

2016/2017 VTA On-Board Survey

Fact Sheet/Questions and Answers

The Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) are collaborating on the development and implementation of a survey of VTA transit passengers. The survey is scheduled for Fall 2016 through Spring 2017.

Why is VTA conducting a survey?

VTA is conducting the survey for several reasons. First, VTA usually conducts passenger surveys every five years or so to update information about customer travel patterns and demographics to improve planning for future services. Also, regional planners need to understand travel behavior in order to update the transit ridership models, which are used for planning purposes. In addition, VTA needs to collect certain demographic information in order to show the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) that it is complying with federal Title VI (Civil Rights) requirements.

Who is conducting the survey?

The Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) and VTA are partnering on funding and the administration of the on-board survey. We have hired ETC Institute, a market research and surveying firm, to implement the survey.

What will happen if I get surveyed?

Several things may happen if you are surveyed. You may receive a card with instruction that you will keep when you get on and return when you get off (this is the boarding-to-alighting survey). Surveyors will scan the boarding-to-alighting survey cards to determine the basic trip patterns that will be used for planning purposes and for the upcoming intercept survey. For the intercept survey, you may be asked to participate in a personal interview where the interviewer will ask questions and record answers on a computer tablet (i.e., a tablet survey). For some routes, you may be handed a paper survey and pencil and asked to fill out the questions yourself and return the survey when you get off (i.e., a paper survey).

When will the survey work be done?

The boarding-to-alighting counts started October 17th and will continue through early November, 2016. The passenger intercept surveys will start in mid-November 2016 and conclude in spring of 2017. We need enough completed surveys for the survey to be statistically significant, and we need to survey several trips on all the selected routes throughout the day.

On which routes will I see surveyors?

All routes in the VTA system will be surveyed on the weekdays. Surveyors will be out primarily on Monday through Thursday. Surveying will also take place on the weekends but on a more limited number of routes.

How do surveyors determine who will get surveyed?

Boarding-to-alighting count scanner cards are distributed to everybody as they get on the bus. Tablet surveyors randomly sample passengers. In order to avoid bias, surveyors use a predefined method to select individual riders. We want to ensure that every group of transit riders is represented in our survey; however, this random sampling method means that some riders will be surveyed multiple times while others are never surveyed.

Do I have to fill out a survey when asked?

We encourage you to fill one out if you are able because the information you provide helps VTA plan for a better and more efficient transit system. If you do not want to answer a question, just leave it blank, however, again, we encourage you to answer all questions as this provides us with more complete data.

What happens if I do not have time to complete a survey before my bus stop?

If you think you will not have enough time to fill out the survey on the bus, let the surveyor know a few stops ahead of time and the surveyor will ask for contact information and the survey will continue by phone in a follow up call.

What happens if I have don't speak English well?

Many surveyors are bilingual and will administer the survey in other languages if possible, however, VTA riders are very diverse and speak many different languages. If the survey cannot be administered in the language of the rider, the surveyor will request contact information and the survey will be administered in the appropriate language through a follow-up phone call.

What kinds of questions should I expect on the survey?

The survey asks questions about the one-way trip you are currently making, such as where you started your trip and where you plan to end your trip. The survey also asks about transfers and trip purpose. Near the end of the survey, we ask demographic and service-quality questions. Surveys should last about five to seven minutes.

What should I do if I do not understand a survey question?

If you do not understand a question or need further clarification, please ask a surveyor on your bus.

Can I fill out a survey if I was not asked?

No. This survey is a random sample survey, so please fill out a survey only if you are asked.

Why are some surveys being conducted on tablets while others are on paper?

A growing trend for on-board transit surveys is to use personal interviews with computer tablets instead of traditional pencil and paper surveys. Tablet-based surveys have a number of benefits. First, they allow riders with low English skills and riders with disabilities to take the survey since surveyors can guide riders through questions and record their answers. Second, they have been shown to collect more accurate location data since tablets use technology to locate riders' starting and ending locations and surveyors can error check responses. Third, the tablets are able to clean, organize, and present data in real time. While tablet-based surveys have many advantages, they take longer than paper-based surveys and are more expensive because of the time surveyors spend asking questions. As a result, we decided to use a combination of tablet-based and paper-based surveys as appropriate. Some routes, such as short or high-ridership routes, will only have paper-based surveys. Other routes will only use tablet-based surveys. Some routes will have both.

What if I have a question, comments, or a complaint about the survey?

Please call VTA at 408-321-2300, or email VTA at customer.service@vta.org