

Public Engagement Summary

Public engagement for the Long Range Transportation Plan was designed to provide multiple ways for people to participate. Rather than requiring everyone to complete the same activity, participants could choose the type and level of engagement that worked best for them. Opportunities included a detailed public survey, open ended questions at engagement events, interactive mapping activities, and conversations with OTO staff.

Open-Ended Questions

Many participants chose to respond to three broad questions:

- What are the region's transportation strengths?
- What are the region's transportation needs?
- What will transportation look like in 2050?

These questions allowed participants to identify issues and ideas in their own words without selecting from a predetermined list. Together, the three prompts generated 635 individual responses. The open ended exercises complement the public survey.

While the survey provides structured information that can be compared across respondents, the open ended responses help identify recurring themes, specific concerns, and ideas that may not have been anticipated with the survey was developed.



What are the region's transportation strengths?

Participants identified a mix of infrastructure, connectivity, planning, and regional cooperation as existing transportation strengths.

The region's **roadway and highway system** was one of the most common themes. Responses referenced major highways, roadway capacity, recent widening projects, roundabouts, road conditions, and the ability to travel throughout the metropolitan area. Specific improvements such as Highway

65 widening and other completed roadway projects were frequently cited positively.

Trails and active transportation facilities were another recurring strength. Participants frequently mentioned trails, walking trails, bicycle facilities, and particularly the continued development of the regional trail network. The Chadwick Flyer Trail was identified several times by name.

Other responses focused less on individual facilities and more on the way the region plans and works together. Participants identified:

- regional connectivity,
- planning,
- coordination,
- collaboration,
- partnerships,
- public engagement, and
- the work of transportation agencies.

These responses suggest some participants value not only existing infrastructure, but also the regional relationships and planning processes used to improve it.

Overall, participants described a transportation system with a strong roadway foundation, growing trail and multimodal connections, and established regional partnerships. At the same time, many of these strengths also appeared in discussions about future needs, suggesting that participants generally want successful elements of the existing system to continue expanding and improving.

What are the region's transportation needs?

The transportation needs question generated the most responses of the three open ended prompts, ranging from broad regional concepts to very specific intersections and roadway segments.

One of the most prominent themes was **public and regional transportation**. Participants requested more transit service, bus connections between Springfield and surrounding communities, transportation for older adults and people with disabilities, regional connections between communities, and alternatives such as passenger rail, streetcars, or other forms of mass transit.

Some responses focused on transit within the region, while others described longer-term concepts such as Amtrak connections to Kansas City or St. Louis.

Another major theme was **walking, bicycling, and trail connectivity**.

Participants frequently requested additional sidewalks, better pedestrian connections, bicycle accommodations, trail extensions, safer crossings, and connections between neighborhoods and destinations. Sidewalk needs appeared repeatedly, including both requests for new sidewalks and improvements to existing facilities.

Participants also identified numerous **roadway, intersection, and traffic operation needs**. Responses included roadway widening, turn lanes, signals, roundabouts, pothole repair, pavement maintenance, additional connections, access management, and improvements at specific intersections. Some comments focused on congestion or capacity, while others described relatively small operational changes that participants believed would improve travel or safety.

Connectivity and redundancy appeared across modes. Participants wanted additional ways to travel between communities, better connections within growing areas, and alternatives to relying on a limited number of major corridors.

Safety concerns were part of many responses, including intersection visibility, speeding, driver behavior, pedestrian safety, school bus safety, and safer accommodations for people walking or bicycling.

The responses demonstrate that participants do not view the region's transportation needs as a single-mode issue. Roadway improvements remain important, but participants also identified significant demand for transit, sidewalks, trails, bicycle facilities, safety improvements, and better connections between communities.

What will transportation look like in 2050?

The 2050 question encouraged participants to think beyond immediate transportation problems and imagine how people might travel in the future. Ideas ranged from likely technological changes to deliberately imaginative concepts.

Automation was a prominent theme. Participants frequently envisioned self-driving, autonomous, automated, or AI-assisted vehicles, suggesting an expectation that technology will play a larger role in transportation by 2050.

Participants also expected continued **changes in vehicle technology**, including electric vehicles, charging infrastructure, and alternatives to gasoline-powered vehicles.

Many responses envisioned a transportation system with **more choices**. Transit, rail, buses, walking, bicycling, and multimodal transportation appeared throughout the responses. Some participants envisioned greater regional transit connections, while others anticipated changes that would reduce reliance on personal vehicles.

At the same time, more responses reflected concern that **current trends** could intensify. Participants imagined more vehicles, greater congestion, busier roads, and continued regional growth, reinforcing the need to plan now for future demand.



The exercise also invited creativity. Flying cars, drones, hovercraft, teleportation, monorails, gondolas, jet packs, and other futuristic technologies appeared frequently. While these responses should not be interpreted as literal transportation recommendations, they illustrate that participants understood the question as an opportunity to think beyond today's transportation system.

Importantly, the responses did not converge on one vision of 2050. Some participants anticipated transformative technological change, while others expected transportation to remain largely recognizable. Collectively, the responses suggest that the regional transportation plan should remain adaptable to new technologies, changing travel behavior, additional transportation choices, and continued growth.

Public Survey

The open ended activities were complemented by a more structured public survey. A total of 127 responses were received. Because respondents could

skip individual questions, the number of responses varies somewhat by question.

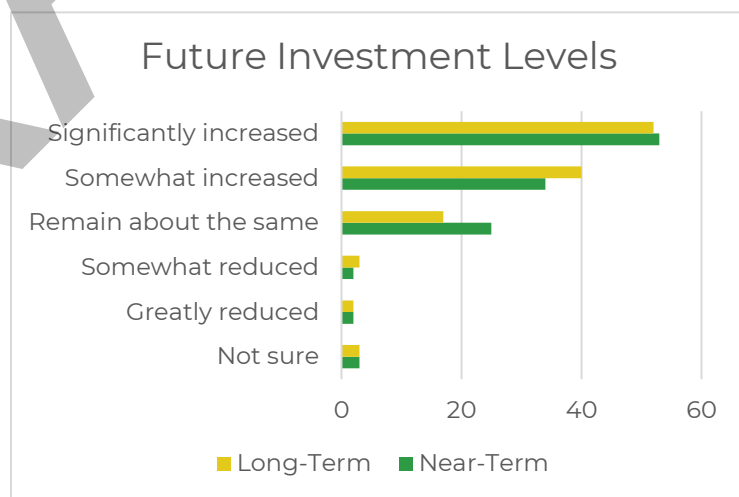
The survey explored how respondents believe transportation investment should change over time, which transportation needs should receive priority, potential approaches to transportation funding, confidence in current investment decisions, and specific transportation improvements they would like to see considered.

The combination of open-ended engagement and structured survey questions provided two different forms of information. The open-ended exercises allowed issues to emerge organically, while the survey asked participants to consider specific choices and tradeoffs.

Expectations for Future Transportation Investment

Survey respondents generally indicated that transportation investment will need to increase over time. In the near term, covering approximately the next 5 to 10 years, 73 percent of respondents indicated that transportation investment should increase, including 45 percent who selected “significantly increased.” About 21 percent felt investment should remain about the same, while very few respondents supported a reduction.

Support for increased investment was even stronger when respondents considered the longer-term, 10- to 25-year planning horizon. Nearly 79 percent indicated that investment should increase, including 44 percent who supported a significant increase. Only about 15 percent felt long-term investment should remain at current levels.



Together, these responses indicate a broad recognition that maintaining and improving the region’s transportation system will likely require greater investment as the region grows and transportation needs change.

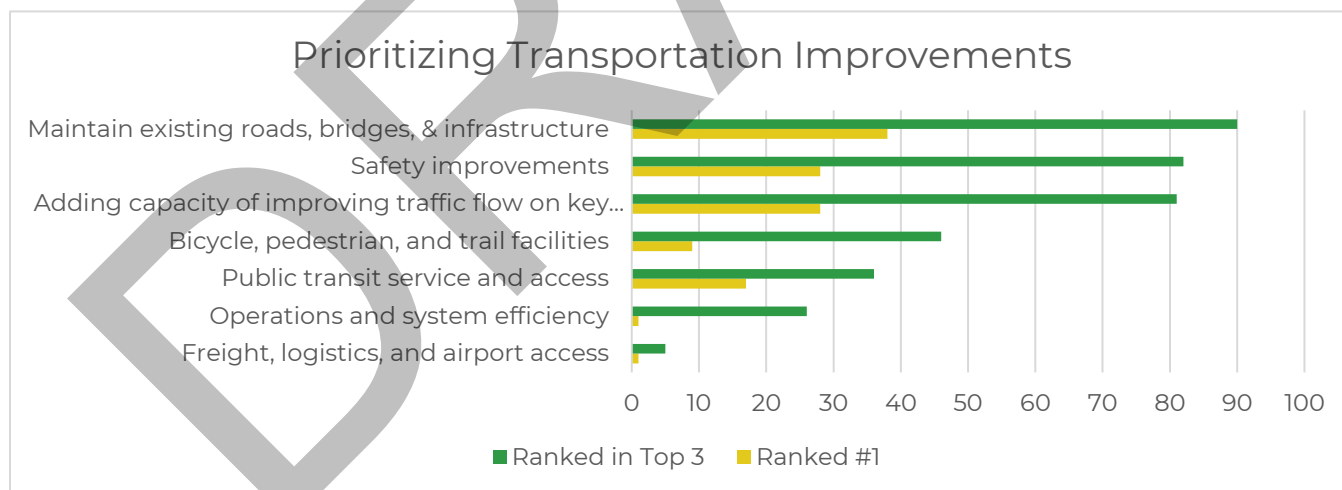
How Transportation Investments Should be Prioritized

Respondents were asked to rank seven transportation investment categories if available funding is limited. **Maintaining existing roads and bridges** ranked highest overall, followed closely by **safety improvements** and **adding capacity or improving travel**.

Maintenance was ranked first by 38 respondents and appeared among the top three priorities for 90 of 122 people who completed the ranking. Safety and capacity were ranked first by 28 respondents and were also frequently placed among the respondents' top three choices.

Middle rankings included: bicycle, pedestrian, and trail facilities; operations and system efficiency; and public transit, however each was identified as a high priority by a portion of respondents. Freight, logistics, and airport access ranked lowest overall when respondents were asked to make tradeoffs among the seven categories.

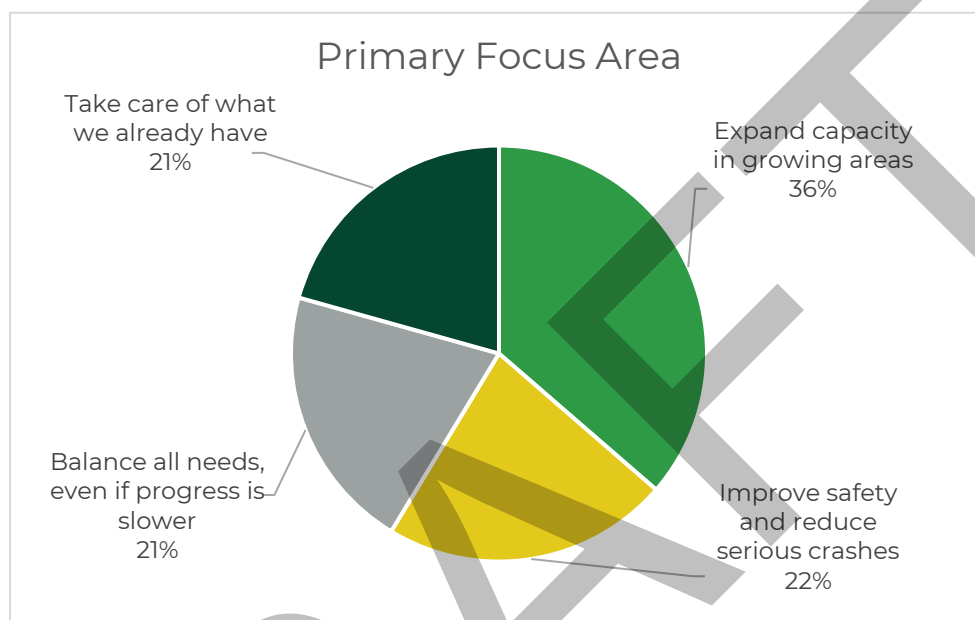
The ranking results reinforce themes from the open-ended engagement. Participants repeatedly identified the existing roadway system as both a regional strength and something that requires continued maintenance, while safety, roadway improvements, and multimodal transportation also appeared frequently among identified needs.



When respondents were subsequently asked to choose just one primary focus, no single option received a majority. The largest share, 36 percent, selected expanding capacity in growing areas. Improving safety and reducing serious crashes was selected by 22 percent, while approximately 21

percent each preferred maintaining the existing system or balancing transportation needs even if progress occurred more gradually.

The distribution illustrates the tradeoffs inherent in long range transportation planning. Respondents identified several important priorities rather than one universally preferred approach.



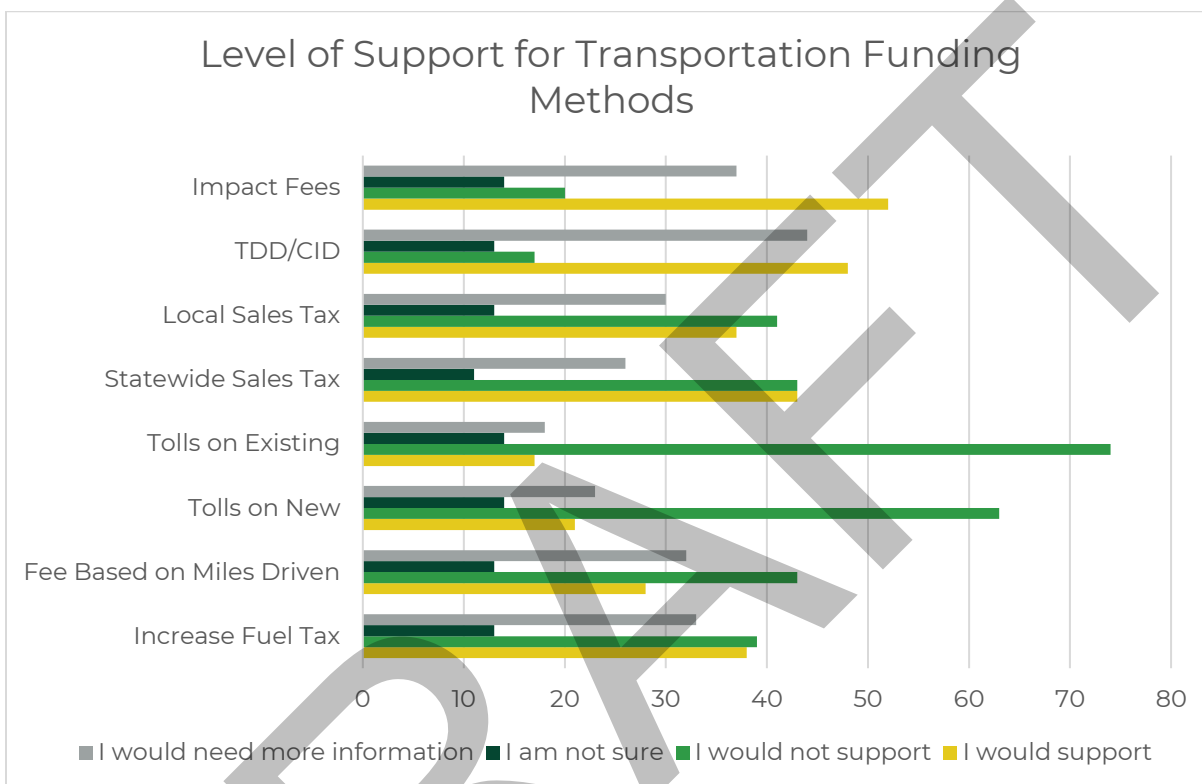
Additional Transportation Funding

Respondents were asked both whether additional transportation investment is needed and how potential additional revenue should be raised and spent. While the survey showed substantial support for increasing transportation investment, opinions about individual funding mechanisms were considerably more divided.

No funding source received majority support. The greatest support was for development impact fees on new development, supported by 42 percent of respondents, followed by Transportation Development Districts or Community Improvement Districts, at 39 percent. A statewide sales tax received support from 35 percent, while approximately 31 percent supported either an increased fuel tax or a local sales tax.

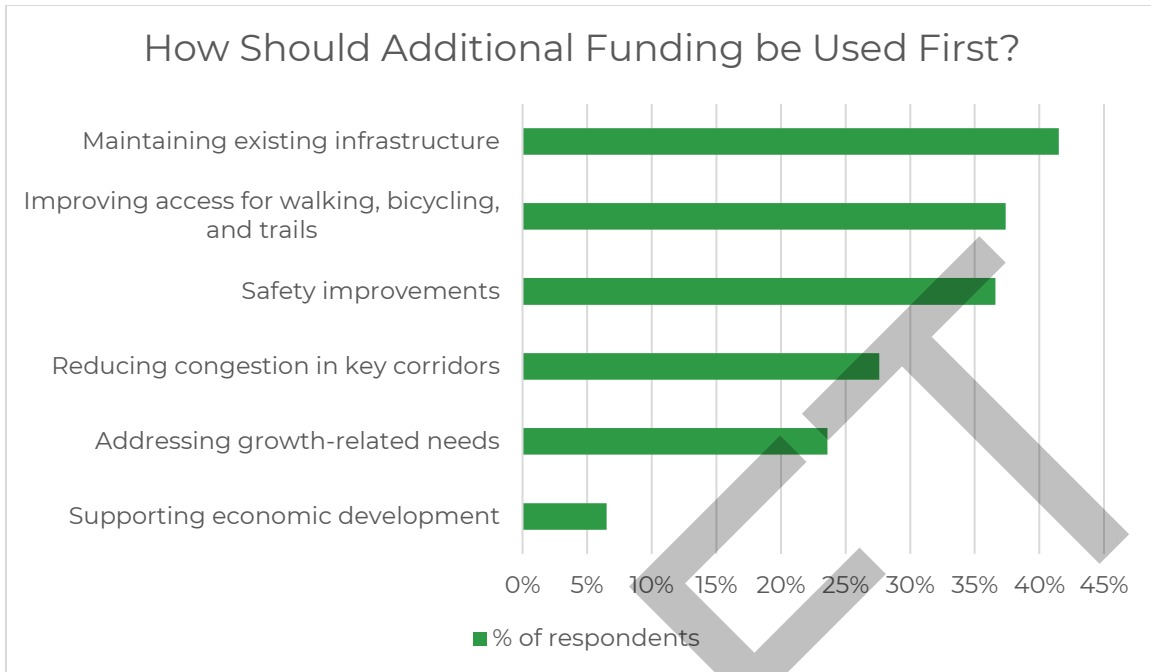
Support was lower for a mileage-based fee and particularly for tolling. About 24 percent supported a fee based on miles driven, 17 percent supported tolls on new roads or bridges, and only 14 percent supported tolls on existing facilities.

An important finding is the number of respondents who selected, “I would need more information.” This was especially common for Transportation Development/Community Improvement Districts and development impact fees. The responses therefore suggest that some funding approaches may be unfamiliar to the public rather than clearly supported or opposed.



Respondents were also asked what additional transportation funding should be used for first. Because participants could identify more than one priority, these percentages do not total 100 percent. Maintaining existing infrastructure was selected most often, by 42 percent of respondents, followed by improving access for walking and bicycling at 37 percent, as well as safety improvements at 37 percent. Reducing congestion was identified by 28 percent, while 24 percent selected growth-related needs.

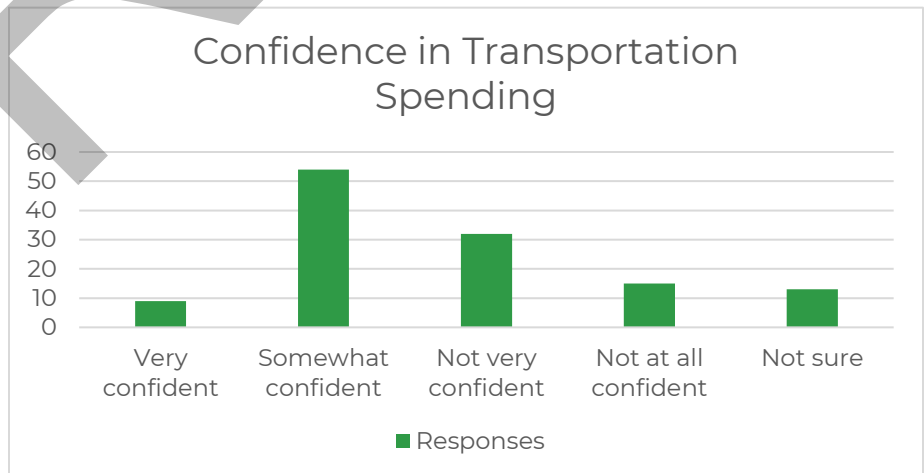
These findings correspond closely with the open-ended exercise. Sidewalks, trails, bicycle facilities, roadway maintenance, safety improvements, congestion, and growth-related roadway needs all emerged independently when participants were asked what the region needs.



Confidence in Transportation Investment Decisions

Respondents expressed mixed, but generally moderate, confidence in how transportation dollars are currently spent in the region. Just over half of respondents at 51 percent reported being somewhat or very confident, including 44 percent who were somewhat confident. Approximately 38 percent were either not very confident or not at all confident, while 11 percent were unsure.

The results suggest that most respondents do not hold strongly positive or negative views. Rather, responses are concentrated in the middle, indicating an opportunity to continue explaining how transportation projects are selected, funded, and implemented, and how public input is incorporated into those decisions.



Location-Specific Transportation Needs

Participants could also identify specific locations where transportation improvements may be needed. Survey map responses included roadway and intersection improvements, safety concerns, trail and sidewalk connections, transit access, and other location-specific needs.

What We Heard

Taken together, the engagement activities reveal several recurring themes.

The public recognizes significant strengths in the existing transportation system, particularly the region's roadway network, recent infrastructure improvements, trails, connectivity, and regional planning partnerships. At the same time, participants identified a broad set of future needs that extend across transportation modes.

Maintaining the existing system emerged repeatedly. It ranked highest in the survey's constrained-investment exercise and was also one of the most frequently selected uses of additional funding.

Safety remains a significant concern. Safety ranked near the top of survey priorities and appeared throughout open-ended comments concerning intersections, driver behavior, pedestrian facilities, roadway design, and specific locations.

Growth and roadway capacity are important, but not the only concern. Survey respondents gave strong support to addressing capacity in growing areas, while open-ended responses identified roadway widening, additional connections, intersection improvements, and congestion. At the same time, substantial numbers of participants called for more sidewalks, trails, bicycle facilities, transit, and regional transportation choices.

Better connections are a recurring regional goal. Participants identified connections between communities, neighborhoods, trails, roadways, and transit systems. Many transit comments specifically addressed travel between Springfield and surrounding communities.

The public expects transportation to continue changing. Responses about 2050 included automation, electronic vehicles, multimodal travel, transit, and emerging technologies, alongside concerns about growth and congestion.

The wide range of responses supports maintaining flexibility as technologies and travel patterns evolve.

Finally, the engagement process demonstrated the value of providing different ways to participate. Some participants preferred answering structured survey questions and considering specific tradeoffs. Others responded to open-ended prompts, identified locations on a map, or spoke directly with staff. Providing multiple avenues for engagement allowed participants to contribute in the format most comfortable and meaningful to them, resulting in a broader picture of how the public views the region's transportation system and its future.