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Poll: Americans Strongly Back Increase in Infrastructure Spending

By Amanda Ruggeri

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Investing in infrastructure isn't just a tagline used by the incoming Obama administration and congressional Democrats to try to get a [stimulus bill](#) passed, but a priority for the vast majority of Americans—even if they have to pay for it.

A [national poll](#) released today shows that 94 percent of Americans support a national effort to build up the country's infrastructure. Meanwhile, 81 percent of Americans say they are prepared to pay 1 percent more in federal taxes to support infrastructure projects.

(Separately, a new Gallup Poll finds that a slim majority of Americans, 53 percent, support a \$775 million [stimulus package of the type Barack Obama described](#) in a speech today.)

One caveat in the support for infrastructure spending, however, is how the projects are developed. More than half of Americans in the poll say that either the accountability or the transparency of the projects is their most important consideration in public works spending. That's three times more than those who say that achieving "measurable results" is their top priority.

That doesn't surprise officials in Building America's Future, the coalition of state and local officials that advocates for infrastructure that commissioned the poll.

"We have seen this in California," says Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, who says his state's legislators have approved \$60 billion in infrastructural projects. "The people like not only us to talk about the infrastructure, but to actually see the cranes out there, to see the action, to see people at work, to see cement being poured, steel being laid . . . They don't mind paying the taxes if they get the bang for the buck."

According to local officials themselves, that can partly be helped by bringing decision-making down to their own level. State and city officials are often more attuned to what their constituents need than those at the federal level, says New York City Mayor Michael

Bloomberg. "You would not have a 'bridge to nowhere' if some local municipality had had to pay for it," he says.

One way to give local communities more of a role would be to have the federal government guarantee municipal debt in the stimulus plan, rather than having the federal government dole out funds to particular projects, Bloomberg says.

Whatever the projects are, officials warn, they must keep the country's long-term needs in mind, such as sustainable energy projects—even though more temporary solutions, like adding lanes to highways or repairing bridges, are likely to mobilize the workforce faster.

That longer-term thinking echoes another finding of the poll: Americans say that energy facilities are their highest priority, followed by roads and highways, and then by clean water.

Regardless of which projects the stimulus funds, however, officials agreed that it can't be seen as a final, major effort at improving America's infrastructure.

"What we're doing here in the recovery plan is not the be all and end all of infrastructure," says Gov. Ed Rendell of Pennsylvania. "This is a drop in the bucket compared to what our needs are."

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