



DATE: July 8, 2019
TO: Transportation Authority of Marin Board of Commissioners
FROM: Dianne Steinhauser, Executive Director
SUBJECT: FASTER Bay Area (Discussion), Agenda Item No. 11

RECOMMENDATION

Discussion only. Staff will present current activity regarding possible new Bay Area transportation revenue measure.

BACKGROUND

Several business organizations have begun exploring the feasibility of a revenue measure for transportation improvements around the Bay Area. The Bay Area Council, Silicon Valley Leadership Group, and Transform are considering a “third leg to the stool” that supports transformative transportation improvements in the Bay Area, with SB1 and RM3 already in place. Dubbed FASTER Bay Area - Fast Affordable Sustainable Transportation – the effort is at an early formational stage, with polling and other outreach efforts being conducted. Supported by several large corporations, the emerging effort does not have specifics yet.

In 2015, the voters of Seattle approved a measure for better transportation infrastructure, taxing themselves over 20 years totaling \$54 billion. In 2016, Los Angeles convinced voters to accept a 40-year tax plan totaling \$120 billion. The Bay Area business and planning advocates leading this effort are considering raising \$100 billion to address transportation needs, with early goal statements focused on a world class transit system that lures non-transit users out of their vehicles. State legislation would be needed to put a referendum on the ballot in all nine Bay Area counties.

Early outlooks of leading vote-getting improvements include:

- A second Transbay crossing for BART (a second tube is being studied independently by BART)
- A network of express toll car and bus lanes
- An expanded ferry network
- Improvements to BART and Caltrain service to increase frequency
- Completion of rail over the Dumbarton Crossing

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

With a requirement to achieve two-thirds voter approval, the team from Bay Area Council, Silicon Valley Leadership Group and Transform are interviewing Bay Area transportation leaders to gain insight of what is needed in each County, or more importantly, what transformative projects would gain public support. While access to and from Silicon Valley is fuel to the region's business engine, it is unlikely that voters in Marin would vote for a new tax if specific benefits to our County were not apparent and included. Marin has significant job access needs as well, as do our sister counties in the North Bay.

It is undetermined exactly how the revenue will be raised. Under consideration is raising sales tax, business taxes, or property taxes. Note in Seattle, the Move Seattle Plan, was a property tax levy that replaced (and increased) an expiring property tax levy that was originally approved by voters in 2006. The November 2015 voter approval of Move Seattle split the funds amongst Safe Routes, Congestion Relief, and Maintenance / Repair. The vote was approved by 58.67% of voters. Note, a super-majority was not required (two-thirds). The estimated revenue generation is approximately \$54 billion over 20 years.

In Los Angeles in 2016, over 71% of voters approved Measure M which levied a new half-cent transportation sales tax and with no sunset date. As part of the effort, Measure M will increase to a one-cent sales tax when Measure R, the existing half-cent sales tax expires in 2039. Measure M funds the LA County Traffic Improvement Plan, with the 40 year \$120 billion plan dedicated to improving freeway traffic flow, rail construction, local regional and express bus service, improving streets and intersections, increasing transit and highway safety, improving accessibility for Seniors, students and the disabled, bike and ped connections, and incorporating modern technology into the transportation system. Most voters saw something they could support in the measure, which resulted in very strong approval.

An outstanding question for Marin is what would excite voters to approve a sales tax or other revenue measure here? How would the choking congestion experienced here and around the Bay be improved? Asked to put forward "transformative projects", a number of transit general managers in the Bay Area have been developing their solutions list, and appear ready to support the effort as it develops over the next several months. The County transportation authorities have not coalesced around an improvement list yet. It would behoove TAM to consider options and be ready to participate as this effort gains steam.

The schedule of activity regarding FASTER is unclear. A November 2020 ballot measure is being considered. A Fall 2019 rollout of a Draft Expenditure Plan is an extremely tight timeframe. A January through June 2020 contemplation by the legislature on both authorizing the ballot measure and likely increasing the sales tax cap in the nine Bay Area Counties will also be challenging. While polling appears positive according to the organizational team, it is unknown what a broader public engagement plan will be, and what role County transportation authorities, transit operators, and MTC may play in leading local efforts. Obviously to make this happen, local transportation leaders must get behind the effort.

Staff is developing a list of potential improvements to be presented to the TAM Board as a rough Draft at the July 8 TAM Board meeting. TAM staff is drawing from previous planning efforts such as the Strategic Vision Plan and interviewing fellow transportation leaders to come up with an array of transformative projects that could be considered for inclusion.

FISCAL CONSIDERATION

N/A

NEXT STEPS

Staff will begin the discussion regarding Marin and North Bay projects that could be considered transformative in nature. The actual timeline is unknown but staff believes it is prudent to begin the conversation now.

ATTACHMENTS

None

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