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NEW JERSEY DIVIDED ON GAS TAX HIKE

No clear sense of urgency over transportation funding

West Long Branch, N.J. – New Jersey is split down the middle on raising the gas tax to fund transportation projects in the state. The **Monmouth University Poll** also found no clear overriding sense of urgency regarding the state of New Jersey’s transportation infrastructure. While there is no partisan divide on support for a gas tax, many residents feel the state should be able to find other sources of revenue for transportation projects.

New Jersey opinion is divided on raising the gas tax if all the revenue was used to pay for road and bridge improvements – 47% of the state supports such a hike and 52% are opposed. Those who *strongly* oppose a gas tax increase (36%) outnumber those who *strongly* support (23%) it. There is no significant partisan divide on this question, with 49% of Democrats, 47% of Republicans and 44% of independents registering support for raising the gas tax to fund transportation projects.

“The lack of partisan division on a tax issue speaks to the broad coalition of business leaders who support replenishing the state’s Transportation Trust Fund, as well as the importance of this issue to Gov. Christie,” said Patrick Murray, director of the independent Monmouth University Polling Institute in West Long Branch, N.J.

The state’s Transportation Trust Fund has run out of money for new road and bridge improvements, with the current revenue being used to pay down debt from past projects. About half (49%) the state is aware of this situation.

Just under half (47%) of state residents think that having no funding for road or bridge projects over the next couple of years would pose a major problem that will harm the state. Another 37% see this as a minor problem that would inconvenience the state, and 14% say it would not be much of a problem at all. Among gas tax hike supporters, 60% say the lack of transportation funding would pose a major problem. Just 36% of gas tax hike opponents feel the same.

Just 26% of Garden State residents say that most state roads are in decent shape. Half (50%) say that some roads are in decent shape but many are in urgent need of repair. Another 23% say that most state roads are in urgent need of repair. Nearly 3-in-10 (28%) New Jerseyans say that a lot of the state's bridges are in urgent need of repair in order to avoid a structural failure, 36% say some bridges need urgent repair, 22% say just a handful of the state's bridges are in this condition, and 7% say none of the state's bridges need urgent repair. Overall, 1-in-3 New Jerseyans are either very (9%) or somewhat (25%) worried that the bridges they personally drive over on a regular basis are in danger of failing in the next year or so.

Interestingly, gas tax hike opponents are somewhat more likely than supporters to think that most of the state's roads are in good condition (31% opponents and 20% supporters) and that few if any bridges are in danger of failure (35% opponents and 20% supporters). Moreover, about 4-in-10 (41%) gas tax hike supporters are worried about the structural soundness of the bridges they regularly cross, while over 1-in-4 (27%) gas tax hike opponents share that concern.

“The difference between support and opposition of a gas tax hike does not appear to fall along traditional political lines, but there are differences related to concern about the seriousness of New Jersey's infrastructure challenges,” said Murray. “There is a broader question among gas tax hike supporters and opponents alike as to whether a tax increase is the only way to fund transportation projects.”

Most New Jerseyans (71%) agree that the state should find new revenue sources to replenish the Transportation Trust Fund. Only 23% feel that the state should not do any road or bridge repairs until the debt for past transportation projects is paid down. However, just 19% of state residents believe that the state needs to raise taxes in order to find this revenue. Nearly half (47%) believe that other revenue sources are available.

One proposal would couple a gas tax hike with a decrease in the state's estate tax. This tradeoff does not seem to generate much public support, even when it is cast as a decrease in “the taxes people pay when they inherit a family home or other property.” Half (50%) of New Jerseyans say this provision would not affect their opinion on the gas tax, while the remainder are divided – 27% say it would make them more likely to support a gas tax hike and 20% say it would actually make them less likely to support a gas tax hike. Among current opponents of a gas tax increase, 22% would be more likely to support a hike if it was coupled with an estate tax cut and an identical 22% would be less likely to support that package, with 52% saying an estate tax cut would not change their opinion on raising the gas tax to fund transportation projects.

The Monmouth University Poll was conducted by telephone with 805 New Jersey adults from January 30 to February 2, 2015. The total sample has a margin of error of ± 3.5 percent. The poll was conducted by the Monmouth University Polling Institute in West Long Branch, New Jersey.

DATA TABLES

The questions referred to in this release are as follows:

(* Some columns may not add to 100% due to rounding.)

1. Would you support or oppose raising the state tax on gasoline if all of the revenue was used to pay for road and bridge improvements? [Is that strongly or somewhat support/oppose?]

	TOTAL	PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE			REGION OF STATE			GAS TAX HIKE	
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	North	Central	South	Support	Oppose
Strongly support	23%	23%	22%	23%	28%	19%	18%	23%	28%	27%	23%	17%	49%	0%
Somewhat support	24%	26%	22%	24%	22%	26%	24%	25%	23%	23%	21%	28%	51%	0%
Somewhat oppose	16%	18%	14%	12%	12%	19%	21%	15%	11%	15%	16%	16%	0%	30%
Strongly oppose	36%	32%	38%	40%	38%	33%	34%	35%	37%	33%	40%	37%	0%	70%
(VOL) Don't know	2%	1%	3%	1%	1%	3%	2%	2%	1%	3%	0%	2%	0%	0%

2. Thinking about the roads in New Jersey, would you say (1) most state roads are in decent shape, (2) some roads are in decent shape but many are in urgent need of repair, or (3) most roads are in urgent need of repair?

	TOTAL	PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE			REGION OF STATE			GAS TAX HIKE	
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	North	Central	South	Support	Oppose
Most state roads are in decent shape	26%	25%	25%	32%	25%	26%	28%	24%	25%	21%	24%	35%	20%	31%
Some roads are in decent shape but many are in urgent need of repair	50%	50%	51%	47%	47%	53%	49%	51%	50%	50%	55%	46%	56%	45%
Most roads are in urgent need of repair	23%	25%	24%	19%	28%	19%	22%	24%	25%	28%	21%	18%	24%	24%
(VOL) Don't know	1%	0%	1%	2%	0%	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%	0%	1%	0%	1%

3. How many of New Jersey's bridges do you think are in need of urgent repair in order to avoid a structural failure or collapse – a lot of them, some of them, just a handful, or none of them?

	TOTAL	PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE			REGION OF STATE			GAS TAX HIKE	
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	North	Central	South	Support	Oppose
A lot of them	28%	24%	31%	33%	29%	28%	18%	30%	36%	31%	24%	29%	34%	23%
Some of them	36%	38%	33%	36%	34%	37%	31%	37%	39%	40%	34%	29%	39%	34%
Just a handful	22%	21%	23%	20%	26%	17%	31%	21%	13%	18%	26%	23%	16%	26%
None of them	7%	11%	6%	1%	6%	8%	16%	6%	2%	6%	6%	11%	4%	9%
(VOL) Don't know	7%	6%	7%	10%	5%	9%	3%	7%	10%	5%	10%	8%	6%	8%

4. How worried are you that the bridges you drive over regularly in New Jersey are in danger of failing in the next year or so – very worried, somewhat worried, not too worried, or not at all worried?

	TOTAL	PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE			REGION OF STATE			GAS TAX HIKE	
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	North	Central	South	Support	Oppose
Very worried	9%	11%	9%	7%	9%	9%	10%	12%	4%	12%	8%	5%	9%	8%
Somewhat worried	25%	25%	27%	22%	20%	30%	19%	25%	31%	27%	24%	24%	32%	19%
Not too worried	33%	36%	31%	32%	36%	29%	36%	32%	31%	32%	36%	31%	34%	32%
Not at all worried	31%	26%	32%	38%	34%	28%	34%	30%	30%	28%	29%	39%	22%	38%
(VOL) Don't know	2%	3%	1%	1%	1%	3%	1%	1%	4%	2%	3%	1%	2%	2%

5. The state Transportation Trust Fund pays for road and bridge repairs and construction on state highways other than the toll roads. The fund is currently out of money and all revenue is being used to pay off debt from past transportation projects. How much have you read or heard about this – a lot, a little, or nothing at all?

	TOTAL	PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE			REGION OF STATE			GAS TAX HIKE	
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	North	Central	South	Support	Oppose
A lot	13%	13%	11%	17%	13%	12%	6%	14%	17%	13%	15%	10%	14%	11%
A little	36%	33%	37%	38%	38%	34%	28%	37%	41%	36%	42%	30%	37%	36%
Nothing at all	51%	54%	51%	45%	49%	53%	64%	49%	41%	51%	43%	58%	49%	53%
(VOL) Don't know	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	1%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%

6. Without new sources of funding, there will be no road or bridge maintenance projects for at least the next couple of years. Do you think this situation would pose a major problem that will harm the state, a minor problem that will be an inconvenience for the state, or not much of a problem for the state?

	TOTAL	PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE			REGION OF STATE			GAS TAX HIKE	
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	North	Central	South	Support	Oppose
Major problem	47%	47%	51%	45%	45%	50%	38%	47%	57%	49%	47%	43%	60%	36%
Minor problem	37%	34%	36%	40%	39%	35%	45%	36%	29%	31%	40%	43%	31%	41%
Not much of a problem	14%	17%	12%	14%	16%	13%	17%	15%	12%	17%	12%	12%	9%	20%
(VOL) Don't know	2%	2%	2%	1%	1%	2%	0%	2%	2%	3%	0%	1%	0%	2%

7. Which comes closer to your view the state should not do any road or bridge repairs until the debt for past transportation projects is paid down OR the state should find new revenue sources to replenish the Transportation Trust Fund now? [CHOICES WERE ROTATED]

	TOTAL	PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE			REGION OF STATE			GAS TAX HIKE	
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	North	Central	South	Support	Oppose
Not do repairs until debt paid down	23%	20%	28%	20%	28%	19%	29%	29%	12%	20%	30%	24%	18%	29%
Find new revenue sources	71%	76%	66%	75%	68%	75%	68%	67%	81%	76%	64%	71%	80%	65%
(VOL) Don't know	5%	4%	6%	5%	4%	6%	3%	5%	7%	5%	6%	5%	3%	5%

8. Do you think the state will need to raise taxes in order to find this funding or are there other revenue sources available?

	TOTAL	PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE			REGION OF STATE			GAS TAX HIKE	
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	North	Central	South	Support	Oppose
Need to raise taxes	19%	18%	20%	19%	20%	17%	17%	17%	23%	22%	16%	15%	26%	13%
Other revenue sources available	47%	53%	42%	52%	45%	49%	47%	47%	49%	49%	44%	47%	48%	48%
(VOL) Both	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	2%	0%
(VOL) Don't know	5%	3%	4%	3%	2%	7%	3%	3%	8%	4%	3%	8%	5%	5%
Opposed to new revenue (from Q7)	23%	20%	28%	20%	28%	19%	29%	29%	12%	20%	30%	24%	18%	29%
No answer (from Q7)	5%	4%	6%	5%	4%	6%	3%	5%	7%	5%	6%	5%	3%	5%

9. Would you be more likely or less likely to support an increase in the gas tax if it was coupled with a decrease in the taxes people pay when they inherit a family home or other property, or wouldn't this change your opinion on raising the gas tax?

	TOTAL	PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE			REGION OF STATE			GAS TAX HIKE	
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	North	Central	South	Support	Oppose
More likely	27%	30%	25%	27%	29%	25%	35%	23%	26%	30%	24%	24%	34%	22%
Less likely	20%	21%	19%	20%	21%	18%	19%	22%	17%	18%	26%	16%	18%	22%
Wouldn't change opinion	50%	46%	53%	50%	47%	53%	45%	53%	51%	48%	45%	58%	46%	52%
(VOL) Don't know	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%	1%	2%	6%	3%	4%	2%	3%	4%

The *Monmouth University Poll* was sponsored and conducted by the Monmouth University Polling Institute from January 30 to February 2, 2015 with a statewide random sample of 805 adult residents, including 605 contacted via live interview on a landline telephone and 200 via live interview on a cell phone, in English. Monmouth is responsible for all aspects of the survey questionnaire design, data weighting and analysis. Final sample is weighted for region, age, education, gender and race based on US Census information. Data collection support provided by Braun Research (field) and SSI (RDD sample). For results based on this sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling has a maximum margin of plus or minus 3.5 percentage points (unadjusted for sample design). Sampling error can be larger for sub-groups (see table below). In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

<i>POLL DEMOGRAPHICS (weighted)</i>			
38% Dem	49% Male	28% 18-34	64% White
43% Ind	51% Female	39% 35-54	12% Black
19% Rep		33% 55+	15% Hispanic
			9% Asian/Other

	TOTAL	PARTY ID			MARGIN OF ERROR					REGION OF STATE			GAS TAX HIKE	
		Dem	Ind	Rep	GENDER		AGE			North	Central	South	Support	Oppose
					Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+					
Unweighted N	805	283	342	162	387	418	155	235	411	380	209	216	412	384
moe	3.5%	5.8%	5.3%	7.7%	5.0%	4.8%	7.9%	6.4%	4.8%	5.0%	6.8%	6.7%	4.8%	5.0%

It is the Monmouth University Polling Institute's policy to conduct surveys of all adult residents, including voters and non-voters, on issues that affect them. Specific voter surveys are conducted when appropriate during election cycles.

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