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**AN EXPLORATION OF  
TRIANGULATION OF  
METHODOLOGIES:  
QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE  
METHODOLOGY FUSION IN AN  
INVESTIGATION OF PERCEPTIONS  
OF TRANSIT SAFETY**

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16. Abstract <p>Integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches to transit research provides an innovative tool in both determining and understanding the needs of users and non-users. The present work builds upon the usefulness of each method and integrates them in the assessment of non-users' perceptions of transit safety and security. The results from the quantitative and qualitative studies are examined in the context of integration and comparison and a new concept called triangulation of methodologies is introduced. Recommendations are made as to how transit agencies might improve the perception of a safe and secure transit environment among non-users. An epistemological discussion of methodological integration is also provided. The two methods are in concordance with one another, verifying that people don't use transit because it is inconvenient, not because of safety issues. However, the triangulation of results produces an enriched data product, with qualitative results expanding motivations behind non-use of transit and quantitative results linking the responses to certain demographic groups and quantifying the results. Triangulation is an effective research tool which yields a product in which the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.</p> <p>In addition, a comparison of transit user versus non-user perceptions of transit safety is included to verify if the reasons which non-users gave for not using transit are valid. In the transit user survey, participants were more concerned about safety than transit non-users. Transit users would like for the system to be more convenient in aspects of travel time and ease of use, but they were more worried about safety. Women and seniors were especially worried about their safety while using the system.</p>		14. Sponsoring Agency Code	
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## **Executive Summary**

Methodological debate is necessarily pervasive in most fields of applied research. The undertaking of a research study requires great consideration as to the appropriateness and validity of any chosen method. The types of data sought, what is to be done with the data, available resources, time constraints, sampling capabilities, and skills of the researchers are some of the factors that contribute to the determination of what research methods are best for any given project.

There are generally considered to be two methodological approaches to data collection and analysis. These are qualitative and quantitative research approaches.

Qualitative researchers reject idea that human behavior can be studied with the same methods as the natural or physical sciences, making the assumption that human behavior is always bound to the context in which it occurs and therefore, behavior must be studied holistically rather than being manipulated. Qualitative research is an intensely personal and subjective style of research. In addition, qualitative research encourages people to participate, to share their opinions, to get involved in the discussion of controversial topics and to say things which others may not find 'politically correct.' In order to participate in qualitative research, one must be willing to think deeply and express those thoughts with the interviewer or the group involved in the study.

On the other hand, quantitative researchers strive for testable and confirmable theories that can explain how one set of variables is related to another. Quantitative research involves reducing social reality to finite variables that can be measured in the same way as variables in the physical sciences and attempts to control the variables in question to see how other variables are influenced. In other words, quantitative research reduces human behavior to a set of finite characteristics that can be quantified and operationalized so that they can easily be tested.

In this paper, the practice combining of quantitative and qualitative methods is discussed. Over the past decade, there has been an increasing trend of blending

quantitative and qualitative data within a study to provide a broader, deeper perspective. This process is referred to as triangulation. Triangulation has been viewed as a somewhat controversial practice (Hilton, 2002).

Triangulation is a surveying term used to describe a technique whereby two known or visible points are used to plot the location of a third point. In research, triangulation refers to the combination of two or more theories, data sources, methods, or investigators in one study of a single phenomenon to converge on a single construct. There are several types of triangulation, but only the type that was used in this study will be discussed.

In these studies, *methods triangulation* was used. This involves using more than one research method or data collection technique because each addresses a different dimension of the topic. In the current studies, both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection on perceptions of transit safety were used. For qualitative methods, six focus groups and 20 in-depth telephone interviews were completed. For quantitative methods, a more simplistic multiple-choice questionnaire was used for five hundred phone interviews .

Triangulation provides confirmation and completeness. Triangulation is not simply combining different types of data, but it attempts to relate the two types of information so as to leave the validity of each type of information intact. The use of triangulation allows researchers to capture a more complete, holistic and contextual portrayal and reveal the varied dimensions of a given phenomena, with each source contributing an additional piece to the puzzle. In using triangulation, bias can be minimized and the validity enhanced. Neither qualitative nor quantitative methods alone could get yield the results of the combination of the two. The sum of the whole is greater than its parts.

Both Quantitative and Qualitative research designs seek reliable and valid results. Data that are consistent or stable as indicated by the researcher's ability to replicate the findings is of major concern in the Quantitative arena while validity of the Qualitative findings are paramount so that data are representative of a true and full picture of constructs under investigation (Bowen, 2002).

By combining methods, advantages of each methodology complements the other making a stronger research design with resulting more valid and reliable findings. The inadequacies of individual methods are minimized and more threats to Internal Validity are realized and addressed.

The controversy arises because some scholars believe that using mixed methods is blurring the lines between two very separate types of research methodologies. These researchers claim that qualitative and quantitative research methods are based on totally incompatible paradigms and should not be combined.

However it is important to study validity to include several types of data collection methodologies. If the researcher omits qualitative methods, then the researcher may be overlooking many phenomena that occur within the context of the setting. Conversely, if the researcher omits quantitative methods, then the causal relationships between variables as well as quantification and analysis of those variables to determine statistical probabilities and certainty of a particular outcome will be absent (Bowen, 2002).

A process of conceptual triangulation is described by Foster (1997) that clearly outlines five steps in conducting conceptual triangulation: 1) Conduct qualitative and quantitative research that is true to the assumptions of each methodology, 2) Find the pertinent results within each method, 3) Examine the level of confidence in the results, 4) Develop criteria for results inclusion in the conceptual model, and 5) Construct the conceptual model. These strategies were used in this study to provide direction in combining qualitative and quantitative methods.

This five-step method was used to construct a picture of transit non-user perceptions of safety. The main idea conveyed in this triangulated picture is that the public does not like to use buses in the Tampa Bay area because of inconvenience and travel time issues, not because of safety issues. These issues of inconvenience and travel time are addressed below.

In the free response section of the quantitative questionnaire, respondents said that they did not use the bus because the buses were not frequent enough, there were not enough bus stops where the respondents lived, the buses did not go to desired places, and travel time took too long; it is difficult and time-consuming to take the bus with small

children or to run errands; it is also difficult to take the bus if one is required to travel for work. These results were echoed in the focus group sessions, but the comments were expanded and in the quantitative results section, more men than women made these comments about inconvenience. Although a few people made the comment that they couldn't use transit because they had young children, but those with children under 16 years of age were less concerned than those without children under 16 years of age about convenience. In the focus groups, conversely, those with small children were much more concerned about convenience when using transit than those without small children.

Additionally, in the focus groups, many participants began explaining their non-use of transit by stating that bus stops were either unavailable to them in their residential area or were too far of a walk. Focus group participants also noted that senior citizens may not be able to access bus stops because access involves walking long distances and that walking long distances in the extreme Florida heat may be particularly dangerous for them. In addition, focus group participants said that they would not be willing to wait or walk in the rain, as most bus stops the participants had utilized or observed had neither a bench nor a shelter. It was also noted that suburban development patterns affected the placement of bus stops and even if a bus stop was placed at the entrance of a subdivision, a person might have to walk for several miles to access it. In concordance with the statement by quantitative participants, that buses wouldn't take them to places they desired to go, participants in the focus group claimed that routes were inconvenient and that coverage in the suburban areas was very sparse. Having to transfer to get to a final destination is also considered an aspect of route inconvenience. The more one must transfer to get to a final destination, the more inconvenient the route may be considered to be. There is also concern about missing the next bus and consequently arriving late for work or scheduled appointments.

Approximately one-fourth of the non-user respondents in the quantitative study were concerned about using the bus system and being able to get around without being stranded and being able to get accurate information about service availability, scheduling and routes. Those most concerned over this aspect were in the 18-24 year old and 65 and older age groups. In the focus group, similar results were obtained in the focus group, with participants reporting negative experiences related to obtaining



information about transit service availability, scheduling, and routes. Service was considered to be inconvenient and restrictive.

Focus group participants further expanded the laundry list of inconveniences to include the inability to carry several packages or large loads onto a bus, the inconvenience of having to provide exact change to the driver, the lack of late evening service, and the unreliability of service. In addition, many focus group participants claimed that they did not want to use transit. Many of the focus group participants wondered if the large buses they saw running mostly empty were economically or environmentally viable.

In the focus groups, participants were asked about the advantages of bus transit. This is something that was not done on the quantitative questionnaire, which only contained multiple-choice and free response questions asking about safety perceptions and main reasons for not using transit. Focus group participants listed the advantages of using bus transit as being more financially sound versus owning a personal vehicle. Several participants also noted that one could engage in other activities that would not be possible while driving. Convenience was also listed as a possible advantage if the buses serve areas where people want to travel with sufficient frequency.

Overall, the majority of transit non-users responding to the quantitative questionnaire were not concerned over their personal security while using the transit system. Only about one-fourth of transit non-users were concerned for their personal security while using the system and the quantitative survey results shows that these senior citizens, those in lower income brackets, women, and minorities such as African Americans and Hispanics. One-third of transit non-users were concerned about having to wait or ride the bus with loud, unruly teenagers. Two-fifths of our respondents were concerned about having to ride the bus with unpleasant people and close to one-third were concerned about having to wait with unpleasant people. The majority of those who were concerned over these aspects of transit use were those over the age of 65 and those making less than \$20,000 per year. It should be noted that most of our respondents over the age of 65 accounted for most of those who made less than \$20,000 per year.

Further, approximately one-third of respondents were concerned about crime around bus stops. Most of those responding that crime around bus stops was a concern for

them were those making less than \$20,000 per year. However, this result cannot be accounted for by previous results wherein those 65 or older responded affirmatively that the item listed was a concern for them. Very few of those over 65 years of age responded affirmatively to this item.

Overall, approximately 16 percent of respondents responded that they agreed with the following statement: "Concern for my safety is a very important reason for my choice not to use public buses." Of these, most were in the 18-24 year old and 65 and over age group and in the lowest income brackets (less than \$20,000 per year). In addition, only 15 percent of our respondents were concerned over buses being used as targets for terrorism and none of the respondents mentioned this aspect in the free-response section of the questionnaire.

In the quantitative study, although the word "safety" was used, it was concluded that most participants interpreted this to mean personal security and not safety, such as not getting into traffic accidents, on the bus. In the focus group, safety referred to the fact that most focus group participants felt safer riding in a bus as compared to a personal vehicle because of the large size of the bus and that the frequency and severity of bus accidents were much reduced when compared to the frequency and severity of personal auto accidents. However, some focus group participants voiced concerns that buses were not equipped with seat belts.

Additionally, possibilities exist for passengers to fall to the floor when standing or to slip off of a seat if the bus were to come to a sudden stop. Safety exiting the bus and accessing the transit system was also addressed in the focus groups. Participants complained that many bus stops were too close to the road and that it was sometimes hard to find secure footing when exiting into a bus stop area, in that there are drainage ditches and grassy areas which could be dangerous. Focus group participants were divided on the issue of bus driver safety records and criminal records and also the mechanical upkeep of the buses. Focus group participants know their own driving skills and records and are also aware of the maintenance schedule of their own personal vehicles.

However, results from the focus groups suggest that security is more of a concern than is safety. Many participants in the focus groups said that the area in which they were accessing or exiting from the transit system would affect anxieties about personal security. For example, if a particular area or neighbourhood were known for drug-related activity or other illegal activities, then they would feel at particular risk in that area. Focus group participants were concerned for their personal security while walking or waiting in dark areas, especially if they were alone. Long waiting times exacerbated these concerns, with the perception being that the longer a person has to wait, the more chance he or she has of becoming a victim. Participants said that while they felt unsafe while waiting either alone or with what they would consider 'undesirable' people, they would feel more secure once they were on the bus.

Focus group participants also discussed who they thought would be most likely to commit crimes in the transit environment and it was overwhelmingly young males. In addition, participants also mention teenagers, gang members, and drug users as being cause for concern about personal safety. One of the focus group participants also spoke of being concerned about the "foreign element" in Tampa and another noted that she has particular fears related to African Americans and Muslims. This is another difference between the quantitative and qualitative groups. In the quantitative study, more minorities said that they would be afraid for their personal security in using the transit system rather than stating that they worried about who the aggressor might be.

The quantitative data results also suggested that more women and senior citizens had more concern about their safety than men or other age groups. The focus groups confirm these results, with female focus group members conveying more experiences in which they felt unsafe than their male counterparts. In addition, both non-senior and senior focus group members stated that senior citizens as a group are viewed as being more vulnerable since they are considered to be more frail and less likely to resist an attack on their person or property. However, while more senior citizens were concerned about their personal security in the quantitative survey, seniors in the focus groups were no more concerned with safety and security than were their younger counterparts.

Although a majority of respondents said that they did not use public transit because they had their own personal vehicle, only a few respondents to the quantitative questionnaire

mentioned that they preferred the privacy and control of their own personal vehicles. Most participants in the focus group mentioned that they experienced comfort in their personal vehicles because they could lock the door, decide who accompanies them, and plan or alter their routes as needed. They also noted fears that they had about having no control about who would be waiting with them at the bus stop and who might sit next to them on the bus.

Another difference between the quantitative survey results and the focus group results is that focus groups brought up the issue of terrorist attack on a transit vehicle on their own, while no one in the free response section of the quantitative survey brought up terrorism concerns on their own. Quantitative survey respondents only commented to items once the administrator of the questionnaire had brought up the issue.

Transit non-users who did not own cars, those in the lowest income brackets (less than \$30,000 per years), widows, and those in the 18-24 year old category and those in the 55 years and older categories were most concerned about being seen using the bus. Fifty-four percent of respondents claimed that they would be embarrassed to have someone they knew see them using the bus. In addition, most of the respondents (71 percent) said that they felt sorry for those having to use the bus and approximately the same amount (78 percent) said that they agreed with the statement: "I believe that most people that use the bus use it because they have no choice." Finally, those in the oldest age group (65 and older) responded that they felt sorriest for those having to use the bus. In all six focus groups, participants cited only "low income" or "poor" populations as the primary clientele of public transit in this area. In support of the results of the quantitative data, participants in the focus groups held the belief that using a bus was a last resort, even for those who could not afford a car, those who were too disabled to drive a car, or those who had lost their license and were not allowed to drive. Most focus group participants said that they only used the bus in this area as a last resort, if they couldn't find rides with friends or relatives. The focus group participants believed that if people had any other choice, they would not use bus service for transportation. However, only a few focus group participants brought up that they might be embarrassed to ride the bus and once the topic was introduced, it was discussed briefly and then the topic was changed, with only three or four people mentioning that they or their family members might feel embarrassed to use the bus. In the focus group, senior

citizens spoke about how they might have to use public transportation some day and how the main barrier would be convenience and access.

### Conclusion

The final count here is that people do not see bus transit as a viable mode of transportation mostly because it is inconvenient. It does not run frequently enough, it does not cover enough area, it is hard to use, using the routes and transferring are complicated, buses are sometimes hard to access, bus stops are poorly maintained and are in physically unsafe as well as unsecured areas. The result of the triangulation of methodologies results in a more complete picture that explains exactly why people prefer using their cars. Only in the most dire of circumstances would the majority of the respondents use bus transit. Both types of methodology results bear out this conclusion. However, the quantitative portion allows linkage to demographic characteristics of respondents while the qualitative results allow expansion of the attitudes behind these decisions. For instance, it was found that women, senior citizens, and minorities were worried for their safety in the quantitative results. However, a more complete picture is that while senior citizens are worried for their safety, they see a time when they might need to use bus transit and personal security is not as prohibitive to utilization of bus services to them as convenience. It is important to get the full picture so that those in marketing positions for bus transit understand the both the attitudes and motivations of demographic groups which could become riders if the right conditions prevailed.

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## Introduction

Relatively little information has been generated regarding the integration of quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection and analysis. Although many studies have *compared* the two methodologies and often argue for one or the other, few researchers have attempted to measure similar research questions by paralleling the methods in application and evaluating those results. Such an undertaking is particularly valuable in transit where much of the market research focuses on quantitative methods and pre-designed survey instruments in the collection of data on intentions to use transit and reasons for not using transit. Open-ended questions in such surveys, if posed at all, are typically limited to brief statements by respondents. Qualitative methods of research encourage study participants to elaborate upon the opinions they provide, and may enrich the understanding of quantitative results.

The safety and security of public transportation are naturally important concerns for transit agencies and the customers they serve. Safety and security issues such as traffic accidents and the security of bus stops are known to be important issues to transit users, and the transit industry makes every effort to provide a safe and secure transit environment. But to what extent do such concerns affect those who do not use transit? Non-users' negative perceptions of safety and security are often considered to be a barrier to transit use, and one that may contribute to the decision not to utilize transit as a mode of transportation at all. How might transit professionals determine whether non-users' perceptions of safety and security are actually prohibiting them from using transit? What methods of research might be used to investigate the reasons non-users' have for other mode choices? Survey questionnaires frequently provide valuable data regarding such topics. They ask direct questions that typically have a limited range of potential responses and provide succinct, quantifiable results. The results of surveys are quite useful in identifying the needs of potential transit patrons. However, by design they do not explore those needs further, and they offer respondents few opportunities to explain the underlying principles of their responses—the real *why* of their mode choices.

The objective of the present research is to parallel a quantitative and a qualitative bus transit research study and analyze the results in terms of integrating the two methods.

The level of similarity between the conclusions reached and the proposed reasons for any major differences will be discussed. Doing so will assist in the development of recommendations to improve the perceptions of transit safety and security among non-users. It will also provide a better understanding of qualitative methods as they may be applied in transit research. This document presents the results of these efforts.



**Chapter One:  
Review of the Literature**

An intensive literature search was conducted to identify previous studies that have utilized both quantitative and qualitative approaches to research. CUTR researchers consulted the Transportation Research Board's on-line TRIS database, the CUTR Resource and Information Center (CRIC), the USF library, and the Internet in search of paradigmatic sources on this topic. Several academic and applied resources were discovered that present arguments for using one method or the other, or for combining them in a research study. The latter position typically recommends utilizing both methods in a single research study, but not as an integrative methodology. Literature sources complying with the established criteria for the present research project were fewer in number, indicating the potential this project holds for methodological innovation in transit research. The findings of the literature search are reviewed below.

Quantitative and qualitative methodologies can be described as distinctive approaches that yield varying types of knowledge (Brannen, 1992). Qualitative research involves characteristics that cannot be easily categorized as a number or label, such as attitudes and opinions. Quantitative research is intended to measure the effect of an independent variable on a certain outcome. It is based on data that are easily categorized and labeled (Taylor, 2000). While there are profound differences between these two styles of research, combining them by using the mixed-model method can provide in-depth and richer data (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998).

There are currently three arguments in the debate over the mixed-model method. The first is the purist ideology that states that the two styles are completely different frameworks that embody fundamentally different and incompatible assumptions about human nature or the world, and what is possible to know (Howard and Borland, 2001). It is implicit in this argument that certain types of information better lend themselves to analysis by either quantitative or qualitative methods.

The second argument is about the practicality of each position. This argument acknowledges the philosophical differences between the two different types of inquiry. These differences should not inhibit the desire to put the two approaches together. Furthermore, researchers should be allowed to decide what is best for the inquiry without having to consider the practical limitations of each method (Howard and Borland, 2001). The practicality position recognizes the differences between quantitative and qualitative research but leaves the decision about integration up to the researcher.

The third and final argument is the dialectical position. It acknowledges the differences between paradigms. All the differences should be deliberately used both within and across studies toward a dialectical discovery of new and revised perspectives and meanings (Howard and Borland, 2001). The complexity of social research would best be advanced via a combination of quantitative and qualitative methodologies. The differences of the two types of research should be embraced and exploited to better understand the area of study.

Over the past decade, there has been an increasing trend of blending quantitative and qualitative data within a study to provide a broader, deeper perspective. This process is referred to as triangulation. Triangulation has been viewed as a somewhat controversial practice (Hilton, 2002).

Triangulation is a surveying term used to describe a technique whereby two known or visible points are used to plot the location of a third point. In research, triangulation refers to the combination of two or more theories, data sources, methods, or investigators in one study of a single phenomenon to converge on a single construct. There are several types of triangulation, but in these studies, *methods triangulation* was used. This involves using more than one research method or data collection technique because each addresses a different dimension of the topic (Hilton, 2002).

Cook (1984; as cited in Bryman, 1988) presents one example of the application of triangulation. Cook's study explores the influence of gender in the way a parent experiences the death of a child from cancer. For the qualitative side of the investigation, Cook used a lengthy interview schedule of a large number of open-ended

questions. The data from these interviews were analyzed to detect underlying themes in the data and then submitted to the procedures associated with quantitative analysis. The two sets of data revealed that mothers were more involved in the culture of a child's illness, while many fathers felt out of place and uncomfortable in the same culture. This study illustrates triangulation of the two methods whereby both quantitative and qualitative approaches corroborate and validate one another.

An important concern in using qualitative and quantitative methods is related to the problems that may ensue when the qualitative evidence does not support the quantitative data. Bryman (1988) suggests that researchers should treat inconsistent findings as possibilities for new research ideas. Rather than ignoring the raw data, inconsistencies should be construed as an opportunity to expand the research in the given area. There are no predetermined criteria to demonstrate whether the qualitative data are not consistent with the quantitative data, or if they are merely elaborating upon what is already known. In the latter case, the data are verified rather than contradicted.

Qualitative research can facilitate quantitative research (Brannen, 1992), as when a questionnaire for quantitative research is developed from qualitative interviews or focus groups. In this mixed-method design the quantitative methodology is considered the primary method for data collection and analysis. Qualitative data are used only in the formulation of the hypothesis or to aid in the initial phases of the study. Quantitative research can also be used in a study based primarily upon qualitative data. Sieber (1973) observes that many survey researchers have an intensive knowledge of a locale, organization, or an intuition that informs the formulation of problems to be investigated and the hypotheses to be drawn from a certain set of data.

Both Quantitative and Qualitative research designs seek reliable and valid results. Data that are consistent or stable as indicated by the researcher's ability to replicate the findings is of major concern in the Quantitative arena while validity of the Qualitative findings are paramount so that data are representative of a true and full picture of constructs under investigation (Bowen, 2002).

The mixed-method approach can be used to analyze different points of view for the same issue. Qualitative data can be used to gather information based on the subject's perspective. Quantitative research is effective in interpreting the structural features of social life, while qualitative studies are usually stronger in terms of processing aspects of social life. These strengths can be brought together into a single study (Brannen, 1992). By using quantitative research the data that could not be retrieved can be supplemented and many more participants can be included in the study without significant addition to the time the researcher must spend accumulating data.

Quantitative research is oriented towards large-scale data and is better suited for overriding basic features of social life. Qualitative research is on a smaller scale, dealing with the processes of human behavior. Findings based purely on qualitative data are more likely to be anecdotal and less likely to give the correct impression of the data collected. In addition, a researcher who simply counts the main effects and the numbers in a quantitative data set may miss some of the message of the data. However, when qualitative data is combined with quantitative data the result will be stronger and lend itself more to generalization. The researcher must have some familiarity with the experimental situation before the collection of quantitative data is begun, because some understanding of participants' concepts and categories is important in formulating a research plan (Bryman, 1988).

Longitudinal studies can benefit from the use of both qualitative and quantitative data. Wenger demonstrates the advantages of utilizing both of these data collection methods by examining the *Bangor Longitudinal Study of Aging* (1999). The *Bangor* study explored what types of assistance were available to and utilized by older people. From 1979 to 1995 a group of over 500 elderly participants were interviewed, via questionnaire, to assess how the participants' needs changed over time and if those needs were being met by social services. In addition, a sub-sample of 30 participants was also selected for an intensive qualitative study. The qualitative study involved a half-day interview two to four times a year over a four-year period in which participants were asked to elaborate on their initial questionnaire interviews. Participants were encouraged to discuss their needs at length as well as their assessments of how these needs were being addressed.

The difference between the qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection was that in the quantitative research method, the respondents answered a set number of questions pre-selected by the interviewer and their answers were selected from a list. During the qualitative phase of the research responses within the sub-sample were free flowing, with the interviewer having no pre-determined set of answers.

The quantitative data demonstrated low levels of poor health, poor morale, social isolation, and loneliness. The data also indicated that the needs of the seniors were being met. The qualitative data expanded upon this information, providing a more vivid and detailed impression of the seniors' daily lives. The qualitative data gathered in the intensive study revealed a group of vital competent seniors who utilized a variety of strategies to meet their needs. By integrating both qualitative and quantitative data, the researchers were able to gain a deeper understanding of the results of the larger quantitative study as well as determine new areas of inquiry. Integration also facilitated the generalization of qualitative results.

A process of conceptual triangulation is described by Foster (1997) that clearly outlines five steps in conducting conceptual triangulation: 1) Conduct qualitative and quantitative research that is true to the assumptions of each methodology, 2) Find the pertinent results within each method, 3) Examine the level of confidence in the results, 4) Develop criteria for results inclusion in the conceptual model, and 5) Construct the conceptual model.

When quantitative and qualitative methods are effectively integrated, the results can be advantageous in allowing researchers to support and validate findings with both forms of data. Triangulation is a methodological tool that can be utilized to verify data and support research findings. Triangulation should provide investigator with some level of confidence in their findings because the results have been replicated and validated using two separate data collection and analysis methods. Generalizations may be made using data collected and analyzed by triangulation. Triangulation provides confirmation and completeness. Triangulation is not simply combining different types of data, but it attempts to relate the two types of information so as to leave the validity of each type of

information intact. The use of triangulation allows researchers to capture a more complete, holistic and contextual portrayal and reveal the varied dimensions of a given phenomena, with each source contributing an additional piece to the puzzle. In using triangulation, bias can be minimized and the validity enhanced. Neither qualitative nor quantitative methods alone could get yield the results of the combination of the two. The sum of the whole is greater than its parts (Hilton, 2002). Using both quantitative and qualitative information during the initial stages of a study allows researchers to develop a hypothesis that is best suited for the area of study. The mixed method approach to social research provides researchers the opportunity to see an issue from many different points of view. The mixed method approach fosters insight into the pertinent questions and situations that are being investigated.

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## Chapter Two: Quantitative Approach

### Methodology

A survey instrument was developed using the results of the literature search. The instrument is included in this report as Appendix A.

The survey asked residents to characterize their commute patterns (if they were employed outside the home), and asked whether they used or had used transit for both commute and non-commute purposes. A battery of questions was asked related specifically to various potential influences on resident's perceptions of safety. Respondents were also asked what their main reason for not using transit was (assuming they were non-transit users) and the influence that their perceptions of safety had on their decision not to use transit. Finally, standard demographic information was collected.

Five hundred residents of Hillsborough, Pinellas, Pasco, and Hernando counties were interviewed for this project. Respondents were screened for being over 18 years of age. The sample was randomly drawn from the four county area through random-digit-dialing. The distribution of responses is therefore roughly proportional to the number of residential telephone numbers in the respective counties.

### Quantitative Findings

#### Main reason for not using transit

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### **Quantitative Findings**

#### *Main reason for not using transit*

The first section of the attitude assessment was free-response. Participants could list any reason for not using transit. Most respondents did not use transit because it was inconvenient in that it did not come frequently enough; it would take too much time to make the trip compared to making the trip via auto; it is difficult and time-consuming to take the bus with small children or to run errands; it is also difficult to take the bus if one is required to travel for work. All of these issues were raised much more prominently over being worried about safety concerns. Very few respondents voiced concern over safety riding on or waiting for the bus. A crosstabulation was run for the following categories: gender, marital status, having children under the age of 16 in the household, number of vehicles available in the household, race/ethnicity, age group, and economic status:

- Men thought that buses weren't frequent enough, the buses didn't go where they needed to go, and travel time took too long. Those who voiced concern over safety riding or waiting for the bus were women.
- There was not a significant difference between marital status and main reason for not using the bus.

- More people without young children were more worried about convenience issues versus those who had young children.
- Out of the ethnic groups, whites were most concerned about convenience issues than other ethnic groups.
- There was a significant difference between those age 35-54 years of age versus other age groups on the issue of frequency and areas of bus service.
- There was no significant difference in main reason for not using bus service between income bracket groups. Although, those making between \$20,000-39,999 were most concerned about bus service coverage than any other group.
- In the free responses, no one mentioned that they did not use transit because they were concerned about terrorist threats. A few commuters mentioned that they were wary of using transit due to fear of crime aboard buses and around bus stops.
- The basic idea was that people don't use buses because of the inconvenience and travel time.

### **Likert scale responses**

The above-listed responses were free responses. The next set of responses were to multiple-choice questions about safety issues.

- Safety walking to the bus/waiting for the bus/riding the bus/walking from the bus stop:
  - All of these items had the same pattern of response and they are summarized below.
  - Most respondents stated that they were unconcerned about their safety walking to the bus or waiting for the bus.
  - About one-fourth of respondents agreed that they worried for their safety walking to the bus or waiting for the bus. More women than men were concerned over their safety.
  - There was no difference on this aspect between geographical areas.
  - Those in the upper brackets of income were less concerned about this aspect than those in the lower brackets of income.

- A simple explanation is that those who make more money live in nicer, safer neighborhoods. Another explanation is that the elderly make less money as well and they tend to feel less safe on this aspect.
- African-Americans and Hispanics were more concerned about their safety while riding the bus. African Americans and Hispanics made less money on average than Whites and this could also explain the difference in race and income over concerns of safety.
- Concerns about other passengers
  - Concerns about loud, unruly teenagers
    - A little bit over half of respondents were unconcerned about having to wait for or ride the bus with loud and unruly teenagers.
    - However, approximately one-third of respondents were concerned about having to wait or ride the bus with loud and unruly teenagers.
    - Those over the age of 65 and those making less than \$20,000 per year were most concerned with the prospect of having to ride or wait for the bus with loud and unruly teenagers.
    - Those over the age of 65 also account for most of our respondents who made less than \$20,000 per year.
  - Concerns about unpleasant passengers
    - Approximately one-half of respondents were unconcerned about having to ride or wait for the bus with unpleasant people.
    - Two-fifths of respondents were concerned about having to ride the bus with unpleasant people, while a little over one-fourth (28 percent) were concerned about having to wait with unpleasant people. This disparity could be due to the fact that when one is waiting with unpleasant people, it is easier to keep a distance than if one is riding the bus with unpleasant people.
    - Those who made less than \$20,000 per year and those over 65 years of age were most concerned about having to ride or wait with unpleasant people.

- Those over the age of 65 also account for most of the respondents who made less than \$20,000 per year.
  
- Concerns about being able to use the system easily and efficiently
  - People were concerned about using the bus system and being able to get around to the places they needed to go without being stranded. There seems to be a concern over how to get information on using the bus system and maps and route information do not seem to be adequate to allay these concerns.
  - Approximately 50 percent of the respondents were unconcerned about being able to use the system easily and efficiently.
  - Less than one-fourth of the respondents were concerned about their ability to use the system easily and efficiently.
  - Those in the youngest (18-24 years old) and the oldest (65 years and older) were most concerned over this aspect of using the bus service.
  
- Concerns about crime around bus stops
  - Thirty percent of respondents believed that a lot of crime occurred around bus stops.
  - More than 60 percent (62 percent) disagreed or strongly disagreed that a lot of crime occurred around bus stops.
  - Those making less than \$20,000 per year agreed most with the statement that a lot of crime occurs around bus stops. However, there was not a significant amount of older persons responding affirmatively to this question.
  
- Personal image concerns
  - Concern about being seen using the bus
    - A majority (53 percent) of respondents disagreed with the statement “I would not want people I know to see me waiting for the bus or getting off the bus.”

- A little under one-fifth (18 percent) of respondents agreed with this statement and a bit more than one-fifth (22 percent) were neutral on this statement.
- People with no cars were more concerned about being seen using the bus versus those with cars.
- Widows were most concerned about being seen using the bus.
- Those in the 18-24 year old category and those in the 55 and older category were most concerned about being seen using the bus.
- Finally, those in the \$30,000 and below income brackets were more concerned about being seen using the bus than those in the income brackets above \$30,000 per year.
- Belief that most people use the bus because they have no choice
  - More than three-fourths of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the following statement: “I believe that most people that use the bus use it because they have no choice.”
  - Only one-tenth of the respondents agreed with the above statement and eleven percent were neutral on the topic.
  - More men than women (12 percent versus 3.5 percent) agreed that most people use the bus because they have no choice.
- I feel sorry for people who I see waiting at bus stops
  - A little less than three-fourths of respondents (71 percent) responded that they felt sorry for those having to wait for the bus.
  - Approximately one-fifth of respondents (19 percent) said that they did not feel sorry for those having to wait for the bus.
  - Those 65 years of age or older feel worst for those having to wait for the bus.
- Terrorism concerns
  - In the free response section, respondents never mentioned being concerned that buses might become terrorist targets as being a reason why they did not ride buses.

- Only 15 percent of respondents were concerned about buses being targeted for terrorist assaults.
- Greater than three-quarters of respondents (76 percent) were not concerned about being targeted by terrorists as a reason for not riding buses.
  
- General safety concerns
  - Most of the respondents (74 percent) disagreed with the statement: “Concern for my safety is a very important reason for my choice not to use public buses.”
  - Only sixteen percent of respondents agreed with the statement and ten percent of respondents remained neutral on the subject.
  - Those in the 18-24 year old age group and those in the 65 and over age group are most concerned with personal safety while using a bus.
  - Additionally, those in the lowest income brackets (\$20,000 or less) were most concerned for their safety.
  - Those 65 and older make up the majority of those making less than \$20,000 per year.

## Chapter Three: Qualitative Approach

### Methodology

The qualitative portion of this research study was designed to assess the prevalence of various safety and security perceptions associated with bus transit among current non-users. This was accomplished through the conduct of six focus groups and 20 telephone interviews. The focus groups were conducted prior to the interviews so that the discussions held within might inform both the content and structure of the telephone interview questions.

The qualitative interview instrument for the focus groups was developed from the literature review and findings from the exploratory focus groups during the NCTR project, *Perceptions of Transit Safety*. To maintain consistency and validity the same qualitative interview instrument was used during each of the groups. The questioning guide used during the focus groups is presented in this document as Appendix C. A CUTR research faculty member and a graduate research assistant moderated each of the focus groups. All of the sessions were tape-recorded and two were videotaped as well. Transcripts were later created from the audiotapes to facilitate analysis of the discussions.

Focus group participants were recruited in three ways. Members of a senior citizen social club comprised the participants of Focus Group Number 1. The director of the club's activities solicited volunteers to participate and coordinated logistics with CUTR staff. This focus group was conducted at the club's regular meeting place in the facility of a local church.

Participants in Focus Group Numbers 2, 3, and 4 were recruited using two different professional market research firms. Each research firm maintains a database of persons who may be interested in participating in various research studies, and participants were recruited from these sources. Participants in these groups were paid



for their involvement in the study. These groups were all held at the firms' facilities in Tampa.

Focus Group Numbers 5 and 6 were each made up of senior citizens from USF's Learning in Retirement (LIR) program who have agreed to be contacted to participate in such studies at the University. Potential participants were contacted and informed of the study. Those who were interested were invited to participate in one of the focus groups. These sessions were conducted at CUTR.

Three groups were held with senior citizens exclusively because this age group is frequently identified as being more concerned with matters of safety and security than are younger age groups.

Participants in the telephone interviews were identified through the quantitative telephone survey process by first soliciting their participation in the extended telephone interviews. Those who declined were then offered the opportunity to participate in the shorter telephone survey. Those who agreed to the extended interview were later contacted for an appointment and the interviews were performed via telephone from CUTR at the scheduled time. Because one of the area codes used in the quantitative survey is assigned to two counties, some Pasco County residents were also included in the telephone interview phase of the study.

The CUTR graduate research assistant who had previously assisted during the focus groups conducted the telephone interviews. Based on the discussions held during the focus groups, interview questions were created for this phase of the study. The same qualitative interview instrument was used for each of the 20 telephone interviews, and is presented in this document as Appendix D. All of the interviews were tape-recorded, and transcripts were subsequently created from the audiotapes to facilitate analysis of the interviews.

### **Focus Group Participant Demographic Information**

Three of the focus groups were attended by senior citizens aged 55 and over, and three groups were held with participants in the 18 – 54 age category. Demographic data were self-reported at either the beginning or the end of the focus group by completing an information form.

A total of 65 people participated in the six focus groups, 47 females and 18 males. Forty-six participants reported their ethnicity as white or Caucasian; six participants reported to be black or African American; five participants classified themselves as Hispanic; and one participant reported to be Native American. Seven participants did not report ethnicity. All but four participants in the senior groups were 65 or older; these respondents were in the 55 – 64 age category. Of the participants in the remaining three focus groups, eight reported to be in the 45 – 54 age group; eight reported to be in the 35 – 44 category; eight were in the 25 – 34 age group; one reported to be 55 – 64 years; and one participant was in the 18 – 24 age category. One participant did not report age. Twenty-two of the 65 participants are married; 20 have been widowed. Twelve participants are single; eight are divorced; two are separated. One participant recorded marital status as “other.”

There is an average of 1.53 working vehicles per participant household, and four participants reported zero working vehicles in their households. Four participants reported that they do not drive and 60 claimed that they do. One participant did not respond to this question. Of the four participants who do not drive, three of them also reported there to be zero working vehicles in their household. Total household income among participants ranged from \$5,000 to more than \$50,000 per household for the year 2001. One participant reported income in the \$5,000 – \$9,999 range; eight participants reported income in the \$10,000 – \$14,999 range; three reported income in the \$15,000 – \$19,999 range; six respondents reported income in the \$20,000 – \$24,999 range; four reported to be in the \$25,000 – \$29,999 income range; two participants reported income in the \$30,000 – \$34,999 range; three reported income in the \$35,000 – \$39,999 range; six participants reported to be in the \$40,000 – \$44,999 income range; five reported income in the \$45,000 – \$49,999 range; and 19 participants reported their total

household income to be \$50,000 or more. Eight participants chose not to record their income.

Participants were also asked about their transit habits. Zero participants claimed to use bus transit at least once per week and four participants answered positively that they had used the bus within the previous six months. Two of these four respondents also indicated they do not drive and there are zero working vehicles in their respective households.

### **Summary of Focus Group Results**

Concerns regarding bus transit safety and security are often cited in the literature as one of the barriers to transit use for potential patrons. The six focus groups were designed to explore the extent to which such concerns prohibit residents in Hillsborough and Pinellas Counties from utilizing bus service in their areas. Summaries of each focus group, including illustrative quotations from participants, are presented in Appendix E.

Focus group participants indicated a range of previous transit experience, both in the United States and abroad. With the exception of occasional crowding issues, most participants reported being generally pleased with transit services in large metropolitan areas such as New York or Los Angeles. Some participants have used or have attempted to use bus service in Florida. Many reported negative experiences typically related to obtaining information, service availability, scheduling, and routes.

There is a general perception that the bus is a necessity if one does not have access to a personal vehicle. Participants reported using personal vehicles because they have them. The small number of participants who do not drive or do not own a personal vehicle reported that they attempt to find rides with friends or relatives before considering using the bus. Although one participant in Focus Group Number 1 reported that she uses the bus, she obtains rides from friends for most of her trips.

The concept that buses are used only if there is no access to a personal vehicle is revealed through the perceptions that participants have regarding who uses public bus service. All six groups cited “low income” or “poor” populations as the primary clientele. Participants hold the belief that if people have a choice they will choose a personal vehicle. If they are financially unable to purchase a personal vehicle, they are forced to use bus service. Focus group participants also noted that those who have lost their license might be forced into using the bus. People who have had their licenses revoked for such infractions as drunk driving use the bus because they are not allowed to drive. Other bus patrons include teenagers as well as disabled people and senior citizens who are no longer able to operate a personal vehicle. Several participants mentioned observing unkempt or generally “undesirable” people near bus stops. They admitted that their observations contribute to a negative perception of bus clientele, whether the people at the bus stops are waiting passengers or not.

Some participants began explaining their non-use by stating that bus stops were either unavailable to them or too far of a walk. One participant noted that the closest bus stop is approximately four miles from her home, making it impossible for her to use bus service. Several participants also noted that senior citizens may not be able to access bus stops because of long distances, which would be particularly dangerous for them in extreme heat. The pattern of suburban development was also considered to be a factor in the accessibility of bus stops. Several participants noted that even if a bus were to stop at the entrance to a housing development, these areas are often so large that many residents might have to walk several miles to reach the front entrance.

Many participants noted that they are unaware of where bus service operates and how to use the transit system in general. Some claimed they have attempted to obtain information and it has either not been helpful or has been confusing. Printed transit information materials are also frequently considered to be confusing, and participants indicated they were unsure as to how to obtain them.

Regardless of their level of transit experience, focus group participants generally hold a negative perception of using the bus. Most often mentioned, the service is perceived to be inconvenient and restrictive. Five of the six focus groups noted that the weather,

most notably in Florida, is a prohibitive factor in using the bus. Participants stated that they are not willing to walk or wait in the heat and rain. Furthermore, they noted displeasure that most of the bus stops they have used or observed do not provide a bench and even fewer have shelters.

Routes are also considered to be inconvenient. Participants often stated that the bus did not travel where they would like to go. It is often associated with downtown areas, and participants believe that coverage in suburban areas is sparse. Transfers are considered to be extremely inconvenient and there is concern about missing one's next bus and therefore missing scheduled appointments or work times.

Frequency is often considered to be an inconvenient factor of bus use. Regardless of age group, participants claim they have busy lives for which the bus cannot meet their transportation needs, largely due to the scheduling constraints associated with using the bus. Participants noted wait times in excess of 30 minutes and up to one hour as being too restrictive for their lifestyles. Such wait times were deemed unreasonable if one wanted to use the bus. Those who work variable schedules or must do activities or errands after work considered the bus to be completely incompatible for their schedule. This was most common among parents who contend that personal vehicles are necessary for them to accommodate the needs of their children. Those participants with a willingness to use transit expressed they were unwilling to arrive at a bus stop two to three hours prior to their workday and make transfers to reach their final destination. Express routes were considered favorably, but some participants stated that if they were already in their personal vehicles to reach a park and ride lot, they could continue on to their final destination.

Other factors of inconvenience that were mentioned include the inability to carry several packages or large loads onto a bus, the necessity of exact change, the lack of late evening service, and the reliability of bus schedules. Furthermore, the economic and environmental feasibility of large buses with few passengers was questioned by a number of participants.

Despite the overall negative perception of bus transit held by most of the focus group participants, they did consider several advantages of bus transit use. In comparison to costs associated with personal vehicle use such as payments, fuel, insurance, and parking, the bus is perceived to offer financial savings. Several participants also noted the benefit of being able to do other activities, such as reading, on the bus and not having to pay attention to driving. Convenience was also considered to be a possible advantage if buses serve areas people want to travel with sufficient frequency, typically ten to 15 minutes.

Because safety and security were the focus of the discussions, a significant portion of each session was devoted to exploring these topics. With regard to safety, several participants noted they would feel safer in a bus compared to a personal vehicle because of the large size of the bus and the frequency and severity of accidents with personal vehicles. Most participants agreed that buses are less likely to be involved in accidents than are personal vehicles, and that injuries are less severe if they are. However, one cause for concern related to personal injuries is that passenger seating in buses is not equipped with seatbelts. Several participants believe the possibility exists for passengers to slip around in the seat or to even fall to the floor in the event of a sudden stop or accident.

The opinion on professional bus drivers is divided among the focus group participants. Some participants stated that having a professional driver provides them with a sense of safety because they believe the driver is well trained and will assist them if needed. Others stated they are most comfortable driving themselves because they know their own driving record and the precautions they take while driving. They expressed anxiety regarding the driver's safety and criminal record as well as his or her abilities.

Another divisive topic related to safety is the mechanical maintenance of bus fleets. While some participants expressed confidence that buses are well maintained, others admitted doubt that inspections were conducted regularly and thoroughly. A number of participants noted they are confident in the regular maintenance of their own personal vehicles, and question the maintenance of buses.

Several participants discussed their concern regarding safety while waiting for or exiting the bus. Bus stops that are too close to the roadway were noted to be dangerous in the event that someone lost control of a personal vehicle. In addition, participants expressed concern and displeasure regarding bus stops located in grassy areas or near storm drains where they may not have secure footing.

Results of the focus groups indicate that security is more of a concern than is safety. Several participants explained that their anxieties related to personal security are affected by the neighborhood or area in which they might be. Those areas perceived to be more dangerous are typically those considered to be “high crime.” Participants noted that feelings of insecurity vary depending upon the crime level in the area. A few participants disagreed, contending that one could be threatened in any neighborhood, regardless of its reputation. Also of note, a number of participants claimed that areas with known or blatant drug-related activity are of particular risk.

Participants reported being especially concerned for personal security while walking or waiting in dark areas, particularly if they are alone. Adequate lighting was often mentioned as a necessity in creating feelings of security. Furthermore, longer wait times coincide with feelings of security. The perception is that the opportunity for a passenger to become a victim increases the longer he or she must wait at a bus stop. Several participants also reported that anxieties would be heightened while waiting at the bus stop, but that they would feel secure once they had boarded the bus. They expressed negative perceptions of the people they have seen waiting at bus stops. Concern for personal security while walking to and from the bus stop was also expressed, but by fewer participants.

All of the focus groups were conducted less than one year following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. The potential of terrorism was raised during one of the group discussions. Participants generally believe that the opportunity is there for a terrorist attack on a bus, and that the likelihood would increase if the bus transportation were to become more popular and more crowded. Fears related to terrorism exist yet they appear minimal in the one group that discussed the subject, and certainly not at a level prohibiting bus use.

With regard to whom they believe might cause trouble or commit crimes within the transit environment, it was overwhelmingly young males. Participants also specifically mentioned teenagers, gang members, and people using drugs as cause for concern. Passengers who may be intoxicated were also noted by several participants, but more in the context of being unpleasant to be around than as a potential threat to personal security. One participant expressed concern regarding the “foreign element” in Tampa, and another noted that she has particular fears related to African Americans and Muslims. Many other participants contended that anyone could be a potential threat to one’s personal security.

Women generally expressed more negative perceptions regarding their personal security than did men. A few female participants reported experiences during which they used the bus and felt threatened by males either on the street or on the bus. While some female participants reported that they are not particularly fearful, more male participants stated they were not concerned about personal security in general. Several noted that concerns may be different or there may be more anxiety for women.

Senior citizens may also have particular needs or concerns related to personal security. In both the senior and non-senior focus groups senior citizens were mentioned as a group that may be more vulnerable. Several senior participants noted that they are perceived to be “easy targets” because they are considered to be frail or less likely to resist an attack on their person or property. It seemed that a number of seniors resented this perception, yet acknowledged that many senior citizens are not physically capable of defending themselves, particularly compared to their abilities years ago. Senior women were of notable concern because they typically carry purses that are targeted for theft.

Despite the specific concerns regarding senior citizens, this age group was no more concerned with safety and security than were their younger counterparts. Many senior participants noted that crime levels are higher “these days” as compared to their youth, and they would indeed be concerned for their safety and security if they were to use transit. However, the primary factor in the seniors’ non-use of transit is convenience more than safety and security.



Although most participants agreed they would be safer in a bus than in a personal vehicle because of the larger size of the bus, most also agreed that they would feel more secure in their personal vehicles. Control emerged as the primary factor in this perception, and several participants used the word *control* to describe what it is about their personal vehicles that make them feel secure. Many participants expressed feelings of comfort at being able to lock their vehicle doors, determine who accompanies them, and plan or alter their routes and times. They noted fears related to the fact that they have no control over who boards the bus or who waits at a bus stop. Awareness of others and of one's surroundings was often cited as the best protective strategy.

The effect of the media on participants' perceptions of safety and security varies according to the individual. Several reported they had never heard or read of bus accidents, and this was often related to their favorable view of bus safety. However they did not report that they had heard or read anything positive. Security was a somewhat more divisive topic. Many participants indicated the media have left them with negative perceptions of bus transportation. Several participants stated they have heard or read negative media reports related to security issues. A number of participants also mentioned a lack of positive or negative media coverage in relation to bus transit.

Participants stated that the conditions that would most encourage them to use bus transit would be desperation due to lack of access to a personal vehicle, the inability to drive due to age or infirmity, cost savings, and time savings. Participants made the following suggestions for improving security as well as bus service in general:

- Increase marketing and improve public relations;
- Institute special event/cultural center transportation;
- Increase availability of route and schedule information;
- Integrate feeder services;
- Increase frequency of service;
- Improve lighting at bus stops;
- Install security cameras on buses;
- Employ security personnel on buses; and,

- Increase police presence/monitoring of bus stops

Results of the focus groups indicate that although participants are concerned about the safety and security of bus transportation, convenience is the prohibitive factor in their utilization of bus service. Several participants indicated they would never be willing to use bus transit, but many group participants expressed a desire or willingness to do so, particularly among senior citizens. It is this latter group that most frequently cited convenience as the reason they will not or cannot use the bus. Improvements in this area may provide these participants, and others like them, the opportunity to use the bus. One participant did note that he believes a negative perception of security is one of the reasons more people do not use bus transit. However, no one in any of the focus groups stated that if they thought the bus was safer or more secure they would use it.

### **Telephone Interview Participant Demographic Information**

Demographic information was self-reported at the end of the telephone interviews and recorded by the interviewer. There were 13 female and seven male participants. Six participants reported their age to be in the 35 – 44 years category and six reported their age to be in the 65 and older category. Three participants were in the 45 – 54 years age category; two were in the 55 – 64 years category; two were 25 – 34 years; and one participant reported to be in the 18 – 24 years age category. Seventeen of the 20 participants reported their ethnicity as white or Caucasian; two responded they are black or African American; and one participant reported ethnicity as Greek.

Eleven participants reported they are married and nine claimed they are single. Children under the age of 16 reside in three of 16 households. These data were not collected during four of the interviews. Total household income for 2001 among participants ranged from \$5,000 to more than \$50,000. One participant reported income in the \$5,000 – \$9,999 range; three participants reported to be in the \$10,000 – \$14,999 income range; three claimed to be in the \$20,000 – \$24,999 income range; two participants reported income in the \$25,000 – \$29,999 range; two reported income in the \$30,000 – \$34,999 range; two participants reported to be in the \$35,000 – \$39,999

income range; one reported income in the \$40,000 – \$44,999 range; one reported to be in the \$45,000 – \$49,999 income range; and five participants reported total household income of \$50,000 or more.

### **Summary of Telephone Interview Results**

Twenty telephone interviews were designed to explore the extent to which such safety and security concerns prohibit residents in Hillsborough, Pinellas, and Pasco Counties from utilizing bus service in their areas.

Similar to participants in the focus groups, telephone interviewees generally believe those who use the bus are low-income or poor populations who have no other transportation option. Participants indicated that most bus patrons use the bus because they are unable to afford a personal vehicle. Other users might include senior citizens who are no longer able to drive, the disabled, teenagers, or people who are not licensed to drive, whether due to a lack of training or a legal infraction. Respondents believe that patrons use the bus for a variety of trips types such as work, school, shopping, and doctor visits.

Although most participants do not use the bus on a regular basis, many indicated there may be several advantages to bus transit. Affordability is considered to be the primary benefit, with cost savings being particularly advantageous in comparison to ownership of a personal vehicle. Not having to pay for parking was also considered to be an advantage. Participants considered the benefits of easing traffic congestion by having fewer cars on the roadway. This coincided with a number of respondents believing that the bus could be environmentally friendly if many private drivers were to travel via one public vehicle. Several respondents also noted that buses are safer than personal vehicles because of their larger size. In the unlikely event of an accident, one is less likely to be hurt. A few participants also mentioned they would find advantage in not having to drive, which would allow them the opportunity to do other things such as read or sightsee.

Participants cited the following as disadvantages of bus transit use:

- Wait and travel times;
- Expense;
- Overcrowding;
- Incompatible schedules and routes;
- Early or late buses;
- Transfers;
- Transporting several packages on the bus;
- Far walks to bus stops;
- Planning required to coordinate personal schedule;
- Inadequate frequency, especially evenings and weekends;
- Forced association with people of a lower socio-economic status;
- Feasibility of large expensive buses with few passengers;
- Insecurity while waiting at a bus stop, particularly after dark or in high crime neighborhoods;
- Walking, waiting, and boarding difficulties for senior citizens;
- Unsafe distances between bus stops and the roadways; and,
- Weather, both extreme heat and rain.

Respondents expressed mixed reviews on how inviting bus service appears to be in their area, based upon their visual observations. Some participants have a favorable impression of bus service. They cited attractive clean buses, well maintained stops with shelters and/or benches, bicycle racks, and safe drivers as factors in their opinion. Others had a far more negative perception of the appearance of the transit environment. Several participants noted a lack of shelters and/or benches at bus stops; bus stops that are too close to oncoming traffic; odd shaped buses; and “troublemakers” being around bus stops.

When queried as to the most important reasons they do not utilize bus service in their area, participants cited the fact that they have access to a personal vehicle to be the reason they do not use the bus. Like focus group participants, telephone interviewees indicated that access to a personal vehicle negates the necessity of using bus transit.

Many also considered scheduling to be problematic. Adherence to a preset bus schedule is deemed inconvenient for busy lifestyles and variable work schedules. Participants stated that they prefer to make trips at their discretion, rather than that of transit scheduling. Routes were also mentioned as an inconvenient aspect of using the bus. Respondents claimed that buses do not generally travel to their desired destinations, and these destinations may change on a daily basis.

Other inconveniences of transit use mentioned during the telephone interviews include far distances to bus stops; not knowing where the closest bus stop is in relation to one's home; limited evening and weekend service; and long wait and travel times.

In considering what it is or might be like to use bus transportation in their communities, many participants noted that the weather, particularly in Florida, may cause difficulties for them if they were to use the bus. Respondents specifically mentioned extreme heat and rain. Suburban development was also mentioned in participants' consideration of accessing bus transit. Several respondents noted the lack of sidewalks in many communities to be inconvenient and a potential safety hazard. A few participants also indicated they would be concerned about loose dogs. Some respondents noted some positive situations they may encounter such as meeting nice people or enjoying the outdoors while they walk or wait at a bus stop.

With regard to perceptions of bus transit safety, most participants stated they believe the bus is a safer vehicle as compared to a personal vehicle because of its large size. Several participants expressed confidence in the bus driver's abilities and in the mechanical safety of the bus; however, a very few participants claimed they are not confident in the drivers' abilities and would not feel safe being a passenger. In addition, some respondents claimed they feel safe knowing they do not have to focus their attentions on defensive driving and can relax during their trip. Negative perceptions of bus safety were primarily related to a lack of seatbelts on the bus, which several participants believe is a potential danger for personal injuries.

Personal security while using bus transit is more of a concern to participants than is safety. Anxieties are typically related to factors of control. Respondents reported they generally feel more secure in their personal vehicles because they are in control and able to lock the doors, determine who travels with them, avoid areas they believe are dangerous, and using a personal vehicle eliminates exposing oneself to potential danger by waiting at a bus stop. Participants expressed particular concern for waiting at stops after dark, alone, and in “high crime” neighborhoods.

For some participants the presence of others is comforting, for other participants it is cause for anxiety. Several participants noted that a full bus would make them feel more secure because other people are available to assist them in the event of an incident. Others noted that too many people at the stop or on the bus would create feelings of insecurity because there is more opportunity for crime or because they simply do not feel comfortable in crowds of people.

In considering who they believe might cause problems on buses respondents cited young males, teenagers, and people who are intoxicated or on drugs. Several respondents also stated that socially unacceptable behavior such as being loud, cursing, or playing loud music would threaten their security. Furthermore, participants expressed concern regarding verbal assaults or arguments at the bus stop or onboard. Many respondents asserted their belief that the bus driver can and should take action in the event there is trouble on the bus.

When asked what impact their perceptions of safety and security have upon their decision to use or not to use bus transit, the majority of participants responded that safety and security have no effect. Respondents indicated that their decision not to use transit is primarily related to their perception that bus transit is inconvenient and that they do not have a need for it because they have access to personal vehicles. One respondent, however, stated that his decision not to use bus transit *is* affected by his negative perception of security while waiting at a bus stop. The single participant who classified himself as a regular user of bus transit asserted that he prefers to take the bus, has never felt concerned about safety or security, feels comfortable in a group of people using the bus, and likes the socialization that groups provide.

Results of the telephone interviews indicate that although participants are concerned about the safety and security of bus transportation, convenience is the prohibitive factor to them using the bus. Several participants indicated they would never be willing to use bus transit regardless of service improvements, but a number of interviewees expressed a desire or willingness to do so. It is participants in this latter group that most frequently cited convenience as the reason they do not or cannot use the bus. Improvements in this area may provide these participants, and others like them, the opportunity and incentive to utilize bus transit.

### **Conclusion**

The focus groups and the telephone interviews resulted in analogous findings. Participants in both processes generally believe the bus is used when one has no other transportation option. It is considered the transportation of low-income populations who cannot afford private transportation. Bus transit is perceived to be inconvenient, most notably in the state of Florida. Several participants reported positive experiences using public transportation in more urbanized areas of the United States and abroad. The suburban sprawl common to Florida apparently contributes to the perception of inconvenience. Participants also noted the weather to be problematic, not wanting to walk or wait in extremely hot temperatures and heavy rains. Bus schedules are considered to be infrequent and prohibitive for the average busy person, especially if he or she has children.

Participants' perceptions of safety and security do not appear to be particularly intense. The bus is often considered to be a safe mode of transportation because of its large size and the unlikelihood of a traffic accident. Participants generally feel more secure in their personal vehicles because they are in control and determine who, if anyone, joins them for the trip. There is some level of concern regarding personal security while waiting at the bus stop. Several participants mentioned they would feel completely secure once they were on the bus, but waiting at a stop, especially if one is alone or it is dark, may be unnerving for some, most notably women.

The focus groups and the telephone interviews both reveal that non-users are not avoiding bus transit because they perceive it to be unsafe or have fears related to their personal security. While these factors are of concern and potential patrons do want to feel safe and secure using transit, the participants in both phases of this research contend it is the inconvenience of public bus transportation that is the underlying factor in their decision not to use the bus.



## Chapter Four: The Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Methodologies

Parallel quantitative and qualitative research studies were designed to explore perceptions related to the safety and security of bus transit and to what degree these perceptions may affect non-users' mode choice. Three survey tools were utilized in integrating the two methodological approaches: a telephone survey (quantitative), focus groups (qualitative), and telephone interviews (qualitative). Analyses of the surveys and interviews resulted in similar conclusions. The findings from these three phases of research suggest that while safety and security are important considerations *if one were to use bus transit*, the overriding rationale behind non-users' decision not to use the bus is because they consider it to be inconvenient.

Much of transit research has relied upon classic quantitative market research approaches in evaluating the perceptions held by transit customers and potential patrons. While convenience is known to be a factor in mode choice, the integration of quantitative and qualitative methods provides a means of simultaneously quantifying and explaining its level of influence. This convergence allows for a depth of interpretation not yet fully realized in transit data collection and analyses. For example, it is generally accepted that women have more concerns than do men regarding their personal security while waiting at bus stops. While this fact was revealed in the quantitative phase of this study, it was during the focus groups and telephone interviews that female participants were invited to explain to interviewers the reasons why they might feel insecure, previous experiences they have had, the precautions they take, or their suggestions as to how transit agencies can impart a more positive perception of security. The details provided through such guided dialogue with the public can greatly assist transit professionals in improving their services and increasing ridership.

## **Similarities and Disparities in the Results**

The quantitative and qualitative results of the present study exhibit many similarities in the perceptions that participants have regarding the safety and security of bus transit. However, there are also inconsistencies between the two methodologies. And still, as described in the literature review, there are many things that are in concordance for both methods with the focus group expanding on the comments and the quantitative group informing the demographics of the results, as the focus group results were harder to link to demographics.

In the free response section of the quantitative questionnaire, respondents said that they did not use the bus because the buses were not frequent enough, there were not enough bus stops where the respondents lived, the buses did not go to desired places, and travel time took too long; it is difficult and time-consuming to take the bus with small children or to run errands; it is also difficult to take the bus if one is required to travel for work. These results were echoed in the focus group sessions, but the comments were expanded and in the quantitative results section, more men than women made these comments about inconvenience. Although a few people made the comment that they couldn't use transit because they had young children, but those with children under 16 years of age were less concerned than those without children under 16 years of age about convenience. In the focus groups, conversely, those with small children were much more concerned about convenience when using transit than those without small children.

Additionally, in the focus groups, many participants began explaining their non-use of transit by stating that bus stops were either unavailable to them in their residential area or were too far of a walk. Focus group participants also noted that senior citizens may not be able to access bus stops because access involves walking long distances and that walking long distances in the extreme Florida heat may be particularly dangerous for them. In addition, focus group participants said that they would not be willing to wait or walk in the rain, as most bus stops the participants had utilized or observed had neither a bench nor a shelter. It was also noted that suburban development patterns affected the placement of bus stops and even if a bus stop was placed at the entrance of a subdivision, a person might have to walk for several miles to access it. In concordance

with the statement by quantitative participants, that buses wouldn't take them to places they desired to go, participants in the focus group claimed that routes were inconvenient and that coverage in the suburban areas was very sparse. Having to transfer to get to a final destination is also considered an aspect of route inconvenience. The more one must transfer to get to a final destination, the more inconvenient the route may be considered to be. There is also concern about missing the next bus and consequently arriving late for work or scheduled appointments.

Approximately one-fourth of the non-user respondents in the quantitative study were concerned about using the bus system and being able to get around without being stranded and being able to get accurate information about service availability, scheduling and routes. Those most concerned over this aspect were in the 18-24 year old and 65 and older age groups. In the focus group, similar results were obtained in the focus group, with participants reporting negative experiences related to obtaining information about transit service availability, scheduling, and routes. Service was considered to be inconvenient and restrictive.

Focus group participants further expanded the laundry list of inconveniences to include the inability to carry several packages or large loads onto a bus, the inconvenience of having to provide exact change to the driver, the lack of late evening service, and the unreliability of service. In addition, many focus group participants claimed that they did not want to use transit. Many of the focus group participants wondered if the large buses they saw running mostly empty were economically or environmentally viable.

In the focus groups, participants were asked about the advantages of bus transit. This is something that was not done on the quantitative questionnaire, which only contained multiple-choice and free response questions asking about safety perceptions and main reasons for not using transit. Focus group participants listed the advantages of using bus transit as being more financially sound versus owning a personal vehicle. Several participants also noted that one could engage in other activities that would not be possible while driving. Convenience was also listed as a possible advantage if the buses serve areas where people want to travel with sufficient frequency.

Overall, the majority of transit non-users responding to the quantitative questionnaire were not concerned over their personal security while using the transit system. Only about one-fourth of transit non-users were concerned for their personal security while using the system and the quantitative survey results shows that these senior citizens, those in lower income brackets, women, and minorities such as African Americans and Hispanics. One-third of transit non-users were concerned about having to wait or ride the bus with loud, unruly teenagers. Two-fifths of our respondents were concerned about having to ride the bus with unpleasant people and close to one-third were concerned about having to wait with unpleasant people. The majority of those who were concerned over these aspects of transit use were those over the age of 65 and those making less than \$20,000 per year. It should be noted that most of our respondents over the age of 65 accounted for most of those who made less than \$20,000 per year.

Further, approximately one-third of respondents were concerned about crime around bus stops. Most of those responding that crime around bus stops was a concern for them were those making less than \$20,000 per year. However, this result cannot be accounted for by previous results wherein those 65 or older responded affirmatively that the item listed was a concern for them. Very few of those over 65 years of age responded affirmatively to this item.

Overall, approximately 16 percent of respondents responded that they agreed with the following statement: "Concern for my safety is a very important reason for my choice not to use public buses." Of these, most were in the 18-24 year old and 65 and over age group and in the lowest income brackets (less than \$20,000 per year). In addition, only 15 percent of our respondents were concerned over buses being used as targets for terrorism and none of the respondents mentioned this aspect in the free-response section of the questionnaire.

In the quantitative study, although the word "safety" was used, it was concluded that most participants interpreted this to mean personal security and not safety, such as not getting into traffic accidents, on the bus. In the focus group, safety referred to the fact that most focus group participants felt safer riding in a bus as compared to a personal vehicle because of the large size of the bus and that the frequency and severity of bus accidents were much reduced when compared to the frequency and severity of personal

auto accidents. However, some focus group participants voiced concerns that buses were not equipped with seat belts.

Additionally, possibilities exist for passengers to fall to the floor when standing or to slip off of a seat if the bus were to come to a sudden stop. Safety exiting the bus and accessing the transit system was also addressed in the focus groups. Participants complained that many bus stops were too close to the road and that it was sometimes hard to find secure footing when exiting into a bus stop area, in that there are drainage ditches and grassy areas which could be dangerous. Focus group participants were divided on the issue of bus driver safety records and criminal records and also the mechanical upkeep of the buses. Focus group participants know their own driving skills and records and are also aware of the maintenance schedule of their own personal vehicles.

However, results from the focus groups suggest that security is more of a concern than is safety. Many participants in the focus groups said that the area in which they were accessing or exiting from the transit system would affect anxieties about personal security. For example, if a particular area or neighbourhood were known for drug-related activity or other illegal activities, then they would feel at particular risk in that area. Focus group participants were concerned for their personal security while walking or waiting in dark areas, especially if they were alone. Long waiting times exacerbated these concerns, with the perception being that the longer a person has to wait, the more chance he or she has of becoming a victim. Participants said that while they felt unsafe while waiting either alone or with what they would consider 'undesirable' people, they would feel more secure once they were on the bus.

Focus group participants also discussed who they thought would be most likely to commit crimes in the transit environment and it was overwhelmingly young males. In addition, participants also mention teenagers, gang members, and drug users as being cause for concern about personal safety. One of the focus group participants also spoke of being concerned about the "foreign element" in Tampa and another noted that she has particular fears related to African Americans and Muslims. This is another difference between the quantitative and qualitative groups. In the quantitative study,

more minorities said that they would be afraid for their personal security in using the transit system rather than stating that they worried about who the aggressor might be.

The quantitative data results also suggested that more women and senior citizens had more concern about their safety than men or other age groups. The focus groups confirm these results, with female focus group members conveying more experiences in which they felt unsafe than their male counterparts. In addition, both non-senior and senior focus group members stated that senior citizens as a group are viewed as being more vulnerable since they are considered to be more frail and less likely to resist an attack on their person or property. However, while more senior citizens were concerned about their personal security in the quantitative survey, seniors in the focus groups were no more concerned with safety and security than were their younger counterparts.

Although a majority of respondents said that they did not use public transit because they had their own personal vehicle, only a few respondents to the quantitative questionnaire mentioned that they preferred the privacy and control of their own personal vehicles. Most participants in the focus group mentioned that they experienced comfort in their personal vehicles because they could lock the door, decide who accompanies them, and plan or alter their routes as needed. They also noted fears that they had about having no control about who would be waiting with them at the bus stop and who might sit next to them on the bus.

Another difference between the quantitative survey results and the focus group results is that focus groups brought up the issue of terrorist attack on a transit vehicle on their own, while no one in the free response section of the quantitative survey brought up terrorism concerns on their own. Quantitative survey respondents only commented to items once the administrator of the questionnaire had brought up the issue.

Transit non-users who did not own cars, those in the lowest income brackets (less than \$30,000 per years), widows, and those in the 18-24 year old category and those in the 55 years and older categories were most concerned about being seen using the bus. Fifty-four percent of respondents claimed that they would be embarrassed to have someone they knew see them using the bus. In addition, most of the respondents (71 percent) said that they felt sorry for those having to use the bus and approximately the

same amount (78 percent) said that they agreed with the statement: “I believe that most people that use the bus use it because they have no choice.” Finally, those in the oldest age group (65 and older) responded that they felt sorriest for those having to use the bus. In all six focus groups, participants cited only “low income” or “poor” populations as the primary clientele of public transit in this area. In support of the results of the quantitative data, participants in the focus groups held the belief that using a bus was a last resort, even for those who could not afford a car, those who were too disabled to drive a car, or those who had lost their license and were not allowed to drive. Most focus group participants said that they only used the bus in this area as a last resort, if they couldn’t find rides with friends or relatives. The focus group participants believed that if people had any other choice, they would not use bus service for transportation. However, only a few focus group participants brought up that they might be embarrassed to ride the bus and once the topic was introduced, it was discussed briefly and then the topic was changed, with only three or four people mentioning that they or their family members might feel embarrassed to use the bus. In the focus group, senior citizens spoke about how they might have to use public transportation some day and how the main barrier would be convenience and access.

### **Recommendations for Transit Improvements**

The following suggestions have been formulated based upon the findings from the quantitative and qualitative studies presented in Chapters Two and Three.

#### **Service and Convenience**

- **Increase coverage, reliability and frequency of service.**

Study participants frequently complained that wait times are too long and there is no service in the areas they want to travel. Many non-users expressed concern about being able to use the system easily and efficiently. They have fears related to being stranded if they were to miss the last scheduled bus because it was late or early.

- **Provide real-time location information.**

If people feel in control of their schedules, they are more likely to use public transportation. When they know where the bus is and when it will arrive, the transit system is perceived to be customer-oriented because patrons can adjust their wait times accordingly. The installation of information kiosks at major stops and transfer centers can provide personalized transportation routes, offering passengers user-friendly information on traveling from origin to destination.

- **Improve the comfort and accessibility of bus stops.**

Participants expressed concern about waiting in the extreme heat and/or rain in Florida. Providing shelters at many stops, especially those with high numbers of daily boardings, would greatly improve the comfort and image of bus transit. Accessibility was also a common issue in that long distances to bus stops are a deterrent to transit use. Increasing the number of stops, particularly in those areas of suburban housing and business development, would reduce the distances patrons are forced to walk and improve the availability of bus service.

### **Safety and Security**

- **Improve security at bus stops and on buses.**

Security at stops can be improved by providing shelters; adequate lighting; call boxes/telephones; and a visual presence of security personnel at or near the stop. Because wait times are often considered to be security issues, increasing frequency and improving reliability to reduce time spent waiting would serve as security improvements, most particularly in areas with higher levels of crime. Other suggestions for improving security include the installation of video cameras at stops and/or onboard and increased driver training in security matters.

- **Improve safety at bus stops and on buses.**

Safety at stops can be improved by increasing the distance between bus stops and busy roadways; ensuring adequate and paved landing areas; and providing benches for passengers such as senior citizens or those with small children who may need a resting place. Several study participants noted they do not feel safe



on the bus because of the lack of seatbelts. Industry opinions vary on the safety and usefulness of seatbelts on buses, and installation should be considered carefully. Onboard safety can also be improved through enhanced driver awareness in allowing older passengers time to board the bus and take a seat.

- **Create bicyclist/pedestrian-friendly environments.**

The lack of bicyclist/pedestrian facilities such as bike lanes, bike racks, sidewalks, crosswalks, and crossing signals often make it difficult to access and utilize bus transit. Further, bus stops located adjacent to drainage ditches may present a hazard to those attempting to access the stop on bike or foot. Bicyclist/pedestrian-friendly environments can be created through the implementation of the above infrastructure improvements, as well as careful consideration of bus stop location and design.

### **Programs to Improve Customer Service and Increase Ridership**

- **Implement service for seniors to designated activity/cultural centers**

Many older participants indicated they would like to use bus transit if it were more convenient, particularly if there was direct service to downtown activity and cultural centers in the evening. Instituting such service may increase ridership among seniors for other purposes as well. Efforts to market these services to retirement communities or other areas with high concentrations of older persons may merit increased use of the system.

- **Provide and market cost incentives.**

Many study participants mentioned the attractiveness of reducing the amount of money they spend on the various costs associated with personal vehicles. Establishing partnerships with local employers or community organizations that can offer transit passes to employees or members at reduced costs may provide incentive for working professionals to use bus transit. Partners can also assist in the marketing of such programs to their employees or members, thereby offsetting the costs incurred by transit agencies.

- **Institute an Adopt-a-Stop program.**

This is a program that has been very popular and successful in other areas of the country. Transit agencies offer free or reduced-price transit passes to volunteers who participate in the maintenance and upkeep of a bus stop. This benefits both the transit agency and the community in that the area surrounding the stop appears clean and inviting. Stops that are well maintained and free from litter and graffiti are more attractive to customers and the community at large. Well-kept and attractive bus stops indicate that someone cares for the stop, thereby attracting more customers than a bus stop in need of maintenance. Well-maintained bus stops also impart the image of a secure bus stop.

- **Improve the quality and availability of transit information materials.**

Route and scheduling information must be easy to understand and widely available. Many participants in the study noted they have seen a bus in their community but do not know where it goes, the time it arrives, or how to obtain this information. Routes and schedules could be posted at bus stops to provide this information. Many transit systems have interactive websites that allow customers to plan a personalized route via the Internet. These websites allow transit customers to enter an origin and destination by street address. An exact set of route and schedule instructions is then computed for that customer.

### **Discussion of the Methodological Triangulation of Results**

This project combines qualitative and quantitative data to render a more complete picture of non-user perceptions of transit safety. While the combination of two methodologies has gained more acceptance in recent years, there are still concerns over the muddying of the methodological waters when two methodologies are combined. Triangulation is the term used for the combination of two or more theories, data sources, methods, or investigators in one study of a single phenomenon to converge on a single construct.

There are several types of triangulation, but only the type that was used in this study will be discussed. In these studies, *methods triangulation* was used. This involves using more than one research method or data collection technique because each addresses a different dimension of the topic. In the current studies, both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection on perceptions of transit safety were used. For qualitative methods, six focus groups and 20 in-depth telephone interviews were completed. For quantitative methods, a more simplistic multiple choice questionnaire was used for five hundred phone interviews.

Triangulation provides confirmation and completeness. Triangulation validates studies and allows researchers to obtain a more complete, holistic and contextual portrayal and reveal the varied dimensions of a given phenomena, with each source contributing an additional piece to the puzzle. In using triangulation, bias can be minimized and the validity enhanced. Neither qualitative nor quantitative methods alone could get yield the results of the combination of the two. The sum of the whole is greater than its parts.

All of the above is true of the combination of the two types of methods. In the quantitative study, it was easier to put together a picture based on demographics of participants. In the qualitative study, it was harder to quantify the attitudes and statements of the participants as belonging to a certain group. The people in the focus groups were more vivid and more expressive than those in the quantitative groups, however. Each methodology provides a piece of the picture, but not a complete picture of the true state of perceptions of safety and security on transit.

By combining methods, advantages of each methodology complements the other making a stronger research design with resulting more valid and reliable findings. The inadequacies of individual methods are minimized and more threats to Internal Validity are realized and addressed.

In this study, the process of conceptual triangulation described by Foster (1997), was used. This process clearly outlines five steps in conducting conceptual triangulation: 1) Qualitative (focus groups and in-depth phone interviews) and quantitative (shorter, multiple-choice interviews) data was collected, 2) The pertinent results of each data collection methodology were analyzed and written up, 3) Both types of data collection

seem to yield valid and reliable results, 4) Critical portions of the results for each type of methodology, both quantitative and qualitative were compared with one another and each validated the other while providing more information than the other; and 5) It was decided that the two methodologies validated one another, with each type merging together to provide a more complete model of the true nature of perceptions of transit safety. The sum of both results provides a greater and richer final picture that is complementary to each of the methodologies.

### **Conclusion**

Incorporating qualitative methods into the typically quantitative transit study is a challenging and valuable undertaking. It provides an innovative approach to transit research with copious potential for future studies seeking not only to identify but also to further the understanding of customer preferences and public perceptions.

## Chapter Five: Perceptions of Transit Safety: Transit Users Versus Non-Users

### Introduction

A 500 participant non-user survey was completed and assessed the reasons as to why people don't use transit with a focus on safety issues. We wanted to know if the concerns listed by non-users for non-transit use were valid issues. In order to assess this validity, we surveyed approximately the same number of transit users and focused on safety issues. What we found is that there is more concern for personal safety amongst users than non-users and that women feel less safe than men in using the transit system in the Tampa Bay area. In addition, women who were transporting children with them also felt that they were unwelcome on the transit system.

However, issues of inconvenience, which was the most common reason for non-users to list for their non-transit use, also arose. Transit users travel an average of 10.1 miles to work while transit non-users in Tampa travel an average of 17.5 miles to work. The average travel time for a transit user is 68 minutes, while the average travel time for a non-user in Tampa is 23 minutes. However, ten percent of transit riders claimed that their travel time to work was greater than 2 hours. So, the claims that travel time is an issue are valid. Plus, many of the more transit users than non-users claimed that travel time is too long and that they were afraid of getting stranded or lost using the system.

Crosstabulations were done for all the attitude safety perception attitude measurements by demographic information and found that the only two demographic categories that were different on responses were for age and gender. In general, women users felt less secure using the system than men. Many of the users felt insecure using the system. In addition, those aged 65 and older felt the most insecure using and accessing the transit system. Although, everyone, except for those 24 and under felt very insecure when there were loud and unruly people in the transit system. Very few users feared that the bus would be used for terrorism.

## **Method**

Our survey consisted of 31 questions regarding users perceptions of transit security and their general opinion of the bus service in the Tampa Bay area. Surveys were administered at the University Area Transit Center between the dates of January 22<sup>nd</sup>-January 31<sup>st</sup>. A total of 473 passengers were surveyed by a team of Center for Urban Transportation Research students. The survey was made so that it would take less than 5 minutes to complete. The following describes the demographics of the participants of our survey:

### **Gender**

42.1 percent Male  
49.9 percent Female  
8.1 percent Missing

In comparison to the non-user survey, the gender split was 50 percent males and 50 percent females. But since a greater majority of transit users are female, these are good statistics.

### **Marital Status**

60 percent Single  
16.3 percent Married  
11.2 percent Divorced  
2.5 percent Widowed  
4.2 percent Refused

Most users were single, whereas most non-users were married.

### **Ethnicity**

22.2 percent White  
46.3 percent Black  
10.8 percent Hispanic  
1.3 percent Asian

0.4 percent	Native American
4.7 percent	Other/Biracial
1.3 percent	Refused

Most non-users were White, whereas the majority of users were Black.

**Age**

5.9 percent	<18 years of age
23.0 percent	18-24 years of age
19.7 percent	25-34 years of age
18.4 percent	35-44 years of age
15.4 percent	45-54 years of age
4.2 percent	55-64 years of age
1.9 percent	65 plus years of age
1.7 percent	Missing

Ages of non-users were fairly well-distributed, with the most respondents in the 35-54 age bracket. There was a much larger percentage of those 55 years and older in the non-user survey than the in the user survey.

**Number of vehicles available**

51.2 percent	Had no vehicles
21.7 percent	Had one vehicle
6.1 percent	Had two vehicles
1.1 percent	Had three vehicles
1.5 percent	Had four vehicles

Most non-users (75 percent) had two vehicles in their household, a big departure from the results of the user survey, which shows more than half of respondents don't have a vehicle. Only 5 percent of non-users did not have a vehicle.

**Children under the age of 16 years**

39.3 percent Had no children under the age of 16.  
16.7 percent Had one child under the age of 16.  
13.3 percent Had two children under the age of 16.  
7 percent Had three children under the age of 16.  
3.2 percent Had four children under the age of 16.  
2.0 percent Had five or more children under the age of 16.  
18.6 percent Missing

**Annual Income**

24.9 percent < \$10,000  
20.5 percent \$10,000-19,000  
16.5 percent \$20,000-29,000  
5.9 percent \$30,000-39,000  
1.7 percent \$40,000-49,000  
3.9 percent \$50,000 or more  
27.5 percent Missing

Non-users, on the whole, made significantly more earnings than users of transit, with non-users averaging \$40,000 per year and non-users averaging just slightly above \$20,000 per year. And, a the largest percentage of non-users made between \$20,000 and \$49,999 per year, with a substantial amount earning more than \$50,000 per year.

**Area of residence**

Most of the respondents on the user survey were from the Central Tampa Bay area, in the City of Tampa and Temple Terrace area.

**Number of days traveled to work**

14.2 percent None  
1.5 percent One  
3.4 percent Two  
4.4 percent Three  
7.6 percent Four



30.7 percent	Five
8.2 percent	Six
4.7 percent	Seven
25.3percent	Missing

**Miles traveled to work**

32.8 percent	0-4 miles
16.7 percent	5-9 miles
9.9 percent	10-14 miles
3.4 percent	15-19 miles
4.2 percent	20-24 miles
4.4 percent	25 or more miles
28.5 percent	Missing

For transit non-users living in Hillsborough County, the average commute distance is 17.54 miles. For transit users, most of whom live in Hillsborough County, the average commute distance is 10.01 miles.

**Travel time to work**

0-15 minutes	20.3 percent
16-30 minutes	15.0 percent
31-45 minutes	7.2 percent
46-60 minutes	8.0 percent
61-75 minutes	3.2 percent
76-90 minutes	8.0 percent
91-105 minutes	2.5 percent
106-120 minutes	3.6 percent
121-150 minutes	6.3 percent
151-180 minutes	1.5 percent
180 minutes or more	1.7 percent

The average commute time for non-users living in Central Tampa Bay area was 23.01 minutes. The average commute time for transit users was 68.1 minutes.

**How many days I drove to work last week**

None	46.3 percent
One	2.7 percent
Two	1.9 percent
Three	0.4 percent
Four	0.8 percent
Five	4.0 percent
Six	0.8 percent
Seven	0.4 percent
Missing	42.5 percent

**How many days I carpooled to work last week**

None	46.3 percent
One	2.7 percent
Two	1.3 percent
Three	1.7 percent
Four	0.0 percent
Five	1.3 percent
Six	1.1 percent
Seven	0.0 percent
Missing	45.7 percent

**How many days I rode the bus to work last week**

None	12.3 percent
One	5.3 percent
Two	4.0 percent
Three	6.8 percent
Four	9.1 percent
Five	24.7 percent
Six	7.8 percent
Seven	4.7 percent
Missing	25.3 percent

**How many days I did something else to get to work last week**

None	43.1 percent
One	2.3 percent
Two	2.5 percent
Three	0.6 percent
Four	1.1 percent
Five	1.3 percent
Six	1.3 percent
Seven	0.2 percent
Missing	47.6 percent

**How many total trips per week do you make riding the bus?**

None	5.7 percent
One to two	13.5 percent
Three to five	27.5percent
Six to ten	19.0 percent
Eleven to twenty	4.2 percent
Twenty or more	5.1 percent
Missing	15.0 percent

**“I worry about my safety while walking to the bus stop”**

*Overall results:*

Strongly agree	16.9 percent
Agree	14.2 percent
Neutral	19.9 percent
Disagree	29.2 percent
Strongly Disagree	15.9 percent
Missing	4.0 percent

Approximately 45 percent of respondents on the user survey were unconcerned about their safety walking to the bus stop. However, one-third (31.1 percent) did voice concern about their safety walking to the bus stop. These results were significantly different from

the non-user survey. Around three-fifths (63.1 percent) of respondents on the non-user survey disagreed with this statement and approximately 8 percent were neutral on this item.

*Gender results:*

No significant differences on responses between the sexes were found on this particular item. This is the same as for the non-user survey.

*Age results:*

Those who are 65 years of age and older are much more worried about their safety walking to the bus stop than those who are younger. Sixty-five percent of those who are over 65 are worried about their safety walking to the bus. Of those less than 24 years of age, approximately 55 percent are not worried about their safety walking to the bus stop. Only one-fourth of those under the age of 24 were worried about their safety walking to the bus stop. There was not a significant difference between age categories on the non-user survey results on this item.

**“I worry about my safety while waiting at the bus stop”**

*Overall results:*

Strongly agree	19.7 percent
Agree	13.7 percent
Neutral	20.5 percent
Disagree	27.9 percent
Strongly Disagree	14.8 percent
Missing	3.4 percent

Approximately one-fourth (24.4 percent) of respondents were concerned about their safety waiting for the bus. This result is in line with the 27.6 percent of non-users who were concerned on this same item. However, only 42.7 percent of respondents said that they were unconcerned about this item, compared with 63.1 percent of respondents in the non-user survey. However, more users were neutral on this item than non-users.

*Gender results:*

There was a significant difference between males and females on this item. Different from the non-user survey, more women (37 percent) than men (30 percent) were worried about their safety while waiting at the bus stop. However, 48 percent of males and 41 percent of females said that they were not concerned for their safety while waiting at the bus stop. One-fourth of the participants of each sex were neutral on this item.

*Age results:*

Those who are 65 years of age and older are much more worried about their safety waiting at the bus stop than those who are younger. Sixty-five percent of those who are over 65 are worried about their safety waiting at the bus stop. Of those less than 24 years of age, approximately 55 percent are not worried about their safety waiting at the bus stop. There was not a significant difference found between age categories on the non-user survey results on this item.

**“I worry about my safety while riding the bus”**

*Overall results:*

Strongly agree	11.4 percent
Agree	13.7 percent
Neutral	23.9 percent
Disagree	27.5 percent
Strongly Disagree	17.5 percent
Missing	5.9 percent

Approximately one-fourth (25.1 percent) of respondents were concerned about their safety riding the bus. On the non-user survey, 28.6 percent of respondents said they were concerned about their safety while riding the bus. These two figures are in line with one another. However, a greater percentage of non-users (63.4 percent) than users (55.0 percent) said that they would be unconcerned about their safety while riding the bus. Only 7.4 percent of non-users were neutral on the subject compared to 23.9 percent of users. This is surprising, given that one would think that more users would have an opinion on bus safety than non-users.

*Gender results:*

There was not a significant difference between responses for genders on this item for the user survey. On the non-user survey, more women (36 percent) than men (21 percent) said that they worried about their safety while riding the bus.

*Age Results:*

There was not a significant difference between responses for different age categories on the user survey, nor on the non-user survey on this item.

**“I worry about my safety after getting off the bus”**

*Overall results:*

Strongly agree	11.8 percent
Agree	14.2 percent
Neutral	20.5 percent
Disagree	29.8 percent
Strongly Disagree	15.0 percent
Missing	8.6 percent

A little over one-fourth (26.0 percent) of respondents on the user survey were concerned about their safety after getting off the bus. Less of the respondents to the non-user survey were worried about their safety after getting off the bus (19.6 percent). However, 44.8 percent of respondents on the user survey said that they were not concerned about their safety, compared to 72.6 percent of all respondents on the non-user survey. Once again, a significantly larger amount of users (20.5 percent) were neutral about the item than their non-user counterparts (7.0 percent).

*Gender results:*

There were not significant results between responses for genders (27 percent of men were concerned versus 28 percent of women) on this item for the user survey. For the non-user survey, more women (22 percent) than men (17 percent) were worried about walking to their final destination after getting off the bus. Fifty-one percent of men and 48 percent of women on the user survey were unconcerned about safety while walking

to their final destination. However, on the non-user survey, 68 percent of women and 77 percent of women were unconcerned about safety walking to their final bus stop.

*Age results:*

Those who are 65 years of age and older were much more worried about their safety walking from the bus stop than those who are younger. Sixty-five percent of those who are over 65 were worried about their safety walking from the bus. Of those less than 24 years of age, approximately 52 percent were not worried about their safety walking from the bus stop. Those in other age groups had results which were evenly distributed between the responses. There was not a significant difference between age categories on the non-user survey results on this item.

***“I worry about my safety when a group of loud, unruly people come to the bus stop where I am waiting”***

Overall results:

Strongly agree	19.5 percent
Agree	22.2 percent
Neutral	20.1 percent
Disagree	22.0 percent
Strongly Disagree	11.4 percent
Did not answer	4.9 percent

A much smaller percentage (33.4 percent) of users than non-users (52 percent) were unconcerned for their safety if they had to wait at a bus stop with loud and unruly people. However, 41.7 percent of respondents on the user survey were afraid of loud and unruly people at a bus stop, as compared with only 37 percent of non-users.

*Gender results:*

On the user survey, more women (47 percent) than men (43 percent) were concerned about loud and unruly people at their bus stops. And, conversely, more men (34 percent) than women (29 percent) were unconcerned about loud and unruly people were waiting with them at the bus stop. There were no gender differences in the responses for this item on the non-user survey.

*Age results:*

Those who are 25 years of age and older are much more worried about their safety when a group of loud, unruly people come to the bus stop than those who are younger. Only approximately one-fourth of those age 24 and younger were worried about having to wait with loud and unruly people. The vast majority of those 24 and younger (60 percent) are unworried about loud and unruly people at the bus stop, whereas only about 25 percent of those 25 years of age and older are unworried by this. However, the amount of worry seems to increase as a function of increasing age. In the non-user survey, on those 65 and older were worried about having to wait with loud and unruly people.

**“I worry about my safety when a group of loud, unruly people get on the bus I am riding”**

*Overall results:*

Strongly agree	18.8 percent
Agree	24.5 percent
Neutral	22.0 percent
Disagree	18.6 percent
Strongly Disagree	10.1 percent
Did not answer	5.9 percent

Even more users (43.3 percent) are afraid of loud and unruly people riding with them. Only 29 percent of non-users were afraid of loud and unruly passengers riding the bus with them. However, only 28.7 percent of users were unconcerned on this aspect of transit use; whereas, more than half of non-users were unconcerned that they might have to ride the bus with loud and unruly people.

*Gender results:*

On the user survey, more women (47 percent) than men (43 percent) were concerned about loud and unruly people on their bus. And, conversely, more men (34 percent) than women (29 percent) were unconcerned about loud and unruly people were on their bus. There were no gender differences in the responses for this item on the non-user survey.



*Age Results*

Those who are 25 years of age and older are much more worried about their safety when a group of loud, unruly people come on the bus than those who are younger. Only approximately one-fourth of those age 24 and younger were worried about having to ride the bus with loud and unruly people. The vast majority of those 24 and younger (60 percent) are unworried about loud and unruly people on the bus, whereas only about 25 percent of those 25 years of age and older are unworried by this. However, the amount of worry seems to increase as a function of increasing age. In the non-user survey, only those aged 65 and older were concerned about loud and unruly people riding their bus.

**“There are times when unpleasant people are at the bus stop where I am waiting”**

*Overall results:*

Strongly agree	16.7 percent
Agree	29.6 percent
Neutral	20.3 percent
Disagree	16.7 percent
Strongly Disagree	8.9 percent
Did not answer	7.8 percent

More than two-fifths of users (46.3 percent) were concerned about unpleasant people at their bus stops. However, only 28 percent of non-users were concerned about having to wait with unpleasant people. Conversely, more than half of non-users were unconcerned about having to wait with unpleasant people and only one-fourth (25.6 percent) of users unconcerned about having to wait with unpleasant people.

*Gender results:*

There was not a significant result for differences between responses on this item for non-users. However, for users, there was a significant difference in responses on this item between males and females. Over half of the females (51 percent) were concerned about having to wait with unpleasant people at their bus stop, while 48 percent of men were concerned about having to wait with unpleasant people. Approximately 28 percent of both males and females were unconcerned about having to wait with unpleasant people at bus stops.

*Age Results*

Those who are 25 years of age and older were much more worried about having to wait with unpleasant people at the bus stop than those who are younger. Only approximately one-fourth of those age 24 and younger were worried about having to wait with unpleasant people. The vast majority of those 24 and younger (60 percent) were unworried about unpleasant people at the bus stop, whereas only about 25 percent of those 25 years of age and older are unworried by this. However, the amount of concern seems to increase as a function of increasing age. In the non-user survey, we found that those aged 65 and older were most concerned about having to wait with unpleasant people.

**“There are times when unpleasant people are riding the bus”**

*Overall results:*

Strongly agree	18.4 percent
Agree	28.8 percent
Neutral	19.7 percent
Disagree	15.2 percent
Strongly Disagree	8.7 percent
Did not answer	9.3 percent

These results are much the same as for the previous question. A little less than half of users (47.2 percent) responded that there are unpleasant people riding their bus. Approximately 41 percent of non-users were concerned that they might have to ride with unpleasant people. However, one-half of non-users (49 percent) were unconcerned over this aspect of riding the bus. Only 23.9 percent of users were unconcerned over this aspect of riding the bus.

*Gender results:*

Neither the non-user or user survey results registered a significant difference between genders on responses to this question.

*Age results:*

The user survey results did not reach significance for the difference in responses between age groups on this item. Most users seem concerned over this aspect of riding transit, regardless of age. However, in the non-user survey, only those 65 and older were worried about having to ride the bus with unpleasant passengers.

***“I worry that I might get on the wrong bus, or that it might not go where I need to go”***

Overall results:

Strongly agree	10.8 percent
Agree	18.2 percent
Neutral	18.4 percent
Disagree	28.5 percent
Strongly Disagree	16.9 percent
Did not answer	7.2 percent

Almost three-tenths (29 percent) of users agreed that they worried that they wouldn't be able to use the system efficiently and easily and these are people that use the system frequently. This is compared with almost one-fourth of non-users (23 percent) who said that they were concerned about being able to use the system easily and effectively. This is surprising because we would have thought that users would be used to the system and its configurations if they rode it all the time, the average user rides the bus 4 times a week. This is a very telling statistic about the HARTLINE system in that users feel confused and upset that they might get lost or stranded while using the system. However, 55.4 percent of users were unconcerned that they would be lost or stranded or unable to use the system easily, compared with 50 percent of non-users who were unconcerned that they would get lost or stranded while using the system.

*Gender results:*

Neither the non-user or user survey results registered a significant difference between genders on responses to this question.

*Age results:*

Of those aged 24 and younger, approximately 21 percent said that they were worried about being able to use the system efficiently. Only 25 percent of those aged 65 and older were worried about being able to use the system efficiently. However, of those in the 25 to 64 age bracket, 35 percent were most concerned over their ability to easily use the transit system. This is an opposite effect of that found in the non-user survey, where those in the 18-24 group and those 65 and older were most worried about their ability to use the system easily and effectively.

**“I worry for my safety, because I believe there is a lot of crime around bus stops”**

*Overall user results:*

Strongly agree	14.6 percent
Agree	19.0 percent
Neutral	20.9 percent
Disagree	24.9 percent
Strongly Disagree	14.4 percent
Did not answer	6.1 percent

In the non-user survey, approximately 62 percent of respondents disagreed with this statement. However, only 45.3 percent of users disagreed with this statement and several complained about having been robbed or mugged at bus stops. One third (33.6 percent) of users were worried about crime around bus stops, while only 23 percent of non-users were concerned about crime around bus stops.

*Gender results:*

Neither the non-user or user survey results registered a significant difference between genders on responses to this question.

*Age results:*

Of those aged 65 or older, 66 percent of users said that lots of crime occurs around bus stops. Fifty two percent of those aged 55 or older agreed with this statement as well. Conversely, 50 percent of those under 24 years of age disagreed with this statement. Twenty four percent of those under 24 years of age agreed with this statement. And,

finally, 35 percent of those in the age group between 25 and 54 agreed and disagreed with this statement, respectively. However, on the non-user survey, there was no effect of age category.

**“I believe most people use the bus because they have no other choice”**

Strongly agree	28.5 percent
Agree	23.7 percent
Neutral	15.0 percent
Disagree	17.1 percent
Strongly Disagree	9.1 percent
Did not answer	6.5 percent

Most of the users strongly agreed on this issue, with 52.2 percent of respondents agreeing with this statement. Approximately one-fourth (26.2 percent) of respondents disagreed with this statement. More than three-fourths of non-users agreed with this statement and only one-fifth (21 percent) of non-users agreed with this statement. Most of the non-users (78 percent) claimed to feel sorry for transit users.

*Gender results:*

There were significant results for the differences between responses on this item. More women (60 percent) than men (48 percent) agreed with this statement and more men (31 percent) than women (27 percent) disagreed with this statement. This result was opposite the non-user survey, wherein more men than women said that people use public transit because they have no other choice.

*Age results:*

Neither the non-user nor the user survey results showed a significant difference between age categories for responses on this item.

**“I fear buses are targets for terrorism”**

*Overall user results:*

Strongly agree	8.9 percent
Agree	12.5 percent

Neutral	19.7 percent
Disagree	29.6 percent
Strongly Disagree	16.9 percent
Did not answer	12.5 percent

Approximately one-fourth of users (21.4 percent) responded that they agreed with this statement, but only 15 percent of non-users were concerned over this possibility. However, 78 percent of non-users were unconcerned over this possibility, while only 46.5 percent of users were unconcerned over this possibility.

*Gender results:*

Neither the non-user or user survey results registered a significant difference between genders on responses to this question.

*Age results:*

Neither the non-user nor the user survey results showed a significant difference between age categories for responses on this item.

***“I try to ride the bus as few times as possible, because I am concerned for my safety”***

Overall user results:

Strongly agree	8.9 percent
Agree	11.8 percent
Neutral	16.9 percent
Disagree	31.5 percent
Strongly Disagree	23.0 percent
Did not answer	7.9 percent

Users were less in agreement with this statement, with approximately 21 percent of respondents agreeing. Approximately half (54.5 percent) of respondents disagreed with this item. Only 16 percent of non-users said that safety concerns were the major reason they did not use transit. Slightly less than three-fourths of non-users (74 percent) said that they did not have general safety concerns about riding the bus.

*Gender results:*

Neither the non-user or user survey results registered a significant difference between genders on responses to this question.

*Age results:*

In the user survey, there is not a significant difference between age categories and worries about safety while using the bus. However, in the non-user survey, we found that those in the 18-24 and 65 and over age groups were more concerned with their safety than those in any other age group.

**“Have you ever had an unexpectedly pleasant experience when using the bus?”**

Yes	18.4 percent
No	72.7 percent
Missing	8.8 percent

These comments consisted of responses wherein drivers helped them by helping them make transfers, gave directions as to how to use the system, made sure that new riders knew how to use the system, called ahead to ensure that a passenger made a transfer, or called work to verify that the bus had broken down. These answers also consisted of responses about meeting nice people on the bus. Many riders said that the bus drivers were usually courteous and helpful and that service was usually reliable and dependable.

**“Have you ever had an unpleasant experience when using the bus?”**

Yes	18.2 percent
No	71.7 percent
Missing	10.2 percent

These comments consisted of responses wherein drivers were not helpful, were rude, did not control unruly or rude people on the bus, passed up stops with people waiting at them, or made inappropriate remarks. Remarks described drivers calling people “fat ass” because they wanted the bus lowered to help them get on the bus; calling certain children “illegitimate” and telling the childrens’ mothers that they shouldn’t have children

out of wedlock. Whether this is the case is a moot point, the drivers should not be making any such comments. They should be focused on providing a service to their customers. In addition, there were several comments that women with children felt unwelcome on the buses, that drivers did not wait for them to be seated, so that they were in danger of falling while they were carrying their small children and also that the bus steps were hard to negotiate with a stroller. This also means that the steps are difficult for those who are physically infirm due to age or disability might also have a hard time negotiating the high steps in the bus. In addition, there was some concern about drivers not helping people with disabilities get on the bus. This was a concern, as we're not sure if this neglect by the drivers is in direct disregard to ADA legislation. While most drivers were helpful, the drivers who were surly, rude and unhelpful evoked the hardest feelings and seem to color the whole bus experience negatively. In addition, people were concerned about unpleasant, drunk, odiferous, and obnoxious passengers that they had to ride or wait with.

### **Summary and Recommendations**

Overall, it was found that users felt more insecure and unsafe in the system than non-users. The reason for this is theorized to be that the majority of non-users have never used public transportation and it is hard for them to realize the problems and upsets of being a frequent user of transit. They can imagine the long travel times, but they may not experience the full intensity of feeling unsafe in traveling from one's job that everyday users do. They also do not experience the frustration of being a frequent user and having a hard time navigating the system. In addition, they have probably never had the experience of having to maneuver on the bus with small children or with a disability. The suggestions below outline some of the main problems with the transit system and ways to fix the problems.

- One of the main problems was with drivers being rude and unhelpful and making unnecessary comments. In driver training, drivers need to know that how they interact with transit customers colors the whole experience. There were many comments about how a helpful driver made a new resident's day. How drivers interact with the public is of the utmost importance in retaining and attracting new



riders to the system. If drivers are helpful and engaging, then people will be more positive about riding the system. On the other hand, if drivers are making degrading comments about a customer's weight and the paternity of their children, then this is not acceptable and it definitely does not help customer relations.

- In addition, there was concern over drivers not being able to maintain control of people on the bus. Customers are frightened of people who are loud and unruly and they are also frightened of being victims of crime while using the system. In order to help perception, it is recommended that there be more frequency so that customers will have less time to wait in dangerous areas. It is suggested that HARTLINE have a security presence, either on-board or at stops to increase the perception of security.
- User-friendliness of the system was also an issue. In some areas, frequency was once an hour, so if a customer missed the bus because the bus ran early or if the bus was late and hadn't yet come by, there was no for the passenger to know. Kiosks are suggested as a way for passengers to keep track of the arrival of buses. It's very hard to be out on the side of the road, not knowing if you're waiting in vain for the next bus. Drivers could also be more helpful on this issue, by assisting passengers in transfers and route information. Route material and system maps need to be made accessible in many different places and at all bus stops for easy system access.
- Older people need transportation services and HARTLINE is not making this a priority. Several of the older people who were surveyed said that it was hard to access transit services and that it was hard to get on buses with steps.
- HARTLINE could entice senior citizens with daytime shuttle service from residential areas to activity areas downtown and could also offer special shuttles for shopping and travel in low floor buses that are easily accessible to those who are physically disabled due to age. This is another segment of the population which could increase ridership if the proper conditions were presented.
- Disabled people also need to receive more assistance from HARTLINE drivers. There were several comments that drivers would not help disabled persons access the bus. The bus company needs to figure out what their policy is on these situations. Also, drivers need to be trained better in the usage of

wheelchair lifts and the whole system could use more reliable wheelchair lifts. Transit systems also need to think of themselves as agencies which provide a social service. HARTLINE is available to provide Paratransit services to disabled persons and those persons should not be looked upon as a burden.

- Children who use transit may grow up to become adults that use transit. This could be one of the best ways to increase ridership. However, if the mothers of these children and the children themselves are not treated with respect and are hassled on the system, this will not be viewed as a positive experience.
- In addition, all buses on the system should be low floor buses. These are easy for access by strollers and by those who have limited mobility. Transit systems want to attract choice riders, but sometimes choice riders are those who have a bit of trouble getting up and down the steep stairs in the buses.
- There is concern of safety on the buses in that drivers often take off prior to people being seated or at least holding on to a handrail. In dealing with those who have physical disabilities, senior citizens, and those who are traveling with children, it is imperative that the driver ensures that they are not throwing their passengers to the floor, as this can result in serious injury for the passengers and possible legal action against the transit system.
- Most frequent users viewed the drivers and the system somewhat positively. However, there are many improvements to be made, from shortening travel time to ensuring a secure environment for passengers. When these changes are made, it is possible that bus transit will become more than the last resort of transit captives.
- Another big concern here is that the actual users of the system were concerned about their ability to use the system. They were also concerned about getting stranded far from home after the last bus has already left because the bus was running early and their connection was running late. This is why people don't see bus transit positively. There is little care or concern for making the system attractive and easily accessible to all customers. Additionally, the fact that users are more concerned for their safety using the system than non-users is of concern. There are steps that were mentioned above to improve the security of the system. In addition, it is suggested that lighting and call boxes be installed on all stops and that all stops have shelter and benches installed. People don't want

to use a system that is inefficient, inconvenient, and unsafe. And, this survey is very telling in this regard. The majority of those who currently use transit on this system wouldn't use this system if they had a choice.

**APPENDIX A  
PERCEPTIONS OF TRANSIT SAFETY NON-USER QUESTIONNAIRE**

**ASK TO SPEAK TO AN ADULT IF RESPONDENT IS CLEARLY NOT AN ADULT**

Good morning/afternoon/evening. My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am calling on behalf of the Center for Urban Transportation Research at the University of South Florida **and the Florida Department of Transportation.**

This evening/today we are conducting a survey on commuting and traffic issues in the Tampa/St. Petersburg metropolitan area.

We are not attempting to sell you anything, we are only interested in your opinions.

1a. Of the 18 years or older in your household, I need to speak with the person who had the most recent birthday. Would that person be you?

- 1 Yes - **CONTINUE**
- 2 No - **ASK FOR THAT PERSON AND REPEAT INTRO**

1d. **RECORD GENDER BY OBSERVATION:**

- 1 Male - **QUOTA = 50%**
- 2 Female- **QUOTA = 50%**

1e.

We are recruiting participants for an in-depth survey on public transportation issues. Public transportation is a key area for future development of urban areas. Your assistance would help to guide planning efforts and service development. This interview would be scheduled at a time that is convenient for you and would take about a half hour to forty-five minutes. What we would want to do for that is to record your name and telephone number and have another interviewer call you back within 72 hours to schedule a convenient time for you to participate. Would you like to participate in that interview?

Yes – Record contact info

No – continue:

1f.

We are also conducting a much shorter survey on this topic. The second survey is an eight-minute survey of your opinions, and the second is a more in-depth discussion of your attitudes, ideas, and thoughts. If you can spare a few minutes, we'd like to complete that one right now.

Yes – continue

No – record refusal

1g. Do you currently work outside the home?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No (Skip to q. 19)

**PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SURVEYING:  
INTEGRATING QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE METHODS FOR TRANSIT RESEARCH**

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2. Do you currently hold more than one job?

- 1 Yes - **(READ: Please answer the questions in this survey with respect to your *primary* job.)**  
2 No

3. Thinking about **last week**, on how many days did you travel to work?

\_\_\_\_\_ # days

3a. (17e.) And about how far is your commute, one-way, in miles?

\_\_\_\_\_ # miles

3b. (17e2.) And about how much time does it take you to commute to work?

\_\_\_\_\_ Minutes/Hours

3c. (17e2a.) And how much time would it take to make the same trip on a Saturday or Sunday?

\_\_\_\_\_ Minutes/Hours

3d. (17e3.) What time do you usually leave home to go to work?

\_\_\_\_\_ am/pm

3e. (17e4.) And what time do you usually leave work to go home?

\_\_\_\_\_ am/pm

<b>IF "0", THIS IS NOT A PERSON WORKING OUTSIDE OF THE HOME, SKIP TO Q.17A</b>
--

4a. Thinking about **last week**, Please tell me the number of days that you drove alone to get to work.

(If respondent uses more than one means of transportation in a single trip, for example walking or driving to the bus, ASK WHAT MODE IS used for most of the trip. IF NOT DRIVING THEN THE FOLLOWING SHOULD BE "0".)

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---

\_\_\_\_\_#days

**IF Q.4a = "0", SKIP TO Q.4c**

4b. When you drove to work last week, did you ever carpool, that is, go to work with someone else in the car, or not? (**"CARPOOLING" IS DRIVING WITH SOMEONE ELSE TO THE WORKSITE. TAKING A CHILD TO SCHOOL/DAYCARE DOES NOT COUNT AS CARPOOLING FOR THIS QUESTION.**)

- |   |     |   |                                   |
|---|-----|---|-----------------------------------|
| 1 | Yes | - | <b>CONTINUE WITH Q.4c</b>         |
| 2 | No  | - | <b>SKIP TO Q.4e IF APPLICABLE</b> |

4c. Thinking about **last week** Please tell me the number of days that you carpooled to get to work? (**"CARPOOLING" IS DRIVING WITH SOMEONE ELSE TO THE WORKSITE. TAKING A CHILD TO SCHOOL/DAYCARE DOES NOT COUNT AS CARPOOLING FOR THIS QUESTION.**) (INTERVIEWER: ENTER "0" FOR LESS THAN 1 DAY)

\_\_\_\_\_#days

4d. So last week you drove to work alone (**ANSWER IN Q.4A**) days and carpooled (**ANSWER IN Q.4C**) days?

4a. response should be \_\_\_\_\_

4c. response should be \_\_\_\_\_

}

**IF TOTAL = Q.3, SKIP TO Q.5a.  
OTHERWISE, CONTINUE**

4e. Thinking about **last week** ,Please tell me the number of days you (**READ LIST**) to get to work? (**IF RESPONDENT USES MORE THAN ONE MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION IN A SINGLE TRIP, FOR EXAMPLE WALKING OR DRIVING TO THE BUS, ENTER ONLY THE MODE USED FOR MOST OF THE TRIP.**)

- |   | <b># Days/Week</b> |
|---|--------------------|
| 1. Vanpooled, that is, rode to work in a van with 7-14 other people | _____              |
| 2. Rode the bus   | _____              |
| 3. Rode the train to work   | _____              |
| 4. Rode a bicycle   | _____              |
| 5. Walked or jogged   | _____              |
| 7. Did something else (SPECIFY): _____                              | _____              |

**WHEN THE DAYS FOR ALL MODES-Q.4a, Q.4c & Q.4e ARE ADDED THE TOTAL SHOULD EQUAL THE ANSWER IN Q.3 AND DEFINITELY NOT EXCEED 7 DAYS. WHEN RESPONSES EQUAL THE TOTAL NUMBER OF DAYS WORKED, GO ON TO Q.5a**

5a. Thinking about **last week**, Please tell me the number of days that you drove alone to get home from work. (**IF RESPONDENT USES MORE THAN ONE MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION IN A SINGLE TRIP, FOR EXAMPLE WALKING OR**

**DRIVING TO THE BUS, ASK WHAT MODE IS USED FOR MOST OF THE TRIP.  
IF NOT DRIVING THEN THE FOLLOWING SHOULD BE 0.)**

\_\_\_\_\_#days

**IF Q.5a = "0", SKIP TO Q.5c**

5b. When you drove home from work last week, did you ever carpool, that is, go home with someone else in the car, or not? (**"CARPOOLING" IS DRIVING WITH SOMEONE ELSE TO THE WORKSITE. PICKING A CHILD UP FROM SCHOOL/DAYCARE DOES NOT COUNT AS CARPOOLING FOR THIS QUESTION.**)

- |   |     |   |                            |
|---|-----|---|----------------------------|
| 1 | Yes | - | CONTINUE WITH Q.5c         |
| 2 | No  | - | SKIP TO Q.5e IF APPLICABLE |

5c. Thinking about **last week**, Please tell me the number of days that you carpooled to get home from work? (**"CARPOOLING" IS DRIVING WITH SOMEONE ELSE TO THE WORKSITE OR HOME. PICKING A CHILD UP FROM SCHOOL/DAYCARE DOES NOT COUNT AS CARPOOLING FOR THIS QUESTION.**) (INTERVIEWER – ENTER "0" FOR LESS THAN 1 DAY)

\_\_\_\_\_#days

**(IF Q.5a AND Q.5c ARE >0, VERIFY)**

5d. So last week you drove home alone (**ANSWER IN Q.5A**) days and carpooled (**ANSWER IN Q.5C**) days?

5a. response should be \_\_\_\_\_

5c. response should be \_\_\_\_\_

}

**IF TOTAL = Q.3, SKIP TO Q.6.  
OTHERWISE, CONTINUE**

5e. Thinking about **last week**, Please tell me the number of days that you \_\_\_\_\_ to get home from work? (**IF RESPONDENT USES MORE THAN ONE MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION IN A SINGLE TRIP, FOR EXAMPLE WALKING OR DRIVING TO THE BUS, ENTER ONLY THE MODE USED FOR MOST OF THE TRIP.**)

	# Days/Week
1. Vanpooled, that is, rode in a van with 7-14 other people	_____
2. Rode the bus	_____
3. Rode the train to work	_____
4. Rode a bicycle	_____
5. Walked or jogged	_____
7. Did something else (SPECIFY): _____	_____

**WHEN THE DAYS FOR ALL MODES-Q.5a, Q.5c & Q.5e ARE ADDED THE TOTAL SHOULD**



**EQUAL THE ANSWER IN Q.3 AND DEFINITELY NOT EXCEED 7 DAYS. WHEN RESPONSES  
EQUAL THE TOTAL NUMBER OF DAYS WORKED, GO ON TO Q.6**

**ASK Q.6-Q.8 ONLY IF Q.4c>0 OR Q.5c>0**

7. Including yourself, how many people were in the car when you carpooled?

\_\_\_\_\_ # people  
(PROBE IF "DON'T KNOW")

**ASK Q.12 ONLY IF Q.4e2>0 OR Q.5e2>0**

12. In the past 12 months have you usually been taking the bus to or from work at least twice per week, or not?

1 Yes  
2 No  
& Don't know  
- Refused

**ASK Q.13 ONLY IF Q.4e3>0 OR Q.5e3>0**

13. In the past 12 months have you usually been taking the train to or from work at least twice per week, or not?

1 Yes  
2 No  
& Don't know  
- Refused

**ASK Q.16 ONLY IF Q.4e2 and q5e2 ALL EQUAL 0**

16. Since the last time either you moved or your job changed locations, have you tried riding the bus to or from work at least once, or not?

1 Yes  
2 No  
& Don't know  
- Refused

19. For the next few questions, please think about trips you made last week that were for shopping, visiting friends or relatives, going to the movies, and so forth – trips that were **not** to or from work.

Thinking about the trips you made last week that were **not** related to work, did you use the bus for any of those trips?

1- Yes                      2- No (Skip to q. 21) 9-dk/ref (SKIP TO Q. 21)

20. For about how many of those trips did you use the bus last week? \_\_\_\_\_  
(Skip to q.24)

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21. Since the last time you moved, have you tried riding the bus for a non-work related trip at least once, or not?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No (Skip to q.22)
- 9 Don't know/refused (Skip to q.22)

(Ask q21a only if q4e2=0, q5e2=0, q4e3=0, and q5e3=0)

21a. And would you say you use the bus

- 1 Very frequently (Skip to q. 24)
- 2 fairly frequently (Skip to q. 24)
- 3 fairly rarely (Skip to q. 24)
- 4 very rarely (continue)
- 5 or almost never (continue)

22. From what you have said, you virtually never use public buses for any trips you make. What is the most important reason or reasons that you don't use public buses? (DO NOT READ CHOICES)

- 1 Bus doesn't run often enough / have to wait too long
- 2 Bus doesn't go where I need to go
- 3 Bus takes too much time
- 4 I don't know how (or can't) get information about where the bus goes and when it runs
- 5 Bus is too expensive
- 6 Riding bus or waiting for the bus isn't safe (**not** specifically about terrorism)
- 7 Feel uncomfortable around the kind of people that ride the bus
- 8 Terrorist fears
- 9 Other (specify \_\_\_\_\_ )

Record up to 3 answers      \_\_\_\_\_      \_\_\_\_\_      \_\_\_\_\_

23. I am going to read you a short series of statements regarding reasons people might not use public buses. For each of the statements please tell me whether you *strongly agree* with the statement, *agree* with the statement, *neither agree nor disagree* or *feel neutral* about the statement, *disagree* with the statement, or *strongly disagree* with the statement. There are no right or wrong answers, we are only interested in your opinions

Read statements 1-4 as a consecutive block, but scatter where the block appears. Scatter 5-13 also.

The first statement is:

(1) (insert statement)

Please tell me whether you strongly agree, agree, feel neutral, disagree, or strongly disagree with that statement

Record response 5 – strongly agree, 4-agree, 3-neutral, 2-disagree, 1-strongly disagree 9 – refuse/don't know

Statements:

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1. If I were to use the bus, and thinking about the bus stops I would use most often, I would worry about my safety while **walking to the bus stop**.
  2. If I were to use the bus, and thinking about the bus stops I would use most often, I would worry about my safety while **waiting for** the bus
  3. If I were to use the bus, I would worry about my safety while **riding** the bus
  4. If I were to use the bus, and thinking about the bus stops I would use most often, I would worry about my safety **after getting off the bus while walking to my final destination**
  5. If I were to use the bus, I would worry about my safety if a group of loud and unruly teenagers got on the bus
  6. If I were to use the bus, I would worry about my safety if a group of loud and unruly teenagers came to a bus stop where I was waiting
  7. If I were to use the bus, It is likely there would be unpleasant people riding the bus
  8. If I were to use the bus, It is likely there would be unpleasant people waiting for the bus with me
  9. If I were to use the bus, I would worry that I might get on the wrong bus or that the bus wouldn't go where I wanted to go
  10. I believe there is a lot of crime that occurs around bus stops
  11. I would not want people I know to see me waiting for the bus or getting off the bus
  12. I believe most people that use the bus use it because they have no choice.
  13. Sometimes I feel sorry for people who I see waiting at bus stops
- (Skip to q. 31)

24. Have you ever had an unexpectedly pleasant experience when using the bus, or not?

1 – yes            2 – No (Skip to q. 26)

25. Could you please describe it for me?  
(record exact response)

26. Have you ever had an unpleasant experience using the bus, or not?

1 – yes            2 – No (Skip to Q28)

27. Could you please describe it for me?

28. I am going to read you a short series of statements regarding how people might feel when they use public buses. For each of the statements please tell me whether you *strongly agree* with the statement, *agree* with the statement, *neither agree nor disagree* or *feel neutral* about the statement, *disagree* with the statement, or *strongly disagree* with the statement.

Read statements 1-4 as a consecutive block, but scatter where the block appears. Scatter 5-11 also.

The first statement is:

(1)

Please tell me whether you strongly agree, agree, feel neutral, disagree, or strongly disagree with that statement

Record response 5 – strongly agree, 4-agree, 3-neutral, 2-disagree, 1-strongly disagree 9 – refuse /don't know

Read statements 2-11

Statements:

1. When I use the bus, I worry about my safety while **walking to the bus stop.**
2. When I use the bus, I worry about my safety while **waiting for the bus**
3. When I use the bus, I worry about my safety while **riding the bus**
4. When I use the bus, I worry about my safety **after getting off the bus and walking to my final destination**
5. When I use the bus, I worry about my safety if a group of loud and unruly teenagers get on the bus
6. When I use the bus, I worry about my safety if a group of loud and unruly teenagers come to a bus stop where I am waiting
7. When I use the bus, there are times when unpleasant people are riding the bus
8. When I use the bus, there are times when unpleasant people are waiting for the bus with me
9. When I use the bus, I worry that I might get on the wrong bus or that the bus won't go where I want to go
10. I believe there is a lot of crime that occurs around bus stops
11. I believe most people that use the bus use it because they have no choice.

29. And the final statement is, I am concerned about riding the bus because I fear that buses may be used as targets for terrorism. Do you strongly agree, agree, feel neutral, disagree, or strongly disagree with that statement?

(Skip to qd1)

31. (if item 8 mentioned in q22, skip to qd1)

I am concerned about riding the bus because I fear that buses may be used as targets for terrorism.

32. And the final statement is, Concern for my safety is a very important reason for my choice not to use public buses. Do you strongly agree, agree, feel neutral, disagree, or strongly disagree with that statement?

Record response 5 – strongly agree, 4-agree, 3-neutral, 2-disagree, 1-strongly disagree 9 – refuse don't know

D1. Now I just have a few questions remaining that are for statistical and classification purposes only. Your answers will remain completely anonymous and confidential.

What is your marital status? Are you: **(READ LIST)**

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- (DO NOT READ)
- 1 Single
  - 2 Married
  - 3 Divorced/Separated
  - 4 Widowed
  - Refused

D2 (D2a.) Do you have any children under the age of 16 in your household?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No
- Refused

D4. (D2b.) How many working vehicles do you have in your household?

\_\_\_\_\_ # working vehicles

D5. What is your race or ethnicity? Are you: **(READ LIST)**

- (DO NOT READ)
- 1 White
  - 2 African-American
  - 3 Hispanic
  - 4 Asian
  - 5 American Indian
  - 6 Other (SPECIFY): \_\_\_\_\_
  - Refused

D6. Please stop me when I read the category that contains your age?

- (DO NOT READ)
- 1 18 - 24 years old
  - 2 25 - 34
  - 3 35 - 44
  - 4 45 - 54
  - 5 55 - 64
  - 6 65 or older
  - Refused

D7. Please stop me when I read the range that contains your household's total income, including yourself and anyone else in your household that worked, for the year 2000?

- 1 Under \$10,000
- 2 \$10,000 - \$19,999
- 3 \$20,000 - \$29,999
- 4 \$30,000 - \$39,999
- 5 \$40,000 - \$49,999
- 6 \$50,000 - \$59,999
- 7 \$60,000 - \$69,999
- 8 \$70,000 or more

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**(DO NOT READ)**      -      Refused

Thank you very much. That concludes our survey.

**VERIFY:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX B  
TRANSIT NON-USER PERCEPTION OF TRANSIT  
SAFETY IN THE TAMPA BAY AREA**

## **Executive summary**

This NCTR funded project has two purposes:

- To investigate the differences in conclusions reached and recommendations developed by
  - Telephone-survey instrument approach,
  - Open-ended wide-ranging, qualitative research approach.
- To investigate the impact of perceptions of safety as a barrier to transit use.

This document contains a report on the telephone survey instrument approach to this issue. The survey instrument was developed from a literature search and the results of two focus groups conducted with non-transit users. Five hundred non-users were phone surveyed by random dialing procedures.

## **Findings**

The first section of the attitude assessment was free-response. Participants could list any reason for not using transit. In general, most non-users do not use transit because it is not convenient: the bus does not go where they want to go, it is inconvenient to use with children and going on errands, the wait time is too long, they cannot use it if they have to travel for work, and the travel time is too long. More men than women listed these reasons as to why they don't use the bus. In the free response section, more whites than minorities voiced concerns over the expense of using buses and that they did not feel safe or like the clientele who rode the buses

The second section of the attitude assessment about perceptions of transit safety was designed like a Likert scale. In sum, it was found that those in the 18-24 year old group, 65 year old and older group, those in the lower income brackets, and women were most concerned about safety waiting for, riding, alighting the bus and walking to their final destination. Those in the 18-24 year old group and those in the 65 years of age and older groups and widows were most concerned about others seeing them using the bus and also about their ability to use the bus system efficiently without getting lost. Those without cars and those in the \$30,000 or less income brackets were most concerned about having others see them using public transit. In addition, those in the 65 years old and older category and those who make less than \$20,000 per year were most concerned about having to use transit with loud and unruly teens, unpleasant passengers, and were most concerned about crime occurring around bus stops. There is a large retired population in this area and most of the respondents over the age of 65 made less than \$20,000 for year, accounting for this result in some, but not all instances.

The main message here is that most non-users of transit do not use transit because of convenience issues, not safety or security issues.

## **Background**

This project was funded under the National Center for Transit Research at the Center for Urban Transportation research. Its purpose was two-fold:



- To investigate the differences in conclusions reached and recommendations developed by
  - 1) Telephone-survey instrument approach,
  - 2) Open-ended wide-ranging, qualitative research approach.
- To investigate the impact of perceptions of safety as a barrier to transit use

This document contains a report on the telephone survey instrument approach to this issue. The survey instrument was developed from a literature search and the results of two focus groups conducted with non-transit users.

Separate documents detail the results of the literature search on Perceptions of safety in transit, the initial focus groups held to help shape the survey instrument for this project, the wide-ranging qualitative effort that was conducted separately, a summary of on-board surveys done in Florida with respect to the information they have regarding the impact of safety perceptions on current riders, and the results of a survey of transit riders conducted on the topic of safety perceptions.

### **Method**

A survey instrument was developed using the results of the literature search. The instrument is included in this report as appendix A.

The survey asked residents to characterize their commute patterns (if they were employed outside the home), and asked whether they used or had used transit for both commute and non-commute purposes. A battery of questions was asked related specifically to various potential influences on resident's perceptions of safety. Respondents were also asked what their main reason for not using transit was (assuming they were non-transit users) and the influence that their perceptions of safety had on their decision not to use transit. Finally, standard demographic information was collected.

500 residents of Hillsborough, Pinellas, Pasco, and Hernando counties were interviewed for this project. Respondents were screened for being over 18 years of age. The sample was randomly drawn from the four county area through random-digit-dialing. The distribution of responses is therefore roughly proportional to the number of residential telephone numbers in the respective counties.

### **Results**

#### ***Commute distances for Tampa/St. Petersburg Area Commuters***

The majority of commuters interviewed (61 percent) reported driving 14 miles or less to work. Of these respondents, twenty percent reported driving 4 miles or less, nineteen percent reported driving between 5 and 9 miles to work, and twenty-two percent reported driving between 10 and 14 miles to work. Twelve percent of respondents reported driving between 15-19 miles to work, fourteen percent of respondents reported driving between 20 and 29 miles to work, and another twelve percent of respondents reported driving 30 miles or more during their work commute.

Dividing up by area, those commuters in Pasco/Hernando county area (including Dade City, Zephyrhills, Brooksville, Odessa, Mango, Webster, San Antonio, Spring Hill, New Port Richey, Hudson, Port Richey, and Holiday) reported that their average one-way commute distance was 22.56 miles, compared to those in the Central Tampa Bay area (including Lutz, Odessa, and Tampa proper), who reported an average one-way commute of 17.54 miles. Those in the East Hillsborough area (including Brandon, Dover, Gibsonton, Lithia, Plant City, Riverview, Ruskin, Apollo Beach, Sun City Center, Seffner, Thonotassassa, Valrico, and Wimauma) reported an average one-way daily work commute of 14.22 miles and those in the Pinellas County/West Pasco County area (including Clearwater, St. Petersburg, Largo, Seminole, Pinellas Park, Tarpon Springs, Palm Harbor, Safety Harbor, Indian Rocks Beach, Dunedin, Belleair Beach, Oldsmar, and Crystal Beach) reported an average one-way daily work commute of only 12.30 miles. There is no significant difference between these commute distances.

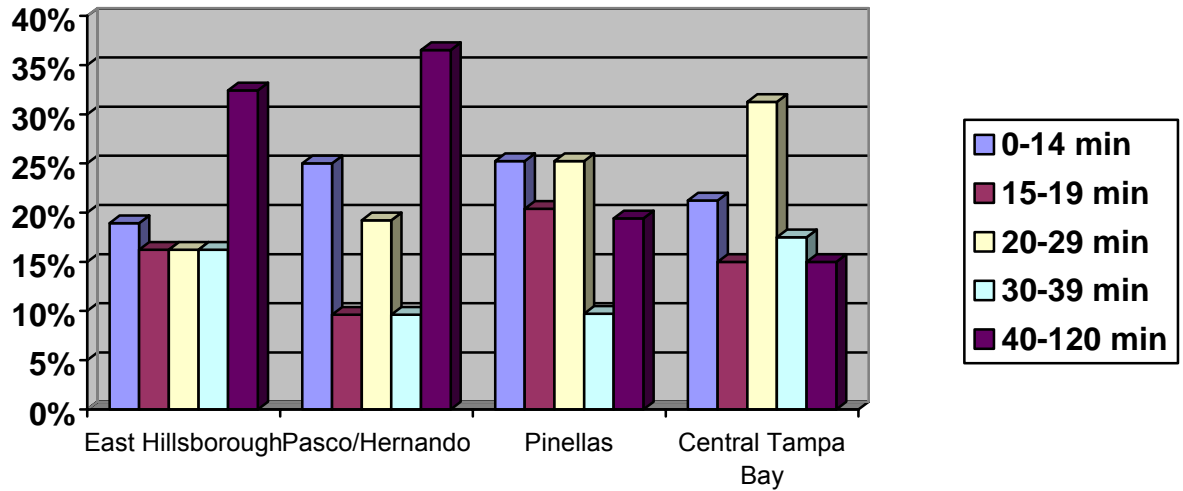
***Commute times for Tampa/St. Petersburg Area Commuters***

A majority of commuters (54 percent) responded that their daily work commute was between fifteen and thirty-nine minutes. Of these, sixteen percent reported that their commute took between 15 and 19 minutes, one-fourth (25 percent) reported that their commute took between 20 and 29 minutes, and thirteen percent reported that their commute lasted between 30 and 39 minutes. Almost one-fourth of respondents (23 percent and 24 percent respectively) were on either end of this distribution, with commutes ranging from 0 to 14 minutes and from 40 minutes to two hours. Mean commute time for East Hillsborough County area is 28.14 minutes, for Pasco/Hernando County area it's 32.58 minutes, for Pinellas County area it is 22.35 minutes, and for the Central Tampa Bay area, it's 23 minutes. Table 1 shows the average commute time and average commute distance for each area.

Table 1. Comparison of commute time versus commute distance.

Area	Commute Time	Commute Distance
East Hillsborough County	28.14 minutes	14.22 miles
Central Tampa Bay	23.01 minutes	17.54 miles
Pinellas/West Pasco County	22.35 minutes	12.30 miles
Pasco/Hernando County	32.58 minutes	22.56 miles

Figure 1. Breakdown of commute time by area.

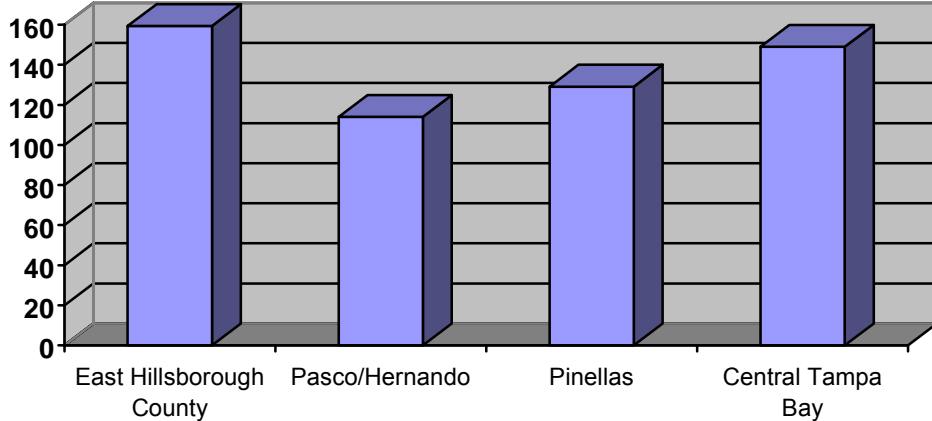


***Congestion Index for Tampa/St. Petersburg Area Commuters***

The congestion index was calculated by divided the commute time during the weekdays by the commute time on the weekends and multiplying by 100. Therefore, a congestion index of 150 would mean that the weekday commute time is one and one-half times as long as the weekend commutes time.

East Hillsborough County has the highest average congestion index at 159.35. The Central Tampa Bay area had the second highest average congestion index at 148.94. The third highest congestion index is seen in the Pinellas County/West Pasco County area at 129.13. The area with the lowest average congestion area was the Pasco/Hernando County Area with an average of 114.01. Interestingly, there is a significant difference between the two Hillsborough County areas congestion index (East Hillsborough County and Central Tampa Bay Area) and the Pinellas/Pasco county areas congestion index (Pinellas County/West Pasco County area and Pasco/Hernando County area). Figure 2 shows congestion index by area.

**Figure 2. Congestion Index by Area.**



### ***Tampa/St. Petersburg AM/PM Rush Hour Index***

Most commuters (47.2 percent) leave their homes for their daily commute between 7:00 am and 8:30 am, with the peak at 8:00 am. Most commuters (42.9 percent) leave their worksites for their daily commute home between 4:30 pm and 6:00 pm, with the peak at 5:15 pm.

### **Percent of Trips Made by Tampa/St. Petersburg Area Commuters Using Alternative Commute Modes**

Approximately 10 percent (9.7 percent) of all trips made in the Tampa/St. Petersburg area are made by carpool, bus, walking, vanpool, bicycling, or some other mode. Most alternative transportation is taken via carpool (8.1 percent). Bus trips account for 0.4 percent of trips, another 0.3 percent use walking as an alternative mode of transportation. Only 0.1% of alternative trips are made via vanpool service. No one reported bicycling to get to work in the 2002 survey. Finally, 1.3 percent of respondents reported using some other, unspecified mode of alternative transportation.

These percentages are comparable to statewide statistics for Florida commuters. Only 12.3 percent of all trips in the state of Florida use carpool, vanpool, bus, bike, walking or other alternative transportation for their transportation needs.

### **Percent of Tampa/St. Petersburg Area Residents Who Have Used Transit**

The vast majority (88.2 percent) of Tampa/St. Petersburg area residents have never used transit. A little more than 10 percent of Tampa Bay area residents have used transit for non-work purposes either now (2.4 percent) or in the past (8.6 percent). A little less than three percent of Tampa Bay area residents have used transit for commuting to work either now (0.2 percent) or in the past (2.6 percent).

Some areas in the interviewing area are less transit dense, such as East Pasco and Hernando counties and East Hillsborough. We ran a crosstabulation to verify if availability of transit in an area would cause those residents of that area to be more likely to try transit. The answer is that although there is more availability of transit in the areas defined as Greater Tampa and Pinellas, those residing in those areas where transit is

more available are no more likely to try transit versus those living in areas where transit is less available.

### ***Demographics of the respondents***

#### *Area of residence*

Five hundred residents of Pinellas, Hillsborough, Pasco, and Hernando counties were interviewed. The geographic area was divided into four areas, as described above. Approximately 38 percent (37.6 percent) of the respondents came from the Pinellas area. One-fourth of the respondents each came from the Pasco/Hernando area (24.7 percent) and the Central Tampa Bay area (24.5 percent), respectively. And, finally, 13.3 percent of respondents resided in East Hillsborough county area.

#### *Gender*

Respondents were split equally, with 50 percent being male and 50 percent being female.

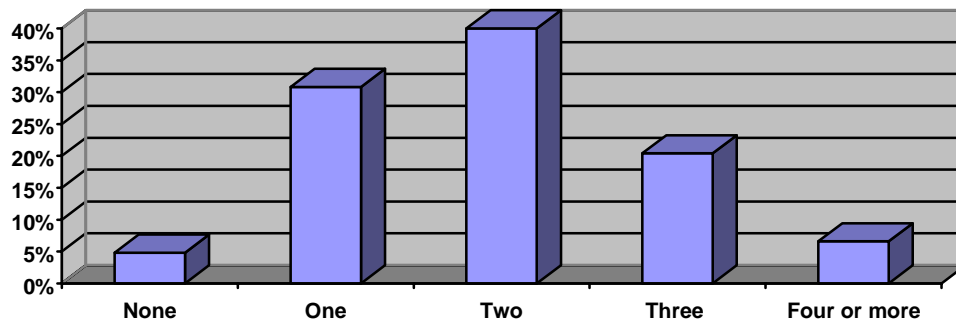
#### *Marital Status*

Approximately one-fourth (23.0 percent) of respondents were single, with the vast majority (55.4 percent) reporting being married. A little more than one-tenth (11.8 percent) of the respondents were either separated or divorced and 7.8 percent of the respondents were widowed. Another 2 percent of respondents refused to answer this question.

#### *Number of working vehicles available to household*

Two-fifths of all households surveyed had two working vehicles available for transportation. Almost one-third of all households (30.8 percent) had one vehicle available. A little over 18 percent (17.8 percent) had three working vehicles in their household. Less than five percent (4.8 percent) of all respondents did not have an available vehicle. Close to seven percent (6.6 percent) of respondents had four or more vehicles at their disposal. Figure 3 shows the breakdown of numbering of working vehicles.

Figure 3. Number of working vehicles per household in Tampa/ St. Petersburg Area.



#### *Race/ethnicity*

Most of the participants (83.8 percent) were White. A little over six percent (6.2 percent) were Hispanics and a little over four percent (4.2 percent) were African-American. Less than one percent were Asian (0.8 percent), American Indian (0.6 percent), or Other (0.6 percent), respectively. Four percent (3.8 percent) of respondents refused to answer this question. Figure 4 shows race of respondents.

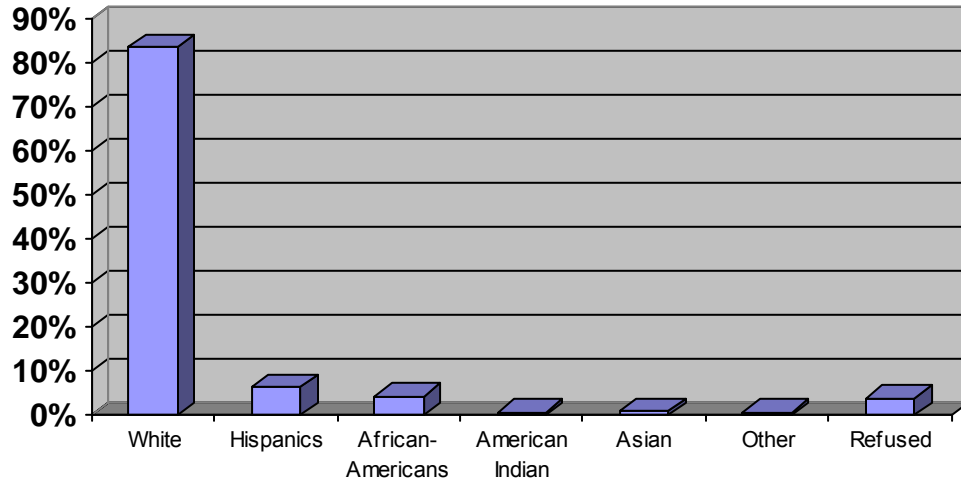
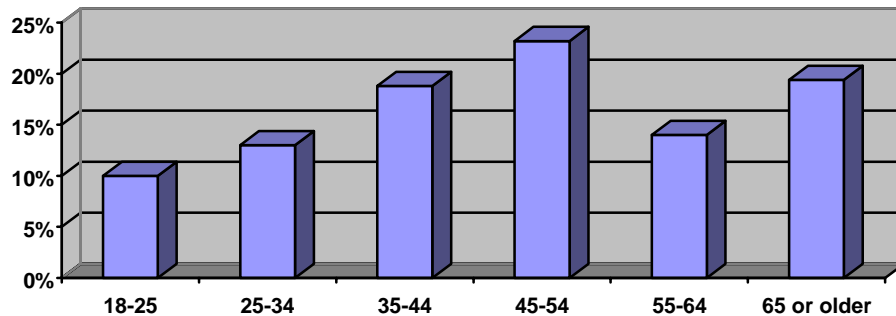


Figure 4. Race of Respondents.

*Age*

Ages of participants were fairly well-distributed. One-fourth (23.2 percent) of the participants were 45-54, one-fifth (19.4 percent) of participants were aged 65 or older. Another one-fifth (18.8 percent) of participants were aged 35-44 years. A little less than fourteen percent of respondents were between the ages of 55 and 64 years of age and exactly thirteen percent of respondents were between the ages of 25-34 years. Another ten percent were between 18-25 years of age. Two percent of respondents refused to answer this question. Figure 5 shows age of respondents.

Figure 5. Age of Respondents.

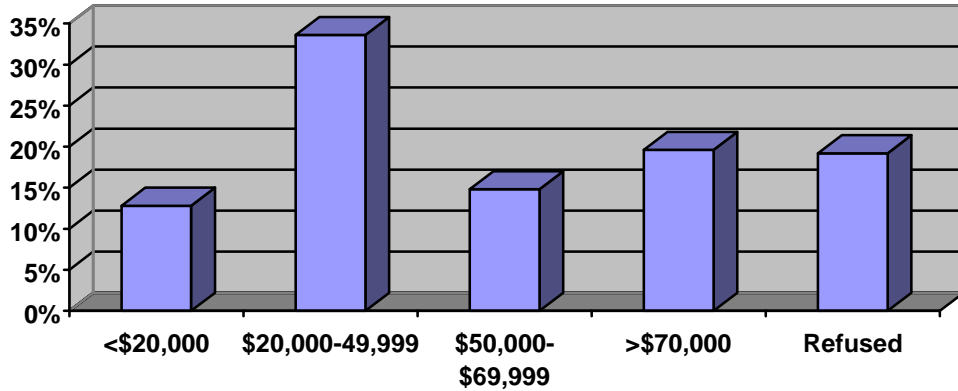


*Income bracket*

Close to one-fifth (19.6 percent) of respondents reported their annual household income was \$70,000 or more per year. One-third of respondents (33.6 percent) of respondents

reported a combined household income of between \$20,000-\$49,999 per year. Approximately 13 percent (12.8 percent) of respondents reported their household income to be under \$20,000 per year. Almost fifteen percent (14.8 percent) of respondents reported a household income of between \$50,000-\$69,999 per year. However, due to the personal nature of this question, almost one-fifth (19.2 percent) refused to answer this question. Figure 6 shows breakdown of income of respondents.

Figure 6. Income of respondents.



### Main reason for not using transit

The main reason for the writing of this report is to compare the results on transit safety perception of non-users in a qualitative study to a quantitative focus groups study of non-users on the same topic. In this paper, it was assessed if non-users of transit don't use transit due to safety issues. In this portion of the paper, the issues of perceptions of transit safety that may impact the choice to use transit will be addressed. A series of questions were posed regarding participants' perceptions of transit and transit safety. Participants' responses to these questions were scored according to a prepared list of possible responses. In general, it was found that most participants did not take the bus because it was inconvenient. Most respondents complained about the inconvenience of taking the bus versus any safety concerns, responding that the bus does not come frequently enough, serve the right areas, makes it difficult to travel for work and difficult to travel with small children or to run errands, it also does not allow them to complete their trip quickly or efficiently enough. Most respondents were not all that concerned about security issues and not one of the respondents who voiced concern that buses may be used as tools for terrorism attacks. It was wondered if comparing differences of responses between demographic groups would give a more complete picture of why people don't use transit and how transit options might be better marketed to different segments of the population. The following demographic categories were focused on: gender, marital status, if the respondent had children under the age of 16 residing in the household, number of vehicles available in the household, race/ethnicity, age group, economic status.

### *Gender differences*

In comparing the differences in responses between genders it was found that, in general, significantly more men than women don't think that the buses run often enough,

or where they need to go, and additionally, riding the bus takes too much time. In general, very few respondents voiced concern about the safety of riding or waiting for the bus and all of these were women.

*Marital Status*

There were no significant differences between marital status and attitude on main reason for not using the bus.

*Children under the age of 16 residing in the household*

This is an interesting category mainly because it is difficult to use transit to run errands with small children and to shuttle children about for various after-school activities. Surprisingly, it was found that significantly more of those without young children were more concerned about the convenience issues listed above versus those who have young children as the main reason for not using bus service.

*Number of vehicles available in the household*

There was no significant difference between number of vehicles available and main reason for not using bus service.

*Race/ethnicity*

These crosstabulation results should be viewed with caution because approximately 84 percent of the respondents were white. 4.2 percent were African-American or Black and 6.2 percent were Hispanic. Only 21 African-Americans and only 31 Hispanics participated in this survey. In comparison, 419 Whites participated in the survey. Significantly more Whites than any other ethnic group complained of the previously discussed convenience issues. In addition, significantly more whites than any other ethnic group complained that the bus was too expensive, and that they did not feel safe riding or waiting for the bus, nor did they like the clientele who rode on buses. However, it should be noted that the number of Whites responding that they were concerned about safety or other passengers was extremely small.

*Age category*

All respondents were screened by interviewers and were required to be age 18 or older in order to complete the survey. There was a significant difference between those aged 35-54 years versus all other age group on the issue of frequency and areas of bus service. There was no difference between age groups on issues of safety or terrorism concerns.

*Economic status*

There was no significant difference in the main reason for not using bus service between economic groups. Although, those making between \$20,000-\$39,999 seem more concerned about bus service area issues than any other group. Overall, most people said that there wasn't enough coverage area for the bus routes. However, even those who lived in transit dense areas such as the Central Tampa Bay area and Pinellas County stated that they did not use buses because the bus service does not go where the respondents want to go.

***Likert scale responses to safety issues***

In the previous section of the questionnaire, respondents were asked to generate their own concerns about why they don't use bus service and then the interviewer marked



their responses according to a prepared list. In this section of the interview, participants were asked to state their agreement to a series of statements regarding transit safety on a Likert-type scale, with 5 meaning that they strongly agreed with the statement and 1 meaning that the participant strongly disagreed with the statement.

*Safety walking to the bus stop/waiting for the bus*

A majority of respondents (63.1 percent) stated that they either strongly disagreed or disagreed with the following statement(s): "If I were to use the bus, and thinking about the bus stops I would use most often, I would worry about my safety while walking to the bus stop/waiting for the bus." These were two different statements read to participants, but since participants responded exactly the same to these two statements, the results to responses to these statements are listed in the same section. A little over one-fourth (27.6 percent) of respondents stated that they either agreed or strongly agreed with the statements. Another 7.8 percent of respondents were neutral on the subject. And, 1.5 percent of participants chose not to respond to these questions. There is no significant difference in responses between the four designated geographical areas in this study. The only significant difference between demographic groups is between the lowest and highest economic categories. Those in the upper brackets of income (greater than \$60,000 income per year) state that they feel safer using bus stops around their neighborhoods than those in the lower income brackets (\$20,000 per year or less). A simple explanation of this result is that people who make more money tend to live in nicer, safer neighborhoods. Another explanation is that senior citizens (those 65 and older) make less money and are more concerned on this aspect of safety.

*Safety riding the bus*

Much like the responses to the above statements regarding walking to the bus stop and waiting for the bus, a majority of respondents (63.4 percent) either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the following statement: "If I were to use the bus, I would worry about my safety while riding the bus." A little over one-fourth of respondents (28.6 percent) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, that they worried for their safety while riding the bus. Another 7.4 percent of respondents were neutral on the subject and 0.6 percent refused to answer the question. More women (36 percent) than men (21 percent) responded that they agreed or agreed strongly that they worried about their safety while riding the bus. However, 69 percent of men and 58 percent of women said that they were not worried about personal safety while riding the bus. Additionally, there was a significant difference between African Americans and Whites and Hispanics and Whites on this item. African Americans and Hispanics felt significantly less safe riding the bus versus Whites. There was also a difference between income brackets on responses to this statement as well. Those in the lowest income brackets (less than \$20,000 per annum) felt less safe riding the bus than those making greater than \$20,000 per year or more, with those who made \$60,000 or more per year responding that they felt the safest riding the bus. This combination of Whites feeling safer riding the bus and those making a greater annual income feeling safer riding the bus makes sense when a crosstabulation of income by race is run, it was found that Whites in the study made an average of approximately \$45,000-\$60,000 per year, whereas, Hispanics and Blacks in the study made an average of approximately \$30,000-\$45,000 per year.

*Safety walking from the bus stop to final destination*

Overall, another pattern of responses much like the ones seen for the previous three statements was found. A majority of respondents (72.6 percent) said that they either

disagreed or strongly disagreed with the following statement: "If I were to use the bus, and thinking about the bus stops I would use most often, I would worry about my safety after getting off the bus while walking to my final destination." Approximately one-fifth (19.7 percent) of respondents said that they strongly agreed or agreed with this statement. Seven percent of respondents said that they felt neutral on this statement and 0.6 percent of participants refused this question. Sixty-eight percent of women and seventy-seven percent of men disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement, stating that they were not worried about safety walking from the bus stop to their final destination. Conversely, 22 percent of women and 17 percent of men stated that they were concerned for their safety in walking from the bus stop to their final destination. Additionally, there is a difference in responses between income groups. Those making less than \$20,000 per year feel less safe walking from the bus stop to their final destination than those making more than \$20,000 per year, with those who made greater than \$60,000 per year feeling most secure in walking from the bus stop to their final destination.

#### *Concerns about other passengers*

The next set of questions involved how concerns about loud and unruly teenagers or other possibly unpleasant passengers might cause people to not use public transportation. The following four statements were read to participants and they were asked to what degree they agreed or disagreed with the statement on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being 'strongly disagree' and 5 being 'strongly agree': "If I were to use the bus, I would worry about my safety if a group of loud and unruly teenagers got on the bus."/ "If I were to use the bus, I would worry about my safety if a group of loud and unruly teenagers came to a bus stop where I was waiting."/ "If I were to use the bus, it is likely that there would be unpleasant people riding the bus."/ "If I were using the bus, it is likely there would be unpleasant people waiting for the bus with me."

#### *Concerns about loud and unruly teenaged passengers*

Sixty percent of respondents were unconcerned about their safety if they had to ride the bus with loud and unruly teenagers. Approximately half of the respondents (52 percent) were unconcerned about their safety if they were waiting at a bus stop with loud and unruly teenagers. However, almost thirty percent (29 percent) of respondents were concerned about their safety while riding a bus with loud and unruly teenagers and 37 percent of respondents were concerned for their safety while waiting for the bus. There was a significant difference in response between age categories, with those over 65 years of age registering the most concern about their safety while riding the bus or waiting for the bus with loud and unruly teenagers. Those in the lowest income brackets were also very concerned about their safety around loud and unruly teenagers. In this area there is a very large retired population. In doing a crosstabulation of age category by income, it was found that those 65 and older make up the majority of those making less than \$20,000 per year.

#### *Concerns about unpleasant passengers*

Approximately one-half (49 percent) of respondents were unconcerned about having to ride with unpleasant people. More than half (54 percent) of respondents were unconcerned about having to wait with unpleasant people. However, 41 percent of respondents did say that they were concerned about having to ride the bus with unpleasant people, but only 28 percent of respondents were concerned about having to wait with unpleasant people. The same results of age and income were found here as

well as in the section about loud and unruly teenagers. Those who make less than \$20,000 per year were most concerned about having to ride with unpleasant people and those over 65 years of age were most concerned about having to ride with unpleasant people. According to the demographics, those over 65 years of age make up the majority of those who make less than \$20,000 per year.

*Concerns about being able to use the system easily and efficiently*

People were concerned about using the bus system and being able to get around to the places they needed to go without being stranded. There seems to be a concern over how to get information on using the bus system and maps and route information do not seem to be adequate to allay these concerns. Around 50 percent (49 percent) of the respondents stated that they disagreed or strongly disagreed with the following statement: "If I were to use the bus, I would worry that I might get on the wrong bus or that the bus wouldn't go where I wanted to go." A little less than one-fourth (23 percent) of the respondents stated that they agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. Interestingly, those in the youngest age group (18-24 years old) and those in the oldest age group (65 years and older) were most concerned about being able to maneuver in the bus system easily and efficiently.

*Concerns about crime around bus stops*

Thirty percent of respondents stated that they agreed or strongly agreed with the following statement: "I believe that there is a lot of crime that occurs around bus stops." However, more than sixty percent (62 percent) of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. Those in the lowest two brackets of income (less than \$20,000 per year) were more concerned about crime around bus stops than those in higher income categories. However, an effect of age on responses like in the section on loud and unruly teenagers and other unpleasant passengers was not seen.

***Personal image concerns***

*Concern about being seen using the bus*

In addition to safety concerns, participants were questioned about personal image concerns that would discourage them from riding the bus, such as not wanting to be seen by their peers or acquaintances using the bus. A majority (53 percent) of the participants responded that they either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the following statement: "I would not want people I know to see me waiting for the bus or getting off the bus." A little under one-fifth (18 percent) of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. And, 22 percent responded neutrally on the subject. There was a difference in response depending upon marital status. Widows were most concerned about being seen using the bus. Also surprising was the finding that people who had no car were more concerned about being seen using the bus versus people who had cars available for use. In addition, people aged 18-24 years of age and those aged 55 and older were most concerned about acquaintances and peers seeing them using the bus or waiting for the bus. Finally, those in the three lowest income categories were more worried about their public image versus those who made \$30,000 and above per year.

*Belief that most people use the bus because they have no choice*

More than three-fourths (78 percent) of the respondents said that they agreed or strongly agreed with the following statement: "I believe most people that use the bus use it because they have no choice." Only approximately one-fifth (21 percent) of the

respondents said that they disagreed or strongly disagreed that people used the bus because they had no other choice.

*I feel sorry for people who I see waiting at bus stops*

Slightly less than three-fourths (71 percent) of the respondents claimed that they agreed or strongly agreed with the following statement: "Sometimes I feel sorry for people who I see waiting at bus stops." Approximately one-fifth (19 percent) of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that they felt sorry for those who had to use the bus. Not surprisingly, those 65 years of age and older feel worst for those having to use the bus.

**Terrorism concerns**

As seen in the free response section above, where respondents were asked to list their top reasons for not using transit, fears of buses being used as targets of terrorism were not important reasons why the respondents were not using bus service. More than three-quarters (76 percent) of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the following statement: "I am concerned about riding the bus because I fear the buses may be used as targets for terrorism." Only 15 percent of respondents were concerned about buses being targeted by terrorists.

**General safety concerns**

Most of the respondents (74 percent) stated that they either disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement: "Concern for my safety is a very important reason for my choice not to use public buses." Only sixteen percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and ten percent of respondents responded neutrally to the statement. In doing a crosstabulation of the results, some interesting interactions in the age group and income category demographics were found. It was found that those in the 18-24 and 65 and over age categories are more concerned with their safety than those in other age groups. Additionally, the same pattern of results were found as in the previous section on responses to statements on waiting for the bus, riding the bus, and walking to the final destination in the income demographic. It was found that those in the lowest two income brackets (under \$20,000 per year) were most concerned about their safety. It was previously reasoned that people who make more money can live in nicer neighborhoods. However, most of the people who have an income of under \$20,000 per year are also those who are over 65 years of age and retired. This low income does not necessarily mean that these people live in a bad area. The majority of the respondents over 65 years of age reside in the East Pasco/Hernando and Pinellas areas.

**Summary**

A survey was conducted with 500 telephone interviews to investigate the impact of perceptions of safety as a barrier to transit use. These results will be compared with focus group results to investigate the differences in conclusions reached and recommendations developed between different surveys methodologies. Specifically, do the focus groups present more varied information versus the quantitative, multiple-choice survey forms?

All participants were from the Hillsborough, Pinellas, Pasco, or Hernando County areas adjacent to the Tampa Bay area. All participants were screened to certify that they were 18 years of age or older. This sample was drawn from random-digit-dialing. The

distribution of responses is proportional to the number of residential telephone numbers in each area.

Demographics of the participants:

- Division by area:
  - 37.6 percent of respondents were from Pinellas County area.
  - 24.7 percent of respondents were from Pasco/Hernando County area.
  - 24.5 percent of respondents were from Central Tampa Bay area.
  - 13.3 percent of respondents were from East Hillsborough area.
- Gender: 50 percent of respondents were male and 50 percent were female.
- Marital status:
  - 23.0 percent of respondents were single.
  - 55.4 percent of respondents were married.
  - 11.8 percent of respondents were separated or divorced.
  - 7.8 percent of respondents were widowed.
  - 2 percent of respondents refused to answer this question.
- Number of working vehicles per household:
  - 4.8 percent of all households had no working vehicles.
  - 30.8 percent of all households had one working vehicle.
  - 40 percent of all households had two working vehicles.
  - 17.8 percent of all households had three working vehicles.
  - 6.6 percent of all households had four or more working vehicles.
- Race/ethnicity
  - Most of the participants were white. 83.8 percent of respondents were white.
  - 6.2 percent of respondents were Hispanic.
  - 4.2 percent of respondents were African-American.
  - 0.8 percent of respondents were Asian.
  - 0.6 percent of respondents were American Indian.
  - 0.6 percent of respondents were some Other ethnic group.
  - 3.8 percent of respondents refused to answer this question.
- Age:
  - 10 percent of respondents were 18-25 years of age.
  - 13 percent of respondents were 25-34 years of age.

- 18.8 percent of respondents were 35-44 years of age.
- 23.2 percent of respondents were 45-54 years of age.
- 14 percent of respondents were 55-64 years of age.
- 19.4 percent of respondents were 65 or older.
- Income bracket
  - 12.8 percent of respondents reported an annual household income of less than \$20,000.
  - 33.6 percent of respondents reported an annual household income of between \$20,000 and \$49,999.
  - 14.8 percent of respondents reported an annual household income of between \$50,000 and \$69,999.
  - 19.6 percent of respondents reported an annual household income of greater than \$70,000 per year.
  - 19.2 percent of respondents refused to answer this question.

In the telephone interviews, commuters were asked to characterize their commute patterns to work. The follow patterns were found:

- Most commuters travel 14 miles or less to and from work, with the average commute taking between 15 and 39 minutes. Commuters in more rural areas such as those in the Pasco/Hernando County area had a longer commute compared with those in more urbanized areas such as Central Tampa Bay area, Pinellas County area, and East Hillsborough area.
- A congestion index was calculated by dividing the commute time during the weekdays by the commute time on the weekends, when there is less congestion. A congestion index of 100 would mean that weekend and weekday commute are equal. A congestion index of 150 would mean that the weekday commute takes one and a half times longer than the weekend commute. In order, the level of congestion index, in descending order, is as follows: East Hillsborough County (159.35), Central Tampa Bay area (148.94), Pinellas County/West Pasco County area (129.13), and Pasco/Hernando County area (114.01).
- Most commuters leave their homes between 7:00 am and 8:30 am, with the peak at 8:00 am. The daily commute home for most commuters starts between 4:30 pm to 6:00 pm, with the peak at 5:15 pm.
- Only 10 percent of all trips made in the Tampa/St. Petersburg area are made by carpool, bus, walking, vanpool, or bicycling. The remainder 90 percent are made by driving alone in a personal automobile.
- The majority of commuters (88.2 percent) have never used transit either presently or in the past for non-work purposes. Even less (3 percent) have ever used transit for their work commute presently or in the past.
- Finally, the greater availability of transit in areas such as Central Tampa Bay and Pinellas county did not affect the probability that a commuter would use transit.

### **Main reason for not using transit**

The main concern of this paper is if commuters are not using transit because of safety concerns. In this section of the questionnaire, respondents were able to voice any concern they had over using transit, including safety issues. It was found that most respondents did not use transit because it was inconvenient, versus there being any safety concerns. Very few respondents voiced concern over safety riding on or waiting for the bus. A crosstabulation was run for the following categories: gender, marital

status, having children under the age of 16 in the household, number of vehicles available in the household, race/ethnicity, age group, and economic status:

- Men thought that buses were not frequent enough, the buses did not go where they needed to go, and travel time took too long. Those who voiced concern over safety riding or waiting for the bus were women.
- There was not a significant difference between marital status and main reason for not using the bus.
- More people without young children were more worried about convenience issues versus those who had young children.
- Out of ethnic groups, whites were most concerned about convenience issues than other ethnic groups.
- There was a significant difference between those age 35-54 years of age versus other age groups on the issue of frequency and areas of bus service.
- There was no significant difference in main reason for not using bus service between income bracket groups. Although, those making between \$20,000-39,999 were most concerned about bus service coverage than any other group.
- In the free responses, no one mentioned that they did not use transit because they were concerned about terrorist threats. A few commuters mentioned that they were wary of using transit due to fear of crime aboard buses and around bus stops.
- The basic idea was that people don't use buses because of the inconvenience and travel time.

### **Likert scale responses**

The above-listed responses were free responses. The next set of responses were to multiple-choice questions about safety issues.

- Safety walking to the bus/waiting for the bus/riding the bus/walking from the bus stop:
  - All of these items had the same pattern of response and they are summarized below.
  - Most respondents stated that they were unconcerned about their safety walking to the bus or waiting for the bus.
  - About one-fourth of respondents agreed that they worried for their safety walking to the bus or waiting for the bus.
  - There was no difference on this aspect between geographical areas.
  - Those in the upper brackets of income were less concerned about this aspect than those in the lower brackets of income.
  - A simple explanation is that those who make more money live in nicer, safer neighborhoods. Another explanation is that senior citizens make less money as well and they tend to feel less safe on this aspect.
  - African-Americans and Hispanics were more concerned about their safety while riding the bus. African Americans and Hispanics made less money on average than Whites and this could also explain the difference in race and income over concerns of safety.
- Concerns about other passengers
  - Concerns about loud, unruly teenagers
    - A little bit over half of respondents were unconcerned about having to wait for or ride the bus with loud and unruly teenagers.

- However, approximately one-third of respondents were concerned about having to wait or ride the bus with loud and unruly teenagers.
  - Those over the age of 65 and those making less than \$20,000 per year were most concerned with the prospect of having to ride or wait for the bus with loud and unruly teenagers.
  - Those over the age of 65 also account for most of the respondents who made less than \$20,000 per year.
- Concerns about unpleasant passengers
  - Approximately one-half of respondents were unconcerned about having to ride or wait for the bus with unpleasant people.
  - Two-fifths of respondents were concerned about having to ride the bus with unpleasant people, while a little over one-fourth (28 percent) were concerned about having to wait with unpleasant people. This disparity could be due to the fact that when you're waiting with unpleasant people, it's easier to keep a distance than if you're riding the bus with unpleasant people.
  - Those who made less than \$20,000 per year and those over 65 years of age were most concerned about having to ride or wait with unpleasant people.
  - Those over the age of 65 also account for most of the respondents who made less than \$20,000 per year.
- Concerns about being able to use the system easily and efficiently
  - Approximately 50 percent of the respondents were unconcerned about being able to use the system easily and efficiently.
  - Less than one-fourth of the respondents were concerned about their ability to use the system easily and efficiently.
  - Those in the youngest (18-24 years old) and the oldest (65 years and older) were most concerned over this aspect of using the bus service.
- Concerns about crime around bus stops
  - Thirty percent of respondents believed that a lot of crime occurred around bus stops.
  - More than 60 percent (62 percent) disagreed or strongly disagreed that a lot of crime occurred around bus stops.
  - Those making less than \$20,000 per year agreed most with the statement that a lot of crime occurs around bus stops. However, there was not a significant amount of older persons responding affirmatively to this question.
- Personal image concerns
  - Concern about being seen using the bus
    - A majority (53 percent) of respondents disagreed with the statement "I would not want people I know to see me waiting for the bus or getting off the bus."
    - A little under one-fifth (18 percent) of respondents agreed with this statement and a bit more than one-fifth (22 percent) were neutral on this statement.
    - People with no cars were more concerned about being seen using the bus versus those with cars.
    - Widows were most concerned about being seen using the bus.



- Those in the 18-24 year old category and those in the 55 and older category were most concerned about being seen using the bus.
  - Finally, those in the \$30,000 and below income brackets were more concerned about being seen using the bus than those in the income brackets above \$30,000 per year.
- Belief that most people use the bus because they have no choice
  - More than three-fourths of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the following statement: “I believe that most people that use the bus use it because they have no choice.”
  - Only one-tenth of the respondents agreed with the above statement and eleven percent were neutral on the topic.
  - More men than women (12 percent versus 3.5 percent) agreed that most people use the bus because they have no choice.
- I feel sorry for people who I see waiting at bus stops
  - A little less than three-fourths of respondents (71 percent) responded that they felt sorry for those having to wait for the bus.
  - Approximately one-fifth of respondents (19 percent) said that they did not feel sorry for those having to wait for the bus.
  - Those 65 years of age or older feel worst for those having to wait for the bus.
- Terrorism concerns
  - In the free response section, respondents never mentioned being concerned that buses might become terrorist targets as being a reason why they did not ride buses.
  - Only 15 percent of respondents were concerned about buses being targeted for terrorist assaults.
  - Greater than three-quarters of respondents (76 percent) were not concerned about being targeted by terrorists as a reason for not riding buses.
- General safety concerns
  - Most of the respondents (74 percent) disagreed with the statement: “Concern for my safety is a very important reason for my choice not to use public buses.”
  - Only sixteen percent of respondents agreed with the statement and ten percent of respondents remained neutral on the subject.
  - Those in the 18-24 year old age group and those in the 65 and over age group are most concerned with personal safety while using a bus.
  - Additionally, those in the lowest income brackets (\$20,000 or less) were most concerned for their safety.
  - Those 65 and older make up the majority of those making less than \$20,000 per year.

**APPENDIX C  
Focus Group Discussion Guide**

## Discussion Group Questions

### INTRODUCTION

- Who I am
- Why we are here
- Outline of how we will proceed and general rules

### OPENING QUESTION

- 1) Please introduce yourself and tell us how long you have lived in Tampa and what type(s) of transportation you most often use.
  - How do you decide to use this (these) type(s) of transportation?
  - What do you like about it/them?
  - Is there anything you dislike about it/them?

### INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS

- 2) Has anyone ever used public bus service here or anywhere else?
  - What type of trips did you use it for?
  - How did you feel about the service?
  - What was the experience like?
  - How comfortable was the experience for you? (This is too vague)
  - How safe did you feel using the public bus service?
    - What aspects of the service or situations impacted your feelings of safety?
  - Did you ever encounter any problems while using public bus service?
    - What was the problem?
    - How was the problem dealt with?
    - What could have been done to prevent the problem in the future?

### TRANSITION QUESTIONS

- 3) When I mention “public bus service **in Florida**,” what are the first things that come to your mind?
  - Who uses public bus service in Florida?
  - Why do they use public bus service?
  - What type of trips do they use bus service for?
  - What do you think some of the advantages of public bus service in Florida might be?
  - What do you think some of the disadvantages of public bus service in Florida might be?

- 4) For those of you who are not using public bus service in Florida, what is the most important reason or reasons that you have not ever used or are no longer using the service?
- What has kept you from trying it?
  - What do you think the experience would be like?
  - What characteristics do you associate with public bus service?

**KEY QUESTIONS**

- 5) Now try to imagine that you or one of your friends were using public bus service here in Tampa,
- How easy or difficult would it be to locate and access a bus stop?
  - What type of situations do you think that you might encounter when using public bus service?
  - What type of people do you think you would meet/see on public bus service?
- 6) How do your feelings of security when traveling in a personal automobile compare with your feelings of security when traveling by public bus?
- What aspects of personal vehicle travel make you feel secure?
  - What aspects of personal vehicle travel make you feel insecure?
  - What aspects of bus travel make you feel secure?
  - What aspects of bus travel make you feel insecure?
- 7) What types of problems have you or might you encounter when using public bus service?
- What are some of the unsafe situations that you believe you might encounter while using public bus service?
  - What type of situations do you think you might encounter on the way to or from a bus stop?
  - What kinds of problems might occur while waiting for the bus?
    - What conditions might contribute to problems at the bus stop?
  - What type of problems might occur while you are riding on a public bus?
  - What kinds of people do you associate with these problems?
  - What is your impression of the bus drivers' skills in terms of being able to maintain control of the bus during incidents?

**\*\*USE #8 ONLY IF NEEDED\*\***

- 8) How safe do you think that you would feel when using the public bus service in Tampa?
- What is your overall impression of personal safety while using public transportation?

- How safe do you think that public bus service in Tampa is?
  - What is your impression of public transportation vehicle safety?
- 9) What do you think that transit agencies can do to make riding the bus a better experience?
- What can transit agencies do to make riding the bus safer?
  - What can transit agencies do to make getting to the bus stop safer?
  - What can transit agencies do to make waiting for the bus safer?

### **ENDING QUESTIONS**

- 11) Give a summary of the key issues and points raised by participants and then ask:
- Is this an adequate summary?
- 12) Give a short overview of the purpose of the study and then ask the participants:
- Have we missed anything?

**APPENDIX D  
Telephone Interview Question Guide**

**Interview #** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

Hi, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ with the Center for Urban Transportation Research at the University of South Florida. I'm calling to conduct our scheduled telephone interview on your opinions about public transportation issues. First, I'd like to thank you for taking the time to participate in this research. The purpose of the study is to learn how people in the Tampa Bay area feel about public transportation safety and security. The study is funded by the Florida Department of Transportation. Your participation in the interview is completely voluntary and will require approximately 30-45 minutes of your time. You will not be paid for your participation. I want to let you know that we are tape-recording the interview so that we do not miss any of your comments, and you are assured of complete confidentiality and anonymity. May I proceed with the interview?

**TELEPHONE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

1) Are you employed outside of the home?     yes             no

If YES, go to question 2

If NO, go to question 5

2) How do you usually travel to and from work/school?  
\_\_\_\_\_

3) What are the primary reason(s) you use \_\_\_\_\_ (answer from question #2) to travel to and from work?

4) Can you tell me a little about your average commute to and from work?

➤ How far (distance)? \_\_\_\_\_

➤ How much time? \_\_\_\_\_

➤ How many people are usually with you? \_\_\_\_\_

**We are also interested in learning more about the trips you make that are not employment-related, such as trips to shopping, visiting friends or relatives, or going to the movies and so forth.**

5) In the course of an average day, can you tell me what types of non-employment-related activities you participate in outside of the home?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6) How do you make these trips? \_\_\_\_\_

- 7) When I mention “**public bus service in Hillsborough/Pinellas County,**” what are the first things that come to your mind? (Hillsborough for 813 / Pinellas for 727)
- Who uses public bus service? What types of people use public bus service?
  - Why do they use public bus service?
  - What types of trips do they use it for?
  - What do you think some of the advantages of public bus service in Hillsborough/Pinellas County might be?
  - What do you think some of the disadvantages of public bus service in Hillsborough/Pinellas County might be?
- 8) Based on your visual observations of public bus service in Hillsborough/Pinellas County, how inviting do you think the service looks?
- 9) In the past 12 months, have you ever used public bus service in Hillsborough/Pinellas County?
- If NO, Go to Question #11**  
**If YES,**
- Where did you use it (locations)?
  - What type of trips did you use it for (work, shopping, recreation, etc.)?
  - What was the experience like?
  - How safe did you feel while using public bus service?



- Could you tell me about your feelings of personal security while using public bus service?
- 10) How frequently would you estimate that you use public bus service?
- Very frequently (**Go to question #12**)
  - Fairly frequently (**Go to question #12**)
  - Fairly rarely (**Go to question #11**)
  - Very rarely (**Go to question #11**)
  - Almost never (**Go to question #11**)

**We would like to learn more about why people do not use public bus service in Hillsborough/Pinellas County.**

- 11) What are the most important reasons that you do not use public bus service in Hillsborough/Pinellas County?
- 12) What types of problems have you or might you encounter when using public bus service?

***Now, thinking about what it would actually be like to use public bus service in your community,***

- 13) Please describe what you think it would be like to walk to and from a bus stop?
- What situations do you think that you would encounter?
  - What do you think might lead to problems or difficulties walking to or from a bus stop? (e.g. environment, people)
- 14) Please describe what you think it would be like to wait for a bus at the bus stop?
- What situations do you think that you would encounter?
  - What do you think might lead to problems or difficulties while waiting at a bus stop? (e.g. environment, people)

- 15) Now, describe what you think it would be like to ride on public buses?
- What types of problems do you think could likely happen while riding on the bus?
  - Are there particular types of people that you think cause problems on public buses?  
(If yes, elaborate)
- 16) How would you say your feelings of security when traveling in a personal automobile compare with your feelings of security when traveling by public bus?
- What aspects of personal vehicle travel make you feel secure?
  - What aspects of personal vehicle travel make you feel insecure?
  - What aspects of bus travel make you feel secure? (E.g. driver abilities, vehicle safety, etc.)
  - What aspects of bus travel make you feel insecure? (E.g. driver abilities, vehicle safety, etc.)
- 17) What is your overall impression of the safety and security of public bus service in Tampa/Pinellas?
- What impact does this have on your decision to use or not use public bus service?

**PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SURVEYING:  
INTEGRATING QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE METHODS FOR TRANSIT RESEARCH**

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Now, I just have a few questions remaining that are for statistical and classification purposes only. Your answers will remain completely anonymous and confidential.

- 1) **Please stop me when I read the category containing your age.**  
 18 – 24     35 – 44     55 - 64  
 25 – 34     45 – 54     65 or older
  
- 2) **What is your ethnic background?** \_\_\_\_\_
  
- 3) **What is your marital status?**  
 Married                       Single                       Divorced  
 Separated                       Widowed                       Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
- 4) ***Including yourself*, how many people live in your household?**  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
- 5) **How many working vehicles are available in your household?**  
 0     1     2     3 or more
  
- 6) **Do you drive?**     Yes     No
  
- 7) **What is your occupation?** \_\_\_\_\_
  
- 8) **What is the zipcode of your residence?** \_\_\_\_\_
  
- 9) **Please stop me when I read the category containing your total household income in 2001.**  
 0 to \$4,999  
 \$5,000 to \$9,999  
 \$10,000 to \$14,999  
 \$15,000 to \$19,999  
 \$20,000 to \$24,999  
 \$25,000 to \$29,999  
 \$30,000 to \$34,999  
 \$35,000 to \$39,999  
 \$40,000 to \$44,999  
 \$45,000 to \$49,999  
 \$50,000 or more
  
- 10) **Do you have any children under the age of 16 in your household?**  
 Yes                       No

**Thank and terminate call.**

**APPENDIX E  
Focus Group Results**

## FOCUS GROUP RESULTS

### Focus Group Number 1

April 30, 2002

11:00 AM – 1:00 PM

The first focus group meeting was held with members of a senior citizen social club. The director of the club's activities solicited volunteers to participate and coordinated logistics with CUTR staff. This focus group was conducted at the club's regular meeting place in the facility of a local church. There were 19 participants in the focus group, and all were female. Eighteen reported their ethnicity to be white Caucasian and one recorded her ethnicity as Native American. One participant reported to be in the 55 – 64 age category and all of the others claimed to be 65 or older. Twelve of the 19 participants have been widowed; four are single; two are married; and one participant is divorced. There is an average of one working vehicle per household and three participants reported that they do not drive.

Total household income for 2001 per participant ranged from \$5,000 to \$39,999. One participant reported income in the \$5,000 – \$9,999 category; six participants reported to be in the \$10,000 – \$14,999 income category; one participant claimed income between \$15,000 and \$19,999; three participants reported to be in the \$20,000 – \$24,999 income category; and one participant reported income in the \$35,000 – \$39,999 category. Seven participants chose not to report total household income.

Participants were also asked about their transit habits. Although zero participants reported that they use transit at least once a week, three responded that they had used it within the previous six months. Two of these three also reported that they do not drive and there are zero working vehicles in their household.

### Participant Travel Characteristics

Eighteen of the 19 participants cited the personal vehicle as their primary mode of transportation, and most respondents currently drive themselves. Among those who provided a reason for this mode choice, most associated the use of personal vehicles with actual ownership, negating the necessity for using bus transit.

*"I've always used the car just because I did not have any other transportation."*

*“Oh, I’ve probably been on the bus since then but I have a car so I had no need for it.”*

*“I would [use the bus] if I didn’t have a car.”*

One participant reported that she never learned to drive and currently relies upon friends to drive her. If no friend is available, she uses the bus for her transportation needs.

### **Prior Use of Public Transportation**

Several participants reported having used public transportation in other areas of the United States. Many recalled negatives aspects of their experiences, including crowding on buses, the observation of pick-pocketing, and being sexually harassed as young women. Perceptions related to such occurrences will be addressed further below.

Although few mentioned ever having used public bus service in Hillsborough County, several participants did recall using streetcars in Tampa and St. Petersburg during the 1930s – 1950s. Streetcars were remembered fondly as being inexpensive, efficient, easy to use, and convenient.

### **Opinions on Transit Users**

When asked what types of people they believe use public bus service, participants generally agreed that it is typically those who cannot afford a personal vehicle, those who do not drive, and workers, particularly those who commute to downtown Tampa.

*“I think people like me that don’t drive.”*

*“People that work downtown, I think a lot of them park their car and go downtown.”*

*“A lot of people working downtown are forced to ride the bus.”*

*“I think some people are just too poor and they don’t make enough money to own a car. I mean the expense of having a car and car insurance has gone up now.”*

One participant did not categorize transit users, but stated that it is “all different kinds of people” who use the bus.

### **Perceptions of Using Bus Transit**

Based upon personal experiences and observations, participants expressed a variety of opinions regarding what it is or would be like to use bus transportation.

#### ***Service Accessibility***

Several participants stated that they did not necessarily have a “problem” with using bus transit, but that service was not available in their area or that access to a bus stop is too far of a walk from their home. Age and health were also factors in the perceived ability to walk to and from a bus stop.

*“There’s no bus service where I live.”*

*“I’m ninety-one and I can’t walk to bus service.”*

*“My reason would be that there is no service out in my area.”*

*“...that’s the closest one [bus stop] I know of and that would be about almost four miles from my house.”*

*“It’s four long blocks one way it’s a good mile the other way.”*

*“It’s because of the distance I would have to go because I’ve got a heart condition and I can’t walk that way.”*

#### ***Lack of Information***

Participants made statements and posed questions to the group indicating that those who do not typically utilize public transit may have a lack of knowledge in how to obtain information regarding routes and schedules, costs, and how to access and use the bus in general.

*“Do they have any bus schedules? Where could you get a bus schedule?”*

*“There’s no transportation on Sundays or Saturdays is there?”*

*“I have a question. I don’t know because I don’t ride the bus, but is there a discount for senior citizens?”*

One participant, who typically drives her own car, shared her experience of using the bus in Tampa. She was “stranded” at a local high school and decided to use the bus to return home.

*“They all seemed to be going all the way. Finally one came and that wasn’t the right bus so again I waited, another bus came. I got on then and [the driver] said, well you have to go to town and then change and go back to where I live. I was over two hours getting home and then had to walk about a mile. I didn’t like the bus service, and oh when I got on there I didn’t have the right change and all the people had to take up a collection so I could, so I could get on the bus. I said, whew, I hope I don’t have to ride this much more.”*

The single participant who does use the bus fairly regularly shared her strategies for obtaining scheduling and route information.

*“I just always made every year around April; make sure I have a new schedule cuz they change, you know. And if you do that well it’s not so hard to judge the time that it’ll be passing and you want to get on. She went on to say, “but you got to space where you’re going and give yourself some time.”*

### **Advantages**

Despite a few negative experiences, participants did consider there to be some advantages or benefits to using public bus transportation, most of which were related to cost savings.

*“It’s less costly with the gas the way it is.”*

*“You don’t have to look for a parking place.”*

*“Another thing is where they congregate and catch the bus to wherever they’re going to work saves a lot of gas on your car. Like they meet downtown where the old fairground used to be and then they catch the bus there and go to their respective place of business.”*

*“I would like it then. I think if I get a big discount it’s be a lot cheaper than my car.”*

Using the bus was considered to be convenient by a few participants.



*"You don't have to look for a parking place."*

*"It's convenient."*

*"In getting you from one place to the other, avoid having to pay those big parking fees and what have you and the schedule, you can usually work your schedule to come and go, you know."*

*"Once you know the schedules it would make it pretty easy to go from place to place."*

### ***Inconvenience***

Participants were divided on the issue of convenience, with many more considering public bus service to be inconvenient compared to their personal vehicles. Convenience appears to be an important factor in participants' decision of whether to use transit or not. Several references were made regarding the inconvenience of using the bus in hot or unpredictable weather.

*"Waiting in the sun."*

*"I might not go in the middle of the summer because it's too hot."*

*"The weather is something."*

In conjunction with the weather, waiting at the bus stop is considered to be inconvenient.

*"Convenient? It's inconvenient to take the buses here in Tampa." The participant continued, "Because you have to wait so long between the stops and there are no sun places, I mean shady places to wait for it."*

*"There's no convenience to taking a public bus, period."*

*"You have to wait twenty or thirty minutes for a bus."*

*"By the time you get to the bus and then you have to wait the twenty or thirty minutes for it, you're exhausted and you don't enjoy the bus ride. You have to walk from where you live and by the time you walk to the bus stop and then wait at the bus stop in the hot sun."*

One participant also commented on the economic feasibility of bus transportation, specifically in Tampa.

*“I don’t see how they run a bus. Sometimes I see one just go by with nobody in it.”*

### **Perceptions of Safety and Security**

#### ***Bus Safety***

Participants expressed a general belief that it is safer to ride on the bus than to be in a personal vehicle because the bus is larger and therefore less susceptible to accidents, there is a professional driver, and because the buses are well maintained.

*“I think a bus is safer than you driving.”*

*“Well I’m thinking of accidents. They have less accidents than personal cars I think.”*

*“A car’s not liable to just take off and hit a bus. It’s too big.”*

*“I think the bus would be safer.”*

*“Professional driver, it makes a difference.”*

One participant also noted that regular bus inspections reinforce her confidence in their mechanical safety.

*“Yeah, we’re all talking about people but you didn’t mention about the mechanical part of a bus. They have to pass inspections all the time and I think that part’s safe maybe, safer than your car because your car, sometimes it’ll make a noise and you think well I’ll wait just a little bit longer before I have it checked so mechanically buses should be safer.”*

#### ***Personal Safety***

While most participants agreed the bus is safer than a car, there was some level of concern for personal safety, primarily related to age and physical mobility. Participants believe that senior citizens move more slowly than do younger passengers, and therefore require more time in boarding the bus and reaching their seat. Concern was also expressed regarding passenger ability to use the first step of the bus safely.

*“Well they don’t wait long enough for you to get a seat.”*

*“For an older folk, we have to have time.”*

*“I wonder about if I get older I might not be as agile and is that first step down where I could get on it or is it a kneeling bus or would I be able to get myself on the first step.”*

*“Sometimes the first step is high to get on. You know someone shorter than me would be harder for them.”*

*“To get on and it’s hard to get up that first step like she was telling you, very hard.”*

Crowding was also considered to be a potential safety issue.

*“I don’t know whether the buses down here ever get really crowded or not but sometimes you ‘em up north in the big cities that they get so crowded, so many of the people get on ‘em and there’s not enough seats to go around. And a lot of people, even pregnant women and so forth have to stand which is not good.”*

### **Personal Security**

The perceptions related to personal security while waiting for or using the bus are far more negative than those related to bus or personal safety. Purse snatching was mentioned frequently as a concern, particularly for senior women who these participants believe have less chance of defending themselves than do younger passengers.

*“It’s very difficult for elderly people to get out because there’s so much purse snatching going on these days.”*

*“Probably their age, they’re more vulnerable. A younger person can fight them off you know.”*

*“That’s the main thing is that they feel that an older person is not strong enough to fight ‘em off and they can take advantage of that.”*

Fears also vary according to the area through which the bus may be traveling or where the passenger is waiting, and whether it is day or night.

*"I think it depends where you live, the location of your place, where you live." The participant explained further, "well the kind of environment, the kind of people that are around you."*

*"In the better neighborhoods you don't have to be afraid."*

*"I think it would depend on where the bus was going, if it was in certain parts of town." The participant explained further, "some parts of town are noted for being unruly I guess is the word to use. The people that live there."*

*"I was just thinking that there is these high crime areas that it's not safe bus or car late at night. Of course in the daytime I think if you travel in the daytime you'd be just as safe on a bus as you would in a car."*

However, another participant believes there to be no difference in security between "high crime" and "better" neighborhoods.

*"I don't know about that. Yeah, the rich kids they'll just rob a lady's purse whether they need the money or not just because they're bored and they do things like that. I've heard of people that have money, they live in mansions and the kids don't have anything to do. They go to the mall and just grab an old lady's purse for fun."*

With regard to who poses the greatest threat to bus patrons, participants often cited teenagers, gang members, and young males in general.

*"I think there are more homeless people and people that don't have cars and maybe you know you get off the bus and you have to hang on to your purse."*

*"You just have to be careful how you carry your purse, that's all. From the teenagers mostly from gangs in the malls probably."*

*"Oh, maybe hiding behind other cars if it's in a mall. Maybe a young male."*

*"And these young people how they dress now, men, you know the young men with their long pants dragging and their underwear showing. That'll scare me just to see 'em even if they're innocent."*

Those who use drugs were also considered potential offenders due to their desperation in obtaining drug money.

*"I think a lot of 'em are on drugs."*

*"Well they might want drug money so they might try and steal your purse or something. A lot of cases I mean you read about it or hear about it on TV, they were on drugs, they do some desperate things."*

One participant expressed concern regarding security and the "foreign element" in Tampa.

*"Well we have a lot of foreign element here, which is probably not as safe as some little town of all Americans."*

Others contend that a threat to personal security could originate from anyone and that one must remain aware of all types of people.

*"I was sitting in a restaurant one Sunday afternoon at four o'clock and a white person come took my purse out of the blue, took off on a bicycle."*

*"And not any particular person, just anyone."*

Participants reported employing a variety of strategies in maintaining awareness of their surroundings and other people. They assert that awareness is critically important, particularly for senior citizens.

*"If I were to ride the bus all the time I'd get a little thing to put down in, put your money like when you go on a trip, don't take anything valuable."*

*"Yeah, for your surroundings to see who's in the area, you now, might look suspicious."*

*"You have to be aware of everybody today."*

*"Yes, I've attended so many safety meetings and they always say be very aware no matter where you are today of strangers or people lurking in the dark, behind bushes and things like that."*

*“People are not, they’re unaware of the surroundings. Elderly people especially are not aware of their surroundings, are more vulnerable than a person that’s alive and on the move.”*

Despite the concerns expressed by many regarding personal security, some participants did not share these worries.

*“I guess I just don’t let it worry me.”*

*“Well I feel safe there [bus] as anyplace, even in a plane.”*

*“I wouldn’t be afraid to get on.”*

*“No I would say it’d be very safe.”*

*“I think it’s pretty safe to take the buses in Tampa.”*

In addition, some participants believe in certain situations, using the bus may be more secure than using a personal vehicle, most notably in relation to car jackings.

*“Well I mean they could make you stop a car and jump in the car where on a bus you’re safer that way.”*

*“Well I think a driver is vulnerable when they’re at a traffic light or a stop street. I mean I can have my windows wound up and the doors locked and everything, but if there’d be a car ahead of me, where could I go?”*

*“I think a car is safe as long as you’re traveling. I mean on the road and in motion. I mean if you’re stopped that’s one thing.”*

Of further note, although some participants reported negative experiences in the past, the overall confidence of most participants in this group regarding personal security has lessened during the last few decades.

*“I never felt unsafe because back then you didn’t. Right now I think you’d have more worries about safety, I mean other people on the street and stuff, having to wait for the bus or on the corner.”*

*“I mean nowadays the, you know on the streets you’re not always safe. People have all kinds of, you don’t know who you’re going to meet and what they’re going to do.”*

*“Who knows in this day and time? You have to keep your purse mighty close to you.”*

*“And we want to trust everybody. In our generation we trusted people. We could leave our houses unlocked and everything and we’d like for it to be like that again but we know that it’ll never be that way.”*

### ***Effects of the Media on Participant Perceptions***

In addition to personal experiences, the media also contribute to participants’ perceptions regarding bus transit, particularly those perceptions related to safety and security. The affectation is to varying degrees and some participants are left with more negative perceptions than are others.

*“With this drive-by purse snatching, people just drive by and get close enough to get it. They just reach out and grab it and drag you along. You read that in the paper all the time.”*

*“I think we’ve read the paper so much and there’s always so much in it that we stereotype these people as poor young men or poor young women that are desperate and they want our money which we probably don’t have and that’s who’s on those buses. That’s what you get from reading the paper.”*

*“It has a lot to do with what I think. That and listening to the news. I don’t ride the bus.”*

*“Well it seems like when you read the paper so many blacks and so many Hispanics that are the criminals. Course I know there’s others too.”*

Some participants claim to have never heard or read anything negative regarding bus transit within Hillsborough County.

*“I said that you very seldom ever hear a problem of anybody having on the bus like being held up or stabbed or whatever in the Tampa transit line that is. I’ve not read anything in the papers or seen anything on TV about that.”*

*“You never hear of any crime on the buses in Tampa. You hear it every place else but you never, I’ve never seen one accident or crime happening on the bus in the newspaper.”*

### **Conditions for Use and Suggested Improvements**

While all but one of the participants in this group reported driving a personal vehicle as their primary mode of transportation, and preference for this mode is evident, there is a general willingness to use the bus if participants no longer have the ability to drive.

*“So I just, once I can’t drive any more I’m gonna be taking the bus myself, unless I can bum a ride with someone.”*

*“Right, but I’m glad we got a bus cuz someday maybe I’ll need to.”*

*“But I would change to bus if I had to.”*

*“We might have to eventually take a bus because we’re all getting older.”*

Some participants mentioned special event service or direct service to cultural centers as a potential improvement that would increase transit use among seniors.

*“I don’t know, I would just wish that they would have bus service in the evenings so that you could go down to the Performing Arts Center or go to the Ice Palace.”*

### **Summary of Focus Group Number 1**

Participants reported using personal vehicles primarily because they *have* personal vehicles and bus transit is not a necessity at this time in their lives. The bus is considered a viable mode of transportation and one that is beneficial for the community, but it is perceived to be for those who have no other option—those who do not have access to a personal vehicle.

Inconvenience is frequently associated with using the bus and was found to be the primary reason participants do not utilize bus transit. The bus was considered to be inconvenient because of weather, wait and travel times, scheduling, and routes. Personal vehicles are viewed to be convenient, particularly when compared to bus transit, because they permit the freedom of travel when and where one chooses. Many participants also expressed a general lack of knowledge in the process of using the bus and transit scheduling.

Overall, it is apparent that participants in Focus Group Number 1 are not avoiding bus transit because of their perceptions related to safety or personal security. When queried



about their opinions on these topics, many participants did admit a certain level of anxiety regarding safety and security, particularly as they relate to senior citizens, but those concerns are not at a prohibitive level.

In general, the bus is perceived to be safer than a personal vehicle because of its size, mechanical inspections, and the presence of a professional driver. As seniors, participants expressed concern regarding their level of mobility as they age, and the ability to board and exit the bus safely. Participants cited young males as the group most likely to commit crimes or harass bus patrons, and this perception extended beyond the transit environment. Awareness of others and one's surroundings was considered to be the most effective protective strategy. Many group participants reported that they are willing to use the bus in the event they are no longer able to drive.

### **Focus Group Number 2**

**June 20, 2002**

**6:00 – 8:00 PM**

The second focus group was conducted at the facilities of Schwartz Research Services in Tampa, which also recruited the participants in accordance with CUTR participant screening instructions. There were ten participants in attendance, five females and five males. Five participants reported their ethnicity to be white or Caucasian; two reported to be black or African American; one reported to be Hispanic; and two participants chose not to report ethnicity. Three participants reported to be in the 45 – 54 age category; three reported their age as 25 – 34; two reported to be in the 35 – 44 age category; one participant recorded age in the 55 – 64 category; and one chose not to report age. Five of the participants are married; three are divorced; one is separated; and one participant is single. There is an average of 1.8 working vehicles per participant household and all participants reported that they drive.

Total household income for 2001 per participant ranged from \$15,000 to more than \$50,000. Four participants reported income of more than \$50,000; two reported income in the \$45,000 – \$49,999 range; two reported income in the \$40,000 – \$44,999 category; one reported income in the \$20,000 – \$24,999 range; and one participant claimed to be in the \$15,000 – \$19,999 income category.

Participants were also asked about their transit habits. No participants in this focus claim to use transit at least once a week and none reported having used it in the previous six months.

### **Participant Travel Characteristics**

All ten participants in this focus group reported that they use personal vehicles exclusively as their mode of transportation. Convenience is the primary factor in this choice. Participants reported that they typically use their personal vehicles for work trips and for shuttling children to and from various activities.

*“Or over the bus? Because it takes too long to get from point A to point B.”*

*“I drive my car mostly because it’s very convenient. I can go when I want to go, come back when I want to and have only who I want in the car with me.”*

*“I drive my car because I’m busy, you know. I gotta go and I don’t want to look at a schedule, if I want to go somewhere I want to go down, get in the car and go. And I have a six year old, that you know, same thing. I can’t see standing in a bus stop waiting for a bus. When it’s time to go it’s time to go.”*

Participants indicated that they do not use the bus because they own personal vehicles. The perception is that access to a personal vehicle negates the personal necessity for bus transit.

*“I’ve never had to.”*

*“First thing I said, why use it? Those of us that’s lived here most of our lives are geared up that you become independent. Your parents have got vehicles.”*

*“People don’t have to ride the bus.”*

### **Prior Use of Public Transportation**

Many participants stated that they have used public transportation in other areas of the United States such as Boston, Washington, DC, Los Angeles, and Denver. Respondents generally had a favorable perception of bus transit in these cities, finding it to be convenient for their needs. In addition, one participant reported having a very positive experience using bus transportation while on a pleasure trip in Sydney, Australia.

*"I lived in Denver for three years, Evergreen and I used to go to my offices down in Denver and sometimes going to lunch or an appointment to see somebody downtown whatever, it was easier to hop on a bus for them to take me there than to drive and try to find a parking spot, so we'd do that."*

*"The buses were very clean; I mean it was always on time and enjoyable."*

*"It worked very well cuz it was; it wasn't like you were waiting for a specific time. These buses ran all the time or with that park ride thing of course you had to get there by a certain time but for school it was constant flow. It wasn't, oh 9:20, oh well I'm screwed for a half hour."*

Those participants having used bus transportation within Hillsborough County expressed somewhat more negative opinions regarding their experiences.

*"If you didn't get there on time, you missed the bus, you would have to wait, like on Sunday an hour for the very next bus. So that was the first thing that popped in my head. On a positive note the A/C on the bus popped in my head. I enjoyed that in the summertime. It was always working. A question, what if it rains, popped in my head next, cuz that was inconvenient, you know if you didn't foresee it raining, you know how that happens, you don't have your umbrella, you're soaked. A lot of the stops never had the covered areas."*

*"But I remember the bus being hot. Hot and raggedy, not such a good one."*

### **Opinions on Transit Users**

With regard to what types of people they believe typically ride the bus, and their level of comfort with these transit users, participants in this group think the bus is primarily used by those who cannot afford cars or do not drive.

*"...the people who have no choice, they ride the bus."*

*"People who can't afford a car."*

Participants also noted that senior citizens who no longer drive may use the bus on a regular basis.

*"We're also talking about this side of the ages. You got an awful lot of senior citizens that are riding the buses because they again, for whatever reason, reside in a nursing home, can't drive anymore, can't afford the insurance, whatever the case may be, you have a large percent of elderly that are riding the bus and how secure they feel sitting at a bus stop at six o'clock in the morning."*

People described as "shady," "strange," "drunks," or "scruffy" are also considered to be frequent bus patrons.

*"I rode the bus when I was younger here but there were some shady characters on the bus."*

*"I've never been on the bus but I see all kinds of strange looking people getting on the bus."*

*"Oh I said drunk. A lot of drunks but then again it's better than getting behind the wheel and driving themselves."*

Participants also indicated the level of comfort they may feel being around those they perceive to be bus patrons. Several participants expressed general discomfort being around those they perceive to be typical bus patrons.

*"I see people getting off the bus that I wouldn't let in my back yard."*

*"But still you don't want to sit next to them on the bus either, you know."*

*"So sometimes I guess if a bus is crowded you know you're possibly sitting closer to the person next to you than you may not necessarily want to."*

*"And it's unexpected. You never know, well from one time you're on the bus to the next right, who's gonna be one there, where you're gonna be able to sit, what it's gonna be like."*

### **Perceptions of Using Bus Transit**

Based upon personal experiences and observations, participants expressed a variety of opinions regarding what it is or would be like to use bus transportation.

### **Service Accessibility**

Participants expressed the belief that bus service is readily available in more densely constructed areas of Hillsborough County, such as downtown Tampa, but that the availability and accessibility of bus service is quite limited or non-existent in suburban or more rural areas.

*“It’s typically not the bus ride that is uncomfortable or unpleasant or difficult. It’s the idea of the commute to the bus from your home or whatever and then conceivably the commute from where the bus drops you off to your destination. So you know it’s not necessarily the bus or the bus system, it’s the fact that you walk half a mile to get to a bus or you walk a half a mile from where the bus lets you off unless you go downtown and they stop in front of all of the major office buildings but...”*

*“I see Tampa has expanded so much and the bus thing seems so still inbound for the local, like you can get to downtown but trying to get to the other outer spans area say for instance, Riverview.”*

*“Some of them [senior citizens] probably can’t walk to the bus stop. It’s too far.”*

Scheduling was also considered to be an issue related to the availability of bus transportation.

*“I’ve been here all my life, live in South Tampa, work out in the Brandon area. Transportation for the bus is not convenient when you work twelve hour shifts and the bus stops running at six or seven o’clock at night and I have to be at work at six a.m. There’s no transportation out there so I use my own vehicle.”*

### **Lack of Information**

The lack of information regarding scheduling was also cited by participants in this focus group as a prohibitive factor in transit use. Lacking knowledge of bus arrival times may also contribute to feelings of insecurity while one waits at a bus stop.

*“I think more with the schedules. Like at the big depots you have the schedules but at the regular stops on the regular street you don’t, if it’s not where it’s a shed and a bench and everything you don’t have a schedule. So if you don’t know, if you just wake up and say, oh I need to get the bus. I go to my bus stop on the corner, there’s no schedule.”*

*"You don't have a clue."*

Participants noted that when they do have information, the materials are sometimes confusing and unhelpful.

*"And plus if you take one of the schedules, to me they're a little bit confusing."*

*"And if you get off one stop you don't know if you're behind schedule, on schedule, trying to read the bus schedule, got no clue."*

*"I was trying to arrange for my daughter to take the bus home from middle school. I had to call that line several times to get any kind of response. Finally I got a bunch of bus, six or seven bus schedules stuck in the mail to me and I thought well that was a big help."*

### **Advantages**

The group considered a variety of advantages to using bus transportation. Depending upon the geographic area and the actions taken, bus transit can be considered convenient.

*"We found that checking with the hotel some of the points of interest were set up fairly conveniently on the bus lines or bus lines were set up around a lot of points of interest within a five mile area of the city and rather than taking a cab or like I said, going to the expensive of renting a car, I'm almost glad because they drive on the wrong side of the road and all kinds of stuff. It was definitely a safety factor not to be forced to commit the opposite rules that we do here so I found it convenient and not necessarily out of the way or inconvenient. I found it for the sake of a dollar you hop on a bus and you can go someplace and come back three or four hours later for another buck."*

*"Well now they have bike racks, I see them making moves. They've got kneeling buses for handicapped people."*

Cost savings are also considered to be an advantage to bus transit.

*"A dollar a trip or whatever it is, is a lot cheaper than two hundred plus car payments a month, a thousand dollars a year insurance, gas and all that kind of things like that."*

*“I would like to ride a bus to work. I would like to save the money. I’d like to do something for the environment; you know in fact I considered riding a bicycle because I could go down Bay Shore.”*

*“But you know it’d be great to be able to park your car, keep the miles down on it, maybe even save on your insurance by telling ‘em I don’t drive it as many miles, save repair, gas, all those good things about it but I just can’t make it feasible.”*

Some consider it to be useful in the event they temporarily do not have access to a personal vehicle or for young people who cannot yet drive themselves.

*“The only thing good about public transportation is if your car doesn’t work, your neighbors have already gone to work, you know just like somebody had mentioned that when they were younger and mom and dad wouldn’t take ‘em to the mall or to somebody’s house we all found a way to get from point A to point B when we wanted to. We may not want to now go to the mall on a bus because we have a car sitting in the yard but when the transportation wasn’t available it was great that there was public transportation as a third choice or fourth choice or fifth choice.”*

### ***Inconvenience***

This group focused quite a bit of their discussion on the inconvenience of using bus transportation. The weather and the lack of shelters were important topics in relation to the convenience of bus service.

*“Well you got three months of when you leave the house you got to either tote an umbrella with you all day or you get rained on either waiting for the bus or walking to the bus.”*

*“A question, what if it rains, popped in my head next, cuz that was inconvenient, you know if you didn’t foresee it raining, you know how that happens, you don’t have your umbrella, you’re soaked. A lot of the stops never had the covered areas.”*

*“If I was standing by a steel spike with that little tiny sign and it was sunny and it was a great day, I wouldn’t even think about it. First time I was standing in a torrential downpour I’d say, I’m out of my mind.”*

*“I don’t think I had a problem riding the bus except for the inconvenience and the weather.”*

*“I don’t want to stand out in the elements.”*

*“It’s too hot.”*

Participants also mentioned the wait times at bus stops and scheduling as being inconvenient, particularly for those with children or variable work schedules.

*“The first thing I thought was the wait. Before I had a car I took the bus from one end of town to the other.”*

*“If you didn’t get there on time, you missed the bus, you would have to wait, like on Sunday an hour for the very next bus.”*

*“But you know if you have kids you may be called at anytime to come get ‘em from school. Well if you ride a bus you can’t do that. If you work a variable schedule like sometimes I may get off early or have to work late, you can’t ride the bus. If it’s raining, you know, who wants to walk four blocks in the rain and stand in the rain to ride a bus. I mean, plus you know if you miss the bus you have to wait sometimes upwards to an hour. I mean there’s a lot of things that just don’t make, if you need to stop on the way home to get milk, you can’t do it if you ride a bus. I mean there’s a million reasons not to ride a bus.”*

*“Well you want to leave when you’re ready to leave and you want to stop here if you want to stop for whatever reason, you know when you want.”*

*“But it’s not practical because like for all the reasons, I sometimes have a variable schedule, I have to stay late, work; you know I just can’t do it.”*

Bus transportation was also considered to be inconvenient in other ways, such as the need for exact change or carrying several items at once on the bus.

*“Don’t you need exact change? How convenient is that? Who has sixty-five cents in their pocket?”*

*“You can play your own music, you can talk on your phone privately, there’s a million benefits, you can carry a buncha junk and you know that you can’t haul around on a bus.”*



One participant linked the need for convenience to societal characteristics.

*“I think we live in a fast paced society and everybody’s in a hurry to get to one place to another and the thing about it is and even all the commercials, the cars, the driving fast, the movies and everything, everybody wants to get to where they want to get then and there. And I think that’s one of the reasons that a lot of people, you know the bus systems just aren’t adequate.”*

From the discussion among this focus group it is obvious that inconvenience plays a crucial role in the decision of these participants to use or to not use bus transit.

### ***Feasibility***

A few of the group participants commented on the economic and environmental feasibility of operating large buses without significant numbers of riders.

*“I see a lot more people riding the bus in St. Pete, like if you go by a bus in Tampa you might see five or six people. You’re in St. Pete and you see the bus packed and a lot of the elderly people but it seems like the buses are more crowded.”*

*“Yeah and there’s bus stops I mean it seems like it’s on every corner and a lot of ‘em have benches and coverings, you know which is kind of neat and all and I’ve been driving and you see four or five people waiting for the bus and all. In Tampa you only see one or two, that’s what I’ve found.”*

### ***Image/Embarrassment***

During this group there was some discussion about the image of public transportation and the embarrassment that some participants associate with using the bus.

*“Yeah and there’s bus stops I mean it seems like it’s on every corner and a lot of ‘em have benches and coverings, you know which is kind of neat and all and I’ve been driving and you see four or five people waiting for the bus and all. In Tampa you only see one or two, that’s what I’ve found.”*

*“That I can’t afford a car. That I can’t pay for my own transportation.”*

*"I drive a mini van like him so I don't care what people think but I'm saying that maybe that might be part of it. Some people might think, I don't want, people label it as bad you know, ew, ride the bus."*

*"Yeah, there's embarrassment. I would be embarrassed, too. First thing I think they would say, oh how many DUIs, you know how'd you use your license?"*

### **Perceptions of Safety and Security**

#### ***Bus Safety***

This group expressed fewer anxieties related to bus safety than did Focus Group Number 1. Concerns were mostly centered on the bus driver.

*"I'm also very leery of who's driving. I'm not very comfortable."*

*"I was on a bus and the bus driver got a speeding ticket."*

One participant expressed confidence in the bus driver's abilities.

*"Bus driver's pretty safe."*

Given the limited amount and the nature of comments on this topic, bus safety does not appear to be a contributing factor in the decision to use or not to use bus transit among these participants.

#### ***Personal Safety***

Concerns regarding personal safety were primarily related to the physical landscape of the bus stop. Participants noted that crossing the street to reach a bus stop and the lack of pavement in the waiting area can be dangerous.

*"When they drop you off, when you go out the door, you're like stepping down in either some grown up grass or close to the side of the street but usually like to a ditch. Always about to kill yourself when you're getting off the bus."*

*"They're always in front of a gutter where water runs into."*

*"And then not being no shade where the bus stop is, so you usually stand across the street on the other side then you gotta run cross traffic cuz the*

*bus is coming and they wouldn't stop in between if they would make you run to the next stop before they'll stop, even if somebody saying, they're coming, they'll keep going until they get to the next stop or whatever, they wouldn't stop mid-stop."*

The lack of seatbelts on the bus is also cause for concern among participants.

*"Oh and you need something to hold onto when you're on the bus because you're sliding this way and this way."*

*"There's no nothing...they turn a corner you don't have nothing to hold onto."*

*"You slide around because they make these big wide turns and they go over bumps."*

### **Personal Security**

One participant believes that concern regarding personal security is a prohibitive factor in potential users actually becoming bus transit patrons.

*"I think most people, one of the reasons they don't ride the bus is security and who's getting on and off on the bus."*

Participants expressed anxiety regarding their personal security if they were to wait at a bus stop, particularly if it were dark.

*"And then I also put sometimes unsafe. I remember waiting at a bus stop when I was younger by myself and just seeing weird people drive by and you know around you sometimes you don't feel safe waiting for the bus."*

*"Scary only because of who might be on the bus with you or standing at the bus stop waiting."*

*"I wouldn't want to be standing when it's real still dark waiting on a bus with everybody going past you and all the, the lighting by some of the bus stops are not good."*

*"Yeah, nothing, if you needed help or somebody was doing something to you at the bus stop real early in the morning you can scream for somebody but nobody's gonna get up and help you."*

A few participants also brought up security concerns related to being stalked if they were walking to or from a bus stop.

*“People see your schedule too. You know if they’re watching you they know what time you leave your house and you’re going to the bus stop, you know back and forth. If they see you get off the bus one day they can follow you home, watch you, you know. Where as if the car is in your front yard, you go out to your car you know they don’t know where you’re coming from.”*

*“Yeah but how convenient is it for someone to stalk you and find out your driving patterns when you’re driving? But if someone sits on the bus everyday, you get on that bus everyday, they know exactly, at least the vicinity.”*

As for the bus itself, wrapped buses do not generally convey a feeling of security among these participants.

*“What he was saying about how neat it looks when they’re all painted. I agree like you see I know Star Trek, I remember seeing on the side. It looks really neat but I wouldn’t feel safe on that bus with it that dark. It’s like nobody would be able to even see me in here if somebody...”*

*“I wouldn’t feel safe on a dark bus like that.”*

However, some participants disagreed, asserting the attractiveness of wrapped buses.

*“They actually look kinda cool, the ones that are completely painted.”*

In discussing how feelings of personal security might differ between personal vehicles and the bus, participants asserted that being in control of one’s vehicle and environment is the determining factor. Being able to lock one’s car doors provides a feeling of security, and the inability to lock doors and to control who enters a bus produce feelings on insecurity.

*“One, A, you control who comes in your car. B, you can lock your car, be totally secure. C, you can bring a weapon in your car if you like. D, you can drive the car wherever you want, drive it to a lit area if someone’s bothering you or drive to a police station, whatever. You can also arrange to have a big, big muscular guy ride with you if you want with a baseball; I mean it’s just like night and day. You don’t have any of those options in a bus.”*

*"You have a more controlled environment if you're in your vehicle. I can lock my doors, roll up my windows and cock and lock a 45. You can't do that on a bus. You may have a concealed weapons permit but you can't on mass transportation."*

*"Well I kinda agree with him about the you can lock your door and on a bus you can't and when you're getting off a bus, when you're stopped, you're off and then the bus is pulling off and you're dead alone."  
"I'm in control."*

Discussion within this group indicates that perceptions may vary between males and females. Males in the group expressed far less anxiety regarding their personal security than did females, not only in relation to using the bus but in the public realm in general.

*"I never once think about who's watching me. I never once think if someone's following me. I never worry about who's sitting next to me. Except if they smell drunk."*

*"I would feel safer on a bus with thirty other people than conceivably walking out of Tampa Bay Center at nine o'clock at night by myself a hundred feet to my car."*

*"I think men feel that way more than women."*

*"Have they surveyed the fact that they get more women riders or more men riders based on the fact that we're hearing more of the personal safety issues from the women? Cuz I'll tell you I never even think about it."*

Several females in the group shared personal experiences or perceptions related specifically to their feelings of insecurity as women.

*"I was waiting at the bus stop once early in the morning and a gentleman kept circling the block where the bus stop was cuz I was by myself."*

*"I just remember being a teenage girl and just you know, these men would get on the bus and they just weren't very polite, you know. I mean that's what I remember just being like, just sitting there not wanting to even move my head because they're making comments and just you know, almost every time. I used it three or four times and that was just,*

*maybe it was just the area I was in or whatever, going to Tampa Bay Mall.”*

*“Women are more vulnerable in any situation so I don’t always feel quite that safe in my car necessarily cuz, I have to lock my doors, if the kids are in the car they could open the door and so I feel vulnerable in my car as well.”*

*“They can pinch you, they can insult you but as soon as you’re off the bus since they stop insulting you and they can start stalking you.”*

Participants, although all under the age of 55, cited senior citizens as a group that may have particular concerns related to safety and security.

*“We’re also talking about this side of the ages. You got an awful lot of the elderly that are riding the buses because they again, for whatever reason, reside in a nursing home, can’t drive anymore, can’t afford the insurance, whatever the case may be, you have a large percent of elderly that are riding the bus and how secure they feel sitting at a bus stop at six o’clock in the morning.”*

*“I don’t think they [seniors] should feel secure at all.”*

*“That’s what I was saying, the issue with the younger person walking from their house down five blocks to the bus stop would be even worse conceivably for a senior person based on health issues, walking when it’s ninety degrees outside and 85% humidity walking eight blocks to the bus stop.”*

*“And if an older person gets on a bus and it’s full of older people they feel more comfortable than getting on a busload of kids.”*

Regardless of sex or age, there is a general perception among these focus group participants that crime is a problem within the bus transit environment.

*“It’s a fantastic combination of both. On the bus nothing but discomfort and awkwardness; off the bus you’re at the mercy of everything.”*

*“Oh, like pick pocketing.”*

*“There are assaults and robberies that occur on a bus on a regular basis.”*

With regard to whom they believe instigate crimes or socially unacceptable behavior at stops or on buses, participants credit young males, particularly teenagers or gang members, as the typical perpetrators.

*"I sure would feel safer if there were seniors on there versus the younger people."*

*"Young, very young."*

*"Young males."*

*"Rowdy kids, I've been on the bus with rowdy kids."*

*"Maybe gang type."*

Furthermore, several participants mentioned being near others who are intoxicated as making them feel uncomfortable, if not insecure.

*"And at times you can feel unsafe on the bus with the people because someone might come in and you smell alcohol or you know, that kind of thing. A drunk person or somebody who you can tell is just not quite with it."*

This focus group was conducted close to the first anniversary of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, DC, and participants' concerns of terrorism being targeted at bus transit were discussed. At the time of this discussion, participants considered terrorism to be a potential threat to bus transit, particularly if transit were to increase in popularity. While some considered terrorism to be a threat in large metropolitan areas, one participant stated that terrorism can be a threat anywhere, and that the feelings of insecurity brought on by the attacks in 2001 will never subside.

*"I'll tell you another thing and I'm sure, I'm surprised nobody brought it up but after September 11th and now with all the things you're reading about, all the bombings in Israel and everything about the buses and all, that also puts a big negative in the people's thinking and they're worried now that you know if I get on this bus some crazy guy could blow up this bus and I think that's effected a lot of people."*

*"It [terrorism] certainly would enter my mind if I was in New York or Los Angeles or something."*

*“But you can’t be like that anymore because I mean it can happen, look what happened September 11th, that could happen in Tampa. I mean MacDill’s strategic over here. So the thing about it is and all, I think now the way people, women, men no matter who it is, when you do get in your car I mean, locking the door, worrying about what’s gonna happen, I think that’s just a feeling that after that happened it’s just not gonna go away. And people are gonna feel that way.”*

*“The more successful a bus became, the better a target.”*

*“Yep, the more crowded it was, the better.”*

### ***Effects of the Media on Participant Perceptions***

Discussion within this focus group indicates that the media has given participants a negative perception of bus transit, which certainly may have an effect on some members of this group and their decision to use the bus or not.

*“I don’t know how long ago it was but usually when they’ve had articles about the bus company in Tampa it’s been negative, problems, you know internal problems here. It’s always the negative so the thing about this and if you’re gonna ride a bus and you read all these negative things, you think well if they’re having that many problems internally, what problems are they having on the buses and everything and all. So I’ve never read anything positive.”*

*“Well I understand that but there’s a lot of negative they do write about it so it puts a negative thought in your mind so automatically it’s like I had to get a ride, my car broke down one time and I said maybe I’ll take the bus and I said, no. I called a couple of friends of mine and said, look let me use your car or whatever and all that.”*

*“Well the point is there’s more incidents on a bus than people realize because the media doesn’t pick up on it. It’s not broadcast.”*

*“But the problem with that is, things you read in the paper, financially they’re always having problems.”*



### **Conditions for Use and Suggested Improvements**

Participants provided insight into those conditions that would encourage them to consider using bus transit. Given the overall negative perception of using the bus within this group, comments related to what may be perceived as extreme or unfeasible situations are not surprising.

*“You know I’m trying to think of what would get me to ride a bus regularly and I almost see it as a lot of pain would need me to do it. In other words the traffic in Tampa would just have to get so bad that I finally said, well I’d rather read a book for forty-five minutes than deal with this for an hour and a half and at that point it’d be like a sudden shift. But until it gets that bad...”*

*“Personally I would take a bus if I could get, if there was a bus stop within a block of my home and if there was a bus that was within a block of where I worked.*

*“You need a bench at every bus stop.”*

Participants also provided suggestions for improving the access of scheduling and route information.

*“Do you know how Yahoo has a map thing where you put in your address and your destination? They got something like that for Hartline? That would be a natural.”*

*“I don’t know what time it comes, when it’s gonna come and I may not have time or whatever to get on the telephone and wait for them if it’s eight o’clock you got everybody calling so you know, but I think all the bus stops should have a schedule on the posts with the times that they’re coming so you’ll know. If it’s on the corner by my house, even if I had to go home and wait thirty minutes and walk back up there.”*

*“I think all the bus stops should have a schedule on the posts with the times that they’re coming so you’ll know.”*

Participants also had several suggestions for improving passenger security. Call boxes at bus stops, lighting, cameras on buses, and police presence were all considered to be beneficial in improving personal security.

*“They need the light and a call box [at bus stops].”*

*“Why don’t they put some kind of cameras or something on these buses in Tampa for security?”*

*“I’m still in favor of the camera so I think that would be great on a bus too.”*

*“And you could also have something and if the bus driver does see something going on maybe he has a security button when he could cut the engine off and the bus just dies.”*

*“The bus company ought to start a campaign on safety and put the cameras in and do that, I think.”*

*“And a call box I think that’s a great idea.”*

*“Having police once in a while drive by the bus stops whatever.”*

Not all participants agreed that security cameras would be an effective strategy in improving personal security. Some consider it to be too invasive.

*“I’m a privacy nut. I don’t like cameras in Ybor or on buses or you know, I think that’s too Orwellian, you know?”*

Other suggestions, not related to security, included those related to physical and social comfort on the bus as well as cost.

*“If they had bigger, more comfortable seats possibly rather than trying to squeeze three people in the space of two people or two people, I mean we’re all built different sizes. When they build seats on buses or they build seats on, just like the other day about the airlines. Some people fit in seats more comfortable than other people fit in seats.”*

*“And quit going up on the bus prices.”*

*“No food or drinks.”*

*“No boom boxes.”*

Two participants offered advice on the marketing of bus transportation, one particularly within Hillsborough County.

*“...mass transit company’s gonna have to take some responsibility and put out some positive PR. They need to show what is the advantage for John Q. Citizen to get on my bus.”*

*“I think what they need to do is send everybody in Tampa free passes for one week. And that way the people that are never gonna ride the bus probably won’t use ‘em. The people that might be tempted to that have, like myself that have never been on a bus in Tampa or within the last ten years might try to just for a short ride. And I might find it different than what I thought. And like I said, it’s just like the mail-in rebate coupons. Only ten percent of the people ever send the coupons in for rebates so even if they gave away ten thousand of them, if they got a thousand people to ride the bus once or twice on a round-trip ticket, you know a round-trip ticket to nowhere, it might change a few of those people that have never been on the bus.”*

## **Summary of Focus Group Number 2**

All participants in Focus Group Number 2 reported that they use personal vehicles exclusively as their mode of transportation. Convenience was cited as the primary factor in this choice. This group expressed an overall negative perception of bus transit. They consider the bus to be inconvenient for their busy lives and not particularly safe nor secure in comparison to a personal vehicle. The weather and scheduling were frequently cited as factors of inconvenience.

Participants associate bus use with those who cannot afford private transportation, unkempt people, and senior citizens who no longer drive. They believe young males are the group most likely to cause trouble or commit crimes at bus stops or on buses. The image of using bus transportation was also negative, with participants admitting to feelings of embarrassment if they were to use the bus.

Advantages were primarily linked with previous experiences in various cities around the United States as well as abroad. Despite the few advantages that were cited, there is an apparent lack of information regarding scheduling and route, and participants suggested more and better provision of such information. According to these participants, further improvements could be made through monitoring of bus stops, security cameras, and better advertising and public relations.

Participant commentary regarding the safety and security of bus transit was generally negative. They expressed safety concerns regarding the abilities of bus drivers as well

as the bus stop environment. Control of one's vehicle and environment was cited as the source of feeling secure in a personal vehicle. Despite the negative perceptions of safety and security regarding bus transit, it does not appear that participants are avoiding the bus because of them. Generally, bus transit is inconvenient for their lifestyles, and personal vehicles allow the freedom and flexibility they desire.

### **Focus Group Number 3**

**June 20, 2002**

**8:00 – 10: 00 PM**

Focus Group Number 3 was conducted at the facilities of Schwartz Research Services in Tampa, which also recruited the participants in accordance with CUTR participant screening instructions. There were 10 participants in attendance, five females and five males. Five participants reported ethnicity to be white or Caucasian; three reported to be black or African American; and one participant reported to be Hispanic. One participant chose not to report ethnicity. Four participants reported to be in the 35 – 44 age category; three reported to be in the 45 – 54 age category; and three participants reported ages in the 25 – 34 category. Six of the ten participants claimed to be married; three reported to be single; and one participant reported marital status as "other." There is an average of 2.2 working vehicles per participant household, and all participants reported that they drive.

Total household income for 2001 per participant ranged from \$15,000 to more than \$50,000. Five of the ten participants reported incomes in excess of \$50,000; one reported to be in the \$45,000 – \$49,999 income category; one reported income between \$40,000 and \$44,999; one reported to be in the \$35,000 – \$39,999 income category; one reported income in the \$30,000 – \$34,999 category; and one participant reported income in the \$15,000 – \$19,999 category.

Participants were also asked about their transit habits. No participants in this focus reported using transit at least once per week and none reported having used in during the previous six months

### **Participant Travel Characteristics**

Of the ten participants, all drive personal vehicles as their primary mode of transportation. One participant did mention that he lives near downtown St. Petersburg and often walks to that area, but uses his personal vehicle most other times. Like

participants in Focus Group 2, the need to shuttle children to and from school and various activities was cited as an important reason for the use of a personal vehicle.

*“...because of my kids I live in my car.”*

Participants generally use their vehicles for work and school trips, as well as performing personal errands.

### **Prior Use of Public Transportation**

Group participants reported using a variety of public transportation modes in various metropolitan areas of the United States, such as Philadelphia, Los Angeles, Memphis, and St. Louis. Participants generally retain a positive perception of bus transit in these cities, with the exception of crowding being an issue.

*“It worked fine. I’d take a bus then have to go down to the subway and get on a trolley and it was fine. I hadn’t seen nothing wrong with it.”*

*“It’s packed.”*

*“It’s not always comfortable. You know this was always packed with kids for school. One the way home you’d have work people and then kids from school.”*

*“Memphis, Tennessee. I’ve also used it in St. Louis, Missouri and in St. Louis it was pretty crowded. The buses there ran pretty often and the connection was good. You have to; you know if you transfer from one bus to another your connection was pretty much always there. On the weekend their scheduling was good and I rode the bus like in the morning and in the evening when I got off work and it was, I liked the bus system in both Memphis and in St. Louis.”*

### **Opinions on Transit Users**

Based upon both experience and observation, this group holds the general perception that those who use the bus are people who have no other option. Users are primarily those who cannot afford a private vehicle; those who do not have access to a private vehicle such as teenagers or older senior citizens; and people who have lost their

license because of legal infractions. In addition, some participants characterized bus patrons as “shady,” “weirdoes,” and “drifters.”

*“I met some shady carrots on buses.”*

*“Yeah there’s a lot of people, you get a DWI or whatever, there’s a lot of people that go to court that have no way to get to their jobs anymore or anything.”*

*“Mostly lower income people.”*

*“And seniors because once their license is taken away and like Pinellas County does have a lot of seniors.”*

*“Yeah, probably a lot of teenagers, cuz I know I took the bus when I was like in middle school, first year of high school, to get around, go to the mall, movies, stuff like that.”*

*“I rode the bus late; I told you who’s on it late night. A bunch of weirdoes. They talk to themselves; if you ignore ‘em he’s still talking to himself. And I’m like man, god I got thirteen more blocks.”*

*“A lot of drifters take the bus down here.”*

With the exception of teenagers and senior citizens, the discussion among this group reveals a rather unfavorable general opinion on who uses bus transit.

### **Perceptions of Using Bus Transit**

Based upon personal experiences and observations, participants expressed a variety of opinions regarding what it is or would be like to use bus transportation. In contrast to Focus Groups 1 and 2, Focus Group 3 provided no commentary on service accessibility, their lack of information regarding routes and schedules, or the confusion surrounding the use of transit information materials.

#### ***Advantages***

Similar to the first two groups, Focus Group 3 also considered money-savings to be a benefit of bus transit use.

*“It’s probably cheaper than driving, owning a vehicle and what have you.”*

*“Car payment, gas.”*

The bus was also considered a good transportation option for those not yet of driving age.

*“If you’re a kid without a license it’s a good thing.”*

In addition, the Suncoast Beach Trolley in Pinellas County received positive comments from several participants regarding its appearance and beach access.

*“The trolley buses are nice.”*

*“Yeah, because they have ones that leave from somewhere downtown, they go all the way to the beaches.”*

*“Yeah, they have nice colors on them and they’re shaped like trolley cars with wheels.”*

*“Yeah, they’re not actually trolley cars; they’re neat looking.”*

Two participants specifically recalled their use of the trolley during the Christmas holiday and enjoyed the ability to view decorative lights without the responsibility of driving or tending to children in the car.

*“It’s good during Christmas time to see the lights.”*

*“Right and then you don’t have to drive, you just put the kid on and sit back and enjoy so that was fun.”*

Despite some negative memories of their own bus transit use and somewhat negative perceptions of current users, participants considered there to be several advantages in using the bus.

### ***Inconvenience***

Comments related to the advantages of bus transit were far fewer in number than those comments related to the perceptions of inconvenience that participants associated with using the bus. As was mentioned in the first two groups, the weather, particularly in Florida, is also an important factor of inconvenience among participants in this group.

*“You know if I’m dressed in business attire, especially in the summertime standing out in the heat, I don’t want to go to work all sweaty so it’s mainly the bus stop you know in direct line with the sun and not shaded.”*

*“In Florida it’s 97 degrees and I don’t want to wait outside and sweat all your make-up off; you took a shower and then you had to go sweat it off before you go to work or wherever you’re going.”*

*“Weather, rain, if you got off there and it’s bad weather and you still need to get to your job or something or an appointment.”*

Wait times at bus stops and scheduling are also considered to be quite inconvenient, and even too prohibitive for some to consider using the bus.

*“It depends where I got to go. It depends if I got to be there at a certain time or not.”*

*“The heat, the wait, trying to prepare to get there and you see people with children trying to lug all those children to the bus stop and I don’t know. I know a lot of people that have good experiences with buses but I don’t see how. I can’t see how they do it, but anyway.”*

*“Very time consuming, cuz I’m busy with kids, the same thing as like, the first thing I think of is there’s no way I’d have that much time in my day to plan to get on a bus.”*

*“I just want to get where I’m going and arrive safely and be able to go on to my next stop and not have to wait. I want to go when I want to go and the bus systems don’t allow that. I don’t know that any bus system allows that, I mean I’ve never, I grew up outside of Pittsburgh in a small town. Alls I can remember is when I did take the bus into Pittsburgh it’s like I had to wait forty-five minutes, an hour, and they were always late and then they pull up and they splash slush all over you and it’s like, please you know. Give me a car so I’m just not a big fan of bus systems.”*

As expressed by participants, bus schedules and routes, and the threat of hot and/or wet weather appear to contribute negatively to the perception of bus inconvenience, most particularly in Florida.



## **Perceptions of Safety and Security**

### ***Bus Safety***

Focus Group 3 expressed several concerns related to bus safety. Some of these comments were related to the abilities of the bus driver.

*“I know I’m driving, I know what my driving record is. I’m aware of what’s going on around me. I don’t know who this bus driver is, you know, what’s his background? I mean you hear it all the time, school bus driver convicted felon, you know, so you know safety records are considered.”*

Far more comments regarding bus safety were related to the maintenance of the fleet. Many participants stated that they question the mechanical safety of the buses, and are more confident in the maintenance of their personal vehicles.

*“I know how I maintain my vehicle so I feel safe in it. I’m not so certain that the city garage is doing the same to those vehicles. I mean I guess we have to have faith that they’re complying and using the right parts when they do maintenance on these buses, but...”*

*“I’m more concerned with the mechanical maintenance.”*

*“My safety concern would be are the buses being maintained properly, you know, their tires being changed regularly, rotated, all that.”*

While some participants expressed concern regarding mechanical safety, others indicated a positive perception of bus maintenance and regulation.

*“There are standards that are set up. Your tread on the tires can’t go below this and it had to be maintained at a certain, or airplanes, it has to be maintained in a certain fashion versus we could let some maintenance go on our own vehicles if we chose to but they probably cannot.”*

*“I think they’re maintained probably better as a whole than the automobiles.”*

When asked whether anyone was concerned about the maintenance of buses, one participant responded, *“I’m not.”*

In the event of an accident, buses are perceived to be safer than cars. This perception appears to be based on statistics with which participants claimed to be familiar and the large size of a bus as compared to a personal vehicle.

*“But we don’t hear that a lot of buses are in accidents.”*

*“I think the statistics show there self that there’s not a lot of bus accidents and I think that’s where I feel safe about buses is that, and that’s something when my son does go on a field trip from school, I’m like okay there’s statistics but there’s not a lot of bus accidents so he’s not likely to get in a bus accident so I feel pretty good about it when he goes on a field trip.”*

*“With a bus, when you’re driving something and you’re going a certain speed and it’s a light, like a car, there’s not much power. When you’re in a bus and you’re going even forty, you know how much power it takes to make that bus go forty? I wouldn’t worry about being in a wreck on a bus. I would be worried about the car, not the bus.”*

One participant also expressed concern for germs that may be present on a public vehicle.

*“Right but all the people that touch the bus, that they on, they get off, they get on, you don’t know what they have.”*

### **Personal Safety**

Some participants expressed concerns for personal safety while using the bus or bus stops. Some concern was related to the bus driver, while some is related to the built environment surrounding the bus stop and drivers of other vehicles.

*“Some of ‘em drive too fast and you sit in your seat and they apply the brakes and dump you half way up to the front. You can pray and hold on to the bars and still run it.”*

*“I would not want to see anybody get off say right in the middle of US 19 where they could get hit by a car. I see lots of bus stops there and they’re not really back far enough off the road. It worries me when I see these little old elderly people getting off and they’re kinda dazed from getting off because it took so much energy and then you have traffic whipping by ‘em at sixty-five. It’s an accident waiting to happen.”*

### **Personal Security**

Participants in this focus group expressed a higher level of concern regarding personal security at night as compared to using the bus during daylight hours, particularly in what are perceived to be more dangerous areas.

*In reference to her daughter, one participant stated: "I wouldn't want her to use the bus at night. I wouldn't feel safe with her, you know, so much happening, especially like wherever they might, the bus drop off might not be in a lighted area, could be in a, I don't know I guess a bad area you know to be let off a bus and I've seen buses right there on Ulmerton, there's no, no light there at all. It's like, you know the traffic is real heavy there and she might have on dark clothes, she can get hit by a car, you know anything, so..."*

*"It's according to what time of day, during the day I wouldn't mind if I had to but at night I would be a little skeptical to get on a bus."*

*"At night, yes there are more [dangerous situations] but it pertains to what areas you are going to and through."*

*"Yeah, you don't want somebody getting off on a dead end street, you know, dark."*

In comparison to their personal vehicles, participants would feel less secure using bus transit. As observed in the first two focus groups, participants cited being in control of their vehicle and whom they let into their vehicle are factors in feeling secure. Awareness of one's surroundings was also considered to be an important protective strategy.

*"I'm safer in my vehicle because like [she] said, I can close it. Obviously you can go all over the place and be in public, but in my vehicle I have more control I can close it, I don't have to let somebody in that I don't want to come into the vehicle. If they force themselves in, well that's a different story but on a bus they can just get right on so it's safer."*

*"I think you just put yourself in different circumstances when you take public transportation and you have to be prepared for anything. It's just like when you leave here tonight, you need to be aware of your surroundings all the time, especially so if you're taking public transportation because you don't know who's on that bus. I know who's in my car."*

*"I just think any transportation you have to be aware of your surroundings and as long as you're doing that and, you've gotta just always be looking over your shoulder even if you are taking your own vehicle cuz somebody can hit you over the head going to your car just as easily as going to a bus stop but I feel safer knowing that when I get to my car I'm locking that door and I'm driving as fast as I can to get away from whatever's tailing me. Whereas if I'm walking from a bus stop I'm running but I'm gonna run out of steam and he might be faster so. I like the convenience of having my vehicle, knowing I'm in control on the road and being able to come and go as I please, and that's the bottom line with having a vehicle."*

Participants in this group also expressed the belief that younger people may cause trouble on buses, particularly by harassing passengers or the driver.

*"Foul language, from all the young people you know. They don't respect the elderly and you know they have such nasty mouths. Some of them you wanna just put your foot in, you know? They have real bold mouths."*

*"They cuss the bus driver out and threaten 'em. You know they threaten the bus drivers and it'll probably come a time when you need a police on the bus and a scanner for guns. Cuz Florida's getting that bad."*

Regarding bus drivers, participants in this group had differing opinions on the driver's role in maintaining order on the bus. While one believes the driver should only drive and not become involved in incidents on the bus, the majority of those who commented on the topic contend the driver should take a proactive role in maintaining control.

*"I think that their job is to drive the bus, not intervene in incidents."*

*"Maybe all bus drivers should have a black belt in karate along with a chauffeur's license or a bus license."*

*"I don't think they're trained at all in that area."*

*"They can call for help."*

*"Yeah, some of 'em, some guys are pretty tough you know. They don't get that stuff on their bus."*

*"I think it should be their responsibility as a driver and the person that's working for that company if something does happen, to get involved. I mean it depends on what degree and if they don't have radios they*

*should, and they probably do and if they don't have like a panic button that goes directly to the police or 911 or what have you they should have something like that."*

Despite the concerns expressed by participants in relation to safety and security, one participant offered a notable observation, which drew general agreement from others in the group.

*"I don't know that any of our reasons for not using the bus are just safety. I think all of ours are pretty much convenience. We just live, if we didn't have cars, I don't think our primary reason for not using the bus is safety, I really don't. I think it's really inconvenience."*

### **Conditions for Use and Suggested Improvements**

In response to the question of what conditions would make bus transit more attractive, convenience was again at the forefront of participants' concerns.

*"It would have to become a way of life. Like it would have to be so popular like in the bigger cities that so many more people would use it, you know, if it became, it would have to become a way of life."*

*"Convenient enough to give up a car and that has to be very convenient."*

*"Bus pooling, I know there's a lot of places where I grew up where they now have places you drive to the lot, and then the bus picks you up and take you to downtown Pittsburgh and that works great, park and rides, yeah, and that works great. I mean it's great for college students, people who work in the city every day, it's a consistent thing, it's a set schedule, it's not like is it or is it not gonna show up. I think that would work well in Pinellas County."*

Cost incentives were also mentioned by one participant as a way of making bus transit more attractive to potential users.

*"And since we all sort of pay for it with our taxes, if there was some sort of incentive to take the bus, if you had an employer or if it was really cheap."*

Participants mentioned lighting, stop placement, emergency telephones, video cameras, and security personnel as potential improvements to concerns regarding safety and security.

*“They have to make sure that the bus stops are well-lit and in populated areas where you get off that bus you know you’re gonna be safe. It’s not real close to Ulmerton Road and you can get hit by a car. I think that’s essential.”*

*“Emergency phones at bus stops or something, you know.”*

*“Yeah, and having random security personnel, not a security person on every bus on every route but randomly have security people on there, in the big cities they do that, they bust all sorts of people.”*

*“Video cameras. It’s been a deterrent on school buses, they could use ‘em on public transportation as well. As long as they utilize it and don’t just put a little red light up there with no camera.”*

*“A video camera would have to have, the signal would have to go somewhere else and the recording would have to go somewhere else, it can’t stay on the bus.”*

For some participants, improvements to bus transit would not be sufficient to promote the use of public transportation. High-speed rail and carpooling were suggested as means of meeting transportation needs.

*“I think they need to be looking at getting quicker ways to get us to where we want to go, not so much improving the bus system. I would much rather see you know a high speed train that’s gonna get me from Clearwater to Tampa in half the time it would take me to go by car or to get to Orlando. That’s what I’m interested in. Taking the bus isn’t helping, I want to get to where I’m going and I want to get there as quick as I can.”*

*“If part of their reason was to have less traffic on the roads I think this is coming off a little bit, but I think instead of doing the bus thing completely, they should do an incentive for co-workers to carpool a co-worker. Maybe the city, the government can give an incentive for that and actually reach workplaces, reach the buildings and actually send out people to talk about it and say, hey this is what we want to do and try to think of a system like*

*that, do more carpooling which will take, minimize traffic. That's just little off the wall but..."*

### **Summary of Focus Group Number 3**

Participants in Focus Group Number 3 reported that they use personal vehicles exclusively as their mode of transportation. Convenience was cited as the primary reason in this choice. Participants associate bus use with those who cannot afford private transportation and others who are either unable or not legally permitted to drive.

The advantages of bus transit were considered in terms of cost savings, teen transportation, and convenient beach access. Although there were some advantages discussed, bus transit is generally perceived as being inconvenient. Inconveniences were considered to be the weather, wait times, and bus scheduling, which are prohibitive to the use of transit.

Participants expressed a variety of concerns related to the safety and security of bus transit. With regard to safety, participants were concerned about the abilities of bus drivers as well as mechanical safety and maintenance. The bus is perceived to be safer than a personal vehicle in the event of accident, primarily because of its larger size. In discussing their personal security, participants indicated they would feel less secure using bus transit than using personal vehicles. Control of one's vehicle and environment was cited as the source of feeling secure in a personal vehicle.

In making suggestions for improvements, participants suggested lighting, emergency telephones, and security cameras and personnel as ways of making patrons feel more secure. However, it was generally agreed upon that concerns regarding convenience that should be addressed and improved, more than focusing upon concerns related to safety and security.

### **Focus Group Number 4**

**June 25, 2002**

**6:00 – 8:00 PM**

Focus Group Number 4 was conducted at the facilities of Quicktest/Heakin, Inc. in Tampa, which also recruited the participants in accordance with CUTR participant screening instructions. There were seven participants in attendance, five females and two males. Four participants reported their ethnicity to be white or Caucasian; one

reported to be black; and two participants reported their ethnicity to be Hispanic. Three participants claim to be married; three are single; and one is divorced. There is an average of 1.85 working vehicles per participant household, and all participants reported that they drive.

Total household income for 2001 per participant ranged from \$10,000 to more than \$50,000. Four of the seven participants reported household incomes of \$50,000 or more; two claimed incomes in the \$25,000 – \$29,999 category; and one participant reported income in the \$10,000 – \$14,999 category.

Participants were also asked about their transit habits. No participants reported to use transit at least once per week and none of the participants reported having used it in the previous six months.

### **Participant Travel Characteristics**

All seven participants reported using a personal vehicle as their primary mode of transportation. As mentioned during Focus Groups 2 and 3, convenience of personal vehicles and the need to transport children between school and various activities supports the decision to use a personal vehicle.

*“Right now I have three children and there’s no reason for me to use it. I use my car.”*

*“But I never used it because I like to have my own car in order to make stops on the way home, pick up things, whatever.”*

### **Prior Use of Public Transportation**

Although all participants in this group currently use personal vehicles, participants reported having experience with transit systems in Portland, Oregon, Boston, New York, Washington, DC, Las Vegas, Cancun, London, France, and Italy. Some participants have had positive experiences in the past, while others report negative experiences such as crowding on buses, most notably in Las Vegas and in Europe.

*“We took a trip to London, their buses are real fast and in busy spots a bus is there every thirty seconds to a minute but that’s just hundreds of people.”*



*“New York is fine, the only thing is the snow and very cold you have to wait sometimes.”*

*“Las Vegas, forget it. They get very crowded at times; some don’t have air condition so it was not a good experience.”*

*“Well everybody’s rushing to get on there [Italy] and it’s, you hold on and you know if you get a seat you’re fortunate, if not you’re holding on and on. It was terrifying.”*

One participant reported that she used public transportation exclusively while living in Portland, Oregon because of the efficiency and convenience of the system there.

*“I gave up my car because it was that good...people actually gave up their cars at times because you could take public transportation.”*

In contrast to participants in the first three focus groups, those in this group with prior experience using public transportation reported a generally negative impression of their experiences. With the exception of the single participant who recalls positive experiences in Portland, most of the other participants focused upon such issues as dirty buses, crowding, and uncomfortable temperatures either while waiting or on the bus.

### **Opinions on Bus Transit Users**

When queried on whom they believe uses the bus, participant comments indicate a generally unfavorable impression of the typical bus patron.

*“Bad clientele.”*

*“Ghetto, ghetto okay, it’s just the people, I don’t see anybody in a business suit taking a bus because I can assume that all the professionals can’t take the bus even if they wanted to.”*

*“Convicts.”*

*“Just I’ve seen people, men, older with bottles in their hands sitting at the stops; people are lying down in their seat.”*

Participants expressed the belief that if bus transit patrons had a choice, they would use a personal vehicle rather than the bus. Similar to other groups, those in this focus group

believe that those who use the bus tend to be poor, people who have lost their drivers' licenses due to legal infractions, students, and senior citizens.

*"A lot of students."*

*"Low income."*

*"People who have DUIs."*

*"I'm thinking that the bus, you know it just depends where you, I think in the Carrollwood area, you know I think that may be some of the elderly folks is my guess, use it."*

*"I feel like I see a lot of moms with children in their strollers. I feel like that's the only way they have to get around and I look at 'em as being courageous and I'm not gonna sit at home, I've got the public bus system, I'm gonna do it, you know and off they go. Just because they don't have, they're cheap, because they don't have a car. I feel like if they had a car they'd be in the car."*

### **Perceptions of Using Bus Transit**

Based upon personal experiences and observations, participants expressed a variety of opinions regarding what it is or would be like to use bus transportation.

#### ***Service Accessibility***

With regard to the accessibility of bus service near their homes, participants cited long walks to and from bus stops as being prohibitive to the use of bus transit.

*"It's very inconvenient, like she said. I would have to be up, cuz I have school at seven in the morning and if I had to get from Dale Mabry, not to mention me having to walk to Dale Mabry cuz I live in the very back of my neighborhood, the very last street, but that'd be a couple miles at least, then god knows how many transfers just to get to 275. Nowhere near."*

*"I would have to walk, my house to like Dale Mabry that's like for me that's maybe a mile and a half."*

*"Yeah because if I had to walk, I'd have to walk a mile to get to the bus stop."*

### ***Lack of Information***

The lack of information regarding schedules and routes was also mentioned as a negative factor of bus use. This was primarily framed in terms of marketing, signage, or the unavailability of information materials.

*“The bus is not advertised. I mean it’s not marketed.”*

*“The signs that say Hartline you know, you almost can’t even see ‘em, you know.”*

*“You have to ask for ‘em [schedules], they’re not posted. I think they should be, I would think you’d want a center.”*

Some participants also noted that the information materials are not particularly helpful. They are often perceived to be confusing.

*“The bus schedules were not easily interpreted.”*

*“I feel like it’s complicated, you know all these, it’s hard to figure out which bus to take where and all, I don’t think it’s real easy to figure out where you’re going.”*

### ***Advantages***

Group participants acknowledged a number of advantages to public transportation in general. The benefits were primarily related to gas and parking cost savings, the opportunity to read while commuting, being able to ride one’s bicycle, and air-conditioning on the bus.

*“A couple of my co-workers did take what, I don’t know if they still have it or not, it was called Park and Ride. Where you park in a parking lot, leave your car and then take the bus into downtown and they really liked it a lot. Got to read the newspaper and all and it was full of professional people going downtown.”*

*“You know I guess if I were a single person maybe in college or something I would probably, I think you can put your bikes on, I think that’s a good thing because you do need that here cuz once you get to your destination you probably need to drive or walk a little bit further. So, and I see people doing that quite often too but, like I said it would just have to be to those major destinations.”*

*“Pricing wasn’t that bad cuz I mean it was like \$1.50 or maybe each way.”*

*“All of mine were air-conditioned. They all were, sometimes you go and it’s a little hotter but they all seemed to be air-conditioned that I remember.”*

One participant recalled the cost and time benefits she realized by using the bus while living in Portland, Oregon.

*“You know I have to be at work basically at seven o’clock so that means like if I lived in Portland I could get on a bus at 6:15 in the morning and actually make it to work in forty-five minutes, all the same amount of time I could get driving so my justification was, hey you know I can save the gas, save the parking garage fee, I’ll just hop on a bus, it’s forty dollars a month for a bus pass.”*

### ***Inconvenience***

Inconvenience emerged as the primary barrier to using bus transit among participants in this group. As in other groups, Florida weather was considered to be an inconvenient factor if one were to use the bus. However, only one participant specifically cited weather during Focus Group Number 4.

*“You’re not gonna be walking in a suit in Florida waiting at a bus stop.”*

Wait times, transfers, and the time it takes to make a trip combine to comprise participants’ general perception that bus schedules and routes are too inconvenient to accommodate their personal schedules.

*“First thing I think of, sucks. That’s the first thing I think of, not professional friendly. When I say that I mean to working professionals, the hours that really serve working professionals I guess. Lousy hours of operation, too long to get anywhere.”*

*“Here I can’t justify getting up at four o’clock in the morning to go ten miles.”*

*“But then when you had to switch for a bus you had to pay for a transfer, which is, and um I didn’t like it.”*

*“Very inconvenient and it’s not passenger friendly.”*

*"I had a problem with transfers. I always would miss my transfer so I could never get there."*

*"I know it seems like an inconvenience if someone had to go to the store and a trip to the store would take three hours."*

Participants also do not approve of having to wait in unkempt areas with limited or no available seating.

*"It's got, got the roof that comes over like this and it's got a little bitty bench for two people and that's it. That's really inviting, you know?"*

*"And the benches, not all the benches are in working condition."*

*"But I understand, just you can't wear nice shoes; they never cut the grass on Dale Mabry."*

### ***Image/Embarrassment***

As did participants in Focus Group Number 2, participants in this group discussed the image of public transportation and the embarrassment often associated with using the bus. Reinforcing their perceptions of who typically uses bus transit, participants acknowledged a negative image of bus transit, and its patrons, with particular reference to Hillsborough County.

*"When you see this woman waiting on the bus stop or on the bus that she must, you know that she's getting home or dire straits and that she's just like an easy target and that desperation has brought her out to get on the bus, you know or else you know she's a drunk and lost her license."*

*"Or they think you're a hooker or something."*

*"That's the way you're perceived, an easy target you know because we just don't have the quality transportation and its not advertised and pushed, it's just not a priority here in this area."*

*"I go to Brewster Tech which is downtown Tampa Street but it seems there's about forty people at the bus stop who are students but none of 'em get in the bus so I'm sure that gives a false impression on people."*

*"I think the image is no one would ever want to be on the bus unless forced. It's not even the considered, I can save money. It's not even at that point."*

*"In Tampa it's not got a good reputation as far as a good positive means of transportation because of the [unclear] poor clientele and what we see waiting at the bus stops and who we see on the buses and it's not just got a positive image. And I think that if it had a more positive image and people wouldn't look down upon it."*

One participant recalled how she once suggested to her non-driving age children that they use the bus. The negativity revealed in her children's response coincides with participants' comments regarding the image of bus transit.

*"I mentioned it to 'em one time. Why don't you take a bus when they said I don't have a way to get there, why don't you take it? Never. Oh they had a terrible perception of it, I mean and believe me we don't talk about buses and public transportation in my home for them to form this, this is something they formed on their own, opinions you know, No Way! Are you outta your mind?"*

### **Perceptions of Safety and Security**

#### ***Bus Safety***

Comments regarding the safety of the bus were limited to the chance of or result of an accident. Similar to those in other groups, participants were in general agreement that a bus would be safer than a personal vehicle in the event of an accident.

*"I know there's, I've seen the car rear-ended a bunch but I've never seen a bus get in a accident."*

*"It's safe, it's huge. It's a tank on wheels, I feel it's safe."*

*"If it's between us and the little car, the bus is winning. Hands down."*

#### ***Personal Safety***

Regarding personal safety, one participant suggested that waiting at a bus stop at night might be dangerous.

*"I think the night, you could get hit by a car, you know."*

### **Personal Security**

Most of the concerns related to participants' perceptions of safety and security are regarding their personal security while waiting for or using the bus. As mentioned in other groups, a number of participants in this group cited waiting in the dark to be particularly frightening, especially for women.

*"I'd have to be at a bus stop by 4:45, catch a 5-5:15 bus, this is me, a single female, standing in the dark, okay."*

*"I wouldn't be out there at night, that's for sure cuz I would be afraid of somebody hurting me, my myself."*

*"I would be very, feel unsafe riding the bus at night, waiting."*

Others mentioned that waiting for long periods or riding alone could cause some anxiety.

*"When you're by yourself you feel a little nervous."*

*"I think if more people were to ride it people'd get a better sense of security, just knowing that I'm not alone, someone here can see..."*

*"I think when you're waiting as long as people say they're uncomfortable, part of what people want is they want to get on a bus and they want to be safe and don't want to stand there for half hour, forty minutes, maybe an hour and not really knowing when it's supposed to come, you know cuz it doesn't work."*

Despite the negative perception held by some participants, no one reported any negative personal experiences.

*"I don't have any incidents happening on the bus as far as people getting hurt or mugged or but I'm sure the opportunity is there."*

*"I've never heard of any [incidents on the bus]."*

In comparison to the first three focus groups conducted, this group addressed fewer concerns regarding their perceptions of the safety and security of bus transit.

### ***Effects of the Media on Participant Perceptions***

None of the participants' credited the media with their perceptions of bus safety and security, and no one stated they had heard any negative publicity regarding this topic.

While participants had stated earlier that transit is not marketed well within Hillsborough County, they are aware of advertising on buses and at stops, particularly the wrapped buses in Hillsborough County.

*"...so much advertising on those buses you couldn't tell if it was a bus or...they decorate the whole sucker I mean."*

*"It's not bad, I give 'em credit for it. And I see on their benches they have like business cards."*

Furthermore, the media has contributed to some participants' positive perception of more fuel-efficient vehicles in Hillsborough County.

*"One thing I saw on the news, Tampa got new buses I heard or that they run a lot cleaner. I don't know, I thought that was pretty good."*

*"Yeah like um I heard they were getting three miles per gallon, now they get eight, I heard that was a good thing, that's cool."*

Overall, the perceptions regarding bus transit held group participants do not appear to be affected substantially by the media.

### **Conditions for Use and Suggested Improvements**

Participants provided insight into those conditions that would encourage them to consider using bus transit.

*"I am totally not against taking the bus. I would take the bus, if it saves me time, if it saves me money in the long run."*

*"If the benefits outweigh the non-benefits or the minor, what I think should be minor inconveniences but things like having to stand at a bus stop at five o'clock in the morning so I can get to work ten miles away by seven-thirty, eight o'clock, that's not convenient. But I'd be willing to do it if they could get me there within say an hour. I'd even give them a stinkin' hour to get me there just get me there without two transfers."*



Group participants also offered suggestions for improving service as well as the image of bus transit. Suggestions included more lighting at stops, locating stops near businesses, and creating more secure environments overall.

*“I think if they start cleaning up the people that just come around the bus stops and more lighting and you know just tried to create a safer looking place.”*

*“But the thing is I don’t see how they could improve it unless they spent so much money.”*

*“That makes me wonder though, you know, that bus stop that I would use if I had to is like on Dale Mabry like just in the grass area off the side and I’ve never really noticed, why don’t they put these bus stops say like in the Publix parking lot where there’s just more people, you would feel more safe, you know you’d have lights, and I never have seen that, you know?”*

An Adopt-A-Stop program to improve bus stops was suggested by one participant who had been involved with such a program in Portland, Oregon.

*“One of the things they did to keep the buses cleaner and safer as far as the stops was they made the riders self-responsible for it. What they would do is they would ask for volunteers, cuz people who typically ride the bus, especially during the weekdays are standing at the same bus stop looking at the same garbage on the ground and what they did was, they asked for volunteers say on a two, three month basis and say you know what, you take this stop all the time, do you want to be responsible for cleaning up this stop? But in return we’re going to give you either a free bus pass, a discount or whatever.”*

#### **Summary of Focus Group Number 4**

Participants in Focus Group Number 4 reported using personal vehicles exclusively as their mode of transportation. This choice is primarily related to the perceived convenience of personal vehicles.

Based on participants’ prior experience, public transportation received mixed reviews. The group expressed an overall negative perception of public bus service, particularly within Hillsborough County. Using the bus is perceived to be inconvenient for

participants' busy lifestyles. In general, participants believe bus transit serves low-income populations and those who may not drive, such as senior citizens or students.

Convenience emerged as the primary factor in participants' decision to not use bus transit. Those factors considered most inconvenient included wait and travel times, transfers, scheduling, and routes. Participants also considered the image of bus use to be negative and admitted to a level of embarrassment if they were to be seen waiting for a bus.

This group seemed to be only minimally concerned about issues of transit safety and security. Participants believe buses to be safer than are personal vehicles in the event of accident, primarily related to their larger size. Regarding issues of personal security participants expressed a generally negative perception. Waiting alone or for long periods, particularly at night, was considered to be potentially dangerous. Although participants did express an unfavorable view, it is apparent that safety and security concerns are not prohibiting participants from utilizing bus service.

The group suggested that improvements should be made to the image of bus transit as well as the condition of the stops. Furthermore, cost and time savings, as compared to a personal vehicle, would encourage bus use among participants.

### **Focus Group Number 5**

**June 26, 2002**

**11:00 AM – 1:00 PM**

Participants in Focus Group Number 5 were recruited through USF's Learning in Retirement Program. The discussion was conducted at CUTR with ten senior participants over the age of 55, six females and four males. Six of the ten participants reported their ethnicity to be white or Caucasian; one reported ethnicity as Hispanic; and three participants chose not to report ethnicity. Three participants were in the 55 – 64 age category and all others were over the age of 65. Five participants reported to be married; two are widowed; two are divorced; and one participant reported being separated. There is an average of 1.6 working vehicles per participant household, and only one participant reported that she does not drive.

Total household income for 2001 per participant ranged from \$10,000 to more than \$50,000. Three participants reported household incomes great than \$50,000; three reported having incomes in the \$40,000 – \$44,999 range; one reported to be in the \$45,000 – \$49,999 income category; one reported income in the \$25,000 – \$29,999

category; one claimed income in the \$20,000 – \$24,999 range; and one participant reported income in the \$10,000 -- \$14,999 category.

Participants were also asked about their transit habits. While no participants reported that they use transit at least once per week, one participant reported having used transit in the prior six months.

### **Participant Travel Characteristics**

All participants reported using personal vehicles as their chosen mode of transportation within Hillsborough County. Similar to statements from other groups, these participants consider themselves as not needing public transportation because they drive personal vehicles.

*“I haven’t needed to use public transportation because I drive.”*

*“I’d ride public transportation. I never really needed it.”*

### **Prior Use of Public Transportation**

Although most participants reported that they currently drive personal vehicles as their primary mode of transportation, many claimed to have used public transportation in other areas of the United States. Participants reported convenient and pleasant experiences using bus service in cities such as Atlanta, Nashville, and Honolulu.

*“Fifty years ago I lived in Atlanta and I was a working person who went all the way from Marietta into Atlanta to work every day, into the city. Rode the bus back and forth every day, very reliable, knew where I was going and knew where it was going. I could transfer to any place; there was no need to have a car in that area unless you wanted to get outside, you know on the weekends and go out of the city somewhere...Now of course they have the MARTA system, the subway system which we, when I go there I use it to get around and go to you know other shopping areas or theaters or wherever you want to go.”*

*“Yeah, I lived in Nashville, Tennessee and we lived out in a suburb and I was doing some graduate work at Vanderbilt and I had to go all the way across town and we had a Volkswagen whose performance was very unreliable. So I would frequently ride the bus and I would ride downtown,*

*and there was a big terminal there, you know and then from there I would ride over to the school. So to me it was sort of an adventure, you know because I saw a lot of people that I never got to see and it was fun. But what I'm trying to say is the bus was convenient, you know. It would take you downtown and from there then you would pick up the bus that you wanted to go, where you wanted to go. So it was pretty good service."*

*"Yeah and I would take cooking classes and then I would get out of the class and get back on the bus, I'd go all the way back. Well on the way I went through the mountains and you know while they're driving I could look out the window and sightsee and it was you know it was great experience and they were so good about transfers. I didn't know a thing about Honolulu and the streets and stuff. I just said, I'm going here and they would tell me, okay time, you need a transfer, you get on the bus, you tell 'em where you're going."*

As did the seniors in Focus Group Number 1, a number of participants in this group remembered fondly the use of streetcars, particularly in Tampa, many years ago.

*"Well see I lived in Tampa when we had streetcars and the buses and that many years ago."*

### **Opinions on Transit Users**

The most commonly held perception regarding who typically uses bus transit, at least those who use the bus within Hillsborough County, is that they are low-income populations who have no other option for their transportation. Numerous comments were made during the discussion to that effect.

*"And I think the bus system here is geared towards taking maybe lower income people who do not have transportation to and from work period and I don't think it's used for much of anything else."*

*"At least that's the perception. That it's for the lower income people and the others just don't ride it."*

*"Okay, people who ride public transportation are looked at as second-class citizens I guess. Lower income because if they had the income they could afford to buy a car to take them door-to-door. So you're looking at people of color, you're looking at people who are not from the United*

*States who are not here, who were not born here, you're looking for people who live in housing that is not up to par, I mean people from Tampa Palms don't ride the bus to the International Mall. They get in their cars and they go."*

Participants clearly believe that public bus service is the transportation of "last resort," and that if patrons had a true mode choice, they would not choose to use the bus.

*"The fact is that those who ride the bus are only riding the bus cuz it's absolutely necessary for them to ride the bus. They have no other alternative. If they had another alternative they wouldn't be riding the bus. And that is what the situation is here in Hillsborough County."*

*"But here in Tampa the attitude is, and the fact is, you don't ride a bus unless you have to, you have no other alternative. And that's the big difference between Hillsborough County and other cities like we were referring to; it's not that way in Chicago, it's not that way in Baltimore."*

Participants also indicated a certain level of comfort that may exist in being around passengers who more closely resemble themselves.

*"And so that's really when you're looking at busing, we do see the rest of the world from our eyes, since we're affluent, we couldn't afford this since we're retired, we couldn't afford to be retired without income. We see these systems and we seem them very few people riding them other than when you drive down Fletcher Avenue you see a lone person, that isn't well-dressed, that isn't very very affluent waiting on that bus."*

*"It's difficult to do, to get our mindset to change to be with people who are not like us."*

### **Perceptions of Using Bus Transit**

Based upon personal experiences and observations, participants expressed a variety of opinions regarding what it is or would be like to use bus transportation. This group made no reference to service availability, with the exception of one participant who stated that a bus stop within a two or three-block distance from one's home was reasonable.

***Lack of Information***

Many participants in Focus Group Number 5 indicated they were unaware of certain aspects of local bus transit, primarily routes and scheduling.

*“The bus stops about a block and a half from my house but I don’t know where it goes.”*

*“Getting to a bus, where does it go?”*

*“Unknown quantity, schedules, availability, destinations.”*

*“I sorta put the blame on me. I said, not sure how to use it, where do I catch a bus? Will it take me to where I want to go? Will I get back home? What happens if I miss the bus?”*

*“Can I transfer and it would help if they had something, folders, brochures or something that were available to people who were interested.”*

One participant also expressed confusion regarding fares and accepted forms of payment.

*“You know I don’t even know how much it costs to get on the bus in Tampa. I’ve never understood you know how much it was, do I have to have a token? Can I put money in it?”*

Participants considered the lack of such relevant knowledge to be a potential barrier to bus transit use, and one that may be removed for some if information were readily available.

*“I think in some way people hesitate about transportation because they don’t know anything about it.”*

*“So I would ride the bus if I had more information on it I think. I think.”*

One participant noted that the printed information materials are confusing to use.

*“And I find, get all of these schedules, which are almost take a computer expert to figure out how to match up.”*

### ***Inconvenience***

In further exploring the perceptions related to transit use, participants were adamant that the routes and schedules for bus service are suitable for their transportation needs. Most particularly, buses do not go where they want to go. In addition, they do not serve the times of day or night that participants would like to travel. Participants consider bus service within Hillsborough County to be inaccessible.

*“If there’s something in the Performing Arts Center or there’s something at the Ice Palace that a senior citizen who does not drive at night wants to go to there is no accessibility.”*

*“It’s still limited where you can meet the bus transportation and then again sometimes you can’t get a bus during the time that you need to get somewhere downtown and get back without having a wait or go somewhere else and circle around. It’s very limited on how you can get there. Therefore we do not use the bus at all and I don’t know what we’ll do when we get to where we can’t drive because we both have driven for so many years.”*

*“I’ve just been appalled that Tampa calls itself a great city and there’s no transportation. You know what they have is virtually useless and they wonder why people don’t ride it, because you know it’s not accessible to you and it’s not going where you need to go.”*

*“And the unavailability of the transportation; it’s just not available.”*

As mentioned during Focus Group Numbers 1 and 2, several participants in this group took issue with the economic feasibility of large buses with few passengers.

*“And they were trying to run city buses, big city buses, when I lived in Sun City you’d see a fifty passenger bus coming down the county road to Sun City, thirty or thirty-five miles away, the same size bus they use in Tampa and there’d be nobody on it.”*

*“And I’d like to make a comment of what you said about the buses being empty. What buses I see, particularly in north Hillsborough County is the same phenomena like that and I often wonder, what a waste of money to see this big, expensive bus with one or no one on the bus and that’s just not every once in a while. It seems to be consistent; it’s always like that. And it just seems to me is there some bureaucracy that is saying that you gotta run these big buses? What happened to the little mini bus, four or*

*five passenger one? That would take care of the same thing, instead of having one large bus, have four or five small ones.”*

*“I have that is was inefficient because we talked about those big buses with nobody on them and they’re always complaining that it’s so expensive they can’t continue it so I think the efficiency must, they need efficiency experts to help ‘em out.”*

### **Perceptions of Safety and Security**

#### ***Bus Safety***

Participants generally believe that the bus is a safe means of transportation. Buses are perceived less likely to be involved in accidents than are personal vehicles, and to be safer in the event of an accident.

*“I think it’s a trade-off. When you’re in you car you’re concerned about being in an accident. When you’re on a bus you don’t have that concern, as much.”*

*“One of the reasons why I would like to see a nice, efficient system to go downtown is so that I don’t have to use my car and risk the chance of being in an accident. That would give me incentive to use the public transportation.”*

#### ***Personal Safety***

One of the concerns participants have related to their personal safety is crossing busy or wide streets in order to access bus stops. Crosswalks are considered to be necessary for safety and signal timing should also allow enough time for safe crossing.

*“Crosswalks too, I mean anyone that needs to get across Fletcher Avenue to catch a bus, forget it. If you survive crossing you’d be lucky.”*

*“The time element is like so many seconds. They’ve planned it, it’s like less than two minutes and for crossing it’s not so much age as much as safety.”*



### **Personal Security**

Most of the commentary regarding participants' perceptions of transit safety and security were related to their personal security. Participants expressed a level of anxiety regarding waiting for the bus, more so than for being on the bus itself.

*"If you're going to use the bus, you'd like to know that you're safe waiting. I don't think getting on the bus is the problem but while you're waiting for the bus, to get on, I think that's a little scary, or would be."*

*"The getting off the bus versus getting out of your car in a certain place and feeling insecure. I would suggest that one of the things I would feel insecure about would reverse that. When I'm done with something, I can get in my car and go. When I'm done with something and then I have to stand there and wait ten, fifteen, twenty minutes for a bus. That would be the area which I would have the most safety concern."*

*"I'd have to be sitting there for ten, fifteen, twenty minutes waiting for the bus to come, where if I use my car I can get done with whatever I'm doing, walk right out of the car and go right away."*

Such feelings of anxiety apparently increase after dark, particularly if one is alone and the area is not well lit.

*"Just, just getting off the bus and being alone. And again I'm independent."*

*"I just think if the area's well lighted and I wouldn't have as much fear getting off I guess downtown if I were going say to the Performing Arts or the Ice Palace or something because there'd be a lot of people around."*

*"I think that a bus stop needs to be well-lighted so that if you're going to come back in the evening that you are going to feel safe."*

*"Because of where you're dropped off as you're going home you might be more alone and that might be more intimidating late, you know course we wouldn't have to worry about it here cuz it doesn't run late, right?"*

The security of one's personal vehicle while it is parked in a park and ride lot was also considered to be an important issue for those who may utilize such a facility.

*"The problem with these park and ride ones is certainly safety. You're concerned about yourself as well as your car when it's in there."*

*“Wouldn’t you like to know that your car would be safe too? Or that it would be there when you got back?”*

*“That would have to do with making the streets where the bus stops, you know the bus stops be well-lighted and in areas where you would feel safe getting on and off or leaving your car if it were a park and ride kind of situation and make sure that it was in an area where it was open and you would feel safe. If you’ve gone to Performing Arts at night and come home at eleven o’clock and get off of a bus in an area, am I gonna be afraid to go to my car?”*

Overall, participants did not express a high level of confidence regarding their personal safety and security while using bus transit. Several general comments were made to this effect.

*“I enjoy driving and it’s just, I can’t imagine not being able to drive, but I know that time is probably coming and it frightens me to think about it because I don’t have any secure feelings about the transportation that’s available right now.”*

*“Those are problems we have, inconvenience and safety for us itself, shelters, crossing streets, sidewalks, lighted areas, shelter areas, posted signs of the buses itself.”*

Some participants did indicate they might be more comfortable using bus transit compared to personal vehicles, if they were to use it for downtown evening events.

*“Much more comfortable on a bus, then I don’t have to worry about parking or whether I have the right change to get out of the parking garage and who’s lurking.”*

*“Well if you got on a bus where everybody was going to the Performing Arts Center, I don’t think you’d feel threatened at all by anybody. When you’re all going for the same purpose so it’s a very comfortable situation.”*

In reference to others on the bus, participants reiterated their belief that people are most comfortable around others they resemble or to whom they relate.

*“Well aren’t you always in a place of safety when you’re with like people? So in other words if there was a bus system that the seniors were comfortable with using, then you would have no fears at all because there*

*would be people just like you. I think the reason that you may feel unsafe in a parking garage is the unknown, the same with the bus system. You don't know who's on that bus so you feel maybe a little threatened."*

### ***Effects of the Media on Participant Perceptions***

Participant commentary does not indicate that television or newspaper media have had much effect on the perceptions they hold. One participant reported having read something negative regarding security at a park and ride lot, but no others mentioned knowledge or opinions they had garnered from such media.

Several participants feel there is not enough media coverage or advertising of public transportation, particularly in Hillsborough County. Furthermore, improving the image of public transportation and expanding the knowledge of services are considered responsibilities of transit agencies.

*"But that's part of their responsibility to advertise and tell you how to be able to do this and there's not enough of that done either."*

*"Sure, they don't do enough advertising and publish, they talk about the Tampa Tribune and how available it is to everybody."*

*"Don't you think that the image that public transportation brings to the public is up to public transportation to improve, not for us to have to constantly ask for it? Those are things that should be I think right out there in front that everybody should realize when they provide public transportation that it needs to be safe and it needs to be in the newspaper and schedules have to be good and where they stop should be important. So I don't feel that it's up to the public to have to persuade public transportation to do this. Public transportation if that's what it is, public transportation should take it upon themselves to improve their own image."*

### **Conditions for Use and Suggested Improvements**

Several participants noted that they have thought about using bus transit or that they would like to use it for reasons such as avoiding interstate driving or downtown parking and environmental concerns. Although some expressed reluctance, there is some level of interest or willingness to use the bus.

*“I use the Interstate quite a bit so one of these days I’m just gonna go to the little parking lot and park my car, get on the bus, and read a book while I’m being transported downtown, do my stuff, get back on the bus. I think what I’m afraid of is that I won’t make it out of the library, out onto the bus in time and then I’m gonna be stranded downtown.”*

*“So I have thought frequently about bus transportation. I haven’t attempted it yet. The bus stops about a block and a half from my house but I don’t know where it goes. Anyway I think it’s something that we all need to look into, you know?”*

Many group participants indicated that there are issues notably relevant to senior citizens that may affect the future of their driving capability, and therefore their use of transit.

*“If I couldn’t drive I don’t know what I would do. I love to drive, I don’t mind getting in my car, I don’t mind going wherever, whether its up north or where so I hope I never have to depend on bus service but I don’t know that that’s true so one of these days I guess we all have to look at that.”*

*“I know as we get older we’re going to need that and right now there’s no need of all of the cars to be downtown Tampa when they could take care of it in a simpler way but I’m not one to want to give up my car or truck to drive either.”*

*“I’ve never driven because of peripheral vision problems so I depend on my husband but since his driving is now limited to daytime driving, that prevents us from doing anything in the evenings.”*

*“Yes, I think we all are very, very reluctant to give up our independence but its not just the fact that we’re getting older and our eyesight’s going, our arthritis is bothering us when we have to shift the gear with the wrong hand or that kind of thing. We are going to have to depend on mass transportation because of the environment and the gas.”*

Participants also expressed the need to plan for seniors and to accommodate their needs. This is of particularly importance in Florida because of the number of senior citizens living in the state.

*“Well I think seniors in general. If you look at the state of Florida, its predominantly inhabited by senior citizens and the things that are being promoted are not geared toward seniors, they’re just geared towards the general public, excluding the largest part of the population.”*

*“As we get older, and I think that we have to look at this, it’s difficult to first of all sometimes to get to a bus stop. Secondly to then get back and get on the bus. I think we have to look in Florida particularly; we’re all getting older down here. We have a lot of retired people and there has to be something done to help the people who are living down here.”*

*“Maybe a picture, they have pictures for all the foreign people as to what these signs read and now they’ve got little pictures that tell you men and women but they don’t have pictures that tell you the bus and which where it goes and the place that you’s going to, they don’t have that for us.”*

The group also suggested a variety of other improvements, not necessarily specific to seniors, that may serve to improve bus transit in general, and specifically in Hillsborough County. One aspect of improvement is related to access and service availability. Participants suggested feeder services and special event transportation.

*“My other comment is Tampa and Hillsborough County have a very different set of circumstances in my book to look at. It’s urban sprawl and I don’t think the county system should be trying to run the city bus system. They should have satellite with county buses coming into some, wherever you want and the city bus system should take care of the city.”*

*“I was wondering, we have the Performing Arts Center, we have so many at the Ice Palace, all the things that offer us something cultural, why is it that they don’t have the buses that have someplace that you can go park your car and then go down to all of these, I drive, I go to Tampa Performing Arts Center a lot, it would certainly be nice to be able to get on to something and not have to worry about the parking and have to get out, why can’t they have transportation for things like this?”*

*“I can’t understand as you said why they wouldn’t have, be able to have say a special Carrollwood area, Temple Terrace area, south Florida area, a special bus for the Performing Arts, you know even if it was on a certain night that they would have it we could all get our tickets on that night, we’d know ahead of time that you could do that and you’d have the*

*transportation. We'd love it, we hate that drive home at night. The drive down there's nightmarish but the one home..."*

*"The point is that it seems to me park and ride is never going to be successful in terms of large volume usage. There needs to be a system developed that you have feeders. That you are able from your home to easily walk to to get on a small feeder that would take you to a point that then you can get on an express system that takes you downtown."*

Participants also discussed the responsibilities of the public as well as transit agencies in making improvements and obtaining information. According to participants in this group, transit agencies should do more in conjunction with local newspapers to educate the public about their services. The public and its political representatives hold the responsibility of ensuring adequate public transportation.

*"But they will not get anyplace with public transportation until the politicians get leaned on in the city council or in the county commission to do something for the citizens about public transportation. And the incentive idea, a lot of cities, downtown congested areas, the city government leans or goes to the corporations and says how about giving your employees some incentives to come downtown by bus. You pay half and we'll pay half, give 'em free bus tickets and give 'em transportation incentives and during, after rush hours for other people to lower the rates, during rush hours they're necessary and they get the rates but they can't expect to make a profit on our transportation system. But anyway that's all I have to say."*

*"We do need more information, we need notices, we need to know what it costs us, even if the Tampa Tribune is so interested in getting the public involved, let 'em make a list out on one page of their paper and say something about, this is what the transportation system offers us. There's so much concern about how many people in business have been recognized for their achievements such as so and so and people in obituaries, giving free obituaries, not saying anything about obituaries but we don't get anything that says, this is what this city offers and why don't we use it?"*

### **Summary of Focus Group Number 5**

Participants in Focus Group Number 5 reported the exclusive use of personal vehicles as their mode of transportation. Because they have access to personal vehicles, bus transit is considered to be unnecessary and inconvenient. Bus use was associated with those who cannot afford private transportation and those who have no other transportation option.

The bus is perceived as being inconvenient, primarily in terms of scheduling and routes. Participants claim the bus does not service the areas to which they would like to travel at the times they would like to go. In addition, there is a particular level of confusion associated with this information, and participants admitted they are generally unaware of how and where bus service in Hillsborough County operates.

The bus is perceived as being safer than is a personal vehicle in the event of an accident, primarily because of its larger size. In relation to their personal safety, participants expressed concern about crossing wide and/or busy streets, particularly when there is no crosswalk with appropriate signal timing. Personal security is more of a concern and is most related to waiting at a bus stop, especially if it is dark. Participants in this group expressed an interest in special event or location-specific bus service, such as that for senior citizens attending events at downtown cultural centers. They indicated that such a service may be convenient and more secure than the use of personal vehicles.

Participants acknowledged the possible need for bus transit as the aging process prohibits or restricts the ability to drive. They suggested that improvements to bus service that would specifically assist aging senior citizens are needed and that this is particularly important because of the number of seniors in Florida.

### **Focus Group Number 6**

**June 26, 2002**

**1:00 – 3:00 PM**

Participants in Focus Group Number 6 were recruited from participants in USF's Learning in Retirement Program. The discussion was conducted at CUTR with nine senior participants, seven females and two males. Eight of the participants reported their ethnicity as white or Caucasian and one participant chose not to report ethnicity. All of the participants were over the age of 65. Six of the participants have been widowed; one is married; one is single; and one participant is divorced. There is an

average of 1.33 working vehicles per participant household, and all participants reported that they drive. One participant claimed zero working vehicles were available in her household.

Total household income for 2001 per participant ranged from \$20,000 to more than \$50,000. Three participants reported household incomes of more than \$50,000; one reported to be in the \$45,000 – \$49,000 income category; one reported income in the \$35,000 – \$39,999 range; one reported to be in the \$30,000 – \$34,999 income category; one reported income between \$25,000 and \$29,999; and one participant reported to be in the \$20,000 – \$24,999 income category. One participant chose not to report total household income.

Participants were also asked about their transit habits. No participants reported that they use transit at least once per week, and none of the participants reported having used transit in the prior six months.

### **Participant Travel Characteristics**

All nine participants in Focus Group Number 6 reported that they use personal vehicles as their chosen mode of transportation.

### **Prior Use of Public Transportation**

Several participants reported favorably their experiences of having used public transportation in metropolitan areas of the United States such as New York, Boston, Detroit, and San Francisco. They generally found the bus, subway, and cable cars to be efficient modes of transportation. One participant reported having used the bus and subway in London as well.

*“I’ve used the bus in New York, I’ve lived up there off and on and they’re very efficient, run often and no problem. I used a cable car in San Francisco. I lived out there for a while. That was a fun ride, jump on and off.”*

*“Yes the public transportation in Boston is usually pretty good. I’ve used it.”*

*“Well I used the subway mostly because it moved much faster being underground in New York than the bus. Now when I go visit I like the bus*



*cuz I can see things. And I used the subways all days and all places, I went everywhere and I never had a problem with it. I think it's something maybe visitors have more problems because they're not savvy. You know, you just kinda, you get to know pretty young how to use, you know, not to go on an empty car or things like that, you know."*

*"Yes the bus and the subways in England with no problem, even though we didn't understand their English."*

*"It seems to be true all over the world. Every place in Europe and Asia and other places public transportation is used by everyone and it's very effective."*

One participant mentioned her most experience using bus transit in Hillsborough County. She expressed displeasure with the length of time it took to make her one-way trip.

*"Anyway I have used the buses occasionally but I think the last time I used the bus was an occasion when my car was in the shop and I was teaching in a private school in South Tampa so I had to catch the bus at six o'clock or six-thirty in the morning. The bus line is only a few blocks from my house, but then I had to transfer at some point. Anyway it took me an hour, hour and a half to get down there to Bay Shore and Bay to Bay."*

As was mentioned in the other two focus groups conducted with seniors, one participant in this group recalled favorably the use of streetcars in Hillsborough County when she was younger.

*"I keep thinking back to the times when I was young here in Tampa, everything was slower, I know. But I mean I didn't drive, I mean when I was a teenager. I mean if I wanted to go to see a friend across town I got on which ever streetcar served our house, got a transfer, got on a Hyde Park car and went where I wanted to go. Didn't cost much, it got me there, I could depend on it, they ran fairly frequently and that was okay."*

### **Opinions on Transit Users**

Regarding whom they believe utilizes bus transit, participant comments indicated they think it is primarily low-income populations who cannot afford personal vehicles.

*“Used by the poor. Used by people who can’t afford private transportation cuz own a car costs about \$5000 a year.”*

*“Only for people who do not own cars, I say the same thing. I was just politely saying, the poor.”*

*“It’s, I mean, you’d only do it if you had to.”*

*“The poor who can’t afford anything else.”*

Participants believe that those who use the bus are those who have no other transportation option. Specifically, they mentioned the disabled and senior citizens as being in need of bus transit if they are not able to operate a personal vehicle.

*“I believe disabled people use the buses too. I think we left those out completely. I believe people who are unable to drive a car but can function otherwise.”*

*“I see a number of elderly women also using it, more elderly women than men for whatever reason. Maybe because they live longer and so there are more of them. At the point where they can’t drive anymore, or they were used to having their husband drive and then if their husband passes away then they don’t drive or aren’t comfortable with driving and they will use public transportation.”*

Others who may have lost their license to drive due to legal infractions, such as drunk driving, are also considered to be potential bus patrons.

*“And we didn’t mention the people that ride the buses are quite often people that for one reason or another have lost their licenses, drunken driving.”*

### **Perceptions of Using Bus Transit**

Based upon personal experiences and observations, participants expressed a variety of opinions regarding what it is or would be like to use bus transportation.

### **Service Accessibility**

Several participants discussed their perception that the pattern of suburban community development in Hillsborough County as being prohibitive to transit use.

*“Well like about the gated communities, they, there's no parking, in other words if the bus were outside, there's no place for the people to park their cars. And those gated communities are large so you'd have to walk or get someone to drop you off and then they'd have to move the car cuz there's no place to park the cars.”*

*“And the way so many communities are set up, the gated communities with one exit and one entrance and the community can be quite large and therefore you could only have the bus stop maybe at one spot and yet you might live quite far from that spot so that's been a trend that they're trying to start to change.”*

In addition to the ability to walk, one participant credits the “culture of not walking” as important reason bus stops are not considered accessible.

*“Well it's too far to walk for some people and there's a tendency not to walk, there's a culture of not walking here, even a few blocks.”*

### **Lack of Information**

Participant comments during the focus group reveal a general lack of knowledge in where and how bus transit operates. Their statements also reveal a curiosity and potential willingness to use the bus.

*“Yes, I was thinking about that because in South Tampa at Britton Plaza they have sort of a bus mall in there and I've often wondered how long it would take me if I drove my car over there and parked it and tried to get out to a class at USF. And I've never gone to do it, I've just often wondered about it, you know because I know we should be trying to conserve fuels and everything because I'm sure I could not go directly. I wondered just how many changes I would have to make and it's very difficult to find out information about transportation too. I tried to find out for somebody a year ago and really I ended up with not getting much information at all, which is very difficult.”*

*“I notice that so many of the buses have racks on the front for bicycles and this interests me because I thought if I were to ride my bicycle to a*

*bus stop and say I did get on the bus and I put my bike on front and then I go downtown, where do I put my bike after I get off the bus?"*

Participants stated directly that there is not adequate and readily available information about bus scheduling.

*"I just found out yesterday that at the mall, at the information desk, I didn't do it myself but my friend told me that the bus schedules are there. But I never knew that. They don't advertise it, they don't market it well."*

*"And so there's not enough known about what's going on."*

*"We need to have something in our hands, bus schedules that everyone can have, pick up at the post office or whatever so that we can depend on it and schedules that are dependable."*

Printed information materials are often considered confusing, but participants in this group noted that even when it is provided over the telephone the information might be meaningless or unhelpful to someone unfamiliar with the transit system. This problem is also perceived as one of particular importance for seniors.

*"I called the bus people and they rattled off some numbers and things, which were meaningless, you see. You say, oh well route such and such is gonna go where you are, well route such and such doesn't mean a thing to me. Say Route 22 or something like that wouldn't have any meaning, you see, I think that would be part of it."*

*"I think, as we get older too [as someone] said, they rattled off numbers and you try to write them down and you can't remember did he say this or did he say that."*

### ***Inconvenience***

As observed in other groups, participants in this discussion have the perception that bus transit is generally inconvenient for their lives. The weather and lack of shelter or seating are often important concerns in the convenience of using transit.

*“You either roast there or you’re saturated with rain. You know, they don’t have shelters in most places, I don’t think do they?”*

*“Particularly in Florida, because of the heat I think. And the weather conditions generally makes it very unattractive to sit out. I wouldn’t sit out there on the corner waiting for a damn bus frankly in the blazing heat.”*

*“I was struck by that the other day when it was raining so and to stop and wait for a bus and that deluge took two young women who were just leaving where they were working as interns or something and they’re standing in this deluge with no shelter and if it’s, even the sun is terrific and if you’re having trouble walking, there are more benches than there are shelters, but there aren’t benches everywhere either.”*

Waiting for the bus and the time it takes to complete a trip are also considered by many to be inconveniences in using the bus.

*“Well I don’t feel it as a cultural thing so much as I say it’s slow. I mean if I want to go somewhere it would take me forever. So why should I patronize the bus when I mean when I have my car and can go there quickly? I mean it’s the speed of the transportation to me that is unacceptable.”*

*“Well if you don’t have to wait but a few minutes it’s not as bad as if you wait a half an hour.”*

*“But the inconvenience of having to wait and then if you want to go to two or three different places in your shopping or whatever it is, or to visit. I mean how do you fit that in on a bus schedule? It’s unrealistic.”*

The scheduling of buses is also considered to be inconvenient, particularly when compared to the convenience and freedom of a personal vehicle.

*“I don’t think there’s any competition there. I don’t think you could, they’re apples and oranges there entirely. So much more convenience in an automobile cuz you can’t compare it to riding in a bus. It takes you where*

*you want to go, it does it now, you don't wait on anything, you don't have to walk to a bus stop."*

*"Americans like things to be convenient. As contrasted with jumping in your car and going anytime you feel like it to wherever it is you want. When you get on the bus you know you may not find it so easy to get to the place that you want."*

Dependability is also a contributing factor to the perceived convenience of bus transit.

*"What I think of when I read the paper and they're cutting out different services and I think if you were economically on that to get to work and all I think it's really put a crushing blow to some of these people that have to get to work and they keep changing the schedule. And you know if they depend on it, it should be somehow, do a better job than they do. Because I would be terrified if I had to get to work and they took my bus out of service. What do you do?"*

*"It's not reliable."*

*"Sometimes, someone mentioned here, sometimes you think the bus is supposed to be at a certain place and it never comes."*

Participant discussion on the topic of convenience indicates that bus transit is not considered to be a timely, accessible, dependable, or convenient mode of transportation for many, including most of the group participants.

The economic feasibility of bus transit was also discussed during this focus group. Some participants believe that the purchase of large buses that serve few passengers is a waste of taxpayer money.

*"Empty buses. You see 'em riding around town all the time, nobody on 'em."*

*"Well I think it's very wasteful. I'm appalled to see the buses going around empty, or every time I see a bus it's empty and that's perhaps because I don't go in the rush hour any where most of the time, but during the day they seem to just wander around empty and as a tax payer I feel that's disastrous. I think that's a huge waste of public money to send empty buses around the place all the time. Buses are practically empty*

*or maybe with one person sitting in them and a full-time driver. It's just not economical."*

*"Because they didn't do a market survey or something. They bought all these big, expensive buses that they never will fill."*

### **Perceptions of Safety and Security**

#### ***Personal Safety***

With regard to personal safety while using bus transit, some participants discussed the dangers they associate with being a pedestrian or bicyclist, particularly in parts of Hillsborough County. Bus passengers are considered to be pedestrians and the area's reputation regarding pedestrian safety concerns some participants.

*"It's extremely dangerous to be a pedestrian in Tampa and a bus rider is more of a pedestrian than one in a car."*

*"The Tampa Bay area has been cited as the most dangerous place in America for walking and going out further Tampa Bay's rate of people killed while bicycling is four times the national average. And also in places like on West Village Drive the bicycle lane is about two feet wide instead of four feet wide and they admit it's not a bicycle lane, it's just to slow down the traffic and get people to riding bicycles on two feet of pavement, which is going to kill someone. So we are a dangerous area where we live in."*

*"I could go to the post office, walk easily and it'd be good for me but I have to cross MacDill and it's not as bad as the Bay Shore but I will get in my car and drive to the post office just because I do not feel safe to walk even where the, there's a stop light but I don't even feel safe to do that because most of those roads they almost use as a speedway."*

*"If it were my side of the road I'd walk, but it's not. I have to cross a busy street."*

### **Personal Security**

Most participants hold a generally negative perception regarding their personal security if they were to use bus transit. Waiting or walking after dark was cited as causes for particular concern.

*“Well you know you get out and go walking; you don’t want to walk around a circle that’s completely dark. In my neighborhood there aren’t streetlights around a circle. People walk it in the daytime even without sidewalks, but they don’t walk late at night.”*

*“I don’t go out and walk at seven in the morning.”*

*“I don’t know what they could do but I’ve often tried to put myself in the place of somebody who works say at Dillards or someplace and they live in a neighborhood that’s not well lighted but after work they don’t get off until maybe eight or nine o’clock and I would be very insecure myself to walk maybe two or three blocks to my home in the dark.”*

Longer wait times are also perceived as being potentially threatening to personal security.

*“So no matter where the location you still can be in danger and one of the things that we consider when we might go to a bus stop is it makes up more vulnerable. We’re standing there waiting and we might wait fifteen minutes and we’re kind of naked standing there.”*

*“I’ve heard several people say about waiting thirty minutes for the bus and so forth. If we had a good system you’d know when the bus is coming and it would come at that time.”*

*“We wouldn’t be such obvious targets. If you’re standing there for a long time anybody who’s looking for an easy victim would spot you. But if you’re there only a few seconds or a minute or two they don’t know that you’re coming.”*

Several participants noted that they would be less fearful once they were on the bus. Waiting at the stop and being alone cause greater anxiety than actually being on the bus. Once boarded, participants indicate they would feel secure.

*“They’d wait til they’d get us alone. I don’t think there’s danger on the bus particularly.”*



*"I would feel perfectly safe once I'm on the bus. I don't really think I'd be too worried about somebody attacking me or anything... You see I'm not really worried about anybody attacking me or anything like you're bringing up here. It wouldn't bother me and once I was sitting on the bus it probably wouldn't bother in the least bit."*

Some participants cited the age and physical abilities of senior citizens as possibly making them more of a target for criminal acts. They believe there is often the perception that because someone is older he or she is an easier target than is a younger person.

*"Well I think we're more vulnerable just because of our age. I'm not able to defend myself as well as I could when I was younger."*

*"Our age and I think people that have something in mind, they're more apt to steal from a little old lady standing at a bus stop than from a macho man standing there in his younger years."*

*"Yes, they perceive us as being vulnerable. We may not be quite so vulnerable but they will perceive us as being vulnerable because of our age."*

Some focus group participants also indicated that threats to personal security may cause more concern in high crime areas, compared to those neighborhoods perceived to be "safer."

*"A lot of the security has to do with neighborhoods. It's a lot different standing on a corner at 22nd and Lake to catch a bus and standing down on Bay Shore to catch a bus. And the bus company has no control over that, or the system has no control over that."*

*"The bus company can't do anything about that. And that's a place that needs buses. There are people in there that have low income that need bus transportation. But what's a bus gonna do about the rest of the population in the neighborhood?"*

*"I guess the areas where there are a lot of drugs; you know where drug addicts may be because of the need for money there. So there are parts of Tampa where I think that for whatever reason people, some people congregate and some people might be more aware, feel more threatened in those areas."*

In contrast to those who believe that certain neighborhoods may be more dangerous than are others, other participants stated that crime could be a problem in any area of a city.

*“You’re not safe in any neighborhood.”*

*“So with any neighborhood, it’s vulnerable.”*

Amid the concerns regarding personal security raised by many in the group, one participant, notably a male, claimed to have no fear regarding his personal security.

*“Well I don’t worry, maybe I’m stupid but I don’t worry about all those safety things people have been talking about.”*

Regarding those whom they believe may cause trouble or commit crimes at bus stops or on the bus, some participants echoed the perceptions of many in the earlier focus groups. Young males, particularly teenagers, are considered by some to be the primary threat to security

*“You might have some hoodlums who got on and caused trouble.”*

*“Mostly groups of teenagers. Groups of teenage boys, to be specific. I would say, give me pause, when I see three or four teenage boys, especially if they’re carrying on, because, just, I watch out because I think there’s that, you know my feeling is that the dare mentality or the macho mentality or whatever there is, I’m not afraid of much but that makes me nervous. That puts me on guard, on alert.”*

One participant stated that although her fears were not “politically correct,” she does have particular security concerns related to African Americans and Muslims.

*“I would say to be politically correct I could say hoodlums and vandals but I can’t say blacks or Muslims or anything like that because that’s not politically correct. But I would think of all those really.”*

Others in the group disagree, contending that anyone could be a threat regardless of their age or appearance.

*“That’s not politically correct. You’re profiling; you can’t do that. Everybody is the same.”*

*“Easy access because some little old lady is walking with her purse and you would not distinguish them by the way they look necessarily. It could just be somebody even sitting in your class.”*

*“I don’t think we really can profile the word hoodlum. Hoodlums is a term that could be anyone. It doesn’t necessarily mean a teenager and also it can happen anywhere.”*

Participants suggest that remaining aware of one’s surroundings is an important protective strategy.

*“So you’re just careful. You’re aware of that and when you are stopping and you know when you drive off the interstate and there’s these people asking for money you just make sure your car door is locked and when you get out at the mall you look around. You just, you know I’m aware of it but it’s not keeping me home. I would feel the same way I think with a bus. If I were going to ride the bus I’d just be careful but it wouldn’t keep me from doing it.”*

*“That’s true, you should always be aware of what’s around you and what’s happening. I don’t want to live in a world of fear all the time.”*

Participant commentary on personal security does indicate concern, but not at a prohibitive level that would keep them from using bus transit.

### **Summary of Focus Group Number 6**

Participants in Focus Group Number 6 reported using a personal vehicle as their exclusive mode of transportation. Participants cited this choice as the most convenient for their lifestyles. Bus use is typically associated with those who cannot afford private vehicles. In addition, those such as the disabled or senior citizens who are unable to drive may use bus service. Young males, particularly teenagers, were considered to be of notable concern with regard to causing trouble or perpetrating crime.

There is a general lack of knowledge in where and how bus service within Hillsborough County operates, and participants indicated that there is not adequate or clear information on scheduling and routes. The bus is typically perceived to be inconvenient, particularly in comparisons to the use of a personal vehicle. Factors related to the inconvenience of bus use include the weather, lack of shelter, wait and travel times, scheduling, and dependability.

Participants expressed generally negative perceptions of bus transit safety and security. Pedestrian and cyclist safety were of particular concern, and participants noted that Tampa is particularly dangerous in this regard. Regarding their personal security, waiting for the bus, especially after dark, was considered to be potentially dangerous. Furthermore, longer wait times were associated with increased risk to personal security. Several participants noted that once they had boarded the bus they would feel far more secure than while waiting at the stop. The group was split regarding the likelihood of danger associated with particular neighborhoods. While some believe that security is most threatened in “high crime” areas, others expressed belief that one may be at risk regardless of the neighborhood. Awareness of one’s surroundings was cited as a crucial protective strategy, and of particular importance for senior citizens.

**APPENDIX F  
TRANSIT USER PERCEPTIONS OF TRANSIT  
SAFETY IN THE TAMPA BAY AREA**