ZIKA COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENTS MEETINGS
LOS ANGELES COUNTY, 2016[1]

Although large-scale, sustained outbreaks of Zika have not yet occurred in the United States, transmission is widespread and ongoing throughout much of Latin America and the Caribbean. Limited local transmission has occurred in Southern Florida and in Texas. Conditions that increase the risk of local transmission include introduction of the Zika virus by infected travelers arriving from a country experiencing an outbreak and the local presence of *Aedes* mosquitoes that can spread the infection. Based on the large numbers of travelers from affected countries and the widespread presence of *Aedes* mosquitoes, Los Angeles County (LAC) has been identified by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as one of the seven jurisdictions in the country most likely to experience a local Zika outbreak. The risk of a local Zika outbreak in LAC underscores the importance of effective vector control before and during an outbreak. Vector control strategies differ in effectiveness, cost, timeliness, and acceptability. Aerial pesticide application has seldom been used due to public opposition, but preferred methods such as "dumping and draining" standing water requires an entire community to respond in order to be effective. New technologies are in development to help fight against vector breeding and illnesses. The new technologies are not available at this time to local agencies but could be introduced over the next few years. As communities face new disease threats, local agencies must work with locals to prevent future outbreaks and have a strategy available for if one occurs in the near future.

In December 2016, the LAC Department of Public Health (DPH), Los Angeles Vector Control, and San Gabriel Vector Control agencies, in coordination with the Keystone Policy Center, convened five community workshops to gain information on public values and preferences to inform policy about mosquito control in LAC. These workshops also served to provide information to the LAC DPH and the county's five vector control districts to improve the effectiveness and acceptability of mosquito control and disease control efforts. The process ultimately focused on helping inform LAC's strategy, investment, and communications for vector control, public health, and preparedness. Workshop objectives included:

- To gather information about community preferences, values, and concerns associated with various mosquito control techniques;
- To gain a greater understanding of community values, motivations, barriers, and decision-making processes that drive individual behavior changes related to mosquito control and exposure; and
- To learn what information is needed at the community level about Zika virus infection and mosquito control and how this information can best be delivered and disseminated.

Overall, 177 people participated across the five workshops. Participants described a need for more information on Zika risks and illness, mosquito control, and protective behaviors. Once educated, most reported intending to "dump and drain" standing water but were skeptical that neighbors would do so. Concern about pesticide exposure was widespread. Most participants would accept aerial application to

[1] The full report on Greater Los Angeles County Vector Control and Public Health Community Engagement can be accessed at http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/acd/docs/VectorCommunityReport.pdf

control a Zika outbreak if provided sufficient information and advanced notice when applications would occur (Figure 1). In electronic polling, protecting babies from birth defects and preventing pesticide exposure were considered "very important" by >80% of participants. When asked what would be more important during a local Zika outbreak, 67% identified preventing birth defects and 33% preventing pesticide exposure. People also widely support the use of new technologies to reduce the spread of *Aedes* mosquitoes, particularly *Wolbachia*-infected sterile male mosquitoes (Figure 2). County support, including funding to further study this approach and share information, would be important if this strategy is to be a viable option.

Figure 1. Support (and Lack of Support) for Aerial Spraying Before and During a Zika Outbreak in LAC

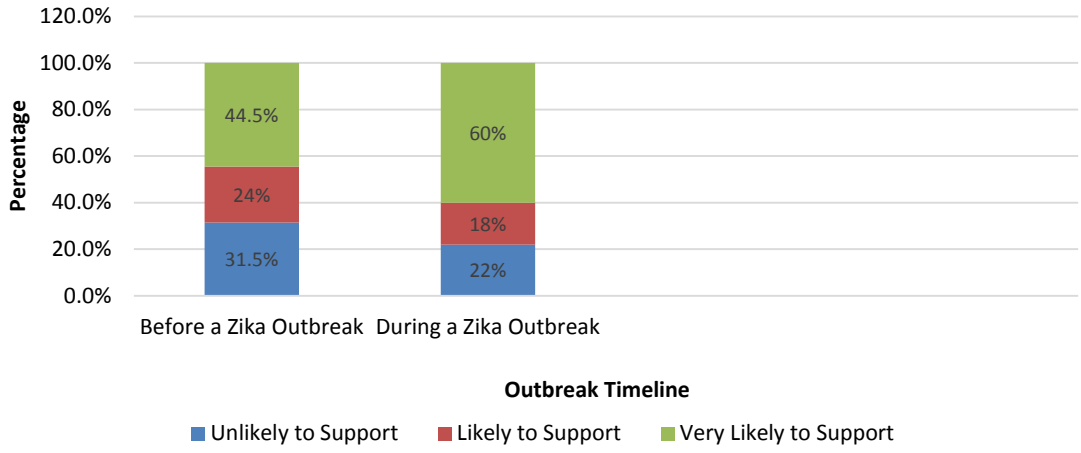

Figure 2. Support (and Lack of Support) for *Wolbachia*-Infectedor GMO Mosquitoes Before and During a Zika Outbreak in LAC