

Ventura County Transportation Funding: Tracking Study

Prepared For
Ventura County Transportation Commission
VCTC

Purpose

Compare voter attitudes with 2008 baseline research and assess the feasibility of a supplemental transportation funding measure for the November 2012 ballot.

Overview – What We Did

- Review of emerging VCTC comprehensive transportation plan and transit study.
- Public opinion research targeting high-frequency voters.
- Compare 2011 research with 2008 baseline.
- Report results and recommendations.

Voter Survey

- Telephone survey of 600 high-frequency voters.
- Conducted in late September 2011
- Sample accurately reflects voter universe.
- Approximately 20 minute interview.
- Margin of error of +/- 4.2%
- Compare with similar baseline data compiled in August 2008.

What We Are Looking For?

- ✓ **Need** – Is transportation a high priority for voters at this time?
- ✓ **Affordability** – Are voters generally confident that they can afford a new tax at this time?
- ✓ **Confidence** – Do voters currently have confidence that tax money will be well spent?

Results

Sales Tax Question

The economy tops all issues – road maintenance is a high priority

Issue	High	Med.	Low
Improving the local economy	86	11	2
Reducing crime and gang activity	79	16	5
Maintaining roads and filling potholes	68	27	5
Preventing pollution of beaches	67	26	6
Improving local schools	67	19	13
Preserving agricultural lands and open spaces	62	30	8
Controlling government salaries and pensions	56	27	13
Relieving countywide traffic congestion	50	40	10
Reducing taxes	49	27	23
Reducing the size of government	44	30	21
Reducing global warming and air pollution	43	27	29
Expanding Metrolink rail services	39	31	27
Providing safer bike routes and sidewalks	37	40	22
Improving local and regional bus services	32	36	27

Voter sense of affordability fell from 2008 to 2011

Could you afford increasing your local sales tax by ½ cent for 30 years...	Yes	No	No Opinion
2008	67	30	3
2011	59	36	5

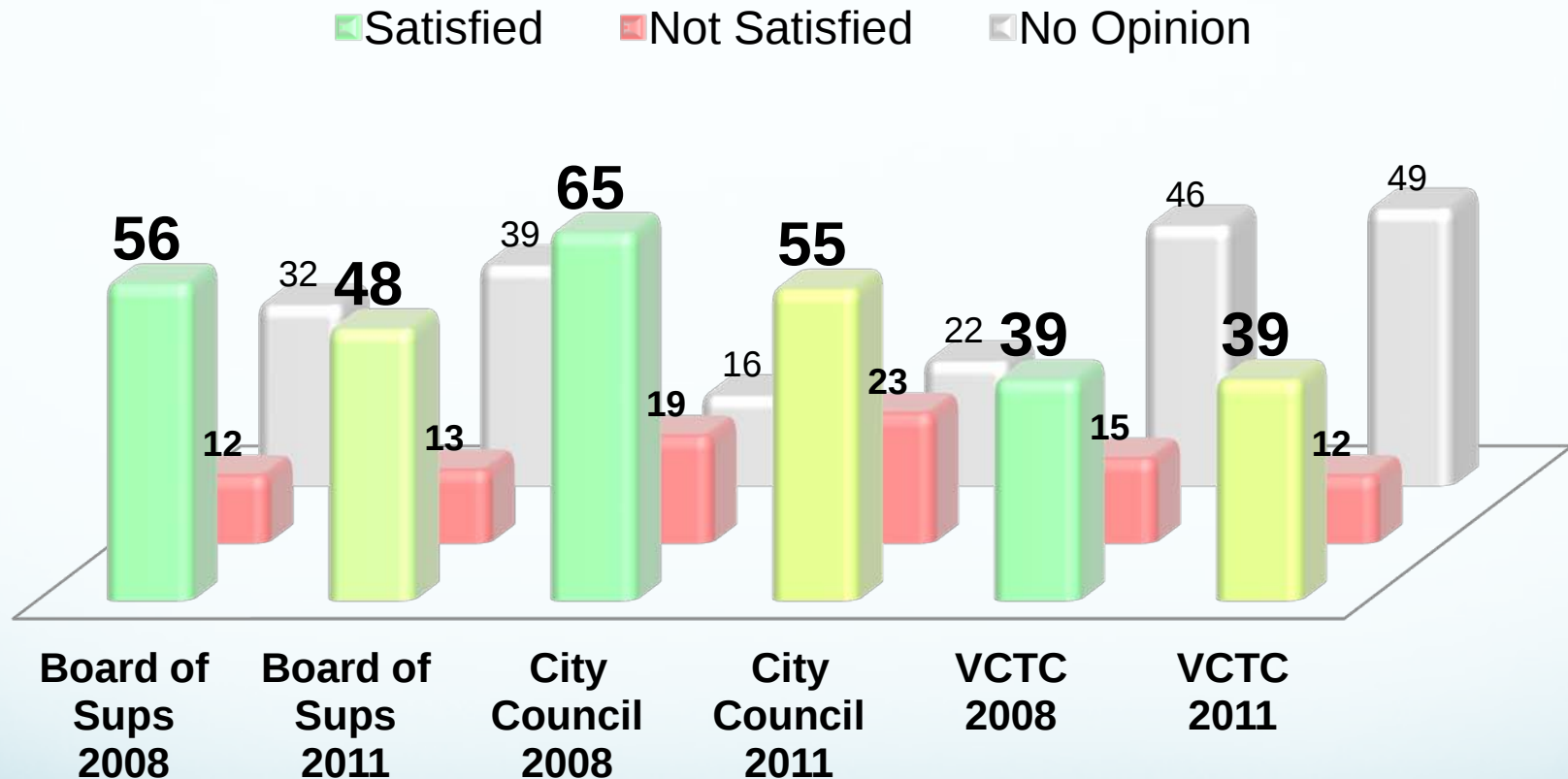
Sensitivity to tax rate rose from 2008 to 2011

Are you concerned the sales tax rate in your community is currently too high?	Yes	No	No Opinion
2008	29	69	2
2011	44	54	2

Confidence fell in how tax money will be spent

Do you have confidence in local elected leaders to spend revenues from a new countywide ½ cent sales tax program efficiently?	Yes	No	No Opinion
2008	39	51	10
2011	30	59	11

Satisfaction with local government fell from 2008 to 2011



- Satisfaction numbers should be in low to mid 60's
- Awareness of VCTC remains low

Support is lacking on three key threshold tax questions

Ventura County Voters (Sept. 2011)	Yes	Maybe	No
Is the purpose of the tax a high priority?		✓	
Do enough voters think they can afford the tax?			✓
Do voters have confidence that the money will be spent well?			✓

Transportation sales tax support in 2011 stays below 2/3 threshold

Sales tax question:	Year	Yes	No	No Opinion
Tax only	2008	54	40	6
	2011	53	42	5
Ballot label	2008	63	31	6
	2011	60	34	6
Full plan	2008	65	29	6
	2011	61	29	10

- 6 out of 10 say yes; need 7 out of 10

Presidential election voters are far more favorable to tax measure

Question	Response	Presidential Voters Only	Mid-Term Voters Only	Full Sample
Ballot Label: ½ cent sales tax for 30 years?	Yes	72	54	60
	No	23	39	34
	No Opinion	5	8	6

Equivalent gas tax is unpopular

A ten cent gas tax increase raises the same amount of revenue as a ½ cent increase in the sales tax. Which option, if any would you prefer to fund transportation improvements?	Percent
Increase sales tax by ½ cent	57
Increase gas tax by 10 cents a gallon	17
Neither	21
No opinion	5

Tax for road repair and safety alone well short of 2/3 approval

To pay for local road repair and safety improvements, would you favor or oppose:	Favor	Oppose	No Opinion
¼ cent increase in local sales tax?	54	43	3
½ cent increase in local sales tax?	53	43	4
½ percent increase in local vehicle license fee?	52	45	3
1 percent increase in local vehicle license fee?	44	52	4

Results

Project Priorities

Voters prefer a range of investments in a ballot measure

Do you have a favorable, unfavorable or neutral response to:	Favorable	Unfavorable	Neutral
Expand transit services for seniors and disabled persons?	77	10	12
Clean up road runoff that pollutes beaches?	73	13	12
Protect open space and farmland from impacts of transportation and development?	68	13	17
Expand Metrolink services connecting Ventura County cities	64	20	15
Fill potholes, resurface streets and improve road safety?	63	16	20

Muted reaction to highway improvements in ballot measure

Do you have a favorable, unfavorable or neutral response to:	Favorable	Unfavorable	Neutral
Add lanes to 101 from LA County line to Ventura?	58	24	16
Improve safety and fix bottleneck on 118; Moorpark to Simi Valley?	54	21	22
Improve safety, intersections and signal timing on 126?	51	18	24
Add lanes to the 101/23 interchange in Thousand Oaks?	51	27	18

Results

Transit Priorities

Nearly two-thirds of voters never use public transit services

How frequently do you use public transit services?

Several times a week

4

Once a month

10

Once a year

24

Never

62

Transit services, except those for seniors and disabled persons, are lower priority for voters

On the subject of public transit service in Ventura County, is __ a high, medium or low priority to you?	High	Med.	Low
Dial-a-ride special services for seniors and disabled persons	55	28	16
Local city fixed route bus services	26	30	43
Commuter bus service between cities	20	32	47

Many would support change to make transit more cost-effective

Local officials are studying ways to improve the quality of services and make them more effective. Would you favor or oppose ____?	Favor	Oppose	No Opinion
Uniform standards for route information, service frequency, connection and transfers	81	6	13
Consolidate all local transit service into one system	62	17	21
Eliminate services with low ridership and use savings to add services where demand is higher	62	24	14

Other options appear less popular

Local officials are studying ways to improve the quality of services and make them more effective. Would you favor or oppose ____?	Favor	Oppose	No Opinion
Create on consolidated service area in east county and another in west county	52	22	26
Maintain separate services, but consolidate planning, financing, information and administration	51	23	26
Keep city-by-city control rather than consolidating service	31	43	26

Findings & Recommendations

1. No ½ cent ballot measure in 2012.

Voter support is not sufficient to place a comprehensive ½ cent 30-year transportation tax measure on the 2012 ballot.

2. Maintain outreach and education.

Strive to maintain ongoing outreach and education efforts to boost engagement and awareness of transportation issues in Ventura County and improve the visibility of the VCTC brand.

3. Use existing resources wisely.

Make the best use of available resources, in light of diminishing state and federal support and SB 716 funding shifts. Focus on delivering cost-effective improvement and service priorities that have strong voter and stakeholder support.

4. Focus on future opportunities.

Be prepared to re-evaluate the feasibility of seeking supplemental transportation revenues as economic conditions improve. Consider a shorter term, lower cost measure focused on basic road repair, safety and other related high priority needs.

Questions