

*Public Opinion Research
& Strategy*



TO: Maggie Linden
Ogilvy Public Relations

FR: David Metz
Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates

Lori Weigel
Public Opinion Strategies

RE: Key Findings From Recent Research on High Speed Rail in California

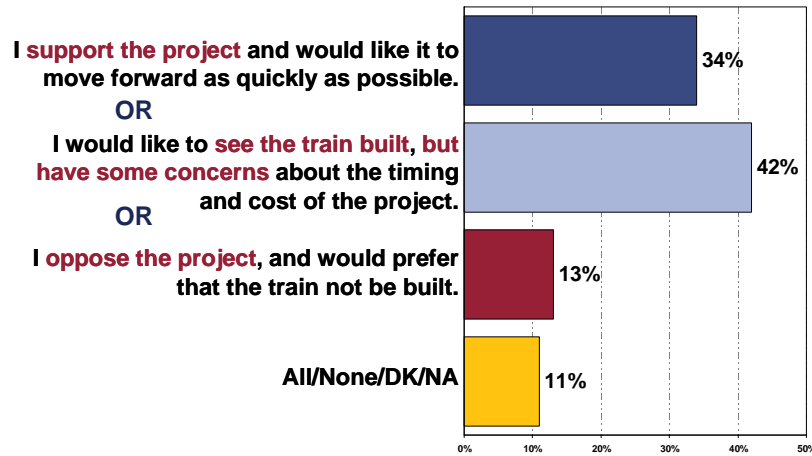
DATE: July 11, 2010

Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates (FM3) and Public Opinion Strategies (POS) recently carried out a statewide telephone survey of Californians to assess their attitudes toward the state's high speed rail project.¹ The results show that more than seven in ten voters would like to see the project built. And although some have concerns about the cost and timing of the project, voters see the project's benefits – particularly for jobs, air quality, and providing a cheaper and more convenient method of travel – as highly important. As a result, voters do not see uncertainties around the project as offering compelling reasons to delay it; and as they get more information about the project, their support tends to intensify.

Key specific findings of the survey include the following:

- **A majority of Californians support the project.** Survey respondents were offered a choice of three statements about the project, as shown in **Figure 1** on the following page. More than three-quarters of those polled (76%) said that they would like to see the train built. This number includes more than one-third (34%) who would like to see it move forward “as quickly as possible,” and an additional 42 percent who said they would like to see the train built despite some concerns over cost and timing. Fewer than one voter in five (13%) indicated opposition to the project.

**FIGURE 1:
Initial Attitudes Regarding the High-Speed Rail Project**



- Most voters have heard something about the project, and the most informed also tend to be the most supportive.** More than seven in ten voters say they have heard something about the project, including 26 percent who have heard “a great deal” and 46 percent who have heard a lesser amount. Those who have heard something about the project tend to be more supportive: fully 47 percent of those who have heard “a great deal” about the project want it to move forward as quickly as possible, compared to 24 percent of those who have not heard anything about it.
- Voters believe that the project will have a wide range of benefits for California.** As detailed in **Figure 2**, survey respondents were asked to rate a variety of benefits of the project as “extremely,” “very,” “somewhat” or “not too important.” As the table makes clear, majorities of those polled saw each benefit of the project as at least “very important.” More than three-quarters offered this evaluation to the project’s benefits for jobs, state revenues, traffic, and air pollution.

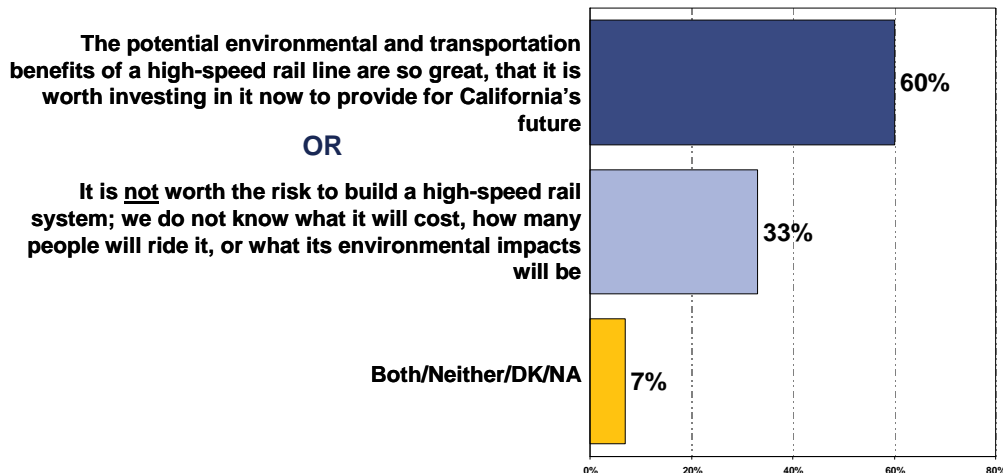
**FIGURE 2:
Evaluation of the Importance of Benefits of the Project
(Split Sampled)**

Project Benefit	% Extremely or Very Important
Creating new jobs	83%
Generating up to three billion dollars in new annual revenue	79%
Reducing traffic congestion	77%
Reducing air pollution and smog	77%
Meeting the transportation needs of California’s growing population	75%

Project Benefit	% Extremely or Very Important
Making travel cheaper	75%
Reducing our use of foreign oil	74%
Making travel safer and more secure	74%
Allowing for faster trips between major cities in California	71%
Making California a national leader in new transportation technology	58%
Reducing global warming	56%

- A clear majority of frequent intrastate travelers indicate that they would like to use the train once it is built.** A total of 77 percent of those polled say they travel long-distance between regions of California at least annually. When informed that a single person’s high-speed rail trip between San Francisco and Los Angeles would cost less than an airplane ticket and much less than the cost of driving – and would be more environmentally friendly – more than seven out of ten said they would prefer to take the high-speed rail line.
- Voters do not see current uncertainties as a reason to delay the project.** When offered two statements about the project, as detailed in **Figure 3**, nearly twice as many voters indicate that the benefits of the train make it worth moving forward with the investment now, as opposed to delaying based on uncertainties about costs, ridership, or environmental impacts.

**FIGURE 3:
Choice of Statements About the Project
(Split Sampled)**



- **As voters get additional information, their support for the project tends to increase.** Over the course of the survey, respondents were provided with detailed information about the project, as well as messages articulating its benefits. After this information, overall support for the project increased, as shown in **Figure 4**. The proportion of voters indicating that they would like the project to move forward “as quickly as possible” rose from 34 percent to 45 percent.

**FIGURE 4:
Change in Support for the Project After Additional Information**

	Before Description	After Information	+/- % Change
I support the project and would like it to move forward as quickly as possible.	34%	45%	+11%
OR			
I would like to see the train built, but have some concerns about the timing and cost of the project.	42%	37%	-5%
OR			
I oppose the project , and would prefer that the train not be built.	13%	15%	+2%
All/None/DK/NA	11%	3%	-8%

Taken together, the survey results show that despite some concerns about its cost and timing, most voters support building the high-speed rail project. Voters value the project’s benefits for job creation, air quality, and providing a cheaper and more convenient way to travel the state, and believe the project is worth continued investment.

ⁱ **Methodology:** From May 11 to 18, 2010, FM3 and POS completed 806 telephone interviews with registered voters in California. An additional 400 interviews were conducted with voters in San Francisco, San Jose, Menlo Park/Atherton/Palo Alto, Los Angeles, Bakersfield, Fresno, and Anaheim. All results have been statistically weighted to reflect the true geographic distribution of voters across the state. Results for the full sample have a margin of sampling error of +/- 3.5%; margins of sampling error for subgroups within the sample will be higher.