

Memo

To: Members of City Council, Mayor Hieftje and Mr. Powers.
From: Nancy Shore, getDowntown Program Director
Date: 2/17/2012
Re: Key findings from 2011 getDowntown Program Evaluation

Every 2 years the getDowntown Program conducts a survey of downtown Ann Arbor Employers and Employees to 1. Get a snapshot of the commuting habits of downtown Ann Arbor employees; 2. Gauge Employer and Employees attitudes, awareness and use of the getDowntown Program and of transportation options in general.

Key Findings: Employer Survey and Employee Surveys

Alternative transportation is an employee attraction and retention tool: 70% of downtown employers surveyed believe that it's either very or somewhat important to have a choice of transportation options (not just parking for cars) to attract high quality workers.

Alternative transportation is good for business: 68% of knowledge-based employers and 78% of restaurant/retail/service employers surveyed believe that it's either very or somewhat important to have a choice of transportation options (not just parking for cars) to attract customers.

Employees comfort level with public transit continues to increase: Compared to the 2009 survey, more employees are using public transit. In addition, 40% of all downtown employees surveyed have at least occasionally commuted by bus in the past year. For employees who drive alone, 47% say they do so because of a lack of alternative transportation options. Employees who have changed their commuting behavior in the past year have tended to switch from driving alone to busing or using a Park & Ride Lot. Finally, go!pass ridership data also confirms that employees are using go!passes at much higher levels than they were 2 years ago. Go!pass ridership in 2011 was 15% higher than it was in 2010.

Employees distance from work significantly impacts their use of alternative transportation: Employees who live 4 miles or less from their jobs report walking, biking or busing to work at significantly higher numbers than at farther distances. In addition, moving to a new house was a top reason employees switched from driving alone to walking to work or taking the bus. At more than 4 miles from work, employees are much more likely to drive alone than use any other type of transportation. This data suggests that providing housing closer to the downtown could significantly increase the numbers of employees who walk or bike to work rather than drive.

The go!pass continues to be a valuable economic development and commuting change tool: For employees who switched from driving alone to using the bus in the past year, a major reason for this change is the availability of a go!pass. In addition, more than 60% of employees report that the go!pass is an important benefit to their job. Finally, employers report that the go!pass is sometimes the only benefit they can offer their employees.

Nancy Shore

getDowntown Program Director