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Endorsement: How Measure B would help Silicon Valley's transportation mess

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The numbers that quantify the misery of getting to work or grandma's house in Santa Clara County are long and punctuated with many commas. But the hours of lost productivity or missed with loved ones are digital measures of things really experienced in analog — the growing frustration and anger as the clock ticks and the car sits.

Measure B – which would take a half-cent extra from each of us every time we buy a dollar's worth of something taxable and pour \$6.4 billion into transportation projects that would make our lives better for the next 30 years – is a well-conceived and practical remedy for the current transportation mess.

The Silicon Valley Business Journal urges you to vote for Measure B on Nov. 8 as one of the most important steps we can take to ensure business prosperity and domestic sanity.

Within the life of Measure B's taxing period, BART will reach downtown San Jose, county expressways will get congestion-relieving interchanges, potholes in city streets will be filled and paved over, bus lines will be extended and frequencies increased, Caltrain stations will get platforms for longer trains and grade crossings that now halt street traffic will be eliminated, new bike and pedestrian paths will give children safe routes to school, and Highway 85 will gain some form of transit in the empty center median.

If that seems like something for everyone, it's because everyone is a victim of transportation gridlock and there's no single solution for it.

"Each component part is important and how they fit together is even more important," says Carl Guardino, the Silicon Valley Leadership Group CEO who is spearheading the campaign. "It's the case with Measure B where the sum of the parts are even better as a whole."

Measure B is not a perfect solution. A perfect solution would cost billions more and state and federal sources would have to put up more than the \$3.5 billion expected to be leveraged by this measure.

But Measure B has generated enormous support throughout the community because of the real transportation needs it addresses. And business can expect \$15.4 billion in increased economic output from money spent on the projects — not to mention that we will all get to work with less frustration, less pollution and in less time.

Even with the absurdly high approval threshold of two-thirds of voters, polls indicate Measure B will pass. But with such a high threshold, the consequences of a few percentage points slippage are too severe to take passage for granted.

As San Jose Mayor Sam Liccardo said last spring, "Sixty-six percent of \$6 billion is zero. We've got to get to 66 and 2/3 percent, and if we don't hit that number, we all have nothing."