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## Car Fee to Fund Road Repairs?

*By Sophie Braccini*

With an estimated \$500 million shortfall in funding for road repairs all over the county, the Contra Costa Transportation Authority (CCTA) is looking at ways to close the gap. It recently proposed a \$10 per vehicle registration fee which the agency will collect and return to communities in the form of infrastructure funding. In Moraga, the Town Council listened to CCTA's presentation and indicated support of the proposal. "It is not a panacea," said Council Member Mike Metcalf, who represents Moraga on CCTA's Board, "but it is a valuable supplemental source of income; it will help to get us out of the infrastructure hole we are in." The measure would generate \$108,023 for Moraga every year in perpetuity. It could be used for street repaving and rehabilitation, safety, traffic management, or pedestrian and bicycle access. The allocation could be saved year after year for larger projects. CCTA's Board is expected to approve the measure this week; it will then be placed on the November ballot. Arielle Bourgart, Director of Government and Community Relations for CCTA, told the council that preliminary polling results show that 54% of residents support the plan; after the meeting she noted that figure is closer to 57% in Lamorinda. "We have noticed that even when people are opposed to raising taxes in principle, they can agree to measures that address specific issues."

Metcalf, who does not often support new taxes, is favorable to the CCTA proposal. "Right now we have Measure J, that was passed in 2006, which brings some \$200,000 for our roads," said Metcalf, "but it is a sales tax (1/2 cent sales tax dedicated to transportation) and those taxes are down by 23%. Measure J's value erodes, so we have to count on this type of opportunity to help with our current infrastructure under-funding." Council Member Howard Harpham questioned the root cause for a new tax. "People have failed to plan and save for their infrastructure maintenance," he said, "so you might be putting an inequitable tax on the next generation." Town Manager Mike Segrest noted, "It has been difficult historically to repair roads and save for their maintenance at the same time. It would be a double burden for one generation."

Council Member Dave Trotter wondered if Moraga would not be contributing more to the measure than it would receive from it. "We often have two or three cars per household; is that fair and equitable for the town of Moraga?" he asked. Bourgart said that the return to source would not be based on the number of vehicles in each town. "The DMV cannot provide us with that figure at this time," she said, "but when they do we could revisit the amounts that are returned to each jurisdiction."

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