

# Greater Nashua Chamber of Commerce 2014 Public Opinion Survey

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**Survey Center**

The UNH Survey Center is an independent, non-partisan academic survey research organization and a division of the UNH College of Liberal Arts.

The Survey Center conducts telephone, mail, e-mail, Internet, and intercept surveys, as well as focus groups and other qualitative research for university researchers, government agencies, public non-profit organizations, private businesses, and media clients.

Our senior staff have over 40 years experience in designing and conducting custom research on a broad range of political, social, health care, and other public policy issues.

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## Executive Summary

The University of New Hampshire Survey Center conducted a survey of New Hampshire adults for the Greater Nashua Chamber of Commerce in February, 2014. The survey was designed to gather public opinion of New Hampshire residents on several policy issues under discussion in the state including expanded gambling, passenger rail, a gas tax increase and the Northern Pass project. Five hundred nineteen (519) New Hampshire adults were interviewed by telephone between February 11 and February 19, 2014. The margin of sampling error for the survey is +/- 4.3%. (See Technical Report below for a more detailed description of survey methods.) The following figures display survey results, detailed tabular results can be found in Appendix A and Appendix B contains the survey instrument.

### KEY FINDINGS

#### GAMBLING

- A majority of NH residents, by a 58%-31% margin, favor legalizing casino gambling in the state.
- Granite Staters are split (47% support, 47% oppose) about having a casino in their city or town.
- A plurality of NH residents (43%) prefer a casino being built along the southern tier of the state.

#### COMMUTER RAIL

- NH residents favor the Capitol Corridor project to extend commuter rail into the state by a wide margin (68% favor, 7% oppose).
- Over half of NH residents say it doesn't change their opinion on rail after being told it would cost the state \$100 million in initial costs and up to \$15 million in annual operating costs.

#### NORTHERN PASS

- Support for Northern Pass has increased somewhat over the past six months with 46% now supporting and 35% opposing the project.
- Although most people have heard of Northern Pass (only 17% are not at all familiar), only 13% consider themselves very familiar with the project.
- When told the majority of Northern Pass transmission lines would be within existing rights of way, almost half (47%) of New Hampshire residents are more likely to support the project.
- Only 19% of Granite Staters would be willing to pay more in electricity rates to see the line buried.
- Nearly two thirds (64%) of residents support the state adding energy sources other than natural gas.

#### GAS TAX

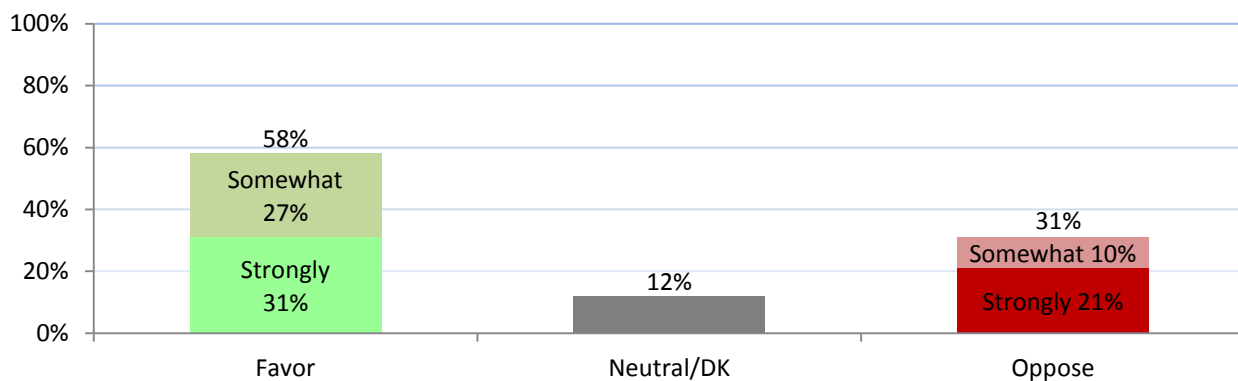
- An increase in the gas tax continues to be unpopular in the state. Granite Staters oppose an 8 to 10 cent increase by a 67%-29% margin.
- Opposition drops to a 49%-44% margin, if the increase could only be used to repair state roads and bridges.
- If given the choice, residents would prefer a one-time increase over tying it to inflation, by a 46%-28% margin.

## EXPANDED GAMBLING

A majority of New Hampshire residents—58% favor expanded gambling in the state (31% strongly and 27% somewhat), 31% oppose (21% strongly and 10% somewhat) and 12% are either neutral or unsure.

- Support for gambling is bi-partisan as majorities of Republicans (61%), Independents (58%) and Democrats (58%) favor casino gambling in the state.
- Residents with a high school education or less are *more likely* to support gambling while older residents (65 and older) are *more likely* to oppose it.
- Over the years the Granite State Poll has asked various questions with different wordings about expanded gambling in the state and these results are largely consistent with those numbers.

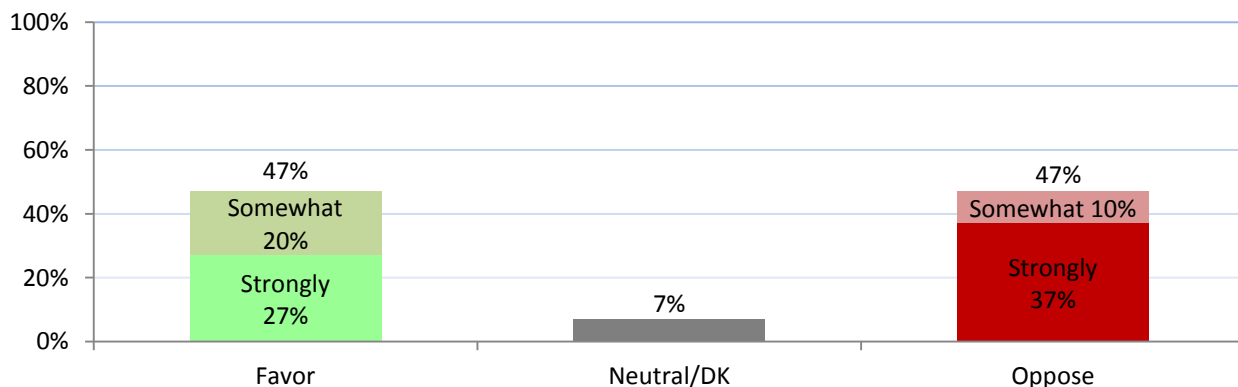
**Figure 1: Favor/Oppose Casino Gambling In New Hampshire?**



New Hampshire residents are split when asked if they would favor a casino in their city or town -- 47% favor the idea (27% strongly and 20% somewhat), 47% oppose (37% strongly and 10% somewhat), and 7% are neutral or don't know enough to say.

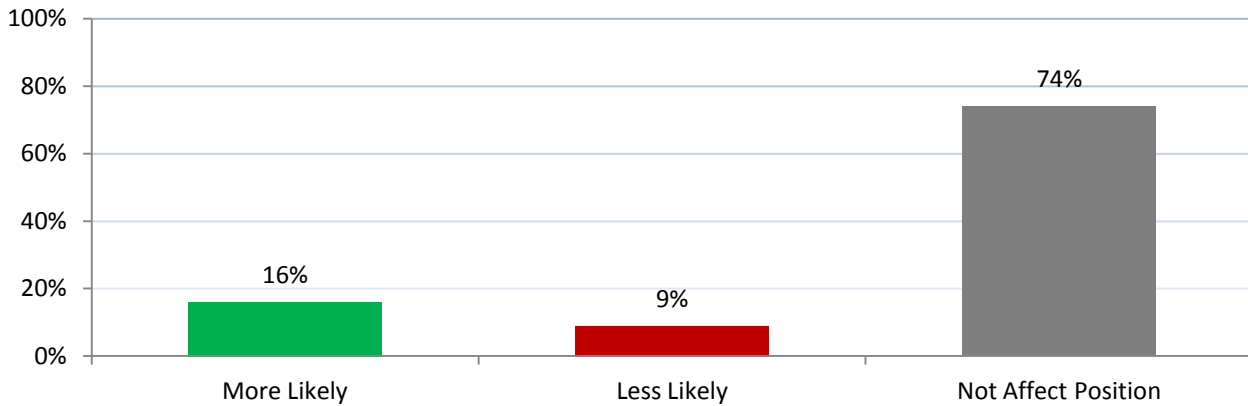
- Supporters of gambling overwhelmingly (72%) favor a casino being located in their city or town, while nearly all opponents of gambling (93%) oppose this idea. Those who are neutral or unsure on gambling are divided on this issue as 36% support and 42% oppose.
- This represents a slight decrease in support from our April 2013 Granite State Poll, when NH residents favored a casino in their town by a 53%-42% margin.

**Figure 2: Favor/Oppose Casino In Your City Or Town?**



Gambling supporters argue that by not legalizing gambling, New Hampshire will lose jobs and revenue across the border as Massachusetts plans to build three casinos. Nearly three in four (74%) residents say this doesn't affect their position, 16% are more likely to favor a casino, and 9% are less likely to favor one.

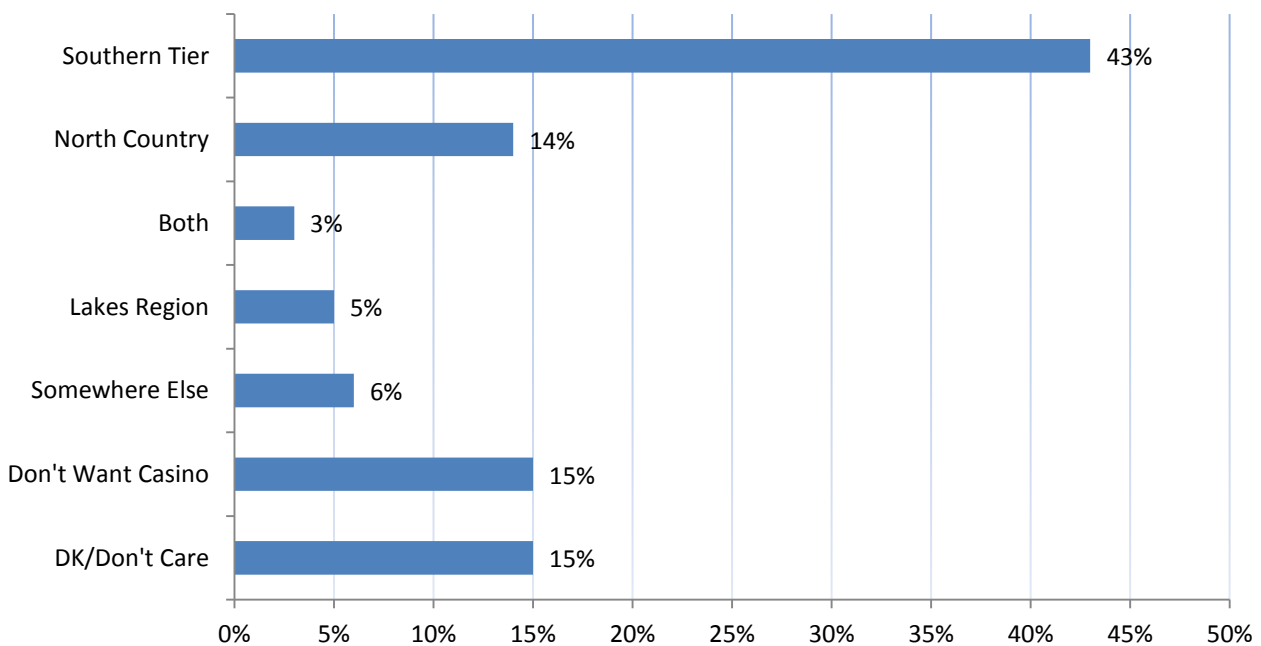
**Figure 3: More/Less Likely To Favor Casino If Massachusetts Is Building Them?**



In recent years, legislators have proposed constructing a casino along the southern tier of the state. NH residents generally agree as 43% prefer a casino along the southern tier of the state, 14% prefer the North Country, 3% said both and 15% were unsure. There were also 5% who volunteered the Lakes Region as the best location, 6% prefer somewhere else and 15% said they don't want a casino anywhere in the state.

- Central/Lakes Region residents and gambling supporters are *more likely* to prefer a casino in the southern tier.

**Figure 4: Where Should An NH Casino Be Located?**

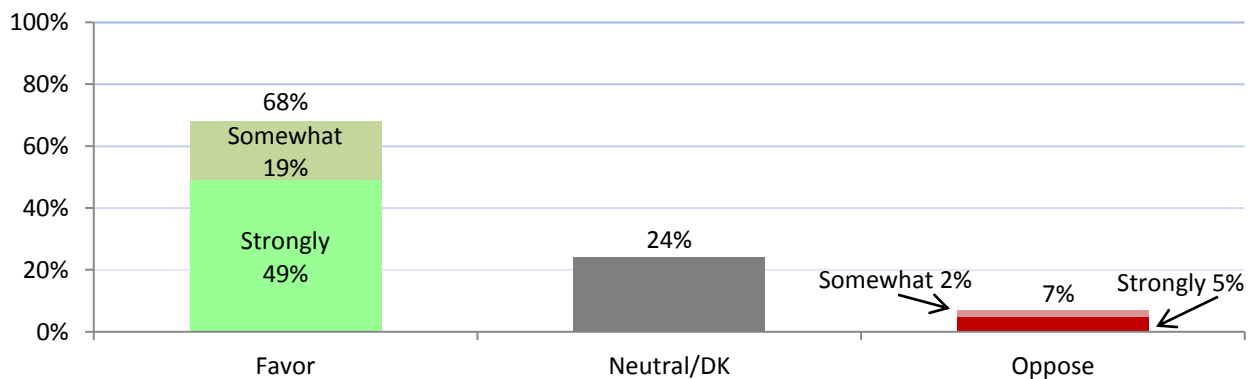


## PASSENGER RAIL

Currently, a federal study is underway to determine the feasibility of the Capital Corridor project, which would extend passenger rail from Lowell MA to Manchester with stops in Nashua, downtown Manchester and the Manchester airport. A large majority of Granite Staters (68%) favor this project (49% strongly and 19% somewhat), only 7% oppose (5% strongly and 2% somewhat) and 24% are neutral or don't know enough to say. The large percentage of respondents who say they don't know is an indication that this is not a well understood policy proposal.

- Hillsborough County residents are *more likely* to favor extending passenger rail.

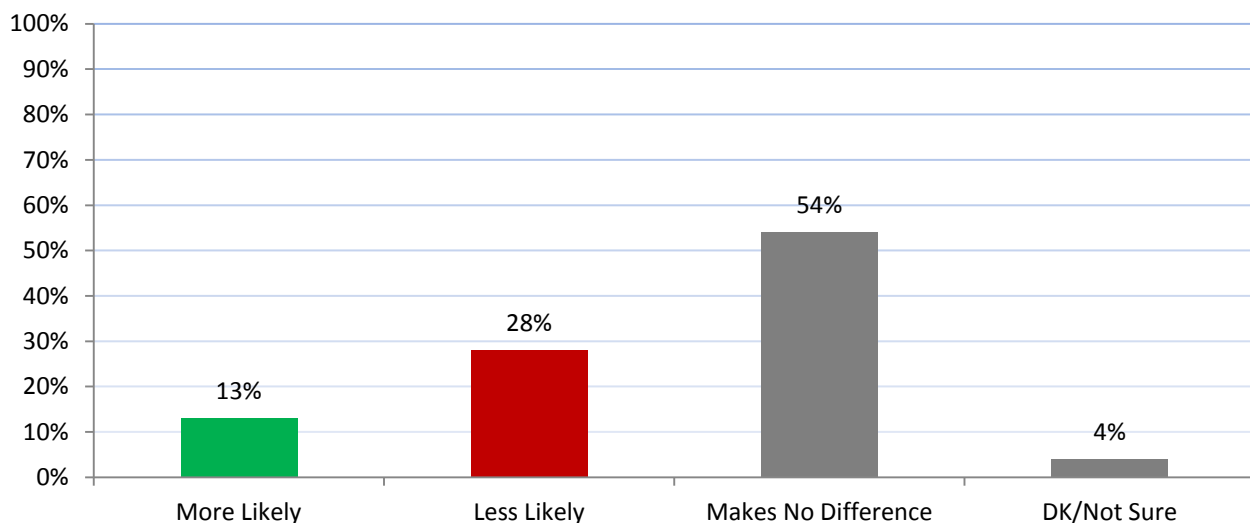
**Figure 5: Favor/Oppose Extending Commuter Rail Into New Hampshire?**



A majority of New Hampshire residents (54%) say it doesn't change their opinion on rail when hearing that this project would cost the state an initial \$100 million dollars and up to \$15 million in annual operating costs, 13% are more likely to support commuter rail, 28% are less likely to support it and 4% are unsure.

- Residents with a high school education or less and those who are either neutral on the idea of commuter rail are *less likely* to support it with this information.

**Figure 6: \$100 Million Cost For The State Make You More/Less Likely To Support Commuter Rail?**

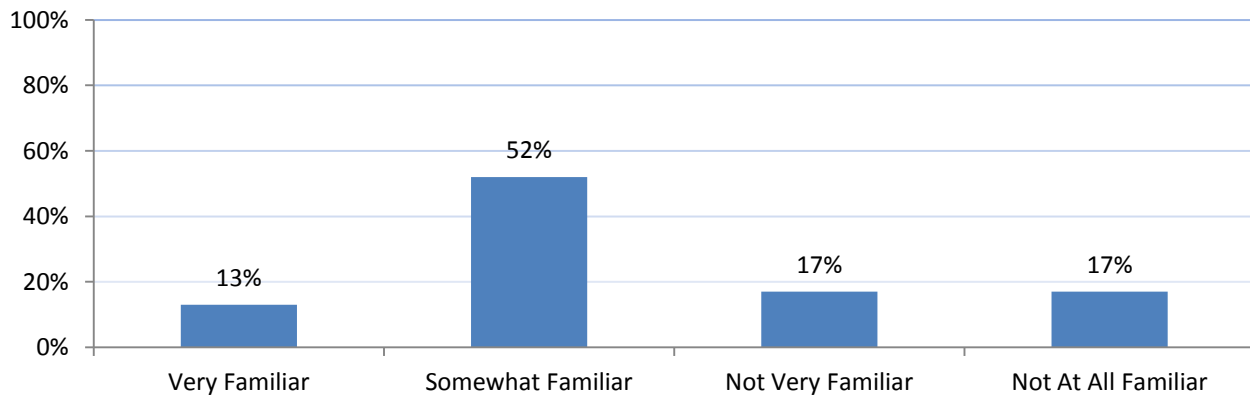


## NORTHERN PASS

Two in three New Hampshire residents have at least some familiarity with the Northern Pass project – 13% consider themselves very familiar with the project, 52% are somewhat familiar, 17% are not very familiar and 17% are not at all familiar.

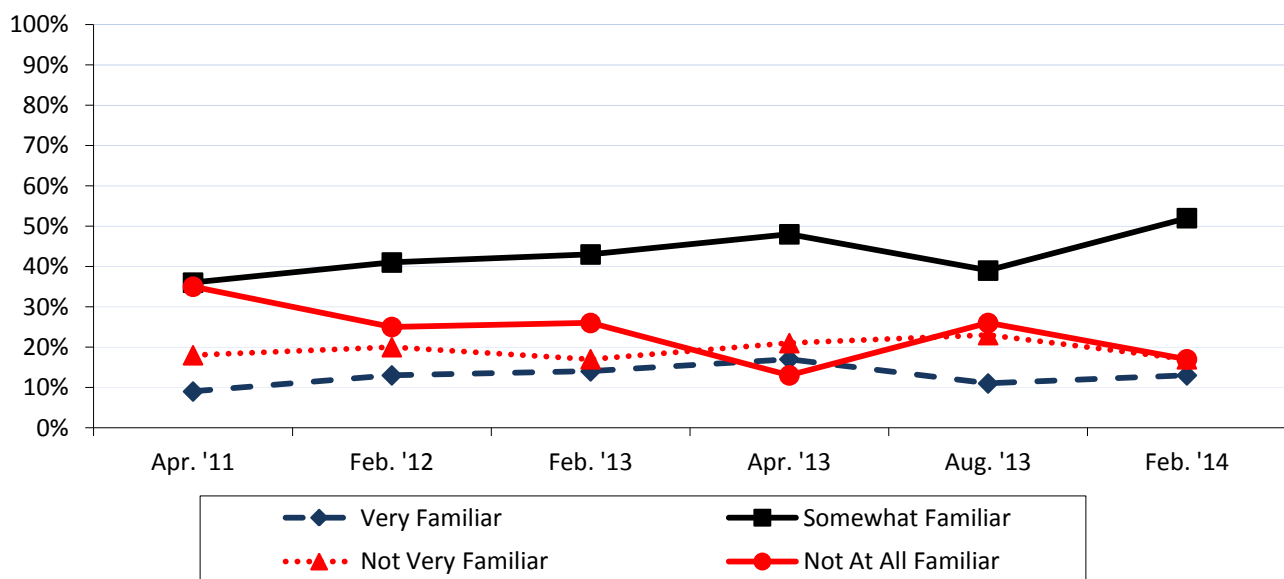
- Residents of the North Country and Central/Lakes Region are *more likely* to be somewhat familiar with Northern Pass.
- Lower income households and residents along the Massachusetts border are *more likely* to be not at all familiar.

**Figure 7: Familiarity With Northern Pass**



These numbers are largely consistent with our Granite State Poll tracking data over the last three years. The percentage of residents who are somewhat familiar with the project has been trending upwards while the percentage of residents who are not at all familiar has been trending downwards.

**Figure 8: Northern Pass Familiarity Tracking Data**

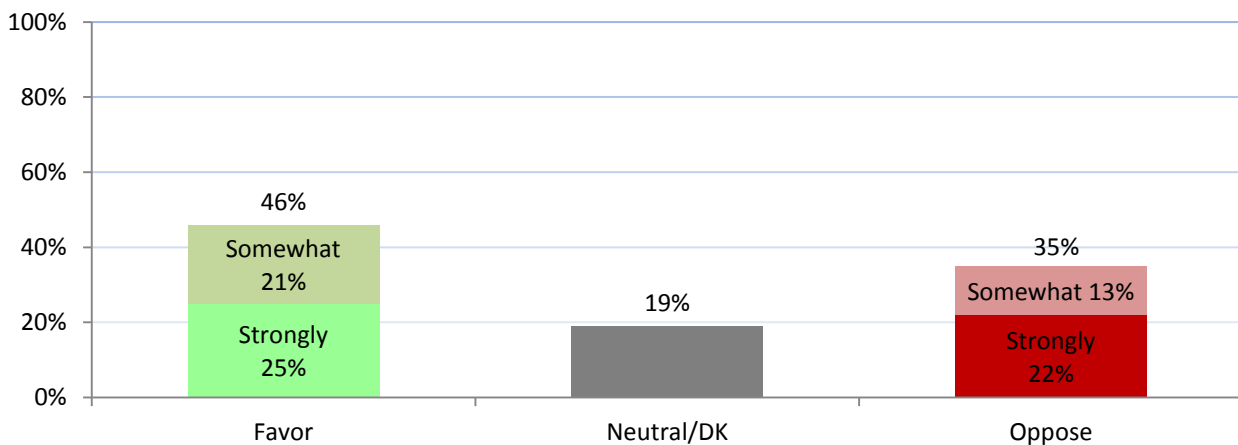




A plurality of New Hampshire residents (46%) favor the Northern Pass project (25% strongly and 21% somewhat), 35% oppose it (22% strongly and 13% somewhat) and 19% are neutral or unsure.

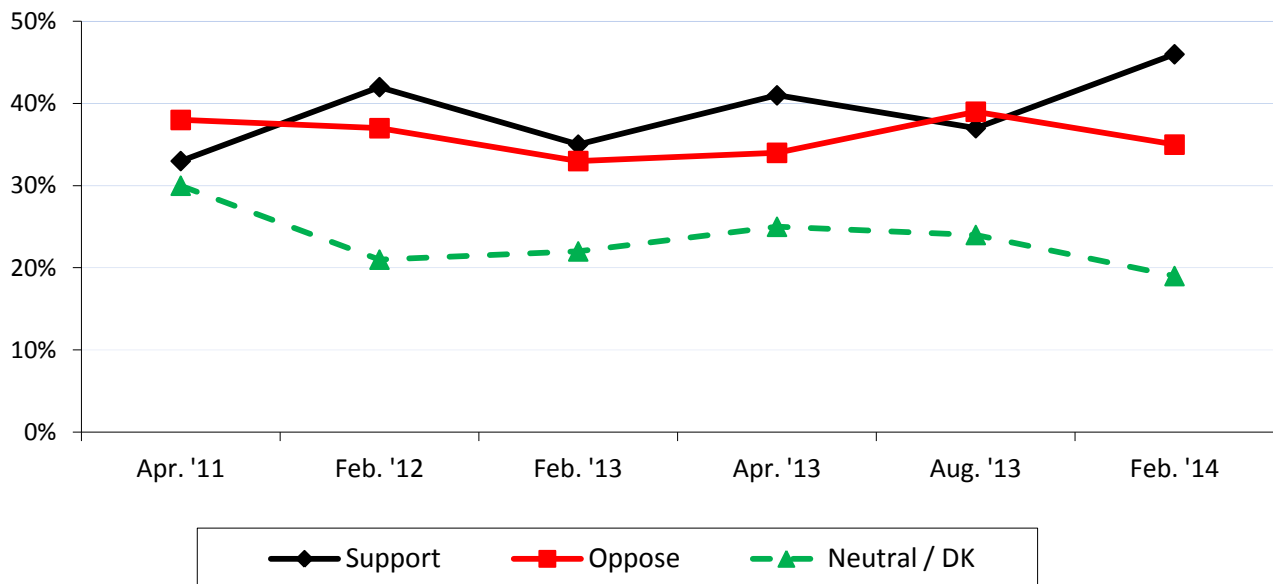
- Hillsborough County residents are *more likely* to support the project while residents of the North Country and Lakes Region are *more likely* to oppose it.
- Those who consider themselves very familiar with the project have the strongest opinions on the project as 44% strongly support Northern Pass and 38% strongly oppose it.
- Political independents and households earning between \$75,000 and \$100,000 are *more likely* to support the project.

**Figure 9: Favor/Oppose Northern Pass Project?**



These figures represent a high point for Northern Pass support, but opposition continues to hover in the high 30's.

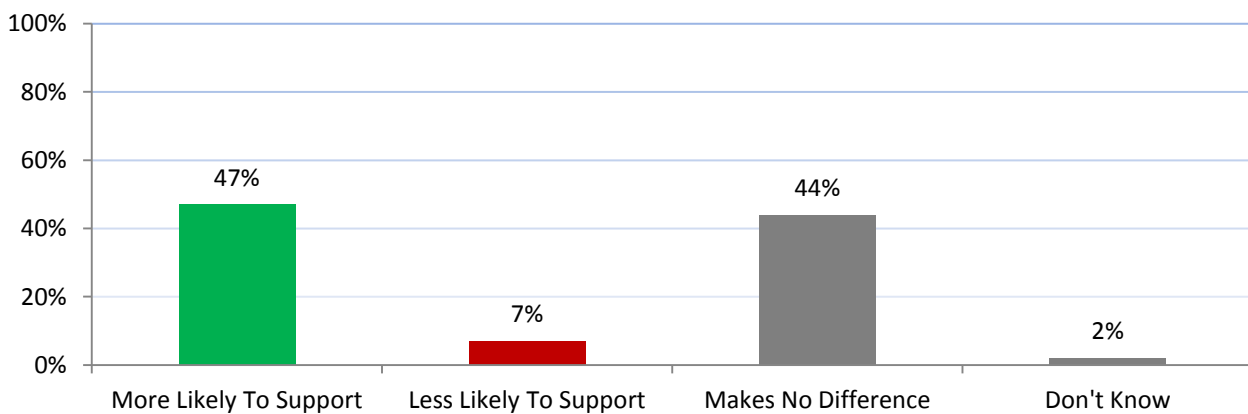
**Figure 10: Northern Pass Support Tracking Data**



The Northern Pass project is planning to construct the majority of its transmission lines within the existing rights of way, where power lines already are. When provided with this information, almost half (47%) of New Hampshire residents say they are more likely to support the project, 7% are less likely to support it, 44% say it makes no difference in their opinion and 2% are unsure.

- Opponents of Northern Pass and North Country residents are *more likely* to say this makes no difference, while supporters of Northern Pass, lower income households and residents of the Seacoast and Hillsborough County are *more likely* to support Northern Pass.

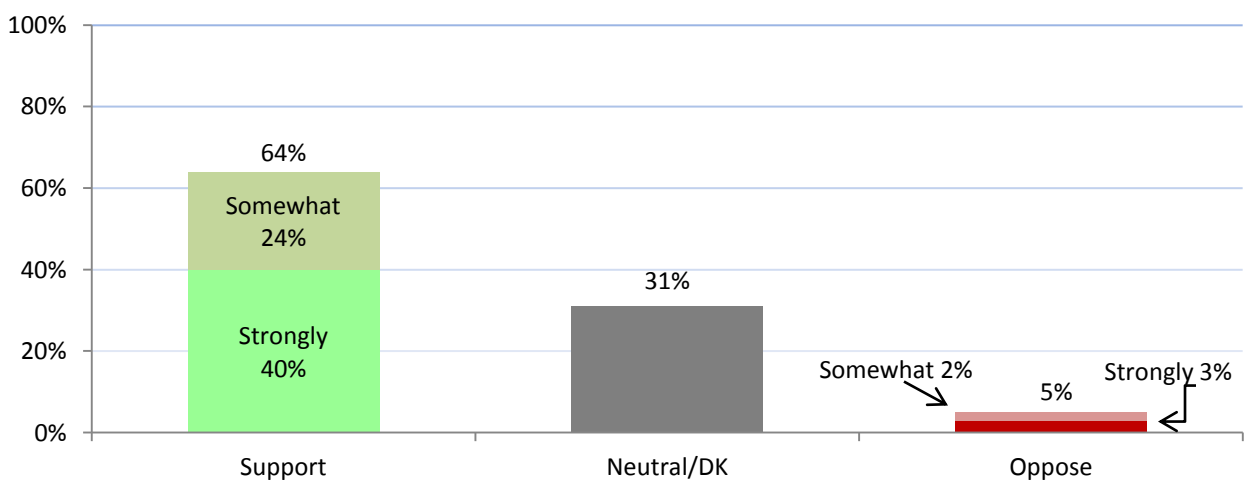
**Figure 11: Northern Pass Lines On Existing Rights Of Way Make You More/Less Likely To Support**



Supporters of Northern Pass say the project would help add another source of energy to reduce overreliance on natural gas and to stabilize heat and electricity prices. In general, a majority of New Hampshire residents (64%) support (40% strongly and 24% somewhat) the state adding energy sources other than natural gas, just 5% oppose (3% strongly and 2% somewhat) and 31% are either neutral or unsure.

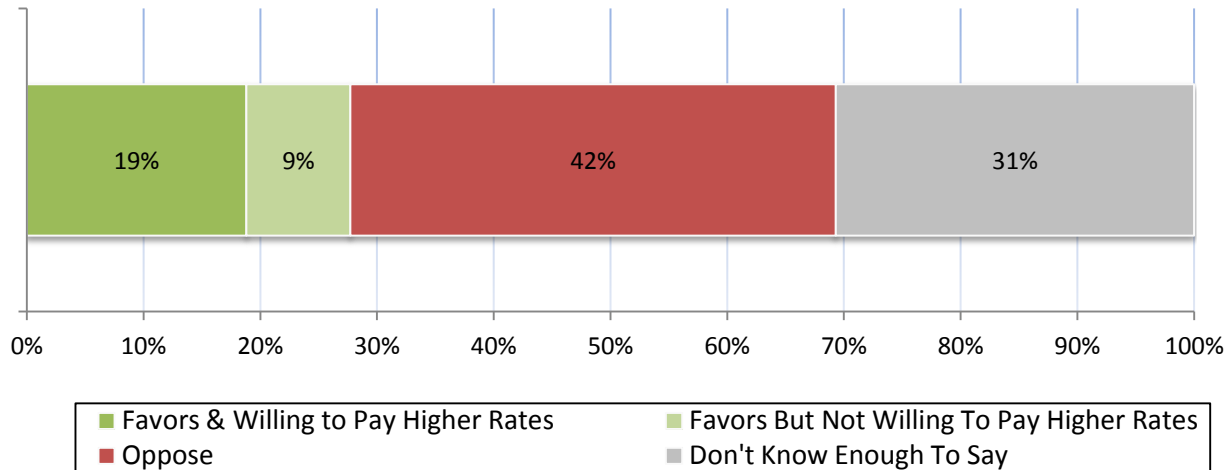
- Higher income households, those who have completed postgraduate work and middle-aged residents (35 to 49) are *more likely* to support additional energy sources.

**Figure 12: Support/Oppose NH Adding More Energy Sources?**



A major concern of opponents of the Northern Pass is the potential visual impact that the transmission lines would have on New Hampshire’s scenery. They have proposed burying the transmission line, but this would cost 5 to 10 times more and those costs would likely be shifted to ratepayers. When provided this information, just 28% of Granite Staters favor burying the entire line (with just 19% willing to pay more), 42% oppose it and 31% don’t know enough to say.

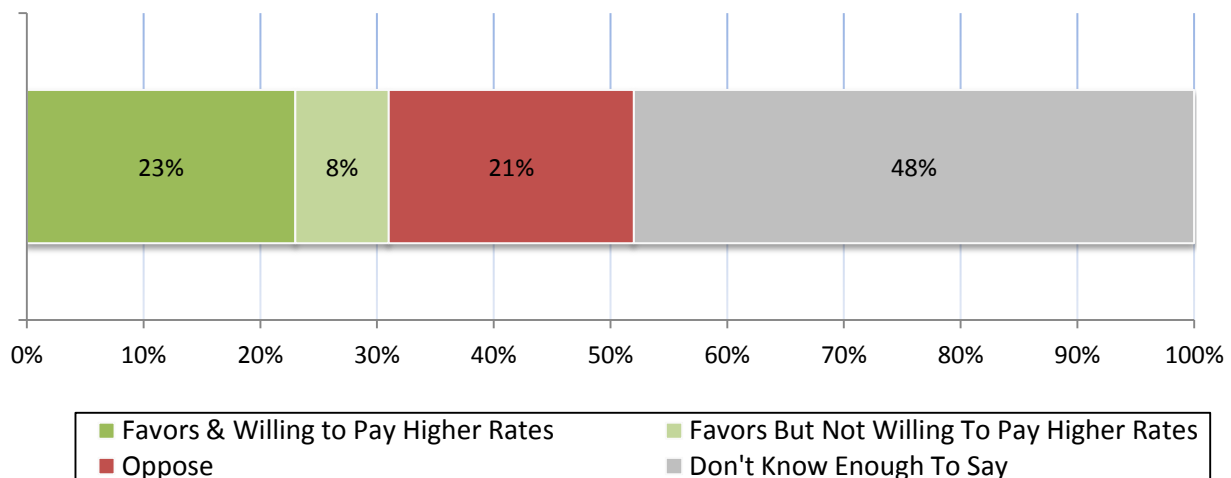
**Figure 13: Favor/Oppose Burying Entire Northern Pass Line?**



Recently, the New England Governors agreed to a new natural gas pipeline which would look to address high prices without having to add another energy source. This pipeline would be publicly funded so therefore the charges would be passed on to the ratepayers. This deal has stayed largely under the radar as nearly half of New Hampshire residents (48%) don’t know enough about this to say, while only 31% would favor the pipeline (only 23% would be willing to pay more for it) and 21% would oppose it.

- Residents who have completed postgraduate work are *more likely* to be willing to pay more in rates for the pipeline.

**Figure 14: Favor/Oppose Public Natural Gas Pipeline?**

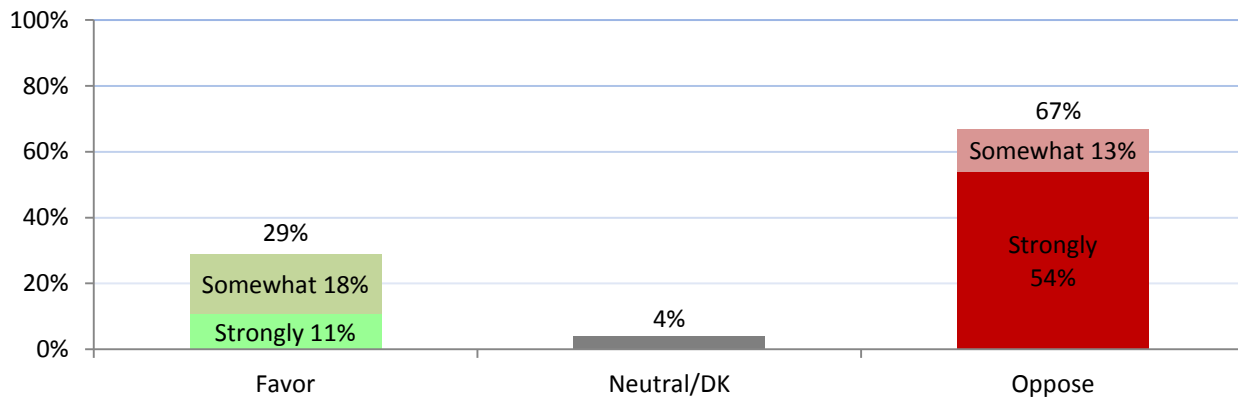


## GAS TAX INCREASE

The idea of increasing the gas tax to help fund road maintenance continues to be unpopular among New Hampshire residents. Two in three (67%) oppose an increase of 8 to 10 cents per gallon (54% strongly and 13% somewhat), while 29% favor it (11% strongly and 18% somewhat) and 4% are either neutral or unsure.

- These numbers are largely consistent with April 2013 and October 2013 Granite State Poll results where an increase of 10 to 15 cents was opposed by 61% and 67% respectively.
- Support is low across partisan groups – Only 41% of Democrats, 24% of Independents and 24% of Republicans would favor an increase.

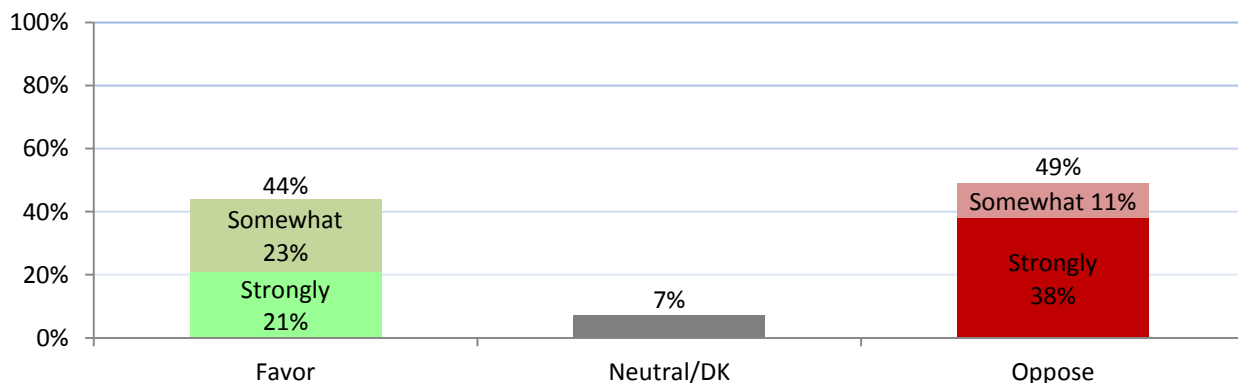
**Figure 15: Favor/Oppose An Increase Of The Gas Tax By 8 to 10 Cents?**



If this increase only went to the state’s roads and bridges, support for the increase rises from 29% to 44% (21% strongly and 23% somewhat), while 49% oppose (38% strongly and 11% somewhat) and 7% are neutral or unsure.

- These results fall between two Granite State Polls on this item as New Hampshire Residents favored the increase if it were to go only for roads and bridges by 53-44% in April 2013 but opposed it 54%-41% in October 2013.
- Unsurprisingly, nearly all gas tax supporters (93%) favor this increase, while the idea gained support of 45% of people who are neutral and 23% of gas tax opponents.

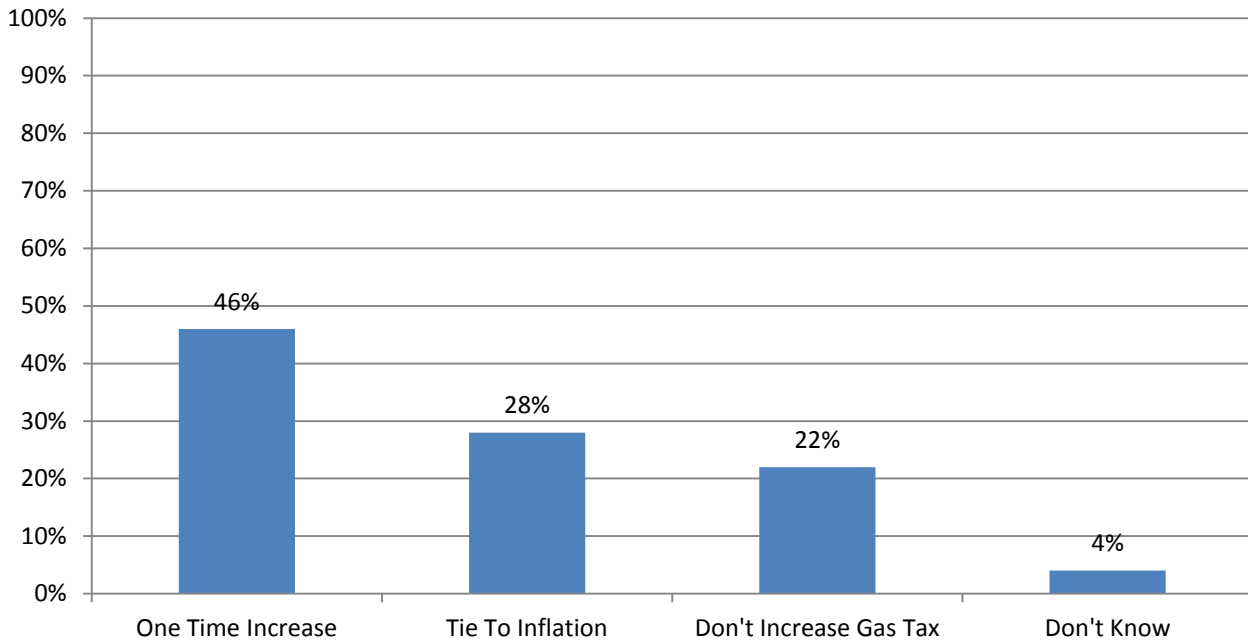
**Figure 16: Favor/Oppose An Increase Of The Gas Tax By 8 to 10 Cents If ONLY For Roads?**



When given the choice between a one-time increase of 8 to 10 cents, or tying a gas tax increase to inflation, a plurality favor a one-time increase over tying it to inflation. 46% support the one-time increase, 28% support tying to inflation, 22% volunteered that the gas tax shouldn't be increased at all and 4% were unsure.

- Supporters of the gas tax and people who are neutral on it are *more likely* to favor a one-time increase.
- Democrats are *more likely* to favor tying the gas tax to inflation.

**Figure 17: How Should Gas Tax Increase Be Applied?**



## Technical Report

### How the Sample Was Selected

The Greater Nashua Chamber of Commerce Survey was a telephone survey of randomly selected adults in the state of New Hampshire. This survey was conducted using a procedure called Random Digit Dialing (RDD), of both landline and cellular telephone.

A sample of households in the area was selected by a procedure known as random digit dialing. The way this works is as follows. First, with the aid of a computer, one of the three digit telephone exchanges that are currently used in the state (e.g., 772) is randomly selected. The computer then randomly selects one of the "working blocks"--the first two of the last four numbers in a telephone number (e.g., 64)--and attaches it to the randomly selected exchange. Finally, the computer program then generates a two digit random number between 00 and 99 (e.g., 57) which is attached to the previously selected prefix (772), and the previously selected working block (64) resulting in a complete telephone number, i.e., 772 6457. This procedure is then repeated numerous times by the computer to generate more random numbers, so that we have a sufficient quantity to conduct the survey. The end result is that each household in the area in which there is a telephone has an equally likely chance of being selected into the sample. This procedure is done for both land line and cellular exchanges.

The random sample used in this project was purchased from Scientific Telephone Samples (STS), Foothill Ranch, CA. STS screens each selected telephone number to eliminate non-working numbers, disconnected numbers, and business numbers to improve the efficiency of the sample, reducing the amount of time interviewers spend calling non-usable numbers.

Each of these randomly generated telephone numbers is called by one of our interviewers from a centrally supervised facility at the UNH Survey Center. If the number called is found not to be a residential one, it is discarded and another random number is called. If it is a residential number, the interviewer then randomly selects a member of the household by asking to speak with the adult currently living in the household who has had the most recent birthday. This selection process ensures that every adult (18 years of age or older) in the household has an equally likely chance of being included in the survey. No substitutions are allowed. If, for example, the randomly selected adult is not at home when the household is first contacted, the interviewer cannot substitute by selecting someone else who just happens to be there at the time. Instead, he or she must make an appointment to call back when the randomly selected adult is at home. In this way, respondent selection bias is minimized.

### When the Interviewing Was Done

New Hampshire adults in the Nashua Chamber Survey were interviewed between February 11 and February 19, 2014. Each selected respondent was called by a professional UNH Survey Center interviewer from a centrally supervised facility at the UNH Survey Center. Telephone calls during the field period were made between 9:00 AM and 9:00 PM.

### Response Rates

Interviews were completed with 519 randomly selected adults in New Hampshire from a sample of 3922 randomly selected telephone numbers. Using American Association for Public Opinion (AAPOR) Response Rate 4, the response rate for the Nashua Chamber Survey was 24% percent. The formula to calculate standard AAPOR response rate is:

$$\frac{I + P + R + NC + O + e}{N}$$

I=Complete Interviews, P=Partial Interviews, R=Refusal and break off, NC=Non-Contact, O=Other, e=estimated portion of cases of unknown eligibility that are eligible, UH=Unknown household, UO=Unknown other.

### Weighting of Data

The data have been weighted to account for known biases of telephone surveys. The data in the Nashua Chamber Survey are weighted by the number of adults and telephone lines within households to equalize the chances that any one adult would be selected for inclusion. The data are also weighted by respondent sex, age, and region of the state.

### Sampling Error

The Nashua Chamber Survey, like all surveys, is subject to sampling error due to the fact that all residents in the area were not interviewed. For those questions asked of five hundred (500) or so respondents, the error is +/- 4.4%. For those questions where fewer than 500 persons responded, the sampling error can be calculated as follows:

$$\pm \sqrt{\frac{P(100-P)}{N}}$$

Where P is the percentage of responses in the answer category being evaluated and N is the total number of persons answering the particular question.

For example, suppose you had the following distribution of answers to the question, "Should the state spend more money on road repair even if that means higher taxes?" Assume 1,000 respondents answered the question as follows:

YES	47%
NO	48%
DON'T KNOW	5%

The sampling error for the "YES" percentage of 47% would be

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

for the "NO" percentage of 48% it would be

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

and for the "DON'T KNOW" percentage of 5% it would be

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

In this case we would expect the true population figures to be within the following ranges:

YES	43.9% - 50.1% (i.e., 47% $\pm$ 3.1%)
NO	44.9% - 51.1% (i.e., 48% $\pm$ 3.1%)
DON'T KNOW	3.6% - 6.4% (i.e., 5% $\pm$ 1.4%)