

INVESTING IN OUR FUTURE: A Report on the Transportation Priorities of Silicon Valley's Diverse Communities

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Silicon Valley Independent Living Center
a disability justice organization that creates fully inclusive communities



Executive Summary

Introduction

The potential 2016 transportation tax could raise as much as \$6 - \$7 billion in the next 30 years for transportation investments and presents an opportunity to build a more robust, affordable, environmentally-friendly, and seamlessly integrated transportation system. This new system would not only meet the diverse transit needs of Silicon Valley's current residents regardless of income, but also of the 2.4 million total South Bay residents expected by 2040.ⁱ

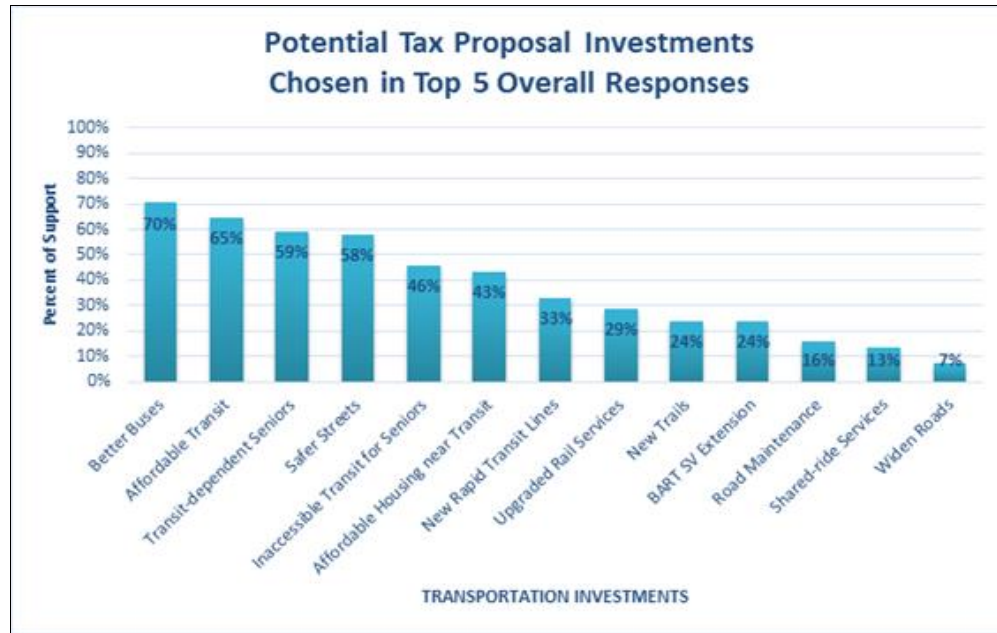
The Transportation Justice Alliance (TJA), a diverse alliance of 18 organizations representing environmentalists, working families, transit, land use and housing advocates, legal experts, and communities of color, convened to advocate for equity and the transit access needs of low-income people, seniors, students, persons with different abilities, and working families. From August through September 2015, the TJA and the Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) co-presented four community meetings and workshops in South County, North County, Downtown San Jose, and East San Jose. The meetings provided information on the potential 2016 transit tax from VTA while soliciting meaningful input about residents' transit needs and challenges through intensive breakout sessions.

This brief summarizes the findings from the four community meetings and workshops with more than 400 community residents in attendance. Community meeting participants were asked to rank their top 5 preferred transportation investments from a list of funding categories informed by VTA staff.

Key Survey Findings

- ***Support for Better Bus Service:*** 70% of respondents ranked Better Bus Services among their top 5 preferred transportation investments, defined as increasing the frequency, operating hours, speed, comfort, and reliability of VTA's most popular or high-need serving bus routes.
- ***Support for Affordable Transit:*** 65% of respondents ranked Affordable Transit among their top 5 preferred transportation investments, defined as reducing the cost of fares for very low-income people, youth and seniors with fixed incomes.
- ***Support for Transit-dependent Seniors and Persons with Different Abilities:*** 59% of respondents ranked Transit-dependent Seniors and Persons with Different Abilities among their top 5 preferred transportation investments, defined as improving the speed, affordability, and reliability of transit service for seniors and persons with different abilities who rely on transit.
- ***Support for Safer Streets:*** 58% of respondents ranked Safer Streets among their top 5 preferred transportation investments, defined as improving safety for people who walk and bike, particularly around schools, senior facilities, and in areas with high injury and fatality rates.

- **Support for Addressing Inaccessible transit for Seniors and Persons with Different Abilities:** 46% of respondents ranked Inaccessible transit for Seniors and Persons with Different Abilities among their top 5 transportation investments, defined as increasing access to public transit and other alternatives for seniors, persons with different abilities, and populations for which transit is inaccessible or unavailable.



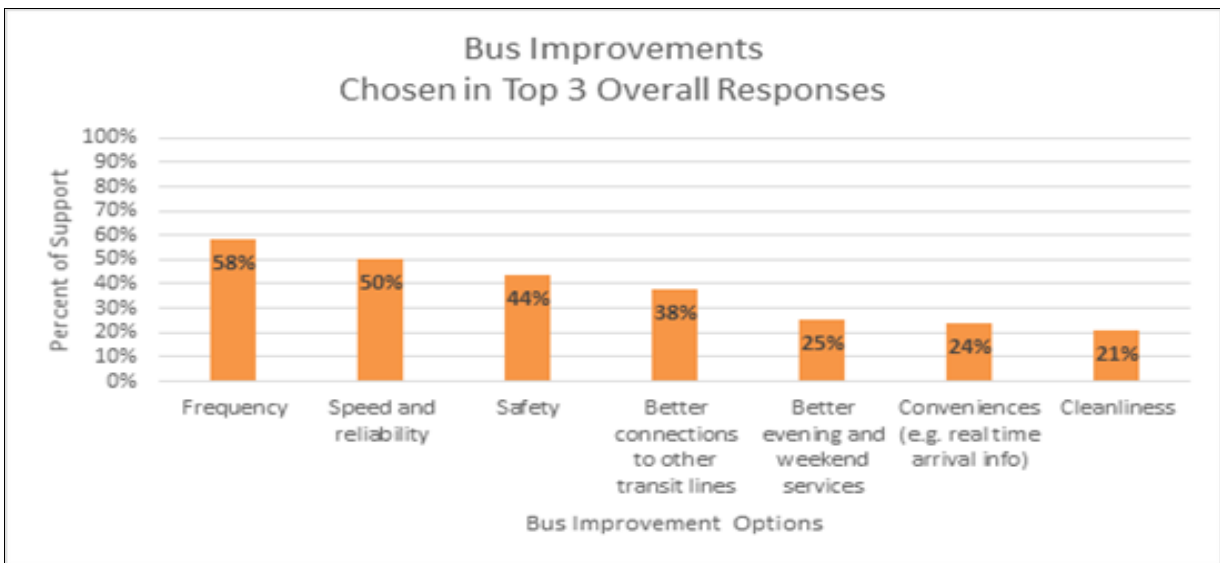
Priorities also varied based on where respondents lived:

- **Support for Affordable Housing near Transit:** 64% of North County respondents ranked Affordable Housing near Transit among their top 5 preferred transportation investments, defined as support for encouraging affordable housing near major transit lines to provide more low-income people with access to affordable transit options.
- **Support for Upgraded Rail Services:** 50% of South County respondents ranked Upgraded Rail Services among their top 5 preferred investments, defined as upgrading the rail system, such as electrifying Caltrain and increasing service from San Joaquin and Alameda Counties.
- **Support for Transit-dependent Seniors and Persons with Different Abilities:** 72% of East San Jose respondents ranked the transit needs of Transit-dependent Seniors and Persons with Different Abilities as their most important investment.



Meeting participants were asked to rank their top 3 bus improvement preferences:

- **Support for Bus Frequency:** 58% of respondents ranked Frequency among their top 3 most preferred bus improvements. However, North County respondents (79%) overwhelmingly ranked Frequency among their preferred bus improvements compared to the other locations.
- **Support for Bus Speed and Reliability:** 50% of respondents ranked Speed and Reliability among their top 3 most preferred bus improvements.
- **Support for Bus Safety:** 44% of respondents ranked Safety among their top 3 most preferred bus improvements.



Conclusion

Access to a quality transportation system affects us all -- from our well-being to our pocketbooks, and even to the health of our entire region. Historically, there has been an underinvestment and divestment in transportation infrastructure and services for low-income communities of color, and seniors in Silicon Valley. The Transportation Justice Alliance (TJA) is committed to working alongside residents, transit agencies, government, private sector, and all stakeholders to ensure community-informed transportation investments. To this end, the TJA will champion investments in better bus service, affordable transit, safer streets, and transit programs and alternative services that meet the needs of seniors and persons with different abilities.

ⁱ Plan Bay Area, Adopted July 18, 2013, ABAG