

Analyzing Public Attitude About San Angelo Transportation Needs



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Prepared for the San Angelo Metropolitan Planning Organization

by

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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Methodology.....	1
Data Presentation Overview	1
Data Presentation: Section I.....	2
Table 1	2
Table 2	2
Data Presentation: Section II.....	3
Figure 1	3
Figure 2	4
Figure 3	5
Figure 4	6
Figure 5	7
Figure 6	8
Figure 7	9
Figure 8	10
Figure 9	11
Figure 10	12
Figure 11	13
Figure 12	14
Figure 13	15
Figure 14	16
Figure 15	17
Data Presentation: Section III	18
Table 3	18
Table 4	20
Table 5	22
Table 6	23
Table 7	24
Summary	25

Introduction

The San Angelo Metropolitan Planning Organization (SAMPO) coordinates transportation planning in the Tom Green County region in cooperation with the Texas Department of Transportation, the Federal Highway Administration, and the Federal Transit Administration. SAMPO is in the process of evaluating and updating the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP). Evaluation and updating are necessary so that SAMPO can plan and program future transportation improvements within the region. In addition, the MTP can be used to support the creation of transportation linkages with other Texas cities and substantiate funding requests.

SAMPO conducted a survey within Tom Green County in an effort to understand the transportation needs and transportation concerns of their constituents. More specifically, the survey was designed to identify users, their needs, and their attitudes toward the quality of existing transportation services. In addition, respondents were asked to identify transportation problems, prioritize elements to include in the MTP, and identify acceptable financing methods when constructing new highways. The purpose of this report is to describe the responses to the survey.

Methodology

Two thousand surveys were mailed to residents of Tom Green County. To enhance the return rate, individuals were encouraged to return their surveys by August 19, 2004, to be eligible for a drawing for a \$50.00 Walmart gift certificate, an introductory flying lesson at Mathis Field, and a one year subscription to Texas Highways Magazine. Consequently, 266 surveys were completed for a return rate of more than 13 percent.

Data Presentation Overview

This part of the report consists of three sections. The first section presents a table showing the demographics of the *typical* respondent (Table 1) and a table describing how respondents heard about the survey (Table 2). The second section includes frequency/percentage tables and graphics that depict the distribution of responses for most of the survey questions (Figure 1 - Figure15). The third section includes tables that depict important transportation problems (Table 3), the priority levels of elements to include in the MTP (Table 4), preferred financing methods for highway construction (Table 5), and various important issues (Table 6) as perceived by the respondents. The last table in the section, Table 7, presents a distribution of the number of comments offered by respondents.

Data Presentation: Section I.

Table 1
The Typical Respondent

Characteristic	Modal Response	%
Area of residence (zip code)	76904	43.3
Time Living in Current Address	>20 Years	37.6
Age Group	40-59	46.6
Gender	Male	54.7
Ethnicity	White	78.6
Household Income	>\$50,000	49.1

The purpose of Table 1 is to identify the *typical* respondent to the SAMPO survey. Of special interest is the fact that respondents belong to an older and higher income group that has some residential stability within the community. Specifically, about 46 percent of the respondents were in the 40-59 age group, more than 48 percent have a household income of at least \$50,000, and more than 37 percent have lived in San Angelo for more than 20 years. These results lend some support to the theory that citizens of higher socioeconomic groups are more active in completing and returning surveys of this type.

Table 2
How did you hear about the survey?

Response	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Received through the mail	68.8	68.8
Picked up survey From an organization	24.3 1.9	95.0
Newspaper	2.3	97.3
Word of mouth	1.5	98.8
Received survey through e-mail	.8	99.6
Broadcast media	.4	98.6
Totals	100.0	

Table 2 describes how respondents heard about the survey. The table clearly shows that the majority received their survey through the mail (68.8 percent). The table also shows that many (26.2 percent) picked the survey up from some location or organization.

Data Presentation: Section II.

Figure 1
Distribution of Respondent's Neighborhood

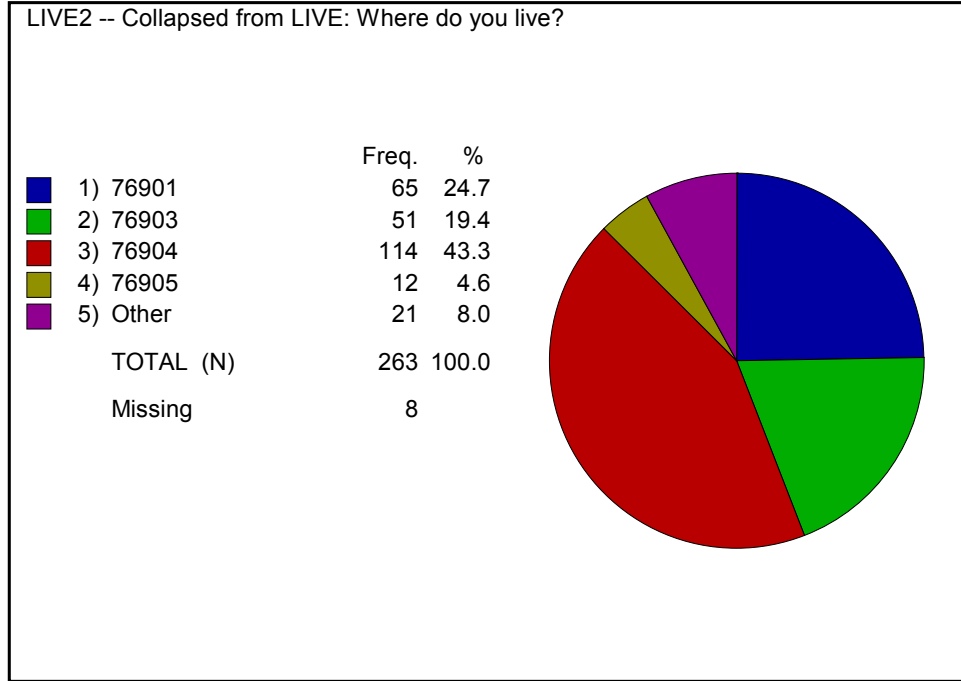


Figure 1 shows that most of the respondents live within the 76901, 76903, and 76904 zip codes. **Note:** the “other” category was expanded to include survey responses to the “other” category and residents living in zip code 76906.

Figure 2
Length of Time Residing in Current Residence

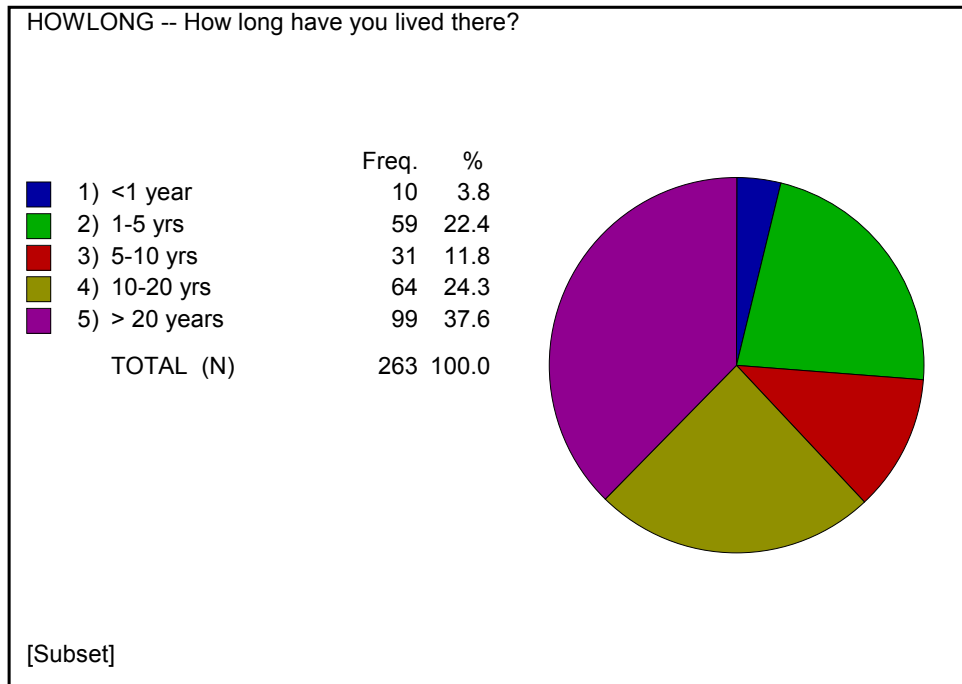
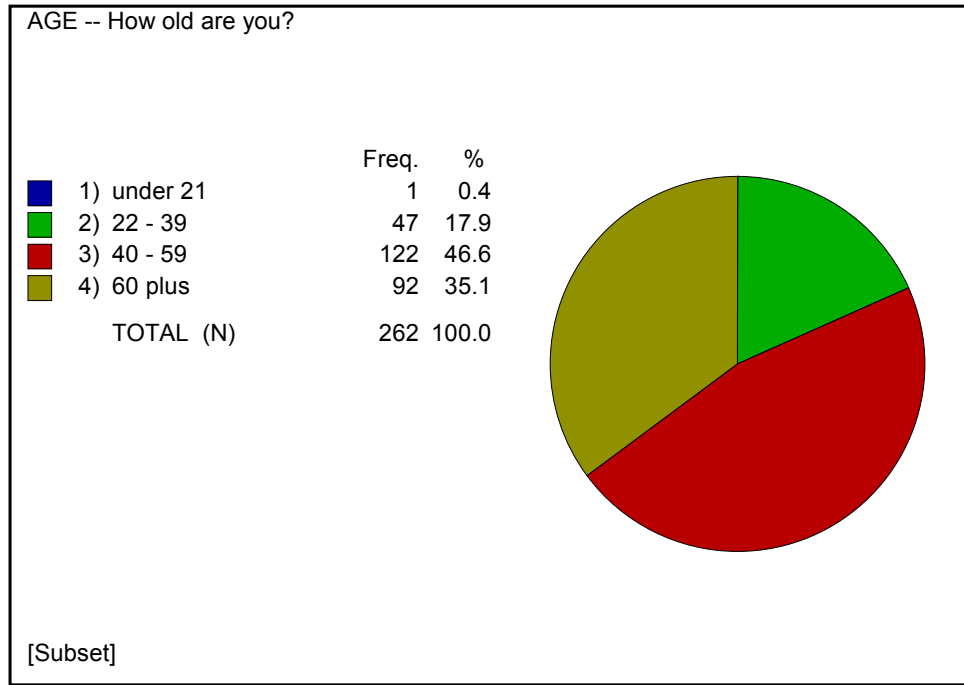


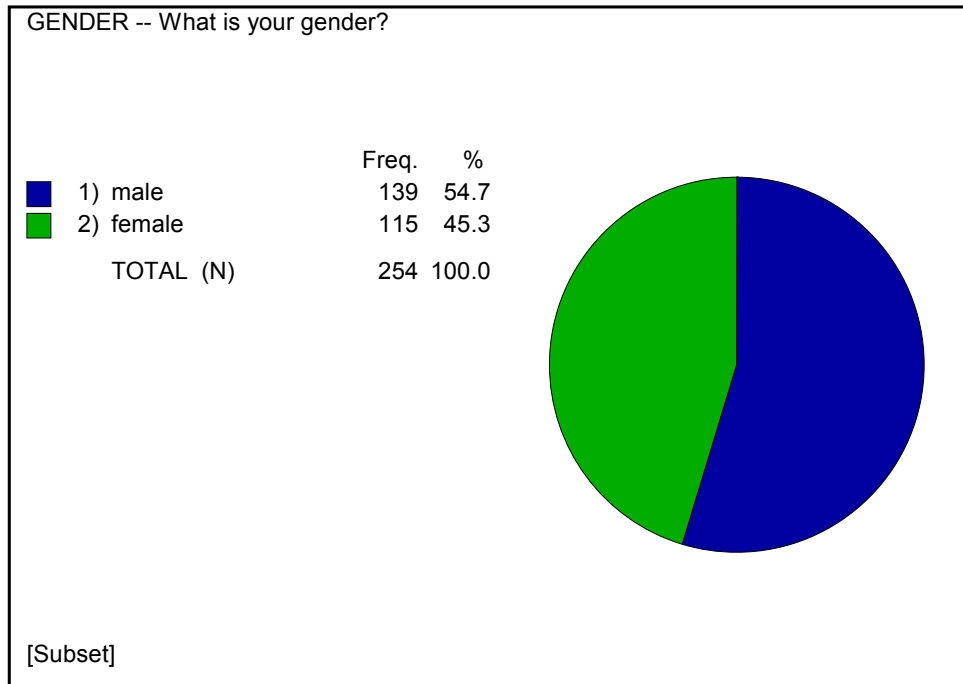
Figure 2 shows that almost 62 percent of the respondents have lived in their current residence in excess of ten years. This suggests some residential stability within the sample group.

Figure 3
Distribution of Respondent's Age



The figure shows that only about 18 percent of the respondents are at least 39 years of age. About 35 percent are senior citizens.

Figure 4
Distribution of Respondent's Gender



The figure shows that the majority of the respondents (54.7 percent) are male.

Figure 5
Respondent's Ethnicity

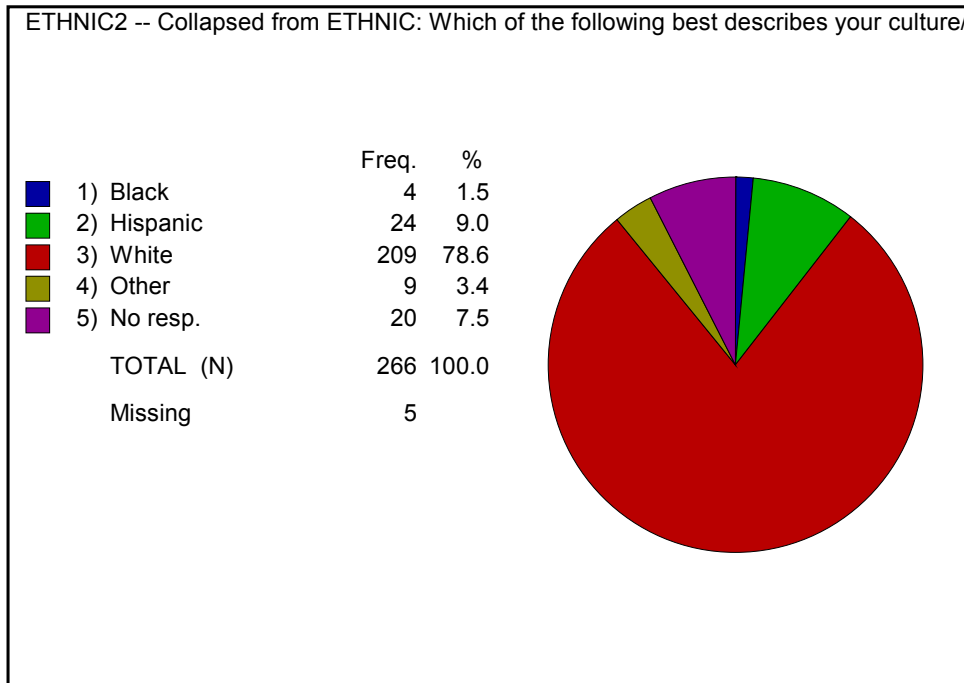
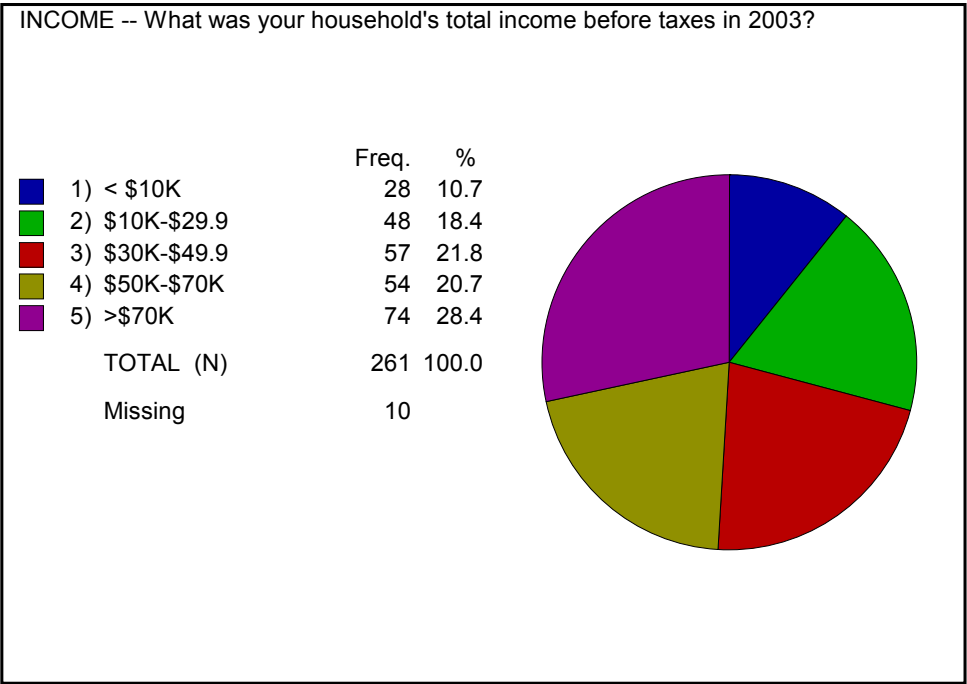


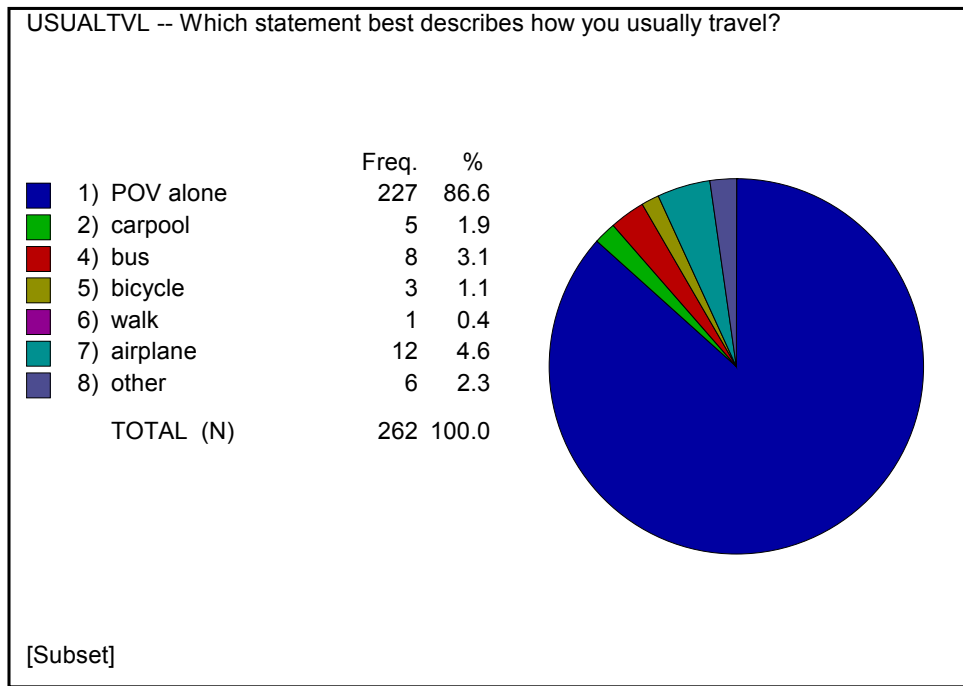
Figure 4 shows that whites make up the majority (78.6%) of the respondents. Of the other ethnic backgrounds, 9 percent report that they are Hispanic. Almost 5 percent of the respondents reported that they belong to an ethnicity group other than white or Hispanic. Interestingly, more than 7 percent did not wish to respond.

Figure 6
Respondent's Household Income



Most of the respondents (49.1 percent) report an annual household income of more than \$50,000. Another 21.8 percent reported their household earnings ranged from \$30,000-\$49,999 a year. Only about 11 percent reported earnings less than \$10,000 per year.

Figure 7
Usual Mode of Travel



It is not surprising that almost 87 percent of the respondents reported that they use their private vehicles as their usual mode of transportation. Like most Americans, San Angelo's residents prefer the independence they experience when using their own vehicles.

Almost 3 percent of the survey comments addressed this question (See Table 7). There was no modal response.

Figure 8
Alternative Mode of Transportation

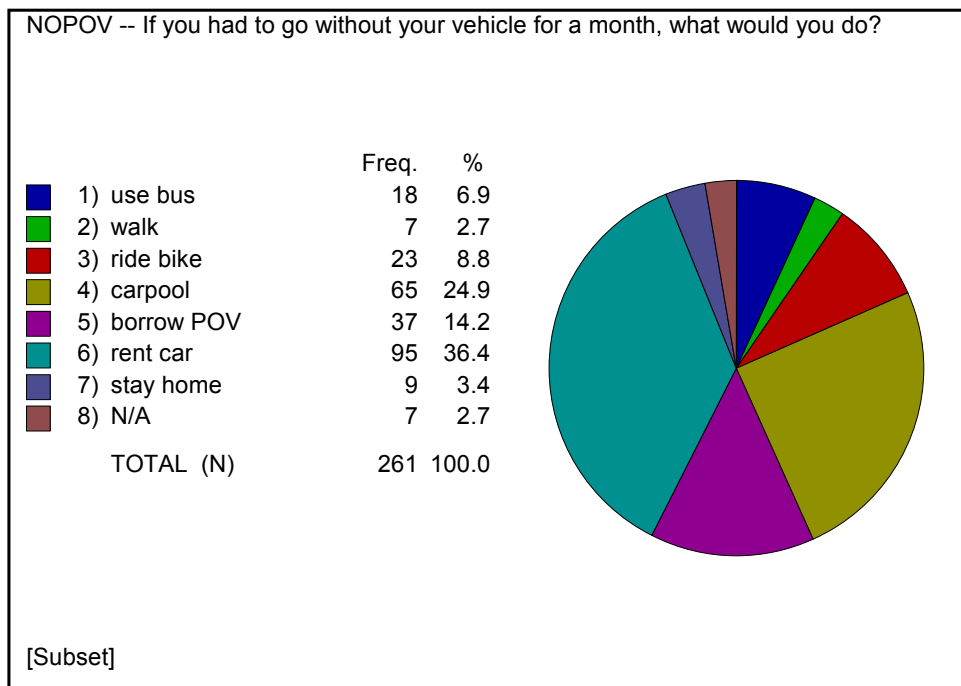
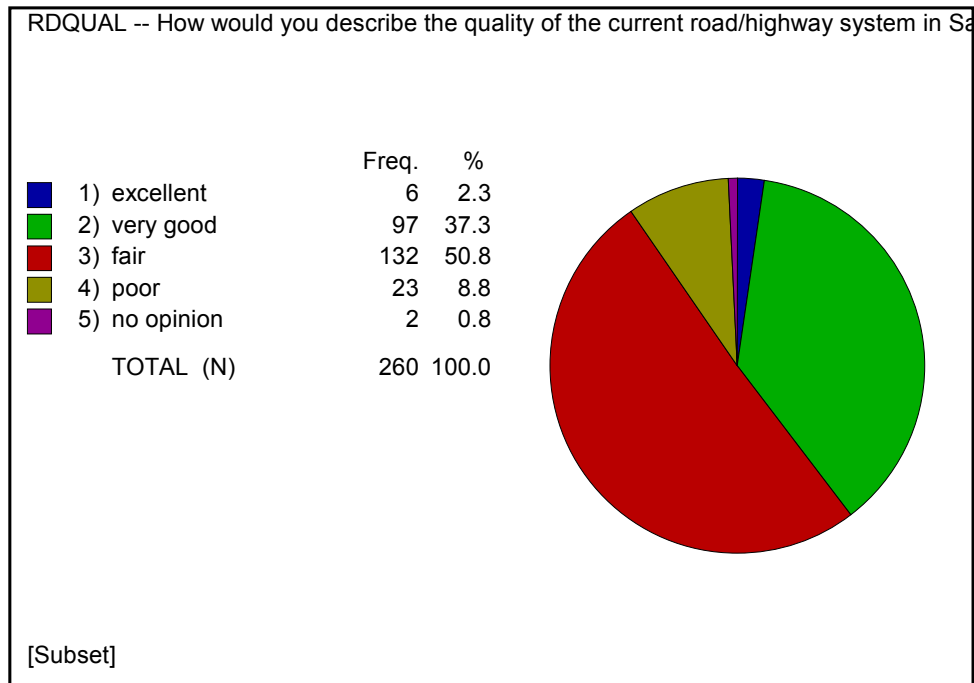


Figure 8 implies that respondents would still prefer some independence if they go without their vehicle for a month. For example, more than 50 percent would rent, or borrow, a car to satisfy their transportation needs.

Almost 3 percent of the survey comments addressed this question (See Table 7). There was no modal response.

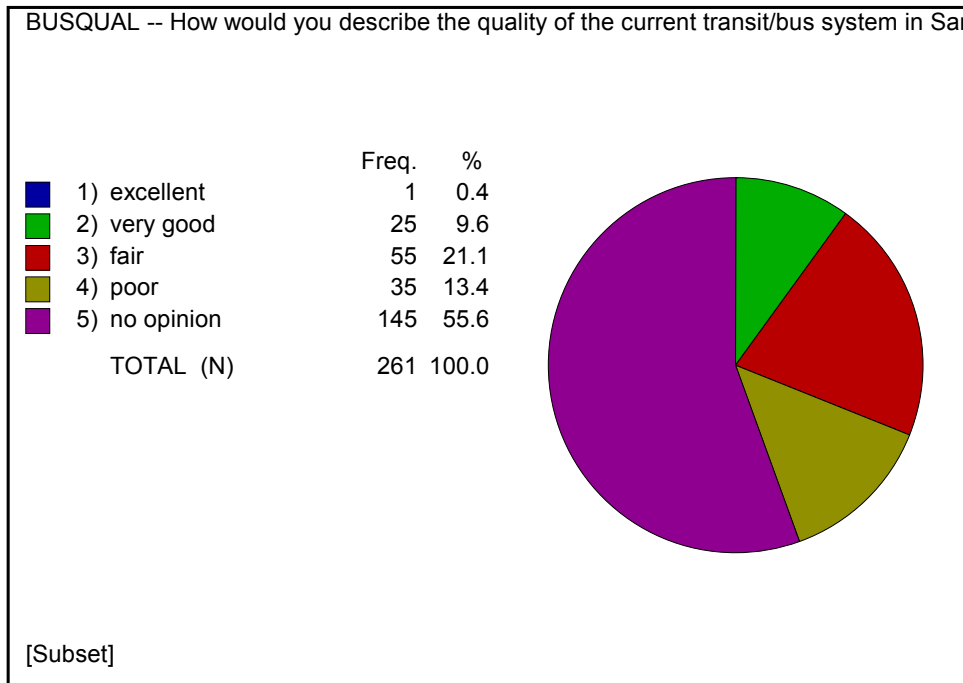
Figure 9
Attitude About Current Road/Highway System



The figure shows that more than 90 percent of the respondents consider the quality of the current road/highway system in San Angelo to be *fair* or *excellent*.

More than 9 percent of the survey comments addressed this question (See Table 7). Most respondents believe that the road surface throughout the city is poor. Several others expressed their concerns about the lack of interstate highway connections.

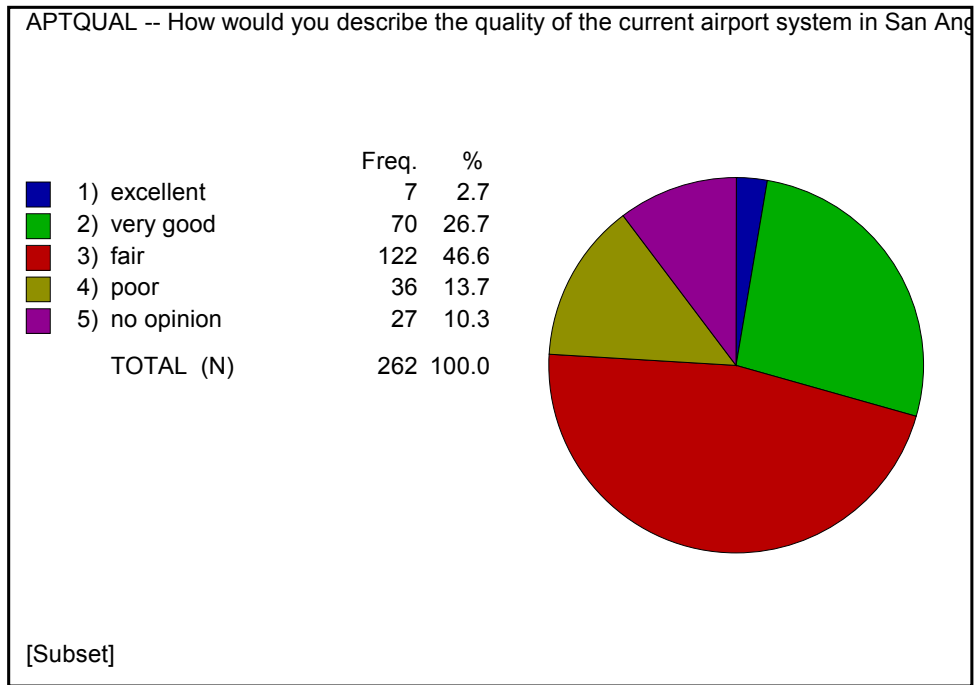
Figure 10
Attitude About Current Transit/Bus System



The figure shows that about 56 percent of the respondents did not have an opinion about the quality of the current transit/bus system in San Angelo. Only one respondent rated the service quality as *excellent*.

More than 9 percent of the survey comments addressed this question (See Table 7). Most respondents said that they never use the bus system. Several others expressed their concerns about the lack of efficient service. For example, there are not enough bus stops, the system does not operate long enough, and there are not enough routes.

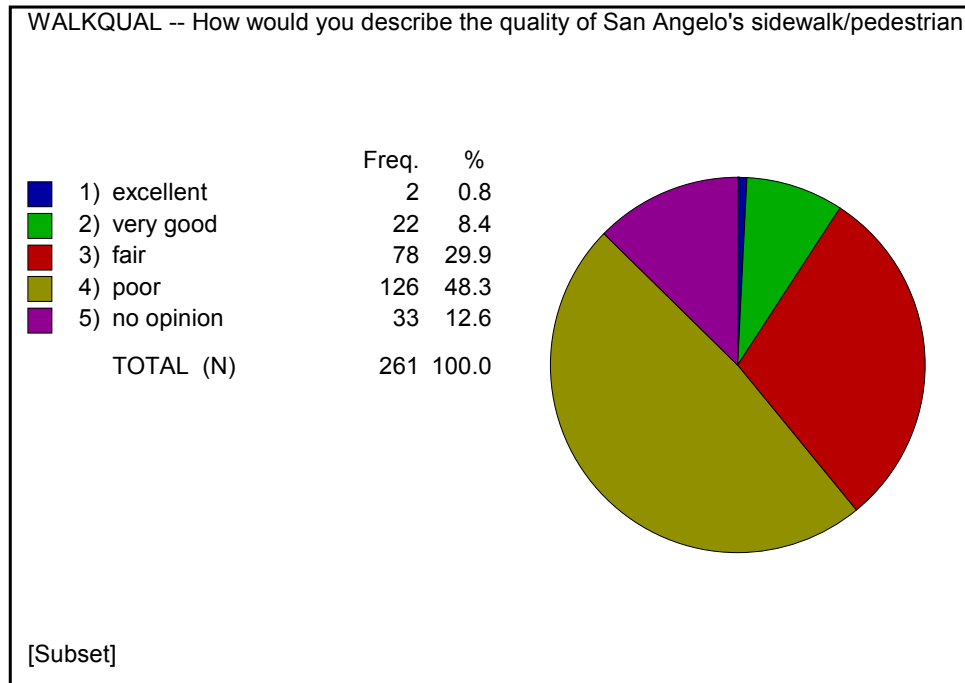
Figure 11
Attitude About Current Airport System



Seventy percent of the respondents consider the quality of the current airport system in San Angelo to be *fair* or *excellent*.

More than 9 percent of the survey comments addressed this question (See Table 7). Most respondents commented about the lack of service to other destinations. Several others expressed their concerns about the cost of existing service.

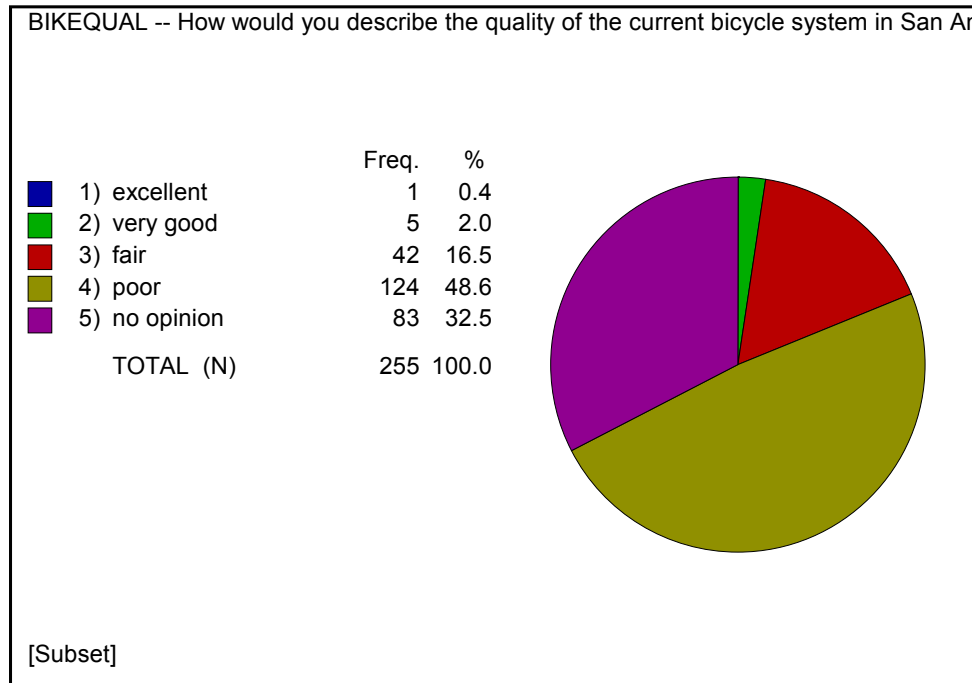
Figure 12
Attitude About Current Sidewalk/Pedestrian System



Many of the respondents are unhappy about the quality of the current sidewalk/pedestrian system in San Angelo. The figure, for example, shows that more than 48 percent of the respondents consider the quality of the system to be *poor*.

Almost 10 percent of the survey comments addressed this question (See Table 7). Most respondents were concerned about the lack of sidewalks throughout the city.

Figure 13
Attitude About Current Bicycle System



The attitude respondents have about San Angelo’s bicycle system is similar to their attitude about the quality of the current sidewalk/pedestrian system in San Angelo. That is, most of the respondents consider the quality of the system to be *poor* (48.6 percent). Only six respondents consider the system to be *very good* or *excellent*.

More than 10 percent of the survey comments addressed this question (See Table 7). Most respondents were concerned about the lack of bicycle lanes throughout the city. Several others believe that bicyclists are a traffic hazard.

Figure 14
Attitude About Current Rail System

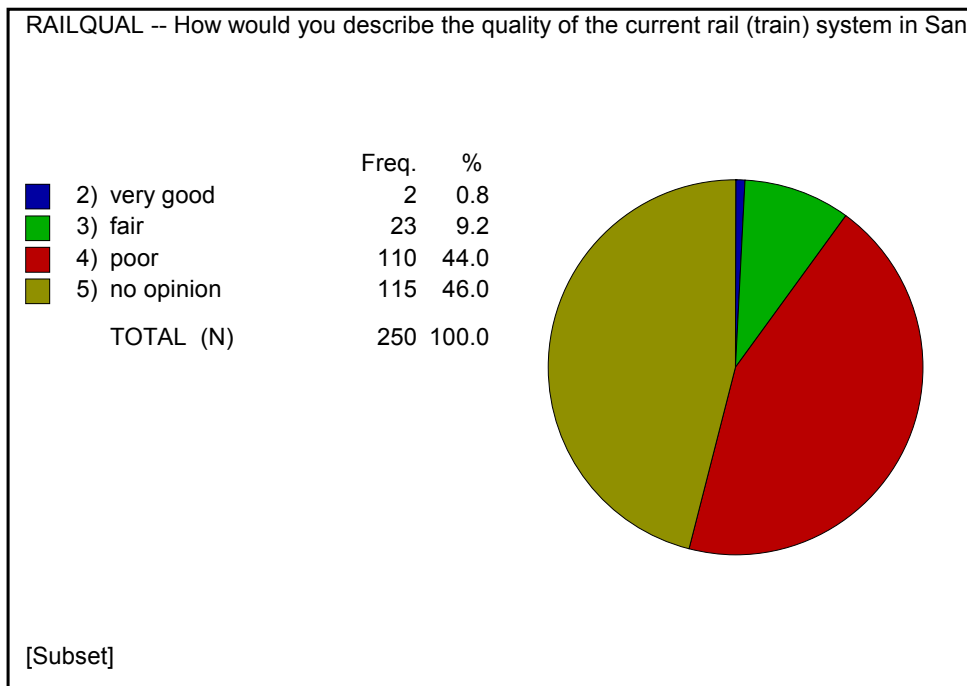
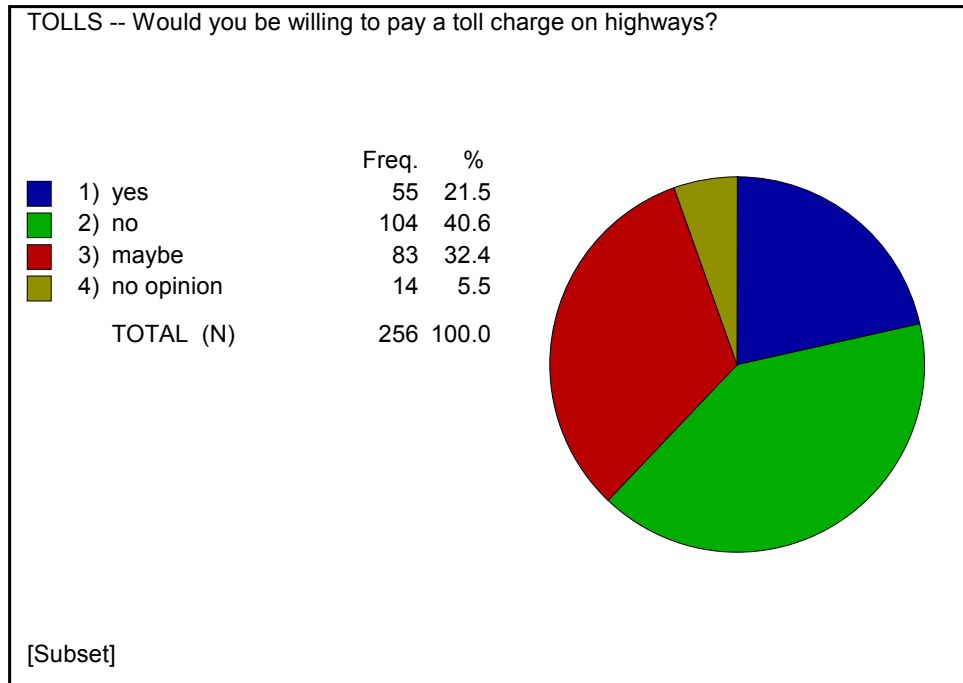


Figure 14 is similar to Figure 12 and Figure 13; most of the respondents are not happy with the current rail system.

Almost 11 percent of the survey comments addressed this question (See Table 7). Most respondents were concerned about the lack of rail service for the city.

Figure 15
Attitude Toward Toll Charges



While most (40.6 percent) of the respondents are not willing to pay a toll charge on highways, more than 32 percent would be willing under the right conditions. Respondents commented, for example, that they would be willing to pay a toll charge if a computerized pass could be purchased and used in an express lane. Others would be willing to pay a toll charge if the charge was eliminated after construction.

Data Presentation: Section III.

**Table 3
Important Transportation Problems**

Problem	1	2	3	Score
Need for improved signal timing	79	53	26	369
Pavement conditions	48	32	24	232
Lack of destinations for air travel	24	36	26	170
Lack of sidewalks	17	23	30	127
Lack of 4-lane access to the interstate highway system	23	16	9	119
Other	18	6	17	83
Lack of bike lanes	6	23	18	82
Lack of access to public transit	12	13	10	72
Congestion problems	8	14	13	65
Unsafe roads	10	7	11	55
Need improvements to railroad crossings	6	6	16	46
Accident/construction delays	5	10	7	42
Lack of passenger rail service	3	4	21	38
Need improved access to the airport	0	2	3	7

Score: Calculated by summing the following:

Number of respondents considering the problem to be most important * 3

Number of respondents considering the problem to be second most important * 2

Number of respondents considering the problem to be third most important * 1

Example: Need for improved signal timing

Most important: $79 * 3 = 237$

Second most important: $53 * 2 = 106$

Third most important: $26 * 1 = 26$

Total: 369

Based on the scores, Table 3 shows that most respondents consider the need for improved signal timing to be one of the three most important transportation problems. Respondents considered the second and third most important transportation problems to be pavement conditions (232), and lack of destinations for air travel (170). Few were concerned about the lack of passenger rail service (38) and the need for improved access to the airport (7).

More than 12 percent of the survey comments addressed this question (See Table 7). Many respondents were concerned about the number of rude and careless drivers in San Angelo. Several others believe street flooding is a serious transportation problem.

Table 4
Priority of Elements in the MTP

MTP Element	Priority levels 1-5 # of Responses	Score
Maintain existing roads	197	812
Build new roads	147	520
Provide non-stop roadway access	143	451
Expand the local transit system	138	401
Add more bicycle lanes	129	337
Add more sidewalks	118	296
Expand railroad services	101	255
Expand airport services	107	246
Some other transportation service	2	9

Priority levels 1-5 # of Responses = Number of respondents that prioritized the element from one to five.

Score: Calculated by summing the following:

- Number of respondents considering the element as their first priority * 5
- Number of respondents considering the element as their second priority * 4
- Number of respondents considering the element as their third priority * 3
- Number of respondents considering the element as their fourth priority * 2
- Number of respondents considering the element as their fifth priority * 1

Example: Maintain existing roads

- First: $123 * 5 = 615$
- Second: $13 * 4 = 52$
- Third: $36 * 3 = 108$
- Fourth: $12 * 2 = 24$
- Fifth: $13 * 1 = 13$

Total: 812

Based on the scores, Table 4 shows that most respondents consider the need to maintain existing roads to be one of the three most important MTP priorities. Respondents considered the second and third most important MTP priorities to be the construction of new roads (520), and the need to provide non-stop roadway access (451). It is interesting to note that respondents prioritized the expansion of railway services (255) higher than the expansion of air services (246). Only

two respondents prioritized some other element.

More than 6 percent of the survey comments addressed this question (See Table 7). There was not a modal response.

Table 5
Attitude Toward Financing Methods

Source	1	2	3	Score
Toll charges	234	78	27	339
POV registration fee	135	90	49	274
Gasoline tax	93	82	30	205
Sales tax	102	66	25	193
None	135	6	10	151
Car parts tax	24	50	26	100
Other	36	12	4	52
Property tax	15	12	11	38

Score: Calculated by summing the following:

Number of respondents considering the source of funding to be the most acceptable * 3
 Number of respondents considering the source of funding to be the second most acceptable * 2
 Number of respondents considering the source of funding to be the third most acceptable * 1

Example: Toll charges

Most acceptable: $78 * 3 = 234$
 Second most acceptable: $39 * 2 = 78$
 Third most acceptable: $27 * 1 = 27$

Total: 339

Based on the scores, Table 5 shows that most respondents consider toll charges as the most acceptable way to finance new highway construction (339). Respondents considered the second and third most acceptable financing methods to be the use of a vehicle registration fee (274) and increases in gasoline taxes (205).

More than 7 percent of the survey comments addressed this question (See Table 7). Some respondents thought that alternative financing sources should include “sin” taxes and valorem added taxes.

Table 6
Important Issues

Issue	1	2	3	Score
Water Issues	91	50	33	406
Economy/jobs	54	59	49	329
Education/school funding	60	48	48	324
Healthcare	36	57	47	269
Insurance	10	19	38	106
Transportation	2	14	24	58
State budget	5	9	13	46
Other	2	0	3	9

The scores, which were calculated as in the above tables, show that respondents are extremely concerned about water issues (406). They are also concerned about the economy (329), education issues (324), and to some lesser degree healthcare issues (269).

Only a little more than 3 percent of the survey comments addressed this question (See Table 7). There was not a modal response.

**Table 7
Respondent's Comments**

Survey Question	Number	Percentage	Cumulative %
Most important transportation problem	44	12.6	12.6
Quality of rail system	38	10.9	23.5
Quality of bicycle system	36	10.3	33.8
Quality of sidewalk/pedestrian system	34	9.7	43.5
Quality of transit/bus system	33	9.4	52.9
Quality of current airport system	32	9.1	62.0
Quality of current highway system	32	9.1	71.1
Toll charge	27	7.7	78.7
Most acceptable financing of highways	27	7.7	86.4
Most important element to include in the MTP	21	6.0	92.4
Alternative travel	9	2.6	95.0
Usual travel mode	9	2.6	97.7
Most important issue	8	2.3	100.0

More than 12 percent of the comments addressed the city's most important transportation problem. A look at Figure 8 through Figure 14 reveals that most respondents did not have a favorable attitude about transportation services. Thus, it is not surprising that more than 58 percent of the respondents gave comments that addressed the quality of existing transportation services.

Summary

The purpose of this report is to describe the responses to a survey administered by SAMPO to two thousand residents of Tom Green County. SAMPO conducted the survey in an effort to understand the transportation needs and transportation concerns of their constituents. More specifically, the survey was designed to identify users, their needs, and their attitudes toward the quality of existing transportation services. In addition, respondents were asked to identify transportation problems, prioritize elements to include in the MTP, and identify acceptable financing methods when constructing new highways.

To enhance the return rate, individuals were encouraged to return their surveys by August 19, 2004, to be eligible for a drawing for a \$50.00 Walmart gift certificate, an introductory flying lesson at Mathis Field, and a one year subscription to Texas Highways Magazine. Consequently, 266 surveys were completed for a return rate of more than 13 percent.

The data analysis section of the report consists of three sections. The first section presents a table showing the demographics of the *typical* respondent (Table 1) and a table describing how respondents heard about the survey (Table 2). The second section includes frequency/percentage tables and graphics that depict the distribution of responses for most of the survey questions (Figure 1 - Figure 15). The third section includes tables that depict important transportation problems (Table 3), the priority levels of elements to include in the MTP (Table 4), preferred financing methods for highway construction (Table 5), and various important issues (Table 6) as perceived by the respondents. The last table in the section, Table 7, presents a distribution of the number of comments offered by respondents.

Respondents to the survey belong to an older and higher income group that has some residential stability within the community. Specifically, about 46 percent of the respondents were in the 40-59 age group, more than 48 percent have a household income of at least \$50,000, and more than 37 percent have lived in San Angelo for more than 20 years (Table 1). These results lend some support to the theory that citizens of higher socioeconomic groups are more active in completing and returning surveys of this type.

Table 2 clearly shows that the majority received their survey through the mail (68.8 percent). The table also shows that many (26.2 percent) picked the survey up from some location or organization.

It is not surprising that almost 87 percent of the respondents reported that they use their private vehicles as their usual mode of transportation (Figure 7). Like most Americans, San Angelo's residents prefer the independence they experience when using their own vehicles.

The results imply that respondents would still prefer some independence if they go without their vehicle for a month. For example, more than 50 percent would rent, or borrow, a car to satisfy their transportation needs (Figure 8).

Respondents have mixed feelings about the quality of transportation services in San Angelo. More than 90 percent of the respondents, for example, consider the quality of the current

road/highway system in San Angelo to be *fair* or *excellent* (Figure 9). In addition, 70 percent of the respondents consider the quality of the current airport system in San Angelo to be *fair* or *excellent* (Figure 11).

On the other hand, many of the respondents are unhappy about the quality of the current sidewalk/pedestrian system in San Angelo. More than 48 percent of the respondents, for example, consider the quality of the system to be *poor* (Figure 12). Additionally, the attitude respondents have about San Angelo's bicycle system is similar to their attitude about the quality of the current sidewalk/pedestrian system in San Angelo. That is, more than 48 percent most of the respondents consider the quality of the bicycle system to be *poor* (Figure 13). Figure 10 shows that about 56 percent of the respondents did not have an opinion about the quality of the current transit/bus system in San Angelo. Only one respondent, however, rated the service quality as *excellent*. Most respondents said that they never use the bus system and several others expressed their concerns about the lack of efficient service. For example, there are not enough bus stops, the system does not operate long enough, and there are not enough routes. Last, most of the respondents are not happy with the current rail system and were concerned about the lack of rail service for the city (Figure 14).

While most (40.6 percent) of the respondents are not willing to pay a toll charge on highways, more than 32 percent would be willing under the right conditions (Figure 15). Respondents commented, for example, that they would be willing to pay a toll charge if a computerized pass could be purchased and used in an express lane. Others would be willing to pay a toll charge if the charge was eliminated after construction.

Based on the scores, Table 3 shows that most respondents consider the need for improved signal timing to be one of the three most important transportation problems. Respondents considered the second and third most important transportation problems to be pavement conditions and the lack of destinations for air travel. Many respondents also expressed their concern about the number of rude and careless drivers in San Angelo. Several others believe the city should repair street infrastructures to alleviate street flooding is a serious transportation problem.

Most respondents consider the need to maintain existing roads to be one of the three most important MTP priorities (Table 4). Respondents considered the second and third most important MTP priorities to be the construction of new roads and the need to provide nonstop roadway access.

Most respondents consider toll charges as the most acceptable way to finance new highway construction (Table 5). Respondents considered the second and third most acceptable financing methods to be the use of a vehicle registration fee and increases in gasoline taxes. Some respondents thought that alternative financing sources should include "sin" taxes and valorem added taxes.

Respondents are also extremely concerned about water issues. They are also pessimistic about the economy, the education system, and to some lesser degree healthcare issues (Table 6).