

Investing in California's Transportation Future: Public Opinion on Critical Needs

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In 2017, the State of California adopted landmark legislation to increase the funds available for transportation in the state: Senate Bill 1 (SB1), the Road Repair and Accountability Act of 2017. SB1 raises revenue from a package of gasoline and diesel motor fuel taxes, as well as annual vehicle registration fees. The law designates the revenue be spent on four critical transportation needs in the state: road maintenance and rehabilitation, relief from congestion, improvements to trade corridors, and improving transit and rail services.

We conducted an online survey of adult Californians to help state leaders identify the most important projects and programs to fund within those four topical areas.

Virtually every respondent wanted to see improvements to all transportation modes, reductions in air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions from transportation, and more convenient options to travel without driving.

Study Methods

We conducted an online survey with 3,574 adult Californians to learn how residents think the state can achieve its SB1 objectives. The survey was administered from April to August 2019 with a survey platform and panel of respondents managed by Qualtrics. Quota sampling ensured that the final sample closely reflected California adults in terms of key socio-demographic characteristics and geographic distribution.

Findings 1: Rating the Transportation System and Agencies Managing It

The majority of respondents rated their communities as having “somewhat good” or “very good” state

highways, local streets and roads, public transit, and pedestrian/bicycle infrastructure. The percentage of favorable ratings was highest for state highways (68%) and lowest for local streets and roads (53%).

The majority of respondents also said that the performance of government agencies providing transportation infrastructure and services in their community was at least “somewhat good.” Modestly more respondents approved of Caltrans (65%) and public transit agencies (64%) than city and county governments (54%).

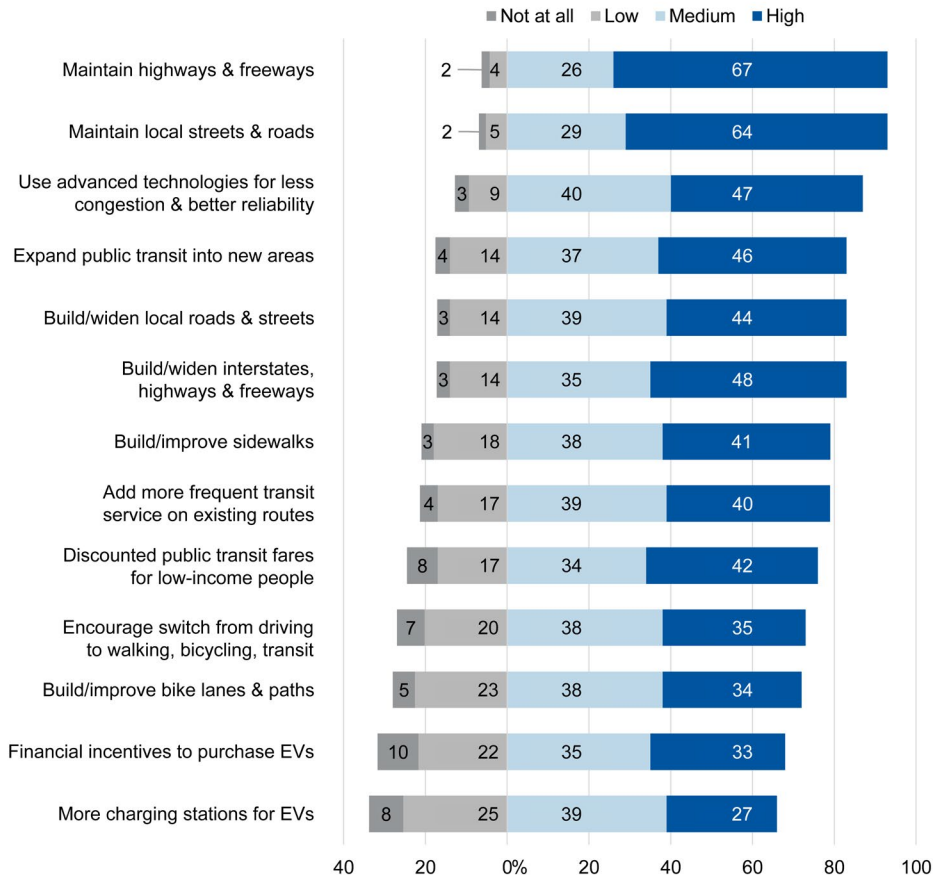
Findings 2: A Vision for Improving Transportation

Virtually every respondent wanted to see improvements to all transportation modes, reductions in air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions from transportation, and more convenient options to travel without driving. Among the six specific goals tested, the three most popular options were maintaining and improving roads, streets, highways, and bridges, reducing traffic congestion, and reducing crashes and improving safety for everyone. At least 93% rated each of these goals as somewhat or very important.

Findings 3: Preferences for How California Spends SB1 Revenue

At least two-thirds of respondents put a medium or high priority on each of 11 spending options presented on the survey. These options addressed streets and highways, public transit, active transportation facilities, and electric vehicle incentives.

Respondents first rated the priority for each option individually and then selected the three options most important to them. The most popular options related



Priority Placed on Different Options for Spending SB1 Revenue (% of respondents)

to maintenance. For example, almost all respondents put a medium or high priority on maintaining interstates, highways, and freeways (94%) and on maintaining local streets and roads (93%). Maintaining local streets and roads was rated as a top-three priority for more respondents than was maintaining highways and freeways (45% vs. 34%).

Most respondents also supported transit-related spending improvements, although these options were a top-three priority for only small percentages. The most popular among the transit options was subsidizing fares for low-income riders; 21% selected this as one of their top three priorities.

The least popular spending options related to electric vehicles, though even these options were rated positively by more than two-thirds. For example, 69% of respondents supported offering subsidies as an incentive to buy electric vehicles.

To Learn More

For more details about the study, download the full report at transweb.sjsu.edu/research/1861

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