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Letters to the Editor

Editor:

Lamorindans may be surprised to learn that since 1978 we have paid a 1/8 percent sales tax (AB 1107) for the sole benefit of the San Francisco Muni and AC Transit systems. The Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), with nudging from our city councils and Supervisor Candace Andersen, must change this unfair arrangement.

For every \$16.00 in taxable purchases here, one penny is sent to Muni and another penny to AC Transit. Not a bit of that money is returned to the 1,000,000 residents of the inland East Bay (925 telephone area code).

The inland East Bay includes 30 percent of the population subject to the tax. Its cities paid 26 percent of tax revenues in 2011. Yet none of the \$16.5 million that the inland East Bay contributes each year is returned to the inland East Bay.

In contrast, San Francisco accounts for just 24 percent of the population subject to the tax and 29 percent of revenues. Yet the MTC always sends half of the revenue to San Francisco. Muni has given its employees unsustainable pay and benefits literally on our dime (see 2010 S.F. Measure G). Our money should be kept here to satisfy our local transportation demands instead of being shunted to a big-city slush fund.

The Bay Area has changed dramatically since this tax began 35 years ago. The inland East Bay, including Lamorinda, has grown considerably. AC Transit has stopped serving the inland East Bay; we have created our own transit agencies (e.g., County Connection). We have unmet local transportation needs, including crumbling roads, that could be resolved with our \$16.5 million that we annually export over the hills. It's time for the MTC to utilize its power under Public Utilities Code section 29142.2(b) and keep our "fair share" of the AB 1107 sales tax funds here in the inland East Bay.

Furthermore, when the next BART strike happens, AC Transit and Muni have a duty to send buses here to shuttle our residents through the Caldecott Tunnel. We deserve something in return for the \$100 millions of "one way" subsidies we have paid all these years.

Please write to your local city councilmembers and to Supervisor Andersen to demand that they ask MTC to keep our "fair share" of the AB 1107 sales tax for local transportation needs. Orinda residents: please also write directly to Councilmember Amy Rein Worth, the current MTC chair. Stop raising our local taxes to compensate for this one-sided transfer of our money over the hills.

Jason A. Bezis
Lafayette

Editor:

Regarding the upcoming issue of modifying Moraga's long existing laws and policies for ridgelines and slopes: Moraga will be initiating yet another round of unwarranted changes to our current, very significant and regulated Town laws and policies which effect development on our hillsides and ridgelines. These actions, though appearing benign and innocuous to most Moragans, are in fact, very aggressive and belligerent actions that seek to implement policies from the recent failed voter initiative, "MOSO 2008". These changes will expand the scope and will seek to impose "selected and targeted" modifications to our laws which will take away what few, remaining property rights still exist for these targeted parcels.

To be clear, our most significant ridges - which have been identified in our General Plan and by MOSO, both major and minor ridges, are NOT in jeopardy of development - they are in fact very well protected by (the original) MOSO. MOSO prohibits home development on our most prominent, visible, and significant ridges and slopes. They are protected and will continue to be protected.

The problem is - a select group, wants to apply these same restrictions to land that is not visually prominent or even zoned Open Space. They want to apply these restrictions to land that has been anticipated and planned for single family homes even before our Town incorporated in 1974 and has been planned for in our original General Plan and in all following amendments.

These potential homes are very important to the long term survival of Moraga as we know it. They will help retain our vision as a single family home community - Blessed with an abundance of scenic vistas and open space, and will help insure our town's future financial viability (please see Town's EPS 2008 9212 Study - which shows how significantly new homes generate revenues for our schools and local government). These potential homes will generate the motivated families and the critical projected revenues, to support and enhance our schools, police and fire protective services as well as providing for many of the lacking amenities our community currently lacks.

In conclusion, this unwarranted pre-emptive effort to rewrite our current rules and preclude potential new single family development will take away property rights, will initiate legal action, and will decrease local control in favor regional efforts such as Plan Bay Area and its' "stack and pack" smart growth philosophy. Finally it will severely impact our community and our important institutions, such as our schools, from prospering and flourishing by restricting critically needed future revenues.

David Bruzzone

Moraga

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