



# Regional Plan Association

*... a research and planning agency supported by voluntary membership to promote the coordinated development of the New York-New Jersey-Connecticut Metropolitan Region.*

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## NEWS RELEASE

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### SPECIAL ATTENTION: EDITORIAL WRITERS

The attached report on Transportation Town Meeting results was sent to all New York State Legislators this week before they gather in a special session of the New York Legislature to consider transportation financing.





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## CHOICES FOR '76

### Results of

#### Town Meeting on Transportation

#### Special Gallup Regional Polls on Transportation

#### RESULTS OF TOWN MEETING ON TRANSPORTATION

Below are the results of how 32,000 people voted in the Transportation Town Meeting held March 31-April 2. On each of the issues listed here, a majority of every demographic group sending in ballots (by race, income, age, and county) agreed with the indicated overall conclusions:

---By a vote of 91 percent to 5 percent, Town Meeting participants said that public policy should "encourage more reliance on public transportation."

---By a vote of 86 percent to 14 percent, residents of both cities and suburbs voted in favor of subsidizing fares on public transportation. Of those favoring subsidies, here is the breakdown on how much ought to be provided:

1. Enough to keep up with the cost of living	35%	)	
		)	
2. Enough to reduce them	35%	)	86%
		)	
3. Enough to have free transit	16%	)	
		)	
4. None at all	14%		

---When asked "If public transportation is subsidized, who should pay?" two-thirds of Town Meeting participants favored a state or regional tax. Here are percentages of support for various options of who should pay:

- |                               |     |
|-------------------------------|-----|
| 1. The motorist               | 25% |
| 2. The municipality or county | 30% |
| 3. The State and/or Region    | 67% |
| 4. The Federal Government     | 53% |

---When asked how many expressways should be built, 78 percent favored continuing construction, while only 22 percent said no more should be built. The breakdown on how many expressways should be built:

- |  |     |   |     |
|--|-----|---|-----|
| 1. Just enough to keep with with additional cars | 38% | ) |     |
| 2. More than that                                | 20% | ) | 78% |
| 3. Less than that                                | 20% | ) |     |
| 4. None at all                                   | 22% |   |     |

---And an overwhelming percentage believe the expressways should be built in developed areas, where the need, cost and controversy are greatest, rather than in rural areas. The vote on where they should be built: (people could circle one or both)

- |   |     |
|---|-----|
| 1. In developed areas, with heavy traffic | 85% |
| 2. In open areas, with little traffic     | 30% |

Regional Plan Association obtained the results above after presenting the pros and cons of the issues in a one-hour television documentary which was broadcast by every television station between New Haven and Trenton, including Channels 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 11, 13, 21, 25, 31, plus five educational stations in New Jersey and Connecticut and two Spanish language stations which broadcast in Spanish, Channels 41 and 47. The issues were also presented in a paperback book, 160,000 copies of which are now in print. And 25 daily newspapers and even more weeklies published 2.0 million copies of the ballot as a public service. Many of them also published articles on the pros and cons of the issues.

Five Town Meetings were held in all--on Housing, Transportation, Poverty, Environment, and Cities and Suburbs. A total of 135,000 ballots have been mailed in thus far from residents in the 31-county New York Region stretching from Poughkeepsie to Montauk and New Haven to Trenton.



Batches of ballots were mailed to 6,500 people who volunteered to host Town Meeting discussion groups, mostly gathered in homes. They were organized by a wide range of civic groups, churches, businesses, and schools. About 40 percent of the mailed-in ballots came from organized groups. Others were sent in by individuals who pick up ballots in banks, libraries, or tore them out of newspapers. According to Neilson ratings, the viewing audience was surprisingly large--between 1.5 million and 3 million people per program.

Those who sent in ballots tended to have more education and higher incomes than the population as a whole. Half had college degrees, for example. Some 21 percent of those sending in ballots had incomes between \$8,500 and \$13,000--almost exactly the percentage of people in the middle income fifth of the population. But people with lower incomes were underrepresented among those who sent in ballots and those earning more than \$13,000 overrepresented.

#### Gallup Poll Reinforces Ballot Results

Anticipating that a perfect cross-sample of the population would not be motivated to send in ballots, RPA commissioned George Gallup Jr. to conduct a scientific poll of the population before the series and another one afterwards. More than 1,500 people were sampled in each poll--as many as Mr. Gallup normally interviews on national issues. Gallup found that on 10 of 11 issues, a majority of the public came to the same conclusions as those motivated enough to send in CHOICES ballots. Below are the results on the two issues of transportation financing tested by Gallup. Results are given for the March poll taken before the Town Meetings were held and for the May poll taken afterwards. The shift in the vote could indicate that the project had an effect on opinion.

---To what extent, if at all, do you think the government should help in paying for fares people pay for public transportation--should the government cover the total fare, part of the fare, or do you think it should cover none of these fares?

	<u>March</u>	<u>May</u>
Total	16%	12%
Part	34%	42%
None	42%	38%
Don't Know	8%	8%



---In planning for the future transportation needs of the overall Region, that is, covering the use of cars, buses, subways and trains--what do you think should be done about the present highway system--build highways to keep up with the increased number of cars or stop building new highways?

	<u>March</u>	<u>May</u>
Keep up with additional cars	56%	58%
Stop building highways	28%	33%
Don't Know	14%	11%

As might be expected, there is a higher degree of support for subsidizing public transportation fares in New York City than in the suburbs. In the May Poll, 72.4 percent of New York City residents favored a total or partial subsidy while 22.3 percent were opposed and 5.3 percent were undecided. Residents of Nassau, Suffolk, Westchester, Ulster, Sullivan, Putnam, Rockland, Orange, and Dutchess Counties (many of which are rural), narrowly opposed subsidies for public transportation fares by a vote of 48.1 percent, 46.5 percent in favor with 5.4 percent undecided.

However, a majority of those who sent in Town Meeting ballots from every county favored public transportation subsidies. The breakdown by county or borough of those who sent in ballots after participating in the Transportation Town Meeting held March 31, April 1 and 2:

	<u>% opposed to fare subsidy</u>	<u>% supporting subsidies to keep up with cost of living</u>	<u>% supporting subsidies to reduce fares</u>	<u>% favoring free transportation</u>
New York City	10	30	34	26
Bronx	8	23	33	37
Brooklyn	9	30	36	25
Manhattan	7	31	34	28
Queens	11	32	36	21
Staten Island	18	33	29	20
New York State				
Dutchess	16	37	33	14
Nassau	15	34	34	16
Orange	21	41	27	11
Putnam	12	40	40	9
Rockland	14	41	34	12
Suffolk	15	34	36	15
Sullivan	18	48	30	3
Ulster	21	28	38	14
Westchester	14	36	38	12

Enclosed with this press release is a summary of how people balloted on all 44 "CHOICES FOR '76"--where people felt the New York Region ought to be headed as we approach America's 200th anniversary. You will also find a press release on all Gallup Poll results.