

Deliberative Polling[®] Effort at Metropolitan State University Reveals Shift in Transportation Opinions

ST. PAUL, Minn.--([BUSINESS WIRE](#))--Citizen viewpoints on transportation priorities and funding changed following Deliberation Day, the second part of a Deliberative Polling[®] initiative led by Metropolitan State University. "The results demonstrated the value of the Deliberative Polling process as a feasible way to engage local citizens in public policy development and debate," said Frank Schweigert, Professor of Public and Nonprofit Administration in Metropolitan State's College of Management.

The Deliberative Polling project began in February with a survey of more than 1,000 metro area residents addressing transportation priorities and funding. Approximately 65 respondents accepted Metropolitan State's invitation to attend a follow-up Deliberation Day, at which they discussed the issues in small groups and posed questions to politically balanced panels of experts and policy makers. At the end of the day, participants retook the initial survey to determine the effects of information and deliberation on their views. Results of the second survey were compared to those of the first.

The greatest change came when respondents were asked whether or not they supported a sales tax on gasoline to deal with growing transportation maintenance and expansion demands. During the first survey in February, 47 percent said "yes." During the second survey, 67 percent said "yes." Other comparisons between the first and second surveys included the following:

- Respondents' knowledge that property taxes pay for the greatest share of road and highway costs increased from 9.4 to 60.4 percent.
- Knowledge that about 30 percent of transit operating costs were covered by riders' fares increased from 54.7 to 83.9 percent.
- Participants reported greater support for increases in certain user-based transportation funding sources after learning more about the issues. Support for adding a sales tax to gasoline went from 47 to 67 percent, support for increasing the gasoline tax by 5 to 10 cents a gallon went from 58 to 76 percent, and support for increasing vehicle registration fees went from 66 to 84 percent.
- Support for an additional half-cent sales tax dedicated to transportation increased from 59 to 68 percent.
- The percentage of respondents concerned that increasing transportation taxes would damage the state's economy declined from 33 to 16 percent.

Both surveys showed strong support for replacing deteriorating bridges, providing incentives to employers for encouraging carpools, increasing transit service both inside and outside the Highway 694/494 beltway, charging truckers additional fees for wear and tear on the roadways, adding lanes to congested highways and concentrating on road maintenance rather than expansion.

Metropolitan State's Deliberative Polling process was modeled on the work of Professor James Fishkin at Stanford University, who pioneered Deliberative Polling to demonstrate changes in citizen input after becoming more informed about an issue. The Metropolitan State initiative was led by Schweigert and Susan Shumer, Director, Community Outreach, Civic Engagement and The Center for Community-Based Learning, with sponsorship from the American Association of State Colleges and Universities. Funding was provided by the F.R. Bigelow Foundation, the Saint Paul Foundation, the Minneapolis Foundation and Metropolitan State University President's Special Initiative Fund.

Metropolitan State University (www.metrostate.edu), a member of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System, provides high-quality, affordable academic and professional degree programs at the bachelor's, master's and doctoral levels. It is the only state university in the Twin Cities metropolitan area.

Copies of the Executive Summary or the full report can be obtained from Aretha Hicks at aretha.hicks@metrostate.edu or Frank Schweigert at francis.schweigert@metrostate.edu.