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Improve Our Tulsa Q&A

The ballot proposal includes investments in streets, parks, transit and public safety.

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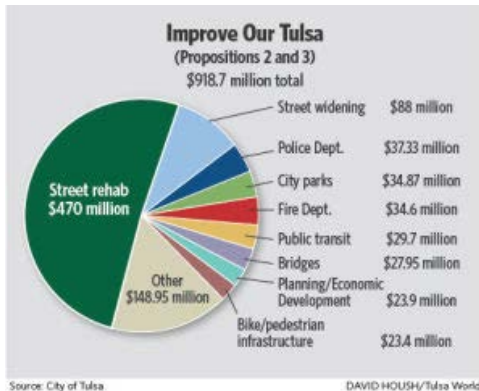
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By ZACK STOYCOFF World Staff Writer | 0 comments

Tuesday's ballot features the most money Tulsans have seen in one election: \$918.7 million split between two ballot propositions under the title Improve Our Tulsa.

The proposal is the result of a year of work by city officials, who whittled down the five-year priorities of each city department and facility, hashed out the details over 50 public meetings and gathered feedback from voters at two rounds of town hall meetings.

It targets what has been called the "nuts and bolts" of city government, including \$470 million for street repairs the single-largest investment in roadwork in Tulsa history and additional funds for repairs to city facilities, park equipment upgrades, police



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and fire equipment, and public transit improvements.

Here's what you need to know before you vote:

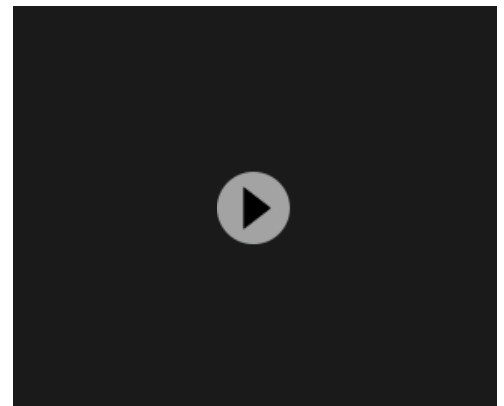
What is Improve Our Tulsa?

It is the continuation of the city's 33-year-old capital funding program, which has provided sales tax and bond funds since 1980.

The proposal itself extends the funding sources behind the 2008 Fix Our Streets initiative.



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What is its tax impact?

Improve Our Tulsa's first ballot item Proposition 2, as it will appear on the ballot will raise \$563.7 million by extending a 1.1 percent sales tax for no longer than seven years.

That would actually decrease sales tax in Tulsa from 8.517 cents to 8.45 percent, although the county has said it will later propose to pick up the shaved-off 0.067 percent for county projects.

Proposition 3, which will appear on the back of the ballot, will authorize issuing \$355 million in bonds that city officials estimate will increase property taxes on average by \$20 annually on a \$100,000 home.

How long will it go?

City officials expect the sales tax portion to be collected in 5 1/2 to six years under what they say are reasonable projections. The ordinance will not allow the tax to go longer than seven years.

The bonds will be issued over five years and will take 20-25 years to pay off.

What are the projects?

The sales tax portion includes \$299.2 million for arterial street repair, widening, public transit and bike/pedestrian infrastructure; and \$264.5 million for other capital projects, including new park playground equipment repairs, as well as police and fire projects.

The bond portion is entirely streets: \$275 million for nonarterial street repairs and \$80 million for arterial streets.

A full list of projects in each proposition can be found at tulsacouncil.org

Why is the proposal so big?

Until the \$452 million Fix Our Streets initiative, the city typically asked voters to extend its capital funding sales tax and issue bonds during separate elections.

That changed when officials decided that both funding sources should be approved together to tackle the unprecedented volume of street repairs included in Fix Our Streets.

This proposal continues that but is even larger than Fix Our Streets because the 1.167-cent sales tax included in Fix Our Streets couldn't be used for the package's entire five-year duration.

Part of the 1.167-cent tax was still tied up with the city's previous funding package when Fix Our Streets began and couldn't be used for Fix Our Streets projects until near its end.

What if it fails?

If Improve Our Tulsa or any hypothetical successor package fails to extend the city's 1.1-cent capital improvements tax by the time the tax expires July 1, 2014, city officials say they would have to take from the city's operating budget to fund Tulsa's most critical capital needs, such as replacement of police cars and repairs for badly worn streets.

Tulsa's 2 percent operational sales tax funds mostly employee salaries and police and fire operations.

Dipping into it for capital needs would almost certainly mean layoffs for police and fire, officials say.

Is this not another Vision?

Tulsa County's Vision2 initiative sought to extend the countywide 0.6-cent Vision 2025 sales tax for cultural and economic projects.

That tax is different from the city's capital improvements tax and is used for different types

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of projects.

County officials will still have the option of trying again to renew that tax regardless of the outcome of Improve Our Tulsa.

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Tax breakdown

Proposition 2 Sales tax

Tax extension: 1.1 percent (extends third-penny and part of the 0.167-cent tax)

Funding: \$563.7 million

Timing: From July 1, 2014, until the amount is raised (estimated 6 to 6 1/2 years), but no longer than 7 years

Tax impact: Passage would drop sales tax in Tulsa from 8.517 percent to 8.45 percent. Rejection would drop it to 7.35 percent.

Proposition 3 Bonds

Funding: \$355 million

Timing: 5 years

Property tax: Average \$20 increase on \$100,000 home

Project categories*

For specific project lists: tulsacouncil.org

Street rehabilitation: \$470 million (including \$355 million in bonds)

Street widening/Gilcrease Expressway: \$88 million

Bridges: \$28 million

Traffic engineering: \$12.1 million

Transit: \$29.7 million

Bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure: \$23.4 million

Street/highway corridor enhancement: \$3 million

Planning and economic development: \$23.9 million

Citywide public facilities: \$8.7 million

Animal shelter: \$3.5 million

Tulsa Zoo: \$11.8 million

River Parks: \$11.8 million

City parks: \$34.9 million

Performing Arts Center: \$5.5 million

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Gilcrease Museum: \$9.1 million

Police Department: \$37.3 million

Fire Department: \$34.6 million

Information technology: \$33.1 million

Tulsa City-County Library: \$10 million

Route 66 Village: \$550,000

Equipment Management Department: \$6.1 million

Eugene Field redevelopment: \$10.9 million

Levee repairs: \$3.4 million

Capital equipment: \$18.9 million

Bond issuance costs: \$500,000

*All categories are in the sales tax proposition unless noted



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