



METROPOLITAN
TRANSPORTATION
COMMISSION

Agenda Item 6a

Joseph P. Bort MetroCenter
101 Eighth Street
Oakland, CA 94607-4700
TEL 510.817.5700
TDD/TTY 510.817.5769
FAX 510.817.5848
E-MAIL info@mtc.ca.gov
WEB www.mtc.ca.gov

Memorandum

TO: Legislation Committee

DATE: June 5, 2009

FR: Executive Director

RE: AB 497 (Block): High Occupancy Vehicle Lane Occupancy Requirement Exception for Physicians

Description

AB 497 (Block) would allow a licensed physician to obtain a special decal from the California Medical Association (CMA) that would grant them access to high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes as a single-occupant vehicle when traveling in response to an emergency call.

Recommendation: Oppose

Discussion

Since 1959, California has allowed physicians to obtain a special decal that allows them to exceed speed limit laws in rural areas when driving to a medical emergency. While the goal of helping a physician respond to an emergency call as fast as possible is clearly commendable, AB 497 raises a number of serious concerns. For instance, there is no practical way for the California Highway Patrol (CHP) to determine if the vehicle was being driven by one of the state's 35,000 licensed physicians in response to an emergency or by another family member or friend with access to the vehicle. Furthermore, the bill contains no requirement that the decal be renewed, thus creating the potential for it to be used long after the physician has retired, changed careers or sold the vehicle to another party. While federal law only provides HOV lane occupancy exceptions to specified low-emission vehicles, if passed in California, AB 497 could create pressure to revise federal law in the new federal surface transportation act.

For the reasons noted above, we recommend opposing this bill.

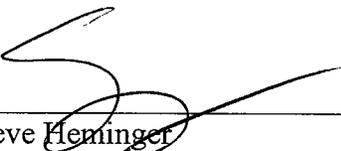
Known Positions

Support

California Medical Association (sponsor)

Oppose

Alameda County Congestion Management Agency
Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District



Steve Heminger