



GODBE RESEARCH
Gain Insight



Merced County Association of Governments: Voter Survey

December 2015

Merced County Association of Governments commissioned Godbe Research to conduct a survey of local voters with the following research objectives:

- Determine issues of importance in the County;
- Assess potential voter support for a sales tax measure for local transportation improvements with funding that cannot be taken by the State;
- Prioritize projects and programs to be funded with the proceeds;
- Test the influence of supporting and opposing arguments on potential voter support;
- Identify the rate and duration at which voters will support the measure; and
- Identify any differences in voter support due to demographic and/or voter behavioral characteristics.

- Data Collection Telephone and Internet Interviewing
- Universe 61,771 likely November 2016 voters in Merced County
- Fielding Dates November 10 through November 24, 2015
- Interview Length 20 minutes
- Sample Size 853
- Margin of Error $\pm 3.33\%$

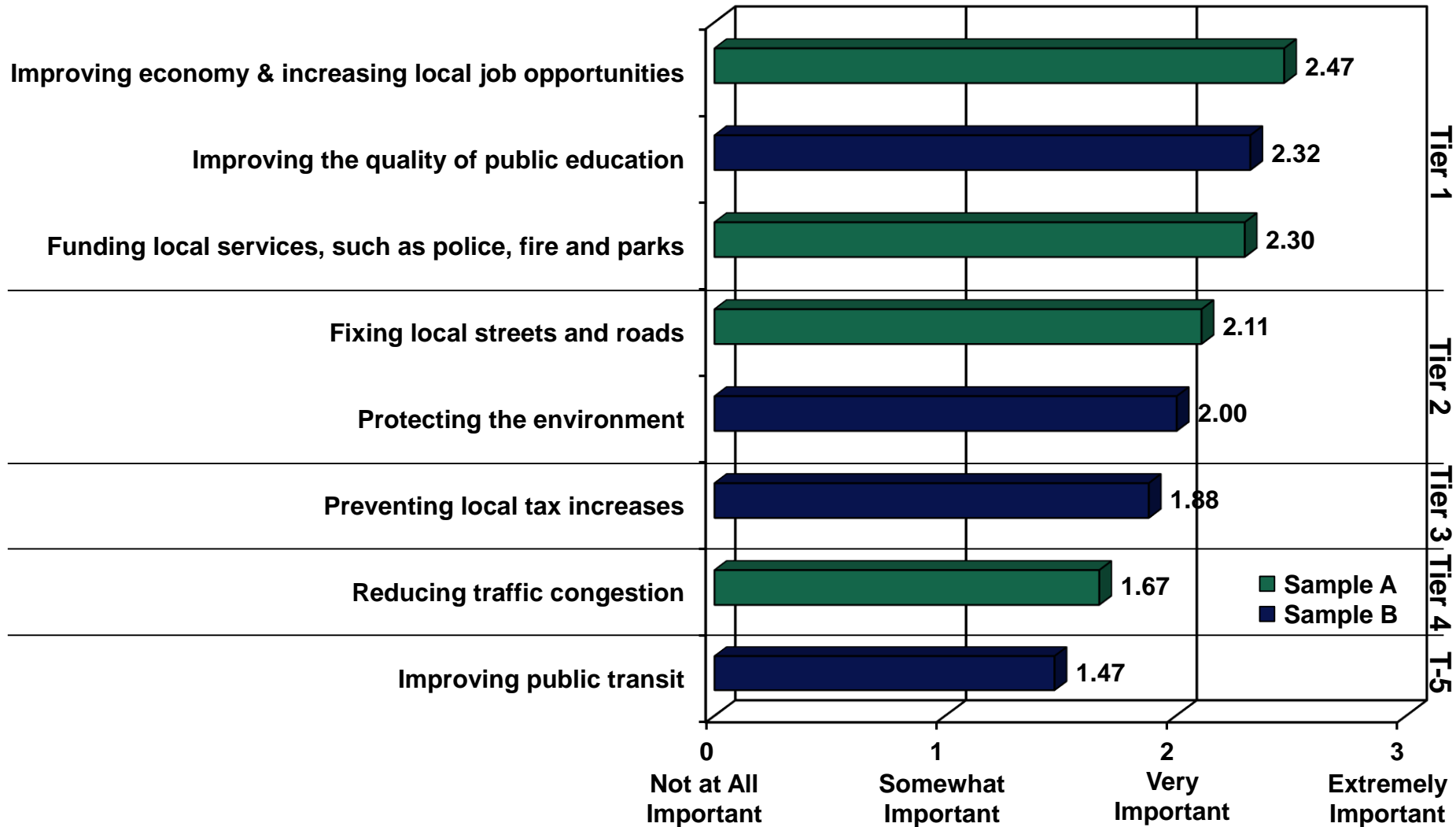


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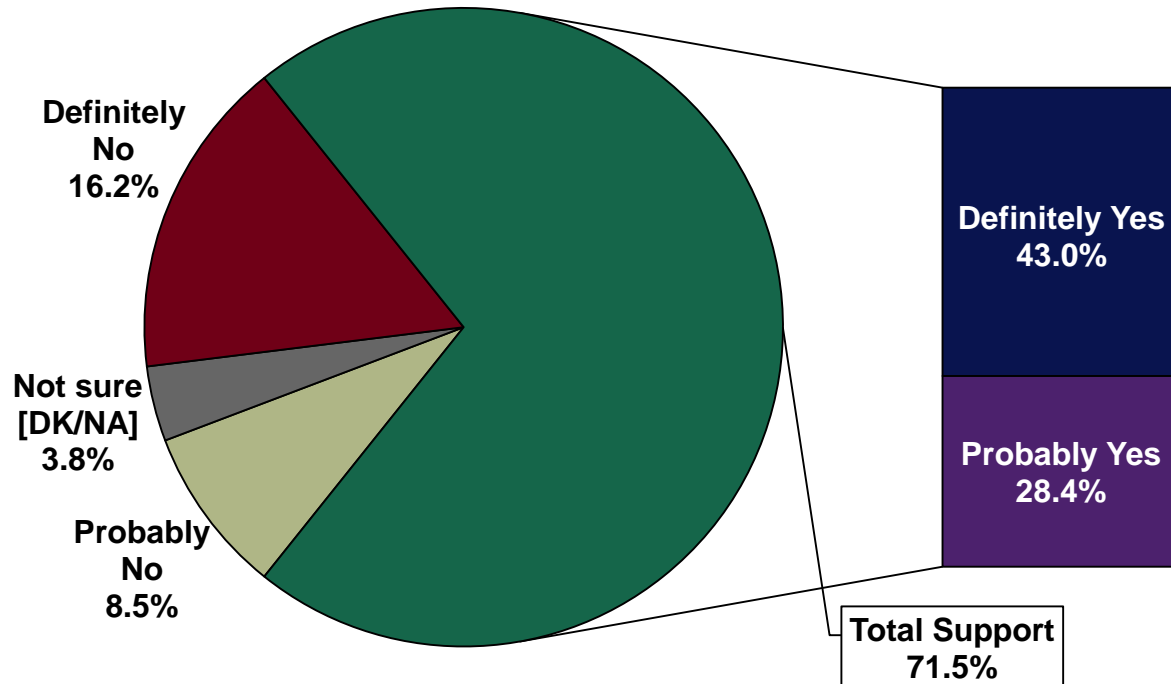


Key Findings

Q1. Issues of Importance (n=853)



Q2. Uninformed Support for Sales Tax (n=853)



To provide funding for local transportation improvements including:

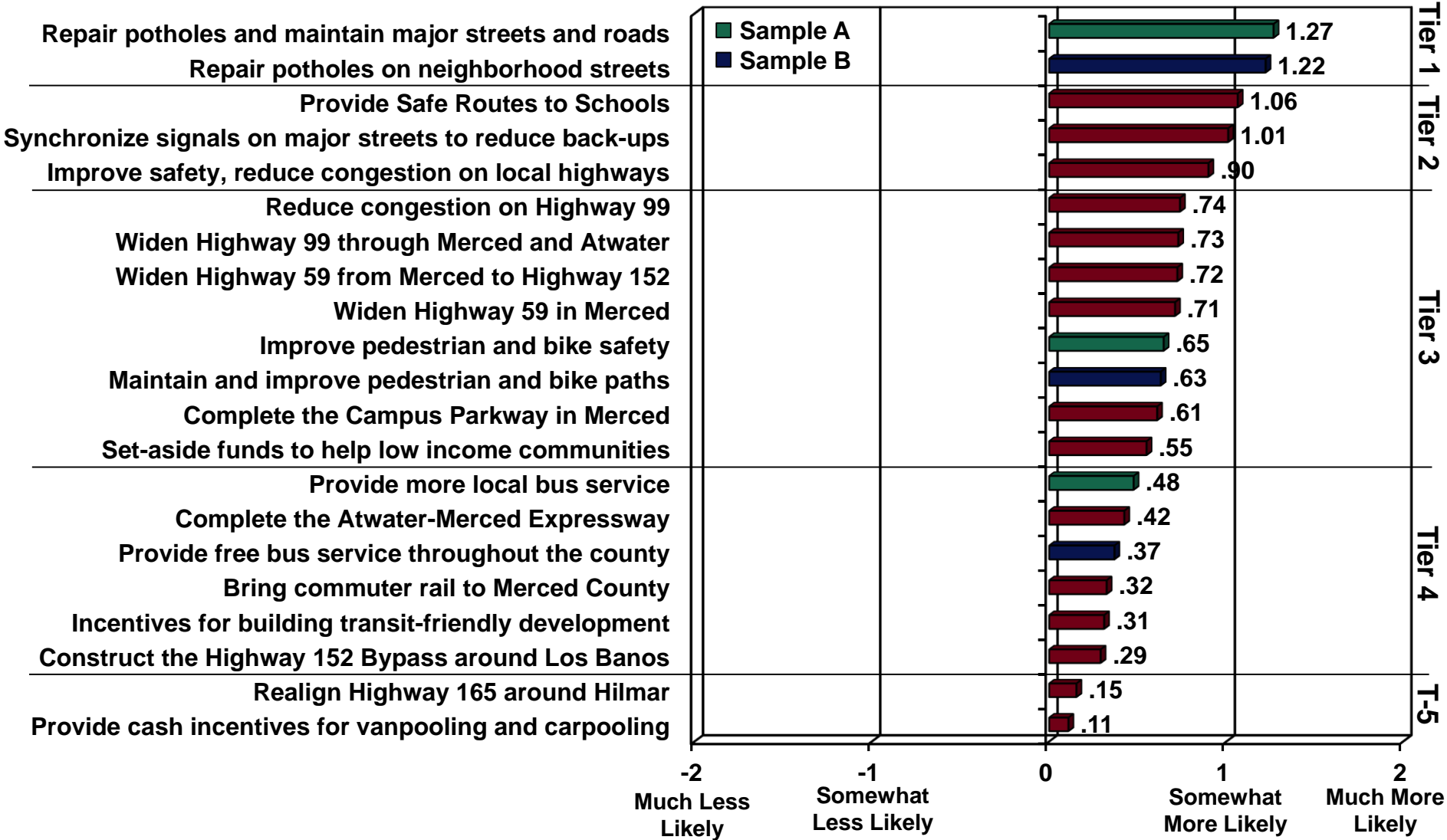
- fixing potholes and maintaining local roads;
- reducing traffic congestion on highways and local roads;
- extending commuter rail into Merced County;
- providing seniors and disabled with mobility options; and
- improving pedestrian and bike travel;

shall the Merced County Transportation Authority enact a ½ cent sales tax, providing \$15 million dollars annually for transportation projects for 30 years, that cannot be taken by the State, with citizens' oversight, and requiring all money to be spent entirely in Merced County?

Q2. Uninformed Support for Sales Tax City Comparisons

	City							
	Total	Atwater	Dos Palos	Gustine	Livingston	Los Banos	Merced	Unincorporated
Total	853	83	14	23	37	120	288	289
Definitely Yes	367 43.0%	36 43.6%	7 52.1%	12 52.2%	15 40.9%	57 47.1%	131 45.4%	110 38.0%
Probably Yes	243 28.4%	20 24.1%	4 33.0%	6 25.8%	12 33.8%	24 20.0%	96 33.3%	80 27.6%
Probably No	72 8.5%	3 3.8%	0 3.4%	1 4.3%	4 12.1%	11 8.9%	17 5.9%	36 12.3%
Definitely No	138 16.2%	19 22.7%	1 9.1%	4 17.7%	2 6.2%	23 19.4%	38 13.1%	51 17.7%
Not sure [DK/NA]	32 3.8%	5 5.8%	0 2.4%	0 .0%	3 7.0%	6 4.6%	7 2.3%	13 4.3%

Q3. Features of the Measure (n=853)



Note: The above rating questions have been abbreviated for charting purposes, and responses were recoded to calculate mean scores: "Much More Likely" = +2, "Somewhat More Likely" = +1, "No Effect" = 0, "Somewhat Less Likely" = -1, and "Much Less Likely" = -2.

Q3. Features of the Measure City Comparisons

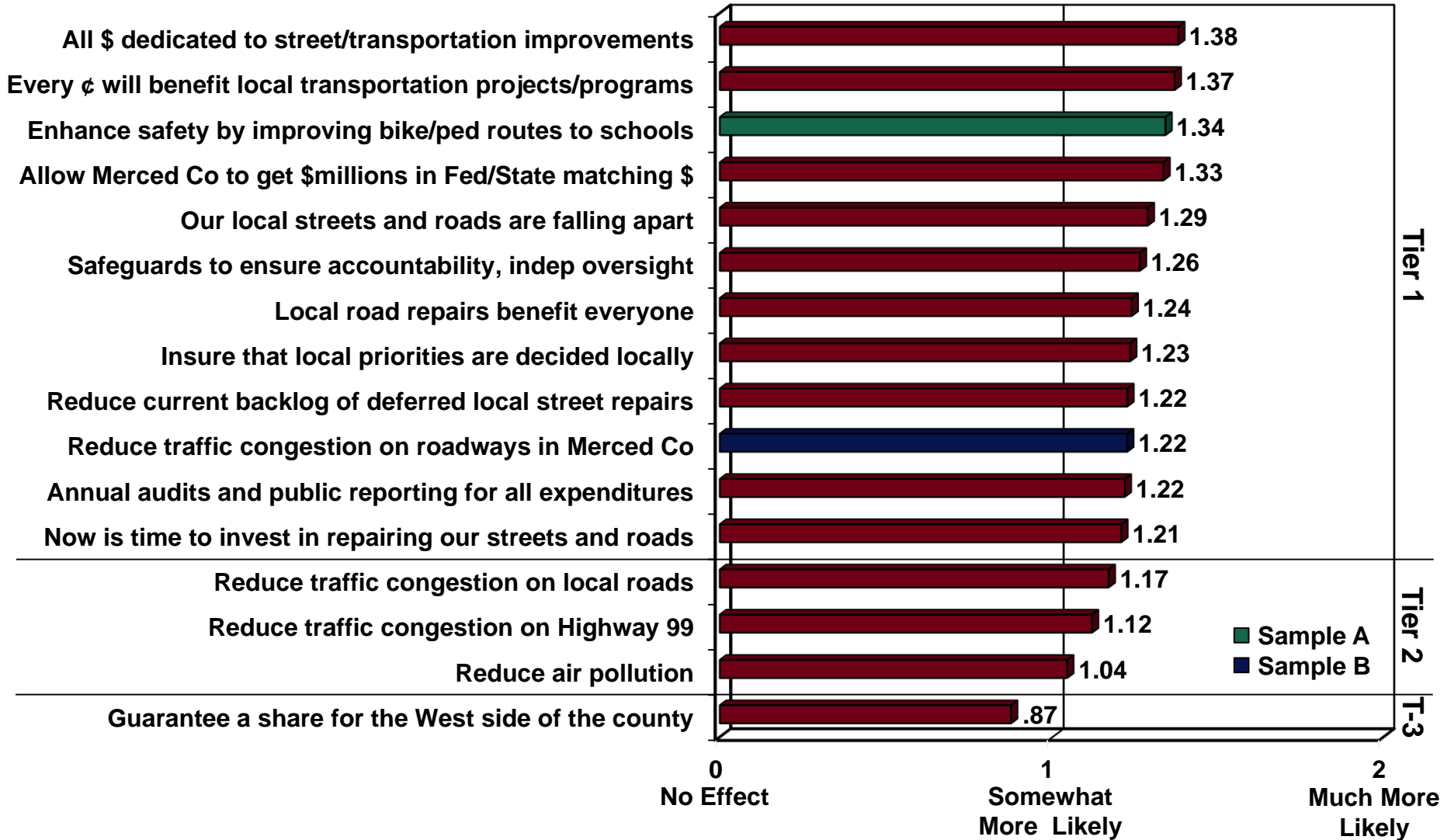
	City							
	Total	Atwater	Dos Palos	Gustine	Livingston	Los Banos	Merced	Unincorporated
3A. Provide Safe Routes to Schools	1.06	.74	1.10	1.12	1.39	1.15	1.23	.91
3B. Reduce congestion on Highway 99	.74	.53	.68	.32	1.12	.55	.81	.79
3C. Synchronize traffic signals on major streets to reduce back-ups	1.01	.86	.75	.96	1.20	.77	1.21	.94
3D. Improve safety and reduce traffic congestion on local highways	.90	.86	.76	.98	1.34	.93	.93	.81
3E. Bring commuter rail to Merced County such as the Altamont Corridor Express, also known as the ACE Train	.32	.16	.24	.62	.40	.39	.47	.18
3F. Construct the Highway 152 Bypass around Los Banos	.29	.01	.75	.68	.64	.87	.22	.10
3G. Complete the Atwater-Merced Expressway connecting Highway 99 to Castle Airport	.42	.97	.65	.02	.73	-.12	.56	.32
3H. Complete the Campus Parkway in Merced connecting to UC Merced	.61	.73	.72	.28	1.16	.20	.83	.46
3I. Widen Highway 99 through Merced and Atwater	.73	.96	.63	.25	1.19	.32	.82	.72
3J. Widen Highway 59 in Merced	.71	.87	1.43	.52	.49	.82	.78	.56
3K. Widen Highway 59 from Merced to Highway 152	.72	.49	1.51	.66	.75	1.02	.86	.49
3L. Realign Highway 165 around Hilmar	.15	.06	.61	.27	.66	.32	-.02	.18
3M. Provide cash incentives for vanpooling and carpooling	.11	-.09	-.11	.75	.36	.27	.22	-.09
3N. Provide incentives for building transit-friendly development projects	.31	.21	.41	.56	.75	.52	.46	.02

Q3. Features of the Measure Continued

City Comparisons

	City							
	Total	Atwater	Dos Palos	Gustine	Livingston	Los Banos	Merced	Unincorporated
3O. Set-aside funds to help low income communities with transportation improvements	.55	.29	1.17	.62	1.21	.68	.63	.37
3P. Repair potholes and maintain major streets and roads	1.27	1.29	1.14	1.45	1.48	1.17	1.25	1.27
3Q. Provide more local bus service	.48	.36	1.39	.35	.86	.69	.43	.39
3R. Improve pedestrian and bike safety	.65	.49	1.40	.68	1.36	.55	.83	.43
3S. Repair potholes on neighborhood streets	1.22	1.20	1.68	.99	1.30	.80	1.26	1.33
3T. Provide free bus service throughout the county	.37	.09	.94	-.04	1.17	.41	.54	.13
3U. Maintain and improve pedestrian and bike paths	.63	.67	.18	.53	1.05	.45	.97	.30

Q4. Influence of Supporting Statements (n=853)



Note: The above rating questions have been abbreviated for charting purposes, and responses were recoded to calculate mean scores: "Much More Likely" = +2, "Somewhat More Likely" = +1, and "No Effect" = 0.

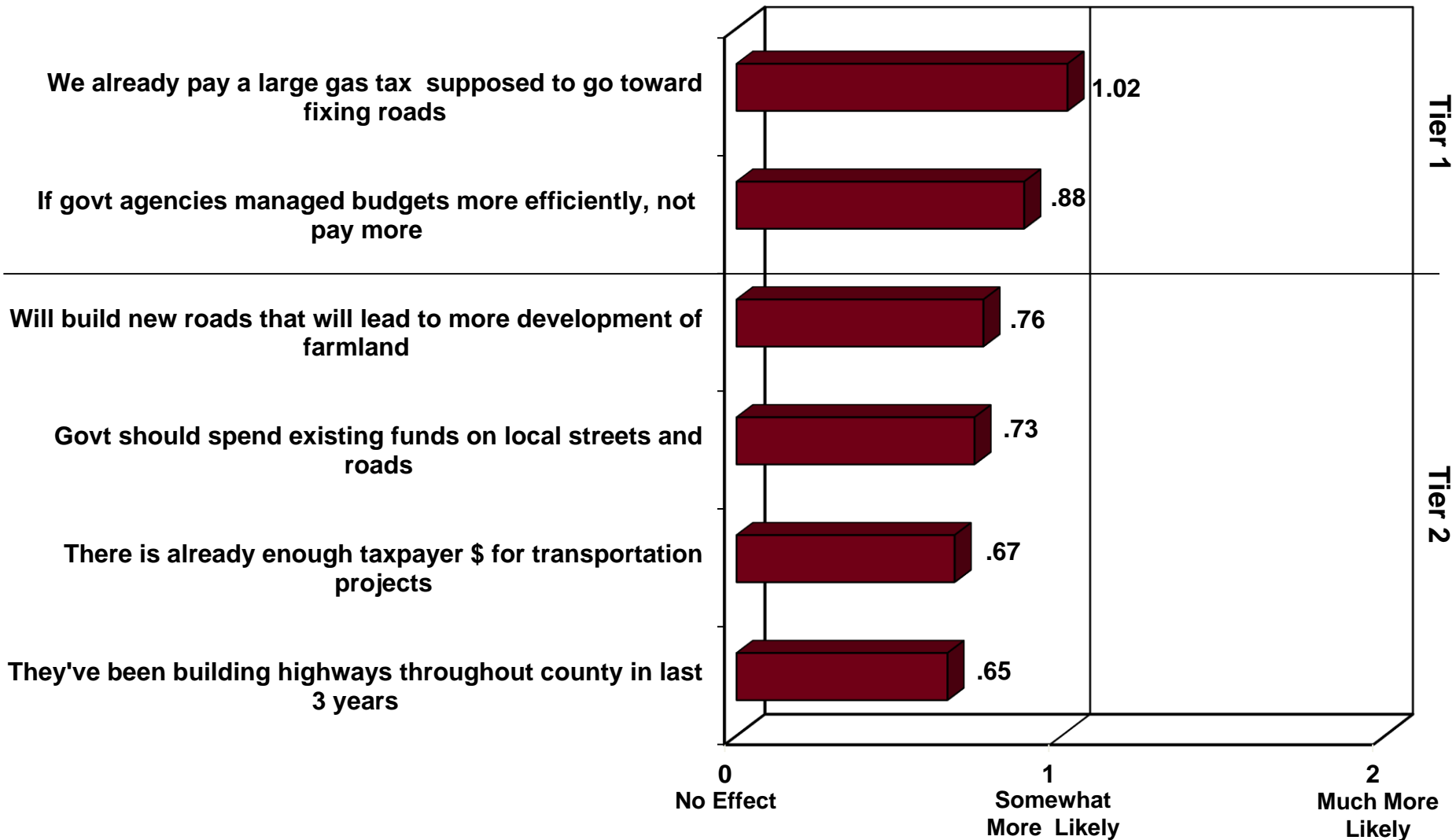
Q4. Influence of Supporting Statements City Comparisons

	City							
	Total	Atwater	Dos Palos	Gustine	Livingston	Los Banos	Merced	Unincorporated
4A. The measure would help reduce the current backlog of deferred local street and road repairs	1.22	1.18	1.51	1.00	1.34	1.14	1.31	1.18
4B. Our local streets and roads are falling apart, this measure will help stop the deterioration	1.29	1.36	1.61	1.18	1.45	1.26	1.25	1.28
4C. The measure will allow Merced County to get millions of dollars in Federal and State matching funds. Without approval of this measure that money will go to other counties	1.33	1.33	1.60	1.11	1.47	1.35	1.43	1.22
4D. Every penny from this measure will benefit local transportation projects and programs, and cannot be taken by the State	1.37	1.32	1.55	1.36	1.28	1.39	1.43	1.31
4E. All of the money from the measure would be dedicated to street, road and transportation improvements and stay in Merced County	1.38	1.34	1.71	1.32	1.49	1.30	1.43	1.34
4F. Now is the time to invest in repairing our streets and roads, if we wait it will just cost more in the future	1.21	1.26	1.58	1.01	1.39	1.13	1.27	1.13
4G. The measure would help reduce traffic congestion on local roads	1.17	1.24	1.43	.50	1.23	1.12	1.28	1.09
4H. There will be annual audits and public reporting requirements for all expenditures	1.22	1.28	1.46	.89	1.28	1.25	1.31	1.10
4I. The measure will help reduce air pollution	1.04	.92	1.08	.78	1.04	1.00	1.32	.84
4J. Safeguards to ensure accountability, including independent oversight and annual audits, will ensure that the money will be spent properly	1.26	1.32	1.24	1.09	1.22	1.33	1.34	1.16

Q4. Influence of Supporting Statements Continued City Comparisons

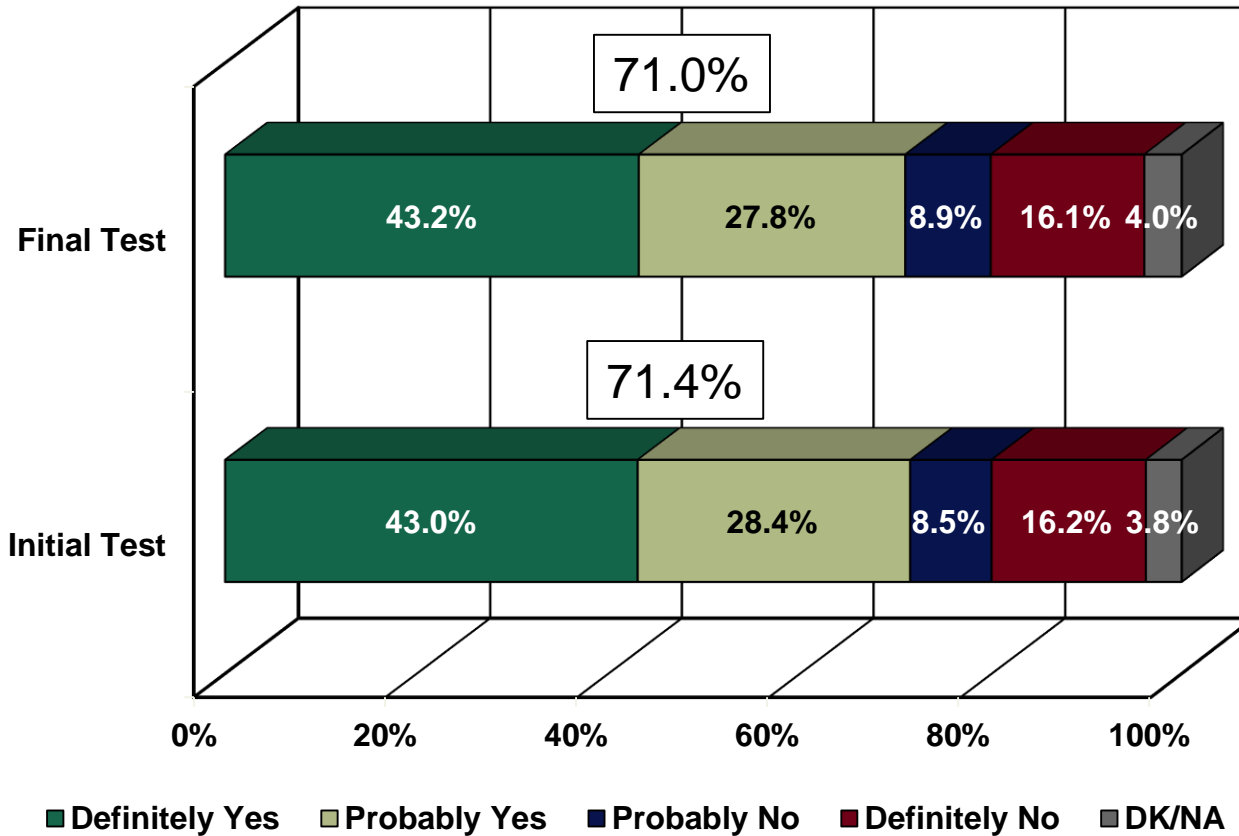
	City							
	Total	Atwater	Dos Palos	Gustine	Livingston	Los Banos	Merced	Unincorporated
4K. Local road repairs benefit everyone - local streets and roads benefit drivers, bicyclists, walkers, buses, seniors, kids, and neighbors	1.24	1.16	1.33	.89	1.40	1.16	1.37	1.16
4L. The measure will reduce traffic congestion on Highway 99	1.12	1.19	1.14	.76	1.27	.92	1.13	1.17
4M. The measure will guarantee a share for the West side of the county, including Dos Palos, Gustine, and Los Banos	.87	.90	1.55	1.25	.72	1.33	.82	.70
4N. The measure will insure that local priorities are decided locally	1.23	1.30	1.51	1.13	1.12	1.34	1.24	1.18
4O. The measure will enhance safety by improving bike and pedestrian routes to schools, installing traffic signals at dangerous intersections, synchronizing traffic and pedestrian signals, and improving emergency response times	1.34	1.45	1.88	.97	1.74	1.30	1.44	1.19
4P. The measure would help reduce traffic congestion on roadways in Merced County, reducing critical emergency response times	1.22	1.05	1.34	.90	1.29	1.12	1.39	1.15

Q5. Potential Opposition Statements (n=853)



Note: The above rating questions have been abbreviated for charting purposes, and responses were recoded to calculate mean scores: "Much More Likely" = +2, "Somewhat More Likely" = +1, and "No Effect" = 0.

Q6. Informed Support (n=853)



To provide funding for local transportation improvements including:

- fixing potholes and maintaining local roads;
- reducing traffic congestion on highways and local roads;
- extending commuter rail into Merced County;
- providing seniors and disabled with mobility options; and
- improving pedestrian and bike travel;

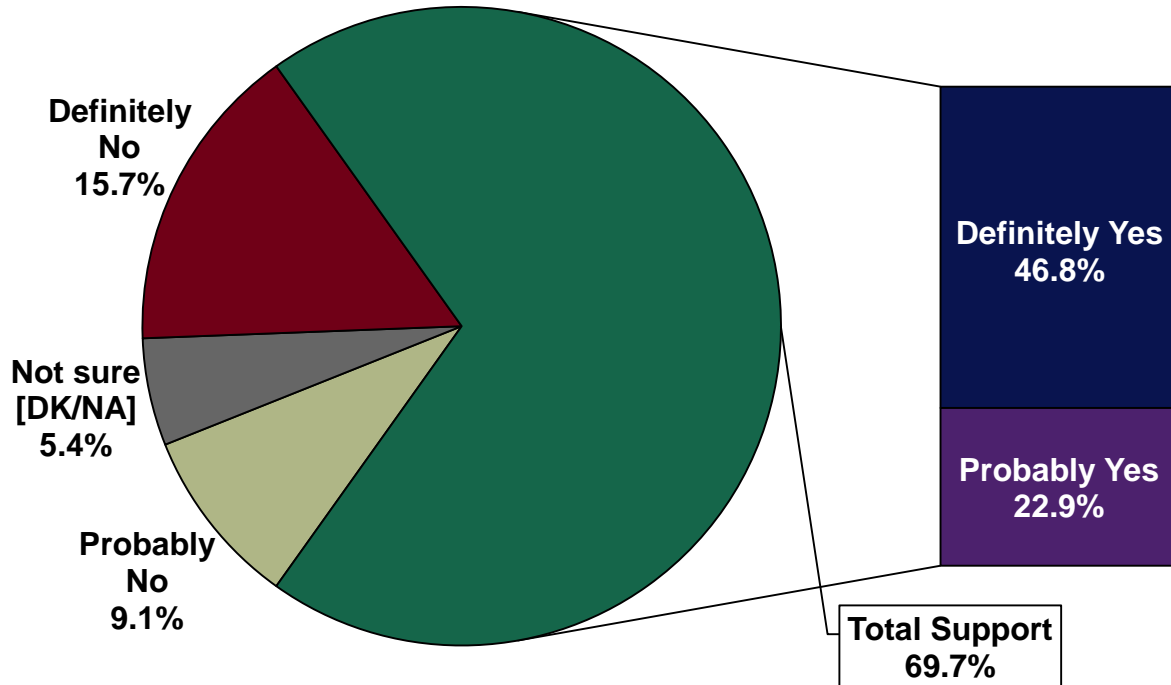
shall the Merced County Transportation Authority enact a ½ cent sales tax, providing \$15 million dollars annually for transportation projects for 30 years, that cannot be taken by the State, with citizens' oversight, and requiring all money to be spent entirely in Merced County?

Q6. Informed Support City Comparisons

	City							
	Total	Atwater	Dos Palos	Gustine	Livingston	Los Banos	Merced	Unincorporated
Total	853	83	14	23	37	120	288	289
Definitely Yes	368 43.2%	37 44.3%	5 37.0%	12 52.2%	20 56.0%	53 43.9%	128 44.5%	113 39.1%
Probably Yes	237 27.8%	21 24.9%	6 43.4%	5 22.2%	11 29.6%	26 21.4%	86 30.0%	83 28.6%
Probably No	76 8.9%	8 9.3%	2 12.5%	0 1.4%	1 1.4%	11 9.6%	26 8.9%	29 9.9%
Definitely No	138 16.1%	16 19.9%	0 .0%	6 24.2%	4 10.6%	23 19.1%	34 11.9%	55 18.9%
Not sure [DK/NA]	34 4.0%	1 1.6%	1 7.1%	0 .0%	1 2.4%	7 6.0%	14 4.7%	10 3.4%

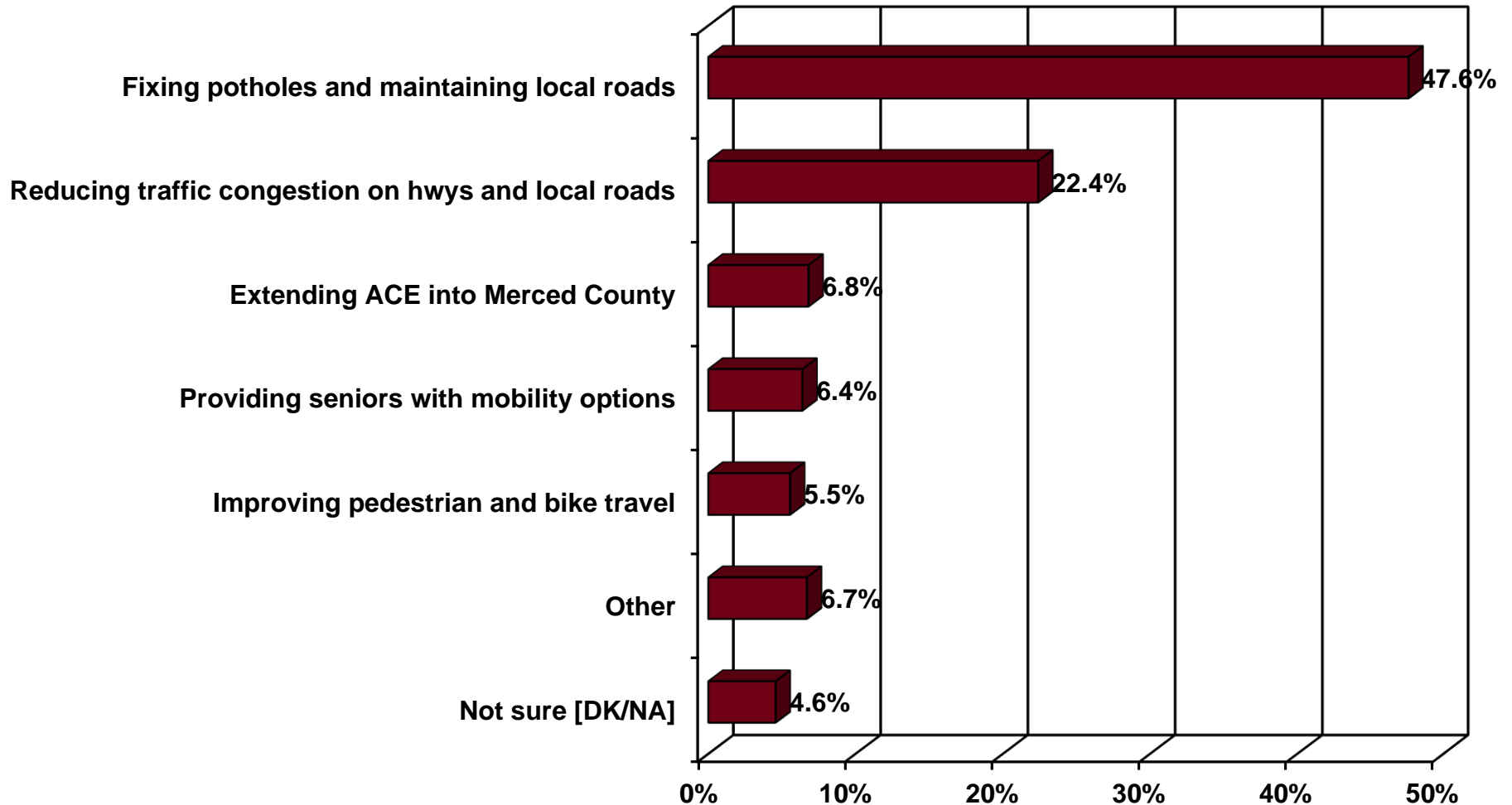
Q7. Support for Alternative ½ Cent Sales Tax / 20 Year Duration

(n=853)

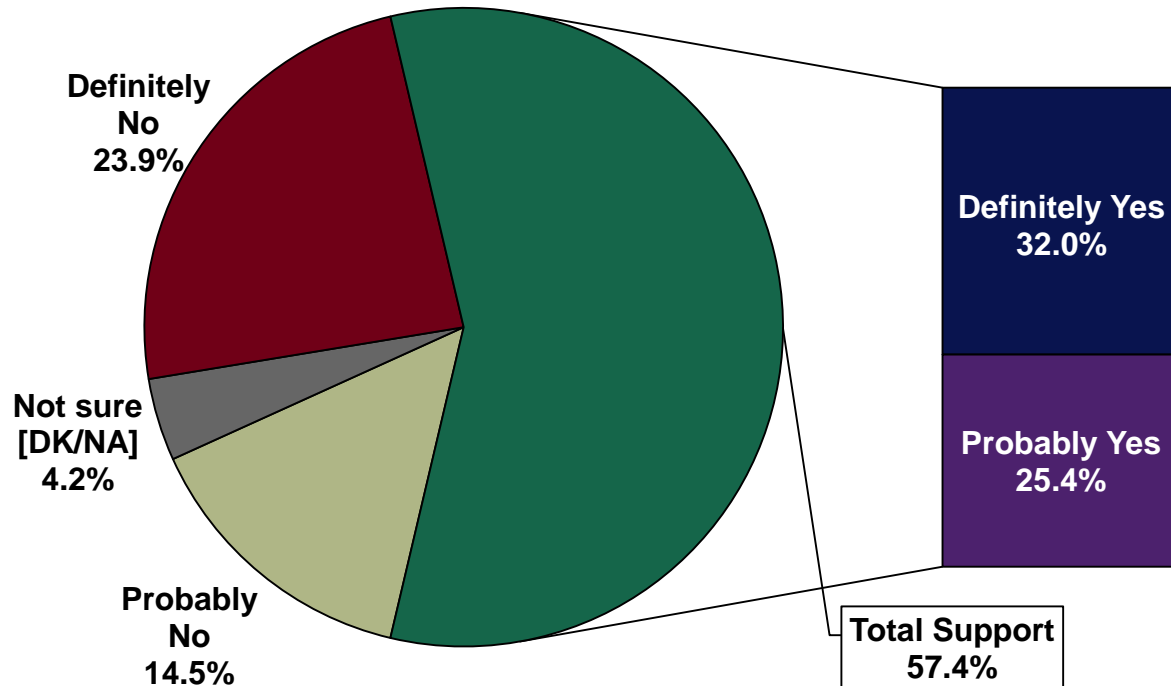


INSTEAD of lasting for 30 years, if the measure to provide funding for local transportation improvements lasted for 20 years, would you vote yes or no on this measure if the election were held today?

Q8. Importance of Transportation Projects (n=853)



Q9. Support for Alternative Transportation & Law Enforcement 1 Cent Sales Tax (n=853)

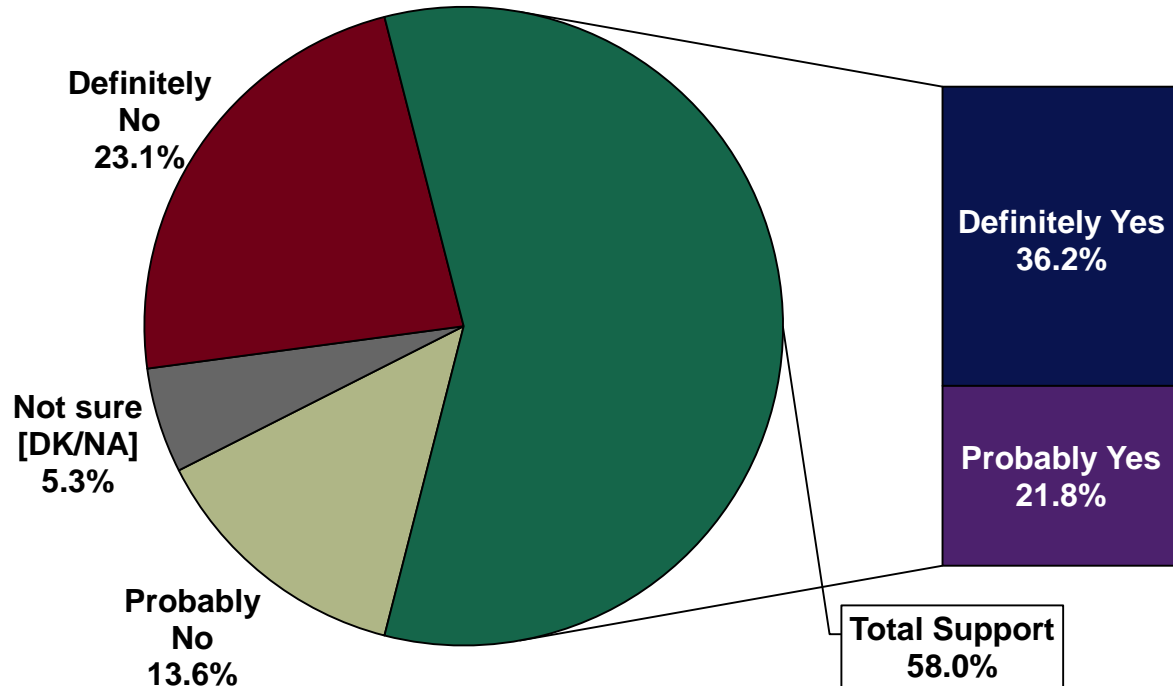


To provide funding for local transportation improvements and law enforcement including:

- fixing potholes and maintaining local roads;
- reducing traffic congestion on highways and local roads;
- extending commuter rail into Merced County;
- enhance city and county crime fighting; and
- improving pedestrian and bike travel;

shall Merced County enact a 1 cent sales tax, providing \$30 million dollars annually for 30 years, that cannot be taken by the State, with citizens' oversight, and requiring all money to be spent entirely in Merced County?

Q10. Support for Alternative Transportation & Law Enforcement 3/4 Cent Sales Tax (n=853)



Instead of the transportation and law enforcement measure just described, there could be a similar measure but instead of a 1 cent sales tax, the measure would fund the same services by raising the sales tax by $\frac{3}{4}$ cent.

Summary & Recommendations

- The survey revealed a very solid base of voter support for a transportation sales tax measure.
 - Support for the measure in the November 2016 election was 71.4% on the uninformed test and 71.0% on the informed test for November 2016.
- Top features of the measure (listed below in priority order) all received more than 2/3rds support countywide.
 - Repair potholes and maintain major streets and roads
 - Repair potholes on neighborhood streets
 - Provide Safe Routes to Schools
 - Synchronize traffic signals on major streets to reduce back-ups
 - Improve safety and reduce traffic congestion on local highways
- Top tier positive statements (listed below in priority order) all received more than 2/3rds support countywide.
 - All of the money from the measure would be dedicated to street, road and transportation improvements and stay in Merced County
 - Every penny from this measure will benefit local transportation projects and programs, and cannot be taken by the State
 - The measure will enhance safety by improving bike and pedestrian routes to schools, installing traffic signals at dangerous intersections, synchronizing traffic and pedestrian signals, and improving emergency response times
 - The measure will allow Merced County to get millions of dollars in Federal and State matching funds. Without approval of this measure that money will go to other counties
 - Our local streets and roads are falling apart, this measure will help stop the deterioration

- Safeguards to ensure accountability, including independent oversight and annual audits, will ensure that the money will be spent properly
 - Local road repairs benefit everyone - local streets and roads benefit drivers, bicyclists, walkers, buses, seniors, kids, and neighbors
 - The measure will insure that local priorities are decided locally
 - The measure would help reduce the current backlog of deferred local street and road repairs
 - The measure would help reduce traffic congestion on roadways in Merced County, reducing critical emergency response times
 - There will be annual audits and public reporting requirements for all expenditures
 - Now is the time to invest in repairing our streets and roads, if we wait it will just cost more in the future
- Given the survey findings, Godbe Research recommends that the Merced County Association of Governments continue the process of preparing for a November 2016 transportation sales tax measure election.



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