

CITY OF SANTA ROSA
CITY COUNCIL

TO: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
FROM: JASON NUTT, ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER
PRESENTER: SUZANNE SMITH, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, SONOMA COUNTY
TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY
SUBJECT: GOSONOMA – NOVEMBER 2020 TRANSPORTATION SALES
TAX BALLOT MEASURE

AGENDA ACTION: MOTION

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended by the Sonoma County Transportation Authority and Transportation and Public Works Department that the Council 1) receive a presentation from the Sonoma County Transportation Authority, and 2) consider, by motion, expressing support for the Sonoma County Transportation Authority's plans for placing the GoSonoma measure on the November 2020 ballot.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Measure M ¼-cent transportation sales tax will expire in 2024. In order to maintain Sonoma County's status as a self-help county and deliver critical transportation projects, the Sonoma County Transportation Authority (SCTA) is advocating for placement of a sales tax extension on the November 2020 ballot. The SCTA tax measure would be placed on the ballot by the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors and impose a 20-year ¼ cent sales tax that would not take effect until the tax imposed by the current Measure M terminates in 2024. SCTA's related GoSonoma Expenditure Plan restructures Measure M's program categories by shifting more funds to address local roadway, transit, bicycle and pedestrian needs and eliminates the Highway 101 and Sonoma Marin Area Rail Transit (SMART) programs. Local project needs are based on the Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP) with the identified needs derived from project submittals from public works departments, transit agencies and the SCTA/RCPA. SCTA will present on the GoSonoma Expenditure Plan and tax measure, and staff recommends that Council consider, by motion, expressing support for SCTA's placement of the measure on the November 2020 ballot.

BACKGROUND

The SCTA Board has been discussing when and how to ask voters to continue support for a local tax for transportation. In March 2019, then SCTA Chair Landman formed the

Measure M ad hoc committee to help focus the approach. Members of the ad hoc are Chair Susan Gorin and Directors Bagby, Gurney, Landman, Rabbitt and Rogers.

On July 9, 2019, SCTA issued a call for projects for the Comprehensive Transportation Plan 2050 asking project sponsors to identify and rank their 10 highest priority projects for consideration in a new SCTA tax measure; as well as submit and rank up to 5 transit projects. The result was just over \$3B in requests ranging from bike safety projects to interchanges across Highway 101 to SMART extension to Cloverdale with increased service.

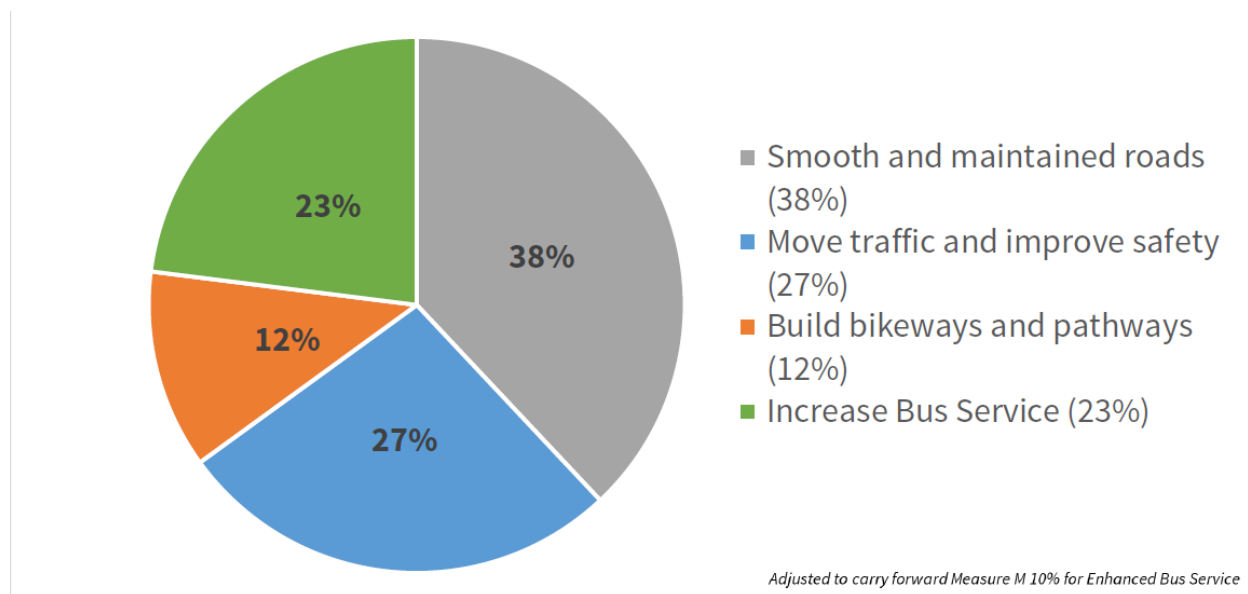


Figure 1 – CTP Measure Priorities by Category (Dollars in Millions)

In the early fall of 2019, the SCTA hired Muelrath Public Affairs and EMC to help guide and perform an initial poll. EMC conducted the first round of polling in September by surveying 600 likely 2020 voters. The results gathered by EMC were positive for a ¼-cent and less optimistic for a ½-cent.

According to EMC’s results, there was very solid support for a ¼-cent with 73% and good support for a ½-cent with 67%. However, EMC’s polling indicated that when presented with an opposition statement, the support drops to 64% and 58% respectively. After adding in “lean support” to the EMC polling, the numbers go to 66% and 59%.

Following the EMC poll, the SCTA ad hoc committee reviewed the project lists submitted by each jurisdiction and deliberated on a possible structure for the SCTA tax measure. The SCTA ad hoc proposed a strawman that was structured with two “buckets” of project types reflecting the importance of:

- a. Improving the backbone of the transportation system across all modes of road maintenance, active transportation and bus service, and

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- b. Connecting communities through infrastructure projects, both big and small, that help people move safely and reliably wherever they need to go.

The SCTA advisory committees reviewed the strawman proposal in late January and early February. In February and March, the SCTA Board took public comment and deliberated on the strawman. The direction to SCTA staff was to drop the proposed structure, simplify the content and provide greater detail on the overall expenditure plan. The DRAFT Expenditure Plan, GoSonoma, was developed to include four programs in two categories. SCTA staff has analyzed the CTP projects submitted as the highest priorities for the new measure and divided them into these categories and then applied the program percentage of the total need:

| | |
|--|-----|
| A. Fix roads, fill potholes, improve traffic – 65% | |
| Smooth & maintained roads | 38% |
| Move traffic & improve safety | 27% |
| B. Improve alternatives to cars, fight climate change – 35% | |
| Increase bus service, affordability, & first/last mile connections | 23% |
| Build bikeways & pathways | 12% |

ANALYSIS

According to SCTA, advancing the tax ballot measure in November 2020 will allow Sonoma County to:

- Keep Sonoma County’s status as a self-help county.
- Keep Sonoma County eligible for regional, State and federal funds and allows us to leverage those funds. Without it, Sonoma County won’t be competitive.
- Allows Sonoma County to start on new projects now – this will help with economic recovery and job creation.
- Help all modes of transportation.
- Continue the work Sonoma County has been doing for another 20 years and is not a new tax. Sonoma County has a proven track record.
- Cost effectively support transportation – if you spend \$25,000 a year on taxable goods (not groceries, rent, insurance, etc.), this measure will cost you \$62/year or \$5/month.
- Protect funds for transportation. These funds cannot be taken away by the State or any other entity. Can only be changed by the voters.

According to SCTA, benefits of GoSonoma for Santa Rosa may include the following:

- Provides \$10M each year directly to each city (Santa Rosa’s share approximately \$2.5M) and the County to pave roads.
- More than triples the amount of local funding for bike and pedestrian projects (such as the Highway 101 Bicycle and Pedestrian Bridge).

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- More than doubles the amount of local money going to local bus service.
- Dedicates 3% to first/last mile connections for transit and travel demand programs to get people out of single occupant cars.
- Dedicates 2% to fare free programs for groups like students and seniors. This will serve an immediate benefit and can serve as a match to regional and State programs that will grow the program.
- Identifies priority projects in each city and the County that improve traffic flow and safety. Will help get those projects shovel ready and provide local match to leverage outside funding.
- Urges use of technology to ensure reliability and safety; not just infrastructure fixes.
- Encourages jurisdictions to prioritize climate change fighting projects and help meet State and local GHG requirements.

A countywide poll was conducted for another topic the first week in May and included a question asking about support for placement of the SCTA GoSonoma tax measure on the ballot. The result from 600 respondents was 76% support; margin of error is 4%. Further details of these poll results/comments can be found in Attachment 1 – SCTA staff report from May 26, 2020.

SCTA's Schedule -

May 26, 2020 - SCTA Board Final Draft Expenditure Planned Draft Ordinance No.5
(See Attachment 2)

June 2020 – Cities and County Presentations

June/July 2020 - Poll #2

July 13, 2020 – SCTA final approval of Expenditure Plan

August 4, 2020 – Board of Supervisors places GoSonoma Measure on ballot

PRIOR CITY COUNCIL REVIEW

None

FISCAL IMPACT

Approval of this action does not have a fiscal impact to the General Fund.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

This action is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) because it is not a project which has a potential for resulting in either a direct physical change in the environment, or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment, pursuant to CEQA Guideline Section 15378.

BOARD/COMMISSION/COMMITTEE REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Not applicable.

NOTIFICATION

Not applicable.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1 - SCTA staff report from May 26, 2020 regarding GoSonoma
- Attachment 2 - SCTA Ordinance No. 5 with GoSonoma Expenditure Plan
- Attachment 3 - GoSonoma Info Sheet

CONTACT

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