

Metropolitan Transportation Commission  
Survey of Bay Area Voters  
Topic: Regional Gas Tax  
**Executive Summary**

Prepared for  
Transit Sustainability Project Select Committee Meeting  
April 11, 2012



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## Methodology

- ▶ Telephone survey (including cell phones) of likely November 2012 voters in Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Solano, and Sonoma Counties
- ▶ 3600 completed interviews
  - ▶ 400 completed in each county
  - ▶ Overall results are proportionally weighted
- ▶ Overall Margin of Error:  $\pm 1.6$  percentage points
- ▶ Margin of Error in Each County:  $\pm 4.9$  percentage points
- ▶ Conducted January 30 – February 26, 2012
- ▶ Interviews in English, Spanish, Cantonese, and Vietnamese

*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%*



Support for a 10 cents per gallon gas tax is well short of the two-thirds supermajority required for passage of ballot measure.

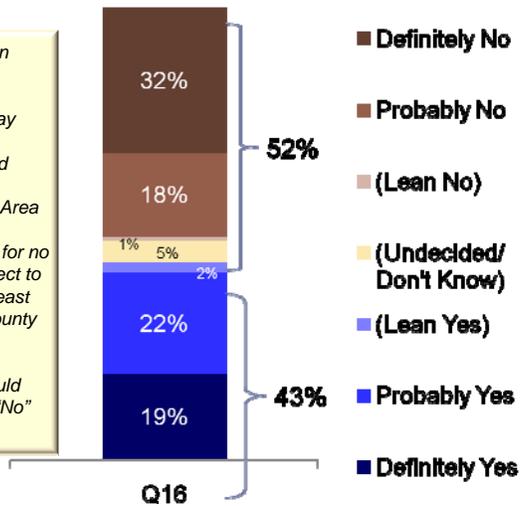
Messaging presented in the poll doesn't move many.

### Less than half of voters initially support the gas tax (2/3 supermajority needed to pass)

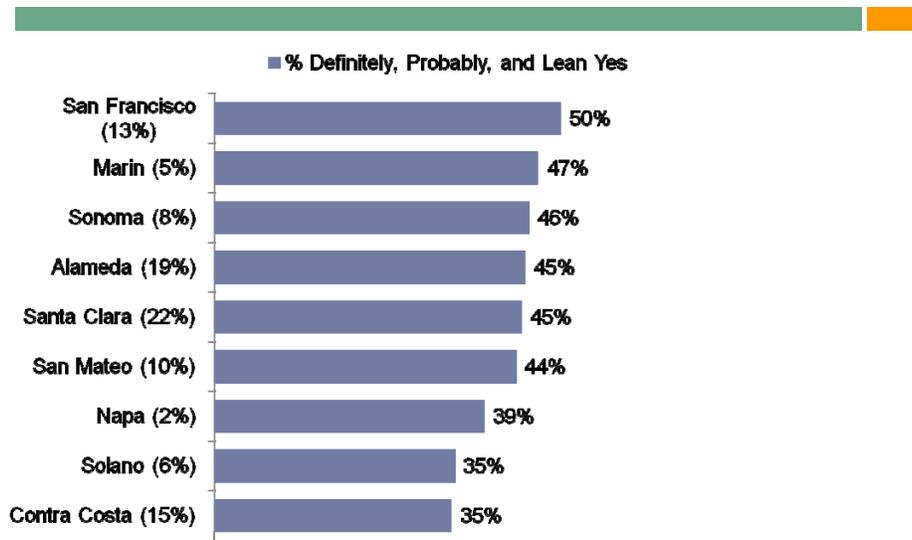
*I'd like to read you a measure that may be on your ballot next year. The measure reads:*

*To improve the efficiency and reliability of Bay Area public transit, make repairs and safety improvements to local streets and roads, and provide other regional transportation improvements, shall the San Francisco Bay Area Metropolitan Transportation Commission implement a 10-cent per gallon gasoline tax for no longer than 20 years with expenditures subject to strict citizen oversight and requiring that at least 95 percent of revenue generated by each county be spent on benefits for that county?*

*If this measure were on the ballot today, would you vote "Yes" to approve this measure, or "No" to reject it? (Q13)*



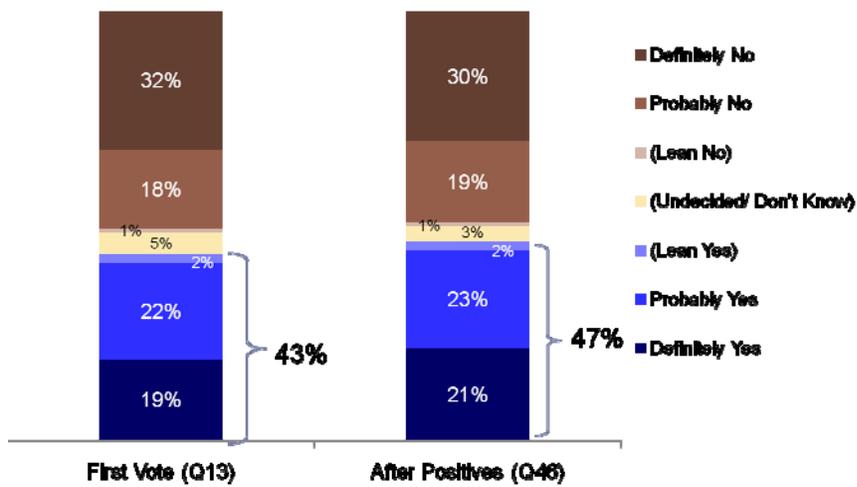
## Support is below the two-thirds threshold in all counties



(Parenthetical percentages indicate percent of the voter population)



## Support is only slightly higher after voters hear projects and positive messages

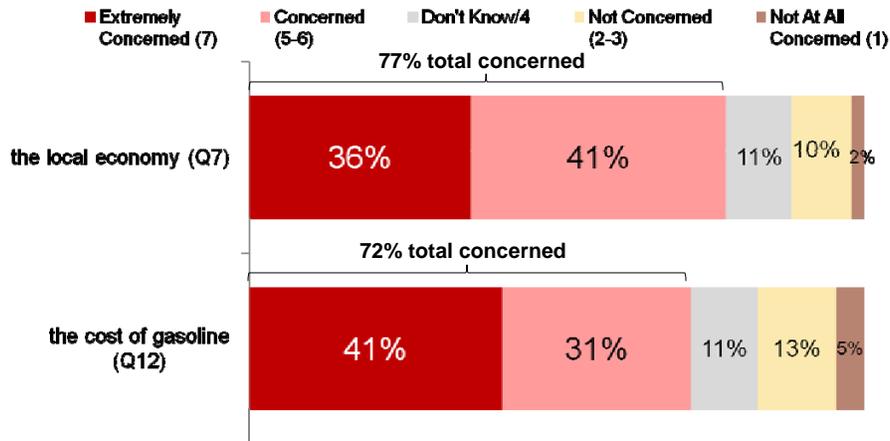


Concern about the economy, gas prices, and taxes are likely contributors to high opposition.

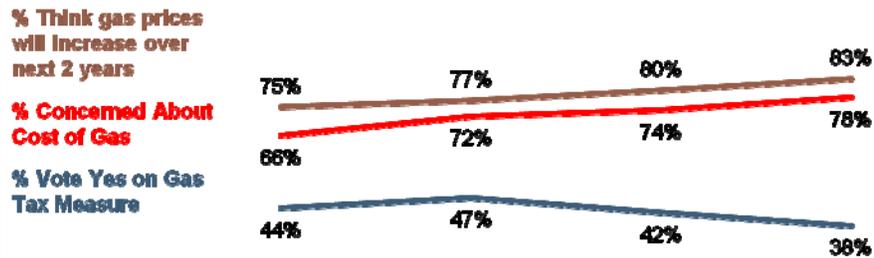
This environment may be different in a future election.

### The local economy and the cost of gasoline are major concerns of voters today

On a scale from 1 to 7 where 1 is not at all concerned and 7 is extremely concerned, how concerned are you about each of the following right now: (Q6-Q12)



## Attitudes about gas prices and the measure changed week to week during interviewing



(Average gas price/gallon in CA at beginning of week)	1/30-2/5 (\$3.74)	2/6-2/12 (\$3.76)	2/13-2/19 (\$3.84)	2/20-2/26 (\$4.04)
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\*Gas prices increased a total of \$.55 per gallon from the first to the last day of interviewing.  
 \*Average CA gas prices are from the U.S. Energy Information Administration.



The ballot question will need to reflect voter priorities.

Voters need a reason to support a regional measure.

## The ballot question language could be improved

### Ballot question tested

To:

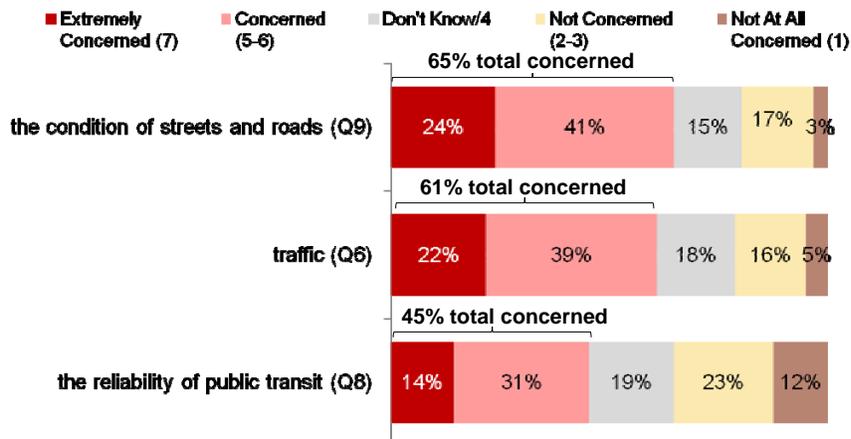
- improve the efficiency and reliability of Bay Area public transit
- make repairs and safety improvements to local streets and roads, and
- provide other regional transportation improvements

shall the San Francisco Bay Area Metropolitan Transportation Commission implement a 10-cent per gallon gasoline tax for no longer than 20 years with expenditures subject to strict citizen oversight and requiring that at least 95 percent of revenue generated by each county be spent on benefits for that county?



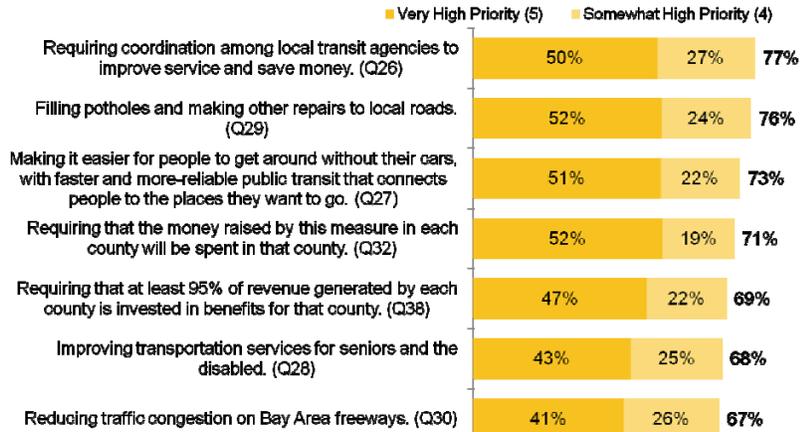
## Fewer than two-thirds are concerned about road conditions and traffic

On a scale from 1 to 7 where 1 is not at all concerned and 7 is extremely concerned, how concerned are you about each of the following right now: (Q6-Q12)



## Cost-saving transit coordination and road repair top the priorities voiced by two-thirds of voters

I'd like to read you some of the components that may be included in this measure. For each one, please tell me how high a priority it is for you. Please use a new scale from one to five, where one means it is not a priority at all and five means it is a very high priority. (Q23-Q39)



## Coordination to improve services and save money is a priority for all counties

### "Requiring coordination among local transit agencies to improve service and save money"

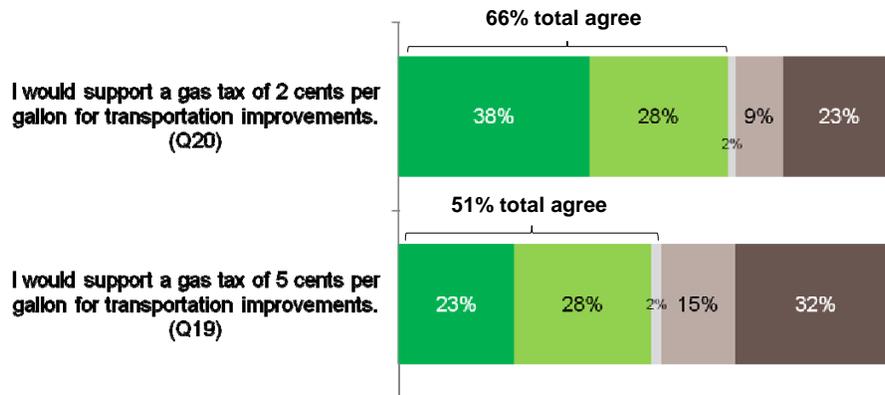


Nearly two-thirds have a positive reaction to a 2-cent tax, but results are influenced by respondents having heard the 10-cent measure first.

After hearing the proposed 10¢ per gallon measure, lower amounts sound better

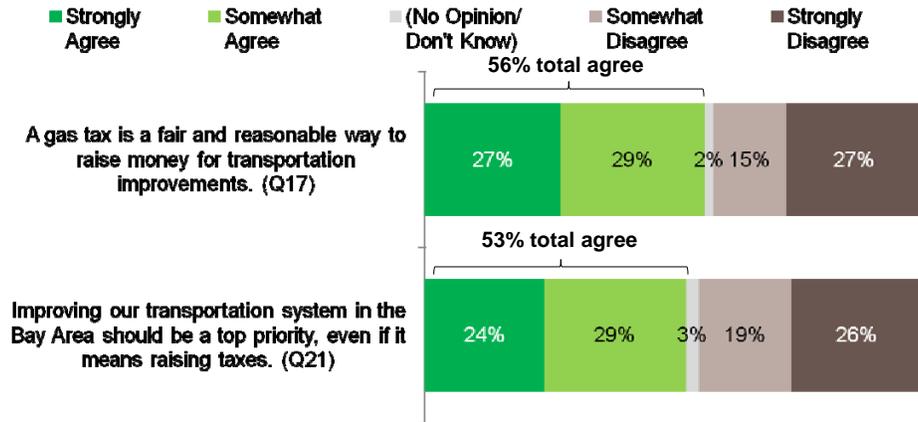
Question order was randomized. All were heard after the initial \$.10 per gallon proposed measure

■ Strongly Agree   
 ■ Somewhat Agree   
 ■ (No Opinion/ Don't Know)   
 ■ Somewhat Disagree   
 ■ Strongly Disagree



## Although many indicate support for a 2-cent per gallon tax, conceptual support for a gas tax is low

Question order was randomized.



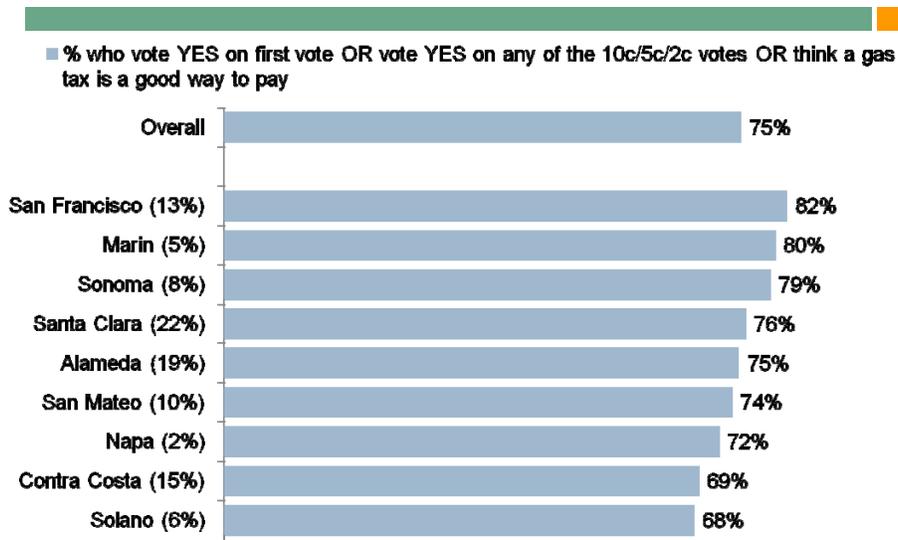
MTC Voter Survey EMC 12-4524

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Analysis of the poll data indicates that success could be possible someday.

We will need to understand more about voter hesitancy and motivators.

75% indicate some level of support for a gas tax at least once during the survey



(Parenthetical percentages indicate percent of the voter population)



## Laying the Groundwork

- ▶ Develop specific regional reforms that could result in cost savings and improved transit service that could be explained and tested with voters and stakeholders.
- ▶ Build coalitions with likely supporters and reach out to potential sources of opposition.
- ▶ Conduct focus groups to gain qualitative understanding of voter opinions on a gas tax.
- ▶ Develop messaging to move voter opinion on using a gas tax to generate revenue.
- ▶ If a November 2012 ballot measure is still a consideration, conduct a poll to test a 2-cent measure.

