



# Calgary's Green Line LRT project in a post-COVID world

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strategic insights

May, 2020

# Methodology

- Survey results cited in this report are from online panel interviews with a representative sample of 603 Calgary residents, between the ages of 18 and older.
- The survey was conducted between May 14-19, 2020, inclusive.
- Technically, a margin-of-error is not possible using an online panel, which uses a representative rather than a random sample. However, by comparison, the margin-of-error for a probability sample of 603 is +/- 3.99%, 19 times out of 20.
- Data was weighted by age and sex to reflect 2016 census profile and representative of geographic distribution of Calgary.

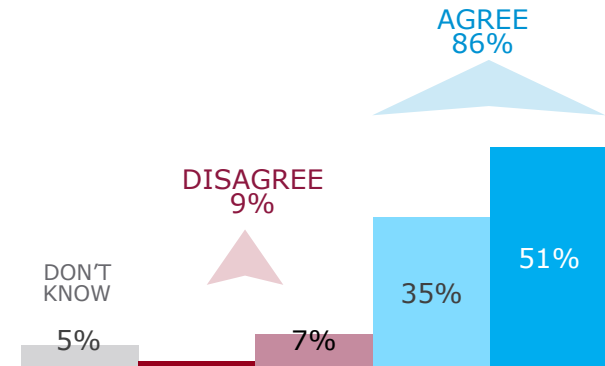


# Key Findings

# Key Findings: Economic anxiety high in Calgary

- Calgarians are bracing for the economic impacts of the energy price crash, a global recession, and COVID-19.
- 86% of Calgarians agree that “Calgary will be hit harder than any other city in Canada”, including a majority (51%) that strongly agree.
- Most Calgarians believe a recovery will come later (2+ years) than sooner (6 months to a year).

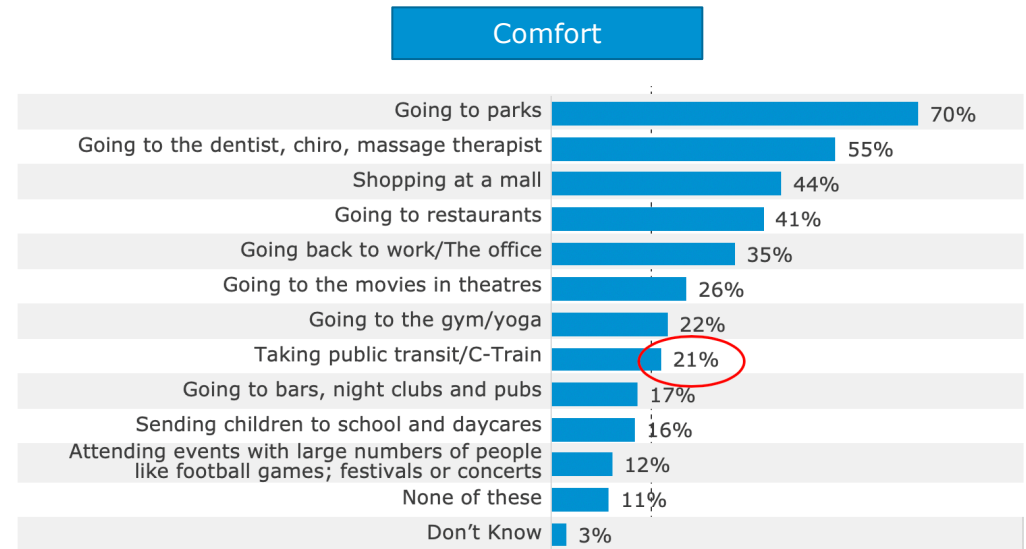
*Calgary Mayor Nenshi said a few weeks ago, that as a result of the energy price crash, global recession and COVID-19 “Calgary will be hit harder than any other city in Canada.”*



*Q. Calgary Mayor Nenshi said a few weeks ago, that as a result of the energy price crash, global recession and COVID-19 “Calgary will be hit harder than any other city in Canada.” Do you agree with the view of Mayor Nenshi? (N=603)*

# Key Findings: COVID-19 impacting transit use intentions

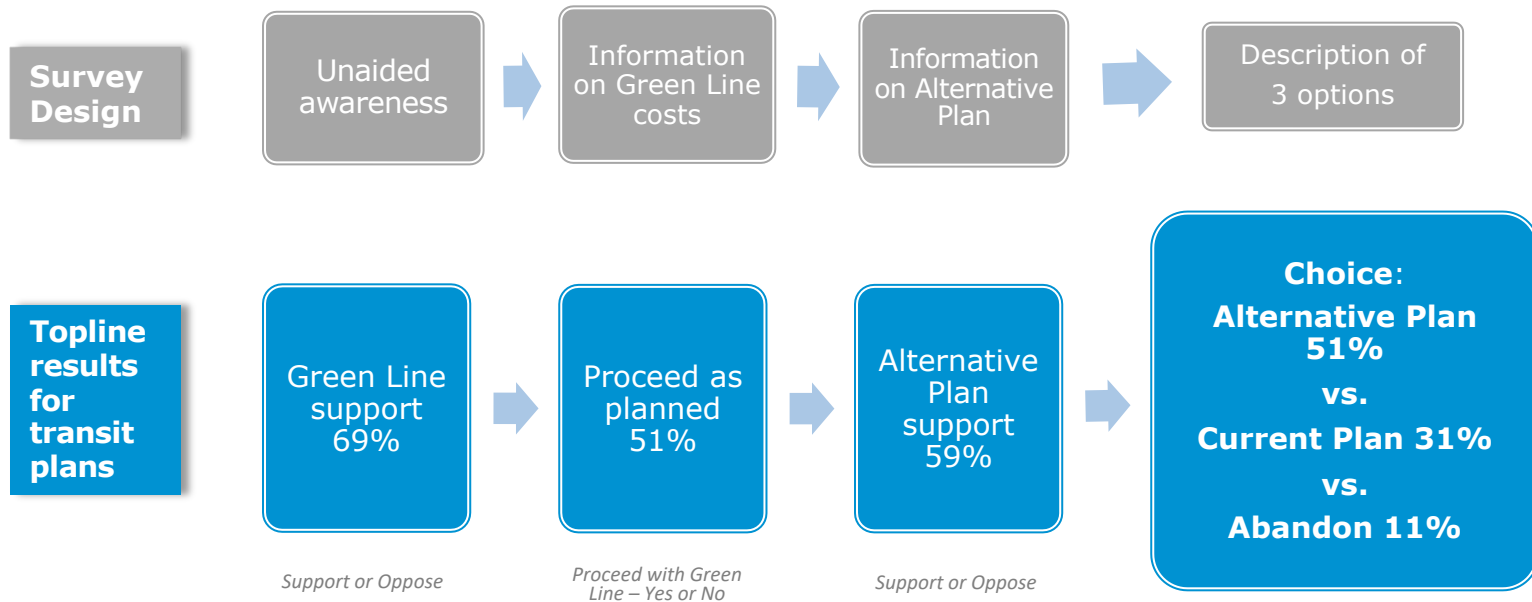
- Only 1 in 5 Calgarians “comfortable” taking public transit, including less than half of frequent transit-goers.
- Of those who work or study mainly outside the home, more than half (57%) prefer to work or study more from home after the pandemic passes.
- Majority (59%) of frequent transit-goers say their transit usage will decline post-pandemic.



Q3. Once the Alberta government lift the protective measures put in place to fight COVID-19, which of the following would you be comfortable doing...? (N=603)

# Key Findings: Calgarians want a transit line, but prefer Alternative

- Calgarians support moving ahead with transit expansion, but when presented with a choice between the Green Line and a lower-cost alternative plan, a majority (51%) prefer the alternative to the current plan (31%).



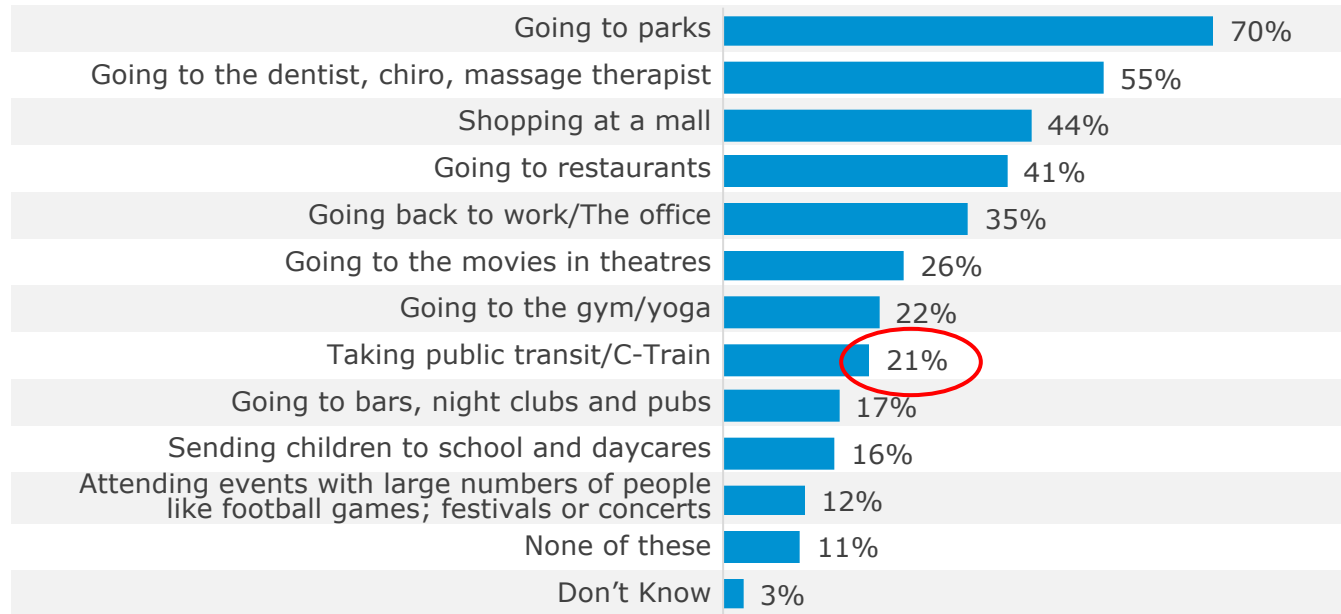


# COVID-19 Context

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# Calgary residents eager to head to parks; Only 1 in 5 comfortable going on transit

- Men (28%) are more comfortable than women (15%) returning to transit
- The most frequent transit users (5+ days per week) are twice more likely (43%) to be comfortable taking transit than the general population (21%), however, a majority (57%) of this group indicate they are not comfortable. Just over one-third (36%) of those who report taking transit 1-4 times/week say they are comfortable taking public transit post-COVID.





# Prior to the pandemic, about 3 in 4 report working or studying mainly outside the home

- Women more likely to report working/studying mainly outside the home (81%)
- Close to one-third of those surveyed report working or attending school downtown prior to the pandemic



Mainly outside home  
**73%**

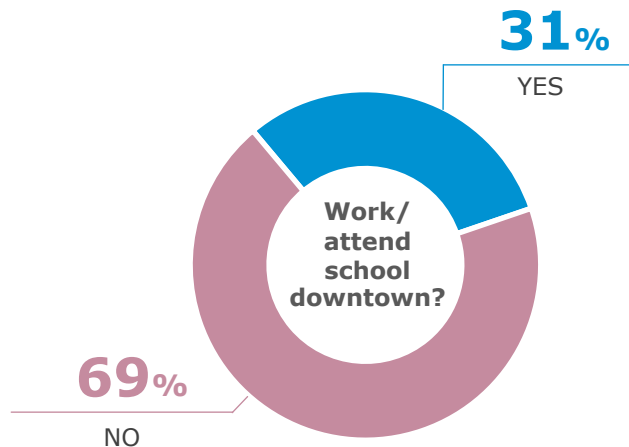


Mainly worked/studied  
at home  
**15%**



Not working/ attending school  
**10%**

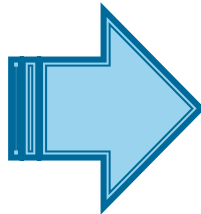
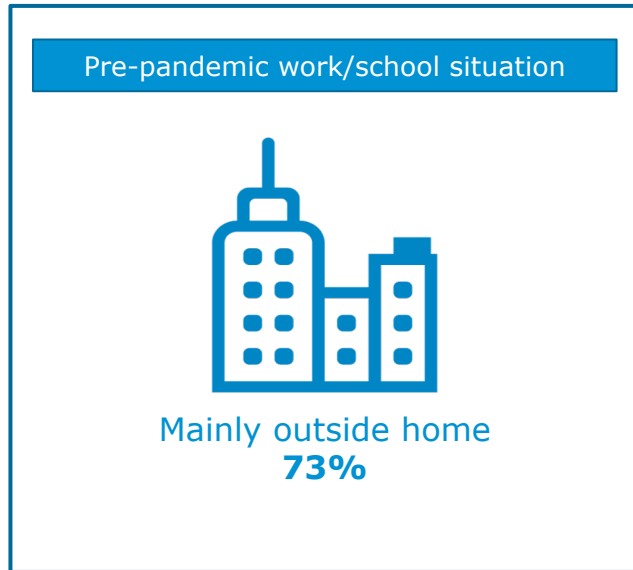
Q4. Prior to the pandemic which of the following descriptions below best described your current work/school situation? (N=443).



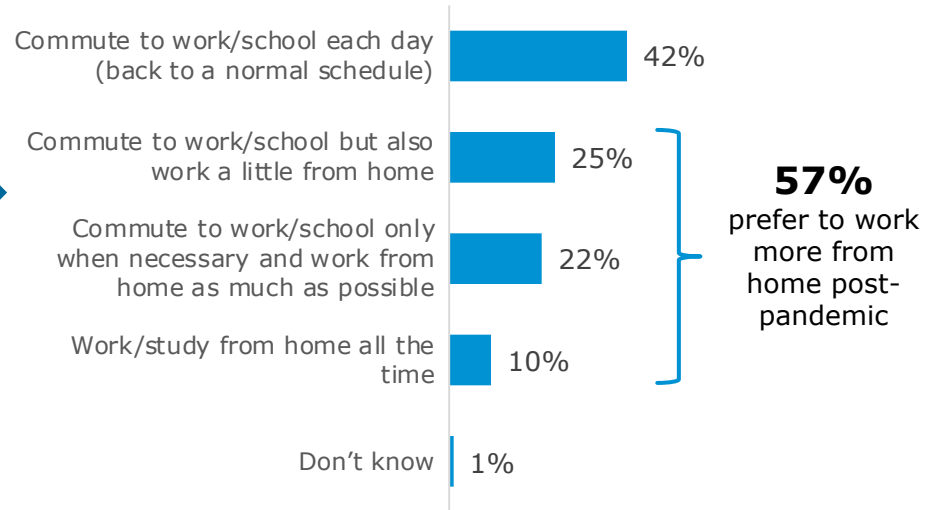
Q5B. Ordinarily (pre-pandemic) do you work or attend school downtown? (N=443)

# Post-pandemic: Commuters prefer to work more from home

- Of those who said they worked or studied mainly outside the home pre-pandemic, about 1 in 3 (32%) say they would like commute only when necessary or work/study from home all the time while 1 in 4 (25%) say they would like to work a little from home

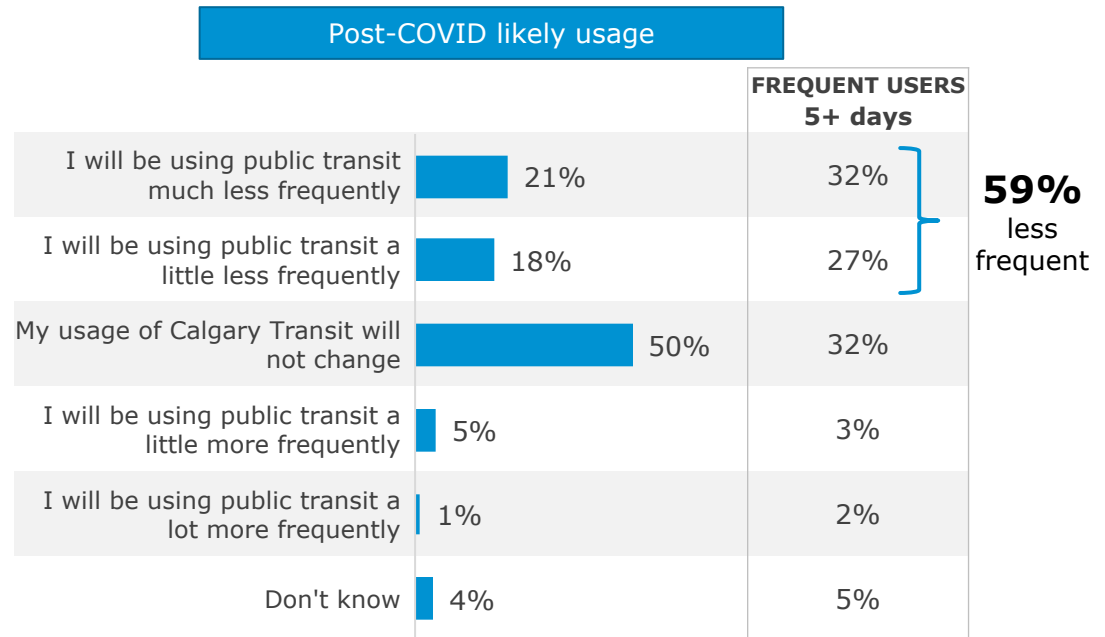
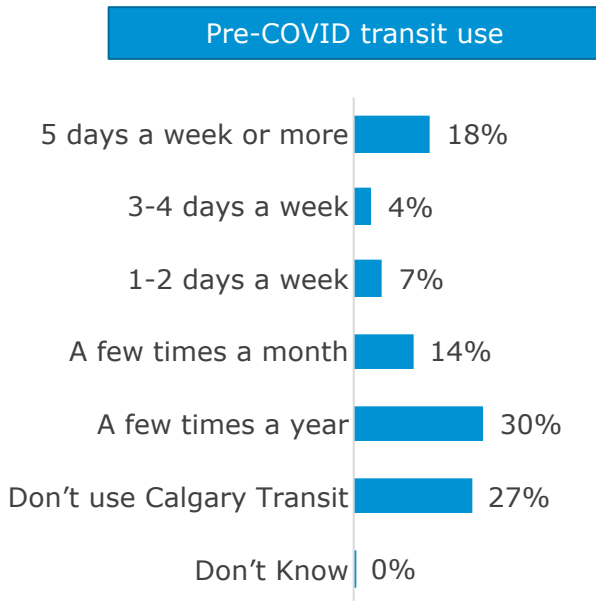


## Post-pandemic preferred work/school situation



# Almost 60% of frequent transit users say they will use public transit less

- Among frequent commuters (5+ days/week), about 1 in 3 (32%) say they will use public transit much less frequently, and more than 1 in 4 (27%) say they will use it a little less frequently. About 1 in 3 of frequent commuters say their patterns will not change while a small group said they would use it more (6%).

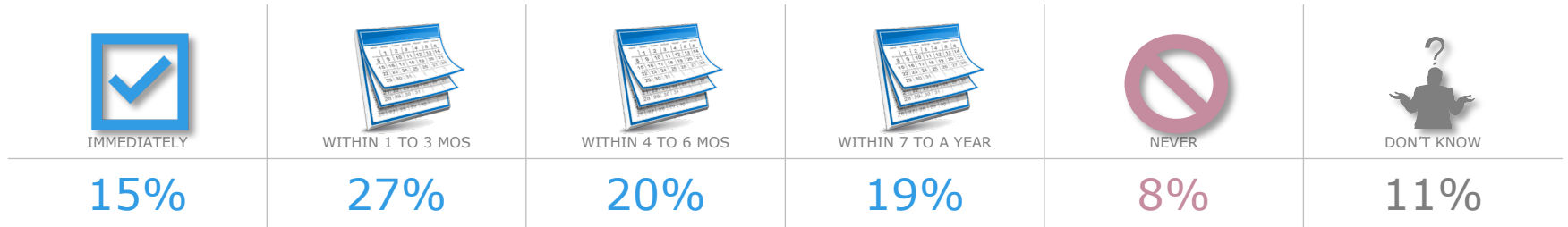


Q8. Prior to the covid-19 pandemic crisis, how often were you using Calgary transit? (N=603)

Q9. After the pandemic crisis has passed and when the province begins to relax social distancing restrictions which of the following best describes your likely usage of Calgary Transit? (N=424)

# Over 1 in 4 say they would not feel totally comfortable returning to transit in next six months

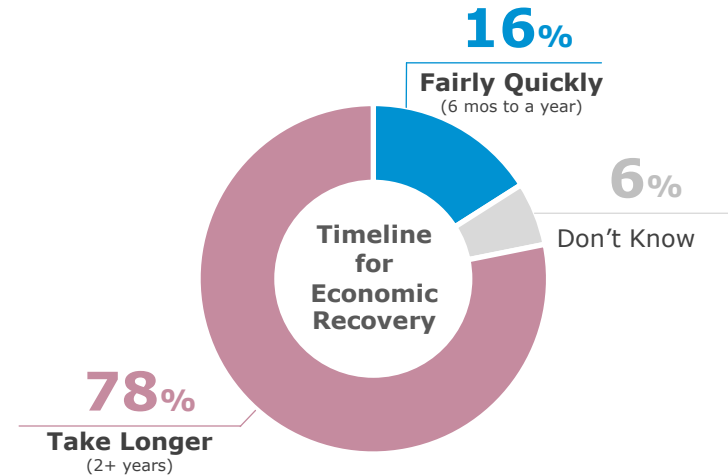
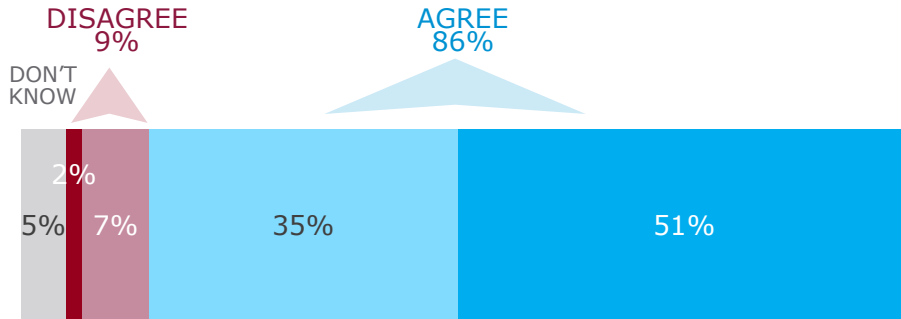
- About 1 in 5 (19%) say they would not feel completely comfortable for 7 months to a year, while 1 in 12 (8%) say they will never feel comfortable.



# Majority strongly agree that Calgary will be hit hard; Over 3 in 4 say a recovery will be slow

- Agreement is consistent among age groups ranging from 84% among 18-34s to 88% among 55+
- Those that report being unemployed are among the most likely to agree (92%)
- Women are more pessimistic about timeline for recovery (12%) compared to men (21%)

*Calgary Mayor Nenshi said a few weeks ago, that as a result of the energy price crash, global recession and COVID-19 “Calgary will be hit harder than any other city in Canada.”*



Q7. Do you agree with the view of Mayor Nenshi? (N=603)

Q7B. Do you feel the economic downturn Calgary is currently in will resolve itself fairly quickly and things will bounce back in 6 months to a year or will it take longer - maybe two years or more - for Calgary's economy to start recovering? (N=603)



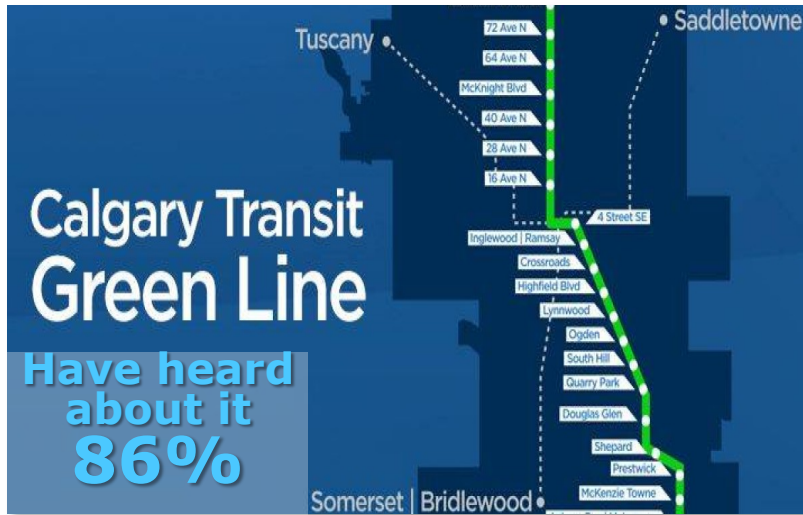
# Views on the Green Line and Alternative Plan

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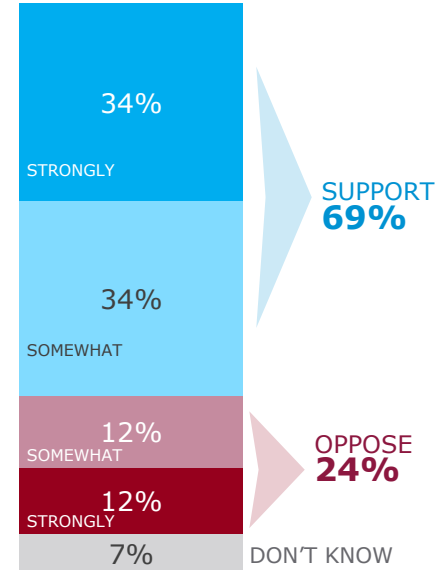
# Green Line LRT project: Unaided awareness and support is high

- Awareness high across the board, and increases with age, ranging from 4 in 5 (79%) among 18-34s to 19 out of 20 (95%) among 55+
- Unaided support highest among 18-34s (81%) and lower among 55+ (56%); unaided support is highest in SE (77%) and lowest in SW (61%)

*Have you heard about the proposed City of Calgary LRT project called the Green Line?*



*Do you support or oppose the City of Calgary going forward with [the Green Line LRT project] next year?*



Q11. Have you heard about the proposed City of Calgary LRT project called the Green Line? (N=603)

Q11B. Based on what you have read, heard or seen about the Green Line LRT project do you support or oppose the City of Calgary going forward with it next year? (N=528)

# Aided awareness: Calgary Green Line Background

## ***Provided to respondents to read:***

*The City's proposed Green Line will provide service and connections from the north of Calgary to the southeast, connecting people to downtown and a variety of important destinations throughout the City.*

*Ultimately the Green Line will add 46 kilometres of track to the existing 59 kilometre system. Construction on the first 20 km stage is expected to begin in 2021 and it is proposed that this first stage will extend from 16 Avenue N (Crescent Heights) to 126 Avenue SE (Shepard). This first stage of construction is expected to be complete by 2026 and will feature:*

- 20 km of LRT track*
- 14 stations*
- 8 bridges*
- 4 tunnels*

*With a budget of 4.9 billion dollars, this is the largest and most complex LRT project the City has ever undertaken. The federal and provincial governments have each agreed to contribute \$1.53 billion, meaning the City will be responsible for the balance of roughly \$1.8 billion, plus any cost overruns.*

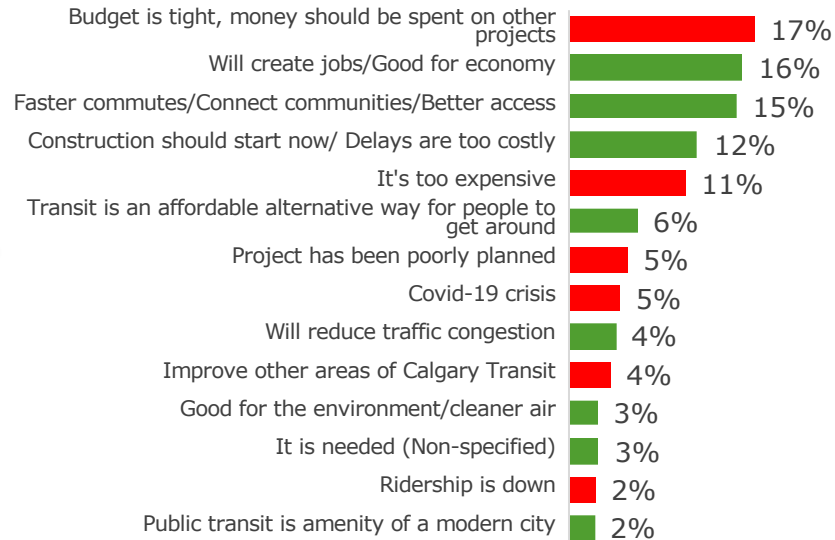
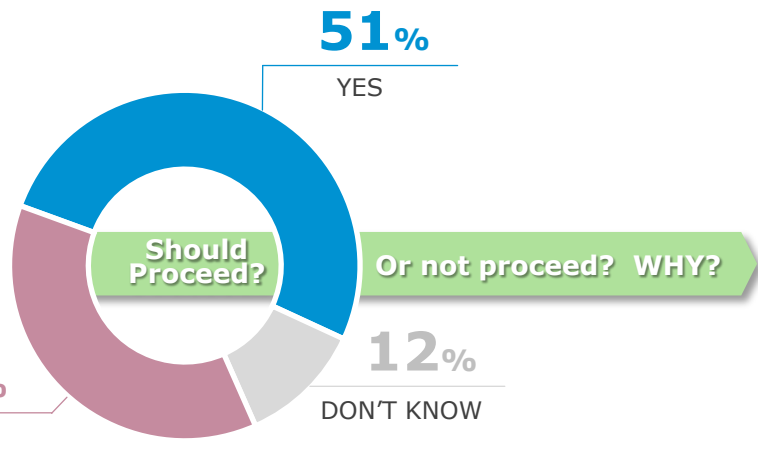
*In addition to cost of building the line, ongoing operating costs will be paid by taxpayers and transit riders. To date, the City has already spent about \$600 million on the project, including things like planning, design, land acquisition, contracting and expert review and analysis.*

*City Council will be making important decisions about the future direction of this project in June.*



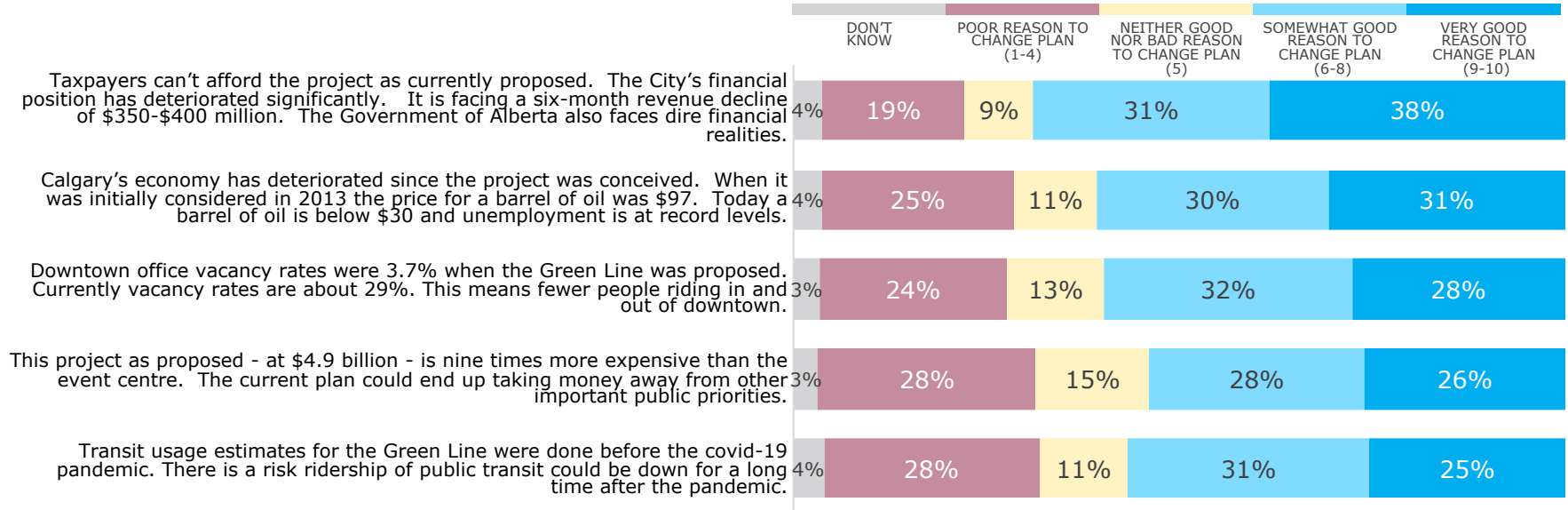
# Aided Awareness: Support drops by 18% when project details provided

- Support drops from 69% (unaided awareness) to 51% (aided awareness, and before Alternative Plan introduced)
- Women 18-34 drop from 76% support (unaided) to 43% (aided); about 1 in 3 who "somewhat support" Green Line unaided shift to "No" in aided awareness
- Those that believe recovery will take longer shift from 67% unaided to 47% aided support; faster recovery respondents shift from 74% (aided) to 67% (unaided)
- Jobs/economy and faster commute times cited as top reasons for proceeding; Budget concerns cited as top reason for not proceeding



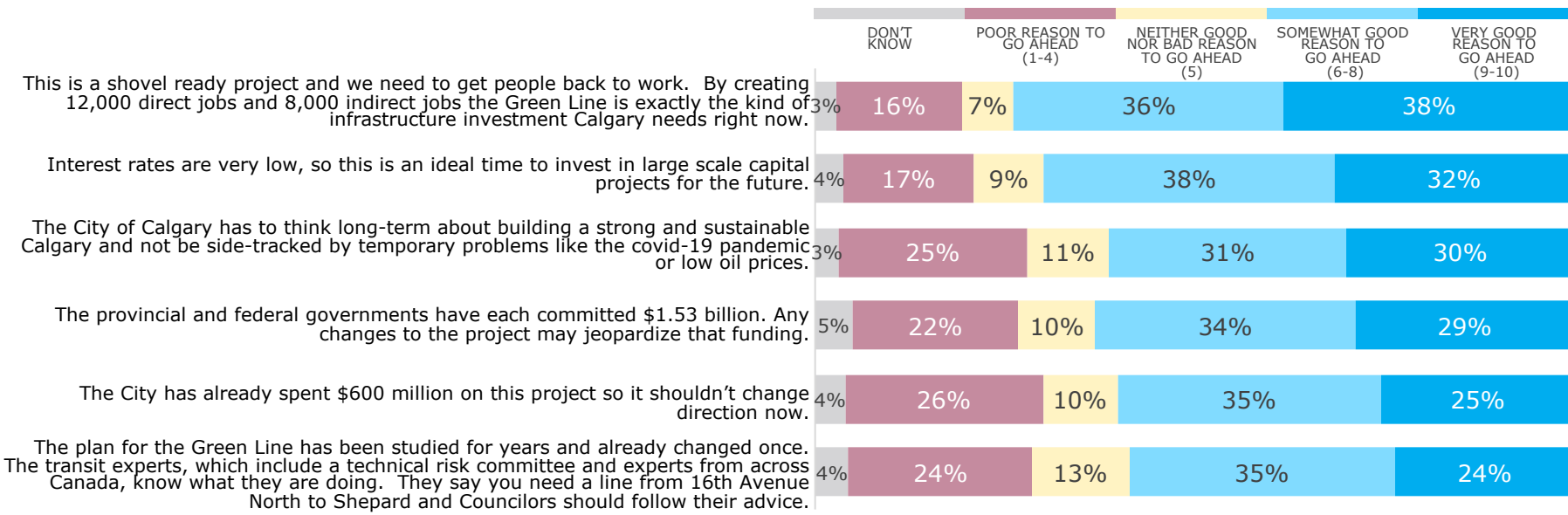
Q12. Based on what you know or just read about the project and taking into account the economic and fiscal situation Calgary finds itself in, do you feel the project should proceed as planned, with full construction of the \$4.9 billion stage one project beginning next year? (N=603)  
 Q13. Why do you feel that way? (N=603)

# Reasons to Change Green Line Plan: Taxpayer affordability, economic outlook top list



Q14. Some people have said that the City's proposed Green Line transit project should be de-risked, and subject to an independent economic review, in light of the economic crash and covid-19 crisis. Please rate where 1=it is a very poor reason to change the current plan and 7=it is a very good reason to change the plan. (N=603)

# Reasons to go ahead: Economic and financial arguments have strongest results



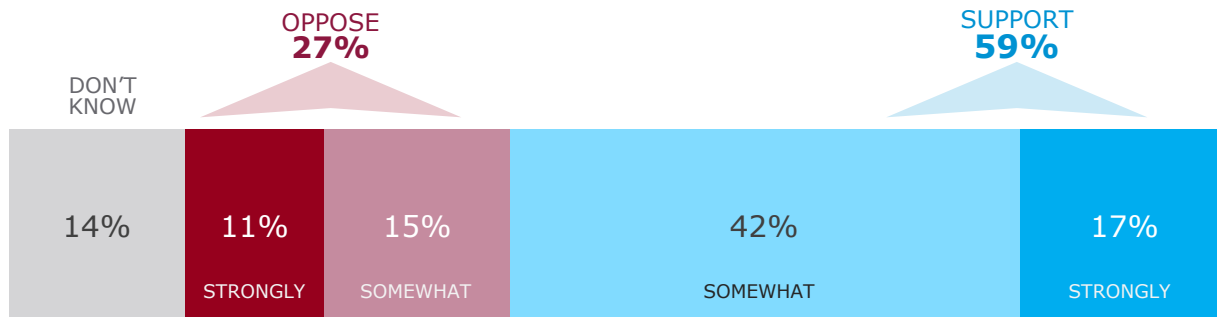
Q15. Some people say the Green Line project should go ahead as planned next year. It has been talked about and studied enough, and the concerns of critics have been addressed. They say this is an important project to help Calgarians to move around the City efficiently, reduce car traffic and cut GHG emissions. Please rate where 1=it is a very poor reason to go ahead with no changes and 7=it is a very good reason to go ahead with no changes. (N=603)

# Alternative LRT Proposal: Majority support Alternative Plan based on description

- Support for Alternative Plan is higher among women (62% support, 19% oppose) compared to men (56% support, 34% oppose)
- Majority of frequent transit-goers support Alternative Plan (58%)

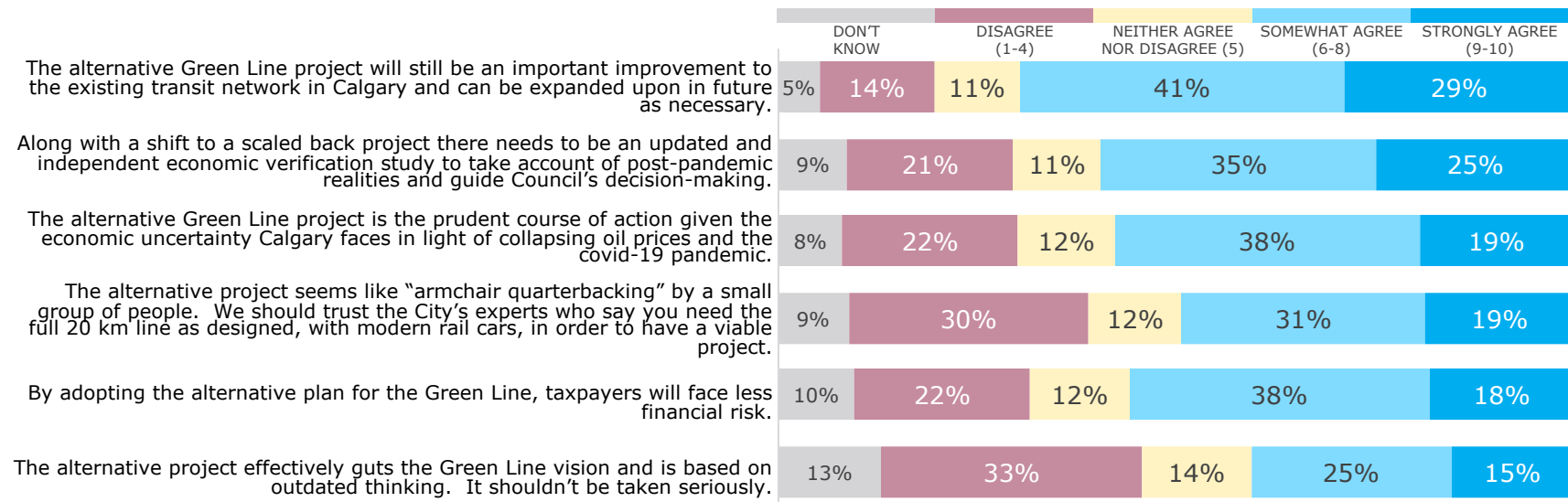
*Some people have suggested an alternative approach to the current Green Line. This involves a scaled back plan for the project. This proposal consists of:*

- *Reducing the length of the project by about 3 kilometres, having it run from downtown (7th Avenue) to Shepard in the southeast, with the possibility of extension in the future.*
- *Saving money by abandoning the expensive downtown to 16th Avenue North portion. Instead, the City should consider expanding the presently successful Bus Rapid Transit system for Centre Street to service north central communities.*
- *Avoiding underground segments, using instead surface-level or elevated lines from the Elbow River to downtown. The cost per kilometre of surface and elevated lines is significantly lower than tunnels.*
- *Using platform-loading cars that are the same as the existing fleet, instead of newer but more expensive ground-loading cars that can't be used on the existing red and blue lines.*
- *Requiring that the City set up a "risk reserve" to protect Calgary taxpayers against capital and operating overruns.*
- *For contracting purposes, organize the shorter line into a number of construction segments that would allow for faster contracting, getting people to work quickly and creating more opportunities for local companies.*



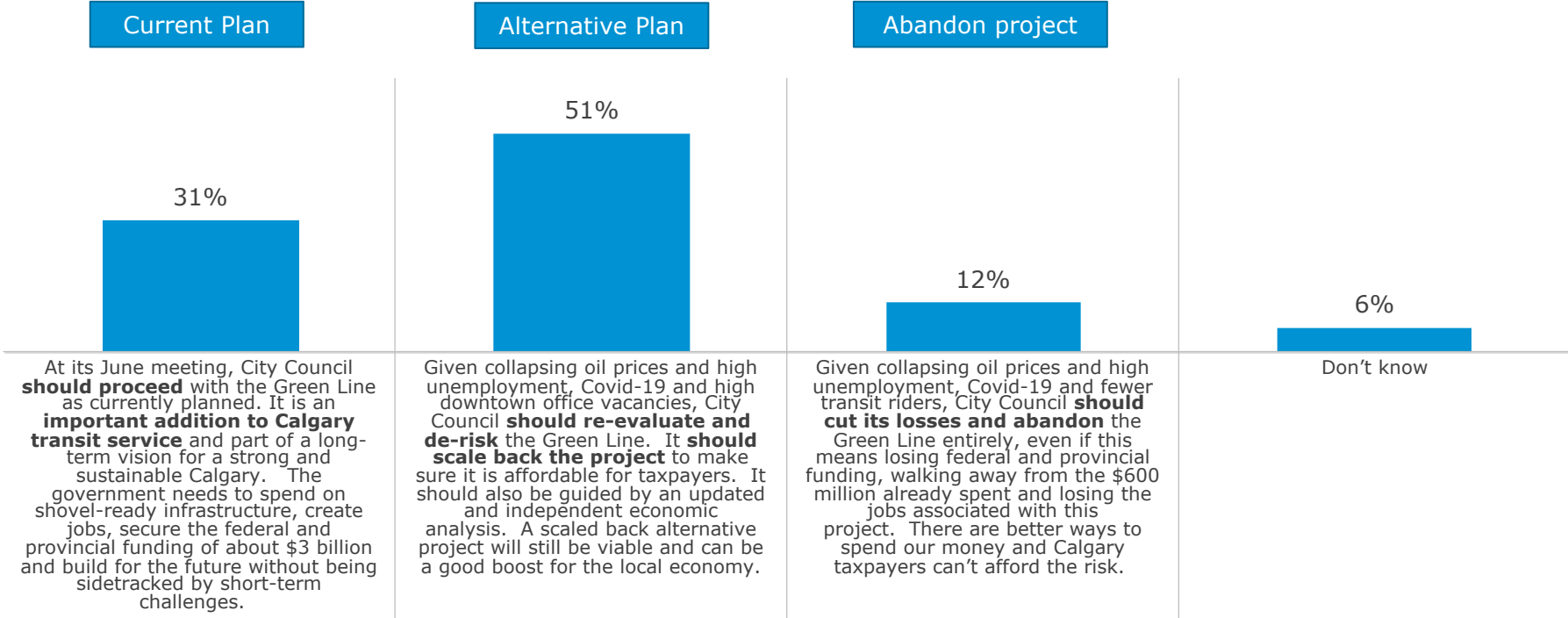
# Alternative Plan seen as expanded, important improvement by 7 in 10

- Strongest agreement on importance of improvement and its expandability with 7 in 10 (70%) agreeing at 6 out of 10 or more
- Majority (57%) agree that Alternative Plan is prudent in face of oil prices and COVID-19



Q17. The table below contains several statements regarding shifting toward a different, scaled back approach for the proposed Green Line. Beside each please indicate your personal level of agreement with the statement. Please use a scale of 1-7 where 1=strongly disagree and 7=strongly agree with the statement? (N=603)

# Less than 1 in 3 back current Green Line plan; Almost 2 in 3 say it should be re-evaluated or abandoned



Q18. Below are three points of view regarding the Green Line project. Please read all three and indicate which one is closest to your own thinking. (N=603)



# Craig Worden

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