

Mendocino Council of Governments

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To: Mendocino County News Media

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Voter Surveys Show Support for Transportation Sales Tax

A voter opinion survey, commissioned by Mendocino Council of Governments to gauge public support for a half-cent sales tax for transportation, was released today. The survey was designed to see whether there is enough support to pass a ballot measure this November, requiring a supermajority (two-thirds) vote. The twenty-year tax would be targeted toward the huge backlog of unfunded local road repair and maintenance needs.

Dave Metz of the opinion research and public policy analysis firm Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin & Associates (FMMA) presented the results at MCOG's monthly board meeting. According to the telephone survey, such a ballot initiative would receive strong support in Willits and in the unincorporated area of Mendocino County. Results from Ukiah and Fort Bragg respondents indicate that there is less support and the prospects of achieving a two-thirds supermajority are less promising. A mail survey of the City of Point Arena is still in progress.

MCOG Executive Director Phil Dow noted that eighteen counties in California, called "self-help" counties, have local sales taxes dedicated to transportation purposes. In Mendocino County, enactment of a half-cent tax in all jurisdictions could raise at least \$4 million annually.

The voter polls were conducted to find out not only the general climate of public support for a tax, but also which specific kinds of projects should be included in a funding plan, as well as local priorities. Results of a survey are useful in determining whether or not investment of staff time in crafting a funding plan and the cost of putting a measure on the ballot are likely to be worthwhile. In this case, the cost of the opinion survey represented about one percent of the potential annual proceeds from a countywide half-cent sales tax.

MCOG has agreed to make individual presentations to each of the City Councils and the Board of Supervisors. MCOG will again consider the transportation sales tax at their next meeting on March 4.

Acting as the Regional Transportation Planning Agency, MCOG programs or allocates various types of state and federal transportation funds to Caltrans, the County of Mendocino and the four incorporated Cities of Ukiah, Fort Bragg, Willits, and Point Arena. In addition to projects on state highways and within its five member jurisdictions, MCOG helps support transportation activities of the North Coast Rail Authority, California Western Railroad, Mendocino Transit Authority, local airports, and others. Projects involve planning, capital improvements, rehabilitation and maintenance, fleet replacement, and intermodal transit centers. For more information, call the MCOG office at 463-1859 or consult the agency's web site at www.mendocinocog.org.

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