FY 2000 Survey of Los Angeles County Residents

Summary Report

October 2000

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Executive Summary

This report summarizes the results of the FY 2000 Telephone Survey of Los Angeles County Residents. The study is designed to provide representative baseline data on Los Angeles County residents' priorities, preferences, perceptions and needs regarding public transportation.

Highlights

- The majority of the population usually travels by driving alone (75% of respondents) while about 16% usually travel by bus or train.

- Low-income households are far more likely to travel by transit than are high-income households. MTA transit service performs a vital social welfare function.

- Forty four percent (44%) of all respondents reported using the bus or rail at least once in the past year.

- Respondents who did not use public transit in 1999 most frequently reported that they did not use transit because they "own or bought a car" (63% of responses) or because transit is "inconvenient" (36% of responses). Service changes which make transit more convenient, faster, and more reliable seem to have a stronger impact on converting non-riders to transit-riders. Cost factors seem to have less impact.

- In general, the public is more optimistic than pessimistic that the overall quality of transit service will improve in the next two years. Respondents also revealed strong support for public transit in Los Angeles County.

- Only about one third (31%) of the respondents to the FY 2000 Survey recalled hearing news stories about the MTA in 1999. Those with recall tended to have more negative perceptions of the MTA than those who did not recall stories.

- Forty one percent (41%) of the respondents were aware of the Freeway Service Patrol program. People who recalled news stories about the MTA were much more likely to be aware of the Freeway Service Patrol program.

- Most respondents either "favored" (38%) or "strongly favored" (30%) the concept of creating dedicated bus lanes on certain major streets.

- Non-regular transit riders are far more likely to have access to the Internet than those who regularly ride transit (58% versus 28%), but only slightly more likely to use it for transit information (58% versus 52%).

- About one out of five respondents (17%) have heard of the Bus Riders' Union, and 7% of respondents recalled hearing about a consent decree related to MTA bus service.

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Acknowledgments

This report would not have been possible without the direction of Dr. Jesse Simon. He worked patiently and closely with us and gave us much needed advice on all aspects of this document. For his guidance and mentorship, we are grateful.

We would like to thank Dr. Robert Jackson, who wrote an earlier draft of this report before retiring. That draft formed the skeleton of this report. We would also like to thank Jim De La Loza, Keith Killough, and Chaushie Chu for their ongoing support of the Service Planning Market Research Program (SPMRP).

Mark McCourt, president of Strategic Consulting and Research (SCR), deserves a special thanks for conducting the household telephone surveys summarized in this report. A note of thanks is also extended to Dr. David Brownstone, Associate Professor at UC Irvine, who worked with SCR to ensure the sample obtained was statistically valid.

Several people within MTA contributed to the design and implementation of this survey. We would like to thank those individuals who reviewed the first draft of the survey instrument and provided thoughtful comments and suggestions: John Stesney, Warren Morse, Andrea Burnside, Bob Cashin, Rex Gephart, Steve Lantz, Byron Lee, Elizabeth McGowan, and Gary Spivack.

Finally, we all owe a debt of gratitude to more than 1,000 residents of Los Angeles County who took the time to participate in the survey. **Your opinion really does count!**

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I. Introduction

This report summarizes the results of the FY 2000 Telephone Survey of Los Angeles County Residents. The FY 2000 Survey was conducted under the auspices of the MTA's Service Planning Market Research Program (SPMRP) and resulted in 1,088 usable questionnaires. These were collected from a representative sample of English and Spanish speaking Los Angeles County residents. The surveys were conducted from December 1999 through February 2000, excluding the holiday period from December 19 to January 10.

Background: The SPMRP was undertaken in mid-1995 to provide the MTA a formal research mechanism for acquiring customer input (transit users and non-users) about transportation-related issues of interest to MTA decision makers. From August to October 1996, a telephone survey of 3,487 Los Angeles County households was conducted to assess public attitudes about transit and MTA as part of a large-scale SPMRP surveying effort. The 1996 Survey provided insights into, among other things, barriers to using public transit in the county.

The FY 2000 Telephone Survey of Los Angeles County Residents is designed to update several of the results from the 1996 Survey. The FY 2000 Survey also includes several new items dealing with such issues as: 1) LA County residents' transportation tax dollars priorities; 2) the public's awareness of the Freeway Service Patrol (FSP); 3) reactions to the "dedicated bus lane" concept; and 4) stated influence of hypothetical situations on transit usage.

The goal of the survey is to provide accurate and representative baseline data on Los Angeles County residents' priorities, preferences, and needs regarding public transportation. This broad goal is operationalized as a series of specific research objectives, which are as follows:

- Assess transportation issues of most importance to LA County residents;
- Measure changes (between 1996 and 2000) in residents' perceptions of public transportation in LA County;
- Determine residents' transportation/transit-related priorities;
- Determine main obstacles to using public transportation;
- Assess residents' awareness of MTA services and their perception of MTA management;
- Assess impact of media on perceptions of MTA.

Similar surveys of LA County residents may be conducted on an annual basis in the future.

II. Overview of Survey Methods

Survey Design: The FY 2000 Survey was designed to yield: 1) a respondent "panel" consisting of individuals who were interviewed both in 1996 and again in 2000; and 2) a representative sample of "new" households. The total number of panel members was

395; the total number of new households was 693, for a total sample size of 1,088 respondents. Each of these two main groups was then broken into two smaller groups. This was done to allow for the use of two different versions of the survey instrument in an effort to reduce telephone surveying time and improve the completion rate.

Survey Instrument: The FY 2000 Survey questionnaire consisted of 104 items. As previously noted, the length of the survey required the use of two versions, each containing roughly 75 of the 104 total items. Among the items that were only given to a subset of the respondents were those pertaining to transit advocacy, transportation tax expenditure preferences, ratings and importance of public transit attributes, and the impact of hypothetical changes on transit usage. The specific questions administered to the two "panel" samples and the two "new" samples are summarized in Appendix A. A copy of the telephone survey instrument is included as Appendix B. The average surveying time was 15 minutes.

Survey Administration: The FY 2000 Telephone Survey of Los Angeles County Residents was conducted by Strategic Consulting & Research (SCR) based in Irvine, California.

Sample: To obtain the sample of 395 "panel" members (i.e., those respondents who were interviewed originally in 1996 and again during FY 2000), the names and phone numbers of approximately 1,200 of the originally 1996 panel were randomly selected for possible participation in the FY 2000 Survey. SCR made one or more attempts to re-survey panel members. Out of the 1,200 attempts, 395 surveys were successfully completed for a 33% completion rate. As might be expected, many phone numbers were no longer valid (e.g., respondent had moved, changed phone numbers, etc.)

It should be made clear that no attempt was made to have the demographic characteristics from the panel respondents match the demographic characteristics of Los Angeles County residents. Accordingly, results from the panel should not be generalized to the population at large. The panel results are best used to validate results found with the "new," representative sample and to explore changes in attitudes and perceptions within the same group of individuals surveyed in 1996 and again in FY 2000.

The final sample of 694 "new" households (weighted) was obtained from the LA County general public using random-digit dialing (RDD) methods. Sampling quotas were based on the sample characteristics of the 1996 respondents. The FY 2000 is weighted geographically throughout LA County in proportion to the 1996 Survey.

Sample Validation: The sample closely reflects countywide demographics as reported by US Census data for Los Angeles County. A comparison with known population parameters is done to ensure the reliability of the inference drawn from the FY 2000 sample. Table 1 shows that most sample statistics are within 1 to 3 percentage points. Larger differences are highlighted in **bold face** type. The few age and income differences between the FY 2000 and the 1990 Census may be explained by both the smaller sample size in FY 2000 (versus that of the 1996 sample) and, especially in the case of the "Less than $10K" category, a real change from 1990. The under-

representation of lower educated respondents in both samples may reflect a real bias in the propensity of the least educated to respond to telephone interviews. The low foreign born statistic for the FY 2000 sample is partially explained by the high rate of non-response to this question among those who took the survey in Spanish. When these non-responses were redistributed proportionately between native born and foreign born categories, the foreign born percentage increased to 31%. (Self-reported nativity in the post Proposition 187 years may have become a more sensitive question than in previous years.)

Table 1. Demographic comparison of 2000 and 1996 Survey with 1990 Census Data

Demographic	Description	FY 2000 Survey	1996 Survey	1990 LAC Census
Gender	Female	52%	53%	50%
	Male	48%	47%	50%
	N	(694)	(3385)	----
Age	18 - 24	15%	16%	16%
	25 - 34	**19%**	28%	27%
	35 - 44	**25%**	24%	20%
	45 - 54	16%	14%	13%
	55 - 64	13%	9%	10%
	65+	13%	10%	13%
	N	(515)	(3381)	----
Income	Less than $10K	**7%**	**10%**	13%
	$10K - 15K	6%	10%	8%
	$15K - 25K	14%	17%	15%
	$25K - 35K	15%	17%	15%
	$35K - 45K	14%	12%	12%
	$45K - 55K	8%	9%	10%
	More than $55K	**35%**	**24%**	28%
	N	(576)	(3025)	----
Race/Ethnicity	White/Caucasian	40%	36%	41%
	Black/African-American	12%	11%	11%
	Hispanic Origin	35%	40%	37%*
	Asian/Pacific Islander	12%	**6%**	10%
	American Indian/Aleut/Eskimo	1%	1%	0.34%
	Other	1%	**5%**	0.24%
	N	(673)	(3316)	----
Education	Grade school or less	**11%**	**20%**	31%
	High school graduate	**29%**	**25%**	21%
	Some college	**25%**	**25%**	21%
	College graduate	23%	21%	20%
	Graduate school	**13%**	9%	7%
	N	(685)	(3363)	----
Nativity	Foreign Born	**26%**	**39%**	33%
	N	(632)	(3376)	----

Source: FY 2000 Survey of LA County Residents (weighted); FY 96-97 Survey of LA County Residents, Final Report
*1990 Census Data variable "Hispanic origin by Race"

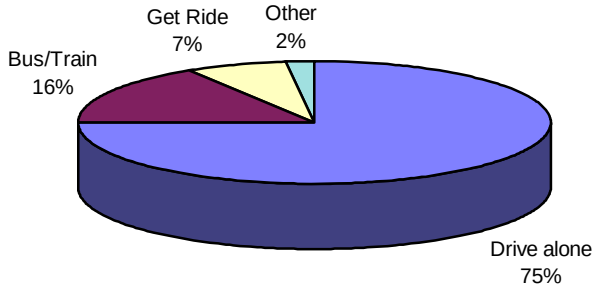
No statistical-correction technique was used to help adjust for non-telephone households (which comprised approximately 3.5% of all households countywide in 1996).

III. Travel Behaviors and Trends

Usual Mode of Travel

Respondents to the FY 2000 Survey of Los Angeles County Residents were asked, "How do you usually travel to places you need to go?"

Figure 1. Respondent's Usual Mode of Travel (n=694)



Source: FY 2000 Survey of LA County Residents (weighted)

In general, three out of four respondents (75%) said "driving alone" is their usual mode of travel. About 16% of respondents answered "bus/train," 7% responded "get ride," and 2% specified "other." The finding that 16% of the general population say that transit is their usual mode is noteworthy. The 1990 US Census reports that 6% of work trips in Los Angeles County are made by transit; the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) reports that 3% of all trips in the region are made by transit. The difference between these data sources and our survey results is not a contradiction, it is the difference between counting trips and counting people. As will be shown below, a majority of people who travel by auto never use transit; but regular transit users often use non-transit modes.

The 16% regular transit user finding was tested for sampling bias. If the FY 2000 Survey had an unrepresentative number of transit users in it then the survey's income and ethnicity statistics would have deviated by known parameters from the census statistics (i.e., there would have been more poor, Hispanics and Blacks). Table 1 shows that the demographic information collected for this survey did not deviate from these parameters. Therefore, the survey does not oversample transit users.

Usual Mode of Travel by Several Demographic Variables

By Race/Ethnicity: White/Caucasians are most likely to drive alone (90%), followed by Asian/Pacific Islanders (77%), Black/African-Americans (67%), and Hispanics (61%). Twenty six percent (26%) of Black/African-Americans and 27% of Hispanics are also more likely to rely on public transit (bus/train) than are Asian/Pacific Islanders (11%) or White/Caucasians (less than 2%).

By Sex: Those who usually drive alone are equally split between women and men (49.7% versus 50.3%). However, public transit riders (respondents who usually travel by bus or

train) tend to be women (62%) and those who usually get a ride also are more likely to be female (65%).

By Income: The strong inverse relationship between household income and regular transit use among Los Angeles County residents is shown in Table 2 below. Forty percent (40%) of the respondents living in households where the total annual income is less than $25,000 said they usually travel by transit. In sharp contrast, less than 2% of the respondents living in households with incomes greater than $45,000 said they usually use transit.

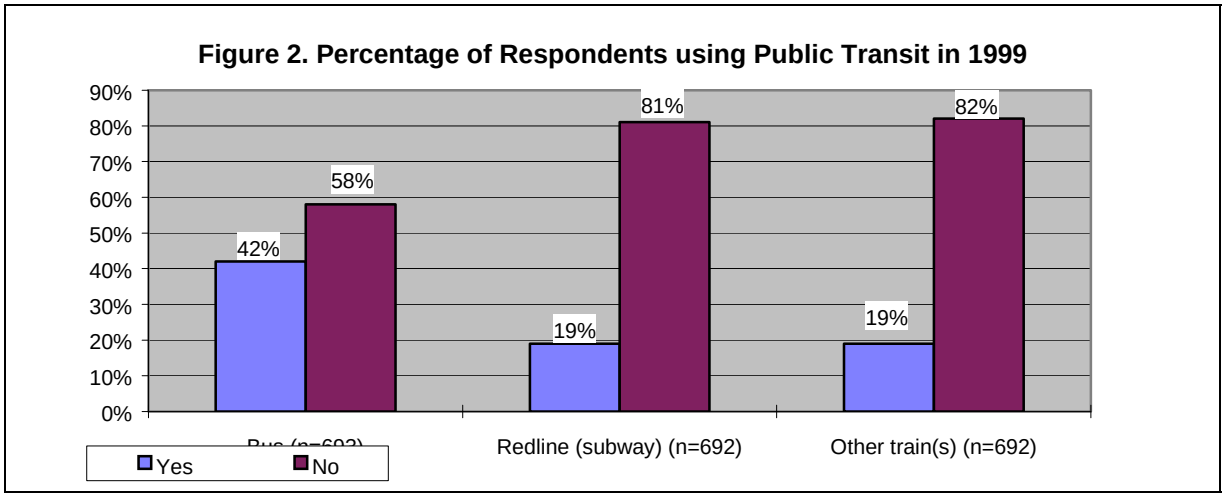
Table 2. Respondents' Usual Mode of Travel by Household Income

Mode of Travel	Less than $25K	$25K - $45K	$45K - $75K	More than $75K
Drive Alone	47%	78%	94%	93%
Transit	40%	13%	2%	2%
Get Ride	11%	9%	2%	4%
Walk/Bicycle	3%	1%	2%	2%
Total	101%*	101%*	100%	101%*
N	(157)	(167)	(140)	(113)

* Summed to 101% due to rounding. Actual totals equal 100%. Source: FY 2000 Survey of LA County Residents (weighted)

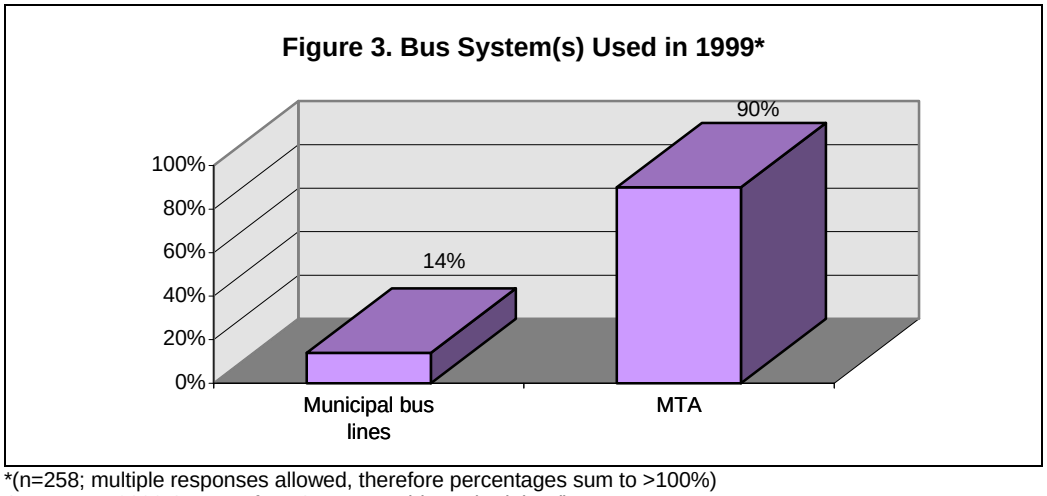
Access to Travel Modes

Use of Either Bus, Redline or Other Train in 1999: Figure 2 below shows the percentage of respondents using public transit in 1999 by mode.



Source: FY 2000 Survey of LA County Residents (weighted)

Forty two percent (42%) of respondents reported using the bus at least once in 1999, compared to 19% who had used the Redline subway and 19% who had used "Other Train(s)." To ensure that bus systems outside of the county were not being included in the result, the 290 respondents who reported using a bus in LA County in 1999 were asked which bus system(s) they used. Excluding respondents who named "Airport/Rental car shuttles" and "Dial-A-Ride services" which include other paratransit services, 90% of the respondents named "MTA" as the system (or one of the systems) used, and 14% named other bus systems such as Foothill and Long Beach.



*(n=258; multiple responses allowed, therefore percentages sum to >100%)
Source: FY 2000 Survey of LA County Residents (weighted)

A subsequent analysis showed that among people who were not regular use transit users, 27% used the bus at least once in LA County in 1999 and 19% used rail. These findings are especially important given MTA's ongoing efforts to induce people in the county to at least "try" public transit. Follow-up analyses and/or focus groups with "occasional" bus users are required to better understand the circumstances under which they are apt to use public transit.

It would appear that although transit travel may not be the main means of transportation for the general population, it can be viewed as a public utility that is accessed by 44% of all county residents (both regular and non-regular transit users).

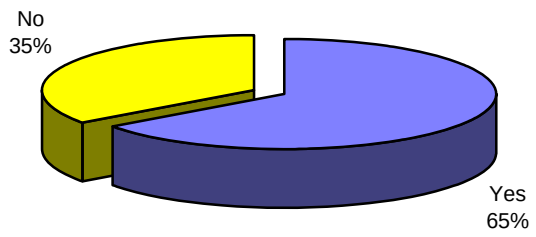
Access to car or driver's license: Seventy six percent (76%) of all respondents "always" have access to a car. The remaining 24% of respondents are almost evenly divided among "usually," "occasionally," and "never" having access to a car. Broken down by ethnicity, "Always" was the modal response for White/Caucasian (94%), Black/African-American (78%), and Asian/Pacific Islander (72%). The modal response for Hispanics was "Usually" (62% of respondents).

Respondents were asked, "How many operational motor vehicles (cars, trucks, vans, etc.) are owned or leased by you or other members of your household?" The modal response was two vehicles (38%). The next highest response was one vehicle (29%). Eight percent (8%) responded owning zero vehicles, while 2% owned six or more vehicles. When asked if respondents had a valid driver's license, almost 83% responded "yes," while 17% responded "no." Across ethnic/racial groups, the majority within each group did have valid drivers' licenses. The licensing rate of White/Caucasian respondents is 96%, followed by Asian/Pacific Islanders (86%), Black/African-Americans (80%), and Hispanics (67%).

Ability to Use Transit for Work Trips: Respondents who reported that they work either full-time or part-time were asked, "Is it possible for you to take transit to work?" Figure 4 shows that about 65% answered "yes," while 35% answered "no". Compared with

1996 Survey results, FY 2000 Survey respondents reported less ability to use transit for work trips (70% vs. 65%). It is unclear if ability to use transit is a matter of availability of transit or a matter of extraneous considerations (i.e., dropping off kids, variable work schedule, need to access car, etc.).

Figure 4. Is it possible to take public transit to work? (n=404)

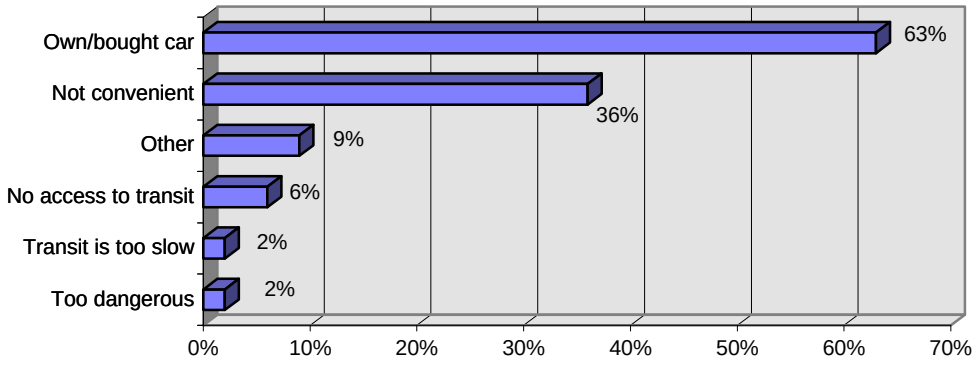


Source: FY 2000 Survey of LA County Residents (weighted)

IV. Factors Affecting Transit Use

Reasons for not using Transit: Respondents who did not use public transit in 1999 were asked, "Why not?" Their responses are summarized in Figure 5 below. Apart from "own/bought a car" (63% of responses), the most frequent reason for not using public transit in the past year is that transit is "inconvenient" (36% of responses). Of course, these responses are not necessarily mutually exclusive, owning a car implies getting about faster, often with greater convenience.

Figure 5. Reasons for not using Transit in 1999*



*(n=204; multiple responses allowed, therefore percentages sum to >100%)
Source: FY 2000 Survey of LA County Residents (weighted)

Travel time: Public Transit vs. Auto: In 1996, Los Angeles County residents who "drove alone" to work estimated the average commute time by transit to be nearly 66 minutes

compared with their estimate of 25 minutes by car. In FY 2000, workers were again asked to estimate travel time by public transit as compared to auto. The same pattern emerged. In FY 2000, the estimated average commute time by transit was 62 minutes versus 27 minutes by car. The slight improvement in transit time and worsening in auto travel time is dwarfed by the prevailing difference between modes.

Table 3. Estimated Commute time by "Drive Alones"

	Estimate of "Drive" Time (n=428)	Estimate of "Transit" Time (n=386)
FY 2000	27 minutes	62 minutes
1996	25 minutes	66 minutes

Source: FY 2000 Survey of LA County Residents (weighted); FY 96-97 Survey of LA County Residents, Final Report

Respondents' estimated average one-way commute distance was 18 miles, including all modes (n=428).

Hypothetical Situations that Might Increase Non-Riders' Use of Public Transit: Respondents to the FY 2000 Survey who do not currently use public transit on a regular basis were asked their reaction to various hypothetical situations that could conceivably affect their public transit use. For each situation, respondents were asked to indicate whether they would "definitely begin using transit," "might begin using transit," or "still would not use transit." The results are summarized in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Impact of Hypothetical Situations on Respondents' Likelihood to use Public Transit

	Definitely begin using transit	Might begin using transit	Still would not use transit
A new, conveniently located bus line was established between your home and your workplace (n=173)	38%	31%	31%
Transit travel time was made comparable to car travel time (n=174)	36%	35%	29%
Existing bus or rail service was always on time and predictable (n=173)	30%	39%	31%
Guaranteed a seat (if no seat, ride would be free, n=173)	28%	34%	39%
Parking costs increased by $50 a month ($50 monthly fee, if currently free, n=165)	25%	35%	40%
Transit fares were set at 75 cents per boarding (n=168)	24%	41%	36%
Cost of gasoline were to reach $2.00 per gallon (n=171)	19%	39%	42%

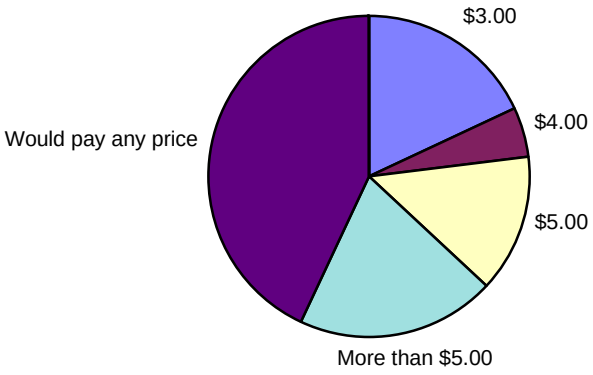
Source: FY 2000 Survey of LA County Residents (weighted)

The results for the hypothetical situations should be viewed cautiously. It is not very likely that people will actually switch to transit in the proportions stated. The results are best viewed as another way of tapping into non-riders' priorities and understanding the obstacles to getting non-users to at least "try" using public transit in Los Angeles County.

Expressed conversion to public transit (i.e., "would definitely begin using") was highest for those changes that make transit more convenient, faster, and more reliable: "a new, conveniently located bus line is established between home and work" (38%), "transit travel time is made comparable to car travel time" (36%), and "existing transit service is always on time and predictable" (30%). Consistent with the "importance ratings" presented later in this report (Figures 13 and 14), hypothetical situations relating to cost would appear to have the least impact in terms of converting non-users to transit users.

Impact of Gasoline Pricing on Transit Usage: Respondents to the FY 2000 Survey who indicated they would continue driving even if the price of gasoline reached $2.00 per gallon were asked the follow-up question, "At what price per gallon of gas would you consider not driving alone?" The results, which are shown in Figure 6, suggest that many LA County residents would have to see the current gas prices more than double before they would even consider not driving alone. Forty three percent (43%) of respondents to this question stated they would pay any price to drive alone. It is important to note that this question was posed to only 19% of the total respondents of this survey (n=56).

Figure 6. Price of Gas per Gallon at Which People Might Consider Not Driving Alone (n=56)*

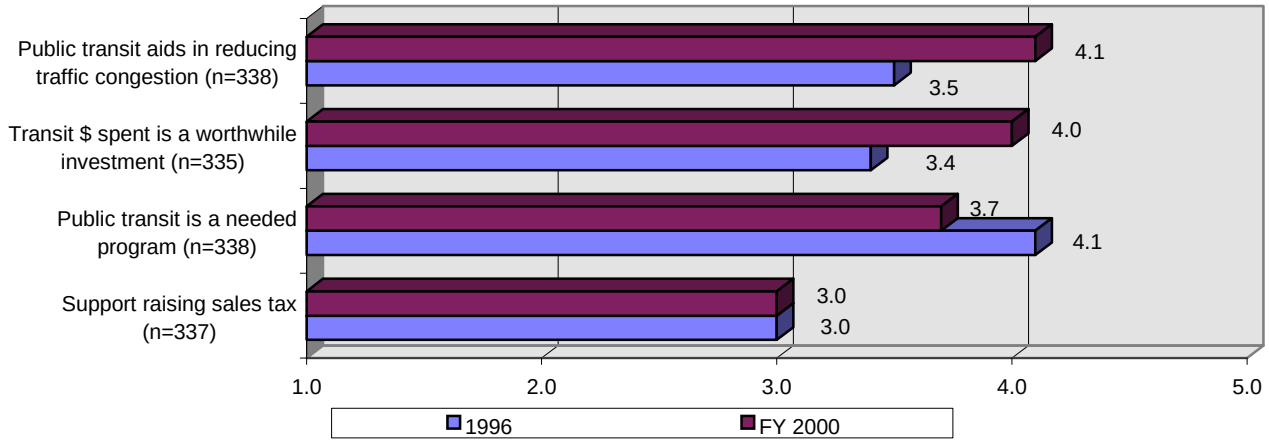


Source: FY 2000 Survey of LA County Residents (weighted)
*Subset of respondents who would continue driving at $2.00 per gallon of gasoline

V. Public's Support of MTA and Transit

Transit Advocacy: Respondents to the FY 2000 Survey revealed a strong base of support (or advocacy) for public transit in Los Angeles County. Figure 7 below shows the comparison between the mean scores of 1996 versus those of FY 2000 using a five-point scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.)

Figure 7. Transit Advocacy: Comparing FY 2000 and 1996 Results

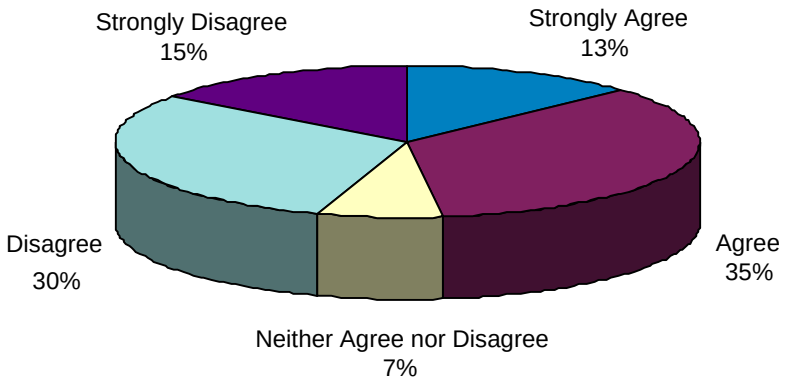


Source: FY 2000 Survey of LA County Residents (weighted); FY 96-97 Survey of LA County Residents, Final Report

Although there was a decline in the mean score for "Transit is a needed program" (4.1 to 3.7), the mean scores for "Tax dollars spent on transit is a worthwhile investment" and "Public transit aides in reducing traffic congestion" showed larger increases from 1996 to FY 2000 (3.4 to 4.0 and 3.5 to 4.1, respectively). Percentage wise, more than five out of six respondents (82%) in FY 2000 agreed that tax dollars spent on transit is a worthwhile investment versus 65% in 1996. Similarly, about five out of six respondents (85%) in FY 2000 agreed that "public buses and trains help reduce congestion in LA" versus 66% in 1996.

Support for Raising Sales Tax: Figure 8 shows that the general public remains evenly split regarding their support for/opposition to raising the local sales tax by one-half percent (0.5%) to improve public transportation in Los Angeles County. This is essentially the same pattern that was found in 1996. Of course, the attitudes expressed by the respondents concerning advocacy for public transit may not predict their behavior (e.g., respondents' actual voting behavior). It should be noted also that the "neutral" rating for "Support raising sales tax" masks a bimodal distribution, as shown in Figure 8.

Figure 8. Public's Support for Raising the Sales Tax by One-half Percent to Improve Transit (n=337)

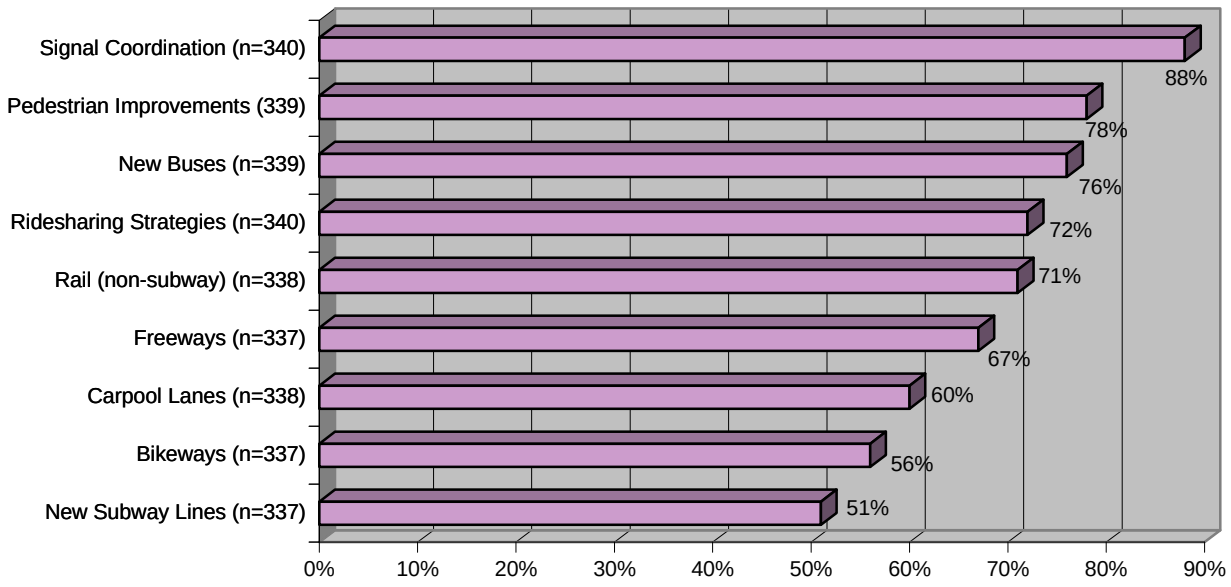


Source: FY 2000 Survey of LA County Residents (weighted)

LA County Residents' Transportation Tax Dollars Spending Priorities: Respondents to the FY 2000 Survey were asked whether they "favored" or "opposed" using tax dollars for various transportation-related purposes. Figure 9 shows that support was strongest for using tax dollars to improve signal coordination (88%), pedestrian improvements (78%), buying new buses (76%), developing and implementing ridesharing strategies (72%), and non-subway rail (71%).

Support was weakest for building new subway lines (51%), bikeways (56%), and carpool lanes (60%). Several respondents used the "no opinion" response option if they were undecided or were ambivalent. About one out of twelve respondents were undecided about spending tax dollars on more bikeways. On the other hand, people not only expressed the most support for spending tax dollars on traffic signal coordination, but they also showed the least level of ambivalence on the issue. (The standard deviation for this response was smallest for this tax expenditure question.)

Figure 9. Percentage of Respondents in 'Favor' of Spending Tax Dollars for Transportation Related Purposes

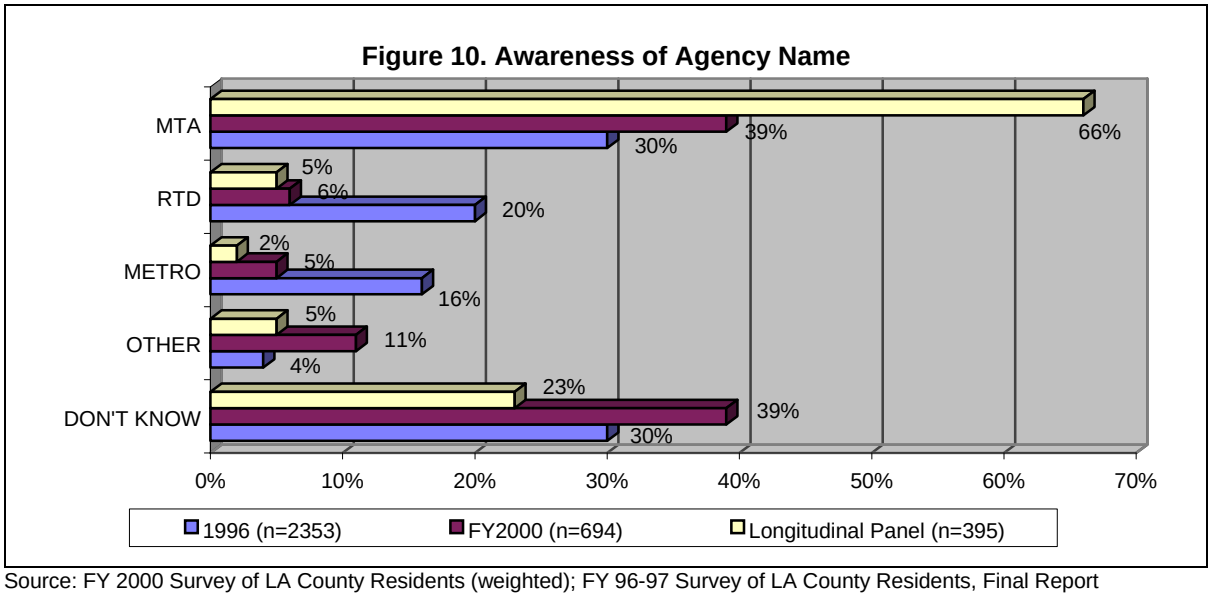


Source: FY 2000 Survey of LA County Residents (weighted)

VI. Awareness and Perceptions of MTA

Awareness of Transportation Agency's Name: Thirty nine percent (39%) of the respondents were able to correctly identify the MTA as "the transportation agency that oversees LA County," without prompting (see Figure 10). In 1996, 30% of the respondents were able to provide the correct answer. Only 6% in FY 2000 still named RTD as the agency versus 20% in 1996.

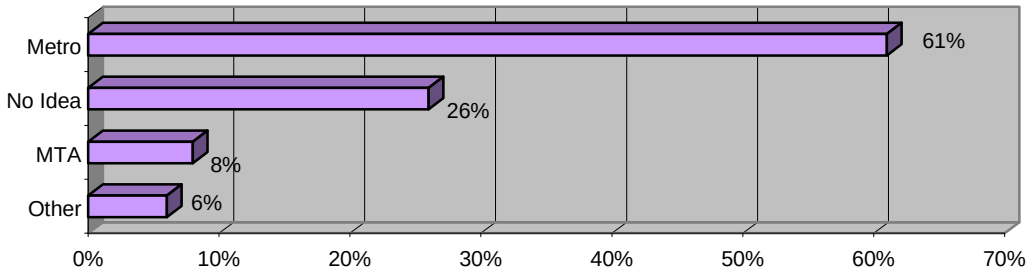
Significantly, two-thirds (66%) of the 395 respondents in the longitudinal panel (i.e. people who were surveyed in 1996 and then re-interviewed in FY 2000) were able to correctly name MTA as the agency. (Note: the 1996 respondents were told that MTA was the name of the agency during the course of that survey). This finding seems to suggest that once people are made aware of the MTA and its function(s), they are apt to recall this information over time (perhaps reinforced by greater awareness of news stories, etc.). If this preliminary panel finding survives more rigorous analysis, marketing strategies promoting awareness of the MTA "brand name" should be explored.



Source: FY 2000 Survey of LA County Residents (weighted); FY 96-97 Survey of LA County Residents, Final Report

Awareness and Meaning of "M" Logo: Almost four out of five of the respondents (70%) said they had noticed the "M" logo on buses or trains in the county. (See Figure 11 below.) When asked, "What does 'M' stand for or mean?" 61% responded "Metro." (Note: the word "Metro" is part of the logo.) Twenty-six percent (26%) said they had "no idea." About eight percent (8%) responded "MTA." "Other" responses (6%) included "Methanol," "Metrolink," "Municipal Transport Authority," and "Metropolitan."

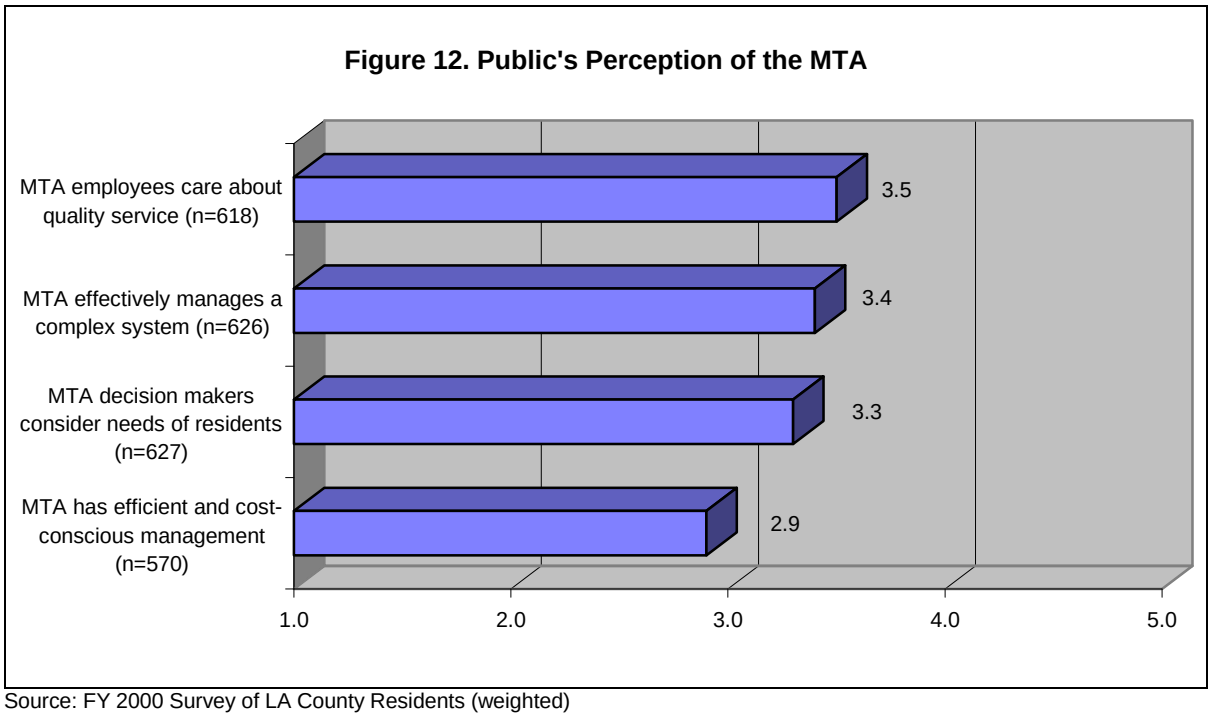
Figure 11. Meaning of 'M' (Metro) Logo (n=231)



Source: FY 2000 Survey of LA County Residents (weighted)

Of course, saying "M" stands for "Metro" begs a larger question. It is not clear from these data how many LA County residents actually link the "M" logo to the agency (i.e., to the MTA).

Public's Perception of MTA Management: Respondents to the FY 2000 Survey were asked about their level of agreement with statements about the MTA. The statements included how strongly they agreed or disagreed with: 1) "MTA decision makers consider the needs of Los Angeles County residents;" 2) "MTA effectively manages a geographically large and complex public transportation system;" 3) "MTA employees care about providing quality service;" and 4) "MTA has efficient and cost-conscious management." Figure 12 shows mean scores on a five-point scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.)



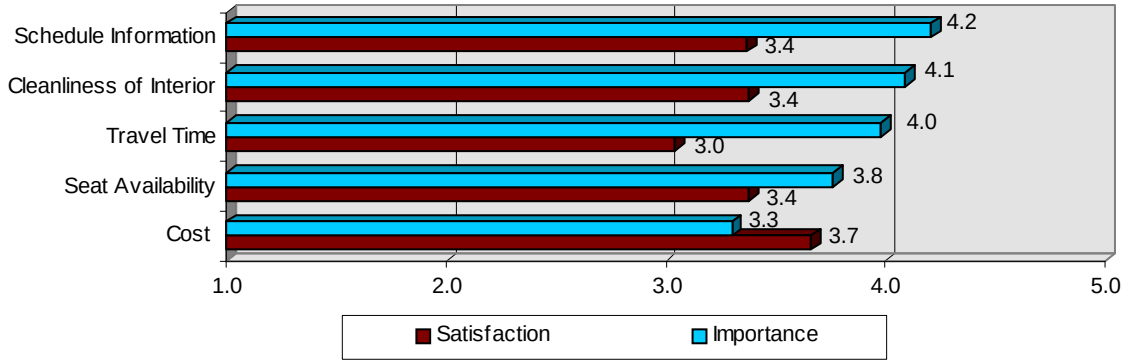
Source: FY 2000 Survey of LA County Residents (weighted)

Overall, respondents have a favorable perception of the MTA and the majority seem to "agree" with the statements above. Respondents agree most with the statement that "MTA employees care about providing quality service" (mean = 3.5 on a five-point scale.) However, "MTA has efficient/cost-conscious management" is not viewed favorably and received the lowest mean score (2.9 on a five-point scale, or less than "neutral"). This item also received the lowest score in 1996.

Respondents who were able to correctly name the MTA as the transportation agency that oversees Los Angeles County, were more likely to disagree with the statements, except in the case of "MTA employees care about quality service." Obviously, greater awareness of the MTA does not necessarily lead to greater approval. (See "Impact of Media Coverage" below.)

Service Priorities and Satisfaction: A subset of respondents to the FY 2000 Survey who had not used public transit were asked to give their perceptions of MTA bus service in Los Angeles County, particularly based on what they know or have heard of schedule information, cleanliness of bus interior, travel time, seat availability and cost. They were also asked to rate the importance of these features in their decision to use or not use public transit. These results are shown in Figure 13, which also uses a five-point scale to rate satisfaction (1 = very bad to 5 = very good) and importance in decision to use or not use transit (1 = very unimportant to 5 = very important.)

Figure 13. Satisfaction with Service vs. Importance in Decision to Use Transit (FY 2000)*

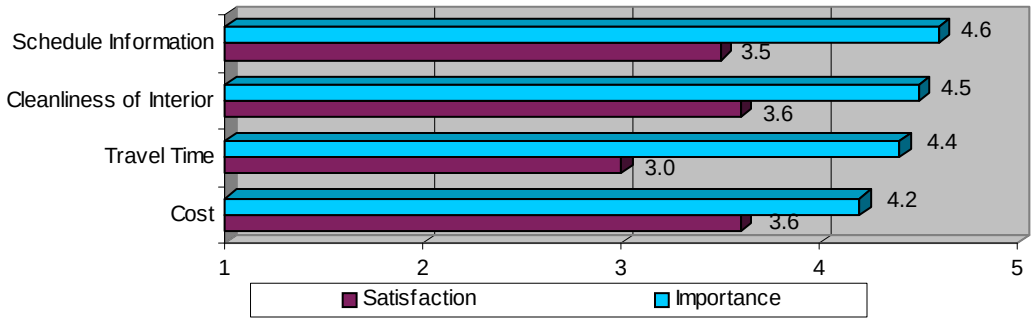


Source: FY 2000 Survey of LA County Residents (weighted)
*Subset of Non-Regular Transit Users only

The subset of non-regular transit users rate the above attributes as being "important" in their decision to not use public transit. "Schedule information" seems to be the most important item for respondents, 42% said that it is "very important" in their decision. Figure 13 also shows that there is a noticeable difference between respondents' satisfaction level and the level of importance respondents place on each attribute. The attribute with the greatest difference between levels of satisfaction and importance in decision to use transit is travel time. It is not surprising to see that for these respondents, who are non-transit users, satisfaction levels fall well below their expectations (except for "Cost"). If respondents' satisfaction levels were comparable with the items that are most important to them, they might be riding the bus.

For comparison purposes, FY 2000 perception and importance ratings are compared to data from 1996. Figure 14 shows these results. "Seat availability" is not included in this figure because it was not included in the 1996 Survey.

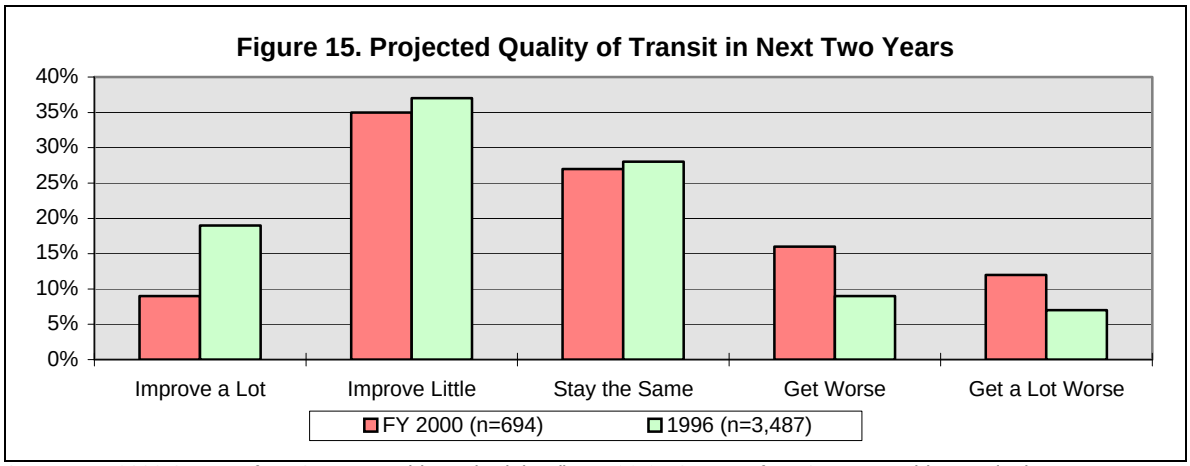
Figure 14. Satisfaction with Service vs. Importance in Decision to Use Transit - 1996 Survey (n=3,487)*



Source: FY 96-97 Survey of LA County Residents, Final Report
*Subset of Non-transit Users only

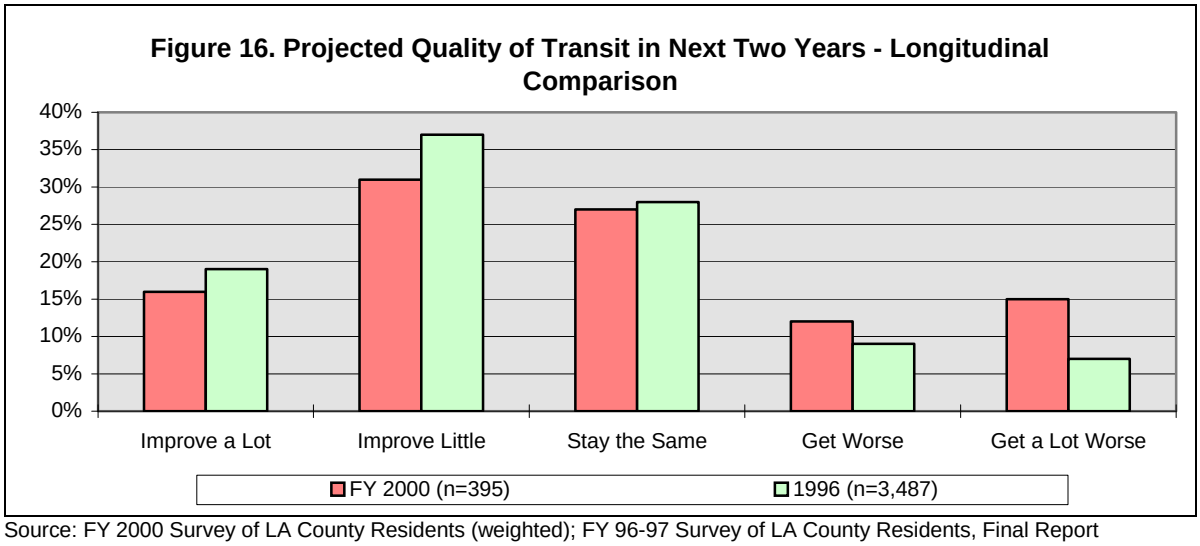
Respondents from the 1996 survey also found the attributes listed above to be "important" in their decision to use or not to use public transit. Similar to FY 2000, their satisfaction with the quality of service, defined by the above items, is much lower than the importance value they placed on each of them. For both FY 2000 and 1996, respondents were most satisfied with cost of transit, which they rated least important in their decision to use transit.

Public's Optimism/Pessimism about Transit Service: Figure 15 shows that the general public is more optimistic than pessimistic that the overall quality of transit service will improve in the next two years; however, the percentage of "pessimists" increased from 16% in 1996 to 28% in FY 2000. The majority of respondents (56%) in 1996 felt that the quality of service would improve somewhat in the near future, only 45% agreed in FY 2000.



Source: FY 2000 Survey of LA County Residents (weighted); FY 96-97 Survey of LA County Residents, Final Report

The longitudinal panel corroborates this apparent shift.



Source: FY 2000 Survey of LA County Residents (weighted); FY 96-97 Survey of LA County Residents, Final Report

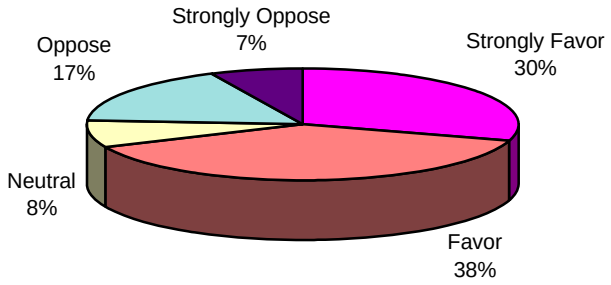
Pessimism has increased among panel members since they were last surveyed in 1996. However, optimism still remains high in the more recent sample. Where 56% of the

longitudinal panel in 1996 thought that the quality of transit would improve in the next two years, 47% (almost half) of the panel members still believe the same in FY 2000. Optimism for improving the quality of service in public transit is declining among Los Angeles County residents. The "It's getting better on the bus" campaign had a great impact on bus users, as shown in another study. It had no similar impact on the General Public.

VII. Public Awareness of Other MTA Programs

Dedicated Bus Lanes: As part of the FY 2000 survey, residents of Los Angeles County were asked their opinions about creating dedicated bus lanes on certain major streets in the county. Respondents were told that "the idea would be to have the bus pick up and drop off passengers at stations along the bus route, much like a train." They were then asked whether they would favor or oppose creating such lanes on certain major streets. Their initial reactions to the dedicated bus lane concept are summarized in Figure 17 below. Most respondents either "favored" (38%) or "strongly favored" (30%) the concept when it was initially described.

Figure 17. Public's Initial Reaction to the 'Dedicated Bus Lane' Concept (n=673)

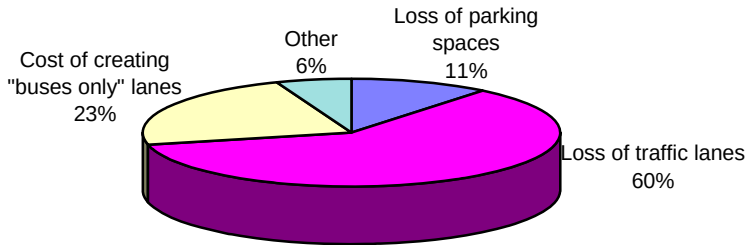


Source: FY 2000 Survey of LA County Residents (weighted)

Respondents who favored dedicated bus lanes were then asked whether they would still support the creation of "buses only" lanes in the county, if such lanes meant removing existing parking spaces or existing traffic lanes during certain times of the day. Seventy four percent (74%) of respondents would still support the concept of dedicated bus lanes despite these potentials.

To better understand possible resistance to the concept, respondents who did not initially favor the creation of dedicated bus lanes were asked the follow-up question, "Which of the following concerns you most about the idea of creating 'buses only' lanes?" Figure 18 reveals that nearly two-thirds of these individuals (60%), were most concerned with the possible loss of existing traffic lanes. The next concern was related to the "cost" of creating the dedicated bus lanes (23%), and thirdly, 11% of respondents were concerned with the loss of parking spaces.

Figure 18. Reasons for Opposing 'Dedicated Bus Lanes' (n=160)

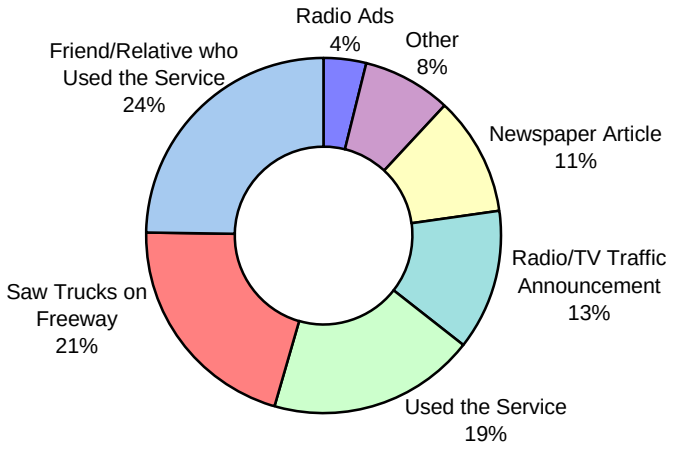


Source: FY 2000 Survey of LA County Residents (weighted)

Freeway Service Patrol: Among the new topics covered in the FY 2000 survey was "awareness of the Freeway Service Patrol." Respondents were asked, "Are you aware of the MTA program that provides free motorist assistance to disabled vehicles on freeways known as the Metro Freeway Service Patrol?" Of the 676 persons responding, only 41% were aware of the program.

Respondents who indicated they were aware of the program were then asked about how they had become aware. Almost half of the respondents indicated that they had either become aware of the program through friends or relatives who had used it (24%) or that they had used it themselves (19%). Less than one-third (28%) of respondents became aware of the Freeway Service Patrol through the media and 21% by noticing the trucks on the road. Figure 19 shows these results.

Figure 19. How did Respondents become Aware of the Freeway Service Patrol? (n=256)



Source: FY 2000 Survey of LA County Residents (weighted)

Among those respondents who said they had actually used the Freeway Service Patrol, the overwhelming majority (83%) rated the quality of service received as "excellent." Fourteen percent (14%) rated the service as either "good" or "fair" and the remaining 3%

had no opinion. Among the respondents who were aware of the FSP, nearly all (87%) felt the service should continue to be free.

The 1-800-COMMUTE Number: Almost two out of five respondents to the FY 2000 Survey (36%) said they had seen or heard of the toll-free number "1-800-COMMUTE". When the subset of respondents who were aware of the number were asked if they had called the 1-800-COMMUTE number in the past year (1999), 28% answered affirmatively. Seventeen percent (17%) of the "Drive alones" who were aware of the number said they had actually used it in 1999.

VIII. Impact of Media Coverage

MTA News Recall: Only about one third (31%) of the respondents to the FY 2000 Survey recalled hearing news stories about the MTA, bus, or subway system in 1999. In 1996, 45% of the survey respondents recalled hearing MTA news "in the past six months."

One key finding from the 1996 survey was that respondents' perceptions of the MTA, particularly their perceptions of MTA management as "efficient and cost-conscious," varied by recall of news stories. Those with recall tended to have more negative perceptions of the MTA than those who did not. As Table 5 shows, a similar effect was found in the FY 2000 survey.

Table 5. Favorable Perceptions of the MTA by Recall of News Stories

	Recall of News	No News Recall	Difference
MTA has efficient and cost-conscious management	31% (n=179)	47% (n=383)	-16%
MTA decision makers consider the needs of residents	54% (n=199)	60% (n=419)	-6%
MTA effectively manages a complex system	57% (n=198)	68% (n=415)	-11%
MTA employees care about quality service	64% (n=196)	65% (n=411)	-1%

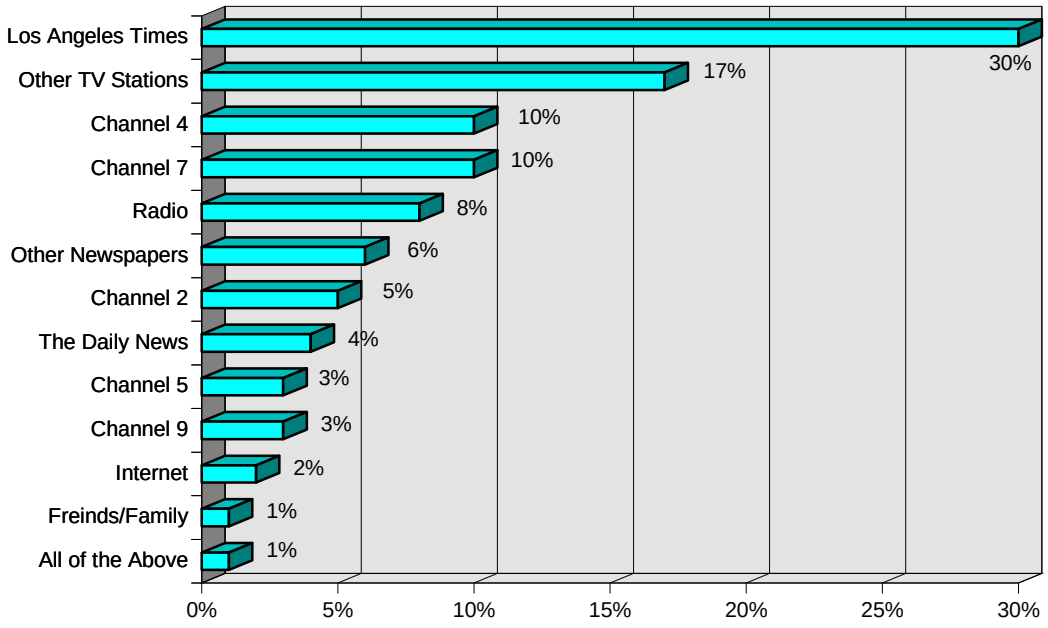
Source: FY 2000 Survey of LA County Residents (weighted); FY 96-97 Survey of LA County Residents, Final Report

On the positive side, people who recalled news stories about the MTA were much more likely to be aware of the Freeway Service Patrol program than those who did not (55% versus 34%, respectively). People who recalled news stories were also much more likely to correctly name the MTA as the agency that oversees transportation in the county than those without recall (54% versus 32%).

Main sources of information: Respondents were next asked to name their main source of information for local news and events. Figure 20 shows the results. Thirty percent (30%) of the respondents cited the *Los Angeles Times* as their main source. Seventeen percent (17%) of the respondents named "Other TV Stations" such as Channels 34, 52 and 11. Ten percent (10%) of the sample cited Channel 4 and another 10% cited Channel

7. Eight percent (8%) of the respondents cited "Radio," and about 6% named "Other Newspapers" such as *La Opinion*, *The Long Beach Press Telegram*, *The Daily Bruin*, and Chinese newspapers. About 4% of the sample cited *The Daily News*.

Figure 20. Respondents' Main Source for Local News and Events (n=641)



Source: FY 2000 Survey of LA County Residents (weighted)

Cross-tabulating the responses for "main source of information" and "MTA has efficient and cost-conscious management," revealed an interesting finding: Table 6 shows a contrast between those respondents whose "main source of information" is from a "newspaper" and respondents who rely on "TV". Almost half (47%) of the "newspaper readers" disagreed with the statement, while only 39% of the "TV watchers" did so.

Table 6. Percent Disagreeing with Statement that "MTA has Efficient/Cost-Conscious Management," by Main Source of Local News

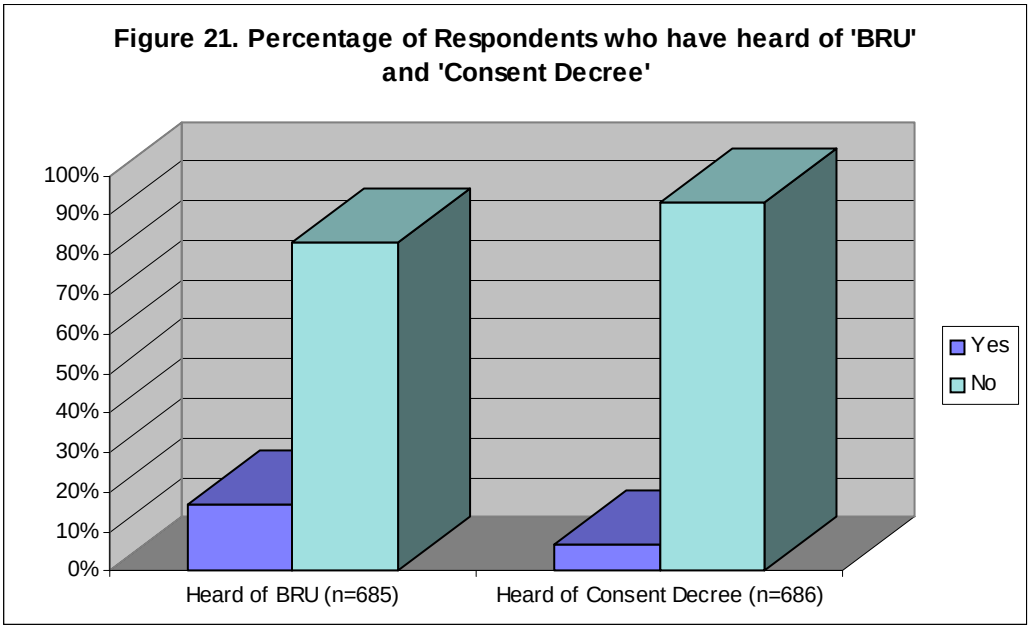
Information Source	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Newspaper (n=213)	47%	13%	40%
Radio (n=44)	42%	22%	36%
TV (n=257)	39%	16%	46%
Other (n=20)	59%	18%	23%

Source: FY 2000 Survey of LA County Residents (weighted)

Access to Internet: Of those respondents who identified themselves as "regular transit users," 28% had access to the Internet, and 52% would use it to obtain transit information. In contrast, of the non-regular transit users, 65% had access to the Internet

and 58% would use it to obtain transit information. Those who ride transit irregularly are far more likely to have access to the Internet than those who regularly ride transit (58% versus 28%), but only slightly more likely to use it for transit information (58% versus 52%).

Awareness of BRU and Consent Decree: To further assess the public's awareness of MTA-related issues, respondents to the FY 2000 Survey were asked, "Have you heard of the Bus Riders' Union (or BRU)?" and "Have you heard about a consent decree related to MTA bus service?" About one out of five respondents (17%) said they had heard of BRU. However, only 7% recalled hearing about a consent decree related to MTA bus service (see Figure 21).



Source: FY 2000 Survey of LA County Residents (weighted)

APPENDIX A

FY 2000 MTA SURVEY OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY RESIDENTS
Subgroup Question Matrix

Description	1996 Orig. Panel (1)	1996 Orig. Panel (2)	1999 New Sample (1)	1999 New Sample (2)	Survey Question(s)
	1	2	3	4	
Solicitation (Original Panel)	●	●			INTRO (1)
Solicitation (New Sample)			●	●	INTRO (2)
Transit Advocacy		●		●	2-5
Transportation Tax Expenditure Preferences		●		●	7-15
Usual Mode of Travel	●	●	●	●	16
Public Transit Usage	●	●	●	●	17-21
Why Transit Not Used in Past Year		●		●	22
Factors Influencing Transit Usage (Importance)	●		●		23-27
Ratings of Public Transit Attributes	●		●		28-39
Impact of Hypothetical Changes on Transit Usage	●		●		40-47
Gas Price Elasticity Item	●		●		48
Will Transit Improve in Next Two Years	●	●	●	●	49
Attitudes About Dedicated Bus Lanes	●	●	●	●	50-53
Employment Status	●	●	●	●	54
Transit Accessibility to Work	●	●	●	●	55
Est. Time & Distance to Work by Transit v. Auto	●	●	●	●	56-58
Employer Pay for Fare		●		●	59
Awareness of MTA Logo		●		●	60-61
Name of LA County Transportation Agency	●	●	●	●	62
Perceptions of MTA	●	●	●	●	63-67
Awareness of Freeway Patrol Service	●	●	●	●	68-72, 103
Awareness of Other MTA Programs	●	●	●	●	73-74
Awareness of News Stories About MTA	●	●	●	●	75

Description	1996 Orig. Panel (1)	1996 Orig. Panel (2)	1999 New Sample (1)	1999 New Sample (2)	Survey Question(s)
	1	2	3	4	
Main Source of Info for Local News and Events	●	●	●	●	76-79
Awareness and Use of 1-800-COMMUTE	●		●		80-81
Access to Internet	●	●	●	●	82
Would Use Internet to Get Schedule Information		●		●	83
Awareness of Bus Riders' Union (BRU)	●	●	●	●	84
Awareness of Consent Decree	●	●	●	●	85
Workplace Location (Workers Only)	●	●	●	●	86
Educational Level			●	●	87
Ethnicity			●	●	88
Birthplace Origin (US non-US)			●	●	89
Household Size	●	●	●	●	90
Valid License	●	●	●	●	91
# People in Household with Valid License	●	●	●	●	92
# Workers in Household	●	●	●	●	93
# of Operational Vehicles in Household	●	●	●	●	94
Auto Accessibility	●	●	●	●	95
Income Level	●	●	●	●	96-98
Registered Voter	●	●	●	●	99
Gender (Not Asked)	●	●	●	●	100
City of Residence	●	●	●	●	101
Zip Code of Residence	●	●	●	●	102
Age Category	●	●	●	●	104

APPENDIX B

FY 2000 Survey of Los Angeles County Residents

Survey Instrument

(The survey instrument is not available in electronic format. Please contact Systems Analysis and Research for more information.)