SUMMARY: TRANSPORTATION
2013 OREGON VALUES & BELIEFS STUDY

Project Background: This memo presents summary points related to transportation from the 2013 Oregon Values & Beliefs study. The summary draws from three surveys conducted in April and May 2013. Final sample sizes were 3971 respondents for Survey #1, 1958 for Survey #2, and 1865 for Survey #3. The questionnaires and findings are available at www.oregonvaluesproject.org.

DHM Research and PolicyInteractive Research designed and conducted the surveys using telephone and online formats to aid accessibility and help obtain a representative sample. Enough interviews were completed in five geographic regions (Central, Eastern, Portland Metro, Southern, and Willamette) to permit statistically reliable analysis at the regional level. The research design used quotas and statistical weighting based on the U.S. Census to ensure representativeness within regions by age, gender, and income. The regions were then weighted proportionally by population per the U.S. Census to yield statewide results.

This study stands out from others in that, when asking questions about policy priorities with cost implications, we informed respondents that rating an item as “important” or “desirable” meant willingness to support some increase in taxes or reallocation of funds from other public services. The visual surveys used $ symbols to emphasize the real-world implications of policy preferences.

Another distinctive feature of the study is that focal topics recur across the three surveys in a variety of question forms and contexts. High-quality research uses this “test-retest” or “triangulation” method to improve confidence in response validity.

This summary of key findings, observations and conclusions reflects the judgment of the research partners and not necessarily the views of the sponsoring organizations.

Findings

1. Asked about the top issues they want local government officials to do something about, Oregonians rate road infrastructure fifth in the list of responses. While road maintenance issues do come up, they are not among the top responses for what state government officials should do something about (S1.4-5 open).

2. Seventy-two percent (72%) of Oregonians consider road and highway maintenance important and indicate they would support some increase or reallocation in tax dollars to increase such services (S1.12).

3. Nearly half of Oregonians (49%) consider new roads and highways very or somewhat important, indicating they would support some increase or reallocation in tax dollars to increase the service (S1.23).

4. Fifty-five percent (55%) of Oregonians consider public transportation important, indicating they would support some increase or reallocation in tax dollars to increase the service (S1.13). A majority support the importance of public transportation in all regions except Eastern Oregon, where the
response is 45% important vs. 27% unimportant. Neutral positions ranged from 24% to 30% across the regions.

5. When answering a forced choice question about investing in cars or public transportation, half of Oregonians (53%) agree that we should invest more in public transit, while fewer than four in ten (38%) would rather invest more in roads for cars (S1.28).

6. Asked about desirable outcomes for Oregon’s energy supply, nearly half (47%) of Oregonians favor shifting some funding for road and highway construction towards public transportation projects such as better bus service and high speed rail. The ratio of those who feel strongly is 1.4 to 1 in favor of public transportation over road construction. Neutral positions ran about 20% across all regions. (S2.50)

7. The survey asked respondents whether they thought Oregon and their community would be a better or worse place to live 10 years from now, with an open-ended follow up question explaining why. The top transportation issue given for why Oregon will be a better place 10 years from now was better infrastructure such as roads and bridges at 5% (S2). Conversely, 5% of Oregonians who feel pessimistic about the future mention the need to upgrade infrastructure, which could include transportation (S2.3).

8. Better transit is a reason 6% of Oregonians give for feeling their community will be a better place to live 10 years from now. Regional differences are striking, however, with 10% in Portland/Metro and zero percent in Eastern Oregon (S3.2). On the contrary, traffic congestion and a need to upgrade infrastructure are top transit-related reasons people give for why their community will be worse off in 10 ten years (S3.3).

Observations and Conclusions

A majority of Oregonians support more investment in public transit and consider such investment more important than investing further in roads for cars. Oregonians also find it desirable to shift some funding away from road and highway construction and towards public transportation such as better bus services and high speed rail projects. This result is consistent with responses elsewhere in the study for ways to deal with climate change.

A slightly different view emerges when asking respondents to consider a list of public service priorities. In this context, road and highway maintenance receive higher taxpayer support than public transportation such as buses and trains, new roads and highways. Perhaps Oregonians want to take care of what roads they have while recognizing that public transportation is a better future choice than building new roads.