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ARMA Survey Executive Summary

Orientation

BaseIice & Associates, Inc. was retained to conduct survey research for the purpose of studying attitudes and opinions of voters in Bexar County. This survey was conducted among N=400 randomly selected voters countywide, with an additional n=100 interviews conducted in selected areas in northern Bexar County. The survey was conducted on September 12-14, 2005. The margin of error for the countywide N=400 interviews is $\pm 4.9\%$ at the .95 test level.

Objective

This survey was designed to measure public opinion regarding traffic and mobility issues in Bexar County. This survey also assesses the current awareness and understanding of the toll system for Bexar County, and identifies information shown to be most effective in informing the public about the future toll lanes to be built in the county.

The survey findings will be used to assist in the design an implementation of a public information initiative being undertaken by the Alamo Regional Mobility Authority to:

1. Inform the public of the current funding crisis in the highway program
2. Provide information regarding the purpose and benefits of the toll lane system
3. Provide public information regarding details of the proposed toll system and the schedule for implementation

Key Findings

- A majority (56%) think traffic congestion in Bexar County is a major problem while 38% think it is a minor problem.
- When asked to select the best way to pay for new highway construction, *building toll lanes* receives the highest level of support (27%), followed by select *increasing vehicle registration fees* (21%), *increasing the sales tax* (16%), and *increasing the gasoline tax* (6%).
- Approximately three in four respondents (77%) report having seen, read, or heard something about toll roads recently. The current message environment surrounding the future toll system is somewhat negative with 44% saying they are less likely to support the toll system based on what they have seen or heard recently, while 18% say they are more likely to support the toll system based on what they recall.

- When initially asked if they favor or oppose the toll system planned for the region, respondents are divided with 44% in favor and 49% opposed. However, a majority of respondents (54%) residing in the areas closest to where the new toll lanes will be built initially favor the new toll system with 39% opposed.
- After presenting details about the toll system to respondents, support increase to 58% while opposition decreases to 34%. Support among those living closest to the future toll lanes increase to 62% and opposition decreases to 32%.
- The details found to be most effective in informing the public and in increasing understanding of the toll system are contained in the following statements:

The new toll system will accelerate the needed construction of additional lanes for the most congested highways in Bexar County without increasing the tax burden on residents.

All highways where new toll lanes will be added will always have a choice to use non-tolled lanes so that drivers who do not wish to pay a toll can use non-toll lanes.

The new toll lanes will help reduce traffic congestion, so drivers will spend less time in traffic and have more time to do what they want.

There will be no toll booths because the new toll lanes will use technology that electronically scans vehicles as they enter the toll lane so drivers will not have to stop to pay a toll thus saving time.

Conclusion

There is a general lack of understanding of the toll system planned for Bexar County, and that is being compounded by a preponderance of negative information in the message environment surrounding the toll system. However, when presented information about the details and benefits of the toll system, significant increases in public support for the toll system can be realized. The public information initiative being prepared by the regional mobility authority should incorporate the messages highlighted above into their communications efforts, and these messages should be delivered at the highest possible frequency to maximize public understanding and support for the toll system.