

Transportation for a Livable Solano County

The Solano Transportation Authority (STA), which coordinates transportation policy and funding for the county, is developing a Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP) which will describe project and funding priorities for the county through 2025. **This spring, STA will use the CTP to decide which projects and programs to include in “Measure S”, a ½-cent sales tax STA may place on the November 2002 ballot. The tax would raise approximately \$800 million over 20 years.**

Deciding what to include in the sales tax offers Solano County an unprecedented opportunity to choose investments that will expand our transportation choices and build a safer and more livable county. If it passes, this sales tax will help the county leverage millions more in regional, state, and federal dollars.

To use this once-in-a-generation opportunity wisely, we must craft a sales tax plan that balances funding for highways with significant funding for cost-effective mass transit, community transportation needs, and smart growth incentives to revitalize our town centers. As outlined in specific elements below, the sales tax plan can draw heavily on plans already developed by STA.

Experience shows that the plan will only receive the 2/3 majority it requires to pass if it is developed with an extensive public process that succeeds in drawing the full and unanimous support of interested community members. The signers of these recommendations are committed to bringing together neighborhood associations, public interest groups, and interested citizens to work with elected officials to craft a sales tax plan the voters will support.

To expand our transportation choices and build a safer, more livable county, we recommend that the sales tax include the following:

Mass Transit to Relieve Congestion

1. **Express Bus Network.** Over 2,800 daily riders in the county already know that express buses are the most cost-effective and quickest way to give commuters an alternative to the stress and delays of congested roads. STA’s “Intercity Vision” would provide service to BART (along I-80 and I-680) and destinations in Contra Costa, Alameda, San Francisco, Sacramento, Napa, and Marin Counties, as well as rapid service between cities in Solano County. *The sales tax should fully fund STP’s 20-year “Vision”, including \$60 million for comfortable luxury buses and over \$3 million per year for operations, which would more than double the number of people served by these buses.*
2. **Vallejo Ferry.** The ferry provides a pleasant and rapid alternative for more than 2,500 commuters bound for San Francisco every weekday. STA’s Ferry Plan would more than double ferry service. *Providing 24 daily round trips – every 15 minutes during commute hours and hourly off-peak – would cost \$79-123 million in capital costs and about \$3 million per year to run the ferries. To protect ferry neighbors and the environment, expansion must provide priority access by bus, bicycle, carpool, and on foot, in order to significantly reduce the proportion of ferry riders who drive alone.*
3. **Capitol Corridor.** The Capitol Corridor provides comfortable train service from Sacramento and San Jose, but has only one stop in Solano County. *The sales tax should support track improvements to reduce travel times and new stations that will contribute to the revitalization of existing town centers (such as the proposed Dixon station).*
4. **Commuter Information.** Solano Napa Commuter Information (SNCI) provides valuable information, by phone (800-53-KMUTE) and other means, that helps the more than 25% of Solano County commuters who use carpools, vanpools, and transit to get to work (RIDES, *Commute Profile 2001*). *The sales tax should provide a stable source of funding for SNCI.*

(continued)

Community Transportation

5. **Enhance Local Bus Service.** Public transit is a necessity for many of the 39% of Solano County residents who do not drive or own a vehicle – primarily children, the elderly, the disabled, and low-income families (source: MTC estimates, DMV records). A recent report identified 23 bus routes in the county that are crucial to a “Lifeline Transportation Network,” which would allow local transit operators to improve service. *Fully funding this need would require an additional \$4.2 million per year, mostly to improve service within Fairfield-Suisun, Vallejo, Vacaville, and Benicia.*
6. **Provide “Paratransit” services for the Elderly and Disabled.** “Paratransit” provides access for the elderly and persons with disabilities to reach health care, shop for food, and get around town. *The sales tax should commit annual operating support to help transit agencies provide paratransit services, including those mandated but not funded by the Americans with Disabilities Act.*
7. **Safety and Access for Pedestrians and Bicyclists.** Bicycling and walking are environmentally sound forms of transportation that promote public health and give life to commercial areas. *The sales tax should provide funding for STA’s Countywide Bicycle Plan (\$53 million for Phase I) and Countywide Trails Plan, as well as support for municipal programs to make the streets safer, programs that would make cities more competitive for statewide “Safe Routes to School” funding.* In addition, all new roads, expansions, and major road maintenance funded with the sales tax measure must incorporate equal access for pedestrians and bicyclists.

“Smart Growth” Incentives

8. **Reward Smart Growth Planning.** *To build on the effective land-use controls in the county’s “Measure A”, the sales tax should establish a new “Smart Growth Incentive Fund” to reward jurisdictions (cities and the county) that have adopted policies to encourage smart growth.* Cities and the county could use these funds for local street maintenance or other transportation projects, at their discretion. These would be “reward” funds, available to jurisdictions that choose to adopt (or have already adopted) policies such as: providing a jobs-housing balance through job growth in existing town centers, voter-approved urban growth boundary, and a development mitigation program that ensures that new development pays a fair share of support facilities.
9. **Transportation for Livable Communities.** *The sales tax should provide significant funding for a program to fund transportation projects that support downtown revitalization and transit-oriented development.* These funds would leverage additional regional funds by making Solano County projects more competitive for the regional “Transportation for Livable Communities” program, which allocates \$27 million per year regionwide and requires local matching funds.
10. **Ensure Highway Expansions do not Promote Sprawl and Harm our Communities.** Poorly planned highway expansions have the potential to spill more traffic onto local streets, induce more driving, reduce transportation choices, and damage the Suisun Marsh and other environmentally sensitive areas. *While the sales tax plan will undoubtedly contain highway projects, these projects must be designed carefully to reduce their negative impacts.* Mitigations that could be funded in the sales tax plan include conservation easements, on lands adjacent to new highways or expansions, to protect farmland from unwanted development.

Endorsed by: Solano Orderly Growth, Green Valley Landowners Association,
Greenbelt Alliance, and Bay Area Transportation and Land Use Coalition

Please join us in helping to make these goals a reality!

To get more information or to endorse these recommendations, contact:

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