



**TO** Interested Parties

**FROM** Lori Weigel and Kathryn Hahne  
New Bridge Strategy

Dave Metz  
FM3 Research

**RE:** Small Town & Rural Voters' Views of Investments Related to the Transportation and Climate Initiative  
a Clean Transportation Fund in the Northeast & Mid-Atlantic

**DATE** September 27, 2019

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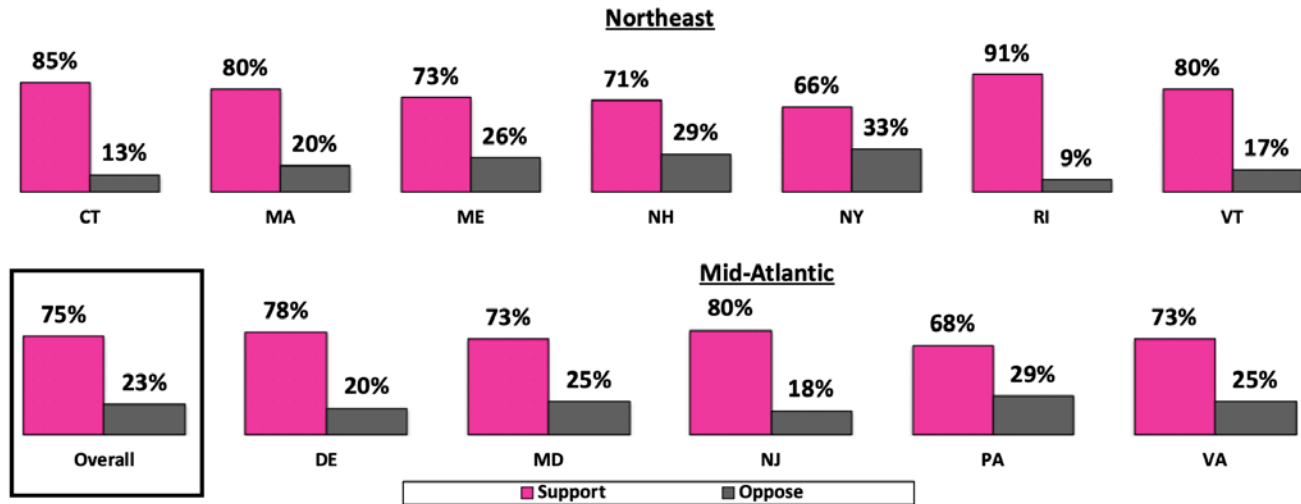
The bipartisan research team of New Bridge Strategy (R) and Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates (D) recently completed a survey of small town and rural voters in the twelve states which comprise the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic states participating in the Transportation & Climate Initiative to measure perceptions of a clean transportation fund in the region.<sup>i</sup> **The study found strong support for a proposal that would invest in transportation choices that reduce pollution, expand public transportation, encourage use of electric vehicles, and develop safe ways for people to walk and bike in small towns and rural areas.** Support is strong across party lines and across all states included in the survey. Moreover, these rural and small town voters express solid support for specific transportation investments, and a majority would be willing to help fund these clean transportation initiatives. This survey was paid for by The Nature Conservancy.

Specifically, the survey found that...

- **Three-quarters of small town and rural voters in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic support the creation of a state clean transportation fund.** Fully 75 percent support a proposal that would reduce pollution, expand public transportation, create incentives and infrastructure for electric vehicles, and safe ways for people to walk and bike, including in small towns and rural areas of the state. Moreover, four-in-ten (39%) voters “strongly” support this proposal and only 23 percent express opposition to it.

### Clean Transportation Fund Proposal

Some people have proposed that the state of [RESPONDENT'S STATE] create a clean transportation fund that would invest in transportation choices that reduce pollution, including expanding public transportation, creating incentives and infrastructure for electric vehicles, and safe ways for people to walk and bike, including in small towns and rural areas of the state. Does this sound like something you would support or oppose?



Notably, support for this proposal is broad-based and widespread, as evidenced across multiple sub-groups, including:

- 80% of women and 70% of men
- 93% of Democrats, 73% of independents, and 63% of Republicans
- 87% of voters of color and 74% of white voters
- 80% of small-town voters and 72% of rural voters,
- 76% of voters with a shorter commute (0-44 mins), and 69% with a longer commute (45+ mins),
- 85% of electric vehicle owners, 83% of station wagon owners, 76% of car owners, 75% of mini-van owners, 73% of SUV owners, and 65% of truck owners
- Ranging from 83% among voters age 18-34 to 72% among voters age 65+.

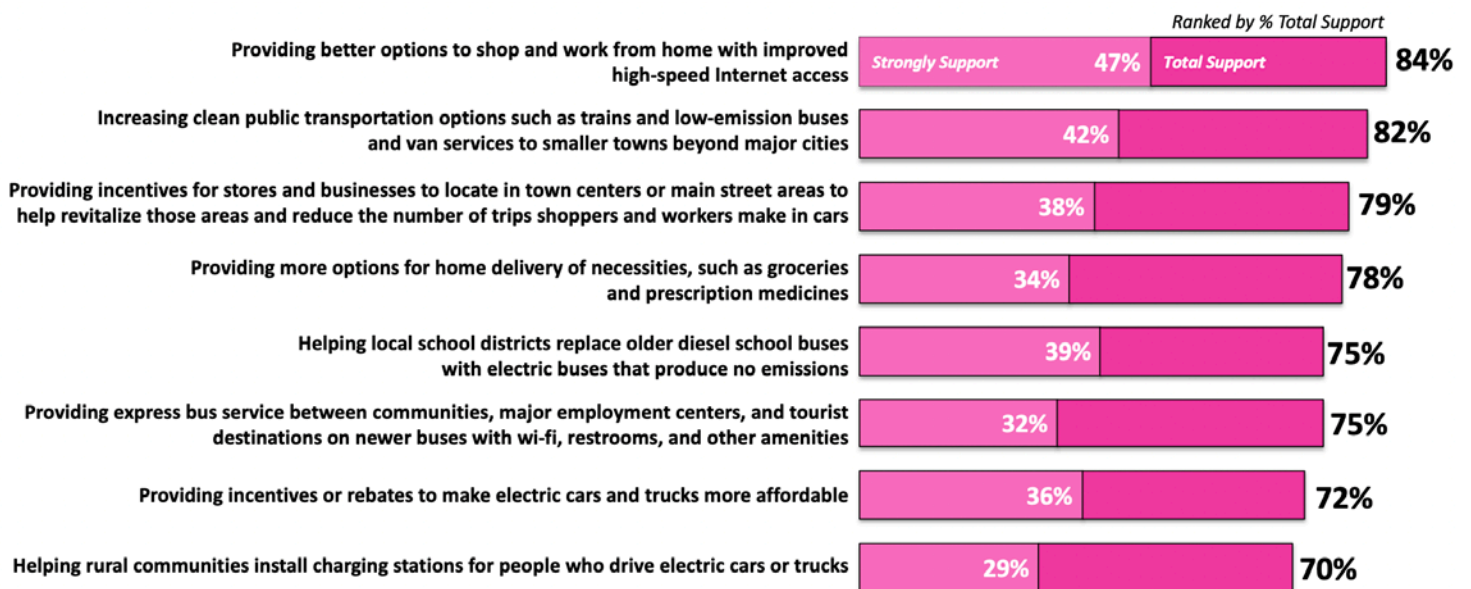
Voter responses to an open-ended question indicate that those who support the clean transportation fund proposal **primarily do so for environmental reasons, including specifically mentioning concerns about climate change and the need to reduce carbon pollution.** There are also numerous mentions of a desire to increase transportation options, make the roads safer, help people – particularly elderly residents living in their communities – get around more easily, and create jobs.



- **Support for investments in clean transportation may be grounded in the fairly dismal perceptions these rural and small town voters have for the current transportation infrastructure.** Overall, voters say that the transportation system in their state – including “highways, roads, and public transportation like trains or buses” – deserves poor marks. Overall, a mere 3% grade the transportation system as an “A”, another 19% as a “B.” A plurality instead offer up just a “C” grade, while nearly one-in-three provide the poorest marks of “D” (20%) or “F” 12%). Across every state, the majority of small town and rural voters rate their state’s transportation system as a grade “C” or below, with little variation.
- **Moreover, it is clear that voters in small town and rural areas of these states see few transportation options available to them and other residents.** Fully 83% agree that they “have no choice but to drive as much as I do,” a sentiment that is shared by three-quarters or more in every single state.
- **At least seven-in-ten voters support each of the potential investments that could be included in the clean transportation fund.** The response to all eight of the options tested is clear – a substantial majority of small town and rural voters in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic support investments that would improve transportation choices and reduce emissions. As shown in the chart below, more than four-in-five voters support proposals to improve internet access for better options to work remotely and to extend clean public transportation services to smaller towns.

### Support for Potential Investments to Improve Transportation Choices & Reduce Emissions

[RESPONDENT’S STATE] could be part of a regional effort joined by other states in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic region to improve transportation choices for all residents and reduce emissions. The following are some potential specific investments that could be made in your area of [RESPONDENT’S STATE]. For each one, please indicate whether that is something you would support or oppose.





Similar to the overall clean fund transportation proposal, there is broad and solid support for all of the potential investments across the 12 states.

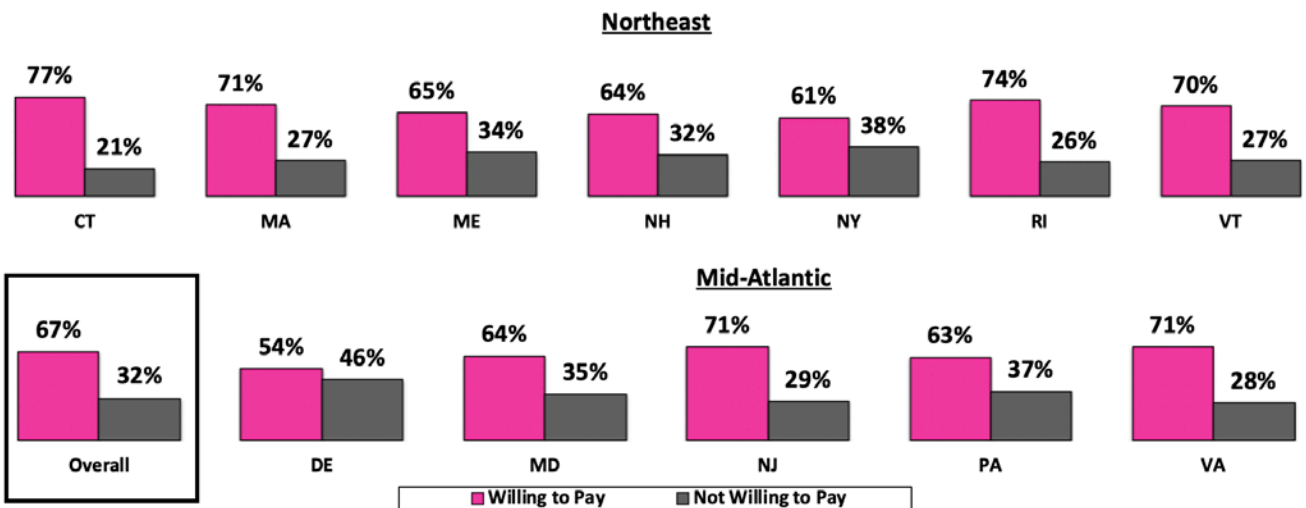
<b>% Total Support Among Northeastern States</b>	<b>TOTAL Northeast</b>	<b>CT</b>	<b>MA</b>	<b>ME</b>	<b>NH</b>	<b>NY</b>	<b>RI</b>	<b>VT</b>
Providing better options to shop and work from home with improved high-speed Internet access	86%	90%	91%	81%	85%	78%	87%	93%
Increasing clean public transportation options such as trains and low-emission buses and van services to smaller towns beyond major cities	82%	90%	83%	80%	78%	75%	85%	90%
Providing incentives for stores and businesses to locate in town centers or main street areas to help revitalize those areas and reduce the number of trips shoppers and workers make in cars	79%	91%	85%	76%	73%	71%	76%	85%
Providing more options for home delivery of necessities, such as groceries and prescription medicines	78%	82%	86%	75%	74%	70%	80%	83%
Helping local school districts replace older diesel school buses with electric buses that produce no emissions	73%	87%	82%	70%	71%	60%	71%	76%
Providing express bus service between communities, major employment centers, and tourist destinations on newer buses with wi-fi, restrooms, and other amenities	76%	85%	81%	71%	74%	62%	80%	82%
Providing incentives or rebates to make electric cars and trucks more affordable	73%	85%	77%	70%	71%	63%	74%	79%
Helping rural communities install charging stations for people who drive electric cars or trucks	71%	79%	77%	64%	69%	61%	72%	77%

<b>% Total Support Among Mid-Atlantic States</b>	<b>TOTAL Mid-Atl</b>	<b>DE</b>	<b>MD</b>	<b>NJ</b>	<b>PA</b>	<b>VA</b>
Providing better options to shop and work from home with improved high-speed Internet access	82%	80%	76%	88%	86%	80%
Increasing clean public transportation options such as trains and low-emission buses and van services to smaller towns beyond major cities	82%	73%	85%	91%	79%	76%
Providing incentives for stores and businesses to locate in town centers or main street areas to help revitalize those areas and reduce the number of trips shoppers and workers make in cars	80%	76%	83%	86%	77%	77%
Providing more options for home delivery of necessities, such as groceries and prescription medicines	78%	76%	79%	84%	77%	74%
Helping local school districts replace older diesel school buses with electric buses that produce no emissions	77%	71%	87%	83%	72%	70%
Providing express bus service between communities, major employment centers, and tourist destinations on newer buses with wi-fi, restrooms, and other amenities	74%	73%	78%	80%	72%	68%
Providing incentives or rebates to make electric cars and trucks more affordable	71%	54%	74%	76%	76%	66%
Helping rural communities install charging stations for people who drive electric cars or trucks	69%	60%	68%	75%	68%	68%

- **Two-thirds of small town and rural voters would be willing to pay more to help fund clean transportation choices in their state.** More than one-quarter (27%) of voters say they would be willing to pay \$20 or more per month to fund clean transportation choices, and another 40% say they would be willing to pay between \$1-\$10 per month. Just slightly less than one-third (32%) say they would not be willing to pay anything.

### Willingness to Help Fund Clean Transportation Choices

Many of these policies require funds to be spent to achieve these goals. How much more – if anything – would you be willing to pay per month to fund clean transportation choices for your part of [RESPONDENT'S STATE]?



Across all key sub-groups, a majority of voters are willing to fund clean transportation choices, including:

- 72% of women and 62% of men
- 82% of Democrats, 65% of independents, and 56% of Republicans
- 76% of voters of color and 66% of white voters
- 71% of small-town voters, and 63% of rural voters.
- 69% of voters with a shorter commute (0-44 mins), and 67% with a longer commute (45+ mins),
- 89% of electric vehicle owners, 81% of station wagon owners, 69% of mini-van owners, 67% of SUV owners, 65% of car owners, and 61% of truck owners, and
- Ranging from 82% among voters age 18-34 to 60% among voters age 65+.

In sum, majorities of small town and rural voters in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic support a clean transportation fund for their state. Support for the proposal tested in the survey is both broad-based and widespread. Moreover, a solid majority of these voters support each of the potential investments tested and are willing to pay more to help fund these clean transportation choices.



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<sup>i</sup> **Methodology:** From September 14-23, 2019, NBS and FM3 completed N=1,059 telephone interviews on landlines, cell phones, and online with rural and small town voters in Northeastern and Mid-Atlantic states. N=101 interviews each were conducted in larger states with greater populations in more rural areas including Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Vermont, and Virginia. N=50 interviews each were conducted in more rural areas of smaller states including Connecticut, Delaware, and Rhode Island. In each state, we identified counties based on their proportion which the U.S. Census characterizes as “rural,” and limited interviewing to those counties. Secondly, in order to qualify into the survey, respondents had to characterize where they live as either “rural” or a “small town,” as opposed to a “city” or “suburban area.” The margin of sampling error for the full sample is  $\pm 3.01\%$  at the 95% confidence interval. Margins of sampling error for population subgroups within the sample will be higher. The margin of error state-by-state is  $\pm 13.86\%$  for the states with N=50 interviews and  $\pm 9.8\%$  for the states with N=101 interviews. Due to rounding, not all totals will sum to 100%.