

**Ken on the Issues:
TRANSPORTATION**

I have always made transportation one of my top priorities. As a member of the Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) board, I work directly on public transportation issues affecting our County, such as serving as chair of VTA's BART to Silicon Valley policy advisory board. VTA recently went through a comprehensive operations analysis to look at ways to run buses and light rail more efficiently that is serving as example to other Bay Area transit operators.

I have continued my service on the Caltrain board, where I am committed to steering Caltrain through both the tough fiscal climate of today and the potential for expanded service in conjunction with High Speed Rail in the future. During my nine years on the board, starting from when I served on the San Jose City Council, Caltrain has come a long way. For instance, we expanded Baby Bullet service to get commuters between San Jose and San Francisco in less than an hour I have seen an increase in demand for speedier and more reliable train service. An increase in ridership on the Baby Bullet trains has shown that commuters are eager to embrace public transportation as a viable alternative to driving.

I also represent Santa Clara County on the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), the regional transportation governing body for the Bay Area. MTC controls state and federal transportation funding, and the commission recently made recommendations for transportation bond money.

MTC runs several programs to help with Bay Area residents' morning commutes. Commuters can call 5-1-1 for information on traffic, road closures, and weather hazards. Emergency call boxes along freeways and other roads are installed and maintained by MTC and allow motorists to report road hazards and receive help in the event of a breakdown or flat tire. To speed commuters through toll booths on the Bay's bridges, MTC has installed FasTrak systems that collect tolls electronically.

My priority when it comes to Santa Clara County's transportation duties remains maintaining roads in County pockets, keeping expressways in good condition, planning regional and local public transportation and regulating local airports.

Airports play a major role in regional transportation, and the County operates Reid-Hillview Airport, Palo Alto Airport, and South County Airport. These local airports help the larger regional airports with numerous tasks, such as flight training, and they provide a place for residents to store and fly their own planes. The County monitors the airports for safety precautions and enforces noise-reduction measures.

Unincorporated areas rely solely on the County to provide services, including road maintenance. The Roads and Airports Department is in charge of repairing and improving nearly 700 miles of roads in unincorporated areas throughout the County. Over the past few years, the County has built sound walls and re-paved streets with rubberized pavement to reduce noise in our neighborhoods.

San Tomas Expressway, Lawrence Expressway, and Central Expressway are major traffic arteries monitored by the Roads and Airports Department. Keeping the traffic moving and the surfaces of these roadways free of potholes is a big responsibility, but expressways are an essential component of our County's transportation network.

I am keenly aware of how increased congestion on our highways is impacting both our economy and environment. Many of our freeways are at capacity, and there is limited space (and funding) to increase it. We must be creative in finding multiple solutions to maximize the efficiency of our system.

One solution that the Bay Area will soon be testing is the use of high-occupancy toll lanes, or Express Lanes. An Express Lane would allow a solo driver to pay a fee to travel in the carpool lane. The price would be

adjusted in real time based on the amount of congestion that stretch of highway is experiencing. In other words, tolls lanes would be more expensive during commute times with heavier traffic.

Replacing our aging highway infrastructure needs to be a priority, too. Anyone who lives near west San Jose or has shopped at Valley Fair and Santana Row knows how terrible the interchange at I-280, I-880 and Stevens Creek Boulevard can be. The merging of multiple lanes in one small area has caused hundreds of accidents and created major traffic jams for decades. When the holidays roll around, many drivers think of this interchange as “The Nightmare Before Christmas.”

Last year, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) gave South Bay shoppers and commuters an early Christmas present. My fellow commissioners and I voted to direct \$32 million in state funding to help rebuild the outdated interchange. The funds will allow the first phase of the \$150 million, multi-year project to start as early as 2011.

The entire project will improve traffic flow by reconfiguring the existing cloverleaf. Ramps will be widened and realigned. The portion of Stevens Creek Boulevard that crosses over I-880 will be widened. A new northbound I-280 off-ramp will be built at Winchester Boulevard, and pedestrian and bicycle access will be improved on the city streets surrounding the interchange.

The \$32 million will get work started on the first, and most important, phase. By providing a separated connector between northbound I-280 and northbound I-880, vehicles will be able to transition more smoothly from one to the other, virtually eliminating the back-ups associated with the current connector.

I have been campaigning for improvements to this interchange since my earliest days on the San Jose City Council. While a councilmember, I made certain that this interchange remained on San Jose’s list of top advocacy items. I also proposed prioritizing the direct connector ramp phase of the project to ensure that crucial element is built first. As Santa Clara County’s representative to MTC, I worked hard to find funding that would make this project a reality.

I’ve spent nearly a decade on various transportation boards like MTC and VTA, as well as the Bart-to-Silicon Valley Policy Advisory Board and Caltrain. Major projects like the ones I’ve outlined above take years to complete. It is satisfying to finally see the pieces fall into place that will address some of our most vexing local problem spots. Furthermore, it will bring much needed construction jobs to the area in these tough economic times.