State of the Commute in Southern California, 1992

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The 1992 State of the Commute survey, conducted by Commuter Transportation Services (CTS), is based on a telephone survey of 2,512 commuters residing within Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Ventura counties. The survey provides updated information on commuters' travel behavior and attitudes toward the commute, traffic congestion, alternative travel modes, employer transportation programs, and high-occupancy vehicle lanes. Data obtained from the 1992 survey are compared with those obtained from CTS's previous State of the Commute surveys to uncover changes in behavior and attitudes. With the presence of the South Coast Air Quality Management District's Regulation XV and the Ventura County Air Pollution Control District's Rule 210, it is expected that the increased attention given to air quality, alternative travel modes, and work schedules by the media and at employer work sites will result in changes in travel behavior and attitudes.

Information obtained from the 1992 State of the Commute survey includes work trip time and distance, arrival and departure times, stops made en route, work schedules, transportation modes, vehicle availability, parking costs, awareness and participation in employer transportation programs, employer size, park-and-ride lot usage, and carpool characteristics. Demographic data gathered include age, sex, ethnicity, occupation, years at the work site and residence, number of household vehicles, home and work counties, and household income.

The survey also gathered information on freeway usage, use and attitudes toward HOV lanes, use of alternate routes, availability of transit, perceptions of traffic conditions and changes in those conditions over time, availability and participation in alternative work schedules and telecommuting, commute satisfaction, commute stress, ridesharing experience, commuter concerns, willingness to try alternative travel modes in the face of changing traffic conditions, and recognition of a RIDE-number.

The basic methodology for all State of the Commute surveys was the same. Randomly generated telephone numbers for the region were obtained through Survey Sampling, Inc. Data were gathered through a telephone survey conducted by an outside marketing research firm. For purposes of clarification, data for the 1992 survey were collected from October through November 1991. Analysis and reporting of the data occurred in the spring of 1992. The timing for data collection has remained consistent for all survey years.

The Southern California region has experienced population growth from 1991 to 1992. Regional growth was 2 percent, and in the counties of Riverside and San Bernardino, growth rates were even higher. Regional population has increased by 892,000 since 1989. According to the California Department of Finance, 14.8 million people now consider the Southland home. It is estimated that there are more than 6.8 million commuters in the region.

FINDINGS

The two most significant changes from the previous surveys to 1992 have been an increase in part-time ridesharing (1 or 2 days per week) and a dramatic jump in awareness of employer trip reduction programs.

Travel Behavior and Trends

- Primary (3 or more days per week) travel mode: In 1992, 77 percent of commuters drive alone to work on a regular basis, 14 percent carpool, 5 percent ride the bus, 2 percent walk, 1 percent vanpool, and 1 percent bicycle. Although consistent with 1991 travel modes, this represents a significant decrease in the percentage of commuters driving alone to work compared with 1989 travel data.
- Part-time ridesharing: There has been a significant increase in the percentage of commuters using transportation alternatives once or twice a week. Nearly one-third of all commuters now use an alternative to driving alone at least once a week (Figure 1).
- Travel distance: For all respondents in 1992, the mean travel distance to work is 16.6 mi one way, whereas the median travel distance is 10 mi. Travel distances within the last 3 years have remained virtually unchanged.
- Travel time: In 1992, the average travel time to work is 36 min. The average travel time home is 40 min. The majority of commuters (60 percent) do not believe that their commute time is longer now than it was 1 year ago.
- Arrival and departure times: Thirty-four percent of 1992 respondents are at work before 7:30 a.m., and 56 percent leave work before 5:00 p.m. Commuters are reporting to work and leaving work earlier in 1992 than they did in 1989.
- Carpools: The average carpool has 2.7 members. Fewer than half (43 percent) of carpool partners are household members. Carpoolers report having been in their current carpool an average of 2 years. Carpoolers travel a mean distance of 22 mi to work.
- Bus riders: Riders report they have been riding the bus an average of 4 years. All respondents (except current bus

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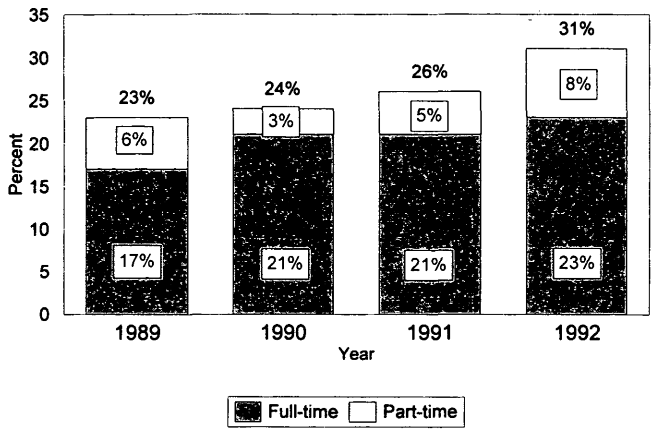

FIGURE 1 Full- and part-time ridesharing.

riders) were asked whether there was a bus that they could take to get to work. Thirty-six percent answered affirmatively. Bus riders travel a mean distance of 12 mi to work.

- Stops during the commute: Nearly one-fifth of all respondents mention that they had made a stop on the way to work. Of these, 23 percent stopped to take their child to daycare or school, and another 21 percent stopped to eat. Twenty-four percent of area commuters stopped on their way home from work, with one-quarter stopping to buy groceries or go shopping. More commuters made stops on their return trip home than did on their trip to work. These data are comparable with previous study findings.
- Number of motorized vehicles: Respondents have a median of two motorized vehicles per household. Motorized vehicles include automobiles, trucks, vans, and highway motorcycles owned or leased by the household. Only 4 percent of the respondents report having no vehicles available.

Commuter Awareness of Employer Transportation Programs

Awareness of incentive programs used by employers to encourage employees to use alternative travel modes or work schedules has increased significantly from 1991 (Table 1). In 1992, 74 percent of all commuters were aware of being offered at least one rideshare incentive; in 1991 that figure was 50 percent. Commuters employed at sites with 100 or more employees (i.e., sites subject to regulation) are even more likely to be aware of incentives (90 percent compared with 65 percent for commuters working at the smaller sites).

Alternative Work Schedules

Forty-two percent of area commuters report that their employer offers flexible work hours, in which 75 percent participate. Fifteen percent claim that their employer offers a 4/40 workweek, in which 48 percent participate. Eleven percent report that their employer offers a 9/80 workweek, in which 47 percent participate. Eight percent of area commuters say that their employer offers a 3/36 workweek, in which 38 percent participate. Fifteen percent of all respondents say that they are currently on either a 4/40, 9/80, or 3/36 work schedule. The percentage reporting that the employer offers flexible work hours has increased significantly (7 percent) from last year's survey. The participation rate in alternative work schedule arrangements has remained unchanged from last year.

Employer Incentives

The employer transportation programs of which commuters were most likely to be aware include the following: offers flexible work hours (42 percent), provides a guaranteed ride home in the event of an emergency (34 percent), provides ridesharing information (33 percent), assists in forming carpools/vanpools (31 percent), provides preferential parking (25 percent), provides bus information on routes and schedules (19 percent), and registers employees with Commuter Computer (18 percent).

Those aware of the programs offered to them were asked whether they have used any of the programs. Forty-one percent of commuters have requested assistance in forming carpools or vanpools, 41 percent have used ridesharing information, 41 percent have made use of ridesharing subsidies, 41 percent have made use of transit route and scheduling information, 40 percent have taken advantage of preferential parking, and 37 percent have registered with a ridesharing organization.

When asked whether participation in the program influenced travel mode choice, roughly one in six answered affirmatively. Those programs most influential in bringing about a change in travel behavior were use of a company car during the day for ridesharers (36 percent), guaranteed ride home program (28 percent), and rideshare subsidies (18 percent).

Telecommuting

Eleven percent of the respondents claim that they have the opportunity to work at home instead of their regular place of work. This figure has remained virtually unchanged during the past 4 years. Of those with the opportunity to work at home, 83 percent actually do.

HOV Lanes

Fifty-three percent of commuters use a freeway to get to or from work. Of these, 35 percent have HOV lanes available to them. Of this subgroup, 28 percent actually use the lanes.

Of the respondents with no HOV lanes available to them, 73 percent believe that the availability of these commuter lanes encourages carpooling, vanpooling, or taking the bus. This figure is even higher for those with access to HOV lanes. HOV lanes are strongly seen as an encouragement to rideshare both by those with access to HOV lanes and those without access.

Attitudes Toward Traffic and the Commute

- Perceptions of traffic: Commuters consider freeway traffic worse than street traffic and evenings worse than mornings.

TABLE 1 Awareness by Employees of Employer Transportation Programs

Employer Program	1989 %	1990 %	1991 %	1992 %
Offers Flexible Work Hours	32%	42%	35%	42%
Offers 4/40 Work Schedule	NA*	14	13	15
Offers 9/80 Work Schedule	NA*	7	9	11
Offers 3/36 Work Schedule	NA*	NA*	NA*	8
Assists In Forming Carpools And Vanpools	8	26	25	31
Provides Ridesharing Info	14	28	22	33
Guarantees A Ride Home In Case Of An Emergency	32	19	17	34
Provides Preferred Parking Spaces To Ridesharers	11	16	13	25
Registers Employees With Commuter Computer	11	14	10	18
Provides Bus Information On Routes And Schedules	12	14	11	19
Provides Free/Low Cost Parking To Ridesharers	10	11	9	16
Subsidizes Ridesharing	NA*	8	9	15
Sells Bus Passes	4	6	7	10
Offers A Company Car During The Day To Those Who Rideshare	19	6	6	8
Has Contests/Prizes For Ridesharers	3	6	6	14
Gives Each Employee A Monthly Allotment Of Money To Reduce Commuting Costs	NA*	4	6	12

* NA = Not Asked in the survey

Roughly 16 percent consider freeway traffic during their commutes to be always good, and approximately 27 percent consider street traffic to be always good.

- Satisfaction with the commute: On a satisfaction rating scale of 1 (low) to 9 (high), respondents give their morning commute a mean (average) rating of 6.1 and their evening commute a rating of 5.9. Somewhat surprisingly, 19 percent of area commuters gave their commute a 9 (the highest) rating (this was true for both the trip to work and the trip home). The range of satisfaction between the morning and evening commutes has definitely narrowed over the past 2 years, since commuters in 1992 were more apt to rate their trip home higher and their trip to work lower than commuters in 1989.
- Commute stress: Commuters were asked to rate the level of stress of their commute from 1 (least stressful) to 9 (most stressful). Overall, commuters rated their commute 4.5. Twenty percent rated their level of stress as 1 and only 9 percent rated their level of commute stress as 9.
- Impact of commute on work relocation: Of commuters who have switched work sites in the last 2 years, 25 percent cited at least one commute-related issue as a reason for the change.

CONCLUSIONS

Findings from the State of the Commute studies are used to support regional policies and suggest rideshare marketing strategies. In addition, the data are being used to support analyses of specific market segments, such as the small employer market and the Hispanic market. Among the policy recommendations from the 1992 State of the Commute are the following:

- Delay lowering the threshold for employer trip reduction programs to include sites with less than 100 employees. Evidence suggests that regular ridesharing (3 or more days per week) is already occurring at sites with less than 100 employees to the same degree that it is occurring at the larger sites (those already under regulation).

• The cost of commuting in the Southland is relatively low. Not surprisingly, commuting costs ranked sixth (representing only 5 percent of commuters) as a motivational factor for travel mode choice. Most commuters (94 percent) receive free parking at their work sites. When commuters cite commute-related reasons for a change in employment location, only 2 percent report costs as the underlying factor. Employer trip reduction programs will only bring about a moderate change in travel mode as a result. To bring about the most change in alternative mode usage, regional policies must support employer trip reduction programs together with pricing strategies, expansion of alternative travel mode options, and improvement in existing options.

• Since part-time ridesharers are less likely to be ridesharing with a person from a matchlist than are full-time ridesharers, this represents an opportunity for matchlist providers to better suit part-time ridesharers' needs.

• One out of four commuters switching work sites in the last 2 years cited at least one commute-related issue as a reason for the change. This represents a sizeable market affected by the stress and strain of the daily commute. Increased education about alternative travel options and incentives may help to keep these employees at their work sites longer.

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