

Mailbox: June 1, 2006

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BART Right-of-way

Robert S. Allen

BART Director, 1974-1988, Livermore

In your March 23 issue you wrote: "Establishing the route (for "bus rapid transit") would preserve the BART right-of-way and also help to demonstrate whether the public was willing to use transit as an option to the automobile."

The planned "bus rapid transit" would follow Stanley Blvd. and crowded Pleasanton city streets. It has no bearing on preserving a freeway median strip for BART. It also would be slow, circuitous, and costly to implement and operate. LAVTA (Wheels) refuses to even look at a freeway-oriented bus that would attract commuters by meeting all BART trains during the AM and PM commute hours.

Like the funded ACCMA I-580 EB HOV lane, which wastes precious transportation dollars serving mainly Central Valley carpoolers and few others, it should be scratched from transportation planning.

What we need is a commute bus linking the BART Park and Ride with the station near Hacienda Drive. The \$238,000/year it would cost is a pittance beside the \$60,000,000 EB HOV lane project – and fares should pay all or most of that cost.

The EB HOV lane would have to be torn out when BART comes, adding greatly to the cost of a BART rail extension to Livermore. How much better to combine it with rebuilding the freeway, putting in new heavy duty truck lanes outside the existing ones, converting the existing truck lanes to auto travel, and using the present inside freeway lanes for HOV while reserving a median for BART rail.

Hindsight

Donald F. King, Livermore

Senator John Kerry was a guest on the Meet the Press Show on Sunday, April 9, 2006. He impressed me, gave all the right answers as I see the issues. He said he might try for the Democratic nomination to replace George Bush in the 2008 election.

I voted for him in 2002, mainly because I saw him as a man who would be a force for peace in the world. His post-Vietnam crusade convinced me that he would not hastily resort to military solutions in dealing with our perceived enemies. Had he been elected, we would not be in the Iraq mess today.

I am convinced that Kerry's handlers failed him in 2002. Their strategy for winning was to down play his anti-war temperament and post-Vietnam behavior. Instead, they dredged up the Swift Boat saga to portray him as a warrior, eager to wreak vengeance upon those who carried out the 9/11 attack. To be a peacemaker in the political climate of 2002, they apparently judged, was to be labeled "weak on defense." They must have convinced Kerry that he had to stand up to Bush, who was portrayed as a strong leader in the war he had declared on "terrorism."

Bush's leadership, as exemplified by his preemptive attack on Iraq, has been a terrible catastrophe. Hindsight tells us we need leaders who will not rush to embrace the stupidity of war.

Bike Paths

Jennifer Hosterman

Mayor of Pleasanton

I've long attempted to bring school busing back to our City, in an effort to reduce a.m. and p.m. traffic on City streets, surrounding every school park. I continue to attempt to find a way to support a pilot program, using energy efficient buses, to get an idea as to whether younger parents would feel comfortable putting their little ones on buses.

In the meantime, there may be some other things we can do. For instance, our bike trails system is catch-as-catch-can, starting here, ending there, with little rhyme or reason. I've identified monies in our Countywide Bicycle Plan, which we may be able to use to connect bike trails safely. But, we need your help. Please help us identify those trails which, if connected or improved, would allow you and your family to safely bike from home to school, or work, and back. Tell me exactly where they are, so we can map them, and identify a priority for funding trails improvement.

We know getting out of our cars and on our feet or our bikes is healthy – for us, and for the environment - which can only

improve our quality of life. May 18 is Bike to Work Day 2006. As an incentive, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission has launched a Team Bike Challenge. If interested, visit the Bicycling Section of www.511.org for information on how to register.

In the meantime, e-mail me with your bike trail suggestions, through the City of Pleasanton website, so we can put together funding and begin making those improvements! I look forward to hearing from you.

Sarah Palmer for Zone 7 Board

Dolores Bengtson, Pleasanton

Sarah Palmer is a candidate for the Zone 7 Board of Directors. When you review the candidates' credentials you will find Ms. Palmer eminently qualified to represent the citizens of the area on the Zone 7 Board.

Ms. Palmer possesses a PhD in Biochemistry and serves as a Board Member for Environmental Health and safety for Las Positas College. She is Lead Teacher for the Environmental Science Academy, LLNL and teaches environmental science for the Tri-Valley ROP at Foothill and Livermore High Schools. During the past 10 years she has coordinated several water study projects for her students with Zone 7 staff. Ms. Palmer has considerable knowledge regarding the hydrology of the area and has demonstrated deep interest in water issues. She has the technical background to fully understand the challenges ahead to meet overall water demands while maintaining high quality drinking water. The Zone 7 Board is an important body with tremendous responsibilities that impact us all. Sarah Palmer will bring fresh, new perspectives to the Board with a particular zest for protecting our environment and our water.

I believe Ms. Palmer will contribute substantially to furthering the mission of the Zone 7 Board. I urge you to vote for Sarah Palmer for the Zone 7 Board of Directors.

Incumbent Rapped Over Schools' Failures

William "Bill" Berck (Former county schools superintendent, 1984-1992) Pleasanton

While I know Sheila Jordan to be a wonderful and caring person, it amazes me that some have chosen to endorse her for reelection as the Alameda County superintendent of schools. Either her supporters are unaware or just don't care about the lack of fiscal oversight she has provided county school districts during her watch.

The Alameda County Grand Jury has taken her to task repeatedly in recent years for her lack of fiscal oversight of county school districts; what I believe to be the most significant function of her office. The Grand Jury's 2003-04 report stated, "The Alameda County Superintendent of Schools has not been effective in preventing school districts financial problems from developing into crises." The same report also noted, "The County Superintendent has not publicly embraced the responsibility under the law for preventing school district financial crises. Nor has the superintendent shown leadership as the only county-wide champion of the tough but necessary choices that must be made by school districts to maintain balanced budgets." The complete reports can be viewed at www.acgv.org/grandjury/reports.htm.

We've had two districts go bankrupt during Sheila Jordan's tenure. The children of Alameda County deserve better. I recommend a vote for John Bernard, a seasoned school administrator who has the experience and training to provide the services that schools deserve.

Vote No on Prop 82

David Bouchard (President & CEO Pleasanton Chamber of Commerce)

Prop. 82 is not a question of whether preschool is good or bad. Rather, the question voters must answer on June 6 is whether or not Prop. 82 is the best way to expand preschool opportunities to our kids, and if it's the best use of \$2.4 billion of limited state funds.

At a time when California has many other pressing needs, like fixing K-12 schools, we shouldn't institute a massive new preschool bureaucracy at a cost of \$2.4 billion annually, in order to increase preschool enrollment by a mere four or five percent. Instead we should focus limited funds on expanding preschool opportunities to those kids most in need.

And, parents should read the fine print of the measure because they could be on the hook with a new parent tax if the program costs more than expected or revenues fall short.

The fact is, Prop. 82 on the June ballot is a nice idea, but its execution leaves a lot to be desired. Please vote NO on Prop. 82.

Soak the Rich?

Walter D. Harvey
Livermore

The educational pros and cons that are being debated may be relevant if Prop 82 were an ordinary Proposition where all taxpayers bear the cost of passage. However, Prop 82 targets only certain "wealthy" taxpayers, which is the real issue. It was undoubtedly fueled by the not-surprising success of precedent-setting Proposition 63 (2004) that also targeted only the wealthy to pay for a statewide program. Now, once again, the self-anointed princes and princesses of political and social "correctness" have taken upon themselves to define the "wealthy" and to decide how much they can afford to be fined to pay for another statewide program. I am only moderately upset with the possibly well-intentioned but constitutionally misguided initiators of these propositions. However, I am greatly alarmed that the secretary of state and attorney general allowed Propositions 63 and 82 (referred to as "direct democracy" initiatives in the Voter Information Guide to appear on the ballot. Of course these kind of measures will pass, and overwhelmingly. Why not resort to similar tactics to pay for the Bay Bridge cost overrun, BART to Livermore, the bullet train, etc., etc.? And why set the "wealthy" threshold at \$400,000/800,000? Be bold and set it at \$100,000! That still would have the support of the vast majority of financially unaffected voters. And why stop at a measly 1.7% fine? Anybody care if the sum of all state and federal incremental tax rates eventually exceeds 100% for the wealthy few? "Direct Democracy" indeed.

Kathy Mount For Judge

Angela Ramirez Holmes
Pleasanton

On your June 6th ballot is a non-partisan race for Alameda County Superior Court Judge. Kathy Mount is the choice of law enforcement in Alameda County. Her 23 years of trial experience in civil and criminal law and demonstrated integrity has earned her the support of Alameda County Sheriff Charles Plummer, police chiefs in Albany, Fremont, Newark, Oakland, Pleasanton, San Leandro, and Union City, Alameda County Deputy Sheriff's Association, Oakland Police Officer's Association, San Leandro Police Officer's Association, Union City Police Managers' Association, state and local chapters of the Peace Officer's Research Association of California (PORAC), and the Peace Officer's Political Action Council of Alameda County (POPAC). Join law enforcement in supporting Kathy Mount for Judge. For more info., please visit www.mountforjudge.com

Mount Impresses For Judge

Pat and Clarence Hoenig
Livermore

For the first time in our memory a candidate for superior court judge in Alameda County took the time to come to a coffee to explain her positions and ask for our vote. Last night we met and liked Kathy Mount. With 23 years of competent and dedicated trial experience in both civil and criminal law she clearly understands and has won the respect of the judicial system in Alameda County.

Her record of duty and commitment to public service has earned bipartisan support from a wide range of community leaders throughout the county. Examples of support include Alameda County sheriff, Charles Plummer, superior court judges, city attorneys, police chiefs, mayors, school board members and many other community leaders.

There are six candidates for judge of the superior court, Office No. 21 on the June 6 Primary ballot. Her ballot statement clearly elevates Kathy Mount to the top of the list. She will bring experience, integrity and compassion to the role of judge and rule of law. Alameda County will be a better and safer place to live with this distinguished lady on the bench.

We recommend Kathy Mount as the best choice for Judge on Tuesday June 6.

Vote for Vonheeder Urged

John Sailors, Livermore

We have a chance to make a real difference in the Zone 7 board of directors. The public rarely pays attention to what they do, but they are about to spend over \$350 million of our money. We need to have the right people making these decisions. It is for this reason, that I am asking you to join me and others in supporting Georgean Vonheeder for the Zone 7 board of directors. She has the "water" experience through her tenure with the Dublin San Ramon Services District and she has the financial expertise garnered from her regular job as a financial consultant.

Her qualifications far outshine her opponents. Vote for Georgean.

Vonheeder For Zone 7

Lynn Martin, Pleasanton

I have known Georgan Vonheeder personally and professionally for almost 25 years. Georgan is dedicated to community service both as an elected official and as a community volunteer. More importantly, Georgan's business experience, DSRSD background and financial expertise make her the perfect candidate for Zone 7. We need her on the board.

I am always concerned when I read about a public employee endorsing a candidate for the board of directors who may ultimately be his or her boss. The general manager of Zone 7, in a letter to the Tri-Valley Herald, went public with his suggestions. If the Zone 7 board does not already have a policy prohibiting employees from publicly endorsing candidates for the board, they should consider implementing one. We do not want our public servants to be obligated or have the appearance of any obligation to the elected officials he or she may report to. The endorsements may be self-serving, and that worries me.

I encourage you to vote for Georgan Vonheeder for Zone 7. Georgan is a highly qualified, independent public servant.

Off-Directional Signs for Houses of Worship

Donald F. King, Livermore

In a report to the Livermore City Planning Commission dated May 16, 2006, City staff addressed an issue that has concerned me and others for some time: It is the fact that the Livermore Planning and Zoning Code has been interpreted to exclude houses of worship from those entities exempted from the Sign Code's provision that no off-site directional signs are permitted in the public right-of-way.

The issue arose when a pastor of a Livermore church requested that a directional sign to the church be established at the intersection of Concannon Boulevard and Evans Street. The church, on Lomitas, a block off of Concannon, is somewhat hidden, in a residential neighborhood.

I agreed to discuss the matter with City authorities; I was informed about the City's policy back in 1998. I found it strange, indeed, that no off-site directional signs are permitted other than to public facilities. I could understand the prohibition on most, if not all, signs to commercial enterprises, but to houses of worship, an admittedly non-commercial entity?

The City's policy does not distinguish houses of worship from any other type of non-commercial entity. Of course houses of worship are not public entities; they are not funded by taxes, and they do not direct their worship services to the general public, but to their own faith communities, yet I would contend that ignoring the very significant niche that religion holds in society and the law is wrong.

Quit Slaughtering Horses

Lex Manwill, Livermore

I marvel at the duplicity of the American people who lavish huge financial and emotional capital on injured Kentucky Derby winner Barbaro, while subsidizing the abuse and slaughter of billions of horses, cows, pigs, and other sentient animals for their dinner table. Although we don't eat horses, we slaughtered 88,000 last year for export to countries that do.

The American Horse Slaughter Prevention Act (H.R. 503 and S. 1915) would permanently ban U.S. transport and slaughter of horses for human consumption. Similar congressional efforts have been thwarted by the USDA earlier this year.

It makes no ethical sense to cherish our horses, dogs, and cats, while paying for the abuse and slaughter of billions of similar animals that are not part of our family. With the great abundance of soy-based meat alternatives in every supermarket, it makes no practical sense either.

Wheels Could Link Park/Ride To BART

Robert S. Allen

BART Director (1974-1988)

Livermore

BART and Caltrans each have little-used park/ride lots in Northwest Livermore near 1-580. The I-580 -Highway 84 (Isabel) interchange project moves Caltrans' park/ride next to the BART/Airway park/ride. About 250 resulting spaces at this future West Livermore station site could easily be expanded by thousands of spaces. All that the park/rides lack is a good bus link with BART.

Wheels (LAVTA) plans a hearing at 4 p.m. June 5 on fares and routes. Despite my repeated pleas, they refuse even to study such a link. Indeed, they would take away the grossly inadequate 12V. I hope they reconsider.

Three buses in a dedicated shuttle could tie BART/Airway with every BART train during commute hours (6-10 am and 3-7 pm). At LAVTA's marginal cost of \$37/hour, they would cost about \$238,000 per year—all or most coming from fares. BART-Plus tickets would be a real attraction, and many users could get rid of a car, saving beaucoup bucks.

Modest capital projects (e.g., a bus berth near the station entrance; bike lockers and a taxi stand at BART/Airway; an interim shoulder or other bus way between Airway Blvd. and El Charro) would greatly enhance the viability of transit in our valley.

A dedicated link – LAVTA or ABLE (Allen BART Livermore Express) Commute—would:
Give Livermore near-BART service pending an ultimate rail extension; Reduce congestion of Stanley Blvd., Pleasanton city streets, and I-580; Cut the cost and hassle of parking at the BART station; Allow good East Dublin service at little cost; Test the market for more hours, routes, and eventual BART rail to Livermore.

I encourage people to attend LAVTA's hearing Monday and support this ABLE Commute concept. Wheels is the logical operator, but the concept should work with another operator if LAVTA won't do it. Give me a call at 449-1387 with your ideas.

Schaffer Ranch Impact Felt

Margaret Jory Tracy, President

Preserve Area Ridgeland Committee Livermore

Subject: Tragic Destruction or Natural Resources in West Dublin

To those who ask why the trees have been cut down and the hills slashed north of 580 as you travel westbound up the Dublin grade, the answer is that this is the legacy of Guy Houston, former Mayor of Dublin.

Some ten years ago development of the Schaffer Ranch in the Dublin Ridgeland was supported by Guy Houston who pushed for approvals by Dublin Planning Commission, City Council, and even Alameda County's Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) approval with the help of Ben Tarver, former Pleasanton Mayor and Cathie Brown, former Livermore mayor. Ben later apologized to environmentalists and said LAFCO approval was part of a "political deal." One wonders what benefits were received by Pleasanton and Livermore residents?

Dublin's residents are now faced with the costs of providing an elementary school, water, fire, and police protection services for the 400 plus homes that will be constructed there.

Valley residents are faced with the tragic destruction of native trees in the seven small canyons adjacent to 580 and grading of hills to construct a one-mile extension of Dublin Boulevard as access to this development. How can this be considered "progress" when these scenic resources are lost forever?

Marchand Backs Zone 7

Incumbents

John Marchand, Livermore

Former Zone 7 board member and president

As a former Zone 7 chairman and board member, many people have asked me for advice on the upcoming election. The decision is easy.

The leadership of the Zone 7 board and the commitment of its staff resulted in Zone 7 being awarded the Directors Award for the Partnership for Safe Drinking Water from the EPA and the American Water Works Association. Only 43 out of 161,000 water agencies nationwide received that award. It was awarded to recognize Zone 7's commitment to water quality, public health, safety, and operational excellence. Furthermore, Zone 7's planning and wise use of resources has made Zone 7's water system one of the most reliable in the nation.

That commitment has demonstrated that the incumbents deserve to be re-elected. After I was elected to the Livermore City Council, that same board, after careful deliberation, unanimously selected Christopher Moore to take my place on the board. I agree with their decision. Mr. Moore is well-versed in water issues and has a long-standing commitment to our community and the region.

Please join me in voting for proven commitment and demonstrated results. Vote for John Greci, Steve Kalthoff, Bill Stevens and Chris Moore for the Zone 7 Water Board.

Best sites 