

Letter to Editor
July 6, 2004

To The Editor,
California residents consistently rank transportation as their first or second top problem, and Gov. Schwarzenegger has wisely chosen to use a billion dollars in Indian casino revenue for state transportation funding. Since transportation is crucial to our economy and quality of life, and the state has already diverted \$2.2 billion from taxes on gasoline, this was hardly the time for another drastic cut in the transportation budget.

The Building Industry Trust, a joint labor-management partnership between contractor associations and the Northern California Carpenters Regional Council, applauds the Governor's agreement with the five gaming tribes and thanks the legislature for supporting his efforts to restore transportation funding. Since the agreement would be nullified if either of the two casino initiatives on the November ballot passes, we also support the Governor's effort to defeat these measures.

The Indian compacts and the conversion of this year's Proposition 42 suspension into a short-term loan reflect recognition that transportation must be a state priority. California voters already understand this need. In 2002, they overwhelmingly approved Proposition 42, which requires that the sales tax on gasoline be spent on transportation. But the funds were nevertheless diverted to other programs.

Consistency of state transportation funding is crucial, for these projects require significant lead times - three years or more - for planning, design, funding and permits. Any break in this process, even if it is supposed to be temporary, disrupts people's lives and seriously impacts efforts to retain and attract jobs throughout the economy.

Investment in transportation infrastructure reduces congestion, decreases pollution, saves time and protects lives. Transportation infrastructure improvements also yield production cost savings. Continual improvement in our standard of living depends on our economy's ability to produce more with less. Simply put, the ability to move people and products freely is crucial to the effort to restore and uphold the dream that is California.

Sincerely,
Robert Alvarado
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