



Washington State  
Transportation Commission



# Washington's Online Public Input Program

Presentation to the Washington & California  
Transportation Commissions  
San Jose, Ca.

August 19, 2014

**One of the missions of the Washington State Transportation Commission is to gather public input from across the state on transportation policy and funding matters.**

**Public input is used to support the development of the state's 20 year Transportation Plan, as well as informing the guidance provided to the Governor and Legislature on policy and funding needs.**

**Typical public meetings do not garner enough attendance, leaving a large silent majority in the state.**



## The solution? Survey the public regularly utilizing technology to increase participation and efficiency.

- We created two on-line survey panels:
  - **The Ferry Riders Opinion Group (FROG)** to gather regular input and data on ferry rider preferences and opinions.
  - **The Voice of Washington State (VOWS)** to gather regular input and data from residents statewide, on transportation policy and funding issues.
- The development of online panels allows people to be connected and continuously heard by their government officials, while giving them flexibility of when they can give their input.
- Large sample size insures proper representation and accurate projectability of the results.
- The use of telephone surveys has significant drawbacks in reaching people due to the increased use of cellphones and fewer land lines.



## **The overall purpose of the FROG program:**

- To provide the Commission, Governor and State Legislature with a direct link to Washington's ferry riders which include commuters and recreational riders.
- Provide data on ferry rider's attitudes and opinions on key ferry policy issues, proposed fare structure changes, demand elasticity and funding alternatives.

## **To accomplish this overall purpose:**

Developed a panel of ferry riders representing the entire ferry system, balanced by route and travel mode, and used to test ferry issues and possible changes.

## **Studies conducted to date:**

We have conducted over 25 surveys since 2008. All are posted online at:

[www.wstc.wa.gov](http://www.wstc.wa.gov)

# FROG Program Overview



- **Started in 2008 - current total panel Size: 20,109.**
  - 10,604 are active FROG Members (have done 1 or more surveys)
- **Conduct surveys every other year of ferry riders, on a variety of topics, such as:**
  - Service performance (down to terminal/boat level)
  - Fare structure and policies
  - Mode shifting and fare elasticity
  - Capital facility/ vessel funding
- **All results are reported to the Governor and Legislature to inform decision making. Also provide results to panel members.**
- **WSF uses data to inform operational changes.**

# FROG Program Recruitment



- **To keep the panel fresh and representative, we recruit annually on-board the ferries to sign up new FROG members.**
  - Ensures we hear from both the commuters and recreational/ occasional users of the ferry system.
- **Conduct “Quick Polls” which are designed to encourage participation.**
  - Quick Polls are short 1 or 2 Question Surveys plus Demographic questions.
  - Demographics collected are applied to all future surveys the member completes, thus shortening their length.
- **Quick Poll Questions have covered:**
  - Overall satisfaction with WSF services.
  - Allowing more advertising on dock / on boat to generate new revenue.
  - Congestion pricing of fares.
  - Privatization of WSF – who would provide better service / fares?
  - Trade-offs – increased fares or decreased services to balance budget.

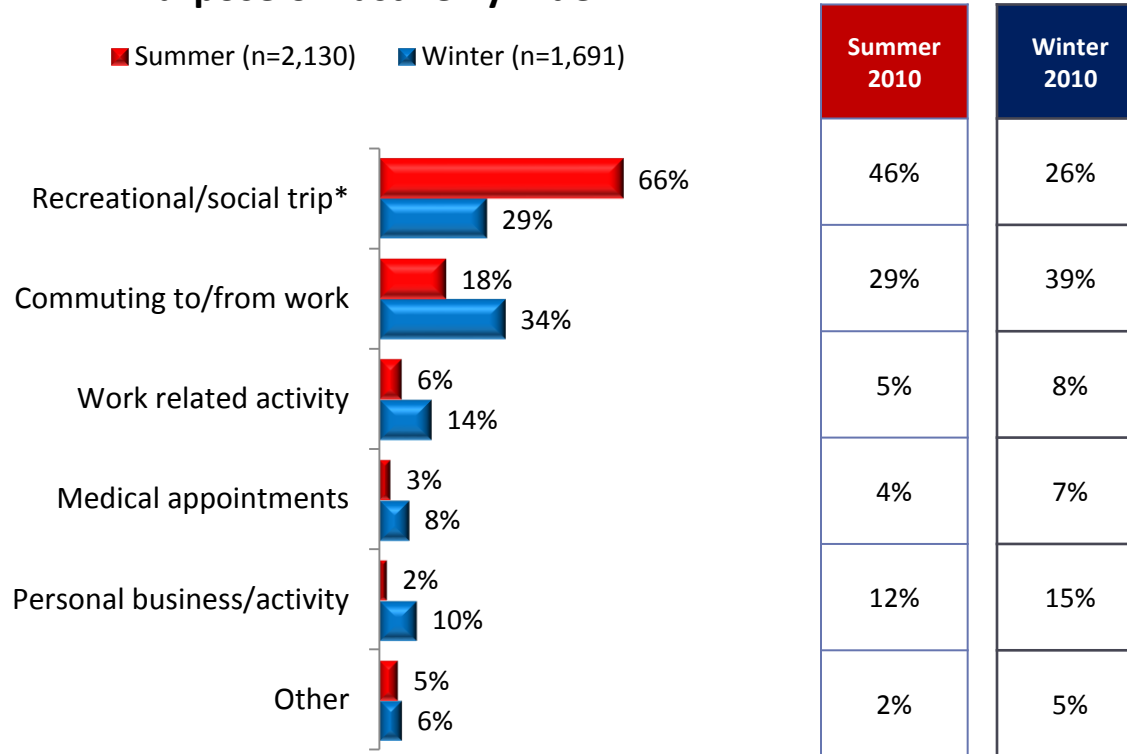
# SAMPLE - FROG Survey Results



**Travel during the Summer and Winter periods continues to vary dramatically, with regards to commuting vs. recreational trips.**

- During the Summer survey, the majority (66%) say the last recreational/social trip they took was also their most recent ferry trip.

## Purpose of Last Ferry Ride



Q33 Thinking about your **LAST FERRY RIDE ONLY** on the {INSERT Q31 NAME HERE} route, which of the following was the **PRIMARY PURPOSE** for that specific trip?

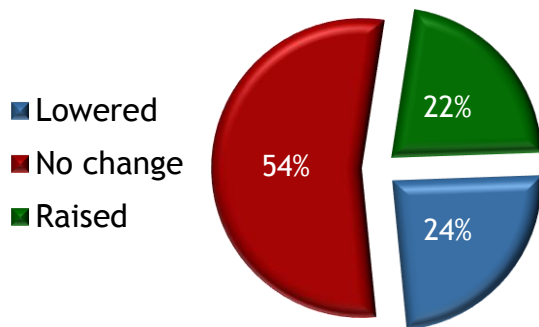
# SAMPLE - FROG Survey Results



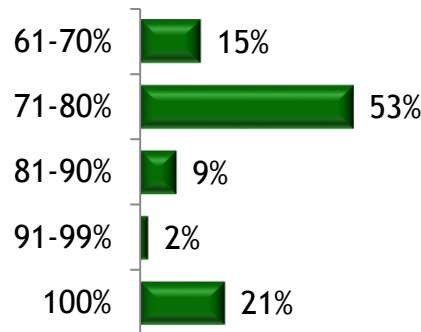
Half believe the current fare coverage structure is adequate and should not be changed, in which fares account for 65% of the ferries' operating costs.

- Of those that believe this rate should be increased, half say a coverage rate of 71-80% is preferred.
- Of those that say the rate should be lowered, half agree a coverage rate between 41-50% is acceptable.

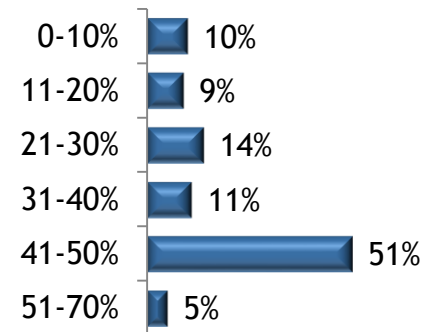
**Rider-Paid Operating %**  
(n=2,888)



**Increasing Rider-Paid %**  
(n=627)



**Decreasing Rider-Paid %**  
(n=703)



**Q73** *Currently fares pay for 65% of the cost of operating the ferries. Given the state budget, this means money for road maintenance and construction must be used to keep the ferries operating. Should the rider paid percent of 65% be raised, lowered or stay the same?*

**Q73A/B** *What percent should it be [raised/lowered] to?*





# Voice of Washington State

Speak out on transportation in Washington  
Sponsored by the Washington State Transportation Commission

## **The overall purpose of the VOWS program:**

To provide the Commission, Governor and State Legislature with a clear understanding of Washington State citizen's attitudes and opinions on transportation policy & funding issues, investment priorities, and funding alternatives.

## **To accomplish this overall purpose:**

Developed a panel of Washington State citizens demographically balanced by county population to be used to test transportation issues and policies.

## **Studies conducted to date:**

We have conducted 10 surveys since 2011. All are posted online at:  
[www.wstc.wa.gov](http://www.wstc.wa.gov)

- **Started in 2011**
- **110,289 Total Members in database**
  - 27,198 Current Active Members (have done 1 or more surveys)
- **Conduct one major statewide survey per year on a variety of transportation policy and funding issues.**
- **All findings are reported to the Governor and Legislature to inform decision making. Also provide results to panel members.**



## Ongoing “Quick Poll” email campaign to state residents

- Registered voters are contacted monthly, via email, and are invited to take a short one or two question survey on a transportation topic of statewide interest. If they would like to participate, they are asked to sign up for the VOWS panel.
- We have a sign-up rate of 3-5% using this approach.

## Quick Poll topics are designed to encourage participation in the panel. Question topics have included:

- Adding sales tax on gasoline purchases.
- Tolling mountain passes to cover pass maintenance.
- Using gas tax revenues to fund public school transportation.
- Using gas tax revenues to fund public transit.

**“Recruit a Friend” program – ask panel members to spread the word on the panel and invite friends and family to join.**



# Voice of Washington State

Speak out on transportation

Sponsored by the Washington State Transportation Commission

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## Welcome To The Voice Of Washington State

Joining the panel means you can share your opinions on specific transportation issues and ideas by responding to occasional online surveys that will be emailed to you. Any Washington State resident can join the Survey Panel. There is no cost to join.

➔ **Please Signup using the form to the right.**

**What is Voice of Washington State, otherwise know as VOWS?** It is a program to gather citizen input on transportation policy, taxes and funding issues. Your input through the VOWS Survey Panel can help shape our state transportation system through our periodic surveys. The [Washington State Transportation Commission](#) will provide survey results to the Governor and the State Legislature to inform their discussions and decision making.

**VOWS Online Discussion Forums:** You can also share your thoughts and ideas by participating in our online discussion forums that will be going on across the state. You will be able to see all the ideas and comments that get posted by citizens and you can vote for or against them as well as post your own ideas for discussion and voting. To join the online discussion forum please go to [Voice Of Washington State](#) and select the region you are interested in. Like the survey panel, all the ideas and discussions will be presented to the Governor and State Legislature so join the discussion and get your ideas out there and in front of our state's decision makers!

### Join Voice Of Washington Survey Panel Now

Email Address \*

First Name \*

Last Name \*

Password \*

Verify \*

\*All fields are required

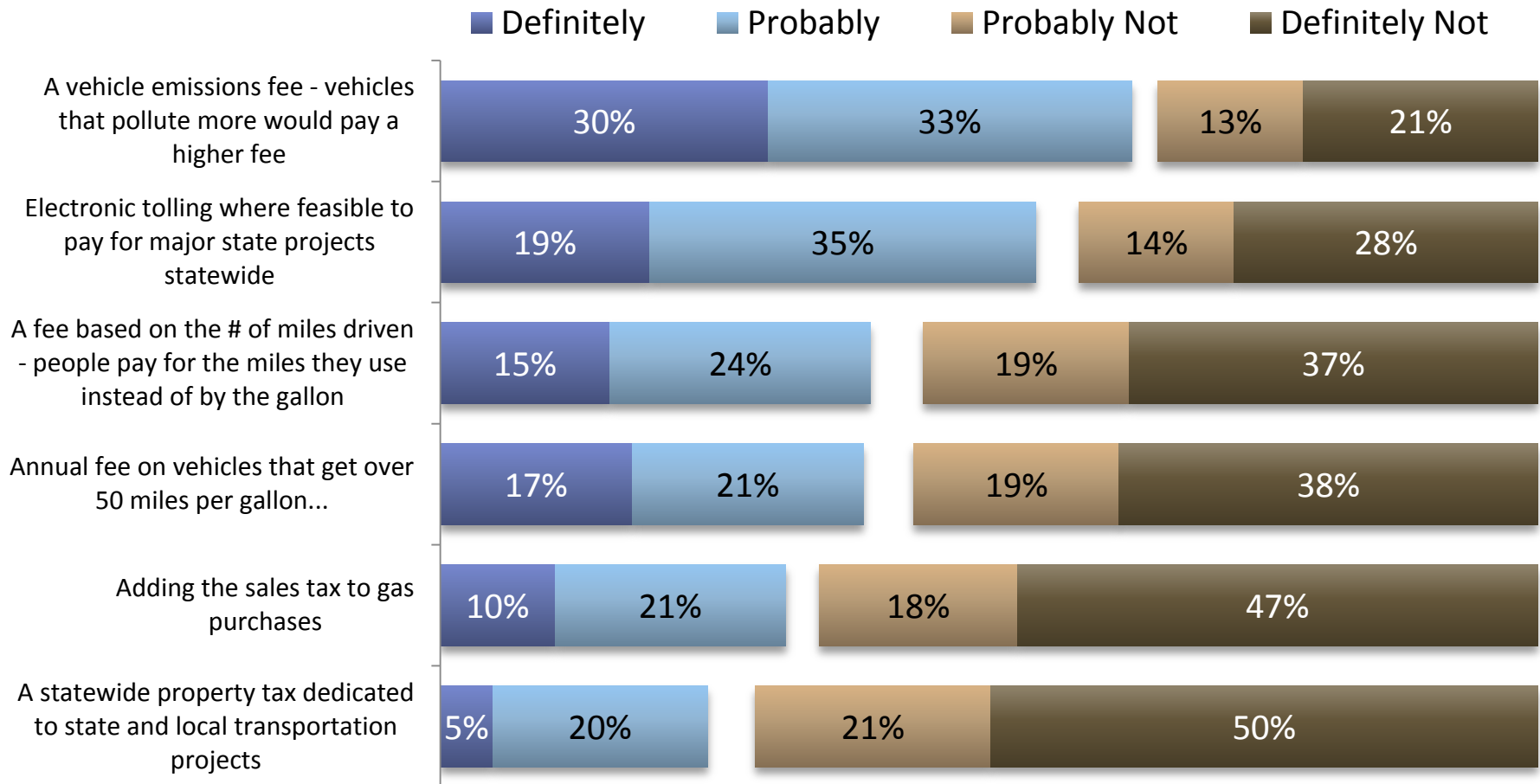
[Get Started >>](#)

## **Below is a short list of the topics we have used VOWS to gather data and input on:**

- The level citizens would be willing to tax themselves to meet growing transportation needs.
- Public's general priorities for transportation investment.
- Basic understanding of how transportation projects are funded.
- Understanding of the magnitude of the funding challenges for transportation.
- Attitudes towards tolling to pay for transportation projects.
- Support for a specified set of taxes/fees to generate revenue for transportation statewide.
- Preferred approaches to funding transportation needs.

# SAMPLE - VOWS Survey Result

There are a number of long term funding options being considered to address the state's long-term transportation financial challenges. For each revenue source, please indicate whether or not you think that method is a good way to help provide future funding for our transportation system.





# The Newest Tool: Online Discussion Forums



**Share your transportation ideas and opinions with the State Legislature and Governor**

Pick a region on the map to start a discussion forum conversation, and vote on other's ideas and comments. There is no limit to the number of discussion forums you can join.

▼ Select a Regional Discussion Forum





# Voice of Washington State

## Speak out on transportation

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[Home](#)

### How does it work?



[Submitting](#) Your Ideas



[Voting & Commenting](#) on  
Other's Ideas



[Joining the Voice of Wa. State  
Survey Panel](#)

[Signup for Survey Panel Here](#)

### Welcome to the North Puget Sound Online Forum

The North Puget Sound Online Forum is sponsored by the [Washington State Transportation Commission](#). This Online Forum is a venue for open discussion where people can publicly share and vote on ideas to improve or change the Washington State transportation system. The Online Forum is open to any Washington State resident and it is free to join and use!

### Regional Topics Currently Under Discussion:

- 1) How could we improve the roads, ferries and public transportation in your region to improve traffic flow and attract more tourism?
- 2) Given federal and local dollars fund transit services, how should state tax dollars be used to fund public transportation services, whether buses, trains or, vanpools?
- 3) The Washington State Ferry system is facing a serious funding short fall that could impact service levels. What should we do about it?



[Submit a New Idea](#)

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### Social Web

### Browse Recent Ideas

[Recent \(13\)](#)

[Popular \(13\)](#)

[Hot \(12\)](#)

I agree

0

votes

I disagree

OTHER ISSUES & IDEAS >

#### take our road money, please!

Our county has been applying for all sorts of road widening and straightening projects that most people don't want or need. We are a rural county and want to stay that way. Please use these funds somewhere they are needed!

Add your comment

Submitted by Community Member 1 day ago





Washington State  
Transportation Commission



**THANK YOU!**

**For More Information Contact:**

Reema Griffith, WSTC Executive Director

Bill Young, Survey Program Project  
Manager

360.705.7070