

POLICY WATCH – March 2014

In This Issue

- America's About to Run out of Money For Roads (Again) Hurting Job Creation and The Economy
- Nominate a Leader of the North Bay: Deadline June 20th
- NBLC's Legislative Advocacy Day Reaps Rewards
- Democracy's Deepening Recession
- Members in the News



Merry May is filled with graduations and celebrations of spring, but in this issue we discuss the not-so-merry state of the North Bay transportation system, or lack thereof. We also examine the state of democracy around the world and whether our form of governance is in a recession.

On the good news side, if you act TODAY, you can still get a ticket to our conference on leadership and decision-making on May 29th. See below for more details. Also, the deadline to nominate a Leader of the North Bay is June 20th. Don't miss giving that special someone or organization their long overdue recognition! And NBLC's Legislative Advocacy Day reaped rewards with the Senate and Assembly budget subcommittees supporting early child education. Read below to find out how you can help!

Best,

Cynthia

America's About to Run out of Money for Roads (Again) Hurting Job Creation and The Economy

The North Bay transportation system is woefully inadequate. Highway 101 is gridlocked every day because of the gap in widening the freeway which remain due to lack of funding. Highway 37 is wall-to-wall traffic at commute hours with no solution in sight. In "Why America's about to run out of money for roads (again)," by Brad Plumer (Vox, May 6, 2014) alerts us to the latest transportation crisis. The Federal government, which currently provides about 27% of the U.S. transportation funding through the Highway Trust Fund, is about to run out of money. If this happens, it would put a halt to about "\$47 billion worth of road, highway and mass-transit projects starting in August." Allowing the Highway Trust Fund to be depleted has become the norm for Congress of late. What makes it even worse, is that state and local governments match that Federal money and have already contracted on projects with the full expectation that the Federal match would be forthcoming.





Plumer says that the funding crisis started in 2008 resulting from Americans driving less, and using more gas-efficient vehicles, thereby generating less federal gas tax. Lawmakers have cobbled together funding to augment the loss gas tax, but Plumer says, “Since lawmakers are reluctant to either slash federal transportation spending or raise the federal gas tax, they have to come up with increasingly convoluted gimmicks to keep the fund intact.”

Most of the Federal money is spent on highways. The Highway Trust Fund was envisioned to provide roads and highways that “would be paid for by the people actually using them. But it is no longer true that highways pay for themselves.

Plumer says that once the trust fund is depleted, the U.S. government is limited to spend on the amount it receives from the gas tax, which hasn’t been raised since 1993. Without an infusion of other funds, projects throughout the U.S. will need to be scaled back or cancelled. Congress is kicking around ways to shore up the funding other than increasing the tax rate. President Obama has proposed spending \$302 billion in federal transportation spending over the next four years, paid for by closing unspecified tax breaks for corporations.

Given Congress’ track record of taking positive action to solve national problems, it is likely that the U.S. transportation infrastructure is about to get even worse. The state of our infrastructure directly impacts the U.S. economic competitiveness, from moving goods and services to easing commutes to providing much needed well-paying jobs.

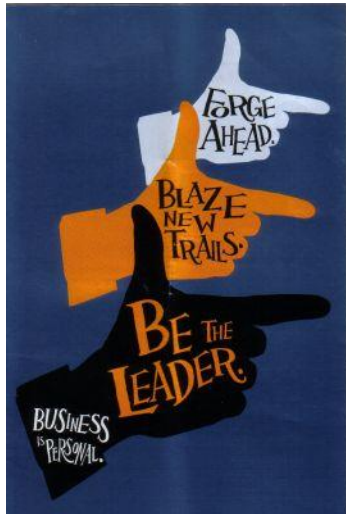
Infrastructure jobs are part of the backbone of the U.S. economy. In “Beyond Shovel-Ready: The Extent and Impact of U.S. Infrastructure Jobs,” by Joseph Kane and Robert Puentes (Brookings, May 2014) the authors reveal that “an analysis of occupational employment data for the nation reveals that in 2012, 14.2 million workers were employed in infrastructure jobs across the country, accounting for 11 percent of national employment. Truck drivers, electricians, and civil engineers are among the occupations employing the most workers overall, the broad majority of whom (77 percent) focus on operating infrastructure rather than its construction (15 percent), design (6 percent), or governance (2 percent.”

The authors also found that “Infrastructure occupations tend to offer more equitable wages compared to all occupations nationally, paying over 30 percent more to workers at lower ends of the income scale. More than 80 percent of workers employed in infrastructure occupations typically have short- to long-term on-the-job training, but only 12 percent hold a bachelor’s degree or higher and generally need less education to qualify for these jobs. Infrastructure occupations are projected to increase 9.1 percent during the next decade, including the need to replace more than 2.7 million workers.”

Nominate a Leader of the North Bay: Deadline June 20th

North Bay Leadership Council (NBLC) seeks nominations for its *2014 LEADERS OF THE NORTH BAY AWARDS*. As the leading employers in the North Bay, NBLC members recognize the importance of leadership to galvanize collective good intentions, create the momentum necessary to move forward toward effective solutions, and help foster a culture of leadership in our region.

NBLC created these awards to recognize leaders within businesses, organizations and/or partnerships who contribute -- financially, civically, innovatively, and otherwise -- to the community through their leadership. The award categories are:



Caught in the Act of Leadership

Individual excellence in leadership: Recognition of an individual who was “caught” demonstrating excellence in leadership.

We’re All in this Together

Community building: Recognition of leadership in corporate philanthropy or volunteerism, civic engagement, or other community initiatives.

Paint the Community Green

Environmental stewardship: Recognition of leadership in green business, green building and/or environmental stewardship.

The ‘Light Bulb’ Went On

Innovative/entrepreneurial spirit: Recognition of creativity, innovation and the entrepreneurial spirit.

Empowering the Latino Community

Leadership within the Latino community: Recognition of efforts to empower and strengthen the Latino community through education, job training, cultural awareness, and business development resources.

Nomination forms may be downloaded at NBLC’s website: www.northbayleadership.org. They are also available by contacting us at info@northbayleadership.org or (707) 283-0028. Please complete both pages of the nomination form. The deadline for nominations is June 20, 2014. The awards will be presented at a luncheon ceremony on October 31, 2014 at the Embassy Suites, San Rafael.

NBLC’s Legislative Advocacy Day Reaps Rewards

On NBLC’s annual Legislative Advocacy Day, we were pleased by the response of Senator Pro-Tempore, Darrell Steinberg, with our request for expanded pre-school. Sen. Steinberg shared with us his new plan the Senate *Fair Start* proposal, which:

- provides high-quality pre-k opportunities to all low-income 4 year olds—an additional 234,000 children;
- provides full-day, full-year pre-k to those with at least one working parent, totaling 77,000 children; and
- takes effect in fall 2015 at a modest additional cost of \$378 million.



The senator also backed the goal of the Legislative Women’s Caucus to offer more than 40,000 child care opportunities for low-income children, largely focused on those ages from birth to age 3, starting this year.

The NBLC delegation was also pleased with the [Assembly budget subcommittee proposal](#), which was also approved:

- includes \$440 million to add 47,000 new early education spaces;
- increases reimbursement rates and family eligibility;
- eliminates the Preschool Family Fee;
- improves provider quality; and
- reinstates a state stipend for nutrition.

The legislation will move on to the budget committees. Please add your voice that these proposals that put our youngest learners first are important and need to pass. With their leadership, we can send a strong budget proposal to Governor Brown with a clear message: our children deserve a fair start!

[Please take two minutes to contact your legislators and urge them to support high-quality early childhood education for our youngest learners!](#)

<https://secure3.convio.net/pca/site/Advocacy?cmd=display&page=UserAction&id=393>

Democracy's Deepening Recession

In The Atlantic, Larry Diamond writes about “Democracy’s Deepening Recession,” (May 2, 2104) which is apropos reading for election time. Says Diamond, “According to Freedom House, 2013 was the eighth consecutive year in which more countries experienced declines in political rights or civil liberties than improvements. Since 2005, democracy has ceased its decades-long expansion, leveling off at about 60 percent of all independent states. And since the military coup in Pakistan in 1999, the rate of democratic breakdowns has accelerated, with about one in every five democracies failing.” As voters decide to bother to vote in the Primary which is predicted to have a low voter turnout, it is important to remember the importance of our democracy and the continuous fight to keep our democracy strong.

Diamond says, “The democratic recession we’re witnessing has been particularly visible in big “swing states”—the non-Western countries with the largest populations and economies. Since the late 1990s, democracy has broken down in Russia, Nigeria, Venezuela, the Philippines, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Thailand (where a military coup just occurred), and Kenya. The Philippines is the one relative bright spot in the group today, with a democratically elected president, Benigno Aquino, committed to serious governance reforms. Russia has become not just a venal and despotic state, but a neo-imperial menace to its neighbors as well. Nigeria has reverted back to tragic levels of political kleptocracy and fraud, feeding political polarization, ethnic resentment, citizen alienation, and an increasingly virulent Islamic terrorist movement in the north.” The cry to “Bring back our Girls” has gripped the world. And the world’s impotence to do that is gut-wrenching.

“Nor should we take India, the world’s biggest democracy, for granted,” says Diamond. He notes that the recent parliamentary elections were “a great pageant of democratic choice and accountability is once again unfolding on a scale never before seen in human history. It happened largely free of violence, and with impressive administrative skill. And it will do what democracy should: Punish the corrupt, under-performing incumbents by evicting them from power.” But Diamond cautions, “The victory of the opposition BJP will bring to power a paradox. In his 12 years as chief minister of Gujarat, Narendra Modi has not only delivered vigorous economic development, but also a style of politics so intolerant of

criticism, so demanding of fawning obedience, that many Indian liberals now shudder at the prospect of his becoming prime minister.”

Diamond notes that there is some good news. He believes 2014 is a year of critical elections where in many places such as Indonesia, South Africa, and even Afghanistan democracy may prevail. Says Diamond,

“In the long run, economic development, globalization, and the growth of civil society will induce democratic change in a number of autocracies, including China and Vietnam, and, well before them, Singapore and Malaysia. But if democracy cannot be reformed and revived in the world’s key swing states, the “long run” will be a lot further off than it need be—and the near term won’t be hospitable to the advance of freedom.” Please exercise your right to vote in this election!

Members in the News

North Bay Business Journal Names 17 Women in Business Honorees; Zappos HR Director to be June 25 Gala Keynote

The Business Journal today announced the selection of its 2014 Women in Business honorees from a diverse group of industries and organizations including agriculture, wine, professional services, technology, specialty foods, restaurants, small business, health care and fitness and nonprofits.

AT&T to Buy DirecTV for \$48.5 Billion in Move to Expand Clout

AT&T agreed on Sunday to buy the satellite television operator DirecTV for \$48.5 billion, trying to tilt the balance of power with media companies as the market for broadband Internet and video shifts.

Autodesk's 3-D Software Kicks Off Nationwide Tour

Prosthetics. Livers. Mount Rushmore. These are a few of the things that have been scanned in three dimensions and either recreated, or at least can be, through three-dimensional printing.

Redwood Credit Union Races to Support Local Nonprofits

RCU Contributes Over \$24,000 through Tri-County Human Race Events

Sonoma Raceway gets NASCAR Express to Offer Train to NASCAR in Sonoma

For the second consecutive year, NASCAR fans can get on board the NASCAR Express train to the Toyota/Save Mart 350 Sprint Cup Series event at Sonoma Raceway.

Sonoma State University Ranked Among California's Most Beautiful Campuses

Sonoma State University has earned the 25th spot in a ranking of the 25 Most Beautiful Colleges in California by CollegesinCalifornia.net.

Sonoma Raceway to Unveil New STEM Initiative at Toyota/Save Mart 350

Science and technology go hand in hand with high performance, and Sonoma Raceway will do its parts to help develop the next generation of engineers and scientists with an all-new youth education initiative for the 2014 race season.

Press Democrat Wins Five Awards in Statewide Contest

The Press Democrat won five first- or second-place awards in the California Newspaper Publishers Association's annual Better Newspapers Contest, including the top overall award for an online publication.

Sonoma Raceway to Host Verihealth High Speed Blood Drive, May 5

BloodSource and Sonoma Raceway will team up to give blood donors a once-in-a-lifetime experience at the 14th annual verihealth High-Speed Blood Drive at Sonoma Raceway on Monday, May 5.

Sonoma State University Professor the Newest “Fellow” on Campus

The American Institute of Certified Planners inducted urban planner Thomas Jacobson, J.D., of Rohnert Park, into the AICP’s College of Fellows on Sunday, April 27, at a black-tie ceremony as part of the 2014 National Planning Conference in Atlanta.

Canine Companions CEO Corey Hudson to Retire

Corey Hudson did not conceive the idea of training gentle dogs to perform simple, daily functions that might profoundly enhance the lives of people without use of their arms and/or legs.

Why BioMarin's Gene Therapy Initially Targets One Type of Hemophilia Instead of Another

When researchers at University College London used a gene therapy to effectively cure six patients of hemophilia B, BioMarin Pharmaceutical Inc. took notice.

COMCAST AND NBCUNIVERSAL RANK AMONG TOP 50 COMPANIES FOR DIVERSITY

We are proud to have been named among the Top 50 Companies for Diversity by DiversityInc for the second consecutive year.

Redwood Credit Union Volunteers Assist Effort to Restore Natural Habitat

A team of 21 Redwood Credit Union (RCU) employees and family members, along with approximately 60 other community volunteers recently participated in the 5th Annual Laguna de Santa Rosa Re-Leaf Day—a local tree-planting effort to help restore the degraded habitat area along Irwin Creek near the Laguna. More than 600 trees and shrubs were planted at the event.

Midstate Construction Does The Grove at Sunset Court

Owner Grove Sunset L.P., Optimus Construction, Inc and Midstate Construction Corporation recently completed the The Grove at Sunset Court in Brentwood.

Sonoma Raceway Hosting Nathan’s Famous Hot Dog Eating Qualifier

Sonoma Raceway has hosted record-breaking wins and historic racing moments, but this June will mark the first time the raceway has ever hosted a hot dog eating contest.

PG&E Installs More Than 100,000 Solar Panels

PG&E continues to chart its course as a national leader in renewable energy. The company is now home to more solar rooftop installations than any other place in the country.

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