



Smart Growth America

Making Neighborhoods Great Together

Communicating Smart Transportation

State Smart Transportation Initiative Community of Practice

Seattle, WA

February 25, 2011



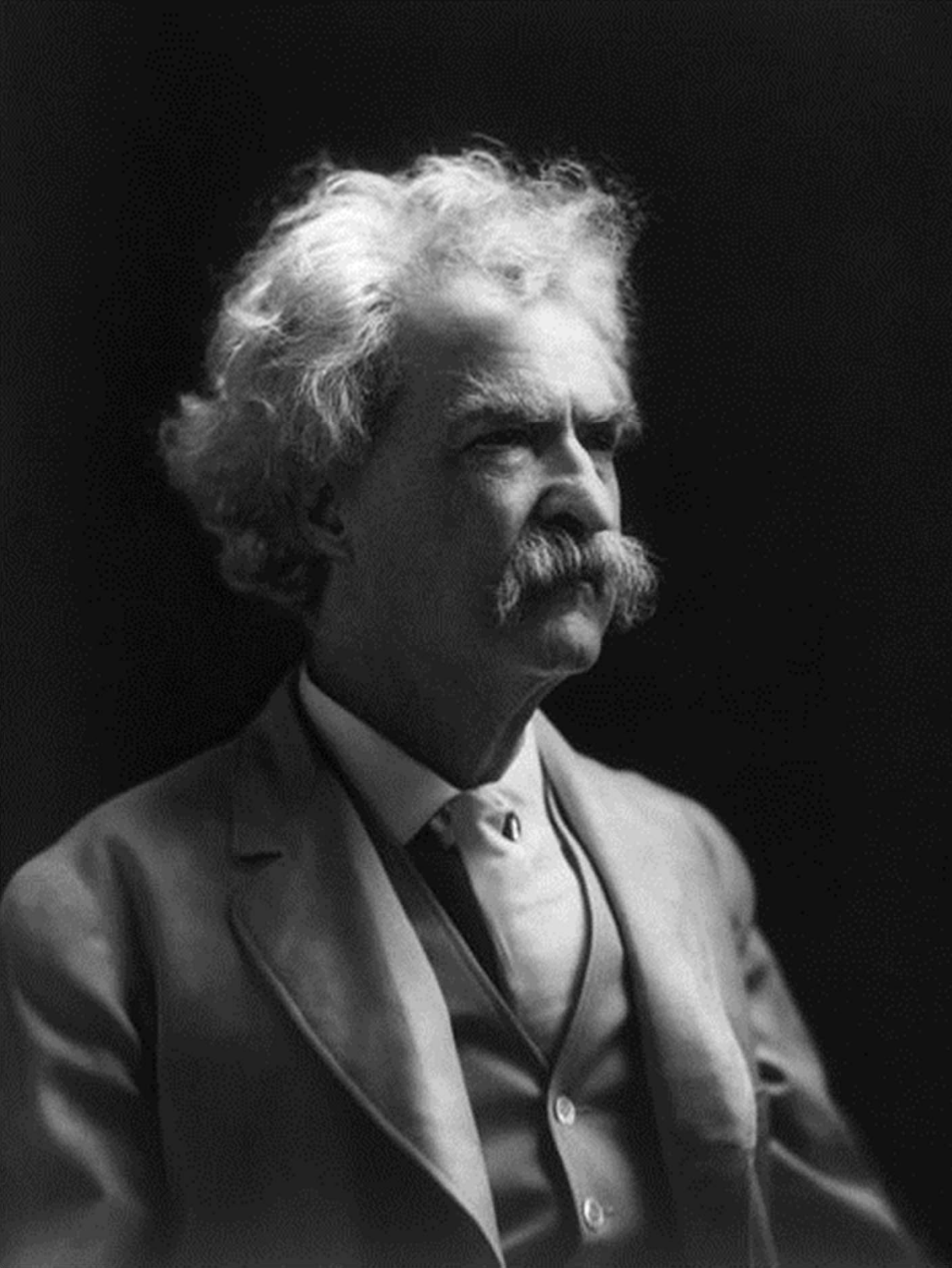
Smart Growth America

Making Neighborhoods Great Together

Overview

- Poll – The Role of Sustainable Communities in Economic Recovery
- Poll – Smart Growth America Transportation Priorities
- Communicating about smart transportation





I am an old man and
have known a great
many troubles, but
most of them never
happened.

- Mark Twain



The Role of Sustainable Communities in Economic Recovery

DRAFT FOR REVIEW ONLY

Funding Provided by the Ford Foundation



Smart Growth America
Making Neighborhoods Great Together

Survey Methodology Overview

- Questionnaire designed by Collective Strength and reviewed by Harris Interactive
- 1,200 interviews from October 21 to November 1, 2010
- Results calibrated to Census estimates for age, race, income, gender and region
- Plus or minus 3% margin of error

Findings about Sustainable Communities

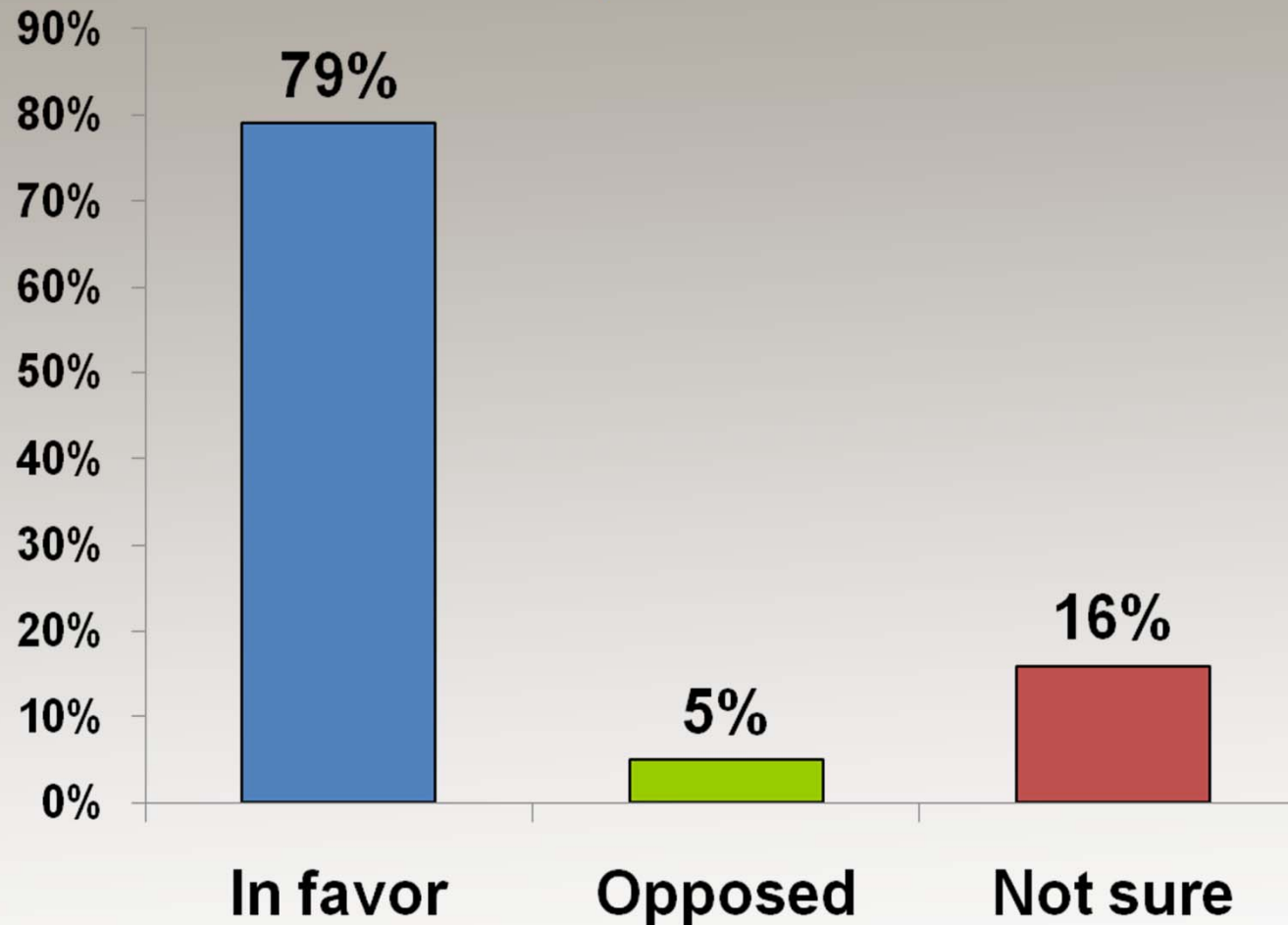
- Most Americans believe that their region needs to rethink housing and transportation because “it doesn’t work for most people.”
- Sustainable communities, as defined by their benefits, are broadly supported in every region and every region believes they need more of them.
- Sustainable communities are widely seen as important to rebuilding the economy.
- There is a clear demand for sustainable communities and it is increasing.



An urban, suburban or rural community that has more housing and transportation choices, is closer to jobs, shops or schools, is more energy independent and helps protect clean air and water.



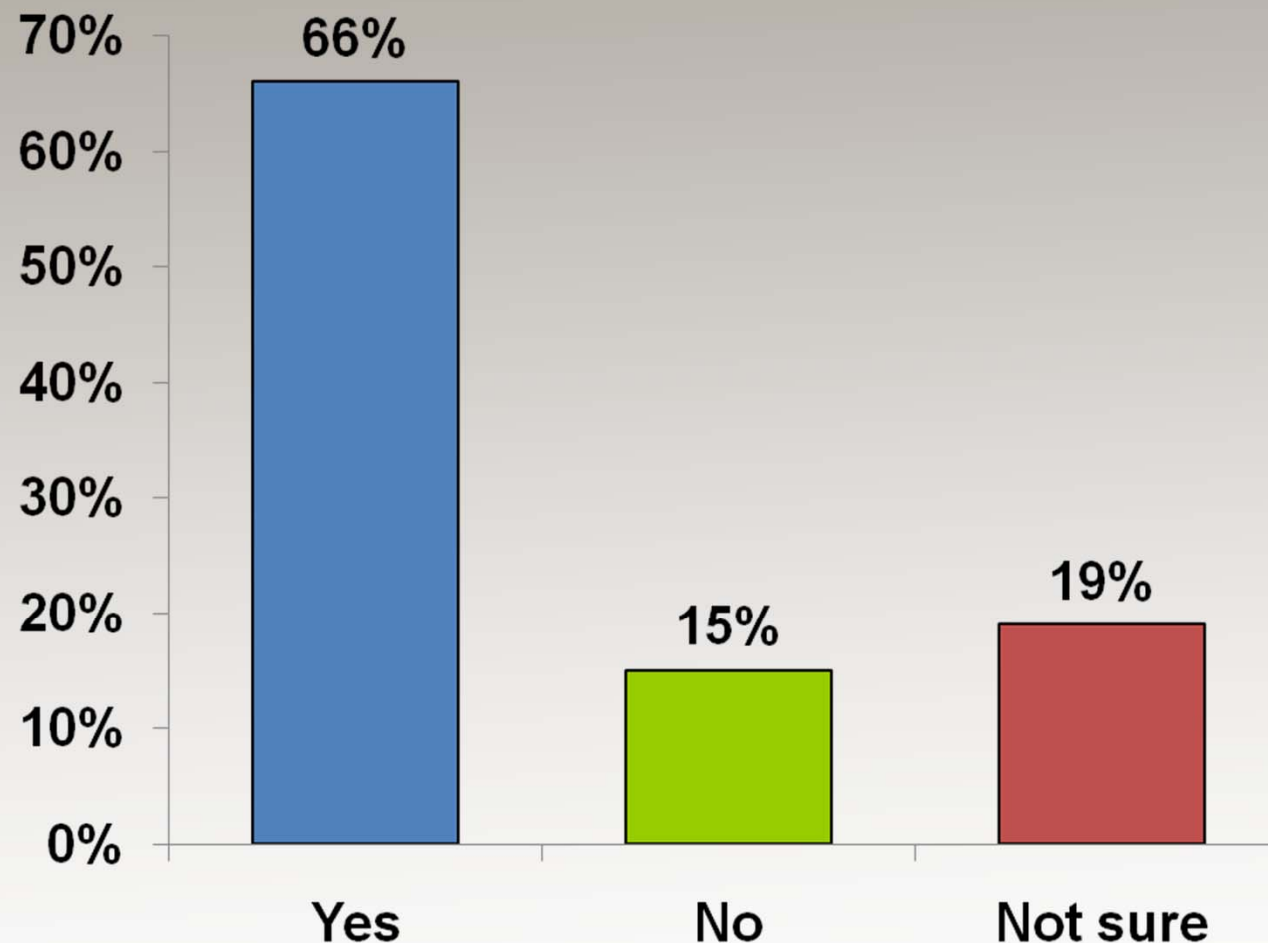
Support for Sustainable Communities (with Definition)



Q: For the remainder of this survey, please use the following definition of sustainable communities: An urban, suburban, or rural community that has more housing and transportation choices, is closer to jobs, shops or schools, is more energy independent, and helps protect clean air and water.



Does your region need more Sustainable Communities?



Q: Do you think that the region of the county in which you live needs more sustainable communities?



Smart Growth America
Making Neighborhoods Great Together

Findings About the Economy

- Jobs and the Economy remain the number one national priority across all regions and demographics.
- Americans want the government to “stop spending money it doesn’t have” and “use the money it has more effectively.”
- Increasing infrastructure spending that supports communities such as public transportation, roads, trains, water systems is widely seen as a jobs catalyst and economic boost.

Findings About the Economy

- As a solution for the economic crisis, infrastructure spending ranks higher than both investing in technology/innovation and investments in clean energy and green jobs.
- Dominant economic theme: Growing the economy and balancing the budget by spending what we do have more wisely.
- Sustainable communities can be framed in a very positive way – IF we are proactive about it.

National Priorities

High Priorities (60%+)

- Jobs 82%
- The economy 85%
- Health care costs 70%
- Federal deficit 68%
- Cost of living 61%
- Taxes 63%
- Education 63%



Q: Now we would like to ask you some questions about the issues our nation is facing today. How much of a priority do you think each of the following issues should be to our elected officials?



Smart Growth America
Making Neighborhoods Great Together

National Priorities, cont.

Medium Priorities (49%+)

- Ending the war(s) 57%
- Public safety 51%
- Reducing our dependence on oil 51%
- Addressing poverty 49%
- Clean air and water 49%

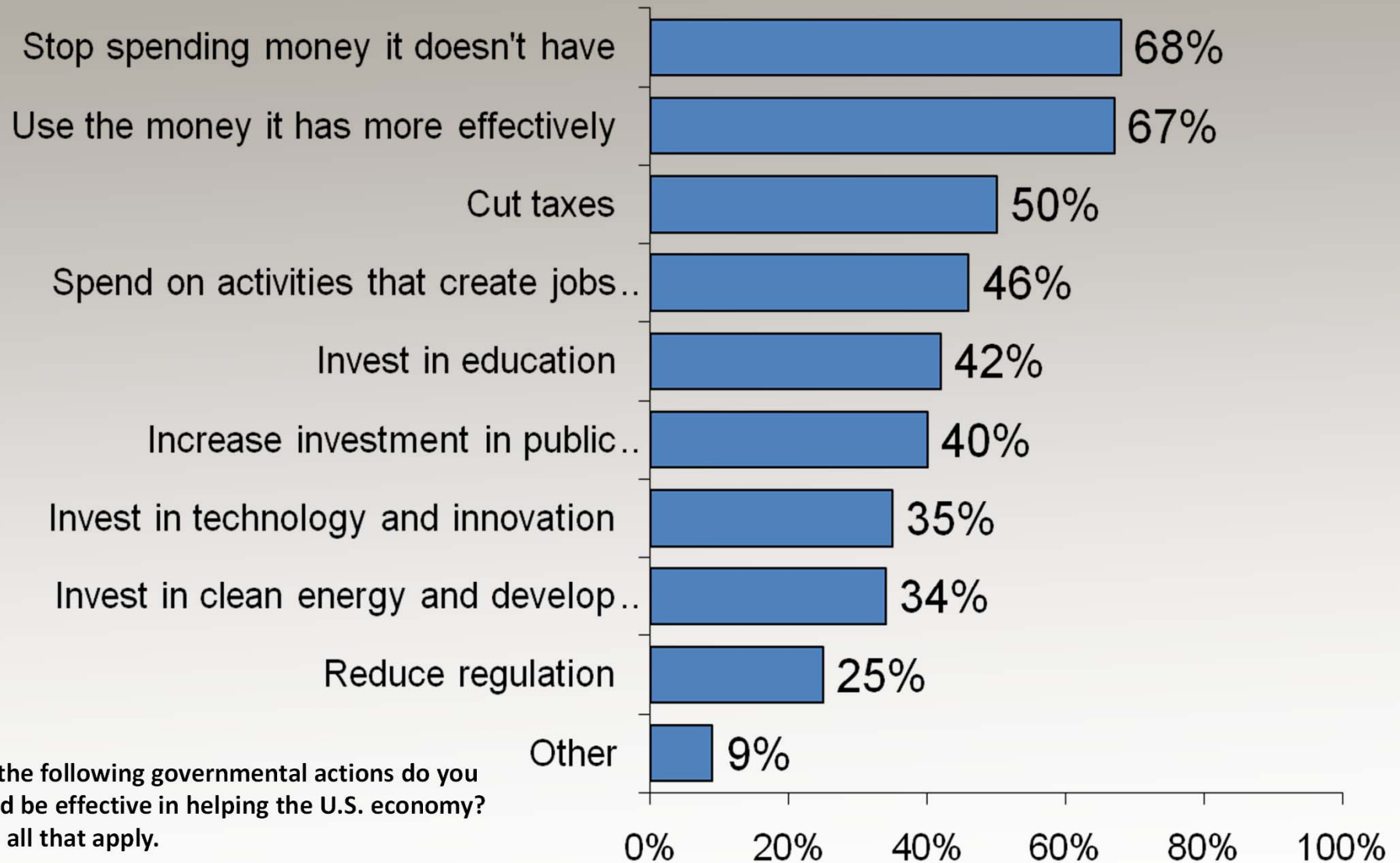
“Just Not Priorities”

- Wall Street and banking reform 39%
- Housing market downturn 38%
- Climate change and global warming 30%
- Transportation 21%
- Land development patterns 16%



Q: Now we would like to ask you some questions about the issues our nation is facing today. How much of a priority do you think each of the following issues should be to our elected officials?

The US Should...



Economic Messages

% Agree

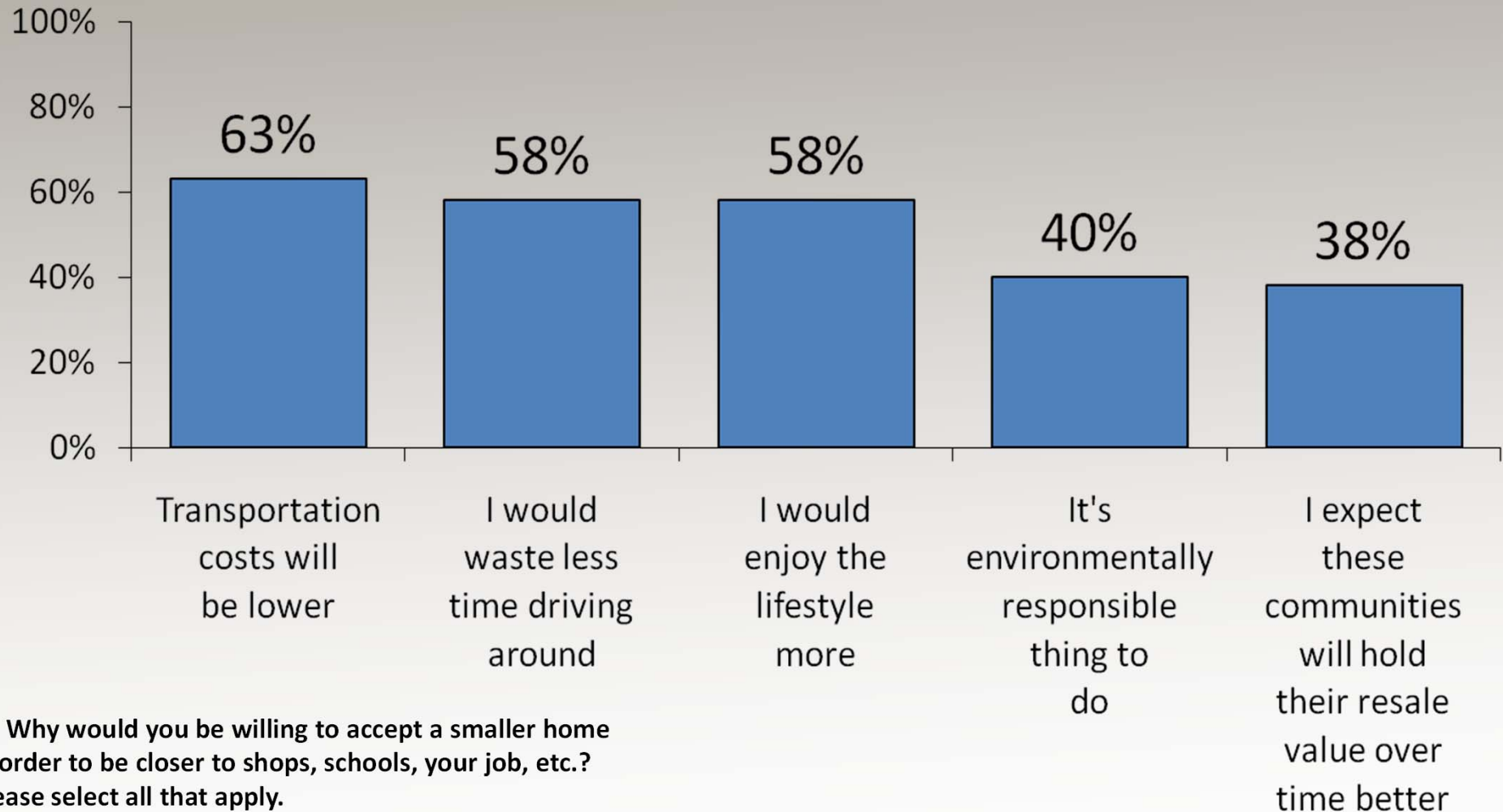
- 84%** Our country is too dependent on oil. We need to change that.
- 82%** Most Americans spend more than 50% of their household expenses on housing and transportation costs. That is too much.
- 82%** Rebuilding our economy and creating new jobs is the most important issue of our generation.
- 75%** Infrastructure spending on roads, trains, and buses create jobs and help the economy get stronger.
- 66%** We need to rethink the way we develop housing and transportation in this region. The way we have been doing it isn't working for most people.
- 58%** I believe that economic growth and environmental quality are interconnected goals. We can't have one without the other.
- 58%** Housing and transportation are in the infrastructure category that makes up 35% of the US economic base. We can't fix our economy unless we fix our housing and transportation problems first.



Findings About Interest for Walkable Communities

- Interest in walkability has dramatically increased as a home buying factor since the last time most Americans bought a house. 58% now say it factors in, compared to 20% who said it did in a significant way when they bought their current house.
- 68% of Americans say they would accept a reduction of at least 5% in square footage if it mean their new house was more walkable to shops and meals.
- The most important reasons given for accepting this trade off is that it would save transportation costs, decrease their time driving around and be more enjoyable.

Reasons to Accept a Smaller Home



Transportation Investment Findings

- “Enthusiasm gap” when transportation is presented as a stand alone issue
 - Transportation is a very low national priority
 - Land use is even lower
- Not supported at all in any region:
 - Expanding the transportation network to handle the growing population
 - taking care of the system we have
 - investing in projects with the greatest payback



Transportation Investment Findings

- Even the highest scoring priority – ensuring that everyone can reach the essentials – jobs, groceries and health care – is not well supported by most regions or demographics.
- Americans want the US to live within its means and plan for the future accordingly as opposed to recognizing the need for additional investments and finding new sources to pay for them.

Transportation Messages

%

Agree

- 75%** Infrastructure spending on roads, trains, and buses create jobs and help the economy get stronger.
- 68%** The federal government should stop focusing only on car-oriented systems, and start balancing the funding more toward public transportation.
- 66%** We need to rethink the way we develop housing and transportation in this region. The way we have been doing it isn't working for most people.
- 64%** Bikeways, sidewalks, and trails are as important as any other kinds of transportation routes.
- 45%** I would prefer to live in a lively town center or downtown area if it was safer and more affordable than it is now.
- 34%** Having a car is too expensive and too much trouble. I want to live where I don't need one as much.

Messages That Do Best Across All Political Preferences

% Agree

84% I want the federal government to coordinate activities and funding between agencies more effectively.

82% Most Americans spend more than 50% of their household expenses on housing and transportation costs. That is too much.

82% Rebuilding our economy and creating new jobs is the most important issue of our generation.



Messages that had Fractured Opinion Across Political Preferences

% Agree

- 70% The federal government needs to stay out of the real estate market.
- 68% The federal government should stop focusing only on car-oriented systems, and start balancing the funding more toward public transportation.
- 65% Distressed areas of our country should receive more resources than areas that have not been hurt as badly by crises and longstanding poverty.
- 58% I believe that economic growth and environmental quality are interconnected goals. We can't have one without the other.
- 57% Climate change and global warming are getting worse and worse. We need to do something to reverse it.

Smart Growth America Transportation Poll



Timing and sample

- Developed by Hart Research Associates and Spitfire Strategies
- Conducted November 16-22, 2010
- 1,000 voters nationwide
 - 37% Democrat
 - 34% Republican
 - 29% Independent
- Voting Patterns:
 - 27% vote Democrat most of the time
 - 23% vote Republican most of the time
 - 50% swing voters



Survey objectives

- Identify priorities for state transportation spending.
- Assess the urgency of investing in transportation in the current economic climate.



Maintenance and repair are the top priority for state transportation funding

Q. Which one of these should be the top priority for state transportation funding?

■ All voters ■ Democrats ■ Republicans ■ Swing voters

Maintaining and repairing roads, highways, freeways, and bridges



Expanding/improving bus, rail, van service, biking, walking, transportation choices



Expanding and building new roads, highways, freeways, and bridges



Priorities for transportation funding align with perceived value for the cost

Percentage of voters who believe each would be a good value for the cost

■ All voters ■ Democrats ■ Republicans ■ Swing voters

Repair/maintain existing roads/bridges



More choices: bus, carpool, light rail, van, commuter rail



Expand biking/walking opportunities



Build new roads and bridges



Regardless of party, majority of voters agree with both arguments for repair and maintenance

Percentage of voters who believe each very/fairly closely reflects their view

■ All voters ■ Democrats ■ Republicans ■ Swing voters

Our government has **obligation to the people** in this state **to create jobs** and implement **policies to strengthen the economy, protect the environment, ensure opportunity** for all. On transportation, we don't need to build more, we need to fix what we have and give citizens **low-cost choices that protect environment and economy** at same time.



We **can't afford to spend more government money on transportation**. Instead of writing blank checks for new roads/other projects, we **need to be fiscally responsible, repair** infrastructure we have, and **invest what's left** on projects with high return.



“Safety first” is the top argument for why rebuilding roads/bridges is a good value

*Percentage of all voters rating each as a **very** convincing argument (defined as 8-10 on a 0-10 scale)*

It's our duty to make sure roads and bridges are safe, but right now many are not.

59%

To attract new business we must ensure business districts and shopping areas are welcoming and accessible.

53%

58% of swing voters rate “attracting businesses” as the best reason to repair roads.

Our money will be spent more wisely--and it will cost less--if we fix what we already have before building new roads and bridges.

52%

More jobs are created by repairing existing roads and bridges than building new ones.

45%

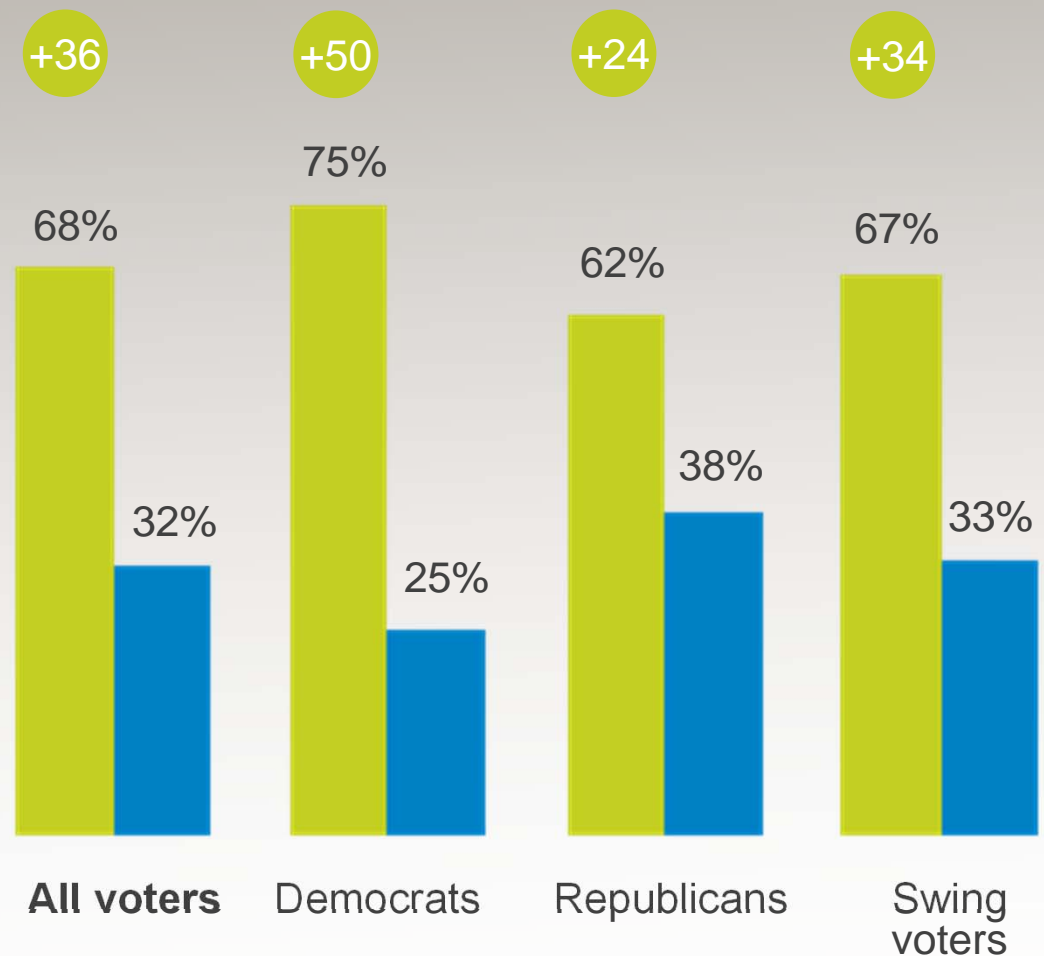


Regardless of party, most agree that now is the time to invest in transportation

Views of state investing in transportation

■ **Now is the time** for state government to invest in transportation, because if we do it right, these investments will create jobs and attract new business.

■ **Now is not the time** for state government to invest in transportation, because budgets are too tight, and in this bad economy, there are more important needs the state should address.



Communicating about Smart Transportation



When communicating about sustainable communities...

- ALWAYS define sustainable communities.
- Never use the terms *smart growth*, *livable* or *sustainable* without a clear definition of the benefits.
- Frame Sustainable Communities in economic and job creation terms. This will vastly increase their relevance over the next decade.

It's the economy . . .

Use this phrase early and often to personalize the discussion:

Most Americans spend more than 50% of their household expenses on housing and transportation. That is too much.

Using any combination of the following to frame smart growth in economic terms:

Rebuilding our economy and creating new jobs is the most important issue of our generation.

Our country is too dependent on oil. We need to change that.

Jobs and the economy are the top priority people have for their elected officials. Everything needs to be based on this challenge we all face.

Demographic Changes

- The younger generation sees cars as a burden not a ticket to freedom
- Aging baby want a more active and less isolated lifestyle
- More than 70% of US households are singles or singles with kids
- Large lot housing in suburban areas is overbuilt
- Other housing choices in all price brackets are under-built
- People are willing to trade house size for proximity to key destinations



Supply and Demand

Talk about being able to live near important community destinations:

People are choosing to live in communities where they can walk to the store, their job, or a local school.

People are looking for ways to cut their own costs and they understand that neighborhoods and places with transportation options help to reduce their costs.

Talk About Transportation in Economic Terms

Use the word “infrastructure”:

Infrastructure spending on roads, trains and buses creates jobs and helps the economy get stronger.

Talk about choices that save time, money and reduce our dependence on oil:

The federal government should start to balance funding to meet the growing demand for more transportation choices that save time and money and help reduce our dependence on oil.

What the Opposition Will Say – and How We Counter it

Rational Opposition	What We Say
Costs too much	We are making the economy stronger than ever
Controlling our Lifestyle	Providing more choices
Intruding on our decisions	Meeting demand
Will focus on transportation	Focus on the economy
Other Opposition	What We Say
United Nations Agenda 21	Demand is increasing/ Regions asking for SCs
Communism	There's more than one American Dream now
Hobbit homes in crowded cities	Demographics driving demand for more choices

Smart Transportation System

- Roads - Networked, More Numerous in Typology, Context-Sensitive.
- Balance and Choice-Multimodal, Connected Network of Modes.



Smart Transportation System

- Better Single Goal Problem Solving- what is the best way to solve this transportation problem?
- New Multi-Goal approaches, solve a transportation problem *and* achieve equity, health, env. outcomes



Investing Scarce Resources in a Future Vision not to “Catch Up” with Past Congestion and Land Use

- Compete for the Knowledge Economy
- Rebuild the Manufacturing Economy
- Protect People Against Energy Price Uncertainty
- Reduce Household Cost
- Improve Access to Regional Labor Pools
- Help All Our Citizens Participate in the Economy
- Reduce Health Costs From Traffic Injuries and Diabetes
- Improve Efficiency of Goods and People Movement
- Meet Demographics and the Market Where it's Going
- Revitalize Communities, Tax Base and Leverage Private Sector Investment



Learn More...

For further information about this research contact

Roger Millar, PE, AICP

Director, Smart Growth America's Leadership Institute

Smart Growth America

rmillar@smartgrowthamerica.org

www.SmartGrowthAmerica.org



Smart Growth America
Making Neighborhoods Great Together



Smart Growth America

Making Neighborhoods Great Together

Smart Growth America is the only national organization dedicated to researching, advocating for and leading coalitions to bring smart growth practices to more communities nationwide.

www.smartgrowthamerica.org

1707 L St. NW Suite 1050, Washington, DC 20036 | 202-207-3355