


Voter Opinion Research 2013

Conducted for:
Alameda County Transportation Commission



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September 26, 2013

Project Approach and Research Summary

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- ▶ **Project Approach**
 - ▶ The research was designed to assess the opinion of likely voters on elements of an updated Transportation Expenditure Plan, as well as understand reactions to timing, duration, and possible ballot language for a potential 2014 ballot measure

- ▶ **Research Summary**
 - ▶ There are two components to the research:
 - ▶ A set of four focus groups with voters in the county's four planning regions
 - ▶ A quantitative telephone survey of a representative sample of likely 2014 voters



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Overall Research Findings

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- ▶ Transportation is not a top problem in need of addressing at this time for most voters
- ▶ Most voters do not remember the 2012 measure (or know about Measure B generally)
- ▶ A little over 30% of voters would likely vote against any new or increased tax
 - ▶ The low vote ceiling for an augmentation makes success more difficult and less certain
- ▶ *About* two-thirds of Alameda County voters will support authorizing a 30 year plan that augments and extends an existing transportation sales tax
- ▶ There is widespread support for the major elements of the TEP
 - ▶ In particular voters support the continued expansion of BART
- ▶ Voters want to know there is a detailed and specific plan that constrains how the money will be spent
 - ▶ The exact specific details are *somewhat* less important than communicating that a plan will *prescribe* how the money will be spent
 - ▶ A sunset helps communicate accountability
 - ▶ Alameda County voters need to know that they are the primary beneficiaries of the measure
 - ▶ BART needs to be named specifically as it is not captured by “public transit”



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Focus Group Summary

Focus Group Structure

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- ▶ Four focus groups were held with Alameda County voters, one in each planning region
 - ▶ South county (held in Fremont) – August 12, 2013
 - ▶ East county (held in Livermore) – August 13, 2013
 - ▶ North county (held in Oakland) – August 19, 2013
 - ▶ Central county (held in Hayward) – August 22, 2013
- ▶ Group participants were likely November 2014 voters who:
 - ▶ Did not support Measure B1, or
 - ▶ Did not vote on everything on the ballot
- ▶ All groups recruited for a mix of gender, age, ethnic background, city within the region, and registration date



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Focus Group Findings

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- ▶ This election was about the Presidential race, the state budget, and education funding. Transportation was eclipsed by the economy and education, and was not on the radar for this election.
- ▶ Even among local measures, Measure B1 had essentially no mindshare.
- ▶ Cynicism is very high, and is being fed by pension issues, BART labor disputes, and the Bay Bridge. They assume politicians and ballot measures are trying to trick them, and believe there is so much waste in the system that money can be found if the government just tries hard enough.
- ▶ Having these types of projects funded at the county level does not make sense to voters, either because they are too large and far-serving, or because they are so routine (like potholes) they feel like they are paying already through gas and federal taxes.

NOTE: Focus Groups are qualitative, not quantitative research; therefore, results cannot be extrapolated to the general population. The focus groups were used to aid development of hypotheses to be tested in the quantitative research to follow.



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Focus Group Findings (continued)

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- ▶ Transit and roads are not viewed as competing priorities; rather they are complementary. More of everything is better.
- ▶ Extending BART is a good idea, and Livermore can be one destination. Voters continue to support the idea of BART encircling the Bay and reaching into the valley.
- ▶ “Public transit” = buses, but not BART.
- ▶ Everyone wants to know exactly what the measure will pay for, but nobody feels the responsibility to find out for themselves.
- ▶ Language is important & the language of this industry is not comprehensible. Even terms that seem clear (“pass-through funds”) are not (“is that money for people that are passing through the county?”).

NOTE: Focus Groups are qualitative, not quantitative research; therefore, results cannot be extrapolated to the general population. The focus groups were used to aid development of hypotheses to be tested in the quantitative research to follow.



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Translating Focus Group Findings to Survey Research

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- ▶ A number of **hypotheses** came out of the focus group research that were incorporated into the telephone survey:
 - ▶ BART must be specifically named, and any extension of the system is positive
 - ▶ The measure is designed primarily to benefit Alameda County residents, and there is something in it for you
 - ▶ A detailed and well-considered expenditure plan is available
 - ▶ There are strong accountability measures embedded in the measure
 - ▶ While the ballot question used for B1 was broadly appealing, it was so non-specific that it may not have attracted interest on the 2012 ballot. A ballot question with more detailed projects may hold greater appeal.



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Survey Design: The Ballot Question

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- ▶ In considering the ballot language to test in the survey, two options emerged:
 - ▶ A version of the ballot question very similar to the way Measure B1 was worded, bearing in mind that the election was extremely close
 - ▶ A version of the ballot question similar to Measure B in 2000, which got over 80% of the vote; it is important to note, this measure was NOT AN INCREASE, only an extension
 - ▶ The language for both versions of the ballot language would be identical, with the only variation coming in the list of benefits.
- ▶ Using a controlled split-sample design, two versions of the ballot question were tested, to allow an independent evaluation of the strength of each version.



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Survey Design: The Ballot Questions

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Version A: Modified B1

Shall voters authorize implementing the Alameda County 30 year Transportation Expenditure Plan to:

- **Improves transit connections to jobs and schools;**
- **Fix roads, improve highways and increase bicycle and pedestrian safety;**
- **Reduces traffic congestion and improve air quality;**
- **Keep senior, student, and disabled fares affordable?**

Approval augments and extends the existing County sales tax, with independent oversight and audits. All money spent will benefit Alameda County residents.

Version B: Modified B

Shall voters authorize implementing the Alameda County 30 year Transportation Expenditure Plan to:

- **Expand BART in Alameda County;**
- **Improve express, local and feeder bus service;**
- **I-80, I-880, I-580, I-680, and I-238 improvements;**
- **Enhance transit services for seniors, students, and persons with disabilities;**
- **Improve pedestrian and bike safety?**

Approval augments and extends the existing County sales tax, with independent oversight and audits. All money spent will benefit Alameda County residents.



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Phone Survey

Phone Survey Methodology

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- ▶ Telephone Survey of Alameda County Voters
- ▶ 815 completed interviews
- ▶ Overall Margin of error \pm 3.4%
- ▶ Conducted September 4–15, 2013
- ▶ Interviews conducted by trained, professional interviewers
- ▶ Split sample methodology employed to test independent reaction to two potential ballot questions; Sample A (General Benefits) and Sample B (Detailed Benefits).
- ▶ Where possible, results are compared with past surveys:
 - ▶ March 6 -14, 2011; 813 interviews; Margin of Error \pm 3.4 percentage points
 - ▶ Sept 28 – Oct. 9, 2011; 805 interviews; Margin of Error \pm 3.5 percentage points
 - ▶ May 16-24, 2012; 801 interviews; Margin of Error \pm 3.5 percentage points
- ▶ Results weighted to reflect likely voter population distribution in Nov. 2014

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%

Region	# of interviews	Margin of Error (\pm)	Weighted % of Population
Central Alameda Co.	179	7.32%	20%
East Alameda Co.	153	7.92%	15%
North Alameda Co.	304	5.62%	48%
South Alameda Co.	179	7.32%	17%



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Phone Survey Findings

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- ▶ Voter optimism is increasing; especially in the East and South
- ▶ Most do not remember Measure B1; those who recall opposing it did so because they oppose all tax increases, not because of the plan itself
- ▶ The most important problem facing Alameda County is crime, followed by unemployment and education
- ▶ Of the potential measure issues tested, health care is the top priority (67% rate it as a high priority)
- ▶ While 61% say increasing funding for road and highway improvements in Alameda county is a priority, just 24% give it the highest priority rating
 - ▶ Many believe there should already be enough money available to fund roads and transit from other sources
- ▶ The version of the ballot language including more general benefits (Version A) is more consistently favorable; there are, however, some populations where Version B tests better
 - ▶ General aversion to tax increases and a distrust of government point to a likely vote ceiling around 69%



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Phone Survey Findings (continued)

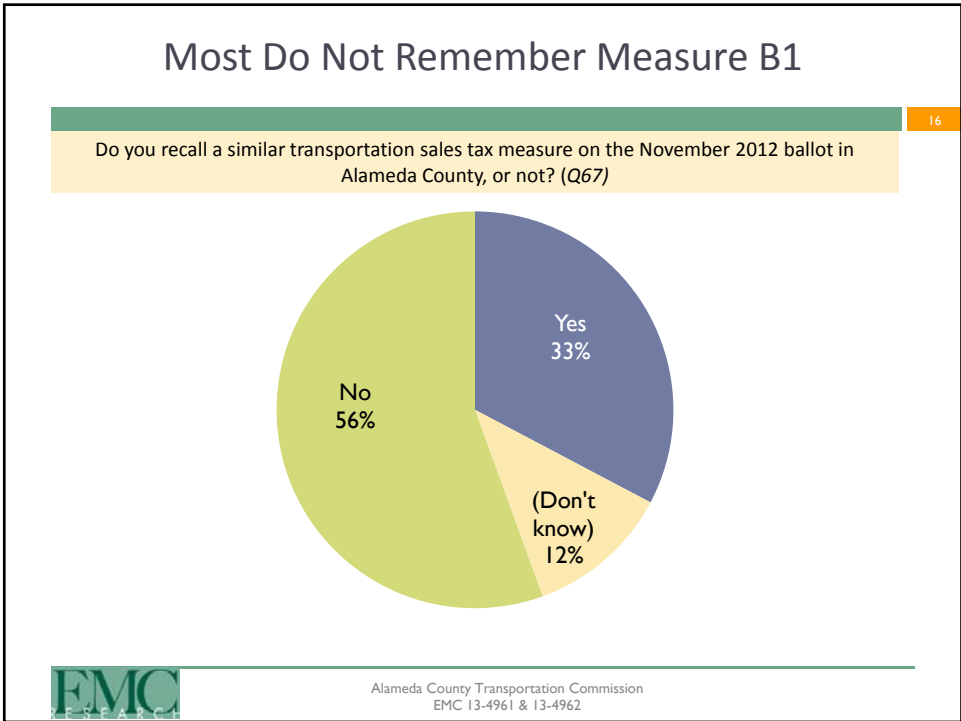
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- ▶ The most appealing elements of the measure are:
 - ▶ A detailed plan that shows exactly how all of the money will be spent (77% strongly support)
 - ▶ Keeping fares affordable and enhancing transit services for seniors, students and disabled (73% strongly support)
- ▶ Extending BART is a priority throughout the county; talking about Livermore has particular appeal in East County, but more general language has benefits in other parts of the county
- ▶ The most compelling message themes are about independent audits, the importance of reliable public transit in light of gas price increases, and benefits to Alameda County residents
- ▶ Talking about the benefits for non-residents generates the strongest opposition



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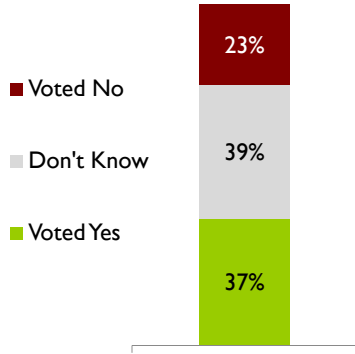
Measure B1



Most who opposed B1 did so because of general tax aversion

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As you may recall, there was a ½ cent transportation sales tax measure on the November 2012 ballot in Alameda County, called Measure B1. Did you vote yes to approve or no to reject Measure B1? (Q68)



Why did you vote no on Measure B1? (Q69)
[Percent out of total sample]

Reason voted no:	%
Against all tax increases	7
Taxes already high	4
Money wasn't spent wisely	2
Financial reasons	2
Did not support the measure	1
No expiration date of tax increase	1
30 year tax increase too long	1
Not enough information	1
Other	5
Don't Know	1
Not asked this question	77



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Initial Vote

Split Sample

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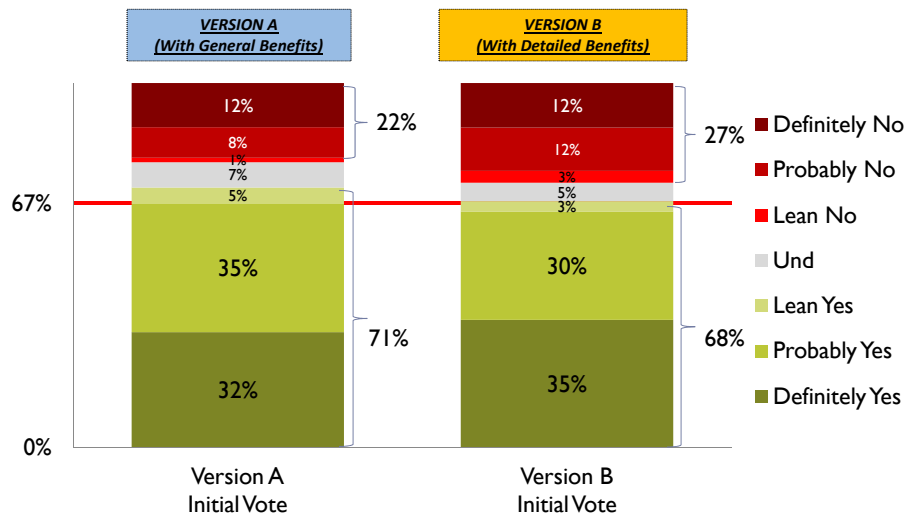
VERSION A <i>(Modified B1-with General Benefits)</i>	VERSION B <i>(Modified B-with Detailed Benefits)</i>
<p>Shall voters authorize implementing the Alameda County 30 year Transportation Expenditure Plan to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improves transit connections to jobs and schools; • Fix roads, improve highways and increase bicycle and pedestrian safety; • Reduces traffic congestion and improve air quality; • Keep senior, student, and disabled fares affordable? <p>Approval augments and extends the existing County sales tax, with independent oversight and audits. All money spent will benefit Alameda County residents.</p>	<p>Shall voters authorize implementing the Alameda County 30 year Transportation Expenditure Plan to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand BART in Alameda County; • Improve express, local and feeder bus service; • I-80, I-880, I-580, I-680, and I-238 improvements; • Enhance transit services for seniors, students, and persons with disabilities; • Improve pedestrian and bike safety? <p>Approval augments and extends the existing County sales tax, with independent oversight and audits. All money spent will benefit Alameda County residents.</p>



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2013: Initial Vote

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2012 Poll & 2012 Ballot Measure Language

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2012 POLL & 2012 BALLOT MEASURE B1

Shall a new Transportation Expenditure Plan be implemented to address current and future transportation needs that:

- **Improves transit access to jobs and schools;**
- **Fixes roads, improves highways and increases bicycle and pedestrian safety;**
- **Reduces traffic congestion and improves air quality;**
- **Keeps senior, youth, and disabled fares affordable?**

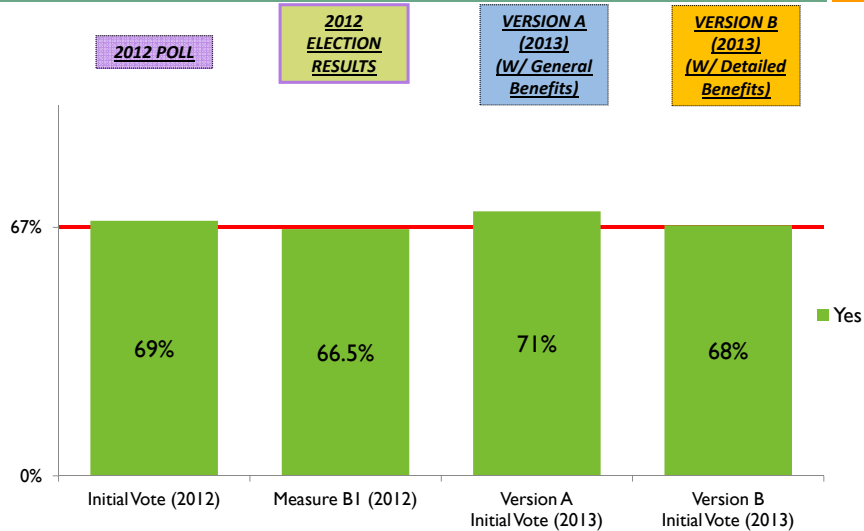
Approval extends the existing County sales tax and increases it by ½ cent, with independent oversight, local job creation programs. No money can be taken by the state.



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2012 Poll, 2012 Election and 2013 Poll: Initial Vote

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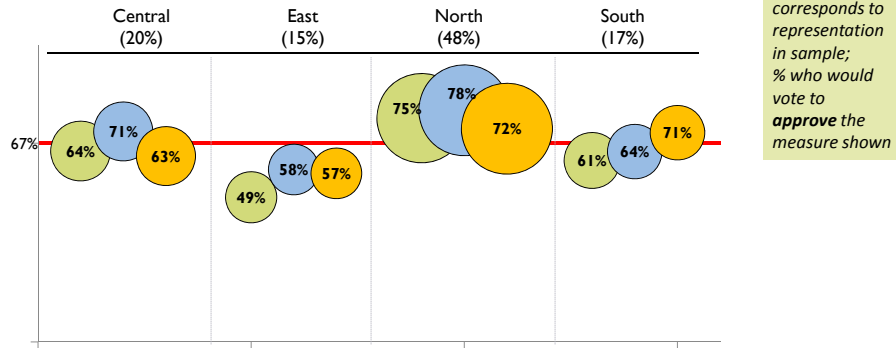
2012 Election and 2013 Poll: Initial Vote by Region

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2012 Election-Measure B1
Overall = 66.5% Yes

VERSION A (With General Benefits)
Overall A Vote = 71% Yes

VERSION B (With Detailed Benefits)
Overall B Vote = 68% Yes



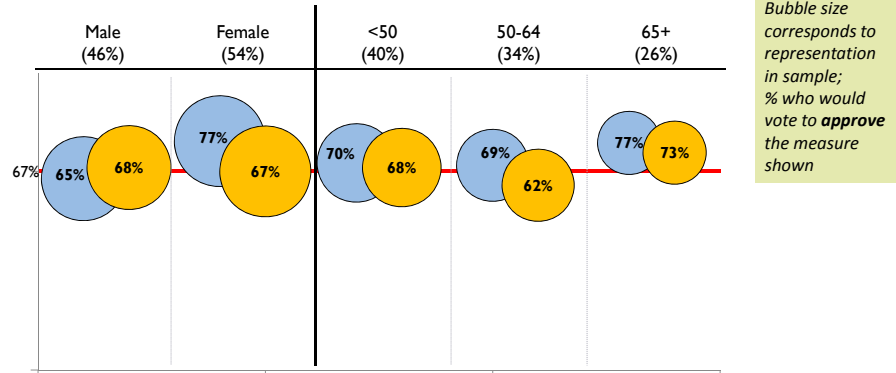
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Initial Vote by Gender & Age

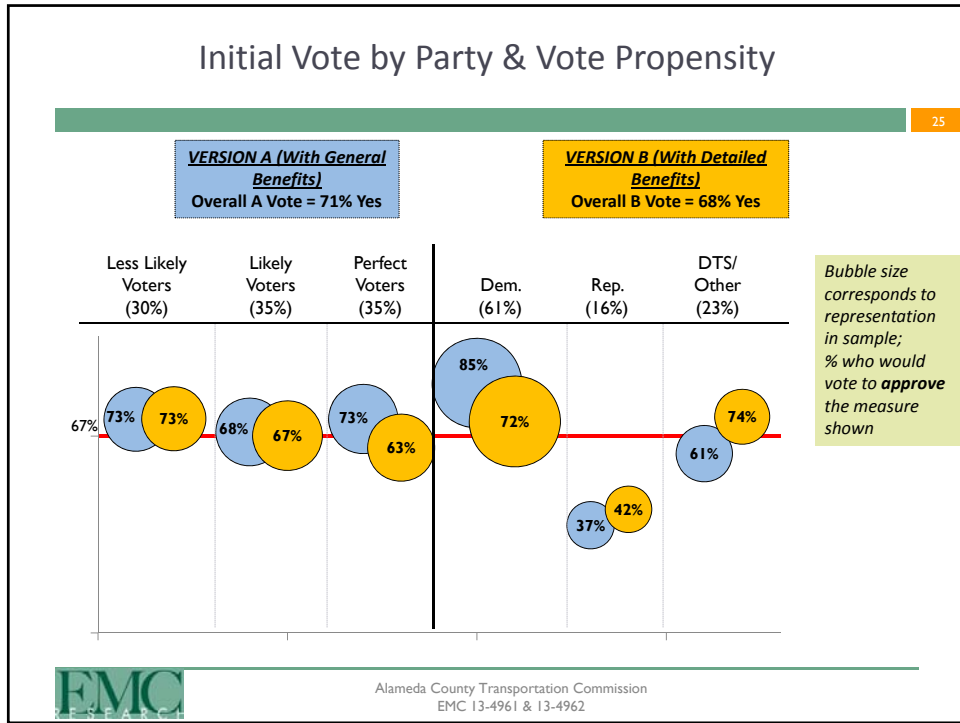
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VERSION A (With General Benefits)
Overall A Vote = 71% Yes

VERSION B (With Detailed Benefits)
Overall B Vote = 68% Yes



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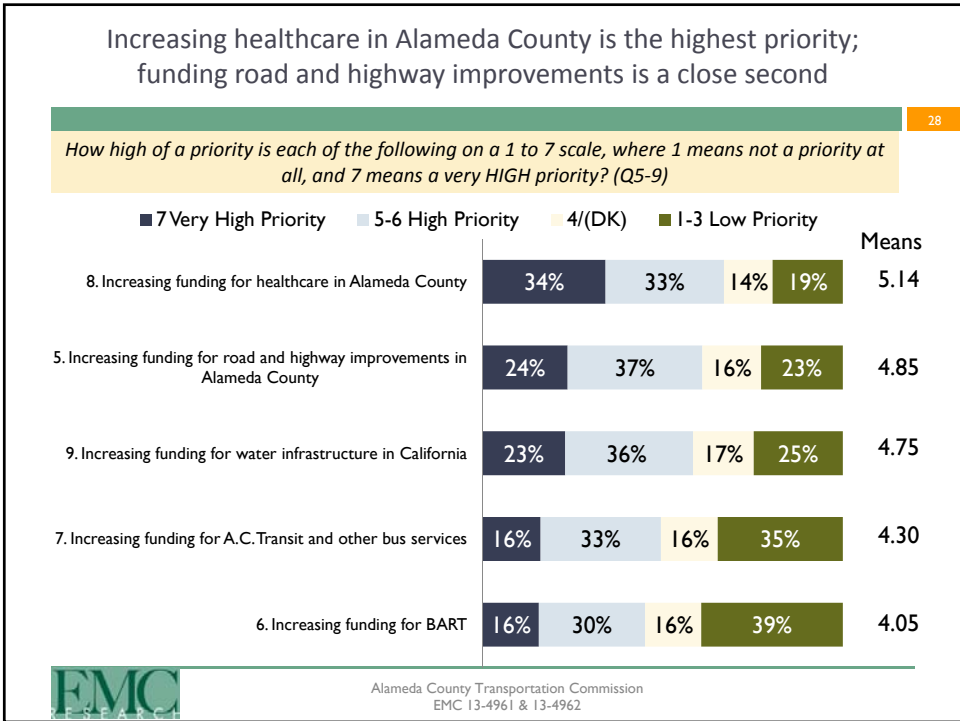


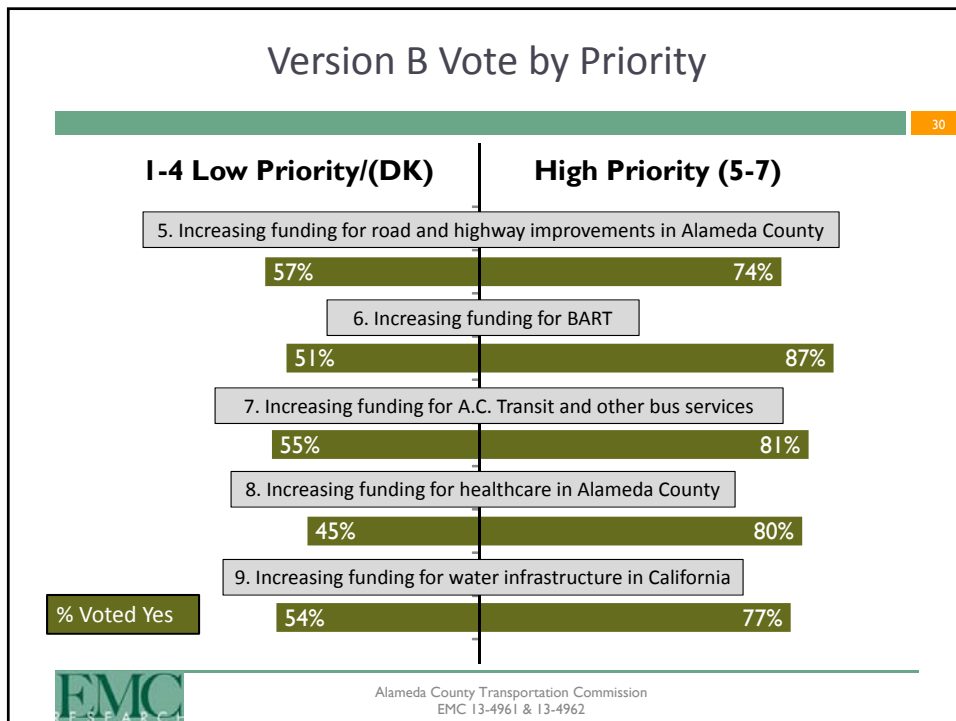
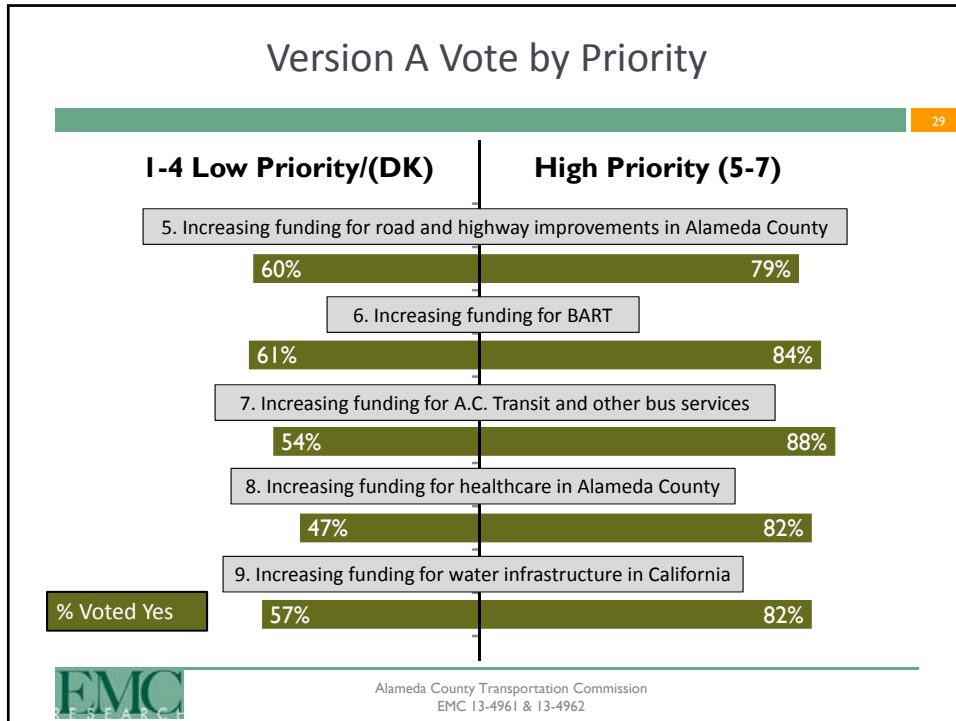
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Voter Turnout	2010 Election	2012 Election
Total Voter Turnout	468,483 (61%)	602,479 (74%)
<50	46%	49%
50-64	33%	30%
65+	21%	21%
Male	46%	45%
Female	54%	55%
Democrats	60%	59%
Republicans	17%	14%
NPP/Other	23%	26%
Central	20%	21%
East	16%	15%
North	47%	46%
South	18%	18%

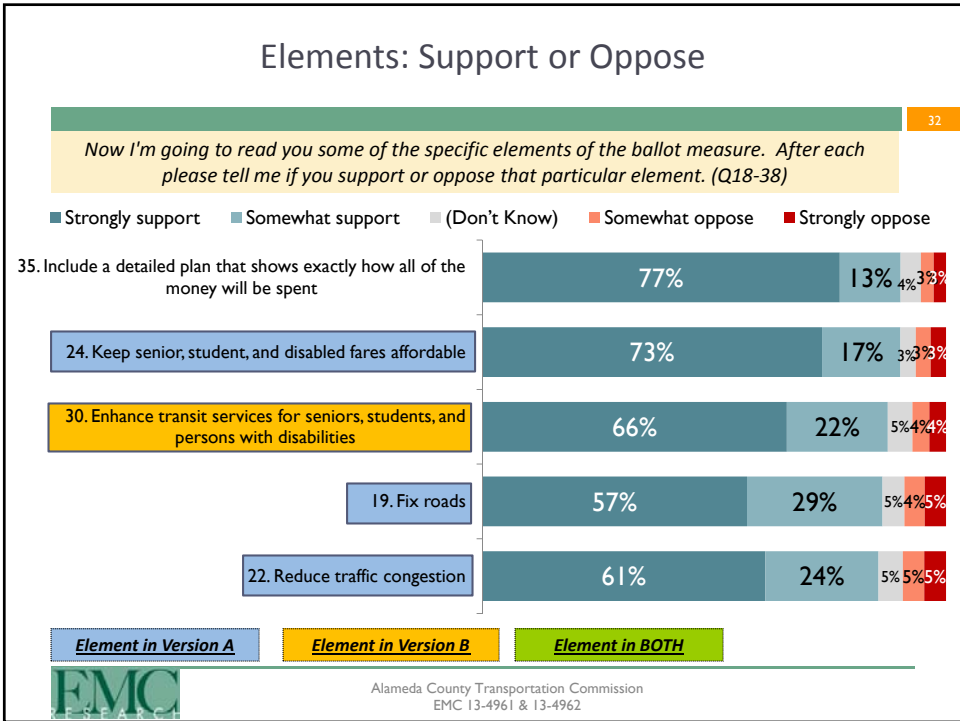
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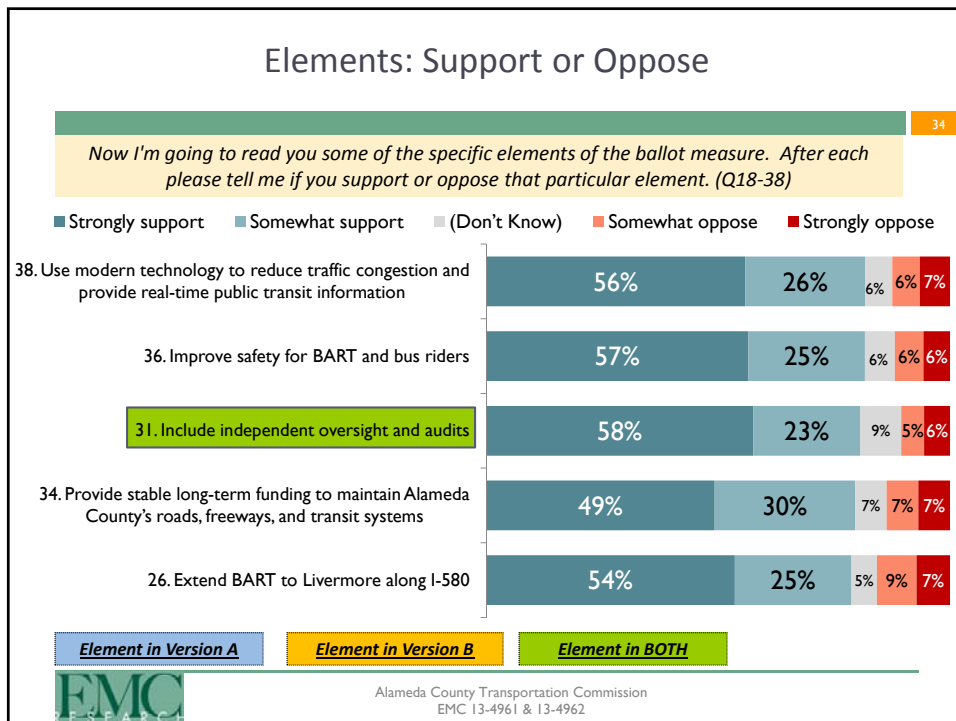
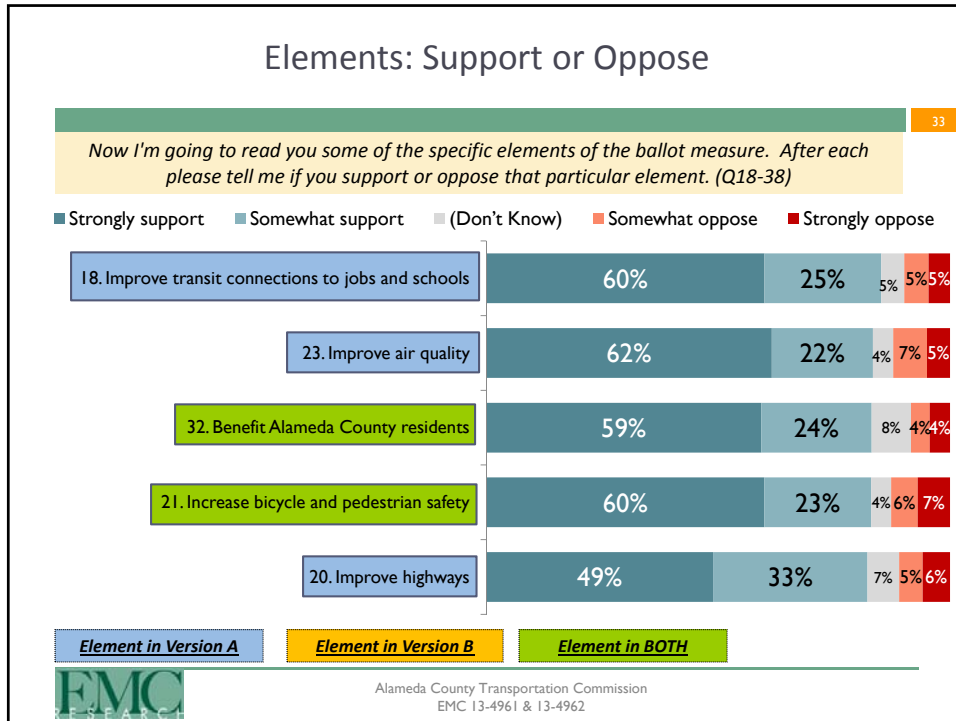
Priorities

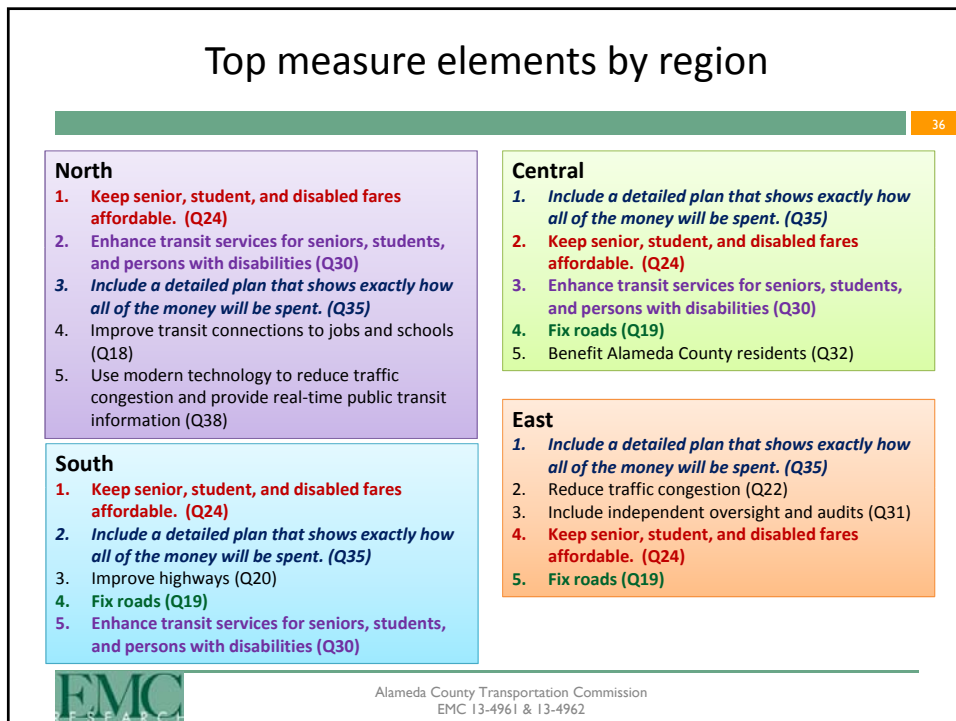
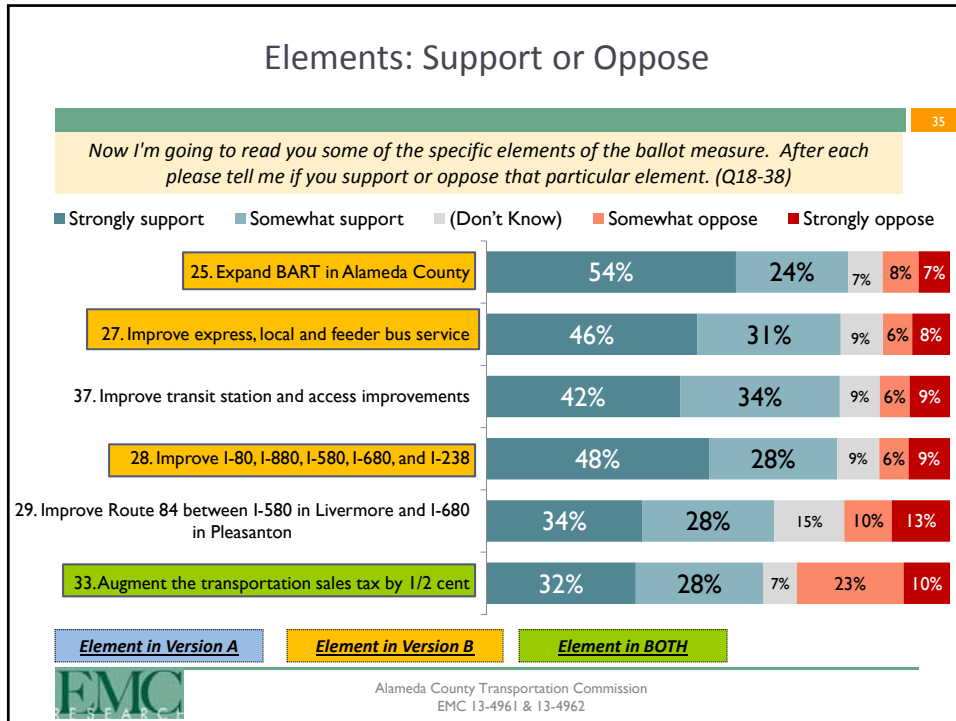


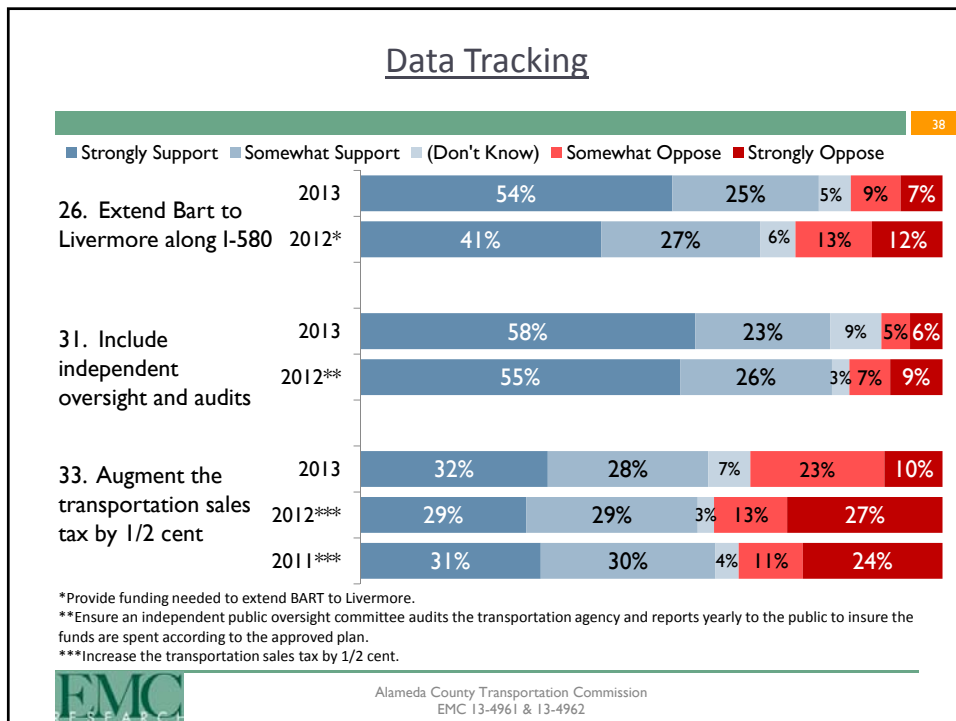
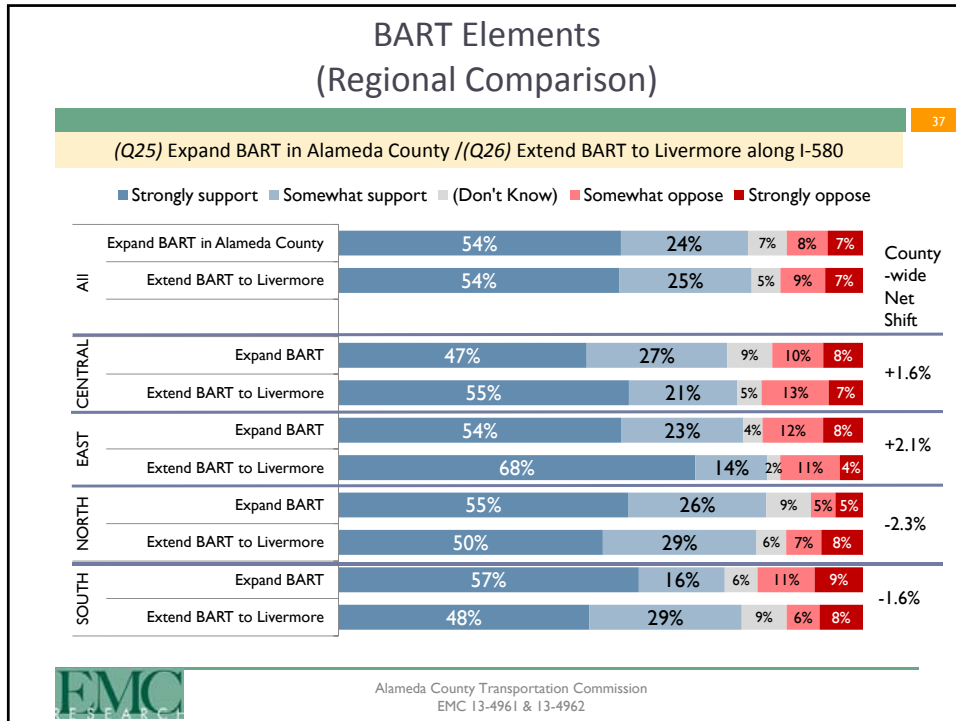


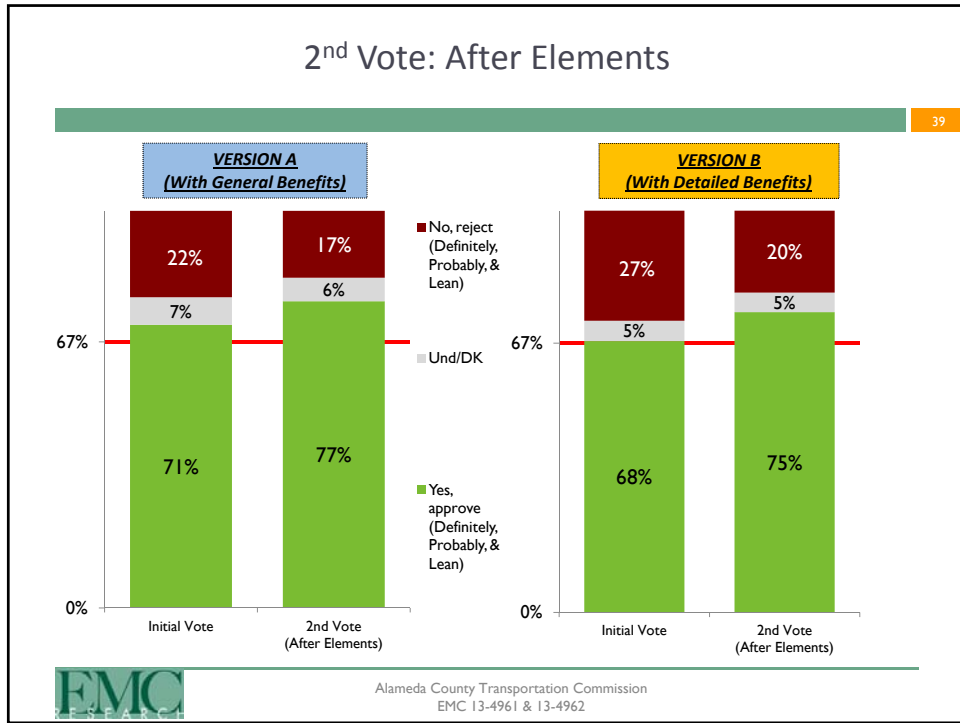
Elements of the Measure



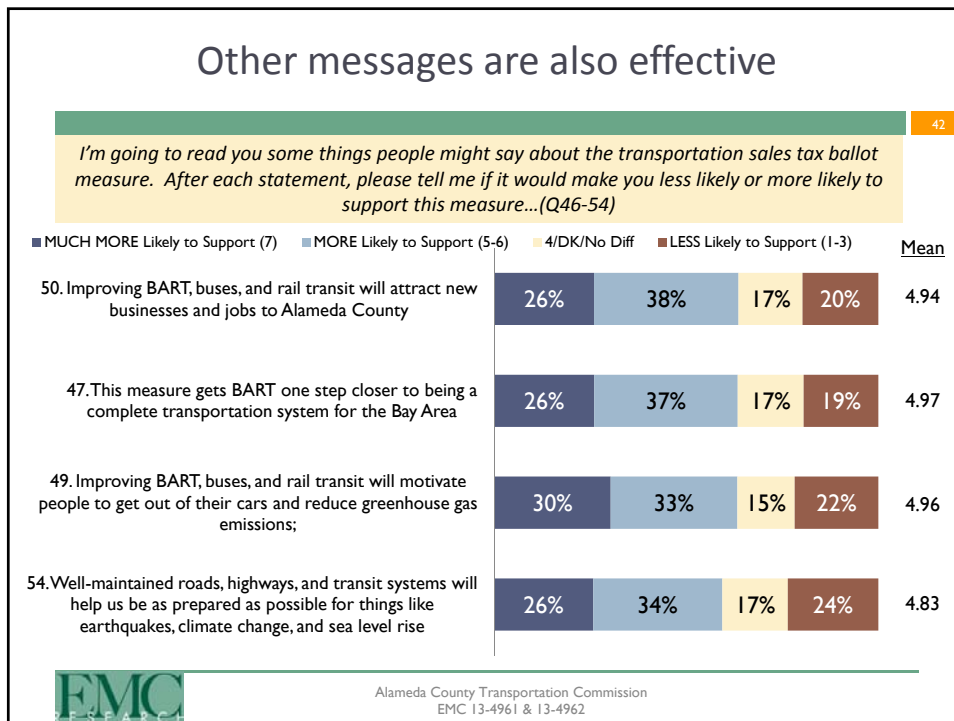
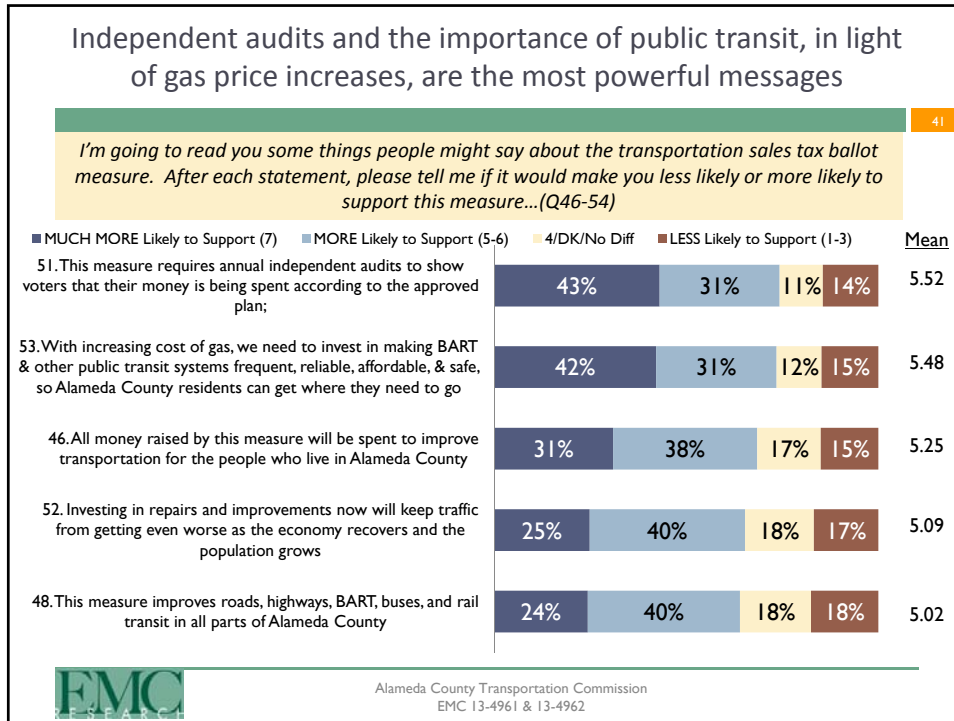








Messages of Support



Top reasons to support measure by region

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North

1. With the increasing cost of gas, we need to invest in making Bart and other public transit systems frequent, reliable, affordable, and safe, so Alameda County residents can get where they need to go. (Q53)
2. This measure requires annual independent audits to show voters that their money is being spent according to the approved plan.(Q51)
3. All money raised by this measure will be spent to improve transportation for the people who live in Alameda County. (Q46)

Central

1. This measure requires annual independent audits to show voters that their money is being spent according to the approved plan.(Q51)
2. With the increasing cost of gas, we need to invest in making Bart and other public transit systems frequent, reliable, affordable, and safe, so Alameda County residents can get where they need to go. (Q53)
3. All money raised by this measure will be spent to improve transportation for the people who live in Alameda County. (Q46)

South

1. This measure requires annual independent audits to show voters that their money is being spent according to the approved plan.(Q51)
2. With the increasing cost of gas, we need to invest in making Bart and other public transit systems frequent, reliable, affordable, and safe, so Alameda County residents can get where they need to go. (Q53)
3. All money raised by this measure will be spent to improve transportation for the people who live in Alameda County. (Q46)

East

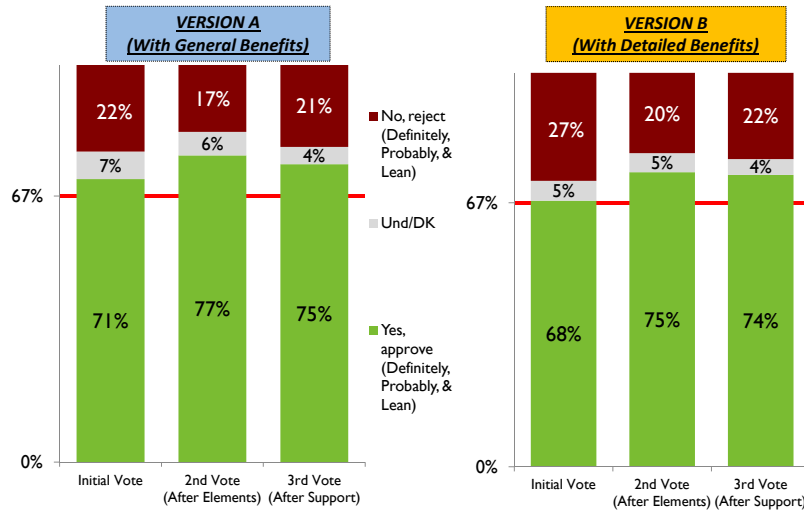
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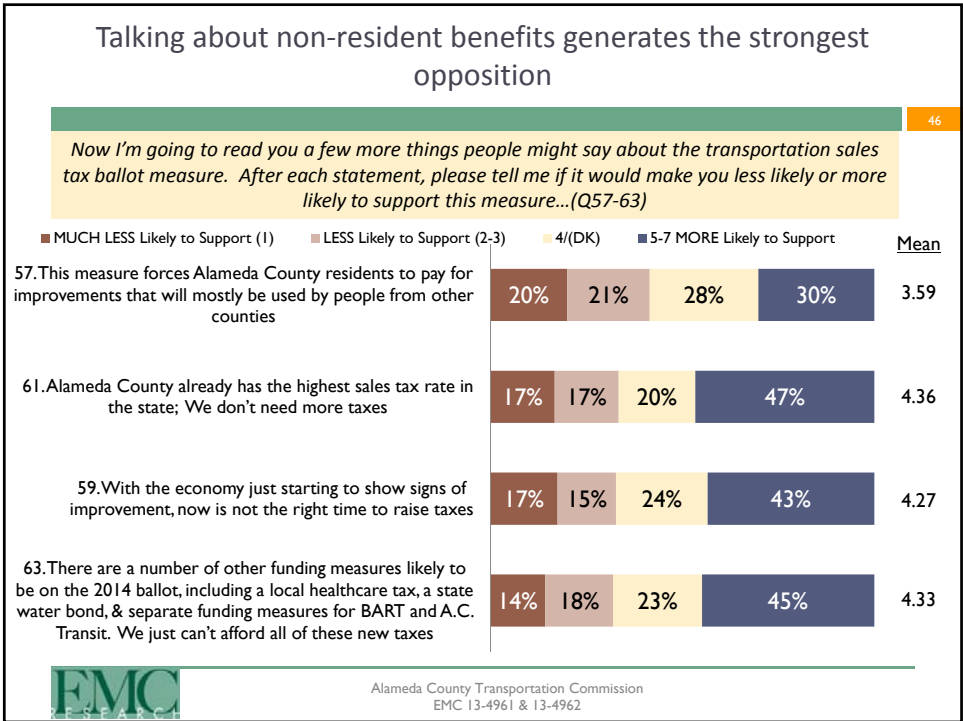
3rd Vote: After Support

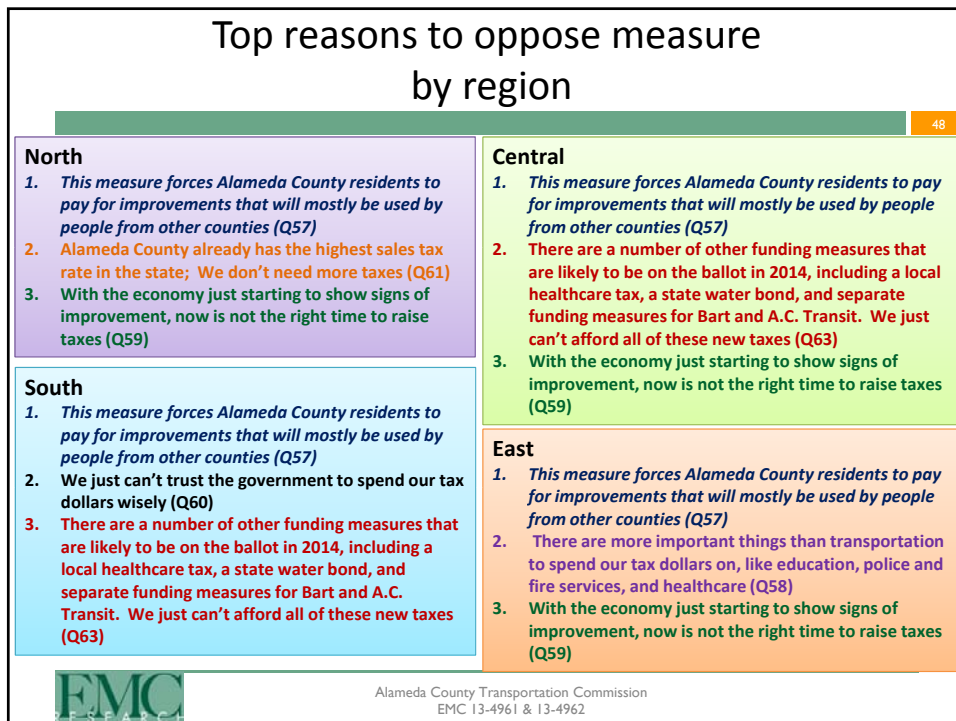
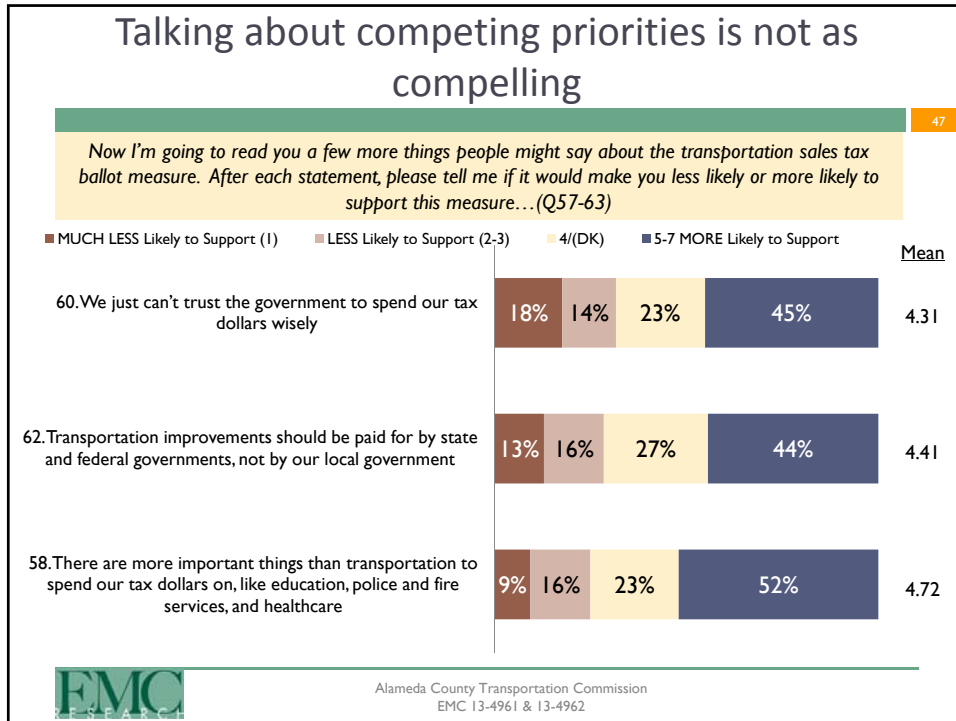
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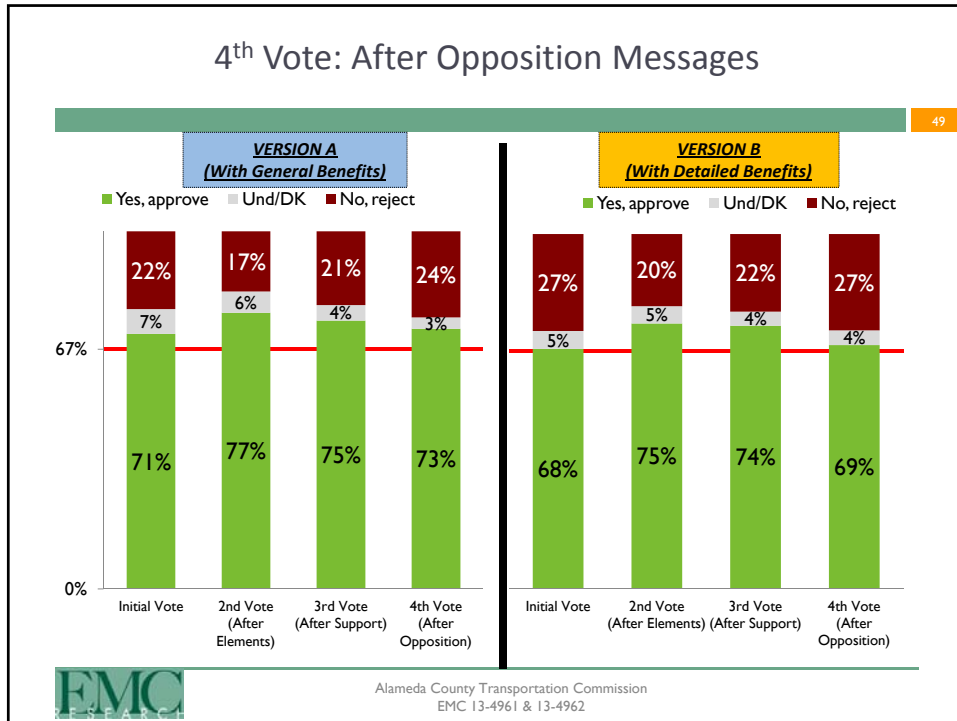


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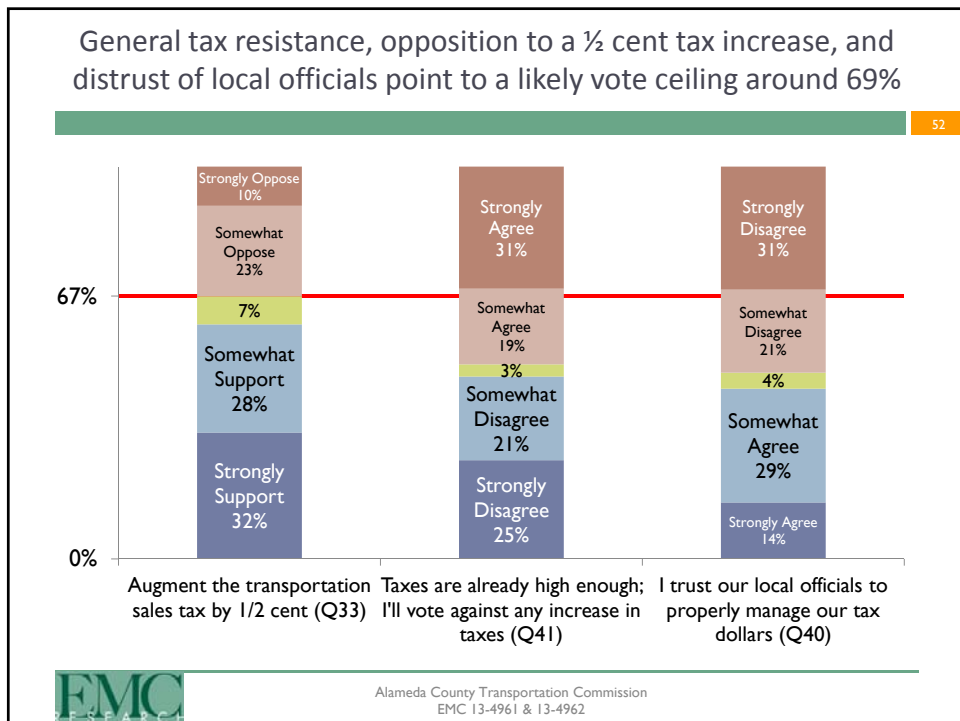
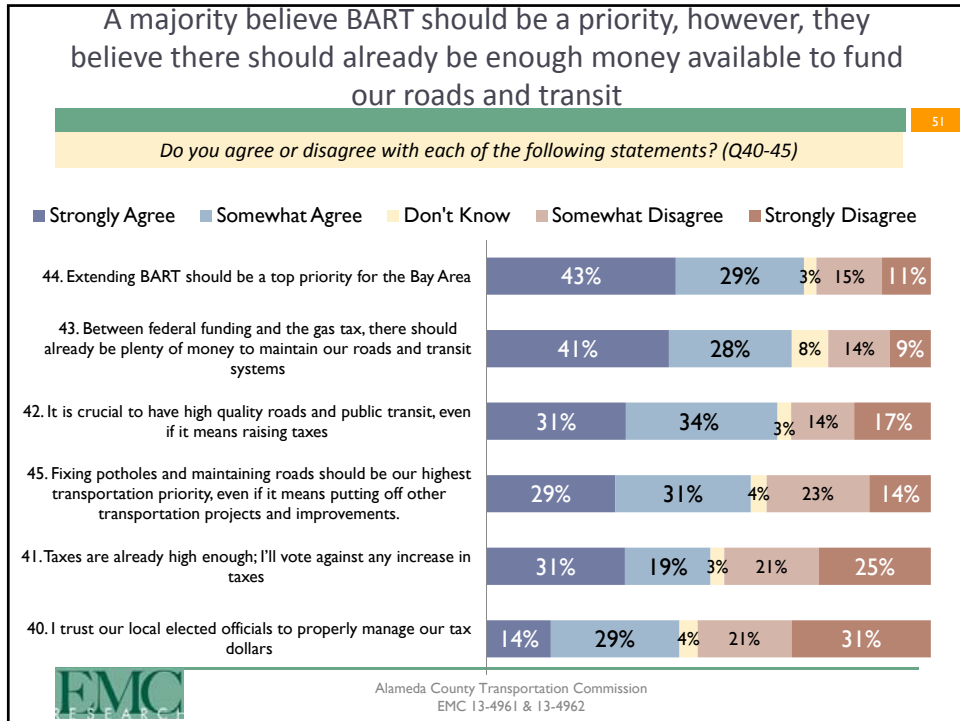
Messages of Opposition







Attitudinal Statements



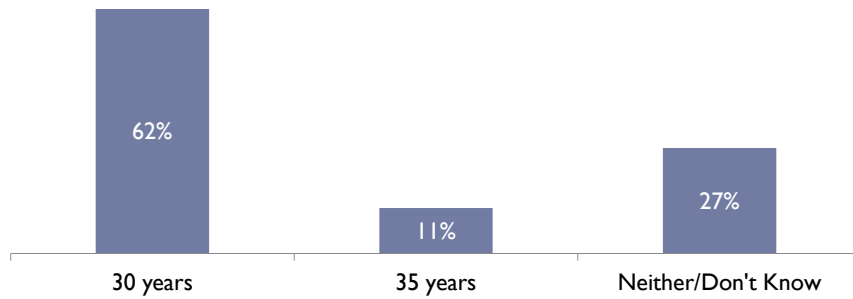
An overwhelming majority believe the measure should expire in 30 years, over 35 years

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(Some/Other) people say this measure should expire after 30 years because that's long enough to fund improvements, but will still allow the voters to decide to stop the funding after 30 years if the money is NOT being spent properly.

(Some/Other) people say the measure should expire after 35 years because this allows for long-term planning for badly needed projects that will really make a difference in this county, but still allows the voters to decide if they want to continue the funding after 35 years.

Having heard this, do you think this measure should expire after 30 years or 35 years? (Q66)



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Issue Environment

Most Important Problem in Alameda County

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4. What is the most important problem facing Alameda County today? (Open-Ended)

Response	Mar. 2011	Oct. 2011	2013
Crime/Personal safety	11%	14%*	27%*
Jobs/Unemployment	16%*	25%*	13%*
Schools/Educational issues	19%*	14%*	13%*
Economical issues/Cost of living	9%	10%	9%
Infrastructure/Traffic	5%	4%	7%
Poverty/homeless	2%	1%	4%
Budget crisis/Budget cuts	14%*	8%	3%
Healthcare	1%	1%	2%
High taxes	3%	3%	2%
Poor leadership	1%	1%	1%
Other	6%	8%	5%
Don't know/ No answer	13%	9%	11%



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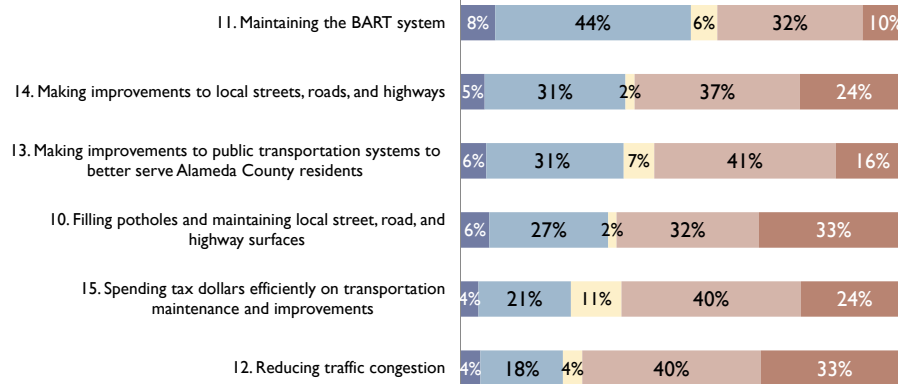
* Indicates Top 3

Most believe Alameda County is doing a good or excellent job maintaining BART; traffic & potholes receive the lowest ratings

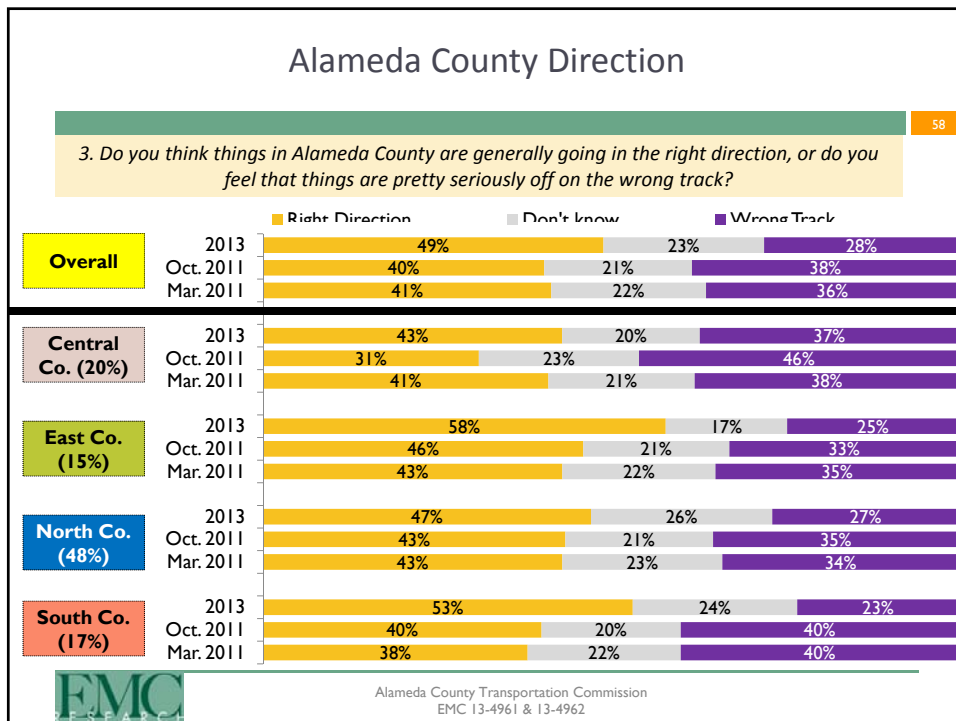
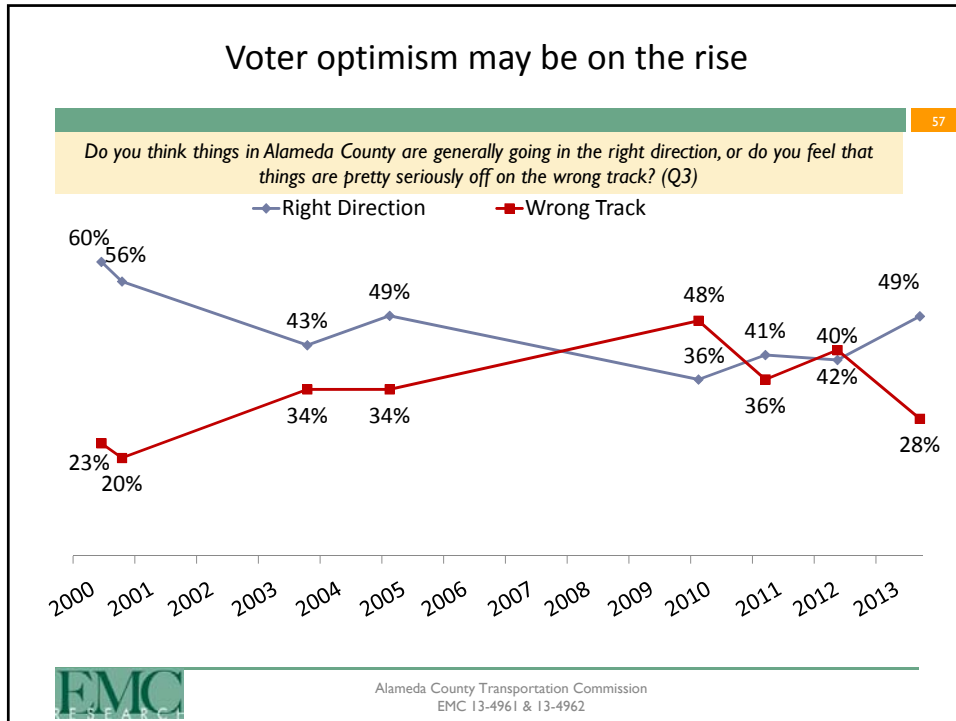
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Thinking about transportation in Alameda County, meaning our local streets, roads, and highways, as well as Bart, buses, and rail systems, please rate the job being done using a scale of excellent, good, only fair, or poor. (Q10-15)

■ Excellent ■ Good ■ Don't Know ■ Only Fair ■ Poor



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Overall Research Findings

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- ▶ Transportation is not a top problem in need of addressing at this time for most voters
- ▶ Most voters do not remember the 2012 measure (or know about Measure B generally)
- ▶ A little over 30% of voters would likely vote against any new or increased tax
 - ▶ The low vote ceiling for an augmentation makes success more difficult and less certain
- ▶ **About two-thirds of Alameda County voters will support authorizing a 30 year plan that augments and extends an existing transportation sales tax**
- ▶ There is widespread support for the major elements of the TEP
 - ▶ In particular voters support the continued expansion of BART
- ▶ Voters want to know there is a detailed and specific plan that constrains how the money will be spent
 - ▶ The exact specific details are *somewhat* less important than communicating that a plan will *prescribe* how the money will be spent
 - ▶ A sunset helps communicate accountability
 - ▶ Alameda County voters need to know that they are the primary beneficiaries of the measure
 - ▶ BART needs to be named specifically as it is not captured by “public transit”



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