



Catalina Island Ferryboat Commuter Study

Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority



**Final Report
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Submitted to:

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Executive Summary

Background

In January 2004, the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) commissioned the Applied Management & Planning Group (AMPG) to develop a study and final report that would assist Metro in effectively supporting its request that the Federal Transportation Administration (FTA) and the administrators of the National Transit Database (NTD) allow Metro to submit, and receive subsidy for, ferryboat miles subsidized by Metro between Mainland Los Angeles County and the City of Avalon, also known as Catalina Island.

Over the past 12 years, the Los Angeles Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) has provided financial assistance to the residents of the City of Avalon, an island community located approximately twenty-six miles off the coast of mainland Los Angeles County. Through a series of subsidies, Metro has assisted in rehabilitating landing facilities, increasing dock capacities and lightening the burden of travel cost for island residents and workers traveling back and forth via Catalina Express, a local ferryboat service provider.

Based on annual transit activity reports submitted to the National Transportation Department (NTD), the Federal Transportation Agency offers Urbanized Area Formulation Program (UAFP) grants to transit agencies throughout the Nation. Urbanized Area Formulation Program (UAFP) grants are designed to provide assistance to public transit agencies so that they may fund various capital projects, plan and pay for equipment and facilities improvements and other activities associated with the operation of mass transportation, public transportation and or transit operations.

Currently, Metro is not allowed to report the commuter miles between Catalina Island and the mainland, but has estimated that successful reporting of ferryboat service among the cities of San Pedro, Long Beach and the City of Avalon will result in approximately \$1.5 million per year in additional Federal Section 5307 capital funds to the Los Angeles County region.

Methodology

Through an intercept survey, executive interviews and a study of other ferryboat operations throughout the country, the Applied Management & Planning group conducted a multifaceted study of the travel patterns and needs of island residents, the legislation governing NTD reporting and UAFP awards, and the operational characteristics of transit agencies that have been historically awarded UAFP grant funds. Key findings from the research are presented on the following page.

Findings

The NTD reporting manual used to direct the reporting of mileage and define eligible commuter services offers conflicting/indistinct definitions of commuter, commuter service and a commute. The reporting manual offers two different guidelines for reporting ferryboat service miles that are based upon commuter rail guidelines which state that:

More than 50 percent of the average daily ridership must travel and return on the same day.

However, the two guidelines presented for ferryboat eligibility state that:

More than 50 percent of the average daily ridership must travel on the service at least three times a week, and;

More than 50 percent of the average daily ridership must travel on the same day (no direction or frequency noted).

Based on results of the intercept survey, neither of the above ferryboat patronage guidelines is met, but Metro seeks to gain recognition and reimbursement ferryboat miles based on other significant study findings.

Use of the service as a “lifeline”

Survey results show that the service between the mainland and island is a “lifeline” service to those who work and live on the island. Sixty-two percent of all respondents and forty-six percent of islanders indicated that they could no longer live/work on the island if the service were not available. In addition, ninety-three percent of those indicating that they use the service for work stated that they felt the service was an irreplaceable lifeline, **providing the only affordable, regularly scheduled** mode of travel between the island and mainland harbors.

When reviewing the travel patterns of those who use the service for work purposes, 47 percent reported that their current trip would last more than 24 hours, indicating that there are commuters who use the service to travel back and forth for work, but plan trips that last over several days to save time and money.

Observance of all travel periods and clarification of reporting guidelines

The results of this survey are based on data collected during non-peak travel times for the ferryboat service. However, if the study were expanded to include summer months, it is estimated that commute percentages would be met based on a modified guideline that states that more than 50 percent of the average daily ridership must travel **on the same day**.

Conclusions

Although Catalina Express does not meet the 50 percent commuter rule required to receive UAFP funds, there is a basis for exception. Catalina Express is unique in that it provides a lifeline service to the residents and visitors traveling on and off the island for purposes of work, school, specialized medical services, and household shopping. Unlike other agencies denied ferryboat subsidies for failing to meet the 50 percent commuter threshold, Catalina Express offers the only regular, affordable, weekday transportation service on and off the island.

The purpose of the UAFP grant program is to assist transit agencies in providing public transportation, particularly to underserved areas and populations. Metro believes that by only subsidizing services that meet strict or varying commuter definitions, the program ignores a large proportion of the public that relies on subsidized transportation for essential travel.

Introduction

The City of Avalon is the major residential and commercial area of Santa Catalina Island. Located approximately twenty-six miles off the coast of mainland Los Angeles County, Catalina Island is a major port of call with a strong draw for vacationers, sport fishers, scuba divers and cruise ship visitors. With an estimated population of over 3,000 full-time residents and a fluctuating number of construction workers, business professionals and government officials, there is a critical need for affordable and reliable means of transportation between the Island and the mainland.

Since 1993, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) has subsidized Catalina Express, a private ferryboat service providing transportation between Avalon and the communities of Long Beach, San Pedro, and Dana Point. The Metro subsidy, which began as a \$160,000 allotment in the early 1990's, has grown to \$250,000. The funds are used to assist eligible island residents with the purchase of commuter ticket books. Additional funding has been allocated for capacity enhancements, rehabilitation, and maintenance of the ferry system.

The FTA allows transportation agencies to receive subsidies based on the number of commuters identified in the annual National Transit Database (NTD) report. At present, Metro is not allowed to include ferryboat miles from Catalina Express operations as a part of its' NTD report. In January 2004, Metro contracted with the Applied Management & Planning Group (AMPG) to assist Metro in providing information to the Federal Transportation Administration (FTA) to support Metro's request to be allowed to report ferryboat miles.

Federal Requirements

Many counties and local transportation agencies are eligible for reimbursement based on the number of individuals using their various services (ferryboat, train, bus, shuttle) for the purposes of commuting. The subsidies are funded through the Urbanized Area Formulation Program (UAFP), a series of federal grants designed to provide assistance to public transit agencies. The Federal Transit Act defines these transportation operations as those which provide transportation by bus or rail, or other conveyance, either publicly or privately owned, providing service on a regular basis. Recipients of UAFP funds can directly operate services or contract for all or part of the total transit service provided.

Eligibility for UAFP funds is based on guidelines set forth in the NTD annual reporting manual.¹ The reporting manual, which is updated each year to reflect changes in legislation and reporting standards, outlines the eligibility requirements for reporting, who should report, what should be reported and how new modes of service should approach submitting for recognition.

¹ 2004 National Transit Database Reporting Manual *Recipients and Beneficiaries of Urbanized Area Formula Program Grants*.

According to the 2004 NTD manual, recognition of ferryboat miles and eligibility for UAAP subsidies are determined by standards set in the commuter rail definition of “commuter service”. However, within the manual there are two disparate definitions of “commuter service” as applied to ferryboat services and it is unclear which one should be applied when defining commuters.

In the Basic Information Module of the manual, the rule for ferryboat states that, “*Predominantly commuter services means that for any given trip segment (i.e., distance between any two piers), more than 50 percent of the average daily ridership travels on the ferryboat on the same day.*” This wording is consistent with the commuter rail definition of predominantly commuter service, but omits the wording “travels back and forth during the same day” which is stated in the commuter rail definition of a commuter.

In the Glossary section of the manual, the ferryboat definition states that “*Predominantly commuter services means that for any given trip segment (i.e., distance between any two piers), more than 50 percent of the average daily ridership travels on the ferryboat **at least three times a week.***” Although all rules for ferryboat and commuter rail state that “Only the predominantly commuter service portion of an intercity route is eligible for inclusion when determining ferryboat (FB) (or commuter rail (CR)) route miles.”, it is unclear which rule should be applied when determining how many times a commuter must use the service. (travel on the same day, travel back and forth during the same day, or at least three times a week).

It is not clear whether a transit service would qualify for subsidies if it meets one, but not both, of the above criteria or why commuter rail definitions are used in ferryboat service evaluation.

Methodology

To identify the travel characteristics of Catalina Express passengers and to assess whether the ferryboat system might qualify for UAFP subsidies, Metro contracted with AMPG to conduct two phases of research. First, to determine the characteristics and travel patterns of ferry passengers, and the necessity of the service for island residents, AMPG conducted a one-month intercept survey with ferryboat passengers using the San Pedro, Long Beach and Avalon Island ports. Second, in an effort to understand the guidelines for ferryboat mile reporting and the characteristics of agencies currently receiving UAFP funds, AMPG conducted a series of telephone interviews with NTD and FTA officials, and the directors/managers of ferryboat services.

The Intercept Survey

AMPG conducted a field survey with passengers riding the Catalina Express between April 19 and May 14, 2004. AMPG distributed a 22-question English/Spanish survey to passengers boarding Catalina Express at Long Beach, San Pedro and Catalina Island terminals. Over the four-week period, AMPG staff distributed 11,756 surveys, representing over 400 departing trips between the mainland and the island. A total of 4,278 surveys were collected yielding a response rate of 36 percent, and an overall margin of error of ± 2 percent. A total of 778 islanders completed the survey, which accurately represents the island population within a margin of error of ± 4 percent. Both error rates exceed industry standards for robust sampling, which is a margin of error of no more than ± 5 percent. For a copy of the survey instrument, see **Appendix A**.

During the boarding call of each trip, Catalina Express personnel announced their participation in the passenger survey and requested that patrons take a survey from the AMPG representative as they boarded the vessel. Patrons were informed that they only needed to fill out the survey once, and, as passengers boarded each vessel, surveyors recorded the number of surveys distributed, the number of refusals, and the number of passengers who had already completed the survey. A "Return Survey Here" envelope was posted at the first class and coach bar areas of each vessel and passengers were asked to place completed surveys in the envelopes. Surveyors on the receiving side of each trip collected the surveys from the envelopes and completed a control sheet that recorded the total number of surveys returned, the number completed and the number incomplete.

In an effort to inform islanders of the survey and promote participation in the study, AMPG used a variety of outreach methods which included advertisements in the local newspaper, *The Catalina Islander*, participation in the island's televised city council meeting, and a public service announcement. As a supplement to the survey data being collected, Avalon's Mayor, the City Manager, and several residents were interviewed and asked to provide their perspectives on the need for ferryboat service and the activities that require travel to and from the mainland.

Executive Interviews and Comparison Operation Reviews

AMPG reviewed the 2003 and 2004 NTD reporting manuals to reference reporting instructions, eligibility requirements, and terminology specific to ferryboat operations. In addition to reviewing these publications, AMPG conducted nine interviews with various NTD and FTA officials responsible for the management of the annual report, and the operations managers from several agencies currently receiving subsidies for ferryboat miles. Each interview explored the agencies' operational characteristics including fleet size, reporting periods, fare structure, ridership statistics, contract based operations, tourist activities and the availability of alternative means of transportation for those who use the service.

Organization of This Report

The following report presents the findings from the Catalina Express passenger survey, and the unique operating circumstances and travel needs of islanders which Metro believes qualifies the Catalina Express ferryboat service for UAFP subsidies. The remainder of this report is organized as follows:

- **Findings**, which presents an overview of the case for subsidizing the Catalina Island ferryboat service.
- **Survey Results**, which presents detailed survey findings that support the case for subsidizing the Catalina ferryboat service based on commuter travel patterns and service needs.
- **Conclusions**, which presents a summary of findings and,
- **Appendices**, which includes a copy of the survey instruments with frequencies for passengers overall and for Catalina residents.

Findings

The Case for Subsidizing Catalina Express

The purpose of the UAFP grant program is to assist transit agencies in providing public transportation, particularly to underserved areas and populations. By only subsidizing services that meet strict commuter definitions, the program ignores a large proportion of the public that relies on subsidized transportation for essential travel.

As stated earlier, there are three separate criteria outlined for UAFP subsidy

- More than 50 percent of the average daily ridership must travel on the service at least three times a week, and/or;
- More than 50 percent of the average daily ridership must travel and return on the same day, and/or;
- More than 50 percent of the average daily ridership must travel on the same day (no direction or frequency noted).

By applying commuter rail standards (or portions there of) to ferryboat miles, Metro cannot meet the criteria for subsidy. Survey findings indicate that only 3 percent of all ferryboat passengers ride three times a week or more, and 48 percent travel within a 24-hour period. Although both of these data fall below the 50 percent threshold, Metro believes that the 48 percent figure would be increased to at least 50 percent by including the ridership frequency of passengers traveling the during summer months.

The Express transports a large number of vacationers during the summer months and various holiday periods throughout the year, but its primary purpose is to serve as a viable means of transportation for individuals (mainly island residents and workers) who need to conduct business between the island and the mainland. Individuals travel to and from the mainland for work, school, medical appointments, and other necessities. More than one-in-five passengers surveyed (22 percent) reported that their trip on Catalina Express was related to school, a medical or dental appointment, or work. Among residents, more than half (53 percent) reported that they were traveling for these purposes.

Based on the guidelines set forth by the Urbanized Area Formulation Program (UAFP), grants are designed to provide assistance to public transit agencies so that they may fund various capital projects, plan and pay for equipment and facilities improvements and other activities associated with the operation of mass transportation, public transportation and or transit operations.

The Federal Transit Act defines these transportation operations as those which provide transportation by bus or rail, or other conveyance, either publicly or privately owned, providing to the public in general or special service on a regular and continuing basis.

Table I presents the cost and availability of alternative means of transportation available from Avalon to Long Beach and San Pedro. **Currently, Catalina Express is the only affordable service to these mainland harbors that offers weekday service, multiple departure times, and limited travel time.**

Table I
Transportation Alternatives from City of Avalon to Mainland Harbors of Long Beach and/or San Pedro

Carrier	Round Trip Fare**	Commuter Book Fare	Commuter Book Fare w/Metro Subsidy for Residents	Weekday Service	# of outbound trips	# of inbound trips	Travel Time
Catalina Express	\$44.50	\$33.10	\$26.10	Yes	8	8	45 min – 1 hour
Catalina Classic Cruises	\$31.50	--	--	No	one	one	1.5 to 2 hours
Catalina Explorer	\$38.00*	--	--	Yes	one	one	1 hour, 15 min
Island Express Helicopters	\$136	--	--	Yes	varies	varies	15 min

* \$33 weekdays.

** This table does not include charter services, Catalina Passenger Service to Newport Beach (\$44 RT), or the Catalina Marina Del Rey Flyer (\$60 RT) service from Marina Del Rey.

Although the service schedule for the Express may change during peak and off peak periods, it is the only service available that provides service on a “regular and continuing basis”. Based on this fact, Metro believes that the service Catalina Express provides is not only “special”, but essential to the travelers to and from the island.

The following section presents operational comparisons with other agencies currently receiving UAFP funds and highlights key findings from the survey. For complete survey results, see **Appendix C** for a copy of the interim data report.

Operational Comparisons

According to the annual profile reports published by the NTD over the past two years, there are approximately fifteen municipalities that consistently report mileage, hours and expenditures associated with the operation of ferryboat services to the NTD. Of these operations, there have been between five and seven operations that are allowed to report ferryboat miles to the NTD for funding under the Urbanized Area Formula Program. Due to the fluctuations in levels of service provided, changes in operational protocol and the need for exceptions to the minimum ridership rule due to extenuating circumstances, the number of agencies that are able to report and receive funding from year to year varies. In an effort to identify a basis for comparison, AMPG focused its research on the characteristics of the four ferryboat operations that consistently receive funding from the federal government.

Based on information gathered from the 2003 NTD report, the following agencies reported ferryboat activities. Not all reporters were eligible for inclusion according to the reporting guidelines, but as stated earlier, all agencies are encouraged to report in order to help provide a clear understanding of transportation and transportation needs throughout the U.S. The 2003 reporting agencies were:

- City of Alameda Ferry Services - CA
- City of Vallejo Transportation Program (Vallejo Transit, Baylink) - CA
- Golden Gate Bridge, Highway and Transportation District (GGBHTD) - CA
- Crescent City Connection Division - Louisiana Department of Transportation (CCCCD) -
- Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) - MA
- Casco Bay Island Transit District (CBITD) ME
- Port Authority Trans-Hudson Corporation (PATH) – NJ
- Metro-North Commuter Railroad Company, dba: Metro Metro-North Commuter Railroad (Metro-MNCR) – NY
- New York City Department of Transportation (NYCDOT) – NY
- Puerto Rico Ports Authority (PRPA) – Puerto Rico
- Corpus Christi Regional Transportation Authority (The B) – TX
- Transportation District Commission of Hampton Roads, dba: Hampton Roads Transit (HRT) – VA
- Kitsap Transit - WA
- Pierce County Ferry Operations (Pierce County Ferry) – WA
- Washington State Ferries (WSF) – WA

Of the fifteen agencies that reported in 2003, only four have been regularly awarded grant monies under UAFP. These are:

- Golden Gate Bridge, Highway and Transportation District (GGBHTD) - CA
- Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) - MA
- New York City Department of Transportation (NYCDOT) – NY
- Washington State Ferries (WSF) – WA

The following highlights some of the similarities in service and operation of these agencies and provides an outline of the features of Catalina’s ferryboat system that make the Catalina ferryboat operations unique.

- **All but one of the subsidized agencies subcontracts their services.** With the exception of Washington State Ferries, which is the largest ferryboat operator of any U.S. or U.S. territory service, all subsidized agencies contract out their ferryboat services. The Alameda/Oakland area transportation agency allows vendors to lease publicly owned vessels, but the operations and upkeep of the vessels are the responsibility of the contractor. In the case of the Catalina Island ferryboat service, the boats are owned and operated by a private carrier, Catalina Express. Metro subsidies are given directly to commuters to off-set the cost of travel or are used to improve the landings used by the Express.
- **Patrons of the ferryboat systems in each city reviewed have at least one other regular, affordable mode of transportation.** In every case reviewed, the ferryboat services are by no means the only way to get back and forth between harbors, landings or piers. Every city reviewed has an established system of bridgeways, subways, trolleys and/or buses that travelers may choose as an alternate method of transportation to and from destinations. This is in contrast to Catalina, where there is **no other regular, affordable, transportation alternative** to Catalina Express.
- **Other agencies received subsidy dollars when the use of alternate means of travel between docking stations have become unusable.** Shortly after the terrorist attacks of 9/11, one of the local New York ferryboat services was allowed to report and receive funding from the UAFP funds due to the lack of viable transportation into the ground zero area. The destruction caused by the fall of the buildings destroyed the transportation passage ways and prevented the subway systems in the area from operating properly. The lack of access to an alternate means of transportation created a situation where the ferryboat system was the only viable means of transportation into the area. During the time that the subway terminals into the ground zero area were not operating, the ferryboats altered travel routes and were allowed to report ferryboat miles based on the number of commuters who chose the ferryboats as their means of commuting to and from the ground zero area. In the Boston Harbor area, the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority was given a subsidy when construction was

being done on a major highway and the ferryboats were used as an alternate means of transportation.

- **Eligible reporting agencies have some routes that are not counted eligible that they have been working to get included in their NTD report.** Although funded for some ferryboat operations, the New York, San Francisco and Boston area ferryboat operations have presented routes of their ferryboat services for inclusion but have been denied acceptance based on an NTD ruling that the ferryboat transportation must be for “work” purposes.

These case studies suggest that the award of UAFP funds is based primarily on whether or not a transportation service is a commuter service. As discussed earlier, based on NTD definitions of a commuter service, Catalina Express is not eligible for federal subsidies. However, in some cases, exceptions have been made based on limited transportation alternatives. Metro believes that in the case of Catalina island commuters, there are limited transportation alternatives for residents and workers and that the frequency of service provided by the Catalina express provides a “life line” service not available through other service providers.

The following section presents selected findings from the survey effort which demonstrate that many Catalina Express passengers depend on the ferry service for essential trips including travel for work, school, medical or dental services, and shopping.

Survey Results

The sections below outline the data collected during the intercept survey portion of this study. These data are used to offer a clear understanding of the uses and users of the Catalina Express ferryboat service.

Trip Purpose

Respondents were asked to identify their reasons for travel on the day they were surveyed and to identify the three primary reasons they traveled between the island and the mainland. When asked about their reasons for traveling on the day they were surveyed:

- Twenty-six percent of islanders indicated that they were traveling for school or work.
- Fifty-four percent of residents indicated that they were traveling for medical or dental appointments or to conduct personal business (27 percent for each category medical/dental, personal business); and,
- Twenty-four percent indicated that they were shopping for general household or specialty items.

Information from the total respondent population shows that:

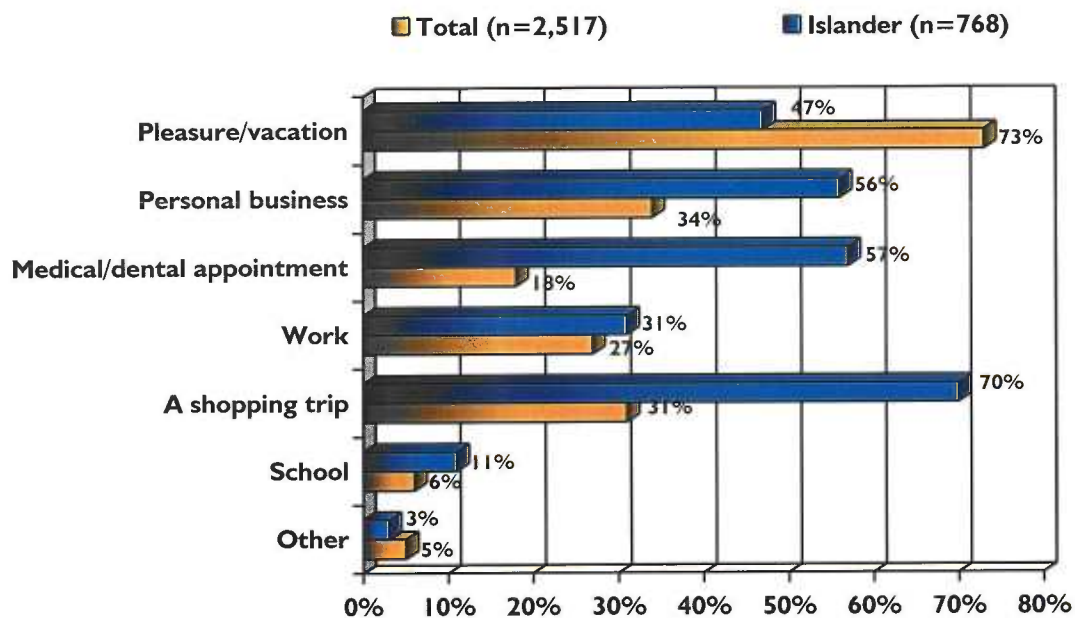
- Thirty-one percent of all travelers surveyed over the study period (resident and non-resident) indicated that they were traveling for reasons other than pleasure or vacation.
- Twenty-three percent of all travelers (resident and non-resident) indicated that they were traveling for either work (14 percent) or personal business (9 percent).

When asked to identify the three primary reasons for travel to and from the mainland, island residents indicated that they travel most for:

- Shopping trips (general household/specialty items) (70 percent);
- Medical or dental appointments (57 percent); and
- Personal business (56 percent).

Figure 1 on the following page shows the primary reasons for travel to and from the mainland for both total respondents and islanders.

Figure 1
Primary Reasons for Travel to and from the Mainland
Total Respondents and Islanders



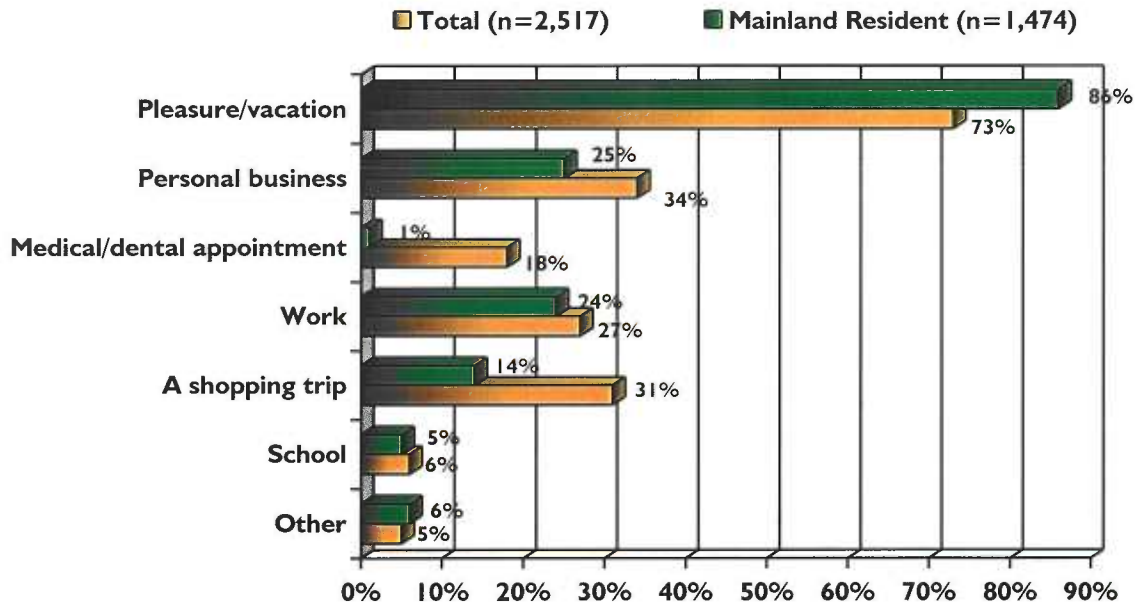
Due to the limited number of stores on the island and the lack of major supply chain stores, many island residents make monthly (15 percent) or bi-weekly (18 percent) trips to the mainland to stock up on supplies needed to run households, business and schools.

Even among non-residents, many passengers were traveling for non-vacation purposes:

- On the day they were surveyed, twelve percent of non-residents indicated that they were traveling to the island for work.
- When asked to identify the primary reasons for travel to and from the island, vacation (86 percent) was indicated most frequently, followed by personal business (25 percent) and work (24 percent).

Complete results are presented in **Figure 2** on the following page.

Figure 2
Primary Reasons for Travel to and from the Mainland
Total Respondents and Mainland Residents



Trip Frequency and Duration

To address both the frequency of travel and the trip duration definitions outlined in the FTA glossary, passengers were asked questions regarding their frequency of travel and their length of stay. Findings are presented below.

- Of the 2,451 respondents to the survey who indicated that they had used the ferryboat service at least once before, 47 percent said that they used the ferryboat service at least once a month.
- Of those who are residents of the island, 93 percent indicated that they used the ferry at least once a month.
- Fifteen percent of the total respondent population (resident and non-resident) and 28 percent of island residents indicated that they use the ferryboat services at least once a week.
- Of those indicating that they use the ferry service for work purposes, 36 percent indicated that they use the service at least on a weekly basis.
- Thirty-nine percent of residents and 49 percent of those who use the ferryboat service to travel for work indicated that they use the service primarily on weekdays.

When asked about the length of their trip on the day they were surveyed:

- Forty-eight percent of the total population, and 52 percent of islanders, indicated that the total time spent on “today’s trip” would be 24 hours or less. Of those indicating that their stay would last more than 24 hours, less than 35 percent of the total respondent population and less than 30 percent of islanders took trips that lasted more than two to three days.
- Of those indicating that they use the ferry service for work, 47 percent indicated that their current trip would last more than 24 hours. This indicates that there are commuters who use the service to travel back and forth for work, but plan trips that last over several days to save time and money.
- Of those who use the ferryboat service to travel to and from work (mainland or island side), 23 percent indicated that they use the service at least twice a week.

Perceived Value of the Ferry Service

To identify the importance of the service to both islanders and mainlanders, and to determine how transportation needs would be met if the service were not available, respondents were asked to identify: (1) how they would replace the ferryboat service as a mode of transportation; (2) if they would be able to continue to live/work on the island if the ferryboat service did not exist; and (3) if they felt the service was an irreplaceable lifeline service between the mainland and the island. The following sections represent the responses to each of these questions.

Alternatives Means of Travel

Respondents were asked how they would travel to and from the island if the ferry service were not available. Choices included: private vehicle, helicopter, or other charter service.

Of the total population:

- Twenty seven percent indicated that they would use the helicopter service;
- Twenty-one percent indicated that they would use some other type of charter service; and,
- Forty-two percent indicated that they would not have made the trip at all.

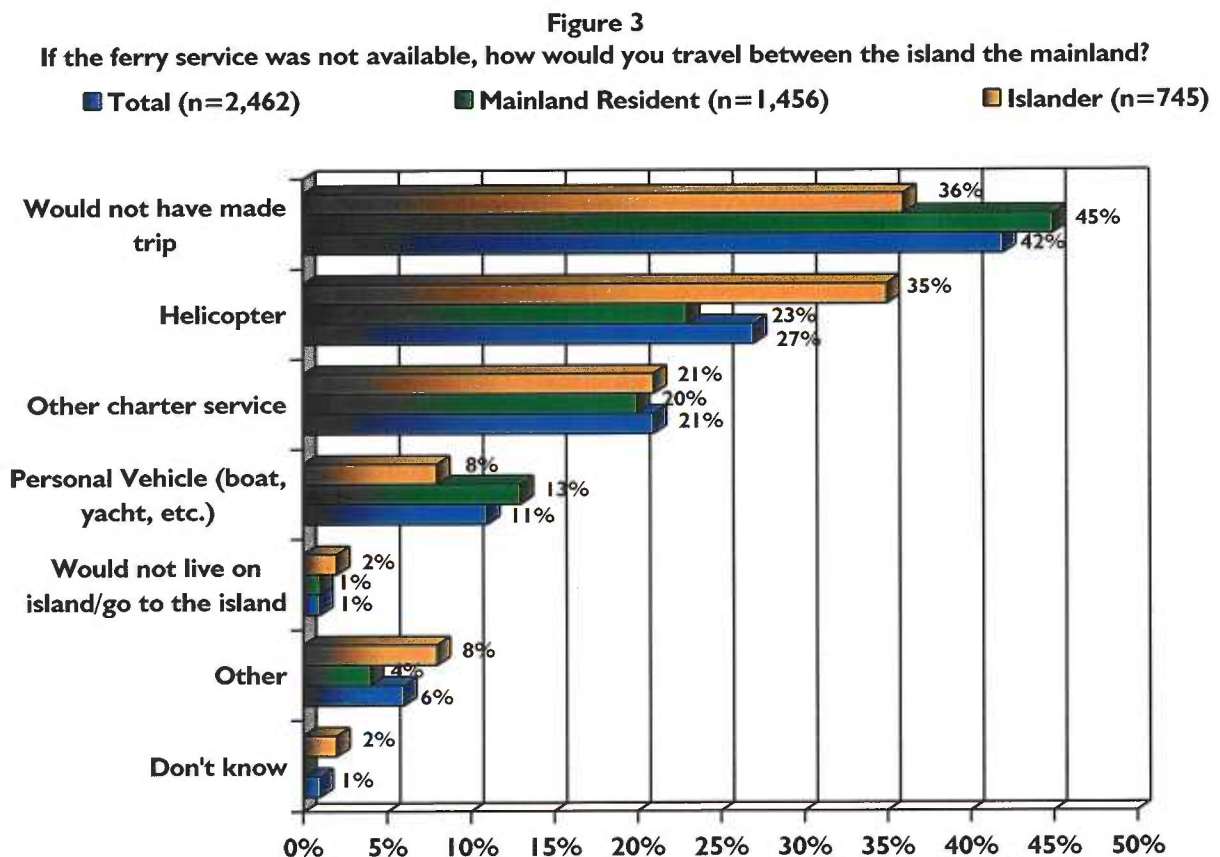
Of island residents:

- Thirty-five percent indicated that they would use the helicopter service;
- Twenty one percent indicated that they would use another charter service; and
- Thirty-six percent of islanders indicated that they would not have made the trip at all.

Next, individuals who work or live on the island were asked, “If the ferry service was not available, would you continue to live/work on the island?”

- Sixty-two percent of the 1,908 individuals responding to this question indicated that they would no longer live/work on the island.
- Fifty-seven percent of those who indicated they used the ferryboat as a transportation service to and from work indicated that they would no longer live/work on the island; and,
- Forty-six percent of islanders indicated that they would no longer live on the island if the service were not available.

Complete results are presented in **Figure 3** on the following page



The Ferryboat Service as a “Life Line” to Catalina Island

Island residents often travel to the mainland to obtain goods and services not available on Catalina. According to the Mayor of Avalon, Mayor Morrow, Catalina has limited specialty medical care, advanced educational instruction and professional services (lawyers, accountants, etc.). When asked: “Do you feel that the ferry service is an irreplaceable lifeline service between the mainland and the island?” respondents reported the following:

- Ninety-three percent of the 2,383 individuals responding to this question indicated that they felt the service was an irreplaceable lifeline service.
- Ninety-three percent of those indicating that they use the service for work indicated that they felt the service was an irreplaceable lifeline service.
- Ninety-four percent of island residents indicated that they felt the service was an irreplaceable lifeline service.

Special Populations: Workers and the Elderly

Two populations of passengers were examined in more detail, specifically the working population and the elderly. Key findings for these populations follow:

Profile of Working Population:

- Of those who use the ferryboat service to travel to and from work (mainland or island side), 23 percent indicated that they use the service at least twice a week.
- Of those who use the ferryboat service to travel to and from work, 41 percent have an annual household income of less than \$50,000.
- Fifty-seven percent of workers using the ferry service to travel to and from work indicated that they would not be able to live/work on the island without it.
- Forty-nine percent of the individuals who use the ferry as a commuter service to and from work indicated that they primarily use the service Monday through Friday.

Profile of Senior Travelers:

- Eleven percent of individuals indicating that they lived on the island were 65 or older. Forty-three percent indicated that they were between the ages of 45 and 64.
- Twenty-five percent of seniors indicated that they travel more than twice a month between the island and the mainland.
- Thirty-nine percent of seniors indicated that they travel at least twice a month between the island and the mainland.
- Thirty-six percent of respondents age 65 or older reported that they travel to and from the island for personal business.

Profile of Catalina Ferryboat Users

The majority of ferryboat passengers are Caucasian or Latino, live on the mainland, and are 25 years or older. Of those, approximately 11 percent are seniors. Most travelers have moderate household incomes between \$50,000 and \$100,000. Only 8 percent of passengers reported a household income \$150,000 and 30 percent earn less than \$50,000 annually.

Conclusions

Although Catalina Express does not meet the 50 percent commuter rule required to receive UAFP funds, there is a basis for exception. Catalina Express is unique in that it provides a lifeline service to the residents and visitors traveling on and off the island for purposes of work, school, specialized medical services, and household shopping. Unlike other agencies denied ferryboat subsidies for failing to meet the 50 percent commuter threshold, Catalina Express offers the only regular, affordable, weekday transportation service on and off the island.

The purpose of the UAFP grant program is to assist transit agencies in providing public transportation, particularly to underserved areas and populations. Metro believes that by only subsidizing services that meet strict or varying commuter definitions, the program ignores a large proportion of the public that relies on subsidized transportation for essential travel.

Appendix A

Survey Instrument with Response Frequencies (All respondents)



Catalina Island Ferry Boat Survey

In an effort to clearly understand the travel patterns of those using the ferryboat service between Catalina Island/Avalon and Mainland California, Metro (Metro) is conducting a survey of Catalina Express passengers. Please tell us about your trip on the Catalina Express ferryboat and your general use of this service.

Date: / Scheduled departure time _____ : _____ ₁ AM ₂ PM

I. Please tell us about today's trip

1. Are you traveling: (n=4,158)
 - ₁ To the island (71%) ₂ From the island (29%)
2. Which mainland harbor are you using today? (n=4,217)
 - ₁ San Pedro Harbor (30%) ₂ Long Beach (69%) ₃ Neither (1%)
3. Are you traveling via Two Harbors or Dana Point? (n=3,515)
 - ₁ Yes (12%) ₂ No (88%)
- 3b. If yes, which (n=494)
 - ₁ Dana Point (18%) ₂ Two Harbors (82%)
4. What is your final destination for this trip? (n=3,375)
 - ₁ San Pedro Harbor (23%) ₂ Long Beach (59%) ₃ Dana Point (2%)
 - ₄ Two Harbors (11%) ₅ Catalina/Avalon (5%)
5. Are you traveling for? (n=4,235) (Note. Totals may equal more than 100% because some respondents selected more than one trip purpose.)
 - ₁ School (3%) ₂ Medical/dental appointment (5%) ₃ Work (14%)
 - ₄ Pleasure/Vacation (69%) ₅ Personal Business (9%)
 - ₆ A shopping trip (General household/specialty items) (6%) ₇ Other: (3%)
6. Is this a: (n=4,175)
 - ₁ One-way trip (14%)
 - ₂ Round trip (86%)
- 6b. how long will it be before you return? (n=2,709)
 - 24 hours or less (48%) 2 to 3 days (35%) 4 to 6 days (9%)
 - 1 to 4 weeks (2%) 5 to 24 weeks (1%) More than 6 months (0%)
 - Other (3%) This is my return trip (2%)
7. Did you pay full fare for this trip? (n=4,116) ₁ Yes (69%) ₂ No (31%)
 - b. If no, what type of discount did you use? (n=1,426)
 - ₂ Discount Voucher (Avalon issued) (35%) ₃ Discount Coupon (9%)
 - ₄ Other Discount: (15%) (Please Specify)
 - Senior Discount (17%) Military Discount (2%)
 - Commuter Book (17%) Subsidized Commuter Book (1%)
 - Group Discount (4%) Travel Package (6%)
 - Employee/Family member discount (0%)

II. Please tell us about your general use of the ferry service

8. Is this your first time using the ferry service between the island and the mainland? (n=4,182)

₁ Yes. (40%)

Please complete the questions in section III and place the survey in the *Survey Today* drop box.

₂ No. Please continue to Question 9. (60%)

9. How often do you usually use the ferryboat service? (n=2,451)

₁ Less than once a month (53%)

₂ Once a month (11%)

₃ Twice a month (8%)

₄ More than twice a month but less than once a week (13%)

₅ Once a week (6%)

₆ Twice a week (6%)

₇ Three times a week (2%)

₈ Four times a week (1%)

₉ Five times a week (0%)

₁₀ Six times a week (0%)

₁₁ Everyday (0%)

10. Do you use the service primarily: (n=2,395)

₁ Weekdays (M – F) (34%) ₂ Weekends (21%) ₃ Both (44%)

11. Which mainland harbor do you *normally* use? (n=2,441)

₁ San Pedro (26%)

₂ Long Beach (74%)

12. When you use the ferryboat, what are the three primary reasons you travel? (n=2,517)

(Please rank the top three reasons)

School (6%) Medical/dental appointment (18%) Work (27%)

Pleasure/Vacation (73%) Personal Business (34%)

A shopping trip (general household/specialty items) (31%)

Other: (Please specify) (5%)

13. If the ferry service was not available, how would you travel between the island and the mainland? (n=2,462)

₁ Personal vehicle (boat, yacht, etc.) (11%) ₂ Helicopter (27%)

₃ Other charter service (21%) ₄ Would not have made the trip (42%)

₅ Other: (Please specify) (6%)

Would not live on the island/go to the island (1%)

Don't Know (1%)

14. If the ferry service were not available, would you continue to live/work on the island?

(n=1,908)

₁ Yes (38%) ₂ No (62%)

15. Do you feel that the ferry service is an irreplaceable lifeline service between the mainland and the island?

(n=2,383)

₁ Yes (93%) ₂ No (7%)

16. Have you ever used an Avalon issued discount travel voucher? (n=2,433)

₁ Yes (32%) ₂ No (68%)

III. Please tell us about yourself

17. Where do you live? (n=3,677)
₁ On the island (21%) ₂ On the mainland (79%)
18. If employed, where do you work? (n=2,839)
₁ On the island (26%) ₂ On the mainland (74%)
19. Gender: (n=3,906)
₁ Male (46%) ₂ Female (54%)
20. What is your age? (n=4,124)
₁ younger than 18 (3%) ₂ 18-24 (10%) ₃ 25-44 (38%)
₄ 45-64 (38%) ₅ 65 or older (11%)
21. What is your ethnicity (Check all that apply)? (n=4,074)
 Latino/Hispanic (17%) Asian/Pacific Islander (6%)
 Black/African-American (4%) American Indian/Aleutian (2%)
 White/Caucasian (73%) Other: (2%)(Please specify) _____
22. What is your annual household income? (n=3,944)
₁ Under \$24,999 (10%) ₂ \$25,000 – \$49,999 (20%)
₃ \$50,000 - \$99,999 (27%) ₄ \$100,000 - \$149,999 (14%)
₅ \$150,000 - \$199,999 (4%) ₆ Over \$200,000 (4%)
₇ Don't know/decline to answer (20%)

THANK YOU



Catalina Island Ferry Boat Survey

In an effort to clearly understand the travel patterns of those using the ferryboat service between Catalina Island/Avalon and Mainland California, Metro (Metro) is conducting a survey of Catalina Express passengers. Please tell us about your trip on the Catalina Express ferryboat and your general use of this service.

Date: / Scheduled departure time _____ : _____ ₁ AM ₂ PM

I. Please tell us about today's trip

1. Are you traveling: (n=757)
 - ₁ To the island (46%) ₂ From the island (54%)
2. Which mainland harbor are you using today? (n=767)
 - ₁ San Pedro Harbor (11%) ₂ Long Beach (89%) ₃ Neither (0%)
3. Are you traveling via Two Harbors or Dana Point? (n=684)
 - ₁ Yes (5%) ₂ No (95%)

3b. If yes, which (n=38)

 - ₁ Dana Point (5%) ₂ Two Harbors (95%)
4. What is your final destination for this trip? (n=591)
 - ₁ San Pedro Harbor (6%) ₂ Long Beach (69%) ₃ Dana Point (1%)
 - ₄ Two Harbors (7%) ₅ Catalina/Avalon (17%)
5. Are you traveling for? (n=770) *(Note: Totals may equal more than 100% because some respondents selected more than one trip purpose.)*
 - ₁ School (6%) ₂ Medical/dental appointment (27%) ₃ Work (20%)
 - ₄ Pleasure/Vacation (15%) ₅ Personal Business (27%)
 - ₆ A shopping trip (General household/specialty items) (24%) ₇ Other: (4%)
 - ₈ Home/Live on the Island (written in response) (6%)
6. Is this a: (n=760)
 - ₁ One-way trip (27%)
 - ₂ Round trip (73%)

6b. how long will it be before you return? (n=429)

24 hours or less (52%)	2 to 3 days (26%)	4 to 6 days (11%)
1 to 4 weeks (4%)	5 to 24 weeks (0%)	More than 6 months (0%)
Other (4%)	This is my return trip (3%)	
7. Did you pay full fare for this trip? (n=735) ₁ Yes (25%) ₂ No (75%)
 - b. If no, what type of discount did you use? (n=606)
 - ₂ Discount Voucher (Avalon issued) (69%) ₃ Discount Coupon (3%)
 - ₄ Other Discount: (7%) (Please Specify)
 - Senior Discount (0%) Military Discount (0%)
 - Commuter Book (22%) Subsidized Commuter Book (3%)
 - Group Discount (1%) Travel Package (2%)
 - Employee/Family member discount (0%)

III. Please tell us about yourself

17. Where do you live? (n=788)
₁ On the island (100%) ₂ On the mainland (0%)
18. If employed, where do you work? (n=664)
₁ On the island (97%) ₂ On the mainland (3%)
19. Gender: (n=766)
₁ Male (47%) ₂ Female (53%)
20. What is your age? (n=774)
₁ younger than 18 (6%) ₂ 18-24 (10%) ₃ 25-44 (30%)
₄ 45-64 (43%) ₅ 65 or older (11%)
21. What is your ethnicity (Check all that apply)? (n=765)
 Latino/Hispanic (24%) Asian/Pacific Islander (3%)
 Black/African-American (1%) American Indian/Aleutian (2%)
 White/Caucasian (75%) Other: (1%)(Please specify)_____
22. What is your annual household income? (n=759)
₁ Under \$24,999 (18%) ₂ \$25,000 – \$49,999 (28%)
₃ \$50,000 - \$99,999 (23%) ₄ \$100,000 - \$149,999 (10%)
₅ \$150,000 - \$199,999 (3%) ₆ Over \$200,000 (2%)
₇ Don't know/decline to answer (16%)

THANK YOU

Catalina Island Ferryboat Commuter Study

Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority



Statistical Analysis and Data Collection
Interim Project Report

Submitted to:

Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority
One Gateway Plaza
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Submitted by:



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents findings from the data collection portion of a two-part study and position advocacy campaign commissioned by the Los Angeles Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA). The purpose of the study is to identify and report on the commuter transportation activities of individuals using the ferry services to travel between Mainland Los Angeles County and the City of Avalon, also known as Catalina Island.

The ferry service that provides transportation to and from Catalina Island is operated under the authority of the City of Avalon by a private ferryboat operating company -- the Catalina Express and is the only affordable mode of travel for the island residents and the communities of the two mainland harbors, San Pedro and Long Beach. MTA subsidizes the operations of the ferry service through a user subsidy program and has provided funding for the rehabilitation, maintenance and upkeep of the ferry terminal.

MTA contracted with the Applied Management & Planning Group (AMPG) to assist the MTA in developing a final report that will present a strong, statistically case to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA's) as to why it should approve the inclusion of the ferry miles of Catalina Express as a part of MTA's National Transit Database (NTD) report. MTA has estimated that successful reporting of ferryboat service among the cities of San Pedro, Long Beach and City of Avalon will result in approximately \$1.5 million per year in additional Federal Section 5307 capital funds to the Los Angeles County region.

As a result of the intercept survey data presented in this report and operational and funding comparisons of data from six other ferryboat operations throughout the U.S. and U.S. territories that will follow, AMPG will outline the unique characteristics of the Catalina Island ferryboat service, its users and the similarities and distinct differences when comparing the Catalina Island service to other NTD reporters.

A total of 11,756 surveys were distributed to passengers riding the Catalina Express ferryboat over a four-week period between April 19, and May 14, 2004. A total of 4,278 surveys were collected, giving a margin of error \pm 2 percent at the 95 percent confidence level.

This executive summary highlights key findings for each of the sections of the Final Report.

Key Findings

Ferryboat Use

- One-third of island residents (32 percent) indicate that they use the ferryboat service more than twice a month but less than once a week.
- Nearly three-quarters of all respondents (74 percent) reported using the Long Beach terminal as their normal mainland travel point. Ninety percent of respondents who indicated that they lived on the island reported that they use Long Beach harbor as their primary mainland service port.

Reasons for Use

- When asked about their current trip, 67 percent of all respondents indicated that they were traveling for pleasure or vacation. Fourteen percent said that they were traveling for work, while nine percent said that they were traveling for personal business.
- Of those who indicated that they lived on the island, the primary reasons for their current trip was to conduct personal business (27 percent), for a medical or dental appointment (27 percent), to shop for general household or specialty items (24 percent), or for work (20 percent).

Island residents surveyed reported that they primarily use the ferryboat service for the following three reasons:

- Shopping for household or specialty items (70 percent);
- Medical and/or dental appointments (57 percent); and,
- To conduct personal business on the mainland (56 percent)
- Among all respondents, the three primary reasons indicated for use of the ferryboat at any time were for pleasure or vacation (73 percent), to conduct personal business (34 percent), and shopping (31 percent).
- Twenty-seven percent of all respondents indicated that they travel to and from the island for work, while six percent of the total respondent population travels to and from the island for school.
- Eighteen percent of the total population indicated that they used the ferryboat service for medical and/or dental appointments.

“My roommate goes to UC Long Beach and must catch the ferry two or three times a week...it’s very costly.”

-- Interview respondent

“There have been ferries since at least 1890! If there were no ferries, there would be no island economy and few people would live there.”

--Survey respondent

Without the ferry service would you continue to live/work on the island?

“Possibly - if my job still existed - and without the ferry it might not.”

--Survey respondent

Value of the Ferry Service

- On the day they were surveyed, 7 of every 10 island residents (78 percent) were traveling to obtain a good or service that they could not get on the island (“Medical/Dental,” “Personal Business,” or “A shopping trip (General household/specialty items).”)
- Forty-two percent of all respondents (residents and vacationers) indicated that if the ferry service were not available, they would not have made the trip.
- Forty-six percent of the respondents who indicated that they lived on the island indicated that they would not continue to live on the island if the service were not available.
- More than half of respondents (57 percent) who indicated that they used the ferry service for work said that without the service, they would not continue to live or work on the island.
- When asked about the value of the service, 93 percent of all respondents (islanders and vacationers) and ninety-four percent of islanders indicated that the ferry service is an irreplaceable lifeline between the mainland and the island.
- When asked how they would travel if the ferry service were not available, 35 percent of islanders indicated that they would use the helicopter service operated by a private carrier to and from the island. This method of travel was chosen over the use of a personal vehicle or another charter service.
- Thirty-one percent of the residents who would take a helicopter if the ferry service were not available reported a household income greater than \$100,000.

Profile of Senior Ferryboat Users

- Eleven percent of all island resident respondents indicated that they were 65 or older.
- Twelve percent of seniors indicated that they were traveling for medical or dental reasons.
- Over half of all seniors (51 percent) indicated that if the service did not exist, they would no longer be able to live/work on the island.

Profile of Ferryboat Users

- Twenty six percent of respondents who were employed indicated that they work on the island.
- Seventy-six percent of all respondents (38 percent equally) fell into the age categories of 25-44 or 45-64.
- Seventy-three percent of all respondents identified themselves as White/Caucasian while 17% of all respondents identified themselves as Latino/Hispanic. Of the 765 island residents who indicated ethnicity, 75 percent identified themselves as White/Caucasian, and 24 percent as Latino/Hispanic. White/Caucasian and Latino/Hispanic are the two largest ethnically represented group residing on the island.

Additional findings, including detailed frequencies, are provided in the full report.

I. INTRODUCTION

The City of Avalon is the major residential and commercial area of Santa Catalina Island. Located approximately twenty-six miles off the coast of the mainland Los Angeles County, Catalina Island is a major port of call with a strong draw for vacationers, sport fishers, scuba divers and cruise ship visitors. With an estimated population of 3,300 full-time residents and a fluctuating number of construction workers, business professionals and government officials, there is a major need for a steady, affordable, and reliable means of transportation between the island and the mainland.

Island access is limited to sea vessels and aircraft and, since the early 1900's, the ferry service between the mainland and the island has been the only affordable mode of travel for island residents and the communities of two the mainland harbors, San Pedro and Long Beach. As a part of county, state, local and federal funding programs, the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) provides funding for transit needs to Catalina Island. Currently, these funds address the transportation needs in both the incorporated and unincorporated areas of Avalon and are used to subsidize ferry service, road improvements and other transportation activities on the island.

The Catalina Island MTA Ferryboat Subsidy Program

As a courtesy to mainlanders and islanders who frequently use the ferryboat service for travel, Catalina Express offers a commuter book, with ten one-way tickets for a cost of \$165.00 per book which equates to a cost of \$16.55 for a one-way trip, a 34 percent savings from the normal one-way trip cost of \$22.25. Through an annual MTA subsidy of \$250,000, the City of Avalon is able to offer an additional discount of \$35.00 per commuter book to *residents* of the island to ease the cost of travel for individuals who may need to conduct business on the mainland or obtain services that are not readily available on the island. (i.e. doctors' visits, estate planning, personal shopping etc.). The reduced fare program allows eligible residents to purchase a ten trip commuter book for \$130.50 which equates to \$13.05 per trip, a 70 percent savings off of the cost of a regular one-way ticket and a 27 percent discount off of the regular commuter book price per trip. This \$35.00 discount is calculated by adding a \$10.00 discount given by Catalina Express to the \$25.00 discount given by the City of Avalon through the MTA subsidy. Any member of a commuter's immediate family may use the book as long as he/she is identified as a valid traveler on the commuter book.

Residents - Any individual who lives on the island nine out of twelve calendar months.

-- City of Avalon

It is important to note that the \$10.00 discount from Catalina Express can only be given to residents who are eligible for the City of Avalon discount.¹

Although the Catalina Express ferryboat service transports a large number of vacationers during the summer months and various holiday periods throughout the year, its primary purpose is to serve as a viable means of transportation for individuals (mainly island residents and workers) needing to conduct business between the island and the mainland. Due to the limited number of readily available services on the island, at times it is imperative for islanders to go to the mainland.

Table one below presents the cost and cost savings for an adult commuter who may need to make two round-trips between the island and the mainland in one seven day period.

Table 1
Cost of two adult round trip tickets

Ticket Type	Round trip Fare (one-way fare x 2)	Total	Savings over regular	Savings over Commuter Book
Regular Fare	\$44.50	\$89.00	--	--
Commuter	\$33.10	\$66.20	\$22.80	--
Subsidized Commuter	\$26.10	\$52.20	\$36.80	\$14.00

Be it building materials, groceries or doctors visits, frequent trips are required to the mainland and without the subsidies provided by MTA, residents could be required to spend upwards of \$200.00 in any given week if travel between the mainland and the island were made daily.

As a part of the nation's federally funded transportation subsidy programs, many counties and local transportation agencies are eligible for federal funding based on the number of individuals using their various services (ferryboat, train, bus, shuttle) for the purposes of commuting. The funding program managed by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) allows transportation agencies to receive subsidy funding based on the ridership numbers and number of commuters identified in their annual National Transit Database (NTD) report. Any agency that provides commuter service on any one of its major modes of transportation is eligible for reimbursement of some operational and capital expenditure for that type of transportation service.

¹ At the time of the study a regular one-way ticket was \$22.50, a regular commuter book was \$165.50 (\$16.55 one-way) and a subsidized commuter book was \$130.50 (\$13.05 one-way). As of June 16, 2004 the cost of each one-way ticket was increased by \$1.50.

The FTA’s definition of “commuter” varies by the method of transportation provided. Presently the definition used to identify ferryboat commuters is the same as the one outlined for commuter rail services.

Fifty percent or more of the daily average ridership must travel on the service at least three times a week.

In the past, MTA has attempted to gain allowance for the ferryboat miles it subsidizes on the Catalina Express. Although the ridership does not meet the 50 percent or more requirement outlined by the FTA, MTA believes that the individuals who utilize the ferryboat service for day to day lifeline necessities are yet commuters with a “vital need for the transportation provided by the Catalina Carrier.”

At present there are five major metropolitan areas within the United States that operate and include ferryboat miles in their NTD reports. Through research, the Applied Management & Planning Group (AMPG) has been able to identify some unique qualities about Catalina commuters that make their travel patterns and needs distinctly different from any of these six systems and/or any commuter rail passengers in the nation. Due to the location, population, business climate and service needs of residents of the island, it is obvious that Catalina Express commuters will not meet the 50 percent service rule, but it is the objective of this study to provide the FTA with strong, statistically supported information that will compel a change in the ferryboat commuter rule or an exception for MTA in the case of Catalina Island commuter miles.

The data presented in this report represent the first phase of a detailed study geared toward identifying the differences and similarities in commuters and the services provided by agencies currently being allowed to report ferryboat miles. By identifying the service needs of Catalina Island commuters and the effects of the current ferryboat services on their daily lives, AMPG intends to develop and present valid case points to be used in an attempt to convince the FTA to allow MTA to report the ferryboat miles in its annual NTD report.

MTA believes that the commuting patterns of many Avalon residents and employees are significantly different than those of commuter rail patrons. They are, nonetheless, commuters, with a vital need for the transportation provided by the Catalina Carrier.

-- Statement of work from MTA’s NTD reporting of ferry miles project.

II. METHODOLOGY

Between April 19, 2004 and May 14, 2004, AMPG distributed a 22-question English/Spanish survey to passengers boarding Catalina Express vessels leaving the Long Beach, San Pedro and Catalina Island Terminals. Over the four-week period, AMPG staff distributed 11,756 surveys, representing over 400 departing trips between the mainland and the island. A total of 4,278 surveys were collected overall yielding a margin of error of ± 2 percent.

In an effort to increase islander participation in the study, AMPG used a variety of outreach methods. Three advertisements were published in the island newspaper, *The Catalina Islander*. The first advertisement ran the week before the study began informing islanders of the study, the importance of participation and the time period for the study. The second notice was published mid-way through the project to remind islanders of the study and to encourage them to visit the docks and complete a survey if they found that they would not be traveling during the survey period. Individuals who visited the docks to complete a survey were asked to complete sections two and three only, which asked questions about their general use of the ferry service and their demographic information. The third advertisement announced the final week of surveying and presented a final request for all islanders to complete a survey either on their trip or at the docks in order to garner a clear understanding of islander travel patterns and ferryboat service needs.

In addition to the published advertisements, AMPG participated in a monthly-televised city council meeting and explained the purpose of the study, the importance of islander participation and the locations where individuals could complete the survey. A public service announcement (PSA) was also developed from an interview with the project manager that aired throughout the survey administration period. Overall, 778 islanders completed the survey, which accurately represents the island population within a margin of error of ± 4 percent.

In order to inform passengers of the survey, Catalina Express personnel announced their participation in the passenger survey during the boarding calls and requested that patrons take a survey from the AMPG representative as they boarded the vessel. Patrons were informed that they only needed to fill out the survey once, and, as passengers boarded each vessel, surveyors recorded the number of surveys distributed, the number of refusals and the number of passengers who had already completed the survey. A “Return Survey Here” envelope was posted at the first class and coach bar areas of each vessel and passengers were asked to place completed surveys in the envelopes. Surveyors on the receiving side of each trip collected the surveys from the envelopes and completed a control sheet that recorded the total number of surveys returned, the number completed and the number incomplete.

Residents of tiny Santa Catalina Island have a tough choice to make...They can either cross a picket line staged by friends and neighbors at the only supermarket in town, or cross the ocean to shop on the mainland, 26 miles away.

*– Laura Wides
the Associated Press
October 17th, 2003*

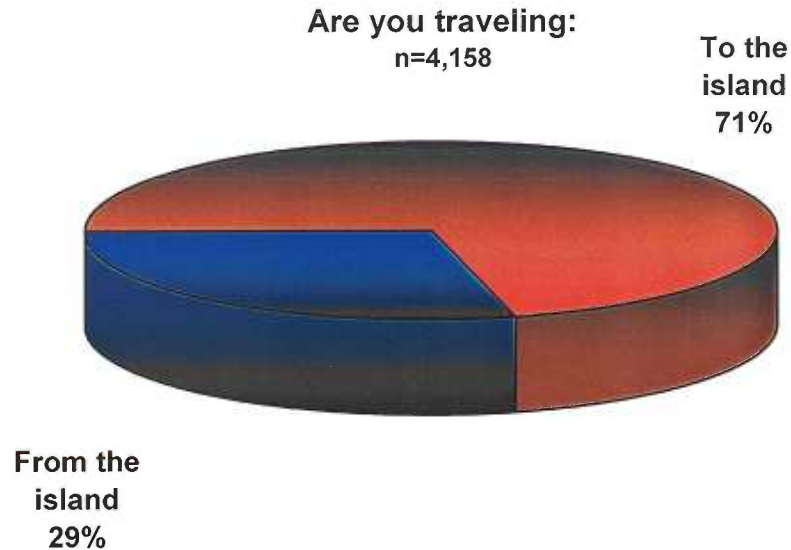
As a supplement to the survey data being collected, Avalon's Mayor, the City Manager, and several residents were interviewed and provided perspective on the reasons for ferryboat use, the statistical impacts of strikes, work stoppages and other factors that affect islanders being able to conduct day-to-day activities that require travel to and from the mainland.

In his interview, the Mayor noted that the major reasons for travel to and from the island are for purposes of obtaining goods and services not available on the island. He noted that services and needs that are not available on the island, such as specialty medical care, advanced educational instruction and professional services (lawyers, accountants, etc.) often force residents to travel to the mainland two to three times a week.

Conversations with other city officials and residents highlighted how the recent grocery strike forced islanders who would not cross the picket lines to take the ferryboat to the mainland and not only shop for themselves, but fulfill grocery orders for friends and relatives who were refusing to cross the picket lines on the island.

III. FINDINGS

Seventy-one percent of all respondents were surveyed on their way to the island.



Purposes for Travel to and from the Island

When asked about their reasons for traveling on the day they were surveyed:

- Thirty-one percent of all travelers (resident and non-resident) indicated that they were traveling for reasons *other* than pleasure or vacation.
- Twenty-three percent of all travelers (resident and non-resident) indicated they were traveling for either work (14 percent) or personal business (9 percent).
- Twenty-seven percent of residents indicated that they were traveling for medical or dental appointments and 27 percent of residents indicated that they were traveling to conduct personal business.
- An additional 24 percent of residents indicated that they were shopping for general household or specialty items.
- Twenty percent of residents indicated that they were traveling for work.

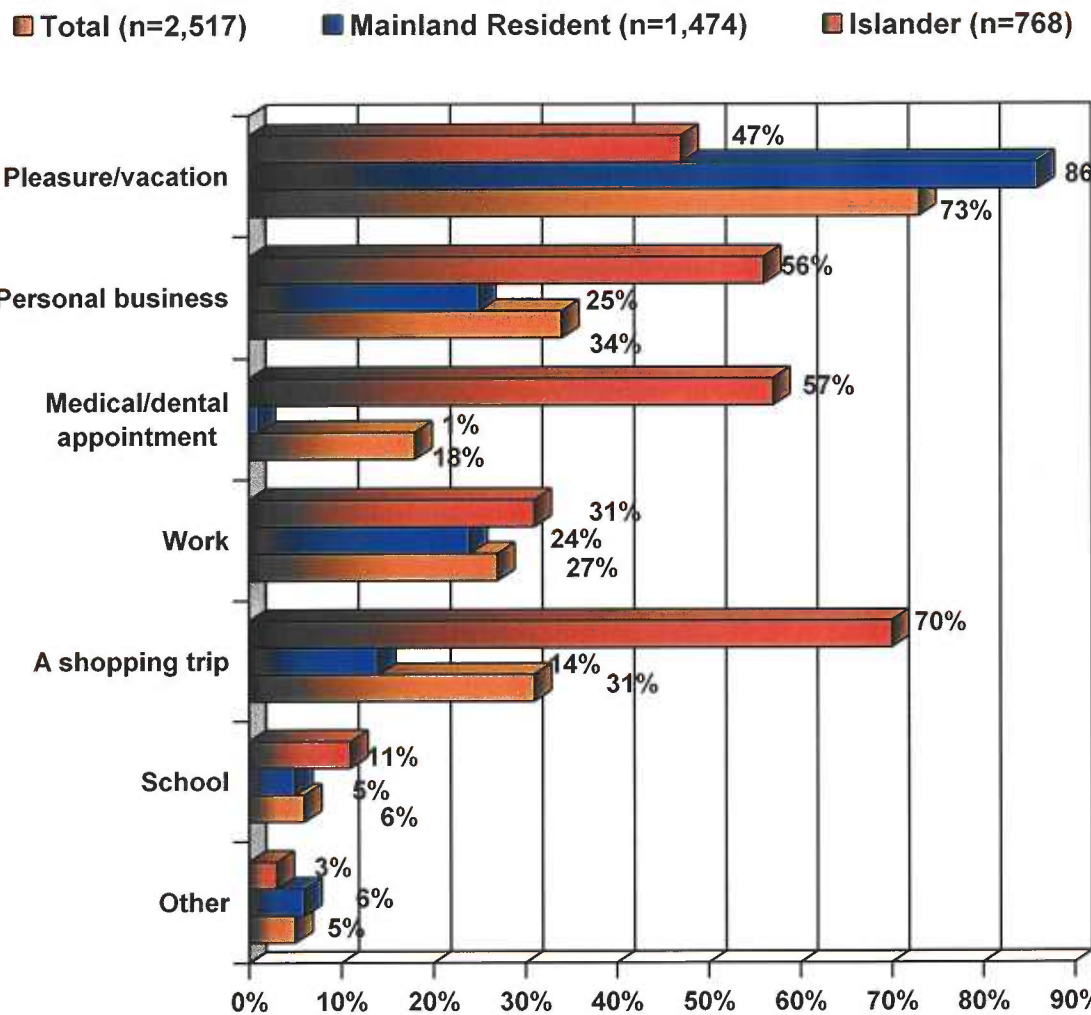
“Avalon schools need substitute teachers badly. I commute to help them out.”

--Work commuter

On the day they were traveling, six percent of residents indicated that they were traveling for school. Overall, however, eleven percent of island residents indicated that they travel to and from the mainland for educational purposes.

When asked to identify the three primary reasons for travel to and from the mainland, island residents indicated that they travel most for:

- Shopping trips (general household/specialty items) (70 percent);
- Medical or dental appointments (57 percent); and
- Personal business (56 percent).



“Shoppers will often go to superstores like Costco and Smart and Final to buy in bulk and ship their goods over to the island. It’s the only way many people can get what they need.”

--Ralph Morrow, Mayor City of Avalon

Forty-nine percent of individuals who indicated that they used the ferry service for work live on the mainland.

“Travel is too costly for everyday travel.”

– Ferryboat traveler

Due to the limited number of stores on the island and the lack of major supply chain stores located on the island, many island residents make monthly (15 percent) or bi-weekly (18 percent) trips to the mainland to stock up on supplies needed to run households, business and schools.

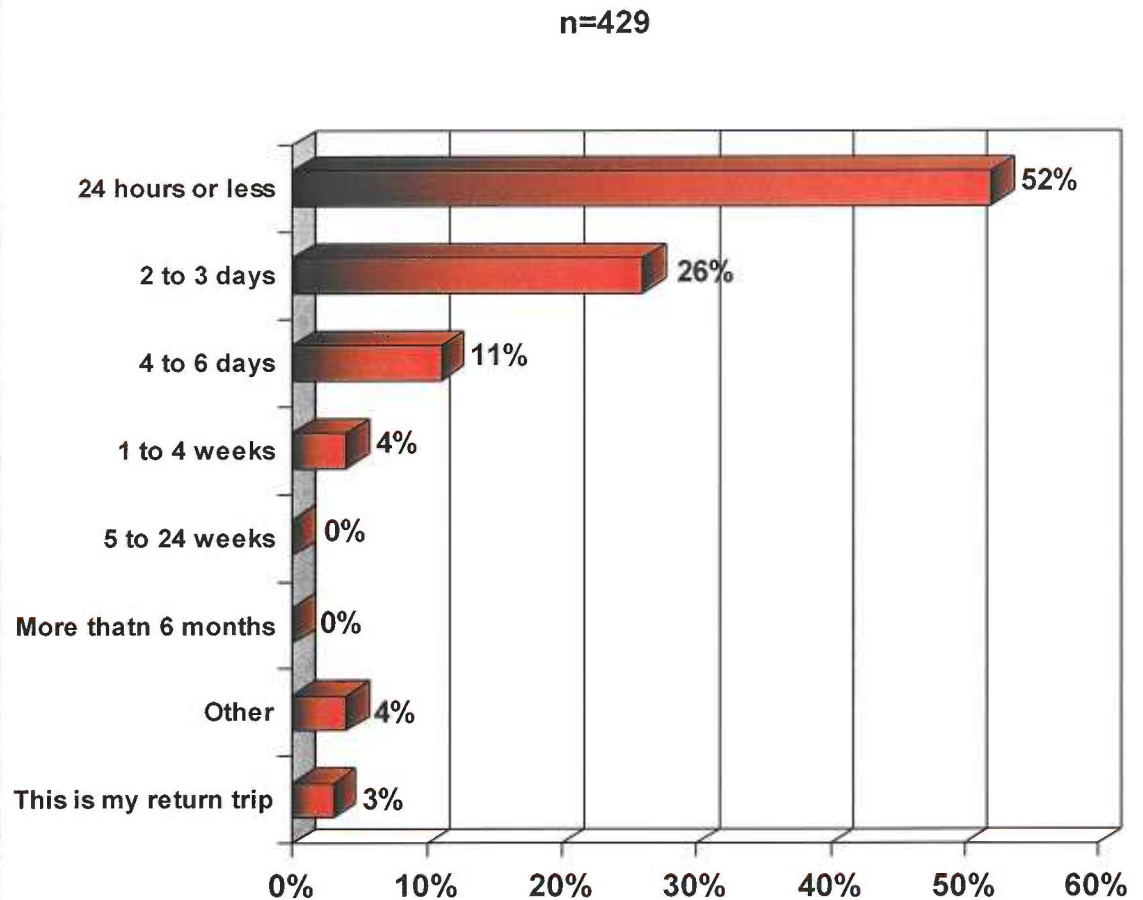
In speaking with Mayor Morrow, he noted that due to the high volume of tourist visits to the island, an increase in the number of domestic/labor workers and the limited access to housing on the island, it has become necessary for City of Avalon residents and business owners to seek employees from a variety of mainland sources. The services of construction workers, consultants, entertainers, law enforcement personnel, home health care providers, teachers and activity directors are all needed on the island but the demand for these types of services cannot be fulfilled by residents alone.

Travel Frequency

- Overall, 47 percent of respondents (resident and non-resident) reported that they use the ferry service at least once a month, while 93 percent of islanders surveyed use the ferry at least once a month.
- Fifteen percent of the total respondent population (resident and non-resident) and 28 percent of island residents indicated that they use the ferryboat services at least once a week.
- Of those indicating that they use the ferry service for work purposes, 36 percent indicated that they use the service at least once a week.

Trip Durations

- Fifty-two percent of islanders indicated that the total time spent on "today's trip" would be 24 hours or less. Of those indicating that their stay would last more than 24 hours, less than 30 percent took trips that lasted more than two to three days.



- Of those indicating that they use the ferry service for work, 47 percent indicated that their current trip would last more than 24 hours.
- Overall, 48 percent of all respondents (resident and non-resident) indicated that the duration of their stay on the island or mainland would be less than 24 hours.

Have you ever used an Avalon issued discount travel voucher?

“It’s crucial - but should be cheaper.”

-- Ferryboat traveler

Payment Method

- Fifty-two percent of all respondents indicated that they used a commuter booklet or Avalon issued discount voucher as the payment for their fare, while 91 percent of islanders surveyed used either a commuter book or an Avalon issued voucher.
- When asked if they had ever used an Avalon issued discount travel voucher, 79 percent of island residents and 11 percent of mainland residents indicated that they had.
- Of those who use the ferry for work purposes, 53 percent reported that they use Avalon issued travel vouchers. Twenty-nine percent reported that they use commuter books; two percent of these respondents were using unsubsidized books.

Alternatives Means of Travel

Respondents were asked how they would travel to and from the island if the ferry service were not available. Responses included: Private vehicle, helicopter, or other charter service. Although these may be viable means of transportation, they are not cost effective, are not provided with any reliability (weather conditions severely affect helicopter trips), are not regularly scheduled and are not subsidized by the MTA. The following are the responses to questions about alternate means of travel.

- Twenty seven percent indicated that they would use the helicopter service.
- Twenty-one percent indicated that they would use some other type of charter service. However, no other high speed, affordable charter services to and from the island exist.
- Thirty-six percent of islanders indicated that they would not have made the trip at all.
- Of those islanders indicating that they would use the helicopter as their means of transportation, 63 percent earn more than \$50,000 annually.

“Helicopter is too expensive!”

-- Ferryboat traveler

***Alternate
Transportation Costs***

Helicopter
\$147.22 round trip

Other charter services
Do not exist

Private Vehicle
10K – 15K/year
(Includes fuel, dock fees, insurance and other maintenance costs).

“Of course this particular service is replaceable (Catalina Express), but the concept of ferry travel is irreplaceable.”

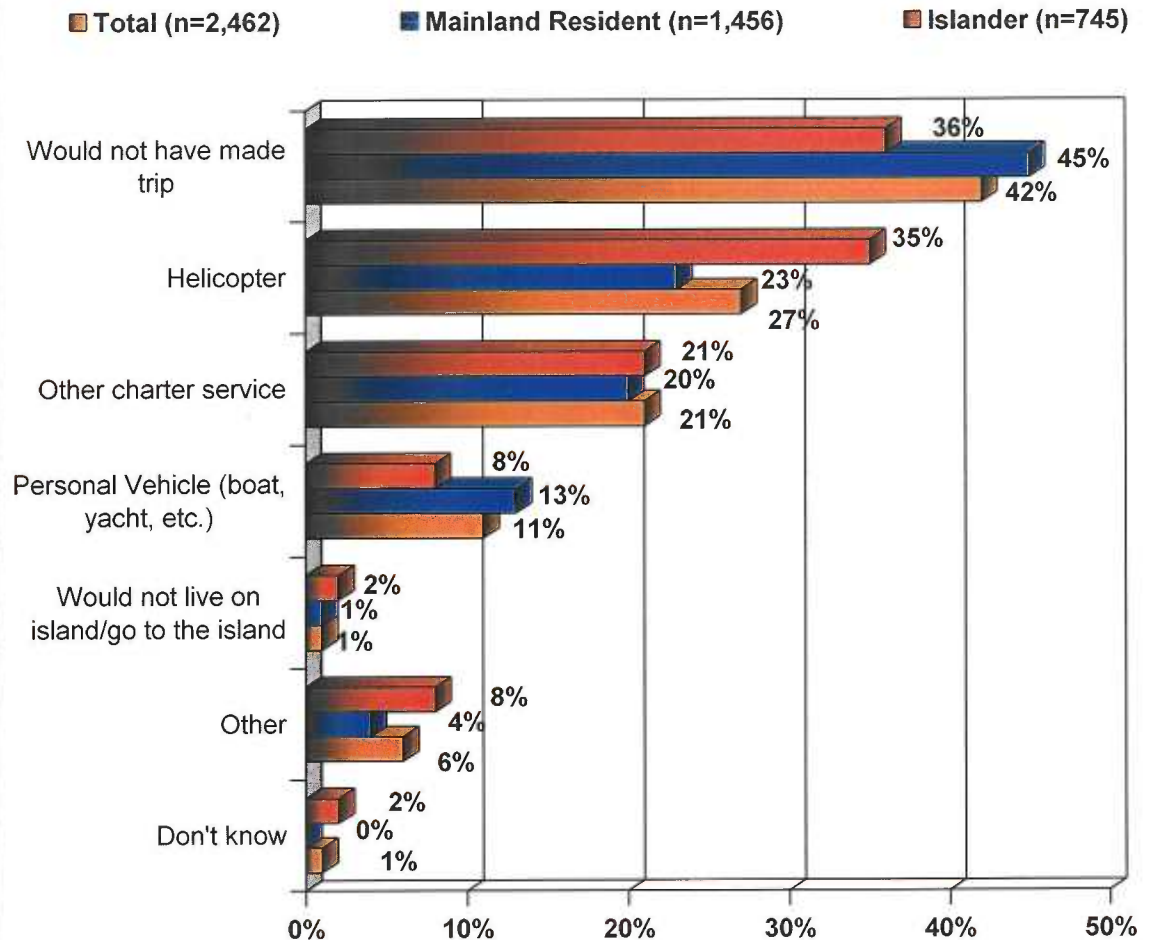
--Survey respondent

*(Without the service)
“It would be called stranded or captive, similar to Alcatraz.”*

--Survey respondent

Of those indicating that they use the ferryboat service for work purposes, 65 percent indicated that they would have to find an alternate means of transportation such as a private boat, helicopter service or another charter service.

- Forty-two percent of all respondents (resident and non-resident) indicated that they would not have made the trip.



When asked: “If the ferry service was not available, would you continue to live/work on the island?”

- Sixty-two percent of all respondents and forty-six percent of islanders indicated that they would no longer live on the island.

When asked: “Do you feel that the ferry service is an irreplaceable lifeline service between the mainland and the island?”

“(This service is irreplaceable)...To the people on the island.”

–Survey respondent

- Ninety-three percent of those indicating that they use the service for work indicated that they felt the service was an irreplaceable lifeline service.
- Ninety-three percent of all respondents (resident and non-resident) indicated that they felt the service was an irreplaceable lifeline service.
- Ninety-four percent of island residents indicated that they felt the service was an irreplaceable lifeline service.

Profile of Working Population

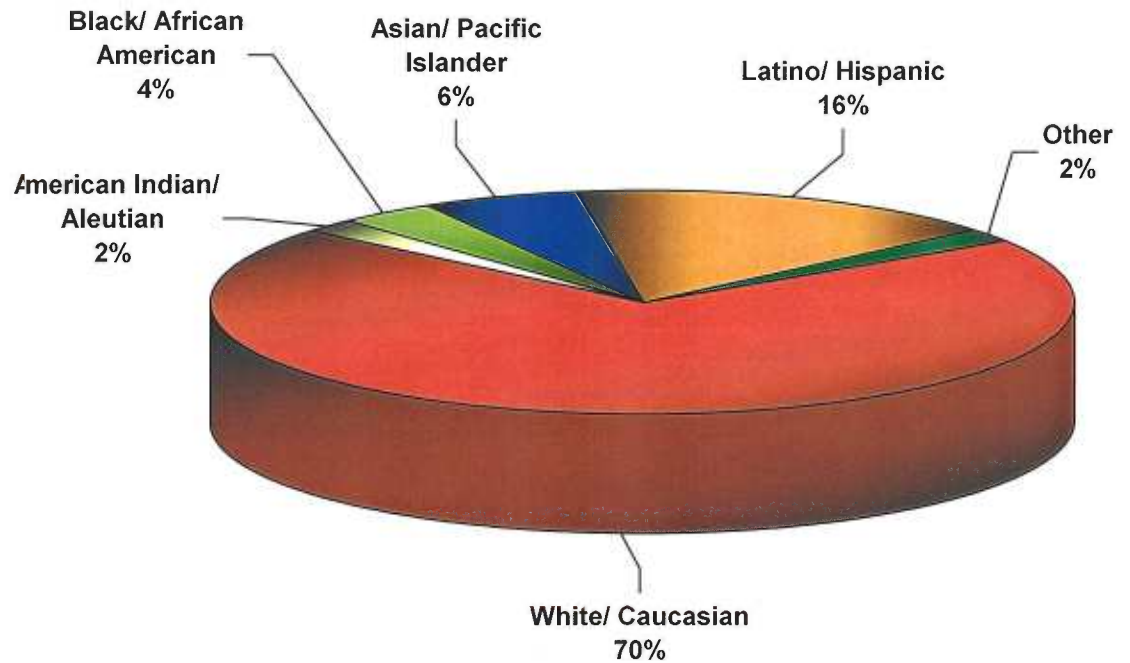
- Of those who use the ferryboat service to travel to and from work (mainland or island side), 23 percent indicated that they use the service at least twice a week.
- Of those who use the ferryboat service to travel to and from work, 41 percent have an annual household income of less than \$50,000.
- Fifty-seven percent of workers using the ferry service to travel to and from work indicated that they would not be able to live/work on the island without it.
- Forty-nine percent of the individuals who use the ferry as a commuter service to and from work indicated that they primarily use the service Monday thru Friday.

Profile of Senior Travelers

- Ninety-five percent of individuals 65 or older feel that the ferry service is an irreplaceable lifeline service for them.
- Twenty-five percent of seniors indicated that they travel more than twice a month between the island and the mainland.
- Thirty-nine percent of senior respondents indicated that they travel at least twice a month between the island and the mainland.
- Thirty-six percent of respondents age 65 or older indicated that they travel to and from the island for personal business.

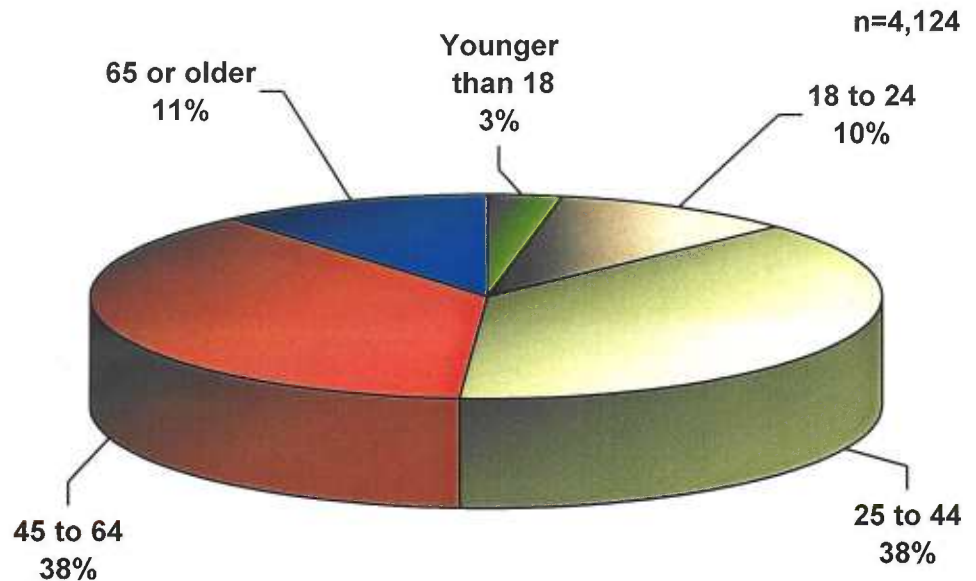
Respondent Profile - Overall

- Sixty percent of all respondents had used the Catalina Express at least once prior to completing the survey.
- Fifty-four percent of all respondents were female.
- Seventy-three percent of all respondents identified themselves as White/Caucasian, 17 percent were Latino/Hispanic, six percent were Asian/Pacific Islander, four percent were Black/African American and two percent were American Indian/Aleutian.



The average median household income of all respondents is between \$50,000 and \$99,999. Only eight of the total reporting population earned over \$150,000 and 30 percent earn less than \$50,000 annually.

- Seventy-six percent of all respondents were between the ages of 25-44, and 45-64 (38 percent for both populations).



Respondent Profile - Islanders

- Fifty-three percent of island respondents were female.
- Seventy-five percent of island respondents identified themselves as White/Caucasian.
- The average median household income of island residents was between \$25,000 and \$49,999.
- Forty-three percent of all island respondents were between 45-64; thirty percent were between the ages of 25-44.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

In reviewing the respondent data regarding the frequency of ferryboat use, it is clear that the 50 percent, three times a week commuter rule, is not met. However, there are many factors that may be used to show commuter service to the City of Avalon. Discussions with FTA personnel indicate that 50 percent, three times a week is not a hard and fast rule and that other factors may be used to determine commuter service status. By combining the “human side” of these data (reasons for use, alternatives to the service and life line issues) with service comparisons with other reporters and unique service issues (other commuter areas have more than one way to travel to and from the islands, such as subway systems or bridges) AMPG believes that it can present a strong case for acceptance of MTA’s ferryboat miles.

The Next Steps

Now that the intercept data have been collected and reviewed, AMPG will spend the next three to four weeks conducting case studies of data on the five major metropolitan areas within the United States that operate and include ferryboat miles in their NTD reports. We will review each city’s unique travel options, interview individuals responsible for reporting miles and identify comparison and contrast points that highlight the Catalina ferry systems unique features.

In addition to reviewing other cities operations, AMPG will expand on the Catalina ferry operations by collecting data from Catalina Express that highlights the year-round activities of commuter travel. Data will include:

- Off peak commuter book use statistics;
- Annual commuter book use statistics; and,
- Off peak daily ridership numbers.

Information garnered from Avalon city officials and commuting residents will be included in the final report to emphasize the importance of the service to the island community and those individuals living on the mainland with specific work and personal interests on the island.

Finally, AMPG will review information from MTA’s failed attempt at mileage recognition to identify areas that may need to be specifically addressed. In an effort to prepare a complete and convincing appeal to the FTA. If needed AMPG, will prepare a complete and thorough presentation to be presented to both MTA and FTA officials.

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Metropolitan Transportation Authority

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Catalina Express

The dock staff, boat crews and ticket agents of Catalina Express

Appendix A

Survey Instrument with Response Frequencies (All respondents)



Catalina Island Ferry Boat Survey

In an effort to clearly understand the travel patterns of those using the ferry boat service between Catalina Island/Avalon and Mainland California, Metro (MTA) is conducting a survey of Catalina Express passengers. Please tell us about your trip on the Catalina Express ferry boat and your general use of this service.

Date: / Scheduled departure time _____ : ₁ AM ₂ PM

I. Please tell us about today's trip

1. Are you traveling: (n=4,158)
 - ₁ To the island (71%) ₂ From the island (29%)
2. Which mainland harbor are you using today? (n=4,217)
 - ₁ San Pedro Harbor (30%) ₂ Long Beach (69%) ₃ Neither (1%)
3. Are you traveling via Two Harbors or Dana Point? (n=3,515)
 - ₁ Yes (12%) ₂ No (88%)
- 3b. If yes, which (n=494)
 - ₁ Dana Point (18%) ₂ Two Harbors (82%)
4. What is your final destination for this trip? (n=3,375)
 - ₁ San Pedro Harbor (23%) ₂ Long Beach (59%) ₃ Dana Point (2%)
 - ₄ Two Harbors (11%) ₅ Catalina/Avalon (5%)
5. Are you traveling for? (n=4,235)
 - ₁ School (3%) ₂ Medical/dental appointment (5%) ₃ Work (14%)
 - ₄ Pleasure/Vacation (69%) ₅ Personal Business (9%)
 - ₆ A shopping trip (General household/specialty items) (6%) ₇ Other: (3%)
6. Is this a: (n=4,175)
 - ₁ One-way trip (86%)
 - ₂ Round trip (86%)⇒
- 4b. how long will it be before you return? (n=2,709)
 - 24 hours or less (48%) 2 to 3 days (35%) 4 to 6 days (9%)
 - 1 to 4 weeks (2%) 5 to 24 weeks (1%) More than 6 months (0%)
 - Other (3%) This is my return trip (2%)
7. Did you pay full fare for this trip? (n=4,116) ₁ Yes (69%) ₂ No (31%)
 - b. If no, what type of discount did you use? (n=1,426)
 - ₂ Discount Voucher (Avalon issued) (35%) ₃ Discount Coupon (9%)
 - ₄ Other Discount: (15%) (Please Specify)
 - Senior Discount (17%) Military Discount (2%)
 - Commuter Book (17%) Subsidized Commuter Book (1%)
 - Group Discount (4%) Travel Package (6%)
 - Employee/Family member discount (0%)

II. Please tell us about your general use of the ferry service

8. Is this your first time using the ferry service between the island and the mainland? (n=4,182)
₁ Yes. (40%)

Please complete the questions in section III and place the survey in the *Survey Today* drop box.

- ₂ No. Please continue to Question 9. (60%)
9. How often do you usually use the ferry boat service? (n=2,451)
₁ Less than once a month (53%)
₂ Once a month (11%)
₃ Twice a month (8%)
₄ More than twice a month but less than once a week (13%)
₅ Once a week (6%)
₆ Twice a week (6%)
₇ Three times a week (2%)
₈ Four times a week (1%)
₉ Five times a week (0%)
₁₀ Six times a week (0%)
₁₁ Everyday (0%)
10. Do you use the service primarily: (n=2,395)
₁ Weekdays (M – F) (34%) ₂ Weekends (21%) ₃ Both (44%)
11. Which mainland harbor do you *normally* use? (n=2,441)
₁ San Pedro (26%) ₂ Long Beach (74%)
12. When you use the ferry boat, what are the three primary reasons you travel? (n=2,517)
(Please rank the top three reasons)
School (6%) Medical/dental appointment (18%) Work (27%)
Pleasure/Vacation (73%) Personal Business (34%)
A shopping trip (general household/specialty items) (31%)
Other: (Please specify) (5%)
13. If the ferry service was not available, how would you travel between the island and the mainland? (n=2,462)
₁ Personal vehicle (boat, yacht, etc.) (11%) ₂ Helicopter (27%)
₃ Other charter service (21%) ₄ Would not have made the trip (42%)
₅ Other: (Please specify) (6%)
Would not live on the island/go to the island (1%)
Don't Know (1%)
14. If the ferry service were not available, would you continue to live/work on the island? (n=1,908)
₁ Yes (38%) ₂ No (62%)
15. Do you feel that the ferry service is an irreplaceable lifeline service between the mainland and the island? (n=2,383)
₁ Yes (93%) ₂ No (7%)
16. Have you *ever* used an Avalon issued discount travel voucher? (n=2,433)
₁ Yes (32%) ₂ No (68%)

III. Please tell us about yourself

17. Where do you live? (n=3,677)
₁ On the island (21%) ₂ On the mainland (79%)
18. If employed, where do you work? (n=2,839)
₁ On the island (26%) ₂ On the mainland (74%)
19. Gender: (n=3,906)
₁ Male (46%) ₂ Female (54%)
20. What is your age? (n=4,124)
₁ younger than 18 (3%) ₂ 18-24 (10%) ₃ 25-44 (38%)
₄ 45-64 (38%) ₅ 65 or older (11%)
21. What is your ethnicity (Check all that apply)? (n=4,074)
 Latino/Hispanic (17%) Asian/Pacific Islander (6%)
 Black/African-American (4%) American Indian/Aleutian (2%)
 White/Caucasian (73%) Other: (2%)(Please specify) _____
22. What is your annual household income? (n=3,944)
₁ Under \$24,999 (10%) ₂ \$25,000 – \$49,999 (20%)
₃ \$50,000 - \$99,999 (27%) ₄ \$100,000 - \$149,999 (14%)
₅ \$150,000 - \$199,999 (4%) ₆ Over \$200,000 (4%)
₇ Don't know/decline to answer (20%)

THANK YOU

Appendix B

Survey Instrument with Response Frequencies (Island Residents)



Catalina Island Ferry Boat Survey

In an effort to clearly understand the travel patterns of those using the ferry boat service between Catalina Island/Avalon and Mainland California, Metro (MTA) is conducting a survey of Catalina Express passengers. Please tell us about your trip on the Catalina Express ferry boat and your general use of this service.

Date: / Scheduled departure time _____ : _____ ₁ AM ₂ PM

I. Please tell us about today's trip

1. Are you traveling: (n=757)
 - ₁ To the island (46%) ₂ From the island (54%)
2. Which mainland harbor are you using today? (n=767)
 - ₁ San Pedro Harbor (11%) ₂ Long Beach (89%) ₃ Neither (0%)
3. Are you traveling via Two Harbors or Dana Point? (n=684)
 - ₁ Yes (5%) ₂ No (95%)
- 3b. If yes, which (n=38)
 - ₁ Dana Point (5%) ₂ Two Harbors (95%)
4. What is your final destination for this trip? (n=591)
 - ₁ San Pedro Harbor (6%) ₂ Long Beach (69%) ₃ Dana Point (1%)
 - ₄ Two Harbors (7%) ₅ Catalina/Avalon (17%)
5. Are you traveling for? (n=770)
 - ₁ School (6%) ₂ Medical/dental appointment (27%) ₃ Work (20%)
 - ₄ Pleasure/Vacation (15%) ₅ Personal Business (27%)
 - ₆ A shopping trip (General household/specialty items) (24%) ₇ Other: (4%)
 - ₈ Home/Live on the Island (written in response) (6%)
6. Is this a: (n=760)
 - ₁ One-way trip (27%)
 - ₂ Round trip (73%)⇒
- 4b. how long will it be before you return? (n=429)

24 hours or less (52%)	2 to 3 days (26%)	4 to 6 days (11%)
1 to 4 weeks (4%)	5 to 24 weeks (0%)	More than 6 months (0%)
Other (4%)	This is my return trip (3%)	
7. Did you pay full fare for this trip? (n=735) ₁ Yes (25%) ₂ No (75%)
 - b. If no, what type of discount did you use? (n=606)
 - ₂ Discount Voucher (Avalon issued) (69%) ₃ Discount Coupon (3%)
 - ₄ Other Discount: (7%) (Please Specify)
 - Senior Discount (07%) Military Discount (0%)
 - Commuter Book (22%) Subsidized Commuter Book (3%)
 - Group Discount (1%) Travel Package (2%)
 - Employee/Family member discount (0%)

II. Please tell us about your general use of the ferry service

8. Is this your first time using the ferry service between the island and the mainland? (n=774)
₁ Yes. (2%)

Please complete the questions in section III and place the survey in the *Survey Today* drop box.

- ₂ No. Please continue to Question 9. (98%)
9. How often do you usually use the ferry boat service? (n=750)
₁ Less than once a month (7%)
₂ Once a month (15%)
₃ Twice a month (18%)
₄ More than twice a month but less than once a week (32%)
₅ Once a week (13%)
₆ Twice a week (10%)
₇ Three times a week (3%)
₈ Four times a week (1%)
₉ Five times a week (1%)
₁₀ Six times a week (0%)
₁₁ Everyday (0%)
10. Do you use the service primarily: (n=763)
₁ Weekdays (M – F) (39%) ₂ Weekends (6%) ₃ Both (55%)
11. Which mainland harbor do you *normally* use? (n=759)
₁ San Pedro (10%) ₂ Long Beach (90%)
12. When you use the ferry boat, what are the three primary reasons you travel? (n=768)
(Please rank the top three reasons)
School (11%) Medical/dental appointment (57%) Work (31%)
Pleasure/Vacation (47%) Personal Business (56%)
A shopping trip (general household/specialty items) (70%)
Other: (Please specify) (3%)
13. If the ferry service was not available, how would you travel between the island and the mainland? (n=745)
₁ Personal vehicle (boat, yacht, etc.) (8%) ₂ Helicopter (35%)
₃ Other charter service (21%) ₄ Would not have made the trip (36%)
₅ Other: (Please specify) (8%)
Would not live on the island/go to the island (2%)
Don't Know (2%)
14. If the ferry service were not available, would you continue to live/work on the island? (n=737)
₁ Yes (54%) ₂ No (46%)
15. Do you feel that the ferry service is an irreplaceable lifeline service between the mainland and the island? (n=748)
₁ Yes (94%) ₂ No (6%)
16. Have you *ever* used an Avalon issued discount travel voucher? (n=739)
₁ Yes (79%) ₂ No (21%)

III. Please tell us about yourself

17. Where do you live? (n=788)
₁ On the island (100%) ₂ On the mainland (0%)
18. If employed, where do you work? (n=664)
₁ On the island (97%) ₂ On the mainland (3%)
19. Gender: (n=766)
₁ Male (47%) ₂ Female (53%)
20. What is your age? (n=774)
₁ younger than 18 (6%) ₂ 18-24 (10%) ₃ 25-44 (30%)
₄ 45-64 (43%) ₅ 65 or older (11%)
21. What is your ethnicity (Check all that apply)? (n=765)
 Latino/Hispanic (24%) Asian/Pacific Islander (3%)
 Black/African-American (1%) American Indian/Aleutian (2%)
 White/Caucasian (75%) Other: (1%)(Please specify) _____
22. What is your annual household income? (n=759)
₁ Under \$24,999 (18%) ₂ \$25,000 – \$49,999 (28%)
₃ \$50,000 - \$99,999 (23%) ₄ \$100,000 - \$149,999 (10%)
₅ \$150,000 - \$199,999 (3%) ₆ Over \$200,000 (2%)
₇ Don't know/decline to answer (16%)

THANK YOU