



Institute for Transportation Research and Education
North Carolina State University

July 18, 2006
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Lisa Gullette, ITRE Communications Manager
(919) 515-8039; lisa_gullette@ncsu.edu

12,560 Triangle Residents to Impact Community Planning

Raleigh, NC – Whether it is bicycle paths, transportation improvement, building schools or land development, local residents are concerned with improving their community. More than 12,000 residents will impact local and regional planning because they participated in research to help planners improve local growing communities. The Triangle Regional Model Service Bureau (TRMSB) at the Institute for Transportation Research and Education (ITRE) recently concluded a six-month Greater Triangle Household Travel Survey on 5,107 households in the Triangle and its surrounding counties. Participants were recruited to participate through a random sampling process, but several households that missed their initial recruitment call actually called the Service Bureau asking if they could be called again to participate. With the understanding that participating in the survey could impact decisions made at local transportation and planning agencies, many were eager to share something they have in common about how they live and work: their daily travel habits.

“Observed travel behavior is a critical building block for travel forecast models, and we are so grateful for the time commitment made by so many families across the Triangle region,” said Leta Huntsinger, program manager for TRMSB. “Their efforts will assure that this region has a robust planning tool that local transportation planners can use when evaluating transportation needs and choices for our growing and dynamic region.”

The primary objective of this survey was to document demographic and travel behavior characteristics of Triangle travelers in order to update the current regional model and to develop a new, more robust travel forecast model for the 12-county region. Travel forecast models help transportation engineers and planners make informed decisions about long-range transportation projects in a growing region. The survey provided high quality travel related data, which transportation planning agencies can begin to use immediately for planning needs.

The Triangle Regional Household Survey was jointly funded by four agencies: North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT), Triangle Transit Authority (TTA), Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), and the Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro MPO. These agencies now have up-to-date information that will inform agency decisions on future development, community use of bicycle paths, and alternative modes of travel as well as travel patterns categorized by demographics, so planners consider the travel characteristics of households in an area while planning travel routes. The results of this research will provide better roadways, sidewalks, bike routes and bus service, to the respective areas that will use the service.

Nagui M. Roupail,
Ph.D, Director

An inter-
institutional
center
serving all
16 UNC
campuses.

Centennial Campus
Box 8601, Raleigh, NC 27695-8601
(919) 515-8899 ☎ (919) 515-8898 fax
<http://www.itre.ncsu.edu>

The data from this survey contains details about 12,560 household members, 9,312 vehicles, and details regarding 51,002 trips during a 24-hour period in the 12 counties in the Triangle region. The inner region primarily consists of Wake, Durham and Orange counties; the surrounding counties are considered the outer region. Statistics such as household size, number of household members employed, number of vehicles and use of bicycles, all factor into the model. For instance, the regional average for vehicle ownership was 1.82 vehicles per household. Households in Nash and Person Counties reported owning the most vehicles, on average (2.14 and 2.12, respectively). Households in Lee and Durham Counties reported owning the fewest (1.68 and 1.55). Households in the inner area reported owning 1.79 vehicles, on average, but the outer areas reported an average of 1.93 vehicles owned. Bicycle ownership was statistically higher for households in the inner area as compared to households in the outer area. Region-wide, households indicated having 1.29 workers, on average. Households in Orange and Wake Counties reported the highest average number of workers (1.37), while those in Vance County reported the lowest number (0.91). Households in the inner area made more trips, on average (10.3 trips) when compared to 8.9 trips in the outer area.

A short section of the questionnaire asked households how often they seek information about traffic conditions in the region and the results will be used in ITS (Intelligent Transportation Systems) investment decisions. Of those regional households that do seek regional traffic information, most (46 percent) look for it on the television, one-third listen to the radio, and 15 percent use the Internet. Households in the outer area listen more to the television than the radio. Those most likely to use the Internet live in Orange County, and those most likely to look to variable message signs live in Lee County. All these and many more statistics were collected in the study and are very valuable to engineers, researchers, and planners. Currently, this information will be used to in another research project underway at the ITRE, which is integrating the benefits of several ITS strategies.

The study was conducted using standard household travel survey methods and was conducted by NuStats, a nationally-known survey research firm specializing in travel behavior and transportation research for the Triangle Regional Model Service Bureau. The current travel forecast model was developed using a household survey from 1995.

The Triangle Regional Model Service Bureau is located at the Institute for Transportation Research and Education (ITRE), administered by North Carolina State University, is a non-profit organization that conducts research, education, and technical assistance projects on a wide variety of surface transportation issues with the goals of solving problems and creating new products, better services and smarter workers. ITRE is located on NCSU's Centennial Campus. For more information about ITRE and related programs, please visit our Web site at www.itre.ncsu.edu.