

## Lakeville Commuter Rail Survey Summary Results – April 26, 2005

### *Background*

SRPEDD has conducted four commuter rail surveys at the Lakeville MBTA station since the Old Colony line was restored in November 1997. The first survey was done in Spring of 1998, mainly to determine where people were coming from and which train they took in the morning and afternoon. A longer survey was done on March 22, 2000 that tried to determine the influence of the rail restoration on people's decisions to live in the southeast region and work in Boston. The last two surveys, done on April 9, 2002 and April 26, 2005 were kept nearly identical in an attempt to mark trends--such as the demographics of people using commuter rail, their opinions, and the importance of commuter rail as a factor in where they live and work.

### *2005 Survey*

This summary highlights the findings of the latest survey and makes comparisons to previous surveys where possible.

Each of the last two surveys was conducted in the same way. SRPEDD staff handed out surveys to nearly every passenger boarding the four peak AM trains as well as the 5:25AM train. Passengers were asked to fill out the survey on the train and give the survey to a staff person or deposit in a marked box at the train platform. Surveys were collected at South Station, JFK and Quincy Center stations. The survey itself also gave instructions for either mailing or faxing the results back to SRPEDD.

The survey is not scientific because there is no control over who responds. Other limitations include the difficulty of collecting completed surveys at South Station where an inbound train can come in on any one of thirteen tracks, which is unknown until the last minute. SRPEDD appreciates everyone who took the time to fill out a survey.

### *Results*

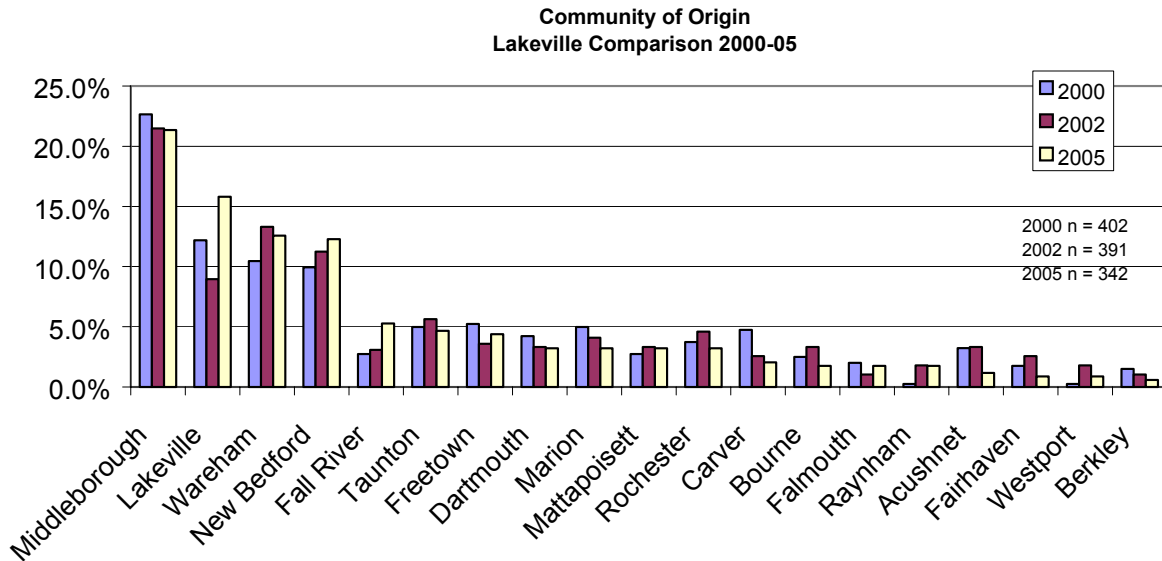
605 surveys were distributed at the Lakeville station; 354 completed surveys were returned to SRPEDD, resulting in a response rate of 58.5%. There was a noticeable decrease in ridership and the number of filled parking spaces from past years. This decrease has been reported systemwide; it may be due to fare and parking increases, the completion of the central artery construction or other factors.

Overall, the responses to the public opinion questions and questions about factors in home and job locations were not that different in 2002 and 2005. The most significant differences are related to the demographics of respondents. The results to every question are illustrated below.

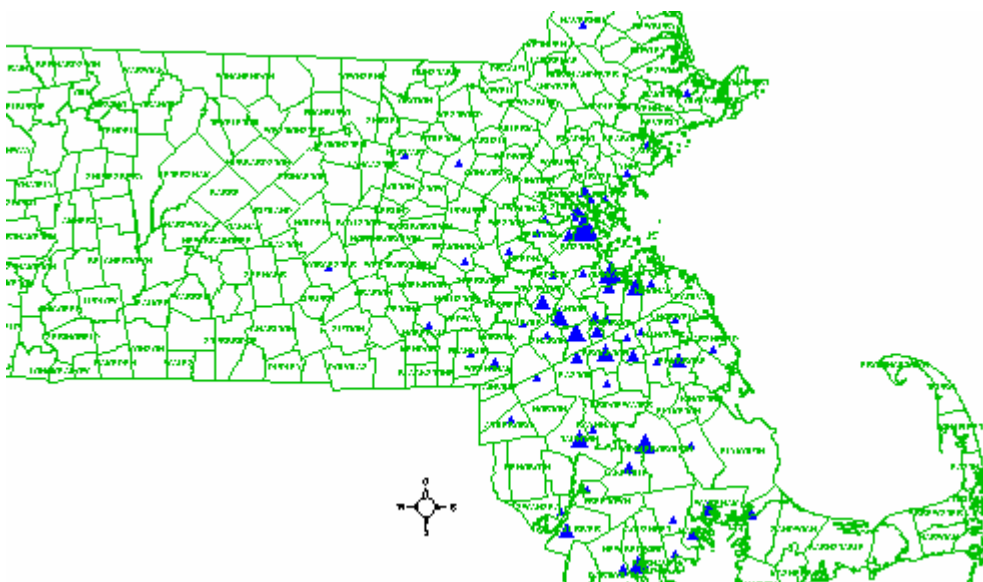
### *Question 1: Where do you live?*

Commuters continue to come mostly from the same four communities. Middleborough is where most commuters come from (20.7%), followed by Lakeville (15.3%), Wareham (12.2%) and New Bedford (11.9%). What is highlighted is a significant increase in

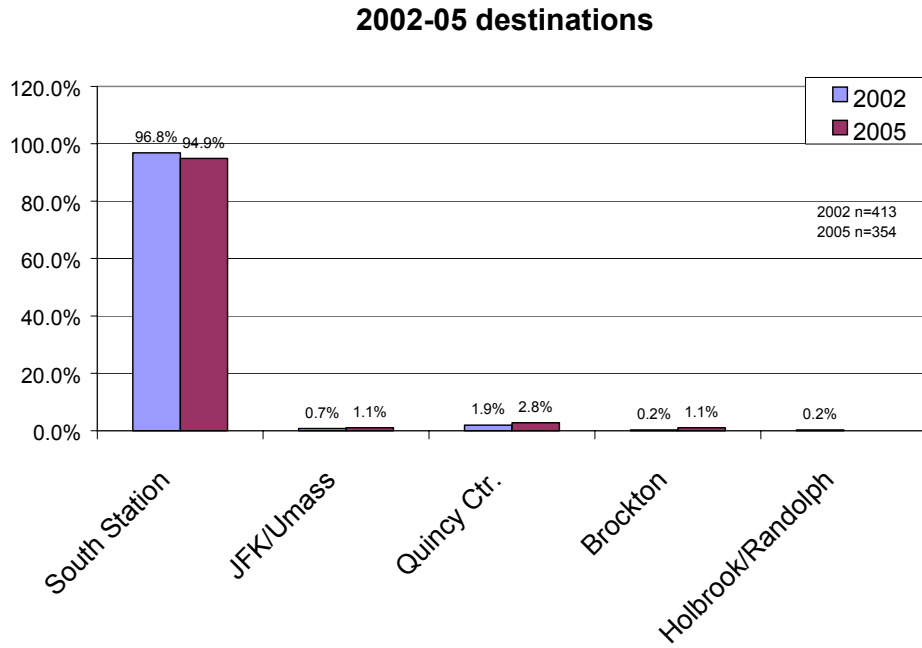
responses from Lakeville since 2002 and a continuing upward trend for the cities of New Bedford and Fall River. The number of responses from Middleborough and every other town (with the exceptions of Freetown and Falmouth) showed a percentage decrease from 2002 to 2005.



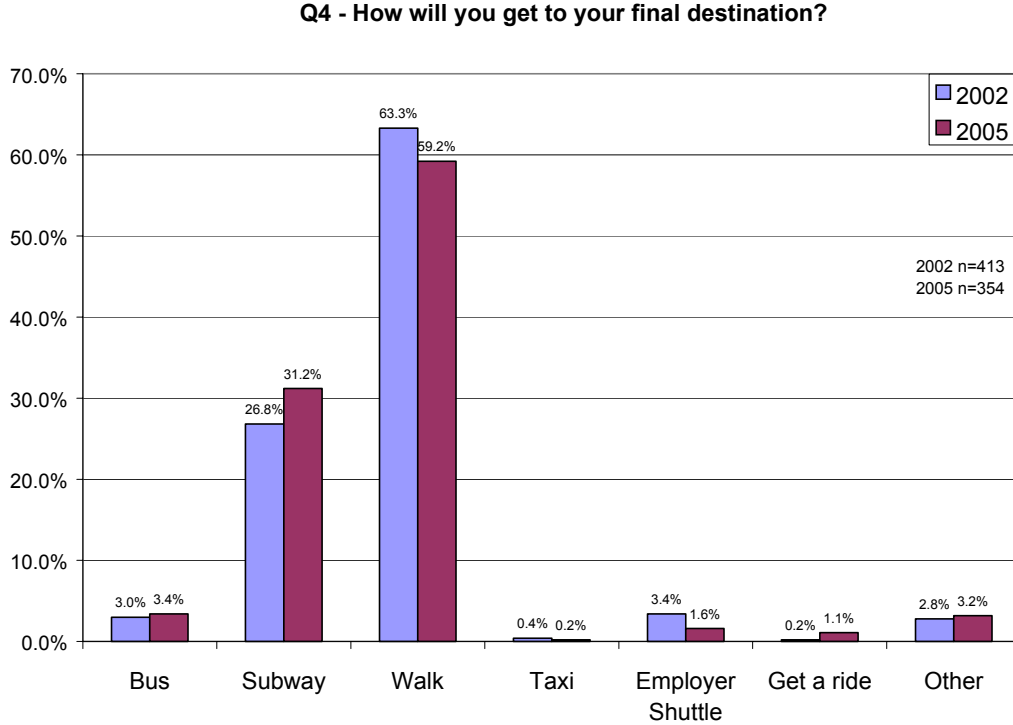
*Question 2: If you've moved since November 1997 (when the Old Colony rail line re-started), from what city or town did you move?*



Question 3: At which stop are you getting off of this train?

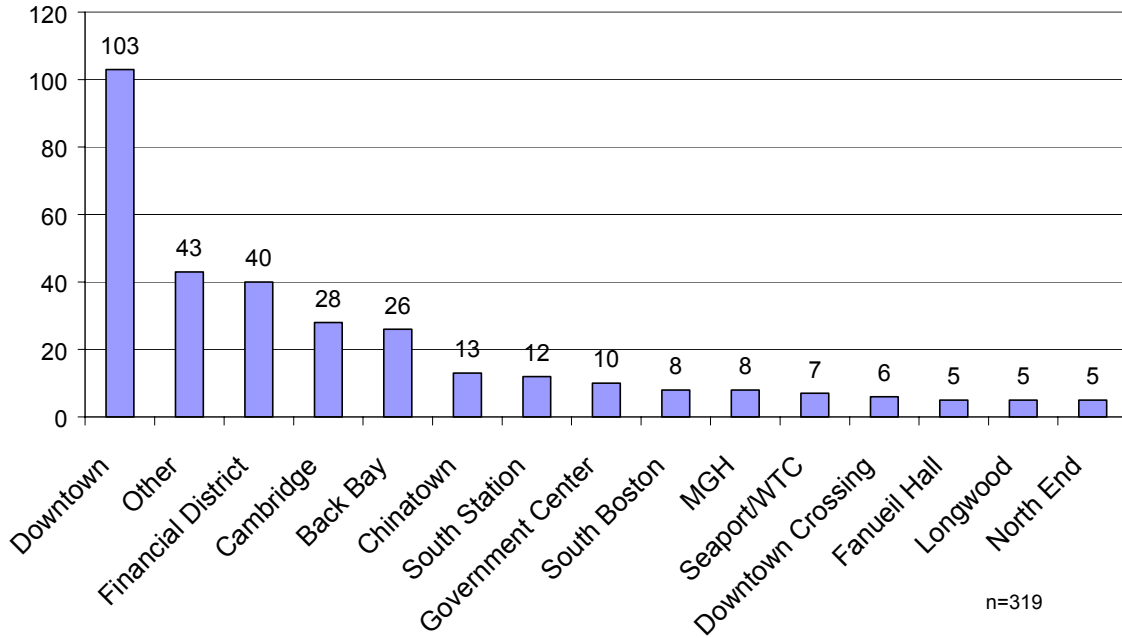


Question 4: How will you get to your final destination? (check all that apply)



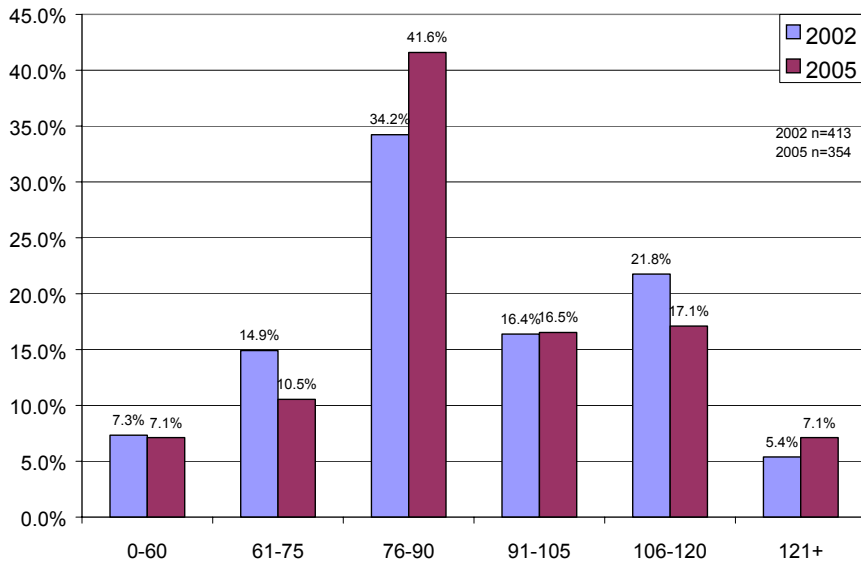
Question 5: If you are going to Boston, where in the Metro area are you going to? (e.g., Back Bay, Downtown, Cambridge, etc.)

### Where in the Metro area are you going?



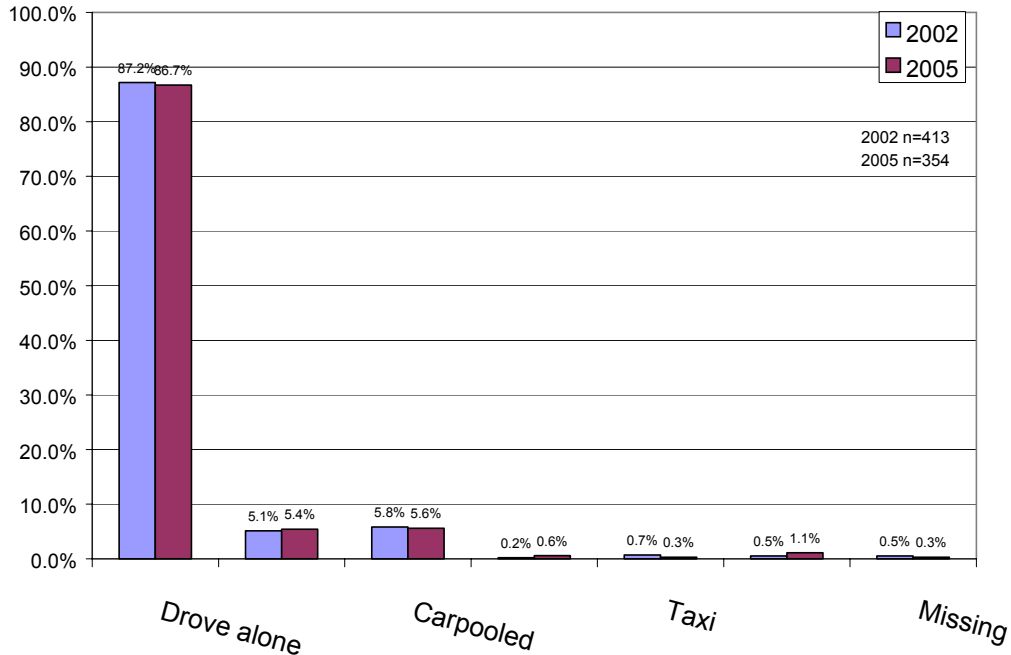
Question 6: How long will it take you to make your trip, from home to your final destination today?

### 2002-05 Commute Time Comparison Lakeville Respondents



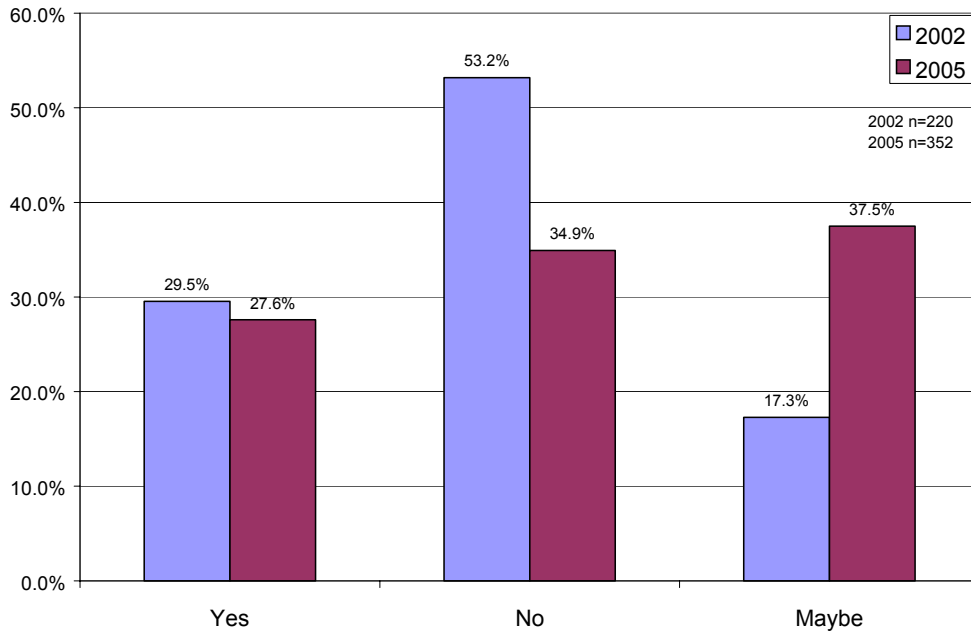
Question 7: How did you get to the station today?

Q4 - Mode to station



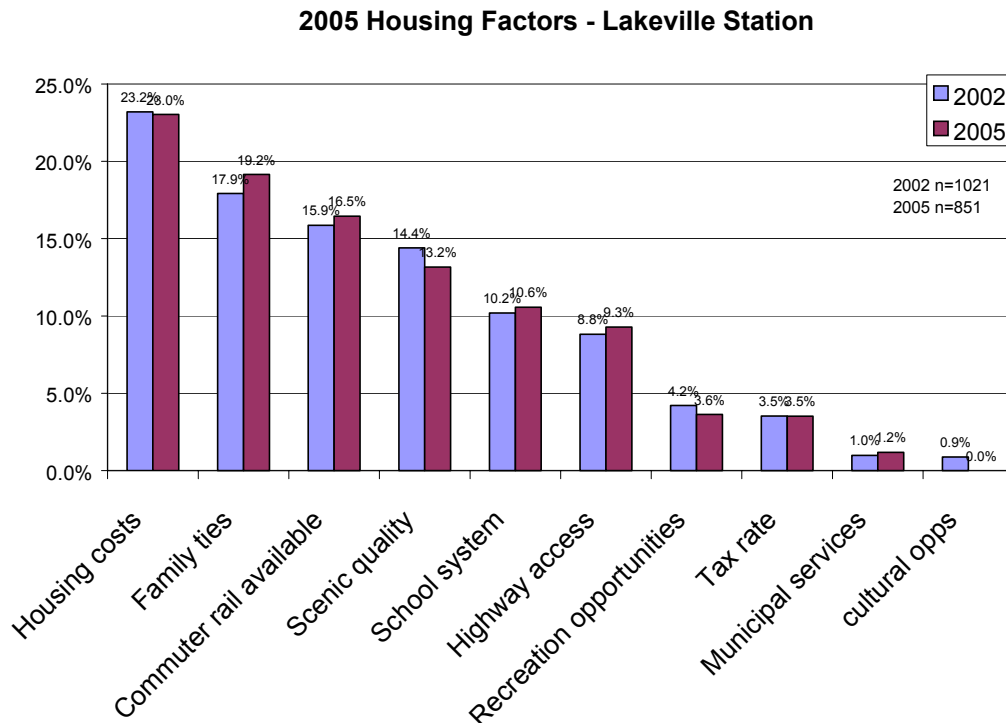
Question 8: Would you ride a shuttle from a central location in your town to the train station if one existed?

Would you ride a shuttle to the train station?



Although there were slightly fewer “Yes” answers, there were notably fewer “No” answers and a lot more “Maybe” answers. This question in 2002 was limited to residents of Wareham, Bourne and Falmouth; in 2005, it was broadened to all respondents. It did not matter if people had moved to the area since 1997 or not; responses varied regardless of where people came from or if they had not moved at all since 1997. This question and the questions about being able to walk to the train station seem to hint that people may be 1) getting tired of driving, 2) would like to be able to get by with one less car in their household, 3) want to save on their gas expenses and vehicle mileage; or, 4) still remember the cold, snowy mornings of the past winter and what they entailed in order to drive to the station.

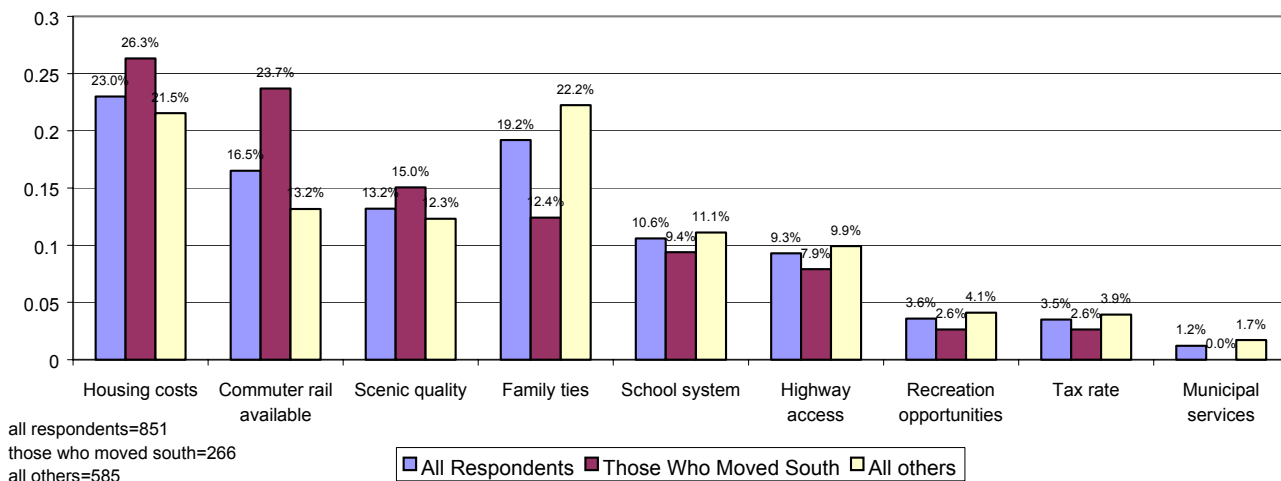
*Question 9: What are the most important factors in your decision about where to live? (Please check up to 3 choices.)*



The top factors in the decision about where to live remain as housing costs, family ties, commuter rail available (remember where this survey is taking place), and scenic quality. Looking at the total respondents, family ties and commuter rail availability increased from 2002 to 2005, while housing costs did not increase in importance—which is surprising. School system and highway access also increased a little.

The following chart separates responses by three categories: total respondents, respondents who moved south from the metropolitan Boston area or other points north of the region (and within Massachusetts), and total respondents minus those who moved south.

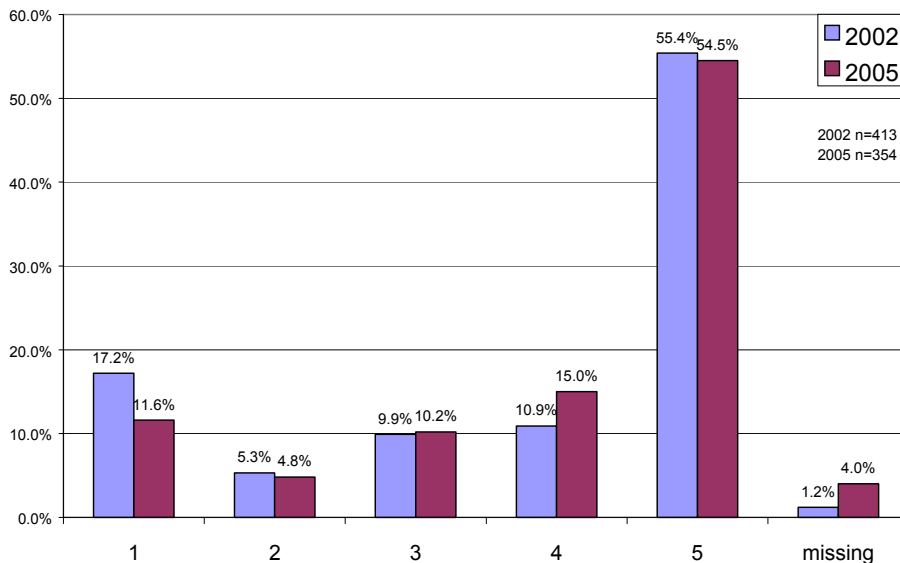
**Most Important Factors about Where to Live  
Those Who Moved South vs. Total**



For those respondents who moved further south, housing costs and commuter rail availability are clearly more important factors than for those who moved from other places or who did not move since 1997. For those people, family ties is the most important factor in the decision of where to live, followed by housing costs.

*Question 10: 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*

**Rate Commuter Rail as a Factor in your Workplace Decision  
Lakeville Respondents**

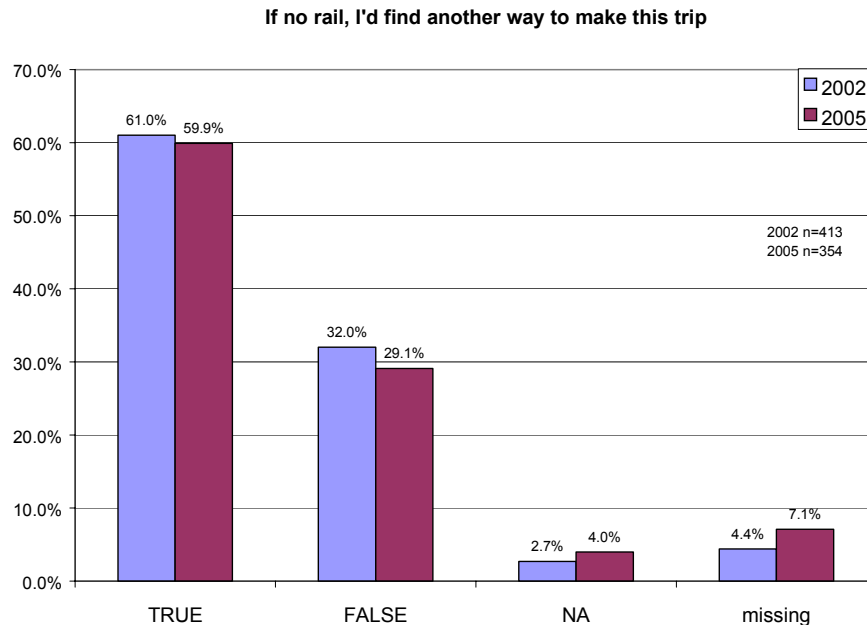
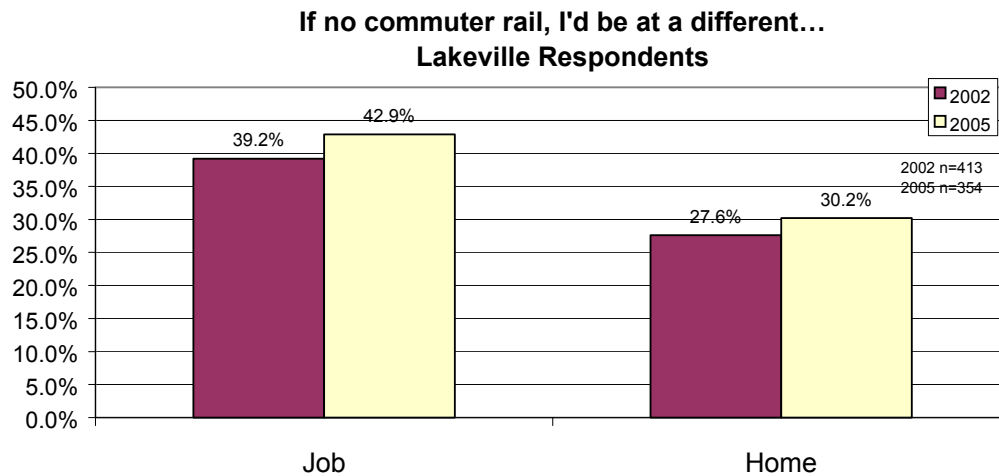


*Question 11: Please mark either “true” (T), “False” (F) or “Not Applicable” (NA) for the following statements.*

If the commuter rail line did not exist, I would be working at a different job.

If the commuter rail line did not exist, I would be living in a different place.

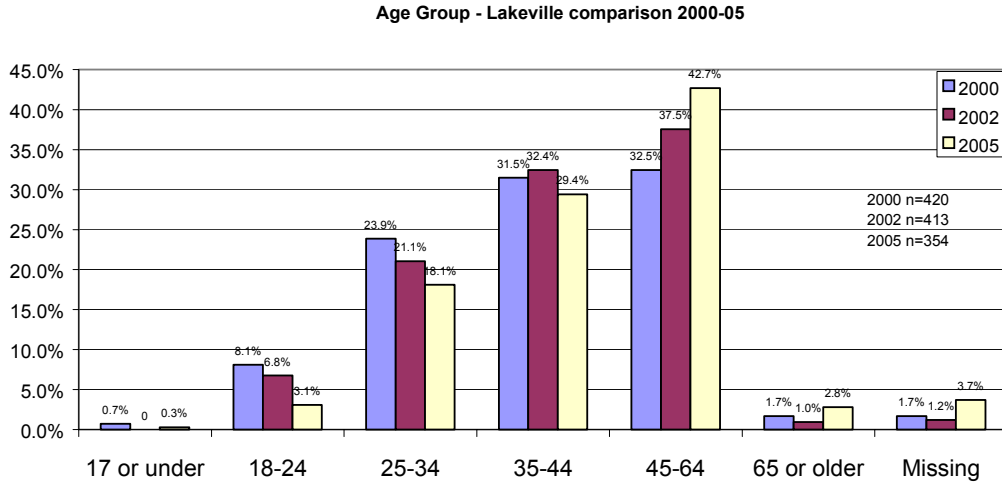
If the commuter rail line did not exist, I would find another way to make this trip.



There are small increases in the number of respondents who said “True”—if there were no commuter rail in the area, they would be at a different home or job. Just as in 2002, it is clear that the availability of commuter rail is a more important factor in job choice than housing choice. Where people live is less flexible than where they work due to the

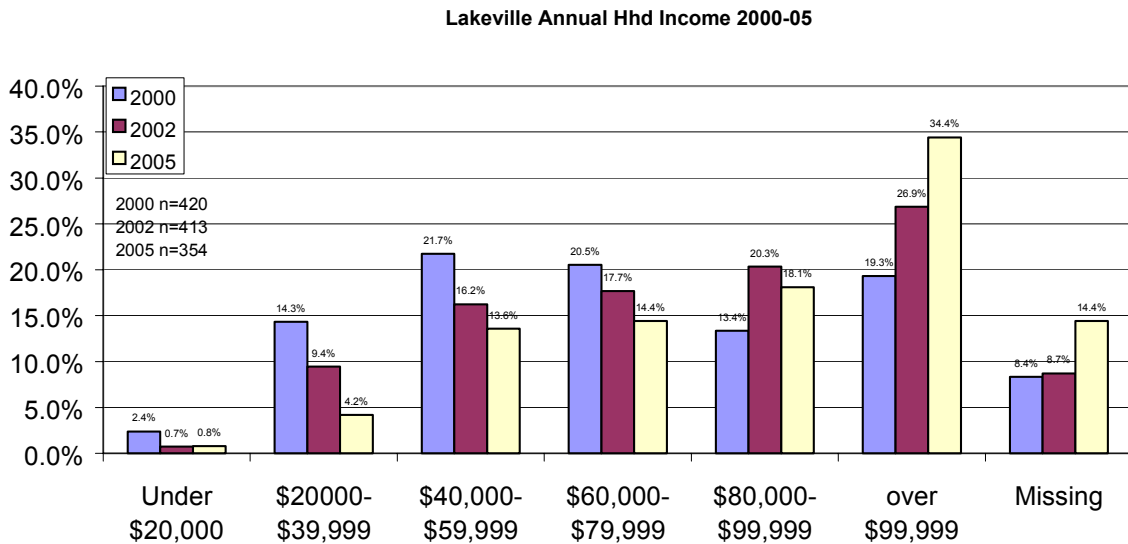
important factors of housing costs and family ties. It is clear, however, that commuter rail availability is an important factor in both choices.

*Question 12: What is your age group?*



Between 2000 and 2005, the age ranges of respondents have become more vertical as the number of 45-64 year-olds increased from 32.5% to 42.7% and the number in every younger age bracket decreased. The age bracket with the sharpest decrease is the 25-34 year-olds, which went from 23.9% in 2000 to 8.1% in 2005.

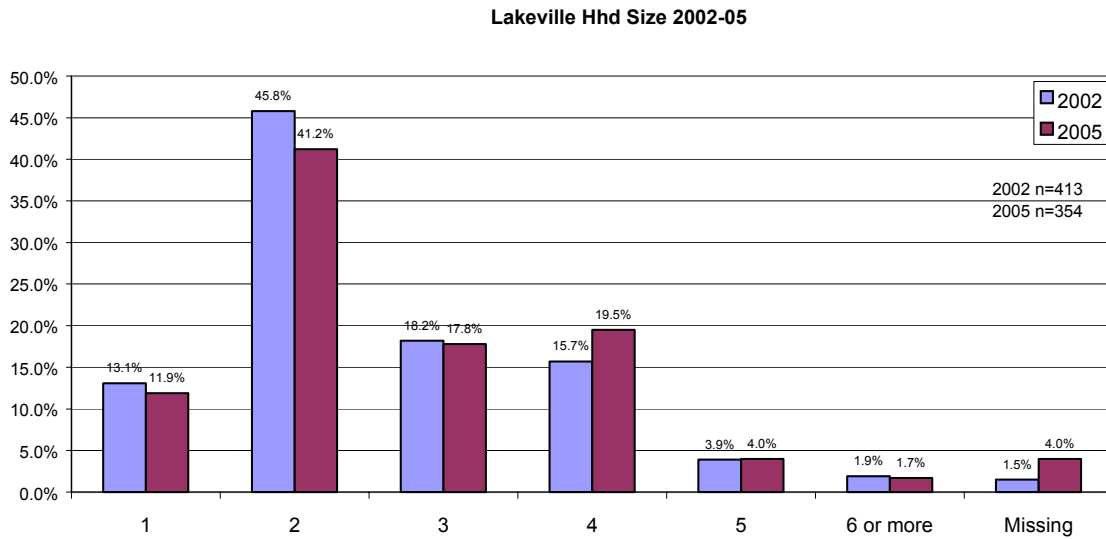
*Question 13: What is your annual household income?*



The survey responses show a similar pattern for income groups as with age groups. Generally, there has been an increase in the highest household income brackets and a

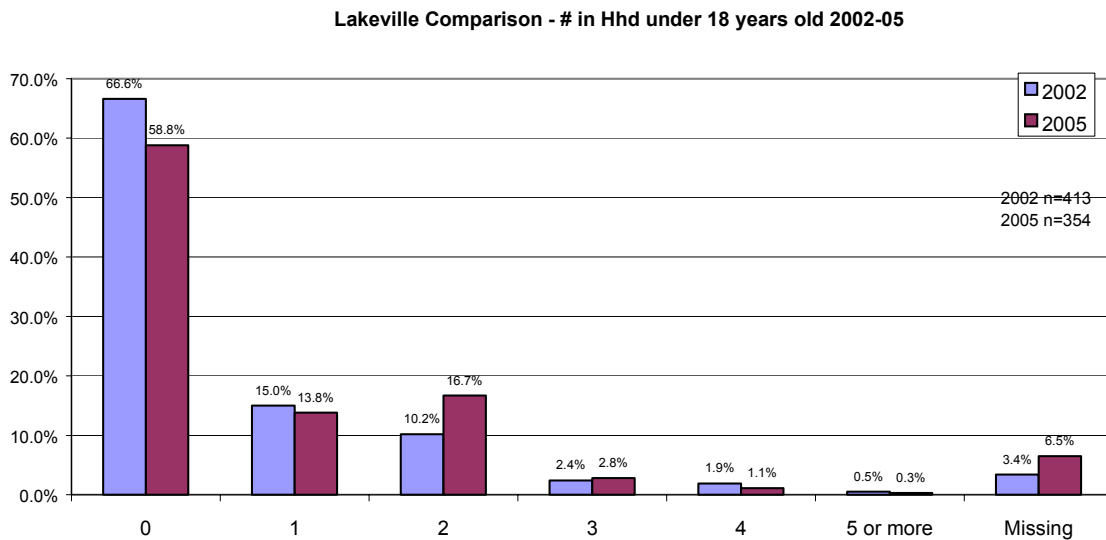
pattern of decline in the income brackets below \$100,000. The \$100,000 and over income category increased from 19.3% in 2000 to 34.4% in 2005. The \$20,000-\$40,000 income bracket decreased from 14.3% of respondents in 2002 to 4.2% in 2005. (There is also a notable increase in the number of passengers who chose not to answer this question—8.7% in 2002 to 14.4% in 2005.)

*Question 14: How many people live in your household?*



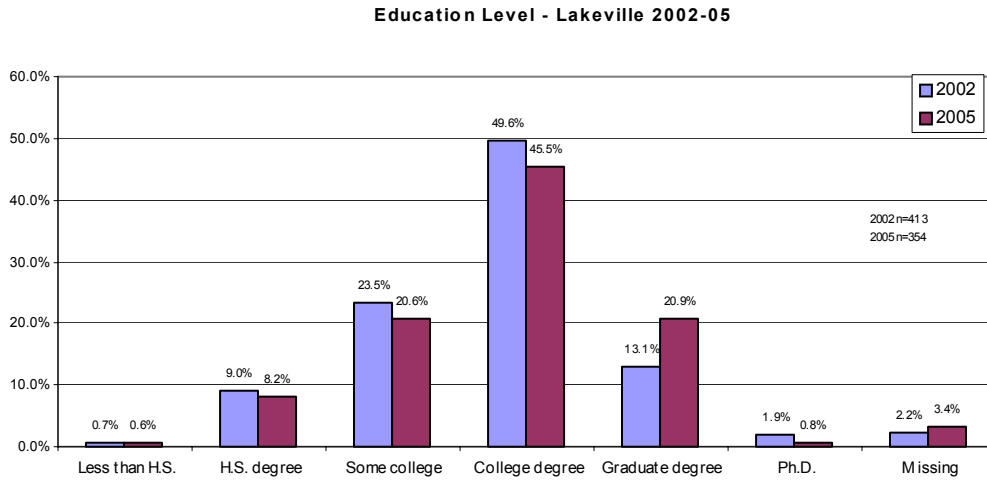
There appears to be a small decrease in the number of one and two-person households among commuters, and an increase in the number of four-person households, from 15.7% to 19.5%. Along with that statistic, there is a 6.5% increase in the number of households with two children under 18 years old.

*Question 15: How many of them are under 18 years old?*

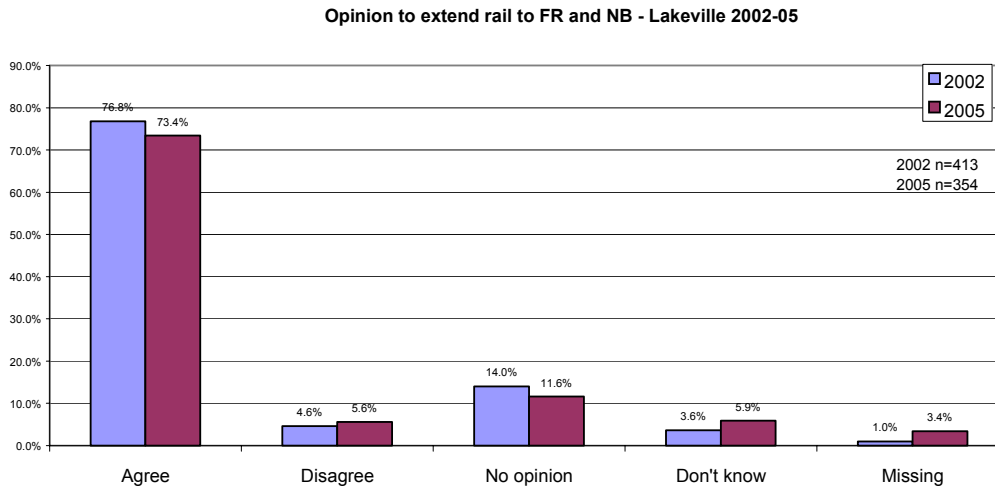


*Question 16: What is your education level?*

All categories showed a decrease in number except for “Graduate degree”, which increased from 13.1% of respondents in 2002 to 20.9% of respondents in 2005.

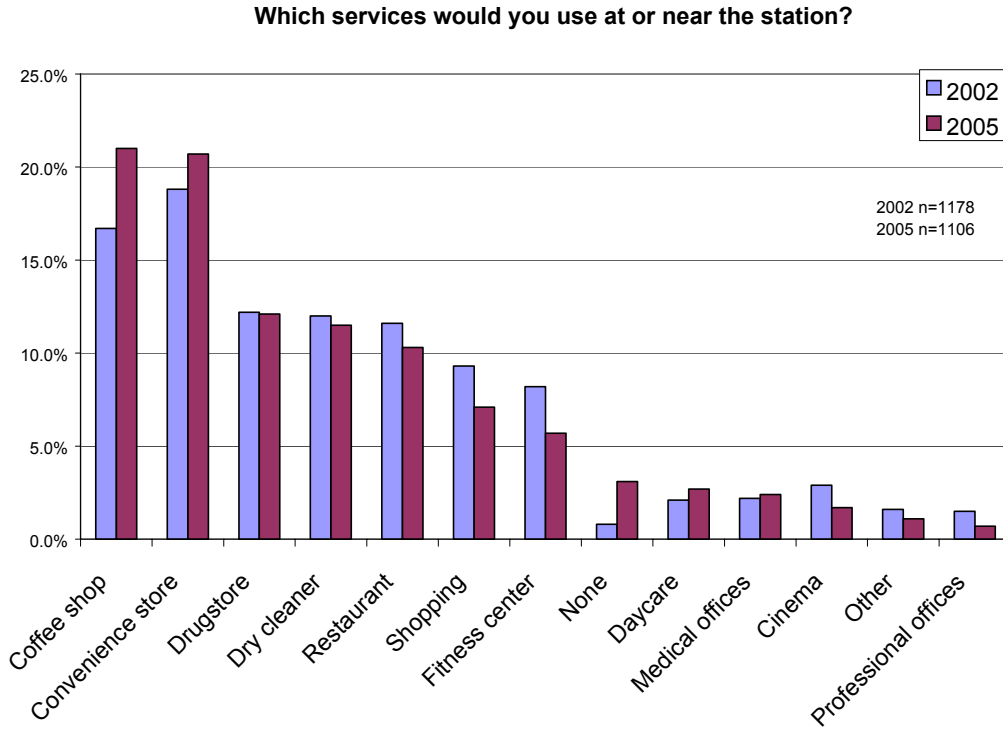


*Question 17: What is your opinion on plans to extend commuter rail to Fall River and New Bedford?*

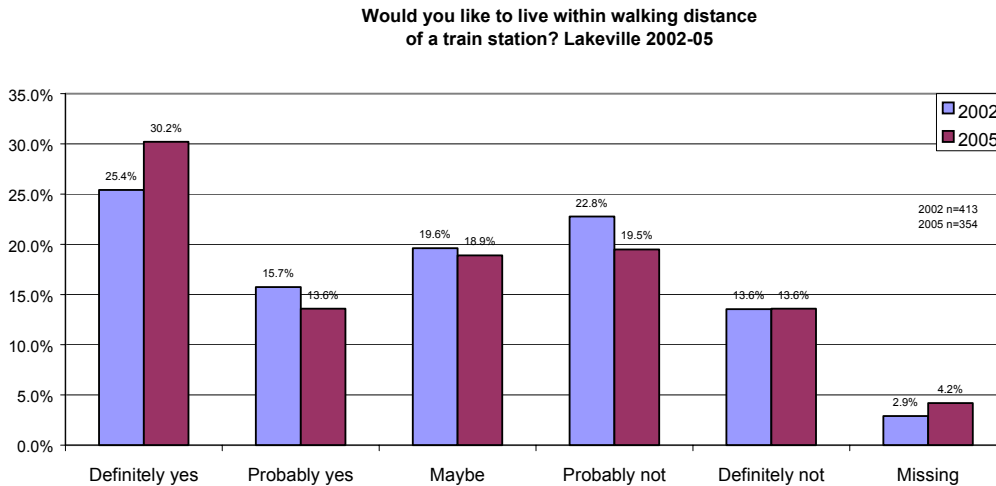


There is a slight change in responses to this question from 2002 to 2005 with a 1% increase in “Disagree”, a 2.3% increase in “Don’t know” and a 2.4% increase in the number of no answers. Still, 73.4% agree with the rail extension, (down from 76.8% in 2002).

Question 18: Which of the following would you use if it were located at or near the Lakeville station? (Check all that apply.)

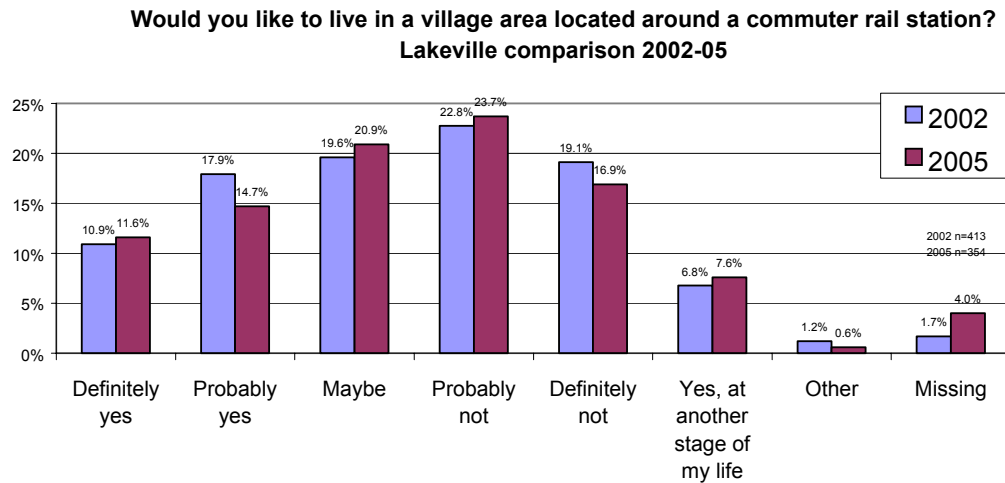


Question 19: Would you like to live within walking distance of a commuter rail station?



The number of “Definitely Yes” responses increased from 25.4% to 30.2%. This may not be a significant finding, but it shows a consistent interest in such housing opportunities.

*Question 20: Would you like to live in a village area located around a commuter rail station? A village area would include apartments, houses, shopping and offices that are close to each other.*



Again, the responses to this question show some consistent interest in this kind of housing opportunity. It also shows that there are clearly a variety of housing and lifestyle preferences.

### *Conclusions*

People are looking for a better quality of life—a term that means different things to different people. Some people commented on the survey about what is important in their decision about where to live. For some, it is a peaceful, quiet location with land; for others, it is financial and job opportunities. To those people commuting by rail from the Lakeville station, the availability of the train allows them to earn a higher income while living in a place they have always lived, or have moved to for reasons of greater affordability or scenic quality.

One thing that cannot be argued is that the availability of commuter rail creates an attractive alternative to driving to Boston. People are willing to travel farther and longer in order to gain more affordable housing and/or a better paying job. For many people, the availability of commuter rail is what makes this longer commute viable.

Although housing costs and family ties are greater decision factors, people who live in southeastern Massachusetts and people who move here appreciate the scenic quality of the region and consider that in their decision to live here. Scenic quality remains more important than the quality of the school system and the tax rate. The importance of this factor should not be overlooked as we develop in the future.