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DT: February 12, 2010

TO: Jay Corbalis

FR: Patrick Murray  
Monmouth University Polling Institute

RE: New Jersey state poll on the Transportation Trust Fund

The Monmouth University Polling Institute conducted a survey of New Jersey residents in January 2010 on behalf of New Jersey Future and the Tri-State Transportation Campaign to assess public opinion on the Transportation Trust Fund.

Summary results:

- Two-in-three New Jerseyans say having Transportation Trust Fund (“TTF”) money available for transportation projects is very important.
- Seven-in-ten residents express some level of concern upon learning that the TTF will run out of money for new projects in the next year, including 4-in-10 who express a *great deal* of concern. Although most New Jerseyans would be concerned by the prospect of the TTF running out of money, very few are actually aware that this is likely to happen.
- While transportation funding is important to state residents, they are split on raising tolls, registration fees, or the gas tax to fund future transportation projects, even after being informed of the impending TTF shortfall.

Detailed results:

New Jersey’s Transportation Trust Fund (“TTF”) is the primary source of money for road, bridge, and transit repairs, as well as new transportation projects in the state. Fully 2-in-3 (68%) Garden State residents say it is *very* important to have such money available to maintain and improve New Jersey’s transportation system. Another 27% say it is somewhat important. Very few say it is not too (2%) or not at all (1%) important.

Those who see having transportation funds available as very important include 68% of all registered voters, as well as 80% of Democrats, 62% of independents, and 59% of Republicans.

A bare majority (54%) of New Jerseyans have heard that the TTF will “run out of money” (\*) early next year. This includes only 7% who have heard a great deal about this, 17% who have heard some, and 30% who have heard only a little.

Four-in-ten (41%) residents express a great deal of concern over the prospect of the TTF running out of money for new projects, and another 31% express some concern. By comparison, only 1-in-4 say they have either a little (16%) or no (11%) concern about this.

About 7-in-10 registered voters, including Democrats, Republicans, and independents alike, have at least some level of concern about the TTF not having money for new projects. However, Democrats (47%) are the more likely than Republicans (30%) to express a great deal of concern over this situation, with independents (43%) falling in between.

As mentioned above, few New Jerseyans are aware of the TTF's financial situation. The poll results indicate that those more familiar with the issue tend to be the most concerned about it. Specifically, 67% of poll participants who have heard a great deal about the TTF's shortfall are also concerned a great deal. This high level of concern compares to 42% among those who have heard something about it, 37% of those who have heard just a little, and 40% of those who have heard nothing about the issue prior to being contacted for the poll.

The poll found a split decision on raising transportation user fees – such as tolls, vehicle registration fees, or the gas tax – even if the money went to road, bridge, and transit projects. Specifically, 49% of those surveyed support an increase in these fees compared to 47% who oppose it. This includes 17% who *strongly* favor such action versus 21% who *strongly* oppose it.

Among registered voters, the result stands at 49% support to 48% oppose. Both Democrats (51% support to 47% oppose) and independents (49% support to 47% oppose) barely support raising these fees, while Republicans (46% support to 51% oppose) are more likely to oppose it.

It's important to keep in mind that the survey question about raising user fees was asked subsequent to the question about the TTF running out of money. Very few people in the general public are familiar with this situation. Those who have heard nothing about the TTF running out of money – representing just under half of the entire state – are more likely to oppose (54%) rather than support (43%) increasing fees to fund it. However, even among those who already have a great deal of awareness, support for raising user fees to fund the TTF stands at only 52%, compared to 44% who oppose it.

*(\*) Note: New Jersey's Transportation Trust Fund is funded through annual appropriations from the gas tax, sales tax on auto sales, and other transportation-related fees. It has also been funded through the issuance of bonds and analysts expect that the TTF's annual debt service obligations will exceed recurring revenues by next year. This will leave no money from these taxes and fees for capital projects even though the TTF will continue to receive state appropriations from these sources. For purposes of this survey, the phrase "out of money" was used to reflect the colloquial public understanding that recurring funds will not be available for actual transportation projects.*

## QUESTIONNAIRE

1. New Jersey's Transportation Trust Fund is the primary source of money paying for road, bridge, and transit repairs, as well as new transportation projects in the state. How important is it to have money available to maintain and improve New Jersey's transportation system – very, somewhat, not too, or not at all important?

Very important	Somewhat important	Not too important	Not at all important	(VOL) Don't Know
68%	27%	2%	1%	1%

2. The Transportation Trust Fund will run out of money early next year. How much have you read or heard about this – a great deal, some, just a little, or nothing at all?

Great deal	Some	Just a little	Nothing at all	(VOL) Don't Know
7%	17%	30%	45%	1%

3. How much does it concern you that the Transportation Trust Fund will run out of money early next year – a great deal, some, just a little, or not at all?

Great deal	Some	Just a little	Not at all	(VOL) Don't Know
41%	31%	16%	11%	1%

4. Would you support or oppose raising transportation user fees – such as tolls, vehicle registration fees, or the gas tax – if you knew the money would go to road, bridge, and transit projects? Would you [support/oppose] that strongly or just somewhat?

Support strongly	Support somewhat	Oppose strongly	Oppose somewhat	(VOL) Don't Know
17%	32%	26%	21%	3%

The survey was conducted and analyzed by the Monmouth University Polling Institute. The telephone interviews were collected by Braun Research on January 27-31, 2010 with a statewide random sample of 803 adult residents. For results based on this sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling has a maximum margin of plus or minus 3.5 percentage points. Sampling error increases as the sample size decreases, so statements based on various population subgroups, such as separate figures reported by gender or party identification, are subject to more error than are statements based on the total sample. In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

### *POLL DEMOGRAPHICS (weighted sample)*

<i>39% Dem</i>	<i>48% Male</i>	<i>30% 18-34</i>	<i>66% White</i>
<i>38% Ind</i>	<i>52% Female</i>	<i>39% 35-54</i>	<i>13% Black</i>
<i>23% Rep</i>		<i>31% 55+</i>	<i>13% Hispanic</i>
			<i>8% Asian/Other</i>