

Regional Transportation Focus Group Summary October, 2003

BACKGROUND

Qualitative research was conducted to provide insight into the current voter mindset in Puget Sound with regard to transportation and public investment for transportation improvements. A total of six focus groups were conducted with voters:

October 6, 2003: Two groups of East King County voters

October 7, 2003: One group of Snohomish County voters

October 13, 2003: Two groups of Seattle City voters

October 14, 2003: One group of Pierce County voters

Participants were randomly recruited from voter lists of people who had voted in two or more of the past four elections (general and primary). A mix of demographic characteristics (i.e., gender, age) representative of the local population was included in each group. Each group was composed of about ten people for a total of 61 participants. Participants were not aware of the sponsor or topic of research at the beginning of the discussion group.

Discussion areas included:

- Perceptions of transportation as an issue – problems and solutions.
- Accountability and governance.
- Potential regional package elements.
- Funding options.

OBSERVATIONS

The Problem

- Transportation continues to be a high priority for Puget Sound residents; however the state of the local economy and loss of jobs emerge as top-of-mind critical issues. People are extremely concerned about the economic health of the state and want to see more employment and job opportunities. They want to encourage business development and are sensitive to issues in how they might positively or negatively impact businesses, particularly small businesses.

East King County Participants...volunteered “most critical issue facing Puget Sound”

- Economy/jobs/taxes on business (8 mentions)
- Education (3 mentions)
- Traffic (2 mentions)
- Cuts in social services (2 mentions)
- Government mismanagement of money (2 mentions)
- Overpopulation (1 mention)
- Healthcare (1 mention)
- Crime (1 mention)

Seattle Participants...volunteered “most critical issue facing Puget Sound”

- Traffic/transportation/need for transit (15 mentions)
- Population growth/stress on services (5 mentions)
- Economy/business climate (3 mentions)
- Environment/open space/parks (3 mentions)
- Education (3 mentions)
- Healthcare (3 mentions)
- Taxes/cost of living (1 mention)

Snohomish County Participants...volunteered “most critical issue facing Puget Sound”

- Traffic/transportation (5 mentions)
- Unemployment/jobs/the economy (4 mentions)
- Education (1 mention)

Pierce County Participants...volunteered “most critical issue facing Puget Sound”

- Economy/jobs/business climate (5 mentions)
- Education (4 mentions)
- Traffic (2 mentions)
- Taxes/government waste (2 mentions)
- Law enforcement response time (1 mention)

- When asked to rate the “transportation system in Puget Sound” on a scale of 1-10, 10 being “excellent” and 1 being “poor,” most people gave below average ratings indicating perceptions of a system in need of major improvements.

Average Rating*

3.3	East King County Residents
4.3	Seattle City Residents
3.6	Snohomish County Residents
3.7	Pierce County Residents

** Note: Average ratings are representative only of the participants in the focus groups and cannot be extrapolated to larger populations with statistical reliability*

- Traffic congestion is seen to negatively impact the quality of life in the region. The inability to get from point A to point B in a timely, reliable manner is the chief problem to be solved. People do not see any progress in addressing this problem and they blame poor planning and lack of political will in developing infrastructure and alternatives to avoid the congestion.

East King County Participants...defining the “problem in transportation”

- Traffic; backup; crowded, takes three hours to Seattle; two-hour commute
- Construction is everywhere and causes delays
- Can’t get across the 520 bridge
- Congestion on side roads
- Improvements too late
- No plan for growth/long term
- Public transport good only to Seattle (not between eastside communities)
- Drives business out
- No one wants to use mass transit; Uneven transit service available
- I-405 is jammed
- Poorly maintained roads

Seattle Participants...defining the “problem in transportation”

- Too many people; population growth with no change in transit, no changes in freeway
- Takes twice as long to get anywhere; most hours roads are congested
- Traffic; traffic congestion
 - Waste time
 - Waste resources
 - Frustration/anger

- Large industry leaving
- Public buses
 - Too many transfers
 - Areas not served
 - No intra-neighborhood service
 - Wasted time waiting
- Nobody takes responsibility
- Too many studies/committees
- Lack of political will/too many proposals
- Failure to make progress
- Timing of lights

Snohomish County Participants...defining the “problem in transportation”

- Too many kids – population
- Too many people moving here
- People love their cars
- System designed for smaller city
- Takes time; two extra hours out of life
- Congestion
- Rearrange lives/late for appointments/avoid roads
- Expense – gas
- Stress

Pierce County Participants...defining the “problem in transportation”

- Traffic; backups; bottlenecks
 - Lower productivity
 - Wastes time
 - Car overheats
- Construction at busy times
- Poor planning

Perceived Solutions

- On the whole, a regional approach is considered most appropriate in addressing transportation problems and solutions. While there were seen to be some common statewide interests and concerns such as highway infrastructure and freight mobility, people felt that the state was simply too disparate for statewide solutions. The primary schism was the East/West divide with the Cascade mountain range delineating different interests and needs. Puget Sound residents articulated the misperception often heard in Eastern Washington research – that it’s not fair that “Eastern Washington pays for Puget Sound’s improvements.” On the other hand, a local approach seemed too narrow. While local solutions are considered important, the real problems and solutions are seen in addressing the linkages between cities and counties in the Puget Sound region.
- The “region” is most typically defined as the three counties of Snohomish, King and Pierce; however upon discussion, people are inclined to include Kitsap County and the I-5 corridor from Olympia to Bellingham.
- Puget Sound residents volunteered a variety of “solutions” to the regional transportation issue, including transit improvements (more direct community-to-community routes with fewer transfers and more frequent schedules), flexible working times/telecommuting, development of alternative modes of mass transit (light rail, commuter rail, monorails, subways), addressing chokepoints, widening lanes, adding lanes, improving off/on ramps. The Pierce County group was the only group that volunteered, “building more roads,” as a solution. Often, people put forth ideas that they saw working in other areas, such as light rail in Portland, elevated rail in Vancouver and Chicago, subways in New York and Europe, flexible HOV lanes in Oregon.

East King County Participants...defining the “solutions for transportation”

- Build a subway/train east to Seattle
- Create HOV lanes on 520 (right-hand side)
- Make the I-90 HOV lanes go the right way
- Model after successful public transportation systems in other areas
- Listen to experts/do something
- Widen 520/new bridges
- Road improvements
- Improve mass transit
 - Effectively designed
 - More of it
 - Easily accessible
- High-density living
- Better designed exits/entrances on freeways
- Voters need to be willing to pay for improvements; Tax on gas
- Make alternatives financially feasible

Seattle Participants...defining the “solutions for transportation”

- Bus schedules to accommodate people on flex time (more frequent schedule in off-peak hours)
- Alternatives to bus & car lane usage (train; rapid transit)
- Improved bus routing
- Money for monorail
- Integrated/comprehensive planning
- Family planning
- Teach people to drive
- Take decisions away from people to experts
- Enforce votes/make it happen
- Move Tim Eyman
- Portland – light rail
- Businesses to promote bus usage
- Unified, planned rapid transit
- Trains like Chicago
- Synchronized lights

Snohomish County Participants...defining the “solutions for transportation”

- Wider roads
- Practical solutions – two lanes through Seattle
- Toll roads
- Easier to use, convenient, faster transit, more hubs
- Bus rapid transit/express buses
- North/South buses and Sounder trains from Everett to Tukwila
- Overhead rapid transit like Vancouver
- HOV or toll lanes
- More flex times/telecommuting

Pierce County Participants...defining the “solutions for transportation”

- Build more roads/highways/freeways
- Better planning
- Synchronize lights
- More use of mass transit/buses
- More carpooling
- Right kinds of mass transit
- Reversible lanes
- Work at home
- Oregon – part-time HOV lanes
- BART rapid transit/Up freeway
- Longer mass transit hours
- Repair roads

- Most people were not convinced that a singular approach will address the region’s problems, i.e., a “roads solution,” a “light rail solution,” a “monorail solution,” a “bus rapid transit solution;” but rather believed that regional improvement will come with a coordinated, integrated plan using a mix of all the options available.
- In comparing Puget Sound to other areas in the country and world (a natural dynamic in the focus groups), residents saw this region as lagging behind in providing mass transit alternatives and thus many people – particularly in King County – were willing (and believed it’s necessary) to invest significant money in developing transit infrastructure. Participants in focus groups were asked to divide a hypothetical “pot of money” in terms of how they would roughly allocate it today for transportation improvements – between the general category of “roads and road improvements” including HOV lanes and “transit improvements” including buses, light rail, monorail or other technologies. King County residents tended to put the majority of money toward transit, indicating their belief that it would provide alternatives to avoid congestion; Snohomish County residents tended to be more divided, some favoring more money toward roads and some favoring relatively more toward transit; Pierce County residents tended to favor spending the majority of money for roads seeing real problems in the basic infrastructure and believing transit options would not be utilized.

Average allocation to “transit” relative to “roads”

East King County	60%
Seattle	65%
Snohomish County	50%
Pierce County	30%

** Note: Average allocations are representative only of the participants in the focus groups and cannot be extrapolated to larger populations with statistical reliability.*

- The issue of the monorail was probed in the two Seattle focus groups. Arbitrarily, one group ended up being composed of mostly people who had voted for the monorail and one group was composed of more people who had opposed it. Seattle monorail supporters recalled voting for the measure as an expression of wanting to see “something done” about mass transit alternatives...a starting point for a more comprehensive system linking neighborhoods and Seattle to the eastside. Opponents tended to indicate that they would prefer to see the money used for different routing or technology. There were few expressions of “sticker shock” upon renewing car tabs; most felt that the cost was reasonable...if they could remember what they had paid. These Seattle residents did not feel that their investment ended with the monorail – in the best sense, it was seen as a beginning of an improved transportation system; in the worst sense, it was seen as “another boondoggle” for the area.

- There was little spontaneous mention of the 5-cent gas tax increase in focus group discussion. When information about the increase was introduced, there was no sense of outrage that the legislature passed it, though people did say they wanted to know how it was going to be used. There was little expectation that this would “solve” transportation problems.

Accountability and Governance

- Most people had little idea of “who is responsible” for transportation and transportation improvements for the region; some mentioned WSDOT, the Legislature, the Governor or “we, the voters.” Most people were unaware of the Puget Sound Regional Council and virtually no one had heard of the Regional Transportation Investment District. This general lack of recognition of who is in charge (“where the buck stops”) helps reinforce people’s overall cynicism toward government.
- Participants were asked to individually rate different organizations in terms of the perceived job performance. The average ratings are summarized below:

Average Job Performance Ratings*
(Scale 1-10: 10 = Excellent; 1 = Poor)

	East King	Seattle	Snohomish	Pierce
WSDOT	5.2	6.2	5.2	5.1
Local transit	6.2	7.1	5.2	4.7
Monorail	3.3	5.1	NA	NA
Sound Transit	5.4	5.4	4.6	3.5

** Note: Average allocations are representative only of the participants in the focus groups and cannot be extrapolated to larger populations with statistical reliability*

- WSDOT received fairly average job performance ratings. Many participants commented that they felt the organization did well with the money it had – and they recognized that there were budget limitations. People were generally pleased that they could identify one or two local construction/improvements projects; conversely, some complained that the projects took too long and workers did not appear productive.
- METRO Transit received relatively high ratings from King County residents who felt it provided excellent service within the City of Seattle and between Seattle and Bellevue; it was faulted for not having direct, convenient routes and schedules between other communities and neighborhoods. Snohomish and Pierce County criticized their local transit (Everett Transit, Community Transit, Pierce Transit) for not having more frequent schedules particularly at non-commuter times and requiring too many transfers of buses to get to destinations.

- The Popular Monorail Authority had little recognition in the East King County groups; some participants confused it with the Seattle Center monorail, which they felt was too limited to be useful. In Seattle groups, monorail supporters tended to give high ratings commending the organization for holding public meetings. Monorail opponents criticized it for various details – the design, changes in the plan, waste.
- Sound Transit was praised in King County for providing region-wide bus service (with large, comfortable buses) and providing commuter rail from Seattle to Tacoma. Concern was expressed about the light rail portion – whether internal and external problems would keep it from being built according to the original plan. A few of the Pierce County participants were highly critical of Sound Transit and believed that Tacoma Link light rail and the Sounder trains were not being used by the public. Snohomish County participants related to Sound Transit primarily in the bus service it provided; given the large area it served, these residents felt it was doing an adequate job.
- There was no awareness of the reforms and accountability measures implemented by WSDOT. While a few participants were vaguely aware of a “Blue Ribbon Commission on Transportation” and the “Washington Competitive Council,” no one could say what had been accomplished.
- Information was introduced about some of the reforms – benchmarks, performance audits and reporting – and people were given an idea of the kind of information that could be found on the WSDOT website. Participants felt that this information should be made more public. People encouraged WSDOT to report on progress in a simple and visible manner, i.e., newspaper updates, television commercials, road signs.
- People defined “accountability” first and foremost as seeing tangible results – transportation improvement projects being completed. Accountability also meant having the sense that these actions were being completed as a part of a comprehensive, integrated plan, and were not piecemeal efforts. Knowing who’s in charge and knowing where to find information was a tertiary part of the definition.
- There was great support for consolidation of regional governance when given background information of the current structure. Focus group participants were given a hypothetical voting measure that included a background statement as follows:

Currently the Washington State Department of Transportation is responsible for the statewide transportation system. In the Puget Sound area (King, Pierce and Snohomish Counties), three additional agencies are responsible for regional transportation. The Puget Sound Regional Council adopts regional plans but has no taxing authority. Sound Transit has taxing authority for regional bus, light rail and commuter rail. The proposed Regional Transportation Investment District would also have new taxing authority for primarily for fixing roads and possibly transit

improvements as well. Seventy-five county and city officials oversee the three regional agencies.

Transportation Accountability Initiative: Would you favor or oppose consolidating these three agencies into one regional accountability board, cutting the number of employees by 10-25% and replacing the 75 leaders with a single board composed of seven members elected by district within the tri-county area whose sole job would be to oversee the regional transportation system. In addition, the three County Executives and the Secretary of the State Department of Transportation would serve on the board.

Percent Support for Hypothetical Initiative:

95%	East King County Participants
100%	Seattle Participants
100%	Snohomish County Participants
60%	Pierce County Participants

- People predicted that regional consolidation of transportation governance would result in better decision-making, less bureaucracy, more coordination, more efficiency and better results. They wanted to see the number of leaders consolidated, not necessarily the number of employees; in fact, several people voted against the measure because they were concerned it would take more jobs away from people in this tight economy. For most people, it was important that the majority of board positions be elected and thus “directly accountable” to the voters. Some were concerned that voters wouldn’t be able to make proper choices and believed that appointed experts would be beneficial for governance.

RTID Package

- While there was no awareness of the Regional Transportation Improvement District and its mission, there was interest in seeing a package of regional transportation improvements as a voting measure.
- In each group, participants were given a set of 18 cards. Each card had a different potential project with a projected price tag. Participants were then asked to sort the cards as a group in terms of the perceived importance of projects. The 18 projects are listed:
 - (\$1-1.5 billion) Build a new 520 bridge with HOV, bike and pedestrian lanes
 - (\$1-3 billion) Improve I-405 – new general purpose lanes, HOV/express lanes; bus rapid transit capacity
 - (\$1-3.4 billion) Replace the Alaskan Way Viaduct in Seattle
 - (\$1.3 billion) Build light rail in Seattle from the University District to Northgate
 - (\$200-935 million) Extend SR-509 from S.188th Street in Seatac to I-5 in Des Moines
 - (\$500 million) Extend light rail from Tukwila to the SeaTac airport.
 - (1.7 billion) Extend SR-167 from Puyallup to I-5 in Tacoma (4 lane divided freeway)
 - (\$668 million) Complete the I-5 HOV system from Tacoma to Everett
 - (\$140-790 million) Add general purpose lanes to SR-167 between Renton and Auburn and adding HOV lanes from Auburn to Puyallup
 - (\$366 million) Improve the intersection of I-5 and SR-16 in Tacoma and adding HOV lanes on SR-16 from I-5 to Gig Harbor
 - (\$509 million) Expand SR-9 from two lanes to five lanes between Bothell and Lake Stevens
 - (\$228 million) Expand SR-522 from two to four lanes between Bothell and Monroe
 - (\$200 million) Build new ferry terminals at Edmonds and Mukilteo
 - (\$100 million) Construct a four-lane bypass around Monroe
 - (\$5 billion) Add major new lanes on all freeways and major arterials
 - (\$850 million) Improve bus transit service throughout region
 - (\$45 million) Signal Synchronization and Intelligent Transportation System
 - (\$80 million) I-90 two-way transit/HOV improvements

- While people had differences in personal priorities, each group was generally able to develop a package that all could agree was valuable. The following illustrates the top priorities for each group – the components that the group as a whole could agree should be in a voting measure – in the approximate order of relative priority the group identified.

East King County Priorities

Group 1

I-5 HOV Lanes
Viaduct
Signal Synchronization/ITS
520 Bridge
Bus Transit
I-405
SR-16
SR-167 (Renton – Puyallup)
I-90 HOV
Airport Light Rail

Group 2

Signal Synchronization/ITS
Northgate Light Rail
Bus Transit Improvements & 520 Bridge
Airport Light Rail
Viaduct
I-5 HOV Lanes
SR-522 & SR-167 (Renton – Puyallup)
I-405 & Add New Lanes

Seattle Priorities

Group 1

Viaduct
Bus Transit Improvements &
Signal Synchronization/ITS
Airport Light Rail
520 Bridge
I-5 HOV Lanes
Northgate Light Rail
Improve I-405
I-405/SR-167 (Renton – Puyallup)
SR-509/SR-16

Group 2

Signal Synchronization/ITS
Airport Light Rail & Northgate Light Rail &
Viaduct
Bus Transit Improvements
520 Bridge
I-405
I-5 HOV Lanes
SR-167 (Renton – Puyallup)

Snohomish County Priorities

I-405
Signal Synchronization /ITS
I-5 HOV Lanes
Monroe Bypass
Viaduct
SR-9
Bus Transit Improvements
SR-522
SR-167 (Renton – Puyallup)
SR-16

Pierce County Priorities

Add New Lanes to all Freeways and Major Arterials

Signal Synchronization/ITS

SR-16

SR-167 (Extend from Puyallup to I-5)

I-5 HOV Lanes

SR-167 (Renton – Puyallup)

Viaduct

- In the discussion during this exercise, it was evident that a consistent logic was being applied for including package components. The groups typically included elements that fell into one of the below categories:
 - Replacing obsolete/aged structures, i.e., 520, the Viaduct.
 - Fixing dangerous areas, i.e., I-167, the Viaduct.
 - Taking relatively inexpensive actions with far-reaching impact, i.e., signal synchronization/ITS.
 - Building on existing mass transit successes for immediate impact, i.e., bus service, HOV lanes.
 - Mass transit investments that might pay off for the future, i.e., light rail.
 - Addressing roads/interchanges that are real problems in daily life.

- The logic for excluding components was also consistent across groups. People generally excluded the following:
 - Anything people were not familiar with (i.e., Monroe bypass for people outside of Snohomish County).
 - Ferry terminals (ferries are valued but facilities are thought to be adequate).
 - Adding new lanes to all freeways and major arterials (thought to be too vague and too much emphasis on roads for King County participants).
 - Light rail from University to Northgate; Tukwila to Airport (people outside of King County did not want to pay for these routes and there was little awareness that they were “missing links” of a larger system).

- Light rail emerged as the most polarizing component – the only clear “deal breaker” if included for some (they wouldn’t vote for any package that included it); for others, it was the “deal maker” (they wouldn’t vote for any package that did not include it).

Funding

- In general, people wanted to see funding sources that are related to the issue. For transportation, natural user-based funding sources are recognized such as the gas tax, license fee, motor vehicle excise tax and tolls. All of these are seen to be appropriate means of funding transportation improvements. User-based funding mechanisms are also sometimes assumed as dedicated for transportation projects. There was concern that general taxes would go into the general fund to be spent in areas other than transportation. Dedicated funding is critical for support of a particular funding mechanism.
- Participants were asked to rank six different funding options in terms of the best to the worst option. The average rankings are summarized below:

Average Rankings of Funding Options*

(1 = Best Option; 6 = Worst Option)

	East King	Seattle	Snohomish	Pierce
Gas Tax	2	4	4 (tie)	1
MVET	4	2	1	2
Tolls	3	1 (tie)	2	3
Annual fee	1	3	4 (tie)	5 (tie)
Sales tax on gas	5	1 (tie)	5	5 (tie)
Sales tax	6	5	3	4

**Note: Average rankings are representative only of the participants in the focus groups and cannot be extrapolated to larger populations with statistical reliability*

- The **gas tax** was felt to be a fair way to raise money as the tax burden increases with usage of the roadways. Since this use causes wear and tear; it is seen feasible to tax users accordingly. Also, many saw a secondary benefit to the gas tax in providing a disincentive for people to drive and thus encourage the use of alternatives like transit. There was no awareness of the 18th amendment restrictions on gas tax and most people felt strongly that transit should be funded by the gas tax in addition to roads. There was little tolerance in accepting the realities of the limitations; instead, people believed that the state law should be changed to include transit alternative.
- A **sales tax on gas** was seen as a convoluted and confusing way to get around the gas tax limits. It required substantial explanation. Support for it came from the notion it would provide funding for transit but many rejected it as another hike in the sales tax. There was concern that a sales tax on gas would not be dedicated.

- The **MVET** was considered an appropriate way to raise funds for transportation in that it is related to a vehicle and is seen to reflect a car owner’s ability to pay. Many participants were will to consider raising the MVET despite the fact that I-695 capped the MVET at \$30. As one said, I-695 was “to make a point” that voters were angry with politicians, not to keep car tabs at \$30 indefinitely. Some preferred a **flat license fee**, believing that it is fairer than the MVET in that every driver is charged the same amount.
- **Tolls** were supported for new construction, particularly for bridges. Some initial resistance went away when it was explained that tolls might be collected electronically (not requiring drivers to physically stop at a toll booth). Some were aware that the 520 bridge had originally been financed by tolls and this example shone as proof that this was a viable source of funding, particularly since the tolls were removed when the financing was complete.
- A **sales tax** increase was criticized as a means to fund transportation improvements because: 1) it was not directly related to transportation; 2) the proceeds would go into the general fund; 3) the sales tax was felt to be already very high; 4) it was seen as a regressive tax, with an unfair onus on lower-income residents. The people who did support it tended to view it as a way for everyone to share in the costs of transportation improvements.
- Two broad levels of potential investment were discussed in the focus groups – an \$8 billion package or a \$14 billion package. When the two numbers were put side by side, most people opted for the lower number indicating that this would be a way to “prove” that the projects would be completed as promised. The support for the lower figure was less reflective of the actual budget number as opposed to the idea of starting with fewer projects.
- Six different funding concepts were also posed in focus groups with participants being asked to indicate whether each sounded like a “good idea” or a “bad idea.” The results of this exercise are summarized for total of the six groups.

Number of Participants Indicating “Good Idea”

(Total number of participants = 61)

- 53 “Using tolls as a means of helping pay for a new 520 bridge.”
- 51 “Streamlining the permitting process for transportation projects.”
- 38 “When transportation improvements increase property values in a local area (e.g. putting the Alaskan Way Viaduct underground), capturing the increased tax revenues (property tax) and using them to finance the project itself.”
- 34 “Establishing HOT lanes (High Occupancy Toll lanes) that are free for multi-passenger cars and solo drivers can use if they pay a toll.
- 30 “Paying for any new lanes on highways or freeways by the use of tolls.”
- 26 “Taxing alternative fuels in the future as the use of gas declines.”

- “Using tolls as a means of helping pay for a new 520 bridge” and “streamlining the permitting process for transportation projects” emerged as the strongest overall concepts. New bridge construction in particular was considered an appropriate for the use of tolls plus people recognized a precedent in that the original 520 bridge had been successfully financed with tolls. Even people who did not feel that a new 520 bridge was necessary indicated that they would support it if it were financed via tolls.
- People were interested in increasing system efficiencies and equated “streamlining the permitting process for transportation projects” as cutting red tape and unnecessary bureaucracy; however, they did not want projects approved “too quickly,” without review or in way that would jeopardize environmental safeguards.
- While participants generally did not approve of the property tax as a means of financing transportation improvements (the property tax received the same criticisms as a sales tax), it was logical to try to capture the revenue generated by increased property values related to local transportation improvements. Some people questioned how this could be quantified in practicality.
- HOT lanes raised questions and issues as well – people wanted to know the logistics of the system and how single passenger violators could be identified. Some were concerned that it created an elitist system where higher-income people could buy their way out of a shared problem. There was general interest in creating more flexible hours and use of HOV lanes.
- Many objected to the notion of “paying for any new lanes on highways or freeways by the use of tolls” on the basis that it was too absolute and vague. Since the prevailing wisdom is that different solutions apply for different areas, most do not want to support any blanket proposals.
- “Taxing alternative fuels in the future as the use of gas declines” was the least popular concept overall because people wanted to encourage the use of alternative fuels and were concerned that taxing them would discourage use. For the time being, most are willing to provide financial incentives for the use of alternative fuels. Once alternative fuels become more mainstream, then it is seen viable to tax them as the use of gasoline declines.

CONCLUSIONS

- Transportation continues to be a top priority for the region and voters want to see action taken to improve the system – allowing people to get to their destinations in a timely, reliable and safe manner. Voters are willing to invest more of their tax dollars for transportation improvements...if they perceive value in the package.
- As in the past, there continues to be strong skepticism and cynicism that government will effectively address transportation problems and thus reluctance to provide additional funding.
- It would appear that there is voter support for a transportation package that includes a balance of significant road and transit improvements and is funded with a mix of user-based taxing mechanisms with revenues dedicated to transportation projects.
- Voters continue to call for government to change the way it does business, increase efficiencies, eliminate bureaucracy and get things done. The potential measure to consolidate regional governance may be one way to address this demand.
- It helps voters to see that new funding mechanisms are being evaluated as a part of the process – that new thinking and approaches are being considered.
- Most everything that is being done to address transportation issues (other than construction) is virtually invisible to the average voter. New means of communication and outreach would be helpful for engagement.