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**Mineta Transportation Institute Report:  
Success of Ballot Initiatives with Substantial Rail Transit Component**

*Updated analysis of earlier research on transportation tax elections in several US urban areas.*

**San Jose, Calif., August 9, 2011** – The [Mineta Transportation Institute](http://www.transweb.sjsu.edu/project/2911.html) (MTI) released a research report that presents an updated analysis of a 2001 report on transportation tax elections in urban areas across the US. It also further analyzes the impacts of 17 previously identified community-level factors with their potential impact on the success of ballot measures for sales tax increases to fund transportation packages with substantial rail components. *Revisiting Factors Associated with the Success of Ballot Initiatives with a Substantial Rail Transit Component* was authored by principal investigator Peter J. Haas, PhD. This is the second update of the original 2000 report. The latest report is available for free download at [www.transweb.sjsu.edu/project/2911.html](http://www.transweb.sjsu.edu/project/2911.html)

Patterns observed in the current case studies were found to be highly consistent with the findings from the 2001 study. Thus, for example, this analysis reaffirms the importance of consensus among the business, elected, and environmental communities, and the accompanying depth of financial support. The updated study once again validated the difficulty of passing an initiative without well-funded, effective use of multimedia. It also validated the importance of using experienced campaign consultants.

“Some factors seemed less important in the current study than in 2001,” said Dr. Haas, who conducted that earlier study with Richard Werbel, PhD. “These include the effectiveness of presenting a multimodal transportation package, the perception that benefits of a package would be distributed throughout the voting district, the experience gained in recent transit elections, and the credibility of the transit agency.”

This compilation also includes an exploration of “rebound” elections – those instances in which a failed measure is quickly followed by a successful one – and the factors that seem linked to success in those instances. That is, four of the eight cases studied were part of a pair of ballot measures offered in rapid succession. These findings suggest that a number of variables not included in the primary analysis may be particularly relevant to the success or failure of transit measures and should not be discredited by transportation planners and campaign entities.

The eight cases studies included in this report represent a variety of circumstances, ranging from approval of a starter rail line, to supplementing an existing tax, to affirming public desire that a general excise tax fund a light rail system, to voting against repeal of an existing sales tax. The eight cities and/or counties included Maricopa AZ, Seattle WA, Charlotte NC, Honolulu HI, Los Angeles CA, Kansas City MO, St. Louis MO, and Santa Clara County CA.

The full report is available for free download from the Mineta Transportation Institute at [www.transweb.sjsu.edu/project/2911.html](http://www.transweb.sjsu.edu/project/2911.html)

**ABOUT THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR**

**Peter J. Haas, PhD**, is a professor in the Department of Political Science at San José State University. He also is education director for the Mineta Transportation Institute. The author of numerous scholarly and professional articles, he earned a PhD in Political Science (concentration in Public Policy and Public Administration) from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1985. A former director of the SJSU Master of Public Administration program, he also has consulted at every level of government and for various nonprofit agencies. Dr. Haas has authored and co-authored numerous reports and other publications covering transportation and is co-author of the text *Applied Policy Research: Concepts and Cases*. In 2003, he received a Senior Specialist grant from the Fulbright Foundation to teach and study in Latvia.

## **ABOUT THE MINETA TRANSPORTATION INSTITUTE**

The Mineta Transportation Institute (MTI) conducts research, education, and information and technology transfer, focusing on multimodal surface transportation policy and management issues. It was established by Congress in 1991 as part of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) and was reauthorized under TEA-21 and again under SAFETEA-LU. The Institute is funded by Congress through the US Department of Transportation's (DOT) Research and Innovative Technology Administration, by the California Legislature through the Department of Transportation (Caltrans), and by other public and private grants and donations, including grants from the US Department of Homeland Security. DOT selected MTI as a National Center of Excellence following competitions in 2002 and 2006. The internationally respected members of the MTI Board of Trustees represent all major surface transportation modes. MTI's focus on policy and management resulted from the Board's assessment of the transportation industry's unmet needs. That led directly to choosing the San José State University College of Business as the Institute's home. Visit [www.transweb.sjsu.edu](http://www.transweb.sjsu.edu)

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