

Bay Area's gridlock of governance

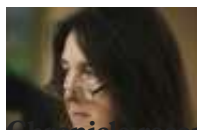
By Marc Levine | May 2, 2016 | Updated: May 2, 2016 4:27pm

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Photo: Eric Risberg, Associated Press

Without public input, the MTC will continue its dysfunctional mismanagement — and Bay Area traffic congestion will only get worse.



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governance

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The other angry GOP voter group

In 1970, the Legislature created the Metropolitan Transportation Commission to address our regional transportation needs. Today, few people know that the MTC exists, what the MTC does, or who serves on the commission. The MTC operates in virtual obscurity and with no accountability whatsoever.

The MTC’s history of mismanaging our transportation system has been the equivalent of a jackknifed big rig across three lanes of rush-hour traffic. This is in part because the MTC makes regional transportation decisions based on old traffic data and through a protracted, staff-driven process that invites little public input.

The Bay Area deserves better. We need an accountable and transparent regional governance structure.

That’s why I have authored legislation (AB1X-24) to create the Bay Area Transportation Commission. This new commission will be elected through publicly financed campaigns and will answer directly to voters.

The new Bay Area Transportation Commission will be responsive and accountable to our communities’ needs rather than operate as the MTC does. Unfortunately, the MTC operates as an appointed bureaucracy seemingly uninterested in addressing our crumbling infrastructure and mammoth transportation problems.

Not surprisingly, the MTC opposes this new structure, continues to ignore its failures and is preoccupied with building its empire through a hostile takeover of the Association of Bay Area Governments.

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The Legislature has charged the MTC with managing what the MTC boasts is a \$2 billion book of business, including a portion of ABAG's budget. The MTC has taken advantage of this financial arrangement and is flexing its muscle by threatening ABAG's funding.

I joined four other Bay Area legislators to formally ask the MTC and ABAG to hit reset and work with us to create a new regional agency and governance model.

Contrary to our request, the MTC and ABAG will conduct public hearings in the next few weeks where they will consider immediate consolidation of staff functions under the MTC's executive director. The MTC made this a higher priority over other transportation projects such as partnering with Caltrans to expedite reopening a third lane on the eastbound Richmond-San Rafael Bridge.

The MTC chooses to double down on a failed regional system that has damaged Bay Area transportation. The MTC's empire-building approach to governance lacks accountability.

That is why the MTC must be eliminated and replaced with a directly elected regional agency such as the Bay Area Transportation Commission proposed by AB1X-24.

ABAG meets May 12 and the MTC meets May 25 to consider the future of the Bay Area's regional governance structure. The MTC has an opportunity to begin the process of making necessary structural changes to better serve Bay Area residents. Unfortunately, they will likely rubber-stamp the consolidation plan.

Please contact ABAG and the MTC to tell them that the MTC's current system is one of failure. Tell them you want a regional agency that serves your needs. Without public input, the MTC will continue its dysfunctional mismanagement — and Bay Area traffic congestion will only get worse.

Assemblyman Marc Levine represents the 10th Assembly District, which includes Marin and Sonoma counties, and is a member of the Select Committee on Regional Planning in the San Francisco Bay Area.

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