



To: City of Brampton
CC: ENTRA Consultants
From: Craig Worden
Date: April 2003
Re: Summary Analysis: Brampton Transit Study, Qualitative Phase

METHODOLOGY

On Wednesday, April 16, 2002, Ipsos-Reid conducted 2 segmented focus groups in Brampton among commuters residing in the City of Brampton. For the purposes of this qualitative study, "commuters" were defined as follows:

- *Employed or self-employed outside of the home on a full-time basis;*
- *Travel to and from the same workplace location no less than 4 days in the usual workweek;*
- *Each leg of the usual commute to and from this workplace is no less than 20 minutes in duration; and;*
- *Bicycling, walking, carpooling, subway, streetcar, taxi, or limousine do not usually cover a major part of the trip;*

Within these parameters, the groups were segmented. The first group – "Auto Drivers" – was comprised of residents who usually drive themselves the entire length of the journey to and from work on a daily basis. The second group – "Primarily Public Transit" – was comprised of residents who, in a regular workweek, either [a] commute most of the way via public transit on the majority of days (but also drive themselves the entire route some days), or [b] usually travel most of the trip via public transit on a daily basis although they have access to a personal vehicle that they could regularly drive the entire route.

OBJECTIVES

This qualitative exercise has been recommended as the initial phase prior to conducting a statistically-reliable, quantitative telephone survey. As such, this qualitative component was designed as an exploratory exercise to more fully understand the specific details and drivers behind the commuting experience. Although it allows a more thorough probing and understanding of the dynamics of a subject, qualitative focus group research on its own cannot provide the statistical reliability and representativeness of quantitative research. Thus, the directional findings of this phase of the project will inform the design, and provide context and insight into the results, of the quantitative telephone survey. In this respect, the focus groups were designed to explore, develop, and understand the following:

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- Top Local Issues
- Current transportation patterns, including all stages in the various commuter routes;
- Comparative perceptions and impressions of public and private modes of transportation;
- Relevant experiential factors;
- Levels, sources and quality of public knowledge about public transit;
- Satisfaction, performance, and momentum ratings for the public transit system;
- Support for the public transit system, including prioritization compared to roads;
- Key drivers of transportation patterns and choices; and
- Ideal and top preferences/priorities for new and/or improved public transit options/characteristics.

KEY FINDINGS

- Overall, the **key factors** influencing **public transit usage** are based upon respondents' preference for the travel mode offering the quickest Travel Time, and their inherent desire for optimum Personal Control over their activities. These specific factors are: Frequency/Speed of schedule, Certainty/Reliability of schedule, Transit Access/Proximity, and – less so – Autonomy/Freedom and Ease-of-Use.
- The **main benefits of public transit usage** for commuters are stress reduction (“quiet time, nap time”) and travel time reduction.
- Almost all exhibit a **moderate level of commuting-based stress**. Although the Public Transit group exhibits a less stressful, somewhat more positive commuting experience than Drivers, **both** groups described largely stress-free and quick morning commutes that are followed by significantly more prolonged and stressful work-to-home commutes – regardless of their mode of travel. Although the work-to-home drive is a more stressful and negative experience due to time impacts and the dangers/annoyances of **traffic congestion**, the work-to-home public transit experience is also negative due to the time impacts of traffic congestion as well as stressful due to inconsistent, infrequent, and multiple-transfer schedules/routes that do not allow people to stay near their workplace long after work. (“I can’t work late when I have to.”; “I get to the stop, and the bus just pulls away and then I have to wait forever for the next one.”)
- Although there is a moderate level of (one-way) commuting-related stress, most exhibit a fact-of-life **acceptance and integration of the commute into their daily routine**. Even the most negative leg of the journey is not described in extremely negative terms – reducing the arguably lower-stress appeal of public transit. In terms of non-work-related (i.e. weekend) travel within Brampton, public transit is a laughable alternative to the personally-directed and comparatively quick mode of the automobile. For destinations outside of Toronto, public transit travel beyond the borders of Brampton is perceived as a slightly more viable option – but one also fraught with poor connections between different municipal/regional transit services.
- Overall, the findings of this research exercise are **quite consistent with Ipsos-Reid research on this topic within the Greater Toronto Area**. In comparison to such research (conducted in areas more distant from Toronto than Brampton), the noticeable differences include (a) greater familiarity, usage, and perception/receptivity towards local bus transit, (b) less stressful and time-consuming commutes, and (c) a more diverse, less Toronto/singular direction-based array of workplace locations.

- In a brainstorming exercise, the top top-of-mind characteristic of the **“ideal Brampton local public transit system” for Drivers** is **emergency buttons** at shelters and stations to ensure safety of waiting riders, followed by express bus service, greater frequency of pickups (every 10 minutes), and shelters at bus stops. Clearly, Drivers are preoccupied with issues of the safety and speed of public transit travel – fears that must be allayed and demands that must be met. **For the Public Transit group**, the priorities are for faster travel across the city’s main routes. The top brainstorming idea was a subway providing expanded, more direct, more frequent, and more rapid access on a **North-South route into Downtown Toronto** – and, less so, along Highway #10 and Queen Street. There is also demand for more frequent and direct/express service along Highways #7 and #407, increased frequency overall, and better synchronized connections to other transit services.
- In a follow-up category-based brainstorming exercise, both groups focussed both on the key concepts of extensive, frequent, reliable service as well as suggestions designed to provide and improve **personal comfort** – in the vehicle, at the bus stop, and at the terminal/station. Clearly, local public transit must adopt improvements to ensure a comfortable, enjoyable, and rider-friendly experience. The top category characteristics for **Drivers** are as follows: Vehicle – security presence and climate control; Waiting Point/Stop – more visible signs, cleaner shelters and areas, and emergency buttons; Terminal – security and lighting; Schedule – More frequency and consistency/reliability; and Payment – Change machine/Make change. For the **Public Transit** group, the top category characteristics are as follows: Vehicle – climate control; Waiting Point/Stop – good shelters and maps/schedules at shelters; Terminal – shelter at the embarking point and more parking; Schedule – increased frequency; and Payment – a pass that riders can use/transfers across different transit services.
- A public information/education campaign may be necessary to inform riders and non-riders about the safety, comfort/ease (if improved), schedule/route (increase distribution), other improvements (per above priorities), and advantages/benefits of local public transit. There is a receptive audience for such a campaign, as participants in both groups were open to increasing their usage of this mode of travel. At present, ambivalent or negative transit news updates are the primary source of service information – a campaign should fill this vacuum and reclaim this communications territory in a way that actually informs and encourages the citizenry about this transportation option.



CONTEXT

Local Priorities

Consistent with quantitative polling throughout the GTA 905 Belt, the top issues to which participants felt local leaders should devote most of their attention stemmed from concerns about “overly rapid” growth in Brampton, with which the infrastructure has not kept apace. However, it was notable that almost every respondent mentioned either roads/traffic or public transit as their top local priority. A few mentioned health care and education, but alleviating the consequences of traffic congestion – either by expanding roads (the most popular option, with benefits to both drivers and local bus transit) or public transit – was almost the singular top priority among both groups.

Personal Priorities: Quality of Life in Brampton

Participants expressed high levels of satisfaction with their community, with particular reference to the presence/proximity of their family and friends as well as green-based leisure activities and destinations such as parks, trails, fruit-picking, and skiing. Other mentions included lower housing prices, and the benefits of proximity to Toronto while living in a smaller town with a more “country feel” that they perceive as being friendlier, cleaner, greener, and safer.

Transit System Comparisons

Although it is somewhat unfair, Brampton Transit nevertheless faces constant comparisons to the TTC, and is seen as less frequent, less expansive/accessible, less friendly, and less value-for-fare (“it costs more here for less – they should stop increasing the fares until they improve the service.”). However, compared to neighbouring local systems, Brampton Transit is perceived essentially in the same light.

The Time Crunch

As we see in other pieces of research, much of the urban population in North America is increasingly focussed on efficient time management/utilization as the “time crunch” grows more intense. This societal development has already had major positive and negative impacts upon some business ventures, and the “time crunch” perspective also impacts views and usage of public transit – particularly in terms of the perceptions and importance of “travel time” and “waiting time”. Thus, public transit systems must “compete” with the citizen’s need for autonomy to manage the errands and responsibilities of everyday life in a manner that is most efficient and most beneficial to their quality of life.

KNOWLEDGE OF PUBLIC TRANSIT

Associations

By far, local bus service was the top association among both Drivers and the Public Transit group when considering the term “public transit”. This is illustrative of the comparatively higher level of familiarity and receptivity (vs. more GO Transit-dependent areas of the GTA that are further from the Megacity) with this mode among Brampton residents.



Familiarity and Usage

Overall, Drivers are moderately familiar with local bus service – and exhibit their highest levels of familiarity (although still moderate) with TTC Subway and TTC Bus services and their lowest levels of familiarity with GO Train and TTC Streetcar. About half have used all or most types of public transit (Brampton Transit, GO, TTC Bus/Subway/Streetcar) at some time in the past year. Although these residents rely on their personal vehicle for their work commute, they are fairly knowledgeable and experienced with the local and other forms of public transit.

Comparatively, the Public Transit group expresses a stronger degree – and their highest level – of familiarity with local bus service, followed by GO Train service. They exhibit their lowest levels of familiarity with TTC Bus and, especially, Streetcar services. Almost all have used every public transit mode except streetcar within the past 12 months – most within the past 6 months, and many within the past week. Clearly, this group of commuters has a high level of knowledge and experience with the local and other modes of public transit.

Information Sources

The top source of information about public transit – beyond personal experiences – is stories in the news media. Unfortunately, these news items and updates can often be negative in nature, focussing on “delays, fare hikes, and other problems”. Radio and print media (Brampton Guardian) represent the top sources for Drivers, whereas print and television media represent the top sources for Public Transit commuters. Bus Stations/Terminals and Shelters are the secondary sources of information for both commuter segments.

PUBLIC TRANSIT RATINGS, TRENDS, AND SUPPORT

Performance Ratings and Trends

Overall, Drivers provide Local Bus service with a moderately poor performance rating, whereas GO and TTC services receive a moderately good rating. Although the performance level of GO and TTC services are seen to have remained steady over the past few years, Local Bus has the perception of slight decline.

Comparatively, the Public Transit group provides a moderately positive performance rating to Local Bus service, and somewhat better ratings to GO and TTC services (especially the Subway). Notably, this group of commuters is split when considering whether the performance level of Local Bus services have improved or declined over the last few years – whereas most feel that GO and TTC performance levels have remained quite steady with some improvement.

Support for Public Transit

Almost unanimously, both groups support local tax dollars being spent on public transit, with the Public Transit commuters expressing a more intense degree of support. Among both segments, the top reason for this supportive position is a belief that expanding and improving public transit systems will attract more riders and increase usage (including themselves) and thereby decrease “out of control” traffic congestion – which is negatively impacting residents’ quality of life and the environment. Some also express concern for



those who cannot afford or are not able to drive their own car, viewing an effective public transit option as a public necessity to allow these people to travel locally and inter-regionally.

Nevertheless, almost all Drivers and about half of the Public Transit group prefer that increasing/expanding the roads network – instead of expanding/improving public transit – be the top spending priority for the transportation budget. Many make the point that expanding the roads network effectively improves public transit as well as the personal vehicle experience, as buses will be able to travel their routes quicker and more efficiently.



APPENDIX A, AUTO: BRAINSTORMING, PHASE 1 – GENERAL (TRADITIONAL)

<i>My Ideal Local Public Transit Service Would (Be) ...</i>	
?	Longer bus
? ? ?	Express
?	Doubledecker
	Streetcars
?	(More) comfortable seats
? ? ? ? (4)	No fare at all / Free public transit
	Weekend service
?	(More/Extended) Service on holidays
? ? ? ? ? ? (6)	Emergency/Safety button
? ? ?	Frequency – every 10 minutes
	(More/Extended) Service to industrial areas
?	(More/Extended) Service during “off” hours
?	A Subway (link)
? ? ?	Shelters (at bus stops) – w/ covering/weather protection, benches/seats
? ?	(Soft) Music on buses
?	More stops / pick-up points
?	Special (request) stopping/service at night
	Refreshments
<p><i>This table contains all mentions provided by focus group participants (from the Auto/Driver session) as a completion of the phrase above. Mentions are listed in the order they were provided. Among the mentions from both Phase 1 and Phase 2, participants used stickers to indicate their top priorities/preferences (?) that would be most likely to increase their public transit usage, and those mentions (if any) that they felt were unnecessary or that would decrease (?) their public transit usage.</i></p>	



APPENDIX B, AUTO: BRAINSTORMING, PHASE 2 – SPECIFIC (X-RAY)

<i>My Ideal Local Public Transit Service's [Component] Would (Be) ...</i>	
Vehicle	The Stop/Waiting Point
? Lots of windows, less claustrophobic	TV: News, Entertainment, Transit Updates
Comfortable	? ? ? Cleaner
More seats, less standing	? ? Emergency button
More bars to hold	Benches, seats, etc.
? ? ? Securityperson/driver enforce rules/order	Full shelter: wind, rain, etc.
? Bathroom on bus	? ? Better, more visible signs
? ? Climate control	
? Decoration/artistic on outside	
Terminal/Stations	Schedule
? Lighting (better)	? ? ? More frequent pickups
? Shorter wait outside w/ bus there (Let us in)	? ? Consistent/reliable schedule
Seats for waiting	More/extended service: Weekend, Off-hours, Holidays
Clean(er)	? 24 hours/7 days a week service
Bathrooms	More schedules available in more places
? ? ? Securitypersons	Payment
Transit Announcements/Updates	? ? No fare increase, unless better service (TTC)
Dropoff area (Kiss 'n Ride)	? ? ? Make change, or changing machine
More parking (with good/better lighting)	? / ? Yearly pass, w/ different options, discounts
Ticket machine (automated)	Other
? ? Amenities: Coffee, donuts, convenience stores	? Links/Connections, to other systems – More, better
Fountains	Longer distances (express/direct)
<p><i>This table contains all mentions provided by focus group participants (from the Auto/Driver session) as a completion of each prompted section above. Mentions are listed in the order they were provided. Among the mentions from both Phase 1 and Phase 2, participants used stickers to indicate their top priorities/preferences (?) that would be most likely to increase their public transit usage, and those mentions (if any) that they felt were unnecessary or that would decrease (?) their public transit usage.</i></p>	



APPENDIX C, MIXED PUBLIC TRANSIT: BRAINSTORMING, PHASE 1 - GENERAL (TRADITIONAL)

<i>My Ideal Local Public Transit Service Would (Be) ...</i>	
? ? ? ? ? ? (6)	A Subway (link) – North/South, Hwy #10, Queen St.
?	Easy access – More stops & connections
? ? ?	More North/South (deeper than Steeles, into Subway)
? ?	More East/West (Hwy #7, Hwy #10, Hwy #407)
? ? ?	Frequency (of pick-ups)
?	Express (Direct)
? ?	Synchronize connections (other transit systems)
	No fare at connections
? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? (9)	No fare at all / Free transit
? ?	Stop fare increases
?	Washrooms at the Stations/Terminals
	Transfer slips that do not expire
	Express Train, Brampton to Toronto
?	Bigger, longer, double-decker buses
?	Security person present to enforce order/rules
?	Extended hours of service (Early morn, Late night)
? / ? ? ? ? (4)	Entertainment – T.V., activities
?	Clean(er)
<p><i>This table contains all mentions provided by focus group participants (from the Mixed Public Transit session) as a completion of the phrase above. Mentions are listed in the order they were provided. Among the mentions from both Phase 1 and Phase 2, participants used stickers to indicate their top priorities/preferences (?) that would be most likely to increase their public transit usage, and those mentions (if any) that they felt were unnecessary or that would decrease (?) their public transit usage.</i></p>	



APPENDIX D, MIXED PUBLIC TRANSIT: BRAINSTORMING, PHASE 2 – SPECIFIC (X-RAY)

<i>My Ideal Local Public Transit Service's [Component] Would (Be) ...</i>	
Vehicle	The Stop/Waiting Point
? ? / ? Comfortable, softer seats	? ? Shelters – More & Full weather protection
More seats, less crowded	Clean
? / ? ? Utilize space, More space. Bigger, Doubledeck	Easier, closer vehicle pull-up (snow removal)
? Visibility, More Windows	Shelters – Big, with Seats/Benches
? ? Temperature/Climate control (air circulation)	? ? Maps/schedules to take – reader-friendly
	Transit Updates (electronic)
	? Automated ticket machine
	Change machine, make change
Terminal/Stations	Schedule
? ? Shelter (awnings) outside where wait/access vehicle	? ? More frequent pickups
? ? Coffee, convenience stores, dry cleaner, food	? Express buses/service
Washrooms (clean)	Cutback on empty bus routes
Information person/desk	? Reliable, consistent schedule
Securitypersons	Extended hours: off-hours
Emergency/Safety Button (especially at night)	? ? Weekend hours
? ? Electronic updates	Payment
? ? Automated ticket machine	? / ? ? ? Cross-transit system pass
? ? Better parking – more spaces	Pay once (start or finish)
	Make change, or Change machine
	? ? / ? NYC/Debit card-style fill-up pay card
<p><i>This table contains all mentions provided by focus group participants (from the Mixed Public Transit session) as a completion of each prompted section above. Mentions are listed in the order they were provided. Among the mentions from both Phase 1 and Phase 2, participants used stickers to indicate their top priorities/preferences (?) that would be most likely to increase their public transit usage, and those mentions (if any) that they felt were unnecessary or that would decrease (?) their public transit usage.</i></p>	



Ipsos Reid