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City of El Paso Bond Initiative Citizen
Support Survey Pilot Study

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**City of El Paso Bond Initiative
Citizen Support Survey Pilot Study
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I. Introduction

The Mayor and City Council have the authority and responsibility to issue bonds for projects necessary for sustaining the infrastructure of the City of El Paso. These projects are financed as on-going operations of City Hall with a proposed bond initiative facing the voters of El Paso in November of 1999. To determine the extent of citizen support for a bond issue, a pilot study was conducted by the Research Survey Team from the Public Policy Research Center at the University of Texas at El Paso from March 17 through March 24, 1999.

The survey team conducted interviews at five locations representing the regions of El Paso: the northeast, the east, the west, central, and the lower valley. The survey sought only public opinions, not those of elected officials nor the media. All opinions recorded are strictly confidential thus, no information gathered from this survey could be tracked back to the participating individuals. The number of legitimate survey respondents, those who were over 18 and a resident of El Paso, was 256 and represents a data confidence level of +/- 6 percent.

In conducting the survey, several issues emerged that may be of importance in a bond campaign or before the implementation of a comprehensive city-wide survey. First, finding participants that really cared or were knowledgeable about the issue was a significant problem. One of the main problems was that people did not know what a bond was. This is a crucial issue for the forthcoming bond campaign because an uninformed public is susceptible to manipulation by special interests. Thus, as a caveat, accurate data about public support of the bond needs to be gathered in association with an education campaign about the bond issue and its major components. Second, surveys need to be in Spanish and English, and while we utilized bi-lingual interviewers, further research into how to translate "bond" and its implications should be undertaken before conducting a city-wide survey. Overall, there appears to be wide support for the bond proposal, however, the crosstabulations should be viewed carefully to determine important and forceful pockets of opposition and support by those involved in the campaign.

II. Bond Issues Pilot Study Survey

1. **What is your current zip code?** *Zip codes were recoded into the following regions of the City of El Paso.*

| | Frequency | % |
|---------------------|------------------|----------|
| Northeast/Ft. Bliss | 31 | 12.1 |
| West | 71 | 27.7 |
| Central | 71 | 27.7 |
| East | 51 | 19.9 |
| Lower Valley | 25 | 9.8 |
| Total | 249 | 97.3 |
| Missing | 7 | 2.7 |
| Total | 256 | 100.0 |

✓ *Sample appears to be representative of El Paso on the whole.*

2. **How long have you lived in El Paso?**

| | Frequency | % |
|-------------------|------------------|----------|
| Less than 2 years | 13 | 5.1 |
| 2 to 5 years | 17 | 6.6 |
| 6 to 10 years | 23 | 9.0 |
| 11 to 20 years | 48 | 18.8 |
| 21 - 30 years | 56 | 21.9 |
| over 31 years | 90 | 35.2 |
| Total | 247 | 96.5 |
| Missing | 9 | 3.5 |
| Total | 256 | 100.0 |

✓ *A majority of the respondents are long-time El Pasoans who are likely to reflect upon previous bond issues.*

3. **What year were you born?** *Recoded into respondent age.*

| Years of Age | Frequency | Percent |
|---------------------|------------------|----------------|
| (18-25) | 12 | 4.7 |
| (26-35) | 38 | 14.8 |
| (36-45) | 30 | 11.7 |
| (46-55) | 52 | 20.3 |
| (56-65) | 50 | 19.5 |
| (over 65) | 59 | 23.0 |
| Total | 241 | 94.1 |
| Missing | 15 | 5.9 |
| Total | 256 | 100.0 |

✓ *Respondents reflect those in age groups which see bond elections as important and likely to vote on them.*

4. **What is your highest level of completed education?**

| | Frequency | % |
|--------------------------|------------------|----------|
| Less than High School | 39 | 15.2 |
| High School Graduate | 46 | 18.0 |
| Some College | 82 | 32.0 |
| Trade School or Two Year | 23 | 9.0 |
| College Graduate | | |
| 4 year college | 44 | 17.2 |
| Post Graduate or | 20 | 7.8 |
| Advanced Degree | | |
| Total | 254 | 99.2 |
| Missing | 2 | .8 |
| Total | 256 | 100.0 |

✓ *Education levels are consistent with the community and should lend no bias to the data.*

5. What is your racial or ethnic background?

| | Frequency | % |
|-------------------|------------------|----------|
| White | 70 | 27.3 |
| Hispanic- Mexican | 120 | 46.9 |
| Hispanic Other | 48 | 18.8 |
| African American | 8 | 3.1 |
| Asian American | 1 | .4 |
| Asian-Indian | 1 | .4 |
| Other | 8 | 3.1 |
| Total | 256 | 100.0 |

✓ *Racial and ethnic background may favor non-hispanic and should be considered relationally to other elections and ethnic/racial participation.*

6. What is your marital status?

| | Frequency | % |
|---------|------------------|----------|
| Married | 119 | 46.5 |
| Single | 116 | 45.3 |
| Other | 21 | 8.2 |
| Total | 256 | 100.0 |

7. What is your gender?

| | Frequency | % |
|--------|------------------|----------|
| Male | 137 | 53.5 |
| Female | 119 | 46.5 |
| Total | 256 | 100.0 |

8. What is your total family household income?

| | Frequency | % |
|----------------------|------------------|----------|
| Less than \$9999 | 46 | 18.0 |
| \$10,000 to \$14,999 | 15 | 5.9 |
| \$15,000 to \$19,999 | 36 | 14.1 |
| \$20,000 to \$24,999 | 14 | 5.5 |
| \$25,000 to \$29,999 | 39 | 15.2 |
| \$30,000 to \$39,999 | 21 | 8.2 |
| \$40,000 to \$49,999 | 29 | 11.3 |
| \$50,000 to \$74,999 | 16 | 6.3 |
| Over \$75,000 | 19 | 7.4 |
| Total | 237 | 92.6 |
| Missing | 21 | 7.4 |
| Total | 256 | 100.0 |

- ✓ *Income levels are reflective of the community, but may play an important role in interpretation when burden of a bond is addressed by opponents.*

9. Would you support a bond election for El Paso in 1999?

| | Frequency | % |
|-------------|------------------|----------|
| Yes | 184 | 71.9 |
| No | 30 | 11.7 |
| Do not know | 40 | 15.6 |
| Total | 254 | 99.2 |
| Missing | 2 | .8 |
| Total | 256 | 100.0 |

- ✓ *Overwhelming support exist for the bond proposal without consideration of demographic characteristics.*

10. If city taxes would not increase for a \$500 million dollar bond program, would you support it?

| | Frequency | Percent |
|-------------|------------------|----------------|
| Yes | 171 | 66.8 |
| No | 48 | 18.8 |
| Do not know | 33 | 12.9 |
| Total | 252 | 98.4 |
| Missing | 4 | 1.6 |
| Total | 256 | 100.0 |

- ✓ *Strong support exists for a major bond iniative without consideration of demographic characteristics.*

11.The current bond proposal is for approximately \$140 million. What is your level of support for the following proposed projects? (This question is based on a three point scale ranging from 1-Strongly Support to 3-Do not Support and 4-Do not know/No response).

Frequency (%)*

| | | | |
|---------------------|---------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|
| Strongly Support | Somewhat Support | Do Not Support | Do Not Know/ No response |
| 1----- | 2----- | 3----- | 4----- |

| | | | | |
|--|------------|-----------|-----------|----------|
| Library: 2 regional library branches, main library remodeling/refurbishing, books & materials, automation | 180 (70.3) | 47 (18.4) | 12 (4.7) | 14 (5.5) |
| Mean: 1.45 | | | | |
| Parks: new parks, and citywide park improvements | 163 (63.7) | 60 (23.4) | 16 (6.3) | 14 (5.5) |
| Mean: 1.67 | | | | |
| Zoo: new marine mammal exhibit, new pool, Africa expansion, infrastructure, Animal quarantine | 141 (55.1) | 68 (26.6) | 27 (10.5) | 16 (6.3) |
| Mean: 1.53 | | | | |
| History Museum: new museum location | 112 (43.8) | 77 (30.1) | 37 (14.5) | 24 (9.4) |
| Mean: 1.88 | | | | |

* Does not include missing cases

- ✓ *The library and parks system obtain the broadest level of strong support, however all four areas obtain significant support when strongly support and somewhat support categories are combined.*
- ✓ *The strength of the somewhat supportive positions cannot be ascertained, but suggest areas in which opposition can be mustered.*

12. What would cause you *not* to support a bond election in 1999, even if taxes do not increase?

| | Frequency | % |
|--|-----------|-------|
| I am not interested | 19 | 7.4 |
| The bond issue does not support projects I like | 71 | 27.7 |
| I would not like to see the city acquire more debt | 62 | 24.2 |
| I do not understand the mechanism of bond issuance | 52 | 20.3 |
| Other | 26 | 10.2 |
| Total | 231 | 90.2 |
| Missing | 26 | 10.2 |
| Total | 256 | 100.0 |

- ✓ *Projects that do not have broad-based voter support are most likely to fail, and thus quality of life issues are most likely to garner political favor.*
- ✓ *The issue of debt will remain an obstacle and cannot be avoided in a bond campaign.*
- ✓ *The fundamentals of a bond, including pay-back, per capita debt, etc., need to be explained to the voters.*

13. If the bond projects were grouped as a single proposition (i.e. all or nothing) on the ballot, would you vote in favor or against the proposition?

| | Frequency | % |
|-------|-----------|------|
| Favor | 127 | 49.6 |

| | | |
|-------------|-----|-------|
| Against | 65 | 25.4 |
| Do not know | 53 | 20.7 |
| Total | 245 | 95.7 |
| Missing | 11 | 4.3 |
| Total | 256 | 100.0 |

✓ *Even in an all-or-nothing initiative, a bond campaign is supported, but not as strongly as individual issue areas as reported above.*

14. How do you usually learn about bond campaign issues and projects? (Check all that apply). *This will not add to 100%. Respondents could check more than one.*

| | Frequency | % |
|--|-----------|------|
| Television | 194 | 75.8 |
| Radio | 76 | 29.7 |
| Newspaper/ Literature | 134 | 52.3 |
| Personal Contacts | 29 | 11.3 |
| Participation in Civic Organizations or Groups | 13 | 5.1 |
| Internet | 13 | 5.1 |
| Elected Officials | 22 | 8.6 |

✓ *As in almost all other studies, the mass media has a major role in elections and public information flows.*

15. Of the following media resources, in which do you have considerable trust? *This will not add to 100%. Respondents could check more than one.*

| | Frequency | % |
|--|-----------|------|
| Television | 140 | 54.7 |
| Radio | 36 | 14.1 |
| Newspaper/ Literature | 95 | 37.1 |
| Personal Contacts | 28 | 10.9 |
| Participation in Civic Organizations or Groups | 5 | 5.9 |
| Internet | 8 | 3.1 |
| Elected Officials | 12 | 4.7 |

Please check the following information that applies to you: *This will not add to 100%. Respondents could check more than one.*

| | Frequency | % |
|---|-----------|------|
| I am a registered voter in El Paso County | 185 | 72.3 |
| I vote in most major elections | 68 | 46.1 |
| I vote in most local elections | 118 | 32.4 |
| I am a first-time voter | 12 | 4.7 |
| I am not a registered voter in El Paso County | 43 | 16.8 |

17. Have you ever voted in a bond election?

| | Frequency | % |
|-----|-----------|------|
| Yes | 111 | 43.4 |
| No | 128 | 50.0 |

| | | |
|-------------|-----|-------|
| Do not know | 7 | 2.7 |
| Total | 246 | 96.1 |
| Missing | 10 | 3.9 |
| Total | 256 | 100.0 |

✓ *The following open-ended questions provide a glimpse of voter thinking, but nothing systematic and, as always contain some non-logical responses.*

18. If yes, what caused you to support or not support the bond projects?

S = Support Position N= Not Support

| | Frequency | % |
|---------------------------------|-----------|-------|
| No Answer/Missing | 170 | 66.4 |
| Improve or beautify El Paso (S) | 16 | 6.3 |
| Not enough information (N) | 6 | 2.3 |
| Consider the issue valuable (S) | 4 | 1.6 |
| Approved of projects (S) | 9 | 3.5 |
| Costs (N) | 2 | .8 |
| Involvement in Election (S) | 1 | .4 |
| People make difference (S) | 2 | .8 |
| Time for change (S) | 2 | .8 |
| Improve quality of life (N) | 2 | .8 |
| Good issue (S) | 5 | 2.0 |
| Disagree with issue (N) | 4 | 1.6 |
| Tax increase (N) | 1 | .4 |
| Too much money (N) | 5 | 2.0 |
| Multiple answers | 3 | 1.2 |
| Support Schools (S) | 4 | 1.6 |
| Support Police (S) | 1 | .4 |
| Other (derogatory) | 2 | .8 |
| Organized county (N) | 1 | .4 |
| Pet projects (S) | 2 | .8 |
| Do not remember | 5 | 2.0 |
| Believed in it (S) | 1 | .4 |
| Parks (S) | 1 | .4 |
| Support Planned Projects (S) | 3 | 1.2 |
| Liked Bond Agenda (S) | 1 | .4 |
| Use of Funds (N) | 3 | 1.2 |
| Total | 256 | 100.0 |

19. If you had a choice, what project would you like to see added to the 1999 bond election?

| | Frequency | % |
|------------------------|-----------|------|
| Missing | 114 | 44.5 |
| Parks | 14 | 5.5 |
| Police | 3 | 1.2 |
| Community enhancements | 8 | 3.1 |

| | | |
|-------------------------|-----|-------|
| Housing | 3 | 1.2 |
| Improve downtown | 4 | 1.6 |
| Transportation | 8 | 3.1 |
| Recreation facilities | 26 | 10.2 |
| Salary increases | 2 | .8 |
| Attract more businesses | 1 | .4 |
| Decrease taxes | 1 | .4 |
| Streets | 13 | 5.1 |
| Zoo | 3 | 1.2 |
| Payment of debts | 1 | .4 |
| Handicapped issues | 2 | .8 |
| Sanitation | 2 | .8 |
| Other | 7 | 2.7 |
| Improve water | 4 | 1.6 |
| System | | |
| Improve town planning | 1 | .4 |
| Finish current projects | 1 | .4 |
| Libraries | 7 | 2.7 |
| Education | 8 | 3.1 |
| Do not know | 6 | 2.3 |
| Multiple Answers | 4 | 1.6 |
| Graffiti | 9 | 3.5 |
| Homeless shelters | 1 | .4 |
| Infrastructure | 3 | 1.2 |
| Total | 256 | 100.0 |