



## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** January 22, 2014

**TO:** San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority Governing Board

**FROM:** Amy Hutzl  
San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program  
State Coastal Conservancy

**SUBJECT:** Ballot Costs

**ATTACHMENT: SB 279 (Hancock; chaptered as Government Code Section 66704.05)**

### Introduction

Original estimates from each county place the bill for ballot costs for a nine-county measure at approximately \$5-7 million. The Restoration Authority's 2013 bill, SB 279 (Hancock; chaptered as Government Code Section 66704.05), streamlines procedures for a multi-county Restoration Authority measure and is anticipated to enable significant reductions in county ballot costs. Save The Bay is working with county election officials to implement SB 279 and hopes to have new estimates of the range of likely ballot costs in February or early March.

Challenges and decisions for the Governing Board include:

- Assembling the funding needed to cover county ballot costs
- Proceeding in face of estimated ranges for ballot costs, rather than specific amounts
- Determining whether all or a portion of the funding for ballot costs must be held by the Restoration Authority prior to the Governing Board adopting a ballot measure resolution

### Background

While the Restoration Authority was granted regional taxing authority through enabling legislation in 2008, there is currently no mechanism or funding stream to address the cost of placing a measure on ballots in all nine Bay Area counties. Original estimates from each county place the total bill for putting a regional ballot measure to the vote at upwards of \$5-7 million. These costs include printing of ballots and measure language, analysis and pro/con arguments, postage, language translation, staffing, overhead, and a litany of additional requirements related to running and administering an election and elections office. This memo outlines current estimates for ballot costs and next steps for staff and elections officials under SB 279, which aims to reduce duplication and streamline procedures for running a regional multi-county measure by the Authority.

**Previous Examples, Current Estimates**

Although no precedent exists for a nine-county regional measure in the Bay Area, recent countywide measures and the previous example of the seven-county transportation measure, Regional Measure 2(RM2), provide some approximation. The table below shows costs billed to the Bay Area Toll Authority, RM2’s sponsor.

County	RM2 Incremental Cost
Alameda	\$509,359
Contra Costa	\$630,970
Marin	\$118,931
Napa	-
San Francisco	\$317,001
San Mateo	\$527,643
Santa Clara	\$1,462,820
Solano	\$294,062
Sonoma	-
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$3,860,788</b>

Although costs listed here are significant, it is important to note that SB 279 (Hancock) has provided the Restoration Authority with potentially significant cost-saving direction. The legislation reads, in part:  
*“...the Authority shall reimburse each county in which the special tax measure appears on the ballot only for the incremental costs incurred by the county elections official related to submitting the measure to voters.”*

We believe that costs to the Authority will be dramatically less than those in recent countywide measures, and significantly less than those in the case of RM2. Key line-items regularly charged to districts that are not understood to be “incremental,” and cost savings due to coordination and reduced duplication in elections offices include:

- Identification of “lead county,” based on largest population (Santa Clara)
  - Only one translation for each required language (vs. seven in RM2)
  - Impartial analysis drafted by Restoration Authority legal counsel, reviewed by lead county
  - Coordination of letter designation
- Staffing, rent, administrative and overhead costs
- Additional labor costs, excluding any costs associated with vote canvass
- Potentially smaller voter packet/measure text (RM2 ran to 28 pages)
- Drayage/transportation, mileage, and similar costs

It is also important to note that while SB 279 will likely reduce ballot costs significantly, the legislation only applies to the “first election” at which the Restoration Authority proposes a special tax measure. Furthermore, while elections costs are traditionally divided by the number of “voting opportunities” (i.e., ballot measures) in each county and thus reducing the cost to special districts in years when a greater number of measures appear on the ballot, the incremental cost definition in SB279 eliminates any such spreading out of costs.

## **Next Steps**

### *Governing Board*

As it has discussed previously, the Governing Board needs to assemble funding to cover county ballot costs.

### *County Election Officials, Staff and Save The Bay*

Led by Contra Costa County Registrar Joe Canciamilla, with support from John Tuteur (Napa) and Shannon Bushey (Santa Clara), elections officials from the nine Bay Area counties are planning a series of coordination calls in January and February to help resolve the issues listed above and identify any others. Save The Bay and Coastal Conservancy staff are following these conversations, and will apprise the Governing Board of the status of elections cost estimates and other outcomes as we learn of them. It is our understanding that Registrars will have an estimated range of costs to the Restoration Authority in February or early March.

Significant coordination efforts are needed, and will be provided by Save The Bay and staff, as the Restoration Authority evaluates a possible November 2014 measure, drafts measure copy, and confirms timing for consolidation resolutions in each of the nine counties.