

Poll results show strong concern for global warming, give highest rankings to transportation alternatives

In the recent poll commissioned by our Regional Transportation Commission, the most striking result is that when those surveyed were asked to evaluate some 17 proposed projects, the project receiving the lowest ranking was “Adding carpool lanes on Highway One from Santa Cruz to Aptos”.

In fact, maintaining local streets and roads, passenger and freight train service, transportation services for seniors and disabled, and expanding and maintaining county bus service were all ranked higher than Highway One widening on a wish list of transportation projects for Santa Cruz County.

This telephone survey of likely Santa Cruz County voters regarding transportation and traffic issues indicates that county residents are strongly concerned about global warming, support the use of the rail line for passenger service, and do not place a high priority on the widening of Highway One.

The survey, conducted by the Oakland based *EMC Research, Inc.*, sampled 602 county residents, 97 percent of whom stated they are “almost certain” to vote in the November 2008 election. The survey was conducted between September 30 and October 2, 2007. The full survey is available from <http://SensibleTransportation.org/pdf/EMCsurvey.pdf>. A slideshow of comments by EMC Research is available from <http://SensibleTransportation.org/pdf/AnalysisAndResults.pdf>.

Here are some key findings:

- 75% agreed that “We must accept that global warming is a problem, and should have long term planning in Santa Cruz County that will result in less individual car use and more efficient transportation choices”.
- 63% agreed that “Adding passenger train service along the coast, improving bus service, improving bike lanes, encouraging carpools and other non-road improvements can solve our transportation problems in the county”.
- 59% agreed that “We need to drastically reduce our reliance on cars in Santa Cruz County, even if doing so is difficult for us today”.
- Naturally, most respondents (81%) felt that “We must accept that people need their cars to get around. . .”, but at the same time felt that we “. . . should have long term planning in Santa Cruz County that will result in efficient parking and less congested roadways”.
- However, only 43% agreed that “Like it or not, we should just raise taxes and move forward with widening Highway One so we can end the arguing and get on with other local issues”.

The graph on the other side of this page shows how those surveyed ranked 17 transportation-related projects that “could be funded if a half cent transportation sales tax is approved in Santa Cruz County.” A rank of 1 indicates **strong opposition**; a rank of 10 indicates **strong support**. The numbers at the right are the average ranks given by the respondents. (The rankings are from the responses to Questions 28 through 47 in the survey.)



As one may note from this graph, projects that would widen Highway One generally receive a low ranking, with the particular project to widen Highway One by adding carpool lanes ranking at the very bottom of the list.

Furthermore, this graph, coupled with the findings noted on the other side of this sheet indicate that voter responses are most consonant with the list of projects recommended by our “Plan C”, which focuses on “Community Needs, Choice, Climate Protection and Corridor Mobility”, and explicitly recommends against Highway One widening projects.

“Plan C” was submitted to the Transportation Funding Task Force in May 2007, well before this survey. It is unfortunate that those surveyed were not asked whether they would vote “yes to approve” or “no to oppose” any ballot measure similar to “Plan C”. Questions 13 and 14 of the survey do ask about proposed ballot measures, but both would fund the widening of Highway One from Santa Cruz to Aptos.

It is also surprising that no polling was done regarding either Personal Rapid Transit (PRT) or the Coastal Rail Trail (within the rail corridor—not “a bike and pedestrian continuous trail on or near the coast. . .”), since both of these projects are under active discussion.

– Prepared by the Campaign for Sensible Transportation, October 27, 2007