



SMART 2026 BASELINE SURVEY
 220-7534-WT
 N=842
 A/B & C/D SPLITS

(PHONE ONLY)

Hello, I'm _____ calling from _____, a public opinion research company. We are conducting a survey about different issues facing residents of your area. Please be assured that I am not trying to sell you anything or ask for a donation of any kind, and that your participation and responses will be kept confidential. May I please speak with _____? **(MUST SPEAK WITH THE VOTER LISTED AND VERIFY THEY LIVE AT THE LISTED ADDRESS—OTHERWISE TERMINATE.)**

(PHONE ONLY)

A. Before we begin, have I reached you on a cell phone? **(IF ON CELL PHONE, ASK: If you are currently driving or otherwise occupied, please confirm that it is safe for you to take this survey without endangering yourself or others.)**

Yes, on cell and can safely take survey	68%
Yes, on cell and should reschedule	(RESCHEDULE)
No, not on cell	32%
(DON'T READ) Prefer not to say	0%

(ONLINE ONLY)

Thank you for participating in this public opinion survey about different issues facing residents of your area. Please be assured that we are not trying to sell you anything or ask for a donation of any kind, and that your participation and responses will be kept confidential.

A. If you are taking this survey on a mobile device and are currently driving or otherwise occupied, please confirm that it is safe for you to take this survey without endangering yourself or others.

Yes, can safely take survey	100%
I'll come back later	(DIVERT TO LANDING PAGE)

(RESUME ASKING ALL RESPONDENTS)

1. First, here are some names of organizations active in public life. For each one, please indicate whether you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of that organization. You can also indicate if you have never heard of the organization—or have heard of them, but do not have enough information to offer an opinion. **(RANDOMIZE)**

(ONLINE: SHOW ALL ANSWER OPTIONS)

(PHONE: IF FAVORABLE/UNFAVORABLE, ASK: Is that very or somewhat FAVORABLE/UNFAVORABLE?)

(S = SONOMA ONLY)

(M = MARIN ONLY)

	SS	Very Fav	Smwt Fav	Smwt Unfav	Very Unfav	Never Heard Of	Heard Of No Op	Total Fav	Total Unfav
a. (T) SMART, Sonoma-Marín Area Rail Transit		32%	33%	11%	11%	2%	11%	65%	22%
b. (T) Sonoma County government	S	10%	44%	21%	12%	2%	11%	54%	33%
c. (T) Marin County government	M	13%	55%	17%	7%	2%	7%	67%	24%

The next questions are about a potential measure that may appear on a future ballot in Sonoma and Marin counties.

2. The measure may read as follows:

Without raising taxes, continue Sonoma-Marín Area Rail Transit District regional rail and pathway service beyond 2029 to serve residents including seniors, youth, essential workers, and low-income households; relieve traffic congestion; complete planned rail/pathway expansion; build upon record ridership; protect community’s historic rail infrastructure investment for future generations; maintain clean/safe trains; reduce greenhouse gas emissions, shall the measure extending the ¼ cent, voter-approved, sales tax **(SPLIT SAMPLE C: until ended by voters) (SPLIT SAMPLE D: for 30 years)**, generating approximately \$51,000,000 annually, be adopted?

Do you think you would vote yes or no on this measure?

(ONLINE: SHOW ANSWER OPTIONS FOR “YES,” “NO” AND “UNDECIDED”)

(IF YES/NO, ASK: Is that definitely or just probably YES/NO?)

(IF UNDECIDED, ASK: Do you lean toward voting yes or no?)

	SPLIT C	SPLIT D	TOTAL
TOTAL YES	65%	73%	69%
Definitely yes	40%	48%	44%
Probably yes	20%	20%	20%
Undecided, lean yes	5%	5%	5%
TOTAL NO	29%	24%	26%
Undecided, lean no	5%	3%	4%
Probably no	5%	3%	4%
Definitely no	19%	17%	18%
(DON’T READ ON PHONE) Undecided	6%	4%	5%

The next questions are about Sonoma-Marín Area Rail Transit (SMART). As you may know, SMART is the North Bay’s passenger rail service. The current 45-mile system includes stations in the Sonoma County Airport area, Santa Rosa, Rohnert Park, Cotati, Petaluma, Novato, San Rafael, and Larkspur. SMART’S system also includes a bicycle and pedestrian pathway along the rail corridor. Future extensions are planned for Windsor, Healdsburg, and Cloverdale.

3. (T) How often do you ride SMART? (PHONE: READ LIST)

Every day	0%
A few times a week	1%
A few times a month	6%
A few times a year	17%
Rarely	27%
Never	49%
(DON’T READ ON PHONE) Don’t know	0%

4. (T) Overall, how would you rate the quality of SMART’s service—is it excellent, good, not so good, or poor?

EXCELLENT/GOOD	47%
Excellent	22%
Good	25%
Not so good	3%
Poor	4%
(DON’T READ ON PHONE) Don’t know	46%

5. (T*) Next, do you think there is a great need, some need, a little need, or no real need for continued funding to maintain and improve the SMART rail system?

GREAT/SOME NEED	67%
Great need	43%
Some need	24%
A LITTLE/NO REAL NEED	21%
A little need	8%
No real need	13%
(DON’T READ ON PHONE) Don’t know	12%

6. Next, have you heard, seen or read anything recently about SMART running out of funding by 2029?

(PHONE: IF YES, ASK: Have you seen, heard or read a great deal or just a little?)

(ONLINE: SHOW ALL ANSWER OPTIONS)

TOTAL YES	32%
Yes, a great deal	5%
Yes, a little	27%
No, nothing	62%
(DON'T READ ON PHONE) Don't know	6%

For the next several questions, we will return to the measure renewing the existing one-quarter cent sales tax to maintain SMART service.

7. First, please consider some potential elements of this measure, including ways in which funds it generates could be spent. For each one, please indicate how important each one is to you personally, regardless of how you feel about the measure: either extremely important, very important, somewhat important, or not too important.

(RANDOMIZE)

(ONLINE: SHOW ALL ANSWER OPTIONS)

	SS	Ext Imp	Very Imp	Smwt Imp	Not Too Imp	Don't Know	Total Ext/Very Imp
a. (T*) Preventing ending all rail service	A	50%	20%	11%	14%	5%	69%
b. Preventing the closure of SMART rail service	B	46%	22%	14%	13%	5%	68%
c. (T) Providing reliable public transportation and pathways to serve residents of Sonoma and Marin Counties, including seniors, youth, essential workers, and low-income households		48%	25%	15%	10%	2%	74%
d. (T) Repairing and maintaining SMART trains, tracks, and other key infrastructure	A	43%	29%	14%	12%	2%	72%
e. (T) Reducing the carbon pollution that causes climate change	B	47%	21%	13%	17%	2%	68%
f. (T) Reducing traffic congestion	A	52%	27%	11%	9%	0%	79%
g. (T) Ensuring SMART service is inclusive and accessible to all	B	44%	25%	15%	15%	1%	69%
h. (T) Maintaining free fares for youth and seniors, and reduced fares for disabled people	A	40%	26%	19%	13%	2%	66%
i. (T) Investing in shuttle access to rail stations	B	33%	25%	20%	16%	5%	59%
j. (T) Providing high-quality rail transit access to education and health care services	A	38%	31%	14%	14%	3%	69%
k. (T*) Maintaining clean, safe trains and train stations	B	45%	35%	11%	7%	1%	80%
l. (T) Relieving traffic congestion on Highway 101	A	53%	26%	10%	10%	1%	79%
m. Providing an alternative to the traffic congestion on Highway 101	B	54%	23%	14%	8%	1%	77%
n. (T) Maintaining the current service levels		31%	27%	16%	13%	14%	58%

	SS	Ext Imp	Very Imp	Smwt Imp	Not Too Imp	Don't Know	Total Ext/Very Imp
o. Building upon record ridership		31%	29%	20%	12%	8%	60%
p. Protecting our community's historic rail infrastructure investment for future generations		33%	26%	20%	17%	4%	59%
q. Reducing greenhouse gas emissions		45%	22%	15%	16%	2%	68%

8. Next, if this existing one-quarter cent sales tax to maintain SMART service is not renewed the agency will be forced to end all rail service by 2029. Please indicate if that is extremely concerning, very concerning, somewhat concerning, or not concerning.

EXTREMELY/VERY CONCERNING	66%
Extremely concerning	49%
Very concerning	18%
Somewhat concerning	14%
Not concerning	18%
(DON'T READ ON PHONE) Don't know	2%

Now you will be presented with statements from potential supporters and opponents of the measure renewing the existing one-quarter cent sales tax to maintain SMART service.

9. First, please consider the following statements from people who may support this potential measure. For each one, please indicate whether you find it very convincing, somewhat convincing, or not convincing as a reason to support the measure. If you do not believe the statement, you can indicate that instead. **(RANDOMIZE)**

(ONLINE: SHOW ONE STATEMENT AT A TIME; SHOW ALL ANSWER OPTIONS)

	SS	Very Conv	Smwt Conv	Not Conv	Do Not Believe	Don't Know	Total Conv
a. (T) (NO INCREASE IN TAXES) This measure is a simple renewal, with <u>no</u> increase in the sales tax. But by voting "yes" we will be able to maintain, improve and expand SMART rail and non-motorized transportation service in Sonoma and Marin, without paying any additional taxes.		52%	25%	13%	8%	2%	77%
b. (T) (ACCOUNTABILITY) This measure has strong taxpayer safeguards to ensure the money is spent as promised, including annual independent audits, independent citizens oversight, and full public disclosure of all spending.	B	35%	35%	16%	11%	2%	70%
c. (T*) (CUTS) If this measure is not approved, the loss of funding will force SMART to eliminate all rail service entirely by 2029. Voting for this measure will ensure that local residents can continue to count on SMART service and facilities for generations to come.		43%	26%	18%	9%	4%	69%

	SS	Very Conv	Smwt Conv	Not Conv	Do Not Believe	Don't Know	Total Conv
d. (T*) (VULNERABLE) SMART service is critically important for residents of our area who don't own a car or can't drive – including many seniors, youth, people with disabilities, and lower-income households – including many of the North Bay's essential workers. This measure will ensure that vulnerable communities who rely on SMART can continue to count on it.	A	43%	28%	20%	6%	2%	72%
e. (T) (CLIMATE CHANGE) Strong public transit systems are one of the most important tools we have to fight climate change. SMART gives people an affordable, effective alternative to driving, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution.	A	34%	35%	20%	10%	2%	68%
f. (T*) (RIDERSHIP) While many transit agencies in the area are struggling, SMART's ridership has rebounded to exceed pre-pandemic levels. In the last year alone, ridership has increased by nearly 30%. Sonoma and Marin residents and visitors rely on SMART to get to work, school, and more. Renewing this measure will prevent the closure of a transit service that many local residents rely on.	A	47%	27%	15%	7%	3%	75%
g. (T*) (TRAFFIC) Too many people spend hours and hours in their cars every week – keeping them away from their loved ones and wasting precious free time. SMART provides an alternative to the congestion on Highway 101 and keeps people off the roads. If we don't renew this measure and continue funding SMART, more people will be back on the roads and commute times will continue to worsen.		29%	36%	25%	8%	1%	65%
h. (T*) (MATCHING FUNDS) As of 2023, SMART has matched local sales tax funds dollar for dollar with grant funding. Over the past five years, the agency brought in over \$390 million in grant funds to improve service for riders. This measure will continue to make SMART eligible for millions in state and federal grant funds over the life of the measure. Every dollar we spend locally can generate additional funds from outside the North Bay to improve SMART, which will otherwise be spent outside our region.	B	33%	37%	20%	5%	5%	69%

	SS	Very Conv	Smwt Conv	Not Conv	Do Not Believe	Don't Know	Total Conv
i. (INVESTMENT) Sonoma and Marin County made a historic investment in creating, building, and growing the SMART rail network. SMART serves 1 million riders each year, provides free service for youth and seniors, and reduces traffic and greenhouse gas emissions – but if this measure is not renewed SMART will be forced to close and taxpayers’ investment will be lost.	A	45%	30%	17%	6%	2%	75%
j. (AFFORDABLE) SMART is free for youth and 25% of SMART’s ridership are youth who depend on it to get to class. Preserving affordable transit service is essential to creating more opportunities for young people in our community.	B	43%	29%	19%	7%	2%	72%
k. (COST) This measure will cost the average taxpayer less than 25 cents per day and allow SMART to qualify for millions of dollars in state matching funds.		32%	30%	26%	9%	3%	62%
l. (TRUMP) Under the Trump Administration, the federal government is making sweeping cuts to public transportation investments. It’s more important than ever to control things locally and create sustainable, independent funding to protect our community’s public transit.		50%	24%	16%	8%	2%	74%
m. (GROWING) SMART has been growing in recent years – opening stations in Petaluma and Windsor, serving more communities in Sonoma and Marin, expanding its bike and walking pathways, and offering free fares for youth and seniors; and SMART’s ridership has increased by nearly 30% in the past year. This measure will maintain and protect this critical service for the Sonoma and Marin communities.	B	45%	33%	14%	5%	2%	78%
n. (BUDGET) Even though SMART has used funds wisely and qualified for hundreds of millions of dollars in state matching funds and grants, the sales tax makes up 65% of the agency’s operating budget. If this measure is not renewed at its existing level, SMART will be unable to continue operating and will become ineligible for grants.		35%	31%	22%	9%	4%	65%

10. Taking into account the statements from supporters, please consider again measure that reads as follows:

Without raising taxes, continue Sonoma-Marín Area Rail Transit District regional rail and pathway service beyond 2029 to serve residents including seniors, youth, essential workers, and low-income households; relieve traffic congestion; complete planned rail/pathway expansion; build upon record ridership; protect community’s historic rail infrastructure investment for future generations; maintain clean/safe trains; reduce greenhouse gas emissions, shall the measure extending the ¼ cent, voter-approved, sales tax (**SPLIT SAMPLE C:** until ended by voters) (**SPLIT SAMPLE D:** for 30 years), generating approximately \$51,000,000 annually, be adopted?

Do you think you would vote yes or no on this measure?

(ONLINE: SHOW ANSWER OPTIONS FOR “YES,” “NO” AND “UNDECIDED”)

(IF YES/NO, ASK: Is that definitely or just probably YES/NO?)

(IF UNDECIDED, ASK: Do you lean toward voting yes or no?)

	SPLIT C	SPLIT D	TOTAL
TOTAL YES	70%	76%	73%
Definitely yes	50%	58%	54%
Probably yes	16%	15%	15%
Undecided, lean yes	4%	4%	4%
TOTAL NO	26%	20%	23%
Undecided, lean no	4%	2%	3%
Probably no	4%	3%	3%
Definitely no	18%	15%	17%
(DON'T READ ON PHONE) Undecided	4%	3%	4%

11. Next, please consider the following statements from people who may oppose this potential measure. For each one, please indicate whether you find it very convincing, somewhat convincing, or not convincing as a reason to oppose this measure. If you do not believe the statement, you can indicate that instead. **(RANDOMIZE)**

(ONLINE: SHOW ONE STATEMENT AT A TIME; SHOW ALL ANSWER OPTIONS)

	SS	Very Conv	Smwt Conv	Not Conv	Do Not Believe	Don't Know	Total Conv
a. (T) (TAXES) The cost of living in Sonoma and Marin is out of control and rising. There will be more taxes on the ballot in 2026 and the last thing we need to do is continue a regressive sales tax that raises the price of everyday goods.		27%	30%	35%	6%	3%	56%
b. (T) (HIGHER PRIORITIES) The North Bay has higher priorities for our local tax dollars than SMART – like dealing with housing costs, homelessness, wildfire prevention, and the increase in crime.		19%	35%	38%	8%	2%	53%
c. (T*) (FEDERAL/STATE FUNDS) In the past few years, both the state and federal government have issued massive infrastructure grants. We should see how much of those federal and state funds we can use for SMART before renewing the local sales tax.	A	22%	33%	34%	8%	3%	55%
d. (WASTE) SMART has received hundreds of millions of dollars in matching funds. The agency needs to tighten its belt and use what it has instead of asking taxpayers for more.	B	25%	28%	35%	8%	4%	53%
e. (COST) This measure could cost households up to \$8,000. This tax is too expensive for the average person.		30%	18%	16%	33%	3%	48%
f. (FOREVER TAX) This measure has no sunset and will be in place forever.	C	24%	20%	33%	17%	7%	44%

12. Taking into account the statements from opponents, please consider one last time the measure that reads as follows:

Without raising taxes, continue Sonoma-Marín Area Rail Transit District regional rail and pathway service beyond 2029 to serve residents including seniors, youth, essential workers, and low-income households; relieve traffic congestion; complete planned rail/pathway expansion; build upon record ridership; protect community’s historic rail infrastructure investment for future generations; maintain clean/safe trains; reduce greenhouse gas emissions, shall the measure extending the ¼ cent, voter-approved, sales tax (**SPLIT SAMPLE C:** until ended by voters) (**SPLIT SAMPLE D:** for 30 years), generating approximately \$51,000,000 annually, be adopted?

Do you think you would vote yes or no on this measure?

(ONLINE: SHOW ANSWER OPTIONS FOR “YES,” “NO” AND “UNDECIDED”)

(IF YES/NO, ASK: Is that definitely or just probably YES/NO?)

(IF UNDECIDED, ASK: Do you lean toward voting yes or no?)

	SPLIT C	SPLIT D	TOTAL
TOTAL YES	66%	73%	69%
Definitely yes	47%	54%	51%
Probably yes	15%	15%	15%
Undecided, lean yes	3%	4%	4%
TOTAL NO	28%	22%	25%
Undecided, lean no	4%	1%	3%
Probably no	4%	5%	4%
Definitely no	20%	16%	18%
(DON’T READ ON PHONE) Undecided	6%	5%	6%

You are almost done with the survey and the final questions are for classification purposes only.

13. Do you own or rent your place of residence?

Own	72%
Rent	28%
(DON’T READ ON PHONE) Prefer not to say	0%

14. Next, what was the last level of school you completed?

(PHONE: READ ANSWER OPTIONS IN ORDER)

Less than high school	0%
High school graduate	6%
Vocational or technical school	3%
Some college, but no degree	16%
Associate degree	8%
Four-year college degree	33%
Graduate school	33%
(DON'T READ ON PHONE) Prefer not to say	0%

15. With which racial or ethnic group do you identify yourself?

(PHONE: READ ANSWER OPTIONS IN ORDER)

Latino or Hispanic	10%
White or Caucasian	74%
Black or African American	2%
Asian or Pacific Islander	3%
Multiracial	5%
Some other ethnic or racial background (SPECIFY _____)	4%
(DON'T READ ON PHONE) Prefer not to say	0%

16. What is the total combined income for all the people in your household before taxes in 2024?

(PHONE: I don't need to know the exact amount, but please stop me when I have read the correct household income category.)

\$25,000 and under	5%
\$25,001 to \$50,000	7%
\$50,001 to \$75,000	9%
\$75,001 to \$100,000	9%
\$100,001 to \$125,000	9%
\$125,001 to \$150,000	11%
\$150,001 to \$250,000	17%
More than \$250,000	17%
(DON'T READ ON PHONE) Prefer not to say	16%

17. How would you describe your political perspective?

(PHONE: READ ANSWER OPTIONS RANDOMIZING TOP-TO-BOTTOM AND BOTTOM-TO-TOP)

Progressive	26%
Liberal	29%
Moderate	32%
Conservative	13%
(DON'T READ ON PHONE) Prefer not to say	0%

18. What is your gender?

Male	48%
Female	52%
Non-binary	0%
Prefer not to say	0%

(THANK AND TERMINATE INTERVIEW)

SAMPLE VARIABLES

AGE	
18-24	6%
25-29	3%
30-34	4%
35-39	8%
40-44	7%
45-49	8%
50-54	6%
55-59	9%
60-64	11%
65-74	22%
75+	18%
BLANK	0%
PARTY REGISTRATION	
Democrat	61%
Republican	16%
No Party Preference	16%
Other	7%
DATA COLLECTION MODE/CONTACT METHOD	
Telephone	48%
Online/Email	31%
Online/Text	21%
A/B SPLIT SAMPLES	
A	50%
B	50%
C/D SPLIT SAMPLES	
C	50%
D	50%
COUNTY	
Sonoma	64%
Marin	36%
SONOMA SUPERVISOR DISTRICTS	
1	22%
2	22%
3	15%
4	20%
5	21%

MARIN SUPERVISOR DISTRICTS	
1	20%
2	22%
3	22%
4	17%
5	19%
LANGUAGE OF INTERVIEW	
English	96%
Spanish	4%
PAST ELECTION PARTICIPATION	
P18	62%
G18	79%
P20	76%
G20	87%
P22	67%
G22	83%
P24	79%
G24	98%
BLANK	1%
HOUSEHOLD PARTY TYPE	
D1	35%
D2+	19%
R1	6%
R2+	5%
I1+	16%
Mixed	19%