2016 Westport Transit District Survey

Prepared for The Westport Transit District
By Beresford Research
December 2016
Background

- The Westport Transit District ("WTD") provides public transportation in the Town of Westport with minibuses operated under subcontract with the Norwalk Transit District.

- Services include commuter shuttles operating to and from Saugatuck and Greens Farms rail stations and daytime Door-to-Door transportation for seniors and citizens with disabilities.

- WTD wishes to improve its understanding of evolving transportation preferences and citizen attitudes about public transportation to help inform future decisions about WTD services.
The WTD commissioned Beresford Research to develop and field a survey with four primary objectives:

1. Measure awareness of the WTD services
2. Quantify the level of satisfaction with the WTD services
3. Provide insights to increase ridership
4. Measure the perceived importance of WTD services to the community
Methodology

• Beresford Research worked collaboratively with the Westport Transit District Directors to develop an online survey with “branch” questions for Town residents, commuter bus riders, other Metro North train riders and local employees
  – The survey was reviewed with selected Westport elected officials, including Jim Marpe, First Selectman, and Peter Gold, Chairman of RTM Transit Committee

• Personalized survey invitations from Jim Marpe were emailed on November 4, 2016, to 12,863 Parks & Recreation, Railroad parking permit holders, and those on the waiting list; reminders sent on November 10th

• Pre-printed postcards with a QR code were distributed to commuter bus riders by the WTD drivers on Friday, November 4, Tuesday, November 8, and Thursday, November 10
Methodology (continued)

- The survey was also promoted by 06880, Westport News, Westport Now, The Westport Senior Center, the Downtown Merchants Association, The Westport-Weston Chamber of Commerce and the Westport Transit District website.
- As an incentive, two local restaurants offered a $100 gift card prize for a random drawing among the 941 respondents who provided their email addresses.
- The survey was in the field from November 4, 2016 – December 2, 2016, and 1,539 surveys were collected.
- 39 responses are from local employees who live outside of Westport – These responses have been excluded from the analysis.
Methodology (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sample size</th>
<th>Margin of error (95% confidence)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commuter bus riders</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>5.3 pts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Train riders excluding bus riders</td>
<td>318</td>
<td>4.9 pts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westport train commuters</td>
<td>463</td>
<td>4.0 pts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westport residents excluding train riders</td>
<td>958</td>
<td>3.1 pts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westport residents</td>
<td>1,421</td>
<td>2.5 pts.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• Since both the Commuter bus riders and train riders were “oversampled,” the total results have been reweighted to compensate.
Demographics
Demographics

- Nearly all (97%) are Westport residents and most (79%) have lived in town for over 10 years

**Resident type**

- Westport resident: 97%
- Resident of neighboring towns: 3%

**How long have you lived in Westport?**

- Under 6 months: 1%
- 6 months to a year: 1%
- 1-2 years: 2%
- 3-5 years: 8%
- 6-10 years: 10%
- Over 10 years: 79%

Source: 2016 Westport Transit District Survey

**Note:**
P1. Which of the following best describes you? *Select all that apply.* (n=1,500, reweighted) AND P1b. How long have you lived in Westport? (n=1,421, reweighted)
Demographics (continued)

- Over three-fifths (62%) of respondents are 35-64 years old
- Those not residing in Westport are most likely to live in Weston (59%)

**Age**

- 18 to 34: 2%
- 35 to 50: 19%
- 51 to 64: 43%
- 65 to 79: 30%
- 80 and over: 6%

**Which town?**

- Weston: 59%
- Norwalk: 17%
- Wilton: 14%
- Fairfield: 6%
- Bridgeport: 1%
- Easton: 1%
- Southport: 1%

*Note:* P1c. Which town? (n=85, reweighted) AND P2. How old are you? (n=1,500, reweighted)

Source: 2016 Westport Transit District Survey
Commuting

- Other than train riders, only 21% of other Westport residents commute more than 10 miles.
- Of those that commute more than 10 miles, 63% ride Metro North.

**Do you commute > 10 miles?**
- Total: 29%
- Commuter bus riders: 100%
- Train riders: 100%
- Other Westport residents: 21%

**How do you commute?**
- Ride the Metro North train: 63%
- Drive my car: 34%
- Take Coastal Link bus: 2%
- Carpool with others: 1%
- Other: 1%

**Note:** P3. Do you commute more than 10 miles most days? (n=1,500 reweighted) AND P3b. How do you primarily commute to work? Select one. (n=696 reweighted)

Source: 2016 Westport Transit District Survey
1. Awareness of the WTD Services
Familiarity with Westport’s minibus bus system

• Overall, under a quarter of respondents (23%) are “extremely” or “quite familiar” with Westport’s minibus system
  – 42% of train riders (excluding commuter bus riders) have no or slight familiarity

Note: Q1. First, before taking this survey, how familiar would you say you are with Westport’s minibus bus system? (n=1,500, reweighted)

Source: 2016 Westport Transit District Survey
Respondents are generally aware of the scheduled bus service to and from Westport’s train stations (81%), much less so for door-to-door services.

- Seniors (those 65+) are more likely to know about door-to-door on-request bus services for seniors (29%) and those with a disability (26%).

### Graph

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Commuter bus riders</th>
<th>Other Train riders</th>
<th>Other Westport residents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scheduled bus service to and from Westport’s train stations</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Door-to-door on-request bus service for seniors</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Door-to-door on-request bus service for those with a disability</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** Q2. Which of the following Westport Transit District services (provided under contract by Norwalk Transit), if any, are you aware of? Select all that apply. (n=1,500, reweighted)
Familiarity with Route System

- Only 19% of Other Train riders are “extremely” or “quite” familiar with the route system, and more than half (55%) are “not at all” or only “slightly” familiar.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Commuter bus riders</th>
<th>Other Train riders</th>
<th>Other Westport residents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Familiarity</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2016 Westport Transit District Survey

Note: Q2a. How familiar are you with the route system? (n=1,256, reweighted)
Considered/tried commuter bus to train station

- Just under half of Other Train riders (47%) have considered taking the bus to the train station
  - Of those who have considered it, two-thirds (66%) have tried the bus (31% of Other Train riders)

Note: Q8. Have you ever considered taking the bus to and from the train station? (n=316) AND Q8b. Have you ever tried the bus to or from the train station? (n=148)
2. Level of Satisfaction with WTD Services
Bus rider frequency and duration

- Nearly three in five bus riders (57%) ride the bus at least 3-4 times/week
- Just under a third of bus riders (31%) have been doing so for 10+ years
  - An additional 43% have been using the bus for 3-9 years

**Note:** Q28. How frequently do you ride and how long have you been riding the Westport bus service for train commuters? (n=145; 137)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>Under a year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 to 4 times a week</td>
<td>1-2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 to 2 times a week</td>
<td>3-5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A few times a month</td>
<td>6-9 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A few times a year</td>
<td>10 years or more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2016 Westport Transit District Survey
Bus rider satisfaction

- Almost all (94%) bus riders are “somewhat” or “strongly” satisfied with the Westport bus service for train commuters.

Note: Q30. Please rate your overall satisfaction with the Westport bus service for train commuters. (n=136)
Reasons to ride the bus

- Reasonable cost, reducing congestion and not driving are top reasons for riding bus

Note: Q32. Which of following are reasons you ride the bus? Select all that apply. (n=136)

Source: 2016 Westport Transit District Survey
Reasons to dislike riding the bus

- Over a third of bus riders dislike riding the bus because of lack of flexibility (38%) and bus not always being available when needed (35%)

Relative lack of flexibility; buses only meet certain trains 38%
- Sometimes the bus isn’t available when I need it 35%
- Waiting outside for bus in morning, especially in extremes 22%
- Buses are sometimes early/late 15%
- No sidewalk or easy way to walk safely to bus stop 11%
- It takes less time to drive myself 7%
- Bus route not close enough to my house 7%
- Buses are uncomfortable 5%
- The cost is too expensive 1%
- None 35%
- Other 5%

Note: Q33. Which of following, if any, are reasons you dislike riding the bus? Select all that apply. (n=136)
Bus rider “loyalty”

- Three of five bus riders without a parking permit (61%) would be “quite” or “extremely likely” to continue riding the bus if they were able to purchase a parking permit.

Likelihood of riding bus if you could purchase a parking permit

- Extremely likely: 36%
- Quite likely: 25%
- Moderately likely: 25%
- Slightly likely: 7%
- Not at all likely: 7%

Note: Q34. How likely, if at all, would you be to continue riding the bus if you were able to purchase a parking permit? (n=69)
• Two-thirds (67%) of bus riders would find a smartphone app that allowed them to track specific buses “quite” or “extremely” useful

Usefulness of smartphone app to track specific buses

- Extremely useful: 38%
- Quite useful: 29%
- Moderately useful: 16%
- Slightly useful: 12%
- Not at all useful: 5%

Note: Q35. How useful would you find a smartphone app that allowed you to track specific buses and their arrival times (à la Uber)? (n=136)
3. Insights to Increase Ridership
Bus routes

- Nearly three-fifth (57%) of train riders who do not currently take the bus believe one of the bus routes could be beneficial to them.
- For this group of Other Train riders, nearly half (45%) typically take trains that are met by the commuter buses in both the morning and evening (excludes Imperial shuttle).
  - This means that about a quarter of Other Train riders could take the commuter bus.

Source: 2016 Westport Transit District Survey

Note: Q10. Could one of these routes be valuable to you? (n=316); Q5. Which train(s) do you typically take from {Q4 response} in the morning (n=178) AND Q6. Which train(s) do you typically take back to {Q4 response} in the evening? (n=178)
Reasons for not considering the bus to the train

- Of those Other train riders who have not considered taking the bus, over half (55%) say it takes less time to drive themselves than to take the bus.

Note: Q8c. Which of the following reasons apply? Select all that apply. (n=168)
Smartphone app for commuter bus

- Over two-fifths of Other Train riders (44%) feel a smartphone app for the bus would be quite or extremely useful.
- One in six of Other Train riders (17%) say app would be quite or extremely likely to increase their use of the bus system.

**Smartphone app usefulness and incentive**

- Not at all: 20% usefulness, 39% likelihood to increase usage
- Slightly: 15% usefulness, 27% likelihood to increase usage
- Moderately: 17% usefulness, 21% likelihood to increase usage
- Quite: 10% usefulness, 22% likelihood to increase usage
- Extremely: 7% usefulness, 22% likelihood to increase usage

**Note:** Q11. How useful would you find a smartphone app that allowed you to track specific buses and their arrival times (à la Uber)? (n=316) AND Q12. How likely would the availability of such a smartphone app increase your ridership of the Westport commuter bus system? (n=316)
Just over half of Other Train riders (53%) are aware of free parking at Imperial lot.

Learning about free parking at Imperial lot interests 28% of those who were previously unaware of it, and 22% would be more likely to try it if bus were free.

**Note:** Q13. Are you aware of the free parking at the Imperial Lot (located besides the Westport Woman’s Club on Imperial Avenue), with scheduled bus service to and from the Saugatuck train platform from 6 AM though 8:30 AM, and 6 PM through 9:15 PM? (n=318); Q13c. Does learning there is free parking and low-cost ($3 round trip; approximately half with a monthly UniTicket) bus service that drops you right at the Saugatuck train platform create any interest in learning more about it? (n=99) AND Q16. Would you be more likely to try parking in the Imperial Lot and riding the bus if the service were provided without any cost? (n=291)
Imperial lot (continued)

- Only 2% of Other Train riders are “quite” or “extremely likely” to try the Imperial lot
- Of those that are “not at all” or “slightly” likely to try the Imperial lot, two-thirds (68%) feel it takes less time to drive, and half (53%) don’t want to drive/bus/train

### Likelihood of trying Imperial Lot

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Likelihood</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all likely</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly likely</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately likely</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quite likely</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely likely</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Why not?

- It takes less time to drive myself: 68%
- Don’t want to drive, then take bus/train: 53%
- No flexibility; buses meet certain trains: 29%
- Need to meet later trains in the PM: 13%
- Need to meet earlier trains in the AM: 12%
- Need to meet later trains in the AM: 4%
- Need to meet earlier trains in the PM: 3%
- Buses are uncomfortable: 2%
- Other: 12%

**Note:** Q14. How likely would you be to try parking at the Imperial Lot? (n=298) AND Q15. Why are you Not at all/Slightly likely about the Imperial Lot. Select all that apply. (n=261)

Source: 2016 Westport Transit District Survey
Value of low-cost middle-of-the-day bus service between Main St and the Saugatuck train station

- Overall, nearly three in ten of Westport residents (29%) feel low-cost, middle-of-the-day bus service to the train is “quite” or “extremely” valuable to the Westport community as a whole
  - Fewer than 1 in 10 feel the same in relation to themselves and their families

Note: Q21. How valuable do you believe regular low-cost, middle-of-the-day bus service between Main Street and the Saugatuck train station would be to you personally, your family and the Westport community as a whole? (“quite valuable” and “extremely valuable” shown) (n=1,239-1,278, reweighted)
Suggestions to increase ridership or improve service

Note: Q43. Please add any suggestions to increase ridership of, or to improve the Westport bus system here. Open-ended responses recoded (n=536)
4. Perceived Importance of WTD Services to the Community
Attractive aspects of Westport for new residents

- Public bus service is not a major reason for new residents to move to Westport

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Some extent</th>
<th>Great extent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compo Beach</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Train service to New York City</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public school system</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance to New York City</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific property purchased/rented</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westport’s restaurants</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westport Public Library</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longshore (Golf/Pool/Sailing)</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downtown shopping</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saugatuck River</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westport Country Playhouse</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public bus service to train station</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services for seniors and Senior Center</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation for disabled persons</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Q27. To what extent, if any, did each of the following aspects attract you to living in Westport? (New residents, <3 years; n=50, reweighted)
Reducing congestion

- Over half of commuters believe it is “quite” or “extremely” important to reduce congestion around the Saugatuck train station (56%) and downtown Westport (62%)

Note: Q19. How important do you believe reducing congestion around the Saugatuck train station and downtown Westport is to Westport’s quality of life? (“quite important” and “extremely important” shown) (n=1,314-1,393 reweighted)
Value of low-cost bus service to the community

- Over three-fifths of Westport residents feel low-cost bus service to the train and door-to-door service for persons with disabilities is “quite” or “extremely valuable” to the Westport community as a whole.

- Support is lower for door-to-door service for seniors without disabilities (43%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Commuter bus riders</th>
<th>Other Train riders</th>
<th>Other Westport residents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To the commuter trains</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons with disability (door-to-door)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seniors (door-to-door)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Q20. How valuable to the Westport community as a whole, is regular low-cost bus service to the train? (“quite valuable” and “extremely valuable” shown) (n=1,356, reweighted); Q25. How important is it to you, your family and to the Westport community as a whole to have the Town provide low-cost (subsidized) door-to-door bus service for persons with disabilities? (“quite valuable” and “extremely valuable shown”) (n=1,094, reweighted) AND Q26. How important to the Westport community as a whole is low-cost (subsidized) door-to-door bus service within Westport for all seniors without disabilities (including those who can drive themselves)? (n=1,094, reweighted)
Financial support for commuter bus service

- Westport residents were shown the following statement:
  - In cities and towns across the United States, fares provide only a portion of the cost of public transportation. Westport’s commuter shuttles are supported by a significant subsidy from the state of CT. Additionally, the Town of Westport currently spends close to $200,000 annually (0.1% of the Town’s $200 million operating budget) on the commuter bus service, which is currently utilized by an estimated 125 to 150 regular riders (with more people using the service occasionally).

Source: 2016 Westport Transit District Survey
Westport residents were then asked to rate their level of agreement.

Three-fifths (59%) agree and three in ten (29%) disagree that the Town should continue funding the commuter bus service.

**Note:** Q23. Given this information above, please indicate whether you agree or disagree that this community service should receive public financial support from Westport. (n=1,419 reweighted)
Funding allocations for the commuter bus (includes “No Opinion”)

- Overall, 27% feel funding for the commuter bus service should follow the current route structure; an additional 39% have “no opinion”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Current structure</th>
<th>Add mid-day service</th>
<th>Add rush-hour service from more parking lots</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>No opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commuter bus riders</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Train riders</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Westport residents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Q24. How do you believe the funding for the commuter bus service should be allocated? *Enter values 0 to 100 so that the total equals 100; if “No opinion,” please enter 100 for this response.* (n=1,419, reweighted)
Funding allocations for the commuter bus (excludes “No opinion”)

- 44% of those with an opinion support current route structure
- Support for mid-day service is weak, but three in ten (30%) support adding rush-hour service between train stations and additional commuter parking lots

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Current structure</th>
<th>Add mid-day service</th>
<th>Add rush-hour service from more parking lots</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commuter bus riders</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Train riders</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Westport residents</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2016 Westport Transit District Survey

Note: Q24. How do you believe the funding for the commuter bus service should be allocated? Enter values 0 to 100 so that the total equals 100; if “No opinion,” please enter 100 for this response. (n=1,419, reweighted) No opinion responses excluded.
In summary
Summary of findings

1. 42% of Westport’s Metro North Train riders (excluding bus riders) have no or only “slight familiarity” with the bus service
   - Familiarity with Town’s door-to-door service predictably low across Westport

2. 57% of train riders (excluding bus riders) believe a commuter bus route could be valuable to them, and an estimated 45% of those (one quarter overall) typically take AM/PM trains that busses meet
   - 17% say that a smartphone tracking app would likely increase their use of the bus system

3. Commuter bus rider satisfaction very high – with reasonable cost, reducing congestion and eliminating need to drive as top reasons
   - 61% of bus riders without parking permits would be quite/extremely likely to continue riding the bus even if they had a parking permit; 14% would be “not at all” or only “slightly likely” to continue
4. Imperial lot and mid-day service not popular – for individuals, family or community

5. Over three-fifths of respondents believe commuter buses and door-to-door services for citizens with a disability are valuable to the community

6. 59% agree that the commuter bus service should be supported by Town funds (29% disagree)
Thank you