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Associates*

FM3

*Public Opinion Research
& Strategy*

TO: Interested Parties

FROM: David Metz and Curtis Below
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RE: Key Findings from a Recent Survey on Transportation Funding in Santa Cruz County

DATE: May 21, 2015

Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates (FM3) recently completed a telephone survey of 600 Santa Cruz County voters to assess opinions about transportation issues in the County and to gauge their reactions to a potential 2016 transportation funding measure.¹

The survey results found that 73 percent of Santa Cruz County voters would support a one-half cent sales tax to fund local transportation projects. This level of support was both strong (38 percent indicated they would “definitely” vote “yes”) and enduring (71 percent continued to express support after hearing pro and con arguments). Much of this support appears to derive from a sense that the County needs additional funding to repair and maintain local streets (83 percent feel there is “great” or “some” need for such funding). Voters’ top spending priorities for any new revenue generated by a finance measure are safety improvements for children walking near schools, maintaining paratransit services, and reducing traffic congestion on Highway 1. Voters also want to see funds dedicated to street repair and maintenance, expanding walking and bicycling paths near schools, improving safety for pedestrians and bicyclists, and investing in projects that address global warming. Taken together, the results suggest that a transportation sales tax has a very good chance of winning approval in the November 2016 election.

Among the key specific findings of the survey are the following:

- **Nearly three-quarters of Santa Cruz County voters are inclined to support a measure funding transportation project by establishing a one-half cent sales tax.** 73 percent of

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survey respondents – more than required to pass a two-thirds threshold measure – indicated they would vote “yes” for a measure establishing a one-half cent sales tax to fund transportation projects in Santa Cruz County for 30 years (**Figure 1**). This included nearly two in five (38%) who indicated they would “definitely” vote “yes,” notably more than the 28 percent who expressed any level of opposition to the measure. Only four percent were undecided.

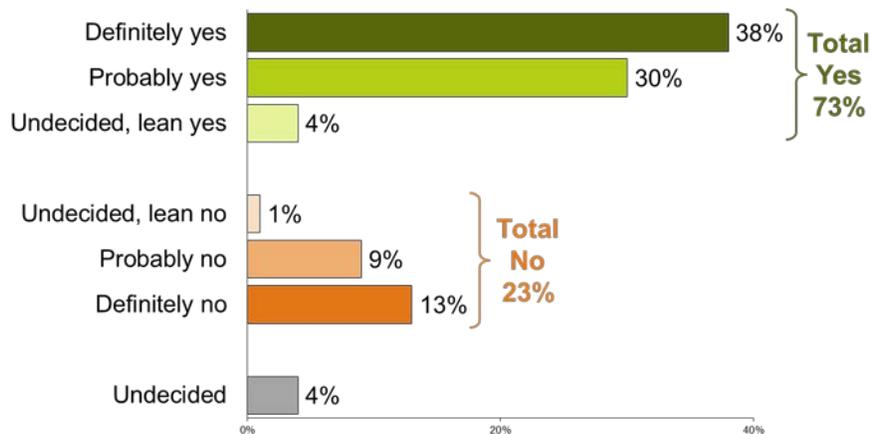
FIGURE 1
Support for a One-half Cent Transportation Sales Tax Measure in Santa Cruz County

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 one-half cent sales tax, limited to 30 years, and subject to citizen oversight and independent, annual audits?



Support for the potential measure is broad-based, with at least two-thirds of nearly all major subgroups of the electorate indicating they would vote “yes” on the measure, including men and women, Democrats and independents, white and Latino voters, voters ages 18-49 and voter ages 50+, voters from all household income levels, and voters in all five county supervisor districts. In addition, a majority of Republicans also expressed support for the measure.

- **Voters' positions remain consistent in the face of arguments both for and against a measure.** Survey respondents were presented with a series of detailed arguments urging either “yes” or “no” votes on a one-half cent sales tax measure funding transportation projects in Santa Cruz County. As shown in **Figure 2**, after hearing both sides seven in ten (71%) continued to express support for a measure, while opposition rose modestly to 27 percent.

FIGURE 2
Support for the Measure after Exposure to Positive and Negative Arguments

Position	Initial Vote	Vote After Pro and Con Arguments
Total Yes	73%	71%
Total No	23%	27%
Undecided	4%	2%

- **Voters see a significant need for additional funding to repair and maintain local roads.** The robust levels of support for a transportation finance measure appear consistent with how voters perceive street maintenance funding needs. For example, more than four in five (83%) voters feel there is “great” or “some” need for *more money to properly repair and maintain streets and roads in Santa Cruz County*. Only twelve percent of voters are more dismissive of this need, in contrast to 43 percent who feel the need is “great.”

FIGURE 3
Perceived Need for Street Repair and Maintenance in Santa Cruz County

Next, 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; a great need, some need, a little need, or no real need?

Funding Need	%
Great need	43%
Some need	40%
<i>Total great/some need</i>	83%
A little need	8%
No real need	4%
<i>Total little/no real need</i>	12%
Don't know	5%

- **Voters prioritize projects that improve safety for children, maintain paratransit services, and reduce Highway 1 congestion.** More than 70 percent of voters see these as “extremely” or “very” important potential spending areas for any new revenue generated by a transportation funding measure (**Figure 4**). Other top spending priorities – seen as “extremely” or “very” important by at least 60 percent of voters – include street repair and maintenance, expanding walking and bicycling paths near schools, improving safety for pedestrians and bicyclists, and investing in projects that address global warming.

FIGURE 4
Top Voter Spending Priorities for a Transportation Finance Measure

Level of Impact	Extremely Important	Very Important	Extremely/Very Important
Improving safety for children walking near schools	34%	39%	73%
Maintaining senior and disabled transit services	27%	46%	73%
Reducing traffic congestion on Highway 1	30%	41%	72%
Repairing potholes	23%	45%	68%
Maintaining streets and roads	22%	45%	67%
Expanding walking and bicycling paths near schools	21%	43%	64%
Repaving deteriorating streets and roads	20%	44%	64%
Investing in transportation projects that reduce pollution that causes global warming	28%	34%	62%
Improving bicycle lane safety	26%	36%	62%
Improving safety for drivers, bicyclists and pedestrians on local streets	22%	39%	61%
Making sidewalks safer and easier for seniors and the disabled to use	19%	40%	60%

Taken together, these survey results suggest that Santa Cruz County voters clearly perceive a need for additional investments to repair and maintain local streets, support transit services and address regional traffic congestion. Consequently, voters are inclined to support a one-half cent sales tax generating funds for these – and other – transportation projects in Santa Cruz County. Support for such a measure exceeds the two-thirds vote threshold, suggesting that a transportation sales tax would be viable in November 2016, given a strong campaign to communicate the ways that the measure would address the County’s transportation needs.

ⁱ **Methodology:** From May 4-7, 2015, FM3 completed 600 telephone interviews (on landlines and cell phones, and in English and Spanish) with randomly-selected Santa Cruz County voters likely to participate in the November 2016 election. The margin of sampling error is +/-4.0% at the 95% confidence level; margins of error for population subgroups within each sample will be higher. Due to rounding, not all totals will sum to 100%.