

**Metropolitan Transportation Commission and Association of Bay Area Governments
Joint MTC Planning Committee with the ABAG Administrative Committee**

January 13, 2023

Agenda Item 7a

Travel Survey Program Overview

Subject:

Overview of the travel survey program (“Survey Program”), which comprises both a regional travel diary survey (also known as a “household travel survey”) and a transit passenger survey of Bay Area operators.

Background:

The two types of surveys MTC has administered most frequently – and form the basis of the Survey Program - are travel diary surveys and transit passenger surveys. These surveys provide empirical traveler data not readily available from other sources. This information has historically been used to update the MTC regional and Bay Area county-level travel models, ultimately informing Plan Bay Area and other agency studies. Other applications of these data include demographic analyses and equity studies, initiatives by regional partners, and academic research.

Travel Diary Survey

A travel diary survey collects demographic, vehicle, and travel information for households over a one-to-seven-day period, including origin and destination locations, trip purpose, duration, and modes, transit boarding/alighting locations, and parking, transit, and toll fees.

MTC administered previous Bay Area travel diary surveys in 1965, 1981, 1990, 1996, and 2000. The most recent comprehensive Bay Area survey was completed in 2012/2013, as an add-on sample to the statewide California Household Travel Survey. However, a smaller-scale adult-based (as opposed to household-based) survey was administered in 2018/2019, focusing on collecting transportation network company (e.g., Lyft, Uber) user and trip data.

While the standard practice has been to administer extensive household travel surveys roughly once every ten years, there are compelling reasons to perform more minor updates on a more continuous basis, such as:

- Sizeable decennial survey efforts require large episodic budget outlays, while more frequent surveying requires smaller, more predictable costs over a longer time period;

- Survey technologies are evolving rapidly, including smartphone apps that greatly reduce survey burden and cost; and
- The pace of new travel trends and behavior is evolving quickly, and a once-every-decade survey misses many behavioral changes.

Transit Passenger Survey

MTC's regional Transit Passenger Survey (TPS) has been implemented in its current form since 2012 and was regionally codified in the 2015 revision for MTC Resolution No. 3866, the Transit Coordination Implementation Plan. The TPS collects passenger trip and demographic characteristics for a sample of riders. The surveys are conducted on a rolling basis, with one or several operators completed each spring and fall. Data is collected from passengers in the field via tablet PC-assisted personal interviews to ensure fidelity of trip and traveler details.

Beginning in March 2020, the TPS was suspended due to COVID-19. Since then, transit ridership relative to that of pre-March 2020 has declined and service has since been restructured for many operators. These unusual circumstances require both near- and long-term data collection approaches to enrich our understanding of who is riding and for what purposes.

Next Steps:

Travel Diary Survey

Staff has recently procured a vendor to begin biennial data collection in spring 2023. Staff will work with the consultant to develop a survey instrument and sampling plan and then administer field data collection. Staff have developed regional partnerships to leverage the amount of data collected and have tentative commitments from San Francisco County Transportation Authority and Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority to provide additional funding for an oversample within their respective counties.

Transit Passenger Survey

It is timely to resume regional transit surveying that was suspended for the pandemic, both to support operator ongoing needs (e.g., Title VI equity filings) and to inform upcoming regional planning efforts including *Plan Bay Area 2050+* and *Transit 2050+*. Toward this end, staff intends to administer two different transit passenger surveys in parallel: a short-term survey and resumption of the long-term Transit Passenger Survey program:

1. **“Snapshot” Transit Passenger Survey:** This short-term survey is being designed to “re-baseline” current riders and trips using a reduced scope, survey instrument, timeline, and budget. The Snapshot TPS will update rider demographics (e.g., age, gender, income, household size, ethnicity, limited-English proficiency), trip purposes, fare payment information, high-level origin/destination (O/D) patterns for the operator system and mode (for multi-modal operators) level. A request for proposal has been released for this project and the field work is anticipated to begin spring 2023.
2. **“Ongoing” Transit Passenger Survey:** This survey continues the more intensive (i.e. route-level data collection) and time-consuming (i.e., 5-7-year timeframe) data collection required by Resolution 3866, as is described in the Background section above. Staff anticipates procuring a bench for this work in spring 2023 and resuming the Regular TPS in fall 2023 or spring 2024.

Updating Survey Program Web Presence

Staff understand that there is much regional interest in making data summaries and reports more accessible to partners and the general public. Toward this end, staff is working to add data resources to our existing web page by the spring/summer of 2023, including reports and/or interactive dashboards for recent and historical data.

Issues:


None identified.

Recommendations:

Information.

Attachments:

- Attachment A: PowerPoint



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