



# Regional Transit Measure



SamTrans Board Meeting | Jessica Epstein, Director  
Government and Community Affairs | March 5, 2025

# Regional Measure Timeline

## Recent Meetings:

- MTC Legislative Committee Meeting – Feb. 14
- SamTrans and TA Chairs and Vice Chairs meeting with staff – Feb. 14
- MTC Full Commission Meeting – Feb. 26

## Next Steps:

- MTC Commission Chair to meet with bill authors – Sen. Weiner and Arreguin
- Bill language must be submitted by late March
- Independent audit of transit operators with deficits is expected late March
- Goes to Senate Transportation Committee, likely others
- Must be approved by both Senate and Assembly

# MTC Sponsored Regional Measure

## Scenario 1A – Core Transit Framework for 10 years

- 10-year, ½-cent sales tax for Alameda, Contra Costa, San Francisco, and San Mateo counties, Opt-in option for Santa Clara County
- 90% for transit operations throughout measure, 10% to transit transformation

## Revised Scenario 2/Hybrid

- 30-year, 9 county, combines ½ cent sales tax with 0.18% payroll tax or \$0.09 per square foot parcel tax
- Funds 90% of operator-reported shortfalls for Years 1-8 and declines over time, while county flex grows 10% to transit transformation

# MTC Transportation Revenue Measure Principles

## The measure must:

- **Be passable**
  - Up to ½ cent with clear path for Citizen's Initiative, supported by essential elected leaders/constituents
- **Prevent major transit service cuts for regional operators**
  - Avoid major service cuts from multi-county transit operators and local operators with operating deficit
- **Take local transportation funding needs into consideration**
  - Timing determined with participating agencies with a tax measure expiring in next 10 years
- **Advance transit transformation: fund & deliver rider-focused improvements**
  - Mandate that operators receiving funds report on and comply with MTC Transit Transformation
- **Ensure fairness**
  - Counties with regional operator must participate in regional measure or fund fair share through alternative source
- **Include meaningful accountability measures**
  - Transparency on how funds are used and oversight of transit agency financials

# Impacts of $\frac{1}{2}$ Cent New Sales Tax in SMC

**Atherton 9.375%**

**Belmont 9.875%**

**Brisbane 9.875%**

**Burlingame 9.625%**

**Colma 9.375%**

**Daly City 9.875%**

**East Palo Alto 9.875%**

**Foster City 9.375%**

**Half Moon Bay 9.375%**

**Hillsborough 9.375%**

**Menlo Park 9.375%**

**Millbrae 9.375%**

**Pacifica 9.875%**

**Portola Valley 9.375%**

**Redwood City 9.875%**

**San Bruno 9.875%**

**San Carlos 9.375%**

**San Mateo 9.625%**

**South San Francisco 9.875%**

**Woodside 9.375%**

**Unincorporated SMC 9.375%**

- 10 cities (50%) will reach 10% sales tax rate if additional 1/2 cents MTC Regional Measure successfully passes; special legislation required to authorize this
- By population, this means 66% of SMC residents would live in a city with a 10% sales tax if passed

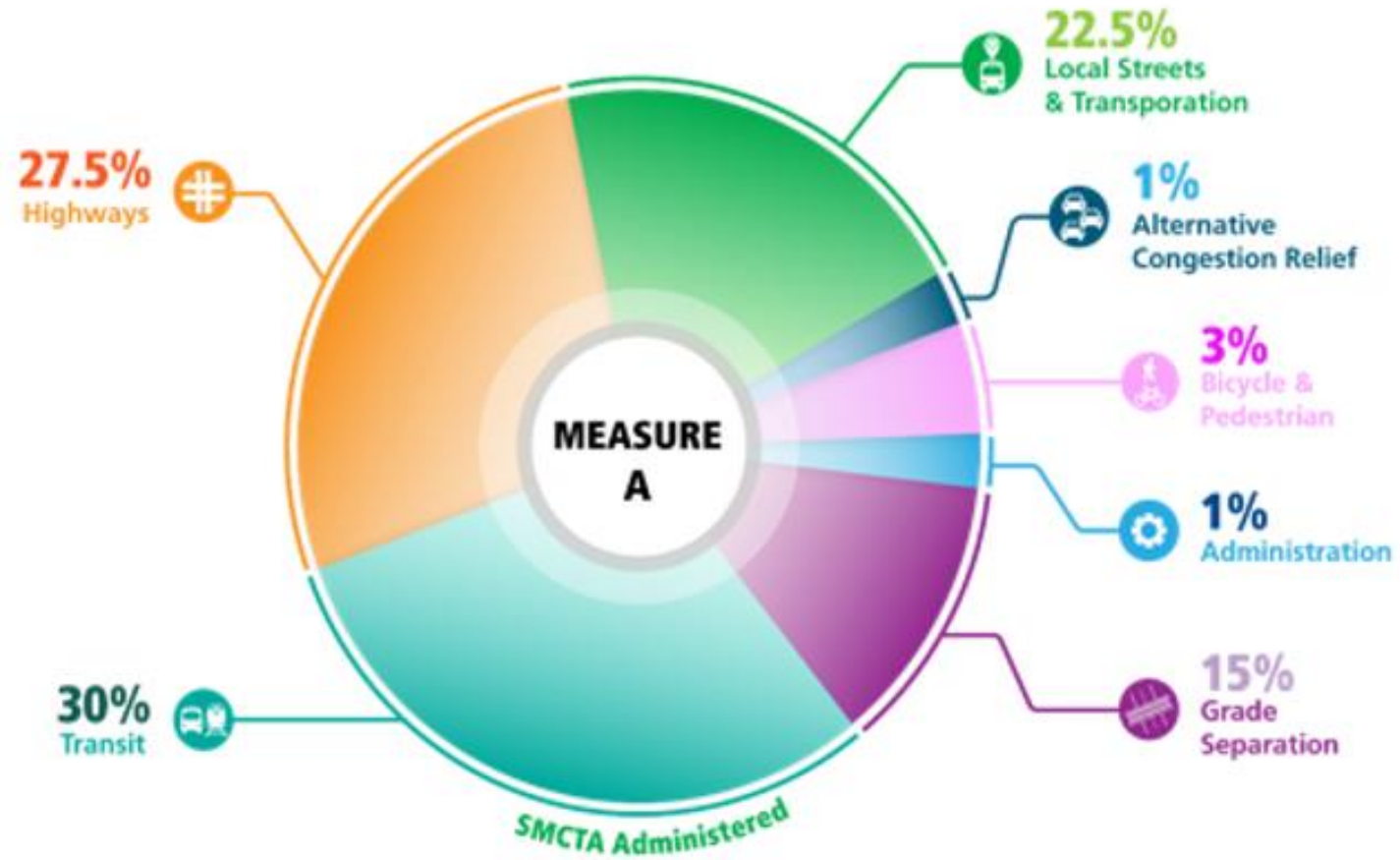
# When Measures Expire

- For reference: Estimated renewal years for transportation ballot measures in San Mateo County

	Expiration Year	Est. Renewal Year	Est. Annual Revenue	Type	Administered by:
<b>Measure A</b>	2033	2028	\$120M	.5% sales tax	SMCTA
<b>Measure M</b>	2035	2032	\$7M	\$10 vehicle registration fee	C/CAG
<b>Measure W</b>	2048	2044	\$120M	.5% sales tax	SMCTA & SamTrans
<b>Measure RR</b>	2050	2048	\$30M	.125% sales tax	Caltrain



# What Measure A Funds



# San Mateo County Priorities

## **A successful ballot measure must:**

- Have a simple and limited scope
- Preserve and protect the ability to self-fund
- Prioritize fair geographic distribution
- Enhance accountability and oversight
- Give counties authority over funding decisions
- Allow San Mateo County to opt-in

## **Top priorities include:**

- Protection of local transportation revenue measures
- Continued responsible fiscal management of SamTrans bus/paratransit and its suite of services
- Protection of Caltrain service (approx. \$30M per year from SMC for Caltrain); funding needed soon



# MTC Poll Takeaways

Support for the 4 county ½ cent sales tax and variable rate measures “*exceeds a majority but falls far short of the two-thirds threshold, indicating the **likely path for a transit measure would be via a citizen’s initiative***”

- All counties poll above 50% which would succeed as a citizen’s initiative but fail at 2/3
- MTC proposal designed to create new district; could be used for signature gathering
- SMC signature requirement over 40,000; cost per signature range from \$10-\$20
- Lawsuit potential, no district-based signature gathering precedent

**Key takeaway – Citizen’s initiatives costly and untested for multi-county measures, though if successful it is most likely option to pass**

# MTC Poll Takeaways

*“Overall framing and details of the measures do little to build support.”*

- Messaging alone does not move voters
- Poll did not ask SMC voters’ opinion on funding by transit agencies

**Key takeaway – Polling and/or expenditure Plan development process needed to clarify community priorities**

*“Although there is interest in preventing cuts to transit, **voters are simply hesitant to raise taxes** and lack trust that more money is the solution.”*

- No information on new tax increase below ½ cent
- No information on regional measure impact to Measure A renewal

**Key takeaway – SMC specific polling needed to understand risks and opportunities**

# MTC Polling Data

Conducted by: EMC Research

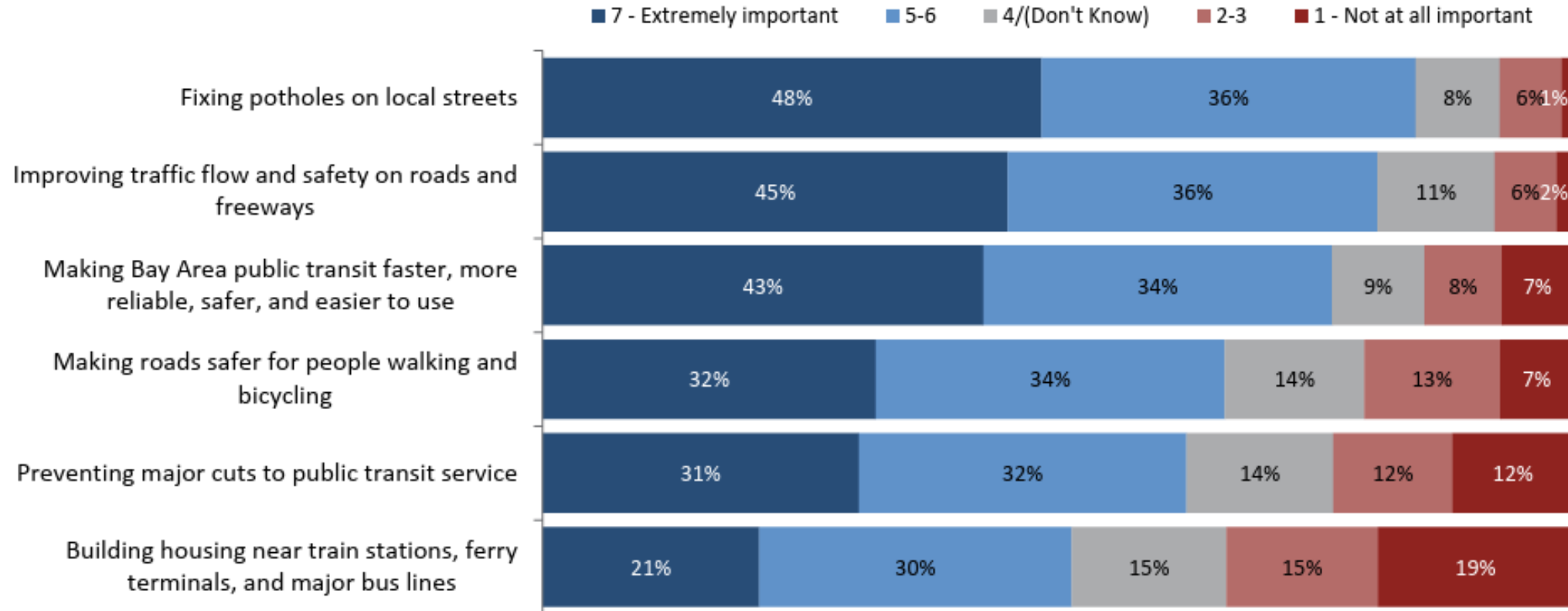
Poll scenarios:

- Four County -  $\frac{1}{2}$  cent sales tax
- Variable –  $\frac{1}{2}$ -  $\frac{7}{8}$  cent sales tax
- Hybrid –  $\frac{1}{2}$  cent sales tax plus \$.09 per building sq ft parcel tax

Margin of error:

- MTC polled 200 San Mateo County individuals for each scenerio, a total of 600 SMC residents for all three scenerios combined
- 6.9% margin of error for each scenerio in SMC

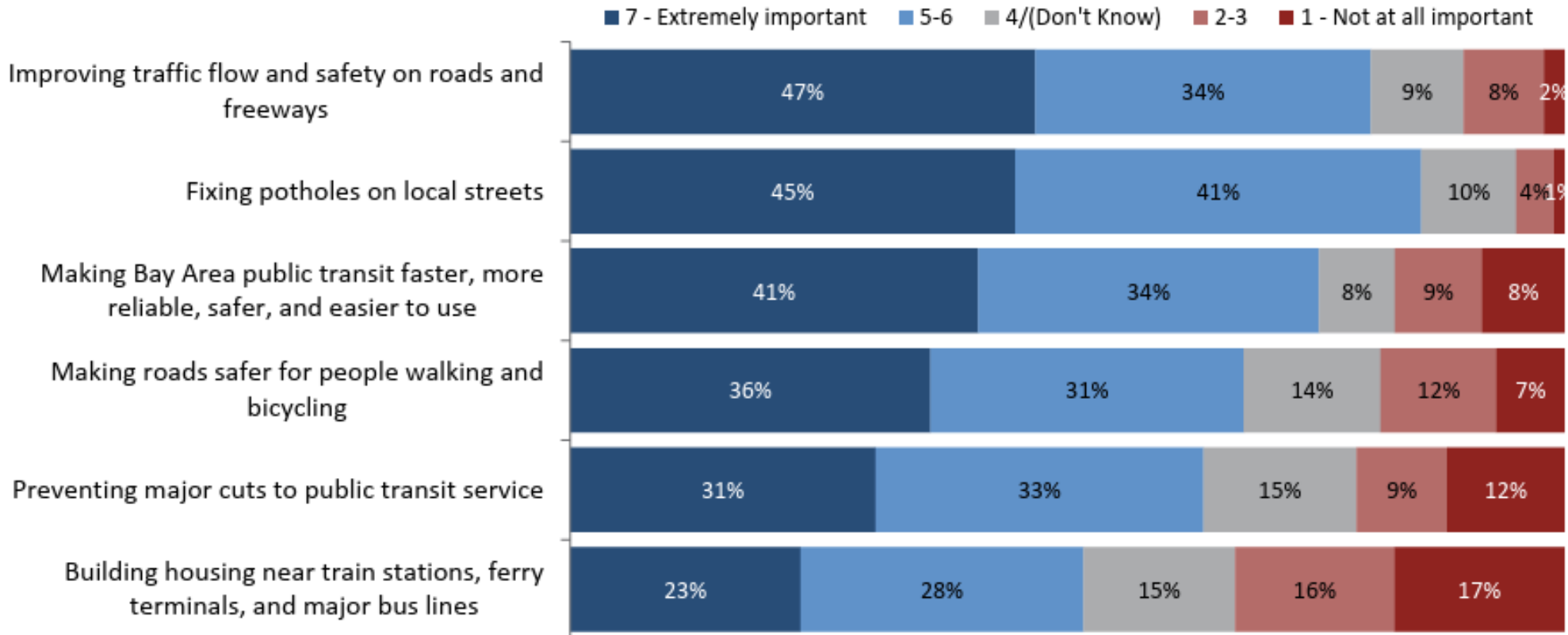
# Issue Importance – 9 County



Q8-13. Thinking about the Bay Area’s transportation needs, on a scale from one to seven, where one is not at all important and seven is extremely important, please tell me how important each of the following is to you.

# SMC - Issue Importance

San Mateo County



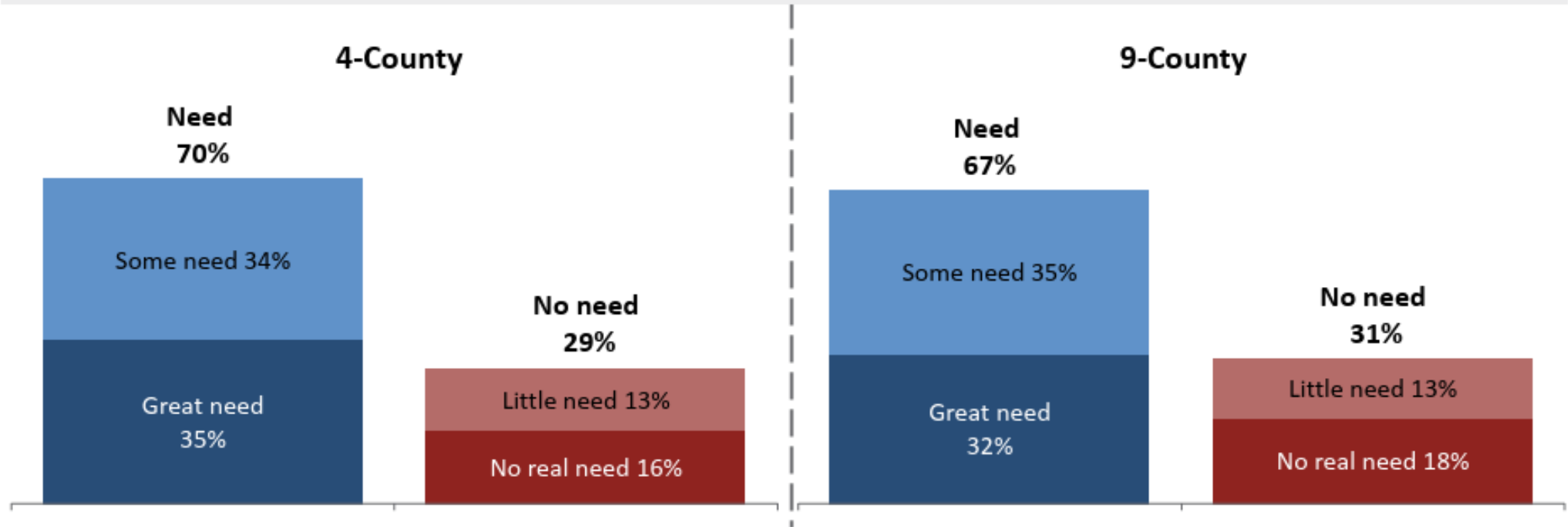
MoE of ±4.0

Q8-13. Thinking about the Bay Area's transportation needs, on a scale from one to seven, where one is not at all important and seven is extremely important, please tell me how important each of the following is to you.

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# Need for Transit Funding

Would you say that public transit in the Bay Area has a great need for more money, some need for more money, little need for more money, or no real need for more money?



MoE ranges from ±2.4 to ±2.7 Q7.

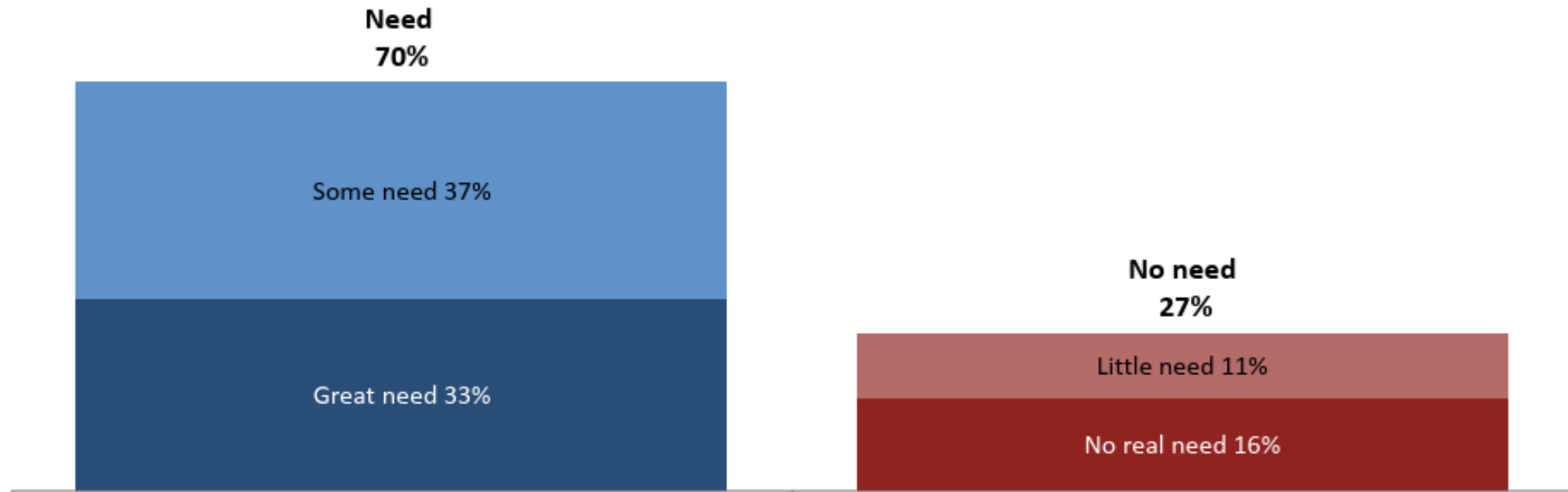
25-9571 MTC Transportation Regional Measure Survey 2025 | 12



# SMC - Need for Transit Funding

*San Mateo County*

Would you say that public transit in the Bay Area has a great need for more money, some need for more money, little need for more money, or no real need for more money?

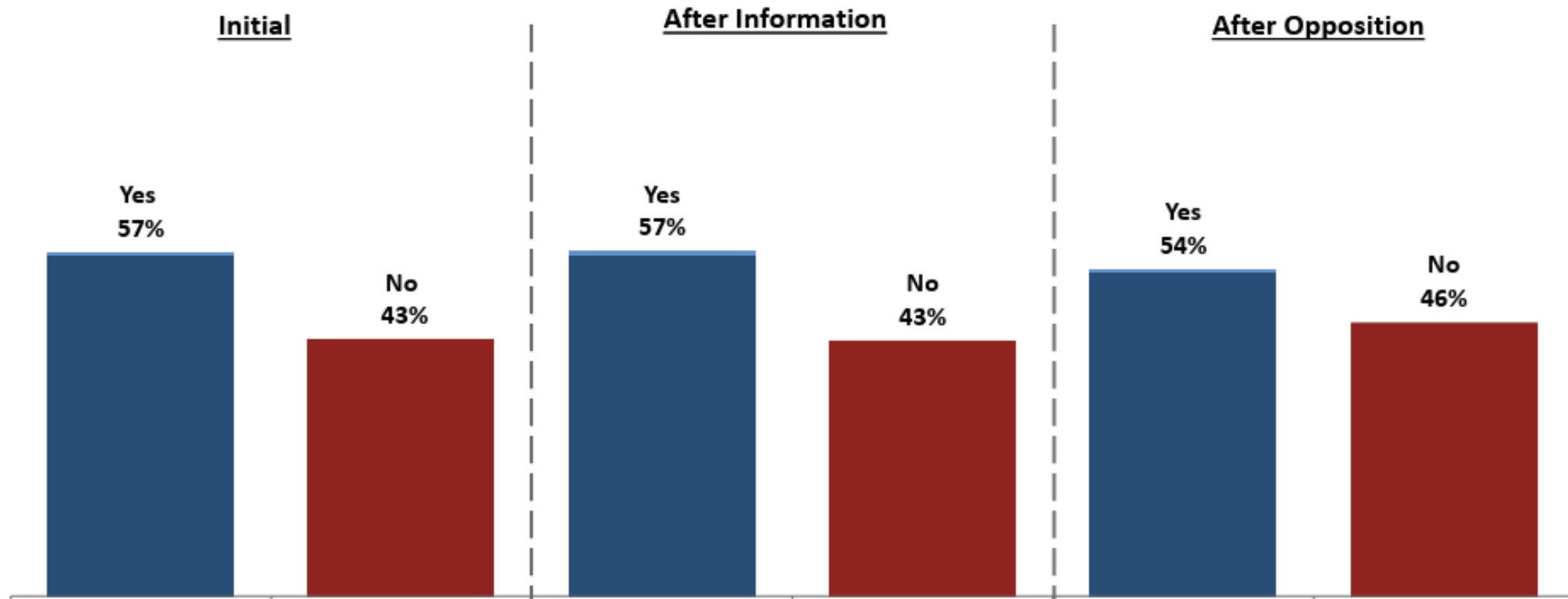


# Support by County

Table shows percent "Yes"	<b>1A: ½ Cent Sales Tax</b> 57% Yes 4-County	<b>Hybrid: ½ Cent Sales + Parcel Taxes</b> 51% Yes 9-County	<b>Variable: 1/2 - 7/8 Cent Sales Tax</b> 56% Yes 4-County
Alameda <i>MoE ±6.2 p.p. for each model</i>	61%	55%	59%
Contra Costa <i>MoE ±6.9 p.p. for each model</i>	53%	51%	54%
San Francisco <i>MoE ±6.9 p.p. for each model</i>	55%	54%	58%
San Mateo <i>MoE ±6.9 p.p. for each model</i>	59%	53%	52%
Santa Clara <i>MoE ±5.7 p.p.</i>		50%	
North Bay (Napa, Marin, Solano, Sonoma) <i>MoE ±6.9 p.p.</i>		44%	

# 4 County Support After Messaging – ½ Cent

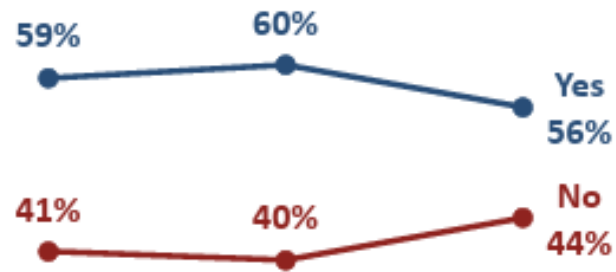
*Support for the ½-cent sales tax is fairly steady, with a slight drop in support following opposition messaging.*



# SMC Positive/Negative Messaging Impacts

San Mateo County

## 1A

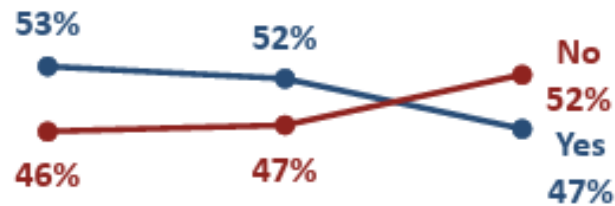


Initial Vote

After Info

After Opp.

## Hybrid

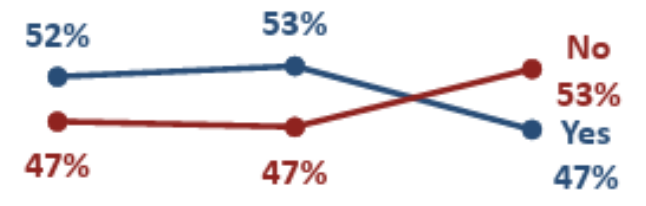


Initial Vote

After Info

After Opp.

## Variable Rate



Initial Vote

After Info

After Opp.

# Recommended Next Steps

- Key Takeaways:
  - Citizen's initiative has best chance of success for regional measure
  - Risks in relying on a multi-county citizen's initiative
  - Do not yet know SMC community priorities (polling/expenditure plan development process)
- Recommendations:
  - SMC focus on self-help reauthorization of Measure A in 2028
  - On a parallel path, provide San Mateo County the ability to opt-in to the regional measure
  - Letter to legislative delegation and MTC stating SMC's next steps
  - TA explore polling/focus groups for increased transit operations and existing Measure A categories



Thank You



Please email [epsteinj@samtrans.com](mailto:epsteinj@samtrans.com)  
with any questions