



Editor's Note:

This has been an historic election cycle for our nation. Clearly, the economy became the central issue in the presidential race. Many felt it would affect transportation ballot initiatives in a negative way but the results speak for themselves—the public is willing to raise their own taxes if the ballot question meets the following three criteria:

- 1. The money is raised for specific projects*
- 2. The revenue stream has a sunset provision*
- 3. A defined timeframe for delivery is specified*

It is remarkable that California approved over \$50 billion in projects over the next 30 years when they are one of the states most severely impacted by the current economical crisis.

Other transit measures were defeated even when proponents predicted cuts in service would result.

We have tracked ballot initiatives for three cycles now and found that in 2006 and 2007 the approval rate was 63% for major questions. The 2008 cycle resulted in an approval rating of at least 70%. It is also noteworthy that over twice as many ballot initiatives were presented to the voters this year as in either of the previous election cycles.

Another observation is that most states have a sales tax as the principal revenue stream and nearly all create more debt for states or cities to repay. The initiative's passing means good things for the people of this nation as substantive and important projects are delivered. It is also good news for the industry as we have opportunities to help in that delivery process.

The key initiatives for the 2008 election cycle are summarized below. TW

In This Special Election Edition

 [2008 Election Results](#)

November 2008 Ballot

Alaska (Statewide)

Initiative: Proposition A authorizes State General Obligation Transportation Project Bonds that will raise \$315 million for 28 specific projects around the state. Projects range in size from \$2.5 million to \$30 million. State revenue officials say that despite market turmoil, Alaska should have no problem selling the bonds because its healthy cash reserves make it a good credit risk.

Status: APPROVED

Arkansas, Jonesboro City

Initiative: The Jonesboro City Council voted to establish a transit agency, the Jonesboro Economical Transportation System (JETS), in 2005. The city agreed to fund the program for five years, but after three years it was up to the voters to decide whether to continue the service. If the ballot initiative had failed, the system would begin to be phased out in 2009, unless another funding source was identified.

Status: APPROVED 86% to 14%

California (Statewide)

Initiative: Proposition 1-A will start construction of the 800-mile high-speed rail line from San Francisco to LA. Valued at almost \$10 billion, this statewide initiative authorizes the sale of bonds for the initial stages of what will eventually be a \$32 billion project.

Status: APPROVED 52% to 48%

California, Santa Barbara County

Initiative: Measure A extends the existing half-cent sales tax for 30 years and raises about \$1 billion for transportation projects. Funds will be distributed at the local, county and state level for specific projects. Improvements on US 101 are the centerpiece of the initiative.

Status: APPROVED 79% to 21%

California, Santa Clara County

Initiative: Measure B increases the sales tax by 1/8 cent for 30 years to "operate, maintain, and improve" the 16.1 mile Santa Clara County BART extension to the South Bay Area.

Status: Too close to call (164,000 last minute absentee ballots still left to count; it could be weeks before a determination is made)

California, Marin and Sonoma Counties

Initiative: Voters agreed to Measure Q, a quarter-cent sales tax measure that will raise \$890 million over 20 years, with annual revenues of about \$45 million to pay for a train system running from Cloverdale to Larkspur. The project is expected to cost \$450 million for construction and \$19.3 million a year to operate.

The train would run for 70 miles from Cloverdale in the north to a station near Larkspur landing, with a short walk to the bay ferry terminal. The Sonoma-Marin Area Rail Transit District estimates that the rail line would carry up to 10,000 passengers daily and cut carbon emissions by 31 million pounds a year.

Supporters of Measure Q said turning an unused set of tracks into a commuter rail system would help improve the environment and reduce the chronic congestion on Highway 101 after an explosion of growth in the two counties in recent years.

Status: APPROVED 68% to 32%

California, Los Angeles County

Initiative: Measure R increases the sales tax by half-cent for 30 years and will raise \$40 billion for transportation projects throughout the county, including major freeway improvements and expansion of transit lines.

Status: APPROVED 67% to 33%

California, Stanislaus County

Initiative: Measure S establishes a half-cent sales tax for 20 years and raises over \$700 million dollars. Funds will be used for specific local, county and state projects.

Status: APPROVED 66% to 34%

California, Alameda and Contra Costa Counties

Initiative: Measure VV doubles the current \$48-a-year parcel tax currently paid for by property owners in the AC Transit District. AC Transit officials say the additional funds will subsidize bus service to prevent fare increases for the elderly, disabled and youth for at least two years. AC Transit officials say the tax may not be enough to prevent general fare hikes and service cuts.

Status: APPROVED 72% to 28%

California, Monterey County

Initiative: Measure Z was to establish a half-cent sales tax for 25 years and raise \$1 billion for transportation projects throughout the county. Key corridors receiving funds would have been Highways 1, 68, 101, and 156.

Status: Defeated 62% to 38% (2/3 approval req.)

California, West Sacramento

Initiative: West Sacramento voters approved Measures V and U extending a sales tax hike for an additional 20 years. The vote will allow construction and operation of a streetcar system connecting West Sacramento with Sacramento across the river.

Measure V passed by a 15-point margin Tuesday, keeping in place a one-quarter cent sales tax that was set to expire in 2013. Measure U directs the city council to spend the money on flood control improvements and the streetcar system.

Sacramento will pay for the streetcar system's construction, while West Sacramento will fund its operation. The \$70 million dollar project could be running in as little as three years because local leaders are not seeking any federal money.

Status: APPROVED 64% to 36%

Colorado, Aspen

Initiative: Voters approved RFTA Question 4A, a 0.4 percent sales tax increase and \$38 million bonding issuance to allow the Roaring Fork Transportation Authority to begin implementing bus rapid transit. Aspen and five other municipalities, and two counties are in RFTA's jurisdiction. The increase could phase in nearly \$62.5 million in capital improvements and boost operating revenues by about \$37 million between 2009 and 2017.

Status: APPROVED

Hawaii, City and County of Honolulu

Initiative: Question 4 will fund the \$3.7 billion, 20-mile elevated light rail project that would extend from Kapolei to Ala Moana adjacent to Waikiki. The project should be completed by 2018.

Status: APPROVED 53% to 47%

Kansas, Lawrence City

Initiative: Voters saved the city's fixed-route bus system by approving a new two tenths of a percent sales tax by a margin of 70 percent to 30 percent. A second five one-hundredths of a percent sales tax to provide funding for new buses and enhanced transit services won by a margin of nearly 69 percent to 31 percent. The two taxes are expected to generate \$1.88 million in 2009 and \$3.28 million in 2010, and will expire in 10 years.

Status: APPROVED 70% to 30%

Missouri, Kansas City

Initiative: A 3/8-cent sales tax for a new 14-mile, \$815 million LRT system was overwhelmingly rejected by voters Tuesday, with only 44 percent voting in favor of the measure. A half-cent sales tax for light rail passed Tuesday in North Kansas City with 59 percent support, but officials there said they would find a way to ensure the tax isn't collected if the Kansas City plan failed.

Opponents cited the lack of specifics in the route, along with the economy and falling gas prices as reasons for the failure.

The outcome was vastly different from two years ago, when Kansas City voters approved a plan drafted by Clay Chastain that the city later decided was not viable and too costly.

Status: Defeated 44% to 66%

Missouri, St. Louis

Initiative: St. Louis voters rejected Proposition M, a half-cent sales tax increase that was projected to raise \$80 million per year. Transportation officials said as a result, Metrolink light rail service will be forced to cut 28 of the 60 routes and possibly end nighttime service.

Status: Defeated, 52% to 48%

Michigan, Lansing

Initiative: Ingham County voters approved an operating millage for the Capital Area Transportation Authority. The millage will cost an average household with a taxable value of \$100,000 about \$78 a year. Without the millage, CATA would have faced cuts in weekend and evening service.

Status: APPROVED

Michigan, Spring Lake

Initiative: The ballot proposal asked Village of Spring Lake voters to agree to a separate tax levy of up to 0.85 mill for the demand-response bus program in exchange for a general fund reduction of 0.72 mill.
Status: APPROVED 76% to 24%

Michigan, Kalamazoo County

Initiative: Kalamazoo County voters turned down a transit tax sought by the county's transportation authority to pay for transit services over the next four years. The rejected tax would have levied 0.63 mills in 2008, and gradually increasing the tax rate each year up to 0.86 mills by 2011. The first year of the new tax rate would have generated \$5 million. The transportation millage would replace two expiring taxes: 1.38 mill for Kalamazoo city taxpayers and 0.38 mill for the rest of Kalamazoo County.

Two years ago, a smaller county transit tax narrowly passed by 51 percent.

Status: Defeated 58% to 42%

Nevada

Initiative: Nevada residents gave final approval to Question 2, which amends the state Constitution to restrict use of eminent domain to acquire private property for public use, making it more difficult for the government to acquire property for public use.

Its provisions, however, may not last long. Last year legislators passed a compromise law and are pursuing a companion constitutional amendment expected to appear on the 2010 ballot.

Status: APPROVED 61% to 39%

Nevada

Initiative: The Regional Transportation Commission asked voters to approve a 1/8 percent sales tax in Washoe County (Reno), would have raised an estimated \$280 million for public transportation.

The rejection of the additional funding will likely force existing transit service to be cut by 20%.

Status: Defeated 36% to 64%

New Mexico, Bernalillo, Sandoval and Valencia Counties (Rio Metro Transit District)

Initiative: Two ballot measures covering a variety of counties were approved to raise the sales tax by 1/8 of a cent to support a commuter rail line (Rail Runner) and local surface transportation projects. The measures will raise an estimated \$19 million annually, rising to \$27 million by 2015.

Status: APPROVED

New Mexico, Santa Fe, Los Alamos, Rio Arriba and Taos Counties (North Central Regional Transit District)

Initiative: Voters in the North Central Regional Transit District approved an identical measure to the Rio Metro Transit District, except that Santa Fe County will dedicate half of its revenue to Rail Runner. The other counties (Los Alamos, Rio Arriba and Taos counties) will keep the tax revenue for local bus and van projects. The measure will produce \$8 million annually.

Status: APPROVED

North Carolina, Greensboro City

Initiative: Fifty-nine percent of Greensboro voters approved a \$134 million bond to pay for the design and construction of dozens of projects, ranging from major road renovations to new sidewalks.

Status: APPROVED 59% to 41%

Ohio, Mahoning County

Initiative: Ohio voters approved Issue 8, thereby saving the Western Reserve Transit Authority (WRTA), with a new .25% sales tax increase – which was rejected in March. The tax will raise about \$7 million annually for WRTA, and enable the agency to subsequently eliminate the Youngstown levies that currently fund the system.

Status: APPROVED 55% to 45%

Oregon, Bend

Initiative: Measure 9-60 was a property tax measure creating a separately funded transit district to support Bend Area Transit (BAT). The proposed property tax rate would be \$0.393 per \$1,000 assessed property value, and raise an estimated \$1.4 million annually.

Status: Defeated 49% to 51%

Oregon, Salem

Initiative: Voters rejected Measure 24-247, the Salem-Keizer Transit District's five-year, \$30.4 million local option tax levy that was to fund the agency's operations. The failed measure, which asked taxpayers for 49 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value, will likely force officials at the transit agency to cut jobs and services.

Status: Defeated 48% to 52%

Rhode Island (Statewide)

Initiative: Rhode Islanders overwhelmingly approved two state bond issues on the ballot totaling \$87 million to fix highways and bridges, buy new buses and extend a commuter rail line. The referendum question approved Tuesday makes the state eligible for \$436 million in matching federal grants for transportation work.

The approval was seen as essential for helping to finance repairs to Route 95 in Pawtucket and for helping to pay for the \$267 million project to link T.F. Green State Airport to commuter rail lines running to Providence, Boston and Wickford Junction. The project is expected to create 300 construction jobs during the next two years.

Status: APPROVED 76% to 24%

Utah, Eagle Mountain/Saratoga Springs

Initiative: Residents agreed to raise their sales tax one quarter-cent to join the Utah Transit Authority's coverage area. With the approval, UTA will begin express bus service to and from Salt Lake City.

Status: Eagle Mountain - APPROVED 78% to 22%/Saratoga Springs - APPROVED 66% to 34%

Washington, Puget Sound

Initiative: Puget Sound area voters approved the \$22.8 billion transit package Proposition 1, which was the largest to pass in two decades and Sound Transit's second attempt in two years. Over two-thirds of the money would go to light rail projects with the remainder focused on bus and other services. Funded through a .5% sales tax increase, it would cost the average adult \$69 per year.

The initial cost of the expansion included an estimated \$17.9 billion in construction, equipment purchase and construction-period financing costs, plus \$4.9 billion in post-construction interest.

Status: APPROVED 59% to 41%

Wisconsin, Milwaukee

Initiative: Referendum will raise Milwaukee County's sales tax from 5.6% to 6.6%, to generate an extra \$130 million in revenue to boost parks and transit.

Status: APPROVED 51% to 49%

We have checked numerous sources to verify information about the preceding ballot measures. If you have any changes or updated information, please send it to twreport@tomwarnereport.com.

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