

# Executive Summary: Best Practices

The Post-Referendum Analysis is an effort to reexamine the transportation needs of the community following a transportation sales tax referendum in 2010 not approved by a majority of Hillsborough County voters. As part of its mission to understand the transportation needs of the county and prepare a plan the community supports, the Hillsborough MPO is looking at other areas around the country.

## Best Practices Review

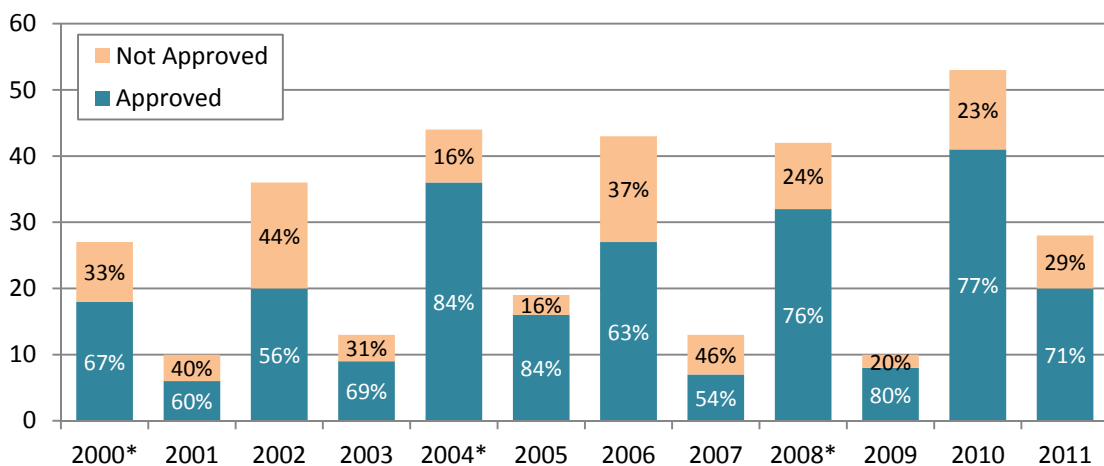
This white paper documents several communities that held successful referenda for transportation funding over the past decade. It is not intended as a critique of past efforts. The review of best practices concluded with three exemplary themes that are of particular interest or practical application in Hillsborough County. They include Project Mix, Selection, and Distribution of Funds; Accountability; and Public Education and Outreach. Additional discussion includes the special cases of the state of Minnesota’s project prioritization method for its state transportation plan and Hillsborough County’s existing Community Investment Tax, as well as a simple tally and description of successful city-only referenda in the past five years.

## Transportation Referenda—National Trends

Between 2000 and 2011, 344 transportation funding-related referenda went before voters across the country. These referenda are mechanisms for voters to choose to raise funds, often through locally-initiated sales tax increases, for desired transportation improvements. Of those 344 measures, 70 percent were approved.<sup>1</sup> Over the last decade, the trend has shown overall high voter support for transportation improvements with local funding (**Figure 1**). This figure shows all votes for local transportation funding such as sales tax, ad valorem (property tax), and bonding options, among others. Sales tax referenda made up 141 of the measures, of which 58 percent passed. However, among the sales tax referenda that were approved, only four were for one percent (of which one was vetoed after approval). The following breaks down the sales tax approvals:

- <0.50% sales tax: 74 total – **65% passed**
- 0.50-0.99% sales tax: 54 total – **56% passed**
- 1.00% sales tax: 10 total – **40% passed** (*Of 4 that passed, 1 had mix of transit, road, community projects; 1 dedicated 10% of revenues to transit; 1 funded a transit center (among other infrastructure projects); and 1 was vetoed by the Wisconsin Governor.*)

**Figure 1: Transportation Funding-Related Referenda by Year, 2000-2011**



\* Presidential Election Year

<sup>1</sup> Center for Transportation Excellence ([www.cfte.org](http://www.cfte.org))

## Common Traits

The following common themes were identified in the 23 case studies researched.

- Transit agencies and local municipalities typically led the effort.
- Planning areas typically match transit service boundaries, most often encompassing multiple municipalities.
- Of the 23 cases, 22 referenda have a sunset; the shortest length of time was nine years, and the longest, 30; the three-county Salt Lake effort (2000) does not sunset.
- Of the 23 cases, 8 sales tax increases ranged from 0.125 cents to 0.49 cents; 11 were 0.5-cent increases.
- California requires 66 percent voter approval for a local sales tax to pass, an expenditure plan outlining how funds will be allocated, and an independent citizen oversight committee; therefore California cases are similar in regards to accountability and transparency.

## Best Practices

### *Project Selection*

1. Balance the mix based on public's needs with "no less than %" as guidelines with flexibility.
2. Develop the plan with the public and make sure it is completed and solidified before the vote.
3. Encourage use of funds as the "local match" and communicate the "multiplier affect".
4. In most cases the plan components were solid for first five years; some were more flexible after that timeframe.
5. The Plan needs to have something for everyone during each time period.

### *Accountability*

1. A citizen oversight committee or a publicly trusted independent review committee **MUST** be created to monitor the funds.
2. Referendum language should clearly state how the agency will be accountable to the taxpayers.
3. Transparency of process, projects, and progress is needed to gain public support.
4. Funds should be managed and distributed by the implementing agency (e.g., planning or transportation agency).
5. An informative, easy-to-navigate website is essential for people to easily find information.

### *Public Information*

1. Highlight past successes and accomplishments as collective successes—"We did this."
2. Involve the public early, often, and completely in the process.
3. Personalize the benefits of the Plan to the community (e.g., university, business, environmental, Environmental Justice, neighborhoods, etc.).
4. Share the communication responsibilities to convey message(s) from multiple sources; recruit professional volunteers (e.g., planners, engineers, economic development, and business leaders) as part of Speakers Bureau.
5. Clearly communicate consequences if plan does not pass.
6. Respond to opposition quickly and stay on point, then move on.

## Cases Studied

**City of Glendale, AZ** - GO Program

**Maricopa County, AZ** - Proposition 400

**Pima County, AZ**

**Contra Costa County, CA** - Measure J

**Los Angeles County, CA** - Measure R

**Marin County, CA** - Measure A

**Orange County, CA** - Measure M

**San Joaquin County, CA** - Measure K

**San Mateo County, CA** - Measure A

**Santa Barbara County, CA** - Measure A2008

**Santa Clara County, CA** - Measure B

**Boulder County, CO** - Issue 1A

**Denver Region, CO** - FasTracks

**Miami-Dade County, FL** - People's Transportation Plan

**St Paul/ Minneapolis, MN** - MVST Amendment

**St Louis County, MO** - Proposition A

**Dallas Region, TX** - Bond approval

**Salt Lake, Weber, & Davis Counties, UT** - County Measure #2

**Salt Lake & Utah Counties, UT** - Proposition 3/ Opinion Question

**City of Seattle, WA** - Bridging the Gap

**Washington State** - Nickel Package