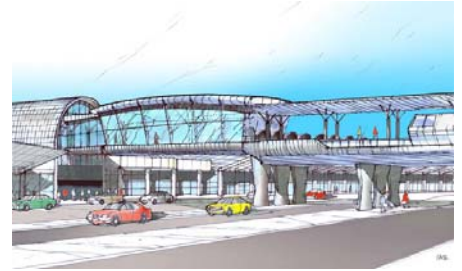


Big Week For Transportation in Bay Area

In the Bay Area, highway congestion is the second-worst in the nation. Even with the infusion of funds from California infrastructure bonds and the federal economic stimulus, we'll still be playing catch up. So what are the solutions? One is to make our existing highway network function more efficiently, and we have been trying to do this for over 30 years with the expansion of the region's carpool network. However, this has been a piecemeal success story, with a fragmented system and often underutilized carpool lane capacity during heavy traffic periods. We have all been stuck in traffic looking longingly at the empty diamond lane to the left, wishing we could just pay \$5 to get in there. Well, thanks to the efforts of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) and the Bay Area Council, you soon may be able to.



AB 744 (Torrico) would authorize a Bay Area-wide express lane network, or high occupancy toll (HOT) lane network, and would convert 400 miles of current carpool lanes into HOT lanes and finance the construction of an additional 400 miles of new HOT lanes. Good old fashioned market forces will make the system run more efficiently by allowing drivers to make a cost-versus-time-saved decision each time they use the HOT lane. If it's moving much faster than the rest of traffic, it may be worth it for a single driver in a hurry to pay to use it, thereby freeing up capacity.

This has been a key policy objective for the Bay Area Council, and this week, the bill passed out of the Assembly Transportation Committee. We will be watching it closely and working with the MTC to get this bill signed into law and get our freeways moving again.

In other transportation news, the Council has been a strong advocate for the light rail Oakland Airport Connector (OAC) for many years. The OAC would link the Oakland Airport seamlessly and efficiently to BART. With testimony and support from the Council, last week the BART Board of Directors passed two of three required funding components necessary to start construction on the OAC in early 2010. The Board accepted \$70 million of Federal Stimulus funds that had been set aside by the MTC. They accepted an additional \$70 million in new funds from other sources identified by MTC, to close the funding gap. With one item left to go, final action is expected on May 14th. We may need your help.

Uh Oh of the Week

The State Controller [released figures on April's personal income tax receipts](#) (obviously the biggest of the year) and they were only half (!) of last year's. This news, coupled with a tough [polling on the May 19 ballot measures](#), makes this year's state budget look really, really bad.

Quote of the Week

"There will likely be an unprecedented budget crisis this summer, with a serious possibility that schools and public universities won't open this fall." – [California Treasurer Bill Lockyer](#).