

# Transactions

Special Awards Issue

OCTOBER 2008

TRANSPORTATION NEWS  
FOR THE NINE-COUNTY  
SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA



**2008 Transportation Awards: Excellence in Motion**



Welcome to this special issue of *Transactions*, in which we highlight the winners of MTC's 28th Transportation Awards Program. The biennial competition honors people, projects and organizations for exceptional contributions to Bay Area transportation.

When we stepped back and looked at the 11 people and programs singled out this year, we were struck by the fact that of the four individuals receiving the ball-bearing award, three are women. Whether compiling a distinguished planning career, managing a megaproject or being the first to handle a physically demanding, formerly male-only job, these women stand out among all who keep us moving day to day.

Of the organizations being recognized and the people behind them, caring could be the common denominator: caring for their fellow human beings, caring for the environment and caring about creating better transportation options for us all.

But clearly, the showstopper in this round of the MTC Transportation Awards is the MacArthur Maze meltdown, which in the skilled hands of Caltrans and its many partners became the Maze miracle. Not only did contractors repair and rebuild the two crucial East Bay freeway connectors closed by the spectacular accident with astounding alacrity, but also, the specter of widespread traffic gridlock never materialized.

When the second connector opened in time for the busy 2007 Memorial Day weekend, the *San Francisco Chronicle* summed up the remarkable achievement: "Rebuilding the freeways was not just a highway construction project. With the Bay Area, the construction industry and others across the country watching, it became a race. Winning the race required an uncommon combination of pride, planning, timing and teamwork."

Enjoy reading, and we hope you feel as inspired as we do by the innovations, hard work and good deeds showcased on these pages.



After remarkably swift reconstruction, only a newer stretch of pavement remains as mute evidence of the horrific tanker-truck explosion that demolished a key segment of the MacArthur Maze, the Bay Area's busiest interchange.

**Grand Award: MacArthur Maze Miracle — Turning Disaster Into Triumph**

GRIDLOCK AVERTED WHILE REGION'S BUSIEST INTERCHANGE IS REBUILT IN JUST 26 DAYS

It took just one crash and the fiery explosion of a gasoline tanker truck to demolish the East Bay's MacArthur Maze, the busiest freeway interchange in the Bay Area. It took hundreds of people working 24/7, under intense pressure, to put it together again. This is a true tale of "Turning Disaster Into Triumph," featuring teams of engineers, contractors, construction workers, surveyors, public information staff, public transit agencies, local, state and federal public officials, and the news media all working together to repair and rebuild the MacArthur Maze in record time and to plan and publicize alternative routes to avoid traffic gridlock.



The tale began before dawn on Sunday, April 29, 2007, when the tanker accident and ensuing fireball destroyed the upper-level freeway connector to eastbound Interstate 580 and draped tons of softened steel and concrete onto the lower level connector to southbound Interstate 880. The weekend catastrophe set the stage for potential Monday traffic mayhem, since on a typical weekday 80,000 vehicles use these routes to travel to and from the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge.

Phones began ringing at 4 a.m. Sunday and Caltrans officials immediately activated the department's emergency response center in Oakland. By noon, Caltrans District 4 staff had organized a meeting with representatives from MTC, Bay Area public transit agencies, the California Highway Patrol, and the Oakland police and traffic departments to plan and publicize alternate driving routes and provide increased transbay transit services (along with all-day, free rides the first Monday after the accident). MTC posted detailed

information about freeway conditions and transit and carpool options on the 511.org Web site, and the media broadcast news of the accident, route detours and increased services on BART, buses and ferries.

Before the smoke had cleared from the accident, Caltrans engineers were on site assessing the damage and working with the department's design offices in Sacramento to rough out repair and reconstruction plans. Demolition crews began clearing the site and hauling away tons of debris and contaminated soil. Governor Schwarzenegger issued an emergency proclamation in order to cut red tape and streamline the contracting process. The federal government weighed in, with Mary Peters, Secretary of the U.S. Department of Transportation, delivering a \$2 million check in person.

By day four after the accident, Caltrans engineers had completed extensive testing and analysis of the damage to the I-880 connector and concluded it had suffered no

structural damage and could be repaired. A contract was awarded to ACC West, and eight days after the accident, with workers on 24-hour shifts, the connector reopened to traffic.



Meanwhile, the bigger job of rebuilding the I-580 connector was under way. Concerned about a steel shortage, Caltrans called on worldwide contacts and tracked down supplies in Pennsylvania and Texas. Caltrans engineers drew up specifications for the reconstruction project in just days instead of weeks, offering per-day incentives for early completion or penalties for delays.

Out of seven bidders, the lowest by far was from the company that bears the name of C.C. Myers, who promised to finish the job before the busy Memorial Day weekend. Although some may have doubted him, Myers did as he promised, and the I-580 connector was ready to reopen in exactly 26 days, more than a month ahead of schedule.

— Marjorie Blackwell



**John F. Foran Legislative Award: Congressman Tom Lantos**

The influence of the late Congressman Tom Lantos spread far beyond the 12th Congressional District on the San Francisco Peninsula, which he represented from 1981 until his death in February 2008. The only survivor of the Holocaust to be elected to Congress, Lantos served as chair of the House Foreign Relations Committee, championing human rights and democracy around the globe.

Lantos also was a tireless advocate for Bay Area transportation, securing millions of dollars in federal funds for Bay Area projects. Two vitally important projects — the Devil's Slide tunnel on Highway 1 and the BART extension to San Francisco International Airport (SFO) — testify to his unwavering commitment to improving transportation options for people in the Bay Area.



Lantos campaigned early in his career for federal emergency funds to repair the precipitous stretch of Highway 1 on the San Mateo coast known as Devil's Slide after winter storms closed the highway for months. In 1983, he secured \$58 million for the repairs, but the money was put on hold while the project awaited approval. Years passed while factions argued over the options: building a new highway bypass in an environmentally sensitive area versus tunneling through the coastal mountain. While the debates and lawsuits raged, Lantos and U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein worked steadily to earmark additional money for Devil's Slide in every federal transportation bill. Finally, the highway versus tunnel debate was settled, and the U.S. Department of Transportation allocated emergency repair funds to finance a \$270 million tunnel.

At the tunnel groundbreaking, Lantos quipped, "I was in knee pants when I introduced this legislation. I learned to be patient." Scheduled for completion in 2011 and named for its steadfast supporter, the Tom Lantos Tunnel will consist of two 4,000-foot bores extending between Pacifica and Montara, and the abandoned roadway will become a shoreline trail with breathtaking views of the Pacific coast.

Extending BART to SFO also was a long-term vision that some doubted could be accomplished. Lantos never lost sight of the vision, however, and fought persistently to ensure the federal government honored its pledge of \$750 million — half of the total cost — for the project.

On a preview test ride of BART to SFO in July 2002, Lantos commented, "This is truly a profound addition to the quality of our lives." Now, MTC is recognizing Lantos' many contributions to the quality of life in the Bay Area with this year's John F. Foran Legislative Award.

— Marjorie Blackwell

**Calendar**

For dates, times and locations of upcoming MTC meetings, visit [www.mtc.ca.gov/meetings](http://www.mtc.ca.gov/meetings).

## Safeway Delivers a Cleaner Environment With Biodiesel Trucks



Safeway's trucks have gone "green" with biodiesel fuel, taking the equivalent of 7,500 cars off the road annually.

Safeway Inc., a national food and drug retailer with Bay Area roots, is taking the term "greengrocer" to a whole new level by embracing environmental initiatives throughout its business operations, including the conversion early in 2008 of its entire California and U.S. truck fleet to cleaner-burning biodiesel fuel. The bold move has earned Safeway a 2008 Award of Merit.

"It's just the right thing to do," said Tom Nartker, vice president of transportation at Safeway. "We've been very socially responsible in terms of the environment for a number of years at Safeway, especially on the retail side, and we were looking for ways we could expand into our distribution and private fleet operations. So we came up with the idea of moving to biodiesel, which has created a huge opportunity for us to help reduce the amount of CO<sub>2</sub> we emit into the air."

Safeway's biodiesel program is part of the company's Greenhouse Gas and Sustainability Initiative, a dedicated effort to use solar power, wind power, alternative fuels and environmentally friendly construction

strategies in conjunction with employee education and consumer outreach to reduce carbon emissions in the communities it serves.

Thanks to the "green" move to biodiesel, Safeway's fleet has cut its carbon dioxide emissions by 75 million pounds annually, the equivalent of taking about 7,500 cars off the road. As a fleet, Safeway trucks annually travel about 25 million miles, and use 5 million gallons of the biodiesel fuel blend.

Although there is not yet any cost advantage to using biodiesel, neither is it prohibitively expensive. Every Safeway truck sports special decals indicating the vehicle is operated with cleaner-burning biodiesel.

Safeway's fleet of 1,000-plus tractor-trailer big rigs now run on what is known as B20 biodiesel, which consists of 80 percent normal diesel fuel blended with 20 percent soy-based biodiesel. B20 biodiesel reduces sulfur, carbon monoxide, hydrocarbon and particulate emissions. The 80/20 blend is the percentage at which manufacturers will still guarantee the performance of the engine parts.

"The drivers can't even tell the difference with the B20," said Curt Friggle, Safeway's truck repair manager. "But our fueler let us know that it smells like French fries!"

According to Nartker, "As soon as the manufacturers warrant the engines to a higher soy blend, Safeway will start using it. We've even tested a B100 biofuel, which is a 100 percent soy blend, but that is tougher on the engine and gels in cold weather."

— Karin Betts

## Stanford University Gets an "A" for Commute Alternatives



Members of Stanford's Commute Club take advantage of free, on-campus bike safety inspections.

as well as students on AC Transit's Line U, which connects to other East Bay transit systems as well as to ACE commuter rail?

If free transportation isn't incentive enough, the Commute Club offers up to \$282 a year in cash to employees and students who stop commuting in solo vehicles, cash prizes, and \$50 cash rewards for referrals of university friends or coworkers who turn in their parking permits and switch to commute alternatives. As a disincentive to commuting via single-occupant vehicle, Stanford's annual parking permit fee has more than doubled in the past six years.

To make commute alternatives even easier, Commute Club members are automatically enrolled in an Emergency Ride Home program and offered up to \$96 a year in Zipcar credit plus 12 hours of free car rentals per year (Zipcar car-sharing and Enterprise Rent-A-Car are located right on campus). A bicycling haven, Stanford also provides 12,000 bike-rack spaces along with enclosed bike storage, clothes lockers and showers. Commuters can try out loaner folding bikes, and get a subsidy to buy their own.

"Stanford has offered alternative transportation services for decades," noted Brodie Hamilton, director of Stanford's Parking & Transportation Services. "But in 2002, our office launched an all-out expansion of the program. We added new incentives, developed targeted marketing, began personal outreach to new employees, and created the Commute Club, to name just a few of the concepts designed to get people out of their cars. Much of our success relies on the synergy of all the programs working together, from free transit passes to an emergency ride home to giveaways."

— Marjorie Blackwell

## David Tannehill Special Employee Award: Meet Deanna Vilcheck, an Engineer Who Can Juggle

As Caltrans' primary engineer for the reconstruction of the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge's West Approach, a one-mile elevated stretch of Interstate 80 coursing through San Francisco's densely developed South of Market residential and commercial area, Deanna Vilcheck has become an expert juggler and ringmaster. She has directed the long-running \$400 million-plus production that has involved hundreds of construction workers; scores of engineers, architects, traffic operations staff, and budget and finance professionals; dozens of contractors; myriad local agencies and other stakeholders; thousands of residents and businesses; and some 280,000 vehicles traveling through the West Approach corridor each day.

The feat has earned Vilcheck the 2008 David Tannehill Special Employee Award.

"The project was exceptionally complex in terms of construction staging and from the community relations perspective," said Tony Anziano, Caltrans' toll bridge program manager. "It required incredible amounts of coordination and collaboration, and Deanna was the focal point for bringing the team together. She does her work quietly, but she is unbelievably effective."

The five-year effort involved completely removing and replacing the freeway in its



MTC Special Employee Award winner Deanna Vilcheck dons her hard hat and a smile as she stands atop her domain of the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge West Approach.

original footprint as well as replacing all on- and off-ramps, sometimes within feet and inches of adjacent buildings, while causing minimal impact on the traveling public and the local community. The seismically outdated double-deck structure is now gone, and in its place is a side-by-side roadway where each deck has its own independent support system. Where the decks stack to join the bridge, those supports

will prevent the structure from collapsing like Oakland's Interstate 880 Cypress Street double-deck viaduct did during the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake.

Caltrans Director Will Kempton compared the West Approach seismic project to "changing a tire on a car that's moving at 65 miles per hour." As the senior resident engineer, Vilcheck has been responsible for many of the nitty-gritty details of that tire

change — making sure that all the plans are followed, coordinating and monitoring contractors' progress, implementing any change orders, and keeping the work on schedule.

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger presided over a milestone event — the opening of the new permanent structure carrying eastbound traffic to the span — in April of 2008. The project is due for completion, months ahead of schedule, this winter.

According to Caltrans Project Manager Ken Terpstra, "Deanna has a strong construction background, but on a project like the West Approach it is about more than construction. The resident engineer needed a very particular skill set to pull that project off, and you know Deanna had it."

"I've really learned a lot about multitasking and delegating," said Vilcheck, who recently was promoted to construction manager for the West Approach and other projects. "I throw 45 balls in the air, and start with the five that are closest to the ground."

Since the start of construction on the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge's West Approach replacement in 2003, Vilcheck has demonstrated her multitasking capabilities beyond the project, finding the time not only to get married, but also to give birth to two children.

— Karin Betts

## Greta Ericson Distinguished Service Award: Finding Middle Ground Drives Jean Hart to the Top



A driving force in plans to alleviate traffic congestion on Interstate 580, Jean Hart retired from the Alameda County Congestion Management Agency following a 30-year career in the planning field.

Future generations who traverse the Bay Area may not know Jean Hart's name, but they will enjoy the results of her planning prowess. During her 14-year tenure as deputy director of planning at the Alameda County Congestion Management Agency (ACMA), Hart led the way in consensus building for transportation projects that crossed county lines and required

multijurisdictional approval. She also was one of the first Bay Area women to reach the upper echelons of transportation management.

"Jean is a terrific manager," said Dennis Fay, executive director of ACCMA. "She knows when to coach someone and knows how to get others to deliver their best work. She really is dedicated to public service, and giving the

public the best work possible."

Hart was a driving force in the move to convert a section of the carpool lane on southbound Interstate 680 to a high-occupancy/toll (HOT) lane, which experts say will help to alleviate congestion. In the works since 1994 and the first in the Bay Area, the HOT project will allow single-occupant vehicles to use the Express Lane during commute hours for a fee. Hart also was instrumental in getting agreement with various communities through the Tri-Valley Triangle Study, leading to HOV lanes on Interstate 580. Her work included securing a grant to perform a feasibility study, collaborating with multiple agencies to introduce the legislative bill to change the vehicle code and obtaining capital funding.

## Miriam Gholikely Public Service Award: AC Transit Employees Catch the Spirit of the Drive

The bus operators at AC Transit's Richmond Facility know what it means to drive. But in the past year, they've become familiar with another kind of drive: a fundraiser.

Bus drivers often overhear the comments of their riders while on the job — most of which they'd probably like to tune out. But last December, while driving his regular route on AC Transit's 72M Line, Hector Perdomo overheard a conversation between a mother and her son that he couldn't ignore. The little boy said all he wanted was a basketball, but his mother — who was living at the Richmond Rescue Mission — could not afford to buy him a gift that Christmas. Perdomo couldn't stop thinking about them, and he eventually ended up at the Richmond Rescue Mission trying to locate the boy and his mother. They had already moved out, but Perdomo now had a new idea: helping all of the children at the Rescue Mission.

The Richmond Facility workers are a close-knit family, and when one of them feels a burden, they all feel it. So when Perdomo

proposed creating a giving tree for all of the families staying at the Rescue Mission, the rest of Division 3 — all 209 of them — fell in line. The names of the family members were hung on a Christmas tree in the break room, and the workers selected a person (or two) for whom they would purchase a gift. Only an hour and a half after the giving tree went up, all of the names were gone, with enough funds left over to purchase extra gifts in case there were new arrivals. On Monday, December 24, several of the bus operators loaded over 100 presents on a Van Hool coach and delivered them to the Rescue Mission.

While Perdomo had a positive outlook on life before the gift drive, he says this experience has taught him a lot about the needs of others and his ability to help. "Many times our minds are filled with angry faces," he said, "but now my mind is filled with their happy faces" as the families received the gifts. He now believes that together, the Richmond Facility workers can do great things,



A few members of the "family" known as the AC Transit Richmond facility workers show pride in their ability to help others.

and says this experience has taught him how "an idea can turn into something happening."

With the 2008 Miriam Gholikely Public Service Award spurring them on, the Richmond Facility workers started a school supply drive this past September, and are consider-

ing turning their Christmas gift drive into an annual event. It's still just an idea at this point, but the AC Transit Richmond crew members make things happen from ideas. They see life as more than just driving — they also have the spirit of the drive.

— Pam Grove

## VTA Bus Route Overhaul Helps Riders Find Way to San Jose — and Beyond

Change is often met with resistance.

Not so the redesign of the bus service operated by the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA), winner of a 2008 Award of Merit. Thanks to the efficient, comprehensive overhaul and an impressive communications and outreach campaign, bus ridership was up by 11 percent in the period from January through April 2008 — the service's first four months — compared to the same period in 2007,

according to Cynthia Santoro, VTA management analyst.

After more than two years of research, evaluation and plan implementation, VTA launched the redesigned bus system on Jan. 14, 2008. Affecting over 100,000 weekday bus riders and almost all VTA bus lines, the new system included major route changes and improved service frequency. Bus lines with low ridership were eliminated and new lines were added, including two new express bus routes and 11 routes with smaller buses, called community buses, that feature lower fares. VTA also instituted more frequent service — every 15 minutes or better — on core bus routes.

"We cut service in places where there wasn't demand, and we added service in places where there was potential for ridership growth," said Bernice Alaniz, deputy director of marketing and communications.

VTA staff's communication plan was centered around the slogan, "The New VTA — New Service, New Standards, New Commitment." The communications campaign was multilingual, with messages in English, Spanish, Vietnamese, Chinese and Tagalog. The new service was promoted in creative ways, reaching out to all age groups, from extensive advertising in the *San Jose Mercury News* (which included an eight-



One of over 200 VTA employee ambassadors answers questions about the redesigned bus service.

page color insert and a sticky-note on the front page) to a cinema ad and a Val-Pak coupon mailed to 390,000 households within the county. Television and radio ads, car cards and bus boards on VTA light-rail trains and buses, station posters, and advertisements in community-based newspapers and foreign language papers completed the information blitz, along with various brochures and news releases.

Over 200 VTA employees served as ambassadors at 25 transit hubs to inform and engage riders about the new bus service. Ambassadors were equipped with a detailed toolkit containing information about the new service.

Wearing "Ask Me" stickers or buttons, ambassadors made personal contact with as many riders as possible at their stations over a two-week period, handing out brochures showing route changes and timetables.

"Because of our advertising campaign and face-to-face, two-week ambassadorship efforts, we achieved a very high level of rider awareness prior to the launch date," said VTA's Santoro.

Ridership numbers have continued to be strong. In July, total system ridership for bus and light rail showed an increase of 9.6 percent over July 2007, Santoro said.

— Georgia Lambert

## Take a Shuttle to the Redwoods, and Leave Parking Hassles Behind

This past summer, Golden Gate Transit Route 66 — known as the Muir Woods Shuttle — returned to Marin County for its fourth year of service, allowing visitors to access the Bay Area's redwood wonders without fighting traffic or adding to the jam-packed parking lots and surrounding roads.

Five thousand people make the trek to Muir Woods National Monument on a busy weekend day, while there is only room for about 190 cars in the parking lots. And on most weekend mornings, the lots fill up by 9 a.m.

"We did some research about visitors to Muir Woods, and we discovered that people spent more time trying to find a parking space than they did in the woods," said Muir Woods Site Supervisor Mia Monroe. "From the National Park Service perspective, we wanted people to have a better experience getting here, and a better experience in the park."

The county battles a related problem: Horrendous traffic grinds through south Marin from U.S. 101 to Muir Woods and Stinson Beach. A predictable segment of that gridlock was the traffic to Muir Woods, and so the park service and county leadership put their heads together and, with the help of Golden Gate Transit, began in 2005 to offer shuttle service from Marin City and a Pohono Street park-and-ride stop at the edge of Mill Valley into Muir Woods. Service now operates from May to September on week-ends and holidays on a 30-minute schedule.

Ridership has tripled since the shuttle started service, and accounted for 30,000



For an adult round-trip fare of \$3, summertime visitors can ride a shuttle to Muir Woods and avoid parking hassles.

trips to and from the park in 2008 — the latest in a series of impressive statistics that helped earn the service a 2008 Award of Merit. "The ridership demand for this service has blown us away," said Marin County Supervisor Charles McGlashan. "And the shuttle is helping local leaders see that transit is an option here in Marin."

The shuttle is also an example of successful recreation-focused ITS, or "intelligent transportation systems."

During the summer season, changeable message signs on U.S. 101 are used to warn visitors when the parking lots are full, and urge them to take the shuttle.

"I was a skeptic about the signs at first," said Monroe, "but now I see the direct connection between the signs and shuttle usage. As soon as that sign goes on, everyone pulls off the highway to go into the lot, and the shuttles fill up."

"The critical factors for success were the signs on the freeway warning people that the parking lot was full, and getting the word out to hotels that there is a noncar option," said McGlashan.

— Karin Betts

## Fannie Mae Barnes: Carrying the Torch for Women as First and Only Female Cable Car Grip

When the hiring managers at S.F. Muni employed Fannie Mae Barnes as a bus driver in 1981, little did they know that this easy-going, then 35-year-old woman would become the first female to complete their rigorous cable car grip program 17 years later. "Pulling grip" for a cable car is no small feat for a man, let alone a 52-year-old single mother.

As a San Francisco bus driver, Barnes noticed that all of her friends in the cable car barn were constantly happy. So at first she decided to try out for the job of conductor — and became one of only three females to hold that position at the time. In the cable car hierarchy, the job of conductor is actually higher up than the grip, although it's less strenuous work, involving assisting on the back brake and collecting fares. It was a significant achievement for Barnes, but she wanted to drive. Several of the other grips said she couldn't do it — that it was impossible because women lack the upper-body strength. "Anytime I hear someone say a woman can't do it, I want to do something about it," Barnes said. "I believe a woman can do anything."

At the helm of a San Francisco cable car, the driver is required to control the vehicle by pulling a lever known as a "grip" — a 260-pound device that attaches the car to the cable. The driver must run the cable



Fannie Barnes relaxes in her home away from home: the San Francisco cable car barn.

car at a steady pace of about nine miles an hour. To stop the car, the driver releases the grip and applies the brakes. If the grip slips, so does the cable car. It takes coordination, strength and mental concentration. And did we mention that a cable car weighs eight tons?

The coveted job of being a cable car grip is a physically demanding one — that is, if you make it through the training program. The 25-day training trial puts wannabes on the line, and approximately 80 to 85 percent drop out within the first five days, according to Saadat Ahmad, cable

car line trainer. As a result, there is an elite crew of drivers — only about 35 at the time Barnes passed the test.

She wasn't successful in her first attempt. But armed with her mantra — that a woman can do anything — she began a weight training program. A year later she was up to 65 pounds on lateral pull-downs, 20 pounds on arm strengthening exercises and 160 pounds on a back-exercise machine. She was ready. Her determination impressed her co-workers. Trainer Ahmad says he "put her through the paces like everyone else."

"I take my hat off to Fannie," he said. "She prepared herself... she's tough. She set her mind to do it, and she did it."

Barnes did have a bit of an advantage, having first been a cable car conductor. But still she recalls the physical agility and coordination required: "On rainy days, it was hard to stop the car. The driver has to put sand on the cable tracks and use a pedal to pump the sand down on the slick tracks. We had to stay away from moving the cable car into certain positions, because there's no such thing as reverse on a cable car."

In August 1998, Barnes was honored with the title of Systemwide Operator, an award given by the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency to employees exhibiting excellence. She now adds an MTC 2008 Award of Merit to her list of honors. While she was a grip for only about four years, and retired in 2007, her co-workers still have a huge respect for her accomplishment. "Fannie came along and changed the term grip man to grip person," said Byron Cobb, fellow grip and line trainer.

Barnes had the honor of pulling the grip on Cable Car 9 as it carried the Olympic torch up the Hyde Street hill in the run-up to the 2002 Winter Games in Salt Lake City. As the only female to ever become a San Francisco cable car grip, she's still carrying the torch.

— Pam Grove

## SPECIAL AWARDS

### Doris W. Kahn Accessible Transportation Award: Making a Good Thing Better, With Carsharing Access for All

Leave it to the city of Berkeley, birthplace of the independent-living movement, to take a good idea like car sharing and make it even better by adapting it for wheelchair users. The AccessMobile, a shared accessible van that can be rented by the hour, became available to the public in April 2008.

In 2004, Berkeley latched on to the benefits of car sharing and retired 10 city fleet cars in favor of vehicles operated by City CarShare, a Bay Area nonprofit that provides convenient, affordable, short-term rental cars as an alternative to car ownership. After business hours, the city makes its car-share fleet — now six vehicles

— available to all members of City CarShare.

When the city won \$25,000 in the National Organization on Disability's Accessible America contest in 2007, City CarShare matched the funds. The nonprofit brainstormed with the city and its Commission on Disability, and together they came up with the notion of a van that would benefit both disabled and nondisabled members.

Participants in the Access Program can use the AccessMobile during business hours, and during off hours, it is available to all City CarShare members. A first for City CarShare's fleet, the van can accommodate up to two wheelchairs and four additional people, and requires only a friend or family

member willing to drive.

On average, the van is used twice a day by the 30 participants in the Access Program. Participant Danny Kodmur needs the van for shopping in places not along a transit route and carrying large packages home. "The AccessMobile is an affordable resource to an underserved population," Kodmur said.

Program expansion depends on demand and funding, but if past is prologue, Berkeley will find a way. At an average cost of \$8.50 an hour, the AccessMobile is a green and accessible innovation by City CarShare and the city of Berkeley, which share this year's Doris Kahn Accessible Transportation Award.

— Pam Grove



Danny Kodmur, a member of City CarShare's Access Program in Berkeley, prepares to take a ride in the new AccessMobile.

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