

SACRAMENTO METRO ADVOCATES FOR RAIL AND TRANSIT (SMART)

Can Sacramento County Step Back from the Edge of Traffic Gridlock?

California has a long history of overdependence on the automobile. The number of vehicles on the road shows no sign of abating, vehicle miles traveled each year is going up, emissions will continue to harm people, and gridlock abounds in this state where there are more cars than people. Our collective reliance on automobiles burdens society with excessive costs, restricted mobility, and dangerous air quality. The Sacramento region will become the gridlock capital of California if we don't join LA and the Bay Area in generating adequate local public revenue for public mass transit and other safer and more affordable modes for getting to our daily destinations.

Current local sales tax from Measure A for transportation projects, including alternative modes and traditional automobile infrastructure projects, is administered by the Sacramento Transportation Authority (STA). Measure A's list of transportation projects was supported by voters in 2004. With federal and state funding for transportation projects limited, Sacramento County, its five cities, and our regional transit system are challenged by the backlog of transportation maintenance and needed safety upgrades, the demands from residents for more transportation choices, as well as mandates to protect air quality from our area's number one pollution source – vehicles.

STA board members are considering a second sales tax measure that will raise more funds to continue progress and avoid 'car-mageddon.' How to do this when there are \$12 billion of unmet transportation needs in the County and transit system altogether? How can the next sales tax measure hope to make the dent when the last Measure B proposed to voters in 2016 provided barely more than half of the 50% transit funds required?

Why Sacramento needs to invest in high quality public transportation

Public transportation is proven to effectively ease traffic congestion, facilitate economic and cultural growth within a region, is safe, and is overall better for our health. In the last 20 years, public transportation has gained in popularity. Total passenger miles traveled annually have increased by 15 billion, and the number of rail ridership alone has increased by 60%. It's important to note that population increase has a direct correlation with an increase in public transportation ridership. As the population increases in Sacramento, so will the demand for public transportation.

Our public transportation system needs to be modernized and expanded as quickly as possible to meet this increase in demand for connected, safe, affordable, green, and economy-boosting transportation choices. To do this, Sacramento Metro Advocates for Rail and Transit is advocating before the STA for several ideas that would give our region a better chance:

- Do not rush - adoption of a measure by February or March 2020 will give the board and stakeholders the time needed to craft the best measure and still leave ample time to pose the measure to voters.
- "Grow the pie" to generate the size of funding needed such as by extending the sunset beyond 30 years or aligning the termination date of the existing Measure A with whatever the termination date of the new measure is determined to be.
- Include sufficient flexibility, such as 10-year reviews of the funding plan to adapt to changing needs and technology with an emphasis on serving long-term mobility, social, economic, and

environmental sustainability. Or establish funding for pots of money for specific objectives, such as senior and disabled services, youth services, innovative services like micro-transit, or bus rapid transit (BRT), without counting against any baseline allocations of funding to different services or providers.

- Design the measure to maximize competitiveness of local transportation agencies and governments for state and federal transportation grant programs. This consideration includes obtaining funding under the SB 1 congested corridors, local partnership, and active transportation programs.
- Ensure that the measure will contribute to our ability to meet our county's Sustainable Communities Strategies requirements under SB 375 for reductions in vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and carbon emissions.
- And, emphasize "complete streets" for road rehabilitation or new road projects. Moving in this direction will keep residents, workers, and businesses rolling.