

Hillsborough County Voters Pass Transportation Surtax — What Happens Next?

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More than 57 percent of Hillsborough County voters approved the imposition of a 1 percent sales tax designed to improve the County's transportation infrastructure and transit service. The tax, enacted through the gathering of signatures to propose an amendment to the County's governing document, the Hillsborough County Charter, goes into effect on January 1, 2019, and is effective for 30 years.

So what happens next?

Fifty-four percent of the tax proceeds are reserved for use by the County and its three municipalities: Tampa, Plant City, and Temple Terrace. Forty-five percent is dedicated for use by the Hillsborough Area Regional Transit Authority ("HART"), with the remainder reserved for use by the Metropolitan Planning Organization.

An oversight committee will be appointed to oversee the agencies' use of these funds. This group will include:

- Four members appointed by the Board of County Commissioners, of which at least two must be experts in transportation, planning, sustainability, engineering or construction
- One member from each city (Tampa, Plant City and Temple Terrace), appointed by its mayor
- One additional member per city for each 200,000 residents in the city, appointed by city council
- Two members appointed by the HART board of directors
- One lawyer appointed by the Hillsborough County Clerk of the Circuit Court
- One land use or real estate expert appointed by the Hillsborough County Property Appraiser

- One certified public accountant appointed by the Hillsborough County Tax Collector.

What can these funds be used for?

The charter amendment approved by the voters provides that the County and cities can use their funds for congestion reduction, safety improvements, bicycle and pedestrian safety, fixing potholes, bridge repairs, and similar work designed to make both driving and walking safer. The funds provided to HART can be used to expand public transit options and enhance bus service.

The funds cannot be used for constructing new roads, improving the interstate highways, or building a sports stadium, but they can be bonded to allow projects to proceed more rapidly.

The transportation referendum was a notable topic of discussion at this past month's Community & Development Forum, hosted by the Carlton Fields Development Industry Group. Please reach out to us with any questions on these voter-approved changes and the tremendous impact they will have on Hillsborough County's future.

Authored By



Kenneth A. Tinkler



Jin Liu



Jourdan R. Haynes



Scott P. Pence

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