

What Do Americans Think About Federal Tax Options to Support Transportation? Results from Year Sixteen of a National Survey

Project 2504
December 2025

Asha Weinstein Agrawal, PhD, and Hilary Nixon, PhD

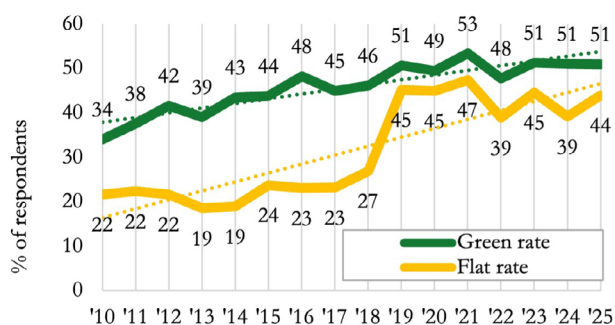
This research brief summarizes results from the sixteenth year of an annual survey series exploring national support for raising additional federal transportation revenues through higher gasoline taxes or new mileage fees.

Study Methods

A nationally representative sample of 2,539 respondents completed the online survey in February 2025. The survey collected data on respondents' opinions about gasoline taxes and mileage fees, views on the quality of their local transportation system, priorities for federal transportation spending, travel habits, and sociodemographic characteristics.

Mileage Fee Findings

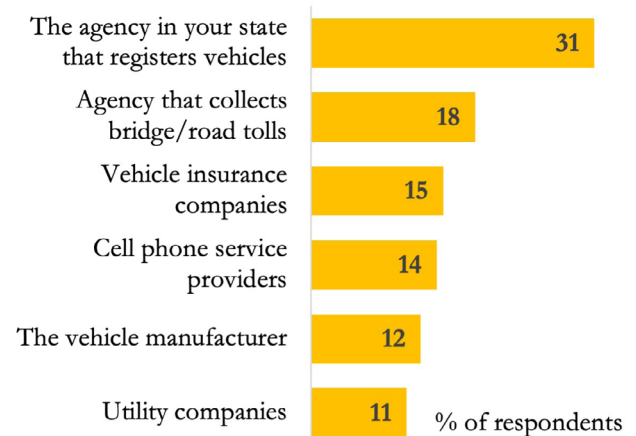
Support for different mileage fee options presented in the survey varied according to the details of the tax option. A majority of respondents (51%) supported replacing the gas tax with a green-rate mileage fee where the rate would vary according to the vehicle's pollution emissions. By contrast, only 44% supported a mileage fee with a flat rate for all drivers. Finally, support for mileage fee options that would impose charges only on commercial travel were the most popular options of all. For example, 58% of respondents supported a fee on delivery and freight vehicles.



Trends in support for adopting the flat-rate or green-rate mileage fee on all travel (2010 – 2025)

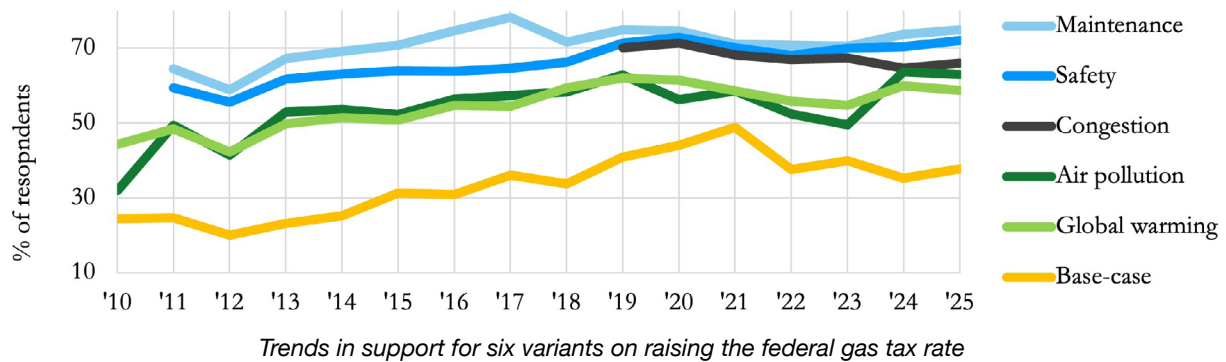
Support for implementing a mileage fee on all travel has risen since 2010. Support for the flat-rate mileage fee grew from just 22% in 2010 to 44% in 2025, and support for the green version grew from 33% in 2010 to 51% in 2024.

New in 2025, the survey explored what kind of public or private organization respondents would prefer to have verify mileage driven, should a mileage fee be adopted. The most popular entity among those tested was the state agency responsible for vehicle registration.



Preferred entity to collect mileage data (2025)

Respondents were open to a variety of mileage fee rate structures and actually preferred some alternatives to a flat rate fee. Sixty-three percent of respondents said that if Congress adopts a mileage fee, they would support charging a lower rate to low-income drivers. As noted above, the green-rate mileage fee has always been more popular than a flat-rate option. Also, almost half of respondents (49%) wanted to see electric vehicles pay a lower rate than gas and diesel vehicles. Finally, respondents were split 50-50 on whether they preferred a flat-rate fee or a block-rate pricing structure that set the rate lower for the first 5,000 miles driven annually and higher for all additional miles driven that year.



Three-quarters of Americans (74%) would prefer to pay a mileage fee in small installments instead of paying annually.

Gas Tax Findings

The 2025 survey found that a majority of Americans would support higher taxes for transportation—under certain conditions. Only 38% supported the “base-case” option presented, which was a 10¢-per-gallon gas tax increase. For this option, respondents were told only that the tax revenues would be spent “for transportation.” However, the five variants on that idea of a 10¢-per-gallon gas tax increase received from 59% to 75% support. For these alternatives, respondents were told that the revenue from the increase would be dedicated to a specific type of spending. The very highest level of support among all the gas tax increase variants tested was for a gas tax increase of 10¢ per gallon with the proceeds dedicated to street, road, and highway maintenance. Seventy-five percent of respondents supported this option, an increase of 37 percentage points over support for the base-case gas tax increase. The next most popular option was a gas tax increase with funds devoted to reducing accidents and improving safety (72% support).

Program design strategies that will increase support for mileage fees include variable rate structures, such as lower rates for low-income drivers and less-polluting vehicles. Another popular design choice tested was to allow payment in small increments instead of requiring an annual payment.

Proposals to raise gas tax rates or adopt a new mileage fee should commit to spending the revenue for a specific purpose that the public values. Maintenance and safety were the most popular priorities tested.

About the Authors

Asha Weinstein Agrawal, PhD, is Director of the Mineta Transportation Institute’s National Transportation Finance Center. Hilary Nixon, PhD, is Deputy Executive Director of the Mineta Transportation Institute.

To Learn More

For more details about the study, download the full report at transweb.sjsu.edu/research/2504

Respondents were open to a variety of mileage fee rate structures and actually preferred some alternatives to a flat rate fee.

Policy Implications

The survey findings suggest that the public may be willing to support both higher fuel taxes or the adoption of mileage fees. However, the specifics of the proposal will significantly impact support.



MTI is a University Transportation Center sponsored by the US Department of Transportation, the California Department of Transportation, and public and private grants, including those made available by the Road Repair and Accountability Act of 2017 (SB1). The Institute is part of San José State University’s Lucas Graduate School of Business.