

**VOTE
NO**

MEASURE M:

Vote No on Placer County Development subsidies

With state and federal funds disappearing, Placer County seeks an even bigger local role using sales taxes for financing highways

The Sierra Club opposes Placer County's proposed half cent sales tax increase that will be on the November ballot. The measure's expenditure plan includes massive highway and interchange improvements (45% for \$716 million), road projects and repairs (30% for \$480 million), rail-transit (12% for \$190 million), bike-pedestrian (5% for \$76 million), North Lake Tahoe area needs (3% for \$48 million), and administration (1% for \$16 million).

These allocations could not be further from Sierra Club policy that supports using transportation financing and subsidies for intermodal transportation between homes and destinations in this order of priority: **walking, bicycling, public transit, passenger and freight railroads, and for equipment that achieves accessibility, convenience, efficiency, and cleanliness and equity goals.**

Reality Check

Comprehensive studies by the consortium National Center on Sustainable Transportation that includes UC Davis show that passing Measure M will not bring the promised relief from traffic congestion. Instead, taxes spent on new highway lanes and I-80/SR65 would be wasted because highway expansion does not relieve traffic congestion in the medium to long run. Shortly after new lanes or roads are opened, traffic increases 10 to 50% of the new roadway capacity and within three or more years total induced traffic rises 50 to 100% of the roadway's new capacity.

The increase in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions attributable to capacity expansion are substantial. Transportation is the largest source of GHG, and each increase in road capacity induces more traffic and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

Accelerating Down A Dead End Transportation Path

The Placer County Transportation Planning Agency (PCTPA)ⁱ has recently financed major interchange projects at I-80/Sierra College Boulevard and SR65/Sunset Boulevard with developers paying their portion in fees *after* the county's construction. Now the Placer County Local Transportation Planning Agency (PCLTPA) is proposing to raise \$716 million over 30 years for Major Highway Projects, with \$200 million allocated for "Financing for Early Construction."

Adding highway capacity affects where development takes place in a region. The PCLTPA proposes to also fund highway interchanges including a massive new one at I-

80/SR65, and others at I-80/SR 174 in Colfax, I-80/Rocklin Road in Rocklin, I-80/Horseshoe Bar Road in Loomis, and SR65/Nelson Lane near Lincoln. Developers who benefit from these new lanes and interchange improvements should pay their mandated fees up front instead of relying on county bonds and financing supported by sales taxes.

Developers don't need subsidies from taxpayers. "...(R)real estate is producing profits much of which are escaping the tax net. From a policy perspective this looks bizarre – and wrong. There may have once been good reason why governments felt the need to support the real estate industry: to encourage urban development, or offset high interest rate impacts, for example. But today, rates are rock bottom, and property developers are some of the wealthiest people in the country.”ⁱⁱ

The pork barrel logrolling aspect of the expenditure plan is demonstrated in the \$716 million major highway category. It includes \$29 million to address operational and safety improvements for SR 49. Six municipalities and the North Tahoe Area would annually receive from \$250,000 (Colfax) to \$4.7 million (Roseville) for various road projects and road maintenance. The unincorporated area would receive \$3.13 million annually each for local road projects and rural road and repair.

This is proposed as a solution to federal and state governments no longer funding new lane construction because there is not enough money to maintain the roads and bridges that we now have. Measure M proposes to use local taxes for commercial interchanges and the 15-mile Placer Parkway short cut between I-80 and SR 99. The solutions to our long term highway infrastructure needs lie in Congress and the state legislature. Local funding should not replace state and federal funding.

Sustaining Communities And The Environment Are Not On The County Agenda

Measure M would be one more misplaced and unnecessary Placer County expenditure to enable new development at the same time the county is cutting back on the needs of existing communities. Two libraries are being closed and community fire stations elsewhere may soon follow.

Yet while it is destabilizing communities by cutting bedrock programs, the County is funding new development. The link between Board of Supervisor transportation expenditures and new development is demonstrated in the Board's recent allocation of \$1.2 million from the general fund to take over Placer Ranch as a County development after the developers dropped out. Placer Ranch is along the proposed Placer Parkway.

Many County planning decisions allow development at the expense of neighbors' property rights. For example, two recent variances were approved for locating secondary homes where they have the *least impact on the applicant's property* and maximum negative impact on neighbors and community character.

WHAT YOU CAN DO!

The Placer Group Executive Committee initiated opposition to Measure M which was reviewed and unanimously supported by the Mother Lode Chapter Political Committee and Executive Committee. Sierra Club California approval followed.

To join the Placer Group in **Opposing Measure M** contact: Michael Garabedian, Placer Group Vice Chair, 916-719-7296 or michaelgarabedian@earthlink.net.

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ⁱ On June 22, 2016, the Placer County Transportation Planning Agency (PCTPA) (Brian Baker/Loomis, Tony Hesch/Colfax, Jim Holmes/Placer County, Stan Nader/Lincoln, Keith Nesbitt/Auburn, Chair Susan Rohan/Roseville, Diana Ruslin/Rocklin, Ron Treabess/citizen appointed by the Board of Supervisors, Kirk Uhler/Placer County) convened for the first time as the Placer County Local Transportation Authority (PCLTA) and proposed Measure M for the ballot. The proposal was developed by the PCTPA at the direction of the Placer County Board of Supervisors.

ⁱⁱ May 26, 2016 Comment in the Financial Times by its Managing Editor who quotes an unidentified real estate leader, "If you are a developer who is paying tax, you have to be pretty dumb."