

Opinion: Measure R is right for recreation

By John Upton

The original Measure S was approved by the voters on Sept. 19, 2000. It sunsets in 2030.

Measure S was very specific in limiting the allowed uses and naming exact locations where its funds could be spent.



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Based on a community survey done in 1999, Measure S contained the following:

1. The annual cost per single family home was limited to \$18, the two-thirds voter approval level.
2. A \$5.8 million bond was issued to construct the following facilities:
 - The ice arena on Rufus Allen Boulevard, which was finished in 2002.
 - Three new fields, plus a warm-up field, located adjacent to Lake Tahoe Community College. A change in TRPA regulations and higher than expected costs reduced this to one synthetic turf field for soccer, plus the warm-up field. Baseball and softball did not receive expected capacity improvements from Measure S.

- Maintenance improvements to Tahoe Paradise Park, and its opening to the public.

3. Measure S also provided the following maintenance funding, available each July:

- \$50,000 per year for the new athletic field located adjacent to the community college.
- \$50,000 per year for Tahoe Paradise Park.
- \$5,000 per year, per mile for up to 25 new miles of bicycle trails, to a maximum of \$125,000.

The maintenance funding was limited to new bicycle trails in order to attract state funds for their construction. The Measure S financial plan expected 25 new miles would be built by 2008. As a result, special tax revenue now annually provides \$125,000 in maintenance funding which can be used only on new bicycle trails – those constructed after Sept. 19, 2000.

The current situation can be summarized as follows:

- Due to state budget problems, only 8 miles of bike trails, requiring \$40,000/year, have been built. The other \$85,000 (of the annual \$125,000) has been accumulating. It is unspendable because under Measure S there is no other allowable use for this money without voter approval of the change.
- To address the fields not built for baseball, the JPA proposed Measure B in 2009. Measure B failed when bicycle advocates sought funds for pre-Measure S trails. In their opposition, the Bicycle Coalition specifically indicated willingness to seek a compromise measure.

Measure R is the JPA's effort at a compromise measure.

- It will equally split an estimated \$470,000 available in summer 2012 among pre-Measure S bicycle trails and ball

fields.

- In order to promptly finish field improvements, fields will receive the next funds available, up to a limit of \$500,000.
- After fields receive the \$500,000, all available funds will go to pre-Measure S bicycle trails. We estimate that those trails will receive a minimum of \$500,000, and potentially much more, by 2020. Pre-Measure S trails will continue to receive available funds until all 25 new miles have been built. As new bicycle trails are completed, they will have priority use of annual bicycle trail maintenance funds. This will correspondingly reduce the funds available to maintain and rehabilitate pre-Measure S bicycle trails.
- If Measure R is successful, advisory committees for bicycle trails and fields projects will be formed by the JPA in December 2011 to determine priorities for use of available funds.

Measure R unlocks the uses of currently unspendable funds, and makes funding available to improve the quality and safety of trails for users of older bicycle trails, and of fields for the nearly 3,000 local kids who participate in field sports – while we wait for new bicycle trails to be built.

In closing, the JPA wants to stress the following:

- Measure R will not affect maintenance funding for new bicycle trails that have or will be built, nor will it affect funding for the field at Lake Tahoe Community College, or for Tahoe Paradise Park.
- Without voter approval, unused bicycle trail maintenance funds remain unspendable, and nothing can be done with the accumulated funds.
- Measure R will accomplish bicycle trail and fields improvements with no increase in taxes.

The South Lake Tahoe Recreation Facilities Joint Powers Authority will meet and conduct a hearing on June 30 to consider whether to place Measure R on the Nov. 8 ballot. The hearing and meeting will take place at the El Dorado County Library meeting room beginning at 9:30am.

John Upton is the lone staff member of the South Lake Tahoe Recreation Facilities JPA.