

# Transportation Finance at the Ballot Box

*Voters Support Increased  
Investment & Choice*



Center for Transportation Excellence

# Transportation Finance at the Ballot Box

## *Voters Support Increased Investment & Choice*

## Acknowledgements

APTA Business members

The Center for Transportation Excellence (CFTE) Transportation Finance at the Ballot Box was written by Bridget Hennessey, Jason Jordan, Mary Karstens, and Stephanie Vance. CFTE gratefully acknowledges the input and assistance from transportation agencies, ballot measure campaigns, and local transportation advocacy organizations from across the nation who contributed to this report. CFTE's Advisory Board was also instrumental in providing guidance for this report. We thank the CFTE Advisory Board and the PT<sup>2</sup> campaign financed by the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) for their support without which the work of CFTE would not be possible.

i

## Center for Transportation Excellence Advisory Board

### **Jeff Boothe**

*New Starts Working Group*

### **Anne Canby**

*Surface Transportation Policy Project*

### **Art Guzzetti**

*American Public Transportation Association*

### **William Millar**

*American Public Transportation Association*

### **Janette Sadik-Khan**

*Parsons Brinckerhoff*

### **Rose Sheridan**

*American Public Transportation Association*

## Center for Transportation Excellence

CFTE is a non-partisan policy research center that provides information, strategies, analysis, and other support related to the benefits of public transportation. CFTE is a clearinghouse for research and information in support of quality transportation investment and expanded choice. CFTE is committed to defending the merits of transit and equipping local leaders with the information needed for successful public transportation ballot referenda and initiatives. For more information, visit us online at [www.cfte.org](http://www.cfte.org).

### **Center for Transportation Excellence**

1640 19th Street, NW, #2

Washington, DC 20009

T: 202.234.7562

F: 202.318.1429

[info@cfte.org](mailto:info@cfte.org)

# Transportation Finance at the Ballot Box

*Voters Support Increased  
Investment & Choice*

## Table of Contents

<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	<b>i</b>
Center for Transportation Excellence Advisory Board .....	i
Center for Transportation Excellence .....	i
<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>2</b>
The Rise & Success of Transportation Ballot Measures .....	2
<b>Ballot Measure Mechanics</b> .....	<b>4</b>
Defining Ballot Measures .....	4
Types and Structure of Ballot Measures.....	5
Innovations in Ballot Language .....	6
<b>Ballot Measures Related to Financing</b> .....	<b>8</b>
Sales Taxes.....	8
Property Taxes .....	8
Bond Issuance .....	9
Other Financing Mechanisms .....	9
<b>Looking Ahead</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>Case Study: Denver FasTracks Transit Expansion Plan</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>Case Study: Lansing, Michigan 2002</b> .....	<b>15</b>
<b>Case Study: Alameda County</b> .....	<b>17</b>
<b>Case Study: New York State</b> .....	<b>20</b>
<b>Case Study: Maricopa County, Arizona</b> .....	<b>25</b>

Notes

Additional Resources

## Executive Summary

One of the most important recent stories in transportation policy and finance has been largely hidden. That story is the unprecedented rise in the use of voter-approved ballot measures to generate local and state funding. Over just the last five years, communities in 33 different states have approved more than \$70 billion in new transportation investment, much of it for public transportation.

The number of transportation ballot measures has steadily increased since 2000, and these measures average a success rate of approximately 70 percent. The Center for Transportation Excellence has reviewed and analyzed transportation ballot measures over the period 2000–2005. This report outlines key findings regarding the electoral trends associated with ballot measure campaigns and the structure and substance of these measures.

Since 2000, few issues have proved to be as consistent a winner at the ballot box in recent years as ballot measures related to transportation, particularly measures increasing investment in public transportation. Successful measures have come from every part of the nation. The past two election cycles have seen notable victories on transportation measures in states as diverse as California and South Carolina, Alaska, and Massachusetts.

In 2004 and 2005, approval rates for transportation measures hit 80 percent. Early indications for 2006 suggest that this trend is only accelerating with several significant measures already approved in primary elections this year and 40 or more measures slated for consideration this fall.

This trend toward increased local investment is particularly striking in light of the fact that popular wisdom suggests that U.S. citizens are tax adverse: they are unwilling to support increasing their tax rates, and most are seeking ways to reduce their tax “burden.” Local, state, and federal politicians often take positions and make policy decisions based on this belief. However, a look at the data, particularly in relationship to

investments in transportation, shows a much different story. In fact, over the last five years citizens have demonstrated their willingness to increase local sales, property, and similar taxes in exchange for investments in their transportation systems.

This increase in local support can perhaps be traced back to the early 1990s, when the U.S. federal government developed a new approach to transportation financing. Through the Intermodal Surface Transportation Equity Act (ISTEA), Congress and federal agencies fostered a partnership with local and state transportation authorities in an effort to promote a more regional and comprehensive approach to transportation planning and infrastructure investment.

Subsequent authorizations (TEA-21 and SAFETEA-LU) confirmed and strengthened this approach. Local communities have held up their end of the bargain by working with citizens to identify sources of local funding, often through the passage of transportation-related ballot measures. In fact, from 2000 to 2005, 202 ballot measures were considered, with about 70 percent approved. If the success of the federal/local partnership in transportation is to be measured by increases in local investment and support, the past five years demonstrates that this partnership is an unqualified and overwhelming success.

*Since 2000, few issues have proved to be as consistent a winner at the ballot box as measures related to transportation.*

This report offers details on transportation measures at the ballot box over the last five years and insights into the total number of measures, level of investment, and overall win-loss ratios; the types of projects voters have indicated a willingness to support; the different types of measures that have been considered, including the varying types of financing measures considered; and anecdotal evidence as to why voters seem to be supporting these measures, including information from exit polls and other resources.

Overall, the data demonstrate a commitment on the part of citizens to the future of their transportation infrastructure. Policy makers at all levels would do well to learn the lessons from these local experiences because transportation ballot measures are here to stay. If anything, the availability of more federal aid with the passage of the Safe Accountable Flexible Efficient Transportation Equity Act – Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), means that more states and communities will be seeking funds necessary to match federal investments. In fact, federal transportation officials report that demand for transit investment continues at record levels. It is clear that local citizens are willing to maintain their side of the federal/local partnership—policy makers at the state and federal level must do the same.

## Introduction

Over the last six years a significant and ever increasing share of transportation financing has been generated through voter-approved ballot measures. The Center for Transportation Excellence (CFTE) has tracked state and local transportation ballot measure since 2000. The results are compelling. Over just the last six elections, voters in 33 states have approved 70 percent of all transportation measures generating funding conservatively estimated in excess of \$70 billion. For comparison, that amount well exceeds the total funding for public transportation contained in the recently passed federal transportation bill, SAFETEA-LU (which itself hit a record high for federal transit funding).

A look at the landscape of transportation measures since 2000 clearly demonstrates the willingness of voters across the nation to support expanded choice and investment with their tax dollars. Two hundred and two transportation measures appeared on ballots across the United States between 2000 and 2005. More than 130 of these were successful. A 70 percent approval rate for

transportation measures is remarkable when taking into account that, according to The Ballot Initiative Strategy Center, only 34 percent of all ballot measures are approved. This data exemplify the ever increasing local demand for transportation solutions and a willingness to pay for it on the part of citizens.

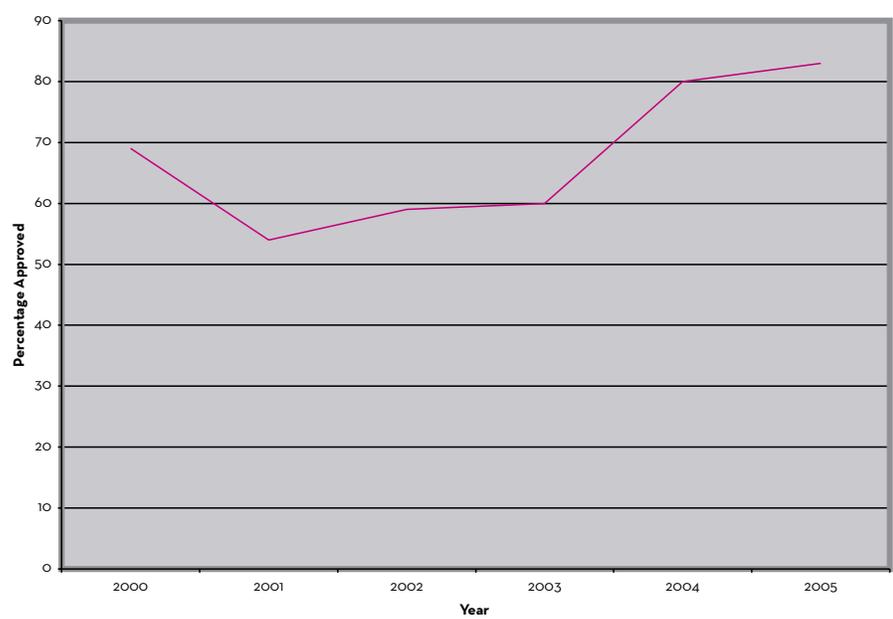
The purpose of this report is to examine the recent striking success of transportation-related ballot measures. In addition to documenting electoral success, this report closely examines the issue of project financing and citizen-driven demand for new investment and greater access. While documenting the growing success of transportation ballot measures and their vital role in project financing, the findings also demonstrate the political will of local communities to seek and fund new transportation choices and investment while reinforcing the critical importance of the federal-state-local partnership.

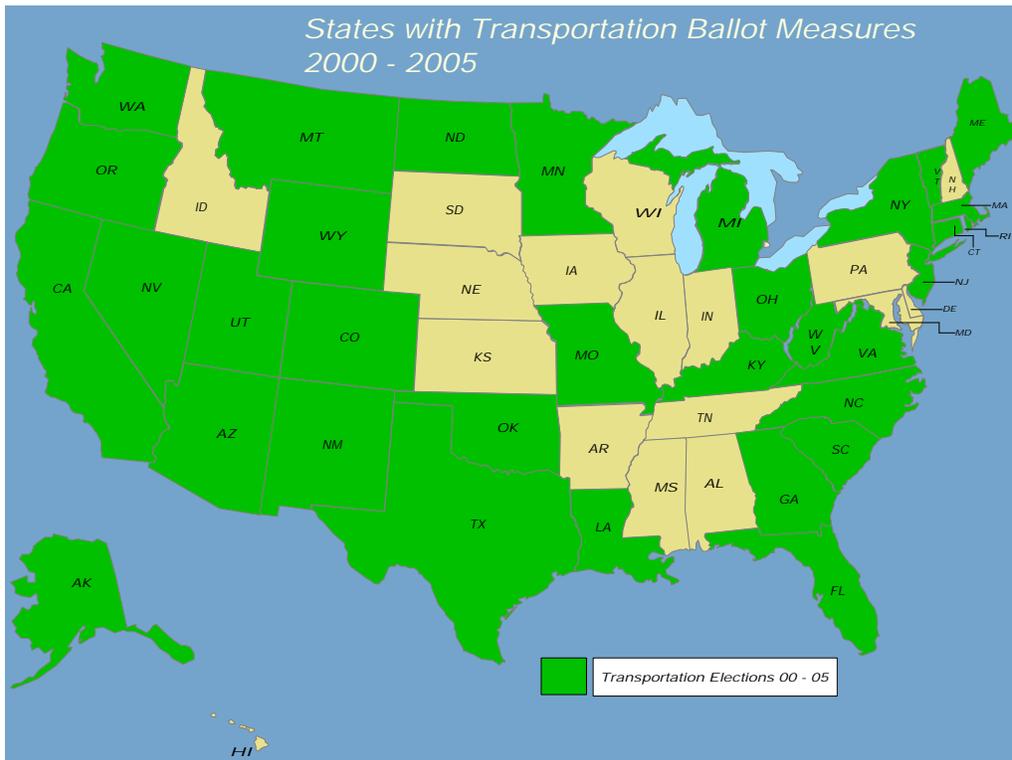
*Over just the last six elections, voters in 33 states have approved 70 percent of all transportation measures generating funding conservatively estimated in excess of \$70 billion.*

### The Rise & Success of Transportation Ballot Measures

With a 70 percent approval rating and over \$70 Billion in approved funding it seems clear that transportation is a top priority for voters. Congestion, rising gas prices, and limited transportation options are driving communities to look at more funding for transportation. According to the American Public Transportation Association, one in four households

Success Rate 2000-05





has no access to public transportation, and one half has limited service. Clearly, local and state government officials are seeing the increased demand from citizens for mobility solutions.

Due in large part to this citizen demand, the number of transportation measures appearing on the ballot has increased over the last six years. In 2000 there were a total of 36 transportation-related measures on the ballot nationwide and by 2004 there were 55 ballot measures. It is also important to note that these measures are not just appearing in booming urban centers. Successful measures have come from every part of the nation.

*The landscape of transportation measures since 2000 clearly demonstrates the willingness of voters across the nation to support expanded choice and investment with their tax dollars.*

Between 2000 and 2005 there have been several notable victories in communities not historically considered friendly to public transportation. Major victories were won in Phoenix, Denver, San Diego, Austin, and Charleston. Further exemplifying this trend, in 2000 Salt Lake City passed a one-quarter cent sales tax increase to expand light rail and bus service. In 2004, fourteen different counties in Michigan took transportation-related measures to the voters. Of the 14 measures, 12 were approved. Perhaps most compelling in all of this is the fact that these measures were approved regardless of the political affiliation of a particular state or region. In fact, unlike many other

issues, transportation measures defied the “red” - “blue” divide, with measures in 2004 being passed in seven states carried by President Bush and four states won by Senator Kerry.

More to the point is that 80 percent of the transportation ballot measures were finance related. Politicians are asking voters to make decisions on how to finance the transportation improvements. Financing measures include proposals to levy property taxes, sales taxes, and bonding.

For instance, in 2004 Sonoma County voters approved a sales tax hike that will raise \$470 million over 20 years to relieve the traffic congestion on Highway 101 and local streets. The Traffic Relief Act for Sonoma County, also funds bike and pedestrian projects and continues work on a North Bay passenger rail line. Like many other municipalities across the country Sonoma had asked voters to approve a long-term financing mechanism that will help to maintain the current transportation systems and build additional projects to meet the needs of a growing community.

The federal government has also played a role in the increasing number of transportation-related ballot measures proposing alternative financing structures. In the early 1990s, the U.S. federal government developed a new approach to transportation financing. Through the Intermodal Surface Transportation Equity Act (ISTEA), Congress and federal agencies fostered a partnership with local and state transportation authorities in an effort to promote a more regional and comprehensive approach to transportation planning and infrastructure investment. Subsequent authorizations (in TEA-21

and SAFETEA-LU) confirmed and strengthened this approach. In order for local governments to access federal transportation funding, the community must be able to come up with matching funds. Therefore, in some cases the availability of federal funding is motivating communities to ask voters to approve a local financing mechanism.

Though a majority of the transportation-related ballot measures are associated specifically with financing projects, there are a handful of measures that simply ask voters to advise on a future transportation project or create a transit authority. For example, in 2002 voters in Denton County, Texas, approved the formation a regional transportation authority. Transportation services for the county include regional commuter rail, express and feeder bus services, bus and park-and-ride facilities, and an elderly/disabled service.

*In fact, unlike many other issues, transportation measures defied the “red” – “blue” divide.*

These types of ballot measures are noteworthy because they prove that transportation and mobility are pressing issues in communities of every size. Across the country in urban, suburban, and rural regions alike, citizens increasingly demand a broader array of transportation options and greater efficiency from those options. Frustration from congestion and a lack of viable alternatives has led voters of all stripes to support new investments and system enhancements with their own tax dollars.

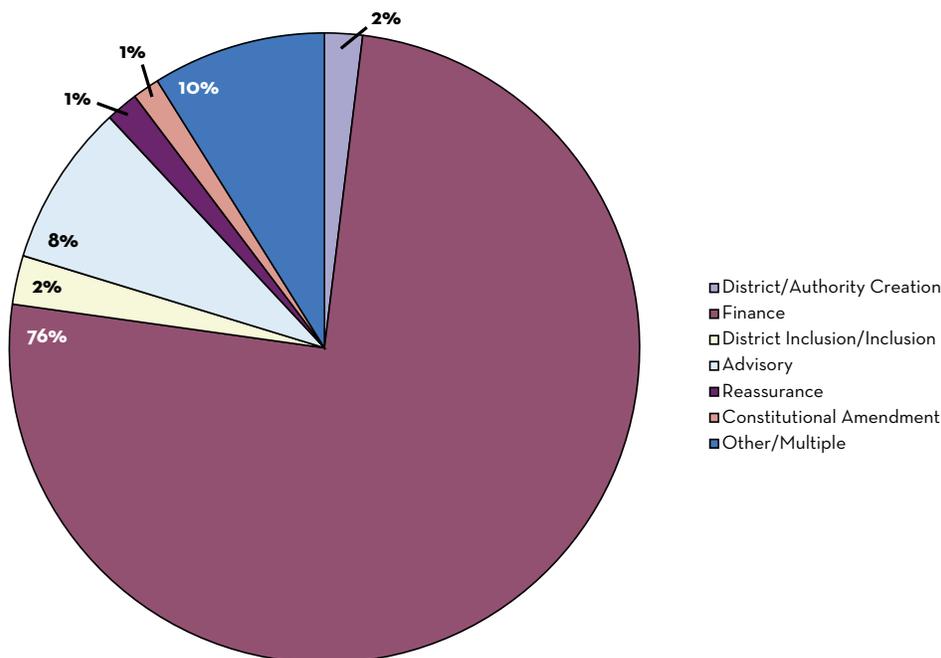
## Ballot Measure Mechanics

In order to better understand ballot measures, including the differences between the measures examined by CFTE, this section provides insights into ways in which measures may come to the ballot, as well as the various types of measures that citizens have been asked to consider.

### Defining Ballot Measures

Ballot measures refer to any of several specific varieties of electoral proposals, the most common of which are initiatives, referendum and popular referendum. Ballot initiatives are measures placed on the ballot through a citizen-petition process. Currently, twenty-four states have statutory provisions allowing ballot initiatives. Each of these states maintains their own requirements for signatures, process, and ballot language. Generally, initiative process states are clustered in the West and Midwest. Citizen-led

Percentage of Ballots by Type of Measure



initiatives may include constitutional amendments, statutory proposals, and advisory measures. No state limits funding for ballot initiative campaigns.

The other main variety of ballot measure is the referendum. This is a proposal that has been “referred” to the ballot by a state legislature or other elected body. Legislative referenda usually create laws, amend the state constitution, or refer bond questions. All states allow the legislative referendum process. Very often state constitutional amendments require referral to and approval by voters.

There is also a “popular” referendum in which citizens collect signatures to bring about a public vote on specific legislation that was enacted by their legislature. A constitutional referendum asks voters to approve or reject an amendment to the state constitution. Many cities and states also allow statutory referendums, where citizens vote on laws passed by the legislature or proposed by an initiative.

### Types and Structure of Ballot Measures

Ballot measures are generally divided into two broad categories: initiatives and referenda. Initiatives, as noted above, are authorized by about half the states and require a citizen-led petition process. Referenda are proposals referred to voters by elected or appointed bodies for final approval. In examining transportation-related measures from the past five years, several additional and distinct categories become apparent. Transportation ballot measures and infrastructure measures can generally be grouped into six types:

- The creation or authorization of a special district, usually for administrative, service, or tax purposes;
- Adoption or approval of some variety of specific financing mechanism for projects (various types of financing are discussed in more detail below);
- Inclusion or exclusion of a community from an existing district or authority;
- Advisory measures on existing or proposed plans and projects, usually non-binding;
- Reassurance from voters on plans or projects previously approved;
- Constitutional amendments; and
- A broad category of measures that authorize studies, change funding formulas, or make various corrections and changes to existing statutes or plans.

The well-documented rise in the use of ballot measures in the United States has focused considerable attention on the growing number of citizen-led initiatives in the twenty-four states that allow such measures. Although there has been a consistent increase in the use of ballot measures to authorize, plan, and fund municipal infrastructure, these measures are almost universally referenda (i.e., referred to citizens by an elected body), not initiatives.

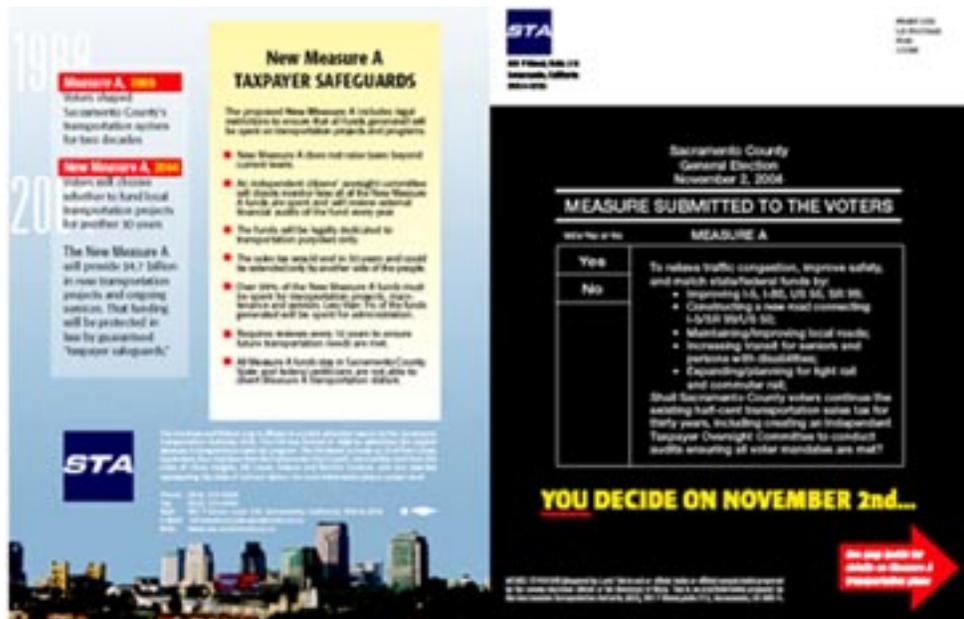
*The rising use of the referendum process to garner funding for projects suggest that officials often prefer to have voters directly authorize new investment and revenue.*

In some respects this is not surprising since such measures often find their genesis in the public agencies responsible for providing critical services (e.g., transit agencies), maintaining public assets (e.g., public works departments), or planning future development (e.g., metropolitan planning organizations). Regardless, the rising use of the referendum process to garner funding for projects suggest that officials often prefer to have voters directly authorize new investment and revenue. This trend has undoubtedly been reinforced by the striking success rate for such approaches.

Transportation ballot measures have been successful in all regions of the country since 2000 but these measures have been more prevalent in those states that allow citizen initiative. Of the 33 states in which transportation ballot measures have been considered since 2000, 18 are citizen-initiative states. In addition, those 18 states account for the majority of all transportation measures considered over the last six elections.

This trend comes despite the fact that most of the measures are referenda. In all likelihood, the high rate of passage of these measures can be attributed to the





focused on finance. However, the specific language of these measures has evolved in interesting ways over the same period. Communities are increasingly employing more specific language in proposed ballot measures or at least linking the financing mechanism on the ballot to a detailed project plan.

The use of detailed project provisions with ballot measures was an important component in two of 2004's most important transportation elections. When Maricopa County, Arizona, sought approval for a \$8.5 billion half-cent sales tax for a regional transportation plan that included light rail, officials crafted a ballot measure that provided voters with the actual map of projects that would be funded under the plan. The map was also a key part of the campaign's voter outreach effort. After previous rejections, the Phoenix plan was successful with 58 percent of the vote, a margin in part attributable to the specificity of the ballot language and aggressive promotion of the project plan.

Similarly, the campaign to pass Denver's \$4.7 billion FasTracks plan incorporated a detailed map of the projects to be funded under the ballot plan into virtually every aspect of the successful campaign. The project map was part of the official public participation and community outreach effort, as well as integrated into the campaign's media, education, and voter mobilization activities.

Campaign managers and transportation officials believe the linkage strategy is both sound policy and politics. It allows citizens to better understand the comprehensive transportation plans for the region and the interconnection between various individual projects and modes. Politically, it is successful because it combats the notion that a tax increase is simply a "blank check" for politicians. Additionally, it helps build a voter coalition because the specific benefits are well defined.

Another innovation in the composition of ballot measures is connecting spending to multiple transportation modes and other types of infrastructure. The benefits of such an approach in an electoral context are obvious. These measures are crafted to attract a broad constituency based on providing a variety of benefits. Many recent transportation measures include a combination of transit, highway, safety, and bike/pedestrian provisions.

Examples of comprehensive transportation measures abound in recent years. The successful statewide 2005 vote in New York not only divided funding between highway and transit programs but also avoided challenging regional politics by splitting resources between the state Department of Transportation and the Metropolitan Transportation Authority serving New York City and its environs. More common is the approach taken in San Diego in 2004 or the vote earlier this year in Pima County where funding is distributed among numerous specific projects that span modes.

A related strategy has been to bundle investment in several kinds of infrastructure or public amenities, such as schools, parks, open space, or water infrastructure. Currently, this approach is far less common than the multimodal language. However, some feel that last year's vote to rescind so-called "tax payer bill of rights" (TABOR) spending restrictions in Colorado was attributable to the broad coalition of interests brought together due to the impact on many different affected programs and projects. This year eyes will be on an historic \$37 billion bond measure in California that bundles transportation with housing, disaster mitigation, and education.

## Ballot Measures Related to Financing

Because the vast majority of transportation ballot measures deal directly with financing, this section of the report seeks to make clear the various types of mechanisms. The three most common revenue sources found in ballot measures are sales taxes, property taxes, and bonds. In addition to these commonly used tools, there exists an array of other financing vehicles, including fees from things such as gasoline taxes, rental cars, vehicle registration, and tolls. In some cases a single ballot measure may incorporate several different financing methods.

### Sales Taxes

Since 2000, the most popular financing method contained in transportation ballots measures is the sales tax. Approximately 40 percent of all measures with a finance component incorporated some form of sales tax. Of all transportation measures that won at the ballot box, about a third contained a sales tax provision—the highest percentage of any category of financing.

Sales taxes also provide the largest amount of transportation funding approved by ballot measure. The sales taxes used for transportation are typically a dedicated one-quarter or one-half cent levy. Usually the tax is provided for a fixed period, usually at least ten years and often longer, after which the tax sunsets unless specifically renewed.

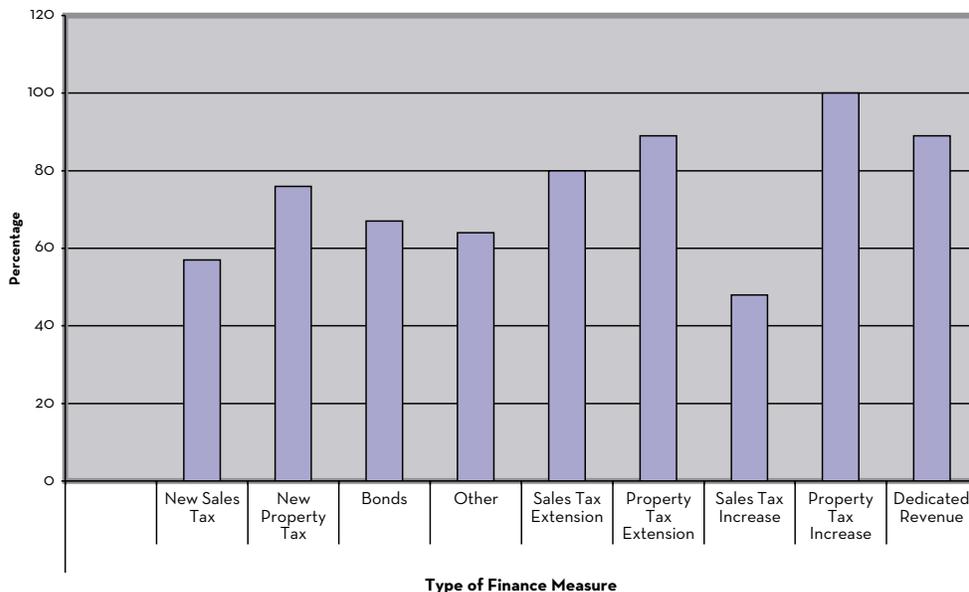
Since 2000 voters have approved just more than half (54 percent) of all sales tax ballot measures. The success rate for sales tax measures trails the overall approval rate for transportation ballot measures, but a direct comparison may be deceiving. Most of the California transportation ballot measures have featured sales taxes. In California, tax increases require a supermajority of two thirds in order to be successful.

### Property Taxes

For many communities, property taxes have become an important source for transportation funding. Seventeen percent of all transportation ballot measures involve property taxes and one-fifth of all successful initiatives are property tax measures. The use of property taxes has been particularly widespread in portions of the Midwest. In 2004 alone, fourteen property tax measures were on the ballot in various Michigan counties. Twelve of the fourteen measures were successful. Already in 2006, four additional Michigan counties have announced plans for a transportation property tax vote.

Property tax measures have the highest victory rate of any financing type. Since 2000, more than 80 percent of all property tax measures related to transportation have been winners at the ballot box. From 2000 to 2005, no ballot measure increasing an existing property tax for transportation has been defeated, and only

Success Rate by Type of Measure (Finance) - 2000-05



one property tax extension measure has gone down to defeat.

There is often a close connection between votes on the establishment of a transit district or inclusion of a community in such a district and property tax financing. Sometimes the connection is explicit with ballot language combining proposals for joining or starting a district and dedicating property tax revenue to support the service. In other cases, the property tax element may be implicit with voters deciding on the transit district issue alone but relying on general fund revenues that are usually driven by property taxes for funding.

For sales and property taxes, ballot language may establish a new levy, increase existing rates, or renew an expiring tax. Sales tax ballot measures since 2000 has tended to be either increases (56 percent) or new taxes (38 percent). Property tax measures over the same period have been more balanced with more than a quarter of these measures providing for a tax extension or renewal. Most of the property tax measures in recent election cycles have been to impose new levies (61 percent). There has been sharp growth over the past couple of years in the number of tax renewals and extensions coming before voters. This is likely to continue as previously approved measures begin nearing expiration. In 2006, four California counties will ask voters to renew or extend sales taxes slated to expire.

The success rates for new taxes, extensions, and increases are universally positive and relatively consistent. Measures proposing new taxes were approved 65 percent of the time, and those calling for an increasing in an existing tax or fee passed 54 percent of the time. The approval rate for extensions was over 80 percent, although it should be noted that the

sample size for extensions in the study period was small. Nonetheless, evidence from recent elections suggests that extension and renewals are proving popular with voters.

## Bond Issuance

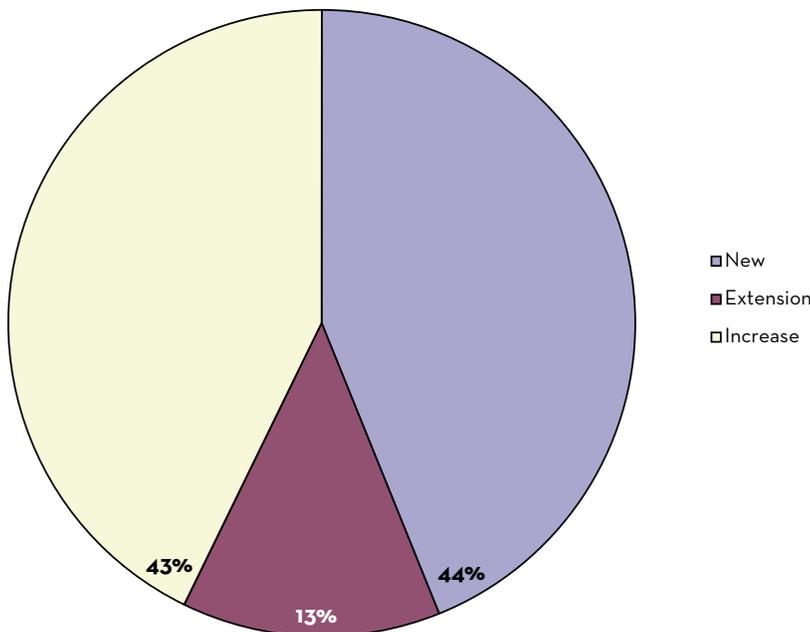
Despite the success of sales and property tax measures at the ballot box, some officials are concerned about relying too heavily on these resources. An alternative approach is asking voters to authorize the issuance of bonds to underwrite transportation plans and projects. The prevalence of bond ballot measures for transportation ranks just behind the use of property taxes with sixteen percent of all measures containing bonding provisions. Over the past six elections, more than two thirds of all bond proposals have been approved by voters.

Bond measures have gained particular prominence in recent years at the state level. In 2005, bond measures were adopted in Maine, New York, Ohio, and Texas providing nearly \$4.5 billion in new investment. California voters are set to consider the largest infrastructure bond in state history this November at \$37 billion, and other states across the nation will undoubtedly be closely watching the results.

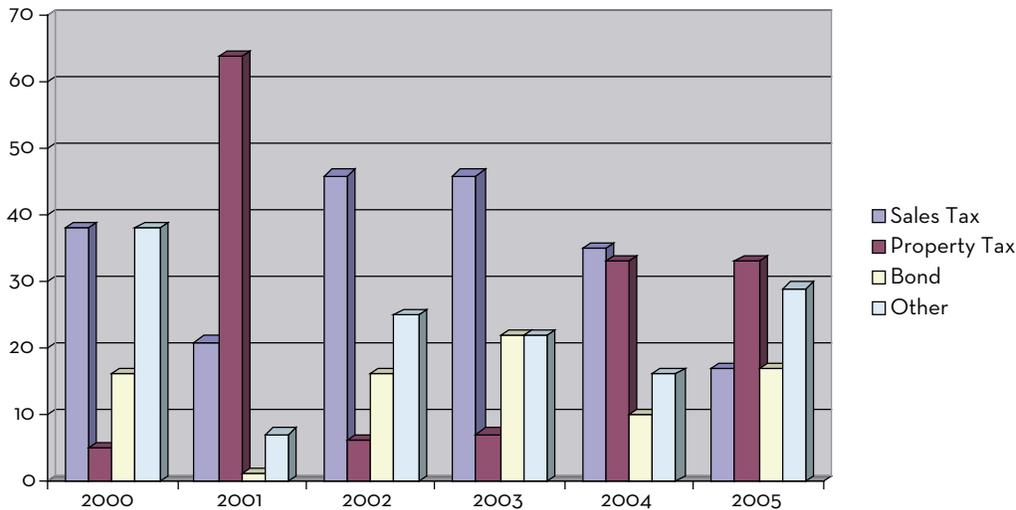
## Other Financing Mechanisms

Other financing measures rely on user fees, special surcharges, tolls, or other special fees or taxes. This broad group constitutes 22 percent of all finance measures. Between 2000 and 2005, user and dedicated fees have been popular with voters, winning nearly 90

Sales and Property Tax Measures



Finance Ballot Types by Year - 2000-05



percent of the time they were proposed.

Most user fee and dedicated tax measures are modeled on the federal transportation trust fund concept of relying on special levies related to use of the transportation system, such as the tax on gasoline, to fund investment in that infrastructure. This funding is funneled through the overall budget but rather specifically dedicated to transportation and “firewalled” from the rest of the general fund.

*Property tax measures have the highest victory rate of any financing type. Since, 2000, more than 80 percent of all property tax measures related to transportation have been winners at the ballot box.*

However, with gas prices hitting record highs, few states are pursuing gas tax hikes to fund transportation investment. Rather, states and municipalities are turning to other transportation-related fees. Often these include fees for such things as obtaining a driver’s license, registering a car, or buying a vehicle. Ballot measures do not always increase these fees. In some instances, the ballot language simply dedicates existing fees to transportation spending or alters spending formulas to broaden eligibility, particularly for transit services.

Examples of this approach will appear on ballots in Minnesota and Florida in fall 2006. Minnesota voters will decide the fate of a constitutional amendment to dedicate car and truck taxes to transportation. The Florida legislature has approved a local-option rental car tax that will allow county officials to place a referendum on ballots to charge a \$2 per day rental car fee. The proceeds would be used to fund local transportation.

Despite the relatively scarcity of new gas tax provisions, last year’s election provided an example of the public’s willingness to invest additional tax revenue—even gas taxes—in transportation improvements.

Washington voters rejected a ballot initiative effort aimed at rolling back a recent legislatively approved gas tax increase. The initiative was defeated 47 percent to 53 percent.

Other efforts to use the ballot box to limit the financial resources available for transportation infrastructure have also met with resistance from voters. Although Coloradans adopted a so-called “tax payer bill of rights” (TABOR) in the 1990s, voters last year approved a statewide measure that suspended TABOR for five years.

TABOR placed a cap of public expenditures that was tied to inflation and population growth. In polls and focus groups, many voters indicated they were concerned that the cap was prohibiting needed investment in transportation options and modernization that was potentially harmful to quality of life in the state. TABOR measures continue to be pushed by some ideological special interest and pose a continuing threat to transit and other public services. TABOR measures have been proposed in ten states in 2006 with at least two initiatives having already qualified.

California may well lead the way. A record number of counties in California are actively pursuing ballot measures. With the major state infrastructure bond already on the ballot, four county funding measures already considered by voters, and many other proposals pending for November, Golden State voters may ultimately approve as much as \$40 billion in bond and tax revenue for transportation this year alone. The trends identified in recent elections seem likely to hold for at least the short term electoral future.

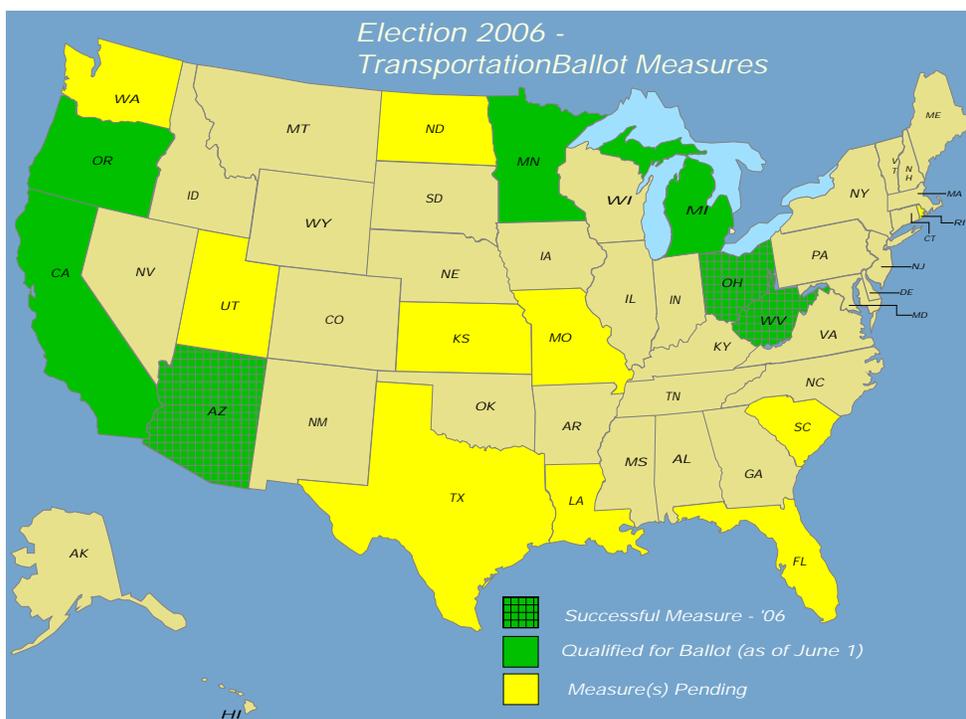
## Looking Ahead

*CFTE has identified more than 40 new measures likely to qualify for ballots this year ... 2006 may well rival 2004 for new transportation investment at the ballot box.*

Election 2006 is already in full swing with many of the trends identified from recent years clearly continuing to play an important role. Thus far, in the early primary elections of 2006, two significant victories have been won by transit advocates. In Canton, Ohio, 58 percent of voters approved a one-quarter cent sales tax extension that is expected to raise at least \$11.5 million annually for the next five years. The funding will support regional bus service. In May, voters in Tucson, Arizona, approved a sales tax investment dedicated to transportation expected to top \$2.1 billion over twenty years.

CFTE constantly monitors the latest developments in transportation ballot measures. Regular updates on transportation elections and proposed ballot measures can be found online at [www.cfte.org](http://www.cfte.org).

Communities in at least fifteen different states are currently in the process of approving transportation ballot measures for consideration this year. CFTE has identified more than 40 new measures likely to qualify for ballots this year. In terms of proposed measures and potential funding, 2006 may well rival 2004 for new transportation investment at the ballot box.



## Conclusion

So, why is the number of ballot measures not only increasing but also succeeding? Simply put, there is growing consumer demand for the public transportation product. This is evidenced by the surge in the number of communities seeking transit funding and record ridership levels on existing systems. Recent data show that transit ridership in 2005 not only continued to expand but also easily outpaced growth in auto use as measured by vehicle miles traveled.

*Voters are sending policymakers a clear message: we want better options and a better system ... and we're willing to pay for it.*

The base of support for these measures has been expanded by the alliance of business interests and environmental and smart growth advocates for public transportation. Most business leaders are now convinced that good transit is good for business, while environmental and smart growth advocates see public transportation as vital to solving underlying issues related to growth and development.

Increased investment in public transportation is seen as a high priority all across the nation and, based on the data collected over the past six years, ballot measures and voter-approved financing for transportation seems likely to continue growing. Voters are sending policymakers a clear message: we want better options and a better system ... and we're willing to pay for it.

## Case Study: Denver FasTracks Transit Expansion Plan

### Initiative 4A

#### Introduction and Overview

In November 2004, voters in the eight-county Denver Regional Transportation District (RTD) approved increased funding for the FasTracks transit program, which would build light rail and expand bus service in the Denver region's most congested transportation corridors. The increase to the sales tax provides \$4.7 billion for the comprehensive transit plan. Voters supported the initiative 58 percent to 42 percent to increase the sales tax from 0.6 to 1% (4 cents on \$10 of taxable spending), for which they would get at least six new rail lines (both light rail transit and regional rail), along with bus and other service improvements over 12 years. The sales tax increase became effective January 1, 2005. The earlier successes of Denver's light rail transit (LRT) helped drive the major rail transit expansion effort. FasTracks would provide:

- 119 miles of new light rail and commuter rail
- 18 miles of "bus rapid transit" service
- 21,000 new parking spaces at rail and bus stations
- Expanded bus service in all areas.

FasTracks will eventually link downtown Denver and nearby activity hubs, including the international airport, through the new rail network; expand bus rapid-transit service, and spur transit-oriented development, giving residents a chance to live within walking distance of jobs, shops and services, and making them less dependent on cars.

The RTD is a public agency created in 1969 by the Colorado General Assembly to develop, operate, and maintain a mass transportation system. The 2,327 square mile district includes all or parts of eight counties. The area population as of January 2006 was 2.5 million.

For the FasTracks 2004 initiative, supporters focused their efforts on planning, building coalitions and gathering community support, and substantial outreach to the voters.

## Ballot Challenges

### Opponents and Critics

Opponents included Republican Governor Bill Owens, the state treasurer, conservative think tanks, local anti-tax and anti-transit groups, auto dealers, and even the director of the Colorado Department of Transportation. Eleven Rocky Mountain news editorials opposed the plan. Having such politically astute opponents created obstacles in fundraising and getting public endorsement of some legislators and civic leaders.

### Lack of Organization in 1999

FasTracks's predecessor, the 1997 "Guide the Ride" initiative was similar in scope to FasTracks, but Guide the Ride was unable to overcome a number of problems. The first was an RTD board of nonpartisan directors each elected to a four-year term. The lack of cohesiveness of the board was played up by the press, which caused voters to distrust the \$6 billion initiative. The 1999 plan also lacked a regional vision with specific lines, technology, and stations; the support of business and elected officials; and adequate time to educate voters. Compounded by a poor campaign organization, the initiative lost 58 to 42 percent. This voter distrust was something that had to be corrected in 2004. For the 2004 campaign a prominent political consultant in Denver, CRL Associates, was hired by Citizens for FasTracks Success 16 months prior to the election to head the campaign team.

## Key Strategies

### Plan Early

The FasTracks campaign started early – one and a half years out – and gathered a great deal of grassroots support. In a highly unusual tactic, the campaign used only volunteers to gather signatures, which garnered positive press and demonstrated public support. Extensive polling drove a \$3.5 million TV and radio campaign funded largely by the business community. The campaign used the planning process as an opportunity to educate the public. RDT published several studies that defined a strategic growth plan that made light rail and other public transit projects high public priorities, an early draft of the plan was released in 2001.

### Community Groups Support

A wide array of supporting groups and officials from economic development organizations, environmental groups, and organizations representing the disabled, the elderly, and the disadvantaged teamed together for field activities. Support also came from 157 businesses, 26 local governments, 74 local elected officials – including 23 mayors, 14 state elected officials, and 2 federally elected officials. The initiative was also strongly pushed by

### Community

Metro Denver, Colorado

### Ballot Proposal

Referendum 4A

### Vote Date

November 2, 2004

### Success

58 percent

### Type of Ballot Measure

Increase the existing sales tax by 0.4% for expansion of the FasTracks rail system and increased bus service for 12 years. Total \$4.7 billion.

### Election Tagline

FasTracks YES!

### Transit Agency/Authority

Regional Transportation District (RTD). Began serving the Denver metro area's transit needs in 1973, with a comprehensive bus system. In 1994, RTD introduced light rail to the region. Its mission is to meet constituents' present and future public transit needs by offering safe, clean, reliable, courteous, accessible, and cost-effective service throughout the District.

### What's Funded

New Light Rail and Commuter Rail, Bus Rapid Transit, New Parking Spaces at Rail and Bus Stations, and Expanded Bus Service in all areas.

### Website

<http://www.rtd-denver.com/fastracks/>

Denver Democratic Mayor John Hickenlooper and urban developers.

### Gaining Business Support

RTD stressed the short-term economic benefits of 8,000 to 10,000 jobs over a 12-year construction build out, as well as the long-term economic impacts. The FasTracks campaign developed a Businesses on Board plan to encourage businesses to get involved with field activities. They worked hard to gather endorsements from local government leaders and the business community. They had the support of all 31 metro mayors and over 500 businesses and community members.

### Coalitions

The success of FasTracks was the product of a broad coalition including planners, transit advocates, environmentalists, business leaders, local elected officials, and developers. This effective alliance raised money and

launched an aggressive communications campaign. The coalition partners teamed up for a broad public education campaign that included everything from presentations at neighborhood meetings to old-fashioned precinct canvassing. RTD had a number of allies in the campaign for FasTracks, including the Transit Alliance, a non-profit coalition of 40 local governments, business associations, and citizen groups promoting expanded rail and bus transit to create and sustain a balanced multimodal transportation system in the Denver Metro region and in Colorado. Proponents formed the advocacy group and built the coalition several years before the vote.

One coalition member, Environment Colorado, released a timely report in support of the initiative that outlined how the FasTracks proposal would spur both economic and transit-oriented development throughout the Denver metropolitan area.

### **Framing the Message**

The basic message was: For just four pennies on a \$10 purchase, FasTracks will deliver projects on time that people will use and that will make Denver better. The main message was that the transportation package was balanced and comprehensive, and was supported by a diverse group of politicians and private organizations. Importantly, the campaign emphasized that the promises from the prior ballot measure had been kept.

### **Getting the Message Out**

Television was the primary medium used for advertising with some use of direct mail and outdoor ads. Television time was purchased and ads ran mid-August during the Olympics. The Transit Alliance was at the forefront for education and outreach, reaching over 15,000 in 2004 through presentations, street fairs, events, and a Speakers Bureau.

### **Responding to All Criticism ASAP**

Twice before, Denver tried a massive transit initiative and twice they failed. In 2004 proponents of FasTracks were much quicker in responding to their critics, staying on message, and doing opposition research.

## **Implementation and Performance**

Actual construction is not scheduled to begin for a few years. The RTD has been working hard with planning and the environmental processes for corridors and projects, procurement of light rail vehicles and buses, and hiring staff and consultants.

Highlights for the first year of FasTracks include accelerated purchase of 34 light rail vehicles, which saves RTD about \$40.8 million. The vehicles will be used on existing and committed light rail corridors, as well as future system-wide expansion. Delivery is expected over a three-

year period, starting in 2008. RTD has also accelerated the purchase of 120 buses in 2005, saving over \$3.2 million.

RTD completed the Corridor Scoping Study which refined corridor alignments and station location, confirmed right-of-way requirements, and provided cost estimates.

Milestones scheduled for 2006 include the groundbreaking of the Denver Union Station 18th Street tunnel work; selecting a master developer for Union Station; continuing the final design efforts on the West Corridor; launching a new FasTracks website; completing Draft Environmental Impact Statements for three Corridors. The new Southeast Corridor Light Rail is on track to start carrying passengers on November 17, 2006, about a month earlier than originally planned.

### **Ridership**

Public transportation in Denver carried its highest number of passenger trips in its 30 years of operation – 85 million passenger trips between September 2004 and September 2005, representing a 3.7% increase over the previous year. The Rocky Mountain News (October 19, 2005) reported that most of the ridership increase was on regional bus routes, although all modes of public transit have seen increases.

### **Economic Benefits of FasTracks**

The 12-year design and construction period of FasTracks is expecting to create an average of 2,413 construction jobs and an additional 3,799 indirect jobs each year for a total of 6,213 jobs annually.<sup>1</sup>

### **Benefits to Business**

The impact of FasTracks to businesses in metro Denver and the state of Colorado is far bigger than the jobs and spending created by the construction, maintenance, and operation of the system. Denver's once-declining downtown is attracting new commercial activity, including retail and banking institutions into the core area, as more and more Denver area residents, employees, and visitors pour into the city's heart. The Denver Post headlined a story on November 9, 2005, describing how Denver's LRT system and other public transport are a major factor in bringing people downtown.

### **Congestion Relief**

The population in metro Denver is projected to grow from 2.6 million people in 2004 to 3.4 million in 2025, a 31 percent increase. Employment is expected to expand by more than 600,000 by 2025. If all new residents attempt to reach their jobs by car, the increase in congestion will be enormous. Congestion can be addressed in various ways; one of which is to encourage people to take transit.

### **Environmental**

Air quality is the primary regional-level environmental



concern. During the summer of 2003, the Denver region violated the new, stricter standard developed for ozone. Overall, with FasTracks, air quality benefits would be small; the most significant would be a reduction in carbon monoxide and particulates.<sup>ii</sup>

### Accessibility

FasTracks is expected to improve employment accessibility region-wide. By 2025, there will be about 548,000 jobs located within walking distance of a rapid transit station – about 26 percent of all jobs. In addition, about 12 percent of all households will be within walking distance of regional transportation, and about 86 percent of all households will be within a five-mile drive of a rapid transit park-and-ride lot. FasTracks will provide increased accessibility to the Denver central business district. The estimated number of residents living within a 45-minute transit trip from Denver Union Station is expected to increase from 535,000 to 1,015,000 with the implementation of FasTracks. This will be an important factor not only for daily commuters but also for people attending special events in the downtown Denver area.<sup>iii</sup>

### Summary

The approval of this plan creates many opportunities to improve the quality of life in Metro Denver. In engineering terms, everything about Denver's new FasTracks project is unique, with this increased funding, Denver will have enough cash to construct the most complete public transit system of any metropolitan region in the West. When finished, the system will connect the full expanse of the Denver region in a web of new rail lines and bus routes. It will reach from city neighborhoods to suburban downtowns to fast-growing exurbs. The interconnected design means that most residents and important destinations will be a short ride or walk from a bus stop or a rail station.<sup>iv</sup>

## Case Study: Lansing, Michigan 2002

15

### Property Tax Millage Proposition

#### Introduction and Overview

Voters in Lansing, Michigan, voted 58 percent in favor on August 6, 2002, to implement an additional property tax millage of 0.82 (82 cents per thousand dollars of taxable valuation) to support the Capital Area Transportation Authority (CATA). The new millage will be added to the previously existing tax level of 1.4 mills. Had the measure not passed, the system would have had to implement significant service cuts in November 2002. The 0.82 mill increase is for five years (2003-2007) and will generate approximately \$3.9 million in 2003.

Proceeds from the special transportation millage are used to finance a contract with CATA to provide a bus transportation system in and around greater Lansing and also provides the bus system that links rural passengers with the CATA bus system. If the millage had not passed, CATA would have been required to reduce service across the board. In 2001 in order to make ends meet, CATA doubled student fares from 25 to 50 cents and eliminated about 40 hours of bus service each day. The 1999 voter-approved five-year 1.4 mill levy (\$6 million funds) didn't generate enough revenue to support the rising costs for gas, repairs, parts, insurance, etc.

CATA provides mass transit bus service within Lansing (the state capital), as well as to many nearby cities and suburbs. CATA also provides transportation throughout the Michigan State University campus with "Spartan Service" that operates during the Fall and Spring semesters. CATA also provides services in and around Lansing Community College and The Thomas M. Cooley Law School. CATA has the second highest ridership in the state of Michigan, next to Detroit.

CATA celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2002. CATA Executive Director Sandy Draggoo reported that demand for the systems service has doubled in the past few years, and in 2002 its miles of service had grown by 1,400 percent since CATA's launch in 1972. For a point of comparison, she noted that the population of Ingham

County, (Lansing is in Ingham County) had grown by just 9 percent in the past 30 years, while CATA ridership had increased by 980 percent.

Population in the region is forecasted to grow by 19 percent, or 86,680 persons from 2000 to 2020. Of this, 66 percent, or 350,921 persons, are projected to reside outside of the core urban area of Lansing, East Lansing, and Lansing Township. Most of this new population is projected to reside in the suburban townships surrounding the historic urban core of the metropolitan area. In this period the urban core is projected to grow by about 9 percent, while the remainder of the region is projected to grow at a rate of 25 percent.<sup>v</sup>

## Ballot Challenges

### Lack of Publicity

Even though CATA sent out a 30-year community report which contained an explanation of the millage proposition, many voters were not aware of the proposed increase until Election Day. One reporter commented that the tax proposal may have caught many “off guard” with “virtually no public relations or press coverage.”<sup>vi</sup> CATA buses did drive around Election Day advertising “Vote Today” in its electronic route windows.

### Voter Mentality

With a weak post-9/11 economy, some voters did not want an increase to their property tax to support CATA. Many Landowners affected by the increase may not have voted for the increase because they tend not to ride buses.

## Key Strategies

### Getting the Message Out

In preparation for the vote, CATA’s marketing department spread the word about the system’s dependable service, strong demand, and community support through a general awareness campaign, which included an outdoor ad campaign; a brief Community Report; print and radio advertising; web banner ads, radio remotes; and news releases.

The Community Report released in the Summer of 2002, was mailed to 77,000 households and posted on the CATA website. The Report highlighted the past 30 years of service and explained the millage proposition.

CATA took advantage of the messaging and image campaign developed by the program PT<sup>2</sup> (Public Transportation, Partnership for Tomorrow). They put up billboards using PT<sup>2</sup> Messaging, including the “Wherever Life Takes You,” tag line, and featuring customers.

CATA’s best messaging tool was their employees. All employees know importance of millages to both customers and the community and shared that knowledge with the community.

## Community

Greater Lansing Area, Michigan

## Ballot Proposal

Millage Proposition

## Vote Date

August 6, 2002

## Success

58 percent

## Type of Ballot Measure

To implement an additional property tax millage of .82 to support the Capital Area Transportation Authority.

## Election Tagline

Wherever Life Takes You

## Transit Themes

Serving All Walks of Life.  
Wherever Life Takes You  
The Wheels of Justice  
The BEST pick-up line on campus  
RIDE ‘til your roommate’s date goes home

## Transit Agency/Authority

Capital Area Transportation Authority (CATA). CATA, established in 1972, provides mass transit bus service within Lansing (the state capital), as well as to many nearby cities and suburbs.

## What’s Funded

Bus Transportation System

## Website

<http://www.cata.org>

## Implementation and Performance

### Ridership

Over 8 million Greater Lansing area residents were served by CATA in 2001 as it transported those passengers over 5.7 million miles. For many years into the foreseeable future, more and more senior citizens and residents with disabilities will depend on CATA for their basic transportation needs. CATA serves the neediest of residents – elderly, the poor, those with disabilities, college students, and schoolchildren. APTA reports that ridership increased 4.81% between 2004 and 2005 with a total of 8.6 million trips at the end of December 2005.

### Environmental

CATA recently introduced three new clean air initiatives for a healthier environment: 1) the use of reduced sulfur – lower emission – fuel; 2) new exhaust filters to lower emissions even further; and 3) longer, higher-capacity buses to move more people using less



fuel. “The environmental benefits far outweigh the slight increase in price,” said CATA Executive Director Sandy Draggoo. CATA pays 10 cents more per fuel gallon for the ultra-low sulfur diesel than with standard diesel.

CATA has a Clean Commute Options program, which is free and is dedicated to educating the community on alternatives to driving alone. The program’s goal is to encourage the community to participate in improving the Tri-County Area’s air quality.

Thousands of residents use bicycles to travel in the Greater Lansing area; CATA published a crosstown bicycle map available on their website. CATA has installed bike racks on fixed-route buses to make intermodal commuting easier and has bike lockers available.

### Accessibility

With 35 fixed routes, a CATA bus stop is in within easy walking distance homes. Fixed-route service provides an average of 27,000 rides every weekday, and more than 14,000 rides on weekends.

Coordination between East Lansing and CATA resulted in a cluster of new apartment buildings, which were geared to MSU students. CATA was able to be a part of the planning process, and orient their transit service and bus stops to generate significant new ridership.<sup>vii</sup> CATA now provides nine routes of MSU on-campus service and seven routes traveling on and off campus. Service is provided 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

CATA partnered with the city of Lansing to construct a \$10 million downtown intermodal transportation center, including places where riders could wait for transfers in a climate-controlled environment.

### Summary

CATA’s overall ridership continues to increase each year. For many years into the foreseeable future, more and more senior citizens and residents with disabilities will depend on CATA for their basic transportation needs. Millage levy funding is only authorized every five years. CATA had another millage proposition pass in August 2004 (60 percent to 40 percent) for continued service; and to replace both existing tax levies (1.4 mills approved by the voters in 1999 and .82 mill approved in 2002) with a renewal of a total millage levy of 2.22 mills (that being \$2.22 per thousand dollars of taxable value) on real and personal property located within CATA’s service area, for five years (2006-2010). This millage would generate approximately \$12.1 million in 2006.



## Case Study: Alameda County

### 2000 Measure B

#### Introduction and Overview

In the November 2000 elections, 81.5 percent of Alameda County, California, voters supported a measure to extend the one-half cent sales tax dedicated to both transit and highway improvements for twenty years. Measure B began collecting the sales tax on April 1, 2002, and will continue until March 31, 2022. Measure B is expected to generate approximately \$3 billion over the 20-year period (\$1.4 billion in 1998 dollars).

Measure B delivered a set of essential transportation improvements and services “to keep Alameda County moving.” The Alameda County Transportation Improvement Authority (ACTIA) was created to deliver the new projects and programs while Alameda County Transportation Authority (ACTA) finalizes the projects promised to the voters in 1986. Measure B supports the transit alternatives Alameda County residents need to get to work, school, shop, and their other daily needs. It provides crucial funding for transit, bicycle and pedestrian programs, and transportation services for the seniors and disabled, as well as the local transportation funds on which cities have come to rely.

In 1986, voters approved the one-half cent transportation tax with a 15-year expiration date with revenue collection from 1987 to March 2002. The November 2000 election was the last chance for voters approve an extension of the tax, rather than having to vote to reinstate the tax. An earlier measure – presented in 1998 to extend the one-half cent transportation sales tax for 15 years – received support from 58 percent of voters, but did not pass because the California Supreme Court ruled in 1995 that a two-thirds supermajority was needed for special purposes, including transportation taxes. The 1998 measure failed to garner the necessary support because environmental concerns and concerns from other geographic groups actively opposing the measure.

For 2000 Measure B, supporters focused their

**Community**

Alameda County, California

**Ballot Proposal**

Measure B in 2000

**Vote Date**

November 7, 2000

**Success**

81.5 percent

**Type of Ballot Measure**

Extend the half-cent sales tax dedicated to both transit and highway improvements for 20 years. Total \$1.4 billion (1998 dollars).

**Election Tagline**

YES on B

**Transit Agency/Authority**

ACTA and ACTIA. The Alameda County Transportation Authority (ACTA) is a special government agency authorized by state law and created by the voters of Alameda County to collect a half-cent sales tax and use the money for a specific list of transportation projects and programs in Alameda County.

The Alameda County Transportation Improvement Agency (ACTIA) was created pursuant to the voters' reauthorization of Measure B in 2000. ACTIA will oversee the expenditure plan in effect from 2002 through 2022.

**What's Funded**

Paratransit, Local Streets and Roads, Mass Transit, Transit Center Development, BART Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Improvements, Rail, BRT, Subway, and Bus.

**Website**<http://www.actia2022.org>

largely attributed to the building of a strong coalition that represented organizations with diverse interests and by involving these groups in the planning process. Alameda County is large and diverse, in 1998 the population was about 1.45 million and across the political spectrum. Some of the communities such as Berkeley tend to be politically liberal and other communities such as Livermore tend to be more conservative. Some communities are ethnically diverse and others are not. The eastern part of the county is growing rapidly but, at the same time, still has some open space, while the northern part of the county is not growing rapidly and has limited open space.

The transportation system in Alameda County comprises many transportation modes, highways and roads, traditional transit systems consisting largely of buses and paratransit, and Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART), which is a high speed rail system to serve the multiple needs of its residents. Alameda County has both a large bus transit system and a well-established rail transit system. Measure B brought more revenue into Alameda County and the ACTA was created to administer the funds and ensure project and program delivery. Approximately 60 percent of the net sales tax revenues are disbursed to the local jurisdictions (cities, Alameda County, transit agencies, and paratransit providers in Alameda County) for various transportation programs (22 percent for local transportation; 22 percent for transit operations; 10.5 percent for paratransit; 5 percent for bicycle and pedestrian safety; and 0.2 percent for the Transit Center Development Fund). The remaining net revenues (approximately 40 percent) are used to fund capital projects that are a mix of transit, highway infrastructure, local streets and roads, and bike and pedestrian safety improvements. Projects include 27 highway improvements, a BART-Oakland Airport "People Mover" connector, downtown streetscape improvements, and local roads.

**Ballot Challenges**

**Two-thirds Majority: A Tough Challenge**  
Measure B needed a two-thirds supermajority countywide to pass on the November 2000 ballot. The previous attempt in 1998 failed due to environmental opposition even though the measure received 58 percent of the votes. Improvements in the 2000 Measure led to unanimous and active support for the expenditure plan from the coalition groups. Measure B was the first transportation tax measure to pass in the Bay Area since the 1995 California Supreme Court supermajority vote ruling.

**Environmentalists**

Some environmental organizations led the opposition to the 1998 Measure. Many environmental organizations,

efforts on preparing a multimodal transportation package that would appeal to business, labor, and environmental organizations and local special interest groups within Alameda County. The success of 2000 Measure B is



most notably the Sierra Club and the Environmental Defense Fund, actively opposed the 1998 ballot measure. Some of these organizations were dissatisfied with their lack of involvement in the decision-making process and not were not in favor of the funding allocations; they wanted less money allocated to highway construction and more money allocated for transit operations. Due to the lack of environmental groups' support, some local politicians opposed the 1998 measure. The environmental organizations also targeted the editorial staffs of newspapers and were partly successful in these efforts. Two out of three San Francisco newspapers opposed the 1998 measure.<sup>viii</sup>

No organized opposition existed in the 2000 campaign based on the coordinated efforts with key stakeholder groups.

### Diverse Groups

The diversity within Alameda County created challenges when obtaining support from voters, particularly with transportation taxes that require supermajority approval. There was a challenge of building a coalition among disparate groups. To maintain the rather fragile coalition of business/labor and environmental organizations for the 2000 Measure, two political consulting organizations were hired; one consultant was selected by business organizations and the other consultant was selected by environmental organizations.

Perceived and actual transportation problems existed throughout Alameda County. In a survey conducted in August 2000, respondents identified traffic and transportation as the most important problem facing the county, with 50 percent of respondents indicating that traffic and transportation was the most important problem. Second highest was education and schools at 38 percent. The perceived transportation problem provided motivation for the various interest and community groups to reach a compromise for the 2000 transportation package.<sup>ix</sup>

### Lack of Fundraising and Organization in 1998

The 1998 Measure proponents raised a particularly low amount of funds to support the campaign, only around \$120,000; By comparison they raised \$900,000 for the 2000 campaign. The lack of fundraising success may also be attributed to the lack of involvement of prominent politicians in fundraising efforts during this campaign. Proponents also did not hire a political consultant in 1998. For the 2000 Measure, proponents hired two political

consulting organizations, one of which was the same consulting group that was used in 1998 by the opposing environmental groups.

## Key Strategies

### Coalitions

Measure B had a large base of support from a broad assortment of public interest groups, ranging from homeless advocates, regional Gray Panther and other senior groups, the Sierra Club and other environmentalists, to the League of Women Voters; and an unusual alliance of construction interests, led by the California Alliance for Jobs, and environmental and transit advocacy organizations, led by the Sierra Club. The Bay Area Transportation and Land Use Coalition (TALC) brought together many of these organizations to create a common platform and to work together for a greater share of funding for sustainable transportation. TALC was instrumental in negotiating the with ACTA for a decrease in the highway funding allotment and increased funding for public transit, paratransit for the elderly and disabled, bicycle and pedestrian safety, and funding for transit-oriented development. TALC then led a massive grassroots effort, signing over 300 organizations to the coalition.

### Framing the Message

Focus groups and surveys were used to help frame the message. These groups helped the campaign identify the messages what worked in the community.

### Getting the Message Out

Television was the primary medium used for advertising with some use of direct mail and outdoor ads. The main message was that the transportation package was balanced and comprehensive and was supported by a diverse group of politicians and private organizations. The campaign avoided providing a list of specific projects; they thought this would generate controversy. The campaign also gave less prominence to the large amount of money going to basic transit operations than to the other components of the package. Importantly, the campaign emphasized that the promises from the prior ballot measure had been kept.<sup>x</sup>

## Implementation and Performance

Four of the 27 capital projects have been completed and six are under construction. Substantial work has been accomplished on most all Measure B programs.

### Mass Transit

Program funds have been used to operate mass transit services on AC Transit, Union City Transit,



WHEELS in East County, the Oakland-Alameda Ferry, and the Altamont Commuter Express Rail. Measure B moves thousands of people each day.

### Local Streets and Roads

Funds are distributed monthly to local jurisdictions.

### Paratransit

Some examples of new paratransit services include return trips from medical centers, the creation of paratransit waiting areas at medical centers, and the increased availability of “same day” trips.

### Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety

The Countywide Bicycle Plan was adopted by the Alameda County Congestion Management Agency in 2001. Communities are using the funding to maintain facilities, close gaps, and construct new facilities, such as bike lanes and pedestrian crossings. In 2003, the ACTIA approved a grant program called the Bicycle and Pedestrian Countrywide Discretionary Fund. Currently, 15 projects totaling \$2.5 million have been funded. The first project completed was the City of Oakland’s Eastlake Streetscape and Pedestrian Enhancement Project.

ACTIA began the development of the first ever Pedestrian Plan for all of Alameda County in 2005. The Plan will be completed by July 2006 and will be adopted by both ACTIA and the Alameda County Congestion Management Agency.

### Transit Center Development

Alameda, San Leandro, and Pleasanton were awarded local match funds in October 2005.

### Summary

With Measure B funding and overwhelming voter support, communities in Alameda County are able to see clearly the improvements in safety, mobility, and efficiency that they helped to bring about with the Yes on B vote.

## Case Study: New York State

### Rebuild and Renew New York Transportation Bond Act Proposition of 2005

#### Introduction and Overview

In November 2005, voters in New York State approved (55 percent to 45 percent) a Transportation Bond to fund transportation needs in the state through 2010. The \$2.9 billion Transportation Bond Act is part of a larger five-year program that will help New York maintain and improve multiple elements of the State’s transportation infrastructure, including local roads and bridges, transit systems, the State’s freight and passenger rail network, airports, canals, and ferry and port facilities. The transportation capital plan is administered by the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) and the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA). The bond calls for the State to borrow \$2.9 billion for various transportation projects. Half the funds go to the MTA to help fund the construction of such mammoth projects as the Second Avenue subway, extension of the Long Island Rail Road to Grand Central Station, and new buses and cars for subway and commuter rail lines. The other half provides for nearly 130 specified projects to improve highways, bridges, mass transit systems and public transportation across the State road and bridge projects around the State. Funded projects include:

#### NYSDOT Transportation Bond Projects:

- \$1.13 billion for state highway and bridge projects
- \$50 million for non-MTA lines
- \$50 million for Canals
- \$76 million for aviation
- \$135 million for rail and port improvements

#### MTA Transportation Bond Projects:

- \$450 million for East Side Access
- \$450 million for the 2nd Avenue Subway
- \$100 million for the JFK Rail Link
- \$450 million for Core Infrastructure Needs

## Community

New York State

## Ballot Proposal

Proposition 2, Rebuild and Renew New York  
Transportation Bond Act Proposition of 2005

## Vote Date

November 8, 2005

## Success

55 percent

## Type of Ballot Measure

Legislative Referendum to authorize the creation of State debt and the sale of State bonds in the amount of \$2.9 billion to fund the maintenance and improvement of the State's transportation

## Election Taglines

Vote Yes New York

What's It All About

It's All About Expansion

It's All About Subways

It's All About Buses

It's All About Long Island Rail Road

It's All About Metro-North Railroad

## Transit Agency/Authority

NYSTOT and MTA.

New York State Department of Transportation  
District (NYSDOT)

Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA)

## What's Funded

Transportation needs through 2010 to maintain and improve multiple elements of the State's transportation infrastructure, including local roads and bridges, transit systems, the State's freight and passenger rail network, airports, canals, and ferry and port facilities. See listing of projects:

[http://dot.state.ny.us/files/bond\\_act\\_regional.pdf](http://dot.state.ny.us/files/bond_act_regional.pdf)

<http://www.mta.info/mta/bondact.htm>

## Website

<http://dot.state.ny.us>

<http://www.mta.nyc.ny.us/mta/bondact.htm>

handles over 100 billion vehicle miles. This total system encompasses over 110,000 highway miles and 17,000 bridges.

- An extensive 5,000 mile rail network over which 42 million tons of equipment, raw materials, manufactured goods, and produce are shipped each year.
- 456 public and private aviation facilities through which more than 31 million people travel each year.
- Five major ports which annually handle 50 million tons of freight.
- Over 130 public transit operators, serving over 5.2 million passengers each day.
- 12 major public and private ports which handle more than 110 million tons of freight annually.

The MTA is a public-benefit corporation chartered by the State in 1965. Since 1982 the MTA has been carrying out the largest public works rebuilding project in the country. MTA subways, buses, and railroads move 2.4 billion New Yorkers a year, about one in every three users of mass transit in the United States, and two thirds of the nation's rail riders. MTA bridges and tunnels carry nearly 300 million vehicles annually, more than any bridge and tunnel authority in the nation. This vast transportation network - North America's largest - serves a population of 14.6 million people in the 5,000-square-mile area fanning out from New York City through Long Island, southeastern New York State, and Connecticut.

New York State has a population of 19.2 million - a 1.3% increase from 2000-2004 - with 11.7 million registered voters. Support for the transportation bond act was strongest among Democrats, with 50 percent in favor and 41 percent opposed. Republicans and Independents were against the bond act by 5 and 7 points, respectively. New York City (NYC) voters supported the proposition by a 51 percent to 40 percent margin. In NYC suburbs, 49 percent supported and 48 percent were opposed; upstate, 41 percent supported and 48 percent opposed according to pre-election polls.

A similar referendum was voted down in 2000; upstate voters overwhelmingly rejected it, outweighing the support of city voters. Had the 2005 proposal not been approved, the federal government would not have provided additional financial support; federal monies were contingent on state contributions.

## Ballot Challenges

### Failure in 2000

Five years ago, there was a similar bond act on the ballot. Then, as now, opponents painted it as a ploy to put taxpayers deeper in debt. It was voted down 53 percent to 47 percent. As a result of the failed ballot measure equipment and services deteriorated, expansion projects

NYSDOT was formed in 1967 to deal with the state's complex transportation system and the ever-increasing need to coordinate the development of transportation with each mode serving its best purpose. Today, the New York State transportation network includes:

- A state and local highway system that annually



## Key Strategies

### Planning Early

Planning of the Bond Act started in December 2004 when a state advisory committee released an alarming report about the sorry state of roads and bridges entitled *Transportation - Trouble Ahead*. The governor and several state legislators released a Memorandum of Understanding mid-July to present to the people of New York an outline for the plan and programs for the Rebuild and Renew New York Transportation Bond Act.

### Community Support

A wide array of supporting groups and officials from business, labor, environmental, and planning organization backed the measure. Nearly every elected official in the state - including Governor Pataki and Attorney General Eliot Spitzer, Mayor Michael Bloomberg and challenger Fernando Ferrer, Senate Majority Leader Joseph Bruno and Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver, and City Comptroller William Thompson - supported the bond act.

Other backers include many major trade, labor, business, environmental, and consumer organizations, including the NYS AFL-CIO, Transit Workers Union - Local 100, New York Building Congress, New York Building Congress, the Partnership for New York City, General Contractors Association of New York, the Construction Industry Council of the Hudson Valley, Environmental Defense, New York League of Conservation Voters, Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA, Empire State Transportation Alliance, Transportation Alternatives, New York State Motor Truck Association, the Regional Plan Association, the New York State County Highway Superintendents Association, and the American Planning Association of New York Metro Chapter, and the League of Conservation Voters. The list goes on and on.

### Gaining Business Support

Business support was wide and across the State. Supporters included the Business Council of New York State Inc. and the Building Congress - New York's largest and most diverse coalition of design, construction, and real estate organizations. The Building Congress raised more than \$100,000 that was used for public awareness initiatives, including pamphlets, posters, brochures, press conferences and advertising.

### Coalitions

The VOTE YES Coalition was made up of business and union leaders, engineers, and commuter-advocacy groups. The group also includes two lawmakers, Senate Transportation Committee chairman Thomas Libous (R-Binghamton) and Assemblyman Richard Brodsky (D-Greenburgh).

stalled, and the City was unable to quickly upgrade security systems after 9/11. In the NYC metropolitan region, commuters account for 8 million rides a day and they paid the price of the 2000 defeat; fares had to be raised in 2003 to keep the system functioning. The State failed to define before Election Day a list of projects financed by the bond - a key failure. The promised projects were vague, opponents were vocal, and voters upstate believed NYC would get the lion's share of the money. State officials and other supporters admitted they didn't do a good job selling the public on the plan. Governor George Pataki who did little to promote the 2000 transportation bond act actively campaigned for the 2005 proposal.

### Opponents and Critics

The bond attracted opposition, primarily from groups that feel the state already has too much debt. The Citizens Budget Commission (CBC) said that the Bond Act would authorize just \$2.9 billion of an additional \$13.2 billion in new State debt, which the State cannot afford. The CBC argued that voters should reject the bond act as the only way to say no to the overall growth in borrowing. The CBC is a nonpartisan, nonprofit civic organization devoted to influencing constructive change in the finances and services of NYC and New York State government.

The Automobile Club of New York also urged for voters to reject the Transportation Bond Act. The Auto Club criticized the state for raiding the highway trust fund, whose revenues come from the gas tax and auto registration fees. The Auto Club said that the state has used trust fund revenues to plug general budget shortfalls.

New York State Conservative Party leader Michael Long was reported saying that the Bond Act would actually cost the state \$4.9 billion when interest costs over 20 years are added in. Mr. Long believed the State cannot manage to spend the \$232 million a year it will take to pay off the debt.

The Empire State Transportation Alliance, a network of civic organizations and environmental-watchdog, and transportation-advocacy groups, who sat out the 2000 fight largely because the larger capital plan put too great a burden on the MTA, also provided supported for the proposal

These coalitions made a concerted, bipartisan effort to sell the proposal with a sales pitch that the Bond Act contained something for virtually everybody.

**Getting the Message Out**

To educate the public about the Transportation Bond Act and its benefits, the MTA Chairman held a press conference in mid-September outlining for the media the MTA spending plan for the bond monies and introduced the MTA educational advertising campaign. This campaign to educate riders about the act and how it would improve the mass transit system was called “What’s It All About?” and each of the MTA agencies that would receive funds from the act (MTA New York City Transit, MTA Long Island Rail Road, and MTA Metro-North Railroad) had ads answering the question by detailing its improvement plans.

The state’s leading labor and business organizations, environmentalists, transportation Advocates and elected officials formed a bipartisan Vote Yes for Transportation Committee to promote passage of the bill. The Committee had a \$1.5 million campaign to promote the bond act, including \$400,000 on advertisements and a website.

The New York Public Transit Association, Inc. (NYPTA), a not-for-profit association of public transportation service providers, private sector manufacturers and consultants, and state government agencies, put together a Resource Center available at their website to provide direction and sample materials to educate local community leadership and the general public concerning the value and benefits of the Bond Act. They prepared a Transportation Bond Act Toolkit and sample materials to help educate voters. The toolkit included a sample press release, a sample Letter to the Editor, sample advertising, and promotion materials.

The Building Congress hosted two Construction Industry Forums, which generated considerable media coverage, thus raising NYC residents’ awareness of the importance of the ballot initiative. One forum featured Governor Pataki, who spoke strongly in support of the Bond Act.

The opponents had done little outreach, limiting themselves to statements at public hearings and some press releases.

**Responding to All Criticism ASAP**

As a response to statements by the Automobile Club of New York opposing the bond referendum, the leader of a downstate construction trade association sent a letter to all members of the New York State Legislature and the media across the state in a swift but measured reaction warning lawmakers and motorists that any reductions in the capital program would jeopardize any advancement New York has made to its transportation infrastructure and its economic development.

**Implementation and Performance**

In February 2006, NYSDOT announced the availability of the first two-year portion of a five-year, \$135 million Rail and Port Capital Program provided through the Bond Act.† Approximately \$54 million in statewide rail and port capital grants will be available over the next two state fiscal years to help improve rail service in the State’s major trade and passenger travel corridors, and to improve access and cargo handling capabilities at upstate port facilities.

MTC plans for 2006 include investing in M-7 Cars for the Long Island Rail Road and M-8 Cars for the Metro-North Railroad, and beginning parking improvements.

**Ridership**

The APTA reports the following New York State ridership for all modes for 2005.

**Economic Benefits**

The Bond-funded investments will have immense impact on the economies of both NYC and New York State. The MTA calculated the following benefits for its proposed 2005 capital program: 1) 16,000-35,000 annual jobs for the next nine years; 2) \$25.3 billion in economic activity and sales; 3) \$10.2 billion in wages and salaries; and 4) \$941 million in state and local personal income and sales taxes.

The Bond Act provides for improvements to roads and bridges, transit systems, the state’s freight and passenger rail network, airports, canals, and port facilities. Direct investment from the Bond Act would create more than an estimated 120,000 jobs, according to Federal Highway Administration methodology.

AGENCY	TOTAL TRIPS THROUGH DECEMBER 2005	PERCENT CHANGE FROM DECEMBER 2004
MTA Long Island Rail Road	98.2 million	0.57% increase
MTA Metro-North Railroad	74.7 million	2.79% increase
MTA New York City Transit	2.5 billion	1.00% increase
MTA Staten Island Railway	3.5 million	3.45% increase
New York City DOT (bus only)	71.2 billion	30.21% decrease

## Environmental

The Bond covers the cost of purchasing hybrid-electric, compressed natural gas, or other alternate fuel buses instead of traditional diesel technology, helping to expand the State's efforts to improve air quality by financing approximately 250 clean-fuel vehicles, the majority of which will be hybrid-electric transit buses.

The governor noted that as energy prices rose in the wake of Hurricane Katrina in August 2005, the Bond Act included significant funding for projects designed to help reduce dependence on gasoline and diesel fuel. More than 60 percent of Bond Act projects support energy-efficient mass transportation; enhance the movement of freight by rail to divert it from trucks; improve the state's bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure; and expand programs that mitigate fuel-wasting highway congestion.

## Accessibility

The Long Island Rail Road (LIRR) East Side Access Expansion Project will provide Long Island and Queens commuters with a new rail link to Grand Central Terminal on the east side of Manhattan, saving riders up to 40 minutes each day on their round-trip commute, while alleviating pressure on the over-crowded Penn Station complex.

The full-length Second Avenue Subway will provide 400,000 daily New York City Transit (NYCT) customers with a one-seat ride from 125th Street to Lower Manhattan, relieving congestion on the Lexington Avenue Line, the most crowded subway line in the country.

The funding will support NYCT's Bus Locator System and LIRR's Passenger Communications system. Both investments will ultimately provide customers with real-time arrival and departure information, as well as other critical service information. The \$50 million dedicated to preserve and rehabilitate New York's historic canal system and construct new bicycle and pedestrian lanes and trails will make the quality of life better for residents.

## Congestion Relief

One public transit bus reduces additional traffic by over 240 vehicles per 24 hour period, significantly mitigating traffic congestion on state roads and highways, and helps alleviate the need for additional highway construction.

## Summary

After rejecting a similar bond proposition five years before, residents witnessed the crumbling infrastructure of the state roads and public transportation facilities and an MTA subway and bus fare hike in 2003. Voters support for the 2005 Rebuild and Renew New York Transportation Bond was across the State. The plan is well-balanced between various transportation modes; the Bond Act splits funding evenly between the needs of the State's highway and bridge system and the various transportation modes (transit, rail, aviation, ports, canals, and multimodal funding) in both upstate and downstate New York.



# Case Study: Maricopa County, Arizona

## Sales Tax Expansion, Proposition 400

### Introduction and Overview

In November 2004, Maricopa County residents passed Proposition 400 that extended a one-half cent sales tax for funding transit improvements for an additional 20 years. The Proposition will raise \$8.5 billion toward the cost of the \$15.8 billion regional transportation plan. Proposition 400 was approved 58 percent to 42 percent. Proposition 400 provides funding for:

- Highway Improvements and Maintenance
  - 344 miles of new and improved freeway. New HOV lanes.
  - Litter control, maintenance, and noise mitigation.
- Street Improvements
  - 275 miles of new arterial streets.
  - 34 re-engineered intersections.
  - 1,200 bus pullouts.
  - Intelligent Transportation Systems to improve traffic.
- Bus Operations and Maintenance
  - New/Enhanced bus service on 28 routes, plus creation of 12 new routes.
  - Improvements to express/bus rapid transit service including 14 new routes.
  - Tripling of ADA Dial-a-Ride services and Vanpool services.
  - 13 park-and-ride lots and 13 transit centers.
  - More than 2,100 new buses and over 1,000 new Dial-a-Ride vehicles.
- New Light Rail Corridors
  - 27 miles expansion on Light Rail Corridors.
  - Additional park & ride facilities at new stations on the expanded system.
- Other Projects
  - Safety planning, bicycle projects, pedestrian facilities, regional planning programs, rideshare and other quality of life programs (rubberized asphalt, sound walls).
  - Programs to address federal air quality requirements.

### Community

Regional, Maricopa County, Arizona

### Ballot Proposal

Proposition 400

### Vote Date

November 2, 2004

### Success

58 percent

### Type of Ballot Measure

Expand the existing county one-half cent transportation sales tax for 20 years. Total \$8.5 billion

### Election Tagline

Yes on 400

Finish the Freeways!

Yes on 400

Serving the Valley's Future

### Transit Themes

ON THE MOVE, Partners in Progress

### Transit Agency/Authority

Valley Metro Regional Public Transportation Authority (RPTA)

Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG)

Valley Metro RPTA is responsible for regional transit planning, transit public information, management and operation of regional bus and Dial-a-Ride services, regional rideshare and vanpool programs, and marketing of both the Maricopa County Trip Reduction Program and Clean Air Campaign.

The MAG is the region's federally recognized transportation planning agency.

### What's Funded

New and Expanded Highways, including litter control, maintenance, and noise mitigation; New and Improved Streets, including bus pullouts; New and Enhanced Bus Service, including new Dial-a-Ride and Vanpool services, and new park-and-ride lots; New Light Rail Routes; and Bicycle and Pedestrian Projects.

### Websites

<http://www.valleymetro.org/>

<http://www.mag.maricopa.gov/>

<http://www.letskeepmoving.com>

In 2000 voters in the Phoenix Metropolitan Area voted for a 20-mile starter light rail line, which is scheduled to open for operation in 2008 and will connect Phoenix, Tempe, Mesa, and Glendale. Proposition 400 provides for additional light rail lines.

The regional transportation plan is administered by Valley Metro Regional Public Transportation Authority (RPTA). The Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) created a Transportation Policy Committee in 2002 and in 2005 MAG had 23 members from member agencies, the business community; and representatives from transit, freight, Citizens Transportation Oversight Committee, and Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT).

Maricopa County is a very large county with an area of 10,000 square miles. The population of the metropolitan Phoenix has increased dramatically over the last decade and is projected to continue growing at a dramatic pace through the next five years and doubling by 2030. The population growth in the metropolitan area has brought significant ethnic diversity and many neighborhoods along the light-rail corridors show high minority presence, which will provide opportunities to integrate those residents into the labor force and into the greater community, as well. There are approximately 60,000 individuals in Maricopa County with disabilities. Over one-half million residents are age 60 and older and by 2030 that number is projected at 1.6 million. That means not only will the total number of motorists increase, but the number of older drivers also will increase at a faster rate than the population.

All areas in the Valley surround Phoenix supported the transit measure, with the exception of a small pocket southwest of Thunderbird and Scottsdale, Tatum Ranch, Cave Creek, and the Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation.

## Ballot Challenges

### Opponents and Critics

Opponents argued the new plan would dedicate too much money toward a yet-to-be-built light rail line. They wanted the rail and highway components to be decided separately by voters. One individual, Dave Thompson – a millionaire from the suburb of Gilbert – had led the No on 400 campaign; he provided 90 percent (over \$1 million) of the funding for the opposition’s campaign TV, radio and mail campaigns. The No on 400 group had support from several conservative Republican lawmakers, including State Senator Thayer Verschoor; Representatives Andy Biggs (R-Gilbert), Karen Johnson (R-Mesa), Ray Barnes (R-Scottsdale), and Russell Pearce (R-Mesa); the former Governor Fife Symington. Governor Symington’s consulting group, Strategic Vision, managed the No on 400 campaign said the goal was to present the opposition on an equal footing with the pro side. Business opponents included the family-run Shamrock Foods.

Opponents concentrated on light rail, which was not as popular as the highway component of the measure that again required voters to increase their own taxes. Critics alleged that the light rail system would have no impact on regional congestion. The basic arguments used against light

rail were the common ones of it costing more than buses, being slower than express buses, having minimal impact on congestion and air pollution, and disrupting business and traffic during a lengthy construction period. They put up many “Stop the Light Rail in its Tracks” posters along the roadways.

Also surfacing was a new group called VOTE (Voters Opposing Tax Extension) that worked to oppose the ballot measure. The goal of the opponents was to force the issue back to the State Legislature and make them pass a new bill without the Light Rail.

## Key Strategies

### Use of Consultant

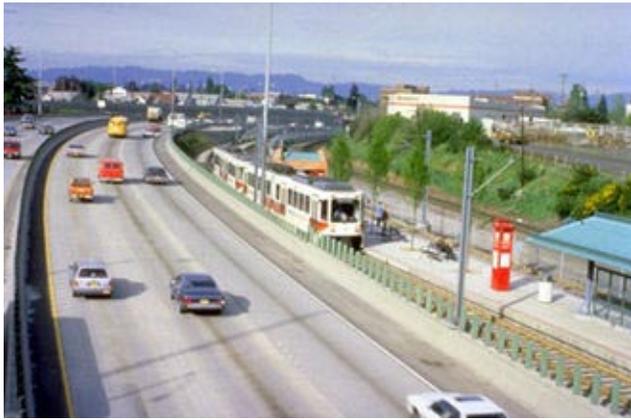
The Maricopa 2020/Yes on 400 committee hired HighGround, Inc., a campaign and public affairs issue management consultant group, to help to develop the one-half cent transportation sales tax continuation plan and helped the Maricopa 2020/Yes on 400 committee become a driving force during plan development. HighGround produced many outreach materials, including the award winning Yeson400.com website and the award winning interactive maps to highlight the various modes of transportation and show where these improvements were to be made.

### Plan Early

Planning began early, just after the 2000 elections. The Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) held 350 meetings during the planning process, all of them dedicated to seeking input from the public Valley mayors and various local business and civic groups. This group worked for two years to agree on the final form of the plan. In 2001, the Urban Land Institute (ULI) was asked by the city of Phoenix and ULI-Arizona to prepare an analysis of the economic development along the planned light-rail line. This report was released in 2002. On the light-rail portion of the plan alone, MAG and municipal officials held 1,158 public meetings, including 758 meetings with individuals and businesses that would be affected directly by the construction of light rail. Public outreach was conducted at every phase, including initial meetings held as part of the subregional, bottleneck, and mobility studies leading up to the Plan.

### Coalitions

The success of Proposition 400 was the product of a broad coalition including planners, transit advocates, environmentalists, business leaders, local elected officials, and developers. A number of coalitions supported and were created to support Proposition 400. The Yes-on-400 group had 4,000 supporters; the group raised \$2 million. Maricopa 20/20 (or 2020) was a coalition of individuals and business organizations formed to support the transportation agenda. This effective alliance raised money and launched an aggressive communications campaign. The coalition partners teamed up for a broad public education campaign that included everything from presentations



at neighborhood meetings to old-fashioned precinct canvassing.

### Community Groups Support

A wide array of supporting groups and officials from economic development organizations, environmental groups, and organizations representing the disabled, the elderly, and the disadvantaged teamed together to support Proposition 400 and the regional transportation plan.

The Valley Forward Association, a blend of members representing 250 large and small companies, as well as most municipalities in Maricopa County and other government agencies that share a goal of promoting cooperation to improve the environment and quality of life in the Valley supported the proposition. This organization believes transportation is the single most important issue facing the growing metropolitan area.

Members of the disability community, including the Arizona Bridge to Independent Living, became a vital voice in the advancement of the plan, first by providing input on projects important to their members and later by becoming one of the strongest proponents.

Both Governor Janet Napolitano and her 2002 rival Matt Salmon supported the proposition meeting with supporters saying that proposition 400 was vital to the state's economy because businesses demand good transportation systems.

### Gaining Business Support

The Westmarc economic development group, and just about every major business group and several employers (Intel, Dial, Pinnacle West Capital Corp. and America West Airlines) backed the transportation plan. Other business backers included the Greater Phoenix and Arizona chambers of commerce. The staff of East Valley Partnership actively participated in campaigning for Yes on 400; they sent out solicitation letters to raise funds for the campaign from corporate groups and provided presentations to small groups. The Arizona Contractors Association which supports public policy to build and improve the infrastructure in order to supply greater mobility for goods and services, and the swift and convenient commuting experiences for the growing state population released a statement that "Proposition 400 will improve the quality of life for Arizona and residents in Maricopa County."

### Getting the Message Out

The Yes on 400 campaign had an aggressive community outreach and public involvement program. The Yes-on-400 was a \$4 million campaign. Their website did an outstanding job of keeping citizens informed. The site included interactive maps to highlight the various modes of transportation and show where these improvements were to be made. The website gave voters the ability to identify supporters in their own communities by clicking on a city and reading a list of names. This website is no longer active.

Friends of Transit is an Arizona nonprofit corporation that instructs the public on the benefits and importance to the Greater Phoenix community of a well-designed and accessible mass transit system. They have been around in January 2001. As an advocacy group they did not take a position on Proposition 400, but did work to educate the community about the benefits of mass transit as part of a balanced regional transportation plan.

There were both television and radio ads, and proponents and opponents met to discuss the proposition on radio talk shows.

### Attacking the Opposition

In an effort to divert attention away from the light rail component of their proposal, the Yes on 400 campaign in Phoenix, Arizona, used a campaign slogan geared towards the freeway component of the plan, "Finish the Freeways!"

The Yes on 400 campaign bombarded the airways criticizing the opponents' positions in the last week prior to the election. Dave Thompson, himself, was targeted by some of the ads.

Supporters of Proposition 400 lodged a complaint alleging that No on 400 violated state campaign finance laws with claims that No on 400 did not notify the county at the proper time of an expenditure of \$10,000 or more (state campaign finance laws require the disclosure). The complaint asserted that No on 400 arranged roughly \$360,000 in billboard, radio, and direct-mail advertising well before it notified the county that it exceeded the threshold.

### Implementation and Performance

The annual report on the status of projects funded through Proposition 400 can be found at the MAG



website ( HYPERLINK “<http://www.mag.maricopa.gov/detail.cms?item=3473>” <http://www.mag.maricopa.gov/detail.cms?item=3473>). The one-year status report on the implementation of proposition 400 reports that a strong coordination effort is being pursued by the RTP Partners made up of MAG, ADOT, RPTA, and Valley Metro Rail.

Out of a total of eight awards given to transit properties across the United States, Valley Metro scooped up three, all for its bicycle programs.

### Ridership

The APTA reports that ridership for all modes in Phoenix increased 4.1% between 2004 and 2005 with a total of 44.9 million trips at the end of December 2005. Valley Metro has experienced an increase in bus ridership from 2004 to 2005. In the past 12 months, there have been 56.4 million bus boardings for the entire Valley Metro system versus 54 million measured during the same time period in 2004, a 4% increase. Contributing to the overall increase are the express and Phoenix RAPID bus services, which have increased by 23 percent.

The number of bike-on-bus boardings continues to rise each year placing the Valley Metro system near the top in the nation for carrying bicycles. Each Valley Metro bus has a bicycle rack that can accommodate up to two bikes. In 2005, there were about 1.2 million bike-on-bus boardings, which is up from 748,124 in 2001

The light rail system is expected to be used for about 27,000 rider-trips a day when operational.

### Accessibility

Valley Metro’s computer modeling predicts significant annual travel time savings of up to 585 hours per year for many residents living near the planned light rail route, as well as those living as many as 15 miles away.

The elderly are typically more dependent on public transportation and frequently relocate closer to public transportation routes. This trend has helped fuel residential redevelopment along light rail routes in other cities.

Many development projects are springing up adjacent to the light rail lines. Access to rail stations is key to developing with provides stations within five minutes of someone’s front door. The light rail location was a big reason why a \$120 million condominium (Portland Place) project is being developed near Central Avenue and Roosevelt Street on once-vacant land. Developer Feliciano Vera is reported saying that arts and culture sites, sports arenas, and other destination spots will be just a few stops away on the train. For example, US Airways Center, Chase Field, the Sun Devil Stadium at Arizona State University (ASU), and various museums are also along located the route.

### Economic Benefits

Significant investments in the immediate neighborhood around the light rail lines will fuel not only downtown revitalization but in the entire Valley. Matt Salmon, candidate for governor in 2002, said the plan is key to the East Valley

because projects near Williams Gateway Airport will help the area become a major employment center. Over time, light rail can stimulate development, which can have a “snowball effect” on future development.

The high-tech Internet firm Google announced that it is setting up a new engineering center and bringing 600 jobs to the Phoenix urban area. Google is opening an office on the Tempe campus of ASU as part of its continued efforts to build out a Phoenix-area operation. Google had announced when first eyeing Phoenix that public transportation including the light rail transit project was part of the reason.

In a January 2006 report the program manager for transit-oriented development for Phoenix’s Downtown Development Office stated that about \$600 million in private and public investment are expected to materialize along the 20-mile rail line in the next few years. These investments includes big projects as the downtown campus of Arizona State University, housing developments as the Portland Place condominiums, and relatively modest office projects such as iPowerWeb. The location of the iPowerWeb office is on East Jefferson and the location with easy access into the downtown core as well as to Sky Harbor International Airport via the light rail is important to businesses like iPowerWeb to help accommodate growth. iPowerWeb is expecting a doubling of its staff and mass transit will help with the parking issues.

### Environmental

The MAG Transportation Improvement Program and the Regional Transportation Plan was found by the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration to conform with the State Air Quality Implementation Plan. The Regional Transportation Plan went through the full plan consultation process and air quality conformity analysis, receiving a finding of air quality conformity from the U.S. Department of Transportation

### Summary

With the population expected to double to nearly 6 million people in twenty years, Proposition 400 was the balanced and integrated transportation solution needed to keep moving in the right direction. Proposition 400 brought the business community, local governments, the Maricopa citizens, and the state legislature together to create a balanced plan the most fits the needs of the county.

The Phoenix case demonstrated that a transit-only measure with a significant increase in the sales tax for a 20-year period can be passed by a large margin when light rail is a component of the package and proponents use an aggressive outreach campaign supported by very successful fundraising.

The balanced, multi-modal transportation plan was developed through an inclusive process that involved all of the communities that it will impact. The plan was also subject to thoughtful public dialogue and air quality conformance testing. Then, it was unanimously approved by the very coalition established by the Legislature to deal with the Valley’s transportation challenges.

## Notes

- i The Adams Group, Inc. and Development Research Partners, Inc., *The Impact of FasTracks on the Metro Denver Economy* (September 2004), p. i.
- ii Denver Regional Council of Governments, *Review of the RTD FasTracks Plan*, (April 2004), p. 27.
- iii *Ibid.* p. 24.
- iv Keith Schneider, *Denver Voters Gallop To Smart Growth* (Elm Street Writers Group, Michigan Land Use Institute, February 2005), <http://www.mlui.org/growthmanagement/fullarticle.asp?fileid=16810>
- v Tri-County Regional Planning Commission, *Regional Growth: Choices for Our Future* (September 2002), p. 3.
- vi John Pollard, "Millage increases: Yes on CATA, no on county," *City Pulse*, July 10, 2002, <http://archives.lansingcitypulse.com/020710/lansing/index.html>
- vii Tri-County Regional Planning Commission, *Regional Growth: Choices for Our Future* (September 2002), p. 24.
- viii Peter J. Haas and Richard Werbel, *Factors Influencing Voting Results of Local Transportation Funding Initiatives with a Substantial Transit Component: Case Studies of Ballot Measures in Eleven Communities* (San Jose, CA: Mineta Transportation Institute, October 2001), p. 143.
- ix *Ibid.* p. 140.
- x *Ibid.* p. 146.

## Additional Resources

### **Center for Transportation Excellence ([www.cfte.org](http://www.cfte.org))**

CFTE provide regular, continuing updates and tracking on ballot measure campaigns related to transportation. You can monitor all 2006 transportation campaigns at the CFTE website.

Check out CFTE's other ballot campaign report, "Building Communities Through Public Transportation: A Guide for Successful Transit Initiatives" at [http://www.cfte.org/Building\\_Communities.pdf](http://www.cfte.org/Building_Communities.pdf).

### **Organizations**

#### **American Public Transportation Association**

[www.apta.com](http://www.apta.com)

#### **Ballot Initiative Strategy Center**

[www.ballot.org](http://www.ballot.org)

#### **The Brookings Institution Metropolitan Policy Center**

[www.brookings.edu/metro](http://www.brookings.edu/metro)

#### **Center for the Study of Law and Politics**

<http://law.usc.edu/academics/centers/cslp/index.html>

#### **Initiative and Referendum Institute**

[www.iandrinstitute.org](http://www.iandrinstitute.org)

#### **National Conference of State Legislatures**

[www.ncsl.org](http://www.ncsl.org)

#### **National League of Cities**

[www.nlc.org](http://www.nlc.org)

#### **Public Transportation Partnership for Tomorrow**

[www.publictransportation.org](http://www.publictransportation.org)

#### **Surface Transportation Policy Project**

[www.transact.org](http://www.transact.org)

#### **Transportation Research Board**

[www.trb.org](http://www.trb.org)

#### **Trust for Public Land's Land Vote Project**

[www.tpl.org/landvote](http://www.tpl.org/landvote)

#### **U.S. Federal Transit Administration**

[www.fta.dot.gov](http://www.fta.dot.gov)

#### **U.S. Federal Highway Administration**

[www.fhwa.dot.gov](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov)

#### **Victoria Transport Policy Institute**

[www.vtppi.org](http://www.vtppi.org)

### **Books & Articles**

Peter Haas, *Why Campaigns for Local Transportation Funding Initiatives Succeed or Fail* (Metropolitan Transportation Institute, June 2000).

Bruce Katz and Robert Puentes, *Taking the High Road: A Metropolitan Agenda for Transportation Reform* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press: 2005).

Lora Lucero, "Ballot Box Zoning: Good Planning or Vigilantism," *Zoning News*, May 2005.

John Matsusaka, "Direct Democracy Works," *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Vol. 19, No. 2, Spring 2005.

Phyllis Myers, "Direct Democracy and Development," *Urban Land*, June 2006.

Phyllis Myers and Robert Puentes, *Growth at the Ballot Box: Electing the Shape of Communities in November 2000* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 2001).

Daniel Smith and Caroline Tolbert, *Educated by Initiative: The Effects of Direct Democracy on Citizens and Political Organizations in the American States* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2004).

M. Dane Waters, *The Initiative and Referendum Almanac* (Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 2003).



**Center for Transportation Excellence**

1640 19th Street, NW, #2

Washington, DC 20009

T: 202.234.7562

F: 202.318.1429

*info@cfe.org*

*www.cfe.org*