

 **McLaughlin & Associates**

Cobb County, Georgia

Transit Survey of General Election Voters

Presented to:

Cobb County Transit Committee



Cobb County
GOVERNMENT

December 11th, 2018

Presented by:

Robert M. Schmidt

Methodology

McLaughlin & Associates conducted a survey of 900 likely general election voters in Cobb County, Georgia from November 26th to December 4th, 2018.

All interviews were administered via telephone by professional interviewers with respondents contacted by both landline phone and cell phone. Interview selection was random and interviews were stratified by precinct, race/ethnicity, age and gender to correlate with current voter registration statistics and actual voter turnout from previous statewide even-year November general elections.

This poll of 900 likely general election voters has an accuracy of +/- 3.3% at a 95% confidence interval. The error margin increases for cross-tabulations. Totals may not add up to exactly 100% due to rounding and refusals.

A total of 49,795 phone numbers were dialed, which yields a response rate of 2%. There were 1,028 respondents who answered their phone, provided consent to be surveyed and satisfied the necessary qualifications and screeners. This means there were 128 respondents who did not complete the survey in its entirety . These individuals were not included in the reports or analysis. The response and drop-off rates are typical and within industry standards.



Major Findings

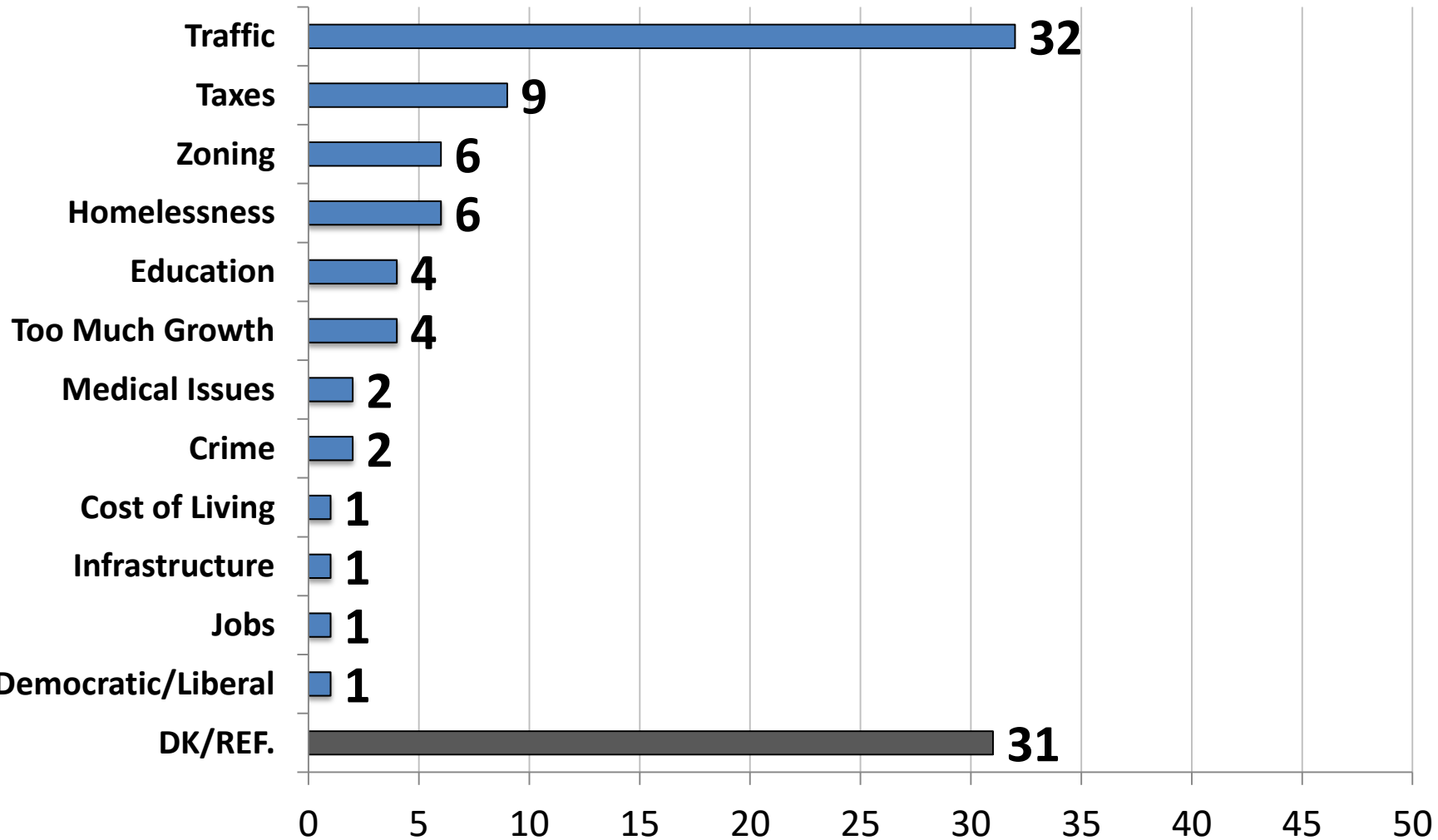
- “Traffic” was overwhelmingly seen as the biggest problem facing Cobb County, at 32%.
- Greater than six in ten (61%) believe that Cobb County should spend more than it does now on transit.
- By a 20-point margin, voters favor creating a new sales tax of up to one percent to fund transit projects that would include rail and bus, 59% to 39%.
- The transit referendum vote with the actual ballot language produced a closer result, with 54% voting YES, 45% voting NO and just 1% Undecided.
- Greater than half, 57%, believe that Cobb County should spend additional funds on both road improvement and transit projects.
- If Cobb County were to expand bus service, voters prefer joining MARTA over expanding Cobb’s current bus system by a 24-point margin, 48% to 24%.
- MARTA has a three to one net positive image rating, 51% Favorable to 17% Unfavorable.
- “Relieving traffic congestion” was the top argument IN FAVOR of creating rail transit, at 46%.
- “Do not trust government to spend money wisely” and “would not provide any benefits to me personally” were the top arguments AGAINST creating rail transit, 22% and 21%, respectively.

Part One – Top Issue & Transit Perceptions



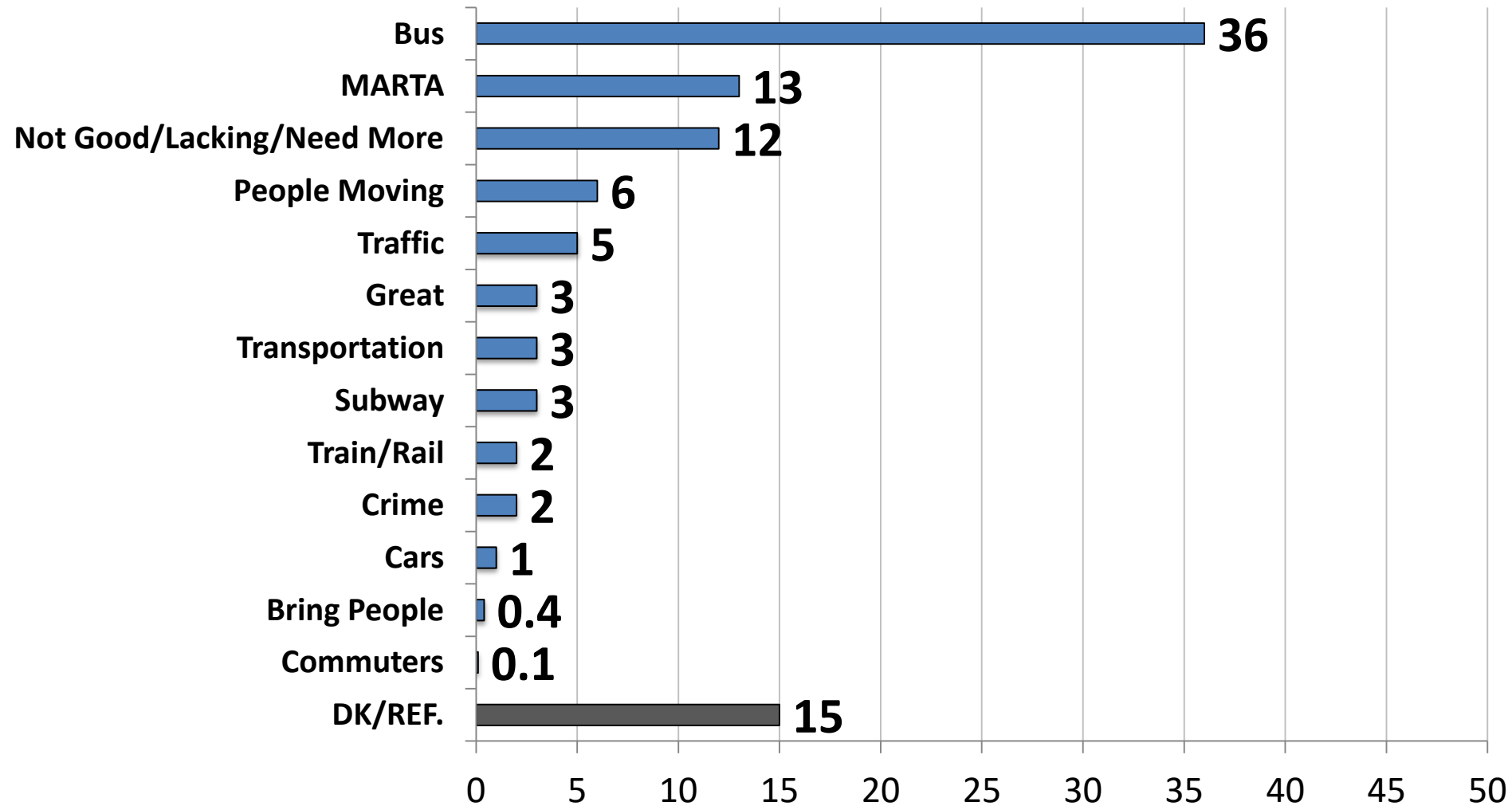
What is the biggest problem facing Cobb County right now that **MOST** impacts you and your family?

(Open-Ended; Ranked Highest to Lowest)

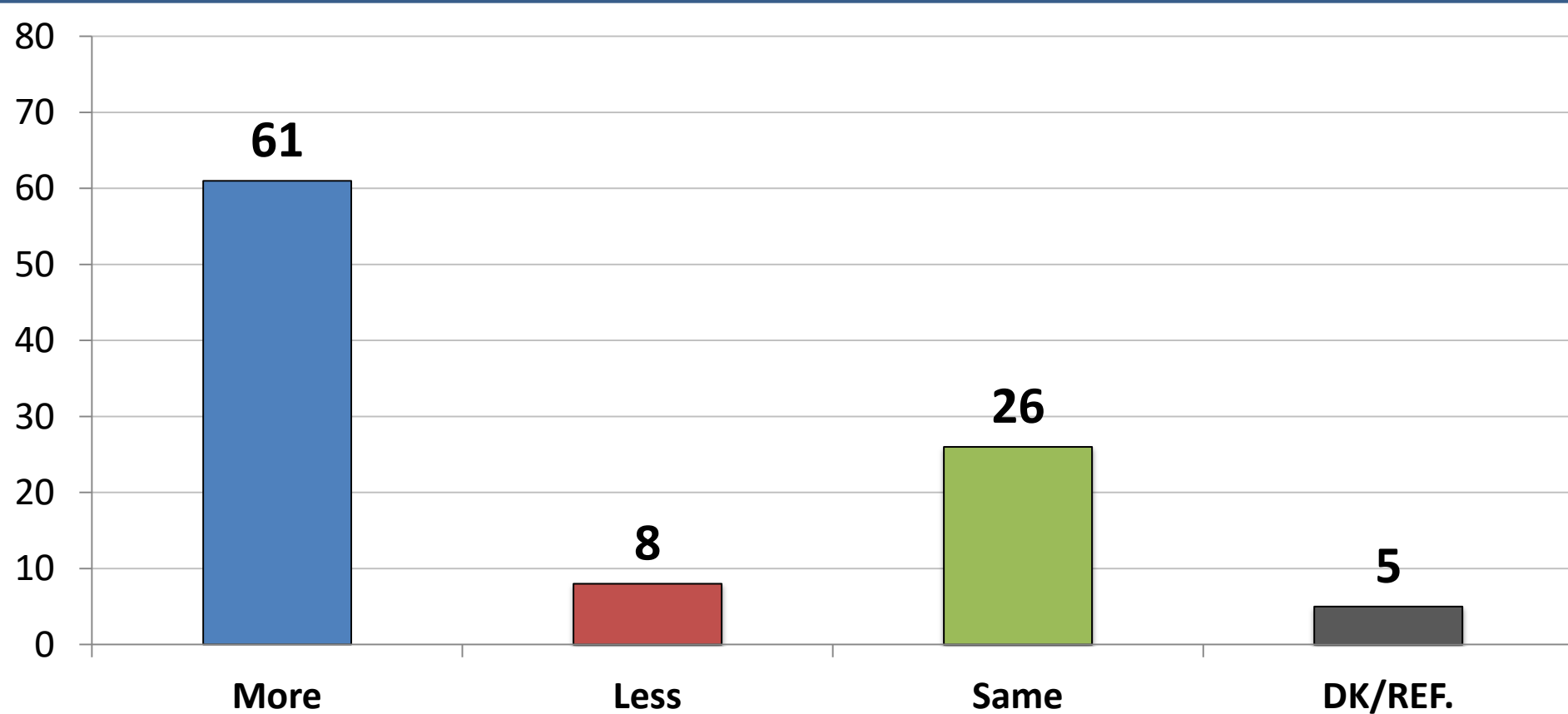


In one or two words, what do you generally think of when you hear the word “transit”?

(Open-Ended; Ranked Highest to Lowest)



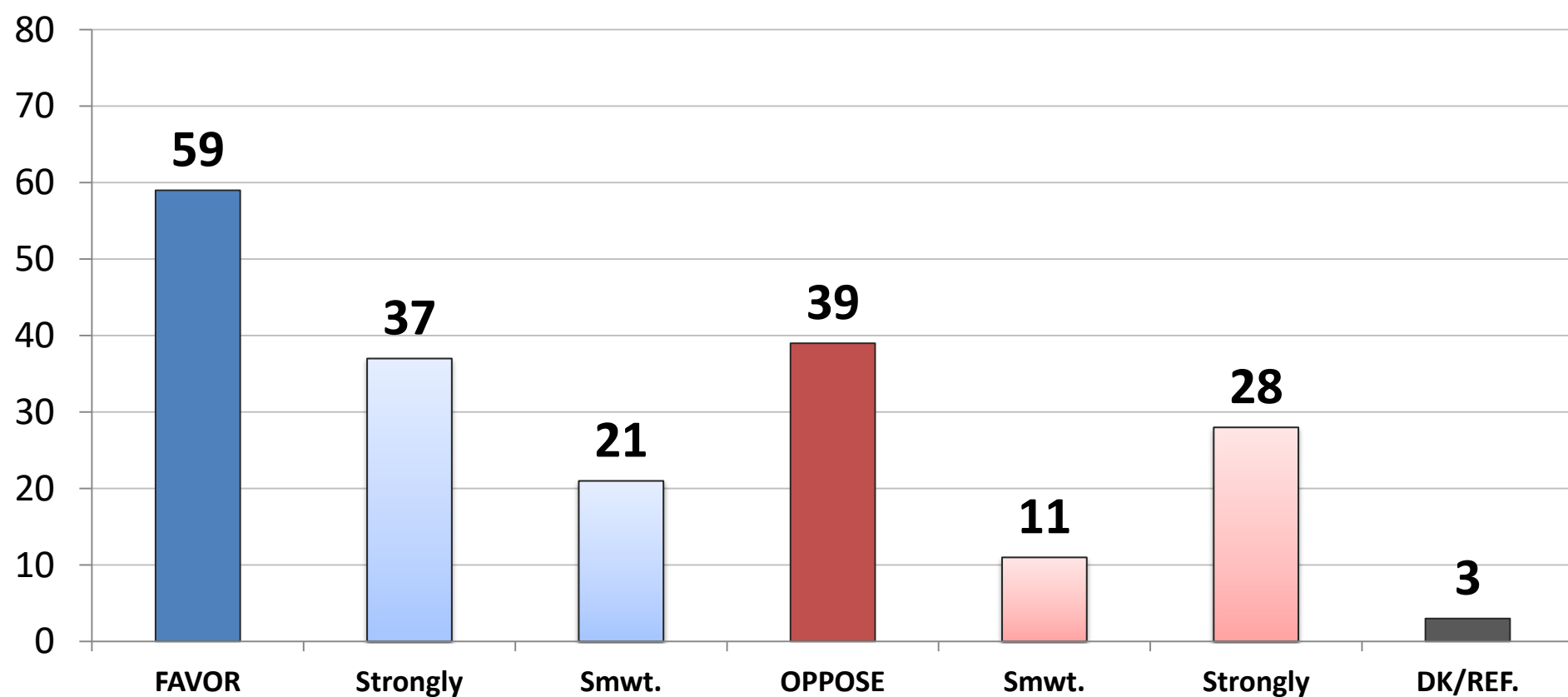
In your opinion, should Cobb County spend more on transit, less on transit or about the same as it does now?



Part Two – Sales Tax Concept & Referendum

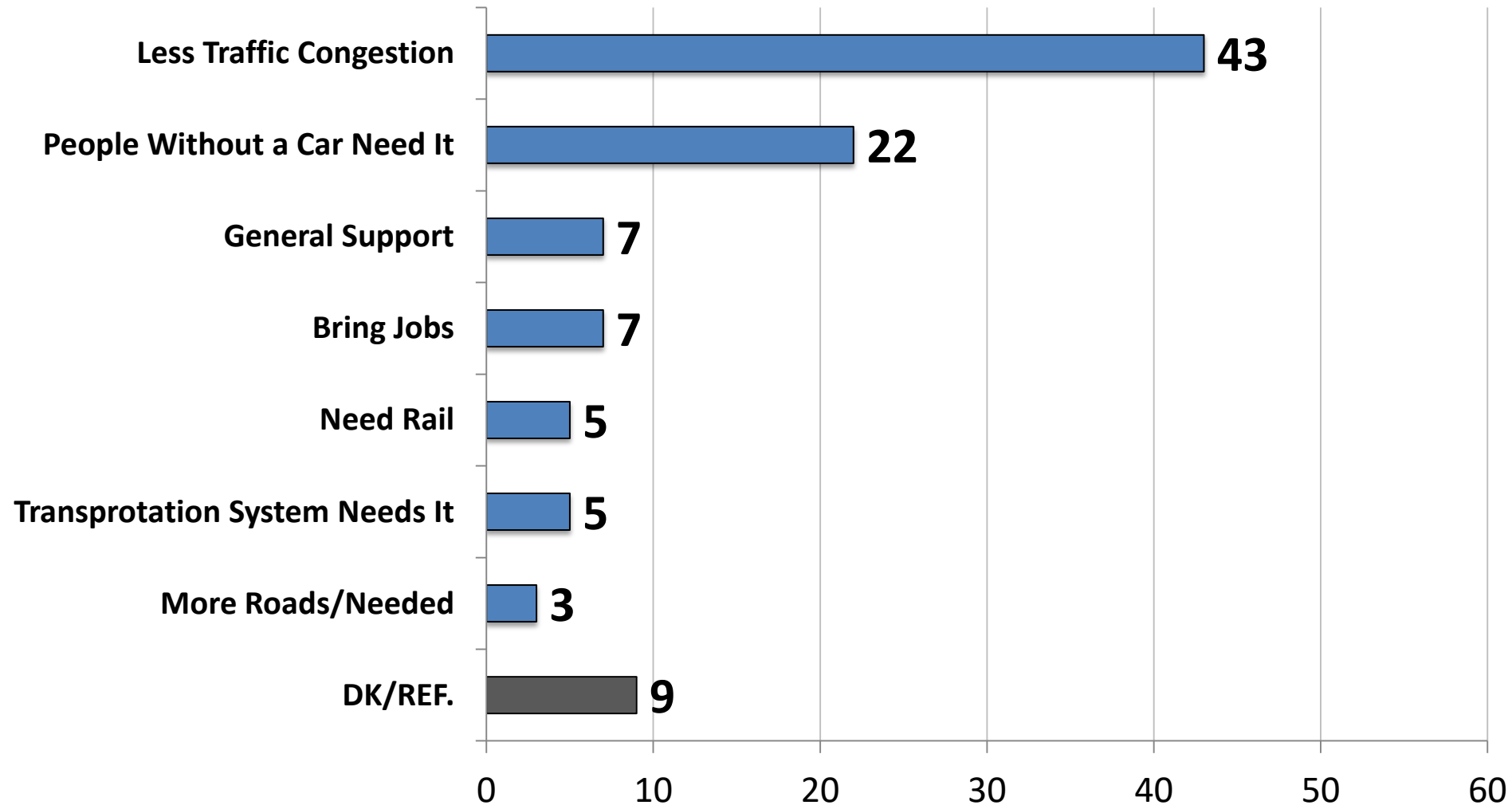


Generally speaking, would you favor or oppose Cobb County creating a new sales tax of up to one percent to fund transit projects in the County that would include rail and bus?



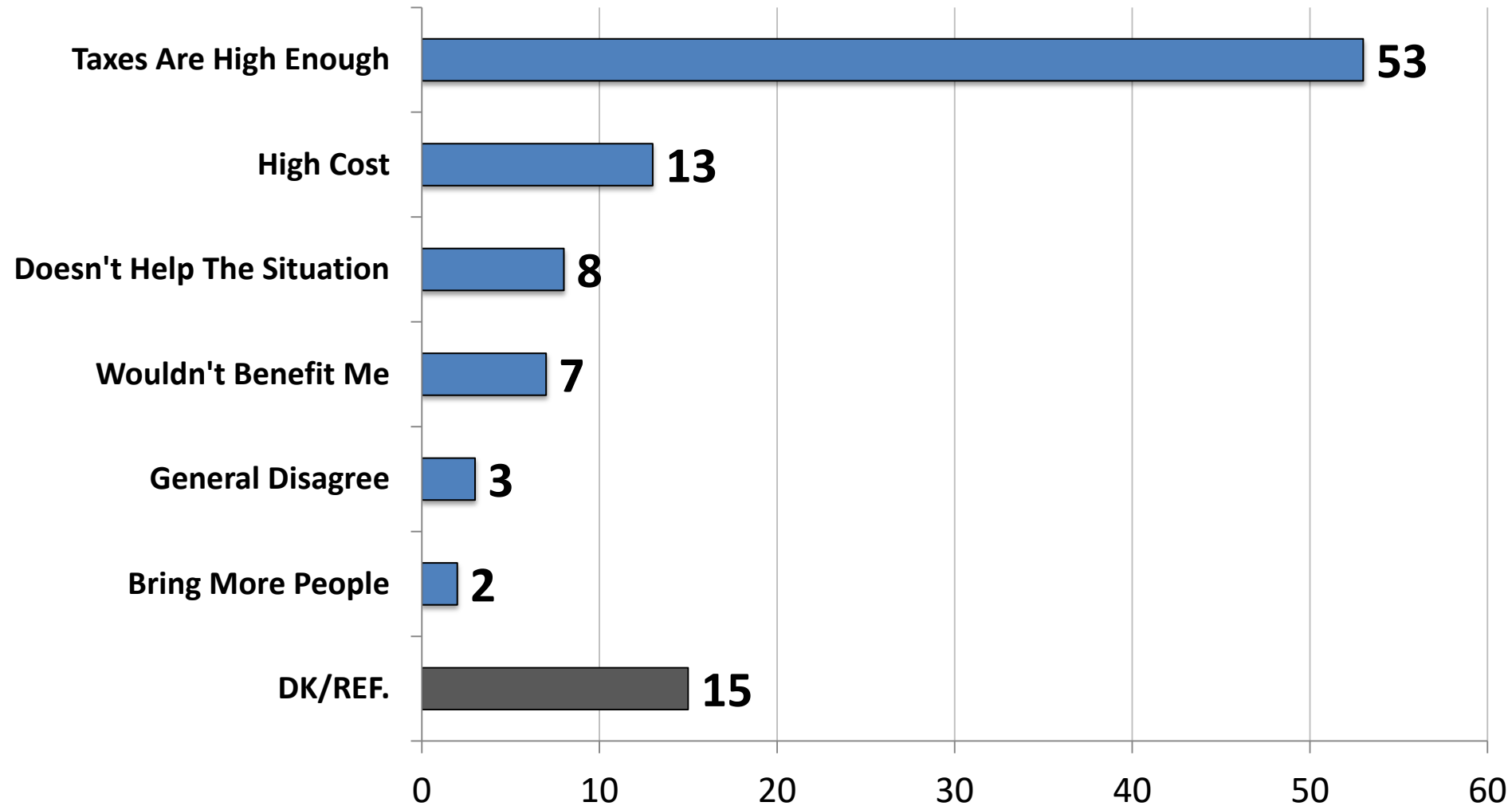
Why would you favor Cobb County creating a new sales tax of up to one percent to fund transit projects in the County?

(Open-Ended; Among Those Who FAVOR)



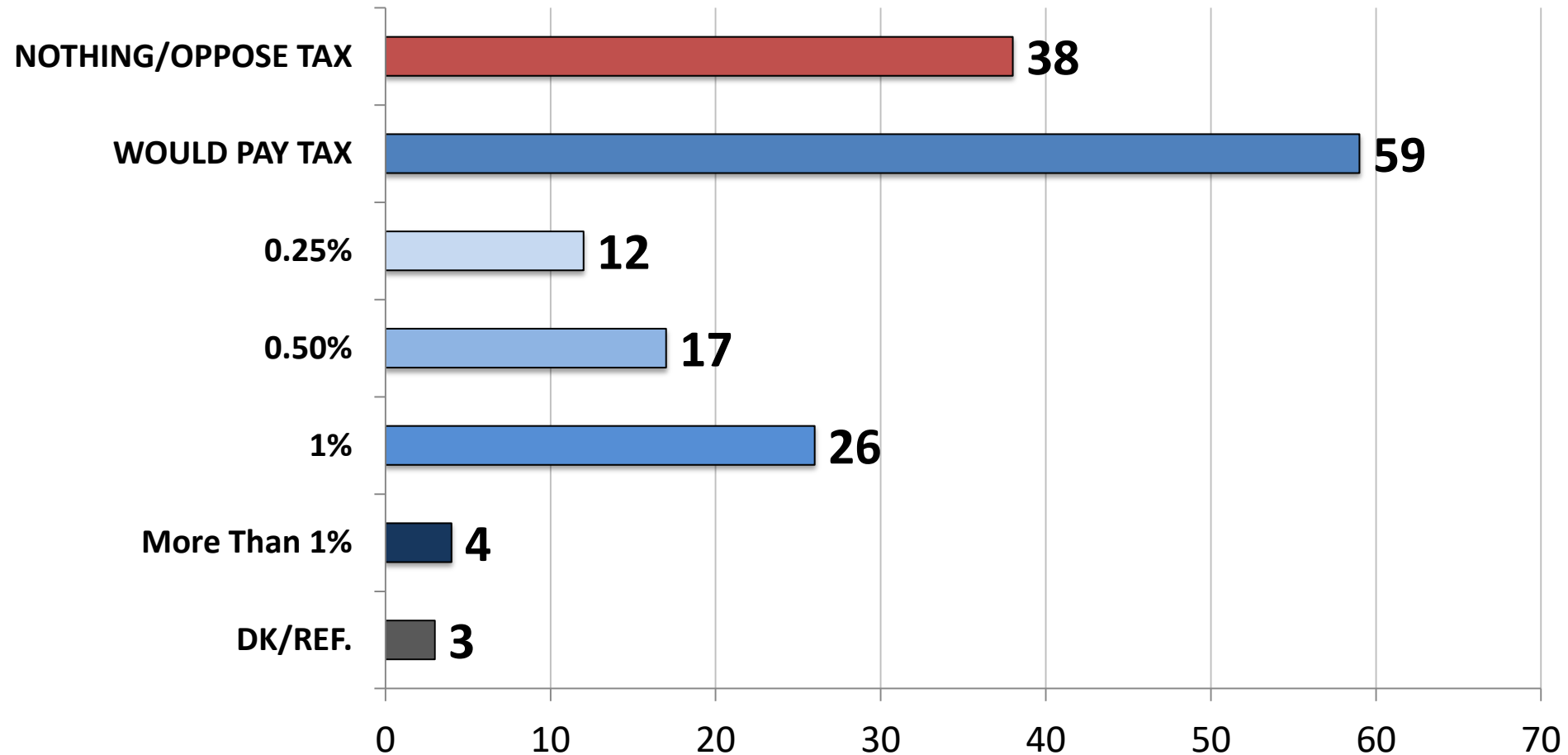
Why would you **NOT** favor Cobb County creating a new sales tax of up to one percent to fund transit projects in the County?

(Open-Ended; Among Those Who Either OPPOSE or Are UNSURE)



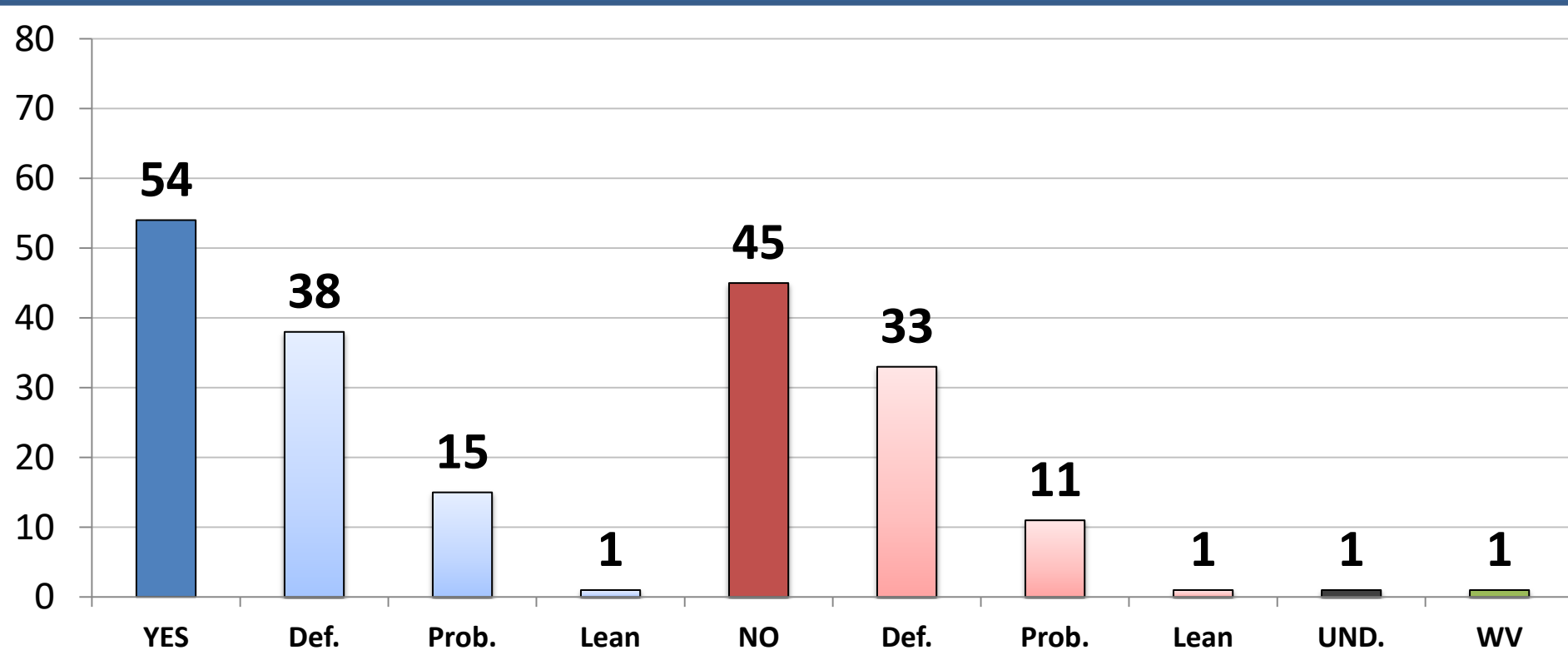
As mentioned, an additional sales tax would be collected to fund these transit projects. Knowing this, how much more would you be willing to pay personally in sales tax to fund these projects?

(Closed-Ended)



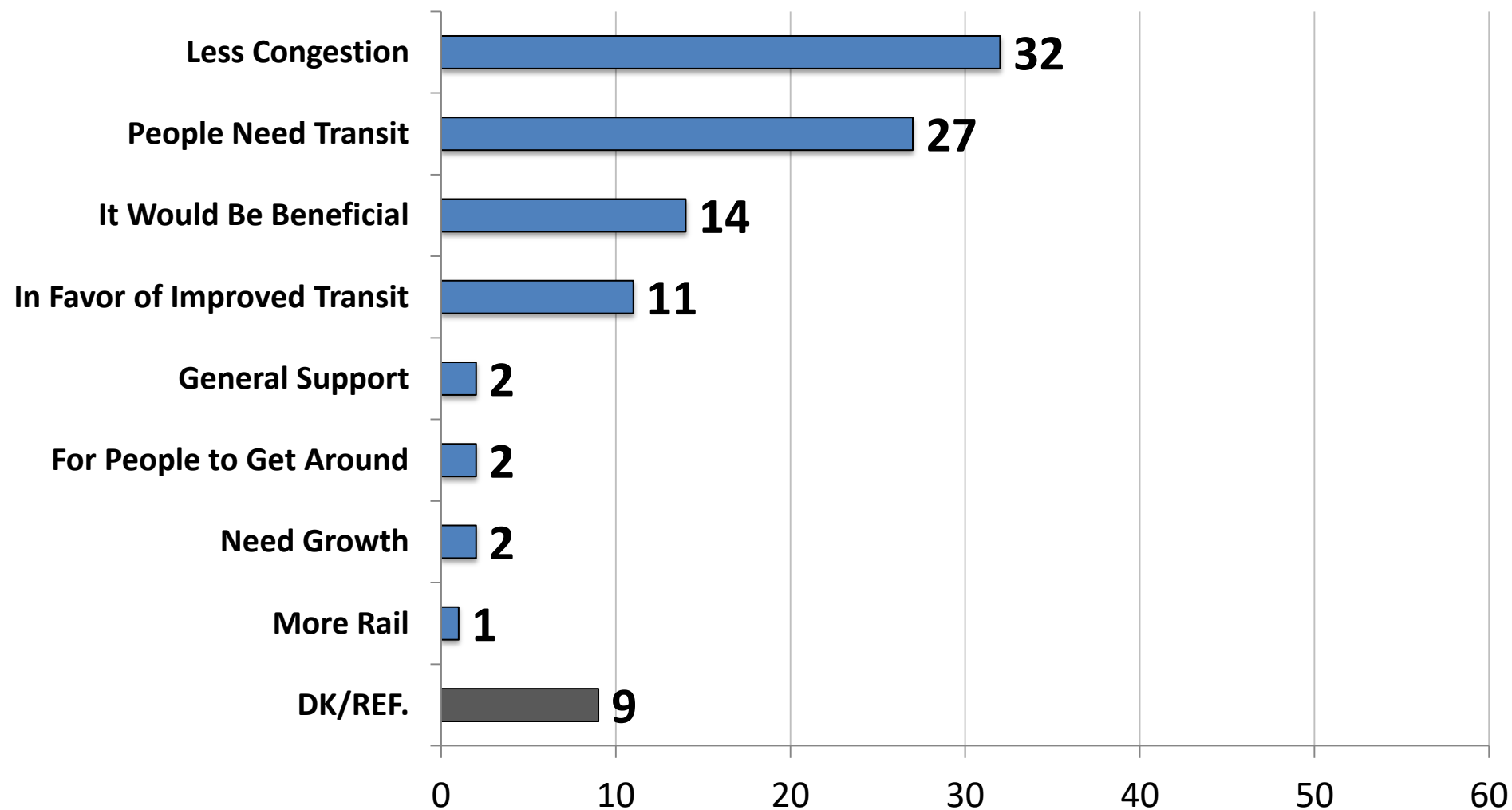
Transit Referendum:

“Shall a special sales and use tax of up to one percent be imposed in Cobb County for a period of time not to exceed 30 years and for the raising of funds for transit projects?”



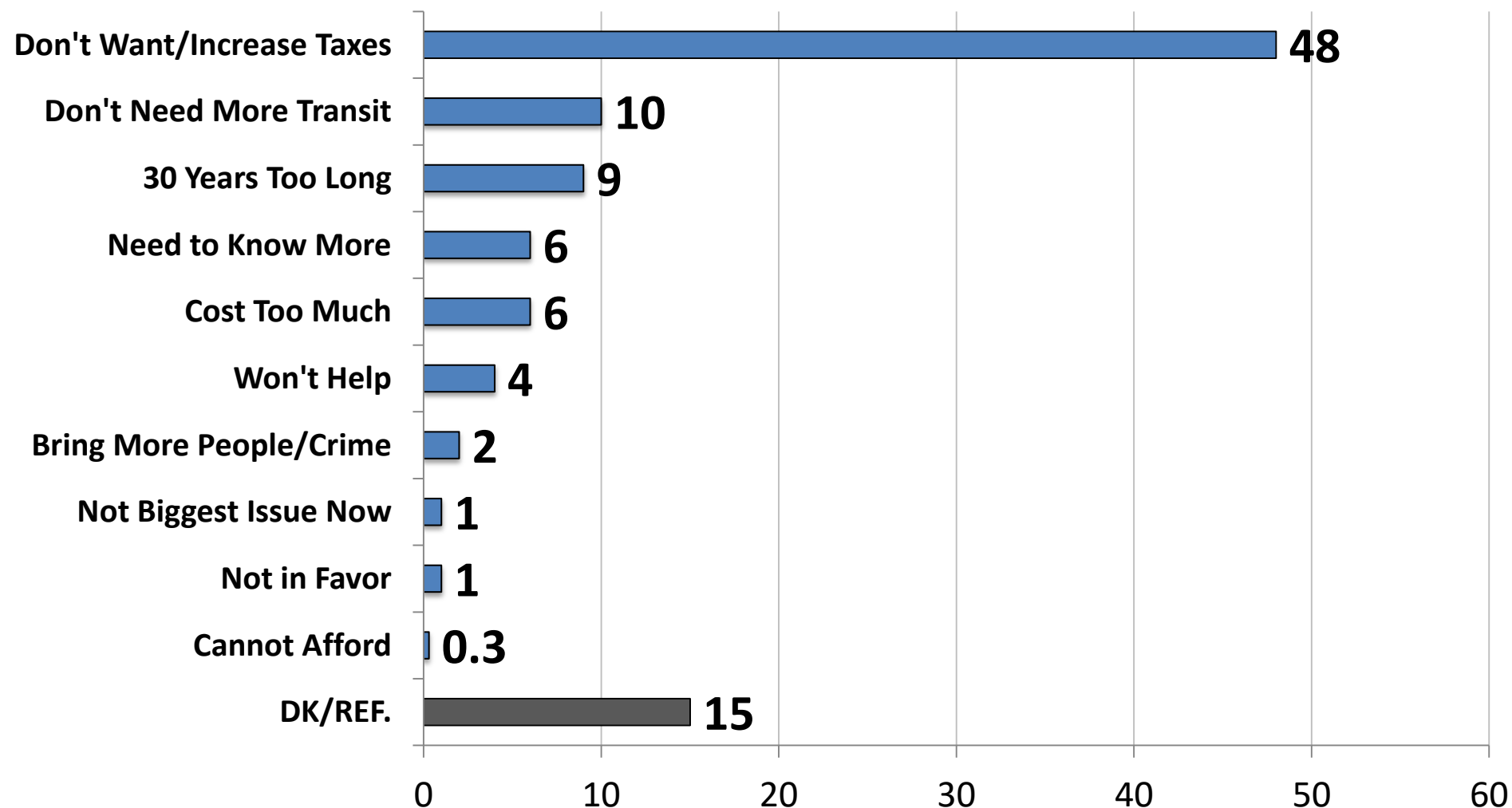
Why would you vote Yes, IN FAVOR of this proposal?

(Open-Ended; Among Those Who Vote YES)

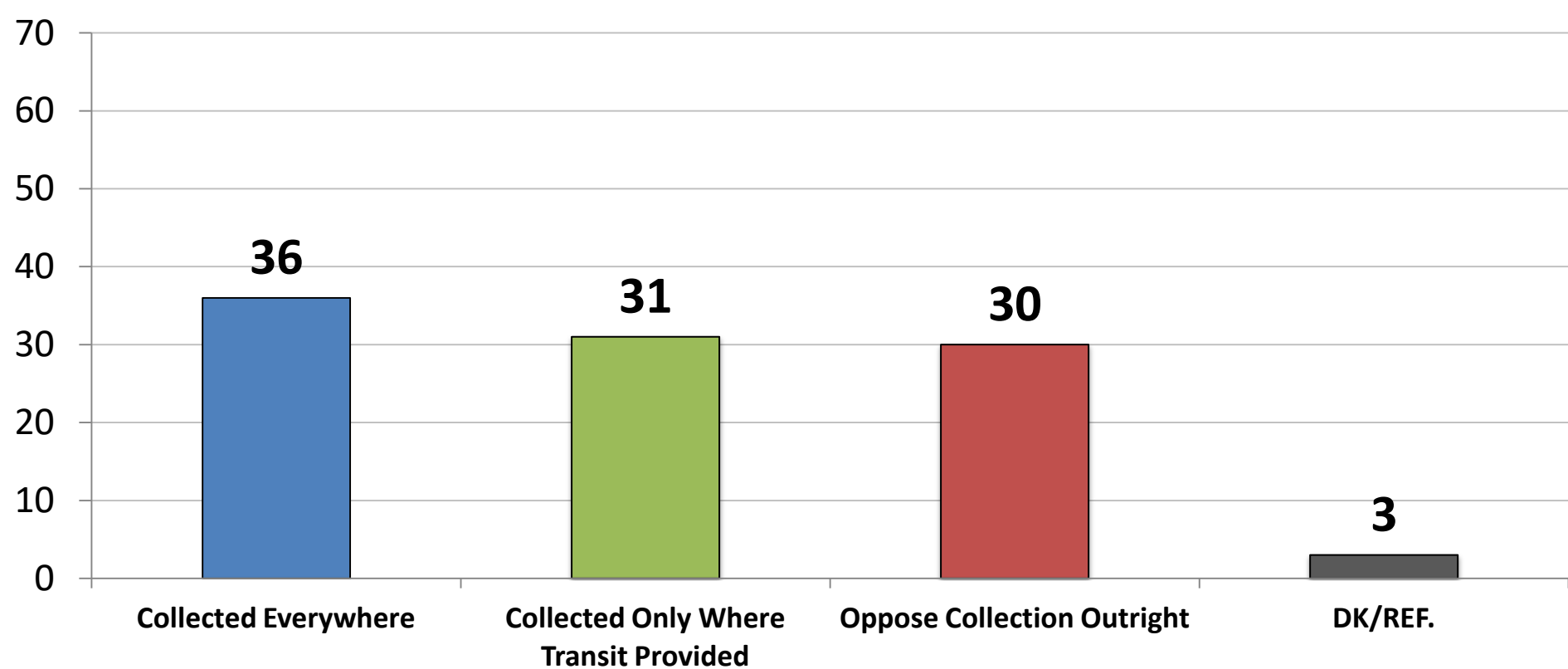


Why would you vote No, AGAINST this proposal or were undecided on this proposal?

(Open-Ended; Among Those Who Vote NO or UNDECIDED)



Now, let's say Cobb County were to create a new sales tax of up to one percent to fund transit projects that would include rail and bus, but the proposed plan would **NOT** serve the entire county. Knowing this, please tell me which of the following comes closest to your own personal opinion.



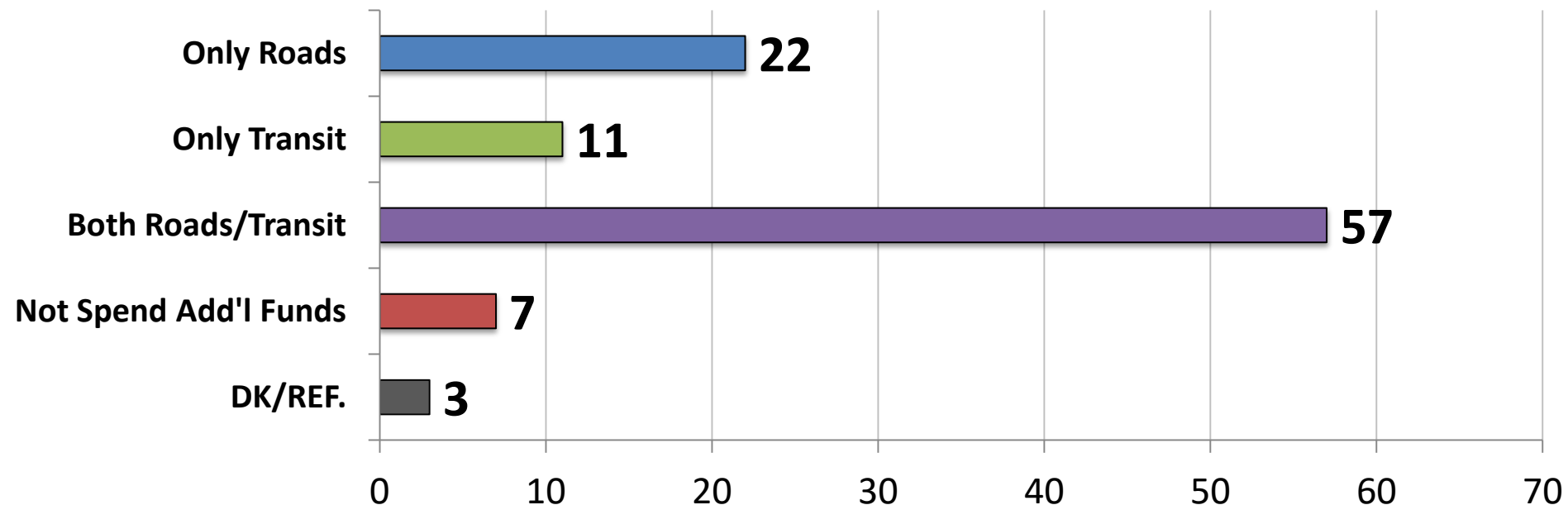
Which of the following comes closest to your own personal opinion on transportation funding?

*Cobb County should **ONLY** spend additional funds on road repaving, widening or building new roads*

*Cobb County should **ONLY** spend additional funds on transit projects, like rail and bus*

*Cobb County should spend additional funds on **BOTH** road improvement and transit projects*

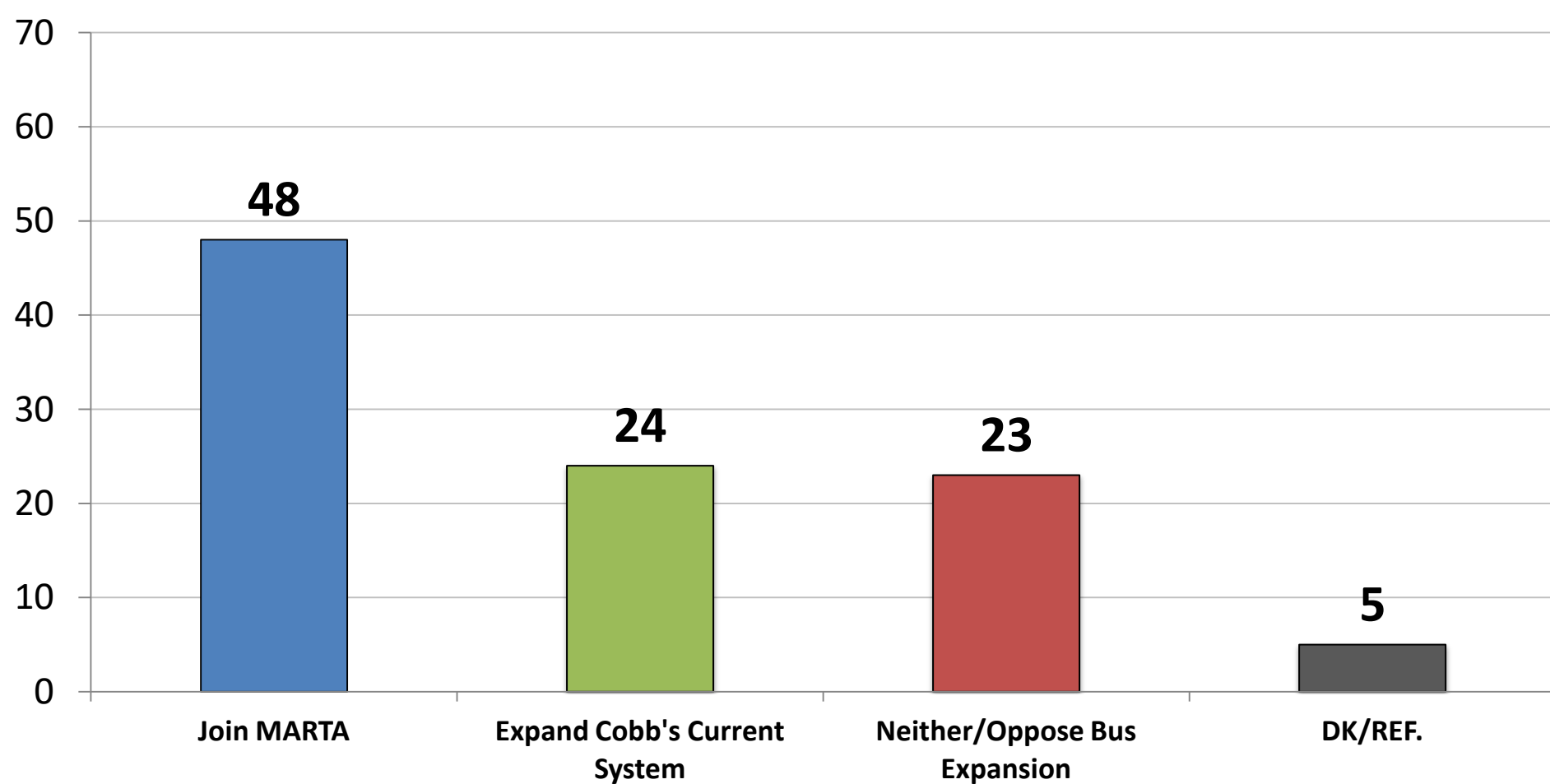
*Cobb County should **NOT** spend any additional funds on either road improvement or transit projects*



Part Three – Perceptions of MARTA

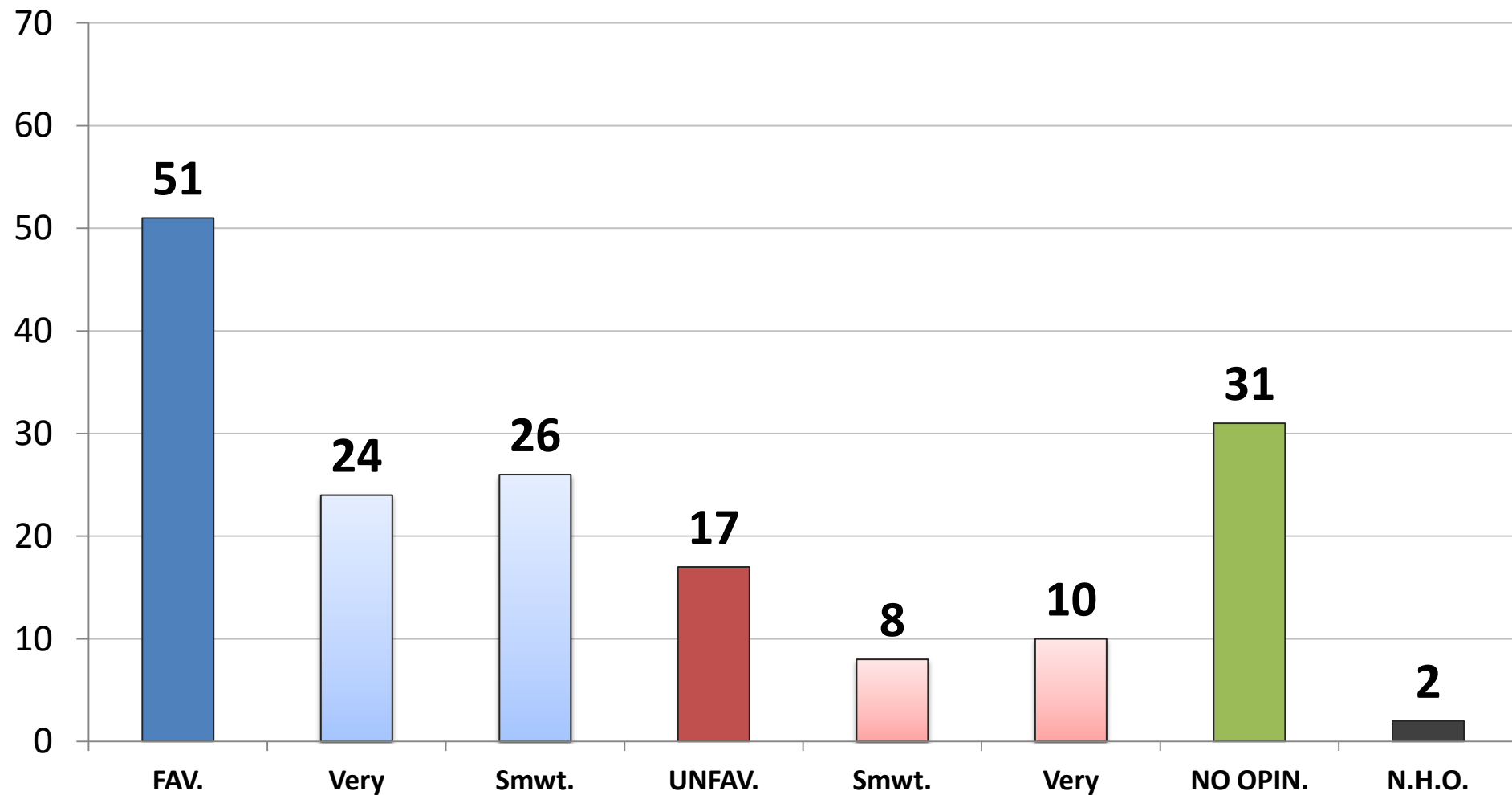


If Cobb County were to expand bus service, would you prefer Cobb County to...?



Opinion Rating:

MARTA

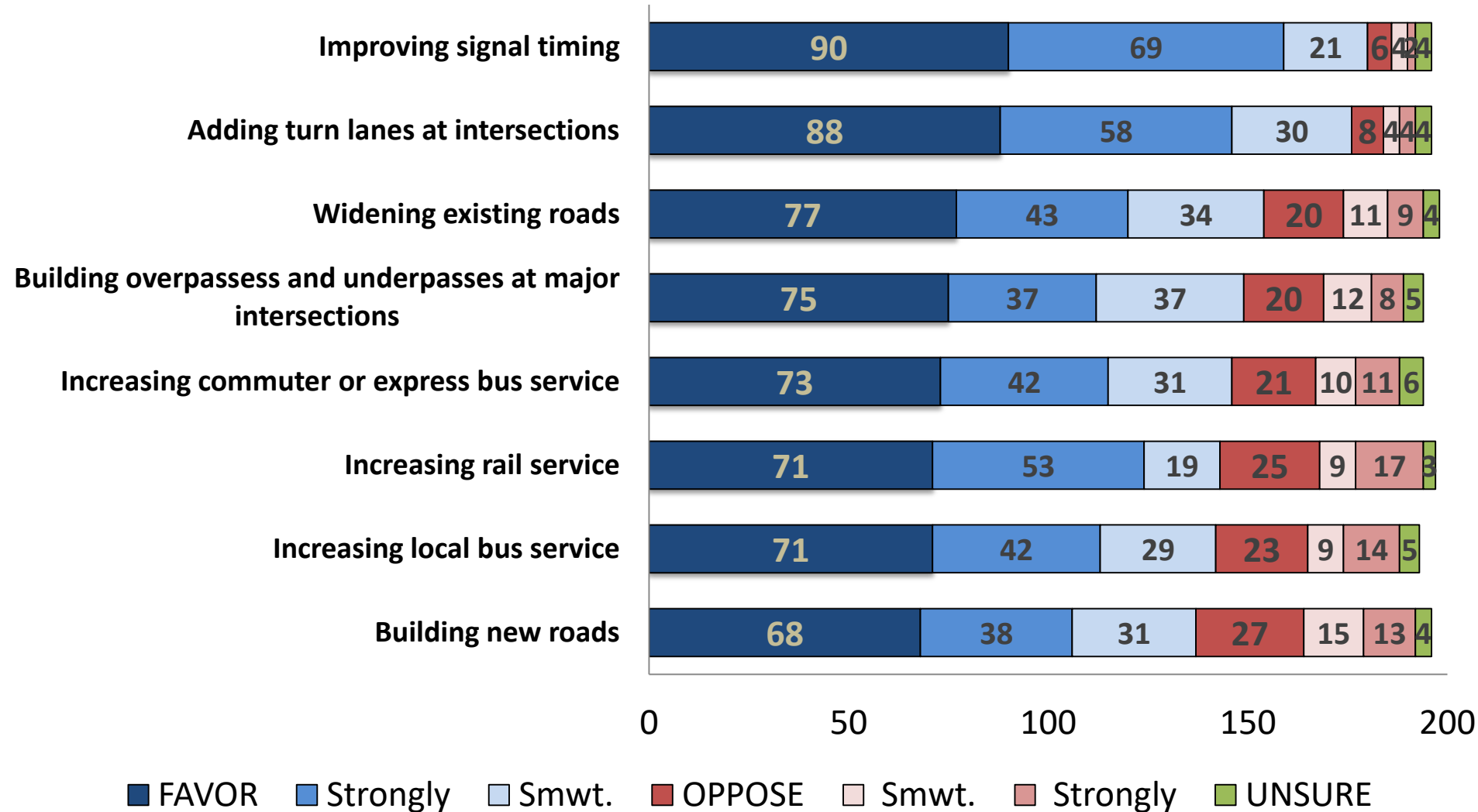


Part Four – Traffic & Service Reduction Proposals



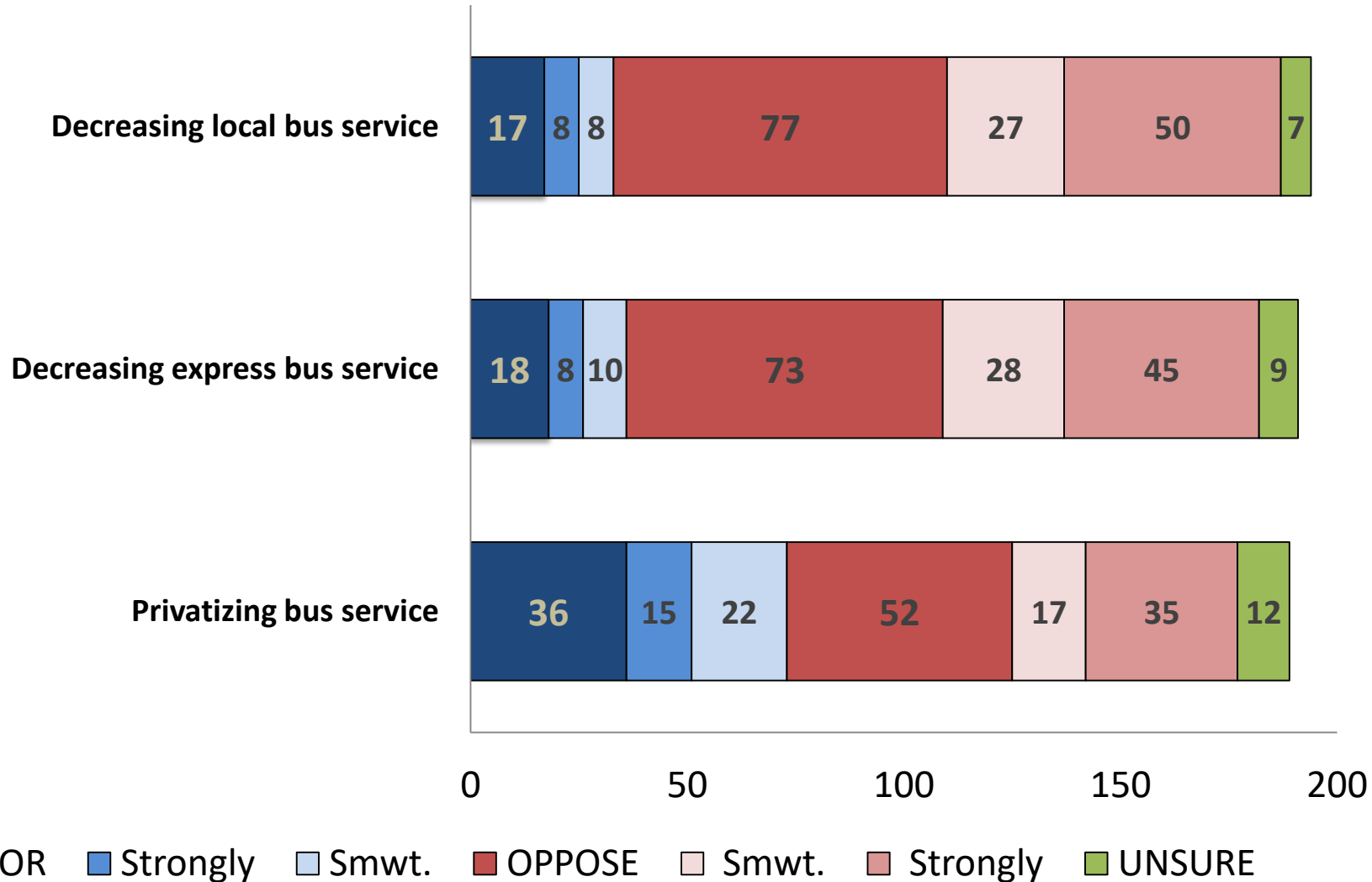
Traffic Reduction Proposals

(Ranked Greatest to Least by Total "Favor")

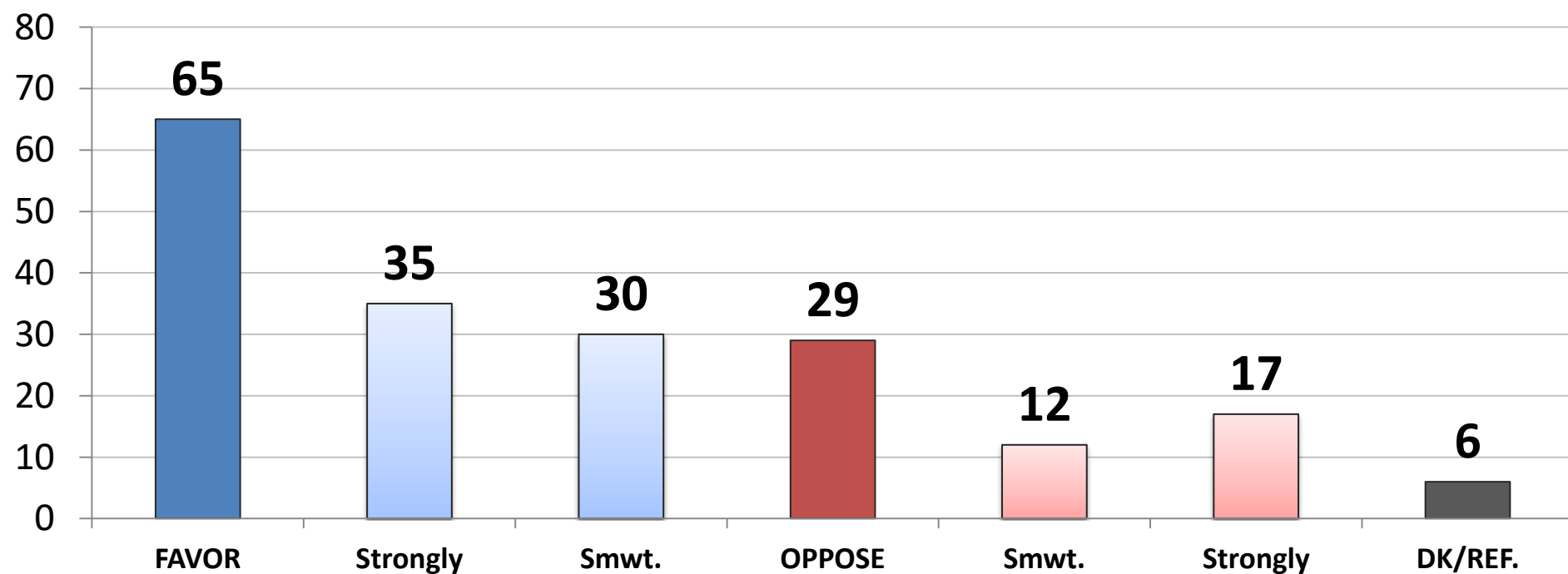


Service Reduction Proposals

(Ranked Greatest to Least by Total "Oppose")



Bus Rapid Transit, or BRT is a transit technology that achieves similar speeds, capacity and quality of service to rail transit. Bus rapid transit accomplishes this by having separate and dedicated lanes, rail-like stations versus basic bus shelters, traffic signal priority at intersections and larger train-like buses. Knowing this, please tell me if you would favor or oppose Bus Rapid Transit.

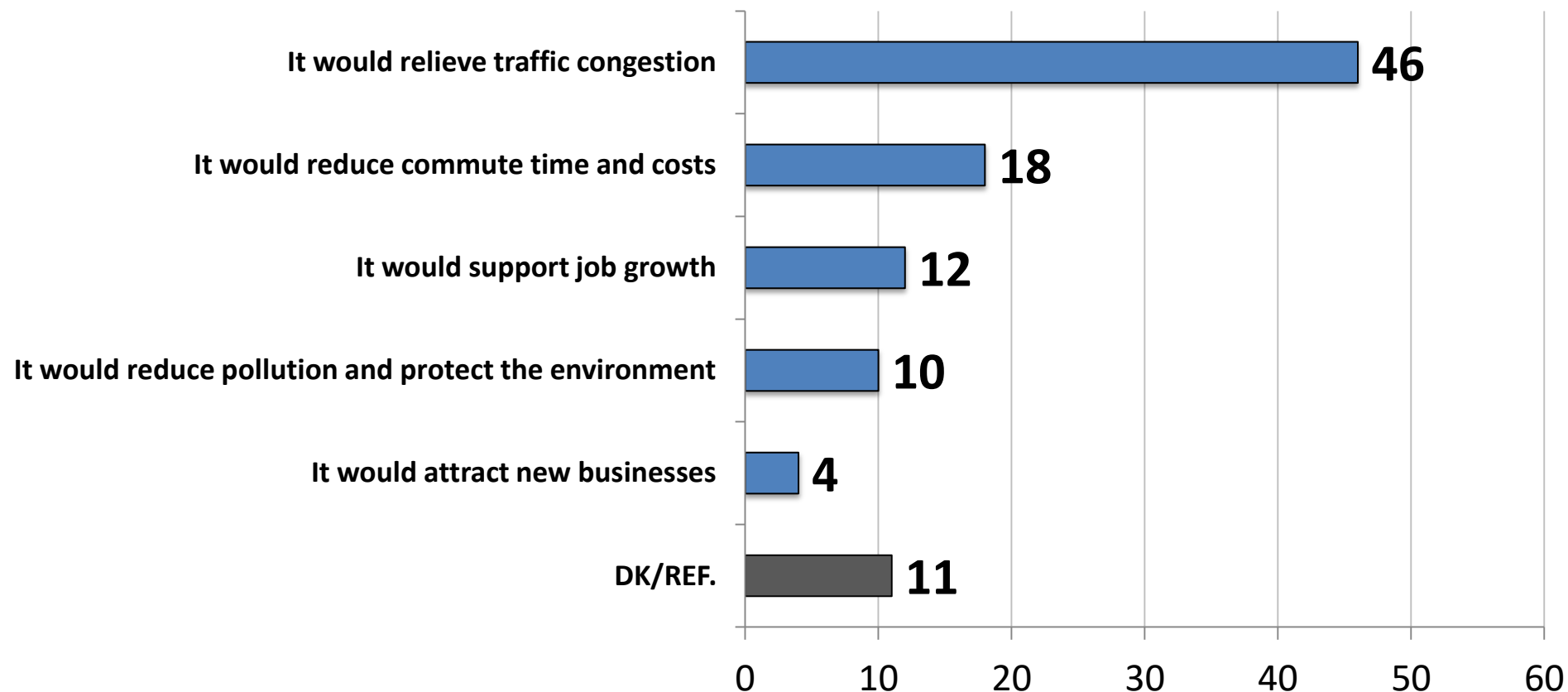


Part Five – Rail Transit Perceptions & Proposals



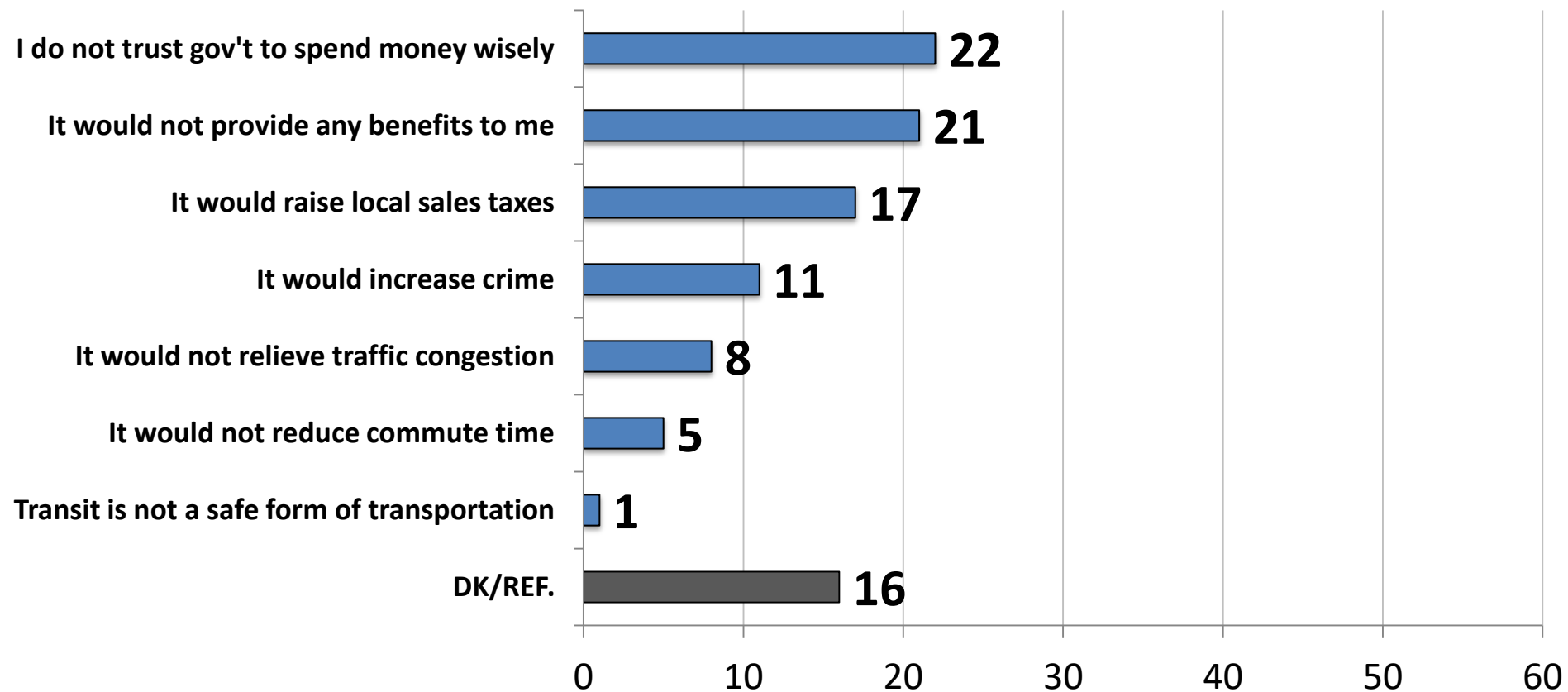
I am now going to read you a list of statements **IN FAVOR** of creating rail transit in Cobb County. Rail service would be operated by MARTA. After hearing all of these statements, please tell me which one is **MOST CONVINCING** to you.

(Closed-Ended; Ranked Greatest to Least)



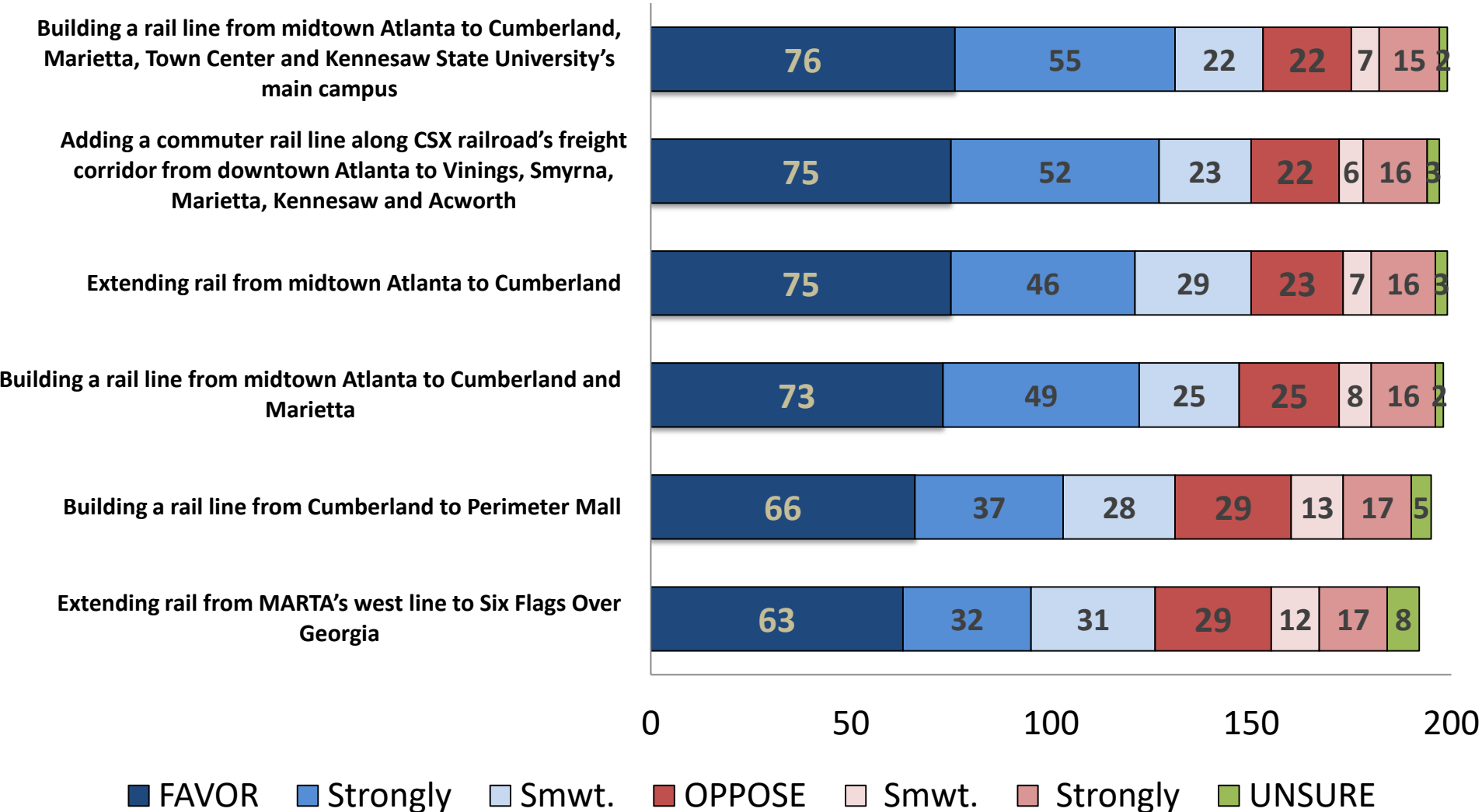
I am now going to read you a list of statements **AGAINST** creating rail transit in Cobb County. Rail service would be operated by MARTA. After hearing all of these statements, please tell me which one is **MOST CONVINCING** to you.

(Closed-Ended; Ranked Greatest to Least)



Rail Transit Proposals

(Ranked Greatest to Least by Total "Favor")

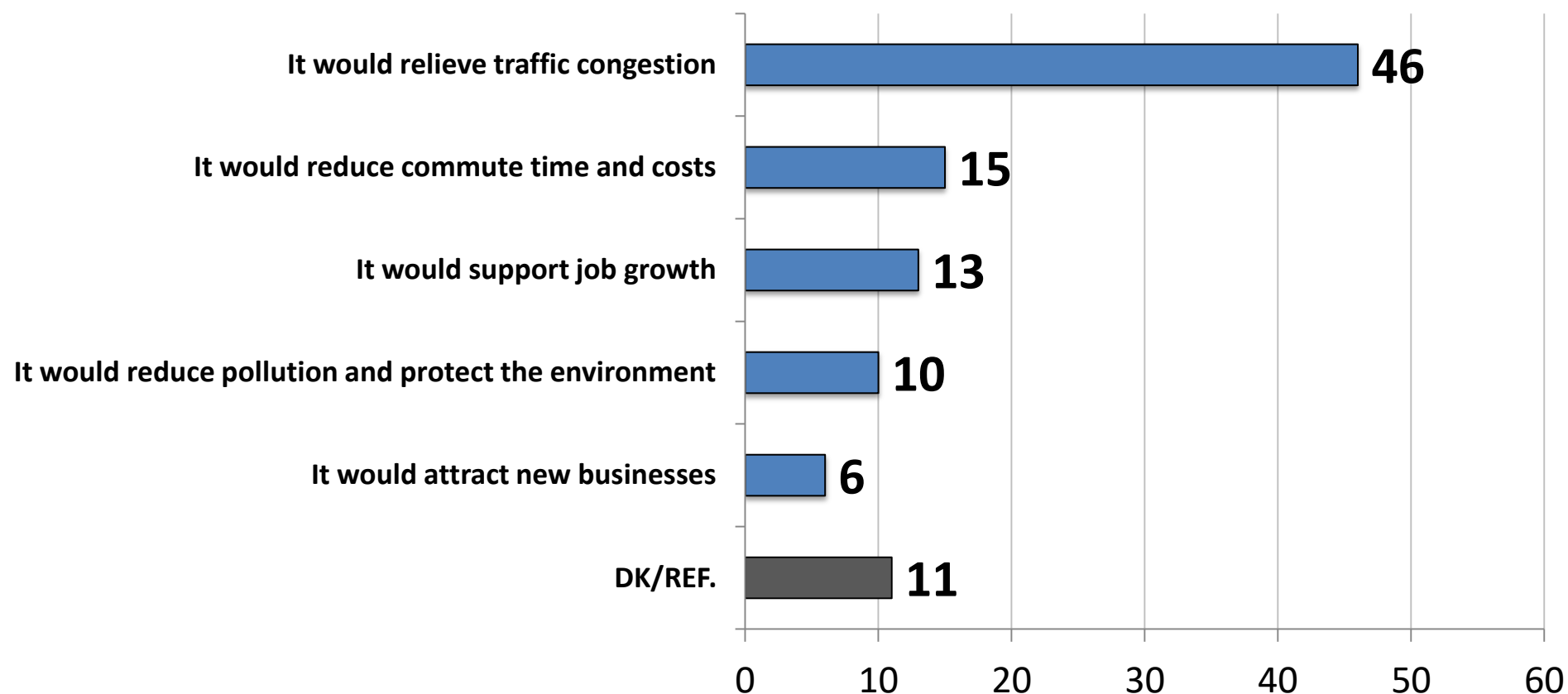


Part Six – Bus Service Perceptions & Proposals

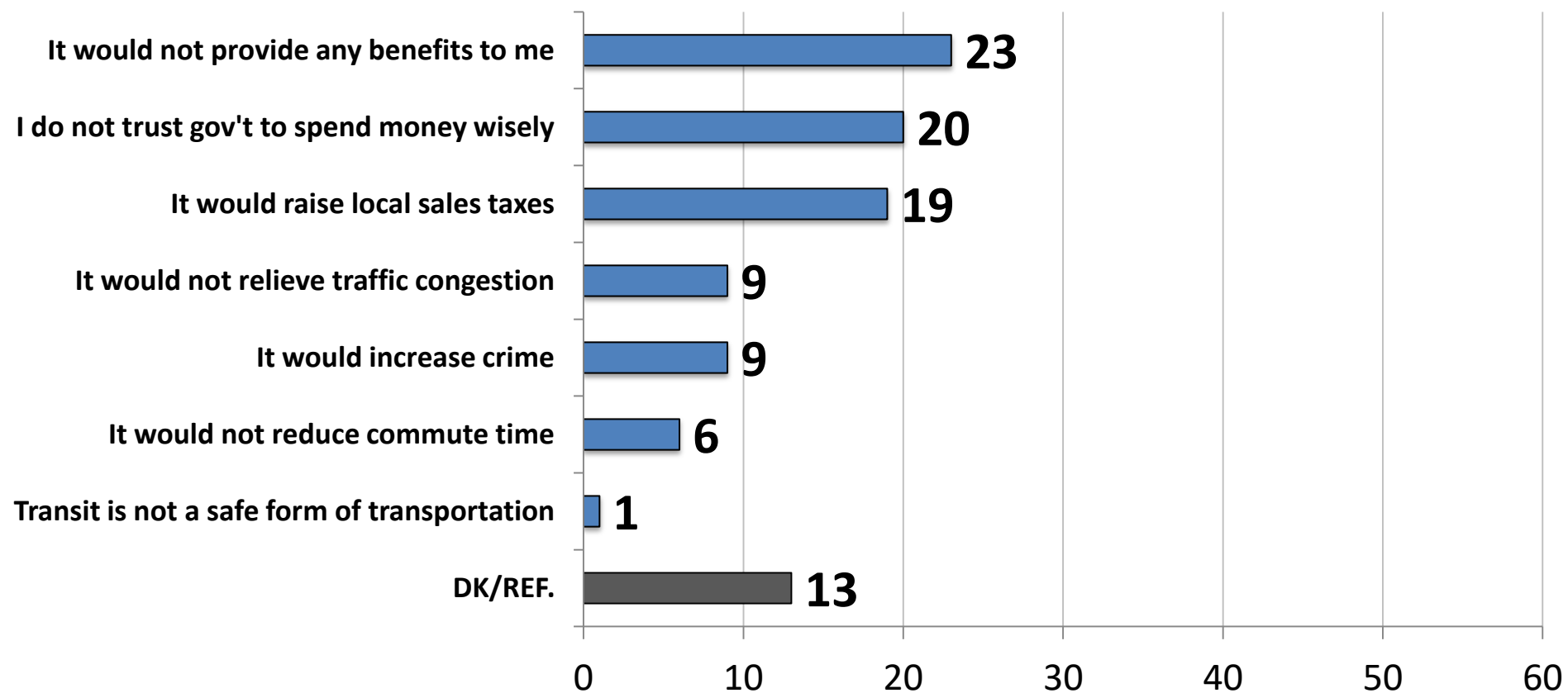


I am now going to read you a list of statements **IN FAVOR** of expanding bus service in Cobb County. Bus service could be operated by MARTA or Cobb County's current bus system. After hearing all of these statements, please tell me which one is **MOST CONVINCING** to you.

(Closed-Ended; Ranked Greatest to Least)

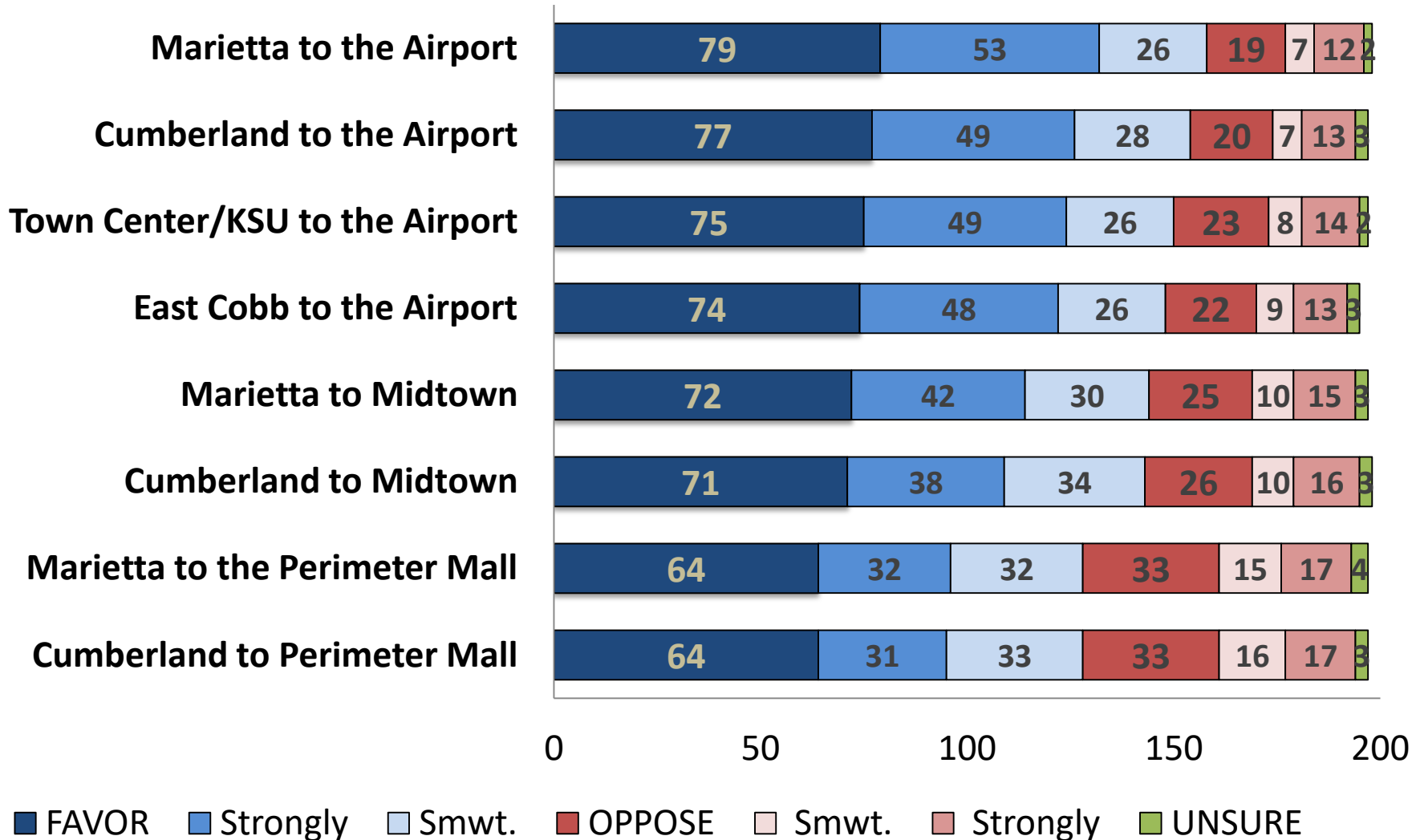


I am now going to read you a list of statements **AGAINST** expanding bus service in Cobb County. Bus service could be operated by MARTA or Cobb County's current bus system. After hearing all of these statements, please tell me which one is **MOST CONVINCING** to you.
(Closed-Ended; Ranked Greatest to Least)



Express Bus Service/BRT Proposals

(Ranked Greatest to Least by Total "Favor")



Demographic Summary

	<u>%</u>
Commission District One	26%
North	11%
South	15%
Commission District Two	27%
East Cobb	17%
Cumberland CID	10%
Commission District Three	24%
North	14%
South	10%
Commission District Four	23%
East	13%
West	9%
Commute Everyday	37%
Commute, But Not Everyday	14%
Do Not Commute	12%
Retired	29%
Not Employed	6%

	<u>%</u>
Residency: Ten Years or Less	30%
Residency: 11-20 Years	22%
Residency: Over 20 Years	47%
Not College Graduate	35%
College Graduate	64%
Income: Under \$50K	23%
Income: \$50K-\$100K	33%
Income: Over \$100K	34%
White	67%
African American	26%
Under 35	23%
36-45	18%
46-55	20%
56-65	19%
Over 65	19%
Men	45%
Women	55%



Executive Summary

- When voters were asked about the biggest problem facing Cobb County, the top open-ended response was “Traffic,” at 32%. This was the top answer by a large margin, as the second highest response was “Taxes” at a distant 9%. Rounding out the top five were “Zoning” (6%), “Homelessness” (6%) and “Education” (4%).
- When asked to say one or two words when hearing the word “transit,” the top verbatim response was “Bus” at 36%. “MARTA” was the second highest response at nearly a third of that (13%), followed by “Not Good/Lacking/Need More” (12%).
- Greater than six in ten (61%) believe that Cobb County should spend more on transit. Just 8% said Cobb County should spend less on transit and 26% said the same amount should be spent.
- By a 20-point margin, voters favor creating a new sales tax of up to one percent to fund transit projects that would include rail and bus, 59% to 39%.
- Among those who favored the one percent sales tax for transit, “Less Traffic Congestion” was the top verbatim reason for their support, at 43%. “People without a Car Need It” was the next highest response, at 22%.
- Among those who did not favor the one percent sales tax for transit, “Taxes are High Enough” was overwhelmingly the top response, at 53%. “High Cost” came in at a distant second, at 13%.
- Voters were then asked how much more in sales taxes they would be willing to pay personally to fund these projects. The responses nearly mirrored those of the proposal, with 39% saying they would either not pay anything or oppose an additional sales tax, with 59% saying they would pay something additional. Included in the 59% are 12% who would pay a quarter percent more, 17% who would pay a half percent more, 26% who would pay a full percent more and 4% who would pay more than a full percent.

Executive Summary

- The transit referendum vote with the actual ballot language produced a closer result, with 54% voting YES, 45% voting NO and just 1% Undecided. Furthermore, 33% would “definitely” vote NO compared to 38% who would “definitely” vote YES. This indicates that the intensity is stronger among the opposition, as the overall vote is YES-NO +9 while the “definitely” YES-NO is +5.
- Among those voting YES, the top verbatim reasons for their support were “Less Congestion (32%), “People Need Transit” (27%), “Would Be Beneficial” (14%) and “In Favor of Improved Transit” (11%).
- Among those not voting YES, the top verbatim reason for their opposition was “Don’t Want/Increase Taxes” (48%). This matches the nature of the opposition seen previously in the concept question.
- Overall, 67% of voters believe in at least some type of collection for a transit sales tax if a proposed plan did not serve the entire County. A slight plurality, 36%, believe it should be collected everywhere in the County and 31% believe it should only be collected in the areas of the County where the services would be provided. Three in ten, 30%, oppose outright the collection of a new transit sales tax regardless of the location.
- Greater than half, 57%, believe that Cobb County should spend additional funds on both road improvement and transit projects. One in three only prefers one or the other, with 22% favoring “Roads Only” and 11% favoring “Transit Only.” Just 7% believe Cobb County should not spend any additional funds.

Executive Summary

- Voters were then given a number of traffic reduction proposals. The most popular one was “improving signal timing” (90% Favor to 6% Oppose). Next best (but still within the margin of error) was “adding turning lanes at intersections “ (88% Favor to 8% Oppose). Rounding out the top five were “widening existing roads “(77% to 20%), “building overpasses and underpasses” (77% to 20%) and “increasing commuter or express bus service” (73% to 21%). “Increasing rail service” (71% to 25%) was similar to “increasing local bus service” (71% to 23%). The least popular proposal, although still having a greater than two to one margin of favorability, was “building new roads” (68% to 27%).
- Majorities of voters were opposed to all three of the following proposals “decreasing local bus service (17% to 77%), “decreasing express bus service” (18% to 73%) and “privatizing bus service” (36% to 52%).
- After hearing a description, 65% would favor Bus Rapid Transit and 29% would oppose it. The BRT proposal has lower support than all of the previous traffic reduction proposals, however it was the only one to mention “transit.”
- If Cobb County were to expand bus service, voters prefer joining MARTA over expanding Cobb’s current bus system by a 24-point margin, 48% to 24%. Combined, 72% favor expanding bus service. Nearly one in four, 23%%, oppose expanding bus service.
- MARTA has a three to one net positive image rating, 51% Favorable to 17% Unfavorable. Among those who are favorable, 24% are “very favorable” and 26% are “somewhat favorable.” Another 31% have No Opinion and just 2% have never heard of MARTA. While opinions vary by sub-groups, there is no instance where MARTA is a “net negative,” meaning the unfavorable rating is higher than the favorable rating.

Executive Summary

- Voters were given a list of five statements in favor of creating rail transit and asked which one was most convincing, regardless of their position. The top argument was “relieving traffic congestion” at 46%. The next best argument was “reducing commute time and costs,” which was nearly 20-points lower at 18%, followed by “support job growth” (12%), “reduce pollution and protect the environment” (10%) and “attract new businesses” (4%).
- Voters were then given a list of seven statements against creating rail transit. “Do not trust government to spend money wisely” and “would not provide any benefits to me personally” were the top two persuasive arguments, 22% and 21%, respectively. The third best argument was “it would raise local sales taxes” (17%), followed by “it would increase crime” (11%), “it would not relieve traffic congestion” (8%), “it would not reduce commute time and costs” (5%) and “transit is not a safe form of transportation” (1%).
- Support for a total of six rail transit proposals were tested and no fewer than 63% preferred them. The top proposal was a rail line from midtown to Cumberland, Marietta, Town Center and KSU, 76% Favor to 22% Oppose. By nearly similar margins, voters favor a commuter line from Atlanta to Vinings, Smyrna, Marietta, Kennesaw and Acworth (75% to 22%) and extending rail from midtown to Cumberland (75% to 23%). A rail line from midtown to Cumberland and Marietta drew a response of 73% Favor to 25% Oppose and a rail line from Cumberland to Perimeter Mall was 66% Favor to 29% Oppose. The lowest scoring proposal was extending rail from MARTA to Six Flags, 63% Favor to 29% Oppose.

Executive Summary

- Voters were then given a list of five statements in favor of expanding bus service and the responses were proportioned very similarly to the same question for rail. The top argument was “relieving traffic congestion” at 46%. The next best argument was a distant “reducing commute time and costs,” at 15%, followed by “support job growth” (13%), “reduce pollution and protect the environment” (10%) and “attract new businesses” (6%).
- The seven statements against expanding bus service were also similar to that about rail. “Would not provide any benefits to me personally” and “do not trust government to spend money wisely” were the top two persuasive arguments, at 23% and 20%, respectively. The third best argument was “it would raise local sales taxes” (19%), followed by “it would not relieve traffic congestion” (9%), “it would increase crime” (9%), “it would not reduce commute time and costs” (6%) and “transit is not a safe form of transportation” (1%).
- Voters were then given a total of eight express bus service proposals. The top four proposals all containing the Airport as a destination – Marietta to Airport (79% Favor to 19% Oppose), Cumberland to Airport (77% to 20%), Town Center/KSU to Airport (75% to 23%) and East Cobb to Airport (74% to 22%). The next two highest proposals had Midtown as a destination – Marietta to Midtown (72% to 25%) and Cumberland to Midtown (71% to 26%). The lowest two proposals had a noticeable drop in favorability (although still preferred by two to one margins) and similarly had Perimeter Mall as a destination – Marietta to Perimeter Mall (64% to 33%) and Cumberland to Perimeter Mall (64% to 33%). Comparatively, the Cumberland to Perimeter Mall rail line was the second lowest scoring rail transit proposal (66% to 29%).

**New York Office**

566 South Route 303
Blauvelt, NY 10913
845-365-2000

D.C./Virginia Office

919 Prince Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
703-518-4445

Southeast Office

Miami, Florida
845-893-5572

www.mclaughlinonline.com