

Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin & Associates

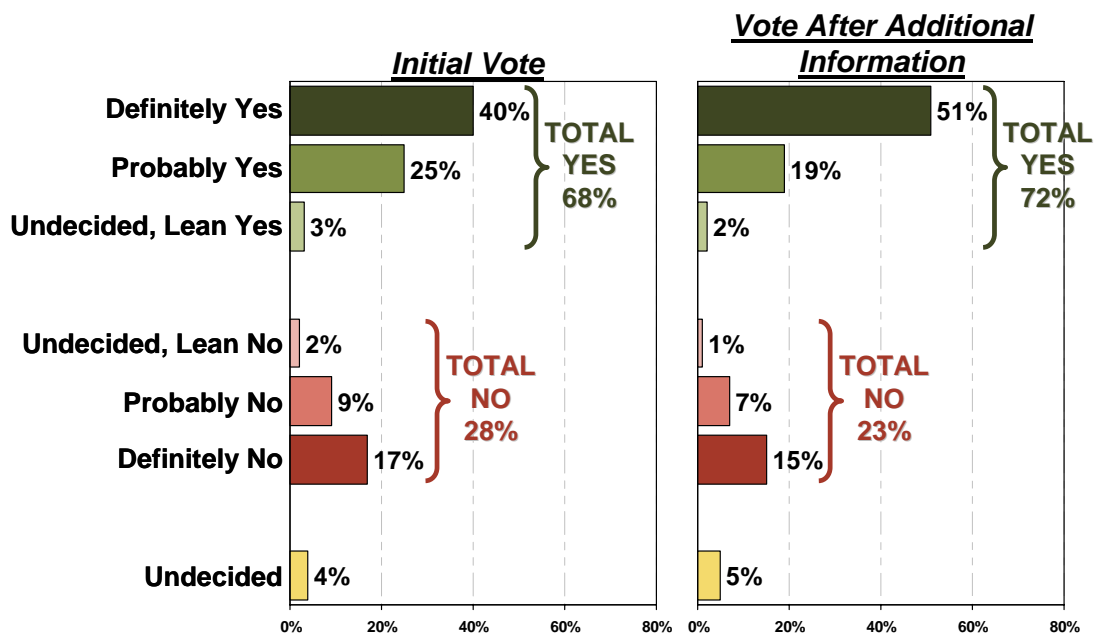
Opinion Research &
Public Policy Analysis

TO: Interested Parties
FROM: Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin & Associates
RE: Survey results
Date: April 26, 2005

The results from a recent survey of Nevada County likely November 2006 voters show that a ballot measure to raise funds for transportation improvements has a strong opportunity to pass.¹

- **Over two-thirds of voters (68 percent) would vote in favor of a transportation safety, road improvement, and traffic relief measure if the election were held today, while just 28 percent would oppose it.** Moreover, intensity of support (based on the proportion saying they would “definitely” support the measure) outweighs intensity of opposition (“definitely” vote against it) by more than 2-to-1 (40% “definitely yes” to 17% “definitely no”) (see Initial Vote, Figure 1).

Figure 1: Vote on Transportation Safety, Road Improvement and Traffic Relief Measure



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- **Once voters are provided with additional information, overall support for the measure increases from 68 to 72 percent.** Even more encouraging is that intensity of support increases by 11 points, from 40 percent “definitely” in favor of the measure initially to 51 percent giving this response after hearing information about it (see Vote After Additional Information, Figure 1).
- **Support for the measure is broad-based.** In fact, the measure receives support from approximately seven in 10 voters in Grass Valley (70%), Nevada City (68%), and the unincorporated areas (69%). This support increases to 77 percent in Grass Valley and 73 percent in each Nevada City and the unincorporated areas after they learn more about it. Initial support is lower in Truckee (58%), which may reflect the fact that Truckee already has a road maintenance sales tax. However, hearing more information brings support in Truckee to 65 percent – putting it within the margin of error for passage.
- **This high level of support for the measure is not surprising given the high level of awareness and concern about transportation related issues:**

When asked in an open-ended question (where no response options were provided) to name the most serious problem facing the residents of Nevada County, just over four in ten (42%) volunteered an issue related to transportation. Specifically,

- Twenty percent (20%) mentioned *traffic congestion*,
- Fourteen percent (14%) said *deteriorating streets or streets in need of repair*,
- Five percent (5%) volunteered *deteriorating highways or highways in need of repair*, and
- One percent (1%) each mentioned *deteriorating bridges*, *public transportation*, and *traffic safety*, respectively.

Concern about transportation issues is more salient than concern about issues we typically see at the forefront of voter attention in areas similar to Nevada County, including education (36% volunteering this issue), drug use (30%), jobs and the economy (3%), and crime (2%).

Survey respondents were also asked to evaluate a number of issues in a close-ended question as well.² In this case, transportation issues remain at the top of the list, although secondary to drug use and abuse and affordable housing. Just over half (53%) consider “*the condition of local streets and roads*” to be an “extremely” or “very” serious problem. Overall, 84 percent consider the issue at least “somewhat” serious. Just a slightly lower 47 percent consider “*the amount of traffic on local streets and roads*” to be “extremely” or “very” serious, with 80 percent calling this issue at least “somewhat serious.” “*The amount of traffic on local highways*” elicited the same level of concern (47% “extremely” or “very” serious, 80% at least “somewhat” serious). Concern about growth and development is near equal, with 41 percent calling it “extremely” or “very” serious, and 73 percent considering it at least “somewhat” serious.”

The top two transportation-related concerns are congestion and road conditions. When asked in an open-ended question to volunteer what they believe is the most important transportation problem facing Nevada County:

- Thirty-eight (38%) gave a response related to *road conditions*, including county roads (17%), city streets (15%), and highways (6%),
 - Thirty-five percent (35%) said *congestion or gridlock* (29%),
 - Two in ten (21%) mentioned *public transportation* (16%) or *a lack of or poor bus service* (5%) and,
 - Five percent said *traffic safety* (5%)
- **The areas in which the highest proportion of voters would like to see funds from a ballot measure be dedicated are in line with their previously mentioned most significant concerns.** When asked to evaluate how important are 20 possible uses of the funds, the highest proportion called each of the following “extremely” or “very” important:
 - *Repairing potholes* (78%)
 - *Providing safety improvements and upgrades to State Routes 49, 20, 89, 174 and 267* (65%)
 - *Resurfacing streets and roads* (63%)
 - *Improving safety of school routes and crossings* (62%)
 - *Relieving traffic congestion on roads and highways* (54%) – just a slightly lower number consider *relieving traffic congestion at intersections* to be of high importance (50%)
 - *Upgrading County roads to accommodate ambulances, law enforcement vehicles, and fire trucks during emergencies* (53%)
 - *Improving public bus services, including increased elderly and disabled accessibility* (53%)
 - Voters in Western³ and Eastern⁴ Nevada County were also asked to evaluate possible uses for the funds germane to their area. In **Western Nevada County**, the most important improvements to fund are *widening Highway 49 from Grass Valley to Combie Road* (60% “extremely” or “very” important); *improving the intersection of Idaho-Maryland and East Main* (59%); and *building on and off-ramps connecting Dorsey Drive to State Route 20* (56%).

Eastern Nevada County voters place significantly high importance on *widening the underpass on State Route 89 South, known as Mousehole* (77% “extremely” or “very” important) and *improving pedestrian and bicycle safety by constructing a tunnel underneath the train tracks at Mousehole on State Route 89* (75%).

¹ Methodology: Between April 6 and 14, 2006, Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin & Associates (FMM&A) conducted telephone interviews with 654 randomly selected Nevada County voters. The margin of error for the survey as a whole is plus or minus 3.8 percentage points. The margin of error for demographic groups and regions within the sample will be higher.

² While the open-ended question shows top-of-mind concerns, the close-ended question shows the level of concern that emerges when reminded of an issue.

³ Western Nevada County includes Grass Valley, Nevada City and unincorporated areas.

⁴ Eastern Nevada County includes the Town of Truckee only.