SAN MATEO COUNTY: REVENUE MEASURE FEASIBILITY SURVEY
Topline Report
June 2010

The County of San Mateo commissioned Godbe Research to conduct a survey to assess potential voter support for a sales tax measure versus an airport parking and rental car business license tax to maintain direct County services. The survey was also designed to: (a) identify the optimum tax rate and the tax duration at which voters will support the measures; (b) prioritize potential projects to be funded based on voter reception; (c) and test the influence of supporting and opposing arguments on potential voter support.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Overall, 900 registered voters in the County of San Mateo completed the survey, representing a total universe of approximately 203,702 voters who are likely to vote in the November 2010 election. In order to test support for a sales tax measure versus an airport parking and rental car business license tax measure, the sample of 900 voters was split into two samples of 450 voters each. These study parameters resulted in a margin of error of plus or minus 4.6 percent for each split sample of 450 voters. Interviews were conducted from May 21 through May 27, 2010, and the average interview time was approximately 18 minutes.

Once collected, the sample of voters was compared with the likely November 2010 voter population in the County to examine possible differences between the demographics of the sample of respondents and the actual universe of voters. The data were weighted to correct these differences, and the results presented are representative of the voter characteristics of the County of San Mateo in terms of gender, age, political party, and household party.

QUESTIONNAIRE METHODOLOGY

To avoid the problem of systematic position bias, where the order in which a series of questions is asked systematically influences the answers, several questions in the survey were randomized such that the respondents were not consistently asked the questions in the same order. The series of items in Questions 4, 5 and 6 were randomized to avoid such position bias. Further, the Questions 5 and 6 were rotated so that the samples were balanced in whether they first heard arguments in favor of or opposed to the ballot measures.

MEAN SCORES AND ROUNDING

In addition to the percentage breakdown of responses to each question, results for the questions relating to features of the measures (Q4), and the positive and negative arguments (Q5 and Q6) include mean scores. For example, to derive the overall influence of an argument in favor of the measures, (Q5), a number value is first assigned to each response category (in this case, "Much More Likely" = +2, "Somewhat More Likely" = +1, and "No Effect" = 0). The number values that correspond to respondents' answers were then averaged to produce a final score that reflects the overall influence of the argument on potential support for the measures. The resulting mean score makes the interpretation of the data considerably easier. Responses of "Don't Know" (DK/NA) were not included in the calculations of the mean scores for any question.

Conventional rounding rules apply to the percentages shown in this report, .5 or above was rounded up to the next number, and .4 or below was rounded down to the previous number. As a result, the percentages may not add up to 100 percent.

GENERAL SALES TAX MEASURE (SPLIT A; n = 450)

1. In the future, voters in San Mateo County may be asked to vote on several ballot measures. Let me read you the description of one potential measure:

   In order to protect and preserve the quality of life in San Mateo County and maintain direct services, including:

   - 911 emergency dispatch;
   - Sheriff's patrol, gang and drug prevention;
   - County hospital, clinics and emergency room;
   - Help for vulnerable children, seniors and disabled;
   - County parks; and,
   - Other County services;

   shall San Mateo County levy a half cent sales tax, which the State cannot take away, with annual fiscal oversight and review, and independent audits? [68 WORDS]

   If the election were held today, would you vote yes or no on this measure? Would that be definitely (yes/no) or probably (yes/no)?

Definitely Yes	31%
Probably Yes	25%
Probably No	13%
Definitely No	21%
DK/NA	10%

AIRPORT PARKING & RENTAL CAR BUSINESS LICENSE TAX: (SPLIT B; n = 450)

In the future, voters in San Mateo County may be asked to vote on several ballot measures. Let me read you the description of two potential companion measures:

2. In order to protect and preserve the quality of life in San Mateo County and maintain direct services, including:

    - 911 emergency dispatch;
    - Sheriff's patrol, gang and drug prevention;
    - County hospital, clinics and emergency room;
    - Help for vulnerable children, seniors and disabled;
    - County parks; and,
    - Other County services;

    shall San Mateo County levy a two and a half percent gross receipts tax on vehicle rental businesses in unincorporated areas, which the State cannot take away, with annual fiscal oversight and review, and independent audits? [77 WORDS]

    If the election were held today, would you vote yes or no on this measure? Would that be definitely (yes/no) or probably (yes/no)?

Definitely Yes	32%
Probably Yes	25%
Probably No	9%
Definitely No	23%
DK/NA	11%

3. In order to protect and preserve the quality of life in San Mateo County and maintain direct services, including:

    - 911 emergency dispatch;
    - Sheriff's patrol, gang and drug prevention;
    - County hospital, clinics and emergency room;
    - Help for vulnerable children, seniors and disabled;
    - County parks; and,
    - Other County services;

    shall San Mateo County levy an eight percent gross receipts tax on commercial parking businesses in unincorporated areas, which the State cannot take away, with annual fiscal oversight and review, and independent audits? [77 WORDS]

    If the election were held today, would you vote yes or no on this measure? Would that be definitely (yes/no) or probably (yes/no)?

Definitely Yes	29%
Probably Yes	23%
Probably No	12%
Definitely No	26%
DK/NA	11%

ALL RESPONDENTS (n = 900)

4. Now, let's talk about the County services and facilities that would be *maintained* with the funds generated by the measure(s). As I read each, please tell me if it would make you more or less likely to vote for the measure(s).

   If you heard the money would be used to *maintain* _____, would you be more or less likely to vote for the measure(s)? Is that much (more/less) likely or somewhat (more/less) likely?

	Mean Score	Much More Likely	Somewhat More Likely	No Effect	Somewhat Less Likely	Much Less Likely	DK/NA
4A. Child abuse protection programs	1.0	50%	23%	12%	6%	8%	1%
4B. Emergency room services	0.8	41%	25%	15%	8%	10%	2%
4C. Restaurant, grocery store and public health inspections	0.4	27%	24%	18%	15%	13%	2%
4D. County parks and prevent park closures	0.7	37%	25%	16%	10%	10%	1%
4E. Fire prevention and response	0.9	45%	24%	13%	8%	9%	1%
4F. Hazardous waste collection and disposal	0.6	35%	23%	16%	11%	12%	2%
4G. Sheriff's patrols	0.6	34%	26%	16%	10%	12%	2%
4H. Sheriff's crime investigation services	0.6	33%	26%	16%	12%	10%	3%
4I. 911 Emergency dispatch services	1.1	49%	26%	12%	6%	7%	1%
4J. Gang and drug prevention programs	0.8	41%	24%	14%	10%	10%	1%
4K. The County jail	0.3	26%	21%	18%	16%	16%	2%
4L. Criminal prosecutions by the district attorney	0.4	27%	23%	19%	13%	14%	4%
4M. Ambulance services	0.8	41%	25%	15%	8%	9%	2%
4N. Safety net services for low-income families not provided by Federal, State or city governments	0.6	33%	24%	16%	13%	11%	3%
4O. Healthcare for low-income children, seniors and disabled	0.9	46%	25%	12%	8%	9%	1%
4P. Homeless shelters and temporary housing assistance	0.6	36%	25%	15%	13%	10%	2%
4Q. Programs for at-risk youth	0.8	36%	29%	15%	9%	9%	2%

Computation of Mean Score:
"Much More Likely" = +2, "Somewhat More Likely" = +1, "No Effect" = 0, "Somewhat Less Likely" = -1, and "Much Less Likely" = -2.

	Mean Score	Much More Likely	Somewhat More Likely	No Effect	Somewhat Less Likely	Much Less Likely	DK/NA
4R. Pre-school, after-school and library programs for children and teens, including reading programs, and homework center	0.9	46%	23%	13%	8%	9%	1%
4S. Disaster and earthquake preparedness programs	0.7	38%	22%	17%	11%	11%	2%
4T. Job training and job search assistance for low-income residents	0.6	35%	26%	14%	12%	11%	2%

Computation of Mean Score:
"Much More Likely" = +2, "Somewhat More Likely" = +1, "No Effect" = 0, "Somewhat Less Likely" = -1, and "Much Less Likely" = -2.

5. Voters will hear arguments from supporters in favor of the measure(s) we have been discussing. As I read each of the arguments in favor of the measure(s), please tell me if you would be more likely to vote "YES" on the measure, given the argument.

   Here's the (first/next) _____. Does this argument make you much more likely or somewhat more likely to vote "YES" – or does it have no effect?

	Mean Score	Much More Likely	Somewhat More Likely	No Effect	DK/NA
5A. The measure(s) will give San Mateo County local control over local funds for local needs. No funds can be taken by the State.	1.1	45%	22%	31%	2%
5B. The measure(s) require(s) independent citizen oversight, mandatory financial audits, and yearly reports to the community to ensure the funds are spent as promised.	1.0	40%	22%	37%	1%
5C. The County is the agency of last resort for many needy people; without this measure low-income people may not be able to see a doctor, get needed job training, or may even become homeless.	1.0	36%	26%	36%	2%
5D. The County has a $100 million dollar deficit and this would help cut it in half.	1.0	38%	24%	35%	2%
5E. The State has taken more than $120 million dollars from San Mateo County to fix the State budget deficit.	0.9	33%	23%	41%	2%
5F. The County has already frozen employee salaries and benefits, cut $36 million dollars from the budget and used emergency reserves to balance the current budget.	0.9	32%	23%	43%	1%
5G. Any more cuts would severely impact the quality of life for all San Mateo County residents.	0.9	32%	25%	41%	1%
5H. The measure will maintain rapid response time for police, fire, and emergency medical services.	1.1	44%	23%	32%	2%
5I. Funding from the measure(s) is necessary to protect our quality of life, the character of our county, and our property values.	0.9	34%	23%	41%	2%
5J. County staffing has been cut by more than 446, including Deputy Sheriffs, nurses, probation officers, and parks and recreation staff.	0.9	33%	25%	40%	2%
5K. If parks are closed, county residents won't have access to County parks and open space.	0.9	35%	23%	41%	1%

Computation of Mean Score: "Much More Likely" = +2, "Somewhat More Likely" = +1, and "No Effect" = 0.

	Mean Score	Much More Likely	Somewhat More Likely	No Effect	DK/NA
5L. If the hospital is closed more than 230,000 patient visits will be redirected to private hospitals.	0.9	32%	25%	40%	3%
5M. All the money raised by this measure will be used for maintaining direct County services. Not a penny will go toward administrative salaries.	1.2	47%	22%	30%	1%
5N. (SPLIT A: n = 450) Residents, businesses, and visitors from outside San Mateo County will all pay their fair share for funding County services; the responsibility won't fall solely on homeowners.	1.0	35%	25%	38%	2%
5O. (SPLIT A: n = 450) Sales tax is higher in San Francisco and Santa Clara counties so we will not lose businesses to other counties.	0.9	35%	21%	42%	3%
5P. (SPLIT A: n = 450) Sales tax is paid as you decide to make purchases, not paid by homeowners on their property tax bills.	0.9	35%	21%	42%	2%
5Q. (SPLIT B: n = 450) Visitors who park and rent cars at the airport will pay their fair share for the impact they have on San Mateo County instead of local homeowners.	1.0	38%	23%	38%	2%
5R. (SPLIT B: n = 450) The cities of South San Francisco, San Bruno and Millbrae already have similar taxes so businesses in the unincorporated area will not be at a competitive disadvantage.	0.8	29%	23%	44%	3%

Computation of Mean Score: "Much More Likely" = +2, "Somewhat More Likely" = +1, and "No Effect" = 0.

6. Voters will hear arguments from opponents against the ballot measure(s) we have been discussing. As I read each of the arguments against the measure(s), please tell me if you would be more likely to vote "NO" on the measure, given the argument.

    Here's the (first/next) _____. Does this argument make you much more likely or somewhat more likely to vote "NO" – or does it have no effect?

	Mean Score	Much More Likely	Somewhat More Likely	No Effect	DK/NA
6A. With the current economy, falling home prices, and continued high unemployment, now is not the right time to raise taxes.	0.9	34%	22%	41%	3%
6B. The County is responsible for the current budget problems, they can't be trusted to manage the funds raised by the measure(s).	0.8	27%	18%	49%	5%
6C. Government employee pensions should be cut before we increase taxes.	0.8	30%	18%	47%	5%
6D. San Mateo County voters are being asked to support hundreds of dollars of new parcel taxes, vehicle registration fees, bond measures and sales taxes all at the same time, we just can't afford all these new taxes.	1.0	38%	20%	39%	3%
6E. (SPLIT A: n = 450) If this measure passes, the sales tax in San Mateo County will be almost 10 percent, among the highest in the Bay Area.	0.9	34%	21%	43%	2%
6F. (SPLIT A: n = 450) Increasing the sales tax in today's economy will drive shoppers out of San Mateo County and hurt local businesses.	0.8	28%	22%	48%	2%
6G. (SPLIT B: n = 450) San Mateo County residents will pay more to park at the airport and even pay more to valet park at restaurants.	0.7	24%	15%	58%	2%
6H. (SPLIT B: n = 450) Taxing rental car companies will force visitors to choose other destinations for business and vacation travel.	0.6	19%	15%	63%	3%

Computation of Mean Score: "Much More Likely" = +2, "Somewhat More Likely" = +1, and "No Effect" = 0.

GENERAL SALES TAX MEASURE: (SPLIT A; n = 450)

7. In the future, voters in San Mateo County may be asked to vote on several ballot measures. Let me read you the description of one potential measure:

    In order to protect and preserve the quality of life in San Mateo County and maintain direct services, including:

    - 911 emergency dispatch;
    - Sheriff's patrol, gang and drug prevention;
    - County hospital, clinics and emergency room;
    - Help for vulnerable children, seniors and disabled;
    - County parks; and,
    - Other County services;

    shall San Mateo County levy a half cent sales tax, which the State cannot take away, with annual fiscal oversight and review, and independent audits? [68 WORDS]

    If the election were held today, would you vote yes or no on this measure? Would that be definitely (yes/no) or probably (yes/no)?

Definitely Yes	36%
Probably Yes	24%
Probably No	11%
Definitely No	25%
DK/NA	5%

8. If you heard that the sales tax was going to be one-quarter cent instead of a half cent, but would still be used to protect and maintain San Mateo County services and facilities would you vote yes or no on this measure? Would that be definitely (yes/no) or probably (yes/no)?

Definitely Yes	47%
Probably Yes	18%
Probably No	9%
Definitely No	23%
DK/NA	3%

AIRPORT PARKING & RENTAL CAR BUSINESS LICENSE TAX: (SPLIT B; n = 450)

Now that you have heard more about the potential companion measures, let me read you a summary of the proposals again:

9. In order to protect and preserve the quality of life in San Mateo County and maintain direct services, including:

   - 911 emergency dispatch;
   - Sheriff's patrol, gang and drug prevention;
   - County hospital, clinics and emergency room;
   - Help for vulnerable children, seniors and disabled;
   - County parks; and,
   - Other County services;

   shall San Mateo County levy a two and a half percent gross receipts tax on vehicle rental businesses in unincorporated areas, which the State cannot take away, with annual fiscal oversight and review, and independent audits? [77 WORDS]

   If the election were held today, would you vote yes or no on this measure? Would that be definitely (yes/no) or probably (yes/no)?

Definitely Yes	36%
Probably Yes	26%
Probably No	7%
Definitely No	25%
DK/NA	6%

10. In order to protect and preserve the quality of life in San Mateo County and maintain direct services, including:

   - 911 emergency dispatch;
   - Sheriff's patrol, gang and drug prevention;
   - County hospital, clinics and emergency room;
   - Help for vulnerable children, seniors and disabled;
   - County parks; and,
   - Other County services;

   shall San Mateo County levy an eight percent gross receipts tax on commercial parking businesses in unincorporated areas, which the State cannot take away, with annual fiscal oversight and review, and independent audits? [77 WORDS]

   If the election were held today, would you vote yes or no on this measure? Would that be definitely (yes/no) or probably (yes/no)?

Definitely Yes	31%
Probably Yes	26%
Probably No	11%
Definitely No	26%
DK/NA	7%

11. The duration of the measure(s) has yet to be decided. If you heard that the measure to protect and maintain County services would _____, would you vote yes or no on this measure? Is that definitely (yes/no) or probably (yes/no)?

GENERAL SALES TAX MEASURE: (SPLIT A; n = 450)

	Definitely Yes	Probably Yes	Probably No	Definitely No	DK/NA
11A. last 15 years	26%	18%	15%	35%	6%
11B. last 9 years	30%	21%	11%	33%	4%
11C. last 5 years	41%	23%	8%	26%	3%

AIRPORT PARKING & RENTAL CAR BUSINESS LICENSE TAX: (SPLIT B; n = 450)

	Definitely Yes	Probably Yes	Probably No	Definitely No	DK/NA
11A. last 15 years	24%	21%	13%	33%	9%
11B. last 9 years	28%	24%	13%	31%	4%
11C. last 5 years	41%	23%	7%	25%	4%

ALL RESPONDENTS (n = 900)

12. Looking ahead to the last few months of 2010, do you think the economy will be about the same as today, or will it be better or worse?

Better	38%
About the same	40%
Worse	18%
DK/NA	4%

Additional Voter Information

A. Do any children under the age of 18 live in your household?

Yes	28%
No	72%
DK/NA	1%

B. What ethnic group do you consider yourself a part of or feel closest to?

Caucasian or White	72%
Hispanic or Latino	8%
Asian	8%
African-American or Black	2%
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	1%
American Indian or Alaska Native	1%
Two or more races	2%
Some other race	2%
DK/NA	4%

C. Respondent's Gender [RECORDED FROM VOICE]:

Male	47%
Female	53%

INFORMATION FROM VOTER FILE: *All information presented below is included in voter registration records, and these items were not asked during interviews.*

D. Voting History:

	Poll	Mail	No
a. Voted 6/04	44%	23%	33%
b. Voted 11/04	52%	38%	10%
c. Voted 11/05	44%	33%	23%
d. Voted 6/06	32%	28%	39%
e. Voted 11/06	49%	41%	10%
f. Voted 11/07	15%	24%	61%
g. Voted 2/08	40%	44%	16%
h. Voted 6/08	19%	37%	44%
i. Voted 11/08	42%	55%	3%
j. Voted 5/09	17%	36%	46%
k. Voted 11/09	22%	34%	44%

E. Times Voted in Last Ten Elections:

1 of 11	1%
2 of 11	3%
3 of 11	4%
4 of 11	7%
5 of 11	9%
6 of 11	9%
7 of 11	12%
8 of 11	11%
9 of 11	11%
10 of 11	18%
11 of 11	16%

F. Absentee Voter:

Never Voted Absentee	35%
1 of 11	10%
2 of 11	5%
3 of 11	3%
4 of 11	6%
5 of 11	5%
6 of 11	6%
7 of 11	6%
8 of 11	5%
9 of 11	6%
10 of 11	7%
11 of 11	8%

G. Party:

Democrat	54%
Republican	25%
Other	4%
DTS	17%

H. Age:

18 to 29 years	5%
30 to 39 years	9%
40 to 49 years	19%
50 to 64 years	36%
65 years and over	28%
Not coded	3%

I. Household Party Type:

Democrat (1)	24%
Democrat (2+)	20%
Republican (1)	9%
Republican (2+)	9%
Other (1)	10%
Other (2+)	4%
Democrat & Republican	7%
Democrat & Other	10%
Republican & Other	5%
Mixed	2%

J. Likely 2011 Mail Ballot Voter:

Yes	64%
No	36%

K. Likely June 2011 Voter:

Yes	49%
No	51%

L. Likely November 2011 Voter:

Yes	65%
No	35%