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Metro-Detroiters Believe Cobo Hall Upgrade Important

Survey Shows Significant Support in Southeast Michigan to support Auto Show, Out-State Voters Not So Sure

MACKINAC ISLAND, Mich. — Voters in the metro-Detroit area believe that investment in Cobo Hall to boost the North American International Auto Show is important to the region, but support wanes proportionately as voters are more removed geographically from southeast Michigan.

“Tourism officials and backers of the North American International Auto Show have expressed the importance of upgrading Cobo Hall to better allow the metro-Detroit region compete for tourism and convention business,” said Kelly Rossman-McKinney, CEO of The Rossman Group. “Voters in the metro-Detroit region tend to agree – but not in overwhelming numbers.”

This according to a recent state-wide survey conducted by Denno-Noor Research, in partnership with The Rossman Group, one of Michigan’s top public relations and issue management consulting firms, and Michigan Information & Research Services, Michigan’s leading daily legislative and state government newsletter. MIRS was recently voted the preferred newsletter of Lansing’s political insiders.

The question was worded as follows:

“Currently the state of Michigan hosts one of the largest and most important auto shows in the country. This event supports the claim of Michigan as the Auto Capitol of the World and pumps millions of dollars into the regional and state economy. But due to the poor condition of Cobo Center, which is where the event is held, the Auto Show risks losing its economic impact and national importance. Knowing this, how important is it to have Cobo Center upgraded? Is it very important, important, somewhat important, or not important?”

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“Overall, 36 percent of Michigan voters said that upgrading Cobo was very important or important,” said MIRS President John T. Reurink. “While 26 percent took a more neutral position by responding that the upgrade was somewhat important, and 31 percent of the state’s electorate felt that improvements were not important.”

“These numbers have greater significance because the possibility of using tax-payer dollars was not introduced in the question,” added Reurink. “It’s important to note, however, had we indicated that the cost of improvements would be funded by taxpayers, the favorable numbers would likely drop. However, it is clear that the public is aware that taxpayer dollars might be involved, as it is less important to older and more Republican voters. There is definitely a partisan split on the issue, as 50 percent of strong Democrats feel the issue is very important or important, while only 23 percent indicated that an upgrade of the facility is not important. Meanwhile, only 25 percent of strong Republicans feel an upgrade is very important or important, with 33 percent feel it is not important.”

The following chart demonstrates where responses landed geographically on the issue of upgrading Cobo Hall*:

	<u>SE MI</u>	<u>Central MI</u>	<u>West MI</u>	<u>Tri Cities/ Thumb</u>	<u>Upper L.P.</u>	<u>U.P.</u>	<u>Oakland</u>	<u>Macomb</u>	<u>Detroit</u>	<u>Balance of Wayne</u>
Very Important	18%	7%	11%	18%	6%	16%	29%	28%	59%	26%
Important	12%	16%	14%	22%	16%	5%	17%	12%	15%	18%
Combined Important/Very Important	30%	23%	25%	40%	22%	21%	46%	40%	74%	44%
Somewhat Important	26%	26%	29%	19%	28%	26%	27%	24%	18%	30%
Not Important	40%	37%	36%	37%	31%	42%	25%	28%	8%	21%
None of the Above/Unsure	4%	14%	10%	4%	19%	11%	3%	8%	0%	5%

*All numbers rounded. Thus, totals may exceed 100 percent.

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“The survey indicates that in terms of relative importance, this is really a metro-Detroit issue,” said Denno-Noor President Dennis Denno. “Those who feel that an upgrade to the aging facility is very important or important outnumber those who feel it is not important in the city of Detroit (+66 percent), Oakland County (+21 percent), Macomb County (+12 percent) and in the balance of Wayne County (+23 percent). Among out-state geographic regions, only the Tri-Cities/Thumb geo-break provided a favorable margin (+3 percent), likely due to the strong automotive presence in Flint and Saginaw and the fact that the region leans strongly Democratic. Conversely, in every other geographic region, those responding that Cobo improvements were not important out numbered those who felt it was either very important or important.”

“The more connected Michigan residents are to Detroit and/or the automotive industry, the more likely they are to feel that Cobo upgrades are important,” said Rossman-McKinney. “The fact is, maintaining the prominence of the North American International Auto Show is critical to Michigan’s economy and our future. The good news is that the Michigan electorate has a general understanding of the importance of this. However, if tax dollars are to be used to fund upgrades, backers of the plan still have some work to do with those who are more removed from the impact of this significant event. In this economy, it could be an uphill battle.”

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Methodology:

This survey was part of the Rossman Group/MIRS/Denno-Noor Quarterly Survey of the Michigan electorate. 600 respondents were surveyed between May 14 and May 17, and the participation was stratified based on census data and past voter behavior. A screen was employed to include only those participants who said they intended on voting, either at the polls or by absentee ballot, in the November 2008 Election. The margin of error is plus/minus four percent.