



Attachment B

Next Generation Bay Area Freeways Study

Community Engagement Round 1

Methodology

Round 1A: During summer 2022, staff conducted fifteen focus groups to understand the communities' vision of a next generation freeway network and gain a more nuanced understanding of the perceptions and concerns with road pricing. Staff was intentional about listening and learning early in the study with deep open-ended conversations and uplifting voices of communities that have historically been left out of the decision-making process. These conversations were not meant to make a case for pricing freeways, nor were they nuanced discussions of pricing policy tradeoffs, but were intended to gauge early reactions to pricing to help develop pathways. Of the fifteen focus groups, eleven were conducted in English; four were conducted in languages other than English, including one each in Cantonese, Mandarin, Spanish and Vietnamese; one group was conducted in person (Vietnamese-speaking community); and two were conducted as in-person, one-on-one interviews (day laborers and unhoused community members). In all, staff heard from 115 community members that reflect the Bay Area's socially-, economically- and culturally-rich and diverse population.

Round 1B: During fall 2022, staff conducted two 90-minute public webinars, "The Future of Freeways," to educate the public on issues confronting Bay Area freeways and gather input on the draft goals for Next Generation Freeways. Staff crafted comprehensive educational messaging and designed the webinars to put audiences in policymakers' shoes, helping to foster greater trust in policymakers and provide greater transparency behind the impetus for the study. The recording of the first webinar was posted and accompanied by a web survey to provide the public with additional opportunities to



participate and weigh in on the draft goals. In total, 786 individuals participated in Round 1B engagement.

Findings: Key Themes from Round 1A

What were participants' visions for Next Generation Freeways?

Congestion-free freeways. Overwhelmingly, participants desired less traffic, especially as more people are commuting due to the growing number of people relocating to find affordable housing. They associated less traffic with lower stress levels, increased mental wellness and the ability to spend more time with family and friends.

Safer freeways. Participants repeatedly called for curbing bad driver behavior as a means toward reducing congestion and the stress associated with driving. They correlated bad driver behavior with poor road conditions and unsafe merges.

Additional themes. Participants demanded improved maintenance of freeways, more reliable and safer transit alternatives, and better management of freight traffic.

What were participants' perceptions and concerns around pricing?

Strong concerns about financial burden. Participants underscored the financial burden in the context of rising inflation and housing unaffordability. They also cited the burden of unfair decision-making about traveling within the region and the associated stress, and how this would restrict access to jobs, services and amenities.

Distrust in government. There was a strong perception of road pricing as "double taxation" and a deep belief that pricing would be another "money grab". Participants doubted that pricing revenues would be invested effectively to improve transportation and/or address congestion, expressing a lack of awareness of how existing transportation revenues (e.g. bridge tolls, gas tax, sales tax) tangibly benefit them.

Disbelief in effectiveness of pricing. Participants believed that pricing would not reduce congestion and wanted to see proof that pricing could work and be equitable. They



instead offered suggestions such as expanding freeway lanes, double-decker freeways, improving transit and building more affordable housing.

What were suggestions for complementary strategies to make pricing more equitable?

Transit-first. Participants called for a reliable, connected, affordable, and safe transit system to be fully in place before pricing is implemented.

Managing financial burden. In addition to income-based discounts, participants called for introducing incentives to use driving alternatives, removing other driving-related fees, and shifting the burden to large companies.

Equitable implementation. Participants recommended pricing to be on the ballot, piloting pricing in a wealthier geography, investing revenues into specific community projects, and transparent communication of how revenues would be used.

A video highlighting participants' input can be found here: [Link to Next Generation Freeways Study: Round 1A Engagement YouTube video](#)

Findings: Key Themes from Round 1B

Positive feedback on presentation approach

Many participants indicated that they learned new things, and several provided positive feedback on the presentation approach.

Key concerns with road pricing

Equity concerns. Participants were concerned about the impacts of a tolling system on people with low incomes as well as traffic diversion to freeway-adjacent communities.

Improving transit. Participants called for improving transit prior to implementation of tolling. Specifically, comments focused on improving access for people with disabilities and people in suburbs/rural areas, making transit cheaper or free, better coordinating transit, consolidating transit agencies, expanding service, increasing frequency,



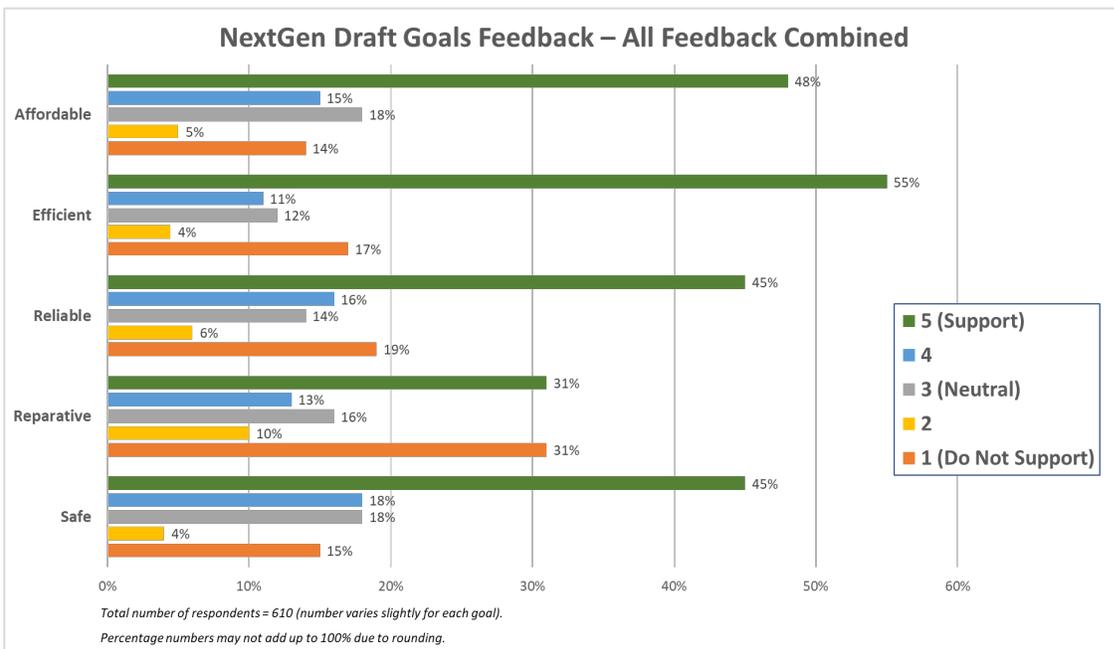
expanding rail, dedicating more funding to transit, improving safety and cleanliness, incentivizing and encouraging transit use, and dedicating freeway lanes to transit.

Other transportation and land use improvements. Comments included improving active travel modes and first/last mile connections, increasing telecommuting, optimizing land use (increased density, walkable neighborhoods, more transit-oriented development), and addressing housing unaffordability.

Level of support for draft Next Generation Freeways goals

Participants were polled for their level of support for each of the five goals (refer to Attachment C for details on goals) developed for Next Generation Freeways, shown in Figure 1. Most goals received broad support of at least 60%. The exception was “Reparative”, which received with 44% support, 16% neutral and 41% lack of support.

Figure 1: Level of Support for Next Generation Freeways Goals (Round 1B Webinars and Web-Survey, 610 participants)



The recording of “The Future of Freeways” webinar can be found here: [Link to Next Generation Freeways Study: Round 1B Webinar](#)