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Santa Barbara County Bucks the National Trend

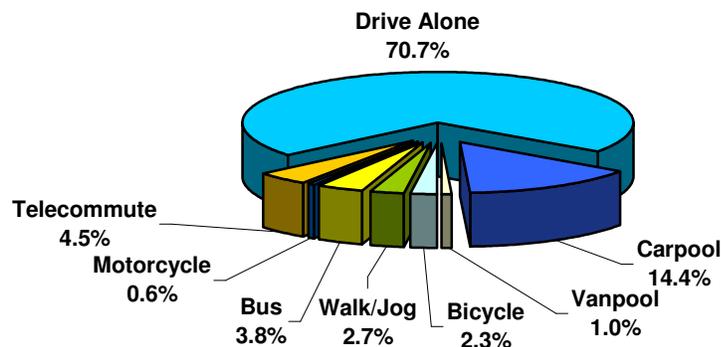
Less Driving Alone to Work, More Carpooling, Transit and Telecommuting

June 26, 2007 (Santa Barbara County, CA): Santa Barbara County commuters are bucking national commute trends. According to the 2007 Commuter Profile recently conducted by SBCAG Traffic Solutions, Santa Barbara County commuters are driving alone less often than they were five years ago, and they are driving alone to work less than the national average. The 2007 Commuter Profile also reveals increases in carpooling, transit and telecommuting.

To gauge the state of the commute, SBCAG Traffic Solutions, the Santa Barbara Countywide rideshare organization, conducts periodic commuter surveys. Today, Traffic Solutions released the 2007 Commuter Profile random telephone survey results, giving officials a better understanding of how commute behavior has changed over the past five years. The Commuter Profile was last conducted in 2002.

The 2007 Commuter Profile indicates that 71% percent of Santa Barbara County residents drive alone to work and the remaining 29% use alternative transportation to commute to work. According to the recent American Community Survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau, the national average drive alone rate is 77%.¹

Santa Barbara County Primary Commute Mode



¹ The two surveys targeted a slightly different demographic, with the American Community Survey targeting both part-time and full-time commuters, sixteen years of age or older, whereas the 2007 Commuter Profile targeting full-time commuters, eighteen year of age or older. The Santa Barbara County statistics from the American Community Survey were about ten percent lower than the national average.

The average commute time for Santa Barbara County commuters is 21 minutes and the average one-way commute distance is 14 miles, both of which are virtually unchanged from 2002. Commuters appear to be working more alternative work schedules than in 2002. The number of employees working a compressed workweek (9-80 or 4-10 work schedules) or some other alternative work schedule tripled over the last five years (12% in 2007 versus four percent in 2002). The number of employees that telecommute as their primary commute mode doubled over the past five years (four and a half percent in 2007 versus 1.9% in 2002).

The telephone survey was given in English or Spanish. The survey results indicate that there were distinct differences in commute behavior for those that took the survey in Spanish versus in English. Spanish speaking respondents drive alone considerably less than English speaking respondents, 43% versus 78% respectively, however, both segments of the population drive alone less than they did in 2002. Spanish speaking respondents are carpooling and bicycling more than they did in 2002, whereas English speaking respondents are taking the bus or telecommuting more than they were in 2002. The lower drive alone rate of Spanish speaking respondents is likely partially tied to the lower average household income of the Spanish speaking respondents. Lower income individuals are more likely to rideshare than higher income individuals.

The 2007 Commuter Profile results also shed light on the choices made by commuters. Amongst the top reasons people commute the way they do, twenty-one percent report they have no other way to get to work, 19% indicate that commute cost is the primary reason and 18% report that the convenience of using their own car is their primary reason. The Commuter Profile also indicates that commuters that work for employers that provide some sort of encouragement for ridesharing are six percent less likely to drive alone to work.

“These survey results are quite favorable,” remarked Kent Epperson, Director of Traffic Solutions, “the lower levels of drive alone commuters results in less traffic, air pollution, fossil fuel consumption and a lower green house gas emissions.” Epperson anticipates this trend will continue if fuel prices increase even more. Epperson also emphasized the need to continue to provide commuters with services and alternatives that will make ridesharing more convenient and efficient, including improvements to transit services, bicycle infrastructure (bike paths and bike lanes) and programs that facilitate more carpooling and telecommuting in Santa Barbara County.

Traffic Solutions, the Santa Barbara Countywide rideshare organization, operates the Clean Air Express commuter bus service, co-manages the VISTA Coastal Express, and encourages alternative transportation, such as carpooling, vanpooling, transit, bicycling, walking and

telecommuting. Traffic Solutions is a Division of the Santa Barbara County Association of Governments. The 2007 Commuter Profile, jointly funded by SBCAG Traffic Solutions, San Luis Obispo Regional Rideshare and the Ventura County Transportation Commission, randomly surveyed over 3,000 residents by phone in Santa Barbara, Ventura and San Luis Obispo counties.

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