

# Construction Ahead?

## Public Opinion on Transportation in Massachusetts

BY STEVE KOCZELA AND RICH PARR

In January, the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT), at the direction of the state legislature, delivered a 10 year plan for the Massachusetts transportation network. Governor Patrick has endorsed the MassDOT plan, and he identified transportation as one of his main priorities during his State of the Commonwealth address and in his budget proposal. The leaders of both the House and Senate have said they intend to take action on

transportation, but have signaled that they may consider alternatives to the governor's specific proposal.

In preparation for this public debate, MassINC and The MassINC Polling Group (MPG) have conducted a yearlong research project on the opinions of Massachusetts voters regarding the condition of the state's transportation network and options for financing it, both now and in the future. This project included dozens of interviews with transportation experts, nine focus groups across Massachusetts, and two statewide public opinion polls. The research described in this report is intended to inform the participants in the debate and to provide state leaders with timely insight into the opinions of Bay State residents on this critical issue.

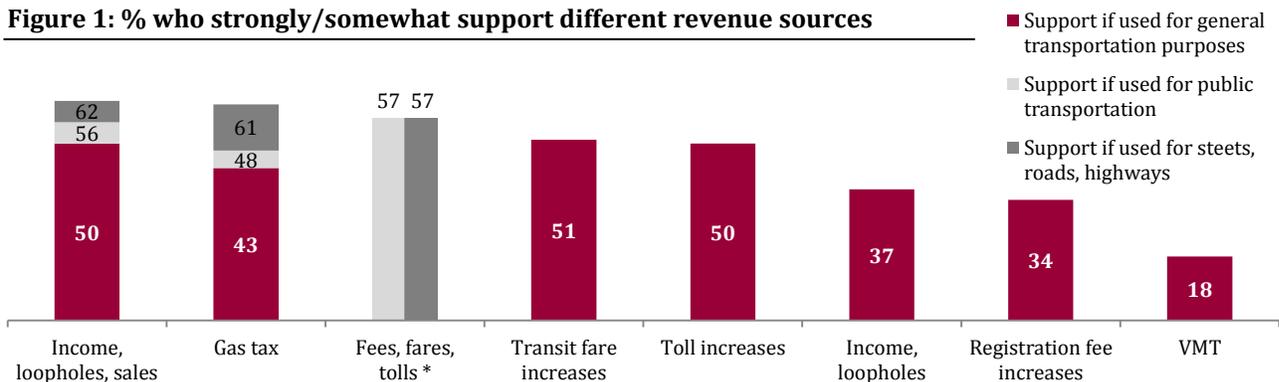
The research reveals a voting public who recognize the benefits of raising additional revenue for transportation and who are open to several potential revenue ideas. To build support for new revenues, voters are looking for assurances that funds raised for transportation will be spent on transportation specifically, rather than reallocated for other uses. Throughout this research project, providing specifics regarding uses of funds resulted in more support for the ideas we discussed. For example, saying new funds would be used specifically for either roads or specifically for transit boosted support above using funds for general transportation needs (Figure 1).

When asked what investments they would prefer, a majority of voters across the state pointed to *both* roads and transit. This included majorities or pluralities even in regions outside of Boston, where interest in transit investment is often thought to be less intense (Figure 2).

### KEY FINDINGS

- Voters see potential economic benefits of an improved transportation network and are open to paying more for it.
- Voters across the state favor investment balanced between roads and transit.
- Voters find several revenues options acceptable, but no one option appeals to all groups equally.
- Providing specifics on how new transportation funds will be spent increases support.
- Dedicating funds to transportation and completing projects on time and budget help overcome mistrust of government spending.
- Voters are mostly unaware of the poor physical and financial condition of the system.

**Figure 1: % who strongly/somewhat support different revenue sources**



\* Separate questions were included on the ideas of using fees, fares, and tolls for general transportation uses. The three were then combined for the purposes of questions about using funds specifically for roads or specifically for transit. For full question wording, see Appendix B of this report. Source: MPG Poll, Feb 2013.

Voters recognize economic benefits that improving the transportation network could provide, both for themselves and for others around the state. The top anticipated economic benefits include increased economic activity from construction, an improved business environment in Massachusetts, and better access to jobs via transit.

The two main public opinion obstacles to raising new revenues are 1) a general lack of awareness of the physical and financial condition of the state’s transportation network and 2) doubts about the efficiency and transparency of state government spending. Without assurances regarding what they will receive in exchange for agreeing to higher taxes and fees, voters will likely react with elevated skepticism to new proposals.

### Public Open to Revenue

Voters in every region recognize the potential economic benefits of *raising revenue* for the purposes of improving the Massachusetts transportation network. Often, polls on issues of taxes versus services show that voters want government services but are reluctant to provide the necessary tax revenues. In this case, however, residents are clearly expressing a willingness to open their wallets to fund what they want, and not merely indicating a passive desire for improvements.

Just over six in ten voters in both the September 2012 and February 2013 polls said they were willing to pay \$50 per person per year “to create a sustainable funding stream for the roads network and public transportation system.” Around half in each poll indicating they would pay \$100, and about a third said they were open to \$200 per year. The polls also tested these same amounts broken out per year versus per month, and tested dedicating funds for projects in respondents’ own areas versus “around Massachusetts.” These changes did not make an appreciable difference in voters’ willingness to pay.

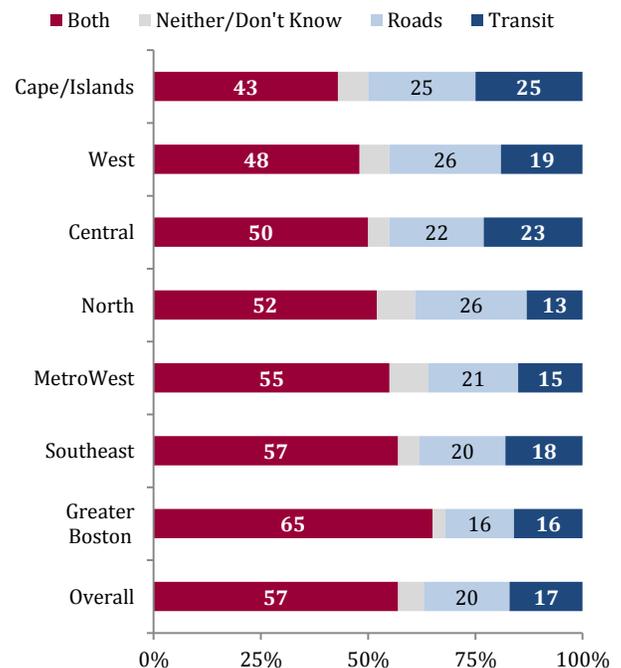
Alongside this openness to paying more is uncertainty among voters about the per-person amount it would take to create a sustainable funding stream for transportation. When asked how much they thought it would cost to create a sustainable

funding stream, most focus group participants would not venture a guess; those who did offered guesses that varied widely, ranging into thousands of dollars per person. They were also clearly nervous about the prospect of another short-term fix with another request for revenues several years down the line.

### A Balanced Approach

How respondents wanted to see the money spent upended the conventional wisdom that there is a major divide between Greater Boston and the rest of the Commonwealth in terms of which mode residents would prefer to fund. *In every region of the Commonwealth, residents favor investment in both roads and transit over an exclusive focus on one or the other.* During the expert interview phase of this research,<sup>1</sup> many of the leaders we spoke to expressed concern about the expected size of this divide, concerns that proved to be largely unfounded.

**Figure 2**  
Highest priority: roads, transit, both or neither?



The September 2012 poll explored whether the highest priority for transportation investment should be roads and highways, public transportation, both or

<sup>1</sup> The first phase of this research was a series of interviews with transportation experts and stakeholders around the state. For more information on the process, see Appendix A.

neither. Statewide, a majority (57 percent) favored investing in both roads and transit (Figure 2). That opinion was also shared by a plurality of voters in each of the seven regions<sup>2</sup>, ranging from a 65 percent majority in Greater Boston to 43 percent on the Cape and Islands. Voters supporting investment in one mode over another were split fairly evenly between roads and transit, with some tilt toward road-only investment in the West and North. Nonetheless, investment in transit, either exclusively or paired with road improvements, received majority support in every region of the state.

The preference for balance between modes shown in the responses to this question is consistent with other MPG polling. In February 2011,<sup>3</sup> when asked what should be a high, medium, or low priority for state leaders, 69 percent of voters said improving roads should be a high priority, and 62 percent said improving transit. In September 2012, 80 percent said that improving roads would contribute a “great deal” or “a fair amount” to economic growth; 73 percent thought the same for public transportation.

#### **Bus systems face perception deficit**

Most focus group participants had favorable opinions of existing subway, train, and ferry service. Bus service, however, was viewed less favorably. Across the state, focus group participants viewed bus service, in its current condition, as an option for residents without automobiles.

Widespread complaints about buses revolved around extended wait times, routes that are limited and difficult to understand, service delays, and lack of evening and weekend service. In Springfield and Boston, participants also complained of dirty buses, poor attitudes among drivers, and perceived potential for violence from other passengers. Addressing these problems could make bus service a desirable option for more commuters.

Focus group participants around the Commonwealth expressed similar views of both transit and roads as important. Even focus group participants who mostly drove recognized the benefit of transit to those who could not or did not drive: students, the elderly, and

<sup>2</sup>To account for the possibility of differing opinions between regions of the state, the state was divided into seven regions for this poll, and we obtained enough responses in each region to report them separately. See Appendix A for more information and a map of the regions.

<sup>3</sup> See *The 80 Percent Challenge: A Survey of Climate Change Opinion and Action in Massachusetts* (2011).

lower-income residents. Others pointed to potential economic benefits of improved transit, with some reporting they themselves had experienced diminished economic opportunity due to limited night and weekend bus service, and bus routes that did not serve job locations. *The recognition of the economic and social benefits of transit, even outside of Boston, was consistent across the polls and focus groups.*

#### **Jobs, Jobs, Jobs**

Voters understand the economic case for improving the transportation system. The February 2013 poll tested several arguments in favor of new revenues for transportation. Three of the four arguments that respondents found to be the strongest had a link to jobs and the economy. These included: creating construction jobs to build the system, linking people to jobs via better transit, and keeping Massachusetts a good place for businesses to locate and for younger workers. In each case, between 64 percent and 69 percent of voters called the ideas “somewhat strong” or “very strong” arguments in favor of additional funding.

Participants in the focus groups were drawn to the idea that transportation is “the glue that holds our economy together,” giving it consistently high marks during written exercises. Many participants shared personal stories of how the existing transportation system had limited their access to economic opportunity, citing traffic congestion, lack of transit access at critical times and transit routes that did not connect them to jobs. Others discussed the importance of moving goods, services, and people as critical elements of economic activity.

#### **Paying the Bill**

If voters understand the economic case for investing in both roads and transit and are open to doing so, how should the Commonwealth raise the needed revenue? Several potential revenue options for transportation received majority support, particularly when the uses of the revenue were spelled out clearly. There is no solution that will pass without opposition, but there are several potential paths toward majority support.

The February 2013 poll explored whether voters would support or oppose seven potential revenue options, while indicating that all of the revenue raised would be dedicated to general transportation uses (Figure 1, Page 1).<sup>4</sup> Of the seven options, three were supported by at least half of voters: increasing transit fares, increasing tolls, and raising the state income tax to 6.25 percent while closing tax loopholes and cutting the sales tax to 4.5 percent.

### Specifics Increase Support

Three revenue options were then tested with additional detail: once specifying that funds would be used mostly to fund roads and highways, and once specifying that funds would go mostly to public transportation. In each case, giving additional details as to how the funds would be spent increased public support. This interest in the specifics of spending plans echoes the finding of the September 2012 poll that 71 percent of residents strongly agree that a project list would make them more likely to support additional transportation funding.

For the gas tax, for example (Figure 3), 43 percent support an increase for general transportation uses, 48 percent support an increase to fund public transportation improvements, and 61 percent would favor increasing the gas tax to fund roads and highways. The difference between support for transit spending and road spending was more pronounced than was the case with other revenue options polled, suggesting that voters may connect the gas tax more closely with automobile-related spending. That said, it is notable that specifying that gas tax funds would go to transit *increases* levels of support for that tax.

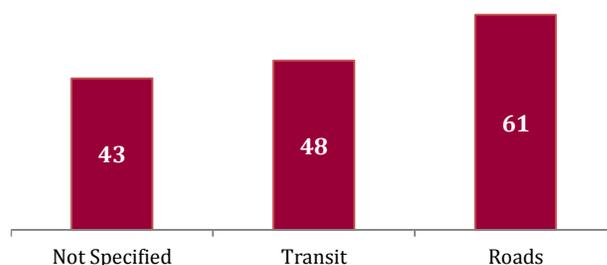
### Support by Region

All told, eight combinations of revenues and uses were supported by at least half of the respondents. The top five all involved specifying that the funds would be used for either roads or transit. The top two options (the gas tax for roads and the income tax/sales tax/loopholes option for roads) were favored by majorities in every region (Figure 4).

<sup>4</sup> For specific question text, see Appendix B.

**Figure 3**

% who strongly/somewhat support gas tax by use specified



### Voters overestimate the current gas tax level

In 2008, Gov. Patrick proposed raising the state's 23.5-cent-per-gallon gas tax, which has not been increased since 1991. Despite support for the idea from business groups, the legislature chose instead to increase the state's sales tax and dedicate a portion of the proceeds to transportation.

Despite its notoriety, our 2013 poll found widespread misunderstanding about the basics of the gas tax. About 8 in 10 respondents thought the gas tax was higher than it actually is or did not know what amount they paid. About 3 in 10 respondents guessed the gas tax was at least twice as high as the actual amount of 41.5 cents (state and federal combined).

There were more pronounced regional variations on other options. Raising transit fares was supported by only 40 percent in Boston but by majorities elsewhere. Conversely, dedicating the income/sales/loopholes combination to public transportation won 70 percent support in Boston but polled between 45 percent and 54 percent elsewhere.

There is also more variation on raising tolls, with stronger support in the West, Central, North, and Cape and Islands than in Greater Boston, MetroWest and the Southeast. This regional variation may reflect the fact that some regions pay tolls currently and believe they would bear the brunt of an increase, while others do not anticipate they would be tolled.

### VMT Widely Unpopular

There was little regional variation, however, when it came to dislike of a tax on based on the number of miles driven, commonly called a Vehicle-Miles-Traveled fee or VMT.

**Figure 4****% who say they strongly or somewhat support each revenue option**

Revenue Source	Specified Use	Overall	West	Central	Metro-West	North	Greater Boston	South-east	Cape & Islands
Income, loopholes, sales	Roads, highways	62	64	60	68	53	67	61	55
Gas tax	Roads, highways	61	53	62	66	60	62	60	53
Fees, fares, tolls	Public transportation	57	64	64	69	59	55	46	62
Fees, fares, tolls	Roads, highways	57	69	61	67	65	49	56	61
Income, loopholes, sales	Public transportation	56	54	45	45	50	70	51	47
Transit fare increases	Not specified	51	53	64	56	60	40	51	59
Toll increases	Not specified	50	66	60	48	57	44	47	55
Income, loopholes, sales	Not specified	50	57	53	49	46	51	48	44
Gas tax	Public transportation	48	47	49	41	44	56	39	40
Gas tax	Not specified	43	34	43	41	37	52	34	40
Income, loopholes	Not specified	37	42	41	35	29	42	34	33
Registration fee increases	Not specified	34	27	38	29	33	39	30	33
VMT	Not specified	18	17	22	19	15	21	12	17

VMT is viewed by many transportation experts as a potential successor to the gas tax, which is declining as a revenue source as vehicles become more fuel-efficient. Mileage would be assessed either by reading a car’s odometer during its annual safety inspection or by means of a transponder in the vehicle. The latter method has the advantage of enabling “congestion pricing” policies whereby drivers are charged more for travel on congested roads or during peak periods. At present, no state is collecting VMT fees on passenger vehicles, although some do charge commercial trucks based on distance traveled. Oregon has conducted a VMT pilot study but has yet to implement the fee.

The VMT is deeply unpopular with voters in Massachusetts. Fewer than one out of five voters (18 percent) would support a VMT charge based on an annual odometer reading, comparable to low levels of support in national polling.<sup>5</sup> VMT was the least popular revenue option across every region, ranging from 22 percent support in the Central region down to 12 percent support in the Southeast.

These findings corroborate the strong negative opinions toward the idea expressed in the focus groups. Focus group participants felt that a per-mile fee would penalize driving, discourage economic activity, and raise privacy concerns. Whatever policy advantages VMT may hold, it is an idea whose time has not yet come in the minds of Massachusetts voters.

#### **Income, Sales, “Loopholes”**

One of the options outlined in the poll was a combination of an income tax increase, sales tax decrease, and changes to tax “loopholes”. This option received 50 percent support for general transportation uses and more support when spending specifics were offered. While this description bears some similarity to Gov. Deval Patrick’s budget proposal, it would not be appropriate to characterize the poll question as such, or use the numbers to analyze public support for the governor’s plan.

First, as with all revenue options polled, the proposal was specifically dedicated to transportation, whereas the governor’s plan would fund improvements to both education and transportation. Second, at the time that the poll was conducted, the full details of the governor’s plan were just being learned. Rather than testing specific exemptions and deductions proposed to be eliminated in the governor’s budget,

<sup>5</sup>What do Americans Think About Federal Tax Options to Support Public Transit, Highways, and Local Streets and Roads? Results from Year 3 of a National Survey. Mineta Transportation Institute, June 2012. <http://transweb.sjsu.edu/PDFs/research/1128-american-survey-federal-taxes-public-transit-highways-streets-roads.pdf>

the poll instead offered a more generic proposition of “closing tax loopholes on individuals and businesses.” Given the nature of some of the deductions and exemptions proposed for elimination, we cannot say with confidence that the description used in the poll provides an accurate picture of what voters would think upon learning the specifics of the governor’s proposal. Finally, at no time did we refer to this revenue option as the governor’s plan or otherwise link it to the governor or any other state leader.

### Roadblocks to Revenue

Despite a willingness to invest in transportation and even an acceptance of some potential revenue options, our poll and focus group data show that there are also significant challenges to overcome as state leaders weigh additional revenue for transportation. The two main barriers are: 1) a lack of understanding of the state-of-repair crisis facing the transportation system and 2) a general distrust of state government spending.

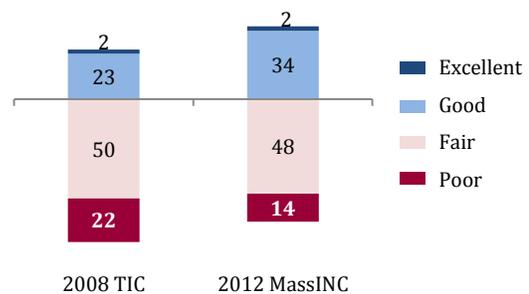
#### Lack of Perception of a Crisis

In recent years, a number of public and private reports from commissions, committees, and the news media have described the deteriorating condition of the transportation network in Massachusetts. Last year, for example, CNBC ranked Massachusetts infrastructure 45<sup>th</sup> in the country.<sup>6</sup> These reports and rankings do not appear to have made much of an impression on the general public, whose perception of the state’s transportation system actually seems to be improving.

When asked about the overall quality of various components of the transportation system (i.e. highways, bridges, neighborhood roads, public transportation, etc.), only between 11 and 22 percent of residents statewide described the condition of each component as “poor” in the September 2012 poll. The share of voters calling each component “good” or “excellent” actually *increased* by an average of 10 percentage points when compared to responses to the same question asked in a 2008 poll sponsored

by the Transportation Investment Coalition (Figure 5).

**Figure 5**  
Perceptions of overall condition of transportation system



Concern over the condition of the state’s public transportation system is also limited. Within Greater Boston, where media coverage of aging trains and equipment is constant, just 8 percent rated the transit system’s overall condition as poor. Public transportation users were no more or less likely than those who drive to work to say the public transit system is in poor condition. State-of-good-repair issues were mostly not mentioned by focus group participants, who were more likely to mention issues like graffiti and vandalism rather than the larger, systemic problems brought on by aging infrastructure. It may be that riders have simply grown to accept an aged and decaying system as normal.

#### Waste, Not Want

Despite years of reports and commissions on the transportation funding shortfall, 71 percent of voters still think “waste and mismanagement” are responsible for the deficits rather than a lack of funds (Figure 6). Again, the percentage holding this negative opinion has actually *grown* slightly since the same question was asked in the Transportation Investment Coalition poll in 2008.

Focus group participants also expressed strong suspicion regarding how state tax dollars are being spent right now. Despite efforts to reform the transportation bureaucracy over the past several years, focus group participants were not even peripherally aware of any changes and responded dismissively to the idea that such reforms have taken place or that any cost savings have been realized.

<sup>6</sup>America’s Top States for Business 2012. CNBC, July 10, 2012. [http://www.cnbc.com/id/100016697/Top\\_States\\_2012\\_Overall\\_Ranking](http://www.cnbc.com/id/100016697/Top_States_2012_Overall_Ranking)

**Figure 6**

Perceived cause of funding shortfall		
	TIC 2008	MPG 2012
Too little funding	15%	15%
Waste & mismanagement	65%	71%
Combination	14%	8%
Don't know/Refused	6%	6%

Their comments revealed an assumption among voters that there are large inefficiencies to be eliminated and reallocations of current revenues to be considered. This will be a challenge for those seeking new revenues, given the belief among many voters that existing revenue levels would be sufficient if spent effectively. Perceptions of overcompensated union workers with lavish benefits packages and early retirement accounted for another commonly-cited explanation for the state of public finances.

#### *The T and the Big Dig*

The MBTA's funding crisis and last year's public hearings on fare and service changes did not make much of a dent outside of Boston. Not a single focus group participant outside of the Boston region was aware of news stories regarding the condition of the MBTA's finances. When asked about recent problems with the MBTA, participants mentioned the May 2009 accident involving a Green Line driver who hit another trolley while texting, but nothing about MBTA finances.

Voters use the central artery project, or the "Big Dig," as a ready shorthand for all that is perceived to be wrong with the transportation network's finances and management and all that could go wrong with similarly ambitious projects in the future. The mere mention of it prompted groans and knowing looks in focus groups across the state. Many residents see it as proof that the state cannot manage a new project efficiently and effectively.

#### **Overcoming Mistrust**

Initially, it may seem contradictory that voters are both willing to support new revenues and skeptical of state government's ability to spend them. This apparent conflict is resolved, however, when we consider other survey responses regarding how voters would like to see funds allocated. These responses indicate an openness to consider new

revenues for projects with tangible benefits, so long as concrete assurances are provided that the revenues will be reserved for transportation, and spent in a transparent and efficient manner. These assurances will help allay voters' underlying concerns that new revenues will be wasted without producing improvements to their everyday experiences with the Massachusetts transportation network.

For example, voters favor measures that specify the uses of funds and dedicate new funds to transportation. About three quarters (77 percent) strongly agreed that specific transportation projects should be listed, trumping regional voting, formula-driven allocations, or selection by state officials as the preferred means of project selection. A majority (60 percent) felt that funds raised for transportation should be locked in for transportation. This desire for specific projects and dedicated revenue is consistent with the finding of the 2013 poll, reported in Figure 1, that providing more detail as to how funds would be spent appears to make voters more open to considering new revenue.

These preferences likely do not indicate a clear understanding of the legal or policy implications of either option. Instead, they appear to reflect a desire for assurances that any new funds will be used as intended, rather than reallocated to fund other priorities. About seven in ten (71 percent) said that ensuring projects are completed on time and on budget would make them more likely to support new funding.

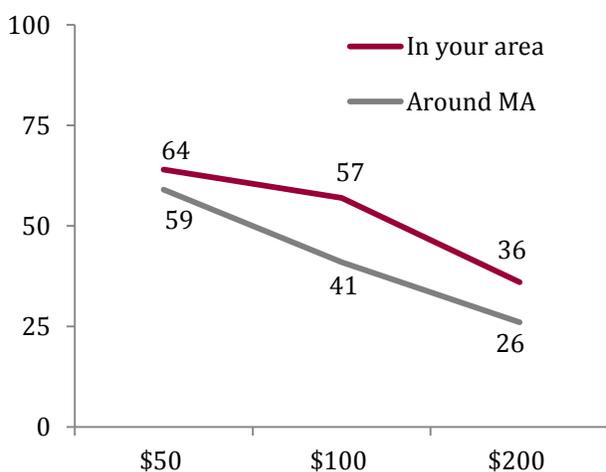
#### **Focus on the Gateway Cities**

Gateway City residents are more likely than residents of other areas to say the transportation network is in bad shape. For example, 44 percent of Gateway City residents said roads in their neighborhood are in "poor" condition, far more than the 19 percent of residents of other areas of the state who said the same. Ratings of all components of the system were worse among residents of the Gateway Cities than statewide.

Perhaps as a result, Gateway City residents are actually *more likely to support specific dollar amounts*

for local transportation projects than are residents statewide, despite lower average income levels. Spending funds locally as opposed to across the state makes a larger difference in support for new taxes in the Gateway Cities than elsewhere, perhaps because of elevated concerns about the conditions of local infrastructure. A majority (57 percent) of Gateway City residents said they would support a \$100 increase in taxes if those funds were earmarked for use in their area, while 41 percent would support the same increase for projects statewide.

**Figure 7**  
Willingness to pay for transportation in one's area

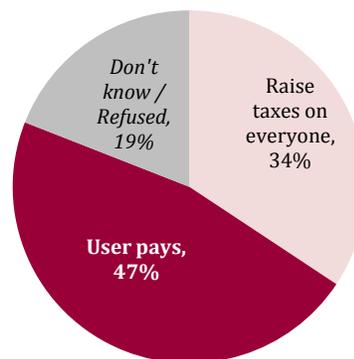


Gateway City residents also anticipate more economic opportunity coming from improved public transportation than is the case statewide. About eight in ten (79 percent) saw connecting people to jobs via transit as a strong argument for additional revenues, compared with 62 percent elsewhere. More Gateway City residents (49 percent) felt that making improvements to bus service would make a “major difference” to their friends and neighbors, 10 points higher than elsewhere.

**User Fees versus Broad-based Taxes**

Transportation is somewhat unique among public goods in that it has traditionally been supported, at least in part, by user fees: tolls, transit fares, registration fees and other taxes on vehicles, and the gas tax. At the same time, all modes of transportation are somewhat subsidized by general taxes.

**Figure 8**  
Who should pay: transportation users or everyone?



Based on responses to our February 2013 poll, Massachusetts voters do not have well-defined opinions about the user-fee revenue source versus more broad-based taxes, as they relate to transportation. When asked how the state should raise additional funds for transportation, 47 percent favored user fees like the gas tax or transit fares, while 34 percent preferred general taxes like the income or sales tax (Figure 8). However, when voters were asked which specific options they favored, the top response was to “close loopholes on individuals and businesses,” decidedly not a user fee.

**Regional Financing**

Currently, cities, towns and regional agencies in Massachusetts cannot ask residents to vote to fund a transportation project for their specific area. Some groups, including MassINC,<sup>7</sup> have advocated changing this as a way to allow regions to address their own transportation needs. Regional ballot initiatives for transportation have proved successful in other parts of the country in recent years,<sup>8</sup> but Massachusetts has neither a tradition nor an existing structure of regional governance.

MPG found little opposition in either the 2012 or 2013 poll to the idea of regional ballot initiatives for

<sup>7</sup>See *Moving Forward with Funding: New Strategies to Support Transportation and Balanced Regional Economic Growth* (2011) and *Reinventing Transit: A Blueprint for Investing in Regional Transportation Authorities for Strong Gateway City Economies* (2013).

<sup>8</sup>The Center for Transportation Excellence maintains an online database of ballot initiatives to fund transportation. <http://www.cfte.org>

transportation. While the language of the questions in the two polls differed, the results were very similar, indicating a stable level of support for the concept rather than a reaction to the specifics of the question wording.

- In February 2013, 75 percent strongly or somewhat supported the idea of “giving cities and towns and regional planning agencies the authority to place transportation funding measures for their specific area on the ballot for voters to approve or reject”.
- In September 2012, 73 percent strongly or somewhat agreed that “the state should allow the residents of each region to hold a vote to raise taxes on themselves to pay for projects they care about”.

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## Appendix A - Research Overview

This report represents a yearlong research project that included interviews with dozens of transportation policy experts from around the Commonwealth, a series of nine focus groups, and two public opinion polls. This report was made possible thanks to support from the Barr Foundation. The entire research process was guided by a steering committee made up of a diverse group of leaders from across the many sectors interested in this issue.

**Expert interviews:** In preparation for the focus group and survey phases of this project, staff of MassINC and The MassINC Polling Group conducted a series of individual discussions and interviews with stakeholders and experts on transportation issues. Throughout, we asked for names of additional people with whom we should speak and followed up with many of them.

To allow participants to speak openly, we conducted conversations off the record and informed participants that we would not include a list of participant names as a part of any report.

**Focus groups:** These focus groups were conducted with groups of 8-to-12 registered voters in nine cities across Massachusetts, including Boston, Framingham, Northampton, Springfield, Pittsfield, Salem, Lowell, Hingham, and New Bedford.

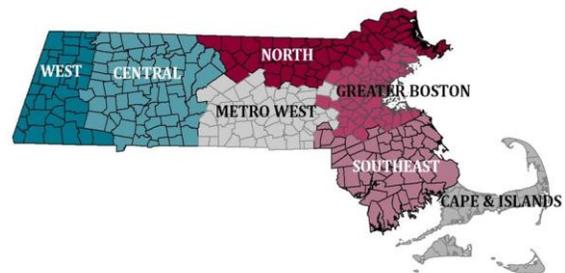
These groups included moderated discussions as well as quantitative exercises completed during the group sessions. Each group lasted approximately 90 minutes, and respondents were paid an incentive to encourage attendance. What resulted was a broad demographic cross-section of voters representing different socioeconomic groups and very different transportation needs and usage patterns.

**Public opinion polls:** We conducted two public opinion polls: one in September of 2012 and one in February of 2013. Each poll included a representative sample of approximately 1,500 registered voters across Massachusetts.

In designing the poll, we anticipated the need to analyze results by region, given the political ramifications of regional variations in opinion. A conventional statewide poll, even one with a large sample size, will obtain just a few responses in areas with lower population densities, such as Berkshire and Franklin counties and the Cape & Islands. The transportation needs in these areas are very different than those in urban areas, giving added reason to survey them in high enough numbers to analyze their opinions separately.

With this in mind, we divided the state into seven regions. The seven regions were chosen to correspond to groupings of Regional Transit Agencies and the transportation needs of each region's residents. There is no one perfect way of creating regional breaks based on transportation needs. We conducted approximately 200 interviews in six of the seven regions, and approximately 300 interviews in the Greater Boston region. These results were then weighted to reflect the geographic and demographic makeup of registered voters in Massachusetts.

### Map of regions used in the polls



## Appendix B – Poll Topline Results

**Sep-2012 Transportation Survey**  
 Massachusetts Statewide Poll of 1,505 Registered Voters  
 Topline Results  
 Field Dates: September 12-23, 2012

Overall, do you think things in Massachusetts are headed in the right direction or are they off on the wrong track?

Right Direction	56%
Wrong Track	35%
Don't Know / Refused	9%

How much do you think each of the following ideas would contribute to economic growth in Massachusetts in the long term—a great deal, a fair amount, not very much, or not at all?

<i>Order rotated</i>	A great deal	A fair amount	Not very much	Nothing at all	Don't Know / Refused
Controlling the cost of health care	54%	27%	7%	7%	4%
<i>Asked to ½.</i> Improving the state's network of roads, highways, and bridges	45%	35%	14%	5%	1%
<i>Asked to ½.</i> Modernizing the state's network of roads, highways, and bridges.	40%	37%	14%	8%	1%
Cutting state taxes in Massachusetts.	30%	30%	21%	16%	3%
Improving K-12 education.	62%	24%	8%	4%	2%
<i>Asked to ½.</i> Modernizing the state's public transportation network such as buses and trains.	42%	27%	16%	9%	5%
<i>Asked to ½.</i> Improving the state's public transportation network such as buses and trains.	39%	34%	17%	7%	3%
Offering tax breaks and incentives to Massachusetts businesses.	41%	34%	15%	6%	4%

How do you get around most of the time? Do you drive your own car, carpool, walk, or take public transportation such as a bus, train, subway, or ferry? **SELECT ALL THAT APPLY IF RESPONDENT OFFERS MORE THAN ONE MODE.**

Drive	86%
Carpool	5%
Walk	11%
Take public transportation	15%
Other (do not read)	2%
Don't Know / Refused	0%
<i>Total does not add up to 100% since respondents could selection more than one option</i>	

In the past month, which of the following modes of transportation have you used to get to work or go shopping? First, have you **READ FIRST ITEM?** And have you **READ NEXT?** **REPEAT QUESTION STEM AS NECESSARY.**

<i>Order rotated</i>	Yes	No	Don't Know / Refused
Walked	50%	50%	0%
Biked	14%	86%	0%
Taken a bus	16%	84%	0%
Taken a train or subway	26%	74%	0%
Taken a ferry	4%	96%	0%
Driven your car	90%	10%	0%

Please tell me if you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. **READ FIRST STATEMENT.** And do you strongly (agree/disagree) or somewhat (agree/disagree)? How about **READ NEXT STATEMENT.**

<i>Order rotated</i>	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strong disagree	Don't Know / Refused
<i>Asked to ½.</i> I would like more transportation options, so I have the freedom to choose how I get where I need to go.	37%	26%	19%	16%	2%
<i>Asked to ½.</i> I would like to use public transportation more often but it is not convenient to or available from my home or work.	39%	17%	17%	25%	3%
<i>Asked to ½.</i> I have no choice but to drive as much as I do.	57%	14%	13%	15%	1%
<i>Asked to ½.</i> My community would benefit from an improved public transportation system, such as rail and buses.	39%	24%	18%	17%	2%

Which do you think should be the highest priority for future investments to improve transportation in Massachusetts: the repair and modernization and roads and highways, the repair and modernization of public transportation, both, or neither?

Repair and modernization and roads and highways	20%
Repair and modernization of public transportation, both or neither	17%
Both	57%
Neither	5%
Don't Know / Refused	1%

Overall, how would you rate the overall quality of the transportation system **here in Massachusetts**, meaning all roads, bridges, tunnels, and the public transportation system?

Excellent	2%
Good	34%
Fair	48%
Poor	14%
Don't Know / Refused	1%

Overall, how would you rate the overall quality of the transportation system **in your town and surrounding area**, meaning all roads, bridges, tunnels, and the public transportation system?

Excellent	6%
Good	37%
Fair	37%
Poor	17%
Don't Know / Refused	2%

Now I'm going to mention some specific aspects of the transportation system in Massachusetts. Please rate the condition of each one using a scale of excellent, good, fair, or poor.

<i>Order rotated</i>	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Don't Know / Refused
Roads in your neighborhood	9%	41%	28%	22%	0%
State highways	7%	49%	33%	11%	1%
Bridges	4%	31%	43%	19%	3%
Tunnels	3%	31%	32%	13%	21%
Public transportation	3%	38%	37%	14%	8%
Bicycle and pedestrian facilities	7%	29%	33%	25%	6%

*Asked to 1/2.* What if I told you that to create a sustainable funding stream for the roads network and public transportation systems in your area would cost about **READ FIRST ITEM** per year for each resident. Would you support or oppose raising taxes or fees by this amount to pay for transportation needs in your area? *Order rotated*

<i>Order rotated</i>	Support	Oppose	Don't Know/ Refused
Fifty dollars	63%	34%	3%
One hundred dollars	48%	47%	5%
Two hundred dollars	32%	62%	6%

*Asked to 1/2.* What if I told you that to create a sustainable funding stream for the roads network and public transportation systems around Massachusetts would cost about **READ FIRST ITEM** per year for each resident. Would you support or oppose raising taxes or fees by this amount to pay for transportation needs around the state?

<i>Order rotated</i>	Support	Oppose	Don't Know/ Refused
Fifty dollars	62%	33%	5%
One hundred dollars	48%	46%	5%
Two hundred dollars	32%	61%	6%

I will now read you several idea people have put forth on how to improve the transportation system here in Massachusetts. As I read each one, please tell me if each idea would make you more likely or less likely to support increased funding for the transportation network here in Massachusetts, or if it would make no difference.

<i>Order rotated</i>	More likely	Less likely	Would make no difference	Don't Know / Refused
Instituting open road tolling so drivers can pass through toll booths without slowing down, eliminating the need for toll takers.	56%	20%	20%	4%
Fixing the maintenance backlog on the public transportation system in the Greater Boston region.	50%	14%	30%	6%
Making public transportation network such as buses and trains in the Greater Boston region faster and more reliable.	59%	12%	25%	3%
Increasing bus service in your area with more routes, more frequent service, and longer hours.	48%	20%	29%	4%
Adding police to bus routes in your area to improve passenger safety.	31%	28%	39%	2%
Repairing and modernizing the state's outdated bridges.	71%	10%	18%	1%
Improving traffic flow on the state's highways to reduce congestion.	71%	10%	17%	2%
Replacing police officers who currently act as flaggers at construction sites with civilian flaggers.	57%	20%	20%	3%
Ensuring that transportation projects are completed on time and on budget.	71%	9%	17%	3%
Replacing worn and outdated buses and trains with new, modern buses and trains.	58%	15%	25%	2%
Renovating old and outdated bus and train depots.	50%	17%	29%	3%

Which of the following two statements is closer to your own point of view? **ROTATE STATEMENTS** Any state funds that are raised for transportation should be used only for transportation. OR. It does not matter which state funds are used to pay for transportation since all of the funds come from taxpayers anyway.

State funds raised for transportation should be locked in for transportation and not used for any other purpose	60%
It does not matter which state funds are used to pay for transportation, since all of the funds come from taxpayers anyway.	28%
Both (do not read)	5%
Neither (do not read)	2%
Don't Know / Refused	4%

If the state does decide to raise funds for transportation, please tell me if you agree or disagree with each of the following ideas for how decisions would be made about what projects to do. **READ FIRST STATEMENT.** And do you strongly (agree/disagree) or somewhat (agree/disagree)? How about **READ NEXT STATEMENT.**

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strong disagree	Don't Know / Refused
<i>Order rotated</i>					
<i>Asked to ½.</i> The specific projects should be listed so that taxpayers will know exactly what will be funded.	77%	17%	3%	1%	1%
<i>Asked to ½.</i> A formula should establish what percentage of funding goes to categories of projects such as bridge repairs, public transportation, or road repairs.	33%	38%	15%	9%	4%
State transportation officials should select the projects that get funding.	25%	31%	19%	20%	5%
The state should allow the residents of each region to hold a vote to raise taxes on themselves to pay for projects they care about.	48%	24%	11%	15%	2%

Thinking about how transportation projects are planned, which of the following two statements is closer to your own point of view? **ROTATE STATEMENTS** Local leaders know more about what this area's transportation needs are and should be the ones making the decisions. OR. State leaders have a better sense of how the whole transportation system fits together, and should be the ones making the decisions.

Local leaders know more about what this area's transportation needs are and should be the ones making the decisions.	65%
State leaders have a better sense of how the whole transportation system fits together, and should be the ones making the decisions.	20%
Both (do not read)	8%
Neither (do not read)	4%
Don't Know / Refused	2%

If the state does decide to raise funds for transportation, do you think **ROTATE STATEMENTS** the top priority should be to maintain and modernize the network that already exists, or should the top priority be to expand the system with new roads and more public transportation?

Maintain and modernize the network that already exists	67%
Expand the system with new roads and more public transportation	28%
Don't Know / Refused	5%

Recent reports indicate the state faces deficits in the billions of dollars for maintaining the transportation system over the next 20 years. In your opinion, is this deficit more likely a result of just too little funding to keep up with necessary maintenance and improvements, or do you think it is more likely a result of waste and mismanagement by government agencies?

Just too little funding to keep up with necessary maintenance and improvements	15%
Waste and mismanagement by government agencies	71%
Both equally (do not read)	7%
Neither (do not read)	1%
Don't Know / Refused	6%

Would you say you live in the MBTA service area, or not?

Yes I do	47%
No I do not	51%
Don't Know / Refused	2%

**Demographics**

Gender

Male	48%
Female	52%

Age

18 to 29	16%
30 to 44	24%
45 to 59	29%
60+	30%

Party Registration

Democrat	36%
Republican	11%
Independent / Unenrolled	53%

Education

High School or less	33%
Some college, no degree	22%
College graduate (BA/BS)	27%
Advanced degree	18%
Don't Know / Refused	0%

Race / ethnic background

White, not Hispanic	82%
All others	16%
Don't Know / Refused	2%

**Feb-2013 Transportation Survey**  
 Massachusetts Statewide Poll of 1,506 Registered Voters  
 Topline Results  
 Field Dates: February 4-11, 2013

In the past month, which of the following modes of transportation have you used to get to work or go shopping? First, have you **READ FIRST ITEM?** And have you **READ NEXT?** **REPEAT QUESTION STEM AS NECESSARY.**

<i>Order rotated</i>	Yes	No
Walked	38%	62%
Biked	6%	94%
Taken a bus	16%	84%
Taken a train or subway	20%	80%
Taken a ferry	4%	96%
Driven your car	89%	11%

Overall, how would you rate the overall quality of the transportation system **here in Massachusetts**, meaning all roads, bridges, tunnels, and the public transportation system?

Excellent	6%
Good	39%
Fair	40%
Poor	13%
Don't Know / Refused	3%

Overall, how would you rate the overall quality of the transportation system **in your town and surrounding area**, meaning all roads, bridges, tunnels, and the public transportation system?

Excellent	9%
Good	41%
Fair	33%
Poor	13%
Don't Know / Refused	4%

I am going to read you a list of transportation related improvements the Massachusetts state government is considering doing **IN YOUR OWN AREA**. As I read each one, please tell me how much of a difference would this make in the every day lives of your friends and neighbors—a major difference, a minor difference, or no difference? **REPEAT QUESTION STEM ONLY AS NECESSARY**

<i>Order rotated</i>	Major difference	Minor difference	Would make no difference	Don't Know / Refused
Repairing and modernizing the outdated bridges in your area.	55%	30%	13%	2%
Increasing bus service in your area with more routes, more frequent service, and longer hours.	40%	28%	28%	3%
Improving traffic flow on the highways in your area to reduce congestion.	63%	21%	14%	2%
Replacing worn and outdated buses and trains with new, modern buses and trains.	38%	31%	28%	3%
Adding train service from Boston to other cities and regions around Massachusetts.	50%	23%	25%	2%
Repairing and upgrading outdated highways in your area.	57%	28%	14%	1%
Building new bike paths and bike lanes in your area, and improving the ones that already exist.	36%	33%	29%	2%
Making improvements to local roads in your area such as repaving and filling potholes.	66%	26%	7%	1%

Asked to ½. What if I told you that to create a sustainable funding stream for the roads network and public transportation systems around Massachusetts would cost about **READ FIRST ITEM** per year for each resident. Would you support or oppose raising taxes or fees by this amount to pay for transportation needs in your area?

<i>Order rotated</i>	Support	Oppose	Don't Know/ Refused
Fifty dollars	65%	32%	3%
One hundred dollars	48%	49%	3%
Two hundred dollars	31%	65%	5%

Asked to ½. What if I told you that to create a sustainable funding stream for the roads network and public transportation systems around Massachusetts would cost about **READ FIRST ITEM** per month for each resident. Would you support or oppose raising taxes or fees by this amount to pay for transportation needs in your area?

<i>Order rotated</i>	Support	Oppose	Don't Know/ Refused
Four dollars	61%	35%	4%
Eight dollars	47%	50%	4%
Seventeen dollars	31%	66%	4%

If the State of Massachusetts were to increase transportation funding, should the state pay for the additional transportation funding by raising taxes on everyone, such as the income or sales tax, or by raising fees and taxes paid by users of the transportation system, such as the gas tax, or public transportation fares? *Order rotated*

Raising taxes on everyone, such as the income or sales tax	34%
Raising fees and taxes paid by users of the transportation system, such as the gas tax, or public transportation fares	47%
Don't Know / Refused	19%

There are many taxes or fees the state government could use to pay for the improvements we have been discussing. I am going to read you a list of choices for how this money could be raised, and would like you to tell me which option you think would be best to pay for transportation improvements. The list is raise the gas tax, raise the income tax, add a mileage fee for drivers, close tax loopholes on individuals and businesses, OR increase user fees such as fares and tolls. Which of these options do you think is best? *Order rotated*

Gas tax	14%
Income tax	13%
Mileage fee for drivers	8%
Close tax loopholes on individuals and businesses	40%
User fees such as fares and tolls	32%
Some other tax/fee (not read)	2%
None of the above (not read, exclusive option)	12%
Don't Know / Refused (exclusive option)	4%

Currently, cities, towns, and regional agencies in Massachusetts cannot ask voters to vote on a transportation project for their specific area. Would you support or oppose giving cities and towns and regional planning agencies the authority to place transportation funding measures for their specific area on the ballot for voters to approve or reject? And do you strongly (support/oppose) this idea, or somewhat (support/oppose)? *Order rotated*

Strongly support	42%
Somewhat support	33%
Somewhat oppose	8%
Strongly oppose	12%
Don't Know / Refused	5%

Assuming the Massachusetts state government decided to raise funds for maintaining and improving our transportation system, there are many ways these funds could be raised. I'm going to ask your opinion about some of these specific options. In each case, assume that legal restrictions would be put in place to ensure that the money collected would be spent ONLY for transportation purposes.

*Order of income/sales, gas, miles, fares/fees/tolls sections rotated*

**Income/Sales Tax**

Assuming the Massachusetts state government decided to raise funds for maintaining and improving our transportation system, one option would be to raise the income tax in Massachusetts from 5.25% to 6.25% percent and close a variety of tax loopholes on individuals and businesses. Would you support or oppose this idea? And do you strongly (support/oppose) this idea, or somewhat (support/oppose)?

Strongly support	16%
Somewhat support	21%
Somewhat oppose	17%
Strongly oppose	42%
Don't Know / Refused	3%

What if, at the same time as raising the income tax and closing a variety of tax loopholes on individuals and businesses, the sales tax is lowered from 6.25%, where it is now, to 4.5%? Would you support or oppose making these two changes at the same time? And do you strongly (support/oppose) this idea, or somewhat (support/oppose)?

Strongly support	26%
Somewhat support	24%
Somewhat oppose	13%
Strongly oppose	29%
Don't Know / Refused	8%

**Gas Tax**

If you had to guess, how much of the cost of every gallon of gasoline in Massachusetts would you say goes to federal and state taxes?

Gessed less than \$0.41	18%
Gessed \$0.41 to \$0.42	<1%
Gessed \$0.43 to \$0.99	21%
Gessed \$1.00 to \$1.99	19%
Gessed more than \$2.00	12%
Don't Know / Refused	31%

The actual amount of all federal and state taxes in Massachusetts is 41.9 cents per gallon. The state gas tax of 21 cents per gallon was last increased in 1991, and no sales tax is charged on gasoline. Because the gas tax is not adjusted for inflation, the gas tax has lost nearly half its purchasing power since 1991. Assuming the Massachusetts state government decided to raise funds for maintaining and improving our transportation system, one option would you support or oppose increasing the state gas tax in order to pay for these improvements? And do you strongly (support/oppose) this idea, or somewhat (support/oppose)?

Strongly support	19%
Somewhat support	24%
Somewhat oppose	13%
Strongly oppose	42%
Don't Know / Refused	2%

## Miles

Assuming the Massachusetts state government decided to raise funds for maintaining and improving our transportation system, one option is to adopt a new tax based on the number of miles a person drives. Each driver would pay a tax for every mile driven. The car's mileage would be read during annual vehicle inspections, and the tax would be paid at that time. Would you support or oppose this idea? And do you strongly (support/oppose) this idea, or somewhat (support/oppose)?

Strongly support	7%
Somewhat support	10%
Somewhat oppose	11%
Strongly oppose	69%
Don't Know / Refused	3%

## Fees/Fares/Tolls

*Order of next 3 questions rotated*

Assuming the Massachusetts state government decided to raise funds for maintaining and improving our transportation system, one option would be to raise fares for transit riders. Would you support or oppose this idea? And do you strongly (support/oppose) this idea, or somewhat (support/oppose)?

Strongly support	23%
Somewhat support	28%
Somewhat oppose	15%
Strongly oppose	29%
Don't Know / Refused	5%

Another idea would be to raise vehicle registration fees. Would you support or oppose this idea? And do you strongly (support/oppose) this idea, or somewhat (support/oppose)?

Strongly support	12%
Somewhat support	22%
Somewhat oppose	15%
Strongly oppose	48%
Don't Know / Refused	3%

Another idea would be to raise tolls paid on Massachusetts highways. Would you support or oppose this idea? And do you strongly (support/oppose) this idea, or somewhat (support/oppose)?

Strongly support	22%
Somewhat support	28%
Somewhat oppose	15%
Strongly oppose	33%
Don't Know / Refused	2%

Next 3 question pairs each asked to 1/3 of respondents.

Asked to 1/3. Now, imagine that state government decided that the best option to raise money for transportation is to increase the state gas tax. I'm going to read you several different options for how the money is spent. For each, please tell me if you would support or oppose the gas tax increase, if the money is spent this way. First, **READ FIRST ITEM.** Would you support or oppose this idea? And do you strongly (support/oppose) this idea, or somewhat (support/oppose)? **REPEAT SCALE AND QUESTION STEM AS NECESSARY.**

<i>Order rotated</i>	Strongly support	Somewhat support	Somewhat oppose	Strongly oppose	Don't Know / Refused
Would you support the gas tax increase if the money were spent ONLY on projects to MAINTAIN streets, roads, and highways?	35%	26%	9%	28%	2%
Would you support the gas tax increase if the money were spent mainly on improving the public transportation network in cities around Massachusetts?	23%	24%	13%	38%	2%

Asked to 1/3. Now, imagine that state government decided that the best option to raise money for transportation is to increase the state income tax and close a variety of tax loopholes on individuals and businesses. I'm going to read you several different options for how the money is spent. For each, please tell me if you would support or oppose these tax changes, if the money is spent this way. First, **READ FIRST ITEM.** Would you support or oppose this idea? And do you strongly (support/oppose) this idea, or somewhat (support/oppose)? **REPEAT SCALE AND QUESTION STEM AS NECESSARY.**

<i>Order rotated</i>	Strongly support	Somewhat support	Somewhat oppose	Strongly oppose	Don't Know / Refused
Would you support these tax increases if the money were spent ONLY on projects to MAINTAIN streets, roads, and highways?	30%	31%	11%	25%	2%
Would you support these tax increases if the money were spent mainly on improving the public transportation network in cities around Massachusetts?	25%	31%	15%	25%	4%

Asked to 1/3. Now, imagine that state government decided that the best option to raise money for transportation is to raise tolls on drivers, raise vehicle registration fees, and raise fares on transit riders. I'm going to read you several different options for how the money is spent. For each, please tell me if you would support or oppose these fee and fare increases, if the money is spent this way. First, **READ FIRST ITEM.** Would you support or oppose this idea? And do you strongly (support/oppose) this idea, or somewhat (support/oppose)? **REPEAT SCALE AND QUESTION STEM AS NECESSARY.**

<i>Order rotated</i>	Strongly support	Somewhat support	Somewhat oppose	Strongly oppose	Don't Know / Refused
Would you support these fee and fare increases if the money were spent ONLY on projects to MAINTAIN streets, roads, and highways?	28%	30%	16%	23%	4%
Would you support these fee and fare increases if the money were spent mainly on improving the public transportation network in cities around Massachusetts?	29%	28%	13%	24%	5%

I am going to read you several reasons some people say we need to raise additional funds for transportation here in Massachusetts. For each statement, please tell me how strong of an argument you think it is in favor of raising additional funds for transportation. First, **READ FIRST STATEMENT**. Is that a very strong, somewhat strong, not very strong, or not at all strong argument in favor of raising additional funds for transportation?

<i>Order rotated</i>	Very strong	Somewhat strong	Not very strong	Not at all strong	Don't Know / Refused
<i>Asked to ½.</i> Raising funds for transportation would keep Massachusetts a good place for businesses to locate and make it an attractive place for younger workers to live.	32%	32%	16%	18%	2%
<i>Asked to ½.</i> Raising funds for transportation would keep Massachusetts competitive. Massachusetts has dropped from the 6th to 28th on the list of best places to do business, in because of our poor infrastructure and transportation.	28%	31%	14%	21%	6%
Raising funds for transportation would mean the state could pay for everyday transportation costs on time, rather than borrowing funds and running up interest charges.	31%	32%	14%	19%	4%
<i>Asked to ½.</i> Raising funds for transportation would reduce the commute time for people in your area.	28%	30%	18%	21%	4%
<i>Asked to ½.</i> Raising funds for transportation would mean less congestion on roadways in your area.	22%	32%	19%	23%	4%
<i>Asked to ½.</i> Raising funds for transportation would mean improving air quality in Massachusetts by reducing the number of cars on the road.	23%	30%	20%	24%	2%
<i>Asked to ½.</i> Raising funds for transportation would reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Massachusetts by reducing the number of cars on the road.	25%	27%	19%	27%	3%
Raising funds for transportation would mean improving the condition of roads in your area.	33%	36%	15%	12%	3%
Raising funds for transportation would bring construction jobs to your area for people to build up the transportation network, jobs which cannot be outsourced.	33%	36%	12%	15%	3%
Raising funds for transportation would connect people in your area to more jobs through more public transportation.	33%	32%	15%	17%	3%

**DEMOGRAPHICS**

Gender

Male	48%
Female	52%

Age

18 to 29	16%
30 to 44	25%
45 to 59	29%
60+	29%

Party Registration

Democrat	36%
Republican	11%
Independent / Unenrolled	53%

Education

High school or less	33%
Some college, no degree	22%
College graduate (BA/BS)	26%
Advanced degree	17%
Don't Know / Refused	1%

Race / ethnic background

White, not Hispanic	82%
All others	16%
Don't Know / Refused	2%