TO: HONORABLE CITY COUNCIL

FROM: CITY MANAGER DEPARTMENT: CITY MANAGER

DATE: FEBRUARY 9, 2004 CMR:153:04

SUBJECT: ENDORSEMENT OF A RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF REGIONAL MEASURE 2 – REGIONAL TRAFFIC RELIEF PLAN

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that Council direct staff to prepare a resolution of support for Regional Measure 2 – the Regional Traffic Relief Plan, which will be on the State ballot in March 2004.

BACKGROUND

In 2002, the California Legislature held hearings on the topic of traffic congestion in the Bay Area. The Senate Select Committee on Bay Area Transportation determined that traffic congestion will increase dramatically over the next 20 years. Forecasts reviewed by the Committee estimated that transbay traffic will increase by more than 40 percent and general traffic congestion could increase by an average of 250 percent by 2025.

To address this problem, the Committee recommended a $1 toll increase on all state owned Bay Area bridges with the exception of the Golden Gate. The toll increase is expected to generate approximately $125 million annually. Funding will be directed to projects that relieve congestion on Bay Area bridges and freeway connectors. The Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) will oversee the distribution of these funds.

DISCUSSION

Two projects identified in the Regional Traffic Relief Plan would have a direct impact on Palo Alto: the Dumbarton Bridge rail and the express bus service expansion. The Dumbarton Bridge project would provide a transbay rail crossing and allow for a connection between the Union City BART and Millbrae BART/Caltrain stations. The
express bus service project would provide for additional bus service in downtown Palo Alto.

The toll increase is considered a fee, not a tax. As a result it will only require a majority vote. Only voters within the seven Bay Area counties with bridges in their jurisdictions will be allowed to vote on the measure. Santa Clara County is one of the seven counties. If approved by the voters, the measure will take effect on July 1, 2004, and the $1 bridge toll increase would be permanent.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This resolution is consistent with existing City policies.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

This staff report does not represent a project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Sample Resolution – Regional Traffic Relief Plan

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