

Transactions

Special Awards Issue

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER
2006

TRANSPORTATION NEWS
FOR THE NINE-COUNTY
SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA



John F. Foran Legislative Award: Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi



A major force in the House of Representatives, Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi (D-San Francisco) likewise has been an

instrumental figure in Bay Area transportation projects. Recipient of this year's John F. Foran Legislative Award, Pelosi, who is the House Democratic leader, has worked across jurisdictional and party lines locally and in Washington to dedicate funding for essential upgrades to the region's infrastructure.

Pelosi's contributions to the transportation network can be found in the seismic strengthening of the Golden Gate Bridge and the Bay Bridge, as well as in visionary projects to provide for future needs such as a new Transbay Terminal in downtown San Francisco. She also has played a critical role in securing federal funding for the BART extension to the San Francisco International Airport by forging consensus among key congressional and Administration decision-makers.

Pelosi has represented San Francisco's Eighth District since 1987. She is being recognized with the Foran Award for her dedication to the region, and for being a leader who is a catalyst for the entire Bay Area congressional delegation, encouraging them to work collaboratively on behalf of the region.

"With transportation improvements capable of providing more than just mobility, we can build an America where all families have access to opportunities, and where no community is left isolated," Pelosi said. — Catalina Alvarado



Activist Gillian Gillett poses with her daughter Lucy in their "traffic-calmed" San Jose Avenue/Guerrero Street neighborhood in San Francisco. Banners declare "We live here! Please slow down," while native plants take root in the median.

Grand Award: San Francisco Street Renaissance

CITIZEN ACTIVISTS TAKE BACK THEIR STREETS IN HAYES VALLEY AND THE MISSION DISTRICT

This year's Grand Award is equally shared by two neighborhood efforts to reclaim their streets from the blight and danger of heavy through traffic. Both projects involve thoroughfares in San Francisco, and both owe their success to countless volunteer hours on the part of community residents, and the professional expertise of the city's Department of Parking and Traffic as well as the Department of Public Works.

San Jose/Guerrero Coalition To Save Our Streets

Several years ago, San Francisco resident Gillian Gillett found that taking her young daughter out for walks in her Guerrero Street neighborhood (Mission District) was dangerous, with speeding drivers treating the six-lane arterial as an extension of Interstate 280.

"There were no traffic controls on the six-block stretch between Cesar Chavez and 29th Street," she said. "There was a four-foot median on Guerrero, and it was very dangerous if you were stuck in the middle. Cars sped by at 50 to 60 miles per hour. You could wait as long as 10 minutes to cross the street. There was tremendous pollution and noise, and there were regular collisions between cars and houses."

In 2003, Gillian discovered and joined an existing neighborhood organization, the San Jose Avenue

Coalition to Save Our Streets, convincing the group to expand its target area to include Guerrero Street.

Gillian researched the history of her neighborhood and learned that both San Jose Avenue and Guerrero Street were expanded from four to six lanes in the 1950s. Many houses on these streets were literally moved onto their own backyards, and the sidewalks were severely narrowed to incorporate extra traffic lanes.

In 2003, Gillian and Coalition members circulated a petition among neighbors and collected 300 signatures, submitting them to the San Francisco Department of Parking and Traffic and their district supervisors. They requested wider medians, bike lanes, the reduction of multiple-turn lanes and a "no right turns on red lights" policy near schools.

Next, the Coalition worked with the San Francisco Department of Public Health to produce street banners featuring pictures of children and the slogan "We live here! Please slow down" in English and Spanish — and raised \$5,700 for the project. More than 100 neighbors and schoolchildren held a demonstration at Cesar Chavez and Guerrero streets to protest traffic speeds and unsafe pedestrian conditions. Gillian and her husband also created a Web site as a community resource.

As a result of the Coalition's efforts, the San Francisco Board

of Supervisors in October 2004 unanimously passed legislation to calm vehicle traffic on Guerrero Street and San Jose Avenue. The city narrowed traffic lanes on both streets from six lanes to four, created bicycle lanes, established four-foot-wide buffer zones on both sides of the center medians, installed a new traffic signal, transformed rush-hour tow-away lanes into parking, reduced the speed limit from 35 to 25 miles per hour and scaled back multiple-turn lanes.

Following on this success, the Coalition raised money from local residents and businesses to "green" Guerrero and in November 2005, more than 125 people came out to plant drought-tolerant shrubs in medians along three blocks.

"People are delighted to have their neighborhood back," said Gillian. "It changes the way you look at the street. It doesn't have to be the way it's been for 50 years."

In 2004 the Coalition won a \$90,000 grant — \$75,000 from MTC's Transportation for Livable Communities Program and \$15,000 from the San Francisco Transportation Authority — to create a Neighborhood Plan. And the community and sponsors have contributed \$65,000 to green the medians along another 10 blocks of Guerrero. — Marjorie Blackwell

See inside for the story on the Grand Award co-winner, Octavia Boulevard.



Less room for cars translates to more room for bicyclists.



2006 Transportation Awards: Excellence in Motion



Welcome to this special issue of Transactions, in which we showcase the winners of MTC's 27th Transportation Awards Program. On the surface, it might appear as though we're giving out fewer awards this cycle — 10 as opposed to the 14 we handed out

in 2004. But if we were to add up all the people, businesses and organizations actually involved in the projects highlighted on these pages, the count of honorees would likely number in the hundreds. Indeed, in many cases, it was the nominees' ability to motivate and mobilize others, and rally community, governmental and corporate support, that drove them to the top of the entry pile.

This year, the venue for the awards ceremony has changed, to San Francisco's recently restored Ferry Building — a majestic setting befitting these titans of excellence and volunteerism, who have devoted so much of their time, energy and know-how to improving the Bay Area's transportation network. Each winning organization or individual receives MTC's handsome and unique ball-bearing award, a small token of our thanks and appreciation. We hope the winners' stories inspire others to look for creative ways of smoothing commutes, improving air quality, calming busy streets and the like, so that when we return in two years, our application in-box will again brim with bright ideas.

— Brenda Kahn

Calendar

Unless indicated otherwise, all meetings take place at:
Metropolitan Transportation Commission
Joseph P. Bort MetroCenter
Lawrence D. Dahms Auditorium
101 Eighth Street, Oakland
(Across from the Lake Merritt BART station)

TUESDAY
NOVEMBER 14, 2006

3:30 pm
Minority Citizens Advisory Committee

WEDNESDAY
NOVEMBER 15, 2006

10 am
Bay Area Toll Authority*
10:05 am
Service Authority for Freeways and Expressways*
10:10 am
Metropolitan Transportation Commission*

FRIDAY
NOVEMBER 17, 2006

10 am
Association of Bay Area Governments/
Bay Area Air Quality Management District/
Metropolitan Transportation Commission
Joint Policy Committee*
1 pm
Minority Citizens Advisory Committee/
Partnership Board Environmental Justice
Subcommittee
MetroCenter, Claremont Conference Room

MONDAY
NOVEMBER 20, 2006

1:30 pm
Partnership Technical Advisory Committee

MONDAY
NOVEMBER 27, 2006

2 pm
TransLink® Management Group
AC Transit
1600 Franklin Street, Oakland

Continued on back page

Greta Ericson Distinguished Service Award: Master Craftsman Rodger "Tim" Reilly Hangs Up His Tools



For 22 years, master craftsman Tim Reilly lovingly restored parts on San Francisco's aging fleet of historic cable cars, and helped build 11 replica cars.

Every time a San Francisco cable car bell rings, it is a tribute to the handiwork of master craftsman Rodger Reilly (who goes by his middle name, "Tim"). For over 22 years, Reilly plied his trade in Muni's cable car carpentry shop in the city's eclectic Dogpatch neighborhood.

The world's first cable-powered street railway was built in San Francisco in 1873. In the decades that followed, many cities in the United States and elsewhere also built cable railways to replace horse-powered streetcars, and then replaced those systems with electric streetcars. Fittingly, San Francisco is now the last city in the world to operate cable cars.

Since no other place has them — and the only things on a cable car that can be store-bought are screws, bolts and nuts — the cars in today's fleet are all hand-built and maintained in Muni's carpentry shop. Bob Harris, the shop supervisor, described the process: "It takes a skilled crew of four carpenters and a pattern maker over a year to turn out a single car." The pattern maker crafts models for every piece of cable car hardware out of wood, metal or plastic. These patterns are then sent to a foundry

to become molds, which are then used to cast actual cable car parts.

"Every cable car in San Francisco today probably has a part that I had something to do with," the 66-year old Reilly said. "It's rewarding to know that, while the system is over 125 years old, it hasn't changed that much mechanically, and it still runs well."

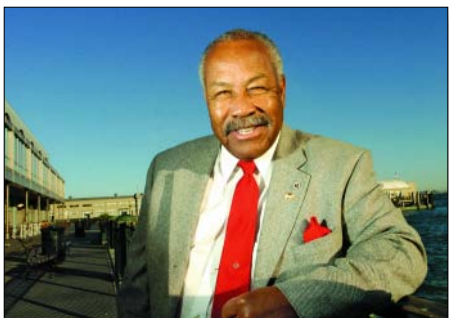
Reilly, who lives in Alameda, joined Muni's shop in 1983 during the systemwide rehabilitation that included replacing all the cable channels and tracks, rebuilding the cable car barn, and repairing the aging fleet of 40 cable cars. Since the rehabilitation, the shop's veteran staff has built 11 more cars.

"Each brand-new car — which is made of wood, glass, brass and steel — takes about 18 months and costs approximately \$1 million to build," explained Harris.

And the work has become more difficult since Reilly retired at the end of 2005; in fact Bob Harris and Muni are still trying to replace him. "What I'm going to miss about Tim is having him as a resource," Harris said. "He was the only pattern maker here for 20 years. I still call him up and ask him how to do things." — Karin Betts



Miriam Gholikely Award: Ernest Bradford — Passionate Advocate for Senior Drivers



Ernest Bradford, a member of MTC's Elderly and Disabled Advisory Committee, spearheaded the first regionwide Summit on Older Drivers.

Ernest Bradford is a quiet leader and advocate who in recent years has concentrated on bringing the plight of older drivers to the attention of MTC and other Bay Area transportation bodies. "Older drivers have equal rights to the road, so long as they can still drive safely," Bradford stressed. "Just because senior citizens don't always come to public meetings to raise heck, their needs and rights shouldn't be overlooked."

As a member of MTC's Elderly and Disabled Advisory Committee (EDAC), Bradford urged MTC to hold the first regionwide Summit on Older Drivers. The daylong forum held last January drew nearly 100 participants and featured a skit authored by Bradford illustrating the challenge of convincing a family member that it may be time to stop driving. A video of the summit will soon be distributed to Bay Area senior and

community organizations.

Now 71, Bradford became interested in transportation and joined the Solano County Paratransit Coordinating Council (PCC) in 2001 after retiring from consecutive careers in the military and public service. He chaired the PCC in 2002–2003, and at the same time joined EDAC. With both groups, he has focused on the issue of seniors and driving.

"Most people want a fair shake, and they deserve the chance to fight for that fair shake," explained Bradford, who experienced discrimination and narrow limitations firsthand as an African-American growing up in Texas in the 1940s and '50s. Bradford's fair shake began when he joined

the Marine Corps and "escaped" the south in 1953. Twenty-one years, two wars and numerous military awards later, he retired from the Corps and worked first for the Veterans Administration, and then for Contra Costa County in veteran services, and finally as a governor's appointee to the State Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs.

This summer Bradford retired from his seats on both the PCC and EDAC in order to spend more time with his wife Jackie, and to continue restoring several antique cars he owns. "But," he warned with a sparkle in his eyes, "that doesn't mean that I'm not watching the agendas and still writing letters to the governor!" — Karin Betts



Grand Award: San Francisco Street Renaissance

Co-Winner: Octavia Boulevard/ Hayes Valley Neighborhood Association

As traffic exits Highway 101 in San Francisco and flows across Market Street onto the new Octavia Boulevard, motorists suddenly realize they are passing through a genuine neighborhood — a cheerful mix of colorful buildings bordering a human-scale, four-lane street lined with poplar and elm trees and old-fashioned lampposts.

Such a friendly welcome to this part of San Francisco was not always so. For decades, historic Hayes Valley was marred by a double-deck freeway that left sad, shadowed buildings, empty lots and crime in its wake — and sliced the neighborhood in half.

Today, the five-block-long Octavia Boulevard is a triumph of urban transportation planning that works both as a high-speed thoroughfare and a quiet pedestrian street. Completed in September 2005, Octavia Boulevard also marks another victory in San Francisco's historic and ongoing "freeway revolt." The success of the roadway is due to 16 years of hard work, relentless determination and imagination on the part of neighborhood residents, urban planners, elected officials, and San Francisco Department of Public Works planners and engineers — as well as to an unplanned natural catastrophe.

The "boulevard battle" began in 1989 when the Loma Prieta earthquake knocked out a portion of the double-deck Central Freeway that extended from Highway 101 across Market and north across Hayes Valley, with ramps at Gough, Franklin, Fell and Oak streets. In 1992, three years after the earthquake, Caltrans razed



Octavia Boulevard replaced a double-deck freeway, and through clever design serves as both a thoroughfare and quiet neighborhood street.

the most damaged portion of the freeway, from the Fell and Oak streets ramps north.

That same year, the Board of Supervisors made it city policy not to rebuild any new above-ground ramps for the freeway north of Fell Street.

With a good part of the ugly freeway vanished from overhead, Hayes Valley residents could see the light, and little by little their neighborhood began to rejuvenate. Caltrans, however, had determined that the rest of the freeway was worth saving, and in 1996 began tearing down the remaining double-deck roadway, in anticipation of rebuilding a safer single deck. At the same time, a city



Octa

Caltrans Wins Demolition "Super Bowl"



A careful balance is maintained between creation and destruction as the new approach takes shape just a few feet from homes and offices in downtown San Francisco.

For Caltrans to replace a one-mile stretch of freeway is not a big deal. But when the freeway is located in the middle of densely populated San Francisco, connects to the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge, has three on/off ramps and carries 260,000-plus vehicles a day, the project takes on another dimension.

The Bay Bridge West Approach seismic retrofit is part of the overall Bay Bridge Seismic Safety Project and one of the most complex and daunting projects in Caltrans' history. The entire one-mile stretch, bounded by Fifth Street and the bridge anchorage on Beale Street, is in the process of being completely torn down and replaced. The work must be done with minimal disruption of heavy traffic and within inches or feet of apartment buildings and offices.

The six-year project, scheduled from 2003 to 2009, consists of a series of elaborately planned demolition and construction projects. Called "retrofit by replacement," the work entails building a temporary structure, rerouting vehicles to it, demolishing the old structure, and beginning work on the new one. When the new structure is built, vehicles are rerouted again, and the temporary structure ultimately demolished.

"It is a 10,000-piece puzzle," said West Approach Project Manager Ken Terpstra, "and requires a unique combination of design, structural, construction and traffic engineers to put it all together."

The greatest challenge of the entire project occurred on Labor Day weekend 2006, when Caltrans closed the eastbound Bay Bridge for 77 hours in order to demolish 1,000 feet of the upper deck bridge approach and remove 10,000 cubic yards of concrete.

"There was a huge amount of planning," said Construction Manager Dennis Turchon. "We had to sell the concept (of the Labor Day weekend closure) to the governor, the Legislature, the CHP, the city and county of San Francisco, and many other decision-makers. We had to know if BART could run 24 hours, if ferry service could be expanded and whether the contractor could do the job in one weekend. This was the Super Bowl of demolitions."

"It was a tremendous PR risk if we didn't succeed," added Caltrans Public Information Officer Bart Ney. "There was no plan to follow. So we developed one. First, we showed the media what we were going to do, which made their jaws drop. Second, we went door-to-door with flyers for the quarter-million people who live and work in the South of Market neighborhood. We also visited virtually every Bay Area city to let them know the artery wouldn't be available over Labor Day weekend. We had to get the message out every way possible."

At 4:23 a.m. the Tuesday after Labor Day, the first cars came through. "We were 37 minutes early, and we had won the Super Bowl," Turchon said. — Marjorie Blackwell





A new park, named for neighborhood activist Patricia Walkup, provides a welcome oasis of open space.

task force proposed a street-level boulevard to replace the five blocks of freeway north of Market. Hayes Valley residents recognized a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to regain their neighborhood and supported the boulevard concept.

In 1997, residents on the west side of San Francisco put an initiative on the city ballot to rebuild the Central Freeway. They argued that a boulevard would cause massive traffic backups at Market Street and effectively cut off access to the Haight, Sunset and Richmond districts. The measure narrowly won, but freeway proponents underestimated the determination of Hayes Valley residents. In 1998, the boulevard

supporters collected 18,000 signatures and put their own initiative on the ballot. It, too, won. In 1999, both sides put measures before the voters. This time, the boulevard won, and the freeway supporters conceded. Three years later, in 2002, Caltrans demolished the remaining part of the Central Freeway, and the freeway fight was finally over.

According to Paul Olsen, president of the Hayes Valley Neighborhood Association, "We wanted to give people back a part of San Francisco and find a better way of moving traffic."

The concept for Octavia Boulevard was the work of two University of California, Berkeley, planning professors, Allan Jacobs and Elizabeth Macdonald. Their design, modeled after the boulevards of Paris and other European cities, is intended to meet the needs of crosstown drivers as well as local traffic.

The boulevard connects Highway 101 with the city and allows through traffic to flow with little interference. Four central lanes of fast-moving traffic — two in each direction — are divided by a planted median. On either side of the central roadway — and separated from it by additional landscaped medians — are more intimately scaled narrow streets for local traffic that buffer residents from the through traffic. Several vacant lots along Octavia that once were part of the freeway right-of-way are planned by the city as sites for some 900 units of transit-oriented housing.

At the end of Octavia, where westbound through traffic turns left onto Fell Street, a new block-long park extends between Fell and Hayes streets. Named in honor of the late Patricia Walkup, founder of the Hayes Valley Neighborhood Association, this grassy park is a gathering place for locals and a welcome oasis of open space. — Marjorie Blackwell

David Tannehill Special Employee Award: Jaimie Levin and AC Transit Taking the Hy-Road



Jaimie Levin shows off one of the Van Hool state-of-the-art, zero-emission, fuel-cell buses at AC Transit's hydrogen energy station in Oakland.

Jaimie Levin is a man on a mission. As AC Transit's enthusiastic director of Alternative Fuels Policy and Marketing, he is leading the nation's foremost hydrogen fuel-cell demonstration project. It is a remarkable private-public partnership that has raised more than \$21 million in grants and contributions to build one of the most technologically advanced demonstrations of its type in the world. AC Transit has spearheaded the production of five state-of-the-art fuel-cell buses, with three now operating — quietly and with zero emissions — on the streets of East Bay cities. Another is in service with SunLine Transit in Thousand Palms, Calif., and another will soon be operating in Hartford, Conn.

AC Transit and its partners also have built two hydrogen energy stations, located in Richmond and Oakland. A third, solar-powered unit is being planned for AC Transit's Emeryville operating division. In partnership with Hyundai-Kia Motor Company, AC Transit's mail delivery staff and transit road supervisors also operate a fleet of zero-emission fuel cell cars (six as of October 2006, and 12 by July 2007).

"Jaimie Levin made this project happen

by his enthusiasm and his ability to work with partners," said AC Transit General Manager Rick Fernandez. "He lives and breathes fuel cells."

The AC Transit HyRoad Project began in 1999 when Levin experienced a prototype hydrogen fuel-cell bus on loan to the AC District. "I saw the future," he said, "and that led to the start of a very aggressive fundraising program." Levin also facilitated creation of an extensive partnership that brought together 28 public agencies and private organizations. He especially applauds Van Hool Bus, UTC Power and ISE Corporation for coming together to design and produce the fuel-cell buses, and Chevron Corporation for building AC's main hydrogen energy station in Oakland.

"It will take five to 10 years to become commercially viable," he said, "but it's time to get started. The immediate returns to the communities we serve are significant quality of life enhancements to our densely populated service area. The only emission from the buses is pure steam, and the only noise is from the tires on the road and the gentle sound of electric motors."

— Marjorie Blackwell



Peter Tannen: Right Person at the Right Time

When Peter Tannen was hired in 1992 as San Francisco's first Bicycle Program manager, the city had about two miles of unconnected bike lanes and no overall bicycle plan or network. By the time he retired in early 2006, San Francisco could boast 43 miles of bike lanes, a 200-mile bike route network, some 3,000 bike route signs and 1,500 bike racks for over 3,000 bicycles. The number of city commute bicyclists had more than doubled, while the number of injury and fatality bicycle collisions in the city decreased about 30 percent. "I would say the improvement is quantum," said Bond Yee, executive director of the city's Department of Parking and Traffic.

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, San Francisco has the highest percentage of commuters who bike to work in cities between 500,000 and 1 million residents, including such bicycle-friendly cities as Seattle and Portland, Ore.

If ever there were a right person at the right time for a job, it's Peter Tannen, a transportation planner and lifetime cyclist who pedaled across the United States, has biked to work since the 1970s, regularly rides 60 miles on weekends and does not own a car.

When he began the job, the city had a very small budget and no staff for the bicycle program. "I realized I couldn't do much with the small amount of money," he said. "So I spent time applying for grants to fund projects and build up staff." He also supervised development of the city's first bicycle plan.

As he routinely bicycled around San Francisco, Peter noticed that many catch basin drain grates were oriented in the wrong



Peter Tannen stands near one of San Francisco's many bicycle lanes that he helped create as the city's first Bicycle Program manager.

direction for bicyclists. So he secured a grant to replace them. In order to locate and mark all these grates on a map, he also began his own campaign to bicycle every street in San Francisco. "It took a couple of years to do it," he said, "but I saw parts of the city I had never seen before."

Peter credits the Board of Supervisors, the city's Department of Parking and Traffic, the San Francisco Bicycle Advisory Committee and Bicycle Coalition, and Bicycle Program staff (which now number seven) with moving the city's bicycle program to where it is today. "Everyone has been very supportive," he said.

Although he's retired, Peter has not given up bicycle advocacy. "I would like to see more bicyclists in San Francisco and more bike lanes," he said. "While there is greater awareness of bicyclists in the city, I hope to see more acceptance of bicycling as a transportation mode because it's much more convenient and economical than driving."

When he's not bicycling around the city or up to the top of Twin Peaks, Peter spends time planning his next vacation — a bicycle trip through the Canadian Rockies.

— Marjorie Blackwell



Doris W. Kahn Accessible Transportation Award: Heart of the Valley, Services for Seniors, Inc.

With the help of Heart of the Valley, Services for Seniors, Inc., this year's winner of the Doris Kahn Award for Accessible Transportation, hundreds of seniors in western Santa Clara County are able to live independent lives in their homes as long as possible. Celebrating its 19th year of service, Heart of the Valley (HOV) relies on over 120 volunteers who provide escorted transportation and other services to more than 700 seniors.

With transportation as the greatest need, HOV volunteers drive seniors to and from medical, business and other appointments, shopping trips, errands, and social events. But their services don't stop there. HOV volunteers also write down instructions from doctors, push grocery carts, carry and load packages, talk with salespeople, and make sure their clients get to scheduled appointments on time and locate needed services. According to one HOV client, Rose Cornbleet, "The service has helped me tremendously. You're right with somebody, and they stay with you the whole time. I feel very fortunate to have Heart of the Valley."

In 2005, HOV volunteers logged a total of 33,000 miles for their clients, donating not only their time, but also their cars and gas. While HOV accepts donations, it does not charge for its services. Stan Zecha, a retired Lockheed Martin budget analyst



Joan Moeller (left) is one of 120 Heart of the Valley volunteers who use their own cars to give rides to seniors. With her is client Georgie Dugre.

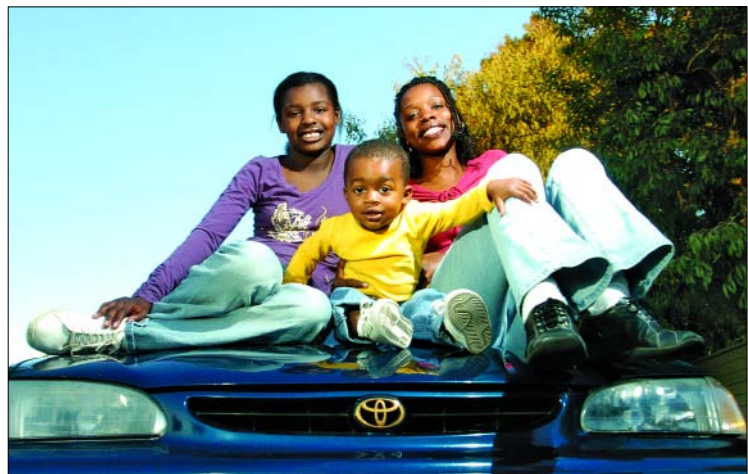
and systems analyst, has been an HOV volunteer for eight years. "I like to help people, and Heart of the Valley is a great organization," he said. "It's very rewarding."

Heart of the Valley's philosophy is to promote self-reliance in seniors and to foster a positive, proactive attitude — while warding off social isolation and postponing the day when seniors have to move to an assisted living facility. HOV volunteers offer new connections with the community that bring spirit and meaning to everyday life, and a sense of well-being that benefits mental and physical health. "With seniors, the number one concern is health, and the number two concern is transportation," said Heart of the Valley Executive Director Glenda Cresap. "The escort transportation we provide is crucial to the seniors in our program."

— Marjorie Blackwell



**Ways to Work Family Loan Program:
Helping Families Transition From Welfare to Work**



Rosetta Fort's Toyota Corolla, purchased with a Ways to Work auto loan, has helped her provide for her children, Jazra (left) and Justus (middle).

Two years ago, Redwood City resident Rosetta Fort was seven months pregnant with her second child, didn't own a car and could not qualify for a loan because of a poor credit history. She was constantly on SamTrans buses, taking her 8-year-old daughter to and from school and getting herself to doctors' appointments. "It was getting really hectic," she said.

Then she saw a church bulletin about the Ways to Work Family Loan Program run by the Family Service Agency of San Mateo County. The single mom qualified for a low-interest loan and bought a used Toyota right before her son was born. Today, Fort says that owning a car has changed her life dramatically, allowing her to take care of her children and to take a second job because she has reliable transportation.

The first of its kind in California, the program provides 4 percent interest loans of up to \$4,000 to struggling families — 84 percent of participants are single mothers — for the purchase of a used car. The program began in 1998 by offering a broad spectrum of services including essential child-care and deposits for housing, but now dedicates itself to providing loans for auto purchases and repairs.

"We've found that the best way to help families become self-sufficient is to get them into an automobile," said Carlos Valenzuela, the program's director. "Families typically jeopardize their employment because of transportation issues. The costs and complications of transit are often a barrier, so parents stay closer to home and sacrifice possible income."

The program requires that loan recipients attend a personal financial management class, and then helps them to find a reliable used car. "It's an educational experience for them," explained Valenzuela.

Since its inception, the Ways to Work Family Loan Program has helped over 200 families and approved loans totaling \$700,000. The average loan recipient's income increases by 17 percent over the first six months, with a 92 percent reduction in missed work time. And, the average borrower's use of public assistance drops by 40 percent within two years.

Of all the loans given since 1998, 75 percent have already been fully repaid. Valenzuela attributes the program's amazing success with a high-risk population to the relationships that are built as part of the process.

— Karin Betts

**Gunn High School's GO-FAST Program:
Taking on Teen Car Culture**



Students at Gunn High School are doing their part — by carpooling, bicycling and riding transit — to reduce congestion on local roads.

Almost nothing is harder to change than a teenager's mind, especially on how "cool" it is to drive your own car to school. Not surprisingly, in some affluent communities, the crush of high school commuters is creating negative impacts — congested streets around schools, compromised safety for pedestrians and cyclists, and clogged parking lots, not to mention increased automobile emissions.

Gunn High School in Palo Alto faced this problem head-on after a school survey in 2002 showed that more than 60 percent of its students were arriving at school in a car. The school community came together to form the Gunn Organization for Alternative Safe Transportation, or GO-FAST, under the direction of the student activities director. GO-FAST committed itself to taking on "teen car culture" and creating incentives for walking, biking, carpooling and using public transit.

In 2003, GO-FAST raised parking fees and restructured the school's parking permit policies to favor carpoolers; increased bus ridership by subsidizing Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) monthly passes with the money from parking permit sales; laid a new sidewalk

and installed bike racks; and gave treats and gifts to cyclists through a Pedaling for Prizes program. GO-FAST also made information about commute alternatives readily available to parents and students in back-to-school packets, a monthly newsletter and e-mail updates.

The effects were immediate. The number of solo student drivers dropped precipitously, while carpooling shot up and traffic began to shrink. In 2003, 85 students reported they were part of a carpool while 250 students drove to school alone. By 2005 the numbers were reversed — with 245 students in carpools and only 83 students regularly driving to school solo. (A recent law that restricts new drivers from transporting passengers who are under 20 years of age could reduce the number of Gunn carpoolers.)

"It's good for the environment; I mean, that's kind of the point of carpooling," said Student Body President Nikki Dodani. "Plus it's fun — you get to be with your friends and talk and listen to music and sing songs!"

"This is a joint venture between the school and the community," said school Principal Noreen Likins. "I sincerely hope that other schools start similar programs."

— Karin Betts

Calendar

Continued from front page

**THURSDAY
DECEMBER 7, 2006**

10:30 am
Elderly and Disabled Advisory Committee

**FRIDAY
DECEMBER 8, 2006**

9:30 am
Planning Committee*
9:45 am
Operations Committee*
10 am
Legislation Committee*
1 pm
Bay Area Partnership Board*
Location to be determined

**MONDAY
DECEMBER 11, 2006**

2 pm
TransLink® Operating Group
BART, 300 Lakeside Drive, Oakland

**TUESDAY
DECEMBER 12, 2006**

3:30 pm
Minority Citizens Advisory Committee

**WEDNESDAY
DECEMBER 13, 2006**

9:30 am
Bay Area Toll Authority
Oversight Committee*
9:45 am
Administration Committee*
10 am
Programming and Allocations Committee*
12:30 pm
MTC Advisory Council

**THURSDAY
DECEMBER 14, 2006**

9:30 am
Regional Pedestrian Committee
MetroCenter, Claremont Conference Room
1 pm
Regional Bicycle Working Group
MetroCenter, Claremont Conference Room

**MONDAY
DECEMBER 18, 2006**

1:30 pm
Partnership Technical Advisory Committee
2 pm
TransLink® Management Group
BART, 300 Lakeside Drive, Oakland

**WEDNESDAY
DECEMBER 20, 2006**

1:30 pm
Bay Area Toll Authority*
1:35 pm
Service Authority for Freeways
and Expressways*
1:40 pm
Metropolitan Transportation Commission*

*Webcast on <www.mtc.ca.gov>.

Note: Dates, times and locations of MTC meetings may change. Please confirm by calling 510.817.5757. Agendas, updated meeting schedules and meeting packets are posted on MTC's Web site: <www.mtc.ca.gov>.

METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION WWW.MTC.CA.GOV

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