

PALO ALTO DAILY NEWS

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May 8, 2003

Simitian bill will cost \$4 per car in county

BY ALYSSA JENKINS
DAILY NEWS CORRESPONDENT

San Mateo County residents may pay an additional \$4 per year to register their vehicles if a bill authored by Assembly member Joe Simitian, D-Palo Alto, is approved.

Assembly Bill 1546 would allow the City/County Association of Governments of San Mateo County to seek public approval to increase vehicle registration fees by as much as \$4 per year.



SIMITIAN

There are an estimated 700,000 vehicles registered in the county.

The additional fee would raise approximately \$2.8 million per year to be used to reduce traffic congestion and storm water pollution within the county.

Supporters of the bill say that the fee increase is necessary to provide consistent funding for much-needed programs. The money raised would come back to San Mateo County, so the motorists who paid the fee would benefit directly from it, supporters say.

"The state and feds keep saying you have to do (clean up the water), but we have little or no revenue sources. What we have to do is going up far faster than our ability to create revenue sources for it," Richard Napier, the executive director of the City/County Association of Governments, said.

Money split

Money raised by the fee increase would be split between reducing storm water pollution and reducing traffic congestion within the county.

Possible measures to reduce traffic congestion include improved accident

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removal systems, new park-and-ride lots to encourage public-transportation use and increased ramp metering to improve the flow of traffic.

An estimated 75 percent of all stormwater pollution is generated by motor vehicles, roads, highways and parking lots, so it is logical that vehicle fees pay for measures to ease pollution, supporters argue. Reducing water pollution may be as simple as increasing street-sweeping, a program that could be funded by the additional revenue.

Currently in the Committee on Appropriations, the bill is supported by the City/County Association of Government of San Mateo County, which includes all of the county's 20 cities, each of which has an elected member serving on the board.

The bill has numerous hurdles to leap before it can become law, not the least of which is getting Gov. Gray Davis' signature. The governor has been hesitant to sign larger regional issues, Simitian said, but he remains hopeful.

If the bill becomes law, it will then be up to the county association to hold public hearings to create programs designed to reduce congestion and stormwater pollution. Each program must have a budget and clear objectives before the fee can be approved.

Redwood City
Menlo Park

The Examiner

December 13, 2004

Drivers to pay for cleanup

Pilot program rids toxic water with \$4 registration

BY JUSTIN NYBERG
Staff Writer

REDWOOD CITY — Vehicle owners in San Mateo County will be the first in the state to pay extra for the cleanup of the toxic water pollution caused by driving, under a program approved by a coalition of local governments Thursday night.

The City/County Association of Governments approved adding an extra \$4 fee to vehicle registrations for local drivers to pay for storm water pollution control and traffic problems.

"The people that pay the fee benefit from the programs created by the fee," said Richard Napier, director of CCAG.

The program, authored by Assemblyman Joe Simitian as AB 1546 in 2003, is the first of its kind in California.

Chemical-laden runoff from local roadways is one of the largest sources of pollution in the Bay and its tributaries. Brake dust, oil, radiator fluid and other substances are often washed by rainfall into storm basins, which drain to the Bay.

The fees collected from drivers will pay for street sweeping pro-



EXAMINER FILE PHOTO

Street cleaning for services, paid for with the added vehicle fee, will prevent water pollution.

grams, storm inlet cleaning and auto repair shop inspections.

The fund will also pay for shuttle programs, timed stoplights and resurfacing to reduce wear and tear on vehicles and congestion.

Half of the money raised by the new fee will go to local governments to pay for existing programs. The rest will go toward new, countywide programs.

For the program to go into

effect, representatives from at least two-thirds of the county's cities had to approve the program at Thursday's meeting. CCAG is comprised of one elected official from each of the county's 20 cities as well as a county representative.

Strict federal regulations on the amount of storm water pollution the area can legally allow to flow into the Bay have placed major funding burdens

on local governments.

"This is a way to help address it. It's not going to solve it, but it's going to help," Napier said.

The law will go into effect Jan. 1, and the Department of Motor Vehicles will begin collecting the fee on July 1.

Since it is a pilot program, the program will cease in January 2009 unless the state Legislature decides to renew it.

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REDWOOD CITY DAILY NEWS

November 12, 2008

Vehicle fee up for vote

An extra \$4 charge tacked onto the annual vehicle registration fees paid by San Mateo County Motorists would be extended through 2012 under a proposal a countywide board will consider Thursday.

Since it was created by state legislation in 2004, the \$4 fee has funded programs for either traffic relief or stormwater pollution prevention – resurfacing roads, re-timing traffic signals, sweeping streets and managing the runoff from parking lots.

With the charge expiring at the end of the year, the board for the City/County Association of Governments is set to extend it for four more years for vehicles registered in the county, generating about \$2.7 million per year.

The reauthorization vote comes after a nearly two-year effort by state Sen. Joe Simitian, D-Palo Alto – who sponsored the 2004 bill that created the fee as a pilot project when he was in the Assembly – to push a renewal bill through to the governor's desk.

Simitian sponsored a bill last year to continue the \$4 charge until 2019, but Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger vetoed it, saying he would consider a shorter extension if proponents could show the program has been successful.

So county officials compiled data showing 130 miles of roads were reconstructed, 157 traffic signals were replaced, 110,175 miles of streets were swept and 16,787 storm drains and catch basins were cleaned in the program's first three years. The money is also helping fund a hydrogen-powered commuter shuttle that the association is leasing from Ford as a demonstration project.

IF YOU GO

WHAT: City/County Association of Governments meeting

WHEN: Thursday, 7 p.m.

WHERE: San Mateo County Transit District building, second floor auditorium, 1250 San Carlos Ave., San Carlos

WHAT: Extension of a \$4 vehicle registration fee through 2012.

Over the objections of several groups, Schwarzenegger signed the new version of the bill in September to extend the fee for four years instead of 10.

The Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association considered Simitian's bill one of several dozen "threats to taxpayers" on its Web site, saying the authorization of the \$4 charge without voter approval violates Proposition 13.

The California New Car Dealers Association also urged the governor to veto the extension, saying the California motorists are "already overburdened with hidden vehicle fees."

The California vehicle registration fee starts at \$34 per year but motorists also pay several other add-on fees to fund air quality districts, smog abatement, abandoned vehicle removal, the California Highway Patrol, call boxes and theft deterrence. "With the current poor economic climate in our state, we believe there continues to be no good reason to further increase the cost of vehicle ownership in California, absent a comprehensive statewide plan to address global warming and criteria pollution," wrote Brian Mass, the director of government affairs for the association, in a letter to Schwarzenegger.

But Rich Napier, C/CAG's executive director, said the funds are "a drop in the bucket" compared to the expensive impact cars have on infrastructure. He said it makes sense to charge motorists for the costs associated with driving.

"If you don't drive a motor vehicle, you don't have to pay it and you don't have the impact to the streets and roads, you don't have the impact to water," Napier said. "To me it's a very simple thing. It's like paying for parking."

Half of the funds are distributed to C/CAG while the rest go to governments throughout the county for programs that address traffic congestion of stormwater pollution.

Bill Dickenson, a Belmont council member and member of the C/CAG board, said he is fiscally conservative but believes the \$4 charge is "an appropriate levy or tax to continue."