Australians continue to back big spending on public transport - survey

Australians are in favour of significant spending on public transport, would prefer to see the development of rail over bus services and are continuing to lose faith in the ability of governments to deliver transport improvements, according to the latest survey by the University of Sydney Business School.

The latest Transport Opinion Survey (TOPS), conducted by the School’s world renowned Institute of Transport and Logistics Studies (ITLS), asked participants how they would like to see their government to spend a hypothetical budget of a $100 billion on transport improvements.

Slightly more than half (51 per cent) answer public transport with 49 per cent preferring to see the money spent on roads.

“It is clear that there remains a strong community commitment to improved public transport”, said the Director of the ITLS, Professor David Hensher.

The latest TOPS also found that three in five Australians would prefer see investment in rail over bus services.

When asked to choose between the development of a 30 kms rail corridor or 300 kms of dedicated bus lanes for the same cost, around 60 per cent nationwide preferred a rail corridor. Queensland and South Australia had a relatively higher number of participants supporting dedicated bus lanes (44%).

“This confirms findings from other research. Residents with experience of dedicated bus systems are very much in favour whereas those lacking this experience tend to defaults to the sexier looking light rail systems,” said Professor Hensher. “Those states with fast bus systems (South Australia and Queensland) recognise how much they can contribute.”

This TOPS also revealed a continuing decline in confidence amongst participants in the ability of government to deliver improvements to transport in their local area and across Australia. The transport confidence index fell to its lowest level since the survey commenced in 2010, with a very strong decline in confidence since September 2013.
The survey was conducted in September just prior to a change in Federal Government leadership. "Statements from the new Prime Minister recognising the importance of Australian cities, may make a difference to confidence levels," Professor Hensher concluded.

TOPS is the only national survey to measure public opinion on transport related issues. The first 2015 report is at: http://sydney.edu.au/business/itls/tops

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