

Metro Vancouver Transit Referendum: “No” side holds the advantage, but this campaign is 10 weeks long

New poll shows TransLink is a big liability for the “Yes” campaign

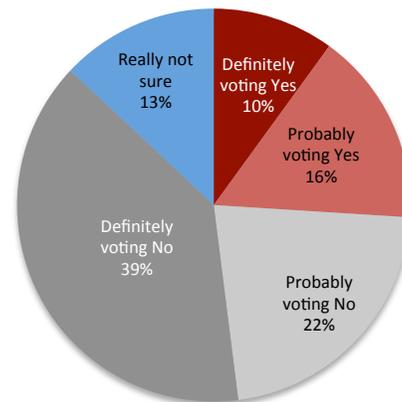
March 16, 2015 – As ballots begin to arrive in Metro Vancouver mailboxes this week, a comprehensive poll from the Angus Reid Institute shows the “No” side with the early advantage.

Many respondents acknowledge traffic woes and are alive to how the region’s transportation system will absorb a growing population. In spite of this, the “Yes” side’s campaign looks to be weighed down with larger and continuing public concerns about TransLink and the potential for the proposed new tax money to be wasted.

Key Findings:

- The “No” side enjoys a two-to-one lead over the “Yes” side (61% to 27%)
- “No” is a sentiment widespread across Metro Vancouver. The contest is more competitive among City of Vancouver residents, younger people, those with a university education and frequent transit riders.
- Half of voters say they will send their ballot back as soon as they receive it; “No” voters are more likely to be firm in their choice
- Distrust of TransLink is a major factor for those inclined towards voting “No”: by six-in-ten respondents overall, by three-quarters of “No” voters and even by half of “Yes” voters.

Overall, are you yourself leaning towards voting “Yes” or “No”?



METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey between February 25th and March 5th among a representative and randomized sampling of 950 Metro Vancouver residents who are members of the [Angus Reid Forum](#). The sample was statistically weighted to ensure alignment with known socio-demographic characteristics and municipal voting turnout. For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size would carry a margin of error of +/- 3.3 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

The survey was self-commissioned and paid for by ARI. Detailed tables are found at the end of this release.

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More Key Findings:

- Other resonant arguments rated as persuasive by six-in-ten of all respondents, including a large number of those inclined to the “Yes” side include:
 - Too much of the new money raised through a sales tax increase will be wasted
 - Transit proposals could be funded from existing taxes
- The “Yes” side's most persuasive argument is that the region's burgeoning population will mean new transportation needs: this has pull for 55 per cent of all residents, including nine-in-ten “Yes” voters and four-in-ten “No” voters.
- Metro Vancouver residents are hardly convinced a “Yes” vote would mean a big improvement to their current traffic woes. Six-in-ten overall say they expect their own personal traffic situation will be “about the same” five to ten years down the road. “Yes” voters are inclined to anticipate a “Yes” win would bring improvement (six-in-ten do). “No” voters are not at all convinced.

How the vote looks as ballots arrive:

Those surveyed by the Angus Reid Institute were presented with the ballot question:

“Do you support a new 0.5% Metro Vancouver Congestion Improvement Tax to be dedicated to the Mayors’ Transportation and Transit plan?”

At this point, a total of 61 per cent of those polled said they are leaning towards “No”, with two-in-five (39%) saying “definitely “No”, and 22 per cent “probably “No”.

Compare this with three-in-ten (27%) currently leaning towards “Yes”. Of this group: 10 per cent say “definitely “Yes” and 16 per cent “probably “Yes”. 12 per cent say they aren’t sure.

Looking across different population groups:

- The “No” side looks to be strongest in suburban areas* (particularly Surrey, Richmond/Delta and the North Shore), and among voters over 35 years of age.
- The contest is more competitive – though still leaning “No” – among residents of Vancouver*, those under 35 and among the university-educated.
- Of note: frequent transit users are actually split on the proposal, while three-quarters of non-riders are currently leaning towards “No”.

**This poll was conducted region-wide across Metro Vancouver, and is representative of the region's population distribution across the various constituent municipalities. The survey results were examined across by region and municipality and, other than those noted here in the case of the overall “Yes”-“No” vote, there are no noteworthy consistent differences in the sub-regional results. Therefore, no other such results are reported.*

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Some key vote diagnostics

Voter turnout will be a major factor in this mail-in vote. This Angus Reid Institute poll finds the “Yes” and “No” sides equally likely to say they will actually vote (roughly half in each case).

There are two key diagnostic points to trouble “Yes” organizers as they push for traction:

- Not only do half of Metro Vancouver respondents surveyed describe themselves as “firmly decided”, this figure is higher among those leaning “No” than “Yes” (51% vs. 36%).
- Half of eligible voters say they intend to mail in their ballot “as soon as they get it”. Even though the final votes won’t begin to be counted until the end of May, many voters intend to effectively shorten the campaign for their vote by casting their ballot at the earliest opportunity.

TransLink a big problem for the “Yes” side

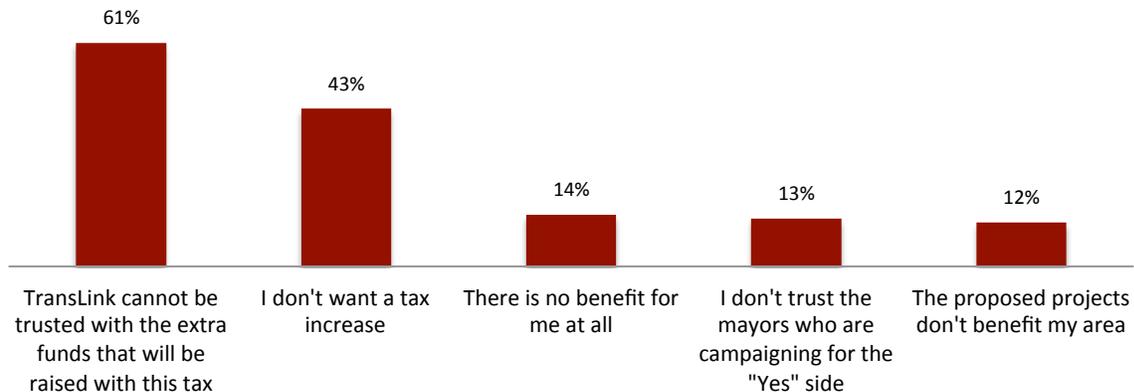
Much of the “No” side’s early advantage can be attributed to public distrust of TransLink, Metro Vancouver’s regional transportation authority.

- Those surveyed were asked to select from a list of a half dozen possible reasons for leaning towards voting “No” (or invited to write in their own). Six-in-ten (61%) chose: *“TransLink cannot be trusted with the extra funds that will be raised from this tax”*. Another four-in-ten (43%) said they simply don’t want an additional tax.
- Among the relative persuasiveness of key arguments either side might advance, the one carrying most weight is: *“TransLink needs to be overhauled before any big proposals go forward”*. Two-thirds (65%) of Metro Vancouver residents find this a persuasive statement, including three-quarters (73%) of those leaning “No” and half (48%) of those leaning “Yes”.
- A separate survey question asking people for their overall views of TransLink found two-thirds (64%) expressing an overall negative view of the agency. Two-in-five (39%) said their overall opinion is *“very negative, TransLink is very broken and needs a complete overhaul”*. Only one-in-ten (12%) of the Metro Vancouver residents surveyed had a positive view of TransLink, including only one-in-three (30%) “Yes” supporters and almost none (4%) of those leaning to the “No” side. Views of TransLink are negative among frequent transit riders (55% of those who ride once a week or more expressed a negative view of the agency).

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What are the main reasons you are leaning towards voting “No” on the referendum question?



Other motivations for “No”

The Angus Reid Institute polled the "pull" of other main arguments in favour of the “No” side:

- Six-in-ten (59%) of those surveyed found this argument persuasive: *“too much of the money will be wasted”*, including roughly two-in-three (70%) “No” supporters and roughly one-in-three (34%) “Yes” supporters.
- The perspective that *“these improvements are a good idea, but they should be funded out of existing taxes”* emerged as an equally resonant argument. (59% overall considered this compelling, including 69% of “No” supporters and 37% of “Yes” supporters).
- Perceptions around fairness also resonate: *“The entire province funds transportation projects in other regions, it's not fair for people in Metro Vancouver to have an extra tax”* was one that held sway with half (49%) of respondents overall, including 57 per cent of “No” voters and one-third (32%) of “Yes” voters.

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And on the “Yes” side

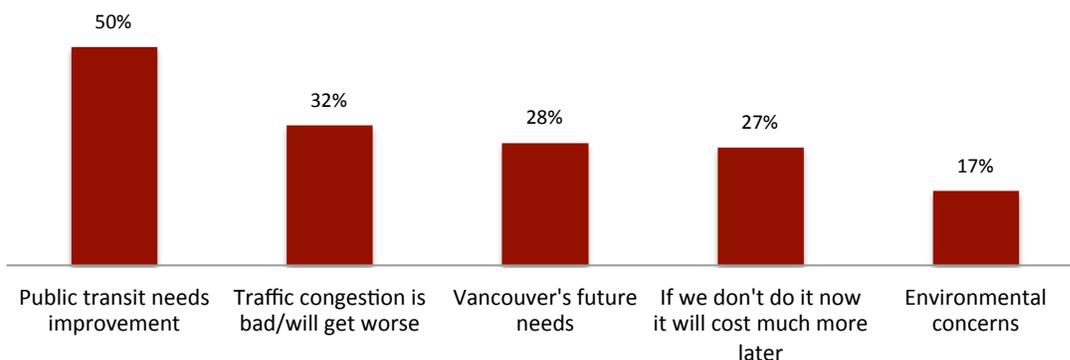
The Angus Reid Institute survey also assessed the persuasiveness of five key arguments that have or may be advanced by the “Yes” side:

- The “Yes” side’s most persuasive argument is, *“The region’s population is going to grow by a million people in the next decade, our transportation system needs to be ready”*. A majority of 55 per cent of those surveyed described this as a very persuasive argument, including almost all (89%) “Yes” supporters and a good percentage of those leaning “No” as well (38%).
- Arguments about traffic also resonate with four-in-ten (41%) of all residents surveyed described this as persuasive, *“Traffic is so bad in Metro Vancouver, it is obvious we need a special tax for improvements”*.

“Yes” supporters were also asked to select from a list of a half dozen reasons they are leaning that way, or provide their own responses.

The one selected most often (50% of “Yes” supporters) is the view that “public transit needs improvement”. This is a particularly compelling reason for “Yes” supporters who are frequent transit riders (68% of them). Other important motivations for voting “Yes” include: concerns about traffic congestion (32%), Vancouver’s future needs (28%), and fears that costs will only increase with delay (27%).

What are the main reasons you are leaning towards voting “Yes” on the referendum question?

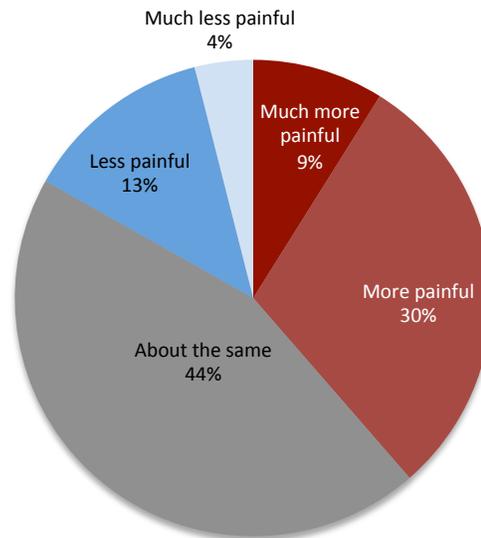


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Traffic woes acknowledged

Thinking about your transportation situation, is it more or less painful for you today than it was, say, five years ago?



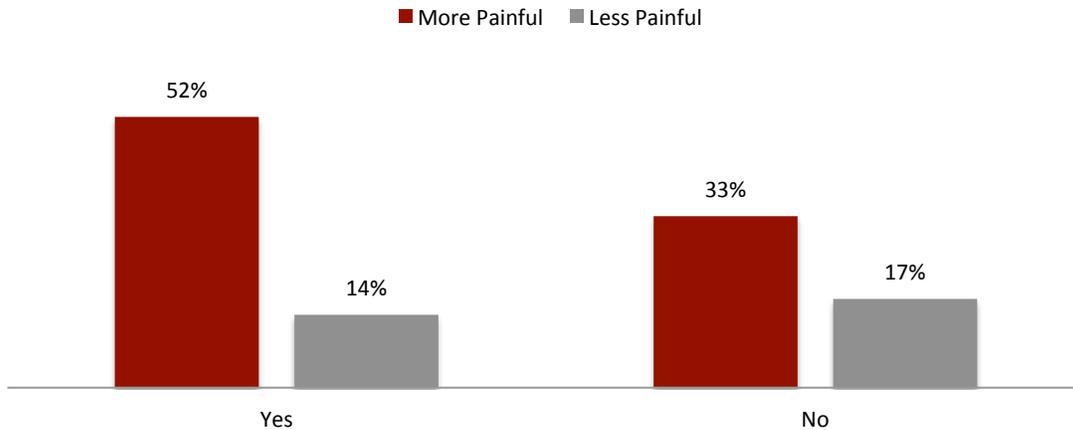
This Angus Reid Institute survey also looked at the region's perceived "traffic pain". Overall, traffic *is* a pain for many Metro Vancouver residents, but a "Yes" vote isn't seen as a panacea for these woes.

- Ten per cent of Metro Vancouver residents surveyed say their traffic pain is "very painful; every day is a struggle". Nearly half (45%) say, "it's bad 2-3 times per week, but otherwise okay". The remaining 45 per cent say they "find getting around to be painless". Those inclined towards voting "No" are somewhat more likely to say they are personally free of traffic pain (49% versus 37% of "Yes" supporters)
- A significant portion of people in Metro Vancouver say their personal traffic situation is **more** painful compared to five years ago. Two-in-five (38%) took this view, while 16 per cent said they think traffic has become **less** painful. Nearly half (45%) said it is more or less the same.
 - "Yes" voters say their traffic woes have become more painful by a margin of five-to-one (52% vs. 14%). Among "No" voters, this margin is two-to-one (33% more painful versus 17% less).

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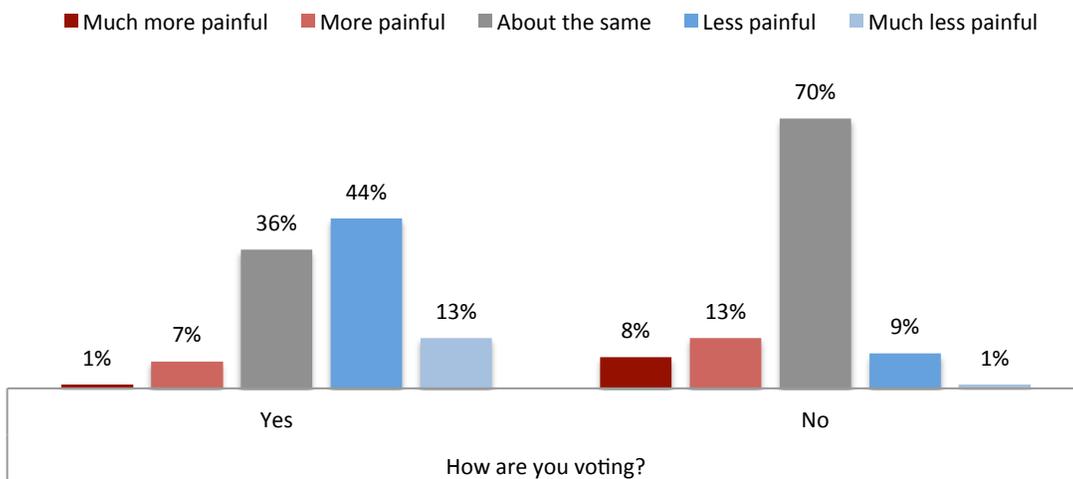
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Is your traffic situation more or less painful compared to five years ago?



- 61 per cent say they expect no change in traffic pain if the “yes” side wins; most “Yes” supporters (57%) *do* expect improvement, but most of those on the “No” side do not.

Suppose the "Yes" side wins and the referendum passes. If that happens, do you think your personal transportation situation will be more or less painful, say, 5-10 years from now?

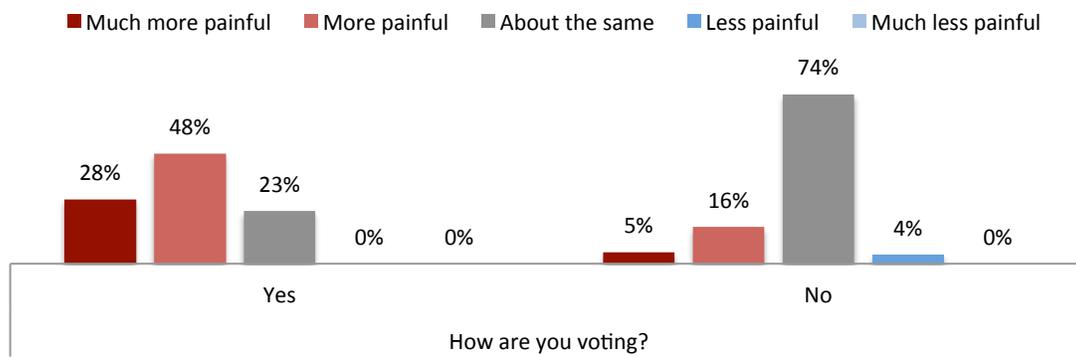


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- Almost identically, in the case of a “No” win, six-in-ten (59%) expect traffic to be essentially the same. Two-in-five (37%) are braced for more traffic pain in the future, including three-quarters of “Yes” supporters but only one-in-five of those inclined to vote “No”.

Suppose the “No” side wins and the referendum is defeated. If that happens, do you think your personal transportation situation will be more or less painful, say, 5-10 years from now?



Metro residents are paying attention

Metro Vancouver residents who are leaning “Yes” and leaning “No”, are paying attention to this plebiscite: three-in-four of those surveyed said they are following it. Specifically, almost one-in-three (29%) said they have “read/saw stories about it and discussed it with friends and family” and another four-in-ten (43%) said they “saw a story or two, and had the odd conversation about it”.

The **Angus Reid Institute (ARI)** was founded in October 2014 by pollster and sociologist, Dr. Angus Reid. ARI is a national, not-for-profit, non-partisan public opinion polling organization established to advance education by commissioning, conducting and disseminating publicly accessible and impartial polls, research and analysis on economics, political science, philanthropy, public administration, domestic and international affairs and other socio-economic issues of importance to Canada and its world.

The question on the ballot will be: "Do you support a new 0.5% Metro Vancouver Congestion Improvement Tax to be dedicated to the Mayors' Transportation and Transit Plan?" Overall, are you yourself leaning towards voting "Yes" or "No"?

All respondents	Total (950)	Gender		Age		
		Men (475)	Women (475)	18 – 34 (218)	35 – 54 (352)	55+ (380)
Definitely voting "Yes"	10%	13%	7%	10%	9%	12%
Probably voting "Yes"	16%	17%	16%	23%	14%	13%
Probably voting "No"	22%	19%	25%	24%	23%	18%
Definitely voting "No"	39%	44%	35%	28%	42%	45%
Really not sure	12%	7%	18%	14%	12%	11%

The question on the ballot will be: "Do you support a new 0.5% Metro Vancouver Congestion Improvement Tax to be dedicated to the Mayors' Transportation and Transit Plan?" Overall, are you yourself leaning towards voting "Yes" or "No"?

All respondents	Total (950)	How are you get around:	
		Regularly drive (782)	Regularly take transit (315)
Definitely voting "Yes"	10%	9%	16%
Probably voting "Yes"	16%	16%	22%
Probably voting "No"	22%	21%	20%
Definitely voting "No"	39%	42%	29%
Really not sure	12%	12%	13%

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How likely do you think it is that you will actually vote in this referendum by completing and mailing back your own ballot before the deadline? Would you say you:

All respondents	Total (950)	Gender		Age		
		Men (475)	Women (475)	18 – 34 (218)	35 – 54 (352)	55+ (380)
Probably won't bother to actually vote	8%	7%	9%	13%	8%	4%
Might vote if the campaign really gets your interest	12%	8%	15%	18%	14%	4%
Will probably vote	31%	28%	33%	41%	29%	24%
Are 100% certain you will vote	49%	56%	43%	27%	50%	68%

How likely do you think it is that you will actually vote in this referendum by completing and mailing back your own ballot before the deadline? Would you say you:

All respondents	Total (950)	How are you voting?		
		"Yes" (278)	"No" (574)	Really not sure (98)
Probably won't bother to actually vote	8%	4%	9%	13%
Might vote if the campaign really gets your interest	12%	11%	10%	24%
Will probably vote	31%	33%	28%	38%
Are 100% certain you will vote	49%	52%	53%	25%

At this point, to what extent have you made up your mind on this issue? Would you say:

Excluding those who identified as undecided	Total (852)	Gender		Age		
		Men (444)	Women (408)	18 – 34 (188)	35 – 54 (314)	55+ (350)
You are firmly decided, your mind is already made up	47%	50%	43%	35%	47%	56%
You feel quite certain in your view, but could still change your mind	46%	42%	51%	54%	46%	40%
You could easily change your mind as the campaign goes on	7%	8%	6%	11%	7%	4%

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At this point, to what extent have you made up your mind on this issue? Would you say:			
Excluding those who identified as undecided	Total (852)	How are you voting?	
		"Yes" (278)	"No" (574)
You are firmly decided, your mind is already made up	47%	36%	51%
You feel quite certain in your view, but could still change your mind	46%	52%	44%
You could easily change your mind as the campaign goes on	7%	12%	5%

As we noted, the voting period lasts from March 16 to May 29. When do you think you yourself will most likely complete and mail in your ballot?			
All respondents except those who say they probably won't vote	Total (904)	How are you voting?	
		"Yes" (270)	"No" (545)
As soon as I get my ballot	53%	55%	59%
I plan to wait a while but send it in well before voting deadline	38%	39%	34%
I'm going to wait until the end just in case I change my mind	9%	6%	7%

Let's turn now to TransLink, which is Metro Vancouver's regional transportation authority. What is your overall opinion of the TransLink organization?						
All respondents	Total (950)	Gender		Age		
		Men (475)	Women (475)	18 – 34 (218)	35 – 54 (352)	55+ (380)
Very positive, they are successfully running a large transit system	2%	3%	1%	3%	1%	1%
Positive overall	10%	10%	10%	17%	8%	8%
Fairly neutral	24%	21%	27%	36%	20%	19%
Negative overall	25%	24%	26%	25%	29%	21%
Very negative, TransLink is very broken and needs a complete overhaul	39%	42%	36%	20%	42%	51%

Let's turn now to TransLink, which is Metro Vancouver's regional transportation authority. What is your overall opinion of the TransLink organization?				
All respondents	Total (950)	How are you voting?		
		"Yes" (278)	"No" (574)	Really not sure (98)
Very positive, they are successfully running a large transit system	2%	5%	1%	0
Positive overall	10%	25%	4%	12%
Fairly neutral	24%	28%	20%	35%
Negative overall	25%	27%	24%	23%
Very negative, TransLink is very broken and needs a complete overhaul	39%	15%	51%	29%

What are the main reasons you are leaning towards voting "No" on the referendum question?						
Asked of those who said they are voting "No"	Total (574)	Gender		Age		
		Men (288)	Women (286)	18 – 34 (101)	35 – 54 (224)	55+ (249)
TransLink can't be trusted with the extra funds that will be raised with this tax	61%	65%	57%	52%	63%	66%
I don't want a tax increase	43%	40%	47%	55%	47%	31%
There is "No" benefit for me at all	14%	12%	16%	14%	12%	15%
I don't trust the mayors who are campaigning for the "Yes" side	13%	15%	12%	7%	14%	17%
The proposed projects don't benefit my area	12%	13%	11%	16%	11%	10%

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What are the main reasons you are leaning towards voting “Yes” on the referendum question?						
Asked of those who said they are voting “Yes”	Total (278)	Gender		Age		
		Men (156)	Women (122)	18 – 34 (87)	35 – 54 (90)	55+ (101)
Public transit needs improvement	50%	43%	59%	65%	53%	29%
Traffic congestion is bad/will get worse	32%	36%	27%	37%	28%	31%
Vancouver's future needs	28%	30%	25%	33%	20%	29%
If we don't do it now it will cost much more later	27%	27%	25%	10%	25%	46%
Environmental concerns	17%	13%	21%	22%	16%	12%

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Regardless of how you are currently leaning, please read and consider each of the following statements, and indicate how persuasive you personally find each one to be. (Persuasive Summary)

All respondents	Total (950)	Gender		Age		
		Men (475)	Women (475)	18 – 34 (218)	35 – 54 (352)	55+ (380)
TransLink needs to be overhauled before any big proposals go forward	65%	70%	60%	52%	67%	73%
Too much of the money will be wasted	59%	60%	58%	52%	59%	65%
These improvements are a good idea, but they should be funded out of existing taxes	59%	57%	62%	58%	59%	60%
The population is growing so much, our transportation system needs to be ready	55%	54%	55%	58%	54%	53%
The entire province funds things in other regions, it's not fair for Metro Vancouver to have an extra tax	49%	45%	54%	54%	48%	47%
Traffic is so bad in Metro Vancouver, it is obvious we need to step up and pay for improvements	41%	40%	41%	42%	39%	41%
The Canadian Taxpayers' Federation is against the proposal	37%	38%	35%	34%	33%	44%
Many major business groups are in favour of the new proposals and associated tax increase	16%	18%	15%	21%	11%	18%
Many major unions are in favour of the proposal	15%	17%	13%	20%	12%	14%
BC Premier Christy Clark is in favour of the proposal	6%	7%	5%	9%	4%	7%

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Thinking about both the time and the money it takes - and regardless of how you personally get around -- how do you find your own personal transportation situation? Would you say:

All respondents	Total (950)	How are you voting?		
		"Yes" (278)	"No" (574)	Really not sure (98)
It's very painful to get around, every day is a struggle	10%	9%	9%	16%
It's bad 2-3 times a week, but otherwise okay	45%	54%	41%	46%
I find getting around to be quite painless	45%	37%	49%	38%

Thinking about your transportation situation, is it more or less painful for you today than it was, say, five years ago?

All respondents	Total (950)	Gender		Age		
		Men (475)	Women (475)	18 – 34 (218)	35 – 54 (352)	55+ (380)
Much more painful	9%	7%	10%	5%	10%	11%
More painful	30%	31%	29%	26%	29%	34%
About the same	45%	45%	46%	53%	42%	42%
Less painful	13%	13%	12%	15%	14%	9%
Much less painful	4%	5%	3%	2%	5%	4%

Suppose the "No" side wins and the referendum is defeated. If that happens, do you think your personal transportation situation will be more or less painful, say, 5-10 years from now?

All respondents	Total (950)	How are you voting?		
		"Yes" (278)	"No" (574)	Really not sure (98)
Much more painful	11%	28%	5%	6%
More painful	26%	48%	16%	28%
About the same	59%	23%	74%	62%
Less painful	3%	0%	4%	2%
Much less painful	0%	0%	0%	2%

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Suppose the "“Yes”" side wins and the referendum passes. If that happens, do you think your personal transportation situation will be more or less painful, say, 5-10 years from now?

All respondents	Total (950)	How are you voting?		
		"Yes" (278)	"No" (574)	Really not sure (98)
Much more painful	5%	1%	8%	4%
More painful	11%	7%	13%	8%
About the same	61%	36%	70%	71%
Less painful	19%	44%	9%	13%
Much less painful	4%	13%	1%	3%

There will be a referendum on transportation and transit this spring. How closely have you yourself been following this issue? Would you say you:

All respondents	Total (950)	Gender		Age		
		Men (475)	Women (475)	18 – 34 (218)	35 – 54 (352)	55+ (380)
Are following it in the news, and discussing it with friends and family	29%	36%	22%	16%	27%	36%
Seeing some media coverage, and having the odd conversation about it	43%	42%	45%	43%	44%	42%
Just scanning the headlines	22%	19%	25%	30%	25%	19%
Haven't seen or heard anything about it	6%	4%	8%	11%	4%	4%

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