Arlington County’s Transit Service and Its Impact

Top 12 Findings From the 2013 Ridership Survey
What Is The Key to a World Class Public Bus System?

“A good public transport system must be easy and convenient to use, fast, safe, clean and affordable.”

Rachel Kyte
VP of Sustainable Development
World Bank
How Does Arlington Transit Rate? Is it World Class?
In order to find out, Arlington Transit and Arlington County Commuter Services commissioned a large-scale research study among riders.

This study was conducted in Spring of 2013 by Southeastern Institute of Research and LDA Consulting.

Additional findings from a 2012 survey of County Business Leaders augments findings from this 2013 study.
2013 ART Ridership Survey Overview

• As a follow-up to the 2008 ART rider study, an on-board survey was conducted in the Spring of 2013.
• Self-administered surveys were available in both English and Spanish.
• 2,905 surveys (1,977 fully complete) were collected during weekday and weekend ride times.
• Quotas were set by route so as to yield representative sample of actual ridership.
• The robust sample size allowed for demographic and ride behavior segment analysis.
ART serves everyone!
Based on Survey Respondent Demographics, ART Riders Are:

- Either gender
- All ethnic backgrounds
- All household sizes
- A wide range of household incomes
- Mostly employed
- A wide range of nationalities and languages
- Increasingly younger (Millennials), mirroring national trends
ART riders are loyal, riding multiple routes and riding frequently.
Q1. How often do you ride ART buses? If one or more days per week, specify number of days.

Note that 20% of respondents selected that they ride ART “One or more days per week”, but did not indicate the actual number of days they ride.

Among those specifying number of days per week (n = 1,829):

- Less than once per week: 13% (n = 359)
- 1 or more times per week unspecified: 19% (n = 524)
- 1 to 4 times per week: 20% (n = 533)
- 5 times per week: 28% (n = 760)
- More than 5 times per week: 28% (n = 545)

n = 2,721
Q13. Is the trip you are on now part of a round-trip?

72% of respondents were interviewed during round-trip travel on ART.

- 37% Yes, I made this trip in reverse earlier today
- 28% Yes, I plan to make this trip in reverse later today
- 35% No, this is a one-way trip

n = 2,151
Q2. What routes do you regularly use? (Choose as many as apply).

On Average, ART Riders Ride Two or More Routes Regularly

Half of all riders utilize Route 41 Columbia Pike – Ballston – Court House

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<th>Route</th>
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<td>Route 41</td>
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ART riders choose ART to reach work and other places.
A Transit Dependent Rider is defined by anyone who indicated they take ART because “I don’t have a driver’s license - it’s my only means of transportation.”

Q4 For what reasons do you take ART buses? (Option e. I don’t have a driver’s license – It’s my only means of transportation used as definition for Transit Dependent)

n = 2,905

The Majority of ART Riders Take the Bus by Choice, Rather Than out of Necessity

- 66% Choice Rider n = 1,921
- 34% Transit Dependent n = 984
Q3. For what types of trips do you ride the bus? And what is the purpose of this trip?

On average, ART riders use the bus for three or more types of trips.

ART Gets People To Work as Well as to Other Destinations

- Going to work: 78% (All Trips), 59% (This Trip)
- Shopping: 44% (All Trips), 15% (This Trip)
- Running errands: 41% (All Trips), 19% (This Trip)
- Dining/entertainment: 34% (All Trips), 16% (This Trip)
- Medical appointments: 33% (All Trips), 13% (This Trip)
- Going to school: 23% (All Trips), 11% (This Trip)
- Going to church: 16% (All Trips), 6% (This Trip)

n = 2,723 All trips
n = 1,173 This trip
Business Leaders and Owners Agree With Riders That ART Plays a Vital Role in Transporting the County’s Workforce
“We have a great bus and subway system, so we have 90% of our employees using public transportation.”

Business Leaders Study
Fall, 2012
“I am able to hire staff that rely on public transportation.”

Business Leaders Study
Fall, 2012

Courtesy of Arlington County DES

Courtesy of ACCS
For all trip purposes, riders say ART is a convenient and easy way to travel.
Q4. For what reasons do you ride ART buses? Please select all that apply and indicate your one main reason.

On average riders choose four or more different reasons for riding ART. 

Arlington Transit is Convenient and Easy to Use

- It's convenient: 75%
- It's easy to use: 70%
- It's affordable: 56%
- It's reliable: 53%
- It's good for the environment: 36%
- It eliminates the need to park: 35%
- It's my only means of transportation: 34%
- I can use commute time productively: 26%
- It's quicker than driving: 23%
- Other: 9%

n = 2,905
Q4. For what reasons do you ride ART buses? Please select all that apply and indicate your one main reason.

Convenience is the Number One Main Reason for Choosing ART

4 in 10 (41%) riders cited convenience as the main reason for riding ART.

Choice riders are especially likely to consider ART convenient.

n = 2,905
ART riders show preference for bus rather than other available travel options.
Almost all ART Riders Have Options

Only a few Would not Have Made Their Trip if ART Were Unavailable

“Other” responses include:

- Ride from a friend or family member: 18 mentions
- Shuttle service, including Pentagon or Department of Defense service: 11 mentions

Almost all ART riders have more than one other transportation option.

Q8. If ART had been unavailable today, how would you have made this trip? (Choose as many as apply).

- Metrobus: 41% (1,232 mentions)
- Walk: 28% (669 mentions)
- Taxi: 22% (524 mentions)
- Metrorail: 18% (426 mentions)
- Driven alone: 13% (317 mentions)
- Would not have made the trip: 7% (168 mentions)
- Bicycle: 5% (118 mentions)
- Carpool: 4% (95 mentions)
- Capital Bikeshare: 2% (47 mentions)

n = 2,364
Most ART Riders Walk to and From Their Bus Stops

Since 2008, use of Metrorail in conjunction with an ART trip has decreased from 30% to 15%.

Q10. How did you get to the bus stop today where you got on this bus? (Choose as many as apply)
Q12. When you get off this bus, how will you get to your final destination?
ART riders are brand advocates. Satisfied with their experiences, they are likely to recommend ART to others.
Satisfaction is consistently high across all routes.

Q6. How satisfied are you overall with your experience with ART? Please use a scale of 1 to 5, where “1” means you are “Not at all satisfied” and “5” means that you are “Very satisfied”.

Overall Satisfaction With ART is High, and Has Increased Since 2008

Total Satisfaction
2008 = 85%
2013 = 90%

n = 2,334
2013

n = 1,616
2008
Q5. Overall, and considering service, ride, tools, apps and resources, how does ART compare to other transit services?

n = varies 1,346 – 2,449

Few Riders Consider Other Options To Be Better Than ART

Those who think another option is better than ART:

- Metrobus – 4%
- Metrorail – 13%
- Other – 3%

191 ART riders surveyed think ART is better than any other transit option.
Q7. How likely are you to recommend ART for travel around Arlington? Please use a scale of 0 to 10, where “0” means you are “Not at all likely” and 10 means you are “Very likely”.

The average (mean) rating of likelihood to recommend ART is 8.53.

64% gave ART the highest compliment – a score of 9 or 10.

n = 2,254
Timing and reliability of service are critical to rider satisfaction.
Choice Riders are more concerned than average with short wait times and convenient routes, while Transit Dependent Riders are more concerned than average with accessible stops and adequate on-board seating.

Q19. How important are each of the following attributes when riding the bus? Please use a scale of 1 to 5, where “1” is “Not at all important” and “5” is “Very important.”

Q20. Based on your experience, how would you rate ART on each of these attributes? Please use a scale of 1 to 5, where “1” is “Very poor” and “5” is “Excellent.”

n = varies

ART Performs Highly, Although There Are Some Opportunities for Improvement

- The bus is reliable/runs on time
- My wait time is short
- The bus runs when I need it
- The route is direct
- The driver is courteous
- The bus stop is accessible
- There are enough seats on the bus
- The bus pulls close to the curb

Importance: 77% 68% 75% 83% 80% 64% 56% 80%
Performance: 90% 88% 85% 84% 82% 86% 81% 80%
While ART scores highly on all attributes, if attention is to be given to any particular areas, they would be improving the actual (or perceived) wait time, increasing the reliability of bus timeliness and assuring that bus routes are scheduled during the most needed times.

Opportunities for Improvement
Revolve Around Scheduling and Timing

Performance (Mean = 4.2)
Ongoing efforts to assess route planning – ensuring direct routes, reliable on-time service and accessible stops – increases convenience and drives satisfaction.
ART riders want more service, so that riding the bus is more convenient.
Even though riders indicated they are highly satisfied with ART, they were asked if there are any **specific reasons** that ART service does not meet their needs.

Open-ended responses were put into a word cloud, where the most frequent responses show as largest font size.
ART Riders Would Like Expanded Service
- Extended Hours and Frequency -

Q22. Are there any specific reasons that the bus schedule does not meet your needs?

n = 449
The ART Rider Wish List Includes:

- An enhanced span of service – evenings and weekends
- More frequency on existing routes
- New service destinations
In an effort to provide a snapshot of travel patterns to assist with planning of the transit network and prioritize bus stop improvements, riders were asked to identify specific origins and destinations.
The most common trip (by far), taken by almost 12% of surveyed passengers, was between Ballston Metro and bus stops surrounding the Virginia Hospital Center complex.

The next most popular trip is between Shirlington Transit Center and Pentagon Metro, taken by over 3% of respondents.
In the Spring of 2013, Arlington County residents, business owners, commuters and the community at large were invited to participate in a Transportation Development Plan Survey.

The intent of this effort was to obtain feedback regarding desired changes in ART and Metrobus routes.
Based on Feedback From the Broad Community of County Residents and Stakeholders, New Service Desires Include:

- Connections b/n Crystal City and the Rosslyn/Ballston Orange Line Corridor
- Expanded service to Ballston and Rosslyn for both North and South Arlington
- Increased service to North Arlington
- Service on Lee Highway
- Service from Shirlington to NVCC (Alexandria Campus)
Well trained, customer-focused operators are the face of the ART brand, making the experience a pleasant and easy one.
Recent Training Has Greatly Improved ART Riders’ Perceptions of Operators

Drivers are complimented for consistently:

- Smiling
- Greeting riders
- Answering questions
- Being friendly
- General politeness

Q21. Specifically, why did you give the driver the rating you did for courteousness? Note: Responses shown for those riders giving the drivers a satisfaction rating of 4 or 5 in Q20.

n = 462
ART riders actively seek information about transit, usually en route, at stops and on buses.
Q14. How do you want to learn about upcoming ART service and route changes? Choose as many as apply.

- Signs on the bus: 59%
- Signs at the bus stop: 49%
- ArlingtonTransit.com: 36%
- ART alerts via text or email: 19%
- ART Forum newsletter: 8%
- Commuter stores: 6%
- Other: 5%

Choice Riders are more likely than their Transit Dependent Rider counterparts to also refer to technology-based information sources.

78% of riders have access to the Internet and 66% have access to a Smartphone. Only 9% have no access to technology.
While there is high satisfaction among current users with Arlington Transit Support Services, there are opportunities to increase awareness.
Q24. Following is a list of services specific to Arlington Transit (ART). For each, select 1) if you have used the service and are satisfied 2) have used the service and are not satisfied 3) you have not used the service but are aware of it, or 4) you are not aware of the service.
...There Are Opportunities to Promote Services to Increase Awareness

In particular, ART Forum newsletter would benefit from promotion: dissatisfaction is low, yet awareness and trial are also low.

Q24. Following is a list of services specific to Arlington Transit (ART). For each, select 1) if you have used the service and are satisfied 2) have used the service and are not satisfied 3) you have not used the service but are aware of it, or 4) you are not aware of the service.
ART makes a difference in reducing SOV Travel in the County.
ART Makes a Significant Difference in Reducing SOV Travel in the County

Weekly average of ART Riders: 53,703
Would have driven alone if ART unavailable*: 13%
Weekly SOV trips eliminated: 6,981

*Q8. If ART had been unavailable today, how would you have made this trip? (Choose as many as apply). 13% responded “Driven Alone”.

n = 2,364
Our Conclusions
Arlington County has a “World Class” public transit system.
Both Business Leaders and Riders Agree That ART is an Integral Part of a World Class Transportation System
“The transportation system in Arlington is excellent.”

“I think Arlington County has the best transportation system in the greater Washington, DC area.”

Business Leaders Study
Fall 2012
Arlington Transit provides a valuable service – a service that is preferred by those relying on public transportation as well as by those who have other transportation options.
ART provides a convenient and easy way for residents and workers alike to travel to where they want and need to be in the County for both work and non-work related trips.
Intentional focus on enhancing, maintaining and improving Arlington Transit services and the promotion of those services is critical to reinforce Arlington County’s position as “A Great Place to Live and Work”
“One of the biggest future needs is dependable, timely, not overcrowded transportation for the high density of our live and work community.”

Business Leader Study
Fall, 2012

Courtesy of Arlington Economic Development
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