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MTC to seek law adding new members from Oakland and San Jose

By Denis Cuff
Contra Costa Times

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A Bay Area commission that allocates \$800 million a year in transportation money will seek a state law adding two new members representing Oakland and San Jose despite objections from its Contra Costa and San Francisco county members.

The Metropolitan Transportation Commission voted 9-3 Wednesday, with one abstention, to pursue the law that would shift power on the nine-county panel. The commission controls the purse strings for state and federal transportation dollars in the region, and coordinates transportation planning.

The commission has 16 voting members. One is a picked by the San Francisco mayor. The others are selected by county boards of supervisors, city mayor associations, and two regional agencies.

If the legislation passes, the two new members will be picked by the mayors of Oakland and San Jose, the third-largest and largest cities in the region, respectively.

A commission majority asserted the two big cities deserve direct representatives because they will absorb the biggest share of transit-oriented development needed for the region to meet state mandates for reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

"The whole sustainable communities strategy is about putting populations back in the urban corridors," said Alameda County Supervisor Scott Haggerty, the MTC chairman.

In a concession to less urban counties, the new law would limit any single county from getting more than three votes on the commission.

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Costa's two commissioners -- County Supervisor Federal Glover and Orinda Councilwoman Amy Worth -- voted no, suggesting their county was getting shorted.

"I think Contra Costa needs a place at the table on all these issues, and in many ways, it has been denied that," Glover said.

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