



# America Moving Toward More Sustainable Infrastructure Solutions

## New HNTB America THINKS survey shows majority of Americans feel large-scale sustainable infrastructure developments are an important investment for future generations

KANSAS CITY, Mo., April 20 /PRNewswire/ -- The green revolution has evolved since the first Earth Day 40 years ago.

According to a new America THINKS survey from HNTB Corporation, 64 percent of Americans are willing to pay more today for national infrastructure that is energy-efficient and less wasteful in order to save money and resources in the future, up from 58 percent last November. And 96 percent of Americans agree all new construction should take sustainability into consideration.

"Whether it's on transportation facilities, such as roads and bridges, or in buildings, we're finding that sustainability has become a requirement for many of our clients because their stakeholders are expecting sustainable features," said David Wenzel, AICP, LEED® AP, HNTB sustainability services chair.

"Particularly with large, complex projects, clients are grappling with understanding this issue and potential responses as they foresee new local, state and federal mandates on the horizon."

Wenzel has met with more than 35 state and regional transportation agency officials – including aviation, transit and rail experts – across the country to better understand their sustainability efforts and plans moving forward. Many in the industry believe a "sea change" is coming in the way America moves people and goods. And the public seems to agree with them.

Many Americans are optimistic about changes in the way they get around, both in the near future and the long-term. Almost half (47 percent) predict that in five years, people in their area will be using public transit much more often – and even more (56 percent) think this could be a reality 20 years from now.

Regardless of the approach, most of the country sees value in sustainability as a movement: more than three in four (76 percent) feel that large-scale infrastructure developments with sustainability in mind are an important investment for future generations. Fifty-one percent said they would be willing to add some

amount to their yearly taxes to ensure new construction within their region was sustainable in some way, averaging approximately \$256.

### **Getting up to speed on sustainable transportation**

The need for more efficient and flexible transportation systems to support the nation's economy and quality of life continues to be a priority in the United States. At the same time, climate change, energy security, diminishing natural resources, and questions about long-term transportation financing raise concerns about the long-term viability of our current approaches to designing, constructing and maintaining our infrastructure.

"The transportation industry's evolution to sustainable practices is being driven by political and public pressure, which is demanding the industry catch up with those that are further advanced in sustainability," said Wenzel. "Federal leadership is establishing mandates and states are rapidly working on strategies to not only meet these mandates, but the public demand for a more environmentally sound transportation network."

Wenzel said his research shows most U.S. transportation agencies are approaching sustainability in two ways: developing design and construction techniques more respectful of natural resources, and implementing practices that reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

While many people realize cars have gotten greener since the first Earth Day in 1970, few probably know the roads are greener, too. In fact, 76 percent of those surveyed think Americans understand programming their cell phones better than ways to make infrastructure more sustainable. Yet examples surround them whenever they travel the country's roads:

- Today old road materials are regularly recycled and reused in new road asphalt and concrete.
- Reflective orange barrels (often made of recycled plastic) are placed in construction zones instead of battery-powered flashers.
- More and more transportation projects include provisions for bicycling and pedestrians.
- Newer technology has reduced – and in some cases eliminated – the number of toll booths on tollways and turnpikes, reducing stopped traffic and lowering related emissions.

### **Evolving the infrastructure industry**

"For our firm, sustainability means looking at every project differently, through a new lens," Wenzel said. HNTB has established guidelines to incorporate sustainable elements into its roadway, bridge and transit projects. Some staff are supporting efforts to establish national standards, such as the Zofnass Program for Infrastructure Sustainability at Harvard University. And Wenzel said others are applying sustainability concepts to evaluate potential project designs early in their development process, something that "would have been unheard of" a few years ago.

Beyond roadways, many airports and rail projects now include green aspects. For example, the Miami International Airport recently completed several projects that reduce energy consumption in its terminal and jetways. In California, HNTB has produced a greenhouse gas reduction plan for the Santa Barbara Airport as it undertakes a renovation and expansion project.

"As a firm, HNTB is dedicated to planning, designing and managing the construction and maintenance of infrastructure that are respectful of our limited resources and ultimately less impactful on the environment," Wenzel said. "It will provide long-term benefits to our clients, their customers and our country."

### **About the survey**

HNTB's America THINKS sustainability survey polled a random nationwide sample of 1,064 Americans April 1-7, 2010. It was conducted by Kelton Research, which used e-mail invitations and online surveys. Quotas were set to ensure reliable and accurate representation of the total U.S. population ages 18 and over. The margin of error is +/- 3 percent.

## About HNTB

HNTB Corporation is an employee-owned infrastructure firm serving federal, state, municipal, military and private clients. With nearly a century of service, HNTB has the insight to understand the life cycle of infrastructure and the perspective to solve the most complex technical, financial and operational challenges. Professionals nationwide provide award-winning planning, design, program management and construction management services. For more information, visit [www.hntb.com](http://www.hntb.com).

EDITOR'S NOTE: Additional statistics and HNTB resource links:

- Seventy-six percent of Americans say large-scale infrastructure improvements that are sustainable are an important investment for future generations.
- Sixty-nine percent say local improvements that directly impact their daily life, such as better public transit systems, are more important than regional or national improvements that might impact them occasionally.
- Sixty-eight percent agree that if state and local governments had more control over development it would discourage sprawl, reduce vehicle miles traveled and create a better environment for public transit.
- Sixty-one percent disagree that the U.S. should try to reduce transportation greenhouse gas emissions through a vehicle miles traveled tax.
- Fifty-three percent say roads and highways most need to be more sustainable in their area, versus public transit (27 percent), bridges (10 percent), waterways (5 percent) or airports (3 percent).
- Less than half are confident the federal (45 percent), state (33 percent) or local (24 percent) governments spend enough on long-term environmental protection.
- Thirty-nine percent would consider moving to a new area simply because it practiced or mandated sustainability more than where they live now.

Greening America's Roadways [Viewpoint](#)

Vaporizing the Gas Tax [Viewpoint](#)

THINK Magazine Issue 3: [Responsible Infrastructure](#)

THINK Magazine Issue 4: [Transformative Infrastructure](#)

Related aviation [white paper](#) and *Aviation Insight* [issue](#)

### ADDITIONAL STATISTICS FOR USE IN PITCHING/REGIONAL OUTREACH

- More than seven in ten (71 percent) of 18 to 24-year-olds are willing to make sacrifices now in order to waste less in the long run, versus 63 percent of their 25+ counterparts.
- Nearly eight in ten (76 percent) assert major, sustainable infrastructure projects are key to providing for future generations. Folks who feel this way are more optimistic about changes in the way they and their neighbors will get around in 20 years, such as using more public transit (61 percent versus 38 percent), driving less (47 percent versus 33 percent) and biking more (33 percent versus 22 percent).
- Half (50 percent) of Americans ages 18-34 feel so strongly about sustainability that it would motivate them to move, while 34 percent of those 35 and older would do the same.
- Americans ages 18-44 would fork over far more of their own money than their 45+ elders (\$310 versus \$172) to ensure that sustainability is a priority where they live.

### Related Links:

[HNTB Corporation website](#)

[THINK Magazine: Responsible Infrastructure](#)

[THINK Magazine: Transformative Infrastructure](#)

[Aviation Insight Magazine: Sustainable Airport Development](#)

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