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Most New Jerseyans Oppose Cutting Services and Raising Fares to Stabilize NJ Transit's Budget

Rutgers-Eagleton Poll shows support for more state funding to aid mass transportation

NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J. (June 23, 2023) – As NJ Transit debates how to avert its budget shortfall, a majority of New Jerseyans oppose cutting transit services or raising fares to stabilize funding and close the fiscal gap, according to the latest Rutgers-Eagleton Poll.

Fifty-four percent strongly oppose and another 24 percent somewhat oppose cutting services; 19 percent (6 percent strongly, 13 percent somewhat) support it. Likewise, 39 percent strongly oppose and another 28 percent somewhat oppose raising fares; 30 percent support it (10 percent strongly, 20 percent somewhat).

New Jerseyans are much more supportive of increasing direct state aid, however: 34 percent strongly support this option to fund NJ Transit and 32 percent somewhat support it. Nearly three in 10 New Jerseyans either somewhat (14 percent) or strongly (15 percent) oppose this measure.

"Like with many issues, New Jerseyans do not want to see their own lives impacted through mass transit service cuts or fare hikes – especially if they themselves ride the rails or buses," said Ashley Koning, an assistant research professor and director of the Eagleton Center for Public Interest Polling (ECPIP) at Rutgers University–New Brunswick. "With ridership not yet back at pre-pandemic levels and with riders accustomed to no fare increases in the last eight years, most New Jerseyans place the onus on the state government to keep NJ Transit afloat."

While a majority of every demographic group opposes cutting services and raising fares, some groups are less resistant to these measures than others. Republicans (45 percent strongly, 21 percent somewhat) and individuals who report never using public transportation (49 percent strongly, 22 percent somewhat) are less opposed to cutting services compared with their

counterparts. Men (45 percent) and white residents (48 percent) are less likely than their counterparts to strongly oppose this measure.

Men (31 percent strongly, 30 percent somewhat) and individuals in households making $100,000 or more annually (35 percent strongly, 27 percent somewhat) are less likely than their counterparts to oppose raising transit fares. White residents (33 percent) are less likely to strongly oppose this measure compared with nonwhite residents (45 percent).

More than half of nearly every group strongly support increasing direct state aid to stabilize NJ TRANSIT's budget: Republicans are the only group who do not reach a majority in favor of it. About two-thirds of riders and nonriders alike support increasing state aid to some degree.

"Unsurprisingly, Democrats and Republicans are divided on what would be considered a budget issue," said Jessica Roman, a research associate at ECPIP. "While Republicans are the most opposed and most divided of any demographic group, Democrats are the most supportive of increasing direct state aid to stabilize NJ Transit's budget."

New Jerseyans' ratings of public transportation in the Garden State are mixed: 5 percent rate the state's mass transit system as "excellent," 35 percent "good," 31 percent "only fair," 14 percent "poor," and 16 percent are unsure. A plurality of those who use public transportation in the state at least a few times a year – 48 percent – rate it as "good," with another 30 percent rating it as "only fair."

Nearly half (47 percent) of New Jerseyans say they never use public transportation.

Results are from a statewide poll of 1,002 adults contacted by live interviewers on landlines and cellphones from April 27 to May 5. The full sample has a margin of error of +/- 3.6 percentage points.

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Broadcast interviews: Rutgers University–New Brunswick has broadcast-quality television and radio studios available for remote live or taped interviews with Rutgers experts. For more information, contact Patti Zielinski at patti.zielinski@rutgers.edu

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ABOUT THE EAGLETON CENTER FOR PUBLIC INTEREST POLLING

Home of the Rutgers-Eagleton Poll, the Eagleton Center for Public Interest Polling (ECPIP) was established in 1971 and is the oldest and one of the most respected university-based statewide polling operations in the United States. Now in its 52nd year and with the publication of over 200 polls, ECPIP's mission is to provide scientifically sound, nonpartisan information about public opinion. To read more about ECPIP and view all of our press releases, published research and data archive, please visit our website: eagletonpoll.rutgers.edu. You can also visit our Facebook and Twitter.

ABOUT THE EAGLETON INSTITUTE OF POLITICS

The Eagleton Center for Public Interest Polling is a unit of the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University–New Brunswick. The Eagleton Institute studies how American politics and government work and change, analyzes how the democracy might improve and promotes political participation and civic engagement. The Institute explores state and national politics through research, education and public service, linking the study of politics with its day-to-day practice. To learn more about Eagleton programs and expertise, visit eagleton.rutgers.edu.

QUESTIONS AND TABLES START ON THE FOLLOWING PAGE

Questions and Tables

The questions covered in this release are listed below. Column percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding. Respondents are New Jersey adults; all percentages are of weighted results. Interpret groups with samples sizes under 100 with extreme caution.

T1. **How often do you use public transportation, regardless of whether it is for work or for personal use? Is it almost every day or more, a few days a week, a few days a month, a few days a year, or do you never use public transportation?**
Note: This question was part of a split block. Half of respondents received questions about transportation and half of respondents received questions about another topic.

Almost every day (or more)	6%
Few days a week	7%
Few days a month	7%
Few days a year	32%
Never	47%
Don't know	0%
Unweighted N=	501

	Party ID			Gender		Race or Ethnicity		Age			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Man	Woman	White, Non-Hispanic	Non-White	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+
Almost every day+	7%	5%	6%	5%	7%	3%	11%	11%	4%	8%	2%
Few days/wk	6%	8%	6%	9%	5%	5%	9%	15%	5%	5%	3%
Few days/mo	11%	7%	3%	8%	6%	6%	8%	10%	7%	6%	5%
Few days/yr	28%	41%	23%	33%	31%	33%	31%	32%	39%	31%	27%
Never	47%	39%	63%	44%	51%	53%	41%	33%	46%	50%	63%
DK	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Unwt N=	174	199	111	240	257	311	175	116	148	131	106

	Income		Education	
	<$100K	$100K+	Some college or less	College grad or more
Almost every day+	10%	3%	8%	5%
Few days/wk	7%	8%	6%	7%
Few days/mo	6%	8%	4%	11%
Few days/yr	24%	38%	28%	39%
Never	52%	44%	54%	38%
DK	0%	0%	0%	0%
Unwt N=	212	232	208	289

T2. **Overall, how would you rate public transportation in New Jersey? Is it excellent, good, only fair, or poor?**
Note: This question was part of a split block. Half of respondents received questions about transportation and half of respondents received questions about another topic.

Excellent	5%
Good	35%
Only fair	31%
Poor	14%
Don't know	16%
Unweighted N=	496

	Party ID			Gender		Race or Ethnicity		Age			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Man	Woman	White, Non-Hispanic	Non-White	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+
Excellent	5%	5%	5%	3%	6%	3%	6%	4%	4%	4%	8%
Good	41%	34%	25%	37%	31%	31%	39%	37%	36%	35%	29%
Fair	29%	34%	31%	32%	30%	30%	32%	33%	33%	29%	29%
Poor	12%	14%	16%	17%	11%	15%	13%	15%	10%	15%	15%
DK	12%	13%	23%	11%	21%	21%	10%	11%	17%	18%	18%
Unwt N=	173	197	109	237	255	307	175	114	148	130	104

	Income		Education	
	<$100K	$100K+	Some college or less	College grad or more
Excellent	6%	3%	6%	3%
Good	35%	34%	36%	33%
Fair	27%	33%	25%	39%
Poor	14%	15%	14%	14%
DK	17%	15%	20%	11%
Unwt N=	208	231	204	288

	Public Transportation Ridership	
	Rider	Non-Rider
Excellent	5%	4%
Good	48%	20%
Fair	30%	32%
Poor	12%	15%
DK	4%	29%
Unwt N=	268	228

T3.   NJ Transit projects a budget deficit by 2025 due to a lack of dedicated, permanent funding and a post-pandemic decline in ridership. Please tell me if you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose each of the following proposals to help stabilize NJ Transit's budget in the coming years:
Note: This question was part of a split block. Half of respondents received questions about transportation and half of respondents received questions about another topic.

Cutting transit services

Strongly support	6%
Somewhat support	13%
Somewhat oppose	24%
Strongly oppose	54%
Strongly support	4%
Unweighted N=	490

	Party ID			Gender		Race or Ethnicity		Age			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Man	Woman	White, Non-Hispanic	Non-White	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+
Strongly support	5%	5%	8%	7%	4%	3%	8%	2%	5%	9%	6%
Somewhat support	6%	14%	22%	15%	10%	16%	9%	10%	10%	19%	12%
Somewhat oppose	22%	26%	21%	29%	18%	28%	19%	21%	18%	29%	26%
Strongly oppose	61%	52%	45%	45%	62%	48%	60%	60%	63%	41%	52%
DK	6%	3%	4%	4%	5%	5%	4%	6%	4%	2%	4%
Unwt N=	173	195	108	234	252	305	170	113	144	129	104

	Income		Education	
	<$100K	$100K+	Some college or less	College grad or more
Strongly support	6%	5%	6%	5%
Somewhat support	12%	13%	14%	12%
Somewhat oppose	21%	27%	24%	23%
Strongly oppose	55%	53%	52%	56%
DK	6%	2%	5%	4%
Unwt N=	206	228	203	283

	Public Transportation Ridership	
	Rider	Non-Rider
Strongly support	4%	8%
Somewhat support	12%	14%
Somewhat oppose	25%	22%
Strongly oppose	58%	49%
DK	1%	7%
Unwt N=	268	222

Raising transit fares

Strongly support	10%
Somewhat support	20%
Somewhat oppose	28%
Strongly oppose	39%
Strongly support	3%
Unweighted N=	490

	Party ID			Gender		Race or Ethnicity		Age			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Man	Woman	White, Non-Hispanic	Non-White	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+
Strongly support	7%	8%	17%	12%	8%	9%	12%	11%	10%	11%	7%
Somewhat support	20%	22%	19%	25%	15%	23%	18%	14%	25%	24%	19%
Somewhat oppose	32%	32%	16%	30%	26%	32%	24%	30%	21%	23%	38%
Strongly oppose	39%	34%	46%	31%	47%	33%	45%	44%	41%	41%	30%
DK	2%	3%	3%	2%	3%	3%	1%	2%	3%	2%	5%
Unwt N=	173	195	108	235	251	305	170	114	143	129	104

	Income		Education	
	<$100K	$100K+	Some college or less	College grad or more
Strongly support	8%	13%	11%	8%
Somewhat support	18%	22%	19%	23%
Somewhat oppose	26%	27%	26%	29%
Strongly oppose	46%	35%	42%	36%
DK	2%	4%	3%	3%
Unwt N=	205	229	202	284

	Public Transportation Ridership	
	Rider	Non-Rider
Strongly support	8%	12%
Somewhat support	21%	20%
Somewhat oppose	30%	26%
Strongly oppose	40%	38%
DK	1%	4%
Unwt N=	268	222

Increasing direct state aid

Strongly support	34%
Somewhat support	32%
Somewhat oppose	14%
Strongly oppose	15%
Strongly support	5%
Unweighted N=	489

	Party ID			Gender		Race or Ethnicity		Age			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Man	Woman	White, Non-Hispanic	Non-White	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+
Strongly support	46%	32%	23%	30%	38%	27%	44%	40%	40%	32%	24%
Somewhat support	40%	28%	26%	28%	34%	37%	25%	30%	28%	31%	38%
Somewhat oppose	5%	18%	15%	15%	13%	14%	13%	13%	10%	18%	15%
Strongly oppose	3%	17%	29%	22%	9%	18%	10%	6%	17%	16%	23%
DK	5%	4%	6%	5%	5%	4%	7%	10%	6%	2%	1%
Unwt N=	173	194	108	234	251	305	171	113	144	128	104

	Income		Education	
	<$100K	$100K+	Some college or less	College grad or more
Strongly support	38%	29%	36%	32%
Somewhat support	27%	37%	27%	37%
Somewhat oppose	15%	12%	14%	14%
Strongly oppose	13%	18%	16%	15%
DK	8%	3%	7%	3%
Unwt N=	205	229	201	285

	Public Transportation Ridership	
	Rider	Non-Rider
Strongly support	35%	34%
Somewhat support	34%	29%
Somewhat oppose	17%	11%
Strongly oppose	12%	19%
DK	3%	7%
Unwt N=	267	222

Methodology
The Rutgers-Eagleton Poll was conducted by telephone using live interviewers April 27 to May 5, 2023, with a scientifically selected random sample of 1,002 New Jersey adults, 18 or older. Persons without a telephone could not be included in the random selection process. Respondents within a household are selected by asking randomly for the youngest adult male or female currently available. If the named gender is not available, the youngest adult of the other gender is interviewed. This telephone poll included 304 adults reached on a landline phone and 698 adults reached on a cell phone, all acquired through random digit dialing; 250 of the cellphone completes were acquired through one-to-one SMS text messaging by live interviewers that led respondents to an online version of the survey. Distribution of phone use in this sample is:

Cell	45%
Text to Web	25%
Landline	30%

The data were weighted to be representative of the residential adult population of New Jersey. The weighting balances sample demographics to target population parameters. The sample is balanced, by form and overall, to match parameters for sex, age, education, race/ethnicity, region and phone use. The sex, age, education, race/ethnicity, and region parameters were derived from 2021 American Community Survey PUMS data. The phone use parameter was derived from estimates provided by the National Health Interview Survey Early Release Program.[1]

Weighting was done in two stages. The first stage of weighting corrects for different probabilities of selection across the telephone samples associated with the number of adults in each household and each respondent's telephone usage patterns. This adjustment also accounts for the overlapping landline and cell sample frames and the relative sizes of each frame and each sample. [2]

The final stage of weighting balances sample demographics, overall and by form, to match target population benchmarks. This weighting was accomplished using SPSSINC RAKE, an SPSS extension module that simultaneously balances the distributions of all variables using the GENLOG procedure. Weights were trimmed to prevent individual interviews from having too much influence on survey estimates. The use of these weights in statistical analysis ensures that the demographic characteristics of the sample closely approximate the demographic characteristics of the target population.

Post-data collection statistical adjustments require analysis procedures that reflect departures from simple random sampling. We calculate the effects of these design features so that an appropriate adjustment can be incorporated into tests of statistical significance when using these data.

All surveys are subject to sampling error, which is the expected probable difference between interviewing everyone in a population versus a scientific sampling drawn from that population. Sampling error should be adjusted to recognize the effect of weighting the data to better match the population. In this poll, the simple sampling error for 1,002 New Jersey adults is +/-3.1 percentage points at a 95

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[1] NCHS, National Health Interview Survey, 2018–2020; U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2017–2019.
[2] Buskirk, T. D., & Best, J. (2012). Venn Diagrams, Probability 101 and Sampling Weights Computed for Dual Frame Telephone RDD Designs. Journal of Statistics and Mathematics, 15, 3696-3710.

percent confidence interval. The design effect[3] is 1.36, making the adjusted margin of error +/- 3.6 percentage points. Thus, if 50 percent of New Jersey adults in this sample favor a particular position, we would be 95 percent sure that the true figure is between 46.4 and 53.6 percent (50 +/- 3.6) if all New Jersey adults had been interviewed, rather than just a sample.

Sampling error does not consider other sources of variation inherent in public opinion studies, such as non-response, question wording, or context effects.

This Rutgers-Eagleton Poll was fielded by Braun Research, Inc. The questionnaire was developed and all data analyses were completed in house by the Eagleton Center for Public Interest Polling (ECPIP). Jessica Roman assisted with analysis and preparation of this report. The Rutgers-Eagleton Poll is paid for and sponsored by the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, a non-partisan academic center for the study of politics and the political process. Full questionnaires are available on request and can also be accessed through our archives at eagletonpoll.rutgers.edu. For more information, please contact poll@eagleton.rutgers.edu.

Weighted Demographics
1,002 New Jersey adults 18+
Overall Margin of Error = +/- 3.6 percentage points

Please note: Totals may equal slightly more or less than 100% due to rounding.

		deff	MOE			deff	MOE
Man	48%	1.36	+/- 5.1%	**White**	55%	1.34	+/- 4.6%
Woman	52%	1.36	+/- 5.2%	**Black**	12%	1.32	+/- 9.4%
				Hispanic	20%	1.26	+/- 9.2%
18-34	26%	1.31	+/- 7.3%	**Other**	13%	1.16	+/- 12.0%
35-49	25%	1.37	+/- 6.7%				
50-64	27%	1.36	+/- 6.9%	**<50K**	24%	1.31	+/- 8.9%
65+	22%	1.37	+/- 8.0%	**50K-<100K**	31%	1.39	+/- 7.1%
				100K-<150K	19%	1.32	+/- 8.2%
Democrat	35%	1.35	+/- 6.1%	**150K+**	26%	1.26	+/- 6.6%
Independent	40%	1.35	+/- 5.8%				
Republican	25%	1.38	+/- 7.6%	**Urban**	17%	1.36	+/- 9.1%
				Suburb	35%	1.36	+/- 6.2%
HS or Less	27%	1.12	+/- 8.8%	**Exurban**	14%	1.35	+/- 9.5%
Some College	31%	1.23	+/- 6.5%	**Phil/South**	17%	1.41	+/- 8.7%
College Grad	23%	1.17	+/- 5.9%	**Shore**	17%	1.31	+/- 8.5%
Grad Work	19%	1.17	+/- 6.6%				

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[3] Post-data collection statistical adjustments require analysis procedures that reflect departures from simple random sampling. We calculate the effects of these design features so that an appropriate adjustment can be incorporated into tests of statistical significance when using these data. The so-called "design effect" or *deff* represents the loss in statistical efficiency that results from a disproportionate sample design and systematic non-response.