



MOORE INFORMATION

OPINION RESEARCH • STRATEGIC ANALYSIS

March 31, 2008

TO: John MacDonald
FROM: Moore Information
RE: City of Missoula Voters - Survey Results

This memo contains results of a Moore Information, Inc. telephone survey conducted among likely voters in the City of Missoula. A total of 400 interviews were conducted March 16-17, 2008. The potential sampling error is plus or minus 5% at the 95% confidence level.

Overview

Results of our recent survey show City of Missoula voters are widely satisfied with life in the city.

- ✓ 81% rate the quality of city life as "excellent" or "good"
- ✓ 97% consider the city a safe place to live
- ✓ 88% are satisfied with services provided by the city

When it comes to satisfaction with specific services and programs provided by the city, voters give high marks to six of the eight services tested in the survey.

- ✓ Fire emergency services (95% satisfied)
- ✓ Maintenance of city parks and trails (91%)
- ✓ Police services (90%)
- ✓ Preserving open space (85%)
- ✓ Public transportation (74%)

A majority of voters (62%) are also satisfied with street repair and maintenance. However, majorities are dissatisfied with the city's efforts on "planning and managing for growth in the city" (54% not satisfied), and "traffic management" (62% not satisfied).

Importantly, however, approximately seven-in-ten or more are willing to pay additional taxes and/or fees to expand all of the specified city services tested in the survey;

- ✓ Fire emergency services (80% willing)
- ✓ Police services (74%)
- ✓ Street repair and maintenance (72%)
- ✓ Maintenance and improvement of city parks and trails (71%)
- ✓ Traffic management (70%)
- ✓ Public transportation (69%)
- ✓ Preserving open spaces (68%)

Further, when asked specifically how much they would be willing to pay to enhance city services in general, a third (32%) say they are willing to pay \$50 or more annually.

Looking at support for a potential city bond measure, we find a majority of voters (53%) support a measure to pay for construction of a new police facility to replace the current facility, while 38% are opposed and 10% have no opinion. Generally speaking, funding measures that fail to reach 60% support in initial polling are considered unlikely to pass on Election Day. Based on this general “rule of thumb,” passage of the bond measure to fund a new city police facility could be an uphill battle today.

Finally, a two-cent per gallon gas tax increase to pay for transportation improvements meets with opposition today (40% support, 57% oppose). However, when respondents are informed a portion of the two-cent increase would be dedicated specifically for sidewalks, bike lanes and bus stops, 50% say they are more likely to vote for a two-cent gas tax increase, while 45% are less likely.

More detailed findings follow.

Perceptions of Life in Missoula

Missoula voters are widely satisfied with the quality of life in the city. Fully 81% rate their quality of life in Missoula as “excellent” (37%) or “good” (45%). Just 14% say their quality of life in Missoula is “average” and another 4% say its “below average” or “poor.” Majorities among all voter subgroups agree the quality of life in the city is above par; however, respondents in households earning less than \$25,000 annually are less likely than higher income households to give an “excellent” or “good” rating, and those who rent their current residence are less likely than homeowners to be optimistic about life in Missoula.

Today, there is no consensus when it comes to the most pressing problem facing people in the City of Missoula. Specific mentions included “affordable housing” (19%), “employment/wages” (14%), “traffic congestion” (13%), “growth management” (8%), “economic conditions/poverty” (6%), “transportation availability” (5%), “road conditions” (4%) and “cost of living” (4%). Regionally, “affordable housing” is the most prominent mention in the Northeast area of the City, and is also a leading concern in City Center. To the South, voters are more likely to mention “traffic congestion,” and there is no consensus among Northwest Missoula residents.

When asked what residents like most about their city, “friendliness/sense of community” (17%), “location/open spaces” (16%), “outdoor scenery” (15%), and “variety of activities and services” (13%) are all leading mentions. Other perceived advantages of Missoula include “diversity/culture (7%), “quiet/preferable size” (6%) “quality of life” (5%) and “everything” (5%). Nothing else was mentioned by more than 4% of voters.

Conversely, when asked what respondents like least about the city, we find “traffic congestion” tops the list at 17%, followed by “growth/urban development” (11%), “pollution” (6%) and “road conditions” (5%). Another 4% each mentioned “winter conditions,” “affordable housing,” “liberal attitudes” and “government organization/planning.” Still, 19% of voters did not offer a complaint about life in Missoula.

Respondents were also asked which one or two characteristics of the city they would like to see preserved. “Natural open spaces” was the leading characteristic (for 37%), while others mentioned the “downtown area” (17%), “parks/areas of outdoor recreation” (17%), “historic sites/buildings” (13%), “quality of life/friendly atmosphere” (9%), “university/education setting” (8%), “small town feel” (6%) and for 5%, the “riverfront” and the city’s “diversity” were leading characteristics for preservation.

Thinking about personal safety, respondents were asked how safe they feel in the City of Missoula. Fully 97% say they feel “very” (49%) or “fairly” (48%) safe. Just 3% of voters say they do not feel safe in Missoula. Wide majorities of voters throughout the city and among all subgroups report feeling safe in Missoula today.

Satisfaction with City Services and Programs

Voters are generally satisfied with the services provided by the City of Missoula. Indeed, fully 88% say they are satisfied, including 32% who are “very” satisfied and 56% who are “fairly” satisfied. Just one-in-ten (11%) say they are not satisfied with the city’s services. Wide majorities in all major subgroups are satisfied with city services today.

Respondents were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with eight specific services and programs the City of Missoula provides its residents. Six of the eight services receive high marks from voters, but as the following table shows, voters are less satisfied with two other services tested in the survey.

City Services and Program Ratings

	Very satisfied	Fairly satisfied	TOTAL satisfied	TOTAL not satisfied
Fire emergency services	65%	30%	95%	1%
Maintenance of city parks and trails	42%	49%	91%	7%
Police services	41%	49%	90%	7%
Preserving open space	33%	51%	85%	13%
Public transportation	31%	44%	74%	18%
Street repair and maintenance	15%	47%	62%	38%
Planning and managing for growth in the city	7%	34%	41%	54%
Traffic management, such as controlling traffic flow and easing congestion	7%	32%	38%	62%

Expanding/Enhancing City Services and Programs

The survey explored respondents willingness to pay additional taxes and/or fees to expand seven services and programs provide by the City of Missoula. Respondents were read the following and then asked to rate each service.

"The City of Missoula is in the process of prioritizing projects and determining necessary funding levels. The cost of providing city services and programs increases every year. To maintain, enhance or offer new services that citizens want, the city would need to increase taxes and/or fees for city services and programs."

As the following table illustrates, a wide majority of respondents are willing to pay more for each of the seven services and programs tested in the survey.

Willingness to Pay for Expanded Services or Programs

	Very willing	Fairly willing	TOTAL willing	TOTAL not willing
Fire emergency services	34%	46%	80%	16%
Police services	29%	45%	74%	22%
Street repair and maintenance, including street cleaning and snow removal	23%	49%	72%	26%
Maintenance and improvements to city parks and trails	30%	41%	71%	27%
Traffic management, such as controlling traffic flow and easing congestion	29%	42%	70%	27%
Public transportation	29%	40%	69%	28%
Preserve open space	37%	31%	68%	29%

When asked which of these seven services should have highest priority for additional funding, or if some other service not mentioned should have priority, we find traffic management tops the list (for 22% of voters), followed by police services (15%), preserving open space (14%), street repair and maintenance (12%), public transportation (8%), fire emergency services (7%) and improvements to parks and trails (6%).

Importantly, when respondents are asked specifically how much they would be willing to pay on an annual basis to enhance city services and programs in general, we find eight-in-ten (84%) willing to pay more. A third (32%) report they are willing to pay an additional \$50 dollars or more annually to enhance city services, 11% are willing to pay \$40-\$49 annually, 12% say \$30-\$39, 12% say \$20-29, and 17% are willing to pay less than \$20 per year to enhance services. Just 9% are not willing to pay anything, and 7% are unsure. Not surprisingly, as household income increases, so too does willingness to pay more to enhance services and programs, as voters in households earning \$50,000 or more annually are more willing than lower income households to pay \$50 or more/year to enhance

services. Additionally, respondents who report being “very” satisfied with city services in general are more willing than those less satisfied to pay \$50 or more/year annually to enhance services provided by the city.

Police Facility Bond Measure

There is majority support today for a 20-year bond measure, costing approximately \$40 per year for a \$250,000 home, to help pay for construction of a new city police facility to replace the current facility. While 53% would support such a measure, 38% are opposed and the remaining 10% don’t know.

Generally speaking, funding measures that fail to reach 60% support in initial polling are considered unlikely to pass on Election Day. Based on this general “rule of thumb,” passage of this bond measure to fund a new city police facility could be an uphill battle today.

Looking at subgroups, we find majority support for the measure throughout the city, and women support the police facility bond measure, while men are divided. Additionally, voters age 45 and older support the measure, while younger voters are divided. By income, majorities of respondents in households earning \$25,000 or more per year support this measure, while voters in lower income households are divided.

Gas Tax Increase

The idea of a two-cent per gallon gas tax increase to pay for transportation improvements meets with opposition today. Voters oppose this proposal by a 57-40% margin, with 45% saying they are “definitely” opposed.

Majorities of voters throughout the city oppose a two-cent per gallon gas tax increase, as do respondents age 60 and older. However, younger voters are divided about the increase today. Not surprisingly, respondents in households earning \$25,000 or less annually widely oppose a gas tax increase, while respondents in higher income households are divided. Additionally, voters who rent their residence are more likely to oppose a gas tax increase than homeowners.

However, after hearing a portion of the two-cent per gallon gas tax increase would go specifically to improving sidewalks, bike lanes and bus stops, 50% say they are more likely to support a gas tax increase. Another 45% say they are less likely after hearing this information, and the remaining 5% are not sure. Regionally, a majority of the voters in the Northeast area of the city are more likely to support a gas tax increase after hearing the specified improvements, as are a narrow plurality of City Center respondents. Elsewhere in the city, sentiment is divided. By age, majorities of voters under age 60 are more likely to support a gas tax increase after hearing about specified improvements, while a majority of older voters are less likely. Importantly, approximately one-in-four (28%) who were originally opposed to the idea of a two-cent per gallon gas tax increase, report they are more likely to support the increase after hearing a portion of the funds would be dedicated to improving sidewalks, bike lanes and bus stops.