

The MPO Wants to Know: Transportation Day at the Capitol

In an effort to better understand public views, the MPO continues its series of online surveys about various transportation-related topics. The survey results will help the MPO develop plans and projects for the future. The responses also will be shared with appropriate roundtables and policymakers. For a list of available surveys, please visit the MPO website at <http://www.dmampo.org/user/survey.html>. Below are the results of a survey related to the 2011 Transportation Day at the Capitol.

Question 1. During the 2011 Transportation Day at the Capitol, much discussion centered on increasing the gas tax in Iowa. What are your thoughts on raising the gas tax?

While respondents' specific views on raising the gas tax vary widely, approximately 70 percent of respondents express general support for an increase. Several respondents note that an increase is "past due." Others point out that the gas tax is a user tax; it is a "true 'pay-as-you-go' tax." Some respondents note that an increase in the gas tax could result in reduced driving, as "higher prices make consumers purchase anything more thoughtfully." This could potentially benefit the environment, make people consider alternate modes of transportation, and reduce the dependence on oil.

Numerous respondents mention that raising the gas tax is "necessary to more appropriately fund road maintenance within the state." Infrastructure across the state is in need of repair, several individuals assert, and an increase would help pay for these repairs. One individual asks, "What good is an attractive tax atmosphere for business if the transportation infrastructure they depend on is crumbling?" Many respondents are adamant that the tax be limited to repair and rehabilitation on existing roadways rather than the creation of new roadways.

Nearly 8 percent of survey respondents are undecided about an increase in the gas tax. One respondent states that "no one likes higher taxes" but that he would be open to an increase depending on the use of the money. Other respondents echo this notion, with one individual noting that officials "should seriously look at how the funds are distributed and the real

integration of transportation policy and planning in the state.” Another respondent would support an increase if the tax included “spending for public transportation and road repair, with restrictions on new road construction, except to replace decaying infrastructure that is safer to replace than to repair.”

Just over 22 percent of respondents oppose raising the gas tax. Several individuals state that gas already is too expensive, while others assert that Iowans already are taxed enough. Some respondents suggest spending what already is collected more effectively. A few respondents believe that “higher gas taxes will have many diverse effects, almost all of which will be directly detrimental to the economy.” Other respondents point to the current economic conditions as a reason not to raise the gas tax; the economy still is “vulnerable to disruptive action, such as a tax increase.”

One respondent notes that gas is a “necessity for most people,” while another individual states that “Iowa is a very rural state. Much of face-to-face connection requires a drive. Many Iowa cities and towns do not have public transportation systems. Raising the gas tax would really hurt low and middle class families, especially those in rural towns.”

Question 2. During Transportation Day at the Capitol, Governor Terry Branstad expressed his hesitation to provide funding for the passenger rail line running from Chicago to Iowa City. The line eventually will run through Des Moines and onto Omaha. Do you think that the state should maintain its funding commitment to this project?

Yes81.5% (97)
No.....18.5% (22)