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Great Park light-rail system

By BETH KROM
Mayor of Irvine

Last week, the Register editorialized against the evils of public transit once again, errantly stating that "Irvine officials want to tap into \$125 million dollars that was set aside for CenterLine but not used to build a transit link to the Great Park" ["Irvine does CenterLine," Opinion, March 1].

California voters specifically earmarked \$125 million for the city of Irvine to invest in a fixed-rail guideway demonstration project when they passed Proposition 116, the rail transportation bond in 1990.

Prop. 116 does not reduce funding for roads. It produced funding for light- and heavy-rail systems to give commuters an alternative to polluted and overcrowded freeways.

Today, thousands of commuters use Amtrak and Metrolink daily to travel between Ventura County, Los Angeles County, Orange County, San Diego County and the Inland Empire. Our Irvine Transportation Center, which is immediately adjacent to the Great Park, is an important link in this vast network.

Irvine originally offered to contribute its Prop. 116 funds to the creation of a countywide light-rail system – CenterLine. When OCTA abandoned the CenterLine project the Irvine City Council unanimously voted to invest these funds in nonpolluting public transportation systems designed to get people to and around the Great Park.

We are now actively studying a number of transportation systems, which include a monorail, electric trolleys and a variety of nonpolluting shuttle systems. Our goal is to make it possible for people to arrive at the Great Park on public transportation, or to park their car once and spend the day.

The Register opposed the renewal of Measure M, citing fear that the Orange County Transportation Authority would focus its resources on "social engineering" – getting drivers out of their cars and into buses and trains. Orange County voters disagreed.

Apparently, the Register fears that a modern transit link to the Great Park could eventually lead to something much worse ... a nonpolluting light-rail system throughout Orange County!

Once again the Register has ignored some inconvenient truths: Our air is getting more polluted, our freeways are getting more congested, and the public rightly expects the government to provide transportation alternatives.

Here in Orange County, voters approved an extension of Measure M by a landslide vote of 69.7 percent. Nearly one-fourth of the \$11.8 billion generated by Measure M has been dedicated to public transit systems, which are designed to give commuters an alternative to

their automobiles.

What's your opinion?

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