

LARGE MAJORITY OF RHODE ISLAND VOTERS WANT REGIONAL APPROACH TO MODERNIZING OUR TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

Key Takeaways in Rhode Island from Sierra Club's "Transportation Modernization Survey"

OVERVIEW:

Electric vehicle charging stations in every neighborhood. Cleaner air for our children and the elderly. Modern roadways. Communities built for walking and biking. A vision of the future that voters across the region can embrace. Ratcheting down air pollution and relieving snarled traffic, with modern, efficient, and visionary solutions that ensure people and products can get where they need.

[A new survey from Sierra Club](#) shows strong support for making that vision a reality among voters from 11 states in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic regions and the District of Columbia. The survey included oversamples that deep dive into voters' opinions in New York State, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Vermont, Delaware and Maryland. The Transportation Modernization Survey, carried out for the Sierra Club by Public Policy Polling (PPP), shows broad-based, bipartisan, support for a regional coalition of states to implement modern clean transportation solutions, with folks from all walks of life revealing a deeper understanding of transportation issues.

- **In Rhode Island, 77 percent of voters support state action to clean-up transportation pollution.** Regionally, about seven in 10 voters (71 percent) in these states support decision makers taking action to reduce air pollution from cars and trucks by investing in the transportation system, and relying more on fuel-efficient, electric cars and trucks, mass transit, and other public transportation options.
- Roughly three in four voters (74 percent) support moving forward with a regional transportation modernization plan that limits pollution by **investing in electric vehicles, public transportation, and safer communities for walking and biking.** This includes majorities of Democrats (81 percent), independents (69 percent), and Republicans (67 percent), all in agreement on this core issue.

CLOSER LOOK: AIR POLLUTION/HEALTH:

Transportation is now the biggest source of climate change causing emissions in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic regions. With the federal government moving backwards on climate action, states must take the lead, working regionally, to keep us moving towards a cleaner transportation future by reducing pollution from vehicles.

- The survey findings reflect this reality and a growing public perception that cars, trucks and public transportation is the primary source of air pollution, including greenhouse gases. **73 percent of voters across the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic – including 73 percent in Rhode Island -- consider air pollution to be a serious problem; 83**

percent of voters say cars and trucks contribute at least somewhat to air pollution, including 42 percent who say they contribute “a great deal.”

- Voters in Rhode Island understand that a modernized transportation system would mean cleaner air and better health. Much has been accomplished to reduce air pollution from coal-fired power plants. Decision makers know that tackling transportation emissions is the next big hurdle. Doing so would save hundreds of lives, reduce hospital ER admissions, asthma attacks suffered by children, and dangers posed to the health of pregnant women. **Over half (53 percent) of those surveyed regionally agree that a clean transportation plan would have a positive effect on people’s health in the region, while a mere 7 percent think it would have a negative effect. In Rhode Island, 58 percent agree it would have a positive effect on people’s health.**

VIEWS ON ECONOMIC BENEFITS:

Northeast and Mid-Atlantic states are heavily reliant on public transportation to bring goods to market and connect people to jobs and opportunities. Modern transportation solutions are also important for attracting business and spurring economic growth. Investments in clean transportation will inevitably create jobs.

Survey findings support this idea among voters, with **half (49 percent) of those surveyed regionally believing that a clean transportation initiative would have a positive effect on jobs in the region.** Just 13 percent disagreed or felt it would have a negative effect.

WHAT THE EXPERTS ARE SAYING:

Nick Sifuentes, executive director, Tri-State Transportation Campaign:

“Even in a region with high access to public transit, the New York City area still suffers from a myriad of transportation issues, including congested roads, long commutes, and deteriorating public transit service. These are regional issues that require regional solutions. With transportation now the leading contributor to harmful greenhouse gases, TSTC is calling for full funding of public transportation, especially in New York and New Jersey, electrification of our transportation networks, especially MTA and NJ Transit buses, and the adoption of congestion pricing in NYC.”

Brian O'Malley, president & CEO, Central Maryland Transportation Alliance:

“A great transportation system gives you choices, whereas a last-Century transportation system forces you and everyone else to drive for every trip. These poll results confirm that Marylanders want the freedom to choose to sometimes walk, bike or ride a bus or train. Rather than cutting transit budgets and pushing old ideas like expanding highways, we call on the Administration, MDOT, and MDE to focus on working in Maryland and with fellow neighboring states to clean and modernize our transportation network by investing in solutions communities want and need.”

ADDITIONAL SURVEY FINDINGS:

- **Regional support for increased fuel efficiency standards remains strong (73 percent support vs 17 percent oppose) and bipartisan (80 percent of Democrats, 69**

percent of independents, and 69 percent of Republicans support the standards). In Rhode Island, support for increased fuel efficiency standards was at 77 percent.

- Even after hearing arguments both in favor and in opposition to a regional clean transportation plan, a **strong majority of voters (64 percent) support moving ahead with the plan, and strong supporters outnumber strong opponents by more than 3 to 1**. Majority support is still found across the partisan spectrum.
- Nearly **seven in 10 voters across the region consider climate change to be a serious problem**, with nearly half of voters (48 percent) calling it a “very serious” problem.

WHAT DOES THIS ALL MEAN?

A broad majority of those surveyed want a bold and region-wide approach to modernizing our transportation system in order to overcome air pollution, ageing infrastructure and the other woes associated how we move people and goods. The results of Sierra Club's Transportation Modernization Survey show that voters in Rhode Island and across the greater region embrace the challenge of building a cleaner, safer, healthier, more equitable and modern system that will create thousands of new jobs and save consumers billions of dollars in healthcare costs.

If you would like to see an op-ed article on this topic, please let us know.

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Sierra Club is the nation's oldest grassroots environmental organization with more than 3 million members and supporters in all 50 states. The Sierra Club's mission is to explore, enjoy, and protect the wild places of the earth, to practice and promote the responsible use of the earth's ecosystems and resources; and to educate and enlist humanity to protect and restore the quality of the natural and human environments. The Sierra Club has 64 chapters nationwide. Visit us at <http://www.sierraclub.org/> and follow us on Twitter @SierraClub.