



Wilmington Area Planning Council

WILMAPCO Public Opinion Survey

Summary of Results

April 2018

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Summary of Results

Background

National Research Center, Inc. (NRC) conducted a phone survey of a random sample of 600 residents of New Castle County, Delaware and Cecil County, Maryland on behalf of WILMAPCO, the area's Metropolitan Planning Organization. A survey of the region's residents has been implemented 3 times previously, in 2006, 2010 and 2014. Several WILMAPCO staff members as well as staff from other agencies convened to determine what new topics should be added and what questions could be eliminated. For the 2018 implementation, it was decided to revisit the script. Several WILMAPCO staff members as well as staff from other agencies convened to determine what new topics should be added and what questions could be eliminated. Through an iterative process a script was developed to be pilot tested. Pilot testing occurred the first few nights of telephone calling, and additional changes were made. Once the script was finalized, it was translated into Spanish.

Interview responses were imported into a dataset for analysis by NRC. Given the extensive revising of the 2018 script, there are only a few questions that can be compared to previous WILMAPCO public opinion surveys. A brief summary of the results is presented below.

Resident Perceptions about Transportation

Nearly 9 in 10 respondents felt the transportation system met their travel needs at least "somewhat well," with about 3 in 10 reporting that the transportation system was meeting their travel needs "very well". These ratings have increased somewhat from 2006 to 2010 and 2014, but made a larger increase from 2014 to 2017.

In 2017, those interviewed were asked how well they thought the transportation system served specific users: pedestrians, bicyclists and those who use public transit. Ratings were lower for these specific users than for the system as a whole (see Figure 2 on the next page), but still generally positive, with between 7 and 8 in 10 respondents reporting the system serves these users very or somewhat well. Positive ratings were given by about 20% fewer respondents, however, among Cecil County residents compared to New Castle residents for the pedestrian system and public transit system, and 8% fewer for the bicycle system.

Figure 1: Perceived Effectiveness of the Transportation System, 2006-2017

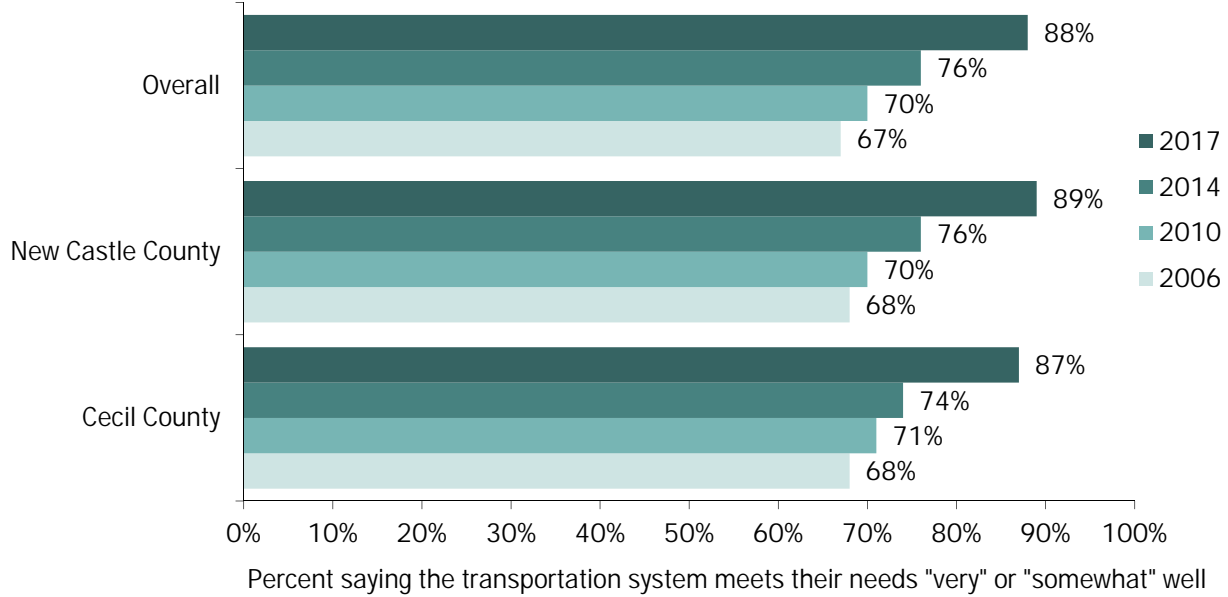
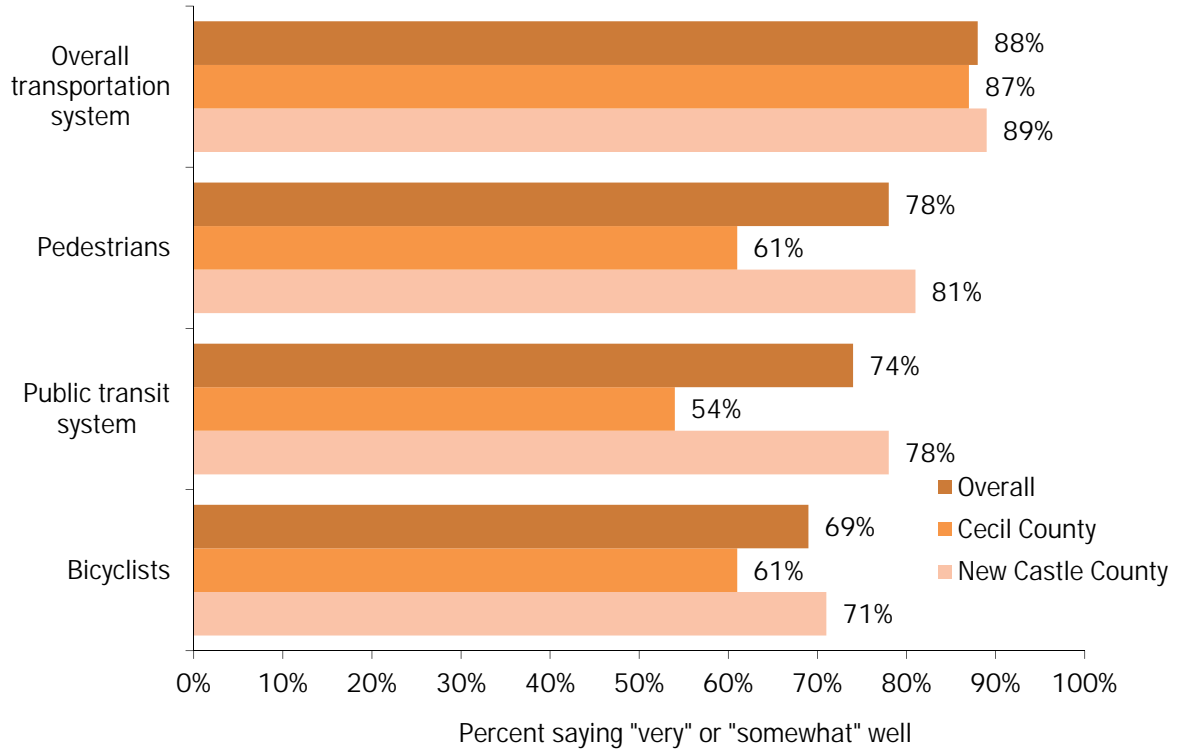


Figure 2: Perceived Effectiveness of the Transportation System for Various Users



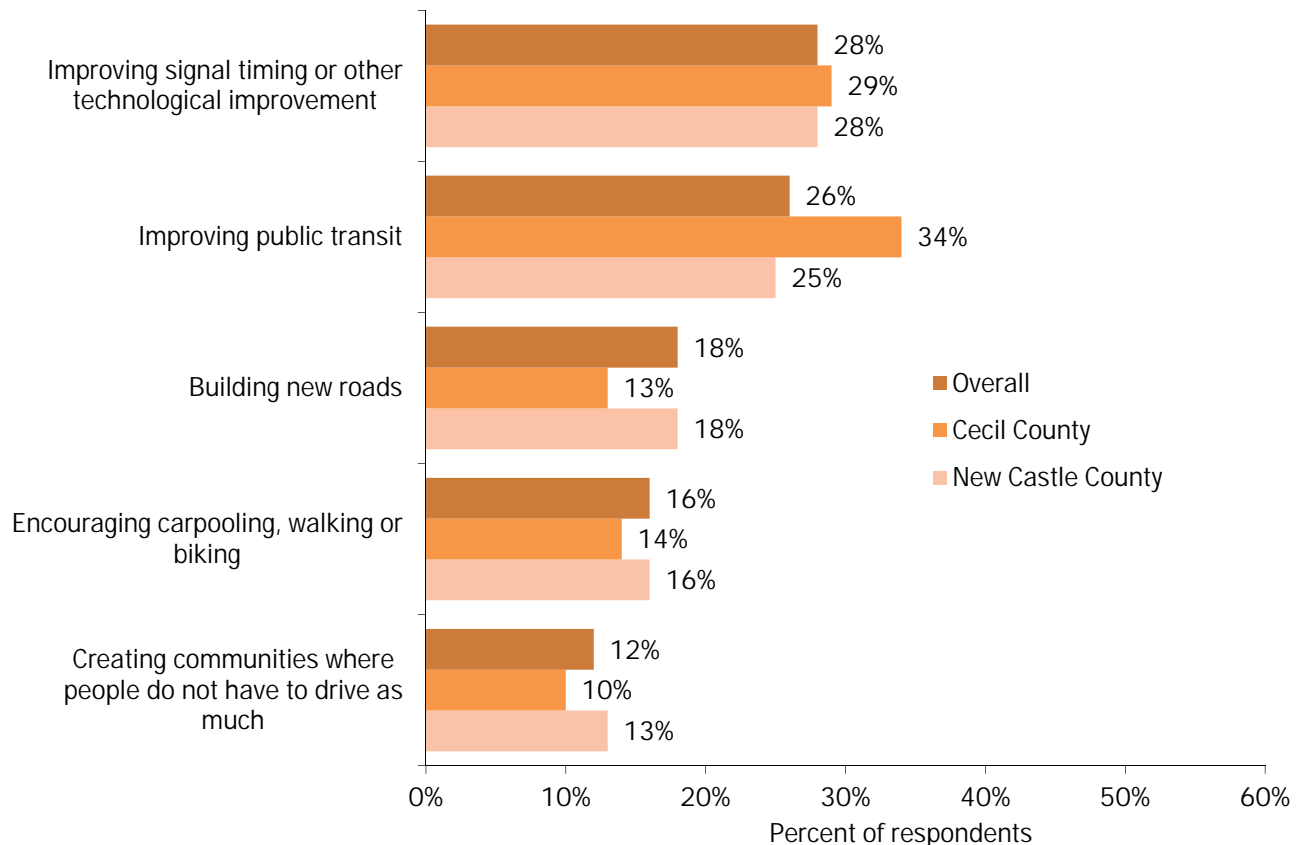
Transportation Planning and Funding

Just under half of respondents (47%) felt that transportation planning is done well in the region. Very few (15%) were aware of how transportation projects are selected, and only 10% were aware of the long-range regional transportation plan. Among those familiar with the long-range regional transportation plan, only 44% were aware of the Transportation Improvement Program.

When asked what they felt was the most effective long-term solution for reducing traffic congestion, improving signal timing or other technological improvements and improving public transit were the top choices. For Cecil County residents, improving public transit was the number one choice, with a third of respondents selecting it (see Figure 3 below).

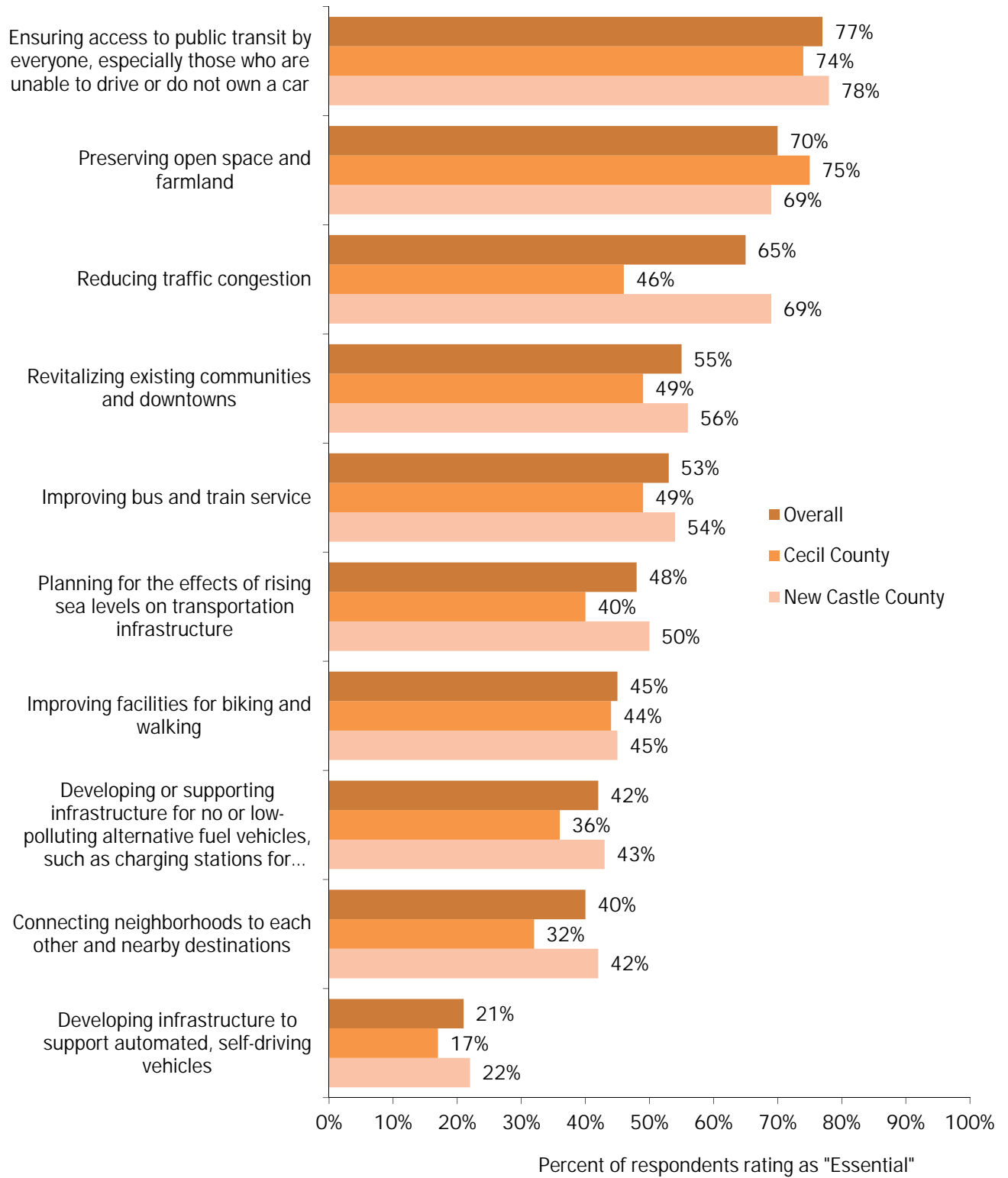
Figure 3: Most Effective Long-Term Solution to Reduce Traffic Congestion

In your opinion, which one of the following is the best long-term solution to reduce traffic congestion? Would you say...



Respondents were asked how important they felt it was to address a variety of issues. The percent rating each as Very Important (Essential) is shown in Figure 4 on the next page. Over three-quarters of respondents rating ensuring access to public transit by everyone as an essential issue to address. Preserving open space and farmland was considered essential by 70% of respondents, followed by reducing traffic congestion, rated as essential by two-thirds of respondents overall; however, this was important for many fewer Cecil County residents (46%). Revitalizing existing communities and downtowns and improving bus and train service were also considered essential by over half of respondents.

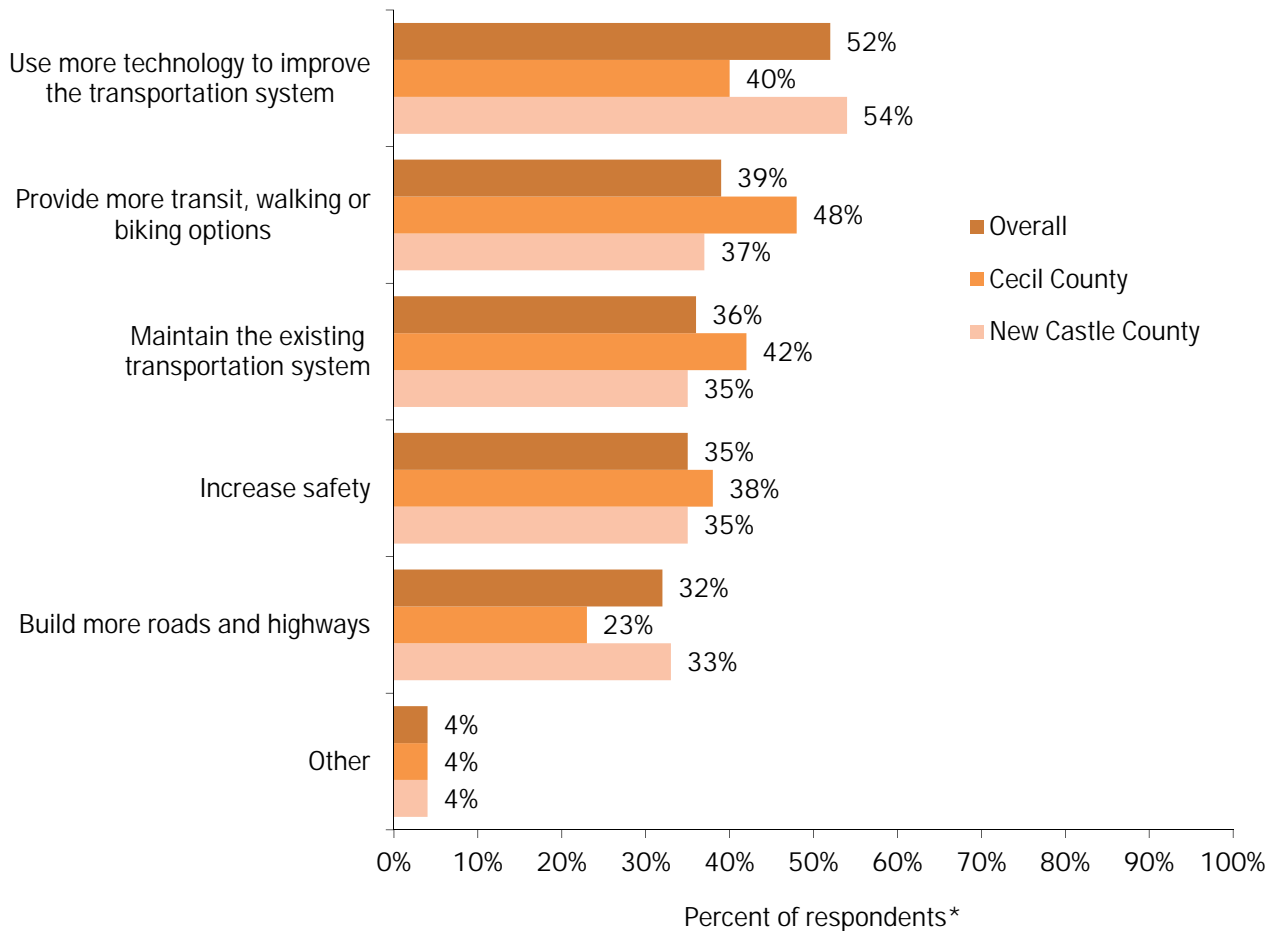
Figure 4: Ratings



Respondents could choose two types of transportation projects from a list of five which they thought should have the highest funding priority. Using technology to improve the transportation system was the top choice among New Castle County respondents, selected by just over half of those interviewed. However, among Cecil County respondents, the top choice was providing more transit, walking or biking options (see Figure 5 below).

Figure 5: Highest Priority for Transportation Funding

I am going to read you a list of five types of transportation improvements. I'd like you to tell me which TWO you think should receive the highest priority for funding?*

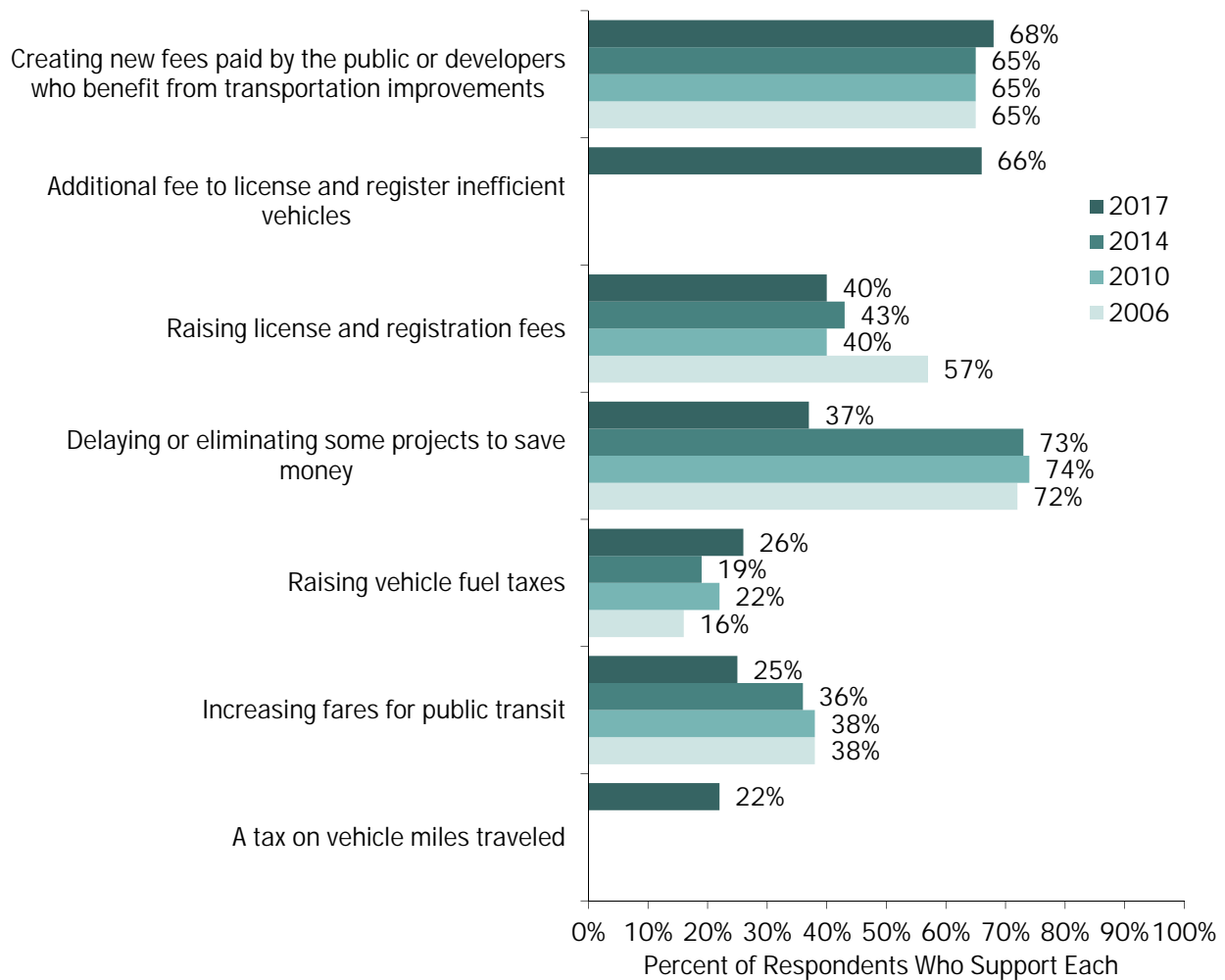


*Percents may add to more than 100% as respondents could give more than up to two answers

Respondents were also asked whether they thought more funding should be devoted to bicycling walking and public transit use. About three-quarters of respondents agreed, and this was similar among Cecil County and New Castle County residents.

As in previous surveys, those interviewed were asked if they would support or oppose various funding methods for transportation projects. In past years, the option with the greatest support was delaying or eliminating some projects to save money, with support from nearly three-quarters of respondents. However, in 2017, only a third of respondents supported this option (see Figure 6 below). The top choices in 2017 were creating new fees to be paid by the public or developers who benefit from transportation improvements and an additional fee to license and register inefficient vehicles, with support from two-thirds of respondents. The item about increased fees for inefficient vehicles was new in 2017, while the development fees received similar support on previous surveys.

Figure 6: Support for Various Funding Methods for Transportation Projects

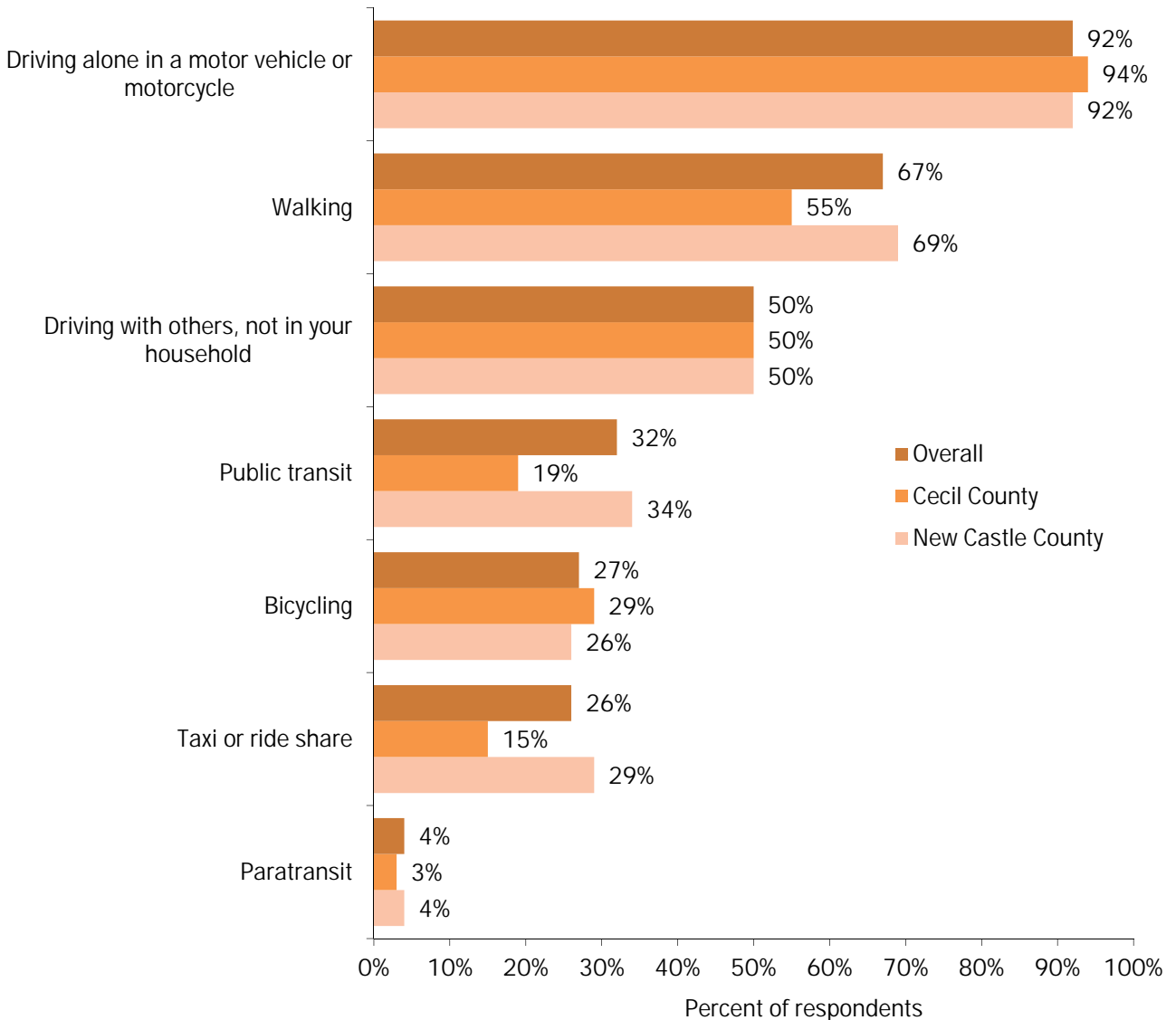


For some of the items, support was similar among New Castle and Cecil County residents, but there were a few differences. Cecil County residents were much less likely to support raising tolls (22% compared to 49% among New Castle County residents) and a little less likely to support raising vehicle fuel taxes, a vehicle miles traveled tax, raising vehicle licences and registration fees or an additional fee to license and register inefficient vehicles. However, Cecil County residents were more likely to support increasing fares on public transit (33% compared to 22% among New Castle County residents).

Transportation Mode Choices

Nearly all respondents reported having driving alone in a motor vehicle or motorcycle, but nearly 1 in 10 respondents had not done so (see Figure 7 below). About two-thirds of respondents in New Castle County had walked, but about 15% fewer in Cecil County had done so. Public transit use was also lower among Cecil County residents, with 19% having ever done so compared to 32% of New Castle County residents. Cecil County residents were also less likely to have used a taxi or ride share, 15% compared to 26% of New Castle County residents.

Figure 7: Percent of Respondents “Ever” Using Each Mode of Transportation



Respondents were asked how often a lack of transportation prevented them from participating in activities such as visiting friends and family, or attending social activities, grocery shopping, getting medical care or other essential errands. About 3% said a they problems with accessing transportation “always” and another 14% “sometimes” had a problem.

Growth and Development

When asked whether they agreed or disagreed that development and transportation projects should be concentrated to areas with higher population and employment, and projects in rural areas should be limited to those that maintain existing systems and improve safety, about two-thirds of respondents overall and in each of the counties agreed, while about one-third disagreed.

Virtually no respondents believed it was “never” appropriate to mix office and retail with residential development, while over 80% felt it was “sometimes appropriate. Overall, 15% felt it was always appropriate, but this was a bit lower in Cecil County (9%) than in New Castle County (16%).

Awareness of Air Quality Programs

In Cecil County, 17% of respondents had heard of the Air Quality Partnership of Delaware, roughly similar to the 14% who had heard of it in 2010 and 20% from 2010.

Just under 20% of respondents had heard of Air Quality Action days; 17% in New Castle County and 19% in Cecil County. Half or more of respondents in 2006, 2010 and 2014 had heard of Ozone Action Days, indicating that Air Quality Action days are not yet as well known.

Familiarity with WILMAPCO

Most respondents (69%) had not heard of the Wilmington Area Planning Council (WILMAPCO) before taking the survey, about the same proportion as in previous years. Those in New Castle County were a bit more likely to have been familiar with WILMAPCO (32%) than those in Cecil County (25%).

Most of the suggested ways in which WILMAPCO could engage with residents were considered effective by between 6 and 7 in 10 respondents (see Figure 8 below).

Figure 8: Effectiveness of Ways WILMAPCO Could Engage with Residents

