

## **Survey: Americans support higher gas taxes, spending revenue on public transit**

*Mineta Transportation Institute's national survey finds growing support for gas tax increase*

**San Jose, Calif., June 28, 2016** – Americans are willing to pay increased taxes if the revenue is invested in specific transportation improvements, according to the results of a new [Mineta Transportation Institute](#) (MTI) national telephone survey. The report, [\*What Do Americans Think About Federal Tax Options to Support Public Transit, Highways, and Local Streets and Roads? Results from Year Seven of a National Survey\*](#), reveals that support depends on how the tax is structured and described, with some options supported by a majority – or even a supermajority – of Americans. The survey is year 7 of an annual series that repeats the same questions each year. This year's results show that support for raising transportation taxes has grown over the past six years. The study, available for free PDF download at <http://transweb.sjsu.edu/project/1528.html>, was conducted by Asha Weinstein Agrawal, PhD, and Hilary Nixon, PhD.

“Conventional wisdom says that Americans strongly oppose any increase in the federal gas tax,” said Dr. Agrawal. “However, this survey shows that more than half of Americans support a federal gas tax increase if the revenue is dedicated to improving maintenance, safety, or the environment.”

### **Key 2016 findings related to increasing taxes include:**

- Of the ten transportation tax options tested, six had majority support.
- Linking tax increases to safety, maintenance, or environmental benefits increased support by at least ten percentage points among almost all the sociodemographic groups tested.
- Support levels varied considerably by the type of tax. When taxes were described with no information other than the tax type, a new sales tax was much more popular than either a gas tax increase or a new mileage tax.
- Looking across the seven years of survey data, support for all the taxes except the flat-rate mileage tax has risen modestly. In seven cases, support has increased by more than ten percentage points since the first year the question was asked.

### **Key 2016 findings specific to public transit include:**

- A large majority (82%) said that expanding and improving transit services in their states should be a high or medium government priority.
- Only one-half of respondents knew that fares don't cover the cost of transit, and only 29% knew of the federal government's role in funding public transit.
- Two-thirds supported spending current gas tax revenues on transit, although only 41% supported increasing gas taxes to improve transit.

## **ABOUT THE RESEARCH TEAM**

**Asha Weinstein Agrawal, PhD**, is director of the MTI National Transportation Finance Center and also professor of urban and regional planning at San José State University. Her research and teaching interests in transportation policy and planning include transportation finance, pedestrian and bicycle planning, and travel survey methods. She also works in the area of planning and transportation history. She has a B.A. from Harvard University in Folklore and Mythology, an M.Sc. from the London School of Economics and Political Science in Urban and Regional Planning, and a Ph.D. from the University of California, Berkeley, in City and Regional Planning.

**Hilary Nixon, PhD**, is professor of Urban and Regional Planning at San José State University. Her research and teaching interests in environmental planning and policy focus on the relationship between environmental attitudes and behavior, particularly with respect to waste management and linkages between transportation and the environment. She holds a B.A. from the University of Rochester in Environmental Management and a Ph.D. in Planning, Policy, and Design from the University of California, Irvine..

## **ABOUT THE MINETA TRANSPORTATION INSTITUTE**

The Mineta Transportation Institute (MTI) conducts research, education, and information transfer programs regarding surface transportation policy and management issues, especially related to transit. Congress established MTI in 1991 as part of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act. MTI won national re-designation competitions in 2002, 2006 and 2012. The Institute is funded through the US Department of Transportation, the US Department of Homeland Security, the California Department of Transportation, and public and private grants. The internationally respected members of the MTI Board of Trustees represent all major surface transportation modes. MTI, the lead institute for the nine-university Mineta National Transit Research Consortium, is affiliated with San Jose (CA) State University's Lucas College and Graduate School of Business. Visit [transweb.sjsu.edu](http://transweb.sjsu.edu)

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