



METROPOLITAN
TRANSPORTATION
COMMISSION

Agenda Item 5

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Memorandum

TO: Legislation Committee

DATE: Feb 1, 2008

FR: Deputy Executive Director, Policy

RE: Freeway Performance Initiative

Description

We have received interest from some legislative staff on a proposed increase to the existing \$1 dollar registration fee paid by motorists in the Bay Area. The fee supports portions of the Call Box and Freeway Service Patrol programs and provides local match for regional projects that utilize federal and state dollars, such as 511-traveler information, arterial signal coordination, and incident management activities.

Recommendation: Amend MTC's 2008 Legislation Program to include an effort to increase the SAFE \$1 vehicle license fee.

Discussion

The Commission adopted a legislative program for 2008 that included a number of new initiatives, some of which would require our seeking bill authors in the legislature. Subsequent to the Commission adopting its 2008 Legislative Program, we have been asked if we are interested in sponsoring legislation to increase the existing \$1 fee for freeway operations. This action is to seek Commission support through our legislative program prior to a bill introduction.

SAFE currently receives \$1 per registered vehicle in the Bay Area, which totals approximately \$6 million per year. This fee has been in place and unchanged since 1986 and in that time has lost over 45 percent of its value. Although we seek to maintain a positive funding balance in this account, its reserve will be depleted within the next few years.

An increase to the existing \$1 vehicle registration fee would not only ensure that all current activities are sustained but would allow a modest beginning toward implementing MTC's proposed freeway performance initiative. The effort would address the many operational strategies to improve our existing freeway system, such as a) expand the popular and cost-effective roving tow trucks that operate on Bay Area freeways; b) complete the detection system needed to monitor freeway conditions; and c) advance the proposal to expand ramp metering on the Bay Area freeway system.

Equally important, an increase in the vehicle registration fee will be needed to continue providing the local match that leverages state and federal dollars.

At an estimated capital cost of \$600 million, the freeway performance program is the most cost-effective strategy being evaluated in our long range plan to reduce traffic congestion and to minimize the impact of traffic incidents.

We propose consideration of amending MTC's 2008 Legislation Program to include an effort to increase the SAFE \$1 vehicle license fee.

Therese W. McMillan