



2009 Vanpool Rider Survey Report

MassRIDES

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A Service of the Massachusetts Department of Transportation

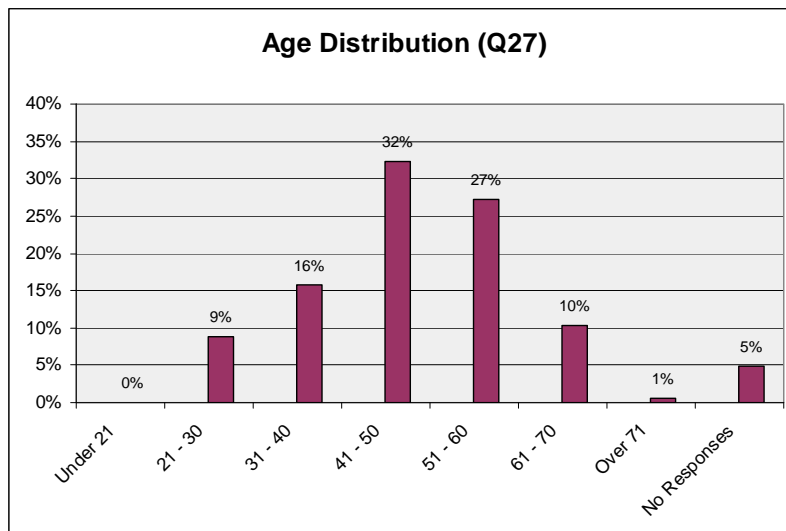
In fall 2009, MassRIDES conducted a survey of current vanpool riders to enhance stakeholders' understanding of vanpool commuters, their experiences, expectations, and opinions of commuting to work by vanpool. This information is intended to support strategic decisions for future vanpool services. See Appendix A for the questionnaire.

At the time of the survey, 43 out of 58 MassRIDES vans (or 74%) were 14- or 15-passenger vehicles, seven were 9-passenger vehicles, and eight were 12-passenger or mini-vans. The average round-trip mileage of the fleet was 93 miles per day. Based on total ridership of 638 in the 58 vans, MassRIDES' vanpool fleet reduced vehicle miles traveled (VMT) by 13,485,000 miles annually.

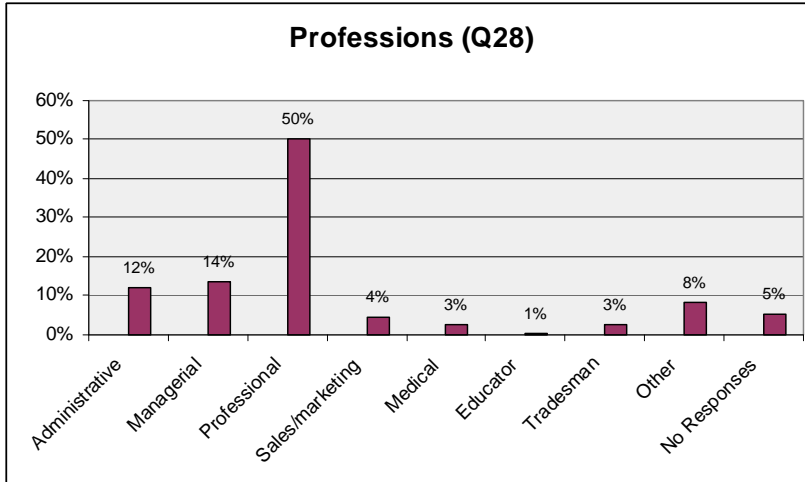
During November 2009, MassRIDES distributed the survey electronically to more than 280 vanpool commuters with email addresses on file. In addition, staff sent questionnaires to 31 vanpool coordinators for distribution to riders who had not yet provided email addresses. In total, 638 vanpool commuters received surveys. Vanpool riders returned a total of 183 completed questionnaires either electronically or by fax, an overall response rate of 29%.

RESPONDENT PROFILES

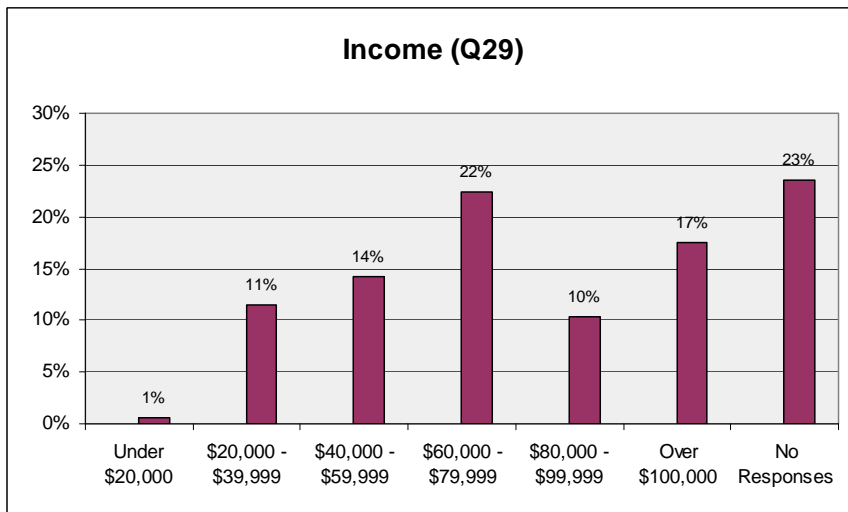
- Most respondents (32%) fell into the age range of 41 to 50, while the next largest group comprised ages 51 to 60 (27%).



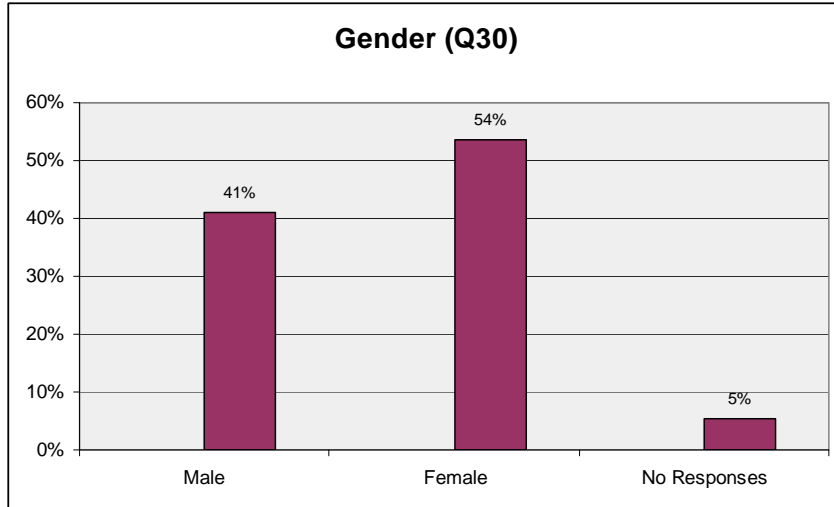
- Fifty percent of survey respondents identified themselves as professionals, with another 14% reporting work in managerial/executive positions, and 12% employed in administrative positions.



- Twenty-two percent of respondents reported an individual annual income between \$60,000 and \$80,000, while 17% earned over \$100,000, and 14% earned between \$40,000 and \$60,000. Over 60% of respondents reported earning more than the Massachusetts median individual income of \$32,800. Almost a quarter of survey respondents declined to provide income information.



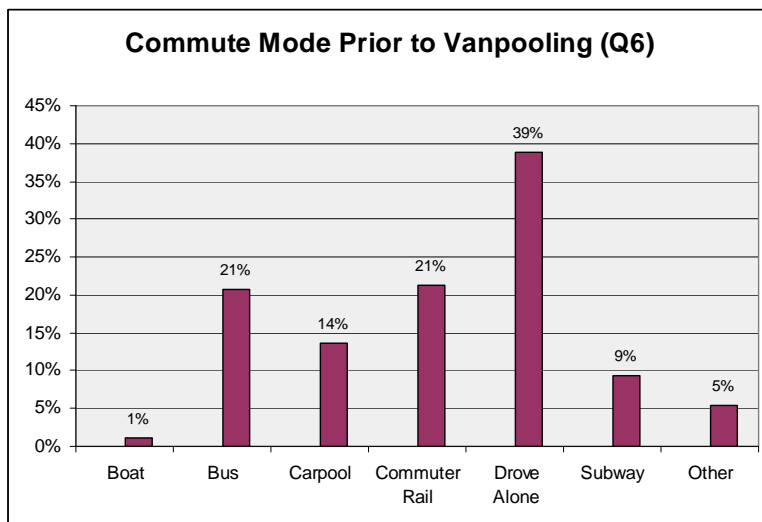
Women represented the majority of vanpool riders responding to the survey (54%).



THE COMMUTE

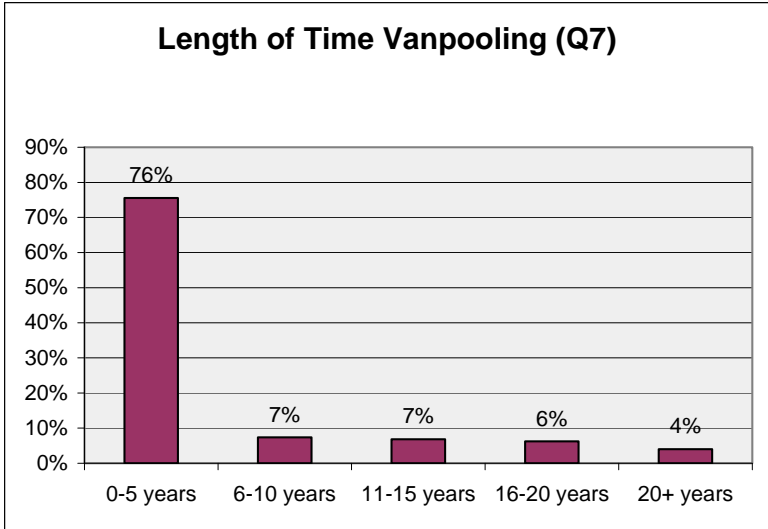
Fifty-eight vanpools currently operate in Massachusetts. Of the total, 60% are destined for Boston or Cambridge, with 40% traveling to suburban destinations. Survey responses mirrored these proportions, with 60% of respondents traveling on vanpools destined to Boston/Cambridge.

Prior to joining their current vanpools, 74% of respondents commuted to the same location. Most of them drove alone (39%), took a bus (21%), or rode commuter rail to work (21%). Because this question asked previous mode over all the years a commuter made his/her work trip, commuters offered multiple answers resulting in percentages exceeding 100%.

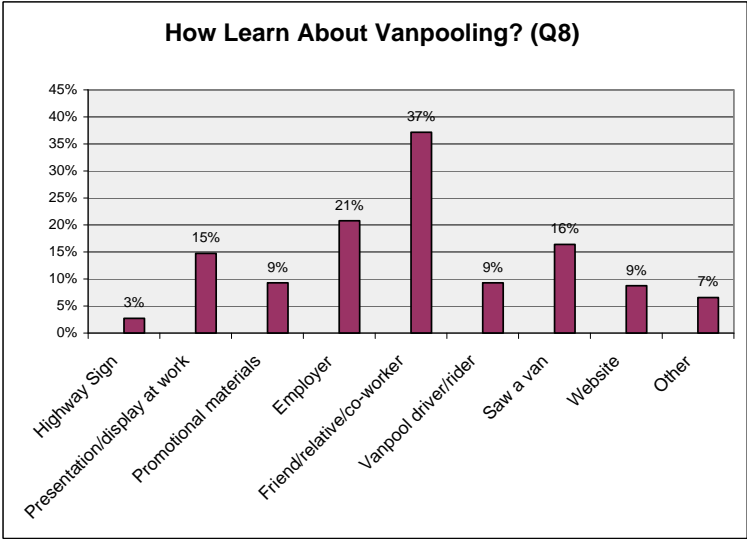


Multiple answers possible. Total exceeds 100%.

Over 75% of respondents (133) had been commuting by vanpool five or fewer years, while 10% had been vanpooling for 16 or more years.



A majority of respondents reported that they first became aware of the MassRIDES vanpool program from “friends, relatives or co-workers” (37%) or from their employers (21%).



For most respondents, the three primary reasons for joining the vanpool were “less expensive,” “less stressful,” and “less wear and tear on a car.” Other common factors were “better for the environment,” “do not want to drive,” and “more convenient” than other modes of transportation.

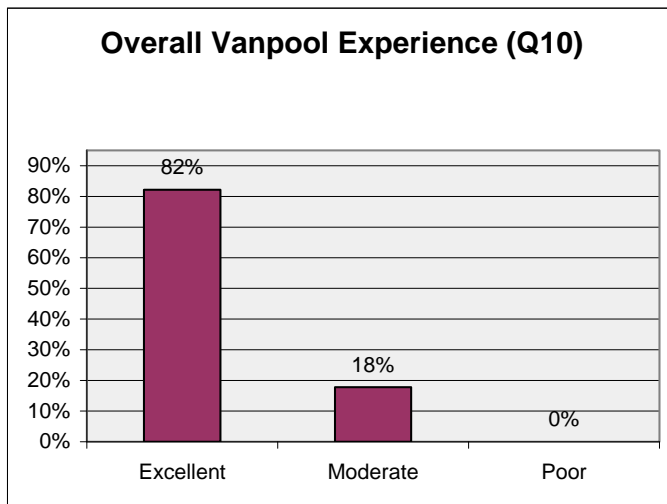
Reasons for Joining the Vanpool (Q9)

<i>Reasons</i>	<i>Response Rate</i>
<i>Less expensive</i>	79%
<i>Less stressful</i>	58%
<i>Less wear on car</i>	57%
<i>Better for the environment</i>	46%
<i>Do not want to drive</i>	45%
<i>More convenient</i>	38%
<i>Employer subsidy/incentive</i>	31%
<i>Faster</i>	27%
<i>More comfortable</i>	26%
<i>Productive use of time</i>	19%
<i>Preferred parking</i>	13%
<i>Other</i>	8%

Multiple answers possible. Total exceeds 100%.

VANPOOL EXPERIENCE

Overall, respondents gave very favorable evaluations of their experience with commuting by vanpool. Eighty-two percent of respondents rated their experience very good to excellent (rating of at least eight on a ten-point scale). Ninety-two percent of current vanpool riders were extremely likely to continue to use a vanpool in the next 12 months and 89% reported being extremely likely to recommend vanpooling to another commuter over the next year.



Overall Experience with Vanpool (Q10)

Mean	8.5
Excellent (Scale 8-10)	82%
Moderate (Scale 5-7)	18%
Poor (Scale 0-4)	0%

How Likely Are You to Continue Vanpooling in the Next 12-months? (Q11)

Mean	9.3
Extremely likely (Scale 8-10)	92%
Moderately likely (Scale 5-7)	5%
Not likely at all (Scale 0-4)	4%

How Likely Are You to Recommend Vanpooling in the Next 12-months? (Q12)

Mean	9.0
Extremely likely (Scale 8-10)	89%
Moderately likely (Scale 5-7)	9%
Not likely at all (Scale 0-4)	2%

When asked to assess various aspects of their vanpool experience, respondents strongly agreed that vanpools “are good for the environment,” “save money,” and are “convenient.” Respondents moderately agreed that the vanpool is “comfortable,” vanpooling “saves time,” the “opportunity to socialize with other commuters is welcome,” and that they use their time on the van productively.

Assessment of Vanpool (Q13)

Statement:	Mean	Strongly Agree (8-10)	Strongly Disagree (0-4)
Vanpools are good for the environment	9.1	88%	2%
Commuting by vanpool saves me money	9.0	89%	6%
Commuting by vanpool is convenient	8.2	73%	5%
The vanpool is comfortable	7.3	50%	10%
Commuting by vanpool saves me time	7.2	56%	20%
The opportunity to socialize with other commuters is welcome	7.2	54%	12%
While on the van, I usually use the time productively	7.0	49%	17%

Seventy-two percent of respondents drove their cars alone to meet the vanpool group. Others used other alternatives, were dropped-off, drove the van, or carpooled.

Commuters considered “less expensive” (80%) the primary advantage of vanpool commuting. Other highly rated advantages included “less wear on car” (40%), “better for the environment” (35%), “less stressful” (33%), and “do not have to drive” (32%). The three most frequently cited disadvantages were “less independence” (59%), “not flexible” (46%), and “difficult to run errands” (28%).

Advantages and Disadvantages of Vanpooling (Q16 and Q17)

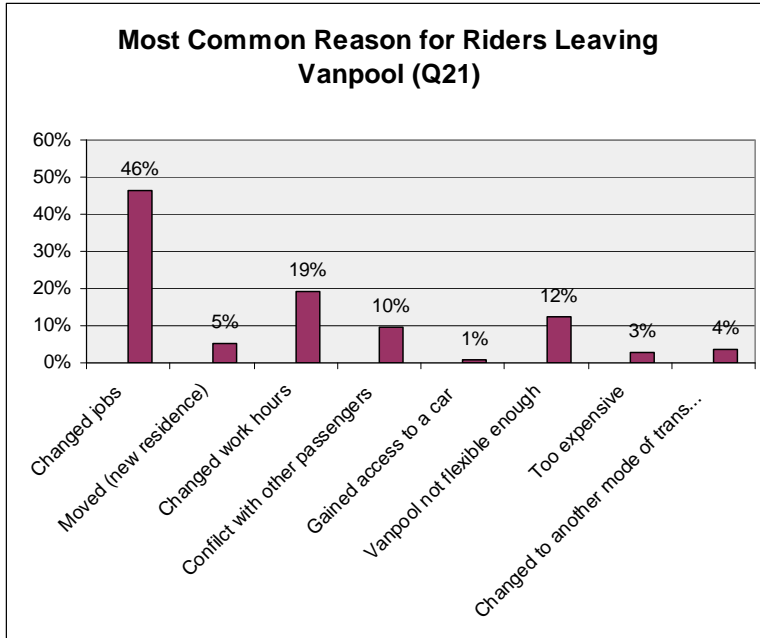
<i>Advantages</i>	<i>Disadvantages</i>
<i>Less expensive (80%)</i>	<i>Less independence (59%)</i>
<i>Less wear on car (40%)</i>	<i>Not flexible (46%)</i>
<i>Better for the environment (35%)</i>	<i>Difficult to run errands (28%)</i>
<i>Less stressful (33%)</i>	<i>Other passengers (22%)</i>
<i>Don't have to drive (32%)</i>	<i>Not door-to-door (22%)</i>
<i>Employer subsidized (25%)</i>	<i>Increase time and distance (20%)</i>
<i>Convenience (20%)</i>	<i>Other (17%)</i>
<i>Reliability (16%)</i>	<i>None (13%)</i>
<i>Other (7%)</i>	
<i>Can get work done (5%)</i>	
<i>Safety (0%)</i>	

Multiple answers possible. Total exceeds 100%.

When asked what would make vanpooling more appealing to commuters, over 60% of the respondents offered comments. Some of the common suggestions were:

- Improved flexibility through increased van frequency and choices for travel times and routes; provide sweep vans for late departures or consolidated tickets with commuter buses.
- Enhanced vehicle conditions and design. Respondents offered suggestions for a more comfortable vehicle such as more comfortable seats/seating arrangement, better air conditioning, ventilation, seating space, and other small improvements.
- Lowering the monthly cost, providing free parking, and/or offering discounts on parking, tolls, insurance, and gasoline.
- Offering subsidies, tax credits, deductions, and incentives by employers and government to lower overall vanpool expense.
- Conducting effective marketing campaigns to increase awareness of vanpooling and its benefits.

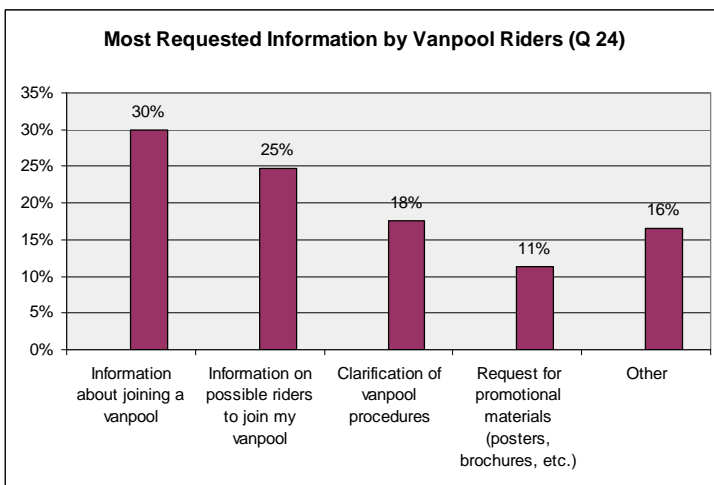
Almost 60% of respondents reported that some riders left their vanpools in the past year. About 25% of respondents reported that the number of riders who left vanpools in 2009 was consistent with previous years, while 15% reported an increase in vanpool rider turnover and 10% reported fewer riders leaving their van in the last year. In survey respondents’ opinions, changing jobs was the primary reason for people leaving the vanpool (46%) followed by changes in work hours (19%).



Thirty percent of respondents to this question reported that their vans had unfilled seats at the time of the survey while 14% specified a number of weeks to fill empty seats. The remaining respondents reported filling seats immediately either because it was “easy to find riders” (10%), or they “had a waiting list” (7%). About 40% of survey respondents provided no information on seat status.

MassRIDES ASSISTANCE

Thirty-seven percent of the respondents contacted MassRIDES with questions about commuting options. Of those commuters, 30% requested information regarding joining a vanpool.



Overall, 64% of these respondents were extremely satisfied (rating of at least eight on a ten-point scale) with the information they received from MassRIDES. They also strongly agreed that MassRIDES responded to their questions in a timely manner and was easy to contact by phone.

Assessment of MassRIDES Assistance (Q25 & Q26)

<i>Statement:</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>High Agreement (8-10)</i>	<i>Low Agreement (0-4)</i>
<i>MassRIDES responds to my questions in a timely manner</i>	8.2	72%	6%
<i>MassRIDES is easy to contact by phone</i>	8.1	68%	4%
<i>MassRIDES provides helpful information</i>	7.8	61%	10%
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Extremely Satisfied (8-10)</i>	<i>Extremely Dissatisfied (0-4)</i>
<i>Overall satisfaction with information provided by MassRIDES</i>	7.7	64%	5%

COMPARISON WITH FINDINGS FROM 2007 SURVEY

This year's vanpool survey represents the third in a series of biennial surveys of vanpool commuters conducted by MassRIDES in 2005, 2007, and 2009. All three surveys reveal consistent snapshots of vanpool commuters as cost-conscious travelers pleased with their vanpool experience. The following comparisons with findings from the 2007 survey, as reported in *2008 Vanpool Rider Survey*, focus on differences which may point to marketing or programmatic opportunities.

Respondent Profiles

The survey response rate improved to 29% in 2009, up from 23% in 2007. Notable shifts in respondents' demographics include:

- Age – The largest proportion of respondents in 2009 were in the 41-50 age range, ten years younger than in 2007, and up six percentage points comprising 32% of respondents this year.
- Professions – More respondents identified themselves as professionals in 2009, up ten percentage points from 2007 to 50%, while fewer reported working in managerial/executive positions (14% in 2009, down from 25 % in 2007).
- Income – In both 2009 and 2007, the largest proportion of respondents reported annual individual incomes of \$60,000-\$80,000. However in 2009, 17% reported incomes over \$100,000, up 12 percentage points from the 5% with that level in 2007.

The Commute

In both the 2009 and 2007 surveys, the largest proportion of respondents switched from driving alone to vanpooling, with significant numbers also moving from commuter rail and buses. This year, more commuters reported switching from carpools, up six percentage points to 14% of respondents.

The 2009 findings revealed a noticeable shift in the length of time respondents report commuting by vanpool. In 2007, 60% of respondents had vanpooled as many as five years. In 2009, that percentage increased to 75%. Riders in the 24 vans added to the fleet since 2005 have all commuted by vanpool five or fewer years.

Respondents' first source of information about vanpooling remained word of mouth (friend/relative/co-worker) in both surveys, but larger proportions of 2009 respondents reported worksite-related sources (presentation/display at work and employer) as where they first learned about vanpooling.

In identifying reasons for joining vanpools, respondents in 2009 and 2007 identified the same top three: less expensive, less stressful, and less wear on car. This year, however, more respondents identified "better for the environment" as a significant motivator, moving it from sixth to fourth place in the rankings.

Vanpool Experience

Notable differences between the 2009 and 2007 findings include:

- Rating of vanpool experience – The percentage of respondents rating their overall vanpool experience good to excellent increased seven percentage points from 75% in 2007 to 82% in 2009. While respondents identify the same top three factors in both surveys when assessing their vanpool experience (environmental impacts, money savings, and convenience), in 2009 "good for the environment" edges out "saves me money" in the top spot.
- Vanpool advantages – "Better for the environment" ranks in the top three responses in 2009, moving up from the sixth position in 2007, and joining less expensive and less car wear as top advantages in vanpoolers' opinions.
- Reasons commuters leave vanpools – In both 2007 and 2009, respondents thought that changes in commuters' jobs or work hours were the primary reasons riders left vanpools. In 2009, however, the proportion of respondents identifying those reasons increased.

MassRIDES Assistance

A smaller percentage of respondents reported contacting MassRIDES for assistance during 2009, down from 86% in 2007 to 37% in 2009. From those who did contact MassRIDES, the mean ratings for response timeliness, contact ease, and information helpfulness slipped .2 to .4 points, with overall satisfaction decreasing from a mean of 8.3 in 2007 to 7.7 in 2009.

CONCLUSION

Vanpools continue to provide a cost-effective travel choice, particularly for commuters with fixed schedules who travel long distances. Enhancing the efficiency of current transportation investments by moving more travelers in fewer vehicles, vanpools contribute toward MassDOT's

mission of expanding mobility, sparking economic growth and supporting a clean environment and stronger communities. Vanpools' long trips (over 90 round trip miles daily), deliver significant reductions in VMT per van, with resultant positive impacts on air quality and energy consumption.

As in the past, *MassRIDES* will share survey results with MassDOT, vanpool vendors, TMAs, Vanpool Coordinators and passengers through the Vanpool Forum, electronic newsletters, and this report. Its findings identifying demographics and opinions of current vanpool commuters provide opportunities to refine marketing and programs to expand vanpooling as an alternative to drive alone travel.

**Appendix A:
Questionnaire**

2009 MassRIDES VANPOOL RIDER SURVEY

As a vanpool rider, your opinions and suggestions are important to us. This brief, confidential questionnaire asks about your experiences, expectations, and evaluations of commuting to work in a vanpool. Please take a few minutes to answer every question **& return your responses by November 17th**. Your opinions are valuable in helping us to provide better services to commuters. **Thank you for your assistance.**

1. VAN #: _____

2. Driver/Coordinator: _____

I. YOUR COMMUTE:

3. What is your commute origin (city, state)? _____

4. What is your commute destination (city, state)? _____

5. Before using the vanpool, did you commute to this same location by another method?

- Yes No (Go to Q7)

6. What method(s) did you primarily use to commute to work on this same commute before joining the vanpool? **(CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)**

- Boat
 Bus
 Carpool
 Commuter Rail
 Drove alone
 Subway
 Other (specify): _____

7. How long have you been commuting by vanpool?

_____ years _____ months

8. How did you first learn about vanpooling? **(CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)**

- Highway Sign Friend/relative/co-worker
 Presentation/display at work Vanpool driver or rider
 Promotional materials (flyer, brochure, newsletter, etc.) Saw a van
 Employer Website
 Other (specify): _____

9. What were your reasons for joining the vanpool? **(CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)**

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Better for the environment | <input type="checkbox"/> More comfortable |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Less expensive | <input type="checkbox"/> More convenient |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Do not want to drive | <input type="checkbox"/> Preferred parking |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Faster | <input type="checkbox"/> Productive use of time |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Employer subsidy/incentive | <input type="checkbox"/> Less wear on car |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Less stressful | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify): _____ | |

II. YOUR VANPOOL EXPERIENCE

10. Overall, how would you evaluate your experience with commuting by vanpool? **(CIRCLE ONE RESPONSE)**

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------|
| 1-Poor | 10-Excellent |
| 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 | |

11. How likely are you to continue using the vanpool in the next 12 months? **(CIRCLE ONE RESPONSE)**

- | | |
|----------------------|---------------------|
| 1-Not likely at all | 10-Extremely likely |
| 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 | |

12. How likely are you to recommend vanpooling to another commuter in the next 12 months? **(CIRCLE ONE RESPONSE)**

- | | |
|----------------------|---------------------|
| 1-Not likely at all | 10-Extremely likely |
| 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 | |

13. Thinking about your experience riding to work in a vanpool, please tell us the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

1-Strongly Disagree 10-Strongly Agree

- The vanpool is comfortable 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
- Commuting by vanpool is convenient 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
- Commuting by vanpool saves me time 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
- Commuting by vanpool saves me money 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
- Vanpools are good for the environment 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
- The opportunity to socialize with other commuters is welcome 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
- While on the van, I usually use the time Productively 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

14. How do you get to your vanpool?

- Carpool
- Drive alone
- Dropped-off
- Drive the van
- Other

15. How many miles do you travel to meet your vanpool? _____

16. What are the top 3 advantages of vanpooling? **(CHECK THREE)**

- Less expensive/saves money Convenience
- Less stressful Less wear on car
- Better for the environment Can get work done during commute
- Don't have to drive Employer subsidized
- Reliability Safety
- Other (specify): _____

17. What are the top 3 disadvantages of vanpooling? **(CHECK THREE)**

- Difficult to run errands Increases commuting time/distance
- Less independence Not door to door
- Not flexible enough Other passengers (lack of privacy, etc.)
- Other (specify): _____
- None

18. What do you think would make vanpooling more appealing to commuters?

19. Have riders ever left your vanpool? (Non-coordinators skip to question 23)

- Yes No (Go to Q23) Don't know (Go to Q23)

20. In the past year, has there been an increase or a decrease in the number of riders who have left your vanpool, as compared to previous years?

- Increase Decrease About the same Don't know

21. In your opinion, what is the **ONE** most common reason for riders leaving your vanpool?

- Changed jobs
- Moved (new residence)
- Changed work hours
- Conflict with other passengers
- Gained access to a car
- Vanpool not flexible enough
- Too expensive
- Changed to another mode of transportation (new commuter rail service, etc.)

22. How long does it usually take to fill the empty seats?

- _____ weeks (**WRITE IN NUMBER**)
- Seats were filled immediately – there was a waiting list
- Seats were filled immediately – it was easy to find more riders
- Seats are still unfilled

III. MassRIDES ASSISTANCE

23. MassRIDES is the state's travel options service. Have you ever contacted MassRIDES with questions about commuting or vanpooling?

- Yes No (Go to Q27)

24. What information did you request?

- Information about joining a vanpool
- Information on possible riders to join my vanpool
- Clarification of vanpool procedures
- Request for promotional materials (posters, brochures, etc.)
- Other (specify): _____

25. Thinking about the information you requested, please tell us the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the statements below.

1-Strongly Disagree 10-Strongly Agree

MassRIDES responds to my questions in a timely manner 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

MassRIDES is easy to contact by phone or web 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

MassRIDES provides helpful information 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

26. Overall, how satisfied were you with the information you received from MassRIDES?

1-Extremely Dissatisfied 10-Extremely Satisfied

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

IV. COMMUTER DEMOGRAPHICS

THESE QUESTIONS ARE FOR CLASSIFICATION PURPOSES ONLY.

27. What is your age range?

- Under 21 51 – 60
- 21 – 30 61 – 70
- 31 – 40 Over 71
- 41 – 50

28. What is your position or title? **(CHECK ONE)**

- Administrative support or clerical
- Managerial or executive administrator
- Professional, technical or specialist
- Sales or marketing
- Medical professional
- Educator
- Tradesman, machine operator or laborer
- Self-employed
- Student
- Other (specify): _____

29. What is your annual individual income range? (Please be sure to list your individual income and not your household income. This question is optional.)

- Under \$20,000
- \$20,000 – \$39,999
- \$40,000 - \$59,999
- \$60,000 - \$79,999
- \$80,000 - \$99,000
- \$100,000+

30. Are you: Male Female

31. THANKS FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!

OPTIONAL

**We are raffling three \$25 gas cards to participants in this survey.
To enter, complete this survey by November 17th and enter your information below.**

GOOD LUCK!

First Name: _____

Last Name: _____

Phone: _____

**Please return your completed survey either directly to MassRIDES:
Fax: 617.892.6090
Mail: MassRIDES, 10 Park Plaza, Suite 2180, Boston, MA 02116**

**OR
to your Vanpool Coordinator.**

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION