



# *Appendix H*

Public Survey

# H1 ONLINE SURVEY RESULTS

---

The NRVRC created an online survey tool to collect input on the travel habits of regional residents, students and visitors, and preferences for passenger rail station service and station amenities. The survey was promoted in regional media and through mailing lists, social media pages, and newsletters of partner organizations, such as Virginia Tech, Radford University, regional economic development and local government organizations, among others. The survey was available online from April through October of 2015, with coordinated publicity efforts to encourage participation in April, and again in September.

Participation in the survey was very strong, with over 6,000 responses. The survey asked respondents to specify whether they were university staff or students, regional residents generally, or visitors to the region, allowing NRVRC staff to analyze the travel habits of these differing groups.

## Survey respondent characteristics

Types of respondents	Response Percent	Response Count
University student	26.7%	1650
University faculty/staff	31.8%	1963
Regional resident- I live in the New River Valley (Giles, Floyd, Montgomery, Pulaski counties, City of Radford)	35.0%	2162
Visitor to the New River Valley	6.6%	405
	<i>Total</i>	<b>6180</b>

## Student response summary

University students represent a significant potential source of users of Amtrak services, with approximately 40,000 students enrolled at Virginia Tech and Radford University. The vast majority of students' families live outside the region, creating a large demand for travel options for students to return home to visit friends and family. Analysis of students' 'home' zip code from university records indicate that at least 13,000 students are from the Washington DC metro area, and a further 2,000+ are from the major northeastern cities along the popular Amtrak route between Washington and Boston. Over 80% of survey respondents said they travel outside the region to visit family more than once per year, with 30% reporting they do so more than once per month. Over 60% of respondents travel more than once a year to visit friends, and 50% do so for vacation or school-related events.

Conversely, over 60% of students reported that friends and family travel to the New River Valley to visit them more than once per year. Nearly 70% of students reported that their family and friends would be more likely to visit if Amtrak service were available to the New River Valley.

Nearly 70% of students surveyed reported that they had their own car, and reported that driving was the transportation option they used most often for trips outside the region. Over 70% of respondents said they drive their own car more than once per year for trips outside the region, while nearly 80% said they were a passenger in someone else's car. Over 60% of students said they never used car rental or car sharing, Megabus service, or Amtrak service for such trips.

The Washington DC metro area was the most common destination for survey respondents, with 77% of students saying they visit the area at least once per year. Other common destinations include the Richmond region, Charlottesville, and Hampton Roads, and New York City, respectively, with at least 20% of respondents indicating they visit these areas once per year or more.

Survey respondents rarely use passenger rail service currently, with nearly 50% indicating they never use the service, and an additional 29% reporting they use it once per year or less. The survey responses indicate a potential for significantly greater use if service comes to the New River Valley, with 70% of students reporting they would be very likely to use the service, and an additional 22% reporting they would be somewhat likely. Only 3% said they would be very unlikely to use the service. Over 80% said they would use the service to travel to the Washington DC area, and 65% said they would use the service to visit other cities on the northeast corridor route (New York, Philadelphia, etc.). Over 50% said they would use the service to visit Roanoke, and nearly 40% would use it to visit Charlottesville.

Survey respondents indicated their preference for station amenities, ranking bathroom facilities as the most important station feature. Other important features include bus/transit service to the station, charging stations for phones/devices, maps and visitor information, on-site staff and ticketing facilities, long term parking, and climate controlled waiting area, respectively. Food and beverage service, and car or bike rental services were ranked as least important.

Surveyed students did not indicate a strong preference for train departure or arrival times, indicating a slight preference for late morning or afternoon departures on weekdays, and a preference for early or mid-morning departures on weekends. The preference for arrival times for trains returning the New River Valley was stronger, with late afternoon or evening as the preferred time for both weekdays and weekends.

Nearly 50% of surveyed students indicated they would be willing to pay up to \$100 for a round trip ticket to Washington DC, although 40% of students said they would not pay more than the \$50 for their tickets.

### **University employee response summary**

The nearly 9,000 faculty and staff of the region's universities were enthusiastic participants in the passenger rail survey, with nearly 25% of all faculty participating. Survey respondents indicated another potentially large source of demand, with frequent travel for both business and personal reasons. Over 80% of survey respondents said they travel outside the region to visit family more than once per year, with 30% reporting they do so more than once per month. Over 70% of respondents travel more than once a year to visit friends, or for vacation and leisure travel. Approximately 68% travel outside the region for business purposes more than once a year, with 17% travelling for business two or more times per month.

Conversely, over 77% of respondents reported that friends and family travel to the New River Valley to visit them more than once per year. Over 60% reported that their family and friends would be more likely to visit if AMTRAK service were available to the New River Valley.

Nearly all surveyed university employees reported that they had their own car, and reported that driving was the transportation option they used most often for trips outside the region. Over 96% of respondents said they drive their own car more than once per year for trips outside the region, while 53% said they were a passenger in someone else's car. About 66% of survey respondents said they used air travel more than once per year, and over 35% of survey respondents used car rental or ride sharing services. Over 60% of respondents said they never used Megabus service or Amtrak service for such trips.

The Washington DC metro area was the most common destination for survey respondents, with 83% of respondents saying they visit the area at least once per year. Other common destinations include Charlottesville, Richmond, Hampton Roads, Lynchburg, New York City and Atlanta, respectively, with at least 20% of respondents indicating they visit these areas once per year or more.

Survey respondents rarely use passenger rail service currently, with nearly 55% indicating they never use the service, and an additional 35% reporting they use it once per year or less. The survey responses indicate a potential for significantly greater use if service comes to the New River Valley, with 80% of respondents reporting they would be very likely to use the service, and an additional 16% reporting they would be somewhat likely. Only 2% said they would be very unlikely to use the service. Nearly 93% said they would use the service to travel to the Washington DC area, and 80% said they would use the service to visit other cities on the northeast corridor route (New York, Philadelphia, etc.). Approximately 58% said they would use the service to visit Roanoke and Charlottesville, respectively.

Survey respondents indicated their preference for station amenities, ranking bathroom facilities as the most important station feature. Other important features include long-term parking, on-site staff and ticketing facilities, climate controlled waiting area, bus/transit service to the station, maps and visitor information, and charging stations for phones/devices. Food and beverage service, and car or bike rental services were ranked as least important.

Survey respondents indicated a strong preference for train departure or arrival times, preferring early or mid-morning departure times for trains leaving the New River Valley, and preferred arrival times for trains returning the New River in the late afternoon or evening.

Over 50% of surveyed university faculty/staff indicated they would be willing to pay up to \$100 for a round trip ticket to Washington DC, and 20% said they would pay up to \$150. Nearly 24% said they would not pay more than \$50 for their tickets.

### **Regional resident response summary**

The New River Valley is home to nearly 180,000 residents, with most living in the urban areas around Blacksburg, Christiansburg and Radford, near the proposed station. Over 80% of survey respondents said they travel outside the region to visit family more than once per year, with over 30% reporting they do so more than once per month. Over 70% of respondents travel more than once a year to visit friends, while 75% travel more than once a year vacation and leisure travel. Approximately 60% travel outside the region for business purposes more than once a year, with 17% travelling for business two or more times per month.

Conversely, over 70% of respondents reported that friends and family travel to the New River Valley to visit them more than once per year. Over 60% reported that their family and friends would be more likely to visit if AMTRAK service were available to the New River Valley.

Nearly all surveyed regional residents reported that they had their own car, and reported that driving was the transportation option they used most often for trips outside the region. Over 98% of respondents said they drive their own car more than once per year for trips outside the region, while 58% said they were a passenger in someone else's car. About 52% of survey respondents said they used air travel more than once per year, and over 25% of survey respondents used car rental or ride sharing services. Over 60% of respondents said they never used Megabus service or Amtrak service for such trips.

The Washington DC metro area was the most common destination for survey respondents, with 76% of respondents saying they visit the area at least once per year. Other common destinations include Charlottesville, Richmond, Hampton Roads, Lynchburg, New York City and Atlanta, respectively, with at least 20% of respondents indicating they visit these areas once per year or more.

Survey respondents rarely use passenger rail service currently, with nearly 58% indicating they never use the service, and an additional 32% reporting they use it once per year or less. The survey responses indicate a potential for significantly greater use if service comes to the New River Valley, with 80% of respondents reporting they would be very likely to use the service, and an additional 15% reporting they would be somewhat likely. Only 2% said they would be very unlikely to use the service. Nearly 91% said they would use the service to travel to the Washington DC area, and 80% said they would use the service to visit other cities on the northeast corridor route (New York, Philadelphia, etc.). Approximately 56% said they would use the service to visit Roanoke and Charlottesville, respectively.

Survey respondents indicated their preference for station amenities, ranking bathroom facilities as the most important station feature. Other important features include long-term parking, on-site staff and ticketing facilities, climate controlled waiting area, maps and visitor information, charging stations for phones/devices, and bus/transit service to the station. Food and beverage service, and car or bike rental services were ranked as least important.

Survey respondents indicated a strong preference for train departure and arrival times, preferring early or mid-morning departure times for trains leaving the New River Valley, and preferred arrival times for trains returning the New River in the late afternoon or evening.

Over 53% of surveyed regional residents indicated they would be willing to pay up to \$100 for a round trip ticket to Washington DC, and 18% said they would pay up to \$150. Nearly 25% said they would not pay more the \$50 for their tickets.

## H2 IN-PERSON SURVEY RESULTS

---

In-person surveys were conducted at the Amtrak station in Lynchburg and on the Virginia Tech campus. This section highlights the feedback received at an existing passenger rail station and Home Ride bus services.

### **Amtrak passenger survey**

NRVRC staff and volunteers surveyed passengers at the Lynchburg Amtrak station waiting for the 7:38am northbound train, on three days in November 2015. NRVRC collected 37 total responses from passengers at the Lynchburg Amtrak station. A summary of the survey results appears below.

According to Amtrak station personnel, an average of 50-60 passengers use the service on most weekdays, and 100-120 passengers use the services on most weekends. The train serves significantly more riders on holidays, and at the beginning and end of the semester at Liberty University.

### **Passenger home locations and destinations**

Over half of all passengers surveyed (54%) live in the Lynchburg metro area, while about 18% of respondents live in Washington DC (10%) or northeastern states (8%) along the Amtrak route. Another 5% of travelers live in the Roanoke area, and 5% live in eastern Tennessee.

The top destination for travelers was Washington DC (35%), followed by New York City (16%). Most of the remaining passengers were travelling to other northeastern cities (Baltimore, Boston, Newark, Philadelphia, and Providence), although about 10% of passengers were travelling to other Virginia destinations, including Alexandria, Charlottesville and Manassas.

### **Travel habits**

Nearly half of surveyed passengers were travelling to visit family and friends, with the remaining passengers split evenly between business and vacation trips. Although car travel is the most frequent mode of travel for those surveyed, passenger rail was the second most frequent, with nearly half of those surveyed using the train multiple times per year. Air travel and carpooling were also frequent options, but very few passengers used an intercity bus more than once per year.

Passengers indicated that they visit nearby Virginia cities frequently, as well as major cities along the AMTRAK route. The most common destinations that respondents visit at least once per year were Charlottesville, Lynchburg, Roanoke, Richmond, Washington DC, and New York City, respectively. Conversely, respondents were more likely to use Amtrak service to visit more distant cities. The most common destinations that respondents said they would use Amtrak to visit at least once per year were New York City, Washington DC, Roanoke, Lynchburg, Charlottesville and Hampton Roads, respectively.

Nearly half of those surveyed indicated that they would be very likely (24%) or somewhat likely (24%) to use passenger rail services to visit the New River Valley, although 30% of travelers said they would be very unlikely to use Amtrak service to visit the New River Valley.

### **Passenger rail service and station preferences**

Most travelers preferred a similar schedule for service from the New River Valley as the service from Lynchburg. Nearly half (48%) preferred a train leaving the New River Valley before 8am, with most others (32%) preferring a departure time of 8a-12p. The preferred times for trains returning to the New River Valley are 4p-8p (35%), or 12p-4p (27%).

Passenger ranked the importance of train station features, identifying parking as the most important feature for a passenger rail station. Respondents ranked climate controlled waiting area as the next important, followed by device charging stations, food and beverage service, maps and visitor information, car rental services, bus and transit connections, and bike parking/rental services.

### **Home Ride bus survey**

Volunteers collected several surveys from students on the Virginia Tech campus waiting for the Home Ride bus service, which travels from several university campuses to the Washington, Richmond and Hampton Roads area. Several buses leave each Friday and return each Sunday on weekends during the fall and spring semesters. Home Ride staff indicated the service is most highly used in the fall semester and around holidays, and typically has fewer riders during the busy end of semester period.

Nearly all survey respondents were from the Washington metro area, except for one student from the Midwest who was using the bus to reach train service in Washington. All were travelling to Washington, DC, except for two who were going to visit friends in Harrisonburg. All respondents indicated that the purpose of their trip was to visit family or friends.

The most common method of travel for respondents is carpooling or riding as a passenger in someone else's car, followed by home ride bus and driving your own car. Most respondents never used the Megabus, zip car, or air travel for trips outside the region.

All survey respondents stated that they would visit Washington DC at least once per year, with other destinations including Charlottesville and Richmond. Although most respondents do not use rail services frequently at present, all respondents indicated that they and/or their family/friends would be likely to use Amtrak service to the New River Valley.

The most important station features for respondents were parking, bus/transit service, climate controlled waiting area, food/beverage service, maps/visitor information, device charging stations, car rental services, and bike parking/rental.

**New River Valley Passenger Rail Study Survey -- Introduction:** The New River Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization is partnering with the New River Valley Regional Commission to identify potential station locations, as well as information about the types of travelers who would use passenger rail service. The process includes learning more about the travel habits of current bus and rail users. Your responses to this survey will allow our regional partners to understand the potential for passenger rail use in the New River Valley, and ensure that a new station would offer services that travelers need most. Thank you for your input!

**Part I: Questions about travel habits**

What is the zip code of your place of residence? \_\_\_\_\_

**For college students only-** do you live on campus? Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_

What city/station is your final destination today? \_\_\_\_\_

What is the primary reason for your trip today?

- Business/work-related trip       Vacation/tourism
- Visiting family/friends       Other \_\_\_\_\_

Including your trip to this bus station, what other transportation will you use to reach your final destination?

- Bike                                       Taxi                                       Intercity passenger train
- Public transit (bus, subway)       Drive your own car               Intercity bus (greyhound, etc.)
- Rental car                               Air travel                              Other \_\_\_\_\_

How often do you use the Lynchburg AMTRAK service?

- Once a month or more               Multiple times per year               Once per year or less

When you travel out of town, how often do use the following transportation options?

**Drive your own car**

- Once a month or more       Multiple times per year       Once per year or less       Never

**Passenger in someone else's car/carpool**

- Once a month or more       Multiple times per year       Once per year or less       Never

**Intercity bus (Greyhound, Megabus, Homeride Bus)**

- Once a month or more       Multiple times per year       Once per year or less       Never

**Air travel**

- Once a month or more       Multiple times per year       Once per year or less       Never

Which of these areas do you visit at least once a year? (check all that apply)

- Atlanta area                               Charlottesville area                       Hampton Roads area
- Lynchburg area                               New York City                               Richmond area
- Roanoke area                               Washington D.C. area



**Part II: questions about passenger rail service preferences**

If passenger rail service were available for travel from the New River Valley, how likely is it that you would use it at least once per year?

- Very likely       Somewhat likely       Somewhat unlikely       Very unlikely

Which of these cities would you use AMTRAK services to visit at least once per year? (check all that apply)

- Atlanta area       Charlottesville area       Hampton Roads area  
 Lynchburg area       New York City       Richmond area  
 Roanoke area       Washington D.C. area

For your typical travel plans, what would be a convenient time for trains DEPARTING the New River Valley, northbound? (Check all that apply)

- Before 8am       8am – 12pm       12pm – 4pm       4pm – 8pm       8pm or later

For your typical travel plans, what would be a convenient time for trains ARRIVING in the New River Valley? (Check all that apply)

- Before 8am       8am – 12pm       12pm – 4pm       4pm – 8pm       8pm or later

How important are the following services at the train station to you?

	Very important	Somewhat important	Not important
Parking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Car rental services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bus/transit services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Climate controlled waiting area	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Device charging stations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bike parking/rental	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Food/beverage services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Maps/visitor information	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

COMMENTS: