

# CAPITOL RESEARCH

## ● ● ● TRANSPORTATION POLICY

### TRANSPORTATION BALLOT MEASURES 2016

#### States have sought to empower localities to raise money for transportation in recent years.

- Indiana lawmakers passed SB 176 in 2014, which allows six counties in the Indianapolis area to consider increasing local income tax rates and dedicating the revenues to public transportation.<sup>1</sup>
- Utah's 2015 state transportation funding package, HB 362, gave counties the authority to go to the voters with a local option sales tax to fund multimodal investments in roads, transit, bike/walk infrastructure or other local needs.<sup>2</sup> A total of 17 of the state's 29 counties put the measure on the November 2015 ballot and 10 won voter approval.<sup>3</sup>

#### 2015 was a big year for transportation-related ballot initiatives and 2016 appears likely to follow suit.

- Voters in eight states in 2015 approved 26 of 37 (70 percent) state or local referendums to increase transportation funding.<sup>4</sup>
- The Center for Transportation Excellence, which tracks transportation ballot measures, lists nearly 50 state or local measures that either already have been or that could be on 2016 ballots in 15 states.<sup>5</sup>

#### While many ballot measures won't be considered until November, a handful have already received a vote in primary and special elections.

- Voters in Portland, Oregon, in May approved a temporary 10-cents-per-gallon tax on gasoline within city limits. The measure, which creates the highest local gas tax in the state, sunsets after four years and is expected to bring in \$64 million for road repairs and pedestrian and bike safety improvements.<sup>6</sup>
- Austin, Texas, voters in May decided against a measure to overturn city requirements on rideshare services Uber and Lyft that include fingerprinting of drivers, which prompted the companies to halt service in the city.<sup>7</sup>



#### Public transit is a major focus of ballot measures this year.

- Los Angeles County voters could consider a measure to renew an existing half-cent sales tax to fund transportation in the county and add an additional half-cent sales tax to expand and improve light rail and subway lines.<sup>8</sup>
- The Georgia General Assembly passed a bill in 2016 that allows the city of Atlanta to hold a November referendum on a 40-year, half-percent sales tax to fund the expansion of the MARTA transit system. Senate Bill 369, recognizing differences between the city and the rest of Fulton County, also splits the county into two districts allowing for the vote in the city only. But a separate sales tax measure could be on the ballot for the rest of Fulton County to raise \$1.2 billion over five years for road and transit improvements, if county officials get their way.<sup>9</sup>
- Marion County, Indiana, voters will consider a 0.25 percent income tax on the November ballot that would raise \$56 million a year to fund improved service and new bus rapid transit construction. The ballot measure is the result of the aforementioned

SB 176, which allows counties to establish mass transit plans through ballot referendum.<sup>10</sup>

- Voters in Seattle will be asked to consider a measure that includes a mix of sales taxes, property taxes and car registration fees to help Sound Transit build upon the Puget Sound region's mass transit system of light rail, commuter rail and bus services.<sup>11</sup>
- Lack of agreement by state officials in California on ways to fund transportation, the cancellation of transportation projects by the California Transportation Commission due to declining revenues from the state's gasoline excise tax—which is tied to gas prices, and a need for \$9.6 billion in capital improvements over the next decade are among the factors that have led Bay Area Rapid Transit, the regional rail service in the San Francisco Bay Area, to place a \$3.5 billion bond measure on the November ballot.<sup>12</sup>
- Four counties in Southeast Michigan could be asked to vote this November on a 1-mill property tax increase that's expected to raise an estimated \$130 million annually for 20 years. The increase is being sought by the Southeast Michigan Regional Transit Authority to expand bus service and possibly fund regional commuter rail services.<sup>13</sup> The millage would add \$1.20 in taxes for every \$1,000 of taxable value in a property. An owner of a \$150,000 home would pay \$90 per year starting in 2017. The transit authority board is expected to vote in July on whether to place the millage proposal on the ballot.<sup>14</sup>
- Commissioners in Broward County, Florida, are considering going to the voters with a 1 percent sales tax increase that would raise \$12.6 billion over 30 years to help fund miles of light rail transit and neighborhood transit centers, along with roadway construction, sidewalks and greenways.<sup>15</sup>
- Sacramento County, California, voters may be asked to consider a half-cent sales tax that would help fund expanded bus service and light rail to the airport. The tax, which would last for 30 years, is expected to raise \$3.6 billion, some of which would also go to road repairs, street expansions and new freeway interchanges.<sup>16</sup>

### **Funding for roads and other modes is also receiving attention.**

- Voters in San Diego may get the chance to vote on a half-cent sales tax ballot measure that would generate \$18 billion over 40 years to pay for road improvements, new trolley lines and other projects.<sup>17</sup>
- The Maine Legislature approved a measure in April that will allow voters to decide in November

whether to give the state the authority to issue \$100 million in bond debt. Eighty percent of the funds would go to highway and bridge projects with the other 20 percent to spend on improvements to ports and harbors, railroads, airports, transit, and bike-pedestrian paths.<sup>18</sup>

- While a measure that would have asked Missouri voters to consider a 6-cents-per-gallon gas tax increase failed in the Missouri House this year, another measure could get a vote. The Missouri Marketers and Convenience Store Association collected enough signatures to ask voters to weigh in on a 23-cents-per-pack cigarette tax increase that would generate about \$95-100 million dollars annually for the state's roads and bridges. The Missouri Secretary of State's Office still must verify the signatures.<sup>19</sup>

### **Some 2016 statewide ballot measures seek to pave the way for future transportation funding enhancements.**

- Illinois voters will consider whether to adopt a constitutional amendment that would prevent the state government from diverting revenue meant for transportation to other budget needs.<sup>20</sup> Maryland and Wisconsin approved similar "lockbox" provisions in 2014. California, Delaware, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania and Tennessee also have similar restrictions.<sup>21</sup>
- New Jersey voters will consider a constitutional amendment that would dedicate all of the revenue from the motor fuels tax to the state's transportation trust fund. Currently, only 10.5 cents of the state's 13.5-cents-per-gallon tax on diesel fuel is dedicated. The remaining 3 cents of the diesel tax, which generates about \$25 million a year, is required by law but not under the constitution to be spent on transportation. All of the state's 10.5-cents-per-gallon gasoline tax is currently dedicated to the trust fund. The amendment would also dedicate an additional \$15 million collected through petroleum products gross tax receipts. Finally, it would direct any new dollars from a future gas tax increase to the trust fund.<sup>22</sup>



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## KEY 2016 TRANSPORTATION-RELATED STATE & LOCAL BALLOT MEASURES

State	Jurisdiction	Nature of the Ballot Measure	Status as of May 2016
Arkansas	Pulaski County	Sales tax for transit authority	Not Approved (3/1/16)
Arizona	Yuma County	Sales tax incr. for county bus system	Pending
California	Alameda County	Extension of parcel tax for transit svc.	Pending
California	Contra Costa County	Extension of parcel tax for transit svc.	Pending
California	Contra Costa County	1/2 cent sales tax for transportation	Pending
California	Los Angeles County	Renewal of sales tax; additional 1/2 cents	Pending
California	Monterey County	3/8 % sales tax for congestion reduction	Pending
California	Placer County	1/2 cent, 30-year sales tax for rail & road	Pending
California	Sacramento County	1/2 cent sales tax for road, transit projects	Pending
California	San Diego County	1/2 cent sales tax for road, transit, bike/ped	Pending
California	San Francisco County	Property tax increase for transit	Pending
California	Alameda County	Property tax increase for transit	Pending
California	Contra Costa County	Property tax increase for transit	Pending
California	Santa Clara County	30-year, 1/2-cent sales tax for transp.	Pending
California	Santa Cruz County	30-year, 1/2-cent sales tax for transp.	Pending
California	Stanislaus County	25-year, 1/2-cent sales tax for transp.	Pending
California	Ventura County	Sales tax for transportation	Pending
Florida	Broward County	1 percent sales tax incr. for transportation	Pending
Florida	Hillsborough County	15-year, 1/2-cent sales tax for road, transit	Pending
Georgia	City of Atlanta	40-year, 1/2-cent sales tax for transit	Pending
Georgia	Fulton County	5-year, 1 percent sales tax for roads, transit	Pending
Illinois	Statewide	Constitutional transportation "lockbox"	On November ballot
Illinois	Roscoe Township	Non-binding advisory vote on transit district	Uncounted
Indiana	Marion County	0.25 percent income tax incr. for transit	On November ballot
Maine	Statewide	Issue \$100 million in bonds for transp.	On November ballot
Michigan	Wayne County	Possible property tax measure for bus, rail	Pending
Michigan	Oakland County	Possible property tax measure for bus, rail	Pending
Michigan	Macomb County	Possible property tax measure for bus, rail	Pending
Michigan	Washtenaw County	Possible property tax measure for bus, rail	Pending
Michigan	Bedford Township	Property tax renewal, increase for transit	Not approved (3/8/16)
Michigan	Grand Haven Township	Property tax for transit expansion	Approved (3/8/16)
Michigan	City of Fort Gratiot	4-year property tax renewal for bus system	Approved (5/3/16)
Michigan	City of Holland	Property tax renewal for bus system	Approved (5/3/16)
Michigan	Holland Township	Property tax renewal for bus system	Approved (5/3/16)
Michigan	City of Kalamazoo	5-year property tax renewal for transit	Approved (5/3/16)

State	Jurisdiction	Nature of the Ballot Measure	Status as of May 2016
Michigan	City of Port Huron	4-year property tax renewal for bus system	Approved (5/3/16)
Michigan	City of Clare County	1-year property tax renewal for transit	Pending
Missouri	Statewide	23-cent cigarette tax incr. for transportation	Pending
New Jersey	Statewide	Dedicating fuel tax revenues to trust fund	On November ballot
North Carolina	Wake County	1/2-cent sales tax for regional transit plan	Pending
Ohio	Franklin County	10-yr. renewal of 0.25 % sales tax for transit	Pending
Ohio	Hamilton County	1/4-cent sales tax for bus expansion	Pending
Oklahoma	City of Tulsa	15-year sales tax for transit	Approved (4/5/16)
Oregon	City of Portland	Local, temporary 10-cent-a-gallon gas tax	Approved (5/17/16)
Texas	City of Austin	Bonding for light rail	Pending
Texas	City of Austin	Overturn city requirements on rideshare	Not approved (5/7/16)
Texas	City of Castle Hills	Continue 1/2 sales tax for transit	Approved (5/7/16)
Texas	City of Richland Hills	Continue 1/2 sales tax for transit	Approved (5/7/16)
Washington	City of Seattle	Sales, property taxes; fees for transit	Pending
Washington	City of Spokane	0.3 percent sales tax for transit	Pending
Washington	City of Ellensburg	10-year, 0.2 percent sales tax for transit	Approved (4/26/16)
West Virginia	Monongalia County	0.022 percent property tax for transit	Approved (5/10/16)
Wyoming	Jackson County	1-cent sales tax for housing, transit	Pending
Wyoming	Teton County	1-cent sales tax for housing, transit	Pending

#### SOURCES

Source: Center for Transportation Excellence. "Transportation Ballot Measures." Accessed from: <http://www.cfte.org/elections>

Note: Some measures listed as pending must still face additional hurdles to be added to November ballots.