

Tuesday seems not have been a great day for local transit advocates in California. Measures to increase or extend tax measures for public transit failed in Los Angeles County ([Measure J](#)) and [currently trail](#) in Alameda County ([Measure B1](#)), with mail-in ballots still being counted. But when I say “failed,” what I mean is they had overwhelming majority support. Such is the nature of democracy in California when Measure J, with [64.7% support](#), and Measure B1, currently with [65.5% support](#), cannot meet the two-thirds hurdle for new taxes required by Proposition 13, approved by voters in 1978.



Given the proliferation of sales tax measures to fund everything from transit to schools, this super-majority bar will only become more daunting in the years to come. Transit advocates should focus their efforts on a statewide initiative to lower the voter approval threshold for taxes, fees, and bonds for transit to 55 percent. [Legislation](#) along these lines has not been successful, but voters approved [a similar initiative](#) for school bonds in 2000.

Transit is chronically underfunded in California and elsewhere, given its relatively powerless constituency compared to the highway lobby and a federal government disproportionately governed by rural interests more concerned with funding roads. Yet the benefits to the economy and environment of a robust transit network are significant and well-documented, as [All Aboard](#) from Berkeley and UCLA Schools of Law highlights. Given these benefits and the entrenched interests thwarting funding efforts, transit advocates should make lowering the voter approval threshold a top priority in both the legislature (to allow local jurisdictions to hold majority votes on fee-based transit revenue) and on the statewide ballot.