

STAFF REPORT

SUBJECT: Fixed Route Passenger Satisfaction Survey 2016

FROM: Cyrus Sheik, Senior Transit Planner

DATE: September 19, 2016

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**Action Requested**

This is an informational item only.

**Background**

LAVTA conducts an annual on-board fixed-route passenger survey to gauge passenger satisfaction in order to continually improve the quality of its service. The results of the surveys are also used to calculate service quality standard indicators upon which the operations contractors' annual incentives are based. Both fixed route as well as paratransit riders are surveyed; this report discusses the results from the fixed route survey.

**Discussion**

Methodology

This year's survey was conducted during the months of June and July, 2016, prior to the major service (COA) changes that were implemented on August 13. To complete the survey, LAVTA hired temporary staff as well as deployed interns to ride Wheels buses and administer the survey to passengers. These surveyors boarded mainline routes and asked each boarding passenger if they would like to complete a Wheels customer satisfaction survey. Surveyed trips were focused on the trunk routes, Routes 10 and 30 (Rapid), but also included surveying the shorter local routes. A total of 215 completed surveys were received.

The survey questionnaire (Attachment 1) was based on the basic customer service survey LAVTA uses each year, and was provided to passengers in English and Spanish.

Survey Results

The full tally of the 2016 survey results is shown in Attachment 2. The core item in the survey related to quality-of-service aspects, such as schedule adherence, cleanliness of buses, and driver courtesy, while the remainder of questions addressed rider profile, such as age and household income. As the 2016 survey was similar to ones undertaken in recent years, a meaningful trend comparison can be made; however, note that as last year's (2015) survey was done as part of the COA study and tallied slightly differently, some of the rider profile indicators from this year's survey will be compared with the survey undertaken in 2014.

Quality of service: As in recent years past, respondents this year gave the Wheels service fairly high marks on quality-of-service aspects, as indicated by their scoring on a 1-5 scale where 1 is the worst and 5 is the best. All of the service quality aspects were given a 3 point grading or better by 93% of the respondents, a 4 point grading or better by 72%, and an excellent (5) rating by 39% or better of those surveyed.

The area that was given the highest share of excellence was whether passengers felt safe when riding the bus, while that related to on-time performance received the lowest relative share. Passengers’ opinion rating of the Wheels service across the board averaged a 4.3 point score on the 1-5 scale.

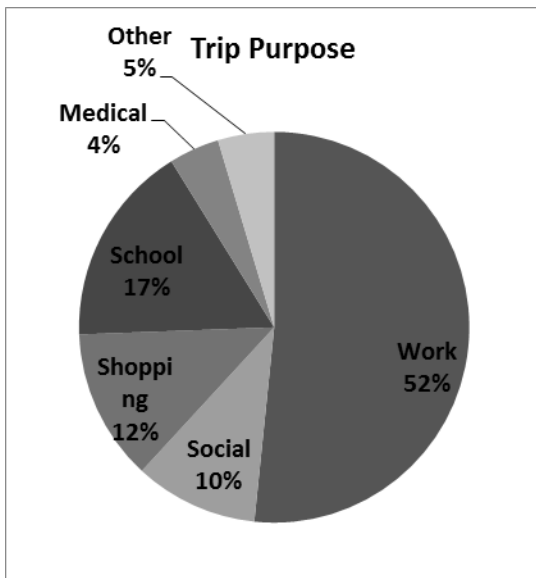
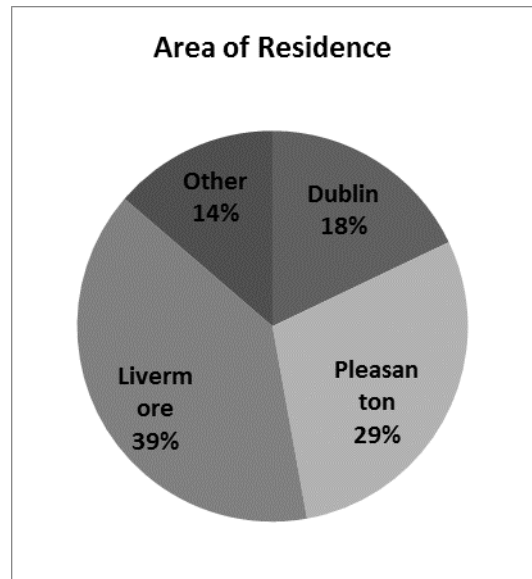
These results appear to be indicative of a high degree of customer satisfaction with the Wheels service overall, and in this year’s survey, every quality indicator except one received a higher average score than last year. The average across all quality-of-service scorings went from 4.2 last year to 4.3 this year; the average score was also higher within all of the nine individual quality areas probed in the survey, except in the area of driver friendliness / helpfulness.

As in all years that the current survey format has been used, all quality rating areas continued to receive scores exceeding the agency-adopted goal of 4.0.

The adjacent table summarizes the quality-of-service scores given by passengers in this year’s survey about Wheels.

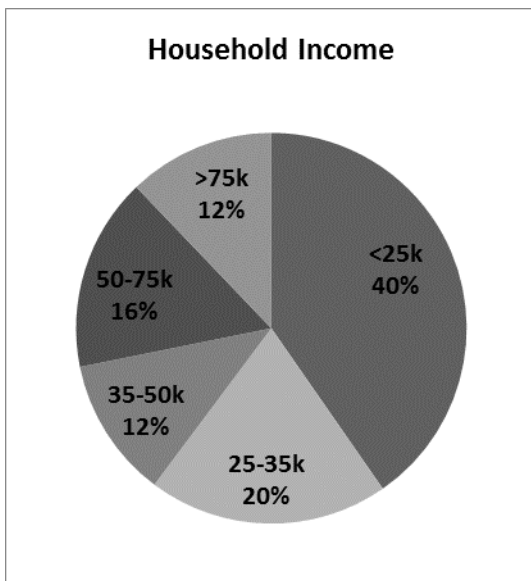
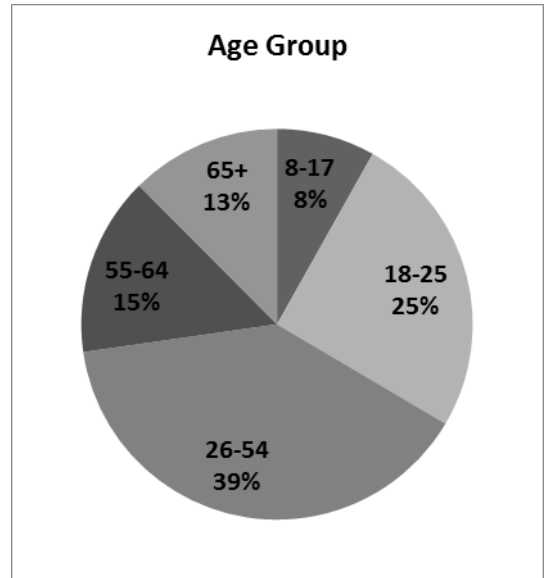
| <b>Quality Ratings</b>                      | <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>5</b> | <b>Avg</b> | <b>Last yr</b> |
|---|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|------------|----------------|
| Service operates on time                    | 1%       | 4%       | 24%      | 33%      | 39%      | 4.1        | 4.0            |
| Feel safe when riding the bus               | 0%       | 1%       | 5%       | 21%      | 73%      | 4.7        | 4.4            |
| Drivers are helpful and friendly            | 0%       | 6%       | 15%      | 28%      | 50%      | 4.2        | 4.3            |
| Route / service information easy to use     | 1%       | 3%       | 17%      | 25%      | 54%      | 4.3        | 4.2            |
| Buses are clean and well maintained         | 0%       | 2%       | 11%      | 30%      | 56%      | 4.4        | 4.2            |
| Transit Center is safe and secure           | 1%       | 2%       | 10%      | 26%      | 61%      | 4.4        | 4.1            |
| Bus stops clean and well maintained         | 1%       | 3%       | 16%      | 25%      | 55%      | 4.3        | 4.1            |
| Customer service staff friendly and helpful | 1%       | 6%       | 10%      | 32%      | 52%      | 4.3        | 4.2            |
| Overall opinion of Wheels service           | 0%       | 0%       | 5%       | 48%      | 46%      | 4.4        | 4.3            |
| <b>Total</b>                                |          |          |          |          |          | <b>4.3</b> | <b>4.2</b>     |

Area of residence: Turning now to the rider profile-related questions, over two-thirds of respondents (68%) indicated either Livermore or Pleasanton as their primary residence, while 18 percent stated Dublin as their home. 14 percent indicated another municipality or city, broken down as follows as number of persons in alphabetical order: Alameda (1), Castro Valley (3), Danville (1), Fremont (2), Hayward (3), Oakland (5), Oakley (1), Pittsburg (1), San Leandro (2), San Ramon (4), Stockton (1), San Francisco (1), and Tracy (4).



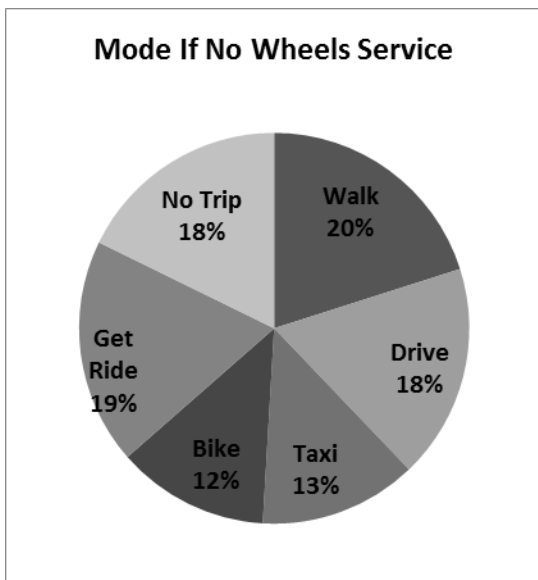
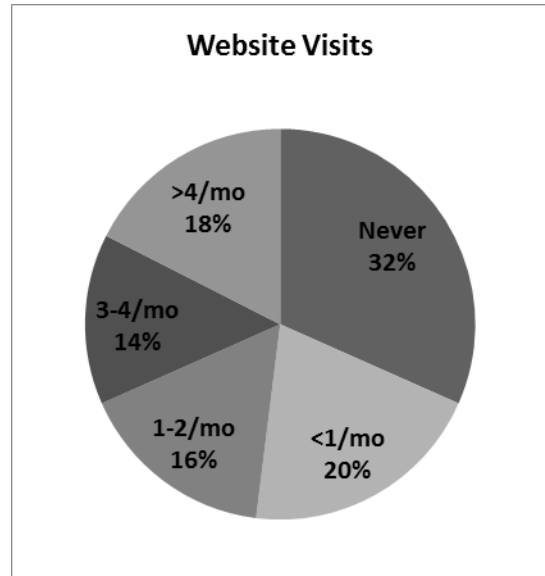
Trip purpose: More than half of the passengers surveyed (52%) indicated “work” as their trip purpose – relatively consistent with recent survey year findings. “School” and “shopping” was indicated by 17% and 12% of respondents, respectively, while other trip purposes such as “social” and “medical” each were cited by 10% or less of respondents. [It should be noted that school tripper routes were not surveyed as part of this effort, so these results will understate the overall “school” trip purpose to a certain extent.]

Age: The age distribution of respondents was somewhat similar to that found in previous surveys, with individuals under 18 and over 65 each comprising relatively small percentages of the overall ridership sampled (at 8% and 13%, respectively). 39 percent of this year's respondents were in the central age group category of 26-54 years of age, and an additional 25 percent was made up of the 18-25 age category. Although seniors are still not a big rider group within LAVTA's fixed route service, the trend over the past decade has been that the 65+ Wheels ridership percentage is increasing – and indeed the percentage of respondents in the 65+ category this year was almost double that seen in the 2014 survey (13% vs. 7%).



Household income: When asked about annual income, a majority of respondents (60%) indicated household earnings of under \$35,000 per year. 28% stated incomes in the \$35,000 to \$75,000 range, with only the remaining 12% indicating household incomes above the \$75,000 mark. Although the Wheels riders have traditionally been found to be from low-income households, the income distribution has shifted somewhat upward from the 2014 survey when 57% of respondents were in the sub-25k bracket, and only 7% were in the 75k+ bracket.

Wheels website visits: Up until a few years ago, the long-term trend had been one of increased awareness and usage of the Wheels website and by 2013, 74% of respondents indicated that they visit the Wheels website, albeit with varying frequency. However, in the 2014 survey, 69% indicated visiting the Wheels website at least on occasion, while 31% stated that they never visit the website. And this year, the reverse trend continued, with 32% stating that they never visit the Wheels website – and of the remainder, the percentage of riders who visit the site more than four times a month decreased from 21 to 18 percent.

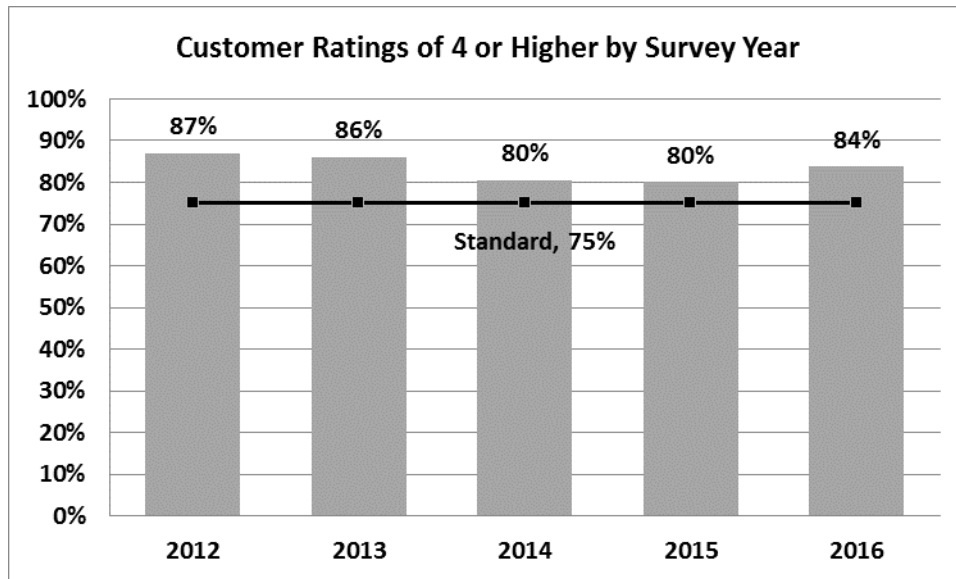


Trip without Wheels: Passengers were asked how they would have made their current trip without the bus. A large majority of respondents (82%) indicated that they would have been able to get around using other means of transportation, while 18% stated that they would not have made the trip. Of the 82% that indicated alternative means to get around, 20% said that they would have walked, 19% stated that they could have gotten a ride, and 13% stated taxi as an alternative. The most notable shift compared with the 2014 survey was that the passengers stating that they would be able to walk as an alternative to taking the bus went down 10 percentage points from 2014.

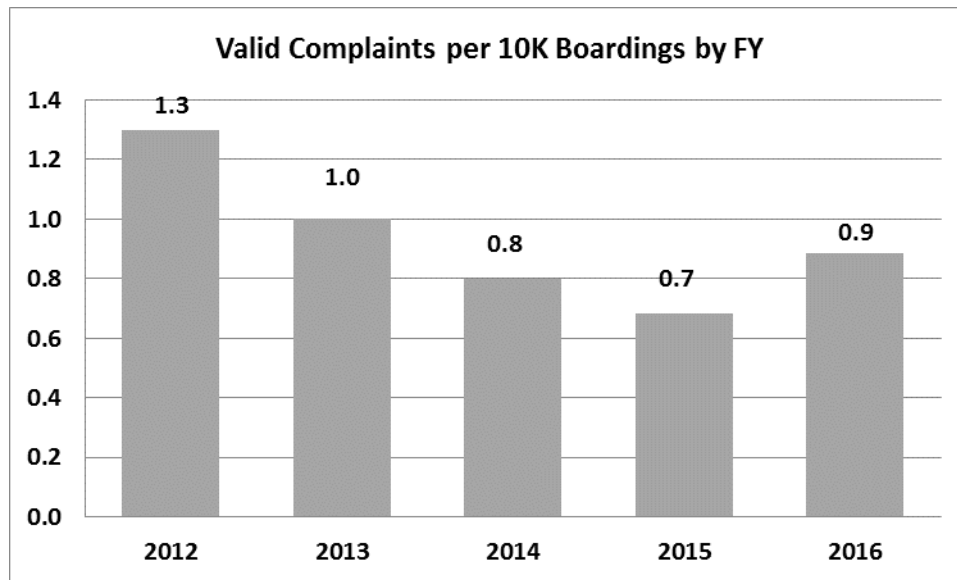
Open comments: 103 of the 215 passengers surveyed took the opportunity to provide open-ended comments at the end of the survey form. Most of the comments addressed a broad spectrum of issues, although some recurring themes were present, such as requests for longer service hours and improved passenger information. Common operational topics included issues about schedule adherence (late buses) and customer service. A number of respondents also stated concern regarding the major service changes for fall 2016, which had been published but not yet implemented at the time the surveys were taken. The entire set of open comments received is shown in Attachment 3.

### Recent-Years Trend Comparison

The following chart shows the five-year trend for overall customer satisfaction, as well as compares it to the agency's standard of receiving an average score of 4 or better from 75% of survey respondents. In this year's survey, 84% of the total pool of scores received were 4 or 5. This is lower than what was seen four and five years ago when customers graded the service in the 86-87% range, but is an improvement over 2014 and 2015 when an overall 4+ rating of 80% was received.



Although not data collected from the annual onboard survey, for illustration purposes the next chart shows the number of valid customer complaints per 10,000 boardings for the past five fiscal years. It shows that valid complaints trended downward thru FY2015, but increased in FY2016, going from a rate of 0.7 valid customer complaints per 10,000 boardings in FY2015 to 0.9 valid customer complaints per 10,000 boardings in FY2016. [“Valid” complaints often pertain to operational issues that can be either confirmed or dismissed, such as bypasses, early timepoint departures, speeding, and driver courtesy.]



### Remarks / Summary

As the results described above show, the Wheels fixed route service is continuing to receive nominally high remarks in all quality-of-service aspects that are probed in the annual on-board passenger survey, and the average respondent this year scored the service quality slightly higher across the board than last year. The item that received the highest rating this year was in the areas of passengers feeling safe while riding the bus (4.7), while the item that received the lowest relative rating was the on-time performance of buses (4.1).

The Wheels ridership base continues to be from low-income households, albeit somewhat less so than in recent years. However, as the responses to the trip-without-Wheels question indicate, most riders stated that they might have had alternative means of getting to their destination and are not entirely captive to the service.

Past studies have indicated that the Wheels ridership base is relatively young, and has a high turnover rate in terms of ridership. The coarse scale used in the annual survey regarding riders' age makes it difficult to draw firm trend conclusions, but other surveys and observations indicate that the Wheels ridership base continues to be relatively young. And senior riders (individuals aged 65 or over) in the system still represent a small, but growing, ridership group in the Wheels fixed route system.

**Recommendation**

None – information only.

**Attachments:**

1. Survey form (English version)
2. Detailed summary of results
3. Open-ended comments



**1. Which general area do you live? Check ONE.**

\_\_\_\_\_ Pleasanton                      \_\_\_\_\_ Dublin                      \_\_\_\_\_ Livermore  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Please rate Wheels Service using a scale of 1-5, with 1 being the worst (strongly disagree) and 5 being the best (strongly agree).**

| <b>Question</b>   | <b>Score (1-5)</b> |
|---|--------------------|
| Transit services operate on-time                            |                    |
| I feel safe when riding the bus                             |                    |
| Drivers are helpful and friendly                            |                    |
| Route / Service Information is easy to use                  |                    |
| Buses are clean and well-maintained                         |                    |
| Transit Center is safe and secure                           |                    |
| Bus Stops are clean and well maintained                     |                    |
| Transit Center (& Telephone) staff are friendly and helpful |                    |
| Overall opinion of Wheels service                           |                    |

**3. What was the main purpose in making your trip today? Check ONE.**

\_\_\_\_\_ Work                                      \_\_\_\_\_ School  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Social Visit                      \_\_\_\_\_ Medical  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Shopping                                      \_\_\_\_\_ Other (please specify: \_\_\_\_\_)

**4. What is your age?**

\_\_\_\_\_ 8-17                                      \_\_\_\_\_ 55-64  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 18-25                                      \_\_\_\_\_ 65+  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 26-54

**5. What is your annual household income?**

\_\_\_\_\_ Under \$25,000  
 \_\_\_\_\_ \$25,000-\$34,999  
 \_\_\_\_\_ \$35,000-\$49,999  
 \_\_\_\_\_ \$50,000-\$74,999  
 \_\_\_\_\_ \$75,000+

**6. How often do you visit [www.wheelsbus.com](http://www.wheelsbus.com)?**

\_\_\_\_\_ 5 or more times in the last month  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 3-4 times in the last month  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 1-2 times in the last month  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Less than once per month  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Never

**7. How would you have made your current trip without the bus? Check ONE.**

\_\_\_\_\_ Walk                                      \_\_\_\_\_ Bike  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Drive myself                      \_\_\_\_\_ Get a ride  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Take a taxi                                      \_\_\_\_\_ I would not have made this trip

**Please provide Wheels Management with your thoughts on how our service works for you and/or how we may improve our service.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

WHEELS PASSENGER SURVEY RESULTS 2016

ATTACHMENT 2

1. Area of Residence

| Dublin | Pleasanton | Livermore | Other | Tot resp |
|--------|------------|-----------|-------|----------|
| 38     | 62         | 83        | 29    | 212      |
| 18%    | 29%        | 39%       | 14%   |          |

2. Quality Rating

|   | 1 | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5   | n/a | Avg Score | Total Responses Received | Total Points |
|---|---|----|----|----|-----|-----|-----------|--------------------------|--------------|
| Service operates on time                    | 1 | 7  | 48 | 66 | 78  | 15  | 4.1       | 200                      | 813          |
| Feel safe when riding the bus               | 0 | 3  | 10 | 42 | 149 | 11  | 4.7       | 204                      | 949          |
| Drivers are helpful and friendly            | 1 | 13 | 30 | 56 | 101 | 13  | 4.2       | 201                      | 846          |
| Route / service information easy to use     | 2 | 7  | 34 | 51 | 110 | 11  | 4.3       | 204                      | 872          |
| Buses are clean and well maintained         | 0 | 5  | 23 | 62 | 114 | 11  | 4.4       | 204                      | 897          |
| Transit Center is safe and secure           | 2 | 4  | 19 | 51 | 117 | 22  | 4.4       | 193                      | 856          |
| Bus stops clean and well maintained         | 2 | 6  | 32 | 51 | 111 | 13  | 4.3       | 202                      | 869          |
| Customer service staff friendly and helpful | 2 | 11 | 18 | 60 | 98  | 26  | 4.3       | 189                      | 808          |
| Overall opinion of Wheels service           | 1 | 1  | 11 | 96 | 93  | 13  | 4.4       | 202                      | 885          |

Quality rating from above as percentages:

|   | 1  | 2  | 3   | 4   | 5   | Avg Score | Last year |     |
|---|----|----|-----|-----|-----|-----------|-----------|-----|
| Service operates on time                    | 1% | 4% | 24% | 33% | 39% | 4.1       | 4.0       | 200 |
| Feel safe when riding the bus               | 0% | 1% | 5%  | 21% | 73% | 4.7       | 4.4       | 204 |
| Drivers are helpful and friendly            | 0% | 6% | 15% | 28% | 50% | 4.2       | 4.3       | 201 |
| Route / service information easy to use     | 1% | 3% | 17% | 25% | 54% | 4.3       | 4.2       | 204 |
| Buses are clean and well maintained         | 0% | 2% | 11% | 30% | 56% | 4.4       | 4.2       | 204 |
| Transit Center is safe and secure           | 1% | 2% | 10% | 26% | 61% | 4.4       | 4.1       | 193 |
| Bus stops clean and well maintained         | 1% | 3% | 16% | 25% | 55% | 4.3       | 4.1       | 202 |
| Customer service staff friendly and helpful | 1% | 6% | 10% | 32% | 52% | 4.3       | 4.2       | 189 |
| Overall opinion of Wheels service           | 0% | 0% | 5%  | 48% | 46% | 4.4       | 4.3       | 202 |

3. Trip Purpose

| Work | Social | Shopping | School | Medical | Other | Tot resp |
|------|--------|----------|--------|---------|-------|----------|
| 111  | 22     | 27       | 36     | 9       | 10    | 215      |
| 52%  | 10%    | 13%      | 17%    | 4%      | 5%    |          |

4. Age

| 8-17 | 18-25 | 26-54 | 55-64 | 65+ | Tot resp |
|------|-------|-------|-------|-----|----------|
| 17   | 53    | 82    | 31    | 26  | 209      |
| 8%   | 25%   | 39%   | 15%   | 12% |          |

5. Income

| <25k | 25-35k | 35-50k | 50-75k | >75k | Tot resp |
|------|--------|--------|--------|------|----------|
| 73   | 36     | 21     | 29     | 22   | 181      |
| 40%  | 20%    | 12%    | 16%    | 12%  |          |

6. Website Visits

| Never | <1/mo | 1-2/mo | 3-4/mo | >4/mo | Tot resp |
|-------|-------|--------|--------|-------|----------|
| 56    | 36    | 29     | 25     | 31    | 177      |
| 32%   | 20%   | 16%    | 14%    | 18%   |          |

7. Trip without Wheels?

| Walk | Drive | Taxi | Bike | Get Ride | No Trip | Tot resp |
|------|-------|------|------|----------|---------|----------|
| 43   | 38    | 28   | 27   | 40       | 38      | 214      |
| 20%  | 18%   | 13%  | 13%  | 19%      | 18%     |          |

Total surveys received = 215

| General Comments   |
|--|
| Overall, it's good.  |
| As of August 13th the Route is changing for bus no. 3. Could you please continue service through Amador or provide some alternative?<br>They are perfect.  |
| I travel in Route 3 from Amada lakes to BART. I wish this route stays after Aug. 13. Have clear maps for clear understanding.  |
| Please don't take away this route. This is the only route I have. If your taking away please replace with some other bus for this route.   |
| Route #3 should exist as it is. We don't want to change. How will people like me come from San Ramon Senior Center when this route will be terminated from 13th August. Not a good change.   |
| Need garbage cans at each bench. Need overhead cover at each bench. Bus drivers should know how far next bus is behind him. Buses should be able to contact each other to hold transfer bus if bus is behind schedule so passengers can make their connections. I will lose my job since you're stoping some routes. |
| I think the service is great. I wouldn't improve your services.  |
| Great Service  |
| Will the new routes cover the old 3 in Dublin?   |
| The R should ride weekends.  |
| I would like for the Rapid to operate on weekends.   |
| Based on my answers, you should know what needs to be fixed. *   |
| I like it when the bus is on time!   |
| You guys get me from point A to point B so I'm happy.  |
| First, the Drivers are really helpful. I needed water to drink and he gave me some. Be best on being on time and stay well maintained and drive safe. Thank you Wheels.  |
| The delays should not be more than 20 minutes. *   |
| Route change affects me to go to work.   |
| Buses are on time in the morning but delayed after 7:30 am and before 9:00 am.   |
| The service is useful and necessary. The service is late at times. A few drivers are lacking in friendliness; sometimes we greet and thank them for their service, and they don't reply. When we get out of work and board the bus, it is not pleasant to find drivers with long faces. *                            |
| Overall good. Make sure electric signs at bus stations are accurate.   |
| Make sure you're on time.  |
| Move wheel chair space.  |
| More frequent buses.   |
| No bus on East Avenue around 11pm week.  |
| The buses need to run later.   |
| The Wheels management service are really good service for this transportation.   |
| I think your service is good my problem is in the weekends when the service is every 40 mins. And it starts late in the morning.   |
| Less opinions from drivers more professional attitude/demeaner.  |
| The service gets me to where I got to be thank you Wheels.   |
| Well, it works great for me.   |
| No   |
| It has good service.   |
| Excellent work. *  |
| Springtown 15 direct bus to BART needed  |
| Some drivers are friendly some aren't, I've also noticed a lot of broken bike racks.   |
| More buses during commute time.  |
| Buses should be on-time. Increase frequency from BART to Pleasanton to avoid wait time (Mon-Fri).  |
| Always on-time and very nice to passengers.  |
| Hire friendly bus drivers. I ride the 15 everyday and I have bad experiences with the women they are rude, have attitude.  |
| R & 12 run almost at same time and that results in one bus going empty. If we space them properly it will be helpful.  |
| Improvements on all above asked questions, but I'd like to thank you all, w/no buses I couldn't be independent.  |
| It would be nice of buses came on-time.  |
| I enjoy taking the bus to get to work and other places.  |
| Bus Drivers need to be more thorough when checking bus stops at night.   |
| It's great!  |
| Your service is great . It's just that I have to walk over the over pass just to get to work on weekdays. 12x should run from 2-close.   |
| More handicap space. During rush hour you run out of room for my wheel chair.  |
| N/A  |
| Just make sure buses are on-time or have the bus stop by more often. Maybe a radio installed, but that's simply an idea.   |
| No   |
| More flexible time with the bus schedule.  |
| More connections to BART.  |
| All Good.  |
| Being a bit more on time would help. Other than that, I like taking the bus because most of the drivers are very helpful and friendly.   |
| Add a garbage can.   |
| Great bus rides when I need it.  |
| Ironically, its sometimes better if the bus is a bit late, as I get out of class about ten minutes after the bus leaves, and having this route come every 30 minutes would be better. Ensure seat cushions are maintained.   |

|  |
|--|
| I feel that the system planner and online schedules should be updated such that one can plan trips better based on timing and location.  |
| I usually ride the 20x everyday to and from work, and wouldn't be able to get to work on time without it.  |
| Just be nice.  |
| More bus stops in Livermore going to transit center.   |
| A few of the stops are out in the sun and have no seating. Would be great to fix that.   |
| Some drivers should be more friendly.  |
| The customer service is not friendly sometimes. Some buses leave without looking back if a passenger is rushing.   |
| Middle-aged B.American female driver is rude and unhelpful (Route 10, afternoon shift). Children aggravate her. The driver instructs riders to get ready to get off before stopping. Some riders are afraid to stand while bus is in motion. |
| Have buses come on time.   |
| The website doesn't give clear times with the bus number on the same page.   |
| Just try to be on time.  |
| Works ok for my needs. Perhaps more frequent buses (mine was every 30 minutes).  |
| Cleaner buses.   |
| It would be great if you guys could have later routes and larger bus for the rapid.  |
| Sometimes I bring my bike with me to work and I truly feel that you need better bike racks.  |
| Bike racks need improvement  |
| The service is good. I don't know why the 8 runs every 60 minutes? It was better before when it use to run every 30 minutes. *   |
| Service during later hours would be good.  |
| Better bike ramps  |
| Later time for routes. I usually have to walk home.  |
| Wait a little longer at bus stops. I have been left plenty of times.   |
| Better road maps.  |
| Overall, good service.   |
| Put signs at Bart station showing Livermore to the left, Dublin to the right, etc. and to explain the bus ticket there better or easier to see.  |
| Better signs at Bart station   |
| Really good experience. A lady that drives route 10 is scary; she drives bus #0331   |
| Made me happy today.   |
| Please keep #10 and 8 in service because it is the only transportation I have.   |
| I seldom use it, but the service seems good. *   |
| Works well.  |
| Some of the bus drivers appear stressed out--so, these guys aren't really friendly.  |
| The bus is really useful to me. I take it everyday, I'm more than satisfied.   |
| Currently, it appears to me that the service is running well. *  |
| Friendly drivers *   |
| Excellent service, keep being better and better. I think you should have some more route around Dublin. Thank you!!  |
| Everything is fine.  |
| Just my opinion, drivers must attend a seminar on customer service to greatly improve their skill on dealing with riders.  |
| More routes to Koll Center Pkwy. One bus went right by me so I had to wait for next bus from Pleasanton to Livermore.  |
| I think the service at Wheels transit is amazing. They are easy to use and are dependable in getting to your destination.  |
| Wheels has been very helpful when needed.  |
| Keep 10 Route as is.   |
| The drivers should be friendly with people. *  |
| The service is great and cheap. *  |
| 15 needs to run more often on weekends. Hillcrest/East Ave stop should remain open. In general, more weekend service.  |
| There isn't a fast route to school (Las Positas).  |
| No cans in people's bags on buses. Unclean. People board the bus with bags of recyclables (unsanitary, and sometimes creates a mess-spill).  |
| Casey and Josh love the service!   |
| Excellent service.   |

\*Translated from Spanish