



FIXING MICHIGAN'S ROAD MESS:

The Unclear Path Ahead

A Center for Michigan Public Engagement Report

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	page 2
The Mandate	page 3
Residents Weigh In	page 8
Expert Consensus	page 9
Misgivings	page 11
Methodology, Demographics, Polling	page 12
What You Can Do	page 18
Thanks and Credits	page 19
About the Center for Michigan	page 20
Notes	page 21



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Michigan's roads are bad, getting worse, and the state should spend more to fix them. Michigan residents agree on that much. But Michigan is divided on how much more the state should spend and where that money should come from.

Using large-scale formal polling, informal online surveys, and live surveys at three regional conferences, the Center for Michigan convened more than 3,200 Michigan residents in April 2019 to identify public priorities for dealing with Michigan's road crisis.

Four points of broad consensus emerged:

Three-quarters of state residents say Michigan's roads are in poor or terrible condition. Data from road quality experts support the public's perception. Michigan's roads received a D- from the American Society of Civil Engineers, and almost 80 percent of roads are considered to be in fair to poor condition by Michigan's Department of Transportation.^{1,2}

Two-thirds say Michigan road conditions are getting worse. Road quality has degraded steadily since 2015, according to the Michigan Department of Transportation.³ Experts anticipate the roads will continue this downward spiral without a major spending increase of \$2.5 billion annually.⁴

More than three-quarters say the state should spend an additional \$1 billion or more each year to fix Michigan roads. Only one in three support spending the full \$2 billion or more per year that experts recommend to fully fix Michigan's roads system and sustain it in good condition.

A slim majority of residents are willing to pay at least \$100 more per year to fund road repairs.

Beyond these four conclusions, there is no public consensus about how to fix the roads. Despite public support for some increased road investment, seven specific options for doing so all lack majority public support. Indeed, majorities of Michigan residents polled for this report individually judged all seven options to be "bad ideas."

The Center conducted this campaign in response to mounting public pressure for Michigan's policymakers to find a lasting solution to the state's deteriorating roadways. We are releasing *Fixing Michigan's Road Mess: The Unclear Path Ahead*, our eighth Citizen's Agenda, to inject citizen sentiment into this ongoing debate.

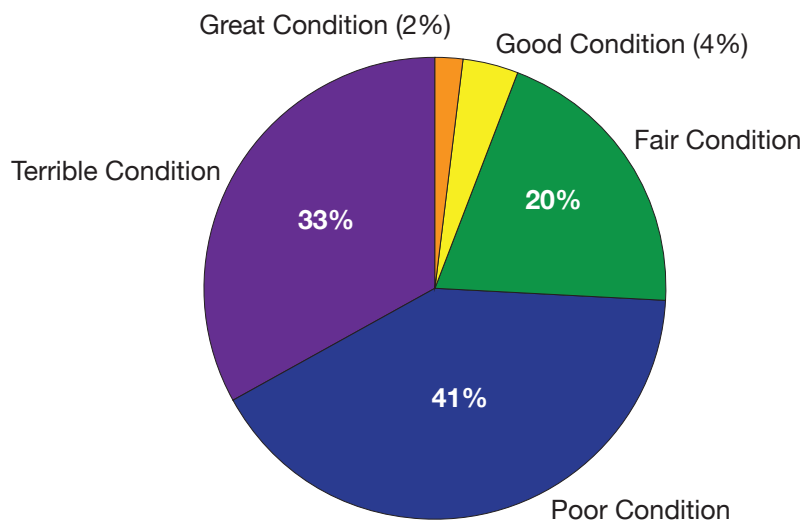


THE MANDATE

Governor Whitmer swept into Lansing in early 2019 vowing to “fix the damn roads.” Michigan residents yell it with her. Overwhelmingly, they think the roads are bad, getting worse, and the state should increase spending to fix all of them.

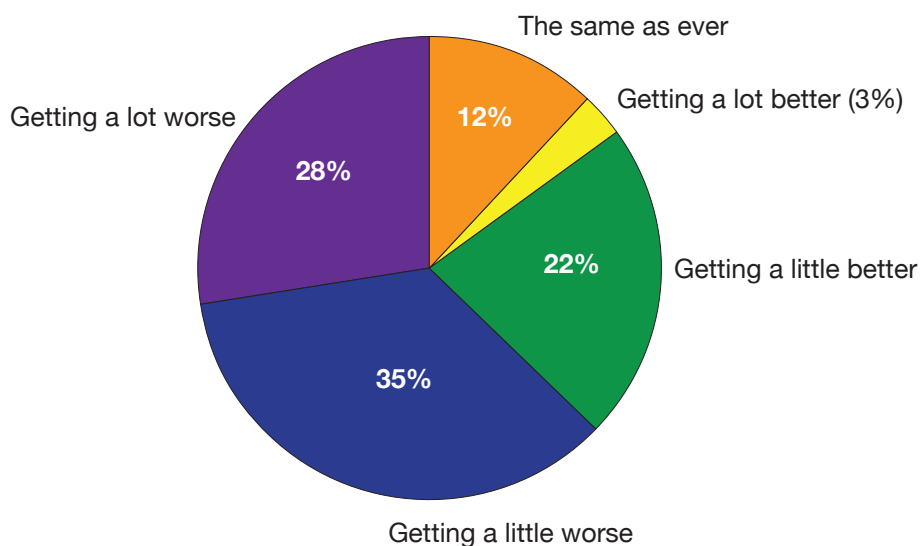
A demographically representative poll by the Center for Michigan in April 2019 found that a strong majority of state residents feel Michigan roads are in either poor or terrible condition – and getting worse.*

In general, do you think Michigan roads are in...



Margin of error: +/- 2.2%
Confidence level: 95%

Thinking about roads in your area over the last year, do you think road conditions are...



Margin of error: +/- 2.2%
Confidence level: 95%

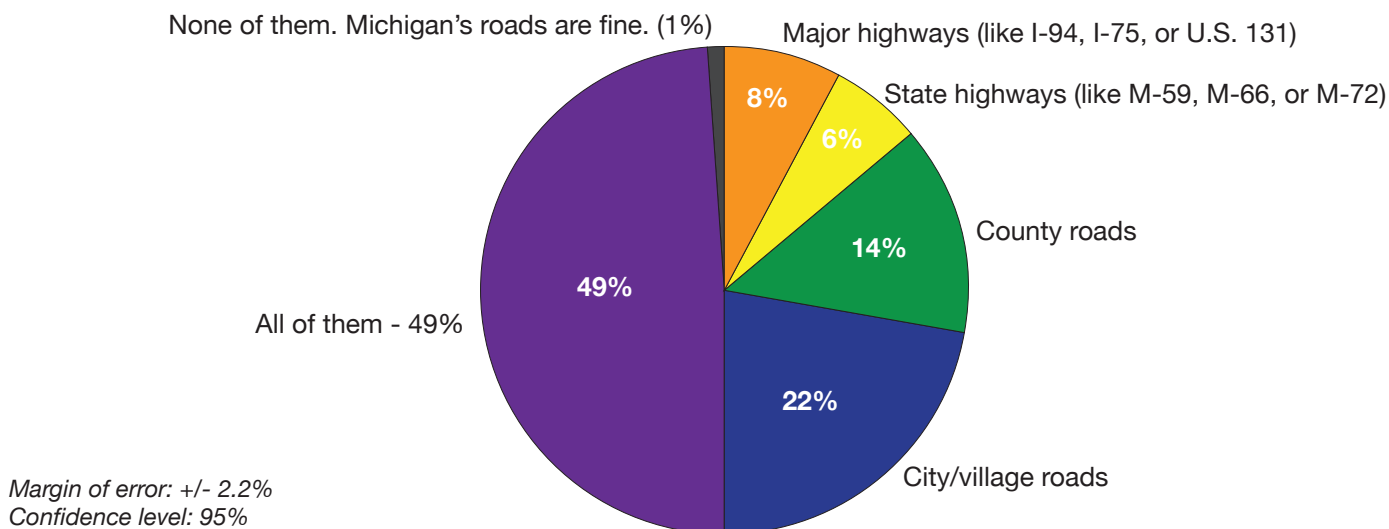
* The Center for Michigan gathered citizen input through live polling at three regional conferences, informal online polling, and a formal poll administered by Public Sector Consultants (PSC). The data discussed in the body of this report and represented graphically come from the demographically representative, statistically significant poll administered by PSC. Quotes from Michigan residents were gathered at in-person events or were submitted via email and are used to illustrate public sentiment identified in the formal polling. For a complete data set for all three engagement strategies, refer to page 12.

Expert analysis backs up public sentiment. About 80 percent of roads across Michigan are in fair or poor condition, according to state data. To reach Michigan’s goal of having 90 percent of roads in good/fair condition, experts estimate the state needs an additional \$2 billion to \$2.5 billion more in annual road funding – even on top of pending road funding increases passed in 2015.⁶

Given all of this, it should come as no surprise that fewer than one percent of participants in this public engagement campaign think Michigan’s roads are already fine and in no need of urgent repair.

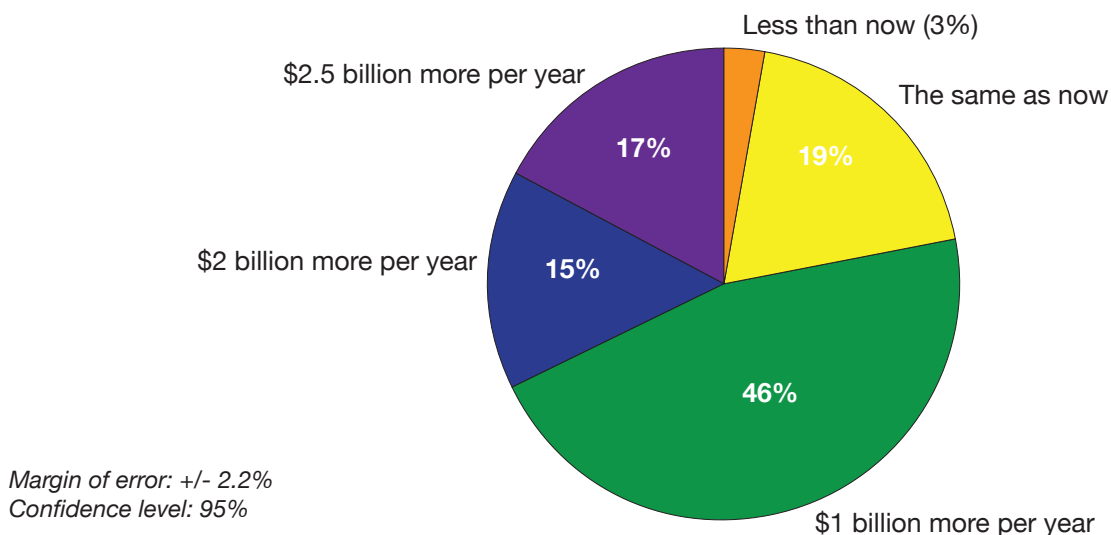
Poll results also found truth in the adage that residents don’t want all roads fixed – they want *their* road fixed. Almost half of respondents said that Michigan should repair all of the roads, and more than a third said they want their local (city/village/county) roads fixed first. State highways were the lowest priority, despite the fact state highways carry more than half of Michigan’s passenger traffic and roughly three quarters of commercial and trucking traffic.⁷

Which roads do you think are in the worst condition and most urgently need repair?



Michigan residents are partially willing to put their tax money where their mouths are to drive on better roads. Nearly eight in ten said Michigan should increase roads spending by at least \$1 billion more per year. But fewer than two in ten want the state to spend the full \$2.5 billion more per year experts recommend.⁹

How much should Michigan spend on roads and Bridges each year?

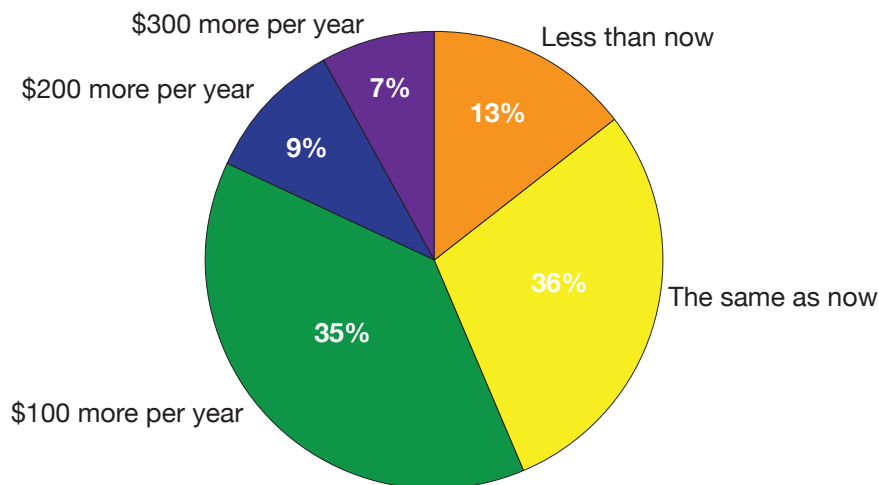


“We need to start investing in ourselves or people won’t invest in us.”

– Dan Gilmartin, Executive Director & CEO of the Michigan Municipal League

A slim majority is willing to fork over additional money from their own wallets for better roads.

How much are you personally willing to pay to improve Michigan roads and bridges each year?



Margin of error: +/- 2.2%
Confidence level: 95%

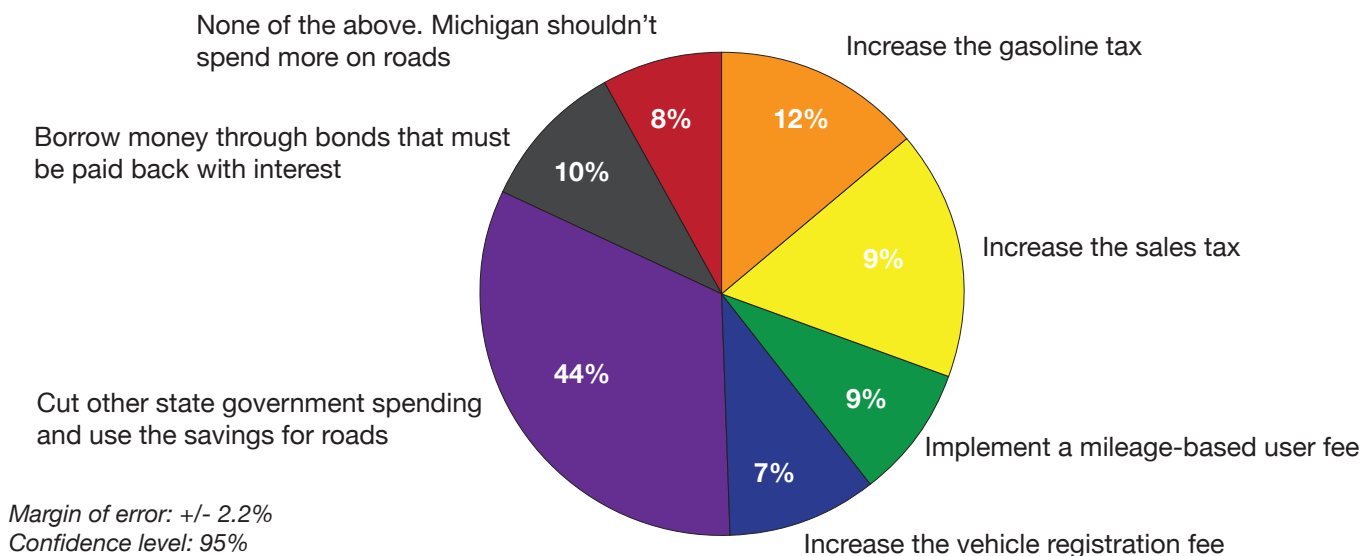
To raise or redistribute?

There is a consensus that the roads need repairs, but not on how the state should pay for them.

Poll results indicate some momentum for generalized ideological paths forward, such as cutting spending or increasing taxes, but approval comes crashing down when residents are presented with the specific ideas currently being discussed by experts and policymakers.

To assess public support for the menu of road funding options, the Center for Michigan used a before-and-after approach. We first asked poll respondents to weigh in on policy ideas without background information. Cutting government spending and redirecting the savings towards roads was the most popular choice followed by some form of tax increase.

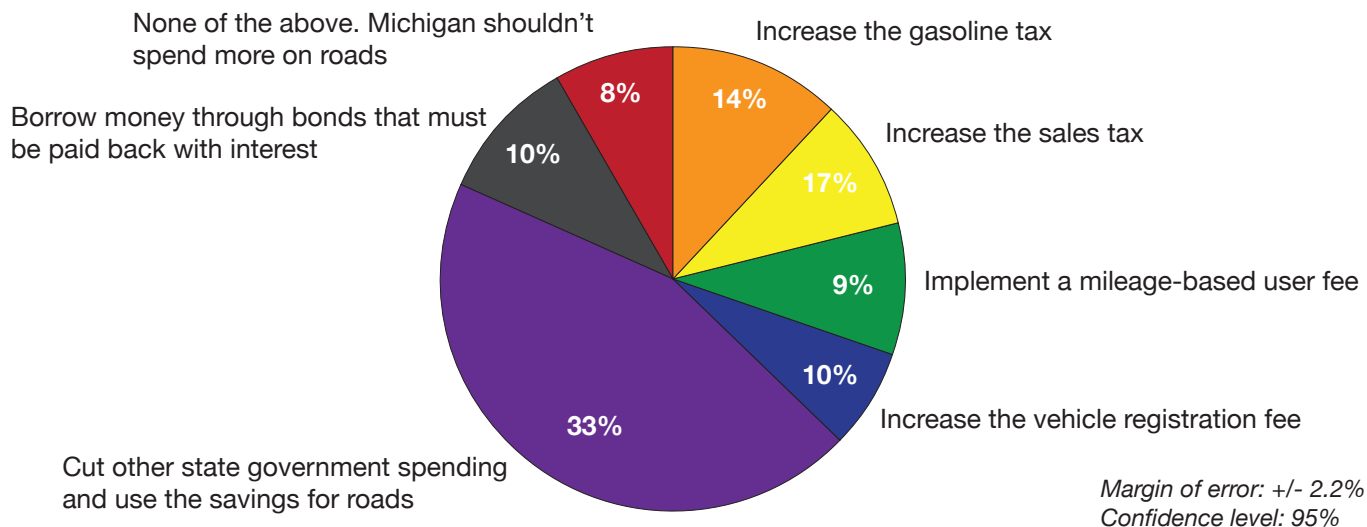
After considering all these options individually, which do you believe is the best option to fund Michigan’s long-term road repairs and maintenance?



Margin of error: +/- 2.2%
Confidence level: 95%

We then presented poll respondents with pros and cons for the various options. After consideration of pros and cons, support for cutting other government spending dropped somewhat while support for some form of tax increase rose slightly.

The expert consensus is Michigan needs to spend \$2 billion more per year to repair and maintain its roads and bridges in good condition. To pay for repair and maintenance, which option seems best to you?



Little Appetite for Lansing's Ideas

At present, no policymaker in Lansing can claim their specific path forward has a groundswell of public support.

Currently, raising Michigan's gasoline tax is the highest profile option. It's the method Governor Whitmer advocates to "fix the damn roads." In her March 2019 budget proposal, the governor presented a 45-cent tax increase phased in over 18 months.⁹

The Michigan Consensus Policy Project, a bipartisan group of former legislators working to propose policy solutions to vexing Michigan issues, also proposed a gasoline tax increase (50 cents phased in over 10 years) in early 2019. *(Disclosure: The Center for Michigan launched the Michigan Consensus Policy Project, but the Center conducted this public engagement campaign on Michigan road conditions independent of the Policy Project. This campaign specifically did not, in any way, advocate for the Policy Project's ideas. Instead this campaign sought to conduct an independent public test of a wide range of road funding ideas.)*

Deputy State Treasurer Jeff Guilfoyle conceded at a Center for Michigan Roads Solutions Summit in Lansing that "nobody wants to pay 45 cents more a gallon...But, the reality is, if you don't raise that much money the roads get worse. If you raise a lesser amount of money you are slowing the rate of decline of the roads, which has some merit, but you aren't making the roads better."

He's right – the idea isn't popular.

Three out of four poll respondents said a gasoline tax increase was a bad idea. Recent polling from the Lansing-based Marketing Resource Group found the same percentage of voters oppose Governor Whitmer's 45-cent gas tax hike specifically. This congruence suggests opposition may be tied to the policy, not just the price tag.¹⁰

"A user fee seems like an unfair tax on the poor," one participant said during the Center's campaign.

Others echoed similar concerns, with one telling the Center that “while the gasoline tax seems to be the best of the options proposed, I am concerned that it will affect low-income folks disproportionately because they tend to drive older, less fuel-efficient vehicles, and many live in rural areas where they have to drive longer distances for work, groceries, etcetera.”

Other tax increases and bonding were similarly unpopular.

Michigan Speaker of the House Lee Chatfield (R-Levering) proposes redistributing revenues from sales tax on gasoline from schools to the roads. This proposal doesn’t have broad public support, either.

“Schools will all lose,” said one in-person participant, “Not just under-performing schools, [but all schools] were the state to now take school funding out of the current gas tax revenue.”

Despite the fact residents do not widely approve of any particular funding plan, they won’t be pleased if state leaders kick the can down the road.

Michigan Senate Majority Leader Mike Shirkey (R-Clarklake) proposes waiting until the road funding package passed in 2015 is fully phased in before making any additional funding alterations. Sixty-five percent of residents polled by the Center disapproved of this idea. Michiganders demand action now.

Support for blending several approaches was shared with the Center by multiple participants. Some suggested several small tax increases, while others advocated for a combination of reallocation and increased taxation.

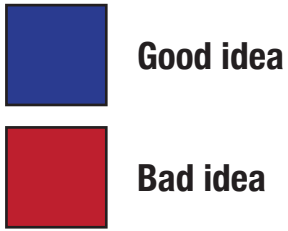
“As I was reading possible solutions,” an online participant wrote, “I could see an approach of combining two or three of the options that were given as the best way to treat our road funding shortage.”

Indeed, when the Center for Michigan surveyed Michigan residents in 2018 on what they wanted from state leaders the number one priority was a solution to hyper-partisanship.¹¹ In this way, a blended funding model offers policymakers the opportunity to address two of the electorate’s highest priorities - busting gridlock and filling potholes - in one fell swoop.

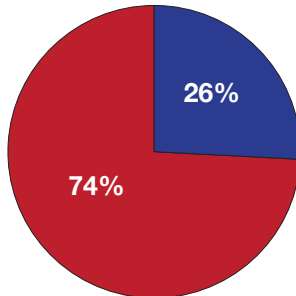
“We need to stop the political bickering and focus on a bipartisan plan,” one campaign participant advised. “Potholes don’t care if you’re a Republican or a Democrat.”



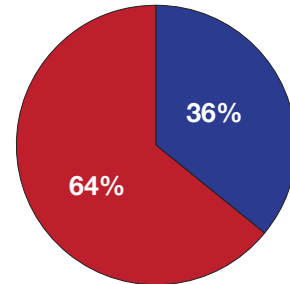
RESIDENTS WEIGH IN



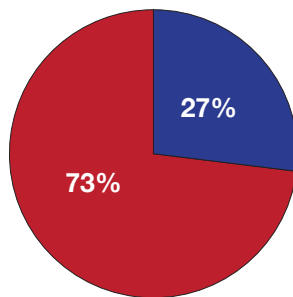
Increasing the gas tax is a...



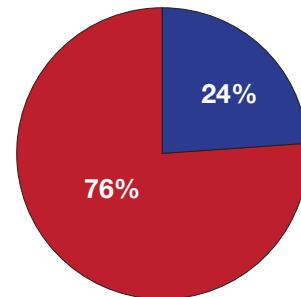
Increasing sales tax is a...



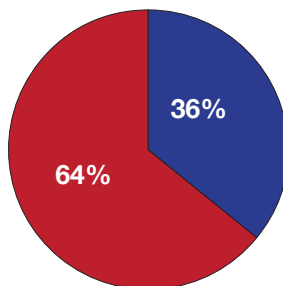
Implementing a two-cent per mile fee is a...



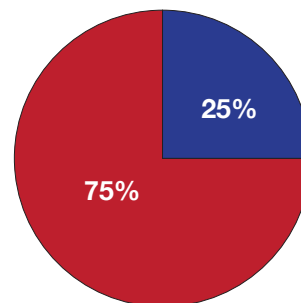
Increasing the vehicle registration fee is a...



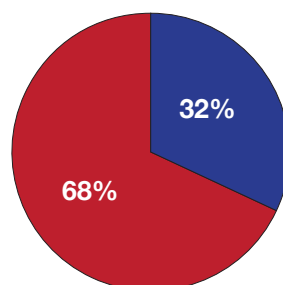
A 'wait-and-see' strategy is a...



Diverting gasoline sales tax from schools is a...



Issuing bonds to be paid back later with interest is a...



EXPERT CONSENSUS

A problem too big to ignore

There is no getting around it: Michigan's roads are in dire need of repair. Michigan can spend a lot of money and fix the problem now, or it can spend much more down the road. Fixing the roads is vital to continue growing Michigan's economy, but a lack of public trust in government will make implementing reforms more difficult.

That's the consensus from road experts across the state and across the political aisle who participated in the Center for Michigan's regional conferences in April 2019. These half-day policy conferences, called Solutions Summits, brought together road experts in Detroit, Lansing, and Grand Rapids to discuss the scale of Michigan's road problems, and how we can solve them.

Road repairs cost money – a lot of money

Citing the state's rank as lowest in the Midwest in per-capita infrastructure spending, leaders pointed to lack of funding as the root cause of Michigan's crumbling roads.

"We have reports, upon reports, upon reports sitting on shelves all across town that talk about the need, and they all come to the same conclusion: we need more money," said Mike Nystrom, Executive Vice President and Secretary of the Michigan Infrastructure and Transportation Association.

"We have to rebuild our foundation," Nystrom continued. "We have to be willing to reinvest in ourselves here in Michigan and be willing to do so at a level that actually matters."

Michigan needs "to start investing in ourselves or people won't invest in us," concurred Dan Gilmartin, Executive Director and CEO of the Michigan Municipal League.

Panelists also emphasized the importance of addressing the issue sooner rather than later. Their urgency is supported by a range of studies that show deferred road maintenance results in considerable increases in overall cost.¹²

"Something has to happen because if we continue to disinvest, the roads only get worse, the cost only goes up. We need to do something today to stave off more long-term, higher costs," added Judd Herzer, an infrastructure policy advisor to Gov. Gretchen Whitmer.

Local funding tight

City and county leaders highlighted the role funding distribution plays in the state's road woes.

While 40 percent of the state's lane miles fall under the jurisdiction of counties or municipalities, leaders of local government indicated they receive less than ample road funding under the state's current fund distribution system.

"[Last year] we filled 5,000 potholes ... That is the biggest, ultimate band-aid," said Andy Schor, Mayor of the City of Lansing. "I can do 5 or 6 major roads but I can't really do anything more than that, and I can do 5,000 potholes. That's the hard reality."

Craig Bryson, Senior Communications Manager for the Road Commission of Oakland County, expressed similar concerns. "The need is tremendous," for completing all of the county's road-repairs, he said, and the commission's budget doesn't even come close.

Roads critical to state's economic success

Poor roads impact the bottom line of businesses transporting goods throughout the state. “We need to be able to compete with the rest of the world,” said Josh Lurger, Senior Director of Government Affairs at the Grand Rapids Chamber. “I hear from enough diverse companies from the across the region to know that we can do better, and we should do better.”

Eric Lupher, President of the nonpartisan Citizens Research Council of Michigan, echoed this concern. He pointed out that produce moved across the state by Michigan’s farmers becomes damaged when driven along bumpy roads. These losses drive up the cost of food for state residents. “We need to get [residents] to understand they are already paying [the cost],” Lupher said. “We just have to repay it the right way.”

Low public trust a roadblock

Finding the “right” way to foot the bill will likely be a challenge, said Christopher Douglas, Associate Professor of Economics at the University of Michigan-Flint. According to him, residents are wary of a new tax after being told the 2015 fuel tax increase is “not enough.”

“For those reasons I’m not sure they’ll want to pay the 250 bucks,” he said.

State Representative Jeff Yaroach (R-Richmond) shared similar concerns about the impact of waning public trust, which is at historically low levels.¹³ “I don’t trust our state government, and I’m [in the Legislature],” said Yaroach. “This is not a Republican or Democratic thing. Until we give the taxpayers evidence we’re doing things right, I don’t think they’ll want to give us more money.”



MISGIVINGS

Public discussions at Center for Michigan roads policy conferences and comments submitted by online participants indicate trepidation that additional road funding, no matter the source, will not be spent effectively.

These misgivings are not tied to any specific proposal, making them roadblocks to any funding plan. The public is not keen to approve additional funding from any source if they don't think it will result in better roads.

Quality Control

One concern was a lack of quality control in the construction and maintenance of the roads. Many participants believe the roads are poorly built in the first place, leading to expensive reconstruction projects. As one participant put it, "too often the reconstructions fail in an unacceptably short period of time and the contractors are not held to account. We taxpayers then foot the bill and have to endure the delays of construction a second time." Another common maintenance concern was that the state's high weight limits for trucks shorten road lifespans by exposing Michigan roadways to undue stress.

Money Mismanagement

Participants raised concern about how tax dollars are allocated and spent when it comes to Michigan's roads. Numerous respondents voiced a lack of trust in Michigan's government to be transparent about how revenue raised through tax or fee increases would be spent, and whether that money would truly be earmarked for road repairs and maintenance. Many also feel that Michigan's system for sharing road repair revenues with local governments is "antiquated" and is "no longer the best way to distribute funds." They encouraged the state to couple distribution reform with any revenue overhaul.

"My concern is that we'll end up with a political compromise rather than a real fix."

– Julie Metty Bennett, Senior Vice President at Public Sector Consultants



METHODOLOGY AND DEMOGRAPHICS

In April 2019, the Center for Michigan led a solutions-oriented, statewide campaign to collect data and ideas from Michigan residents on what policy/policies the state should implement to fund road repairs and maintenance. This campaign was launched because of expert and citizen concern. This report contains the data and comments that relay those hopes, concerns and proposed solutions for how to finally “fix the damn roads.”

In total, 4,165 citizens participated in this campaign, from April 5 - April 30, 2019. Methods of engagement included the following:

- Solutions Summits: 224 residents participated in three half-day policy conferences
- Fixing Michigan’s Roads Online Poll (PSC-administered): 2,000 residents participated in an online poll conducted by Public Sector Consultants from April 22 - April 30, 2019
- Fixing Michigan’s Roads Online Poll (CFM-administered): 997 residents participated in an online SurveyMonkey poll, administered by the Center for Michigan, from April 5 - April 26, 2019
- Facebook Live Streaming of our Solutions Summits: 944 people engaged online with the live stream of our Solutions Summits

Methodology

Solutions Summits

Half-day policy conferences, called Solutions Summits, were held in Detroit, Lansing, and Grand Rapids during April 2019. Free and open to the public, these Summits were designed to gather public input on what strategies might be implemented to best fund Michigan’s roads. Each participant received our “Potholed” issue guide, a booklet which provided nonpartisan, professionally researched background information, statistics, and pro/con information about potential solutions. The issue guide was developed by the Center for Michigan’s public engagement team. The summits opened with two 30-minute panels of experts discussing two main topics: “Impact Investing: Why Road Funding Matters More than You Think,” and “Filling the Funding Potholes: How to Close Michigan’s Road Finance Gap.” Afterward, attendees were asked 14 multiple-choice questions about solutions to fixing and funding Michigan’s roads and were given the opportunity to share their thoughts during an open discussion guided by five prompts related to the previous 14 questions. Participants were also asked to answer five demographic questions. Where common themes emerged in both the quantitative and qualitative data, we shared the findings in this report.

Fixing Michigan’s Roads Online Poll - Public Sector Consultants

The Center for Michigan hired Public Sector Consultants, a nonpartisan, policy consulting firm, to administer an online poll to gather Michigan residents’ input on fixing Michigan’s roads. All 19 multiple choice questions (14 roads-related and 5 demographic) that were asked at the Solutions Summits were asked of these online poll participants. This poll was administered from April 22—April 30, 2019, to 2,000 demographically representative Michigan adults. The poll has an overall margin of error at +/- 2.2 percent at a 95 percent confidence level.

Fixing Michigan’s Roads Online Poll

The Center for Michigan also administered an online poll using SurveyMonkey to gather Michigan residents’ input on fixing Michigan’s roads. All 19 multiple choice questions that were asked at the Solutions Summits and in the online poll conducted by Public Sector Consultants were asked of these online poll participants. This poll was available online to the general public from April 5—26, 2019 and was promoted to Bridge Magazine’s subscribers via email and during each Facebook Live event. The poll received 997 responses, with many respondents submitting additional comments and solutions to Center staff. Where common themes emerged in both the quantitative and qualitative data, we shared the findings in this report.

Demographics

AGE	CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS	ONLINE POLLING	FORMAL POLLING
17 or younger	2%	0%	0%
18-24	1%	0%	13%
25-34	7%	3%	17%
35-44	11%	7%	16%
45-54	16%	11%	15%
55-64	21%	28%	19%
65-74	29%	39%	15%
75 or older	11%	11%	6%

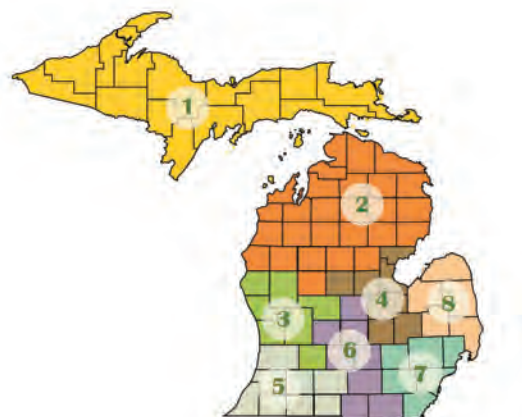
RACE	CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS	ONLINE POLLING	FORMAL POLLING
African American/Black	8%	1%	16%
American Indian	1%	1%	1%
Arab American	1%	0%	1%
Asian American	1%	0%	3%
Caucasian/White	84%	93%	69%
Hispanic/Latino	2%	1%	6%
Multiracial	4%	3%	3%

HOUSEHOLD INCOME	CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS	ONLINE POLLING	FORMAL POLLING
Less than \$21,199	4%	5%	19%
\$21,200-\$40,099	6%	13%	19%
\$40,100-\$50,799	8%	11%	12%
\$58,000-\$63,199	6%	11%	14%
\$63,200-\$100,599	27%	28%	19%
\$100,600-\$179,999	30%	22%	13%
\$180,000 or more	18%	10%	4%

GENDER	CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS	ONLINE POLLING	FORMAL POLLING
Male	61%	57%	50%
Female	38%	42%	50%
Transgender/non-conforming	1%	1%	1%

NOTE: Rounding may result in percentages not adding to 100

REGION	CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS	ONLINE POLLING	FORMAL POLLING
1	0%	4%	3%
2	2%	15%	5%
3	15%	11%	12%
4	30%	8%	9%
5	2%	9%	9%
6	23%	14%	9%
7	28%	35%	50%
8	0%	3%	2%



Polling Questions and Participant Responses

In order to ensure our data was truly representative of Michigan's population, the Center took a blended approach to gather public input, combining online polling with in-person policy conferences. Solutions Summits provided robust dialogue as well as quantitative data, which was also captured in our online survey. Structured online polling, administered by Public Sector Consultants, provided statistical validity and ensured that our data is not influenced by self-selection bias. Polling data collected by Public Sector Consultants was representative of population estimates for Michigan from the 2010 U.S. Census and three-year estimates from the American Community Survey.

Aggregate responses from each platform for every polling question is provided below.

In general, do you think Michigan roads are in...

	CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS	ONLINE POLLING	FORMAL POLLING
Great condition	1%	0%	2%
Good condition	1%	2%	4%
Fair condition	22%	19%	20%
Poor condition	44%	44%	41%
Terrible condition	31%	36%	33%

Thinking about roads in your area over the last year, do you think road conditions are...

	CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS	ONLINE POLLING	FORMAL POLLING
The same as ever	11%	9%	12%
Getting a lot better	2%	1%	3%
Getting a little better	18%	17%	22%
Getting a little worse	41%	38%	35%
Getting a lot worse	29%	35%	28%

Please read the following list of types of roads. Which roads do you think are in the worst condition and most urgently need repair?

	CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS	ONLINE POLLING	FORMAL POLLING
Major highways (like I-94, I-75, US-131)	8%	7%	8%
State highways like (M-59, M-66, M-72)	5%	7%	6%
County roads	19%	20%	14%
City/Village roads	31%	19%	22%
All of them	37%	46%	49%
None of them. Mich. roads are fine	0%	1%	1%

How much should Michigan spend on roads and bridges each year?

	CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS	ONLINE POLLING	FORMAL POLLING
Less than now	2%	2%	3%
The same as now	3%	10%	19%
\$1 billion more per year	14%	29%	46%
\$2 billion more per year	27%	30%	15%
\$2.5 billion more per year	53%	29%	17%

How much are you personally willing to pay to improve Michigan roads and bridges each year?

	CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS	ONLINE POLLING	FORMAL POLLING
Less than now	3%	5%	13%
The same as now	4%	21%	36%
\$100 more per year	16%	29%	35%
\$200 more per year	26%	23%	9%
\$300 more per year	52%	22%	7%

The expert consensus is Michigan needs to spend \$2 billion more per year to repair and maintain its roads and bridges in good condition. To pay for repair and maintenance, which option seems best to you?

	CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS	ONLINE POLLING	FORMAL POLLING
Increase the gasoline tax	49%	29%	12%
Increase the sales tax	9%	15%	9%
Implement a mileage-based user fee	16%	12%	9%
Cut other state government spending and use the savings for roads	15%	26%	44%
Borrow money through bonds that must be paid back with interest	6%	8%	10%
None of the above. Michigan shouldn't spend more on roads	1%	5%	8%

One option for covering Michigan's \$2 billion road funding gap is a gasoline tax increase. It could cost the average driver \$300 more per year, but eventually save drivers from some car repair costs caused by poor road conditions. But gasoline taxes are becoming less effective as a long-term solution as vehicles become more energy efficient. With that information, do you think increasing the gasoline tax is a good idea or a bad idea to pay for road repair and maintenance?

	CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS	ONLINE POLLING	FORMAL POLLING
Good idea	73%	40%	26%
Bad idea	27%	60%	74%

Another option to raise \$2 billion more for roads is a two-cent fee on each mile driven. This would cost the average Michigan driver \$300 per year but may eventually save drivers from some car repair costs caused by poor road condition. Some states are experimenting with mileage-based user fee pilot programs. But the technology hasn't yet been implemented on a statewide level. With that information, do you think a two cent-per-mile-driven user fee is a good idea or a bad idea to pay for road repair and maintenance?

	CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS	ONLINE POLLING	FORMAL POLLING
Good idea	31%	29%	27%
Bad idea	69%	71%	73%

Another option to raise \$1.5 billion more for roads is to increase the state sales tax from 6 percent to 7 percent. Consumers would pay more for daily purchases of many goods. This could prove to be a more stable revenue source than gasoline over time as vehicles become more energy efficient. It, too, might eventually save drivers from some car repair costs caused by poor road conditions. But Michigan voters turned down a sales tax increase for roads five years ago. With that information, do you think increasing the sales tax is a good idea or a bad idea to pay for road repair and maintenance?

	CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS	ONLINE POLLING	FORMAL POLLING
Good idea	45%	42%	36%
Bad idea	55%	58%	64%

Another option to raise \$2 billion more for roads is to double state vehicle registration fees. Drivers now pay \$36 to \$178 or more per year in registration fees based on the list price of their vehicles. Like other options, this could fully fund Michigan road repairs and eventually save on some car repair costs. However, drivers would have to pay the increased registration fees in one lump sum each year instead of the incremental small payments of gasoline or sales taxes. With that information, do you think the registration fee increase is a good idea or a bad idea to pay for road repair and maintenance?

	CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS	ONLINE POLLING	FORMAL POLLING
Good idea	29%	23%	24%
Bad idea	71%	77%	76%

The Michigan Legislature approved \$1.2 billion in additional road funding five years ago, but experts still say the state has a \$2 billion road funding gap. Some legislative leaders now favor a wait-and-see approach as the 2015 road funding increase is fully implemented. This option may be taxpayer-friendly in the short term but not the long term due to increased repair costs from additional deferred maintenance.

nance. With that information, do you think the wait-and-see approach is a good idea or a bad idea to pay for road repair and maintenance?

	CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS	ONLINE POLLING	FORMAL POLLING
Good idea	11%	20%	36%
Bad idea	90%	80%	64%

Some legislative leaders want to redirect \$1 billion in gasoline sales taxes that currently fund schools to fund road repairs instead. This option may be taxpayer friendly in the short term. However, neglecting full Michigan road repairs now means they'll cost more later. Moving money from schools to roads could intensify problems in under-performing schools. With that information, do you think that redirecting funds from schools is a good idea or a bad idea to pay for road repair and maintenance?

	CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS	ONLINE POLLING	FORMAL POLLING
Good idea	20%	21%	25%
Bad idea	80%	79%	75%

As mentioned earlier, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer proposes fixing roads with a major gas tax increase. During her campaign last year, she often said that if the Legislature blocked her road funding plan, she may seek to issue bonds and borrow money for road repairs. Bonds may work for short-term road repairs. However, it would take billions of dollars in borrowing (and potentially cost taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars in interest payments) to fully address Michigan's road problems. With that information, do you think borrowing through bonding is a good idea or a bad idea to pay for road repair and maintenance?

	CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS	ONLINE POLLING	FORMAL POLLING
Good idea	26%	24%	32%
Bad idea	75%	76%	68%

After considering all these options individually, which do you believe is the best option to fund Michigan's long-term road repairs and maintenance?

	CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS	ONLINE POLLING	FORMAL POLLING
Increase gasoline tax	60%	25%	14%
Increase sales tax	13%	21%	17%
Implement a mileage-based user fee	10%	11%	9%
Increase vehicle registration fee	4%	8%	10%
Cut other state government spending and use the savings for roads	9%	24%	33%
Borrow money through bonds that must be paid back with interest	3%	7%	10%
None of the above. Michigan shouldn't spend more on roads	2%	4%	8%

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Contact Your Leaders

Make your voice heard! Call or write your legislators and urge them to act on the priorities outlined in this report, as well as your additional ideas for improving our state. To find the name and contact information for your state representative, visit www.house.mi.gov. To find the name and contact information for your state senator, visit www.senate.michigan.gov. Your voice matters!

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We are Michigan's leading practitioner of nonpartisan public engagement. We make citizenship interesting, convenient, and meaningful through interactive, small-group Community Conversations, large town hall conferences, phone polling, and online engagement tools. More than 69,000 residents have engaged with us to date. This bottom-up public engagement can, and does, lead to actual policy change.

We also publish Bridge Magazine, our free online news publication at www.bridgemi.com. Launched in 2011, Bridge focuses on the "how" and "why" of Michigan current events. Our differentiated, in-depth, data-driven public affairs reporting and watchdogging of the state capitol, education, state economy, environment, urban affairs and other policy issues has earned more than 150 state and national journalism awards. More than 1.7 million people read Bridge in 2018.

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