

2017 ADA Paratransit Survey Results

Prepared July 2017



**Pioneer Valley
Transit Authority**

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	1
Introduction	3
Methodology.....	7
Findings	11
Discussion.....	21
Attachment 1: Survey	25
Attachment 2: Written Responses.....	27

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Executive Summary

The Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVTA) periodically surveys its paratransit customers using demand response transportation service. This report reviews findings from the most recent survey, conducted in the winter of 2017. A sample of 500 riders certified under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was surveyed, with 76% of those surveyed responding.

PVTA has a high degree of confidence that this survey represents an accurate snapshot of its ADA customers. As a result of multiple reminders, the response rate was more than double the response rate in 2011, and validity tests suggest a low likelihood of response bias. Thus, the findings from this survey should be highly reflective of the demographics, opinions, and other characteristics of the whole ADA customer population.

Key findings are:

1. **Overall Satisfaction** – There remains a high degree of satisfaction with PVTA’s ADA service, with 93% of customers rating the service overall as either “Good” or “Excellent.” This is consistent with findings from prior years’ surveys.
2. **Areas for Improvement** – The lowest-rated aspects of the service were on-time pick-ups and drop-offs, travel time, automated arrival notifications, and the ADA certification process. For on-time performance and travel time, PVTA works constantly to improve these aspects of service. PVTA will also investigate what specific aspects of the arrival notifications and the ADA certification process are problematic and work to improve them.
3. **Access to Technology** – Today, about half of PVTA customers have access to the internet, and 40% use smart phones. This compares to only 30% of customers using the internet in 2011. Given the growth in use of online technology, PVTA could explore ways to integrate online and/or mobile resources to improve the customer experience.
4. **General Comments** – The general comments, included in Attachment 2, reflect the same topic in the “Areas for Improvement” in the first bullet point above. However, one aspect of on-time performance had to do with increasing flexibility of pick-up times for when appointments finish early. PVTA will look into options to decrease the wait time in such circumstances.
5. **Increasing Diversity** – As with the region and the country, the PVTA customer base is becoming increasingly diverse. The proportion of riders who identified as “White” decreased from 83% in 2011 to 75% in 2017, while the proportion of those identifying as “Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish” nearly doubled, from 4.8% to 9.3%.

Finally, it is worth noting that ADA customers reported a household poverty rate of 46%, and more than one-third of them responded that without the ADA van service, they have no other transportation options. Given the fact that the top-ranked trip purpose was for medical appointments, these responses underscore that the service provides critical healthcare access for those in our communities with the fewest transportation options available.

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Introduction

The Pioneer Valley Transit Authority periodically surveys its paratransit riders to understand rider attitudes, typical trip purposes, demographics, and other information relevant to the agency's paratransit service. In the winter of 2017, PVTA conducted its ADA paratransit survey, the last survey having been completed in 2014.

PVTA uses this information for a variety of purposes. First and foremost, this information will ensure that PVTA paratransit service is of the highest possible quality, meeting the needs of its customers and providing the essential transportation services demanded. PVTA also uses this information to ensure compliance with Title VI and other state and federal regulations. And finally, survey results are used to inform actions PVTA can take to improve specific aspects of the service.

ADA Service Overview

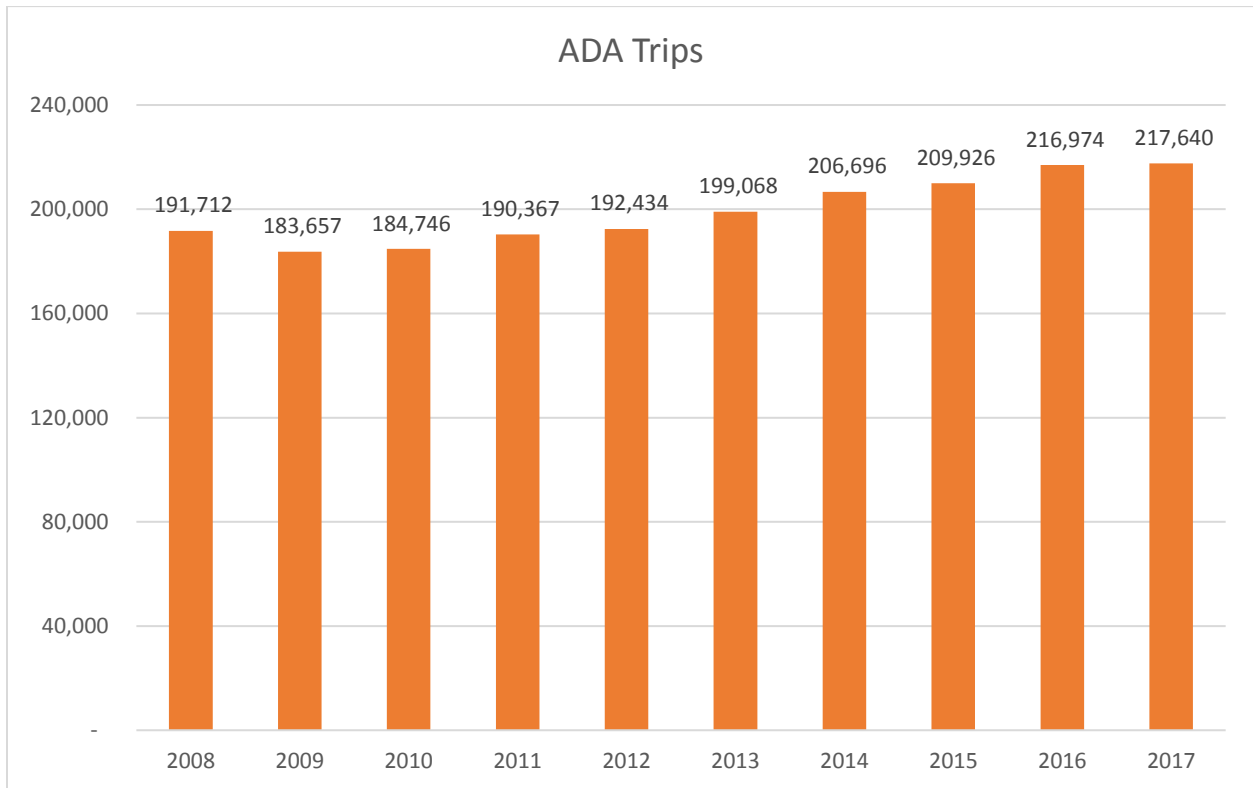
The Pioneer Valley Transit Authority provides community-wide demand response service to 21 out of the 24 member communities, with the exception of Hampden, Leverett and Pelham (see Figure 2 for a map of the PVTA service area). This service is above and beyond the minimum-required paratransit service within a $\frac{3}{4}$ mile buffer around fixed routes, mandated by the ADA.

The PVTA ADA paratransit service has the following features:

1. **20-Minute Window and 1-Hour Rule** – As per the ADA regulations, PVTA uses a 20-minute window instead of giving an exact pick-up time (e.g. 10:40 AM – 11:00 AM). Any pick-up occurring after the close of the 20-minute window is considered “late.” Furthermore, the PVTA may schedule the trip for up to one hour before or after the requested pick-up time (depending on whether it is an appointment-based trip). However, PVTA strives to pick up customers as close to the requested time as possible.
2. **Automated Phone Calls** – When customers call to schedule their trip, they are not given a pick-up window at the time of their call. Rather, they are called the night before their scheduled trip through an automated system and given the 20-minute pick-up window. For example, a customer may request a 10:00 AM pick-up on Monday. Sunday evening, the customer will receive an automated message with their pick-up window; in this case, the window may be 9:50 AM to 10:10 AM.
3. **ADA Certification** – Customers must be certified for ADA service – that is, it must be verified that their disability prevents them from using regular fixed-route PVTA service. Every three years, ADA customers must come to the PVTA office to recertify their ADA-eligible status.
4. **Shared Ride Service** – PVTA operates a shared ride service. This means that an ADA customer may need to stop several times to pick up or drop off other ADA customers before arriving at their destination.
5. **Comparable Fixed-Route Ride Times** – In general, PVTA strives to keep all paratransit trips under 60 minutes in duration. However, there are times when trips exceed 60 minutes in duration, especially when those trips cover great distances (e.g. Westfield to Hadley). ADA standards require that paratransit ride times not exceed the ride time of a comparable fixed-route trip. In most cases, comparable ride times for these long-distance trips is substantially longer than the paratransit ride time (e.g. 70 minutes for paratransit, 120 minutes for fixed-route).

In Fiscal Year 2017, PVTA provided 217,640 ADA trips on its paratransit system (not including its senior van service). It is expected that the ADA rider base will grow as the population becomes older on average (primarily driven by the Baby Boomer generation). The 2014 Paratransit Comprehensive Service Analysis estimated that PVTA should expect ADA demand to increase by at least 2% per year until 2030. This is primarily the result of an increase in the number of seniors in the service area. Given that the average increase over the last five years has been 2.5% per year, this estimate seems credible.

Figure 1. ADA Trips, Fiscal Years 2008 – 2017**

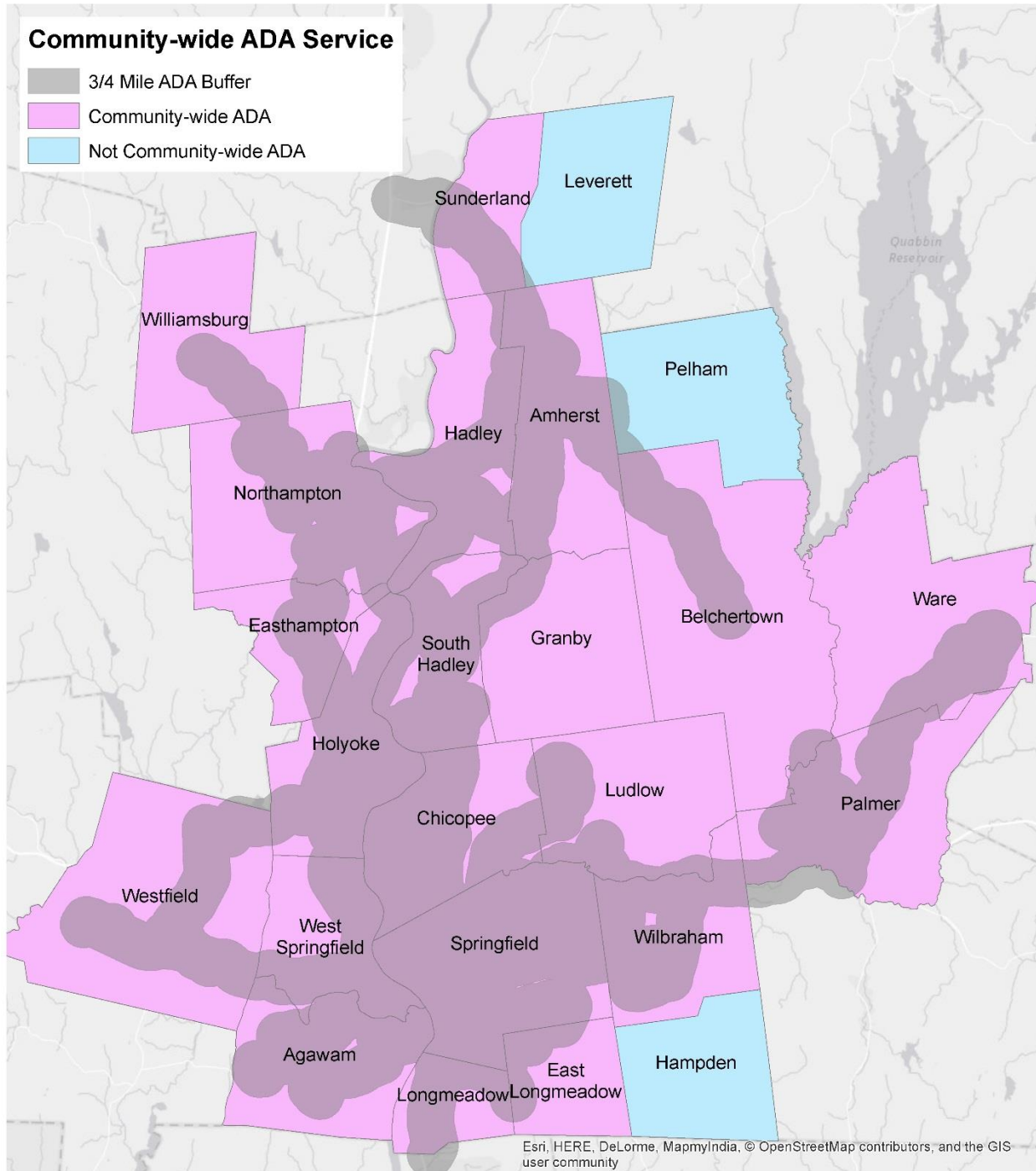


**These are trip numbers, not ridership numbers. Ridership is slightly higher than trips due to PCAs and guests.

Additionally, PVTA provides complementary Senior Van Service to all 24 member communities. While the Senior Van Service is not included in this report, it is worth noting that this service is also operated using PVTA fully-accessible vans in parallel to the regular ADA service. This service is available to any person age 60 years and over who lives in a member community.

Figure 2. PVTA Communities with ADA Service

PVTA Communities with ADA Service



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Methodology

The 2017 Paratransit Survey methodology improved upon prior surveys in that it used a sample of paratransit riders instead of surveying the entire population. In so doing, it is possible to get a higher response rate and verify with a much greater degree of certainty the validity of the results. This section reviews in detail the process for creating the population sample and the methods for surveying the sample.

Sampling Method

A primary goal of this survey method was to return a response rate of 70% or greater. The 2011 survey (the most recent mail-in survey) returned a response rate of 34%, indicating the potential for response bias (that is, a motivated subgroup of those surveyed responding in greater proportion to others).

The best way to increase response rates is to send multiple reminders to the survey population. However, that becomes cost prohibitive with a large survey population, particularly in the context of a mailed survey. Therefore, a random sample of the population was used to decrease the cost of multiple reminder surveys.

For this survey, a sample of 500 customers was selected out of the 1,478 active ADA clients. Clients are considered “Active” if they were listed as Active in the database and had used the service at least once within the prior six months. Client records were pulled from ADEPT in October of 2016.

Once the client records were pulled, the *Random* function in Excel was used to assign each client a random number between 0 and 1. Client records were then sorted from high to low based on the random number assigned, with the top 500 records selected for the sample.

After the first mailing, 13 surveys were returned as “Unable to Forward.” Additional clients were selected using the same method to take the place of those whose surveys were returned by the postal service.

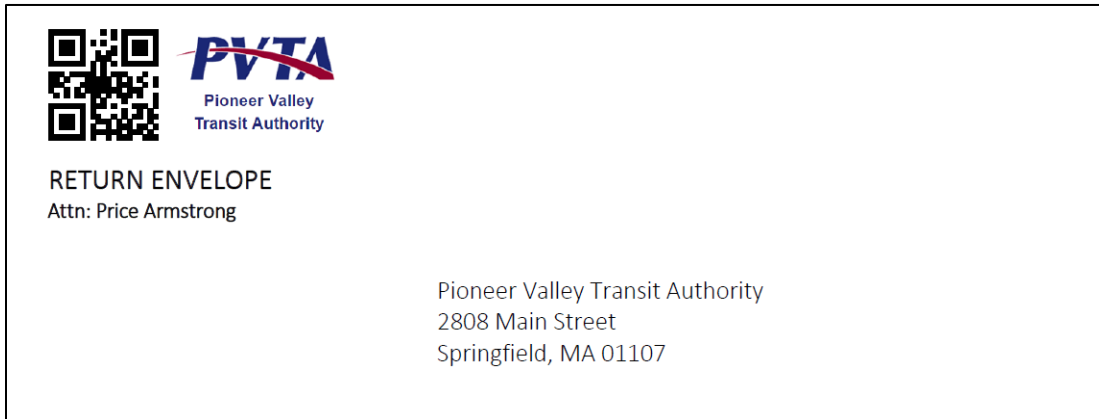
Survey Method

This survey was done as a mail-based survey. The initial mailing to the randomly selected customers was sent out on February 10th contained the following items:

1. A cover letter from the Administrator.
2. The 2-sided 8.5” x 14” (legal sized) paper survey.
3. An addressed, stamped return envelope.
4. Two free ride tickets for the van service.

Each customer was assigned a unique arbitrary ID, starting at 1000. The return envelope had a QR Code in the upper-left corner which, when scanned, returned the unique ID number. Each returned survey was linked to the unique ID and, thus, the client. This also allowed PVTA to track who returned a survey and who did not, allowing for better-targeted reminder mailings.

Figure 3. Return Envelope Example



There were 213 responses received after the first mailing, giving an initial response rate of 43%. The first reminder mailing went out on Friday, March 3rd. The reminder mailing consisted of the following items:

1. A cover letter from the Administrator.
2. The 2-sided 8.5" x 14" (legal sized) paper survey.
3. An addressed, stamped return envelope.

After the first reminder, 109 additional responses were received, giving an overall response rate of 64%. The final reminder was sent out on Thursday, March 30th and contained the same materials as the first reminder. The requested response date in the final reminder was Friday, April 14th. An additional 55 surveys were returned after the final reminder was sent out, giving a final response rate of 76%.

Of the sample, 67 customers had a visual impairment listed in their client file. Given the fact that this was a written mailed survey, the survey team divided up these customers to call them individually and administer the survey over the phone in addition to the mailed version. Sixteen filled out the survey over the phone, 41 returned the paper survey, and ten did not respond at all.

Only two customers in the sample had "Spanish" as their preferred spoken language in the client record. To accommodate them and any other person preferring a Spanish version, a phone number was provided to take the survey via an interpreter. Two customers took the survey in Spanish.

Response Bias

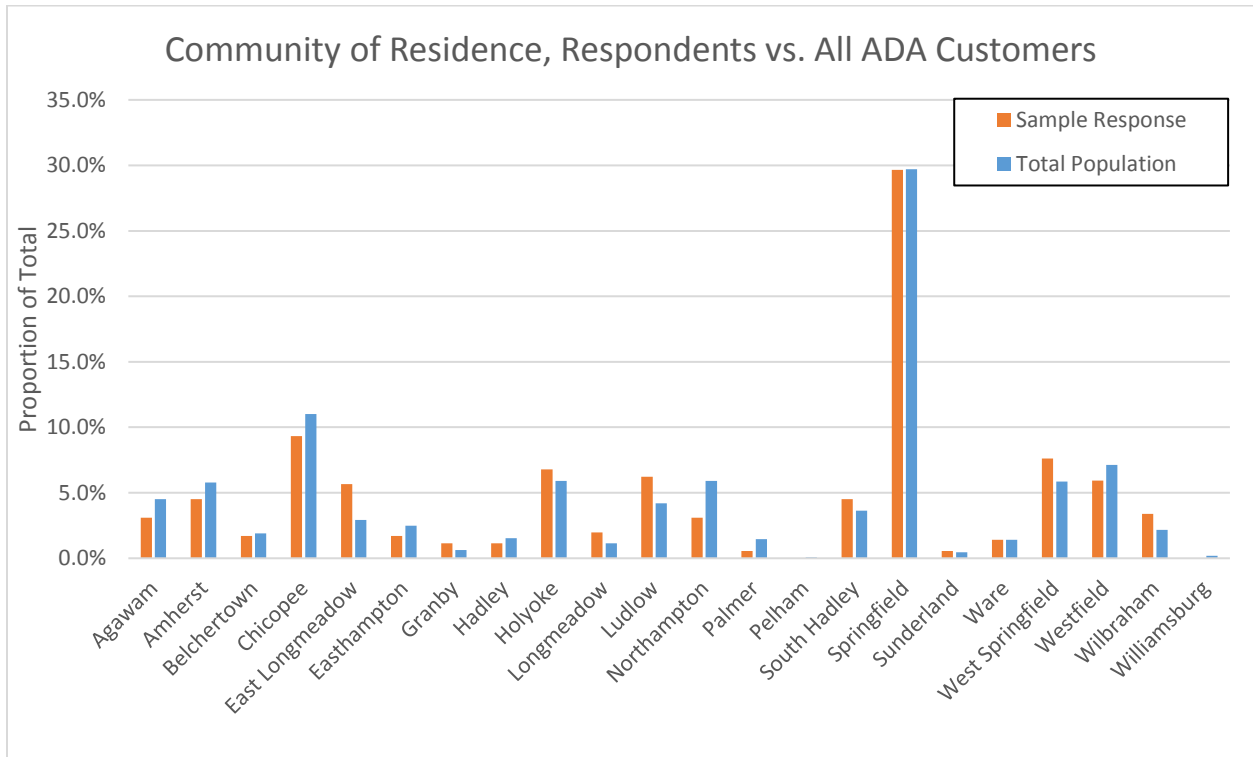
The point of any survey is to gather an accurate snapshot of a population. If a particular segment of the population is less likely to respond to the survey, then the snapshot is not accurate; this is referred to as "response bias." The survey method described above was designed to minimize response bias.

For example, low-income ADA customers may be less likely to respond to the survey due to lack of time or less interest in taking surveys. This lack of response would make the ADA customer base seem more affluent than it really is, which has implications for federally required service equity analyses. For this reason, minimizing response bias is a key aspect to conducting a survey.

The primary method to reducing response bias is to follow up with those surveyed multiple times. The gold standard for response rates is at least 70%; in order to achieve the response rate of 76%, two reminder surveys were sent out (as described in the Survey Method section).

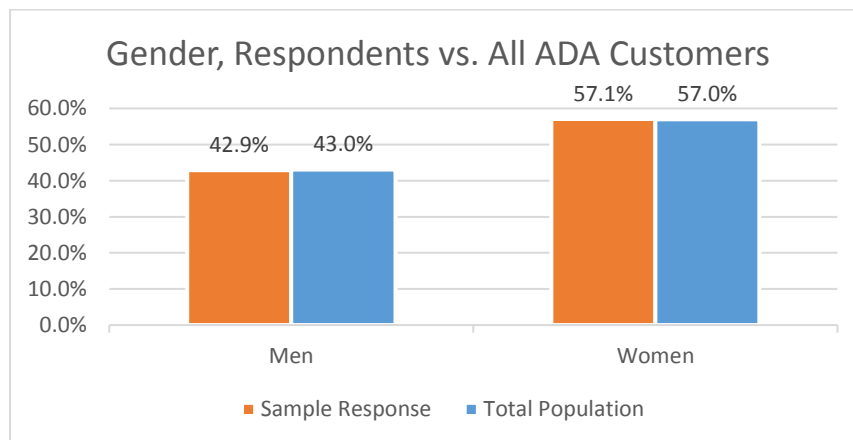
One way to test whether the surveys are reflective of the population is to compare the survey responses to information already held about the population as a whole. Fortunately, there are three pieces of information that PVTA already has against which the survey responses can be compared: Age (date of birth), gender, and community of residence. In each case, the survey sample closely matches the total population, indicating a small likelihood of response bias.

Figure 4. Community of Residence Response Rate Comparison



As shown in Figure 4, the proportion of responses from each community matches up closely with the total number of customers living in each community. Ludlow, Northampton and East Longmeadow show the greatest discrepancy between sample and total population responses, but in all three cases the discrepancy does not exceed three percentage points.

Figure 5. Gender Comparison



As Figure 5 shows, the gender comparison of the sample response versus the total population matches up very closely. Again, this reinforces that the sample had a low response bias.

Finally, the mean age of the respondents matches up closely with the total ADA population.

Table 1. Age Comparison

	Sample	Total Population
Mean Age	55.8	56.3

Taken together, these comparisons between the survey respondents and the total ADA population suggest that there is a minimal response bias. For the purposes of generating an accurate snapshot of the ADA population, this is a highly desirable outcome – in order to make generalizations and draw conclusions based on the survey data, an accurate sample is essential.

Data Entry

The data was entered in April 2017 using an automated “Scantron” system. Where respondents marked answers in a way that the scanner might not register (e.g. putting an “X” through the response instead of filling in the bubble), those responses were corrected (for an example survey, see Attachment 1).

Responses to specific questions were excluded under the following circumstances:

- Questions with illegible written responses;
- Questions with multiple responses exceeding the number of responses allowed (e.g. marking more than one answer for “Educational Attainment”).

In instances where a response was excluded, the field was entered as a null value.

Additionally, in two instances a respondent returned more than one survey (presumably a result of sending the first survey after the reminder survey was mailed, and then returning the reminder survey). In this instance, a coin was flipped to determine which survey to include in the final analysis.

Findings

The surveys yielded rich information about the PVTA ADA customer base. PVTA was interested in exploring three specific topic areas:

1. Service Experience
2. Rider Access to Technology
3. Demographics

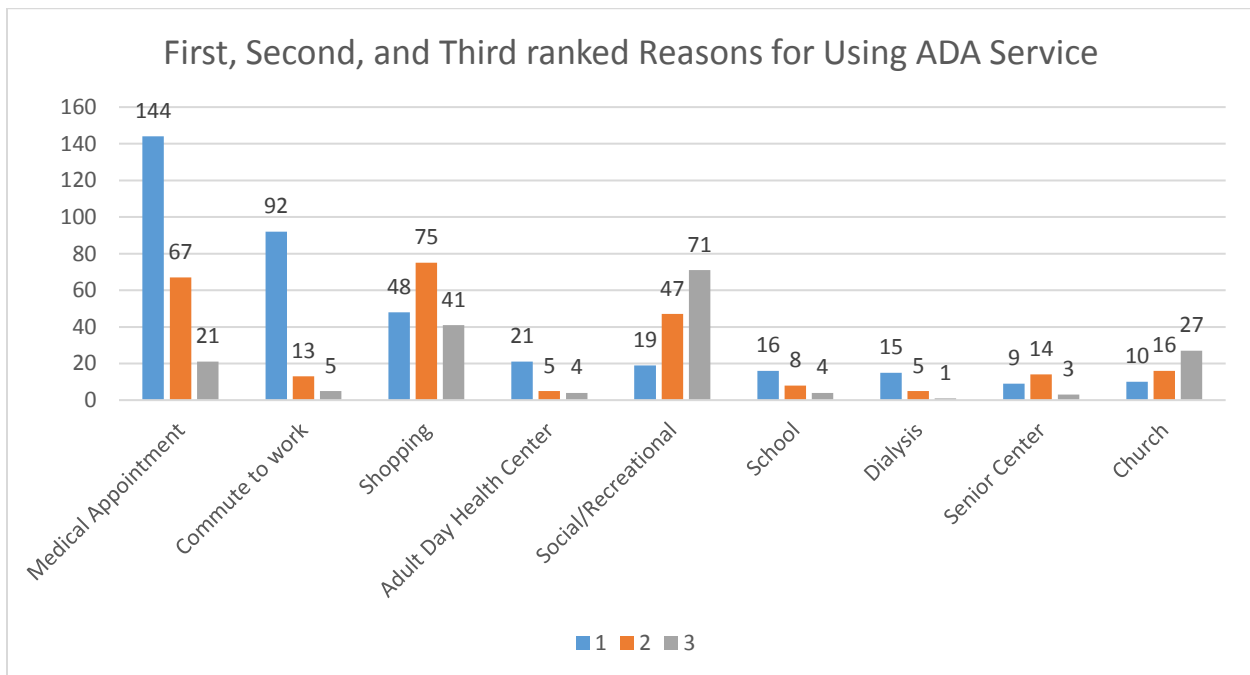
Each of these subject areas provide essential information to maintaining high-quality, equitable service for PVTA customers.

Service Experience

The section dealing with service experience asked questions related to customer service and the user experience of the paratransit system.

Customers were asked what their top three trip purposes were.¹ For number one reasons, the top-ranked option was medical appointment, while shopping was the top-ranked secondary purpose and recreational trips the top-ranked tertiary purpose.

Figure 6. Trip Purposes



¹ If more than three purposes were chosen, the response was excluded from the analysis.

Just under one-third of customers only chose one trip purpose, indicating that they do not use the service for multiple reasons. Of those who only use the service for one purpose, the top reason is medical appointment followed closely by commute to work, school, or volunteer jobs.

Figure 7. Number of Trip Purposes

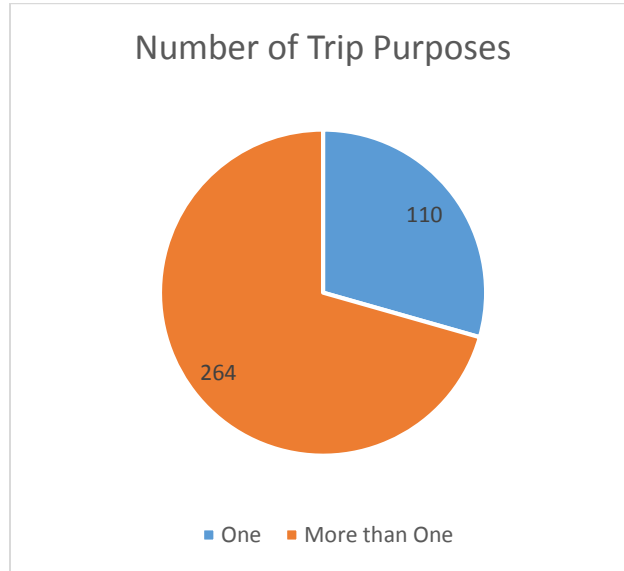


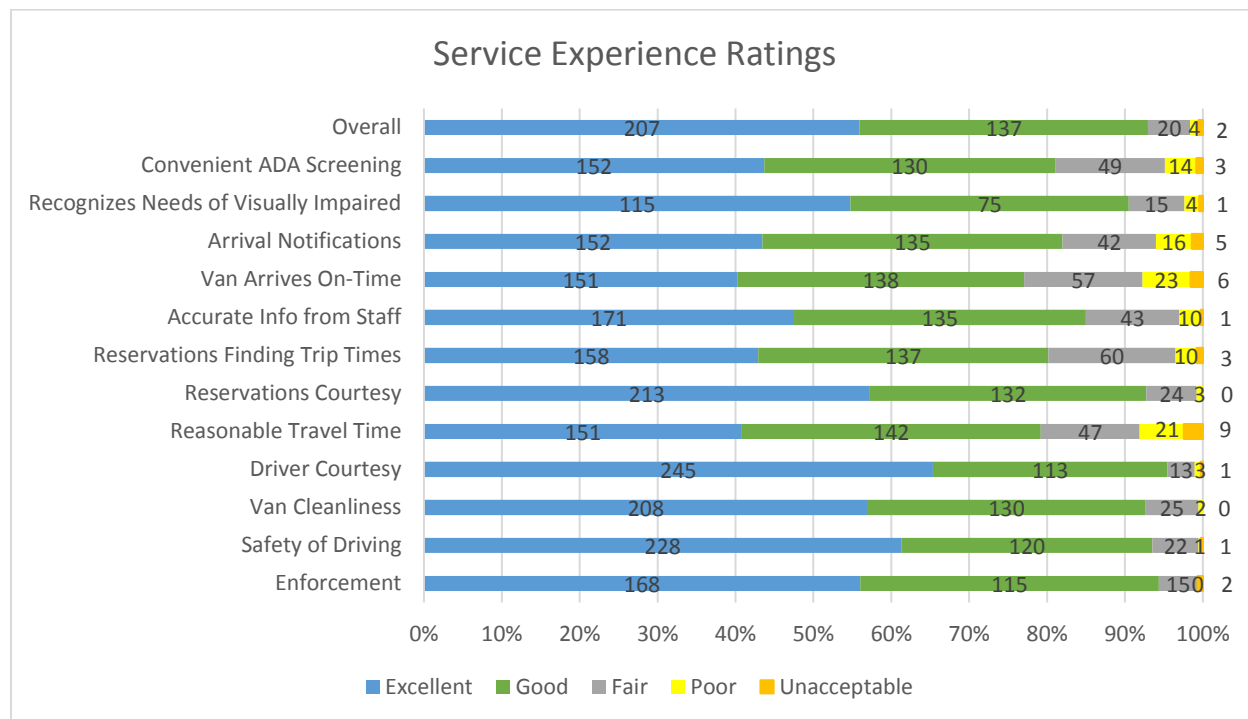
Figure 8. Trip Purposes Chosen as Only Trip Purpose

Trip Purpose	Respondents Selecting as Only Trip Purpose
Medical Appointment	38
Commute to work	31
Adult Day Health Center	15
Dialysis	8
School	7
Social/Recreational	5
Shopping	4
Senior Center	2
Church	0

Using the service for only one trip purpose suggests that these customers have other transportation options available to them, with PVTA acting as the transporter for one specific activity. This contrasts with the other two-thirds of the customers, who use PVTA for a variety of daily activities.

Customers were asked to rate overall experience with safety, courtesy and professionalism, on-time performance, and other aspects relating to convenience and reliability of the demand response service.

Figure 9. Overall Service Experience

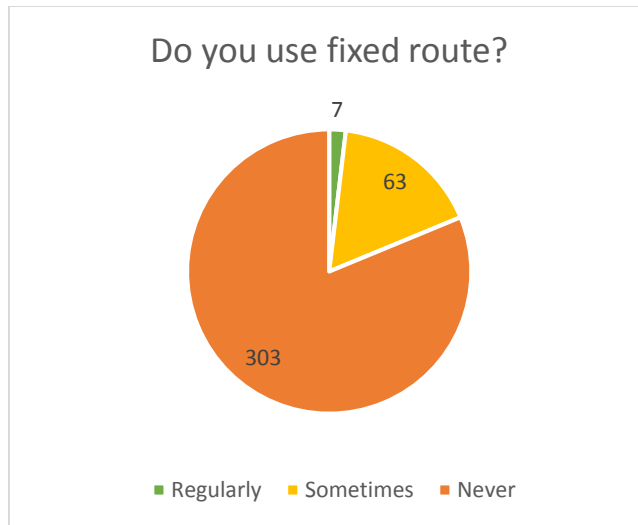


As can be seen in Figure 9, satisfaction with PVTA is generally high. Combined ratings for “Good” and “Excellent” ranged from a high of 95% to a low of 77%. In general, on-time performance, travel time, ADA screening, and automated arrival notifications had the highest proportion rated “Poor” or “Unacceptable.”

In contrast, driver courtesy, driver safety, reservationist courtesy, and van cleanliness all ranked highly for combined “Good” and “Excellent” ratings.

The survey asked about use of fixed-route service. In general, fixed-route service is much more cost-efficient than demand response. This series of survey questions can help PVTA focus efforts to make fixed-route service more appealing to its paratransit riders, and eliminate barriers they might face to accessing the service.

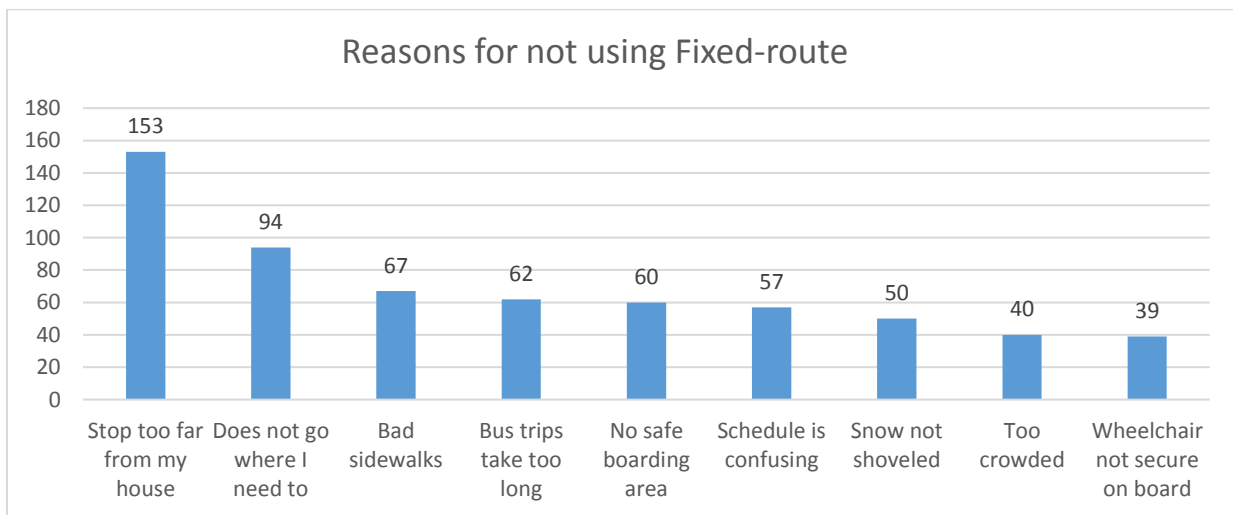
Figure 10. Use of Fixed-route Service



As can be seen in Figure 10, the vast majority of respondents do not use fixed-route service at all. Only 19% use fixed-route on at least an occasional basis.

The reasons for not using fixed-route service are varied, though the distance from the customer’s residence to the nearest bus stop ranked highest. The second-ranked issue is that the bus routes do not go where the customers need them to go. Both issues, to a large extent, are reflective of the fact that PVRTA demand response service goes above and beyond the minimum-required ¼ mile ADA service (that is, providing paratransit service only within ¼ of a mile of a bus route).

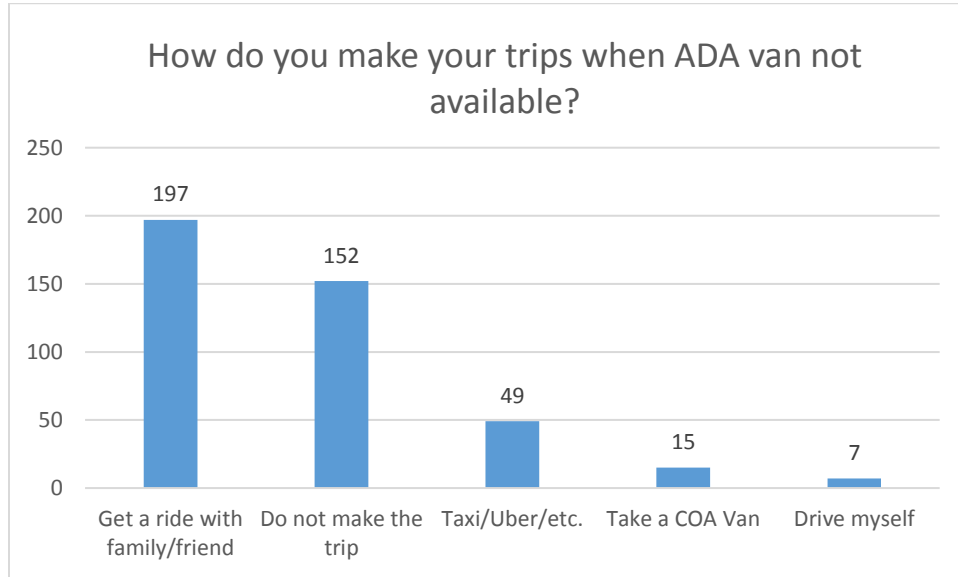
Figure 11. Reasons for not using fixed-route service



Among the write-in responses, the most common response cited disability as the reason they could not use the fixed-route service (e.g. “Too weak to carry walker on/off bus”). Only seven respondents cited personal safety reasons as a concern.

When PVTA service is not available (e.g. holidays, weekends, etc.), the majority of respondents reported that they were transported by friends or family members. However, a close second reported that they simply did not make the trip.

Figure 12. Transportation Alternatives



Only seven respondents indicated that they are able to drive themselves when ADA service is not available.

Access to Technology

The section on technology access dealt with PVTA customer access to internet and mobile communications technology. As agencies around the country explore ways to increase the accessibility of information, such as vehicle location and arrive time, it is important to understand what proportion of PVTA riders would potentially benefit from any projects aimed at developing these capabilities.

This is also important due to the rise of Transportation Network Companies like Uber and Lyft. Recently, the MBTA in Boston launched a partnership program which would allow paratransit riders to use these on-demand apps to schedule paratransit trips, with the MBTA subsidizing part of the cost. Though PVTA has no formal plans to pursue such a partnership at this time, understanding customer capabilities is important to understanding who might be able to participate in such a program should the agency implement a similar system in the future.

Just over half of PVRTA respondents have at least some access to the internet, and just over 2/5 of them use smart phones (e.g. iPhone, Samsung Galaxy, etc.).

Figure 13. Level of Internet Access

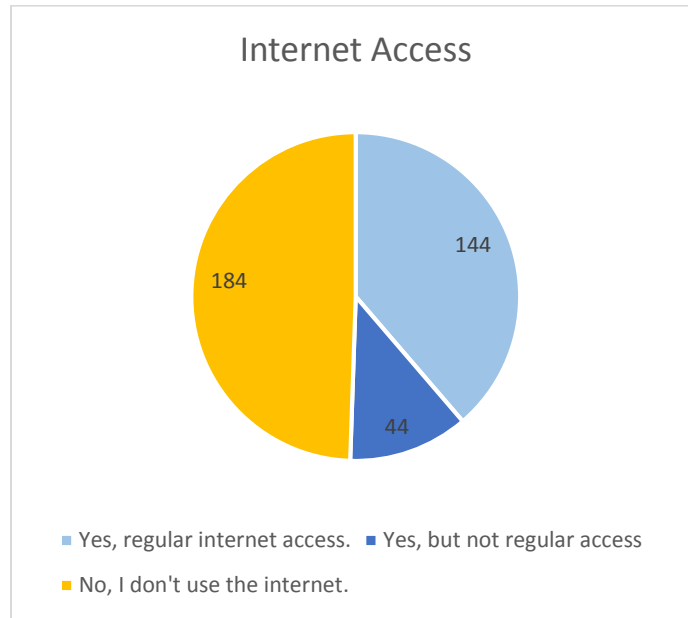
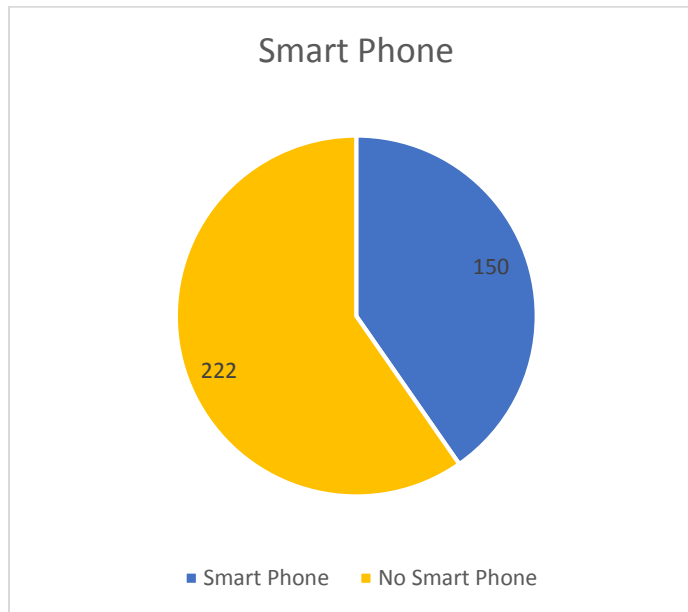


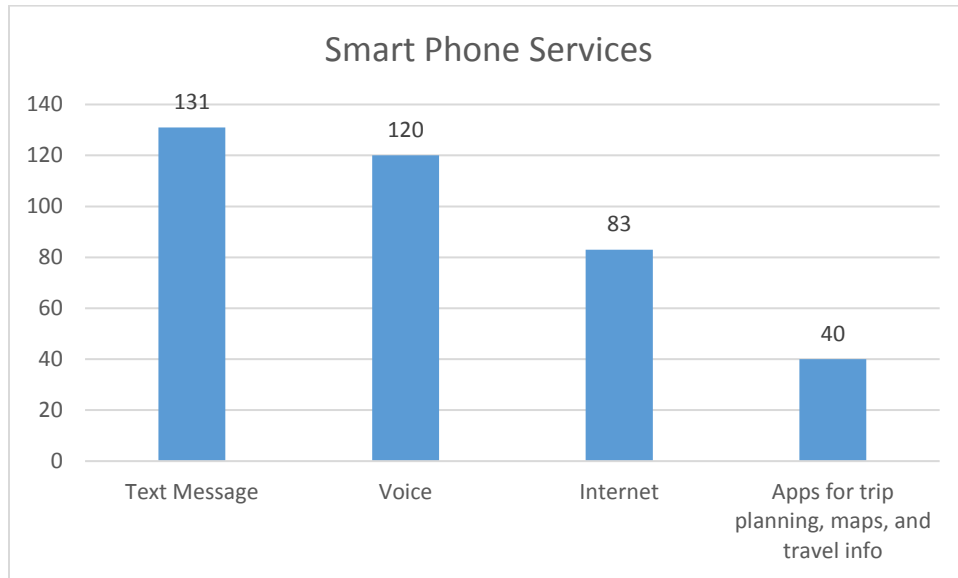
Figure 14. Use of Smart Phones



For those respondents who did report using smart phones, only a little over one-quarter of them also reported using it for apps (such as Lyft, Uber, or other services). However, double that number reported

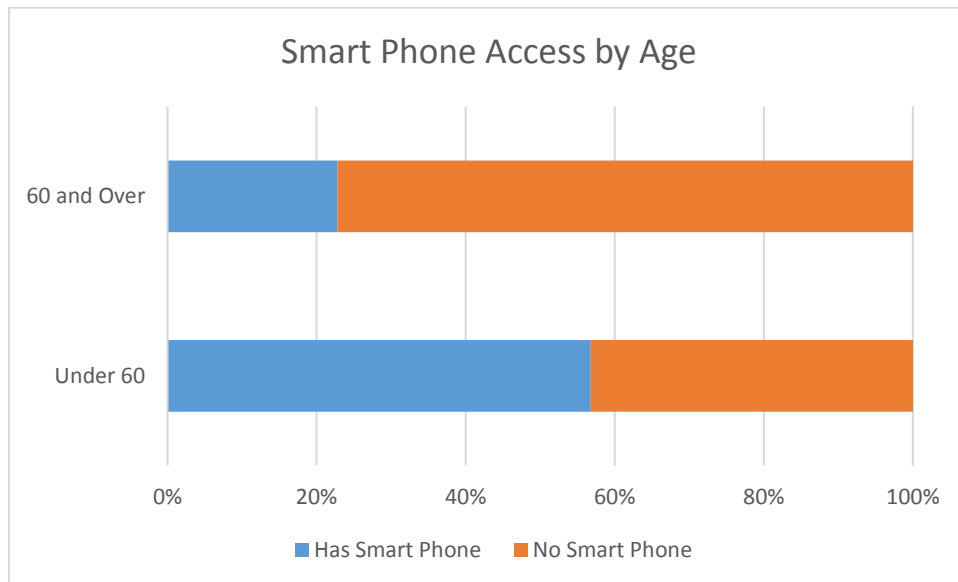
using the internet from their smart phone, suggesting that some may be able to easily use apps if shown how.

Figure 15. Smart Phone Services Used



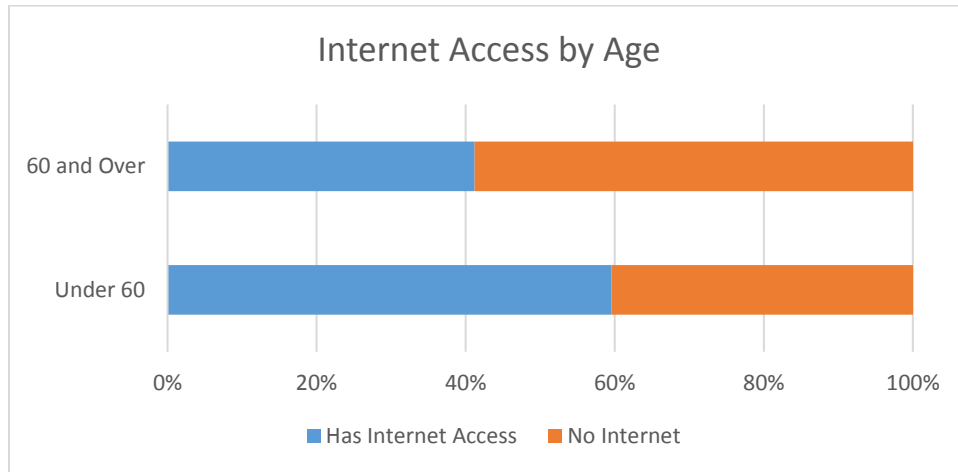
It should be noted that the use of smart phones divides along generational lines. Almost 80% of those age 60 and over report not using a smart phone, compared to just over 40% of those under the age of 60. This suggests that older customers in particular may not have the experience or the devices required to successfully use mobile apps, should PVTA invest in developing such capabilities.

Figure 16. Smart Phone Access by Age



Similar to smart phone access, Internet access is greater among younger ADA customers. Of those under age 60, 60% use the internet at least occasionally. This contrasts to 40% for those age 60 and over.

Figure 17. Internet Access by Age

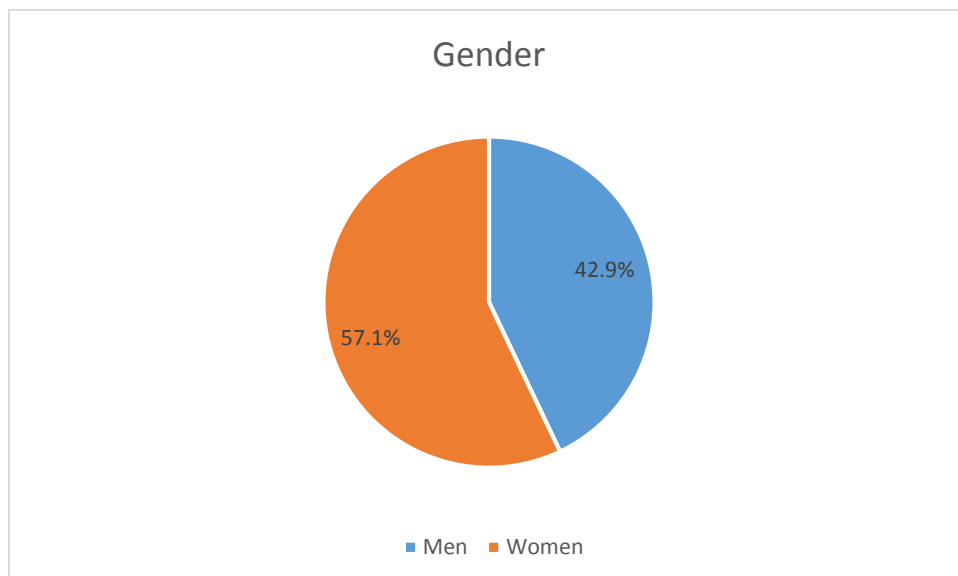


Demographics

Demographic information is used in a variety of ways to ensure that ADA service is provided in a fair and equitable manner. For example, PVTA uses demographic information to inform the periodic Title VI analyses required by the Federal Transit Administration whenever fare or service changes are proposed. These reports are done to ensure that such changes do not have a disproportionate negative impact on protected classes as defined by the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

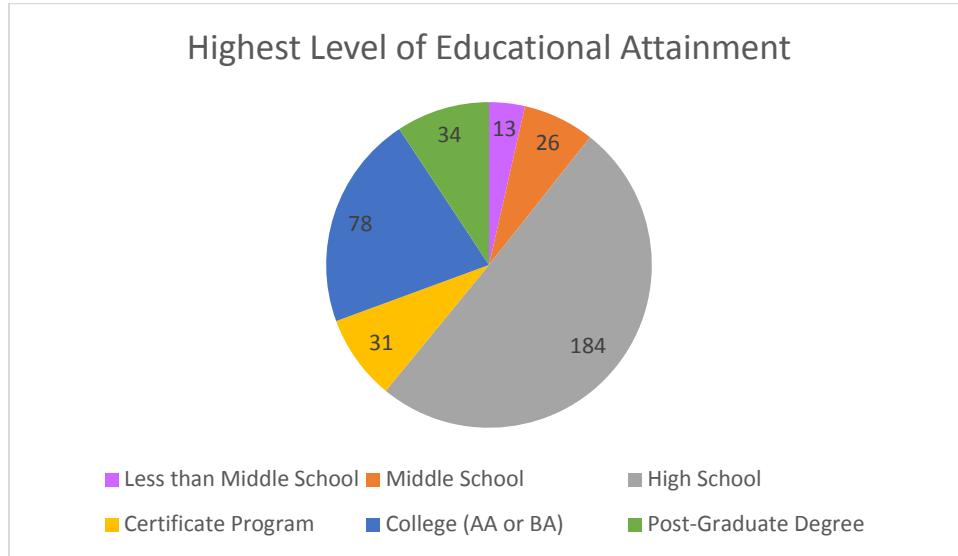
The median age of respondents was 58 years old, and the majority of respondents identified as female. It should be noted that this year the options of "Transgender" and "Other (write in)" were added to the survey under the question, "What is your sex or gender identity?", though no one selected either option.

Figure 18. Gender



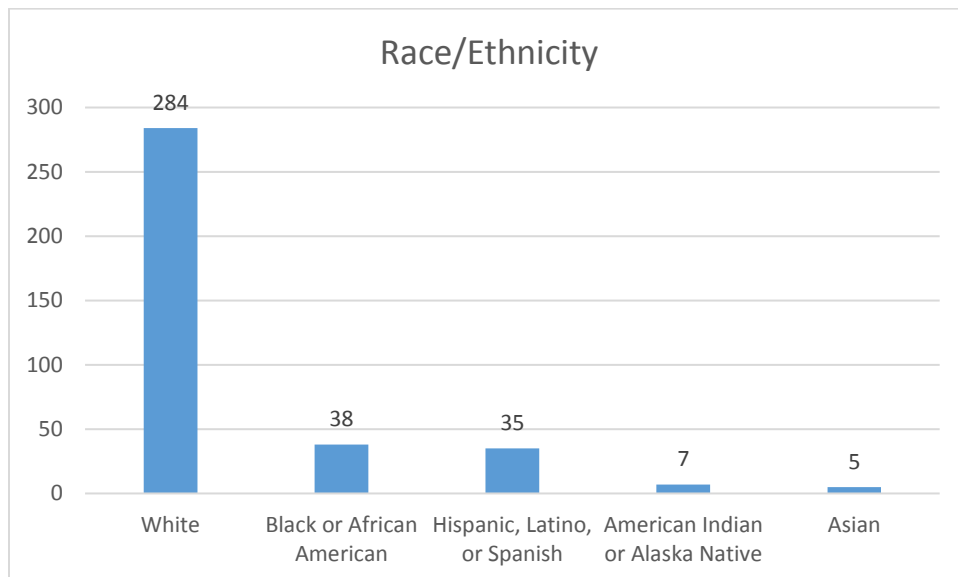
About half of all respondents reported high school as the highest level of educational attainment, with slightly over one-fifth of respondents reporting post-secondary education as the highest level of education.

Figure 19. Educational Attainment



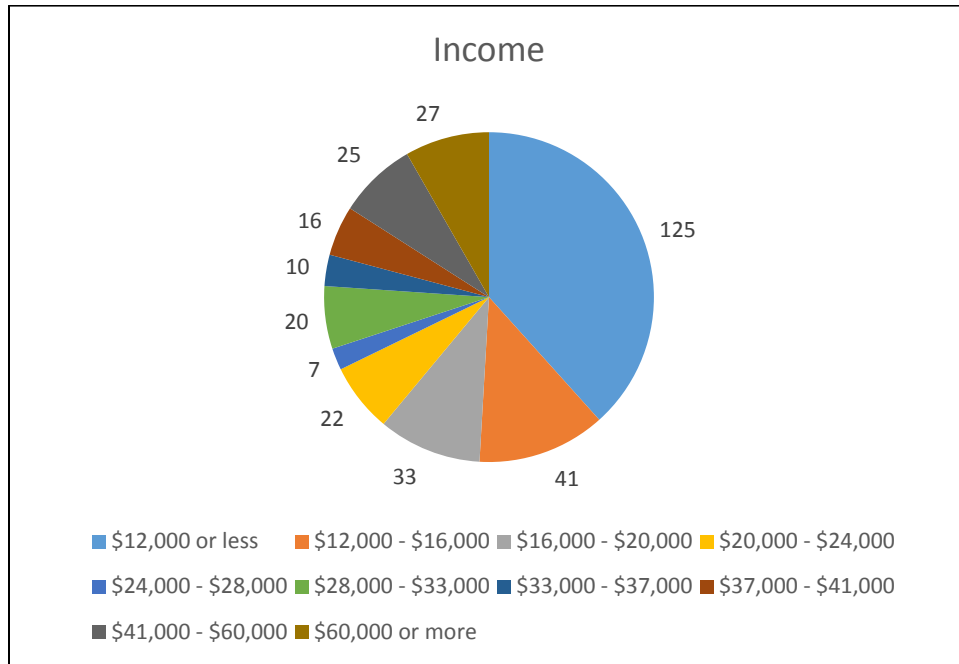
The vast majority of respondents identified as White, with the second-highest proportion identifying as Black or African-American. The options were not mutually-exclusive; 2.4% of respondents chose more than one option.

Figure 20. Race/Ethnicity



Reported income levels were relatively low, with 38% of all respondents reporting less than \$12,000 annual income.

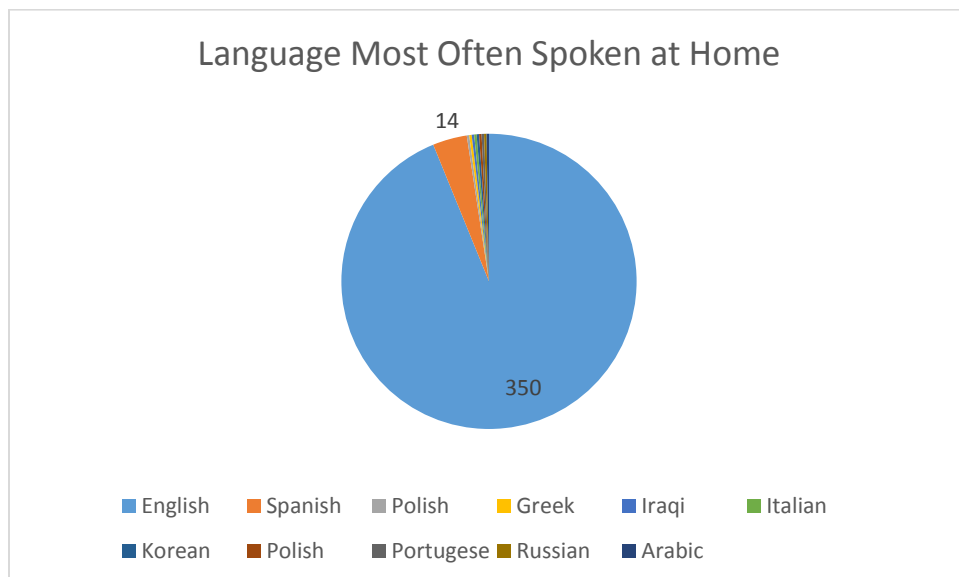
Figure 21. Household Income



When combined with information about the number of people living in the household, it is estimated that the household poverty rate among ADA clients is 45.7%.

The overwhelming majority of respondents speak English as their primary language. With the exception of Spanish, all other languages had only one reported instance of being spoken as the primary language at home.

Figure 22. Language Spoken at Home



Discussion

Drawing comparisons to prior surveys is somewhat difficult due to the differing survey methodologies. In 2011, surveys were mailed out to all active PVTA demand response riders (ADA and Senior Van Service) without any reminders, resulting in a 34% response rate. In 2014, surveys were distributed by van drivers, at rider meetings, at Senior Centers, and online. Because of the methodology, it is difficult to say what the response rate in 2014 was – however, the 478 responses gathered would be a response rate of approximately 16% of the total ADA and Senior Van Service customer base.

For the current survey, a sample of 500 ADA customers was used, with a response rate of 76%. Compared to the prior two surveys, the 2017 survey provides us with the most reliable snapshot of PVTA’s ADA customers. Thus, discrepancies between findings in 2017 compared to 2014 or 2011 might be actual trends, or could be reflective of changes in survey methodology.

Regardless, we see some general consistencies between surveys. Overall, the 2017 survey results show a high level of satisfaction with PVTA’s ADA service, with 93% of respondents rating service as either “Good” or “Excellent.” This compares with 95% in 2011 and 89% in 2014. And consistent with the prior surveys, satisfaction with the 20-minute window was among the lowest performing ratings.

Table 2. Customer Satisfaction Ratings in 2011, 2014, and 2017

Category	2011	2014	2017
Overall Quality	95%	89%	93%
Convenience of ADA Certification Process*	90%	86%	81%
Van arrives within 20 minute window	90%	83%	77%
Helpfulness of Reservations staff	93%	87%	80%**
Safety of service	95%	97%	93%
Van cleanliness	92%	92%	93%
Driver courtesy	95%	95%	95%

*Changed from mail-in to in-person ADA Certification between 2011 and 2014.

**The 2017 survey split this into two separate questions: Reservationist courtesy, and Reservationists finding trip times. This number refers to Reservationists finding trip times that work for the customer. Reservationist courtesy was rated at 92% approval.

The 2011 survey also asked about many of the same topics included in the 2017 survey. Included in the following tables are values for 2011 and 2017.

There was considerable consistency in the response to the use of fixed route service. In 2011 and 2017, around 4/5 of those surveyed indicated not using fixed route at all, the main reason being inability to get to the bus stops.

Table 3. 2011 and 2017 Fixed Route Use

Fixed Route Questions	2011	2017
Use Fixed Route at least occasionally	19%	19%
Top Reason for not using Fixed Route	"Not able to walk to bus stop"	"Bus stop is too far from my home or destination"

As shown in Table 4, the rank of transportation options was unchanged between 2011 and 2017, with the top alternative being a ride from family or friends followed by skipping the trip entirely. It should be noted that the proportion of seniors with no other transportation options grew somewhat between the two survey periods, while those getting rides from family or friends declined.

In the “Other” category in 2017, “PVTA fixed route bus” and “Personal Care Attendant” were the most common responses.

Table 4. 2011 and 2017 Transportation Alternatives

How do you make trips when PVTA van service is not available?	2011	2017
Ride from family or friends	50.9%	43.9%
None - I can't make the trip without the PVTA van	27.8%	33.9%
Taxi or other shuttle**	9.1%	10.9%
Use local senior center van	5.0%	3.3%
Drive myself	5.0%	1.6%
Other	2.2%	6.5%

**“Uber” was included as an option in the 2017 version

Unsurprisingly, there was tremendous growth in the number of people with access to and regular use of the internet between 2011 and 2017. The market penetration and ubiquity of the internet and, likely, mobile connectivity is expected to continue growing.

Table 5. 2011 and 2017 Comfort Using Internet

Comfort Using the Internet**	2011	2017
Very comfortable - use regularly	16.0%	38.7%
Somewhat - use occasionally	14.0%	11.8%
Not comfortable - not much use	71.0%	49.5%

**The options in 2017 were:

- Yes, I have access and I am able to get information and perform transactions online.
- Yes, I can use the Internet, but I don't have regular access to it.
- No, I don't use the Internet

The proportion of respondents with an income of less than \$20,000 declined from 78.9% to 61.0% between survey periods, shown in Table 6. This could be the result of two factors:

1. This does not take inflation into account. Using the Consumer Price Index, \$20,000 in 2017 is worth only \$18,086 in 2011. The proportion of respondents with incomes under \$18,086 in 2011 was presumably smaller than 78.9%.
2. The 2017 survey specifically asks about *household income*, whereas the 2011 survey does not specify. Thus, reported incomes in 2017 may be higher than those in 2011 by virtue of including all household members instead of just the person completing the survey.

Table 6. 2011 and 2017 Income

Income**	2011	2017
< \$20,000	78.9%	61.0%

**The only income break point that matched between surveys was less than or more than \$20,000. This is not controlled for inflation.

The survey respondents in 2017 were somewhat more diverse than the survey respondents in 2011, with the share of White respondents declining from 83% to 75%. At the same time, the share of Hispanic/Latino respondents increased from 4.8% to 9.3%.

Table 7. 2011 and 2017 Race/Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	2011	2017
White	83.1%	75.1%
Black or African American	9.6%	10.1%
Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish	4.8%	9.3%
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.2%	1.9%
Asian or Pacific Islander**	1.4%	1.3%

**The 2017 survey broke “Asian” and “Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander” into two separate groups to reflect categories used by the US Census Bureau; however, in 2017 no respondent chose “Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander.”

Given the general demographic shift in the nation and in the Pioneer Valley toward a more diverse population, especially among younger residents, this trend in the ADA population is expected to continue.

Written Comments

The final question in the survey solicited comments for how to improve PVTA service. Several themes emerged from the written comments:

1. **Positive Comments** – Roughly one-quarter of all comments were positive statements about the ADA service (e.g. “Excellent service. Thank you.”)
2. **On-Time Service** – The main complaint had to do with late pick-ups. This was often in combination with frustration at the 20-minute window.
3. **Return Trip Flexibility** – The second-most common desire was for more flexibility in trip scheduling, particularly return trips. A commonly cited circumstance is when a customer has an appointment (typically medical) that finishes early. As a result, the customer has to wait, sometimes for an hour or more, for the van to pick him or her up for the return trip. There was a desire for more flexibility to accommodate same-day trip changes.
4. **Communication** – Many customers expressed understanding about vans running late, but wished that there was better communication when a van is running late.

Additionally, a few customers commented that they wished there was an online portal or mobile application available to book rides or look up trip status.

Next Steps

The results from this survey will be used as a basis for service improvements, equity analyses, and future innovations in service delivery. As a result of the survey, several areas have emerged for improvement or further investigation:


- **On-Time Performance** – Customers identified being picked up too late or too early as a problem. Furthermore, on-time performance is a key metric used by the federal government for system performance. PVTA has made it a priority, and will continue prioritizing, the timely pick up and drop off of passengers.

- **ADA Certification Process** – The ADA certification process was identified as a low-performing aspect of the service provided by PVTA. In order to ensure that ADA service is only being given to those who are not able to use fixed-route service, PVTA requires in-person certification every three years. Depending on the nature of the dissatisfaction with the process, PVTA could make adjustments to the certification process. Further inquiry should be made to find specific details as to why the certification process is rated poorly.
- **Scheduling Process** – The ability for Schedulers to “find trip times that work for the customers” rated poorly. PVTA uses a 20-minute pick-up window, which is a narrower window than the industry standard of 30-minutes. In the written comments, some customers noted that they would prefer receiving the pick-up window at the time they make the trip request instead of the night before. PVTA can look into ways to either more promptly provide pick-up window information, or more effectively convey that information to the customer.
- **Online and Mobile Technology** – This new section in the survey found important information about access to mobile and internet technologies. Only 40% of ADA customers have a smart phone, and only 51% have access to the internet. However, the survey also revealed that there is a substantial generational divide in access to technology. If PVTA makes use of internet technology (e.g. online trip scheduling), then it is likely that customers’ abilities to use these capabilities will grow in the future. Especially in light of comments requesting these online and mobile services, PVTA should explore these options.

Finally, it is worth noting the responses to the question, “How do you make your trips when ADA van service is not available?” One-third of the respondents indicated that they do not make the trip, as they have no other means of transportation. That response underscores the importance of the ADA van service to the quality of life for residents in the Pioneer Valley, especially when the highest ranked trip purpose is for medical appointments. For this reason, PVTA remains committed to constant improvement of, and innovation in, paratransit service delivery.

Attachment 1: Survey

PVTA Customer Survey for ADA Van Riders 2017




1. What are the main reasons that you use PVTA's ADA Van Service?
Select up to 3, in order of how often you ride for that purpose.

- ① ② ③ Shopping
- ① ② ③ Job/commute to work/volunteer
- ① ② ③ Visit Senior Center
- ① ② ③ Adult day care
- ① ② ③ Healthcare/medical appointment (not dialysis)
- ① ② ③ Dialysis
- ① ② ③ Church or religious activity
- ① ② ③ School
- ① ② ③ Social/recreation/restaurant meal out
- ① ② ③ Other (write in) _____

2. Do you also ride PVTA's scheduled routes on these larger buses? →

Regularly Sometimes Never



2a. What prevents you from taking PVTA's scheduled bus routes more often—or at all?
(Select all that apply)

- Bus does not go where I need to
- Bus is too crowded
- No safe boarding area, surface, or shelter
- Snow not shoveled at bus stop
- Bus stop is too far from my home or destination
- Poor sidewalks to and from the bus stop
- Don't feel my chair/scooter can be safely secured on a bus
- Bus trips take too long compared to the van
- Bus schedules are confusing

3. Please rate your overall experience with PVTA's ADA Van Service.

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Unacceptable	Not Applicable
a. Driver enforcement of rules with other passengers (if they are disruptive)	5	4	3	2	1	0
b. Van driving safely	5	4	3	2	1	0
c. Van cleanliness	5	4	3	2	1	0
d. Driver courtesy and professionalism	5	4	3	2	1	0
e. Travel time is reasonable for trip distance	5	4	3	2	1	0
f. Reservations staff courtesy and professionalism	5	4	3	2	1	0
g. Reservations staff ability to find trip times that work for me	5	4	3	2	1	0
h. Accuracy of information from staff if I call to ask where the van is	5	4	3	2	1	0
i. Van arrives within 20-minute window	5	4	3	2	1	0
j. 5-minute advance van arrival phone notification	5	4	3	2	1	0
k. Responsiveness to needs of visually impaired customers	5	4	3	2	1	0
l. Convenience of ADA application and interview process	5	4	3	2	1	0
m. Overall quality and value of ADA Van Service	5	4	3	2	1	0

CONTINUED ►

Questions? Contact Price Armstrong at 413-732-6248 x242 or parmstrong@pvta.com

4. How do you make your trips when the ADA Van does not operate? (Select all that apply)

- Drive myself
- Get a ride from family or friends
- Take a van operated by local senior center
- Take a taxi, Uber, or other private service
- None—I cannot make trips without the ADA Van
- Other (write in) _____

5. Do you use the Internet? (Select one)

- Yes, I have access and I am able to get information and perform transactions online.
- Yes, I can use the Internet, but I don't have regular access to it.
- No, I don't use the Internet.

6. Do you have a smart phone?

- Yes
- No

6a. If yes, which of these services do you use? (Select all that apply)

- Voice
- Text messages
- Internet browsing
- "Apps" for trip planning, maps, and travel info

7. What is your age (in years)?
(Write your age in the boxes, then fill in the corresponding circle below each box.)

0	0
1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4
5	5
6	6
7	7
8	8
9	9

8. What is your sex or gender identify?

- Female
- Male
- Transgender
- Other (write in) _____

9. What level of education have you completed? (Select one)

- Did not complete Middle School
- Middle school (9th grade)
- High school (12th grade) or GED
- Certificate Program/Trade Apprenticeship
- College (associate's or bachelor's degree)
- Post-college (master's degree, PhD or doctorate)

10. Which of these categories describes your race or national origin? (Select all that apply)

- Asian
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Black or African American
- Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- White
- Other (write in) _____

11. How many people in your household (include yourself)?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9 or more

12. What is your total annual household income? Include yourself and all family members in your home. Example: You earn \$20,000/year and your spouse earns \$15,000/year. Your total is \$35,000 and you would mark the "\$33,001 to \$37,000/year."

- Less than \$12,000/year
- \$12,001 to \$16,000/year
- \$16,001 to \$20,000/year
- \$20,001 to \$24,000/year
- \$24,001 to \$28,000/year
- \$28,001 to \$33,000/year
- \$33,001 to \$37,000/year
- \$37,001 to \$41,000/year
- \$41,001 to \$60,000/year
- More than \$60,000/year

All answers are confidential

13. What language do you speak most often at home? (Please select one)

- English
- Spanish
- Russian
- Vietnamese
- Mandarin
- French/Creole
- Other (write in) _____

14. What is the single most important thing that PVTA can do to improve our ADA Van Service for you?

THANK YOU! Your answers will help us improve our ADA Van Service for all riders.

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY
DO NOT WRITE
IN THIS BOX

0	0	0	0
1	1	1	1
2	2	2	2
3	3	3	3
4	4	4	4
5	5	5	5
6	6	6	6
7	7	7	7
8	8	8	8
9	9	9	9

Questions? Contact Price Armstrong at 413-732-6248 x242 or parmstrong@pvta.com

Attachment 2: Written Responses

The following are the written responses to the final question, "What is the single most important thing that PVTA can do to improve our ADA Van Service for you?"

I have a 530 am pick up for dialysis three times a week.
see about street ramp (Bay St cemetery area) emergency doctor call at last minute
pickup times closer to meeting times. Sometimes they want to bring me an hour early. Cannot sit in cold. Not a good neighborhood
the amount of waiting time. The pickup time is extremely long - at work too early and waiting a long time to be picked up. Window is too long
be punctual. When van is late dispatch should be accurate/honest about how long before van arrives (not standard "10 minutes" reply)
the electronic system should be better. Most of the times they call but leave no message with the times.
be available for weekend trips/holidays if needed. Make sure drivers are qualified to deal with elderly in a wheel chair
widen window of pickup time
I am satisfied. The service is outstanding and I feel fortunate to be able to receive it.
less waiting
be on time
offer prepaid accounts
they are doing a good job
always be on time for pickups
more bus routes
I love PVTA - drivers are kind, courteous and consistent
we are pleased with ADA van service
a schedule of times to and from Springfield and Holyoke or Leeds Mass for Veterans assistance with fare amounts
be more flexible on pick up times
pickup time could be closer to appointment time
giving me a call 5 minutes before the van is supposed to arrive
service is outstanding
very happy how ADA van service runs.
shorten return waiting times
If I can get back from food shopping within 2 hours. I understand traffic is bad at times. I haven't met a moody or bad driver. They are very respectful
gets me to doctors
I can get out of my house to go shopping. I don't have to wait for somebody else to take me
things are good
it is excellent already
no complaints!
return home variability. If you are done early - ability to pick up early
nothing so far
discharge me at a safe and convenient place since I am a handicapped person. Provide me with door to door service.
make 5 minute phone call better

application process to get approved. Forms that are required, some of the questions are redundant; also make it easier for people who cannot travel to office
[REDACTED] gets out of work at 4:00 pm but sometimes she isn't getting home till 5:00 pm
come closer to scheduled time
educate drivers when picking up at dialysis (not private residence) I have waited long times because they are looking for private home not dialysis center.
shorter pickup and drop off times
pick up time within 10 mins. Drivers should not play radio. Speed should be kept to speed limit - no over, like 80mph in a 65 zone. Drivers should follow ADA rules all the time.
improve pickup (return) times, schedule quicker, so waiting is less than 30 minutes, waiting an hour or more after desired time is not good
less wait time at end of appointment or able to call in when appt is over and not have to wait 1 to 1 1/2 hour for pickup to go home
accountability
good service
always arrive within the 20 minute window
allow for flexibility
more schedulers on Sunday and return trips from work sometimes require me to wait 1 hour or more
today a ride showed up when I cancelled. Too often I am in severe pain and can't go out. This is not your fault
be on time
thank you for the service
many elderly individuals have cooccurring disabilities and do not realize they could qualify for ADA rides once screened in. If someone has medicaid, have PVRTA apply for transportation reimbursement from MA health for medical appointments.
we are thankful for the van services for transporting my child to school and work. She is unable to drive
less travel time.
to call me or get a text that they are 5 minutes away
I have short distances. Plus wait time, being picked up where I can only sit on my walker in peoples way. Want to try going to Greenfield? Costs too high to just go over two streets.
continue ride confirmation call the day before ride
be on time. Accept one care insurance
better pick up times so no getting places way earlier than needed or waiting for over an hour for a return trip
make trips for the time they want not what they want to give us
arriving sooner for pickup service appointment
nothing to improve right now
work on timing of pickup. Sometimes the van arrives too early in relationship to the opening of my program
return times - try to make shorter
use internet to schedule rides
fix the call to tell me my time etc. does not happen regular/sometimes no call
have drivers really read their manifests and pay attention to special notes
better time slots
long waiting period for pickup from destination home

on disability - lower ride prices
the important features are just fine but the seats could be a bit more comfortable
reduce the waiting time for pickup
doctor app hospital
schedule and stick to better return trip times
prompter service - I am often late for work
while I am going to my doc's appt others are going home. Improve or consider taking us people to the doctor first, then take these other people home.
give me a pickup time when I call. Not the night before
be closer to pick up time when possible
keep the vans clean
Dr appointment special trip where don't go by close enough
Pay drivers a living wage to obtain quality drivers
improve service pickup times. I recently ordered a ride that would have dropped me off an hour before office opened and picked me up 3 hours after requested time. I cancelled both rides and took a cab. I think van service should only be for work/volunteering and medical appointments only.
decrease the waiting time. Thank you
be on time for the end of the day
pick up on time
better driver safety. Some drive way too fast. Some drivers are not very pleasant and don't get out of seat to assist with door to door service.
I am not verbal but understand english and spanish. When I go to appts they are always late to my right home. Even if I call them
can't think of a single thing to improve ADA service
Improve pick up times, reduce waiting windows (20 to 15). Training the drivers on how to help blind customers
Drive outside Hampden County. I live in Holyoke and cannot go to visit family and business in E'ton, S. Hadley, S'ton, or Northampton
Have more trips out of Springfield accessible: concerts, dinner etc.
The drivers be more informed of my needs due to visual impairment
Simplify the process for people with disabilities
Make sure they pick me up in the back
Enlarge bus route in Ludlow so I could van to go to church on Sundays. [REDACTED]
That the ADA van that I take to work and I take the ADA van to come home comes on time
Call 15 mins before arrival
Hire more drivers
Call me if you are not able to pick me up. I had to call to find out you were unable to keep my appt. and had to reschedule my Dr. appt.
Bus pickup appointments coming home stop at Mercy Hospital - back doors and front door - both should be checked if someone is not there. Only takes a few mins and no one is left behind.
More flexible on time, rides and scheduling, pickups; I see vans com and go could have picked me up - or dropped me off, like flagging a taxi
find my apartment building and unit
Arriving at destination too early - leaving destination a lot later that I wanted
I would always like a call when the van is coming
When I make reservations I don't mind a 20 minute but an hour or more is ridiculous

excellent service
Some drivers text while driving. Mostly younger drivers. If this can be enforced that would be great otherwise I am very thankful
Making appointments - close to actual time when scheduling
Rides to work
To call before arriving in the city of Westfield MA
Operate on weekends in Wilbraham
Buying tickets and having sent to home
Friendlier drivers
My mother used your services - usually quite satisfied - drivers friendly and courteous. She died 2/16/17 thank you for all your help. Much appreciated
Pickup time is too long. Travel to destination takes too long once picked up
Please ask your drivers not to speed. You have important people on your buses and we would like to get to our appointments in one piece. But overall thumbs up to the ones who don't. Especially in winter months can drivers please help me door to door
Have a van available same day - if I don't feel good and want to go back home most times I call there no van available
reduce wait times for return pickup
Make vans quieter
When I call, the receptionist needs to be more professional and not snap at me
Nothing - the service is mostly perfect - well maybe better shocks and better roads - not your problem
run later at night. Excellent service
I am satisfied with the ADA van service
be on time! Check to see if we are ready
2 1/2 hour wait times can be hard on back. Maybe shorter time
Not so many bumpy roads. Longer seat cushions - little to short. Not long ride where I get home late after long day at VA
Pay drivers enough money so there can be more riding consistency
consolidate trips
Trip times closer to requested arrival and departure times. Thank you for your service!
be on time.
Have travel on holidays and late times
Keeping return time the same instead of windows later
Requested time is always late. I mean most of the days the pickup time is always late and other thing is to sit in a bus for more than one hour some times.
Have return drivers arrive at time given for arrival
arrive on time
the only thing is the pick up and drop off sometimes I have to wait an hour
make return times more realistic
service is great - one pickup in dropping me off was handled professionally. Suggestion for Sunday church drop off - drop off within 15 min - not 1/2 or hour. Otherwise mom sits in church with the previous service
tighter scheduling, cleaning snow from stops
Don't leave me stranded for three of four hours when your pickup time has passed.
provide a ride for return to my home when my appointment is finished early. Hire more van drivers
keep me smiling; get from point a to point be safe and sound

would be arrive close to the promised arrival time
The service has been good. They have been picking up on time to go home
Need tele *2. I was using landline for leaving home calls. Let me ride year round. When mom in nursing home outside authorized time I have to depend on friends to see her. Mostly moms PCA take me shop now cause I go about 3 places 1 time a week
Make trip times work for me. (I self-cath every 4 hours and often the van service has not been able to do my needed pickup and arrival times)
Call the phone number that I went to rather than calling my home so that I be ready on return trips.
more common sense scheduling. Pickup time closer to request. Less time on van. Use people to schedule not computers. Run service like you did between 2010 -2012
the seat belts dig into my hip (hard plastic piece) on some vans. Better shocks and struts to make ride less painful. More wide seats for fat people
time between return entirely too long. Even if you call dispatch the wait is awful. Example: I asked for 1/2 and they picked me up 1 1/2 hours later
I appreciate the ADA van service
Not make me wait so long when I just pick up a script from my doctors
Have van service on Saturdays in Wilbraham
They do a good job
be on time.
Scheduling: always go pass my window time when it's to go home or I have to wait an hour or hour and half to be picked up to go home
Try to get the time closer to the time we say
Things are working out fine
Your van service is great
Shorten wait time and delivery
Be here on time
service is great!
App to schedule transportation on my phone, and just one ADA driver for every time I call - he will be my driver all the time
Opportunity to schedule vans on the day needed (same day pickup). Haven't received a 5 minute advance call, ever
schedule adherence
More lenient in changing schedule. If I get sick in middle of night - try to call and leave message
Make original pickup on time
Not having service for those that live in East Longmeadow is not fair. My dad misses out on all of our family picnics
I honestly cannot think of a single most important thing PVRTA can improve ADA service, except I wish bags could be brought to my room but it's a bit of a distance from lubly where can into
shorten window
schedule adherence, prioritize medical trips
I've been very happy with the service since I've moved to Hadley MA
Sometimes, if there is a secured wheelchair in the van, I have to step around the buckle and I lose my balance
Come on time. I am an inpatient disabled vet at [REDACTED]
I often have to wait over an hour for pickup after class ends, then have several stops on way home. End up getting home much later than I'd like (2 hours after class ended)

Go to Enfield CT - go down on the price for kids
You do a great job. Only improvement - reduce waiting times for vans and reduce trip times - I know this is difficult. Expand service to CT
Picking me up on time
Stop getting me to my appointments an hour early
Pickup and return times
Monitor drivers more (without getting in their way) some drive the vans like sports cars which makes my pain level increase
Timing - I have had to wait beyond the 20 minute allotted time for pickups on several occasions
Keep all of these things going strong!! This van service is exceptional
When I finish early be picked up
pick up on time
If I didn't have to leave quite so early before appt and not have to wait so long to be picked up to go home it would be better
Tighten up arrival/pickup times
Try to pick us up after our appts a little
Improve transportation times. Vans often do not arrive in time window and most time windows are at the end of the hour
Get to my hours or work on time so I don't have to stress out. Filled out by brother for customer he is mentally challenged
Drivers need to be more helpful in assisting clients on and off vans or little cars
To be on time to get me. Sometimes I have long wait times - longer than 20 minutes. Getting correct information when the van is late
Continue the good work
No complaints good attitude
Service is great as is!
Better arrival / pickup times
Could be nicer/more helpful. One driver carriers my bag even though I'm not door to door and makes sure I am safe
It would be better if they worked on the times of pick up and bringing home
Continue with the respectful and courteous service I have received up to now. Thank you for the 2 tickets
Better scheduling procedure. To try to get to work for around 8:30 am I need to schedule my ride for 9:15 in order to not arrive an hour or more early
Try to be on time and not leave me stuck at locations and overall service good. Drivers could be more friendly
Being able to get same day service. At 92 totally blind and disabled I forget to call
Not require minimum trip time. Average trip time 3 hours not acceptable for ride in home town
Be able to schedule on a tighter time frame - especially for a regularly run - this form not applicable for disabled rider to answer. Mom filled out
Get there on time for my appointments for work
Pick up time and something I want to go someplace today but cannot get a ride cause I didn't know t days ago
I wouldn't change a thing
Later times to pick up after 5 pm. When we have social events times are too early for pick up P.M.

Nothing - everything is great with PVTA. I am very thankful to be able to use your services when I go somewhere. Thanks again!
Availability to purchase tickets and when ordered the turn around time to receive tickets
stop calling me for reminder
Mostly used to get to work. Live with my parents who are retired. When they aren't available to pick me up from work I sometimes have had to wait over an hour for my ride past scheduled pick up time. Also sometimes the van has taken me to Chicopee before taking me home.
stop calling so often - if you are permanently disable why do you continue to do re-certs?
Pick up and return times relative to time of appointments
Return pickups can at times be late and the drive home can be very long
15 min window instead of 20 min. Pay van drivers more
You could get a few newer vans. Some vans are really worn
I am very happy with the service
Longer hours on weekend and weekday evening , nights
They are fine with me. I have had no problems - I think it's a blessing!
Timing - for pickups is rarely timely - too long!
Improve reservation process so that trips are planned with rider's input. Inform rider when you are going to be late. Allow change in pickup site when you (PVTA) are late
Schedule trips closer to my requested times
Shorter return time pickup sometimes it's between 1 1/2 or 2 hours waiting for van
Get me home on time from dialysis. Bring me home without a lot of stops because a home health aid meets me at home at a set time and I often feel sick, bad bp and very tired. Least have driver wait and enter my house door before driver leaves to make sure I had no problems at 98 years old.
Come on time
I don't see anything, the service is very good
arrives ontime
I can't comment on that at this time. My experience with van service has been good so far. Thank you
I would like for the return of same-day booking reservation
Shorten the 2 hour window to 1 hour
Make trips closer to time requested - that is, amount of time. Ex I've requested 30 minutes and gotten 1 1/2 hours only occasionally - most are ok
wishing for no delays
some drivers are not friendly. They are irritable. Because of them I feel anxious on the bus
The waiting period when picking up from destination to home
Nothing - everyone is great and I receive great service. I truly appreciate the ADA van service.
Improve the ride scheduling and dispatch part of the service. It would really help if there was separate phone lines for drivers and we could schedule rides and request our times the night before. Thank you so much for all the work you do. I really appreciate it
Try to get more accurate times as needed for my schedule. But for the most part times are ok
The staff taking calls for the rides don't seem to pay attention to your times. Too rushed for some reason. Rides get screwed up
Better scheduling format for the rides
nothing - no complaints
On time, pick up on time
Some drivers leave windows open - could be a little warmer. Most drivers are excellent

1 1/2 - 2 hour rides are quite long - 1 hour ride is acceptable but longer is not! Drivers are helpful and very courteous
think overall the service is very good, but wish pickup times for return trips were more prompt
this service is a wonderful blessing to me. I am grateful. Retain qualified drivers. I have heard more than once complaints of shortage of drivers or new ones
Pickup from destination to return home
Avoid large differences in pickup times versus requested times
come on time not an hour later
Increase dollar rides. Make sure person that makes reservation times for me lets me know if dollar rides apply at times I want to travel
make certain all drivers are properly trained. And paid enough
pick up time after appt is often too long after appt is over
increase number of trained experienced drivers. M-F
book rides online
the scheduling system, as it schedules round trips to arrive later than asked for. The automated caller system has issues at times.
pick up at home is ok but pickup from appt usually is very late
better time for arrival for ride schedule
make sure to be on time
The ADA service is excellent all around.
call more to let me know are on their way more often
great job
better times - should be closer to times I request
train drivers to deal better with visually impaired. Some drivers are not very understanding
Improving phone service. Ex: when taking the call make sure it is a detailed message
expand start and end times for all communities so that PVRTA can better accommodate my schedule/travel needs
service is great!
quicker pick up after doctors appt is over. Not good to wait so long when sick.
call people more
be on time for pickup and return
increased weekend service
I have one appt each month which has been ongoing for 10 years. Res. Staff often don't believe the address I give. Drivers should turn off radio when passengers board. So Rude!
be on time and have more time available for rides
nothing - they are great
Filled out for my husband who passed. We don't use PVRTA anymore
a way to view/cancel van rides online
continue service - if not for this service I would not be getting necessary medical treatment. Everyone is wonderful.
make fare cost effective for the ADEA van(eg: monthly bus pass for ADA van.
have spare van to pickup when appt are done early. Have at least 10-15 min waiting time instead 5 min.
very happy with service
pickup time for ride coming home
no problems

very happy with service