



SIERRA CLUB

TEHIPITE CHAPTER

NOVEMBER ELECTION UPDATE

In the recent November General Election, two crucial ballot measures that would have **extended urban sprawl** for **decades to come** were **defeated decisively** in Fresno and Madera Counties. Fresno County's Measure C proposed continuing a half-cent sales tax to fund transportation projects for the next 30 years, while Measure T in Madera County would have extended its sales tax permanently.

The Sierra Club Tehipite Chapter opposed both these measures for the same reasons: *each was essentially locking in our freeway-centric economy for the indefinite future*, long after gasoline engine vehicles are banned from the roads. And each was essentially **written behind closed doors**. This became glaringly apparent when organized input from environmental, environmental justice, and community groups fell on deaf ears.

In a replay of the 2021 effort to redraw Fresno County Commissioner district lines following the US Census, decisionmakers representing powerful special interests recognized the importance of **stonewalling grassroots community members**. BUT THIS TIME, THEY FAILED IN THIS EFFORT. Our activists deserve credit for persisting in building an impressive, inclusive coalition. Their efforts revealed the lengths to which cynical politicians, aligned with powerful real estate development, construction, and agribusiness interests, will go to subvert democratic process.

A broad coalition of more than 40 organizations repeatedly called on local government agencies and committees to take the time to bring the community into discussions and to ensure that the public's needs were addressed.

This never happened. Our already anemic public transit funding was cut in half by the Measure C drafters, and funding was restricted to road-widening projects, ignoring the mess of our crumbling Fresno County infrastructure. When the coalition was prevented from having even one iota of impact on the

language of the ballot measure, the Tehipite Chapter joined with our coalition partners in opposing Measure C. Supporting the No on Measure C coalition, our campaign met, and in some ways surpassed, expectations.

Both ballot measures are now in the dustbin of history. Each needed a two-thirds majority to pass. Measure C received 58% support. Measure T in Madera County fared even worse, receiving a bare majority: 52% support. Proponents of these measures and our outspoken coalition opponents can go back to the drawing board and work to redesign a 21st transportation system with true community participation. This was a great victory for the environment and for good planning.

What does the defeat of Measure C mean? Sandra Celedon, President and CEO at Fresno Building Healthy Communities had this analysis:

“This unprecedented coalition *is truly reflective* of our valued community groups, Labor groups, and young people who are working for a better transportation system in Fresno County. This defeat of Measure C gives an opportunity for a vision to move forward — to allocate our tax dollars **to move into the future.**”

“**Status quo politicians have done exactly nothing.** As home to California's fifth-largest city, Fresno County is a power player. We should not accept mediocrity. It's time that our policies and investments reflect the talent of our diverse community members. We deserve a transportation plan that provides residents with the opportunities that we know they deserve.”