

Madera County to Re-Try Measure T Sales Tax for Roads

Measure T is the 1/2 percent sales tax authorized by voters in 2006 supposedly used for local roads. The 20-year measure, now in its 17th year, ends in 2027. In 2022, 5 years ahead of schedule, the County tried to renew the Measure; voters overwhelmingly rejected it. The County is preparing to try again in 2024 still more than 2 years ahead. This new version looks like it will be mostly a copy of the 2022 effort, except the "forever" feature is out and likely replaced with either 20- or 30-year term.

The core problem with Measure T, is leadership and governing structure. Three bodies govern the measure: the Madera County Transportation Authority (Authority), the Madera County Transportation Commission (Commission), and the Policy Advisory Committee (Committee). The same 6 people are on all 3 bodies. The 3rd group, the policy component has a 7th voting member, the CalTrans Director. He also sits on the other 2 groups in a speaking but non-voting capacity. Any way you look at it, the same people are on all 3 groups.

And the question is "Why?" The short answer is because that's the way they want it. In general, the operation of the transportation Authority is regulated by the California Public Utilities Code. That code allows the County to choose the transportation Commission to be the Authority. And the Commission board requirements are in the California Government Code. It requires a minimum of 6 people, 3 representing the County and the others representing the cities, in our case, Chowchilla and Madera. The Government code does not place any requirements on the members of the board only that the board appoints them. Specifically, there is no requirement that those 3 be self-selected by the supervisors. of the supervisors, for the supervisors.

In their now 50-year-old resolution, No. 72-331, the supervisors of their own choosing specified the 3 county representatives will be supervisors...almost in a "you chose me, and I'll chose you" fashion". Keep in mind that there are only 5 supervisors.

So, what does it take to change that? -- simply another, current resolution removing that requirement. That means needing only putting pen to paper, but most importantly, it would take the "want-to" from supervisors.

The Grand Jury in their 2018 Report noted that there was inadequate input into the program, a theme that has been repeated many times, and we too echo that sentiment.

There is an easy solution. One step is to expand Commission membership to add 3 citizen members: one from westerly portion of the Valley floor, a 2nd one from the central or easterly portion of the valley floor, and the 3rd from the foothills in the far eastern portion of the County.

There are many other problems that stem from that closed leadership. Things like unbalanced representation, upside down allocations to local roads compared to regional roads, restrictions on the so-called "independent" accountability group, the high cost of consultants hired to help push the measure through. Those topics will be covered in separate articles on this web site.