

Transportation, Health, and the Environment

Improving Mobility, Health, and Quality of Life



Alameda County's half-cent transportation sales tax expands transportation options to improve mobility, health, and quality of life. Alameda CTC funds healthy transportation alternatives such as public transit, shuttles for seniors and people with disabilities, and biking and walking, in addition to highway improvements that reduce congestion.

Alameda CTC delivers roadway and highway improvements and transit services that reduce congestion and pollution, and improve air quality. Keeping roads in good repair, installing express lanes, and providing better access to public transit are just a few ways the half-cent transportation sales tax increases safety, reduces congestion, and helps protect the environment.

By law, Alameda County must contribute to the regional reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. About 36 percent of greenhouse gas emissions come from transportation sources. Alameda CTC is working toward reducing emissions by funding public transit operations and expanding alternative transportation choices.

Alameda CTC improves access to jobs and housing. By funding transit-oriented developments designed to maximize access to public transit, housing, and jobs, Alameda CTC encourages vibrant communities that support healthy lifestyles.

HIDDEN HEALTH COSTS OF TRANSPORTION CHOICES

Over 80 percent of the personal trips people make in Alameda County are by private vehicles and about 20 percent are by transit, walking, or bike riding.¹ However, there are hidden health costs related to these transportation choices.

Nearly 52 percent of the people living in Alameda County (2007 data) are estimated to be obese or overweight,² caused, in part, by sedentary lifestyles. A large number of people drive to their destinations rather than walk or bike. Many neighborhoods lack safe sidewalks and trails, which diminishes the opportunity for everyday physical activity.

The estimated cost to Alameda County for overweight citizens, obesity, and physical inactivity in 2006 was nearly \$2.2 billion,³ nearly double the amount reported in 2000. Half of the total amount was spent on health care, and half came from lost productivity. Employers and taxpayers share much of the economic costs associated with poor health.⁴ Therefore, promoting opportunities for healthy physical activity benefits everyone.

TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENTS CREATE HEALTHY OPTIONS

The Alameda County Transportation Commission (CTC) is addressing these hidden health costs by strategic expenditures to improve the County's transportation network and programs. Over the past 10 years, Alameda County's half-cent transportation sales tax has generated over a billion dollars for transportation improvements.⁵ Investments in Alameda County transportation have provided residents and businesses with many benefits: convenience and comfort, economic well-being, access, mobility, and independence.

A healthy community promotes healthy people by ensuring safe places to walk, run, or bike. A healthy community has clean air and water, and protects the environment. Alameda CTC is dedicated to developing healthy communities. Since 2002, it has distributed over \$40 million (5 percent per year of the overall half-cent transportation sales tax revenues) to programs and projects that make Alameda County more walkable and bikeable.⁶ Among other projects, over the past 10 years, local agencies and jurisdictions have used these moneys to repair or install:

- 134 miles of sidewalk
- pedestrian crossing improvements at 72 intersections
- 25 miles of bicycle lanes
- 56 bike parking spaces in bike lockers
- 158 crosswalks
- almost 2,000 curb ramps
- 602 bike racks.⁷
- traffic signals at 62 intersections

More people are walking and biking. Between 2002 and 2011, Alameda County realized a 47 percent increase in walkers and a 75 percent increase in cyclists.⁸ Not only does more walking and biking improve people's health, but it relieves congestion on our roads, saves fuel costs, and reduces vehicle emissions.



A New Fit Family

To help their 85-year-old father, Frank Daniels, become more mobile, daughters Connie Machado, 61, and Elaine Darby, 57, enrolled with him in a 16-week “Walk This Way” fitness and education program for seniors in Fremont, Newark, and Union City funded by Alameda County’s half-cent transportation sales tax.

Before beginning Walk This Way, Frank Daniels could barely walk. “I couldn’t go grocery shopping or mow my lawn. I even had difficulty just getting up and down out of my chair, and I was falling all the time.”

Frank is now thriving. “Since I joined the program, I have improved 100 percent. I have strengthened my leg muscles so much I haven’t fallen once. I can mow my grass and go out shopping with my wife. With the exercises I learned through the program, I was even able to get a handle on my diabetes—dropping my blood sugar from about 175 down to around 100, and eliminating one of my diabetes medications!” And Connie and Elaine liked the program so much that they now lead similar classes for other seniors.

Walk This Way is one of many programs funded by the half-cent transportation sales tax to improve the mobility and health of elderly and disabled Alameda County residents.

REDUCING CONGESTION IMPROVES AIR QUALITY AND HEALTH

As a central hub between San Francisco, San Jose, and the Central Valley, Alameda County fulfills a special role in regional, statewide, and international transportation. It is home to six interstate freeways that transect the county, seven transit operators, hundreds of local lane miles, and an international gateway with the Port of Oakland and the Oakland International Airport.

As a result, Alameda County bears a disproportionately large share of traffic congestion in Northern California. While 20 percent of the Bay Area’s population lives in Alameda County, nearly 40 percent of the region’s freeway congestion occurs here.⁹

Five of the top 10 congestion hot spots in the nine-county Bay Area are located in Alameda County.¹⁰

Motor vehicles — particularly cars and light-duty trucks — are the biggest source of air pollution in the Bay Area, contributing about 36 percent of the greenhouse gas emission inventory.¹¹ The longer a vehicle sits in traffic, the more pollutants it sends into the air.

Over the past 10 years, the county’s half-cent transportation sales tax has funded major capital improvements to the county’s streets and highways to reduce congestion and thereby improve air quality, which has resulted in dramatic improvements at certain traffic hot-spots. For example, widening the segment of I-238 between Castro Valley and Hayward from 4 lanes to 6 has greatly reduced congestion.

LESSENING THE TRIGGERS FOR ASTHMA

Vehicle exhaust contains many toxic and carcinogenic compounds. Studies have shown that air pollution is harmful to health, and is even associated with premature death. It can trigger or worsen asthma (an inflammatory lung disease), allergies, and bronchitis, especially among children and the elderly.¹²

In 2005, almost one in four children in Alameda County were diagnosed with asthma, compared to an average of one in five children statewide.¹³ Each year in Alameda County, children 5 to 17 years old visit hospital emergency rooms over 1,700 times.¹⁴

Children living in North Oakland, Emeryville, West Oakland, and downtown Oakland visited emergency rooms for asthma at a rate two to three-times higher than the overall county rate,¹⁵ in part because of proximity of the I-80 and I-880 corridors and concentrated industrial land use.

Over the past 10 years, the county’s half-cent sales tax has funded several highway improvement projects along I-80 and I-880, including construction of the I-880/Washington Avenue Interchange improvements, preliminary scoping of the I-880/Broadway–Jackson Interchange improvements, design of the I-880 North Safety and Operational improvements, and design of the I-80 Integrated Corridor Mobility project, among many other important highway projects throughout the county.

REDUCING GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS PROTECTS THE ENVIRONMENT

Scientists believe that greenhouse gases such as water vapor, carbon dioxide, ozone, and methane affect the Earth's climate by trapping heat and holding it like a blanket that surrounds the planet.¹⁷ Scientists also believe that the Earth is warming because of more greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.¹⁸

Supporting the county's transit network is one important way the county's half-cent sales tax effectively helps reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Forty percent of the Bay Area's greenhouse gas emissions—nearly 42 million metric tons a year—come from our cars, trucks, buses, trains, ships, and planes.¹⁹ The Alameda CTC is helping Alameda County comply with California Assembly Bill 32 (AB 32) and California Senate Bill 375 (SB 375), which mandate reductions in greenhouse gas emissions for many sectors.

AB 32, the "Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006," requires a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by the year 2020. SB 375, the "Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008," requires that California communities implement integrated land use, housing, and transportation planning to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Public transportation produces 95 percent less carbon monoxide, 90 percent fewer volatile organic compounds, and about half as much carbon dioxide and nitrogen oxide, per passenger mile, as private vehicles.²⁰ Alameda CTC allocates approximately half of the county's half-cent transportation sales tax toward transit projects and programs.

SUPPORTING TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT

Supporting transit-oriented development is a land-use strategy to enable more people to live closer to transit hubs, so they don't have to drive their cars as often. Studies show that communities designed with dense residential areas, mixed-use neighborhoods (residential combined with commercial use), and connected streets and paths enjoy better health.²¹

The half-cent transportation sales tax has funded streetscape improvements and bicycle and pedestrian access at several notable projects near transit hubs, including the Bay Street streetscape project in Fremont, the West Oakland 7th Street transit village streetscape, the MacArthur transit hub streetscape improvement project in Oakland, and transportation enhancements at Ashby BART station/Ed Roberts campus in Berkeley.



Safe Routes to Schools

On October 5, 2011, over 70 schools in Alameda County participated in International Walk or Roll to School Day. Alameda County District 4 Supervisor Nate Miley (rear, center in the photo) accompanied kids from Laurel Elementary to school. This special day is organized as part of the countywide Safe Routes to Schools program, which was established in 2007.

Safe Routes to Schools encourages safe walking and biking to school. When more kids walk or bike, traffic congestion and air pollution around schools is reduced. Safe Routes to Schools also inspires kids to stay active and healthy. With safer sidewalks, crossings, and bike lanes, the half-cent transportation sales tax revenues have enabled youth to get to school more safely.

The number of children walking and biking to school is on the rise. In a 2009 survey, 46 percent of children and teens said they walked or biked to school in the previous week, up from 30 percent in 2007.¹⁶ Alameda CTC continues to advance safe walking and biking for students and families to get to school.

TRANSPORTATION IMPROVES OUR HEALTH

About the Half-Cent Sales Tax

In 1986, Alameda County became one of the first counties in California to authorize a voter-approved sales tax, Measure B, for transportation improvements. In 2000, 81.5 percent of Alameda County voters supported transportation again, authorizing a second half-cent transportation sales tax. Through Measure B, Alameda CTC delivers a specific set of voter-approved transportation projects to improve mobility and enrich the lives of Alameda County residents.

About Alameda CTC

Alameda County Transportation Commission was formed in 2010, the result of a merger of the Alameda County Congestion Management Agency (ACCMA) and the Alameda County Transportation Improvement Authority (ACTIA). The resulting agency serves as the county's transportation planning, funding, and sales tax authority, providing streamlined methods for project and program delivery. As a result of the merger, taxpayers saved over \$3 million in the agency's first year.

Our mission is to plan, fund, and deliver a broad spectrum of transportation projects and programs that expand access and improve mobility to foster a vibrant and livable Alameda County. Alameda CTC is governed by a 22-member commission of elected officials; five members of the Alameda County Board of Supervisors, representatives from the 14 cities within Alameda County (including two from Oakland), as well as an AC Transit director, and a BART director.

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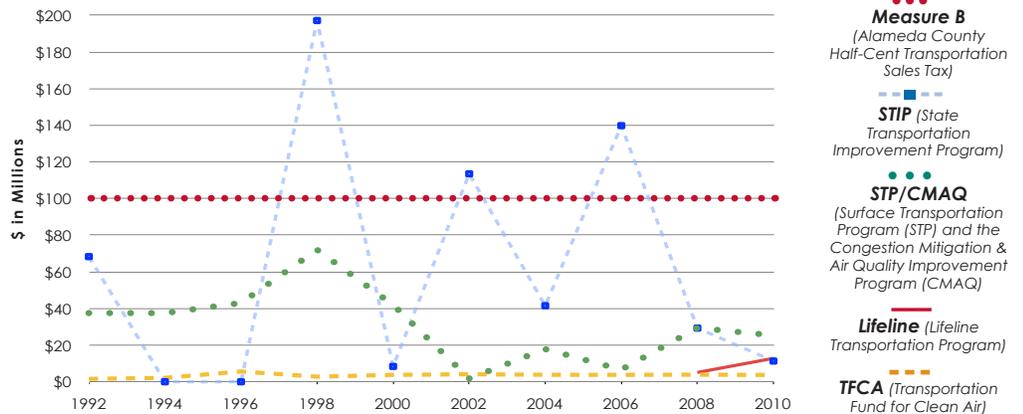
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Alameda CTC takes a two-pronged approach to reducing congestion, and thereby improving air quality. First, it supports safe, convenient, and healthy alternatives to car-based travel, such as transit, walking, and biking. Second, it improves highways and roads to increase road capacity and reduce bottlenecks.

More transportation investments are needed to support a growing population, address legislative mandates to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and support continued improvements in our air and environment. The county's half-cent sales tax is a reliable and consistent way for the county to maintain and improve the transportation network, but it sunsets in 2022.

A new measure to fund a Transportation Expenditure Plan will be on the November 6, 2012 ballot to infuse an additional \$7.8 billion to support jobs, expand mobility, and foster safe and healthy communities in Alameda County. We cannot lose sight of the critical importance of continuing to improve, maintain, and support our vital transportation networks.

Historical Funding Levels for Alameda County Transportation ²²



Alameda CTC has demonstrated that transportation can be improved – with efficiency, transparency, and accountability. In improving transportation, we improve the environment. In improving the environment, we improve peoples' health and quality of life.

Endnotes

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