

Public still favours building new highways and roads in Ontario: Poll

Spiro Papuckoski - Mar 14, 2024

A new survey suggests Ontario residents continue to be in favour of investments in new highways and roads.

And the same poll found respondents don't agree with recent comments from Steven Guilbeault, the federal environment minister, who told a Montreal audience last month that his Liberal government should "stop investing in new road infrastructure."

The poll, commissioned by the Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario (RCCAO) and the Ontario Road Builders Association (ORBA), showed a majority of respondents (55%) were in support of building Hwy. 413, while 28% were opposed.

The results were more evenly split among women over 55 years of age.

The proposed 52-kilometre route would connect the existing Hwy. 401 and the 407 ETR interchange at the Halton–Peel boundary to Hwy. 400 north of Vaughan.

The Bradford Bypass, a 16-kilometre link between Hwys. 400 and 404 north of Newmarket, had similar support in the poll, with 56% of respondents in favour of the route being built while 24% were opposed.

Support for the proposed highways were virtually unchanged from a previous poll done in June 2021, while opposition has increased 5% and 9% respectively.

Meanwhile, more than half of respondents (55%) disagreed with the statement that the federal government should stop investing in new roads, while 33% agreed.

"Ontarians have made it clear that they want all levels of government to invest in new and existing road infrastructure to alleviate congestion and open up more economic opportunities," Nadia Todorova, executive director of RCCAO, said in a news release.

"It is time for the federal government to accept the will of the people and support transformational infrastructure. Projects like Hwy. 413 and the Bradford Bypass, and their supporting transit pairings, will better enable the movement of people and goods throughout one of North America's fastest growing regions."

Support for the future projects cut across all political lines, including respondents who didn't identify with a provincial party.

The Ontario government argues the new highways will connect residents to major employment centres and help ease traffic congestion by reducing travel times.

Opponents point to the loss of fertile farmland and negative impacts on waterways and woodlands, while arguing single-vehicle use would not help cut down carbon emissions.

“At a time when we are facing a climate emergency, when it is becoming increasingly clear that our inability to address it is leading us towards a worst case scenario, continuing to base our communities around a reliance on cars as the primary mode of transportation is extremely irresponsible,” [says the Simcoe County Greenbelt Coalition](#).

The study was conducted from Feb. 28 to March 1 among a sample of 1,959 Ontario residents who are members of Maru Blue’s online panel.