



County of Santa Cruz⁰³⁶¹

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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AGENDA: 9/19/00

September 8, 2000

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
County of Santa Cruz
701 Ocean Street
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

RE: SANTA CRUZ COUNTY TRANSPORTATION SURVEY

Dear Members of the Board:

I am taking this opportunity to provide the Board with the attached Executive Summary of the Santa Cruz County Transportation Survey conducted August 3, 2000.

This survey was conducted by J. Moore Methods of Sacramento, on behalf of Citizens for Improved Transportation, an organization of business and community representatives working to analyze community responses towards various scenarios by which transportation improvements might be implemented.

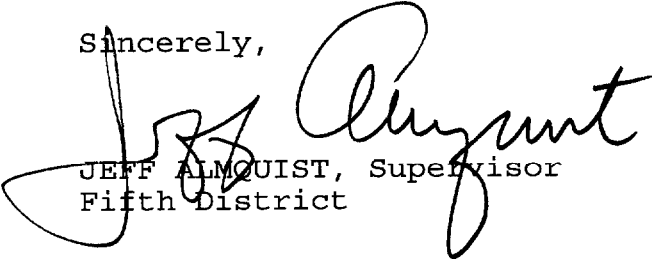
This survey asked respondents important questions concerning the direction of transportation, level of satisfaction with how issues were being handled, an increase in local taxes for transportation services, transportation priorities, endorsement influence on voter reaction within the County, and other questions regarding new tax programs. James Conklin and other representatives of Citizens for Improved Transportation will be present at our meeting of September 19 to provide an overview of the survey results to the Board.

I believe this study provides an important tool in the ongoing development of better transportation throughout the County.

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Accordingly, I would recommend that the Board hear from representatives of Citizens for Improved Transportation, and other interested parties, and accept and file this report.

Sincerely,



JEFF ALMQUIST, Supervisor
Fifth District

JA:ted
Attachment

cc: James Conklin, Citizens for Improved Transportation

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August 3, 2000

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SANTA CRUZ COUNTY TRANSPORTATION SURVEY CITIZENS FOR **IMPROVED** TRANSPORTATION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

This **report** presents the findings from a voter opinion survey conducted on behalf of Citizens for Improved **Transportation**. Citizens for **Improved** Transportation is an organization made up of business **and** community representatives whose goal is to work with the Regional **Transportation** Commission and others to plan for, receive approval of and successfully fund a Santa **Cruz** County transportation **expenditure** plan that effectively addresses the County's transportation needs. The **main** purpose of this survey, **conducted by** J. Moore Methods of Sacramento, was **to** rest community perceptions of transportation as an issue in Santa **Cruz** County, to determine the public's willingness to pay for needed improvements and to test countywide preferences for various transportation projects.

A **total** of five hundred (500) **likely** voters in Santa Cruz County were interviewed **by** telephone during **the period** June 21 - July 9, 2000. A stratified **sample** of this size has a margin of **error** of 4.5%. Likely voters are defined as individuals who have voted in the last two general elections or those who **have** recently registered to vote. A voter opinion survey was conducted because **the funding** mechanism tested. i.e., an increase in **the** County sales tax by 1/2 cent for 20 years, would have to be approved by County voters prior to implementation.

This report represents an overview of the **survey** results. **We expect** specific results and more detailed findings to be available on the Internet at www.sccbusinesscouncil.org in the next few **weeks**.

General Direction

We ask this question in our surveys to get **a sense** of **the general** attitude which exists within a county. This is important in terms **of** setting a **context** for other questions. A negative attitude can affect the response to individual questions. The **overall. attitude** of the respondents in this survey **was good**. but it **seems that county** issues are **not as settled** compared to what's going on at the state and community levels.

- . Respondents were asked whether they felt things were going in the right or wrong direction.
- Right Direction Responses: In the State of California. 51%; In Santa **Cruz** County, 41%; In your local community, 60%.

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Level of Satisfaction With How Issues Are Being Handled in Santa Cruz County

Investigating some major issues **further**, we found that the **problem** of **most concern to county** voters is preventing **worse** traffic congestion. Those jurisdictions **expressing** the highest levels of concern about this issue **were Capitola** and Santa Cruz. However, traffic congestion was the top issue in all jurisdictions across the board. **Further**, the level of intensity with respect to this issue is very high. A brief summary of responses to issues of concern follows:

- **82% (the highest level of dissatisfaction registered)** are concerned about worsening traffic congestion. In addition, 79% of those responding said that traffic congestion is a very important issue for them.
- 76 % of respondents are satisfied with **the** provision of recreation services; 55% believe that taxes are being kept at affordable levels, and 62% say that there are enough new jobs.
- 51% are dissatisfied with how public education is provided, 62% aren't happy with planning for **future** growth and development, and 53% don't believe **tax** money is being spent wisely.
- 61% don't believe enough is being done to provide for housing needs and 68% are dissatisfied with the availability of affordable housing.
- 54% don't think enough is **being** done to maintain streets and roads.

Response to Increasing Local Taxes for Transportation Services

Next, we attempted to **assess** voter attitudes about paying to improve transportation services. Without any indication of projects which could be funded or arguments in support of a local **program** for this purpose, a sizable majority responded favorably to paying for improved transportation services through increased local taxes.

- 55% would increase local taxes to pay for improving the County transportation system; 68% responded favorably to increasing local taxes to pay for maintaining local streets and **roads**.

Increasing the County Sales Tax by 1/2 Cent for 20 Years to Pay for Needed Transportation Improvements

We followed the general question about increasing local taxes with a series of questions specifically **aimed** at the imposition of a 1/2 cent sales tax for 20 years. This funding **mechanism** was rested based on the fact that 17 counties in California have implemented local sales **tax** programs for transportation. Another 17 counties have attempted to raise local taxes for transportation purposes. Where most of the existing programs were approved by a simple majority vote of the county **electorate**, current law and court rulings require **two-thirds** voter approval. In addition, at the time the survey was conducted, the prospect existed for a legislative initiative to be placed on the November, 2000 ballot asking voter approval to allow these

programs to be adopted in each county on a simple majority vote. That initiative (Senate Constitutional Amendment No. 3) was not approved by the Legislature.

The **responses** to questions regarding a **local** sales tax program, however, were very **positive**.

a 59% of respondents indicated that they would **support** a transportation sales tax in an initial question with no information on projects. After hearing a list of potential projects, 70% indicated that they would support a transportation sales tax.

The highest level of **support** from local jurisdictions within the county came **from north county**. Seventy-four percent of voters in Santa CNZ and 82% of voters in **Capitola** would **support** a **1/2** cent sales tax for **twenty years** to pay for **selected** transportation improvements. The intensity of **support** for this type of program is also high in **those** jurisdictions, Of **even** greater significance for Santa **Cruz**, however, is **that** the level of- "strong" opposition to a local sales tax program drops to **10** percent after suggested projects **are** presented to respondents. Based on our experience, this is an extremely low level of intensity in opposition to a proposed sales tax measure.

Transportation Priorities

- The following projects are ranked in order of the percent responding in support of increasing the County sales tax by **1/2 cent** for **20** years to pay for that project:

- 83%, expanding transit services for the elderly **and** disabled
- 79%, filling potholes and maintaining local streets and roads
- 75%, safety improvements to Highway 1, Highway 9 and Highway 17
- 74%, completing the upgrade of the Highway 1/Highway 17 interchange
- 72%. expanding commuter bus service between **Santa Clara** and **Santa Cruz** Counties
- 71%, adding truck climbing lanes on **Highway 17**
- 69%, park-and-ride lots for commuters, tourists and students
- 66%, sidewalk and pedestrian safety improvements
- 65%. adding bicycle commuter routes and improving **bikeway** facilities and programs
- 65%. Widening Highway 1 **between** the Highway 17 interchange in Santa **Cruz** and Aptos for car-pools and buses,
- 63%. extend Cal-Train service from San Jose to Monterey
- 62%. improving major streets and roads, such as Soquel, Freedom. and Graham Hill
- 61%. **provide** congestion relief on local streets **and** roads
- 61%. **expanded** CHP highway safety **programs** and freeway service patrol
- 58%. constructing bicycle and pedestrian paths alongside county rail lines
- 57%. expanding CHP highway safety programs
- 56%. adding **turn lanes** and signal improvements **at** the Highway 1/Highway 9 intersection

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- 56%, landscaping and lighting for safety and **street** beautification
- 56%, purchasing the railroad right-of-way between **Watsonville** and Davenport for bicycle, pedestrian and other uses
- 54%, providing passenger rail service between **Santa Cruz** and **Watsonville**
- 53%, enhanced rideshare marketing and promotion
- 52%, expanding transit service to the UC Santa **Cruz** campus
- 52%, improving bus stops and passenger facilities
- 47%, implementing traffic **calming** projects in neighborhoods
- 45%, improving the Highway 17 interchange at Granite Creek in **Scotts Valley**
- 43%, making improvements to promote bicycle, pedestrian and transit travel on the UC Santa **Cruz** campus
- 43%, improving Highway 152 and Highway 129
- 33%, runway and access improvements at Watsonville Airport

Level of Group/Individual Influence

Quite often during a public effort to implement a local **program** or impose **local** taxes for a specific purpose, groups and individuals will speak out and offer their opinions. We attempted to find out whether several prominent groups or individuals in the county might have an influence on **voter** reaction to a new county transportation plan, **Following is** a sampling of the percentages of respondents who would be more likely to support a new plan if supported by a group or individual:

- 48 %, the Santa **Cruz** County Board of Supervisors
- 41%, the Santa **Cruz** City Council
- 61%. the Watsonville City Council
- 57%. the **Scotts Valley** City Council
- 53%. **your** County Supervisor
- 58%, senior citizen groups
- 50%, the Santa **Cruz** County Transportation Commission
- 50%, Caltrans
- 44%. taxpayer and property rights organizations

Support for **Allowing** Local Counties to Extend or **Approve** New **Sales Tax Programs**

- 53% of those surveyed were in support of allowing local counties to extend, or **approve** new, 1/2 cent sales **tax** programs to finance state and local transportation system improvements with a simple majority vote. Interestingly enough, while less than a majority in every other jurisdiction responded favorably to **this question**, 68% of the respondents from the City of Santa **Cruz** indicated their support for this proposal.

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Dedication of Sales Tax on Gasoline

- When asked about **dedicating** the sales tax on gasoline for **transportation** purposes, in lieu of spending those revenues on a variety of public programs, such as health, education, law enforcement and parks, and allowing counties **to** approve **local** transportation sales tax programs with a simple majority vote, 43% responded favorably.

Demographics

Age: 40 years **or** older - 71 %
Own or Rent Home: 72% own home
Environment: 69% consider themselves to be an environmentalist
Lived in county: 39% more than 20 **years**; 59% more than 10 years
Growth: 26% pro-growth; 53% no-growth; 15% slow growth
Employment: 61% work outside of their home
Commute: 25% commute into Santa Clara County
Worker Travel Mode: 81% drive alone. 3% ride the bus, 8% **carpool** or **vanpool**, 3% ride a bike or motorcycle, 4% walk
Education: 54% college graduate or graduate school
Average Commute; 36% commute for 30 **minutes** or more

General Comments

While the results in response to questions **regarding** a **local** sales tax program are positive, it is our judgment that the numbers do not indicate adequate support to pass this type of measure with a super-majority vote. There is very strong support: for a sales tax program in some jurisdictions, including **the** Cities of Santa **Cruz** and Capitola, but overall, we would need to see a greater intensity of support throughout the County in order to recommend proceeding under current law. If the voter threshold for these programs is lowered to a simple majority in the future, chances of success for a local transportation sales tax program **are** substantially improved.

SUBMITTED BY:

SMITH & KEMPTON

Consulting and Governmental Relations
Sacramento, California

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