



Thomas Jefferson Institute  
for Public Policy

## **News ... News ... News ... News ...**

### **Mason-Dixon Poll: Virginians Oppose “Carbon Car Tax”**

The Thomas Jefferson Institute for Public Policy today released results of a [Mason-Dixon poll](#) showing that the glowing benefits of a proposed Transportation and Climate Initiative are supported by a majority of Virginians ... but that Virginians equally oppose the measure when voters learn it will mean a major new carbon tax on gasoline and diesel sold here.

The drop in support was clear in two back-to-back questions included in a mid-December poll of Virginia voters by Mason-Dixon Polling & Strategy. The two questions were added at the request of the Thomas Jefferson Institute for Public Policy to a more general poll on political and legislative topics.

The first question outlining the many benefits claimed by the Transportation and Climate Initiative received the support of 61 percent of poll respondents. Benefits mentioned included improved transportation, developing the clean energy economy and reducing carbon dioxide emissions from vehicles.

When the second question asked for voter attitudes if the program included an 18 cents per gallon tax on fuel and would result in less money for road repairs and construction, support dropped to 34 percent, and opposition rose to 58 percent. The erosion was noted in all regions of the state, including in Northern Virginia where voters then split on the idea 44 to 44 percent.

“The Virginia General Assembly and others who love this idea need to understand the voters will not,” said Steve Haner, the Jefferson Institute’s Senior Fellow for State and Local Tax Policy. “Adding almost 20 cents per gallon to fuel costs will take significant funds out of their family or business budget. This is a carbon car tax.”

The full report from Mason-Dixon is attached to this news release, and a summary of key findings is below. All figures represent the percentage of voters expressing support:

	Q1: Mentioning the claimed TCI benefits but not the cost.	Q2: Mentioning a related 18- cents per gallon carbon tax.
Statewide Support	61%	34%
Northern Virginia	76%	44%
Richmond Metro	61%	33%
Democrats	89%	53%
Republicans	19%	9%
Independents	63%	31%

The poll was a live interview conducted December 16-19, and surveyed 625 Virginia voters by landline and cell phone.

If fully implemented, TCI will be a regional compact following a similar Atlantic coast footprint to the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, with Virginia the southernmost state participating. It seeks to reduce the amount of CO2 emitted by motor vehicles by capping the amount of gasoline and diesel over-the-road available for sale in the member jurisdictions, and then gradually reducing the amount available. Fuel wholesalers would need to buy carbon allowances in order to continue selling the products.

The intended rate of decline has not been announced, but organizers released modeling on December 17 based on a goal of a 25 percent reduction between 2022 and 2032. It projected that the program would result in allowance costs equivalent to 17 cents per gallon, very close to the estimate used in the poll question. The billions of dollars raised by the sale of allowances are not intended to go to the traditional uses of the gasoline tax, including highway maintenance and construction.

“Only a handful of Virginians have even heard of this proposed regional compact,” Haner added. “It has not been blessed by the General Assembly, which is the only legal body that might have authority to ration these fuels and impose this carbon tax. People also need to understand that Governor Ralph Northam is proposing this and another 12-cent gasoline tax at the same time, which could add a potential 30 cents per gallon at the pump.”

“This issue needs to emerge from the cloud of smoke that obscures it.”

A copy of the poll questions, cross-tabulations, and methodology may be found by [clicking here](#).

**For more information contact:**

Stephen D. Haner  
Senior Fellow, State and Local Tax Policy  
M: (804) 938-4922

Christian N. Braunlich  
President  
M: (571) 212-0058