

*Fairbank,  
Maslin,  
Maullin,  
Metz &  
Associates*

**FM3**

*Public Opinion Research  
& Strategy*

TO: Interested Parties

FR: David Metz & Curtis Below  
Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz and Associates

RE: Key Findings from Recent Southern California Survey on Transportation and Land Use Planning

DATE: October 31, 2011

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Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates (FM3) recently completed a survey of voters in the counties served by the Southern California Association of Government (SCAG), assessing public attitudes toward various issues related to transportation and land use planning.<sup>i</sup> The research was designed to assess Southern California residents' priorities in these areas, and to identify their preferred approaches to reducing regional traffic congestion and air pollution. **Survey respondents indicate that future planning should emphasize investments in transit, bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure over building new roads, while shifting new development into cities with a good mix of jobs and services.** Voters see these approaches as most likely to reduce traffic congestion and their commute time, while improving air quality and public health.

More specifically, the survey results show that Southern California voters strongly support increasing regional investment in public transportation – including trains, buses and light rail – and place a far greater premium on expanding such public transportation over expanding roads and highways. Consequently, they would like to see the region's transportation expenditures divided more evenly over a wide variety of spending categories, from expanding public transportation, bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, to repairing and maintaining existing roads and highways. Additionally, the results show that most Southern Californians want to live in mixed-used communities that are more pedestrian-friendly and closer to places of employment, even if this means choosing to live in smaller homes.

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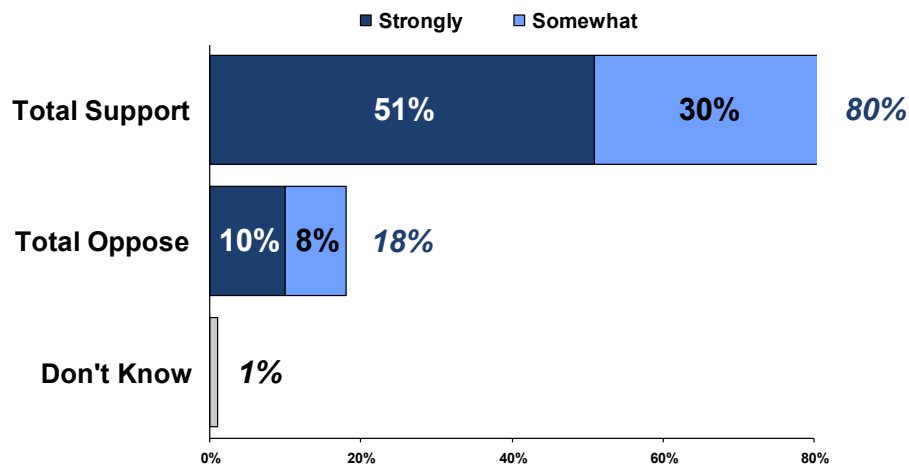
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Among the key specific findings of the survey are the following:

- Southern California voters strongly support greater investment in public transportation to reduce traffic congestion and air pollution.** In total, four in five voters surveyed (80%) expressed support for local governments in Southern California spending more to expand and improve public transportation (including buses, trains and light rail) in order to reduce traffic congestion and air pollution, and to provide more transportation choices (**Figure 1**). Furthermore, a majority (51%) “strongly” supported such investments, highlighting the public’s intense desire to see public transportation options expanded.

**FIGURE 1**  
**Support for Increased Investments in Public Transportation**

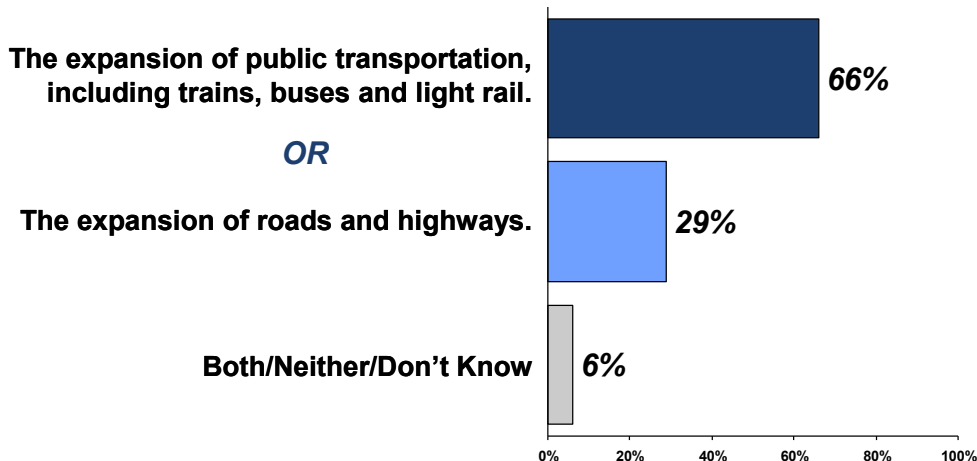
*In order to reduce traffic congestion and air pollution, and provide more transportation choices, would you support or oppose local governments in Southern California investing more to expand and improve your public transportation including buses, trains and light rail?*



- By more than a two-to-one margin, voters prioritize expanding public transportation over expanding roads and highways.** Two-thirds (66%) of voters surveyed indicated that the “highest priority for future investments to improve transportation in Southern California” should be the “expansion of public transportation, including trains, buses and light rail.” Only three in ten (29%) prioritized expanding “roads and highways” over expanding “public transportation.” (**Figure 2** on the following page).

**FIGURE 2**  
**Preferences for Future Transportation Investments**

*Which of the following do you think should be the highest priority for future investments to improve transportation in Southern California?*



- Voters want to live in communities that are pedestrian-friendly, and would rather have shorter commutes than larger houses.** Survey respondents were asked to imagine they were moving and think about the kind of community they would like to live in. As shown in **Figure 3**, 64 percent expressed a preference for more pedestrian-friendly communities with a diversity of home types and businesses, while 34 percent would rather live in a community comprised of only homes and requiring driving to get to stores and other businesses. Similarly, 65 percent indicated they would rather live in a community with smaller houses and lots – but with shorter commute times – than a community with larger houses and lots and longer commute times.

**FIGURE 3**  
**Preferred Community Types**

Preferred Community	%
A community where the neighborhood has a mix of houses, apartments, townhouses, stores and other businesses that are easy to walk to	64%
A community where the neighborhood has houses only and you have to drive to stores and other businesses	34%
Both/Neither/Don't Know	1%

Preferred Community	%
A community where the houses are smaller and on smaller lots, and you would have a shorter commute to work, 20 minutes or less	65%
A community where the houses are larger and on larger lots, and you would have a longer commute to work, 40 minutes or more	31%
Both/Neither/Don't Know	4%

Taken together, these findings suggest that voters want to live in mixed-used communities that are more pedestrian-friendly and closer to places of employment, even if this comes at the “expense” of living in a smaller home.

- **Southern California voters see expanding public transportation as the most effective approach to reducing air pollution and traffic congestion in the region.** Survey respondents were given a list of several different approaches to reducing air pollution and traffic congestion in Southern California and were asked to indicate – on a scale from one to seven – how effect they believe each approach would be; a rating of “seven” signified they felt the approach would be “extremely effective,” a rating of “one” meant it was seen as “not at all effective,” and a “four” represented neutrality.

As shown in **Figure 4**, “expanding public transportation” was clearly seen as the most effective approach, with nearly two-thirds (64%) of voters assigning it a rating of “six” or “seven.” Expanding alternative transportation options, improving pedestrian safety, and building homes near jobs and public transportation comprised a second tier of approaches, with nearly one-half of surveyed voters assigning them ratings of “six” or “seven.” Widening existing or building new roads and highways were seen as decidedly less effective approaches.

**FIGURE 4**  
**Perceived Effectiveness of Approaches to Reducing Air Pollution  
and Traffic Congestion in Southern California**

Approach	Proportion Rating Each Item 6-7 ( <i>Indicating Strong Perceived Effectiveness</i> )
Expanding public transportation, including trains, buses and light rail	64%
Expanding alternative transportation options, such as shuttles and bike lanes	47%
Making sidewalks and crosswalks safer for pedestrians	46%
Building new homes and apartments closer to jobs and public transportation	45%
Widening existing roads and highways	37%
Building new roads and highways	32%

- **Voters want to see the region’s transportation budget divided across a wide variety of spending categories, with a preference for expanding public transportation and maintaining existing roads and highways.** Survey respondents were asked to imagine they were in charge of their region’s transportation budget, and to allocate a hypothetical \$100 budget across five different spending categories. As shown in **Figure 5**, voters surveyed expressed a desire to see their region’s transportation dollars divided somewhat evenly across on spending categories. Respondents indicated that about half the transportation budget should be dedicated to “expanding public transportation” and “repairing and maintaining existing roads and highways,” and the remaining half divided about evenly between “expanding roads and highways,” “helping existing trains, buses and light rail run on-time” and “expanding bike lanes and improving sidewalks and crosswalks.”

**FIGURE 5**  
**Preferred Allocation of a Hypothetical \$100 Regional Transportation Budget**

Spending Category	Mean Dollar Amount
Expanding public transportation, such as trains, buses and light rail	\$24.80
Repairing and maintaining existing roads and highways	\$24.50
Expanding roads and highways	\$19.70
Helping existing trains, buses and light rail run on-time	\$16.90
Expanding bike lanes and improving sidewalks and crosswalks	\$14.10

Taken together, the survey results show that Southern California voters strongly believe that future regional land use and development plans place a priority on expanding and improving public transportation. No other approaches to reducing traffic congestion and air pollution are seen as nearly as effective or desirable. Additionally, most voters indicate that they are less interested in larger homes in single-family home communities than in smaller homes in communities developed with an emphasis on public transportation, shorter commutes and walkability.

<sup>i</sup> **Methodology:** From October 24-27, 2011, FM3 completed 758 telephone interviews with registered voters living within the Southern California Association of Governments’ boundaries, including oversamples in Riverside and San Bernardino Counties. The margin of error for the full sample is +/- 5.7%; margins of error for subgroups within the sample are higher. Due to rounding, not all percentages sum to 100%. The survey was sponsored by Move LA, the American Lung Association in California, and the Natural Resources Defense Council.