2007
Metro Residents Survey

An examination of Minneapolis-Saint Paul metro residents' concerns and attitudes about the region

February 2008

Metropolitan Council
390 Robert Street North, Saint Paul, Minnesota 55101

Metropolitan Council Members

*T*he mission of the Metropolitan Council is to develop, in cooperation with local communities, a comprehensive regional planning framework, focusing on transportation, wastewater, parks and aviation systems, that guide the efficient growth of the metropolitan area. The Council operates transit and wastewater services and administers housing and other grant programs.

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Quality of Life

- Positive feelings about the Twin Cities region have been consistent over 25 years of Metropolitan Council surveys; 94 percent of Twin Cities residents said the region is a better or much better place to live than other metropolitan areas.

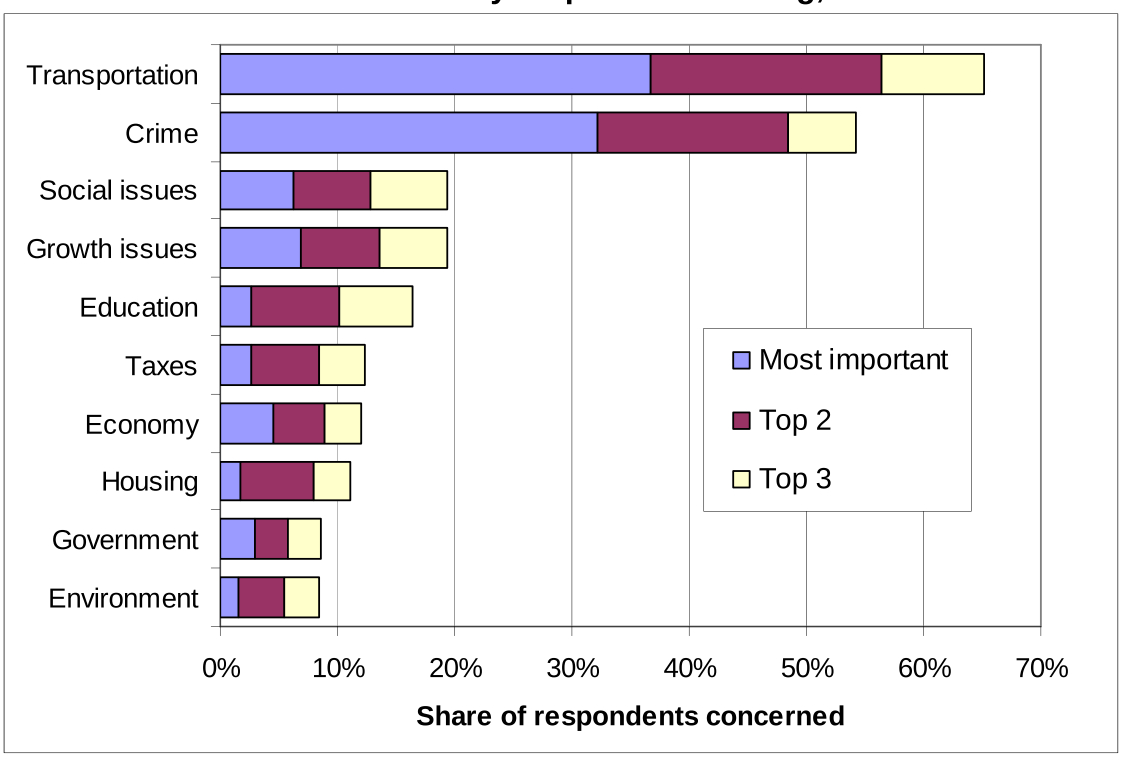
- There is continuing concern that the region's quality of life is slipping: 34 percent felt that the quality of life has gotten worse in the past year. The perception that the region's quality of life has declined has been on the rise since the recession of 2000-01.

- When asked about the Twin Cities region's most attractive feature, 35 percent identified the region's parks, trails, lakes and natural environment. Other assets cited include the variety of things to do (8 percent), arts and cultural opportunities (7 percent), and quality of life aspects (7 percent).

Issues Facing the Region

- Asked about issues facing the region, 37 percent named traffic congestion, road conditions, limited transit options, or other transportation challenges as the region's single most important problem. Sixty-five percent included transportation concerns among the region's top three problems.

Overall concern by respondent ranking, 2007



n=1319, confidence +/-3%

- Concern about crime is also high, with 32 percent citing crime as the single most important problem in 2007. Fifty-four percent placed crime among the region's top three problems.

- Distinctive of the past five years is that both transportation and crime are major, dominant concerns at the same time. In 2007, a combined 69 percent highlighted transportation or crime as the region's foremost problem.

- Among other issues – growth issues were mentioned by 19 percent and social issues by 19 percent. However, these were more likely to be considered secondary concerns, rather than the region's single most important problem.

Commuting Solutions

- Survey participants were asked how likely they were to try cost-reducing commuting solutions. Forty-two percent of all commuters said they are very likely to try a more fuel-efficient vehicle.

- Since 2005, there has been an increase in public interest in trying each of the alternative commuting solutions discussed in the survey.

- In 2007, 54 percent of all commuters said they are very likely to try one or more of several traffic-reducing solutions. One-quarter said they are very likely to try transit; one-quarter said they are very likely to work at home or telecommute.

- The number of Twin Cities commuters who said they are very likely to try car-pooling is twice as large as the number who currently car-pool. The number of commuters who said they are interested in taking transit is three times as large as the number who currently take buses and LRT to work.

- Results show significant potential for transit market growth (potential interest amounts to 200,000 new riders) and in other solutions that would further reduce vehicle miles traveled.

Residential Preference

- One-quarter of Twin Cities residents said they would prefer to relocate or live in a different type of area. Of those interested in relocating, two-thirds were interested in a rural setting or a small town.

- Residents who would prefer to relocate cite various reasons. In the growing suburbs, residents cite rapid development and transition. Residents of older suburbs cite traffic and urban inconveniences. Central cities residents said crime is their chief complaint.

- If all residents who said they preferred a rural setting actually lived in a rural setting, the region would experience a doubling of its rural population. The preference is problematic since greater population is what transforms rural areas and small towns into something else – precipitating the complaints heard from residents of growing suburbs.

The Role of the Metropolitan Council

- Public approval of the Metropolitan Council's performance improved significantly between 2000 and 2005. In 2007, 41 percent said the Council is doing a good or very good job; 40 percent said the Council is doing a fair job; 19 percent said the Council is doing a poor job or worse.

- Ninety-five percent of residents said the Council's role in monitoring water supply and water quality is very or moderately important. Wastewater treatment, planning to accommodate growth, and natural resources and land conservancy also ranked high as important Council functions.

Contents

Section 1: Introduction

The Metropolitan Council conducts the Metro Residents Survey to assess what residents think about the region's quality of life, leading regional problems and solutions, and the Council's portfolio of responsibilities. The survey provides public opinion measurement that the Council can use to make the case for regional solutions.

This report describes the findings of the 2007 Metro Residents Survey. The survey is an annual effort dating back to 1982. Many of the questions asked in 2007 have been asked in past years and historical comparisons are provided.

Metro area residents were randomly selected for inclusion in the survey's geographically stratified sample. Survey data collection, via mail-returned survey questionnaires and telephone interviews, took place between October 11 and December 5, 2007. A complete discussion of the survey methodology is found in Section 6 of this report. The survey instrument is found in the Appendix.

Reading data in this report

The report is organized by topic. Each section begins with a summary of key findings, followed by a discussion of sub-topics within that section. Data tables are found in each section, after the discussion of findings.

Percentages are rounded to whole numbers; some tables may not add up to 100 percent. Not all respondents answered every question. The number of respondents answering any given question in 2007 is listed with each table and is noted as "n =…"

Most results are reported through frequencies of responses and cross-tabulations. Segment analyses comparing public opinion in four geographic areas (central cities, developed suburbs, developing communities, and rural areas) are presented where results showed a meaningful difference between areas. Further analysis of the study data is available by contacting Todd Graham or Regan Carlson (651-602-1000) at the Metropolitan Council.

Section 2: Quality of Region

Key Findings

- Positive feelings about the Twin Cities region have been consistent over 25 years of Metropolitan Council surveys; 94 percent of residents said the region is a better or much better place to live than other metropolitan areas.

- There is continuing concern that the region's quality of life is slipping: 34 percent felt that the quality of life has gotten worse in the past year. The perception that the region's quality of life has declined has been on the rise in the past 5 to 7 years As a follow-up, survey participants were asked about problems facing the region.

- The Twin Cities region has many attractive features and amenities. A variety of these were mentioned by survey participants; 35 percent identified the region's parks, trails, lakes and natural environment.

- Asked about issues facing the region, 37 percent named traffic congestion, road conditions, limited transit options or other transportation challenges as the region's single most important problem. Sixty-five percent placed transportation concerns among the region's top three problems.

- Concern about crime is also comparatively high, with 32 percent citing crime as the single most important problem in 2007. Fifty-four percent placed crime among the region's top three problems.

- Concern over transportation has sometimes been higher in previous years, as has concern over crime. Distinctive of the past five years is that both transportation and crime are major, dominant concerns at the same time. In 2007, a combined 69 percent highlighted transportation or crime as the region's foremost problem.

- Among other issues – growth issues were mentioned by 19 percent and social issues by 19 percent. However, these were more likely to be considered "other important problems" – secondary concerns rather than the region's single most important problem.

- Findings about the region's key challenges are based on open-ended questions, in which residents could identify whatever they felt to be important.

- Successive surveys have found a consistent minority (41 percent in 2007) disapprove of the region's growth. A minority also are concerned about growth in their own community (31 percent). This concern is down from 2005 and 2006 as new construction and development activity have slowed in the past two years.

Discussion

Survey participants were asked how the Twin Cities compares to other metropolitan areas, what makes the region attractive, what problems are currently facing the region, and how those problems should be addressed.

The Twin Cities compared to other metro areas

Positive feelings about the Twin Cities region have been consistent over 25 years of Council surveys. The vast majority of Twin Cities residents (94 percent) considered this region a better place to live than other metropolitan areas. Half of this number (52 percent) thinks that it is a much better place to live (Figure 1 and Table 2.01).

Changes in the quality of life

More volatile is the perception of change: Is the quality of life holding steady or diminishing? Half of residents (52 percent) think the Twin Cities' quality of life stayed the same in 2007; 34 percent think it worsened (Table 2.02).

The perception that the region's quality of life has declined has been on the rise in the past 5 to 7 years. As a follow-up, survey participants were asked about problems facing the region. The trend of growing pessimism has coincided with public concern over transportation and crime issues. Over the past five years, two-thirds majorities have identified transportation or crime as the foremost major problem facing the region.

What makes the Twin Cities area an attractive place to live?

Survey participants were asked to indicate what they think is the most attractive feature of the Twin Cities metro area today. The question was open-ended; the survey did not provide a pre-set list of choices. Responses were coded into summary categories and the results are presented in Table 2.03 and Figure 2.

A combined 35 percent of residents think parks, trails, lakes or other aspects of the natural environment are the region's most attractive feature (parks or trails, 26 percent; natural environment, 9 percent). Also highly rated were: the variety of things to do (8 percent), arts and cultural opportunities (7 percent), quality of life aspects (7 percent), good neighborhoods and neighborhood characteristics (5 percent), shopping and the Mall of America (5 percent), and the regional economy (5 percent). The distribution of responses in 2006 was very similar to the distribution found in the 2005 and 2006 surveys (Table 2.03).

Perceptions regarding growth in the region and local communities

Half of the region's residents (56 percent) think the Twin Cities area, as a whole, is growing at about the right pace. Others indicate less satisfaction: 41 percent think the Twin Cities area is growing too fast (Table 2.04).

Participants were also asked about growth in their own local communities: 63 percent think local growth is happening at about the right pace; 31 percent think local growth is advancing too fast. Concern over local growth has both grown and declined, in tandem with the boom and bust of home-building and commercial development. Dissatisfaction is highest in rural areas and new suburbs on the developing edge of the region (Table 2.05).

Geographic variations of public opinion

To better understand local views, responses can be segmented by where respondents live. The Council's *2030 Regional Development Framework* identifies six planning areas: Developed Communities, Developing Communities, Rural Centers, Rural Residential Areas, Diversified Rural Areas, and Agricultural Areas. The 2007 Metro Residents Survey sample was designed to enable segment analysis for Minneapolis and St. Paul, developed suburbs, developing communities, and the remaining rural areas combined.

Table 2.05 looks at growth opinions for each area. Statistically, there are minimal differences in perceptions about regional growth.

There are sub-regional differences about perceived local growth. Only 24 percent of residents in the region's developed core think that their communities are growing too fast. In developing communities and rural areas, about around 40 percent of residents are dissatisfied with rapid development.

Top issue facing the Twin Cities metro area

Residents were asked to identify the single most important problem facing the Twin Cities metro area today. They were then asked to suggest a solution to that problem.

Residents were also asked to list up to three other important problems facing the region. Each of these questions was open-ended, with survey respondents describing issues and solutions in their own words. For analysis, the open-ended responses were categorized. (See Table 2.06 for categories and sub-categories used to code responses.)

Transportation, which includes traffic congestion, road conditions, limited transit options, and related issues, was identified as the top problem by 37 percent of survey participants. The incidence of transportation issues complaints was higher in 2007 than in 2006 (when 33 percent identified transportation).

The change from 2006 seems centered around increased concern for road conditions, bridges, and infrastructure adequacy. For expediency, concerns about road conditions were grouped together with more generic responses, such as "transportation is awful" or simply "transportation," without further elaboration.

Table 2.07 and Figure 3 provide a time-series perspective of the single most important problem of the past 21 years' surveys. Throughout the 1990s, public opinion held that crime was the region's greatest concern. From 1993 to 1996, majorities of survey participants (more than 50 percent) named crime as the region's most important problem. From 2000 to 2005, and again in 2007, transportation has been the dominant concern, with peak concern (58 percent) in 2003.

Table 2.08 shows opinions on the most important issues by planning area. In the developed suburbs, developing communities, and rural areas, transportation was the major concern.

Concern grows with distance from the central cities and, presumably, with time spent commuting.

Central cities residents were less likely to identify traffic congestion and other transportation problems, and more likely to identify crime, including gangs, drug-related crime and crime in general (Table 2.08). This is not to say that crime is only an inner-city concern. Throughout the suburbs and rural areas residents are aware of crime, with 30 percent in each geographic sector identifying crime as the region's No. 1 problem.

Top three issues facing the Twin Cities metro area

The Metropolitan Council asks survey participants about the single most important problem, but also about other important problems facing the Twin Cities. Identifying the top three problems allows a broader view of overall concern – the share of all residents who have an issue on their minds.

Traffic congestion and other transportation problems are still the leading concerns when the top three problems are considered cumulatively. A large majority, 65 percent, expressed concern about transportation problems in 2007 (Table 2.09 and Figures 4 and 5). This was true in all geographic sectors: 58 percent were concerned about transportation problems in the central cities; 70 percent majorities identified transportation as the top issue in developing communities and rural areas (Table 2.10).

Figure 6 shows a time series for traffic congestion as one of the top three problems facing the region. Traffic congestion began to emerge in the public consciousness in the late-1990s. Concern about the issue doubled between 2001 and 2003, before beginning to ebb in 2004 (Figure 6). The trend of public opinion seems to indicate a resigned acceptance of chronic traffic-congestion problems that emerged in the late-1990s, and perhaps also public recognition that congestion levels and travel times have reached equilibrium. Travel times have not significantly worsened the past five years (see Section 3).

On the other hand, as discussed earlier, this year's survey showed an increase in complaints about road conditions, bridges, and infrastructure adequacy. The August 1, 2007, collapse of the I-35W bridge in Minneapolis continued to weigh on public consciousness and was mentioned by a number of survey participants.

Other problems

Crime became a majority concern in 2006 and again in 2007 (54 percent are concerned). Historically, concern over crime moves in tandem with crime incidence statistics. Public concern, as well as crime incidence, was very high in the 1990s.

Growth and social issues were concerns for one in five residents, and most of these listed growth or social issues as second- or third-choice concerns. Education, housing, the economy and taxes also tended to be second- or third-choice concerns rather than the single most important problem.

Table 2.10 shows overall concern for regional problems by planning area. Transportation and crime were the two dominant, majority-mentioned problems throughout the region.

Solutions to problems facing the Twin Cities area

Participating residents were asked to suggest potential solutions to their single most important problem. Solutions related to crime are listed in Table 2.11 and solutions for transportation problems are listed in Table 2.12. In coding the responses, Council researchers worked to identify the primary solution emphasized, or otherwise, the first solution mentioned.

Among the 32 percent of survey participants who were most concerned about crime, the top solutions were: hire more police (36 percent); tougher sentences (15 percent); greater police-community involvement or cooperation (7 percent); dealing with poverty and the cause of crime (7 percent); and parenting and family solutions (6 percent).

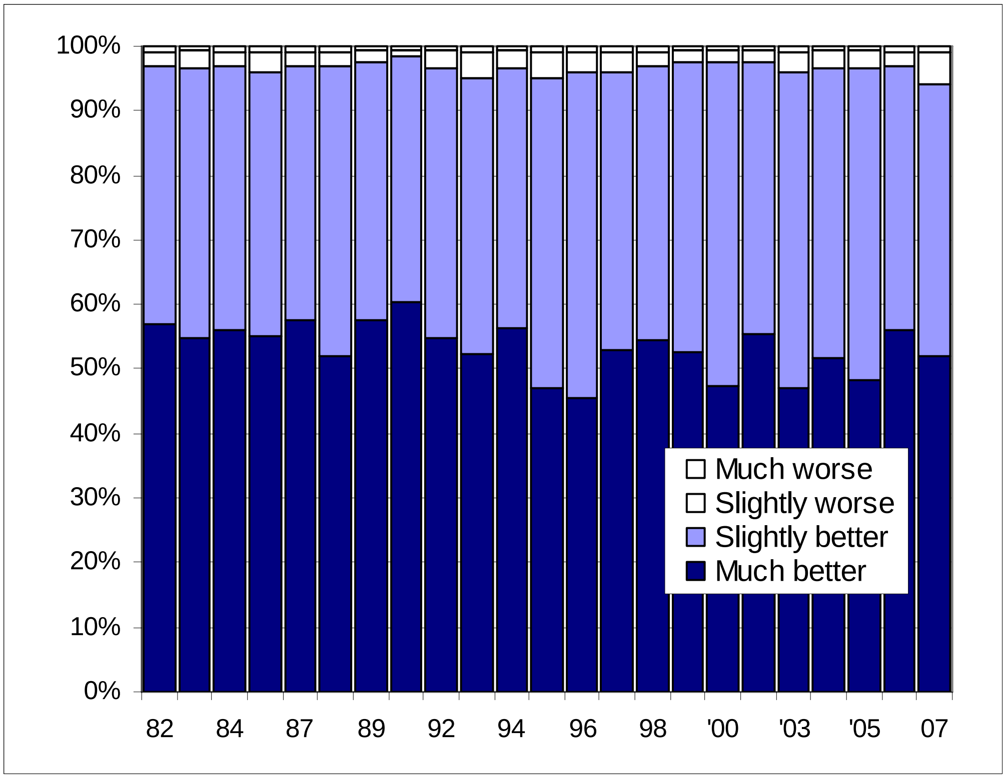
Among Twin Cities residents most concerned about transportation issues, many suggested improving or increasing mass transit service (40 percent), or improving the road network (20 percent), or both (5 percent).

Transit and roads are intertwined aspects of the challenge facing the region. Respondents' detailed responses provide evidence of broad public understanding of the complex systems nature of the challenge. Still, the design of the survey questionnaire influence survey participants to prioritize. It seems significant that transit was the primary response of a 40 percent plurality of residents.

Among residents who suggested mass transit solutions, their solutions can be split into two sub-groups, with 19 percent recommending mass transit generally, and another 21 percent indicating LRT or commuter trains specifically.

To resolve transportation issues, residents consistently suggest system solutions, rather than changing behavior or changing their own routines; less than one percent suggested behavior changes or incentives for behavior change. However, elsewhere in this survey, many respondents did express interest in transit or car-pooling solutions (Section 3: Commuting Characteristics and Choices). Some of the suggestions for expanding or improving the transit system may arise from respondents' desire to use transit, if it were viable in their situation.

Figure 1: How would you rate the Twin Cities as a place to live, compared to other metro areas? 1982-2007



n=1292, confidence +/-3%

Table 2.01: How would you rate the Twin Cities as a place to live, compared to other metro areas? 2000-2007

	2000	2001	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
A much better place	47%	55%	47%	52%	48%	56%	52%
A slightly better place	50%	42%	49%	45%	48%	41%	42%
A slightly worse place	2%	2%	3%	3%	3%	3%	5%
A much worse place	<1%	<1%	1%	<1%	<1%	1%	1%

n=1292, confidence +/-3%

Table 2.02: Over the past year, do you think the quality of life in the Twin Cities has gotten better, stayed the same, or gotten worse? 1998-2007

	1998	1999	2000/ 2001	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Gotten better	23%	26%		15%	12%	14%	17%	14%
Stayed the same	62%	60%	Not asked	57%	64%	55%	51%	52%
Gotten worse	15%	13%		28%	24%	31%	32%	34%

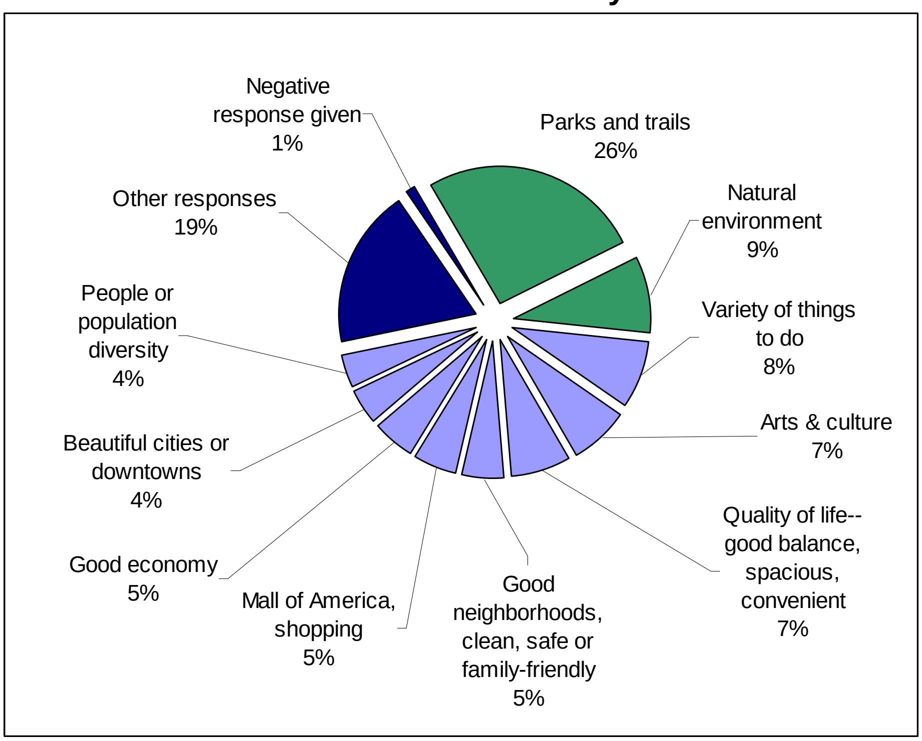
n=1340, confidence +/-3%

Table 2.03: What do you think is the single most attractive feature of the Twin Cities metro area today? 2005-2007

	2005	2006	2007
Parks and trails	23%	21%	26%
Natural environment	14%	13%	9%
Variety of things to do	7%	8%	8%
Arts & culture	8%	10%	7%
Quality of life – good balance, spacious, convenient	2%	6%	7%
Good neighborhoods, clean, safe or family-friendly	8%	6%	5%
Mall of America, shopping	7%	5%	5%
Good economy	4%	5%	5%
Beautiful cities or downtowns	5%	4%	4%
People or population diversity	5%	5%	4%
Weather	3%	2%	3%
Professional sports	2%	2%	2%
Negative response given	1%	<1%	1%
Other responses	12%	14%	14%

n=1245, confidence +/-3%

Figure 2: What do you think is the single most attractive feature of the Twin Cities metro area today? 2007



n=1245, confidence +/-3%

Table 2.04: Do you think the Twin Cities metro area as a whole is growing too fast, at the right pace, or too slow? How about the city, suburb or town where you live?

	Twin Cities area growth		Local community growth	
	2000	**2007**	**2000**	**2007**
Too fast	47%	41%	26%	31%
About right	52%	56%	71%	63%
Too slow	1%	3%	3%	7%

n = 1303 (Twin Cities question), n = 1297(community question), confidence +/-3%

Table 2.05: Opinions of growth, by planning area, 2007

Respondents' place of residence:	Twin Cities area growth:			Local community growth:		
	Too fast	**About right**	**Too slow**	**Too fast**	**About right**	**Too slow**
Minneapolis and St. Paul	41%	54%	5%	24%	65%	11%
Developed Suburbs	41%	56%	3%	24%	68%	7%
Developing Communities	42%	57%	1%	39%	58%	3%
Rural Areas	43%	55%	2%	41%	49%	9%
Twin Cities Region	41%	56%	3%	31%	63%	7%

For geographic segments, n varies from 283 to 351, confidence +/-6%

Table 2.06: What do you think is the single most important problem facing the Twin Cities metro area today?

Single most important problem:	Percent	Single most important problem:	Percent
Transportation – Total	**36.7%**	**Government – Total**	**3.0%**
Traffic congestion	19.3%	Government (general)	1.0%
Transportation (general) – including road conditions, adequacy	11.5%	Government funding or spending	1.0%
Mass transit	4.8%	Politics, politicians	0.7%
Construction is too prevalent	0.8%	Stadium issues – for or against	0.2%
Parking costs and availability	0.2%	The Governor	0.1%
Bad driving, cell phone use	0.1%		
		Taxes – Total	**2.7%**
Crime – Total	**32.2%**	Taxes (general)	2.1%
Crime (general)	23.6%	Property taxes	0.6%
Gangs	5.1%		
Crimes by youth	1.3%	**Education - Total**	**2.6%**
Drug related crime	1.3%	Financing, supporting education	1.0%
Guns, gun availability	0.5%	Education (general)	0.9%
Policing and criminal justice	0.4%	Quality of education	0.7%
Growth – Total	**6.9%**	**Housing – Total**	**1.7%**
Sprawl, outward growth	2.0%	Housing cost and affordable housing availability	1.2%
Immigration	1.7%	Declining home values	0.2%
Population, crowding, density	1.5%	Housing (general)	0.1%
Urban decay	1.3%	Foreclosure crisis	0.1%
Lacking amenities, attractions	0.3%		
		Environment – Total	**1.6%**
Social Problems – Total	**6.3%**	Pollution (general)	0.7%
Drug use (not including crime)	1.3%	Trash, litter	0.5%
Youth issues	1.3%	Air pollution	0.2%
Poverty and social disintegration	1.2%	Environment (general)	0.1%
Homeless	0.9%	Water quality	0.1%
Welfare abuse	0.5%		
Minorities	0.4%	**Health care – Total**	**0.5%**
Senior support and care	0.3%	Health care cost and access	0.4%
Discrimination	0.2%	Mental health system	0.1%
Community, social compact	0.1%		
		Energy – Total	**0.2%**
Economy – Total	**4.6%**	Energy prices, conservation	0.2%
High cost of living	1.6%		
Unemployment, lack of jobs	1.3%	**Other**	**1.0%**
Growing disparity - rich and poor	0.7%		
Economy (general)	0.6%		
Business climate	0.4%	**Total**	**100.0%**

n=1319, confidence +/-3%

Table 2.07: Single most important problem in the Twin Cities metro area, grouped into major categories, 1986 to 2007

Year	Transportation	Crime	Growth*	Social	Economy	Taxes	Housing	Other*
1986	5%	17%	n/a	9%	21%	18%	2%	28%
1987	8%	12%	n/a	14%	23%	15%	4%	24%
1988	11%	21%	n/a	21%	12%	13%	5%	17%
1989	8%	22%	n/a	30%	8%	12%	5%	15%
1990	7%	26%	n/a	23%	11%	11%	3%	19%
1992	4%	41%	n/a	14%	26%	4%	0%	11%
1993	3%	61%	n/a	11%	11%	3%	0%	11%
1994	4%	55%	n/a	12%	7%	8%	2%	12%
1995	4%	58%	1%	14%	9%	5%	1%	8%
1996	8%	53%	3%	12%	9%	7%	2%	6%
1997	12%	39%	3%	15%	6%	6%	1%	18%
1998	16%	31%	4%	13%	6%	10%	5%	16%
1999	20%	24%	4%	16%	4%	7%	10%	15%
2000	23%	13%	3%	14%	6%	7%	16%	18%
2001	19%	9%	2%	12%	14%	6%	19%	18%
2003	58%	13%	6%	5%	3%	3%	4%	9%
2004	49%	17%	12%	6%	2%	2%	4%	8%
2005	35%	26%	11%	9%	3%	3%	4%	9%
2006	33%	36%	11%	5%	1%	4%	2%	9%
2007	37%	32%	7%	6%	5%	3%	2%	9%

n=1319, confidence +/-3%

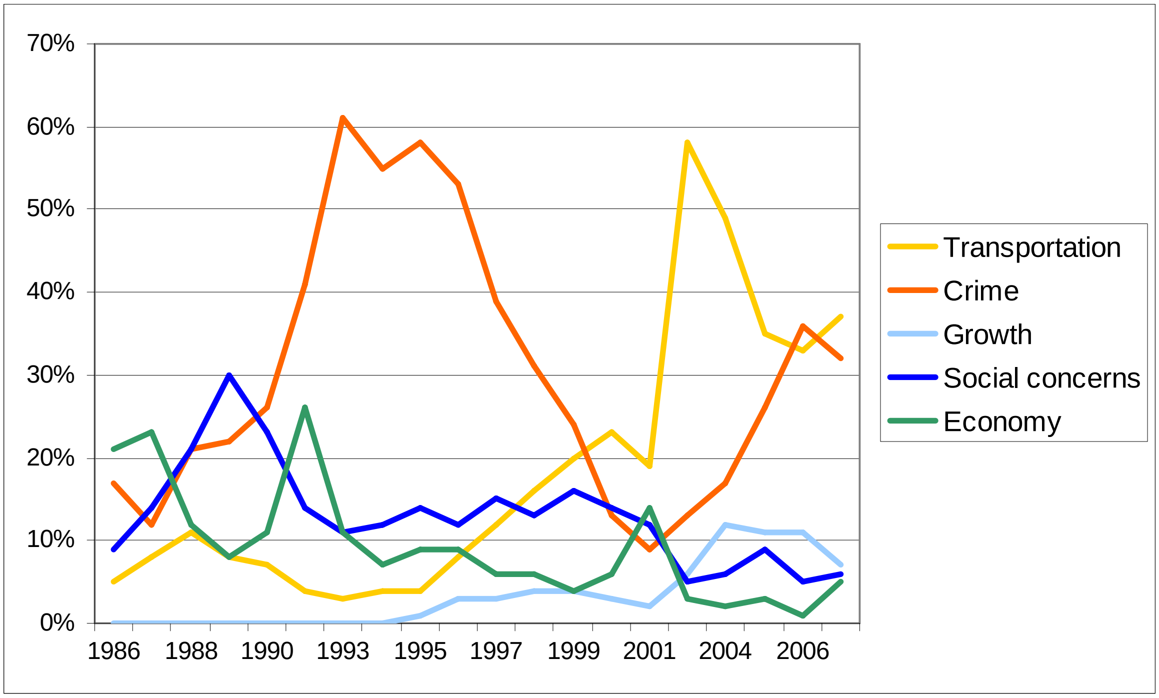
- Other problems here include: education, government, environment, weather, health care and energy.
- Prior to 1995, growth/sprawl issues were grouped as "other."

Table 2.08: Single most important problem, by planning area, 2007

Minneapolis and St. Paul	%	Developed Suburbs	%	Developing Communities	%	Rural Areas	%
Crime	37%	Transportation	37%	Transportation	43%	Transportation	45%
Transportation	25%	Crime	31%	Crime	30%	Crime	29%
Growth issues	8%	Economy	7%	Growth issues	7%	Growth issues	7%
Social issues	8%	Social issues	7%	Social issues	5%	Housing	4%
Government	6%	Growth issues	6%	Economy	4%	Social issues	4%
Housing	4%	Environment	3%	Taxes	2%	Taxes	3%
Education	4%	Education	2%	Education	2%	Education	2%
Taxes	3%	Taxes	2%	Government	2%	Government	2%
Economy	3%	Government	2%	Other	2%	Economy	2%
Healthcare	1%	Housing	1%	Environment	1%	Environment	1%
Environment	1%	Healthcare	1%	Housing	<1%	Other	<1%
Other	1%	Other	<1%	Healthcare	<1%		
Energy	<1%			Energy	<1%		

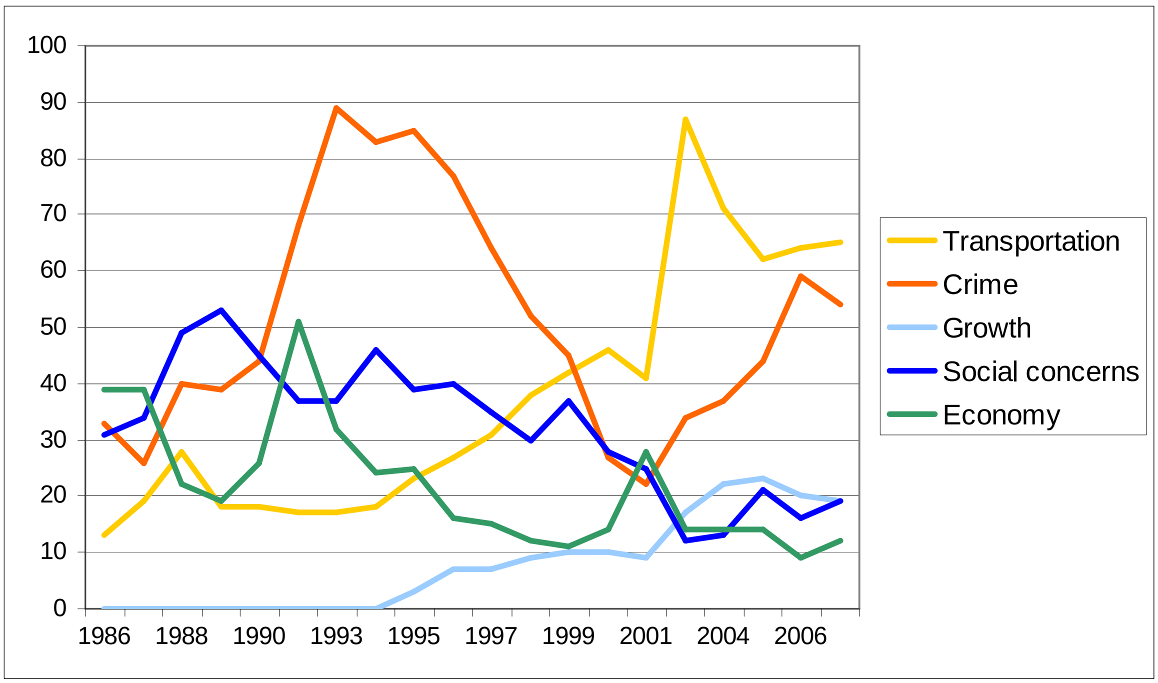
For geographic segments, n varies from 281 to 357, confidence +/-6%

Figure 3: Single most important problem, 1986 to 2007



n=1319, confidence +/-3%

Figure 4: Overall concern (top three problems identified), 1986 to 2007



n=1319, confidence +/-3%

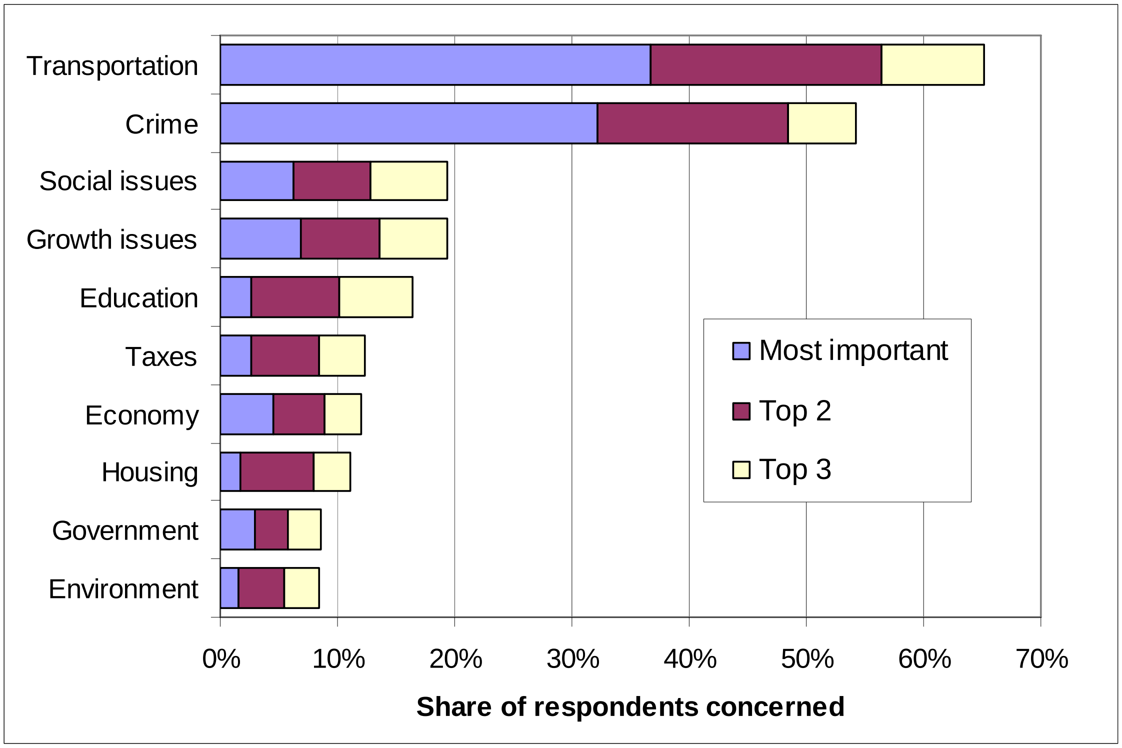
Table 2.09: Overall concern (top three problems identified) for issues facing the Twin Cities, 1986 to 2007

Year	Transportation	Crime	Social issues	Growth*	Education	Taxes	Economy – job market	Economy – other	Housing	Government	Environment	Healthcare	Energy	Other*
1986	13	33	31	n/a	7	35	24	15	6	5	23	6	-	18
1987	19	26	34	n/a	10	28	19	20	11	3	15	14	-	-
1988	28	40	49	n/a	10	28	10	12	13	6	17	4	2	15
1989	18	39	53	n/a	9	29	9	10	10	4	23	3	1	6
1990	18	44	45	n/a	14	24	14	12	9	8	22	4	3	6
1992	17	68	37	n/a	14	16	39	12	5	5	9	9	-	11
1993	17	89	37	n/a	15	20	21	11	4	9	5	6	-	14
1994	18	83	46	n/a	18	31	15	9	9	5	6	9	-	14
1995	23	85	39	3	20	19	14	11	4	5	4	4	-	11
1996	27	77	40	7	17	27	7	9	6	6	4	2	-	12
1997	31	64	35	7	18	20	5	10	4	9	4	3	-	11
1998	38	52	30	9	17	24	5	7	10	4	7	5	-	11
1999	42	45	37	10	19	16	6	5	20	8	3	6	1	7
2000	46	27	28	10	19	19	5	9	32	7	5	7	6	7
2001	41	22	25	9	27	15	12	16	35	9	5	5	-	5
2003	87	34	12	17	21	16	10	4	18	10	10	4	1	3
2004	71	37	13	22	25	11	8	6	20	11	6	5	1	6
2005	62	44	21	23	13	14	6	8	17	11	7	4	4	4
2006	64	59	16	20	21	15	4	5	10	7	6	8	1	4
2007	65	54	19	19	16	12	6	6	11	8	8	4	1	3

n=1319, confidence +/-3%

- This is a different way of looking at problems. Survey respondents identified a most important problem, as well as second and third other problems.
- Respondents could list up to three problems, so the total will be greater than 100%.
- In this table, economic issues are split into two groups: jobs-related and non-jobs-related.
- Prior to 1995, growth/sprawl issues were grouped as "other."

Figure 5: Overall concern by respondent ranking, 2007



n=1319, confidence +/-3%

Table 2.10: Overall concern (top three problems identified) by planning area, 2007

Minneapolis and St. Paul	%	Developed Suburbs	%	Developing Communities	%	Rural Areas	%
Transportation	58%	Transportation	63%	Transportation	70%	Transportation	71%
Crime	58%	Crime	57%	Crime	49%	Crime	52%
Growth issues	21%	Social issues	20%	Growth issues	20%	Growth issues	19%
Social issues	21%	Growth issues	17%	Social issues	16%	Social issues	15%
Education	20%	Education	16%	Taxes	14%	Education	15%
Housing	17%	Economy	14%	Education	13%	Taxes	12%
Taxes	12%	Taxes	11%	Economy	10%	Economy	10%
Economy	11%	Environment	8%	Housing	10%	Housing	10%
Government	10%	Government	8%	Environment	8%	Government	9%
Environment	9%	Housing	8%	Government	7%	Environment	6%
Healthcare	4%	Healthcare	6%	Other	5%	Other	3%
Other	3%	Other	2%	Healthcare	2%	Healthcare	2%
Energy	1%	Energy	1%	Energy	<1%	Energy	2%

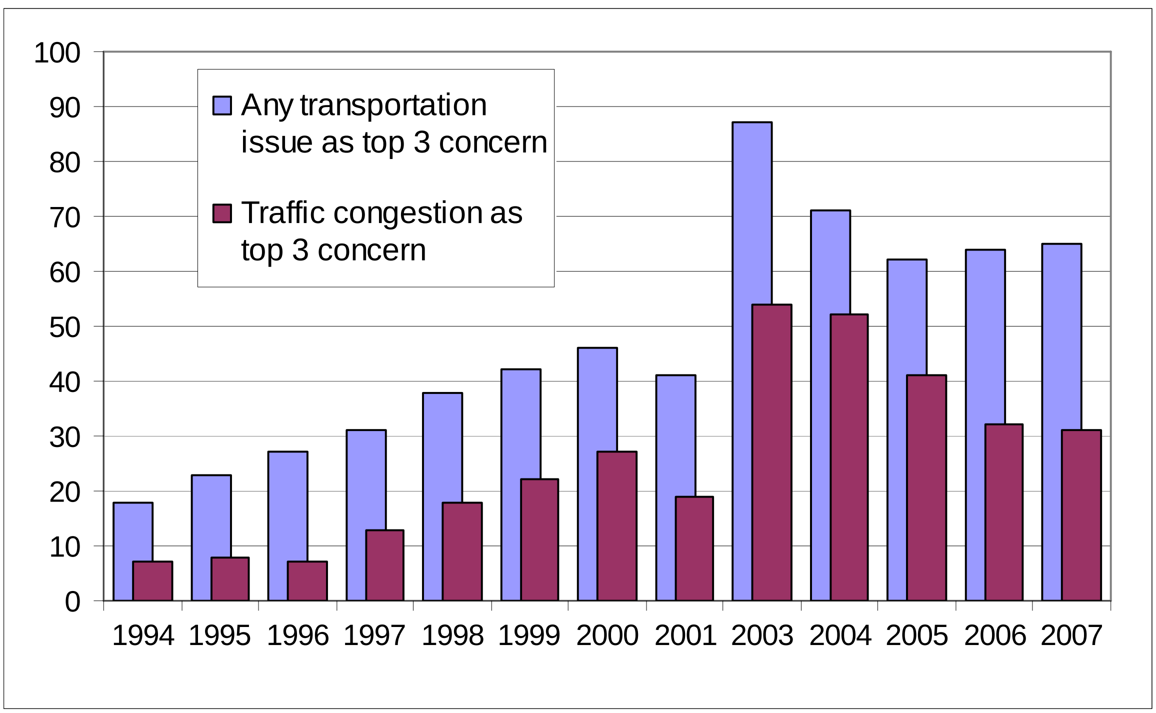
For geographic segments, n varies from 281 to 357, confidence +/-6%

Table 2.11: Solutions suggested for dealing with crime

Suggested solutions	Among respondents who listed crime as No. 1 problem*
More police and law enforcement	36%
Tougher sentences	15%
Increase police-community involvement or cooperation	7%
Deal with poverty and the causes of crime	7%
Parenting and family solutions	6%
Better funding and resources for law	4%
Education solutions	3%
Targeting gangs	3%
Miscellaneous	19%
Don't Know	7%

n = 425, confidence +/-5%

Figure 6: Traffic congestion and transportation as concerns (top three problems identified), 1994 to 2007



n=1319, confidence +/-3%

Table 2.12: Solutions suggested for dealing with traffic congestion and transportation issues, 2007

Suggested solutions	Among respondents who listed traffic congestion as No. 1 problem*	Among respondents who listed any transportation issue as No. 1 problem
Improve/increase road infrastructure	**30%**	**20%**
· Build more roads	11%	7%
· More lanes on existing highways	9%	5%
· Better design and layout	6%	4%
· Better roads, and better maintained	5%	4%
Improve/increase mass transit	**37%**	**40%**
· Increase/improve mass transit	19%	19%
· More LRT and/or commuter trains	18%	21%
Roads AND transit both mentioned	**6%**	**5%**
Other transportation suggestions	**24%**	**32%**
· Increase funding for transportation	10%	15%
· Better long range planning	5%	5%
· Reduce road construction time	1%	4%
· Reduce urban sprawl, redevelop cities	3%	2%
· Other miscellaneous	6%	6%
Don't know	**3%**	**3%**

n for traffic congestion only = 259, confidence +/-7%
n for all transportation issues = 485, confidence +/-5%

- Traffic congestion is a subset of the larger transportation issue.

Section 3: Commuting Solutions

Key Findings

- The Twin Cities has an auto-dominated transportation environment. Five out of six commuting workers drive alone. Drive-alone incidence is highest (90 percent) in rural areas and developing communities where privately-owned vehicles slightly outnumber adult drivers.

- Survey participants were asked about the likelihood of trying cost-reducing commuting solutions. Fuel-efficiency is the most popular cost-reducing solution: 42 percent of all commuters said they are very likely to try a more fuel-efficient vehicle.

- Since 2005, there has been an increase in professed public interest in trying each of the alternative commuting solutions discussed in the survey.

- In 2007, 54 percent of all commuters assessed themselves as very likely to try one or more of several traffic-reducing solutions. One-quarter said they are very likely to try transit; also one-quarter said they are very likely to work at home or telecommute.

- The number of Twin Cities commuters who said they are very likely to try car-pooling is twice as large as the number of commuters who currently car-pool. The number of commuters interested in taking transit is three times as large as the number of commuters who currently take buses and LRT to work.

- Applying survey findings to the 1.2 million Twin Cities commuters who currently dive alone to work, there is significant potential for transit market growth (potential interest amounts to 200,000 new riders); in greater car-pooling and ride-sharing opportunities, potentially reducing vehicles on the road by 70,000–140,000, and in other solutions that would further reduce vehicle miles traveled.

Discussion

Commuting modes

While Metro Transit ridership is at 25-year high-mark – 77 million rides in 2007 – transit use is still outnumbered by almost one billion car-based commute trips. There has not been significant change in the overall commuting mode distribution. (Slight fluctuations measured by past years' surveys have not been statistically significant changes.)

Of residents who worked outside the home, 83 percent got to work by driving alone; seven percent car-pooled, van-pooled or rode with others; seven percent took transit (6 percent on bus, less than 1 percent on LRT); and two percent walked or bicycled (Table 3.01).

Commute mode choice is influenced by at least two obvious factors: personal access to a vehicle and location. Among central cities residents, 11 percent of commuters took transit to work (10 percent on bus, 1 percent on LRT); seven percent walked or biked. In contrast among rural commuters, one percent took transit and less than one percent walked or biked to work (Table 3.02).

In households with only one vehicle, 78 percent of commuters got to work by driving alone. In households with more vehicles, it was 89 percent (Table 3.03). Not coincidentally, households with no vehicles or only one vehicle are most common in the central cities (Table 3.04).

Cost-reducing and traffic-reducing commute solutions

Gasoline prices are volatile. Prices fluctuate from month to month, obscuring long-run trend adjustments. Still, an adjustment has occurred. In 2005, 2006 and 2007, gasoline prices have been at or above $3 per gallon – substantially higher than the $2 per gallon prices typical in 2000-2004. While it is taking time for the public to adjust to enduring higher fuel costs, it may take longer still for public attitudes and behavior to adjust.

Without referencing fuel prices, the survey asked participants to assess their interest in various cost-reducing commute solutions. The highest ranked choice was to commute in a more fuel-efficient vehicle: 42 percent said they are very likely to try fuel-efficient vehicles (Table 3.05).

The second and third most-commonly cited solutions were transit (26 percent said they were very likely), or work at home or telecommute (25 percent). Individually, these traffic-reducing solutions are not overwhelmingly popular. However, as a group, *traffic-reducing* solutions do have an appeal and potential. Fifty-four percent said they are very likely to try one or more of the traffic-reducing solutions listed. (Note: Fuel-efficient vehicles are considered separate from the five *traffic-reducing* solutions. They provide a cost savings, but are unlikely to reduce congestion.)

Public attitudes adjusting

Receptiveness to commuting alternatives is on the rise. Public attitudes and behavior are adjusting – the result of higher fuel prices and possibly greater environmental awareness.

Driving a more fuel-efficient vehicle was of interest to 26 percent of survey participants in 2005. That share has risen to 42 percent in 2007. There has been rising interest as well in each of the other commuting alternatives discussed (Table 3.06 and Figure 7).

As discussed above, there are Twin Cities commuters, one out of six, who already practice alternative commuting solutions. The 2007 survey reveals the market potential for traffic-reducing solutions. The number of Twin Cities commuters who said they are very likely to try car-pooling is twice as large as the number of commuters who currently car-pool. The number of commuters interested in taking transit is three times as large as the number of commuters who currently take buses and LRT to work (Table 3.06).

Target market for commuting solutions

Table 3.06 analyzes potential interest for the estimated 1.2 million Twin Cities commuters who currently drive alone. Among this target group, almost half (46 percent) would consider traffic-reducing solutions. Seventeen percent said they are very likely to try transit (potentially 200,000 new riders). Twelve percent are interested in riding with others (potentially reducing vehicles on the road by 70,000–140,000). Others are willing to telecommute or work closer to home, further reducing vehicle miles traveled.

Table 3.07 shows variations in interest in commuting alternatives by geography. Commuters in the central cities were significantly more likely than residents in developing communities to express interest in traffic-reducing solutions (60 percent vs. 47 percent).

Some of the difference may be credited to perceived opportunities. Transit service is most readily available in Minneapolis and St. Paul. In addition, pedestrian-friendly urban form, accessibility, and proximity of destinations make the central cities convenient for walking or commuting by bicycle. In some suburban communities, however, walking or bicycling may not be easy and safe, so urban form and design become an obstacle to pedestrian accessibility.

Still, even after accounting for feasibility of getting around without a car, there remains an attitudinal and preference difference. Central cities residents tended to be more "green." Half of central cities commuters said they are very likely to drive a more fuel-efficient vehicle, compared with only one-third in developing communities (Table 3.07).

Commuting time

The 2007 Metro Residents Survey did not include a question on perceived commuting time. Journey-to-work survey data is available, with a one year delay, from US Census Bureau's American Community Survey. Twin Cities seven-county-area statistics from the Census are presented in this section (Table 3.08 and Figure 8).

The striking finding of the American Community Survey is that the distribution of commute times in 2006 was very similar to the distribution in 2000. The share of commuters driving 30 minutes or more each way was 31 percent in 2000; 32 percent in 2005 and 2006. (Journey-to-work survey data for the intervening years, 2001-2004, is not available.) Transportation planners and economic analysts in the Twin Cities credit the slow growth of employment with holding commute times in check in 2005 and 2006.

Table 3.01: If you work outside of your home, how do you normally get to work? 2005-07

Mode of travel	2005	2006	2007
Drive alone	84%	82%	83%
Drive/ride with others or car/van pool	7%	8%	7%
Take the bus	8%	7%	6%
Bicycle	1%	<1%	1%
Walk	<1%	<1%	1%
Take the LRT	1%	<1%	<1%
Some other way	<1%	<1%	<1%

n = 877, confidence +/-4%

- Percentages for 2005 add to 103%. Survey participants were allowed to give multiple answers.
- This question was changed in 2006 and 2007. Percentage distributions from 2005 and 2006 were recalculated to represent only commuters who work outside of their homes.

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Table 3.02: Commuting mode, by planning area, 2007

Mode of travel	Minneapolis and St. Paul	Developed Suburbs	Developing Communities	Rural Areas
Drive alone	76%	82%	88%	90%
Drive/ride with others or car/van pool	5%	8%	7%	8%
Take the bus	10%	7%	5%	1%
Bicycle	5%	<1%	<1%	<1%
Walk	2%	1%	<1%	<1%
Take the LRT	1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
Some other way	1%	1%	<1%	<1%

For geographic segments, n varies from 200 to 245, confidence +/-7%

Table 3.03: Commuting mode, by vehicles available to household, 2007

Mode of travel	1 vehicle	2 vehicles	3+ vehicles	All households
Drive alone	78%	85%	89%	83%
Drive/ride with others or car/van pool	5%	8%	7%	7%
Take the bus	9%	6%	2%	6%
Bicycle	4%	<1%	<1%	1%
Walk	2%	<1%	<1%	1%
Take the LRT	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
Some other way	2%	<1%	<1%	<1%

For demographic segments above, n varies from 146 to 446,
confidence from +/-8% (one vehicle) to +/-5% (other segments)

Table 3.04: Vehicles available to household, by planning area, 2007

Mode of travel	Vehicles per adult in household	No vehicle available	1 vehicle	2 vehicles	3+ vehicles
Minneapolis and St. Paul	0.9	8%	34%	44%	14%
Developed Suburbs	1.0	3%	23%	52%	23%
Developing	1.1	1%	11%	54%	34%
Rural Areas	1.2	<1%	10%	49%	40%
Twin Cities Region	1.0	3%	21%	51%	26%

For geographic segments, n varies from 272 to 349, confidence +/-6%

Table 3.05: "If you work outside of your home, how likely are you to try new commuting solutions to reduce your transportation costs?"

	Not at all likely	Slightly likely	Moderately likely	Very likely
Drive in a more fuel-efficient vehicle	14%	18%	26%	**42%**
Take transit (buses or LRT)	48%	13%	12%	**26%**
Work at home or telecommute	50%	12%	14%	**25%**
Drive/ride with others or car/van pool	45%	22%	15%	**18%**
Change jobs to be closer to home	62%	12%	14%	**13%**
Bicycle or walk to work	68%	11%	7%	**13%**

n varies from 878 to 892, confidence +/-4%

Table 3.06: "Very likely" to try new commuting solutions: All commuters vs. commuters driving alone, 2005 and 2007

	All commuters		Commuters driving alone	
	2005	**2007**	**2005**	**2007**
Drive a more fuel-efficient vehicle	26%	**42%**	26%	43%
One or more of the traffic-reducing solutions below*	**49%**	**54%**	**42%**	**46%**
Take transit (buses or LRT)	21%	**26%**	14%	17%
Work at home or telecommute	18%	**25%**	17%	25%
Drive/ride with others or car/van pool	12%	**18%**	8%	12%
Bicycle or walk to work	9%	**13%**	6%	10%
Work closer to home (but not at home)	10%	**13%**	9%	12%

n of all commuters varies from 878 to 892, confidence +/-4%
n of commuters driving alone varies from 729 to 744, confidence +/-4%
Note: Fuel-efficient vehicles can be considered to be cost-reducing, but not traffic-reducing.

Table 3.07: "Very likely" to try new commuting solutions: All commuting workers, by planning area, 2007

	Minneapolis and St. Paul	Developed Suburbs	Developing Communities	Rural Areas
Drive a more fuel-efficient vehicle	50%	45%	34%	44%
One or more of the traffic-reducing solutions below*	**60%**	**61%**	**47%**	**50%**
Take transit (buses or LRT)	37%	29%	18%	17%
Work at home or telecommute	22%	27%	26%	23%
Drive/ride with others or car/ van pool	14%	24%	16%	20%
Bicycle or walk to work	25%	15%	6%	5%
Work closer to home (but not at home)	17%	10%	13%	15%

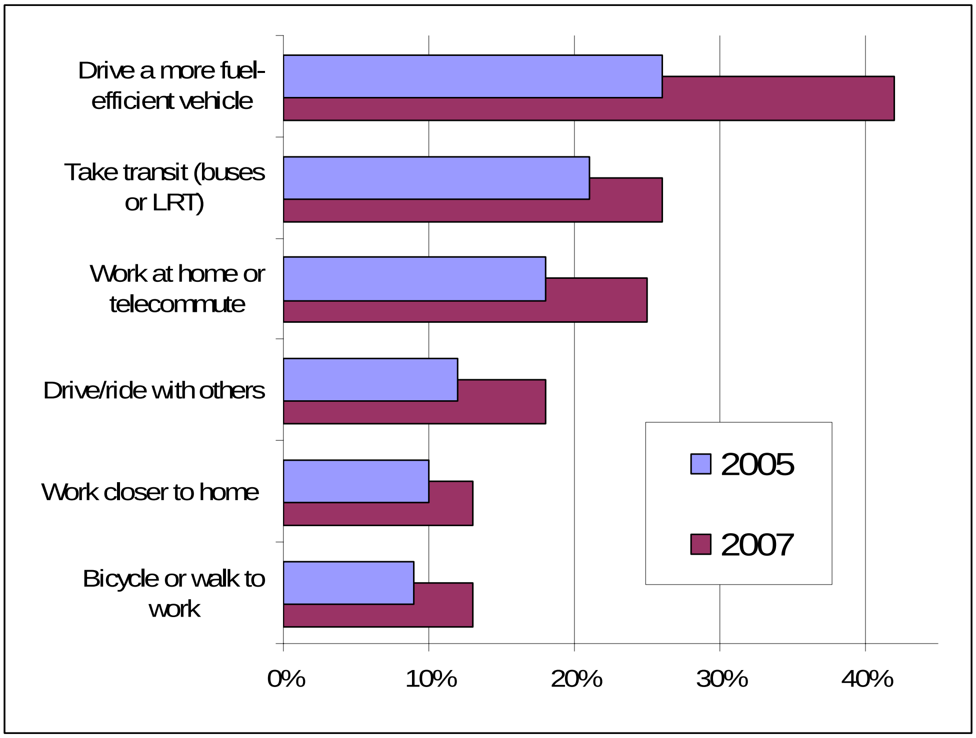
For geographic segments, n varies from 199 to 252, confidence from +/-7%
Note: Fuel-efficient vehicles can be considered to be cost-reducing, but not traffic-reducing.

Table 3.08: Perceived commute time among commuting workers: Twin Cities area, 2000, 2005 and 2006

	Census 2000	ACS 2005	ACS 2006
Less than 10 minutes	12%	12%	12%
5 to 9 minutes	15%	14%	14%
10 to 14 minutes	17%	16%	17%
15 to 19 minutes	18%	18%	17%
20 to 24 minutes	8%	8%	8%
25 to 29 minutes	15%	15%	15%
30 to 34 minutes	3%	4%	4%
35 to 39 minutes	4%	4%	4%
40 to 44 minutes	6%	7%	6%
45 to 59 minutes	3%	3%	3%
60 or more	12%	12%	12%

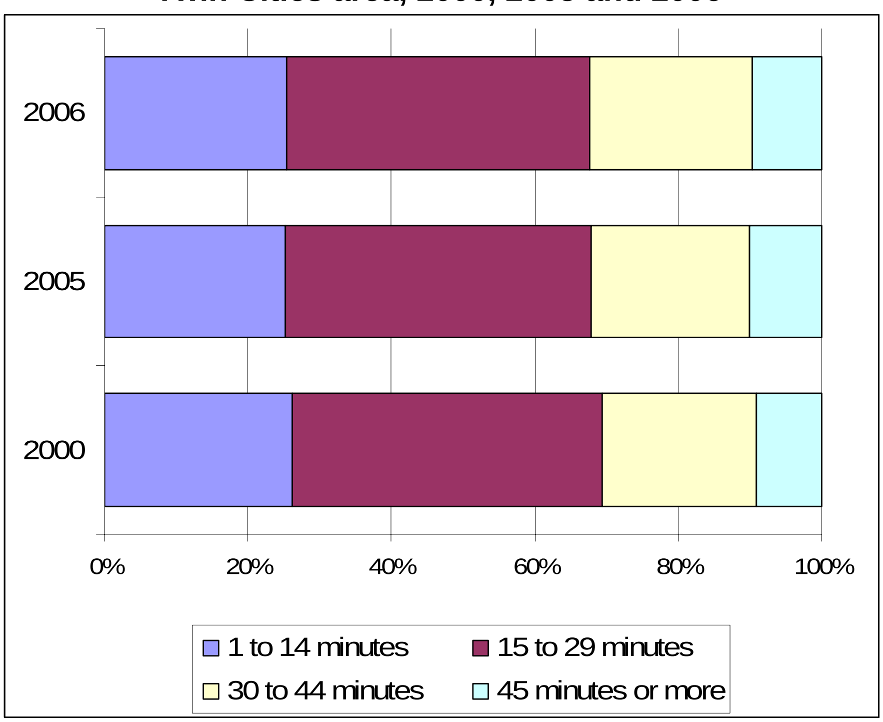
Source: US Census Bureau, Census 2000; American Community Survey 2005 and 2006.
ACS 2006 published confidence varies by data cell, from +/-2% to +/-7%

Figure 7: "Very likely" to try new commuting solutions: All commuters, 2005 and 2007



n of all commuters varies from 878 to 892, confidence +/-4%

Figure 8: Perceived commute time among commuting workers: Twin Cities area, 2000, 2005 and 2006



Source: US Census Bureau, Census 2000; American Community Survey 2005 and 2006.
ACS 2006 published confidence varies by data cell, from +/-2% to +/-7%

Section 4: Residential Preferences

Key Findings

- Five percent of survey respondents indicated they live in a rural setting; nine percent in a small town; 35 percent in a growing suburb; 26 percent in an older suburb; 18 percent in a central cities neighborhood; and seven percent in a very urban or downtown setting.

- One-quarter of Twin Cities residents said they would prefer to relocate or live in a different type of area. Of those interested in relocating, two-thirds were interested in a rural setting or a small town.

- Residents who would prefer to relocate cite various reasons. In the growing suburbs, residents cite rapid development and transition. Residents of older suburbs cite traffic and urban inconveniences. Central cities residents said crime is their chief complaint.

- If all residents who said they preferred a rural setting actually lived in a rural setting, the region would experience a doubling of its rural population. The preference is problematic since greater population is what transforms rural areas and small towns into something else.

Discussion

Where people currently live

The Twin Cities region includes a continuum of communities at different stages of development with varying patterns of community form. As distance from the urban center increases, community form becomes less urban and more rural.

For this section, analysis draws on survey respondents' self-identified community type. Survey participants were asked to characterize their community by choosing one of six descriptions: a very urban or downtown setting, a central city neighborhood, an older suburb, a growing suburb, a small town or a rural setting. (For example, the Metropolitan Council considers Dayton, Minnesota, to be a developing community. In this section of the report, survey participants from Dayton could also self-identify as small town, rural or growing suburb.)

Figure 9 shows most survey participants living in either an older suburb (26 percent) or a growing suburb (35 percent). Eighteen percent live in a central cities neighborhood and seven percent in a very urban or downtown setting. The remainder identify themselves as rural area (5 percent) or small town residents (9 percent).

Where people would prefer to live

Survey participants were asked whether they would like to relocate to a different kind of area.

Most Twin Cities residents are satisfied with their community setting. However, 26 percent said they would prefer to relocate to a different type of area (Table 4.01). Relocation interest was lowest among rural area residents (13 percent), small town residents (22 percent) and senior citizens (Table 4.02).

Table 4.03 shows where suburban and central cities residents said they would prefer to live. (The relocation preferences of current rural residents are not analyzed; too few were interested in moving to provide accurate estimates.) Two-thirds of potential relocators would prefer either a small town or a rural setting. The preference is problematic since greater population is what transforms rural areas and small towns into something else – precipitating the complaints heard from residents of growing suburbs: too congested, too urban, and growing too fast.

Again, a 74 percent majority indicated that they do not want to relocate to a different type of community. Table 4.04 and Figure 10 take all regional residents into account and show preferred, ideal settings contrasted with where people currently live. The results are less dramatic than looking only at those who would prefer to relocate, but the trend of rural preference or small town preference is apparent.

Why people would prefer to move

Respondents who indicated that they would prefer relocation to a different type of area were asked what they like least about where they currently live (Table 4.05). These are "push" factors that underlie eventual decisions to move.

Respondents were also asked what appeals most to them about their preferred, ideal area (Table 4.06). These are the "pull" factors. Both questions were open-ended with survey participants providing push and pull factors in their own words. Open-ended responses were then coded and categorized.

Data are not available for all subgroups due to the small number of respondents in some cases.

Push factors

"Push factors" are community characteristics cited as reasons for interest in relocating. The top push factors vary within distinct markets.

In growing and older suburban areas, no one concern was dominant. In both growing and older suburbs, 16 to 20 percent of dissatisfied residents feel their area has become "too urban;" another one out of six complained about traffic congestion and accessibility. Local growth rate is a distinct concern for 18 percent in the growing suburbs.

In the central cities, residents expect their neighborhoods to be urban. Central cities residents offered more specific, distinct complaints. Thirty-four percent cited crime; 14 percent cited "the type of people here;" 10 percent mentioned noise as motivations to relocate (Table 4.05).

Pull factors

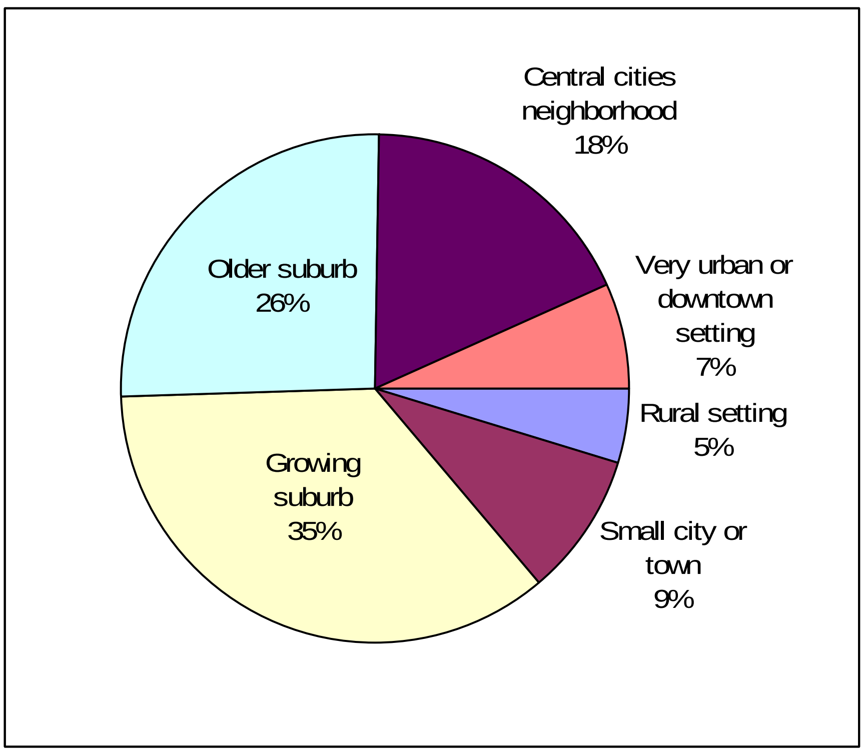
Rural areas, small towns and suburbs seem to be distinct markets with distinct "pull factors" attracting relocators. What appeals most about rural areas is space, fewer people (18 percent), more open space and natural environment (23 percent), as well as more private space (11 percent).

For those who said they prefer small-town life, small town neighborhoods are thought to be clean, peaceful and quiet (21 percent), with a stronger sense of community (14 percent).

Meanwhile, appealing aspects of suburbs, according to respondents, are the sense of community and lack of crime (29 percent) and the accessibility and proximity to amenities (22 percent).

Data are not available for downtowns and central cities neighborhoods, due to the small number of 2007 survey respondents interested in inner city relocation (Table 4.06).

Figure 9: How would you describe the area where you live now?



n = 1338, confidence +3%

Table 4.01: Would you prefer to live in a different kind of area?

Currently living in:	No	Yes, prefer different area
Respondents living in:		
A rural setting	87%	13%
A small town	78%	22%
A growing suburb	74%	26%
An older suburb	73%	27%
A central cities neighborhood	73%	27%
A very urban/downtown setting	N/A*	
All areas combined	74%	26%

n varies from 140 to 387, confidence from +/-9% (rural setting) to +/-5% (growing suburb)

- There were too few respondents in this category to accurately represent the population.

Table 4.02: Interest in relocation, by age cohort

	No	Yes, prefer different area
Senior citizens (65+)	85%	15%
Older Boomers (50-64)	75%	25%
Young Boomers (40-49)	70%	30%
Gen X and Gen Y (18-39)	73%	27%

n for age cohorts varies from 281 to 442, confidence varies from +/-6% (age 40-49) to +/-5% (age 50-64)

Table 4.03: Area preference of the one-quarter who would prefer to move

		For those who would prefer to move, where they would prefer to live					
Currently living in:	**n**	**Rural setting**	**Small town**	**Growing suburb**	**Older suburb**	**Central cities neighborhood**	**Very urban/ downtown**
A rural setting	21	Sub-group data not available*					
A small town	62	Sub-group data not available*					
A growing suburb	215	47%	27%		10%	6%	10%
An older suburb	149	49%	25%	13%		8%	5%
A central cities neighborhood OR urban/downtown	133	19%	34%	26%	14%		
All areas combined	580	41%	27%	11%	8%	6%	7%

n for segments above varies from 133 to 215, confidence 9% to 7%

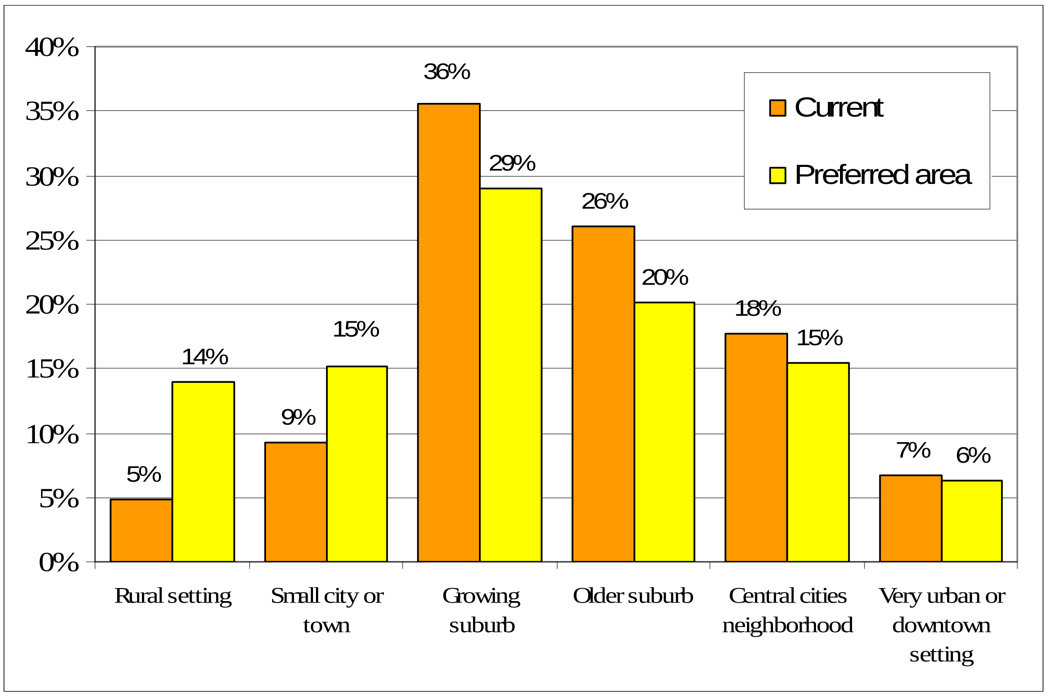
- Survey data from 2007 and 2006 surveys were combined to improve significance.
- There were too few respondents to accurately represent people interested in *leaving* rural settings or small towns.
- This cross-tabulation excludes survey particpants who did not indicate a preferred area.

Table 4.04: Where people live and where they would prefer to live

	Rural setting	Small town	Growing suburb	Older suburb	Central cities neighborhood	Very urban/ downtown
Area of *current* residence	5%	9%	35%	26%	18%	7%
Preferred area, including relocators and current residents	14%	15%	29%	20%	15%	6%

n = 1298, confidence +/- 3%

Figure 10: Where people live and where they would prefer to live



n = 1298, confidence +/- 3%

Table 4.05: Push factors – What dissatisfied residents like least about where they live, by current community type

Like least about current community type	**Growing suburb**	**Older suburb**	**Central cities neighborhood *or* downtown**
Growing too fast	**18%**	2%	<1%
Too urban	**16%**	**20%**	7%
Traffic congestion	**16%**	**15%**	**10%**
Distance to destinations	9%	4%	2%
Area is boring	7%	4%	1%
Wrong type of development	5%	7%	1%
Don't like the people	5%	7%	**14%**
Crime	4%	8%	**34%**
Noise	2%	6%	**10%**
Area in decline	<1%	8%	6%
Other	17%	18%	15%

n varies from 145 to 212, confidence from +/-8% (central cities, older suburbs) to +/- 7% (growing suburbs)

- Survey data from 2007 and 2006 surveys were combined to improve significance.
- There were too few respondents to accurately represent people interested in *leaving* rural settings or small towns.

Table 4.06: Pull factors – What appeals to those who would prefer a new area, by preferred area type

Most appealing about preferred area	**A rural setting**	**A small town**	**A growing suburb *or* older suburb**
More open space, natural	**23%**	8%	3%
Fewer people	**18%**	**10%**	0%
Clean, peaceful, quiet	**16%**	**21%**	**11%**
More private space, larger lots	**11%**	8%	1%
Accessibility, close to amenities	9%	9%	**22%**
Less traffic congestion	7%	8%	1%
Sense of community, safety	5%	**14%**	**29%**
Slower pace	5%	7%	0%
Small town feel	1%	6%	1%
Housing options, affordability	0%	2%	**11%**
More people like me	0%	4%	7%
Other	3%	3%	15%

n varies from 102 to 259, confidence from +/-9% (suburbs) to +/- 7% (rural areas, small towns)

- Survey data from 2007 and 2006 surveys were combined to improve significance.
- There were too few respondents to accurately represent people *preferring* central cities or downtowns.

Section 5: Metropolitan Council

Key Findings

- Seventy-four percent of Twin Cities residents have heard of the Metropolitan Council.

- Most residents regard the Metropolitan Council's performance in addressing regional issues as fair to good: 41 percent think that the Council is doing a good or very good job; 40 percent think the Council is doing a fair job; and 19 percent think the Council is doing a poor job or worse.

- When Council programs and responsibilities are specifically listed, 9 out of 12 are considered "very important" to majorities of Twin Cities residents. The highest ratings went to water supply and quality monitoring (78 percent said very important), planning to accommodate growth (69 percent said very important), and wastewater treatment (66 percent said very important).

Discussion

Public opinion on the Metropolitan Council

Seventy-four percent of Twin Cities residents have heard of the Metropolitan Council. This has been the average over the last five years of Council surveys (Table 5.01).

Familiarity with the Council in 2007 was lowest among Twin Citians who identify as minority or multi-racial (56 percent recognition) and young adults, ages 18-39 (58 percent recognition). There was not a significant difference across geographic sectors or other demographic segments (Table 5.02).

The three-quarters of the public who had heard of the Metropolitan Council were asked to rate the Council's performance addressing and resolving regional issues. Of that group, 41 percent think that the Council is doing a good or very good job; 40 percent think the Council is doing a fair job; and 19 percent think the Council is doing a poor job or worse.

Public approval of Council's performance improved significantly between 2000 and 2005, and has held steady since 2006 (Table 5.01 and Figure 11).

Public approval can be analyzed by demographic segment. Those who are most critical of the Council's performance (28 percent approval, 30 percent disapproval) also believed the region's quality of life has diminished (Table 5.02).

Rating of importance of Council programs

Survey participants were asked about 12 Council responsibilities and program areas. Program importance was rated using a four-point scale: not at all important, slightly important, moderately important and very important.

Nine out of 12 Council programs were rated as very important to majorities of residents (Table 5.03). The largest majorities in 2007 thought that water supply and quality monitoring (78 percent), planning to accommodate growth (69 percent), and wastewater treatment (66 percent) are very important programs. These three programs received the highest overall importance scores in previous years as well.

Understanding of program importance related to approval

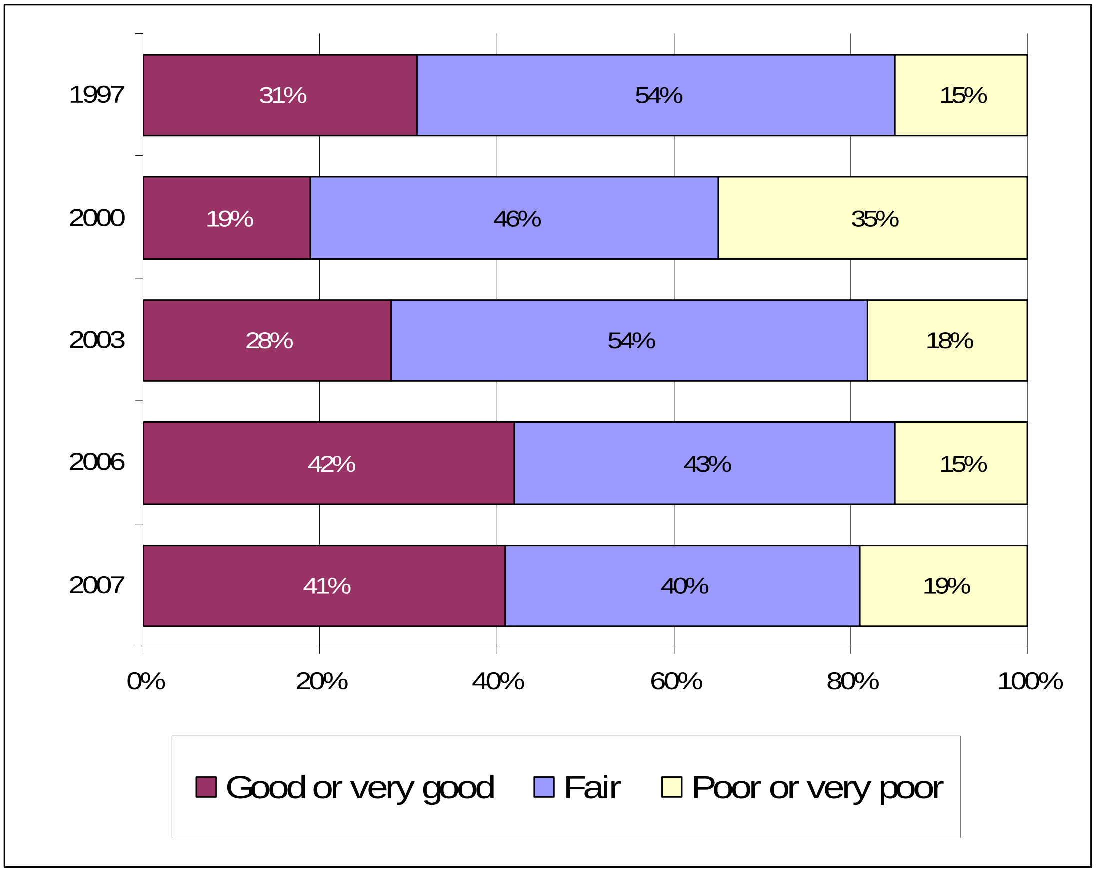
Public understanding of the Metropolitan Council's responsibilities is somewhat related to the Council's approval rating, discussed above. That is, the public evaluates the Metropolitan Council not only on its objective performance. One's opinion of the Council's mandate influences what one thinks of the Council's overall performance as well.

The evidence of this relationship is represented with correlation scores, measuring the statistical association between performance approval and perceived importance of Council programs. The correlation between approval of the Council's performance and importance of the Council's overall mandate (composite importance rating of the 12 programs, as a set) is approximately 0.40 (on a scale of 0 to 1).

Correlation scores are generally low as programs are considered one at a time (Table 5.03). The correlations presented can be interpreted as measuring the relative political liability associated with specific programs. For example, public approval of the Council may be slightly boosted by public consensus around the importance of regional planning. On the other hand, public approval may be weighted down by public ambivalence concerning grants to develop and preserve housing. This valorization (or devalorization) is independent of the actual performance of the agency.

On the other hand, public valuation of wastewater treatment has a very low correlation. While there is a solid consensus around the importance of the core responsibility of wastewater treatment, the ascribed importance does not seem to be a significant public relations asset for the Council.

Figure 11: Public opinion of Metropolitan Council performance, 1997-2007



n = 801 for performance approval, confidence +/- 4%

- Beginning in 2004, respondents were explicitly invited to say “no opinion/don’t know.”
- For comparison over time, the figure excludes “no opinion/don’t know”.

Table 5.01: Name recognition and public approval of Metropolitan Council performance, 2000-2007

	2000	2001	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Name recognition	**62%**	**68%**	**74%**	**78%**	**69%**	**73%**	**74%**
"What is your impression of the Metropolitan Council's performance addressing regional issues?"							
Very good job	2%	4%	2%	3%	5%	6%	6%
Good job	17%	26%	26%	34%	32%	36%	35%
Fair job	46%	52%	54%	43%	46%	43%	40%
Poor job	23%	12%	14%	14%	14%	12%	13%
Very poor job	12%	6%	4%	6%	4%	3%	6%

n = 1324 for name recognition, confidence +/- 3%
n = 801 for performance approval, confidence +/- 4%

- Beginning in 2004, respondents were explicitly invited to say "no opinion/don't know."
- For comparison over time, the table excludes "no opinion/don't know.

Table 5.02: Name recognition and public approval of Metropolitan Council performance, by demographic segment, 2007

	Name recognition	Impression of Council's performance		
		Very good or good	Fair	Poor or very poor
Optimistic outlook – believe quality of life has improved or stayed the same	72%	48%	38%	13%
Pessimistic – believe quality of life has gotten worse	78%	28%	42%	30%
Minority or Multi-Race	56%	42%	37%	21%
White, Non-Hispanic	78%	41%	40%	19%
Senior citizens (65+)	84%	47%	39%	14%
Older Boomers (50-64)	88%	47%	34%	19%
Young Boomers (40-49)	81%	27%	44%	28%
Gen X and Gen Y (18-39)	58%	43%	41%	16%
Minneapolis and St. Paul	78%	42%	45%	14%
Developed suburbs	71%	45%	35%	19%
Developing communities	76%	37%	41%	22%
Rural areas	76%	36%	36%	28%
All residents of region	74%	41%	40%	19%

n for name recognition varies from 282 to 836, confidence varies from +/-6% (age cohorts, planning areas also pessimistic) to +/-4% (optimistic outlook)
n for performance varies from 124 to 493, confidence ranges are +/-9% (for age 18-39), +/-8% (other age groups, planning areas), +/-6% (pessimistic outlook), +/-5% (optimistic)

Table 5.03: How important are the following Council programs for maintaining the quality of life in the Twin Cities metro area?

Council Program	Not at all important	Slightly important	Moderately important	Very important	Correlation with approval rating
Monitoring water supply and water quality	1%	3%	17%	78%	0.20
Planning to accommodate a growing population	3%	8%	21%	69%	0.27
Wastewater treatment	1%	6%	27%	66%	0.10
Natural resources and land conservancy	3%	8%	27%	62%	0.26
Metro Transit (bus system)	6%	10%	24%	59%	0.29
Grants for transportation projects	6%	9%	28%	57%	0.30
Grants to clean up and reuse polluted lands	2%	12%	30%	56%	0.22
Light Rail Transit	13%	13%	20%	54%	0.30
Regional parks and trails	3%	11%	33%	53%	0.22
Grants for development that connects housing, jobs	6%	13%	33%	48%	0.31
Coordinating development across neighboring communities	5%	18%	32%	44%	0.28
Grants to help develop and preserve housing	8%	20%	34%	38%	0.34

n for importance scores varied between 1225 and 1302 for the various programs, confidence +/-3%
n for correlations between program importance and performance approval varied from 762 to 793.

- Correlation scores measure the statistical correlation, on a scale of 0 to 1, between approval of Council's performance and importance of each program.

Section 6: Methodology

This report describes the findings of the 2007 Metro Residents Survey; 3,300 residents of the seven-county Twin Cities area were randomly selected and invited to participate in this study. The sample was stratified to provide balanced numbers in four geographic sectors: Central Cities, Developed Suburbs, Developing Communities, and Rural Areas. Geographic area was validated on receipt of completed surveys.

In October 2007, each sampled resident was sent a postcard announcing the coming survey. One week later (October 10 and 11), each sampled resident was sent a survey packet: a letter from the Council Chairman, a survey questionnaire to be completed, and a postage-paid return envelope. To encourage participation by recent immigrant groups, the questionnaire included instructions in Spanish, Somali and Hmong languages. The instructions offered the reader the opportunity to arrange an interview in another language.

Data collection began October 11. Throughout the process, received responses and returned mail were tracked by the Metropolitan Council and the Council's survey contractor, Information Specialists Group Inc. One week after the October survey packet was mailed, non-respondents were flagged for telephone follow-up. Information Specialists Group Inc. conducted telephone interviews through November 13. Mail-returned survey questionnaires were accepted for inclusion through December 5, 2007.

Of the initial 3,300 sampled residents, 495 were determined to be unlocatable; 19 participants were reached, but found living outside the seven-county area. This left 2,786 active records in the survey sample database.

Survey participation

In total, 592 telephone interviews and 757 mail-returned surveys were completed and received. The 1,349 completions represent a 48 percent response rate for the 2007 survey.

Both the sample size and response rate are relevant to the reliability of survey analysis. With a respondent pool of 1,349, the margin of error (due to sample sufficiency) is +/-3 percent, with 95 percent confidence. Margins of error increase where questions were answered by a smaller number of respondents. (Table 6.01)

The response rate, 48 percent, is considered good. Council researchers are concerned, however, that the survey under-represents certain demographic segments. This concern is addressed through weighting of response data and through targeted over-sampling of younger households and recent movers.

Comparing the response distributions of the telephone interview and mail-return participants, there are some observed differences in demographic characteristics, behavior (parks visitation, commute mode), and public opinion (evaluating Council programs). Some respondents are more likely to answer a mail-in survey, while others are more willing to respond in a telephone interview. Therefore, a multi-modal data collection method was employed to achieve a higher response rate and to more completely capture residents' views and experiences.

Preparation for analysis: weighting

Weighting of the data was necessary to correct for stratification in sample design (the deliberate over-sampling of rural areas), as well as demographic imbalances in the respondent pool. Individual survey responses are given greater (or lesser) weight in order to represent population segments. The unadjusted pool of survey responses *under*-represents people under 30 and minority-identified residents. The raw, unadjusted pool *over*-represented senior citizens and people living alone.

Weight factors were independently calculated for age, gender, race, household size, and geographic sector. For most of these variables the distribution of survey participants was benchmarked against 2006 American Community Survey statistics for adults in the Twin Cities region. For geographic sector, the distribution was benchmarked against the Metropolitan Council's own 2006 population estimates. The five factors were then multiplied together (age weight X gender weight X minority weight X household size weight X geographic weight) to yield "case weights" for each of the 1,349 survey responses.

The end product is a survey dataset that fairly represents the region's demographic diversity: Survey participants from each age cohort fairly represent their share of the region's population; minority participants and white, non-Hispanic segments fairly represent their share of the population.

The survey instrument is found in the Appendix section of this report.

Comparison with other surveys

Response to any public opinion survey is influenced by survey design and wording of questions, as well as participants' feelings about the survey sponsor.

For several years, the Minnesota Center for Survey Research (MCSR) has conducted a regional poll asking "What do you think is the single most important problem facing people in the Twin Cities metropolitan area today?" This is almost identical to the Metropolitan Council's question. However, the MCSR and Council receive different response distributions.

Survey respondents are influenced by survey design, the overall set of questions asked, and/or by tailoring of response to the perceived audience. For example, some Council survey participants cited "urban sprawl" and a deficit of planning as regional problems – and then mentioned the Metropolitan Council. When survey presentation provides a "framing," influence is possible.

Table 6.01: Margin of error for various sample sizes

Sample of "n"	Margin of error, with 95% confidence
1,067	+/- 3%
600	+/- 4%
384	+/- 5%
267	+/- 6%
196	+/- 7%
150	+/- 8%
119	+/- 9%
96	+/- 10%

Table 6.02: Distribution of survey sample and regional population

	Unadjusted distribution of survey participants	**Demographic distribution of region's adult population***	**Weighted, valid distribution of survey data, *excluding blank responses***
White only	90%	83%	83%
Minority or multi-racial	8%	17%	17%
No race identified	2%		
Male	50%	49%	48%
Female	49%	51%	52%
No gender identified	1%		
Senior citizens (65+)	22%	13%	14%
Older Boomers (50-64)	33%	24%	25%
Young Boomers (40-49)	21%	23%	23%
Gen X (30-39)	15%	20%	19%
Gen Y (18-29)	7%	21%	20%
No age identified	2%		
Live alone	22%	16%	16%
2 in household	36%	34%	33%
3 in household	12%	19%	19%
4 in household	16%	17%	17%
5 or more in household	11%	14%	15%
No household information	3%		
Central cities	27%	24%	24%
Developed suburbs	26%	36%	36%
Developing	25%	34%	34%
Rural**	22%	6%	6%

* For race, age, gender, and household size, the adult population is used as the benchmark. For geographic area, the all-ages population distribution (adults and children) is used as the benchmark.
** The residents' survey's stratified sampling is designed to yield statistically significant data for each of the four geographic sectors.

Appendix: Survey Questionnaire

The questionnaire is an eight-page document with 26 questions. See the survey at http://www.metrocouncil.org/metroarea/Questionnaire2007.pdf