

Impact of Propositions 1A and 1B in Mendocino County

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The first two state-wide propositions faced by voters in the November election, 1A and 1B, have to do with funding of transportation infrastructure. The impacts of these measures in California are well documented in the voter guide, but what will they mean to the residents in Mendocino County?

In 2002, voters approved Prop 42. Their intention was that sales tax charged on motor vehicle fuels, an estimated \$1.4 billion a year, was to be spent on transportation projects. Previously, these funds had been included in the State's general fund for non-transportation projects. Unfortunately, in the process of writing the State budget for two of the four years since then, the legislature and governor "borrowed" some of that money to balance the general fund budget. Although the "loan" is being paid back with interest, that loss of cash caused serious delays in many transportation projects while costs and traffic congestion have increased dramatically.

Prop 1A would simply protect the flow of these funds by tightening some loopholes. Loans to the State general fund may still be made, but they must be repaid within three years, no new loan may be made until the previous loan is paid off, and no more than two loans may be made within any ten year period.

Since all gas tax money now goes toward highway maintenance, sales tax revenues under Prop 1A would provide a greater assurance that there will be a stable statewide capital improvement program to improve our highways and local streets and roads system. This means up to \$5 million per year for such projects in Mendocino County. Priority projects for these funds as established by MCOG are the Willits Bypass project and the Hopland Bypass project.

Transportation funds, protected by Proposition 1A, will also flow directly to Mendocino County for road improvements. This will amount to approximately \$3 million per year. Ukiah will receive at least \$162,000 per year, Fort Bragg at least \$73,000, Willits \$53,000 and Point Arena \$5,000 for street maintenance and improvement.

Transit will also benefit from Proposition 1A protection. Approximately \$95,000 next year and \$180,000 annually thereafter will be available for MCOG to allocate for public transit capital and operating purposes.

Proposition 1B is the first of four general obligation bonds on the ballot. 1B, the Highway Safety, Traffic Reduction, Air Quality and Port Security Bond Act of 2006, proposes to generate nearly \$20 billion over the next ten years to spend on twelve specific transportation related programs. The breakdown of benefits for all components

of the bond package have not yet been worked out, but the likely benefits for some of these bond programs is as follows:

- The largest program, the Corridor Mobility Improvement Account, would provide \$4.5 billion state-wide. The Willits Bypass project meets the criteria for this program and MCOG predicts it will have a reasonable chance to obtain competitive funding for construction dollars under this program.
- Another large program would provide a one-time augmentation of \$2 billion to the state-wide transportation improvement program, the STIP. Mendocino County's share of that would amount to approximately \$6.5 million. It would be allocated by MCOG for a variety of transportation projects. Currently, the top priority projects are the Willits Bypass project and the Hopland Bypass project. In the past, MCOG has allocated 80% for street, road and highway improvements; 10% for rail; 5% for pedestrian and bicycle facilities and 5% for transit projects. If the Corridor Mobility Improvement Account funds the Willits Bypass project, then MCOG's priorities will be revisited.
- Two specific programs would provide nearly \$5 million over several years for transit capital and security projects. The MTA Board has not set priorities for these funds, but bus replacements to improve exhaust emissions would be eligible.
- Local street and road improvements for reducing congestion and improving safety would provide approximately \$6.5 million over several years directly to Mendocino County for roadways maintenance and improvement. In addition, Ukiah would get \$512,000 over this period for street maintenance and improvement, Fort Bragg, Willits, and Point Arena would each receive \$400,000 for street maintenance and improvement.
- Five other programs, worth \$2.3 billion state-wide, would help to fund safety and capacity improvements for local streets, roads and highways; railroad crossing safety; seismic retrofit of local bridges; and school bus replacements. How much of this money would be available to Mendocino County is not yet known.

In summary, Proposition 1B should provide at least \$14.7 million in Mendocino County for highways, roads and streets, plus \$5 million for public transit. In addition, it may provide the remaining funds needed to construct the Willits Bypass as planned. Staff of the Mendocino Council of Governments and Mendocino Transit Authority will be available to discuss priorities for the funding provided under the proposed bond program.

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