

POLICY WATCH – August 2015

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Climate change and its effects, drought and fires, are forefront on our minds this month. We applaud the North Bay's great job in conserving water and remind all of us to make permanent change in our use of water. We have new data on climate change driving the need for more action to secure our future.

We also look at another related problem. The failure to maintain our transportation infrastructure is contributing to greenhouse gas emissions. Better roads and transit will help reduce emissions. The state needs to act now to provide the solutions to address the \$59 billion deficit in transportation statewide. We have high hopes that the special session on transportation produces good results.

Tickets go on sale September 1st for this year's Leaders of the North Bay Awards luncheon on October 23. Every year, we sell out quicker, so don't delay. Buy your table or tickets early. Sponsorships are still available.

Thank you to all of the hardworking people in the North Bay. Happy Labor Day!

Best,


Cynthia

Climate Change Worsens Drought and Even “Godzilla El Nino” Won't Fix It

Kevin Cortopassi writing in Science blog (August 21, 2015) reports, “A new study suggests that climate change has likely intensified California's current drought by 15% to 20%. As the world continues to warm, such dry spells are likely to worsen in the state in the future, The New York Times reports. The research, published in Geophysical Research Letters, found that the odds of California experiencing droughts as acute as its current one, which began in 2012, have roughly doubled over the past century.

That same research warned, “A lot of people think that the amount of rain that falls out of the sky is the only thing that matters, said lead author A. Park Williams, a bioclimatologist at Columbia University's Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory. “But warming changes the baseline amount of water that's available to us, because it sends water back into the sky.” The study predicts an end to California's nice weather with “evaporation overpowering any increase in rain, and then some. This means that by around the 2060s, more or less permanent drought will set in, interrupted by only the rainiest years. As time goes on, precipitation will be less able to make up for the intensified warmth.”

That is why the predicted “Godzilla El Nino” is unlikely to reverse the drought. As explained by the authors, Tracy Bloom et al, in Godzilla El Nino May be Coming, but Extreme Rainfall Unlikely to Reverse California’s Drought (KTLA%, August 15, 2015) “El Ninos have only a weak – or sometimes no – correlation with increased precipitation in Northern and Central California and in the upper Colorado River Basin, areas where the Golden State gets most of its water. In the central Sierra Nevada, where mountain snowpack flows into statewide drinking supply come spring, it would take 2 ½ times the average annual precipitation to balance the snowpack deficit created by the drought, said Kevin Werner, NOAA’s director of western regional climate services. The wettest year on record in that region, 1983, brought only 1.9 times the average annual precipitation.”

And that is bad news for all of us. A new study by the UC Davis Center for Watershed Sciences found that the “drought this year will cost California’s economy more than \$2.7 billion and could result in 21,000 job losses. The study says if the drought continues into 2017, the effect on the economy is likely to be about 6% worse than this year,” said Amy Quinton, Capital Public Radio (August 18, 2015). The study reported that much of the impact would be felt in the Central Valley, where another study found that the ground has sunk a foot due to subsidence from the loss of groundwater.

Couple that with the economic impact from the ever increasing losses from wildland fires, which are predicted to intensify with the dryer, warmer weather. A horrific 5,200 wildfires have been raging in Northern California and the traditional fire season hasn’t even begun.

What can we do? Take actions like doing the 5 Things below. Do our part to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. And understand that the “new normal” means that the way we live today is not possible going forward. Our behaviors must change, we must adapt and we must work collectively to minimize the effects of the drought and climate change.

One thing we should NOT do is believe false solutions. In Let’s Rate the Dumbest Solutions to California’s Drought (Sophia Chen, Wired, Science column, August 8, 2015), Chen debunks some of the proposed ways we can save water. Check out the article for the details but take her word for it, harvesting fog water, having the tourists bring water from home with them, piping water from the Northwest, and replacing toilets with portapotties won’t do the trick. Likewise, making showers illegal, saving the condensation on the outside of your cold drinks, and collecting your tears as you watch chick flicks won’t work.



Act Now to Secure Our Water Future!

5 Things You Can Do Now!

We all need to do our part in the drought.

- 1** Let your lawn go golden.* Replant in October with drought resistant plants and drip irrigation.
- 2** Replace old toilets with high efficiency toilets that use as little as 0.8 gallons per flush.
- 3** Look for leaks and fix any leaking pipes, irrigation, toilets or faucets.
- 4** Take a fast shower — reduce shower time by 2 minutes.
- 5** Use a bucket to capture shower “warm up water” and use for other household needs.

*Rebates and free products may be available — go to www.wateroff.org



**We’re in a drought.
Turn the Water Off.**

Transportation Improvements Still Facing Red Lights



The special session on transportation is making progress about as fast as traffic going north on Highway 101 on Friday afternoons. It is another example of legislators not being able to work together to improve the lives of people, the economy and the environment of our state. California's streets, roads and highways rank 48th out of 50 states in terms of pavement condition. Funding for transportation has not kept pace with its needs, and the gap in funding the \$100 Billion needed to maintain and sustain California's infrastructure.

Jim Wunderman, CEO, Bay Area Council, recently said it well, "Every single day, all of us in the Bay Area experience the difficulty and unpleasantness of getting around, especially of getting from our homes to where we work—for most of us, that's a trip that crosses at least one county line and that becomes more grueling every day. Highways and bridges are coming to a standstill. Even carpool lanes offer little relief: they're often slow and congested, or end abruptly, forcing drivers back

into the general purpose lanes.

If, such as on a very light traffic day, you're fortunate enough to get up to real freeway speeds, you'll feel the crumbling pavement pounding away at your car's suspension. This is not just an issue of inconvenience or annoyance. Commute delay is becoming a strategic challenge for our region and our employers. The innovation businesses that drive our economy compete for highly talented employees. If they can't hire those employees here, because commutes are too challenging or housing too expensive, then we are at risk of losing those companies, or at least their next expansion. It's never been easier for companies to diversify their operations across the U.S. and around the globe. Whether it's Austin or Boston or Israel or Brazil or India, there's a growing roster of locations that have highly skilled workforces and that would welcome our employers with open arms.

Cargo is stuck on the same gridlocked highways with commuters. As trucking becomes slower and less reliable and more expensive, it becomes just that much harder to operate a logistics, warehousing, manufacturing and distribution, import/export, or wholesale business in the Bay Area.

With our high land and housing costs, it's already challenging to run these kinds of businesses in the Bay Area, but they are critical to a healthy and well-rounded economy that provides opportunity for people at all education and skill levels. I don't want to see the Bay Area lose innovation jobs or blue-collar jobs. You shouldn't either. Our strong economy is largely responsible for the state's budget surplus, with fully a third of personal income tax receipts coming from the Bay Area, even though we've only got one sixth of the population. You probably know about the steps that some tech employers are taking to provide commute relief for their own employees, with things like shuttles, free transit passes, and bicycling incentives. There's a lot of public benefit from these programs, which take tens of thousands of cars off of the roads; some companies have less than fifty percent solo drivers. Running buses is probably the last thing these companies want to do, but they've concluded that they are facing a transportation crisis and that waiting for someone else to solve their problem wasn't going to work. That's the kind of attitude and commitment that's needed from the State of California, Caltrans, and local transportation agencies.

It's time for immediate and drastic action from every level of government in California. We need more money for transportation, we need to be more creative about what projects and programs we fund, and we need to be a lot more efficient at turning the money into the projects. And we will urge the California Legislature to raise taxes to support more transportation improvement. We want the State of California to raise taxes. For a business group, with a Board of business executives, this is not a trivial point. In the Special Session, you've got nearly every appropriate revenue source on the table: Gas tax, diesel tax, vehicle registration, vehicle license fee, truck weight fees, cap and trade auction revenues, Caltrans efficiencies—but a sales tax may be the most politically viable. The need is so big—both to restore the existing system, and to improve and expand it—that more than one solution will be needed. We are calling on the Legislature to put them all together and get to a serious amount of money that is going to make a significant difference for Californians.

And you should consider one more revenue source that could be added to the pot. The Proposition 30 temporary sales tax expires at the end of 2016. Reauthorizing that ¼ percent sales tax and dedicating it to transportation would bring another \$1.5 billion per year, without increasing the tax level. But money is not the end of the story, because we also need to do a better job at turning the public's transportation money into transportation projects.



- First, we need to guarantee that new transportation money can never be diverted to non-transportation uses.
- Second, we need to provide an expedited CEQA process for the highest priority transportation projects, in much the same way that AB900 provided expedited CEQA review for high-priority housing projects.
- Third, we need to take the handcuffs off of Caltrans and its local partners, and let them use the same time-saving and money-saving project delivery methods that are commonplace in other states—things like design-build, and public-private partnerships.
- Fourth, we need to empower the largest regions in our state to control their own transportation destinies, by giving them more options to raise regional revenue, manage the regional transportation system, and deliver transportation projects.

I know that California—and Sacramento—can do this. It's generally not an easy thing for the Legislature to decide to raise taxes. But the employers of California are trying to make it easy for you. We are asking, even urging, you to raise transportation taxes. Citizens of California are making it easy for you too; talk to them individually or look at polls, and it's clear that they are fed up with our decrepit and congested transportation system and they are willing to pay for a solution. Let's not give them any half-measures. Let's make sure that we aim high enough, with substantial revenues and significant reform, that Californians will actually experience real and meaningful transportation improvement over the next decade, such that they look back with gratitude that the Legislature took bold action in 2015."

Teaching Social Skills Improves Grades and Lives



central Pennsylvania.”

The lack of soft skills has been a consistent complaint of employers in finding candidates to fill their job openings. A study by researchers from Pennsylvania State University and Duke whose goals were “to understand how children develop healthy social skills, and help them do so,” has published their findings. In [Teaching Social Skills to Improve Grades and Lives](#) (David Bornstein, New York Times, July 24, 2015), Bornstein details how kindergarteners were rated by their teachers on their social and communication skills in the classroom, as part of the Fast Track Project, “an intervention and study administered in Durham, N.C., Nashville, Seattle and

central Pennsylvania.” The findings are extraordinary in revealing the importance of soft skill development and later success in careers and life. The students were tracked for 13 to 19 years and the correlation to the teachers’ assessments and what was found “warrants major attention because the teachers’ rankings were extremely prescient. They predicted the likelihood of many outcomes: whether the children would graduate from high school on time, get college degrees, have stable or full-time employment as young adults; whether they would live in public housing or receive public assistance; whether they would be held in juvenile detention or be arrested as adults. The kindergarten teachers’ scores also correlated with the number of arrests a young adult would have for severe offenses by age 25.”

Bornstein says, “One major result: Children who scored high on social skills were four times as likely to graduate from college than those who scored low. These studies suggest that if we want many more children to lead fulfilling and productive lives, it’s not enough for schools to focus exclusively on academics. Indeed, one of the most powerful and cost-effective interventions is to help children develop core social and emotional strengths like self-management, self-awareness and social awareness — strengths that are necessary for students to fully benefit from their education, and succeed in many other areas of life.”

Bornstein says, “The United States remains far behind other nations in ensuring that young children get the early support they need to thrive — whether it is through [paid parental leave](#) or [investing in preschool programs](#). And one of the most troubling aspects of high-stakes testing in education is that it has led many schools to focus on reading and math instruction and test preparation at the expense of other educational goals.

The [California Office to Reform Education Districts initiative](#), or [Core Districts initiative](#), is a collaboration to improve school quality among 10 school districts that include Fresno, Los Angeles, Oakland, Sacramento and San Francisco. These locales are currently field testing alternative methods to evaluate school success — measures that now take into account students’ [social and emotional skills](#). (The districts have [received a waiver](#) from standard federal assessment guidelines to do so.) “We’re putting a [flashlight on the social and emotional skills](#) to help schools think about the role they play,” said Noah Bookman, chief accountability officer for the Core Districts initiative. “We think school quality is not only about academic success but also about developing the whole child. And it’s essential to give states and districts more flexibility about what to measure.”

Roger P. Weissberg, a professor of psychology and education says, “The challenge is how to take evidence-based programs and integrate them with other priorities so it’s not an add-on, but a way to strengthen things they’re already doing.” Evidence indicates that effective programs do just that. “In 2011, Weissberg co-authored a [meta-analysis](#) of studies of 213 school-based social and emotional learning programs, which in total reached 270,000 students. The review found that the programs produced significant gains in students’ social skills, attitudes, behavior and academics.” Let’s hope that the Core Districts initiative takes hold in California and becomes a part of the state’s educational programs.

Members in the News

Congratulations to the NBLC Companies that Were Awarded Best Places to Work

A record 103 companies and organizations have earned a spot in the Business Journal’s 10th annual Best Places to Work in the North Bay.

Comcast Announces Fifth Back-to-School Kick Off for Internet Essentials

More than 2 million low-income Americans, from 500,000 families, have now crossed the digital divide at home with Internet Essentials.

Kaiser Permanente San Rafael Opens its new Emergency Department

As part of Kaiser Permanente’s ongoing commitment to bring high-quality, personalized, and convenient care, the San Rafael Medical Center recently opened its new state-of-the-art Emergency Department at 99 Montecillo Road in San Rafael.

Midstate Construction Completes Redwood Business Center in Petaluma

Owner Basin Street Properties, general contractor Midstate Construction Corporation and tenant Cyan, recently completed construction and tenant improvements of the Redwood Business Center Building A2 at the Redwood Business Center in Petaluma, CA.

Sonoma State University Hosts Teacher Summit Connects 20,000 K-12 Educators Across California

The Better Together California Teachers Summit gathered 20,000 K-12 educators for a one-day collaborative conference at universities across the state last week, with 200 teachers meeting at Sonoma State University to watch simulcast keynote sessions and participate in localized "Ed Talks" on classroom and curriculum innovation.

Autodesk is launching its own game engine

If you play video games, you've probably seen the effects of Autodesk's work. Autodesk owns the Maya and 3ds Max modeling software, the Scaleform rendering engine, and a variety of animation and texture-making tools.

Sunny Hills Services' Mary Kaye Gerski Joins as Chief Program Officer

Mary Kaye Gerski, a visionary administrator with expertise in senior-level strategic planning, policy-making, and financial and program management, recently joined Sunny Hills Services as its new Chief Program Officer.

Read more online at www.northbayleadership.org/news



Who We Are

Over twenty years ago, business leaders founded the North Bay Leadership Council on a simple premise: We can accomplish more by working together. Today, the Council includes 45 leading employers in the North Bay. Our members represent a wide variety of businesses, non-profits and educational institutions, with a workforce in excess of 25,000. As business and civic leaders, our goal is to promote sound public policy, innovation and sustainability to make our region a better place to live and work. For more information: Call

707.283.0028 / E-mail info@northbayleadership.org
www.northbayleadership.org