

Measure R: Powering economic development

By Ty Holscher

When the citizens of Tulare County voted for Measure R in 2006, we were voting primarily for improved roads.

Measure R promised to improve regional and local roads, tackle a serious pothole problem countywide, support transit and provide bike paths throughout the county.

Nearly five years later, Measure R has done that – and more. Measure R has also been a job generator, in an economy that desperately needs economic development successes.

With the projects made possible by Measure R, jobs are being created both directly and indirectly.

In Porterville, for example, Measure R funds will be leveraged with state funds to improve State Route 190, a vitally important corridor that leads directly to the industrial area that is crucial to Porterville's current and future economic development plans. Improvements to Scranton and Indiana will also enhance the link to the core area of the city.

The area around Porterville's airport is designated industrial and the majority of new jobs for residents are anticipated to come from this location over the next 20 years. Without Measure R, Porterville officials say, the city would have had a difficult time providing the linkages that lead to job creation.

With the improvements, Porterville will be able to offer better access to State Route 99, which enhances the city's ability to attract new employers. With new employers come much-needed new jobs.

Visalia's Industrial Park is also a critically important employment center, with an estimated 5,000 people from throughout the area working there.

Thanks to Measure R, access to the park will be easier thanks to improvements to Betty Drive, Riggan Avenue, Plaza Drive and, soon, the intersection of Plaza Drive and Highway 198.

These improvements will make the employment center more accessible and attractive to prospective future employers. Access to major highways is the cornerstone to job-creating new development and is always at the top of the list for site selection consultants.

Significant numbers of jobs are created during construction. The Sacramento Regional Research Institute's formula indicates that, considering the \$500 million in projects, Tulare County will see as many as 6,2000 jobs created due to Measure R.

In addition, these projects create demand for everything from gasoline and equipment to clothing and burgers. Sales tax revenues have increased by 10 percent in the past year, and it is fair to say that some portion of that increase is a result of the huge transportation projects under way.

Sales tax supports local services such as law enforcement, fire and parks. It is critical to the lifeblood of local government.

Measure R can't solve our unemployment problem on its own. But the numbers of unemployed would be greater without Measure R, and the future is brighter due to Measure R.

An effective transportation network makes our region marketable, and is hugely important to economic development efforts. Thank you to the voters of Tulare County for your investment in today and tomorrow.

I encourage residents to participate in the Measure R process by visiting a Citizens Oversight Committee or a Tulare County Association of Governments meeting. For details, visit www.tcmeasurer.com.

(Ty Holscher is chairman of the Measure R Citizens Oversight Committee, representing the City of Tulare.)