



COMMONWEALTH *of* VIRGINIA
Office of the
SECRETARY *of* TRANSPORTATION

SMART SCALE Process Review

April 18, 2023



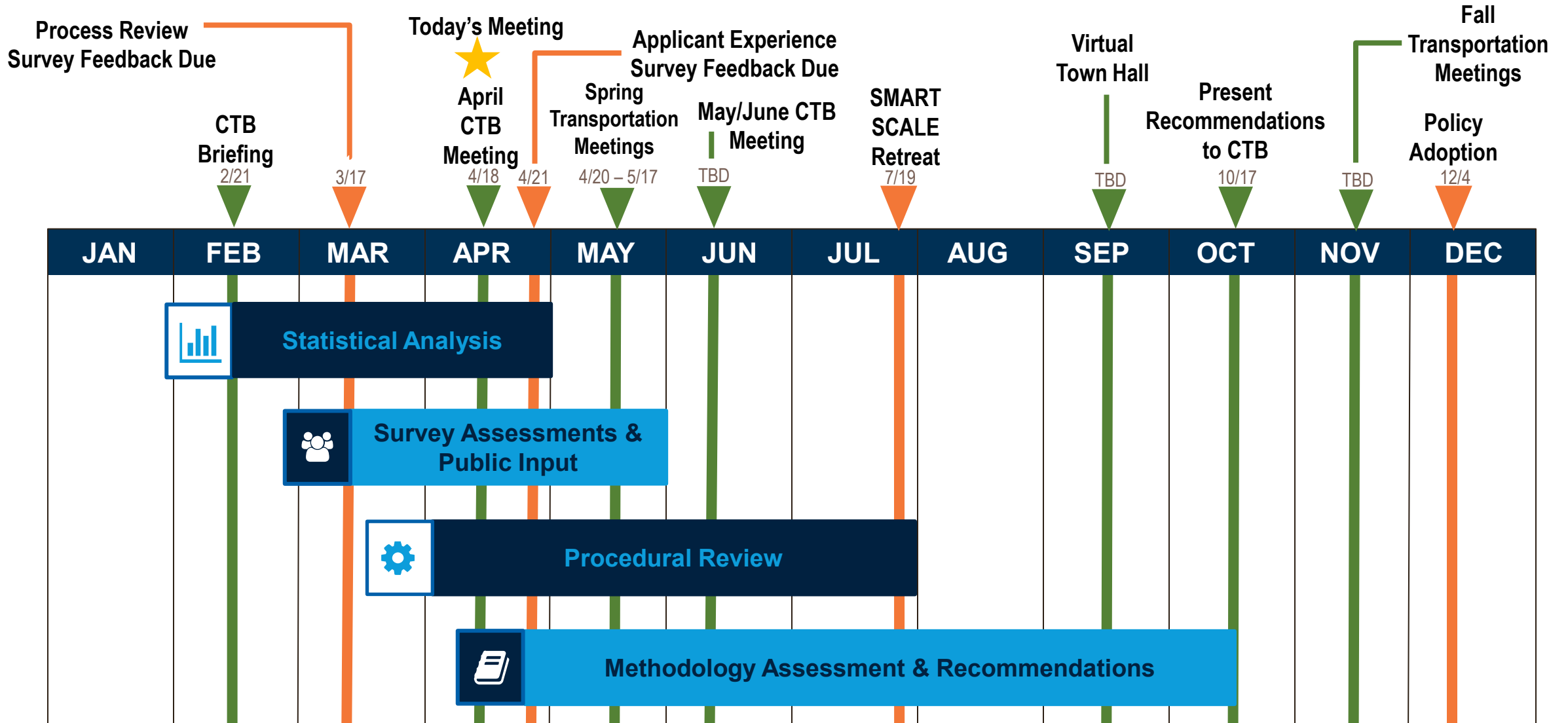
VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF RAIL
AND PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION



Structure and Objectives of Today's Presentation

- **Overview**
 - Team Milestones and Timeline
 - Process Review Update
- **External Review**
 - Overview
 - Survey Response Overview
 - Perceptions from the Process Review Survey
 - Initial Key Takeaways
 - Next Steps
- **Additional CTB and Respondent Feedback**
 - Themes from CTB Meetings
 - Highlights from Respondent Letters / Emails
- **Internal Review**
 - Overview
- **Concluding Remarks**

Overview: Team Milestones and Timeline



Overview: Process Review Update

- **Statistical analysis is ongoing, with initial trends and findings leveraged with survey feedback**
- **Representatives from Virginia Municipal League (VML), Virginia Association of Counties (VACO), and Virginia Transit Association (VTA) have been added to the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and currently participate in twice monthly meetings**
- **Recent participation in 1-on-1 meetings with CTB members to gather additional feedback regarding the SMART SCALE process to incorporate into considerations for the Process Review, this includes additional considerations provided during the February CTB meeting**

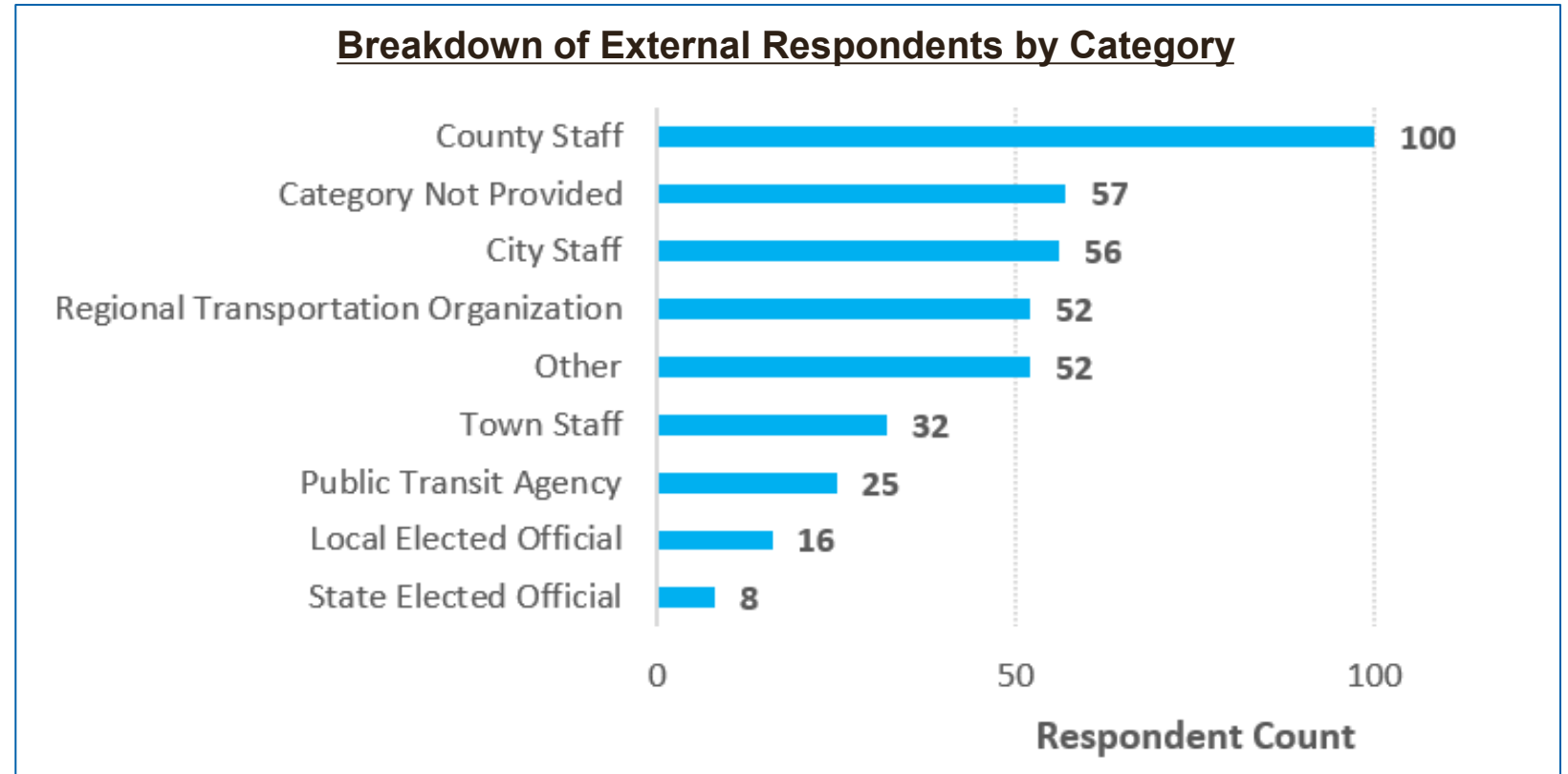
External Review: Overview

- **Process Review Survey – released on January 12th and closed on March 17th**
 - The survey was extended to allow for greater participation
 - Survey feedback presented today focuses on responses from “external” respondents, those who did not identify as VDOT, State DOT, and Consultant response groups
- **External survey feedback was reviewed to gain better insight into sentiments from the free text comments made by external survey respondents**
- **Key trends from external respondents have been summarized in the following slides**

External Review: Survey Response Overview

Possible number of external survey respondents: 1,300

Total number of external survey respondents: 398 (31% of possible external survey respondents)



[See Appendix A \(p. 26\) for more details](#)

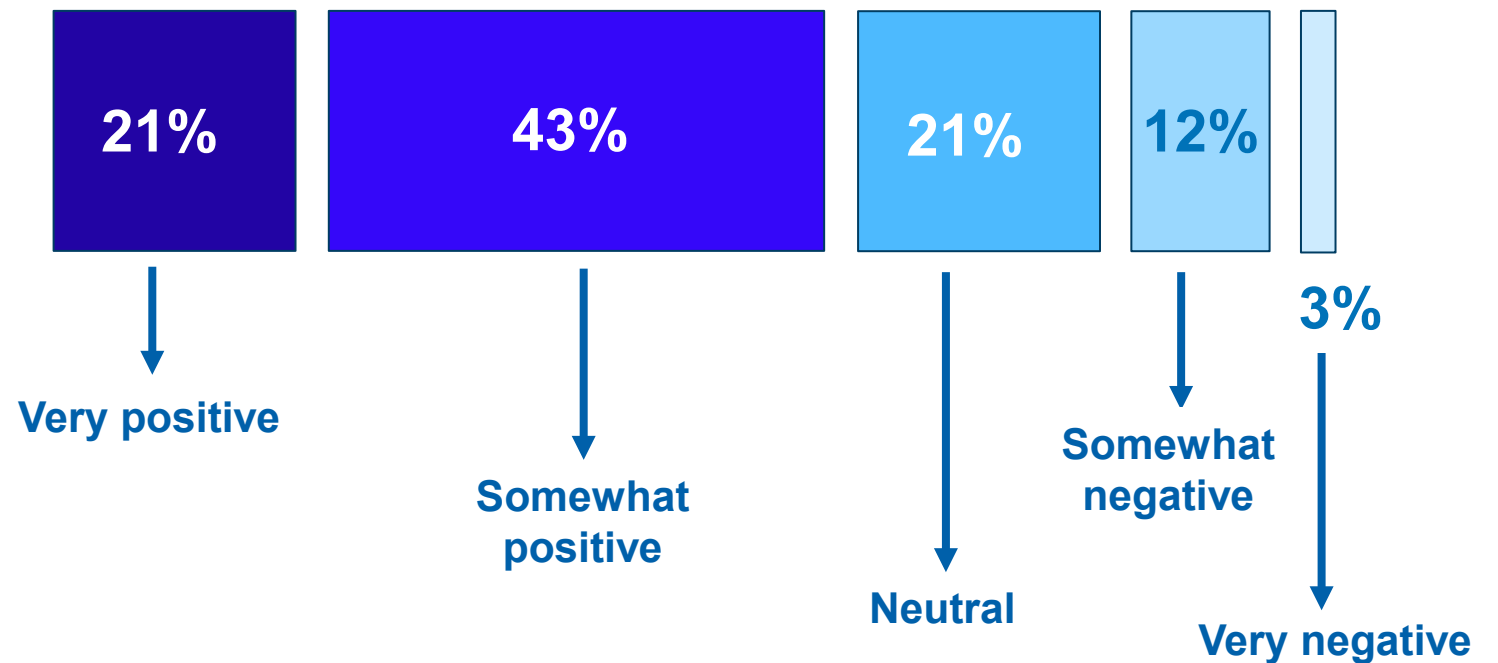


External Review: Perceptions from the Process Review Survey

“What is your overall impression of SMART SCALE?” (select from range)

64%

of external survey respondents who answered *have a somewhat or very positive impression of SMART SCALE*

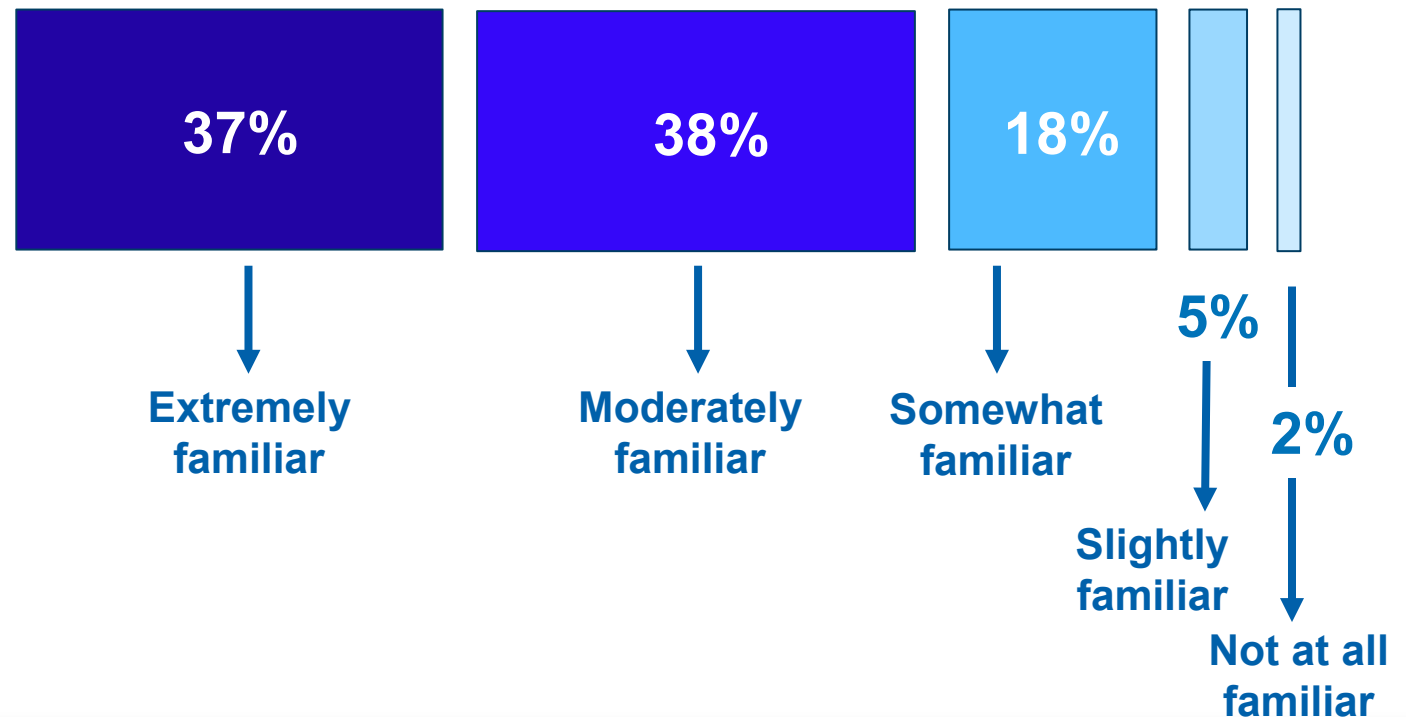


External Review: Perceptions from the Process Review Survey

“Generally, how familiar are you with the SMART SCALE process?” (select from range)

75%

of external survey respondents who answered indicated they are *moderately or extremely familiar* with the SMART SCALE process



External Review: Perceptions from the Process Review Survey

“Have you applied for a SMART SCALE project in the past?” (yes/no question)

Yes

59%

of external respondents *have applied* for SMART SCALE projects in the past

No

41%

of external respondents *have not applied* for SMART SCALE projects in the past

External Review: Perceptions from the Process Review Survey

“In general, do you think SMART SCALE is funding the right projects?” (yes/no question)

Yes

71%

of external respondents *feel that SMART SCALE is funding the right projects*

No

29%

of external respondents *feel that SMART SCALE is not funding the right projects*

[See Appendix B \(p. 27\) for more details](#)



External Review: Perceptions from the Process Review Survey

“The SMART SCALE scoring process positively weighs applications that include committed project funding from other sources (often regional or local). In your opinion, is this good public policy and an appropriate way to value the Commonwealth’s investment?” (yes/no question)

Yes

80%

of external respondents think *this is a good public policy and an appropriate way to value the Commonwealth’s investment*

No

20%

of external respondents think *this is not a good public policy or an appropriate way to value the Commonwealth’s investment*

External Review: Perceptions from the Process Review Survey

“Do you think a good mix of SMART SCALE projects are being funded?” (yes/no question)

Yes

50%

of external respondents *feel that SMART SCALE is funding a good mix of projects*

No

20%

of external respondents *feel that SMART SCALE is not funding a good mix of projects*

Not sure

30%

of external respondents *were not sure whether a good mix of SMART SCALE projects are being funded*

See Appendix C and D (p. 28 and 29) for more details



External Review: Perceptions from the Process Review Survey

“Do you think the current process is biased in any way (urban/rural, large/small projects, mode, etc.)?” (yes/no question)

Yes

59%

of external respondents *feel that biases exist in the SMART SCALE process*

No

41%

of external respondents *feel that biases do not exist in the SMART SCALE process*

[See Appendix E \(p. 30\)
for more details](#)



External Review: Perceptions from the Process Review Survey

“Do you think the current process is biased in any way (urban/rural, large/small projects, mode, etc.)?” (yes/no & free text response)

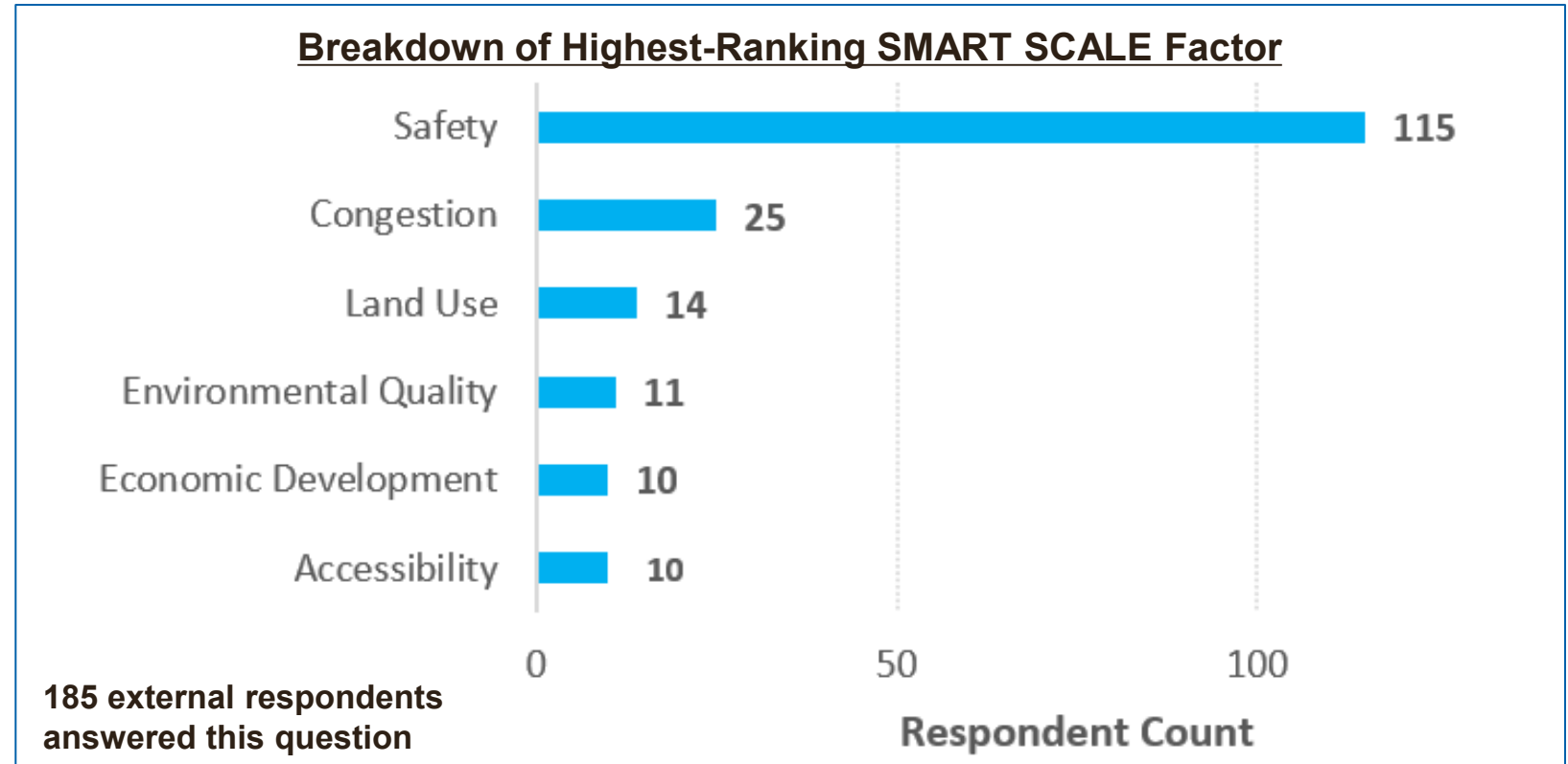
- 66% of external respondents responded to this question
- Of those that responded, 59% said yes
- These are the most frequent areas of perceived bias:

Urban
Small project
Application process

External Review: Perceptions from the Process Review Survey

“What do you think is the most important factor that the SMART SCALE process addresses?” (select from range)

- **Safety was consistently ranked as the most important factor by external respondents (62%)**
- **Congestion mitigation was the next highest ranking (almost 14%)**



[See Appendix F \(p. 31\) for more details](#)



External Review: Perceptions from the Process Review Survey

“Are there other factors that should be considered?” (free text response)

- 37% of external respondents responded to this question
- Of those that responded, 67% provided factors to be considered
- These are the most frequent factors:

Equity
Livability
Non-Motorized Benefits
Resilience

External Review: Perceptions from the Process Review Survey

“What elements of SMART SCALE should be changed?” (free text response)

- 43% of external respondents responded to this question
- Of those that responded, 92% provided feedback regarding elements that should be changed
- These are the most frequent elements to be changed:

Scoring changes Application process

Transparency
Project Timeliness

External Review: Perceptions from the Process Review Survey

“What elements of SMART SCALE should remain the same?” (free text response)

- 34% of external respondents responded to this question
- Of those that responded, 90% provided feedback regarding whether SMART SCALE should remain the same
- These are the most frequent elements to remain the same:

Scoring criteria
Application process
All elements
Transparency

External Review: Initial Key Takeaways

Familiarity with SMART SCALE

Most external survey respondents felt moderately or extremely familiar with the SMART SCALE process, and indicated that they have applied for a SMART SCALE project in the past

Funding the Right Projects

71% of external survey respondents who responded feel that SMART SCALE is funding the right projects, with 50% indicating they feel a good mix of projects are funded

Changes to SMART SCALE process

Scoring criteria and the application process were the top two answers for what should change and what should remain the same in the SMART SCALE process

Potential Biases Exist

Feelings of potential biases exist toward urban and smaller projects; however, external survey respondents largely indicate a positive impression towards the SMART SCALE process

External Review: Next Steps

- **Reviewing the survey feedback in comparison to historical Program data to better understand whether there may be potential biases towards:**
 - Urban or rural areas
 - Large or small projects
 - Type of project (i.e., bike/pedestrian projects)
- **Continued survey review and statistical analysis to include:**
 - High Priority Project scoring and success rates across the districts
 - Weighting of the factor areas and typologies
 - Analysis of existing factor areas, and where adjustments could be implemented to incorporate feedback from external survey respondents

Additional CTB and Respondent Feedback: Themes from CTB Meetings

- The SMART SCALE process works, but look for opportunities to be more forward-thinking
- Process seems to be transparent; however, would be helpful if simplified
- Potential favoritism towards smaller projects and not higher priority projects that are needed
- Need to understand intended and unintended consequences
- There seems to be a bias toward Bike/Ped projects
- Applicants are focused on projects that will be selected and not necessarily value add
- Importance of SMART SCALE focusing on economic development, as it generates revenue
- Concerns regarding cost estimation and contingencies

Additional CTB and Respondent Feedback: Highlights from Respondent Letters / Emails

- **Suggestions on adjustments to project scoring / factors**
 - Emphasize equity and environmental quality (greenhouse gas emissions) in project scoring
 - Refine multimodal accessibility measure
 - Adjustments to specific thresholds / metrics
 - Incorporate military routes into methodology
 - Consider additional costs and barriers associated with older infrastructure projects
- **Suggestions on improving the SMART SCALE applicant experience**
 - Make Technical Guide available earlier in process
 - Reconsider requirement of cost estimation as part of application submittal
 - Ensure consistency in applicant requirements for small and large communities
 - Change Tier 1 application limits to meet the needs of medium sized areas in Virginia

Internal Review: Overview

- **Round 5 Applicant Experience Survey – OIPI Lead**
 - Focuses on procedural elements, SMART Portal, resources, and communications
 - Released on March 22nd and will close on April 21st
- **Summarize statewide Lessons Learned Workshops, observations from the scoring teams, and the Applicant Survey, Ad Hoc Feedback (i.e., Emails and Letters)**
 - Scoring Teams Lessons Learned Workshop held on February 7th
 - Statewide DRPT, VDOT, and OIPI Screening and Validation Teams Workshop held February 28th

Concluding Remarks

- **May/June 2023 CTB Meeting to include an update regarding the statistical analysis component of the Process Review**
- **SMART SCALE Retreat – Scheduled for July 19th**
 - Focus on comprehensive Process Review findings, including draft recommendations for participants to review and discuss
 - Participation in 1-on-1 meetings with CTB members, as well as the Spring Transportation Meetings will allow for additional opportunities to capture feedback ahead of the SMART SCALE Retreat
- **Final findings and recommendations presented during October 2023 CTB meeting for consideration**
- **Policy adoptions and other recommendations in December 2023**



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Thank you.

Please contact Young Ho Chang with any questions
or for additional information.

Young Ho Chang
yhchang@atcsplc.com
571-436-3754

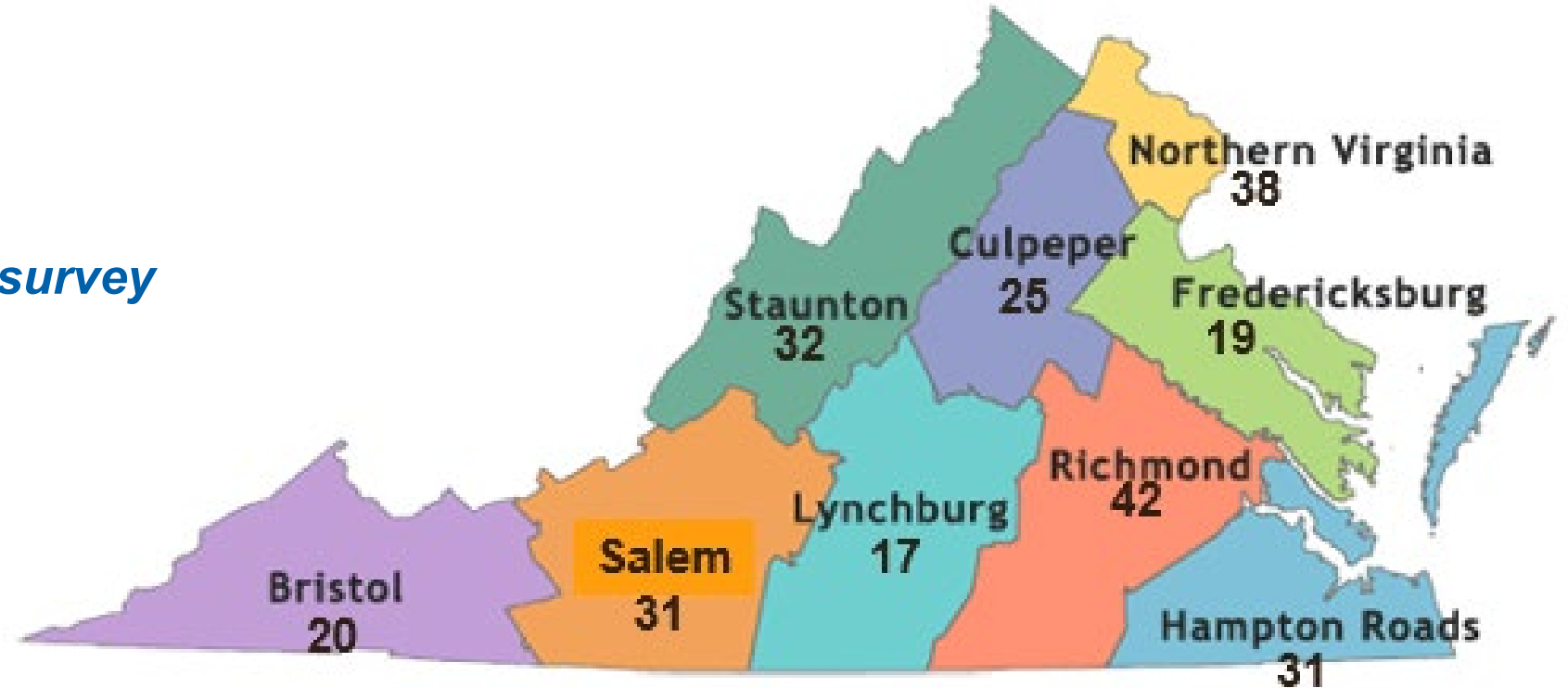


Appendix A: Respondent Count by District

of External Respondents per District

Total number of survey respondents: 459

Total number of external survey respondents: 398 (87%)



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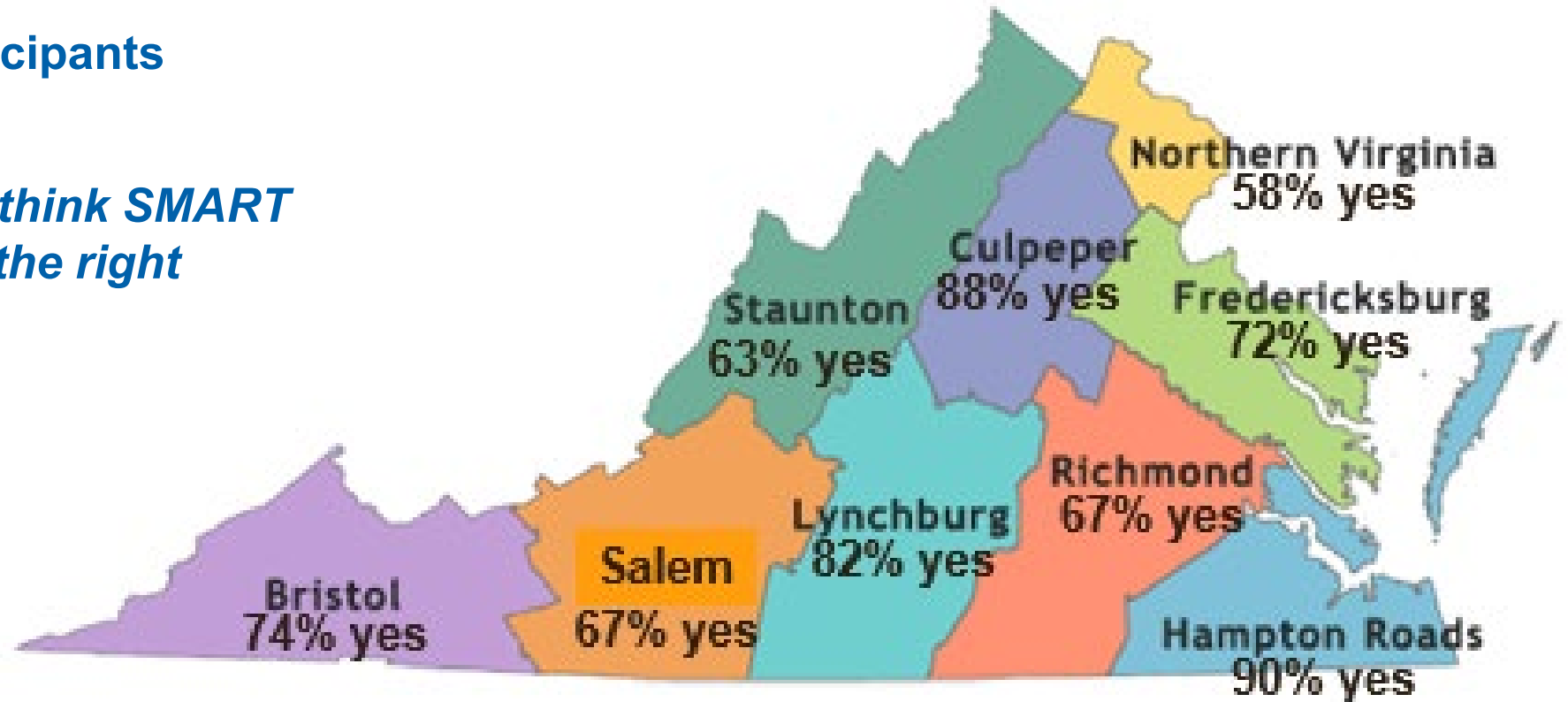


Appendix B: Survey Perceptions by District

Funding the Right Projects

Survey asked participants
(yes/no question):

*In general, do you think SMART
SCALE is funding the right
projects?*

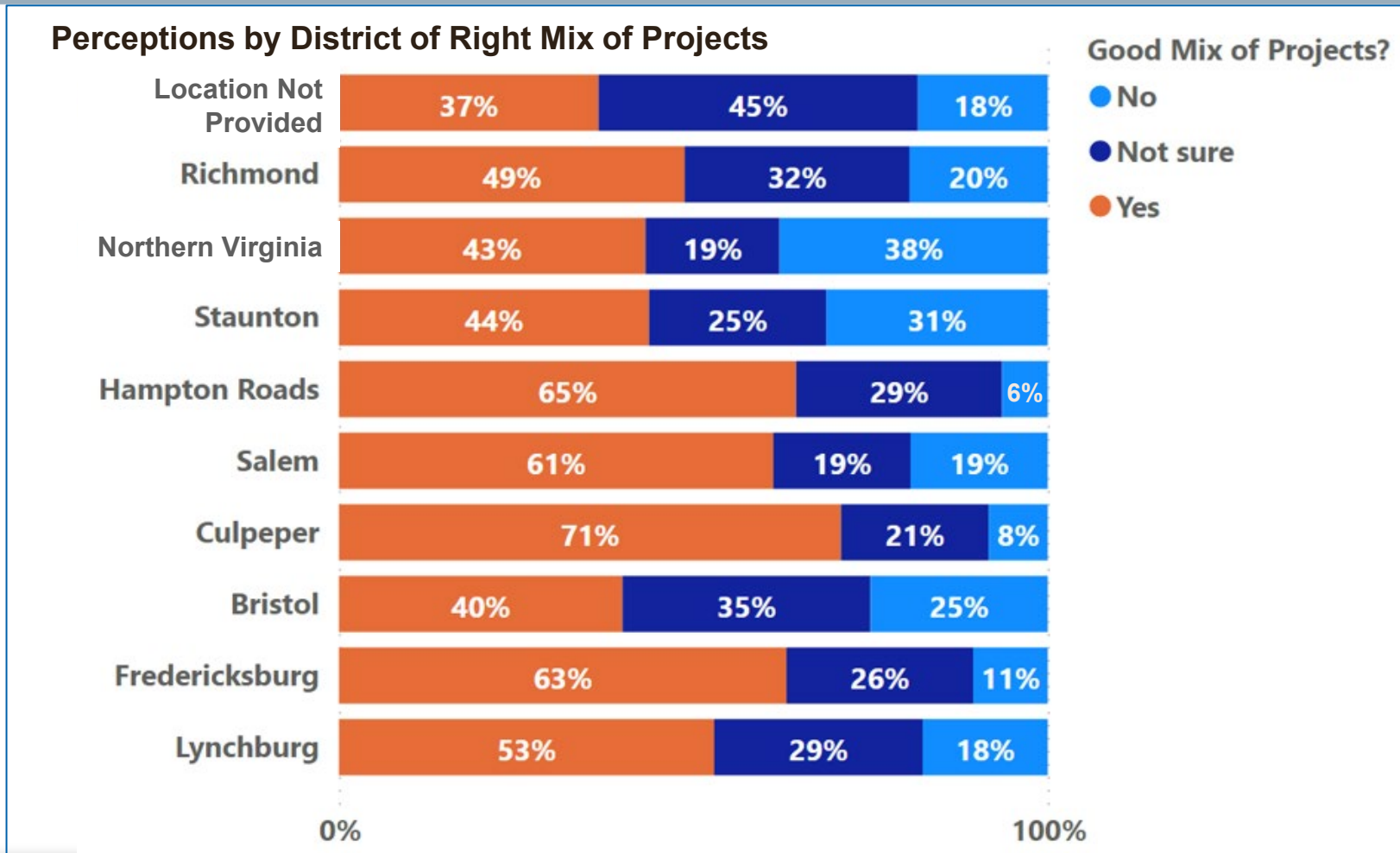


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Appendix C: Survey Perceptions by District

Right Mix of Projects



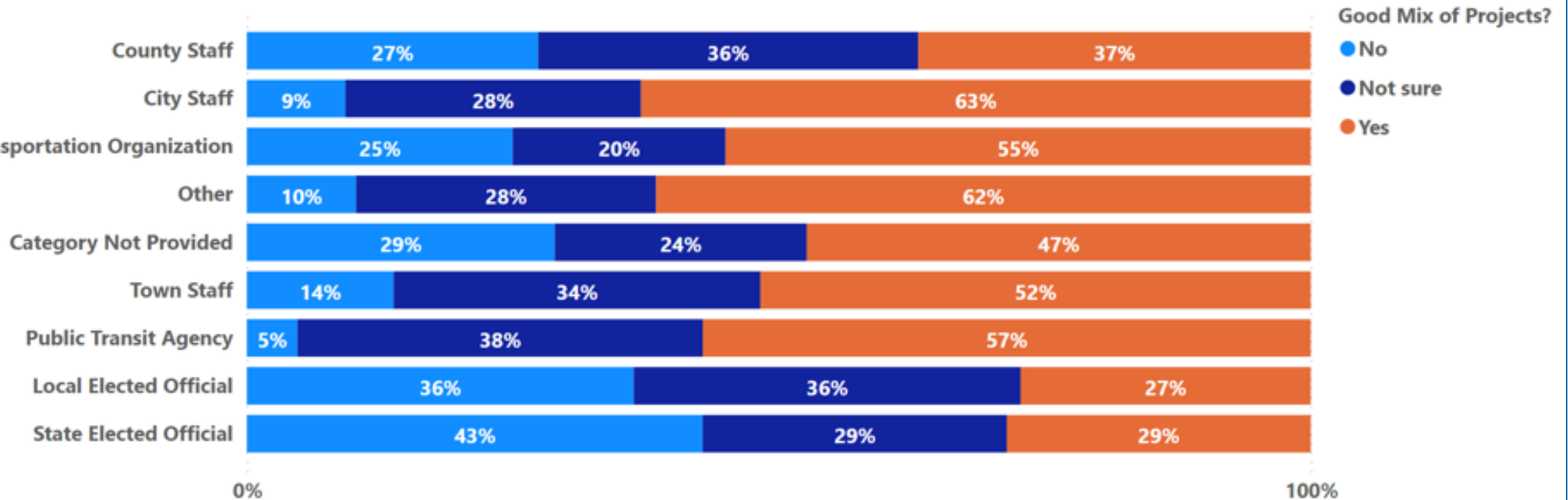
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Appendix D: Survey Perceptions by Category

Right Mix of Projects

Perceptions by Group of Right Mix of Projects

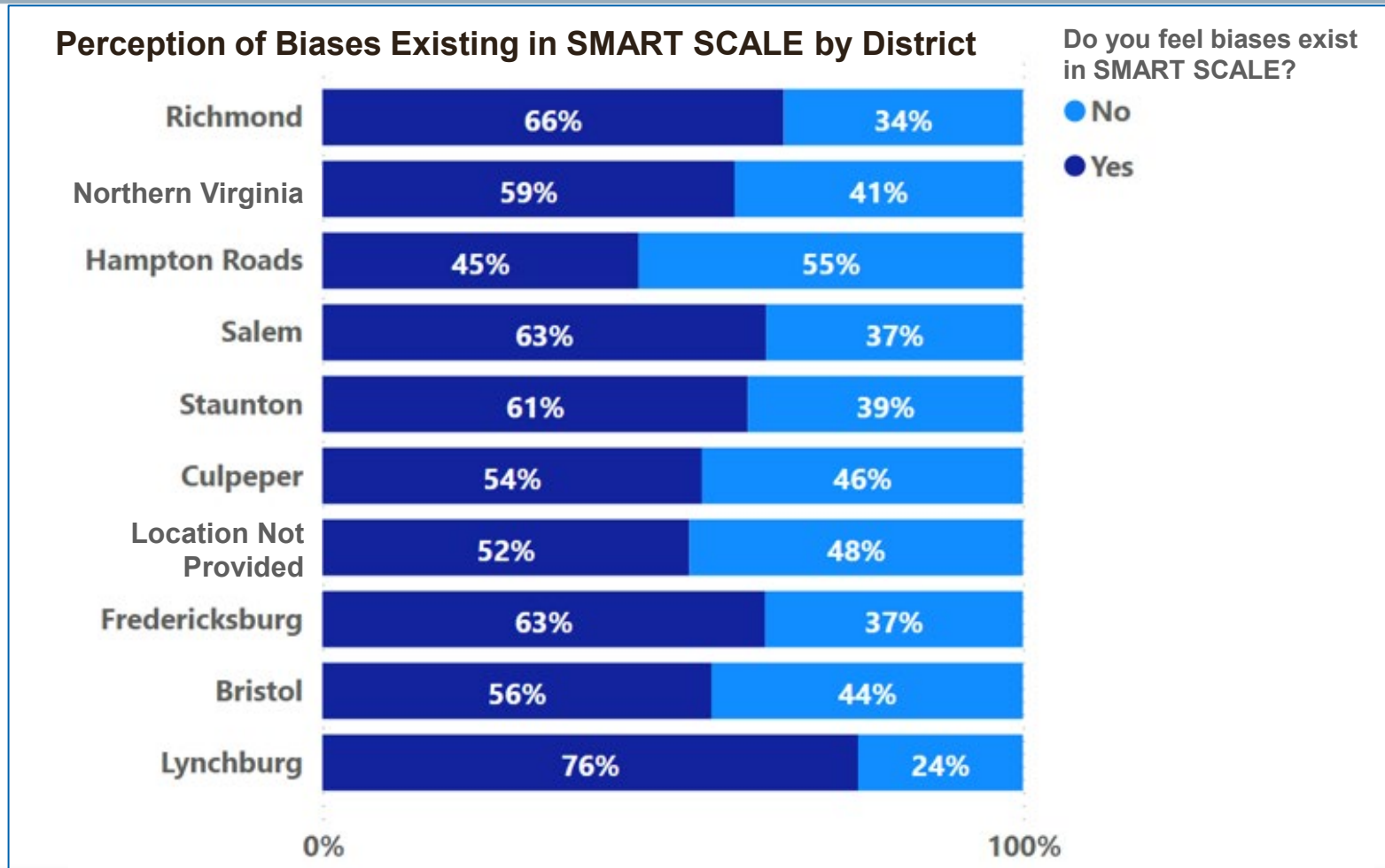


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Appendix E: Survey Perceptions by District

Perceived Biases

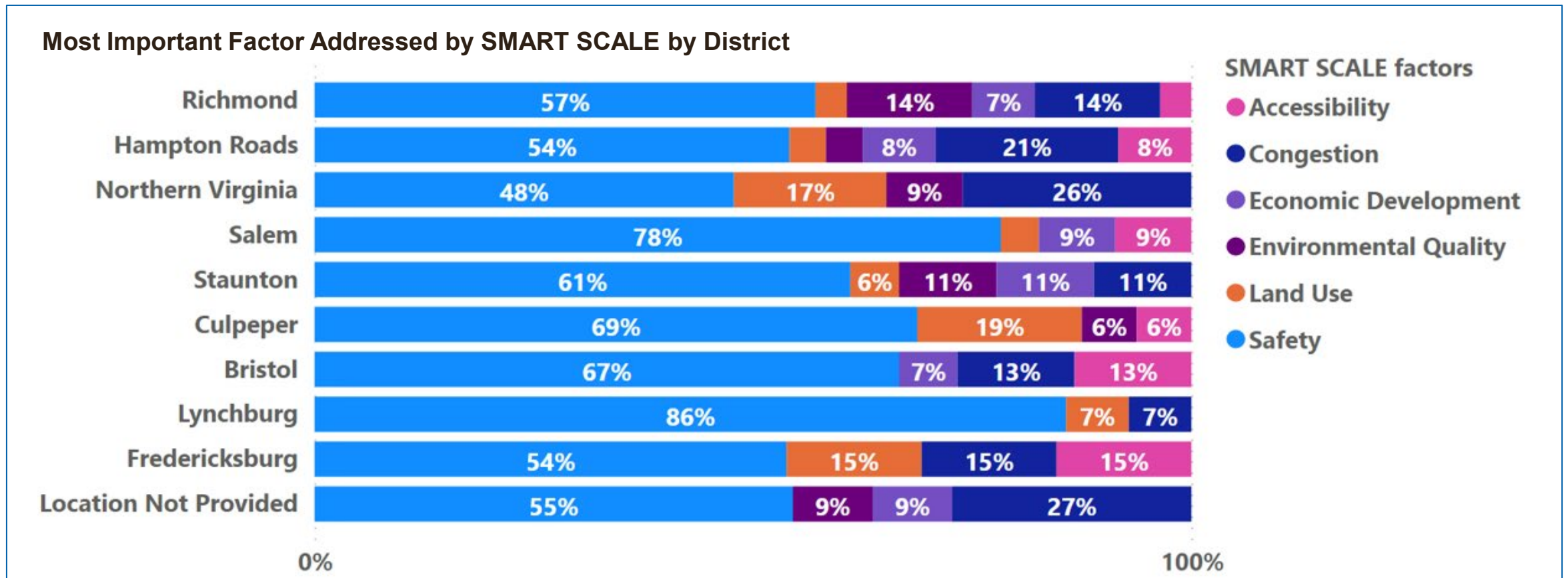


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Appendix F: Survey Perceptions by District

Highest-Ranking SMART SCALE Factor



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