



# Hillsborough Metropolitan Planning Organization

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## 2035 Plan Post-Referendum Analysis Interagency Working Group

Friday, July 13, 2012

1:30 pm

18<sup>th</sup> Floor, Hillsborough County Center, 601 E. Kennedy Blvd.

### I. Introductions & Welcome to Phase 3

Beth Alden, MPO Staff

### II. Phase 2 Lessons Learned & Follow-Up Research into Best Practices

- Project Mix, Selection, & Distribution of Funds
- Accountability
- Public Education & Outreach

Jennifer Straw, Jacobs/ MPO Consultant

### III. Public Opinion Survey Draft

Ben Kelly, The Kenney Group/ MPO Consultant

### IV. Overview of Next Steps

Beth Alden, MPO Staff

### V. Round Robin

### VI. Adjournment

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# Transportation tax campaign makes 300K calls

By [Ariel Hart](#)

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

5:34 p.m. Thursday, May 31, 2012

Three hundred thousand telephone calls was just the beginning.

The \$8 million campaign for the July 31 Atlanta regional transportation referendum is trying to reach every voter it can who might swing the vote.

Aside from commercials, mailers and forums, the campaign already has dialed up 300,000 metro Atlanta residents to push the message, and expects to do much more.

Considering the obstacles, there's no telling if the formidable effort will be enough.

In a meeting with The Atlanta Journal-Constitution's editorial board Thursday and in presentations this week, campaign strategists talked about their tactics and the challenges they face. They also drove home the serious threat they perceive to the region if the referendum doesn't pass.

Opponents say the tax itself is a threat to the region, and they hope their message will stand up to the proponents' war chest.

The fight is over a proposed 10-year, 1 percent sales tax to build a list of transportation projects throughout the 10-county region. All 10 counties will vote together and pay the tax together if it passes.

If it does, the tax is expected to raise \$7.2 billion overall, with \$6.14 billion of that going to a regional list of projects throughout the 10 counties. On the regional list, about half the money would go for mass transit, and about half for roads.

The task of knitting together projects that could satisfy the disparate groups in the 10-county region -- transit passengers and car drivers, suburbanites and urban walkers -- was a tough one. Now, to pass that list, the campaign has some equally tough goals.

Though Democratic voters are traditionally less tax-shy, campaign officials know that they don't love taxes, either, and their wallets have been battered by the economy. Moreover, any voter who walks into the polls uncertain or uninformed is usually a no vote, campaign officials said. So they're aiming for just 60 percent of Democrats voting in the referendum.

The campaign hopes to win 35 percent of Republican men who come out to vote in the primary. It's aiming for 50 percent of Republican women voting that day.

Campaign leaders insist those goals are doable. They think they currently have a razor-thin majority.

Opponents say, no way.

"I can understand them doing everything in their power and imagination to get out there and sell as many people as they can on this ridiculous program," said Harold Bost, a Fayette County resident who has been organizing against the measure for more than a year. "I'll be very disappointed if 35 percent of Republican men vote for it. And for them to think that the women are not smart, too? I just can't buy that story."

The pro-referendum campaign's strategy is to tip the balance by getting unlikely primary voters to come to the polls.

"I happen to be a Republican primary voter," said Paul Bennecke, one of the campaign's strategists. "I think I'm an example of what people have to deal with every single day in their commute."

He detailed his drive on I-75, which leaves him with 30 minutes a day to see his eight-month-old son. In addition, he said, for Republicans defense, public safety and infrastructure are the core functions of government.

Campaign leaders and officials with the Metro Atlanta Chamber say the referendum must pass or the region will stagnate. They say Atlanta is already losing jobs as companies decide traffic congestion makes it too cumbersome to relocate here. They don't see a viable option if it fails.

"We're losing against states like North Carolina and Texas and other states that have invested in infrastructure," said Carol Tome, chief financial officer of Home Depot and the Chamber's chairwoman.

Campaign opponents acknowledge the congestion problem, but say the referendum's project list won't address it. Opponents from the right criticize the heavy investment in mass transit, saying it won't take enough cars off the road to make a dent. Opponents from the left say there's not enough mass transit.

The Atlanta Regional Commission, the region's official planning agency, is holding "wireside chats" where residents can learn more about the referendum projects. For more information see [atlantaregional.com](http://atlantaregional.com).

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Find this article at:

<http://www.ajc.com/news/transportation-referendum/transportation-tax-campaign-makes-1450208.html>

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# Austin mayor says urban rail isn't ready for November ballot

By **Marty Toohey** and **Mary Ann Roser**

AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF

Updated: 11:13 p.m. Friday, June 1, 2012

Published: 11:05 p.m. Friday, June 1, 2012

Urban rail is again a dream deferred.

Mayor Lee Leffingwell, Austin's chief rail advocate, pulled his support Friday for a November bond election, saying the city should not ask voters to approve \$275 million in debt for the first segment while so many questions linger. He effectively killed any chance that urban rail will appear on the ballot this year.

"I know many people in our community who will be deeply disappointed by delaying, once again," Leffingwell wrote in a midday blog post. "In retrospect, it has proved to be the greatest challenge of my tenure as mayor to build consensus around the details of (a) proposed system and a plan for moving forward. But what I can tell you is that I have no intention of giving up now."

City staff members last month unveiled a recommended first phase for urban rail, 5.5 miles of dual track running from the Austin Convention Center to Mueller in East Austin, passing through the Capitol complex and the University of Texas. Leffingwell's announcement comes 10 days after the city staff said the system, which would use electric-powered light rail or "modern streetcars," would cost \$550 million, half of which would come from federal money.

But the mayor said too many questions about the system remain: how to pay for operating costs estimated at \$16 million annually and whether the city could count on landing the federal grants.

Leffingwell said he is also concerned that urban rail would be too expensive in light of other hefty spending proposals that could be on the ballot. He would support a separate city bond package with a wide range of projects but wants to limit it to \$400 million, which he said is the threshold at which a property tax increase would be required. The city is considering a bond package of as much as \$575 million.

Moving rail off the ballot and limiting the size of the bond package could free up space on the November ballot for a possible bond proposal or tax increase to build a medical school.

That project comes with its own set of questions, and no decisions have been made about seeking bonds or higher taxes. A cadre of Central Texas politicians and power players say a medical school would galvanize Austin's economy. Some officials privately worried that the public could not stomach rail and medical school proposals on the same ballot.

Leffingwell said delaying the bond vote wouldn't necessarily delay the city's estimated opening date for rail of 2019 to 2021.

Friday's announcement was met with a mixture of disappointment and resignation among rail supporters.

"We support the mayor's decision; we knew from sitting in so many meetings this was a call that might have to be made," said Celia Israel, the chairwoman of the Alliance for Public Transportation. "If we keep our foot on the gas pedal, we can be ready to go in a year."

When Leffingwell campaigned for mayor in 2009, he pledged to put urban rail on the ballot the next year, but, citing unanswered questions mainly about funding, he pushed a vote back to 2011, then 2012.

His Friday blog entry did not say when he thought the issue should go to voters, and he did not return a call for comment.

State Sen. Kirk Watson, D-Austin, who is spearheading efforts to establish a medical school, has said that having the medical school and urban rail on the same ballot is not ideal.

Watson said Friday: "We're going through a process to evaluate a medical school in Austin, new teaching hospital and other community health care priorities. ... None of these goals was ever contingent on other efforts or projects."

Almost a month ago, UT System regents pledged \$30 million for a medical school, provided the community puts up another \$30 million toward the project. The pledge sets aside \$25 million in operating funds on a continuing basis and \$5 million annually for eight years for equipment.

"It's clear that the community will play a role in building a medical school," Watson said Friday. "But it's still unclear what that role would be or how it would look and function."

Rosie Mendoza, chairwoman of the Central Health board, said the board has made no decision on seeking a property tax increase or a ballot initiative for a medical school or related projects.

"We are going through a financial analysis to see where UT is on this and to see if there are some private donors" to help fund a medical school.

Leffingwell's blog post did not directly address the possibility that rail and the medical school could compete for the same limited dollars. But he wrote that he is "acutely aware of, and very much concerned about, the larger context of this ongoing discussion."

Apart from the possibility of a medical school initiative on the November ballot, Austin school district trustees could ask voters for a tax rate increase. And putting urban rail on the ballot along with a \$400 million bond package for affordable housing, city facilities, parks and roads would raise the city tax rate.

City staffers said last week that if the council put a \$675 million bond package on the November ballot — \$275 million for urban rail and \$400 million for other projects — the city taxes on a \$200,000 home would increase by more than \$100 by 2016. Because previous bond debt is close to being paid off, voters can approve up to \$400 million in bond projects in November without raising the current property tax rate. (If they do not approve the package, they could see a reduction in the tax rate).

The mayor said his concern is compounded by electric rates that the council will soon raise and municipal budget projections that call for either a tax increase or spending cuts.

"In short," Leffingwell wrote in his blog, "the potential for financial strain on Austin taxpayers is deeply worrisome to me."

Contact Marty Toohey at 445-3673; contact Mary Ann Roser at 445-3619

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<http://www.statesman.com/news/local/austin-mayor-says-urban-rail-isnt-ready-for-2387349.html>

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# chicagotribune.com

## Chicago-area gas tax hike proposed to fund mass transit investment

### Projected \$168 million would be raised over 5 years for CTA, Metra and Pace

By [Jon Hilkevitch](#), Chicago Tribune reporter

March 1, 2012

Mass transit supporters proposed state legislation Wednesday that would increase the gas tax in the Chicago area to raise a projected \$168 million over five years for the CTA, Metra and Pace.

advertisement

The legislation seeks to index the state motor fuel tax to inflation, with annual adjustments, to ensure a dedicated transit funding source, officials said.

The state gas tax, 19 cents per gallon, was last increased in 1990.

The proposed legislation, if approved by the General Assembly, would generate \$11.6 million in new transit funding in 2013 based on an estimated two-fifths-of-a-cent increase in the motor fuel tax in the six-county Chicago area only, supporters said.

The proposed legislation would also direct new incremental revenue to the state public transportation fund. It does not divert funding from the state roads program.

"A lot of us who ride transit are really more and more fed up with higher fares and worse service," Ron Burke, executive director of the Active Transportation Alliance, said at a news conference at State and Van Buren streets downtown. "Unfortunately, transit has been derailed by chronic underfunding."

The alliance helped introduce the bill.

Burke said the gas take hike would amount to about 0.4 of a cent a year, or an extra \$3 to \$4 for a family that travels about 20,000 miles a year.

The sponsor of the legislation, SB 3236, is state Sen. Martin Sandoval, D-Chicago, who heads the Senate Transportation Committee. Sandoval is expected to introduce the bill soon in Springfield, officials said.



The legislation is being introduced against a backdrop of state government spending cuts as well as a Republican-led move in Congress to pare dedicated federal funding for mass transit.

Neither leaders in the General Assembly nor Gov. Pat Quinn have taken a position on the state Senate transit funding bill, officials said. It will likely be a very tough sell, given the state of the economy and recent increases in gas prices.

It's also unclear how much money indexing the motor fuel tax to inflation would generate, because many people have cut back on driving because of high gas prices. Many people also drive more fuel-efficient vehicles, which reduces how much gas is purchased.

Despite the long odds facing the legislation, backers of the bill said there is an urgent need to provide faster, more frequent and more reliable bus and rail service in the Chicago area, ease traffic congestion and create jobs.

Members of Riders for Better Transit, an advocacy group created by the Active Transportation Alliance, distributed fliers at downtown train stations Wednesday to ask commuters to contact their state legislators to express support for better transit service.

Burke said Metra's record fare hike in February, which caused ticket prices to shoot up as much as 35 percent, could have been avoided or minimized if the legislation were in place.

But a Metra official disagreed.

"It's just me speaking, (but) I don't believe that necessarily would have unburdened that. But it might have had some effect, perhaps," said Sam Smith, Metra's government relations chief.

Metra plans more fare increases, tied to inflation, as soon as next year.

The CTA will also be hard-pressed to avoid fare hikes and possibly service cuts in 2013, officials said.

"We are falling way behind in terms of being competitive on transportation as it serves our economy," said Steve Schlickman, executive director of the Urban Transportation Center at the University of Illinois at Chicago. "We can't just rely on fare increases to solve our transit needs. Fares will never pay for the infrastructure."

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## [Government](#)

# Rep. Readshaw Proposes Lottery to Assist Mass Transit

'(Mass transit agencies) could divert the money they would otherwise pay on their debt, and instead, use the funds to maintain services.' - Harry Readshaw

5:30 am

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With still more cuts in subsidies to mass transit looming in the next Pennsylvania budget, [state Rep. Harry A. Readshaw](#), a Democrat whose [36th Legislative District](#) includes parts of [Baldwin](#) and [Whitehall](#) boroughs, is preparing to re-introduce a bill (first introduced by Readshaw in 2005) that would authorize a lottery specifically to assist municipal mass transit operations.

The proposal is for a lottery to be conducted 12 times per year. After prizes and costs, all remaining revenue from the \$5 tickets would go toward repaying the debt incurred on bonds issued for mass transit development.

"By taking off some bond repayment load from the mass transit agencies," Readshaw said, "they could divert the money they would otherwise pay on their debt, and instead, use the funds to maintain services.

"The [Allegheny County Port Authority](#) and virtually every other mass transit operation in [the commonwealth](#) are confronted by the continuing reduction of the state's share of the costs for their services.

"There is a significant number of Pennsylvanians for whom mass transit is the only way to commute to and from work. The more that is shaved off of transit work, the more of those people could face losing their job. That means more tax money spent on unemployment, and (it) makes an area less attractive to potential employers."

Readshaw also noted that, for many people, their local bus is the only way that they can travel to medical facilities and grocery stores.

Readshaw asserted that his proposed [Economic Development Fund for Mass Transit](#) would be conducted in such a way as to not interfere with the [current state lottery](#), which benefits older Pennsylvanians. Among the benefits funded by the current lottery is senior transportation.

Readshaw added that, ultimately, a mass transit lottery would increase support for the local systems without creating a further burden on taxpayers.

He expects to re-introduce the legislation after [the state House](#) returns to session in March.

**Thoughts on the bill? Share them in the comments section below.**

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## Brent Batten: Saad on taxes: Don't go down that road

By BRENT BATTEN

Monday, February 6, 2012

Tax increases are looming down the road.

The fact that the road may be congested and bumpy may even hasten their arrival.

A statewide advisory committee looking into Florida's anticipated shortfall in money to build and maintain roads is eyeing a list of ideas including a 10-cent per gallon increase in the state's gas tax and an entirely new system of taxing motorists based on the number of miles they drive.

Naples City Councilman Sam Saad III sits on the Florida Metropolitan Planning Organization Advisory Council and voted against sending the list of 13 options to a consultant so they can be turned into actionable items, like draft legislation.

Saad recognizes the state is facing a transportation funding deficit. "We're woefully underfunded," he acknowledges. But raising taxes isn't the right approach, he said.

First, the state Legislature should stop raiding the Transportation Trust Fund to plug holes in the general budget, Saad said.

Last year, the Legislature took \$150 million from the fund. The year before, then-Gov. Charlie Crist vetoed a \$160 million sweep the Legislature sought. In 2009, Crist allowed \$120 million to be taken from the fund for other uses. With the state facing a \$1 billion budget shortfall this year, another raid is possible.

But Howard Glassman, executive director of the MPOAC, said securing the trust fund alone won't be enough to meet the state's needs in the coming years.

"The shortfall is enormous. There is a decline in anticipated revenues and an increase in anticipated needs. There's billions in needs. Billions and billions," Glassman said. Make that \$62 billion over the next 20 years, according to a 2008 assessment of the state's transportation requirements.

People are driving fewer miles in vehicles that are more fuel efficient, cutting into the gas tax revenue that helps fund roads and mass transit in the state. Inflation is eating away at the purchasing power of the dollars that are collected, Glassman said.

The big ticket item on the list of options is an increase in the state's fuel tax of two

cents per year for five years, resulting in a 10-cents per gallon increase once the escalation is complete. The would yield about \$852 million a year, MPOAC documents state. Some members of the advisory board noted that the price of gas goes up or down 10 cents in a week under current conditions. People would barely notice a tax increase of that much spread over five years, the thinking goes. "That's not the point," Saad said. "It's a tax increase."

Increasing vehicle registration fees, indexing gas taxes to keep up with inflation and adding tolls to more roads are also on the list of alternatives.

One particularly sensitive option is a vehicle miles traveled tax. The thought of it conjures up images of transponders in cars with government tracking their movements. But Glassman said it doesn't have to work that way. The tax could be calculated by motorists annually reporting their odometer readings, much like they do when they register a vehicle today.

With the move toward higher fuel efficiency and electric cars, the gasoline tax becomes less and less reliable as a funding mechanism, Glassman said. At the same time, people are reluctant to embrace the idea. "A lot of my members are nervous about that one," he said.

None of the ideas in the MPOAC revenue study will be ready for the Legislature to consider this year. The goal is to have specific proposals in front of lawmakers when they meet in 2013. Even then, they may not be ripe for passage.

But eventually, the state is going to have to face its transportation funding shortfall. "At some point, the Legislature is going to have to take the bull by the horns and make some tough decisions," Glassman said. "It may take years, but at least we need to get the ball rolling."

On that point, at least, he and Saad agree. "The Legislature needs to make transportation a priority," Saad said.



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