



Yes on measures A and B: Editorial

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“I hate taxes – I just hate traffic more.”

So says Carl Guardino, CEO of the Silicon Valley Leadership Group. Guardino’s group is a leading proponent of Measure B, a half-cent sales tax on the Nov. 8 ballot. Measure B provides money over 30 years to address a multitude of needs, from road repairs and additions to finishing the BART extension to San Jose. Los Altos and Mountain View would benefit from tens of millions of dollars in street repairs.

We like Measure B because we all need traffic relief, and because we can trust that the money would be put to good use. Guardino points to an impressive track record of previous sales-tax transportation measures that have led to major improvements, to wit: passage of Measure A in 1984, which funded Highway 85 and turned Highway 237 into a full freeway. The 2000 measure, a one-half-cent sales tax, included a BART extension from Alameda to Santa Clara County, now a year ahead of schedule and \$75 million under budget, Guardino said. He expects it to open next fall.

We have no control over growth in the North County, which is expected to house 300,000 more people over the next 15 years. But we can choose to mitigate the increased traffic that comes with it. Measure B is not the cost-of-living increase we usually like to see, but with no help from the outside, we must deal with this major problem ourselves.

Measure A is a \$950 million bond that would fund the purchase of land to develop affordable housing for county residents in need – the homeless, the disabled and veterans. The county estimates that Measure A funds could create 5,000 affordable housing units and draw matching grants from the state and the federal government for additional units. Bond proceeds could also assist 1,000 first-time homebuyers in a county where the median home price is \$900,000.

If you don’t believe that Measure A is the morally right thing to do, consider

this: It costs taxpayers more to treat the homeless than to house them. We have more than 6,500 homeless people in the county, costing about \$520 million in services annually. One report found that “providing housing to the highest users of services could result in a net cost avoidance of more than \$42,700 per person per year for services such as emergency medical care and general assistance.”

Passing Measure A isn't just the right thing to do. It's also the economically right thing to do.