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Transit Manipulation by the Koch Brothers: Analyzing the Relationship between the Division of Power in the United States Government, Societal Benefits, Voter and Rider Composition, Referendum Language and Cost of Improvement Under the Lens of the 2018 Nashville Transit Improvement Program Referendum

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Transit Manipulation by the Koch Brothers

Samantha Lee, Virginia Commonwealth University

Introduction

Public transit is the medium that transports all people from point A to point B. In Nashville, Tennessee, Charles and David Koch, known as the Koch Brothers, manipulated these areas--the division of power in the United States government, societal benefits, voter and rider composition, referendum language and cost of the improvement--in order to turn what was initially positive voter feedback into a roadblock for the 2018 Nashville Transit Improvement Program Referendum, a multi-modal system of interconnected bus, light rail, automobile, biking, and pedestrian transportation.



Map." Let's Move Nashville, http://letsmovenashville.com/map/.
Accessed 6 November 2018.

Societal Benefits

Pro-public transportation voting
Americans support public transit
because of social benefits: reduction
of congestion, cleaner environment,
aid for the poor and socially
excluded, revitalization of cities, and
job creation, resulting in limited insupport votes and ridership,
reflecting the greater influence of
self-interest on voters, especially
when taxes are involved.

Voter and Rider Composition

Nashville's median household income is \$49,391, supporting the average resident could not afford the tax increase required. Increased public transit promotes public health. Discontinuing the obesity prevention program, despite 37.4% of adults and 29% of adolescents being overweight in Davidson County, reflects the Transit Referendum potential to the general population.

U.S. State and Federal Division of Power

Projects in states that received most of the funding for the 2010 national high-speed rail failed because of misrepresented expectations of the people. A systemic bias exists against transit funding as it requires a vote to increase taxes whereas highway funding, historically, is included in state and federal budget

Culver, Gregg. "Moving Forward or Taking a Stand? Discourses Surrounding the Politics of Wisconsin High-Speed Rail." Mobilities, vol. 11, no. 5, Dec. 2016, pp. 703-722. SocINDEX with Full Text, https://doi.org/10.1080/17450101.2015.1075783.

Manville, Michael, and Benjamin Cummins. "Why Do Voters Support Public Transportation? Public Choices and Private Behavior." Transportation, vol. 42, no. 2, 2015, pp. 303-332. Springer Standard Collection, doi:10.1007/s11116-014-9545-2.

"Obesity Prevention." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention,

www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dch/programs/communitiesputtingpreventiontowork/communities/profiles/obesity-tn_nashville-davidson-county.htm. Accessed 11 December 2018.

Koch Brothers

- Known for their funding to conservative, Republican political candidates
- Own holdings in the petroleum industry
- Interested in anti-transit
 movements, leading to funding
 organizations such as Americans
 for Prosperity and NoTax4Tracks

Communications. "The Koch Network: A Cartological Guide." OpenSecrets, 7 January 2014, www.opensecrets.org/news/2014/01/koch-network-a-cartological-guide/.



Referendum Language and Cost of Improvement

The Referendum language in Nashville and Davidson county explicitly includes large figures, such as \$5,354,000,000 (capital cost) and \$8,951,062,000 (required revenue through 2032), to describe the cost and value of the program, opposing the median voter's willingness to pay.

"Transit Improvement Program Referendum Election." Nashville, 11 April 2018, www.nashville.gov/Portals/0/SiteContent/ElectionCommission/docs/ballots/pdf/180501-Transit.pdf. Accessed 8 October 2018.

"Wisconsin: Median Household Income." United States Census Bureau, www.census.gov/search-

results.html?stateGeo=none&q=2010+wiscon sin+median+household+income&searchtype= web. Accessed 11 December 2018.

Conclusion

Understanding the failure of the 2018
Nashville Transit Improvement Program
Referendum was a result of the Nashville's
societal and economic conditions that were
exploited by conservative political groups,
such as Americans for Prosperity, one can
apply such knowledge to future transportation
referendums and mirror or counteract the
Koch Brothers' actions to prompt successful
passage.

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