

PHOENIX

## Phoenix voters pass Prop. 104 transit tax

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### Key Points

Phoenix voters approved a major boost in transportation funding for new light rail lines, bus expansion and street improvements over the next several decades in Tuesday's election.

Unofficial returns for Proposition 104 show 55 percent of voters supporting the initiative with 45 percent voting against it.

The city's 0.4 percent sales tax for transit will increase to 0.7 percent for transportation, beginning Jan. 1 and lasting 35 years. The sales tax is the foundation of a \$31.5 billion plan that will be funded by a variety of sources including federal grants and fares.

About 35,000 votes have yet to be counted, or about 26 percent of the total ballots cast. Another update won't come until Friday, according to the City Clerk Department.

The success of Prop. 104 is a victory for Phoenix leaders promoting the tax since the City Council approved the measure in March. Mayor Greg Stanton, who formed a citizens committee last year to envision Phoenix's transportation future, spent much of the summer campaigning for the measure over his own bid for re-election.

Supporters of MovePHX, the campaign in favor of the plan, crowded DeSoto Central Market to watch early results. They joined Stanton's election night party at the downtown spot near the light rail.

Stanton claimed victory for Prop. 104 after early results were released, calling the infrastructure investment a historic moment for Phoenix.

"This is a great night for the future of the city of Phoenix," Stanton said.

Councilwoman Kate Gallego, co-chair of the MovePHX campaign, said, "Today is a victory for anyone who wants a shaded, more walkable city."

Tom Jenney, director of the Arizona chapter of Americans for Prosperity, a group fighting the measure, declined to comment immediately after early results were released.

Passage of the measure also will allow about \$16 million from Phoenix's general fund to shift from public transit to the police department for the hiring of more officers.

Phoenix's sales tax rate is 8.3 percent and will increase to 8.6 percent Jan. 1 with the transit tax increase.

The increased tax will help pay for new light rail routes, expanded bus service, street repavement and transit infrastructure improvements. Federal funding, fares and other sources also will fund the proposal.

The proposition received significant support from Stanton, who easily won re-election. He established a citizen committee last year to draft the plan prior to the city's current 0.4 percent sales tax for transit ending in 2020.

More than half of the Prop. 104 plan's funding will go to maintaining and improving bus service throughout the city. Less than a third will pay for running current light rail service and building new routes.

About 7 percent will fund street improvements such as repaving roads, constructing new streets and adding sidewalks and bike lanes. The last 10 percent will pay for debt service and an operating reserve.

The most contested aspect of the proposal was the planned tripling of light rail miles in the system. Potential new routes will connect from the current line to reach destinations such as Paradise Valley Mall, south Phoenix, 79th Avenue, Grand Canyon University and Metrocenter Mall.

Monica Keyes, 33, dropped off her ballot at the Memorial Presbyterian Church off East Thomas Road on her way to work Tuesday.

She said she voted in favor of Prop. 104. "I use public transportation and I think it's great that it'd expand," she said. "I think it makes it a better place to live in our community."

Prop. 104 won support from the majority of the City Council as well as business, health and education leaders in the run up to Tuesday's election.

The MovePHX campaign in support of the proposition raised more than \$1 million from groups ranging from construction companies and transit providers to sports teams. Likely voters each received 10 to 12 mailers promoting the plan, according to Campaign Manager Bill Scheel, and the campaign distributed about 1,000 signs.

Less organized opposition groups focused on the high cost of light rail for a system that moves relatively few commuters, as well as concerns about accountability for the decades-long plan. Two groups fighting the proposition raised several thousand dollars from individuals, and used the money for sign-making supplies and an automated phone call.

Americans for Prosperity, a free market advocacy group, also is fighting the measure. Councilmen Bill Gates, Jim Waring and Sal DiCiccio voted against sending the plan to voters.

## **Other propositions**

Four other propositions on the ballot passed easily and had received little opposition.

**Proposition 100** will approve an update to the city plan. Commonly known as "PlanPHX," the plan emphasizes a more connected city to promote a stronger economy, sustainability, diverse neighborhoods and a more vibrant downtown.

**Proposition 101** will continue local "home rule," which allows the City Council to set the city budget instead of following a state formula. Voters have approved the measure since the 1980s.

**Proposition 102** will allow the city to make electronic payments.

**Proposition 103** will change the Phoenix's pension system to limit costs to the city. A new formula will be used to calculate payments for employees hired on or after Jan. 1, 2016. For employees hired on or after July 1, 2013, contributions will be capped.