

[Andrea Seastrand](#)

Here's how California can fix roads without increasing taxes

By Andrea Seastrand

October 11, 2018 03:09 PM

Updated 8 hours 42 minutes ago

We can fix California's bridges and roads and invest billions of dollars in new transportation infrastructure without raising taxes. Sound too good to be true?

It's not, provided we actually invest transportation-related taxes into their intended purpose, and that's why a recently announced state ballot [initiative](#) by the proponents of Yes on Proposition 6 Repeal the Gas Tax is so important.

The constitutional amendment would appear on the 2020 ballot and, according to authors, would dedicate an estimated \$7.9 billion annually to roads and transportation infrastructure — more funding to transportation than the tax increases contained in SB 1.

Unlike previous "lockboxes," this proposition would make sure that 100 percent of state gas tax funds go to road projects by banning any diversions to the state general fund and, in the process, would dramatically increase the amount of money available for improvements.

The no-new-taxes ballot measure does something Gov. Brown should have done years ago by canceling the failing high speed rail project that has already wasted [\\$5.4 billion dollars](#) and has only built a small section of track in the Central Valley. The latest estimate is that it will cost \$77 billion to complete the whole system. Think of all the projects that money could be better spent on.

Under the proposed initiative, any unspent high speed rail funds would go to other transportation needs. And it also bolsters local control by shifting authority to city and county governments to spend revenues on projects they identify for their communities. For those who support public transportation, the initiative would dedicate sales taxes from vehicles purchases to a permanent fund that supports all forms of transportation like transit, bikes and rails. That would ensure projects right here in our region move forward.

Some elements in the proposal are similar to the [transportation plan](#) coauthored by our Assemblyman Jordan Cunningham, which Sacramento Democrats refused to even give a hearing. This concept of putting transportation-related taxes to their intended purposes shouldn't have to be so hard for liberal politicians to understand. Yet because the state Legislature refuses to act, it's left to citizens to take things into their own hands by submitting a ballot proposition directly to voters.

While this statewide measure could ensure our road repairs have the funding they need after the SB 1 gas tax increases are repealed this November, there are steps we can do locally to create more money for transportation without raising taxes. For example, instead of pursuing options like Measure J, the half-percent sales tax increase proposed by San Luis Obispo Council of Governments that voters rejected in 2016, locals leaders should look to a model the city of San Diego embraced. In 2016, they passed a [ballot measure](#) that earmarked nearly \$4 billion over 25 years for infrastructure funded by setting aside growth in local tax revenues. A similar plan here could create the [dedicated funding stream](#) for local projects that proponents of Measure J said we so desperately needed.

Over the years, Sacramento has made multiple efforts like [Proposition 42](#) in 2002 and [Proposition 1A](#) in 2006 to convince the public that it's spending transportation dollars on actual projects to improve highways and roads. No matter, politicians always found a way around these "lockboxes." The most recent attempt to create a firewall around road dollars was approved by voters this summer with Proposition 69 which is supposed to protect the revenue from the new gas tax increase. However, as history shows us, we can't trust Sacramento to hold themselves accountable which is yet another reason why this new citizens-driven ballot measure is so desperately needed.

Transportation is a core function of government that should be a top priority. As evidenced by the horrible condition of our state's roads despite already paying some of the [highest gas taxes](#) in the country prior to last year's hike, anyone can see politicians in the State Capitol have been less than forthright about the protections around the transportation tax dollars. By advancing an initiative to dedicate transportation-related taxes to their

true purpose, taxpayers can have much greater confidence that their money is going where it should.

Let's hope voters in 2020 have an opportunity to send a lasting message to Sacramento that they need to prioritize our transportation infrastructure with the tax dollars we already pay.

And remember to vote Yes on Proposition 6 Repeal the Gas Tax on November 6th!

Conservative columnist Andrea Seastrand is a former representative for the 22nd Congressional District, a longtime grass-roots activist and current president of the Central Coast Taxpayers Association. Her column runs in The Tribune every other week, in rotation with liberal columnist Tom Fulks.