



Campaign for Sustainable Transportation  
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Mike Saint

June 12, 2018

California Air Resources Board  
California Transportation Commission

Dear Commissioners and Board Members,

We celebrate the first joint meeting of the CARB and CTC in the hope that closer connections between the two organizations will result in effective greenhouse gas reduction in our transportation sector as well as more socially equitable transportation options than auto dependency.

With that goal in mind, we have a suggestion for your consideration. SB 1 has authorized funding for reduction of traffic congestion. Our organization used to promote the idea that the most effective way to reduce congestion is to invest in effective transit and active transportation. We were wrong. We continue to advocate for transit and active transportation to be our community's top investment priority. But we are under no illusion that it will reduce congestion on the highway.

What we've learned from researchers<sup>1</sup> is that the induced travel effect operates whether you add a lane to a highway, or a new transit line parallel to the highway. The highway will become congested again in a relatively short space of time.

This doesn't mean that we should not aim for reduction in traffic congestion, which diminishes the quality of life for those who experience it on a daily basis. We submit that the old and futile ways of trying to reduce congestion need to make way for what works: charging a price for use of the road. Researchers report that this is the only measure that can produce lasting congestion relief.

The chief drawback in creating a toll lane on a highway is that it impacts people of low income a lot more than those well off enough not to notice the toll. It's a regressive tax. The only way to reverse the inequity in toll roads is to use the toll revenue to benefit public transit, thereby improving the transit service. If transit and active transportation can be made safe and convenient enough to allow households to own one less car, it can enable a huge reduction in household expense. This outcome turns the potentially regressive toll road into a progressive funding source with the greatest benefits going to working people.

What we Californians can't afford to do is to use highway toll revenue to expand new highway capacity for HOV or HOT lanes. The high cost of highway expansion will take

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<sup>1</sup> Milam, et al, [Closing the Induced Vehicle Travel Gap Between Research and Practice](#)

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the lion's share of toll revenue, leaving little if anything for public transit. That outcome would be truly regressive towards working people. It would miss the opportunity to infuse our transit system with a new source of revenue, allowing transit to become a convenient alternative to being stuck in traffic. Without effective transit alternatives, drivers' only choice will be paying with their time in congested conventional lanes or paying ever-higher tolls in the HOT lanes. That just makes our society's social inequity even worse.

In summary, if we are serious about reducing traffic congestion, we need to bundle the strategy of converting existing highway lanes to HOT lanes, with the revenue going to support effective transit alternatives. If we do that, we'll see our vehicle miles traveled drop, and with that our greenhouse gases.

In closing we ask your guidance to the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission. The Commission plans to expand Highway 1 for four miles of auxiliary lanes, and plans on asking the California Transportation Commission for funding. Guidelines for grants under the Congested Corridors Program include funding auxiliary lanes. However, the guidelines also state that the purpose of those lanes be for improving safety. The Caltrans Draft EIR on the Highway 1 project that includes the auxiliary lanes concludes that there would be no safety benefit from the project.<sup>2</sup>

Could you please ask your staff to advise our RTC that their grant application to the Congested Corridors Program would be stronger if instead of auxiliary lanes it included one or more of other options currently under study by the RTC's Unified Corridors Study: bus-on-shoulder of Hwy 1; transit on the abandoned rail corridor; or enhanced bus service on the Soquel-Freedom Corridor.

Thank you,

*Rick Longinotti*

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<sup>2</sup> Draft EIR: "The total accident rates overall and by segment in 2035 under the Tier I Corridor TSM Alternative would be the same as the accident rates for the No Build Alternative." (The currently proposed auxiliary lanes are a subset of the TSM Alternative.)

