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How Proposed Transportation Sales Tax Will Impact Lamorinda

By Nick Marnell

The Board of Supervisors July 12 approved the expenditure plan of the Contra Costa Transportation Authority, paving the way for a countywide one-half cent sales tax measure to appear on the November ballot. The plan proposes funding for several high-profile projects in the Lamorinda area. Since 1988 the dollars generated through voter-approved sales tax measures C and J, and administered by the CCTA, have funded a wide variety of major Contra Costa County transportation projects, notably the Caldecott Tunnel's Fourth Bore. The current Measure J half-cent sales tax, in effect through 2034, will generate approximately \$2.5 billion. If the new half-cent sales tax measure is approved, it will bring in an additional \$2.9 billion through 2047.

The expenditure plan provides for funding over five major areas, including transit, major highway corridors, local streets and roads, the environment, and the safe transportation of children, seniors and people with disabilities.

"It took a lot of compromise among many, many groups and organizations to bring us to where we are today," Board Chair Candace Andersen said.

In order for a jurisdiction to receive its share of the funds generated by the proposed sales tax, it must meet a long list of criteria, including the adoption of a development approval process that supports transit, bicycle and pedestrian access. Each jurisdiction must also demonstrate reasonable progress in providing housing opportunities for all income levels, and must maintain growth within clear urban limits.

"You want the voters' money, these are the rules," said Don Tatzin, Lafayette city council member and CCTA commissioner. A public oversight committee will make sure that the rules are followed. Officials of the Lamorinda communities outlined what the money from this proposed tax measure will provide for their jurisdictions.

Moraga

Benefits to Moraga residents include more than \$400,000 for local street and road maintenance over the life of the proposed measure, according to Ellen Clark, town planning director. The plan will also provide funding for pedestrian and bicycle projects throughout town, for enhanced transit service and for the Lamorinda School Bus program, which eliminates 3,000 automobile trips every school day. "Major streets projects like the new roundabouts planned along St. Mary's Road could also be funded with the measure," Clark said.

Orinda

"BART is a huge piece, because residents want access to BART," said Amy Worth, Orinda city council member and CCTA commissioner. BART, however, will not receive proceeds from the sales tax measure until it meets contingencies, which include spending on its own infrastructure and funding by Alameda and San Francisco counties. Money will also go toward the design of direct access to eastbound Highway 24, the city's bicycle and pedestrian master plan, and the maintenance of Orinda roads. Worth said that the plan will address increased demand for senior services, as seniors wish to be able to age in place in Lamorinda.

Lafayette

Tatzin also led off with BART, noting that Lafayette residents are big users of the system, with money from the proposed tax allocated to increased capacity and ridership. Also planned is improvement of traffic and pedestrian flow and bicycle access in the downtown.

"We want to make the portion of Mt. Diablo Boulevard west to Acalanes Road a more attractive route," Tatzin said. A bicycle trail along the East Bay Municipal Utility District aqueduct is also on the docket.

Not only did all of the 19 county jurisdictions support the expenditure plan, every member of each of the governing bodies voted yes. Orinda endorsed the plan in May, Moraga and Lafayette in June.

Having been approved by the Board of Supervisors, the plan returns to the CCTA board for approval, then back to the supervisors for adoption of an ordinance allowing the sales tax measure to be placed on the November ballot, where it must garner two-thirds of the vote for passage. "We have taken into consideration the needs of various interests, and we think this is going to be saleable to the public," said Supervisor Federal Glover, also a CCTA commissioner.

Reach the reporter at: nick@lamorindaweekly.com

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