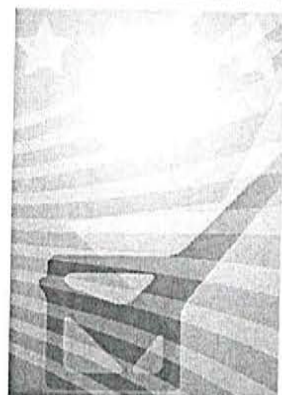


REVENUE MEASURE FEASIBILITY STUDY  
SURVEY REPORT

PREPARED FOR THE  
FIVE CITIES FIRE AUTHORITY



SEPTEMBER 14, 2011



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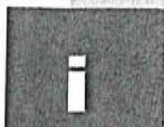


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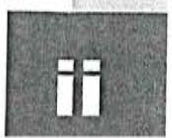
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## INTRODUCTION

Established in 2010 by a Joint Powers Agreement between the cities of Arroyo Grande, Grover Beach and Oceano Community Services District, the Five Cities Fire Authority (Authority) provides fire suppression, rescue, emergency medical and disaster preparedness services to residents and businesses throughout its jurisdiction. The Authority's mission is to provide the highest level of service possible by mitigating threats to life, property and the environment while meeting the growing needs of our communities.

Like many fire districts in the State, the Five Cities Fire Authority is heavily dependent on property tax revenues to fund its operations. With the economic recession and associated steep decline in the housing market, the funding the Authority relies upon for providing fire services has also declined. Despite being efficient, fiscally responsible, providing comparatively low salary and benefits packages, the Authority faces a funding shortfall that threatens its ability to continue providing high quality fire protection services.

**MOTIVATION FOR RESEARCH** The primary purpose of the study was to produce an unbiased, statistically reliable evaluation of voters' interest in supporting a local revenue measure to partially close the funding gap noted above. Additionally, should the Authority decide to move forward with a revenue measure, the data provides guidance as to how to structure the measure so that it is consistent with the community's priorities and expressed needs. Specifically, the study was designed to:

- Gauge current, *baseline* support for a local revenue measure to ensure adequate funding for fire and emergency medical services
- Identify the types of services and projects that voters are most interested in funding, should the measure pass
- Expose voters to arguments in favor of—and against—the proposed measure to gauge how information affects support for the measure
- Estimate support for the measure once voters are presented with the types of information they will likely be exposed to during the election cycle

It is important to note at the outset that voters' opinions about tax measures are often somewhat fluid, especially when the amount of information they initially have about a measure is limited. How voters think and feel about a measure today may not be the same way they think and feel once they have had a chance to hear more information about the measure during the election cycle. Accordingly, to accurately assess the feasibility of establishing a local revenue measure to fund fire services, it was important that in addition to measuring *current* opinions about the measure (Question 2), the survey expose respondents to the types of information voters are likely to encounter during an election cycle—including arguments in favor (Question 6) and opposed (Question 8) to the measure—and gauge how this information ultimately impacts their voting decision (Questions 7 & 9).

**DIFFERENT MECHANISMS, DIFFERENT METHODOLOGIES** One of the key objectives of this study was to determine how support for a proposed revenue measure may vary depending on the *type* of funding mechanism employed: parcel tax or benefit assessment. Because the legal, logistical, and campaign environments for special taxes and benefit assess-

ments differ on so many dimensions that ultimately affect whether a measure will win or lose, it was important that the research methodology take these differences into account to ensure reliable results for each unique scenario. Although the methodologies used for the study are discussed in greater detail later in this report (see *Methodology* on page 32), it is worth noting at the outset that this survey was administered to two overlapping sample sets which collectively encompass both a likely November 2012 voter universe (parcel tax) and the universe of residential property owners<sup>1</sup> who are likely to participate in a benefit assessment. Through filtering and weighting the samples, we are able to gauge the opinions and support levels under each scenario. Accordingly, throughout this report the results of key questions are shown separately for the parcel tax and assessment samples.

A total of 400 respondents were administered the survey between August 16 and August 22, 2011. Interviews were conducted via telephone during weekday evenings (5:30PM to 9PM) and on weekends (10AM to 5PM). It is standard practice not to call during the day on weekdays because most working adults are unavailable and thus calling during those hours would bias the sample. Interviews averaged 15 minutes in length.

**ORGANIZATION OF REPORT** This report is designed to meet the needs of readers who prefer a summary of the findings as well as those who are interested in the details of the results. For those who seek an overview of the findings, the sections titled *Just the Facts* and *Conclusions* are for you. They provide a summary of the most important factual findings of the survey in bullet-point format and a discussion of their implications. For the interested reader, this section is followed by a more detailed question-by-question discussion of the results from the survey by topic area (see *Table of Contents*), as well as a description of the methodology employed for collecting and analyzing the data. And, for the truly ambitious reader, the questionnaire used for the interviews is contained at the back of this report and a complete set of crosstabulations for the survey results is contained in Appendix A.

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS** True North thanks the Five Cities Fire Authority for the opportunity to conduct the study, as well as for Chief Hubert's contributions to the design of the survey. A special thanks also to Terrain Consulting for assisting in the overall research design, implementation and analysis of the survey. Their collective expertise, local knowledge, and insight improved the overall quality of the research presented here.

**DISCLAIMER** The statements and conclusions in this report are those of the authors (Dr. Timothy McLarney and Richard Sarles) at True North Research, Inc. and not necessarily those of the Five Cities Fire Authority. Any errors and omissions are the responsibility of the authors.

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1. It should be noted that residential property owners represent a large segment of the individuals who are eligible to participate in a benefit assessment. However, other types of property owners—including owners of commercial, industrial, and apartments properties—are also eligible to participate in an assessment. The purpose of this study was to profile the support levels among residential property owners only. Based on the findings of this survey, if the Authority elects to take the next steps toward a benefit assessment, a detailed engineering analysis is needed to develop a fee methodology that is compliant with Proposition 218, and a follow-up mail survey is recommended to test support for the specific rates generated by that proposed methodology among *all* property ownership categories.



**ABOUT TRUE NORTH** True North is a full-service survey research firm that is dedicated to providing public agencies with a clear understanding of the values, perceptions, priorities and concerns of their residents and voters. Through designing and implementing scientific surveys, focus groups and one-on-one interviews, as well as expert interpretation of the findings, True North helps its clients to move with confidence when making strategic decisions in a variety of areas—such as planning, policy evaluation, performance management, organizational development, establishing fiscal priorities, passing revenue measures, and developing effective public information campaigns.

During their careers, Dr. McLarney and Mr. Sarles have designed and conducted over 600 survey research studies for public agencies—including more than 250 studies for California municipalities and special districts, and more than 200 revenue measure feasibility studies. Of the measures that have gone to ballot based on Dr. McLarney's recommendation, more than 90% have been successful. In total, the research that Dr. McLarney has conducted has led to over \$19 billion in successful local revenue measures.

**ABOUT TERRAIN CONSULTING** Terrain Consulting, Inc. is the Central Coast's leading public affairs and government relations firm, specializing in developing successful strategies for dealing with complex political issues. Terrain focuses on the challenging and often controversial climate surrounding public input and government decision making, and achieves results by navigating the political "terrain" of a community. Terrain understands that all issues, policies and politics are interconnected, and that clients need the strategies and expertise to effectively position their vision and goals for successful outcomes.

Principals Brian Robinson and Jim Youngson have over 30 years combined experience in this specialized field. They have conducted dozens of public affairs initiatives throughout the Central Coast and have delivered a multitude of successful political campaigns on a variety of issues, including candidate campaigns and revenue measures, development and environmental projects, public awareness and information initiatives.

## JUST THE FACTS

The following section is an outline of the main factual findings from the survey. For the reader's convenience, we have organized the findings according to the section titles used in the body of this report. Thus, if you would like to learn more about a particular finding, simply turn to the appropriate report section.

### IMPORTANCE OF ISSUES

- When presented with a list of six specific issues and asked to rate the importance of each, the most important issue was ensuring quick response times to 911 calls for fires and emergencies (92% extremely or very important), followed by maintaining the quality of education in our local public schools (88%), maintaining public safety (87%), and ensuring adequate local fire protection and prevention services (85%).

### INITIAL BALLOT TEST

- With only the information provided in the ballot language, 57% of likely voters indicated that they would definitely or probably support the \$93 parcel tax measure at this stage in the survey. Approximately 29% stated that they would oppose the parcel tax and 13% were unsure or unwilling to share their vote choice.
- Support for the \$93 benefit assessment measure among residential property owners was slightly softer, with 55% of respondents indicating that they would definitely or probably support the measure, 34% opposed, and 11% unsure or unwilling to share their vote choice.
- Those who opposed the measure at the Initial Ballot Test were most likely to reference their concerns about taxes already being too high (23%), the tax rate for the measure being too high (15%), and poor budgeting or overspending as their reasons for opposing the measure. However, it is instructive that approximately one quarter (23%) of respondents cited a need for additional information as their reason for initially not supporting the measure.

### TAX/FEE THRESHOLD

- When their attention is focused on the tax or fee rate, voters and property owners are somewhat price sensitive when it comes to their support for the fire protection measure. At the highest tax rate tested (\$93 per year per property) 55% of respondents indicated that they would vote in favor of the measure. Incremental reductions in the tax rate resulted in incremental increases in support for the measure, with 62% of respondents indicating that they would support the proposed measure at an annual tax rate of \$66 per property.

### PROGRAMS & PROJECTS

- Among the programs and services that could be funded by the measure, respondents most strongly favored ensuring quick response times to 911 medical emergencies, followed by maintaining the number of professional firefighters and medical personnel needed to keep our community safe, maintaining high quality local fire protection and prevention services, and making needed repairs and upgrades to life-saving fire protection and emergency equipment.

## POSITIVE ARGUMENTS

When presented with arguments in favor of the measure, respondents found the following arguments to be the most persuasive:

- *All money raised by this measure will be spent locally to provide fire protection and emergency response services. The money cannot be taken away by the State or used for other purposes.*
- *In a medical emergency, brain damage occurs in 4 to 6 minutes, and brain death occurs in 8 minutes without oxygen. This measure will ensure that we have the staff and resources needed to provide quick response times to emergencies.*
- *This measure will ensure that firefighters and medical personnel have the facilities and equipment they need to do their jobs.*

## INTERIM BALLOT TEST

- After being presented with programs that could be funded as well as arguments in favor of the measure, voter support for the parcel tax increased slightly to 60%, with 30% of respondents opposed to the measure and an additional 11% unsure or unwilling to state their vote choice.
- Overall support among property owners for a benefit assessment remained stable at 55%, with 36% of respondents opposed to the measure and an additional 8% unsure or unwilling to state their vote choice.

## NEGATIVE ARGUMENTS

Of the arguments in opposition to the measure, respondents found the following arguments to be the most persuasive:

- *People are having a hard time making ends meet with the housing crisis, high unemployment, and the economy in recession. Now is NOT the time to be raising taxes.*
- *This tax is unfair to seniors and others on fixed incomes.*
- *Firefighters are paid too much in salary and pensions. If they took a modest pay cut, there would be no need for this tax.*

## FINAL BALLOT TEST

- After providing respondents with the wording of the proposed measure, possible tax rates, programs and projects that could be funded by the measure, and arguments in favor and against the proposal, support for the parcel tax measure was found among 58% of voters, with 31% opposed to the measure and 9% unsure or unwilling to state their vote choice.
- Support for the benefit assessment among residential property owners remained somewhat lower at 54%, with 38% opposed to the measure and 7% unsure or unwilling to state their vote choice.

## ALTERNATIVE RATE

- Those who opposed the \$93 measure at the Final Ballot Test were subsequently asked if they would support the measure at \$66 per year, an additional 8% of voters and 8% of prop-

erty owners indicated they would support the measure at the lower rate—bringing overall support for the measure at \$66 per parcel among a high-turnout electorate that is also quite familiar with the measure to 66% among voters, 64% among property owners.

## CONCLUSIONS

The bulk of this report is devoted to conveying the details of the study findings. In this section, however, we attempt to ‘see the forest through the trees’ and note how the collective results of the survey answer the key questions that motivated the research. The following conclusions are based on True North’s and Terrain Consulting’s interpretations of the survey results and the firms’ collective experience conducting hundreds of revenue measure studies for public agencies throughout the State.

*Should the Five Cities Fire Authority proceed with plans to place a revenue measure before voters or property owners in 2012?*

Yes. The vast majority of voters and property owners in the District consider maintaining the quality of local fire protection, fire prevention, and emergency response services to be among the most important issues facing their community—on par with maintaining the quality of education in public schools, and more important than preventing local tax increases. This sentiment translates into solid support for a local revenue measure to maintain high quality local fire protection and prevention services, ensure quick response times to 911 emergencies, upgrade fire protection and emergency equipment, and maintain an adequate number of firefighters and medical personnel.

The results of this study suggest that, if packaged appropriately and combined with a broad-based and effective public education effort, a measure to fund fire and emergency response services has a good chance of passage.

Having recommended that the District move forward, it is important to note that this recommendation to take the next steps toward placing a measure on the ballot comes with several qualifications and conditions. Indeed, although the results are promising, all revenue measures must overcome challenges prior to being successful. The proposed measure is no exception. The following paragraphs discuss some of the challenges and the next steps that True North and Terrain Consulting recommend.

*Which funding mechanism appears to have the best chance for passage?*

One of the key objectives of this study was to determine how support for a local revenue measure for fire and emergency services may vary depending on the type of funding mechanism employed: parcel tax or benefit assessment. As described in the *Introduction*, these financial mechanisms have very different legal, logistical, and campaign environments, each having its own opportunities and challenges for a measure.

A parcel tax for a specific purpose is considered a special tax under California law and requires support from two-thirds of voters who participate in the election—which can be held either as a traditional polling-booth election or by mailed-ballot. Registered voters can participate in the election regardless of whether they own property or are renters, and all votes are counted equally (one person=one vote) in determining the outcome of the election.

A benefit assessment, on the other hand, requires that those who participate own property in the District. In addition to residential property owners, owners of other types of properties (i.e., commercial, industrial, apartments, etc.) as well as absentee owners<sup>2</sup> are eligible to participate. Whereas in special tax elections each vote is weighted equally in determining the outcome, in assessment ballot proceedings the higher the amount of a property owner's fee, the greater the weight of their vote in determining the outcome of the election. A majority of the *weighted* votes is required for a measure to pass. Assessment ballot proceedings also employ different voting procedures, as all property owners are typically mailed a ballot that includes an information sheet, but does not include arguments in support or opposition as is the case with a special tax.

The results of the survey indicate that a parcel tax would have difficulty achieving the necessary two-thirds threshold for success. Even among voters who are likely to participate in a high-turnout election like November 2012, support for the proposed \$93 parcel tax measure remained seven to ten percentage points below the required threshold throughout the survey. Lowering the tax rate results in somewhat higher support levels, but at no point does support for the parcel tax exceed two-thirds.

The survey results also indicate, however, that a benefit assessment could be a viable mechanism for funding fire protection and emergency services. Among the residential property owners surveyed in this study, support for a \$93 benefit assessment ranged between 54% and 58% at the Ballot Tests—several percentage points above the weighted simple majority required for passage under California law. Lowering the tax rate increased support even further.

It is important to keep in mind, however, that the results of this initial assessment survey are among residential property owners who comprise the vast majority—but not all—of the property owners in the District who would participate in an assessment ballot proceeding. Commercial, apartment and industrial property owners are also eligible to participate in a benefit assessment. Traditionally, their levels of support for revenue measures such as that proposed are lower than that found among residential property owners. If the District opts to move forward with a benefit assessment, it will be important to consider the impact that these property owners may have on the final weighted vote and structure the measure and fee rates accordingly. On that note, if the District is inclined to take the next steps toward a benefit assessment, we strongly recommend conducting a follow-up mail survey to estimate support for a spe-

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2. A person who does not live in the District but does own property in the District is still eligible to participate in a benefit assessment.

cific assessment package among *all* property owner groups prior to the Board voting to call for the ballot proceeding.

*How will the tax or fee rate affect support for the measure?*

Naturally, the willingness of voters and property owners to support a specific revenue measure is contingent—in part—on the tax rate associated with a measure. The higher the rate, all other things being equal, the lower the level of aggregate support that can be expected. **It is critical that the rate be set at a level that the necessary proportion of voters or property owners view as affordable.**

One of the more striking patterns from the survey is that voters and property owners are somewhat price sensitive with respect to the proposed fire and emergency services measure, especially when their attention is *focused* on the tax rate. At the highest tax rate tested (**\$93 per year per property**), **55% of respondents indicated that they would vote in favor** of the measure. Incremental reductions in the tax rate resulted in incremental increases in support for the measure, with **62% of respondents indicating that they would support the measure at an annual tax rate of \$66 per property.**

Given that price will be one of the *driving* factors that will shape how property owners react to the proposed measure, we recommend keeping the tax rate as affordable as possible—especially considering the current state of the economy and voters' sensitivity to this issue. Our recommendation as to a specific rate will depend upon the outcome of future research and discussions with the District, as well as a candid evaluation of the resources that can be expected for the campaign.

*How might a public information campaign affect support for the proposed measure?*

As noted in the body of this report, individuals' opinions about revenue measures are often not rigid, especially when the amount of information presented to the public on a measure has been limited. Thus, in addition to measuring current support for the measure, one of the goals of this study was to explore how the introduction of additional information about the measure may affect voters' and property owners' opinions about the measure.

It is clear from the survey results that voters' and property owners' opinions about the proposed measure are somewhat sensitive to the nature—and amount—of information that they have about the measure. Information about the specific improvements that could be funded by the measure, as well as arguments in favor of the measure, were found by many respondents to be compelling reasons to support the measure. Moreover, this information played an important role in mitigating the erosion of support for the measure once respondents were exposed to the types of opposition arguments they will likely encounter during an election cycle.

Accordingly, one of the keys to building and *sustaining* support for the fire and emergency services measure will be the presence of an effective, well-organized campaign to that focuses on the need for the measure as well as the many benefits that it will bring.

How might the economic or political climate alter support for the measure?

An important component of any ballot measure's potential for success is the economic and political climate surrounding the election. Concerns about the housing market, an unstable stock market, job losses, and the recession have done little to raise consumer confidence—which has yet to rebound substantially from all-time *lows* reached last year. Together with the state of the economy, lingering concerns about the ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as the State budget crisis combine to create an economic and political climate that is not as favorable to revenue measures as it has been in prior years.

The results of this study and the conclusions noted above must be viewed in light of the current times. Indeed, the results for a measure were quite strong *despite* the general economic malaise, which speaks volumes about the value that voters place on maintaining the quality of fire and emergency response services. It is important to keep in mind that this poll is a snapshot in time. Should the economy and/or political climate change in ways that would be more favorable, support for the measure—and the potential effectiveness of a positive education campaign—could increase considerably. Conversely, negative economic and/or political developments, especially at the local level, could dampen support for the measure below what was recorded in this study.



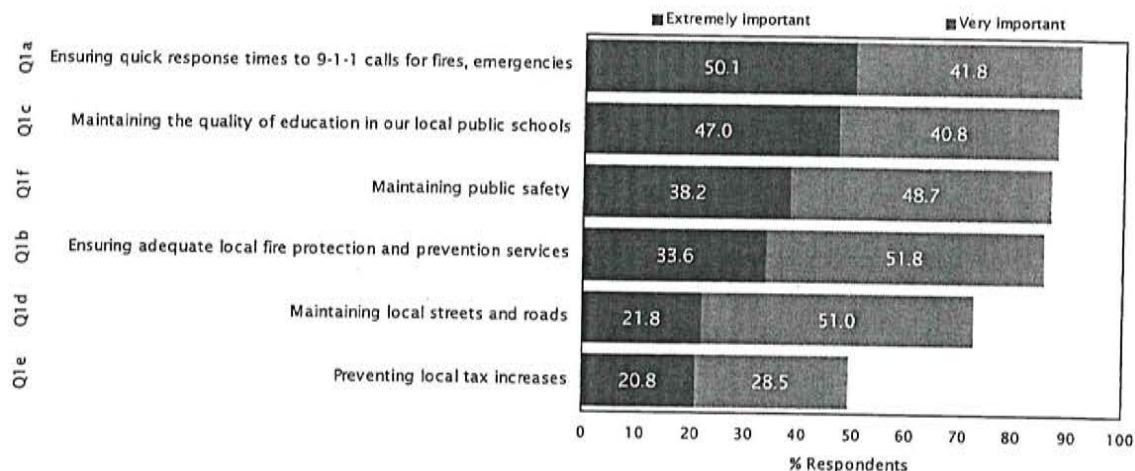
## IMPORTANCE OF ISSUES

The first substantive question of the survey presented respondents with six issues facing residents in their community and asked them to rate the importance of each issue. Because the same response scale was used for each issue, the results provide an insight into how important each issue is on a scale of importance *as well as* how each issue ranks in importance relative to the other issues tested. To avoid a systematic position bias, the order in which the issues were read to respondents was randomized for each respondent.

Figure 1 presents each issue tested, as well as the importance assigned to each issue by survey participants, sorted by order of importance.<sup>3</sup> Overall, the most important issue was ensuring quick response times to 911 calls for fires and emergencies (92% extremely or very important), followed by maintaining the quality of education in our local public schools (88%), maintaining public safety (87%), and ensuring adequate local fire protection and prevention services (85%). Given the purpose of this study, it is instructive to note that preventing local tax increases (49%) was rated much lower in importance than the fire protection, response-time, and public safety items.

**Question 1** *To begin, I'm going to read a list of issues facing your community and for each one, please tell me how important you feel the issue is to you, using a scale of extremely important, very important, somewhat important or not at all important.*

FIGURE 1 IMPORTANCE OF ISSUES



3. Issues were ranked based on the percentage of respondents who indicated that the issue was either extremely important or very important.

## INITIAL BALLOT TEST

The primary research objective of this survey was to estimate voters' and property owners' support for establishing a revenue measure to maintain high quality local fire protection and prevention services, ensure quick response times to 911 emergencies, upgrade fire protection and emergency equipment, and maintain an adequate number of firefighters and medical personnel. To this end, Question 2 was designed to take an early assessment of respondents' support for the proposed measure.

The motivation for placing Question 2 up-front in the survey is twofold. First, voter support for a measure can often depend on the amount of information they have about a measure. At this point in the survey, the respondent has not been provided information about the proposed measures beyond what is presented in the ballot language. This situation is analogous to a voter or property owner casting a ballot with limited knowledge about a measure, such as what might occur in the absence of an effective education campaign. Question 2—also known as the Initial Ballot Test—is thus a good measure of voter support for the proposed measure *as it is today*. Because the Initial Ballot Test provides a gauge of 'uninformed' support for the measure, it also serves a second purpose in that it provides a useful baseline from which to judge the impact of various information items conveyed later in the survey on respondent support for the measure.

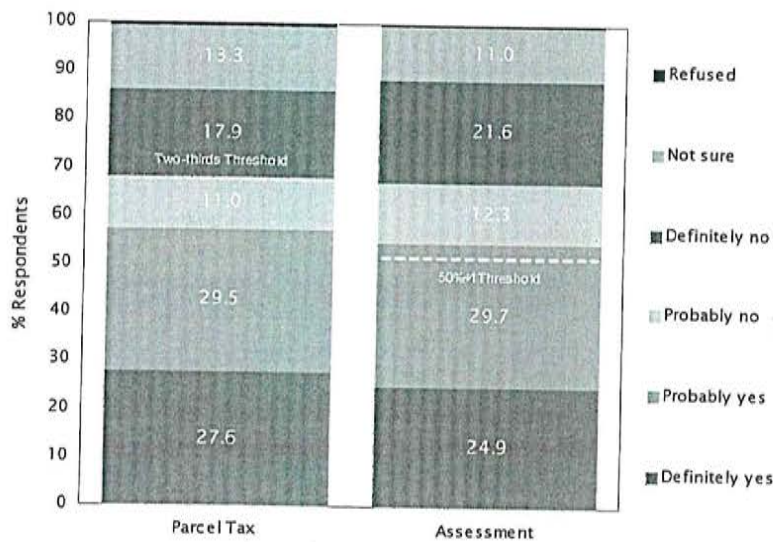
To accommodate the District's interest in estimating support for a parcel tax and a benefit assessment, the sampling methodology was designed to encompass both a likely November 2012 voter universe and the universe of residential property owners who are likely to cast ballots in a benefit assessment. Through filtering and weighting of the data, we are able to profile support in both scenarios.

**SUPPORT BY MEASURE TYPE** Figure 2 on the next page presents the results of the Initial Ballot Tests for both the parcel tax and benefit assessment measures. Overall, 57% of likely voters indicated that they would definitely or probably support the parcel tax measure at this stage in the survey, which is approximately 10% lower than the two-thirds threshold required for passage of a special tax. Approximately 29% stated that they would oppose the parcel tax and 13% were unsure or unwilling to share their vote choice. Support for the benefit assessment measure among residential property owners was slightly softer, with 55% of respondents indicating that they would definitely or probably support the measure, 34% opposed, and 11% unsure or unwilling to share their vote choice.

For benefit assessments, the level of support recorded at the Initial Ballot Test is approximately 5% above the simple majority (50% + 1) required for passage. However, it is important to keep in mind that residential property owners represent only a *portion* of all property owners allowed to participate in a benefit assessment, and the other property owner groups (i.e., commercial, industrial, apartment owners) carry a significant percentage of the weighted vote.

**Question 2** *Your household receives fire protection services from the Five Cities Fire Authority, which was formed last year by merging the Arroyo Grande, Grover Beach, and Oceano Fire Departments. Next year, voters in your area may be asked to vote on a local ballot measure. Let me read you a summary of the measure. In order to maintain high quality local fire protection and prevention services; ensure quick response times to 9-1-1 medical emergencies; upgrade and repair life-saving fire protection and emergency equipment; and maintain the number of professional firefighters and medical personnel needed to keep our community safe, shall the Five Cities Fire Authority establish a parcel tax of up to \$93 per parcel, with citizen oversight and all money staying local? If the election were held today, would you vote yes or no on this measure?*

**FIGURE 2 INITIAL BALLOT TEST**



**SUPPORT BY SUBGROUPS** For the interested reader, Tables 1 and 2 show how support at the Initial Ballot Test for the parcel tax and benefit assessment measures, respectively, varied by key demographic traits. The blue column (Approximate % of Universe) indicates the percentage of the universes that each subgroup category comprises. When compared to their respective counterparts, those who had lived in the area less than 15 years, Democrats and voters who are unlikely to vote in the upcoming November 2011 election were consistently the most likely to support a local revenue measure to fund fire protection services—be it a parcel tax or benefit assessment.

**TABLE 1 DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN OF SUPPORT AT INITIAL BALLOT TEST: PARCEL TAX**

		Approximate % of Voter Universe	% Probably or Definitely Yes	% Not sure
Overall		100	57.1	13.3
Years in S. San Luis Obispo County (QD1)	Less than 10	35	65.8	15.5
	10 to 14	15	64.7	9.4
	15 or more	51	47.9	13.3
Children in Hsld (QD3)	Yes	31	56.8	16.6
	No	69	56.7	12.0
Party	Democrat	35	69.4	14.2
	Republican	43	47.2	11.0
	Other / DTS	22	56.9	16.4
Gender	Male	48	56.8	7.4
	Female	52	57.4	18.8
Age	18 to 29	12	60.2	15.1
	30 to 39	12	51.3	15.6
	40 to 49	17	63.2	14.5
	50 to 64	33	55.0	11.4
	65 or older	26	57.1	13.0
Homeowner	Yes	62	54.7	11.0
	No	38	61.0	17.0
Registration Year	2011 to 2008	41	56.6	15.4
	2007 to 2002	28	68.0	9.5
	2001 to 1997	9	57.3	9.9
	1996 to 1990	10	42.6	22.4
	Before 1990	12	44.2	10.4
Likely to Vote by Mail	Yes	45	53.5	15.3
	No	55	60.1	11.6
Likely November 2011 Voter	Yes	43	52.6	10.5
	No	57	60.5	15.4
Household Party Type	Single dem	18	72.5	15.5
	Dual dem	11	65.7	19.0
	Single rep	19	53.5	12.6
	Dual rep	17	38.9	8.4
	Other	15	51.9	19.2
	Mixed	19	60.9	8.3
Likely June 2012 Voter	Yes	68	53.7	12.2
	No	32	64.4	15.7

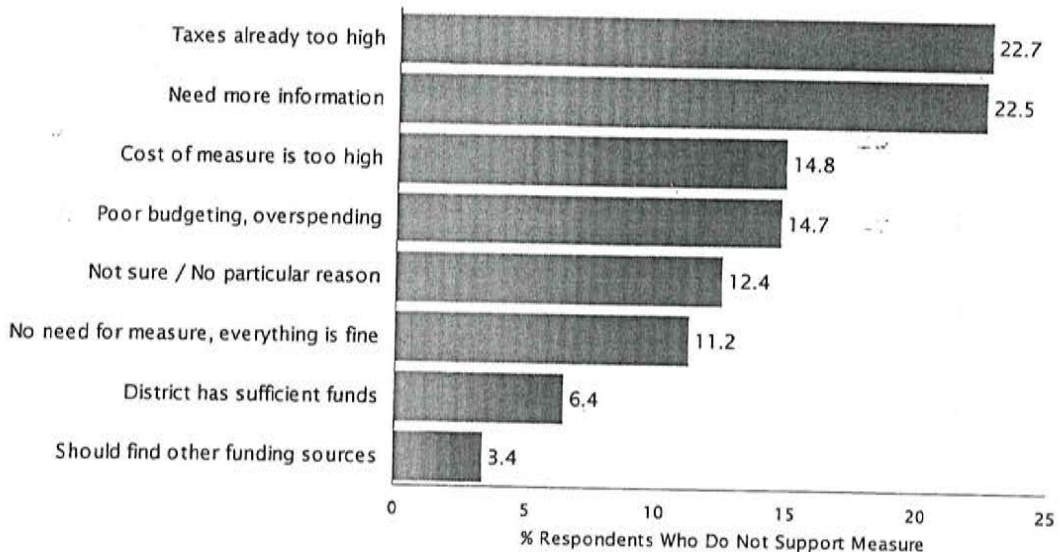
**TABLE 2 DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN OF SUPPORT AT INITIAL BALLOT TEST: ASSESSMENT**

		Approximate % of Voter Universe	% Probably or Definitely Yes	% Not sure
Overall		100	54.7	11.0
Years in S. San Luis Obispo County (QD1)	Less than 10	26	62.8	14.3
	10 to 14	18	58.9	6.5
	15 or more	56	49.0	11.0
Children in Hsld (QD3)	Yes	28	59.9	11.1
	No	72	52.6	11.1
Party	Democrat	34	70.7	11.0
	Republican	47	44.8	9.9
	Other / DTS	20	50.4	13.7
Gender	Male	48	52.2	7.9
	Female	52	57.0	13.9
Age	18 to 29	9	42.9	14.3
	30 to 39	9	56.5	13.0
	40 to 49	16	59.1	11.4
	50 to 64	36	53.7	9.5
	65 or older	31	56.4	11.1
Homeowner	Yes	100	54.7	11.0
	No	0	N/A	N/A
Registration Year	2011 to 2008	26	50.3	12.8
	2007 to 2002	32	68.3	8.6
	2001 to 1997	13	49.3	11.8
	1996 to 1990	12	41.7	17.8
	Before 1990	17	48.9	7.6
Likely to Vote by Mail	Yes	52	54.5	14.4
	No	48	54.8	7.3
Likely November 2011 Voter	Yes	55	48.6	11.2
	No	45	62.1	10.8
Household Party Type	Single dem	14	67.8	15.5
	Dual dem	12	76.0	12.5
	Single rep	15	47.8	10.5
	Dual rep	22	40.8	7.6
	Other	11	43.9	14.0
	Mixed	26	57.4	9.9
Likely June 2012 Voter	Yes	76	53.3	10.1
	No	24	59.3	14.0

**REASONS FOR OPPOSING MEASURE** Respondents who opposed the measure at the Initial Ballot Test were subsequently asked if there was a particular reason for their position. Question 3 was asked in an open-ended manner, thereby allowing respondents to mention any reason that came to mind without being prompted by—or restricted to—a particular list of options. True North later reviewed the verbatim responses and grouped them into the categories shown in Figure 3 on the next page. For the most part, the responses are typical of what True North has encountered in other communities, including concerns about taxes already being too high (23%), the tax rate for the measure being too high (15%), and poor budgeting or overspending (15%). However, it is instructive that approximately one quarter (23%) of respondents cited a need for additional information as their reason for initially not supporting the measure, which is not a typical response and represents a clear opportunity for public outreach to build support for the measure.

**Question 3** *Is there a particular reason why you do not support the fire protection measure I just described?*

**FIGURE 3 REASON FOR NOT SUPPORTING MEASURE**



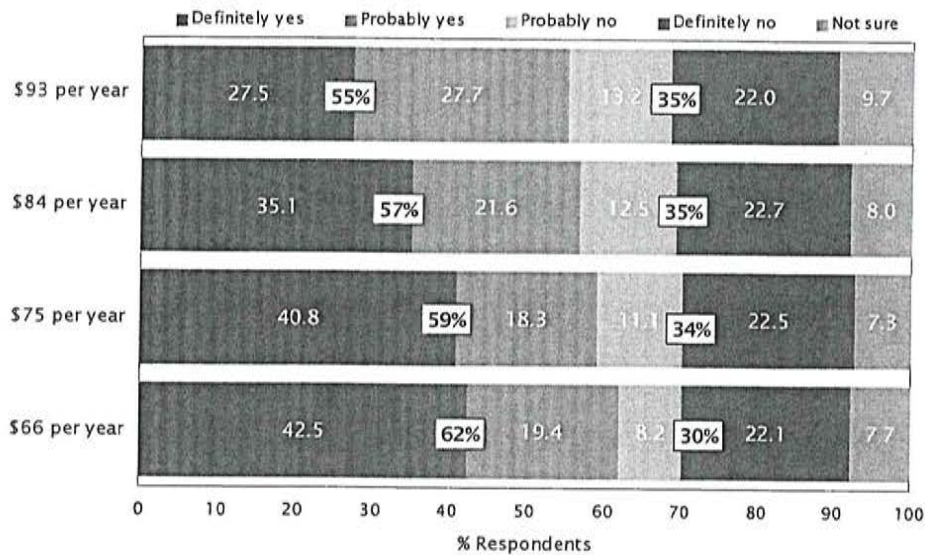
## TAX THRESHOLD

Naturally, voter and property owner support for a revenue measure is often contingent on the cost of the measure. The higher the tax/fee rate, all other things being equal, the less likely a person is to support the measure. One of the goals of this study was thus to gauge the impact that changes in the tax/fee rate can be expected to have on voter and property owner support for the proposed measure.

Question 6 was designed to do just that. Respondents were first instructed that the tax rate for the measure had yet to be determined, although several rates were being considered. They were then presented with the highest tax rate (\$93 per year) and asked if they would support the proposed measure at that rate. If a respondent did not answer 'definitely yes', they were asked whether they would support the measure at the next lowest tax rate.<sup>4</sup> The four tax rates tested, as well as the percentage of respondents who indicated they would vote in favor of the measure at each rate, are shown below in Figure 4.

**Question 4** *The measure I just described would raise money through annual property taxes paid by residential and commercial property owners. However, the amount to be charged to each parcel has not been determined yet. If you heard that your household would pay \_\_\_\_\_ per year for each property that you own in the district, would you vote yes or no on the measure?*

FIGURE 4 TAX THRESHOLD

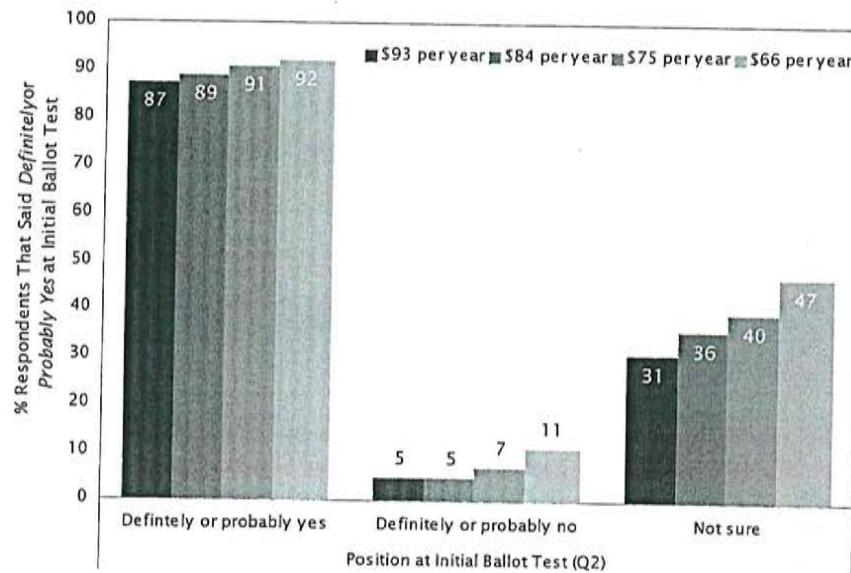


The most obvious pattern revealed in the figure is that voters are somewhat price sensitive when it comes to their support for the fire protection measure. At the highest tax rate tested (\$93 per year per property) 55% of voters indicated that they would vote in favor of the measure. Incremental reductions in the tax rate resulted in incremental increases in support for the measure, with 62% of voters indicating that they would support the proposed measure at an annual tax rate of \$66 per property.

4. If a respondent answered 'definitely yes', it is assumed that they would support the measure at the lower tax rate. Their support at each rate is factored into the percentages shown in the figure.

**PRICE SENSITIVITY BY INITIAL SUPPORT** Figure 5 examines how the specific tax rate information conveyed in Question 4 affected support for the fire protection measure according to respondents' positions at the Initial Ballot Test. What the figure makes clear is that initial supporters, initial opponents, and those who were unsure at the Initial Ballot Test were *all* price sensitive to some degree. At a rate of \$93 per parcel, for example, just 87% of voters who were initially supportive of the measure indicated that they would continue to support the measure. Conversely, at the lowest tax rate tested (\$66 per parcel), 11% of those who initially opposed the measure and 47% of those who were unsure switched to a supportive position.

**FIGURE 5 TAX THRESHOLD BY POSITION AT INITIAL BALLOT TEST**





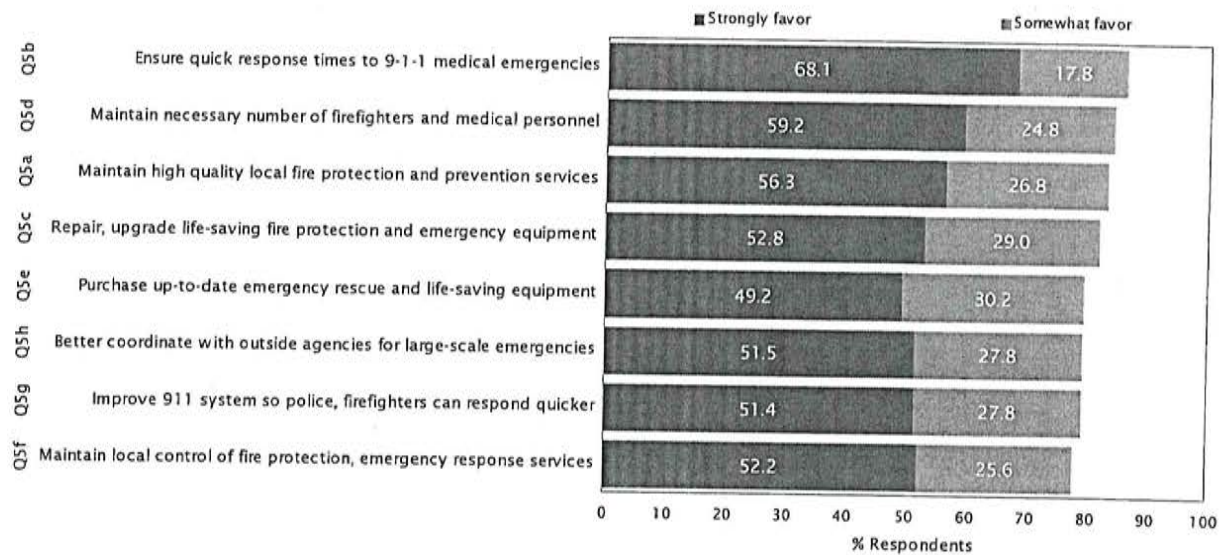
## PROGRAMS & PROJECTS

The ballot language presented in Question 2 indicated that the proposed measure would be used to maintain high quality local fire protection and prevention services, ensure quick response times to 911 emergencies, upgrade fire protection and emergency equipment, and maintain an adequate number of firefighters and medical personnel. The purpose of Question 5 was to provide respondents with the full range of programs and improvements that may be funded by the proposed measure, as well as identify which of these improvements voters most favored funding with the measure proceeds.

After reading each improvement that may be funded by the measure, respondents were asked if they would favor or oppose spending some of the money on that particular improvement assuming that the measure passes. Truncated descriptions of the improvements tested, as well as voters' responses, are shown in Figure 6.<sup>5</sup>

**Question 5** *The measure we've been discussing would provide funding for a variety of fire protection and public safety services. If the measure passes, would you favor or oppose using some of the money to: \_\_\_\_\_, or do you not have an opinion?*

**FIGURE 6 PROGRAMS & PROJECTS**



Overall, the item that resonated with the largest percentage of respondents was providing ensuring quick response times to 911 medical emergencies (86% strongly or somewhat favor), followed by maintaining the number of professional firefighters and medical personnel needed to keep our community safe (84%), maintaining high quality local fire protection and prevention services (83%), and making needed repairs and upgrades to life-saving fire protection and emergency equipment (82%).

5. For the full text of the improvements tested, turn to Question 5 in *Questionnaire & Toplines* on page 35.

**PROJECT RATINGS BY SUBGROUP** Table 3 presents the top five projects (showing the percentage of respondents who *strongly* favor each) by position at the Initial Ballot Test. Not surprisingly, individuals who initially opposed the measure or were unsure of their position were generally less likely to favor spending money on a given project or service when compared to supporters. Nevertheless, initial supporters, opponents and the undecided did agree on two of the five top priorities for funding.

**TABLE 3 TOP PROGRAMS & PROJECTS BY POSITION AT INITIAL BALLOT TEST**

Position at Initial Ballot Test (Q2)	Item	Program or Project Summary	% Strongly Favor
Probably or Definitely Yes (n = 228)	Q5b	Ensure quick response times to 9-1-1 medical emergencies	81
	Q5d	Maintain necessary number of firefighters and medical personnel	77
	Q5a	Maintain high quality local fire protection and prevention services	69
	Q5c	Repair, upgrade life-saving fire protection and emergency equipment	66
	Q5g	Improve 911 system so police, firefighters can respond quicker	65
Probably or Definitely No (n = 116)	Q5b	Ensure quick response times to 9-1-1 medical emergencies	42
	Q5a	Maintain high quality local fire protection and prevention services	33
	Q5d	Maintain necessary number of firefighters and medical personnel	31
	Q5f	Maintain local control of fire protection, emergency response services	31
	Q5h	Better coordinate with outside agencies for large-scale emergencies	29
Not Sure (n = 53)	Q5b	Ensure quick response times to 9-1-1 medical emergencies	68
	Q5e	Purchase up-to-date emergency rescue and life-saving equipment	58
	Q5c	Repair, upgrade life-saving fire protection and emergency equipment	54
	Q5f	Maintain local control of fire protection, emergency response services	50
	Q5a	Maintain high quality local fire protection and prevention services	49

## POSITIVE ARGUMENTS

Ballot measures do not succeed or fail in a political vacuum. During an election cycle, proponents of a measure will present arguments to try to persuade voters to support the measure, just as opponents will present arguments to achieve the opposite goal. The objective of Question 6 was thus to present respondents with arguments in favor of the proposed measure and identify whether they felt the arguments were convincing reasons to support it. Arguments in opposition to the measure were also presented and will be discussed later in this report (see *Negative Arguments* on page 25). Within each series, specific arguments were administered in random order to avoid a systematic position bias.

**Question 6** *What I'd like to do now is tell you what some people are saying about the measure we've been discussing. Supporters of the measure say: ----- Do you think this is a very convincing, somewhat convincing, or not at all convincing reason to SUPPORT the measure?*

**FIGURE 7 POSITIVE ARGUMENTS**

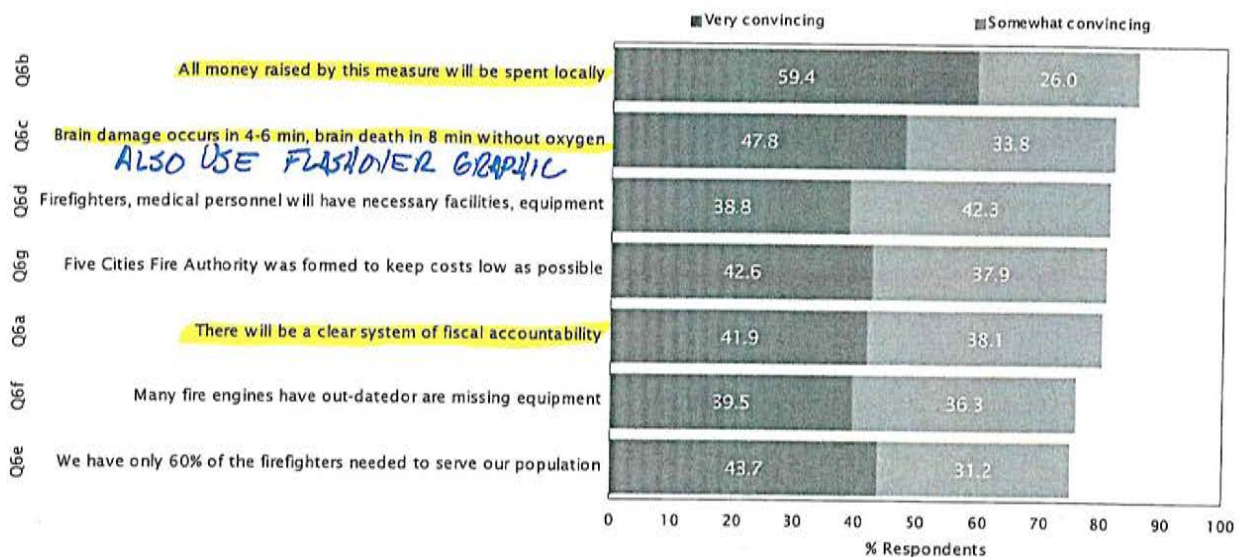


Figure 7 above presents the truncated positive arguments tested, as well as respondents' reactions to the arguments. The arguments are ranked from most convincing to least convincing based on the percentage of respondents who indicated that the argument was either a 'very convincing' or 'somewhat convincing' reason to support the measure. Using this methodology, the most compelling positive argument among voters was: *All money raised by this measure will be spent locally to provide fire protection and emergency response services. The money cannot be taken away by the State or used for other purposes* (85%), followed by *In a medical emergency, brain damage occurs in 4 to 6 minutes, and brain death occurs in 8 minutes without oxygen. This measure will ensure that we have the staff and resources needed to provide quick response times to emergencies* (82%), and *This measure will ensure that firefighters and medical personnel have the facilities and equipment they need to do their jobs* (81%).

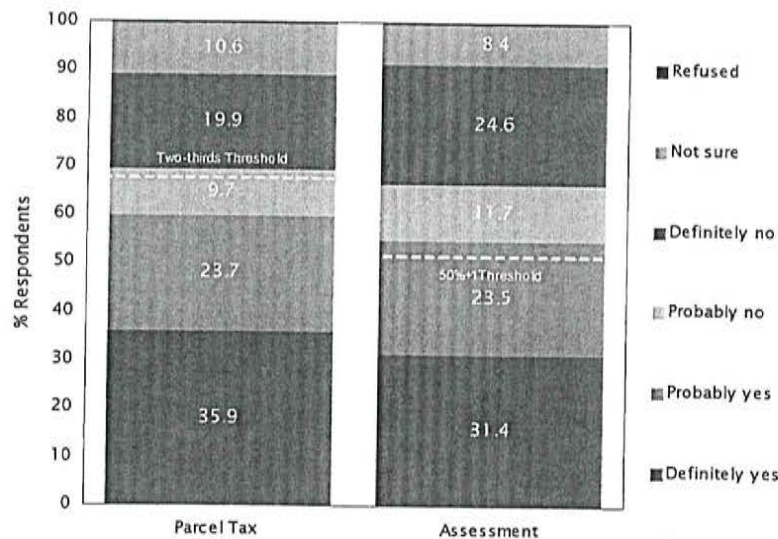
## INTERIM BALLOT TEST

After exposing respondents to the types of positive arguments they may encounter during an election cycle, the survey again presented respondents with the ballot language used previously to gauge how their support for the proposed revenue measure may have changed.

As shown in Figure 8, voter support for the parcel tax increased slightly to 60%, with 30% of respondents opposed to the measure and an additional 11% unsure or unwilling to state their vote choice. Overall support among property owners for a benefit assessment remained stable at 55%, with 36% of respondents opposed to the measure and an additional 8% unsure or unwilling to state their vote choice.

**Question 7** *Sometimes people change their mind about a measure once they have more information about it. Now that you have heard a bit more about the measure, let me read you a summary of it again. In order to maintain high quality local fire protection and prevention services; ensure quick response times to 9-1-1 medical emergencies; upgrade and repair life-saving fire protection and emergency equipment; and maintain the number of professional firefighters and medical personnel needed to keep our community safe, shall the Five Cities Fire Authority establish a parcel tax of up to \$93 per parcel, with citizen oversight and all money staying local? If the election were held today, would you vote yes or no on this measure?*

**FIGURE 8 INTERIM BALLOT TEST**



**SUPPORT BY SUBGROUPS** For the interested reader, tables 4 and 5 display how support for the parcel tax and benefit assessment measures at this point in the survey varied by key demographic subgroups, as well as the percentage change in subgroup support when compared to the Initial Ballot Test. Positive differences appear in green, whereas negative differences appear in red.

**TABLE 4 DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN OF SUPPORT AT INTERIM BALLOT TEST: PARCEL TAX**

		Approximate % of Voter Universe	% Probably or Definitely Yes	Change From Initial Ballot Test (Q2)
Overall		100	59.6	+2.5
Years in S. San Luis Obispo County (QD1)	Less than 10	35	75.1	+9.3
	10 to 14	15	63.8	-0.9
	15 or more	51	47.3	-0.6
Children in Hslld (QD3)	Yes	31	65.3	+8.5
	No	69	56.6	-0.2
Party	Democrat	35	73.4	+4.0
	Republican	43	47.1	-0.1
	Other / DTS	22	62.2	+5.3
Gender	Male	48	57.5	+0.7
	Female	52	61.6	+4.2
Age	18 to 29	12	71.1	+11.0
	30 to 39	12	59.7	+8.4
	40 to 49	17	65.8	+2.7
	50 to 64	33	55.0	-0.0
	65 or older	26	55.9	-1.2
Homeowner	Yes	62	55.0	+0.3
	No	38	67.1	+6.1
Registration Year	2011 to 2008	41	65.2	+8.6
	2007 to 2002	28	66.1	-1.9
	2001 to 1997	9	50.7	-6.7
	1996 to 1990	10	45.1	+2.4
	Before 1990	12	43.6	-0.6
Likely to Vote by Mail	Yes	45	58.3	+4.8
	No	55	60.7	+0.6
Likely November 2011 Voter	Yes	43	53.3	+0.7
	No	57	64.3	+3.9
Household Party Type	Single dem	18	77.4	+4.8
	Dual dem	11	70.2	+4.5
	Single rep	19	53.5	-0.0
	Dual rep	17	40.0	+1.1
	Other	15	58.0	+6.0
	Mixed	19	61.0	+0.1
Likely June 2012 Voter	Yes	68	56.2	+2.5
	No	32	66.9	+2.5

**TABLE 5 DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN OF SUPPORT AT INTERIM BALLOT TEST: ASSESSMENT**

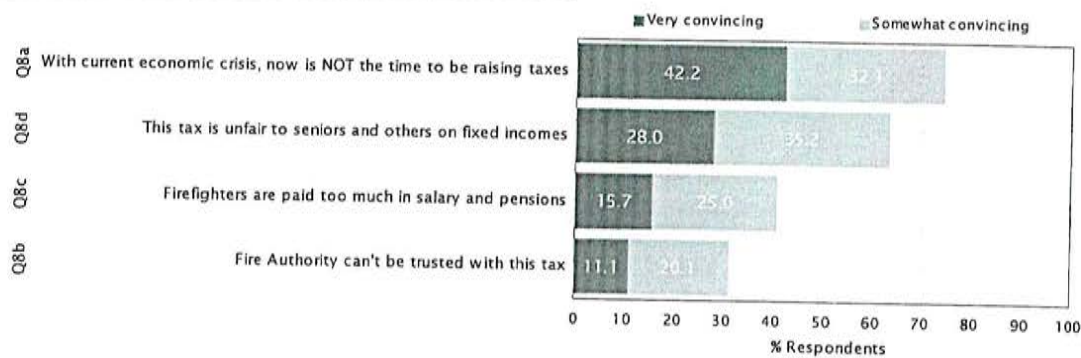
		Approximate % of Voter Universe	% Probably or Definitely Yes	Change From Initial Ballot Test (Q2)
Overall		100	55.0	+0.3
Years in S. San Luis Obispo County (QD1)	Less than 10	26	68.1	+5.3
	10 to 14	18	51.7	-7.2
	15 or more	56	50.0	+1.0
Children in Hsld (QD3)	Yes	28	61.3	+1.4
	No	72	52.4	-0.1
Party	Democrat	34	71.6	+0.9
	Republican	47	43.7	-1.1
	Other / DTS	20	53.0	+2.6
Gender	Male	48	50.1	-2.1
	Female	52	59.5	+2.5
Age	18 to 29	9	47.6	+4.8
	30 to 39	9	60.9	+4.3
	40 to 49	16	59.1	No change
	50 to 64	36	53.7	-0.0
	65 or older	31	54.7	-1.7
Homeowner	Yes	100	55.0	+0.3
	No	0	N/A	N/A
Registration Year	2011 to 2008	26	57.3	+7.0
	2007 to 2002	32	64.2	-4.1
	2001 to 1997	13	45.5	-3.9
	1996 to 1990	12	44.9	+3.2
	Before 1990	17	48.2	-0.7
Likely to Vote by Mail	Yes	52	57.9	+3.4
	No	48	51.7	-3.1
Likely November 2011 Voter	Yes	55	48.5	-0.0
	No	45	62.8	+0.7
Household Party Type	Single dem	14	74.9	+7.1
	Dual dem	12	70.5	-5.5
	Single rep	15	44.7	-3.1
	Dual rep	22	42.2	+1.4
	Other	11	44.8	+0.9
	Mixed	26	57.6	+0.2
Likely June 2012 Voter	Yes	76	53.7	+0.5
	No	24	58.9	-0.3

## NEGATIVE ARGUMENTS

Whereas Question 6 presented respondents with arguments in favor of the measure, Question 8 presented respondents with arguments designed to elicit opposition to the measure. In the case of Question 8, however, respondents were asked whether they felt that the argument was a very convincing, somewhat convincing, or not at all convincing reason to *oppose* the measure. The arguments tested, as well as respondents' opinions about the arguments, are presented in Figure 9.

**Question 8** Next, let me tell you what opponents of the measure are saying. Opponents of the measure say: \_\_\_\_\_. Do you think this is a very convincing, somewhat convincing, or not at all convincing reason to **OPPOSE** the measure?

FIGURE 9 NEGATIVE ARGUMENTS



Among the negative arguments tested, the most compelling for respondents were: *People are having a hard time making ends meet with the housing crisis, high unemployment, and the economy in recession. Now is NOT the time to be raising taxes (74%), This tax is unfair to seniors and others on fixed incomes (63%), and Firefighters are paid too much in salary and pensions. If they took a modest pay cut, there would be no need for this tax (41%).*

**NEGATIVE ARGUMENTS BY INITIAL SUPPORT** The following table ranks the negative arguments (showing the percentage of respondents who cited each as very convincing) according to respondents' vote choice at the Initial Ballot Test.

TABLE 6 NEGATIVE ARGUMENTS BY POSITION AT INITIAL BALLOT TEST

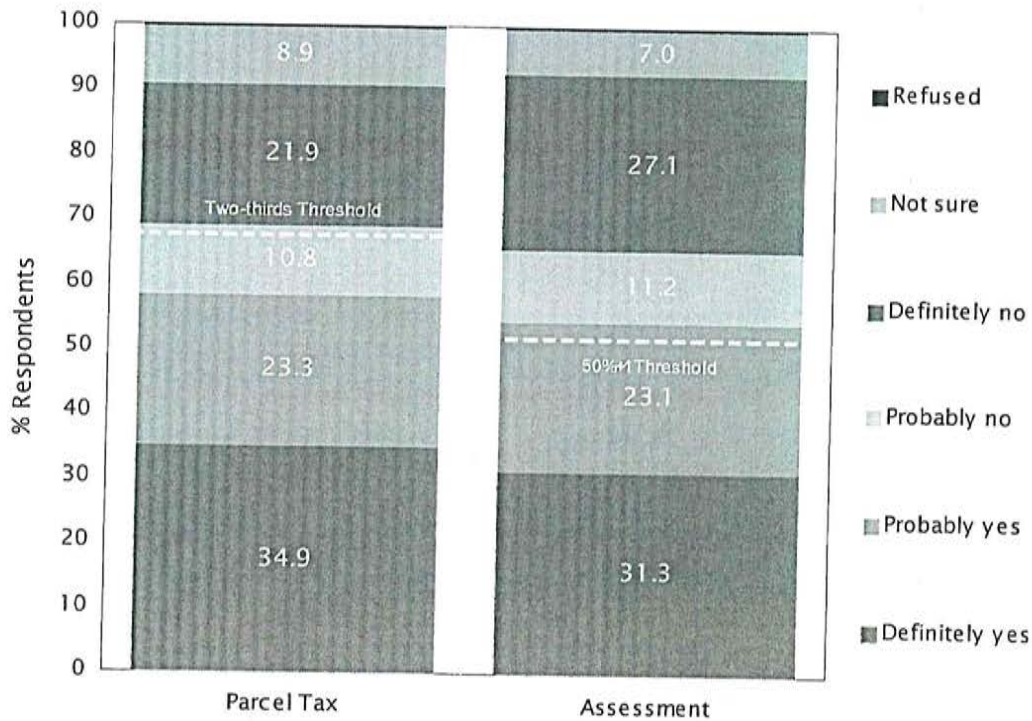
Position at Initial Ballot Test (Q2)	Item	Negative Argument Summary	% Very Convincing
Probably or Definitely Yes (n = 228)	Q8a	With current economic crisis, now is NOT the time to be raising taxes	28
	Q8d	This tax is unfair to seniors and others on fixed incomes	17
	Q8c	Firefighters are paid too much in salary and pensions	11
	Q8b	Fire Authority can't be trusted with this tax	6
Probably or Definitely No (n = 116)	Q8a	With current economic crisis, now is NOT the time to be raising taxes	75
	Q8d	This tax is unfair to seniors and others on fixed incomes	49
	Q8c	Firefighters are paid too much in salary and pensions	28
	Q8b	Fire Authority can't be trusted with this tax	24
Not Sure (n = 53)	Q8a	With current economic crisis, now is NOT the time to be raising taxes	33
	Q8d	This tax is unfair to seniors and others on fixed incomes	26
	Q8c	Firefighters are paid too much in salary and pensions	8
	Q8b	Fire Authority can't be trusted with this tax	6

## FINAL BALLOT TESTS

Voters' and property owners' opinions about ballot measures are often not rigid, especially when the amount of information presented to the public on a measure has been limited. An important goal of the survey was thus to gauge how their opinions about the proposed fire protection measure may be affected by the information they could encounter during the course of an election cycle. After providing respondents with the wording of the proposed measure, projects that could be funded by the measure, as well as arguments in favor and against the proposal, respondents were again asked whether they would vote 'yes' or 'no' on the proposed water reliability measure.

**Question 9** *Now that you have heard a bit more about the measure, let me read you a summary of it one more time. In order to maintain high quality local fire protection and prevention services; ensure quick response times to 9-1-1 medical emergencies; upgrade and repair life-saving fire protection and emergency equipment; and maintain the number of professional firefighters and medical personnel needed to keep our community safe, shall the Five Cities Fire Authority establish a parcel tax of up to \$93 per parcel, with citizen oversight and all money staying local? If the election were held today, would you vote yes or no on this measure?*

FIGURE 10 FINAL BALLOT TEST



At this point in the survey, support for the parcel tax measure was found among 58% of voters, with 31% opposed to the measure and 9% unsure or unwilling to state their vote choice. Support for the benefit assessment among residential property owners remained somewhat lower at 54%, with 38% opposed to the measure and 7% unsure or unwilling to state their vote choice.

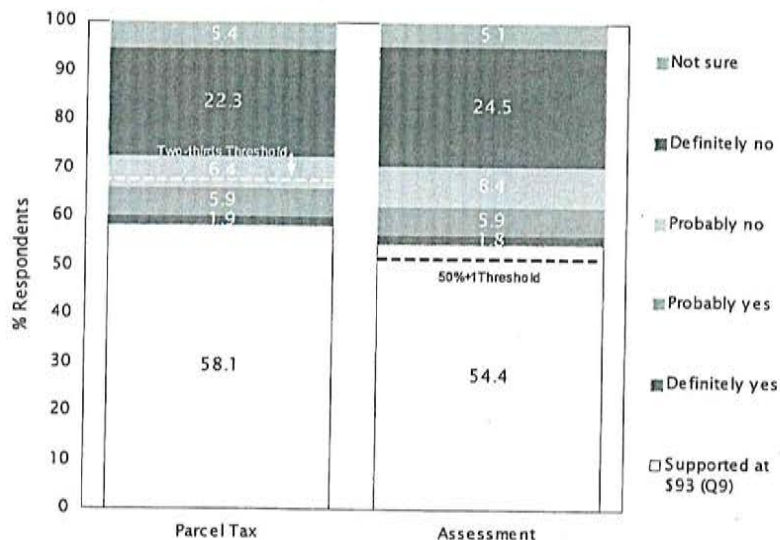


**LOWER TAX RATE** The ballot language for the proposed measure used in Questions 2, 7, and 9 indicated that the measure would increase annual property taxes by up to \$93 per parcel. Respondents who opposed the measure at the Final Ballot Test (or were unsure of their position) were subsequently asked how they would vote if the tax increase were instead \$66 per parcel.

Table 10 displays the responses to this question and includes those respondents who previously indicated they would support the measure at \$93 (and thus did not receive this question). An additional 8% of voters and 8% of property owners indicated they would support the measure at the lower rate, bringing the overall support for the measure at \$66 per parcel among a high-turnout electorate that is also quite familiar with the measure to 66% among voters, 64% among property owners.

**Question 10** *How about if instead of \$93 per household, the tax were \$66 per household. Would you vote yes or no on this measure?*

**FIGURE 11 FINAL BALLOT TEST AT LOWER RATE**



## CHANGE IN SUPPORT

Tables 7 and 8 provide a closer look at how support for the proposed parcel tax and benefit assessment measures, respectively, changed over the course of the interview by calculating the difference in support between the Initial, Interim, and Final Ballot Tests within various subgroups of voters. The percentage of support for the measure at the Final Ballot Test is shown in the column with the heading *% Probably or Definitely Yes*. The columns to the right show the difference between the Final and the Initial, and the Final and Interim Ballot Tests. Positive differences appear in green, whereas negative differences appear in red.

**TABLE 7 DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN OF SUPPORT AT FINAL BALLOT TEST: PARCEL TAX**

		Approximate % of Voter Universe	% Probably or Definitely Yes	Change From Initial Ballot Test (Q2)	Change from Interim Ballot Test (Q7)
Overall		100	58.1	+1.0	-1.5
Years in S. San Luis Obispo County (QD1)	Less than 10	35	75.8	+10.0	+0.7
	10 to 14	15	58.6	-6.1	-5.2
	15 or more	51	45.4	-2.5	-1.9
Children in Hsld (QD3)	Yes	31	61.5	+4.7	-3.8
	No	69	56.1	-0.6	-0.5
Party	Democrat	35	70.9	+1.5	-2.5
	Republican	43	47.7	+0.5	+0.6
	Other / DTS	22	58.2	+1.3	-4.0
Gender	Male	48	57.4	+0.6	-0.1
	Female	52	58.8	+1.4	-2.8
Age	18 to 29	12	74.1	+13.9	+3.0
	30 to 39	12	57.8	+6.4	-2.0
	40 to 49	17	63.2	No change	-2.7
	50 to 64	33	55.9	+0.9	+0.9
	65 or older	26	50.3	-6.8	-5.6
Homeowner	Yes	62	54.4	-0.3	-0.6
	No	38	64.2	+3.1	-2.9
Registration Year	2011 to 2008	41	65.1	+8.5	-0.1
	2007 to 2002	28	62.0	-6.0	-4.2
	2001 to 1997	9	53.1	-4.2	+2.5
	1996 to 1990	10	41.7	-0.9	-3.4
	Before 1990	12	42.2	-2.0	-1.4
Likely to Vote by Mail	Yes	45	54.2	+0.7	-4.1
	No	55	61.4	+1.3	+0.7
Likely November 2011 Voter	Yes	43	49.7	-2.9	-3.6
	No	57	64.4	+4.0	+0.1
Household Party Type	Single dem	18	71.9	-0.6	-5.5
	Dual dem	11	70.8	+5.1	+0.6
	Single rep	19	53.7	+0.2	+0.2
	Dual rep	17	41.4	+2.5	+1.4
	Other	15	52.1	+0.1	-5.9
	Mixed	19	61.4	+0.5	+0.4
Likely June 2012 Voter	Yes	68	54.2	+0.6	-1.9
	No	32	66.4	+2.0	-0.5

**TABLE 8 DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN OF SUPPORT AT FINAL BALLOT TEST: ASSESSMENT**

		Approximate % of Voter Universe	% Probably or Definitely Yes	Change From Initial Ballot Test (Q2)	Change from Interim Ballot Test (Q7)
Overall		100	54.4	-0.3	-0.6
Years in S. San Luis Obispo County (QD1)	Less than 10	26	69.6	+6.7	+1.5
	10 to 14	18	54.5	-4.4	+2.8
	15 or more	56	47.4	-1.6	-2.6
Children in Hsld (QD3)	Yes	28	58.9	-0.9	-2.4
	No	72	52.6	-0.0	+0.1
Party	Democrat	34	71.5	+0.8	-0.1
	Republican	47	43.4	-1.5	-0.3
	Other / DTS	20	51.0	+0.6	-2.0
Gender	Male	48	50.1	-2.1	No change
	Female	52	58.4	+1.4	-1.1
Age	18 to 29	9	47.6	+4.8	No change
	30 to 39	9	56.5	No change	-4.3
	40 to 49	16	59.1	No change	No change
	50 to 64	36	56.8	+3.2	+3.2
	65 or older	31	50.4	-6.0	-4.3
Homeowner	Yes	100	54.4	-0.3	-0.6
	No	0	N/A	N/A	N/A
Registration Year	2011 to 2008	26	58.8	+8.5	+1.5
	2007 to 2002	32	62.6	-5.8	-1.7
	2001 to 1997	13	48.4	-0.9	+2.9
	1996 to 1990	12	40.5	-1.2	-4.4
	Before 1990	17	46.7	-2.2	-1.5
Likely to Vote by Mail	Yes	52	58.1	+3.6	+0.2
	No	48	50.3	-4.5	-1.4
Likely November 2011 Voter	Yes	55	48.7	+0.1	+0.2
	No	45	61.3	-0.8	-1.5
Household Party Type	Single dem	14	73.0	+5.2	-1.9
	Dual dem	12	71.4	-4.6	+0.9
	Single rep	15	41.2	-6.6	-3.5
	Dual rep	22	44.0	+3.2	+1.7
	Other	11	41.1	-2.8	-3.7
	Mixed	26	58.0	+0.6	+0.4
Likely June 2012 Voter	Yes	76	53.5	+0.2	-0.2
	No	24	57.2	-2.0	-1.7

Whereas Tables 7 and 8 display change in support for the measure over the course of the interview at the group level, Tables 9 and 10 display the individual-level changes that occurred between the Initial and Final Ballot Tests for the respective measures. On the left side of the tables is shown each of the response options to the Initial Ballot Test and the percentage of respondents in each group. The cells in the body of the tables depict movement within each response group (row) based on the information provided throughout the course of the survey as recorded by the Final Ballot Test. For example, in the first row of Table 9 we see that of the 27.6% of respondents who indicated that they would definitely support the parcel tax measure at the Initial Ballot Test, 21.9% also indicated that they would definitely support the measure at the Final Ballot Test. Approximately 4.1% moved to the probably support group, 0.0% moved to the probably oppose group, 0.9% moved to the definitely oppose group, and 0.8% percent stated they were now unsure of their vote choice.

To ease interpretation of the tables, the cells are color coded. Red shaded cells indicate declining support, green shaded cells indicate increasing support, whereas white cells indicate no movement. Moreover, within the cells, a white font indicates a fundamental change in the vote: from yes to no, no to yes, or not sure to either yes or no.

**TABLE 9 MOVEMENT BETWEEN INITIAL AND FINAL BALLOT TEST: PARCEL TAX**

Initial Ballot Test (Q2)		Final Ballot Test (Q9)				
		Definitely support	Probably support *	Probably oppose	Definitely oppose	Not sure
Definitely support	27.6% →	21.9%	4.1%	0.0%	0.9%	0.8%
Probably support	29.5% →	10.0%	14.2%	2.2%	1.0%	2.2%
Probably oppose	11.0% →			4.8%	3.5%	
Definitely oppose	17.9% →			1.8%	15.7%	
Not sure	13.9% →			2.1%	0.7%	4.9%

**TABLE 10 MOVEMENT BETWEEN INITIAL AND FINAL BALLOT TEST: ASSESSMENT**

Initial Ballot Test (Q2)		Final Ballot Test (Q9)				
		Definitely support	Probably support	Probably oppose	Definitely oppose	Not sure
Definitely support	24.9% →	21.3%	2.8%	0.0%	0.8%	0.0%
Probably support	29.7% →	8.9%	16.5%	1.6%	1.2%	1.6%
Probably oppose	12.3% →			5.8%	4.5%	
Definitely oppose	21.6% →			1.5%	20.1%	
Not sure	11.4% →			2.2%	0.5%	4.9%

As one might expect, the information conveyed in the survey had the greatest impact on individuals who either weren't sure about how they would vote at the Initial Ballot Test or were tentative in their vote choice (probably yes or probably no). Moreover, Tables 9 and 10 make clear that although the information did impact some respondents, it did not do so in a consistent way for all respondents. Some respondents found the information conveyed during the course of the interview to be a reason to become more supportive of the measure, whereas others found the same information to be a reason to be less supportive.

Despite 19% of voters making a *fundamental*<sup>6</sup> shift in their opinion about the parcel tax measure and 13% of property owners making a similar shift for the benefit assessment over the course of the interview, the net impact is that support for the parcel tax measure at the Final Ballot Test was just 1% greater than support at the Initial Ballot Test. Similarly, support for the benefit assessment measure at the Final Ballot Test was the same as the levels recorded at the Initial Ballot Test.

6. That is, they changed from a position of support, opposition or undecided at the Initial Ballot Test to a different position at the Final Ballot Test.

# BACKGROUND & DEMOGRAPHICS

TABLE 11 DEMOGRAPHICS OF SAMPLE

Total Respondents	400
Years in S. San Luis Obispo County (QD1)	
Less than 10	34.2
10 to 14	14.3
15 or more	50.2
Refused	1.2
Children in Hsld (QD3)	
Yes	30.8
No	68.0
Refused	1.2
Party	
Democrat	35.0
Republican	43.0
Other / DTS	22.0
Gender	
Male	47.9
Female	52.1
Age	
18 to 29	12.4
30 to 39	12.3
40 to 49	16.6
50 to 64	32.7
65 or older	26.0
Homeowner	
Yes	61.6
No	38.4
Registration Year	
2011 to 2008	40.8
2007 to 2002	28.3
2001 to 1997	9.4
1996 to 1990	9.7
Before 1990	11.8
Likely to Vote by Mail	
Yes	45.5
No	54.5
Likely November 2011 Voter	
Yes	42.8
No	57.2
Likely June 2012 Voter	
Yes	67.9
No	32.1
Household Party Type	
Single dem	18.5
Dual dem	11.2
Single rep	19.3
Dual rep	16.9
Other	15.0
Mixed	19.2

In addition to questions directly related to the proposed measure, the study collected basic demographic information about respondents and their households. Some of this information was gathered during the interview, although much of it was collected from the voter file. The profile of the sample used for this study is shown in Table 11.

## M E T H O D O L O G Y

The following sections outline the methodologies used in the study, as well as the motivation for using certain techniques.

**QUESTIONNAIRE DEVELOPMENT** Dr. McLarney of True North Research worked closely with the Five Cities Fire Authority and Terrain Consulting to develop a questionnaire that covered the topics of interest and avoided the many possible sources of systematic measurement error, including position-order effects, wording effects, response-category effects, scaling effects and priming. Several questions included multiple individual items. Because asking the items in a set order can lead to a systematic position bias in responses, the items were asked in a random order for each respondent.

Some of the questions asked in this study were presented only to a subset of respondents. For example, only respondents who indicated that they did not support the proposed revenue measure at the Initial Ballot Test (Question 2) were asked the follow-up question if there was a particular reason for their position (Question 3). The questionnaire included with this report (see *Questionnaire & Toplines* on page 35) identifies the skip patterns that were used during the interview to ensure that each respondent received the appropriate questions.

**PROGRAMMING & PRE-TEST** Prior to fielding the survey, the questionnaire was CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) programmed to assist the interviewers when conducting the telephone interviews. The CATI program automatically navigates the skip patterns, randomizes the appropriate question items, and alerts the interviewer to certain types of key-punching mistakes should they happen during the interview. The integrity of the questionnaire was pre-tested internally by True North and by dialing into random homes in the district prior to formally beginning the survey.

**SAMPLES** The accommodate the Authority's interest in obtaining reliable estimates of support for the proposed measure under two different funding scenarios—parcel tax and benefit assessment—two samples were specified for the study. Questions pertaining to a parcel tax were administered to a sample of 400 voters who, based on their voting history, are expected to participate in the November 2012 election. The assessment version of the questions was administered to a subsample of 300 voters who are also owners of residential properties in the district. The samples were stratified by key respondent characteristics—household party type, age, gender and location within the district—prior to randomly selecting individuals into sample clusters.

**STATISTICAL MARGIN OF ERROR** Because this study consisted of random samples drawn from the likely voter and residential property owner universes in the district, the results can be used to estimate the opinions of *all* likely November 2012 voters (or residential property owner voters in the district) who are likely to cast ballots in the elections of interest. Because not all voters or property owners participated in the study, however, the results have what is known as a statistical margin of error due to sampling. The margin of error refers to the difference between what was found, for example, in the survey of 400 voters regarding a parcel tax for a particular question and what would have been found if all of the approximately 18,078 likely November 2012 voters in the district had been surveyed for the study.

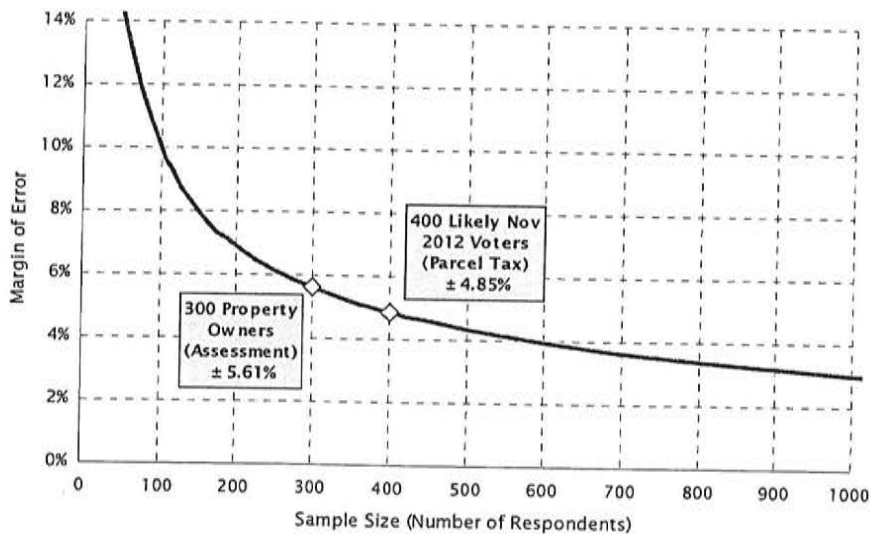
For example, in estimating the percentage of likely November 2012 voters who would definitely support the proposed parcel tax measure on the natural at a rate \$93 per year (Question 2), the margin of error can be calculated if one knows the size of the population, the size of the sample, a desired confidence level, and the distribution of responses to the question. The appropriate equation for estimating the margin of error, in this case, is shown below:

$$\hat{p} \pm t \sqrt{\left(\frac{N-n}{N}\right) \frac{\hat{p}(1-\hat{p})}{n-1}}$$

where  $\hat{p}$  is the proportion of voters who said that they would definitely support the measure (0.28 for 28% in this example),  $N$  is the population size of all likely November 2012 voters (18,078),  $n$  is the sample size that received the question (400), and  $t$  is the upper  $\alpha/2$  point for the t-distribution with  $n - 1$  degrees of freedom (1.96 for a 95% confidence interval). Solving the equation using these values reveals a margin of error of  $\pm 4.36\%$ . This means that with 28% of survey respondents indicating they would *definitely* support the measure at a \$93 tax rate, we can be 95% confident that the actual percentage of likely November 2012 voters that would definitely support the measure at this rate is between 24% and 32%.

Figure 12 provides a plot of the *maximum* margin of error in this study. The maximum margin of error for a dichotomous percentage result occurs when the answers are evenly split such that 50% provide one response and 50% provide the alternative response (i.e.,  $\hat{p} = 0.5$ ). For this survey, the maximum margin of error is  $\pm 4.85\%$  for questions answered by all 400 respondents from the parcel tax sample and  $\pm 5.61\%$  for questions answered by all 300 respondents from the benefit assessment sample.

**FIGURE 12 MAXIMUM MARGIN OF ERROR DUE TO SAMPLING**



Within this report, figures and tables show how responses to certain questions varied by subgroups such as age and gender. Figure 12 is thus useful for understanding how the maximum margin of error for a percentage estimate will grow as the number of individuals asked a question (or in a particular subgroup) shrinks. Because the margin of error grows exponentially as the sample size decreases, the reader should use caution when generalizing and interpreting the results for small subgroups.

**DATA COLLECTION** Interviews were conducted via telephone during weekday evenings (5:30PM to 9PM) and on weekends (10AM to 5PM) between August 16 and August 22, 2011. It is standard practice not to call during the day on weekdays because most working adults are unavailable and thus calling during those hours would bias the sample. Interviews averaged 15 minutes in length.

**DATA PROCESSING** Data processing consisted of checking the data for errors or inconsistencies, coding and recoding responses, and preparing frequency analyses and crosstabulations.

**ROUNDING** Numbers that end in 0.5 or higher are rounded up to the nearest whole number, whereas numbers that end in 0.4 or lower are rounded down to the nearest whole number. These same rounding rules are also applied, when needed, to arrive at numbers that include a decimal place in constructing figures and charts. Occasionally, these rounding rules lead to small discrepancies in the first decimal place when comparing tables and pie charts for a given question.



# QUESTIONNAIRE & TOPLINES



Five Cities Fire Authority  
Revenue Measure Feasibility Survey  
Final Toplines  
August 2011

## Section 1: Introduction to Study

Hi, may I please speak to \_\_\_\_\_. My name is \_\_\_\_\_, and I'm calling on behalf of TNR, an independent public opinion research firm. We're conducting a survey of voters about important issues in southern San Luis (Lew-iss) Obispo (O-biss-po) County and I'd like to get your opinions.

*If needed:* This is a survey about important issues in your community. I'm NOT trying to sell anything and I won't ask for a donation.

*If needed:* The survey should take about 12 minutes to complete.

*If needed:* If now is not a convenient time, can you let me know a better time so I can call back?

*If the person asks why you need to speak to the listed person or if they ask to participate instead, explain:* For statistical purposes, at this time the survey must only be completed by this particular individual.

*If the person asks who is sponsoring the survey, explain:* For statistical purposes, I can't reveal the sponsor of the survey at the beginning of this interview, but I will tell you at the end.

*If the person says they are an elected official or is somehow associated with the survey, politely explain that this survey is designed to measure the opinions of those not closely associated with the study, thank them for their time, and terminate the interview.*

## Section 2: Importance of Issues

Q1 To begin, I'm going to read a list of issues facing your community and for each one, please tell me how important you feel the issue is to you, using a scale of extremely important, very important, somewhat important or not at all important.

Here is the (first/next) issue: \_\_\_\_\_. Do you think this issue is extremely important, very important, somewhat important, or not at all important?

	Randomize	Extremely Important	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not at all Important	Not sure	Refused
A	Ensuring quick response times to 9-1-1 calls for fires and emergencies	50%	42%	7%	1%	0%	0%
B	Ensuring adequate local fire protection and prevention services	34%	52%	12%	2%	0%	0%
C	Maintaining the quality of education in our local public schools	47%	41%	9%	2%	1%	1%
D	Maintaining local streets and roads	22%	51%	26%	1%	0%	0%
E	Preventing local tax increases	21%	29%	36%	13%	1%	1%
F	Maintaining public safety	38%	49%	11%	1%	0%	0%

**Section 3: Initial Ballot Test**

Your household receives fire protection services from the Five Cities Fire Authority, which was formed last year by merging the Arroyo (Uh-ROY-O) Grande (Grawn-day), Grover Beach, and Oceano (O-SHE-awn-o) Fire Departments. Next year, voters in your area may be asked to vote on a local ballot measure. Let me read you a summary of the measure:

- In order to:
- ◊ Maintain high quality local fire protection and prevention services
  - ◊ Ensure quick response times to 9-1-1 medical emergencies
  - ◊ Upgrade and repair life-saving fire protection and emergency equipment
  - ◊ And maintain the number of professional firefighters and medical personnel needed to keep our community safe

Shall the Five Cities Fire Authority establish a parcel tax of up to \$93 per parcel, with citizen oversight and all money staying local?

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

1	Definitely yes	28%	Skip to Q4
2	Probably yes	30%	Skip to Q4
3	Probably no	11%	Ask Q3
4	Definitely no	18%	Ask Q3
98	Not sure	13%	Ask Q3
99	Refused	1%	Skip to Q4

Q3 Is there a particular reason why you do not support the fire protection measure I just described?

	Taxes already too high	23%
	Need more information	22%
	Poor budgeting, overspending	15%
	Cost of measure is too high	15%
	Not sure / No particular reason	12%
	No need for measure, everything is fine	11%
	District has sufficient funds	6%
	Should find other funding sources	3%
	Refused	1%

**Section 4: Tax Threshold**

**Q4** The measure I just described would raise money through annual property taxes paid by residential and commercial property owners. However, the amount to be charged to each parcel has not been determined yet.

If you heard that your household would pay \_\_\_\_\_ per year for each property that you own in the district, would you vote yes or no on the measure? *Get answer, then ask: Is that definitely (yes/no) or probably (yes/no)?*

*Read in sequence starting with the highest amount (A), then the next highest (B), and so on. If respondent says 'definitely yes', record 'definitely yes' for all LOWER dollar amounts and go to next section.*

	Ask in Order	Definitely yes	Probably yes	Probably no	Definitely no	Not sure	Refused
A	93 dollars	27%	28%	13%	22%	9%	1%
B	84 dollars	35%	22%	13%	23%	7%	1%
C	75 dollars	41%	18%	11%	23%	6%	1%
D	66 dollars	43%	19%	8%	22%	7%	1%

**Section 5: Programs & Projects**

**Q5** The measure we've been discussing would provide funding for a variety of fire protection and public safety services.

If the measure passes, would you favor or oppose using some of the money to: \_\_\_\_\_, or do you not have an opinion? *Get answer, if favor or oppose, then ask: Would that be strongly (favor/oppose) or somewhat (favor/oppose)?*

	Randomize	Strongly Favor	Somewhat Favor	Somewhat Oppose	Strongly Oppose	No Opinion	Refused
A	Maintain high quality local fire protection and prevention services	56%	27%	5%	4%	5%	2%
B	Ensure quick response times to 9-1-1 medical emergencies	68%	18%	2%	6%	5%	1%
C	Make needed repairs and upgrades to life-saving fire protection and emergency equipment	53%	29%	6%	4%	7%	2%
D	Maintain the number of professional firefighters and medical personnel needed to keep our community safe	59%	25%	4%	5%	6%	1%
E	Purchase up-to-date emergency rescue and life-saving equipment	49%	30%	5%	7%	7%	1%
F	Maintain local control of our fire protection and emergency response services	52%	26%	7%	6%	9%	1%
G	Improve the 9-1-1 dispatch system so that police and firefighters can respond quicker to emergencies	51%	28%	5%	6%	8%	2%

H	Better coordinate with outside agencies whose help we depend on when multiple or large-scale emergencies happen	51%	28%	6%	8%	6%	1%
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**Section 6: Positive Arguments**

What I'd like to do now is tell you what some people are saying about the measure we've been discussing.

Q6 Supporters of the measure say: ----- Do you think this is a very convincing, somewhat convincing, or not at all convincing reason to SUPPORT the measure?

Randomize		Very Convincing	Somewhat Convincing	Not At All Convincing	Don't Believe	Not sure	Refused
A	There will be a clear system of accountability, including a Citizen's Oversight Committee and annual independent audits to ensure that the money is spent properly.	42%	38%	19%	0%	1%	0%
B	All money raised by this measure will be spent locally to provide fire protection and emergency response services. The money cannot be taken away by the State or used for other purposes.	59%	26%	13%	0%	1%	0%
C	In a medical emergency, brain damage occurs in 4 to 6 minutes, and brain death occurs in 8 minutes without oxygen. This measure will ensure that we have the staff and resources needed to provide quick response times to emergencies.	48%	34%	16%	0%	1%	0%
D	This measure will ensure that firefighters and medical personnel have the facilities and equipment they need to do their jobs.	39%	42%	17%	0%	2%	0%
E	We have only 60% of the firefighters that experts agree are needed to serve our population. When more than one 9.1.1 call comes in at a time, we often have to depend on help from outside agencies because we don't have enough of our own firefighters. We are stretched too thin, and that puts all of our lives at risk.	44%	31%	22%	1%	2%	0%
F	Many of our fire engines have out-dated equipment, or are missing equipment needed to save lives in a medical emergency such as a heart attack. We need to pass this measure to protect our community.	40%	36%	22%	1%	2%	0%

G	By merging to form the Five Cities Fire Authority, our local fire departments have been able to cut administrative costs, eliminate redundancy, and save taxpayers money. They've done everything possible to keep the cost of this measure as low as possible.	43%	38%	17%	0%	2%	0%
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**Section 7: Interim Ballot Test**

Sometimes people change their mind about a measure once they have more information about it. Now that you have heard a bit more about the measure, let me read you a summary of it again.

Q7	In order to:	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◊ Maintain high quality local fire protection and prevention services</li> <li>◊ Ensure quick response times to 9-1-1 medical emergencies</li> <li>◊ Upgrade and repair life-saving fire protection and emergency equipment</li> <li>◊ And maintain the number of professional firefighters and medical personnel needed to keep our community safe</li> </ul>	
	Shall the Five Cities Fire Authority establish a parcel tax of up to \$93 per parcel, with citizen oversight and all money staying local?	
	If the election were held today, would you vote yes or no on this measure? <i>Get answer, then ask: Would that be definitely (yes/no) or probably (yes/no)?</i>	
	1 Definitely yes	36%
	2 Probably yes	24%
	3 Probably no	10%
	4 Definitely no	20%
	98 Not sure	11%
	99 Refused	0%

**Section 8: Negative Arguments**

Next, let me tell you what opponents of the measure are saying.

Q8		Opponents of the measure say: _____. Do you think this is a very convincing, somewhat convincing, or not at all convincing reason to OPPOSE the measure?					
Randomize		Very Convincing	Somewhat Convincing	Not At All Convincing	Don't Believe	Not sure	Refused
A	People are having a hard time making ends meet with the housing crisis, high unemployment, and the economy in recession. Now is NOT the time to be raising taxes.	42%	32%	23%	0%	2%	0%
B	The Fire Authority can't be trusted with this tax. They will mismanage the money.	11%	20%	64%	1%	3%	0%
C	Firefighters are paid too much in salary and pensions. If they took a modest pay cut, there would be no need for this tax.	16%	25%	53%	2%	4%	0%
D	This tax is unfair to seniors and others on fixed incomes.	28%	35%	35%	0%	2%	0%

**Section 9: Final Ballot Tests**

Now that you have heard a bit more about the measure, let me read you a summary of it one more time:

Q9		In order to:	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◊ Maintain high quality local fire protection and prevention services</li> <li>◊ Ensure quick response times to 9-1-1 medical emergencies</li> <li>◊ Upgrade and repair life-saving fire protection and emergency equipment</li> <li>◊ And maintain the number of professional firefighters and medical personnel needed to keep our community safe</li> </ul>	
		Shall the Five Cities Fire Authority establish a parcel tax of up to \$93 per parcel, with citizen oversight and all money staying local?	
		If the election were held today, would you vote yes or no on this measure? <i>Get answer, then ask: Would that be definitely (yes/no) or probably (yes/no)?</i>	
1	Definitely yes	35%	Skip to D1
2	Probably yes	23%	Skip to D1
3	Probably no	11%	Ask Q10
4	Definitely no	22%	Ask Q10
98	Not sure	9%	Ask Q10
99	Refused	0%	Ask Q10

Q10	How about if instead of \$93 per household, the tax were \$66 per household. Would you vote yes or no on this measure? <i>Get answer, then ask: Would that be definitely (yes/no) or probably (yes/no)?</i>	
	Supported at \$93 (Q9 above)	58%
1	Definitely yes	2%
2	Probably yes	6%
3	Probably no	6%
4	Definitely no	22%
98	Not sure	5%
99	Refused	0%

**Section 10: Background & Demographics**

Thank you so much for your participation. I have just a few background questions for statistical purposes.

D1	How long have you lived in southern San Luis (Lew-iss) Obispo (O-biss-po) County?	
1	Less than 1 year	0%
2	1 year to less than 5 years	14%
3	5 years to less than 10 years	20%
4	10 years to less than 15	14%
5	15 years or more	50%
99	Refused	1%
D2	Which of the following best describes your current home?	
1	Single family detached home	77%
2	Apartment	5%
3	Condominium	4%
4	Townhome	5%
5	Mobile home	6%
99	Refused	3%
D3	Do you have children in your household?	
1	Yes	31%
2	No	68%
99	Refused	1%

Those are all of the questions that I have for you. Thanks so much for participating in this important survey. This survey was conducted for the Five Cities Fire Authority.

Post-Interview & Sample Items		
S1	Gender	
	1 Male	48%
	2 Female	52%
S2	Party	
	1 Democrat	35%
	2 Republican	43%
	3 Other	4%
	4 DTS	18%
S3	Age on Voter File	
	1 18 to 29	12%
	2 30 to 39	12%
	3 40 to 49	17%
	4 50 to 64	33%
	5 65 or older	26%
	99 Not Coded	0%
S4	Registration Date	
	1 2011 to 2008	41%
	2 2007 to 2002	28%
	3 2001 to 1997	9%
	4 1996 to 1990	10%
	5 Before 1990	12%
S5	Household Party Type	
	1 Single Dem	18%
	2 Dual Dem	11%
	3 Single Rep	19%
	4 Dual Rep	17%
	5 Single Other	11%
	6 Dual Other	4%
	7 Dem & Rep	6%
	8 Dem & Other	6%



	9	Rep & Other	5%
	0	Mixed (Dem + Rep + Other)	1%
S6	Homeowner on Voter File		
	1	Yes	62%
	2	No	38%
S7	Likely to Vote by Mail		
	1	Yes	45%
	2	No	55%
S8	Likely November 2012 Voter		
	1	Yes	43%
	2	No	57%
S9	Likely November 2011 Voter		
	1	Yes	68%
	2	No	32%
S10	Likely November 2012 Voter		
	1	Yes	100%
	2	No	0%