



TO: Interested Parties
FROM: John Whaley and Yule Kim, Goodwin Simon Strategic Research
RE: California Voter Attitudes on the Delta Tunnel
DATE: January 26, 2021

This memo summarizes key findings from a survey of 600 registered voters across California conducted from December 16 – December 29, 2020, and includes an oversample of Black voters to achieve n101 Black voters overall. Respondents could take the survey via phone or online; in English or Spanish. A detailed description of the survey methodology can be found at the end of this memo. The survey has an overall margin of error of ± 4.0 percentage points (higher for subgroups).

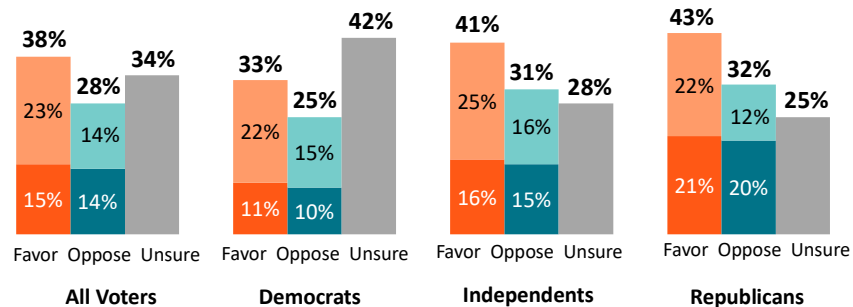
KEY FINDINGS

- **Based on limited information, 38 percent of California voters favor the Delta Tunnel, 28 percent oppose the Tunnel, and more than a third (34%) are unsure.** These results are largely consistent across party, with a plurality of voters favoring construction of the Delta Tunnel. Notably, the very large proportion of unsure voters suggests that many voters lack sufficient understanding of either the Delta Tunnel, or the Bay-Delta itself.

Favor or Oppose Delta Tunnel (Initial Vote by Party)

Do you FAVOR or OPPOSE the construction of the Delta Tunnel, which would move water from northern California to central and southern California to be used for agricultural and urban purposes?

■ Strongly favor ■ Somewhat favor ■ Somewhat oppose ■ Strongly oppose ■ Unsure



- **After learning basic facts about the Bay-Delta and the Delta Tunnel, a majority (55%) of California voters oppose the Tunnel compared to less than a third (30%) of voters who remain in favor— a 27-point shift toward opposition.** Opposition increases 21 points among Democrats (46% oppose to 33% favor); 27 points among Independents (58% oppose to 30% favor); and 35 points among Republicans (67% oppose to 26% favor). In their open-ended responses, voters cite environmental damage and high costs as the primary reasons they oppose the Tunnel’s construction.

Description of Bay-Delta Provided to Respondents

The Delta covers 1,100 square miles of lowlands and is located south of Sacramento and east of San Francisco, where California’s two longest rivers meet and flow into the San Francisco Bay. The Delta is the hub of California’s water distribution system, supplying water to many of California’s farms and drinking water to more than 25 million people—nearly two-thirds of the California population. The Delta is also a critical breeding ground and habitat for nearly 750 species of plants, fish, and wildlife, including wild salmon. In addition, freshwater flows through the Delta into the San Francisco Bay and helps refresh the Bay.

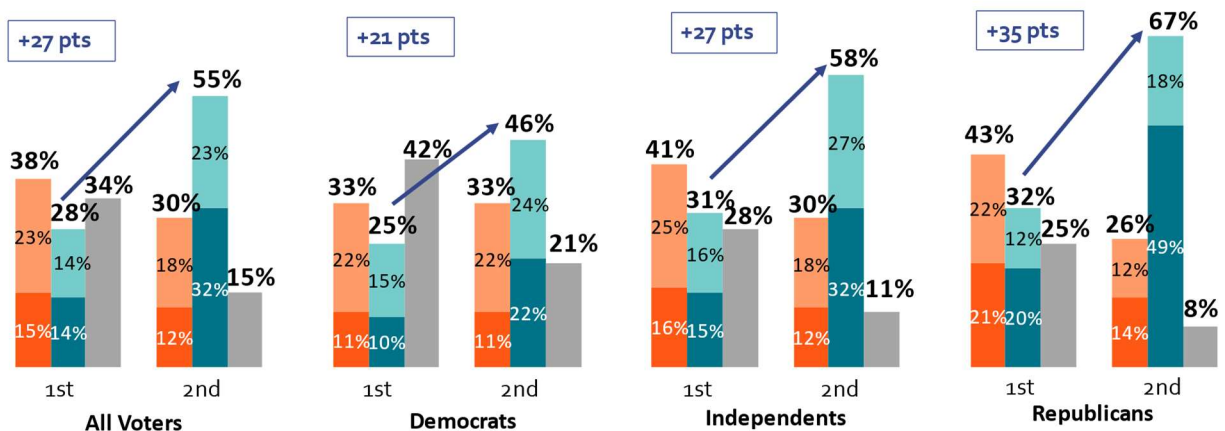
Description of Delta Tunnel Provided to Respondents

Governor Gavin Newsom’s administration has called for the construction of a large, underground Delta Tunnel that would divert trillions of gallons of freshwater away from the rivers that flow into the Delta and San Francisco Bay, and move that water to the southern and central parts of California. The Newsom administration estimates that the Delta Tunnel will cost at least \$15.9 billion.

Favor or Oppose Delta Tunnel (Second Vote by Party)

Having heard/read more, do you FAVOR or OPPOSE the construction of the Delta Tunnel?

Strongly favor Somewhat favor Somewhat oppose Strongly oppose Unsure

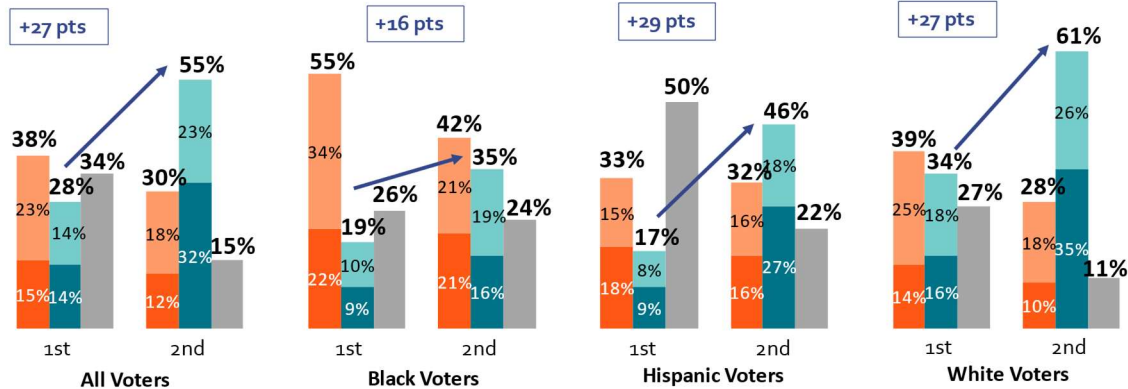


- **Opposition to the Tunnel also grows significantly among Black, Hispanic, and white voters.** After learning more about the Delta and the Tunnel, opposition increases 16 points among Black voters (35% oppose to 42% favor); 29 points among Hispanic voters (46% oppose to 32% favor); and 27 points among white voters (61% oppose to 28% favor).

Favor or Oppose Delta Tunnel (Second Vote by Race)

Having heard/read more, do you FAVOR or OPPOSE the construction of the Delta Tunnel?

Strongly favor Somewhat favor Somewhat oppose Strongly oppose Unsure

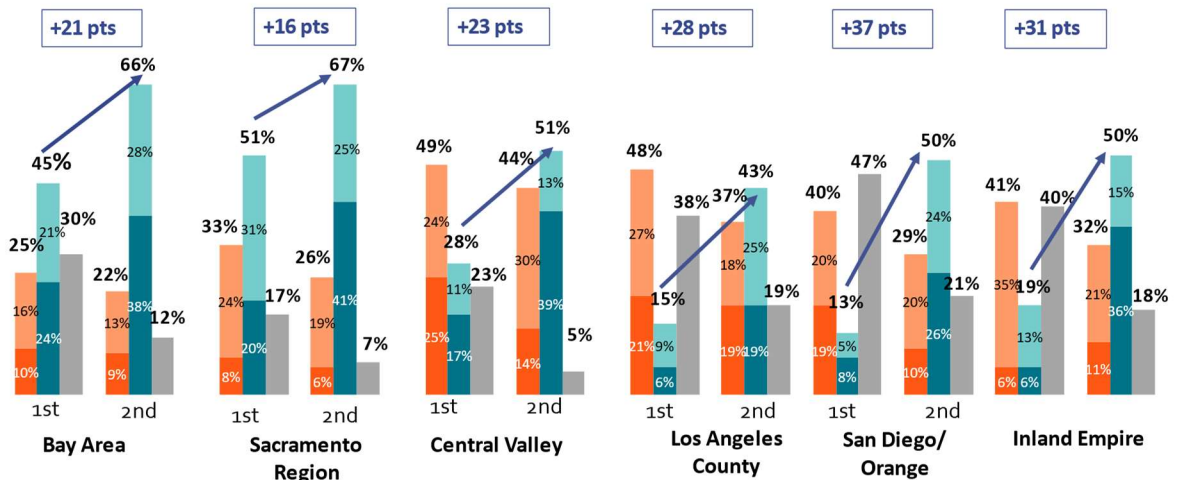


- Opposition to the Tunnel also increases across all regions, including Southern California.** In each California region, introducing background information on the Bay-Delta and the Delta Tunnel moves large portions of initially unsure voters to oppose the Tunnel. For example, opposition to the Tunnel increases 23 points in the Central Valley (51% oppose to 44% favor), 28 points in Los Angeles County (43% oppose to 37% favor), 27 points in San Diego/Orange County (50% oppose to 29% favor) and 31 points in the Inland Empire (50% oppose to 32% favor).

Favor or Oppose Delta Tunnel (Second Vote by Region)

Having heard/read more, do you FAVOR or OPPOSE the construction of the Delta Tunnel?

Strongly favor Somewhat favor Somewhat oppose Strongly oppose Unsure

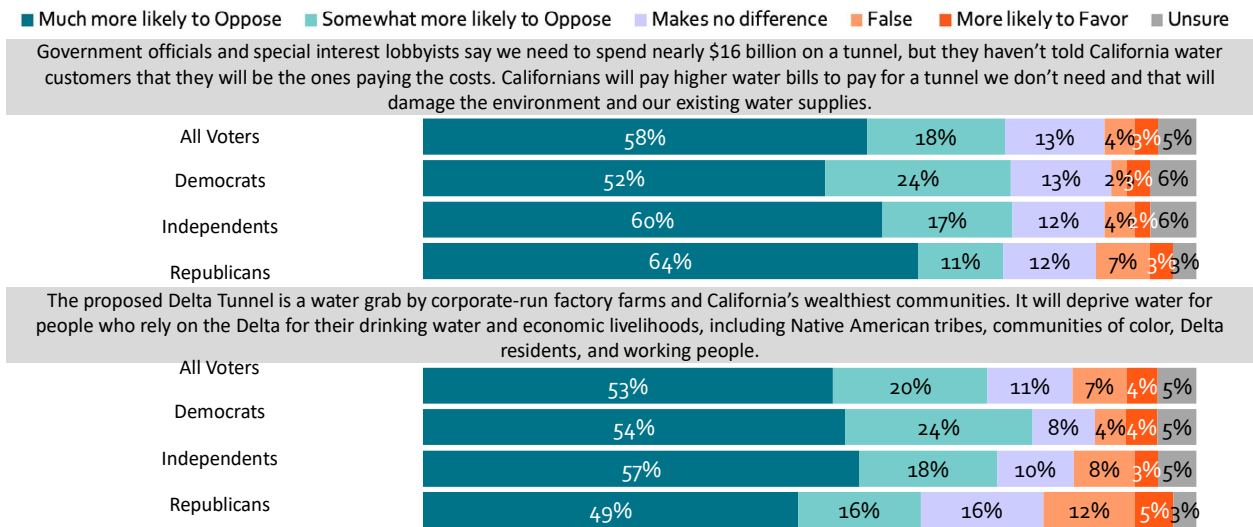


- Voters respond strongly to all opposition messaging tested.** In our experience, effective messages must hit a threshold of 30 percent or higher in the intensity measure. Notably, all fifteen messages tested in opposition to the Tunnel far exceed that threshold, with intensity measures of at least 48 percent in each case.

- **The top two opposition messages cite the Delta Tunnel’s high cost and highlight how it will deprive water for people who rely on the Delta for their drinking water and economic livelihoods**—including Native American tribes, communities of color, Delta residents, and working people. Over half of voters say these messages make them *much* more likely to oppose the Tunnel (58% and 53% respectively), and with about one in five voters saying they make them *somewhat* more likely to oppose the Delta Tunnel (18% and 20% respectively). These results are largely consistent across Democrats, Independents, and Republicans.

Top Messages to Oppose Delta Tunnel: by Party

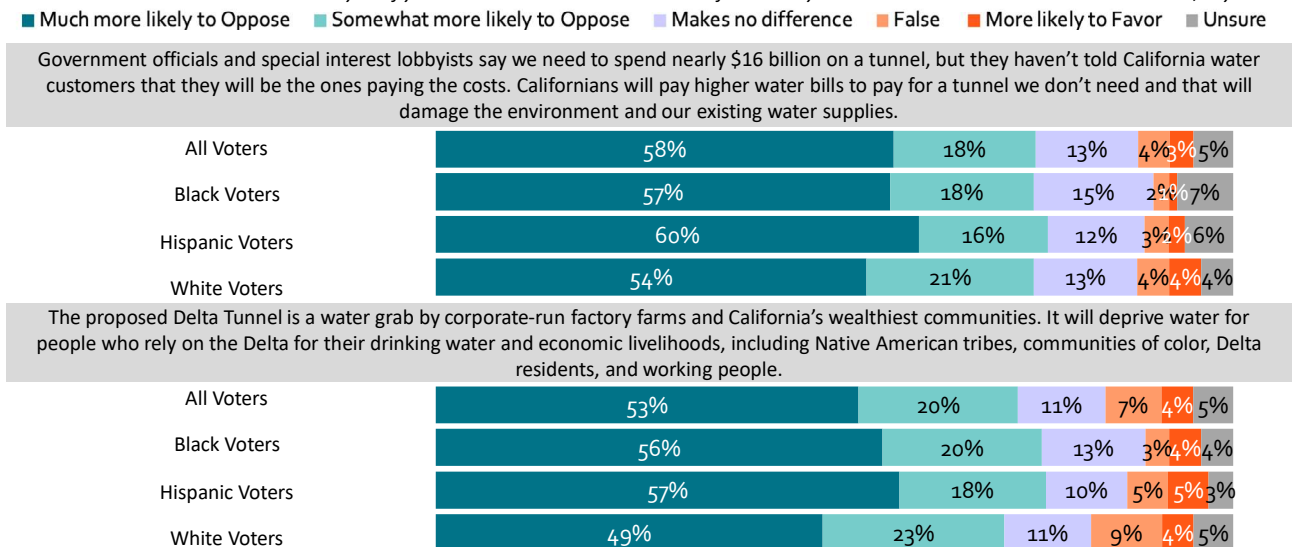
Please indicate if the statement makes you **MUCH MORE LIKELY TO OPPOSE** constructing the Delta Tunnel, **SOMEWHAT MORE LIKELY TO OPPOSE**, or whether it **MAKES NO DIFFERENCE** to you. If you think the statement is **FALSE** or if it makes you **MORE LIKELY TO FAVOR** the Delta Tunnel, say that.



- **These messages earn especially high marks among Black and Hispanic voters**, with solid majorities of Black and Hispanic voters *much* more likely to oppose Tunnel construction after hearing each message.

Top Messages to Oppose Delta Tunnel: by Race

Please indicate if the statement makes you **MUCH MORE LIKELY TO OPPOSE** constructing the Delta Tunnel, **SOMEWHAT MORE LIKELY TO OPPOSE**, or whether it **MAKES NO DIFFERENCE** to you. If you think the statement is **FALSE** or if it makes you **MORE LIKELY TO FAVOR** the Delta Tunnel, say that.



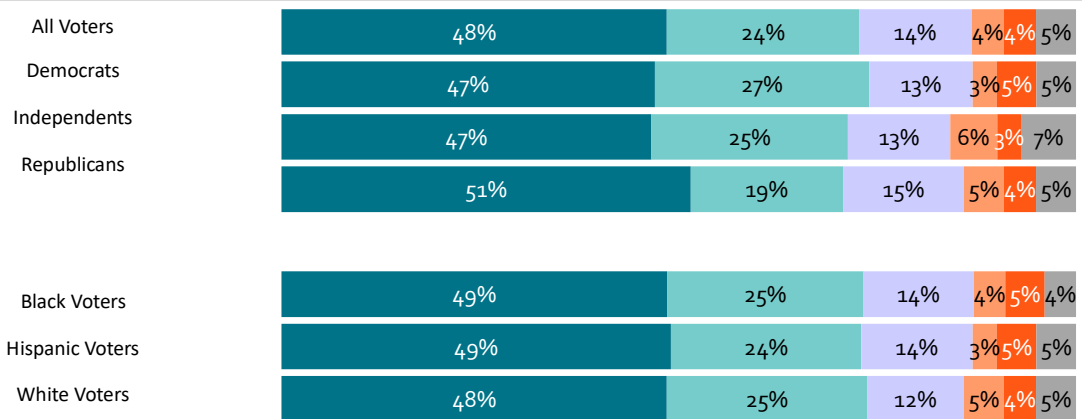
- Another effective message describes how the environmentally-destructive Tunnel would divert trillions of gallons of freshwater from the Delta’s sensitive and complex estuary.** Nearly half of all California voters (48%) say they are *much* more likely to oppose the tunnel for after hearing this message, with another 24 percent who say the message makes them *somewhat* more likely to oppose the Delta Tunnel after hearing this message. As the chart below illustrates, this ecological message performs effectively across both race and party ID.

Likelihood to Oppose Delta Tunnel: Party and Race

For each of the following, please indicate if the statement makes you MUCH MORE LIKELY TO OPPOSE constructing the Delta Tunnel, SOMEWHAT MORE LIKELY TO OPPOSE it, or whether it MAKES NO DIFFERENCE to you. If you think the statement is FALSE or if it makes you MORE LIKELY TO FAVOR the Delta Tunnel, say/indicate that.

■ Much more likely to Oppose
 ■ Somewhat more likely to Oppose
 ■ Makes no difference
 ■ False
 ■ More likely to Favor
 ■ Unsure

The Delta’s future is threatened by the massive Delta Tunnel, an environmentally destructive and expensive project that would divert trillions of gallons of freshwater from the Delta’s sensitive and complex estuary.



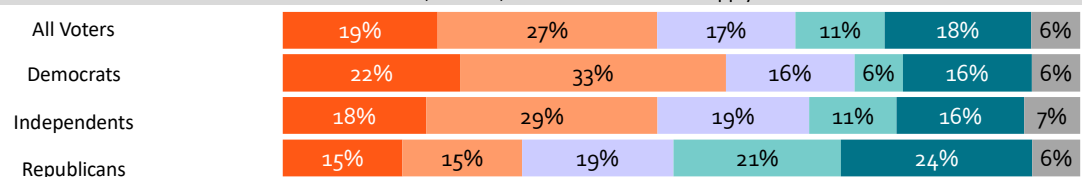
- By contrast, pro-Delta Tunnel messages fare poorly, with each falling well short of the 30 percent threshold for an effective message.** This includes a message promoting the Tunnel as a way to modernize our outdated water infrastructure and secure a clean, reliable, and affordable water supply for millions of Californians.

Top Messages In Favor of the Delta Tunnel

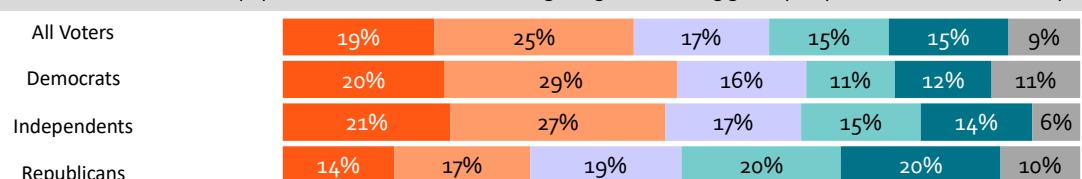
Please indicate if the statement makes you MUCH MORE LIKELY TO FAVOR constructing the Delta Tunnel, SOMEWHAT MORE LIKELY TO FAVOR it, or whether it MAKES NO DIFFERENCE to you. If you think the statement is FALSE or if it makes you MORE LIKELY TO OPPOSE constructing the Delta Tunnel, just say so.

■ Much more likely to Favor
 ■ Somewhat more likely to Favor
 ■ Makes no difference
 ■ False
 ■ More likely to Oppose
 ■ Unsure

The Delta’s deteriorating dirt levees will eventually be overwhelmed by sea-level rise and intensifying storms caused by climate change. When the levees fail, two-thirds of California’s freshwater supply could be contaminated with salt water. We need the Delta Tunnel to modernize our outdated water infrastructure and secure a clean, reliable, and affordable water supply for millions of Californians.

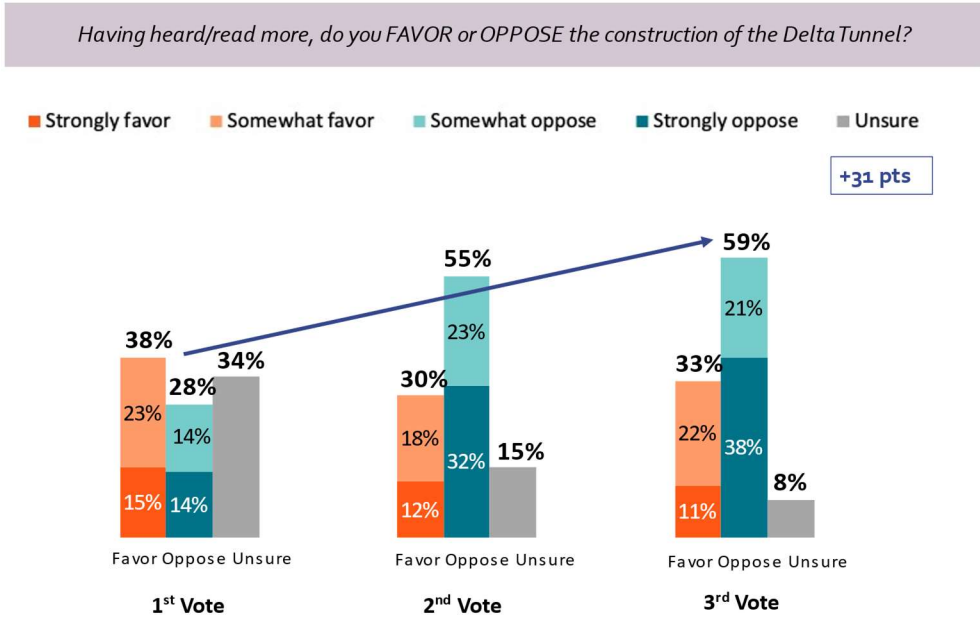


The Tunnel will replace the environmentally destructive water pumps currently regulating the Delta waters. The Tunnel will return river flows to their natural state and allow native fish populations to flourish rather than getting sucked into gigantic pumps that kill countless fish a year.



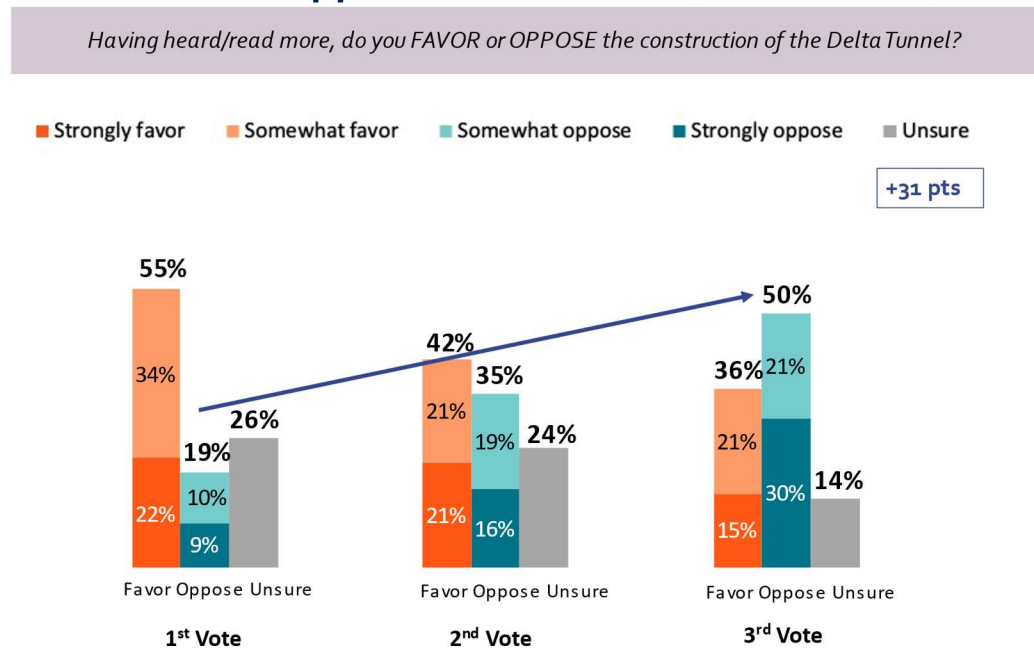
- **After hearing messaging on both sides, voter opposition to the Delta Tunnel increases still further.** After hearing messaging in opposition to the Tunnel followed by messaging in favor of the Tunnel, nearly six in ten voters (59%) oppose the Delta Tunnel’s construction—with 38 percent *strongly* opposing the Tunnel. By contrast, only one-third (33%) of California voters say they favor the Delta Tunnel’s construction—and just 11 percent *strongly* favor the Tunnel. Among all voters, post-messaging opposition to the Delta Tunnel increase 31 points from initial vote.

Favor or Oppose Delta Tunnel (All Voters)



- **Likewise, opposition to Delta Tunnel construction among Black voters increases 31 points after hearing messaging on both sides.** On the initial vote, a slim majority of Black voters (55%) support Delta Tunnel construction compared to 19 percent who oppose (26% are unsure). However, after hearing pro- and anti-Tunnel messaging, support for the Tunnel among Black voters plummets to 36 percent, while opposition increases to 50 percent.

Favor or Oppose Delta Tunnel (Black Voters)



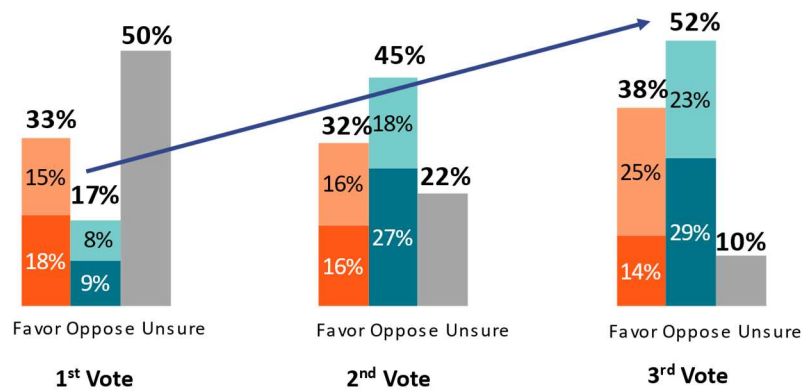
- Similarly, opposition among Hispanic voters increases 35 points from the initial vote after receiving both pro- and anti-Tunnel messaging. On the initial vote, only 17 percent of Hispanic voters oppose the Delta Tunnel. However, after the messaging batteries, more than half of Hispanic voters oppose the Tunnel (52% oppose to 38% favor).

Favor or Oppose Delta Tunnel: Votes 1-3 (Hispanic Voters)

Having heard/read more, do you FAVOR or OPPOSE the construction of the Delta Tunnel?

Strongly favor Somewhat favor Somewhat oppose Strongly oppose Unsure

+35 pts



CONCLUSION

While a plurality of California voters initially supports Delta Tunnel construction, providing neutral information about the Bay-Delta and the Delta Tunnel boosts opposition significantly, with more than half of the California electorate (55%) opposing the Tunnel compared to just 30 percent in favor. Anti-Tunnel messaging cements voter opposition still further, while pro-Tunnel messaging fails to rally voter support. These results suggest a majority of California will likely oppose the Delta Tunnel once they learn basic facts about the proposed project.

METHODOLOGY

Goodwin Simon Strategic Research conducted a hybrid telephone/online survey of 600 registered California voters (with a Black voter oversample of n80 to achieve an n101 total Black voter sample) from December 16 – December 29, 2020. Respondents were contacted via landline, cell phone, or text message. The survey sample is representative of registered voters across the state, with respondents having the option of taking the survey in English or Spanish. Respondents could take the survey online or with a live telephone interviewer.

For questions about survey methodology or findings, please contact John Whaley at johnw@goodwinsimon.com or (510) 393-2673.