Measure M:

Lessons from a Successful Transportation Ballot Campaign

July 2019

Eno
Center for Transportation

Author

Michael Manville
Department of Urban Planning and Institute of Transportation Studies
UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs

Acknowledgments

Emma Huang and Joshua Schank from the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LA Metro) and Marla Westervelt, now at Bird, contributed to the research and writing of this paper.

About Eno

The Eno Center for Transportation is an independent, nonprofit convener of ideas. As the leader in its field for nearly a century, Eno provides government and industry leaders with timely research and a pragmatic, fact-based voice on policy issues. Eno publishes rigorous, objective analyses on critical and emerging issues facing transportation and provides ideas for a clear path forward. In addition, Eno's professional development programs offer a full spectrum of practical and leadership skill building programs to help transportation professionals at every rung of the career ladder. From graduate students about to enter the workforce, to mid-level managers, to the very top in the C-suite, Eno sees the needs of the industry and has created programs to advance the workforce to meet them.

This paper is being released as part of a multi-year Eno initiative to comprehensively catalog, analyze, and assess transportation measures at the ballot box. Eno does not endorse or oppose any of the measures in this document or as part of the initiative. The information is provided for research purposes only.

Contact

Ike Obi
Communications Manager
iobi@enotrans.org
www.enotrans.org
202-879-4707

Table of Contents

I. Introduction 1

II. Context: Ballot Box Planning and the Evolution of Transportation Finance 4

III. The Origins of Measure M 7

IV. Building the Coalition and Project List 10

V. The Campaign 13

VI. Discussion & Conclusion 16

VII. Appendix A: Los Angeles Metro's Interview Database 18

VIII. Appendix B: Los Angeles County Transportation Expenditure Plan 20

IX. Endnotes 24

I. Introduction

In November 2016 voters in Los Angeles County approved a ½ cent sales tax increase to finance transportation called Measure M. Formally titled the "Los Angeles County Traffic Improvement Plan," Measure M was proposed by the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LA Metro) and on Election Day won resoundingly, with 71.15 percent of the vote. Measure M's passage marked the fourth time since 1980, and the second time since 2008, that LA County voters approved a sales tax increase to finance transportation. The measure is expected to generate $120 billion over forty years to fund 50 transportation projects.

Measure M's ambition is not small: its goal is to transform the way people move around the region. Los Angeles County has long been oriented around the automobile, and the region's traffic congestion is notorious. Only a small minority of its residents use transit regularly; the county's transit commute share is about 6 percent, and about 78 percent of the population uses transit less than once a month.[1] Most of the county's regular riders are low-income people who lack access to cars. In 2016, 78 percent of LA Metro riders reported not having an automobile available for their trip, and their median household income was just over $16,000, much less than the county median of over $57,000.[2] In other words, public transportation in Los Angeles has long been a vital social service for people with few options. Those with more options overwhelmingly choose to drive.

Measure M aims to upend this status quo. It includes funding for road and freeway improvements, but its primary focus is expanding public transportation. Over 65 percent of the measure's revenue goes to transit and construction of new rail and bus rapid connections. When the Measure M project list is fully built, the county's rail network will have doubled in size. LA Metro's CEO has said, at different times, that Measure M will help make upwards of 25 percent of residents into regular transit users and help Los Angeles' transit system rival New York's.[3]

Measure M's resounding victory was impressive given its focus on transit in an auto-focused region. It is even more so considering the county's physical vastness and demographic heterogeneity. Los Angeles is the United States' largest county, with over 10 million people in 88 cities across 4,000 square miles that include urban centers, seaside suburbs and resorts, and rural communities in both mountains and deserts. To pass Measure M, supporters had to market a massive investment in public transit to a diverse electorate united by little—at least in transportation terms—beyond a commitment to daily driving.

For these reasons Measure M is an unquestionable political achievement and its victory holds important lessons for other auto-oriented places. Los Angeles is unique in being a large transit market that demographically resembles a small market. The sheer number of

transit trips rivals the country's "legacy" systems that today account for over two-thirds of U.S. transit use. However, in its low share of people who regularly use transit as well as the socioeconomics of its riders, Los Angeles looks much more like the systems in Topeka, Waco or many other American places.[4] Some of these other regions—like Atlanta—are also using the ballot to finance and encourage more use of public transportation. Because Los Angeles shares both goals and attributes with these places, Measure M holds potential lessons for them, as they embark on their own processes of trying to change transportation at the ballot box.

This paper offers lessons from Measure M in a specific way: by drawing primarily on a novel dataset created by LA Metro. In early 2017, the authority's communications office commissioned Joel Epstein (a transportation writer and policy analyst) to conduct detailed interviews with scores of people involved in Measure M, asking for their recollections and interpretations of the campaign. The interviews offer a unique window into the thinking behind Measure M, and together form an oral history of how it came to be. Unless otherwise noted, all the information about the Measure M campaign in this paper comes from the Epstein interviews. For more details, see the Appendix.

The purpose of this paper is to situate Measure M in a larger academic literature on transportation finance and politics, and also to more critically explore the tensions and tradeoffs that ballot box transportation planning creates for transit advocates. The intent is that these lessons provide a perspective on Measure M's victory and a window into what successful transportation ballot campaigns require.

The findings, in brief, are as follows:

Measure M is a classic example of coalition politics. Much of the work surrounding the measure involved building an alliance to support it. This took place long before voters even saw the proposal.

Los Angeles County placed Measure M on the ballot in June 2016 and voters approved it in November 2016. The campaign—if we define a campaign as an effort to persuade voters—lasted only five months. But the groundwork began years before, and was a campaign in itself, albeit one that played out beyond the public eye. Uniting a large and diverse county behind Measure M meant building a coalition of what political scientists often refer to as elites: political insiders that are actively involved in the policy process and wield disproportionate influence as a result (either by being able to sway voters or elected officials). Measure M's success began with a coalition representing almost every geographic area and large stakeholder.

The fulcrum on which that coalition was built and balanced was the specific set of projects and the order of delivery that Measure M's tax revenue would fund.

The project list obviously had to appeal to voters, but it also served as the glue that held the coalition together. The plan carefully balanced geographic, schedule, and modal interests, to ensure that stakeholders from every part of the county and every area of transportation policy felt invested in the near and long terms. Thus, building the project list, schedule, and coalition were not separate steps, but were instead the joint outcomes of a single process. In creating the project list and schedule transit advocates also created the coalition needed to support it.

Coalition politics at every level demand tradeoffs between political feasibility and transportation efficiency.

When a project list is designed to deliver both transportation projects and political support, a tension between transportation planning and political strategy is likely to arise. The project list that creates the strongest coalition may not be one that creates the best transportation system. Unless the geography of transportation aligns with the geography of political power, ballot advocates will be forced to balance these dueling imperatives. As a result, some decisions about what to fund, and especially the order in which projects get built, may be based on maintaining political support, rather than maximizing transportation efficiency. Transportation planners may dislike such concessions, but when finance moves to the ballot box it becomes an all-or-nothing exercise. A plan designed with concessions to politics might be less beneficial than one built only with transportation performance criteria in mind. But if a plan designed by transportation experts does not win, it delivers no benefits at all. This balance is one of the central challenges of building a coalition.

Coalitions require strong leaders who can coordinate efforts publicly and privately.

An effective coalition must unite a diverse array of interests, harness powerful stakeholders, and minimize opposition. The same breadth and diversity that define a strong coalition, however, can also make it hard to manage. For this reason, coalitions must have at least *de facto* leaders. Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti and LA Metro CEO Phillip Washington functioned as both the public face of the coalition as well as important brokers between its members. Garcetti was not just the leader of the county's largest city but also a member of LA Metro's Board of Directors. MoveLA, an independent group that formed in 2008 to help pass an earlier tax measure, played a similar though less-visible role in building the coalition and helping its members maintain a consistent message. MoveLA, the Mayor's office, and the LA Metro CEO had no formal relationship with each other, but they coordinated to move Measure M forward.

Ballot campaigns often require advocates to strategically manage its messaging.

One of Measure M's policy goals was to make Los Angeles a place where more people can regularly use transit, and thereby make the region more socially equitable and environmentally sustainable.[5] This policy goal, however, confronted a political obstacle: many voters seemed to have little appetite for changing their travel behavior. The Measure M campaign, as a result, downplayed this objective. As one of the measure's political consultants put it, "This was not a campaign about ideas … it was not about transforming LA County or changing your behavior." The campaign instead pushed the idea that Measure M would benefit people who maintained the status quo of driving. In so doing it also pushed the limits of accuracy, relying heavily on two questionable studies that generated appealing but often incorrect talking points. Tactics of this sort are hardly unique to Measure M, of course, but they are a reminder that campaigns often reward simple talking points and punish nuance.

II. Context: Ballot Box Planning and the Evolution of Transportation Finance

Measure M exemplifies an ongoing trend in transportation policy: the devolution of transportation funding and finance from the federal to the local level. This devolution is more reliant on direct democracy, and less reliant on legislative deal making in Washington and administrative fiat.

For much of the postwar period, the U.S. Congress played a major role in transportation by periodically passing large bills funded largely by federal fuel taxes. Congressional transportation packages were notable for being political but not partisan; they were forged on cross-party coalitions built more on geography than party affiliation. Republicans and Democrats from populous urban states that paid more in fuel tax would vie for funds against Republicans and Democrats from larger-but-less-populated rural states that paid less in fuel taxes but had more road mileage. Amid this geographic confrontation, advocates for particular projects and different modes would lobby legislators on all sides. The ultimate bill was often the product of intense behind-the-scenes negotiation: logrolls, earmarks, and other backroom trades that ultimately yielded a bill with majority support.

This process never lacked for critics. The exchanges needed to build a political majority often came at the cost of transportation efficiency. Highway bills were well-known for favoring new projects over maintenance, for disproportionately allocating resources to sparsely-populated but politically important places, and for funding the occasional boondoggle.[6]

Whatever its merits or flaws, in the 2000s the Congressional funding model began to change. Partisan polarization increased, the purchasing power of the federal fuel tax dwindled, and together these factors reduced both the motivation and means for Congress to cooperate on large spending bills. However, the public's demand for transportation did not abate simply because of the Congressional stalemate and state and local governments began to play a larger role.

Local transportation finance was not unheard of before this time—both San Francisco and Atlanta's heavy rail systems were initially funded by local ballots—but the pace of local initiatives, and their success rate, notably increased as the 20th century ended. By the late 2000s hundreds of localities were proposing transportation sales taxes each year.[7]

Importantly, this change in transportation federalism did not end the need for coalition building: it just moved it from the national to the local level. Negotiations and alliances once forged across Congressional aisles now had to be built across local regions—between mayors and local power brokers rather than Senators and Representatives. Local advocates who attempted transportation packages without building coalitions often failed. Indeed, Los Angeles' early efforts at local transportation finance illustrate this pitfall.

Since 1968, Los Angeles County attempted eight different transportation sales tax measures (Table 1). The first three of these attempts—in 1968, 1974, and 1976—failed. These focused exclusively on building transit, especially rail, and as such would have delivered benefits to relatively few parts of the county. The 1968 proposal, for example would have taxed the entire county to only build a subway down Wilshire Boulevard.

Table 1: Recent Transportation Sales Tax Measures in Los Angeles

Year	Name	Percent Approved	Amount	Sunset	General Purpose
1968	Measure A	44.8% (failed)	½ cent	N/A	Initial 89-mile system to connect downtown Los Angeles to Century City District. Projected cost: $2.5 billion, 8.5 year construction period.
1974	Proposition A	46.3% (failed)	1 cent	N/A	Initial 140-mile system. Projected cost: between $8 and $10 billion.
1976	Proposition R	40.6% (failed)	1 cent	N/A	230 miles of elevated heavy rail and 51 miles of light rail. Projected cost: $7.5 billion.
1980	Proposition A	54.3% (passed)	½ cent	None	35% rail construction; 25% local return; 40% general transit purposes.
1990	Proposition C	50.4% (passed)	½ cent	None	55% light rail, transit ways, park-and-ride lots, bus stops; 25% signal improvements; 20% local return.
2008	Measure R	67.2% (passed)	½ cent	2039	40% new rail and bus rapid transit; 25% transit operations; 20% for highways; 15% local return.
2012	Measure J	66.1% (failed)	½ cent	Extend Measure R for 30 years	Makes Measure R permanent and accelerate projects from Measure R
2016	Measure M	71.2% (passed)	½ cent	None	37% transit construction 22% for transit operations; 17% highway construction; 16% local return; 6% regional rail; 2% bike/ped.

The next five attempts (Measure M included) were different. Each of these measures spread funding across modes—roads, rail, bus, bicycle and pedestrian—across the county, and across political leaders. Projects were proposed in more places, and each measure crucially included a "local return" mechanism that guaranteed every municipality some funding to use at their own discretion. This ensured that even municipalities without a major project would benefit from the new tax revenue.[8] Only 2012's Measure J narrowly lost and did so despite capturing 66.1 percent of the vote.[9]

Devolution does not merely shift the burden of coalition-building downward; it also subjects the coalition's output to direct voter approval. This voter-veto is an important additional obstacle to transportation finance. When Congress agreed on a transportation bill, that bill became law. In contrast, when a local coalition agrees on a transportation spending package, it has completed only one step in the approval process. It still needs to be approved by voters.[10]

Direct voter approval is a hurdle for any legislative strategy, but it particularly complicates efforts to finance transit, since transit is not used by most voters. In Congress and other legislative environments, policies that benefit only a minority of voters are easier, because they are protected by logrolling, or the practice of reciprocal voting across issues. Logrolling can help groups that are outnumbered in their domain of interest remain essential parts of broader majorities. Their membership in that majority in turn protects their interests. Exposing single-issue legislation to direct referenda, in contrast, strips some of that protection away. As a result, advocates of such legislation are often forced to find majoritarian justifications for minority policies. This was the challenge faced by advocates of Measure M.

III. The Origins of Measure M

Measure M is best understood in the context of the two measures that preceded it: Measures R and J. Measure R, approved in 2008, revived transportation finance in Los Angeles County and resurrected the idea of expanding the region's subway system. But Measure R's tax increase was limited to 30 years, and this sunset provision posed problems when LA Metro tried to bond against its revenues to complete all projects (many at a higher cost than forecasted) in ten years instead of 30 years. Measure J, in 2012, was an attempt to fix these problems by making Measure R's tax increase permanent beyond year 30. But Measure J narrowly lost by not achieving a two-thirds plus one super-majority. In losing, it set the stage for Measure M, which ultimately accomplished what Measure J did not: it made Measure R's tax increase permanent, added an additional permanent tax increment to LA Metro's revenue stream and fully funded the scope-of-work coming out of the environmental studies necessary to implement Measure R. Thus, while Measure M is a standalone tax measure, it is also a reaction to Measure J, which in turn was a reaction to an underfunded and slow project schedule in Measure R. Understanding Measure M as a consequence of these earlier measures helps explain the lengthy process of drafting it. Measure M's architects set out to avoid what they saw as the mistakes of Measure J.

It is important to understand that Measure J's loss was so narrow that pinpointing why it actually failed is probably impossible. In "failing," the measure won 66.1 percent of the vote: it lost only because California law requires most tax proposals to secure two-thirds super-

majority plus one vote. In absolute terms, Measure J fell 16,000 votes short in an election where 2.9 million votes were cast. In this way, the razor-thin margin suggests that its loss may have been largely random.

It should also be noted that nationwide, most transportation tax ballots win. In 2018, for example, voters in 34 states approved over $40 billion for transportation, about 58 percent of what was considered. Every region of the country considered at least one measure, though most were in the West and Midwest.[11] Measure M stands out for being a permanent tax in a very large county, which makes its total projected revenue very large, but neither its victory nor its vote margin distinguish it strongly from other measures nationwide or in Los Angeles.[12] Measure J was much more the outlier, for losing, than was Measure M, for winning.

Those caveats aside: Measure M's advocates sought to avoid Measure J's perceived mistakes. Chief among these was a relatively small and tenuous coalition. Because Measure J did not fund any new projects and did nothing to resolve shortfalls in the included projects (it only accelerated the lower cost project options from Measure R), its coalition was basically the same coalition that had pushed Measure R. But Measure R had been drafted relatively quickly by a small group, and while LA Metro's Board of Directors voted in favor of placing it on the ballot (only two members voted no), the members were divided about it. On Election Day, moreover, voters just barely approved it (with 67.2 percent of the vote). Since the same groups who objected to Measure R would likely object to Measure J, Measure J came with some opposition baked in.

Much of the controversy over Measure R stemmed from opponents' belief that it was overly oriented toward the city of Los Angeles and other central areas, while neglecting outlying parts of the county. Some elected officials and voters in these outlying areas felt left out of Measure R's planning and shortchanged by the cost constraints and project list. Los Angeles County Supervisor Michael Antonovich perhaps best exemplified the belief that Measure R burdened outlying places. Antonovich represented the rural northern part of the county and at the time Measure J was proposed, he was Chair of the LA Metro Board. He vigorously opposed Measures R and believed Measure J would reinforce the existing unfairness to his district.[13]

This opposition was sometimes subtle. If one looks strictly at the numbers, Measure J had support at every stage. Only two LA Metro Board members (including Antonovich) voted against placing Measure J on the ballot, but this does not tell the whole story. All five County Supervisors criticized the Measure, even as four of them allowed it to move forward. The Supervisors variously worried that it was too soon to ask voters for another tax increase, that Measure J's purpose was unclear, or that it did not remedy the spatial

inequities of Measure R. Antonovich, moreover, succeeded in preventing LA Metro from spending money on "informational" material in the Measure J campaign, thus removing an important avenue of reaching voters.

Measure J's prospects were further clouded by defections from the Measure R coalition. As some of Measure R's projects got underway, controversies arose over their implementation, and created animosity in places that had once reliably supported LA Metro and its spending. Residents of the Cheviot Hills neighborhood in western Los Angeles, for example, opposed the proposed Expo line extension through their neighborhood, while leaders from the southern part of the city (including County Supervisor and LA Metro Board member Mark Ridley-Thomas) said the decision to run the Expo line at-grade through poorer neighborhoods would reinforce class- and race-based disparities. In addition, activists in Crenshaw protested the planned alignment of a light rail through that city. Perhaps most notably, the Beverly Hills School District became embroiled in a bitter fight with LAMetro over the location of subway tunneling.

On Election Day, these conflicts were costly. As expected, in places where voters opposed Measure R, they also opposed Measure J. But support also fell sharply in some places that had supported Measure R like Beverly Hills. In 2008, 77 percent of Beverly Hills voters supported Measure R, and done so in a high turnout election where 78 percent of the county's registered voters cast a ballot. In 2012, only 58 percent of Beverly Hills voters supported Measure J, in an election where turnout was much lower (only 68 percent cast a ballot). Thus, in Beverly Hills alone thousands of "yes" votes disappeared in an election decided by 16,000 votes total.

Measure J's fallout was a combination of disappointment at its loss, but also encouragement at how close it had come. Perhaps the most unexpected result was that it converted Antonovich, the arch-opponent, into an almost immediate supporter of what became Measure M. The precise reasons for his reversal are unclear, but the narrowness of Measure J's loss may have convinced him that another measure could be successful.[14] He insisted, though, that any new measure must address the concerns of people that he believed were slighted by Measures R and J. Measure R, he said, had been "top-down" and written hastily by a handful of activists and people within the transit agency and biased toward the urban core. Any new measure would need to be "bottom-up" and crafted with input from stakeholders countywide. Shortly after the election, Antonovich wrote a letter to all the county's Councils of Government (COGs) and proposed a new measure whose project list would arise from the COGs soliciting input from their member local governments.

Meanwhile, transportation advocates elsewhere in the county were also looking at Measure J's loss and concluding that the county should try again. Among this group were the leaders of MoveLA, a transportation advocacy organization formed in 2007 to push for more rail investment and instrumental in writing and passing Measure R. By 2012 the group had

grown and drew sponsorship and funding from a variety of philanthropies, public labor unions, and corporations. MoveLA had supported Measure J and saw promise in its narrow loss. Finally, some transportation officials who would work for then-incoming Mayor Garcetti also saw possibility for a new measure. Early in Garcetti's first term, his office began basic voter research for a new ballot measure and initial polling was promising: one survey showed 70 percent support. Toward the end of 2013, Garcetti hosted a summit for the county's mayors, and at one point asked if attendees would support a new ballot measure. Over 95 percent said yes.

Garcetti was in a strong position to push for a new measure. Los Angeles' mayor has an automatic seat on LA Metro's Board and is able to appoint three more board members. This outsize influence would be augmented further when Garcetti became Chair of Board in 2013. Over the next three years, working both together and in parallel, LA Metro, Garcetti's office, and MoveLA built the Measure M coalition.

IV. Building the Coalition and Project List

Antonovich's demand for a broad, bottom-up process for creating a project list (and thus a coalition) had an existing model. The Gateway Cities COG, which represented local governments in the southeast portion of the county, had already begun soliciting input from its member cities on transportation priorities for the coming decades. At the end of 2013, LA Metro expanded this process to include every COG, as part of its own long-range planning, and thus established a planning inventory in each COG that became known as its "Mobility Matrix". As momentum for a ballot measure built, the Mobility Matrix became a mechanism to collecting and evaluating ideas about it. The COGs solicited suggestions from their member local governments and passed those suggestions (along with weights to be used for pre-determined criteria) on to LA Metro who added the weighted projects to the Matrix for each COG. By 2016, with the list expanding well beyond the capability of a single ballot measure, LA Metro added a variety of metrics (such as projected cost and transportation benefits) to establish the relative weight of each project. (The COG specific weights for LA Metro's pre-determined criteria were first agreed-upon by LA Metro's board.)

The Mobility Matrix was a process that occurred within LA Metro and helped expand the coalition of local government officials by affording the ability to provide input into the authority's priorities. MoveLA (working outside LA Metro) began building a coalition of nongovernmental actors and running large focus groups with representatives from labor unions, business groups, transportation advocacy groups, and environmental and social justice organizations. Where the Mobility Matrix process largely dealt with geographical tensions among government officials, MoveLA's process resolved modal conflicts among

nongovernmental actors. Like the measures that preceded it, Measure M was always going to be multimodal, but the precise division of revenue across modes mattered since it helped ensure a large coalition where the most powerful stakeholders were satisfied.

Organized labor, similarly, was a crucial ally since the unions could raise money, field campaign volunteers, and turn voters out on Election Day. However, an early draft of MoveLA's project list allocated ten percent of Measure M's revenue to bicycle and pedestrian improvements which labor representatives considered too large. They were not opposed to such projects themselves but preferred for Measure M to support major investments and bus service. They considered bicycle and pedestrian improvements too small to need large construction crews. Ultimately MoveLA crafted a compromise: it reduced those investments to 2 percent and incorporated active transportation improvements into other line items on the logic that easier cycling and walking to transit stations would make the rail investments more effective. This move retained the support of labor's operating and contraction trades representatives, mollified the bike/ped community, and preserved substantial funding for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.

Negotiations of this sort were frequent and made easier by MoveLA having no official connection to LA Metro. Because MoveLA's focus groups and draft project lists carried no formal weight, stakeholders felt comfortable voicing displeasure with different proposals. The MoveLA list gave participants something to critique without critiquing the measure itself. MoveLA's list became known as the "Straw Man" that evolved constantly as the focus groups progressed. MoveLA wrote the first Straw Man in August 2014 and it was rewritten dozens of times.[15]

LA Metro ultimately considered the feedback from the Straw Man as it was trying to whittle down the now-enormous list of potential projects in the Mobility Matrix to an Expenditure Plan. By 2015, the COGs cumulatively submitted over 12,300 projects, representing about $274 billion in investment. The goal for Measure M was a list of projects that could be complete within the next forty years in order to give the public something tangible they could reasonably live to see completed. The nearly 50 projects—with a price tag of $120 billion—was the outcome of estimating what 40 years of revenue could build. Invariably, then, many projects had to be culled, a process that could risk alienating some stakeholders. And even among those projects that were approved, conflict could arise over the order in which they would be built. Some stakeholders might see their preferred project make the list but be dismayed to learn that ground breaking would not happen until 2050.

LA Metro was helped at this point by having the consistent metric-driven scoring process that the Board agreed to beforehand. Having a pre-agreed process reduced the perception that projects were being promoted or eliminated for purely political reasons. The authority also strategically appeased the supporters of projects that were cut or pushed to the end of the schedule, by leaving open the possibility of accelerated timelines or other funding

sources. LA Metro's CEO created the Office of Extraordinary Innovation and an Unsolicited Proposal Process, making clear that it was newly open to public/private partnerships. All these steps suggested that if advocates of particular projects could bring some outside funding to the table, their projects could be added to LA Metro's priorities, or completed faster.

This long, iterative process of arriving at a project list, occurring both inside and outside LA Metro, underlines the list's importance to Measure M's success. The spending plan, as one of the measure's political consultants said, had to deliver "something for everyone … to nail everyone down: business, labor, seniors, AARP, and…avoid [any] organic opposition."

As the final spending plan took shape, LA Metro commissioned polls and focus groups to gauge public support and test the appeal of different versions (e.g., different titles, changes in messaging etc.). Overall, the measure polled well in every version that was tested, always passing or on the edge of doing so. Its popularity was highest when called a "Traffic Improvement Plan" and that ultimately became Measure M's title. Perhaps the most significant insight from this outreach was that a permanent tax would be just as popular as one with a limited duration. A permanent tax increase would let LA Metro fund more projects and/or complete them earlier. Although proposing a permanent tax was politically risky, after some internal debate the authority decided to propose it.[16] The authority's leaders justified this decision by arguing that once projects were built, they would need ongoing funding to be maintained. The County Supervisors voted 4-1 to allow LA Metro to proceed with a ballot measure, and in June 2016, the authority's board voted 11-2 to put Measure M on the ballot.[17] The "no" votes came from two members representing the southern part of the county, who believed the division of revenues and schedule were geographically inequitable.

Notably, these vote proportions—one county supervisor opposed, two board members opposed—were identical to those from Measure J. It might seem odd that so much work generated a numerically identical result. In part this reinforces the fact that Measure J was, despite its defeat, popular. Measure M's architects believed Measure J lost because not enough was invested in coalition-building, but that belief, given the election's tiny margin, is difficult to verify. A different perspective is that—as was mentioned earlier—the vote shares among Board members and Supervisors tell only part of the story. The Supervisors did not criticize Measure M as they had Measure J. Supervisor and Board Member Ridley-Thomas, for example, voted to put Measure J on the ballot but withheld his personal support and often spoke critically of it. But he supported Measure M. Similarly, where LA Metro's board assented in 2012 to Antonovich's demand that the authority spend no money disseminating information about Measure J, no such restrictions were put in place in 2016. LA Metro could move aggressively to support Measure M. In this way, the coalition building paid off and with the measure safely on the ballot, the general campaign began.

V. The Campaign

With the election looming, the political work around Measure M shifted from building the coalition to deploying it: turning out in an effort to convince voters. In part because of the coalition building, Measure M had almost no organized opposition, and the groups that did oppose it had little money. As a result, the campaign was waged mostly against the status quo, the high statutory bar California established for tax increases, and other questions that would be on the ballot and compete for voters' attention such as a parcel tax in the city of Los Angeles to fund homeless services. While LA Metro was responsible for some of this effort, the beginning of the formal campaign imposed some limits on the authority's role. As a public agency, LA Metro was allowed to "educate but not advocate." It could produce materials discussing Measure M's content and likely impacts but could not urge voters to support or oppose it. In practice the line between education and advocacy is often blurry (and perhaps in the eye of the beholder) but these legal limits meant that the more straightforward advocacy fell to Mayor Garcetti and the political consultants hired by the Measure M coalition.

Garcetti's influence on the campaign was substantial. He barnstormed the county to talk at pro-M events (including one with a flash mob at a professional football game), appeared in a television advertisement, and wrote an op-ed in support of the Measure. He also loaned the "Yes on M" campaign his political staff and donated momey from his political action committee. Most of the campaign's funds, however, came from local stakeholders who saw profit in either Measure M's construction projects of the expanded transportation network. Large developers and landowners, along with construction firms, labor unions and project consultants, contributed heavily to the campaign. In the five months from June to November, the campaign unleashed about $10 million of ads and outreach, held over 450 public events and 50 press conferences, ran telephone town halls, and sent thousands of pro-M text messages.

The transition to a general election also meant that the tenor of the Measure M campaign changed, shifting from the language of backroom bargaining and technocratic decision-making to the more high-minded rhetoric needed to sway the general electorate. "The internal discussion with electeds," as one insider noted, "is very different from the conversation with voters."

That conversation faced a fundamental obstacle: the typical Los Angeles County voter did not use transit and may well not even have known anyone who did. Why should they support a tax increase that sent two-thirds of its revenue to public transportation?

An implicit (and sometimes explicit) policy goal of Measure M was to convert more Angelenos into transit riders. LA Metro CEO Phillip Washington regularly said he wanted to make 25 percent of county residents regular users of public transportation. The professional consultants who ran Measure M's campaign, however, determined that emphasizing this goal was unlikely to be a winning political strategy. For one, current riders were considered safely in the "yes" camp and were a small share of the electorate. Once Measure M was in place, LA Metro might be able to persuade more people to ride but getting Measure M in place would require a different message, and one that did not imply that the measure's benefits would hinge on people driving less and riding transit more.

"A key audience for us," one of the campaign consultants said, "[was] people … who have no intention of ever getting out of their cars. [You need to] show these voters why the measure matters … the goal is to convince them that this robust campaign will get others out of their cars and out of their way on the freeway. … The imperative therefore was to reach those who had no experience with transit and no intention of ever riding." The one-third, non-transit part of the Measure M became a highlight in the process.

LA Metro's leadership understood this electoral calculus and did not object when Measure M's political consultants removed transit ridership from the campaign messaging. Where the authority's everyday messaging urged people to ride transit, Measure M's campaign messaging did not. Building this wall between what the authority said and what the campaign said was essential to the consultants. "Transit agencies," one of them said, "often try to adapt their [transportation] messages at campaign time to try and win votes, and that doesn't work. That approach is driven from building ridership and engineering considerations, and that is different from winning votes." LA Metro, he added, was wise to cede the campaign message to political professionals. The agency did not "come to us and say 'the focus should be on x or y'" he said. "They came to us and said, 'what do we need to do to win'"?

The answer, essentially, was to focus on reducing congestion, improving roads, and creating more jobs. As one consultant noted: "There are three legs to the Measure M stool: The traffic measure that speaks to commuters; the jobs metric that speaks to everyone … and the statement that we were immediately going to fill potholes in the 88 cities of the county outside your house, your kid's school or the local grocery store."

These themes underpinned almost all of the Measure M campaign material, and LA Metro's role in these themes was important but indirect. In its educational role LA Metro commissioned two studies on the likely impacts of Measure M. The first estimated Measure M's likely impact on traffic congestion. The second, performed by the LA County Economic Development Corporation (LAEDC) estimated Measure M's likely impact on employment. Each generated a headline talking point that the campaign used aggressively. The congestion study asserted that Measure M would reduce the time people spend in traffic by

15 percent.[18] The economic development study found that building the Measure M projects would create 456,000 jobs.[19] The congestion claim, in particular, became a centerpiece of the campaign, which is unsurprising given the ubiquity of congestion in the county. "All of the campaign communications," one consultant said, "led with [that] claim."

Neither talking point was very accurate, however. The congestion claim—that voters' time in traffic would be 15 percent less after Measure M—actually concluded that by 2057, the growth in congestion would be 15 percent slower than it would be otherwise. The campaign boiled a very specific message into a more general assertion—something that, of course, virtually every political campaign does.

The employment study, similarly, generated the attention-grabbing number of nearly a half million new jobs. But it built this figure on numerous incorrect assumptions and questionable reasoning. The study took the estimated new jobs over 50 years and combined them into a single figure. It assumed that all new construction jobs associated with Measure M would not exist if Measure M was not passed, it did not account for any jobs being lost as a result of Measure M's increased taxation, and wrongly treated labor costs as a transportation spending benefit.

The presence, salience, and inaccuracy of such studies are not uncommon in situations where advocates need public approval for new expenditures. A fairly robust literature in economic development concludes that commissioned impact studies are often wrong, and that furthermore the purpose of the studies is not to be right, but instead to generate a headline talking point that can sway marginal voters. Measure M's messaging heavily pushed the job and congestion numbers, and the numbers percolated through the public discourse. The "Argument in Favor" of Measure M that appeared on the official election ballot even stated that "The non-profit Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation estimates that Measure M will create 465,000 new jobs throughout Los Angeles County."

Not all interview respondents were sanguine about Measure M's congestion claims. One, for instance, worried that LA Metro would not be able to deliver on the promises the Yes on M campaign made. "I think it's kind of disingenuous to say you are building out a rail system to reduce traffic …I think that the messaging has set LA Metro up to fail." From another perspective, however, using such messaging was simply pragmatic. Officials at the authority understood the shortcomings of some of the arguments, but also recognized the reality that political campaigns reward simplicity. Running a campaign, as one LA Metro official bluntly stated, is not the same as "writing a dissertation." And members of the political team repeatedly observed that while the point of Measure M might be to change travel behavior, the point of the campaign was to win. As one explained: "This was not a

campaign about ideas. This was not about you as a voter trying to change your behavior. It was about who you are today, no matter who you are. It was not about transforming LA County or your behavior".

VI. Discussion and Conclusion

What can we take away from Measure M? Is it a singular achievement that other places can learn from? If so, what can they learn? The easy answer is that Measure M is important because it is so large and won so resoundingly. Yet neither the fact of Measure M's victory nor the size of its "yes" vote makes it stand out among transportation ballot measures. Most such proposals win, and win by comfortable margins. Measure M is projected to raise more revenue than almost any similar measure, but that is a product mostly of the measure's permanence and Los Angeles County's sheer size.

The county's size, in fact, is probably what makes Measure M so notable, since its magnitude and diversity increased the challenge involved in fashioning a single measure that could gain two-thirds approval. That challenge was compounded by the fact that Los Angeles is at once a large transit market and a market where most voters never use transit. A transformative ballot measure therefore needed to make transit expenditure appealing to voters with little personal experience using transit.

In this way Los Angeles resembles most American regions. Over 65 percent of U.S. transit trips occur in just six metropolitan areas: New York, Chicago, Washington DC, Boston, San Francisco, and Philadelphia. In others (including Los Angeles) transit is a small market mode, used primarily by certain groups. If these places wish to create more multimodal transportation systems, they will likely confront similar political challenges, and can learn from what Los Angeles did.

One key lesson that emerges from the interviews is that overcoming this challenge involves a long and careful process of coalition building. Within that process were two sub-processes: letting many stakeholders contribute ideas for projects, and then having a transparent and agreed-upon process for winnowing those ideas down into a final project list and project sequence. The care devoted to building and maintaining the coalition allowed Measure M to emerge onto the ballot with a strong consortium behind it, and little organized opposition in front of it.

Another lesson is that, without a strong coalition, Measure M's odds of passage would have been lower. Whether the particular steps were important—for instance, the specific performance metrics used to measure proposals—is harder to say. The interviewees who mentioned the metrics place a lot of emphasis on them, but we should be wary here of insider bias. Suppose these metrics really did make the coalition stronger. Since Measure

M won, we might then infer that these metrics played a role. But Measure J didn't use such metrics, and while it lost, it lost by such a small amount that it is hard to believe a lack of metrics is the reason. Interestingly, Measure R only indirectly used metrics from top-down planning processes, and it barely won. In the end, we can be most certain that a strong coalition matters, and that bottom-up metric can strengthen the coalition relative to no metrics or top-down metrics. How exactly a region arrives at that coalition is probably more open to debate. The quiet campaign for Measure M began years before LA Metro put it on the ballot. Much of the planning and political work occurred out of sight of voters.

A third clear lesson is that once a measure is in front of voters, it becomes an exercise in electoral politics, not transportation policy. Advocates cannot lose complete sight of transportation policy, but the first rule of political campaigns is to win. Anyone supporting a transportation ballot measure can and presumably does have longer-term policy goals, but those goals hinge on winning in the short-term. This electoral imperative, in turn, can mean tailoring a message to voters that is built more on electoral appeal and less on accuracy. Measure M's political strategists downplayed some of its long-term policy goals (like convincing many Angelinos to drive less and ride transit more) and invoked simplistic and borderline deceptive analyses to persuade voters of the Measure's benefits.

No one should be surprised at these tactics, which merely reflect the reality of contemporary politics. In the broader realm of political maneuvers, Measure M's were quite tame. Anyone attempting to interpret or replicate Measure M's victory, however, cannot ignore its political strategy. Voters were expressly not offered a vision of a more multimodal or environmentally sustainable Los Angeles; they were mostly offered instead a vision of more jobs, better roads, and easier driving.

One might argue that with victory achieved, the county can now use Measure M's revenue to advance a transformative vision. Voters may have been promised faster driving and more jobs, but voters have short memories, so if LA Metro pursues a more transit-focused agenda voters are unlikely to notice or feel harmed (as evidence: if LA Metro's focus groups were accurate, many Measure M voters were unaware of, or had forgotten, Measure R). And as the transit system is built out, more people—both current and future Angelinos—will use it.

Of course, whether this outcome will occur is unknown. But this point raises a final lesson to take away from Measure M, one that goes virtually undiscussed by the interviewees. Measure M's importance as a political victory hinges on whether it attains its policy goals. Strictly speaking, voters approved an ordinance that promised 50 transportation projects to be delivered along a predetermined schedule. If those projects are delivered on time, then by this metric Measure M is a success. However, given the lofty rhetoric that accompanied the Measure it seems reasonable to assume that some of Measure M's policy outcomes involve changes in travel behavior, not just completed construction projects.

If that is the case, then other regions should examine not just Measure M, but also Los Angeles' broader experience with ballot box transportation finance. Few places are as successful as Los Angeles in securing voter financing for transit. Yet during that time the region has struggled to increase transit use. Since 1980 Los Angeles added more vehicles-per-household, become more congested, and seen both its per capita and absolute transit ridership plunge.

Ultimately, the lesson that emerges is not just that coalitions are necessary to win revenue, but that revenue alone, or even project delivery alone, cannot transform transportation. Los Angeles has a hard road in front of it in making the vision of Measure M a reality. An electoral victory is the end of a political process, but only the beginning of a policy process. Regions unwilling to commit to the long-term project that is the latter may wish to think twice about the shorter-term project that is the former.

Appendix A: Los Angeles Metro's Interview Database

This paper draws on LA Metro's interview data to construct a narrative of Measure M and elicit lessons from it. These interviews constitute the bulk of the empirical evidence, and unless otherwise noted, any assertions or quotations in the following sections are drawn from them. For that reason, it is important to briefly discuss the interviews' origins and attributes.

LA Metro's Communications office commissioned Joel Epstein, a transportation writer and policy analyst, to conduct 54 interviews with a wide range of people: senior LA Metro personnel, members of the LA Metro Board, the Mayor of Los Angeles and members of his political team, local government officials from around Los Angeles County, representatives of the advocacy group MoveLA and other groups who become involved in the measure.

The benefits of these data are obvious: they constitute a remarkable trove of firsthand observations, recollections and interpretations. But the data also have four important limitations that readers should understand:

First, LA Metro's interviews were almost entirely with Measure M supporters. Of all the respondents, only two—both of them representatives of the South Bay Council of Governments—opposed the Measure. In fairness, Measure M had little organized opposition, and the opposition that existed was not very active. So even in a representative sample of opinion about Measure M, the voices of supporters would outnumber the opponents. But the ratio of supporters-to-opponents would perhaps be not quite as high as it is in these transcripts.

Second, the transcripts were edited by LA Metro's Communications staff before this research began. While it is understood that these edits were made only for brevity, the fact remains that the author did not have access to the full set of questions and answers. It is possible that in their full context, some of the quotations and responses could be interpreted differently.

Third, the information in these interviews most likely suffers from an implicit "insider" bias. Anyone asking campaign actors and strategists to explain a successful election outcome is likely to hear a story about campaign actors and strategists. This result is simple human nature: a long line of research in psychology and organizational theory suggests that insiders in general—in business, government and other large institutions—tend to overestimate their own agency, particularly when retrospectively explaining success. People involved in the campaign, and who see Measure M through the lens of that experience, are likely to give the campaign more weight when they explain why it won. They are also more likely to highlight how different Measure M was from other ballots. But the actual role that political strategy plays in elections remains contested in political science and is not obvious how unique Measure M actually was.

Fourth, the transcripts offer no direct evidence about why voters supported the measure; the interviews are with political and policy elites, not voters themselves. What the transcripts provide instead is an accounting of why advocates, campaign architects and other informed observers think voters supported it. This question is obviously different from the question of why voters supported it. However, it is still important for two reasons. To the extent the elites gauged the electorate correctly when designing the campaign, their account is a backdoor way to infer voter preferences. More persuasively, understanding how elites see the electorate, and how they craft transportation policy in light of those beliefs, provides insight into how transportation policy is created more generally.

Appendix B: Los Angeles County Transportation Expenditure Plan (2015 $ in thousands)

Project (Final Project to be Defined by the Environmental Process)	Groundbreaking Start Date	Expected Opening Date (3-year range)	2016 - 2067 Local, State, Federal, Other Funding 2015$	Measure M Funding 2015$	Most Recent Cost Estimate 2015$**	Mode
Airport Metro Connect 96th St. Station/Green Line Ext	FY 2018	CY 2021	$233,984	$347,016	$581,000	T
Westside Purple Line Extension Section 3 ®	FY 2018	FY 2024	$986,139	$994,251	$1,980,390	T
High Desert Multi-Purpose Corridor (HDMC)®	FY 2019	FY 2021	$100,000	$170,000	$270,000	H
I-5 N Cap. Enhancements (SR-14 to Lake Hughes Rd)	FY 2019	FY 2023	$544,080	$240,000	$784,080	H
Gold Line Foothill Extension to Claremont ®	FY 2019	FY 2025	$78,000	$1,019,000	$1,097,000	T
Orange Line BRT Improvements	FY 2019	FY 2025	$0	$286,000	$286,000	T
BRT Connector Orange/Red Line to Gold Line	FY 2020	FY 2022	$0	$240,300	$240,300	T
BRT Connector Orange/Red Line to Gold Line	FY 2020	FY 2022	$0	$26,700	$26,700	T
East SF Valley Transit Corridor Project ®	FY 2021	FY 2027	$520,500	$810,500	$1,331,000	T
West Santa Ana Transit Corridor LRT ®	FY 2022	FY 2028	$500,000	$535,000	$1,035,000	T
Crenshaw/LAX Track Enhancement Project	FY 2022	FY 2026	$0	$49,599	$49,599	T
SR-71 Gap from I-10 to Rio Rancho Rd.	FY 2022	FY 2026	$26,443	$248,557	$275,000	H
LA River Waterway & System Bikepath	FY 2023	FY 2025	$0	$365,000	$365,000	H
Complete LA River Bikepath	FY 2023	FY 2025	$0	$60,000	$60,000	H
Sepulveda Pass Transit Corridor (Ph 1) ®	FY 2024	FY 2026	$0	$130,000	$130,000	H
Sepulveda Pass Transit Corridor (Ph 1) ®	FY 2024	FY 2026	$0	$130,000	$130,000	H
Vermont Transit Corridor	FY 2024	FY 2028	$400,000	$25,000	$425,000	T
SR-57/SR-60 Interchange Improvements	FY 2025	FY 2031	$565,000	$205,000	$770,000	H
Green Line Extension to Crenshaw Blvd in Torrance ®	FY 2026	FY 2030	$272,000	$619,000	$891,000	T
I-710 South Corridor Project (Ph 1) ®	FY 2026	FY 2032	$150,000	$250,000	$400,000	H
I-105 Express Lane from I-405 to I-605	FY 2027	FY 2029	$0	$175,000	$175,000	H
Sepulveda Pass Transit Corridor (Ph 2) ®	FY 2024	FY 2033	$1,567,000	$1,270,000	$2,837,000	T
Sepulveda Pass Transit Corridor (Ph 2) ®	FY 2024	FY 2033	$1,567,000	$1,270,000	$2,837,000	T
Gold Line Eastside Extension (One Alignment) ®	FY 2029	FY 2035	$957,000	$543,000	$1,500,000	T
Gold Line Eastside Extension (One Alignment) ®	FY 2029	FY 2035	$957,000	$543,000	$1,500,000	T
West Santa Ana Transit Corridor LRT ®	FY 2022	FY 2041	$1,082,500	$400,000	$1,482,500	T

Project (Final Project to be Defined by the Environmental Process)	Groundbreaking Start Date	Expected Opening Date (3-year range)	2016 - 2067 Local, State, Federal, Other Funding 2015$	Measure M Funding 2015$	Most Recent Cost Estimate 2015$**	Mode
I-710 South Corridor Project (Ph 2) ®	FY 2032	FY 2041	$658,500	$250,000	$908,500	H
I-5 Corridor Improvements (I-605 to I-710)	FY 2036	FY 2042	$46,060	$1,059,000	$1,105,060	H
Crenshaw Northern Extension	FY 2041	FY 2047	$495,000	$1,185,000	$1,680,000	T
Crenshaw Northern Extension	FY 2041	FY 2047	$0	$560,000	$560,000	T
I-405/I-110 Int. HOV Connect Ramps & Intrchng Improv ®	FY 2042	FY 2044	$0	$250,000	$250,000	H
I-605/I-10 Interchange	FY 2043	FY 2047	$472,400	$126,000	$598,400	H
SR 60/I-605 Interchange HOV Direct Connectors	FY 2043	FY 2047	$360,600	$130,000	$490,600	H
Lincoln Blvd BRT	FY 2043	FY 2047	$0	$102,000	$102,000	T
I-110 Express Lane Ext South to I-405/I-110 Interchange	FY 2044	FY 2046	$228,500	$51,500	$280,000	H
I-405 South Bay Curve Improvements	FY 2045	FY 2047	$250,840	$150,000	$400,840	H
Green Line Eastern Extension (Norwalk)	FY 2046	FY 2052	$570,000	$200,000	$770,000	T
SF Valley Transportation Improvements	FY 2048	FY 2050	$0	$106,800	$106,800	T
Sepulveda Pass Westwood to LAX (Ph 3)	FY 2048	FY 2057	$3,800,000	$65,000	$3,865,000	T
Orange Line Conversion to Light Rail	FY 2051	FY 2057	$1,067,000	$362,000	$1,429,000	T
City of San Fernando Bike Master Plan	FY 2052	FY 2054	$0	$5,000	$5,000	H
Historic Downtown Streetcar	FY 2053	FY 2057	$0	$200,000	$200,000	T
Gold Line Eastside Ext. Second Alignment	FY 2053	FY 2057	$110,000	$2,890,000	$3,000,000	T
High Desert Multi-Purpose Corridor - LA County Segment	FY 2063	FY 2067	$32,982	$1,845,718	$1,878,700	H
Expenditure Plan Major Projects Subtotal			**$19,581,027**	**$20,989,941**	**$40,570,969**	

Source: LA Metro; ® = Measure R-related projects

Project (Final Project to be Defined by the Environmental Process)	Groundbre-aking Start Date	Expected Opening Date (3-year range)	2016 - 2067 Local, State, Federal, Other Funding 2015$	Measure M Funding 2015$	Most Recent Cost Estimate 2015$**	Mode
Metro Active Transport, Transit 1st/Last Mile Program	FY 2018	FY 2057	$0	$857,500	$857,500	H
Visionary Project Seed Funding	FY 2018	FY 2057	$0	$20,000	$20,000	T
Street Car and Circulator Projects	FY 2018	FY 2022	$0	$35,000	$35,000	T
Transportation System and Mobility Improve. Program	FY 2018	FY 2032	$0	$293,500	$293,500	H
Active Transportation 1st/Last Mile Connections Prog.	FY 2018	FY 2057	$0	$361,000	$361,000	H
Active Transportation Program	FY 2018	FY 2057	$0	$264,000	$264,000	H
Active Transportation Program	FY 2018	FY 2057	$0	TBD	TBD	H
Active Transportation Program (Including Greenway	FY 2018	FY 2057	$0	$231,000	$231,000	H
Active Transportation, 1st/Last Mile, & Mobility Hubs	FY 2018	FY 2057	$0	$215,000	$215,000	H
Active Transportation, Transit, and Tech. Program	FY 2018	FY 2032	$0	$32,000	$32,000	T
Highway Efficiency Program	FY 2018	FY 2032	$0	$133,000	$133,000	H
Bus System Improvement Program	FY 2018	FY 2057	$0	$55,000	$55,000	T
First/Last Mile and Complete Streets	FY 2018	FY 2057	$0	$198,000	$198,000	H
Highway Demand Based Prog. (HOV Ext. & Connect.)	FY 2018	FY 2057	$0	$231,000	$231,000	H
I-605 Corridor "Hot Spot" Interchange Improvements	FY 2018	FY 2057	$240,000	$1,000,000	$1,240,000	H
Modal Connectivity and Complete Streets Projects	FY 2018	FY 2057	$0	$202,000	$202,000	H
South Bay Highway Operational Improvements	FY 2018	FY 2057	$600,000	$500,000	$1,100,000	H
Transit Program	FY 2018	FY 2057	$500,000	$88,000	$588,000	T
Transit Projects	FY 2018	FY 2057	$0	$257,100	$257,100	T
Transportation System and Mobility Improve. Program	FY 2018	FY 2057	$0	$350,000	$350,000	H
North San Fernando Valley Bus Rapid Transit Improvements	FY 2019	FY 2023	$0	$180,000	$180,000	T
Subregional Equity Program	FY 2018	FY 2057	TBD	TBD	$1,196,000	T/H
Countywide BRT Projects Ph 1 (All Subregions)	FY 2020	FY 2022	$0	$50,000	$50,000	T
Countywide BRT Projects Ph 2 (All Subregions)	FY 2030	FY 2032	$0	$50,000	$50,000	T
Active Transportation Projects	FY 2033	FY 2057	$0	$136,500	$136,500	H
Los Angeles Safe Routes to School Initiative	FY 2033	FY 2057	$0	$250,000	$250,000	H
Multimodal Connectivity Program	FY 2033	FY 2057	$0	$239,000	$239,000	H
Countywide BRT Projects Ph 3 (All Subregions)	FY 2040	FY 2042	$0	$50,000	$50,000	T

Project (Final Project to be Defined by the Environmental Process)	Groundbre-aking Start Date	Expected Opening Date (3-year range)	2016 - 2067 Local, State, Federal, Other Funding 2015$	Measure M Funding 2015$	Most Recent Cost Estimate 2015$**	Mode
Arterial Program	FY 2048	FY 2057	$0	$726,130	$726,130	H
BRT and 1st/Last Mile Solutions e.g. DASH	FY 2048	FY 2057	$0	$250,000	$250,000	T
Freeway Interchange and Operational Improvements	FY 2048	FY 2057	$0	$195,000	$195,000	H
Goods Movement (Improvements & RR Xing Elim.)	FY 2048	FY 2057	$0	$33,000	$33,000	T
Goods Movement Program	FY 2048	FY 2057	$0	$104,000	$104,000	T
Goods Movement Projects	FY 2048	FY 2057	$0	$81,700	$81,700	T
Highway Efficiency Program	FY 2048	FY 2057	$0	$128,870	$128,870	H
Highway Efficiency Program	FY 2048	FY 2057	$0	$534,000	$534,000	H
Highway Efficiency, Noise Mitig. and Arterial Projects	FY 2048	FY 2057	$0	$602,800	$602,800	H
ITS/Technology Program (Advanced Signal Tech.)	FY 2048	FY 2057	$0	$66,000	$66,000	H
LA Streetscape Enhance. & Great Streets Program	FY 2048	FY 2057	$0	$450,000	$450,000	H
Modal Connectivity Program	FY 2048	FY 2057	$0	$68,000	$68,000	H
Public Transit State of Good Repair Program	FY 2048	FY 2057	$0	$402,000	$402,000	T
Traffic Congestion Relief and Improvement Program	FY 2048	FY 2057	$0	$63,000	$63,000	H
Traffic Congestion Relief/Signal Synchronization	FY 2048	FY 2057	$0	$50,000	$50,000	H
Arroyo Verdugo Projects to be Determined	FY 2048	FY 2057	$0	$110,600	$110,600	H
Countywide BRT Projects Ph 4 (All Subregions)	FY 2050	FY 2052	$90,000	$10,000	$100,000	T
Countywide BRT Projects Ph 5 (All Subregions)	FY 2060	FY 2062	$0	$100,000	$100,000	T
Multi-Year Subregional Programs Subtotal			**$1,430,000**	**$10,253,700**	**$12,879,700**	
GRAND TOTAL			**$21,011,027**	**$31,243,641**	**$53,450,669**	

Endnotes

[1] Michael Manville, Brian Taylor, and Evelyn Blumenberg, "Falling Transit Ridership," UCLA ITS Report to the Southern California Region of Governments, 2018

[2] LA Metro, "Onboard Survey Results," Fall 2018.

[3] Laura Nelson, "A Tax Hike to Fund a Major Expansion of the Metro System is Leading in Early Returns," Los Angeles Times, November 9, 2016.

[4] Michael Manville, "Measure M and the Potential Transformation of Mobility in Los Angeles," UCLA ITS Report to] TransitCenter, 2019.

[5] LA Metro's goals for Measure M suggest that the measure's primary purpose is to address congestion, with sub-goals of making transit more accessible, repairing infrastructure, and creating jobs. Since the measure spends two-thirds of its revenue on public transportation, the implied mechanism for congestion reduction is through expanded use of transit—people driving less and using transit more.

[6] A proposed $398 million, 2,700-foot bridge to Gravina Island, Alaska (population 50) is perhaps the most infamous example of politically powerful legislators dropping projects of dubious efficiency into federal transportation bills. See: Taxpayers for Common Sense, "The Gravina Access Project: A Bridge to Nowhere," 2005. Local officials, of course, are not immune to the benefits of ribbon-cutting, but federal officials may see larger net benefits from infrastructure, since they can spread the costs of any given project over more non-constituents. See: Paul Peterson, The Price of Federalism, Brookings, 1995.

[7] See Robert Puentes, "Transportation at the Ballot Box: More Votes that Matter This Year," Eno Transportation Weekly, September 19, 2016.

[8] To be clear: broader coalitions helped win passage of the later measures, but it is doubtful that they account for the entire swing in electoral outcomes. LA County changed in many ways since 1968, becoming more liberal, more diverse, more environmentally-oriented, and more congested.

[9] As a result of California state law, Measures R, J, and M faced a two-thirds threshold for voter approval, while earlier transportation tax measures needed only a simple majority. The higher threshold was imposed as a result of a 1996 voter-approved state proposition, which mandated that "special purpose taxes" (like taxes for transportation) would require supermajority approval. Los Angeles' three successful measures in 1980, 1990 and 2008 meant that even before Measure M, LA Metro was raising almost half its annual operating budget from local sales taxes.

[10] Devolution complicates coalition building in an additional way, which we will only briefly mention here: it injects more intergovernmental uncertainty into the approval process. Congress can form a coalition and pass a bill with no input from state and local governments. In practice it may not do so, but Congress is largely unconstrained by lower levels of government. Local governments, in contrast, have no powers reserved explicitly for them, and as a result can do nothing—including raising their sales taxes—without permission from their states. Thus a county that wants to increase its sales tax to fund transportation must first win approval from its state legislature, in the form of enabling legislation. Securing this legislation adds another layer of negotiation to the coalition-building process.

[11] These high success rates are in part a product of endogeneity: advocates only propose ballots when they are reasonably confident of success.

[12] Propositions A and C, the sales tax increments Los Angeles approved in 1980 and 1990, are also permanent.

[13] Kevin Roderick, "Mayor Walks out on Antonovich," LA Observed, April 19, 2012.

[14] LA Metro interview respondents gave varying explanations, all of them speculative, for Antonovich's reversal. Some suggested that Antonovich had opposed Measures R and J partly from a personal dislike of LA Mayor Antonio Villaragoisa, who had led the R and J coalitions. He got on better with LA Mayor Garcetti. Other respondents suggested that Antonovich had neither expected nor wanted J to lose: while it had been politically important for him to oppose it, given his constituency, it was not to his advantage to be seen as the reason it failed. In 2016, term limits would prevent Antonovich from running again for County Supervisor, and any other office he sought (he ended up running unsuccessfully for State Senate) would have a constituency that had supported Measure J.

[15] MoveLA's representatives say the Straw Man went through 54 drafts. On MoveLA's web site, the figure is 33. MoveLA's executive director Denny Zane said, "As things proceeded it got a little awkward as some groups began to imagine that our MR2 Strawman was the "real" measure. So after about 54 revisions we had to try to close it up and submit it with explanations to Metro as our input into the process."

[16] One of the biggest hurdles to making Measure M permanent was a state law passed in January 2016, which

required every tax proposal on a ballot to disclose both the amount of money it would raise annually and its duration. LA Metro thus faced the possibility of being forced to write ballot language that prominently proposed a permanent tax increase. After debate with its lawyers, the agency resolved this problem through some clever wording: Measure M would last, the ballot language stated, "until ended by voters."

[17] A smaller and unexpected finding from LA Metro's focus groups was that many voters did not know they were already paying three other ½ cent sales tax increments to the authority (from 1980's Proposition A, 1990's Proposition C, and 2008's Measure R). Upon learning they were, support for Measure M fell. Partly as a result of this finding, election materials for Measure M did not emphasize its relationship to Measure R.

[18] Laura Nelson, "Metro's Sales Tax Could Reduce Your Time Stuck in Traffic by 15% — But Not Until 2057," Los Angeles Times, October 21, 2016.

[19] Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation, "Construction Impact of Los Angeles County Traffic Improvement Plan," 2016.

Eno
Center for Transportation

www.enotrans.org

@EnoTrans

@EnoCenterForTransportation

bit.ly/EnoLinkedIn

1629 K St. NW
Suite 200
Washington D.C. 20006

CONTACT US:
publicaffairs@enotrans.org
202-879-4700