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**Omaha-Council Bluffs Metropolitan
Area Planning Agency (MAPA)**

Beltway Perception Study #2

Summary Final Report

November 5, 2009

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
2: DESCRIPTION OF METHODOLOGY	2
2.1 SAMPLE DESIGN AND SELECTION	2
2.1.1 <i>Target Population</i>	2
2.1.2 <i>Sampling Unit</i>	2
2.1.3 <i>Sample Design</i>	2
2.1.4 <i>Sampling Technique</i>	3
3: SURVEY RESULTS.....	4
4: RESULTS BY QUESTIONS	6

1: INTRODUCTION

The Omaha-Council Bluffs Metropolitan Area Planning Agency (MAPA) is conducting a Beltway Feasibility Study that evaluated the need for and feasibility of a beltway to serve the Omaha-Council Bluffs metropolitan area (metro area). A beltway is a major road that follows a circular route around a city, thereby providing an alternate route for traffic traveling around or through a city and relieving the congestion on streets and highways inside of the beltway. As the metro area grows, traffic along major highways and interstates in the area is becoming more congested and the need for transportation improvements is increasing. Currently, the beltway concept is in its initial phase of MAPA's long term plan for transportation improvement in the area.

A key component of the beltway study is to determine if there is public support for a beltway or other major transportation improvements. Therefore, MAPA conducted a public opinion survey to gauge public perception on the construction of a beltway in the Omaha-Council Bluffs metro area.

For the purpose of this study, Omaha-Council Bluffs metro area consists of the following counties: Douglas, Pottawattamie, Sarpy and Washington. Precision in the key estimate of "percent in favor" is required within 5 percentage points at a 95 percent confidence level for the set of targeted counties. For this reason, the targeted population needs to be grouped or "stratified" by county boundaries. Consequently, the sampling size calculations are done proportional to the population sizes of each of the counties.

2: DESCRIPTION OF METHODOLOGY

2.1 Sample Design and Selection

2.1.1 Target Population

All persons aged 18 years and older who reside in Douglas, Pottawattamie, Sarpy or Washington County constitute the target population for which estimates are required.

2.1.2 Sampling Unit

The sampling unit for the purpose of this study is a household with a zip code in Douglas, Pottawattamie, Sarpy or Washington County.

2.1.3 Sample Design

To gauge public perception on the construction of a beltway in the Omaha-Council Bluffs area, a stratified random sample of 253 households from Douglas, 45 households from Pottawattamie, 76 households from Sarpy and 10 households from Washington Counties was selected.

A stratified random sample is selected by dividing the target population into four non-overlapping subpopulations, called strata. Within each stratum, a random sample is selected such that every sampling unit in the subpopulation has an equal probability of being selected for the sample.

From the subpopulation of 502,032¹ housing units in Douglas County, a sample size of 253 was chosen, from the subpopulation of 89,647¹ housing units in Pottawattamie County, a sample of 45 units was chosen. While from the subpopulation of 150,958¹

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, Douglas County Fact Sheet, Occupied Housing Units <http://factfinder.census.gov>

housing units in Sarpy County, a sample of 76 units was chosen and from the subpopulation of 19,812¹ housing units in Washington County, a sample of 10 units was chosen. The data collected from the combined total of 384 sampled units would ensure a margin of error for the key estimate of percent favorable not more than ± 5 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level. In other words, if the same survey was conducted 100 times, 95 of those times the results would be no more than 5 percentage points higher or lower than the results if we had interviewed the entire population.

2.1.4 Sampling Technique

A list of all households with zip codes in Douglas, Pottawattamie, Sarpy and Washington was obtained. From this list, 384 households were randomly selected, without replacement, for inclusion in the sample. Each household on the sample list was contacted to participate in the survey. All surveys were conducted via telephone by professional research interviewers. To help eliminate non-response bias, each number from the sample list was contacted a minimum of five times before declaring that the number was unreachable.

3: SURVEY RESULTS

The survey questionnaire was designed to obtain, through responses to a series of 16 questions, a respondent's opinion on the current and future state of traffic congestion in the Omaha-Council Bluffs metropolitan area as well as their views on the construction of a beltway in the metro area. There were three questions that remained exactly the same from the first public survey and one question was modified slightly to adjust the future year from 50 years to 20 years in the future. The remaining questions were new.

In survey #1 traffic congestion in the whole target population of the Omaha-Council Bluffs metro area was rated as *“medium”* by **63.2%** of all residents in the target population, while **21.46%** believed that traffic congestion was in fact *“high”* - compared to responses in survey #2 in which respondents rated traffic congestion as *“medium”* by **64.3%** of all residents in the target population, while **19.5%** believed that traffic congestion was in fact *“high”*. Consensus seems to exist in both surveys that traffic congestion is currently at moderate levels. While, when residents were asked in survey #1 to predict future traffic levels in 50 years, a large plurality **42.7%** suggested that traffic congestion would *“worsen significantly”*. In addition, some **39.4%** believed that traffic congestion would *“worsen some”*. Compared to the responses in survey #2 when the question changed slightly and asked respondents to predict future traffic levels in 20 years, where **46.9%** respondents suggested that traffic congestion would *“worsen some”*. While some **37.8%** believed that traffic congestion would *“worsen significantly”*. This finding in changing the horizon year is not surprising and not meaningfully different, since looking into the future is a somewhat abstract concept.

In survey #1 across the whole target population, **31.6%** of sampled residents were aware of the MAPA Beltway Feasibility Study. Compared to survey #2, where **38.0%** of the whole target population were aware of the MAPA Beltway Feasibility Study. When asked in the first survey of the study, **66.7%** stated *“yes”* in favor of construction of a beltway or some portion of a beltway around the Omaha/Council Bluffs metropolitan

area. Compared to in survey #2, where **75.5%** replied “*yes*” in favor of construction of a beltway or some portion of a beltway around the Omaha/Council Bluffs metropolitan area. This shows that as the study has progressed, the public is not only more aware of the study, but also more in support of the construction of a beltway.

The whole target population from survey #2 responded “*yes*” with **57.0%** in support of altering land use practices to help limit increases in transportation congestion. However, a contrary response was found with **57.3%** of sampled residents who would like to move to a less dense housing area in the future. In addition, **56.8%** responded that they would utilize transit routes, if they were available, now or in the future to serve their daily commutes instead of driving their personal vehicle. Lastly, **62.8%** believe if current funding for roadway improvement projects is not sufficient to build the roadways needed to limit congestion, they would be in favor of seeking additional methods for funding transportation projects other than the gasoline tax.

4: MAPA BELTWAY FEASIBILITY STUDY: PUBLIC OPINION PHONE SURVEY RESULTS BY QUESTION

Table 1: Question 1. Are you aware that MAPA is currently conducting a study of a beltway for the Omaha/Council Bluffs metropolitan area?

County	Response	Number of Responses	Estimate (%)
Douglas	Yes	94	37.2
	No	159	62.8
Pottawattamie	Yes	17	37.8
	No	28	62.2
Sarpy	Yes	30	39.5
	No	46	60.5
Washington	Yes	5	50.0
	No	5	50.0
Total	Yes	146	38.0
	No	238	62.0

Table 2: Question 2. How would you rate traffic congestion in the Omaha/Council Bluffs metropolitan area?

County	Response	Number of Responses	Estimate (%)
Douglas	High	41	16.2
	Medium	167	66.0
	Low	43	17.0
	None at all	2	.8
Pottawattamie	High	14	31.1
	Medium	25	55.6
	Low	6	13.3
	None at all	0	.0
Sarpy	High	20	26.3
	Medium	46	60.5
	Low	9	11.8
	None at all	1	1.3
Washington	High	0	.0
	Medium	9	90.0
	Low	1	10.0
	None at all	0	.0

Total	High	75	19.5
	Medium	247	64.3
	Low	59	15.4
	None at all	3	.8

Table 3: Question 3. Looking 20 years out into the future, do you think traffic congestion in the Omaha/Council Bluffs metropolitan area will:

County	Response	Number of Responses	Estimate (%)
Douglas	Worsen significantly (compared to today)	93	36.8
	Worsen some (compared to today)	123	48.6
	Remain the same (as today)	23	9.1
	Improve (compared to today)	14	5.5
Pottawattamie	Worsen significantly (compared to today)	17	37.8
	Worsen some (compared to today)	17	37.8
	Remain the same (as today)	5	11.1
	Improve (compared to today)	6	13.3
Sarpy	Worsen significantly (compared to today)	33	43.4
	Worsen some (compared to today)	32	42.1
	Remain the same (as today)	6	7.9
	Improve (compared to today)	5	6.6
Washington	Worsen significantly (compared to today)	2	20.0
	Worsen some (compared to today)	8	80.0
	Remain the same (as today)	0	.0
	Improve (compared to today)	0	.0
Total	Worsen significantly (compared to today)	145	37.8
	Worsen some (compared to today)	180	46.9
	Remain the same (as today)	34	8.9
	Improve (compared to today)	25	6.5

Table 4: Question 4. Compared to other major cities you have lived in or travelled in, is easier or harder to get around in the Omaha/Council Bluffs metropolitan area?

County	Response	Number of Responses	Estimate (%)
Douglas	Easier	215	85.0
	Harder	26	10.3
	Don't know	12	4.7
Pottawattamie	Easier	36	80.0
	Harder	5	11.1
	Don't know	4	8.9

Sarpy	Easier	62	81.6
	Harder	9	11.8
	Don't know	5	6.6
Washington	Easier	9	90.0
	Harder	1	10.0
	Don't know	0	.0
Total	Easier	322	83.9
	Harder	41	10.7
	Don't know	21	5.5

Table 5: Question 5. Is maintaining reasonable travel times in the metro area important to you?

County	Response	Number of Responses	Estimate (%)
Douglas	Yes	229	90.5
	No	22	8.7
	Don't Know	2	.8
Pottawattamie	Yes	40	88.9
	No	5	11.1
	Don't Know	0	.0
Sarpy	Yes	68	89.5
	No	7	9.2
	Don't Know	1	1.3
Washington	Yes	10	100.0
	No	0	.0
	Don't Know	0	.0
Total	Yes	347	90.4
	No	34	8.9
	Don't Know	3	.8

Table 6: Question 6. Based on the fluctuations in fuel prices have you or your family changed driving habits in any of the following ways? Mark all that apply:

County	Response	Number of Responses	Estimate (%)
Douglas	Reduced daily miles traveled	112	44.3
	Increased carpooling	38	15.0
	Increased use of public transit	10	4.0
	Increased use of non motorized transportation	43	17.0
	Work at home	46	18.2
	Other	4	1.5

Pottawattamie	Reduced daily miles traveled	23	51.1
	Increased carpooling	7	15.6
	Increased use of public transit	0	.0
	Increased use of non motorized transportation	6	13.3
	Work at home	8	17.8
	Other	1	2.2
Sarpy	Reduced daily miles traveled	36	47.4
	Increased carpooling	7	9.2
	Increased use of public transit	2	2.6
	Increased use of non motorized transportation	13	17.1
	Work at home	13	17.1
	Other	5	6.6
Washington	Reduced daily miles traveled	5	50.0
	Increased carpooling	2	20.0
	Increased use of public transit	0	.0
	Increased use of non motorized transportation	0	.0
	Work at home	1	10.0
	Other	2	20.0
Total	Reduced daily miles traveled	176	45.8
	Increased carpooling	54	14.1
	Increased use of public transit	12	3.1
	Increased use of non motorized transportation	62	16.1
	Work at home	68	17.7
	Other	12	3.1

Study Conclusion Statement:

The conclusions from the transportation study noted future mobility in the Omaha/Council Bluffs metropolitan area will be served through:

1. The adoption of land use policies that increases the density of development and inhibit urban sprawl.
2. Transit changes and enhancements that significantly increase the number of transit users in the metro area.
3. Continued expansion and investment in our roadway system, including a beltway system built in a way that does not promote urban sprawl.

With consideration for those conclusions respondents answered the following questions:

Table 7: Question 7. Would you support altering land use practices to increase densities in the metro area to help limit increases in transportation congestion?

County	Response	Number of Responses	Estimate (%)
Douglas	Yes	151	59.7
	No	66	26.1
	Don't Know	36	14.2
Pottawattamie	Yes	22	48.9
	No	17	37.8
	Don't Know	6	13.3
Sarpy	Yes	41	53.9
	No	25	32.9
	Don't Know	10	13.2
Washington	Yes	5	50.0
	No	4	40.0
	Don't Know	1	10.0
Total	Yes	219	57.0
	No	112	29.2
	Don't Know	53	13.8

Table 8: Question 8. In the future if you were to change residences, would you move to a more dense housing area or less dense area?

County	Response	Number of Responses	Estimate (%)
Douglas	More dense housing	37	14.6
	Same density as currently	53	20.9
	Less dense housing	146	57.7
	Don't know	17	6.7
Pottawattamie	More dense housing	12	26.7
	Same density as currently	11	24.4
	Less dense housing	20	44.4
	Don't know	2	4.4
Sarpy	More dense housing	13	17.1
	Same density as currently	10	13.2
	Less dense housing	48	63.2
	Don't know	5	6.6
Washington	More dense housing	1	10.0
	Same density as currently	3	30.0
	Less dense housing	6	60.0
	Don't know	0	.0

Total	More dense housing	63	16.4
	Same density as currently	77	20.1
	Less dense housing	220	57.3
	Don't know	24	6.3

Table 9: Question 9. If transit routes were available now or in the future that served your daily commute, would you utilize this service instead of driving your personal vehicle?

County	Response	Number of Responses	Estimate (%)
Douglas	Yes	152	60.1
	No	86	34.0
	Currently I utilize transit for commuting	0	.0
	Don't know	15	5.9
Pottawattamie	Yes	22	48.9
	No	18	40.0
	Currently I utilize transit for commuting	0	.0
	Don't know	5	11.1
Sarpy	Yes	38	50.0
	No	29	38.2
	Currently I utilize transit for commuting	1	1.3
	Don't know	8	10.5
Washington	Yes	6	60.0
	No	4	40.0
	Currently I utilize transit for commuting	0	.0
	Don't know	0	.0
Total	Yes	218	56.8
	No	137	35.7
	Currently I utilize transit for commuting	1	.3
	Don't know	28	7.3

If respondent answered "No" on #9 then #10 was asked, otherwise interviewer skipped to #11

Table 10: Question 10. What would encourage you to ride transit instead of driving your personal vehicle? Mark all that apply:

County	Response	Number of Responses	Estimate (%)
Douglas	More bus routes	9	10.5
	Shorter wait time between buses	1	1.2
	Cleaner buses	0	.0
	Enhanced bus stops with shelters	0	.0
	Having a light rail transit system in addition to buses	3	3.5
	Nothing	63	73.3
	Don't Know / Refused	10	11.6
Pottawattamie	More bus routes	2	8.7
	Shorter wait time between buses	1	4.3
	Cleaner buses	2	8.7
	Enhanced bus stops with shelters	1	4.3
	Having a light rail transit system in addition to buses	2	8.7
	Nothing	14	60.9
	Don't Know / Refused	1	4.3
Sarpy	More bus routes	1	3.4
	Shorter wait time between buses	0	.0
	Cleaner buses	0	.0
	Enhanced bus stops with shelters	0	.0
	Having a light rail transit system in addition to buses	2	6.9
	Nothing	23	79.3
	Don't Know / Refused	3	10.3
Washington	More bus routes	2	50.0
	Shorter wait time between buses	1	25.0
	Cleaner buses	0	.0
	Enhanced bus stops with shelters	0	.0
	Having a light rail transit system in addition to buses	0	.0
	Nothing	1	25.0
	Don't Know / Refused	0	.0
Total	More bus routes	14	9.9
	Shorter wait time between buses	3	2.1
	Cleaner buses	2	1.4
	Enhanced bus stops with shelters	1	.7
	Having a light rail transit system in addition to buses	7	4.9
	Nothing	101	71.1
	Don't Know / Refused	14	9.9

Table 11: Question 11. In general, do you favor the construction of a future beltway or some portion of a beltway around the Omaha/Council Bluffs metropolitan area?

County	Response	Number of Responses	Estimate (%)
Douglas	Yes	186	73.5
	No	34	13.4
	Don't Know	33	13.0
Pottawattamie	Yes	36	80.0
	No	6	13.3
	Don't Know	3	6.7
Sarpy	Yes	60	78.9
	No	10	13.2
	Don't Know	6	7.9
Washington	Yes	8	80.0
	No	2	20.0
	Don't Know	0	.0
Total	Yes	290	75.5
	No	52	13.5
	Don't Know	42	10.9

Table 12: Question 12. If current funding for roadway improvement projects is not sufficient to build the roadways needed to limit congestion, would you be in favor of seeking additional methods for funding transportation projects other than the gasoline tax?

County	Response	Number of Responses	Estimate (%)
Douglas	Yes	160	63.2
	No	74	29.2
	Don't Know	19	7.5
Pottawattamie	Yes	31	68.9
	No	11	24.4
	Don't Know	3	6.7
Sarpy	Yes	40	52.6
	No	32	42.1
	Don't Know	4	5.3
Washington	Yes	10	100.0
	No	0	.0
	Don't Know	0	.0

Total	Yes	241	62.8
	No	117	30.5
	Don't Know	26	6.8

DEMOGRAPHICS QUESTIONS:

Table 13: Question 13. How long have you lived in the Omaha/Council Bluffs metro area?

County	Response	Number of Responses	Estimate (%)
Douglas	Less than 1 year	4	1.6
	1 to 5 years	12	4.7
	6 to 15 years	37	14.6
	16 years or more	200	79.1
Pottawattamie	Less than 1 year	1	2.2
	1 to 5 years	3	6.7
	6 to 15 years	3	6.7
	16 years or more	38	84.4
Sarpy	Less than 1 year	3	3.9
	1 to 5 years	4	5.3
	6 to 15 years	19	25.0
	16 years or more	50	65.8
Washington	Less than 1 year	1	10.0
	1 to 5 years	1	10.0
	6 to 15 years	1	10.0
	16 years or more	7	70.0
Total	Less than 1 year	9	2.3
	1 to 5 years	20	5.2
	6 to 15 years	60	15.6
	16 years or more	295	76.8

Table 14: Question 15. Please estimate how many miles do you drive your primary vehicle in a year?

County	Response	Number of Responses	Estimate (%)
Douglas	Less than 5,000 miles a year	23	9.1
	Between 5,000 and 10,000 miles a year	89	35.2
	Between 10,000 and 15,000 miles a year	92	36.4

	Over 15,000 miles a year	49	19.4
Pottawattamie	Less than 5,000 miles a year	3	6.7
	Between 5,000 and 10,000 miles a year	16	35.6
	Between 10,000 and 15,000 miles a year	15	33.3
	Over 15,000 miles a year	11	24.4
Sarpy	Less than 5,000 miles a year	5	6.6
	Between 5,000 and 10,000 miles a year	32	42.1
	Between 10,000 and 15,000 miles a year	28	36.8
	Over 15,000 miles a year	11	14.5
Washington	Less than 5,000 miles a year	0	.0
	Between 5,000 and 10,000 miles a year	2	20.0
	Between 10,000 and 15,000 miles a year	4	40.0
	Over 15,000 miles a year	4	40.0
Total	<i>Less than 5,000 miles a year</i>	31	8.1
	<i>Between 5,000 and 10,000 miles a year</i>	139	36.2
	<i>Between 10,000 and 15,000 miles a year</i>	139	36.2
	<i>Over 15,000 miles a year</i>	75	19.5

Table 15: Question 16. What type of housing do you currently live in?

County	Response	Number of Responses	Estimate (%)
Douglas	Farm	1	.4
	Acreage	7	2.8
	Single family house	216	85.4
	Duplex	5	2.0
	Apartment or condo	22	8.7
	Other	2	.8
Pottawattamie	Farm	5	11.1
	Acreage	10	22.2
	Single family house	26	57.8
	Duplex	0	.0
	Apartment or condo	4	8.9
	Other	0	.0
Sarpy	Farm	0	.0
	Acreage	6	7.9
	Single family house	66	86.8
	Duplex	1	1.3
	Apartment or condo	2	2.6
	Other	1	1.3

Washington	Farm	1	10.0
	Acreage	5	50.0
	Single family house	4	40.0
	Duplex	0	.0
	Apartment or condo	0	.0
	Other	0	.0
Total	Farm	7	1.8
	Acreage	28	7.3
	Single family house	312	81.3
	Duplex	6	1.6
	Apartment or condo	28	7.3
	Other	3	.8