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Tennessee Voters Support Increased Spending on Biking and Walking Infrastructure
University of Tennessee survey finds majority of Tennesseans value biking and walking infrastructure as investments in safety

NASHVILLE—As the Tennessee General Assembly convenes its session next week, it is widely expected to consider proposals by Gov. Bill Haslam to increase transportation revenue in the state. A new survey, conducted by a center within the Social Work Office of Research & Public Service at The University of Tennessee at Knoxville (UT Knoxville), finds that Tennesseans support greater investments in biking and walking infrastructure as well as funding for multimodal transportation—highways, roads, bridges, trails, sidewalks, bike lanes and public transit. Tennessee voters also believe decision-making about transportation spending should occur at the local level.

“This survey shows that Tennesseans want more biking and walking opportunities in their communities,” said John Paul Shaffer, board chairman of Bike Walk Tennessee. “Voters believe that more sidewalks, separated bike lanes and off-street trails can make a difference in the safety and quality of transportation options for everyone in the state, regardless of whether they live in urban, suburban or rural communities.”

Support for biking and walking infrastructure isn’t limited to large urban areas. A majority of respondents in small towns and rural non-farm areas indicated there were “too few” on-street bike lanes, walking and biking paths, and off-street trails in their communities. Support for spending any revenue increase on multimodal forms of transportation was highest in small cities (64.1 percent), followed by towns and large cities (58.7 percent each), rural non-farm areas (53.6 percent) and small towns (50.4 percent).

“Tennesseans from Memphis to my Dutch Valley farm in East Tennessee’s Anderson County want safer, better transportation options for themselves and their children to walk, bike and get around,” said Marianne Wesley Fowler, senior strategist for policy advocacy at Rails-to-Trails Conservancy. “But they also want the ability to make decisions locally about the transportation options that work best for their communities.”

Safety and local control were important considerations for Tennesseans. Nearly two-thirds (66.2 percent) of registered voters indicated that adding a separated bike lane would improve safety for both vehicles and bikes. Respondents—including Republicans and those from communities of all sizes—would also be more likely to support a gas tax increase (43 percent) if decisions about how to spend it were made at the local level.

Bike Walk Tennessee and Rails-to-Trails Conservancy commissioned the Center for Applied Research and Evaluation in the Social Work Office of Research & Public Service at UT Knoxville to conduct a survey of 762 registered Tennessee voters in October 2016. Surveys—completed using landline sampling, cell phone sampling and a web panel—resulted in a margin of error +/- 3.6 percent at a 95 percent confidence level. A summary of survey findings may be viewed [here](#).

Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC), a nonprofit organization with more than 160,000 members and supporters, is the nation's largest trails organization dedicated to connecting people and communities by creating a nationwide network of public trails, many from former rail lines and connecting corridors. Founded in 1986, RTC's national office is located in Washington, D.C., with regional offices in California, Florida, Ohio and Pennsylvania. For more information, visit www.railstotrails.org.

Bike Walk Tennessee is a nonprofit organization committed to making Tennessee a great place for people who walk or bike. Founded in 2009, Bike Walk Tennessee advocates for policies and infrastructure that enhance the safety of roads and trails across the state. Bike Walk Tennessee believes that biking and walking create vibrant, healthy communities that contribute to economic development and quality of life. For more information, visit www.bikewalktn.org.