

2024 Illinois Traveler Opinion Survey
Key Findings Report

*Report prepared by the
Center for State Policy and Leadership
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Key Findings

Section I. IDOT Projects

As with previous years, in this year's survey respondents were asked to select up to three capital projects that they believe are the most important. The options available were repair/upgrade deteriorating highways and bridges, construct new highways and bridges, improve mass transit/public transportation system, comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act/improve accessibility, construct or update bike and pedestrian paths, improve freight rail, and improve passenger rail and stations. The most frequently selected capital improvement project was once again "repair/upgrade deteriorating highways and bridges" (68%), down five percentage points from 2023 (73%). The largest jump in support from 2023 was for "improve or expand bicycle and pedestrian trails" (from 33% to 38%, +5).

ACCESS TO IDOT INFORMATION

As with 2023, this year's survey included four questions about access to information from different sources. Respondents were asked where they would likely search if they were looking for information on IDOT projects, road conditions, road closures, and employment opportunities. The options were local news on TV, newspaper or radio, media websites, IDOT website, IDOT social media, and state of Illinois website.

For road conditions and road closures, most respondents get their information from the local news on television. A total of 47% of respondents used the local news on TV for information on road conditions, while 46% of respondents used it for road closure information. For IDOT projects and job opportunities, most respondents get their information through the IDOT website. When it comes to IDOT projects, 58% of respondents look for information on the IDOT website. Just under two-thirds (62%) of respondents searched for employment opportunities through the IDOT website.

Section II. Passenger Rail and Public Transportation

Just under half (49%) of respondents rarely (once a month or less) use Amtrak. Only 2% of respondents use it very often (daily or almost daily). When asked about their opinion of Amtrak, a large majority of respondents (83%) believe that Amtrak is an important part of the transportation system in Illinois.

A majority of respondents (61%) also report the level of service and the number of Amtrak routes should be increased. As expected, those who use Amtrak daily were much more supportive (97%) of it than those who have never used Amtrak (38%). In terms of demographics, across all age, education, gender, race, and region groups, most respondents in each group believes that Amtrak is an important part of the transportation system in Illinois, is meeting the needs of travelers and should be expanded.

For this year, new questions were added assessing the effects of COVID on respondents' travel, including Amtrak use. When asked to compare their use of Amtrak prior to COVID to now, the majority (64%) of respondents indicated that their use of Amtrak is about the same as it was prior to COVID, and of those who stated they used Amtrak very often, half (50%) say they have increased their use.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION, AIR TRAVEL, HIGHWAY SYSTEM, AND BIKE AND PEDESTRIAN ACCOMMODATIONS

Respondents were asked whether the current public transportation, air travel, highways, and bike and pedestrian paths were at adequate levels or should be expanded.

For public transportation, two-thirds (66%) of respondents believe that public transportation should be expanded in Illinois. In terms of air travel, 47% of respondents believe that airport facilities in Illinois are currently meeting the needs of travelers, while 41% report the airport facilities in Illinois need to be expanded.

Furthermore, 42% of respondents believe that Illinois should focus on maintaining the current highway system, while 36% believe Illinois should focus on expanding the highway system. Lastly, 56% of respondents believe Illinois should expand its pedestrian and bike paths.

As was the case in **Section I**, when asked to prioritize projects, respondents prioritize the highway system, though support has increased for the expansion of bicycle and pedestrian trails. Collectively, this possibility suggests that Illinois residents would like to see an expansion in other areas of public transportation, but not at the expense of deprioritizing the Illinois highway system.

Finally, when asked to compare their use of public transportation prior to COVID to now, the majority (59%) of respondents indicated that their use of public transportation is about the same as it was prior to COVID.

New to the 2024 survey is a set of questions about electric vehicles. Most respondents (93%) indicated that they do not drive an electric vehicle or plug-in hybrid, and just over a third (37%) indicated that they were seriously considering purchasing one. Respondents from Chicago (48%) and those with a four-year degree or more (49%) were more likely to consider purchasing an electric vehicle or plug-in hybrid, while downstate respondents (24%) and those 60 years or over (25%) were least likely.

Section III. Commuting

The most common mode of transportation for those who report commuting is “car/personal vehicle” (72%), similar to the 2023 rate (74%). There was a 7-percentage point increase in respondents who use a regional train service to commute (24%).

In terms of distance traveled, respondents from Chicago (54%) and those 18-34 (47%) indicated that they had the shortest commute in miles – less than 10 miles to work. Furthermore, 19% of downstate respondents indicated that they travel more than 50 miles to work, compared to Chicago (<1%) and the Chicago suburbs (11%).

When asked to compare their commute prior to COVID to now, over two-thirds (69%) of respondents indicated that their commute is about the same as it was prior to COVID.

Section IV. Traveler Services

IDOT WEBSITE USE AND ACCESSIBILITY

A similar rate of respondents reported visiting the IDOT traveler website in 2024 (61%) as in 2023 (57%). The respondents most likely to visit were between the ages of 35 and 59 (67%), have a four-year degree or more (74%), are male (69%), white (71%), and live downstate (73%).

Section V. Rating IDOT

OVERALL IDOT RATING

A total of 57% of respondents rated the job IDOT was doing as “very good” or “good.” This is a decrease from 2023 (66%) but maintains most respondents having a positive evaluation of the agency at the abstract level. Moreover, 54% of respondents indicated they could trust IDOT to do the right thing “just about always” or “most of the time” – a decrease from 2023 (62%).

RATING IDOT EMPLOYEES

In the four areas surveyed, respondents’ positive ratings of IDOT employees remain high, as in previous years (with overwhelming majorities having positive evaluations in each category). The most positively rated item was “overall conduct of employees on the job” (85%) with “courtesy and respect shown to motorists” (83%) a close second. This indicates a high level of satisfaction among Illinois travelers with IDOT employee performance directly compared to evaluations of the agency at the abstract level.