

Measure R gives Tulare County a needed boost

It's been three years since the Tulare County Association of Governments received the first Measure R check. Since that time, Measure R has been the constant stream of money that we've needed. We've put it to good use and stretched it farther than expected. As vice chairman of the Measure R Citizens' Oversight Committee, I think it's important that we regularly celebrate what Measure R does for us.

Before we celebrate, it's important to remember that Measure R doesn't fund just road repair. It's primarily intended to fund roads, but also helps fund clean air transportation initiatives to improve the way we travel by bus, by bike and on foot.

A lot of good has come from Measure R in a short time, although we won't see the full benefits of its \$652 million overnight. We've seen, and we'll continue to see, a lot of good work throughout its 30-year life. However, not all of the county's 3,057 miles of roads will be fixed with this money. To do that, we'd have to double the sales tax and dedicate it solely to roads.

The good news is that with Measure R we're seeing a lot of good work, we're helping ourselves as a county, we're opening doors to state and federal funding, and we're making sure that we get the biggest bang for our buck.

To date, Measure R has funded more than \$47.8 million in Measure R projects and in the next five years, \$500 million in construction projects are planned. To date, the bulk of Measure R money (\$23.4 million) has helped cities and the county fix potholes, streets, bridges, traffic signals and improve sidewalks. A total of \$16.6 million has helped us complete regional projects that help all of us travel countywide, while \$6.7 million has helped us improve bus services and improve or construct multi-use trails.

With Measure R we thought we would do \$49.1 million in projects at this point. Instead, we've done \$200.3 million in projects. Measure R has outperformed original projections by 400 percent. We've stretched Measure R dollars by making sure that our cities, the county and the Tulare County Association of Governments work together. As a team we've used Measure R as the local match to secure state and federal dollars. Before Measure R, there was no local match.

Recent examples include Avenue 416 and State Route 190. With Measure R covering the required local match, the county of Tulare and the city of Dinuba were able to secure federal funding for the Avenue 416 bridge.



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Caltrans and the Tulare County Association of Governments are working together to fund the \$21 million State Route 190 project with Measure R paying \$4 million.

To date, the bulk of Measure R funds have allowed cities and the county to work on one of the greatest needs in our communities — road repair. In making repairs, city and county officials have chosen to repair roads by overlay rather

than reconstruction, a process that can be four times more costly. Overlays repair an isolated road segment with asphalt and allow agencies to complete more roadway repairs throughout the county. For example, the county can either reconstruct 612 feet of roads in its 27 communities or overlay 1/2 mile of roads in those communities — that's more than four times the amount of repairs.

One thing that has been especially positive is that city and county officials take into consideration public feedback to help prioritize these projects. Some have gone as far as to meet with town councils to prioritize spending. If you ever want to suggest a road for repair, you can always e-mail the appropriate city or county officials at TCMeasureR.com. Just click on 'Contact Us.'

Measure R has also created jobs in Tulare County. There have been direct impacts — employment and business opportunities for companies. There have also been indirect impacts — money spent locally by the companies hired to complete Measure R projects and their employees.

The potential for new jobs throughout the life of Measure R is even more promising. According to the California Alliance for Jobs, \$500 million in construction projects will create approximately 10,000 jobs.

I look forward to what the future holds with Measure R and I invite you to get involved and get informed about Measure R. Please join us Nov. 8 at our next oversight meeting at the Board of Supervisors Rooms A&B, 2800 W. Burrell, Visalia. You should also visit TCMeasureR.com and find out about the great diversity of Measure R projects — roads, transit, multi-use trails, etc. — that have been funded in your community.

Ty Holscher is vice chairman of the Measure R Citizens' Oversight Committee.