

Thank you, Legislators, for supporting traveling public

DEBBIE HALE and CARL SEDORYK

12:02 a.m. PT April 12, 2017



"Our transportation infrastructure is critical to California's economy. ... Every day, California drivers spend too many hours in choking traffic on deteriorating roads, while businesses face increased costs and falling productivity from congested highways."

—Allen Zaremborg, California Chambers of Commerce

Our roads and bridges are crumbling, and it's time to do something about it. We need better transportation for our seniors, disabled and veterans. Sound familiar? These were the rallying cries for the Measure X and Measure Q local transportation funding measures that Monterey County voters approved to start chipping away at our \$2 billion backlog of road repairs and help run more bus service to our most vulnerable citizens.

As providers of transportation in Monterey County, we are pleased that the voters recognized that the state wouldn't help us out unless we helped ourselves. But until the Legislature acted last week, the state was not holding up its end of this funding bargain. California hasn't raised the gas tax in 23 years. You can't support a 21st century transportation system with 1990's revenues – our funding system doesn't even recognize that electric vehicles are on the road. It is no wonder that our streets are in failing condition, and we can't run our buses as many places, or as often, as they are needed.

But late last Thursday, two-thirds of the State Legislature voted to approve Senate Bill 1, by Sen. Jim Beall, to provide \$52.5 billion in guaranteed funding for transportation. We are proud to say that our Monterey Bay delegation – Sens. Bill Monning and Anthony Cannella, and Assembly members Mark Stone and Anna Caballero – unanimously voted to repair our local roads and streets, increase bus service, and improve state highway safety and road conditions.

The program focuses on "fixing it first," or ongoing maintenance, but there is also strong support for making it safer to walk or bike in your neighborhood. It will cost most drivers less than \$10 a month – significantly less than the estimated \$700 per year drivers spend on vehicle repairs caused by our rough roads. And, electric vehicles will now pay for their wear and tear on the roads with a new \$100/year fee.

With local transportation sales tax measures Q and X now in place, the estimated \$213 million in state transportation revenues generated by SB 1 completes a comprehensive transportation funding package for Monterey County for the next 10 years. Even those who do not drive will benefit as thousands of daily passengers of MST will benefit from new buses and expanded services.

The County of Monterey, whose roads average 40 points out of 100 in pavement condition, will receive nearly \$100 million to repave, repair and redesign safer county thoroughfares, and our cities will be able to fill potholes, build sidewalks and improve intersections.

State highway repairs will get a significant boost as well, an expense that our local measures rightfully left to Caltrans. Whether you are a local resident traveling to work, school, shopping, medical appointments or a visitor traveling to experience all that Monterey County has to offer the revenues from SB1 will help make your commute safer and more enjoyable.

Voting for taxes is a tough call – you know that because you made that decision last November. Let's thank our state legislators for investing in the Monterey Bay regional economy and voting for SB 1.

Debbie Hale is executive director of the Transportation Agency for Monterey County and Carl Sedoryk is CEO and general manager, Monterey-Salinas Transit

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