



*The Texas Lyceum*

# The Texas Lyceum Poll

*June 25, 2008 – Transportation Issues*

## Summary of Findings

The second in the ongoing series of Texas Lyceum Polls is focused on transportation. Texans drive a lot, want less congestion on the roads, are looking for ways to deal with high gas prices, and hope their governments will put more money into public transportation. But they don't like gas taxes and toll roads – especially where there are existing roads. And they'd like to see a ban on drivers using cell phones.

## General Information

We interviewed Texas adults during the June 12-20 period, talking to 1,000 adults, half of them male, half of them female. Eight out of ten said they are registered to vote.

The highly contested presidential contest apparently has Texans more tuned into politics than they were a year ago. Half identify themselves as voters in "every" or "almost every" election, and 85% consider themselves "extremely interested" or "somewhat interested" in politics and public affairs.

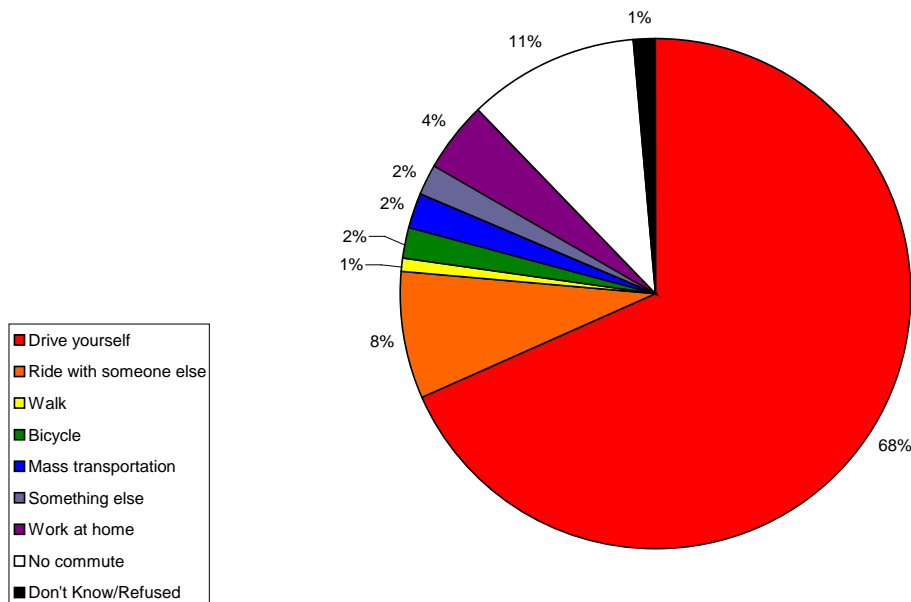
The respondents come from a variety of places, 42% suburban, 28% urban, and 27% rural. Most – 59% – are married, and 43% have one or more college degrees. Most – 54% – identify themselves as White; 32% as Hispanic; and 11% as African-American. The party splits are 32% Republican and 44% Democrat – but the ideological splits go the other way, with 42% calling themselves conservative, 34% saying they are moderate, and 19% identifying themselves as liberals.

## Transportation

Texans spend a lot of time on the road and they're clearly aware of the costs, thinking of carpooling and public transportation, and getting some new roads to ease their commutes. They're open to higher government spending on transportation. But they don't want higher gasoline taxes or toll roads, and they have reservations about private companies working on Texas highways and about the state's use of eminent domain for new projects. They like the idea of trains connecting adjacent cities. And they'd support a ban on drivers using cell phones.

Most Texans — 68% — said they drive themselves to work. Another 8% ride with someone else; 3% walk or ride a bike to work or school; 2% use mass transit. Most — 74% — said they're in the car for less than an hour. More than a third (37%) spend less than a half-hour in the car on the daily commute. Another 12% spent 90 minutes or more commuting every day; almost half of that group spends more than two hours on the commute. And one in twenty said they work at home, avoiding the commute altogether (that doesn't include the 11% of respondents who said they don't commute to work or to school).

2008 Texas Lyceum Poll - Ways Texans Commute

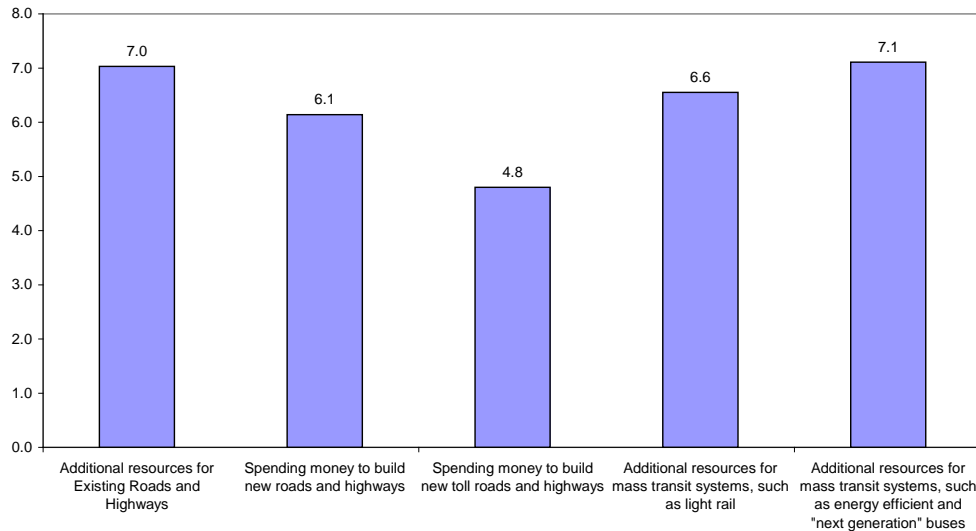


Nearly everyone – 88% – said they own a vehicle. Virtually all of them use their own vehicles to drive to work at least one day a week; four-fifths of them use their own car to go to work at least five times per week.

Not surprisingly, Texans think something ought to be done about traffic congestion, with 49% saying it's "very important" compared to other issues facing the state and 35% saying it's somewhat important.

They are willing to spend more on roads, so long as those roads are free to use. Asked how they feel about committing more resources to repair and improve existing roads, on a scale of zero to ten, most (70%) said they'd opt for more spending. Less than one in ten gave the idea a "4" or less on that 1-to-10 scale. They were only slightly less open to the idea of committing more resources to new roads and highways, with 57% giving that a "6" or more. Change the question to toll roads and Texans get riled: 45% gave that idea a grade of "4" or less and nearly a quarter of them gave it a zero.

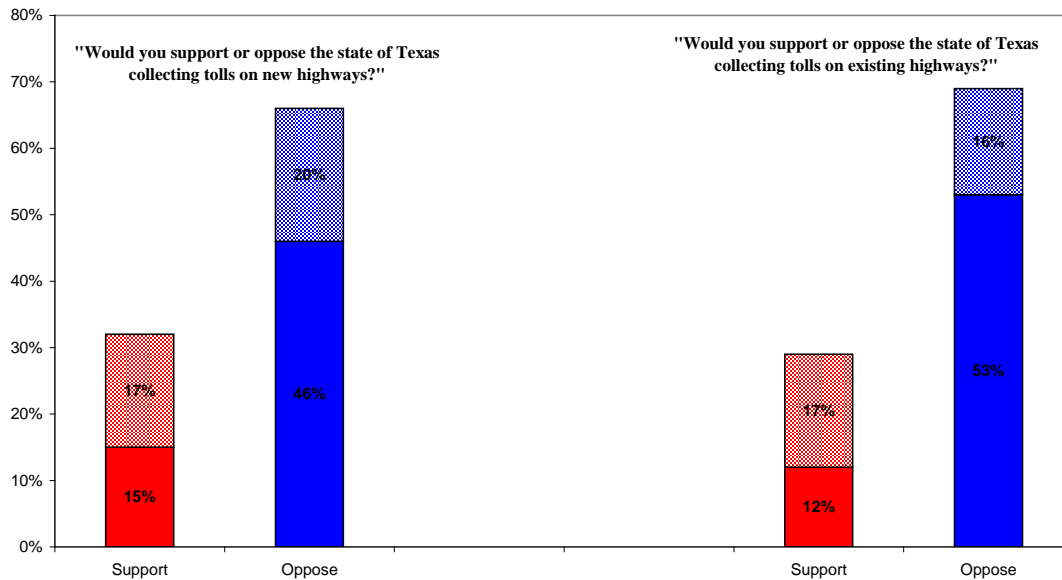
**2008 Texas Lyceum Poll -  
Public Attitudes on Approaches to Dealing with Transportation Issues**  
(Average response on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is "extremely unfavorable" and 10 is "extremely favorable")



Asked directly, Texans made it clear they don't like tolls on new roads, and they like it even less on existing ones. On new roads, 66% oppose tolls (including 46% who "strongly" oppose them), and on existing roads, opposition to tolls climbs to 69% (including 53% who "strongly" oppose tolls on existing highways).

### 2008 Texas Lyceum Poll - Public Attitudes on Collecting Tolls

(Solid colors represent "strongly" support/oppose; shaded colors represent "somewhat" support/oppose)

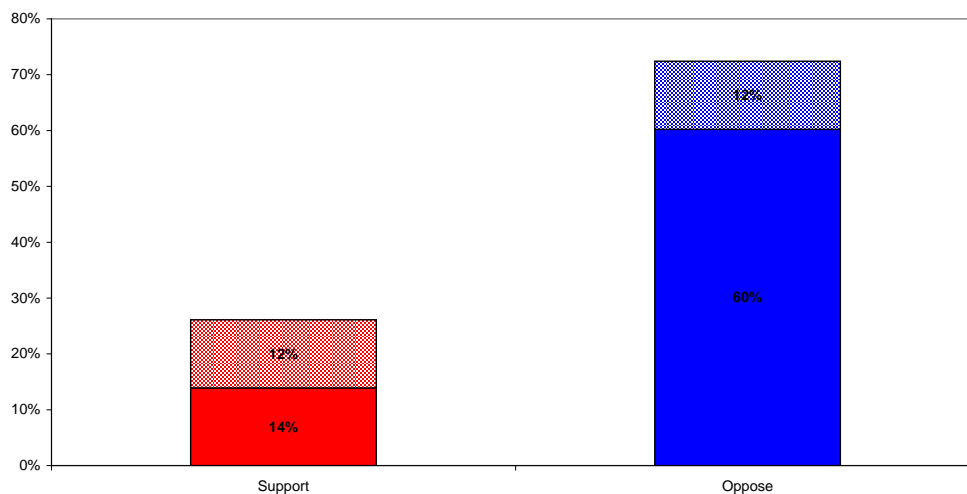


That's in spite of the fact that most of the respondents said they never or only rarely use toll roads. Only 8% regularly drive on toll roads, and only 29% said they occasionally drive on such roads.

Texans we surveyed don't want to raise taxes on gasoline to pay for transportation. Most — 60% — strongly oppose an increase and they're joined by another 12% who somewhat oppose it. Only about one in four Texans said they would support an increase in the gas tax to maintain or build new roads.

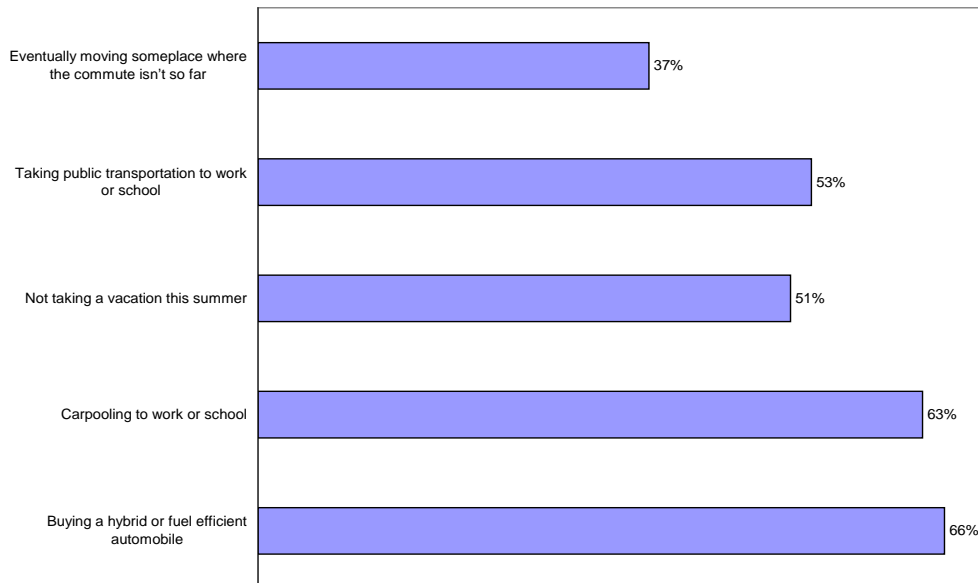
### 2008 Texas Lyceum Poll - Public Attitudes on Increasing the Gas Tax to Pay for Transportation Projects

(Solid colors represent "strongly" support/oppose; shaded colors represent "somewhat" support/oppose)



They're plainly thinking about the costs of driving and about the environment. Most (66%) said they would strongly consider buying a hybrid or fuel-efficient automobile. More than half (63%) said they would consider carpooling and a majority (53%) said they would consider taking public transportation to work or to school. Just over half (51%) said they would strongly consider not taking a vacation this year; almost as many said they wouldn't consider that option. Some are thinking about living closer to work or school: 37% said they'd consider an eventual move to shorten their commute, while 62% said they wouldn't.

2008 Texas Lyceum Poll - Public Responses to Rising Gas Prices



They're more open to higher spending on public transportation than for toll roads. Most of our respondents — 65% — gave systems such as light rail a ranking of "6" or more on that favorability scale (40% gave it an "8" or better). And about that many gave the same mark to spending more on energy efficient and "next generation" buses (71% rated this "6" or higher on the 0-10 scale).

Asked whether state and local governments in Texas should be spending more or less than what they're spending now on transportation, 44% said spending is about right, while 26% said spending should be higher and 22% said it should be lower.

The numbers change a bit when the subject is "our rail system." Most (58%) said state and local governments should be spending "a little bit more" or "much more" on rail projects; 18% opted for "a little bit less" or "much less." They were less enthusiastic about spending more on airports (34%) and ports (44%).

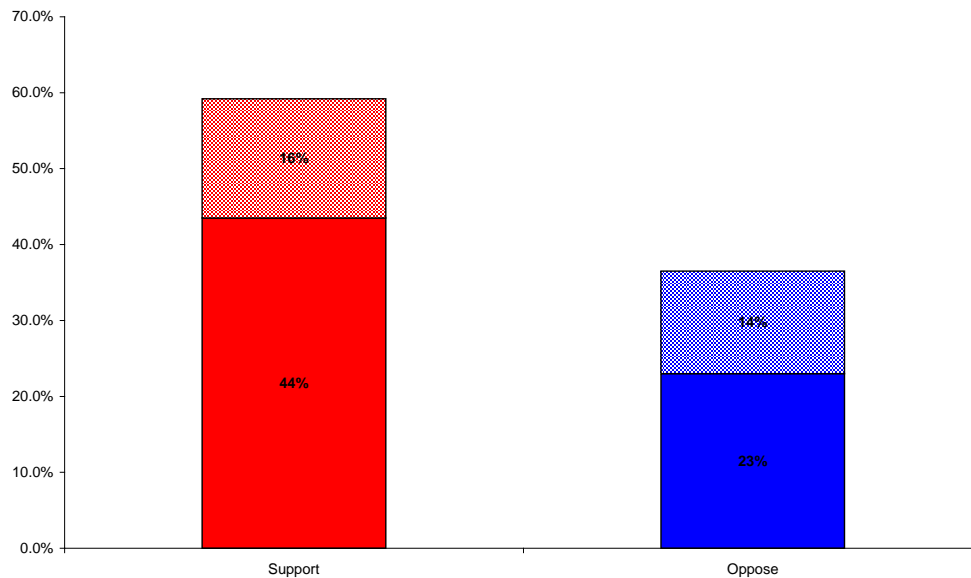
Slightly more than half support "the state of Texas allowing private business contractors to handle transportation projects and improvements." But few are undecided. While 53% favor the private work, another 41% oppose it.

By a wide margin, Texans prefer to have design of new roads and highways in state rather than in local control. Those planners will have to walk carefully, though: 51% of our respondents said they oppose the state using its power of eminent domain to secure right of way for new transportation projects.

A large majority (76%) said they would support regional rail systems connecting adjacent cities like Dallas and Fort Worth or Austin and San Antonio.

Although 44% said they use their cell phone when driving, a smaller number would oppose a ban on using a mobile phone while driving. A majority — 60% — would "strongly" or "somewhat" support a ban on cell phone use while driving. More than two in five would "strongly" support that ban. Just 23% strongly oppose a ban, joined by 14% who would somewhat oppose such a prohibition.

**2008 Texas Lyceum Poll - Public Attitudes on Banning Cell Phone Use While Driving**  
(Solid colors represent "strongly" support/oppose; shaded colors represent "somewhat" support/oppose)



### Methodology

The 2008 Texas Lyceum Poll is a telephone-based multi-stage cluster sample of Texas adults. Telephone coverage within the state of Texas is approximately 97%. Randomized selection procedures were assiduously followed throughout the process, even at the level of selecting individuals within the household. The final

sample size is 1,000 adult Texans. The instrument itself relies on questions that have been used previously in national polls, and have been shown to be both valid (correlating with plausible independent and dependent variables) and reliable (robust to question order and interviewer effects). A Spanish version of the instrument was developed and respondents were given a choice of participating in English or Spanish. Bilingual interviewers were utilized, and approximately 48 interviews (5% of the sample) were completed in Spanish. The overall response rate (completed interviews/contacts) is 37%. This rate is partially the result of an extended time in the field, which facilitated call-backs. The overall margin of error for the sample is +/- 3.1 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. The data used to generate top-lines and tables are weighted by U.S. Census Bureau estimates with respect to age, gender, and race. For example, Census data indicate the proportion of 18-29 year old Hispanic females in Texas, and we use these estimates to weight the survey data. As expected, the most significant weights are applied to young, male, minority respondents (who are under-represented here, as they are in almost all polls in the U.S.).

***More to come***

The Texas Lyceum will release more results from the 2008 poll. Tomorrow, June 26<sup>th</sup>, will cover findings on the 2008 presidential match-up as well as what Texans think about the economy and other national issues. June 27<sup>th</sup> will feature results about Texans' attitudes on important issues facing the state and matchups for the 2010 election cycle.

Summaries and details of the poll will be posted to [www.texaslyceum.org](http://www.texaslyceum.org).