



4 MARCH 2013

## Tough Road Ahead for Transportation Package

The transportation package unveiled in the legislature last week has a tough road to voter support. House Democrats rolled out a \$10 billion package of programs and funding sources. To assess the broad contours of public opinion about the plan, *The Elway Poll* asked 412 voters for their opinions about some of its key features. The survey focused on broad issues of priorities and funding sources rather than dive into the specific projects and funding details.

The first hurdle will be that voters do not see a significant problem: 70% rated the state's transportation system as "satisfactory" or better, including 28% who rated it "good" and 4% who said "excellent." Only 7% said "poor." Not surprisingly given this view, voters placed higher priority on repairing and maintaining existing roads and bridges than expanding the system. Predictably, most were disinclined to pay for any of it.

Majorities rated 3 of 4 improvement categories as a "high" to "top priority" for the state, including: 88% for repair and maintenance of existing roadways and bridges; 61% for expanding major highways to reduce congestion and increase freight mobility; 53% for providing money to local mass transit systems.

Just 46% rated upgrading and maintaining the ferry system as a high priority, while 50% said that was a low priority (43%) or not a priority at all (7%).

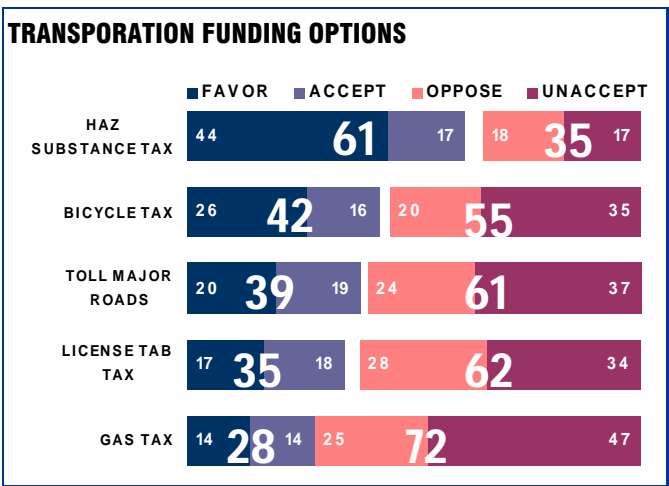
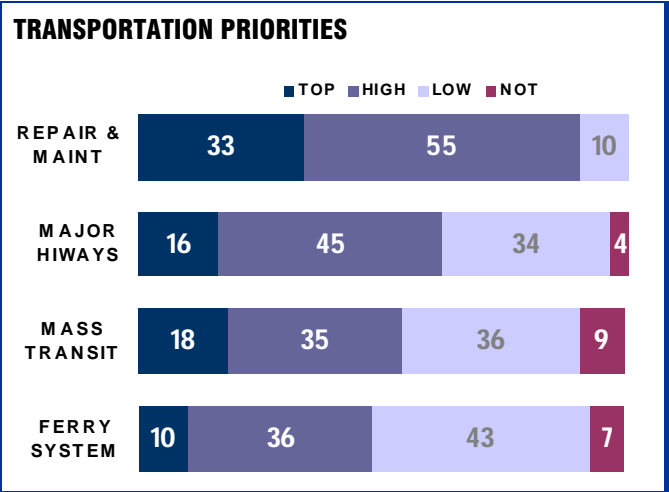
The most significant regional difference was regarding mass transit, which was a high priority for: 78% of Seattle voters, but only 48% of King county voters outside Seattle 57% in the rest of Western Washington and 39% in Eastern Washington.

The ferry system had majorities rating it as a high priority in Pierce Kitsap and King (outside Seattle) counties, but nowhere else.

When it came to paying for transportation improvements, the only option with majority support out of five tested was increasing the hazardous substance tax, mostly paid by oil refineries. The other four options all had majority opposition, including at least 1/3 of respondents who said each option was "unacceptable."

The two options most likely to raise the most revenue were at the bottom of the list: 72% opposed a gas tax increase, including 47% who said it was unacceptable; 62% opposed the license tab tax, including 34% who said that was unacceptable.

Setting aside the hazardous substance tax—which was supported by majorities across the board—majorities were opposed to every other tax option in every demographic category of voter. The only exceptions were:



# Sample Profile

412 registered voters selected at random from registered voter lists in Washington state, were interviewed Feb. 28-Mar 2, 2013 by live, professional interviewers. 17% of the interviews were conducted on cell phones. The margin of sampling error is ±5% at the 95% level of confidence. This means, in theory, that had this same survey been conducted 100 times, the results would be within ±5% of the results reported here at least 95 times.

## REGION

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| King County.....                            | 30% |
| Pierce + Kitsap .....                       | 15% |
| North Sound (Snohomish to Whatcom).....     | 17% |
| Western Washington (Clallam to Clark) ..... | 17% |
| Eastern Washington.....                     | 20% |

## GENDER

|              |     |
|--------------|-----|
| Male.....    | 50% |
| Female ..... | 50% |

## AGE

|             |     |
|-------------|-----|
| 18-35 ..... | 12% |
| 36-50 ..... | 24% |
| 51-64 ..... | 35% |
| 65+ .....   | 28% |

## PARTY IDENTIFICATION

|                   |     |
|-------------------|-----|
| Democrat.....     | 30% |
| Republican .....  | 24% |
| Independent ..... | 46% |

## HOUSEHOLD MAKEUP

|                                   |     |
|-----------------------------------|-----|
| Couple / Children at Home .....   | 32% |
| Couple/ No Children at Home ..... | 41% |
| Single / Children at Home .....   | 6%  |
| Single / No Children at Home..... | 18% |

## HOUSEHOLD INCOME

|                    |     |
|--------------------|-----|
| <\$50,000 .....    | 32% |
| \$50-100,000 ..... | 30% |
| \$100,000+ .....   | 23% |
| No Answer.....     | 14% |

# The Elway Poll

The Elway Poll is an independent, non-partisan analysis of public opinion in Washington and the Northwest available exclusively to subscribers.

**SUBSCRIPTION:** An annual subscription is \$250.

**PROPRIETARY QUESTIONS:** Each month, space is reserved in the questionnaire to allow subscribers to insert proprietary questions. The fee for proprietary questions is \$600 per question. You will receive the results of your question(s) with full crosstabulations within three days.

**CROSSTABS:** A full set of cross-tabulation tables for any survey is available for \$100.

**The Elway Poll**  
 7035 Palatine N.  
 Seattle, WA 98103  
 206/264-1500 FAX: 264-0301  
 epoll@elwayresearch.com

- Seattle voters, most of whom favored or could accept each of the options except a new bicycle tax;
- About half of King County voters outside Seattle favored or could accept the bicycle tax (51%);
- About half of North Sound respondents favored or could accept the car tab tax increase (52%).

Opposition to the tax options crossed party lines. Majorities of Democrats, Republicans and Independents opposed four of the five options. Most Republicans even opposed the hazardous substance tax, although large majorities of Democrats and Independents were in favor.

These findings reflect the low priority for transportation in general among state voters. At the beginning of this legislative session, only 2% named any transportation issue as an “important issue for the legislature to be working on” — compared to 43% for the economy and 24% for budget and spending issues. Just five years ago, transportation was the #1 issue, named by 33%.

Building support for any transportation tax package will have to be preceded by rebuilding the idea that the transportation system needs help. This survey purposely did not list specific transportation projects named in the plan. In theory, such a list would increase support by promising improvements in every part of the state. That theory is about to be tested. ☒

## QUESTION WORDING: TRANSPORTATION PRIORITIES

The legislature is looking at some potential transportation improvements. Of course, transportation projects are expensive and take a long time to complete. So the question is where to spend taxpayer dollars. I am going to read a list of projects that could be included in this package. As you think about the state transportation system over the next 10 years, tell me whether you think each project should be a Top priority for state government, a High priority, Low or a Not a priority for state government :

- Expand major highways around the state to reduce commuter congestion and increase freight mobility
- Provide money to the state ferry system to upgrade and maintain the system and keep fares down
- Repair and maintenance of existing roads and bridges
- Provide money to local mass transit systems

## FUNDING OPTIONS

As I said, transportation projects are expensive. The other part of the package will be how to pay for these improvements. No one likes to raise taxes, but as I read some funding options, tell me whether you would: Favor that proposal, be inclined to Accept it, be inclined to Oppose, or find it Unacceptable. I realize you don't have all the details, but how are you inclined?

- Increase the hazardous substance tax mostly paid by oil refineries on the state
- A new tax on Bicycles that cost over \$500
- Allowing tolls on major roadways
- An increase in the license tab tax