INTRODUCTION

Smart Growth America partnered with Hattaway Communications, a strategic communications firm based in Washington D.C., to test American voters’ attitudes about current approaches to transportation and potential options for altering the status quo to prioritize people over highways.

This report outlines findings and insights from a nationwide online survey as part of this partnership and was developed in collaboration with Smart Growth America, America Walks, and Hattaway Communications. This survey was supported by the Natural Resources Defense Council and a grant from the Summit Foundation.

The survey tested Americans’ awareness of, attitudes toward, and aspirations for smart, sustainable transportation projects, as well as their levels of trust in transportation decision-makers. The survey also tested messages, visions, and stories about neighborhood reconnection and highway expansion opposition efforts.

The survey was fielded online, with a nationwide sample of 2,001 registered voters, between February 23 and March 7, 2023, and reflects the overall race, age, gender, and geographic composition of the United States.

Note: Some charts do not add up to 100% due to answer choices such as “don’t know” or “prefer not to answer” being left out of the analysis.

Note: Some questions in the survey use a methodology that helps us understand how people prioritize different aspects of transportation. By asking people to choose the most and least important features from a group of options, we are able to find out what people like best and least.
IDEAS ABOUT HOW TO REDUCE TRAFFIC

Below are some ways that your community could reduce traffic. In your opinion, which of the following approaches would be the best and worst long-term solutions to reducing traffic in your area?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approach</th>
<th>Best long-term solutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Repairing existing roads so they work better for me</td>
<td>22%</td>
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<td>Providing more public transportation options, like trains, buses, bike lanes, and sidewalks</td>
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<td>Building communities with homes, jobs, and other destinations near each other so people do not have to drive as much</td>
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<td>Making streets more bike-friendly by adding bike lanes</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building new highways and freeways</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Demographics

The survey was fielded online, with a nationwide sample of 2,001 registered voters, between February 23 and March 7, 2023, and reflects the overall race, age, gender, and geographic composition of the United States.
The following charts show the demographic breakdowns of the survey sample.

**GENDER: How do you identify?**
- 52% Woman
- 47% Man
- 2% Non-binary

**AGE: What is your age?**
- 27% 18-34
- 30% 35-54
- 36% 55-74
- 7% 75+

**RACE: Which of the following terms best describe your race/ethnicity? Select all that apply.**
- 74% White
- 13% Black or African-American
- 14% Hispanic or Latino/a
- 13% Asian or Asian-American
- 7% Indigenous American or Alaska Native
- 2% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander

**HIGHWAY PROXIMITY: Do you live within a 5 minute walk of a highway?**
- 50% Yes
- 48% No
- 2% I don't know

**AREA: How would you describe the area you live in?**
- 34% City
- 45% Suburb
- 19% Rural area
- 2% Native nation
- 2% I don't know

**POLITICS: In politics today, how do you identify?**
- 32% Democrat
- 39% Independent
- 30% Republican
**MOTIVATING AMERICA TO SUPPORT FREEWAY FIGHTERS**

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**EDUCATION:** *What is the highest level of education you have completed?*

- Less than HS: 26%
- Some college + AD: 32%
- College and more: 42%

**IDEOLOGY:** *When it comes to your views on most issues, would you say that you are?*

- Conservative: 30%
- Moderate: 43%
- Liberal: 27%

**EMPLOYMENT:** *Which of the following best describes your current employment status?*

- Employed full-time: 41%
- Employed part-time: 6%
- Self-employed: 27%
Understanding Personal Values and Aspirations

The following questions helped us set a baseline and gather respondents’ top-of-mind perceptions on the values and aspirations they hold for themselves and their communities.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly agree (8-10)</th>
<th>Somewhat agree (6-7)</th>
<th>Neutral (5)</th>
<th>Disagree (0-4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I can easily get to parks and other green spaces from where I live</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel safe walking or biking in my neighborhood</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I always try to reduce waste and pollution in my daily actions</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I value the members of my community</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I often think about how my neighborhood could be improved</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small businesses in my neighborhood are struggling</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I spend a lot of time driving and dealing with traffic</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting to work, school, or shopping is difficult where I live</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Strongly agree (8-10), Somewhat agree (6-7), Neutral (5), Disagree (0-4)
Mapping Satisfaction in Transportation Options

This section maps Americans' attitudes and familiarity toward smart, sustainable transportation projects, while identifying audience segments with different mindsets toward transportation issues.
In your opinion, how much of a problem is traffic in your area?

Registered voters: 63% Problem, 36% Not a problem, 2% I don't know

In your lifetime, would you say traffic in your area has gotten:

Registered voters: 21% Better, 28% Has not changed much, 49% Worse, 2% I don't know

In your opinion, does building new roads and highways, or adding lanes to existing roads and highways...

Registered voters: 36% Increase traffic, 24% Have no effect on traffic, 23% Decrease traffic, 17% I am not sure
CAR OWNERSHIP & USAGE

Do you currently own a car?

Registered voters 87% Yes 13% No

At what age did you first get a car?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average</th>
<th>5th Percentile</th>
<th>25th Percentile</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>75th Percentile</th>
<th>95th Percentile</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

About how much does it cost you to own and maintain your car per year? Think about insurance, maintenance, loan payments, gas, and other costs.

Asked of those who selected ‘Yes’ to Do you currently own a car?

Registered voters 61% Less than $5,000
30% $5,000–$15,000
9% More than $15,000
GETTING AROUND

How frequently do you use your car to get to where you need to go?
*Asked of those who selected “Yes” to “Do you currently own a car?”*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Registered voters</th>
<th>Very frequently</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you could, would you like to use your car ...
*Asked of those who selected “Yes” to “Do you currently own a car?”*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Registered voters</th>
<th>More</th>
<th>The same amount</th>
<th>Less</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
GETTING AROUND

Which of the following statements comes closer to your view?

*I usually don’t have to leave my neighborhood to get most of my everyday needs.*

Registered voters: 35% (Difficult), 12% (Neither), 53% (Not difficult)

*On most days, I need to travel to other neighborhoods to get to work, school, or do my shopping.*

Registered voters: 67% (Difficult), 33% (Not difficult)

Imagine you did not have access to a car. Would getting to a doctor where you live be ...

Registered voters: 60% (Difficult), 40% (Not difficult)

Imagine you did not have access to a car. Would getting to a grocery store where you live be ...

Registered voters: 67% (Difficult), 33% (Not difficult)
# ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS

## How frequently do you take trains or buses, ride a bike, or walk to get to where you need to go?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Registered voters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very frequently</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## If you had safe and reliable options to do so, would you use trains, buses, bike lanes, or sidewalks?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Registered voters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The same amount</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Which of the following statements comes closer to your view?

Adding more transportation options [such as trains, buses, bike lanes, and sidewalks] will **grow my local economy**.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>View</th>
<th>Registered voters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adding more transportation options [such as trains, buses, bike lanes, and sidewalks] will <strong>do little</strong> to help my local economy.</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Please rate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements. Use a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means STRONGLY DISAGREE and 5 means STRONGLY AGREE.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I want communities damaged by transportation projects to be fixed.</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I distrust how my state government spends money.</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In my neighborhood, there are roads that are dangerous for people who are walking and biking.</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In my neighborhood, I see small businesses struggling to stay open.</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are projects expanding existing highways and freeways near me.</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are new highways or freeways being built near me.</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not have enough transportation options.</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is an unsafe amount of pollution in my neighborhood.</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel isolated from my neighbors.</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have to travel a long way to get to work.</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Message Testing

After first testing existing attitudes, the survey also tested visions, messages, and stories about neighborhood reconnection and highway prevention projects, measuring voters’ attitudes about the status quo and excite them about alternatives.
VISIONS ABOUT SMART, SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION

How convincing are each of the following statements as a reason to support better transportation options? Please rate each on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means it’s NOT AT ALL CONVINCING, and 10 means VERY CONVINCING.

RESTORING COMMUNITIES

Dozens of U.S. cities are planning to provide better transportation options and create thriving neighborhoods.

Currently, states spend billions of tax dollars on highways that divide communities. Instead, residents want to remove a few miles of highway and build areas where people can live, work, play, and shop.

Providing people with more transportation options is better for our health, safety, and economy than building more highways.

![Survey Results](Registered voters)

Registered voters

PROTECTING COMMUNITIES

Residents across the country are choosing to protect their neighborhoods and open spaces, rather than let states pave them over to expand highways.

It’s more important to protect our quality of life than to spend billions of tax dollars on expanding highways. By removing a few miles of highway and adding more transportation options, like trains, buses, bike lanes, and sidewalks, we can have healthier communities.

![Survey Results](Registered voters)

Registered voters

(RE-)CONNECTING COMMUNITIES

Dozens of cities across the country are planning to connect communities that are divided by highways.

Highways can cut us off from work, school, stores, and our neighbors. They also make it dangerous to move around.

Residents want to remove a few miles of highway and add better transportation options to create thriving, connected neighborhoods.

![Survey Results](Registered voters)

Registered voters
DESCRIBING COMMUNITIES

After reading these three statements, what best describes the kinds of communities you just read about?

- Connected communities: 25%
- People-centered communities: 22%
- Livable communities: 18%
- Thriving communities: 13%
- Healthy communities: 12%
- Vibrant communities: 7%
- Other: 3%
TESTING SUPPORTING MESSAGES

Please rate how much you agree or disagree with the following statement. Respond using a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means STRONGLY DISAGREE, 10 means STRONGLY AGREE, and 5 means COMPLETELY NEUTRAL.

SAFETY
Reconnecting neighborhoods with streets, sidewalks, bike lanes, and bus routes makes it safer and easier to get around. That saves lives.

- Strongly agree: 50%
- Somewhat agree: 22%
- Neutral: 17%
- Strongly disagree: 12%

FREEDOM TO MOVE
No matter where you live, you should have the freedom to easily get where you need to go. Almost all government spending on transportation goes to highways. Instead, states should fund more options, like trains, buses, bike lanes, and sidewalks.

- Strongly agree: 49%
- Somewhat agree: 22%
- Neutral: 16%
- Strongly disagree: 13%

TIME FOR BETTER OPTIONS
For nearly 70 years, the United States has had one transportation strategy: build bigger roads. It’s time to invest in better options that work for you.

- Strongly agree: 48%
- Somewhat agree: 23%
- Neutral: 18%
- Strongly disagree: 11%

SAVE TIME AND EFFORT
Getting where you need to go shouldn’t be difficult. When you have easy access to trains, buses, and other transportation options, it’s easier to get where you need to go. You can save time and effort that goes into driving.

- Strongly agree: 48%
- Somewhat agree: 21%
- Neutral: 18%
- Strongly disagree: 14%

BETTER TRANSPORTATION PLANS
It’s time to create better transportation options for our residents. Your state’s department of transportation spends billions of tax dollars on highway projects. They almost always run over budget, cause headaches, and fail to deliver on the promise of reducing traffic.

- Strongly agree: 48%
- Somewhat agree: 21%
- Neutral: 19%
- Strongly disagree: 11%
HEALTHY COMMUNITIES
Replacing a few miles of highway with thriving neighborhoods reduces air, noise, and water pollution. We need healthy communities, not bigger highways.

- Strongly agree: 46%
- Somewhat agree: 21%
- Neutral: 19%
- Strongly disagree: 14%

HIGHWAY EXPANSION DOESN'T WORK
Expanding highways takes years, causes delays, and costs billions of dollars. After all that, your commute might only be a minute or two faster. We know that widening highways attracts more people to drive, which creates more traffic in the long run.

- Strongly agree: 46%
- Somewhat agree: 21%
- Neutral: 19%
- Strongly disagree: 13%

WASTE OF TAXPAYER MONEY
Widening highways almost never speeds up traffic. After states spent more than $500 billion on highways, people actually spent twice as much time in traffic. Research shows that widening highways leads more people to drive, which creates more traffic. That's a waste of taxpayer money.

- Strongly agree: 43%
- Somewhat agree: 20%
- Neutral: 21%
- Strongly disagree: 17%

ECONOMIC GROWTH
States spend billions of tax dollars on expanding highways. That money could be used to create more jobs and economic growth by funding other transportation options, like trains, buses, bike lanes, and sidewalks. This creates more vibrant neighborhoods with all kinds of jobs.

- Strongly agree: 43%
- Somewhat agree: 23%
- Neutral: 19%
- Strongly disagree: 15%

REDRESSING DISCRIMINATION
Highway projects in the 1950s and 1960s targeted areas that were home to Asian, Black, and Latino families. Their neighborhoods were destroyed. Today, states can redress this discrimination by reconnecting and restoring these neighborhoods so no one is left behind.

- Strongly agree: 39%
- Somewhat agree: 21%
- Neutral: 23%
- Strongly disagree: 17%
IDEAS ABOUT HOW TO REDUCE TRAFFIC

After hearing the visions and messages on pages 19–22, respondents were asked again the same core question about strategies for reducing traffic:

“Below are some ways that your community could reduce traffic. In your opinion, which of the following approaches would be the best and worst long-term solutions to reducing traffic in your area?”

Post-message testing, support for both building new or adding/expanding highways dropped further.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-Message Testing</th>
<th>Best long-term solutions</th>
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<tr>
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<table>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>7%</td>
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</table>
HOW OUR MESSAGES MAKE VOTERS FEEL

Thinking about everything you just read and saw about transportation projects and options, do you feel:

Select top 3.

- Hopeful: 58%
- Optimistic: 48%
- Concerned: 47%
- Curious: 42%
- Inspired: 35%
- Overwhelmed: 23%
- Proud: 18%
- Sad: 12%
- Angry: 10%
- Afraid: 8%