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## The MPO Wants to Know: Commuting Habits

In an effort to better understand public views, the MPO has launched a series of online surveys about various transportation-related topics. The survey results will help the MPO develop plans and projects for the future. The responses also will be shared with appropriate roundtables and policymakers. For a list of available surveys, please visit the MPO website at <http://www.dmampo.org/user/survey.html>. Below are the results of a survey related to commuting habits, which was issued to coincide with new evidence of a strong correlation between driving and obesity rates.

### *Question 1. How do you travel to work?*

|                            |       |
|----------------------------|-------|
| Bike .....                 | 4.8%  |
| Drive .....                | 56.4% |
| Mass Transit.....          | 34.3% |
| Telecommute.....           | 2.1%  |
| Walk .....                 | 2.3%  |
| Other                      |       |
| • <i>Carpool</i>           |       |
| • <i>Motorcycle</i>        |       |
| • <i>Multimodal trips</i>  |       |
| • <i>Rideshare/Vanpool</i> |       |

### *Question 2. Approximately how many miles do you commute (one way)?*

|                          |       |
|--------------------------|-------|
| Less than ½ mile .....   | 1.5%  |
| ½ to 1 mile .....        | 1.7%  |
| 1 to 2 miles.....        | 3.2%  |
| 2 to 5 miles.....        | 11.5% |
| 5 to 10 miles.....       | 23.0% |
| More than 10 miles ..... | 59.2% |

### *Question 3. Approximately how long does your commute last?*

|                            |       |
|----------------------------|-------|
| Less than 5 minutes.....   | 2.4%  |
| 5 to 10 minutes.....       | 6.1%  |
| 10 to 20 minutes.....      | 25.7% |
| 20 to 30 minutes.....      | 30.0% |
| More than 30 minutes ..... | 35.8% |

*Question 4. Do you take the health implications into consideration when choosing your mode of commuting?*

Yes .....37.3%  
No.....62.7%

*Question 5. If you commute via automobile, do you commute alone?*

Yes .....39.1%  
No.....35.3%  
I do not commute via automobile .....25.6%

*Question 6. If you lived within a reasonable distance, would you bike or walk to work?*

Yes .....70.9%  
No.....19.5%  
I already bike and/or walk to work .....9.6%

*Question 7. Studies show that commuting via automobile may increase stress levels, which in turn adversely impacts one's health. Does your commute create more stress in your life?*

Yes .....25.2%  
No.....74.8%

*Question 8. What would you most like to change about your commute?*

The majority of respondents want more public transportation options. These individuals want more service to suburban areas and would like service reinstated to other areas. Many individuals also want more frequent service; by offering more trips, more people would utilize the Des Moines Area Regional Transit Authority's (DART) services. Numerous respondents noted that they are able to commute via automobile in less time than they are via public transportation.

Many respondents desire shorter commutes – both in time and in distance. People would bike and/or walk if they lived closer to their workplaces. As one individual notes, however, "I like my home, and I like my job; there is no good alternative." Another respondent states that a shorter, faster commute would result in less stress. However, some are required to live in certain areas. Still another respondent mentions that, "Commuting is a way of life for many of us that live beyond the suburbs." Surprisingly, two respondents want longer commutes. One individual desires a longer commute so that bicycling would have more of a health impact. The other individual seeks a longer commute in order to allow more time to read.

Several respondents want to reduce their respective commutes by telecommuting at least one or two days per week. Other respondents want more people to participate in existing carpools. Not only would this reduce driving responsibilities, it also would reduce costs.

Similarly, several respondents would like cheaper bus passes; some feel the fares are “a bit pricey.” One individual suggests more discounts for those that carpool with more than two people. Another person would like companies to offer discounts for vanpooling.

In addition to vanpooling, respondents seek other options. Suggestions include light rail, more bike lanes and paths, and a bullet train. Respondents want to be able to bike every day, yet many businesses do not offer facilities that would allow for this to occur.

A few respondents would like to eliminate construction from their commuting routes. On the contrary, though, some individuals point out specific “bumpy” roads that should be fixed in order to reduce wear and tear on vehicles. Smoother trails also would help enhance the commute for those who bicycle.

Others want to reduce the amount of traffic. Respondents also suggest reducing the number of traffic lights along some routes and improving the timing of other traffic lights. A few respondents would like more bus shelters to protect them from inclement weather as well.

Despite the previous thoughts, many respondents do not desire any changes in their respective commutes. Some of these individuals drive, some ride the bus and/or vanpool, and some bike or walk. Some like the option of a multimodal commute, while others enjoy the time spent with fellow carpoolers. Still others take pleasure in the daily drive.