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From: Dale S Satre [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, November 12, 2023 3:55 AM
To: MTC-ABAG Info <info@bayareametro.gov>
Subject: Public comment: MTC commissioner meeting

External Email

Dear Commissioners

If it pleases the crown: May I drive my vehicle, which I pay yearly fees for, onto freeways which I've paid to build and maintain with taxes on post-taxed income, without paying an additional fine during working hours?

The "Next Generation" Bay Area Freeways Project all-lane highway tolling proposal sounds like an Orwellian nightmare of government surveillance and tax extraction. The use of our freeways, which we've paid for already and continue to pay for, should not be exclusive to the well-heeled, even in rush hour. If a citizen wants to use the freeway during rush hour, they can use the rush hour commute times to decide for themselves. However, applying financial determinations is punitive to the working class and out of touch with the flight from California driven by politically driven cost of living increases like this. If people could afford these fees, they'd likely be living closer to work and not commuting so far in the first place.

These fees will add up to a commuters budget. This will take food off the table. And the per mile rate is only doomed to increase with inflation and increased government budgets.

MTC says that this is to fund public transportation. However, what accountability is there that public transportation can meet the demands of commuters by 2035 (the proposed start date of taxation)? Considering the track record of public works build times and the current state of public transportation in the Bay Area, public transportation's centralized planning nature fails to meet the needs of various commutes. I doubt our policymakers can bend the rules of government procurement, contracting, and construction to get us a better result than what their track record says.

MTC has assured us that these fees will stay in congested areas. Are we really supposed to take the assurance that a toll-extracting body will limit itself to its initial "appetite"? The natural track record of bridge tolls, HOV lane tolls, and CA taxes speak otherwise. I anticipate that the precedent of charging freeway access will expand in geography and cost across the Bay Area.

MTC's website says "[The project] looks to 2030 and beyond, and will consider tolling on congested freeways in areas that also have good public transportation options." How they define what is a "good" public transportation option, which would enable them to price, needs to be clarified. I fear without this discussion, public transportation that does not do its job will be used as a justification to charge. For example, if the definition of "good" transportation is the Caltrain which broke down twice on me in one week with wait times of over an hour each time, then this is a problem.

Unsurprisingly, MTC does not have elected citizen representation advising the project, or in general. Any citizen that MTC does work with is appointed by themselves and meant to represent a specific interest group. Is anybody here seriously representing the needs of the general working class and motoring public, which does not have consolidated political representation (and probably why we are getting taxed like crazy)? Such representation is sorely lacking for an idea that only a committee could dream of. How, with all this "representation," are we still missing the bigger picture?

I understand that this is being tried in different cities already. That doesn't mean I want my commute to be like that, or that we should force this idea through. I, and many other Bay Area citizens from what I gather online, will vehemently oppose this idea and any policymaker that pushes it. Clearly, it's time for MTC open positions for elected general citizens, and end this idea here.

Sincerely,

Dale Satre
Stanford, CA