



Why Measure A Funds May Remain Unspent

Educational overview for the Independent Taxpayer Oversight Committee (ITOC)

An unspent balance is not automatically a sign of poor performance. Some balances reflect normal project development, funding strategy, or prudent budgeting. Persistent or growing balances, however, may also signal delivery or capacity issues that warrant review.



Key Point

Not all unspent funds represent delay. For capital projects, spending is often back-loaded, with the largest expenditures occurring during construction. Ongoing program balances may raise different questions about project readiness, staffing, budgeting, or local priorities.

1. Normal Capital Project Development



Typical spending pattern: lower expenditures early, then much higher expenditures once construction begins.

- A project may have Measure A funds programmed before major costs are incurred.
- Environmental clearance, utility conflicts, right-of-way, and outside funding can all affect timing.

2. Common Factors Affecting Delivery



External / Project Delivery Factors

- Environmental clearance (CEQA / NEPA)
- Permits and regulatory approvals
- Utility coordination or relocation
- Right-of-way acquisition
- Funding and grant dependencies
- Interagency coordination
- Community and policy decisions



Internal / Agency Capacity Factors

- Staffing capacity and recruitment challenges
- Project readiness and delivery capacity
- Competing workload and local priorities
- Procurement and contracting timelines
- Budgeting and reimbursement timing
- Strategic preservation of local funds while pursuing grants
- Cost escalation and scope uncertainty

3. Why Ongoing Program Balances May Be a Higher Concern



- Funds may accumulate in local agency budgets over multiple years.
- Balances may reflect limited staffing, insufficient ready projects, or shifting priorities.
- Some agencies may reserve local funds until grant opportunities become clearer.
- If balances remain high without a clear project plan or delivery schedule, performance concerns may increase.

4. Looking Ahead

Before updating performance standards, it is important to distinguish between normal project development and persistent inactivity. Useful measures may include:



Funds spent



Funds committed or encumbered



Funds tied to an approved project with a credible expenditure schedule



This mockup is intended as a neutral educational summary. Project-specific examples can be added separately.