

# THE Independent

VOLUME XLIV, NUMBER 10

Circulation: 48,365 Serving Livermore, Pleasanton and Sunol

THURSDAY, MARCH 8, 2007

WWW.INDEPENDENTNEWS.COM

## Isabel Interchange Wins Enough Money to Finish

Lobbying by Livermore Mayor Marshall Kamena and city staff at the California Transportation Commission (CTC) paid off in a major way last week.

The state panel took funding away from a north coast freeway project, and gave some of it to construction of the Isabel Avenue/Highway 84 interchange on Interstate 580.

Others, including Supervisor Scott Haggerty, also had a hand in convincing CTC to provide funding for local highway projects.

The \$68 million authorized for the Isabel interchange completes the amount of money needed to build the project, said city engineer Cheri Sheets. She estimated that groundbreaking for

the interchange will occur in spring 2008. The project is expected to be completed 16 months later, or roughly by the summer of 2009.

Two other I-580 projects got the green light from the CTC, as part of \$1.8 billion of first-round funding from Measure 1B, approved in November by voters. One project provides for a high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lane eastbound, with an award of \$72.2 million. The other is for a westbound HOV lane, which will receive \$103 million. All projects must be underway by 2012 to qualify for the money.

At its meeting Feb. 21 in Sacramento, the CTC had approved only the eastbound HOV lane on I-580, because it

was far enough along in its planning and design work. The other two projects were left off a list recommended by the CTC staff for commission approval. It took one week of lobbying before the CTC approved the two projects at its Feb. 28 meeting in Irvine.

The last approval for funding at the Feb. 28 meeting was for the westbound HOV lane. "It was a nail-biter until the end," said Dawn Argula, deputy chief of staff for County Supervisor Scott Haggerty. She said that she kept track of the Irvine meeting via cell phone from reports provided by Congestion Management Agency (CMA) staff in attendance.

Kamena testified at both CTC meet-

ings. After the first session, in Sacramento, he and City Manager Linda Barton met with Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's staff. The governor later wrote a letter to the commission pointing out how money should be shifted away from rural areas; and instead be devoted to decongesting urban and suburban areas.

The valley corridor of Interstate 580 is the second worst freeway traffic bottleneck in the Bay Area. The commission appeared to respond to that at its Irvine meeting. First it voted to take an allocation of \$176 million away from Willits on the north coast, and give \$68 million to the Isabel interchange. Later, the commission found more money for the

westbound HOV lane on I-580.

Kamena praised state Sen. Don Perata, whose district includes Dublin and Livermore. "Sen. Perata was very influential in lobbying the commission," said Kamena.

Kamena also gave Haggerty a pat on the back. The Livermore resident is a member of the county Congestion Management Agency (CMA). From his position on the CMA, Haggerty helped speed up the time schedule for the westbound HOV lanes project to make it eligible for this first round of funding.

Argula said that her boss conducted some critical shepherding of the westbound HOV project through the CMA. (See FUNDS, page 4)

## FUNDS

(continued from page one)

in time to have it ready for approval. She also noted that two of the nine CTC panelists have plenty of experience with the clogged traffic on Interstate 580.

One is a veteran commission member and a longtime Valley residential developer Jim Ghielmetti. The other, Bob Alvarado, has served on the CTC a relatively short time. He is a union official who lives in El Cerrito, and has business often in the Central Valley, said Argula.