

Staff Report

To: SCTA Board of Directors **Meeting Date:** 4/13/20
From: Suzanne Smith, Executive Director **Item Number:** 4.1.2
Subject: November 2020 transportation sales tax ballot measure – DRAFT Expenditure Plan with Comprehensive Transportation Plan based funding levels
Consent Item: ☐ **Regular Item:** ☒ **Action Item:** ☒ **Report:** ☐

Issue

What is the content of the proposed DRAFT Expenditure Plan? How shall the SCTA proceed with a possible measure in the November 2020 ballot?

Recommendation

Provide feedback on the DRAFT Expenditure Plan and direction on next steps to keep SCTA's option of a November 2020 ballot measure available in these uncertain times caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Advisory Committee Recommendation

The Countywide Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee, Technical Advisory Committee and Citizens Advisory Committee all reviewed the DRAFT Expenditure Plan. CBPAC was generally supportive, TAC expressed on-going concerns about shortfalls in pavement funding and the CAC offered several collaborative comments that have been incorporated into the DRAFT as well as other comments about types of projects allowed and the program distributions that may require additional edits pending further stakeholder discussion. The CAC was pleased with the new structure of the Draft and, while they were not able to vote to support the Expenditure Plan, felt it was generally heading in the right direction. Several stakeholders are planning to convene and discuss prior to the April 13 SCTA Board meeting.

Alternatives Considered

A DRAFT Expenditure Plan format was emailed to all of the advisory groups on March 16 with blanks left in the four program categories. A prior strawman proposal was discussed by Advisory Committees and the SCTA ad hoc Committee and Board in January, February and March.

Executive Summary

The Measure M ¼-cent transportation sales tax will expire in 2024. In order to maintain our status as a self-help county and deliver critical transportation projects, the SCTA is considering a sales tax extension for the November 2020 ballot. The DRAFT Expenditure Plan with staff recommendation based on Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP) needs is derived from project submittals from public works departments, transit agencies and the SCTA/RCPA.

Policy Impacts / Nexus to Agency Goals

The SCTA currently manages a ¼-cent sales tax dedicated to a multi-modal expenditure plan known as Measure M. The DRAFT Expenditure Plan maintains the ¼-cent tax for an additional 20 years, eliminates the

Highway 101 and SMART programs, and re-structures the program categories to address roadway, bus and bicycle and pedestrian needs.

If voters do not renew Measure M by 2024, the SCTA and its member jurisdictions will no longer have a local funding source to leverage State and federal dollars for transportation projects. By putting a measure on the ballot in 2020, the SCTA will be able to plan for new projects and fund new projects sooner.

Financial Implications

Is there a fiscal impact to this item? Yes ☒ No ☐

Is there funding in the current budget? Yes ☐ No ☒

The funding source(s) to be used are: The cost of the election may need funds if the measure is unsuccessful. If voters approve the measure, the new measure funds can pay the election costs.

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 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, the 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 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.

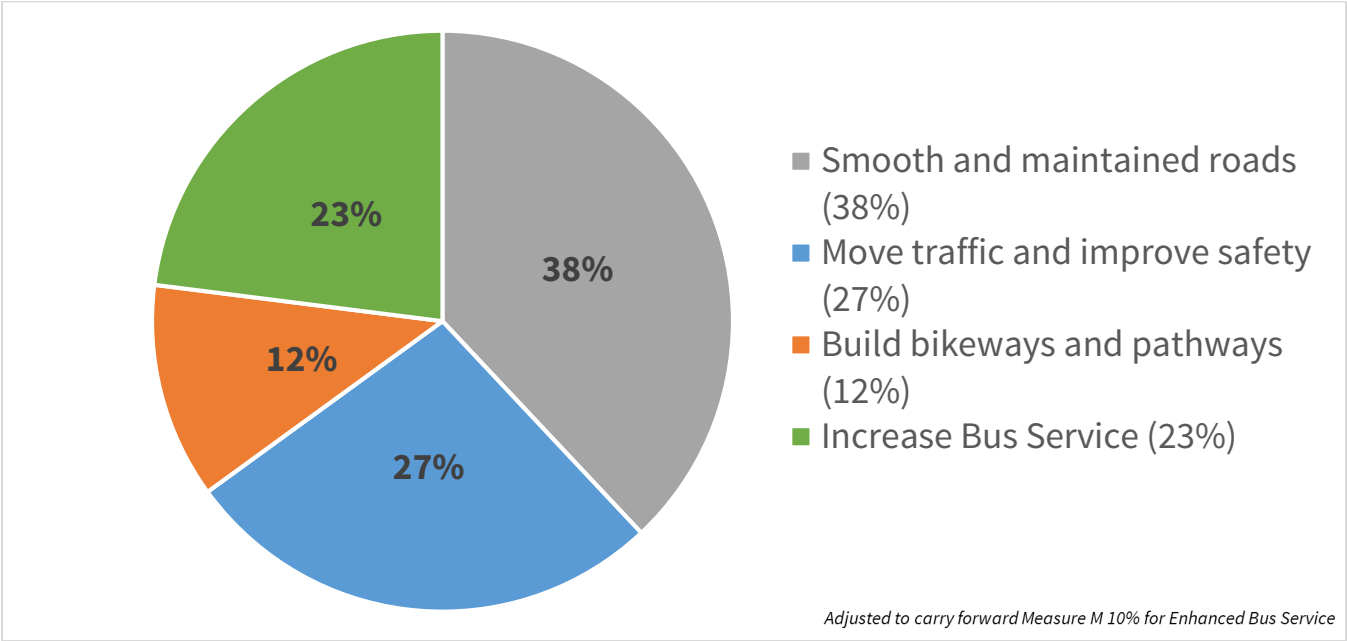


Figure 1 – CTP Measure Priorities by Category (Dollars in Millions)

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 were positive for a ¼-cent and less optimistic for a ½-cent.

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

Following the poll, the ad hoc committee reviewed the project lists submitted by each jurisdiction and deliberated on a possible structure for the measure. The 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
- 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 Board took public comment and deliberated on the strawman. The direction to staff was to drop the proposed structure, simplify the content and provide greater detail on the overall expenditure plan. The DRAFT Expenditure Plan is the staff effort to address these comments and provide a framework for the next round of discussions.

The DRAFT Expenditure Plan includes four programs in two categories. 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%

The cost of elements of the roadway projects that directly benefit bicycle and pedestrians can be quantified at approximately 25%; the result is an estimated 50/50 split between roads and alternatives.

Advancing the ballot measure in 2020 will allow Sonoma to:

- Plan now. From inception to completion transportation project take years if not decades to deliver. Planners and engineers need reliable known funding sources to develop and implement projects that will meet our transportation needs.
- Stay competitive. It allows Sonoma to be competitive leveraging regional, State and Federal fund sources.

Schedule of Next Steps	Target Completion Date
Advisory committee and stakeholder input	March/April 2020
SCTA Board Initial Draft Expenditure Plan	April 13, 2020
SCTA Board Final Draft of Expenditure Plan	May 11, 2020
Cities and County Presentations	May – June 2020
Poll #2	June 2020
SCTA final approval of Expenditure Plan	July 13, 2020
Board of Supervisors places on the ballot	Aug 4, 2020

Supporting Documents

Attached: DRAFT Expenditure Plan with staff recommendation based on CTP needs