

A Plan to Keep Ventura County Moving

by Darren Kettle



While used by everyone, the transportation system gets little attention - until things begin to go awry. When traffic on U.S. 101 slows to a crawl, when potholes multiply, when buses and trains are unavailable, people take notice.

Like all of Southern California, Ventura County's population is mobile and growing. More residents and visitors mean more traffic. On the 101, Ventura County's transportation backbone, drivers already collectively average 28,000 hours *a day* stuck in traffic. The picture on the 118 isn't much better. All these hours wasted in traffic stifle local business and rob us of time with our families, and congestion on our freeways is projected to increase by up to 50% in coming years.

At the same time, our population is also aging. By 2030, more than 21% of Ventura County's population will be over the age of 65. Without greater investment in our region's transit system, the Baby Boom generation, the most mobile in human history, faces a future of shrinking transportation options. Seniors—along with youth, veterans and people with disabilities—need affordable transit to basic lifeline services.

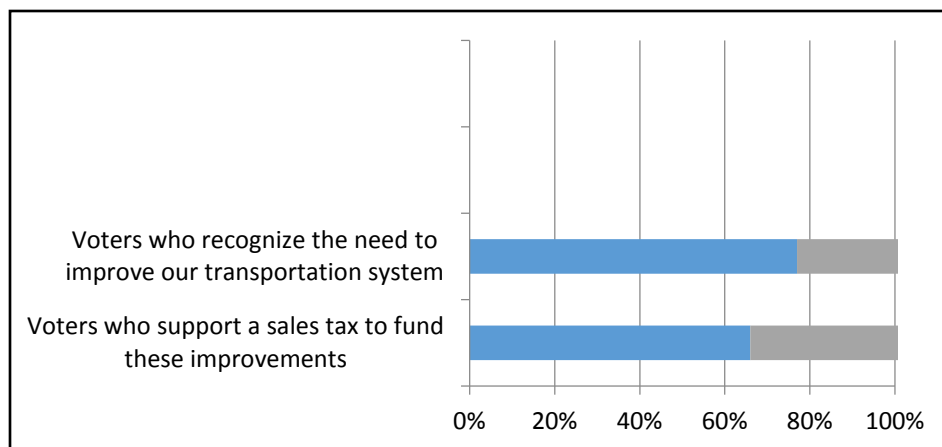


Over the years, my staff and I have spent hundreds of hours talking to citizens, business owners, elected officials, and city engineers all over Ventura County. No matter where we go, we have heard loud and clear: "Please take care of our city streets." Today, Ventura County finds itself at the edge of a transportation fiscal cliff. Over the next 30 years, city and County engineers across the County estimate at least a \$1.3 billion

shortfall just to maintain streets in their current condition.

Construction costs continue to rise and, for every day we defer street maintenance, costs to repair roads increase. At the same time, state and federal funding is shrinking and the rules of the game have changed. In order to get its fair share of transportation tax revenues from Sacramento and Washington, Ventura County competes against other counties. To access tax dollars, even those paid by our own residents at the pump in many cases, a local match is required.

On April 22, 2016, the Ventura County Transportation Commission (VCTC) voted to place a one-half cent transportation sales tax on the November 2016 ballot. This 30-year transportation sales tax measure not only allows Ventura County to begin to fund needed improvements, but also provides a source of local matching funds necessary to bring more federal and state tax dollars home.



Recent voter research shows that 77% of our voters recognize the need to improve our transportation system and 67% supports a sales tax to fund those improvements.

VCTC believes now is the time for residents to invest in the future and repair, preserve, and improve the transportation system that adds so much to Ventura County's quality of life. A ½-cent transportation sales tax would raise \$70 million per year, but only cost residents \$1 per week.

The allocation of sales tax revenues amongst Ventura County's numerous transportation needs and stakeholders is one of the most important elements of VCTC's proposal. Fully one half of the funds would go to local jurisdictions to be used for local priorities. That translates to about \$1.650 billion dollars over the next 30 years for cities and the County to do what is most important to their citizens, whether that be filling potholes, repaving city streets, repairing sidewalks, building bike paths or operating transit services.

All local street improvements completed using sales tax revenues must meet California's "complete streets" requirements, a multi-modal approach to transportation planning that gives equal consideration to pedestrians, cyclists and drivers.



The other 50 percent of the sales tax revenues will be used to address pressing regional transportation issues, including much-needed improvements to the 101 and the 118; projects

to facilitate goods movement to and from the Port of Hueneme; and a program to keep transit fares affordable for seniors, veterans, students, and people with disabilities, to name just a few.



By law, a transportation sales tax would strictly follow a transparent, detailed Transportation Investment Plan. VCTC has drafted a plan that describes and provides funding allocations for specific local transportation improvements, measures to maintain Ventura County's quality of life, and requirements for environmental preservation and taxpayer protection.

In the end, accountability and transparency will be critical to the success of the Transportation Investment Plan. The proposed sales tax measure will require that all revenues raised go into a transportation trust fund to ensure that money that's raised here, stays here—and won't go to Washington D.C. or Sacramento. The plan also includes an Independent Taxpayer Oversight to ensure accountability and annual independent audits to monitor expenditures. VCTC will conduct annual reviews of all projects and programs to report performance to ensure that promises made are promises kept.

If you're interested in learning more, you can review the plan and see details about each project at <http://keepvcmoving.org/>.



Darren Kettle
Executive Director
Ventura County Transportation Commission