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The bill for public transit

March 1, 2007

Re "Give L.A. a free ride," Current, Feb. 25

I agree with D. Malcolm Carson's proposal to make all buses and subways free. Rather than funding his proposal through an increase in the sales tax, I suggest a more appropriate source of revenue would be an increase in the gasoline tax.

EDUARDO SUBELMAN

Los Angeles

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Carson's solution to our region's transportation problem is a well-intentioned but unworkable plan to replace Metro fares with a dedicated quarter-cent sales tax. He appears to be unaware of the existing portion of our statewide sales tax that is dedicated to public transportation.

The state's local transportation fund requires urban transit operators in California to recover at least 20% of their operating expenses from fares in order to receive their share of the existing quarter-cent statewide sales tax in that fund.

To eliminate fares, Metro would have to give up its portion of that fund, which amounted to \$286 million in 2006 and was shared with the non-Metro transit agencies in L.A. County. Because Metro already receives these funds, the sales tax that Carson proposes (in the same amount) would not be adequate to cover all the costs, or Metro would already be able to do so.

There is more to the equation than the simple "policy decision" that Carson claims, and there is no logic in giving up existing sales tax revenue in order to create another tax in the same amount.

KYMBERLEIGH RICHARDS

Public affairs director

Southern California Transit Advocates

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What a simple idea! Timely, magnanimous and practical too. And when one considers the size of the bill we all pay to endlessly clean up the air and water pollution from superfluous single-occupant autos, what a bargain to boot.

LOIS ARKIN

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