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## **Town Hall Addresses Transportation Hurdles**

By Laurie Snyder



Photos Andy Scheck

We represent 60 percent of the residents who commute," said Orinda Mayor Amy Worth recently of the Contra Costa County road warriors making the daily schlep from the bucolic East Bay to urban grindstones. That 'wow' moment was just one of many at the Town Hall hosted by California Senator Mark DeSaulnier in Orinda Oct. 30.

DeSaulnier explained how funding declines are jeopardizing California's transportation infrastructure, thanks to sources like the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and California's Proposition 1B ending - even though the modern workforce requires greater mobility than ever before.

Seventy-one percent of mothers are now employed, contributing to the nationwide average of two or more people in every household commuting daily. Locally, the East Bay ranks number one for U.S. "mega commuters" - those with commutes of at least 90 minutes and 50 miles. One reason for this, said DeSaulnier, is that housing closest to job centers is the most expensive, forcing many workers to live further away.

Randy Iwasaki of the Contra Costa Transportation

Authority and Tom West from the University of California, Berkeley discussed impacts of technology on traveler behaviors, infrastructure and vehicle safety before Anthony Levandowski fired up his presentation about Google's self-driving cars.

"For me, this is personal," he said, choking up while relating his wife's car accident when pregnant with their now healthy son, Alex. Self-driving cars will not be 100 percent effective - even kids' car seats aren't - but he said many lives will be saved. Perhaps most heartening, cars will no longer be taken away from seniors when vision declines because their cars will drive for them.



Lafayette council member Don Tatzin stops by to take a look at the self-driving car on his way to the meeting.

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back

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