Straw Man Proposal #50
for a ½ cent sales tax that would generate $90 billion over 45 years

Sept. 23, 2015

Over a year ago, Move LA began a process of dialogue about priorities that might be reflected in the next round of transportation investments in LA County. We developed a draft proposal we call the “Straw Man,” framed largely by Measure R with the addition of certain elements, such as bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, goods movement, and an investment program for arterials and boulevards.

**Objectives Move LA believes should drive the investment program**

- Reducing vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and improving our worsening traffic congestion
- Improving our economy and creating jobs
- Significantly reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and air pollution
- Ensuring greater social equity and reducing environmental injustices
- Creating easy and equitable access to jobs, education, services, amenities and open space in LA County

### Adding It Up: How Do Various Systems Fare in Move LA’s “Straw Man”?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transit systems: 65%</th>
<th>Local Return: 25%</th>
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<tr>
<td>30% Metrorail</td>
<td>15% Any local transportation infrastructure or service</td>
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<tr>
<td>25% Metro Bus &amp; Rail Operations</td>
<td>5% dedicated to Active Transportation</td>
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<tr>
<td>5% Metrolink</td>
<td>5% dedicated to Arterials/Complete Streets/Grand Blvd</td>
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<tr>
<td>5% Bus Rapid Transit set-aside within Complete Streets/Grand Boulevards (Local Return)</td>
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<th>Transit Operations: 25%</th>
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<tr>
<td>20% Bus and Metro Rail operations</td>
<td>5% First &amp; last-mile program carve out in Local Return</td>
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<tr>
<td>5% dedicated to students, seniors &amp; people with disabilities</td>
<td>5% Active Transportation carve out in Local Return</td>
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<th>Highway Systems: 20%</th>
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<tr>
<td>15% for Freeways and Clean Goods Movement</td>
<td>5% Complete Streets carve out in Local Return</td>
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<tr>
<td>5% for Arterials/Complete Streets /Grand Boulevards from Local Return</td>
<td>5% First &amp; last-mile program carve out in Metrorail; includes access from transit to trails, parks &amp; LA River</td>
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<th>Students, Seniors &amp; People with Disabilities</th>
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<td>5% dedication from Transit Operations for passes and services for students, seniors and people with disabilities</td>
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[Note: figures exceed 100% because categories are not exclusive]
Proposed Program Scale: One half-cent sales tax increase with at least a 45-year term and at least a $90 billion expenditure program

In order to meet the real needs of a place as large and as diverse as LA County it is necessary to have very robust investment. This is not just a practical imperative; it is also a political imperative. It is simply not possible to win a two-thirds vote unless every part of the county sees the measure as meeting real and significant needs in their community. That requires a robust budget.

Move LA supports a half-cent sales tax increase. We believe the scale of the measure—hence its ability to ensure that every part of the county receives significant improvements—is directly proportional to the length of its term. Move LA prefers a measure with no sunset, principally to avoid a moment when there might be a sudden and significant drop in transit operating funds that could force a sudden and dramatic cut in service. We believe that a 45-year measure generating more than $90 billion would enable the county to meet many—maybe most—of its transportation capital needs, even given an expected population growth of three million new residents over that time.

Move LA’s Proposed Expenditure Program

1. **A Robust Countywide Metrorail Transit Expansion: 30% = ~$27 Billion**

   A robust transit system with a high degree of connectivity is essential to any strategy to get people out of their cars, reduce traffic congestion and air pollution, significantly reduce greenhouse gases while creating jobs and opportunities in a more efficient and equitable economy. Therefore, Metro’s top priority should be to create a robust countywide rail transit system with a high level of connectivity. It must serve every part of Los Angeles County while being consistent with local priorities.

   This effort begins with implementing most of the 2009 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) Strategic Unfunded Rail Transit Program and the transit development priorities of the Councils of Governments (COGs). Relying upon Metro’s published cost projections for these projects, the estimated total cost would be approximately $27 billion or 30% of the projected revenue from a 45-year measure.

   - **Move LA recommends first priority be the completion of Measure R projects where enhancements have emerged from community dialogue:**
     
     - Complete a rail connection to LAX.
     - Build the East San Fernando Valley light rail corridor along Van Nuys Boulevard from the Orange Line station to the Sylmar Metrolink station.
     - Build the West Santa Ana Corridor ECO-Rapid Transit light rail from Artesia to Downtown LA.
     - Build both alternatives on the Eastside Gold Line light rail extension so that service is provided to both South El Monte and Whittier.
     - Build a light or heavy rail line through a tunnel under the Sepulveda Pass/405 corridor connecting the Orange Line/Van Nuys station to the West LA/Expo Line. Consider a toll road in the tunnel or over the pass to raise revenue if analytic assessment demonstrates feasibility. This project can significantly improve regional connectivity and reduce freeway congestion.
b. Move LA recommends the next priority be to extend and augment Measure R and other projects to serve more communities and improve overall system connectivity, including:

- Extend the Crenshaw Line to Wilshire Boulevard, continuing to West Hollywood then to the Hollywood/Highland station on the Red Line
- Extend the Foothill Gold Line to Claremont.
- Extend the Green Line to Torrance
- Extend the Wilshire Subway to Bundy. [Consider extending to Wilshire and 17th St., Santa Monica]
- Convert the Orange Line to light rail in the San Fernando Valley
- Add BRT to Vermont Avenue from Wilshire to the
Green Line in South Bay
• Add BRT from the San Fernando Valley to San Gabriel Valley
• Extend the Green Line east in Norwalk to connect to the Metrolink station
• Continue light rail on the 405 Corridor from West LA to LAX

c. **Metro should consider the following additional transit projects should funding be available:**
• Extend the Green Line beyond Torrance to ultimately connect it to the Blue Line, providing continuous Metrorail service from Long Beach to LAX and north to the San Fernando Valley.
• Create a multimodal rail and “Rail to River” active transportation program on the Harbor Subdivision corridor east of the Crenshaw line.

d. **First & last mile transit access, wireless infrastructure & community mitigation: 5% ~ $4.5 billion**
• 3% dedicated to improving transit access and efficiency: first-&-last-mile infrastructure & wireless communications capability.
• 2% for enhanced first-&-last-mile and station area investments in communities with effective residential and business retention policies.

**Discussion:** Move LA believes no rail project and no transit station area should be regarded as complete without investment in first-&-last-mile infrastructure. This includes bicycle and pedestrian facilities, shared mobility options, and better access for seniors and people with disabilities.

These are critical investments that serve diverse needs and will boost transit ridership. Bike paths, protected bike lanes, safe bike parking, sidewalks that are in good repair, and clearly marked crosswalks will increase public safety and encourage walking and biking to and from stations.

Real-time arrival and departure information, wayfinding signage, and apps that help transit riders plan multimodal trips will also encourage transit use. Information technology is making the integration of all modes possible and mobility hubs near stations will make riders feel safer and more comfortable, while encouraging ridership.

It is vital to maximize the retention of local residents and businesses in station areas. We recommend structuring a portion of this fund as a competitive grant program for enhanced first-&-last-mile infrastructure, making these funds available to communities that have policy or funding commitments in place to:
• help small neighborhood businesses adapt to changes in their customer base and rents,
• encourage retention of core transit riders living in transit-rich neighborhoods,
• encourage the development of housing for the moderate and low-income residents who are likely to be the most frequent users of transit.

We also encourage Metro to integrate access to natural assets into first-&-last-mile strategies. Urban river corridors with biking and walking trails, for example, could serve as first-last-mile connections to transit as well as safe routes to schools.

2. **Metrolink regional commuter rail within LA County: 5% ~ $4-5 billion**

- Move LA recommends significant funding for Metrolink capital and operations to enhance service, reduce fares, and boost ridership.
- Move LA urges priority investments in double-tracking and grade separations for express Metrolink service to regional airports.
- Metrolink should install wireless communications infrastructure into passenger cars and stations.
- Metrolink should reduce emissions by investing in zero-emission equivalent vehicles.

**Discussion:** The five-county Metrolink regional commuter rail system is a significant and cost effective way to get regional commuters off the freeways and onto safe and comfortable transit. The system serves over 44,000 riders per day from all corners of Los Angeles and neighboring counties and has significant room for growth. Transitioning to zero-emission equivalent technologies is a great near-term opportunity to reduce diesel emissions as well as greenhouse gas emissions.
Metrolink is uniquely capable of providing express transit service to regional airports especially Palmdale, Burbank and Ontario. A Metrolink direct connection to Ontario Airport is being considered by SANBAG (the San Bernardino County transportation agency). Together with express service to Downtown LA, this has potential for significant congestion relief and to create economic development opportunities in East LA and the San Gabriel Valley.

Improvements in the LA County portion of the Metrolink San Bernardino Line should include double tracking where needed to enable this service. Given the explosion of growth of both residential and commercial development in Downtown LA, regular express service to Union Station could attract major carriers to Ontario Airport, especially Asian carriers that need access for their Superjumbo A-380 aircraft, which LAX struggles to accommodate and Ontario runways handle easily. These carriers may also be eager to serve the Asian communities all along the route.

3. Transit Operations: 25%
   ~$200 million 1st year
   ~$23 billion over 45 years
   - 20% for Metro bus and rail operations
   - 5% for student transit passes and investments in infrastructure and services for seniors and people with disabilities

*Low fares + high service = higher ridership:* Ensuring significant new funds for bus and rail operations is necessary to improve transit service and build and maintain ridership. Operations funding to maintain high service levels and low fares may be the single most important investment if our goals are to reduce congestion and emissions and provide access to opportunity. Move LA does believe these should be priority goals.

Every time Metro, or any other transit agency, raises fares there is a measurable and sometimes significant decline in ridership. This can translate into worsening congestion or loss of employment or both. These declines can take as long as a decade to reverse. Fare increases should only be done when absolutely necessary to avoid significant service cutbacks.

To avoid both fare increases and service cuts, the measure put before voters in 2016 should include significant transit operating funds.

*Students, Seniors & People with Disabilities:* Within the 25% for transit operations, we urge a set-aside of 5% of the measure’s total funding for countywide transit pass programs for students and for improved transit access, passes, and more para-transit services for seniors and people with disabilities. Move LA regards this as a fundamental responsibility of a just and democratic society.

A universal student transit pass program, as has been implemented at universities and colleges across the nation, may be one of the most cost-effective ways to provide near-term traffic congestion relief. A student transit pass program for K-12 will help many children from low income families. It would also help ensure a more equitable Los Angeles if it includes low-income part-time students who don’t qualify for the Metro discounts and often juggle work, studies and family.

4. Highway Program & Clean Truck Corridors: 15% ~ $14 billion

(Note: The total highway investment in this proposal is 20%. 15% here and an additional 5% for Arterial Program for secondary highway funding in Local Return.)

In order of priority:
- 3% dedicated to facilitate deployment of zero emission equivalent trucks
- Investment in our goods movement corridors to reduce highway congestion
- Express lanes, HOT lanes
- Interchange improvements only where demonstrably and significantly advantageous

There are important highway investments that need to be made in LA County. Residents, businesses, and voters in general are eager to see investments that yield congestion relief, air quality improvements, and improve overall economic performance. And, there are important highway investment opportunities that were not included in Measure R that should be considered a priority in this measure.
a. Addressing the Challenges of the Goods Movement Industry

Perhaps the most important highway investment needed in Southern California is improving safety and reducing air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions from the goods movement industry which overwhelmingly uses diesel fuel. Goods movement is one of LA County’s strongest economic drivers, in large part because the Ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles are the primary gateways for Asian trade for the entire nation. Still, heavy-duty trucks are a major source of traffic congestion and a significant source of safety concerns on our freeways, especially on the north/south I-710 corridor and the east/west I-10 and I-60 corridors.

In addition, emissions from diesel trucks and locomotives are the most significant and the most challenging problem facing air quality officials. Diesel emissions are among our most toxic air contaminants, a major cause of lung cancer, asthma, heart disease and other health problems. Diesel vehicles contribute 42% of So Cal’s NOx, a critical precursor to ozone, as well as 70%+ of our particulate matter. Locally, diesel emissions account for 84% of the cancer risk from breathing toxic air contaminants. Nationally, the cancer risk from diesel emissions is about ten times higher than from all other hazardous air pollutants combined. These problems are heavily concentrated in low-income communities of color along the 710, 60, and 10 corridors.

*Improving congestion and safety and reducing pernicious diesel emissions and greenhouse gases should be the top priority of the Highway Program.*

Vehicles involved in goods movement often operate nationally and even internationally, which means local and state regulators do not have the authority needed to require clean technology. The strategies that have succeeded in bringing clean vehicles to the market, such as the Carl Moyer Program, are those where public resources have been invested in partnership with private engine manufacturers and trucking companies to develop and demonstrate cleaner technologies, mostly natural gas, as well as electric or hybrid-electric technologies.

The challenge for a clean goods movement strategy is no longer about developing and demonstrating clean technologies that are comparable in performance to heavy-duty diesel-powered trucks. The challenge is deploying these technologies on scale.

*We urge that 3% of this measure be used to support deployment of zero emission equivalent trucks. Facilitating deployment of clean trucks in the goods movement industry is the single most important clean air measure we can undertake and it will address our most difficult environmental justice challenge.*

Because vehicles engaged in goods movement are both expensive and have a long operational lifespan, engine manufacturers are not able to ramp up production of even successful technologies unless they know there is a long-term market. Once manufacturers are confident they will expand production and gain the advantage of economies of scale that will bring costs down and enable a sustainable technological transformation.

Worsened traffic congestion and reduced highway efficiency and safety are also serious problems associated with the goods movement industry. The public and the private sectors need to work together and invest together, if we are to reduce this vital industry’s adverse impacts upon our highways and communities while retaining the industry’s economic benefits.
Plans have been developed to address these operational issues with truck-only lanes and corridors that separate truck and auto traffic. Some plans involve toll roads and special access for clean trucks. All require significant public investment to succeed. We need federal dollars and state dollars — but we will never get that investment if we do not first commit local dollars.

b. Other Highway Programs
HOV/High Occupancy Toll /Express Lane programs that encourage carpooling and transit as an alternative (such as the Silver Line BRT) have been surprisingly successful and should be expanded. Also, freeway maintenance and repair merits inclusion on a list of priority investments.

5. Local Return Funding: 25% ~ $23 billion
- 15% for any local transportation purpose
- 5% for local Active Transportation investments
- 5% for Complete Streets and Grand Boulevards on arterials

Move LA supports the continued practice of directing a significant share of sales tax proceeds to local governments for implementation of local transportation priorities. These “finer grained” local transportation infrastructure projects have an important role in our county system.

Move LA believes there is a smart approach whereby 25% of total funding is directed toward local infrastructure investments, and that those investments include bicycle and pedestrian projects as well as subregional arterial investments. Two of the most important missed opportunities of Measure R were 1) the failure to invest in bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, and 2) the failure to invest in our arterials and boulevards.

Specifically, we propose that out of the 25% in the Local Return category as follows.

a. Unrestricted Transportation Purposes
15% of total funds to be allocated by population formula to local cities for any transportation investment at their discretion

b. Active Transportation
5% of total funds should be allocated by population formula to local cities for investment in bicycle and pedestrian improvements and programs in their communities. This will facilitate success in our efforts to reduce GHG emissions.

c. Arterials, Complete Streets & Grand Boulevards:
5% of total funds to be managed by Councils of Governments (COGs) — in coordination with Metro — for the planning and implementation of a Complete Streets and Grand Boulevards investment program. Complete streets should be designed to enhance overall mobility and expand transit services while creating separated bicycle lanes and enhanced pedestrian infrastructure.

An excellent strategy to reduce GHGs, Complete Streets becomes Grand Boulevards when a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) program and a community development program have also been implemented.

Ensuring Geographic Equity
Move LA recommends that half of the total arterial funds be allocated by a population formula and half be used to ensure geographic equity to subregions with less overall rail transit service.

The Importance of Investing in Active Transportation, Arterials and Complete Streets
Local governments should have the resources to plan and implement a locally planned active transportation program. Active transportation is a clean and healthy alternative to driving that reduces both air pollution and GHGs. Enabling low-cost healthy alternatives that enable more localized economies is a smart long term strategy in a world faced with rising energy costs and the certain and significant disruptions of climate change.

In addition, smart investments on many LA County arterials and boulevards could create “complete streets” that not only improve the efficiency of overall travel and create opportunities for expanded bus transit, but also provide for separated bike infrastructure and enhanced pedestrian infrastructure that creates a safer environment. Street widening should be permitted – but only to enable enhanced bike and pedestrian infrastructure.
On some boulevards bus service could transition eventually to Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), potentially creating a BRT network as extensive as our rail network. Not long ago, leaders like Mayor Richard Riordan saw BRT as a preferred alternative to rail transit. We should do both.

Our boulevards are also opportunities for transit-oriented mixed-use development to house the middle, moderate, and low-income households likely to be the most frequent users of transit. A boulevard that has become a complete street in a community that plans to improve transit service and implement a local community development program should have the resources necessary to implement what we call a “Grand Boulevard.”

Grand Boulevards would be good locations for improved bus stops, bike share stations, and mobility hubs providing information about car-share, bike-share and ride-share options, real-time info about bus arrivals and departures, and wayfinding signage. Funding for the operation and maintenance of bike sharing stations along Grand Boulevards should also be an eligible use of Local Return.

Sales tax revenues could also leverage funding for green infrastructure including cool pavement, and storm water recapture and reclamation. These improvements could help cool down neighborhoods and reduce GHG emissions, improve air quality, and make Grand Boulevards the best neighborhoods in which to live, work, shop, play, or just wait for the bus.

Looking back to see forward: Grand Boulevards

Many of our legacy streetcar corridors and boulevards could be repurposed and revived at relatively low-cost. They could attract catalytic and strategic investments to make them complete streets. Boulevards that provide ready access to an enhanced network of transit, jobs and services will attract investment and new residents and businesses.

A local Grand Boulevards program could leverage other funding from sources such as the state’s Cap & Trade program (GHG Reduction Fund) that could pay for street trees and district parking at strategic locations along these boulevards. Cap & Trade can also pay for new apartments with affordable rents, raising the potential for lively, neighborhoods where it’s easy and affordable to live and get around and an abundance of transit users.

Too visionary? We think not. A Grand Boulevards program could be a prescription for progress triggered by transportation investments that not only address traffic congestion by providing new mobility options but also create walkable, bikeable, transit-oriented and more prosperous and equitable communities as well.