



University of North Florida Jacksonville, Florida Transportation

SCHOOL

University of North Florida (UNF), Public, 4-year, 16,368 students (Fall 2011 Enrollment), Jacksonville, Florida.

ABSTRACT

The 2011 University of North Florida (UNF) Campus Commuter Preferences Survey (CPS) is an initiative by UNF's Environmental Center to promote and institute additional sustainable transportation to and from its campus. The survey was conducted to gauge students, faculty and staff on their interest in participating in more alternatives to transportation than they use now. The survey ran from March 7, 2011 to April 11, 2011. UNF's greenhouse gas emissions inventory of 2009 found that student, faculty, and staff commuting contributed to 28% of the universities GHG emissions. Its overall purpose was to simply gauge interest in alternatives such as carpooling, biking, and utilizing public transit. It was found that respondents were most interested in carpooling, followed by public transit with less interest and biking with the least interest. Interest in off-campus shuttle routes was also assessed. The future goal of the survey is for it to be used to institute such things as new and more efficient bus routes, a way for commuters to find others to carpool with, convenient bike lanes for those near campus, and an overall enrichment of sustainable transportation practices.

GOALS AND OUTCOMES

Goals

The motivation for conducting such a survey came primarily from the GHG emissions inventory of UNF that was conducted in 2009 where it was found that a total of 28% of carbon emissions came as a result of commuting to and from campus. When starting this project, our goal was to measure commuter preferences in such a way that we could decrease this 28% due to commuting students, faculty, and staff. Once the survey was created, a goal was set to gain at least 10% responsiveness from those invited to take the survey where once the survey ended, a total of 20.52% responsiveness was received. Within the next 2-3 years, we hope to begin working with Jacksonville Transportation Authority on creating new and more efficient bus routes that accommodate the university; begin working with the North Florida Transportation Planning Organization in order to create a way to increase vanpooling and carpooling participation; and institute new shuttle routes using our currently exclusive on-campus shuttle system to accommodate areas off-campus within close proximity to campus.

Accomplishments and Outcomes

Three alternative transportation modes were queried specifically in the survey. Interest levels in each of those appear below in order of most to least interest by the UNF community.

1. Carpooling
2. Public Transportation

3. Biking

Results of the survey were evaluated on a question-by-question basis. Because not every question required an answer, not every question had the same number of respondents. A total of 3,581 people responded out of 17,448 invited yielding a total response rate of 20.52%. Of those respondents, 76.10% identified as students, 14.32% identified as staff, 7.33% identified as faculty, and 2.30% identified as administrators.

General Transportation Patterns

When asked to identify their primary means of transportation when arriving to campus, 77.2% of respondents selected “driving alone,” 8.5% chose walking from campus housing, and 5.7% chose carpooling with another person whose end destination was UNF. A physical disability preventing use of one or more of these choices was addressed in the next question where 97.8% chose “No” and 2.2% chose “Yes.” Those who answered “Yes” were able to describe why they chose this answer. Most common responses concerned physical handicaps that required wheelchair use or that injuries prevented them from comfortably using an alternative mode of transportation.

Peak arrival and departure times of the UNF community were queried. A total of 33.7% of respondents chose that they arrived mostly from 8:00-9:00 a.m., 27.2% chose 9:00-10:00 a.m., and 23.5% chose from 7:00-8:00 a.m. Also, 30.7% chose that they depart mostly from 5:00-6:00 p.m., 25.4% chose from 4:00-5:00 p.m., and 24.4% chose 8:00-9:00 p.m.

Respondents were asked if transportation issues ever prevented them from coming to campus. Issues included such things as lack of regular access to a car as well as not being able to find parking. A total of 70.3% chose “Yes” while 29.7% chose “No.” Those who chose “Yes” were asked to explain why they chose this response. The most common reason given was that they cannot find parking on a regular basis.

Interest in Alternative Modes of Transportation

Biking

Respondents were asked about the likelihood that they would bike to campus. A majority of 74.9% chose that they would not ever consider biking to campus, 18.7% chose that they might consider it if certain changes were made, and 6.4% chose that they already bike to campus. Those who chose “Yes” and “Maybe” were directed to the next question, which queried what factors would have the most significant impact increasing biking. Factors with the most impact were additional bicycle parking, facilities on campus for bicycle maintenance, bicycle lockers to prevent loss, as well as clearly designated bike lanes both on and off campus. Bicycle technique and safety classes received the least amount of interest.

Carpooling

Respondents were asked about the likelihood that they would carpool to campus. A majority of 51.9% chose that they might consider carpooling to campus, 30.3% chose that they would not ever consider carpooling to campus, and 17.8% chose that they already carpool to campus. Those who chose “Yes” and “Maybe” were directed to the next question, which queried what factors would have the most significant impact on increasing carpooling. Factors with the most impact included ways to find others who: commute from close to their address, have similar schedules, if they could get to know the

person/people beforehand, and if they could be guaranteed a ride home in an emergency. The factor with the least desire was if they could find others with similar driving habits. These results are expressed in the stacked column graph below.

Public Transit

Respondents were asked about the likelihood that they would take public transit to campus. A majority of 60.2% chose they would never consider taking public transit, 35.2% chose they would consider it if certain changes were made, and 4.6% chose they already use public transit. Those who chose “Yes” and “Maybe” were directed to the next question, which queried what factors would have the most significant impact on increasing use of public transit. Factors with the most impact included the bus routes being shorter and taking less time to arrive on campus, the bus schedule working better with theirs, and easy access to a bus stop from their commute address. The factors with the least desire were if public transit were safer and if it costs less.

Also, respondents were asked to choose from a list of Express (minimal-stop) Bus Routes that they would take if instituted in the future. A total of 32.7% chose that they would not use any of the routes, 21.9% chose the Beaches, 18.8% chose Southside, and 14.4% chose the Orange Park area. The choices with the least interest were Downtown/Riverside/San Marco/Avondale. Those who selected one or more of the Express routes in the previous question were then asked to identify the maximum total travel time they would be willing to spend utilizing an Express Bus. The most common answers were 30 minutes, 20 minutes, and 40 minutes. The answers with the least response were 10 minutes, 50 minutes, and greater than 50 minutes.

Increasing student fees were addressed in order to promote off-campus shuttle routes. A total of 40.1% chose they might be willing pay an increase depending on the fee and if the routes would benefit them, 34.0% chose “No”, 17.1% chose they were not students, while 8.8% chose “Yes.” Those who chose “Yes” and “Maybe” were directed to the next question which queried the most favored routes. The most desired routes in order of decreasing interest were the St. John’s Town Center, Beach/Hodges/Kernan, Southside/Gate/Touchton, and “None.” These results are expressed in the column graph below.

Also addressed, was at what gas price point respondents would consider using more alternatives to driving alone than they use now. A total of 31.7% chose \$5 per gallon, 25.3% chose that gas prices would not affect their choice of transportation, while 21.5% chose \$4 per gallon. The choices with the least response were \$6 per gallon, over \$7 per gallon, that they never drive to campus, and \$7 per gallon.

There have not been any policies adopted in conjunction with this project as of yet.

Challenges and Responses

The major challenge in conducting this survey was portraying our goal in conducting the survey to those invited. A free response question was included in the survey so that respondents could address issues or thoughts that were not included in the survey in question form. A large amount of responses were intended for arenas more suitable for Parking and Transportation Services rather than that of the Environmental Center. Respondents were animated when talking about their experiences with parking services and it was observed that respondents may have been somewhat biased by not understanding what the intentions of the survey were. Efforts were made to try to avoid this such as briefing respondents prior to participating in the survey as well as being sure to state that the Environmental

Center was conducting the survey rather than parking services. The variable responses were then directed to the appropriate parties. Future changes to avoid this kind of misunderstanding would be to continuously remind the respondents who is conducting the survey, and why it is being done.

Campus Climate Action: Your School's Carbon Footprint

This project indirectly addressed global climate change as it was simply a means to gauge interest in more sustainable alternative modes of transportation that will eventually, in turn, reduce GHG emissions.

Commentary and Reflection

Just as when conducting a project of any kind, research prior to its development is crucial. Multiple surveys from other institutions were attained and used to aide in creating the survey and ultimately help determine in what direction responses would take us. Keeping any survey short while still gaining all needed information is vital as well as having some kind of incentive for others to take your survey. Also, test the survey with a select number of individuals before it is released. This will assist in ensuring that the questions and answers presented are well rounded and unambiguous.

Because one may be motivated and inspired enough to pursue a project such as this, do not forget that others may not be quite as enthusiastic. When you come across this issue, take the time to educate and explain your reasoning rather than ending communication with your peers. Sometimes, because one is not familiar with a topic, they will be biased and judgmental. Taking the time to educate your peers will pay off big time for your initiative!

ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT

Leaders and Supporters

This survey was conducted by the UNF Environmental Center and funded by the Cummer Family Foundation. They have been a continual supporter of the center and its initiatives for a number of years. Alison Krauss of Information Technology Services was instrumental in helping with the creation of the skeleton of the survey using the Vovici survey software. Dr. Fen Yu of Institutional Research was responsible for distribution of the invitations to participate in the survey. Cheryl Pakidas aided in the creation of the survey and its report. The entire Environmental Center staff tested the survey before it was published and aided in clarifying its intentions. Dr. David Lambert of the College of Engineering and Neal Fisher of Parking and Transportation Services assisted in narrowing the direction of the survey and were consulted throughout this project. Dr. Radha Pyati spear-headed the project, gained monetary support from the Cummer Family Foundation to make this survey possible, aided in the creation of its report, and also conducted the GHG emissions inventory in 2009 from which inspiration was gained for this survey.

Funding and Resources

The funding that exclusively financed this project came from the Cummer Family Foundation, which supported the necessary staff needed to create and conduct the survey. Funding was exclusively used to pay for two student research assistants and totaled \$9,000.

Education and Community Outreach

There has not been any outreach efforts used to engage the campus and local community directly regarding this survey other than the campus community actively participating in the survey. The campus community did show interest in this initiative considering the great amount of responsiveness.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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MORE ABOUT YOUR SCHOOL

Campus Sustainability History

The Environmental Center at the University of North Florida fosters environmental research, both on and off the campus. In addition, the Environmental Center helps coordinate sustainability efforts on campus. In addition, UNF has a Sustainability Committee which has representatives from multiple departments around campus and whose mission is to increase environmental sustainability in all areas and aspects of campus life.