

2017 San Joaquin Valley Survey - Results on High-Speed Rail

A Majority in the San Joaquin Valley Support Construction of High-Speed Rail

According to a new survey of the San Joaquin Valley conducted by the Institute for Leadership and Public Policy at Fresno State, a majority of respondents (58 percent) support construction of the high-speed rail project. Thirty-five percent of adults in the Valley are opposed to completion of the project.

As we might expect, there are clear differences across party lines. A sizeable majority of Democrats (74 percent) support construction of high-speed rail, along with a majority of Independents (59 percent), or those who express no party preference. A majority of Republicans (58 percent), however, do not support construction of the high-speed rail project in the Valley. Significant differences can also be found among Trump supporters and non-Trump supporters. A majority of non-Trump supporters, 68 percent, are in favor of building high-speed rail, while an almost equal number of Trump supporters, 62 percent, oppose continuing construction on the project.

Among those who voted in the 2016 presidential election, there is a very marked split in their views of the high-speed rail project. Forty-seven percent of voters support the completion of the project, while 46 percent oppose it. In contrast, non-voters are much more supportive of high-speed rail, with 74 percent of them in favor of it. This finding is consistent with a recent statewide poll by the Public Policy Institute of California (March) that showed support for high-speed rail was lower among likely voters compared to all adults.

Across racial and ethnic groups, non-white groups are the most supportive of the high-speed rail project. Seventy-six percent of Latinos and 60 percent of non-white, non-Latinos, which includes blacks and Asians, support construction of the project. In contrast, a majority of whites (64 percent) oppose the construction of the high-speed train through the Valley.

Table 1: Percentage who Support High-Speed Rail

	All (%)	Trump Supporter		Party Registration			Voted in Presidential Election		Race/Ethnicity		
		Yes	No	Dem	Rep	Ind.	Yes	No	White	Latino	Other
Support	58	33	68	74	35	59	47	74	29	76	60
Oppose	35	62	23	21	58	33	46	18	64	15	36
Don't know	7	5	9	5	7	8	7	8	7	9	4

Note: Trump supporter is respondent that indicated that he/she voted for Donald Trump or would have voted for Donald Trump if she/he had voted in the election. Other for race/ethnicity includes blacks and Asians. Numbers may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Many in the Valley Would Use High-Speed Rail for Business and Pleasure

When asked about how they would use the high-speed rail if it was completed, 66 percent of respondents in the San Joaquin Valley said they would use it for business, pleasure, or both. A plurality of adults, 35 percent, indicated that they would use the train for pleasure, while 28 percent said that they would use it for both business and pleasure. Surprisingly, only 3 percent responded that they would use the train mostly for business. In contrast, 30 percent said that they would not use the high-speed rail at all if it was completed.

The survey also reveals that slightly over half of Trump supporters, 52 percent, do not plan to use high-speed rail once it is completed. On the other hand, 75 percent of non-Trump supporters in the Valley, or 3 out of 4, indicated that they would use the train for business, pleasure, or both.

Among registered voters, Democrats and Independents were the groups most likely to say that they would use high-speed rail. Eighty-three percent of Democrats and 68 percent of Independents responded that they would use the train for business, pleasure, or both. In comparison, half of Republicans said that they would use high-speed rail in one or more of these ways.

Although strong majorities of both voters and non-voters indicated that they would use the train for business, pleasure, or both, the potential usage rate is much higher among non-voters than voters (79 percent compared to 60 percent).

With regard to racial and ethnic groups, potential usage of high-speed rail was highest among non-white groups. About 80 percent of both Latinos and non-white, non-Latinos said that they would use the train for business, pleasure, or both. In contrast, just 41 percent of whites stated that they would use high-speed rail for one or more of these purposes.

Table 2: Future Use of High-Speed Rail

	All (%)	Trump Supporter		Party Registration			Voted in Presidential Election		Race/Ethnicity		
		Yes	No	Dem	Rep	Ind.	Yes	No	White	Latino	Other
Business	3	1	4	2	5	4	3	4	2	4	3
Pleasure	35	23	40	34	25	47	35	38	28	43	27
Both	28	21	31	47	20	17	22	37	11	34	50
Wouldn't Use	30	52	20	16	47	27	38	17	55	15	21
Don't know	4	3	4	2	4	5	3	5	4	4	0

Note: Trump supporter is respondent that indicated that he/she voted for Donald Trump or would have voted for Donald Trump if she/he had voted in the election. Other for race/ethnicity includes blacks and Asians. Numbers may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Methodology of Survey

The findings in this report are based on a survey of a random sample of adults from the San Joaquin Valley, which includes eight counties: Fresno, Kern, Kings, Madera, Merced, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, and Tulare. A total of 541 adults were interviewed in Spanish or English. Eighty percent of interviews were conducted in English, while 20 percent were conducted in Spanish, based on the respondent's preference. Sixty-two percent were interviewed on landlines and 38 percent were interviewed on cell phones. Interviews took on average 13.6 minutes to complete. Interviewing took place on weekday nights and Sunday evenings, from March 13-26, 2017. Up to 5 attempts were made to reach each randomly selected number on different days during the interview period. Dr. Annabella España translated the survey questions into Spanish.

The final sample was weighted by age, gender, education, and race/ethnicity to match the characteristics of the San Joaquin Valley adult population. The Institute used the U.S Census Bureau's 2015 American Community Survey population estimates to compare regional demographics to the characteristics of the survey sample in order to assure representativeness. The margin of error for the survey is ± 4.2 percent at the 95 percent confidence level for the unweighted sample of 541 adults. That is, we are 95 percent confident the results will reflect the population's responses ± 4.2 percentage points, if all adults in the San Joaquin Valley were interviewed. There are other possible sources of error beyond sampling variability, such as question wording, question sequencing, and survey timing.

Additional information about our methodology is available upon request from Dr. Lisa Bryant at lbryant@mail.fresnostate.edu or 559.278.7612.

Questions Asked

As you may know, California is currently constructing a high-speed rail linking Los Angeles to the San Joaquin Valley and the San Francisco Bay Area. The first phase of construction has started in Fresno and the project is expected to be done in the next decade. Do you support or oppose continuing construction on the high-speed rail project?

- Support
- Oppose
- Don't know

If the project were to be completed, how would you use the train? Do you think you would use it for mostly business, mostly pleasure, both business and pleasure, or do you think you would not use the train?

- Business
- Pleasure
- Business and Pleasure
- I would not use it
- Don't know

About the Institute for Leadership and Public Policy

Under the College of Social Sciences, the new Institute for Leadership and Public Policy is dedicated to conducting policy-relevant research and offering student training and career development to inspire public leadership in the San Joaquin Valley. Financial support for the Institute has been provided by a generous gift from PG&E and Chevron.