



# AAA + Advocacy

Fall 2007

*For over 100 years, AAA has been a leading advocate on a number of issues including transportation funding, traffic safety, and consumer protection. In addition to being the voice for well over four million members on such issues, AAA has also been a trusted and reliable resource for our Members and the general public, providing objective and timely information about important issues that affect them.*

*AAA provides information to the public by reporting on traffic conditions and gas prices, issuing travel advisories, and through other similar services. Likewise, AAA often takes a public education role on a variety of issues like California's water crisis and upcoming ballot initiatives. This edition of AAA + Advocacy takes a look at how AAA helps get the word out on the important issues of the day.*

## California's Water Crisis: What You Need to Know

Californians rely on water to sustain our vibrant economy, keep our families healthy and maintain our quality of life. Yet as long as water flows steadily from our taps, most people don't think about what it takes to get water to our homes- or whether it will always be so readily available.

The truth is that California is facing serious problems that could ultimately lead to water rationing and reduced supplies throughout the state. California's aging water supply and delivery system could face multiple threats that could jeopardize the state's water supply. Among them:

- California's population is growing rapidly, but our statewide storage and delivery system has not been significantly improved in 30 years.
- Aging Delta levees are at risk of a natural disaster that could cripple water deliveries to 25 million people and 2.5 million acres of farmland.
- California is facing severe drought conditions, with 2007 ranking as a record dry year in some regions. If this continues, mandatory water rationing may be imposed in some areas.
- Climate change is reducing our mountain snow pack – a critical source of natural water storage – and may usher in longer drought and more severe floods.

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## Proposition 91

*The Unintended Ballot Measure*

The first initiative to make it onto the February 5 primary ballot got there completely by accident.

The "Transportation Funding Protection Act," as it was dubbed by its proponents, would limit to no more than one year that Article XIX and Proposition 42 transportation funds could be loaned to the general fund, and would take away the authority to make loans to the general fund from the Public Transportation Account. In addition, the initiative would eliminate the legislature and governor's ability to suspend Proposition 42 as of fiscal year 2007-08.

The California Alliance for Jobs initiated the signature gathering campaign in early 2006 to place the initiative on the ballot to protect money set aside under Proposition 42 from being loaned out. Passed by voters in 2002, Proposition 42 dedicated most of the revenue from gasoline taxes to improving streets, highways and transit systems. Since its passage, over \$2.5 billion in Proposition 42 revenue had been diverted to non-transportation purposes.

By spring 2006, the Alliance had enough signatures to qualify the initiative for the ballot, but submitted only enough to keep the measure "in the pipeline", hoping that the legislature would take the lead in creating their own ballot measure. Eventually the Legislature did, introducing Proposition 1A, a compromise that allowed the state to borrow money from Proposition 42 funds under certain conditions.

*(Continued on Page 3)*



(Continued from Page 1)

- Recent federal court rulings cut water supplies from the state's two largest water delivery systems by up to one-third to protect endangered fish-impacting people, businesses and farms throughout the state.

Although state and local water agencies have done much to promote water conservation and efficiencies, the collective impacts of droughts, climate change, increased population demands, supply reductions and potential natural disasters have created a crisis that cannot simply be solved through conservation alone.

In an effort to raise awareness of this impending problem, the Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA), a coalition of 450 public water agencies, has launched a statewide effort to educate Californians about critical problems now confronting the state's water supply and delivery system.

The effort began in September and will continue through the end of the year. For more information about the program visit: [www.calwatercrisis.org](http://www.calwatercrisis.org).

## Did You Know...

AAA can help you find the nearest gas or alternative fueling station in your area.

By using the AAA Gas Price Finder on our website, you can find gas stations with the lowest prices across the country. Information is derived from more than 85,000 outlets around the country.

AAA has also partnered with Clean Car Maps to help you locate alternative fueling stations in California and Nevada. Fueling stations for electric, hydrogen, biodiesel, natural gas, propane, ethanol, and methanol are all listed.

AAA also has toll-free numbers where 24-hour operators can help you locate the nearest fueling station while you are on the road, seven days a week.

Northern California and Nevada: 1-800-861-7759  
Southern California: 1-800-400-4AAA (4222)

## A Look Back...

### *Pioneering Commuter Traffic Reports*

At the 1954 dedication of the San Francisco International Airport, AAA took to the air in a Hiller Helicopter to direct drivers to the festivities. Hiller had hoped to launch its helicopter service as an antidote to traffic jams, but the public was more interested in its traffic reports. AAA responded to the positive feedback by reporting on traffic around the entire Bay Area over the coming Labor Day weekend— pioneering commuter traffic reporting.

The new reporting service was soon taken over by private sources. Within a few years, AAA began equipping cars with two-way radios to become the only exclusively ground traffic report service. AAA cars reported on traffic to a central station shared by the emergency road service dispatch center in San Francisco.

By 1967, KCBS broadcast AAA commute reports every fifteen minutes from 6:15am to 8:45am on the Dave McElhatton program, and from 4pm to 6pm each afternoon. AAA later reported traffic conditions to seven radio stations simultaneously using a special "Hot Line Phone."

Our traffic reporter fleet steadily increased as congestion worsened. Starting with seven radio-equipped cars in the 1960s, the fleet grew over the years to 35, 50 and 100 cars by 1988.

While cell phone and other technology eventually made our radio transmissions obsolete, we're proud of our groundbreaking traffic commute reports. Today traffic reporting continues to be more important than ever. Our favorite broadcast remains, "No stalls or accidents to report."



AAA pioneered commuter traffic reports with on-the-road reporters like this one at work near Highway 101. October 1980.



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Proposition 1A requires Proposition 42 suspensions to be treated as loans to the General Fund that must be repaid in full, including interest, within three years of suspension. In addition, the measure provides that Proposition 42 suspensions can occur only twice in 10 consecutive fiscal years, and not until prior suspensions have been repaid in full.

When Proposition 1A easily passed last November and rectified the problem, Proposition 91 was no longer needed. Proposition 91 was not expected to qualify for the February ballot, but it narrowly did with an unusually high number of verified signature. In a strange twist of events, the Alliance behind the initiative will write a ballot argument against it-saying to voters, "thanks but no thanks." It appears that there will not be an active campaign on its behalf.

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## AAA is Working for Better Roads

It's official, California has the worst roads in the country. And it's worse than just a dubious distinction. It means drivers in California face more dangers and higher costs than in other states.

Six of the nation's top ten metro areas with the worst pavement conditions are in California according to the latest TRIP report, three of which are located in Northern California (San Jose #1, San Francisco-Oakland #3, and Sacramento #6). Over half of roads in these areas are in substandard condition, which translates to the bumpiest rides for motorists.

Not only is driving on poorly maintained roads unpleasant, but it also puts additional stress on our cars. This increases maintenance costs, accelerates depreciation, and decreases fuel efficiency of our vehicles. TRIP calculates that California motorists in areas with the worst roads pay an *additional* \$600 to \$700 in annual operating costs attributed to driving on bad roads, nearly double the national average of \$383. And that's on top of having the highest gas prices in the country!

AAA is helping to raise awareness and find funding solutions for better roads as part of San Francisco's Good Roads Campaign. Let's hope that all this good work will lead to smoother roads ahead.

## November is "Hybrid Awareness Month"

Three years ago AAA decided to dedicate one month a year to really "drive home" its public education efforts around hybrid vehicles and other alternative fuel vehicles. And so November was declared "Hybrid Awareness Month".

Throughout this month AAA will offer a variety of activities and information to Members and the general public to educate them about hybrids and other alternative fuel vehicles and technology.

AAA will feature its second annual Greenlight Initiative Showcase at the San Francisco International Auto Show, November 22 – December 2. The AAA booth will feature six vehicles representing the latest in alternative fuel technology, including an all-electric converted Toyota Corolla, a plug-in hybrid that gets 100+ mpg, a Daimler hydrogen fuel cell car, a vegetable oil/biodiesel truck, and a compressed natural gas police car will be on display. Automotive experts will be on hand throughout the week to discuss the future of the automobile. Visit [www.aaa.com](http://www.aaa.com) to print a special 2-for-1 coupon for AAA members.

AAA is also proud to announce the recipients of the first Greenlight Initiative Grants. Applicants from non-profit, government and academia submitted proposals for projects that included awareness campaigns, vehicle conversions and dedicated research focused on the development of automotive fuels technologies. Grant winners include San Francisco's Department of the Environment, City of San Jose Environmental Services Department, and CalCars. Visit [www.aaa.com/greenlight](http://www.aaa.com/greenlight) for more details.

### AAA's Advocacy Mission

For more than 100 years, AAA of Northern California has steadfastly spoken out on behalf of its Members and the traveling public. Because our 4.4 million Members in Northern California, Nevada and Utah represent a broad section of the population, the association works for balanced public policy positions on a variety of issues ranging from traffic safety and transportation to consumer protection and the environment.