

"Are We There Yet?" Results: Central Arkansans Choose How and When to Achieve Regional Vision



"Are We There Yet?," an interactive online activity or "InfoGame" was launched in mid-June 2013. The tool is intended to be the focal point of the third phase of public outreach for Imagine Central Arkansas, a multi-year visioning effort that will result in a long term plan for the region. It features an interactive, multi-step wizard in which residents of central Arkansas choose from a range of options that will impact how and when a shared recommended Vision for the region is achieved. The Imagine Central Arkansas Vision includes investments in a robust local transit network, a regional transit system, walking and cycling and improving our freeway and road network.



The purpose of "Are We There Yet?" is to inform central Arkansans about conditions affecting the future and to obtain important feedback regarding emerging trends, policy directions and funding options for the region over the next three decades. Participants first set goals for the region's future, including choosing a target year between 2020 and 2050 in which they would like to see the Imagine Central Arkansas Vision become a reality. The target implementation year is displayed as the participants make choices on the following pages about major trends, policy options, and funding options to meet the Vision goals. On each page, the tool moves the implementation year forward or backward for each element of the Vision goals, based upon choices that are made by the participant. This allows participants to understand the impact of their decisions, thus, the earlier they want implementation of the Vision to occur, the more decisions have to be made.

The online activity reached central Arkansans through a variety of means, including e-Blasts, social media, Arkansas Times online ads and at hometown visits throughout the region. To date, over 525 people have taken part in "Are We There Yet?".

External Trends:

Participants were first presented with seven state, national and global external trends that will impact central Arkansas over the coming decades. Using slider bars, they were asked to rate how much of an impact they thought a given trend would have.

There were five options, ranging from "No Impact" to "Strong Impact." In summary:

61% of participants rated rising energy cost as having a significant impact on the region by placing the slider bar on the highest ("Strong Impact") or next-highest position. Due to longer than average commutes, increases in gas prices are likely sensitive to many central Arkansas families.

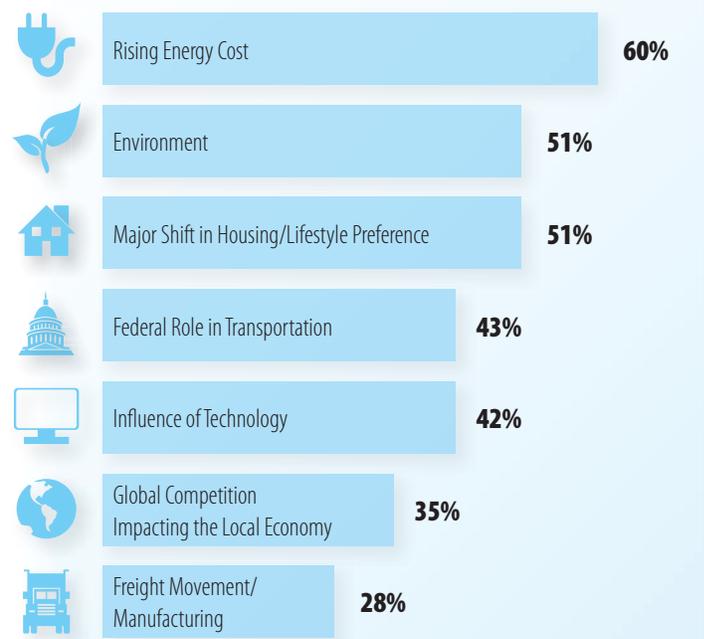
51% of participants rated environmental factors, including dwindling natural resources and energy sources, climate change and degrading air quality, as having a significant regional impact, suggesting that central Arkansans may be forced to rethink business as usual.

51% of participants rated major shifts in housing/lifestyle preference as having a significant impact on the region in the coming decades. Aging baby boomers and new "millennials" are showing a preference for smaller homes/lots and more multi-family housing options sited in close-in locations with plenty of activities nearby, getting away from large homes/lots, maintenance and long commutes. They are also showing a preference towards having a range of transportation choices, including walking, cycling and transit.

The percentages shown in the table below represent the percentage of participants that placed the slider bar on the highest ("Strong Impact") or next-highest position for a given trend.

External Trends

Percent of participants who selected 'greatest' or 'second-greatest' impact.



Local Decisions:

A number of decisions made locally will critically impact the implementation of the Imagine Central Arkansas Vision. Participants were presented with five local policies and were asked to identify their level of support for each of the policies. Again using slider bars, they were asked to rate how much of support they would have for the policies. There were five options, ranging from "No Support" to "Strong Support."



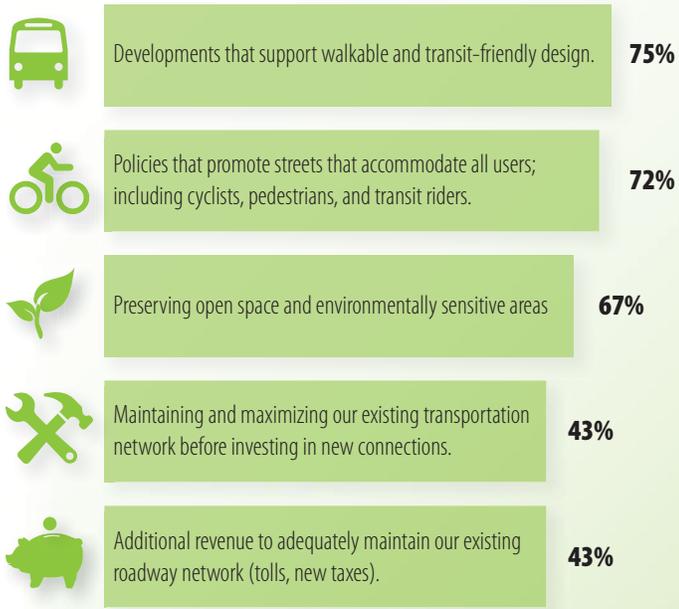
About 70 percent of participants placed the slider bar on the highest ("Strong Support") or next-highest position for the following policies:

- Developments that support walkable and transit friendly design;
- Policies that promote streets that accommodate all users, including cyclists, pedestrians and transit riders, and
- Preserving open space and environmentally sensitive areas.

The table below shows how all five local policy decisions were rated by participants. The percentages shown in the table represent the percentage of participants that placed the slider bar on the highest ("Strong Support") or next-highest position for a given policy.

Local Decisions

Percent who selected 'greatest' or 'second-greatest' support.



Regional Coordination:

Coordination and collaboration among the many governmental agencies in central Arkansas could have a positive impact on the delivery of regional transportation. Participants were asked to identify their level of support on two regional actions. In summary:

56% of participants indicated that they would support the formation of a Regional Mobility Authority (RMA) for the purpose of building and maintaining a regional transportation system by placing the slider bar on the highest ("Strong Support") or next-highest position.

52% of participants indicated that they would support informal collaboration through voluntary collaboration among local governments.



Financial Factors:

Funding availability is a critical issue in accomplishing the Imagine Central Arkansas Vision. Participants were presented with seven alternative funding options, including property tax, sales tax, fuel tax, to help implement the Imagine Central Arkansas Vision and were asked to identify their level of support for each option.



Generally speaking, new funding sources received a favorable reaction. In summary:

80% of participants indicated that they would support a dedicated property tax to fund a regional transportation system (i.e. regional transit or Regional Arterial Network). Participants could choose between one and five mills of assessment. The average millage rate chosen by participants is 2.7 mills. Residents of Faulkner and Lonoke Counties indicated the most support (an average of 3.9 mills each), and residents of Saline County indicated the least support (an average of 2.4 mills).

70% of participants support extending the half-cent statewide sales tax beyond the current 10-year time frame for roads, such as for widening freeway/interstate system and other major highways.

66% of participants support a half-cent sales tax increase for establishing or expanding local transit service and bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Residents of Faulkner and Pulaski Counties identified the highest level of support (71 percent each), and residents of Saline County identified the least level of support (42 percent).

74% of participants support an increase in sales tax to build a regional transit system by either a half-cent (37 percent) or a full cent (37 percent). Residents of Faulkner County identified the highest level of support (82 percent favor either a half-cent or full cent), and residents of Saline County identified the least level of support (64 percent).

62% of participants favored a sales tax increase to improve and complete local and regional arterial streets (44 percent favored a half-cent and 18 percent favored a full cent).

66% of participants favored new taxes on gasoline and diesel fuel (based on per gallon sales). Participants could choose between five and twenty-five cents of additional fuel tax. The average fuel tax rate increased identified by par-

ticipants is 8.7 cents. Residents of Pulaski County identified the highest level of support (72 percent favored some degree of fuel tax increase), and residents Faulkner and Lonoke Counties identified the least level of support (57 percent).

47% of participants favored the placement of an index on fuel taxes in order to offset the impact of construction cost inflation.

Given all the input from the selections provided by participants on external trends, local policies, regional coordination and funding options, the table below outlines the average year for implementing the goals of the Imagine Central Arkansas Vision:

Vision Element	Goal Year
Regional Transit Goals	2028
Local Transit Goals	2028
Bicycle/Pedestrian Goals	2028
Regional Arterial Network Goals	2034
Freeway Goals	2040

For more information contact Judy Watts at 501.372.3300 or at jwatts@metroplan.org or visit <http://imaginecentralarkansas.org/are-we-there-yet>.

Faulkner County Residents

 Identified the highest level of support for developments that support walkable and transit friendly design and for maintaining and maximizing our existing transportation network before investing in new connections.

 Identified the highest level of support for informal collaboration through voluntary collaboration among local governments.

 Identified the least level of support for preserving open space and environmentally sensitive areas.

Pulaski County Residents

 Identified the least level of support for Formation of a Regional Mobility Authority (RMA) or for informal collaboration through voluntary collaboration among local governments.

Saline County Residents

 Identified the highest level of support for maintaining and maximizing our existing transportation network before investing in new connections.

 Identified the least level of support for developments that support walkable and transit friendly design and policies that promote streets that accommodate all users, including cyclists, pedestrians and transit riders.

Lonoke County Residents

 Identified the highest level of support for policies that promote streets that accommodate all users, including cyclists, pedestrians and transit riders and additional revenue to adequately maintain our existing roadway network (tolls, new taxes).

 Identified the highest level of support for formation of a Regional Mobility Authority (RMA).