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FM3
Public Opinion Research & Strategy

TO: The San Diego Foundation

FR: David Metz & Curtis Below
Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz and Associates

RE: Key Findings from Recent Countywide Survey on Climate Change

DATE: September 14, 2010

Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates (FM3) recently completed a survey of San Diego County voters assessing attitudes toward climate change.[i] Specifically, the research was designed to determine the views, values and perspectives of County residents toward the *local* impacts of climate change and the public's appetite for the policies needed to address it. Additionally, it will serve as a tool for policy makers and planners to better understand community opinions and enable all stakeholders to work together as local climate change policies are developed and implemented.[ii]

The survey results themselves show that San Diego County voters are concerned about global warming and want the San Diego region to take a leadership role in addressing the issue. Moreover, the results show that this high level of support cuts across many demographic groups. Not surprisingly, when asked conceptually about two of California's landmark greenhouse gas emission reduction laws – AB 32 and SB 375[iii] – San Diego voters demonstrated strong support for each, as well as for specific steps that might be taken to implement each. More broadly, by a large margin voters share the opinion that we do not need to choose between a strong economy and a healthy environment, a point underscored by the fact that three times as many voters believe that addressing global warming will create more jobs (47%) than will cause there to be fewer jobs (14%).

Among the key specific findings of the survey are the following:

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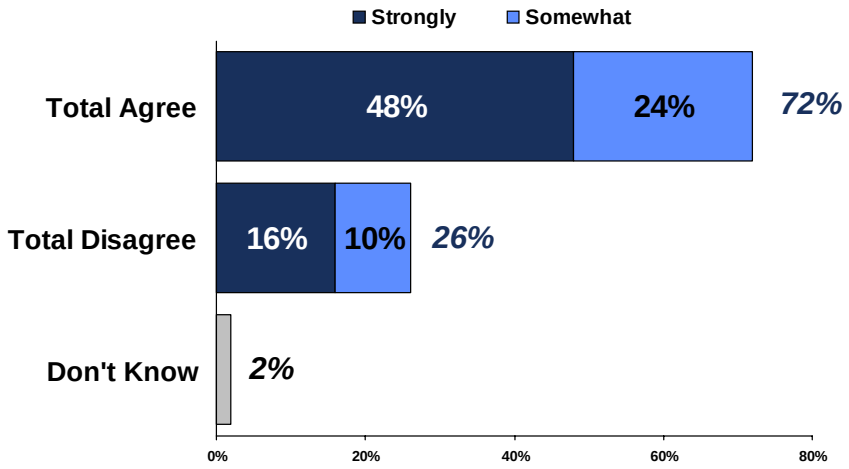
- **Voters overwhelmingly believe the San Diego region should take a leadership position in setting goals for reducing greenhouse gas emissions.** In total, 72 percent of voters surveyed agreed with the statement, "San Diego County should take a statewide leadership position in setting goals for reducing greenhouse gas emissions," including nearly half of all voters (48%) who agreed "strongly" (**Figure 1**).

FIGURE 1
Support for San Diego County Taking a Leadership Role in Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Would you agree or disagree with the following statement: San Diego County should take a statewide leadership position in setting goals for reducing greenhouse gas emissions.



The results further suggest that support for San Diego region taking a leadership role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions is shared by San Diegans of many different walks of life, notably including majorities of Republicans and moderates, but also including majorities of Democrats, independents, and liberals, and voters of every level of education, ethnic background, age group and income level.

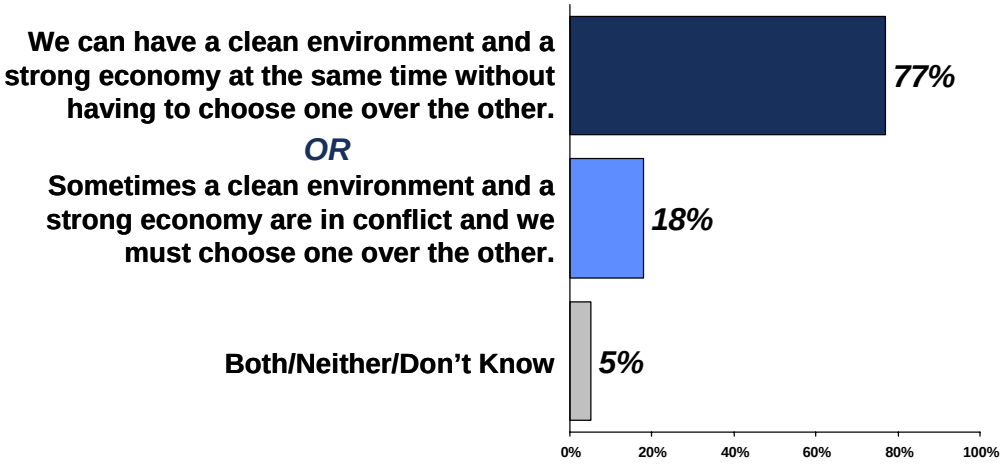
- **San Diego voters are most concerned that global warming could reduce local water supplies and increase the risk of severe wildfires.** As shown in **Figure 2** on the following page, majorities of voters were concerned about most potential impacts of global warming, but were particularly concerned about the "reduction of our water supply" (80% concerned) and the "increased risk of severe fires" (78% concerned). Additionally, though three in five (61%) were concerned about "heat waves," relative to the other impacts it was seen as the least worrisome potential outcome of global warming.

FIGURE 2
Concerns about Different Potential Global Warming Impacts

Potential Impact	Total Concerned
Reduction of our water supply	80%
Increased risk of severe fires	78%
Loss of coastal lands and beaches as sea levels rise and erosion increases	71%
Threats to human health, including more cases of asthma and other respiratory diseases	71%
Higher costs to the public to deal with the impacts of global warming	70%
Loss of native plants and animals	69%
Decreased energy supply to meet energy needs	69%
Loss of jobs	68%
Heat waves	61%

- **Despite the weak economy, San Diego County voters don't believe we have to choose between strengthening the economy and having a clean and healthy environment.** Given the choice between competing arguments – that we can have a clean environment and strong economy without having to choose one over the other, *or* that a clean environment and strong economy are sometimes "in conflict" and we must choose one over the other – San Diego voters, by a wide margin (77 to 18 percent), believe we can attain both goals simultaneously (**Figure 3**).

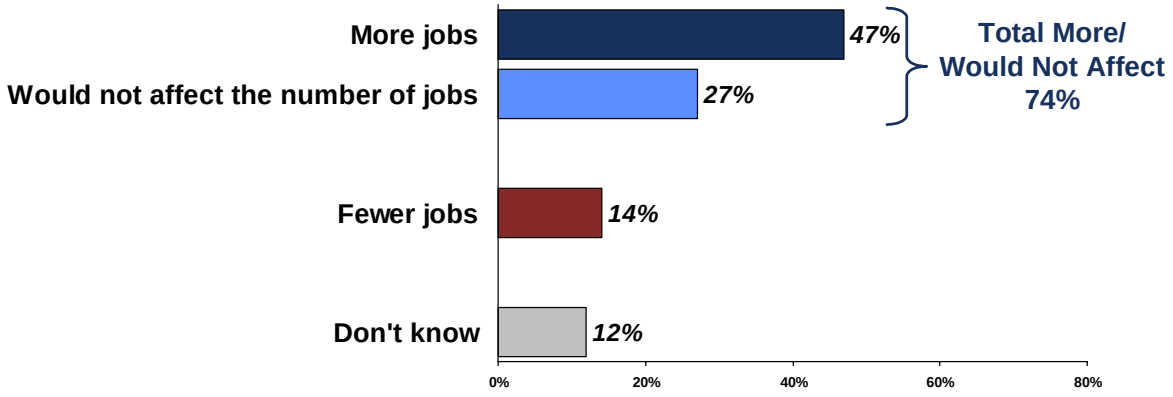
FIGURE 3
Attitudes toward the Environment and Economy



- **Many San Diego County voters believe addressing global warming would create more jobs for people in the County; few believe taking such actions would result in job losses.** Only 14 percent of voters were of the opinion that San Diego County taking

action to reduce global warming – including expanding renewable energy and technology, and requiring pollution reductions – would result in fewer jobs (**Figure 4**). In comparison, three quarters of respondents (74%) thought that such policies would result in more jobs (47%), or would not affect the number of jobs (27%).

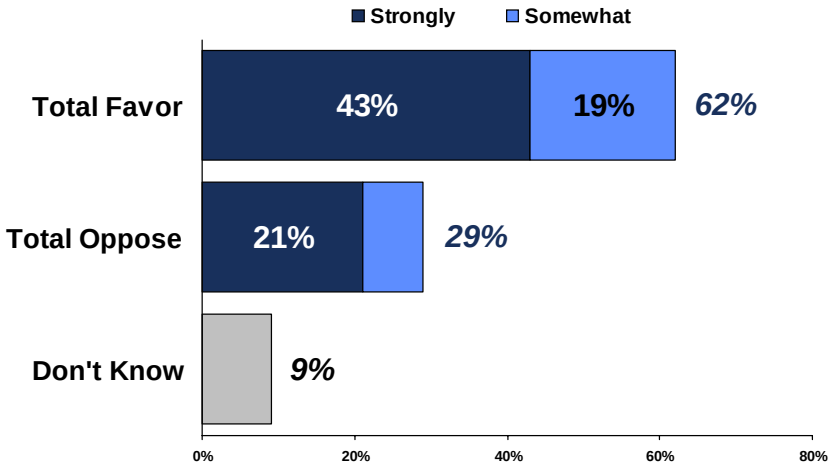
FIGURE 4
Perceived Impact on Jobs from San Diego County Addressing Global Warming



- **By a two to one margin voters in San Diego County agree with the principles of AB 32.** Voters in San Diego County were read a description of California's Global Warming Solutions Act (AB 32), and asked whether they favored or opposed the law. As shown in **Figure 5**, 62 percent of voters favored AB 32 while 29 percent opposed it (only 9% were unsure). Furthermore, 43 percent indicated they "strongly" favored AB 32, representing more than two in five San Diego County voters.

FIGURE 5
Voters' Reactions to the Primary Goal of AB 32

To address global warming, do you favor or oppose the state law that requires California to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions back to 1990 levels by the year 2020?

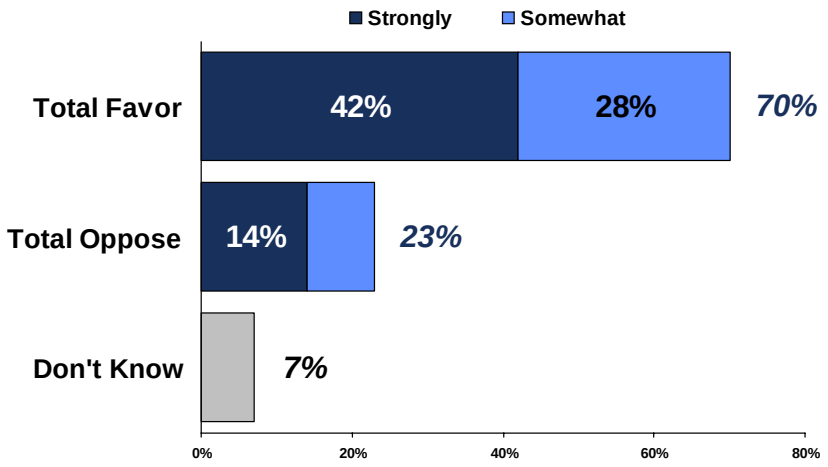


These results were similar to a recent statewide survey conducted by the Public Policy Institute of California, in which 67 percent of California voters indicated they favored AB 32 and only 21 percent opposed the law.

- **Similarly, seven in ten voters hold a favorable view of SB 375 and support its implementation by SANDAG.** Relative to support for AB 32, an even greater proportion of voters in San Diego County think highly of the County's implementation of SB 375. As shown in **Figure 6**, 70 percent of voters indicated they support SANDAG's implementation of SB 375, while only 23 percent were opposed to it.

FIGURE 6
Voters' Reactions to the Primary Goal of SB 375

The San Diego Association of Governments – or SANDAG – is developing a regional plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution; promote shorter commutes; and conserve open space and natural areas in San Diego County through a variety of methods, including focusing the building of new homes in areas near jobs and schools, reducing commutes and traffic, and providing more transportation choices. Based on this description, would you favor or oppose SANDAG developing such a plan?



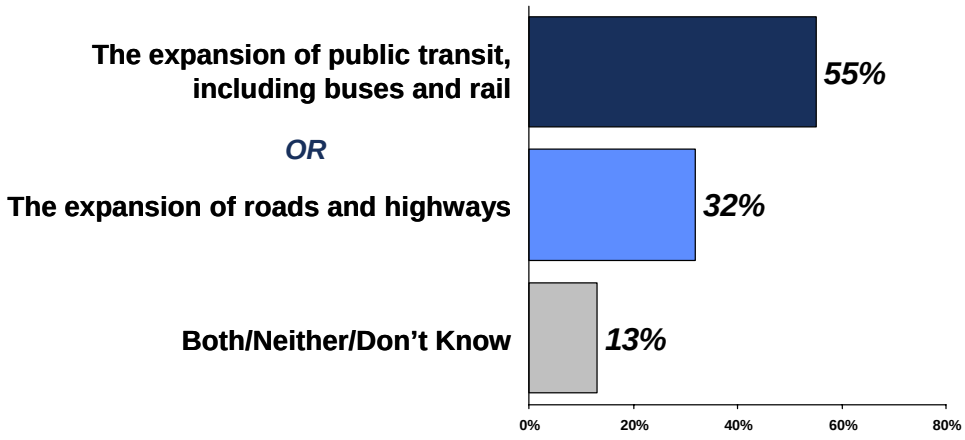
- **San Diego County voters strongly support the key policies that would be implemented under these two laws.** Survey respondents were given a list of some of the key steps that might be taken to implement AB 32 and were asked to indicate – on a scale from one to seven – whether they would support or oppose each provision; a rating of "seven" signified strong support, a rating of "one" strong opposition, and a "four" represented neutrality. As shown in **Figure 7** on the following page, each provision was supported (as indicated by a rating of five, six or seven) by at least seven in ten voters. In fact, over 50 percent of voters expressed strong support (as indicated by a rating of seven) for "expanding the use of clean energy" (53%) and "making large polluters pay fees based on the amount they pollute" (52%).

FIGURE 7
Support for Potential Provisions to be Implemented Under AB 32

Provision	Proportion Rating Each Item 5-7 *(Indicating Support)*
Expanding the use of clean energy	78%
Making large polluters pay fees based on the amount they pollute	77%
Expanding the use of clean technology	77%
Requiring industrial plants, oil refineries, and commercial facilities to reduce their emissions	77%
Requiring utilities to generate one-third of their energy from renewable sources, such as solar and wind power	75%
Requiring automakers to further reduce the emissions of greenhouse gas pollution by increasing mileage of new cars	74%
Requiring diesel trucks to reduce their emissions	71%
Requiring an increase in energy efficiency for residential and commercial buildings and appliances	71%

Regarding SB 375, survey respondents were asked to indicate which should be the highest priority for future investments to improve transportation in San Diego County, "the expansion of roads and highways" or "the expansion of public transit, including buses and rail." As shown in **Figure 8**, a solid majority of voters prioritize expanding public transit – a likely component of any SB 375 regional plan – over expanding roads and highways.

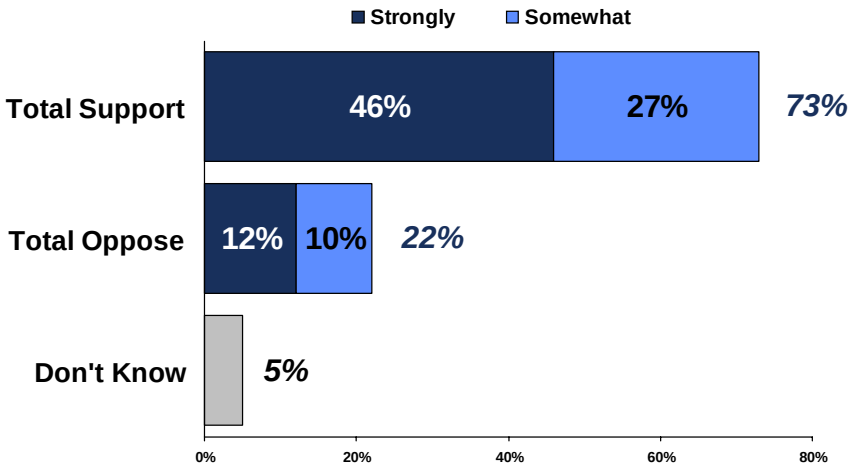
FIGURE 8
Voters' Preferences between Expanding Public Transit or Roads and Highways



Additionally, survey respondents were asked about another key component of implementing SB 375 – locating homes and jobs closer together and near transit (i.e. more compact and transit-friendly development). Nearly three-quarters of voters (73%) indicated they would support such development, with nearly one-half (46%) expressing strong support (**Figure 9**).

FIGURE 9
Voters Support for More Compact and Transit-Friendly Development

Would you support or oppose locating more homes and jobs closer together and near transit in your community, providing people with more choices to shorten commute times and reduce pollution?



Furthermore, the survey results suggest that in addition to addressing climate change, San Diego County voters see many other important benefits of implementing SB 375. For example, at least two-thirds of voters indicated that protecting clean water, forests, wildlife habitat and San Diego's coastline; stimulating the economy through public transit investments; reducing water consumption; and reducing wildfire risks were all convincing reasons for the County to draft its SB 375 regional plan.

Taken together, the survey results show that San Diego County voters recognize global warming is a significant issue and strongly desire the San Diego region to address the problem head-on for the benefit of their environment, their economy, and their quality of life. Furthermore, voters believe that we can have a clean environment and strong economy without having to choose one over the other. In fact, nearly one-half (47%) believe that addressing global warming will create *more* jobs for people living in San Diego County. Overall, the opinions reflected in this survey suggest voters broadly support the policy goals of AB 32 and SB 375 and want San Diego County to be a leader in setting standards for reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and more compact, transit-friendly development.

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[i] **Methodology:** From August 10-18, 2010, FM3 completed 1,205 telephone interviews with registered voters in San Diego County. The margin of error for the full sample is +/- 3.1%; margins of error for subgroups within the sample are higher. Due to rounding, not all percentages sum to 100%.

[ii] This research was funded by The San Diego Foundation's Climate Initiative.

[iii] AB 32, also known as the California Global Warming Solutions Act, was passed by the California State Legislature in 2006 and requires California to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions back to 1990 levels by the year 2020. SB 375 was passed by the California State Legislature in 2008 and requires each metropolitan region to adopt a "sustainable community strategy" in its regional transportation plans to encourage compact development that aligns with regional greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets set by the California Air Resources Board.