

## "Both sides of the road"

This is a listing of the points in the Measure T Fact Sheet written by Madera County Transportation Authority and their consultant, DKS, in September 2023

The counter points are written by Sierra Citizens.

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### Madera County Transportation Authority Measure T Fact Sheet September 2023

- Measure T was approved by voters in November 2006. It established the Madera County Transportation Authority and authorized a ½ cent retail transaction and use tax for 20 years (between April 1, 2007, thru March 31, 2027) specifically to fund transportation projects and programs in the County. It followed Madera County's previous Measure A Program which was approved in 1990 and expired in September 2005.

#### Counterpoint

**The county hired a consultant in the 2006 who made promises to voters, which the Transportation Authority did not honor. In reality, the 2006 Measure T followed the 1990 Measure A, which ended up with a hodgepodge of projects based on whims of the leadership of the BOS, the Transportation boards, and jurisdictions. The Transportation boards have adopted a near-identical process for the current 2024 election cycle using a consultant. The Consultant is the one making statements, and promises...not the Transportation boards.**

- Measure T has generated \$156 million to date and allowed the region to leverage an additional \$319 million in state and federal matching funds. It is expected to generate a total of \$217 million by its sunset date.

#### Counterpoint

**Interesting. At the Citizens Oversight Committee meeting, on 1/10/2024, it was stated that the leverage funding was 94%, not the 200% claimed in this point. Regardless of which is right, the question is: Where was the \$475 million (\$156 + \$319 million) spent? Does the Citizens Oversight Committee know? Does MCTA know?**

- Measure T failed to be renewed by voters in November 2022, earning 52.41 percent of the vote, falling short of the 2/3 majority required.

**Counterpoint**

**Almost half of the 2022 voters saw through the attempt to do business as usual and to extend the tax to a “forever” tax. They voted a resounding NO**

- The MCTA Board of Directors has authorized an education outreach program to provide factual information about Measure T and its impact on local streets and roads, transit services, and major infrastructure through 2023. This will include information related to the consequences to the region if the Measure is not renewed.

**Counterpoint**

**For the failed 2022 Measure T, and for the current 2024 Measure T being contemplated, the Transportation boards will have spent about \$1.5 million in taxpayer funds on what they call *education and outreach* as well as on the failed 2022 election costs. Most of their efforts have been focused on surveys and polls regarding “what would it take to convince voters” instead of unbiased education with pros and cons. It is interesting that they say they present consequences of non-renewal, but they do not present any alternatives to their proposal – making it simply a take-it-or-leave-it planning process.**

- A second attempt at a Measure T renewal is being considered for the November 2024 ballot. This effort reflects direction given by residents/voters and will include several important differences from the 2022 effort:

- This renewal will specify a firm sunset date eliminating the idea of a “forever tax.”

**Counter point**

**The idea of a forever tax is a non-starter, and the Transportation boards finally recognize that. However, the only proposal offered by the consultant who is guiding the Steering Committee is to decide up front whether 20-year, or 30-year term, without knowing the content of the proposal: 20 vs. 30 years of taxation to do what?**

- The expenditure plan itself will be developed by a citizen-based body made of residents from all parts of the county representing diverse communities and needs.

#### Counterpoint

Unfortunately, this is not correct. The citizen-based body will be set up to only recommend percentages to allocate to 4-5 buckets that the Transportation Authority calls Programs. The Transportation boards will only consider the recommendations, and decide whether they like those recommendations, or the recommendations of staff. The boards are under no obligation to accept the recommendations of the citizen-based body.

- The expenditure plan considered in 2022 has been shelved to give this committee an opportunity to take a fresh look at proposed investments in the region.

#### Counterpoint

It is a good thing that the 2022 plan has been abandoned. Hopefully, the citizen-based body will be given the opportunity to start from scratch, and represent the will of the voters. It is hoped that the factors that spread the funds to the jurisdictions will be expanded to be based on miles of roads, usage of those roads and their conditions. Currently the allocations are spread based on population alone and not need.

- Language will be developed for the Measure to strengthen the Citizens Oversight Committee, requiring at a minimum, biannual reports from agencies receiving Measure T funds, clarifying how funds were used and documenting all payments made as part of those efforts.

#### Counterpoint

Language changes alone, to strengthen the Citizens Oversight Committee are not sufficient. The changes needed are more fundamental, addressing the independence of the group. Members of the COC have been hand-picked by the Transportation Boards for 17 years without even consulting the members of the Committee. Until the last audit, the Committee has merely reviewed the financial audit in a rubber-stamp fashion. The Oversight Committee does not have manpower, budgets, or other resources to conduct full-range reviews of the Transportation boards' expenditures. Further they have been prohibited from making recommendations about changes for the 2024 ballot measure. The conclusion is that they are not independent, and they must be.

- The citizen-based committee will start meeting in October 2023 with a goal of developing a new expenditure plan for MCTA Board consideration in April of 2024. A **technical advisory committee** made up of staff members from local agencies will be meeting concurrently to provide information and support to the citizens committee. (High lighting added)

#### **Counterpoint**

The technical advisory committee has provided no information or support to the citizens-based committee, which is nearly complete with its work. In fact, there is no such identifiable advisory committee. There are no named members, no named chairman, no minutes of their meetings, and no packets associated with their agenda items. The so called "technical advisory committee" has nothing to do with technical matters. Attendance at a recent meeting of this group revealed it is merely the equivalent of a staff meeting where everyone updates the group on progress of the matters they are working on...in essence a staff coordination meeting. That is a probably a good thing but the statement about providing information is simply not true. There was NO discussion about the information or data the citizen-based committee is said to receive--NONE.

The only people who have presented information to the citizens-based committee are themselves jurisdictional and staff employees who will benefit if the Measure passes.

- MCTA is in the process of scheduling presentations and meetings throughout the County to inform the public about this process and are open to all opportunities available.

#### **Counterpoint**

We expect these meetings will be nothing more than sales pitches, trying to convince the public why the tax is needed based on scare tactics about what happens if their measure is not approved. We believe the measure is needed and we support it IF important changes are made. The core problem with the measure is the structure of the boards--the decision-makers. The two boards (MCTC and MCTA) are made up of the same 6 elected County Supervisors and City Council Members...the same 6 on 2 two boards as well as the Policy Committee. There is little to no citizen input providing checks and balances.

The Feb 21, 2024 letter to the Transportation Authority and Transportation Commission boards, also on this website, provides a good overall summary.