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## Poll: Minnesota voters say state should spend more on mass transit

By **Tim Harlow** | OCTOBER 3, 2018 — 11:34AM

An overwhelming majority of Minnesota voters say the state should spend more money to improve and expand mass transit, and nearly 60 percent of voters are on board with the idea even if it would result in higher taxes or fees to pay for them.

Overall, 74 percent of voters said the state should make additional investments in transit, including on buses and light-rail, while 24 percent opposed, according to results of a poll of 500 registered voters conducted by nationally known Public Opinion Strategies for the Minneapolis Regional Chamber.

The idea gained bipartisan support with 92 percent of Democrats, 72 percent of Independents and 54 percent of Republicans in favor of expanding transit, according to results released Wednesday.

In other key demographics, 77 percent of women and 72 percent of men gave their support. Voters in all age demographics support the state increasing investments in transit, with 77 percent of voters under age 35 approving. More than seven in 10 voters between 35 and 44 and 76 percent of those between 45 and 64 approved, as did 76 percent of seniors, according to the poll.

A large majority, 73 percent, said improving and expanding mass transit would be beneficial to the state's economy while nearly the same percentage said better mass transit would improve the quality of life in the state and boost its ability to attract jobs to Minnesota.

Nearly 64 percent of respondents said the Twin Cities needs a more complete transit system, including more light-rail lines, to compete for jobs with cities with better regional transit systems such as Dallas, Portland, Salt Lake City and Denver.

It's also getting harder to drive on clogged roads. More than 54 percent of voters in greater Minnesota and 69 percent in the metro area support investing in transit because they say congestion has gotten worse in recent years.

Of course, any investment in transit costs money and lots of it. Two light-rail projects being proposed - the Southwest Light Rail line from downtown Minneapolis to Eden Prairie and the Blue Line Extension from downtown out to Brooklyn Park - each will cost more than \$1 billion. Metro Transit is also facing a multi-million deficit.

But voters may be ready to pony up. Just under six in 10 voters statewide supported the state making additional investments in transit "even if it means a small increase in taxes or fees." Fifty-two percent said they support a one-half of one percent sales tax in the seven-county metro area to fund transit expansion, according to poll results.

"This survey shows that Minnesotans are strongly supportive of investing in an improved transit system," said Jonathan Weinhagen, President and CEO of the Minneapolis Regional Chamber. "Getting over the us-vs.-them discussion on transportation and transit is important. Minnesotans recognize that transit is good for our economy and they believe better transit would mean good things for jobs, making our state stronger and more competitive."

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