

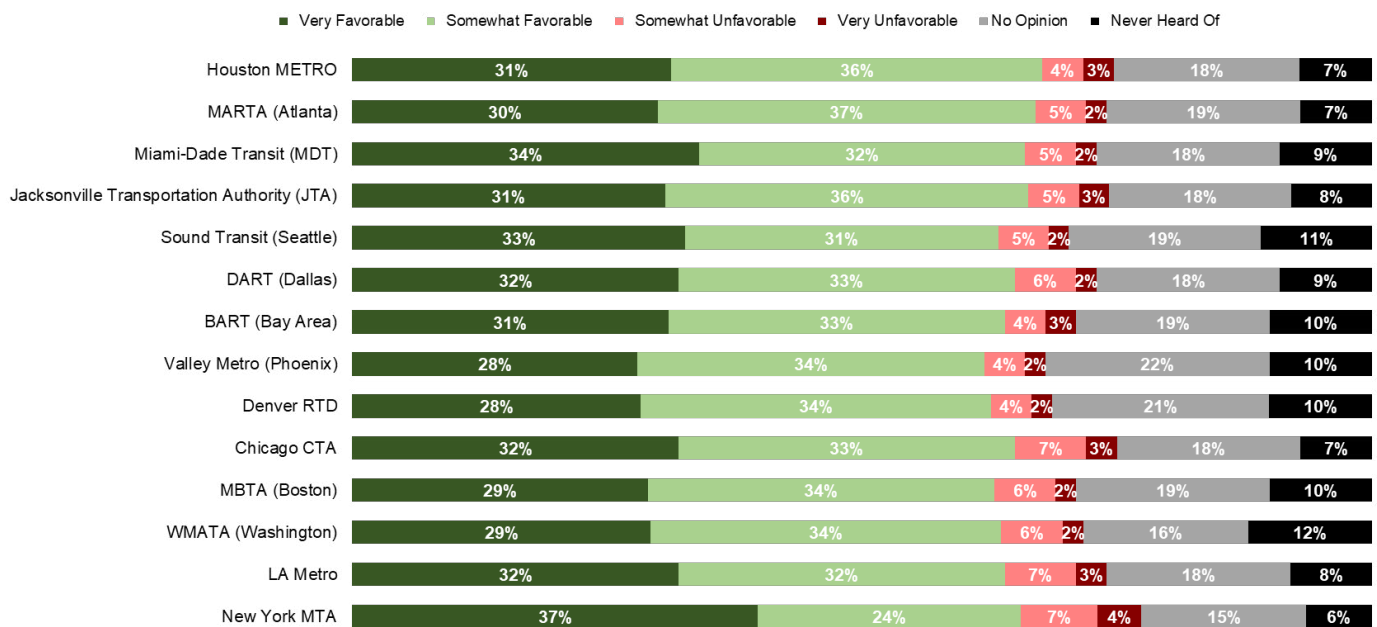
TO: Interested Parties
FROM: Plymouth Union Public Research
SUBJECT: National Transportation Influencer Study
DATE: January 8, 2026

METHODOLOGY

This memo is based on findings from a national quantitative survey of transportation influencers conducted in late November 2025. A total of n=522 interviews were completed using an online panel of verified transportation and policy professionals. Respondents included individuals working in federal and state government, local transit agencies, regional planning organizations, industry associations, consulting, research, and transportation focused journalism. Participants were screened to confirm active professional involvement in transportation related policy, planning, operations, or analysis.

BASELINE PERCEPTIONS AND SYSTEM AWARENESS

Across major U.S. transit systems, awareness and favorability are broadly comparable. Familiarity with large and mid-sized agencies is widespread, and favorability ratings cluster tightly across peer systems, with roughly three in ten respondents rating agencies “very favorable” and another three in ten “somewhat favorable,” while only small single digit shares express unfavorable views. A meaningful minority report either no opinion or limited familiarity, underscoring that national perceptions are shaped more by general system performance than by distinct agency branding.

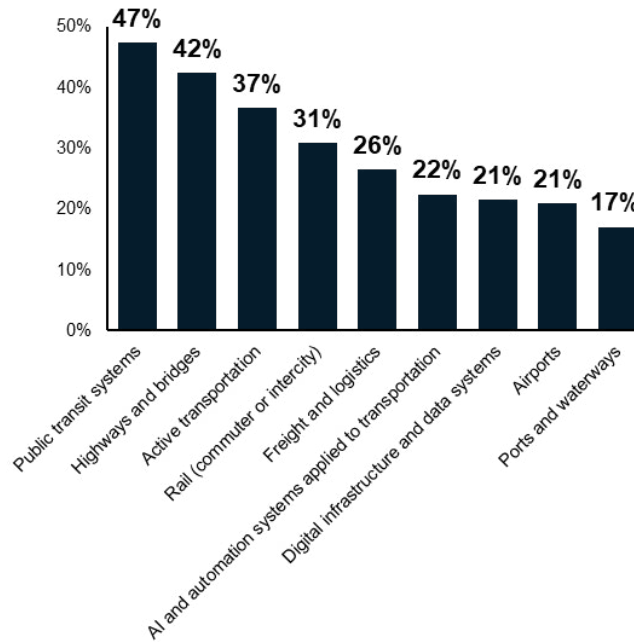




INVESTMENT NEEDS AND STRUCTURAL CHALLENGES

When asked which transportation modes or system areas are most in need of investment or modernization, public transit ranks first at 47 percent, followed by highways and bridges at 42 percent and active transportation at 37 percent. These priorities are reinforced by the challenges influencers believe agencies face today. Funding shortages are cited by 47 percent as a top challenge, while workforce shortages closely follow at 40 percent. No other challenge reaches the same level of concern, indicating that financial and human capital constraints dominate perceptions of agency performance.

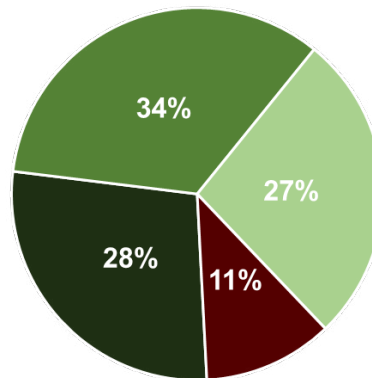
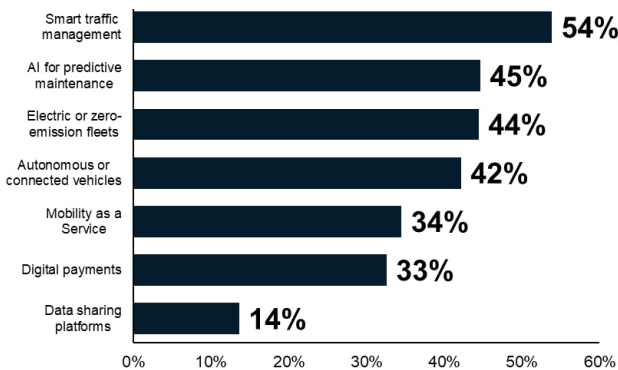
Which transportation modes or systems are most in need of investment or modernization? Select up to 3.



INNOVATION PRIORITIES AND CURRENT PERFORMANCE

Influencers identify smart traffic management as the most impactful innovation over the next five years, selected by 54 percent. AI for predictive maintenance follows at 45 percent, alongside electric or zero emission fleets at 44 percent. Autonomous or connected vehicles trail these nearer term technologies at 42 percent, while digital payments and data sharing platforms rank lower.

Despite these forward-looking priorities, views of current system performance remain largely positive. Thirty three percent rate the U.S. transportation sector's performance as excellent, and 34 percent rate it as good, meaning roughly two thirds offer positive evaluations. Only 11 percent rate performance as poor, indicating confidence in baseline operations even as expectations for modernization grow.



In general, how would you rate the current performance of the U.S. transportation sector?

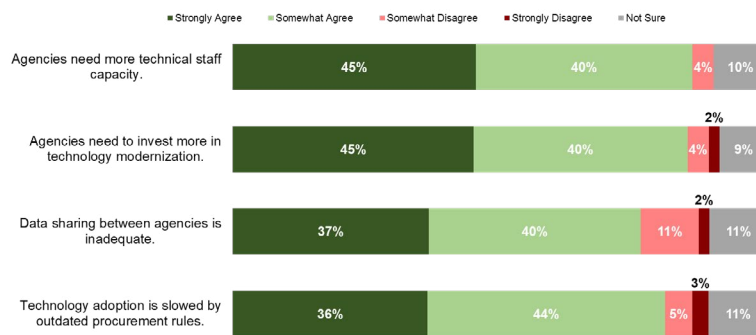


TECHNOLOGY ADOPTION AND PREPAREDNESS

A large majority of influencers say agencies are effective at adopting new transportation technologies. Eighty-five percent rate agencies as either very effective (37 percent) or somewhat effective (48 percent). Preparedness for future innovation is slightly weaker but still strong, with 77 percent saying agencies are very prepared (33 percent) or somewhat prepared (44 percent).

BARRIERS TO TECHNOLOGICAL PROGRESS

Influencers clearly identify structural barriers slowing technology adoption. Seventy-three percent agree that outdated procurement rules slow technology adoption, including 36 percent who strongly agree. Eighty two percent agree that agencies need to invest more in technology modernization, and 85 percent say agencies need more technical staff capacity. Data sharing also emerges as a major issue, with 82 percent agreeing that data sharing between agencies is inadequate. These responses indicate that barriers are seen as systemic rather than isolated or agency specific.

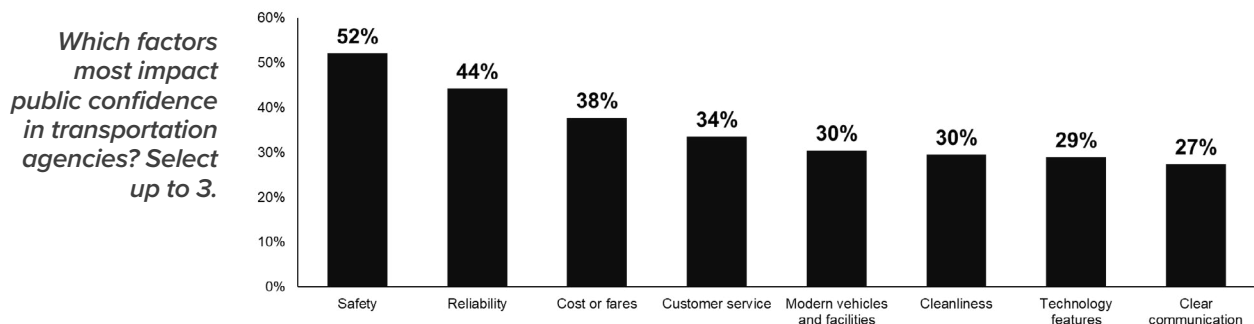


PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS AND FEDERAL SUPPORT

Support for public private partnerships is nearly universal. Ninety one percent of influencers say they support using public private partnerships to accelerate transportation technology adoption. At the same time, satisfaction with federal support for transportation modernization is more mixed, with 70 percent saying they are satisfied. In addition, seven in ten believe current federal programs favor large urban systems over mid-sized or smaller agencies, reinforcing concerns about uneven access to resources and innovation opportunities.

PUBLIC CONFIDENCE DRIVERS AND COMMUNICATION

Safety is the dominant driver of public confidence in transportation agencies, selected by 52 percent of respondents. Reliability follows at 44 percent, with cost or fares cited by 38 percent. Communication also plays a meaningful role. Over half, 53 percent, agree that agencies need to improve public communications, and 48 percent agree that a lack of transparency harms public trust. In contrast, only small shares disagree with these statements, signaling broad consensus that communication weaknesses undermine confidence even when operational performance is strong.





ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE INVESTMENT AND READINESS

Influencers express strong support for investment in AI and advanced analytics. Ninety percent say it is important for agencies to invest in AI over the next five years, including 46 percent who say it is extremely important. Readiness is viewed as relatively high, with 81 percent saying agencies are very or somewhat ready to evaluate or begin procuring AI based solutions.

OUTLOOK FOR THE NEXT DECADE

Optimism about the future of U.S. transportation is widespread. Eighty-five percent of influencers say they are optimistic about the next ten years, including 41 percent who are very optimistic and 44 percent who are somewhat optimistic. Only 15 percent express pessimism. This strong positive net outlook holds across political affiliation, demographics, and professional roles, suggesting that despite acknowledged constraints, the transportation influencer community believes the sector is positioned for long term progress if investment and institutional barriers are addressed.

