Future Of Transportation National Survey

Lori Weigel Dave Metz
On behalf of Smart Growth America and Transportation For America, Public Opinion Strategies and Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz and Associates conducted a national telephone survey of 800 registered voters, including 700 landline interviews and 100 cell phone interviews.

The survey was conducted February 27-March 2, 2010, and has a margin of error of \( \pm 3.46\% \).
Attitudes on Transportation Options
One-in-five voters have used public transportation – either bus, rail, or ferry – in the last month (19%), and even more have walked or biked.
For those who have not taken public transportation in the last month, availability is the main barrier to use.

What is the main reason you have not taken public transportation in the last month?

- Not available in my community: 47%
- Not convenient to my home or where I need to go: 35%
- Other/Unsure/Refused: 3%
- Costs too much: 1%
- Not safe to take public transportation: 3%
- Takes too long: 3%
- Have car/Want to use car: 8%

Future of Transportation National Survey – March 2010
Voters are most likely to want the CHOICE of transportation options.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transportation Statements</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have no choice but to drive as much as I do.</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would like more transportation options, so I have the freedom to choose how to get</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>where I need to go.</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would like to use public transportation more often, but it is not convenient or</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>available from my home or work.</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would like to spend less time in my car.</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Future of Transportation National Survey – March 2010
There is a strong sense that the nation and their community would benefit from improved public transportation.

Transportation Statements

**My Community**

- **Strongly Agree**: 69%
- **Agree**: 43%
- **Strongly Disagree**: 30%
- **Disagree**: 18%

**United States**

- **Strongly Agree**: 82%
- **Agree**: 56%
- **Strongly Disagree**: 16%
- **Disagree**: 16%

My Community Would Benefit From an Expanded and Improved Public Transportation System, Such as Rail and Buses

The United States Would Benefit From an Expanded and Improved Public Transportation System, Such as Rail and Buses
Voters are most likely to perceive rail as being neglected in federal priorities.

*Types of Transportation Not Getting Enough Attention - 2010*

- **Trains or light rail systems**: 33% (First Choice) - 57% (Combined Choice)
- **Roads**: 27% (First Choice) - 45% (Combined Choice)
- **Buses**: 15% (First Choice) - 34% (Combined Choice)
- **Sidewalks**: 8% (First Choice) - 23% (Combined Choice)
- **Bike paths or trails**: 11% (First Choice) - 22% (Combined Choice)
A majority side with public transportation as a solution to traffic congestion, but it is notably lower than last year.

**Traffic Congestion Statements**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>2009 %</th>
<th>2010 %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Some people say that we need to improve public transportation, including trains and buses, and make it easier to walk and bike to help reduce traffic congestion.</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other people say that we need to build more roads and expand existing roads to help reduce traffic congestion.</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Federal Funding
Voters’ guess for the amount of funding that is allocated to public transportation is close to the mark, but they say we SHOULD be spending twice as much.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean Current Allocation</th>
<th>Mean Ideal Allocation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Out of every dollar the federal government invests in transportation, how many cents would you guess IS currently spent on public transportation, such as trains, rail, ferries and buses?</td>
<td>$0.19</td>
<td>$0.37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Out of every dollar the federal government invests in transportation, how many cents would you say SHOULD BE spent on public transportation, such as such as trains, rail, ferries and buses?
Respondents were read a neutral description of current federal transportation spending:

Actually, today 80 cents out of every federal transportation dollar goes to highways, while 17 cents is used for public transportation such as trains, rail, ferries and buses around the country, and the remainder for other transportation needs.
A majority says that more should be allocated to public transportation after hearing the current reality.

Having heard that, would you say more funding should be allocated to public transportation, less funding should be allocated to public transportation, or do you think the current amount is about right?

**Future of Transportation National Survey – March 2010**
Support is significantly higher in the Northeast.

More Funding Should Be Allocated to Public Transportation, By Region

- Northeast (22%) - 67%
- West (22%) - 58%
- Midwest (22%) - 57%
- South (34%) - 52%

Having heard that, would you say more funding should be allocated to public transportation, less funding should be allocated to public transportation, or do you think the current amount is about right?
Future of Transportation National Survey – March 2010

Even a majority of rural residents would allocate more to public transportation.

*More Funding Should Be Allocated to Public Transportation, By Area Type*

- Urban (16%): 62%
- Suburban (35%): 59%
- Small Towns (25%): 60%
- Rural (23%): 50%

Having heard that, would you say more funding should be allocated to public transportation, less funding should be allocated to public transportation, or do you think the current amount is about right?
That said, those who use transit now are most likely to advocate increased spending on it.

More Funding Should Be Allocated to Public Transportation, By Usage

- Public transportation Users (19%): 68%
- Non-transportation users (81%): 55%

Having heard that, would you say more funding should be allocated to public transportation, less funding should be allocated to public transportation, or do you think the current amount is about right?
There is also a partisan dimension to allocating more funding to public transportation.

**More Funding Should Be Allocated to Public Transportation, By Party**

- **Democrats**: 66% (35%)
- **Independents**: 59% (30%)
- **Republicans**: 49% (31%)

*Having heard that, would you say more funding should be allocated to public transportation, less funding should be allocated to public transportation, or do you think the current amount is about right?*
A slim majority of voters are even willing to increase their own taxes in order to expand and improve public transportation in their community.

Total Support 52%
Total Oppose 46%

In general, would you support or oppose increasing funding to expand and improve public transportation in your community, if it required a small increase in taxes or fees?
Support is lower in rural areas, indicating that metro area measures will likely engender more support.

*Support for Small Tax/Fee for Public Transportation, by Type of Community*

- **Big City (16%)**
  - Support: 60%
  - Oppose: 37%

- **Suburban (35%)**
  - Support: 53%
  - Oppose: 45%

- **Small Town (25%)**
  - Support: 56%
  - Oppose: 42%

- **Rural (23%)**
  - Support: 56%
  - Oppose: 40%

In general, would you support or oppose increasing funding to expand and improve public transportation in your community, if it required a small increase in taxes or fees?
And as with any public need that involves a tax increase, there is greater support among Democrats.

**Support for Small Tax/Fee for Public Transportation, by Party**

- **Republicans (31%)**: 41% Support, 55% Oppose
- **Independents (30%)**: 48% Support, 50% Oppose
- **Democrats (35%)**: 66% Support, 33% Oppose
- **White Democrats (22%)**: 60% Support, 39% Oppose

*In general, would you support or oppose increasing funding to expand and improve public transportation in your community, if it required a small increase in taxes or fees?*
Outcomes
Outcomes of Increased Options

Respondents were asked to rate a number of potential outcomes of expanding and improving public transportation and walking and biking options on 2 dimensions:

#1 How likely is that outcome to happen?

#2 How good or bad would it be if that outcome were to happen?
## Choice and mobility outcomes are seen as most likely.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Very Likely</th>
<th>Total Likely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Residents will have more transportation choices</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-wage workers, seniors and the disabled will have an easier time getting where they need to go</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traffic congestion will be reduced</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of life will improve</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety on the roads will be improved</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good, long-term jobs will be created and maintained</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residents will have cheaper transportation options</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air pollution will be reduced</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People’s health will improve</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our dependence on foreign oil will be reduced</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global warming pollution will be reduced</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Future of Transportation National Survey – March 2010*
Happily, these are also seen as very positive outcomes.

- Residents will have more transportation choices: 31% (very positive)
- Low-wage workers, seniors and the disabled will have an easier time getting where they need to go: 37% (very positive)
- Good, long-term jobs will be created and maintained: 31% (very positive)
- Traffic congestion will be reduced: 30% (very positive)
- Quality of life will improve: 29% (very positive)
- Air pollution will be reduced: 29% (very positive)
- Our dependence on foreign oil will be reduced: 34% (very positive)
- People’s health will improve: 25% (very positive)
- Safety on the roads will be improved: 28% (very positive)
- Residents will have cheaper transportation options: 29% (very positive)
- Global warming pollution will be reduced: 29% (very positive)
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- Residents will have cheaper transportation options: 29% (very positive)
- Global warming pollution will be reduced: 29% (very positive)
Residents will have more transportation choices
Low-wage workers, seniors and the disabled will have an easier time getting where they need to go

Traffic congestion will be reduced
Quality of life will improve
Safety on the roads will be improved
Good, long-term jobs will be created and maintained
Air pollution will be reduced
Residents will have cheaper transportation options

Our dependence on foreign oil will be reduced
People’s health will improve
Global warming pollution will be reduced

Future of Transportation National Survey – March 2010
Now, some people say that we need to expand and improve our transportation options, which would include public transportation such as trains, rail, ferries and buses, as well as walking and biking options. I am going to read you a number of reasons that they say we need to expand and improve our transportation options, and for each one please tell me if that statement is very convincing, somewhat convincing, not very convincing, or not at all convincing as a reason to support expanding and improving our transportation options, including public transportation such as trains, rail, ferries and buses, as well as walking and biking options.
**Accountable**  
Government officials must be held accountable for how our transportation tax dollars are spent. We cannot afford to build more roads, while existing roads are in disrepair.  

**Income**  
Expanding and improving our transportation options will help those of poor or modest incomes or those without cars have a way to get to their jobs, training programs or school.  

**Health**  
A better network of roads and trails that are safe for walking and bicycling would help Americans stay active and healthy. Kids could walk or bike to school, families and workers would have better transportation options, and those who choose to walk or bicycle can be healthier.  

**Progress**  
It has been 50 years since government really looked at our transportation needs. We need our leaders to have their eyes on the future and invest in modern transportation options, including public transportation. We cannot rely on yesterday’s transportation options in our 21st century economy.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>% Very Convincing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economic Boost</td>
<td>Expanding and improving our transportation options can serve as a boost to our economy because it will not only create new jobs to build and run the system, but will spur economic development around rail stops, transportation centers and bus lines.</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy Independence/70%</td>
<td>Today, seventy percent of the oil we consume is for transportation. Expanding and improving our transportation options will help us reduce our dependence on foreign oil.</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>Car accidents claim the lives of forty thousand people each year, so investing in safe alternatives to driving can save lives while reducing congestion for those who do drive.</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affordable</td>
<td>The typical American family spends twenty percent of their household income on transportation, second only to housing and more than on health care. Expanding and improving our transportation options can help family budgets, by making it possible to use their cars less and spend less on insurance and maintenance.</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Clean Air
We need cleaner transportation options - from rail to bicycling and walking. By making it easier and more convenient to drive less, we can reduce air pollution and smog that causes lung disease and asthma.

Mobility for All
Expanding and improving our transportation options will enable all people, whether they have a car or not or whatever their incomes, to have the opportunity to get to jobs, school, or wherever they need to go.

Efficiency
Smarter, more responsible investments would allow communities to connect roads, public transportation, and walking and biking options in a transportation network that is efficient and convenient.

Less Time in Traffic
Expanding and improving our transportation options will help reduce traffic congestion and give people an alternative to sitting in traffic. Less time in traffic means more time to do what you want, and less money spent buying gasoline.

% Very Convincing

37%
35%
34%
33%
### Future of Transportation National Survey – March 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Freedom</th>
<th>Expanding and improving our transportation options will give more Americans the freedom to choose to drive when they WANT to - not because they HAVE to.</th>
<th>32%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Energy Independence/Hostile Nations</td>
<td>Today, the majority of the oil we use comes from foreign countries, many unfriendly to the U.S.. Expanding and improving our transportation options will help us reduce our dependence on foreign oil.</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitive</td>
<td>Some of the world’s best public transportation and rail systems are in Europe and Asia - not the United States. China has committed to spending one trillion dollars in the next ten years to expand its high speed rail network. Our nation’s economic competitiveness and American jobs depend on having a modern, efficient public transportation system.</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-Term Jobs</td>
<td>Building a modernized system of rail, clean-fuel buses, trails, and streets that are safe for walking and bicycling will create good, long-term jobs and give us dependable transportation networks we need for our economy's future.</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pocketbook</td>
<td>Gasoline prices are predicted to go up long-term. With a modern, efficient system of more fuel efficient buses and a network of passenger rail, we will have choices and options to protect our pocketbook AND our ability to get where we need to go.</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
We saw a clear distinction between talking about all workers versus workers of more modest incomes.

INCOME
Expanding and improving our transportation options will help those of poor or modest incomes or those without cars have a way to get to their jobs, training programs or school.

MOBILITY FOR ALL
Expanding and improving our transportation options will enable all people, whether they have a car or not or whatever their incomes, to have the opportunity to get to jobs, school, or wherever they need to go.

% Very Convincing

48%
35%
Energy independence does resonate, but evoking the security aspect is less compelling than the 70% figure.

ENERGY INDEPENDENCE/70%
Today, seventy percent of the oil we consume is for transportation. Expanding and improving our transportation options will help us reduce our dependence on foreign oil.

ENERGY INDEPENDENCE/HOSTILE NATIONS
Today, the majority of the oil we use comes from foreign countries, many unfriendly to the U.S.. Expanding and improving our transportation options will help us reduce our dependence on foreign oil.
A transit-oriented economic development message is more credible than ones focused on the long term economic competitiveness implications of transit.

**ECONOMIC BOOST**
Expanding and improving our transportation options can serve as a boost to our economy because it will not only create new jobs to build and run the system, but will spur economic development around rail stops, transportation centers and bus lines.

**COMPETITIVE**
Some of the world’s best public transportation and rail systems are in Europe and Asia - not the United States. China has committed to spending one trillion dollars in the next ten years to expand its high speed rail network. Our nation’s economic competitiveness and American jobs depend on having a modern, efficient public transportation system.

**LONG-TERM JOBS**
Building a modernized system of rail, clean-fuel buses, trails, and streets that are safe for walking and bicycling will create good, long-term jobs and give us dependable transportation networks we need for our economy's future.
### % Very Convincing Message Grid: Party

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Accountable (%)</th>
<th>Income (%)</th>
<th>Energy Independence (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Republicans (31%)</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents (30%)</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>31 (70%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrats (35%)</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Democrats (22%)</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **#1** Accountable (51%)
- **#2** Income (36%), Health (45%), Economic Boost (56%), Accountable (55%)
- **#3** Energy Independence /70% (31%), Income (42%), Health (56%), Health (52%)
% Very Convincing Message Grid: **Income Groups**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income Groups</th>
<th>Health</th>
<th>Accountable</th>
<th>Accountable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under $40K (31%)</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$40K-$80K (28%)</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over $80K (35%)</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>Energy Independence/70% (41%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**#1**
- Health (56%)
- Accountable (57%)
- Accountable (50%)

**#2**
- Income (53%)
- Income (47%)
- Income (44%)

**#3**
- Clean Air (51%)
- Safety (46%)
- Energy Independence/70% (41%)
% Very Convincing Message Grid: **Geography**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Big City (16%)</th>
<th>Suburban (35%)</th>
<th>Small Town (25%)</th>
<th>Rural (23%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#1</td>
<td>Income (54%)</td>
<td>Accountable (47%)</td>
<td>Accountable (56%)</td>
<td>Accountable (55%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#2</td>
<td>Accountable (51%)</td>
<td>Income (46%)</td>
<td>Income (49%)</td>
<td>Health (53%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#3</td>
<td>Economic Boost (50%)</td>
<td>Affordable (43%)</td>
<td>Clean Air (47%)</td>
<td>Income (46%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### % Very Convincing Message Grid: Funding Allocation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>More (63%)</th>
<th>Less (5%)</th>
<th>About the right amount (31%)</th>
<th>Movers to More (11%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>Accountable</td>
<td>Accountable</td>
<td>Income</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(59%)</td>
<td>(34%)</td>
<td>(52%)</td>
<td>(69%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountable</td>
<td>Health</td>
<td>Health</td>
<td>Accountable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(53%)</td>
<td>(17%)</td>
<td>(33%)</td>
<td>(62%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Boost</td>
<td>Less Time in Traffic</td>
<td>Income</td>
<td>Economic Boost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(52%)</td>
<td>(14%)</td>
<td>(30%)</td>
<td>(54%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The messages have some impact on voters’ willingness to fund transportation options in their community.

**Initial**

- Somewhat Support: 27%
- Strongly Support: 24%
- Somewhat Oppose: 14%
- Strongly Oppose: 32%
- Unsure: 3%

**Total Support**: 52%
**Total Oppose**: 46%

**Informed**

- Somewhat Support: 29%
- Strongly Support: 28%
- Somewhat Oppose: 11%
- Strongly Oppose: 30%
- Unsure: 3%

**Total Support**: 57%
**Total Oppose**: 40%
Of rebuttals to pro-roads messages, these resonate most:

And which one, if any, would be your greatest concern about continuing the current government approach that gives building more roads a much higher priority than public transportation in our communities?

- We cannot properly maintain the roads we already have (34%)
- We can better use the roads we have by encouraging flexible work hours, telecommuting, and other strategies to reduce traffic at rush hour (30%)
- More roads will simply fill with more cars and traffic (14%)
- More roads increases our dependence on cars and oil (14%)

Future of Transportation National Survey – March 2010
Final Conclusions
Final Conclusions

- Voters are supportive of having more transportation options. They think the country and their community would benefit, and would allocate more current transportation tax dollars to transit, but are wary of investments that require an increase in taxes.

- The following framing statement captures many of the strongest themes evident in the research:

  *The time has come for our government to ensure America has a modern transportation system -- with well-maintained roads and bridges, with convenient public transportation, and with safe places to walk and bike -- that provides more options for everyone. One that helps workers get to where jobs are; one that lets children walk and bike safely to and from school; and one that allows seniors and the disabled get to where they need to go. We must hold government accountable for spending our tax dollars wisely to ensure that we have these transportation options.*
The key themes encapsulated in this message include:

- Government accountability;
- Options;
- Safety; and
- Specific examples of benefits.

Secondary messages include:

- Reducing our dependence on foreign oil / 70% is used for transportation;
- Boosting our economy not only from jobs building the system, but through spurring development;
- Allowing Americans to stay active and healthy; and
- (If needed to rebut a pro-roads message) Maintaining roads and utilizing existing roads more efficiently.