

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In November and December 2009, a survey was administered by the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission (SWMPC) to find out what is important to the public in transportation projects. The survey was directed at residents of communities within the Twin Cities Area Transportation Study (TwinCATS) boundaries. The survey was approved by the TwinCATS committee members, with the purpose of using the priorities of the public (and of the committee members) to prioritize transportation projects selected for federal surface transportation funding for the years 2011 through 2014. The survey will also be used in future planning efforts. It is a tool to prioritize the major goal areas of the TwinCATS long-range transportation plan (LRTP):

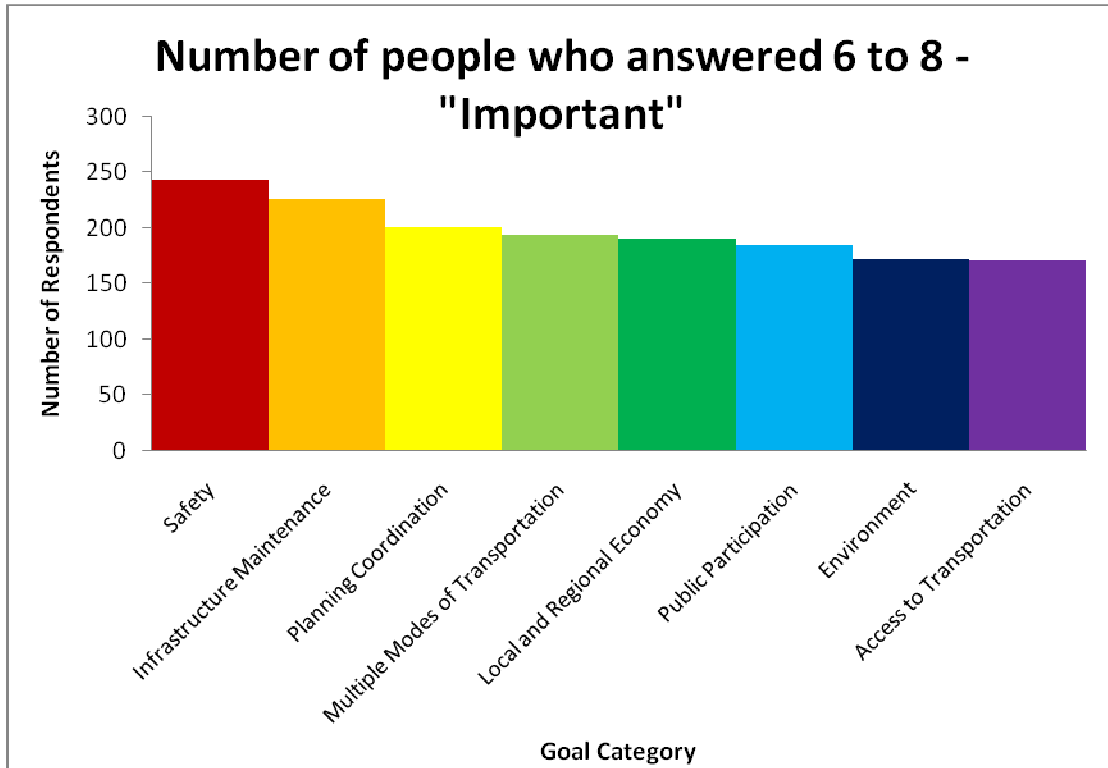
- **Environmental and Social Considerations (Environment)**
- **Environmental Justice (Access to Transportation)**
- **Local and Regional Economy**
- **Multimodalism (Multiple Modes of Transportation)**
- **Planning Support (Planning Coordination)**
- **Preservation (Infrastructure Maintenance)**
- **Public Participation**
- **Safety**

Following are some of the major conclusions that can be drawn from the survey results:

- 257 members of the public responded to the survey. There were so many members of the public from diverse communities and backgrounds who filled out the survey that their very different opinions almost cancelled one another out. In other words, there is no strong preference among the public as a whole for one of the eight goal categories over the other.

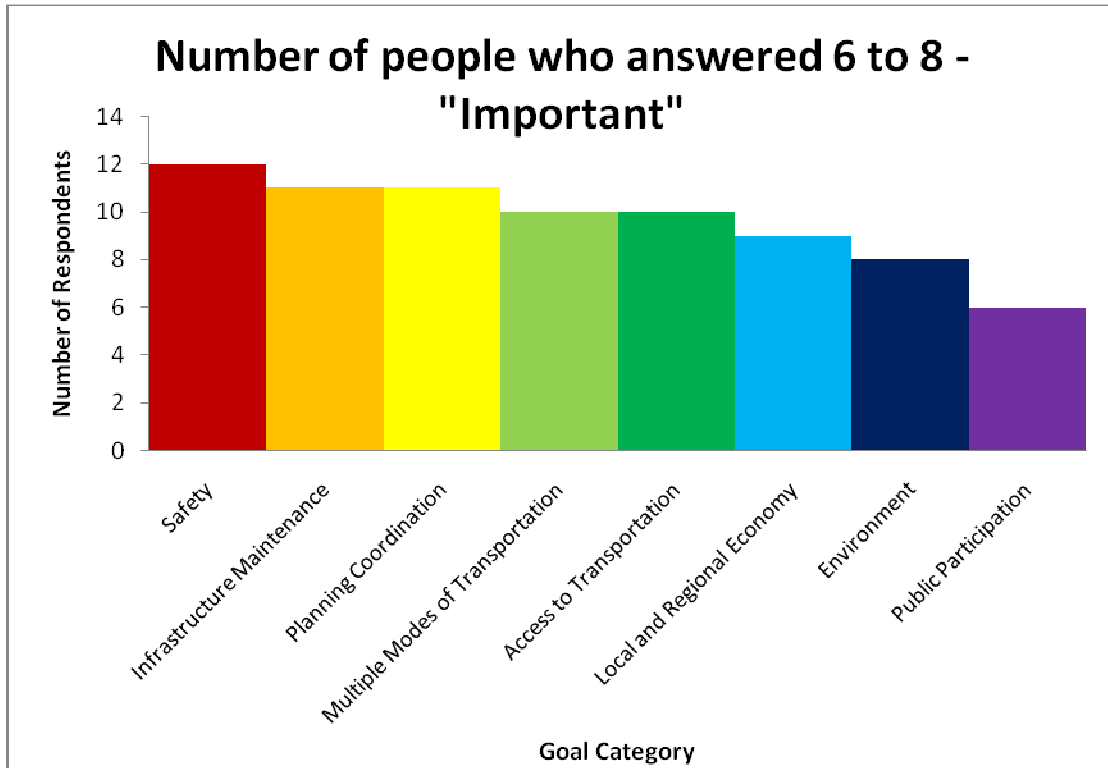
- By all three methods used to analyze the survey results (mean score, median score, and number of respondents who scored the category 6 to 8 for "Important"), **Safety** and **Infrastructure Maintenance** were the highest-scoring, while Environment and Access to Transportation were the lowest-scoring. See chart below.

Results of surveys answered by the public



- Twelve TwinCATS representatives filled out the survey. Like the public, the TwinCATS members scored **Safety** and **Infrastructure Maintenance** the highest and Environment and Access to Transportation the lowest. See chart and table below.

Results of surveys answered by TwinCATS members



Number of People who Answered 6 to 8 - "Important"

Goal Category	TwinCATS Respondents		Public Respondents	
Safety	12	100.0%	243	94.6%
Infrastructure Maintenance	11	91.7%	226	87.9%
Planning Coordination	11	91.7%	201	78.2%
Multiple Modes of Transportation	10	83.3%	194	75.5%
Access to Transportation	10	83.3%	171	66.5%
Local and Regional Economy	9	75.0%	190	73.9%
Environment	8	66.7%	172	66.9%
Public Participation	6	50.0%	185	72.0%

"What's Important to You in Transportation Projects?" Regional Priorities Study

- Members of the public were far more likely than TwinCATS members to consider Public Participation "important" (with a score of 6, 7, or 8). The TwinCATS members were much more likely than the public to consider Safety, Planning Coordination, Multiple Modes of Transportation, and Access to Transportation "important."
- Out of the respondents from the public who gave open-ended responses, the most number of people commented on needing **coordinated countywide bus transit** (26 people), and then **bicycle and pedestrian-friendly facilities** (13 people).

Recommendations. Given the results of this survey, the recommendations of SWMPC staff as next steps in the TwinCATS transportation planning process include:

- Score the transportation projects proposed for the fiscal year 2011-2014 Transportation Improvement Program for TwinCATS on a weighted scale so that projects focusing on Safety and Infrastructure Maintenance are prioritized the highest.
- Work on providing information to the public and the TwinCATS members in the following areas:
 - The relationship between the environment and transportation;
 - The importance of access to transportation for Environmental Justice populations; and
 - The importance of a focus on multiple modes of transportation.
- Continue to give future transportation planning work a heavy focus on coordinated countywide public transit and non-motorized transportation facilities.