

Toronto subways lead over LRTs, Forum poll shows

Forum Research finds that subway support has barely wavered in the last two years.



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A Forum poll has found that 55 per cent of respondents favour a subway-based transit system, compared with 34 per cent who prefer LRTs.

By: [Tess Kalinowski](#) Transportation reporter, Published on Wed Feb 12 2014

Despite the continued debate at [city hall](#) over the best transit technology for Scarborough, Toronto's preference for subways has barely wavered in two years, according to the [latest findings from Forum Research](#).

A Forum poll last week found that 55 per cent of respondents favour a subway-based transit system, compared with 34 per cent who prefer LRTs. The finding comes in the wake of another attempt in January at city council to reopen the Scarborough transit question.

But it's a pro-subway result that has barely budged since [Forum](#) began asking the question in February 2012. Back then, 57 per cent of respondents favoured subways, compared to 38 per cent who approved of LRTs.

There's a "real hunger" for subways, said Forum Research president Lorne Bozinoff.

“People pretty much have in their minds what they prefer. It varies by where you live in the city but within that it doesn’t change over time,” he said.

There is a good case to be made for LRTs but the subtleties of those arguments haven’t resonated with the public, said Bozinoff.

Two years ago, council had just rejected Mayor Rob Ford’s unfunded subway plan and returned to the previous administration’s pro-LRT agenda in Scarborough and on Finch and Sheppard.

By April 2012, when [Metrolinx](#) was confirming the timelines for Toronto’s LRT plan, subway support polled at a two-year high — 60 per cent — compared with 36 per cent of support for an LRT.

What has changed in those two years is the number of undecided respondents. That number has more than doubled in the same period — from 5 per cent in February 2012, to 11 per cent last week.

The preference for subways in the latest poll ranged from a high of 62 per cent in North York to a low of 43 per cent in the core and East York. Fifty-nine per cent of Scarborough residents preferred subways.

“People out in the suburbs they’re not streetcar people. They don’t have any streetcars there . . . it’s just kind of alien,” he said.

[Subways](#) are also the preferred transit option for Scarborough among 49 per cent of Toronto residents and 58 per cent of Scarborough residents. But half of respondents living downtown or in East York said they preferred an LRT for Scarborough.

Toronto residents were split over whether a downtown relief subway should be built ahead of either a Scarborough LRT or subway. Forty-six per cent indicated the relief line should come first, with 41 per cent in favour of Scarborough transit. Not surprisingly, 65 per cent of Scarborough respondents said the east-end transit line was the priority.

“This is all really based on where you live and where you have to go. If you look at the Toronto numbers, people in the city really think Scarborough should have an LRT. They don’t want to pay for (a subway) because they won’t take it,” said Bozinoff.

The latest interactive telephone Forum Poll of 769 respondents was conducted last Thursday. It is considered accurate within 4 per cent 19 times out of 20.

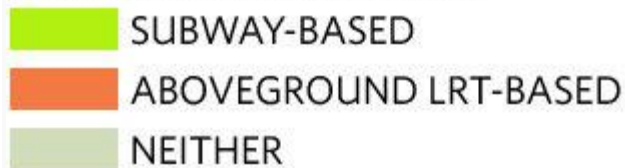
Poll results

LRT vs. subways

SURVEY QUESTION:

Overall, do you prefer an aboveground LRT-based transit plan or a subway-based transit plan for Toronto?

PREFERRED TRANSIT PLAN



Toronto or East York



North York



Etobicoke or York



Scarborough



Total



Total respondents: 769

TORONTO STAR GRAPHIC
SOURCE: Forum Research Inc.

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