

GUEST EDITORIAL

By Russ Desch

A look at the 1% slice of the Measure R pie

In 2006, the voters of Tulare County saw the need for significant improvements in our transportation network and had the foresight to plan ahead. The result is Measure R.

As a “self-help” county, Tulare County has been able to leverage local funds to bring in millions in state and federal funds and there are major projects under way all over the county today. These projects are funded under the 50 percent “regional” slice of the Measure R funding allocations pie.

Measure R has also funded huge improvements in our transit service and new bike and pedestrian paths (funded under the 14 percent environmental category) and local transportation improvements (funded under the 35 percent local category).

So what happens with the remaining 1 percent?

As detailed in the Measure R Expenditure Plan (available online at tcmeasurer.com), this 1 percent is set aside to fund administration and planning. This includes studies required for Measure R-funded projects; staff time to prepare strategic plans and work plans and updates; develop funding allocation requirements; administer and conduct specific activities as needed for the other three funding categories; and prepare an annual report.

This funding category also funds public outreach efforts to keep the citizens of Tulare County informed on Measure R activities and an annual audit, which documents all financial activity. The audit is available for public review by contacting TCAG at 624-7274.

Staff time related to specific projects is not billed against projects – only the 1 percent approved by voters is used to fund administration. Other self-help counties choose to bill against projects but the TCAG board and staff instead put all project funds into projects.

Transportation projects today require a great deal of advance planning, extensive (and expensive) studies and extensive documentation. By careful and frugal budgeting, TCAG is able to work within the 1 percent funding allocated by the Expenditure Plan.

The Citizens Oversight Committee serves as the eyes and ears of the public regarding Measure R. For a meeting schedule, visit tcmeasurer.com. I am pleased to

serve under the “audit/finance/budget” category of the committee, and very knowledgeable private citizens volunteer their time as the Finance Committee.

Measure R generates significant revenue – an anticipated \$650 million over its 30-year lifespan – so the role of these private citizens is very important. Together with the staff and the board, we ensure that the funds collected are used wisely.

We are proud of the work that the TCAG staff and board do in delivering on the promises of Measure R.

(Russ Desch, CFO of Visalia Medical Clinic, fills the Audit/ Finance/Budget seat on the Citizens Oversight Committee. The committee meets quarterly and all meetings are open to the public.)