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[Infrastructure bond spending on fast track](#)

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California voters were convinced of the need to make a huge investment in the state's deteriorating infrastructure and overwhelmingly approved a package of bonds Tuesday.

Now, it's time for the politicians and state bureaucracy to deliver. And state officials said Wednesday that they won't dawdle.

"If we do not validate the confidence voters have expressed, we will never travel this way again," said Senate President Pro Tem Don Perata, D-Oakland, one of the chief backers of the bond package.

Voters approved a \$40.1 billion public works spending package put together by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and Democratic legislative leaders that includes five bonds and a dedication of the sales tax on gasoline to transportation projects.

State officials expect the bonds to be sold in December and the money to be available for projects by at least early next year.

Proposition 1A, the gas sales tax restriction, captured 76.6 percent of the vote; Prop. 1B, a transportation bond measure, passed with 61.3 percent; Prop. 1C, a housing bond, won with 57.5 percent; Prop. 1D, a school facility bond, won with 56.6 percent; Prop. 1E, a flood control bond, garnered 64 percent; and Prop. 84, a bond to fund water, land and habitat preservation projects, took 53.8 percent.

In anticipation of the bonds' passage, state and regional agencies have been preparing.

"We're not going to be sitting around," said Randy Rentschler, spokesman for the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, the Bay Area's transportation planning and financing agency, which will propose the projects that could be funded by Prop. 1B. "Our people have been working hard all summer to get ready."

The Bay Area is guaranteed \$2 billion from Prop. 1B and hopes to reap as much as \$4.5 billion more by competing for funds that will be distributed by the California Transportation Commission, the agency that oversees state transportation spending. That process is expected to begin in March.

The MTC will decide on its list of preferred projects next month. Likely to top the list are projects that will relieve congestion and are close to being ready to build. To qualify for funds, projects have to be ready to start construction by 2012.

Although the decision on what projects get funded is ultimately up to the state commission, Rentschler expects the projects featured in the campaign for the bond measures -- the Caldecott Tunnel, Highway 101, Interstate 880, and BART and Caltrain extensions -- to be competitive.

Likewise, school officials are ready to start spending the windfall from passage of Prop. 1D.

Chris DeLong, policy manager for the state Office of Public School Construction, said that the bond sets aside money for different types of school construction projects, and that standards for awarding some funds still need to be developed. But money for renovation and modernization projects will be available almost immediately, he said.

About half of the \$2.85 billion housing bonds from Prop. 1C will continue to fund programs started with 2002's Prop. 46. That money should flow to projects that provide grants or low-interest loans for everything from homeless shelters to down-payment assistance, said Julie Spezia, executive director of Housing California. The state Department of Housing and Community Development will decide which projects get funded.

"It's clear that most Californians think that we should help the neediest people in our community and that we ought to do something about our housing crisis," she said. "The trick is getting them to see that there is a role for government."

The rest of the funds will go toward such purposes as housing for foster youth and urban infill housing projects.

Prop. 1E provides \$4.1 billion for repairing and strengthening the state's levee system. Voters also approved Prop. 84, a \$5.4 billion bond measure that would provide money to clean up California's coastal and inland waters, improve parks and protect natural resources. About \$800 million of that bond will also go toward helping fix levees.

The state is already working to shore up some of the most critical levee sites that protect urban areas.

Hurricane Katrina showed that severe flooding could be disastrous, which is one reason Schwarzenegger decided to have the state foot the bill for the most critical repairs.

An estimated \$12 billion in levee work is needed, but many levees that protect farmland have not yet been assessed, said Rodney Mayer, chief of the division of flood management at the state Department of Water Resources. He said the state will be developing a list of projects within the next few months.

"However, to fix everything will take decades," he said. "This is sufficient funding to

keep us busy for the next decade or so."

Many state leaders cautioned that the bonds won't be enough to solve all infrastructure needs.

"The state is never going to have enough money to build the infrastructure needed to match its population growth," Perata said. "We're going to have to look at things using private capital. We're never going to get there using tax dollars alone."

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Infrastructure propositions

1A -- Protections for transportation funding
99% of precincts reporting

| | VOTE | % |
|-----|-----------|----|
| YES | 4,984,333 | 77 |
| NO | 1,526,161 | 23 |

1B -- Transportation bond
99% of precincts reporting

| | VOTE | % |
|-----|-----------|----|
| YES | 3,997,044 | 61 |
| NO | 2,531,137 | 39 |

1C -- Housing bond
99% of precincts reporting

| | VOTE | % |
|-----|-----------|----|
| YES | 3,753,898 | 57 |
| NO | 2,777,758 | 43 |

1D -- School construction bond
99% of precincts reporting

| | VOTE | % |
|-----|-----------|----|
| YES | 3,700,803 | 57 |
| NO | 2,846,934 | 43 |

1E -- Flood protection bond
99% of precincts reporting

| | VOTE | % |
|-----|-----------|----|
| YES | 4,139,722 | 64 |
| NO | 2,334,629 | 36 |

84 -- Water/parks/conservation bond
99% of precincts reporting

| | VOTE | % |
|-----|-----------|----|
| YES | 3,473,329 | 54 |
| NO | 2,987,149 | 46 |

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