

From: [Sandra Lang](#)
To: [Rich Hedges](#)
Cc: [Jean Book](#)
Subject: Fwd: Rich Hedges is a legend!
Date: Wednesday, December 11, 2024 11:55:30 AM
Attachments: [Lontime leader steps aside for newer voice in San Mateo](#), [Local News](#), [smdailyjournal.com.pdf](#)

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Dear Rich
Your support , work and friendship over the years is so appreciated.
Especially for remaining value true as the years from 1970 have been a trip ! And you stayed the course .
Yes, the Daily Journal report today provided an uplifting message and tribute to good government.

Thank you again for your service
Sandra Lang

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: Mike Swire <mswire91@gmail.com>
Date: December 11, 2024 at 10:14:12 AM PST
To: undisclosed-recipients;;
Subject: **Rich Hedges is a legend!**

Congrats to longtime CAC member Rich Hedges on an incredible career!!! Nice work, brother!

Mike

https://www.smdailyjournal.com/news/local/longtime-leader-steps-aside-for-newer-voice-in-san-mateo/article_f33f8cb0-b773-11ef-9351-bb2aa5fd505.html?utm_campaign=blog&utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=social&fbclid=IwY2xjawHGtHlleHRuA2FlbQ1xMQABHXz6vbfitFHciwPIRrpO2bODt1trE9sI8hiJZLtNewyqz2E5H7ZEql-v5O_aem_Y0jZoakzibg_QUEL.DaRWFA

https://www.smdailyjournal.com/news/local/longtime-leader-steps-aside-for-newer-voice-in-san-mateo/article_f33f8cb0-b773-11ef-9351-bb2aa5fdb505.html

FEATURED

Longtime leader steps aside for newer voice in San Mateo

Rich Hedges a community mainstay, but leaves City Council role for its new youngest member

By Alyse DiNapoli, Daily Journal staff

Dec 11, 2024



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When Councilmember Rich Hedges first moved to San Mateo in 1970, there was a strong blue collar presence, buoyed by a robust industrial sector in and around the city.

The economic opportunities were an improvement from the inner city of Kansas City where he grew up, but it certainly is not the expensive place it's now become, he said.

Hedges worked for the United Food and Commercial Workers union for years upon moving to the Bay Area and had been involved not only in labor organizing but political and community engagement as well, even in Kansas.

Two years ago, after much community involvement, Hedges came on board the council to fill a vacant seat that was causing turmoil among the new council.

But despite his extensive knowledge of the city and successful bridge-building efforts, he opted not to run for a second term, instead endorsing Danielle Cwirko-Godycki who was sworn in Dec. 9 to represent District 4, which, in part, encompasses Shoreview, Mariners Island and Parkside neighborhoods.

Hedges said the district has historically been neglected in many ways and is more vulnerable to climate change impacts due to its proximity to the San Francisco Bay. Both Hedges and Cwirko-Godycki were active in efforts to pass last year's stormwater fee initiative, which was in large part a reaction to devastating floods the year prior.

“When I started on this journey, I was a frustrated citizen. I didn't want my house to flood,” she said. “I want to be an advocate for others, and represent the community. ... There have been very few electeds from this side of the highway.”

Like Hedges, Cwirko-Godycki knows that infrastructure is a key issue facing not only her district but the city as a whole. For those living close to the water, getting off the Federal Emergency Management Agency flood maps — which requires purchasing expensive insurance policies — has been a costly and challenging battle. Just last month, after more than a decades' worth of effort and tens of millions of dollars in upgrades, about 1,600 properties were taken off the flood map in the North Central and North Shoreview neighborhoods.

But Hedges said more infrastructure investment and improvements need to be made east of Highway 101 and citywide, not just for flood risk but also quality of life. Over the years he's seen how the cost of living has pushed out many residents, in part a result of higher-wage knowledge economies and the hollowing out of nearby industrial hubs like South San Francisco.

“We really have to recognize the people who are working here are suffering,” he said. “We’re no longer a blue-collar city ... we have a lot of trades people who work for the government, and they are struggling due to the cost of living. We’re losing medical people. We’re not bringing in new young doctors, and it’s hard to get a home health care worker.”

He said he is optimistic Cwirko-Godycki will be able to propel some of those issues forward, along with the rest of the council.

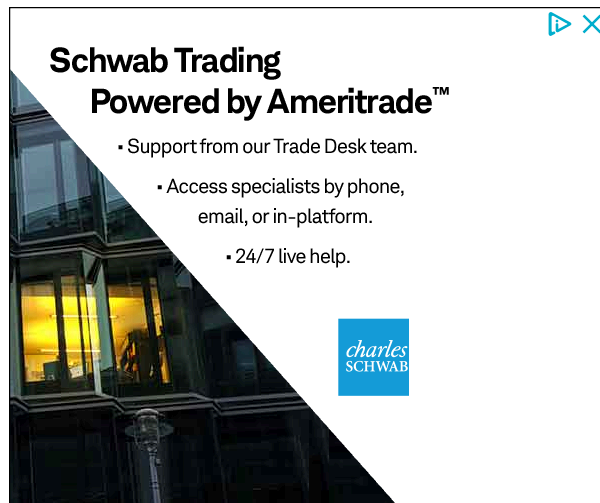
The increasing financial strain faced by the working class in San Mateo County is also reflective of a national trend, something Hedges said Democrats need to start taking seriously. Divisive rhetoric from national politics has also trickled down to

city residents and elected leaders at times, he said, but added it's improved more recently.

Cwirko-Godycki said she hopes to continue much of the work Hedges has fought for in their district.

“Rich has been advocating for the lagoon for 30 years or longer ... he’s been involved, serving the community for 50 years, even as a private citizen,” she said. “I also think, far too often, there are leaders that are unlikely to pass the baton, but Rich has demonstrated that he wants that door opened to everybody.”

The 34-year-old San Mateo native works in recruiting and hopes to represent a demographic that is often too occupied to run for elected office, given the job’s long hours and low pay. While most of the new council works full time, it’s historically been most conducive to those who have sufficient income or time to dedicate to the role.



“I think it’s important for younger people to see that it’s possible,” Cwirko-Godycki said.

“We have to be role models and show you can do both.”

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MORE INFORMATION



New leadership for San Mateo

Alyse DiNapoli, Daily Journal staff

Daily Journal staff

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From: [Mike Swire](#)
To: [cacsecretary \[@smcta.com\]](mailto:cacsecretary [@smcta.com])
Subject: Good Yale article on transportation politics in California and induced demand
Date: Monday, December 9, 2024 2:25:36 PM
Attachments: [Yale Why widening highways doesn't reduce traffic congestion » Yale Climate Connections.pdf](#)

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Dear CAC members,

I urge you to take five minutes to read [this interesting article](#) from Yale on California transportation politics and induced demand.

Tx and happy holidays,

Mike

TRANSPORTATION

Why widening highways doesn't reduce traffic congestion

It has to do with a phenomenon called induced demand.



by SARAH WESSELER
OCTOBER 18, 2024



California prides itself on its climate leadership. And the state's work on transportation – its largest source of emissions – is no exception; its electric vehicle policies **have been adopted** by other states across the country. Sacramento lawmakers have also taken ambitious steps to reduce car use altogether, developing regulations aimed at reshaping communities to encourage walking, biking, and taking public transportation.

But on-the-ground reality often doesn't live up to this vision. In particular, communities throughout the state continue to invest heavily in highway expansion projects that undermine efforts to change how people get around. Because of a phenomenon known as induced travel, these projects lead Californians to spend more time, not less, behind the wheel.

Amy Lee, a postdoctoral scholar at the **UCLA Institute of Transportation Studies**, has spent years studying induced travel and the politics of highway expansions in California. Yale Climate Connections spoke with her to learn more.

This interview has been edited and condensed.

Yale Climate Connections: Can you give me a high-level overview of induced travel? How does it work?

Amy Lee: So the biggest factor that people consider when deciding how to get around is cost. That's a matter of dollars, but also time – time is a really, really important factor in how we travel. When a particular roadway is congested, traveling on it can take a long time, or an unpredictable amount of time, which discourages people from using it.

Highway widening is kind of like putting travel on sale. It attempts to reduce congestion by expanding the amount of roadway supply, reducing the time cost of travel for travelers using it. So let's say traffic kept me from going to a restaurant I really like that's 20 miles away, but after the highway is widened, I can go there more frequently. Or I might choose a doctor in the next town over as opposed to the one in my neighborhood.

We rearrange our travel patterns because of highway expansions, and the new driving that results is what we call induced travel. And research has shown that because of induced travel, congestion returns to previous levels about five to 10 years after the highway is widened.

YCC: Is this something that's been discovered recently, or have we known about it for a while?

Lee: We've measured this for a really long time. It's been observed for at least 100 years, and it's been measured with increasingly advanced statistical methods since the '70s and '80s.

YCC: So highway expansion clearly seems problematic from a transportation planning perspective. Can you say more about how it affects climate change?

Lee: There are several ways. One is that the materials involved in physically making highways and roadways – **concrete**, aggregate, asphalt – are incredibly carbon-intensive. Highway expansions emit a lot of carbon in

their production.

Then, once highways have been built, we develop our communities around them, building further out along these highway corridors, which generates auto use, which leads to more emissions. Right now, automobiles run mostly on fossil fuels, and this seems like it will be the case for a long time.

Highway expansions can also make it more difficult to get around urban neighborhoods. I live in a city with the classic set of highways that were built right through downtown to bring suburban commuters into the metropolitan core, severing neighborhoods like mine from the city center. To get downtown from where I live, you have to cross under the highway two times. Researchers have been doing really cool work about how that impedes walking and biking. As roads are expanded, not only do your shopping mall or your doctor's office go further down the highway, but it also becomes a lot harder to get around your own neighborhood without driving, even if you're just going a short distance.

YCC: I imagine there's also a massive opportunity cost to highway expansions. They're expensive, and that's money that's not spent on other things.

Lee: Absolutely. It's not for lack of funding that we don't build, say, transit and bicycle infrastructure everywhere. In California alone, about \$30 billion are slated to be spent on transportation in the next fiscal year – that is an astronomical amount of money. So we have the money; it's just how we choose to spend it. And historically, and even today, a lot of it goes to highways and highway expansion.

Transportation folks love to say, "Oh, but we can't just shift money around, because it's not one big pot from which every single project's funding comes." And that's true; there are lots of pots that have been created by legislation. If we wanted to change those policies, we could. I won't discredit how hard it would be, though.

YCC: For your Ph.D. dissertation, you interviewed dozens of people involved in highway projects in California. What did you learn about how they think about induced travel and climate change?

Lee: There's a wide array of ideas about induced travel. Some people see it as a first-order priority that needs to be addressed in policy and in projects and that our goal in the transportation world should be mitigating effects on climate. That is not a super widely held view, though.

The views are usually more along the lines of, "Yes, climate is a big problem, we need to address it, but we have really bad congestion in our community, and it's an urgent problem, so we just need to do this project now." People talk about problems with freight, about community members coming to council meetings and saying it's hard to get their kids to school – in a lot of communities in California, the main way to get around

is on the highway. So for them, while climate mitigation is a very important goal, it is not today's problem. It's tomorrow's problem, and what they need to do today is relieve congestion, and the way to do that is to expand the highway.

There's also a very technocratic debate about induced travel going on – although some would say that it is a philosophical debate being carried out under the facade of a technical debate. It has some parallels to climate denialism, with its varying levels of denial. You don't hear a ton of people just outright say, "I don't believe in induced travel," although that does happen sometimes. Others say they believe in induced travel as a general concept, but that they don't think that's what will happen in their own communities. Or they think, "My project is exceptional and will not induce travel."

YCC: And if I'm understanding correctly, California has climate-focused policies in place to discourage highway expansions that would result in induced travel, but these expansions happen frequently anyway. Is this accurate?

Lee: Yeah. You do hear some people say, essentially, "Yes, there are greenhouse gas goals in California, but there are many goals, and there has been no ranking or prioritization of these goals. So why should transportation focus on climate as opposed to economic development?" So California has a policy about it, but it does not reign supreme in many actors' minds.

If you were to take up one of my hobbies, listening to public meetings, you'd hear that pretty frequently. People say things like, "This project is not aligned with the goal of reducing carbon emissions, but this is a really important freight corridor." And most appointed and elected officials seem to be loath to do anything that could be perceived as harming freight and economic activity. As one person said to me, "Goods movement projects are like mother and apple pie – everyone loves them, except for the communities who have to live near them."

YCC: Freight and "goods movement" being essentially semi-trucks, I assume?

Lee: Yeah. There was even a carve-out for freight across all of California's transportation and climate policy. It's only about passenger transportation, despite trucks causing massive air pollution, health risks, lots of carbon.

Another issue that can't be ignored when thinking about highway expansions in California, and the U.S. more broadly, is the big political economy built up around large infrastructure projects. There are a lot of people who produce the concrete and aggregate for highways or work for the construction companies that build them. And in California, where you have a supermajority of Democrats in the legislature, the labor and trade unions are really strong players. So while there is policy to reduce emissions, you also have a lot of material interest

in construction of big transportation capital projects, and these groups have the ear of elected officials. There's a lot of money to be made from that \$30 billion in transportation funding.

YCC: To me, one of the reasons induced travel is such an interesting concept is that it basically means that you can't have a transportation system based only on cars that people will actually be happy with, because you'll never be able to build your way out of traffic jams – they're essentially baked in. Is that an accurate understanding of the issue?

Lee: Yeah, and that's what California's **climate and transportation policy** was trying to get at: reducing auto dependence by doing coordinated land use and transportation planning so that there could be more multimodal accessibility, essentially. The idea is to give people more options to use travel modes like public transportation, walking, and biking.

It's a fabulous vision, but how it plays out in practice is really where the rubber meets the road. And as many people from all over the policy arena of transportation have told me, the most salient political issue for many elected officials, especially at the local level, is traffic congestion. People at the local level hold a lot of power; the policy arena in transportation is very fragmented. And congestion is a really salient issue for local politicians. They need to show that they are trying to do something to help it, even if it doesn't fix it in the long run: They just have to get reelected.

It's rare for local politicians to reach for upstream solutions like facilitating new housing in urban areas, which can help people walk and bike to their jobs instead of getting on the highway. Housing development is a slow process, and it isn't controlled publicly in the United States. Transportation, on the other hand, is publicly funded. So local elected officials use transportation as a field to try to deliver for their constituents.

Expanding highways also just seems like an obvious thing to do. Improving housing options and mass transit are more effective ways to help people avoid congestion, but that would involve trying to make them imagine a different future. Whereas with highway expansions, you're just telling them, "I'm gonna help that highway you're on all the time." So it feels very obvious and direct.

And most elected officials are not steeped in this stuff, right? It's not like they're getting a lecture on induced travel when they take office.

But you're never going to solve congestion this way; we've shown that time and time again. Everyone loves to hold up Los Angeles as a car city, and it's also a prime example of, "Look, they built as many highways as you possibly can, and there's still congestion."

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