

TA

CORRESPONDENCE

as of 3-29-2024

From: [Mike Swire](#)
To: [cacsecretary \[@smcta.com\]](mailto:cacsecretary [@smcta.com]); [Board \(@smcta.com\)](#)
Subject: Chronicle op-ed against funding for highway widening projects
Date: Friday, March 29, 2024 11:11:56 AM
Attachments: [Chronicle - A Bay Area ballot measure that funds wider freeways No thanks.pdf](#)

Some people who received this message don't often get email from mswire91@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

ATTENTION: This email came from an external source. Do not open attachments or click on links from unknown senders.

Dear SMCTA Board and Members of the CAC,

I thought you might be interested in [this article in today's Chronicle](#), written by several local transportation leaders. [Nick Josefowitz](#) is Vice Chair of the MTC. [Jeannie Ward Waller](#) is the former Caltrans whistleblower who was canned for speaking out against a widening. [Transform](#) is a local nonprofit that advocates for clean, affordable, and equitable transportation options.

Thanks,

Mike Swire
SMCTA CAC Appointee
C/CAG BPAC Appointee
(writing as an individual)

SUBSCRIBE FOR ONLY 25¢

Sign in

OPINION // OPEN FORUM

A ballot measure that funds wider freeways? That's the last thing the Bay Area needs

By **Nick Josefowitz, Jeanie Ward-Waller, Jenn Guitart**

March 29, 2024





Highway widening is sold to the public as a way to reduce congestion. But new roads and wider highways make traffic worse by inviting more trucks and cars onto roads.

Jessica Christian/The Chronicle 2021

From cycles of drought and intense rain, to raging wildfires and rising sea levels, the Bay Area is already seeing the frightening effects of the climate crisis. Residents want policymakers to do all they can to avert further impacts. Yet despite lofty rhetoric from our politicians about their ambitious climate goals, highway widening projects that increase emissions and worsen congestion are still on the agenda for state and local governments.

The Metropolitan Transportation Commission, the Bay Area's regional transportation planning body, is pursuing legislation that could send a transportation funding measure to Bay Area voters as soon as November 2026, potentially raising over \$50 billion in new funding and creating thousands of good union jobs. Legislation to authorize the measure, Senate Bill 1031, introduced earlier this month by state Sens. Scott Wiener, D-San Francisco, and Aisha Wahab, D-Fremont, is currently being debated in the Legislature.

SUBSCRIBE FOR ONLY 25¢

Act Now

Unfortunately, the MTC plan for the legislation is designed to pour billions from a future measure into highway widening — expensive projects that would bring more trucks and traffic onto our streets, gobble up funds critical to a healthy transportation system, and ensure decades of increased emissions.

ADVERTISEMENT

Article continues below this ad

We need a fix-it-first approach to our streets, not wider highways. Our roadways and bridges are getting more dangerous and falling into disrepair. On average, someone dies from traffic violence every day in the Bay Area, with traffic fatalities almost 50% higher than a decade ago. Pavement conditions in jurisdictions in six of the nine Bay Area counties are “poor or at-risk,” and roads are not in good condition in any county. As part of Plan Bay Area, the region’s long-range strategic plan, MTC identified a \$73 billion need for improvements in the coming years just to make existing roads and bridges safe and functional.

Every dollar we spend on new highways is one dollar less for pothole and bridge repairs, safe streets and improving alternatives to driving alone. To widen one mile of freeway in an urbanized area can cost as much as \$85 million — about a fifth of AC Transit’s annual operating budget. That’s enough to build around 3,000 miles of protected bike lanes or 33,000 safer crosswalks. And highway building isn’t a one-time cost: Each lane added brings new maintenance and repair costs that eat up transportation dollars.

There’s also a cost to human health. Research shows that people who live or work near major roadways have higher rates of asthma, cardiovascular disease, childhood leukemia, preterm birth, and premature death as well as Alzheimer’s, Parkinson’s and multiple sclerosis. And those impacts are borne unevenly, as low-income Black and brown people are more likely to live near highways. Diesel exhaust spewing from the major freeways crisscrossing West Oakland is associated with significantly higher rates of cancer, stroke and asthma hospitalizations according to a 2019 report by the Bay Area Air Quality Management District.

Highway widening is sold to the public as a way to reduce congestion. But new roads and wider highways make traffic worse by inviting more trucks and cars onto roads. The temporary traffic

relief from a new lane is quickly offset by additional drivers who would otherwise have taken transit or driven at off-peak hours. This phenomenon, known as “induced demand,” has played out throughout the United States, from Interstate 405 in Los Angeles to bottlenecks on Highway 101 and I-80 in the Bay Area.

Instead of wasteful spending on wider highways, the Bay Area urgently needs additional transit investments to keep trains and buses running and to make service more convenient. Despite stopgap support in the state budget last year, BART, Muni, AC Transit and other agencies face the prospect of devastating service cuts that could send public transit into a downward spiral from which it wouldn't recover.

ADVERTISEMENT

Article continues below this ad

Without additional funding by 2027, BART would only run one train an hour, and San Francisco Muni riders would see a 20% service cut across the board. The loss of public transit would cost the region's residents billions of dollars in increased transportation expenses, turning already clogged roads into truck parking lots and compounding the heavy burden of air pollution many communities face.

Wiener and Wahab authored SB1031 to impose clear guardrails on a future ballot measure by ensuring that new transportation

funding would first go to investing in transit service, avoiding service cuts and creating a safe, reliable and connected regional transit network. The bill recognizes how unconscionable it would be to run a regional transportation funding measure that did not prevent our transit agencies from falling off a fiscal cliff.

While this is a strong start, the scale of our climate crisis requires bolder action than two state senators can provide on their own, and they face strong pressure from highway building interests to ensure funding for continued highway expansion. Gov. Gavin Newsom and the Legislature need to ensure that not one dollar of this regional funding measure goes toward highway widening projects that worsen greenhouse gas emissions, air pollution and traffic congestion.

Nick Josefowitz is a former Board Director of BART, Capitol Corridor and WETA and a longtime transportation advocate.

Jeanie Ward-Waller is Director of Transportation at Fearless Advocacy and former Deputy Director for Planning and Modal Programs at Caltrans. Jenn Guitart is Executive Director of Transform, a climate and equity advocacy organization based in Oakland.

March 29, 2024

By **Nick Josefowitz**

By **Jeanie Ward-Waller**

By **Jenn Guitart**

About Opinion

Guest opinions in **Open Forum and Insight** are produced by writers with expertise, personal experience or original insights on a subject of interest to our readers. Their **views do not necessarily reflect** the opinion of The Chronicle editorial board, which is committed to providing a diversity of ideas to our readership.

[Read more about our transparency and ethics policies](#)

Top Of The News



REAL ESTATE

Renting versus buying a home: Has the math changed for today's Bay Area real estate market?

Is it better to rent or buy a home right now? Here's what the math shows for the Bay Area's biggest cities.

REAL ESTATE

S.F. to take over former big tech headquarters building in Mid-Market

CRIME

Newsom announces contract to install nearly 500 car-tracking cameras in and around Oakland

SAN FRANCISCO

S.F. opened homeless housing in this wealthy neighborhood. Then the 911 calls began

RESTAURANTS

The cheesy pasta technique Bay Area diners can't get enough of

[Top](#)

[About](#)

[Contact](#)

[Services](#)

[Account](#)

HEARST *newspapers* © 2024 Hearst Communications, Inc. [Terms of Use](#) | [Privacy Notice](#) | [CA Notice at Collection](#) |

[Your CA Privacy Rights \(Shine the Light\)](#) | [DAA Industry Opt Out](#) | [Your Privacy Choices \(Opt Out of Sale/Targeted Ads\)](#)

From: [Jean Brook](#)
To: [Board \(@smcta.com\)](#)
Subject: RE: SCLP Letter Re: San Mateo 101 Managed Lanes Project North of I-380 to San Francisco border Freeway Expansion vs Lane Conversion
Date: Monday, March 25, 2024 1:54:26 PM

From: Board (@smcta.com)
Sent: Monday, March 25, 2024 1:53 PM
To: 'Dashiell Leeds' <dashiell.leeds@sierraclub.org>
Subject: RE: SCLP Letter Re: San Mateo 101 Managed Lanes Project North of I-380 to San Francisco border Freeway Expansion vs Lane Conversion

Dear Ms. Dev,

Thank you for your comments.

Jean Brook (she/her)

Assistant District Secretary
Executive Administration

San Mateo County Transit District
1250 San Carlos Avenue
San Carlos, CA 94070
Office: 650-508-6223
Cell: 650-703-1934
www.smctd.com

From: Dashiell Leeds <dashiell.leeds@sierraclub.org>
Sent: Monday, March 25, 2024 11:38 AM
To: Board (@smcta.com) <board@smcta.com>; mcrume@smcgov.org
Cc: spurewal@smcgov.org; Canepa, David [dcanepa@smcgov.org] <dcanepa@smcgov.org>; GPapan@ci.millbrae.ca.us; caltrans_d4@dot.ca.gov; arbboard@arb.ca.gov; James Eggers <james.eggers@sierraclub.org>; Mike Ferreira <michaeljferreira@gmail.com>; Barbara Muir <barbara.muir@sierraclub.org>; Wils Cain <wils.cain@sierraclub.org>
Subject: SCLP Letter Re: San Mateo 101 Managed Lanes Project North of I-380 to San Francisco border Freeway Expansion vs Lane Conversion

You don't often get email from dashiell.leeds@sierraclub.org. [Learn why this is important](#)

ATTENTION: This email came from an external source. Do not open attachments or click on links from unknown senders.

Dear SMCTA Chair Ramirez and Members of the Board and C/CAG Chair Hurt and Members of the Board,

The Sierra Club is opposed to freeway expansions such as adding a new lane, for an Express Lane, on Interstate 101 from I-380 to the San Francisco border. High occupancy vehicle (HOV) and high occupancy vehicle/toll (HOT) lanes should come from converting existing highway lanes rather than constructing new lanes.

Please read the attached letter for our full comments.

Respectfully submitted,
Gita Dev
Chair, Conservation Committee
Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter

email sent from account of
Dashiell Leeds
Conservation Coordinator
Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter