May 12, 2023   Agenda Item 3b

Public Opinion Poll Research Findings

Subject:

Analysis of the poll conducted by EMC Research, Inc. (EMC), which examined voter opinions on potential transportation and housing funding measures, general concerns, and priorities and perceptions of transportation (and public transit in particular) to help inform future regional transportation measures enabling legislation.

Background:

In March 2023, EMC Research, Inc. conducted a poll of 1,800 Bay Area voters in the nine-county Bay Area related to Bay Area voter sentiments regarding general issues of importance, transit and transportation usage and perspectives, as well as reactions to potential funding measures, including a housing bond and a transportation sales tax. EMC staff will present high-level findings from the poll.

Discussion:

The primary purpose of this poll was to provide detailed information on Bay Area voters' current priorities and concerns to help inform future enabling legislation for a regional transportation measure. As part of our 2023 MTC ABAG Joint Advocacy Program, the Commission directed staff to begin this analytical work along with public outreach this year, to inform enabling legislation in 2024. Two questions were asked as it relates to a future transportation measure, one testing a measure focused solely on public transit, the other testing a slightly broader transportation measure that included funding for pothole repair, among other categories. In addition, given direction to staff (from the Association of Bay Area Governments' Executive Board and the Bay Area Housing Finance Authority (BAHFA), MTC's affiliate housing agency) to proceed with the necessary work to place a general obligation bond on the November 2024 ballot, two questions on a housing bond were also included, one testing a ballot question subject to current law provisions requiring detailed estimates of the cost to the homeowner of the property tax assessment and one without such detail.

It is important to note that while these questions were asked to provide the current pulse of Bay Area voters with respect to approving revenue measures for these two topics, **the poll was not designed to be test the viability of a transportation or housing ballot measure on the November 2024 ballot.** For starters, November 2024 is too far in the future to make a "go/no go" decision a whether a measure looks viable. Additionally, there are many other considerations, including efforts to lower the voter approval threshold (for housing in particular as well as for a broader set of categories, including transportation), that have bearing on election viability. The bottom line, however, is that the poll indicated that neither a transportation measure nor a housing bond currently exceed the two-thirds vote threshold required; a transit-only measure received 59 percent support and a housing bond (with question structured as required by current law) received 58 percent. A broader transportation measure and a housing bond question worded without the explicit assessed value rate tested higher, but both still fell short of two-thirds at 63 percent and 65 percent, respectively.

As you will see in the presentation, most of the questions were aimed at understanding how Bay Area voters feel about public transit with detailed breakdowns of these perceptions by categories of user, including daily transit riders, weekly riders, and so on. Questions were also asked about what Bay Area voters' priorities are when it comes to transportation generally. The poll included some very encouraging findings, including that **79 percent of Bay Area voters** agree with the statement "Having high-quality, reliable public transit in the Bay Area benefits everyone, even people who don't ride it" and that **74 percent agree** "We need to invest in real improvements to our public transit system to make it a better option for more people in the Bay Area instead of driving."

Recommendations:

Information

Attachments:

- Attachment A: PowerPoint

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Andrew B. Fremier