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Customer survey shows increase in satisfaction

Confidence in DART rising with ridership

Ridership isn't the only thing going up at Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART). A new survey shows that 94% of customers report overall satisfaction with the transit agency, an increase from 91% in 2007.

The survey results follow the release of Fiscal Year 2008 ridership data reporting record ridership of 116.8 million passenger trips as well as ridership records in DART Rail, Trinity Railway Express commuter rail and High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes.

Asked if DART's services are better than last year, 87% say yes, compared to 77% in 2007, and 96% say they'd recommend DART to others, compared to 93% a year ago. The survey was conducted in August 2008. Approximately 45,000 customer satisfaction surveys were distributed to bus and rail riders in the 13-member cities that make up DART.

"These positive numbers represent the hard work of all of our employees. It takes each of us to do the job right, and it certainly looks like that is being accomplished," said Gary Thomas, DART president and executive director.

Survey respondents reported improvements in buses being on schedule (86%, up from 80% last year). Customers said bus transfers were on schedule 90% of the time compared to 85% in 2007, and feelings about bus cleanliness improved from 72% to 79%. Trains got a 95% on-time performance rating, and train cleanliness increased five percentage points from 82% to 87%.

Making customers feel safe, secure

Responding to issues arising from the 2007 survey, DART Police have strengthened officer deployment to raise the visibility of uniformed personnel throughout the system. Consequently more customers, 87%, say they feel safe at bus stops and rail stations - up from 80% last year.

"While we are pleased with the improved ranking, we recognize that progress still needs to be made," said DART Police Chief James Spiller. "We feel like we are doing a good job; however, the public's perception needs to be strengthened, so we will look for even more positive changes."

Spiller added, "We implemented a problem-solving policing campaign where we look beyond the incident and get to the root cause of the problems. We've held community forums with leaders from businesses, communities, judicial, school districts and other police agencies to work together to solve problems of mutual interest. Safety and security on our system is a joint venture with our member cities and communities, and together we can make all of our communities and areas safe."

New customers, new opportunities

A growing percentage of DART's customers are new to the system. In fact, 74% of those surveyed say they are leaving their cars at home and riding DART as a remedy for high gas prices, an increase from 64% in 2007. "We appreciate our loyal riders who have been with us for years, and we

are excited about the new riders who are providing unprecedented ridership numbers. They have a choice for transportation, and they choose DART," Thomas said.

The survey

Approximately 6,271 surveys were received in both print and online for a 14% response rate, the highest response rate DART has received for this type of survey. The survey has a margin of error of plus or minus 1.3% at a 95% confidence level.