

East End Transit Survey



Qualitative & Quantitative Surveys Five Towns on the East End of Long Island

Prepared for:
Five Town Rural Transit, Inc.
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Key Finding:

- ☛ All surveys show overwhelming support for proposed transportation plan
 - Little variation by region, age, income, etc.
 - Younger residents more likely to use new system, retired less-likely

The Surveys – Qualitative:

Focus Groups

- Five Focus Groups were conducted
 1. Commuters to jobs on East End
 2. Permanent Resident Non-Commuters
 3. Large employers on East End
 4. 2nd Homeowners
 5. Spanish-speaking residents

- Two Purposes
 1. Open-ended responses, idea generation
 2. Question design for quantitative telephone survey

The Surveys – Quantitative:

Telephone Survey

- ☛ 1,200 Respondents - $\pm 3\%$ margin of error
- ☛ Five regions – 240 interviews each -- $\pm 6\%$ margin of error -- weighted
 - East Hampton Town
 - Riverhead Town
 - Southold / Shelter Island Towns
 - Southampton Town – East of Shinnecock Canal
 - Southampton Town – West of Shinnecock Canal
- ☛ 42 questions, partly derived from focus groups
- ☛ 16 minutes average duration

Current State of Transportation / Long Island's East End

- Predominantly automobile (95%)
- Steady increase in traffic
- Businesses and employees are affected
- Conclusion: Traffic probably beyond critical point

Focus Groups & Telephone Survey

Current State of Public Transportation

Three Major Modes

- Suffolk County Transit – Intra-regional
- Long Island Rail Road – Inter-regional
- Long distance buses – Inter-regional

No Coordination of Services

Suffolk County Transit has Increasing Ridership, but ...

- ☞ Routes and schedules do not make sense
 - ☞ Limited hours, no Sunday service
 - ☞ Some rude drivers
 - ☞ No coordination with other modes
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- ☞ Only 3% use Suffolk County Transit at least two times per week
 - ☞ 88% never use Suffolk County Transit, 7% only a few times per year.

Focus Groups & Telephone Survey

The Long Island Rail Road Gets Limited Use

- ☛ Almost no-one uses the LIRR for intra-regional travel
- ☛ Infrequent service – not geared to regular users, except possibly weekenders
 - Worse on North Fork
- ☛ 54% never use the LIRR, 35% only a few times per year

Focus Groups & Telephone Survey

Long Distance Buses

- ☛ North Fork – Sunrise Coach
- ☛ South Fork – Hampton Jitney
Hampton Luxury Liner
- Significant passenger loads on all lines
- Quick, reliable, flexible in routes
- Frequent service, multiple stops
- Comfortable, clean, safe
- Pricy, some say (but gasoline prices ...)
- 46% never use long distance buses, 41% only a few times per year

Focus Groups & Telephone Survey

Doubt that Public Transportation can Be Improved

After discussing current system, according to focus group respondents ...

- ☞ The area is too spread out geographically
- ☞ Many employees don't work at fixed locations (construction/renovation, landscaping, etc.)
- ☞ Not enough population to warrant frequent service
- ☞ Resistant 2nd homeowners
- ☞ Demand limited to transit-dependent

But ...

Describe the Perfect Public Transportation System

1st Tier -- Most Important Components -- Unprompted

- Frequency of service
- Reliability – on time
- Accessibility of system – proximity to routes
- Increased speed

Describe the Perfect Public Transportation System

- ☛ 2nd Tier -- Most Important Components -- Unprompted
 - Low cost
 - Extended hours, Sunday service
 - Coordination of bus and train schedules
 - Amenities – clean, comfortable, safe
 - Parking
 - Energy-efficient, non-polluting
 - No exact change requirement

Why Employers Would Want a New Public Transportation System

- Hard to hire or retain employees
- Forced to pay premium salaries in return for long commutes
- High parking expenses
- Tired and harried employees
- Excessive and unavoidable lateness
- Their attempts to improve the situation have failed
 - Incentives to car pool, fare subsidies

Focus Groups

East End Transit Proposal – Overall

- From Focus Groups, first reaction comments after the plan was described:
 - “When does it start? We’re ready.”
 - “The interesting thing about this focus group .. is that there is no negativity toward the plan. Everybody wishes your group well and encourages them to move forward.”
 - “Everybody’s going to benefit a lot .. The government, the users, the environment.”

Focus Groups

East End Transit Proposal - Components

Rate Each Component on a 1 to 5 scale – 5 is Most Favorable		
Component	Least Favorable (1-2..)	Most Favorable (..4-5)
First, create public authority	26%	49%
New trains with service every 30 minutes	19%	68%
Mini and larger buses coordinate with trains	17%	70%
More parking at train stations/bus stops	18%	67%
Fares similar to Suffolk County Transit	5%	86%
Reopen closed LIRR stations	12%	74%
New bus routes and enhanced stops	13%	71%
Extended AM/PM hours and Sunday service	9%	80%
New trains/buses-from Fed grants	6%	87%
Seasonal, passenger-only water taxis	23%	65%

Telephone Survey

East End Transit Proposal - Conceptual System Map



How Often Would You Use the New System?

☞ 4/5 times / week	7%	} 22%
☞ 2/3 times / week	15%	
☞ A few times / month	29%	
☞ A few times / year	26%	
☞ Never	19%	
☞ Don't Know	4%	→ Very Low

Telephone Survey

How often - do you/would you - use public transportation on Long Island's East End?

	Use Current	Would Use New System	Would Use New System If Free
4/5 times / week	2%	7%	13%
2/3 times / week	2%	15%	17%
Combined Regular Use	4%	22%	30%
A few times / month	9%	29%	24%
A few times / year	34%	26%	21%
Never	53%	19%	18%

"Free is good."

Telephone Survey

The New Plan -- Components

Operations

- Respondents relieved it would be contracted out
- Need for maintenance yards

Parking

- Additional parking at railroad stations and enhanced bus stops ... But land is so expensive
- Solution – “Could we use some of the money going to the MTA to buy land for parking? Or just not pay it?”
- Desire for Park & Ride, especially west of Shinnecock Canal for commuters coming from the west into the five towns.

"Shoot Holes in the Plan"

- ☞ 1. Convincing the MTA to give up the LIRR
 - "... not something they're going to relinquish easily, since they are having their own budget crisis."
 - "They would throw everything at us."
 - "Why hasn't the LIRR had the vision to accept that there is a need for this kind of service?"
 - Irony – east end trains are money-losers, says the MTA.
- ☞ Solution – "Emphasize that it's a good idea and develop our own political power." "Let us help."

"Shoot Holes in the Plan"

- 2. Getting people out of their cars
 - "People are wedded to their cars. People demand total convenience and control."
 - 2nd homeowners -- "I use public transportation in New York City all the time ... but I can't imagine using these trains and buses to get where I'm going when I can just pop into my car and drive."
- Incentive not to drive – gasoline prices.
- Solution: Success = small shift to trains and buses = major reduction in auto congestion.

Focus Groups

New Plan -- Actions Taken by Employers

- Adjust hours to meet new schedules
- Provide vans - shuttle employees to stops/stations
 - "If I could eliminate employee parking lots, I would pay for it."
- Support -- "You'll need us and all of our employees and their friends and family to advocate for this plan."
- Everyone benefits, "... even if they don't use the system ... reduced traffic, environment, convenience."

Focus Groups

Reasons to Support The New Proposal:

How convincing do you find this reason to support new proposal?	Extremely/ Very Convincing	Somewhat Convincing	Not at all Convincing
Cuts traffic -- gets people out of cars	58%	26%	15%
Everybody benefits, not just transit-dependent	53%	30%	15%
Well-thought-out, widely-backed	44%	34%	17%

Telephone Survey

Which of these benefits of the new proposal is the most important?

Energy-efficient, non-polluting	17%
People would switch, get cars off the road	32%
Better public transportation for people who need it	44%

Telephone Survey

New system rated far higher than current public transportation system:

Telephone Survey – 1 to 5 scale – 5 is best

	<u>Current</u>	<u>New</u>
☛ Worst it could be (1 – 2..)	52%	13%
☛ Average (.. 3 ..)	26%	25%
☛ Best it could be (.. 4 – 5)	22%	62%

Telephone Survey

Conclusion: It's not just that you like the new system. It's that you'll use it.

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Telephone Survey