



## 2005 Air Quality & Transportation Telephone Tracking Survey FINAL EXECUTIVE HIGHLIGHTS REPORT

MARCH, 2005

### AIR QUALITY ISSUES

#### Assessment of Sacramento Area Smog

- ❖ Residents in the Sacramento region are concerned about the quality of air in the area. The 30% who said smog was a "very serious" problem were more likely to be college-educated, non-drivers, and live in high-density developments. Over time, attitudes appear to have shifted, in that air pollution is not considered as serious an issue of environmental concern as it was ten years ago.
- ❖ When asked to think about air quality over the past two years, about half of those surveyed believe it has deteriorated in the region as a whole.
- ❖ The vast majority believe the air quality in their own particular neighborhood is the same or better than that in other areas in the region. Respondents in El Dorado AQMD and Yolo/Solano AQMD felt that the air quality in their neighborhoods was better than that of other areas, while respondents in the City of Sacramento were more likely to say it was about the same.
- ❖ Residents hear about air pollution primarily from the media, including television, newspaper, and radio. Use of a particular source for air pollution information varied by demographic characteristics. While television remains the most common information source, significantly more people access the Internet for this type of information now than in the past.

#### Effect on Household Health

- ❖ About 26% of regional respondents reported that someone in their household had difficulty breathing during periods of unhealthy air last summer. The frequency of these reports varied by respondent demographics.
- ❖ Regionally, fewer respondents reported household breathing problems this year than in previous survey years.

### DRIVING AND TRANSPORTATION HABITS

#### Type of Vehicle

- ❖ The majority of drivers in the region own newer vehicles, but approximately 30% own and operate a 1990 or older model year vehicle. Among commuters that drive alone to work, 7% said they usually travel in a vehicle that is over 15 years old.

## **Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District**

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- ❖ While the proportion of hybrid vehicle drivers is small (2% of drivers regionally), it is higher than the proportion in last year's survey (less than 1%).

### **Use of Vehicle**

- ❖ All but 8% of respondents reported driving at least one mile per week. Among the rest, the median number of miles driven per week was 100. The amount of driving has generally remained consistent over the last four years.
- ❖ Approximately 85% of employed respondents commute to and from work, and the majority (75%) drive alone. The median number of miles from home to work is 10. The percentage of commuters as well as those commuters who drive alone to and from work has generally remained stable over the past 10 years.

### **Use of Alternative Transportation**

- ❖ About half of the drivers interviewed also used alternative transportation for some trips instead of driving their own vehicles. In general, the proportion of drivers who used alternative transportation has remained about the same since 2001, with the exception of last year.
- ❖ Carpooling was the most common form of alternative transportation used by regional drivers, with 58% riding with others at least once a month. At least once a week, 48% of drivers walk, 44% carpool, 17% ride a bus, 18% use light rail, and 13% ride a bicycle to their destination. Use of alternative transportation varied by demographic characteristics.

## **RESPONSE TO GAS PRICE INCREASES**

### **Overall Impact of Gasoline Price Increases**

- ❖ The gasoline price increases in the fall of 2005 caused serious concern among the majority of residents surveyed, with 32% considering it to have been a "very serious" problem. The level of concern varied by demographic characteristics.

### **Effect on Gasoline Buying Behavior**

- ❖ As a result of rising gas prices, respondents are trying to consume less by (in rank order):
  1. shopping around for less expensive gasoline,
  2. driving less around town or on car vacation trips, and
  3. using the more fuel-efficient vehicle more frequently (among those who have more than one vehicle).
- ❖ Ways to reduce gas consumption differed by demographic characteristics.
- ❖ Nearly half (46%) of those surveyed had to cut back in other areas of spending because of the increase in gas prices.
- ❖ The majority of respondents felt that gas prices would remain steady (34%) or go up (39%) in the next year, while 20% anticipate a decrease.

## REGIONAL ISSUES

### Overall Participation in Community Activities

- ❖ About half of those surveyed consider themselves to be actively involved in community activities and events, but fewer than 10% are “very” active.
- ❖ Community activism appears to be increasing.

### Future Housing Preference

- ❖ Over the last five years, support has shifted away from single-family neighborhoods and towards high-density housing. Since 2000, preference for the low-density option has significantly decreased from 56% to 49%. However, in both years a significant larger proportion of respondents still favor single-family homes over the alternative of high-density, compact developments.
  - When asked about the two future housing strategies separately, respondents showed significantly more support for future high-density developments (48%) than for single-family neighborhoods (42%).
  - However, when respondents were asked to choose between the two strategies, neighborhoods of single-family homes (49%) were significantly more popular than high-density developments (41%).
  - The two demographic features that distinguished preferences for future housing were ethnicity and education. Respondents who were better educated and who identified their ethnicity as Caucasian were more likely to prefer the high-density option.

### Smog Check Program

- ❖ California’s Smog Check program is well-known among Sacramento regional residents: about half said they were “somewhat” familiar and a further 41% reported being “very” familiar with the program.
- ❖ The majority of respondents supported the retesting of vehicles that fail a smog check again in one year (not two). Two other proposals were also supported.

These conclusions are based on a telephone survey of 1,354 residents in the Sacramento Metropolitan area, which was conducted in November and December, 2005. The plurality of respondents was female, Caucasian, between the ages of 35 and 54, held a college degree, and had household earnings of less than \$60,000. They were homeowners, living in single-family neighborhoods, with no children (under 18), and are registered to vote. They were employed full-time with a regular work schedule at a private company and work and live in the same county.