

# Agenda Item 8– Future Tax Measure Survey Results

## April 3, 2024










# Sonoma and Marin County Voter Attitudes Toward Renewing the SMART Sales Tax

*Key Findings of a Districtwide Survey  
Conducted February 8-15, 2024*



OPINION  
RESEARCH  
& STRATEGY

# Survey Methodology

<b>Dates</b>	February 8-15, 2024
<b>Survey Type</b>	Dual-mode Voter Survey
<b>Research Population</b>	Sonoma and Marin County Voters
<b>Total Interviews</b>	642 (402 in Sonoma County and 240 in Marin County)
<b>Margin of Sampling Error</b>	(Full Sample) $\pm 4.0\%$ at the 95% Confidence Level (Sonoma County) $\pm 4.9\%$ at the 95% Confidence Level (Marin County) $\pm 6.3\%$ at the 95% Confidence Level
<b>Contact Methods</b>	 Telephone Calls  Email Invitations  Text Invitations
<b>Data Collection Modes</b>	 Telephone Interviews  Online Interviews
<b>Languages</b>	English & Spanish

*(Note: Not All Results Will Sum to 100% Due to Rounding)*



# Political Context

# Majorities have a favorable opinion of SMART and of their respective county governments.

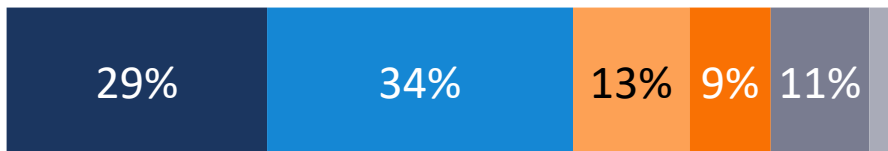
*I'm going to read a list of organizations active in public life. Please tell me whether your impression of that organization is generally favorable or unfavorable. If you don't recognize a name or if you have heard about the organization but do not have enough information to offer an opinion just say so.*

■ Very Fav. 
 ■ Smt. Fav. 
 ■ Smt. Unfav. 
 ■ Very Unfav. 
 ■ Heard of/Don't Know 
 ■ Never Heard of

**Total Fav.** **Total Unfav.**



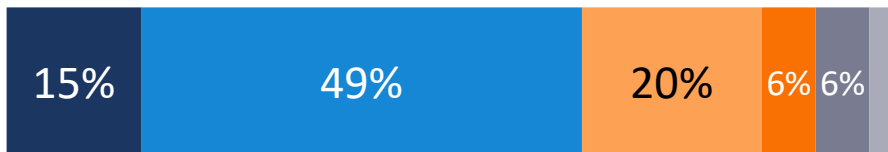
SMART,  
Sonoma-Marín Area Rail Transit



**63%** **22%**



\*\*Marin County government



**63%** **27%**



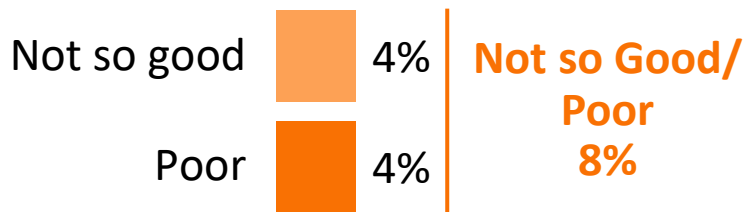
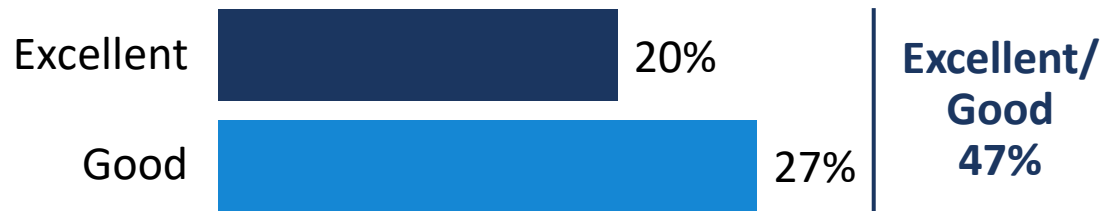
\*Sonoma County government



**55%** **30%**

# Among those familiar with SMART, the quality of service is highly rated.

*Overall, how would you rate the quality of SMART's service — is it excellent, good, not so good or poor?*



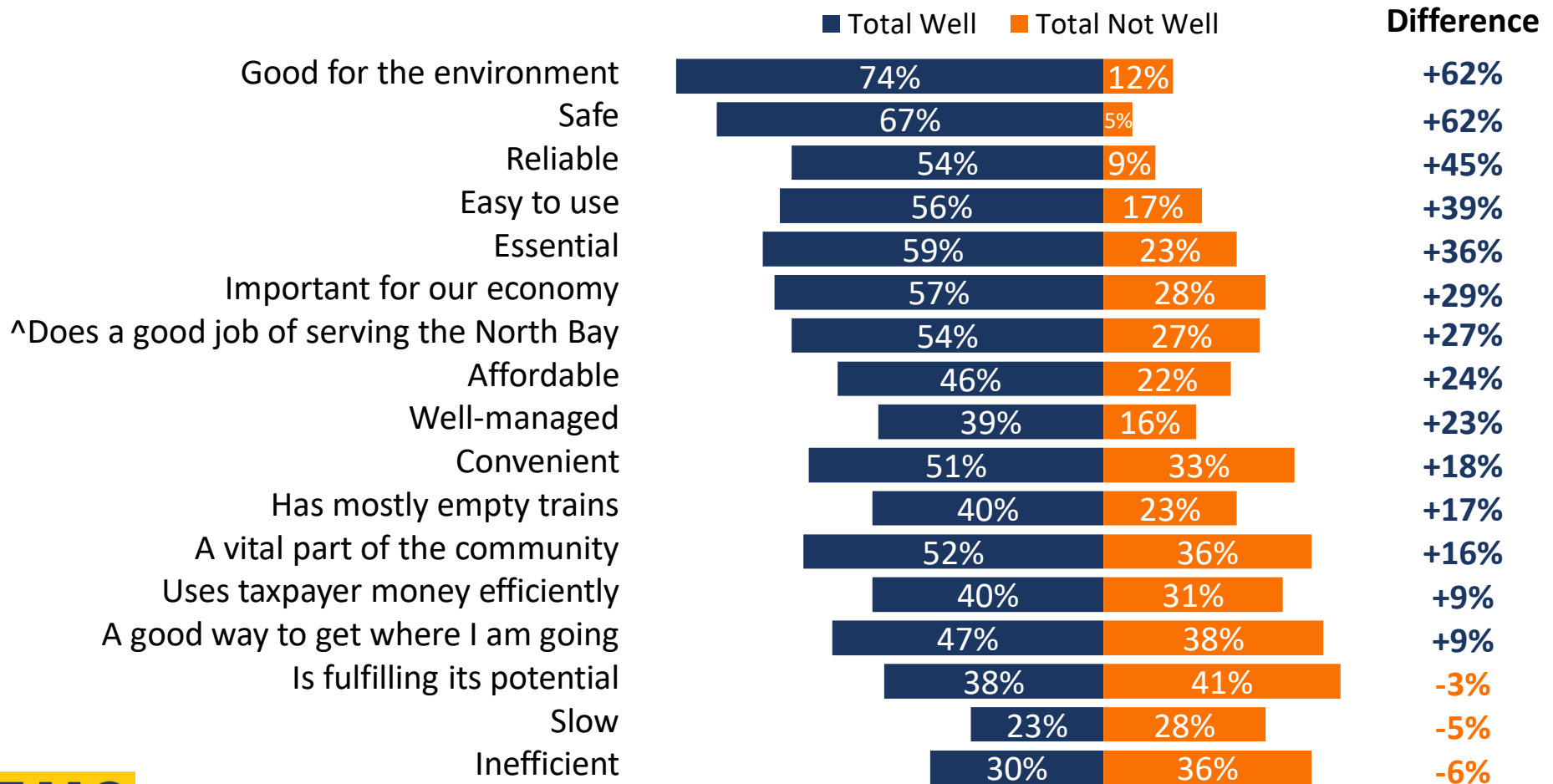
82% of those who have ever ridden SMART say service is "excellent" or "good."



# Voters most commonly describe SMART as good for the environment, safe, and reliable.

*Here is a series of words and phrases that someone might use to describe SMART.*

*Please tell me if it describes the organization very well, somewhat well, not too well, or not at all well.*



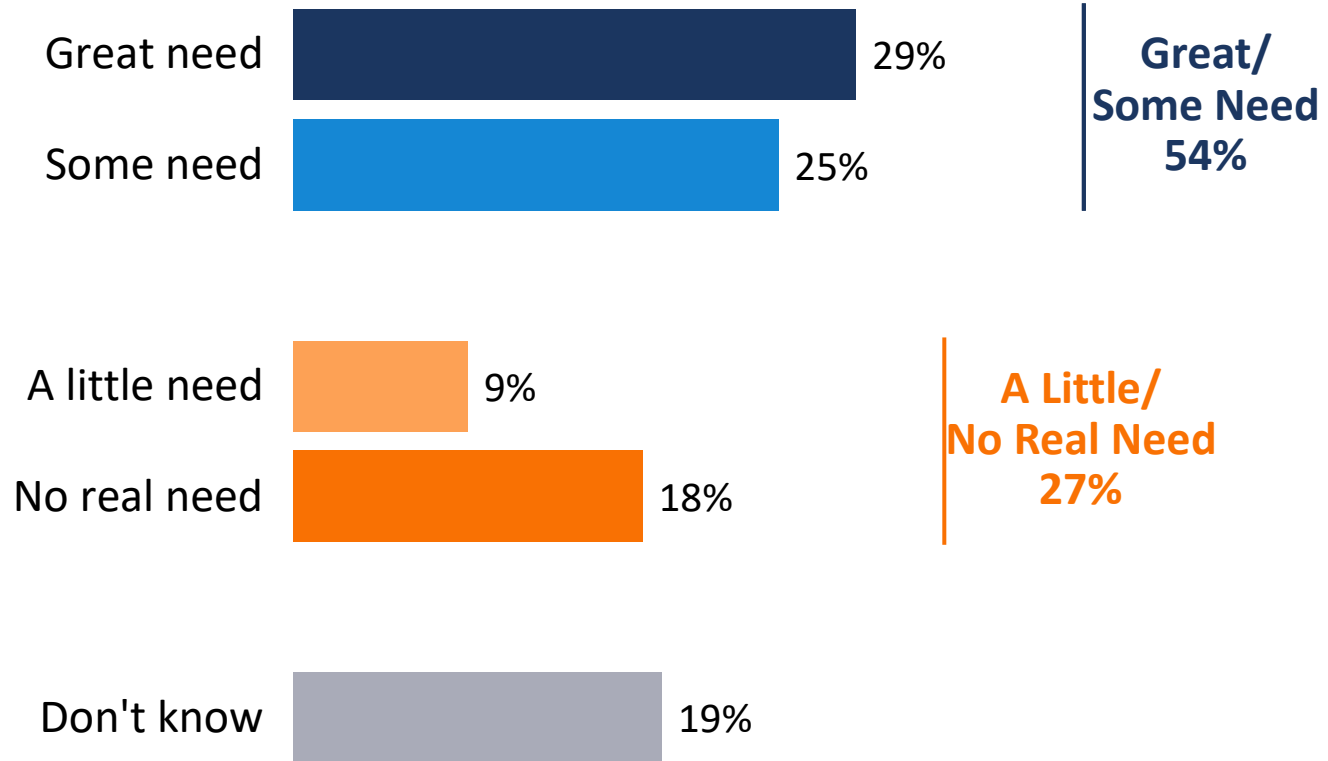
# SMART riders are especially likely to say that it is safe and easy to use.

Description	Total Well		
	All Voters	Ridership	
		Ever	Never
Good for the environment	74%	86%	62%
Safe	67%	88%	45%
Essential	59%	76%	41%
Important for our economy	57%	77%	38%
Easy to use	56%	88%	27%
Reliable	54%	78%	29%
Does a good job of serving the North Bay	54%	77%	31%
Is a vital part of the community	52%	73%	33%
Convenient	51%	70%	31%
A good way to get where I'm going	47%	69%	25%
Affordable	46%	66%	27%
Has mostly empty trains	40%	34%	45%
Uses taxpayer money efficiently	40%	62%	19%
Well-managed	39%	56%	20%
Is fulfilling its potential	38%	55%	21%
Inefficient	30%	25%	35%
Slow	23%	28%	18%



# A majority says there is a need for additional funding for the SMART system.

*Do you think there is a great need, some need, a little need, or no real need for additional funds to maintain and improve the SMART rail system?*



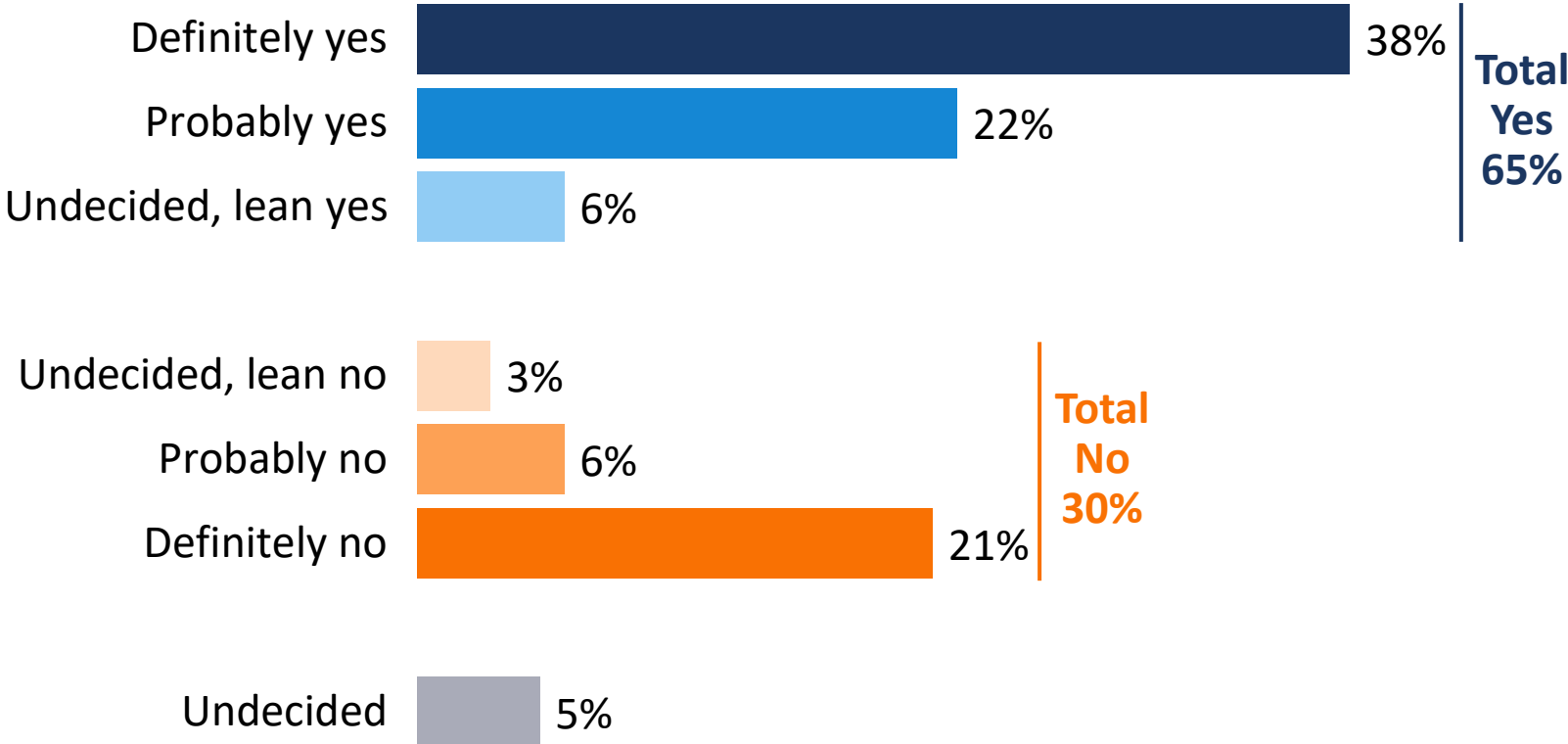


# Introducing the Measure

# Measure Language Tested

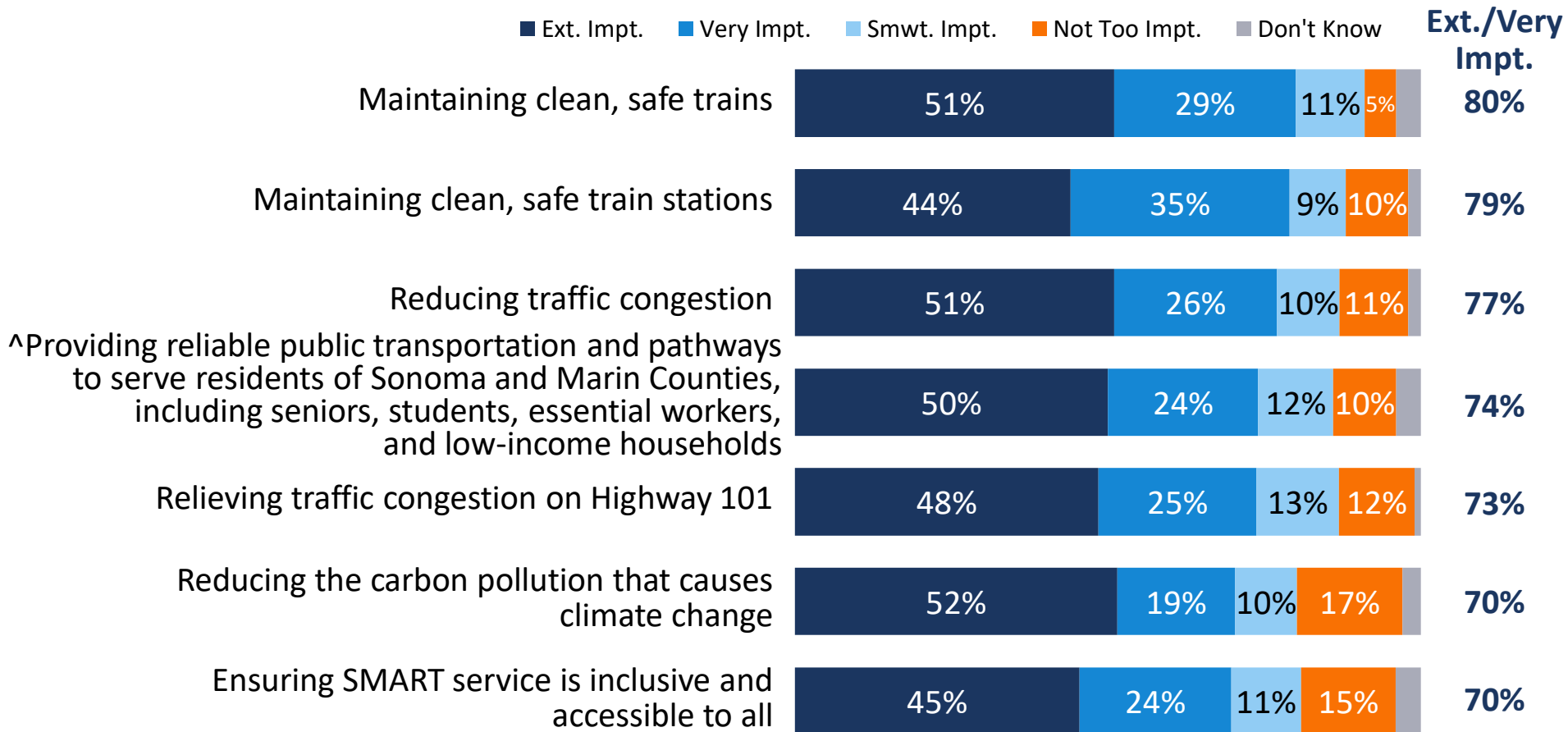
Without raising taxes, to continue relieving traffic congestion on Highway 101; reducing carbon pollution; providing reliable public transportation and pathways to serve residents of Sonoma and Marin Counties, including seniors, students, essential workers, and low-income households; completing rail service and biking/walking pathways between Larkspur and Cloverdale, shall an extension of the existing Sonoma-Marin Area Rail Transit District 1/4-cent voter approved sales tax, at the same rate, generating approximately \$51,000,000 annually for an additional 30 years, subject to public disclosure, be adopted?

# Support for the measure is just under the two-thirds level.

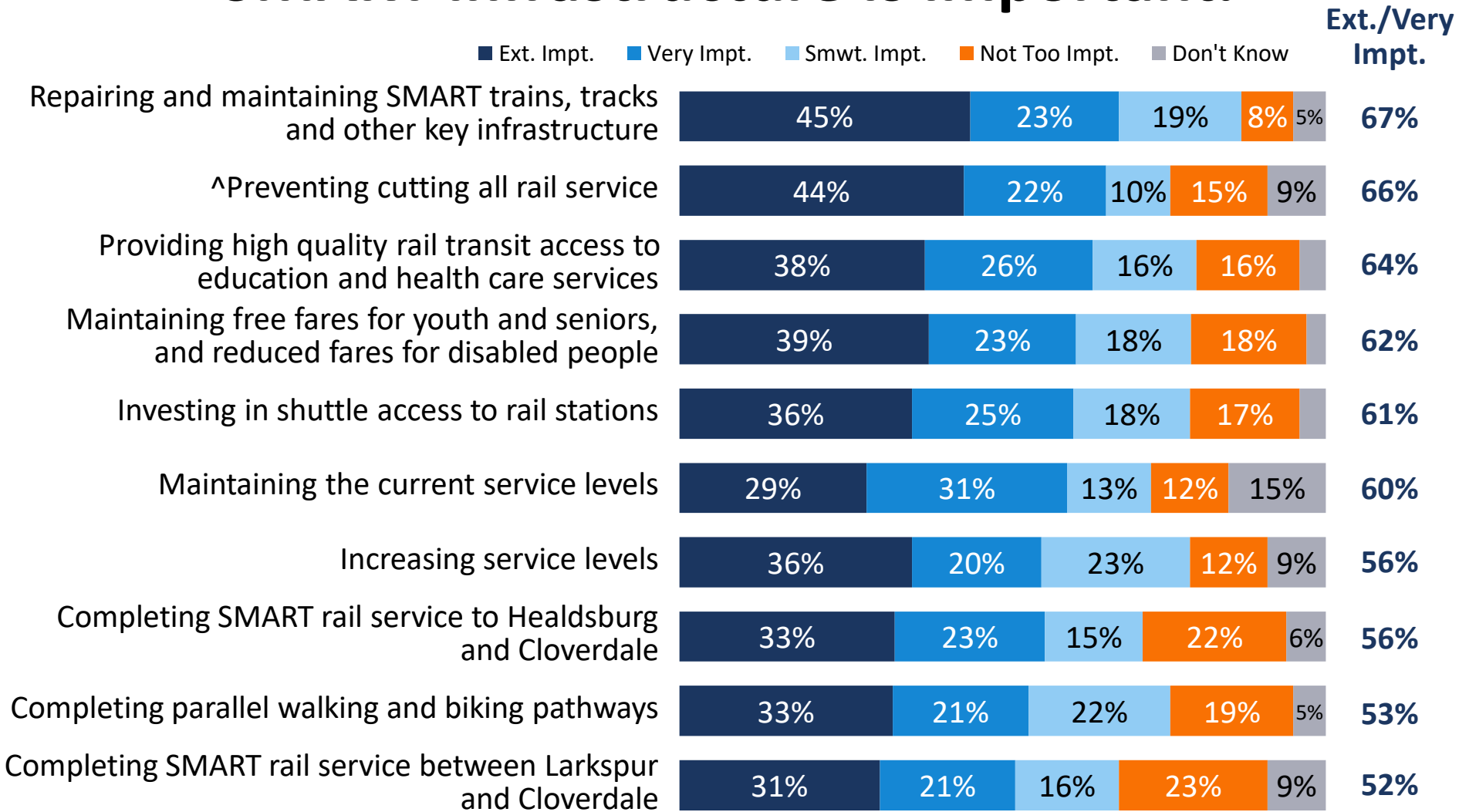


# Maintaining clean and safe trains and stations are the top priorities for voters.

I am going to read you a list of potential outcomes of this measure. Please tell me how important each one is to you: extremely important, very important, somewhat important, or not too important?



# Two-thirds say repairing and maintaining SMART infrastructure is important.

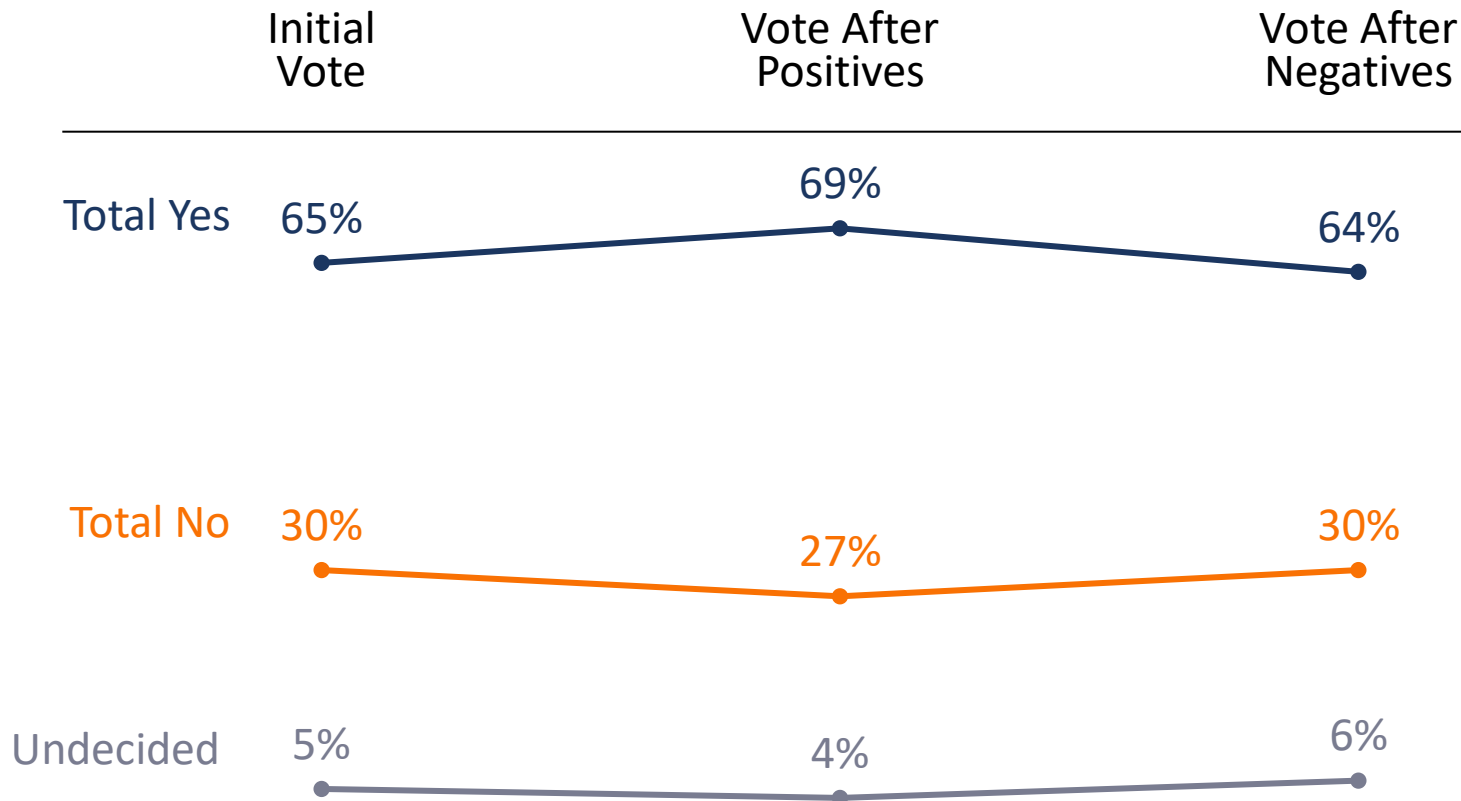


Q7. I am going to read you a list of potential outcomes of this measure. Please tell me how important each one is to you: extremely important, very important, somewhat important, or not too important? ^Not Part of Split Sample



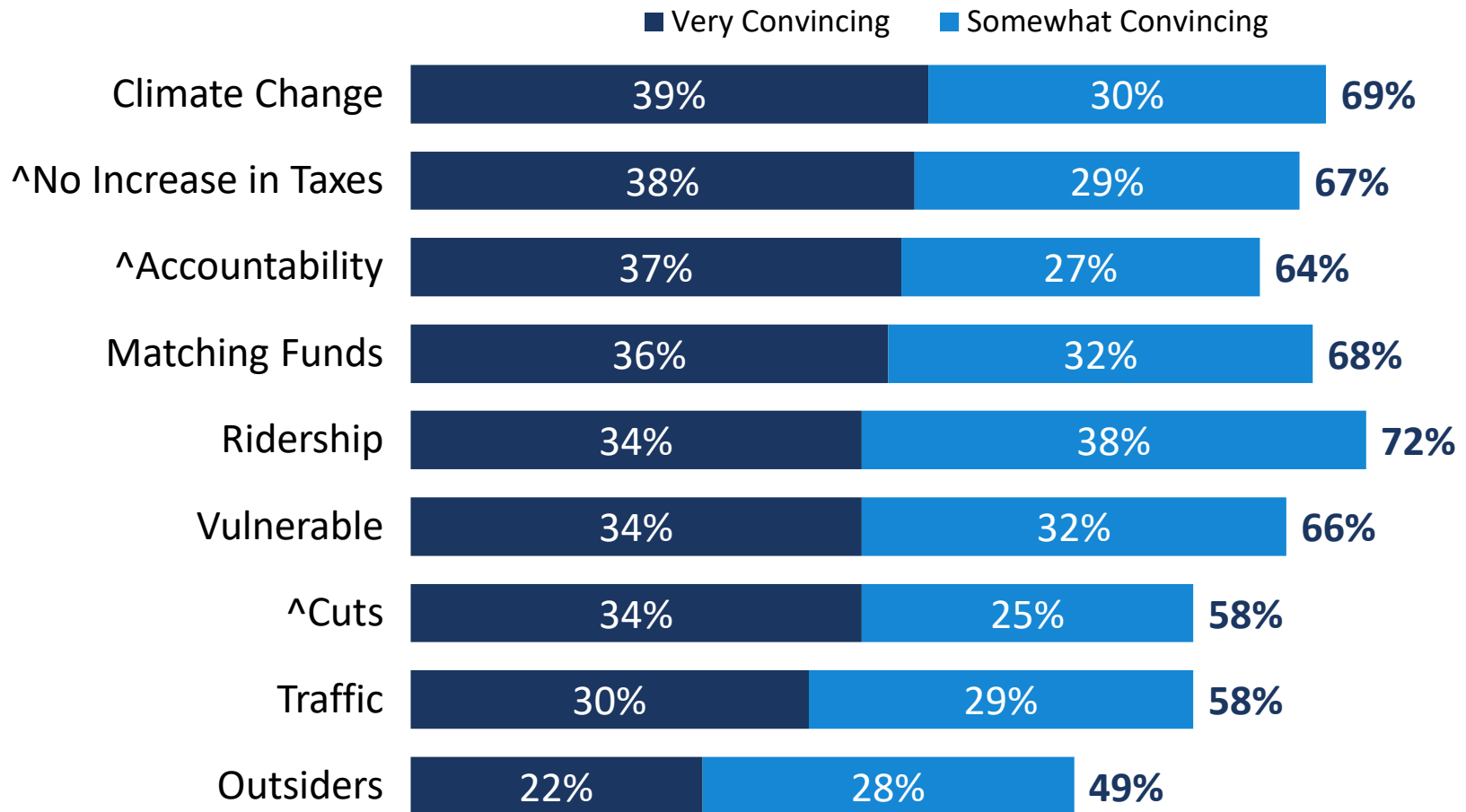
# Messaging

# Support peaks at 69% after positive messaging.





# Messages that describe fighting climate change, emphasize the renewal, and highlight accountability are most convincing.





# Conclusions

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- SMART is broadly viewed favorably.
  - SMART is commonly seen as good for the environment, safe, and reliable – but not necessarily fulfilling its potential.
  - A majority sees a need for additional funding for the system.
- In this context, support for the SMART sales tax measure is just under two-thirds initially and remains within the margin of error of the two-thirds level throughout the survey.
- Maintaining clean and safe trains/train stations and reducing traffic congestion are voters' top priorities for the measure.
- Messaging that emphasizes the benefits to climate change, accountability provisions, and that the measure will not increase taxes resonates most strongly; collectively, it lifts support to 69%.
- However, critical messages push support back down below two-thirds.
- Overall, the findings suggest that there is a path forward for a renewal in November, but it is vulnerable given the challenge of reaching two-thirds support; raising voter awareness of SMART, its funding needs, and the benefits to the community will be essential for the measure's success.

For more information,  
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# Questions?

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