



## Annual Commuter Attitudes Report — 2007

### HIGHLIGHTS

#### Opposition to gas tax hike softens as residents perceive Massachusetts is losing ground on transportation infrastructure

Residents believe we're losing ground when it comes to maintaining our roads and mass transit systems, according to Mass Insight's annual Commuter Attitudes Report, but the majority of those who commute by car continue to say congestion is not a daily problem.

As in the past, most residents drive to work or school each day. The perceived decline in road conditions – combined with gas prices that when the survey was conducted were lower than they had been a year earlier – has softened resistance to raising the Commonwealth's gas tax, which funds road and bridge improvements. This year, a majority of respondents say they would support an increase.

Responses appear contradictory on the issue of how transportation funds should be allocated. Most say they favor investing in maintenance over expansion, yet a majority support each of three potential transit expansion projects. A plurality prioritize improving and expanding public transit over roads.

### KEY FINDINGS

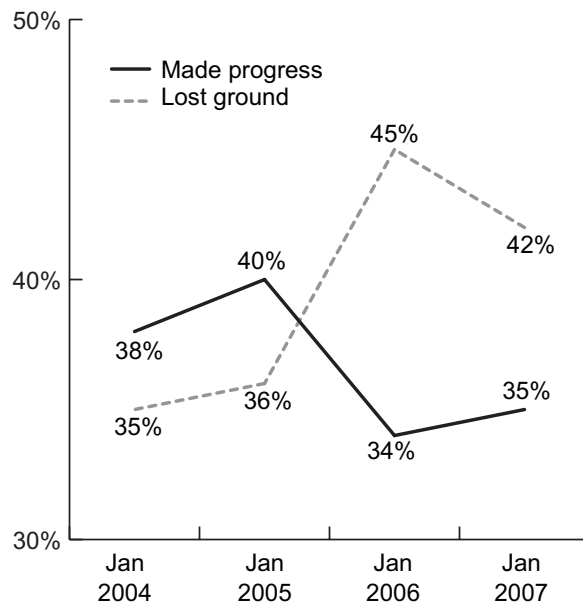
The severity of the transportation funding challenges Massachusetts faces was hammered home by the recent release of the Transportation Finance Commission's long-awaited report. Over the next 20 years, the Commonwealth's roads and the MBTA face a \$15-\$19 billion funding shortfall — nearly \$1 billion per year — and that assumes that not a single new road or transit line will be built beyond those already under construction.

As daunting as they are, these problems must be addressed, because sufficient transportation infrastructure is a prerequisite for economic growth. This year, Mass Insight's annual Commuter Attitudes Report is part of **Global Massachusetts 2015**, a two-year economic development initiative designed to facilitate creation of a comprehensive, statewide economic development plan.

## Losing ground on transportation infrastructure. . .

- For the second year in a row, residents believe we're losing ground on transportation infrastructure.
- Sixty-one percent rate the condition of our roads and bridges as "fair" or "poor."
- Public transportation quality ratings and satisfaction with the MBTA are down.
- Only 16% are satisfied with the Big Dig, a new low.

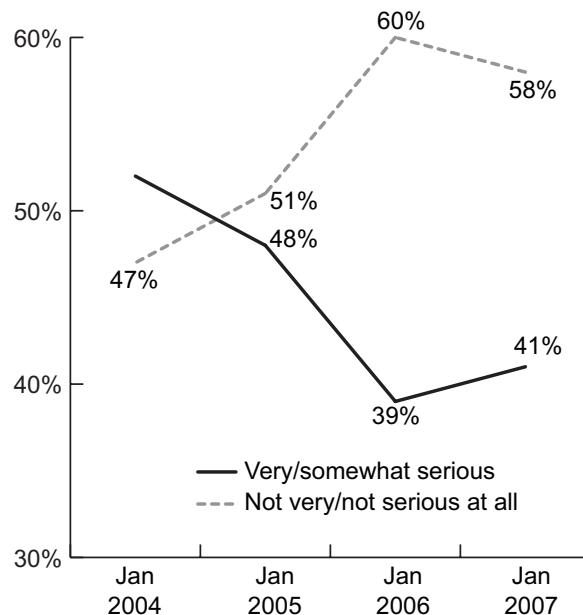
How much progress has the state made with repairing and maintaining our roads, highways and mass transit systems?



## But congestion is not a serious problem for most

- Nearly three quarters (74%) of Massachusetts residents commute by car.
- Public transportation is an option for 24% of those who commute by car.
- Commuters list ease or convenience (46%) as the biggest reasons they choose to commute by car.

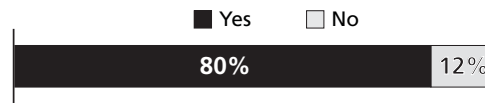
How serious a problem is traffic congestion for your daily commute?



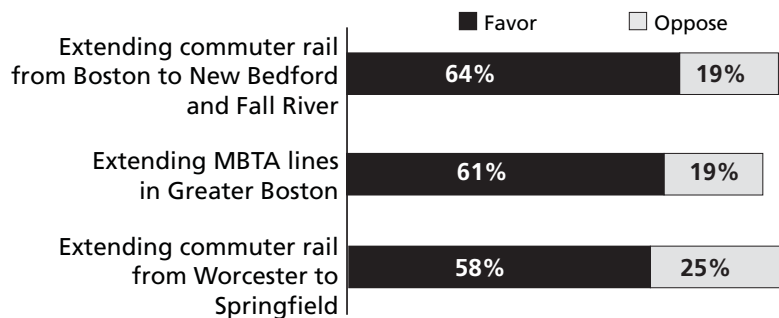
## Maintain first... but expand as well

- Four-fifths support requiring state transportation agencies to invest in maintenance before committing to expansions.
- Sixty-three percent say the MBTA's first priority should be to maintain existing lines, but...
- About three-fifths support extending commuter rail service to New Bedford, Fall River and Springfield, building the Urban Ring through Boston neighborhoods and adjacent towns.

Would you support a provision to require state transportation agencies to make sufficient investments in maintenance before dedicating money to expansion?



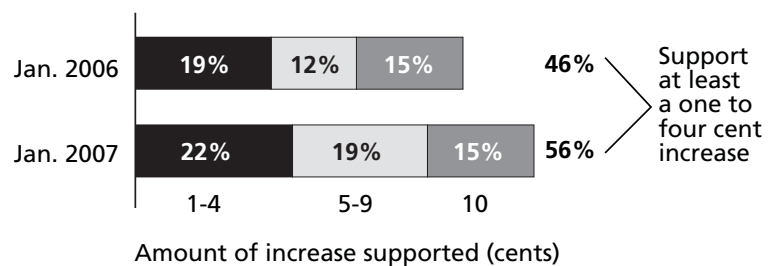
With limited MBTA resources to expand, do you support or oppose the following major public transportation projects?



## Less resistance to new revenues, but control labor costs

- A majority of residents now support some increase in the gas tax.
- But coupling a gas tax increase with taking down tolls on the Massachusetts Turnpike didn't increase support; 54% oppose the package deal.
- Almost three-quarters support bringing generous MBTA employee benefits in line with those of other state employees.

The state's gas tax, which funds road construction and improvements, has not been raised since 1991. A five-cent increase in the gas tax would produce more than \$150 million dollars to maintain our roads and cost the average driver \$30 per year. Would you support:





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