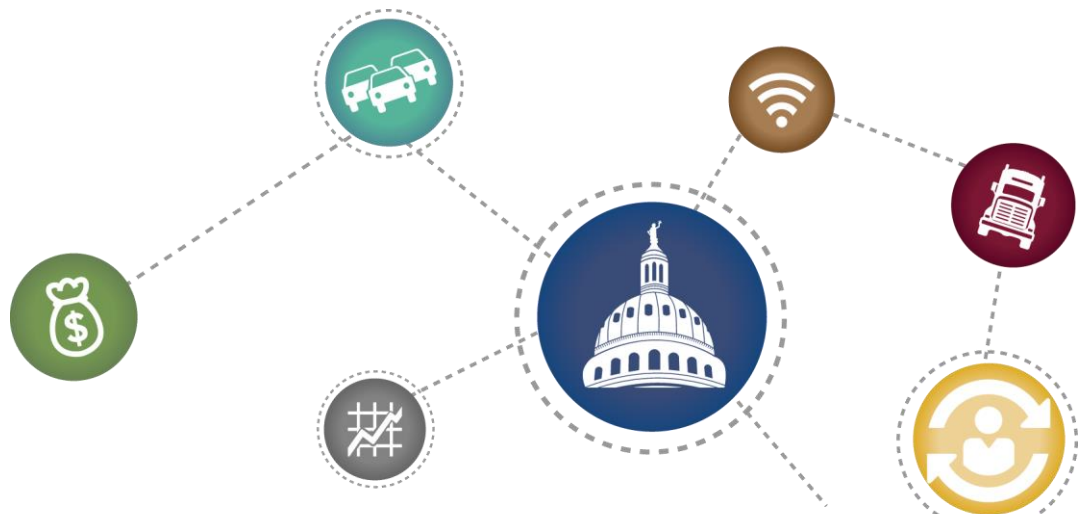


# Texas Transportation Poll

*Final report*

PRC 14-16-F



# Texas Transportation Poll

Texas A&M Transportation Institute

PRC 14-16-F

September 2014

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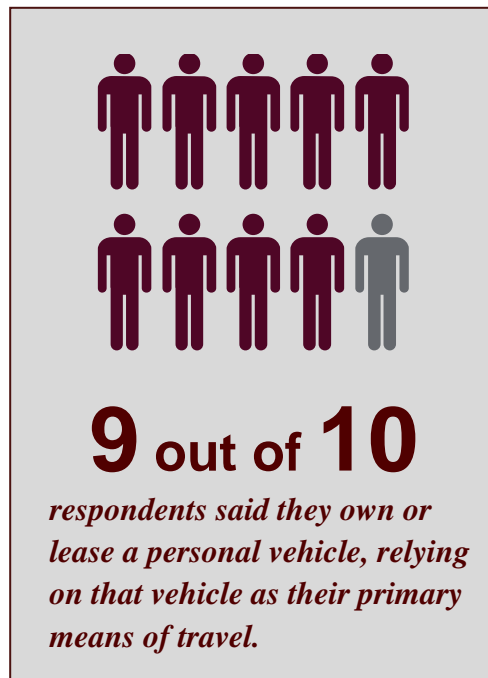
## Executive Summary

In spring 2014, the Texas A&M Transportation Institute initiated the Texas Transportation Poll, a longitudinal survey of more than 5,000 Texans, to assess public opinion surrounding the following transportation issues: travel behavior, travel solutions, transportation funding, and customer satisfaction with governmental agencies. The survey will be conducted every two years to allow researchers to track changes in public perceptions over time.

This executive summary presents a top-level synopsis of the inaugural 2014 survey findings.

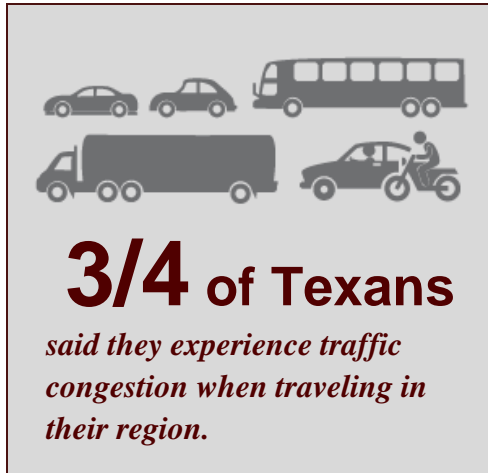
### Travel Behavior

#### How Do Texans Travel?



Texans are heavily reliant on a personal auto as their primary means of travel. Ninety percent of total respondents reported owning or leasing a personal vehicle, with nine out of 10 using it as their primary means of travel. Travel behavior research suggests a correlation between income and personal mobility as measured by personal vehicle miles traveled. The cost of travel is a larger proportion of the household budget for low-income households when compared to that of high-income households. This survey research makes similar findings, with low-income Texans reporting fewer annual miles traveled in their personal vehicles than Texans with higher incomes. Young respondents (18–24 years old) are less likely to use a personal auto; non-white, minority respondents (particularly Hispanics and African Americans) and low-income respondents (less than a \$25,000 annual household income) have the heaviest reliance on public transportation.

One-third of Texans reported walking to make a non-recreational trip in the last 30 days. One-fourth reported using public transit to make a trip. One-tenth reported using a bicycle for a non-recreational trip.



### *What Do Texans Believe and Do about Congestion?*

Three-fourths of Texans experience congestion while traveling in their region. Not surprisingly, Texans living in survey regions with major metropolitan areas were more likely to experience congestion in their region than respondents living in less urbanized areas. Furthermore, young and minority populations were less likely to experience congestion, although the reasons are unclear.

The findings suggest that most Texans have yet to make significant lifestyle changes, such as moving or

changing vehicles, to manage congestion. This is because either congestion has not yet reached a point where Texans may feel compelled to make lifestyle choice changes, or congestion has become such an integral part of Texans' lives that they may perceive more significant lifestyle changes as futile and simply deal with the congestion.

A majority of Texans agreed that congestion is the byproduct of a strong economy and the growing population. Respondents living in survey regions with major metropolitan areas and those that reported experiencing congestion were more likely to agree with these sentiments than respondents living in less urbanized areas.

A majority of Texans who primarily use personal autos did not feel that congestion is caused by an under-investment in roads but instead by a growing economy. A majority of those who use transit and other means of transportation *did* believe that congestion is caused by an under-investment in public transportation. These findings suggest that Texas' public transportation users believe that increased funding of public transportation will help manage congestion, but Texans that primarily use autos believe that increased investment in strategies, such as traffic signal timing and incident clearance, may be more effective in resolving transportation issues.

## **Travel Solutions**

### *Who Should Have the Most Influence on Transportation Policy?*

Texans believe that auto drivers and state departments of transportation should have the most influence on transportation policy. The data suggest that one's mode of primary travel has an impact on one's perception of the influence each of the user groups should have on transportation policy. For example, Texans that identified personal auto as their primary means of travel rated themselves most highly as the group that should have the most influence on transportation policy, while Texans that identified other modes as their primary means of travel rated state departments of transportation most highly.

The data also suggest that those who primarily use autos, roughly 90 percent of Texans, may have a challenge seeing themselves as merely *one of many* user groups for whom the system was





*From a list of 15 ways to improve transportation in the state, better traffic signal timing and clearing accidents more quickly were **more popular** ideas than adding more highway lanes.*

*Building more toll roads was the **least popular** idea.*

designed. Rather, they see themselves as *the* user group for whom the system was designed. Furthermore, they may view the primary role of state departments of transportation—but also to a lesser extent municipal and county government—as facilitating their system needs.

### *What Strategies Do Texans Believe Will Most Effectively Help Reduce Congestion?*

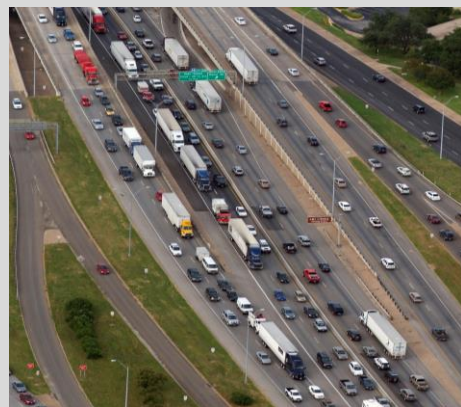
A majority of Texans feel public transit is not convenient in their region. This was true in all regions of the state including metropolitan areas and rural areas. The data suggest a high level of skepticism about the ability of other modes to reduce congestion relative to personal auto. This is an important finding since the state will continue to see population growth concentrated in urban areas, where transit will need to support mobility as a viable option.

Texans are most supportive of timing traffic signals more effectively and doing a better job of managing accidents as strategies to help resolve regional transportation issues. Timing traffic signals more effectively was clearly identified as the highest-rated strategy. Building more toll roads was, by far, the least-supported strategy. The lack of support held true in both metropolitan areas and rural areas, as well as areas with and without toll roads. The data suggest that demographic and geographic characteristics influence not only travel behavior but also one's perception of the utility of transportation management strategies.

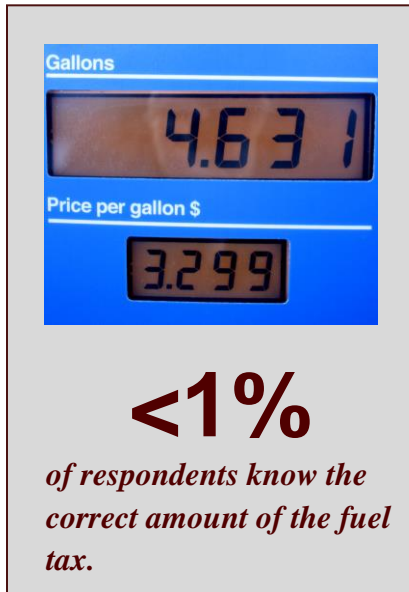
## **Transportation Funding**

### *Does Texas Need to Increase Transportation Funding?*

Nearly two-thirds of Texans believe there is a need to increase transportation funding in Texas. The data suggest a majority agreement on this sentiment across all socio-economic groups. Support was strongest among more highly educated Texans and Texans that primarily use modes other than the personal auto.



**Nearly 2/3 (64%)**  
*of respondents said they support increased funding for transportation statewide.*



*What Do Texans Know about the Fuel Tax?*

The data indicate that less than 1 percent of all Texans know the correct amount of the fuel tax and how it is assessed. A slight majority of Texans correctly identified the fuel tax as a flat tax on each gallon of gasoline purchased; however, a near majority of Texans either incorrectly identified the fuel tax as a sales tax or did not know what type of tax it was (flat or sales).

*What Do Texans Know about Other Transportation Funding Sources?*

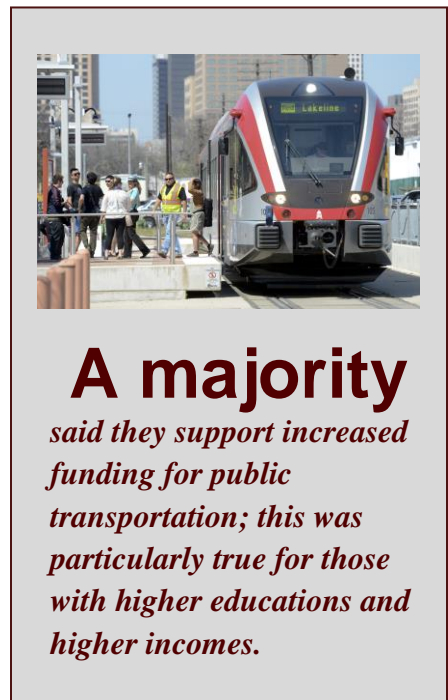
A majority of Texans identified vehicle registration fees, tolls, and driver license fees as sources of revenue used to fund transportation, in addition to the fuel tax. There were high levels of uncertainty regarding the use of general sales taxes, federal income taxes, and property taxes for funding

transportation. The data also suggest that funding mechanisms that are perceived as being directly associated with transportation (fees or taxes associated with drivers, driving, or roads) are easier for respondents to identify as being used for funding transportation in Texas than those that are not directly associated with transportation.

Texans were not overly supportive of any potential transportation funding mechanism offered. Among those mechanisms offered, respondents were most supportive of dedicating the state sales tax on vehicles to transportation and least supportive of increasing vehicle registration fees from \$65 per year to \$115 per year. The data may suggest that Texans are more comfortable with transportation funding mechanisms that do not require any perceived additional spending on their part (such as dedicating to transportation an existing tax that will be paid regardless of how the funding is allocated) than those that do (such as increasing vehicle registration fees or the state fuel tax).

*What Do Texans Think about Investing More Public Dollars in Public Transportation?*

A majority of Texans agreed with investing more public tax dollars in public transportation, either regionally or statewide. The data suggest that support increases as respondent income and education increase. Texans in metropolitan areas and those not primarily using an auto also support investing more in public transportation because they believe it will reduce congestion.



### *How Do Texans Feel about Specific Transportation Funding Mechanisms and Their Characteristics?*

Respondents were asked to evaluate specific transportation funding mechanisms such as “increasing the state fuel tax by 5 cents per gallon.” The data suggest that the least attractive mechanisms are those that are more likely to require additional spending on the part of Texans, such as those mechanisms that are linked to inflation and funded by system users. The most attractive mechanisms are those associated with fees already being paid, such as the state vehicle sales tax, but are not currently dedicated to transportation funding.

Respondents were also asked to evaluate *characteristics* of transportation funding mechanisms, such as “assuring a long-term solution” or “reducing dependency on foreign oil.” Texans prefer funding mechanisms that ensure long-term, predictable solutions, reduce dependency on foreign oil, and prevent funding diversions.

Texans generally reacted more positively toward funding mechanism *characteristics* than to the funding mechanisms themselves. Political affiliation slightly influenced respondent perception of transportation funding characteristics. While self-identified Republicans ranked “assuring a long-term solution” most highly, self-identified Democrats ranked “promotion of clean energy” most highly.

## **Customer Satisfaction in Governmental Agencies**

### *What Are Texans’ Beliefs about Local, State, and Federal Government’s Role and Government’s Ability to Address Transportation Issues in Their Region?*

The data suggest that Texans perceive state and local elected officials as not truly understanding their expectations of the transportation system. However, they favor state and local government over the federal government when it comes to addressing regional transportation issues.

### *What Are Texans’ Views about Public-Private Partnerships?*

While Texans believe private corporations should have very little influence on transportation policy, they are supportive of transportation agencies partnering with private corporations, when they can, to help find solutions to transportation issues. The data may suggest that Texans perceive a need for transportation agencies to work in partnership with private corporations while ensuring the partnerships are equitable and in the best interest of citizens.

### *How Well Are Transportation Agencies Performing?*

Texans believe transportation agencies are doing above average in some areas, such as maintaining a safe system, doing the best they can with the budget they have, and connecting communities. Texans also believe transportation agencies are doing below average in many areas, including providing good customer service, being innovative in finding solutions to transportation issues, working efficiently to complete projects, understanding respondent expectations of the transportation system, and maintaining financial transparency.

## Survey Study Overview

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In spring 2014, the Texas A&M Transportation Institute initiated the Texas Transportation Poll, a longitudinal survey of more than 5,000 registered Texas voters, to assess public opinion regarding transportation issues in four core topical areas: travel behavior, travel solutions, transportation funding, and customer satisfaction in governmental agencies. This report presents a top-level synopsis of the survey findings.

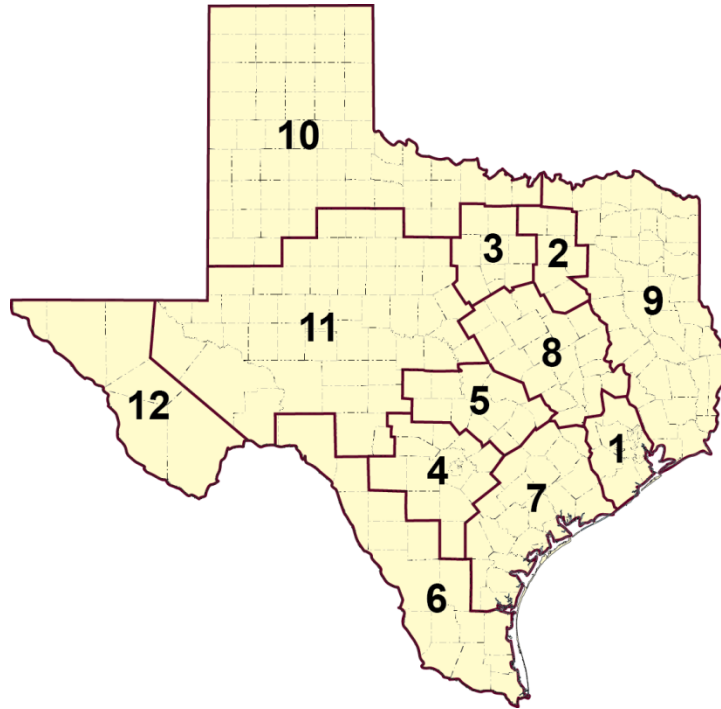
### Objectives

The objectives of the project were to:

- Design and implement a random sample survey of Texans to establish a baseline dataset for legislators, policy makers, transportation agencies, and others to assess public opinion in the four core areas.
- Conduct segmentation analysis to gain a deeper understanding of how geography and demographics influence public opinion.
- Use the survey as a means to help inform transportation policy.
- Assess how public opinion about transportation changes over time.

### Where Was the Study Conducted?

The sampling methodology involved geographically stratifying Texas into 12 survey regions, with each made up of one or more Texas Department of Transportation districts. These districts are not only familiar but also provide a logical geography upon which to draw statistical estimates of public opinion regarding transportation. See Figure 1 for a map of the stratification.



Stratum ID	Stratum Name	Stratum ID	Stratum Name
1	Houston	7	Corpus Christi/Yoakum
2	Dallas	8	Bryan/Waco
3	Fort Worth	9	Atlanta/Beaumont/Lufkin/Paris/Tyler
4	San Antonio	10	Amarillo/Childress/Lubbock/Wichita Falls
5	Austin	11	Abilene/Brownwood/Odessa/San Angelo
6	Laredo/Pharr	12	El Paso

Figure 1: Texas Transportation Poll Geographic Stratification

## What Did the Survey Cover?

Researchers conducted a thorough review of recent U.S. public opinion surveys on a wide range of transportation issues, as well as transportation-related activity in the recent 83<sup>rd</sup> Legislature. Based on this information, the final survey contained 37 primary questions distributed over five modules: travel behavior, travel solutions, transportation funding, customer satisfaction in governmental agencies, and demographics. Because many of the primary questions had sub-questions, as many as 140 data points could be collected for each respondent.

## How Were Survey Respondents Selected?

Eligible survey respondents were at least 18 years old, were registered voters, had a valid mailing address, and were required to speak English or Spanish well enough to participate in the survey. The sample was drawn from a database of all known Texas residential mailing

addresses. Phone numbers were then appended to as many of these addresses as possible. The sampled addresses were then sent advance notification of selection, which included respondent responsibilities, contact information, and the web survey URL. The letter was accompanied by a paper copy of the survey, a postage-paid envelope, and a toll-free phone number for respondents who preferred to take the survey in Spanish.

A goal of 375 surveys per stratum (4,500 statewide) was established at the onset of the survey. This would provide a stratum-level confidence interval of 5 percent +/- at the 95 percent confidence level, and a statewide confidence interval of 1.5 percent +/- at the 95 percent confidence level.

The final participation rate was 30 percent<sup>1</sup>.

## **How Was the Survey Conducted?**

The ETC Institute collected data from March 10, 2014, to May 5, 2014, via phone, web, and mail. Of the total 5,545 interviews completed:

- 61 percent were completed via telephone.
- 35 percent were completed via mail.
- 4 percent were completed via the web.
- 93 percent were conducted in English.
- 7 percent were conducted in Spanish.

## **How Were the Data Analyzed?**

Upon receipt of the initial dataset, researchers completed a series of logic checks and diagnostics for quality assurance. The cleaned dataset was then weighted and expanded so that it was demographically representative of Texans at the regional and statewide levels.

Researchers developed demographic weights based on the variables of ethnicity, age, household income, and employment. During weight development, data analysts used the hot deck imputation method<sup>2</sup> to impute income. In order to facilitate this process, approximately 392 cases that were missing at least one demographic variable were removed from the dataset. The distribution of these cases was compared to the distribution of the complete dataset to ensure their removal would not bias the dataset. The resulting dataset contained 5,153 unexpanded cases. Table 1 gives weighted and expanded distributions of all survey respondents and registered voters by geographic strata.

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<sup>1</sup> The participation rate was calculated by dividing the total number of responses (5,545) by the total number of delivered mailings (18,477).

<sup>2</sup> For details on hot deck imputation, see <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3130338/>.

**Table 1: Weighted and Expanded Survey Distributions of Survey Respondents**

Geographic Stratum	All Respondents		Registered Voters	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Houston	4,369,406	23%	3,460,153	22%
Dallas	3,158,500	16%	2,647,697	17%
Fort Worth	1,717,406	9%	1,506,393	9%
San Antonio	1,720,339	9%	1,438,438	9%
Austin	1,446,241	8%	1,229,677	8%
Laredo/Pharr	1,176,289	6%	881,176	5%
Corpus Christi/Yoakum	695,655	4%	617,371	4%
Bryan/Waco	897,450	5%	767,444	5%
Atlanta/Beaumont/Lufkin/Paris/Tyler	1,724,271	9%	1,456,566	9%
Amarillo/Childress/Lubbock/Wichita Falls	857,323	4%	741,332	5%
Abilene/Brownwood/Odessa/San Angelo	689,161	4%	598,752	4%
El Paso	610,810	3%	519,134	3%
Total	19,062,851	100%	15,864,136	100%

The weighted and expanded dataset compares well with demographic distributions for Texas as summarized by the U.S. Census Bureau. As is the case with most surveys, certain segments of the population do not respond well relative to other segments of the population. The Texas Transportation Poll was no different and is slightly over-representative of individuals with college educations.

## About the Survey Results

The results presented in the next sections of the report represent the attitudes and opinions of registered Texas voters (n=4,422 unexpanded cases or 15,864,136 expanded cases). Expansion is the process by which survey data are “blown up” or “expanded” to the total number of units in the survey universe. The term *respondent* or *Texan* is used to describe this subset of the population from this point forward. See the appendix for a demographic summary of respondents.

## Travel Behavior

SECTION OVERVIEW	
Question	Key Result
What is your primary means of transportation?	Nine out of 10 use a personal auto.
Do you own or lease a personal vehicle?	90 percent own or lease a vehicle.
Did you use an alternate mode of transportation in the last 30 days?	33 percent had made at least one non-recreational trip by walking, while 25 percent reported using public transit.
Do you ever experience congestion while traveling in your region?	Three out of four reported experiencing congestion.
Have you made any relevant changes in your life in the last year in response to congestion?	Of those that have experienced congestion, nearly 40 percent have either changed their residential location or work hours or telecommuted to avoid congestion.
What technologies have you used in the last 30 days to make travel decisions?	51 percent reported using a smart phone app.
What do you believe causes congestion?	66 percent agreed (either strongly or somewhat) that “congestion in my region is caused by the influx of people wanting to live or work here,” and 53 percent agreed that “congestion is a byproduct of economic prosperity.”



## What Is Your Primary Means of Transportation?

### Results

Slightly more than nine out of 10 respondents use a personal auto as their primary means of transportation. See Figure 2 for further details.

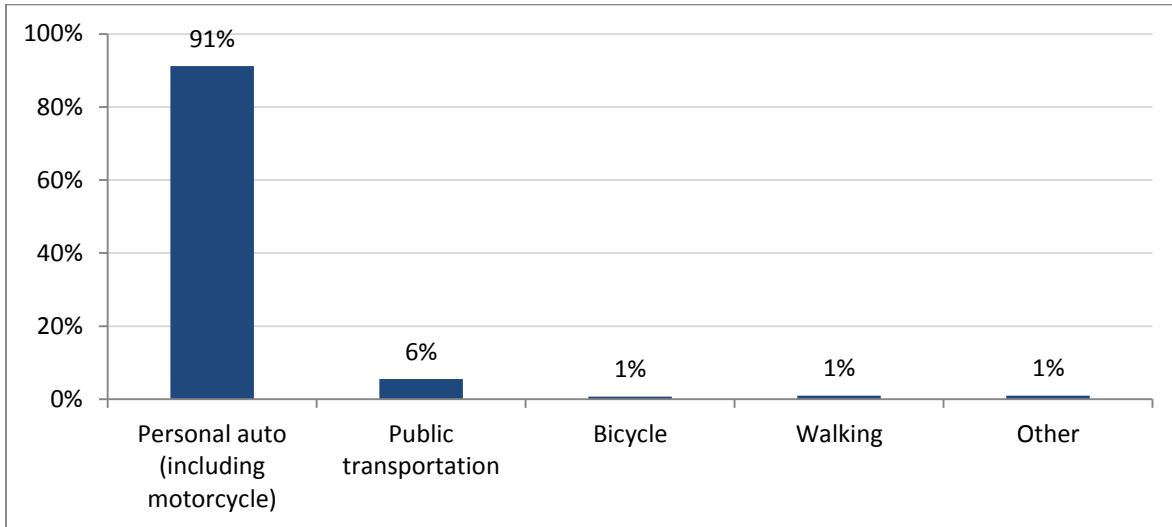


Figure 2: What Is Your Primary Means of Transportation?

### Detailed Analysis

The accompanying cross-tabulation analysis suggests that young respondents (18–24 years old) are less likely to primarily use autos, while minority respondents and respondents with an annual household income of less than \$25,000 have the heaviest reliance on public transportation.

## Do You Own or Lease a Personal Vehicle?

### Results

Ninety percent of respondents own or lease a personal vehicle. Demographic patterns of auto ownership are similar to those observed with auto use. See Figure 3 for further details.

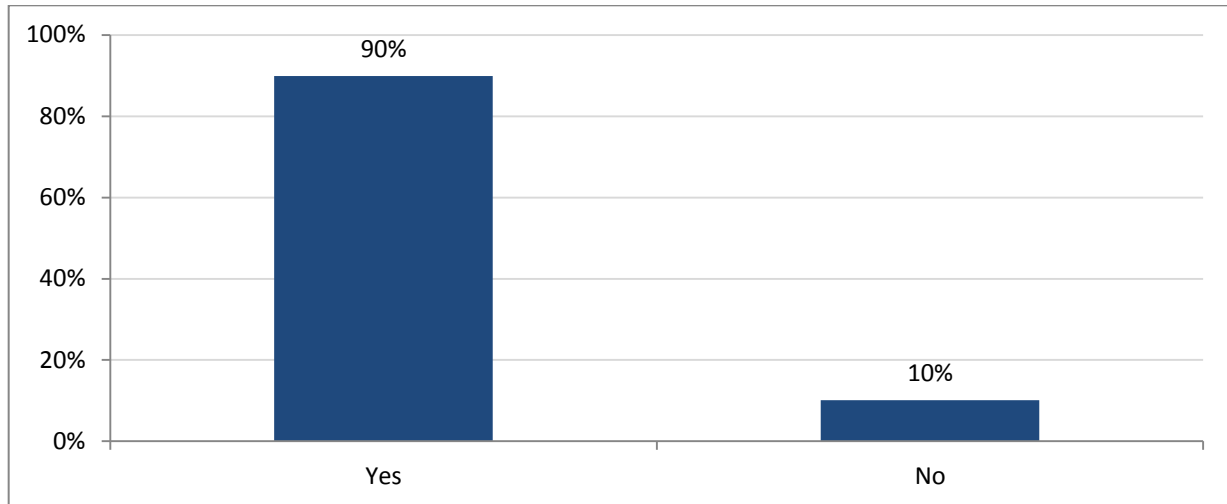


Figure 3: Do You Own or Lease a Personal Vehicle?

### Detailed Analysis

Households reporting annual incomes of less than \$25,000 travel less than those with annual incomes between \$25,000 and \$74,999. Similarly, households reporting annual incomes between \$25,000 and \$74,999 travel less than those reporting annual incomes of \$75,000 or more.

Travel behavior research suggests a correlation between income and personal mobility. When measured by personal vehicle miles traveled, the cost of travel is a larger proportion of the household budget for low-income households than it is for higher-income households. While all households that owned or leased a personal vehicle reported driving an average of 13,000 miles in the previous 12-month period, the accompanying cross-tabulation analysis suggests that income is correlated with personal vehicle miles traveled for respondents.

## Did You Use an Alternate Mode of Transportation in the Last 30 Days?

### Results

Respondents were asked to report alternate modes of transportation used in Texas in the last 30 days. One-third had made at least one non-recreational trip by walking, while one-quarter reported using public transit. Slightly more than one out of 10 respondents (11 percent) had used a bicycle to make at least one non-recreational trip. See Figure 4 for further details.

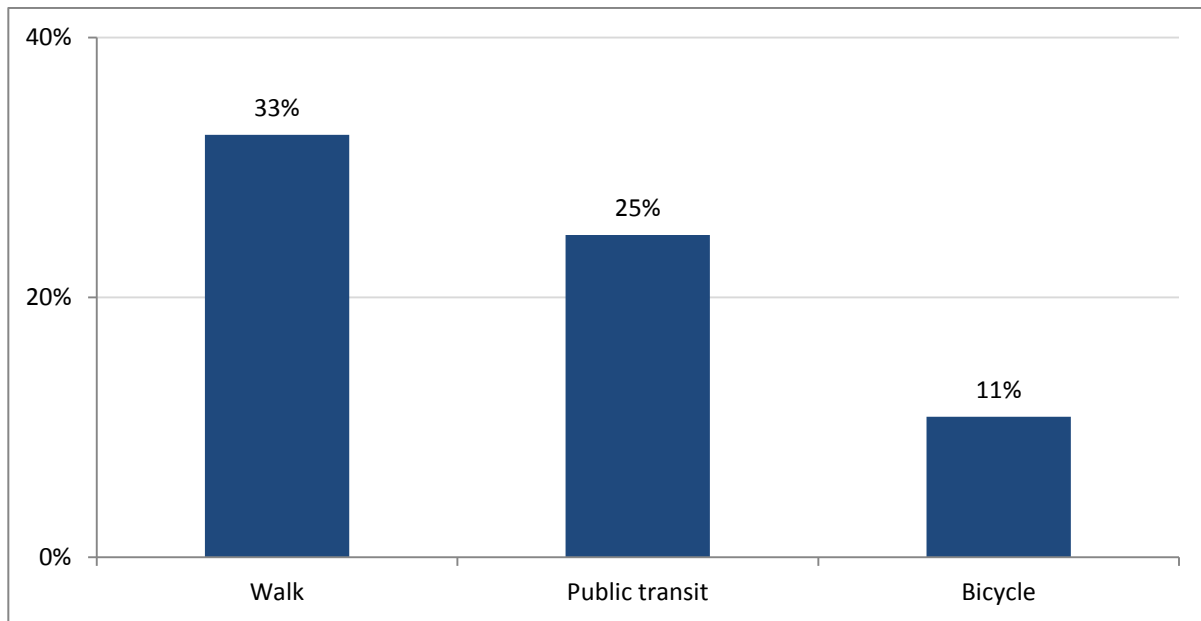


Figure 4: Did You Use an Alternate Mode of Transportation in the Last 30 Days?

### Detailed Analysis

For bicycling and walking, respondents were asked to exclude recreational trips when reporting how often they used an alternate mode of transportation.

Of Respondents Using a Non-personal Auto Mode in the Last 30 Days (42 Percent)...	
22%	Used one alternate mode
14%	Used two alternate modes
6%	Used three alternate modes

## Do You Ever Experience Congestion While Traveling in Your Region?

### Results

Slightly more than three out of four respondents reported experiencing congestion while traveling in their region. See Figure 5 for further details.

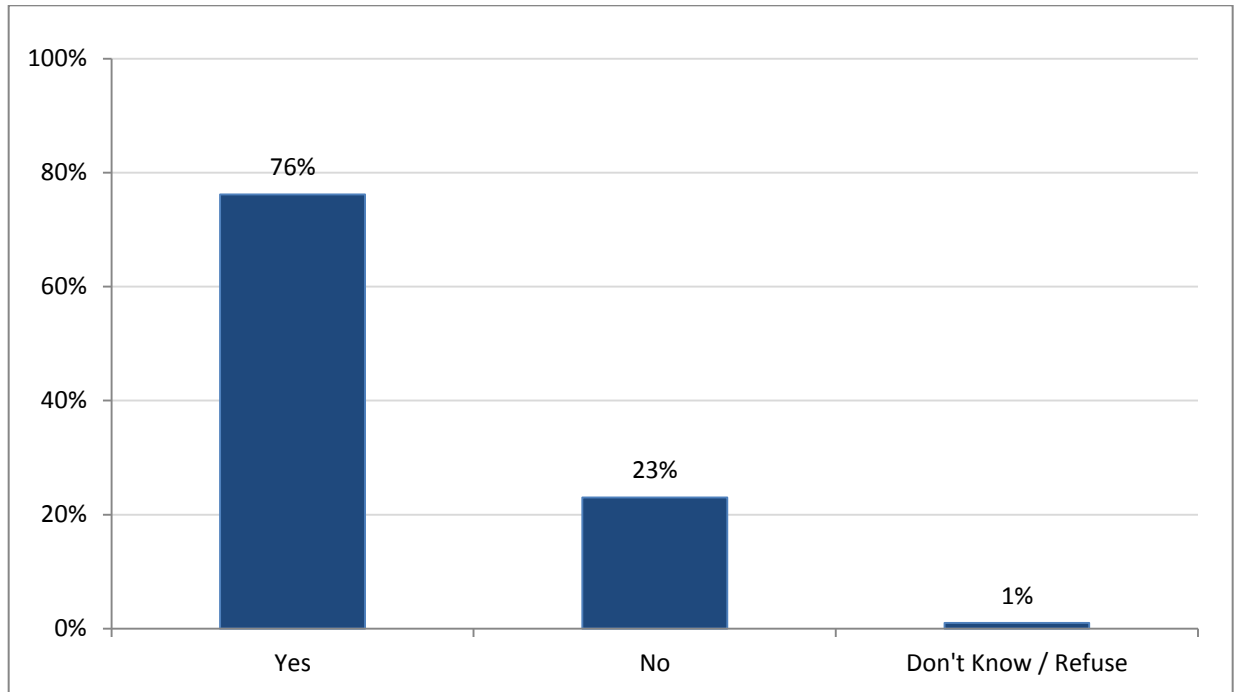


Figure 5: Do You Ever Experience Congestion While Traveling in Your Region?

### Detailed Analysis

The accompanying cross-tabulation analysis suggests that respondents living in major metropolitan areas (Houston, Dallas, Austin, San Antonio, and El Paso) were more likely to experience congestion in their region than respondents living in less urban areas. Furthermore, young or minority populations that rely primarily on alternate modes were less likely to experience congestion in their region.

When asked to rate congestion in their region, using a scale from zero (congestion is not bad at all) to 10 (congestion is extremely bad), respondents assigned an average congestion rating of 6.5.

## Have You Made Any Relevant Changes in Your Life in the Last Year in Response to Congestion?

### Results

Respondents were given a list of activities that they may or may not have performed in the last year. “Making an effort to travel less because of fuel prices” was by far the most often-mentioned activity. See Figure 6 for further details.

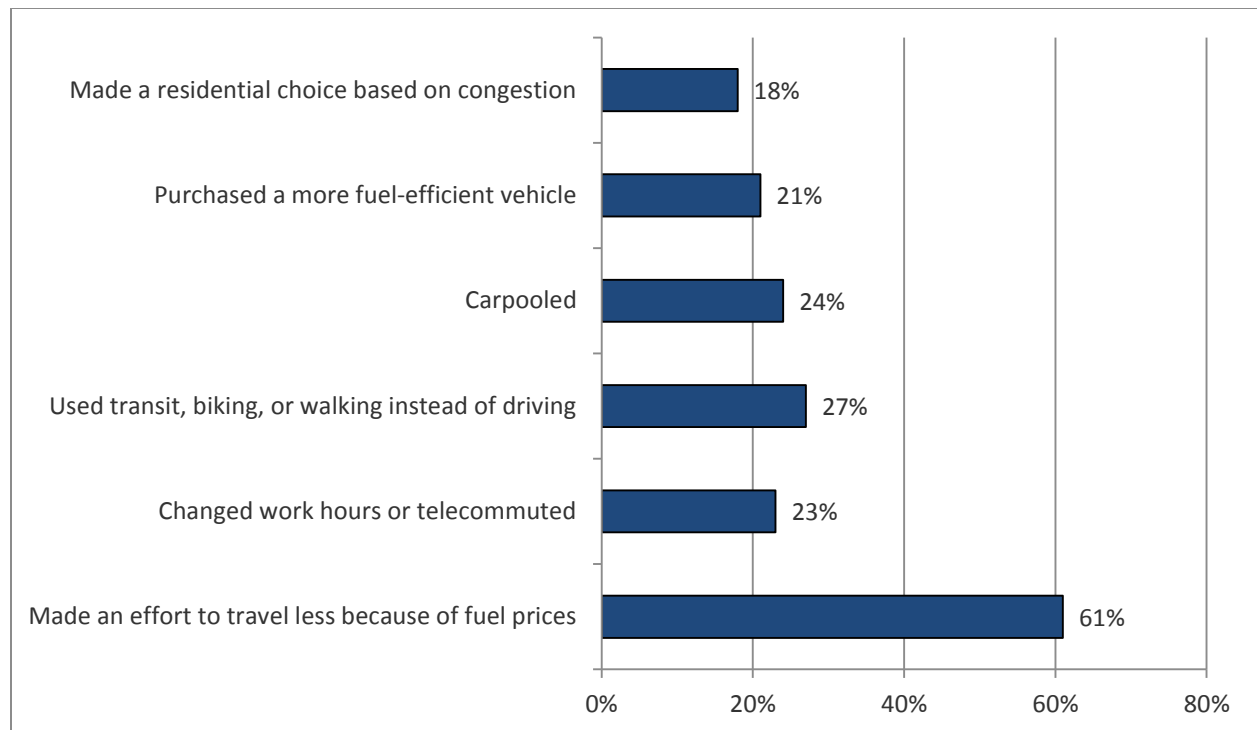


Figure 6: Have You Made Any Relevant Changes in Your Life in the Last Year in Response to Congestion?

### Detailed Analysis

The accompanying cross-tabulation analysis suggests a correlation between age and making an effort to travel less because of fuel prices. Essentially, the older the respondents, the less likely they are to make an effort to travel less because of fuel prices. It is interesting to note that the most popular response option is distinguishable from the less popular response options by the level of activity associated with the option. Active participation options, such as “made a residential choice,” “purchased,” “changed,” “carpooled,” and “used transit,” were not selected as often as the most popular option, “made an effort to...”

The findings suggest that most Texans have yet to make more significant lifestyle changes to manage congestion, such as changing residential location or vehicle. This is because either congestion has not yet reached a point where Texans feel compelled to make lifestyle choice changes, or congestion has become such an integral part of Texans’ lives that they perceive more significant lifestyle changes as futile and simply deal with the congestion.

## What Technologies Have You Used in the Last 30 Days to Make Travel Decisions?

### Results

Respondents were given a list of technologies that they may or may not have used in the last 30 days to make a decision regarding travel. Fifty-one percent, a slight majority, mentioned using a smart phone app. See Figure 7 for further details.

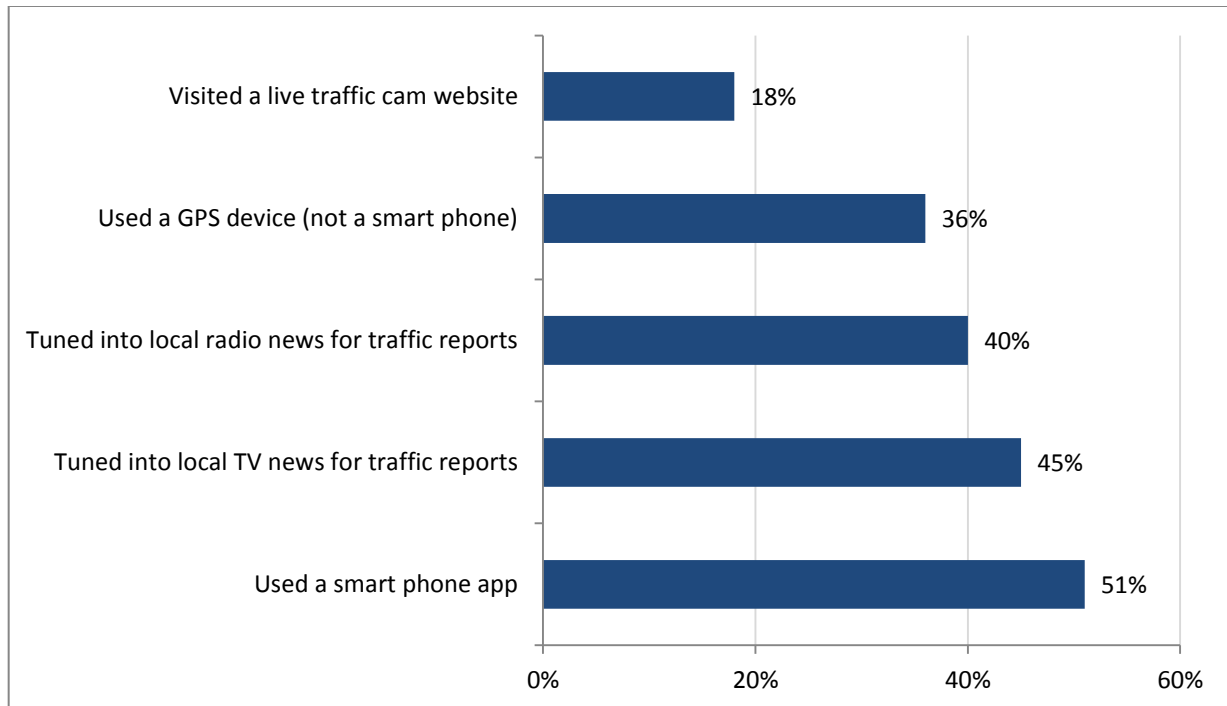


Figure 7: What Technologies Have You Used in the Last 30 Days to Make Travel Decisions?

### Detailed Analysis

A deeper segmentation analysis of the data on respondents shows some respondents are using multiple strategies:

To Help Them Make Travel Decisions...	
23%	Used a smart phone app and GPS device
8%	Sought traffic reports via the web, radio, and TV
4%	Reported doing all five actions in Figure 7

The data suggest that these congestion strategists are characterized by the following demographic attributes:

- Twice as likely to be employed as unemployed.
- Higher annual household income.
- Higher levels of education attainment.
- Younger.

## What Do You Believe Causes Congestion?

### Results

Respondents were asked to provide their level of agreement regarding a number of congestion-related statements. A majority of respondents agreed, either strongly or somewhat, that “congestion in my region is caused by the influx of people wanting to live or work here” and “congestion is a byproduct of economic prosperity.” See Figure 8 for further details.

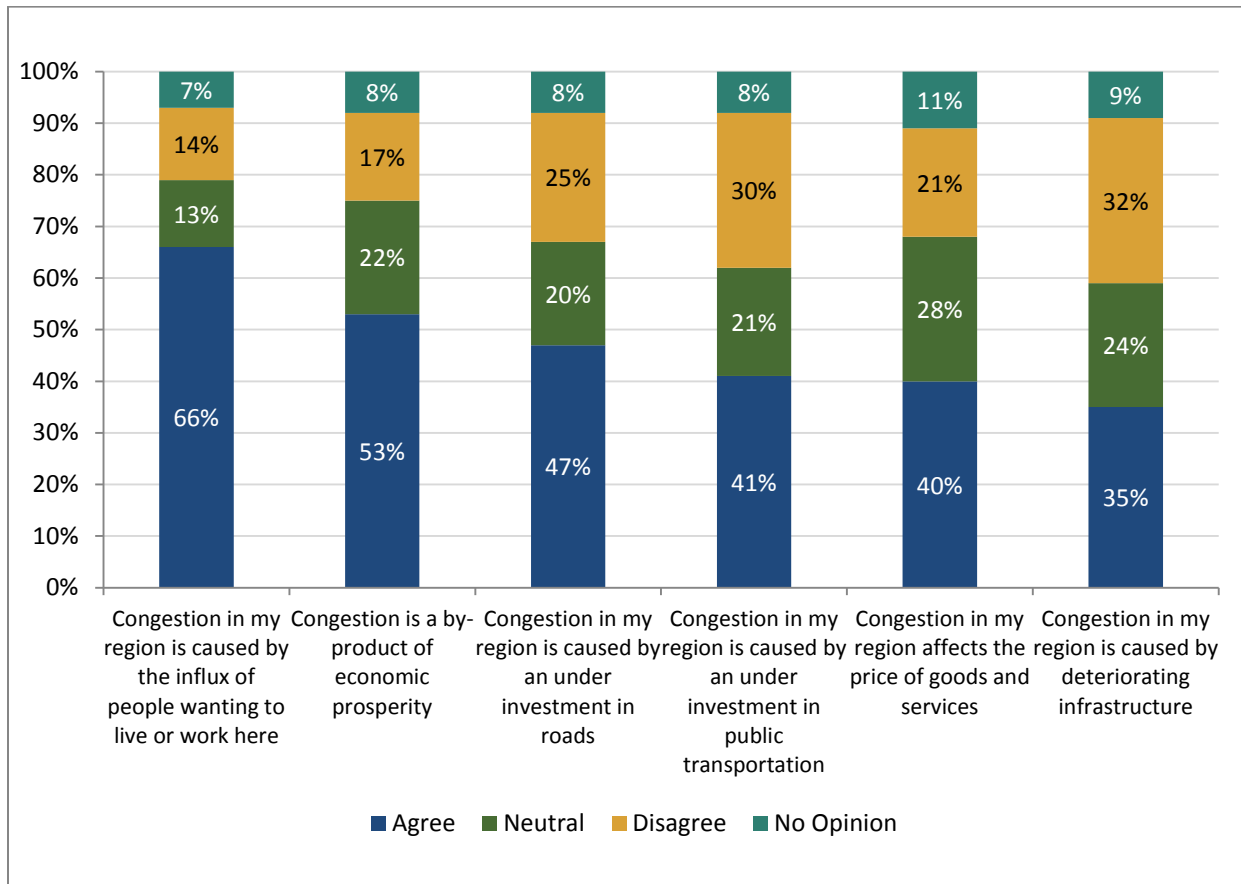


Figure 8: Level of Agreement with Congestion-Related Statements

### Detailed Analysis

The accompanying cross-tabulation analysis suggests a few noteworthy trends:

- As education and annual household income increase, so too does the likelihood to agree with these two sentiments. Since education and annual household income are often two indicators of socio-economic status, the data may be suggesting that respondents with higher socio-economic status may be more inclined to make the connection between a strong economy and traffic congestion.
- Respondents living in more urban areas (Houston, Dallas, Fort Worth, San Antonio, Austin, and El Paso) were also slightly more likely to agree with the previous two sentiments than respondents living in less urban areas.

- Similarly, respondents that reported experiencing congestion while traveling in their region (see Figure 5) were much more likely to agree that congestion was a function of economic prosperity and the accompanying influx of people wanting to capitalize on the strong economy.
- While a majority of Texans who primarily use personal autos did not feel that congestion is caused by an under-investment in roads but instead by a growing economy, a majority of those who use transit and other means of transportation did feel that congestion is caused by an under-investment in public transportation. This suggests that Texans using public transportation believe increased funding of public transportation will help manage congestion. However, Texans who primarily use autos believe that an increased investment in strategies such as traffic signal timing and incident clearance may be more effective in resolving transportation issues.
- Among all demographic strata, no group showed majority agreement that “congestion in my region affects the price of goods and services.” Austin was the only survey region with majority agreement on this sentiment (52 percent).



## Travel Solutions

SECTION OVERVIEW	
Question	Key Result
Who should influence transportation policy?	Texans believe that auto drivers and state departments of transportation should have the most influence on transportation policy.
What are your views about public transportation, bicycling, and walking as alternate modes of transportation?	Texans do not believe that using alternate modes is an effective way to deal with transportation issues.
What strategies should be used to resolve transportation issues?	Texans are most supportive of timing traffic signals and least supportive of building more toll roads.

## Who Should Influence Transportation Policy?

### Results

Respondents were queried about which users and providers of the transportation system *should* have the most influence on establishing transportation policy. Using a scale from zero (should have the least influence on establishing transportation policy in your region) to 10 (should have the most influence on establishing transportation policy in your region), respondents were asked to rate various groups. The mean scores ranged from 3.88 to 7.30. Auto drivers and state departments of transportation received the highest mean scores, followed by city and county governments. Private corporations and bicyclists received the lowest mean scores. See Figure 9 for further details.

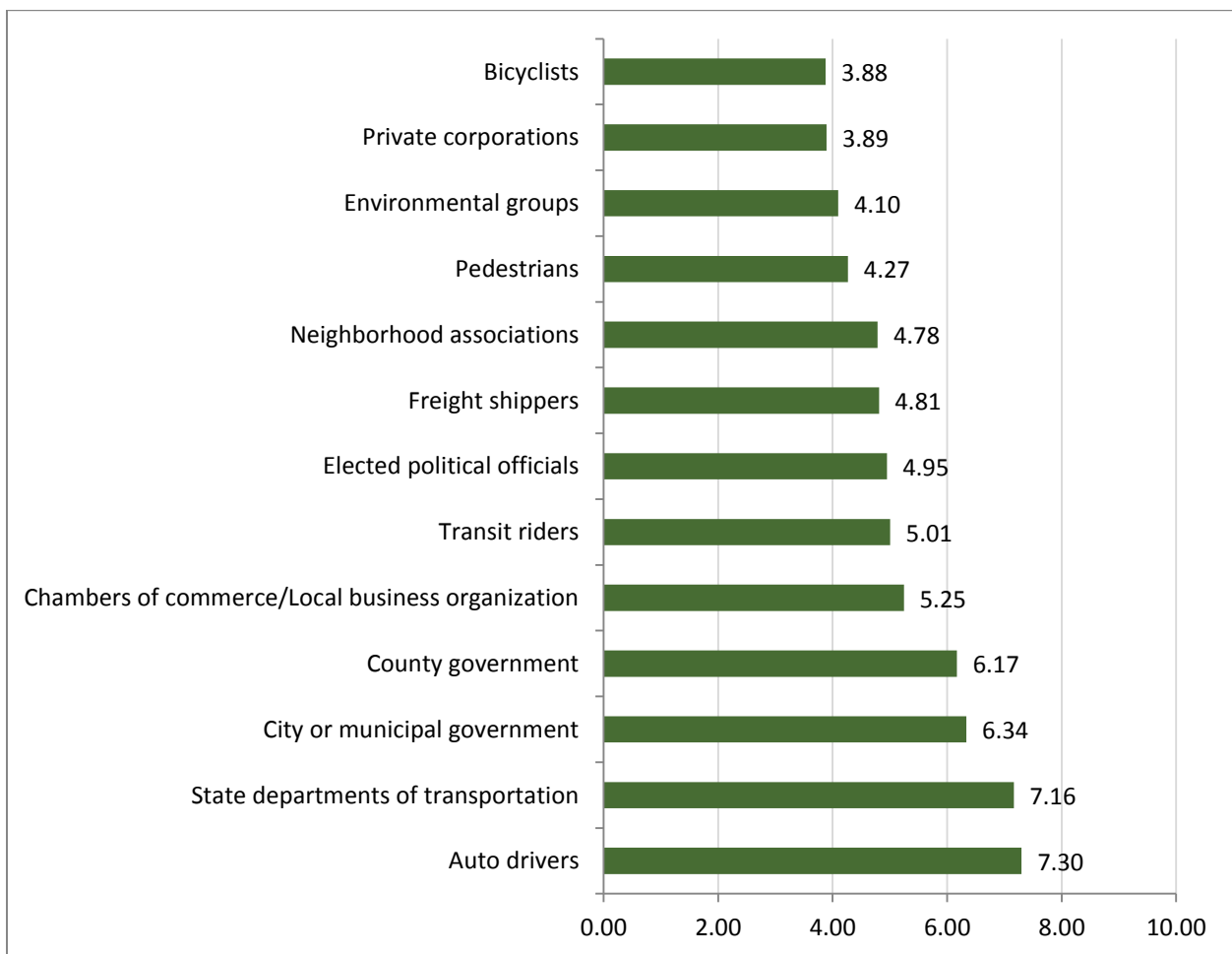


Figure 9: Mean Score Assigned to Groups That Should Influence Transportation Policy

### Detailed Analysis

Among the 13 options provided, five represent direct user groups (auto drivers, transit riders, freight shippers, pedestrians, and bicyclists), while the remaining eight represent governmental agencies or interest groups. Auto drivers are, by far, the most highly rated direct user group, with

transit users the second highest, ranked about midway in importance. Furthermore, state departments of transportation are the highest-rated governmental agency or interest group and ranked second in importance overall.

Texans identifying as Republicans were most supportive of auto drivers having the most influence on transportation policy, while self-identified Democrats felt state departments of transportation should have the most influence. Table 2 presents mean scores by primary mode of travel (see Figure 2), where the primary mode has been segmented into personal auto and other modes.

**Table 2: Mean Score Assigned to Groups That Should Influence Transportation Policy—  
Personal Auto versus Other Modes**

Group	Personal Auto		Other Modes	
	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank
Auto drivers	7.4	1	6.2	3
State departments of transportation	7.2	2	7.1	1
City or municipal government	6.4	3	5.8	4
County government	6.2	4	5.8	6
Chambers of commerce/local business organizations	5.2	5	5.5	7
Elected political officials	4.9	6	5.2	10
Transit riders	4.9	7	6.3	2
Freight shippers	4.8	8	4.8	12
Neighborhood associations	4.7	9	5.3	9
Pedestrians	4.1	10	5.8	5
Environmental groups	4.0	11	5.4	8
Private corporations	3.9	12	3.9	13
Bicyclists	3.8	13	4.8	11

Texans believe that auto drivers and state departments of transportation should have the most influence on transportation policy. The data shown in Table 2 suggest that one’s mode of primary travel has an impact on one’s perception of the influence each user group should have on transportation policy. For example, Texans that identified personal auto as their primary means of travel rated themselves most highly as the group that should have the most influence on transportation policy, while Texans that identified other modes as their primary means of travel rated state departments of transportation most highly.

The data also suggest that the 90 percent of respondents who are primarily auto users may have a challenge seeing themselves as *one of many* user groups for whom the system was designed. Rather, they see themselves as *the* user group for whom the system was designed. Furthermore, they may view the primary role of governmental agencies—mainly state departments of transportation—as facilitating their system needs.

## What Are Your Views about Public Transportation, Bicycling, and Walking as Alternate Modes of Transportation?

### Results

Respondents were asked to provide their level of agreement regarding a number of statements concerning alternate modes of transportation. The data suggest the only majority achieved was that 54 percent *disagreed* with the following statement: “Taking public transit is convenient in my region.” See Figure 10 for further details.

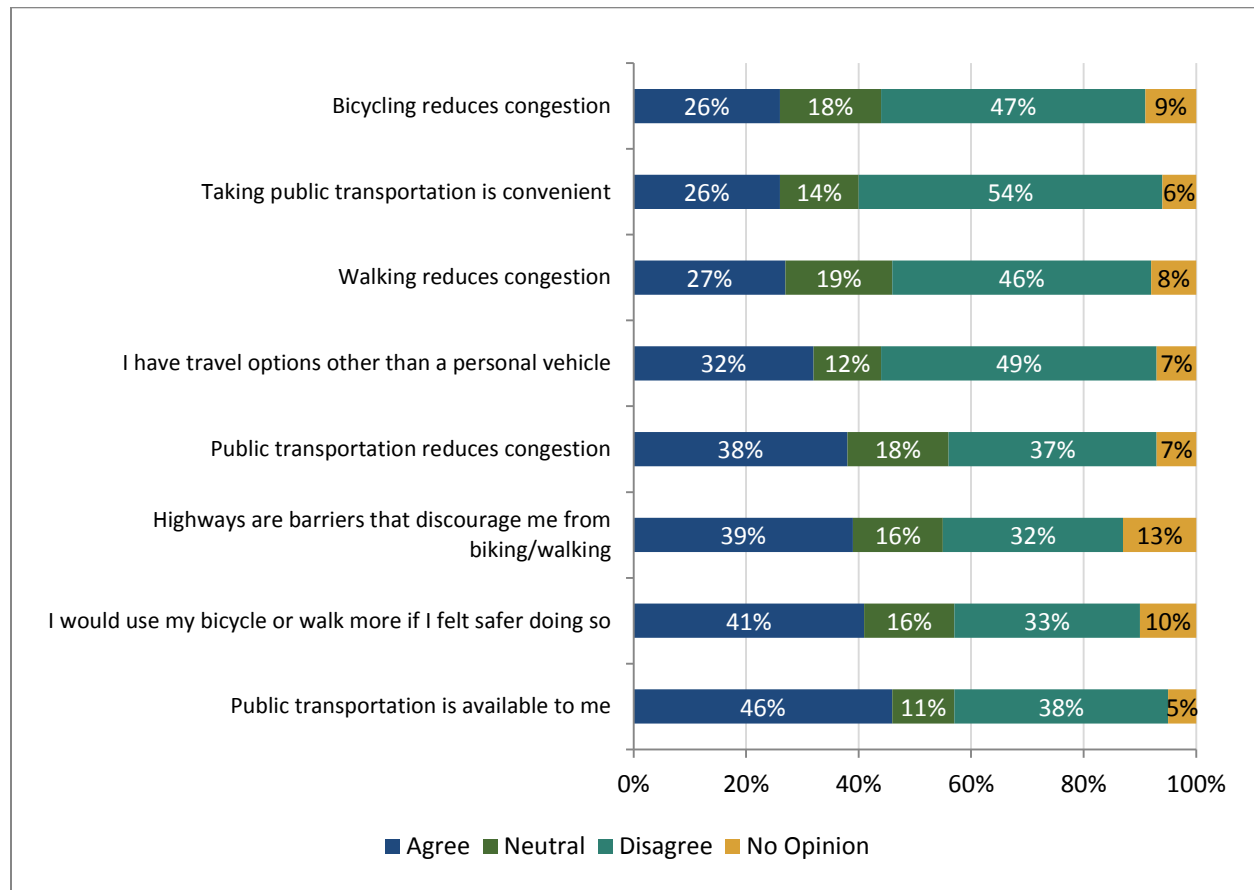


Figure 10: Level of Agreement with Statements Regarding Alternate Modes of Transportation

### Detailed Analysis

These estimates may suggest a high level of skepticism when it comes to respondents recognizing the use and availability of alternate modes of transportation such as walking, biking, and public transit as an effective means of reducing congestion or addressing transportation issues.

While majority agreement was not attained when political affiliation was taken into account, a higher proportion of Democrats agreed that alternate modes were an effective means of reducing congestion.

## What Strategies Should Be Used to Resolve Transportation Issues?

### Results

Using a scale from zero (a strategy you strongly oppose to help solve transportation issues in your region) to 10 (a strategy you strongly support to help solve transportation issues in your region), respondents were asked to rate various strategies. Timing traffic signals more effectively and doing a better job of managing accidents were ranked with the highest mean scores. Building more toll roads and investing more in the shipment of goods and services were ranked the lowest mean scores. Mean score ranges fell between 3.06 and 8.07.

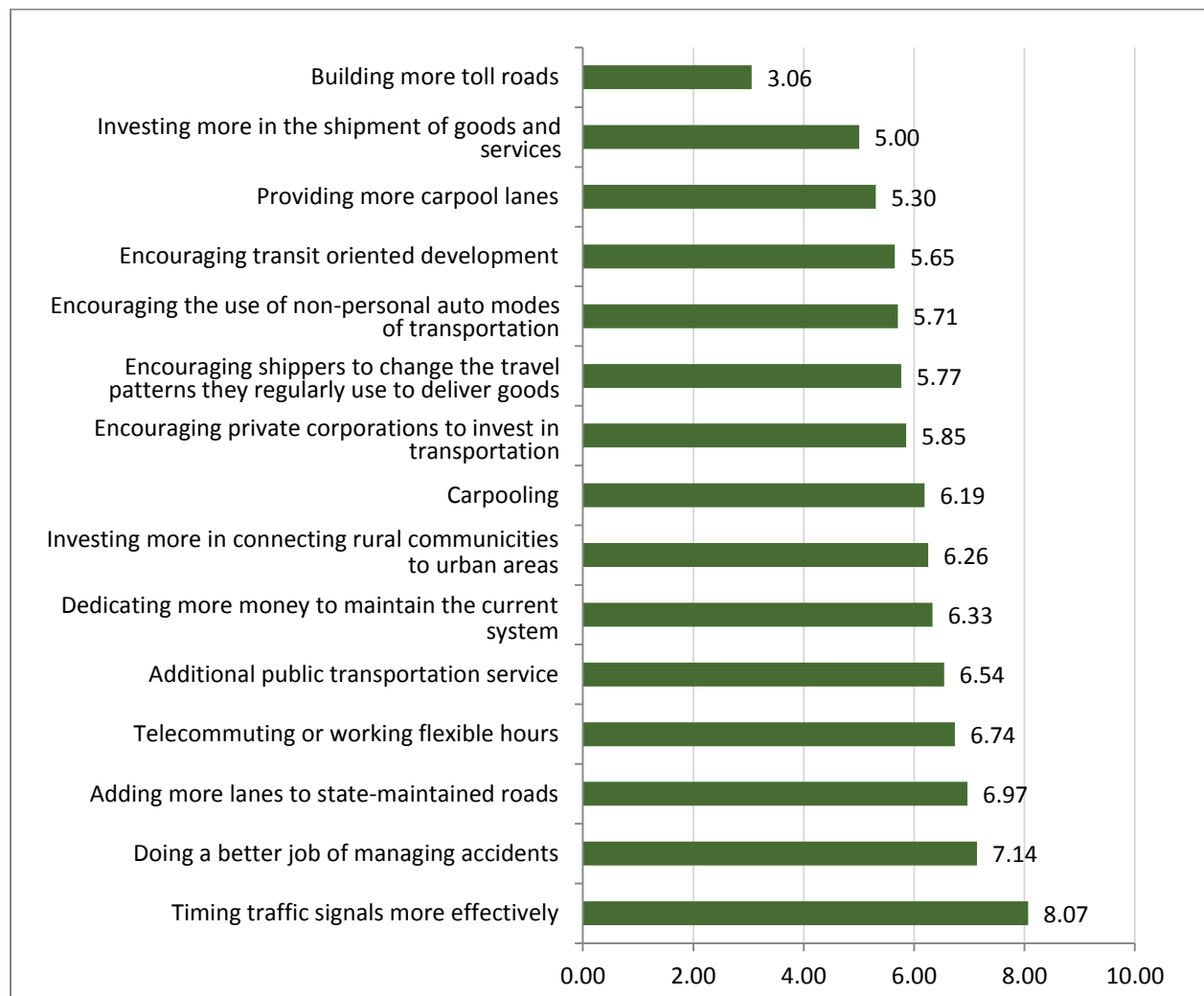


Figure 11: Mean Score Assigned to Strategies to Resolve Regional Transportation Issues

### Detailed Analysis

The distribution of responses in Figure 11 suggests both an overwhelming favorite—more effective signal timing—which was given the highest mean score of any statement in the entire survey, as well as an overwhelming least favorite—more toll roads. The accompanying cross-tabulation analysis suggests some interesting demographic trends:

- Respondents from low-income households were more likely to be more supportive of strategies focusing on alternate modes and encouraging private corporations to invest in transportation than were respondents from high-income households. Conversely, high-income households were more supportive of investment in the system (either existing or new construction), teleworking, encouragement of off-peak delivery of goods and services, signal timing, and incident management.
- Texans from major metropolitan areas were more likely to be supportive of all strategies except dedicating more money to maintain the current system, investing more in the shipment of goods and services, and investing more to connect rural communities to urban areas.
- Republicans and Democrats saw timing traffic signals as an effective strategy for resolving transportation issues.
- Building more toll roads was, by far, the least supported strategy. The lack of support held true in both metropolitan areas and rural areas, as well as areas with and without toll roads.
- The data suggest that demographic and geographic characteristics influence not only travel behavior but also one's perception of the utility of transportation management strategies.

## Transportation Funding

SECTION OVERVIEW	
Question	Key Result
Is there a need to increase transportation funding in Texas?	64 percent said yes.
Is the fuel tax a flat tax or a sales tax?	Most Texans do not understand the specifics of the fuel tax.
In addition to fuel tax, what else helps fund transportation in Texas?	Most Texans had trouble identifying transportation funding mechanisms that are not directly associated with transportation.
What transportation funding mechanisms do you support?	Dedicating vehicle state sales tax to transportation received the most support.
How much do you support funding public transportation?	A majority supported increased funding regionally and statewide.
How do you rate various transportation funding mechanism characteristics?	Texans generally reacted more positively to funding mechanism <i>characteristics</i> than to the funding mechanisms themselves.

## Is There a Need to Increase Transportation Funding in Texas?

### Results

A majority (64 percent) confirmed that there is a need to increase transportation funding in Texas. The accompanying cross-tabulation analysis suggests majority agreement on this sentiment across all socio-economic groups. See Figure 12 for further details.

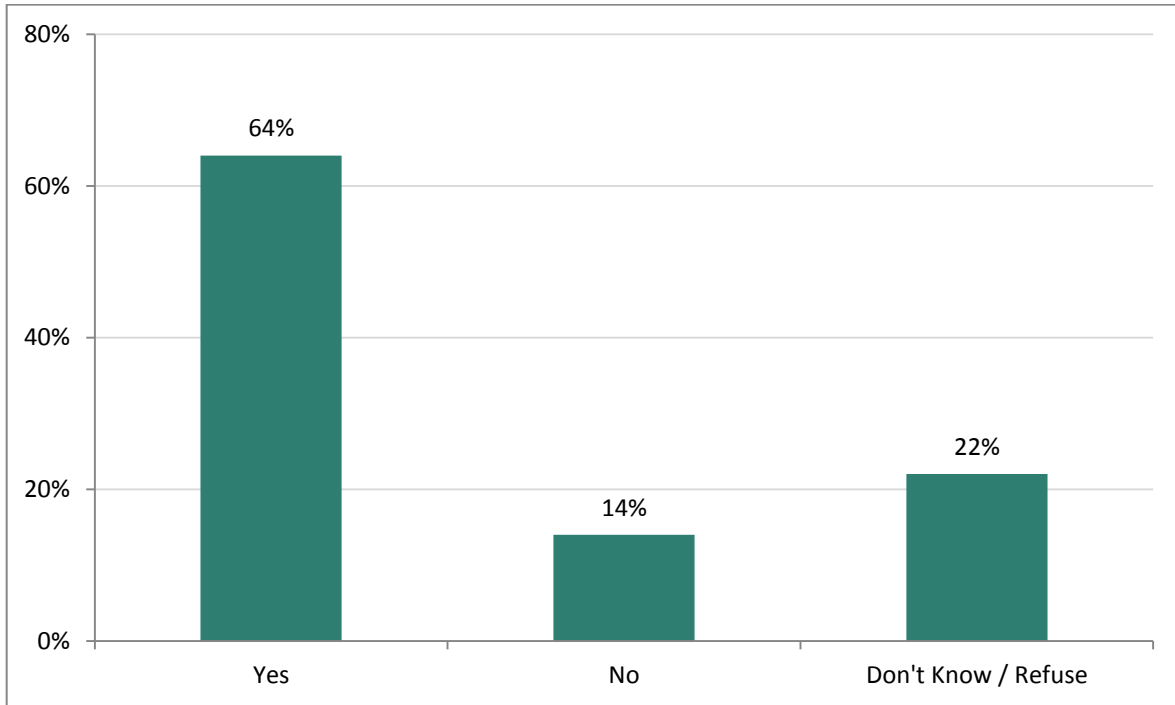


Figure 12: Is There a Need to Increase Transportation Funding in Texas?

### Detailed Analysis

Demographically, education is correlated with the perceived need to increase transportation funding in Texas, with a higher proportion of more highly educated respondents indicating a need to increase funding than seen in respondents with less education. Similarly, a higher proportion of respondents who use modes other than personal autos indicate a need to increase funding in Texas than those who rely on personal autos as their primary means of transportation.

A higher proportion of Democrats (72 percent) felt a need to increase transportation funding, while 61 percent of Republicans felt this way. Almost a quarter of Texans do not know or refused to answer whether there is a need to increase funding for transportation.



## Is the Fuel Tax a Flat Tax or a Sales Tax?

### Results

Respondents were told that the majority of transportation funding in Texas was from revenue generated by the fuel tax. When asked if the fuel tax was a flat tax or a sales tax, a slight majority (51 percent) of respondents correctly reported it was a flat tax. However, almost that many (49 percent) either reported it as a sales tax or did not know. See Figure 13 for further details.

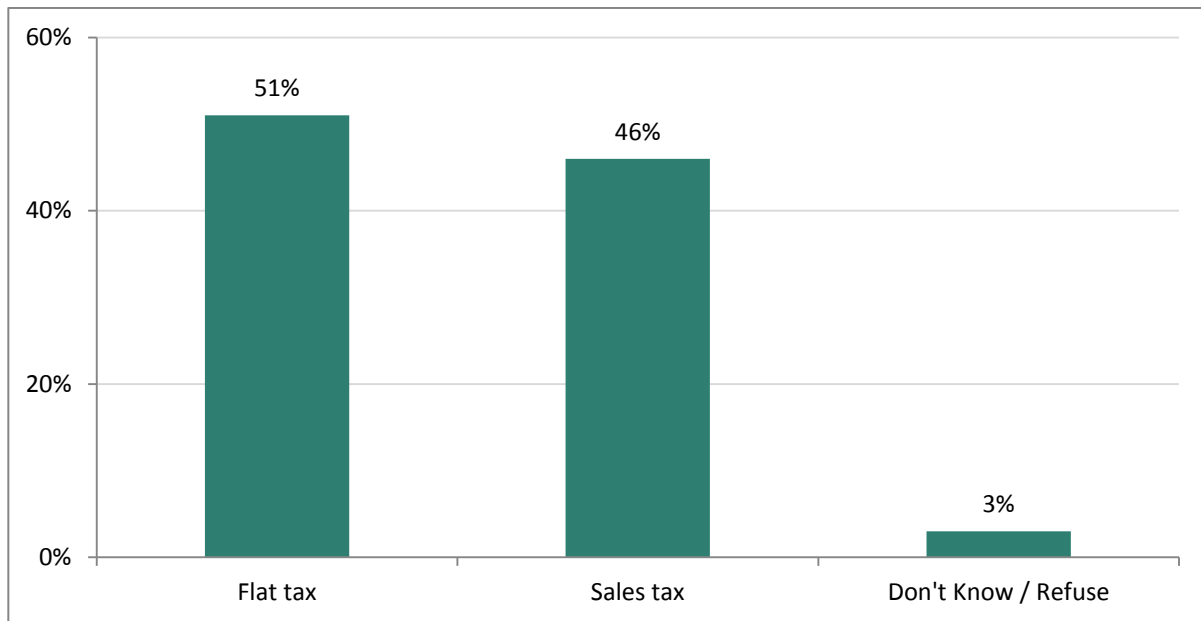


Figure 13: Is the Fuel Tax a Flat Tax or a Sales Tax?

### Detailed Analysis

Of those that correctly reported the fuel tax as a flat tax, 71 percent of respondents commented that they did not know the amount of fuel tax paid for every gallon of gasoline purchased. Of the 29 percent that reported knowing the correct amount, only 2 percent correctly identified the total gas tax (federal and state) as 38 cents per gallon of gasoline purchased. This translates into less than 1 percent of respondents knowing the correct amount they pay in fuel tax for every gallon of gasoline purchased and how that tax is assessed. The data clearly suggest that respondents have a low level of knowledge about the specifics of the fuel tax.

## In Addition to the Fuel Tax, What Else Helps Fund Transportation in Texas?

### Results

Respondents were next provided a list of revenue-generating mechanisms and asked to identify which, if any, of these mechanisms were used to help fund transportation in Texas, in addition to the fuel tax. A majority correctly identified vehicle registration fees and tolls as being used to help fund transportation in Texas. The local sales tax supports public transportation, the federal income tax helps to reinforce the Highway Trust Fund and public transportation funding, and the property tax funds local roads. A majority incorrectly identified the motor vehicle sales tax and driver's license fees as being used to help fund transportation in Texas. See Figure 14 for further details.

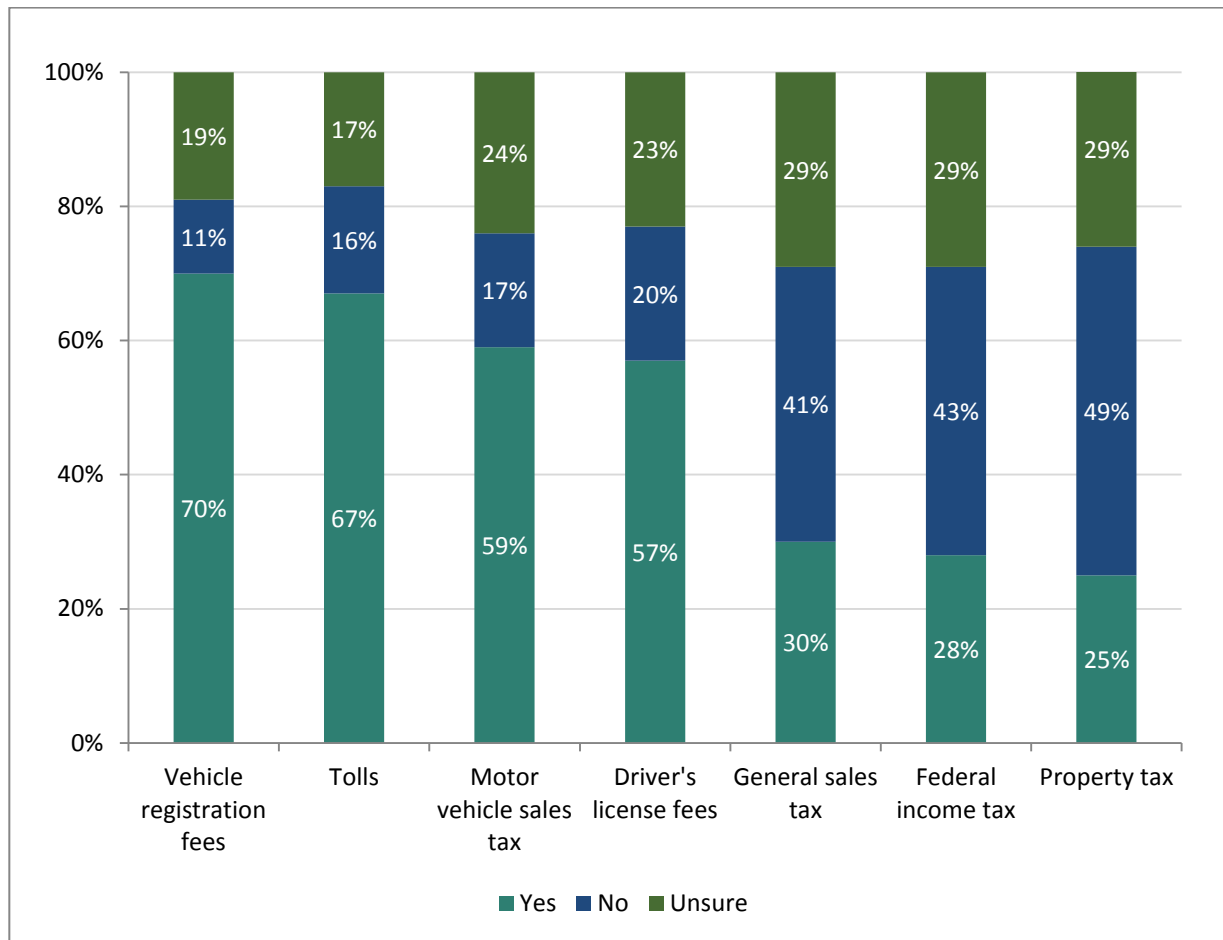


Figure 14: Level of Agreement with Statements Regarding Transportation Funding

### *Detailed Analysis*

More than 40 percent of respondents lacked awareness of three funding mechanisms: general sales tax, federal income tax, and property tax, all of which are used to help fund transportation in Texas. These data suggest that funding mechanisms that are not perceived as being directly associated with transportation (fees or taxes associated with drivers, driving, or roads) are more difficult for respondents to identify as being used for funding transportation in Texas.

## What Transportation Funding Mechanisms Do You Support?

### Results

Using a scale from zero (strongly oppose) to 10 (strongly support), respondents were asked to rate various mechanisms to help generate additional transportation funding. “Dedicating state sales tax on vehicles to transportation” was the most highly rated mechanism by both Republicans and Democrats. “Increasing vehicle registration fees from \$65 per year to \$115 per year” gained the least support by both Republicans and Democrats. See Figure 15 for further details.

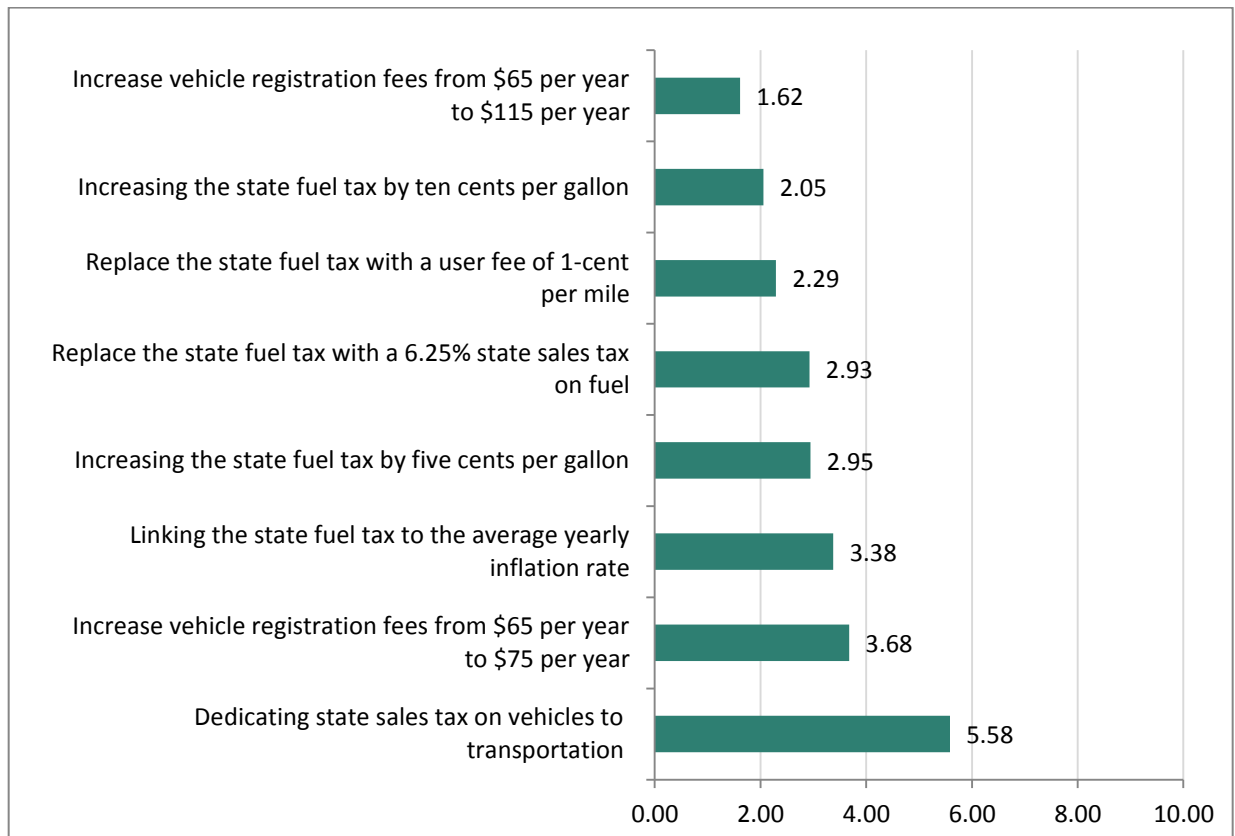


Figure 15: Mean Scores Assigned to Potential Transportation Funding Mechanisms

### Detailed Analysis

Throughout the survey, respondents were presented a series of topically similar statements (such as those listed in Figure 15) and asked to rate them, using a scale from 0 (the least positive rating) to 10 (the most positive rating). Estimating mean scores for each individual statement allows the reader to position each statement relative to all other statements.

Another useful statistical technique is the estimation of an overall mean score (calculated by averaging the individual mean scores assigned to each statement). This allows the reader to position each topic relative to all other topics. The overall mean score associated with Figure 15 is the lowest overall mean score of all questions in the survey where respondents are asked to rate response options. This may suggest that respondents are not overly supportive of any of these potential funding mechanisms, despite confirming a need to increase transportation funding in Texas. However, among the funding mechanisms offered, the respondents are most supportive of dedicating state sales tax on vehicles to transportation. The data may also suggest that respondents are more comfortable with transportation funding mechanisms that do not require any additional spending on their part.

## How Much Do You Support Funding Public Transportation?

### Results

Several statements regarding the funding of alternate transportation modes were presented to respondents, and they were asked to provide their level of agreement with each statement. A majority of respondents agreed (either somewhat or strongly) with the following statements:

- “I support investing more public tax dollars in public transportation in my region” (54 percent).
- “I support investing more public tax dollars in public transportation across the state” (52 percent).

See Figure 16 for further details.

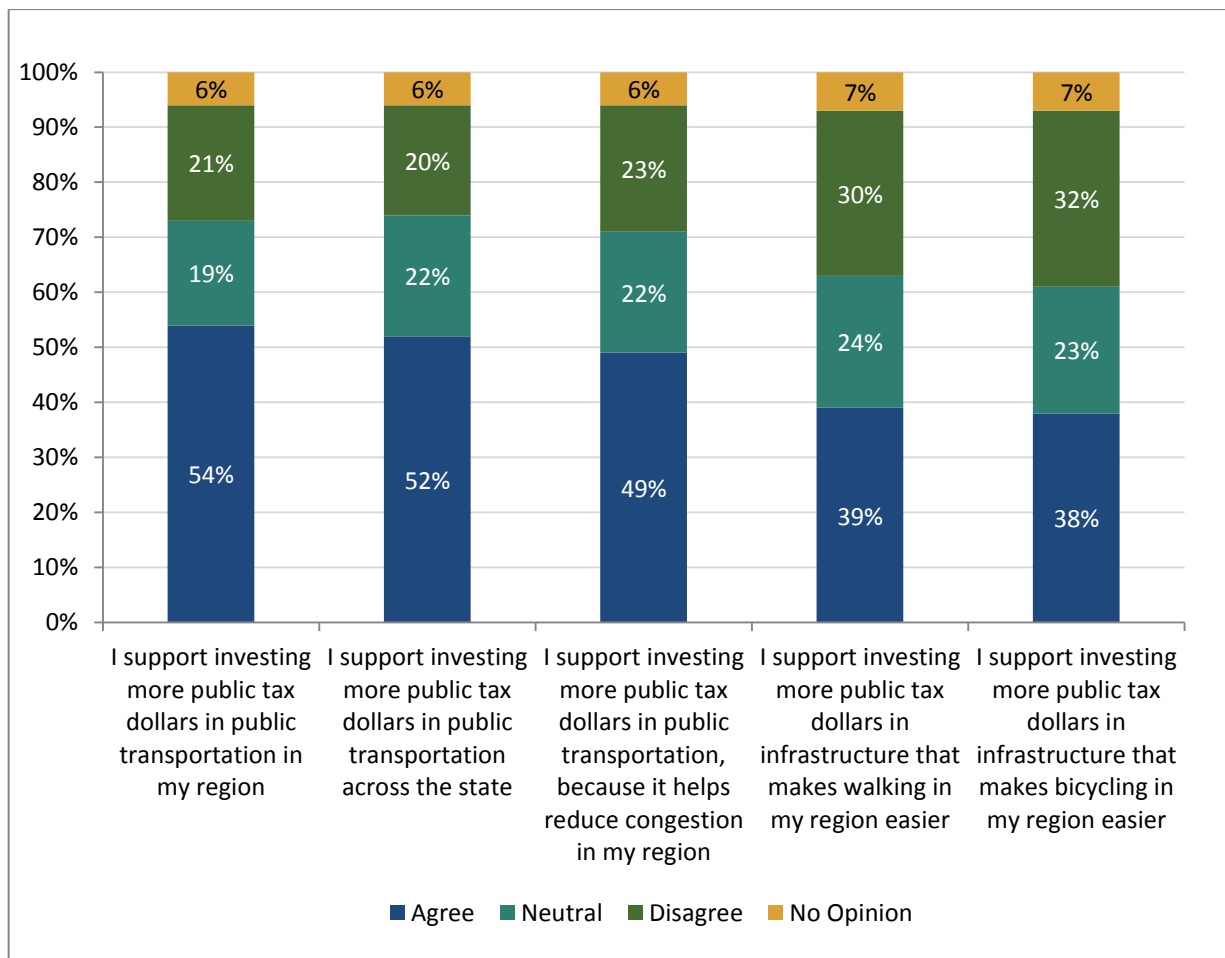


Figure 16: Level of Agreement with Statements Regarding Alternate Modes of Transportation

### *Detailed Analysis*

The accompanying cross-tabulation analysis suggests that support for investing more public tax dollars in public transportation (either regionally or statewide) increases as income and education increase. Respondents who use modes other than the personal auto, respondents living in survey regions that are major metropolitan areas, and respondents that believe there is a need to increase transportation funding in Texas were also more supportive. The data also suggest that respondents were more likely to support funding public transportation when it was not tied to its ability to make walking or biking easier.

## How Do You Rate Various Transportation Funding Mechanism Characteristics?

### Results

Using a scale from zero (strongly disagree) to 10 (strongly agree), respondents were asked to rate various transportation funding mechanism characteristics. The four most highly ranked characteristics were:

- “Assuring a predictable long-term solution” (a mean score of 7.75).
- “Reducing dependency on foreign oil” (a mean score of 7.61).
- “Guaranteeing that 100 percent of all revenues are spent on transportation projects” (a mean score of 7.55).
- “Encouraging business and commerce in Texas” (a mean score of 7.48).

See Figure 17 for further details.

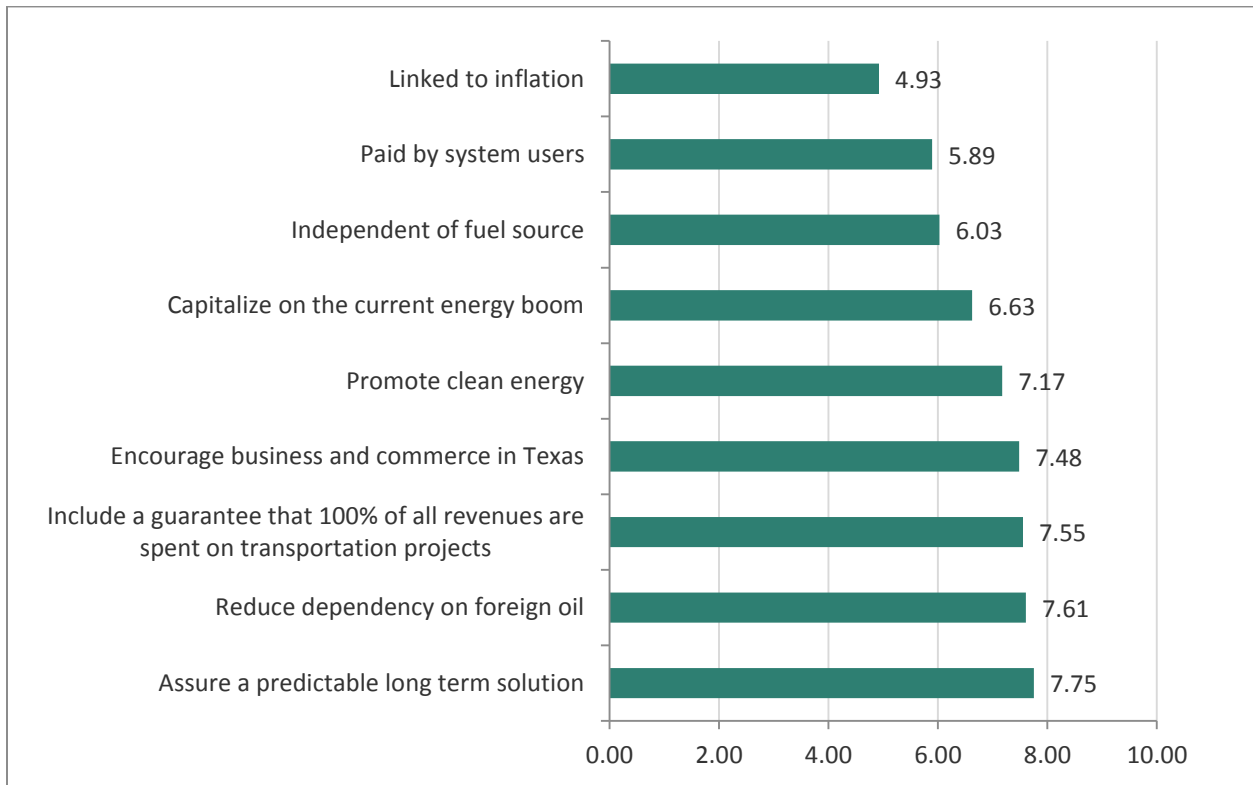


Figure 17: Mean Score Assigned to Various Transportation Funding Characteristics

### Detailed Analysis

These four characteristics are only separated by about a quarter of a point in mean scores, suggesting Texans view them as nearly equal in value. The overall mean score to this question is the highest overall mean score of all questions in the survey where respondents are asked to rate response options. This may suggest that respondents are generally more supportive of the



characteristics of the funding mechanisms that were offered than they were of the funding mechanisms themselves. Similar to the situation presented earlier in the report (where the data perhaps suggest that respondents are more comfortable with transportation funding mechanisms that do not require any additional spending on their part), these data also suggest that the least attractive characteristics are those that are more likely to require additional spending on the part of the respondent (mechanisms that are linked to inflation and mechanisms where system users pay).

Republicans ranked “assuring a predictable long-term solution” most highly, while Democrats ranked “promoting clean energy” most highly.

## Customer Satisfaction with Governmental Agencies

SECTION OVERVIEW	
Question	Key Result
Should local, state, and federal government play a significant role regarding transportation issues in your region?	Texans are eager to have local and state government, but not the federal government, play a role in resolving transportation issues.
How well are transportation agencies performing?	Texans believe that agencies are doing okay in some areas but not in others. Texans also believe that public agencies should partner with private corporations to resolve issues.

## Should Local, State, and Federal Government Play a Significant Role Regarding Transportation Issues in Your Region?

### Results

Using a scale from zero (strongly disagree) to 10 (strongly agree), respondents were asked to rate a series of statements regarding transportation issues in their respective regions. “Local government should take a more significant role in addressing transportation issues in my region” and “State government should take a more significant role in addressing transportation issues in my region” were the statements that received the highest level of agreement. See Figure 18 for further details.

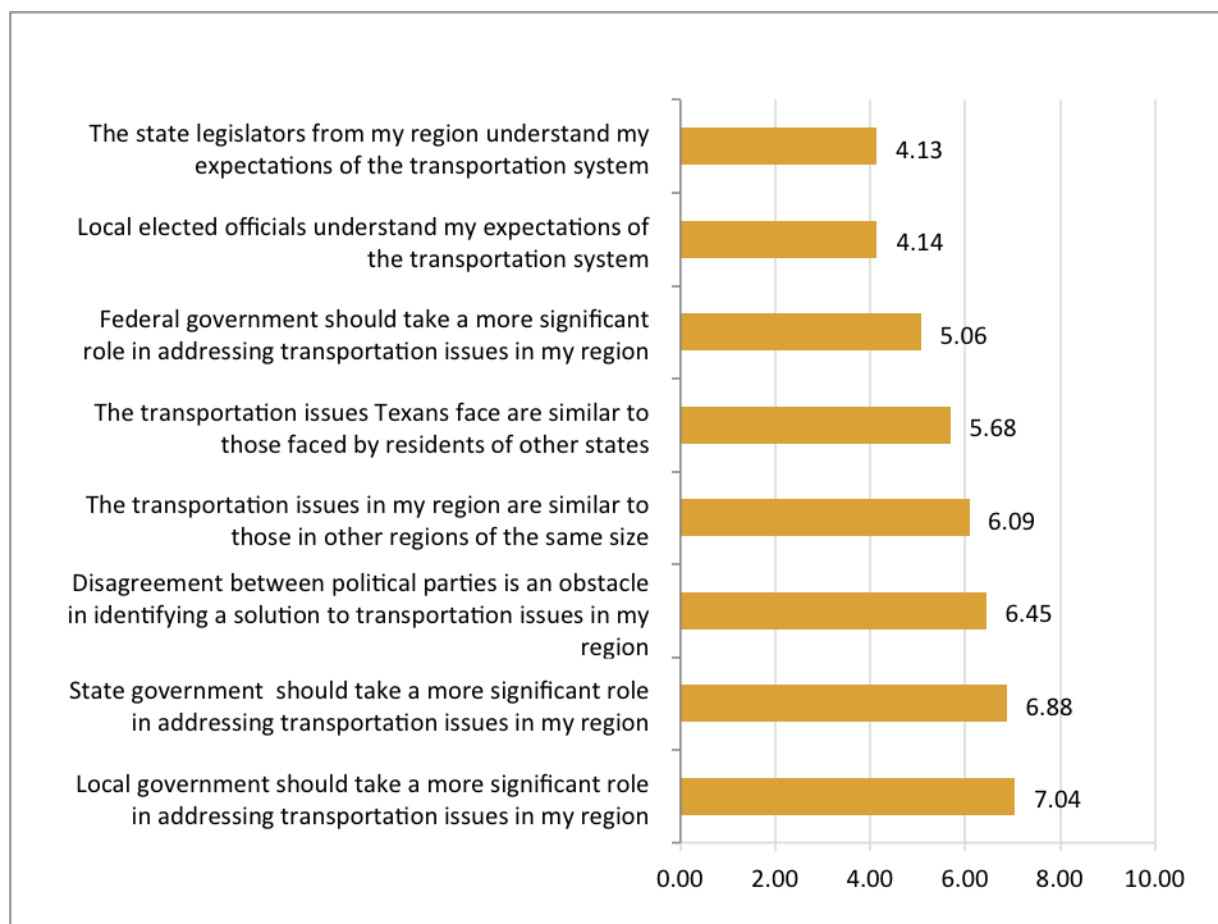


Figure 18: Mean Score Assigned to Various Statements Regarding Transportation Issues

### Detailed Analysis

While respondents are eager to have local and state government play a more significant role in addressing transportation issues in their region, they are significantly less eager to have federal government intervene. Respondents were least agreeable to statements regarding state legislators and local elected officials understanding the respondent expectations of the transportation system. Mean scores ranged from 4.13 to 7.04.

## How Well Are Transportation Agencies Performing?

### *Results*

Respondents were asked to indicate their agreement or disagreement with a series of statements about transportation agencies, using a scale from zero (completely disagree) to 10 (completely agree). Texans believe transportation agencies are doing above average in some areas, such as maintaining a safe system, doing the best they can with the budget they have, and connecting communities. Texans also believe transportation agencies are doing below average in many areas, including providing good customer service, being innovative in finding solutions to transportation issues, working efficiently to complete projects, understanding respondent expectations of the transportation system, and maintaining financial transparency. See Figure 19 for further details.

### *Detailed Analysis*

The mean scores suggest that respondents see transportation agencies as having room for improvement. “Transportation agencies should seek partnerships with private corporations when they can to help find solutions to transportation issues” was the most highly rated statement, while “Transportation agencies do a good job of maintaining financial transparency” was the least highly ranked statement. It is of interest that respondents believe private corporations should have little influence on transportation policy (see Figure 9), yet they are supportive of transportation agencies partnering with private corporations when they can to help find solutions to transportation issues. This may suggest that respondents perceive a need for transportation agencies to work in partnership with private corporations while ensuring the partnerships are equitable and in the best interest of citizens.

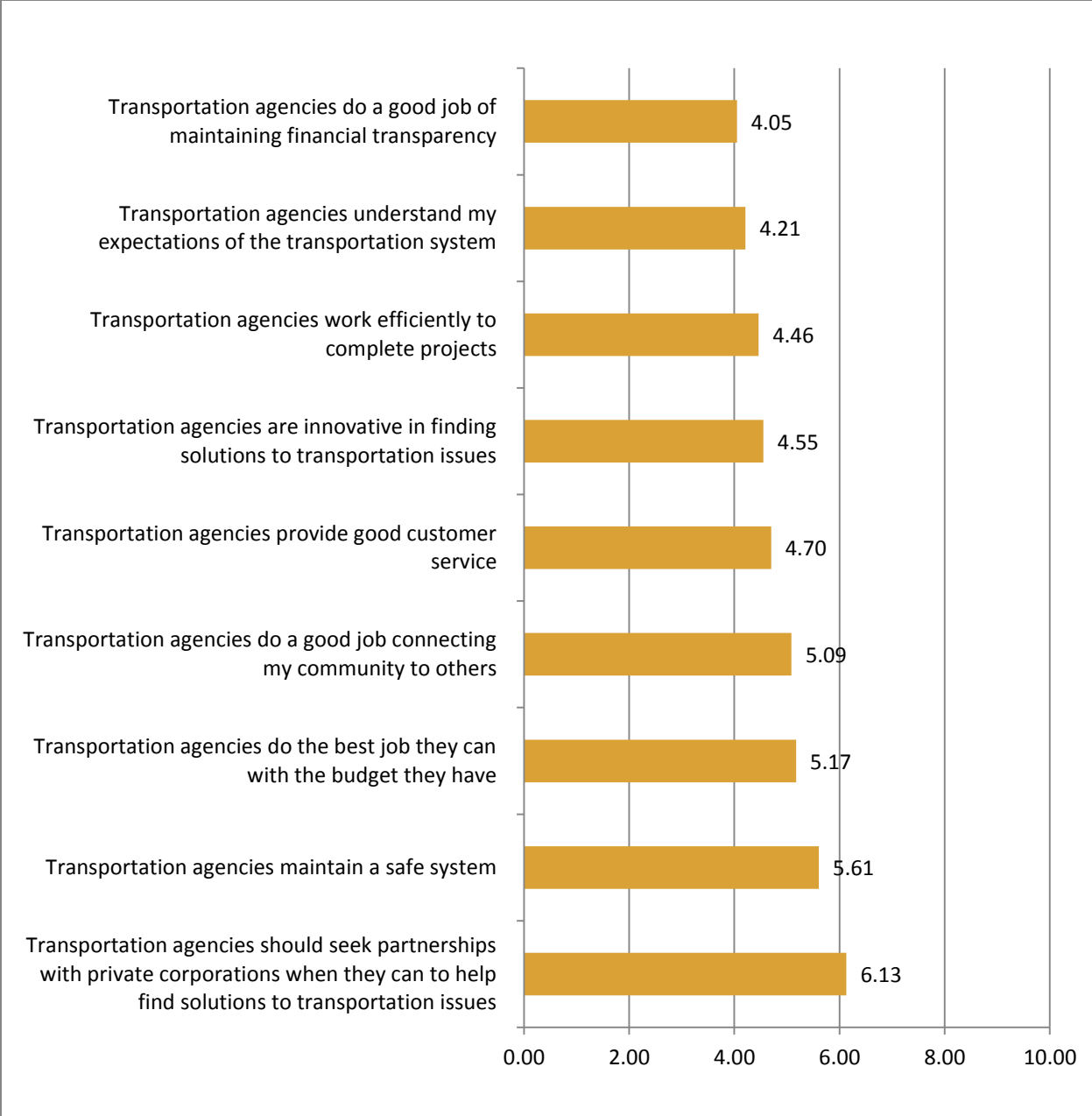


Figure 19: Mean Score Assigned to Various Statements Regarding Transportation Agencies

## What Does the Texas Transportation Poll Tell Us?

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The research presented in this report provides a snapshot of the modal travel behavior of Texans, as well as their opinions about various transportation-related issues.

### Texans Rely on Their Cars

Texans are similar to residents of other states in that the overwhelming majority use their personal auto as a primary means of travel. This is not surprising because the automobile is as intrinsic to most people's lives as television or the Internet, if not more.

Certain demographic subpopulations are less reliant on personal auto travel than others. Texans that are young, minority, and low income tend to be more reliant on non-personal auto modes than other groups. The previous body of research suggests that the primary reason these groups may not use a personal auto as much is the cost associated with vehicle ownership—they simply cannot afford a personal auto, or they cannot afford to operate one. However, research also suggests that as the young mature and some Texans gain socio-economic status, personal auto ownership becomes more realistic. These study results also suggest a correlation between personal wealth and personal mobility.



**3 out of 5**

*Because of higher fuel prices, three out of five have tried to drive less; the younger the respondent, the more likely he or she is to limit driving due to high fuel prices.*

### Texans Accept Congestion with Little or No Lifestyle Changes

The reliance on personal autos has led to a situation where congestion is now commonplace and particularly troublesome in urban areas, where some Texans (particularly younger and wealthier) use many sources of information and technologies, such as TV, the web, GPS, and apps, to help manage congestion and avoid delay in their daily travels. This may suggest that the majority of Texans value the perceived convenience of having a personal vehicle at their disposal more than their desire to avoid congestion. The findings also suggest that most Texans may be reluctant to make significant lifestyle changes to cope with congestion, such as changing residential location or vehicle. This is because either congestion has not yet reached a point where Texans feel compelled to make lifestyle choice changes, or congestion has become such an integral part of Texans' lives that they may perceive more significant lifestyle changes as futile and simply deal with the congestion.



**A majority**  
*of Texans view congestion as a byproduct of the state's growing population and expanding economy.*

Texans realize that a significant factor contributing to congestion is the influx of people moving in due to the state's strong economy...an economy that shows no sign of weakening. This may cause Texans to further rationalize and accept that congestion is an inevitable result of a strong economy and worth the benefits such as low unemployment, the ability to attract high-quality workers, and increased competitiveness in the national and global marketplace. The data also suggest that urban Texans with higher socio-economic status may rationalize congestion to a greater degree than respondents characterized by lower socio-economic status. These findings indicate that congestion, and the perception of the inconveniences it causes, will need to get worse before a significant proportion of the

population makes significant lifestyle changes to avoid it.

## **Texas Vehicle Owners Believe They Should Influence Transportation Policy**

The data clearly suggest that one's primary mode of travel has an impact on one's perception of the influence specific transportation user groups should have on transportation policy. Texans primarily using personal autos believe they should have the most influence on transportation policy, while those using other modes believe state departments of transportation should have the most influence. These findings suggest that Texans may fail to see the transportation system holistically. They may also think the primary role of governmental agencies is to design and operate a system based solely on their needs.

## **Texans Support Improved Signal Timing and Incident Management to Solve Regional Transportation Issues**

The data also portray Texans as being very pragmatic when it comes to their perception of how and by whom regional transportation issues are managed. Overall, most perceive public transit (and other alternate modes) as an inconvenient mode of travel that is ineffective in helping to resolve regional transportation issues. Rather, traffic signal timing and incident management are perceived as the most effective strategies for solving regional transportation issues.



**Nearly 1/2**

*incorrectly think that the state's fuel 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.*

## **There Is a Significant Knowledge Gap among Texans Regarding Current Transportation Funding Mechanisms**

Nearly equal proportions of Texans incorrectly identified the fuel tax as a sales tax and correctly identified the fuel tax as a flat tax. Furthermore, less than 1 percent of all Texans surveyed knew the correct amount of the fuel tax. The data also suggest that funding mechanisms that are perceived as being directly associated with transportation, such as fees or taxes associated with drivers, driving, or roads, are easier for respondents to identify as being used for funding transportation in Texas than those that are not directly associated with transportation, such as income tax, property tax, and general sales tax.

## **Texans Believe There Is a Need to Increase Transportation Funding**

Texans are well aware that congestion is likely to increase as the state economy continues to strengthen. It will be challenging to establish economic public policy that helps stimulate the economy, while simultaneously establishing transportation public policy that helps reduce the negative effects of congestion and the increasing demands on the state's infrastructure. However, the survey results suggest that progress toward resolving this challenge will not be inhibited by lack of public support for increasing transportation funding. Nearly two-thirds of Texans believe there is a need to increase transportation funding, with majority support from nearly all demographic and political segments.

## **Among the Funding Mechanisms Offered, Respondents Are Most Supportive of Dedicating State Sales Tax on Vehicles to Transportation**

After Texans evaluated specific transportation funding mechanisms, they were asked to evaluate characteristics of transportation funding mechanisms. "Assuring a predictable long-term solution" and "reducing dependency on foreign oil" were the most highly ranked characteristics. The least attractive characteristics are those that are more likely to require additional spending on the part of the respondent. These are mechanisms that are linked to inflation and mechanisms where system users pay.

When taken into account with previous findings regarding funding, the fact that Texans were not overly supportive of any specific funding mechanism offered for evaluation suggests that they





*Of the options they were offered, respondents were*  
**least**  
**supportive**  
*of raising the vehicle registration fee from \$65 to \$115.*

are generally more supportive of the *characteristics* of the funding mechanisms that were offered than they were of the funding mechanisms themselves. There is more comfort with dedicating an existing revenue stream, such as the vehicle sales tax, to transportation than with directly increasing costs to the transportation user with mechanisms such as higher vehicle registration fees or state fuel taxes.

### **Texans Are Supportive of Transportation Agencies Partnering with Private Corporations**

Lastly, while Texans believe private corporations should have little influence on transportation policy, they are supportive of transportation agencies partnering with private corporations, when they can, to help find solutions to transportation issues. The data may suggest that Texans perceive a need for transportation agencies to work in

partnership with private corporations to ensure that the needs of the private corporation are not put ahead of the needs of the system users.

## Appendix—Summary of Texas Registered Voter Demographics (Weighted and Expanded)

Demographic	Proportion of Registered Voters
<b>Political Position</b>	
Conservative	47%
Neutral	31%
Liberal	16%
Don't Know/Refuse	6%
<b>Party Affiliation</b>	
Democrat	31%
Independent	24%
Republican	30%
Other	7%
Don't Know/Refuse	8%
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>	
Hispanic	32%
White	48%
Black or African American	16%
American Indian or Alaska Native	0%
Asian	3%
Other	1%
<b>Relationship Status</b>	
Married	59%
Widowed	5%
Divorced	10%
Separated	2%
Never Married	18%
Living with Partner	6%
<b>Age</b>	
18–24	11%
25–34	19%
35–44	20%
45–54	20%
55–64	16%
65+	14%

<b>Demographic</b>		<b>Proportion of Registered Voters</b>
<b>Education</b>		
Less than High School		3%
High School Diploma or GED		15%
Some College or Associates/Technical Degree		38%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher		44%
<b>Annual Household Income</b>		
Less than \$10,000		7%
\$10,000 to \$14,999		5%
\$15,000 to \$24,999		10%
\$25,000 to \$34,999		11%
\$35,000 to \$49,999		14%
\$50,000 to \$74,999		18%
\$75,000 to \$99,999		12%
\$100,000 to \$149,999		14%
\$150,000 to \$199,999		5%
\$200,000 or More		4%
<b>Employment Status</b>		
Yes		62%
No		38%
<b>Driver's License Status</b>		
Licensed		92%
Not Licensed		7%
Don't Know/Refuse		1%
<b>Gender</b>		
Male		49%
Female		51%
Average Number of Household Members		2.02
Average Number of Household Vehicles		2.84