

SURVEY OF  
PARK 'N RIDE USERS

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA  
RAPID TRANSIT DISTRICT

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## BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

At the time this Park 'n Ride study was proposed, there were 12 Park 'n Ride services in operation. Two locations had been cancelled recently and there were plans to open additional ones in the near future.

In order to minimize future unsuccessful operations, it was felt that the District would benefit from knowing what factors contribute to the success or failure of a location, who uses this particular type of service and why it is used. Consequently, the study was designed to meet the following objectives:

- (1) Define the Park 'n Ride users in terms of their demographic characteristics and trip patterns.
- (2) Determine if they are new RTD riders or if the Park 'n Ride service merely served to pull riders away from regular lines.
- (3) Determine reasons for using the Park 'n Ride service.
- (4) Determine how riders first learned about the Park 'n Ride service they currently use.

## METHODOLOGY

The study utilized an on-board, self-administered, structured questionnaire for data collection. These forms were distributed on board the a.m. buses leaving from the Park 'n Ride site. Overall, 93% of all inbound buses were surveyed. Questionnaires were distributed to all boarding passengers and collected before they left the bus. RTD Mobile Information Team members, who have been trained in market research data collection

techniques, handled the distribution and collection of the questionnaires. Consequently, the response rate was close to 100%.

Originally, eight locations -- Canoga Park, La Mirada, Long Beach, Pasadena, San Gabriel, San Pedro, Van Nuys and West Covina -- were selected for study. These eight locations were surveyed the week of November 17, 1975. However, requests were received to survey two additional locations. These two locations -- Torrance and Pomona -- were subsequently surveyed on November 24 and December 11, 1975. -

A total of 1,529 riders returned valid questionnaires. The report which follows is based on the responses of these 1,529 riders representing the ten Park 'n Rides listed above. On most of the tables, data is shown for those individual Park 'n Rides where there was a respondent base of at least 100. If significant, differences among locations with a base of less than 100 are also included.

The data for the total sample are accurate within ± 2.3% at the 95% confidence level.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The current Park 'n Ride users comprise a new market segment for public transportation. They are, for the most part, transit independents who are relatively young, affluent and have at least one automobile in the household. They have opted for public transportation, not because of necessity, but primarily for financial reasons.

Thus, establishment of additional Park 'n Rides can help increase overall ridership by tapping this source of heretofore non-riders or infrequent riders. However, in order to increase the probability of success of new Park 'n Rides, they should:

1. Be located in an area with a high concentration of young, higher income families, whose members are employed in downtown Los Angeles or its immediate environs, and
2. Be in an area where existing bus service does not have a high ratio of this type of rider -- otherwise it will only serve to cannibalize from the existing service, as is the case in West Covina.

The major reason for using this service is to save on gasoline and other auto-related costs. This advantage appears to be disappearing for many riders with the recently instituted fare increases. At this time, the \$27 a month appears to be the ceiling that will be tolerated. However, it is not so much the cost, per se, that riders object to -- although that is certainly part of it. What they really are objecting to is paying a premium price for what they perceive as standard (and sometimes in their estimation sub-standard) service. Many state that unless there are improvements they will revert to driving

*st. at d.?*

or carpooling. The improvements that would have the greatest impact on this particular category of riders are: consistent use of newer buses, more frequent scheduling during peak periods to eliminate standees and flexible routing which would allow for the use of alternate routes to avoid lengthy traffic tie-ups. The use of older, smaller buses is of special concern and a source of great irritation to the San Gabriel and West Covina Park 'n Ride users.

Insofar as sources of information regarding the Park 'n Rides are concerned, newspaper stories appear to be the most effective in terms of primary sources of information. Apparently the combination of high newspaper readership, normally evidenced by persons matching the profile of the Park 'n Ride users, with the high credibility enjoyed by newspapers in general, makes the newspaper story the best means of disseminating this type of information. However, as stated in the report, this subject needs further study to determine the relative merits of various media and their effectiveness in creating awareness and interest.

## DEFINING THE PARK 'N RIDE USER

Although there are certain variations by location, the Park 'n Ride users in general are a relatively homogeneous group. They are not at all the traditional stereotype of the transit rider, as evidenced by their demographic characteristics. With an average (median) age of 36 and an annual household income of \$19,123, Park 'n Riders are a young and affluent group. There is a nearly equal proportion of males (49%) and females (51%) using this service.

Occupationally, more than three out of four are in one of three major job categories -- clerical (36%), professional/technical (26%) and managerial (19%).

Only 3% have no automobile. More than four out of five have at least one automobile in the household, while two-thirds own two or more automobiles.

Considered as a whole, the typical Park 'n Ride passenger is using the service by choice not necessity. As opposed to the traditional transit users who are thought to be the transit dependents defined as the very young, the elderly and the lower income, the Park 'n Ride user presents a totally different market segment for public transportation.

Of the 10 locations surveyed, Pasadena and San Gabriel had a significantly greater than average proportion of female riders (68% and 74% respectively). These two locations also had a younger than average median age and lower than average

annual income.

Average incomes by locations ranged from a low of about \$13,000 in the Pasadena and San Gabriel areas to slightly over \$20,000 in La Mirada, San Pedro and Torrance. In the remaining locations, annual income of riders clustered in the \$16,000 to \$19,000 range.

With the highest ridership among the Park 'n Rides surveyed, La Mirada also had the highest proportion of multiple car households. Seventy-seven percent of La Mirada Park 'n Riders had at least two automobiles. At the other end of the spectrum, 8% of Pasadena Park 'n Ride users had no cars and only 46% had two or more automobiles.

Tables 1 through 5 give a detailed breakdown of the demographics of the sample.

TABLE 1AGE OF RIDERS

	<u>Total Sample</u>	<u>La Mirada</u>	<u>West Covina</u>	<u>Pasa- dena</u>	<u>Van Nuys</u>	<u>Long Beach</u>
Under 30	32%	26%	40%	40%	30%	32%
30 - 39	29	33	27	25	32	27
40 - 49	20	22	20	13	18	18
50 - 61	16	16	12	18	19	18
62 & over	2	3	1	3	1	5
No answer	<u>1</u>	<u>*</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Base	(1,529)	(415)	(281)	(233)	(134)	(130)

\* Less than 0.5%

TABLE 2

SEX OF RIDERS  
(Percentaged Horizontally)

	<u>MALE</u>	<u>FEMALE</u>
Total Sample	49%	51
La Mirada	54%	46
West Covina	48%	52
Pasadena	32%	68
Van Nuys	53%	47
Long Beach	56%	44

TABLE 3INCOME OF RIDERS

	<u>Total Sample</u>	<u>La Mirada</u>	<u>West Covina</u>	<u>Pasa- dena</u>	<u>Van Nuys</u>	<u>Long Beach</u>
Under \$5,000	2%	2%	2%	3%	2%	1%
\$5,000-9,999	14	9	9	27	11	18
\$10,000-14,999	18	17	11	23	20	18
\$15,000-19,999	19	22	23	14	20	15
\$20,000-24,999	19	21	21	12	18	21
\$25,000 & over	22	25	25	14	23	22
No answer	<u>6</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>5</u>
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Base	(1,529)	(415)	(281)	(233)	(134)	(130)

TABLE 4

NUMBER OF AUTOMOBILES IN HOUSEHOLD

	<u>Total Sample</u>	<u>La Mirada</u>	<u>West Covina</u>	<u>Pasa- dena</u>	<u>Van Nuys</u>	<u>Long Beach</u>
None	3%	1%	2%	8%	2%	2%
One	29	22	25	45	27	33
Two	54	60	59	40	54	57
Three or more	13	17	14	6	17	6
No answer	<u>1</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>2</u>
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Base	(1,529)	(415)	(281)	(233)	(134)	(130)

TABLE 5

OCCUPATION OF RIDERS

	<u>TOTAL RESPONDENTS</u>
Professional/Technical	26%
Managers/Officials/Proprietors	19
Clerical Workers	36
Sales Workers	5
Craftsmen/Operatives	4
All Other	5
Unemployed	<u>5</u>
	100%

## RIDERSHIP PATTERNS

The Park 'n Ride user is most likely to be using this service five times a week commuting to and from work. Pasadena and Van Nuys have a greater than average proportion of five days a week riders. Long Beach riders have a significantly greater likelihood of 3-4 days a week ridership. (Table 6)

TABLE 6

### FREQUENCY OF USING PARK 'N RIDE (Percentaged Horizontally)

	<u>5</u> <u>times/</u> <u>week</u>	<u>3-4</u> <u>times/</u> <u>week</u>	<u>Less than</u> <u>3 times/</u> <u>week</u>	<u>Base</u>
Total Sample	81%	15	4	(1,529)
La Mirada	82%	14	4	( 415)
West Covina	80%	14	6	( 281)
Pasadena	87%	10	3	( 233)
Van Nuys	87%	9	4	( 134)
Long Beach	70%	25	5	( 130)

Nearly three out of four passengers drive their own car to the Park 'n Ride and park it there all day. Consistent with automobile ownership patterns, Pasadena and San Gabriel have

the lowest proportion of riders who drive their own car and park. Riders from Pasadena also differ significantly from the other Park 'n Ride passengers in that they are more likely to come to the Park 'n Ride by bus. This has created transfer problems for some of the Pasadena Park 'n Ride users. Complaints were also voiced that the Park 'n Ride bus would leave them behind, even though the driver of the local bus behind it indicated for it to wait for passengers. (Table 7)

TABLE 7

MODE OF TRAVEL TO PARK 'N RIDE  
(Percentaged Horizontally)

	<u>Drive own car &amp; park</u>	<u>Passenger driven to lot</u>	<u>Take another bus</u>	<u>Walk</u>	<u>Other</u>
Total Sample	74%	17	4	4	1
La Mirada	79%	19	-	-	2
West Covina	78%	16	2	2	2
Pasadena	50%	20	17	10	3
Van Nuys	80%	7	2	10	1
Long Beach	75%	10	2	10	3

Most riders have less than two blocks to their final destina-

tion after leaving the Park 'n Ride bus. A substantial minority of riders has more than 10 blocks to their final destination. Requests were made to extend service to the Security Pacific Bank Plaza, and points along Wilshire Boulevard. (Table 8)

TABLE 8

DISTANCE TO FINAL DESTINATION  
(Percentaged Horizontally)\*

	<u>Less than 2 blocks</u>	<u>2 - 5 blocks</u>	<u>6 - 10 blocks</u>	<u>More than 10 blocks</u>
Total Sample	56%	25	6	12
La Mirada	44%	29	11	16
West Covina	76%	11	4	9
Pasadena	51%	30	3	13
Van Nuys	39%	49	6	6
Long Beach	68%	16	2	13

The mode of transportation used to get to their final destination is consistent with the distance to their final destination.

\* May total to less than 100% because "no answer" category is not shown.

Those who have less than 6 blocks to their final destination are most likely to walk that distance. Those who have more than 10 blocks, nearly always transfer to another RTD bus. (Table 9)

TABLE 9

MODE OF TRAVEL TO FINAL DESTINATION  
(Percentaged Horizontally)

	<u>Walk</u>	<u>Transfer to another bus</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Base</u>
Total Sample	79%	18	3	(1,529)
La Mirada	66%	31	3	( 415)
West Covina	85%	12	3	( 281)
Pasadena	81%	16	3	( 233)
Van Nuys	88%	8	4	( 134)
Long Beach	81%	15	4	( 130)

While an impressive 81% of Park 'n Ride users are regular riders -- i.e. ride five times a week -- more than half of them had never made this trip by bus prior to introduction of the Park 'n Ride service. This indicates that most of these riders are new to transit.

There are, however, wide variations by location. More than half of West Covina passengers rode an RTD bus "regularly"

before the Park 'n Ride service. Thus, in that area, there has been a considerable drain from regular bus service users. (Table 10)

TABLE 10

PRIOR USE OF BUSES

	<u>Total</u> <u>Sample</u>	<u>La</u> <u>Mirada</u>	<u>West</u> <u>Covina</u>	<u>Pasa-</u> <u>dena</u>	<u>Van</u> <u>Nuys</u>	<u>Long</u> <u>Beach</u>
Regularly	28%	16%	54%	25%	22%	12%
Occasionally	7	8	6	8	3	7
Seldom	9	10	6	13	10	9
Never	55	65	34	53	65	72
No answer	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Base	(1,529)	(415)	(281)	(233)	(134)	(130)

REASONS FOR USING PARK 'N RIDE SERVICE

During these times of increased costs, it is not surprising that more than half the respondents listed "to save money on gasoline and other auto-related costs" as their primary reason for using the Park 'n Ride service. This reason is given by a significantly higher proportion of Pasadena and Van Nuys riders. West Covina riders, consistent with their previous bus ridership, had a significantly higher proportion saying they "used the bus before and this service was faster."

(Table 11)

TABLE 11

REASONS FOR USING PARK 'N RIDE  
(Percentaged Horizontally)

	<u>To save money on gasoline and other auto-related costs</u>	<u>Don't like to drive and this service met my needs</u>	<u>Used bus before and this was faster</u>	<u>Other</u>
Total Sample	55%	24	16	5
La Mirada	60%	29	4	7
West Covina	40%	21	35	4
Pasadena	64%	15	17	4
Van Nuys	64%	19	13	4
Long Beach	59%	31	6	4

## SOURCE OF INFORMATION

In order to maximize the effectiveness of the District's advertising and promotional efforts, it is necessary to know which sources are most successful in penetrating public awareness.

Recognizing that this particular study was not the best vehicle for collecting awareness data, an effort was made nevertheless, to acquire at least a rough answer to this very basic question. Consequently, respondents were asked to indicate how they first found out about the Park 'n Ride service they currently use.

The fact that 55% of all respondents indicated "word-of-mouth" as their primary source of knowledge is significant in the context of the overall marketing and promotion mix. What this figure says, in effect, is that on the average, each of those who first learned about the service through a traditional channel of communication, in turn informed 1.2 persons. If the word-of-mouth category is disregarded, it is clear that newspaper stories had the greatest impact. RTD brochures were a distant second, while newspaper advertising came in a weak third.

Thus, it appears that billboard, street signs and stories on TV or radio are only marginally effective in promoting awareness of this particular service. However, this statement cannot be made unequivocally without additional research on media

penetration and advertising awareness. Be that as it may, this is the best information we have at this time indicating that stories presented in the editorial context of newspapers carry greater impact than<sup>n</sup> paid advertising. (Table 12)

TABLE 12

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

	<u>Total</u> <u>Sample</u>	<u>La</u> <u>Mirada</u>	<u>West</u> <u>Covina</u>	<u>Pasa-</u> <u>dena</u>	<u>Van</u> <u>Nuys</u>	<u>Long</u> <u>Beach</u>
Word of mouth	55%	64%	53%	50%	61%	64%
Newspaper story	23	14	26	29	15	17
RTD brochure	11	10	14	9	14	11
Newspaper ads	5	4	8	3	4	1
Billboards	4	7	1	*	4	8
Street signs	4	3	4	6	3	1
Mobile Infor- mation Teams	2	*	4	3	4	3
All other sources	3	2	3	2	2	2
Total	**	**	**	**	**	**
Base	(1,529)	(415)	(281)	(233)	(134)	(130)

\* Less than 0.5%

\*\* Totals may add to more than 100% due to multiple responses.

RATING OF PARK 'N RIDE SERVICE

People who use the Park 'n Ride service give it quite a favorable rating. On a four-point scale, where 4 = excellent and 1 = poor, the mean rating for all respondents was 3.2. Seven out of eight respondents rate the service as "good" or "excellent." (Table 13)

TABLE 13

RATING SCALE

	<u>Total Sample</u>	<u>La Mirada</u>	<u>West Covina</u>	<u>Pasa- dena</u>	<u>Van Nuys</u>	<u>Long Beach</u>
Excellent	38%	45%	32%	31%	44%	45%
Good	49	49	52	55	50	49
Fair	11	6	14	13	6	6
Poor	<u>2</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Base	(1,529)	(415)	(281)	(233)	(134)	(130)

## VOLUNTARY COMMENTS

In addition to the structured questions comprising the survey, space was allowed for respondents to make any voluntary comments they cared to. The sheer number of such comments is a measure of the interest and involvement of those using the Park 'n Ride services, more than half of whom wrote in the space provided.

Three major areas appear to head the list of concerns. Fare increases over the past few months are objected to -- but not necessarily in and of themselves. Tied in to the objections to fare hikes are feelings of not receiving premium service for the premium fare they perceive themselves paying. Additionally, there is an adverse feeling among those who do not use the parking facilities at paying the same amount as those who do use the parking lot. And finally, having Park 'n Ride buses which are old and often overcrowded (especially during the p.m. peak) goes counter to their notion of what they are entitled to by virtue of the higher fare structure.

Further down the list of complaints are problems with off-schedule buses which in turn create transfer problems. Many requests were made for earlier and/or later buses outbound.

Interestingly, there were exceedingly few driver complaints. Among those who complained about the drivers, most dealt with drivers not waiting for a late arriving passenger.

In the area of suggestions, many requested flexible routing to allow drivers to take alternate routes which would by-pass traffic tie-ups. (Table 14)

TABLE 14

VOLUNTARY COMMENTS

	<u>Total Respondents</u>
Positive Comments:	
Good service/enjoy service Drivers	8% 1
Negative Comments:	
Fares: Too high;unfair to pay for parking when don't use it	18%
Not enough buses;not often enough	23
Schedules not adhered to/changed often	9
Overcrowded buses/standing	10
Need newer buses; buses too old/small	22
Driver complaints	2
Suggestions - Requests:	
Add/extend service	3%
Additional stops	4
Bus/express lane on freeways	2
Alternate routes to avoid traffic	2
Sell monthly passes/coffee/etc. at Park 'n Ride lot	1
Parking area improvements: lighting/ security/shelter/etc.	1
All other comments (less than 1% each)	8
Base: Those making comments	(781)