

IDAHO AT A GLANCE

Voter Opinions on Roads and Bridges

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Highlights

A critical challenge for Idaho's policy makers is finding revenue to invest in infrastructure for which most voters see a clear need in the future. This is the main conclusion from our 2014 likely voter survey on Idaho's roads and bridges. Key findings include the following:

- ◆ Likely voters generally view roads and bridges as adequate today but not for ten years from now.
- ◆ Almost all likely voters see a relationship between the economy, on one hand, and roads and bridges, on the other.
- ◆ Roughly half of likely voters say that increasing funding for roads and bridges should be among the state legislature's top three priorities.
- ◆ A substantial majority of likely voters is convinced by arguments about safety and the economic importance of roads and bridges, but less convinced by arguments about high taxes and government waste.
- ◆ Revenue sources for which voter support is highest are those that are less likely to generate significant amounts of funding.

Background

Like other states, Idaho faces critical issues related to funding roads and bridges. Revenues to support maintenance and capital improvements are flat or declining, while costs and use are increasing. These trends pose significant challenges for policy makers. They need credible, unbiased information to make sound funding decisions, especially in an environment in which tax and fee increases are politically difficult.

This report presents findings from a telephone survey on issues related to funding Idaho's roads and bridges, which are part of a transportation system that also includes rail, mass transit and other components. The survey was commissioned by the McClure Center for Public Policy Research and conducted by the Social Science Research Unit (SSRU), both at the University of Idaho. Complete results and detail on the methodology are available in SSRU's technical report on the McClure Center's website (see below).

The survey's primary goal was to understand opinions of likely Idaho voters on issues related to funding roads and bridges. It was designed to produce unbiased information about voter opinions, without predisposing respondents to answer questions in one way or another. Topics included:

- ◆ the adequacy and conditions of roads and bridges;
- ◆ the importance of funding roads and bridges relative to other legislative priorities;
- ◆ arguments for and against increasing funding for roads and bridges; and
- ◆ alternative revenue sources for funding roads and bridges.

Use of roads and bridges

The most common use of roads and bridges is for personal business. Almost 80% of likely voters use them at least three days a week for this purpose.

The second most common use of roads and bridges is for commuting. Sixty-seven percent of likely voters use roads and bridges at least three days a week for this purpose. Of those who use roads and bridges to travel back and forth for work, nearly 50% commute less than 20 minutes a day. Ten percent commute 60 minutes or more a day.

Share of likely voters who use roads and bridges at least 3 days a week for personal business, commuting, and recreation (%)

	percent
Personal business	78
Commuting	67
Recreation	33

Importance and connection with economy

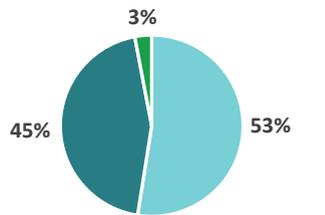
Roughly half of likely voters say that increasing funding for roads and bridges should be among the state legislature's three highest priorities. Voters age 25-49 are the *least* likely age group to say this issue should be among the top three priorities, as were voters with higher incomes.

Opinions do not vary significantly by gender or where people live.

Almost all likely voters make the connection between the economy, on one hand, and roads and bridges, on the other: 71% say roads and bridges are very important to Idaho's economy and another 27% say they are somewhat important. Older voters are more likely than younger

voters to say roads and bridges are very important to the economy. Opinions did not vary significantly by gender, income, or where people live.

Likely voters' views on the importance of roads and bridges as a legislative priority



- One of the three highest priorities
- Lower down the list
- Don't know

How likely voters view the connection between the economy and roads and bridges (%)

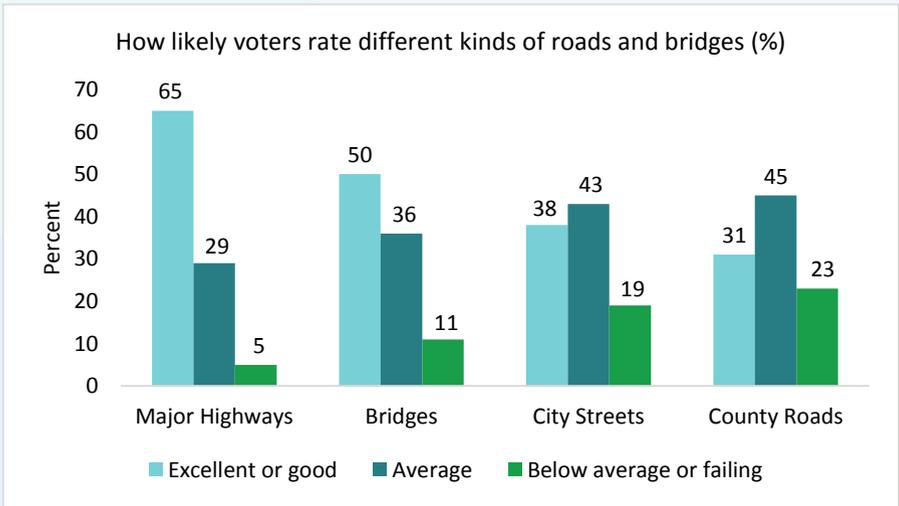
	percent
Very important	71
Somewhat important	27
Somewhat unimportant	2
Not at all important	0
Don't know	0

Rating the system

We asked respondents to rate different parts of the transportation system. To the extent voters think there are problems with roads and bridges, they are most likely to see those problems close to home. County roads received the least favorable ratings, followed by city streets, bridges, and major highways.

Ratings vary by where people live. Compared to voters elsewhere, those in District 2 (see map on back panel) tend to give lower ratings to highways, bridges, and city streets. And, compared to urban voters, those in rural counties tend to give lower ratings to city streets and county roads.

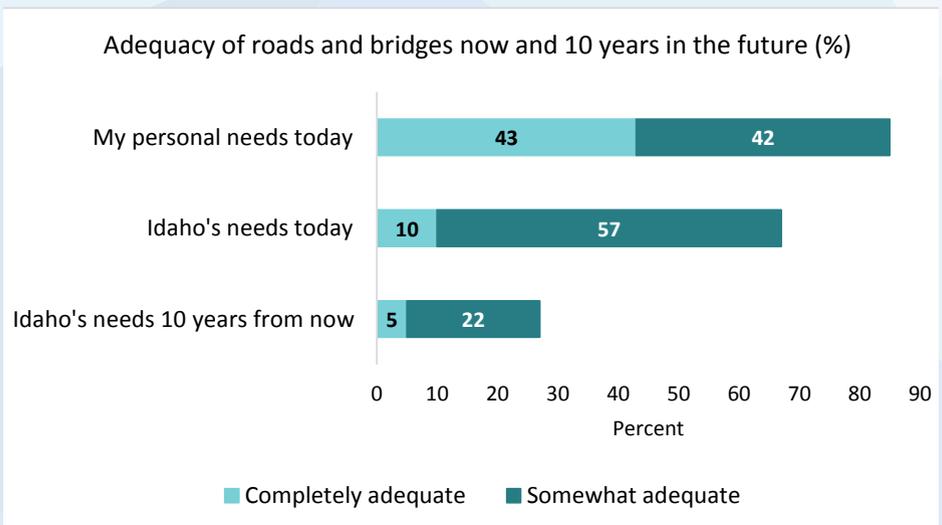
Ratings do not vary significantly by gender or income.



Likely voters generally view roads and bridges as adequate today, but not for the state's needs ten years from now. Only 27% say existing roads and bridges will be completely or somewhat adequate for Idaho's needs in ten years.

Men and women vary in their opinions. Female voters are less likely to view roads and bridges as completely adequate both now and ten years from now.

Voters in District 2 are less likely than others to view roads and bridges as being adequate for Idaho's needs today and ten years from now. Views do not vary significantly by age, income, or whether people live in urban or rural counties.



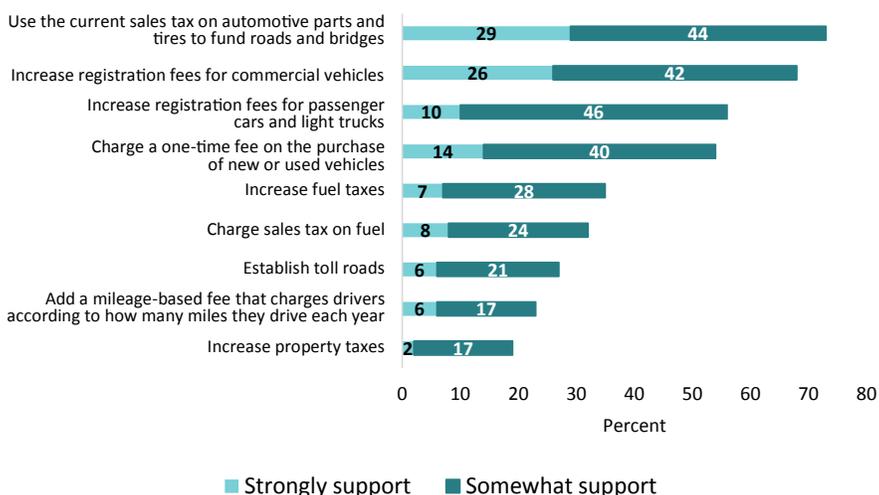
Alternative revenue sources

We asked respondents about the level of their support for nine sources that could be used to raise more funds for Idaho’s roads and bridges. A solid majority strongly or somewhat supports, first, using the current sales tax on auto parts and tires to fund roads and bridges and second, increasing registration fees for commercial vehicles. Levels of support for other sources are lower.

In general, older voters were more likely than younger voters to oppose the various funding sources, although there were exceptions and not all differences in support levels were significant.

Voters most opposed to increasing fuel taxes include those who live outside District 3, women, and those with lower incomes.

Likely voters' level of support for various ways of funding roads and bridges (%)



Who are Idaho’s likely voters?

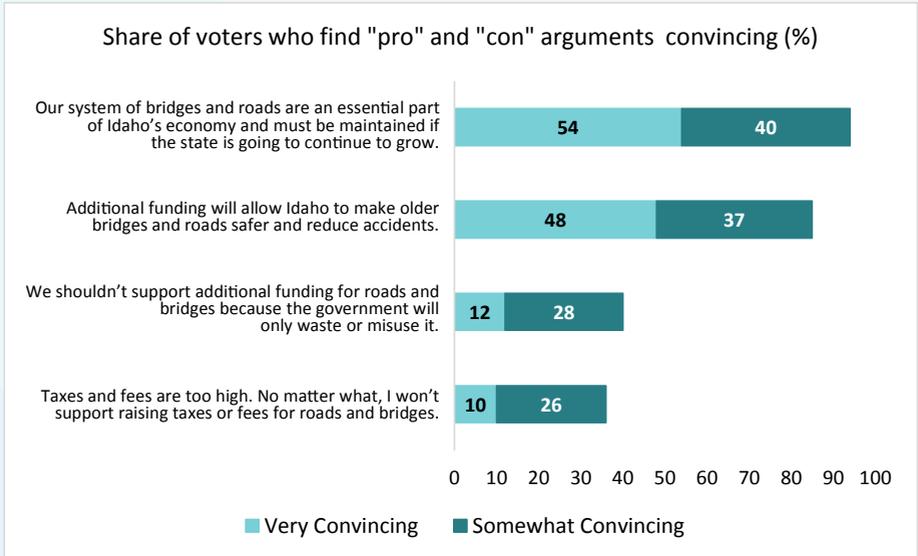
Characteristics ^a	percent
Gender	
Male	47
Female	53
Age	
18-24 years old	6
25-49 years old	41
50-64 years old	30
65 and older	23
Education	
Less than high school	2
High school ^b	17
Some college or associates degree	39
Bachelor's degree or more	42
Annual household income	
Under \$25,000	14
\$25,000-49,999	27
\$50,000-74,999	27
\$75,000 and up	32

^a The sample was weighted to align with the age and gender characteristics of voters in Idaho's 2012 general election. See SSRU's technical report on the McClure Center's website.

^b Includes equivalency

Persuasiveness of “pro” and “con” arguments

We asked respondents how convincing they find four specific arguments they might hear about increasing funding for roads and bridges. Two of the arguments we asked about were positive and two were negative. A substantial majority of likely voters find the two positive arguments very or somewhat convincing. A much smaller share – less than half – find the two negative arguments very or somewhat convincing.



There are several differences among sub-groups in terms of how convincing voters find the four arguments.

- ◆ Younger voters, those with lower incomes, and women are *more likely* to be convinced by the argument that additional funding will allow Idaho to make older bridges and roads safer and reduce accidents.
- ◆ Rural voters are *more likely* than urban voters to be convinced by the argument that we shouldn't support additional funding because the government will only waste and misuse it.
- ◆ Voters in District 3 are *less likely* than those in the rest of the state to be convinced by both negative arguments.

Thirty-seven percent of voters are very or somewhat convinced by the argument, “roads and bridges are an essential part of Idaho's economy and must be maintained if the state is going to continue to grow” *and* by the argument, “we shouldn't support additional funding for roads and bridges because the government will only waste or misuse it.” Thus, 37% of voters view roads and bridges as economically important and worthy of investment but they lack trust in how the public sector might use additional funding.

A larger share of voters is convinced by the economic importance argument but not the government waste and misuse argument. Fifty-seven percent are very or somewhat convinced by the argument, “roads and bridges are an essential part of Idaho's economy and must be maintained if the state is going to continue to grow” *but not by* the argument, “we shouldn't support additional funding for roads and bridges because the government will only waste or misuse it.”

About the survey

Results presented here are based on data from a telephone survey conducted from February to April 2014 by the University of Idaho's Social Science Research Unit (SSRU). To ensure overall coverage of the population, SSRU used a dual-frame, stratified random sample, including cell and landline users. SSRU used two questions to screen potential respondents and identify likely voters:

- 1) Do you always or nearly always vote?
- 2) Will you or will you probably vote in November's election?

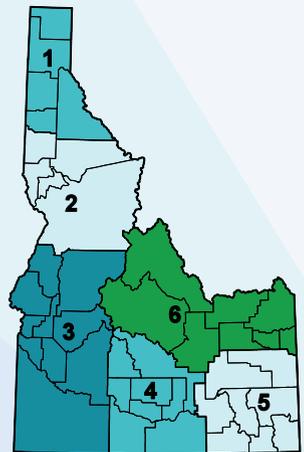
Interviews were conducted with respondents who answered "yes" to the first question, as well as with those who answered "no" to the first question but "yes" to the second question. Respondents who were identified as unlikely voters were thanked and the interview was terminated.

Completed interviews lasted an average of 10 minutes. The final sample included 1,062 likely voters and our response rate was 54%. The sample size yielded a state-level sampling error of plus or minus 3.0%. The statewide random sample was stratified by the Idaho Transportation Department's six highway districts to provide an accurate representation of the state's population (see map). District-level sampling errors ranged from 5.5% in District 3 to 8.4% in Districts 2 and 4. For details on the methodology, please see SSRU's technical report on the McClure Center's website.

The study was entirely funded by the McClure Center, with no state funds. To ensure that the study used the best available methodology, the McClure Center arranged for an external review by Dr. Linda Ng Boyle, associate professor of Industrial and Systems Engineering at the University of Washington. Dr. Boyle directs UW's Human Factors and Statistical Modeling Lab. She reviewed the methodology in advance and the technical report after the survey was completed.

Idaho Transportation Department Highway Districts

- District 1:** Benewah, Bonner, Boundary, Kootenai and Shoshone
- District 2:** Clearwater, Idaho, Latah, Lewis, and Nez Perce
- District 3:** Ada, Adams, Boise, Canyon, Elmore, Gem, Owyhee, Payette, Valley, and Washington
- District 4:** Blaine, Camas, Cassia, Gooding, Jerome, Lincoln, Minidoka, and Twin Falls
- District 5:** Bannock, Bear Lake, Bingham, Caribou, Franklin, Oneida, and Power
- District 6:** Bonneville, Butte, Clark, Custer, Fremont, Jefferson, Lemhi, Madison, and Teton



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