



# **Transit and Shuttle Funding Project Review of Funding Practices at Other Universities**

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## **Summary of Findings**

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Compiled for UC San Diego Transportation Services by

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## **Summary of Findings**

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# **Transit and Shuttle Funding Project Review of Funding Practices at Other Universities**

## **Summary of Findings**

### **Overview**

In Fall Quarter 2008, UC San Diego Transportation Services initiated a review of campus transit and shuttle programs, with a goal of identifying new sources of revenue to offset steadily rising costs associated with increased ridership and associated operational expenses. Three specific options were evaluated; user fees for currently free transit and/or shuttle services, a student transportation fee to fund access to transit and/or shuttle services for undergraduate and graduate students, and reductions in transit and/or shuttle services to curtail ongoing operating costs.

As part of the review process, information about transit and shuttle funding mechanisms was gathered from other university campuses, both within the University of California system and outside the UC system. The information collected paints a broad picture of how other universities are funding the demand for increasing public transportation services at a time of shrinking revenues. Summarized below are findings from the review of funding practices at other university campuses.

### **Summary of Findings**

#### **Information from University of California Campuses and Other UC Entities**

##### **1. Subsidized Transit and Shuttle Programs**

According to information collected in winter 2008 by UC Berkeley and summarized in Table 1, eight other UC campuses in addition to UC San Diego operate campus shuttle programs, as does the Medical Center at Irvine. UC Santa Barbara is the only UC campus *not* to have a campus shuttle program.

While it is not possible to accurately determine the variability in actual service levels from campus to campus (e.g. the number of routes and stops and the area of campus covered by the routes), partial information is available to show that hours of operation vary from program to program. All but one

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campus shuttle program operates during both daytime and nighttime hours; UC Davis operates only during daytime hours. As might be expected, the annual cost for campus shuttle service varies widely from campus to campus, with an annual high of \$3.67 million for campus shuttle operations at UC San Francisco, and a low of \$153 thousand at UC Merced.

**Table 1**  
**Campus Shuttle Programs at UC Campuses**

Campus	Daytime Operations	Nighttime Operations	Annual Costs	Sources of Operating Revenue
<b>UCB</b>	Yes 7am-7pm	Yes 7pm – 3am	\$1,704,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parking revenue</li> <li>• Student fees</li> <li>• Farebox revenue</li> <li>• Other campus funds</li> </ul>
<b>UCD</b>	Yes 5:30am-7:55am	No	\$400,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hospital, Medical Center and School of Medicine recharge</li> <li>• Parking revenue</li> </ul>
<b>UCI</b>	Yes	Yes	\$635,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Citation revenue</li> <li>• Housing recharge</li> <li>• Farebox revenue</li> </ul>
<b>UCI Med Center</b>	Yes	Yes	\$1,000,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Citation revenue</li> <li>• Housing recharge</li> <li>• Farebox revenue</li> <li>• Other campus funds</li> </ul>
<b>UCLA</b>	Yes 7am-7pm	Yes 8pm-11pm	\$2,724,841	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parking revenue</li> </ul>
<b>UCM</b>	Yes 7am-7pm	Yes MF 6:30pm-11:30pm S/S 11am-12am	\$153,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Citation revenue</li> <li>• Parking revenue</li> <li>• Student fees</li> <li>• Other campus funds</li> </ul>
<b>UCR</b>	Yes	Yes	\$1,100,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Citation revenue</li> <li>• Parking revenue</li> <li>• Other department recharge</li> </ul>
<b>UCSC</b>	Yes 7:20am-6pm	Yes 6:30pm-12:30am	\$2,550,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Citation revenue</li> <li>• Parking revenue</li> <li>• Housing/Conference recharge</li> <li>• Student fees</li> </ul>
<b>UCSD</b>	Yes 5:30 am-7pm S/S 7am-7pm	Yes 7pm-2am S/S 7pm-12am	\$3,070,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Citation revenue</li> <li>• Parking revenue</li> <li>• Medical Center recharge</li> </ul>
<b>UCSF</b>	Yes	Yes	\$3,670,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parking revenue</li> <li>• Medical Center recharge</li> </ul>

Sources of operating revenue are more generalized. As noted in Table 1, all campuses fund at least a portion of their shuttle programs with revenue from parking and/or citation income; **UC Los Angeles is the only campus to fund its entire shuttle program from parking revenue.** Seven campuses identify recharge contributions from other campus departments, such as housing or the campus Medical Center,

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and a few cite the use of other campus funds. Three campuses (UC Berkeley, UC Merced and UC Santa Cruz) fund a portion of campus shuttle services from mandatory student transportation fees, and three UC entities (UC Berkeley, UC Irvine and the UC Irvine Medical Center) fund a portion of shuttle costs with farebox revenues, indicating that fees are charged for at least some component of shuttle services.

As shown in Table 2, all UC campuses, the UC Irvine Medical Center and the UC Office of the President have a transit pass program that provides free or subsidized access to public transit for employees.

**Table 2  
Employee Transit Pass Programs at UC Campuses**

Campus	Annual Program Cost	Annual Cost Covered by Campus	Annual Revenue from Users	Cost to Employees
<b>UCB</b>	\$450,000	\$100,000	\$350,000	\$30/month or \$360/year
<b>UCD</b>	\$115,569	\$19,876	\$95,693	Varies; campus subsidy of up to \$18 per month per employee
<b>UCI</b>	\$34,000	\$34,000	\$0	\$0
<b>UCI Med Center</b>	\$41,571	\$41,571	\$0	\$0
<b>UCLA</b>	\$1,615,081 <sup>1</sup>	\$1,375,303	\$238,758	\$.25/ride or \$22.50/quarter for BruinGo! Card (local transit) \$78 - \$100/month for Metro pass
<b>UCM<sup>2</sup></b>	\$135,000	\$22,000 (88.5% funded by CMAQ grant)	\$7,500	\$30/month
<b>UCOP</b>	\$52,000	\$52,000	\$0	\$0
<b>UCR</b>	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$0	15% subsidy for Metrolink 50% subsidy for transit passes
<b>UCSB</b>	\$120,000	\$120,000	\$0	\$0 for employees without a parking permit
<b>UCSD<sup>3</sup></b>	\$1,464,898 \$410,712	\$1,464,898 \$62,392	\$0 \$348,320	\$0 \$0 to \$139/month
<b>UCSC</b>	\$205,000	\$131,000	\$74,000	\$60/year

According to data collected in winter 2008, in addition to UC San Diego, five other UC entities provide transit services free of charge to employees. Other locations assess a fee to employees which generates revenue to offset total program costs, although the proportion of total program costs generated by such fees is dramatically different. For example, at UC Los Angeles, employee and student fees cover about

<sup>1</sup> Includes cost of transit pass program for students.

<sup>2</sup> UC Merced started a new, limited transit pass program in Fall Semester 2008. Annual costs and revenues are projections. Includes costs for both employees and students.

<sup>3</sup> Includes cost of transit pass program for students.

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15% of program costs, meaning that 85% of transit program costs are subsidized, while at UC Davis, employee fees generate about 83% of program costs, with the campus subsidizing about 17% of costs.

At UC San Diego, the transit pass program has a dual approach. One portion of the program provides access to free local transit on eight specific MTS/NCTD bus routes for staff, faculty and students. This program costs the campus about \$1.46 million per year, and is subsidized primarily by parking and citation revenues (85% of annual costs), but also by contributions from Housing and Dining Services, and Student Affairs. With proper identification (i.e. a special bus sticker on their campus ID card), staff, faculty and students have unlimited access to these free bus zone routes. The other portion of the transit pass program subsidizes the cost of a bus pass for staff, faculty and students; this pass provides access to the entire range of MTS/NCTD routes. UC San Diego subsidizes about 15% of the cost of the bus pass, and the staff, faculty or student pass holder pays the balance of the cost.

All UC campuses and the UC Irvine Medical Center also provide a subsidized transit pass program for students. This information is summarized in Table 3.

**Table 3  
Student Transit Pass Programs at UC Campuses**

<b>Campus</b>	<b>Annual Program Cost</b>	<b>Annual Cost Covered by Campus</b>	<b>Annual Cost Covered by Student Fees</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>UCB</b>	\$2,000,000	\$0	\$2,000,000	
<b>UCD</b>	\$3,500,000	\$84,500	\$1,800,000	City of Davis covers balance
<b>UCI</b>	\$90,500	\$90,500	\$0	
<b>UCI Med Center</b>	\$124,714	\$124,714	\$0	Transit participants also receive 48 days of free parking, 12 passes per quarter
<b>UCLA<sup>4</sup></b>	(Included in Employee Program Costs)	(Included in Employee Program Costs)	\$0	\$.25/ride or \$22.50/quarter for BruinGo! Card (local transit) \$50 - \$54 for Metro pass
<b>UCM<sup>4</sup></b>	(Included in Employee Program Costs)	(Included in Employee Program Costs)	\$22,000	
<b>UCR</b>	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$0	
<b>UCSB</b>	\$234,500	\$0	\$234,500	Local transit service
<b>UCSD<sup>4</sup></b>	(Included in Employee Program Costs)	(Included in Employee Program Costs)	\$0	Students have access to nine free bus routes and can also obtain a subsidized pass for full access to all MTS/NCTD routes
<b>UCSC</b>	\$2,300,000	\$0	\$2,300,000	

<sup>4</sup> Program costs for students are included in figures for employee transit pass program costs.

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On four other UC campuses and at the UC Irvine Medical Center, student transit pass program fees are totally subsidized by the campus. On three campuses, UC Berkeley, UC Santa Barbara, and UC Santa Cruz, student transportation fees cover the entire cost of the student transit pass program. As noted above, at UC San Diego, the student transit pass program has two components—a free bus zone program that costs student riders nothing to ride on nine specific MTS/NCTD bus routes, and a subsidized bus pass program that provides unlimited access to all MTS and NCTD transit lines. Students pay about 41% of the cost of a student pass for extended transit service.

A review of Tables 1, 2 and 3 draws attention to distinct differences in how shuttle and transit programs are funded across the University of California system. On some campuses and at some UC entities, the philosophy is to provide most shuttle and transit services free of cost to riders. At other campuses, a decision has been made to share the cost of shuttle and transit services between the University and its constituents. Neither approach is inherently better than the other; certainly encouraging transit ridership is a sound, sustainable transportation practice. However, as costs continue to escalate for both university-provided and publicly-funded transit and shuttle services, it is likely that more UC campuses will begin to consider offsetting some subsidized costs with user fees or mandatory student transportation fees.

2. Student Transportation Fee Programs at UC Campuses

Five UC campuses have mandatory student transportation fees that are assessed of all registered students. These campuses—UC Berkeley, UC Irvine, UC Merced, UC Santa Barbara and UC Santa Cruz—use the revenue generated by these fees to provide or support access to transit and shuttle services deemed valuable on each campus. For example, at UC Berkeley, the current \$58.50 per semester student transportation fee provides unlimited access to all transit buses, including trans-bay lines to San Francisco and Palo Alto, and to all on campus shuttles year round. At UC Merced, the \$35 per semester student transportation fee funds the campus CatTracks program, a commuter and intercampus shuttle program, as well as student bus passes on Merced County Transit lines. At UC Santa Cruz, the current \$111.66 per quarter student transportation fee funds the extensive on campus shuttle program as well as unlimited access to the Santa Cruz County Metro bus system. At UCSB, the fee of \$13.13 per quarter pays for free student transit passes. Finally, at UC Irvine, the Measure “S” student transportation fee of \$8 per quarter funds new vehicle purchases, equipment, and route upgrades for the ASUCI Express

Shuttle, which is a cooperative effort between the Associated Students of UC Irvine and the UC Irvine Parking and Transportation Services department. See Table 4 for a summary of this information.

**Table 4**  
**Student Transportation Fees at UC Campuses**

	<b>Amount of Student Transportation Fee<sup>5</sup></b>	<b>Services Provided by the Student Transportation Fee</b>
<b>UCB</b>	\$58.80/semester	Unlimited access to AC Transit Buses and Bear Transit campus shuttles during the academic year
<b>UCI</b>	\$8/quarter	Vehicle and equipment purchases and route upgrades for the ASUCI Shuttle Program
<b>UCM</b>	\$35/semester	Unlimited access to the campus CatTracks shuttle and a free bus pass for The Bus
<b>UCSB</b>	13.13/quarter	Unlimited access on local transit lines
<b>UCSC</b>	\$111.66/quarter	Unlimited access to campus shuttles and unlimited access to Santa Cruz County Metro buses

At campuses with a student transportation fee, it is common for a student board to be established to oversee the expenditure of fees collected. For example, at UC Berkeley, the Class Pass Advisory Board has both graduate and undergraduate student representatives, and helps advise transportation administrators on the allocation of student transportation fees. This ensures that student transportation fees are budgeted and spent with full accountability and transparency.

### **Information from Other CPARK Colleges and Universities**

In fall 2008, a message sent by the University of Texas San Antonio to a CPARK list of Campus Parking System Administrators posed a question about student transportation fees used to operate university shuttle systems. Responses to the electronic mail inquiry provide insight into the fees assessed at twelve other colleges and universities.

As can be noted in Table 5, the average student transportation fee at these twelve reporting campuses is about \$49 per semester, although fees vary widely from lows of \$11.50 per semester at Utah State and \$20 per semester at the University of Texas San Antonio, to highs of \$70 per semester at Texas A & M University, and \$65 per semester at Miami Ohio and the University of Kansas. Mandatory student

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<sup>5</sup> Based on figures for 2008-09.

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fees typically support campus shuttle programs—which may serve both on and off campus locations—and, in some cases, access to local transit services as well.

Naturally this information does not represent a valid sampling of colleges and universities across the nation. Rather, it is a serendipitous sampling of data from CPARK participant organizations, showing trends in the use of student transportation fees to fund campus shuttle and bus programs for students.

**Table 5**  
**Student Transportation Fees at Select CPARK Universities**

	<b>Student Transportation Fee</b>	<b>Annual Revenue from Fee</b>	<b>Services Supported by Fee</b>	<b>Ridership</b>	<b>Contributions from Other Sources, if Specified</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>Georgia Southern</b>	\$45/semester \$30/summer		Campus shuttle service	10 buses, 1.45 million trips	\$20,000	Entire service is out-sourced
<b>Indiana University</b>	\$54.96/semester	\$4 million	Campus bus service; local BT public transit service; night bus service; safety escort van	21 shuttles, 3.1 million trips. 1.96 million trips on BT; 70K trips on night shuttle		Public transit service provided by Bloomington Transit (BT)
<b>Miami Ohio</b>	\$65/semester		Metro Bus service; access to disability transport for students			
<b>Seton Hall</b>	\$25/semester residents only		Shuttle service		\$1/ride for staff, faculty and commuter students	
<b>Texas A &amp; M University</b>	\$70/semester	\$6 million	On/off campus shuttle program; night shuttle service	80 buses, 5 million trips		120,000 hours of service annually
<b>University of CO Colorado Springs</b>	\$64.50/semester \$32.25/summer		(not specified)			Transportation and safety fee
<b>University of CO Boulder</b>	\$58/semester		EcoPass on Denver RTD plus extended service Th-Sat nights		Housing pays for shuttle to off campus dorms and apartments	Off campus shuttle generated 1.2 million trips
<b>University of Connecticut</b>	\$35/semester		On campus shuttles, night and weekend shuttle service	13 buses, 6 routes, 1.3 million trips		
<b>University of Kansas</b>	\$64.90/semester \$10/semester	\$3 million; \$670,000	KU Wheels, Park and Ride; SafeRide and SafeBus programs	28 buses, 9 routes, 2.6 million trips	\$1.4 million from parking income	Fee increased by \$20/year for fare free service for students, staff and faculty
<b>University of South Florida</b>	\$3/credit hour or about \$60/semester	\$2 million +	On and off campus shuttle service	17 buses, 5 routes, 900K rides	15% of additional operating expenses	Campus also funds HART U-Pass (free local transit service) for \$200K/year
<b>University of Texas San Antonio</b>	\$20/semester		Campus shuttle service	15 buses, 1.8 million passengers		
<b>Utah State University</b>	\$11.50/semester		Campus shuttle system	10 buses, 900K trips		

## **Information from the Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP)**

The Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP) was established under Federal Transportation Administration (FTA) sponsorship, with a mission of conducting research necessary to solve operating problems, adapt appropriate new technologies from other industries, and introduce innovation into the transit industry. TCRP sponsors various research activities designed to gather information and provide a broad forum for transit agencies to cooperatively address common operational challenges.

In 2008, TCRP published a research paper entitled *Transit Systems in College and University Communities—A Synthesis of Transit Practice*.<sup>6</sup> The paper addresses practices and trends in the areas of transit operations, campus policies and planning, with a focus on technology and environmental innovations. Contained within the paper is information useful to the current UC San Diego study of transit and shuttle funding options.

A survey distributed by TCRP researchers received 94 responses, including 58 colleges and universities,<sup>7</sup> 32 transit operators serving college and university communities, and 10 local government or other agencies. Of the 94 respondents, 81 are either traditional universities (4 years plus graduate programs) or agencies that serve traditional university communities. Most respondents (49) represent or serve universities with enrollments between 10,001 and 35,000 students. Eighteen respondents represent or serve universities with more than 35,000 students. Eighty percent of all respondents are located in urban or suburban settings. Based on reported demographics, comparisons between the UC San Diego and respondent institutions and agencies seem to be reasonable.

Respondents were asked what types of transit serve the college or university. Responses are shown in Table 6. Nearly all campuses are served by local transit routes, and about three-quarters have on-campus circulator shuttles. A majority also have on-demand accessible paratransit or other on-demand services. More than half also have dedicated parking shuttles.

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<sup>6</sup> This paper can be retrieved in its entirety at the website of the Transportation Research Board, [www.trb.org](http://www.trb.org).

<sup>7</sup> UC Davis, UC Irvine and UC Los Angeles are among the universities that responded to the TCRP survey.

**Table 6  
Types of Transit and Shuttle Programs Serving TCRP Universities**

Type of Transit	Proportion of Respondents	UC San Diego Transit & Shuttles
Local Fixed-Route Bus Transit	91%	✓
On Campus Circulator/Shuttles	74%	✓
Dial-a-Ride/Accessible Paratransit	73%	✓
Other On-Call Service (e.g. night escort shuttle)	59%	
Parking Shuttle	53%	✓
Intercity Scheduled Coach Service	41%	
Regional/Commuter Rail	30%	✓
Urban/Light Rail Transit	9%	
Other	30%	

Asked the primary purposes for transit and shuttle operations at their campus, nearly all university respondents said that the services provide on-campus circulation. More than two-thirds also reported that transit and shuttle services provide links between the campus and the surrounding city or that they provide nighttime safety services. Table 7 summarizes this information.

**Table 7  
Purposes for Transit and Shuttle Programs at TCRP Universities**

Purpose Served	Proportion of Respondents	UC San Diego Transit & Shuttles
On Campus Circulation	93%	✓
Link between Campus and City	64%	✓
Night/Evening Safety	63%	✓
Accessible Services	55%	✓
Park and Ride Link	54%	
Inter-campus Circulation (multiple locations)	43%	✓

Nearly all respondents indicated that ridership has increased over time, with comments suggesting that increases are due to factors such as increasing gas prices; new routes or increased service levels; U-Pass agreements or other price incentives; growing student enrollment and other demographic shifts; decreases in campus parking availability; increased awareness or routes, and marketing efforts. The few respondents reporting declines in ridership cited either reductions in service due to financial constraints, construction of more parking on campus, or the construction of more on campus housing that has shifted student commuters to student residents.

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Asked about financial challenges, 85% of respondents cited rising fuel costs—including the costs of alternative fuels—as the challenge most impacting their operations. Reduced state and federal funding for operations or capital investments was the second most common financial concern, cited by 26% of respondents, followed by labor costs and the rising cost of employee health insurance, cited by 25% and 22% of respondents, respectively. About 14% of respondents said that increasing demand for service among campus constituents was having a direct financial impact on their operations.

Respondents to the TCRP survey were asked about funding sources for transit and shuttle operations. Most indicated that they rely on a variety of funding, including student fees, campus general funds, parking fees, and advertising revenues. Table 8 summarizes funding sources for operating expenses.

**Table 8  
Sources of Operating Revenue for Transit and Shuttle Programs at TCRP Universities**

<b>Funding Source</b>	<b>Proportion of Respondents</b>
<b>Student Fees</b>	25%
<b>Campus General Funds</b>	20%
<b>Advertising</b>	15%
<b>Parking Fees</b>	13%
<b>Federal Funds</b>	8%
<b>State Funds</b>	8%
<b>Fares</b>	7%
<b>Local Government</b>	5%
<b>Private Subsidy</b>	3%
<b>Other</b>	20%

Four universities reported a single source of operating funds. Indiana University Bloomington funds 100% of its operating costs from mandatory student fees. Loyola Baltimore gets 100% of its operating funds from campus general funds and the University of Arizona Tucson uses parking fee revenue to fund 100% of its transit and shuttle operations. The University of Delaware funds 100% of operating expenses from unspecified “Other” sources.

The vast majority of campuses provide on campus shuttle service free of charge to students, but five campuses charge a student fare, ranging from \$0.25 at the University of Texas Austin, to \$1.50 at Cabrillo College in Santa Cruz. Fares for local transit service vary as well. About 44% of universities responding said that students ride local transit routes fare free. Fares for public transit at other

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universities range from \$.25 per ride at the University of Texas Austin to \$2.75 at the University of Minnesota. Slightly more than 39% of universities responding reported that students pay between \$1.00 and \$1.50 per ride. See Table 9 for details.

**Table 9  
Cost Per Ride for Students on Transit and Shuttle Services at TCRP Universities**

<b>Cost Per Ride</b>	<b>On Campus Shuttle Service</b>	<b>Local Bus Service</b>
<b>Free</b>	44%	91%
<b>Less than \$1,00</b>	8%	4%
<b>\$1.00 to \$1,50</b>	39%	5%
<b>\$1.50 to \$2.00</b>	8%	0%
<b>More than \$2.00</b>	2%	0%

About half of all responding universities have a U-Pass program, a formal relationship with a local transit provider to provide subsidized transit services for students, faculty and staff. Subsidies reported by respondents varied considerably; no general conclusions can be drawn about the *amount* of the subsidy. However, *sources* of the subsidy were reported in the study. Most subsidies come from parking revenues (25%) or user fees (20%). General campus funds account for about 12% of U-Pass subsidies.

Finally, a question on the TCRP survey asked respondents about user satisfaction with campus and local provider shuttle and transit services. About three-quarters of responding universities said that the campus community and its constituents are either satisfied (48%) or very satisfied (26%) with the quality of shuttle and transit services. Comparable statistics for UC San Diego taken from the Winter 2009 Transportation Survey indicate that about 80% of *actual* users are either satisfied (45%) or very satisfied (35%) overall with campus shuttle services.<sup>8</sup> Correspondingly, about 71% of *actual* riders report being either satisfied (42%) or very satisfied (29%) with free transit services.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Components of overall satisfaction include satisfaction with shuttle routes and stops, convenience, dependability, frequency of service, ease of use, comfort/cleanliness, safety, cost, and courtesy of shuttle drivers.

<sup>9</sup> Components of overall satisfaction include satisfaction with transit routes and stops, convenience, dependability, frequency of service, ease of use, comfort/cleanliness, safety, and cost.