

**getDowntown Commuter Survey
Final Report
November 2007**

Introduction

In November 2007, the University of Michigan Community Consulting Club conducted a Commuter Survey to answer the following questions:

1. What are the motivations, inhibitions and needs currently driving the transportation choices of employees in getting to and from their place of employment in the downtown Ann Arbor area?
2. What types of services (information, workshops, programs) can getDowntown provide to best fill the needs gap, leading to a decrease in automobile reliance among Ann Arbor employees getting to and from work?

The following report outlines the results of the Survey as well as some recommendations for the future.

About the getDowntown Program

The getDowntown Program is an employer-based commuter choice program that encourages and assists downtown commuters in the use and development of transportation options. The program is a partnership between the City of Ann Arbor, the Ann Arbor Downtown Development Authority, The Ann Arbor Area Chamber of Commerce and the Ann Arbor Transportation Authority. For more information on the getDowntown Program, please visit www.getdowntown.org.

Method

Survey Objectives

The UM Community Consulting Club created a Commuter Survey for the getDowntown Program that met the following objectives.

The Commuter Survey would:

1. Incorporate past efforts and research
2. Find the status quo transportation trends and preferences
3. Elicit ideas and suggestions
4. Investigate effect(s) of population and company demographics (if any)

Survey Creation

The survey was created online through Survey Monkey (www.surveymonkey.com). The Survey had 5 parts with one page for each part. In addition to an online survey, the Consulting Club created a paper Survey that could be distributed to first floor retail and restaurant businesses whose employees had limited computer access.

Survey Contents

The Survey had the following content:

- 1. PART I: Identity**
 - a. Personal and company demographic information
- 2. PART II: Working Patterns**
 - a. Days, times, hours
- 3. PART III: Commuting Patterns**
 - a. Current practices: means of transportation, frequency, go!pass usage
- 4. PART IV: Commuting Options**
 - a. Assessment of: cost, time, challenges
 - b. Frequency of bus use
 - c. Satisfaction with current means of transportation
 - d. Information needs
- 5. PART V: Final Questions**
 - a. Open comments: services to provide, survey design
 - b. Personal contact information

Survey Incentives

The getDowntown program provided incentives (Ann Arbor Gold) to encourage employers to distribute the survey and to encourage employees to take the survey.

Survey Distribution and Implementation

The UM Community Consulting Club randomly selected 490 downtown organizations from the getDowntown database to participate in the Commuter Survey. The contact people for these organizations received an introductory email from the getDowntown Program inviting them to participate in the Survey. The next email three days later included a link to the Survey and suggested text that could be sent to employees. Contacts also received several reminder emails encouraging them to have their employees take the Survey.

The Consulting Club also created a paper version of the survey that was distributed to first floor retail and restaurants by getDowntown work study students. These restaurant and retail businesses were the same ones included on the list of 490 downtown organizations that received the survey over email.

Survey Results

Survey Participation

Of the 490 organizations selected, 46 did not have valid email addresses. Two organizations did not want to participate in the survey. That left 442 organizations with valid emails and an interest in participating.

Of the 442 organizations with valid emails who received the email and paper surveys:

- 785 respondents from 124 different organizations participated in the survey.

Survey Demographics

Here are some basic respondent demographics. More information on survey demographics can be given upon request:

- **Gender:** Female: 60%; Male: 40%
- **Age:** Age evenly distributed between 20 and 59.
- **Daycare Needs:** 16% of respondents have children with daycare needs.
- **Company Type:** 62.5% of respondents are office or service workers (37% office, 26% service)
- **Days Worked:** Over 90% work Monday through Friday
- **Shift Worked:** Almost all work during the day
- **Time Worked:** 80% work about 40 hours a week
- **Distance from Work:** 75% of respondents live within 10 miles of downtown Ann Arbor

Current Commuting Habits of Participants

According to the Survey, respondents use the following modes of transportation as their primary means of getting to work. Please note: Respondents could (and did) select more than one primary means of transportation:

- **Personal Vehicle:** 74%
- **Ann Arbor Bus:** 18%
- **Walking:** 13.3%
- **Bicycle:** 7.4%
- **Carpooling:** 4%

While most respondents (74%) drive to work in a personal vehicle as their primary means of transportation, 43% of respondents also use other modes frequently. These numbers indicate that participants use a combination of transportation modes as their primary means to get to work, rather than just driving to work in a single occupancy vehicle every single day.

Go!pass Use

- 54% of respondents have a go!pass.
- Of those respondents with a go!pass, 57% use their go!pass.
- 7% of respondents do not know what a go!pass is.

Commuting Attitudes

- Of the 70% of respondents who do not commute by bus:
 - 50% say they don't use the bus because it doesn't stop by their house
 - 38% say they don't use the bus because it takes too long

- Respondents believe driving costs 3x as much as bus/carpooling:
 - Perceived cost of driving per week: \$35.14
 - Actual cost of driving per week based on parking prices (low/high): \$31.25/43.75
- Greatest Challenges of each commuting choice:
 - **Bus:** Time, Inconvenience & Scheduling
 - **Personal Vehicle:** Cost
 - **Bike:** Time, Inconvenience & Bad Weather
 - **Carpooling:** Inconvenience and Scheduling
 - **Walking:** Time
- 40% of respondents are frustrated with driving.
 - 151 respondents who use a personal vehicle are unsatisfied or very unsatisfied with their current mode of transportation
- 17 of respondents who primarily carpool are very satisfied or satisfied with their current mode of transportation. None are unsatisfied
- 30% of respondents want to learn more about alternative modes of transportation (specifically carpooling).
- 85% of respondents say the getDowntown website is the easiest way to receive information

Employers who pay for parking

- 55% of respondents said their employer pays for some or most of their parking.

Free-Response Questions

The Survey also gave respondents a chance to give their own suggestions and feedback. The Consulting Club made the following observations about the comments:

- There is strong support in this sample set for a commuter rail of some sort that will connect the major metropolitan areas. This is especially interesting considering trains were not mentioned anywhere in the survey.
- Many respondents suggested an improved Park & Ride system, mentioning wanting more and better publicized Park and Ride structures with express shuttles to downtown.
- Respondents also suggested express bus services from various transit depots, including major metro hubs outside of Ann Arbor, especially Ypsilanti.
- There is substantial interest in a system that would facilitate the matching of riders for carpooling.
- Many bus-riders are inhibited from using the bus by being uncertain of the buses whereabouts.
- Poor schedules and maps were commonly cited complaints related to the bus.
- Many respondents suggested a real-time system of tracking the location of the buses: suggestions included automatic text messages sent out when the bus reaches a certain major hub, and coordination with Google maps to indicate bus routes in an easily accessible format.
- Several commuters cited the lack of bike infrastructure, including insufficient lanes, bike-locking structures and showers at their place of work, as a problem.

Recommendations

The UM Community Consulting Club made the following recommendations for getDowntown based on the results of the survey:

Program Focus

- Motivate employers to encourage their employees to use other modes.
 - Emphasize the parking cost savings to employers who pay for some or all of parking for employees.
- Focus on carpooling.
 - Create events in local communities where potential carpool participants can meet and exchange schedules and/or phone numbers.
- Information on bus routes.
 - Determine prospects for bus route expansion.
 - Work with the AATA to enhance maps and bus tracking technology.
- Continue marketing and advertising go!pass program
 - People are satisfied with this program.
 - Educate those who don't know about it.
- Understand reasons for employees' frustration with driving to work.
- Look at each business's results separately.
 - Employees from every company type use personal vehicle as their primary transportation mode, but those working in ground-level businesses (restaurant, retail, services) are more likely to use the bus, so focus bus information outreach to them.
- Help resolve employees' concerns on an individual basis.
 - getDowntown can look more deeply into the data to determine company-specific needs in order to personalize message.
- E-mail results of survey to business contacts

Program Focus

- Figure out if people who didn't ride bus because it was "inconvenient" would ride if it came closer to their house.
- Compare subgroups of day care vs. non day care.
- Explore how where an individual lives impacts their preferences.
- Account for noted margins of error in future studies

Potential Margins of Error in Survey Data

While this Survey provided some useful data, it is important to note some possible margins of error:

Potential problems with sample

- Since the survey was primarily done over email, the results were skewed towards companies who use email as a regular communication tool with employees.
- There were more female than male respondents. This might not be representative of the actual downtown worker population.
- A Spanish language version of this survey was not created, which excludes some workers.

Potential problems with survey questions

- The questions had an emphasis on bus use, which might have skewed the responses.
- Although one of the questions in the survey asked respondents to mark all of the challenges they have with a particular mode of transportation, an error did not allow them to fill in more than one challenge/problem.
- 36 people who said they have a go!pass and use it, use it 0 times/week. This might have been because these respondents only use the pass a couple of times a year.

Next steps

getDowntown will use the Commuter Survey data and recommendations to shape the getDowntown program in the following ways:

More information to employees and employers on commuting choices

- getDowntown will continue to create and distribute materials to help make commuting easier for downtown commuters. getDowntown will work with the AATA to ensure commuters have access to the information they need for their commute.

A better system for carpooling to the downtown

- getDowntown is working with the AATA and the DDA to provide an easy to use database and preferential parking to employees who carpool. This system should be up and running by the spring.

Continue to listen to and understand the attitudes and behaviors of downtown workers

- getDowntown will continue to involve employees and employers in its programs and work to build better relationships with employers.

Advocate for better transportation options

- getDowntown will continue to advocate for employers and employees to enhance the transportation choices available. The results of this survey will help guide getDowntown in terms of what types of services commuters find most valuable.

Thank You

The getDowntown Program would like to thank the following people and organizations for their help and support with this survey:

- The University of Michigan Community Consulting Club
- The getDowntown Advisory Board: Wendy Rampson, Dave Konkle, Susan Pollay, Jesse Bernstein, Eli Cooper, Chris White and Mary Stasiak
- getDowntown Work Study Students Natalie Tucker and Elizabeth Luther
- The Ann Arbor Area Chamber of Commerce
- The Ann Arbor Downtown Development Authority
- The City of Ann Arbor
- The Ann Arbor Transportation Authority.

More information about this survey:

To receive more information on this survey or to make a comment or suggestion, please contact the getDowntown Program at 734-214-0100 or getdowntown@annarborchamber.org