

2006 Arlington County Teen Transit Initiative Study

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RESEARCH SUPPLIER:

[Southeastern Institute of Research](#), Richmond, VA. Conducted: 2006

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OVERALL STUDY PURPOSE:

- ☞ The purpose of this study was to provide a marketing information foundation for the Arlington County Teen Transit Initiative, a teen-led task force charged with planning additional transit-oriented services for Arlington County teens.

OBJECTIVES OF RESEARCH:

- ☞ Understand where Arlington County's teens want to go and why
- ☞ Understand how teens currently get there and if they need help getting there
- ☞ Assess how transit could better serve teens
- ☞ Identify teens who currently use transit and the optimal teen target audiences to increase transit use
- ☞ Understand current level of satisfaction with transit and what improvements would help get existing Arlington County teen riders to ride transit on a more regular basis
- ☞ Understand what barriers must be overcome to attract more teens to transit
- ☞ Assess what impact family members' experience with transit ridership has on teen interest in and use of transit

METHODOLOGY:

Mode of Data Collection	10-minute Paper Research Survey: - Teens Online Qualitative Input - Parents - Educators
Completed Surveys	698 Teens: - 8 th Grade = 111 - 9 th Grade = 188 - 10 th Grade = 169 11 th Grade = 230
Survey Population	- 13 high schools were represented in sample. Respondent distribution across schools closely monitored Arlington County School Statistics. - Survey respondents' ethnicity distribution closely matched Arlington Public Schools' demographic profile, as well.
Survey Instrument	Paper hand-out survey
Criteria for Participation	- Arlington County 8 th – 11 th graders

KEY FINDINGS

Teen Demographics:

- ☞ Just over half the respondents were female.
- ☞ The majority were 16 and 17 years of age, white, and born in Arlington County.

Opportunity Audiences:

- ☞ Teens fell into three broad segments: 53% non-riders (of ART or Metrobus), 24% light riders (ride ART or Metrobus a few times a month or less), and 23% heavy riders (ride ART or Metrobus at least once a week).
- ☞ Teens who were not transit riders were most likely to be 14-17 year olds who have lived in Arlington County for a long time.
- ☞ Heavy riders tended to be Hispanic or African American and new residents in the County.
- ☞ Heavy riders skewed older (18) and light riders tended to be younger teens (15-16).

The Need for Teen Transit:

- ☞ Those who said it was easy to find a ride (56%) tended to use transit less than other teens.
- ☞ One out of five Arlington County teens said finding a ride was hard.

Where Teens Go, What They Do & How They Get There:

- ☞ Teens went everywhere. Most popular destinations were North Arlington & Ballston.
- ☞ Heavy riders appeared to go to all of Arlington County destinations more regularly than did light riders and non-riders.
- ☞ Teens frequented malls, movie theaters, and friends' houses.
- ☞ Non-riders and riders did the same activities at these destinations, with the one exception being "work." Teen transit riders cited "work" more often as a travel destination than did non-riders.
 - Twice as many heavy riders as non-riders or light riders said they were going to work.
- ☞ Most teens get to places with their parents' help or by walking.
- ☞ Transit had light penetration (use) among teens.
- ☞ ART and Metrobus served less than 10% of teens who were engaged in any one activity – going to the mall, to the community center, to jobs, etc.
- ☞ Only 19% of all teen respondents said they use ART and/or Metrobus as the way they "usually get there."

Families Experience/Use of Transit Lifts Teens Interest/Use in Transit:

- ☞ There was a direct and positive correlation between family experience with ART and/or Metrobus and teen use of ART and/or Metrobus. The Arlington County Teen Transit Initiative can have a long-term positive impact – any conversion to transit would potentially create another "pro-transit influencer" on extended family members in this and future generations.

Making Transit More Attractive:

- ☞ Among teens who indicated they used ART & Metrobus, convenience, dependability, and costs (fares) were most important considerations (expectations). Teens' expectations were not being met by existing services – there were significant "performance gaps."
- ☞ Light riders, when compared to heavy riders, had greater expectations of what convenience and dependability meant to them – this creates an even bigger "performance gap" to close.
- ☞ The "cost factor" was a bigger issue for heavy riders than for light riders perhaps in part because heavy riders experienced fares (cost) more often.
- ☞ No single barrier or over-arching issue made transit unappealing to non-riders. Multiple issues appeared to be important – lack of information, high fares, lack of convenient and dependable service and schedules, overall "lame" image, and parents' permission.
- ☞ These barriers also arose when non-riders were asked what it would take for them to ride the bus – the barriers (real or perceived) limited the overall appeal of transit.
- ☞ Parents appeared to have many of the same issues with ART and/or Metrobus that teens did – high fares, lack of convenience and dependable service and schedules.
- ☞ Some parents were also concerned about safety.
- ☞ Parents did see the benefit of ART and/or Metrobus helping teens get to work.

OTHER RELATED STUDIES, PLANS & DOCUMENTS:

- 2004 Arlington County Public Perceptions of Transit
- 2005 Arlington County Public Perceptions of Transit

AVAILABLE DOCUMENTS:

Questionnaire
Data Tables
PowerPoint Presentation Final Report

KEY WORDS:

Arlington County, ART, High School, Metrobus, Metrorail, Middle School, Teen, Transit, Teen Transit Initiative