



# May 2025 Survey of Likely Voters San Mateo County *Summary Report on Results*

# Survey Methodology

- ▶ Online survey (text/email) of likely voters in San Mateo County
- ▶ Data collected May 14 – June 1, 2025
- ▶ Survey available in English, Spanish, Chinese, and Tagalog
- ▶ 2,400 interviews countywide; margin of error  $\pm 2.0$  percentage points
- ▶ Four-way split-sample allowed for independent test of four different potential ballot measures
  - 600 interviews countywide in each split, margin of error  $\pm 4.0$  percentage points

# Split Sample: Regional Measure Text

## Split A

### **Regional Variable Rate Sales Tax San Mateo County at 1/4¢**

*(Identical to language tested in the MTC poll)*

To prevent increased traffic congestion; maintain BART, Caltrain, VTA, AC Transit, Muni, and other transit services; preserve transportation services for seniors/persons with disabilities; address transit safety and cleanliness; advance climate protection; reduce air pollution; and prevent station closures, shall the measure enacting a 7/8 cent (San Francisco), a 1/2 cent (Alameda, Contra Costa counties), and a **1/4 cent (San Mateo County)** sales tax for 11 years generating at least \$580,000,000 annually, with required public audits and accountability/transparency provisions, be adopted?

*600 interviews, margin of error  $\pm$  4.0 percentage points*

## Split B

### **Regional Variable Rate Sales Tax San Mateo County at 1/2¢**

*(Identical to language tested in the MTC poll with updated SMC rate)*

To prevent increased traffic congestion; maintain BART, Caltrain, VTA, AC Transit, Muni, and other transit services; preserve transportation services for seniors/persons with disabilities; address transit safety and cleanliness; advance climate protection; reduce air pollution; and prevent station closures, shall the measure enacting a 7/8 cent (San Francisco) and a **1/2 cent (Alameda, Contra Costa, San Mateo counties)** sales tax for 11 years generating at least \$640,000,000 annually, with required public audits and accountability/transparency provisions, be adopted?

*600 interviews, margin of error  $\pm$  4.0 percentage points*

# Split Sample: Local Measure Text

## Split C

### Local Sales Tax

#### Extend Measure A with no increase

**Without increasing taxes**, to repair potholes, maintain streets, reduce traffic congestion, improve road/freeway safety, enhance connections between Caltrain, SamTrans, BART and other transit services, prevent transit service cuts for students, seniors and persons with disabilities, increase access to jobs and housing, and improve safety for bicyclists/ pedestrians, shall San Mateo County Transportation Authority's Ordinance **extending the current 1/2 cent sales tax** for 30 years, with local control, independent oversight and accountability/transparency requirements, providing approximately \$120,000,000 annually, be adopted?

*600 interviews, margin of error  $\pm$  4.0 percentage points*

## Split D

### Local Sales Tax

#### Extend Measure A with 1/8¢ increase

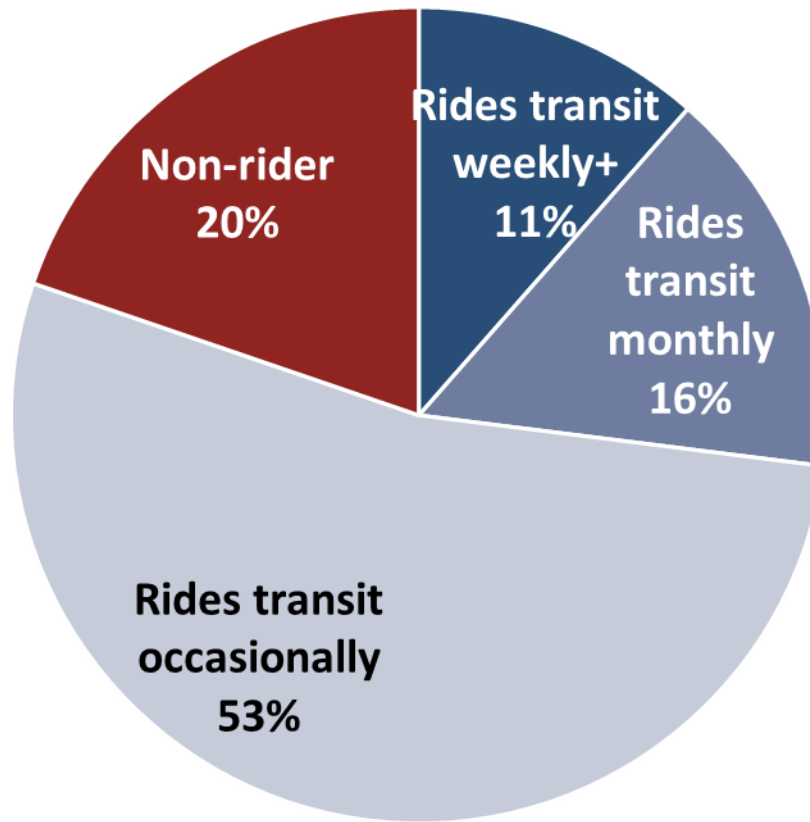
To repair potholes, maintain streets, reduce traffic congestion, improve /freeway safety, enhance connections between Caltrain, SamTrans, BART, and other transit services, prevent transit service cuts for students, seniors and persons with disabilities, increase access to jobs and housing, and improve safety for bicyclists/ pedestrians, shall San Mateo County Transportation Authority's Ordinance **extending the current 1/2 cent sales tax, plus 1/8 cent**, for 30 years, with local control, independent oversight and accountability/transparency requirements, providing approximately \$180,000,000 annually, be adopted?

*600 interviews, margin of error  $\pm$  4.0 percentage points*

# Key Findings

- ▶ Voter mood in the county is **optimistic, but uncertain about the economic future** of the Bay Area.
- ▶ **Six in ten voters support a tax increase** for local or regional transportation priorities, **but only the measure to extend Measure A without increase gains support from over two-thirds of likely voters.** Any tax measure is vulnerable to opposition.
- ▶ While six in ten state a general inclination to oppose tax increases, over half of voters also agree it is **crucial to have high-quality roads and transit service even if it means raising taxes**, indicating that these issues may be important enough to overcome some tax hesitancy.
- ▶ Voters are sensitive to the cost burden of any tax increase, but **tax rates at or above 10% do not engender any more concern.** Similarly, there is **little difference in support between a ⅛, ¼, and ½ cent increase.**
- ▶ While **potholes and traffic congestion are important issues** to voters, they are also motivated to support **public transit investments and preservation of transit service.**
- ▶ Voters want to improve **both local and regional transit connectivity**, with a slight preference for regional. There is **minimal difference in voter support or opposition for funding Caltrain, BART, and SamTrans.**
- ▶ Voters are interested in **road maintenance, pothole repair, and congestion relief**, and have concerns about solutions that do nothing to address those issues locally.
- ▶ Voters **don't inherently trust local over regional** agencies to make transportation investment decisions. In any measure, **accountability components** will be critical.

# Self-Reported Transit Usage Among Voters



80% of San Mateo County voters report riding public transit at least occasionally, with 27% saying they ride at least once a month

**Weekly+ Riders:** Rides any public transit (SamTrans, VTA, BART, Caltrain, Muni, or any other Bay Area transit) service at least once a week

**Monthly Riders:** Rides any public transit (SamTrans, VTA, BART, Caltrain, Muni, or any other Bay Area transit) service at least monthly

**Occasional Riders:** Rides any public transit (SamTrans, VTA, BART, Caltrain, Muni, or any other Bay Area transit) service less than monthly

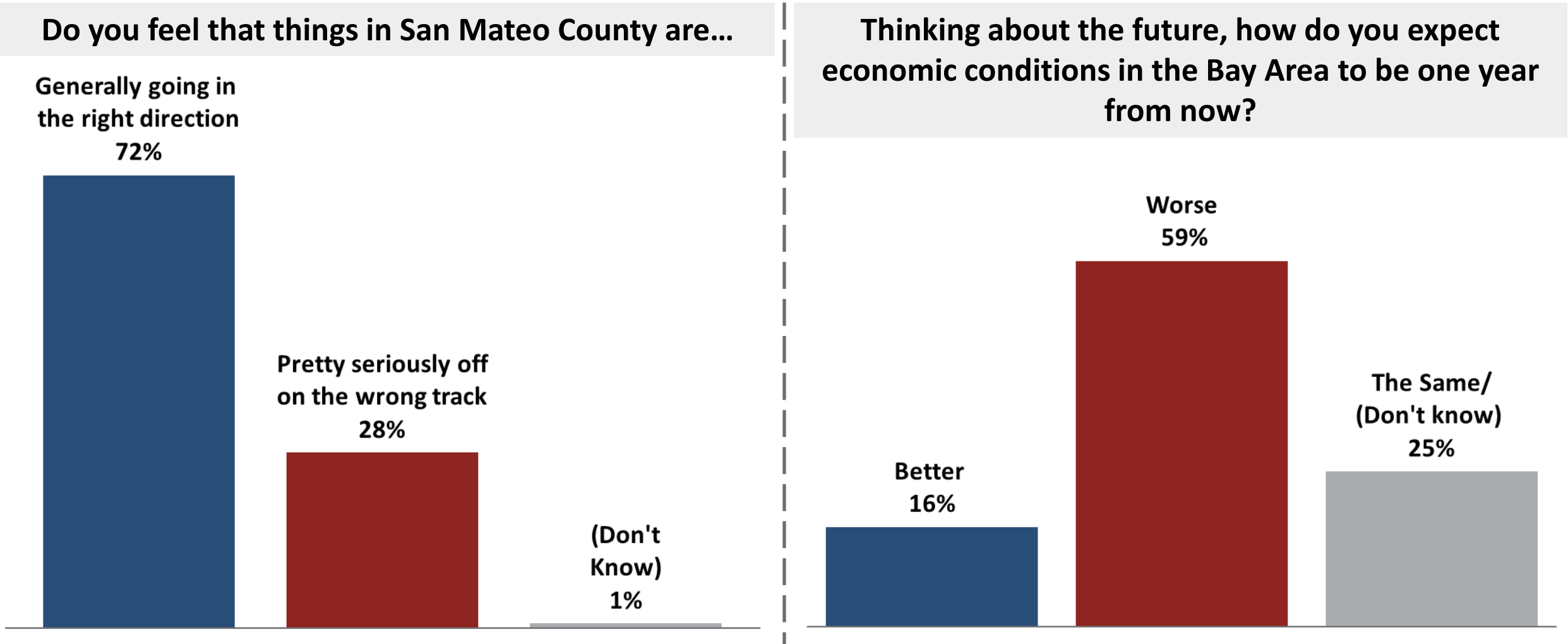
**Non-Riders:** Never rides on any public transit service

# Key Finding #1

Voter mood in the county is **optimistic, but uncertain about the economic future of the Bay Area.**



Nearly three-quarters of voters feel that things in San Mateo County are generally going in the right direction. However, over half of voters expect economic conditions in the Bay Area to be worse one year from now

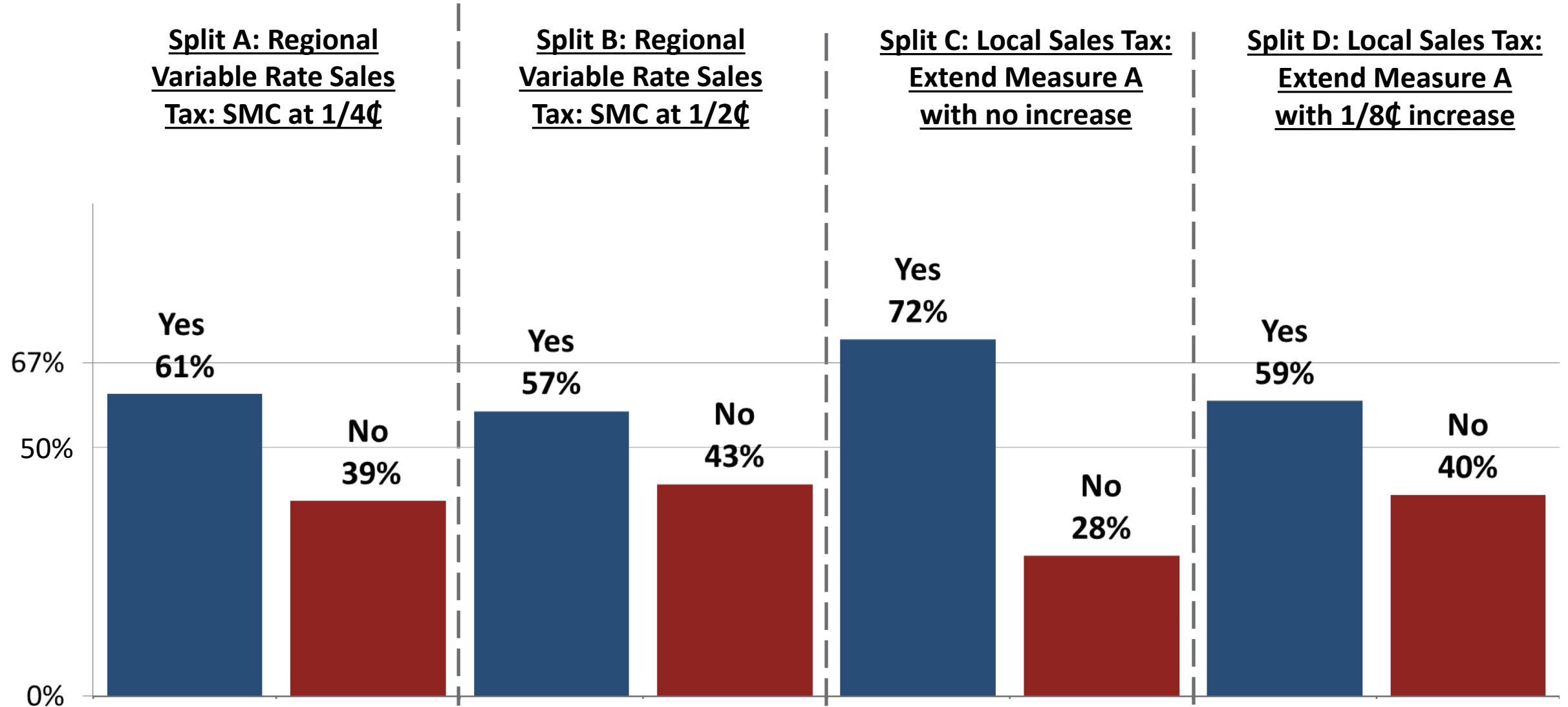




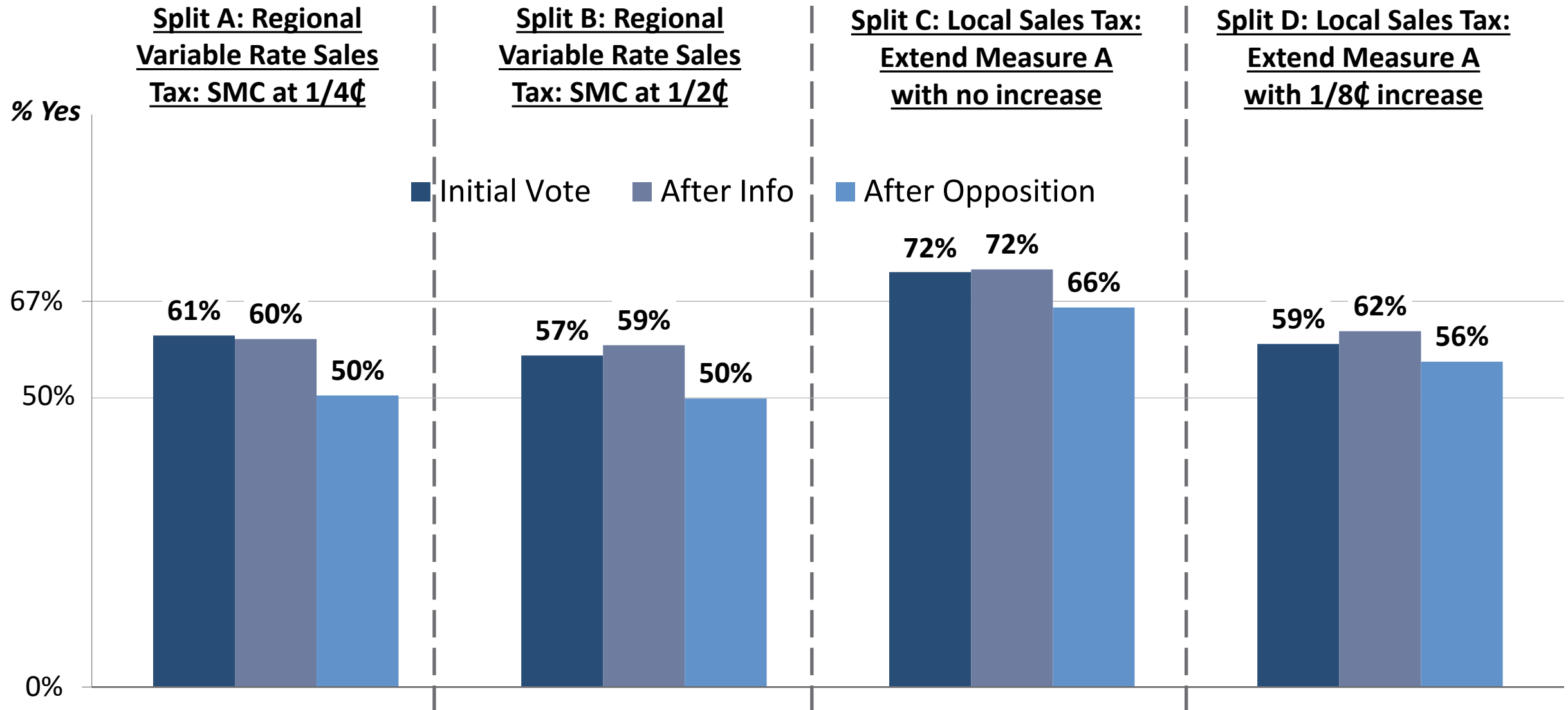
## Key Finding #2

**Six in ten voters support a tax increase for local or regional transportation priorities, but only the measure to extend Measure A without increase gains support from over two-thirds of likely voters. Any tax measure is vulnerable to opposition.**

While all measures reach majority support in the County, support for a Measure A extension without increase is the only instance where support reaches two-thirds



# Any tax measure is vulnerable to opposition messaging



# Key Finding #3

While six in ten state a general inclination to oppose tax increases, over half of voters also agree it is **crucial to have high-quality roads and transit service even if it means raising taxes**, indicating that these issues may be important enough to overcome some tax hesitancy.

# Many voters feel roads and transit may be worth considering a tax increase

Do you agree or disagree...

■ Agree

■ Disagree

Taxes in this area are already high enough, I'll vote against any tax increase.

61%

39%

It is crucial to have high-quality roads that are safe for drivers, bicyclists, and pedestrians in San Mateo County, even if it means raising taxes.

64%

36%

It is crucial to have high quality public transit service in San Mateo County, even if it means raising taxes.

56%

44%

It is crucial to reduce traffic congestion in San Mateo County, even if it means raising taxes.

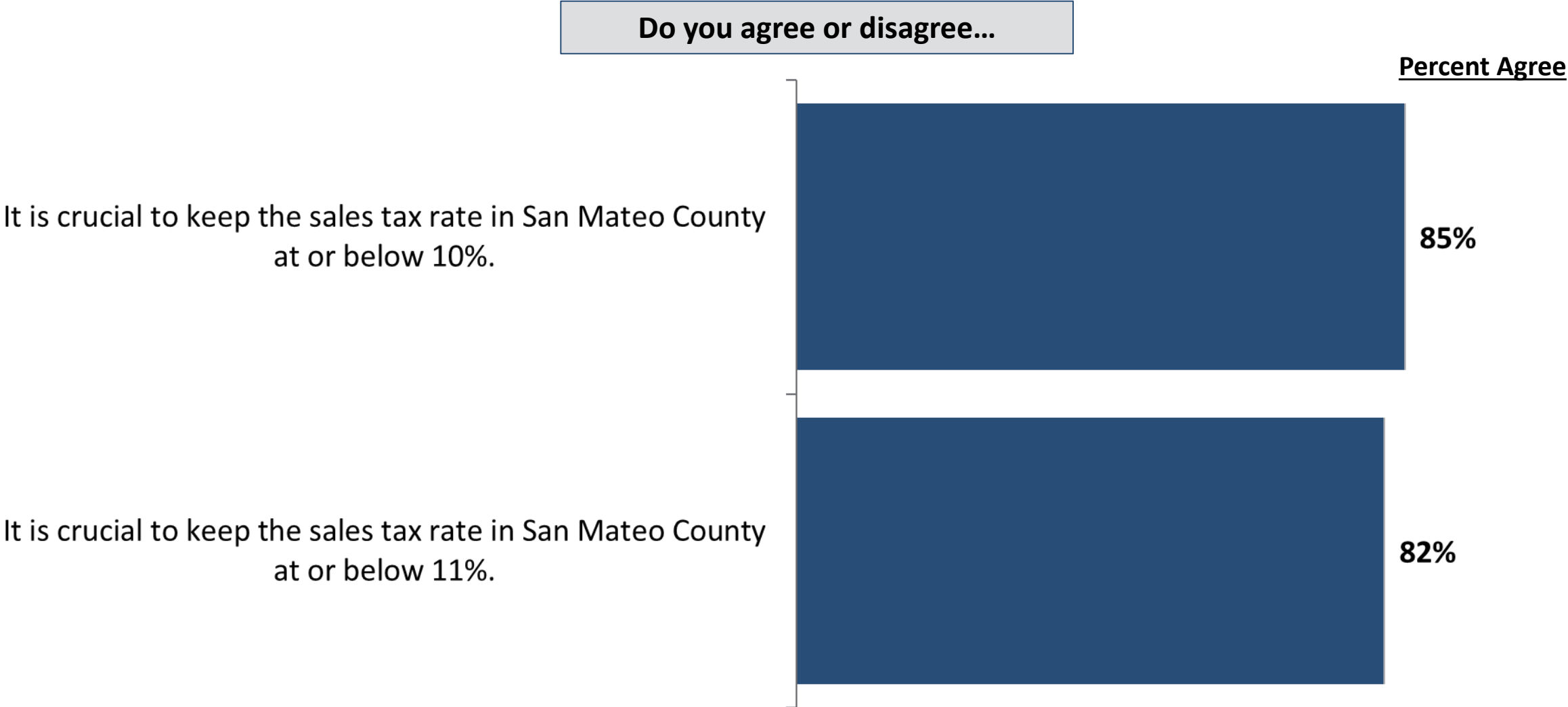
46%

54%

# Key Finding #4

Voters are sensitive to the cost burden of any tax increase, but **tax rates at or above 10% do not engender any more concern**. Similarly, there is **little difference in support between a  $\frac{1}{8}$ ,  $\frac{1}{4}$ , and  $\frac{1}{2}$  cent increase**.

# Voters see little difference between a 10% tax rate and an 11% tax rate

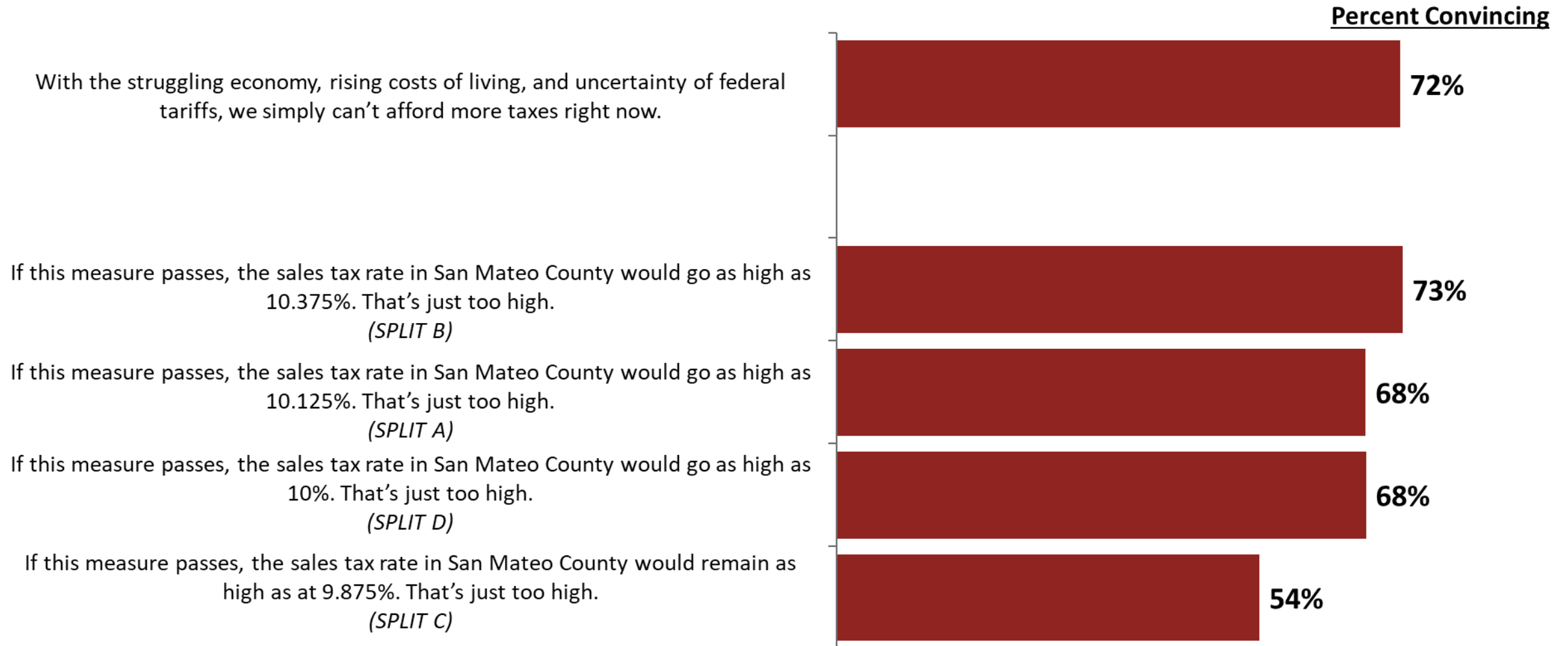


*\*Each version of the question was shown to only half of the overall sample (MoE = ±2.8%)*



# Voters are sensitive to the cost burden of any tax increase; total rates at or above 10% do not generate significantly different amounts of opposition

How convincing is this as a reason to vote **against** the measure?



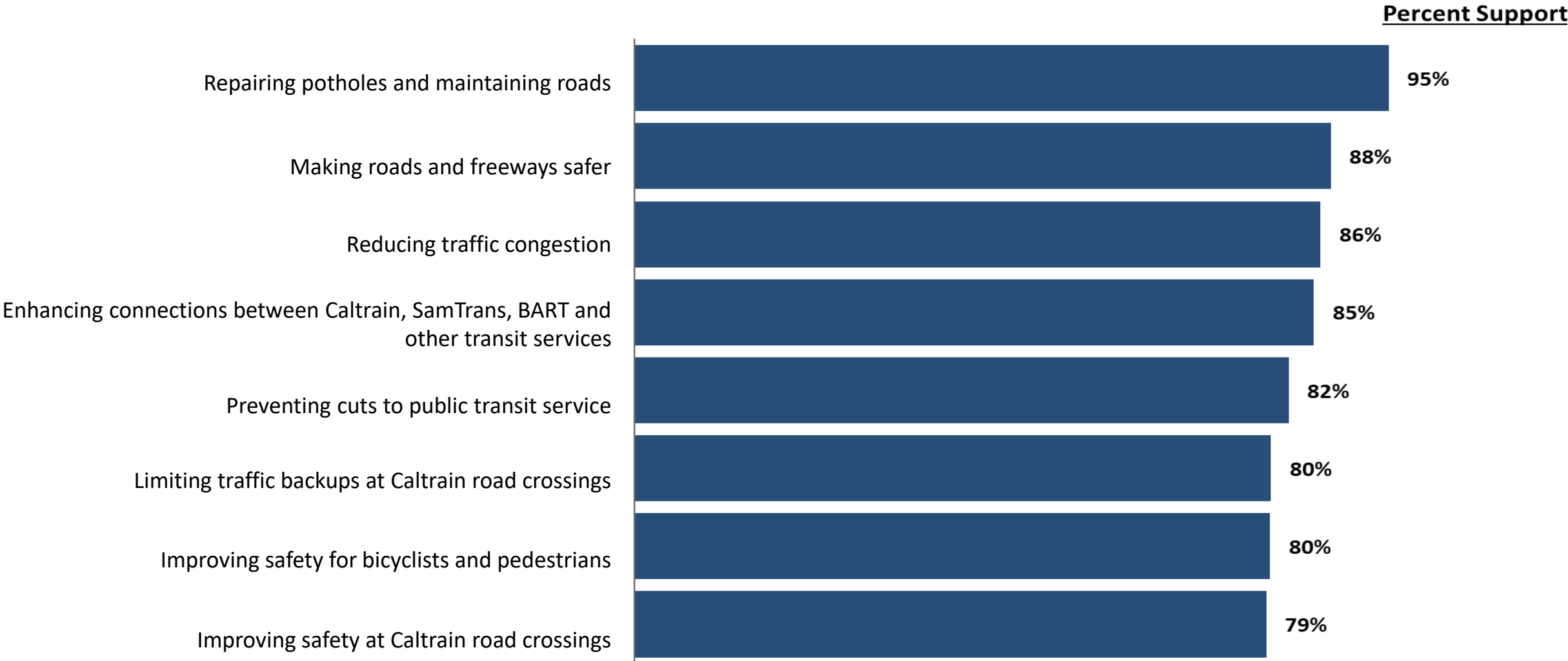
\*Each version of the specific rate question was shown to only one of the four samples (MoE=±4.0 %)

# Key Finding #5

**While potholes and traffic congestion are important issues to voters, they are also motivated to support public transit investments and preservation of transit service.**

# Voters are interested in a range of transportation investments

**How do you feel about your tax dollars being spent on each of the following transportation priorities in San Mateo County?**



# Voters are motivated by the content of a measure, but concerns around cost and credibility hold them back

## Top Motivators to **Support** a Tax Measure

*(Coded responses to open-ended question, across all samples)*

- Maintaining transit for those who need it
- Transit connectivity
- Roads and potholes *(local measures)*
- Oversight

## Top Motivators to **Oppose** a Tax Measure

*(Coded responses to open-ended question, across all samples)*

- Cost of living
- Too many taxes
- We won't see results

*"I don't trust that the money would actually go to projects."*

*"[...] public transportation is the backbone of our infrastructure and ability to travel throughout the Bay Area."*

*"At a low cost, this measure creates funding for maintenance on roads and promotes public transportation."*

*"Cost of living is already too high with so much taxes already."*

# Key Finding #6

**Voters want to improve both local and regional transit connectivity, with a slight preference for regional. There is minimal difference in voter support or opposition for funding Caltrain, BART, and SamTrans.**

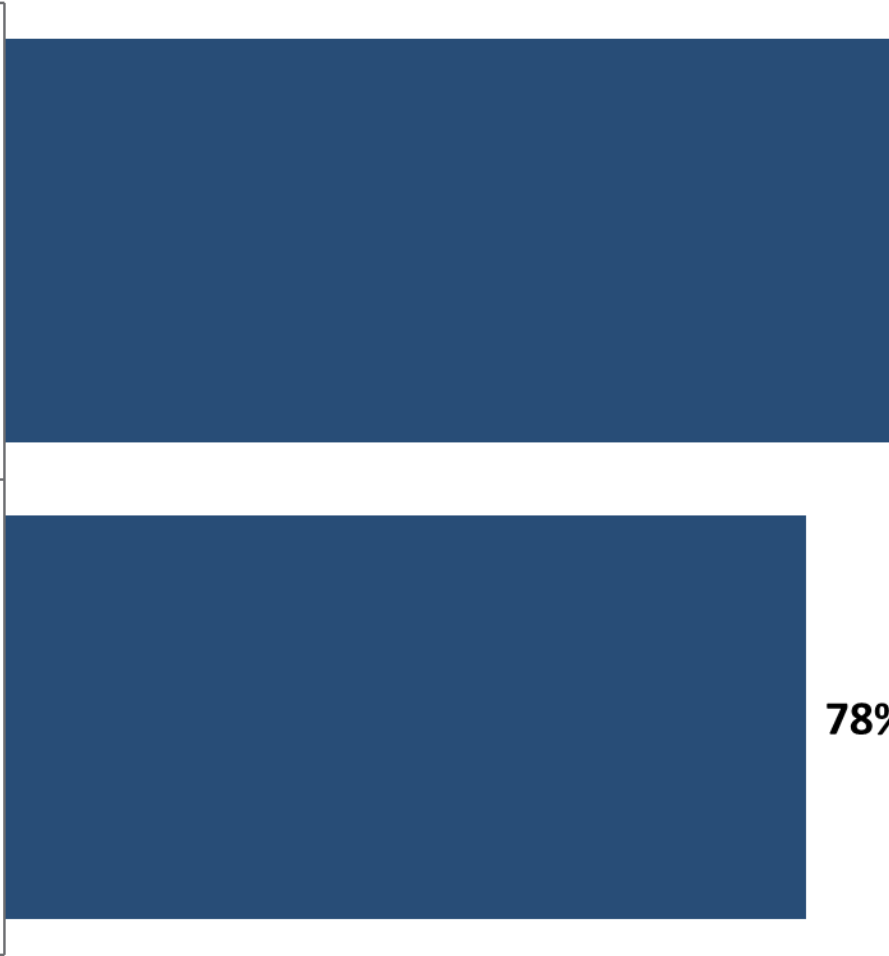
# Voters want to see both regional and local improvements to public transit

Do you agree or disagree...

Percent Agree

Improvements to public transit should be made at the **regional level** to make sure all public transit is well connected and serve the entire Bay Area.

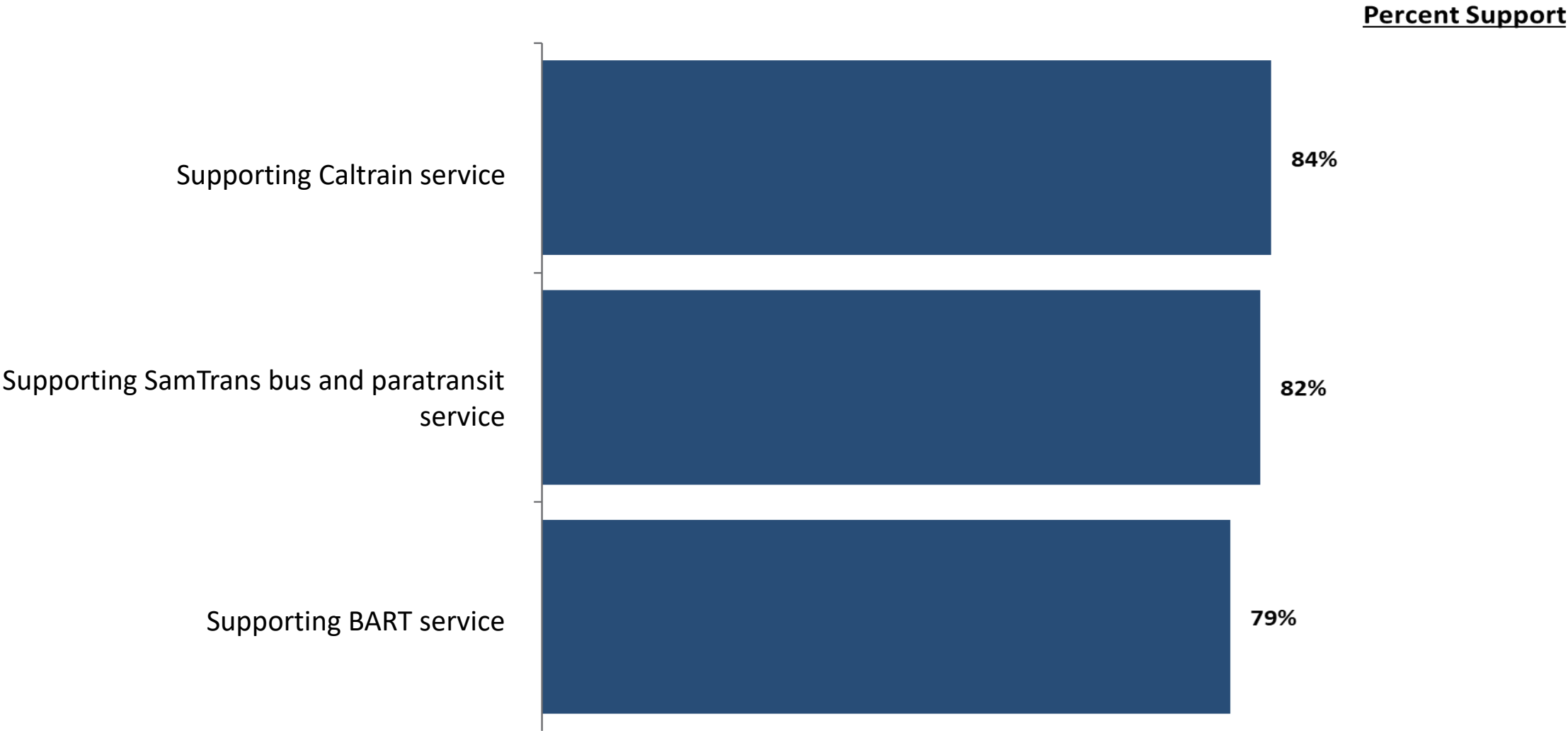
Improvements to public transit should be made at the **local level** to make sure that public transit services make sense for the local communities they serve.



# Most support tax dollars being spent on three major transit operators in the county



How do you feel about your tax dollars being spent on each of the following transportation priorities in San Mateo County?





# Seven in ten voters are compelled by the idea of transit connectivity, both regional and local

How convincing is this as a reason to vote for the measure?

Percent Convincing

This measure will coordinate transit service **in San Mateo County**, including Caltrain, SamTrans, and BART, making it easier and more convenient for people to get around the area on public transit.  
*(SPLIT C AND D, n=1,200)*

72%

This measure will coordinate transit service **across the Bay Area**, including Caltrain, SamTrans, BART, Muni, and VTA, making it easier and more convenient for people to get around the Bay Area on public transit.  
*(SPLIT A AND B, n=1,200)*

70%

# Key Finding #7

Voters are interested in **road maintenance, pothole repair, and congestion relief**, and have concerns about solutions that do nothing to address those issues locally.

# Road maintenance is a compelling reason to support a local measure.

How convincing is this as a reason to vote for the measure?

Percent Convincing

This measure includes funding to repave roads, fill potholes, and improve interchanges, which will reduce traffic and improve road safety.  
*(SPLIT C AND D, n=1,200)*



# Opposition that focuses on what is excluded from a measure is effective, but concern is higher around the lack of local traffic congestion relief

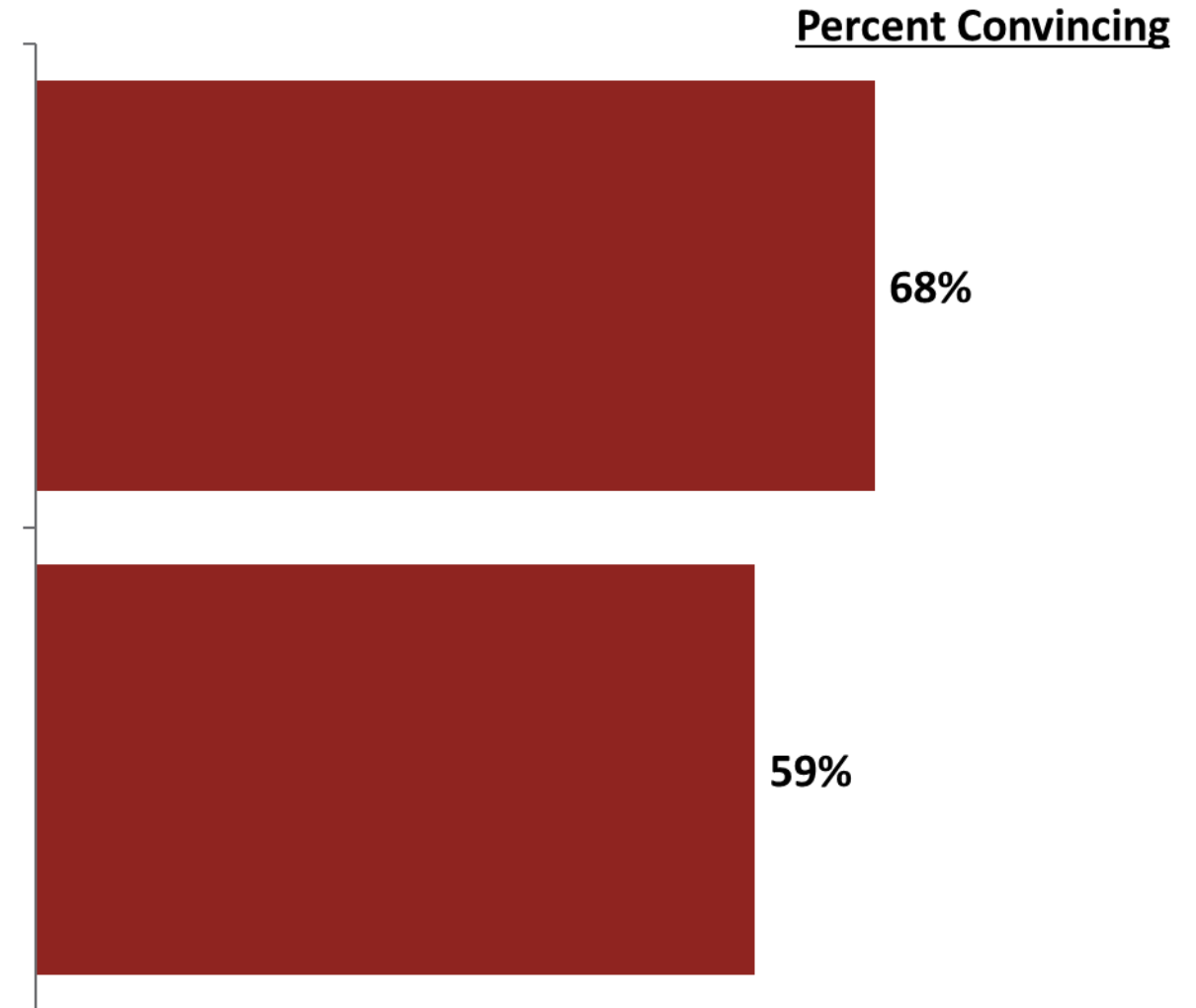
How convincing is this as a reason to vote against the measure?

The vast majority of the funds from this measure will be spent in other parts of the Bay Area and **won't do anything to address our traffic problems here in San Mateo County.**

*(SPLIT A AND B, n=1,200)*

This measure will only be spent on improving transit in San Mateo County, but **won't do anything to improve regional transit or make it easier to get around the Bay Area.**

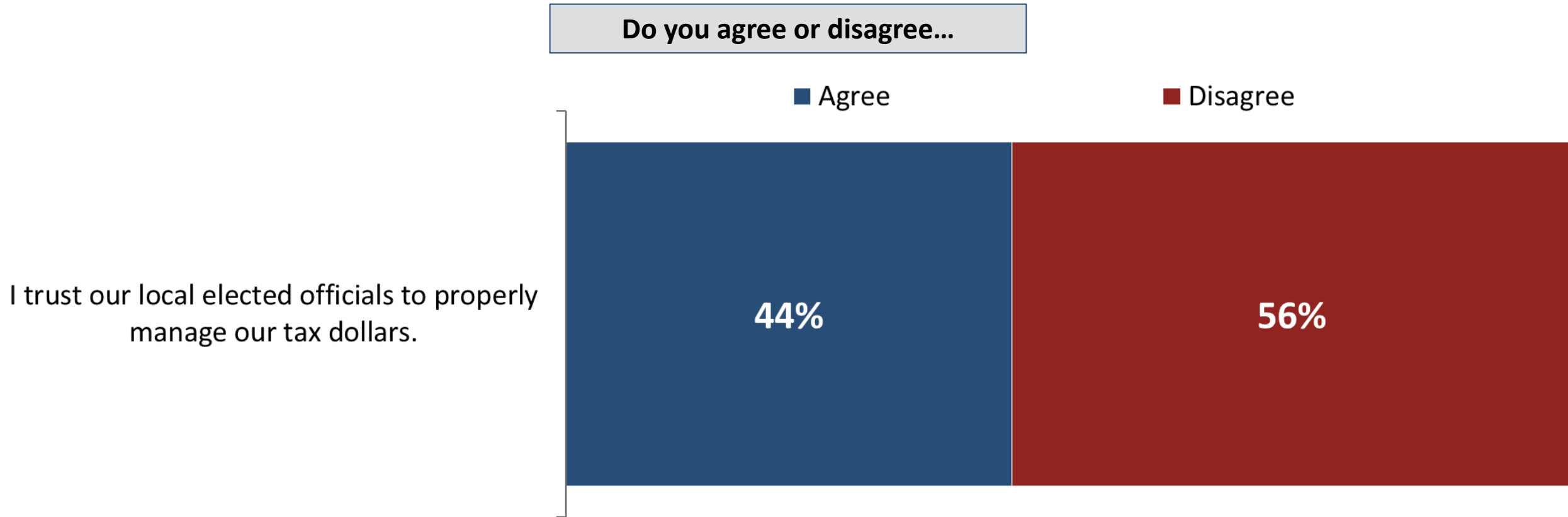
*(SPLIT C AND D, n=1,200)*



# Key Finding #8

**Voters don't inherently trust local over regional agencies to make transportation investment decisions. In any measure, accountability components will be critical.**

## Trust in government management of tax dollars is low



# Voters appreciate public transit investment decisions at both the regional and local level, although interest is slightly higher in regional transit improvements

How convincing is this as a reason to vote for the measure?

Percent Convincing

This measure requires that decisions about public transit investments in the Bay Area be made **at the regional level** by trusted regional agencies, ensuring that we are making investments that improve transit across the entire Bay Area.  
*(SPLIT A AND B, n=1,200)*

59%

This measure requires that decisions about transit and transportation investments in San Mateo County are **made only by local agencies** that we can trust to understand what our local communities need.  
*(SPLIT C AND D, n=1,200)*

53%



# Conclusions

- ▶ San Mateo County voters generally support investments in transportation projects and programs; they would like to preserve and connect public transit around the region (including within the county), while improving roads, infrastructure, and traffic locally. They are equally interested in supporting Caltrain, BART, and SamTrans with their tax dollars.
- ▶ While more than two-thirds of voters are supportive of extending Measure A without increase, a tax increase at any level is supported by around six in ten voters, with little difference in support for increases of 1/8, 1/4, or 1/2 cent, or the resultant total tax rates.
- ▶ Cost concerns and skepticism about government effectiveness are challenges for both regional and local measures, and will require the inclusion of strong oversight and transparency around any tax measure.



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