

Wilmington Area Planning Council
(WILMAPCO)

Public Opinion Survey of Cecil County Residents

Summary of Results
September 2016



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Summary of Results

Background

A telephone survey was conducted of a random sample of 600 residents of Cecil County, Maryland, for which WILMAPCO is the Metropolitan Planning Organization. The purpose of the survey was to gather information on the transportation choices made by residents and to gauge their perceptions and thoughts regarding transportation. The interview script was developed by the staff and board of WILMAPCO. The script was pilot tested and revised before being fully fielded by Aspen Media Research, a survey call center. This was the eighth implementation of the survey, with previous implementations in 2007, 2008, 2009, 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2015. WILMAPCO also conducts surveys of residents of the entire WILMAPCO area, which includes New Castle County, Delaware as well as Cecil County; these surveys were previously conducted in 2006, 2010 and 2014. Where questions from that survey are similar or identical to questions from the Cecil County survey, responses from Cecil County residents are included.

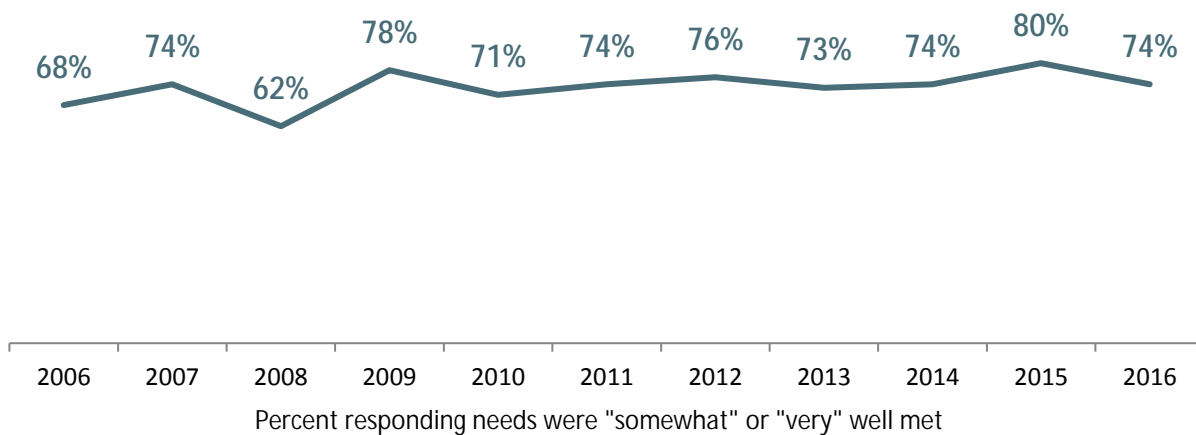
A brief summary of the results is presented below.

Perceptions of the Transportation System

Those interviewed were asked how well they felt the current transportation system meets their travel needs. Three-quarters respondents reported that their transportation needs were “somewhat” or “very” well met in 2016, a return to the levels seen since about 2011 after the high point last year in 2015.

Figure 1: Ratings of Current Transportation System

Transportation in Cecil County consists of roads, buses, trains, sidewalks and bike facilities. How well do you feel the transportation system meets your travel needs?



Note: The question wording varied in 2010. In 2010, the question read, "Transportation in our region consists of roads, buses, trains, sidewalks and bike facilities. How well do you feel the transportation system meets your travel needs?"

When asked to rate the condition of roads and highways in Cecil County, about half of respondents (51%) thought they were “excellent” or “good” (see Figure 2), about the same as last year, but lower compared to recent years before that. However, over half of respondents said in the last year they had noticed improvements made by the State to the transportation system in the area, a greater proportion than observed in past years (see Figure 3). The portion of respondents who felt that the condition of county roads and highways had gotten better (33%) was the highest that has been observed since surveying began in 2007 (see Figure 4) About 2 in 10 respondents, however, felt that road conditions have gotten worse, a smaller proportion than in 2015.

Figure 2: Ratings of the Overall Condition of Roads and Highways

Overall, how would you rate the condition of Cecil County's roads and highways?

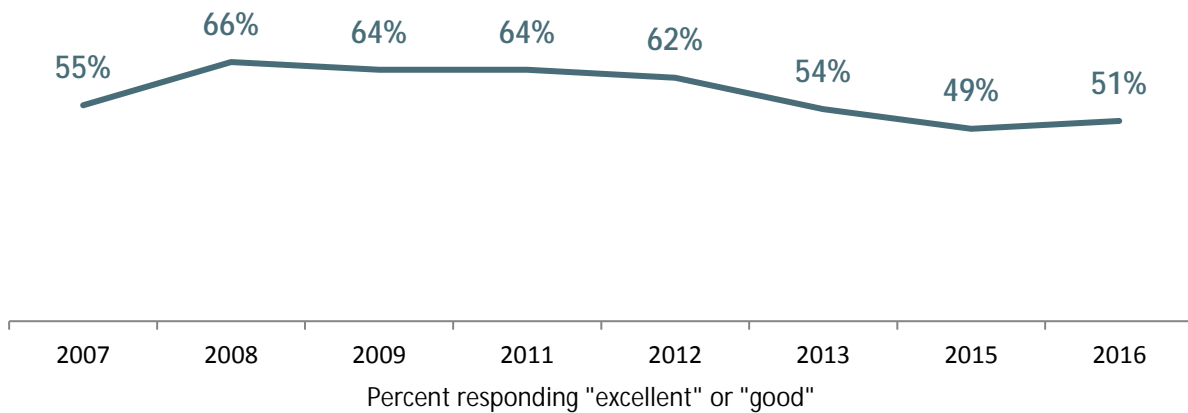


Figure 3: Percent of Respondents Noticing Improvements to Transportation System

The State has been working to make improvements to the transportation systems in the area. Have you noticed any improvements in the last year, such as new bus shelters, bike lanes, sidewalks or other alternatives?

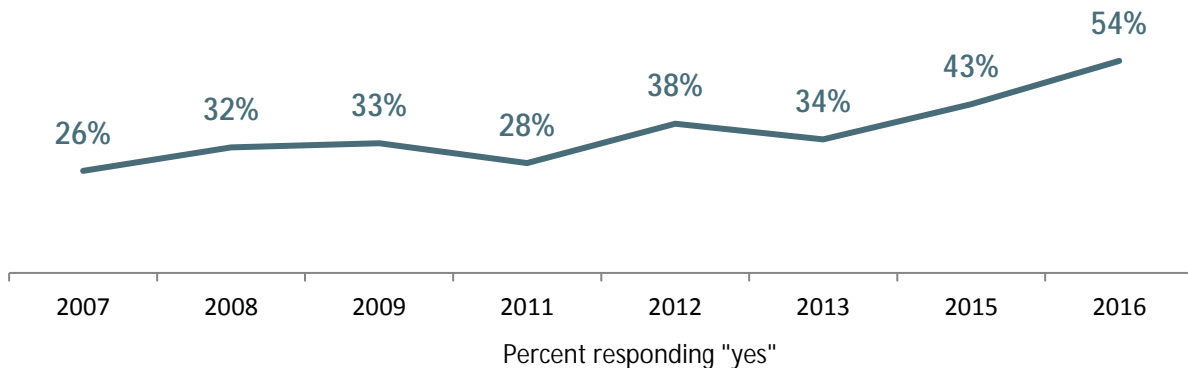
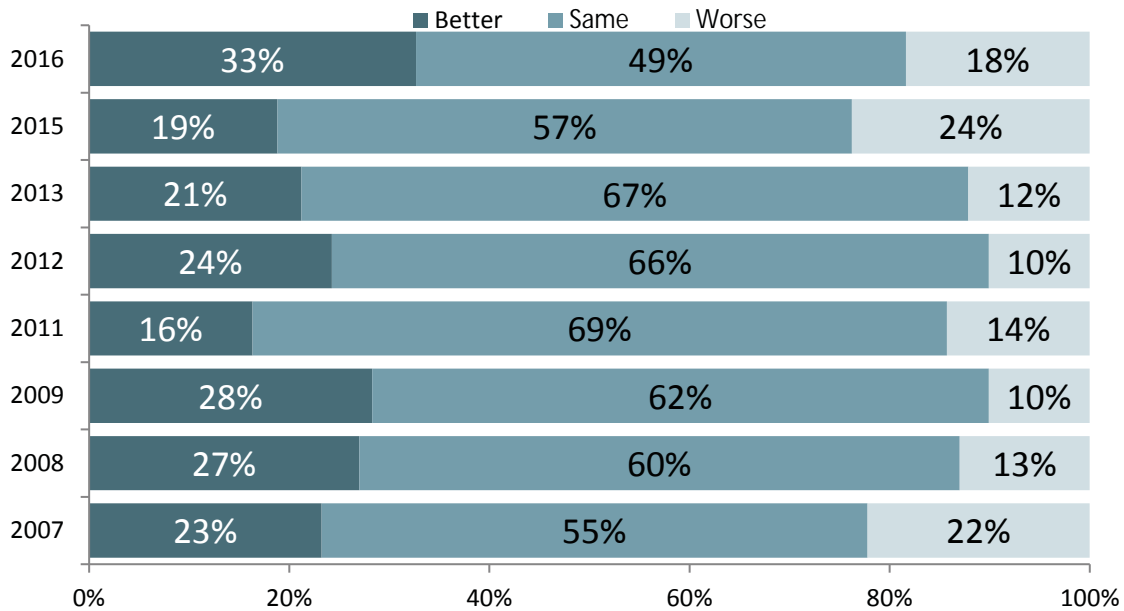


Figure 4: Ratings of the Condition of Roads and Highways
 In the past few years, would you say the condition of Cecil County's roads and highways has gotten better, worse or stayed the same?

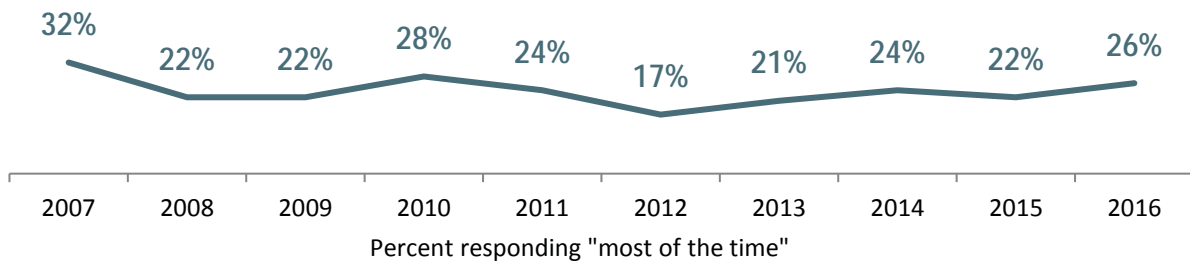


Perceptions of Congestion

Employed respondents were asked how often they experienced traffic congestion during their work commute. In 2016, about a quarter of employed respondents reported finding themselves in traffic congestion, the highest proportion since 2011, but not quite as high as the highest years of 2010 and 2007.

Figure 5: Ratings of Congestion During the Work Commute by Employed Respondents

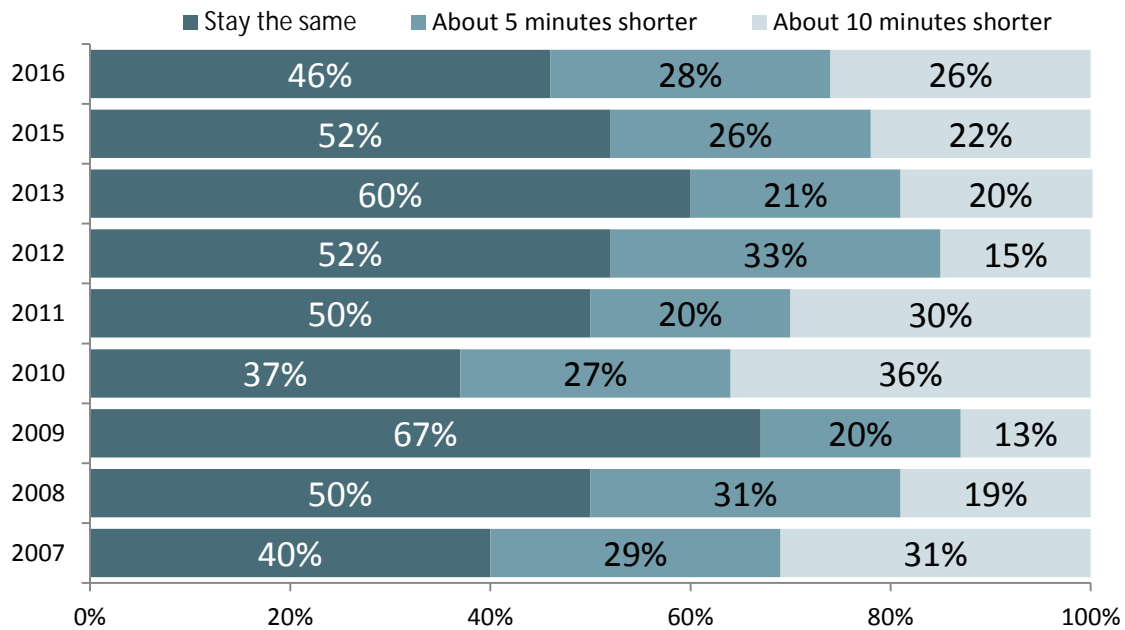
How often do you find yourself in traffic congestion when you go to work?



Note: The question wording varied from 2010 to 2011. In 2010, the question read, "In general, how often do you find yourself in traffic congestion when you go to work?"

Respondents were also asked two questions related to the lengths of their commutes: one asked the average length and the other asked how long their commute would be if there was no congestion. The responses between these questions were compared to gauge the perceived change in the length of the commute. In 2016, just under half of respondents (46%) indicated that their commute time would not change if there was no congestion, while about one-quarter thought their commute would be about 5 minutes shorter and another quarter thought it would be 10 minutes shorter. The perceived impact of congestion on the work commute has increased somewhat in the last three years (see Figure 6).

Figure 6: Perceived Change in Commute without Traffic Congestion*



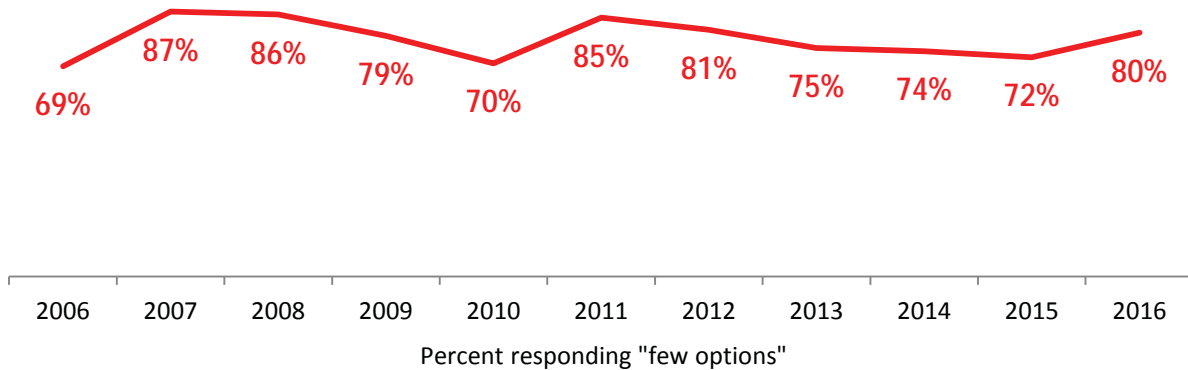
*Respondents were asked to provide the length of commute (on average and if there were no congestion) on a 10-point scale ranging from "less than 5 minutes" to "60 or more minutes" in 5- and 10-minute increments. Responses between the two questions were compared and if the difference between responses was at least two scale-points on the 10-point scale, the perceived change was coded as "about 10 minutes." If the difference was only one-scale point, the perceived change was coded as "about 5 minutes." If there was no difference, the response was coded as "stay the same."

Residents' Mode Choice

In general, Cecil County residents felt like they did not have a lot of transportation options; in 2016, 80% of respondents reported they had “few” options, an increase compared to the past three years (see Figure 7). As in past survey administrations, respondents’ assessment of the job the government has done improving accessibility to alternative modes of transportation was somewhat negative, with about 8 in 10 feeling that government agencies were doing a “fair” or “poor” job (see Figure 8).

Figure 7: Perceptions of Availability of Transportation Options

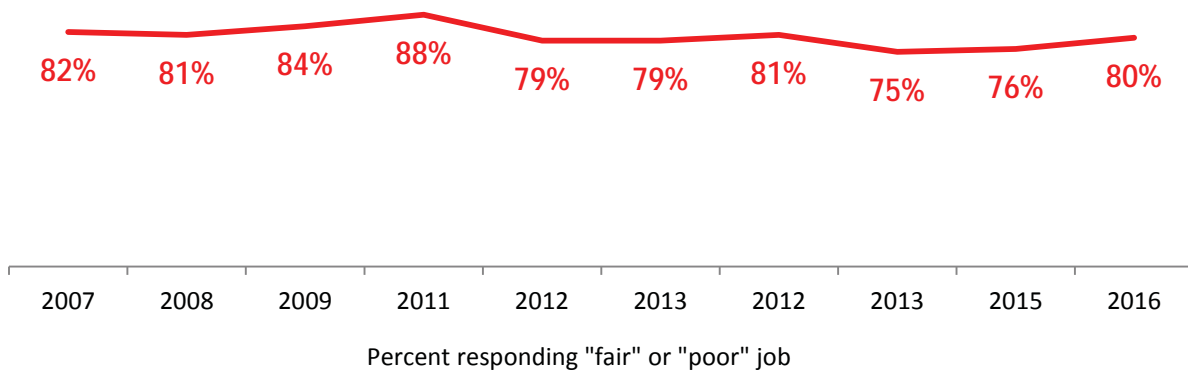
Would you say you have many different transportation alternatives to choose from or would you say you have few options to choose from?



Note: The question wording varied from 2010 to 2011. In 2010, the question read, “Would you say that you have many different means of travel to choose from or would you say that you have very few options to choose from?”

Figure 8: Ratings of Accessibility of Alternative Modes of Transportation

How would you rate the job government agencies have done at improving your accessibility to walking, biking, taking the bus or train, etc? Would you say they have done....



As in previous years, the majority of respondents reported they “always” or “usually” drove alone, a small decrease from 2015 and 2013 (see Figure 9). Overall, the trend since 2007 has seen a slight decline in dependence on drive alone trips. Among employed respondents, 83% reported that they usually drove alone for the work commute (see Figure 10), a small decline from previous years. Employed respondents were asked whether their type of employment permitted them to work out of their home. About 4 in 10 employed respondents reported being able to do so. Of those, 74% were able to telecommute from home and 12% were in a home-based business.

Figure 9: Respondents’ Single Occupancy Vehicle Use

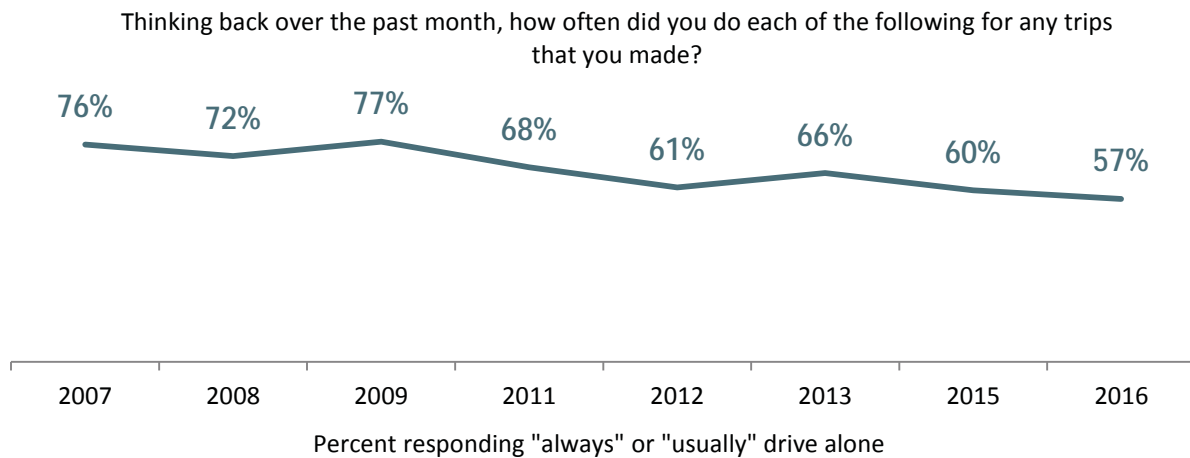
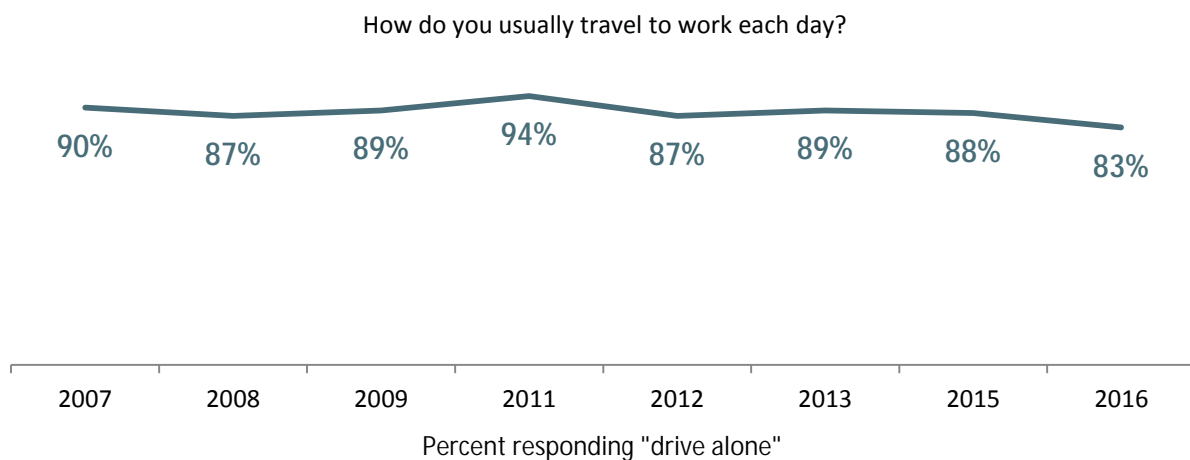


Figure 10: Respondents’ Single Occupancy Vehicle Use for the Work Commute

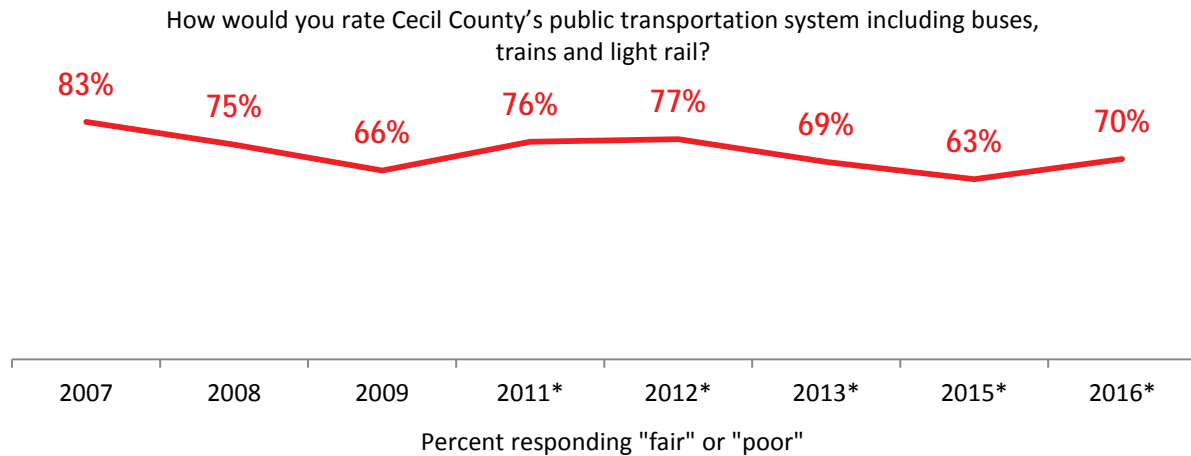


Respondents were asked whether they had used any public transportation in the last month. As in previous years, about 9 in 10 respondents said they had not used any mass transit in the last month; any particular bus or train had been used by 1% to 3% of respondents, as in recent years.

Ratings of Public Transportation (Mass Transit)

The proportion of respondents giving negative ratings to public transportation in Cecil County had been going down since surveying began. In 2015, 63% of respondents gave a “fair” or “poor” rating, continuing a decline started in 2013, but in 2016, 70% of respondents thought public transportation was fair or poor, returning to 2013 levels (see Figure 11).

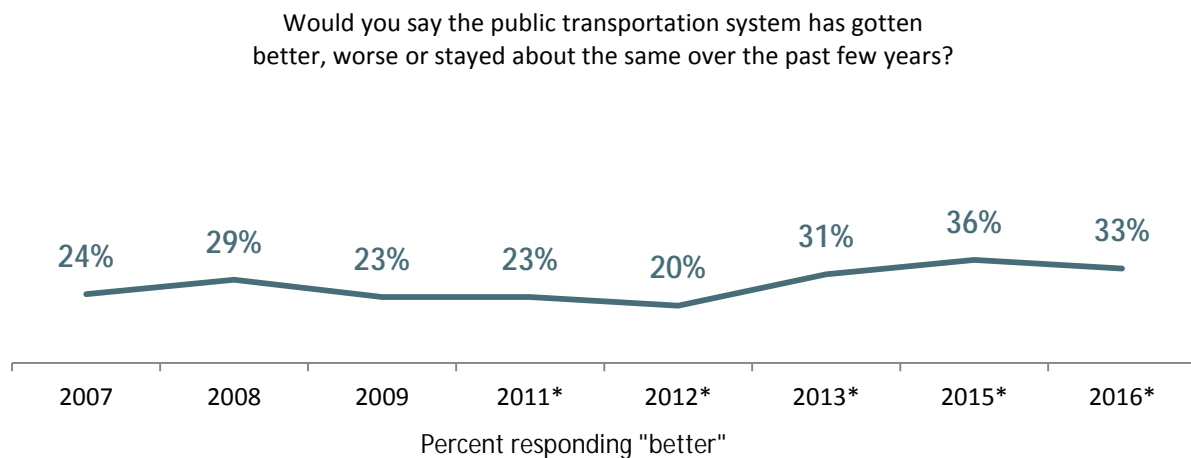
Figure 11: Ratings of Public Transportation in Cecil County



**Note: Starting in 2011, all respondents were asked to rate the public transportation system, while in previous years only those who had used it were asked to rate it.*

When asked whether the mass transit system had gotten better, gotten worse or stayed about the same over the past few years, the proportion of respondents in 2016 that thought it had deteriorated (9%) was slightly higher than in 2013 (4%); however a higher percent in 2015 thought it had improved (36%) compared to 2013 results (31%), which also represented an increase compared to previous years (see Figure 12).

Figure 12: Proportion of Respondents Feeling Transportation System in Cecil County Has Improved



**Note: Starting in 2011, all respondents were asked to rate the public transportation system, while in previous years only those who had used it were asked to rate it.*

Familiarity with WILMAPCO and Preferred Methods of Feedback and Communication

About 2 in 10 survey participants in 2016 said they were familiar with the organization called WILMAPCO. When asked how they would rate opportunities to participate in transportation planning, about 8 in 10 respondents considered their opportunities to be just “fair” or “poor” (see Figure 13). There was no clear consensus on the preferred way to communicate with planners. About a quarter of respondents most preferred using a website and another a quarter preferred public meetings. Surveys as a form of feedback were also preferred by nearly a quarter of respondents (see Figure 14).

Although the ratings of opportunities to participate in transportation planning were low, about 3 in 10 of those completing the survey said they were interested in receiving free newsletters or public meeting announcements from WILMAPCO regarding future transportation plans in their area.

Figure 13: Ratings of Opportunities to Participate in Transportation Planning by Year

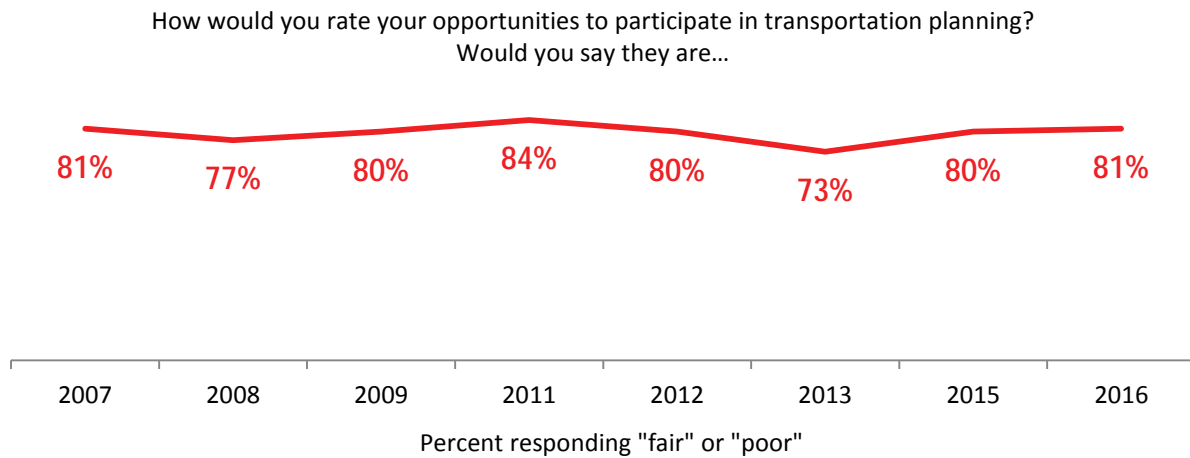


Figure 14: Respondents' Preferred Method for Providing Feedback to Planners by Year

In your opinion, what is the best way for you to provide feedback to planners on transportation issues related to Cecil County?

