

VIEWPOINT

The Business Journal welcomes letters to the editor.

Send letters to the Silicon Valley Business Journal
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FROM THE EDITOR

A step toward cleaner air

The geography of Silicon Valley is at the heart of one of its most vexing challenges.

The same flat, open land that was so conducive to our first major industry – agriculture – encouraged sprawl that's now a detriment to our progress and our brand.

I've written before about the benefits of density – people living, working and playing in urban centers linked by effective public transit. I've written about how attractive those urban centers are to the tech talent that drives innovation here. I've written about the lifestyle benefits of abandoning autos as a primary transit source.

It's time to talk about the health advantages of making Silicon Valley less reliant on internal combustion.



You can reach Editor-in-Chief Greg Baumann at gbaumann@bizjournals.com, 408.299.1838 or @SVBizGreg.

In addition to the stress and annoyance that Silicon Valley's traffic generates, cars and trucks produce the biggest portion of health-damaging ozone in Silicon Valley.

Spurred by Senate Bill 1339, Bay Area companies have an opportunity to adopt commuter programs intended to get smog-spewing, solo-driver vehicles off the road.

Under the programs that



FILE PHOTO

Reducing traffic makes Silicon Valley more competitive.

will flow from that legislation, companies may offer employees their choice of commute benefits such as the option to pay for transit, vanpooling or bike expenses with pre-tax dollars. It will also encourage transit or vanpool subsidies, a free shuttle or vanpool.

One immediate step Bay Area companies can take to push for clean air is to support groups like Breathe California of the

Bay Area, which advocates for lung health.

On May 9 and 10, Breathe California is holding its Breathe Extreme Challenge, where donors and fundraisers will get to rappel 15 stories off the top of the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Santa Clara.

I'll be one of the participants. I hope to see top Silicon Valley executives on the roof with me.

The Breathe Extreme Challenge is a small thing that points to a much larger issue.

It's in employers' best interests to do whatever they can to take cars off the road. Beyond the productivity lost to employee time stuck in traffic, cleaner air means healthier workers. It also is a step toward creating better functioning communities that are an employee-recruiting asset.