Traffic ahead?
The present and future of transportation in Massachusetts – Voter views

February 2018

Made possible thanks to support from The Barr Foundation.
Survey background

• Results based on a survey of 709 registered voters in Massachusetts.

• Conducted online December – January 2018.

• Latest in a long series of MPG polls on transportation in the Commonwealth.

• Made possible thanks to support from The Barr Foundation.
Few see improvements recently

• More say things have stayed the same or gotten worse in the last 5 years than those who see improvements

Q: In the past 5 years, would you say that getting around your part of the state has:

- Stayed about the same: 46%
- Gotten worse: 38%
- Gotten better: 14%
- Unsure / Prefer not to say: 2%
Transportation is a top-tier issue

- Roads were at the top the list of priorities for the state government among the things included in this poll.

Q: How much of a priority do you think each of the following issues should be for state government here in Massachusetts?

% saying each issue should be a "major priority"

- Improving highways, roads, and bridges: 73%
- Improving public education: 68%
- Improving public transportation like buses, trains and subways: 64%
- Keeping taxes as low as possible: 62%
- Addressing climate change: 37%
- Improving bikeways and walkways: 35%
Gov. Baker and transportation

- Governor Baker retains his very strong overall approval rating
- Approval ratings for transportation were still positive, but a bit lower

Do you have a favorable or unfavorable view of Charlie Baker?

Would you say you approve or disapprove of how Governor Charlie Baker is dealing with the transportation system in your area?
Transportation and the economy

- About half say transportation is good enough to keep the economy moving, roughly the same as the numbers for the MBTA.

Q: Thinking about ______, do you think the roads and public transportation in ___ are:

- Good enough to keep the economy moving
- Bad enough that they are holding the economy back
- Unsure / Prefer not to say

The state as a whole: 51% good, 35% bad, 14% unsure
Your region of the state: 55% good, 33% bad, 12% unsure
The MBTA system: 48% good, 35% bad, 17% unsure

MassINC Polling Group
Roads, transit seen as equally effective

- Consistent with past polling, we find support for multi-modal approach.
- Transit reliability and affordability seen as more effective in Boston and with riders.

Q: How effective do you think each of the following would be in improving getting around the state?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Very effective</th>
<th>Somewhat effective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Making public transportation more frequent and reliable</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving the condition of poor roads and bridges</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cracking down on drivers texting and using their smartphones while driving</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expanding rail service to connect cities like Springfield, Fall River and New Bedford to Boston.</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making public transportation more affordable</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building more housing, shopping, and office space near public transportation</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Support for East-West, South Coast Rail

- Majority support in every region, strongest in regions which would be affected by the new service

Q: Would you support or oppose expanding the commuter rail system to connect cities like Springfield, Fall River and New Bedford to Boston?

- Strongly support
- Somewhat support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Strongly Support</th>
<th>Somewhat Support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeast</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outer suburbs</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inner Suburbs</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boston proper</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MassINC Polling Group
Support for new transportation funding

- Sizable majority (81 percent) support for new money for transportation in abstract.
- Majority support for specific ideas, from regional ballot (70 percent) to gasoline import fee for clean transportation (59 percent).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Idea</th>
<th>Strongly support</th>
<th>Somewhat support</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Raising new money for transportation</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional ballots</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AET earmarked for regional congestion relief</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reducing off-peak tolls</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gas import fee</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AET on more roads</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raising rush hour tolls</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Electronic tolling – where and for what use?

- Overall, all electronic tolling is very popular.
- Voters are split on adding AET to other highways, but support rises to 61 percent if toll revenue is earmarked for relieving in congestion in the region where collected.

![Bar charts showing support percentages for different scenarios.]

**AET on Pike**
- Somewhat support: 8%
- Strongly support: 12%
- Somewhat oppose: 30%
- Strongly oppose: 44%
- Unsure / Prefer not to say: 6%

**AET on other roads**
- Somewhat support: 25%
- Strongly support: 20%
- Somewhat oppose: 23%
- Strongly oppose: 24%
- Unsure / Prefer not to say: 7%

**AET if for congestion relief in region**
- Somewhat support: 17%
- Strongly support: 14%
- Somewhat oppose: 31%
- Strongly oppose: 30%
- Unsure / Prefer not to say: 7%
Openness to time-of-day pricing

- Most support toll discounts outside rush hour; opinion flips on surcharges for travel during rush hour.

Q: Would you support or oppose [reducing/raising] tolls on the highways going in and out of Boston [outside of/during] rush hours, to encourage drivers to travel at less busy times of day?

Lower outside rush hour

- Somewhat support: 38%
- Strongly support: 14%
- Somewhat oppose: 22%
- Strongly oppose: 16%
- Don’t Know / Refused: 10%

Higher during rush hour

- Somewhat support: 24%
- Strongly support: 32%
- Somewhat oppose: 23%
- Strongly oppose: 14%
- Don’t Know / Refused: 7%
Continued support for regional ballots

- We’ve tested this concept with various wordings going back to 2012 and found similarly high levels of support.

2017 Q: Currently, cities, towns, and regional agencies in Massachusetts cannot ask voters to vote on a transportation project for their specific area. Would you support or oppose letting cities, towns place funding measures for local or regional transportation projects on the ballot for voters in their area to approve or reject?
Transportation and climate

- Majority support for an import fee on gasoline to pay for pollution it causes and to invest in clean transportation (public transit, electric vehicles).
- Asked with and without comparison to RGGI for power sector; made little difference in the overall numbers.
Ride-hailing impact on traffic?

- Contrary to latest research, not much consensus on the impact of ride-hailing on traffic levels.
- Higher concern among younger voters and closer to Boston, but pluralities of these groups still see no effect.

Q: Do you think that ride-hailing services like Uber and Lyft are making traffic:

- Better: 20%
- Worse: 19%
- Make no difference: 43%
- Unsure / Ref: 18%
Caution on self-driving cars

- Pluralities think AVs will make traffic and road safety worse for drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you think that self-driving cars will make traffic on the roads:</th>
<th>Better</th>
<th>19%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Worse</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make no difference</td>
<td></td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure / Prefer not to say</td>
<td></td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you think self-driving cars will make the roads:</th>
<th>Safer for other drivers</th>
<th>26%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Less safe for other drivers</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unsure / Prefer not to say</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Do you think self-driving cars will make the roads:             | Safer for pedestrians and cyclists | 26% |
|----------------------------------------------------------------| Less safe for pedestrians and cyclists | 45% |
|                                                                 | Unsure / Prefer not to say | 30% |
AVs not seen as replacing transit

- Very few say the coming of AVs mean we can wait to invest in transit.

Q: Which of the following is closest to your point of view?

- 79%: Self-driving cars will largely replace public transportation like the MBTA. We don’t need to worry about making big investments in public transportation.

- 12%: Self-driving cars will not replace public transportation. We need to invest in public transportation regardless of what happens with self-driving cars.

- 9%: Don’t Know / Refused