

MCL

From: MCL
Sent: Tuesday, March 09, 2010 3:35 PM
To: 'Steve Kinsey (skinsey@co.marlin.ca.us)'
Cc: Elena Belsky (Elena_scmg@comcast.net); 'bsalzman@worldnet.att.net'; Larry Minikes (lminikes@avstim.com)
Subject: SB 83 – Proposed TAM Ballot Measure: Vehicle Registration Fee (VRF)



March 9, 2010

Supervisor Steve Kinsey, Chairman
Transportation Authority of Marin (TAM)
750 Lindero St., Suite 200
San Rafael, CA 94901

SUBJECT: SB 83 – Proposed TAM Ballot Measure: Vehicle Registration Fee (VRF)

Dear Steve,

Marin Conservation League is aware that TAM is considering a plan that would place an initiative on the November ballot for a \$10.00 annual registration fee for each vehicle registered in Marin County, as allowed by SB 83. We note that the TAM Board voted to proceed with Phase 2 of the carefully crafted plan. This phase instructs Staff to proceed with developing the Expenditure Plan as required by SB 83.

All totaled, TAM will be spending \$200,000 to organize the material for the election, several thousands of dollars to cover costs of the election, and an ongoing administration charge from the Board of Equalization. At the current level of vehicle registrations in Marin, the \$10.00 fee would provide a revenue stream to TAM of about \$2 million per year.

As you are aware, an issue of great importance to Marin residents – and all Californians – is the California State Parks Initiative, also slated for the November ballot. The initiative will establish a State Parks and Wildlife Conservation Trust Fund, to be funded by revenues from an annual \$18.00 surcharge on registration of all California vehicles (excepting large commercial vehicles, mobile homes, and permanent trailers).

The advantages of this plan are numerous. Eighty-five percent (85%) of the trust fund would keep State Parks open, finance a backlog or more than \$1 billion in deferred maintenance from past budget reductions, and support ongoing state park operations. Fifteen per cent (15%) would provide support for ocean and wildlife conservation programs statewide. Establishing an independent funding source for state parks would also free up approximately \$ 130 million in the General Fund for other uses, such as education. And all occupants of cars with California vehicle registration would receive free day-use admission to any state park.

The State Parks initiative has received very favorable support in numerous polls. It is anticipated that strong support in Marin will help carry the issue state wide. State parks are a valued asset for Marin County: Marconi Center, China Camp, Mount Tamalpais, Tomales Bay, Angel Island, Samuel P. Taylor, and Olompali State Parks are heavily used by all Marinites, including TAM Board members and their families, in addition to millions of Bay Area, national, and international visitors. State parks have a significant positive impact on local economies. A recent study found that,

statewide, park visitors spend an average of \$57.63 in surrounding communities per visit. Every dollar the state spends on state parks generates another \$2.35 for California's treasury.

We believe that one governmental agency, like TAM, should not act to jeopardize passage of the Parks initiative at this time, but should fully recognize the importance and timing of two initiatives that could compete for voter support, to the detriment of both. TAM has been successful in obtaining State and Federal funds for transit projects and operations, but should not contribute to ballot clutter that could harm other objectives that are also important to Marin. Note in particular that Marin's share of State Parks funds will be enhanced by the turnover of spending and employment to our economy.

Setting priorities for ballot measures has been done in the past. In 2008 the Open Space sales tax measure was postponed so as to not jeopardize the SMART tax measure. **We urge TAM to take full account of current priorities and postpone the TAM Vehicle Registration Fee ballot initiative.**

Sincerely,

Nona Dennis

President

Marin Conservation League

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