SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA'S MEASURE 3 SEEKS TO CREATE "RAPE" BRIDGE TOOLS IN ORDER TO PUT CRONY CASH IN THE POCKETS OF JERRY BROWN'S FRIENDS

- The Entire Measure 3 Plan Is A Scam To Help Google and Crony Insiders!

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On the June 5 ballot, Regional Measure 3 asks voters in nine Bay Area counties to approve a $3 increase in tolls on all the region's bridges but the Golden Gate "to reduce auto and truck traffic, relieve crowding on BART, unclog freeway bottlenecks and improve bus, ferry, BART and commuter rail service." Its supporters, who include the Bay Area Council, the Silicon Valley Leadership Group, SPUR, Facebook, and YIMBY Action, call it "a bold, coordinated, region-wide traffic relief plan."

RM3 is bold all right: it's an audacious con that dedicates $4.5 billion to a hodgepodge of disconnected projects that will bring the Bay Area little traffic relief.

Its critics include Rep. Mark DeSaulnier (D-Concord). In a stinging op-ed, DeSaulnier calls RM3 "a highly flawed initiative born out of dysfunctional policy-making." To be sure, the Bay Area "urgently needs new investment in transportation," but RM3, he says, "is not the answer."

For one thing, the measure discriminates against people living in Alameda and Contra Costa Counties. "East Bay residents make up half of the affected bridge commuters," DeSaulnier writes, but the money allocated by RM3 constitutes a "transfer of wealth from the East Bay to Silicon Valley."

The irony is that RM3 has also garnered strong objections from Silicon Valley public officials. "'I think it's fundamentally unfair,'" Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors President Joe Simitian told the *Daily Post*. Simitian notes that in 2016, Santa Clara County voters raised their sales tax by a half-cent for transportation projects, and that in 2017, the state Legislature raised the gas tax by 12 cents a gallon—increases that he favored.

"'An inside deal'" is how Mountain View Mayor Lenny Siegel describes RM3. "'[O]ur cities were not given an opportunity to suggest have the money might be spent." The result, Siegel told the *Post*, is that "'once again, money is going to projects that don't address our commute problem in North County.'"

One of those ineffectual projects is "express lanes," aka toll lanes. RM3 allocates $300 million for new toll lanes on Highway 101 in San Francisco and San Mateo Counties, and on I-80, I-680, and SR 84. As Siegel observes, toll lanes "discriminate against drivers who can't afford an extra toll, and [they] don't adequately discourage driving alone." Indeed, if anything, toll lanes encourage people to drive.

Even if you avoid the toll lanes, by 2025, DeSaulnier points out, typical commuters would be paying about $700 more each year but "see little to no improvement" in their commutes.

Actually, it could be worse than $700. RM3 authorizes the Bay Area Toll Authority to raise bridge tolls more than $3, if the region's cost of living goes up, or if BATA's debt service requires higher tolls. As of last December, the agency's portfolio included variable rate bonds worth $2.1

billion. In 2010, BATA paid a "wolf pack of banks" $104 million in bridge tolls after some of its credit swaps went bad.

Which raises another dubious aspect of RM3: what its supporters call the measure's "robust public accountability and oversight provisions." We may assume that those provisions are intended to assuage well-founded voter skepticism about the ability of BATA/MTC and BART—which RM3 slates for nearly a billion dollars of the new tolls—to administer public monies. As DeSaulnier writes,

The Bay Bridge, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission headquarters acquisition and renovation, and the Transbay Terminal are projects that have involved billions of cost-overruns and undermined confidence in governments' ability to plan and prioritize.

RM3's oversight provisions include the creation of an "Independent Office of the BART Inspector General." This is the Legislature's idea of independence: BART would nominate three persons to the Governor, who would then appoint one of them to a four-year term. In its first year of operation, the office would get $1 million of bridge tolls and, if BATA wishes, more in subsequent years. So much for "robust public accountability and oversight."

It's time—actually, well past time—we demanded real accountability from MTC.