

Public opinion on transit in Massachusetts

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Overview

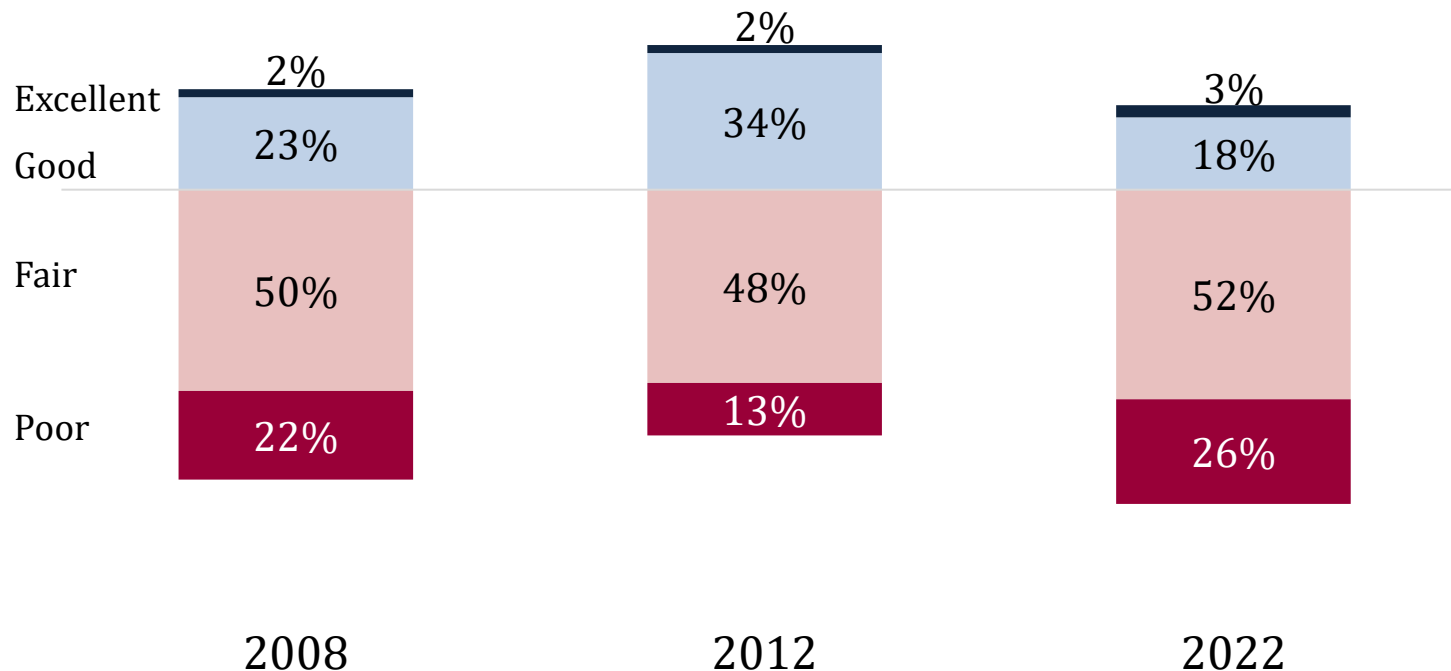
- Perceived system conditions
- Regional differences in opinion
- Views of revenue needs

Perceived system conditions

Condition of the system

- The overall transportation system in the state has been perceived as in poor / fair condition for many years.

Residents have seen the transpo system in poor condition for many years
% who rate the condition of the overall system as _____



Most important transportation issue

- In late 2023, public transportation had risen to the top concern statewide, driven by heightened concerns within Route 495.
- Farther from Boston, road conditions and traffic are higher priorities.

Fixing the state's existing public transit is residents' top transportation issue

% overall and by region who cited each as their most important transportation issue – Open ended

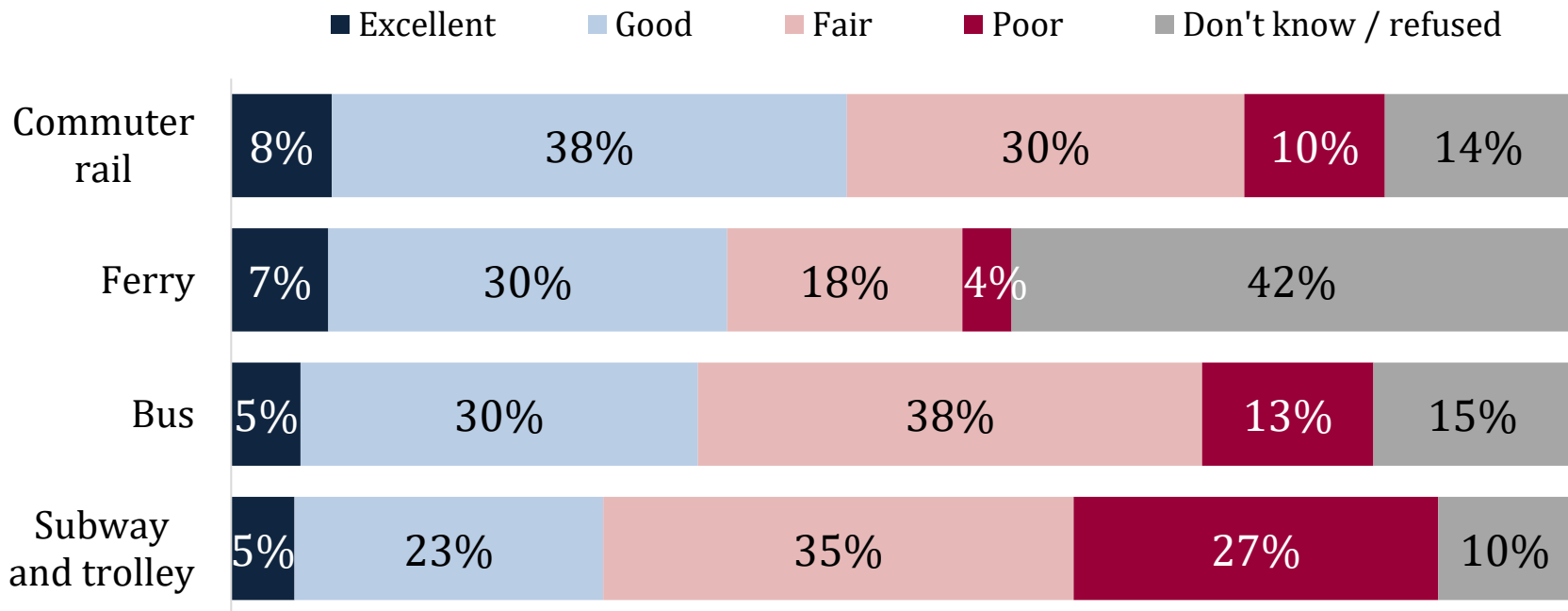
	Overall	West / Central	Southeast	495 to 128	Inside 128
Existing public transportation	39%	27%	25%	45%	48%
Traffic / congestion	21%	14%	29%	22%	22%
Roads, bridges, tunnels, construction	20%	30%	27%	17%	13%
Cost	9%	9%	13%	7%	7%
Expanding public transportation	8%	16%	9%	6%	5%
Distracted / reckless driving	2%	3%	4%	2%	2%
Safety	3%	2%	3%	3%	5%
None	3%	4%	1%	2%	5%
Other	8%	10%	4%	7%	9%
Don't know	3%	2%	6%	3%	2%

Ratings for MBTA services

- In August 2023, less than half of all residents in the MBTA Service Area rated each of the four T services as excellent or good, with subways and trolleys drawing the fewest positive marks.

Less than half of residents offer good / excellent quality ratings for MBTA services

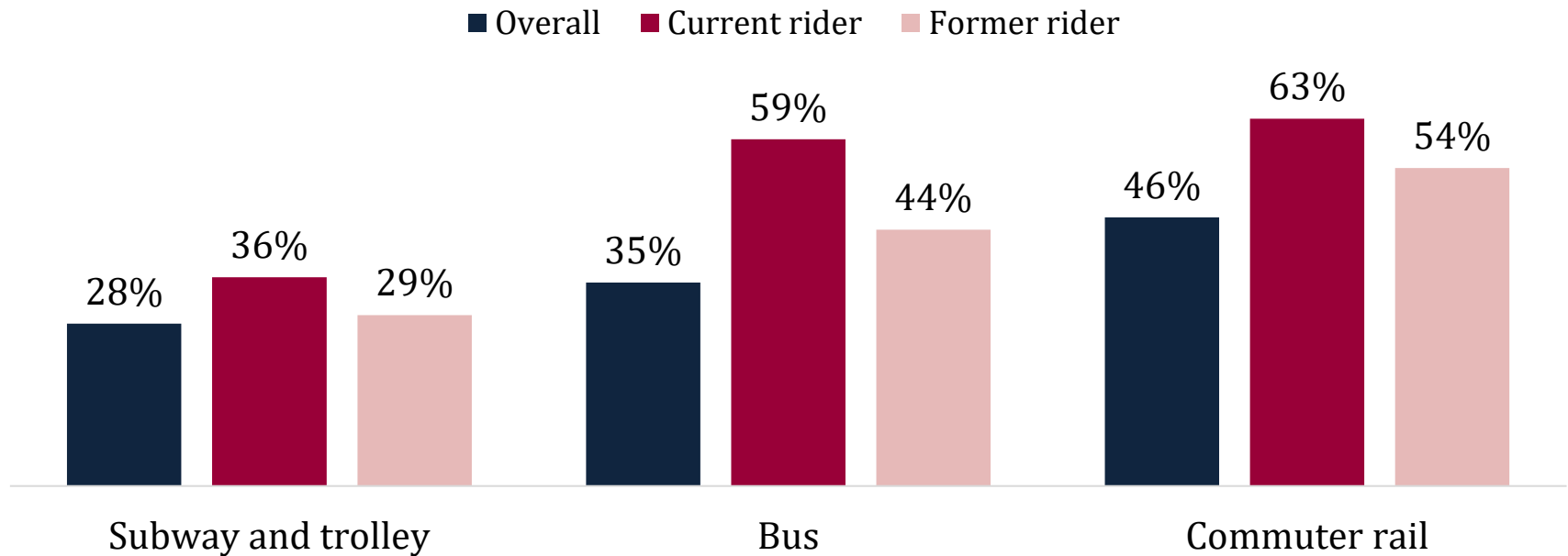
% who rate the quality of _____ as _____



Riders give T higher marks

- Current and former riders were more likely to rate the MBTA services as “good” or “excellent”, particularly bus and commuter rail.
- Subway ratings remained low, even among current (36%) and former (29%) riders.

Current and former riders more likely to rate MBTA services higher
% who rate the quality of _____ as “excellent” or “good” by ridership status

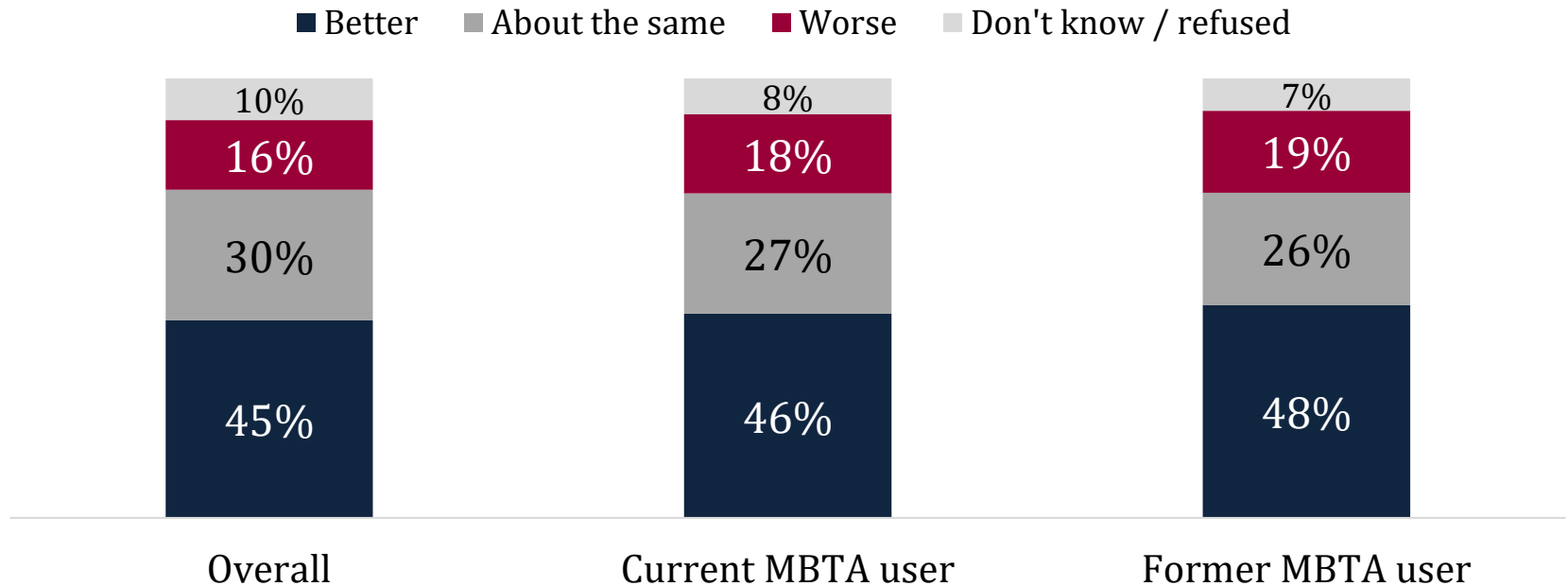


Plurality think MBTA will get better

- Regardless of ridership status, a plurality think that the MBTA will be better 10 years from now (45%).
- As one focus group participant put it: “When you’re on your back, there’s no place to look but up.”

Regardless of ridership status, plurality think MBTA will be better in 10 years

% who say the MBTA will be _____ in 10 years by ridership status



Regional Differences

News about the T

- Even during the Orange Line shutdown in 2022, residents elsewhere in the state had heard little or nothing about the MBTA.

Those farther from Boston are more likely to have heard little or nothing about the T

% who say they have heard _____ in the news (during shutdowns in 2022)

	Overall	West / Central	Southeast	495 to 128	Inside 128
Shutdown	43%	28%	35%	47%	57%
Broken / old / needs repairs	21%	16%	21%	19%	27%
Train fires / accidents / derailments	10%	6%	9%	9%	14%
General negative comment	8%	6%	6%	9%	9%
Mismanagement	3%	1%	2%	4%	5%
Breakdowns / delays	3%	4%	4%	2%	2%
Debt / finance	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%
Federal audit / takeover	1%	0%	1%	2%	2%
Other	9%	9%	9%	6%	11%
None / nothing / don't know	25%	44%	34%	23%	5%

Who's responsible for the T?

- When asked during the 2022 Orange Line shutdown who is most responsible for fixing the T, many named the agency itself, or state government generally.
- Even close to Boston, 14% named Mayor Wu, who at the time had no formal role in T governance.

Many residents unsure about who is in charge of fixing the T

% who cited each group or person – open ended

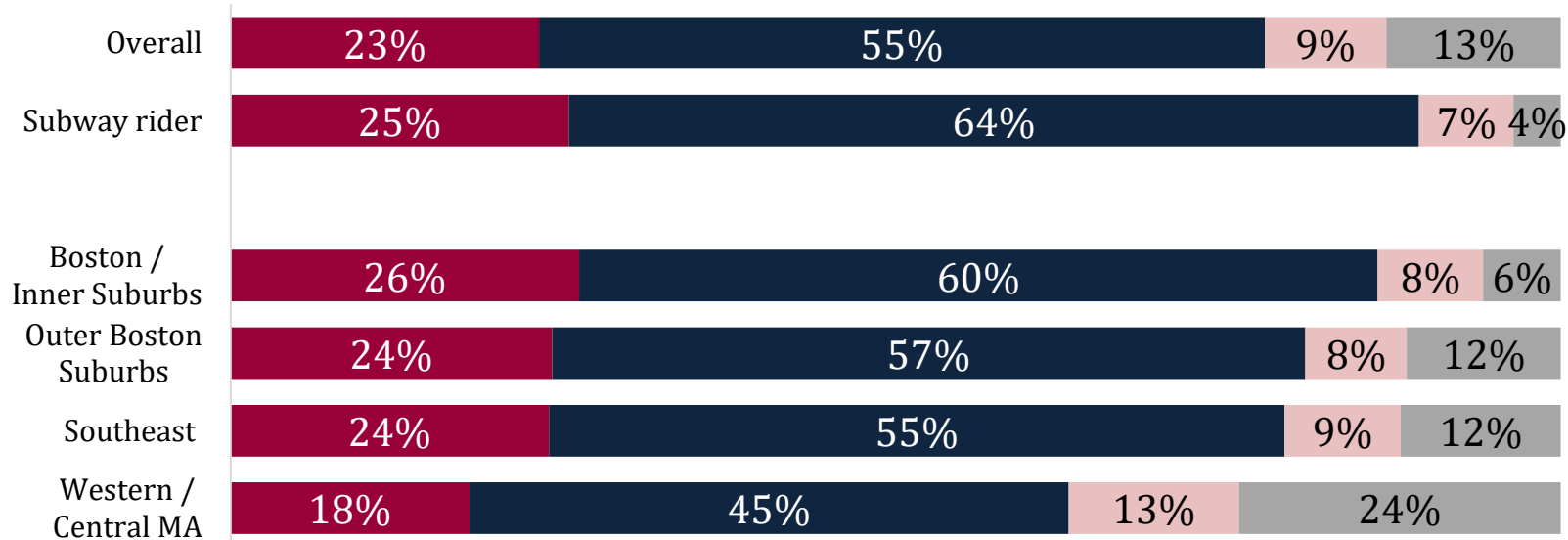
	Overall	West / Central	Southeast	495 to 128	Suffolk / Inside 128	Ride Transit
MBTA	28%	26%	21%	31%	31%	24%
State government	26%	24%	25%	26%	28%	27%
Baker / Governor	17%	16%	22%	12%	20%	25%
Boston / Boston Mayor	12%	13%	12%	11%	14%	14%
Dept of Transportation	4%	3%	7%	4%	4%	5%
Federal government	2%	2%	1%	2%	3%	3%
Other	7%	8%	6%	5%	8%	6%
No comment/ don't know	18%	22%	19%	19%	14%	14%

Optimism about fixing the T

- In 2021, a majority statewide thought the T could get better with the right policies.
- Transit riders and those living closest to Boston were more optimistic.

Most think the MBTA could be much better with the right policies.

% who hold each view of the MBTA's future



■ It will always be a serious problem

■ With the right policies, it could get much better

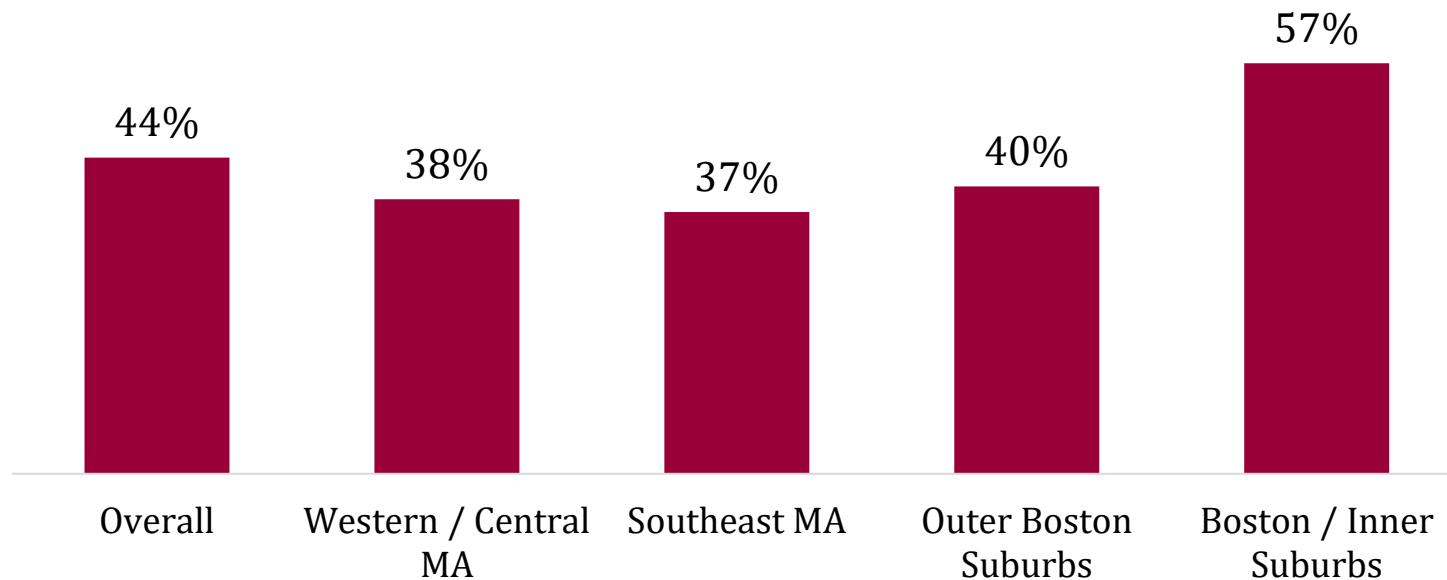
■ It is not really a problem

■ Unsure

Transportation as a pain point

- In 2021, residents closer to Boston were more likely to say transportation was a “pain point” in their day.

A majority close to Boston consider transportation a “pain point” in their day
% who agree transportation is a “pain point” in their day



Views of Revenue Needs

Battling longstanding perceptions

- In 2008 and 2012 polls, far more thought waste and mismanagement were more responsible for MBTA financial issues.

Perceived cause of funding shortfall had more to do with waste

Residents who said MBTA funding shortfall was more due to _____

	TIC 2008	MPG 2012
Too little funding	15%	15%
Waste & mismanagement	65%	71%
Combination	14%	8%
Don't know/Refused	6%	6%

Need for more revenue?

- In 2021, more thought the state could make do with existing transportation funds, if the funds were well spent.

As of 2021, there were divisions over the need for more revenue

% of residents who say that agree more with each statement

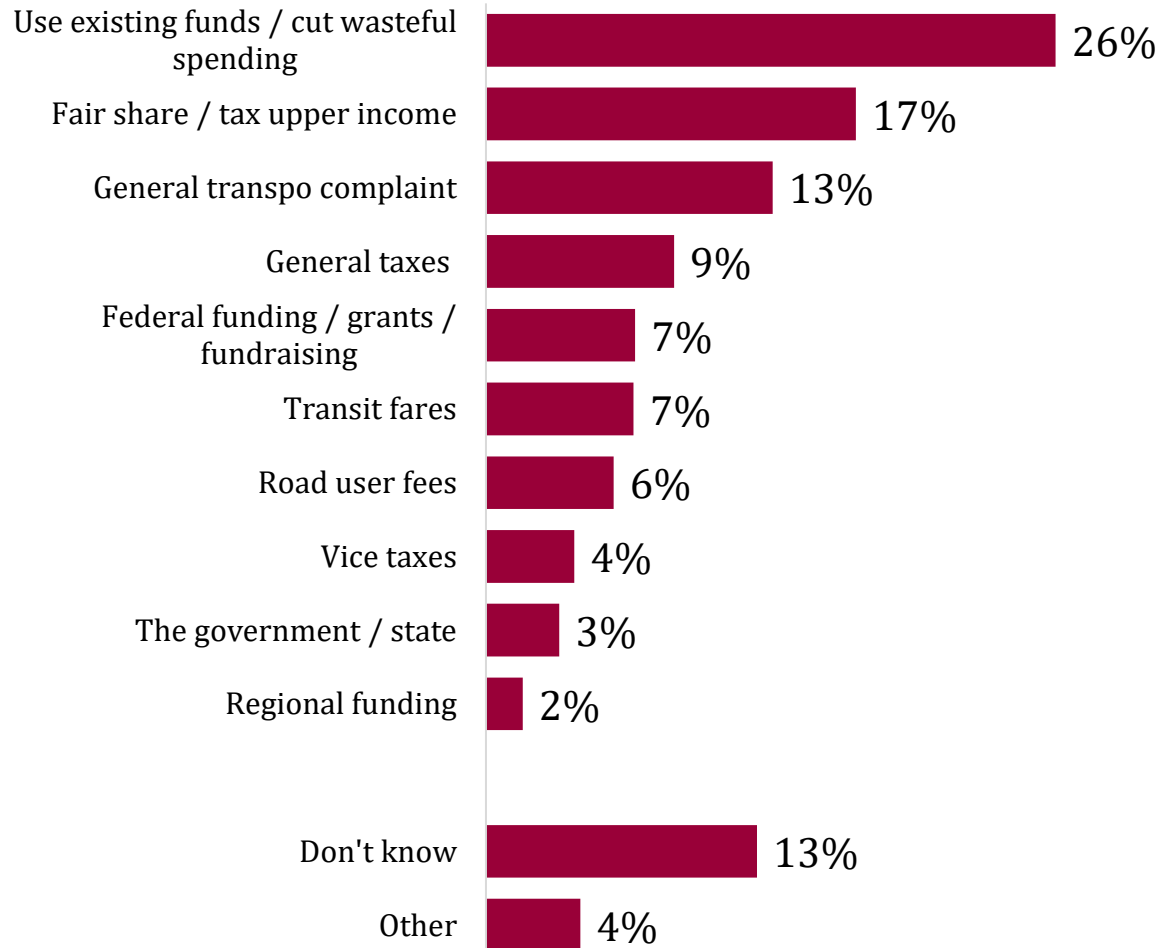
	Overall	Dem	Rep	Ind / other	West / Central	Southeast	Outer Suburbs	Boston / Inner Suburbs
The state has all the money it needs to deliver the transportation system residents need It just needs to spend it well	49%	45%	61%	50%	46%	54%	48%	51%
Even if it spends every dollar well, the state will need more money to deliver the transportation system residents need	38%	46%	33%	37%	37%	37%	39%	39%
Unsure	12%	10%	5%	14%	16%	9%	13%	10%

How to pay for transportation?

- When asked how state should pay for transportation changes in 2022, respondents offered a range of ideas.
- The most common were to use existing funds or to use fair share funds.
- Voters by and large do not have consistent ideas for funding streams to help resolve state transportation woes.

Voters offer a range of responses on funding the system

% who say the state should pay for changes in transportation using _____ (open end)



In summary

- Perceived system conditions – perceptions of the poor condition of the system have been very longstanding.
- Regional differences in opinion – voters further from Boston pay less attention to the MBTA and have different priorities.
- Views of revenue needs – residents' views of the system and its funding tend not to be consistent enough to rely on for the way forward. Fixing the T is a high priority, but we can't look to residents for the solution.



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