



# Excellence in Motion

TRANSPORTATION AWARDS • OCTOBER 2014

## Meet the 2014 MTC Award Winners



The recent passing of former state Senator John F. Foran at the age of 84 weighed heavily on our hearts and minds as we prepared for this year's Transportation Awards ceremony. An early champion of regionalism, Foran was the author of the 1970 bill that created MTC and is thought of as the "father" of MTC. His contributions to Bay Area transportation are commemorated with the Foran Legislative Award, begun in 1986 upon his retirement from public service. This year's recipient is U.S. Congressman George Miller, retiring at the end of 2014 after 40 years on Capitol Hill. You can read about Miller's lasting impacts on the Bay Area transportation network in the column to the right, and see a tribute to Senator Foran at [mtc.ca.gov/foran](http://mtc.ca.gov/foran).



The legacy of former state Senator John F. Foran lives on in the legislative award named after him.

Our four Special Awards deserve some special attention. Each award is named after a talented and dedicated MTC staffer, adviser or commissioner who put his or her mark on the agency. Charles Davis, the singing bus driver, brightens passengers' days as he tunelessly identifies Muni stops. We've recognized him with this year's David Tannehill Special Employee Award. Naomi Armenta, whose experiences as a wheelchair and transit user are invaluable as she advocates for accessibility on behalf of senior and disabled travelers, won the Doris W. Kahn Accessible Transportation Award. Cory LaVigne, winner of the Greta Ericson Distinguished Service Award, started out as a bus driver and climbed the transit ladder all the way up to a director role at AC Transit before his untimely passing in 2012 at age 42. Rounding out the Special Award categories is the Miriam Ghilkey Public Service Award, which goes to Bruce Beyaert and his Trails for Richmond Action Committee, which spearheaded the longest single segment of the San Francisco Bay Trail.

Award of Merit honorees include Good Karma Bikes, providing free bike repair services and training to underprivileged community members; Gary Richards, aka "Mr. Roadshow," longtime author of a Q-and-A transportation column; and SolTrans, created in 2010 by combining two transit agencies into one to better serve Solano County. Among the winners is a trio of tunnels — the Caldecott Fourth Bore and the Devil's Slide Tunnel Project, which features twin bores as well as a trail with stunning vistas. A triptych of visual projects showcasing the Bay and the Bay Bridge are sharing a Merit Award — the Bay Lights, illuminating the Bay Bridge West Span; the Oakland Museum of California's "Above and Below: Stories From Our Changing Bay" exhibit; and Joseph A. Blum's action-packed photographs of East Span construction workers.

The bridge also was the inspiration for this year's Grand Award winner, Mary King, chair of the Bay Bridge Design Task Force. In all, 17 people, projects and organizations earned the coveted and unique Excellence in Motion trophy that features an actual ball bearing with moving parts.

— Georgia Lambert

See our extraordinary winners come alive on video at [mtc.ca.gov/awards](http://mtc.ca.gov/awards).

## Grand Award: Mary King Steered Design Process for New Bay Bridge East Span Toward a Winning Outcome



Mary King steered the Bay Bridge East Span design process through choppy waters while she was an MTC commissioner and Alameda County supervisor, in the end building consensus on an iconic design.

By the time Mary King arrived at the initial Bay Bridge Design Task Force meeting in 1997, she had already been appointed chair. King, at the time an MTC commissioner representing Alameda County, was a natural choice for then MTC Executive Director Lawrence D. Dahms. Her poise under pressure, her genuine interest in fair decision-making and her command of others' attention made her the crucial leader of a challenging process to define a signature design for the new East Span of the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge. And the same impressive characteristics made her the obvious choice for MTC's Grand Award.

King already had an extensive political resume. She had been chief of staff to both state legislator Bill Lockyer and Oakland Mayor Lionel J. Wilson. In 1988 she became the first African-American woman to serve as an Alameda County supervisor, and was re-elected twice. In that role she worked tirelessly to expand social services and opportunities for economically disadvantaged residents.

King felt that a resource and monument as public as the new East Span demanded public participation. From the beginning, she resolved to fairly consider all opinions.

"I was going to listen to the public input and then I was going to try to get the members of the committee to reach some kind of consensus," she said.

Immediately, this proved to be no easy task. Not only were there major design disagreements among the engineers, the politicians and the public, but there also was heavy debate within the various factions. But King maintained

an extraordinary command of the process.

She dodged "so many curveballs" from various competing interests, said Steve Heminger, the current MTC executive director.

For Heminger it was a treat to work with King and to watch her handle the maddening clash of interests. "Mary's job managing

the Bay Bridge Task Force was sort of like being ringmaster of a three-ring circus," Heminger said. "Mary was a really gifted public official. She is really smart, very funny and incredibly quick on her feet."

In spite of the challenges, King emerged from her role on the Task Force even more optimistic about the ability of the government to give the public what it desires.

The bicycle/pedestrian path on the new East Span is a testament to the power of the public and the responsiveness of the committee. At the first



Mary King examines a model of the proposed new Bay Bridge East Span design at a 1998 meeting.

Task Force meeting, everyone laughed at the group helmed by Alex Zuckerman, the late bike activist to whom the path is dedicated.

It was "David against Goliath," King explained. "They didn't have the big bucks, but they had the big heart. They never went away, and they got a bike lane on the bridge."

Now standing proudly above the Bay, the sparkling white self-anchored suspension span carries motorists, cyclists and pedestrians alike across the eastern side of the Bay. Its elegant design has made it an immediate icon, and King "deserves a lion's share of the credit for that," Heminger said.

King moved on to other prominent positions: president of the Association of Bay Area Governments, private consultant and various roles at AC Transit for eight years, including interim general manager. But the bridge sticks out as a crowning achievement of a full career.

"Every time I see the bridge, I'm very proud, I'm very touched, I'm very happy that I was able to be a part of it," she said. — Natalie Orenstein



The many bicyclists and walkers enjoying the new East Span can thank Mary King for her support for a pathway alongside the car decks.

## John F. Foran Legislative Award: U.S. Representative George Miller

### Congressman Boosts Key Bay Area Mobility Improvements During 40-Year Career

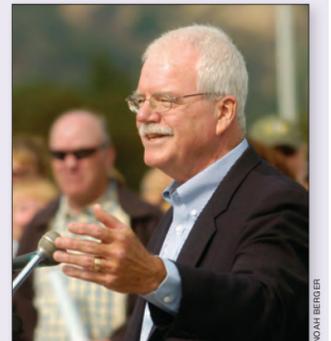


With U.S. Rep. George Miller (D-Martinez) calling a close to his 40-year congressional career at the end of 2014, the Bay Area will lose not just the longest-serving member of its Capitol Hill delegation, but also one of its most influential champions for regional transportation improvements. Miller's many initiatives to fund and expedite major Bay Area infrastructure projects have earned him the John F. Foran Legislative Award.

Elected to Congress at age 29 as one of the so-called Watergate Babies of 1974, Miller rose to several House leadership positions, including stints as chairman of the Select Committee on Children, Youth and Families (1983–92), the Natural Resources Committee (1992–94), and the Education and Labor Committee (2007–10).

Thanks in large part to Miller's defense of New Starts program funding for Bay Area projects, the transportation appropriations bill passed by Congress in 1994 brought federal dollars for BART's extension to San Francisco International Airport and Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority's Tassman light-rail line. Miller also helped craft the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, which delivered crucial support for transit system preservation, pavement rehabilitation and bicycle/pedestrian projects around the region, as well as the new Presidio Parkway in San Francisco, upgrades to Vasco Road in eastern Alameda and Contra Costa counties, and the long-awaited Fourth Bore of the Caldecott Tunnel, for which the congressman cut the ribbon last fall.

The state Legislature in 2007 named the newly completed northbound Benicia-Martinez Bridge the Congressman George Miller Bridge. The tribute was especially meaningful given that the original 1962 span, which now carries southbound traffic and a bicycle/pedestrian path, is named for the congressman's father, the late George Miller Jr., who represented Contra Costa County in the state Assembly from 1947 to 1948, and in the state Senate from 1949 until his death in 1969. As a congressman, the younger Miller marshaled a multiagency team of engineers



Congressman Miller greets the crowd at the 2007 opening of the new Benicia-Martinez Bridge, which bears his name.

who helped overcome delays during construction of the new bridge by devising an innovative bubble curtain to protect migratory fish from pile-driving shock waves. This technique has since become standard for underwater construction projects.

"I'm proud of what I have been able to accomplish on behalf of children, working people and the environment, in my district and for our country," reflected Miller at the time of his retirement announcement earlier this year. "I have not won every fight that I have waged. And there remain, of course, many critical challenges waiting to be addressed. But I have no regrets about what I have accomplished and what I have tried to accomplish in the public interest." — John Goodwin

**Award of Merit: Hellish Stretch of Highway Now a Sublime Experience**

With its frequent rockslides and road closures, the old Devil's Slide that hugged 1.3 miles of the San Mateo County coastline was indeed hellish. Now the pair of inland replacement tunnels that opened in March 2013 safely usher cars through the mountains and past the once notorious segment of Route 1 between Pacifica and Montara.

And just one year after the tunnels' debut, the

"I have to give a huge shout-out to the talented team of designers, engineers and then the contractors who built the tunnel, because it's really a collaborative process that's resulted in a great solution to this problem we've had for many years," said Lennie Roberts, a prominent local environmentalist who began fighting in the 1970s for a tunnel instead of the freeway bypass originally planned to replace Devil's Slide.

Prior to the tunnels, the local economy suffered greatly from the frequent and lengthy closures of the road; the twin-bore tunnels are now a reliable and protected route for commuters and travelers in San Mateo County.

"This tunnel is behind all that landslide activity," Sowko explained.

Quickly following the opening of the tunnels, highway hell was reincarnated as paved heaven for nonmotorized travel. The Devil's Slide Trail, the latest segment of the California Coastal Trail, features bidirectional bike lanes and a 10-foot-wide lane for hikers, horseback riders, joggers and pets. Lookout spots provide stunning views of the blue ocean below.

Panels along the 1.3-mile path provide information on the history and geography of the coastal region — and the wildlife that is newly visible from the trail. "For decades falcons and other birds have been offshore and nesting right there," said Carla Schoof, a San Mateo County Parks community programs specialist who was heavily involved in the creation of the trail. "Of course when you're driving along that road, no one would know that."

Schoof was thrilled but not surprised to see a huge turnout for the opening of the trail, which now averages 1,120 users a day. "It's the peace and the relaxation and just the joy of being on that trail" that draws the crowds, she said.

— Natalie Orenstein



Once plagued by rockslides, this stretch of coastal highway has taken on a new life as a popular path for walkers, joggers and cyclists.

once-treacherous roadway reopened as a paved path for cyclists and pedestrians — who are free to soak in the gorgeous coastline views that were previously life-threatening to the motorists who dared take their eyes off the road. Together the two projects have brought relief and redemption for Devil's Slide, so it is fitting that they are sharing an Award of Merit.

The tunnels are the product of decades of public input and environmental reviews, and a vote cast in 1996 by San Mateo County residents supporting the construction. A group called the Citizens' Alliance for the Tunnel advocated tirelessly for the solution to the harrowing stretch of highway.

The process "was very involved and it took a lot of public meetings to understand what the concerns were," said Skip Sowko, the Caltrans engineer who became the project manager in 2000.

Engineers, designers and construction crews took immense care to protect the plentiful wildlife in the area, creating a pond to protect the red-legged frog population that calls this rugged environment home. The use of textured concrete at the tunnels' portals helps them blend in nicely with the natural terrain, per locals' requests.

"We're in a park-like setting, so the tunnels fit within that scene," Sowko said. He said commuters have given him nothing but positive feedback.



The portals of the twin tunnels are ringed with textured concrete that helps them blend in with the natural landscape.

**Award of Merit: Good Karma Bike Shop Pumps Up Mobility and Self-Esteem**

When Jim Gardner saw a homeless man on a rickety and unsafe bicycle, he was left with a lingering question: What is this man supposed to do to have safe and reliable transportation, especially if his bike is his only way of getting around? From the germ of this question sprouted Good Karma Bikes, a nonprofit organization founded in San Jose in 2009 that provides free bicycle repair services to underprivileged community members.

Since 2009, Good Karma Bikes has served 11,000 clients and given away 1,100 bicycles. No bike is too ugly for repairing at Good Karma, and everyone is welcome, from financially strapped parents seeking a bike for a child to individuals who rely on their bicycles as their primary mode of transportation. This volunteer-based organization not only does repairs but also teaches people how to fix and maintain their bicycles themselves. They even have a

Good Karma Kids program that allows youths the opportunity to get involved in everything from rehabilitating bicycles to giving bikes to peers in need.

"Quite honestly, Good Karma Bikes is amazing," said MTC Policy Advisory Council Member Randi Kinman, who works with low-income residents in Santa Clara County. "The dignity and respect that they show to all people — whether on their last step on the way down or taking their first step on the way up — is amazing."

Nearly 90 percent of Good Karma's clients are homeless, and less than 15 percent are employed. More than half of its clients earn money from recycling; of those, 90 percent use a bicycle to do so. Some 90 percent rely on their bicycles as their primary means of transportation.

Clients are invited to return as volunteers, where they learn bicycle repair skills and help others. "Some of our client-volunteers have acquired enough experience through our Certified Bicycle Technician job skills program to begin teaching others," Gardner said. "This is a terrific self-esteem boost, as well as an avenue to future employment and increased self-sufficiency."

To Gardner, offering this transitional employment in the bike shop is the real work of Good Karma Bikes, whose motto is "Transportation for Transformation." "Good Karma Bikes is not about bikes," Gardner said. "Bikes are the medium we work in." Instead, Good Karma is about providing adults in recovery, whether from substance abuse, homelessness or other challenges, the opportunity to change their lives.

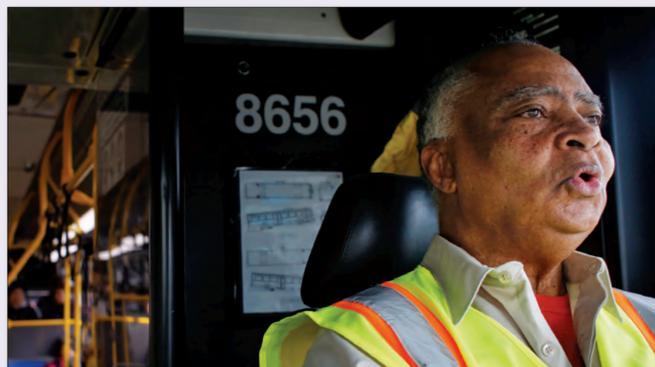
The organization has earned its Good Karma name in spades, and now it has also earned regional recognition in the form of an MTC Award of Merit.

— Kristina Wenzinger



Jim Gardner founded Good Karma Bikes and coined the phrase "Transportation for Transformation."

**David Tannehill Special Employee Award: Charles Davis Sings His Way Into Riders' Hearts**



Charles Davis' tuneful stop announcements not only brighten the lives of passengers, they also keep seniors safe by preventing bunching at the front of the bus.

Passengers riding on San Francisco Muni's 29-Sunset route expect their bus driver to make a host of stops between the Presidio and the Bayview. What they don't expect to find is bus operator Charles Davis belting out the stop names along the way.

"Deeep Blue Ooocean!" he croons from the driver's seat.

Charles Davis has been a Muni operator for more than a decade, driving routes as varied as the 27-Bryant, the 54-Felton and the 71-Haight/Noriega. "I started driving for Muni in 2003, and I had been trying to get into Muni since '79, so I was very elated to get in," Davis said. "I enjoy my work with the people. I'm very much a people person — it turns me on."

Soon after he started driving a motor coach for Muni, Davis realized that he preferred straight, long runs — routes that stretched across the city and took an hour or more to complete in one direction. The 29-Sunset quickly became a favorite route because of its lengthy journey from the Bay to the far reaches of San Francisco's northwest coastal corner.

"I began to notice that a lot of the older people would be crowding at the front of the bus," said Davis. "They wouldn't move back, even though there was more room in the back." He soon realized that many older riders were bunching up at the front because they couldn't see their stops coming.

As a bus operator, Davis was required under the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA)

to announce stops. But he decided to take his announcements one step further and sing them out. He had loved to sing since his days in the church choir and thought that adding some tunes might add more excitement to the task.

Once he began singing the stops, Davis found that older riders began to sit rather than stand near the front. Young students, on their way between home and school, often quieted down when Davis sang, curious to hear what Davis might create for their destination. Not only did his singing give riders a better sense of the upcoming stops, but also it made for a better driving experience for Davis: Having seniors seated meant fewer passengers at risk for injury in case he had to brake suddenly.

Today, Davis' riders expect him to sing out the stops, and after many years of doing so, it has become second nature for him. On a few occasions, Davis recalls, off-boarding passengers, in operatic voices, have sung back to him. "Thank you, operator, for a very good ride. It just made my day," would be a typical refrain. Others have slipped him notes thanking him for brightening up their days.

Now MTC is brightening Davis' day with the David Tannehill Special Employee Award, named for a talented MTC staffer who passed away at a young age in 2001. The award recognizes an employee who goes the extra mile to keep the region moving.

— Kristina Wenzinger

**Greta Ericson Distinguished Service Award: Cory LaVigne Built Consensus on His Way Up the Transit Ladder**

Growing up in DeKalb, Ill., Cory LaVigne had a fascination with all things related to transportation: planes, trains, boats and, of course, cars. His favorite activity was riding his scooter, and perhaps it was his love of driving it around town that led him to work first as a bus driver, and later as a planner determining the routes the buses would take and a manager involved in nearly every aspect of running a transit system.



Cory LaVigne's career spanned the transit gamut — from bus driver to high-level administrator.

LaVigne began his professional career while in college when he started working as a "Huskie" driver in 1991 at Northern Illinois University. He majored in political science but still had a passion for transportation, and by 1997 he had graduated and worked his way up the campus transit ladder to the position of route supervisor. In 1998 he made the move to administrator when he took a position with ATC/Vancom as interim general manager of operations in Chico, Calif. Later he made another career switch to become a transit planner at the Livermore Amador Valley Transit Authority (LAVTA).

While at this Bay Area bus agency, LaVigne managed a number of significant capital projects, and successfully implemented the Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) tracking system, developing rela-

tionships with local police and fire workers to maximize use of the system's security capabilities. In 2007, he was hired at AC Transit as a senior transportation planner, and later was promoted to director of Service Development and Planning. In this position, LaVigne was instrumental in obtaining \$10.5 million for improvements along Oakland's busy Route 51 corridor.

LaVigne was well-respected and well-liked by his professional colleagues and his many friends, leaving a big hole in their lives when he passed away unexpectedly in 2012 from heart failure. Laughing and smiling easily both at work and at home, LaVigne was known as someone who appreciated a diversity of opinion, ethnicity and culture, with an ability to make people of all backgrounds feel comfortable.

Kate Miller, currently the Napa County Transportation and Planning Agency's executive director and a former planner with AC Transit and MTC, is one of many who appreciated LaVigne's abundant people skills. "Cory was really good at building consensus," she said, "and he did that with members of the public, and he did that with a number of staff members throughout the industry."

— Pam Grove

**Doris W. Kahn Accessible Transportation Award: Naomi Armenta Keeps Alameda County's Senior and Disabled Riders Moving**

As a disabled professional woman living independently, Naomi Armenta relies on her wheelchair and the region's public transit offerings to get around. Her deep familiarity with and passion for Bay Area transit inspired a career in transportation — as well as an awareness of transit's gaps and potential for improvement.

Paratransit coordinator for the Alameda County Transportation Commission (Alameda CTC), Armenta is the recipient of the 2014 Doris W. Kahn Accessible Transportation Award (named after an MTC commissioner) for her commitment to providing access to quality transportation options for seniors and persons with disabilities.

Currently employed by the consulting firm Nelson\Nygaard, Armenta works as an in-house consultant for the Alameda CTC, where she's been since 2006 and efficiently oversees approximately \$10 million in annual sales tax funding for transportation for seniors and people with disabilities in Alameda County.

Armenta's personal experience makes her a powerful advocate for better transportation options for this population of riders — both on the job and in the leadership positions she holds.

"Not only is she an effective manager, she is also a strong advocate for the consumer," said Art Dao, executive director of the Alameda CTC.

Armenta introduced an enhanced definition of mobility management to Alameda County, with the goal of providing a seamless experience for the

rider. She secured federal funding to inventory all services available in the county — transit-provided paratransit service, city services and services run by nonprofit organizations — and to create a one-stop resource for senior and disabled residents.

Armenta is also responsible for revamping two existing county programs — the Hospital Discharge Transportation Service, which allows hospitals to arrange rides at the time of patient discharge, and the Wheelchair and Scooter Breakdown Transportation Service, which provides emergency rides when a user's mobility device breaks down. Armenta figured out how to use limited funding most efficiently for the services, which are offered to eligible riders free of charge.

"Many of our programs are fast becoming the model for the Bay Area and across the state," Dao said.

Armenta travels widely, exploring the nation's and other countries' transit systems. She is always on the lookout for new ideas.

"I consider Naomi a role model," said Sylvia Stadmiere, chair of the Alameda CTC's Paratransit Advisory and Planning Committee. Armenta offers the committee her personal experience and thorough knowledge of the laws, regulations and funding sources applicable to transportation for seniors and people with disabilities.

On top of her full-time work, Armenta manages to squeeze in time for additional endeavors.

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Naomi Armenta is on a crusade to provide a seamless experience for senior and disabled users of the public transit and paratransit services in Alameda County.

**Miriam Gholikely Public Service Award: Bruce Beyaert and Friends Transform Richmond Shoreline**

Richmond's Bay Trail is blessed with expansive Bay views, shoreline parks that connect with each other, and interpretive panels with tales about Richmond's history and its tidal wetlands, wildlife and offshore islands. It wasn't always this way, but thanks to the Trails for Richmond Action Committee (TRAC), founded and chaired by Bruce Beyaert, trail users can walk their dogs and hike and bike along miles of shoreline with killer views never before accessible.

When he retired from Chevron in the 1990s, Beyaert knew he wanted to devote his time to a worthwhile project. He was Chevron's manager of Environmental Planning worldwide, giving him the expertise to work with government agencies and other stakeholders. He founded TRAC in 1999, when Richmond had only about 12 miles of shoreline trail. It's taken 15 years and tenacious behind-the-scenes work to develop the additional 20 miles of trails that TRAC has completed so far.

"The key is partnerships and cooperation,"

Beyaert said. "We've worked with developers, the city of Richmond, private owners and many others. We became little worker bees, preparing grant applications to get the funding."

MTC is honoring Beyaert and TRAC with the Miriam Gholikely Award (named after a longtime MTC adviser and community activist) for their work with numerous stakeholders in expanding the longest single segment of the Bay Trail.

Not only has the transformed waterfront filled a crucial gap in the Bay Trail system, which ultimately will ring all 500 miles of shoreline, but also it has gone a long way toward improving Richmond's image.

One of the recently opened Richmond Bay Trail connectors is a three-mile path built around the West County Landfill, or "Garbage Mountain." Called the Landfill Loop, the trail boasts fantastic views of San Pablo Bay.

"Bruce believes in thinking regionally and acting locally, and his record of action bears out his

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Under the leadership of TRAC Chair Bruce Beyaert (center, holding sign), the organization has added 20 miles to the Bay Trail along the Richmond Shoreline, creating the single-longest segment in the regional path. Shown with Beyaert are TRAC board members (top row, left to right) Kim Hampton and Andrew Butt; and (front row, left to right) TRAC Vice Chair Bruce Brubaker, Interpretive Subcommittee Chair Donald Basin, and board members Jerry Rasmussen, Whitney Dotson and Nancy Strauch.

**Award of Merit: Caldecott Fourth Bore Eases Traffic — Beautifully**

When it comes to star quality in an infrastructure project, the Caldecott Tunnel Fourth Bore has it all. Delivered on time and on budget? Check. Innovative construction techniques? Check. Careful traffic planning to avoid disruptions? Check. Stellar safety record? Check. An element of art? Check. Improved the lives of tens of thousands of travelers? Check.

This vital, two-thirds-of-a-mile link along State Route 24 through the hills separating Alameda and Contra Costa counties boasts all these qualities and more. The Caldecott Fourth Bore was completed in just four years thanks to an aggressive program of simultaneous tunneling from both ends, not only opening on schedule, but coming in within the \$420 million budget.

Prior to the November 2013 opening of the Fourth Bore, crews needed to switch the direction of traffic in the morning and evening in the middle bore to accommodate the ebb and flow of commute traffic (and several times during the weekend as well). But even this intricate dance didn't solve the monumental traffic that strangled the roadways to and through the tunnel complex.

With the advent of the Fourth Bore, Caltrans could dedicate two tunnels to westbound traffic and two to eastbound traffic — a move that proved to be the key to loosening the traffic knots. Since the opening of the Fourth Bore, the 160,000 motorists driving daily on State Route 24 have been experiencing up to 10 to 15 minutes of time savings in the reverse-commute direction.

The winning outcome made the construction challenges along the way well worth the effort. As they guided gargantuan, specially made drills deep into the mountainside through layers of prehistoric rock, the miners were in constant danger of releasing dangerous methane gas, and had to follow stringent protocols and wear special gear to ward off mishaps.

While crews braved the potential for methane along with unstable, crumbling rock deep inside the earth, a public relations team waged a vigorous outreach campaign on the outside to keep the public and the media informed.

"The Caldecott is built in an urban area, and as such, it was very important to have a very close relationship with the community," said Caltrans Project Manager Cristina Ferraz. The project was a partnership effort with funding coming from a local sales tax administered by the Contra Costa Transportation Author-



The Fourth Bore is notable for achieving its mission of easing traffic to and through the Caldecott tunnel complex, and for including advanced safety systems to keep motorists safe.

ity plus federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds and regional bridge tolls from MTC. The Alameda County Transportation Commission also had an important role in delivering the project.

The new bore incorporates advanced safety systems, including 19 giant overhead jet fans to flush the tunnel's air in the event of a fire. The third and fourth bores are linked by seven passageways to allow evacuations. The project also includes a new high-tech operations and maintenance command center that watches over all four tunnels.

Through a competition, six students from Alameda and Contra Costa counties were selected to design decorative medallions that echo the Art Deco medallions incorporated into the two original 1937 tunnels. Celebrating the natural beauty of the hillsides surrounding the Caldecott tunnel complex, the new medallions were unveiled to thunderous clapping at the opening ceremony for the Fourth Bore.

It was hard to tell who was prouder at the event: the beaming artists and their parents, or the officials, engineers and construction companies who had banded together to deliver this model infrastructure project that clearly deserves its Award of Merit.

— Brenda Kahn



Student artist Aojfe Gorsbow poses with the medallion that she designed.

**Award of Merit: The Future Looks Sunny for SolTrans**

When elected officials and transportation agencies from Vallejo and Benicia came together to create Solano County Transit (SolTrans) in 2010, they did so with one shared purpose: to provide sustainable and efficient transportation services for the citizens of southern Solano County.

At the time, the overall economy was sluggish and the independent transit operators in Vallejo and Benicia were facing long-term financial sustainability issues. Given this shared challenge — and concerns about the cities' ability to serve the large population of transit users in the southern part of the county — city leaders along with the Solano Transportation Authority consolidated the two transit programs and formed SolTrans, a joint powers authority (JPA), in December 2010.

Less than a year after the JPA was established, SolTrans took over transit operations, saving more than \$1 million annually in operational costs. The agency put a fleet of 21 new hybrid-electric buses into service and developed the downtown Vallejo Transit Center, which now serves approximately 1.4 million riders annually. "We are financially healthy as a merged organization," say Mark Hughes, SolTrans Board of Directors chairperson and councilman from Benicia. "We were not as independent organizations."

One indicator of the three-year-old agency's success is its increased average monthly ridership, which has grown 5 percent over the last fiscal year. The farebox recovery ratio has increased more than 9 percent in the last two years, while the total number of accidents decreased significantly thanks to a new service contractor and an enhanced safety program.

SolTrans' creation "is the best thing to happen to us," says SolTrans Board of Directors Vice Chairperson and Vallejo Mayor Osby Davis. "We've had the ability to provide flexible service as well as on-time service, and it has worked out tremendously for all constituents."

SolTrans' yellow sun logo isn't the only thing that looks bright for the agency — so, too, does its future. The transit system is now on the verge of increasing frequencies and turning loop routes into bidirectional services, moves that would not have been possible without the partnership. "It is the way of the future," noted Mayor Davis about the merger. "If public agencies are going to survive, they are going to have to find ways to collaborate with each other because the resources are not there anymore to do it alone."

The combo of collaboration and creativity has been the magic formula for SolTrans, earning the system new riders and an MTC Award of Merit.

— Kristina Wenzinger



A SolTrans bus takes off from the handsome new Transit Center in downtown Vallejo. The move to merge and streamline transit in Solano County has drawn more riders while improving safety.

**Award of Merit: Bay Bridge Old and New Serves as Muse for Three Visual Projects**

The 75th anniversary of the original Bay Bridge in 2011 and the opening of the bridge's new East Span a couple of years later in 2013 put the spotlight on what has long been considered the region's work-horse bridge, and inspired three interrelated



visual projects that together are sharing one Award of Merit. These unique and creative projects illuminate — quite literally, in one case — the beauty and majesty of the Bay Bridge old and new, and the rich ecosystem and history of the Bay underneath.

**Bay Lights Art Installation Adds Sparkle to San Francisco's Waterfront**

The Bay Lights is a massive installment of 25,000 energy-efficient LED lights on the West Span of the Bay Bridge. It is the product of the coordination and creativity of dozens of people who merged technology, infrastructure and art to bring something uniquely Bay Area to countless viewers. Artist Leo Villareal's nightly light show adds sparkle to San Francisco's skyline, and dazzles locals and tourists alike.



The north face of the West Span of the Bay Bridge has become the canvas for a nightly light show that dazzles locals and tourists alike.

The kinetic Bay Lights display brings walkers and bikers to S.F.'s waterfront. "We all had high hopes but the reality vastly exceeded them," said Ben Davis, Bay Lights visionary and CEO of the nonprofit Illuminate the

Arts, which engineered financing and permits for the project. "It's not just a work of art. It reorients us and creates a sense of connection, exemplifying the metaphorical powers of bridges."

**Photographer Joseph Blum Gets Up Close and Personal With East Span Construction Crews**

While Bay Lights creator Leo Villareal explored the lines of the original West Span, it is the new East Span — and the men and women who built it — that inspired photographer Joseph A. Blum. The laborer-cum-artist brought his Nikon to the construction site soon after work began on the span, and has since produced an unparalleled collection of film-based and digital images of the crews and their work. A former boilermaker and welder, Blum marries mechanical fluency with a

keen sense of composition and color. Aptly titled "The Bridge Builders," Blum's most recent photography exhibit was displayed by the San Francisco Arts Commission at S.F. City Hall before moving to MTC's offices for an extended run. "I try to get as close as possible to the work and when lucky get an image that almost seems to be taken from the point of view of the worker in the midst of his or her labor," Blum said in his artist statement. Now in his 70s, the photographer



Intrepid photographer Joseph Blum has crawled, climbed and walked all over the East Span construction zone to capture the workers in action.

took the time to get to know each worker intimately and do justice to his or her strength, determination and courage — identifying each person by name in the captions accompanying his show.

"A lot of guys out here put in long hours, and you start to feel like a robot," an ironworker told the *Organized Labor* newsletter. "Joe coming out here almost every day, even when the conditions were tough, meant something to us."

**Oakland Museum's "Above and Below: Stories From Our Changing Bay" Exhibit**

While the Bay Bridge is the centerpiece of both Joe Blum's and Leo Villareal's work, in another case it was just one compelling feature of a multifaceted project. Tackling state and federal mitigation requirements with creativity, the Oakland Museum of California collaborated with Caltrans to develop an interdisciplinary exhibit about the Bay and the beauty that surrounds it. "Above and Below: Stories From Our Changing Bay," whose opening coincided with the new East Span's, explored the intersection of the natural and the manufactured, through oral histories, replicas, hands-on activities and artifacts from the bridge — including a twin of the infamous Bay Bridge troll statue.

was being able to work with so many different stakeholders, organizations and people who have such strong relationships with the Bay."

A clear marker of success were the visitors who would sit and watch the Center for Land Use Interpretation's 2.5-hour film of a flyover of the Bay's 500-mile perimeter for 30 minutes at a time — "insane for a museum exhibit," Pubols said.

— Natalie Orenstein



The launch of the exhibition "Above and Below: Stories From Our Changing Bay" was timed to coincide with the opening of the new East Span.

"It was very much a collaboration between the art, natural history and science perspectives," said Senior Curator Louise Pubols. "What was great

**Award of Merit: "Mr. Roadshow" Tackles Commute Issues**

Gary Richards, aka the "Mr. Roadshow" columnist for the Bay Area News Group, has heard it all when it comes to commute issues throughout the Bay Area. He's been writing his transportation column since 1991, back when readers called in with complaints and queries and he still used a typewriter. The column now appears six days a week in the *San Jose Mercury News*, the *Contra Costa Times*, the *Oakland Tribune*, the *Marin Independent Journal* and several other newspapers around the region, and he gets up to 1,000 emails a week in addition to tweets and Facebook messages.

ferrets out the reasons for the slow-downs and finds out when and how the issues will be resolved. As for distracted driving, aside from the ubiquitous talking or texting on cell phones, Richards' readers report seeing drivers painting toenails, shaving, knitting, reading books and applying makeup.

Bay Area News Group Managing Editor/Content Bert Robinson had this to say about Mr. Roadshow: "Gary — and this is rare for a journalist — understands issues the way real people understand them. He has an uncanny ability to give voice to the commuting public, on issues ranging from protected right turns to HOT lanes

Throughout the 23 years he's written the Mr. Roadshow column, Richards' wide readership has benefited from his unparalleled knowledge of transportation issues in the Bay Area. He has also saved lives by publicizing dangerous highway conditions. The Award of Merit honoring Richards this year is actually his second — he first earned an MTC Award of Merit in 1994.



Gary Richards' popular Q-and-A column started at the San Jose Mercury News, and now appears in a number of daily papers around the region.

"When they opened Highway 85 in Santa Clara County, there was no median barrier; it hadn't been put in the budget,"

Richards said. "I started getting calls from CHP officers and readers about the dangers. If it's a real safety thing, I'm going to write about it." After a series of fatal accidents on Highway 85, Assemblyman Jim Cunneen, R-Campbell, joined Richards in his campaign to install a barrier on the South Bay freeway. Largely thanks to their efforts, California adopted a new policy that added median barriers to highways throughout the state, greatly increasing safety on the road.

to solid white lines on the freeway. And because his readers know that he's there for them, they listen to him — I credit Gary in large part for the growing acceptance of carpool lanes and metering lights in this area over the last decade. No other journalist I know has quite that ability."

The Mr. Roadshow column isn't always a one-man show. Since he has faced some health challenges recently, Mrs. Roadshow, Jan Richards, drives her husband to work and back home, and frequently collaborates with him, providing her reaction to various issues. She coined the descriptive term "road boulder" (a slower driver who blocks a passing lane, refusing to move to the right). "I'm so proud of the work Gary does," she said. "He performs a real service as the voice of the driver, the commuter, the transit user. His work saves lives and changes conditions on the road. This award from MTC recognizes his value and the impact he has."

— Georgia Lambert

**Bruce Beyaert and Friends**

Continued from page 3

philosophy," said Laura Thompson, Bay Trail project manager for the Association of Bay Area Governments. Beyaert has been on the Bay Trail Board of Directors since March 2001.



After retiring from a career in environmental planning for Chevron, Beyaert used his expertise to engineer a major expansion of the Bay Trail.

While much has been accomplished, a 10-mile stretch of the Richmond shoreline has yet to be included in the Bay Trail. Access to the land — most of which is privately owned — is TRAC's biggest

challenge. Each segment of the trail also requires planning studies, CEQA compliance and design, as well as funding. Beyaert and his team of volunteers are steadfast in their determination to

see the trail through to completion.

"I'm a hiker and I love San Francisco Bay," Beyaert said. "The Bay Trail just sings to me."

— Georgia Lambert

**Naomi Armenta**

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In June of 2014, she earned her master's degree in Transportation Management from the Mineta Transportation Institute (MTI) at San Jose State University and was named MTI's Student of the Year in 2014 by the Council of University Transportation Centers. Additionally, she is the

current chair of the MTC Policy Advisory Council's Equity and Access Subcommittee and the city of San Leandro's Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee. She also is active in the Women's Transportation Seminar (WTS), earning the 2014 Rosa Parks Diversity Leadership Award from WTS' San Francisco branch.

— Leslie Lara-Enriquez

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