

Agenda Item 5



METROPOLITAN
TRANSPORTATION
COMMISSION

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Memorandum

TO: Policy Advisory Council

DATE: March 6, 2013

FR: Andrew B. Fremier

W.I. 1236

RE: Regional Express Lane Network: Environmental Justice Update

In past discussions, the Council has expressed interest in environmental justice and, in particular, how express lanes might affect low-income travelers. The attached presentation slides provide an update on how the Network may affect low income travelers, based on:

- A review of data from express lanes in operation, which is the best indicator of how express lanes are likely to actually work in the end.
- Results from focus groups and intercept surveys conducted by MTC in November 2012. These efforts focused on low-income and minority communities adjacent to the routes in the 270-mile Express Lane Network that MTC has authority to operate in Alameda, Contra Costa and Solano counties. (A summary report is under development and will be available shortly.)

This staff presentation addresses considerations as they may relate to network-wide policies and practices, such as toll tag policies and public education. These are distinguished from potential project-specific impacts from traffic, noise and air quality, which will be addressed in the environmental review process as described below under “Next Steps”.

A few key features of the Regional Express Lane Network provide context for considering the impacts of express lanes on all travelers, including low-income travelers:

Benefits to carpools and buses. Bus riders and carpools stand to benefit from the Network, which will close gaps in the existing carpool network. The Express Lane Network corridors offer extensive express bus service and serve long commutes with large numbers of carpools and vanpools. Completing the carpool network is an effective way to improve travel conditions for bus riders and carpools.

Choice. Use of the express lane is a choice that travelers make on a trip-by-trip basis. Data from existing express lanes show that, regardless of income levels, travelers value having the opportunity to pay for a reliable, congestion-free trip when they need it. Feedback from MTC’s outreach in November reinforces this finding.

Fastrak[®] Policies

Since tolls will be collected using the FasTrak[®] electronic toll collection system, drivers will need to have FasTrak[®] accounts to use the Network. Furthermore, as explained in the express lane presentation to the Council in February, the recommended approach for managing violations is to install a video-

based system similar to the one that BATA uses on the toll bridges today. Under such a system, all vehicles in the express lanes, including carpools, would be required to have a FasTrak[®] toll tag. This possibility caused staff to (1) review the policies and fees for FasTrak[®] in comparison with other toll agencies and (2) address the topic of FasTrak[®] in the November 2012 outreach. The attached slides include a summary of this comparison.

Next Steps

Decisions affecting network-wide policies and practices associated with implementation of the Express Lane Network will be made starting this summer and up to opening of the first express lanes in 2015. There will be opportunities for staff to return to the Council as details are developed on topics of particular interest to the Council. If approved by MTC, the Bay Area Infrastructure Financing Authority (BAIFA) will be responsible for policies specific to the Express Lane Network. However, BATA will remain the venue for policies related to FasTrak[®] accounts.

Separately, the project-level environmental process under the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) includes an assessment to determine if a project would have disproportionately high and adverse impacts on environmental justice communities from factors such as construction, noise, traffic or air quality. As explained in the February 2013 staff presentation, MTC has initiated environmental studies for an initial set of projects that would convert existing carpool lanes to express lanes on I-880, I-680 south of Walnut Creek, and westbound approaches to the Bay Bridge, San Mateo Bridge and Dumbarton Bridge. Staff expects to complete the environmental studies for these projects at the end of this year.

MTC EXPRESS LANE NETWORK

Environmental Justice Update

MTC Policy Advisory Council
March 13, 2013

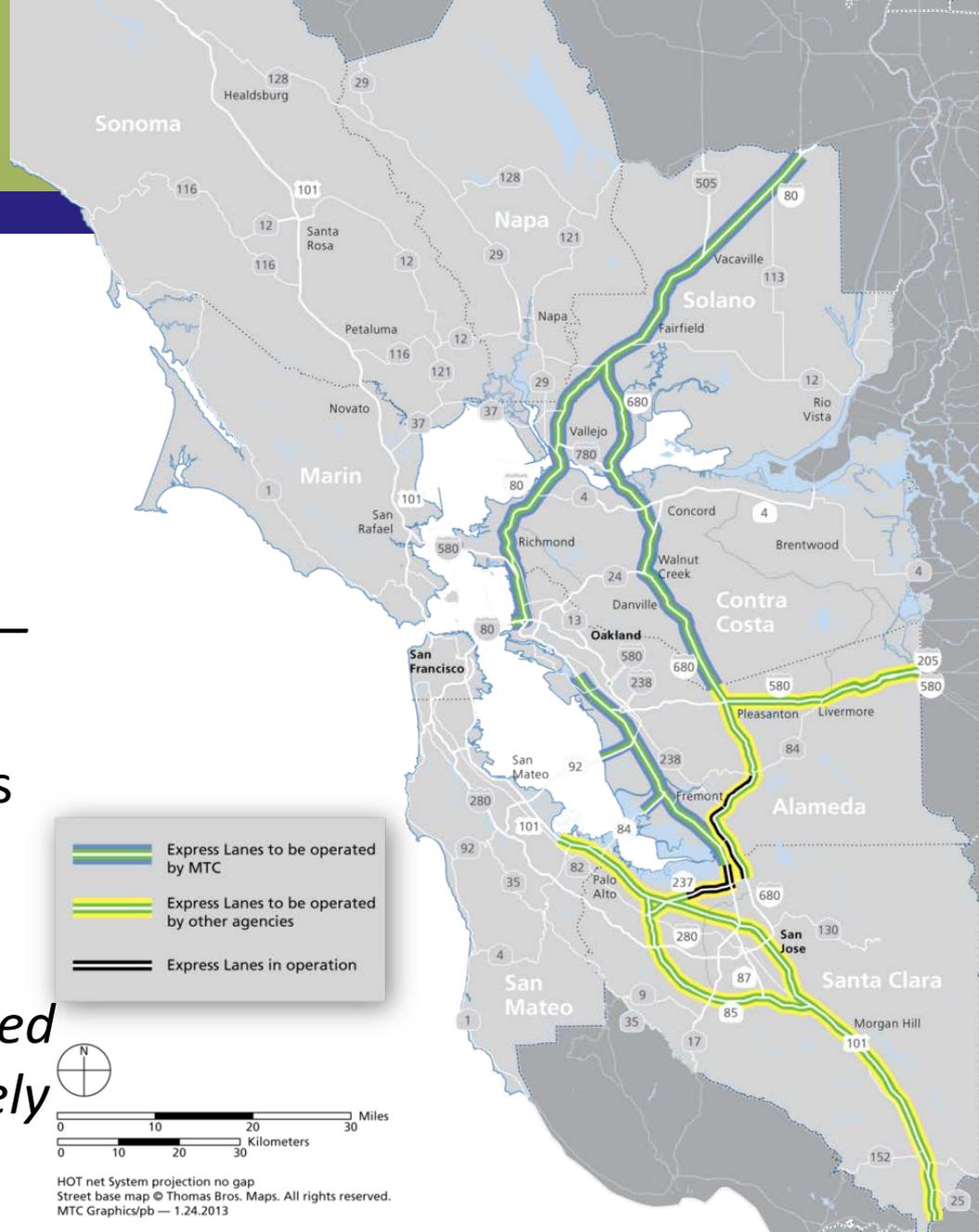


Bay Area Express Lanes

550 miles total

- MTC — 270 miles
(Oct. 2011 CTC action)
- Alameda CMA & Sunol JPA — 90 miles
- Santa Clara — VTA 190 miles

Although there are several operators, parties are committed to making the system completely seamless for drivers



You Don't Have to Pay to Benefit

The Express Lane Network

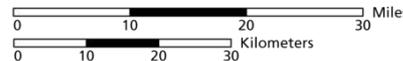
- Connects HOV lanes to serve buses & carpools better
- Increases HOV lane reliability through better incident detection (cameras, speed sensors, etc.)
- Uses existing capacity more efficiently
- Shifts vehicles from regular lanes



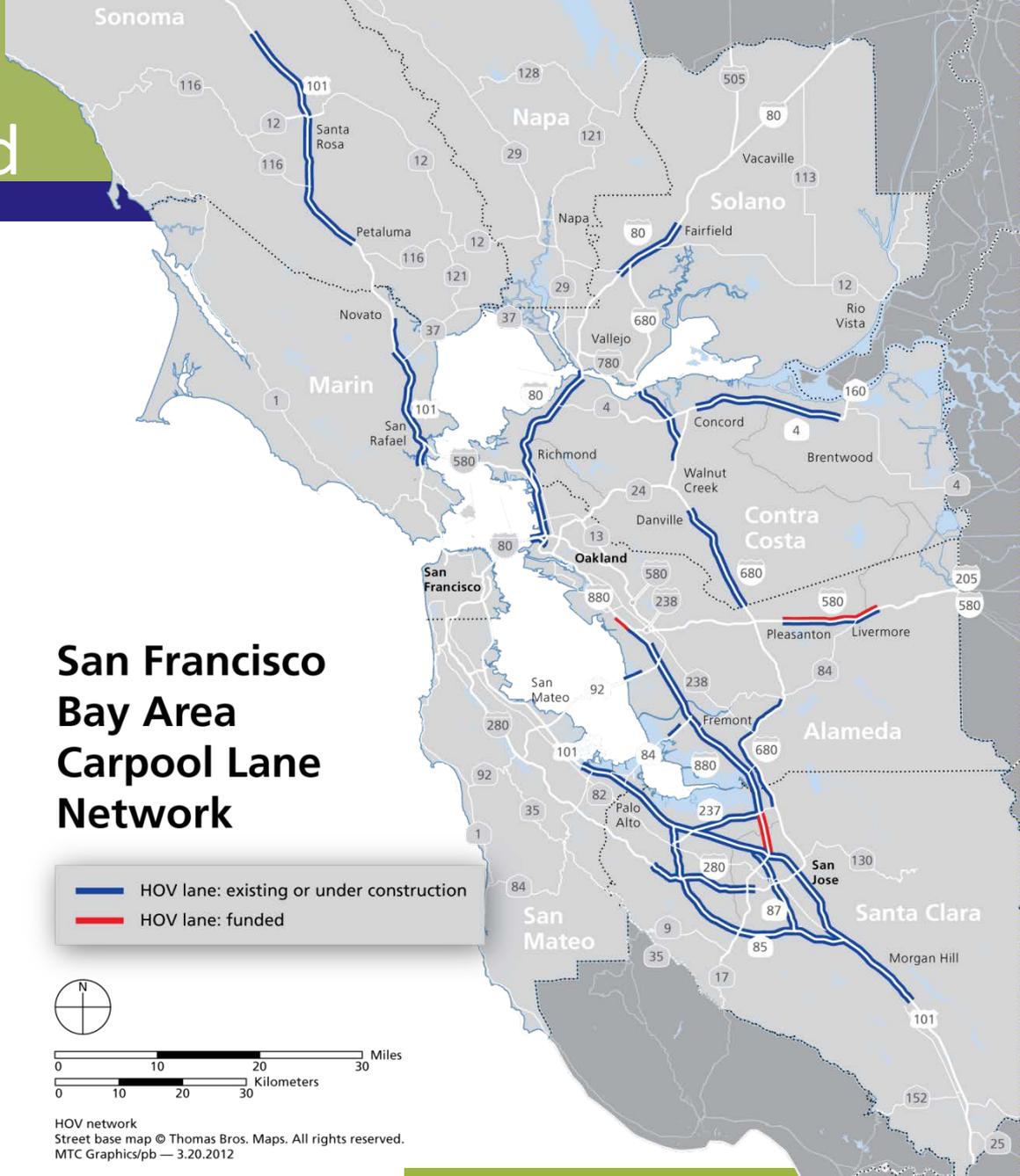
The Existing HOV System is Fragmented

- 450 miles built in the past 20+ years
- Goal: promote carpooling and express bus to reduce emissions
- Funding is limited, making it hard to close gaps

San Francisco Bay Area Carpool Lane Network



HOV network
Street base map © Thomas Bros. Maps. All rights reserved.
MTC Graphics/pb — 3.20.2012

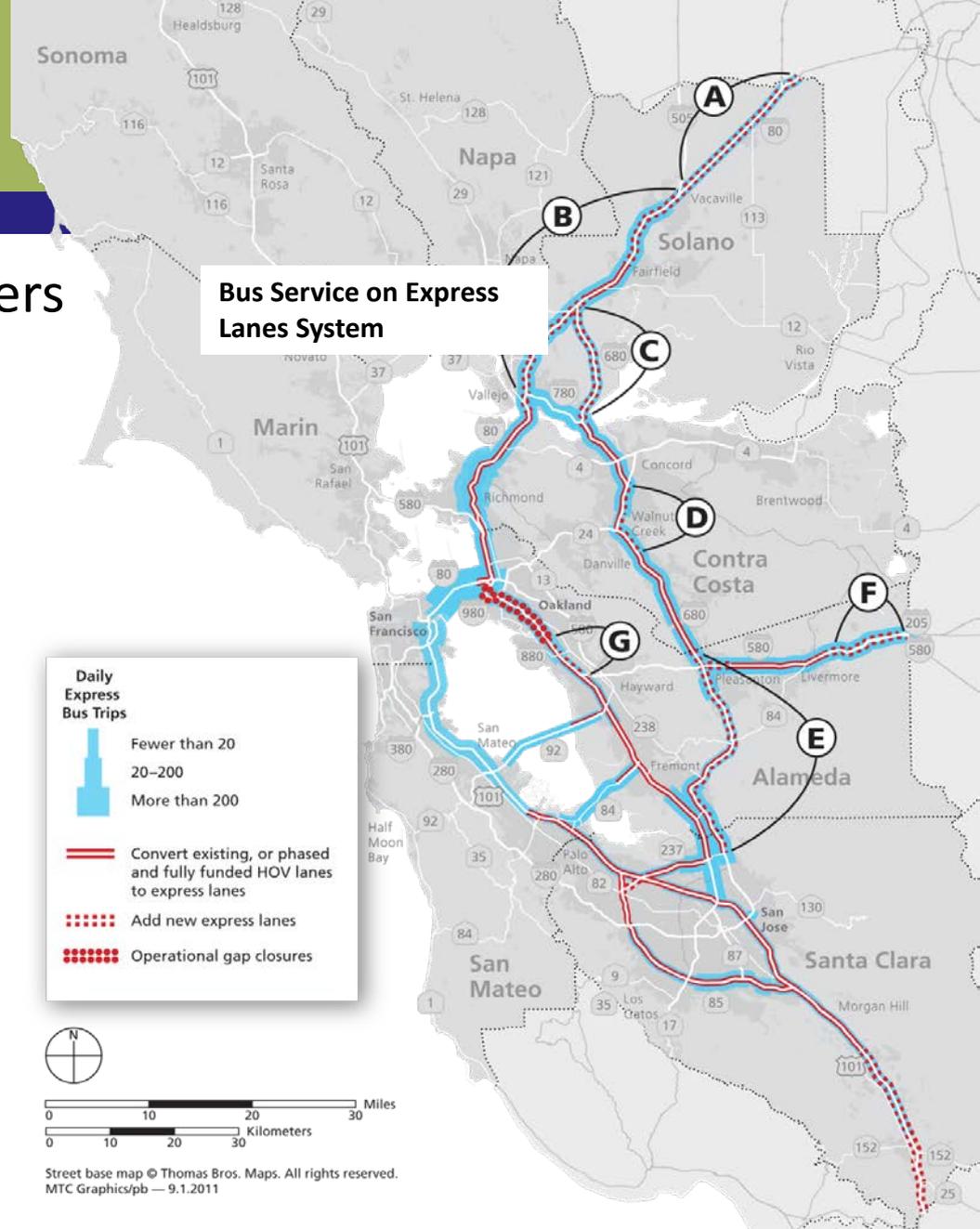


Benefits to Buses

By closing gaps, the Network offers

- Faster, more reliable travel
- Incentive for more bus service

Route	Peak Hour Bus Trips (current service)
A. I-80 Yolo County to I-505	4
B. I-80 I-505 to Carquinez Bridge	40
C. I-680 Gold Hill Rd. to I-780	4
D. I-680 Route 242 to North Main St.	40
E. I-680 Alcosta Blvd. to SR 237	4
F. I-580 Greenville to San Joaquin County	40
G. I-880 Hegenberger to Lewelling	30

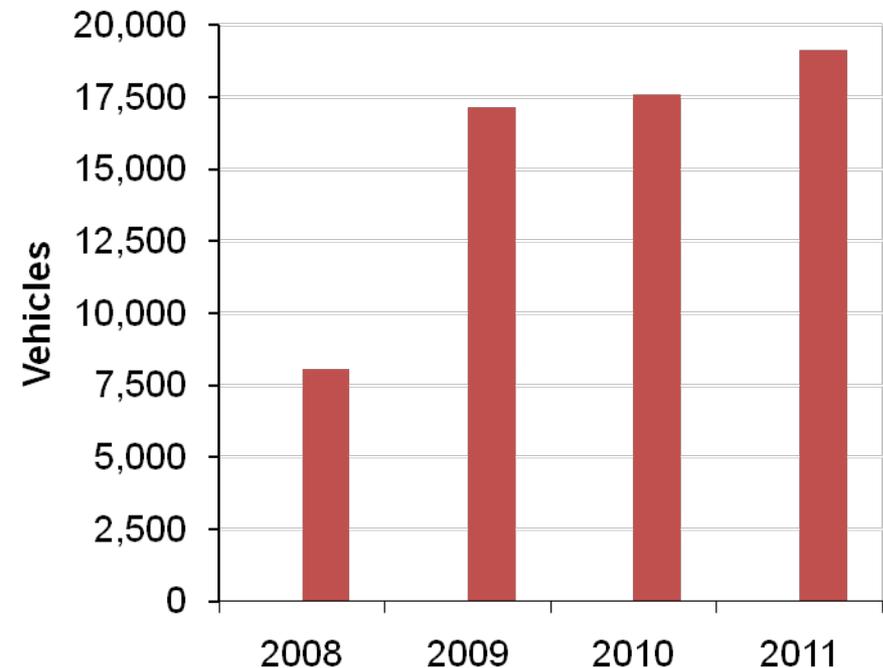


Benefits to Carpools

- Connected Network serves existing and new.
- Number of paid vehicles will be limited so they do not congest the lanes.
- Carpooling has increased on I-15 in San Diego and SR-91 in Orange County.

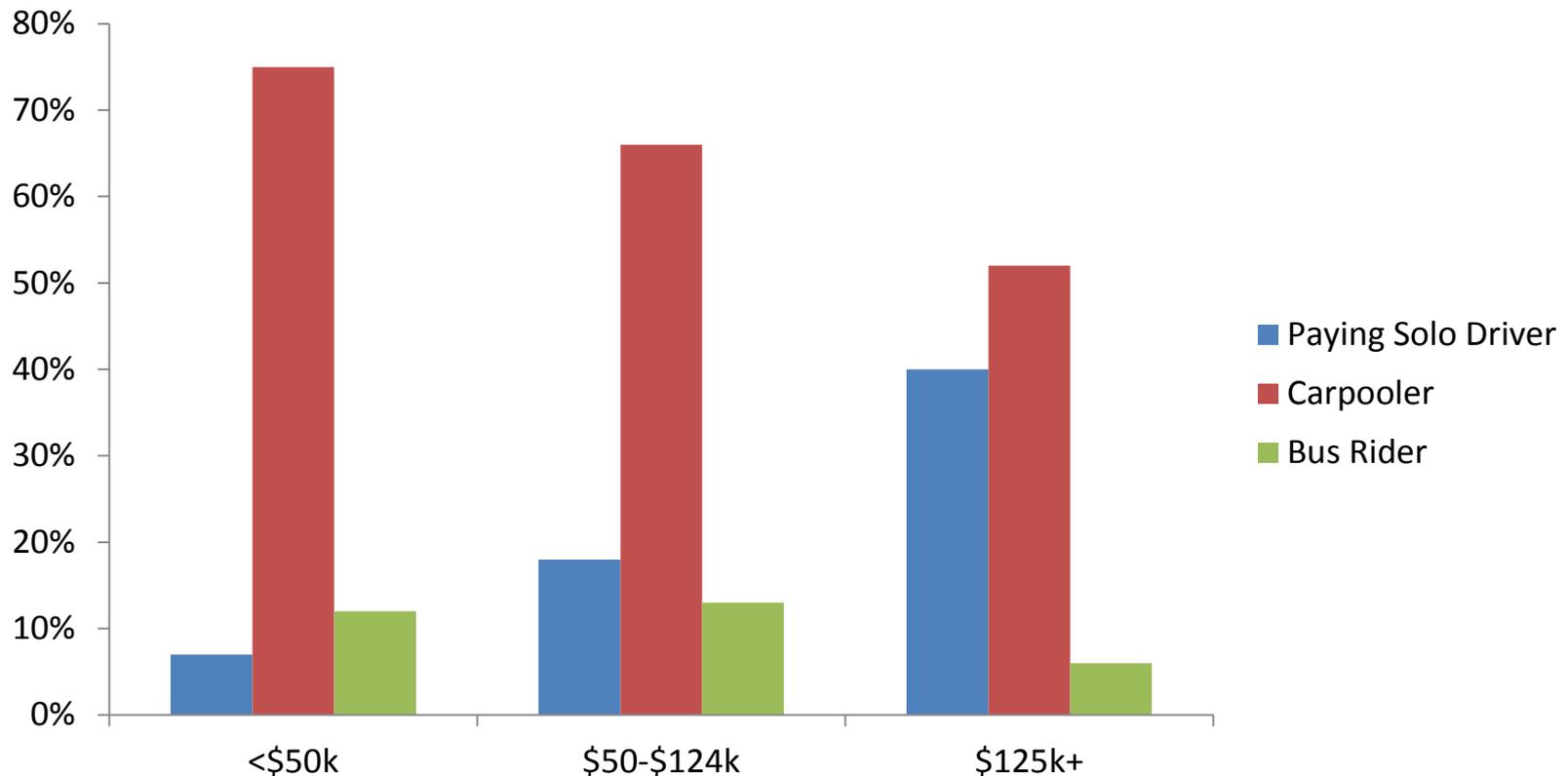


Use by Carpools on I-15 San Diego Since Express Lane Expansion



Most Low-Income Users Carpool in the Express Lane

Among MnPass users, most lowest-income users carpool in the express lane, while most highest-income users pay to drive solo



Source: MnPass Evaluation Attitudinal Panel Survey, NuStats (August 2006)

Express Lanes Offer Choice

- Paying is a choice
- Use it only when you most need it
- Drivers of all income levels appreciate choice
- Most drivers use occasionally, not daily

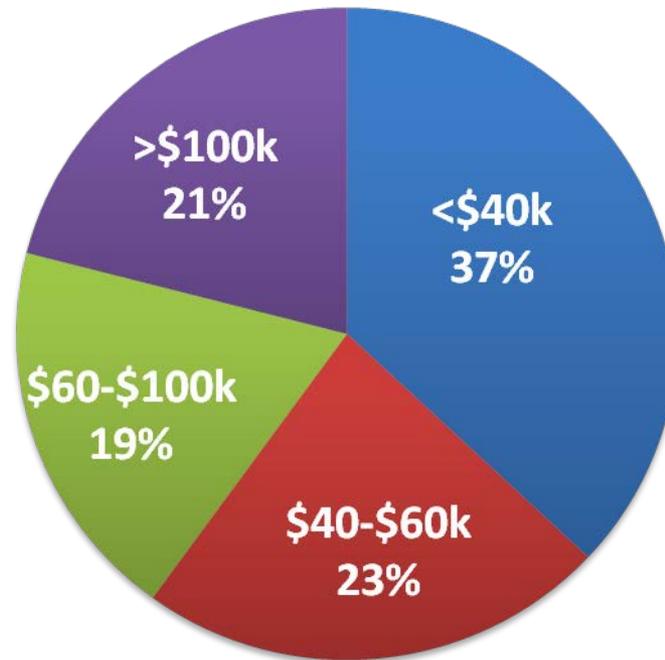
Most people (approximately 88 percent) said that they use the HOT lanes to avoid congestion in the general purpose lanes or make a faster trip when they really need it.

-SR 167 HOT Lanes Pilot Project: Third Annual Performance Summary May 2008 – April 2011, Washington State Department of Transportation. (2011)

All Income Groups Use Express Lanes

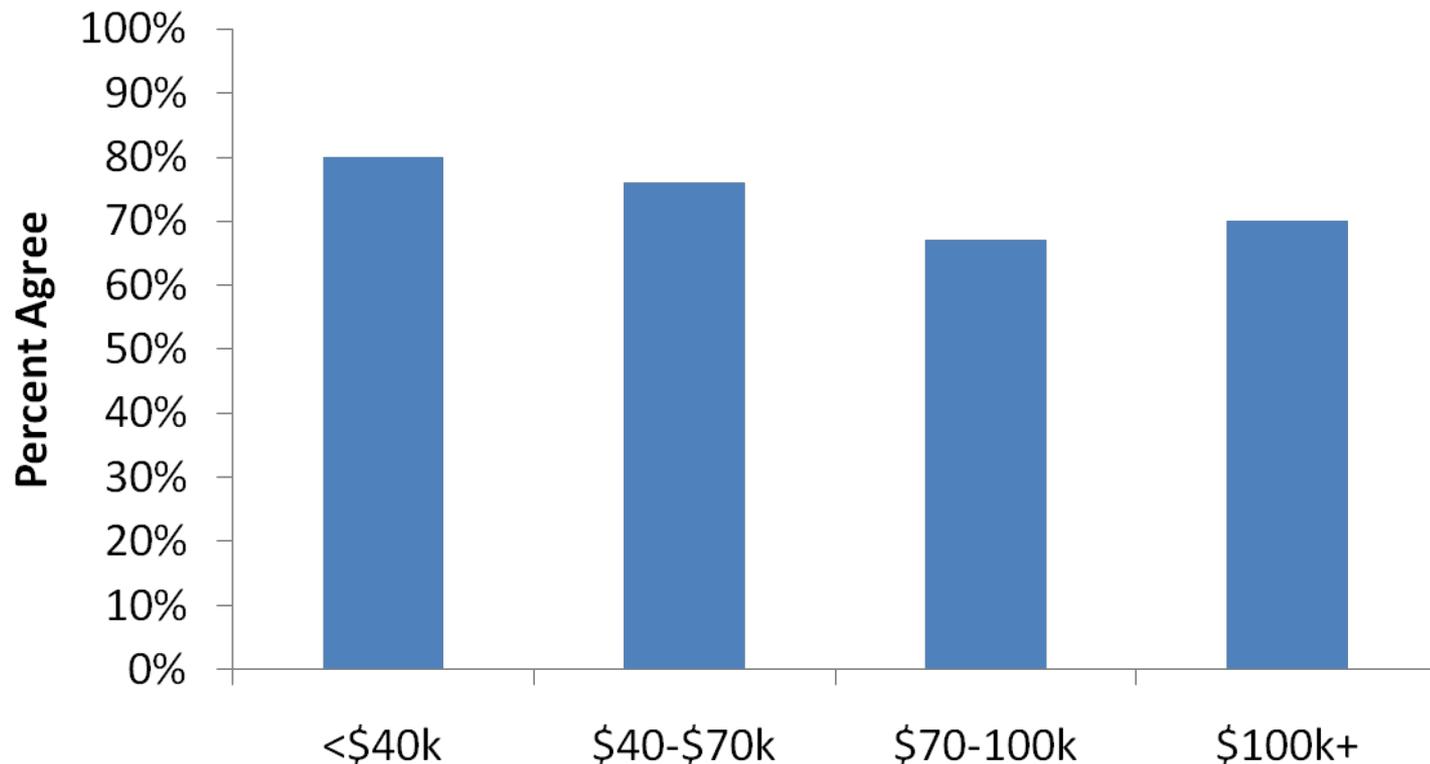
Higher-income households travel by car more frequently than lower- and middle-income households, but use of toll lanes is found across all groups

SR-91 Orange County, CA
Annual Household Income Peak Period Express Lane Users (1999 study)



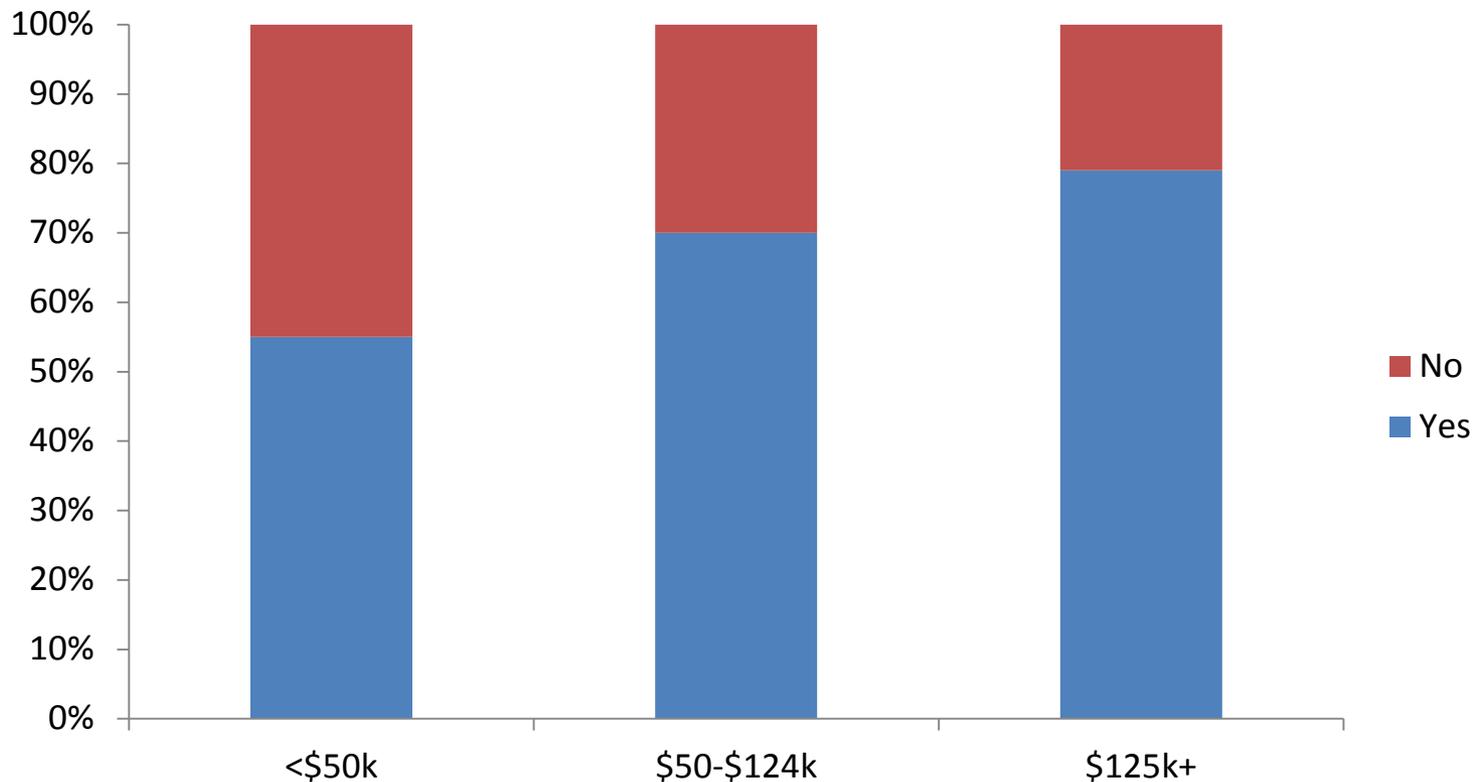
Support is High Among All Income Groups

Of motorists using the I-15 corridor in San Diego, 80% of those with income under \$40K agreed that people driving alone should be able to use HOV lanes for a fee.



Use of Express Lanes by Income

Among travelers on Minnesota's I-394, a majority of respondents have used the express lanes (MnPass) at least once

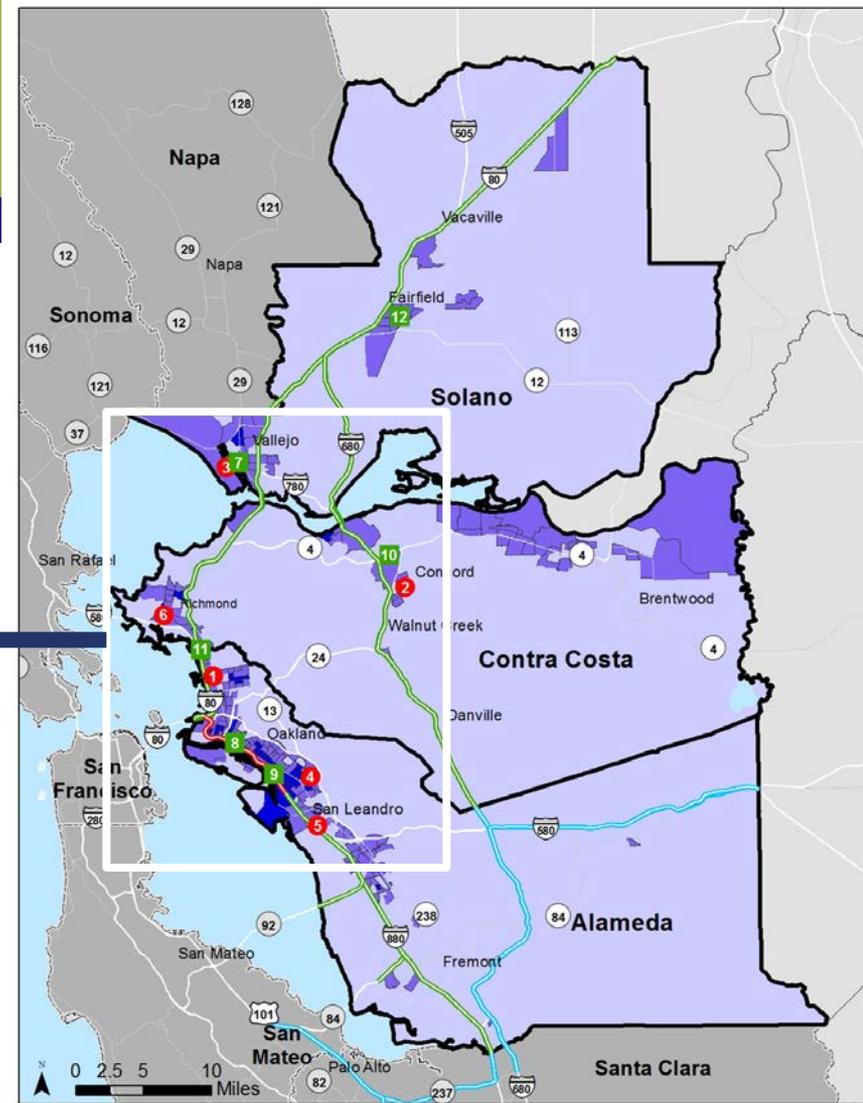
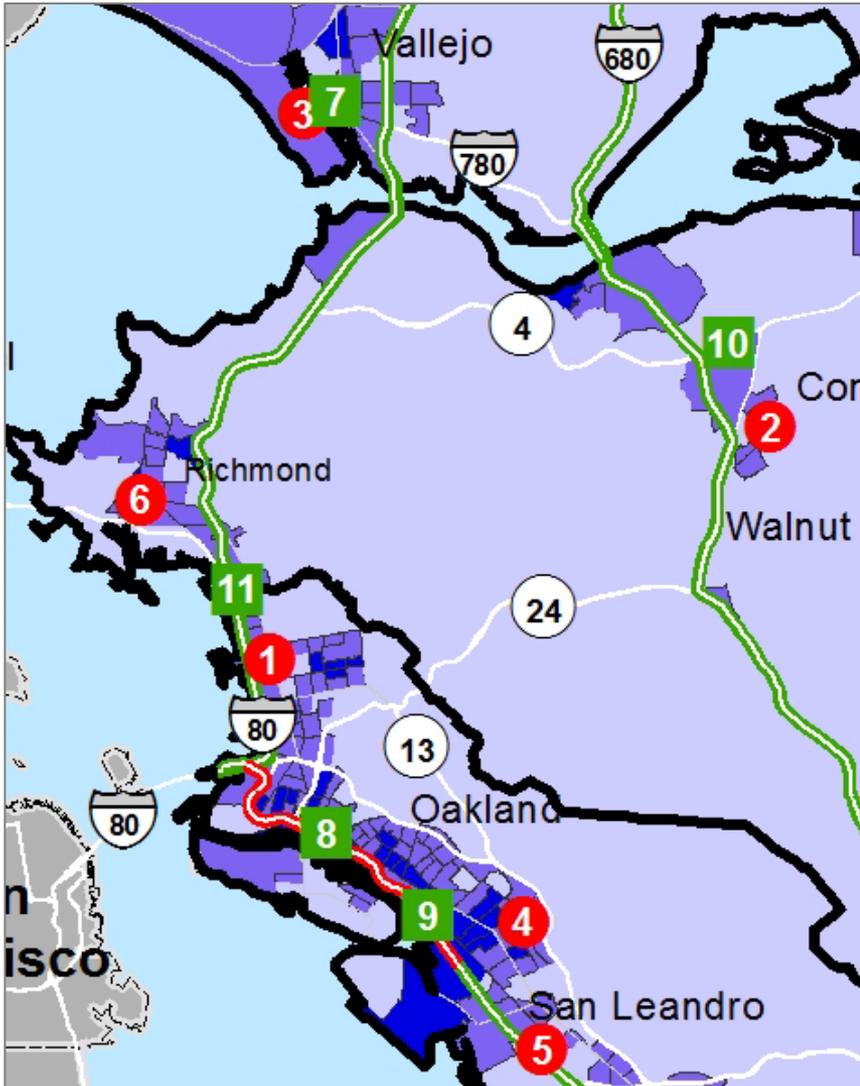


MTC Outreach

- Outreach to Environmental Justice (EJ) Communities in November 2012
 - 132 Intercept Surveys
 - 6 Focus Groups



Targeted Outreach



Legend

- Focus Group Locations
- Intercept Survey Locations

Percent of Individuals Below 200% of Poverty Level by Census Tract

- Less than 30%
- 30 to 60%
- Greater than 60%

Outreach Findings

- Similar findings to other regions before opening express lanes
- EJ populations have similar perceptions as general population
 - Choice is important
 - Recognize benefits of occasional use
 - Skeptical about enforcement and congestion reduction
 - Wary of technology

“The benefit is that you have the option to use it.”

-Alameda County focus group participant (November 2012)

“Family is first...If I could spend \$20 more a week so I could not miss my kids growing...and cook a real dinner, it’s worth it.”

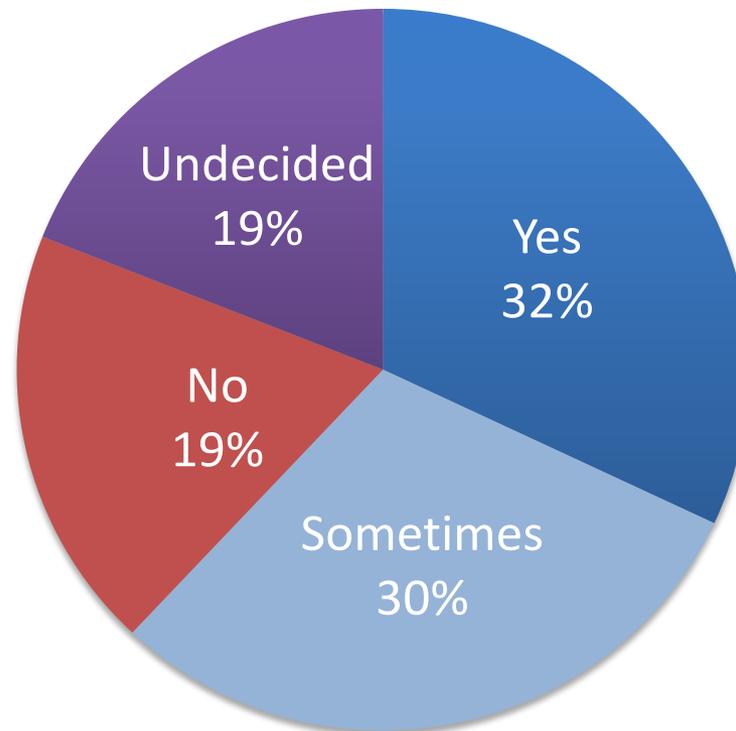
-Alameda County focus group participant (November 2012)

“Personally, that would benefit me. When I am rushing, I wouldn’t have to look for more people to come with me. It’s a small toll instead of a ticket.”

-Contra Costa County focus group participant (December 2012)

Willingness to Pay to Avoid Congestion

Would you be willing to pay a fee to avoid congestion when driving on freeways?

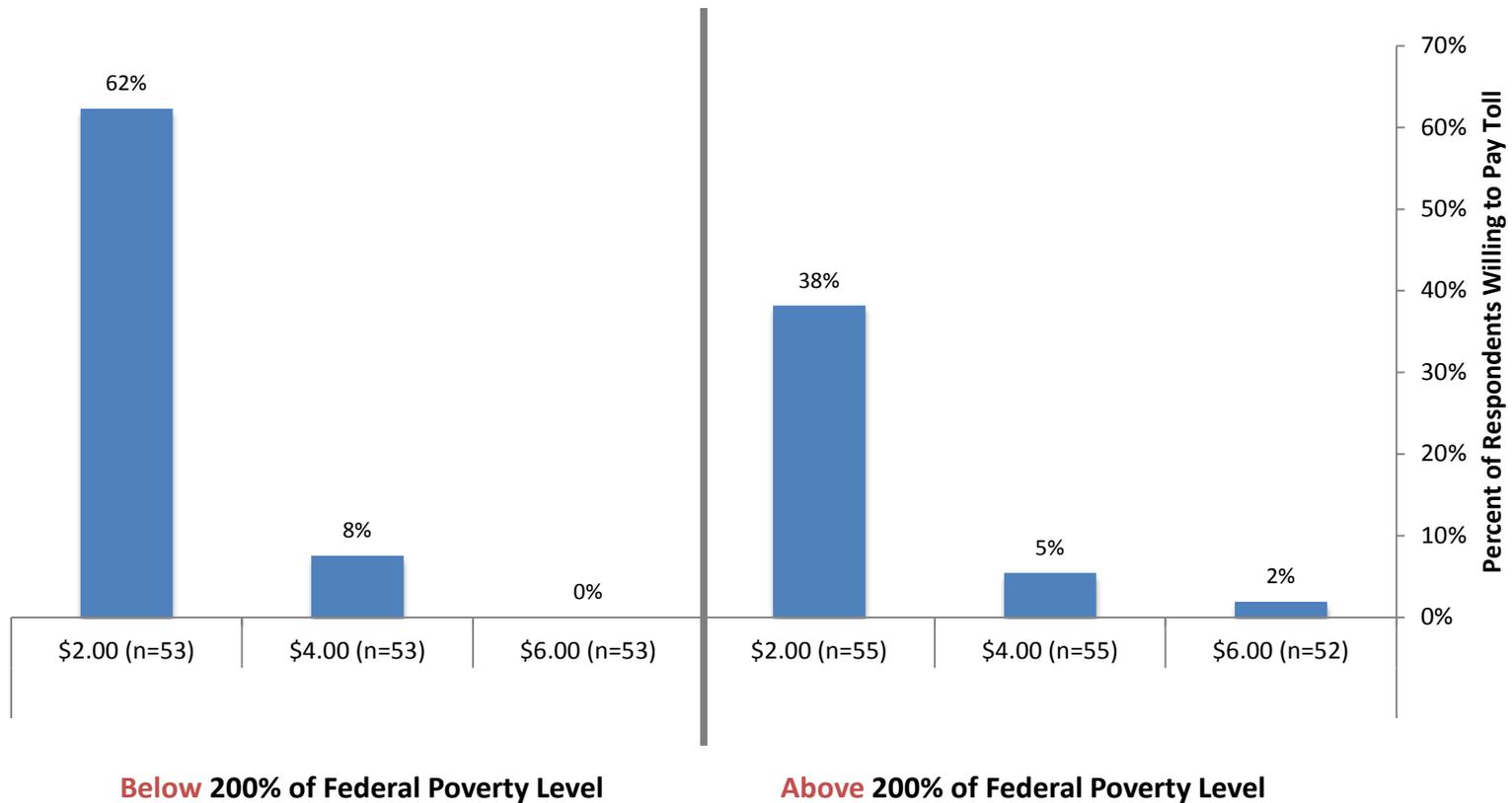


62% of survey respondents are willing to pay

n = 129

Source: MTC intercept survey, November 2012

Willingness to Pay by Income Level



n = 129

Source: MTC intercept survey,
November 2012

Average Peak Period Tolls on Express Lanes

Project	Length 1-way (miles)	Average Price Paid for Peak Period Trip
I-15 in San Diego	12	\$1.50
I-394 in Minneapolis	11	\$1.50
I-10 in Houston	13	\$1.60
SR 167 in Seattle	9	\$1.75
I-95 in Miami	7	\$2.00
I-85 in Atlanta	16	\$2.35
I-680 in Bay Area	14	\$2.97
I-25 in Denver	7	\$4.50
SR-91 in Orange County	10	\$6.00

Information collected March 2012

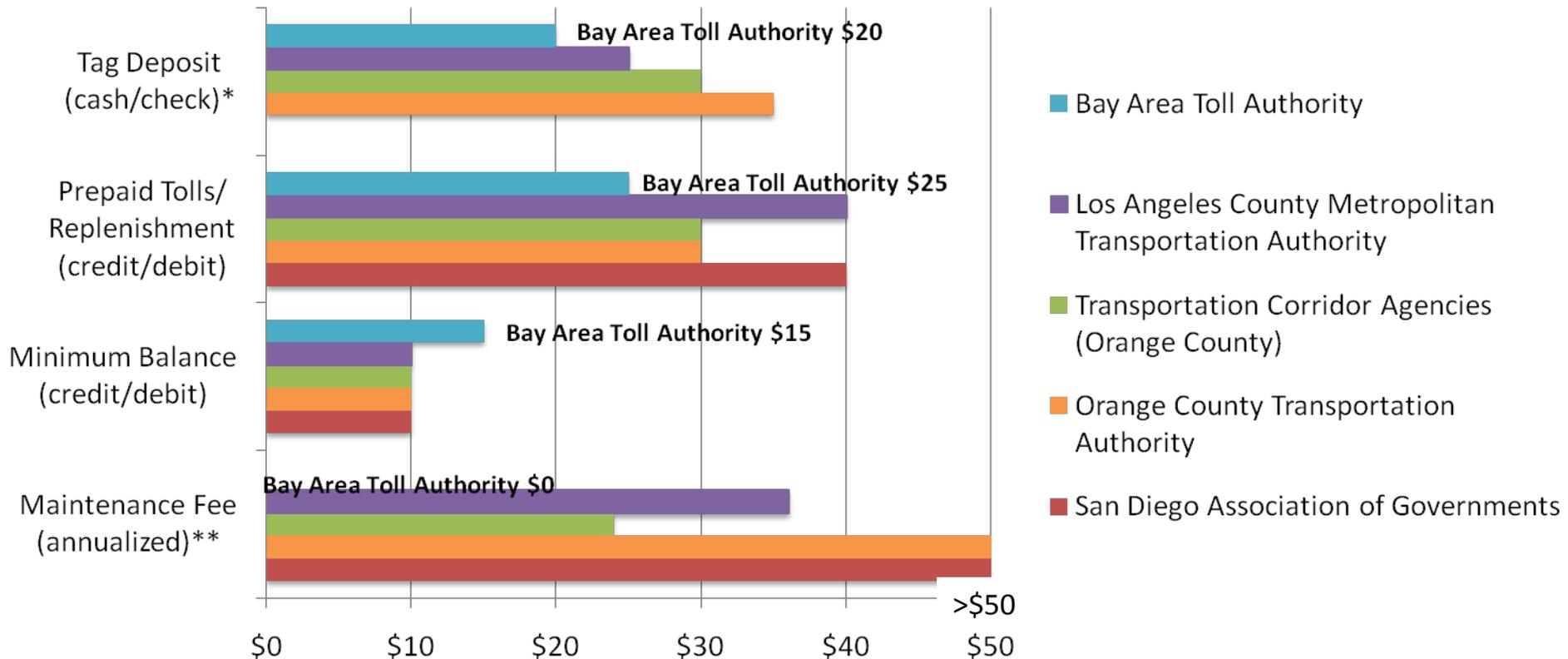
BATA FasTrak® Policies



BATA policies promote broad usage:

- Tags available at retail locations
- Lower deposit
- Lower minimum balance
- Cash option available
- No account maintenance fees
- Limited English proficiency operators

Comparative Toll Account Fees



*Deposit waived when account is established with a credit or debit card; SANDAG does not accept cash/check

**Maintenance fee is waived if customer meets minimum usage requirements

Outreach Findings

- Considerations raised in focus groups about FasTrak®
 - Deposit
 - Minimum balance
 - Knowing when account balance is low
 - Lack of information and confusion about how FasTrak® works, even among those who have toll tags

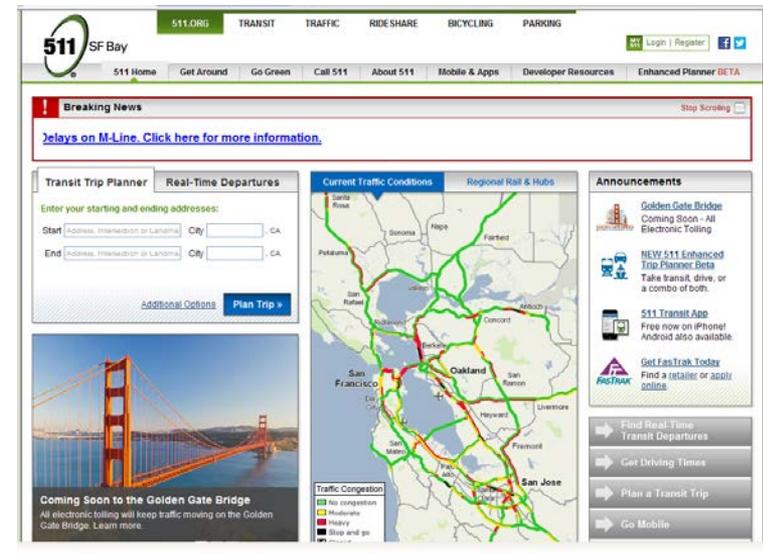


Approach

- FasTrak[®] account balances can be monitored on-line.
- New cash network makes it easier to add value to FasTrak[®] account with cash.
- 511 offers support for carpool & vanpool formation.
- Staff will explore ways to address concerns expressed in focus groups about FasTrak[®].

Approach

- Extensive outreach prior to Express Lane opening
(based on feedback from focus groups and surveys)
 - Community-based organization networks
 - Radio
 - TV
 - Email
 - Text messaging
 - Website



Next Steps

1. Explore ways to address concerns expressed about FasTrak[®] (now – Spring 2014)
2. Incorporate findings into BAIFA policy decisions for express lane implementation (Summer 2013 – Summer 2015)
3. Project-level environmental analysis will address specific impacts, such as noise, traffic & air quality (now – December 2013)