



VICTORY: Assemblyman Todd Spitzer, R-Orange, right, jokes around Tuesday while talking to Anaheim Mayor Curt Pringle at the Measure M headquarters at the Hyatt Regency in Irvine.

KEVIN SULLIVAN, THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

## By the numbers

**68.5** Percentage of voters who supported new Measure M on Tuesday

**4.2** Billions of dollars initial Measure M will actually raise

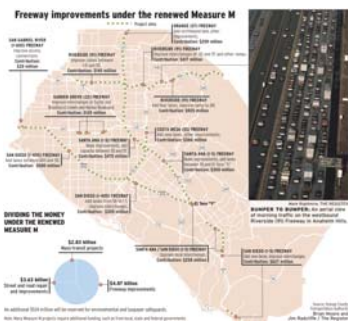
**3.1** Billions of dollars initial Measure M was to raise

**11.9** Billions of dollars estimated to be raised by tax

**33** Dollars that the average county resident will pay a year for Measure M

*Source: OCTA, County Registrar of Voters' Office*

## Graphic



[Freeway improvements under Measure M](#)

## Graphic



## [Where Measure M did best](#)

Thursday, November 9, 2006

# M is for more money

## Voters narrowly approve a 30-year extension of a half-cent sales tax for spending on transportation projects.

By ERIC CARPENTER and SUSHMA SUBRAMANIAN  
The Orange County Register

Orange County transportation officials Wednesday cheered the renewal of Measure M and pushed ahead with plans to combat congestion on local freeways and roads with the \$11.9 billion it is expected to generate.

In a county typically adverse to taxes, voters chose to pay more and idle less.

The measure's approval means the Orange County Transportation Authority can begin work on more than \$1 billion worth of improvements before the current tax expires in March 2011, OCTA officials said.

Money for those projects would come from bonds issued before any money is collected from the new tax. The bonds would be repaid as the tax is collected through 2041.

On average, a county resident will pay \$33 a year to fund the projects.

Voters Tuesday narrowly approved the 30-year continuation of the half-cent sales tax for transportation projects across the county.

The measure needed a two-thirds margin – 66.7 percent – to pass. It won 68.5 percent of the vote, according to unofficial results.

"This means continued improvements to our freeways, to our roads and to our transit systems," said Art Brown, chairman of the OCTA board, which oversaw the creation of the ballot proposal. "We're thrilled.

"I had a gut feeling leading up to the election that it would pass. Even the most conservative members of my church were saying they'd vote for it, because they have seen the improvements and they want it to continue to get better."

Opponents of the measure argued that it focused on "quick fixes" rather than long-term solutions, dedicated too much to mass transit and lasted too long.

A Register analysis of voters showed that Measure M did well at the polls across the county.

## UPCOMING PROJECTS

OCTA must decide which of the targeted projects to tackle first with the funds from the renewed measure.

Brown said the first area of focus will likely be in south Orange County, where traffic stalls along the San Diego (I-5) Freeway in San Clemente at the San Diego County line.

He said he understands residents in that area don't want to see large widening projects that would take away land. So improvements would probably focus on freeway entrance and exit ramps and other projects that wouldn't intrude on private property.

"The addition of car-pool lanes (in part of San Clemente) can be done within the existing right of way," said Susan Ritschel, a San Clemente councilwoman and OCTA board member. "But obviously any proposals to move ahead with this will take into consideration the input of locals."

But County Supervisor Bill Campbell, also an OCTA board member, said he expected the first improvements to be along the Riverside (91) and San Diego (I-405) freeways.

"We have those studies in place. We know what needs to be done," Campbell said. "Now we'll have the ability to move sooner."

As dictated by the measure, a major focus – and \$5 billion – of improvements will go toward the continuation of widening and upgrading the county's freeways.

Some \$4 billion will be used to improve city streets and synchronize traffic signals countywide, and about \$2 billion will expand Metrolink train service.

About \$240 million will be used to catch or clean up storm-water runoff that pollutes local waterways and beaches, OCTA officials said.

## THE POLITICAL FIGHT

The second Measure M was widely supported by politicians across the county. And more than \$2.5 million was raised by supporters to push for its renewal.

Major donors included the Orange County Business Council, the Automobile Club of Southern California, major developers, engineering firms and area businesses, including the Walt Disney Co.

Disney contributed \$49,900 to the campaign, according to records in the Orange County Registrar of Voters Office. Lennar Platinum Triangle, the developer in charge of an Anaheim project, contributed \$99,000.

But the two-thirds requirement left supporters unsure about chances for success.

In 1990, when the original half-cent tax was proposed, it needed a simple majority to win. It eventually was approved with 54 percent of the vote, after the failure of two similar ballot measures.

After that, a state law was enacted requiring a two-thirds vote for a new or renewed transportation tax.

Transportation officials put the renewed tax on the ballot years before the original tax was set to expire, knowing that if it failed they'd have time to put a similar measure to a vote.

No major public opposition emerged to Measure M – and less than \$1,000 was spent to fight it.

Mission Viejo resident Larry Gilbert was disappointed the measure was approved because, he said, not enough progress was made on the previous measure and it will fund the wrong projects, such as mass transit.

"I'm pretty proud of what we did (at the ballot box) considering we did not spend any money," he said. "I just feel that the measure needed to be improved."

Stan Oftelie, former chief executive of OCTA when the original Measure M won, sent a congratulatory e-mail to fellow supporters Wednesday.

He called it the biggest victory for Orange County transportation since 1912, when the "Good Roads" program received 70 percent of the vote.

It provided \$1.27 million to pave 117 miles of dirt roads between the county's cities and villages.

"It really allowed the automobile age to begin in Orange County," he said.

"On Tuesday, \$11.9 billion was raised. Times have changed, but I think that will have an enormous impact that won't be fully measured for decades to come."

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