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## **OPINION: Measure DD Will Yield Transportation Project Grants**

By Willard Richards and Michael Allen

**Measure DD** will maintain Sonoma County's ability to compete for State funding of transportation projects that are now in the planning stages. It will do so by continuing the 1/4-percent Transportation Sales Tax approved by voters in 2004.

**Most transportation projects depend on federal or state grants. Without a local funding source such as the Transportation Sales Tax, many of them could never be planned or constructed.**

Currently more than ten dozen such projects are on the drawing boards of City and County public works departments. Most planning efforts depend upon a reasonable expectation that some federal or State funding will be available in future years to match local monies.

Because the process of planning and obtaining environmental clearances for significant projects can require a decade or more, it is important to assure that the Transportation Sales Tax will continue beyond the year 2025.

**Measure DD will have no effect on taxes until April 2025.**

At that time, the economic conditions will be very different from now. Dr. Anthony Fauci is optimistic that a safe and effective vaccine will be available in late 2021, and some of the more promising vaccines are already being manufactured in quantity.

Unless there is another catastrophe, the economy will be well into a recovery mode in April 2025, when Measure DD extends the Transportation Tax.

There are two Presidential elections between now and then, so it is less easy to project the political climate. However, many members of both political parties favor infrastructure projects as a way to boost the economy and help the recovery from the downturn caused by the pandemic. Locally we cannot let our roads fall into disrepair.

**Infrastructure projects provide jobs that have to stay local**, and they provide badly needed upgrades to our infrastructure. Measure M does not have the funds needed to prepare projects so they can compete for new infrastructure grants because the discretionary funds are mostly committed to paying off bonds for projects already started.

**Sonoma County needs to continue to be a self-help county and have additional local resources to compete for infrastructure grants. Measure DD assures both.**

The timelines of the existing sales tax and Measure DD are shown in this diagram.



The red **Prepare Projects** box shows the time between the election this November and April 2025 when the income stream guaranteed by Measure DD would allow the Sonoma County Transportation Authority to use bond funding to do the environmental studies and engineering needed to make projects shovel-ready.

This strategy played a key role in bringing in \$5 of state funding for every local tax dollar used to widen Highway 101.

**The time between November and 2025 a crucial time to make projects shovel-ready so we can be competitive when infrastructure grants are awarded.**

Yes, we are all in a world of hurt right now, but waiting two years to approve Measure DD will not decrease anyone’s taxes in any way. It will only take two years away from the time we have to make transportation projects shovel ready and to compete for infrastructure grants.

*Willard Richards is Chair of the Sonoma County Transportation and Land-Use Coalition. Michael Allen is a retired Assemblymember.*