

**2006 Arlington County Teen Transit Initiative Study**

**SPONSOR:**

Arlington County Commuter Services (ACCS)

Contact:
Howard Jennings, Research Director
Arlington Transportation Partners
1735 N. Lynn Street, Suite 102
Arlington, VA 22209
703 683-6630
hjennings@transpartners.com

ACCS is a section of the Division of Transportation, Department of Environmental Services
Arlington County, Virginia

**RESEARCH SUPPLIER:**

Southeastern Institute of Research, Richmond, VA. Conducted: 2006

Contact: John Martin, President & CEO
Telephone: 804-358-8981
Email: JWM@SIRresearch.com

**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:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode of Data Collection</th>
<th>10-minute Paper Research Survey:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Teens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Online Qualitative Input</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Educators</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Completed Surveys       | 698 Teens:                        |
|                        | - 8th Grade = 111                |
|                        | - 9th Grade = 188                |
|                        | - 10th Grade = 169               |
|                        | - 11th 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. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Instrument</th>
<th>Paper hand-out survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Criteria for Participation</td>
<td>Arlington County 8th – 11th graders</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**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 raiders 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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Data Tables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PowerPoint Presentation Final Report</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

KEY WORDS:

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