

February 8, 2007

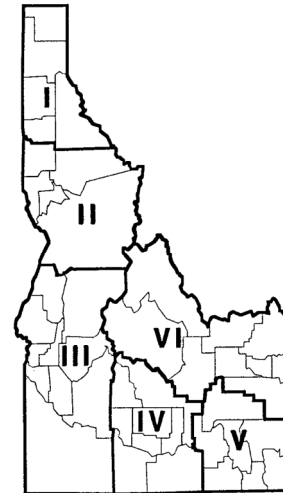
## **PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS ABOUT LOCAL OPTION TAXES and ISSUES RELATED TO MASS TRANSIT.**

*A Boise State University  
Public Policy Center "Briefing Report"*

### **SUMMARY**

**Public opinion surveys indicate that Idaho citizens are supportive of local option taxes when subject to local voter approval for funding mass transportation. Mass transit is viewed favorably where it is feasible, especially in the urban areas. A cohort of citizens currently use mass transit, and at current gasoline prices of \$2 - \$3 per gallon, 16% of Idaho citizens would consider public transportation.**

- Eighty-five percent of Idaho citizens surveyed agreed that the legislature should allow the expansion of public transportation through voter approved local option taxes.
  - All areas of the state agree overwhelmingly, although the highest level of agreement occurs in Southwest Idaho.
- Currently, a majority of Idaho citizens (54%) surveyed support mass transit development where they live.
- Should gasoline reach \$4 - \$5 per gallon, a majority of citizens surveyed say they would consider public transportation.



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### **ISSUE SUMMARY**

**The Idaho Legislature grants authority to local governments to levy taxes. This session, the Idaho Legislature may consider granting a 'local option' tax for funding mass transportation, subject to voter approval.**

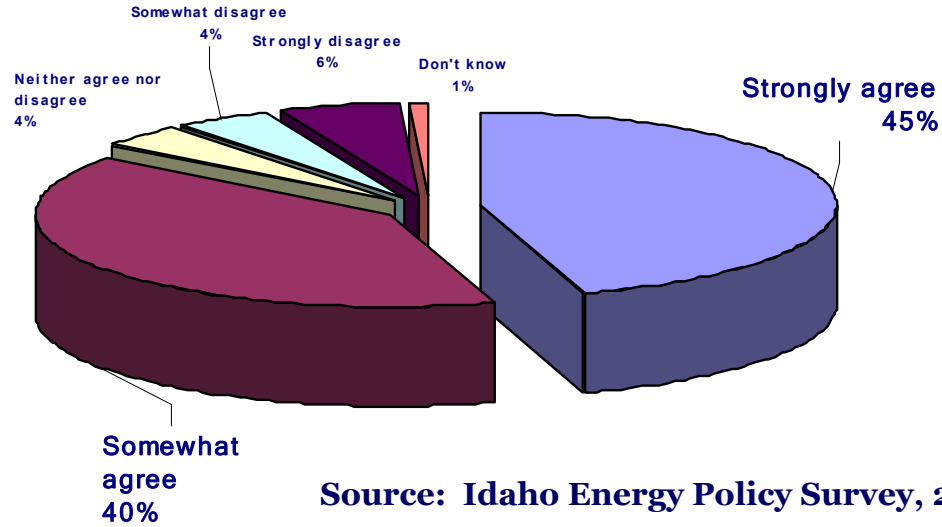
### **BACKGROUND**

The Public Policy Center has measured public attitudes across Idaho over the past several years about local option taxes, public mass transportation, and other issues related to growth and quality of life. These survey findings may help inform the policy discussion by providing a snapshot of public perception about the level of public support and opposition for local option taxes and public transportation.

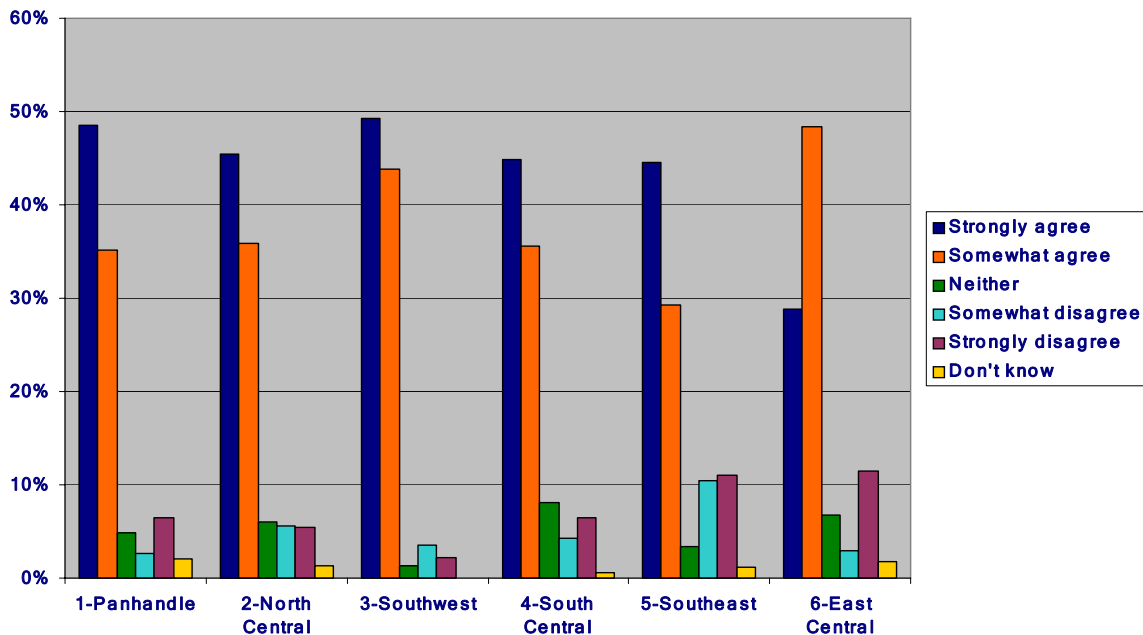
# RESEARCH FINDINGS

## Public Attitudes about Local Option Taxes

*Level of agreement that the legislature should allow the expansion of public transportation through voter approved local-option taxes.*



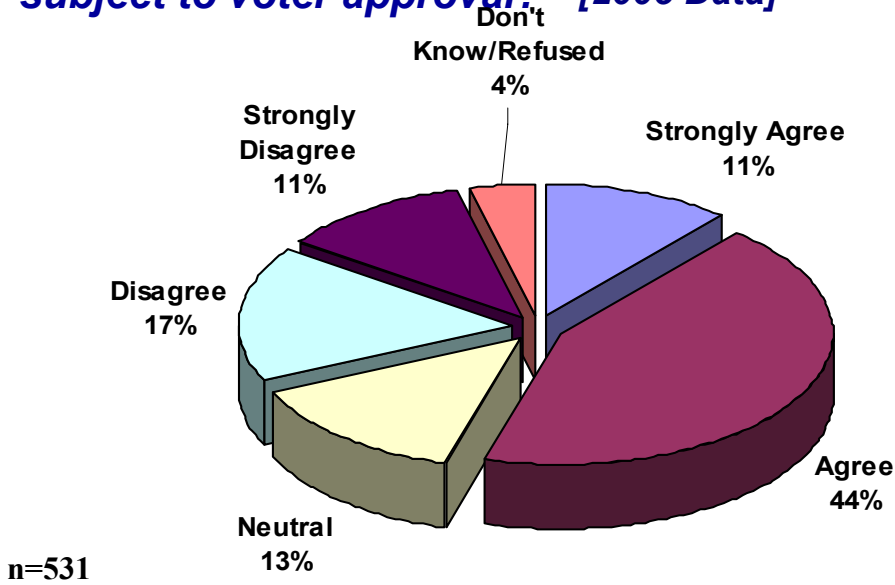
*Level of agreement that the legislature should allow the expansion of public transportation through voter approved local-option taxes. [Regional Breakdown]*



n=513  
Q220\_5

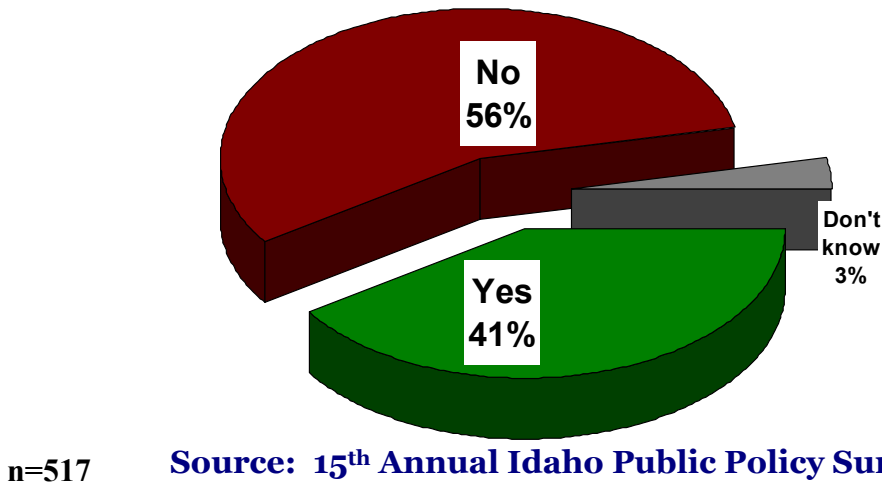
Source: Idaho Energy Policy Survey, 2007

**How much do you support a legislative proposal to grant cities and counties local option tax authority if it were subject to voter approval? [2005 Data]**



**Source: 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Idaho Public Policy Survey, 2005**

**Would you support a local option tax dedicated to transportation services?[2004 Data]**



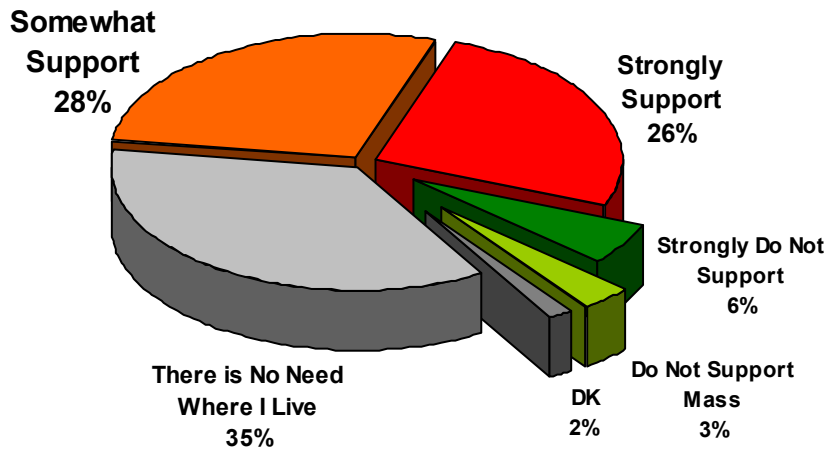
**Source: 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Idaho Public Policy Survey, 2004**

**Idaho citizens agree that local option taxes, subject to local voter approval, are appropriate for specific purposes, such as mass transit projects.**

- Currently, 85% of citizens agree. This margin of support has risen over time, from 41% statewide agreement in 2003 to 55% in 2003.
  - On a regional basis, support is strongest in Southwest Idaho. The regions with less support are generally found in Eastern Idaho.

## Public Attitudes about Public Mass Transit

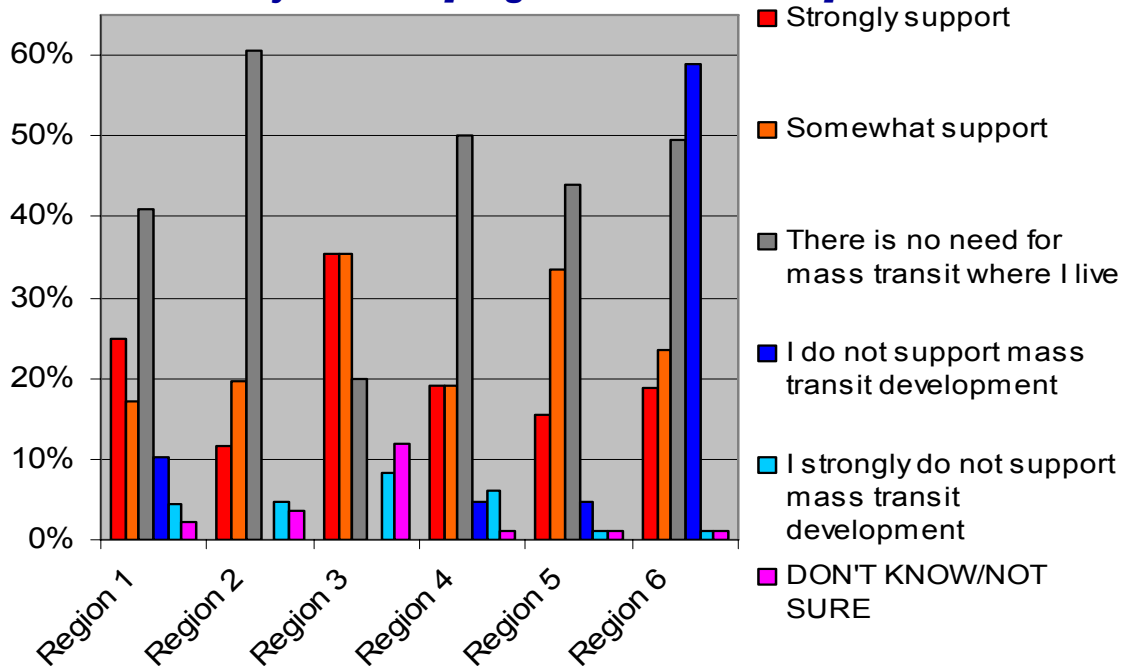
*How strongly would you support the development of mass transit where you live?*



n=517

Source: 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Idaho Public Policy Survey, 2007

*How strongly would you support the development of mass transit where you live? [Regional Breakdown]*



n=517

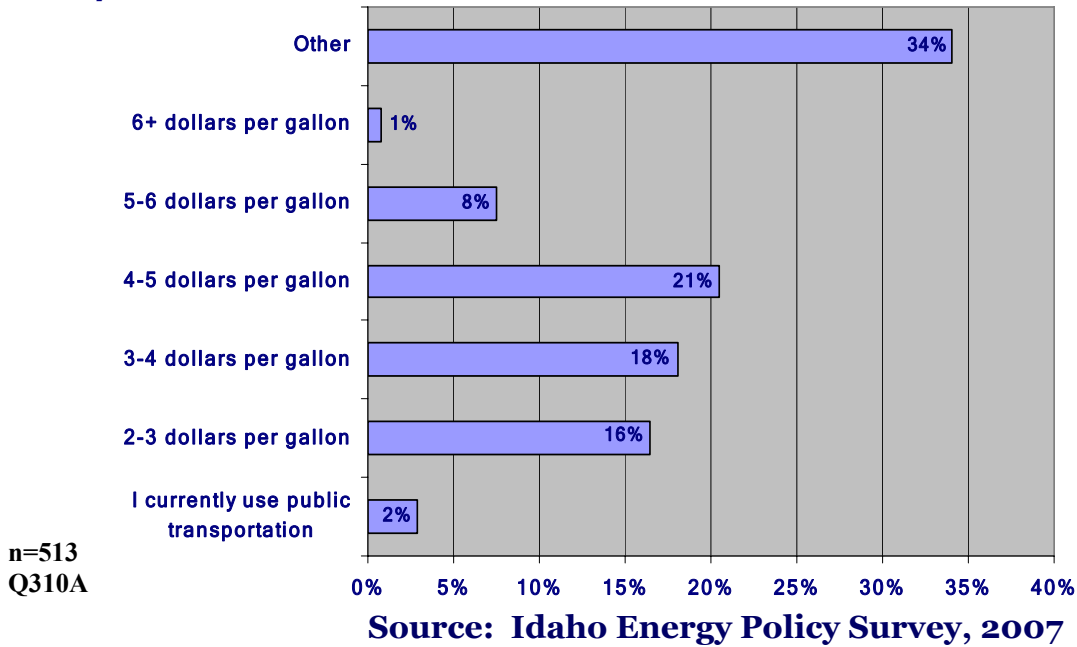
Source: 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Idaho Public Policy Survey, 2007

*Mass transit is viewed by a majority of residents statewide as a viable option, particularly in areas with urban centers. Fifty-four percent of citizens support the development of public mass transit currently. Thirty-five percent stated that there was no need in their area at this time.*

- Regionally, Southwest Idaho is the most supportive and Eastern Idaho is generally not supportive of the development of mass transit.

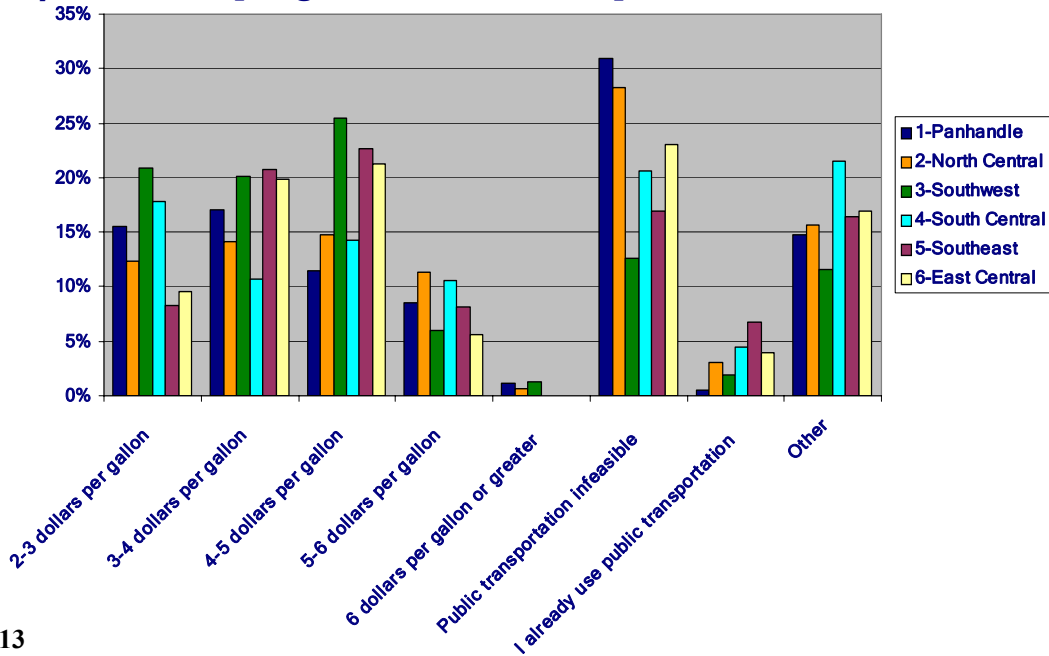
## Public Attitudes about Fuel Prices & Public Transport Use

### *Price of gasoline before Idahoans would consider public transportation for commute.*



Note: 'Other' responses included volunteered answers such as 'public transport not available/feasible' and 'I don't commute'.

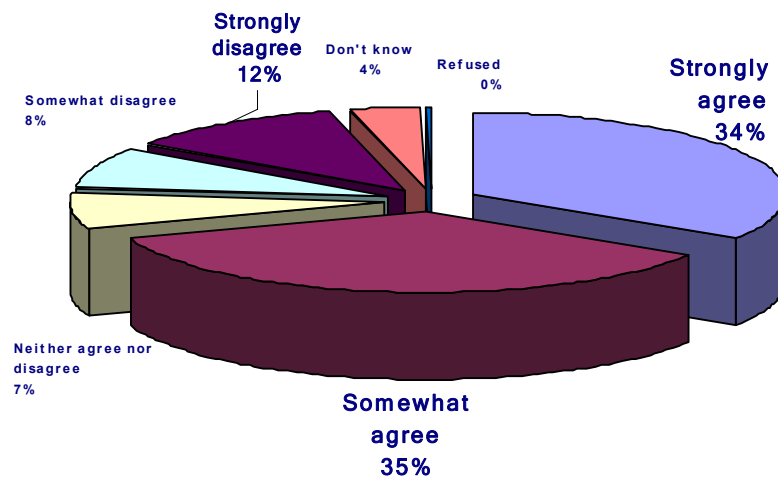
### *Price of gasoline before Idahoans would consider public transportation? [Regional Breakdown]*



**Idaho citizens recognize the need for public transportation options, especially as fuel prices rise.**

- *Should gasoline prices reach \$4 - \$5 per gallon, a majority of Idahoans would consider public transportation. About one third of the public would consider public transport at \$3 - \$4 per gallon.*
  - *The Panhandle and North Central area of the state had about 20% – 30% of respondents volunteer that public transport was not readily available where they live.*
  - *Two-thirds of respondents in Southwest Idaho would consider public transit when gasoline reaches \$4 - \$5 per gallon.*

**Level of agreement that Idaho encourage land use planning and policies that reduce the amount of driving required by Idahoans**



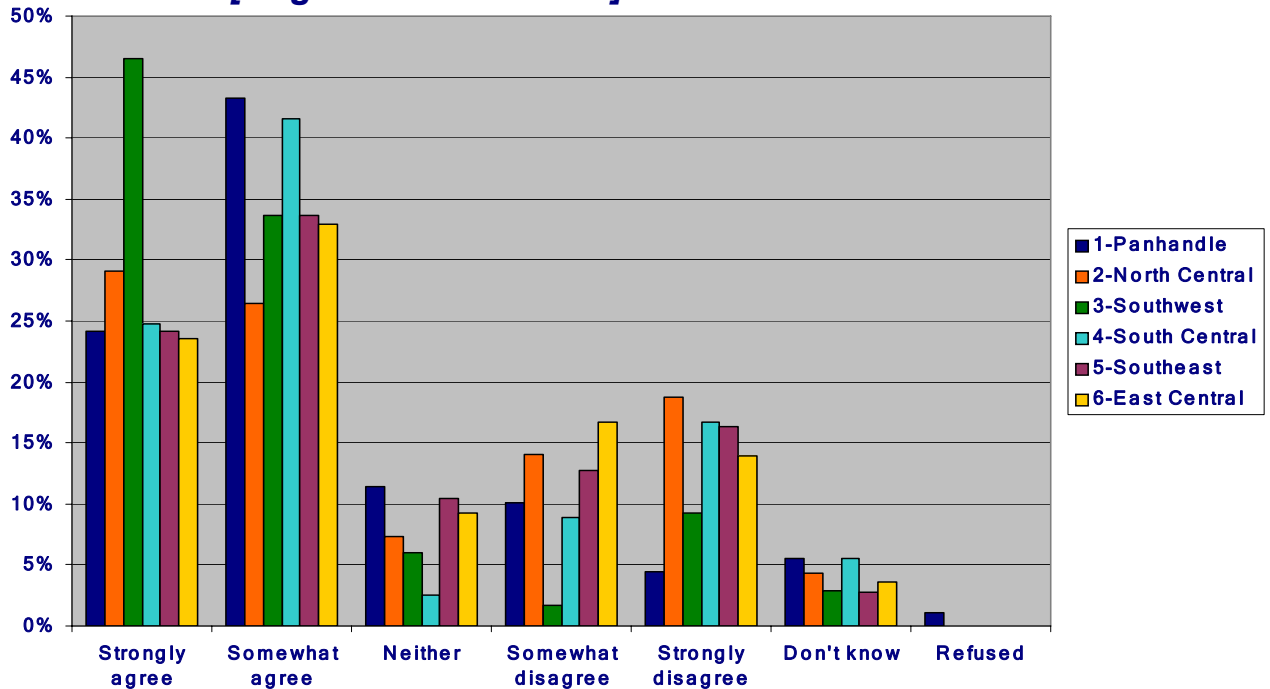
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**Source: Idaho Energy Policy Survey, 2007**

**Growth, land use planning, and air quality issues are concerns for Idahoans. Support for strategies to maintain a high quality of life is typically supported by the majority of citizens.**

- *Sixty-nine percent of Idaho citizens agreed that land use planning and policies that reduce the amount of driving should be encouraged. This echoed strongly across all regions of the state.*
  - *In Southwest Idaho, agreement with planning and policies to reduce driving is supported by 70% of survey respondents.*

**Level of agreement that Idaho encourage land use planning and policies that reduce the amount of driving required by Idahoans. [Regional Breakdown]**



n=513  
Q220\_7

Source: Idaho Energy Policy Survey, 2007

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**Sources:**

15<sup>th</sup> Annual Idaho Public Policy Survey, 2004  
(<http://ppa.boisestate.edu/ssrc/archive/2004-annualsurvey15.pdf>)

16<sup>th</sup> Annual Idaho Public Policy Survey, 2005  
(<http://ppa.boisestate.edu/ssrc/archive/2005-annualsurvey16.pdf>)

18<sup>th</sup> Annual Idaho Public Policy Survey, 2007  
(<http://ppa.boisestate.edu/ssrc/archive/2007-pressconf-18.pdf>)

Idaho Energy Policy Survey, 2007  
(<http://ppa.boisestate.edu/ssrc/archive/2007-EPI-pressconf.pdf>)

To access full survey reports, please go to <http://ppa.boisestate.edu/ssrc>

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## **The Public Policy Center at Boise State University**

**In keeping with the University's role and mission in public affairs, the Public Policy Center is involved in several important applied research and training activities that have major statewide impact. In addition to a number of specialized projects funded by grants and contracts, the Center develops research materials used by public officials throughout Idaho.**