

AGENDA: August 1, 2013
(Carried over from June 26, 2013 Policy Workshop)

TO: Regional Transportation Commission

FROM: Karena Pushnik, Senior Transportation Planner

RE: Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) Priorities and Preferences Telephone Survey

RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommends that the Regional Transportation Commission receive a presentation on the results of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) Priorities and Preferences survey.

BACKGROUND

Development of the long range Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), federally-mandated tri-county Monterey Bay Area Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), and state-mandated Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) component of the MTP includes a robust public outreach program. Public input is being sought on elements of these transportation planning efforts through online surveys, workshops, meetings with advisory committees and stakeholders, as well as a telephone survey.

The Association of Monterey Bay Governments convened all three transportation planning agencies in the region – the Regional Transportation Commission for Santa Cruz County, Transportation Agency for Monterey County and the San Benito Council of Governments -- to develop a survey to be used as one of the tools for engaging the public in evaluation of the regional Sustainable Communities Strategies (SCS). The SCS is required under state Senate Bill 375 for greenhouse gas emission reduction.

The firm of EMC Research was hired to perform the survey and staff from all four agencies worked together to develop questions. In addition, each county was able to tailor a few questions related to local projects. EMC Research also conducted a voter survey for the RTC in 2007.

DISCUSSION

A statistically representative sample of 450 voters from Santa Cruz County was surveyed by phone from May 28 to June 6, 2013. In addition, 450 voters were

surveyed in Monterey County and 301 in San Benito County. The margin of error for Santa Cruz county surveys is approximately +/- 4.6%.

The survey probes for information from the public regarding:

- Level of concern about community issues
- Use of the local transportation system
- Transportation infrastructure needs
- Proposed projects for transportation investment
- Themes or messages that may assist public information efforts

Representatives from EMC Research will present the results of the phone survey at this meeting. Information from the survey is one of the many elements being considered in development of the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS). It is important to note that this survey was not designed to assess the viability of a local funding measure to pay for transportation projects or programs and the results of this survey do not directly translate into tools for that purpose. Rather this survey was designed to understand what types of shift in individual transportation uses are possible that will enable the region to meet greenhouse gas emission and sustainability targets. Findings from the survey are attached ([Attachment 1](#)).

SUMMARY

As one of the tools to collect public input during development of long range transportation plans in the tri-county Monterey Bay region, a telephone survey of voters was conducted. The results will be presented at the meeting.

Attachment 1: Telephone Survey Results for Santa Cruz County

Three-County Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) - Priorities and Preferences

Telephone Survey Results for Santa Cruz County

Survey conducted May 28-June 6, 2013; 450 surveys in Santa Cruz County (1201 total)

Purpose: One of many tools for public engagement to develop the MTP/SCS/RTP

Key Findings:

- Results support development of a Sustainable Communities Strategy and Regional Transportation Plans that preserve open space and farmland, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and include transportation projects for all modes.
- There is agreement that long-term planning should be aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions and car usage, but cars and road improvements are also necessary.
- While there is no single solution that motivates voters to reduce vehicle miles traveled, voters indicate support for many options to reduce the amount they drive -- which would help the region achieve SB375 requirements to reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT) per capita by at least 5%. Voters indicated they would especially drive a lot less/drive a little less under the following situations: if there were more stores and services near homes (23% a lot less/28% a little less); better public transit (20%/28%), and/or increases to the direct costs of driving (gas: 36%/31% and parking 18%/29%).

Support for SB 375/Sustainable Communities Strategy Principles

- Voters support long term planning that improves roads and highways (85%), but also reduces greenhouse gas emissions and car use (79%).
- The level of support for focusing new transportation spending and improvements in places where the most people will use them is 77%.
- Although reducing greenhouse gas is mandated by the state, opinions are mixed about whether it should be a priority: 55% indicate that it should be a high priority and 22% a low priority

Support for Specific Transportation Projects

- Voters support a wide range of projects, including:
 - Making it easier to walk to schools, stores and jobs: 80%
 - Transportation for seniors and people with disabilities: 77%
 - Road safety projects: 74%

- Road maintenance, repairing potholes: 72%
- Carpool/vanpool opportunities: 72%
- Highway projects that reduce traffic and travel times: 69%
- Highway 1 improvements that reduce spillover traffic on local roads and allow traffic to flow more smoothly: 68% (merge lanes 66%)
- Bike facilities: 66%
- Avoiding cuts to bus service: 65%

Travel Behaviors

- 72% of voters go to work, school or a volunteer position at least three times a week (commute)
- Commute Destinations:
 - Over 70% stay within Santa Cruz County
 - 42% to Santa Cruz area (includes Live Oak)
 - 11% Mid-county (Capitola-Aptos/La Selva)
 - 10% to Watsonville
 - 9% Scotts Valley/SLV
 - 17% travel north to Santa Clara County
 - 6% south to Monterey or San Benito Counties
- Commute Trip Length: Most commute less than 10 miles
 - 32% travel 5 miles or less
 - 24% travel 6-10 miles
 - Averages all commutes
 - Distance: 16 miles
 - Time: 31 minutes
- Commute Mode of Travel:
 - 72% drive alone
 - 12% carpool/vanpool
 - 5% bus
 - 5% walk
 - 3% bike
 - 2% motorcycle
 - 1% other
- Of all respondents, 75% use a variety of transportation modes other than drive alone (bicycle, walk, take the bus) on a regular basis
- Differences for long and short distance commuters (people who regularly go to school, work or volunteer destinations)
 - Short Distance Drivers

- in Santa Cruz and mid-County areas
- More likely (than long distance commuters) to drive less based on: cost of gas, traffic congestion, cost of parking, and more bike lanes
- More mixed in age and job status than long distance drivers
- Long Distance Drivers –
 - Primarily under 50, full time employees
 - Slightly more likely (than short distance commuters) to drive less based on: location of goods/services, improved public transit, housing near jobs, more sidewalks or flexible work schedules

Other Findings

- Transportation is not at the top of mind for voters right now (10%, compared to 19% in 2007 identified as a top concern). Crime is currently a top concern (28% compared to 5% in 2007).
- Words matter: language can impact support levels.
 - “Climate change” versus “greenhouse gas emissions”
 - “Commuter train service” is slightly more popular than “local passenger rail service between Watsonville and Santa Cruz”

Staff Observations:

RTC staff looked at the findings from this poll as work on the Regional Transportation Plan approaches the closing phase. A few observations which tie the poll findings to the RTP can be offered:

- Survey results support inclusion of a range of transportation projects in the RTP.
- One size does not fit all. Long term transportation choices viewed differently by younger individuals, who may be less likely to see driving alone as necessary.
- Build upon support and economic value of walkability.
- Support for open space and farmland preservation complements compact, walkable land use patterns and shortening trip distance.

Monterey Bay Metropolitan Transportation Plan
Sustainable Communities Strategy
Priorities and Preferences Survey

Executive Summary of Findings

Prepared for Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission

August 1, 2013



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EMC 13-4879

Project Purpose

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- ▶ Assist with development of Monterey Bay Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) Sustainable Communities Strategy and the Regional Transportation Plans (RTP).
- ▶ Three-county survey of voters
 - ▶ Developed by AMBAG and the three local transportation agencies (TAMC, RTC, and SBCOG)
- ▶ One of many public engagement tools being used



Project Purpose (cont.)

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- ▶ Explores attitudes about transportation projects and transportation behaviors, and sustainable communities strategies
- ▶ **Not** designed to develop or prepare for a sales tax measure or to decide funding priorities.



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Methodology

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- ▶ Telephone survey of registered voters in Santa Cruz, Monterey, and San Benito Counties
- ▶ Conducted May 28 to June 6, 2013
- ▶ Interviews conducted by trained, professional interviewers in English and Spanish

As with any opinion research, the release of selected figures from this report without the analysis that explains their meaning would be damaging to EMC. Therefore, EMC reserves the right to correct any misleading release of this data in any medium through the release of correct data or analysis.

Please note that due to rounding, percentages may not add up to exactly 100%

County	n	Margin of Error	Weighted %
Overall	1201	±2.8	100%
Santa Cruz	450	±4.6	46%
Monterey	450	±4.6	47%
San Benito	301	±5.7	7%

Where applicable, results are compared to previous surveys:

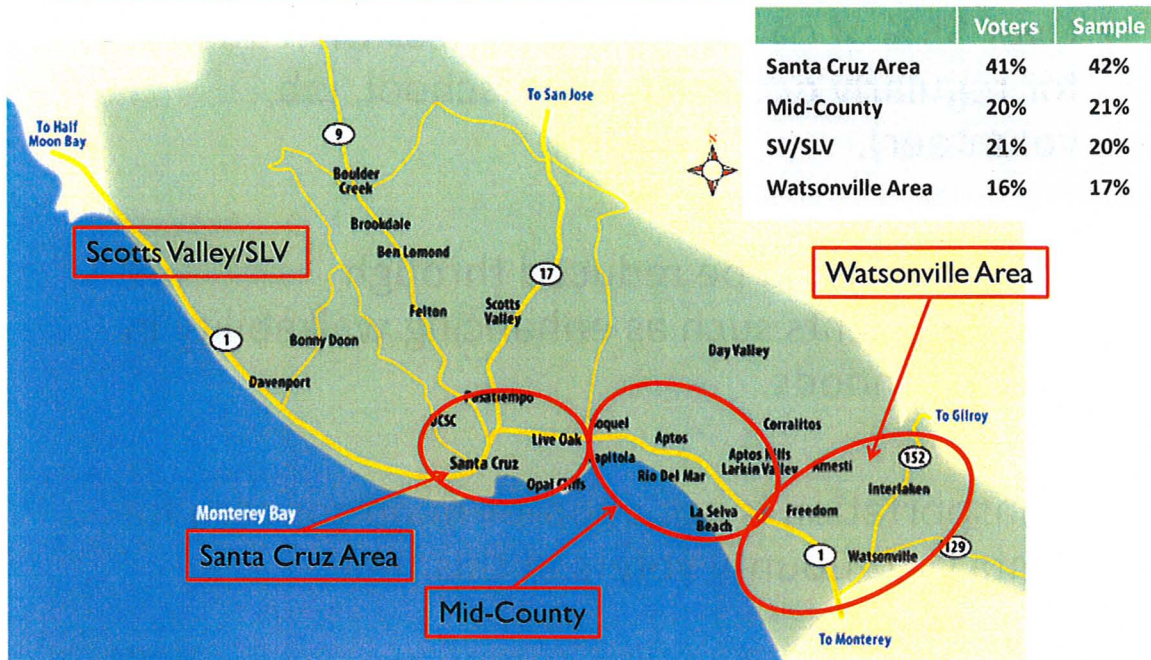
- ▶ Sep 30-Oct 2, 2007; n=602
- ▶ Feb 10-12, 2004; n=500



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Survey respondents are representative of voters geographically

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Key Findings

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- ▶ Words matter; concepts phrased differently yielded different results.
- ▶ Farmland and open space/habitat protection are important.
- ▶ Voters agree that long-term planning should be aimed at reduction in car usage, but that cars and road improvements are necessary to support the population and the economy.



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Key Findings

- ▶ Over 55% of commuters drive less than 10 miles for regularly occurring trips (school, job, volunteer).
- ▶ Car usage could be reduced through improvements such as enhancing walkability in neighborhoods.
- ▶ Transportation is not a top-of-mind concern for Santa Cruz County voters at this time.



Issue Environment

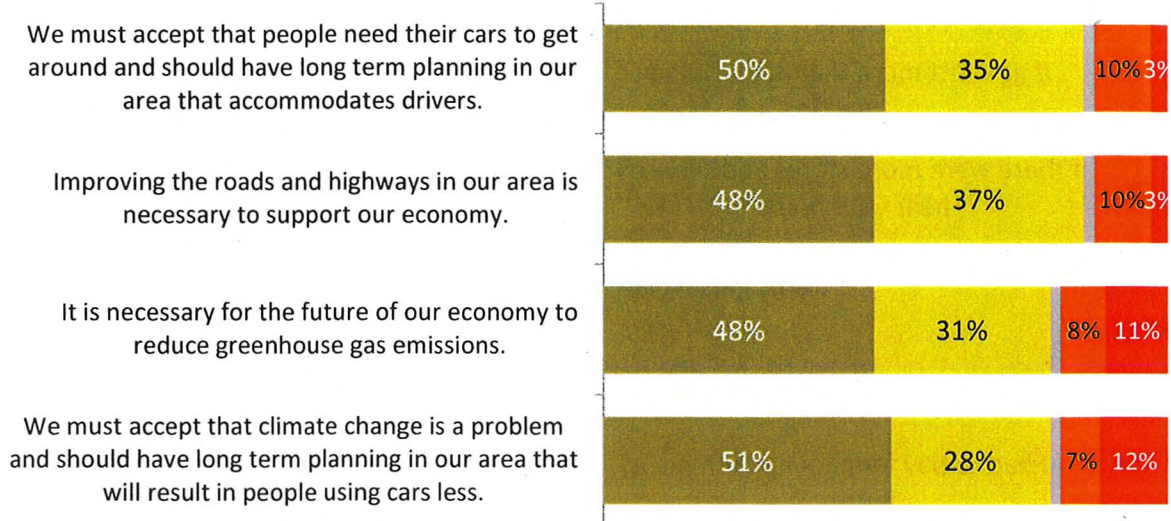
Need to accommodate cars, but also need long-term planning that reduces GHG emissions and car use

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For each of the following statements, please tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the statement.

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■ Strongly agree ■ Somewhat agree ■ (Don't know) ■ Somewhat disagree ■ Strongly disagree



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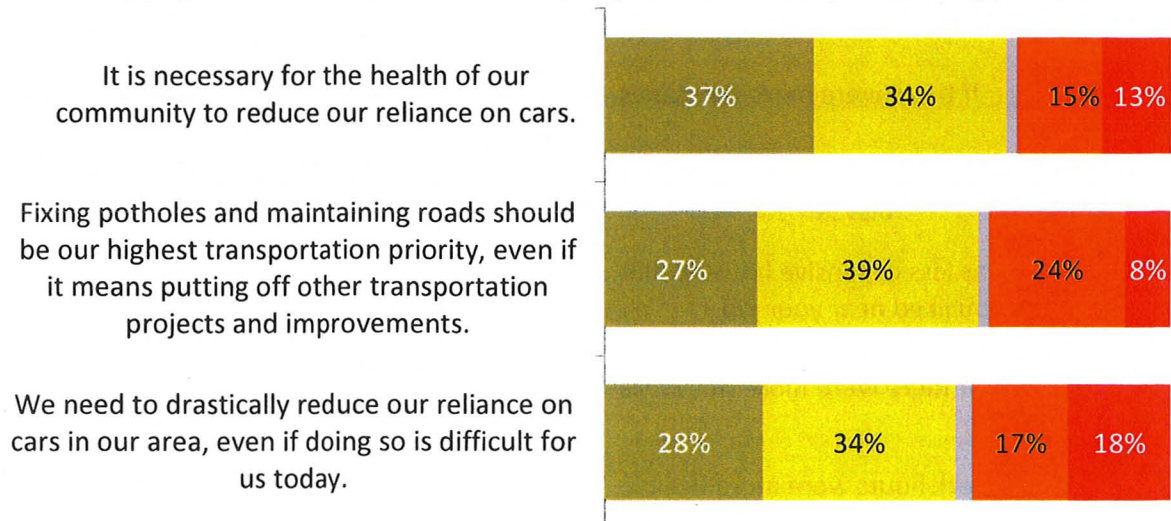
Voters would like to reduce reliance on cars

14

For each of the following statements, please tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the statement.

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■ Strongly agree ■ Somewhat agree ■ (Don't know) ■ Somewhat disagree ■ Strongly disagree

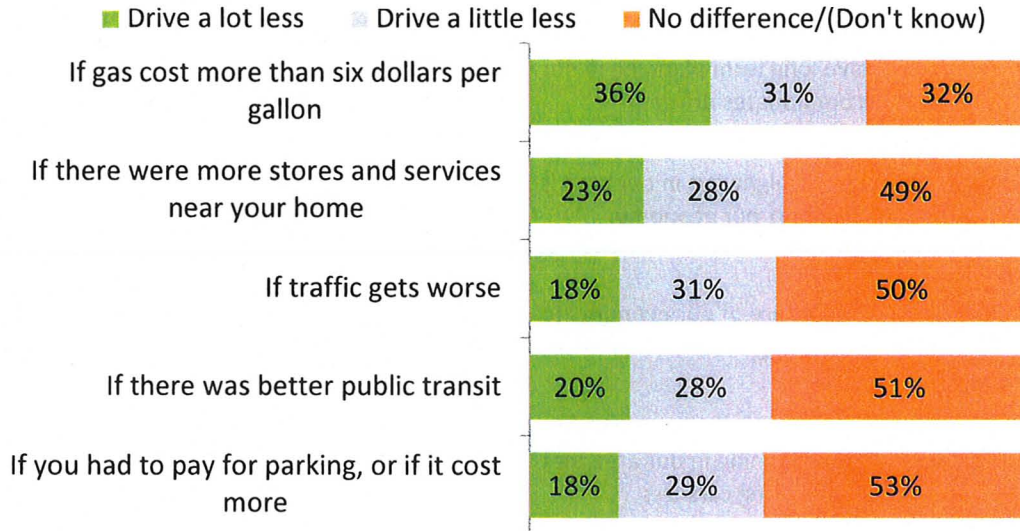


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One-third of voters say they would drive a lot less if gas were significantly more expensive, and many others would drive less with other changes

I am going to read you a few different situations. For each of these situations, please tell me if you think it would make a difference in how much you drive a car. For each one, do you think you would drive a lot less, a little less or would it make no difference in how much you use a car?

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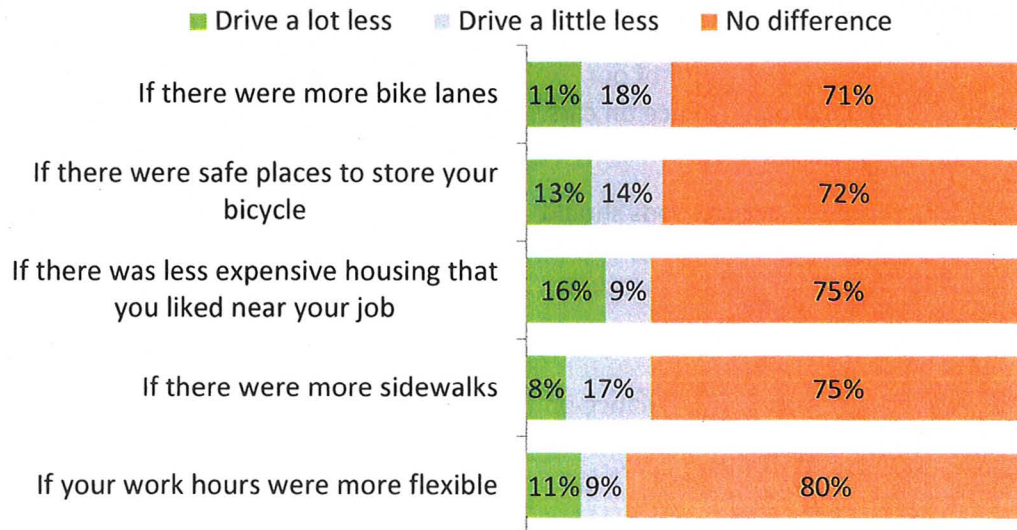


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Incremental shifts separately and combined—can reduce driving

I am going to read you a few different situations. For each of these situations, please tell me if you think it would make a difference in how much you drive a car. For each one, do you think you would drive a lot less, a little less or would it make no difference in how much you use a car?

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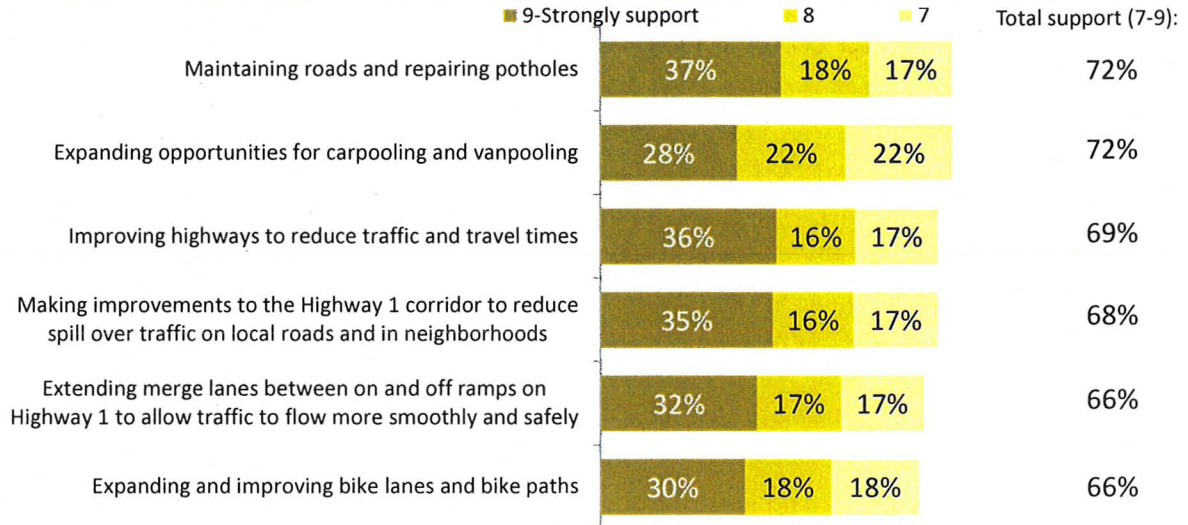
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Support is high for maintenance and maximizing use of the existing system

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Now I'm going to read you a list of possible transportation projects in your area. For each of the following projects, please tell me whether you support or oppose the project, using a scale of one to nine where one means strongly oppose and nine means strongly support.

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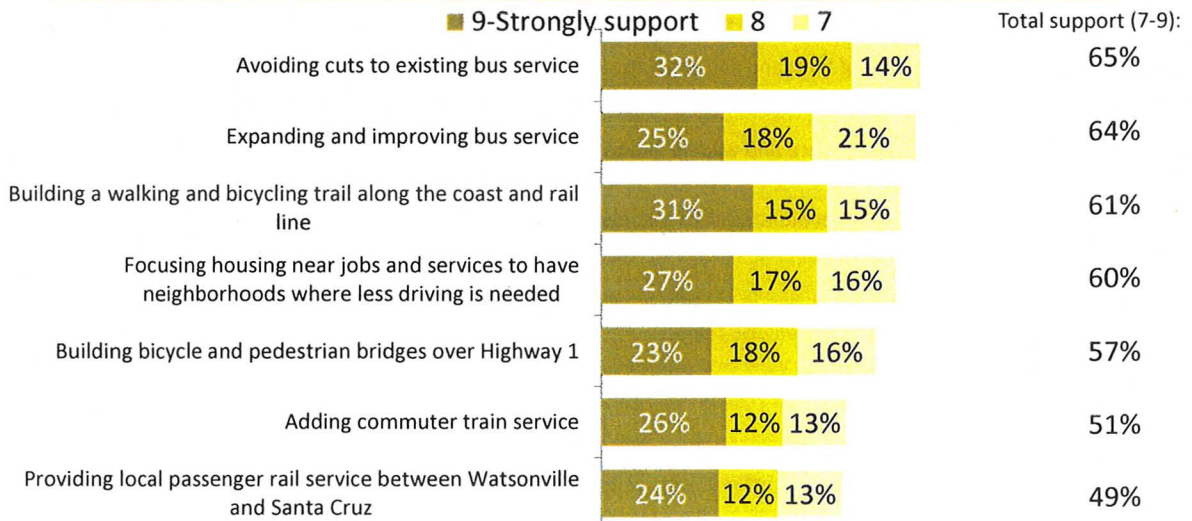
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All projects have some strong supporters

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Now I'm going to read you a list of possible transportation projects in your area. For each of the following projects, please tell me whether you support or oppose the project, using a scale of one to nine where one means strongly oppose and nine means strongly support.

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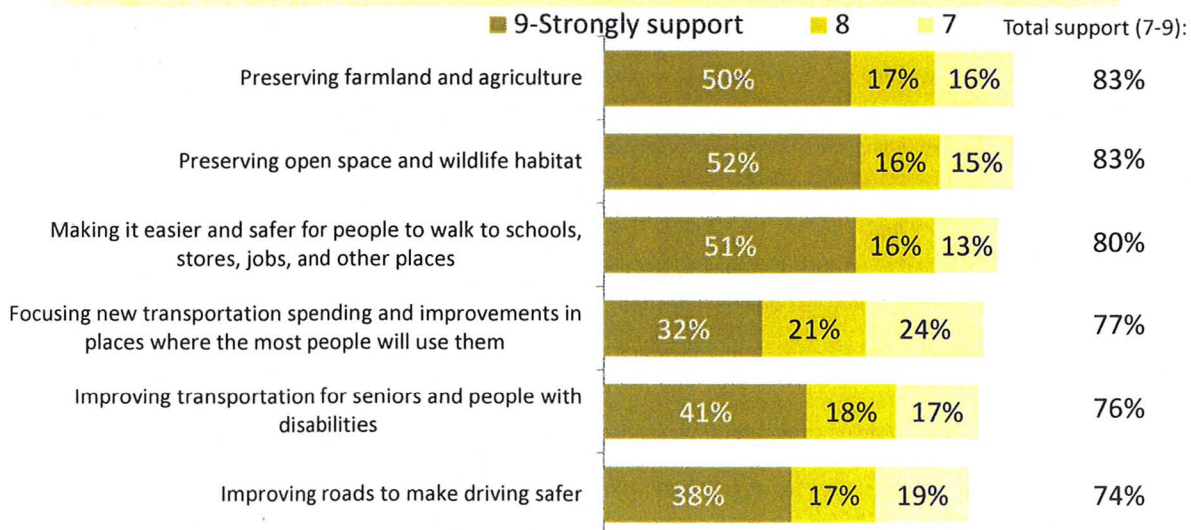
Projects and Programs

Farmland and open space preservation are important; there is also strong support for making walking easier and safer

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Now I'm going to read you a list of possible transportation projects in your area. For each of the following projects, please tell me whether you support or oppose the project, using a scale of one to nine where one means strongly oppose and nine means strongly support.

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Travel Behaviors

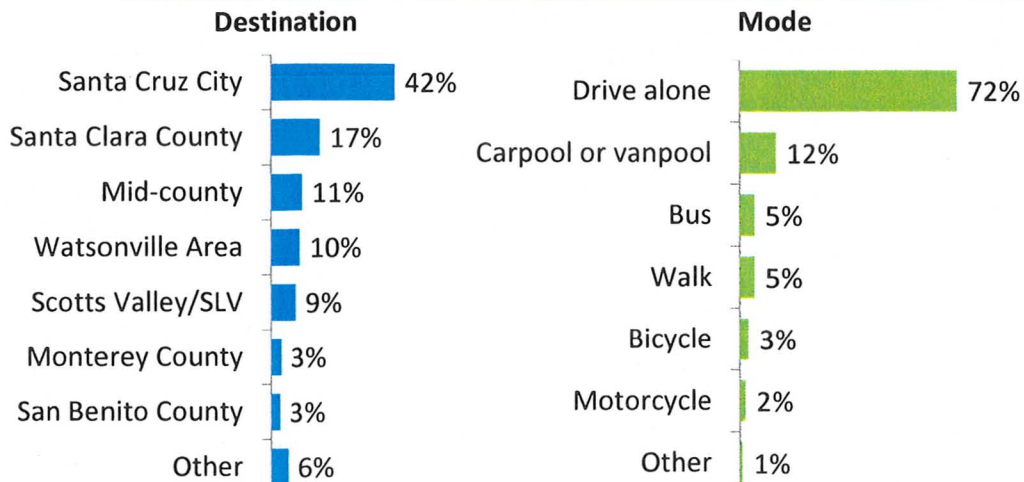
Seven in ten voting commuters in the county drive alone

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Do you go to work, school, or a volunteer position outside of your home at least three times a week, or not? In what city or town is your primary destination, meaning the place you go the most often? (If not in a city or town: what is the closest city or town?) What is your main method of getting there?

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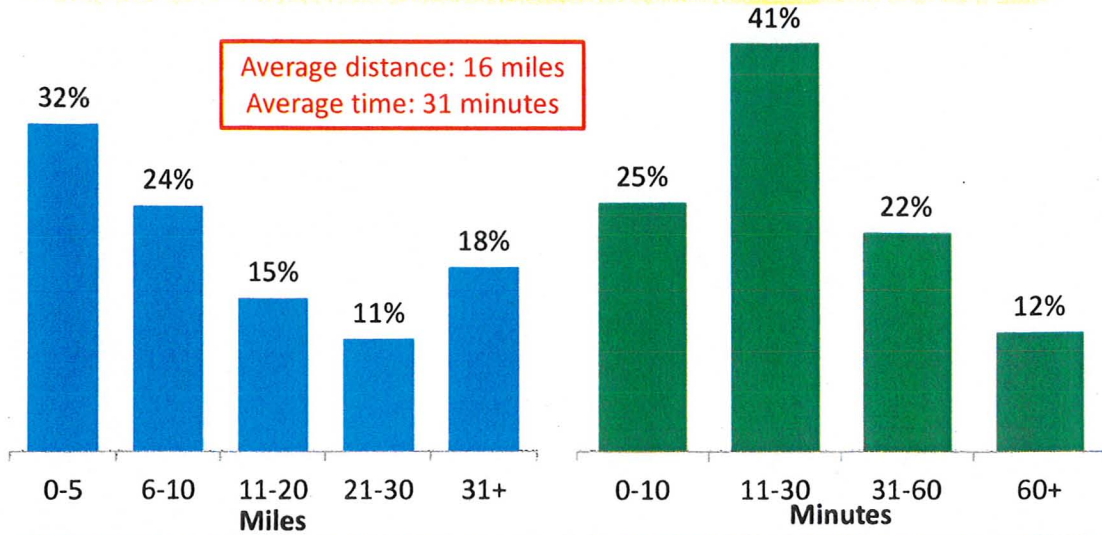
72% of voters in the county commute at least three times a week. Of those...



The majority of Santa Cruz County commuters travel 10 miles or less

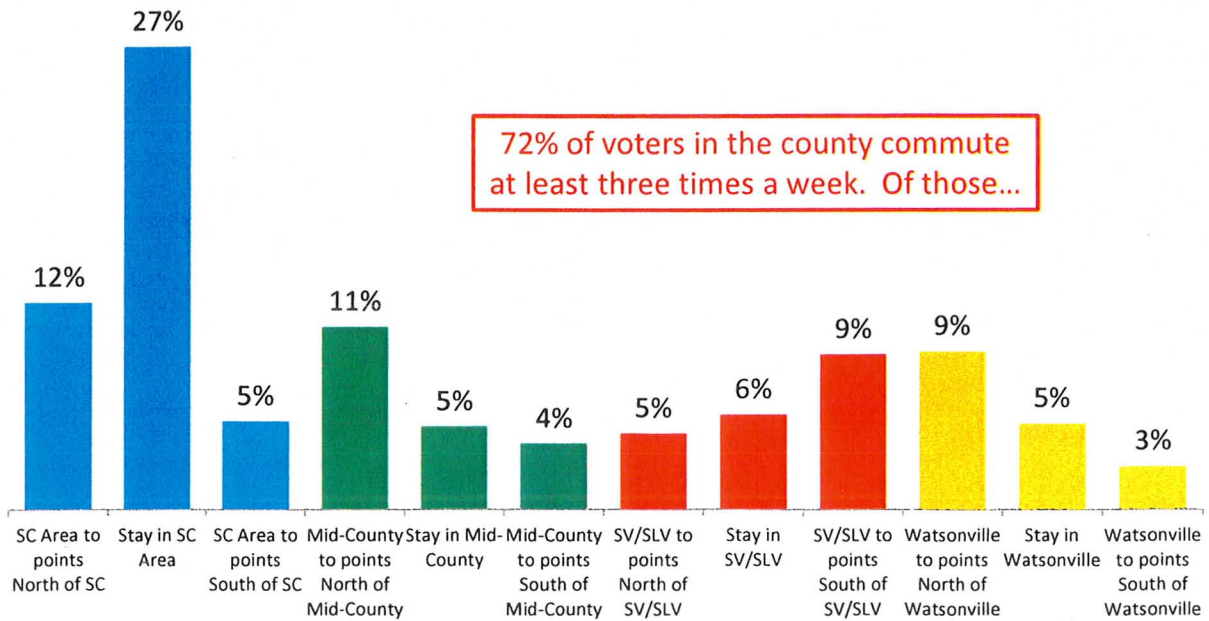
How many miles is your one-way trip? On average, does your one way trip take less than an hour, or an hour or more? (If less than an hour) How many minutes is your one-way trip? (If an hour or more) How long in hours and minutes is your one-way trip?

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Most commuters either stay in Santa Cruz Area or drive towards that area



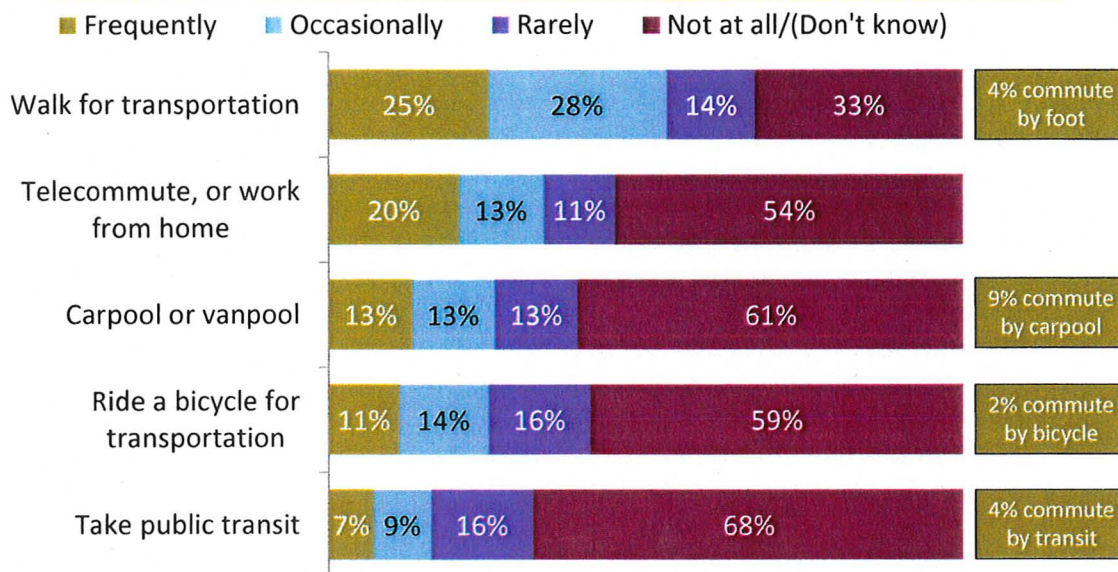
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People use multiple modes to get around, more than half walk at least occasionally

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I'm going to read you a short list of activities you might do, for each one, please tell me if you do it frequently, occasionally, rarely or not at all during a typical week.

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Conclusions for RTP/MTP/SCS

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- ▶ While most acknowledge that cars continue to be necessary, there is support for long-term planning that can get people out of their cars.
- ▶ Three-quarters of respondents say that they sometimes walk, bicycle, or take transit to get places, providing an opportunity to expand these uses.
- ▶ Large numbers of recurring trips are five miles or less, prime trips for non-vehicle uses.
- ▶ Voters strongly support preservation of both farmland and open space, implying support for compact communities.
- ▶ There are opportunities for incremental behavioral shifts towards driving less, especially by improving public transit and the walkability of neighborhoods.



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