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Report Date	11/3/2020

RESEARCH ABSTRACT

Willingness to Support Transit Index: Understanding the Impact of Political, Ideological, and Socio-Demographic Traits on Support for Public Transit

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This paper reports on the study of public support for transit in Southeast Michigan. The goal was to assess Willingness to Support Public Transit (WTST) among likely-voters in the region. The study developed a new tool (WTST Index) that would allow planners, policy makers, and advocates to measure the likelihood of support for transit based on a reduced set of questions, through a formula that captures the gradient from attitudes (opinion) to behaviors (action). The study investigated how sociodemographic, sociopolitical, geographical, and opinion related variables impact WTST Index. The results highlighted how wealth, education, and political and ideological beliefs impact willingness to support transit. The U-shaped distribution of the WTST Index shows the divisiveness in support and uncovers the political and ideological dimensions of transit. The results provide guidance for understanding support for transit in comparable regions where transit initiatives and policies seek to expand or improve underused transit systems