

Legislation to Stop Toll Cheating Nears Finish Line

To improve public safety and curb toll cheating by vehicles without license plates, MTC has long advocated establishment of a temporary license plate program. California is the most lenient state in the nation when it comes to allowing cars to drive around unidentified. Current law gives motorists up to 90 days to drive without plates; as if this isn't bad enough, there's no way for law enforcement to tell when the 90 days are up.

The solution, proposed in AB 516 (Mullin), is very simple: require all cars sold without plates to be provided a temporary license plate at the point of sale. Law enforcement, toll agencies and the California New Car Dealers Association all support AB 516. The bill passed the Assembly by a strong bipartisan vote of 74–1, passed the Senate Transportation Committee 10–1 and awaits passage in the Senate.

While the primary benefits of AB 516 are to public safety, the bill has significant transportation revenue implications as well. In FY 2014–15, vehicles using Bay Area toll bridges without plates cost the region \$11 million in uncollected bridge tolls, while Southern California toll roads lost an additional \$8 million.

Worse, the problem is gaining momentum, growing 29 percent in the last year alone. MTC is working closely with Assembly Member Mullin's office to ensure AB 516 is heard on the Senate Floor soon and signed by Governor Brown.



Assembly Bill 516 would establish a mandatory temporary license plate system (Florida example pictured above).

(Photos: Randy Rentschler)



METROPOLITAN
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San Francisco Chronicle

EDITORIALS *On the Need for AB516*

A license to get away

Sharp-eyed tipster deserved the kudos for alerting San Francisco police to a jail escapee over the phone.

It might seem remarkable for a profile case — with the story being blasted all over broadcast news — to be able to reach San Francisco to install the license plate that never replaced the neon sign that the owner had used.

It's highly unlikely that the state would have made it to the Grapes if not for a tolerant policy on license

License law was a help to escapees

Use of advertising plates let fugitives travel unseen

By Peter Fimrite and Michael Cabanatuan

Three fugitives who escaped from an Orange County jail and abducted a cabdriver before they were captured more than a week later — two of them in San Francisco — might have been hauled in earlier had police been able to identify the untrackable plastic plates from a dealership on their stolen getaway van.

California's practice of allowing auto dealers to slap plastic advertisements on recently sold vehicles — sometimes referred to as dealer plates — for up to 90 days has been slammed as an outdated system that can aid criminals while costing bridge and roadway toll-takers a mint as many anonymous vehicles roll through for free.

Plates continues on A10

» **Editorial:** California must tighten license plate laws. **A13**

San Francisco Chronicle, February 4, 2016 (p.1 and editorial page)

Don't Delay — Take Action on Transportation Funding in 2016

Roadway Infrastructure in Disrepair

Bay Area Commuters Suffering Worst Delay on Record

Dozens of Transportation Projects on the Chopping Block

City and County Road Repair Budgets Lose 25 Percent of State Funding

These headlines — describing the current state of affairs — are compelling calls to action as legislators consider how to best address the state's transportation funding crisis. Add to that the steep drop in gas prices, rising wages, and a lowering unemployment rate and conditions would seem ripe for action to increase funding for transportation, as proposed by SB x1-1 (Beall), AB 1591 (Frazier) and Governor Brown.

And yet, momentum is flagging. With the November election on the horizon, the two-thirds vote threshold for new taxes looks insurmountable. Rather than give up, however, California legislators should look beyond our borders at the 21 states that have overcome the odds and raised transportation funding in the last three years.

These states are led by Republicans as well as Democrats, with split Legislatures, as well as those controlled entirely by the same party. In 2015, six states under 100 percent Republican control — including Idaho, Georgia, Michigan,

Nebraska, South Dakota and Utah — enacted tax increases for transportation. In addition,

- **Iowa**, led by a Republican Governor, a Republican House and a Democratic Senate, enacted a 10-cent per gallon gas tax increase.
- **Washington**, led by a Democratic Governor, a Democratic House and a Republican Senate voted for a 11.9-cent per gallon gas tax increase.

Notably, in the case of both Iowa and Washington, success only happened on the second try. MTC is counting on the Bay Area delegation to keep up the pressure and bring a long-term proposal to a vote in 2016.

“We have no choice but to maintain our transportation infrastructure. Yet, doing so without an expanded and permanent revenue source is impossible. That means at some point, sooner rather than later, we have to bite the bullet and enact new fees and taxes for this purpose. Ideology and politics stand in the way, but one way or another, the roads must be fixed.”

— Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr.
2016 State of the State Address



California Governor Jerry Brown announces his transportation funding proposal at a press conference in 2015.

(John Perry/Port of Oakland)

Transportation Funding Crisis Hits Home

CTC Announces Major Cut to STIP

Underscoring the urgency of the state's transportation funding shortfall, the California Transportation Commission last month announced the need to cut \$754 million out of the current 2016 State Transportation Improvement Program, the state's only funding program with a focus on improving mobility.

The drop in available funding is due to the 6-cent/gallon cut in the state's price-based excise tax that went into effect last July, as well as a Board of Equalization forecast that additional tax cuts will need to be made later this month, effective July 1, 2016.

State Funding for Local Roads Also Slashed

The STIP is not the only victim of the recent cut in the state gas tax. Cities and counties saw state funding for local streets and roads cut by 25 percent in FY 2015–16, forcing deferred maintenance for many Bay Area communities whose roads are already in poor condition.

MTC Principles for a New State Transportation Funding Package

- Increase revenue through new, ongoing user fees and stabilize the variable fuel excise tax
- Share new revenue equitably between the state and local roadway system
- Increase funding for public transit
- Provide a new funding source for goods movement
- Provide eligibility for bicycle and pedestrian projects in conjunction with roadway repairs
- Exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act projects in the existing right-of-way



Many Bay Area roads are in urgent need of repair.

(Karl Nielsen)

MTC strongly urges the Legislature to restore the rate to 18 cents per gallon, eliminate the price-based adjustment and index it to the Consumer Price Index or the Construction Cost Index thereafter.

“The effect of this reduction on the state’s transportation system will be nothing short of catastrophic... The Commission strongly urges legislators to work together to develop a compromise that will result in a significant down payment on our transportation infrastructure needs and provide for meaningful reforms to the state’s transportation program.”

– Letter from California Transportation Commission to the State Legislature, January 27, 2016



SUPPORT SB 1128 (GLAZER):

Continue the Bay Area Commuter Benefits Program

Since its launch in April 2014, the Bay Area Commuter

Benefits Program — authorized as a pilot program by Senate Bill 1339 in 2012 — has provided new commute benefits to almost half a million Bay Area workers, helping to reduce traffic congestion, improve air quality, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, as well as provide workers and employers with substantial tax savings.

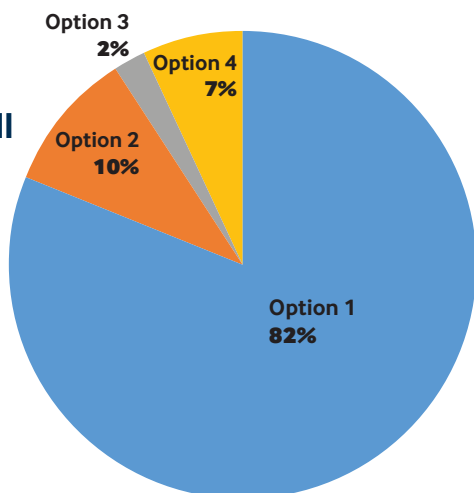


Bay Area Commuter Benefits Program

Given the successful pilot, MTC and the Bay Area Air Quality Management District are sponsoring legislation, SB 1128 (Glazer), to authorize the program on a long-term basis. We are encouraging the entire Bay Area delegation to co-author this legislation.

As of December 28, 2015, a total of 3,910 employers have registered with the program. Collectively, these companies employ approximately 1,275,000 employees in the Bay Area. Of those who registered, 55 percent reported that they are offering commuter benefits for the first time.

Commuter Benefits Offered by All Registered Employers



A Flexible Approach

The Bay Area Commuter Benefits Program requires employers with 50 or more employees within the nine Bay Area counties to provide their full-time employees one of four options:

- Option 1:** Allow employees to exclude their transit or vanpool expenses from taxable income, up to the maximum amount allowed by federal law (\$255 per month in 2016).
- Option 2:** Employer-provided transit subsidy (or transit pass) or vanpool subsidy up to \$75 per month, plus an annual cost-of-living adjustment.
- Option 3:** Employer-provided free or low-cost bus, shuttle, or vanpool service operated by or for the employer.
- Option 4:** An alternative employer-provided commuter benefit that is as effective in reducing single occupant vehicle trips as Options 1–3.

Employer Incentives are Changing Commute Choices

Analysis of employer registration information, combined with a randomized telephone survey of Bay Area workers, indicate the program is attracting thousands of Bay Area commuters to alternate modes. Key results from the first 12 months of the program’s operation include:

- **44,000 employees** switched from driving alone to an alternative mode (e.g., transit, shuttle, vanpool or bike)
- **4.3 million fewer vehicle trips**, reducing vehicle miles traveled by 86 million miles
- **35,778 fewer tons** of CO₂ emissions

For more information, visit: <https://commuterbenefits.511.org/>



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