Santa Cruz Voters’ Support for Transportation Investments

Survey Conducted May 4-7, 2015

220-4111
Methodology

- FM3 completed 600 telephone interviews with likely November 2016 voters in Santa Cruz County
  - Interviews conducted between May 4-7, 2015
  - Interviews on landline and wireless phones
  - Interviews conducted in English and Spanish
- Margin of sampling error of +/- 4.0% at the 95% confidence interval
- Some percentages may not sum to 100% because of rounding
Key Findings

- A majority of Santa Cruz County voters – and more than in 2013 – trust their elected officials to manage their tax dollars wisely.
- Voters see a significant need for additional funding to repair and maintain local roads.
- Nearly three-quarters (73%) of Santa Cruz County voters would vote “yes” for a measure funding local transportation projects by establishing a one-half cent sales tax for 30 years.
- Voters’ positions remain consistent in the face of arguments both for and against a measure, with final support at 71% “yes.”
- Voters feel the most important spending areas are on projects that improve safety for children, maintain paratransit services, and reduce Highway 1 congestion.
- However, sizable constituencies would also like to see funding spent on street repair, improving walking and bicycling options, reducing traffic congestion on local streets, and expanding transit options.
Issue Context
The relevant government agencies are all viewed favorably, with varying degrees of familiarity.

I would like to ask your impressions of some organizations in public life. Please tell me whether your impression of that organization is generally favorable or unfavorable. If you don’t recognize a name or if you have heard about the person but do not have enough information to offer an opinion just say so.

Santa Cruz Metro Transit: 60% favorable, 8% unfavorable, +52%
Santa Cruz County government, overall: 58% favorable, 23% unfavorable, +35%
The Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors: 43% favorable, 19% unfavorable, +24%
Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission: 30% favorable, 8% unfavorable, +22%
A majority expresses trust in elected officials to manage tax dollars - up slightly from 2013.

I trust our local elected officials to properly manage our tax dollars.

Q9a. For each of the following statements, please tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the statement.
More than four in five voters feels more money is needed to adequately repair and maintain streets.

*In general, how much need would you say that there is for more money to properly repair and maintain streets and roads in Santa Cruz County?*

- **Great need**: 43%
- **Some need**: 40%
- **A little need**: 8%
- **No real need**: 4%
- **Don't know/NA**: 5%

**Great/Some Need**: 83%

**Little/No Real Need**: 12%
I would use my bicycle more often for daily trips if I could use safe, separated bike trails rather than ride on the street.

Q9c. For each of the following statements, please tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the statement. Split Sample
Support for Transportation Ballot Measure
Voters were asked about a $\frac{1}{2}$ cent sales tax increase for roads, and other transportation issues.

Traffic Relief, Road Repair, and Transportation Safety and Transit Improvement Measure

Shall the Santa Cruz Regional Transportation Commission:

- Reduce traffic congestion on Highway 1 and local streets;
- Repave deteriorating streets and repair potholes;
- Improve traffic flow and safety for drivers, bicyclists and pedestrians;
- Maintain senior and disabled transit services; and
- Provide passenger rail service, walking and biking trails,

By establishing a $\frac{1}{2}$ cent sales tax, limited to 30 years, and subject to citizen oversight and independent, annual audits?

Q3. If there were an election today, do you think you would vote "yes" in favor of this measure or "no" to oppose it?
More than two-thirds - and nearly three-quarters - would vote “yes.”

If there were an election today, do you think you would vote “yes” in favor of this measure or “no” to oppose it?

- **Definitely yes**: 38%
- **Probably yes**: 30%
- **Undecided, lean yes**: 4%
- **Undecided, lean no**: 1%
- **Probably no**: 9%
- **Definitely no**: 13%
- **Undecided**: 4%

**Total Yes**: 73%
**Total No**: 23%
Traffic and roads are top reasons for support.

In a few words of your own, please tell me why you would vote YES on this ballot measure?

Traffic is terrible: 33%
Rocks need improvement/Potholes need fixing: 32%
Need more public transportation: 14%
It’s necessary/important: 14%
General support: 10%
It’s worth the money: 9%
Improves safety: 8%
More bike paths/trails: 7%
The city needs upgrading/Improve infrastructure: 5%
Better quality of life for residents: 4%
For senior citizens: 4%
Helps the disabled: 1%
Need more information: 1%
Other/Don't know/Nothing: 3%
Taxes and waste are top reasons for opposition.

In a few words of your own, please tell me why you would vote NO on this ballot measure?

- No more taxes: 36%
- Money is misspent/wasted OR they should use the money they already have: 32%
- It won’t change anything: 8%
- Measure is too complicated: 8%
- It’s not necessary: 4%
- Need more information: 3%
- Money should be spent elsewhere: 3%
- The city cannot accommodate it: 2%
- It doesn’t affect me: 2%
- General oppose: 1%
- Against the train: 1%
- 30 years is too long: 1%
- Other/Don't know/Nothing: 11%
Q3/Q13/Q15. If there were an election today, do you think you would vote "yes" in favor of this measure or "no" to oppose it?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Initial Vote</th>
<th>After Positive Statements</th>
<th>After Negative Statements</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Yes</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>71%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total No</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>27%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
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Support and opposition changed little after pro and con argumentation.
Spending Priorities
Q10. I am going to read you a list of some specific projects that this measure might fund. Please tell me how important it is to you that that type of project be funded: extremely important, very important, somewhat important, or not too important. Split Sample

Traffic on Highway 1, transit for seniors, and safety for kids, are most important.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improving safety for children walking near schools</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maintaining senior and disabled transit services</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reducing traffic congestion on Highway 1</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Repairing potholes</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Maintaining streets and roads</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Expanding walking and bicycling paths near schools</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repaving deteriorating streets and roads</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Investing in transportation projects that reduce pollution that causes global...</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>13%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Improving bicycle lane safety</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>16%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Improving safety for drivers, bicyclists and pedestrians on local streets</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Making sidewalks safer and easier for seniors and the disabled to use</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Investing in transportation projects that ensure local growth is environmentally and economically sustainable</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Reducing traffic congestion on local streets</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Expanding transit services to meet the needs of a growing population of senior and disabled persons</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expanding bus services to meet the needs of a growing population</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Improving crosswalk safety</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building new bicycle lanes for bicycle commuters</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishing safe paths for wildlife – such as deer and mountain lions – to cross under Highway 17</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making travel times through the county more predictable</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adding additional lanes to Highway 1</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q10. I am going to read you a list of some specific projects that this measure might fund. Please tell me how important it is to you that that type of project be funded: extremely important, very important, somewhat important, or not too important. Split Sample

Other projects are comparatively less popular.

- Establishing train service to connect to Amtrak and Bay Area commuter services: 46%
- Replacing old deteriorating buses prone to breaking down: 39%
- Building and maintaining a 32-mile paved bike and pedestrian path along the coastal rail line from Davenport to Watsonville: 37%
- Connecting Santa Cruz rail systems to the planned state high-speed rail line: 36%
- Expanding Highway 17 to San Jose express bus service: 35%
- Building a walking and bicycling trail along the coastal rail line from Davenport to Watsonville: 35%
- Expanding carpool and vanpool programs: 35%
- Building new bicycle lanes for recreational purposes: 33%
- Building new Highway 1 overpasses for pedestrians and bicyclists: 31%
- Building a new Watsonville Junction/Pajaro passenger train station to connect with other rail services: 28%
When forced to choose, congestion on Highway 1 is most important, with repairing local streets close behind.

Reducing traffic congestion on Highway 1
1st Choice: 36% 
2nd Choice: 19% 
Total: 55%

Repairing local streets and making them safer for drivers, bicyclists and pedestrians
1st Choice: 27% 
2nd Choice: 28% 
Total: 55%

Maintaining bus service, and senior and disabled transit programs
1st Choice: 15% 
2nd Choice: 23% 
Total: 38%

Expanding passenger rail services
1st Choice: 9% 
2nd Choice: 12% 
Total: 21%

Expanding walking and biking trails
1st Choice: 9% 
2nd Choice: 11% 
Total: 20%

Other/All/None/DK/NA
1st Choice: 6% 
2nd Choice: 11% 
Total: 17%

Q11. I’m going to read you five different general categories of transportation improvements that might be funded by this measure. Please tell me which one you think should be the highest priority.
However, supporters of all five spending categories were equally likely to vote “yes.”

Initial Vote by First Choice Transportation Priority

Q3. If there were an election today, do you think you would vote “yes” in favor of this measure or “no” to oppose it?
Conclusions

- A transportation sales tax measure appears viable for November 2016.
- However, given the two-thirds vote threshold, success will still require a strong campaign to communicate the ways that the measure would address the County’s transportation needs.
- The top priorities are clearly reducing traffic congestion – particularly on Highway 1 – and repairing and maintaining local streets.
- At the same time, all five major spending categories clearly have their constituencies, and it appears that advocates for each are strongly supportive of a measure.
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