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Public Opinion
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TO: Interested Parties

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RE: Key Findings from a National Survey on Transportation Funding

DATE: March 11, 2010

The Democratic polling firm of Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates (FM3) and the Republican polling firm of Public Opinion Strategies (POS) recently partnered to complete a national survey of registered voters to assess public attitudes toward transportation, and in particular funding of public transportation and walking and biking options.¹ The survey results show that American voters overwhelmingly perceive a benefit from an expanded and improved public transportation system, would personally like more transportation options – including options for biking and walking -- and a solid majority says that more federal transportation dollars should go to public transportation as opposed to road building.

In fact, when thinking about reducing traffic congestion, three-in-five voters choose improving public transportation and making it easier to walk and bike over building more roads and expanding existing roads (59% to 38%). Many voters are already utilizing alternatives to driving – or wish they could – and the chief reason American voters do not use public transportation more often is simply that it is not available or convenient for them.

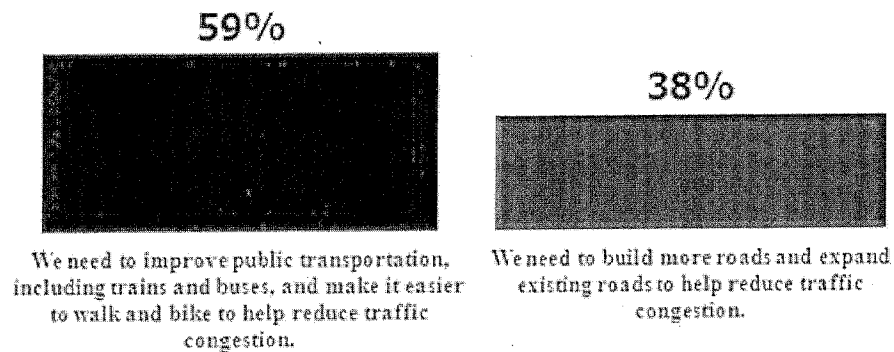
Specifically, the survey found the following:

- Voters express strong positive regard for public transportation and increasing transportation options in a number of different ways, from the global to the personal:
 - More than four-in-five voters (82%) say that “the United States would benefit from an expanded and improved public transportation system, such as rail and buses.” A majority (56%) say they “strongly agree” with this sentiment. This is a widely held view, held by overwhelming majorities of voters in every region of the country and in every type of community.

¹ **Methodology:** From February 27 - March 2, 2010, FM3 and POS completed 800 telephone interviews with registered voters nationwide. The sample included 700 voters with landline telephones, as well as 100 voters who mostly or entirely use cell phones. The margin of sampling error for the full national sample is +/- 3.8%; margins of error for subgroups within the sample will be larger.

- On a personal level, two-thirds (66%) say that they “would like more transportation options” so they have the freedom to choose how to get where they need to go. Along these same lines, 73% currently feel they “have no choice but to drive as much as” they do.
- One-in-five voters have used public transportation – either bus, rail or ferry – in the last month (19%) in order to go to school, work run errands or go shopping. In addition, 44% say they have walked and 13% say they have biked for those non-recreation purposes.
- Among the four-in-five voters (81%) who have not taken a bus, train or ferry in the last month for those purposes, the primary reason cited is that it is simply not available in their community (47%), while another 35% say it is not convenient to their work, home or school (35%).
- A solid majority view an expanded transportation network as the preferable step in facing our transportation future. When asked which of the following statements comes closer to their point of view, three-in-five voters point to improving public transportation and biking and walking options as the step we should take as one can see in **Figure 1**.

**Figure 1:
Preference to Reduce Traffic Congestion**

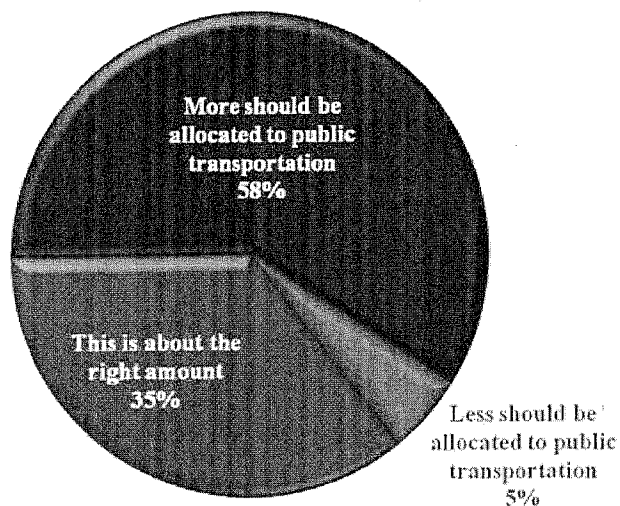


This view is widely held, as majorities of virtually all key voter sub-groups side with improving public transportation and walking and biking options, including majorities in every region of the nation and in every type of community from urban to suburban to rural.

- When thinking about federal funding for public transportation, solid majorities clearly indicate they do not feel that current allocations are appropriate.
 - First, voters are fairly accurate in their assessment of how many cents out of every federal transportation dollar currently fund public transportation, with 19 cents the average estimate of current spending (compared to 17 cents in reality).
 - These same respondents would prefer to nearly double the allocation to public transportation, saying that 37 cents of every federal transportation dollar is what they think *should* be the norm. Fully 59% of the electorate cite some amount that is greater than what the federal government currently spends (18 cents or greater).

- Respondents were then told the current reality: “*Actually, today 80 cents out of every federal transportation dollar goes to highways, while 17 cents is used for public transportation such as such as trains, rail, ferries and buses around the country, and the remainder for other transportation needs.*” Given that perspective, a majority of 58% say that more should be allocated to public transportation, while 35% feel that this is about the right amount as demonstrated in **Figure 2**. A mere 5% say that less should be allocated to other transportation options.

Figure 2:
Allocation of Federal Transportation Spending



The desire to increase the amount that is allocated to public transportation and walking and biking options is shared across diverse sub-groups, including:

- 54% of men and 61% of women;
- 67% in the Northeast, 58% in the West, 57% in the Midwest, and 52% in the South;
- 61% of working Americans and 65% with the longest commutes;
- 72% of those who have used public transportation in the last month;
- 62% in urban areas, 59% of suburbanites, 60% in small towns and 50% in rural areas;
- 66% of Democrats, 59% of Independents, and 49% of Republicans; and
- Majorities of all income groups.

Overall, the survey results reflect a strong and broadly-shared desire among American voters to expand the transportation options available to them, and for the federal government to take a more active role in financially supporting a wide range of transportation options – including public transportation, biking, and walking.

