

 DATA FOR *PROGRESS* The McHarg Center TransitCenter

# VOTERS WANT A BETTER TRANSIT SYSTEM FOR AMERICA

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On behalf of **Data for Progress, the Ian L. McHarg Center for Urbanism and Ecology, Transportation for America, TransitCenter, and the Socio-Spatial Climate Collaborative, YouGov Blue** fielded a survey of 1,029 US voters on YouGov's online panel as part of YouGov Blue's registered voter omnibus. The survey fielded from November 27, 2019 through November 29, 2019. The results were weighted to be representative of the population of US voters by age, race/ethnicity, sex, US Census region, and 2016 Presidential vote choice.

Here, we report on the results of several items pertaining to Americans' transit usage habits, their attitudes toward the state of America's transit systems, and their attitudes toward policies that could change these habits and systems. These items were developed in conjunction with Data for Progress and affiliates.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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- ▶ While party identification is the strongest predictor of attitudes toward transit policy in the United States, geography plays nearly as strong a role in many cases. **Urban and suburban voters are consistently more supportive of stronger public transit systems in the US.**
- ▶ There are important exceptions to this partisan and geographic split, including consistently **high support amongst rural, suburban, and urban Democrats, Independents, and Republicans for a 10-year moratorium on all new highway construction.**
- ▶ Car use is nearly ubiquitous among US voters, and increases slightly as propensity to vote increases. **But voters also report they have**

**no choice but to use cars as much as they do, and that they do not have sufficient options for there to be viable alternatives.**

- ▶ **Nearly four times as many voters support increasing public transportation funding as support reducing it. There is no appetite among voters for cuts to investments in public transportation,** even accounting for party identification and geography. Less than 1 in 5 Republicans supports cutting transportation spending, and that is the high water mark.
- ▶ **In some areas, geography is a more important predictor of attitudes than is party identification.** While Democrats, Independents, and Republicans are all similarly high in support for repairing infrastructure before building new infrastructure, rural and urban voters are united in driving this support over suburban voters.
- ▶ Voters consider cars to be nuisances, but oppose policies they would perceive to be too strict on car ownership. **Voters clearly favor subsidies that would increase the availability of electric vehicles.**

In the following sections, we explore these results in greater detail. Access to the data for this project, including topline, crosstabs, and codebook, are available [here](#).

## CHANGING A COUNTRY OR A COMMUNITY

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At the outset of the survey, we asked voters to indicate in broad terms whether they supported expanding public transportation. We asked voters to consider the question from two levels: from that of their own communities, and from the

United States overall. Specifically, we asked

*Next, you will see some statements some are saying about America's transportation systems. For each of those statements, please say whether you [agree or disagree], or if you are unsure.*

*The United States would benefit from expanded and improved public transportation, such as rail and buses*

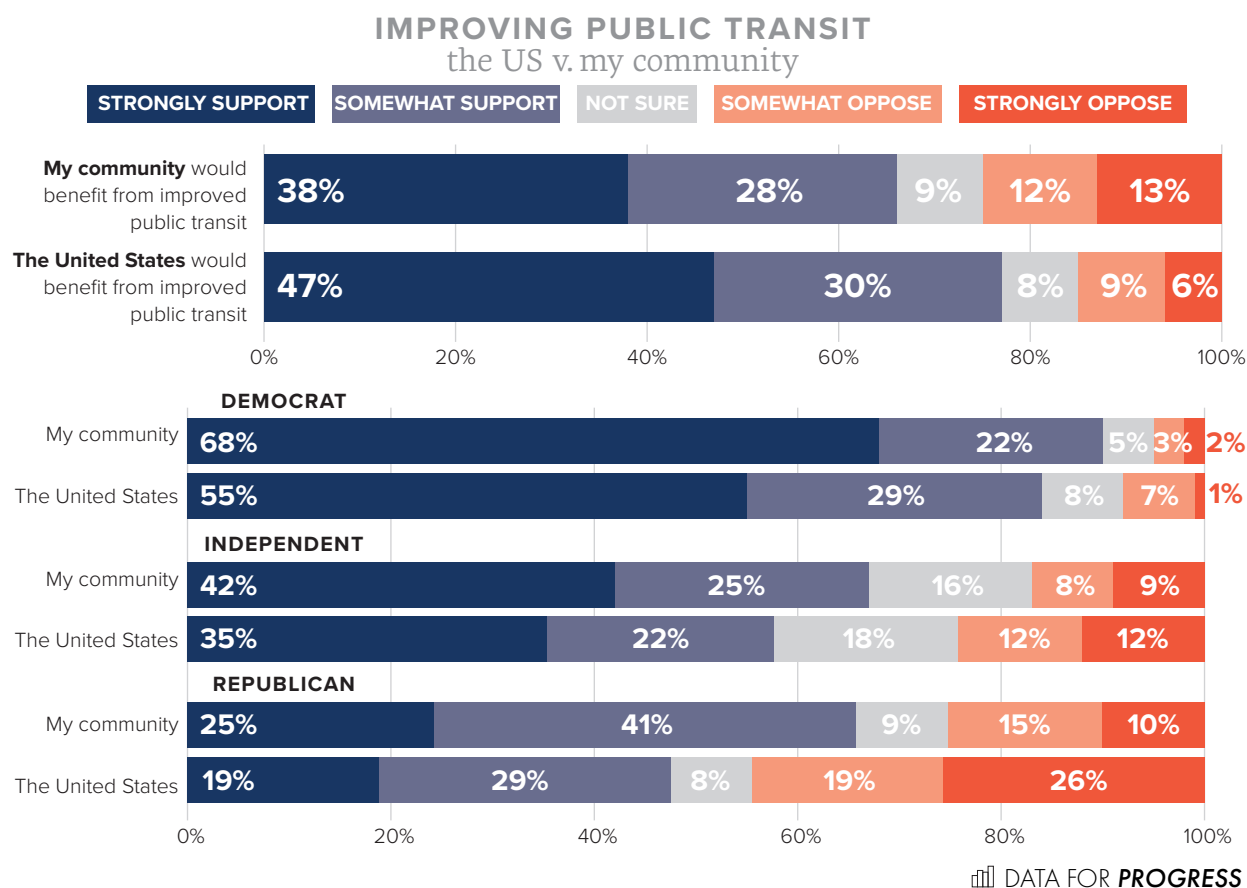
*My community would benefit from expanded and improved public transportation, such as rail and buses*

The distinction between how voters feel about their own communities versus how they feel about the country overall is important in many policy domains. Many Americans support the expansion of the energy grid so long as it does not entail a new powerplant in their neighborhoods,

for example. Notoriously, Americans are often thought to be supportive of new housing so long as the net housing stock in their own communities goes unchanged.

In this particular domain, however, we observe only small differences in how voters feel about the need for additional transit in their own communities versus the need for additional transit in the country overall.<sup>1</sup> **Across the full sample, about 66 percent of voters believe their own communities would benefit from expanding public transit while about 77 percent of voters believe the US overall would benefit from expanding public transit.**

While there is some drop-off when moving from an abstract, national-scale to one's own community, the NIMBYism that tends to hamper new housing construction does not appear to be as prevalent when it comes to transit infrastructure.



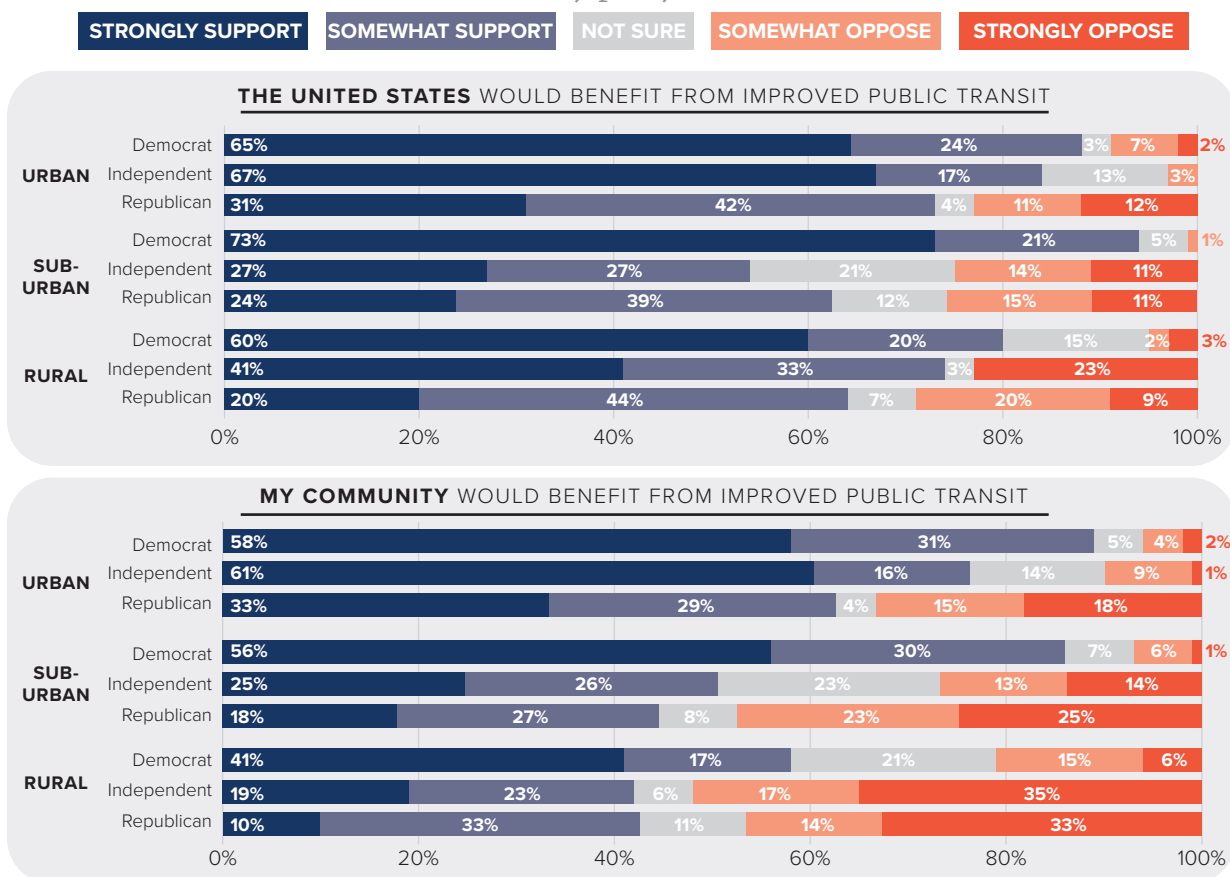
**This support includes near unanimity among Democratic voters, 90 percent of whom somewhat or strongly agree** and just 5 percent of whom somewhat or strongly disagree that the United States would benefit from improved public transit. Additionally, fully 84 percent of Democrats feel the same about improving transit in their own communities.

**Notably, Independent and Republican voters agree with Democrats.**<sup>2</sup> Independent voters are nearly as unanimous as Democrats are. About 77 percent of Independent voters agree that the US would benefit from improved public transit, and about 57 percent agree that their own communities would as well. Even among Republicans, fully 65 somewhat or strongly agree that the US needs better public transit and, by a 48-45 margin, narrowly support better public transit for their own communities, too.

In a domain such as public transit infrastructure, it is natural to also account for differences in voters' attitudes that can be attributable to their geography. Even controlling for differences attributable to party identification, geography plays a clear role in predicting voters' beliefs in expanding the availability of public transportation. Overall, urban- and suburban-area voters tend to support public transit more than do rural-area voters.<sup>3</sup>

For example, while fully 89 percent of urban-area Democrats agree their communities need stronger public transit, just 58 percent of rural-area Democrats feel the same. About 77 percent of urban-area Independents want their communities to have better public transit, down to 51 percent of suburban Independents and just 42 percent of rural-area Independents. Rural-area Independents on net disagree that their communities need

## IMPROVING PUBLIC TRANSIT by party ID and urban/suburban/rural status



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better public transit, as do rural-area Republicans. Suburban Republicans are statistically split on the question by a 45-48 margin.

That said, there is support across partisanship and geography for better transit in the US overall. **Within party identification groups, geographic groups, and the combination of the two, support for better public transit in the US is on net positive.**

Next, we pressed voters to report whether they would support efforts to expand and improve public transit even if it required paying a price.

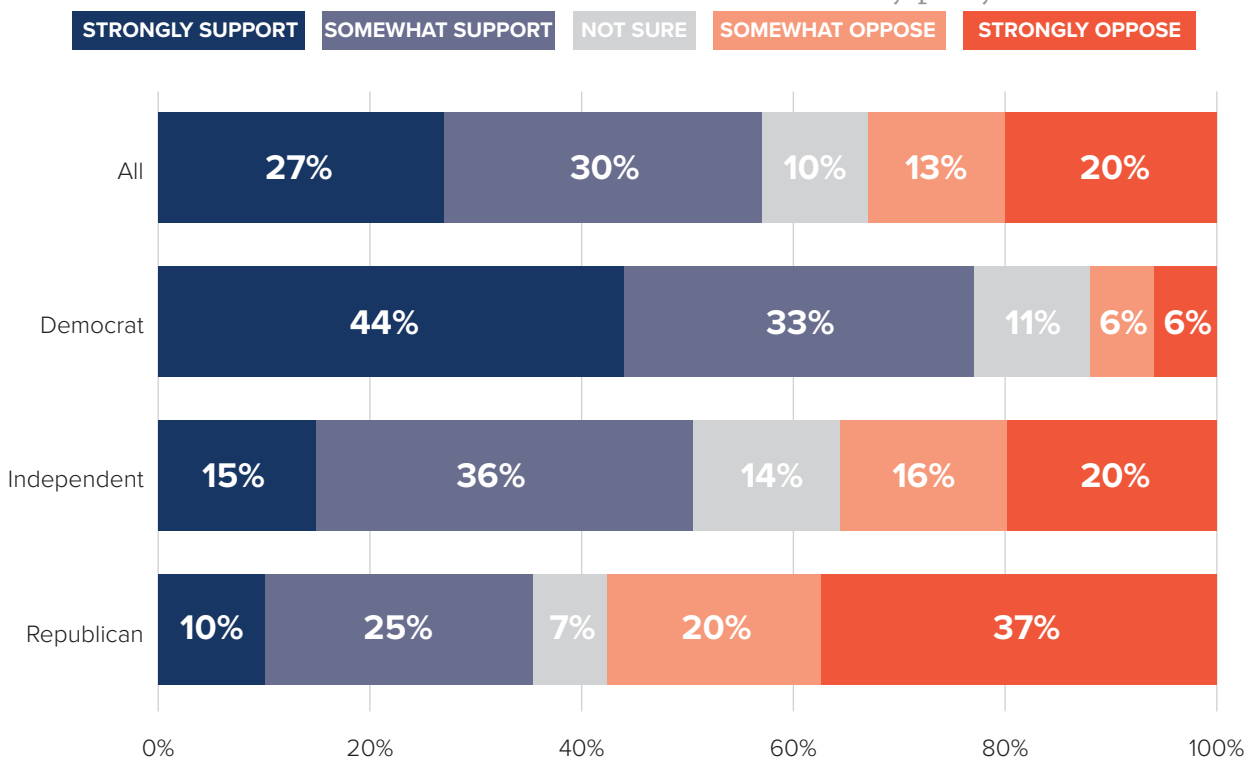
We asked voters,

*In general, would you [support or oppose] increasing funding to expand and improve public transportation in your community, if it required a small increase in taxes or fees?*

**Voters are willing to pay for public transportation. Voters support increasing funding and paying for it by a 57-33 margin.**

This includes a clear 77-12 positive margin among Democrats and a 51-35 positive margin among Independents. While Republicans on net oppose paying for better public transit, they are more split than one might expect: Fully 35 percent of Republicans are willing to pay for better public transit, while 57 percent are not.

### SUPPORT FOR INCREASING FUNDING TO PUBLIC TRANSIT EVEN WITH INCREASES IN TAXES OR FEES by party ID



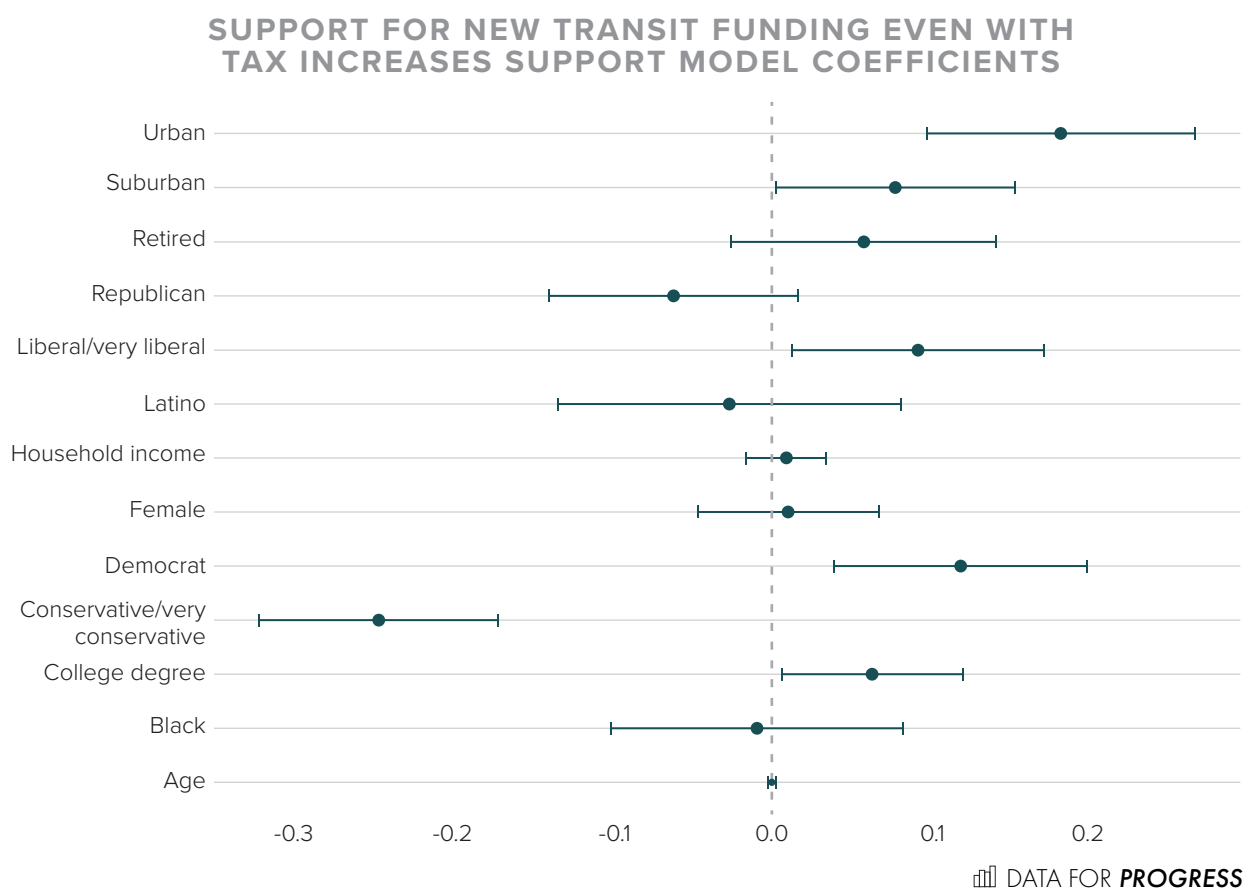
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A common refrain in this particular policy area is the importance of party identification and geography in predicting voters' attitudes toward a given policy. These two factors stand out even accounting for a host of other factors. The following plot shows the results of a multivariate statistical model that predicts support for paying additional taxes and fees for better public transportation as a function of various political and demographic factors.

Here, we account for voters' age, race/ethnicity, their level of education, their self-reported political identification, their party identification, sex, income, retirement status, and geography. The general trends we report are robust to a variety of model specifications, including a variety of independent

variable choices and coding decisions.<sup>4</sup> These trends are broadly consistent across other items in this survey, and we report this representative model in the interest of brevity.

The dotted line at 0 in the following chart separates variables that are positively correlated with supporting paying for better public transit from those that are negatively correlated. Variables whose estimates are in black are statistically significantly correlated with supporting public transit, while those in gray are not. Estimates out to the righthand side of the chart indicate *positive* correlation, and those out to the lefthand side indicate *negative* correlation. The coefficients are standardized so that their magnitudes are broadly comparable.





These results suggest that, compared to living in a rural area, living in an urban or suburban area both positively correlated with funding new transit. Identifying as ideologically liberal or very liberal also positively correlates, as does identifying as a Democrat, as does having a college degree. Those who identify as ideologically conservative or very conservative are less likely to support new public transit, controlling for these other factors. Controlling for other factors, we see that factors such as age, race/ethnicity, and gender are not as helpful predictors of attitudes toward public transit.

Overall, Americans clearly support having better public transportation systems. This basic conclusion is robust to a variety of political, demographic, and geographic factors. **Even if voters do not necessarily believe their own communities need better public transit, voters overwhelmingly believe the country at large would.**

## CARS ARE AN UNWANTED NECESSITY

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Inevitably, any project focused on transit policy in the United States will require understanding voters' opinions of cars. The next section of our survey included several items about car use, including how much Americans use vehicles, and whether they enjoy doing so.

First, we asked voters,

*How much would you say you drive or ride in a car?*

*<1> I own or share a car, and a car is my primary mode of transportation*

*<2> I own or share a car, but do not use a car as my primary mode of transportation*

*<3> I do not own or share a car, but use ride sharing services or cabs as my primary mode of transportation*

*<4> I do not own or share a car, and do not use cars as my primary mode of transportation*

*<5> Not sure*

**Car use is highly prevalent in the electorate. Fully 79 percent of voters report they own a car. That number rises to 84 percent of voters who voted in 2016, and 85 percent of voters who turned out in both 2016 and in 2018. In other words, more likely voters are also more likely to both own a car and use it as their primary means of transportation.**

However, this does not necessarily mean they enjoy doing so. We next asked voters to characterize *why* they use a car, and whether they would prefer to use it more or less often. We asked voters,

*Next, you will see some statements about using a car. For each of those statements, please say whether you [agree or disagree], or if you are unsure.*

- ▶ *I have no choice but to drive as much as I do*
- ▶ *I would like to spend less time in my car*
- ▶ *I would like more transportation options, so I have the freedom to choose how I get to where I need to go*
- ▶ *I would like to use public transportation more often, but it is not as convenient to or available from my home or work*

**Among those who reported a car was their primary mode of transportation, about 80 percent reported agreeing with the statement they have “no choice” but to drive as much as they do.** Just over half of car users report wishing they had more options, and about the same share

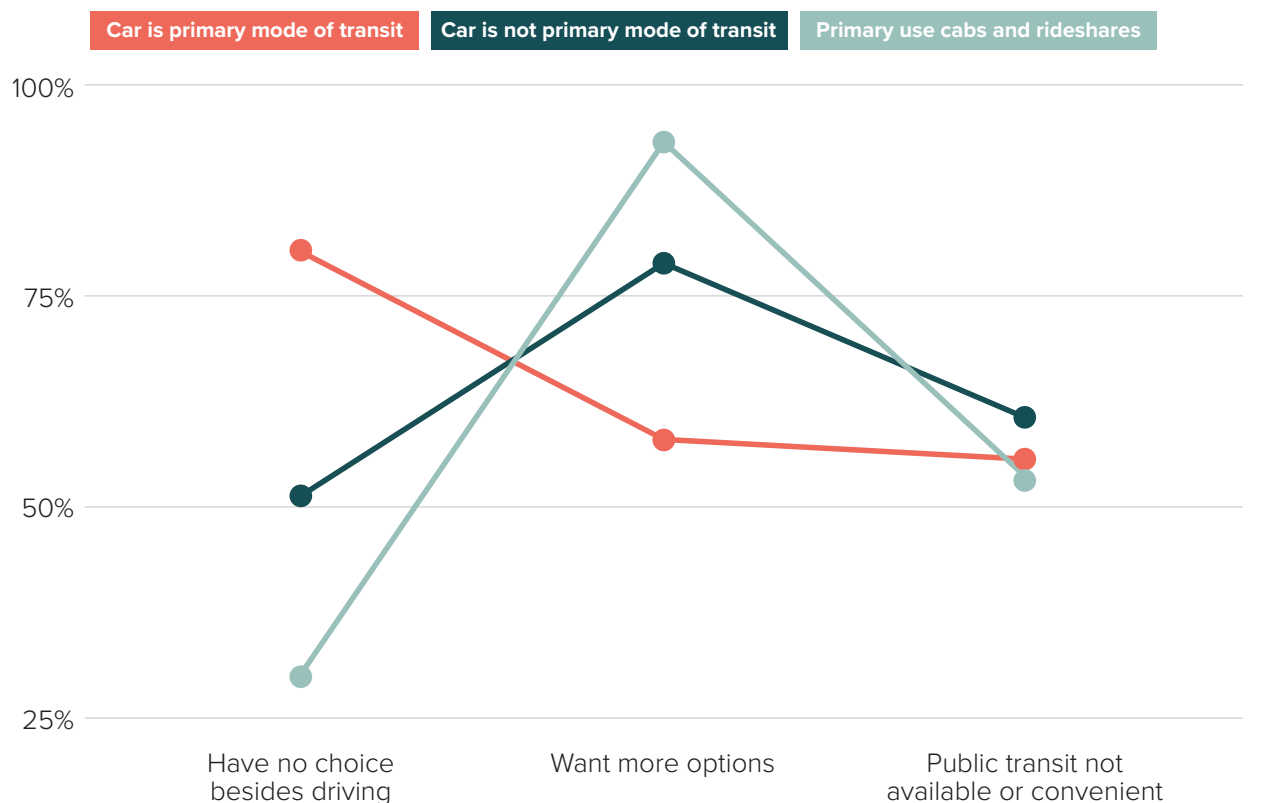
of car owners said that public transit was not convenient for their needs.

Similarly, even those who own cars but don't necessarily rely on them say they wish they could use cars less often. About 50 percent of voters who own but do not necessarily rely on a car say they have no choice but to drive as much as they do, and just over 75 percent wish they had more

options. Across car users in our sample, between 50 and 60 percent report that non-car transit options aren't convenient for their needs.

Car use is prevalent among voters in the United States. But voters tell us they don't necessarily prefer to drive as much as they do. By and large, voters feel they have insufficient alternatives to driving and thus have no choice but to use their cars as much as they do.

### DRIVING AND PUBLIC TRANSIT OPTIONS Among frequent driveres and rideshare users



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# AMERICANS WANT THEIR GOVERNMENT TO SPEND MORE ON PUBLIC TRANSIT

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Next, we asked voters to evaluate the current state of transportation spending in the United States. The items we asked were straightforward: we asked voters to guess how many cents out of every dollar of the transportation budget went to transportation, versus how much should. Voters could respond with any amount in the zero cents through 100 cents range.

We asked,

*Out of every dollar the federal government invests in transportation, how many cents would you guess ARE currently spent on public transportation, such as trains, rail, ferries and buses?*

*Out of every dollar the federal government invests in transportation, how many cents would you say SHOULD be spent on public transportation, such as trains, rail, ferries and buses?*

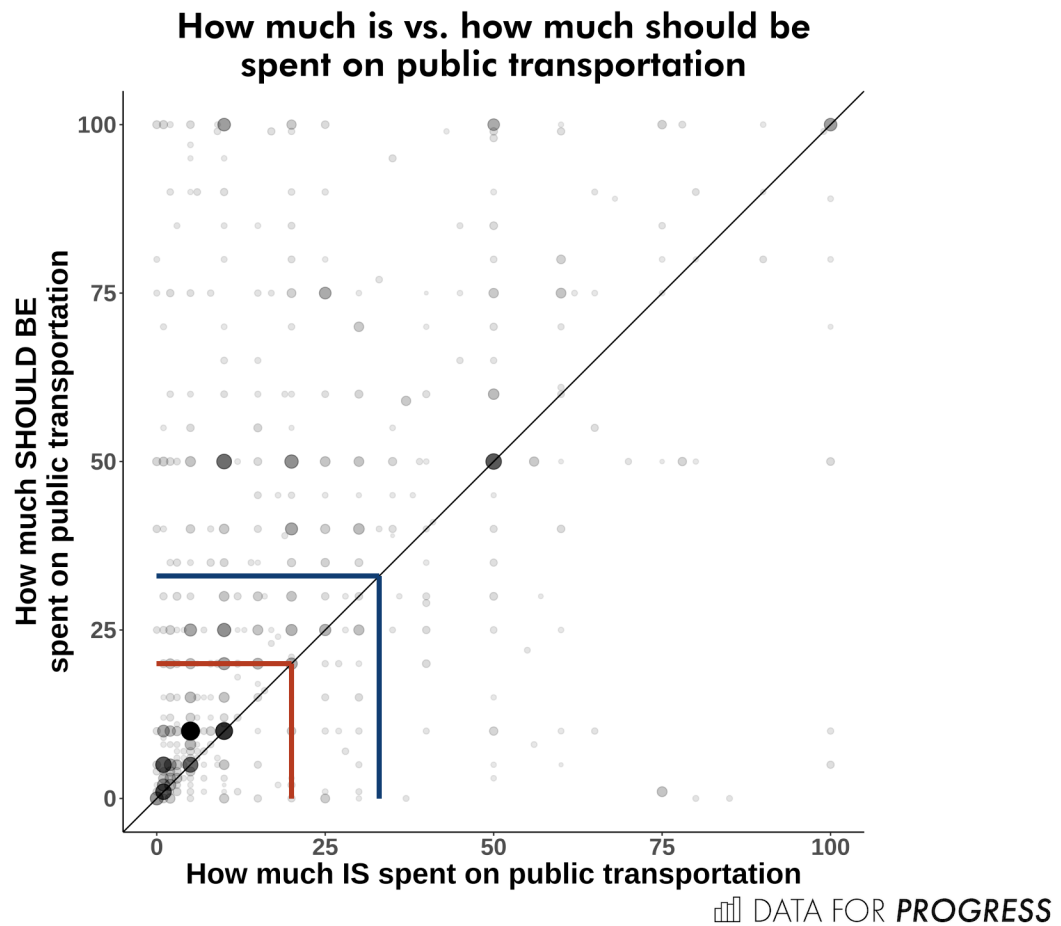
On this item, the wisdom of the crowds did not disappoint. Though there was a fair amount of skew in the responses, with quite a few guesses

centered around zero and a small lump around a guess of fifty cents per dollar, the average estimate supplied by voters was \$0.194 per dollar, compared to the true quantity of \$0.20 per dollar. In the following chart, the red line represents the current true quantity.

At the same time, **voters were clearly ready to shift transportation spending toward public transportation.** The average response to the item asking how much *should* be spent per dollar on public transportation was about \$0.33 cents per dollar. This is a roughly \$0.13 cent increase, or about a 65 percent increase over the quantity the average voter guessed is currently spent on public transit.

In the following chart, the blue line indicates the amount voters would *prefer* to spend on public transportation. The black line stretching outward from zero represents the “line of equality,” i.e., where responses would fall if voters believed that the amount currently allocated to public transportation were exactly right. That is, a voter’s response would appear on that line if their beliefs about how much is spent on public transit and how much *should* be spent on public transit were identical.

As such, points above the line represent voters who believe we should spend more on public transit than we currently do, and points below the line represent voters who believe we should spend less. Perhaps not surprisingly, most dots are above the line of equality. Voters are prepared to allocate more transit spending toward public transportation.



To push voters on this point, we followed up these items by asking them explicitly about the current breakdown of spending in transportation funding. We informed voters of the true quantity spent on public transportation (about 20 cents), and then asked them how they felt once they knew the true quantity. We asked,

*Next, you will read a statement some are saying about the state of transportation in America today.*

*According to a recent analysis of the federal budget, about 74 cents out of every federal transportation dollar go to highways, while*

*20 cents are used for public transportation such as such as trains, rail, ferries and buses around the country, and the remainder for other transportation needs.*

*Having read that statement, would you say [more funding should be allocated to public transportation, less funding should be allocated to public transportation], or do you think the current amount is about right?*

*<1> More should be allocated to public transportation*

*<2> The current amount is about right*



<3> Less should be allocated to public transportation

<4> Not sure

**Not surprisingly, when asked outright, voters report they would like more spending on public transportation.** About 45 percent say more should be spent, 32 percent say the status quo is “about right,” and only 12 percent believe public transportation spending should be cut.

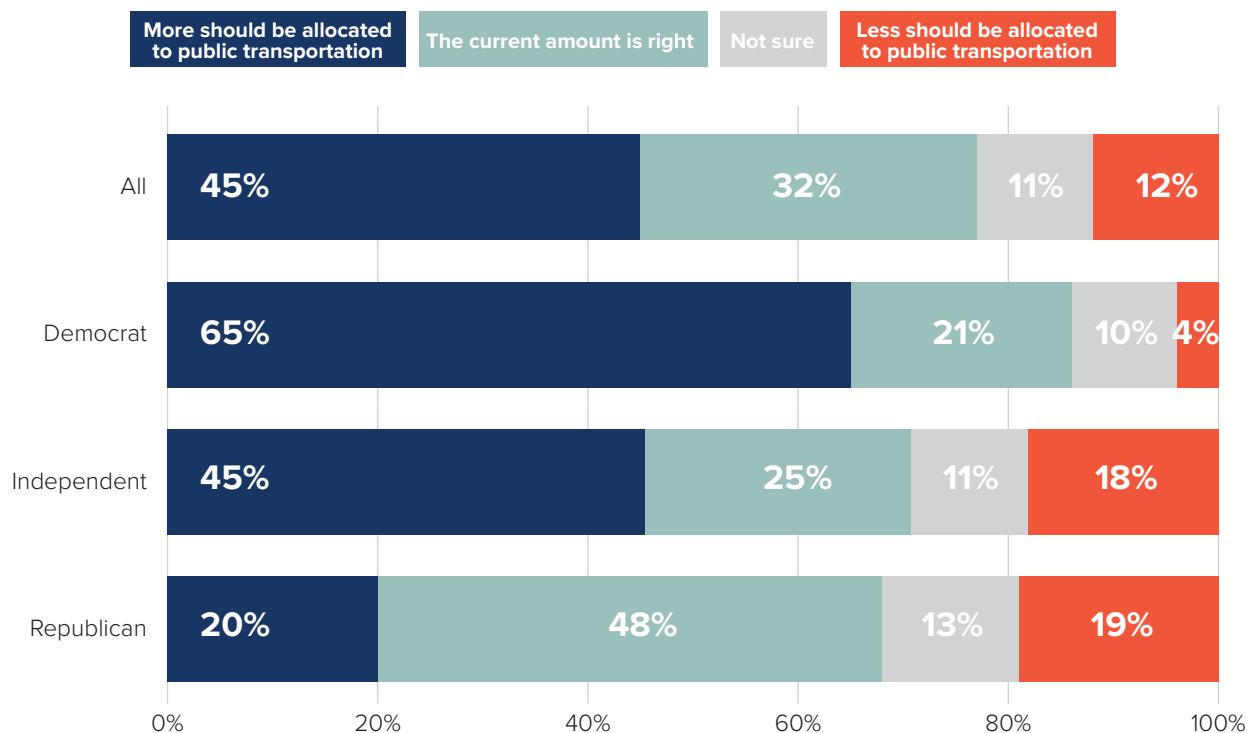
**A more surprising result is that Republicans narrowly favor more public transportation spending,** while the modal Republican respondent is fine with the status quo level of spending. About 1 in 5 Republicans support increasing public transit spending, and just under that quantity supports reducing it. Overall, voters clearly prefer increasing public transit spending to decreasing it, and also prefer more spending over the status quo amount.

## AMERICANS WANT TO FIX EXISTING ROADS BEFORE BUILDING NEW ONES

In a similar vein, we asked voters how much they thought the government spent on *new* versus *existing* roads, bridges, and highways. We included this item because much of the debate around transit policy includes debates over whether we need new infrastructure, or simply to improve the quality of existing infrastructure.

*Next, you will see some questions asking you to guess how much the federal government invests in highways, roads, and bridges. Each of those questions will include several items*

### SUPPORT FOR PUBLIC TRANSIT SPENDING



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that sum to 100 cents per dollar of spending. For each of these, please provide your best guess or your opinion by using the slider for each set of items to produce a sum of 100 cents per dollar.

Out of every dollar the federal government invests in highways, how many cents would you guess ARE spent on maintaining and repairing existing roads and bridges, and how many cents ARE spent on building new roads?

Out of every dollar the federal government invests in highways, how many cents would you guess SHOULD BE spent on maintaining and repairing existing roads and bridges, and how many cents SHOULD BE spent on building new roads?

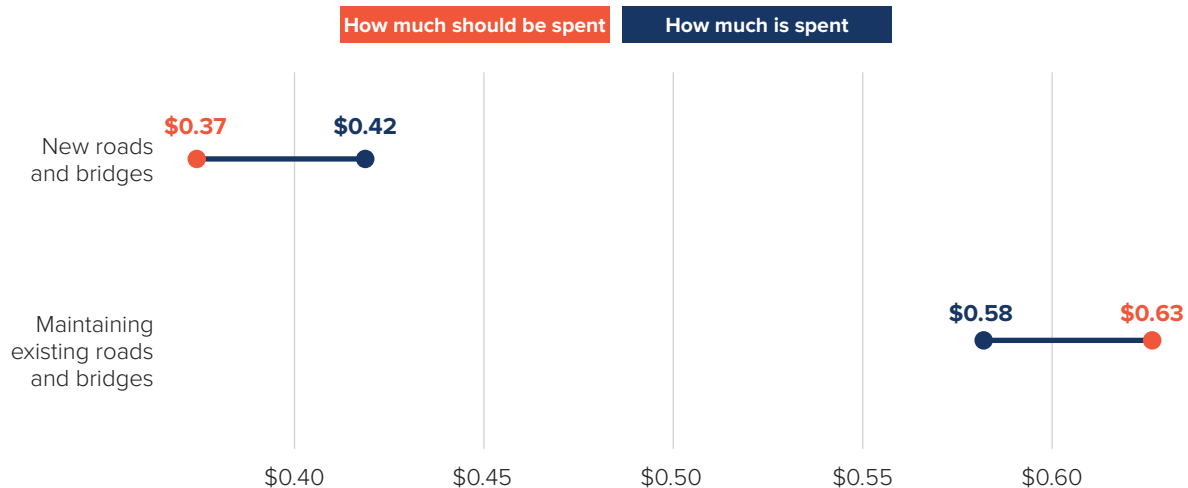
For each item, voters would first allocate some amount of cents per dollar to both of the “are” items, and then on the following page of the survey, to the “should be” items.

**Voters would prefer the US spend more on maintaining existing infrastructure.** The average voter guessed that the transportation budget includes spending about 58 cents per dollar on maintaining existing roads and bridges, but should be spending on average about 63 cents per dollar.

In addition to preferring additional spending on maintaining existing roads and bridges, voters reported they would prefer new policies that would essentially obligate local governments to do so. After asking voters to compare their perceived with their ideal allocations of transit spending on maintaining versus creating roads, we pressed voters on policy specifics.

We asked three follow-up items on policies the government could enact to help focus transit spending on infrastructure. The first asked if the government should focus on this activity generally speaking. The second proposed obligating state governments to justify any new roads on explicit

## HOW MUCH IS SPENT ON NEW INFRASTRUCTURE OR EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE VS. HOW MUCH SHOULD BE SPENT



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economic and environmental grounds. The third proposed an outright moratorium on new roads. We asked,

*Next, you will read a statement some are saying about the state of transportation in America today.*

*According to a recent analysis, states are spending about the same amount of federal highway funds maintaining existing roads as they are expanding roads and building new roads. There is no requirement that states prioritize fixing existing roads over building new ones, and since 2009, road conditions have worsened in most states. As of 2017, one in five road-miles is now in “poor” condition.*

*Hearing that, would you say you [agree or disagree], or are unsure how you feel that...*

- ▶ *We cannot afford to build more roads while existing roads are in disrepair*
- ▶ *The federal government should focus on repairing existing roads and expanding public transportation options*
- ▶ *If states want federal funding for new roads, they should have to apply to a special program and justify the new roadway on economic and environmental grounds*
- ▶ *The federal government should stop funding new roads for 10 years, focusing on repairing existing roads and expanding public transportation options. If states want to construct new roads, they should use state funding and not ask for federal taxpayer support*

As with the previous items in this domain, voters reported they preferred new policies obligating the government to work on existing infrastructure before building new infrastructure. About 72 percent of voters agreed broadly that we can’t afford more roads while the ones we have are in disrepair. **Fully 79 percent of voters agreed that the government should fix existing roads before building new ones. About 73 percent require a new set of obligations on state governments to justify any new roads, and 61 percent support an outright moratorium on new roads for ten years as a means of reorienting local governments toward repairing infrastructure.**

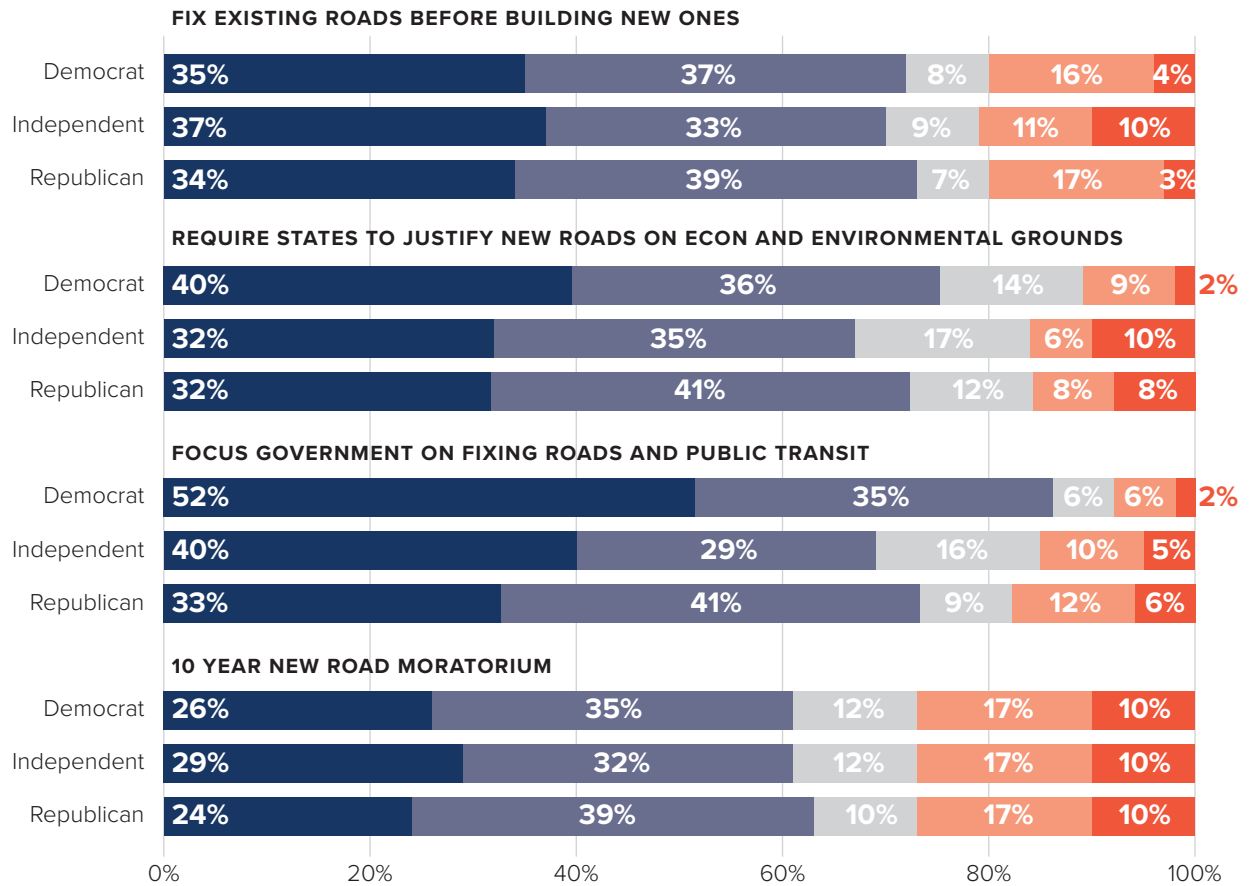
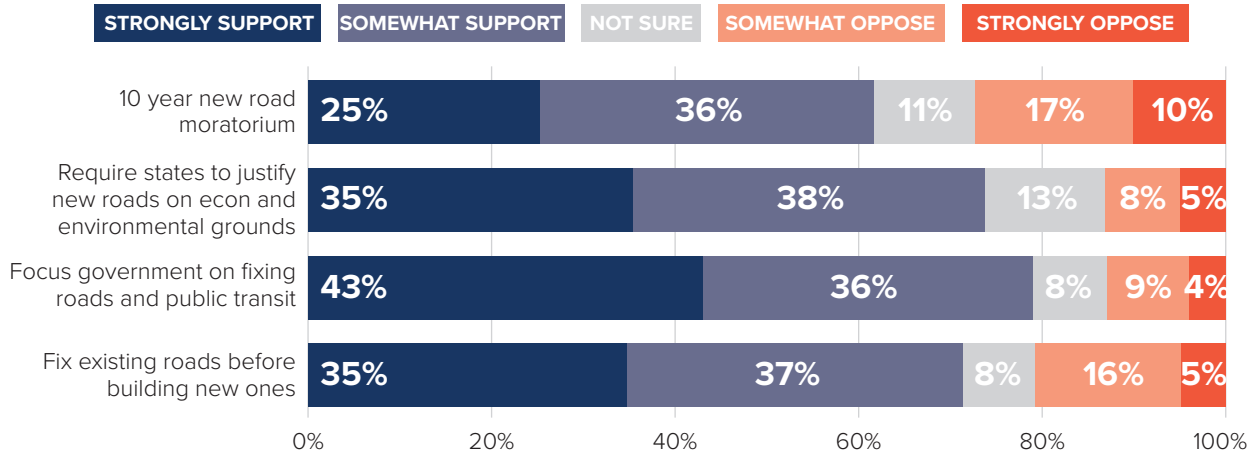
**Curiously, unlike in other domains, we do not see much of a party identification divide on these items.** Democrats and Republicans, for example, differed by only about 1 percentage point in their overwhelming support for fixing new roads before building new ones. They differed in support for a new roads moratorium by only 2 percentage points, and only by 3 percentage points in new requirements on governments to justify building roads.

The cross-cutting nature of these policies most likely explains this outcome. Each policy essentially imposes new limits on government spending, which appeals to Republicans and ideological conservatives. Each of these policies does so, however, in the explicit interest of protecting the environment and promoting the healthy development of cities, which are priorities for Democratic voters. As such, it is sensible to see partisanship play only a weaker role here than in other areas, as partisan cues each drag these policies upward for different reasons.



## MAINTAINING EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE BEFORE BUILDING NEW INFRASTRUCTURE

After infrastructure quality statement



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The following chart summarizes these high levels of net support both by party identification and by geography. Shown this way, we see that there are some areas where the geographic divide significantly overrides partisanship. For example, rural Republicans are more supportive of three of these policies than are rural Democrats. Rural-area Independents are much more supportive of new obligations on state government than are suburban or urban-area Independent voters.

## ...BUT ARE SPLIT ON REMOVING EXISTING ROADWAYS

Voters strongly support infrastructure repairs and improvements to public transportation. Next, we asked voters how they felt about a slightly more contentious subject: urban freeway removal. Urban

freeway removal has clear health, environmental, and economic benefits, but is not currently a prevalent part of the transit policy discussion.

Because of this, we began this battery of items by informing voters about urban freeway removal. We opened with a brief informative statement, which read,

*Next, you will read a statement some are saying about the state of America's roads and infrastructure.*

*In most major American cities, freeways force drivers to move through congested roads and pollute densely developed neighborhoods. Beyond the carbon emissions, this often leads to higher asthma rates in cities from heavy traffic flows along waterfronts, parkways, and downtowns. In response to this, some American cities have begun investing their limited transportation funds in urban freeway removal. Many others have proposed doing so pending funding.*

### MAINTAINING EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE BEFORE BUILDING NEW INFRASTRUCTURE by party identification and urban/suburban/rural status

0-20% 21-40% 41-60% 61-80% 81-100%

	Fix existing roads before building new ones			Focus government on fixing roads and public transit			Require states to justify new roads on econ and environmental grounds			10 year new road moratorium		
	Rural	Suburban	Urban	Rural	Suburban	Urban	Rural	Suburban	Urban	Rural	Suburban	Urban
Republican	+68%	+40%	+60%	+59%	+54%	+56%	+61%	+54%	+58%	+47%	+22%	+48%
Independent	+69%	+42%	+49%	+56%	+38%	+76%	+84%	+33%	+66%	+37%	+15%	+66%
Democrat	+59%	+52%	+50%	+67%	+85%	+77%	+56%	+70%	+64%	+24%	+34%	+37%

We then asked voters whether they agreed or disagreed with several statements pertaining to urban highway removal. We asked,

*Hearing that, would you say you agree, disagree, or are unsure how you feel that...*

- ▶ *Government officials must take these climate and public health concerns seriously. We must make strategic investments in urban freeway removal a core part of national transportation policy*
- ▶ *Once urban freeways are removed, government officials must ensure that the newly available space in our cities is put to the best possible public use. This includes building new public parks, public and affordable housing, and placing as much of this new land into public or co-operative ownership as possible*
- ▶ *The federal government should condition future transportation funding for major cities/states on developing plans for urban freeway removal*

As with other batteries in this survey, voters saw each of these items in a randomized order. Voters were also randomly signed to be asked whether they “agreed or disagreed,” or whether they “disagreed or agreed” with the statements, to cancel out ordering effects.

**Overall, voters support urban highway removal after hearing information about it. By a 45-32 margin, voters support making “strategic investments in urban freeway removal a core part of national transportation policy.”** This support includes

fully 73 percent of Democrats, 45 percent of Independents, and 26 percent of Republicans. About 11 percent of Democrats opposed such a plan, along with 33 percent of Independents, and 57 percent of Republicans.

**By a 56-25 margin, voters also agree that the newly available space should be used to produce public goods such as parks and additional housing.** This includes clear net support among Democrats and Independents, as well as a statistical tie among Republicans, who are split 38-44 on this question.

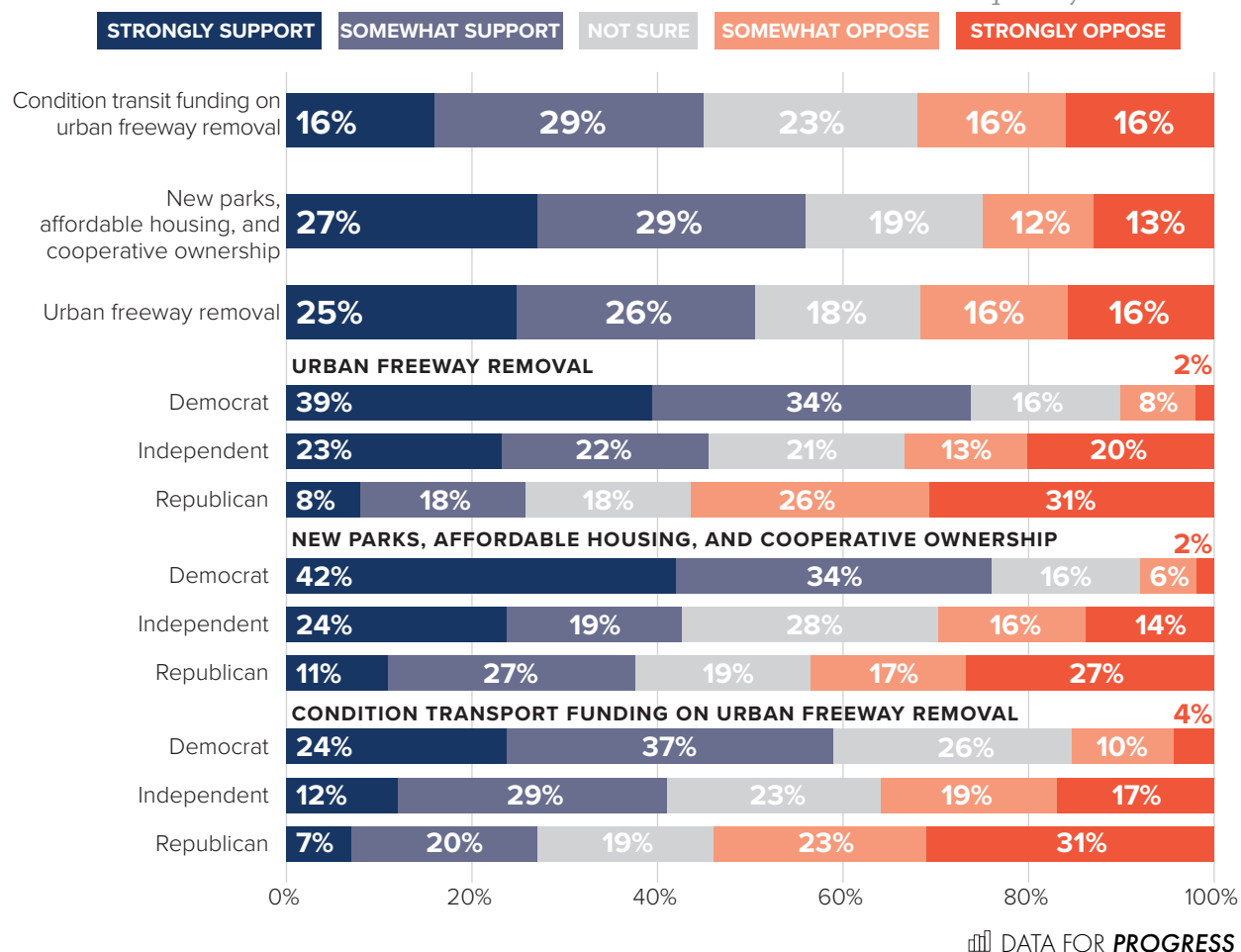
**Perhaps surprisingly, voters also on net support adding conditions to additional transportation funding to incentivize states to focus on urban freeway removal.** Voters support such conditions by a 45-32 margin, including net positive support among both Democrats and Independents.

**That said, there are significant geographic divides on each of these items, even accounting for the effects of party identification.** For example, support for urban freeway removal is 20 points higher among suburban Democrats than rural-area Democrats, and 15 points higher among urban-area Democrats than rural. Urban-area Independents overwhelmingly side with Democrats on each of these policies, while suburban- and rural-area Independents are more split.

Urban-area Republicans are statistically split on the question of urban freeway removal. Suburban Republicans are split on whether new land freed up by such a policy should be used for parks, affordable housing, and cooperative ownership projects. Independents are exactly split on this question.



## URBAN ROADS AND INFRASTRUCTURE After infrastructure quality statement



## URBAN ROADS AND INFRASTRUCTURE by party identification and urban/suburban/rural status

	-50- -30%			-29- -9%			-8-0%			1-20%			21-40%			41-60%			61-80%		
	Urban freeway removal			New parks, affordable housing, and cooperative ownership			Condition transport funding on urban freeway removal														
	Rural	Suburban	Urban	Rural	Suburban	Urban	Rural	Suburban	Urban	Rural	Suburban	Urban	Rural	Suburban	Urban	Rural	Suburban	Urban	Rural	Suburban	Urban
Republican	-47%	-32%	-6%	-23%	-5%	+19%	-34%	-28%	-13%												
Independent	-4%	-7%	+49%	+3%	0%	+41%	-7%	-18%	+46%												
Democrat	+48%	+68%	+63%	+50%	+72%	+67%	+40%	+49%	+48%												

## AND SUPPORT MORE ELECTRIC VEHICLES BUT NOT FEWER CARS OVERALL

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Next, we pressed voters on the subject of the availability of electric vehicles. In asking about electric vehicles, we also sought voters' attitudes on policies that might actually reduce the number of cars on the road. We began by giving voters a brief informational statement on the importance of vehicle policy in the present political context:

*Next, you will read a statement some are saying about some of the 2020 Presidential candidates' climate plans.*

*Most of the climate plans put forward by 2020 Presidential candidates have included a trade-in program for electric vehicles. Whether a rebate, credit, or other tax policy instrument, these programs have largely centered on a one-to-one replacement of combustion engine vehicles with electric vehicles.*

This statement provides some important context for voters and helps them understand that the explicit intent of many of the electric vehicle policies currently up for debate are intended to either net-zero or net reduce the number of cars on the road. With that in mind, we then asked voters,

*Hearing that, would you say you agree, disagree, or are unsure how you feel that...*

- ▶ *Government officials must develop a tax policy for electric vehicles that takes some of our 260 million personal automobiles off the road by 2030.*

- ▶ *Electric vehicle policy should provide the most generous rebates to people living in places where public transportation where never be possible: rural and suburban communities where driving is a necessity, like West Virginia, Arkansas, and North Dakota.*
- ▶ *Electric vehicle policy should make it punitively expensive to own a personal automobile in our wealthiest, best-connected-by-transit communities like Midtown Manhattan, Pacific Heights San Francisco, and Beacon Hill Boston.*

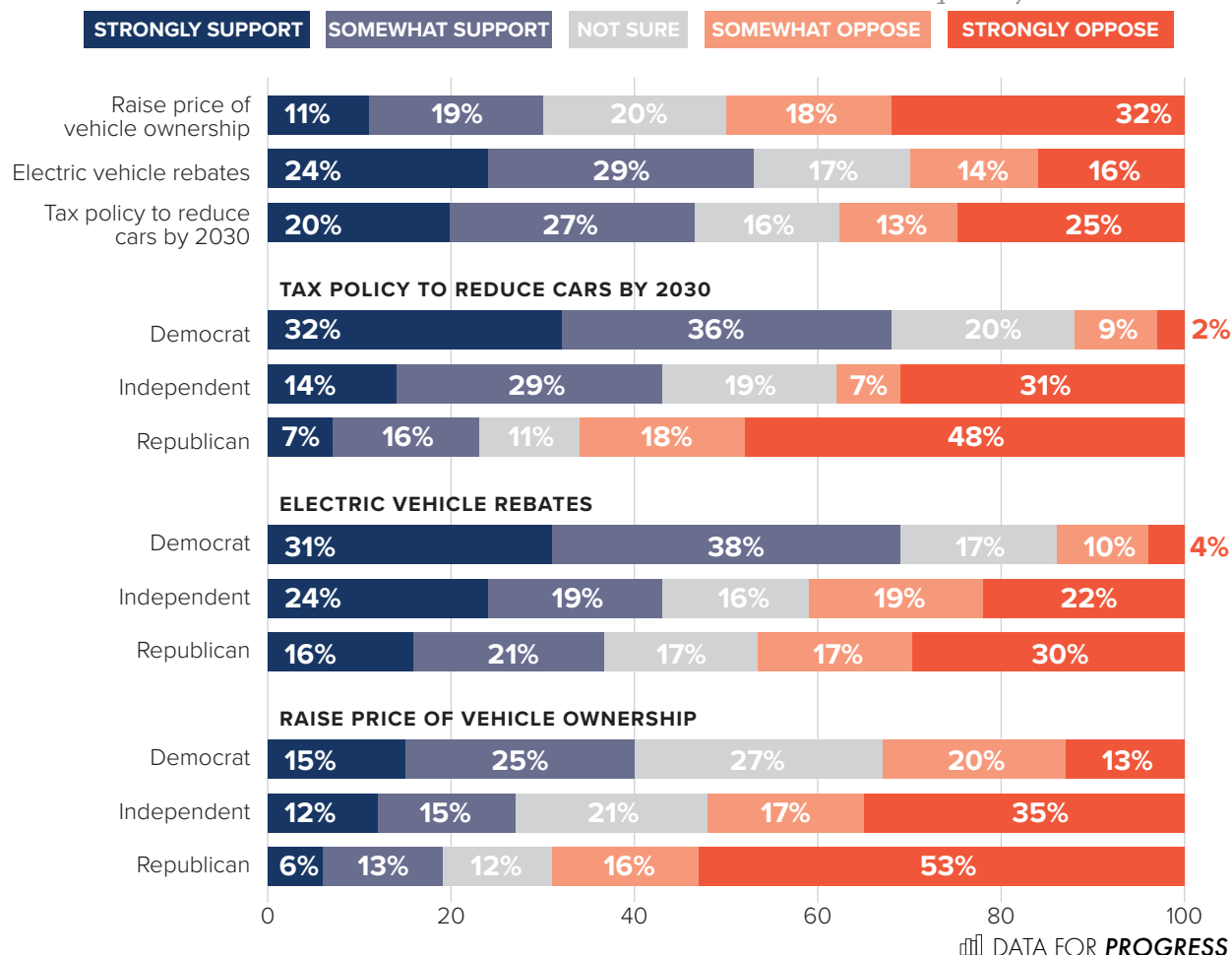
As with other items in our survey, voters saw each of the agree/disagree statements in a random order. Voters were randomly assigned to be asked whether they “agreed or disagreed,” or whether they “disagreed or agreed” with each statement.

**Perhaps surprisingly, voters on net support a policy to reduce the number of personal automobiles on the road. By a 47-38 margin voters agree that the government should aim to reduce the number of vehicles in the US over the next few years.** This includes a clear 68-12 net support among Democrats and 43-38 net positive support among Independents as well. About 23 percent of Republicans somewhat or strongly agreed with the statement.

**We also found support for “generous rebates” for electric vehicles that specifically help those living in areas where a stronger transit network is less feasible.** About 69 percent of Democrats supported and just 11 percent opposed this policy. Independents favored generous electrical vehicle rebates by a 43-41 margin, and Republicans only narrowly opposed rebates, by a 37-47 margin.

Voters do not support making personal vehicles prohibitively expensive. Just 30 percent of voters somewhat or strongly support making

## ELECTRIC VEHICLE AVAILABILITY After infrastructure quality statement



it “punitively expensive” to own cars in the wealthiest areas, while 50 percent would oppose such an objective. Democrats are split on the idea by a 40-33 margin, while Independents and Republicans both clearly oppose the policy on net. While national support for such an approach might be difficult to muster, it might offer an alternative to congestion pricing to cities like New York, San Francisco, and others that are looking for ways to take cars off the road.

Controlling for the effects of party identification, there are some large geographic divides on each of these policies. There is a 72-point net approval gap between Independents living in rural areas versus those living in urban areas in support

for reducing cars by 2030, for example. Electric vehicle rebates are most popular among rural-area Democrats and also urban-area Independents and Republicans. All three of these groups on net favor such a policy.

Support for policies that would reduce personal cars on the road by 2030 were almost 30 percentage points more popular among Republicans living in urban areas than those in rural areas. Urban-area Independents on net favor electric vehicle rebates, while those in other areas oppose such a plan. Rural Republicans and suburban Independents are particularly unwilling to see the price of vehicle ownership get pushed too high.

## ELECTRIC VEHICLE AVAILABILITY

by party identification and urban/suburban/rural status

	-60– -30%			-29– -9%			-8–0%			1-20%			21-40%			41-60%			61-80%		
	Tax policy to reduce cars by 2030			Electric vehicle rebates			Raise price of vehicle ownership														
	Rural	Suburban	Urban	Rural	Suburban	Urban	Rural	Suburban	Urban	Rural	Suburban	Urban	Rural	Suburban	Urban	Rural	Suburban	Urban	Rural	Suburban	Urban
Republican	-54%	-45%	-25%	-10%	-15%	+5%	-60%	-53%	-27%	-60%	-53%	-27%	-60%	-53%	-27%	-60%	-53%	-27%	-60%	-53%	-27%
Independent	-44%	+3%	+28%	-17%	-10%	+30%	-22%	-45%	+5%	-22%	-45%	+5%	-22%	-45%	+5%	-22%	-45%	+5%	-22%	-45%	+5%
Democrat	+50%	+60%	+51%	+65%	+55%	+51%	+26%	+3%	+8%	+26%	+3%	+8%	+26%	+3%	+8%	+26%	+3%	+8%	+26%	+3%	+8%

## CONCLUSION

Overall, voters are clearly prepared to spend more on public transit and to orient government spending toward improving existing infrastructure. While car use is ubiquitous among US voters, voters are not necessarily attached to their cars. Political partisans are united in agreement that the government should be doing more to fix our roads and to help with congestion in our cities.

As one of the most carbon-intensive sectors of the economy, any serious climate proposal will place the kind of focus on decarbonizing transportation that has thus far only been given to the energy and housing sectors. While Sanders, Warren, and

others have focused on electric vehicles and high-speed rail in their proposals, none of their plans appear to be as ambitious as the voters are on highway construction and maintenance, transit investment, and keeping more personal vehicles off the road. As our first transit brief (LINK TK) and this memo show, there is significant appetite for a moratorium on new highway construction that could redirect federal transportation investments to repairs and upgrades, expanded transit operations and networks, and accelerating EV penetration into rural and suburban markets, while taking more urban cars off the road—items that are exceedingly popular. As the largest carbon emitting sector, transportation is a strategic lever to pull in the march towards the jobs, justice, and decarbonization goals of the Green New Deal.



## ENDNOTES

1. We further note that each voter saw these items in a randomized order so that the effects of seeing one or the other first would, across the full set of responses, cancel out.
2. In this analysis, we identify Independents who report they lean toward one party or the other as identifying with that party, as is the recommended practice in this domain. In other words, Independents who report they “lean to the Republicans” are grouped with other Republican voters, and vice versa for Independents who report they lean to the Democrats. Those in the “Independent” group in this analysis report both that they are Independent voters, and that they do not lean toward one party or the other.
3. In our survey, asked voters to report whether they lived in a “city,” “town” “suburb,” “rural area,” or “other.” For simplicity, here we report these results with respondents who said they lived in a “town” or “suburb” as “suburban,” and those who reported they lived in a “rural area” or “other” as “rural” voters.
4. For example, the results are substantively the same whether we use a 2-category, 3-category, or 4-category race variable; treating age as continuous or breaking it into generations; treating education as a 2-category or 4-category variable, and so on.