

# **2005 Arlington County Public Perceptions of Transit Study**

## **SPONSOR:**

[Arlington County Commuter Services](#)

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## **RESEARCH VENDOR:**

[WB&A Market Research](#)

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## **OVERALL STUDY PURPOSE:**

- ☞ This project was a component of a semi-annual psychographic and behavioral study of Washington area residents.
- ☞ The purpose of this study was to determine Washington area residents', especially Arlington County residents', behaviors and attitudes toward transportation, in particular toward the private car, Metrobus, and Metrorail.

## **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES:**

- ☞ Determine the size and characteristics of current rider customer groups
- ☞ Identify how these customer groups are distinct from the regional population as a whole
- ☞ Determine the size and characteristics of the customer groups representing the greatest potential for conversion to transit from other modes of transportation
- ☞ Identify the service-related and/or attitudinal factors that inhibit increased use of transit by these groups
- ☞ Identify motivating positions and marketing strategies that would overcome factors inhibiting use or increased use of transit within individual market segments
- ☞ Determine the size and characteristics of the customer groups representing non-potential groups
- ☞ Identify the specific information needs of existing customers and potential customers

## **METHODOLOGY:**

<b>Mode of Data Collection</b>	Random Digit Dialing Telephone Survey
<b>Completed Surveys</b>	500 Respondents Total: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Private vehicle only – 253</li><li>- Mass transit - 229</li><li>- Ethnicity – 78% white</li></ul>
<b>Survey Population</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Residents of Arlington County and those who may live elsewhere but work in Arlington County</li><li>- Must be at least 18 years of age</li></ul>
<b>Survey Instrument</b>	Questionnaire and CATI Interviewing

## **KEY FINDINGS:**

### **Private Car Usage:**

- ☞ Use of the private car was quite prevalent in Arlington County.
  - The vast majority of all trips taken by Arlington residents were by private car (73%), with about one-half being by private car occupied by the driver alone (48%).
- ☞ Private vehicle only users tended to be older and have a higher household income than transit users. They also were more likely to be married, to have lived in the DC area longer, and not to have a post-graduate or professional degree, than were transit users.
- ☞ Residents tended to be neutral in their opinions of the private car as a mode of transportation.
  - They did show concern about cost, safety, parking and other issues, with cost a particular problem.

### **Metrorail:**

- ☞ Use of Metrorail, particularly for commuting to and from work or school, was fairly strong among Arlington County residents – there is still room for growth, though.
  - Virtually every resident (97%) had used Metrorail at some point in the past
  - Almost half of Arlington County residents said that they are using Metrorail less often now than they did in the past.
  - Nine in ten residents said they lived within what they considered to be walking distance of a Metrorail station.
- ☞ Metrorail users tended to be younger, more likely to be new to the DC area, employed full-time, and have a college degree, compared to non-users.
  - The household income, gender, marital status, and ethnicity of Metrorail riders were comparable to those of the general public.
- ☞ Arlington County residents had generally positive opinions of Metrorail as a mode of transportation – lifestyle, parking, and safety issues were factors impeding greater use.
  - While residents still tended to see buying Metrorail farecards as easy, the proportion agreeing that this is so decreased from 2004.

## **Metrobus:**

- ☞ Use of Metrobus appeared to be limited among Arlington County residents and there was little change from 2004. A large majority (79%) said, however, that they have used Metrobus at some point in the past.
  - Only 3% of Arlington County residents' trips are typically made by Metrobus.
  - A large proportion of Arlington County residents said that they use Metrobus less often than they did in the past - primarily because of a preference for the car or Metrorail.
  - Almost nine in ten residents said they live within four blocks of a bus stop.
- ☞ Metrobus users differed from the general population of Arlington County on several demographic characteristics.
  - They lived in the DC area for less time and had significantly lower household incomes.
- ☞ Opinions of Metrobus as a mode of transportation among Arlington County residents were less positive than for Metrorail. Ratings of all Metrobus attributes were similar to what was reported in 2004 – safety, convenience, comfort, available, and meeting transportation needs were areas of concern.

## **Other Issues:**

- ☞ A majority of Arlington County residents were aware of SmarTrip – 37% were currently using it, an increase from the 30% who mentioned using it 2004.
- ☞ More than four in ten of those employed were aware that their employer offers Metrochek or SmartBenefits.
- ☞ Many of those employees continued to receive free or subsidized parking at work.

## **OTHER FINDINGS:**

- ☞ Seven segments of the market were combined into three segments to establish which groups to target.
- ☞ Forget 'Ems (28% of the market)
  - This segment was the most positive toward cars and, conversely, the most negative toward public transportation. They were the most mobile and the most dependent on private vehicles as a means of transportation. They were the least likely to be influenced to use public transportation.
- ☞ Should Get 'Ems (29% of the market)
  - This segment was identified as young, well educated, and relatively affluent. They live busy work and personal lives. They primarily use their cars to get around, but they do have a more positive attitude toward public transportation than do other drivers. While they do not typically use public transportation now, they could be influenced to do so in the future.
- ☞ Get 'Em Mores (43% of the market)
  - Members of this segment were identified as the most frequent users of public transportation. However, they also were noted to travel the least. They had very positive attitudes toward public transportation, coupled with their desire to save money, providing an opportunity for increased public transportation usage.

## **OTHER RELATED STUDIES, PLANS & DOCUMENTS:**

2003 Arlington County "Pike Ride" Transit Service Study  
2004 Arlington County Public Perceptions of Transit Study  
2006 Arlington County Teen Transit Initiative Study

**AVAILABLE DOCUMENTS:**

PowerPoint Presentation

**KEY WORDS:**

Arlington County , Car, Commuters, Metrobus, Metrocheck, Metropolitan DC Area, Metrorail, Perceptions, Private Vehicle, Smartbenefits, Smartrip, Transit, Transportation