

Report on the 1999 Survey of Major Employers



HORIZONS

THE YEAR 2025 PLAN FOR THE DELAWARE VALLEY

REPORT ON THE 1999 SURVEY OF MAJOR EMPLOYERS

JUNE 2000

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Created in 1965, the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) is an interstate, intercounty and intercity agency which provides continuing, comprehensive and coordinated planning for the orderly growth and development of the Delaware Valley region. The region includes Bucks, Chester, Delaware, and Montgomery counties as well as the City of Philadelphia in Pennsylvania and Burlington, Camden, Gloucester, and Mercer counties in New Jersey. The Commission is an advisory agency which divides its planning and service functions between the Office of the Executive Director, the Office of Public Affairs, and three line Divisions: Transportation Planning, Regional Planning, and Administration. DVRPC's mission is to emphasize technical assistance and services and to conduct high priority studies for member state and local governments, while determining and meeting the needs of the private sector.



The DVRPC logo is adapted from the official seal of the Commission and is designed as a stylized image of the Delaware Valley. The outer ring symbolizes the region as a whole while the diagonal bar signifies the Delaware River flowing through it. The two adjoining crescents represent the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the State of New Jersey. The logo combines these elements to depict the areas served by DVRPC.

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ABSTRACT

This report summarizes the results of a survey of business executives performed in the fall of 1999 to gauge their opinions on the most crucial transportation-related projects over the next 25 years. The input of the business community is essential in determining what types of transportation projects should be encouraged, and in what areas of the region, in order to aid in the Delaware Valley Regionís economic development. Questions were chosen that would best reflect opinions regarding commuting behavior, resource utilization and goods movement.

According to the survey respondents, the most significant of the three groups of issues presented was commuting behavior. Business leaders had stronger opinions and greater general concerns with transportation facilities that would enable their employees to travel to and from work with the least congestion and greatest safety. Some of the major conclusions arrived at through this study were:

- Transit service should be made more accessible to suburban commuters
- 80 percent of respondents felt that there were significant hazards to bicycling within 2 miles of their workplace
- 80 percent of respondents believe that alternatives to the automobile should be provided for those who cannot or would prefer not to drive
- Fewer than 10 percent of employers in the region found any mode other than trucking a practical alternative for shipping goods to or from their factories
- Revitalization of neighborhoods was viewed as the biggest regional problem, followed by the condition of existing transportation facilities and the preservation of open space



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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) has again begun its long-range planning process, this time in an effort to update the *Direction 2020 Land Use and Transportation Plan*. DVRPC is required to maintain and update this plan to reflect the 20-year federally-required planning horizon. This update will be used by the Philadelphia-Camden-Trenton region to guide highway and transit investments and plan for the allocation of federal funds. As the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the nine-county greater Philadelphia region, DVRPC has a responsibility to continually monitor the changing trends and conditions within the region, determine significant factors of change and develop a vision of where the region should be headed in the future.

The new plan, *Horizons, The Year 2025 Plan for the Delaware Valley*, will build upon the extensive work undertaken during the preparation of the 2020 Plan. Since the majority of the data gathering and analysis from the 2020 Plan was completed only recently, the 2025 Plan will review and update those goals and objectives, rather than seek to define them again. Most significantly, the Delaware Valley Region's vision for development and growth over the next 25 years will be refined to include the latest population and employment forecasts, transportation facilities and land use goals.

This Survey of Major Employers was administered in an effort to achieve one of the key objectives stated in the transportation component of DVRPC's long-range plan: to aid in the Delaware Valley Region's economic development. The input of the business community is essential in determining what types of transportation projects should be encouraged, and in what areas of the region, in order to better achieve this goal.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The Survey of Major Employers was designed in an effort to determine attitudes about transportation behavior and facilities among business executives in the Delaware Valley region. Questions were chosen that would best reflect opinions regarding commuting behavior, resource utilization and goods movement. Also, it was anticipated that by asking survey participants about the allocation of funds to a selection of project types, a consensus could be reached about what kinds of transportation improvements this group would like to see in the future. This question had also been posed to the community at large through DVRPC's public workshop process, which enabled the formulation of comparisons among the responses. Given the increasing federal emphasis on non-motorized modes, several questions were also designed to gauge the receptiveness of the business community toward the provision of pedestrian and bicycle facilities.

Survey recipients were chosen by random selection from a Dun & Bradstreet list of establishments in the nine-county region with greater than 99 employees (since one firm may have several qualifying worsksites, some firms were surveyed more than once). This method of selection resulted in surveys being sent to 1,858 employers in Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery and Philadelphia Counties in Pennsylvania and Burlington, Camden, Gloucester and Mercer Counties in New Jersey.

A total of 359 surveys were completed and returned to DVRPC (19% of the total sent out), while 137 were returned by the U.S. Postal Service due to addressing flaws (7%). Respondents had an opportunity to return the survey to DVRPC with or without identifying codes, which would be used to group the responses by state and county. Of the total 359 surveys that were received, 12 were completed anonymously (3%), 94 were from the City of Philadelphia (26%), 164 were from suburban Pennsylvania (46%) and 89 were from New Jersey (25%). The total response rate of employers to whom the survey was sent varied from 16 to 20 percent, depending upon the area (New Jersey at 16%, Pennsylvania suburbs at 20% or the City of Philadelphia at 19%).

Responses were tabulated in a Microsoft Access Database, the input screen for which is shown in the appendix. All of the results were input by a single DVRPC staff member to ensure consistency and accuracy in reporting.

SUMMARY

The results of this survey will be used to help guide the content of the *Horizons 2025* Plan for the Delaware Valley so that the needs of businesses in the Philadelphia Metropolitan Region are appropriately taken into consideration. The transportation element of this plan will involve continued development of the regional transit system as well as the highway network, some local street improvements, pedestrian and bicyclist accessibility and resource conservation measures, all of which play a significant role in how the Delaware Valley proceeds into the 21st Century. This survey will be only one of a number of tools used to determine the type of development and the impact of the changes that will be recommended by DVRPC.

According to the survey respondents, the most significant of the three groups of issues presented was commuting behavior, with issues surrounding goods movement and resource utilization playing secondary roles. Business leaders had stronger opinions and greater general concerns with transportation facilities that would enable their employees to travel to and from work with the least congestion and greatest safety.

Commuting Behavior

With the automobile still seen as the most practical mode for commuting, improvements must be made in increasing the appeal of transit. In fact, half of all employers felt that increasing the capacity of the regions' highways was a major improvement that would benefit their businesses. Yet respondents also suggested that transit service must be made more accessible to suburban commuters and more favorable an alternative in the City. Seventy percent of Philadelphia business owners felt that improving transit was significant, and over half of all respondents regarded transit improvements as helpful to their organizations. That is, service must be improved so that it is more frequent and more reliable, as well as more attractive to commuters.

Improvements to both pedestrian and bicycle facilities are necessary according to survey respondents, 80 percent of whom felt that there were significant hazards to bicycling within 2 miles of their workplace. Half of the employers from both PA and NJ suburbs felt that walking to their workplaces from nearby transit stops was unsafe as well. Having received greater attention in recent years, it appears that the focus on pedestrian and bicycle improvements — particularly safety — should be maintained since 80 percent of respondents believe that alternatives to the automobile should be provided for those who cannot or would prefer not to drive.

Goods Movement

As far as shipping either products to customers or pre-production materials to factories, fewer than 10 percent of employers in the region found any mode other than trucking a practical alternative. This places the responsibility on transportation planners, rail and marine operators to provide a safe and efficient alternative to trucking that delivers

goods reliably. Recent mergers of rail freight companies may encourage better services in the long run, so that rail freight may be restored as a competitive mode for shipping and receiving goods. However, only 10 percent of employers felt that restoring the competitive nature of rail was of critical importance. On the other hand, over 30 percent of respondents said the most important improvement to the transportation system would be increasing highway capacity. Such reliance on trucking could pose continued safety and congestion concerns for the region's highways.

Resource Utilization

Regarding environmental impacts, survey respondents in the suburbs felt that open space preservation was significant, but employers in the city did not share that view. This may be attributed to a lack of any undeveloped land in the city, while there is abundant land in the suburbs that could be preserved. The biggest environmental problems in Philadelphia are air quality and waste disposal, according to respondents. Although employers in the City did not view preserving open space as the most significant environmental problem, they still opted to allot significant resources to open space acquisition.

Investing in the Future

The responses with the greatest difference among respondents from the three survey areas was Question 12, which asked how the respondent would allocate \$100 to different areas that would be addressed in the 2025 plan. Philadelphia business owners viewed the need for revitalization of neighborhoods as the biggest problem, followed by the condition of existing transportation facilities. Because the City is densely populated and has extensive transportation facilities, these responses appeared to accurately reflect conditions. NJ employers found those same two problems to be the greatest, but in smaller proportion to other issues such as preserving open space and building new transportation facilities. Suburban PA respondents also felt that improving existing transportation facilities was one of the most significant problems that needed to be addressed, but also found preserving open space and building new transportation facilities among the most significant.

This question was also posed to participants of DVRPC's *Horizons 2025* planning workshops, who responded somewhat differently to the question than did the business owners. For example, urban revitalization was the highest priority among workshop participants, followed closely by the preservation of open space. And the category garnering the least support among workshop attendees, building new roads, received almost one third of the money from those at the workshops as it did from survey respondents.

Conclusion

The most salient points derived from the results of this survey were:

- Employees' ability to commute safely and efficiently is the most important concern of respondents judging on the comments received.
- Transit service is a practical alternative for fewer than half of employees and yet respondents spent more on this issue than any other.
- Walking and biking are not seen as very friendly today but most felt it important to provide accommodations for those who wish to bike or walk.
- Use of trucks to receive and deliver goods is critical, if only to connect with other modes and we need to maintain mobility for trucks.
- Revitalizing towns and preserving open space were the second and third most important issues reinforcing the concerns of workshop participants.

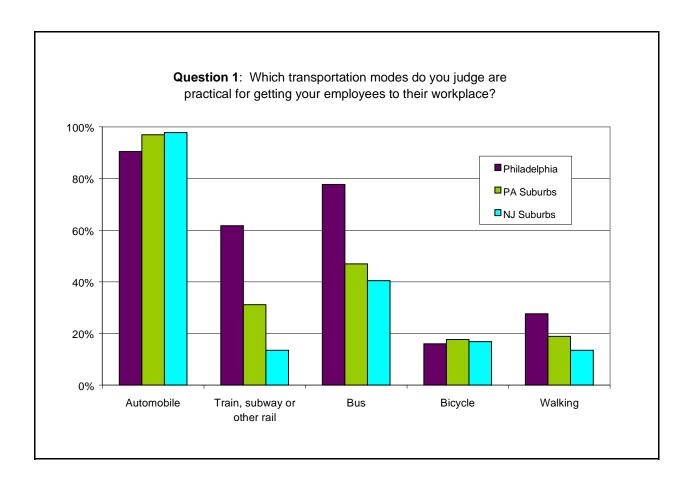
SURVEY FORM - Page I

at kinds of major improvements to the asportation system are most important in ting your employees to your major work?
Increasing the capacity of the highway network Building and improving sidewalk and other pedestrian facilities Improving current transit service, such as reliability, frequency and speed Adding new transit services Building safe bicycle lanes and paths Other, please specify:
nsportation for materials and ducts: ich transportation modes are practical getting your products or services to your stomers? (Check as many as apply.) Truck to final destination Truck to airport Truck to marine port Truck to railroad Railroad to final destination Railroad to marine port Other, please specify Not applicable ich transportation modes are practical
getting the materials you need to duce your products or services to your lility? (Check as many as apply.) Truck from source
Truck from airport Truck from marine port Truck from railroad Railroad from source Railroad from marine port Other, please specify Not applicable
F

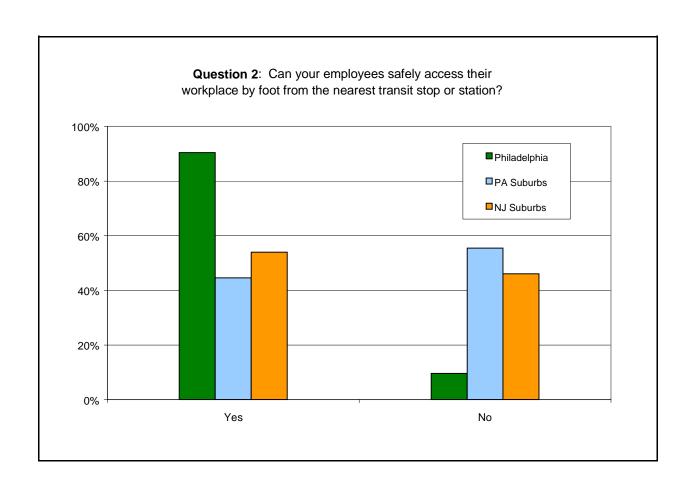
SURVEY FORM - Page 2

7.	What kind of major improvements to the transportation system are most important for getting your products and services to your customers?	10.	The states and the region's local governments should invest ample public funds to constrain development in areas of the region which now support viable
	 Increasing the capacity of the highway network 		agricultural uses or which contain extraordinary natural features.
	 Streamlining the procedures involved in transferring freight from one mode to another 		□ Agree□ Disagree□ Don't Know
	 Making rail freight competitive in cost and speed to trucks 	11.	The states and the region's governments
	 Removing obstacles such as posted bridges or low clearances Other, please specify: 	11.	should assure that transit services, sidewalks, and bike lanes exist for persons who cannot, or would prefer not to, drive an automobile in all parts of the region.
	□ Not applicable		,
			☐ Agree☐ Disagree☐
III	Energy and the environment:		☐ Don't know
8.	What environmental area do you believe is the most important to make progress on during the next decade?	12.	How would you invest \$100 (in increments of \$5) among the following six selected areas which the Year 2025 Plan will address:
	Air qualityWater quality		Preserving farmland and open
	☐ Waste disposal		space
	Visual quality of the environmentPreserving open space		Revitalizing towns and cities
	☐ Other, please specify:		Bicycle and pedestrian
			improvements Building <i>new</i> roads
9.	What energy source do you believe creates the greatest cost burden to your business?		Building <i>new</i> public transit systems
	□ Electricity		Improving existing transportation
	☐ Natural gas		facilities
	☐ Fuel oil☐ Gasoline and diesel fuel for	13.	Please describe below any specific
	transportation Other, please specify:		transportation project which you believe would be helpful to your organization:
		-	
IV	Putting it all together:		
	ease indicate your reaction to the two		
sta	tements at the top of the next column:		

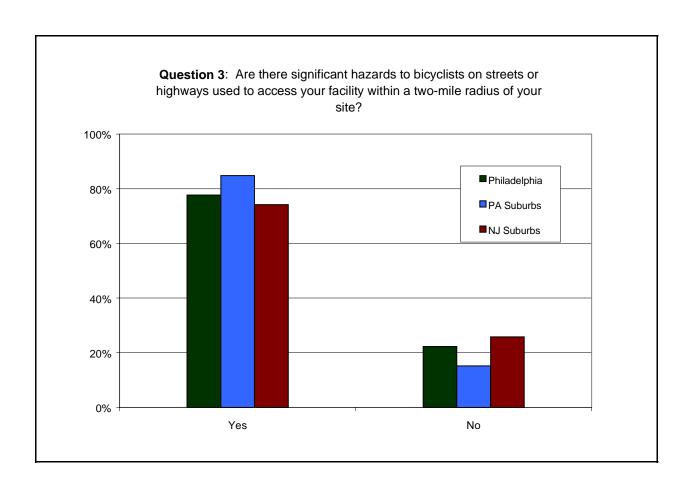
RESPONSES



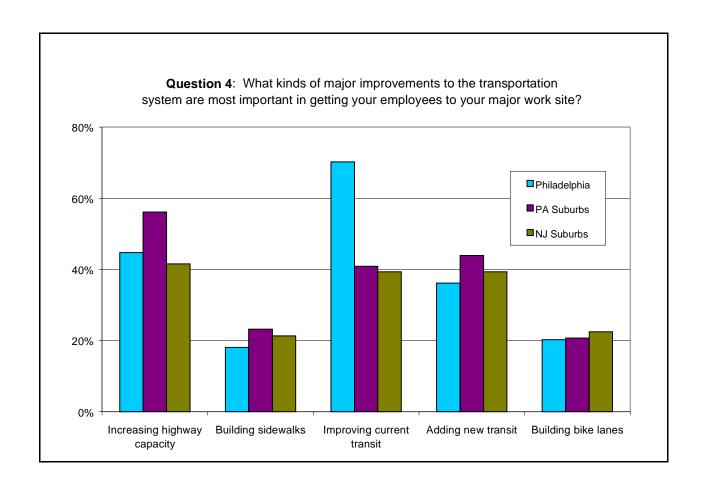
The results of Question 1 seemed very typical of a metropolitan region with a central city and surrounding suburbs, with Philadelphia being the only survey area in which almost every method of commuting seemed at least somewhat practical. The term practical was used to describe a "reasonable" commuting option, thus almost 80 percent of City residents found a bus practical and about 60 percent said the same about train/subway/other rail. In the suburbs, train/subway/other rail was twice as likely to be rated practical in PA than in NJ, but buses rated about 42 percent in both areas. Bicycling was even across the board, with about 18 percent saying that it was a practical way to commute, but walking was deemed practical by twice as many people in the City as in the NJ suburbs, with the PA suburbs in between. In fact, the only area where driving was less than 90 percent practical was in the City, with the suburbs on both sides of the river saying that driving was 95 percent practical or greater. The only comments received regarding Question 1 were from areas not served by train or bus routes, and those responses said that a vanpool, carpool or rideshare program would be very helpful in getting people to and from the offices.



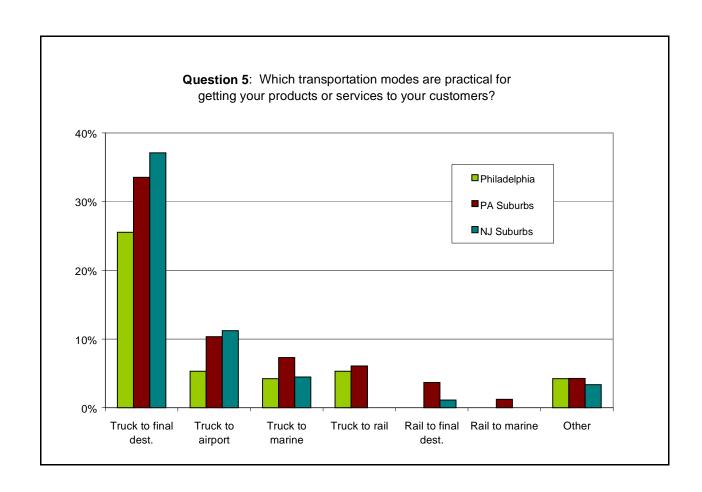
The responses to question 2 showed striking contrast. In Philadelphia, 90 percent of the survey respondents said that their employees could access their workplace safely from the nearest transit stop. In the suburbs, however, it was split almost evenly in both PA and NJ. In the PA suburbs, 45 percent said they could access their workplace safely, while 55 percent could not, and in NJ the results were exactly the opposite (55 percent could access safely, 45 percent could not). Approximately 80 comments were received on this question, and the majority of respondents felt that there was a lack of facilities that kept them from feeling safe walking from a transit stop to the office. Among the facilities missing were sidewalks, meaning employees would have to walk either in the street or along the grass to access their workplace, and transit stops themselves, without which one can not walk to work from a transit line.



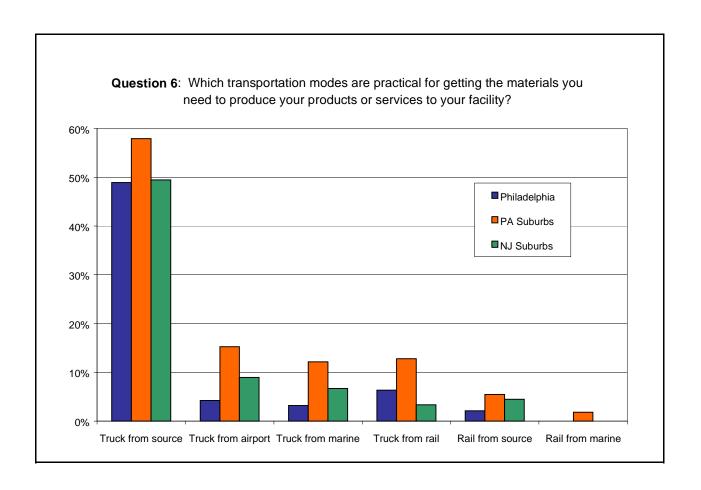
The results that were tabulated from Question 3 were less then surprising, given the high volume of auto travel and general lack of bicycle facilities in the region. Approximately 80 percent of respondents across all three regions felt that there were significant hazards to bicyclists traveling within two miles of their work site. In fact, more people noted hazards on their survey forms in PA suburbs than in either Philadelphia or in NJ suburbs. Many of the comments received in conjunction with this question involved locations that were on heavily-traveled corridors with widespread congestion and high vehicle speeds. "Heavy traffic" was indeed the most widespread response in the comment section of Question 3. Several of the respondents also replied that there is a notable lack of bicycle facilities on many streets that they would otherwise traverse by bicycle. Specific comments that were mentioned were an absence of sidewalks and bike lanes, as well as shoulders that were either occupied by parked cars or too badly damaged to travel via bicycle.



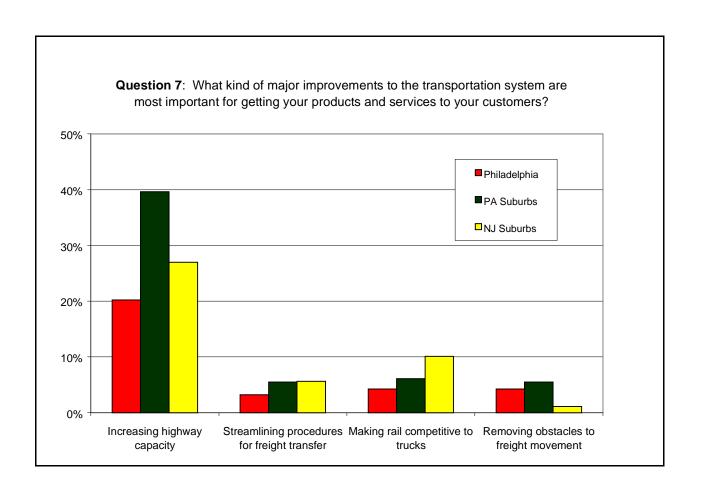
This question had varying results dependent upon the respondent's location was from. For example, "Improving current transit" was seen by 70 percent of the respondents from Philadelphia as a significant improvement to the transportation system for getting employees to work and back, but only 40 percent of suburban respondents from PA and NJ felt that way. Interestingly, "adding new transit" received about the same 40 percent from both suburban areas, but only 35 percent in Philadelphia, reflecting the extent of existing transit service within the City. Instead, the highest priority in the City was for improved transit service. Also, "increasing highway capacity" was seen as most important by about 42 percent of respondents in Philadelphia and NJ suburbs, but by about 55 percent in the PA suburbs. Suburban employers in PA appear to have a greater sense of urgency regarding the amelioration of congestion than do residents of NJ suburbs or Philadelphia. "Building sidewalks" and "building bike lanes," however, were the steadiest responses, receiving about 20 percent of the respondents votes in all areas. The comments on Question 4 basically were requesting additional parking facilities or transit routes that serve the areas in which the surveyed companies do business.



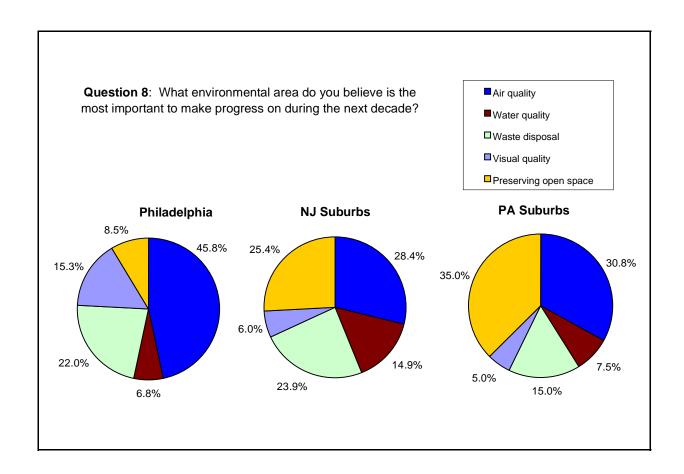
Question 5 results would suggest that virtually the only method of providing goods and services to a company's customers in the Philadelphia metro area would at least start by truck. About 35 percent of both NJ and PA suburb respondents stated that truck was the only practical way to get their goods or services to their customers, while respondents in Philadelphia indicated that response about 25 percent of the time. As for the remaining choices, the only other response to garner greater than 5 percent was "truck to airport," meaning that a truck was used to transport the product or service to the airport for shipment to the customer, which had approximately 8 percent of all respondents claiming that this was practical (10 percent for both PA and NJ suburbs, 5 percent for Philadelphia). The other choices, involving rail and marine shipping methods, received 5 percent or less on the whole. Some of the comments reflected the idea that shipping anything to anyone without using parcel shippers such as UPS or Federal Express was not practical.



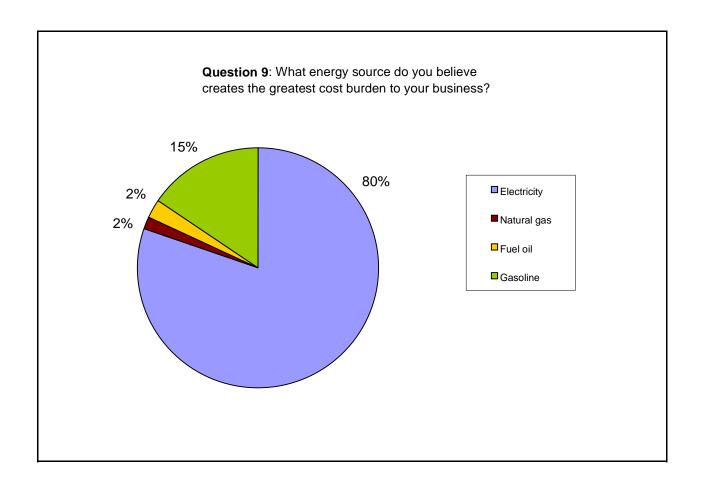
The responses to Question 6 indicated results that were very similar to those from Question 5, where trucking was the only viable method of transporting goods. In this question, however, it was a much greater percentage of respondents stating that the trucking industry was the preferred method of receiving goods at the factories for production of their materials: 55 percent. All other means of acquiring production materials were stated as being practical by fewer than 10 percent of respondents, except by those in PA suburbs. Those respondents felt that trucking from an airport, from marinas and from rail heads were also practical in about 12 percent of cases. A few respondents did cite direct rail service to their location as practical. Comments about this question were also very similar to Question 5, in that respondents mentioned UPS and Federal Express as practical options for receiving goods for production.



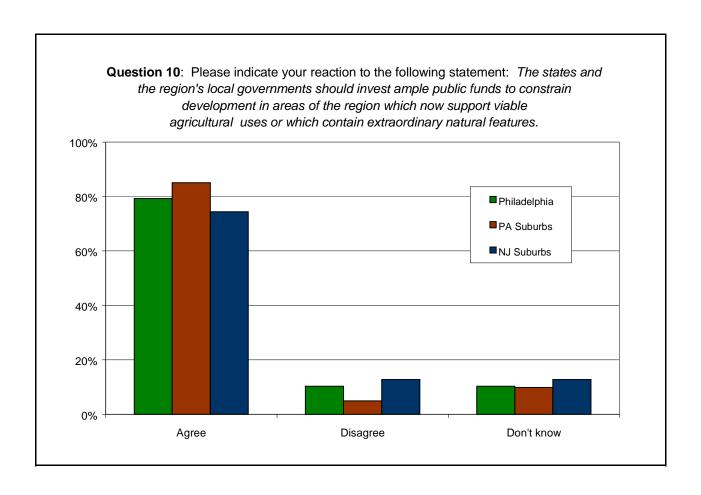
In Question 7, where it is not so much the practicality of existing transportation facilities that respondents were asked about, but what methods of improving those facilities would aid them in shipping goods to their customers, respondents said that "increasing highway capacity" would make the most difference. Approximately 40 percent of those in the City, 28 percent of those in NJ suburbs and 20 percent of those in PA suburbs felt that way. The remaining responses, which included "streamlining freight transfer procedures" and "removing obstacles to freight movement," received no more than 10 percent (and in most cases much less than that) or respondents' affirmative responses. Many of the comments submitted by respondents suggested improved access to intermodal transportation facilities such as ports, highways and transit facilities. Also, the implementation of Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) were mentioned, which would improvement the management of the transportation system as a whole. ITS consists largely of information management networks that would coordinate the receipt of data from Departments of Transportation, State Police, transit authorities and shippers of freight to improve the movement of goods, vehicles and people through the transportation network. ITS also involves the timely dissemination of that information to commuters and shippers so that informed decisions regarding route selection and mode choice may be effected.



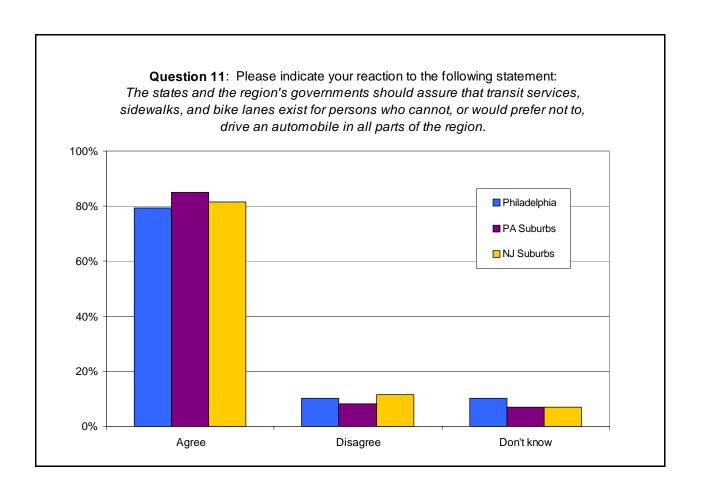
The responses to Question 8 reflect the evident disparities between perceptions in the City and in the suburbs. While Philadelphia business owners believed that the most important environmental concern over the course of the next ten years is air quality (45%), followed by waste disposal (22%), the opinions of business owners in the suburbs were more varied. The NJ suburban business owners believed air quality to be their primary concern (28%), followed by preservation of open space with 25 percent. Philadelphia residents felt that open space preservation was of minimal concern (9% listed open space preservation as their foremost concern), since little exists to preserve. PA suburbs felt that open space was the number one priority (35%), followed by air quality (31%). Other distinct differences among the regions surveyed were water quality, with 15 percent in NJ suburbs but only about 7 percent in PA suburbs and Philadelphia, and visual quality of the environment, with 15 percent in the City but only 5 to 6 percent in the suburbs. The only comments received regarding this question were from business owners who believed that all of the choices deserved equal weighting in terms of importance over the next decade.



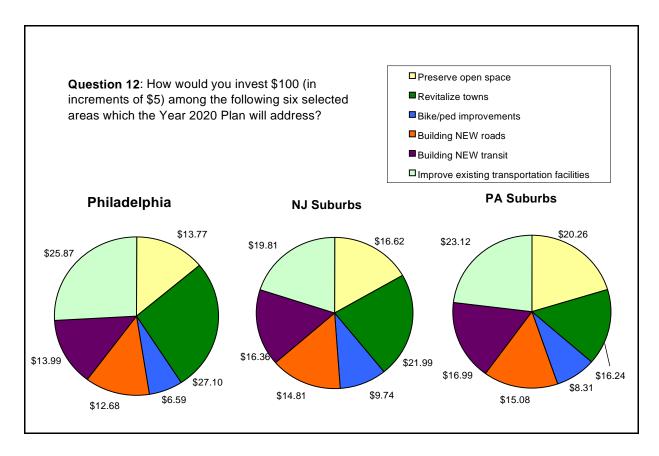
Question 9 showed little difference in results among the three areas surveyed, thus only one set of total results is shown. Of those that responded to this question, 80 percent felt that electricity was the greatest-cost utility to their business. The 15 percent that had gasoline listed as their greatest cost burden were likely transportation firms of one kind or another, or service firms that travel to their customers. The question was asked in an effort to determine whether the price and availability of certain resources was critical to business in the Philadelphia region. This question served as verification that the majority of businesses in the region are not involved in manufacturing or materials processing, and these second- and third-tier businesses are often reliant on electricity for the largest portion of their energy usage. The only comment received on this question was that "coal" was the number one cost burden for that particular business.



Question 10 produced similar results to Question 9, in that the tabulations yielded the same results across all three regions surveyed. Approximately 80 percent of all respondents felt that public funds should be used to constrain development to areas that are not environmentally sensitive or do not support agricultural uses, while 10 percent disagreed and another 10 percent did not have any opinion formulated on the matter. The responses from NJ and PA suburbs follow from Question 8, where residents in the suburbs felt that preserving open space was a paramount concern. City business owners, though they did not list open space preservation as their primary concern in Question 8, believe that where there exists open space as a result of agriculture, it should be preserved. There were no comments received regarding this question.

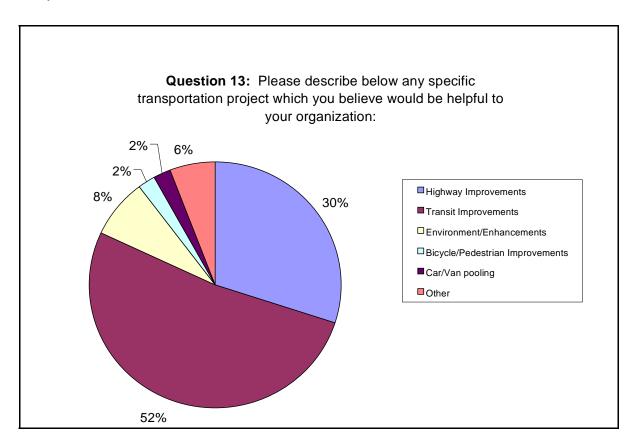


The results for Question 11 were again similar to Questions 9 and 10, since the conclusions were similar regardless of the region surveyed and were weighted in favor of one specific response. In this case, approximately 80 percent of respondents regardless of business location believed that the government should ensure that those people who would prefer not to drive, or cannot drive for any reason, should have facilities available for their use. Of the 10 percent who disagreed with that statement, several wrote in that government money should not be spent on projects they regarded as frivolous, while another 10 percent preferred not to respond or didn't know whether this was a worthwhile expenditure of government funding.



The responses to Question 12 were compared to the results gathered from participants of DVRPC's Horizons 2025 planning workshops, to whom the same question was posed. These workshops were held from late October to mid-November in King of Prussia, Glassboro, Philadelphia and Burlington, and asked citizens from the region what projects they would invest \$100 in DVRPC "play money" in over the course of the next several years. Those workshops yielded results that were similar in terms of DVRPC investment dollars destined for building new transit facilities, but were notably different in every other area of funding. Funding for revitalizing towns and cities came in from the public workshops roughly the same as Philadelphia respondents to the survey. but much higher than both PA and NJ suburbs (\$25 from workshop participants). Funding for new bicycle and pedestrian facilities was greater from the workshops than from any of the three survey regions, with participants giving \$10 and respondents offering only about \$8.25. "Improving existing facilities" received more funding from Philadelphia and PA suburbs (\$26 and \$23) than from the workshop participants or from NJ suburbs, both of which allocated about \$19. Interestingly, money for the preservation of open space was highest from workshop participants (\$24) and lowest from Philadelphia survey respondents (\$14). One category received only a third of the funding from the workshops as it did from survey respondents, and that was "building new roads." This category received \$5 from workshop participants and about \$14 from each of the three survey areas. From the results of the survey alone, in fact, it can be seen that attitudes are indeed different across the region. For example, for urban

revitalization, the PA suburbs allocated only \$16 of their \$100 budget, while NJ suburbs allocated \$22 and Philadelphia \$27, perhaps meaning that business owners in Philadelphia see more urban blight and a need to remedy that than do suburban business owners. The preservation of open space had similar differences, albeit in the reverse order, with Philadelphia allocating \$14, NJ suburbs \$17 and PA suburbs \$20. This is in large part due to the fact that there is little remaining vacant land to preserve in the City, unlike the suburbs.



With only approximately 43 percent of survey participants choosing to answer Question 13, a wide variety of responses were still received. Although this question was designed to allow respondents to focus on what improvements they felt were significant without limiting them to any particular projects types, there were still several general areas in which their responses fell. Over half of the responses (90 out of 158) mentioned improvements to transit facilities in the region, with approximately an even split between rail and bus projects. Five respondents directly referenced the Schuylkill Valley Metro, a proposed light rail project linking Center City Philadelphia with Norristown and Reading. And one third of all the responses had to do with highway improvements, including capacity increases on existing facilities and the need for additional facilities. There were other groups that referred to the need for projects related to the environment (8%), bicycle and pedestrian issues (3%) and car/vanpooling (3%).

APPENDIX 1

Survey Results Database Input Screen

Respondent 1. Automobile Train, subway, rail Bus Bicycle Walking Other, please specify Other	Truck from marine port Truck from rail Railroad from source Railroad from marine port Other, please specify Not applicable
2. □ yes Comment: □ 3. ☑ yes Comment:	7.
4. Increasing highway capacity	8. Water quality Other 9. Electricity Other
5. Truck to final dest.	11. Agree 12. 20 Preserve open space 20 Reivtalize towns 5 Bike/ped improvements 10 Building NEW roads 30 Building NEW transit 15 Improve existing transportation
☐ Not applicable Other	13. Add New Record