University of Texas at El Paso
DigitalCommons@UTEP

IPED Technical Reports | Institute for Policy and Economic Development

3-1-1999

City of El Paso Bond Initiative Citizen Support Survey Pilot Study

Dennis L. Soden
University of Texas at El Paso, desoden@utep.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.utep.edu/iped_techrep

Part of the Business Commons, and the Economics Commons

Comments:
IPED Technical Report: 1999-6

Recommended Citation
Soden, Dennis L., "City of El Paso Bond Initiative Citizen Support Survey Pilot Study" (1999). *IPED Technical Reports.* Paper 47.
http://digitalcommons.utep.edu/iped_techrep/47

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Institute for Policy and Economic Development at DigitalCommons@UTEP. It has been accepted for inclusion in IPED Technical Reports by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@UTEP. For more information, please contact lweber@utep.edu.

City of El Paso Bond Initiative
Citizen Support Survey Pilot Study
March 1999

Dennis L. Soden, Ph.D.

Technical Report 99-6

Public Policy Research Center
University of Texas at El Paso
500 University
Benedict Hall, Room 103
El Paso, TX 79968-0703
915.747.7974
915.747.7948 (fax)
pprc@utep.edu

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 iniaitive 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 System	4	1.6
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