Understanding Public Perceptions of Different Options to Fund the Highway System

The ISSUE

The purpose of this research was to generate an understanding of the public perceptions of different revenue generation systems that are already in use or that have the potential to be used in the future, and to educate the public on the different revenue generation systems.

The RESEARCH

The survey was sent to 15,945 people in five states: Colorado, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming (Mountain-Plains Consortium states) via mail. Only 1,190 surveys were returned, 27 were eliminated due to various issues, and 1,163 were posted as completed surveys resulting in a response rate of 7.30%. Data analysis of the results consisted of performing descriptive and inferential statistics and running chi-square tests for correlation analysis.
the FINDINGS

Results indicate that the public in Colorado, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming selected “increasing the federal gas tax that is collected at the time of purchase” as their first choice of funding option. The support for the use of highway tolling to fund the highway system was somewhat moderate among the population across the five states. The collection of additional sales tax on all goods to fund the highway system was an unpopular funding mechanism among respondents. Similarly, the support for the use of mileage-based user fees was disliked.

the IMPACT

This research is significant, as few studies have been done on understanding the public perceptions of different options to fund the highway systems. Furthermore, the findings of this survey could be used by the law-makers in the five states to make better decisions with respect to the alternative options of funding the highway system in their state-based on the general public’s perceptions. Future research could assess the impact of the utilized option on each state with regard to its social, economic, and behavioral issues that could result from its implementation.

For more information on this project, download the entire report at http://www.ugpti.org/resources/reports/details.php?id=836