

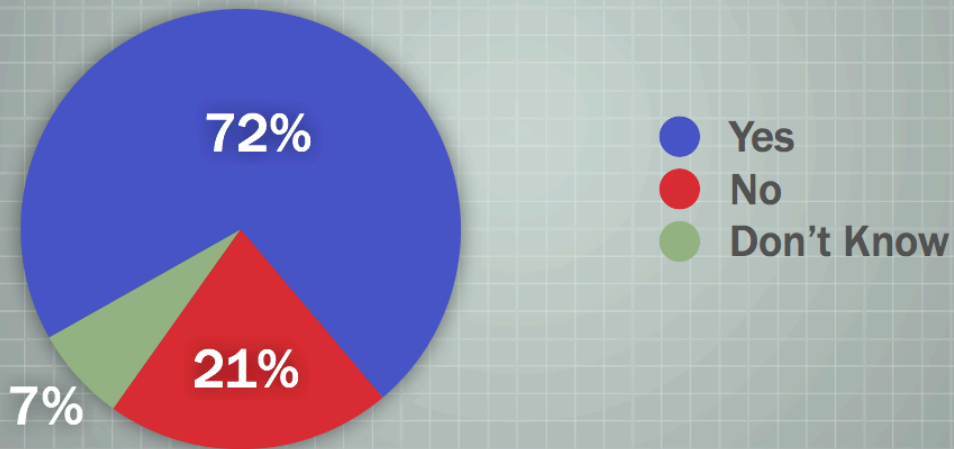
“INSIDE” INTELLIGENCE

Sponsored by: **Hahn, Texas**

*The Texas Weekly/Texas Tribune insider poll
for the week of April 22*

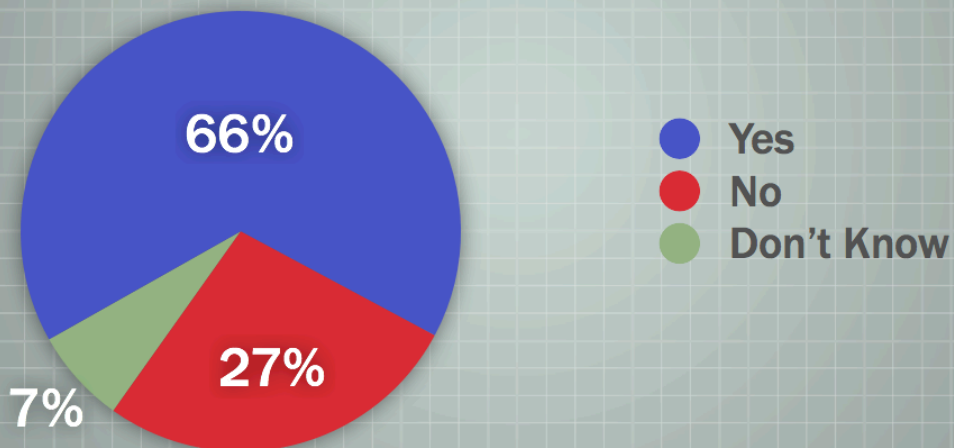
INSIDE INTELLIGENCE

Should vehicle sales taxes be used only for transportation?



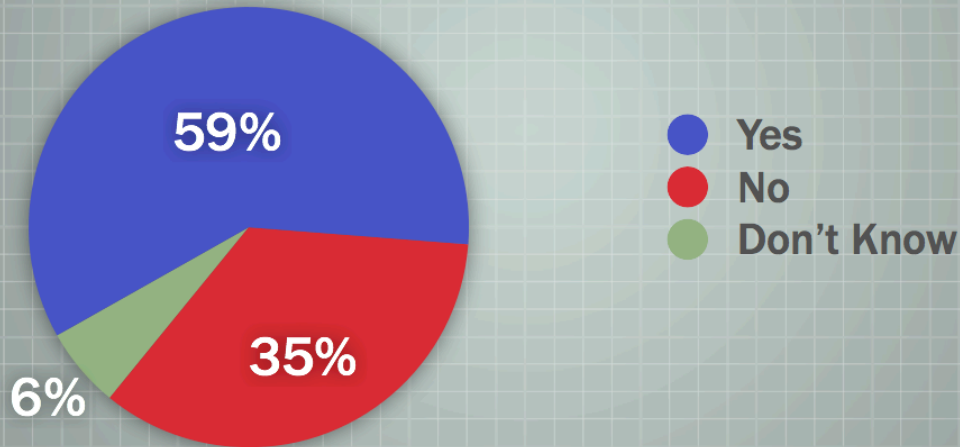
INSIDE INTELLIGENCE

Should some of the Rainy Day Fund be used for transportation?



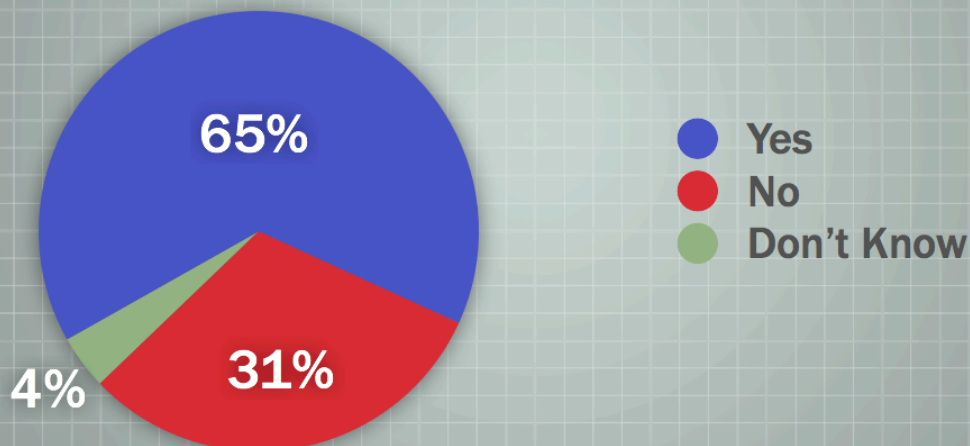
INSIDE INTELLIGENCE

Should Texas use all gasoline taxes for roads instead of sharing with schools?



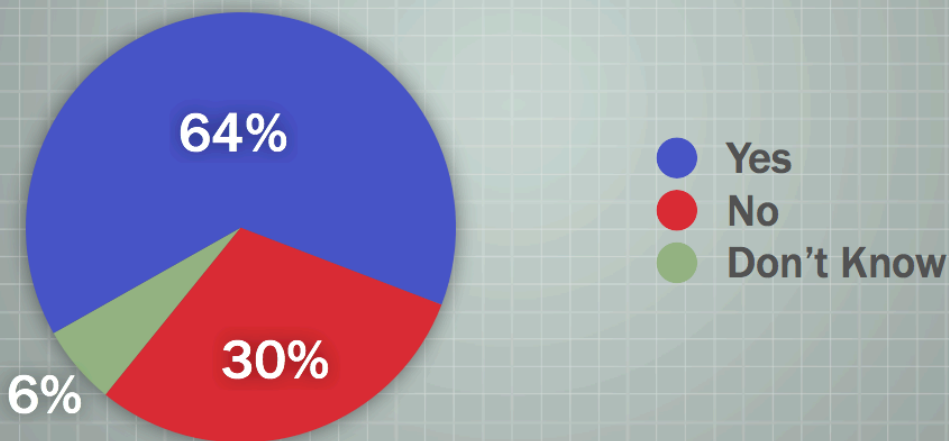
INSIDE INTELLIGENCE

Should Texas raise fees to pay for transportation?



INSIDE INTELLIGENCE

Should lawmakers spend more on transportation if it means breaking the budget spending cap?



Should Texas dedicate taxes on vehicle sales to transportation?

- "New technologies in vehicle fuel consumption has caused a funding gap. Higher MPGs mean less fuel taxes. Texas is in need of a new revenue stream to offset this loss."
- "I don't know what the best way is to dedicate new revenue to transportation but vehicle sales seems to be as good / bad as anything else. With fuel efficiency standards constantly increasing, it makes sense for the state to find a new and stable source of revenue."
- "It's logical - since 25 percent of the gas tax currently goes to education, it is appropriate for at least a portion of the motor vehicle sales tax to go to roads"
- "Texans love to buy cars and trucks. Cars and trucks are used on Texas' roads. Seems like a reasonable fund dedication."
- "Texas' transportation [read that highways] needs all the funds it can get from all possible sources. No pun intended, but it's the grease on our most important priority business development [read that Jobs] plans."
- "To thoughtfully answer this question, I need to know how much tax money is collected. And where it currently goes."
- "The more general vs. dedicated revenue the state has, the better."

- "A fine idea, if there is some other way to raise the \$8 billion that the MV sales tax supplies to GR every budget. Not that easy."

- "Let's start by ending the diversions on the taxes we already levy for transportation purposes."

- "And make it dedicated"

- "Add a car to the road, provide a portion of the money for roads!"

- "You have to start from the premise that Texas revenues are inadequate, making it literally impossible to do what needs to be done in Education, health care, transportation and water."

- "At least a portion, if not all."

- "Would be better to raise the cost of registration for all vehicles since they all use Texas roads."

- "Yes, especially if we're really, truly, this-time-it's-for-real, going to spend dedicated funds for their dedicated purposes. And 'transportation' should mean roads--NOT HIGH SPEED RAIL."

- "They should periodically APPROPRIATE as much as necessary

from this source to transportation as they need to, but dedication of the revenue itself will only leave a permanent hole in the GR budget which might have to be filled by new taxes."

- "Unless a rich uncle leaves us a lot of unencumbered money."

- "I thought it did that already"

- "We need as many dollars as possible to ensure our kids can get to school, our products get to market, and Texas remains economically viable. We need to fund new roads and bridges (and fix the old ones) to make this happen."

- "There is a nexus - tax the Lexus."

- "The current situation is not sustainable. Additional revenue sources must be found."

- "We need to build roads or we are in trouble, period."

- "A portion - but only if dedicated taxes are actually dedicated."

- "But it still won't be enough..."

Should the state use money in the Rainy Day Fund for transportation?

- "We can use the Fund now to fix our aging infrastructure or increase taxes in the future."

- "You don't want the Rainy Day Fund to hit the cap, and oil and gas development is not going away any

time soon. We have the money, let the paving begin."

- "It would be irresponsible not to use a portion of what's in our savings to fix the problem we have today, then create a reliable revenue stream for

the future that does not include the Rainy Day Fund"

- "Under the current tools available, the state will never catch up on the highway projects critical to all parts of the state. In this case, the Rainy Day Fund is a good option."

- "For transportation infrastructure -- long term investments..."

- "If necessary"

- "Oil prices won't always be this high, so we'd best prepare for less money in the budget."

- "Of course; it's there to be used. Also for public education, which should have been funded from the RDF two years ago. Never too late."

- "If there are one-time expenditures that will improve our infrastructure in a way to help create more Texas jobs, then let's do it."

- "Rainy Day fund should be used for items which are in crisis - like Education in this state!"

- "Not routinely."

- "Education"

- "Traffic congestion costs businesses millions of dollars and families dozens of hours each year. It is both pro-business and pro-family values. This shouldn't be a debate by a majority and governor who claim to vigorously support both."

- "Just one-time expenditures, not recurring expenses"

- "I'm really conflicted on this. Typically, I'm in the crowd that says no rainy day money for recurring expenses, but we are so far behind the eight-ball in the shale-play areas that I'm leaning toward cracking the piggy bank--provided we come up with some regular income streams devoted to roads."

- "The rainy day fund is just general revenue with a dotted line around it. As long as they keep 5% of the GR budget in the fund, they can spend it for anything, as long as it's a one-time expenditure."

- "Not until Schools are fully funded"

- "And maybe a little thing called EDUCATION!!"

- "They hardly used any for public education so why in the hell would I support it for roads. Get some asphalt and patch them up."

- "Should not be for one time expenditures. Use as a revolving fund"

- "One time expenditure? Don't think so..."

- "Last biennium we were \$27B in the red, this time around we're \$8B in the black. That fluctuation suggests our economy is not stable. We should use monies from the Economic Stabilization Fund to ensure our state has the proper transportation infrastructure to attract business and grow our economy. I think feel-good types call this 'paying it forward.'"

- "Not until education, Medicaid and water are funded."

- "There is not enough money to fix the problem. We need a reoccurring tax system to keep up."
- "If we used the rainy day fund for everything people wanted to use it for there would be no rainy day fund."
- "Transportation is a black hole. Why try one-time money to fix a problem that's been around for decades? We need a recurring source of revenue."
- "Drivers stuck in traffic snarls all over Texas urban areas would wonder why not."
- "Rainy Day money should be used first to jump-start the water plan implementation, not to start subsidizing ongoing expenditures."
- "Here's a novel idea: equal shares for the Big 3. Whatever transportation gets out of the RDF, so doth Education and Water."

Should the state use all of the gasoline tax for transportation and find a substitute for the 25 percent that now goes to education?

- "Who do you rob...Peter or Paul?"
- "I like that solution better than the vehicle sales tax."
- "We have to take a harder look at schools and the money that is being wasted year in and year out on administrative CYA ... get those dollars in the classroom - invest in instructions instead of inflated bureaucratic administrative positions. Fund vouchers and you will see competition do some wonderful things for the children of this state."
- "If we don't support education, good roads may not be necessary. Future generations won't qualify for good jobs that require a commute."
- "We should raise the gas tax."
- "... ALL possible sources."
- "Yes, with so much talk about 'accountability' in education results, the focus should change to where funding is currently invested and what the results are for our investment. We already know that the bureaucracy is top-heavy and thinning it and moving funds to the classroom would likely enhance education results."
- "Quit gutting education."
- "More importantly they should adjust the gas tax for inflation."
- "Why not? If you have a source worth \$1.5 billion per biennium. Maybe get rid of the high-cost natural gas exemption to make up the difference."
- "Don't stop there. End ALL of the diversions."
- "I am torn here - transportation infrastructure needs funding, but unless we find a way to replace that 25% in the education budget it should remain there!"
- "Good luck getting that Constitutional amendment passed."

- "The big question is whether they would replace the education money or end up in court again if not."

- "No sense robbing Peter to pay Paul."

- "We have one of the largest economies in the world. There is plenty of money to do everything we need done if priorities are set."

- "Pretty worthless endeavor-- synonymous with robbing Peter to pay Paul."

- "No, that's too much to bite off at this time...however, it's past time to look at bumping that tax up a penny or five."

- "The best outcome of the session for transportation would be to end all diversions...."

- "Removing money from education would have to be replaced from somewhere. If we need to raise the gasoline tax by a dime, so be it. I don't see the Legislature cutting education again."

- "Roads should be paid for by the people that use them."

- "Hell NO! You actually think those clowns would find a substitute for the quarter that goes to public education? Come on, now."

- "Property taxes, lottery proceeds, gasoline sales...our state surely funds education in a weird manner, huh? We should cut education funding ties

to these areas that have nothing to do with education. Surely there's a better way to ensure everyone pays a fair share to educate our kids."

- "Nope. Education should keep its bird in the hand."

- "Just another part of transparency. Keep gasoline paying for roads."

- "Truth in taxation!"

- "With the surplus available, time to 'true up' the budget."

- "We should calculate our transportation needs and find dedicated resources for them."

- "We already spend a bundle on education. Educators can learn to do more with less. And I will puke if I hear we have cut to the bone. I know school districts where kids live within walking distance of their schools and still ride the bus. Really? I can find you more examples of ways to keep cutting. Has anyone dared take on the cesspool of corruption and waste we call HISD? Let's start there. Let's take on the nasty and hard political fight, put more money into the classrooms and whack the administrators and their budgets. Instead of three administrators for three areas make one do it and tell that one they can do the work or find new work. If I were the politician I would bet there are more teachers voting than administrators voting. And you mean to tell me you cannot sell this to the public by saying teachers count more? Come on people...."

Should the state find the money for transportation by raising fees?

- "But may be a slight gasoline tax increase 1 cent or 2."
- "We're carving out all of these lanes to make it easier for bicyclists to run stop signs and red lights, why don't we make them pay registration fees?"
- "The existing system is not sufficient - it hasn't been for over a decade and instead of fixing the problem we resort to stop gap measures that have grown unpopular like tolls and even bonding. It's past time to fix the problem - stop punting."
- "Fees have been raised...and raised. You can't get there using that route. Never enough money."
- "... ALL possible sources."
- "NO new taxes!"
- "Fees are extremely regressive. So are all the other choices available in Texas."
- "If by 'fees' you mean tolls that would allow roads to be built sooner than they otherwise would be, then, 'yes.' Otherwise, 'no.'"
- "We are 'feeling' people to death already."
- "No adjustment in years for inflation, or more efficient cars and our transportation infrastructure is not keeping pace so the answer is we need more money."
- "How about raising the gas tax instead?"
- "The gas tax has not been raised in two decades and should be to help fill the transportation funding gap."
- "Fees are a gimmick and regressive. They are the coward's way of budgeting. Cowboy-up and fund transportation in a real way, without gimmicks."
- "Registration for all vehicles should be raised. With 26 million residents, \$10 would get you more than a 1/4 billion dollars."
- "If by 'find the money,' you mean find ALL the money, no. But if you're talking modest increases in overweight fees with the fees earmarked to road repair, I can go with that."
- "Motor vehicle registration fees and tire fees would be a reasonable source."
- "Everyone benefits from transportation facilities. We should pay for transportation improvements/maintenance with general taxes."
- "Small raise in gas tax and license fees makes sense"
- "Including gas tax!"
- "No, and I'll use the example given to public education; live within your means."
- "There is substantial support for increasing fees to national median levels"

- "Our roads are vital to our continued economic viability, and we need to fund them. The City of Austin tried a no-build approach ('If we don't build roads, they won't come') and we're living with that disastrous policy decision today. Texas cannot afford the same problem on a grander scale."

- "Directly related user fees, not more sneaky criminal penalties. Taxpayers need to know what they're being taxed for, and what it costs individually."

- "Driving a vehicle is a right. Motorist should pay for that right. DLs and registrations should increase."

- "User fees - AKA toll roads. Toll roads have worked well in the Houston area and been embraced by the public, while the rest of the state complains about congestion and

protests the construction of tolled roads."

- "We are either a 'pay as you go state' or we are not. We like the growth. The gov says that when the family grows, we have to take care of it."

- "Those of us who hunt, fish and camp have been paying our way for many years because Texas Parks and Wildlife Dept. is not fully funded from taxes. Let EVERYONE pay the fees because we all drive on the roads or use them in one way or another whether you are rich or poor. We all need roads. If I hear one more liberal say that is regressive I will puke!"

- "All these questions and not one time do you ask: Should the state raise taxes to pay for transportation?"

- "That's the only real answer. We can't keep trying bond ourselves into transportation paradise."

Should Texas increase spending for transportation if it means busting the constitutional cap on budget increases?

- "We are addressing this problem about 15 years late. We have to make more radical choices than if we had raised the gas tax by a nickel and indexed it to CPI in 2001 as Clyde suggested."

- "I don't see why we have the Rainy Day Fund if it's going to be subject to the constitutional cap. Isn't that why you have a Rainy Day Fund in the first place?"

- "Unfortunately yes. We are not recognizing that there is a problem if we continue to point to the cap and

say, 'well, sorry we can't.' If we had been more responsible the last decade the cap wouldn't be a problem. But we were not, and now is not the time to hide behind it. Fix the whole problem; don't invest in putting up the walls and hope that you can afford a roof later. You'll look like an idiot when it rains."

- "While there may be legitimate reasons for busting the cap, roads ain't one of them."

- "If possible."

- "Zero-based budgeting would provide more than enough money for Texas roads."

- "As long as they do it through resources other than taxes - IE Rainy Day fund."

- "Oh please -- it's not that hard. The constitutional cap can be broken by a simple majority vote. In fact, it was broken as recently as 2007. But the real problem is that there isn't usually enough revenue to even get to the cap. There isn't this time either, unless you get into the Rainy Day Fund."

- "If cap-busting is required to make one-time expenditures out of the Rainy Day fund, we should put that vote to the people."

- "Capital spending should be ok to do so."

- "All I know is that for a very long time the Texas Legislature has been unwilling to address this critical need in a satisfactory way. Something has to give, or this state will see roads deteriorate and our economic future will follow."

- "You use it, you pay for it."

- "Not building and hoping the people wouldn't come obviously didn't work. Serious traffic congestion needs to be dealt with."

- "More congestion, less progression!"

- "That's an arbitrary number that should be arbitrarily burst through."

- "As long as they have the courage to be on record and have the votes to do it, let them bust the cap. Voters can

bust the members at the next election if they don't like it."

- "This is the lifeblood of business!"

- "Perhaps. There is no greater threat to the quality of life in Texas cities than traffic congestion. In addition, traffic congestion is negatively impacting our productivity and limiting the ability of businesses to move goods and deliver services. A variety of strategies are needed to solve the problem, including toll roads, but the problem is urgent and must be dealt with."

- "I don't agree with most of the Governor's positions, but since his Lite Guv days he has been pushing for improvements to transportation and he has been right."

- "Same for education and water."

- "With the caveat that the legislature should audit all funding at the agency closely and annually. We know what the needs are, but are there sufficient vendors to actually do the roadwork if the money is available? TXDOT and DPS have historically been black holes for state funding. How many hearings did we sit through listening to Sen. Ogden talk about all of the heavy equipment that would sit in areas for MONTHS along the highway for project B because the vendor was too busy on project A or C to get to B. Strong auditing requirements needs to be implemented."

- "I'll say it again; live within your means Republicans!"

- "Smart people than I can figure out a way to make it happen within the confines our current parameters."

- "Texas needs to bust a cap on somebody's constitution."

- "We are close to a crisis."

Our thanks to this week's participants: Gene Acuna, Cathie Adams, Brandon Aghamalian, Jenny Aghamalian, Clyde Alexander, George Allen, Doc Arnold, Jay Arnold, Charles Bailey, Tom Banning, Dave Beckwith, Rebecca Bernhardt, Andrew Biar, Allen Blakemore, Tom Blanton, Chris Britton, Andy Brown, David Cabrales, Kerry Cammack, Marc Campos, Thure Cannon, Snapper Carr, Janis Carter, Elizabeth Christian, Elna Christopher, Kevin Cooper, Beth Cubriel, Randy Cubriel, Curtis Culwell, Denise Davis, Hector De Leon, June Deadrick, Nora Del Bosque, Tom Duffy, David Dunn, Jeff Eller, Jack Erskine, John Esparza, Jon Fisher, Wil Galloway, Norman Garza, Dominic Giarratani, Eric Glenn, Kinnan Golemon, Jim Grace, John Greytok, Clint Hackney, Anthony Haley, Wayne Hamilton, Bill Hammond, Adam Haynes, Ken Hodges, Laura Huffman, Deborah Ingersoll, Cal Jillson, Jason Johnson, Mark Jones, Robert Jones, Lisa Kaufman, Richard Khouri, Tom Kleinworth, Sandy Kress, Nick Lampson, Pete Laney, Dick Lavine, James LeBas, Luke Legate, Ruben Longoria, Vilma Luna, Matt Mackowiak, Bryan Mayes, Dan McClung, Scott McCown, Robert Miller, Mike Moses, Steve Murdock, Nelson Nease, Keats Norfleet, Pat Nugent, Pat Oxford, Nef Partida, Gardner Pate, Jerry Philips, Tom Phillips, Wayne Pierce, Richard Pineda, Allen Place, Kraege Polan, Gary Polland, Jay Propes, Bill Ratliff, Tim Reeves, Patrick Reinhart, Grant Ruckel, Jason Sabo, Andy Sansom, Jim Sartwelle, Stan Schlueter, Robert Scott, Dan Shelley, Christopher Shields, Jason Skaggs, Ed Small, Martha Smiley, Todd Smith, Larry Soward, Leonard Spearman, Dennis Speight, Jason Stanford, Bob Strauser, Colin Strother, Michael Quinn Sullivan, Sherry Sylvester, Russ Tidwell, Trey Trainor, Vicki Truitt, Ware Wendell, Darren Whitehurst, Seth Winick, Peck Young, Angelo Zottarelli.