

## ***POLICYMAKERS FACE A BUMPY ROAD WITH TAXPAYERS OVER THE GAS TAX***

**Fairleigh Dickinson University, November 19, 2015** – As Garden State residents prepare for winter driving conditions, they're still likely to encounter roads and bridges in continued need of repair, having been ravaged by time, the elements, and insufficient funding. One proposal for addressing our state's infrastructure needs involves raising the gas tax, which is currently among the lowest in the nation (14.5 cents per gallon). The most recent statewide survey of adults from Fairleigh Dickinson University's PublicMind finds that support for raising the gas tax has increased slightly since January, but so too have doubts that any money raised would be used for its intended purpose.

Sixty-two percent say they are opposed to raising the gas tax for road and bridge repairs, with 36 percent in favor. In January 2015, 28 percent were in favor with 68 percent opposed. Currently, Democrats (46%) are significantly more in favor of an increase relative to independents (29%) and Republicans (27%). Younger residents are also more supportive of an increase, with almost half (46%) of those under age 35 giving a green light to the added tax. Attitudes toward an increase are unaffected by how much a respondent drives each day.

"The needle seems to be moving toward support for a bump, perhaps because an increase is easier to stomach when gas prices are hovering around \$2.50 a gallon, with some areas enjoying prices beneath \$2 a gallon. But, there's still a long way to go in convincing the public to agree to pay more at the pump," said Krista Jenkins, director of PublicMind and professor of political science.

Among those who said they are opposed to an increase, almost half (48%) believe taxes are too high already, with another 39 percent who just don't believe politicians will use the money for infrastructure improvements. In January 2015, 31 percent said they rejected a tax increase due to suspicions over where their taxes would ultimately go.

In a new question, PublicMind asked those who said their opposition to an increase stems from the distrust they feel for politicians whether they would change their minds given a constitutional mandate that revenue be dedicated for road and bridge repairs. Of those, 36 percent said they would approve an increase, with a sizable majority (61%) remaining firm in their opposition.

"The broken trust that exists between policy makers and the public seems to be an underlying factor in any policy discussion. As much as residents complain about and recognize the need to fix our roads and bridges, it's hard to move forward when so many believe a chasm separates what politicians say versus what they do. So, the state remains paralyzed by an inability to move forward, with motorists

paying more for car repairs, and public transportation users paying more to ride trains and busses,” said Jenkins.

Methodology - The Fairleigh Dickinson University PublicMind survey was conducted by landline and cellular telephone November 9-15, 2015 among a random statewide sample of 906 adults. Results have a margin of sampling error of +/- 3.8 points, including the design effect.

*Methodology, questions, and tables on the web at: <http://publicmind.fdu.edu>*

*Radio actualities at 201.692.2846                      For more information, please call 201.692.7032*

## Methodology

The most recent survey by Fairleigh Dickinson University’s PublicMind was conducted by telephone from November 9-15, 2015, using a randomly selected sample of 906 adults in New Jersey. One can be 95 percent confident that the error attributable to sampling has a range of +/- 3.8 percentage points, including the design effect. The margin of error for subgroups is larger and varies by the size of that subgroup. Survey results are also subject to non-sampling error. This kind of error, which cannot be measured, arises from a number of factors including, but not limited to, non-response (eligible individuals refusing to be interviewed), question wording, the order in which questions are asked, and variations among interviewers.

PublicMind interviews are conducted by Opinion America of Cedar Knolls, NJ, with professionally trained interviewers using a CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) system. Random selection is achieved by computerized random-digit dialing. This technique gives every person with a landline phone number (including those with unlisted numbers) an equal chance of being selected.

Landline households are supplemented with a separate, randomly selected sample of cell-phone respondents interviewed in the same time frame. The total combined sample is mathematically weighted to match known demographics of gender, age, education, and race. 449 interviews were conducted on landlines and 457 were conducted on cellular telephones.

The sample was purchased from Marketing Systems Group and the research was funded by Fairleigh Dickinson University.

## Tables

<i>Which of the following comes closest to your view, even if neither statement is perfect: New Jersey needs to raise the gasoline tax because all of the current money is committed and without new revenue there cannot be any new road or bridge projects OR Regardless of the need, no new taxes should be imposed on gas for road and bridge improvements.</i>														
	PID				Gender		Race		Miles per day			Age		
	All	Dem	Ind	Repub	Male	Female	White	Non-white	10 or less	11-30	31+	18-34	35-59	60+
Raise tax	<b>36%</b>	46	29	27	39	34	39	32	36	38	34	46	30	38
No tax increase	<b>62%</b>	53	69	70	59	64	58	68	62	60	63	54	68	57
DK/Ref (vol)	<b>2%</b>	1	2	3	2	3	3	0	3	2	3	0	2	5

Which of the following comes closest to your view, even if neither statement is perfect: New Jersey needs to raise the gasoline tax because all of the current money is committed and without new revenue there cannot be any new road or bridge projects OR Regardless of the need, no new taxes should be imposed on gas for road and bridge improvements.

	November	January
Raise tax	36%	28%
No tax increase	62%	68%
DK/Ref (vol)	2%	4%

Which of the following reasons best explains why you are opposed to an increased gas tax? I don't believe the extra money will really be used for road improvements; Taxes in the state are already too high; Roads and bridges are fine and don't need improvements; I can't afford the added cost [N = 559; MoE = 4.3]

	All	PID			Gender		Race		Miles per day			Age		
		Dem	Ind	Repub	Male	Female	White	Non-white	10 or less	11-30	31+	18-34	35-59	60+
Doubt where money will go	39%	41	36	39	39	39	41	39	42	37	45	45	37	42
Taxes already too high	48%	43	53	51	48	47	48	47	45	49	50	44	51	44
Roads and bridges ok	2%	4	1	1	3	2	2	2	2	1	2	1	2	3
Can't afford added cost	9%	11	8	7	7	11	7	11	10	10	3	10	7	10
Other (vol)	1%	0	3	2	3	0	1	1	0	3	1	0	3	0
DK/Ref (vol)	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1

Which of the following reasons best explains why you are opposed to an increased gas tax? I don't believe the extra money will really be used for road improvements; Taxes in the state are already too high; Roads and bridges are fine and don't need improvements; I can't afford the added cost

	November	January
Doubt where money will go	39%	31%
Taxes already too high	48%	45%
Roads and bridges ok	2%	2%
Can't afford added cost	9%	20%
Other (vol)	1%	2%
DK/Ref (vol)	0	1%

If the state constitution required that any gas tax revenue be used for road and bridges in the state, would you approve or disapprove [rotate] of a higher gas tax? [N = 220; MoE = 6.6]

	All	PID		
		Dem	Ind	Repub
Approve	36%	44	33	35
Disapprove	61%	54	56	64
DK/Ref (vol)	3%	2	11	1

<i>On average, how many miles do you drive each day?</i>											
		PID			Gender		Race		Age		
	All	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	White	Non-white	18-34	35-59	60+
<10	36%	39	35	32	32	39	34	39	32	30	46
11-20	23%	24	24	21	21	24	24	21	21	21	27
21-30	17%	18	15	18	15	20	17	18	23	18	13
31-40	4%	4	3	5	5	4	5	3	4	7	2
41+	17%	13	20	22	25	11	18	16	18	23	10
DK/Ref (vol)	2%	2	2	3	3	1	2	3	3	1	1

**Exact question wording and order**

US1 and US2 withheld

NJ1 and NJ2 released November 17, 2015

NJ3 withheld for future release

SEX1 and SEX2 withheld for future release

PRES1 through PRES4 withheld for future release

ID series withheld for future release

*TAX1 Which of the following comes closest to your view, even if neither statement is perfect: New Jersey needs to raise the gasoline tax because all of the current money is committed and without new revenue there cannot be any new road or bridge projects OR Regardless of the need, no new taxes should be imposed on gas for road and bridge improvements [rotate].*

- 1 Should raise the tax
- 2 Should NOT raise the tax
- 8 DK (vol)
- 9 Refused (vol) ]

*TAX2 Which of the following reasons BEST explains why you are opposed to an increased gas tax?[rotate options]*

- 1 I don't believe the extra money will really be used for road improvements
- 2 Taxes in the state are already too high
- 3 Roads and bridges are fine and don't need improvements
- 4 I can't afford the added cost
- 5 Other (vol)
- 8 DK (vol)
- 9 Refused (vol)

*TAX2A If the state constitution required that any gas tax revenue be used for road and bridges in the state, would you approve or disapprove [rotate] of a higher gas tax?*

- 1 Approve
- 2 Disapprove
- 8 DK (vol)
- 9 Refused (vol)

**Weighted sample characteristics**

<b>Gender</b>	<i>Male</i>	49%
	<i>Female</i>	51%
<b>Age</b>	<i>18-34</i>	28%
	<i>35-59</i>	41%
	<i>60+</i>	30%
<b>Race</b>	<i>Refused</i>	1%
	<i>White</i>	63%
	<i>African American</i>	12%
	<i>Hispanic</i>	6%
	<i>Asian</i>	16%
	<i>Other/Refused</i>	4%
<b>Party (with leaners)</b>	<i>Dem</i>	47%
	<i>Ind/DK/Refused</i>	18%
	<i>Repub</i>	36%