

Fall 2010

Bennington College Community Transit Survey Report



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Bennington College

Fall 2010

Introduction & Methods:

In order to implement any changes to improve Bennington’s eco-friendliness, we first had to determine the baseline CO₂ emissions and current usage of public transit options. A survey was constructed, and put online so that it would be convenient for people to take and data could be easily collected.

The survey was written, then tested and edited and changed from paper form to an online version made through SurveyMonkey.com. In total, 156 students, 25 faculty, and 68 staff members took the survey, with a completion rate of 89.6%. Responses were elicited through email, through slips left in the mailboxes of staff, faculty, and students, through school-wide or group announcements, by sitting with computers in the downstairs of Commons, and a few other methods. As extra incentive to take the survey, a \$25 gift certificate to the College bookstore was offered to a random participant, one each in the student category and the staff/faculty category.

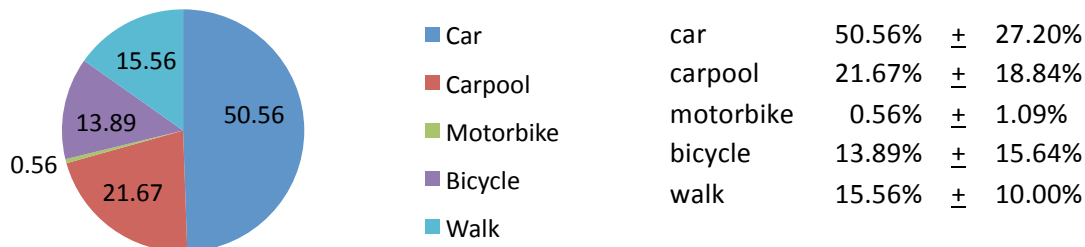
There were four sections to the survey, one which only students answered, one only staff answered, one only faculty answered, and one everyone answered. Responses were kept anonymous, and the contact information asked for at the end was only used for the purpose of giving out the prize.

Results & Discussion:

Students

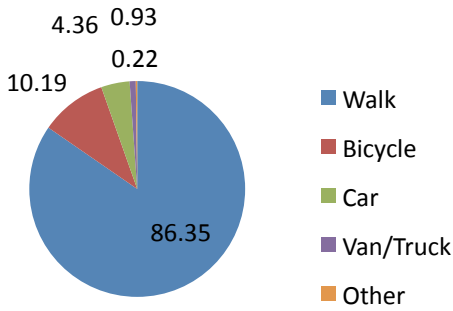
93.6% of students surveyed live on campus, **6.4%** live off campus.
Most common off-campus location listed: Welling Townhouse.

Commute method



* - Off-campus students only. Values indicate approximate % of cases individuals use each method over the year. Conservative margins of error in table to right.

Move around campus

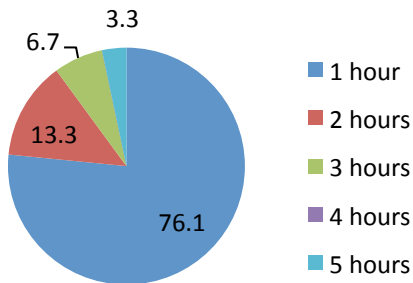


walk	86.3%	±	3.51%
bicycle	10.19%	±	3.44%
car	4.36%	±	2.00%
van/truck	0.93%	±	0.59%
other	0.22%	±	0.33%

68% of students do not own a car on campus.

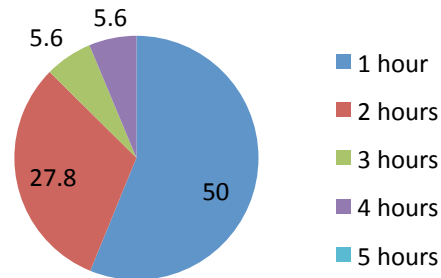
How many hours per week do you spend...

driving on campus for school-related matters?



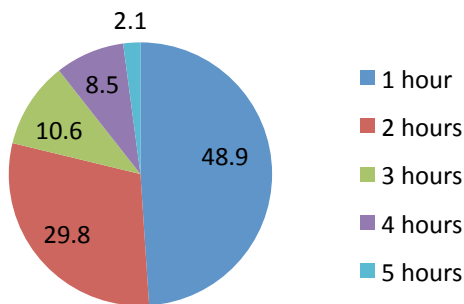
* - 21% of all students

driving off campus for school-related matters?



* - 12.1% of all students. Includes working as a van driver.

...driving on campus and around town for non-school-related matters?



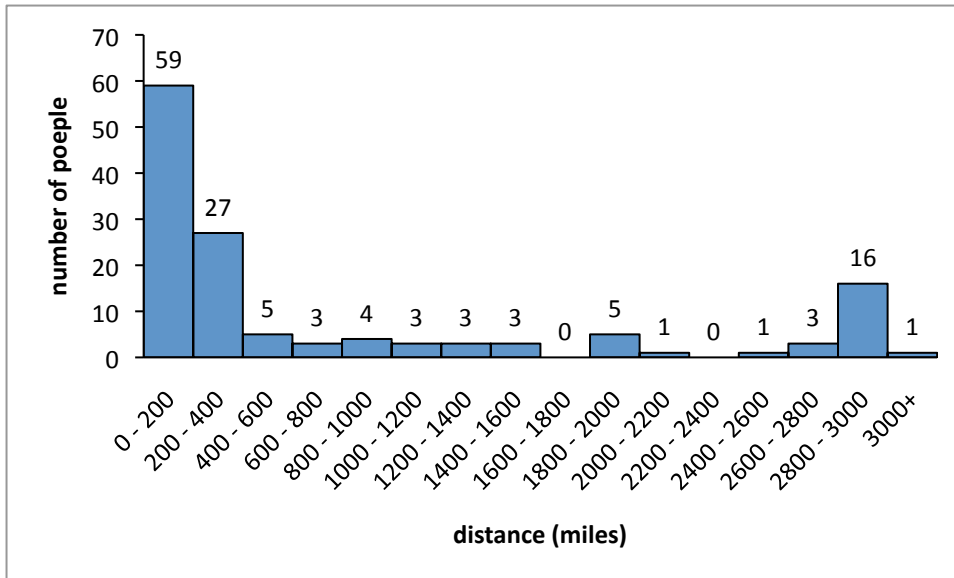
* - 94% of students who own a car on campus only —31.8% of the total student population.

Commuting to classes at neighboring colleges

Only **3.2%** said they do so. Commute on average **2.2 times a week**, median **twice**. Most travel by car, only 20% specified that they carpool.

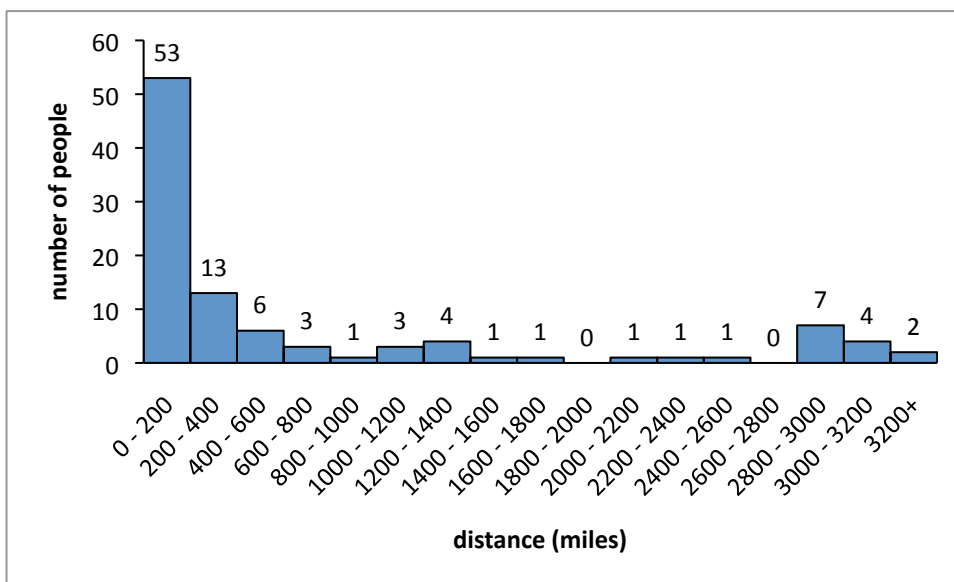
Traveling Home and to FWT

On average, students travel **785.2 miles** from their home to Bennington (not including international students). They take about **4 round trips** to and from home a year. **61%** travel by car at least part of the way, **35%** travel by airplane.

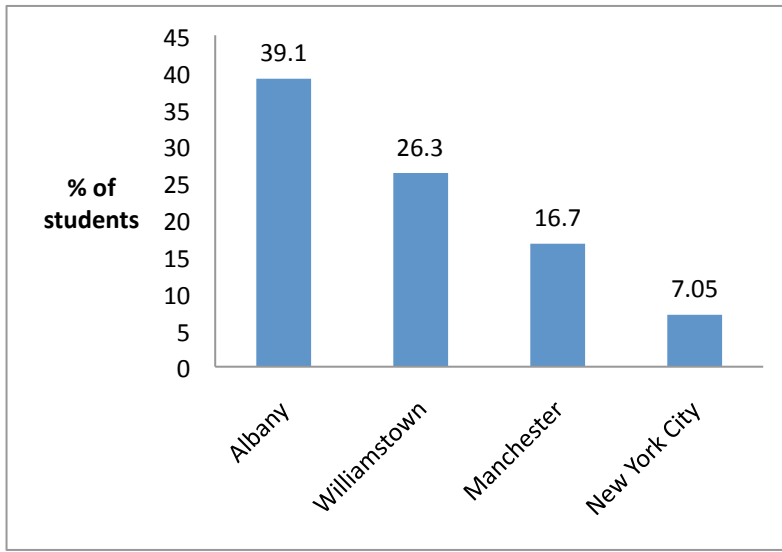


FWT

Average distance traveled to FWT location is **717.9 miles**, not including overseas FWTs. Average number of round trips is **6.12**.



Travel in Greater Bennington Area



Most popular locations specified included **Albany**, **Manchester**, and **Williamstown**, as well as **New York City**. Of those that said where and how they went, **70.7%** travel by car, **15.4%** carpool or get a ride from a friend, and **15.4%** take the shuttle. Average number of round trips per year is **5.9** to any of these locations.

Studying Abroad

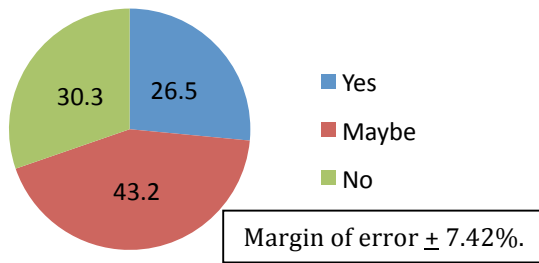
Only **11.2%** of students have studied abroad, the majority of those in the UK or Europe. **82.4%** of those did so for only one term. Median number of round trips is **1**, average **1.06**.

Bike Share

Recently Bennington has begun a "bike share" program, where bicycles are available for check-out from the Crossett Library.

About **82.3%** have not used the bike share, and only **17.4%** have.

Will you use the Bike Share in the future?

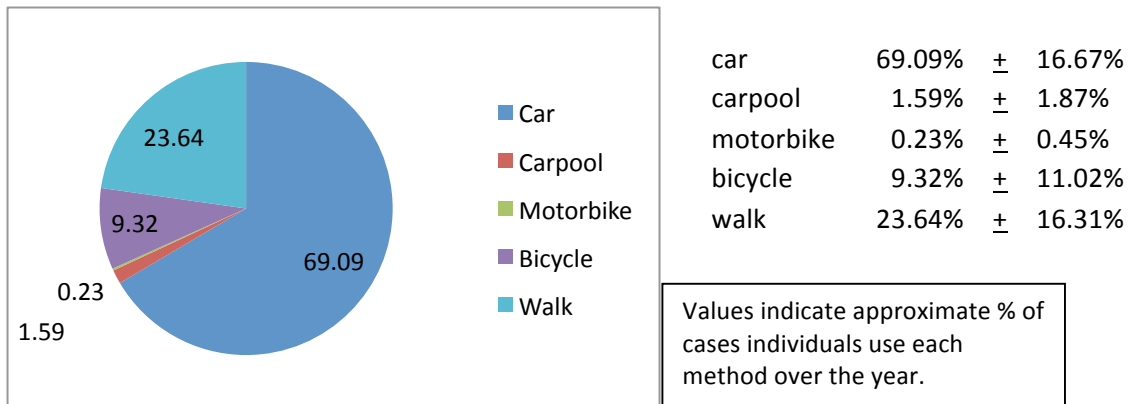


The most common reason cited for not using the bike share was because students already owned their own bikes, because the weather did not permit it, lack of knowledge about the bike share, or simply because they do not like biking or prefer to walk. Those that do use the bike share are overall satisfied, and appreciate how nice the shared bikes are. Suggestions for improvement include increasing the check-out hours, being able to have the bikes out for longer, possibly overnight or for more than one day, and having multiple check-out locations, such as one at the Jennings library.

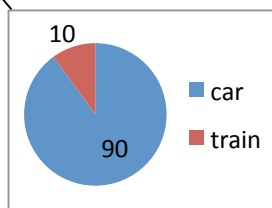
Faculty

60% of faculty members commute to campus **5 days a week** (average **4.45**).

Commute method

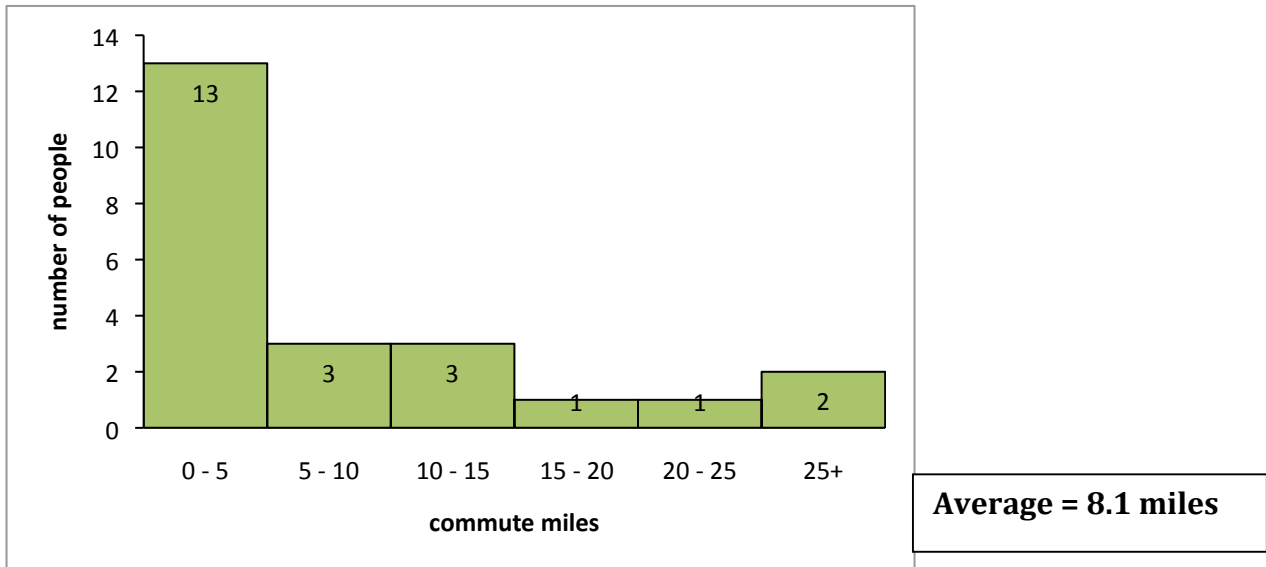


From second residence:



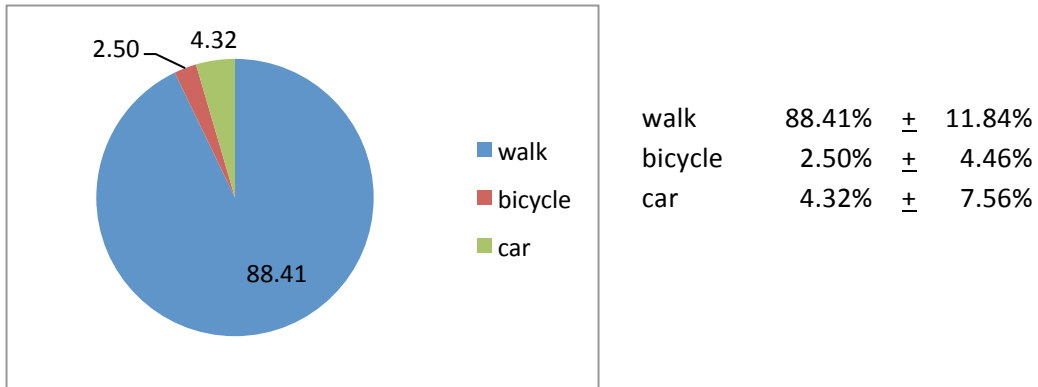
Margin of error = $\pm 12.0\%$. Only 18.2% of those surveyed answered this; most do not commute directly from second residence to work.

Commute Distance (Residence 1)



The average distance from Bennington College of faculty members' second residences is **147.5 miles** (not including the one in Paris, France). The majority (**2/3**) of these are in **New York City**.

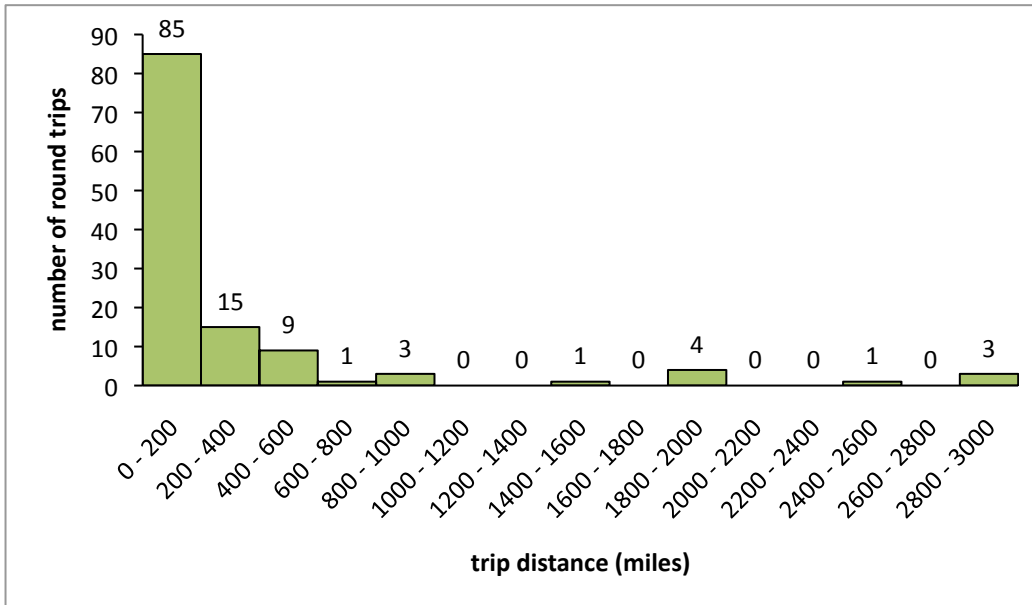
Move around campus



Faculty do not work on campus on average **15.2 weeks a year**.

Travel for work

66.7% of faculty travel for work. Of those that do, the average distance is **989.9 miles**, median **332 miles**. **New York City** is the most common destination.

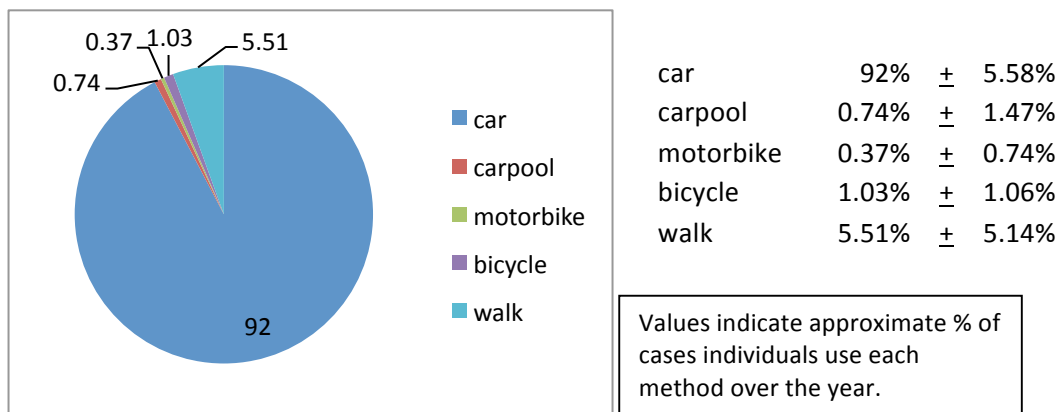


62.5% of faculty surveyed invite guests to visit for work purposes. These guests traveled on average **425.4 miles** to come to Bennington. **66.7%** of guests use cars as their primary mode of transportation, **12.5%** travel by train, and **20.8%** travel by plane. **29.2%** use cars as their secondary form of transportation.

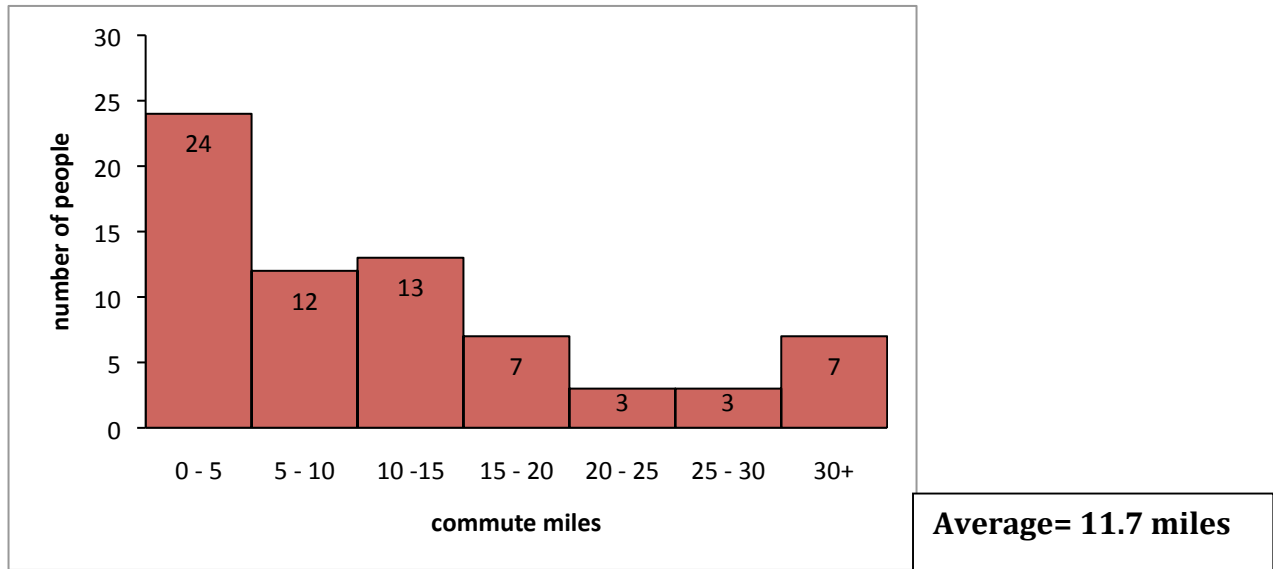
Staff

86.4% of staff members commute to campus about **5 days a week** (average **4.81**)

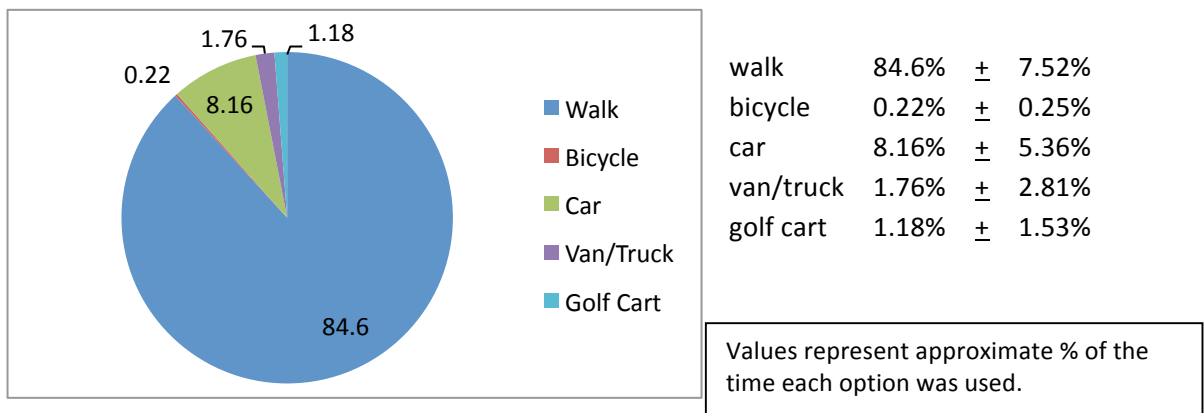
Commute method



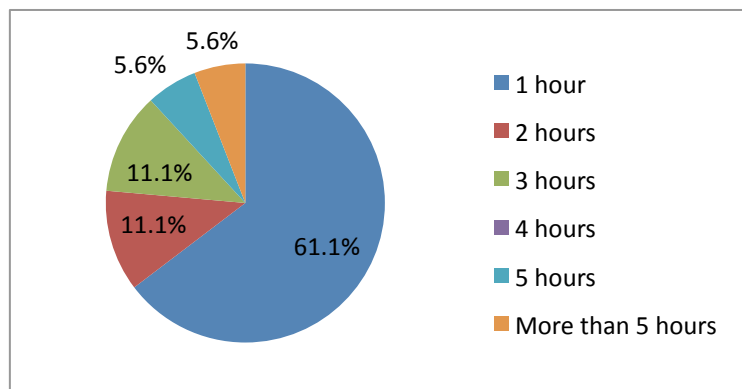
Commute distance

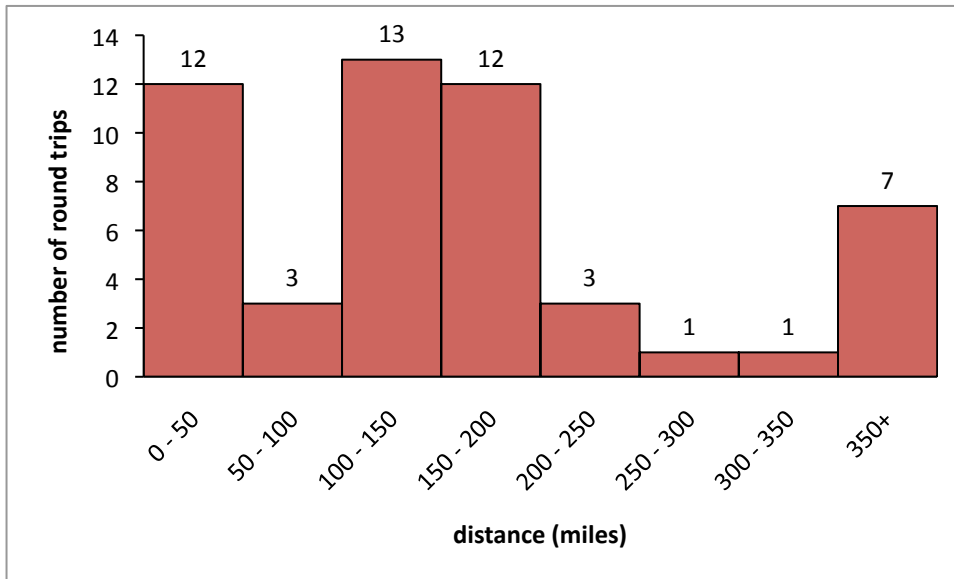


Move around campus



Time per week spent driving around on campus or around town for school-related matters (out of the 26.5% who do so)





78.5% do not travel as part of their job. Of those that do, the median distance is about **162 miles**. About **77%** go by car at least part of the way, about **27%** by plane, and about **8%** by train. Median number of round trips is **1**.

Staff do not work on campus on average **6.1 weeks a year**.

ALL

Carpool to Campus for school or work

	Faculty	Staff	Students	Students Off-Campus	ALL
Yes	14.3%	6.2%	6.3%	83.3%	7.0%
No	85.7%	93.8%	93.7%	16.7%	93.0%
MOE	21.4%	12.2%	8.2%	40.0%	6.5%

93% ($\pm 6.5\%$) of all people surveyed do not carpool to campus. Part of this can be contributed to students who live on campus and therefore do not need to carpool to campus (97% of those answered no to this question). 83.3% of students living off campus carpool. But 92% of staff and faculty, the majority of whom live off campus, do not carpool.

Main reasons why people do not carpool include scheduling issues, that there is no one nearby to carpool with or who works the same hours on campus, having other obligations such as picking up or dropping off family members, wanting to only run quick errands, and overall needing the flexibility that comes with having one's own car.

Carpool Around Town for non-school/-work related matters

	Faculty	Staff	Students	Students Without Cars	ALL
Yes	18.2%	13.8%	75.7%	78.0%	52.8%
No	81.8%	86.2%	24.3%	22.0%	47.2%
MOE	20.9%	12.2%	8.2%	9.8%	6.4%

About 60% carpool into town once or twice a week, 23% three times or more, and 17% less than once a week.

Have you used the Green Mountain Express bus?

	Faculty	Staff	Students	Students Without Cars	ALL
Yes	0.0%	1.6%	22.1%	30.7%	14.5%
No	100.0%	98.4%	77.9%	69.3%	85.5%
MOE	21.4%	12.5%	8.1%	9.8%	6.5%

Reasons why not include that it is unreliable and they have had to wait too long or don't think it would get them back in time for class/before the end of their lunch break, the schedule and stops are inconvenient, and also just that they have *heard* from other people that it is inconvenient, which discourages them from using it. Many people feel it is more time efficient to use their own car, have a friend with a car drive them, or borrow a friend's car. Some people also said they do not know what it costs. (It's free for students once you get the sticker on your ID from Campus Safety, only 50 cents otherwise.) People are unfamiliar with its schedule or feel it is overly complicated. People prefer the van, saying they can't go to multiple places with the bus. People who live off campus say there are no stops near their home. However, a few have used it and liked it, and have used it to go to places in town or places farther away that the van does not go to, such as Brattleboro or Manchester.

Would you participate in a car share program like Zip-Car on campus?

	Faculty	Staff	Students	Students Without Cars	ALL
Yes	28.6%	25.4%	50.3%	60.6%	41.7%
No	71.4%	74.6%	49.7%	39.4%	58.3%
MOE	21.4%	12.8%	8.2%	9.8%	6.6%

Many expressed strong interest in the program, but many were also unfamiliar with it and would like to learn more about it first. The main concerns were about the cost of the program, and if the scheduling for it would be convenient and organized. Many said that they use their car to go on longer trips or to their homes farther away, and a car share program would not allow them to do this. Many felt that people who do not have cars on campus would use it. Looking only at students who do not have cars on campus, about 61% of them said they would use Zip-Car, and they were the ones who responded most enthusiastically in the comment section to the idea.

Use of bus/train station/airport in Albany

	Faculty	Staff	Students	Students Without Cars	ALL
Yes	100.0%	74.2%	64.3%	75.8%	70.4%
No	0.0%	25.8%	35.7%	24.2%	29.6%
MOE	21.3%	12.5%	8.2%	9.9%	6.5%

For...

	Faculty	Staff	Students	ALL
school-related and non-school related matters	71.4%	23.8%	40.2%	9.7%
non-school related matters only	9.5%	59.5%	55.4%	50.3%
school-related matters only	19.0%	16.7%	4.3%	40.0%
MOE	20.2%	14.3%	9.6%	7.4%

Of those that do, 54.7% traveled by car, 25.79% by carpool, and 15.72% using the campus shuttle service.

Campus van/shuttle

	Faculty	Staff	Students	Students Without Cars	ALL
Yes	0.0%	4.8%	60.4%	78.0%	39.6%
No	100.0%	95.2%	39.6%	22.0%	60.4%
MOE	21.3%	12.5%	8.2%	9.8%	6.5%

People that do say they do not use it that often, ranging from once or twice a week to only once a week or once a term. Usually they go into downtown Bennington, especially Hannaford's and CVS. A few people also use it to go to religious services.

How important is it to have a car on campus?

	Faculty	Staff	Students	Students With Cars	Students Without Cars	ALL
Very Important	63.6%	52.4%	28.5%	50.0%	19.0%	38.4%
Somewhat Important	13.6%	27.0%	46.5%	36.4%	51.0%	38.0%
Not Important	22.7%	20.6%	25.0%	13.6%	30.0%	23.6%
MOE	20.7%	11.6%	7.7%	13.9%	9.2%	6.1%

General suggestions:

Requests were made for more buses or trains to popular locations, including Albany (especially the airport), Boston, New York City, Williamstown and Manchester. Obviously Bennington College is not capable of creating train routes, but it could be made more convenient to reach locations where there are train and buses. There are bus options, especially to Albany, that are not known about that could be used. Especially considering the large number of faculty and staff members who travel for work-related reasons using the airport and bus/train station in Albany, more shuttles specifically for that group should be available, perhaps offering “home drop-offs” if possible to encourage usage.

Other comments were to have more regular bus or shuttle service to popular locations in town (Hannaford’s), and more reliable bus and shuttle service so that it does not take so long to get back and forth. Many people also requested more van hours, finding it more reliable than the Green Mountain Express bus. Another good idea suggested by students was to have a “shopping day” in which at a certain time, perhaps on Saturdays, the van would go to a certain shopping location (Hannaford’s, Price Chopper, CVS).

General conclusions:

- More info about options that already exist.
- Improving already existing options, or starting new ones.
- Encouraging carpooling, especially amongst staff and faculty.

The survey itself could be improved in many ways. The title was misleading; many assumed it was only about usage of public transit and because they “had a car” they did not need to take it. Many felt that they would be judged by their responses, faculty members especially. Only 36% of faculty who took the survey gave their name on the end, compared to about 59% of staff and 76% of students. The contact information was not a necessary aspect of the survey, and was only used to enter participants in the random prize drawing, and it could just be that faculty were less interested in the gift certificate and therefore less likely to provide this information. But it also could be that they, or members of other groups, felt that the survey was judging them against a very high standard, and if they did not live up to it they would be a “bad person” (I witnessed this personally on several occasions while getting people to take the survey). This may even have discouraged people

from taking the survey at all. Environmental issues are well-known about in today's world but many people may feel helpless against what seems to be an overwhelming problem, or not know specifically how to change. They feel the guilt of being "non-green," which only further discourages them to take action. If this survey were to be improved upon and repeated, greater emphasis should be made on the anonymity of the survey and the fact that the results will be used not to tell people how bad they are being but to through easy

One major issue is that not having participants choose 0% on the transportation options they did not use (i.e. on questions about commute methods) altered the averages calculated by SurveyMonkey, as non-responses were not counted as zero values. (Meaning if one did not bicycle to work, and one selected nothing in that row, the average % of the time people commuted by bike would be calculated using only the people who did select in that row, making the average appear larger than it was, and the values not equal 100%.) This was easily fixed by the survey analyst, but next time respondents should be instructed to select 0% if they do not use an option instead of leaving it blank on those types of questions.

The language of the questions could also be made to be more user-friendly. People will misread things no matter what (e.g. understanding the suggestion of Zip-Car program "on campus" to mean one in which cars are only used on the campus itself), but some clarification on certain items would greatly aid in gaining better survey responses.

- **The definition of carpool.** Put early on in the survey: 2 people or more.
- **Van vs. shuttle.** There was some confusion over whether the "Do you use the campus shuttle?" question meant the college van service, which is used mainly by students to get rides into town or North Bennington, or the campus shuttle, which regularly goes to Williams College or Albany. The Albany service costs money and requires signing up for.
- More confusing terms such as "**Point of departure**" being changed to "Where did you leave from?", etc.

Some items were also not covered by the survey but bear importance. Students travel the farthest initially to get the college, but once they are there they have a lesser impact, as the vast majority live on campus and thus do not commute every day. Additionally, many faculty and staff also live on campus, which was not fully addressed by the survey. Also notable is the extent that students without cars are using the services of other students with cars. Some students may be driving back and forth from Albany quite often to take other students where they need to go, as opposed to for their own purposes, which was not fully covered by the survey.

Transit Initiatives: Taking the Lead from Other Schools

Colleges and universities have implemented a variety of strategies to reduce the impact of campus transportation. Many institute parking fees and/or parking bans for freshmen, all residents, or other groups as a way to reduce impacts on parking resources, congestion, and carbon emissions (see: <http://www.aashe.org/resources/campus-car-bans>). Other programs that encourage carpooling or alternative transport are gaining in

popularity—programs like ZipCar car sharing, rideshare programs and incentives, and bike sharing.

Car Share Programs

One of the most popular programs to implement to reduce the number of student vehicles is car sharing. Many companies have developed car-sharing services for colleges and universities, including ZipCar, Enterprise, and Hertz.

Setting these up appears to be easier and cheaper than one would assume. As an example, with ZipCar, cars are provided and campus community members can subscribe for their own ZipCar account. In addition, ZipCar handles all gas, insurance, and account management. The college provides administrative support for the program, parking, and works with ZipCar to promote the program. Many car-sharing programs are limited to drivers 21+, although some have special programs for colleges that are limited to drivers 18+.

These programs often involve a yearly membership fee (\$35-100) and a per-use fee (~\$8/hour, \$65/day). For each trip, members are allotted 180 miles, and a mileage fee is assessed at \$0.45/mile past the initial 180. Reservations that exceed 24 hours, 20 additional miles are allotted per additional hour (up to a maximum of 180/day)

<http://www.zipcar.com/universities/how/>

ZipCar operates at a variety of academic institutions, including many small colleges, such as Pomona College, Swarthmore, Cooper Union, Hampshire College, and Green Mountain College.

Carpooling/Ridesharing

A variety of programs to encourage and promote carpooling have proliferated among various schools. Very common are dedicated parking spots in desired locations for carpoolers, as well as free or discounted parking permits or passes.

A growing trend at some schools, such as UC Santa Barbara, Northwestern, and UNC Chapel Hill, is to provide “Emergency Ride Back” services to registered carpoolers. The goal of these programs is to provide transportation when travel is required outside of normal carpool (i.e. sick child, overtime, broken pipes, etc), thus removing one of the major obstacles to faculty and staff carpooling. Northwestern indicates that in about a year since policy has been in place (providing cab/bus fare), it has only been requested once. UC Santa Barbara’s program a six-time limit on use of the program and allows the use of a UC vehicle. UNC offers van service ERB to members of the commuting alternatives network.

Many schools have set up or linked to online rideshare sites and maps (including Carleton College, Arizona State, Dartmouth College, and Evergreen State) to facilitate carpooling within their communities. ZimRide, a social network for ridesharing, is gaining traction at many schools as well, including Stanford, UCLA, University of Michigan, Cornell, University of Wisconsin. The network, which can be utilized through Facebook, is operated

through licensed software and is built specifically for your institution's use with email-verified sign-up. ZimRide does not require an investment of staff time, can be integrated with other initiatives, and included in the annual license fee is marketing and promotional support.

<http://www.zimride.com/rideshare/university>

Vanpooling is another growing trend—University of Wisconsin, UCSB, NC State, Evergreen State, and Emory University have all instituted vanpooling programs, among many others. The following is Wisconsin's program description, representative of many others:

“Vanpools are groups of 7 to 15 commuters sharing their ride to work in a passenger van that is owned, insured and serviced by the Wisconsin State Vanpool Program. Passengers share the cost of operating the van by paying a fare based on fixed and variable costs, the number of riders, and the number of miles driven.”

Bicycling

Bike sharing is a popular program for schools to institute to promote alternative transportation, and has been instituted at Bennington College as of Fall 2010. Since this program is already in place, these programs will not be discussed here.

To encourage bicycle use, some schools provide (or sponsor clubs that provide) training workshops on bicycle repair, maintenance, and commuting (Humboldt State), or sponsor Bike to Work Week/Day events (UC Boulder). Some schools (Naropa College) additionally allow visitors/alumni utilize bike-share bicycles for a daily fee.

Flex Time/Tele Work/Videoconferencing

By reducing the number of days faculty and staff work on campus, or by instituting flexible scheduling to allow for mass transit, institutions can create a significant impact on the number of individual car trips to campus. Some schools, such as Pomona College and Sacramento State, are paying increasing attention to videoconference capabilities to reduce travel necessary for meetings, interviews, etc.

NC State, Duke, Pomona College, Brown, and Case Western Reserve have formal telecommuting policies with various degrees of flexibility and rules.

NC State's policy:

“Flex time: “With their supervisor's approval, some employees may work a flexible schedule. Adjusting your schedule by just a one-half hour may enable you to carpool or vanpool; or working four 10-hour days a week could save you one day per week on the road.”

“Telework: “With supervisor's approval duties of some positions can be performed offsite and employees are able to arrange to work from home or another offsite location. Discuss telecommuting options with your supervisor. For example, some people telecommute once a month while others may telecommute once a week. Note that telecommuting

arrangements must be formalized with written agreements and approved by Human Resources.”

No-Idling policies

In addition to encourage reduced car use on campus, several schools have instituted policies to minimize pollution and carbon emissions by discouraging idling vehicles on campus. Idling cars and trucks emit air pollutants including nitrogen oxides, sulfur dioxide, volatile organic compounds, carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, and particulate matter. Exhaust from idling vehicles can accumulate and pose a health risk to employees, drivers, and the community at large. Exhaust also exacerbates asthma and existing allergies, and long-term exposure is thought to increase the risk of lung cancer (<http://www.nrdc.org/enterprise/greeningadvisor/ta-idling.asp>). Bard College, Brandeis, Washington University, and Dalhousie University have all utilized no-idling policies.

Examples:

Brandeis: States that "Facility Services' vehicles shall not sit idling for longer than 5 minutes except in the case of snow removal operations."

UNC Greensboro: Requires that operators of any university vehicle "Minimize Idling time. Do not allow university vehicle and equipment to idle for any length of time unless necessary to accomplish work related tasks...."

Dalhousie: States that: Vehicles shall never be left idling when unattended. Engine warm up periods should not exceed one (1) minute (provided air pressure for air brake systems are fully charged and all safety provisions are in place). Light –duty vehicles (passenger size) should be shut down whenever idling periods are expected to exceed one (1) minute. Heavy-duty vehicles (such as buses and cargo trucks) should be shut down whenever idling periods are expected to exceed (3) three minutes, with exceptions explained further in their Anti-Idling Policy document Word file).