

Regional Measure 3 - \$3 Bridge Toll Increase

WHAT IS REGIONAL MEASURE 3?

Regional Measure 3 (RM3) will be on the June 2018 ballot of all nine Bay Area counties. Passage requires a *combined* “Yes” vote from a simple majority of voters in all nine Bay Area counties. Details of RM3 were devised by the Bay Area Metropolitan Transportation Commission, on authority from California Senate Bill 595 (authored by Senator Jim Beall, and signed by Governor Jerry Brown in October 2017). In the context of RM3 “traffic mitigation” means funding for public transit and bicycle safety, as well as funding for highway construction.

WHAT DOES RM3 DO?

- * Raises the toll of Bay Area’s state-owned bridges by \$1 in 2019, another \$1 in 2022, and another \$1 in 2025, to a maximum of \$3. The toll increase would raise \$4.45 billion intended for transit improvements in the toll bridge corridors and their approach routes.
- * Establishes an independent oversight committee to ensure the toll revenues generated by the toll increase are expended consistent with a specified expenditure plan.
- * Provides discounts for vehicles that pay for tolls electronically or through other non-cash methods and to charge differential rates based on the chosen method. Provide a 50% discount on the amount of the toll increase on a second bridge crossing for those using a two-axle vehicle and pay in non-cash methods.
- * Creates an Independent Office of the BART Inspector General within BART, appointed by the Governor from nominees provided by BART for 4-year terms, funded by an allocation of \$1,000,000 from bridge toll revenues for the first year, increasing in subsequent years.

WHAT WOULD RM3 REVENUES BE USED FOR?

- * \$60 million of revenues generated by the toll increase will be made available annually for funding operations of the Transbay Terminal (\$5 million), ferries (\$35 million), and regional express bus (\$20 million). This amount is “another component of the Regional Measure 3 expenditure plan.”
- * \$1,965 million to fund regional capital projects, such as BART cars, express lanes, San Francisco Bay Trail/Safe Routes to Transit, ferry enhancement, BART to San Jose, SMART Rail Transit, Clipper system.
- * \$2,485 million to fund corridor-specific capital projects, such as Caltrain Downtown Extension, MUNI fleet expansion, AC Transit improvements, I80 transit improvements, planning and preliminary engineering of a second rail tube, Tri-Valley transit access improvements, San Jose Diridon Station, Dumbarton Corridor improvements, Highway 101/Route 92 improvements, I680 reconstruction, Solano County I80/I680/Route 12 improvements, Route 34 improvements, San Rafael Transit Center.

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RM3 RAISES SOME CONCERNS:

EQUITY:

* RM3 transforms bridge tolls from user fee to tax disguised as user fee. Commuters who use BART, ferry, and MUNI Metro benefit from the toll increase, but do not pay tolls.

* Counties like Santa Clara with a large population of voters but fewer bridge toll payers have the same say at the ballot box as everyone else.

* Higher-income residents are concentrated in Santa Clara, San Mateo and San Francisco, counties with the lowest rates of bridge toll payers; while relatively less affluent counties like Alameda or Contra Costa have higher number of residents who pay tolls – a case of the less affluent funding the more affluent.

* Public transit is not a realistic option to the many parents needing to drop off small children in daycare before heading off to work; so they will probably drive, pay bridge tolls, and subsidize the child-free taking the ferry to work.

TRACK RECORD:

* The 2016 “first of its kind” Regional Measure AA promised that a \$12 parcel tax would restore the Bay, but one year later even with the help of an assortment of other grants, the project is less than 30 percent funded and will most likely need additional funding by the 2030 deadline.

ACCOUNTABILITY:

* Multi-purpose proposals that promise improvements in numerous fronts make it difficult for voters to hold legislators and agencies accountable for inefficiency and waste.

* The challenge is compounded in the age of “regionalism,” when voters are dealing with a massive regional agency such as the Metropolitan Transportation Commission.

* More accountability can be obtained with local control and inter-agency collaboration, such as existed prior to the regionalization of Bay Area government.

VOTER CONTROL:

* The trend towards creation of offices of appointed inspectors general to do the work residents would have expected from elected boards continues with RM3. BART will receive its appointed inspector general with this measure, at a cost of \$1 million the first year to increase in subsequent years.

USE OF FUNDS:

* The high taxes Californians pay do not buy them good services compared to other states. Voters should curb their enthusiasm that RM3 will deliver on its promises.