

2022

## **Ada County Highway District Public Opinion Survey 2022**

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ADA COUNTY  
HIGHWAY DISTRICT  
PUBLIC OPINION  
SURVEY 2022



**BOISE STATE UNIVERSITY**  
IDAHO POLICY INSTITUTE

# ACHD PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY 2022

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Ada County Highway District (ACHD) public opinion survey, developed in partnership with Idaho Policy Institute (IPI), was conducted April 28 through May 5, 2022 and surveyed 600 adults who live in Ada County, Idaho. The sample is representative of the county's population both geographically and demographically. Survey responses were collected by cell phone (50%), landline phone (33%) and online via email (17%). The survey addressed a variety of issues including road safety, road quality, traffic congestion, and spending priorities. Respondents were selected via a simple random sampling method with a margin of error of +/- 4%. The survey was conducted by GS Strategy Group.

### KEY FINDINGS

- A majority of respondents (58%) approve of ACHD's performance in regard to planning, designing, and managing efficient traffic flow and traffic safety throughout Ada County.
- Nearly half of respondents (48%) rate the quality of roads as excellent or good, while only 10% rated it as poor. The safety of roads receive similar marks (50% to 7%).
- Among various priorities, respondents' most popular choice for increasing safety is roadway expansion (39%), followed by intersection improvements (21%).
- 59% of respondents indicate they trust ACHD to spend taxpayer dollars wisely.

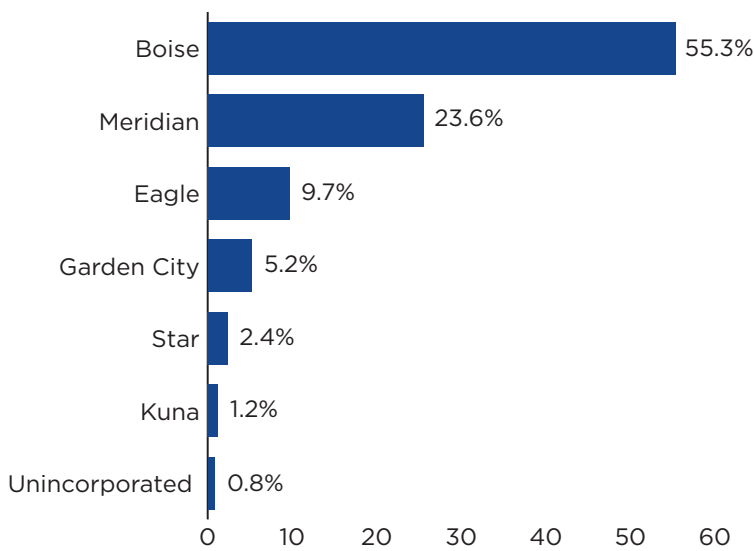


# OVERVIEW

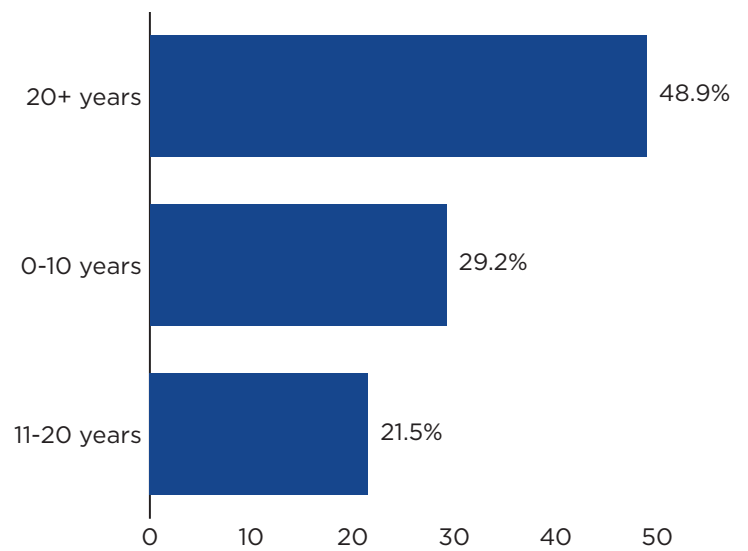
Ada County Highway District (ACHD) is responsible for planning, designing, and managing efficient traffic flow and traffic safety throughout Ada County. In order to inform future decision making, ACHD engaged Idaho Policy Institute (IPI) to conduct a mixed-mode public opinion survey of 600 registered voters (500 phone and 100 online) in Ada County, Idaho.

A majority of respondents reside in Boise (55%), followed by Meridian (24%), Eagle (10%), Garden City (5%), Star (2%), and Kuna (1%). One percent live in an unincorporated area. About half of the respondents (49%) have lived in Ada County for more than 20 years, 22% for 11-20 years, and 29% for 10 years or less. Political orientations varied: 38% of respondents identify as conservative, 33% as moderate, and 24% as liberal.

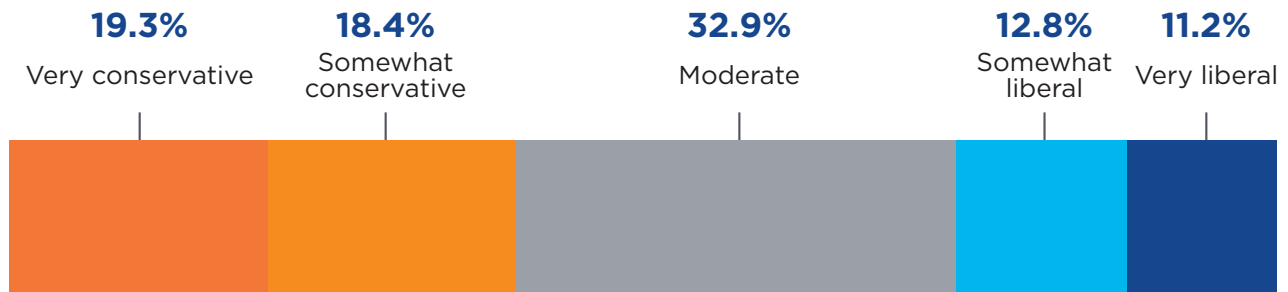
**FIGURE 1: RESPONDENT CITY**



**FIGURE 2: TENURE IN ADA COUNTY**



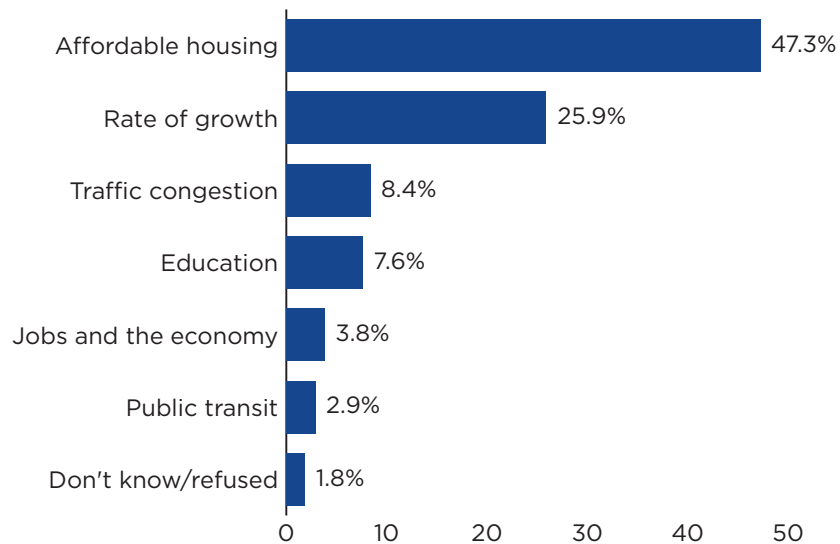
**FIGURE 3: RESPONDENT IDEOLOGY**



When asked to identify the most important issue currently facing Ada County, the largest share of respondents (47%) chose affordable housing, followed by the rate of growth (26%), traffic congestion (8%), education (8%), jobs and the economy (4%), and public transit (3%).

In particular, newer residents (52%) living in the county for 10 years or less and liberals (56%) are more concerned about affordable housing (compared to 45% for longer-term residents and 37% for conservatives). Longer-term residents (29%) living in the county for 11 years or more and conservatives (33%) are more concerned about the rate of growth (compared to 19% for newer residents and 19% for liberals).

**FIGURE 4: MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE**

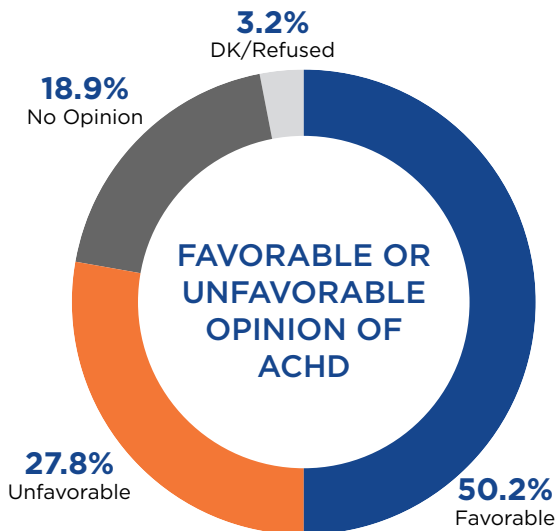


## ACHD PERFORMANCE

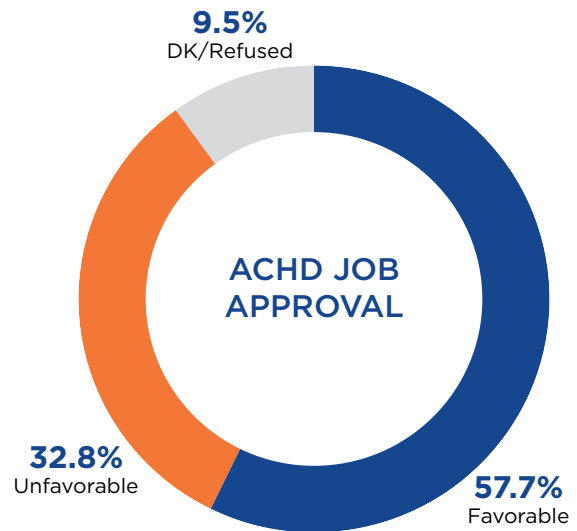
Respondents were asked whether they have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of ACHD – this was without providing specific information about ACHD. Overall, half of respondents have a favorable opinion and a minority of residents (28%) have an unfavorable opinion. The rate of favorability is consistent among liberals (49%), moderates (52%), and conservatives (50%). Among respondents with an unfavorable opinion, conservatives (31%) are more likely to hold this view than liberals (24%).

The survey then informed respondents that ACHD is responsible for planning, designing, and managing efficient traffic flow and traffic safety throughout Ada County. Based on this information, it again asked them to indicate their approval or disapproval of ACHD's performance in the county. With this new information about ACHD, respondents were more likely to approve of its performance. A majority of respondents (58%) approve of the job that it does, while one-third disapprove. Respondents who have lived in Ada County for 10 years or less are more likely to approve (66%) than those who have resided in the county for 11 or more years (54%). ACHD has consistent job approval among liberals (60%), moderates (58%), and conservatives (58%), but has more disapproval among conservatives (37%) than moderates (32%) and liberals (26%).

**FIGURE 5: ACHD FAVORABILITY**

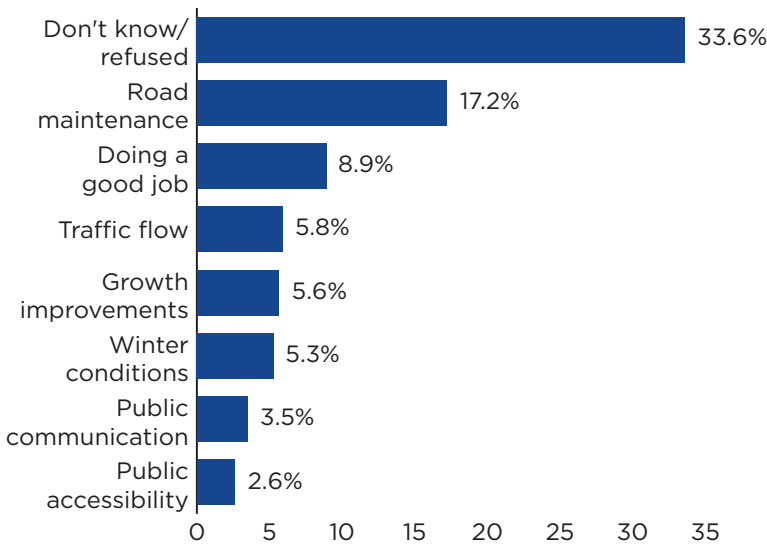


**FIGURE 6: ACHD APPROVAL**

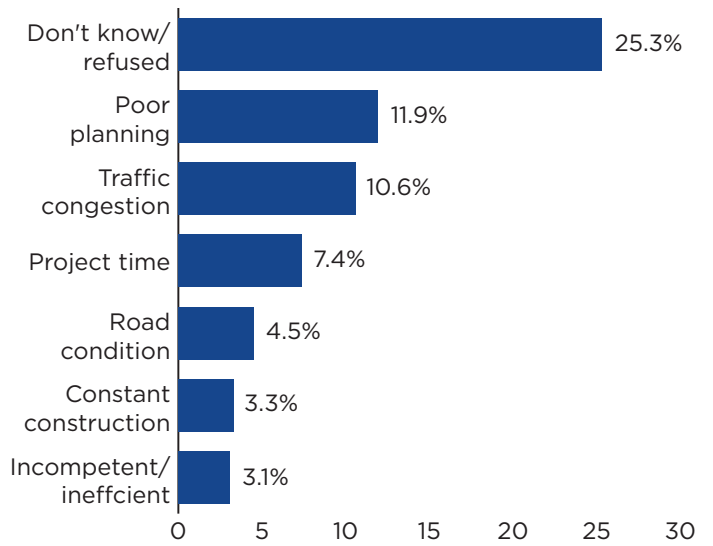


When asked what they like most about ACHD and the job it does, the most common responses relate to road maintenance and repairs and handling traffic flow. Residents were also asked to describe what they like least about ACHD and the job it does. Popular responses include poor planning, especially as it relates to growth, and the prevalence of traffic congestion. However, it is notable that by far most common response to both questions is that they do not know or they declined to answer.

**FIGURE 7: LIKE MOST ABOUT ACHD**



**FIGURE 8: LIKE LEAST ABOUT ACHD**



Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with several statements. Three out of four respondents believe ACHD should lower speed limits when designing new roadway projects, especially near residential areas, and that speed bumps are effective tools in accomplishing that mission. Almost as many respondents feel that ACHD should focus on reducing traffic and congestion over bike lanes and sidewalks, yet half are willing to accept longer travel times to accommodate increased bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. A majority of respondents agree that ACHD is spending tax dollars wisely, including support among liberals (60%), moderates (59%), and conservatives (51%). A smaller share agree that ACHD communicates and collaborates well with other local government agencies when designing and prioritizing road projects. However, most did not indicate a view, presumably because they do not have enough knowledge of such relationships, and only 25% disagree with the statement.

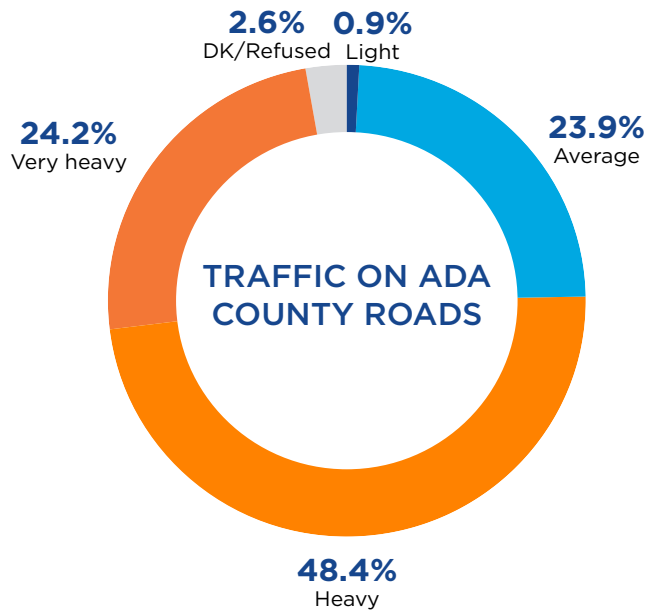
**TABLE 1: STATEMENT AGREEMENT**

Statement	Strongly or Somewhat Agree
ACHD should lower speed limits especially near residential neighborhoods	76%
Speed bumps are effective tools in reducing speeds	75%
ACHD should focus on reducing traffic/congestion over bike lanes/sidewalks	70%
ACHD is spending tax dollars correctly	56%
Willing to accept increase in travel time to accommodate more sidewalks/bike lanes	51%
ACHD communicates/collaborates well with other government agencies	42%

## ROADWAY

When asked to describe traffic on Ada County roads, nearly half of respondents (48%) report heavy traffic and 24% report very heavy traffic. Non-Boise residents are more likely to report very heavy traffic (28%) compared to Boise residents (21%). Similarly, longer-term Ada County residents are more likely to report very heavy traffic (27%) than respondents newer to the county (17%).

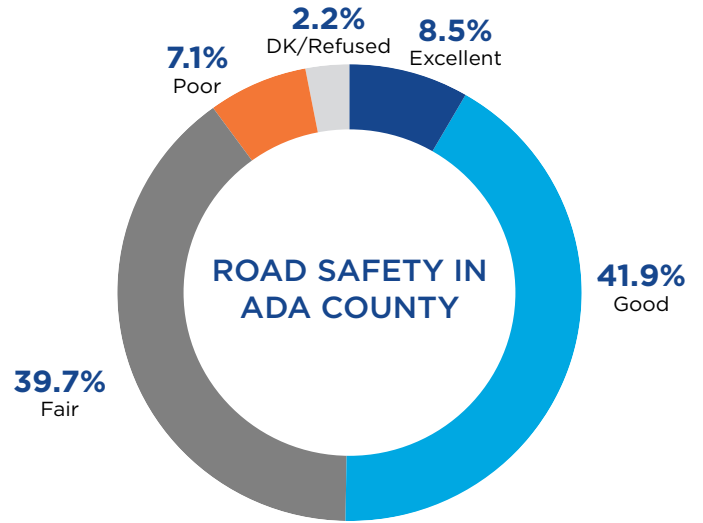
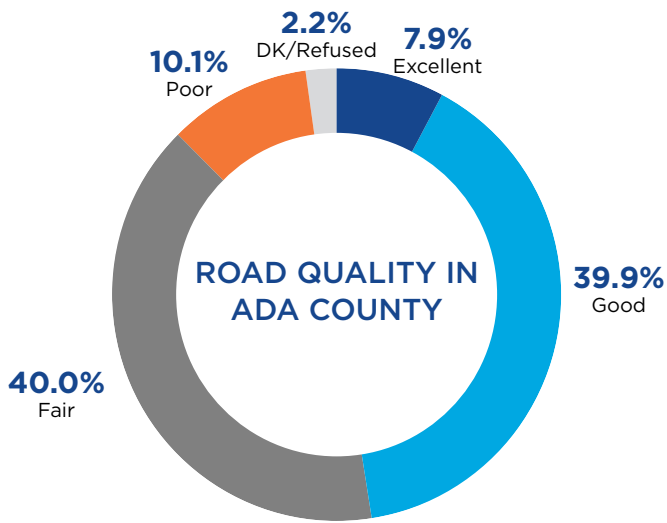
**FIGURE 9: TRAFFIC RATING**



Respondents rated the quality and safety of roads in Ada County. About eight in ten residents rate the quality and safety of the roads as good or fair. Newer residents are more likely to view road quality as excellent or good, while longer-term residents are more likely to perceive them as fair or poor. Road safety responses follow a similar trend, with newer residents seeing it as in excellent condition and longer-term residents more likely to rate road safety as fair.

**FIGURE 10: ROAD QUALITY**

**FIGURE 11: ROAD SAFETY**

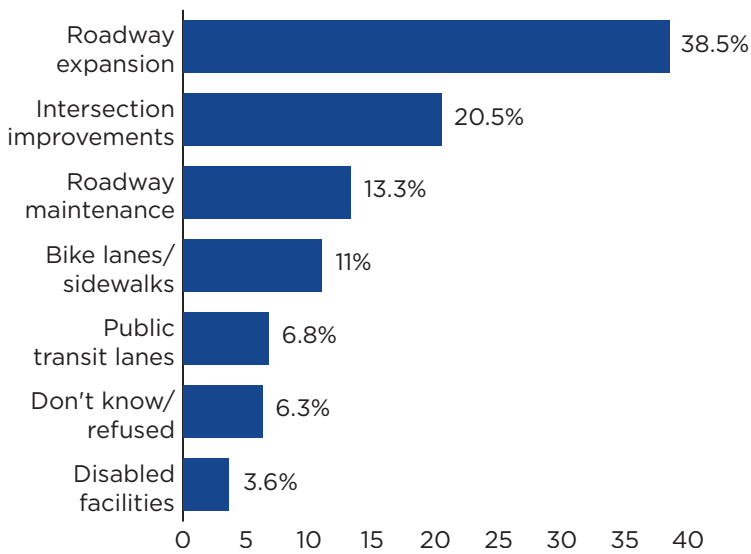




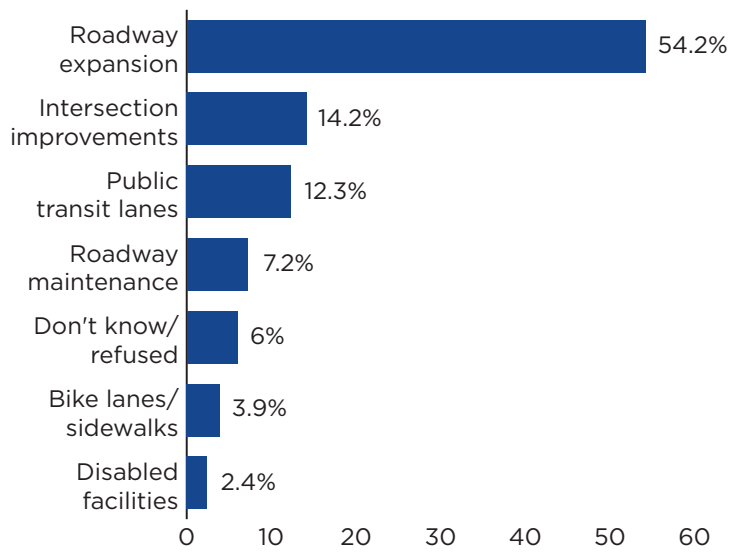
Residents were asked to select what strategy was best for improving road safety. The most popular view is roadway expansion (39%), followed by intersection improvements (21%), roadway maintenance (13%), and expanding bike lanes and sidewalks (11%). Although this perception is shared between Boise and non-Boise residents, roadway expansion is less popular among Boise residents (34%) compared to the rest of the county (44%). Ideologically, expansion is top of the priority list for each group but more pronounced among moderates (44%) and conservatives (41%) than liberals (27%). Liberals are more likely to identify the safety value of expanding bike lanes and sidewalks (17%) and adding public transit lanes (11%).

Similar trends hold when respondents were asked about strategies for improving traffic and congestion. Given the same list of spending priorities, respondents prioritize roadway expansion (54%), distantly followed by intersection improvements (14%) and public transit lanes (12%). Roadway expansion remains the most popular choice for conservatives (62%), moderates (53%), and liberals (49%).

**FIGURE 12: HOW TO IMPROVE SAFETY**



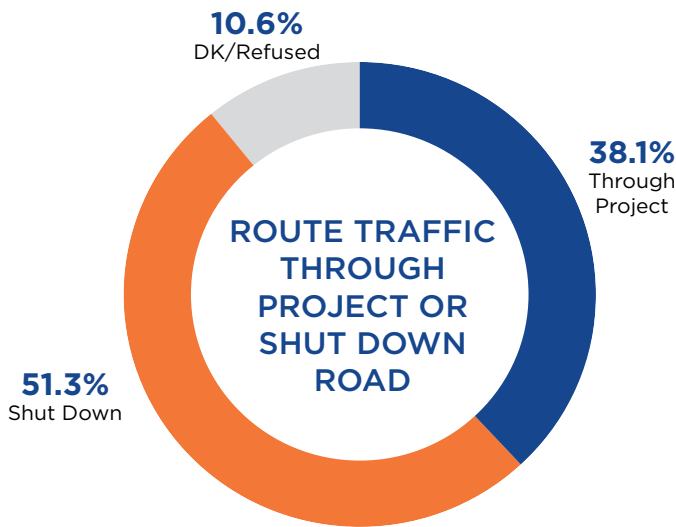
**FIGURE 13: HOW TO IMPROVE TRAFFIC**



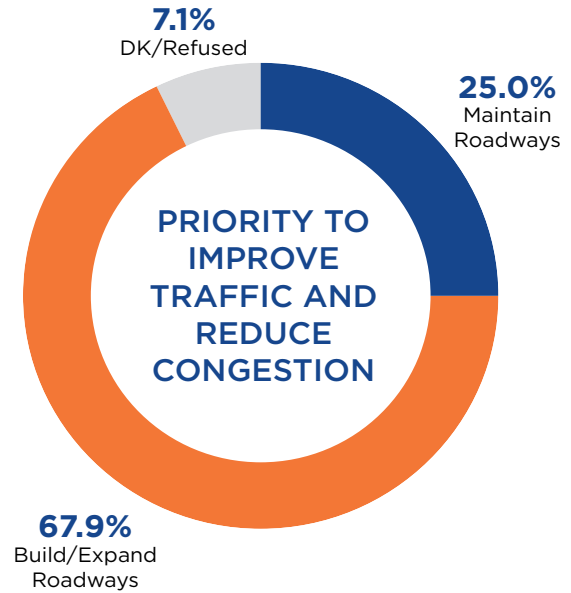
ACHD uses a number of strategies to control traffic flow during road projects. When given a list of these strategies, most respondents prefer shutting down traffic on roads in order to complete projects faster and cheaper, even if it causes greater congestion (51%), over routing traffic through projects (38%).

Respondents were also asked their opinion on strategies to improve traffic and reduce congestion in Ada County. Over two-thirds of respondents believe that building new roads and expanding current roadways (68%) should be a priority, while one-quarter chose maintaining and repairing existing roadways.

**FIGURE 14: PROJECT TRAFFIC FLOW**

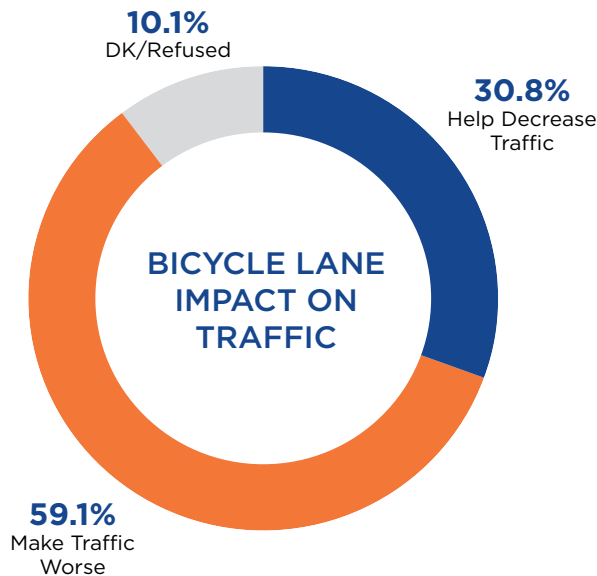


**FIGURE 15: IMPROVE TRAFFIC CONGESTION**

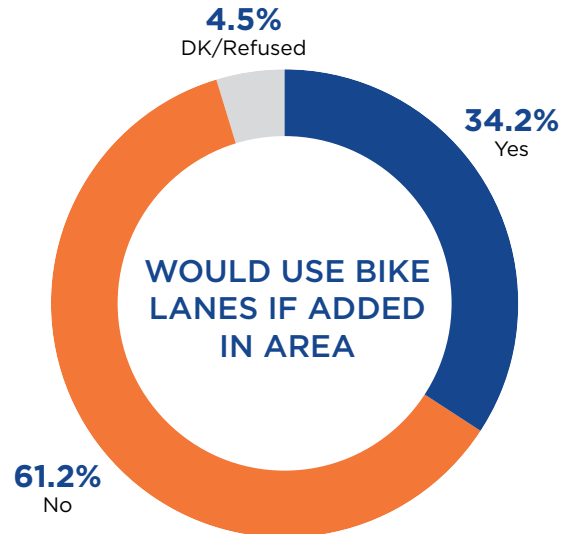


Most respondents fear that adding bicycle lanes could make traffic congestion worse (59%), compared to a minority of those who believe they help decrease traffic congestion in the area (31%). A majority of Boise and non-Boise respondents believe traffic congestion would be worsened by bicycle lanes, although this view is more pronounced among those in the rest of Ada County (66%) than in Boise (53%). Following a similar pattern, most respondents would not use bike lanes if they were added in their area (61%) and a smaller share would use them (34%).

**FIGURE 16: BICYCLE LANE IMPACT**



**FIGURE 17: BICYCLE LANE POTENTIAL USE**

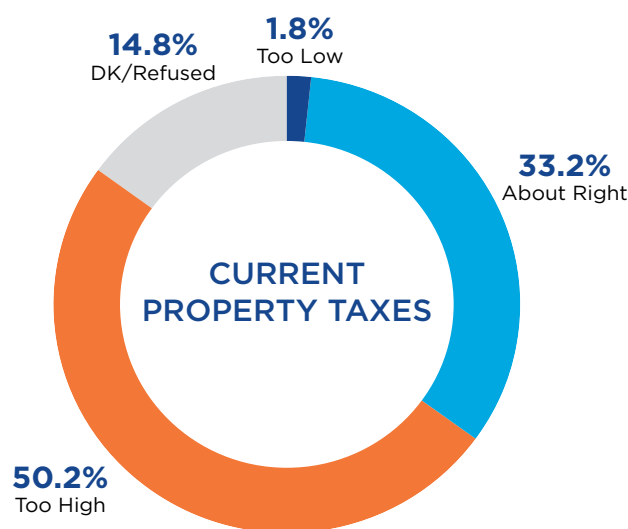


# BUDGETING AND FINANCE

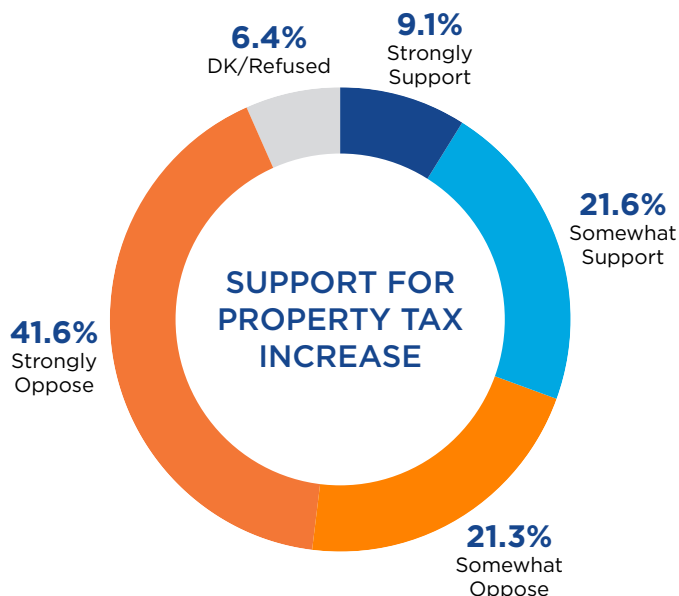
ACHD is funded primarily through property taxes, gas taxes, vehicle registration fees, and development impact fees. The largest portion of its budget comes from property taxes. When asked about the current levels of their property taxes, 50% of respondents indicate that their property taxes are too high, 33% about right, and 2% too low. Residents living in Ada County 11 years or more (56% compared to 37% newer residents) and conservatives (57% compared to 37% liberals) are more likely to indicate that property taxes are too high.

When asked if they would support an increase in property taxes to fund increased spending on road maintenance and construction, 31% of respondents support a potential increase and 63% oppose it. There is a sizable difference among resident tenure and political ideology: 42% of newer residents express support for an increase, compared to only 26% of longer-term residents. Politically, 43% of liberals indicate support, double the support among conservatives (21%).

**FIGURE 18: PROPERTY TAX RATES**



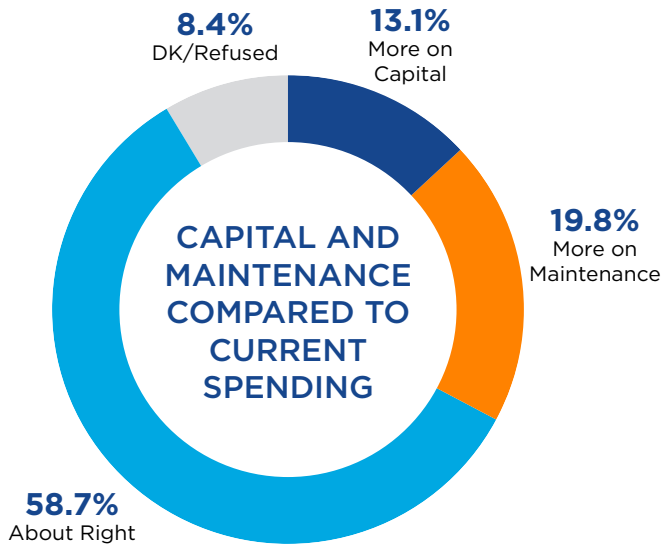
**FIGURE 19: SUPPORT FOR INCREASE**



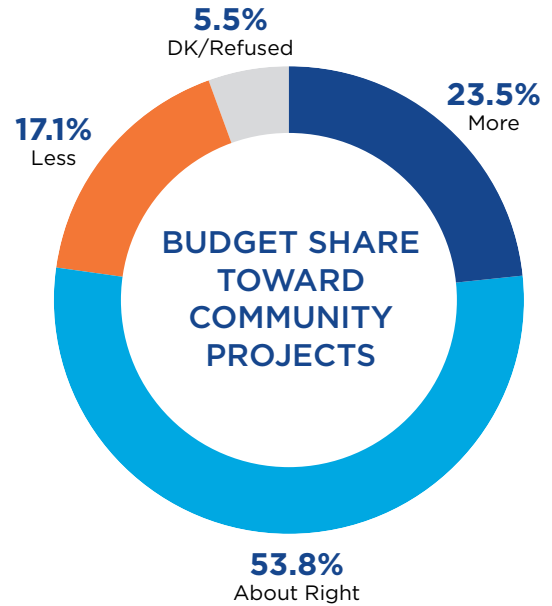
ACHD spends approximately 52% of its budget on capital projects and 48% on maintaining existing roadways. When asked to rate this split, 59% of respondents answered the division is about right, 13% that ACHD should spend more on capital projects, and 20% to spend more on maintenance of existing roads. Interestingly, 18% of residents living outside Boise indicate that ACHD should spend more on capital projects, higher than the 9% among Boise residents.

ACHD spends about 15% of its budget on community projects such as building bike lanes and sidewalks. Given this information, 54% of respondents agree that this spending share is about right, while 24% support spending more on community projects and 17% suggest spending less. The support for spending more on the projects is higher for Boise residents (28%) compared to those living in other parts of Ada County (18%).

**FIGURE 20: ACHD SPENDING**

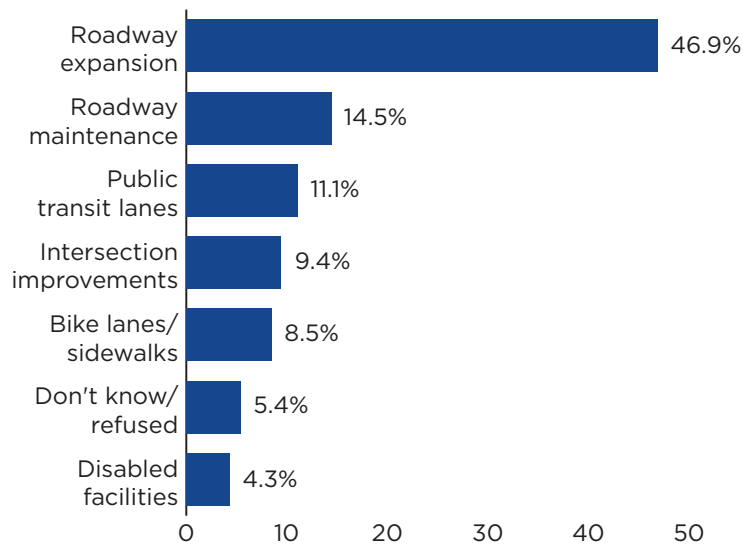


**FIGURE 21: COMMUNITY PROJECTS**



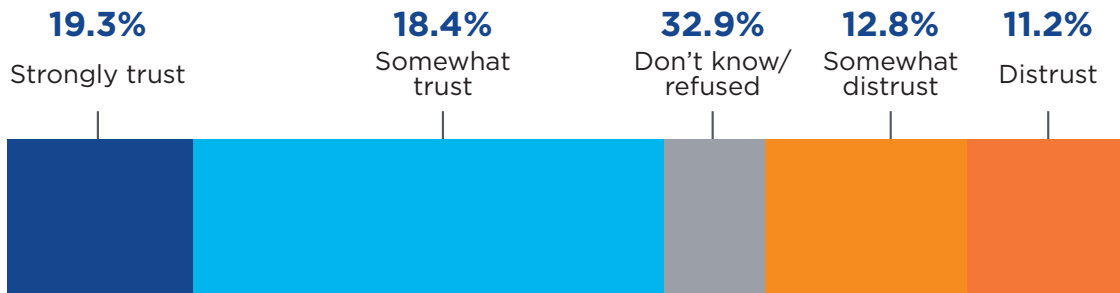
Respondents were asked for their opinion on ACHD’s top project spending priority. 47% indicate roadway expansion as top priority, such as adding lanes on highly congested roads, followed by roadway maintenance (15%), public transit lanes (11%), intersection improvements (9%), expanding bike lanes/sidewalks (8%), and expanding facilities for persons with disabilities (4%). Specifically, roadway expansion is the top priority among newer residents (52%) and liberals (56%). Roadway maintenance receives higher support from longer-term residents (29%) and conservatives (33%) compared to their counterparts.

**FIGURE 22: TOP SPENDING PRIORITY**



Most respondents trust ACHD (59%) to spend its budget wisely. This trust is consistent across political ideology (64% of liberals, 57% of moderates, and 59% of conservatives).

**FIGURE 23: TRUST IN ACHD SPENDING**



## CONCLUSION

No government organization could properly function without the support from its residents. One way of maintaining support is improving performance by making its work align with residents' preferences through feedback from them. This survey of a representative sample of county residents generated information about ACHD's work. In addition, the survey informed that, on the whole, ACHD successfully maintains the confidence of county residents. Understanding the opinions of Ada County residents can help inform ACHD on the interests and concerns of its constituents as it considers the most pressing issues.

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