

Memorandum

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To: Virginia League of Conservation Voters Education Fund
Piedmont Environmental Council

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The Conservation Majority *Findings from a Statewide Survey of Likely 2007 Virginia Voters¹*

The conservation age has matured, and by overwhelming majorities in nearly every instance, likely 2007 Virginia voters report they are both concerned about conserving Virginia's natural resources, and most importantly, are also willing to pay a nominal fee to do so.

Overall, this survey provides little doubt that conservation and the environment- from land use to public transportation to global warming and conserving the Chesapeake Bay - is front-and-center in this electorate's mind, and political leaders would be remiss not to highlight their pro-conservation credentials. Indeed, nearly across-the-board, this survey finds broad and deep support for proposals that encourage more conservation, that invest in alternative and renewable energies, and that give communities the tools they need to address growth and sprawl. Most interesting, as well, is that the conservation coalition that emerges is as diverse as the electorate itself - comprised of Republican-leaning audiences, such as conservatives who attend church at least weekly to more liberal secular voters and moderates, too, all of whom are highly supportive of a conservation agenda and conservation candidates.

Traffic and land use remains a top of mind concern, but even more remarkable than that finding is that a plurality of voters today prefer investments in mass transit to widening

¹ These findings are based on the results of a bipartisan statewide poll of 600 likely 2007 Virginia voters conducted by Myers Research | Strategic Services (Democrat) and American Viewpoint (Republican) for the Virginia League of Conservation Voters Education Fund. Dialing took place between June 7 - 12, 2007 and was conducted by professional interviewers and overseen by Myers Research | Strategic Services staff. The data were stratified geographically by the projected contribution to the total expected vote. Partisan self-identification for this sample is 31 percent Democrat, 35 percent Republican and 33 percent independent. The margin of error for this survey at a 95 percent confidence level is +/- 4.0 percent. The margin of error for subgroups is greater.

roads and building highways. And, most important, by a very wide margin voters prefer giving communities more tools to manage growth and development in their area. Clearly, this data leave little doubt that this electorate strongly connects land use and development with traffic and congestion, and fully 65 percent saying that land use issues will be either the most important or a very important factor in their voting decision this November.

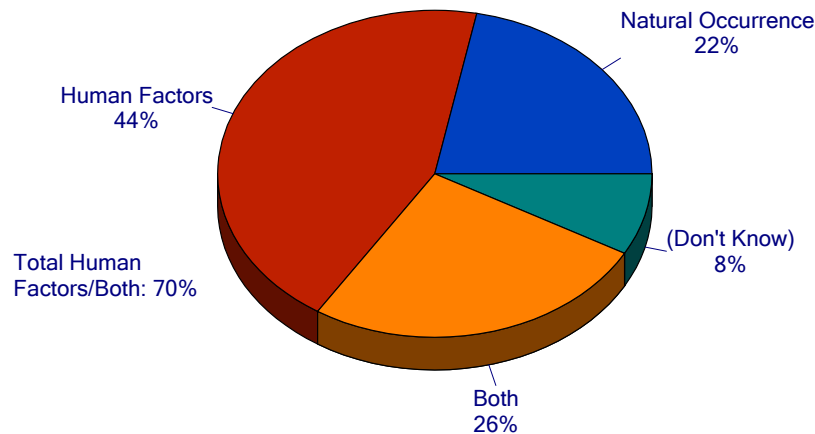
The bottom line from this survey is a simple and clear challenge for candidates - voters want action to preserve and enhance Virginia's environment and natural resources, and politicians who stand in the way of voters' desire could, and most likely will, pay a price at the ballot box this November. What follows is a more detailed analysis of the survey's central findings.

Global Warming: The Debate Isn't Whether It's Happening, It's How Will Virginia Address It

In the past several years, there has been a remarkable transformation throughout the nation on the debate over global warming, and Virginia is no exception to that trend; rather, it may indeed be a leader.

Today seven in ten voters say global warming is caused either by human factors or a combination of human and natural factors. Moreover, twice as many voters believe global warming is caused by human factors and believe it is caused by natural factors.

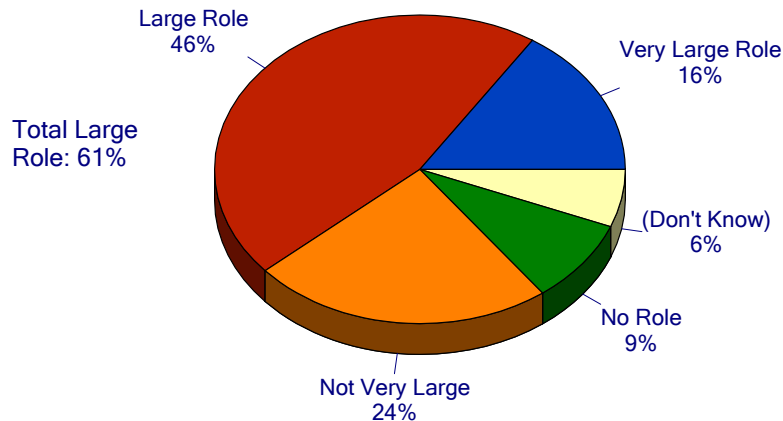
Thinking about the issue of global warming, do you believe global warming is caused more by human factors or is it more of a natural occurrence?



Most compelling for candidates for state office, however, is that today, a very strong majority, 61 percent, believe Virginia should play a very large or large role in addressing

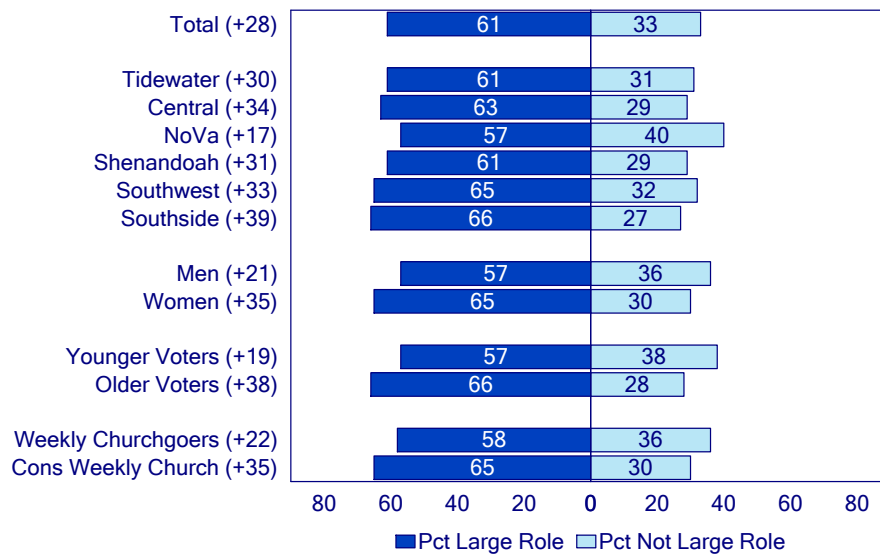
the problem, while just one-third say state government should not have a role in addressing the problem.

How large of a role do you think state government should have in trying to solve the issue of global warming -- should they have a very large role, a large role, a not very large role or no role at all?



Support for a larger role for state government in addressing global warming is deep and wide throughout this electorate, and there is not a single region in Virginia where a majority of voters do not believe government should have a larger role in solving this problem. By gender, some distinctions do emerge, with women more supportive than men, yet majorities of both call for a larger role for state government. More interesting than gender, however, is the age divide that emerges, with older voters, that is voters over the age of 50, and seniors in particular, reporting they are more supportive of a larger role for state government action than their younger counterparts. And, even majorities of some of the most conservative audiences, that is conservative voters who attend church more than once a week, all call for a larger role in addressing the problem.

State Role in Global Warming



Importantly, to a slightly larger extent than state government’s role in addressing global warming, nearly eight-in-ten (78 percent) voters agree that “businesses in Virginia have a responsibility to reduce global warming pollution and other wastes.”

Specific Proposals to Address Global Warming

As a result of this call for action by state government, this survey also found tremendous salience in support for a variety of proposals to encourage more energy conservation and begin to encourage the use of more alternative energies.

GLOBAL WARMING PROPOSALS		
	Pct Total Agree - Pct Total Disagree	Net Agree- Disagree
State government should invest in making Virginia's universities the nations leader in the research and development of clean energy alternatives, like renewable fuels such as wind, solar bio-diesel and hydrogen, so we can lessen our dependence on foreign oil and create more good paying jobs (<i>Split B</i>)	86 - 9	+77
State government should do more to encourage clean and alternative energy research and development in Virginia (<i>Split A</i>)	85 - 13	+72
State government buildings should be constructed to meet high energy efficiency standards, or 'green building standards', in order to conserve ongoing energy use and costs	84 - 10	+74
State government should set a goal that by the year 2020, at least twenty percent of all energy used in Virginia comes from clean energy sources, like wind, solar and bio-fuels (<i>Split B</i>)	82 - 9	+73
State government should require utility companies to invest in energy conservation and efficiency programs to benefit consumers	81 - 13	+68
State government should require that by the year 2020, at least twenty percent of all energy used in Virginia comes from clean energy sources, like wind, solar and bio-fuels (<i>Split A</i>)	77 - 15	+62

On the state front, two proposals in particular met with broad and deep approval. First is a proposal to construct all state government buildings to meet green standards to conserve the use of energy. Fully 84 percent of voters agree with that proposal, 44 percent strongly so. The trend among subgroups is equally impressive and this proposal meets with majority level support or better among every single subgroup.

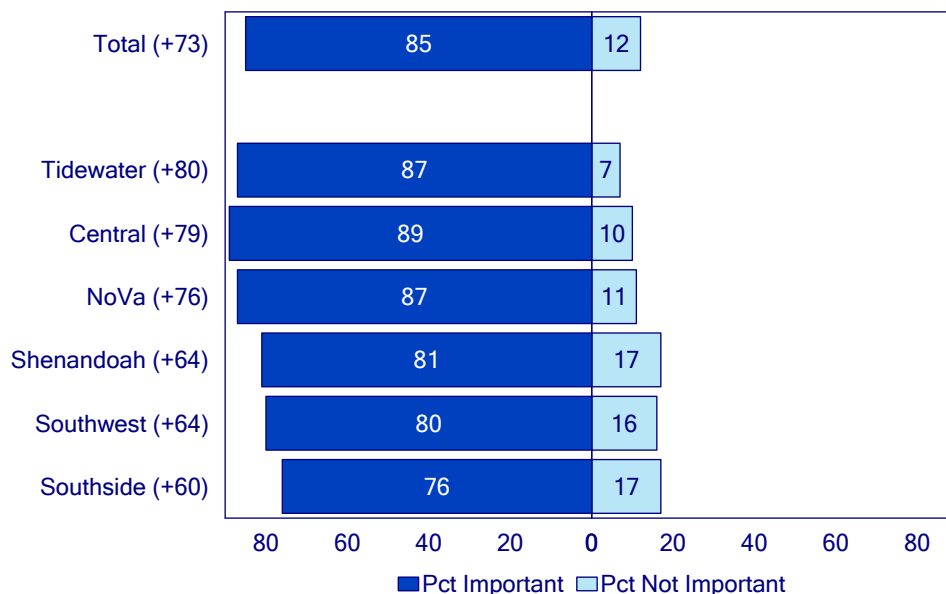
More indicative of the salience of addressing global warming among this electorate, however, was a split sample exercise where half the sample heard the statement that state government should 'require' that by the year 2020, at least 20 percent of all the energy used in Virginia should come from clean and alternative sources, like wind solar and bio-diesel, verse the identical message that said 'set a goal.' Stuningly, no statistically valid difference between the two emerged, though opposition was somewhat higher in the 'require' formulation. Nonetheless, the salience of the 'require formulation' underscores the central findings on global warming from this survey - Virginia voters want bold action, new ideas and most of all, progress on addressing global warming and conserving the environment.

The Chesapeake Bay: Broad Support for Meeting Goals of Multi-State Agreement and Voters are Willing to Pay for It

There’s little question that cleaning up the Chesapeake Bay remains a strong priority for voters today. Fully six-in-ten voters, 61 percent, say that cleaning up the Bay is a top concern in deciding their vote for a candidate for public office. At least a majority of voters in every region rate the Bay as a top issue in deciding their vote, though concerns about the Bay are most salient in Tidewater (67 percent) and Southside (68 percent) and Southwest (62 percent).

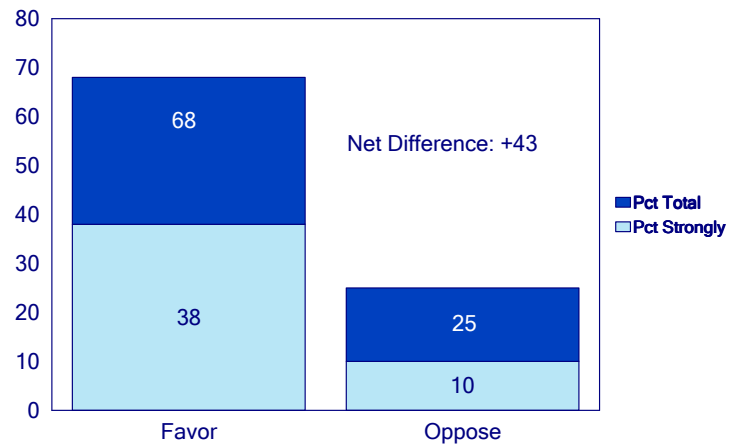
Underscoring the impact of the Bay on the vote choice are two profound findings. First, a near unanimous majority of voters, 85 percent overall, believe that it is important for the state to meet its goals of land preservation under the multi-state compact.

Meeting Land Preservation Goals



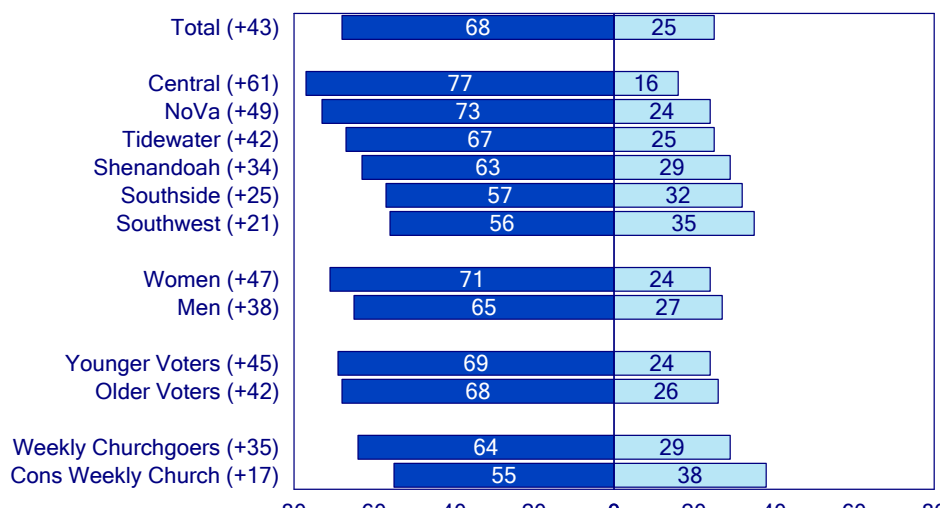
Second, and more importantly, more than two-thirds of voters are willing to open up their pocketbook to meet these goals too, 38 percent strongly so.

Would you favor or oppose paying one dollar a month more in either taxes or fees in order to dedicate those funds to preserving the Chesapeake Bay?



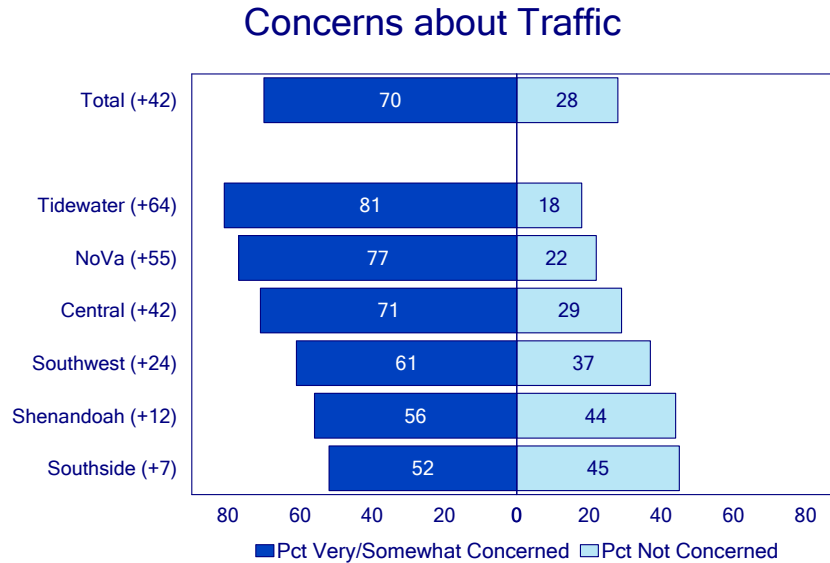
As demonstrated in the table below, regionally, support is strongest in Central and Northern Virginia, though it is notable that a majority of voters in every region are willing to pay more to preserve the Bay. In gender terms, women are slightly more supportive than men, and no clear age divide emerges, with similar majorities of both younger and older voters willing to pay more to preserve the Bay. A broad majority of weekly churchgoers - and a majority of conservative weekly churchgoers - are all willing to invest in conserving the Bay.

\$1 a Month for Bay Clean-Up



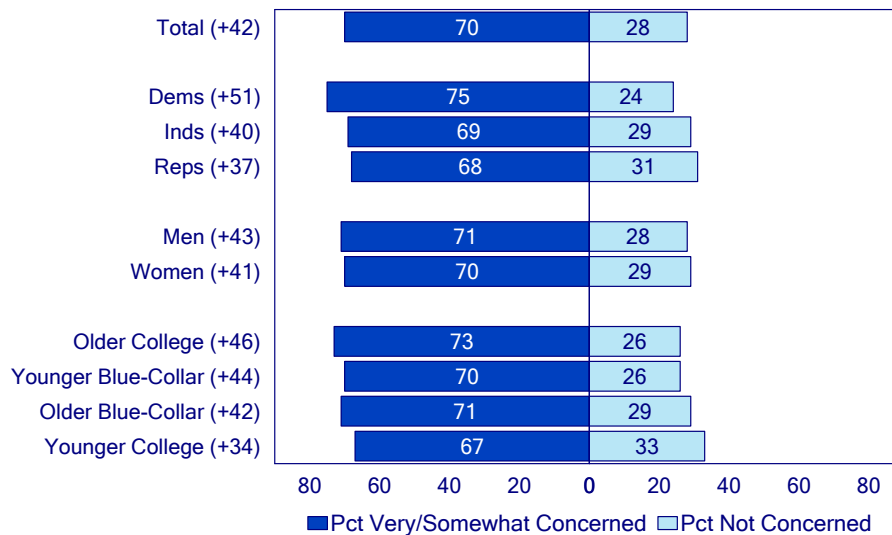
Traffic: Voters Want More Transportation Alternatives, But Aren't Necessarily Willing to Pay For Them

Overall an overwhelming majority, fully seven-in-ten Virginia voters, report they are very or somewhat concerned about traffic in their area. Not unsurprisingly, regionally concerns about traffic are most salient in the North, Central and Tidewater areas, while they fall off considerably in other parts of the state, as demonstrated below.



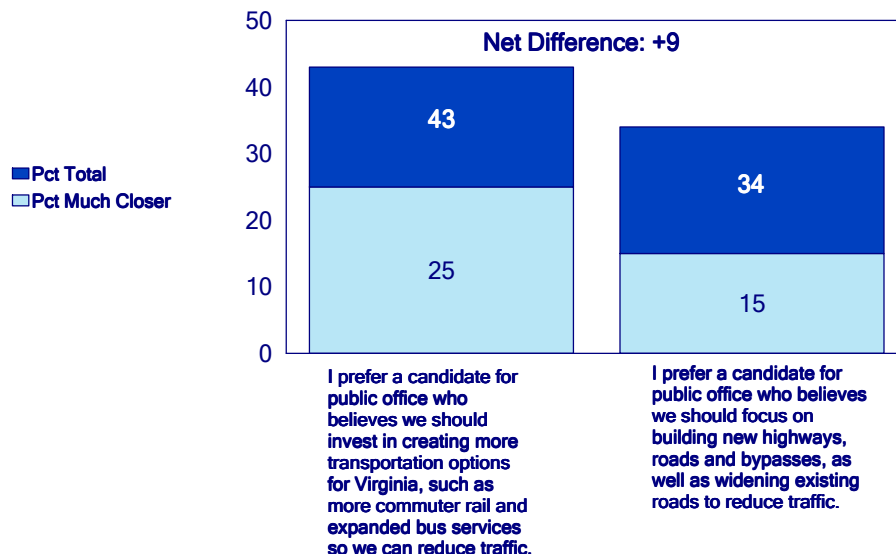
Notably, concerns about traffic cross all partisan barriers and are highly salient among nearly every demographic audience statewide, with virtually no exceptions.

Concerns about Traffic



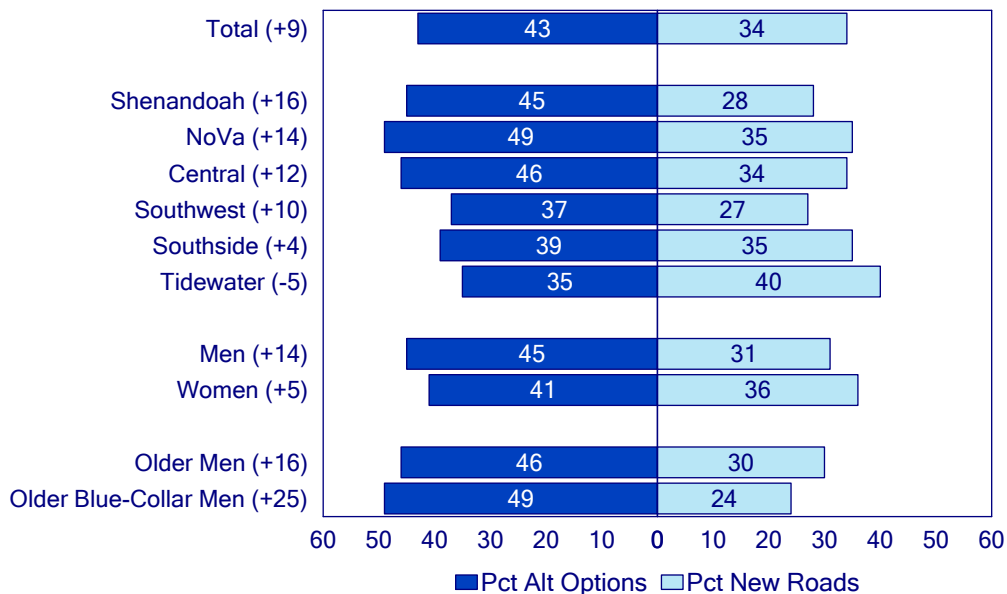
This survey however, demonstrates real support among this electorate for solutions that look beyond new roads and expanded highways. Indeed, when voters are presented with a balanced exercise and asked to choose between a candidate who favors investing in mass transit options versus a candidate who favors expanding roads and highways, by a nearly double-digit margin a plurality choose mass transit, as demonstrated below.

Virginians Prefer More Alternative Transportation Options



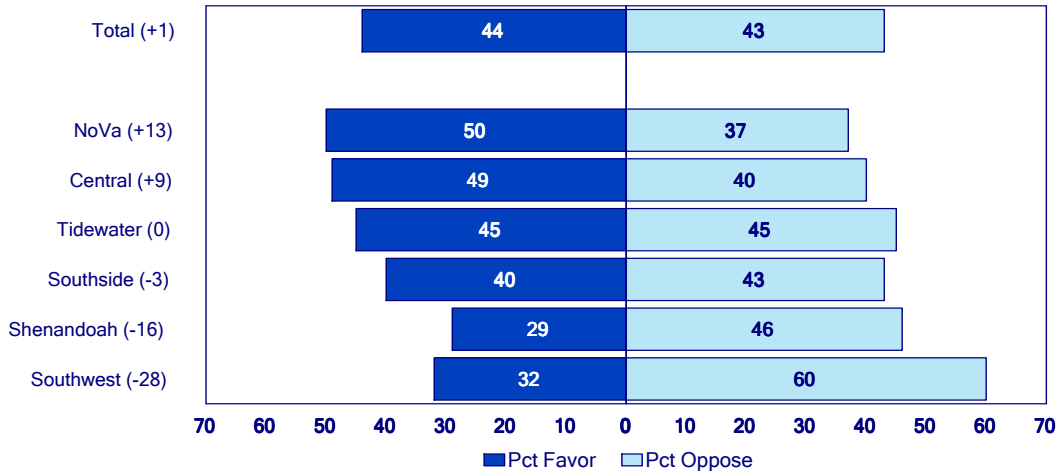
Regionally, voters in the North prefer a candidate who favors mass transit by a wide double-digit margin, as do voters in the Valley and Central regions. Notably, voters in Tidewater are more evenly split, as are voters in the balance of the state. Men, more so than women, prefer a candidate who emphasizes mass transit, and in particular, that trend is driven by older men and older blue collar men overall.

Alternative Transportation v New Roads



However, when voters are asked whether they are willing to pay for more investments in transportation, they split evenly overall, with 44 percent favoring and 43 percent opposing. 25 percent of voters strongly oppose a tax increase, with 15 percent strongly favoring it. The regional divide on this issue is significant, with voters in the North and Central areas favoring new taxes and fees, while voters in Tidewater split evenly, and voters elsewhere lean towards opposition, as demonstrated below.

Still thinking about transportation, would you favor or oppose a plan to raise taxes and fees to fund transportation improvements in VA?

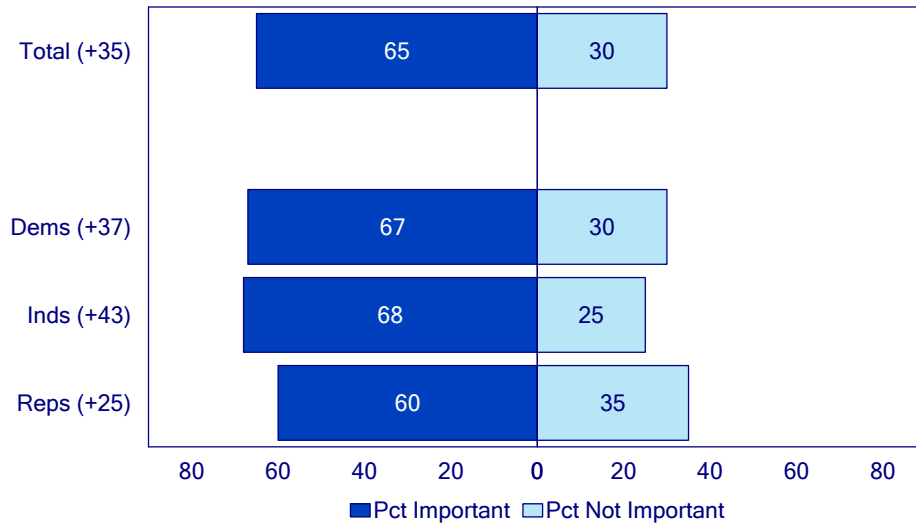


Clearly a regional transportation tax would have a much better chance of passing than would a statewide tax.

Broad Call for More Local Control of Growth; Voters Report it Weighs Heavily on their Vote

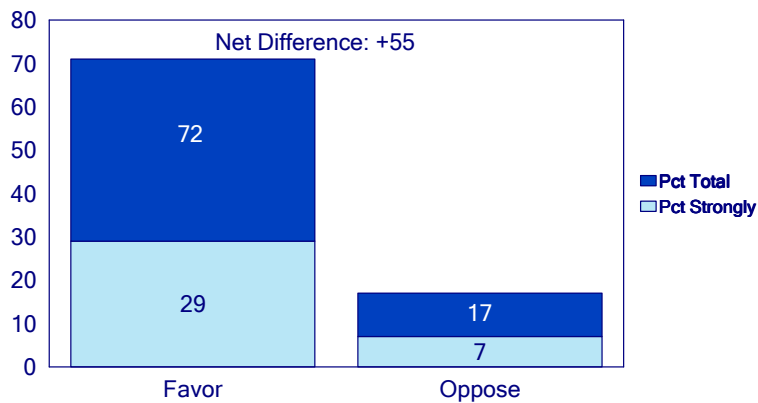
Just under two-thirds of voters, 65 percent, say that a candidate’s view on land use, growth and curbing sprawl will be the most important or an important factor in their voting decision this November. Notably, among critical independent voters, just under seven-in-ten (68 percent) say it is the most important or an important factor in their vote choice - more than either Democrats or Republicans.

Importance of Candidate's Position on Growth on Vote Choice



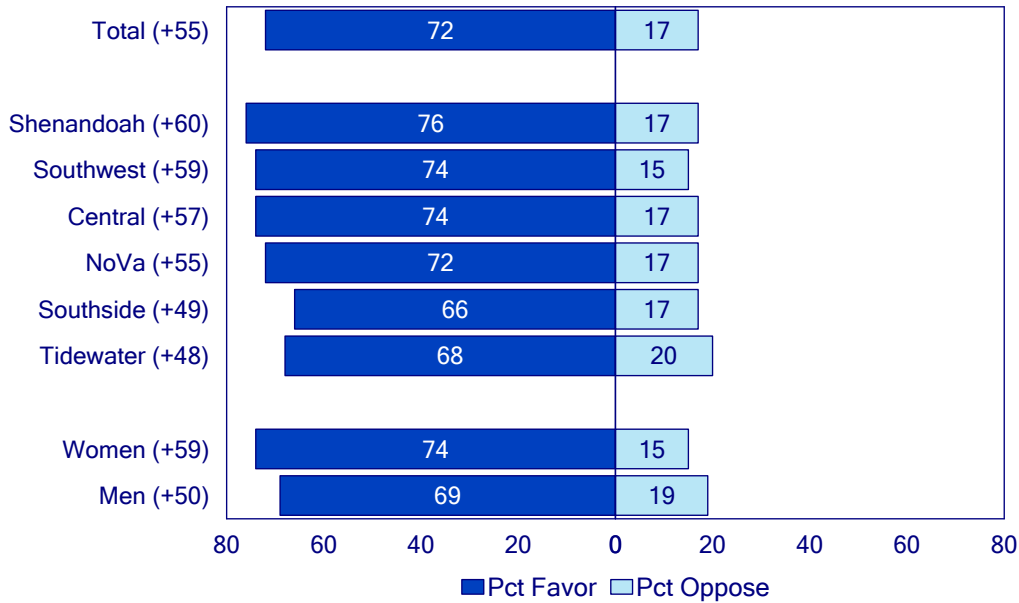
Within that context it is clear that voters want change in current land use policies. Indeed, nearly three-quarters of voters, 72 percent, believe that local government should be given more tools to manage growth and development in their area, while less than two-in-ten say they oppose giving localities more tools to manage growth.

Currently, Virginia state law limits local governments' ability to manage growth and development in their area. Thinking about that, would you favor or oppose giving local governments in Virginia more tools to manage growth in their area, such as allowing them more flexibility in making development and land use decisions, which are currently made by state government?



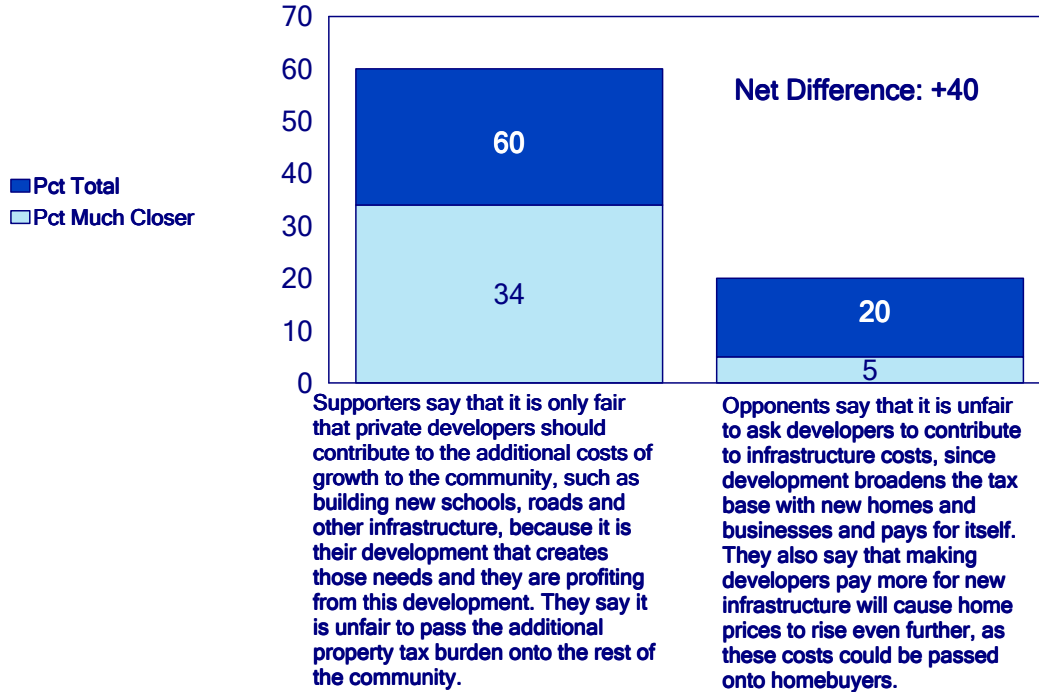
The trend here is wide and deep, with not a single audience supporting local control at a level of less than 60 percent. Indeed, regionally there are few real distinctions, with strong majorities from Tidewater to Southside all calling for more local control over growth. In gender terms, women favor more local control slightly more than men, but again the differences are minimal.

Locally Managed Growth



By a similarly strong 40 point margin, 60 to 20 percent, when presented with a balanced exercise that plays out both sides of the debate, voters prefer making developers pay a share of the additional costs of infrastructure that their development creates.

Who Should Pay for the Cost of Development?



Again, the trend is wide and deep, and in every region except Southwest, it is met with broad majority support while demographically there is not a single audience who gives this less than majority support.

Cost of Development among Demographic Audiences

