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Time to Make the Jetsons a Reality?

Oct. 30 Town Hall to focus on future of transportation

By Laurie Snyder

More than a half century after Hanna-Barbera first forecast flying cars and dogs jogging joyfully on space-age treadmills, Lamorinda's closet George and Jane Jetsons will finally get the chance to experience truly futuristic technology when Google comes to town with a self-driving car. That was part of the electrifying news from state senator Mark DeSaulnier, chair of the California state senate's Transportation and Housing Committee, who recently announced that he will be hosting a special Town Hall meeting Oct. 30 at the Orinda Library Auditorium from 7 to 9 p.m.

Scheduled well in advance of the mass transit meltdown that has irritated commuters across the Bay Area, the timing of "The Future of Transportation: Challenges and Opportunities" could not be better. In addition to having their voices heard on issues impacting personal and professional lives, Lamorindans will learn about intelligent transportation systems, current state policies, the negative impacts that inadequate funding and the insular culture of government agencies have on innovation, and potential reforms which could alleviate these issues.

"California will face many transportation-related challenges in the years ahead as our infrastructure ages.

Fortunately, California is consistently on the forefront of new technology," adds DeSaulnier. "As chair of the Senate Transportation and Housing Committee, I know how important it is to emphasize innovation as we plan for the future."

The audience will also hear from expert panelists Randell H. Iwasaki, executive director of the Contra Costa Transportation Authority (CCTA) and Thomas West of California Partners for Advanced Transportation Technology at the University of California, Berkeley.

But even DeSaulnier knows it's likely to be the Google gadgetry that will inspire the young and old to turn out. In addition to describing how self-driving cars work, Anthony Levandowski, Google's product manager for autonomous driving, will explain why the company became involved with transportation planning, what has been done with automated vehicles to date and how their increased use could benefit society as a whole.

So, be sure to bring Judy and your boy, Elroy. The event is free, but RSVPs are requested and should be sent via sen.ca.gov/1565/transportationtownhall. For more information, call (925) 942-6082.

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