

2018 Chapel Hill Transit (CHT) Passenger Survey Executive Summary

Introduction

ETC Institute conducted a survey of Chapel Hill Transit (CHT) passengers. The survey was administered to a random sample of 1,462 riders on both express and local CHT routes. The overall results for the sample of 1,462 riders have a 95% level of confidence with a precision of +/-2.0%. The primary objective of the survey was to gather input from riders to identify ways to improve transit services to better serve users. This was the fourth Transit Passenger Survey administered by CHT; the first was in the spring of 2010, the second in the spring of 2012, and the third in the spring of 2016. Some of the topics addressed on the survey included:

- Frequency of use
- Purpose of trips
- Whether or not passengers are riding because they choose to, or if they have no other means of transportation
- Means of egress and access into the system
- Factors which would contribute to passengers riding more often
- Levels of satisfaction with various aspects of CHT service
- Ways in which passengers obtain information on CHT

The survey was administered onboard CHT buses by trained staff from ETC Institute. The goal was to complete 1,200 surveys, 200 surveys with riders on express routes, and 1,000 surveys with riders on local routes. The goal was exceeded by over 200 completed surveys.

The routes surveyed include: A, CCX, CL, CM, CPX, CW, D, DX, F, FCX, G, HS, HU, J, JFX, JN, L, N, NI, NS, NU, RL, RU, S, T, U, and V.

The following section contains a brief summary of the major findings from the passenger survey; the full passenger survey report includes the following:

- Charts depicting the results of the survey and comparisons to the 2016 survey results when applicable
- Importance-satisfaction analysis tables

- Tables that show crosstabulations of the survey results by type of route (combined, express only, & local only routes)
- A copy of the survey instrument

Characteristics of Transit Riders and Select Findings

- **Age of Transit Riders:**
 - Seventy-seven percent (77%) of CHT riders were under the age of 35, while 9% of riders were ages 35-44.
 - Seventy-seven (77%) of riders in 2016 were under the age of 35, while 10% were ages 35-44.
 - Riders age 55-64 increased from 4% in 2016 to 6% in 2018.
- **Annual Household Income:** Fifty-one percent (51%) of riders surveyed had an income under \$30,000. Fifty-one percent (51%) of riders surveyed had an income under \$30,000 in 2016.
- **Occupation of Transit Riders:** The most common occupations of transit riders were: student (59%), professional (20%), skilled technician (4%), and various service industry occupations (4%). Only 2% of riders identified as unemployed, a one percent (1%) decrease from 2016 (3%). In 2016 the most common occupations of transit riders were: student (55%), professional (22%), and skilled technician (5%).
- **Status of Rider's UNC Affiliation:** The most common relationships with UNC were: undergraduate student (34%), graduate student (29%), employee at UNC hospital (13%), and staff/contractor at UNC (10%). On express routes 34% of riders identified as employees at UNC hospital, and on local routes 38% identified as undergraduate students at UNC.
- **How Often Transit Riders Use Chapel Hill Transit:** Fifty-two percent (52%) of riders used public transit at least 5 days a week; 19% used it 3 to 4 days a week, 10% used it 2 days or less per week, and 1% of riders surveyed were riding for their first time. In 2016 sixty-eight percent (68%) of riders used public transit at least 5 days a week, and 11% used it 2 days or less a week.
- **How Long Transit Riders Have Been Using Chapel Hill Transit:** Thirty-nine percent (39%) of riders surveyed have been using CHT less than a year. One-quarter (25%) of riders surveyed have been using CHT between 1 to 2 years; 37% of riders surveyed have

been using CHT for over 3 years. Similar results were observed in 2016, 39% of riders had been using CHT for 1 year or less; 26% had been using CHT between 1 to 2 years.

- **Vehicle Availability and Reasons for Use:** Sixty-two percent (62%) of riders surveyed indicated they had another vehicle they could have used to make their trip, and 38% did not. Of those riders who did own a car, the most frequently mentioned reason they used the bus were because parking is too expensive (72%, 53% in 2016), parking is hard to find (61%, 48% in 2016), and they cared about the environment (30%, 24% in 2016). Of those riders who did not own a car, the most frequently mentioned reasons they used the bus were because it was their only alternative (59%, 63% in 2016), they did not have a vehicle available for this trip (27%, 10% in 2016), and no driver's license (21%).
- **Purpose of the Trip:** The most frequently mentioned destinations of riders surveyed were: college (46%), or work (42%).
- **How Transit Riders Got to the Bus:** The two most frequently mentioned ways riders got to the bus were: they walked (75%, 80% in 2016), and they drove a vehicle (20%, 15% in 2016).
- **Overall Ratings of the Quality of Chapel Hill Transit:** Excluding “don't know” responses, 89% of riders surveyed rated the overall quality of CHT as either excellent or good; 10% felt it was average, and only 1% felt it was poor. Similar results were seen in 2016: 89% of riders surveyed rated the overall quality of CHT as either excellent or good; 10% felt it was average, and only 1% felt it was poor.
- **Transit Services Riders Were Most Satisfied With:** The transit services riders were most satisfied with, based upon a combined percentage of “very satisfied” and “satisfied” responses were: the cleanliness/maintenance of buses (91%), how safe riders feel while using the bus (90%), courtesy/customer service of operators (88%), how close bus stops are located to their workplace (88%), and how safely bus drivers operate their vehicles (87%). These ratings are very similar to the 2016 ratings, the top five services riders were most satisfied with in 2018 are the same as in 2016.
- **Transit Services Riders Were Least Satisfied With:** The transit services riders were least satisfied with, based upon a combination of “very dissatisfied” and “dissatisfied” responses were: availability of bus shelters at bus stops (12%), hours bus service is offered (18%), and the availability of bus service on Saturdays (34%), and Sundays (39%). The availability of service on Saturday and Sunday have remained an issue of least satisfaction since 2012.
- **Chapel Hill Transit Services Riders Felt Were Most Important:** The transit services most important to riders was the timeliness of buses (64%). Other services riders felt were important were: the hours bus service is offered (25%), this service was also one of

services riders was least satisfied with. How quickly buses get riders to their destination (31%) was also a service riders felt was important.

- **Items That Would Encourage Riders to Use Public Transit More Often:** The items that would most encourage riders to use CHT more often were: more frequent service (48%), more service offered later in the evenings (42%), and more service offered on Saturday (37%) and Sunday (34%). These items remained similar to the reasons in 2016 that would most encourage riders to use CHT more often. In 2018, only seven percent (7%) of riders surveyed indicated that a fuel price increase would encourage them to ride transit more often, while in 2016 seventeen percent (17%) of riders selected this response.

- **Other Findings:**
 - In 2016 over half (55%) of riders surveyed indicated they typically use the CHT website to get information about CHT services. In 2018 that number dropped from 55% to 43% and the most used method for getting information about CHT services, mobile apps, rose from 59% in 2016 to 64% in 2018.

 - From 2016 to 2018 the trip planners riders use did not drastically change. In 2016 over half (55%) of riders indicated they did not use Google Transit or GoTriangle as a trip planner. In 2018 over half of riders (56%) still indicated that they do not use Google Transit or GoTriangle as a trip planner.

 - Between 2016 and 2018 the percentage of riders who indicated they would be using CHT a year from now stayed about the same (83% in 2018, 84% in 2016). Similarly in 2016 and 2018 only 1% of riders surveyed indicated they “don’t know” if they will be using CHT a year from now.