



DATE: June 1, 2017

TO: Transportation Authority of Marin Board of Commissioners

FROM: Dianne Steinhauser, Executive Director
Molly Graham, Public Outreach Coordinator

SUBJECT: Report on City/County Briefings (Discussion), Agenda Item No. 9a

RECOMMENDATION

Discussion Only.

Receive information on educational outreach conducted to Marin County and to all cities and towns.

BACKGROUND

In January 2017, the Transportation Authority of Marin began introducing the idea of renewing our transportation sales tax to our local city and town councils. The current 20-year transportation sales tax, passed by voters in 2004, will expire on March 31st, 2025. While there are 8 years remaining for the tax to be collected, there are advantages to renewing early, creating an ongoing reliable stream of revenue to continue much needed projects and programs.

TAM conducted a majority of its outreach around what the sales tax pays for now, and what has been identified as needs in Marin. With the sales tax having been passed in 2004, and many council members and supervisors having been newly elected since then, educating on the details of the sales tax was a useful and appreciated effort. Reporting also on needs, the need for congestion relief on Highway 101 and interchanges, school bus service, senior mobility and pothole repairs have all been identified as outstanding needs by our residents, businesses, municipalities and community organizations.

As a first step back in January, TAM explored whether to seek an exemption from the current state law limiting local sales tax to 2% above the state sales tax level. While TAM first pursued action by local councils on the sales tax cap exemption, we received feedback that the approval of the exemption should be at a later step in the process. Staff and TAM Board leadership recognized that prior to councils considering the exemption to the sales tax cap, there was a need for a clear understanding of what the sales tax pays for now, what needs are unmet, what are the ways to pay for those needs, and whether there is support for Marin to generate more local funds for transportation needs. The outreach to cities and towns was reset, away from requesting action by councils on a sales tax cap exemption, and instead focused on an educational overview of the projects and programs supported by the current sales tax, and receiving feedback from elected officials and residents on unmet needs

The TAM Board Chair, the TAM Executive Director and the Marin Transit General Manager provided a joint presentation to give a thorough overview of what projects and programs are currently funded by the Measure A transportation sales tax throughout Marin and in each city/town, as well as projects that are of interest to the public but remain unfunded.

There continues to be great interest in transportation issues from both elected officials and Marin residents. We are pleased to have had these recent conversations with the cities and towns, and the County, and appreciate the feedback we have received from council members and residents. In general, there is wide support from elected officials for the projects and programs funded by the existing sales tax, and cities and towns have ongoing unmet needs for transportation funding.

Key comments from outreach to jurisdictions included:

- Local funding is the most flexible for cities and towns and does not have restrictions like much state and federal funding
- A transportation sales tax expenditure plan is a critical document. Jurisdictions and the public will not support a tax that is not clearly defined
- Support exists for increased crossing guards and more school bus service
- Requests occurred for expediting the northbound 101/eastbound 580 project
- Requests occurred for clarification on how local road funds are distributed There was recognition that local Major Road projects were useful and needed to continue to be supported
- There was recognition that several local road Interchanges with Highway 101 needed to be improved.
- There was recognition that gaps in the bike/pedestrian network would benefit from being addressed
- Interest existed in the next steps for renewing the transportation sales tax and whether the sales tax cap would need to be addressed
- There was recognition that since Proposition 13, local jurisdictions have had to pay for services they support through local funding measures
- Concern existed regarding tax fatigue; programs and projects in an expenditure plan must be strongly supported.

NEXT STEPS

Discussion only. This initial educational outreach was useful and appreciated. Education on what a renewed sales tax would include, and perhaps what an increased sales tax would include will be repeated at the end of 2017/early 2018 to all councils and the Board of Supervisors. The TAM Board will consider proceeding to the next step of forming and directing staff to manage an Expenditure Plan Advisory Committee.

ATTACHMENT

Attachment A: Schedule of Outreach to Cities, Towns and the County