

# CENTRAL ARKANSAS TRANSIT SYSTEM VOTER POLLING RESULTS

DECEMBER 2014

Prepared for Nelson/Nygaard by  
Communications Group, Inc. Regions Center 400 W. Capitol Avenue, Suite 1391  
Fayetteville, Arkansas (501) 376-8722 [www.comgroup.com](http://www.comgroup.com)



# BACKGROUND & METHODOLOGY

# BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

The Communications Group, Inc. was commissioned by Nelson/Nygaard to conduct a voter opinion study among registered voters in Pulaski County, AR for their client, Central Arkansas Transit System (CATA).

The objective of this research is to provide a measurement of overall impressions of CATA service, transportation priorities and voter acceptance of a possible tax increase that would fund CATA operations.

The Communications Group collaborated with Nelson/Nygaard and CATA staff to design the survey for phone administration among active voters residing in Pulaski County, AR.

# BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY...CONTINUED

- A phone polling vendor, American Directions, handled all survey programming, data collection and data processing.
- Phone surveys were conducted from November 13 – November 17, following the mid-term elections. Call periods included both weekends and weekdays.
- A combination of 70% landline and 30% wireless phone numbers were used.
- Quotas were required for Gender, Geographic Location and Age.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

■ Overall, voter sentiment about the direction of Pulaski County was good.

- 60% of voters said they felt like Pulaski County was “on the right track.”

■ Traffic congestion is a big concern for voters.

- 73% of voters believe traffic congestion is “a serious problem.”



■ Regarding taxes in the county, 66% of respondents felt the rates were too high.

- Notably, 33% believed their taxes were “about right” or “low.”

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY...CONTINUED

- When asked to rank 4 transit-related variables that affect Pulaski County, voters said their highest priority was attracting more young professionals to work and live in Pulaski County, followed closely by tourism's impact on the local economy. Other choices included bicycle amenities and reducing pollution.
- Familiarity of CATA was good: 62% of respondents were aware of who CATA is and what they do, including the fact that CATA runs River Rail.



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY...CONTINUED

- Despite awareness, ridership on both bus service and River Rail were, however, low. Only 45% of voters polled had ever ridden a CATA bus. 46% said they had ridden the streetcar.
  - Of those who were riders, only 14% were “regular” riders
  - Regular riders: defined as having ridden in the last week
- Whether or not the voters polled had ever ridden the bus or River Rail, the overall impression of CATA was favorable.
- Notably though, 37% had a “neutral” opinion of the agency.





# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY...CONTINUED

Close to 60% of voters polled said public transportation should be increased.

When asked if they were willing to pay for that increase in public transportation with additional taxes, the “for” and “against” sentiments were almost evenly expressed:

- 48% of those polled said they would “vote in favor” of a tax.
- 47% said they would “vote against” a tax.

Key supporters of the tax include younger voters (18-34), voters 55+ years, Democrats and Independent voters, those who live in Little Rock or North Little Rock ZIP codes.

- Key detractors include Republican voters and those within the Little Rock and North Little Rock ZIP codes.



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: CONCLUSION

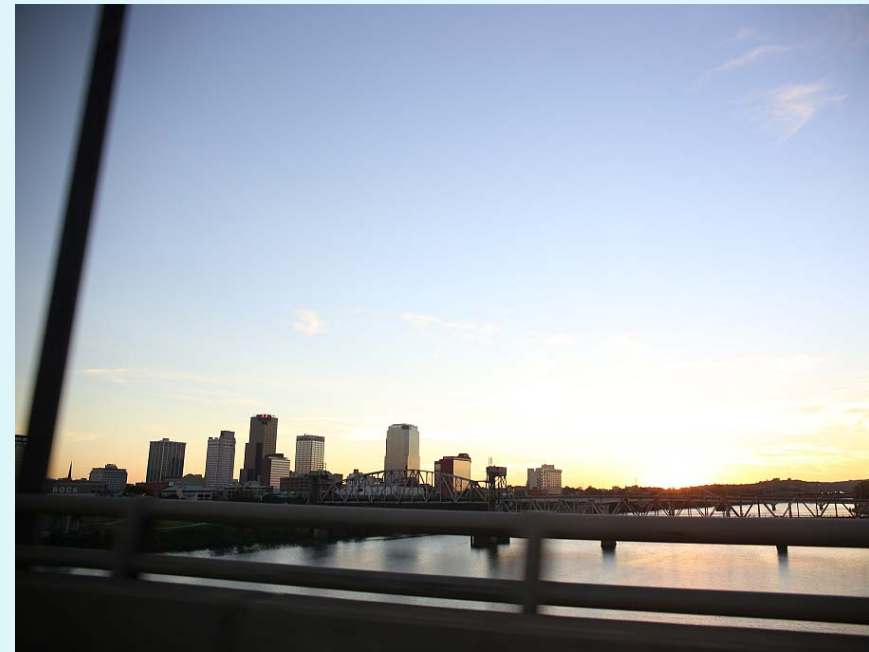
- While the split between voters displaying pro-tax sentiment and anti-tax sentiment is almost equal now, the poll shows a vacuum of information not just about CATA, but transit issues in general.
- It should also be noted that no specifics regarding the tax were provided (e.g. – half-cent sales tax or 1% property tax increase annually) during this poll.
- A follow-up poll is tentatively slated in the first half of 2015 following a period of more intensive marketing and education to the community.



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: CONCLUSION

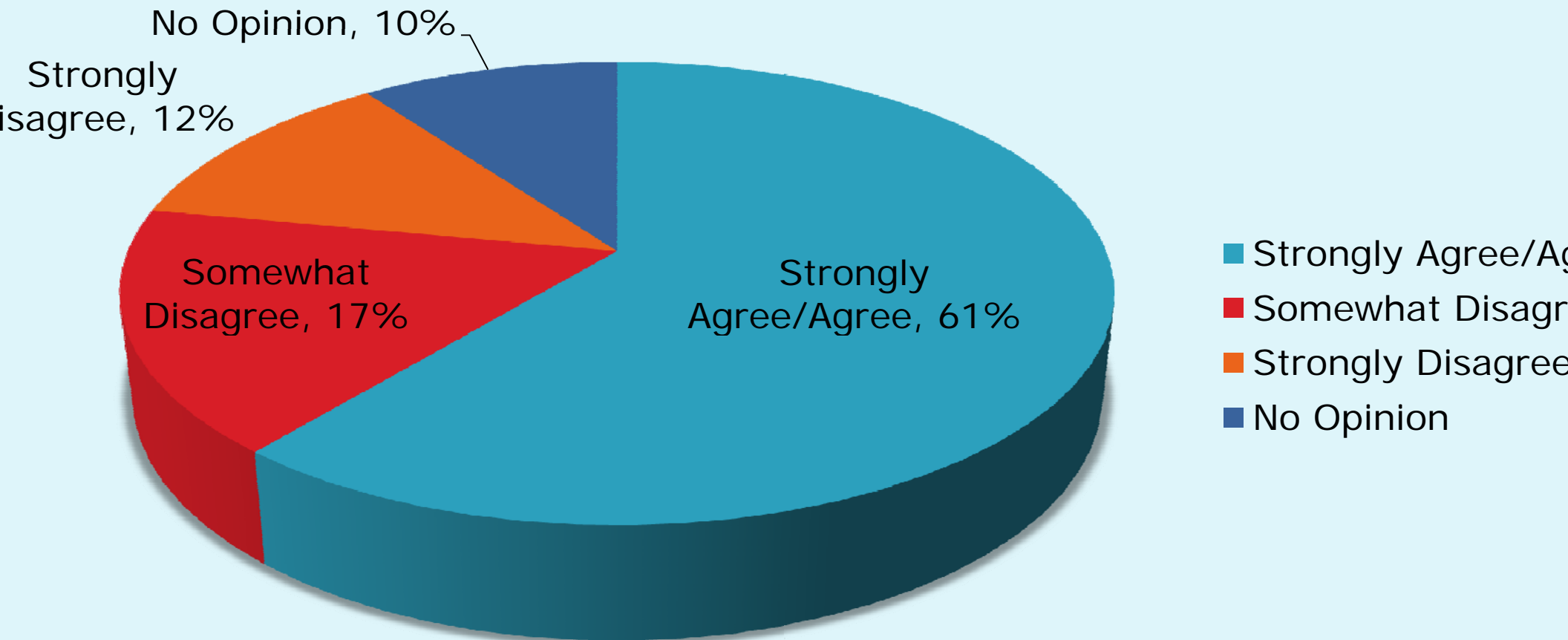
This is particularly important because there is a strong anti-tax minority that historically has had a disproportionate impact on a vote in special elections.

Consistent supporters of a tax, as well as anti-tax voters that are likely to be swayed, appear receptive to messages that promote the agency's economic impact on the community.



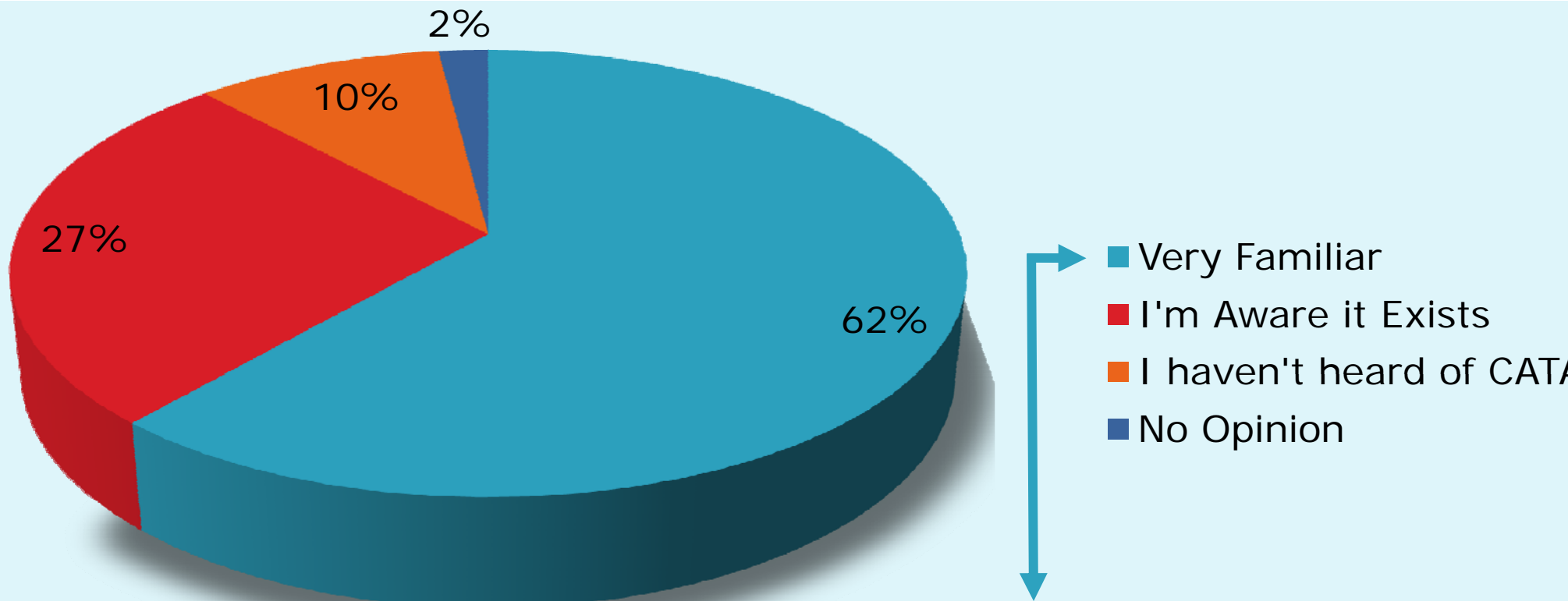
## ROLE OF TRANSIT

# "I BELIEVE CENTRAL ARKANSAS HAS A GOOD QUALITY PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM."



## AWARENESS OF CATA

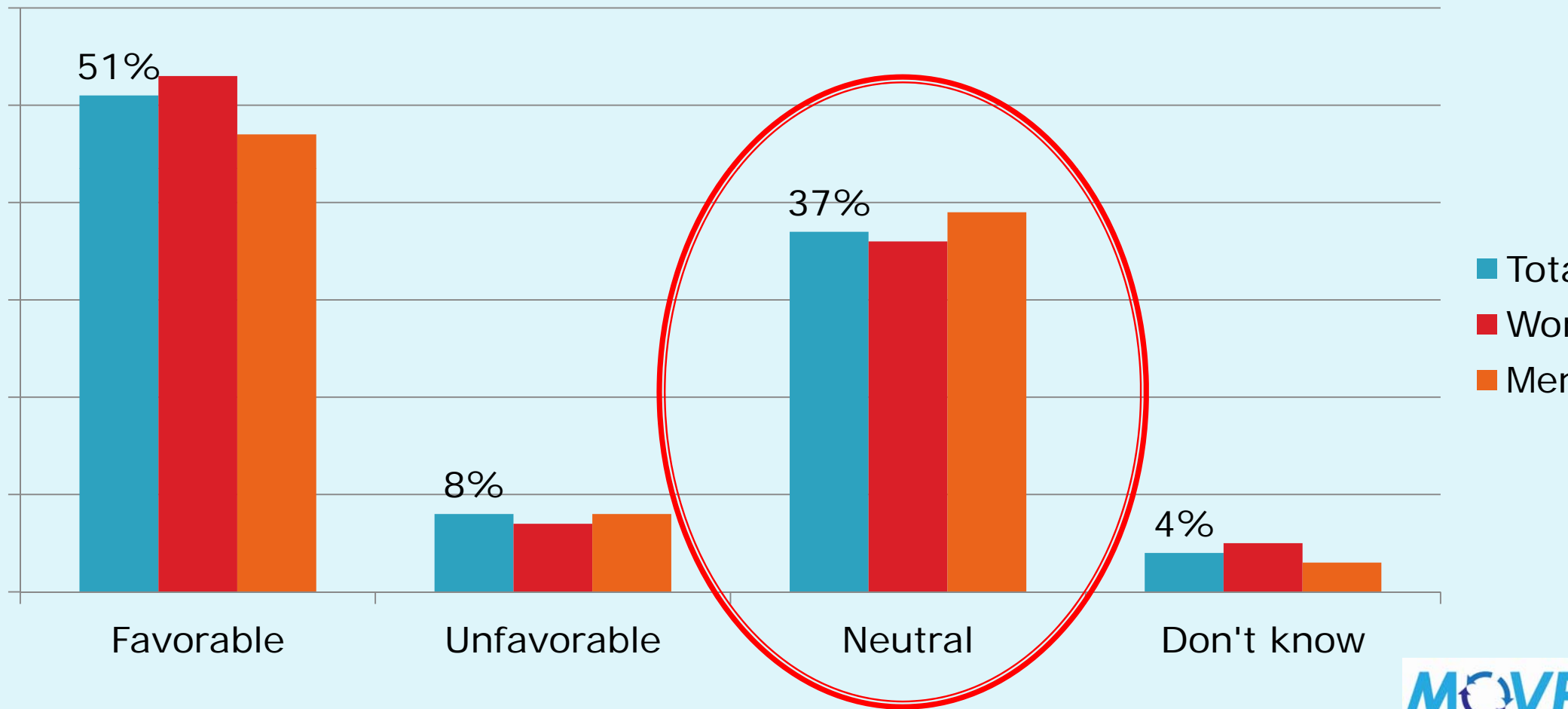
# FAMILIARITY WITH CENTRAL ARKANSAS TRANSIT AUTHORITY



Of those very familiar – 88% were from LR and NLR ZIP codes

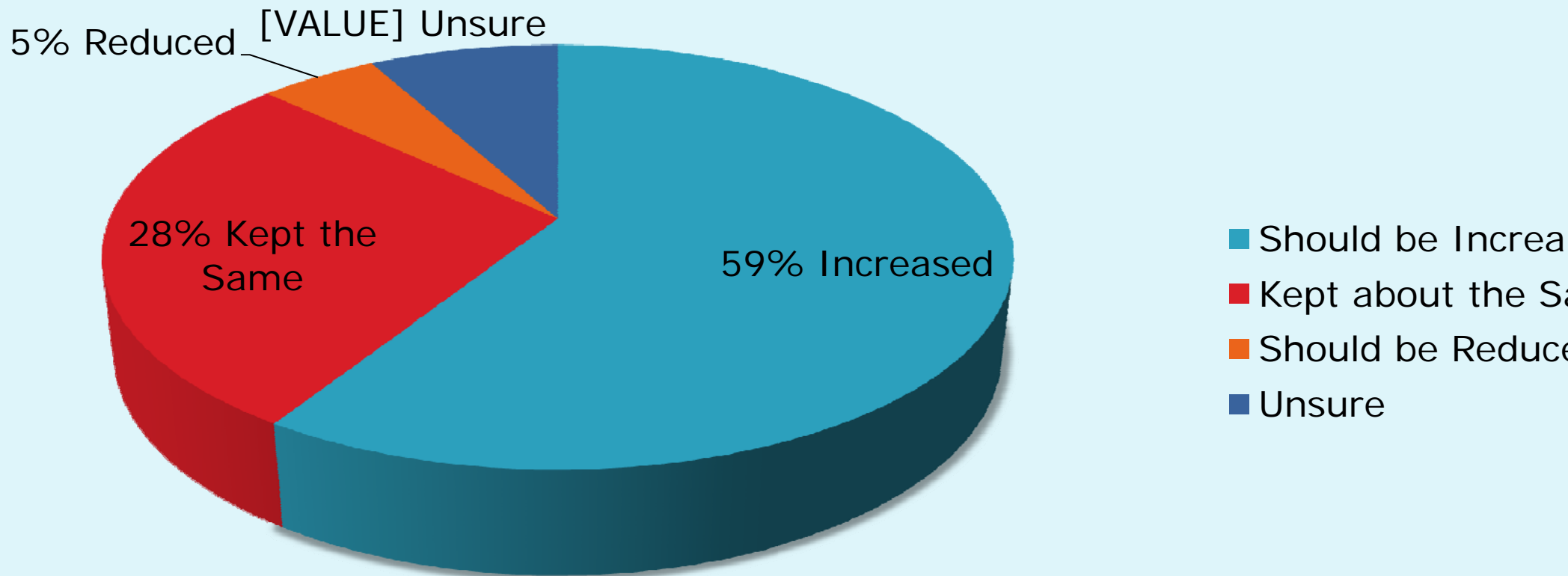
## AWARENESS OF CATA

# WHETHER OR NOT VOTERS HAVE USED THE BUS OR RIVER RAIL, OVERALL IMPRESSIONS OF CATA:



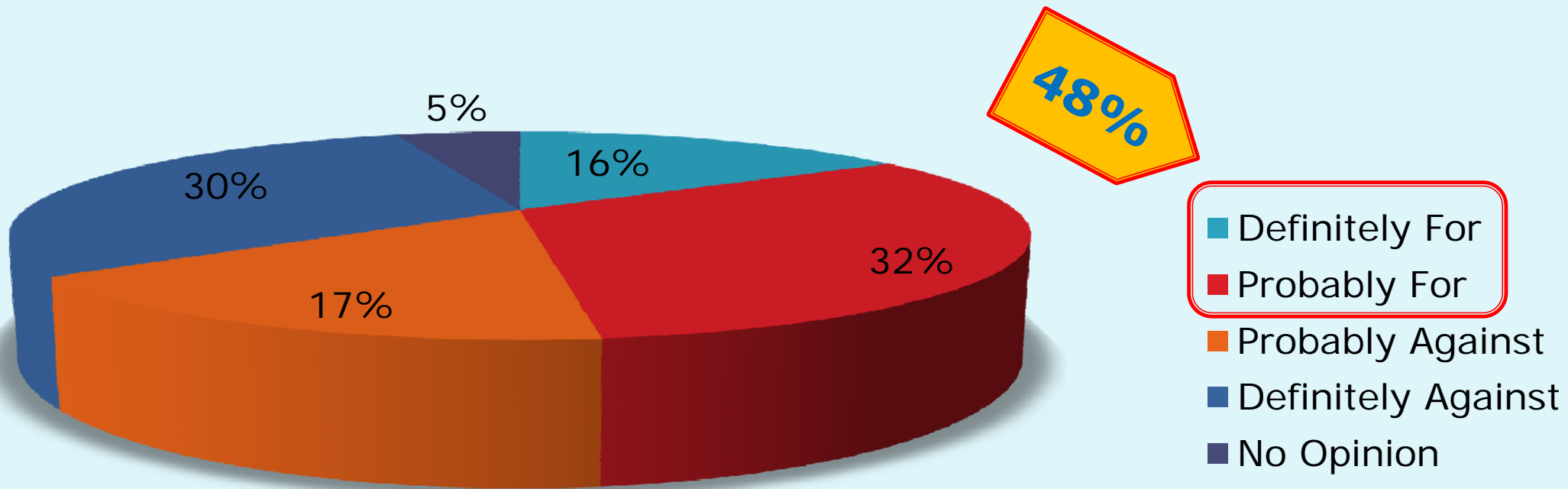
AWARENESS OF CATA

# WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THE AMOUNT OF PUBLIC TRANSIT IN CENTRAL ARKANSAS?



## TAX SUPPORT

TERS INDICATED A WILLINGNESS TO PAY ADDITIONAL LOCAL TAXES TO  
NCREASE PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SERVICE IN CENTRAL ARKANSAS





# CONCLUSIONS

# CONCLUSIONS

The community is minimally aware of Central Arkansas Transit Authority. Passage of any kind of funding initiative is going to require a higher level of visibility for the agency.

Democratic voters and those within the city limits of Little Rock and North Little Rock are most likely to be supportive of transit expansion and the taxes required to support them.

In open-ended comments about general transportation improvements (not necessarily about CATA), the majority of voters indicated a desire for expanded rail services.

Top major negative perceptions

- About the county

- About tax rates

- About CATA

- About public transportation in general



# CONCLUSIONS

Big concern is high percentage of neutral perceptions: indicates need for more marketing and visibility with non-riders.

Surprising absence of anti-tax sentiment in the county.

Young people are most supportive, but unfortunately least likely to vote in a special election. They should be mobilized and involved in any future campaign activity.

ATA has a good foundation on which to build a voter outreach program but will need to consistently demonstrate transit's value to the growth and prosperity of the community.



# VOTER PROFILES

# VOTER PROFILES

## SUMMARY OF SAMPLE

### AGE

18-24	28%
25-34	14%
35-44	24%
45-54	17%
55+	17%

### GENDER

Women	52%
Men	48%

### POLITICAL AFFILIATION

Democrat	45%
Republican	20%
Independent	22%
Others/NA	10%

### COUNTY VS. URBAN

County	15%
Urban	85%

### ETHNICITY

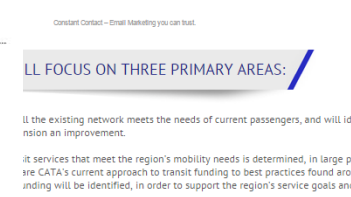
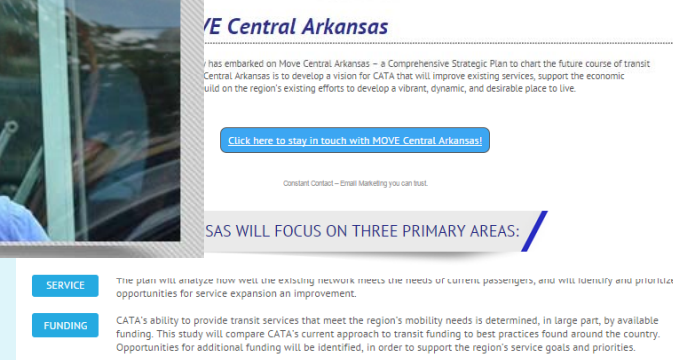
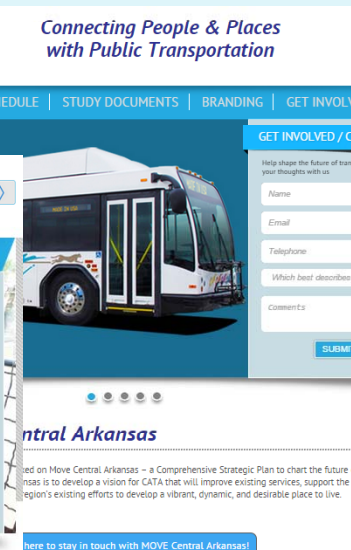
Caucasian	57%
Black/African Amer.	34%
Hispanic	3%
Asian/Other	6%

### TAX SUPPORT

For the Tax	48%
Against the Tax	47%
Don't Know	5%

# VOTER POLL SURVEY QUESTIONS

To see complete survey please visit the project website at [CAT.org/Move/](http://CAT.org/Move/)



# QUESTIONS