

*Fairbank,  
Maslin,  
Maullin,  
Metz &  
Associates*

**FM3**

*Public Opinion Research  
& Strategy*

TO: Interested Parties

FROM: David Metz and Curtis Below  
Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates

RE: Washington Voters' Attitudes toward Coal Shipping and Export

DATE: October 9, 2015

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Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates (FM3) recently completed a telephone survey of 1,200 citizens in the State of Washington likely to vote in the November 2016 election to assess their opinions of shipping and exporting coal through the state.<sup>1</sup> Overall, the survey found that a strong and growing majority of voters in Washington opposes proposals to ship coal through Washington along rail lines for the purposes of export to Asia. Majorities of moderate and independent voters join those on the left in expressing opposition, as do both older and younger voters, and voters across in the income spectrum. Additionally, opposition has grown significantly over the past three years, increasing a full 18 points since we first asked the question in 2012.

Among the key specific findings of the survey are the following:

- **Majorities of voters in Washington oppose transporting coal through their home state for export to Asia.** A solid majority (56%) of voters in Washington express opposition to shipping coal in rail cars through their state, after hearing a brief description of the concept (**Figure 1** on the following page). Additionally, coal export opponents feel much more strongly about the issue (40% “strongly oppose”) than do supporters (17% “strongly support”). Furthermore, opposition is broad-based, with majorities of diverse electoral subgroups expressing opposition: Democrats and independents; liberals and moderates; voters ages 18-49 and 50 and over; voters of all income levels; voters from union households

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<sup>1</sup> **Methodology:** From September 15-20, 2015, FM3 completed 1,200 telephone interviews (on landlines and cell phones) with randomly-selected Washington State voters likely to participate in the November 2016 election. The margin of sampling error is +/-2.8% at the 95% confidence level; margins of error for population subgroups within each sample will be higher. Due to rounding, not all totals will sum to 100%.

*12100 Wilshire Ave, Suite 350  
Los Angeles, CA 90025  
Phone: (310) 828-1183  
Fax: (310) 453-6562*

*1999 Harrison Street, Suite 2020  
Oakland, CA 94612  
Phone: (510) 451-9521  
Fax: (510) 451-0384*

and voters from non-union households; and both voters who volunteer or donate to environmental organizations and voters who do not.

**FIGURE 1.**  
**Voters' Position on Shipping and Exporting Coal through Washington**

*Coal companies propose to ship millions of tons of coal per year through Washington along the Columbia River and through Puget Sound on trains and tankers to Asia, where the coal would be burned in coal-fired power plants. The coal trains would have uncovered rail cars. Would you support or oppose transporting coal through Washington to export to Asia?*

Position	%
Strongly support	17%
Somewhat support	19%
Somewhat oppose	16%
Strongly oppose	40%
Undecided	8%
<b>Total support</b>	<b>36%</b>
<b>Total oppose</b>	<b>56%</b>

- **Opposition to coal shipping and export has grown steadily since 2012.** In the summer of 2012, Washington voters were far more divided on whether they supported or opposed shipping and exporting coal through the state (**Figure 2**). However, opposition has notably increased in the past several years: in the summer of 2013 a slim majority (51%) opposed coal export, but now opponents outnumber supporters by a 20-point margin.

**FIGURE 2.**  
**Changes in Voters' Perspectives on Shipping and Exporting Coal over Time**

Position	July 2012 <sup>2</sup>	August 2013	September 2015	Change
Support	<b>42%</b>	38%	36%	-6%
Oppose	38%	<b>51%</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>+18%</b>
Undecided	20%	12%	8%	-12%

Taken together, these survey results show a dramatic shift in Washington voter opinion against proposals to ship coal on rail lines through Washington for the purpose of export to Asia. A majority of voters now opposes this proposal – with two in five offering “strong” opposition – and with solid opposition coming from the ideological center of the electorate.

<sup>2</sup> July 2012 Question Wording: “A number of Washington communities with shipping ports are considering proposals to build major terminals for the purpose of exporting coal. Coal would be mined in Montana or Wyoming, carried through Washington in train cars, and taken to Washington ports where it would be shipped to China for use in coal-burning power plants. Would you support or oppose building these coal export terminals in Washington?”