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Most Texans support more funding for transportation, new poll shows

Traffic congestion in Texas continues to worsen each year, but that's not changing how the vast majority of Texans feel about their cars and trucks. This and a variety of other insights come from the first [Texas Transportation Poll](#), which was conducted by the [Transportation Policy Research Center](#) of the Texas A&M Transportation Institute. The study examines the travel behaviors and opinions of registered voters in Texas, and its results say a lot about what Texans think about daily transportation choices, challenges, funding, and solutions.

They support spending more on solutions, but they don't agree on just how to do that.

- Nearly two-thirds of respondents said they support increased funding for transportation statewide, and the strongest support came from those with higher levels of education and those who use transportation options other than a personal auto.
- A majority also said they support increased funding for public transportation; this was particularly true for those with higher educations and higher incomes.
- Of the options they were offered, respondents were most supportive of dedicating the motor vehicle sales tax to transportation needs; they were least supportive of raising the vehicle registration fee from \$65 to \$115.
- From a list of 15 different ways to improve transportation in the state, better traffic signal timing and clearing accidents more quickly were the most popular ideas. Building more toll roads was the least-supported option.

They lack a general understanding of how transportation is funded.

- Less than 1 percent of respondents know the correct amount they pay in fuel tax for every gallon of gasoline purchased and how that tax is assessed.
- Nearly half incorrectly think that the state's motor fuels tax is a sales tax (a percentage based on the overall price of a gallon), while it is actually a flat tax that does not change, regardless of the price.

They really depend on their cars and trucks.

- Nine out of ten respondents said they own or lease a personal vehicle, relying on that vehicle as their primary means of travel.
- One-third reported walking to make a non-recreational trip during the last 30 days prior to the survey, one-fourth used public transit, and one in ten used a bicycle.

They're feeling the squeeze of traffic gridlock and higher gas prices.

- Three-fourths of Texans said they experience traffic congestion when traveling in their region.
- A majority view congestion as a byproduct of the state's growing population and expanding economy.
- Because of higher fuel prices, three out of five have tried to drive less; the younger the respondent, the more likely he or she was to limit driving due to high fuel prices.

The findings also suggest that most Texans may be reluctant to make significant lifestyle changes to cope with congestion, such as changing where they live. Either this is because congestion has not yet reached a point where people feel compelled to make such changes, or traffic congestion has become so commonplace that they view such changes as futile, and choose to simply deal with it.

Researchers say the poll was conducted in part to help inform transportation policy discussions, and that the findings confirm a number of things suggested by previous research.

"From dozens of focus groups over several years, we have seen that Texans, in general, have very little understanding of how we pay for the highways we use," says Ginger Goodin, Director of TTI's Transportation Policy Research Center. "What we know now that we didn't know before is that that lack of understanding is widespread, and it's common among all demographic groups."

The random sample survey responses were collected by mail, by phone, or online. The sample size of more than 5,000 provides for a margin of error of plus or minus 1.5 percent at the statewide level. Also, the size of the sample provides an opportunity to investigate how attitudes and behaviors differ along demographic lines, including age, gender, and education. The study also provides for comparisons based on where respondents live, with the state divided into [12 regions](#).

Researchers plan to repeat the study in two years to measure possible changes in the travel choices and attitudes among registered voters in the state.

The full survey report, along with a summary for each region of the state, can be found online at <http://tti.tamu.edu/policy/texas-transportation-poll>.

The Texas A&M Transportation Institute is a member of the Texas A&M University System. Through a statewide network of 11 universities, seven state agencies, two service units and a comprehensive health science center, the A&M System educates more than 131,000 students and makes more than 22 million additional educational contacts through service and outreach programs each year.