

THE BOND BUYER

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Infrastructure

Poll: No Consensus on Road Funding

by [Jim Watts](#)

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DALLAS – A majority of Americans agree on the need for more federal highway funding but there's no consensus on how to pay for it, according to a new poll released Wednesday by the American Trucking Associations.

The poll of 800 registered voters found that 60% believe that the nation should be spending more on transportation infrastructure, up from 48% in a similar poll in 2014. And 53% agreed that taxes and fees must be raised to fix the nation's roads and highways.

But when asked how to generate an estimated \$4 trillion over the next 25 years to do the work, a majority of voters rejected all four options: 74% opposed interstate tolling; 73% objected to a doubling of state vehicle fees; 62% opposed adding 20 cents in a phased-in basis over eight years to the 18.4 cent per gallon federal gasoline tax and 24.4 cent per gallon tax on diesel; and 61% were against a 1% increase in the federal income tax that would be dedicated to the Highway Trust Fund.

When asked to choose between the four potential revenue sources, 26% of those polled opted for the higher gasoline tax, followed by an income tax surcharge with 25% support, interstate tolling with 22%, and higher state fees, 15%.

The nationwide poll was conducted for ATA by Public Opinion Strategies Inc. late last month.

Congressional leaders should pay attention to the poll results showing an increase from last year in support for additional infrastructure funding, with 63% agreeing that American roads and bridges are not being properly maintained, said Bill Graves, president of the trucking group. "This poll tells us the American people now believe what we've been saying for some time: Our roads and bridges are in need of repair and we need to raise revenue to do it," Graves said.

Rep. Bill Shuster, R-Pa., chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, told ATA members Monday that the committee will vote Thursday on a multiyear transportation measure (H.R. 3763) that the full House could consider as early as next week.

Lawmakers will not be able to resolve the differences between the six-year DRIVE Act, which the Senate passed in late July, and a House measure before the current 90-day extension of federal transportation funding expires Oct. 29, Shuster said.

"Most certainly we will have to pass another short-term extension," he said. "That will give us

more time to get our long-term bill through the conference process with the Senate.”

Shuster predicted that Congress will adopt its first multiyear transportation funding bill since 2005 before lawmakers break in mid-December for the Christmas recess.

“I think we’ll probably be able to get it done and on the president’s desk by the end of the year,” he said.

Meanwhile, a poll of New Jersey voters conducted by Eagleton Center for Public Interest Polling at Rutgers University found that 57% of the 935 respondents opposed an increase in the state gasoline tax for any reason. Dedicating the additional revenues to highway maintenance pushed the disapproval level to 58%, said Ashley Koning, assistant director of the polling center.

“New Jerseyans agree more money is needed for this upkeep, but even when told specifically how the extra revenue would be used, they do not want it coming out of their own pockets,” she said.

“It’s an interesting disconnect,” said Koning. “Most New Jerseyans, including the gas tax hike’s dissenters, agree more funding for road and bridge maintenance is needed but they are largely against the most likely method for securing it.”



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