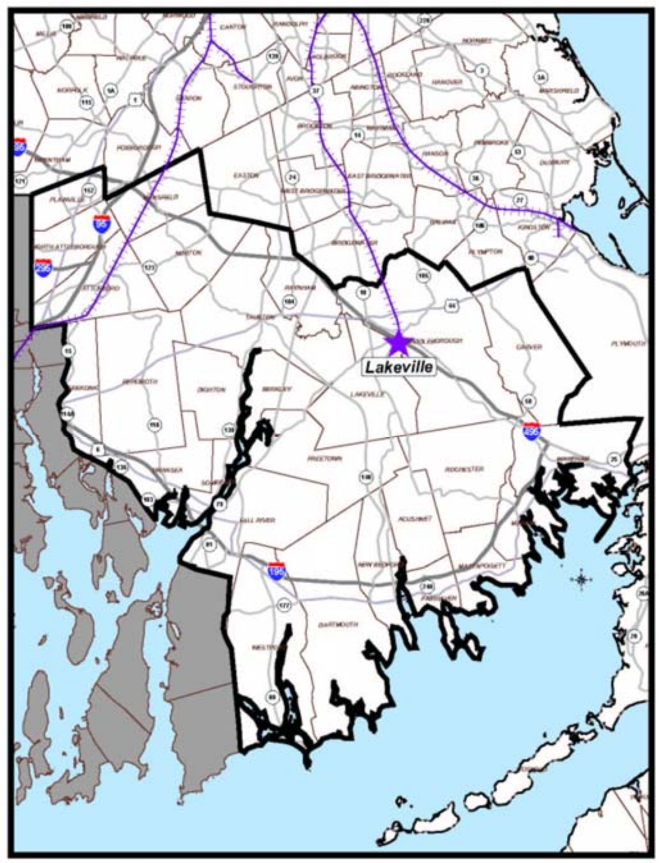
Lakeville Commuter Rail Survey Summary May 14, 2008



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May 14, 2008 Lakeville Commuter Rail Survey Summary of Results

Introduction

SRPEDD has conducted periodic surveys of the Lakeville MBTA station users since 1998. The station opened when commuter rail service was restored to the new Old Colony Line in November 1997. An initial survey in April 1998 was done to determine the origins of commuters who used the Old Colony terminus station in Lakeville. Subsequent surveys in spring of 2000, 2002 and 2005 were done in order to collect information about commuter origins, but also to try and learn more about who uses the train and how much of an impact its availability had on people's choices about where they live and/or work. The May 14, 2008 survey asks many of the same questions as previous surveys, in order to track trends.

The survey is not scientific, with respondents being self-selected rather than randomly chosen. Nevertheless, it offers insight into who rides the train. Additionally, the responses and characteristics of commuters have been consistent for all of the surveys, giving credibility to the profile that the survey data present.

Methodology

MBTA audits from 2007 indicate that approximately 1,200 people board the trains daily at the Lakeville station. On May 14, 2008, SRPEDD staff distributed surveys to passengers boarding the morning inbound trains from Lakeville to Boston. Six hundred surveys were handed out and 261 surveys, or 43.5%, were returned. This return rate is smaller than that of the last two surveys conducted in 2005 (58.5%, 354 surveys) and 2002 (58%, 413 surveys) respectively.

The survey is systematic, with content and format being consistent with the previous surveys, and distributed to as many commuters as possible while they board the train in Lakeville. Commuters are asked to complete the survey while onboard the train and turn them in to SRPEDD staff upon exit, or deposit them in a collection box at South Station. Some responses are received by fax, as well.

Surveys were distributed to commuters taking the four AM Peak trains plus one earlier and one later inbound morning train. Mid-day and later trains, with fewer passengers, which could have yielded more varied trip purposes and station destinations, were not surveyed. The following table indicates how many completed surveys were turned in by commuters on each morning train. Peak hour trains are highlighted in bold.

Inbound Train	# Surveys Completed
5:25AM	42
6:00AM	58
6:58AM	64
7:20AM	36
8:05AM	37
9:38AM	10
unknown	14
TOTAL	261

FINDINGS

Trip Characteristics

Trip Purpose
The majority of Lakeville train users (94.6%), are, not surprisingly, commuters going to work. Other trip purposes included medical, shopping, social, meetings and training. A few respondents indicated they were making multi-purpose trips. 97.7% of commuters were going to South Station. A handful of commuters traveled to JFK/UMass or Quincy Center.

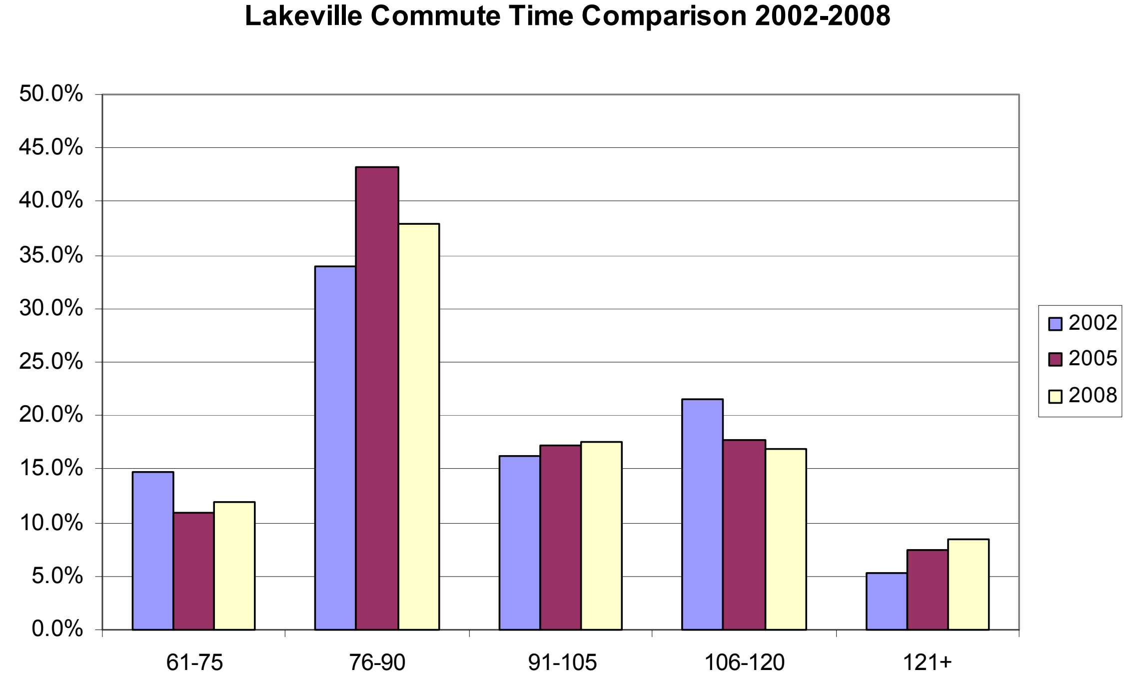
Trip Frequency
The frequency of trips made per week is a reflection of the work trip purpose. 83% of respondents said that they make this trip four or more times per week; 7% make it two to three times per week; 4% make it two to three times per month.

Trip Destinations
Downtown and the Financial District are the most common Metro destinations for rail commuters, followed by Cambridge and Back Bay. Sixty-six commuters (25% of the total) who take the Lakeville train to South Station work in the part of Boston known as Downtown or Government Center. Another 47 (18%) work in the Financial District. Thirty commuters (11%) work in Cambridge. Other destinations exist throughout the Metro area. Only nine respondents were not going to South Station, but this count cannot be used as a finding due to the methodology, which did not allow for surveys to be collected at other stations.

Trip Length
Commuters were asked how long it usually takes them to complete their trip, from where they started to their final destination. The train trip from Lakeville to South Station is 55 to 57 minutes long. Commuters' duration of work trips ranged from 60 to 243 minutes from home to their final destination. Figure 1

shows that the largest number of commuters has a work trip of 75-90 minutes in duration.

Figure 1



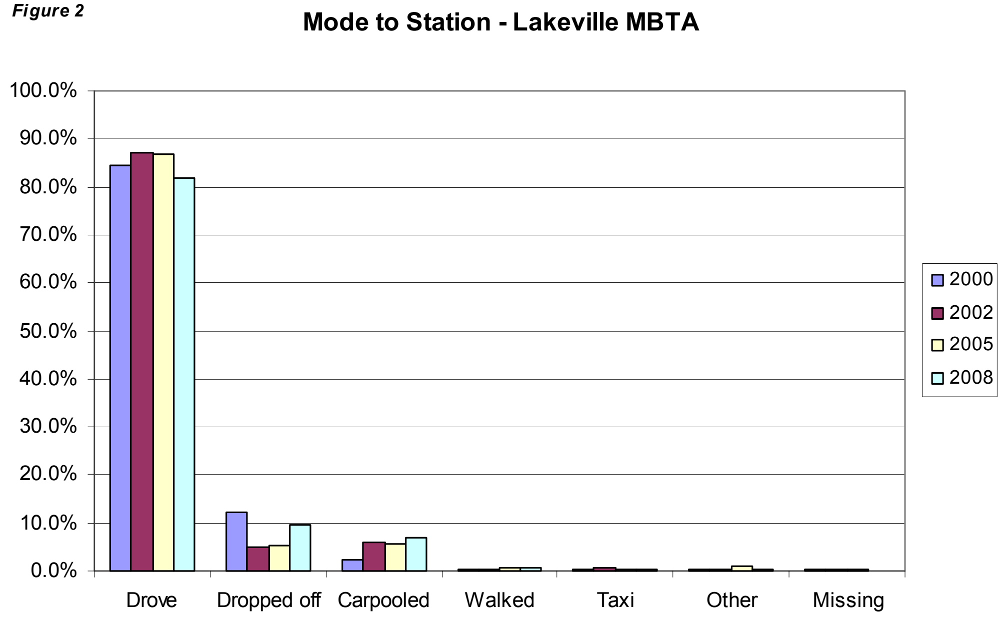
There does not appear to be any significant change in commuting time from 2002 to 2008. The median commute time is 90 minutes.

Mode of Transportation to Lakeville Station

Figure 2 compares mode to the Lakeville Station for the past four surveys. In May 2008, 82% of respondents drove alone to the station, 9.6% were dropped off, 6.9% carpooled and, inasmuch as the location of the station makes it difficult to access by walking, only two individuals walked.

Nearly half of the commuters who were dropped off originate in towns that are not near to the station (e.g., Wareham, New Bedford, and Fairhaven.) This is surprising due to the distance the person who is dropping off the commuter must drive at both trip ends. Even with 40% of commuters originating in the two adjacent towns of Middleborough and Lakeville, only 5% of total respondents were dropped off from these two communities.

Figure 2

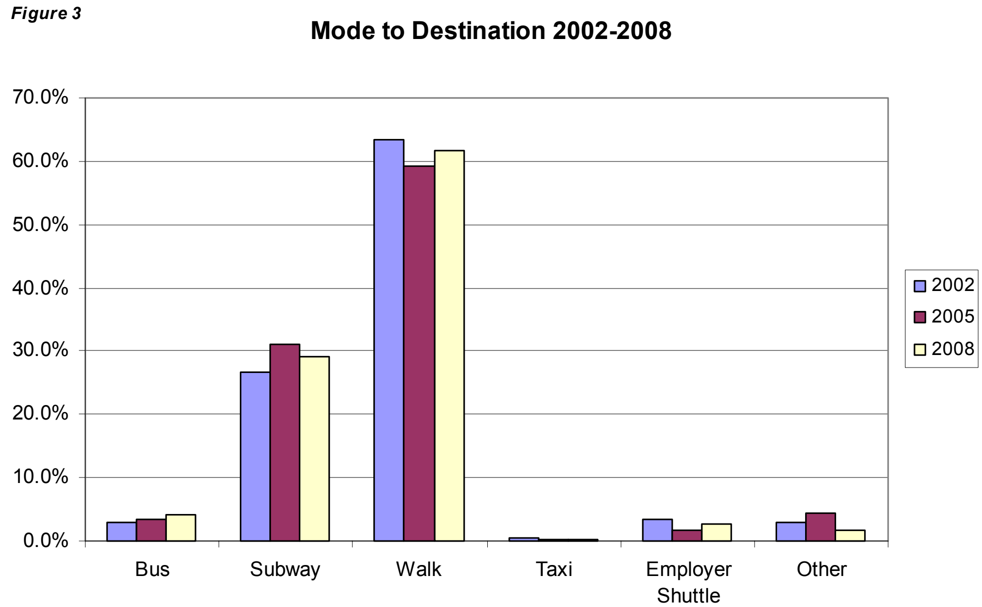


The number of commuters trying other modes to the station increased slightly from 2005 to 2008 as the number of drive alone commuters has decreased slightly. An upward shift in alternative modes of commuting to the station is expected as gas prices increase above $4.00 per gallon.

Mode of Transportation to Destination

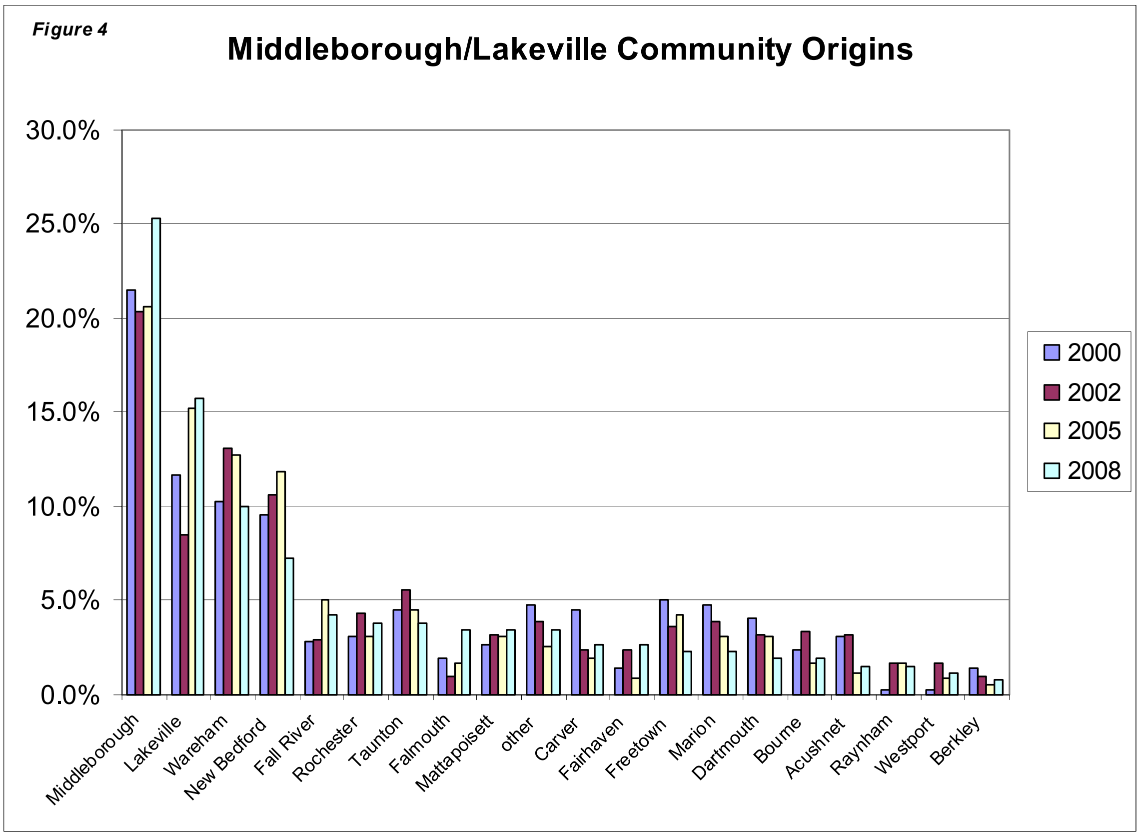
Commuters continue to walk and take the subway from South Station to their final destinations at similar rates to those in previous surveys with small changes between surveys, as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3



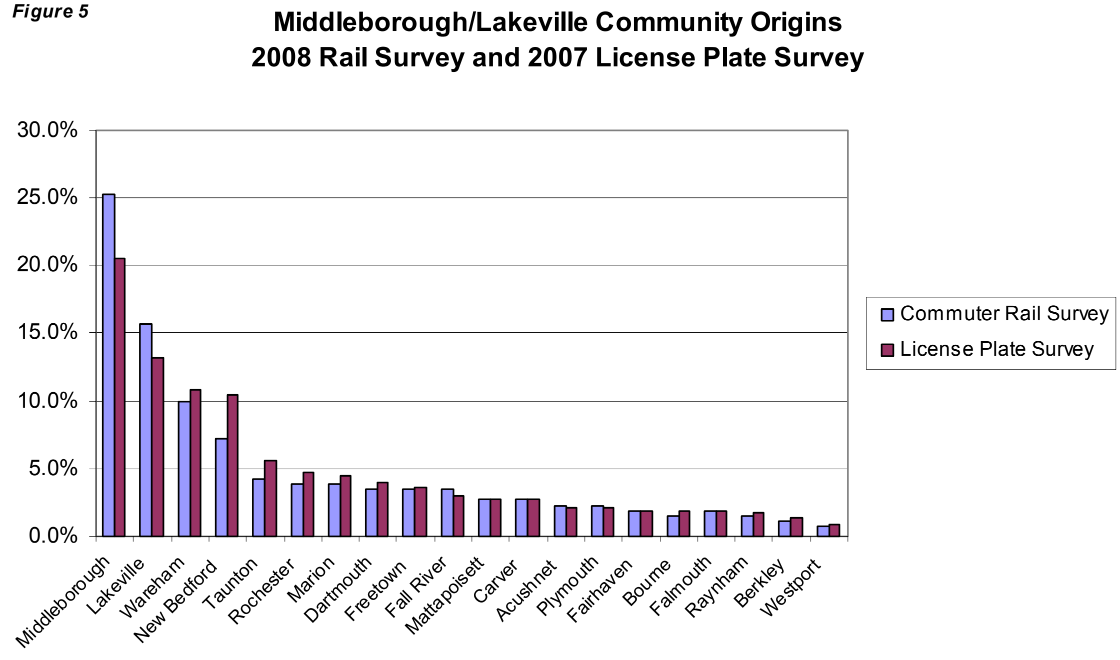
Commuter Characteristics

Communities of Origin of Commuters
Figure 4 shows the community of origin for train commuters from Lakeville Station in 2008. As the data show, the top four communities of origin for Lakeville commuters have remained consistent over the years, namely: Middleborough, Lakeville, Wareham and New Bedford. Middleborough commuters accounted for 25% of the total respondents in 2008. Middleborough and Lakeville together account for 41% of all commuters from this station. Fall River has been fifth in order in 2008 and 2005.



In 2007, the Old Colony Planning Council (OCPC) license plate survey at the Lakeville station showed the same rank order for the top four communities of origin. Figure 5 compares the results from the 2007 license plate survey and the 2008 commuter survey. The license plate survey had similar results to the survey in that the same top four community of origins are found, with the remaining drivers coming from multiple communities.

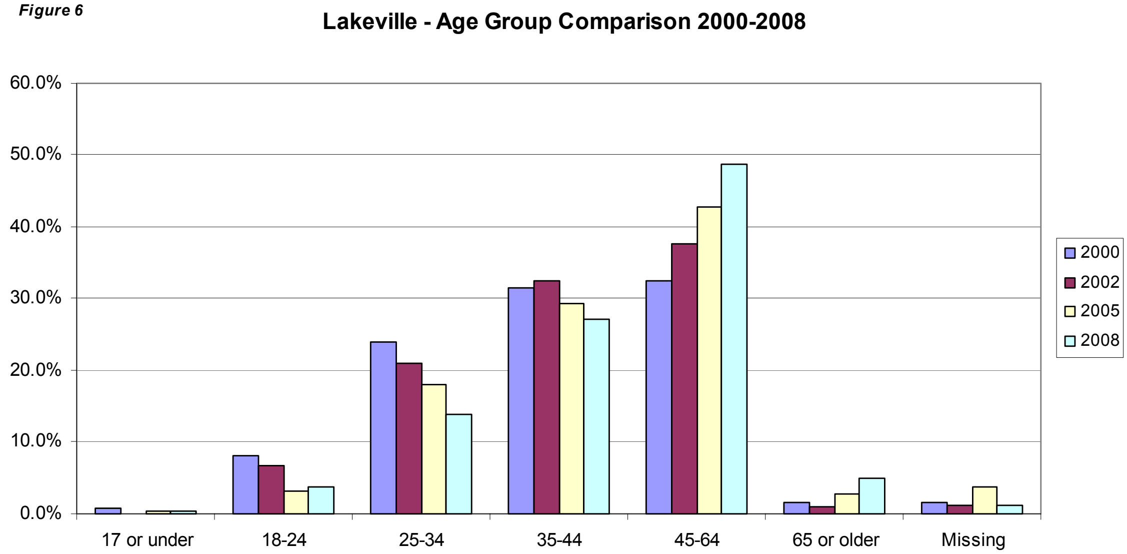
Figure 5



Age Groups

The majority of respondents (48.7%) are between the ages of 45 and 64 years old. (See Figure 6.) Another 27.2% are between 35 and 44 years old. Between 2000 and 2008, there was a decrease in 25 to 34-year-olds and 35 to 44-year-olds and an increase in 45 to 64-year-olds and people over 65 years old. An older population would be expected to have higher incomes, smaller households and households with fewer children under 18 years old—and that is the case with the survey respondents.

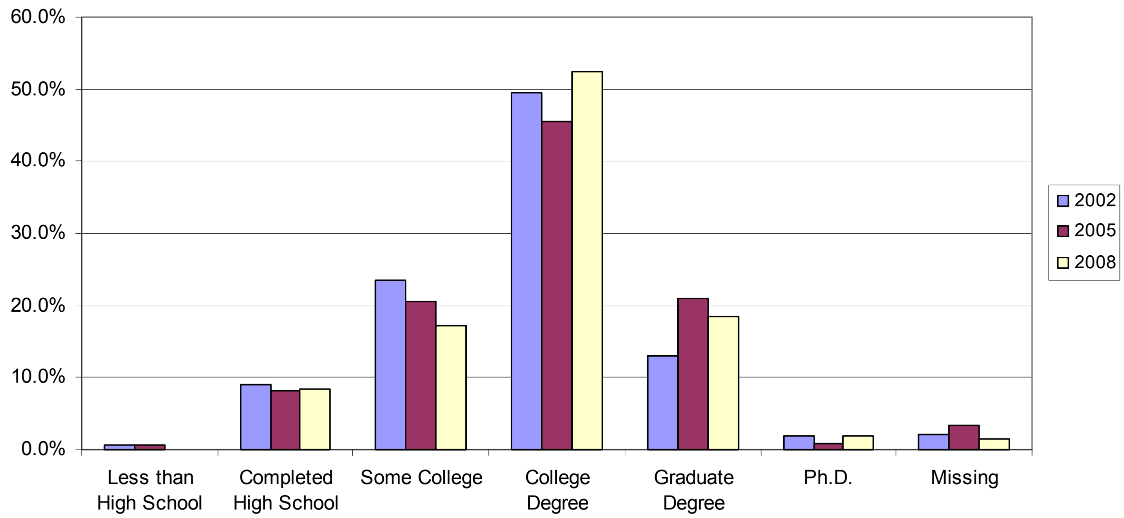
Figure 6



Education Level
Figure 7 compares education levels of commuters over the past three surveys. In 2008, 52.5% of respondents indicated that they have a college degree. 17.2% have some college, 20.3% have an advanced degree and 8.4% have a high school diploma with no college.

Figure 7

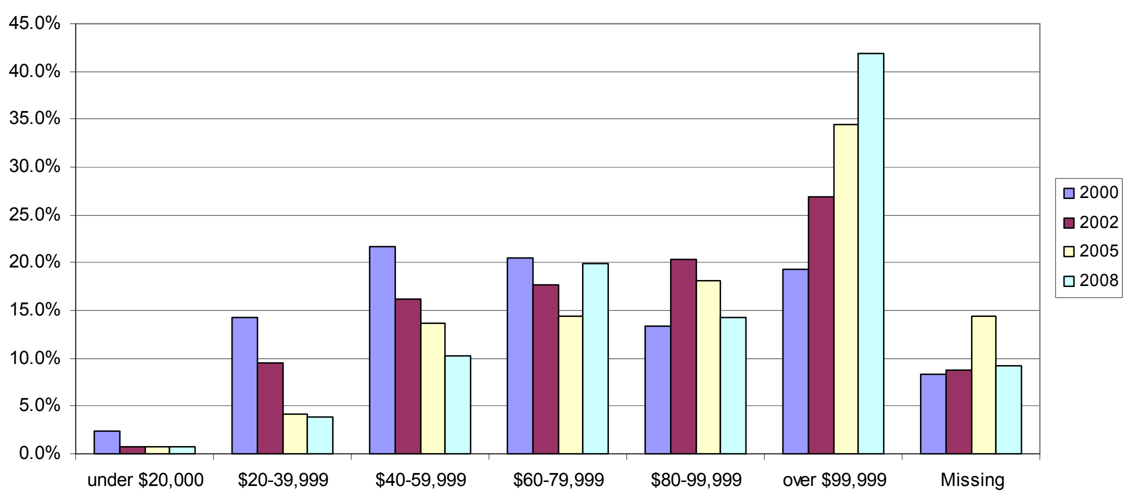
Lakeville Education Level 2002-2008



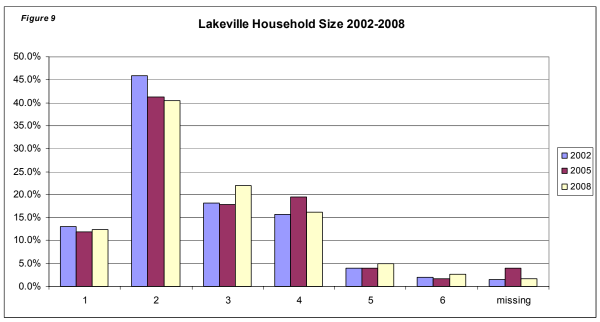
Household Income
In 2008, 41.8% of respondents indicated their household income to be over $100,000, compared with 26.9% in 2005 who claimed to belong in that same income bracket. (See Figure 8.)

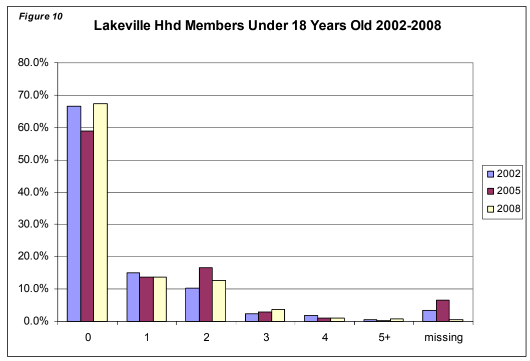
Figure 8

Lakeville Household Income Comparison 2000-2008



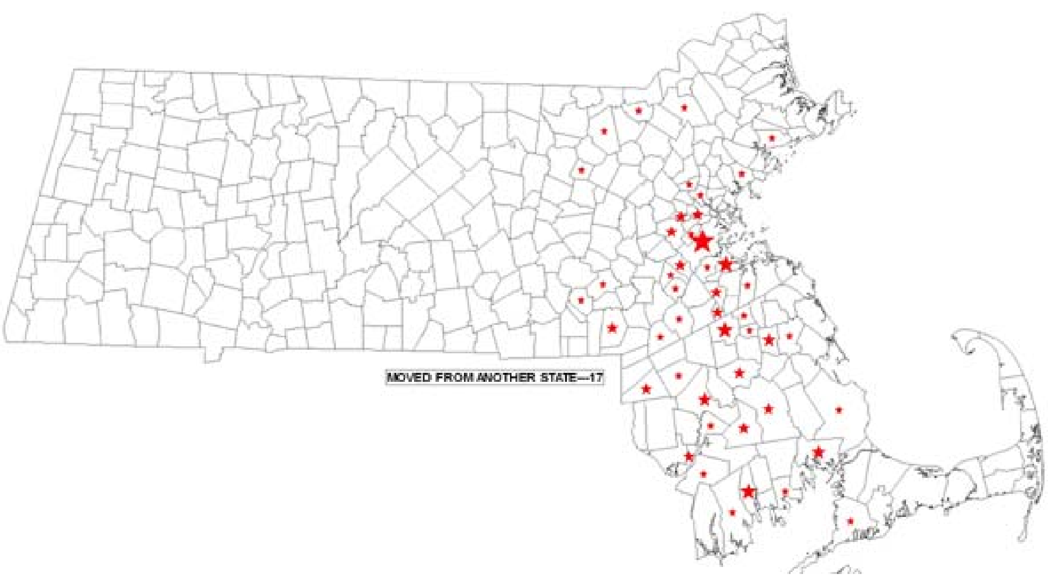
Household Size
Characteristics of household size and households with children under the age of 18 are shown in Figures 9 and 10, respectively. Two-fifths (40.2%) of respondents live in a two-person household; five of these households include a child under the age of 18. Single households account for 12.3% of respondents. Only three of these single household respondents are under the age of 35 and most are between 45 and 64 years old. A majority of respondents (67.4) have no children under the age of 18. There are 21.9% of respondents who live in three-person households and 16.2% of households have four persons. Only 5.7% of respondents have more than two children. The findings on household size and number of household members under 18 years old are consistent with previous survey results.





Residential Mobility: Comparisons between Movers and Non-Movers
Over half (59.8%) of the 2008 respondents have remained in their place of residence since at least 2002, 6.5% have moved from another state, 24.9% have moved from another region of the state, and 8.8% have moved from another community within the SRPEDD region since 2002.

Where Lakeville Commuters Have Moved From Since 2002



The table below shows similarities and differences in demographic characteristics between the group of survey respondents who have and have not moved since 2002. A majority (65%) of the respondents who have not moved belong to the age group of 45 or older. The movers were more evenly split across three age groups.

Age group					
		18-34	35-44	45+	Total
	Non-Movers	15	38	100	153
	MOVERS	31	33	40	104
Total		46	71	140	257
	Non-Movers	9.8%	24.8%	65.4%	100.0%
	MOVERS	29.8%	31.7%	38.5%	100.0%

Household Size				
		1-2	3+	Total
	Non-Movers	76	76	152
	MOVERS	61	43	104
Total		137	119	256
	Non-Movers	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
	MOVERS	58.7%	41.3%	100.0%

Education					
		High School or less	College degree	Graduate	Total
	Non-Movers	43	85	25	153
	MOVERS	24	52	28	104
Total		67	137	53	257
	Non-Movers	28.1%	55.6%	16.3%	100.0%
	MOVERS	23.1%	50.0%	26.9%	100.0%

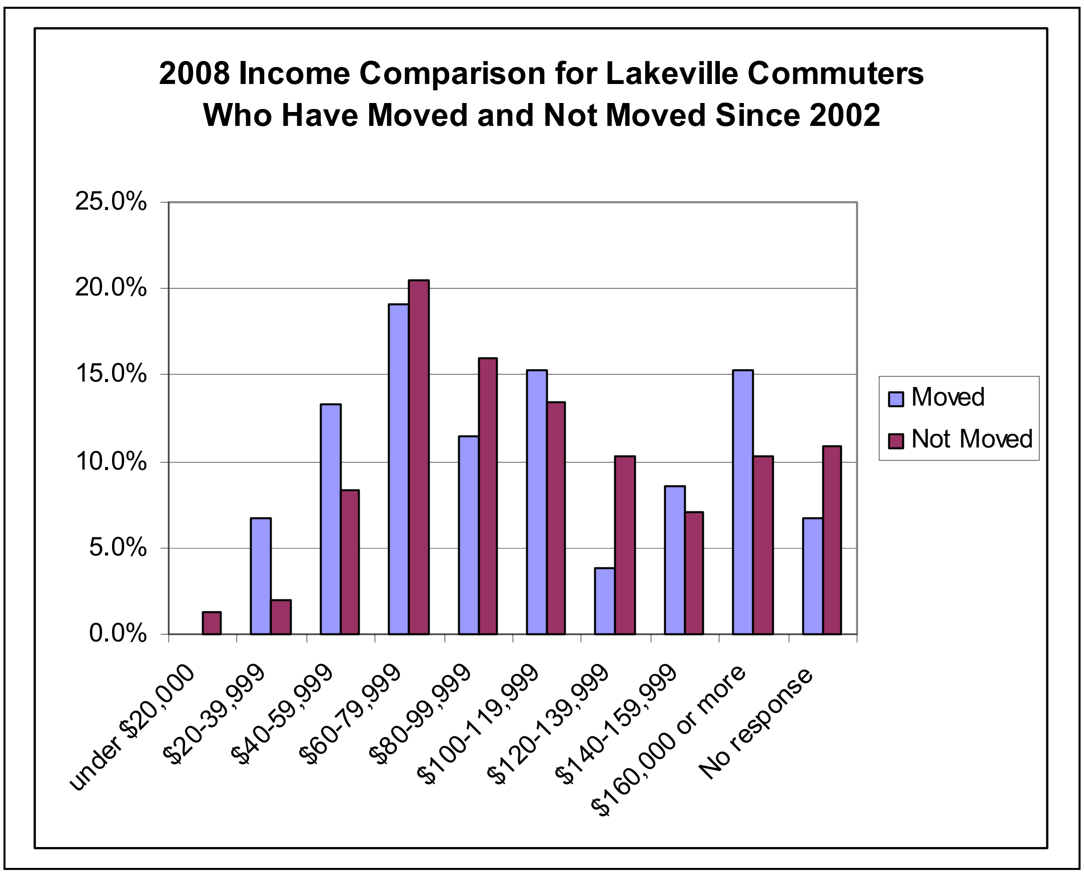
Income					
		Income			Total
		20k - 79,9k	80k - 119,9k	Over 120k	
	Non-Movers	50	46	43	139
	MOVERS	41	28	29	98
Total		91	74	72	237
	Non-Movers	36.0%	33.1%	30.9%	100.0%
	MOVERS	41.8%	28.6%	29.6%	100.0%

The difference in household size between movers and non-movers is slight: one-half of non-movers are in one or two-person households; 58% of movers are in one or two-person households.

Educationally, more movers than non-movers are in the categories of “high school or less” (28.1% vs. 23.1%) and “college degree” (55.6% vs. 50.0%). A higher percent of movers had a graduate degree (27% vs. 16%).

Household income variations between respondents who had and had not moved since 2002 are shown in Figure 11. With the exclusion of the under $20,000 household income group, (which had two responses), there were more respondents in the “moved” category who placed themselves in the lower two and also, in the higher two income groups. There does not seem to be any other pattern with which to compare income group categories of movers and non-movers.

Figure 11

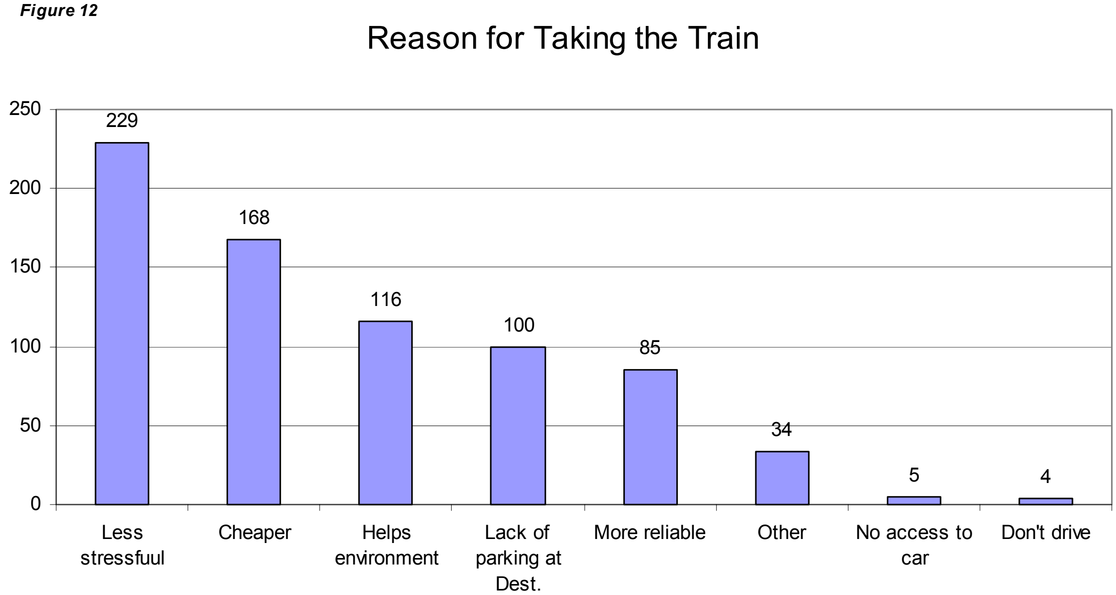


Commuter Opinions

Reasons for Taking the Train

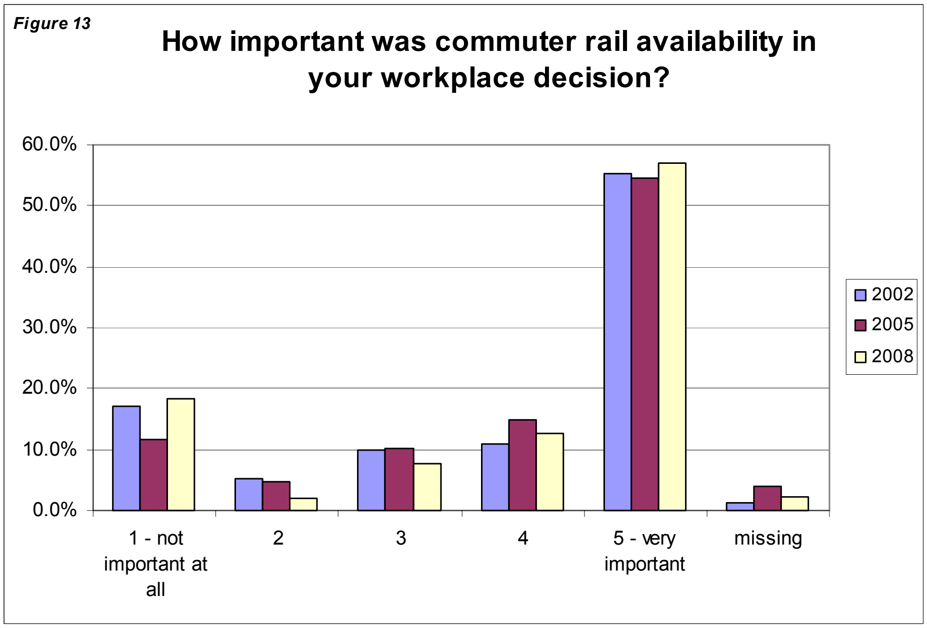
Commuters were asked about their reasons for taking the train, with multiple responses allowed. Figure 12 shows that the top reason given by the majority of respondents (87.7%) was because it it "less stressful than driving". Although this reason was never the only reason cited for using the train, it was the reason most often cited. A majority of respondents (64.4%) chose the train is "cheaper than driving" as a reason for using the train. Survey respondents, who tend to have a higher age and income than the average for the region, indicate that cost is important but other factors are frequently more important. It should also be noted that a large number (38.7%) of respondents receive a commuter rail discount or subsidy from an employer, school or other agency. The third most cited reason for using the train was that it "helps the environment". The fourth reason was a "lack of parking at their destination". The reliability of the train over driving was the fifth top reason for taking the train. "Other" reasons cited for taking the train include the ability to work or sleep on the train, avoiding highway construction and traffic, enjoyment of the commuter train culture, health factors and the fact that work helps pay for it.

Figure 12



Importance of commuter rail to decisions about where to work and live

When asked to rate the importance of the availability of commuter rail in their decision to work where they currently work, the majority of respondents (57.1%) gave the highest rating of importance, as shown in Figure 13. Another 28% were neutral or did not consider commuter rail availability an important factor in their work location choice.



Similarly, respondents indicated that commuter rail availability is a more important factor in their workplace location than in where they choose to live, as seen in Figure 14. 29.5% said they would <u>live</u> elsewhere if there were no rail. 41.4% said they would <u>work</u> elsewhere if there were no rail. (Note: 43% of respondents work in the Downtown or Financial District where parking is scarce and driving is a less attractive mode choice. It is possible that at least some of these respondents would continue to work in a different location within Metro Boston.) This pattern of responses has been consistent since 2002.

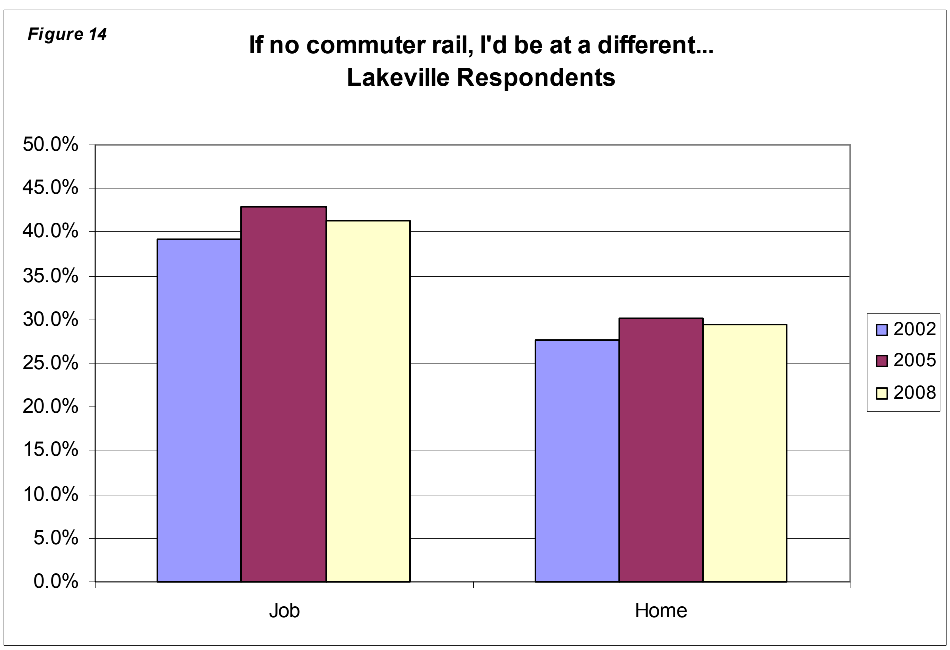
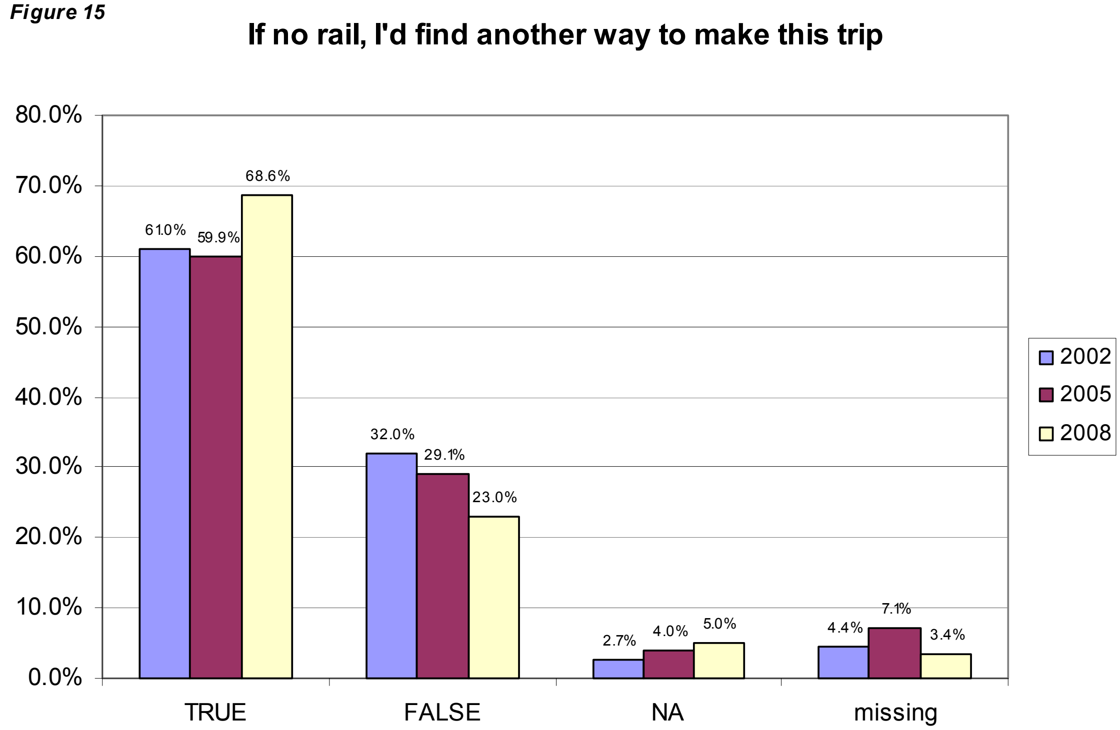


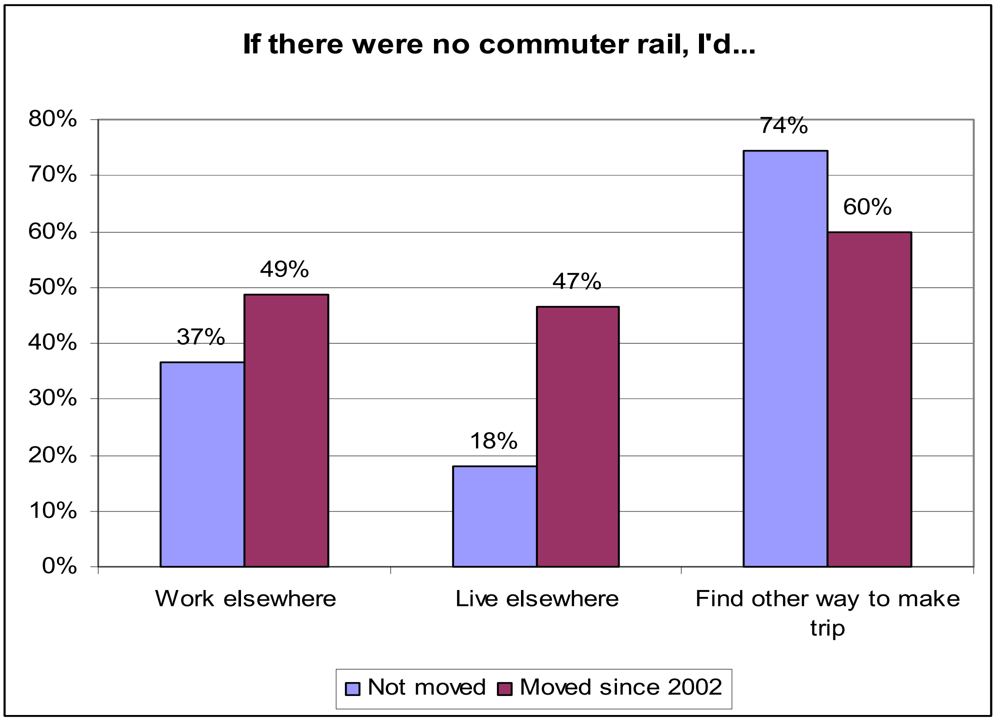
Figure 15 indicates that over two thirds of respondents (68.6%) would find another way to make their work trip if there were no commuter rail. This seeming contradiction in responses could mean that respondents have made their work and home location decisions with or without the presence of the commuter rail, depending upon how long they have been in their home or been at their job. The question also asks them to consider what they would do if commuter rail no longer existed, given their present circumstances. A large number of commuters however, prefer to make different workplace and home decisions in the absence of commuter rail. In other words, commuting choices are lower in priority on the list of factors considered in where to live, yet remain a big factor in considering a workplace.

Figure 15



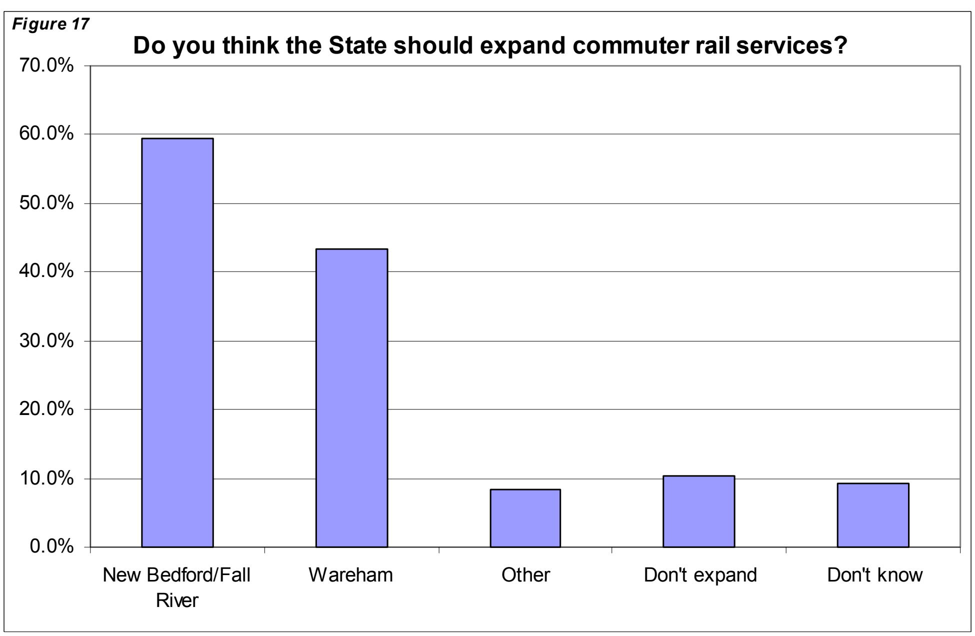
Commuter rail remains an important factor in home location decisions for those households who are more likely or more able to change housing locations. Of those survey respondents who have moved since 2002 (40%), 47% said that if there were no commuter rail line, they would be living in a different community than the one they are living in. Only 18% of those who have not moved since 2002 said they would be living in a different community if there were no commuter rail line. (See Figure 16.)

Figure 16



Opinions about Commuter Rail Expansion

Figure 17 shows that a majority of respondents support commuter rail expansion. 59.4% said it should be expanded to Fall River and New Bedford, 43.3% said it should be expanded to Wareham and another 6.1% wrote in that rail should be expanded to Buzzards Bay or Cape Cod. 10.3% said there should be no expansion and 9.2% did not know.



Opinions about How to Raise Funds for Commuter Rail
Raising gas taxes, sales taxes or local assessments were the least popular ways to raise funds for commuter rail. Of the ways listed on the survey for the State to cover the cost of commuter rail service, the most popular responses were the following:

1. Sell bonds (96 responses),
2. Take the funds from other state programs (66 responses)
3. Toll booths on highways into Boston (64 responses)
4. Increase the cost of vehicle registration fees (53 responses)

Several people wrote in other ideas, which are listed below:

- Seek federal funding
- Collect fares all the time
- Improve efficiency in MBTA budget and operations
- Add private car membership/club cars with added amenities
- Increase parking costs in Boston
- Alcohol and tobacco tax
- Reduce salaries of politicians
- Contributions from large Boston companies
- Reduce executive pensions
- Increase fines to lawbreakers
- Change MBTA retirement policies
- Include funding in casino negotiations
- Use revenues from the regional greenhouse gas initiative
- Use savings from cuts to other government programs
- Reduce share paid for state employees' healthcare
- Increase commercial property tax
- Increase corporate taxes
- Increase taxes in municipalities receiving new service
- Spend less on highways and roads
- Increase excise tax on gas guzzlers
- Increase fares

Conclusion
Although commuter rail is an important factor in housing and work location decisions, there has been no significant change in the trend of community origins since the rail line was restored in 1997. Middleborough and Lakeville continue to be home to the largest number of Lakeville station commuters, followed by Wareham and New Bedford, with the two latter communities located approximately twenty miles away from the station.

The schedule of the train is characteristic of a commuter rail service as respondents' trip purpose and frequency indicate, with nearly all passengers traveling all the way to Boston. Higher wages and a greater number of job opportunities within the Boston metro area contribute to people's willingness to make long commutes.

Getting people to use other modes to the station is a challenge. Future station siting decisions should consider the convenience of using alternative modes to the station, particularly walking, as fuel costs rise. Such considerations would also reduce the parking requirements and cost of building and maintaining the station.

Consistent with past survey trends, Lakeville commuters continue to get older with each survey—even while approximately 40% of respondents have moved to the area since 2002.

As fuel prices rice, it is expected that more workers will use rail to commute rather than driving. It is interesting to note, however, that a significant majority of survey respondents choose to take commuter rail because it is less stressful than driving, rather than because it is cheaper than driving. This point could be related to the previous point that Lakeville commuters tend to be a little older (and wiser?); nevertheless, the "less stressful" reason was chosen by all ages and income groups.

A previous survey indicated that rail is a less important factor in where to live than the factors of housing costs and family ties. Surveys indicate that the availability of commuter rail is a more important factor in where to work. The availability of commuter rail is believed to attract people with higher incomes and education levels. It also allows existing residents to gain higher incomes by connecting them with the Boston job market.

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LAKEVILLE TRAIN SURVEY

SRPEDD is conducting this survey in an effort to study the growth impacts of commuter rail on the region. Please be assured that your answers are confidential. **If you are traveling to South Station**, you may drop your completed survey in the box marked "Deposit Train Surveys Here" at the end of the platform. **If you are getting off the train at any other stop**, you may fax the survey to 508-823-1803 or give the survey to someone who can deposit it in one of the platform boxes at South Station. Thank you for your help. Survey results will be available on the SRPEDD website, www.srpedd.org in about one month.

1. *Please write the city or town where you live.* ___________________________________

2. *At which stop are you getting off of this train?*
___South Station ___Braintree ___Brockton
___JFK/UMASS ___Holbrook/Randolph ___Campello
___Quincy Center ___Montello ___Bridgewater

3. *What is the purpose of your trip today?*
___Work ___School ___Medical
___Shopping ___Social/Recreational ___Other___________________

4. *How frequently do you make this trip?*
___4 or more times/week ___2-3 times/week ___once/week
___2-3 times/month ___once/month ___less than once/month

5. *How will you get to your final destination? (Check all that apply.)*
___Bus ___Subway ___Walk ___Taxi ___Employer Shuttle ___Other__________

6. *If you are going to Boston, to where in the Metro area are you going? (e.g., Back Bay, Downtown, Cambridge, etc.)* ________________________________

7. *How long does it usually take you (in hours and minutes) to make this trip, from where you started to your final destination?* ____hours ____minutes

8. *How did you get to the station today?*
___Drove alone ___Carpooled ___Taxi ___Vanpool
___Was dropped off ___Walked ___Bicycled ___Other___________________

9. *What are your reasons for taking the train today? (Check all that apply.)*
___Don't drive ___Don't have access to a car ___Less stressful than driving
___Cheaper than driving ___More reliable than driving ___Lack of parking at destination
___Helps the environment ___Other ____

10. *Do you receive a commuter rail discount or subsidy from an employer, school or other agency?*
___No ___Yes

11. *What is your age group?*
___17 or under ___18-24 ___25-34 ___35-44 ___45-64 ___65 or over

12. *What is your annual <u>household</u> income?*
___Under $20,000 ___$60,000-$79,999 ___$120,000-$139,999
___$20,000-$39,999 ___$80,000-$99,999 ___$140,000-$159,000
___$40,000-$59,999 ___$100,000-$119,999 ___$160,000 or more

13. *How many people live in your household?* ___1 ___2 ___3 ___4 ___5 ___6 or more

14. *How many of them are under 18 years old?* ___0 ___1 ___2 ___3 ___4 ___5 or more

15. *What is your education level?*
___less than High School degree ___some College ___Graduate degree
___completed High School ___College degree ___Ph.D.

16. *If you've moved since 2002, from what city or town did you move?*

____

17. *On a scale of 1 – 5, how important a factor was the availability of commuter rail in your decision to work where you currently work? 1 = not important at all; 5 = very important*
___1 ___2 ___3 ___4 ___5

18. *Please mark either "True" (T), "False" (F) or "Not Applicable" (NA) for the following statements.*
If the commuter rail line did not exist, I would be working at a different location. ___T ___F ___NA
If the commuter rail line did not exist, I would be living in a different community. ___T ___F ___NA
If the commuter rail line did not exist, I would find another way to make this trip. ___T ___F ___NA

19. *Do you think the State should expand commuter rail service?*
___Yes, to New Bedford/Fall River ___Yes, to Wareham
___Yes, to _______________ ___No, should not expand ___Don't know

20. *How do you think the State should cover the cost for commuter rail service? (check all that apply.)*
___Raise the gas tax ___Raise the sales tax ___Sell bonds paid from general revenue
___Take the funds from other state programs ___Increase city/town assessments
___Increase the cost of vehicle registration fees ___Toll booths on highways into Boston
___Other ideas____

Please write comments related to this survey or transportation issues below or on the back of this sheet. You may also email your comments to info@srpedd.org. ***Thank you so much for your time!***