



**DATE:** February 12, 2018

**TO:** Transportation Authority of Marin Board of Commissioners

**FROM:** Dianne Steinhauser, Executive Director

**SUBJECT:** Accept the Transportation Sales Tax Measure Feasibility Survey Results (Discussion)  
Agenda No. 6

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## **RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommend the TAM Board receive the topline results from the public opinion survey of likely Marin County voters conducted by Godbe Research and provide comment.

Note that Charles Hester of Godbe Research will be presenting the survey results at the Board meeting.

## **BACKGROUND**

The current ½-cent transportation sales tax, passed by voters in 2004, operates under a sales tax expenditure plan that is approaching 15 years old. The TAM Board has been considering a potential early renewal of the existing sales tax measure, resetting how the funds will be spent in the future to create an ongoing reliable stream of revenue for much needed projects and programs.

In January 2017, the Transportation Authority of Marin began educational briefings to our local city and town councils to introduce the idea of renewing and possibly increasing our county-wide transportation sales tax. These briefings focused on providing information about the projects and programs supported by the current sales tax and receiving feedback from elected officials and residents on priorities and unmet needs. The idea of legislatively increasing the statewide sales tax cap to enable an increase in the transportation sales tax was initially discussed, then abandoned.

In February 2017, the TAM Board authorized a baseline poll regarding transportation needs and priorities of approximately 1100 likely voters. Godbe Research was selected as the polling firm and they conducted a baseline poll in May 2017. The poll focused on an increase of the sales tax from ½-cent to ¾-cent. Informed support registered at 66.9% of likely 2018 voters. A final question in that poll regarding renewing the sales tax versus expanding it registered at 72.1% of likely 2018 voters.

In June 2017, the TAM Board reviewed the baseline poll results and approved the formation and membership of a Transportation Sales Tax Expenditure Plan Advisory Committee (EPAC) to develop a draft expenditure plan, to consider both a renewed sales tax at ½-cent, and an increased sales tax at ¾-cent.

The EPAC met between June and December 2017 to develop a plan to extend the existing ½-cent transportation sales tax and consider expanding the sales tax. The committee was comprised of 24 residents, including Citizens' Oversight Committee members, representing a diverse array of interests in Marin County.

The EPAC reviewed the poll results from the 2017 poll. They received broad education about the current ½-cent transportation sales tax and learned from a variety of agencies about current programs and unmet transportation needs. Based on this information, the EPAC developed a draft expenditure plan that culminated with a consensus recommendation to pursue a 30-year extension of the ½-cent sales tax to be placed on the ballot in November of 2018.

On December 11, 2017, the TAM Board of Commissioners unanimously elected to move forward with educational briefings to local jurisdictions to receive their input on the draft expenditure plan developed by the EPAC and approved conducting a scientifically based public opinion poll to augment the baseline poll conducted in May 2017.

## **DISCUSSION**

The baseline poll conducted in 2017 confirmed that transportation issues and traffic congestion continue to be top concerns of Marin County residents. There is great interest in transportation issues and solutions from our elected officials, workers, business community, residents and community organizations. The baseline survey and subsequent follow-up survey are helping gauge the public's perception of transportation needs, assessing potential voter support for a sales tax measure and providing useful information about prioritizing projects and programs to be included in a sales tax measure. The polls also test the influence of supporting and opposing arguments and can help understand voter interests and objectives.

In response to a tax sensitive climate, baseline poll results and input from the EPAC, agencies and interested stakeholders, the follow-up poll only explored renewing the existing sales tax. Expansion of the sales tax is not being considered at this time in favor of protecting the existing sales tax and adjusting details of the expenditure plan to respond to current needs.

## **NEXT STEPS**

In February and March, the TAM Executive Director and staff, Marin Transit management, Public Works Directors and agency staff, as needed, will conduct educational outreach to Cities and Towns to receive input on the draft Transportation Sales Tax Renewal Expenditure Plan. Based on the public opinion poll and input from agencies and residents from ongoing outreach, staff will write and refine a detailed Final Draft Transportation Sales Tax Renewal Expenditure Plan.

In April the TAM Board will consider voting on the Final Draft Transportation Sales Tax Renewal Expenditure Plan and will decide whether to direct staff to seek approval from all 12 local jurisdictions on the Final Draft Transportation Sales Tax Renewal Expenditure Plan.

For the Transportation Sales Tax Renewal Expenditure Plan to be placed on the ballot for consideration by voters in November 2018, the 75-word ballot argument and expenditure plan must be submitted to the Registrar of Voters no later than August 10, 2018.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommend the TAM Board accept the topline results from the public opinion survey of likely Marin County voters conducted by Godbe Research.

## **ATTACHMENT**

Attachment A: Likely Next Steps to Renew the Transportation Sales Tax



### SCHEDULE OF LIKELY STEPS- December 2017

Topic	Target Dates	Complete
	<b><u>2017</u></b>	
1. Introduction and Initial Feedback from Local Jurisdictions	Feb - Apr	✓
2. Baseline Polling - TAM Board approval of polling effort	Feb	✓
3. TAM Ad Hoc Committee guides poll - poll conducted	Mar - Apr	✓
4. TAM Board considers initial input from Local Jurisdictions and Polling and determines whether to proceed to next step of forming an Expenditure Plan Advisory Committee (Go/No Go)	Apr - May	✓
5. TAM Board establishes membership of Advisory Committee	Apr - May	✓
6. Kickoff of Expenditure Plan Advisory Committee Process	June	✓
7. Expenditure Plan Advisory Committee meets to develop options for renewing transportation sales tax, for increasing transportation sales tax, or both	June - Dec	✓
8. Expenditure Plan Advisory Committee engages in public outreach	June - Dec	✓
9. TAM Board reviews activity of Expenditure Plan Advisory Committee and determines whether to proceed to next step of briefing stakeholders and local councils on status and conducting a public opinion poll of draft Expenditure Plan Elements (Go/ No Go)	Dec 11	✓
	<b><u>2018</u></b>	
10. TAM Ad Hoc Committee guides poll and the poll is conducted	Feb	✓
11. TAM briefs stakeholders and local jurisdiction councils on status of Expenditure Plan development – seeks and receives input	Feb - Mar	
12. TAM Board considers input from stakeholders, local jurisdictions and polling results, and votes on Final Draft Sales Tax Expenditure Plan (Go/No Go)	April	
13. TAM Board directs staff to seek approval from all 12 local jurisdictions on Final Draft Sales Tax Expenditure Plan	May - July	
14. Final approval by TAM to request the Board of Supervisors to put the transportation sales tax renewal on the November 2018 ballot. Board of Supervisors approves.	July	
15. Expenditure plan and ballot argument (75 words) deadline for submission to registrar for November 2018 ballot.	August 10	

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