Access and Affordability: A Snapshot of Residents’ Transportation Needs

2022 Pottawatomie County, Oklahoma Transportation Survey

A Transportation Needs Assessment of Pottawatomie County, Oklahoma

Overview

This report provides a comprehensive snapshot of Pottawatomie County residents’ transportation awareness, needs, and usage, in addition to reporting on residents’ perceptions of their community’s safety and attractiveness. Based on 2016 to 2020 U.S. Census data, there are approximately 73,019 residents, over three-quarters (77%) of whom are 18 or older. About half (52%) of all residents are female, while about 3 in 4 (74%) of all residents identify as White (74%) or American Indian (14%). Additionally, over half (56%) of residents are employed and the median household income was $51,150.

This report is based on the results of an online survey of 1,015 residents, 18-plus, whose demographic characteristics generally resemble those of county residents (see page 3), although females are slightly overrepresented in the sample. While designed as a convenience sample, the survey’s sample, rigorous design, and implementation helps ensure the relevancy of the findings for county residents.

Familiarity

While over a third (39%) of all Pottawatomie County residents are at least somewhat familiar with public transportation services offered in the county, about 3 in 5 residents (61%) are not very (27%) or not at all familiar (34%) with these services. Similar trends are evident with respect to residents’ familiarity with special transportation services in their community, such as handicap-accessible vans. About 1 in 3 (37%) of county residents are aware of such special transportation services; however; over 3 in 5 (63%) residents are either not aware (48%) of the services or report being unsure (15%).

### Familiarity with Public Transportation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Familiarity with Public Transportation</th>
<th>n=1015</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extremely/Very Familiar</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat familiar</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not very familiar</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all familiar</td>
<td>34%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**Transportation Needs**

About 1 in 6 (17%) residents experience at least some difficulty with going to a wide-range of activities or places outside of their home because of a lack of transportation. Notably, residents report the highest difficulty ratings when trying to go to medical appointments (21%), the grocery store (20%), stores to shop for clothes or household goods (19%), a pharmacy (18%), an entertainment venue (18%), a bank (18%), or a place to eat (18%). Moreover, eleven percent of residents report that such activities are often or always difficult to do without access to transportation.

Nearly 1 in 5 (17%) residents of Pottawatomie County struggle to get where they need to go, even though a high share of residents drive as their primary form of transportation.

**Current Transportation Use**

Overall, 3 in 5 (57%) Pottawatomie County residents use more than one mode of transportation to get around. Residents are most likely to rely only on driving (41%) when they need to go shopping or do other activities. However, close to a quarter of residents (24%) rely both on driving oneself and getting a ride from friends or family, while another six percent (6%) of residents drive, get rides from family and friends, and walk. Public transportation is most likely to be used in combination with one of these other modes of transports as indicated by five percent (5%) of respondents. Still, biking is another type of transportation option, which residents (5%) are most likely to use in combination with driving, getting rides from others, and walking.

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**Top Five Ways Pottawatomie County Residents Get Around**

(n = 1015)

- Drive myself, only: 41%
- Drive myself and get rides with family or friends: 24%
- Drive myself, get rides with family or friends, and walk: 6%
- Drive myself, get rides with family or friends, walk, and bike: 5%
- Use public transport in conjunction with something else (e.g., driving, getting rides with others): 5%

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Note: Chart reports percentages for top five transportation modes used from a total of eight modes that respondents were asked about.

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**Cost of Transportation (Public or Personal)**

(n=1015)

- Less than $20 per week: 36%
- $20 or more per week: 18%
- Does not spend on a weekly basis: 54%

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**Number of Transportation Modes Used to Move Around the County**

(n=1015)

- 1 mode only: 43%
- 2 modes: 33%
- 3 modes: 13%
- 4 or more modes: 11%
Thirty-five percent of residents would use public transportation if it was affordable and easily accessible in their communities.

Pottawatomie County residents are most likely to travel outside of the county for shopping and appointments once a week or less often (62%). However, close to another third (31%) do so two or more times per week. At the same time, eight percent of residents indicate that they never go beyond the county for shopping or appointments. When traveling outside of the county, 1 in 5 (20%) residents require transportation assistance at least sometimes, while half of them (10%) need assistance frequently or always. While most residents did not miss any activities in the past three months due to a lack of transportation, 1 in 6 (17%) residents sometimes or frequently missed activities for this reason.

While 2 in 5 (41%) of residents currently only drive to get around, more than 4 in 7 (60%) residents would rely on public transportation if their health status declined, gas prices increased, or they no longer had a vehicle.

Future Use
While most Pottawatomie County residents currently do not use public transportation, more than 4 in 7 (60%) would be willing to use public transportation under a variety of different circumstances. Two thirds (65%) of county residents say they would use public transportation if they were experiencing vision difficulties, if they were physically unable to drive (65%), or without a vehicle (71%). Nearly 4 in 10 (38%) residents would also be willing to use public transportation based on increased gas prices. Among those residents who are employed full- or part-time (68%), about one-third say they would be extremely or very likely to use public buses (32%) or carpools (29%) if these options were available. Nearly the same share of residents (28%) would walk to work if that was an available option.
Streets Features and Community Safety

Pottawatomie County residents are very interested in safety for pedestrians on busy streets in their communities. Nearly all respondents (91%) feel that safe walking space is extremely or very important. Additionally, most (88%) say it is extremely or very important to make improvements to traffic or pedestrian signals, along with roadway design, to make crossing busy streets safer.

Nearly half (45%) of county residents are at least fairly satisfied with their community’s safety for pedestrians and bicyclists, but only 8% of residents report being extremely or very satisfied. Compared to a decade ago, residents are slightly less likely to be highly satisfied (-4%) with their community’s safety. Nonetheless, over three-quarters (76%) of residents perceive the safety of their community’s street intersections as good (30%) or fair (46%). Yet, over a third rated the safety of sidewalks as poor (35%) or fair (38%).

In the past six-months, residents were most likely to report seeing speeding cars (91%), unleashed dogs (71%), or run-down areas (76%). Overall, 45% of county residents rate the maintenance of community streets as poor, which represents a 15% increase compared to 2012 survey results.

### Importance to Pottawatomie County Residents for Specific Street Safety Features

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Importance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q23. For pedestrians to be able to walk safely on busy streets (n=1015)</td>
<td>91%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q25. Installing signals or other improvements to make crossing a busy street safer (n=1015)</td>
<td>88%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q24. To build sidewalks that improve access to bus stops (n=1015)</td>
<td>84%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q26. To build new bike and walking paths separated from traffic (n=1015)</td>
<td>73%</td>
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(Q23-Q26. Summary of Extremely important and very important)

### Implications

While Pottawatomie County residents’ current familiarity with, and use of, public transportation is low, they have a clear desire and need for future public transportation. Overall, 60% residents would rely on public transportation if their health status declined, gas prices increased, or they no longer had access to a vehicle. Among these residents, over half (39%) of them would be extremely likely to use public transportation under such circumstances. Additionally, while most respondents indicate they solely drive to get to places (41%), over a third (35%) would travel on public transportation if the service was accessible and affordable in their community. Willingness to use public transportation options, like buses and carpools, is especially high among those still in the work force. The study findings also reveal that residents want improvements to their streets and roadway design, sidewalks, along with increased safety in their communities. In the ten years since the previous needs assessment, there has been an increase in safety concerns for pedestrians, unleashed dogs, heavier traffic, and poor street maintenance.

**Methodology:** This online survey of 1,015 residents, 18-plus in Pottawatomie County, Oklahoma was fielded from February 16th through March 31st, 2022, on Dynata Insights Platform using a convenience sample. The sample was recruited by AARP OK State Office and their community partner Shawnee Forward. The data are not weighted.