

Public Transit Ballot Measures Updates and Analysis

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APTA's Center for Transportation Excellence

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WHAT WE'LL COVER



- 1) What is CFTE and who am I
- 2) Transit on the ballot in 2019
- 3) What transit advocates and critics are talking about in 2019
- 4) Spotlight: Phoenix “No on 105”
- 5) What’s coming in 2020
- 6) How we win
- 7) Questions?



What is CFTE?

- ▶ Campaign “war room” supported by APTA
- ▶ Clearinghouse for public transit facts, messaging, political support to help public transit initiatives, mostly ballot measures
- ▶ Resource when you need us

Who am I?

- ▶ Political communications consultant with New Heights Communications
- ▶ Veteran of the DSCC, Capitol Hill, OFA, DNC, etc.
- ▶ Father of a 3-year-old public transportation enthusiast



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WHAT'S ON THE BALLOT IN 2019

16

Measures on the Ballot

3

Wins to Date

2

Losses to Date

\$3,252,184,311+

Annual Funding for Transit on the Ballot

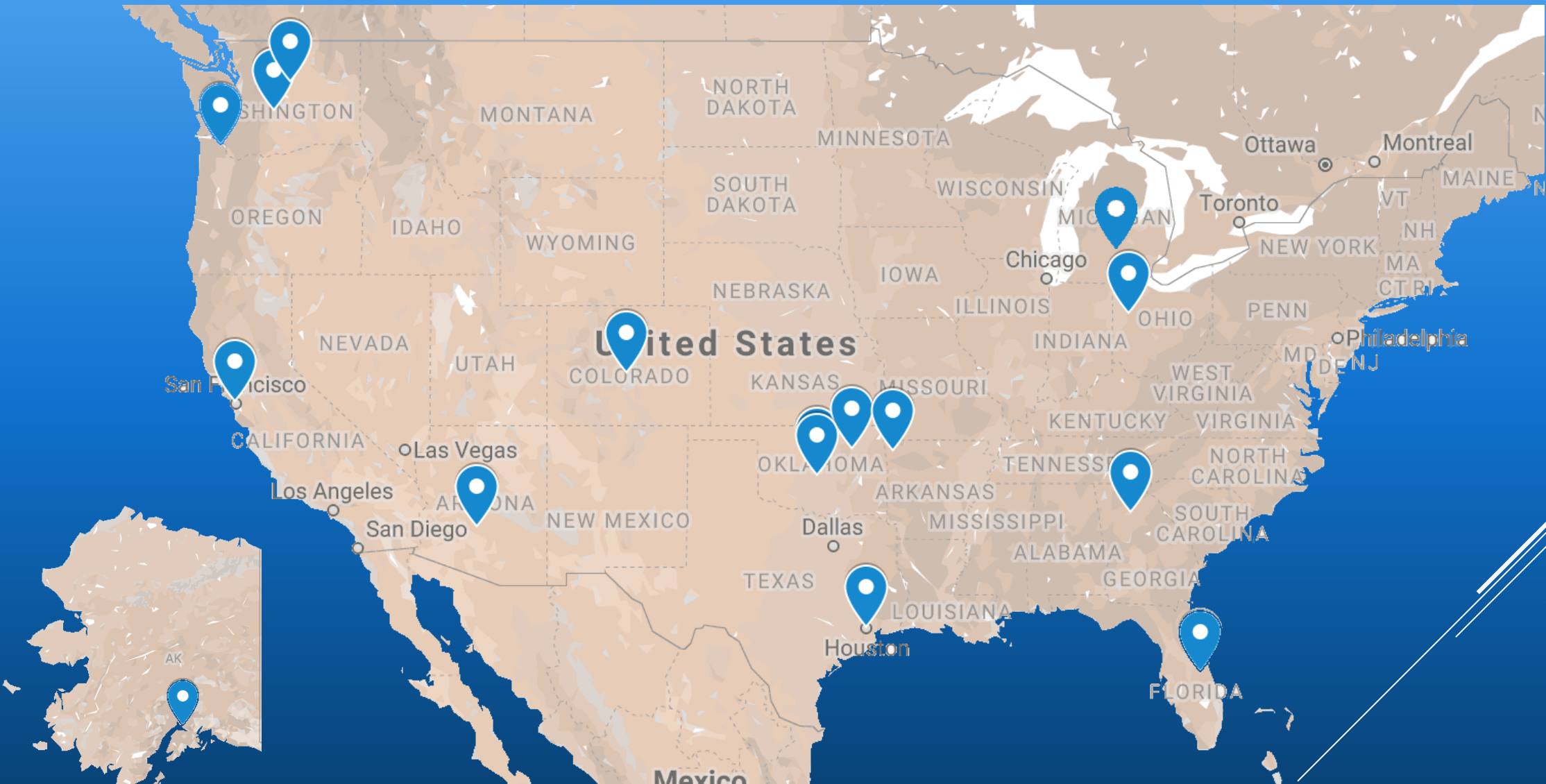


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WHAT'S ON THE BALLOT IN 2019



2019 MEASURES SO FAR

Wins

Anchorage, AK

- \$6 million in bonds for transportation
- \$1 million investment in public transit
- Passed 58%-42%

Fayetteville, AR

- \$74 million in bonds for transportation, including public transit
- Passed 75%-25%

Lima, OH

- 0.1% sales tax increase for the Allen County RTA
- Passed 74%-26%



2019 MEASURES SO FAR

Losses

Gwinnett County, GA

- Ratification of the county's service contract with MARTA
- 1% sales tax increase for transit
- Failed 54%-46%

Osceola County, FL

- Penny sales tax for transportation
- No dedicated transit funding
- Failed 67%-33%



WHAT'S COMING BEFORE NOVEMBER

Chelan and Douglas Counties, WA

- 0.2% sales tax increase for Link Transit
- Meant to fund all new projects, including weekend and evening service

Meridian Township, MI

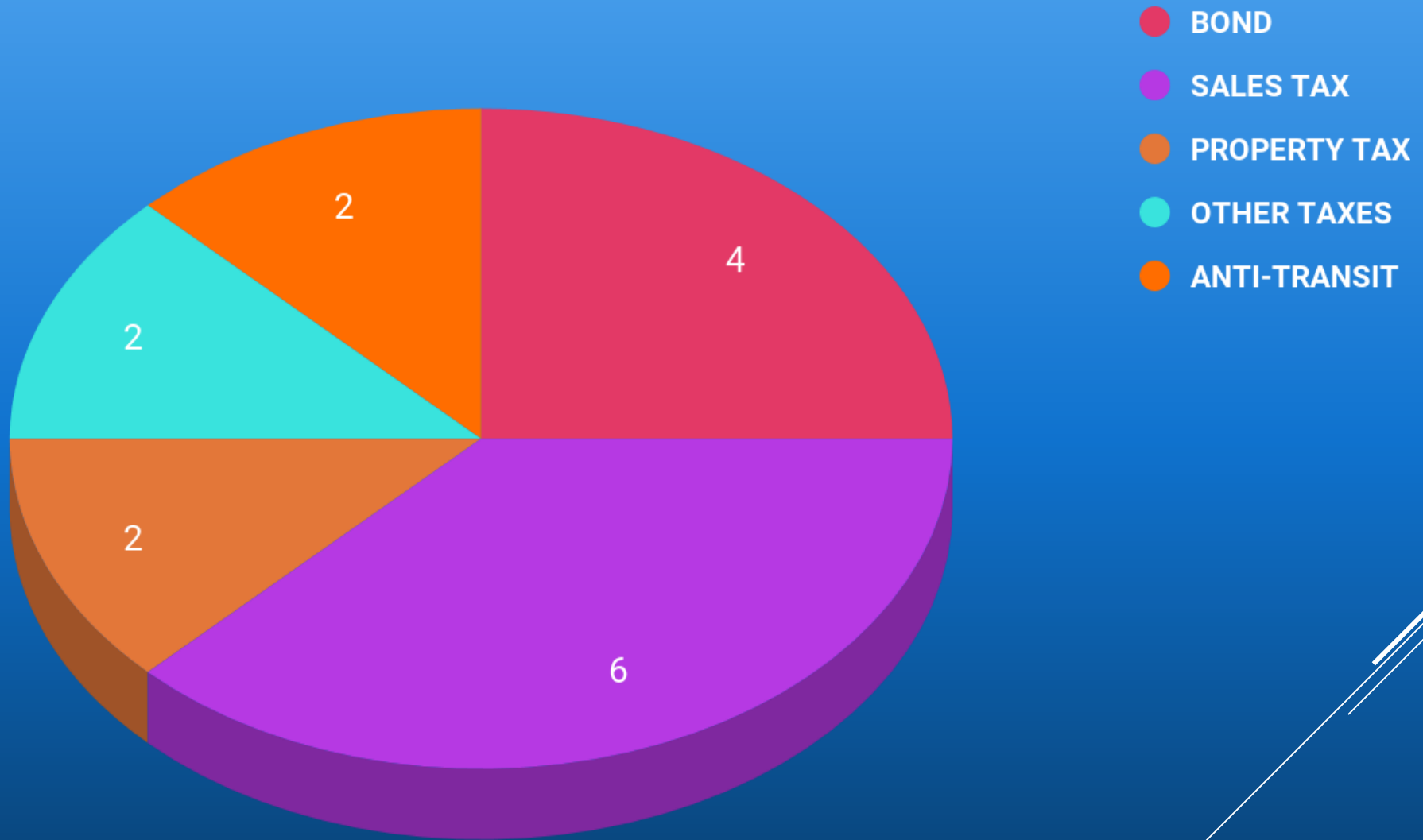
- Millage renewal for on-demand transit service, Redi-Ride

Phoenix, AZ

- Initiative to end light rail construction and redirect funding to road and infrastructure improvements



2019 BALLOT MEASURES BY TYPE



WHAT TRANSIT ADVOCATES ARE SAYING

- Focus on how transit helps **disadvantaged groups**, especially **elderly and disabled people** (Pine River, MI, Allen County, OH, Chelan and Douglas, WA, Columbia County, OR, Meridian, MI)
- Emphasize the ability to leverage local funding to get **state and federal funding** (Allen County, OH, Houston, TX, Columbia County, OR)
- Argue that transit investment is necessary to manage **future growth** (Houston, TX, Orlando, FL, Colorado)
- Claim transit is the best way to deal with **congestion and gridlock** (Gwinnett, GA, Houston, TX, San Francisco, CA, Fayetteville, AR)



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WHAT TRANSIT CRITICS ARE SAYING

- For smaller measures, avoid attacking the **merits of transit** as a whole
- Focus on the **burden** imposed by **new taxes and fees**
- Argue that there are **better uses for transportation funding** than transit, such as road improvements
- Raise concerns about **mode and location** of new projects, how poorer people will be affected



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WHAT TRANSIT CRITICS ARE SAYING

- Claim transit agencies should seek **other funding sources**, such as increased tolls
- Claim transit agencies are **mismanaged** and **waste money** (San Diego, CA, Allen County, OH)
- Cite **ridership statistics** and **sightings of empty buses and trains**
- Pit transit against other kinds of infrastructure (Phoenix, AZ, Houston, TX, Gwinnett, GA)



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CAMPAIGN BUZZ WORDS

Pro-Transit

disabled
infrastructure
congestion
grants
inclusivity
seniors
federal
gridlock
support cuts
affordable
low-income
economy
growth

Anti-Transit

empty
ridership
fares
underutilized
overtaxation
greedy
mismanaged
suburban
debt
inefficient
streets
burden
responsible
waste
uber



CFTE SPOTLIGHT: PHOENIX “NO ON 105”

- Proposition 105 is on the ballot on August 27 in Phoenix, AZ
- If passed, it would redirect funding for light rail projects to street and road improvements and prohibit any future light rail construction
- The proposition is backed by Building a Better Phoenix, a group with ties to the Koch Brothers and Americans for Prosperity



CFTE SPOTLIGHT: PHOENIX “NO ON 105”

Polling

Pre-message testing, No on 105

- 50% No
- 39% Yes

Post-message testing, No on 105

- 57% No
- 36% Yes



CFTE SPOTLIGHT: PHOENIX “NO ON 105”

Message Testing

- Investing in Phoenix’s light rail system is worth it because it connects many of our workers, students, and families to their jobs, schools, and communities ... 62%

OR

- Investing in Phoenix’s light rail system is not worth it because very few of us ride it, and we should make different investments that serve all of us... 37%



CFTE SPOTLIGHT: PHOENIX “NO ON 105”

STATEMENT: Phoenix is a world-class city, and in order to keep it that way, we need to protect our light rail system. Most major cities have many options, from driving our own cars to riding buses and light rail. If we want to attract the best talent and the best jobs, we need a light rail system that keeps up with the times.

Doubts: 34%

No Doubts: 61%



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CFTE SPOTLIGHT: PHOENIX “NO ON 105”

Leading the No Coalition:

- AARP Arizona
- United Phoenix
- Fire Fighters
- Friends of the Phoenix Public Library

Also active:

- Greater Phoenix Chamber of Commerce
- Greater Phoenix Leadership
- The Phoenix Community Alliance
- Labor unions like AFL-CIO, UNITE, AFSCME, IBEW, and LiUNA among many others



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WHAT'S COMING IN 2020

14

Measures on the Ballot So Far

\$562,210,000+

Annual Funding for Transit on the Ballot

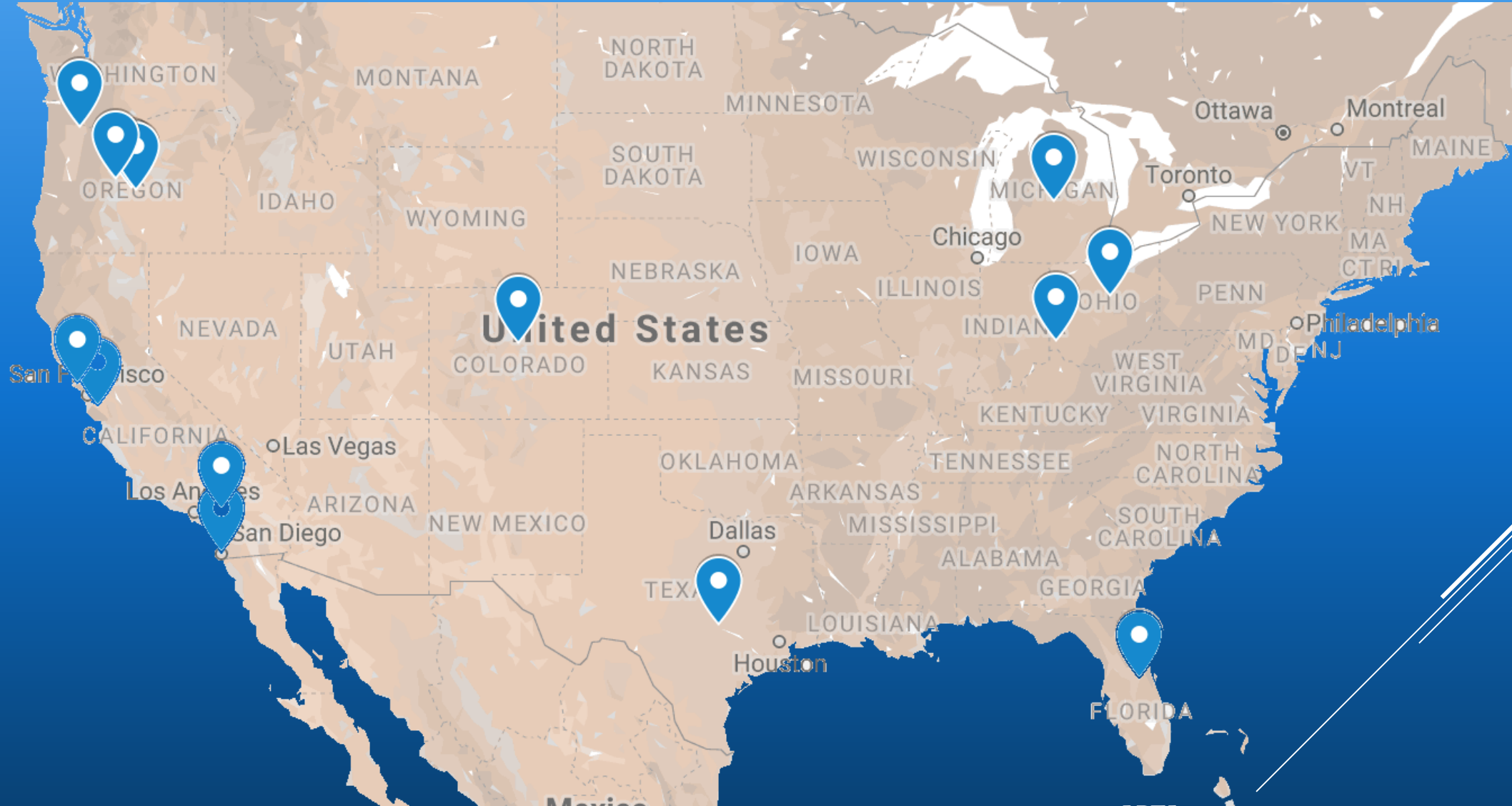


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WHAT'S COMING IN 2020

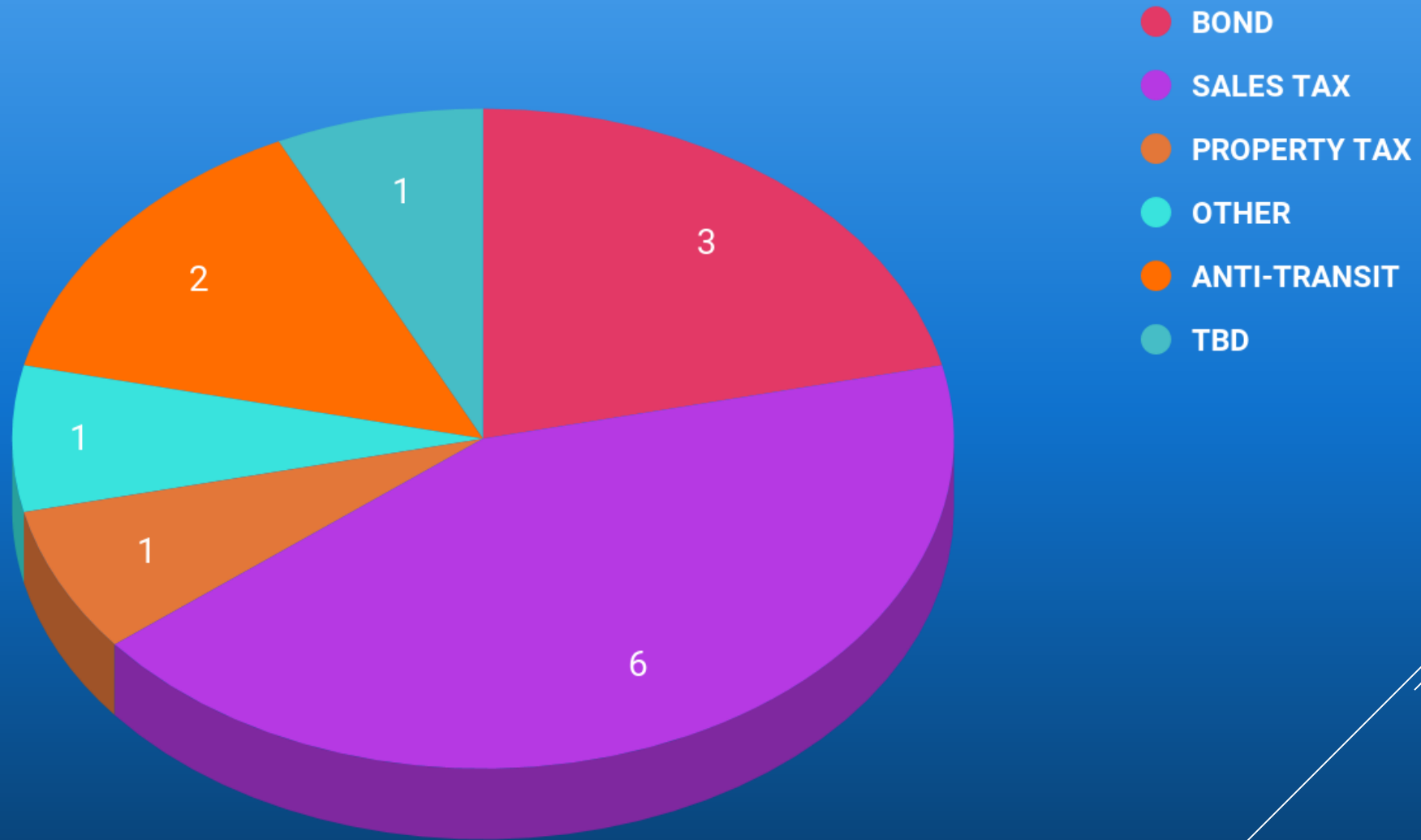


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2020 BALLOT MEASURES BY TYPE



UNDERSTANDING THE OTHER SIDE

Public transportation faces criticism from a small but vocal company of ideologues that, effectively, fall into two broad categories:

- Thought leaders
- Political practitioners

WHERE THEY'VE WON...SO FAR:

- Nashville
- Little Rock
- Southeast Michigan
- Central Utah



HOW WE WIN



- **Start early.** Don't wait for your opponents to gain traction. Early leadership and funding are key. Get riders on board by building trust in your day-to-day operations.



- **Data.** Know your voters and audience to map your path to victory. Data should help inform everything from the policy to the coalition to the campaign.



- **Broad-based coalition.** Build a coalition where all stakeholders have meaningful engagement and shared ownership. Transit critics are great at exploiting divisions, don't give them an opening.



HOW WE WIN



- **Hold focus groups.** Test to see what kinds of messages are most effective and prepare yourself for how to respond to attacks.



- **Conduct polling.** Figure out where your campaign stands and how effective your messaging is at increasing support.



- **Secure stakeholder buy-in.** Hold community meetings and seek feedback from riders. Take the time to get the policy right.



HOW WE WIN



- **Get into the field.** Nothing is more powerful than one-on-one conversations with voters. Start early.



- **Smart, disciplined messaging.** Find a message that works for your voters and stick with it in paid media, earned media, mail, and in the field.



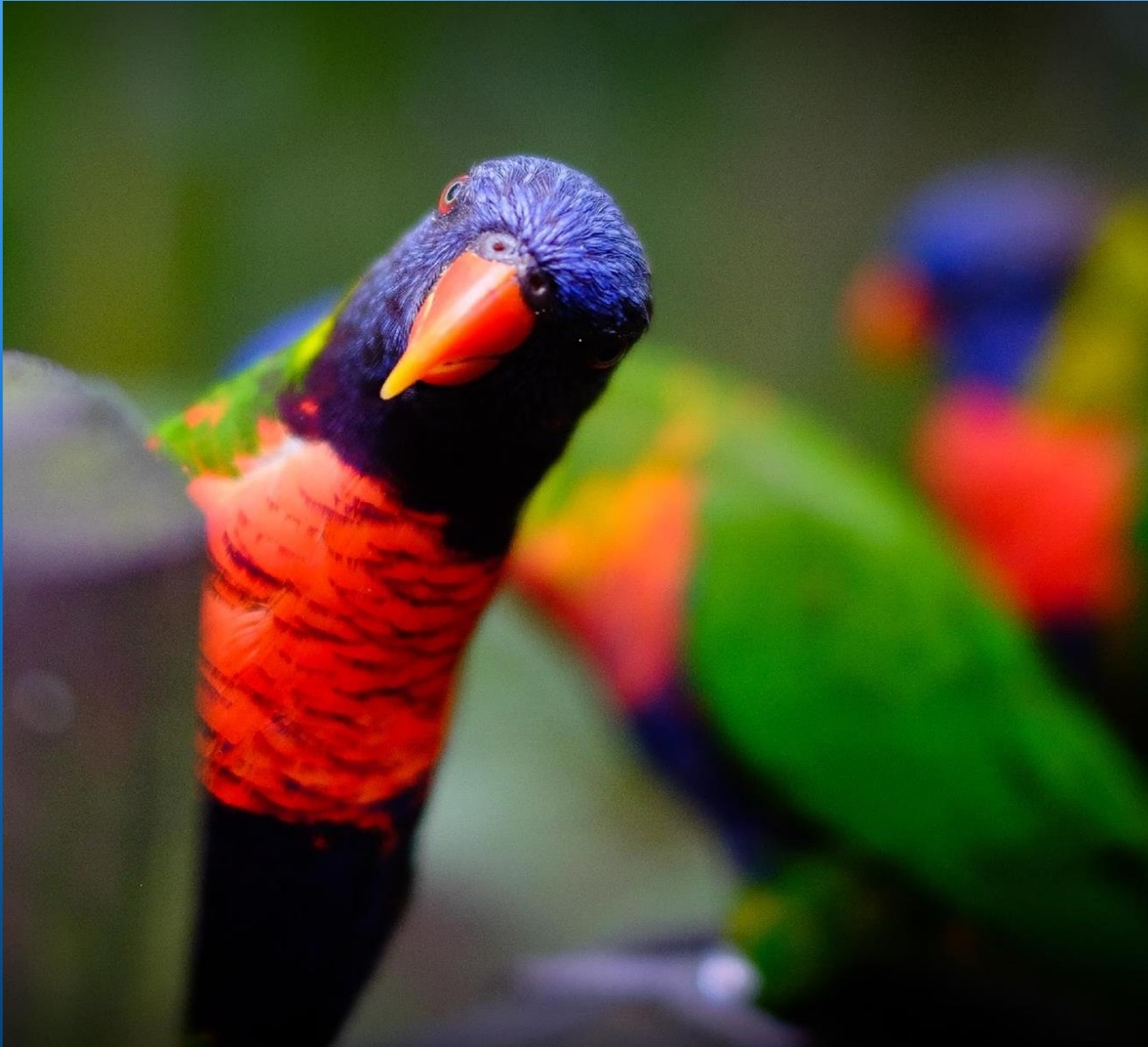
- **Rapid Response.** Respond quickly to an attack without reinforcing it.



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QUESTIONS?

