

The Obama Infrastructure Plan:

*A Survey of American Attitudes on Infrastructure Improvement
and the Local Economy*

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Methodology and Sample Characteristics

Methodology

Zogby International was commissioned by the US Conference of Mayors to conduct an online survey of 2889 adults between January 14th and January 16th 2009.

A sampling of Zogby International's online panel, which is representative of the adult population of the US, was invited to participate. Slight weights were added to region, party, age, race, religion, gender, education to more accurately reflect the population. The margin of error is +/- 1.9 percentage points. Margins of error are higher in sub-groups.

**Zogby International and the U.S. Conference of Mayors previously released a poll in January of 2008. Fieldwork for that poll was conducted between November 21st and December 12th, 2007.*

More information about that survey can be found at:

<http://www.zogby.com/search/ReadNews.cfm?ID=1432>

Sample Characteristics	Frequency	Valid Percent*
Sample size	2889	100
East	633	22
South	748	26
Central/Great Lakes	863	30
West	633	22
Did not answer region	13	--
Democratic	1098	38
Republican	895	31
Independent/Minor party	809	28
Did not answer party	87	3
18-29	575	20
30-49	1151	40
50-64	662	23
65+	489	17
18-24	198	7
25-34	555	19
35-54	1191	41
55-69	708	25
70+	224	8
White	2041	73
Hispanic	280	10
African American	363	13
Asian/Pacific	56	2
Other/mixed	56	2
Did not answer race	93	--
Liberal	770	28
Moderate	768	28
Conservative	1236	45
Less than \$25,000	251	10
\$25,000-\$34,999	238	9
\$35,000-\$49,999	385	15
\$50,000-\$74,999	559	22
\$75,000-\$99,999	444	17
\$100,000 or more	702	27
Did not answer income	310	--
Male	1399	49
Female	1456	51

* Numbers have been rounded to the nearest percent and might not total 100.

Executive Summary

President-elect Barack Obama has proposed a 25 billion dollar infrastructure improvement plan as part of a larger effort to stimulate the economy. This survey tested public opinion about that proposed plan as well as the connection of that plan to the economy as a whole. Respondents were also asked about the previous financial bailout package, other stimulus options and overall trust and transparency in government.

A majority of respondents believe that the President-elect's plan will help create local jobs (55%) and help to stimulate the local economy (54%). And even though only 37 percent of respondents believe the plan will help 'people like me,' a majority (54%) believes the plan should be a top priority for the incoming administration.

Americans clearly see the connection between infrastructure projects and the economy. Nearly all respondents (84%) believe that infrastructure improvements are important to the health of the local economy. Ninety-two percent believe the health of the local economy is important to the health of the national economy.

Even though most respondents do not define many non-transportation and non-construction related projects as being infrastructure projects, a clear majority agree that increased funding for those projects is important. A majority support not only increased funding for local roads and highways (81%), but also increased funding for non-transportation and non-construction related projects like water and wastewater improvements (80%), modernizing the energy grid (87%) and modernizing public schools (70%).

'Going green' is also seen as being important to the local economy. As in our 2008 survey, a majority of respondents believe that 'going green' can help the local economy, local job creation and can make the local community more attractive for business.

When asked which groups or projects should be targeted in a new economic stimulus package, state and local infrastructure projects ranked second behind only companies that agree to create jobs in the United States. Other groups and projects cited as important by a majority of respondents include small businesses and local banks, the unemployed (through an extension of unemployment benefits) and state and local governments facing budget shortfalls.

One warning sign that emerged in the survey involved the transparency of the financial bailout package passed in the fall of 2008. Three-quarters of respondents believe there has been little to no transparency from the Federal government with respect to the financial bailout--a majority (53%) believes there has been no transparency at all.

Respondents are evenly divided over whether Federal money should be distributed to the state or local governments. Respondents do, however, trust local government over state government by a 3:1 margin.

Findings

Fifty-four percent of Americans surveyed believe that the Obama Administration should make their proposed 25 billion dollar infrastructure improvement and development a top priority. Less than one quarter (21%) feel the plan should be a low priority or not a priority at all, while another quarter (22%) believe it should be a moderate priority.

Local Impact of President-Elect Obama's \$25 Billion Economic Infrastructure Plan

	Plan Will Help Create Jobs in My City/Community	Plan Will Help Stimulate Local Economy	Plan Will Help People Like Me
Strongly Agree	20	21	14
Somewhat Agree	35	33	23
AGREE	55	54	37
Somewhat Disagree	19	20	22
Strongly Disagree	18	20	33
DISAGREE	37	40	55
Not Sure	7	7	8

- A majority of respondents believe that the proposed economic plan will help create jobs in their city or community (55%) and will help stimulate the local economy (54%); however, only 37 percent say the plan will help ‘people like me.’

Importance of . . .

	Infrastructure Improvements to Health of Local Economy	Health of Local Economy to Health of National Economy
Very Important	51	53
Somewhat Important	33	39
IMPORTANT	84	92
Not Very Important	9	7
Not At All Important	4	1
NOT IMPORTANT	13	8
Not Sure	4	<1

- There is near universal agreement among respondents that infrastructure improvements are important to the health of the local economy (84%). Furthermore, 92 percent of respondents believe the health of their local economy is important to the overall health of the national economy.

What Comes to Mind When You Hear ‘Infrastructure Projects’

	Overall
Bridges/Roads/Highways	91
Public transportation/Rail/Buses	67
Construction of public buildings, stadiums, facilities, etc . . .	46
School improvements/modernization	42
Emergency Services (Fire, Medical)	28
Public Safety (Police)	22
Environmental Programs/Environmental Protection	21
Increasing Broadband connectivity	20
Business Development/Job Creation	18
Creation of Affordable Housing	15
Security/Terrorism Prevention	13
Quality of life issues (tourism/arts/cultural projects, parks, recreation)	12
None of the Above/Not Sure	4

**Respondent were asked to choose all that apply*

- When asked to compare their current local economy to the overall national economy, respondents offer a mixed opinion. Nearly a third of respondents (31%) believe their local economy is better off than the national economy while a quarter (25%) believe their local economy is worse off. Forty-three percent say the two are about the same.

Importance of Increased Funding For Each of the Following:

	State Roads/ Highways	Local Roads/ Highways	Public Trans.	Airport Imp.	Train Trans.	Modernizing Energy Grid
Very Important	46	33	42	21	33	60
Somewhat Important	41	48	33	41	37	28
IMPORTANT	87	81	75	61	70	87
Not Very Important	10	14	16	29	21	8
Not At All Important	3	4	9	9	8	4
NOT IMPORTANT	13	18	25	38	29	12
Not Sure	1	1	1	1	1	1

Importance of Increased Funding For Each of the Following:

	Water/ Wastewater Imp.	Mod. Public Schools	Other Public Utilities	Inc. Overall Energy Efficiency	Public/ Affordable Housing Imp.
Very Important	44	40	31	56	26
Somewhat Important	36	30	39	25	33
IMPORTANT	80	70	70	81	59
Not Very Important	14	18	21	11	20
Not At All Important	5	11	8	7	20
NOT IMPORTANT	19	29	29	18	40
Not Sure	1	1	1	1	1

Effect of ‘Going Green’ on Local Economy and Community

Going Green . . .	Will Have Positive Impact on Local Economy		Can Help My Local Gov’t Create Jobs		Make Local Community More Attractive Business	
	2009	2008	2009	2008	2009	2008
Strongly Agree	27	28	24	27	29	23
Somewhat Agree	29	31	29	29	30	33
AGREE	56	59	53	56	59	56
Somewhat Disagree	15	14	16	15	14	17
Strongly Disagree	25	18	25	18	23	15
DISAGREE	40	32	41	33	37	32
Not Sure	5	10	7	11	5	12

- A majority of respondents believe that ‘going green’ can have a positive impact on their local economy and their community. Agreement that ‘going green’ can have a positive impact has not changed significantly over the course of the past year.

Importance When Considering Economic Stimulus Package

	Important	Not Important
Companies that agree to create jobs in the United States	86	13
State and local infrastructure projects	84	15
Small businesses and local banks	74	25
Those who are unemployed through an extension of unemployment benefits	69	30
Companies that agree to increase energy efficiency through modernization	63	25
Homeowners for mortgage relief	63	36
State and local governments to help them cover budget shortfalls	60	39
Parents for help with college tuition payments	53	46
Specific industries impacted by the economic downturn (e.g., Auto industry)	52	46
National and regional banks and large financial institutions	41	57

- Respondents believe the two most important groups to target with any economic stimulus package are (1) companies that agree to create jobs in the United States (86%) and state and local infrastructure projects (84%). Three-quarters (74%) believe small businesses and local banks should be targeted, followed by the unemployed (69%), companies agreeing to increase energy efficiency (63%), homeowners (63%) and state and local governments who have to cover budget shortfalls (60%).
- When asked about the transparency of the financial bailout package passed by Congress in the fall of 2008, three-quarters of respondents say that they believe there has been little transparency. A majority (53%) believe there has been no transparency at all, while only 15 percent believe the stimulus package has been very or somewhat transparent.
- Respondents are evenly divided over whether Federal money should be given to city or state governments. A third of respondents believe the money should flow to governors (34%) while another third believe it should flow to mayors (30%).
- Finally, when asked who they trust most, respondents cite local government over state or federal government by more than a 3:1 margin. Thirty-seven percent say they trust local government most, compared with 11 percent for state government and 6 percent for the Federal government. Eighteen percent trust all three equally while the remaining 28 percent are not sure.