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Stockton Poll: New Jersey Motorists Say Much-Needed Infrastructure Repair Should be Fueled with Federal Money

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Motorists say New Jersey roads and bridges are in bad shape and should be fixed. But only a minority are willing to personally pay more for road work, preferring federal funding to repair infrastructure, according to a Stockton University Poll released recently.

In the poll of 632 New Jersey adults, 80 percent rated the condition of the state's roads and highways as fair (45 percent) or poor (35 percent). Respondents rated the condition of New Jersey's bridges and tunnels only a little better, with 63 percent rating them as fair (43 percent) or poor (20 percent). Thirty-eight percent said they have felt concern for their safety when traveling over a bridge or through a tunnel.

Nearly half say poor road conditions have cost them money in repairs, with 46 percent saying their car sustained a flat tire or other damage because of a pothole in the last three years. Thirty-one percent called potholes the greatest hazard on the state's roads.

The Stockton Polling Institute of the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy at Stockton University interviewed 632 adult residents of New Jersey in this poll. Live interviewers called landline and cell telephones March 21-28, 2019. The poll's margin of error is +/- 3.9 percentage points.

Strong majorities believe leaders in Washington should do more about the problem. Sixty-two percent said President Donald Trump is not paying enough attention to the conditions of roads, bridges and tunnels, while 22 percent said he is, and 15 percent were unsure.

But the president fared better than Congress; 76 percent said leaders in Congress were not paying enough attention to infrastructure concerns, while 13 percent said they are, and 10 percent were unsure. Researcher John Froonjian of the Hughes Center said the results are consistent with abysmally low ratings of Congress in previous Stockton polls.

New Jersey adults would overwhelmingly support a federal infrastructure bill discussed in Washington that would spent up to \$200 billion, according to the poll. Eighty percent said

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they would support it, with 10 percent opposed and 9 percent unsure. However, when asked whether they personally were willing to pay more to help finance construction projects for roads and bridges, 48 percent said no, while 45 percent said they would be willing, and 7 percent were unsure.

“New Jersey is a very high-state tax, and taxpayers already feel that they are tapped out,” said Michael W. Klein, interim executive director of the Hughes Center. “The state’s gas tax increased more than 27 cents per gallon between 2016 and 2018, and the congestion pricing plan for driving into New York City, recently approved under New York State’s new budget, will make commuting for many New Jerseyans more expensive than ever when it is implemented.”

The percentage in support of a federal infrastructure bill dropped to 55 percent if the bill would increase the federal debt.

So how to fund infrastructure repairs? Among those willing to pay more to improve road and bridge conditions, one-third would support higher tolls, including increased tolls on existing toll roads (21 percent) or charging new tolls on New Jersey roads that do not have them (13 percent). Eighteen percent supported a higher gasoline tax, while 20 percent would increase other taxes such as the state’s sales or income taxes. Only 5 percent wanted more government debt.

Distracted Drivers Also a Major Hazard

While poor road conditions were seen as dangerous by many, the most respondents (49 percent) said distracted drivers posed the greatest hazard on the road. A majority of 55 percent said New Jersey drivers generally drive too fast. Six percent said they drive too slowly, while 35 percent said most drive at appropriate speeds. However, there was little appetite for greater enforcement of anti-speeding laws: 53 percent wanted no change in enforcement levels, and 6 percent wanted less enforcement. Forty percent would like stricter enforcement of speed limits.

Eighty-four percent of respondents said they drive more than 10 mph over the speed limit at least occasionally, with 39 percent responding they speed very or somewhat often. Otherwise, motorists rate themselves as careful drivers. Only 9 percent said they are distracted when they drive very or somewhat often, and the same percentage admitted to driving too aggressively very or somewhat often. Eleven percent said they have frequently made rude gestures at other drivers, and 7 percent said they have felt road rage. Hardly anyone – 1 percent – said they ran stop signs or traffic lights very or somewhat often, while 17 percent said they do so occasionally.

Finally, many see traffic as the bane of New Jersey driving. Ten percent identified it as the greatest road hazard, and 56 percent (60 percent in North Jersey) said it poses a major

inconvenience (23 percent) or a serious problem (33 percent). Thirty-seven percent called it a minor inconvenience.

For full poll results, go to [Poll Results](#).

About the Hughes Center

The William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy (www.stockton.edu/hughescenter) at Stockton University serves as a catalyst for research, analysis and innovative policy solutions on the economic, social and cultural issues facing New Jersey, and promotes the civic life of New Jersey through engagement, education and research. The center is named for William J. Hughes, whose distinguished career includes service in the U.S. House of Representatives, Ambassador to Panama and as a Distinguished Visiting Professor at Stockton. The Hughes Center can be found on YouTube, and can be followed on Facebook @StocktonHughesCenter, Twitter @hughescenter and Instagram @_stockton_hughes_center.

Methodology

The poll of New Jersey adults was conducted by the Stockton Polling Institute of the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy March 21-28, 2019. Live interviewers who are mostly Stockton University students called cell phones and landlines from the Stockton University campus. Overall, 59 percent of interviews were conducted on cell phones and 41 percent on landline phones. A total of 632 respondents screened as adults and residents of New Jersey were interviewed. Both cell and landline phone numbers came from a random digital dialing (RDD) sample provided by MSG. Data are weighted based on U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 5-year data for New Jersey on variables of age, ethnicity, race, education level, sex and region. The poll's margin of error is +/- 3.9 percentage points at a 95 percent confidence level. MOE is higher for subsets. The Stockton Polling Institute is a member of the American Association for Public Opinion Research.