ARC Regional On-Board Transit Survey Executive Summary

Overview

Between October 2009 and January 2010, the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) conducted a regional on-board transit survey. The purpose of the survey was to better understand the travel pattern of transit users in the Atlanta area. The results will be used to update ARC's regional travel demand model.

The survey was one of the largest and most comprehensive on-board transit surveys ever conducted in the United States. More than 50,000 surveys, representing approximately 1 out of 10 transit riders in the region, were completed. The survey was administered to passengers on bus routes and rail lines operated by seven transit systems: Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority, Georgia Regional Transportation Authority, Cobb Community Transit, Gwinnett County Transit, Clayton County Transit, Hall Area Transit, and Cherokee Area Transit. The survey covered a 20-county region, including: the City of Atlanta and the counties of Clayton, Cherokee, Cobb, DeKalb, Douglas, Fayette, Fulton, Gwinnett, Henry, Rockdale, Barrow, Bartow, Carroll, Coweta, Forsyth, Hall, Newton, Paulding, Spalding, and Walton.

The magnitude of the survey will allow regional planners to better understand the needs and travel patterns of many specialized populations. For example, the final database contains responses from:

- more than 24,000 people who do not have cars
- more than 16,000 students
- more than 13,000 people living in households with incomes of less than $10,000 per year
- nearly 3,500 persons of Hispanic origin
- more than a 1,000 persons age 65 and older

Major Findings

- **Public Transit Usage Is Significant in the Atlanta Area.** The results of the survey show the region's transit system facilitates the completion of more than 270,000 one-way trips per day or more than 1.3 million trips during a typical 5-day work week. By providing residents with a reliable mode of transportation, the region's transit system is having a positive impact on traffic flow and air quality, reducing the number of trips that would have otherwise been completed by car.

- **Public transit is important to the region's economy.** Nearly three-fourths (72.8%) of those surveyed indicate they are currently employed, and trips to/from work are the most frequent non-home destination for transit users in the region. In fact, 45% of all transit trips completed in the region involve travel between a person's home and their work place. Without public transit, nearly two-thirds (64%) of those surveyed indicate they would have difficulties getting to work because they do not have a car or their car is not available.

- **Public transit is important to education in the region.** Nearly one-third (31%) of those surveyed indicate they are students, which explains the reason colleges/schools were the second most frequent non-home destination for transit users in the region. In fact, 1 in every 6.2 transit trips involves travel between a person's home and a school, daycare, or college. On a typical weekday, more than 40,000 school-related trips are completed on public transportation in the Atlanta area.

- **Many residents with cars and higher incomes are choosing to use public transit instead of driving.** The results of the survey show that 10% of all transit users in the region have annual household incomes of $75,000 or more. Among those with annual household incomes of at least $75,000, nearly three-fourths (73%) indicate they could have completed their trip by driving a car instead of using public transit.