



Center for Transportation Excellence

# Campaigning for Successful Transit

**2011** LOUISIANA  
**SMART  
GROWTH**  
S U M M I T

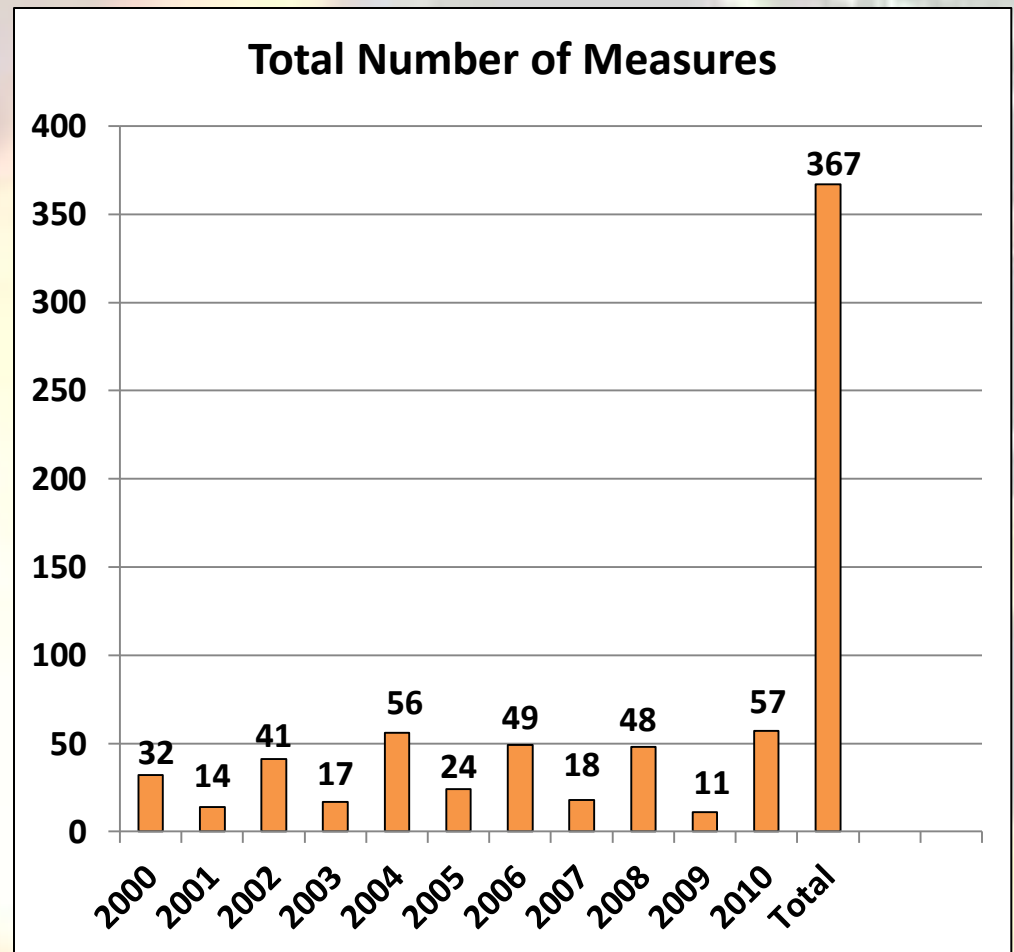
*Creating  
Communities  
that Work*

August 17th-19th  
*at the Manship Theatre  
at the Shaw Center for the Arts*

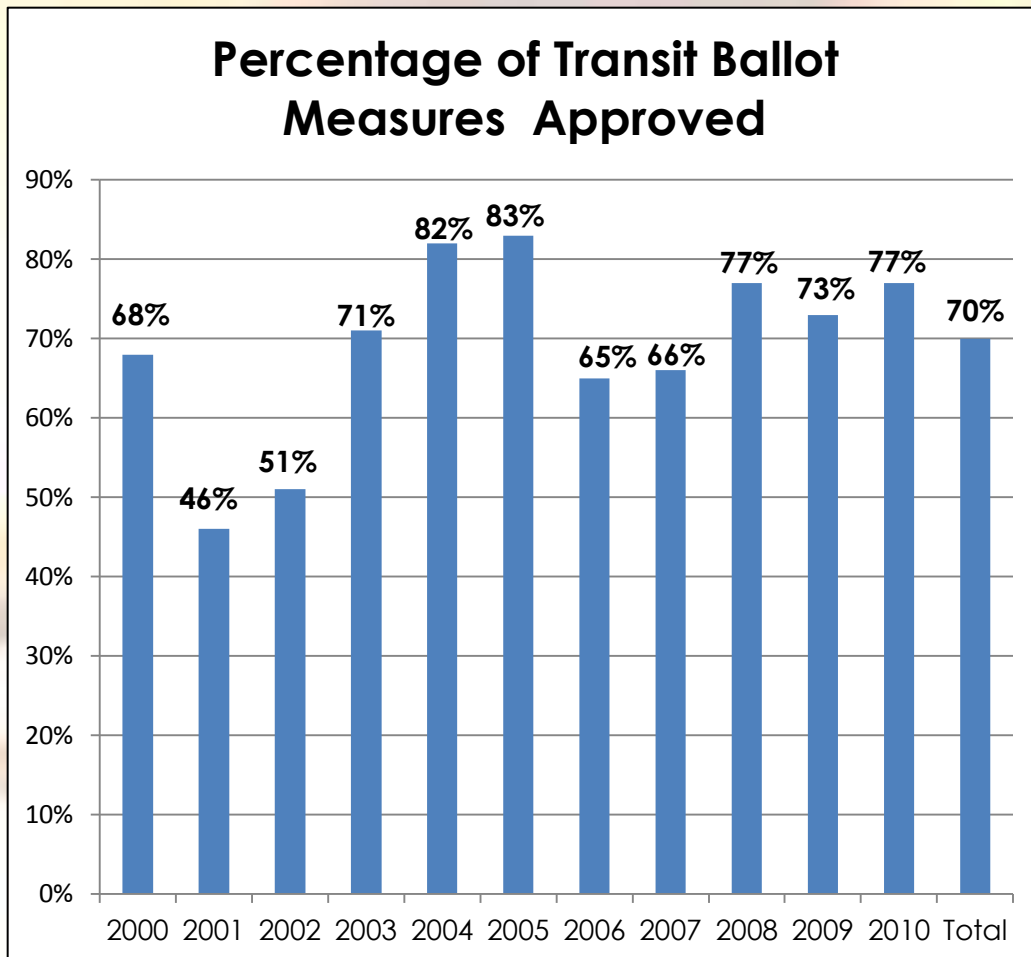
Jason Jordan  
Center for Transportation Excellence  
August 18, 2011

# Transit Appears on the Ballot Every Year

- More transportation measures are placed on the ballot in election years
- The willingness of communities to go to the ballot was affected by the recession in 2009
- But 2010 had more measures than any year since monitoring began in 2000



# Public Transportation Measures Win at the Polls

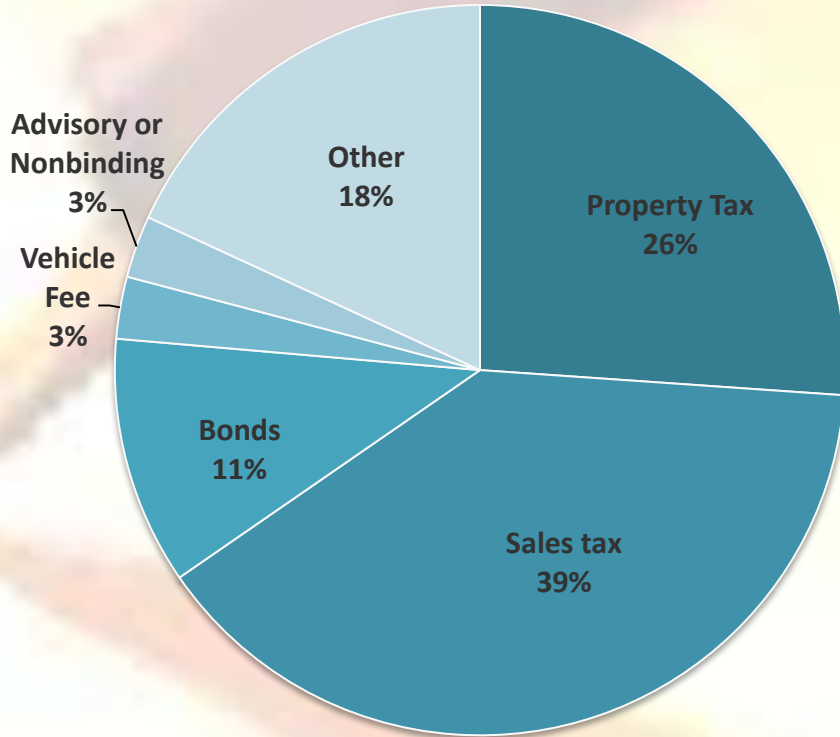


- 70% Approval Rate for Transportation Measures
- Twice the Approval Rate of All Ballot Measures
- Success Across Region, Population, Party Affiliation

# 2000-2010

## Public Transportation Finance Measures

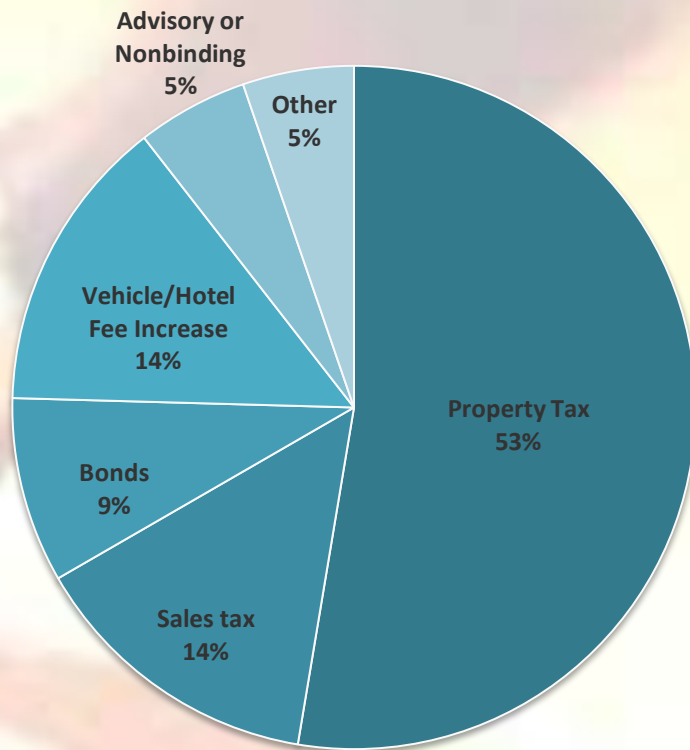
**Types of Ballot Measures**  
**2000-2010**



- 309 finance measures on ballots between 2000-2010
- 84% of all transportation measures are finance-related
- Sales tax increases or renewals are most common type
- Bonds are most successful with 84% approval—but are far more common on statewide ballots than local and regional
- Property tax measures are more successful than sales tax measures, with 81% approved vs. 59%

# Types of Measures in 2010

## Types of Ballot Measures in 2010



- Property Tax vs. Sales Tax
  - Sales tax measures more common than property tax measures over last decade
  - In 2010, property tax measures are more than 3x as prolific as sales tax measures
  - Property tax measures are more successful than sales tax measures, with 81% approved vs. 59%

# 2010 Overall Results

## Election Day

<b>Wins:</b>	23
<b>Losses:</b>	8
<b>Total:</b>	31
<b>Success Rate:</b>	74%

## November 2, 2010

Nearly \$500 million approved by voters  
84% of measures were finance-related

## 2010

This year alone, voters approved over \$1 billion

## 2010

<b>Wins:</b>	44
<b>Losses:</b>	13
<b>Total:</b>	57
<b>Success Rate:</b>	77%

# Red vs. Blue

## Transportation Ballot Measures Cross the Partisan Divide

### 31 Transportation Measures on the November 2 Ballot

#### RED

- 42% of measures (13) were in regions that voted primarily for Republican candidates.
- 69% of measures (9) were approved.
- Slightly fewer measures on ballots in right-leaning regions, but voters support them at a rate on par with the 10-year average.

#### Blue

- 58% of measures (18) were in regions that voted primarily for Democratic candidates.
- 77% of measures (14) were approved.
- Slightly more likely to go to the ballot with transportation issues; approval rate above average for the day.

# Winning in Small Communities



## California—November 2010

Voters in Alameda, Marin, San Francisco, San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties approve a \$10 vehicle fee increase for roads and transit.



## Ohio—November 2010

- Toledo voters approved a renewal of the 1-mill levy for TARTA, 53%-47%
- Voters in Belmont and Jefferson Counties approved a 2-mill replacement levy for Eastern Ohio RTA, 56%-44%

## West Virginia—May 11, 2010

- Voters in Cabell County approved a property tax renewal, 70%-30%
- Voters in Huntington also approved a property tax renewal, 62%-38%, for the Tri-State Transit Authority

## Stark County, OH—May 3, 2011

Voters Approve Sales Tax Increase, 66%-34%





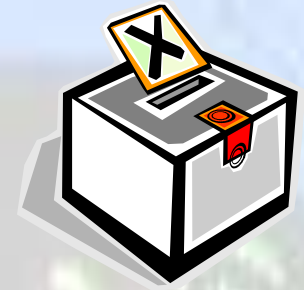
# Still Winning in a Tough Economy

## May 3, 2011: A Good Day for Transit

- 100% Success Rate on May 3
- 8 Measures on the ballot in communities in Michigan and Ohio
  - 1 sales tax renewal
  - 3 millage renewals
  - 2 millage increases
- 5 More Measures Pass on Aug 2
- Year-to-Date Win Rate: +87%



# Ballot Trends



- Economic Conditions
- Highly Specific Ballot Language
- Growing Use of Sales Tax for Infrastructure
- Plan & Project Funding Approval Measures
- Aggressive Public Education & Outreach
- Multiple Elections
- Advisory Measures
- More Non Sales or Property Tax Finance Measures

# Do Transit Measures Always Win the First Time?

## Why Measures Fail the First Time

- **Public Perception**
- **Too much money**
- **Not the right mix of projects**
- **Consequences aren't apparent**
- **Weak Coalition or Campaign Coordination**
- **Not enough campaign planning and infrastructure**

## When at First You Don't Succeed...

- **St. Louis**—Lost in 2008, won in 2010 with a stronger coalition and new GOTV strategy
- **Seattle**—Lost in 2007, won in 2008 after cutting “roads” portion of “Roads & Transit” proposition
- **Kalamazoo, MI**—Countywide measure failed in 2008, two measures won in 2009 (small countywide & additional city-only measure)
- **Grand Rapids, MI**—Lost millage increase in 2009, won in 2011 with greater urban support
- **Mahoning County, OH**—Lost in Spring 2008, but won in November 2008 when voters realized entire system was at risk

# Hallmarks of Successful Campaigns

## Early Steps...

- **Clear & Specific**— "What's in it for me?" "What are we 'buying'?"
- **Messengers & Champions**—well-known, public or private sector figures can be valuable assets
- **Polling and Research**—Identify voters' values and concerns; level of funding they can support
- **Fundraising**—start early!
- **Know the Local Politics** – Manage timing, reputations, other issues
- **Coordination** – Plan for smooth collaboration with the agency, coalition and campaign
- **Strong Field & Messaging Ops**

## ...Keep Going

- **Strong Coalition**—organize support from like-minded groups, grassroots and the business sector



- **Respond to Critics**—Be prepared for criticism and address it directly
- **Stay on Message**—Don't let criticisms distract voters
- **Incorporate New Tools & Tactics** – New Media, Aggressive Field Operation
- **It's a Campaign. Run it like one.**





# St. Louis, MO

- April 6, 2010
- Half-cent sales tax increase to maintain bus service and expand light rail
- Approved, 63%-37%
- Generates approximately \$75 million annually
- A similar measure failed at the ballot in November 2008 with only 48% of voters in favor



# St. Louis, MO



## The Challenge

- Negative perceptions of Metro
- Lack of public awareness of effects of bus service cuts
- Lack of public awareness of need for and benefits of an expanded system

## Reasons for Success

- Strong Two-Part Campaign
  - Education
  - Advocacy
- Civic Leadership
  - Business Community Support
  - Well-known Public Figures as Champions
- GOTV Efforts
  - Voter turnout for primary elections typically 13-15%, 22% came out for this election



[Video Testimonials](#)

# St. Louis, MO

## Prop M Results - Nov '08

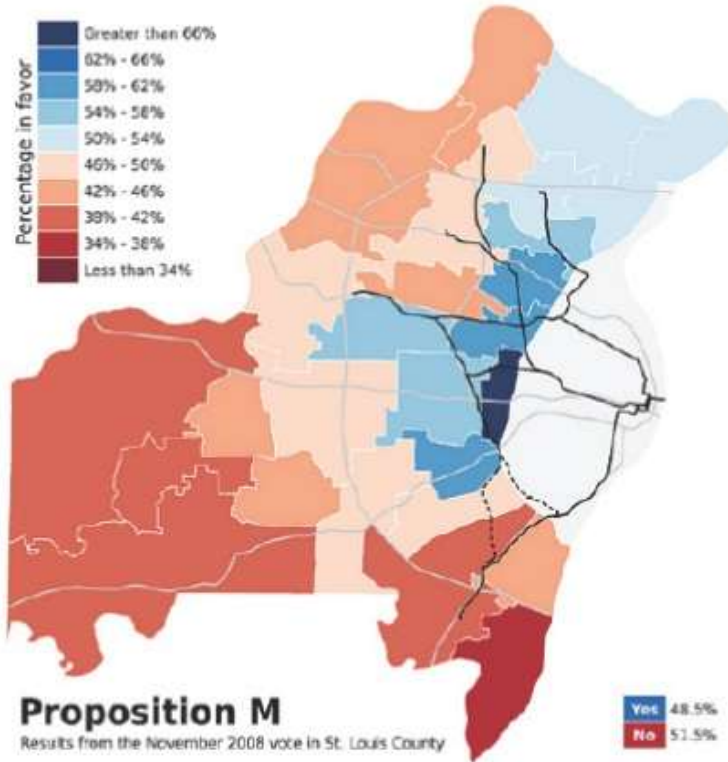
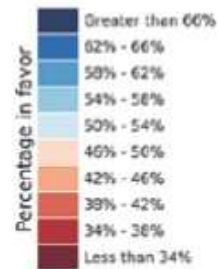


Chart showing the November 2008 results for Proposition M in St. Louis County. Current and proposed MetroLink lines are overlaid in black.

## Prop A Results - Apr '10

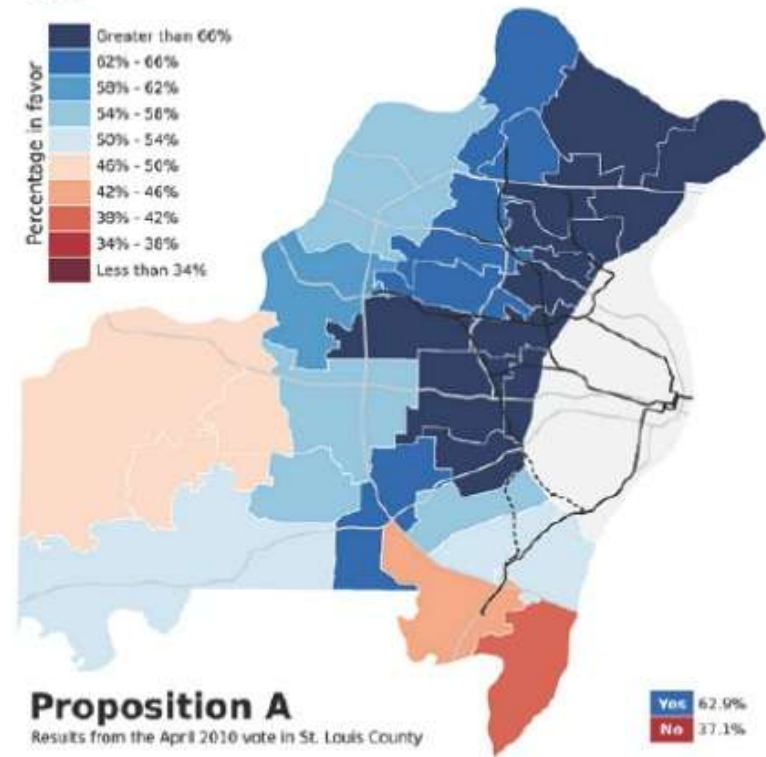
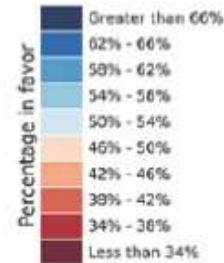


Chart showing the April 2010 results for Proposition A in St. Louis County. Current and proposed MetroLink lines are overlaid in black.



# Seattle, WA

- November 4, 2008
- Half-cent sales tax to expand light rail, commuter rail, and express bus service in King, Pierce and Snohomish Counties
- Approved, 58%-42%
- Generates approximately \$17.8 billion over 20 years
- In 2007, voters defeated a 20-year "Roads & Transit" construction plan. The cheaper 2008 proposal was stripped of all road and highway provisions, promised fewer deliverables, and shortened the expected timeframe for completion to 15 years.



# Seattle, WA

## Challenges for 2007 “Roads & Transit” Proposal

- Voters thought the package was too big, too costly, too complex
- Off-year election resulted in increase of older, anti-tax voters; top of ballot meant high visibility
- No clear campaign message
- High cost (\$5 million) campaign never identified base of support
- Organized opposition included Sierra Club and Cascade Bicycle Club



## Reasons for Success in 2008

- Public included in drafting of new proposal
- 2007 critics consulted early on
- Original coalition of support remained strong and involved
- Less prominent placement on ballot
- Simple campaign message (Mass Transit Now!)
- Low budget campaign focused on the base
- Critics overconfident

# Seattle, WA

## TV Ads

- [“Buried in Traffic”](#)



**Join us in voting Yes on Prop 1: Mass Transit Now**  
And give Puget Sound a mass transit system that moves more than 1 million people every day.

Dear Neighbor,

I understand from one of our great volunteers at Mass Transit Now that you are gathering more information before you vote on this issue.

While you consider both sides, I wanted to share with you the reasons I am voting Yes on Prop 1. For about the price of a single tank of gas, I'm going to get real transportation options - 100,000 more bus hours, 36 additional miles of light rail, and more commuter rail service!

I'll be helping the environment, helping the economy, and making my quality of life in the Puget Sound region even better. \$69 — about the price of a single tank of gas — for a transit system that moves more than 1 million people a day? I say YES!

I hope you'll join me in voting YES for Mass Transit Now! YES on Proposition 1!

Sincerely,  
*Rachel Smith*


PS - Prop 1 is a top priority at the end of your ballot.



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# YES!

**\$69. That's the average annual cost for Mass Transit Now — a big transit package that will get our region moving forward.**

- ✓ 36 miles of light rail
- ✓ 100,000 hours of immediate new bus service

At a time when politicians are preaching abstinence from progress, we say, "Let's get down to business."

**Vote YES on Proposition 1**  
**Enough talk. Enough Delay.**  
It's the top local priority at the bottom of this year's ballot.



The Sierra Club, the Cascade Bicycle Club, Washington Conservation Voters, 4000AFC and the King County Labor Council are all saying "YES!"

[www.MassTransitNow.org](http://www.MassTransitNow.org)

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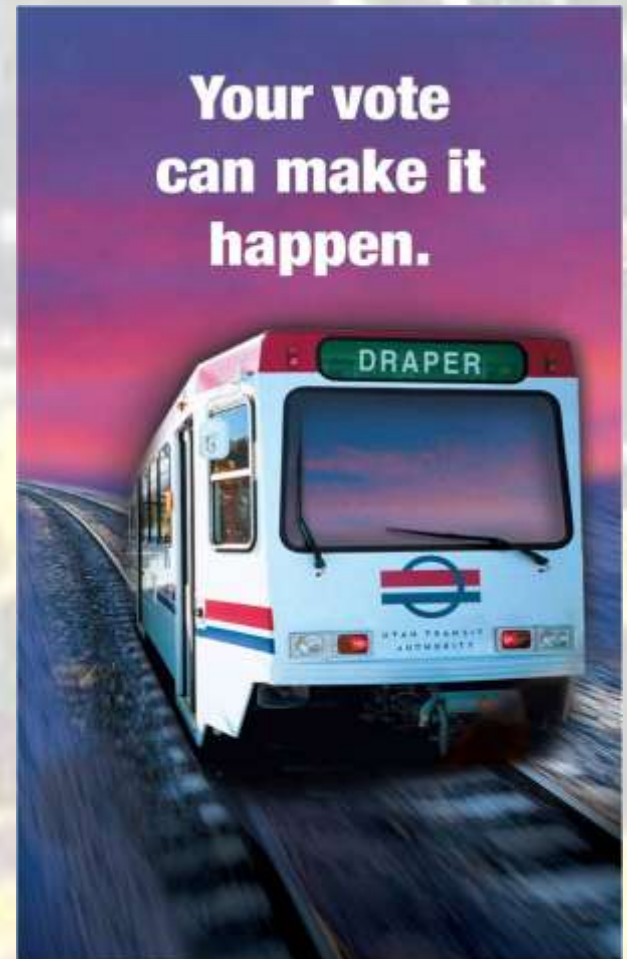
# Salt Lake City, UT

## Challenges

- No measure until 6 weeks before election; uncertainty until last minute as to sales vs. property tax
- No money raised 6 weeks out
- Utah County joins discuss late; must play catch up after not participating in 2000 referendum
- Two counties voting:
  - Two packages of projects
  - Two ballot names/language
  - Complex road component

## Reasons for Success

- UTA maintained a strong, positive public reputation prior to launch of campaign
- Hired experienced campaign management
- Ran a strong, direct voter education and advocacy campaign
- Strong support from business community and LDS church
- Effective campaign message: focused on “simple benefits”

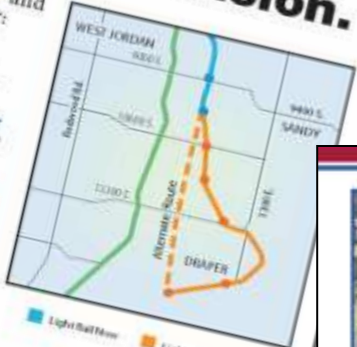


# Salt Lake City, UT

## Yes, Draper City could have a light rail extension.

**VOTE YES on County Measure #1 and here's what we could get in Draper City:**

- A light rail extension that will connect Draper City with Sandy City, Salt Lake City, the University of Utah and other destinations along the Wasatch Front.
- Over the length of the plan, a doubling of the bus service in Draper City including:
  - Increased night service
  - Increased Sunday service
  - Sunday & holiday service
- 15 to 20 minute frequency of bus service on all major corridors
- Access to a regional commuter rail system from Ogden to Provo
- Park-and-Ride lots
- Generally transit hubs
- More service for the disabled community

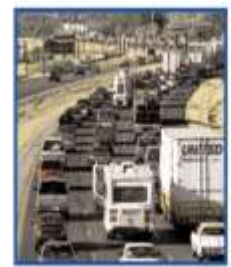


People for Sustainable Transportation  
P.O. Box 12345  
Salt Lake City, UT 84111

PROFIT UP  
US POSTAGE  
PAID  
Salt Lake City, UT  
Permit No. 9034

All we need is 1/4 of 1% in additional sales tax (just 25¢ for every \$100) to qualify for over \$600 million in Federal support to make it happen. Vote Yes on County Measure #1!

**YES** to County Measure #1  
Better Public Transit



### LIFE IN THE FAST LANE WHAT'S AHEAD?

10,000 passengers a day ride the TRAX. Business travelers want I-15 TRAX (fast gateway) light rail system - many of whom want good public transportation in the city. TRAX has already proven to be fast, safe, and reliable. TRAX has a TRAX bus line on an express part of increasingly efficient public transport system with a very high future.



### Making TRAX toward the future

- Support greater TRAX system. Allow people to have convenient along the Wasatch Front will be able to connect the USA's TRAX by through increased rail extension. will also be more TRAX system with more frequently with greatly expand parking area at the station.
- More TRAX Automation. To be able to ride TRAX in most major areas the valley, including the University of Utah, the Salt Lake International Airport, West Valley City, West Jordan and Ogden.

### STEERING CLEAR OF A CRISIS.

In the next 10 years, traffic along the Wasatch Front will grow by 70 percent. That brings with it increased congestion, more time to deal with added congestion, less time to get to work, and the fact that more of the road means more congestion, less parking, more roads and freeways, and it means for a reason. One from poll, 90 percent of Wasatch Front residents have expressed their public transportation use. While a long-range transportation plan has already been developed and approved by our elected leaders, and together we can choose to make it happen.

### The plan, and the driving force!

- In 1999 elected officials of the Wasatch Front counties approved the Wasatch Front Regional Council to specifically deal with increasing growth and transportation concerns.
- In 2006 a 20-year transportation plan, with specific projects and one specific action, was approved by the Wasatch Front Regional Council. The Utah Transit Authority has been charged with implementing the Road gateway and public transit portion of the plan.
- We're ready. When building a sustainable transportation improvement can begin to establish.

### WASATCH FRONT RESIDENTS OVERWHELMINGLY FAVOR EXPANSION OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT



- High-speed commuter service. Passengers will be able to travel by express commuter rail (fast gateway) between Provo, Salt Lake and Ogden, including access to business.
- High-tech, central information systems. Riders will get also mobile, easy-to-understand information about where and when they can get on. This high-tech information will also help I-15 hold a more reliable and efficient system.



### THE FINANCIAL CHALLENGES DOWN THE ROAD.

UTA, the leading of public transportation agency including roads and highways in the United States, is limited by its dollars. UTA's use will be spending much more widely from sales tax revenue. To help, state their Constitution strictly prohibits the use of gas taxes for public transportation. To become a reality, the Wasatch Front Regional Council has announced the state will be local support for a complete transit system to take on.

### GETTING THERE FROM HERE.

- No increase since 2006. The original 1.75 cents per dollar has not increased in 20 years. A little tax goes a long way.
- Transportation tax revenue equal transportation services. All funds go directly to public transportation and maintenance. Services to regularly distributed based on county sales tax revenues.
- A significant portion of Utah's sales tax comes from retailers. Certain counties have already distributed funds on county sales tax revenues.
- Our need increased! Wasatch Front Regional Council announced to build through sales tax on a low than half the average for U.S. states.



### Bus service is rolling, too.

- Expanded bus service. Getting to where you want to go will be even more convenient, especially evenings, weekends, holidays. Plus, a 24-hour and more convenient to get to UTA TRAX stations that are better. The bus system will be expanded, both north/south and east/west, to provide more frequent and express bus services. Our goal is to have more people at places with each bus system will be more than a vehicle.



# Charlotte, NC



- November 6, 2007
- Measure to repeal existing half-cent sales tax in Mecklenburg County
- Win for transit, measure failed, 30%-70%
- Voters first approved the sales tax in 1998 for to support the implementation of the 2025 Integrated Transit/Land-Use Plan which included construction of the Lynx light rail system
- The repeal measure was sponsored by a coalition citing management concerns and cost overruns as failures

A campaign flyer for the "Vote Against Repeal" movement. The top left section has a blue background with the text "DON'T LET THE PLAN BE DERAILED." Below this, it states "Not only will the future light rail line make it easier to travel to and from the University area, it will also:" followed by a bulleted list: "• Reduce traffic congestion", "• Stimulate our area's economy", and "• Create greater connectivity to other areas". A small photo shows a group of people. Text next to the photo says "Join those University City neighbors who have already voted against repeal of the transit tax." The bottom left has the website "www.VoteAgainstThepeal.com". The bottom right features the "Vote Against Repeal" logo and the slogan "Keep Mecklenburg Moving". The right side of the flyer shows a blue and white light rail train in front of a city skyline.

**DON'T LET THE PLAN BE DERAILED.**

Not only will the future light rail line make it easier to travel to and from the University area, it will also:

- Reduce traffic congestion
- Stimulate our area's economy
- Create greater connectivity to other areas

Join those University City neighbors who have already voted against repeal of the transit tax.

For further information, go to:  
[www.VoteAgainstThepeal.com](http://www.VoteAgainstThepeal.com)

**VOTE AGAINST REPEAL**  
*Keep Mecklenburg Moving*

**YOUR TRAIN IS COMING.**

# Charlotte, NC

## Challenges

- Organized opposition successfully places measure on ballot in Summer 2007
- Costs of South Corridor LRT line doubled
- Claims of CATS mismanagement
- Mayor—transit champion—targeted by opposition
- Discussion became “Highways vs. transit”

## Reasons for Success

- Identified several public figures as champions
- Two-phased campaign:
  - Answer questions raised by opposition
  - Send clear, simple message to contradict complicated request: “Vote AGAINST Repeal”
- Professional campaign management to conduct research, organization and polling



# Charlotte, NC



# Winning in Small Communities

## Washington

- Since 2009, Island, Jefferson and Walla Walla County have approved transit sales tax measures
- Bellingham and Olympia have also approved sales taxes for public transit
- Clark County is on the November 2011 ballot



## Michigan

- Voters in 18 counties have approved countywide property tax measures for transit service in 2010 and 2011
- More than a half dozen townships and cities have also renewed or increased property taxes for transit service in recent years

