Smart Growth America Nationwide Survey

Strategic findings from survey among 1,000 voters nationwide
Conducted November 16 – 22, 2010
Objectives

- Identify priorities for state transportation spending.
- Test messages around roads, bridges, and transportation choices.
- Assess the urgency of investing in transportation in the current economic climate.
Key subgroups of the electorate:

Political Self-Identification

- Republican: 34%
- Democrat: 37%
- Independent/Other: 29%

Self-Described Voting Pattern

- Vote for DEMOCRATS most of the time: 27%
- Vote for GOPs a little more often: 50%
- Split votes pretty evenly: 23%
- “SWING VOTERS”
Voters are pessimistic about the direction and economic conditions of their state.

**Overall Direction of the State**

- **Right direction**
  - All voters: 65%
  - Democrats: 34%
  - Republicans: 33%
  - Swing voters: 66%

- **Wrong track**
  - All voters: 35%
  - Democrats: 60%
  - Republicans: 67%
  - Swing voters: 66%

**State Economic Conditions**

- **Very satisfied**
  - All voters: 81%
  - Democrats: 43%
  - Republicans: 46%
  - Swing voters: 44%

- **Somewhat satisfied**
  - All voters: 79%
  - Democrats: 34%
  - Republicans: 20%
  - Swing voters: 30%

- **Very dissatisfied**
  - All voters: 19%
  - Democrats: 21%
  - Republicans: 17%
  - Swing voters: 20%

- **Somewhat dissatisfied**
  - All voters: 83%
  - Democrats: 80%
  - Republicans: 46%
  - Swing voters: 44%
Maintenance and repair is the top priority for state transportation funding.

Which one of these should be the top priority for state transportation funding?

Maintaining and repairing roads, highways, freeways, and bridges
- All voters: 51%
- Democrats: 45%
- Republicans: 56%
- Swing voters: 52%

Expanding/improving bus, rail, van service, biking, walking, transportation choices
- All voters: 33%
- Democrats: 42%
- Republicans: 22%
- Swing voters: 32%

Expanding and building new roads, highways, freeways, and bridges
- All voters: 16%
- Democrats: 13%
- Republicans: 22%
- Swing voters: 16%
Priorities for transportation funding align with perceived value for the cost.

% saying each would be a good value for the cost

- **Repair/maintain existing roads/bridges**: 76% of all voters, 78% of Democrats, 78% of Republicans, 74% of Swing voters. 32% to 36% of all groups say this would be a very good value.
- **More choices: bus, carpool, light rail, van, commuter rail**: 41% say this would be a very good value. 78% of all voters, 78% of Democrats, 47% of Republicans, 66% of Swing voters. Age 65+: 87% Men/50+: 85% Men/coll. grad: 83% Women/coll. grad: 77% Afr. Amer.: 73% Postgrad: 71% Women/college grad: 55% Under age 35: 54% Hispanic: 48% South: 45%.
- **Expand biking/walking opportunities**: 45% of all voters, 54% of Democrats, 37% of Republicans, 46% of Swing voters. 37% of all groups say this would be a very good value.
- **Build new roads and bridges**: 37% of all voters, 36% of Democrats, 44% of Republicans, 38% of Swing voters. 36% to 44% of all groups say this would be a very good value.
Regardless of party, majorities of voters agree with both arguments for fix-it-first.

Our gov’t has obligation to the people in this state to create jobs and implement policies to strengthen the economy, protect the environment, ensure opportunity for all. On transportation, we don’t need to build more, we need to fix what we have and give citizens low-cost choices that protect environment and economy at same time.

We can’t afford to spend more gov’t money on transportation. Instead of writing blank checks for new roads/other projects, we need to be fiscally responsible, repair infrastructure we have, and invest what’s left on projects with high return.
“Safety first” is the top argument that rebuilding roads/bridges is a good value.

% all voters rating each as a very convincing argument (8-10 on zero-to-10 scale)

- Our duty to make sure roads/bridges are safe; right now many are not: 59%
  - Age 65+: 72%
  - Midwest: 69%

- To attract business we must ensure business/shopping accessible: 53%
  - Age 65+: 67%

- Cost less if we fix what we already have: 52%
  - Age 65+: 66%

- Repairing existing roads/bridges creates more jobs than building new: 45%
  - HS or less: 54%
  - Afr. Amer.: 52%
  - Midwest: 52%
  - Age 65+: 50%
Arguments for rebuilding roads/bridges score about equally across parties.

% rating each as a very convincing argument (8-10 on zero-to-10 scale)

<table>
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There is no single winning argument for bus, carpool, and rail offering good value.

% all voters rating each as a very convincing argument (8-10 on zero-to-10 scale)

Makes it easier for low-income, disabled, seniors to get around: 49%
- Afr. Amer. 64%
- Age 65+ 59%
- Women/50+ 58%

Can reduce miles driven by 58%: 47%
- Hispanic 55%

Creates jobs, spurs economic development: 46%
- Hispanic 59%

Unemployment at 10%: need transportation that creates jobs: 45%
- Afr. Amer. 54%

To attract good employees, businesses want transit options: 42%
- Hispanic 52%
- Postgrad 51%
- Women/50+ 50%

Typical family spends 20% of income on transportation: 41%
- Hispanic 52%
- Afr. Amer. 50%
There are major partisan divides, however, with Democrats the most convinced.

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Arguments for biking/walking opportunities as good value are not convincing overall.

% all voters rating each as a very convincing argument (8-10 on zero-to-10 scale)

Would help Americans stay active and healthy 41%
- <$35K 51%
- Afr. Amer. 50%
- Under age 35 49%

Would make our air cleaner, neighborhoods more livable 37%
- Hispanic 50%
- <$35K 46%

Attract businesses: employees want to live in these types of communities 32%
- Hispanic 43%
- <$35K 43%

Most trips are less than 3 miles: would reduce the number of cars on the road for short trips 29%
- <$35K 39%
Republicans are far less convinced than Democrats by biking/walking arguments.

% rating each as a very convincing argument (8-10 on zero-to-10 scale)

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Regardless of party, most agree that now is the time to invest in transportation.

View of State Investing In Transportation

- Now is the time for state government to invest in transportation, because if we do it right, these investments will create jobs and attract new business.

- Now is not the time for state government to invest in transportation, because budgets are too tight, and in this bad economy, there are more important needs the state should address.
Appendix

Full Text of Arguments for Types of Transportation Spending
Arguments That Rebuilding Roads And Bridges Is A Good Value

We have a duty to make sure that our roads and bridges are safe and reliable, and right now a lot of them are not. With a limited budget, we should use our state’s transportation dollars to repair our existing roads, bridges, and transit to make them safe, before spending money on new facilities.

If we want to attract new businesses and jump-start the economy in our state, we must ensure that our business districts and shopping communities are welcoming and accessible. This means fixing the roads and bridges that are crumbling around them.

Billions of tax dollars have been spent on transportation, but roads are falling apart and bridges are crumbling. Our money will be spent more wisely—and it will cost less—if we fix what we already have before building new roads and bridges.

We need to take every opportunity to strengthen our economy and ensure that our tax dollars are well spent. When it comes to transportation, repairing our existing roads and bridges creates more jobs than building new roads and bridges does.
Arguments That Buses, Carpoools, Light Rail, Commuter Rail Are Good Values

Public transportation allows low-wage workers, seniors, and the disabled the opportunity to get where they need to go. Whether it’s going to work, going to the grocery store, or visiting friends and family, transit options such as buses, carpools, light rail, and commuter rail make it easier for them to get around.

Investing in transit options can reduce the number of miles driven in a community by as much as 58%. If we reduce the number of miles we drive, we’ll also reduce our dependence on oil.

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.

With the unemployment rate at almost 10%, we need to invest in transportation strategies that will create more jobs. For every $1 billion invested in bus, light rail, and commuter rail transit, 19,000 jobs are created. The same amount of money spent on new roads creates only half that number, less than 10,000 jobs.

To attract high-quality employees, businesses prefer to locate in areas where there are practical and convenient transit options, such as buses, carpools, light rail, and commuter rail. Investing in a high-quality transit system will draw new businesses to our state, making us better able to compete.

The typical American family spends 20% of their household income on transportation, second only to housing and more than both health care and education. Expanding and improving our transit options will help families save money by providing alternatives so they can use their cars less and spend less on insurance and maintenance.
Arguments That Expanding Biking/Walking Opportunities Is A Good Value

A better network of roads and trails that are safe for walking and biking 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 bike can be healthier.

One way to make our air cleaner and our neighborhoods more livable is to create more opportunities for people to bike and walk. This translates into healthier, more breathable air for our kids and families.

Livable communities give people more opportunities to bike and walk to get where they need to go. By providing more active transportation—like bike lanes and sidewalks—we will attract businesses because these are the types of communities in which employees want to live.

Most trips that people take are less than three miles in length. Safe and attractive biking and walking choices would reduce the number of cars on the road for short trips.