

Transit Tax Finds Backing

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Triangle voters are leaning in favor of a proposed local sales tax increase to pay for bus and rail transit improvements, according to a poll commissioned by a pro-transit business group.

The Regional Transportation Alliance backs legislation that would give Wake, Durham and Orange county residents the power to increase the local sales tax by one-half percent to cover most of the cost of major projects.

The poll of 1,006 registered voters found that 49.1 percent favored the legislation and 42.1 percent opposed it, with the rest undecided. Asked whether they would vote to tax themselves if the proposed half-penny tax was on a local referendum ballot, a larger share said yes - 52.8 percent, with 43.7 percent opposed.

The numbers for Wake County alone were less favorable on the transit sales tax. The enabling legislation was opposed by 47.8 percent to 46.2 percent of Wake voters surveyed, while the local sales tax vote itself was supported by 50.5 percent to 46.7 percent.

Joe Milazzo II, executive director of the Regional Transportation Alliance, said the results show "a promising level of initial support, given the current focus on the economy."

The poll found that voters opposed an increase in property taxes to pay for transit, by 56.9 percent to 39.2 percent.

A bill moving through the House would authorize Triangle county commissioners to raise the sales tax by one-half percent - 5 cents on every \$10 in sales - if voters agree in a referendum.

Fallon Research conducted the poll interviews and said the margin of error on the three-county results was 3.8 percent. The margin of error on tallies from the individual counties was higher, 4.9 percent for the 404 Wake voters who participated.