

Introduction

The Washtenaw and Livingston line (WALLY) is a proposed commuter rail service between Howell Michigan and Ann Arbor. As part of WALLY's development a consumer survey was conducted with residents in the proposed service area in Livingston County. The survey information and findings would guide the development of the public information/education program, and provide the benchmark for evaluating the success of those efforts.

The survey was a random sample of adults (18 years or older) residing in Livingston County and in an area defined by both zip code and city/township of their residence. These included the cities of Howell and Brighton, and the townships of Oceola, Hartland, Marion, Genoa, Hamburg, Green Oak and Howell. These represented the WALLY service area, where the proposed service would draw most of its ridership and community interest.

The questionnaire included a number of topics to gauge interest in the project and the factors most important to citizens when considering their support for WALLY. A total of 100 adults were interviewed. While not a large number of interviews to pinpoint statistical significance, the data assessment provides trends and inferences that are extremely valuable for the development of a public information and education program.

This memo presents the results of the data tabulations and analysis, and is organized by topics representing important findings. The questionnaire and complete data file have been enclosed as attachments.

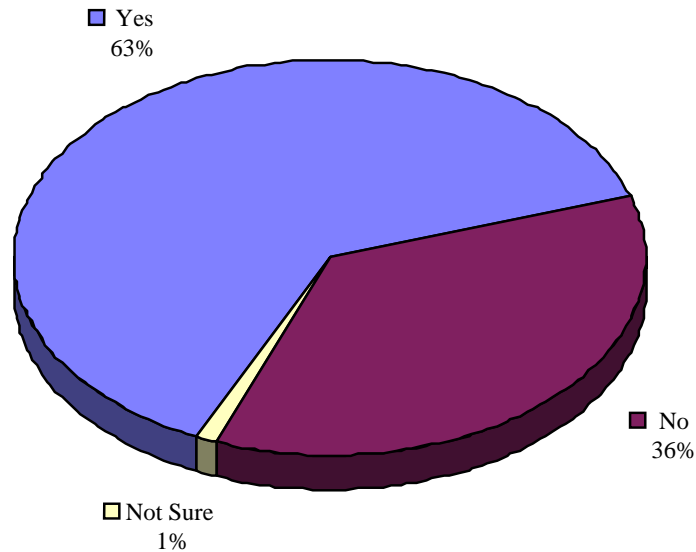
Significant Findings

Public Awareness and Support for WALLY is Strong

WALLY is well known in the community and has strong community support. Close to two-in-three residents (63%) have heard of WALLY, and 80% approve of the proposed service. Four-in-ten (43%) strongly approve of the development of WALLY, and only 10% do not approve of WALLY being developed.

WALLY Awareness, 2009

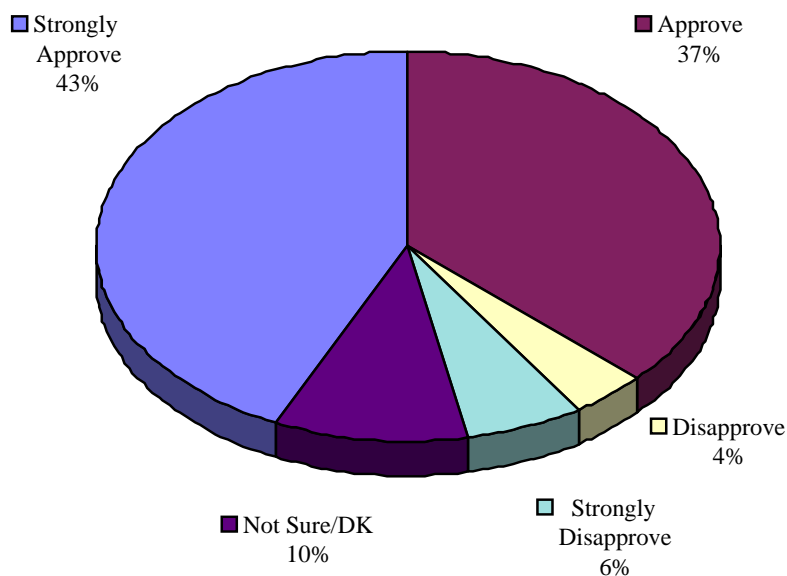
'Have you heard of the transportation project called WALLY, the commuter rail service proposed between Howell and Ann Arbor?'



- WALLY awareness is highest among people over 35, and among people with incomes over \$50,000. It is slightly lower among women (63%) than men (68%).
- Communication strategies that target younger people (in this case defined as under 35) should generate even higher project awareness.
- Awareness was equally high among all occupations, including retirees, and all political affiliations.
- Those 65 and older are slightly less aware of the project (59%). While not significant, it would be expected this age group would have had higher awareness for a project that has generated high public awareness.
- While almost half (46%) of those who had heard of WALLY were strong supporters of its development, there are one-in-ten who strongly oppose the project. This serves as a reminder that as the community education program is implemented, there will be some level of disagreement and discussion.

WALLY Support, 2009

'WALLY is a proposed passenger train service that would operate on existing railroad tracks between Howell and Ann Arbor. There would be stations located in Howell, Genoa Township, Hamburg, Whitmore Lake and Ann Arbor. Trains would operate during commute hours. Please tell me if you Strongly Approve, Approve, Disapprove or Strongly Disapprove of the development of this new service?'

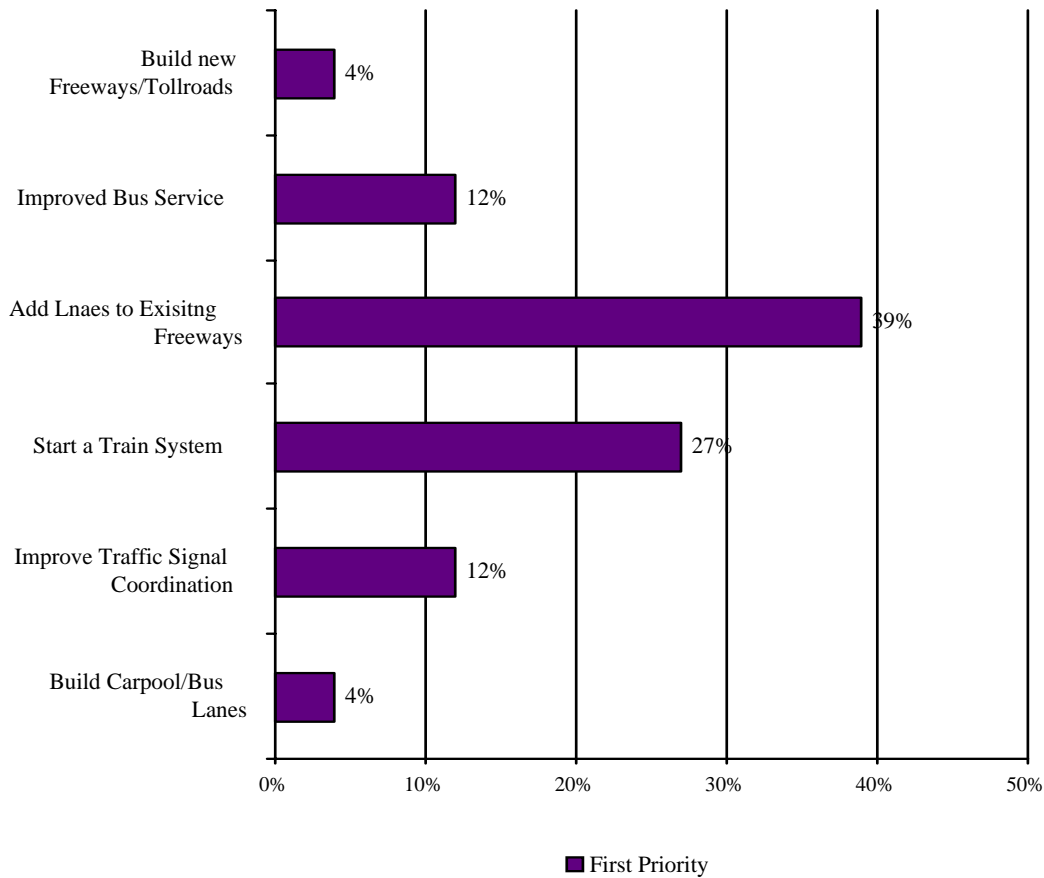


We examined those indicating they strongly approve of WALLY's development to provide guidance on maintaining and growing project support over time.

- Strong support was shown by the age group 55-64, but not among those 65 or older.
- Strong support is indicated by those employed, including the self-employed (57% strongly approve of the project). Those who are retired show less support.
- 40% of Democrats, 37% of Republicans and 50% of Independents strongly supported Wally development.
- People with lower incomes (under \$35,000) were somewhat less supportive of the project.
- Among the strong supporters, there is a group who are also supporters of rail passenger transit as part of the proposed solutions to traffic congestion in the area

Another indicator of support was how well WALLY ranked among options for reducing traffic congestion. The option 'starting a train system' was second only to 'adding more lanes on existing roads' as residents' first priority for reducing traffic congestion. Four-in-ten residents (39%) stated adding lanes to existing freeways and roads as their top priority, while 27% had 'starting a train system' as their top priority. The next preference (a tie between improved bus service and improved traffic signal coordination) generates only 12% interest.

Priority Options for Reducing Traffic Congestion in Livingston County



Safety, Service and Increased Employment Are the Top 3 Decision Factors

Residents were asked to rate the importance of twelve factors in their decision-making on supporting WALLY’s development. These factors covered a wide range, from service related to ability to vote on the project.

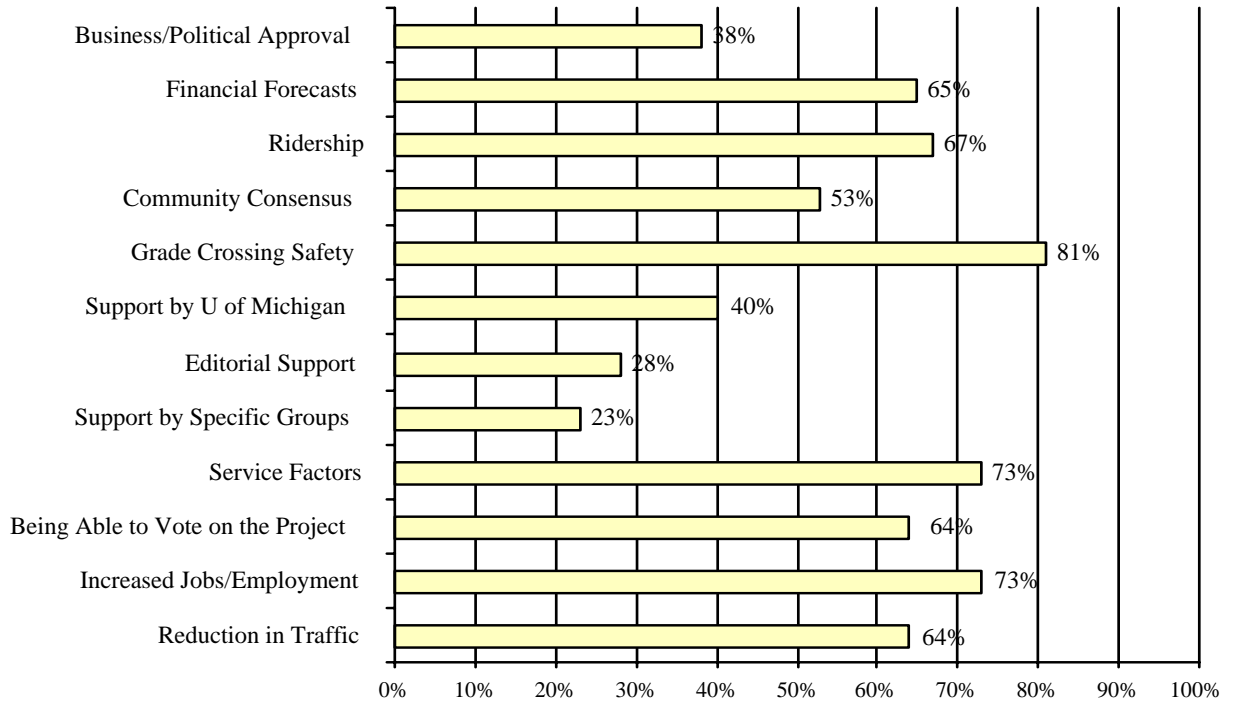
The number one factor in the public’s decision to support WALLY was grade crossing safety. A total of 81% of the interviewees rated this factor as Very Important, 8% higher than the next most important factors. These were job growth and service factors (days of service, number of departures), rated as Very Important by 73%.

Next in importance were financial and ridership forecast information. The least important factors were endorsements, by the media, civic groups, University of Michigan or the like.

These findings suggest a number of considerations for the public education program:

- Include in the Plan a variety of elements related to grade crossing safety such as prominent positioning in the FAQs, photos of what each crossing on the alignment would look like when the service was in operation, meetings with people/businesses near crossings that focus on safety (or combined with station area planning meetings), presentations to PTAs, planning for 'do not cross' signs along the alignment, and possibly a display-type sign by each crossing showing motorists/pedestrians what the crossing gates, etc. will look like.
- Place more emphasis in the Plan on communicating to the public directly, rather than seeking editorial/political endorsements. These cannot be ignored for they are important to some key target supporters (noted below), but they are less important than going direct to the public.
- Service factors are very important to the public, and there is a tendency in the communications of commuter rail projects to 'discount' the level of service, rather than promoting the service as 'very convenient, fast, as comfortable as your car, etc'. Also, while not specifically stated in this research, other work has shown a guaranteed-ride-home component is highly valued by the public, and is seen as expanding the value of the service being offered. As service is described in communications, guaranteed ride home should be as much as part of the descriptions as number of departures, travel time, connections, etc.

Decision Factors, Very Important



Tabulations of the data reveal several interesting findings.

- Among people 65 or older, 'community consensus on the project' and 'support by groups such as Kiwanis, environmental or accessibility organizations' had more importance than any other age group.
- For those people who currently disapprove of WALLY's development, there are only a few clues as to what factors might influence them. There is a hint (and only a hint because of a very small sample size) that those showing a strong disapproval of the project will react to financial forecast information more than any of the other factors. Being able to vote on the project also has some influence, but business/political support, organizational support, community consensus, etc. have little influence.
- For those people who indicated they were 'Not Sure' of their support for WALLY, there are indications (again a small sample size) that financial and ridership forecasts will be important to them, as will community consensus and being able to vote on the project. Editorial support will have no impact, and increased employment/jobs has little influence.
- The group that indicated only approval (and not strong approval) for the project was examined with the strategy that moving them to strong approval would aid project support over time. There was no distinguishing item that might motivate them, other than

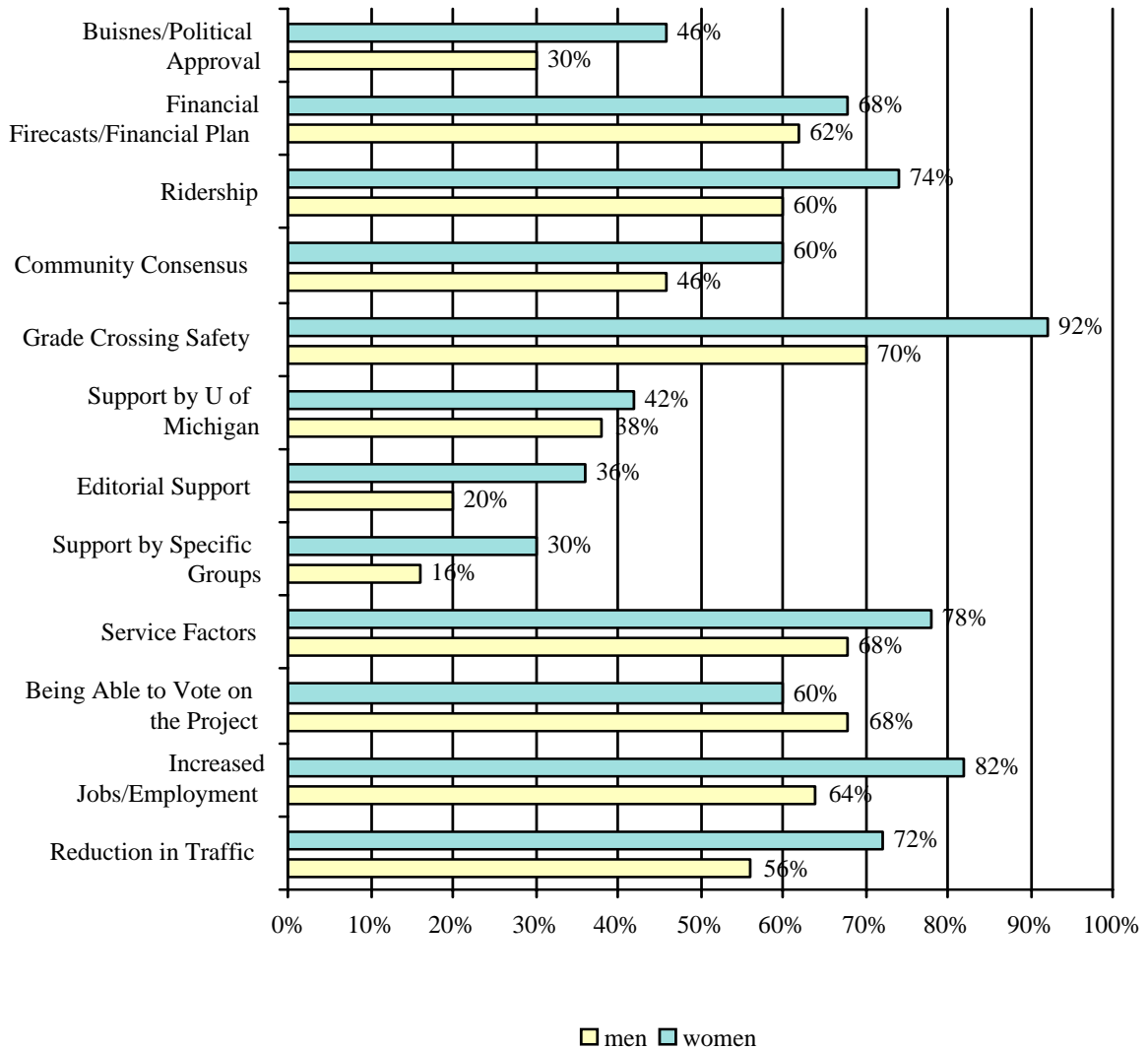
editorial support, community consensus and the like would not have an impact.

- The tabulation by political party revealed: financial forecasts will have impact with Republican voters, as will gaining a community consensus. Democrats will be influenced by service factors and traffic reduction.

In more than one place in the tabulations there were key differences in opinions between men and women.

- women would more likely to place importance on opinions of others (business, editorial, community group), ridership forecast information, promised benefits and community consensus.
- on top of women's list, by far, is grade crossing safety and possibly alignment safety (although this item was not tested).
- men do not appear to have one particular item, although it appears approval by others (editorial, political, groups, University of Michigan have little affect).

Decision Factors, Very Important, Men/Women



MDOT's Participation in the Project Should Not Be Emphasized

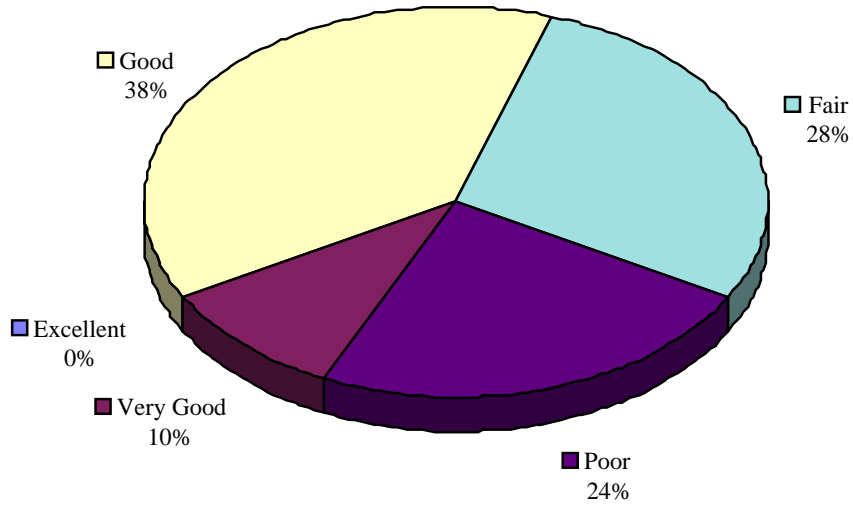
The public opinion of MDOT is very low. It is so low that any acknowledgement of their participation in the project should be minimized, otherwise it could negatively impact public approval of the project. One-in-four (24%) rate the department's performance as Poor, and 28% rate it as Fair. Only 10% rate the performance above Good. As a mean score with a 5 being Excellent and a 1 being Poor, the mean score is 2.34, or only slightly above Fair. By comparison, AATA gets a mean score of 3.54 for being 'well managed'.

The lowest scores for the department are recorded by those with less support for WALLY development. Among those who strongly support the

project the mean score is 2.50, while those who only approve of the project the score is 2.32, and for those that do not approve, the mean score is less than 2.00.

MDOT Performance Rating, 2009

'Overall, how would you rate the performance of the Michigan Department of Transportation'



Among Those Aware of AATA, Performance Opinions are Very Positive

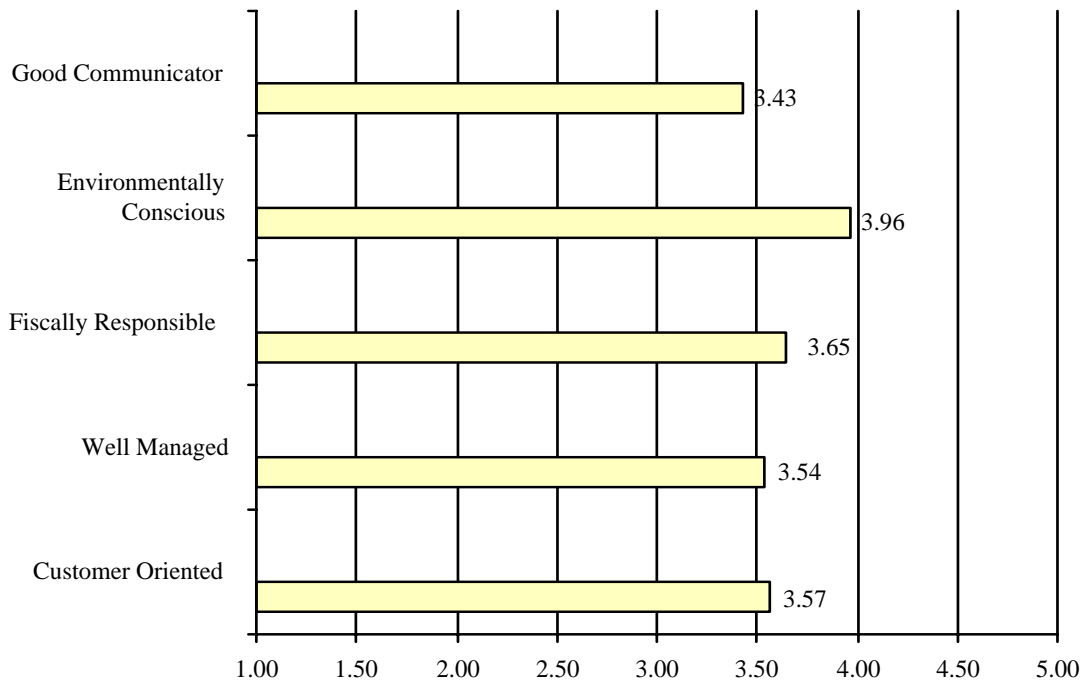
A majority (57%) of Livingston County residents have not heard of the Ann Arbor Transportation Authority. But, among those who know of the Authority, the public opinion is very positive, and it is positive over a wide range from fiscal to environmental.

AATA scores are notably higher among the strongest supporters of the project. Females provide higher scores than males.

Overall, among Livingston County residents, AATA's participation in the project is positive, and makes a positive contribution to the development of WALLY .

AATA Performance

'Based on what you have seen or heard about the Ann Arbor Transportation Authority, how well do you feel the following statements describe the agency'



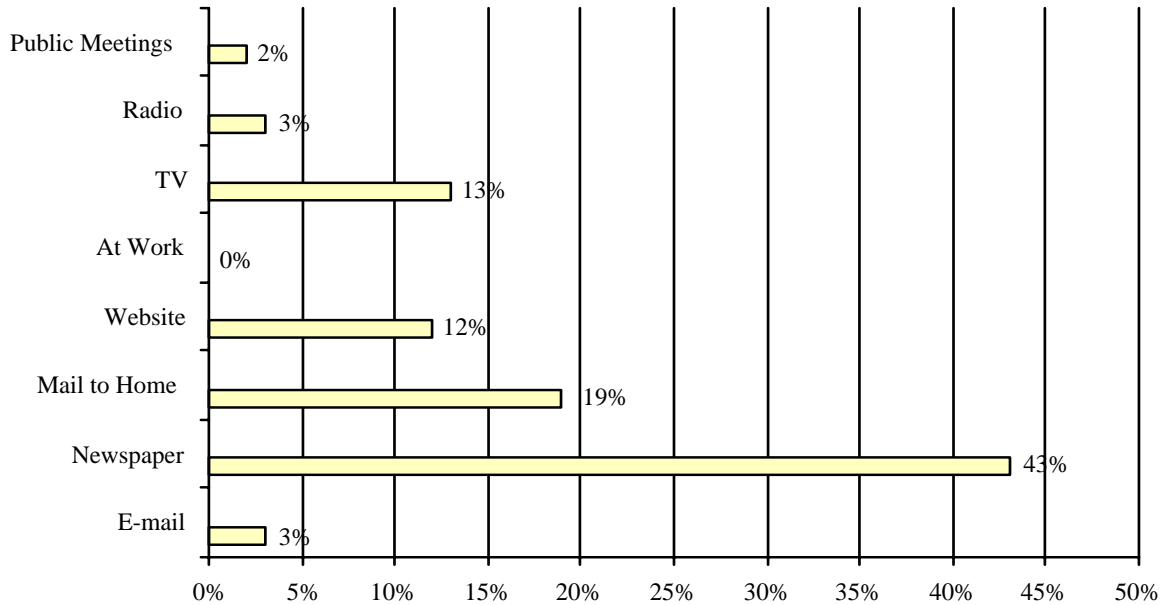
Newspapers Are A Key Source for Project Information, But ...

Several questions addressed project communications, and the best means to communicate with the public about WALLY development. Close to two-thirds of the public (64%) state they regularly read a local newspaper, and with this level of market penetration newspapers are a good source for project communications (paid and media releases). But, age makes a big difference and the break appears to be about at age 45.

Those over 45 are much more likely to be newspaper readers than those under 45. This includes men and women.

Mailing project information to a home has some appeal, with a slightly greater appeal among men than women.

'For a large public project, what is the best way to get information about the project status?'



Churches and Neighborhood Associations should be included in the mix as four-in-ten Livingston County residents (41%) belong to a church or religious group and 29% belong to a Neighborhood Association. This compares to less than 5% for business-oriented organizations. But, much of the participation among church and neighborhood organizations is older and more likely female.

The most significant communication challenge will be residents who are younger and men in particular. These groups are difficult to reach as their interest level is generally low and typical communication means for public/community projects are less than effective. For WALLY project information to reach these audiences, more atypical methods will need to be identified, developed and deployed, and the graphic identity of project materials should be developed for a audience that is 25 to 40.

Men Need Help

Gender does make a difference when residents view WALLY development. Among women, 50% strongly approve of the project, while only 36% of men approve of the project. Women are more likely to ride, and are more likely to see traffic congestion as a major issue. Women want local and regional government to actively seek a solution to traffic congestion, and place more importance on rail passenger transit being one of the alternatives to traffic congestion. They see money spent on

transit as a good investment, the economic importance of downtown Ann Arbor and the role of transit in reducing traffic congestion.

Specific strategies/tactics should be in the WALLY Marketing/Education Plan that target men. These encompass both the information being delivered and how/where it is delivered.

Long Term Residents May Provide an Opportunity

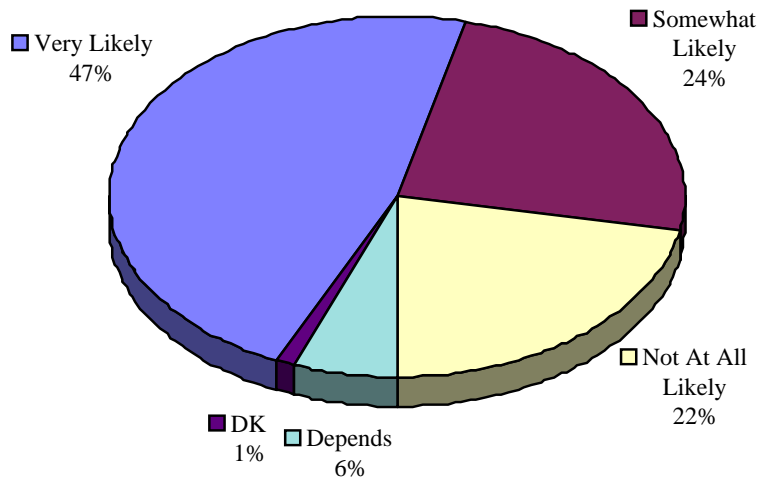
Among the demographic data collected is one that is strategically important, length of time lived in the area. Nine-in-ten residents (91%) interviewed have lived in the area five or more years (95% three or more years). This is significant as long-term residents tend to be more conservative in their thinking, as related to public projects. Even with strong support for WALLY there may be some sentiment that the project will not happen, as any number of projects (of all types) have been proposed, discussed and not implemented over the years. People tend to remember the projects not implemented more than the ones that were built.

The WALLY public education program should recognize and take advantage of the number of long-time residents in the area.

Strong Interest Is Shown in Riding WALLY

Nearly half (47%) of the residents stated they would be Very Likely to ride WALLY. While a 47% Very Likely statistic cannot be translated to a ridership forecast, the size of interest does represent a significant measure of support for WALLY. People can see themselves riding WALLY, when the circumstances fit their specific travel needs. People can see a benefit to themselves, which is much more positive than a person's support being linked to 'so someone else will ride'.

'Imagine you worked or traveled regularly to Washtenaw County, how likely would you be to consider riding the WALLY service?'



WALLY Support is Not Directly Linked to US 23

Fifty-seven percent of the interviewees travel on US 23 in a typical week, and 63% of those who are strong supporters of WALLY development are using US 23. But, analysis of other responses on traffic congestion and rail transit support indicates WALLY's strong approval with the public is not linked to US 23 congestion specifically. WALLY's appeal is broader and the communication program should position

WALLY accordingly. WALLY can certainly be mentioned as an alternative to US 23 congestion, but the rationale for its development should not rely on this one element.

The public does see a link between improved public transit and congestion reduction. A total of 60% strongly agreed with the statement 'It's important to improve transit services in order to reduce traffic". But, WALLY may or may not be seen by the public as public transit so that link would need to be communicated.

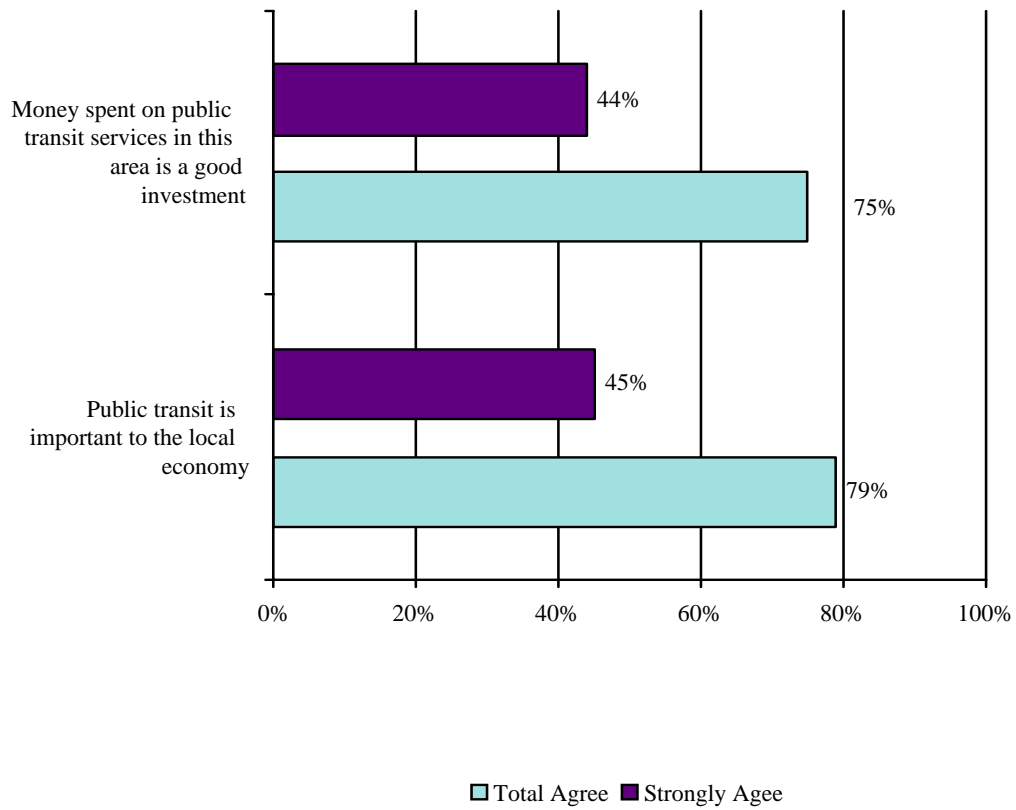
Strong Public Approval for Transit Investment

Livingston County residents positively view public transit investment as good for the local economy, and that current spending on transit is a good investment. In both cases three-of four agree with these statements, and slightly more than four-in-ten (44% and 45%) strongly agree. Given these results, stating WALLY is a transit investment would be a good idea.

For the first statement 'Money spent on public transit is a good investment', women much more than men are in strong agreement, and the strongest disagreement come froms men exclusively. The second statement, the linkage between public transit and the local economy, gains strong support from both men and women, with 48% of men and 42% of women stating strong support. When results were segmented by occupation, the self-employed provided the strongest agreement (8 of 10) for the statement regarding public transit being important to the local economy.

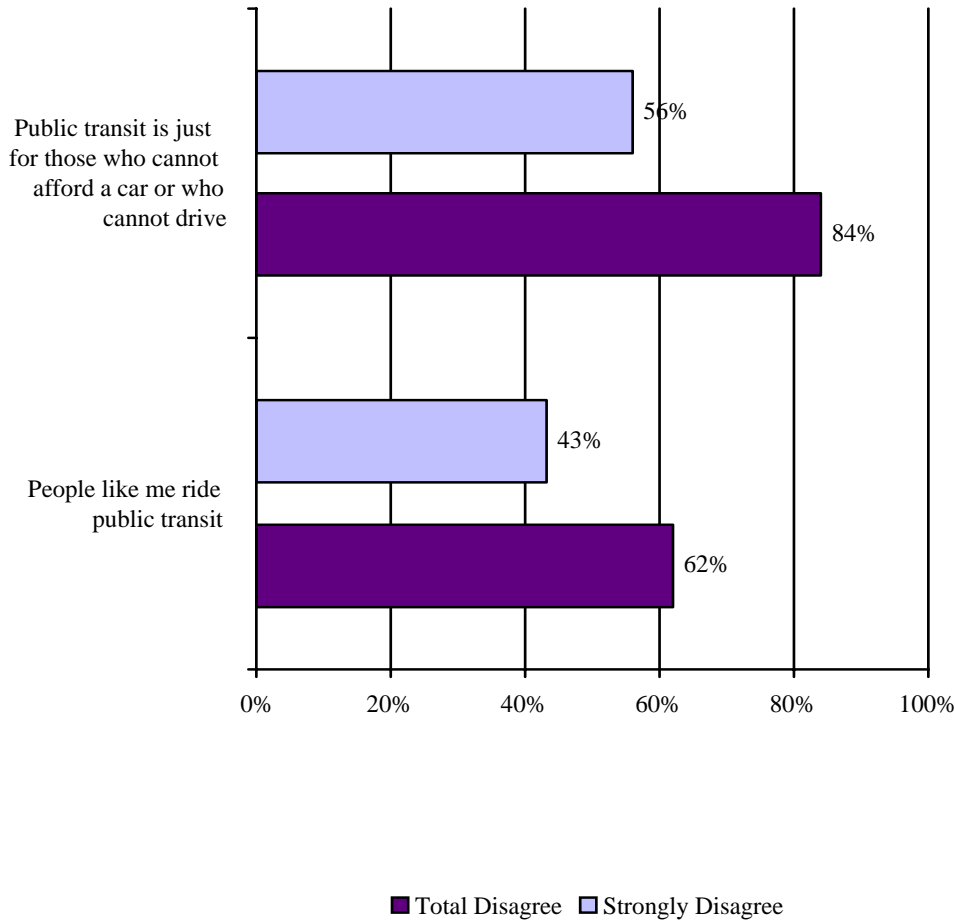
A related economic question asked whether downtown Ann Arbor was important to the economic vitality of the area. A majority (52%) of Livingston County residents surveyed stated strong agreement, and an additional 25% somewhat agreed. The importance of downtown Ann Arbor was strongly supported much more so by women than men. By occupation, those employed showed the most support (60% strong agreement) and those retired showed the least support (48% strong agreement).

Public Transit and the Economy



Positive Attitudes Toward Public Transit, but

Most residents see public transit as a service for all people, as 84% disagreed with the statement 'Public transit is just for those who cannot afford a car or who cannot drive'. Females much more than males see transit as for everyone. However, many fewer people actually see people like themselves riding public transit.



Comments from Residents

Interviewees had two opportunities to provide 'in their own words' comments on the development of WALLY. One was a question asking 'what have you heard about WALLY?' and a second was 'What would you say are the greatest benefits of the proposed WALLY service?'. .

Getting comments from people 'in their own words' is always interesting. People seem to understand WALLY is a proposed train service, and they see a benefit of less traffic on US 23 as a result of WALLY. Few of the comments are negative, and that aids in the confirmation of the approval ratings. No one mentioned any stations in Livingston County other than Howell. Many people see it as proposed but seem not to be as sure if WALLY is still being developed. No one mentions an economic benefit of any kind. Lastly, the comments were relatively short. In related survey work it would not be unusual to have many paragraph long comments. The length of comments may relate

to residents not seeing the project as at a stage where a final decision was imminent, or the relative lack of technical information such as station site plans, financial forecasts/funding plan, environmental reviews, etc.

'What have you heard about WALLY?'

- Going to be a commuter service between Howell and Ann Arbor
- There would be a train between Howell and Ann Arbor
- I can't remember it's been at least two years ago when I heard something about it. I wasn't too interested in it because it didn't affect my area of travel
- I heard there was a proposal but not much after that
- Just read that is was proposed
- It would be going between Howell and Ann Arbor
- I knew there was a study being done on how many passengers would ride
- It is going from Howell to Chicago
- It was stalled due to loss of funds
- Can't remember what I heard, it's been a while
- I heard there was a proposal to get trains to go from Livingston to Ann Arbor
- There was talk about a number of things
- Rail service to Ann Arbor. It is going to cost way too much and probably won't get done
- It is a train service
- Good system
- I heard they were considering something
- I heard it was proposed and picked up a pamphlet about it
- I heard something was proposed
- That there is a train service going to Ann Arbor
- There isn't money available
- Light rail
- I haven't heard much about it
- It would use an existing stations
- City is behind this, but it will do nothing
- I heard it would be expensive
- It would be nice to have
- I heard something about a train system in Lansing and Howell
- They need the budget they just don't have the money
- They are preparing a light rail system going to Ann Arbor
- I cant remember except I heard or read something about putting in a rail system
- Something about a commuter train between two points
- There will be stops a couple stops along the way where people can disperse to buses
- Run from Howell to Ann Arbor
- Supposed to run between Howell and Ann Arbor
- Read about it, the train would run to Ann Arbor
- A transit train
- It will come close to my house and bring business to the area
- I think I saw something on TV about it
- Heard about it two years ago but nobody would fund it
- Heard about a train service but couldn't get the funding
- I don't remember

- It is going to connect Ann Arbor and Howell
- I can't remember it has been too long
- I don't remember
- They were trying to get funding and approval
- No one would use it
- Something that would need to be built
- I thought while in the planning phase it fell through
- I read about a project for a light rail
- I heard it was going to use the train tracks
- Heard it will be a while before it is done
- Read the train would go to Ann Arbor to Howell
- Only that something is being proposed for Ann Arbor
- They are trying to get a light rail going
- Heard there would be a problem with transportation once people got to Ann Arbor
- Would run from Howell to Ann Arbor, may not happen though because of funding
- They want to have the project but don't have money for it
- Don't remember anything
- Going from Howell to Ann Arbor
- I heard they have been thinking about it. If you did take it to Ann Arbor after getting off you would have a hard time getting around from there

'What would you say are the greatest benefits of the proposed WALLY service?'

- For Howell area people to get to and from Ann Arbor
- It would take a lot of traffic off the freeway
- I guess it would eliminate traffic on the freeway
- It would have a snowball effect-conservation of gas and less traffic congestion
- For commuters going from Howell to Ann Arbor and the Ann Arbor to Howell
- Could sleep while going to work and would take a lot of traffic off of 23
- It would eliminate some of the traffic
- Don't know enough about it
- People could avoid the drive
- I guess they wouldn't have all the cars on the road
- Helps the commuters traveling on Hwy 23, it would also help the environment
- Less congestion
- Lessen the traffic on 23
- For people who commute regularly to Ann Arbor
- Less cars on the road and it will be more relaxed for travelers
- Environmental impact
- Ease travel and I wouldn't have to drive
- Less traffic
- It would be really helpful if you needed to commute
- Will take vehicles off the hwy
- There would not be any benefit
- Not sure but it would be better for the roads, less traffic
- Less congestion

- No benefits at all
- It would be used a lot by people
- It would save fuel costs
- Less traffic on the highways, also less pollution
- Help traffic, it would be more efficient
- Hopefully it would lessen traffic
- It would help traffic
- Save gas and lessen the traffic
- Would take the traffic off the road
- It would alleviate traffic
- Ease congestion on 23
- No benefits, I don't see any at all
- Take a lot of cars off the road and save on gas
- Business will increase
- Cut down on traffic
- Reduce traffic
- Reduce commute time
- No benefits
- Draw buses to the area
- Getting to your job and being able to get to medical offices
- It would cut down on traffic and allow some to work further from home
- It would take cars off the road, and people could rely on it to get to work
- In theory it would help reduce traffic
- A few people who don't currently have cars would have better access
- Less traffic
- Personally I don't see a need for this service
- I don't know if there are any
- It would take some time to get places but would help people who are working in those areas
- Actually none, but I guess it would alleviate traffic on hwy 23
- Getting cars off the road and giving people more options
- I see less traffic on the streets
- None that I can think of
- It would save gas and cut traffic congestion
- Reduction in energy usage
- It would get people off the freeway
- Less traffic on 23, might shorten commute time