



# Excellence in Motion

TRANSPORTATION AWARDS • OCTOBER 2014

## Meet the 2014 MTC Award Winners



The recent passing of former state Senator John F. Foran at the age of 84 weighed heavily on our hearts and minds as we prepared for this year's Transportation Awards ceremony. An early champion of regionalism, Foran was the author of the 1970 bill that created MTC and is thought of as the "father" of MTC. His contributions to Bay Area transportation are commemorated with the Foran Legislative Award, begun in 1986 upon his retirement from public service. This year's recipient is U.S. Congressman George Miller, retiring at the end of 2014 after 40 years on Capitol Hill. You can read about Miller's lasting impacts on the Bay Area transportation network in the column to the right, and see a tribute to Senator Foran at [mtc.ca.gov/foran](http://mtc.ca.gov/foran).



The legacy of former state Senator John F. Foran lives on in the legislative award named after him.

Our four Special Awards deserve some special attention. Each award is named after a talented and dedicated MTC staffer, adviser or commissioner who put his or her mark on the agency. Charles Davis, the singing bus driver, brightens passengers' days as he tunelessly identifies Muni stops. We've recognized him with this year's David Tannehill Special Employee Award. Naomi Armenta, whose experiences as a wheelchair and transit user are invaluable as she advocates for accessibility on behalf of senior and disabled travelers, won the Doris W. Kahn Accessible Transportation Award. Cory LaVigne, winner of the Greta Ericson Distinguished Service Award, started out as a bus driver and climbed the transit ladder all the way up to a director role at AC Transit before his untimely passing in 2012 at age 42. Rounding out the Special Award categories is the Miriam Ghilkey Public Service Award, which goes to Bruce Beyaert and his Trails for Richmond Action Committee, which spearheaded the longest single segment of the San Francisco Bay Trail.

Award of Merit honorees include Good Karma Bikes, providing free bike repair services and training to underprivileged community members; Gary Richards, aka "Mr. Roadshow," longtime author of a Q-and-A transportation column; and SolTrans, created in 2010 by combining two transit agencies into one to better serve Solano County. Among the winners is a trio of tunnels — the Caldecott Fourth Bore and the Devil's Slide Tunnel Project, which features twin bores as well as a trail with stunning vistas. A triptych of visual projects showcasing the Bay and the Bay Bridge are sharing a Merit Award — the Bay Lights, illuminating the Bay Bridge West Span; the Oakland Museum of California's "Above and Below: Stories From Our Changing Bay" exhibit; and Joseph A. Blum's action-packed photographs of East Span construction workers.

The bridge also was the inspiration for this year's Grand Award winner, Mary King, chair of the Bay Bridge Design Task Force. In all, 17 people, projects and organizations earned the coveted and unique Excellence in Motion trophy that features an actual ball bearing with moving parts.

— Georgia Lambert

See our extraordinary winners come alive on video at [mtc.ca.gov/awards](http://mtc.ca.gov/awards).

## Grand Award: Mary King Steered Design Process for New Bay Bridge East Span Toward a Winning Outcome



Mary King steered the Bay Bridge East Span design process through choppy waters while she was an MTC commissioner and Alameda County supervisor, in the end building consensus on an iconic design.

By the time Mary King arrived at the initial Bay Bridge Design Task Force meeting in 1997, she had already been appointed chair. King, at the time an MTC commissioner representing Alameda County, was a natural choice for then MTC Executive Director Lawrence D. Dahms. Her poise under pressure, her genuine interest in fair decision-making and her command of others' attention made her the crucial leader of a challenging process to define a signature design for the new East Span of the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge. And the same impressive characteristics made her the obvious choice for MTC's Grand Award.

King already had an extensive political resume. She had been chief of staff to both state legislator Bill Lockyer and Oakland Mayor Lionel J. Wilson. In 1988 she became the first African-American woman to serve as an Alameda County supervisor, and was re-elected twice. In that role she worked tirelessly to expand social services and opportunities for economically disadvantaged residents.

King felt that a resource and monument as public as the new East Span demanded public participation. From the beginning, she resolved to fairly consider all opinions.

"I was going to listen to the public input and then I was going to try to get the members of the committee to reach some kind of consensus," she said.

Immediately, this proved to be no easy task. Not only were there major design disagreements among the engineers, the politicians and the public, but there also was heavy debate within the various factions. But King maintained

an extraordinary command of the process.

She dodged "so many curveballs" from various competing interests, said Steve Heminger, the current MTC executive director.

For Heminger it was a treat to work with King and to watch her handle the maddening clash of interests. "Mary's job managing

the Bay Bridge Task Force was sort of like being ringmaster of a three-ring circus," Heminger said. "Mary was a really gifted public official. She is really smart, very funny and incredibly quick on her feet."

In spite of the challenges, King emerged from her role on the Task Force even more optimistic about the ability of the government to give the public what it desires.

The bicycle/pedestrian path on the new East Span is a testament to the power of the public and the responsiveness of the committee. At the first



Mary King examines a model of the proposed new Bay Bridge East Span design at a 1998 meeting.

Task Force meeting, everyone laughed at the group helmed by Alex Zuckerman, the late bike activist to whom the path is dedicated.

It was "David against Goliath," King explained. "They didn't have the big bucks, but they had the big heart. They never went away, and they got a bike lane on the bridge."

Now standing proudly above the Bay, the sparkling white self-anchored suspension span carries motorists, cyclists and pedestrians alike across the eastern side of the Bay. Its elegant design has made it an immediate icon, and King "deserves a lion's share of the credit for that," Heminger said.

King moved on to other prominent positions: president of the Association of Bay Area Governments, private consultant and various roles at AC Transit for eight years, including interim general manager. But the bridge sticks out as a crowning achievement of a full career.

"Every time I see the bridge, I'm very proud, I'm very touched, I'm very happy that I was able to be a part of it," she said. — Natalie Orenstein



The many bicyclists and walkers enjoying the new East Span can thank Mary King for her support for a pathway alongside the car decks.

## John F. Foran Legislative Award: U.S. Representative George Miller

### Congressman Boosts Key Bay Area Mobility Improvements During 40-Year Career

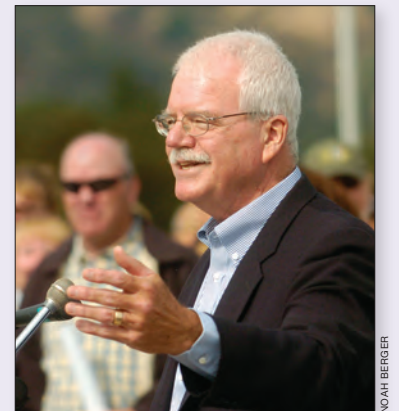


With U.S. Rep. George Miller (D-Martinez) calling a close to his 40-year congressional career at the end of 2014, the Bay Area will lose not just the longest-serving member of its Capitol Hill delegation, but also one of its most influential champions for regional transportation improvements. Miller's many initiatives to fund and expedite major Bay Area infrastructure projects have earned him the John F. Foran Legislative Award.

Elected to Congress at age 29 as one of the so-called Watergate Babies of 1974, Miller rose to several House leadership positions, including stints as chairman of the Select Committee on Children, Youth and Families (1983–92), the Natural Resources Committee (1992–94), and the Education and Labor Committee (2007–10).

Thanks in large part to Miller's defense of New Starts program funding for Bay Area projects, the transportation appropriations bill passed by Congress in 1994 brought federal dollars for BART's extension to San Francisco International Airport and Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority's Tassman light-rail line. Miller also helped craft the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, which delivered crucial support for transit system preservation, pavement rehabilitation and bicycle/pedestrian projects around the region, as well as the new Presidio Parkway in San Francisco, upgrades to Vasco Road in eastern Alameda and Contra Costa counties, and the long-awaited Fourth Bore of the Caldecott Tunnel, for which the congressman cut the ribbon last fall.

The state Legislature in 2007 named the newly completed northbound Benicia-Martinez Bridge the Congressman George Miller Bridge. The tribute was especially meaningful given that the original 1962 span, which now carries southbound traffic and a bicycle/pedestrian path, is named for the congressman's father, the late George Miller Jr., who represented Contra Costa County in the state Assembly from 1947 to 1948, and in the state Senate from 1949 until his death in 1969. As a congressman, the younger Miller marshaled a multiagency team of engineers



Congressman Miller greets the crowd at the 2007 opening of the new Benicia-Martinez Bridge, which bears his name.

who helped overcome delays during construction of the new bridge by devising an innovative bubble curtain to protect migratory fish from pile-driving shock waves. This technique has since become standard for underwater construction projects.

"I'm proud of what I have been able to accomplish on behalf of children, working people and the environment, in my district and for our country," reflected Miller at the time of his retirement announcement earlier this year. "I have not won every fight that I have waged. And there remain, of course, many critical challenges waiting to be addressed. But I have no regrets about what I have accomplished and what I have tried to accomplish in the public interest." — John Goodwin



**Award of Merit: Bay Bridge Old and New Serves as Muse for Three Visual Projects**

The 75th anniversary of the original Bay Bridge in 2011 and the opening of the bridge's new East Span a couple of years later in 2013 put the spotlight on what has long been considered the region's work-horse bridge, and inspired three interrelated



visual projects that together are sharing one Award of Merit. These unique and creative projects illuminate — quite literally, in one case — the beauty and majesty of the Bay Bridge old and new, and the rich ecosystem and history of the Bay underneath.

**Bay Lights Art Installation Adds Sparkle to San Francisco's Waterfront**

The Bay Lights is a massive installment of 25,000 energy-efficient LED lights on the West Span of the Bay Bridge. It is the product of the coordination and creativity of dozens of people who merged technology, infrastructure and art to bring something uniquely Bay Area to countless viewers. Artist Leo Villareal's nightly light show adds sparkle to San Francisco's skyline, and dazzles locals and tourists alike.



The north face of the West Span of the Bay Bridge has become the canvas for a nightly light show that dazzles locals and tourists alike.

The kinetic Bay Lights display brings walkers and bikers to S.F.'s waterfront. "We all had high hopes but the reality vastly exceeded them," said Ben Davis, Bay Lights visionary and CEO of the nonprofit Illuminate the

Arts, which engineered financing and permits for the project. "It's not just a work of art. It reorients us and creates a sense of connection, exemplifying the metaphorical powers of bridges."

**Photographer Joseph Blum Gets Up Close and Personal With East Span Construction Crews**

While Bay Lights creator Leo Villareal explored the lines of the original West Span, it is the new East Span — and the men and women who built it — that inspired photographer Joseph A. Blum. The laborer-cum-artist brought his Nikon to the construction site soon after work began on the span, and has since produced an unparalleled collection of film-based and digital images of the crews and their work. A former boilermaker and welder, Blum marries mechanical fluency with a

keen sense of composition and color. Aptly titled "The Bridge Builders," Blum's most recent photography exhibit was displayed by the San Francisco Arts Commission at S.F. City Hall before moving to MTC's offices for an extended run. "I try to get as close as possible to the work and when lucky get an image that almost seems to be taken from the point of view of the worker in the midst of his or her labor," Blum said in his artist statement. Now in his 70s, the photographer



Intrepid photographer Joseph Blum has crawled, climbed and walked all over the East Span construction zone to capture the workers in action.

took the time to get to know each worker intimately and do justice to his or her strength, determination and courage — identifying each person by name in the captions accompanying his show.

"A lot of guys out here put in long hours, and you start to feel like a robot," an ironworker told the *Organized Labor* newsletter. "Joe coming out here almost every day, even when the conditions were tough, meant something to us."

**Oakland Museum's "Above and Below: Stories From Our Changing Bay" Exhibit**

While the Bay Bridge is the centerpiece of both Joe Blum's and Leo Villareal's work, in another case it was just one compelling feature of a multifaceted project. Tackling state and federal mitigation requirements with creativity, the Oakland Museum of California collaborated with Caltrans to develop an interdisciplinary exhibit about the Bay and the beauty that surrounds it. "Above and Below: Stories From Our Changing Bay," whose opening coincided with the new East Span's, explored the intersection of the natural and the manufactured, through oral histories, replicas, hands-on activities and artifacts from the bridge — including a twin of the infamous Bay Bridge troll statue.

was being able to work with so many different stakeholders, organizations and people who have such strong relationships with the Bay."

A clear marker of success were the visitors who would sit and watch the Center for Land Use Interpretation's 2.5-hour film of a flyover of the Bay's 500-mile perimeter for 30 minutes at a time — "insane for a museum exhibit," Pubols said.

— Natalie Orenstein



The launch of the exhibition "Above and Below: Stories From Our Changing Bay" was timed to coincide with the opening of the new East Span.

"It was very much a collaboration between the art, natural history and science perspectives," said Senior Curator Louise Pubols. "What was great

**Award of Merit: "Mr. Roadshow" Tackles Commute Issues**

Gary Richards, aka the "Mr. Roadshow" columnist for the Bay Area News Group, has heard it all when it comes to commute issues throughout the Bay Area. He's been writing his transportation column since 1991, back when readers called in with complaints and queries and he still used a typewriter. The column now appears six days a week in the *San Jose Mercury News*, the *Contra Costa Times*, the *Oakland Tribune*, the *Marin Independent Journal* and several other newspapers around the region, and he gets up to 1,000 emails a week in addition to tweets and Facebook messages.

ferrets out the reasons for the slow-downs and finds out when and how the issues will be resolved. As for distracted driving, aside from the ubiquitous talking or texting on cell phones, Richards' readers report seeing drivers painting toenails, shaving, knitting, reading books and applying makeup.

Bay Area News Group Managing Editor/Content Bert Robinson had this to say about Mr. Roadshow: "Gary — and this is rare for a journalist — understands issues the way real people understand them. He has an uncanny ability to give voice to the commuting public, on issues ranging from protected right turns to HOT lanes

Throughout the 23 years he's written the Mr. Roadshow column, Richards' wide readership has benefited from his unparalleled knowledge of transportation issues in the Bay Area. He has also saved lives by publicizing dangerous highway conditions. The Award of Merit honoring Richards this year is actually his second — he first earned an MTC Award of Merit in 1994.



Gary Richards' popular Q-and-A column started at the San Jose Mercury News, and now appears in a number of daily papers around the region.

"When they opened Highway 85 in Santa Clara County, there was no median barrier; it hadn't been put in the budget,"

Richards said. "I started getting calls from CHP officers and readers about the dangers. If it's a real safety thing, I'm going to write about it." After a series of fatal accidents on Highway 85, Assemblyman Jim Cunneen, R-Campbell, joined Richards in his campaign to install a barrier on the South Bay freeway. Largely thanks to their efforts, California adopted a new policy that added median barriers to highways throughout the state, greatly increasing safety on the road.

to solid white lines on the freeway. And because his readers know that he's there for them, they listen to him — I credit Gary in large part for the growing acceptance of carpool lanes and metering lights in this area over the last decade. No other journalist I know has quite that ability."

The Mr. Roadshow column isn't always a one-man show. Since he has faced some health challenges recently, Mrs. Roadshow, Jan Richards, drives her husband to work and back home, and frequently collaborates with him, providing her reaction to various issues. She coined the descriptive term "road boulder" (a slower driver who blocks a passing lane, refusing to move to the right). "I'm so proud of the work Gary does," she said. "He performs a real service as the voice of the driver, the commuter, the transit user. His work saves lives and changes conditions on the road. This award from MTC recognizes his value and the impact he has."

— Georgia Lambert

**Bruce Beyaert and Friends**

Continued from page 3

philosophy," said Laura Thompson, Bay Trail project manager for the Association of Bay Area Governments. Beyaert has been on the Bay Trail Board of Directors since March 2001.



After retiring from a career in environmental planning for Chevron, Beyaert used his expertise to engineer a major expansion of the Bay Trail.

While much has been accomplished, a 10-mile stretch of the Richmond shoreline has yet to be included in the Bay Trail. Access to the land — most of which is privately owned — is TRAC's biggest challenge. Each segment of the trail also requires

see the trail through to completion.

"I'm a hiker and I love San Francisco Bay," Beyaert said. "The Bay Trail just sings to me."

— Georgia Lambert

planning studies, CEQA compliance and design, as well as funding. Beyaert and his team of volunteers are steadfast in their determination to

**Naomi Armenta**

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In June of 2014, she earned her master's degree in Transportation Management from the Mineta Transportation Institute (MTI) at San Jose State University and was named MTI's Student of the Year in 2014 by the Council of University Transportation Centers. Additionally, she is the

current chair of the MTC Policy Advisory Council's Equity and Access Subcommittee and the city of San Leandro's Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee. She also is active in the Women's Transportation Seminar (WTS), earning the 2014 Rosa Parks Diversity Leadership Award from WTS' San Francisco branch.

— Leslie Lara-Enriquez

**Metropolitan Transportation Commission**

Joseph P. Bort MetroCenter  
101 Eighth Street  
Oakland, California 94607

510.817.5700 TEL.  
510.817.5769 TDD/TTY  
510.817.5848 FAX  
info@mtc.ca.gov EMAIL  
mtc.ca.gov WEB

- facebook.com/mtcbata
- twitter.com/mtcbata
- youtube.com/mtcabaglibrary
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