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## EDITORIALS

# We deserve more

As the state's import/export hub, Southern California should get the lion's share of transportation funds.

**L**AST YEAR, California voters approved nearly \$20 billion in transportation bonds via Proposition 1B, trusting that state officials would spend it on the most worthwhile projects. That trust was eroded in February when the initial distribution of highway funds bypassed a critical widening project for the 405 Freeway and earmarked only 12% to Los Angeles County, which contains nearly a third of the state's population and has the nation's worst freeway congestion. The 405 money was eventually granted after a furious lobbying campaign, but now, as the time nears to pass out \$2 billion for speeding cargo between the state's ports and distribution centers, there are troubling signs that L.A. and Southern California are about to be snubbed again.

Today, the California Transportation Commission is slated to set the criteria for how the Trade Corridors Improvement Fund will be spent. Insiders have long complained that decision makers seem to be giving unreasonable weight to projects in the Bay Area and Central Valley, which play a tangential role in California's trade industry. Those complaints were justified last month when the state Business, Transportation and Housing Agency submitted its proposed criteria.

The agency's proposal makes no mention of the comparative size of a region's ports or trade infrastructure. Its sole nod to regional fairness is a statement that funds should be distributed based on "reasonable geographic balance." As a source for this criterion, it cites a section of the government code created by Proposition 1B. But it ignores the immediately preceding subsection of the

code, which states that funds should be allocated in a way that "balances the demands of various ports (between large and small ports, as well as between seaports, airports and land ports of entry)." Thus the agency is highlighting a part of the code that calls for spreading the money across the state, while forgetting about the part that calls for considering the size of an area's ports.

The Los Angeles/Long Beach port complex is the largest in the nation. It handles more than 85% of the containerized cargo processed at California ports, and Southern California's road and rail network carries 75% of all cargo exported from the state. Trade is a key driver of our economy, but we pay a heavy price for all this activity. Not only do cargo trucks jam our freeways, but an estimated 1,200 Southern Californians die prematurely every year because of pollution generated by the goods-movement industry. By building more efficient rail networks and other projects, the bond money could help reduce that pollution.

The state Transportation Commission isn't accustomed to allocating money for goods movement. Its usual job is to divvy up funds for roads and freeways, which it does based on a regional formula: 60% goes to Southern California and 40% to the north. Applying the same formula to trade infrastructure would make no sense. By rights, the trade corridor connected to the ports of L.A. and Long Beach should get 85% of the bond money, given that they move 85% of the goods. Anything significantly less would be inefficient and unfair.

If L.A. gets stiffed again on transportation bond money, it will destroy voter confidence — indeed, it would justify Angelenos never again supporting statewide infrastructure bonds. Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, who is hoping to put a major water bond on the ballot, should make sure his appointees on the Transportation Commission understand how disastrous that would be.

## Easing congestion

L.A. deserves its fair share of bond money for transportation.

**T**HERE are many obvious differences between Southern and Northern California. The climate, the style, the state of mind and the amount of traffic — particularly trucks carrying goods to and from the nation's busiest ports.

While that last one is obvious to Southern California motorists, who often compete in tight traffic with phalanxes of cargo rigs, it doesn't seem clear to the state's top transportation officials.

And this is a problem when it comes to allocating \$2 billion in bond money for projects that improve trade corridors.

A coalition of Southern California transportation officials from

San Bernardino to Los Angeles is making what seems to be a fair request of the California Transportation Commission when it meets Tuesday: Divide up the money according to need.

And the Los Angeles region's need is pretty great. About 85 percent of the port activity of the state comes through the Los Angeles-Long Beach ports — and is projected to more than double in the next 25 years.

California voters supported the infrastructure bonds to improve the state's public facilities and, thus, its quality of life. And voters expect that money to be spent fairly, benefitting the entire state and not doled out on the basis of political pull.

We join the coalition to request that Southern California's heavy trade corridor get its fair share of the \$2 billion bond.

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# Easing congestion fair share of bond money.

Port area deserves its

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Easing highway congestion

A coalition of Southern California transportation officials from San Bernardino to Los Angeles is making what seems to be a fair request of the California Transportation Commission when it meets Tuesday: Divide up the \$2 billion in state bond money according to need.

And the Los Angeles region's need is pretty great. About 85percent of the port activity of the state comes through the Los Angeles-Long Beach ports. Truck traffic on the freeways is evidence of this.

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