

## Policies regarding Rider Opinion Survey

Information compiled July 23, 2007

**The Question:** We are in the planning phase of conducting a long overdue rider opinion survey, and would like to know how other properties go about doing this type of survey. How do you attempt to get a representative sampling? Control for one response per rider? Obtain answers from illiterate riders? If you have used survey takers, how has that worked for you? Any information is appreciated.

**Community Transit** says... The following is the methodology from the Community Transit Onboard Survey completed in October of 2006. I have included our questionnaire and can provide other information if it would be helpful.

### Methodology

Community Transit riders completed a self-administered paper questionnaire during their trip. Paper surveys were placed on each bus by Community Transit over a 3 day period (Wednesday October 18th, Saturday October 21st, Sunday October 22nd). A total of 9,107 surveys were collected during this time.

Drivers were given packets of pre-counted and numbered surveys corresponding to the estimated ridership on each run. The surveys were placed in folders hung near the driver and passengers were asked to take and complete a survey each time they boarded a bus. Pens were provided in order to complete the survey. Completed surveys were placed in an envelope behind the driver. Drivers returned all completed surveys to Community Transit and unused surveys were removed from the buses at the end of the day. Surveys were collected by Community Transit and returned to Informa Research Services' Seattle office. Surveys were printed in English, but a phone number was provided for riders to call if they wanted to complete the survey in another language via phone. In addition, a portion of the surveys were printed in large font to comply with ADA regulations.

The questionnaire was developed by Community Transit with input from Informa Research Services. The questionnaire asked about topics such as rider's trip origin and destination, mode of transportation to and from the bus, frequency of ridership, transfer activity, fare payment, time of travel, trip purpose, rider demographics and evaluation of bus services. Question formats varied and included closed single, multiple-response, and open-ended questions. [Click here](#) to view a copy of the questionnaire.

Findings are reported as observed. Weighting was done on data to match the number of actual surveys collected from each route group with the ridership for each route group. There were no significant differences between observed and weighted data, therefore data is reported as observed.

**CUBS** says... We have not done a ridership survey for awhile, so I do not have a good answer to your question.

**Everett Transit** says... How do you attempt to get a representative sampling? We survey for one full day or one full week and compare to our regular ridership numbers. We offer surveys via paper and have used surveyors to capture those who don't take a survey on the bus. Control for one response per rider? We ask riders to fill out a survey every time they board the bus as that is how our ridership statistics are compiled. Obtain answers from illiterate riders? We have used surveyors to assist illiterate and ESL passengers. If you have used survey takers, how has that worked for you? Temporary surveyors work O.K. if there is some way of monitoring their interaction with customers. We prefer to use off-duty drivers or customer service staff as they understand the system and can answer questions completely. They also care about what is being said and often times solve issues before they arise.

**Island Transit** says... We have a survey on our website, and we also conducted a survey last year. [Click here](#) to view a copy of the 2006 survey. We also have surveys in our booth at Fairs.

**Jefferson Transit** says...Past experience shows that in order to get the best results you need to have someone on each trip handing out, collecting, and assisting people in completing the forms.

Since there are so many variables involved such as time of day, travel direction, origin/destination, broad socio-economic backgrounds of the passengers, etc, it is best to try for a 100% sample of each trip over a two week period. Meaning that each scheduled trip should have data collected one time over the course of the sample period (two weeks). Also, each passenger should only complete the form once.

It would be almost impossible to obtain a statistically valid sample using standard random sampling techniques in order to obtain a valid, overall system assessment.

**Kitsap Transit** says... We conduct an annual survey of our ACCESS passengers. It is done by internal staff. A current list (last 30 days) of clients is used. Every 10th person on the list is contacted for a representative sampling. If no contact is made, 3 call backs are made, then that person is skipped and the next one in line is called. Those who are unable to answer the questions themselves were polled by asking their caregivers or attendees. The questions were structured and scripted. The data was captured in a spread sheet.

Every so often, by route usually, routed passengers are surveyed. Customer Service staff ride the buses/routes, explaining what the survey is for and how to fill it out. Surveys are handed out

and collected by the staff on the bus. Passengers will fill out the survey themselves, and if they have questions about what is being asked, the CSO staff can answer.

Once, in the past five years we hired temps to ride each bus trip twice (routed) and capture information themselves without ridership input. That data was mostly for on-time performance.

**Mason Transit** says... We conduct rider surveys (English and Spanish versions) with survey takers on-board and via phone.

Members of our Citizens Advisory Board and MTA staff serve as survey takers.

To obtain a representative sampling, we randomly select persons within service zones when calling riders and keep track of those who did or did not offer a response. On-board survey takers are scheduled at such times to avoid any potential of a rider providing more than one response. Survey takers also ask, "Have you already participated in this survey?" as another means to avoid duplication.

Riders are given an option to complete the survey (if interested):

Verbally - their responses are written down by the survey taker

Written - riders can complete the survey within a designated time frame and either mail it back or give it to the driver

We have not yet implemented the ability for riders to complete surveys on-line.

**Skagit Transit** says... We are also thinking about doing surveys of this nature.

**Spokane Transit** says... We conduct an annual Riders Survey. We contract the survey to be done through a professional research company. Last year, this effort was conducted by Strategic Research Associates. They were tasked with conducting a 3500 on-board, self administered survey of weekday and weekend transit riders. The primary objectives of the survey were to measure behaviors among bus travel, motivations for taking the bus, satisfaction with STA services, and demographics of the riders.

Specific measurements areas were investigated in the survey:

1. **Sample Characteristics, Routes and Interviewing Periods**
2. **Behaviors Among STA's Riders**
  - Origin and destination
  - Walking distance to the bus stop
  - Transfer patterns
  - Method of payment
3. **Motivators of Bus Usage**

- Availability of alternative means of transportation
- Main reasons for choosing the bus

**4. Satisfaction with STA Services**

- Service performance overall
- Perception of service
- Recommendations for improvement

[Click here](#) to view a copy of the actual questionnaire and [click here](#) to view the oral survey results for 2006. [Click here](#) to view the summary. The information we receive from the surveys has been very valuable to us in defining our goals, measuring our results and helping us focus our efforts in increase our efficiencies and effectiveness in service delivery.

If you have other questions, I'd be more than happy to talk to you. Please give me a call at 509 325-6090.

**Whatcom Transit** says... We do two different kinds of rider surveys.

The first is a full survey of attitudes, perceptions, ridership characteristics, demographics, etc. of both riders and non-riders. This broad survey is done maybe once every 7-8 years and in the two that have been done since I've been here we've hired outside firms to do the survey, compile the data and produce the reports. Our last one was 1999.

The other survey we do is an ongoing on based on the FTA's random sampling of routes for Section 15 purposes. Those surveys are very short (5-6 questions) and deal with rider perceptions of safety, cleanliness, driver skill, route quality, etc. We hand out 5 surveys per route surveyed (one to every other person boarding the bus until the 5 are used up). Riders then mail them in postage paid. They are tabulated quarterly.

We have also done ad hoc surveys on specific routes or in specific neighborhoods to judge the effectiveness of routing, etc. but those are as needed only.

If you'd like samples of anything we do I'd be happy to send them along.