

Working Paper 06-03

Archive of Survey Questionnaires

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June, 2006

Chicago Area Transportation Study
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Archive of Survey Questionnaires

Introduction

Much of the data used by the Chicago Area Transportation Study (CATS) for both long- and short-range planning throughout its 50-year history has been generated through the use of travel-related surveys. During this time, the CATS Information Services Division (previously known as the Data Collection Division) has been engaged in developing and executing all manner of surveys.

When CATS was created in 1955, it was given the mandate to prepare the region's first comprehensive transportation plan. At that time, a series of surveys was undertaken to obtain regional travel characteristics data. These earliest travel surveys mainly concentrated on home-based travel (home interview) and cordon line/screen line (roadside interview) surveys. Studies of this type have been repeated several times throughout CATS' history.

Over the past five decades, however, there have been tremendous changes in the way people travel. At the same time, the planning process has grown more complex. New types of surveys have been developed that obtain travel characteristics data for a wide range of planning activities that address these changes. These surveys are mainly studies of how the various modes of transportation are used. This includes surveys of motorists using the region's expressways, tollways, arterial streets and parking facilities. Other surveys have targeted bus/rapid transit/commuter rail riders, airline passengers, special events attendees and pedestrians.

Surveys were conducted in a variety of ways. For the most part, questionnaires were either handed to or mailed to the recipients. Other survey questionnaires, however, have been developed to interview selected individuals either in person or over the telephone. A more recent innovation in questionnaire distribution is via the Internet.

It is important to note that all of the survey methods mentioned above are useful, depending on the type of study. Household travel and license plate survey questionnaires have been successfully distributed via the mail. Roadside, trip generation, transit rider and pedestrian survey questionnaires have been distributed by handing them directly to the recipients. Personal interviews, which do not involve distribution of a questionnaire, have been conducted with pedestrians, motorists and airline passengers, and in a few cases, household members have been

interviewed via telephone. Questionnaires can now be sent via the Internet; however this method requires some prior contract with or permission from the recipient, since e-mail addresses cannot be randomly generated like home addresses or telephone numbers. This method is fairly common in marketing surveys, but as yet it has not been widely used in transportation-related surveys.

The questionnaires and related correspondence pertaining to the various types of travel surveys and distribution methods mentioned above have been compiled in the archive that accompanies this report.

The Archive

This archive is a compilation of survey questionnaires developed and used primarily by the Chicago Area Transportation Study, but also by numerous other planning and programming agencies in northeastern Illinois and around the country. The questionnaires and related materials reveal a tremendous variety of styles and techniques that have been developed in the pursuit of the data that is used in both short- and long-range planning activities.

The archive consists of three sections, each of which includes an index that lists every item with a coded sequence number. The sections are organized by subject matter, the agency/organization that produced the items and the date of the survey, if available. This index is followed by copies of the actual questionnaires and related correspondence (“Dear Citizen” letters, follow-up/reminder letters, etc.). The first section contains questionnaires from highway-related surveys. Section two concentrates on bus and rail transit. The third section contains questionnaires from 12 different types of surveys, including commercial vehicle, parking, aviation, bicycle/pedestrian, waterways, rideshare/congestion mitigation, household travel, limited mobility, trip generation, special events, public involvement and demographics.

This archive is available to anyone faced with the challenge of developing a new survey. They will be able to look at previous efforts and determine how problems with the wording of questions, page layout, written instructions, etc. were addressed. Every data collection project has a unique set of challenges, and it can be beneficial to see how similar challenges have been met in past efforts. For example, there are many different ways to ask questions such as, “Where are you coming from?” or “What was the purpose of this trip?” Many of the questionnaires that have been compiled in this archive contain similar questions, but the wording differs according to the needs of the particular survey. The examples shown in

these three volumes provide useful information and guidance for creating questionnaires that will result in successful data collection efforts.

It is not the intention of this working paper to discuss the success or failure of individual surveys or the questionnaires that have been used to collect the data. They are included in this compilation as examples of the many ways that the desired information can be obtained. It is true that certain techniques of survey and questionnaire design have worked better than others. However, it is not practical to discuss the merits of all of the individual questionnaires included in this compilation. The techniques that have proven useful in questionnaire design and survey development are addressed in CATS Working Paper 06-02, Survey and Questionnaire Design, where the collective experiences of the CATS Data Collection/Information Services Division are documented.

Prior to the creation of this archive, survey questionnaires were scattered among a multitude of paper files. The majority came from studies that were conducted at a time when digital formatting was either non-existent or just coming into use. The first steps in creating the archive were to copy the materials, organize them by type, date and author, label and index them and assemble them by subject matter into three binders. Once the hard copy compilation was completed, all of the materials were then scanned and digitally formatted. A CD containing this archive is included as part of this report. Because the archives are so large (7.5 megabytes or larger), they couldn't be placed on the CATS website. Persons wishing to receive a CD of the archives should contact the CATS Communications Division at 312/386-8740.

Updating the Archive

As new surveys are developed, they will be added to the archive – both electronically and in the hard copy version. Identification numbers are unique to each of the 12 topics and new numbers can be assigned within those groupings. For example, all questionnaires listed in the Streets and Highways category are coded with the letter H preceding the sequence number (H001, H002, etc.). Numbering starts over with each topic, so that the first entry under transit would be T001 and the first entry under aviation is A001, etc. The letter codes for the 14 topics are shown below in the order in which they appear in the archive.

Codes Used to Classify Survey Questionnaires

| Code | Topic |
|-------------|--------------------------------|
| A | Aviation |
| B | Bicycles/Pedestrian |
| C | Commercial Vehicles/Trucks |
| D | Demographics |
| G | Trip Generation |
| H | Highways/Streets |
| I | Public Involvement |
| M | Mobility Limited |
| P | Parking |
| R | Rideshare/Congestion Reduction |
| S | Special Events |
| T | Transit |
| W | Waterways |
| X | Household Travel |