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Baltimore Voters Support Equitable Transportation Funding and Enhanced Trail Infrastructure

New poll results from Rails to Trails Conservancy and the Central Maryland Transportation Alliance show residents prefer connected, active communities

BALTIMORE (June 12, 2024) — Baltimore voters are seeking balanced transportation spending, prioritizing connectivity and accessible ways to safely walk and bike, according to a new poll shared by Rails to Trails Conservancy (RTC) and the Central Maryland Transportation Alliance (CMTA). The findings highlight a clear preference for a more equitable allocation of funds across pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, public transit and highways, moving away from the current budget which predominantly supports highways.

When asked how they would distribute funds across transportation initiatives, poll respondents envisioned an allocation where more than 17% of the budget would support fixing and maintaining existing public transportation, and more than 15% expanding and building new public transportation. Fixing and maintaining walking and biking facilities like trails and sidewalks received 14% of the budget designation, with an additional 13.7% earmarked for expanding and building new walking and biking facilities like trails and sidewalks.

Trails have emerged as a unifying topic with a broad base of support. Baltimore voters recognize the importance of prioritizing trail development, with 58% of respondents indicating they are more likely to vote for an elected official who prioritizes trails for walking and biking.

"We're seeing a compelling case for the expansion and prioritization of the Baltimore Greenway Trails Network, complete streets initiatives and public transportation in the Maryland budget," said Rev. Kate Foster, Mid-Atlantic Director of Trail Development at RTC. "By addressing concerns related to safety and accessibility, Baltimore can enhance the quality of life for its residents and create a more connected, active, and healthy community."

Findings showed overwhelming support among Baltimore residents for complete streets initiatives and a significant desire for walking and biking infrastructure, which is viewed as a critical component for the well-being and connectivity of Baltimore's neighborhoods. Only 4% of Baltimoreans who responded to the poll oppose the Baltimore Greenway Trails Network.

The poll also revealed a strong desire among 56% of respondents to utilize trails more frequently. Currently, over a third of respondents (36%) already walk to work, school, errands, or appointments, demonstrating the integral role that walking plays in their daily lives.

“Our polling indicates that most voters want better walking, biking and transit options in their neighborhoods, and recent primary election results show that most voters support candidates who will invest more in those modes. It is time to stop letting the loudest voices overwhelm the rest of us,” said Brian O’Malley, President and CEO, Central Maryland Transportation Alliance.

While the support for trails, walking and biking among Baltimoreans is clear and enthusiasm for trails is clear, residents have also highlighted barriers to using the current active transportation options in Baltimore. About a third of respondents mentioned they would be more likely to walk or bike if they had protected bike lanes or more trails and greenways separated from traffic. Additionally, 62% cited the amount of traffic, and 59% cited the speed of traffic as major or total obstacles preventing them from walking or biking more frequently.

Another major barrier to trail usage is the distance from home to the nearest trail, with 64% of respondents indicating this distance is between 1 to 5+ miles. Improving access to trails is essential to increasing their use and ensuring all residents can benefit from these green spaces.

The poll was conducted through Stratallys research and collected data via online polling fielded April 17 to May 1, 2024, reaching 750 registered voters across Baltimore city and county zip codes, with 50% of the 500 city respondents from zip codes 21217, 21216, 21230, 21218, 21225, 21223, 21224, 21205, 21239 and 21251. Quotas ensuring respondents reflect the Baltimore population’s overall age, gender and ethnicity were also in place.

The Baltimore Greenway Trails Network is one of Rails-to-Trails Conservancy’s TrailNation™ projects, comprising regional trail networks that represent diverse people, places and approaches to building connected trails across city, county and state lines. TrailNation is a national initiative that brings together model projects, leaders, champions and resources to accelerate the pace of equitable trail development nationwide, creating new access to this essential infrastructure and the benefits it brings for everyone in America. Learn more about TrailNation at railstotrails.org/trailnation.

About Rails to Trails Conservancy

Rails to Trails Conservancy is the nation’s largest trails organization—with a grassroots community more than 1 million strong— dedicated to connecting people and communities by creating a nationwide network of public trails, many from former rail lines. Connect with RTC at railstotrails.org and @railstotrails on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

About Central Maryland Transportation Alliance

The Central Maryland Transportation Alliance was formed in 2007 as a diverse coalition of corporate and civic leaders uniting business, philanthropic and institutional sectors around a common agenda: improving and expanding transportation options for the citizens and businesses of Central Maryland. Our singular focus is to be a catalyst for improving the region’s transportation.

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