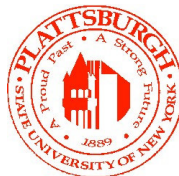


Research Report

Public Transportation Attitudes and Practices of Employees at Major Clinton County Employers



Survey Conducted by the Technical Assistance Center at
State University of New York at Plattsburgh
for
The Development Corporation Clinton County New York
and the
Clinton County Economic Collaborative



June 15, 2009

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The goal of this research project was to learn about public transportation attitudes and practices among employees at three of Clinton County's large employers. The process of conducting the research survey raised awareness of public transportation issues for the 149 employees who participated, as well as their employers.

This Employee Study is the second part of a research project commissioned by The Development Corporation Clinton County (TDC) on behalf of the Clinton County Economic Collaborative. The first report, issued in December 2008, focused on the attitudes and practices of Clinton County major employers. Data from this research therefore makes it possible to compare and contrast attitudes and practices of employees with those expressed by employers, and to identify points of convergence that can be further analyzed and developed by public transportation planners (Part IV).

According to the Employee Study, there were a significant number of employees who indicated an interest in a monthly pass for public transportation if certain incentives were provided by their employer. A majority of employees also believe that their employer is at least somewhat flexible on punctuality for employees using public transportation. This is promising for public transportation advocates, given that the number one reason cited by employers in support of an employee public transportation assistance program was the belief that such a program will make it easier for them to retain and attract employees.

The data overwhelmingly indicates that most employees feel that their private vehicle is their best means of commuting to work at the present time. Most respondents have a good impression of Clinton County Public Transit, but most non-users are unaware of bus stop locations nearest to their residence. A majority of respondents (both current and non-users of public transportation) indicated that convenience is the most important factor to encourage them to use alternative forms of transportation to get to work.

Many employee respondents stated that they are interested in alternative transportation choices such as Park and Ride. However there are perceptions that a combination of factors precludes these choices being a realistic option for them, including flexibility at the workplace and need for a personal vehicle during the workday. It will likely require incentives, creative alternatives, and possibly redesign of the current public transit system to convince most people to try an alternative to their personal vehicle.

There was a 6% response rate to the Employee Survey. Several questions provided an opportunity for additional comment. This anecdotal data should be useful to transportation planners (see Appendix A).

Highlights of Findings

General

- Nearly 94% of respondents presently use their own vehicle to commute to work.
- Over 97% have not used public transportation in the last month to get to work.
- Over 75% are not aware of the closest Clinton County Public Transit bus stop to their home.
- The major reasons given by respondents for not using public transportation or car pooling are “I am not familiar with the Clinton County Public Transit schedule and stops” (39%), followed by “I need my vehicle during the work day for personal or business use” (38%).
- 60% of respondents indicated that their employer is either “flexible” or “somewhat flexible” about punctuality for employees who use public transportation.
- There was clear interest expressed in several incentives to “purchase a monthly pass that allowed unlimited use of the bus system (given: \$35 in the City and \$60 outside of the City), with “Paying for the transit passes through a pre-taxable income deduction from my paycheck” ranking the highest (44%), followed by “My employer paying a portion of the transit costs” (39%). However, nearly 40% indicated that they would not be interested in such a pass.
- 33% were either “very likely” or “likely” to use a Park and Ride facility, if available. Many of these respondents suggested potential locations for a Park and Ride facility (Appendix A, question 7).
- Of the 35 respondents who indicated using a bus recently, 37% found the experience “very pleasant” or “somewhat pleasant”, while 60% indicated “neutral”, and only one indicated “very unpleasant”.
- Nearly 75% indicated that “convenience” was the major factor keeping them from using public transportation.
- More than half the respondents indicated that increased gas prices would cause them to consider using public transportation, or using it more often.

II. BACKGROUND

In 2008, The Development Corporation Clinton County (TDC) initiated a new organization known as the Clinton County Economic Collaborative (CCEC). One of the first projects undertaken by the CCEC is a study of the interface of public transportation and the workplace in Clinton County.

A Transportation Committee was formed by the collaborative to guide research about major local employers and their employees' attitudes toward public transportation, and related workplace practices and policies. This employer research was completed in December 2008 and presented in a report entitled "Clinton County Large Employers' Attitudes and Practices Regarding Public Transportation".

The Technical Assistance Center at SUNY Plattsburgh (TAC) was commissioned by The Development Corporation to conduct primary research on the attitudes and practices of the employees at several large and one small employer in Clinton County with regard to public transportation. TDC wishes to assess awareness of and interest in alternate transportation options that may help in reducing local job loss and turnover.

III. METHODOLOGY

TDC engaged the Technical Assistance Center (TAC), a regional economic development outreach service based at the State University of New York at Plattsburgh, to design and administer the survey instrument and to gather, tabulate, analyze, and report the results.

The purpose of this study was to determine the attitudes and practices of employees at several employers in Clinton County. Employees participating in the survey worked for the most part at a manufacturing plant, a health care provider, or a technology services company.

A Transportation Committee was formed to provide TAC with input for the survey. TAC worked closely with the Transportation Committee to determine the goal of the research and to create a survey instrument that would gather employee data. Members of the Transportation Committee include:

Maggie Barie, Clinton County Public Transit
Paul Grasso, Workforce Investment Council
Erin Hynes, The Development Corporation
Larry Jeffords, Jeffords Steel & Engineering
Howard Lowe, Technical Assistance Center
Susan Matton, Plattsburgh-North Country Chamber of Commerce

TAC developed a survey instrument with input from the committee. Committee members' suggestions were used to revise the survey. The final survey contained 14 questions that pertained to the employees' transportation means, and attitudes toward public transportation.

TDC staff, in conjunction with CCPT, conducted public transportation awareness events at three large Clinton County employers. An incentive to participate was provided in the form of a chance to win gift certificates from Target and Wal-Mart.

Employees had the option of filling out a paper survey or were directed to the survey that TAC posted on line. The survey was open to employees from April 17, 2009 through May 15, 2009.

Approximately 2,340 employees were invited to take the survey. One hundred and forty-nine (149) surveys were completed, representing 6% of those contacted. A response rate of 10% or higher is ideal, however we believe that the response rate in this survey provides a valid sample from which meaningful data may be drawn.

The primary researcher for this report was Howard Lowe, Director of Economic Development at TAC. Victoria Zinser Duley, TAC Assistant Director, and Theresa Bennett, Clerical Specialist, provided assistance.

IV. COMPARING AND CONTRASTING EMPLOYER AND EMPLOYEE FINDINGS

The data gathered through the employer and employee survey research permits the researchers to compare and contrast the attitudes and practices toward public transportation of these two groups. There is clear evidence that there are several areas of convergence between employer and employee attitudes and practices toward alternative transportation. Despite the very low current use of public transit by employees who participated in the survey, the researchers believe that an environment exists at the companies that participated in this study to foster increased use of alternative transportation methods by their employees. Findings from the Employer survey include:

- 85% were aware of the Clinton County Public Transit system
- 18% said they encourage their employees to use public transportation
- Over 56% of employers indicated that some of their workers use the Clinton County Public Transit system
- Over one-third of employers (17 of the 49 respondents) indicated that their employees have asked for public transportation information or assistance related to their commute
- There was strong support for the public transportation awareness events employers permitted to be held in their facilities, and they encouraged their employees to take the survey
- Half of the employers indicated that they would be flexible with punctuality for employees who used public transportation
- A clear majority of employers said that they support alternative transportation methods that would help them retain and attract employees

Findings from the Employee survey include:

- 34% expressed considerable interest in Park and Rides as an alternative, and seven possible parking locations were suggested
- There was high interest indicated in a monthly transit pass, given the financial incentive options described
- 60% of employees believe that their employers would generally be flexible on punctuality for employees using public transportation

- Employees generally expressed positive attitudes toward the quality and safety of Clinton County Public Transit, and those who had used the system gave their experience high marks.

V. COMPLETE SURVEY RESULTS

1. Zip code distribution of place of employment among survey respondents

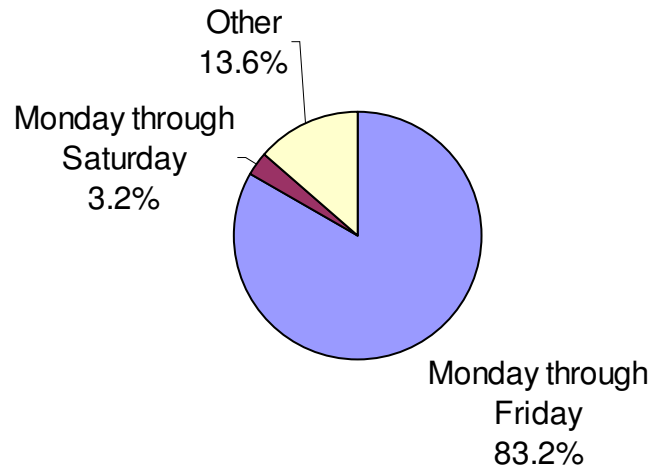
12901: Plattsburgh	137 respondents
12919: Champlain	1
12962: Morrisonville	7
12979: Rouses Point	2
12992: West Chazy	1

The vast majority of respondents reside in the Plattsburgh area zip code.

2. Zip code distribution of residence among survey respondents

12901: Plattsburgh	52 respondents	12941: Jay	1
12903: Plattsburgh	4	12944: Keeseville	7
12910: Altona	1	12953: Malone	1
12912: AuSable Forks	2	12958: Mooers	2
12918: Cadyville	4	12959: Mooers Forks	1
12919: Champlain	5	12962: Morrisonville	15
12920: Chateaugay	3	12972: Peru	8
12921: Chazy	5	12975: Port Kent	1
12923: Churubusco	1	12978: Redford	1
12924: Clintonville	1	12979: Rouses Point	2
12929: Dannemora	2	12981: Saranac	7
12932: Elizabethtown	1	12985: Schuyler Falls	1
12934: Ellenburg Center	2	12992: West Chazy	9
12935: Ellenburg Depot	2	12997: Wilmington	3
12936: Essex	1	05468: Georgia, VT	1

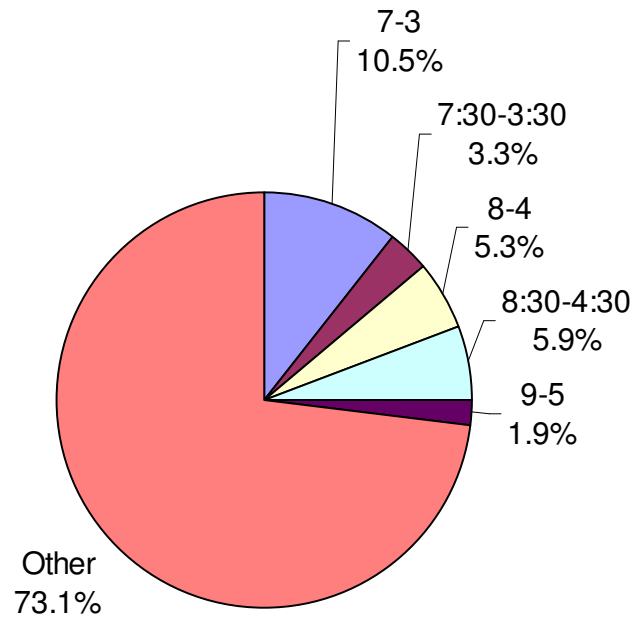
3. What days of the week do you work at your place of primary employment?



The vast majority of respondents work at their primary employer Monday through Friday.

Number of Respondents answering question: 133

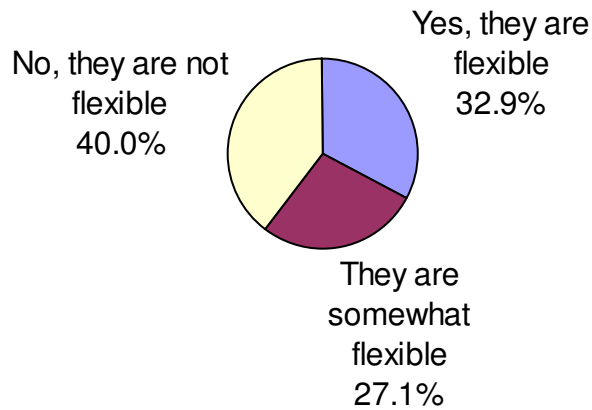
4. Please tell us your normal hours of work at your primary work place.



Most respondents indicated hours worked other than the options given in the survey. This is likely related to the many survey respondents from the hospital. See Appendix A for the other schedules worked by respondents to this question, which appear to vary widely, posing challenges for public transportation planners.

Number of Respondents answering question: 149

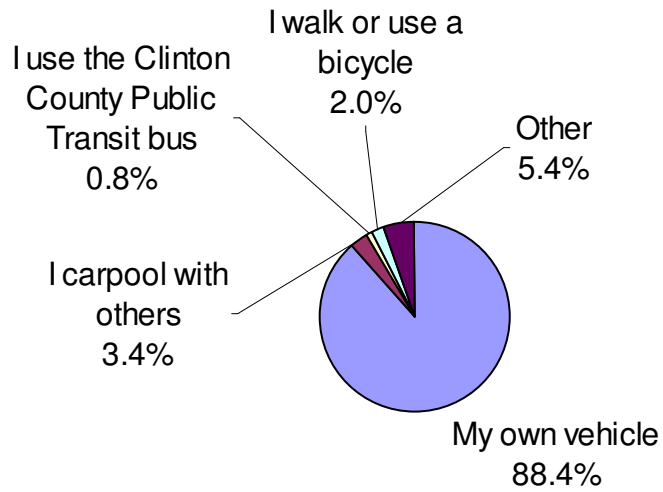
5. Do you feel that your employer is flexible with employee punctuality for those workers who use public transportation?



Sixty percent of respondents indicated that their employer is at least “somewhat flexible” with punctuality for workers who use public transportation. This is an important finding for public transportation advocates, given that most employees will be concerned about how their employer will view a late arrival time at work caused by a delay in public transportation.

Number of Respondents answering question: 140

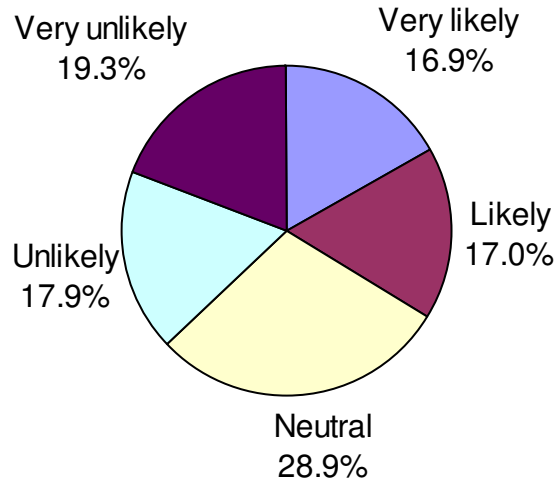
6. What kind of transportation do you normally use to get to and from work?



The vast majority of respondents prefer to use their own vehicle to commute to work. Respondents in the next largest category, “other” provided comments about the use of the Lake Champlain Ferry, using a bicycle, and carpooling, see Appendix.

Number of Respondents answering question: 145

7. How likely would you be to use a Park and Ride service if it were available on your area at no cost?



There were 34.9% of respondents that answered “Likely” or “Very likely”, 37.2% that answered “Unlikely” or “Very unlikely”, and 28.9% that answered “Neutral”.

This is a generally encouraging response for transportation planners who wish to explore the feasibility of providing a Park and Ride facility. Those who indicated “Neutral” may be persuaded to try a Park and Ride system if they had more information and were asked for input about locations, security, scheduling, etc.

Seven respondents provided suggestions for Park and Ride facilities - see Appendix A.

Number of Respondents answering question: 145

8. What encourages or discourages you from using the Clinton County Transit bus?

Answer Options	Strongly Encourages	Encourages	Neither encourages or discourages	Discourages	Strongly discourages	Rating Average
Cleanliness of buses	15.5%	35.7%	46.5%	2.3%	0.0%	3.64
Routes available	26.5%	19.7%	28.8%	13.6%	11.4%	3.63
Convenience of bus schedule	23.8%	20.0%	26.2%	16.9%	13.1%	3.25
Safety of buses	22.3%	30.0%	46.9%	0.8%	0.0%	3.74
Cost	27.7%	27.7%	40.0%	3.8%	0.8%	3.78
Safety at bus stop locations	20.0%	25.4%	51.5%	0.8%	2.3%	3.60
Distance of bus stop from my home	25.4%	15.4%	30.8%	16.9%	11.5%	3.26

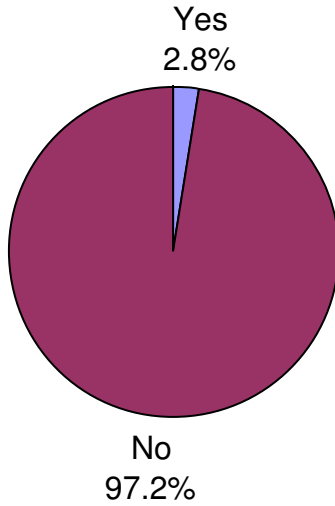
The Clinton County Transit Bus received above average marks by the respondents, with the average rating for five of the seven factors rated above 3.5. This is encouraging feedback about overall perception of the bus system.

The cost factor was the one with the most favorable rating, with 55.4% (3.78) rating it as “encourages” or “strongly encourages” their use. Second was safety, 52.3%, 3.74, and third was cleanliness, 51.2%, and 3.64.

The convenience of the bus schedule and the routes available were the only two factors with significant responses in the “discourages” or “strongly discourages” use categories. This is an area where public transportation planners might target for providing additional information.

Number of Respondents answering question: 134

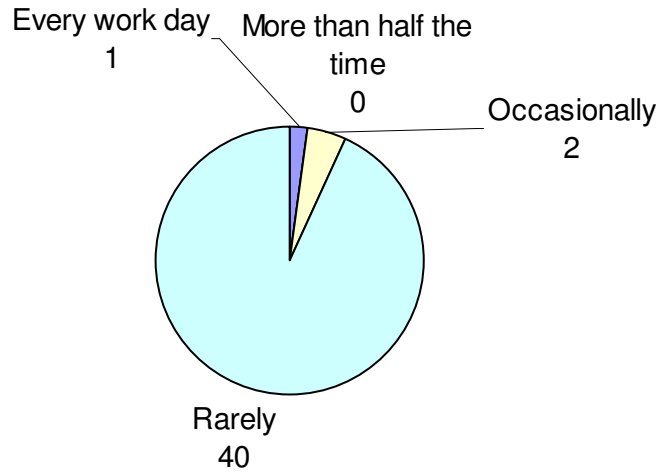
9. In the past month have you used the Clinton County Public Transit bus to get to or from work? If you answer "No" below, please skip to question 12.



Less than 3% of respondents have used the Clinton County Public Transit bus to commute to and from their work place. While few have recently used public transportation, this is validation of the large potential numbers who may be potential riders.

Number of Respondents answering question: 144

10. How often do you take the bus to or from work?



This question was to be answered only by those respondents who answered “yes” to the prior question regarding bus use.

However, there were only four respondents who answered “yes” to using the bus to get to or from work in the past 30 days. This is an extremely small sample.

It appears that additional respondents answered this question because while they have not used the bus in the previous 30 days, they have used it in the past to get to or from work.

Number of Respondents answering question: 43

11. Please rate your last experience using a Clinton County Public Transit bus.

Answer Options	Very pleasant	Somewhat pleasant	Neither pleasant nor unpleasant	Somewhat unpleasant	Very unpleasant	Rating Average
Choose one:	17.1%	20.0%	60.0%	0.0%	2.9%	3.49

There was a low response rate for this question because relatively few of the respondents have used the Clinton County Public Transit bus.

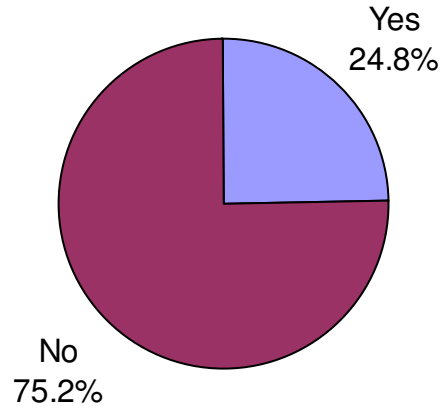
However, 37% of those that said they have used the bus rated their experience as either “somewhat pleasant” or “very pleasant”.

Sixty percent ranked their experience as “neither pleasant nor unpleasant”, or “neutral”.

Overall, the 3.49 average rating is a positive indication for the present transit bus system.

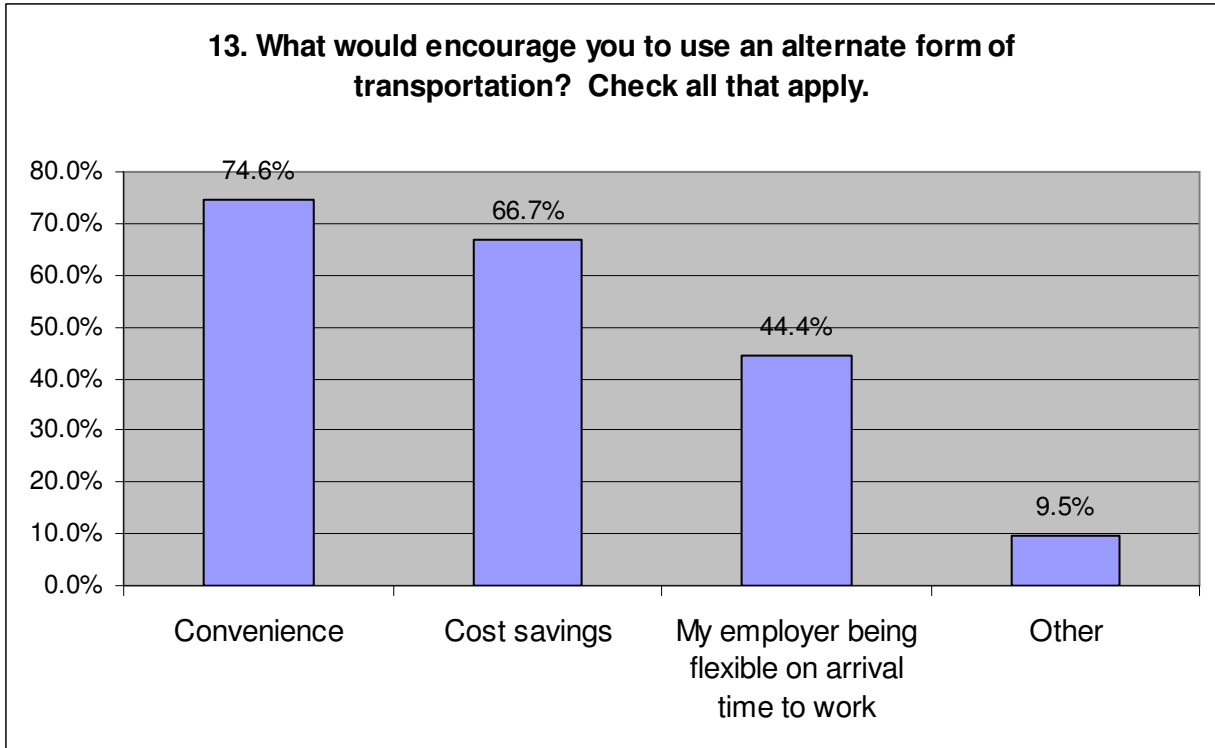
Number of Respondents answering question: 35

12. Do you know where the closest Clinton County Public Transit designated stop is to your home?



Three quarters of respondents do not know where the closest public transit bus stop is from their home. This indicates an opportunity further inform County residents about transit bus locations.

Number of Respondents answering question: 145

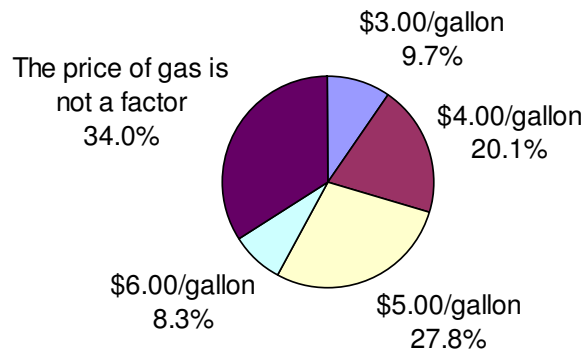


Three quarters of respondents indicated that convenience (schedule, bus stop location, etc) is the number one factor that could encourage them to use an alternative form of transportation to get to or from work. Two thirds identified cost savings as an encouragement. Over 44% were concerned about being late for work given their employer’s expectations for punctuality.

There are additional useful respondent comments included in Appendix A.

Number of Respondents answering question: 126

14. Should gas prices increase, at what price per gallon would you begin to consider using public transportation, or using it more frequently?

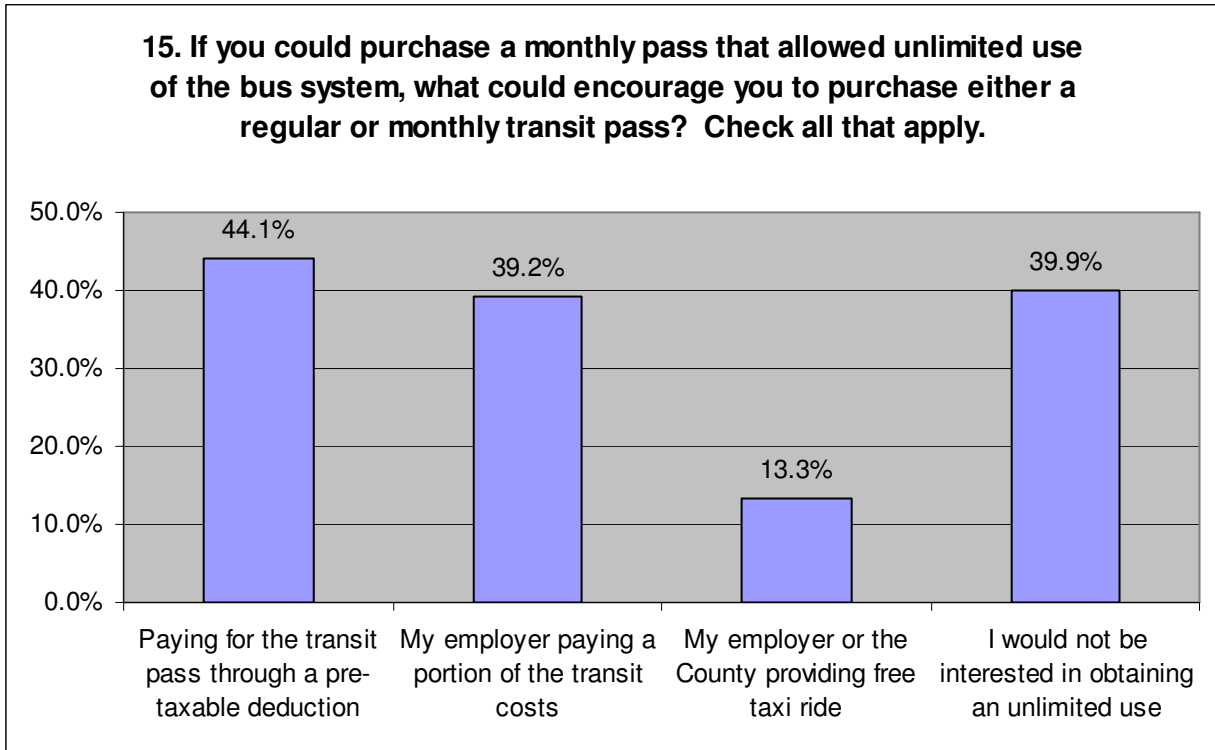


The price of gas was not a factor for over a third of respondents, which correlates with the data in question 16, where many expressed a need to have their own vehicle at work.

For those who indicated that the price of gas could cause them to consider using public transportation, the \$5.00 level was the price that attracted the most selections at nearly 28%.

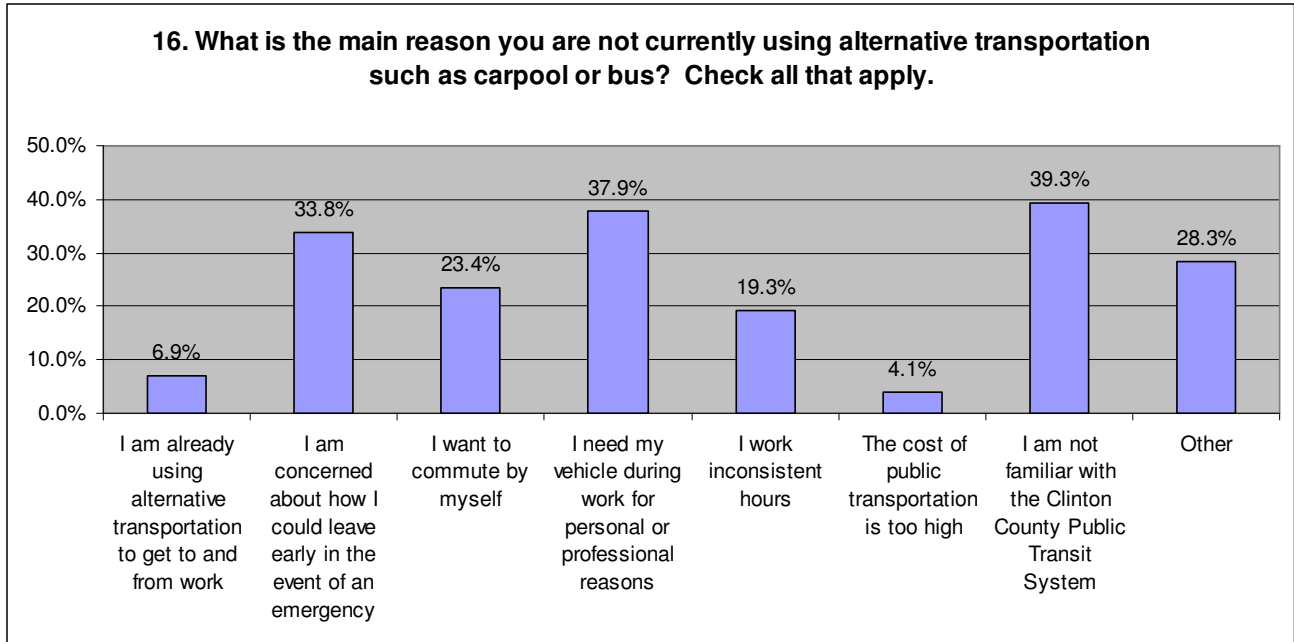
More than half the respondents indicated that the price of gas would cause them to consider using public transportation, or using it more often. As gas prices are once again increasing as of the date of this report, there is an opportunity for public transportation planners to use this information to promote increased use of the transit system.

Number of Respondents answering question: 144



This question measured the respondent’s interest in several incentives to purchase a transit pass. Two of the three ranked fairly high among respondents, indicating considerable interest in pre-tax or cost assistance options. There was also some interest in the taxi option, though it ranked a distant third.

Number of Respondents answering question: 143



Number of Respondents answering question: 143

The responses to this question indicate that increasing employees' awareness of the Clinton County Public Transit system could attract more ridership, as lack of familiarity with the system was the highest ranked reason for not using alternative transportation.

However, it is clear that most respondents will not easily give up their personal vehicle, for several reasons. First, they need their vehicle for work or personal reasons; second, they want their vehicle in case of emergency; and third, they simply want to commute by themselves.

This question elicited the highest percentage of respondents indicating that they currently use some form of alternative transportation, at nearly 7%.

There is additional useful data in Appendix A.

APPENDIX A

Respondents' additional comments

3. What days of the week do you work at your place of primary employment?

- Any of the seven days.
- Every other weekend
- Every other weekend off
- Full time every other week-end
- I work all days of the week, by schedule.
- I work every other weekend
- Monday - Friday and every other weekend.
- Monday - Friday and every other sat.
- Monday, Thursday, Friday one week then Tuesday, Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday the next (12 hour shifts)
- Monday through Thursday
- Monday through Thursday
- Monday, Wednesday, Friday
- Occasionally on a Saturday and Sunday
- One weekend a month
- Sometimes Saturday and Sunday.
- Sunday
- Sunday through Thursday
- Varied schedule
- Varies
- When overtime needed Saturday.

4. Please tell us your normal hours of work at your primary work place.

8:00 am–4:30 pm	22
7:00 am–3:30 pm	11
6:00 am-2:30 pm	9
3:00 pm-11:30 pm	5
7:00 am-7:30 pm	3
8:00 am–5:00 pm	3
6:30 am–5:00 pm	2
11:00 pm-7:30 am	2
12:00 am-8:00 pm	1
5:00 am-5:00 pm	1
7:30 am-5:00 pm	1
7:30 am-4:00 pm	1
7:45 am-4:15 pm	1
8:30 am-5:00 pm	1
6:00 pm-9:00 pm	1
2:30 pm-11:00 pm	1
3:00 pm–11:30 pm	1
10:30 pm - 7:00 am	1

6. What kind of transportation do you normally use to get to and from work?

- Also use Lake Champlain Ferry and a cab to get home
- Carpool on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays
- Drive school bus
- Ferry
- I also walk or use my bike
- I sometimes motorcycle or peddle bike
- I work from home

7. I know of a possible unofficial Park and Ride location in my neighborhood (for example, a store parking lot), which is:

- But, I think it is a GREAT idea
- Chase's store in Redford, Old Assumption of Mary School
- Corner of Rt. 190 and Alder Bend Road
- Glenwood Plaza, Peru NY
- I only live a half mile from work
- I want to Park and Ride
- Old St. Alexander's School - I might do it if bad weather
- Rest area on Route 3 west of Saranac
- Rock's Store or Post Office
- Sky Way Plaza?
- United States

8. What encourages or discourages you from using the Clinton County transit bus? Please rate each item with 5 indicating an item that "strongly encourages" you and 1 indicating an item that "strongly discourages" you.

- Always like the availability of coming and going as I wish.
- Convenience of bus schedule - and distance of bus stop from my home - This is a strong indicator for me - but the current schedule is terrible
- Don't even know if it stops near my house or not. Don't know what is available or where to get information
- Don't know the schedule, I only live 5 miles from work
- Dropping children at day care before and after work.
- Getting me to work on time - I absolutely cannot be late for work.
- Have a private auto
- Have young children.
- I don't know anything about the buses.
- I have always had my own vehicle
- I have my own car so I am not in the habit of public transportation
- I know very little about CCPT.
- I like having my car for doing stuff at lunch.
- I live in Morrisonville, and work in Plattsburgh only a few miles from work, bus schedule and locations unknown
- I live very close to work.
- I live within three minutes of my work
- I live within a mile of my job.
- I need my car during the day to go back and forth between different locations
- I only live two miles from work and have my own transportation, don't think bus goes by my house
- It needs to be in a location that is easily accessible and also when I leave work that I do not have to be standing around waiting
- Job requires travel to customer sites. Must have own vehicle.
- I live only two miles from work
- No reason to use
- Not sure where closest bus stop would be
- Parking lot security of my vehicle and maintenance of the lot in the winter.

13. What would encourage you to use an alternate form of transportation (e.g. carpool, Park and Ride, bus)? Check all that apply.

- #12 Comment - There are none near me. If I want to come to any place I have to call ahead and hope the bus stops as it passes the road near my house in a range of time. I have called twice and twice they have missed me.
- A parking lot
- Closer location of nearest bus stop.
- I drive a school bus from my home to work thus do not need an alternate form of transportation.
- If no kids & my employer was more flexible, I'd use it.
- In the summer of 2007 my son did a 16 week summer internship at Wyeth in Rouses Point. His car was not in the best shape to get from Plattsburgh to Wyeth daily so he chose to use the CART bus system. He rode the bus probably 90% of the time and had nothing but positive comments about this service and always recommends the CART system to others. The only complaint was that he fell asleep a few times and instead of getting off at the North Country shopping center he ended up on Margaret Street near Frechette's grocery.
- No one in my area coming to my work place.
- Nothing
- Time of day/parking available.
- Would never use

16. What is the main reason you are not currently using alternative transportation such as a carpool or bus? Please check all that apply.

- Second shift.
- Some days I go to the gym after work, some days I have to pick up my child at school (after school sports with no transport after it ends)
- The possibility of arriving late
- There is no good schedule, nor convenience near my home.
- They are not scheduled to leave Morrisonville early enough to get me to work on time
- They don't run the over night schedule
- Work hours
- Would car pool but no one in the area.