



Dial-A-Lift Customer Survey 2011

Executive Summary

Survey conducted and report prepared by
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Introduction

Dial-A-Lift is a door-to-door, shared-ride public transportation service for people with disabilities that prevent them from using regular bus service. Intercity Transit offers Dial-A-Lift service where and when regular fixed-route buses operate.

This report provides an objective evaluation of Intercity Transit's paratransit service through professionally administered market research in the form of rider surveys and client database analysis. The objectives of this research were to:

- Gather satisfaction ratings from clients;
- Identify potential service improvement areas;
- Better understand who uses Dial-A-Lift and how they use the service; and
- Establish baseline performance data for future comparisons.

The Dial-A-Lift survey took place from July 7-July 18, 2011, with a pre-test questionnaire conducted July 1, 2011. The survey method was chosen to provide unbiased, statistically valid data, collected by Corey, Canapary & Galanis, an independent research company. Key characteristics of the survey are:

- Random sample of 450 riders, segmented by ridership:
 - 375 frequent riders (who had ridden on Dial-A-Lift during the survey period)
 - 50 infrequent riders (who had not ridden during the past month, but had ridden Dial-A-Lift within the past year)
 - 25 non-riders (who had signed up and been certified for Dial-A-Lift but had never used the service)
- Most frequent riders had used the service within the previous two days.
- Survey was administered on the telephone by professional researchers.
- Questions elicited both objective information and subjective rider assessments.
- The survey was formulated in order to be a benchmark, so that future surveys can track rise/fall in satisfaction and ridership demographics.

For ease of understanding, the responses to some questions have been translated to scaled numeric scores. For example, in reporting on such questions as *Question 1* where respondents rated their feelings about the service as very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied, the responses were assigned the numbers of 4 to 1, respectively. Then the numeric scores for all the responses were added up and divided by the number of respondents, to compute an average score. Similarly, on questions where respondents rated service characteristics as excellent, good, only fair, or poor, the responses were assigned the numbers of 4 to 1, respectively, then averaged.

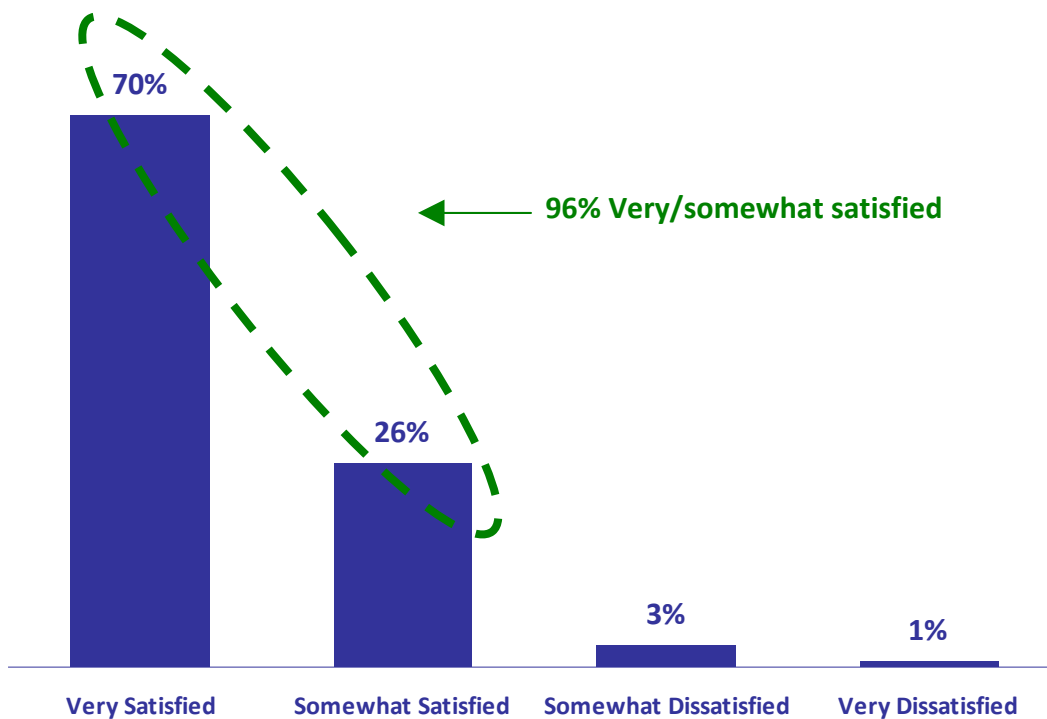
More details about the survey are included in the Technical Memorandum in the Appendix. The Appendix also includes the questionnaire used by the telephone surveyors, and the raw numbers of responses for each question are shown on the questionnaire. The questions asked on the survey were developed by Intercity Transit's Dial-A-Lift and Marketing & Communications staff, and members of the Corey, Canapary & Galanis research team.

In addition to the customer survey, a database analysis was also conducted. Reported in a separate section, this analysis discusses all riders in the Dial-A-Lift system as of July 13, 2011. This was done during the survey period so any analysis was contemporary to the customer survey (and the same general pool of customers was analyzed).

Executive Summary

Overall Satisfaction and Satisfaction/Rating Trends

- Riders are very satisfied with Dial-A-Lift overall. On a scale of “Very satisfied” (4) to “Very dissatisfied” (1), 96% of riders saying they were either “Very satisfied” (4) or “Somewhat satisfied” (3). This is a very high satisfaction rating.



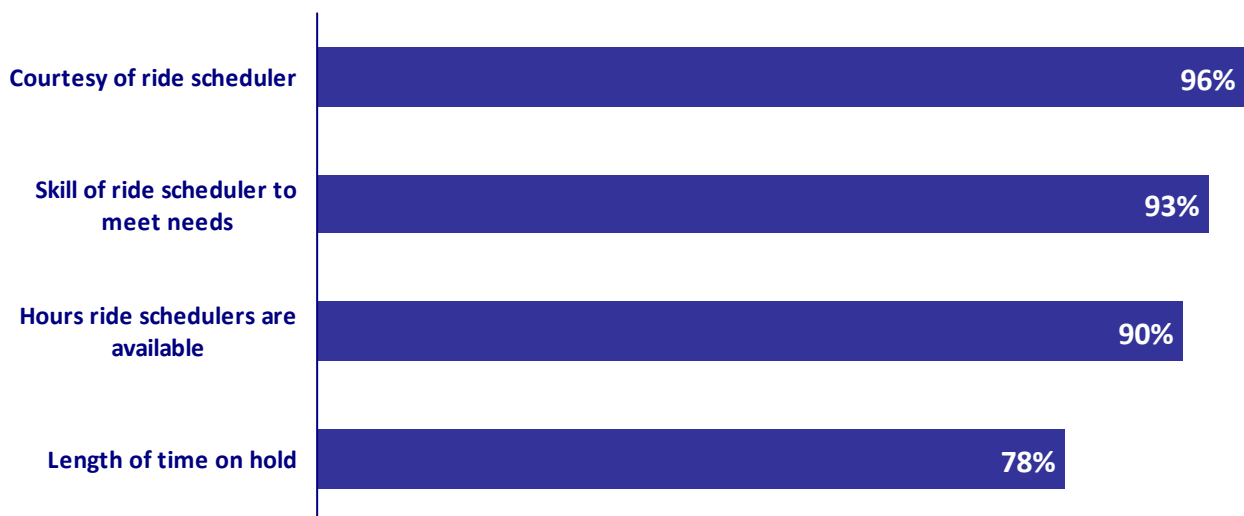
- Infrequent riders tended to be even more satisfied, with 98% saying they are very or somewhat satisfied (compared to 96% of frequent riders who are very or somewhat satisfied). A slightly higher satisfaction rating among infrequent riders is generally not unusual in transportation studies, generally speaking, as those riding more often are more likely to see imperfections than those who ride only occasionally.
- Those with a developmental/cognitive disability as their primary impairment tended to be somewhat less satisfied with Dial-A-Lift than other respondents. However, even among this group, 94% indicated they are very or somewhat satisfied.

On successive questions, including reservations, customer service, and the surveyed trip, riders were asked to use a 4-point scale, rating whether the trip or some part of the trip was “Excellent” (4) to “Poor” (1).

Making A Reservation

- Over the past month, 70% of respondents said they had called to make a reservation. As may be expected, frequent riders were more likely to have done so (75%) than infrequent riders (34%).

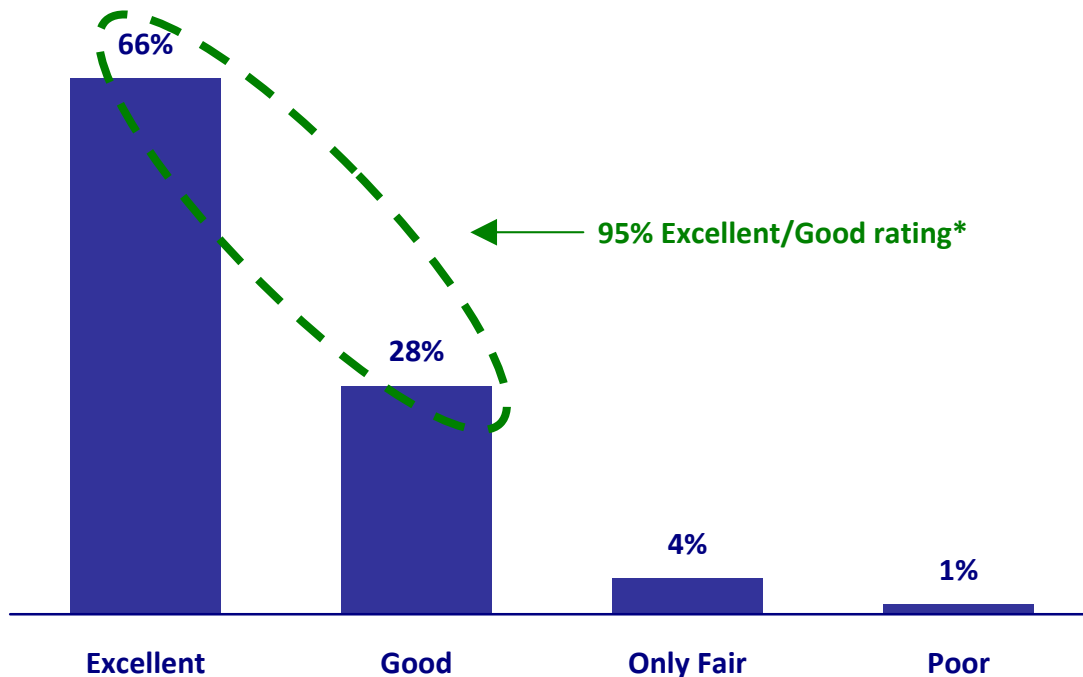
Percent rating attribute “Excellent” or “Good”



- Callers were most satisfied with attributes directly tied to DAL personnel. Notably, 96% of riders rated ride scheduler courtesy as excellent/good, and 93% said the ride scheduler’s skill in working to meet their reservation needs was excellent/good.
- Riders were somewhat less satisfied with the length of time on hold and scheduler availability. Only 78% of riders said the length of time on hold was excellent/good, although 90% said ride scheduler availability was excellent/good. (Note however, some technical difficulties with the phone system during the survey period, which increased the time on hold, may have contributed to this somewhat lower excellent/good percentage.)

Surveyed Trip

- Riders were generally positive about the surveyed trip, with 95% saying the surveyed trip was excellent/good.

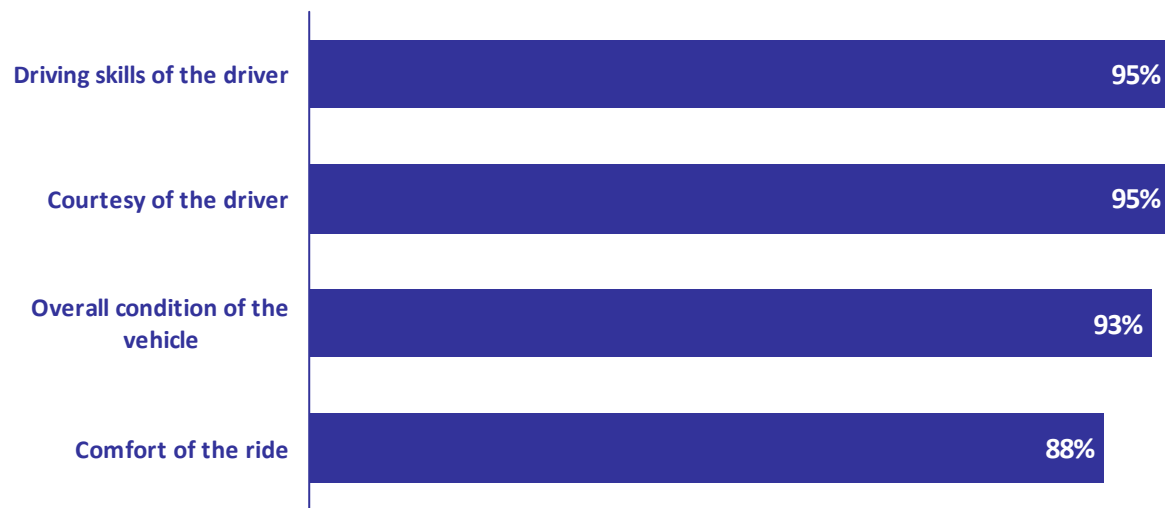


***Due to rounding total Excellent/Good (66.3% and 28.2%, respectively) would be 94.5%**

- Those with a frailty/energy impairment as their primary disability rated overall trip satisfaction highest, with 98% saying the surveyed trip was excellent/good. Those with a primary impairment of a developmental/cognitive nature rated overall trip satisfaction lowest, although 88% of these riders still rated the surveyed trip as excellent/good.
- Almost all riders indicated that drivers picked them up on time and followed protocols.
 - Among those taking the surveyed trip, 89% said the driver arrived within the time window allotted (on time).
 - While about two-thirds (66%) said the driver got out of the vehicle and announced himself/herself at the door, most of those who said the driver did not do so (92%) indicated they were waiting outside or at the curb when the driver arrived.
 - While 45% of respondents said they needed help on at least some portion of the trip, almost all riders who indicated they needed help (98%) said the driver did help them.

- While trip-related ratings were all relatively high, riders tended to be most positive when asked about driver conduct/skills and less positive when asked about their comfort or seat belt conditions. Respondents were very positive about driver-related attributes, with 95% saying the courtesy of the driver and 91% saying the driving skills of the driver were excellent/good. By comparison, 88% of riders said the comfort of the ride, as well as the condition and ease of use of seat belts, was excellent or good.

Percent rating attribute “Excellent” or “Good”

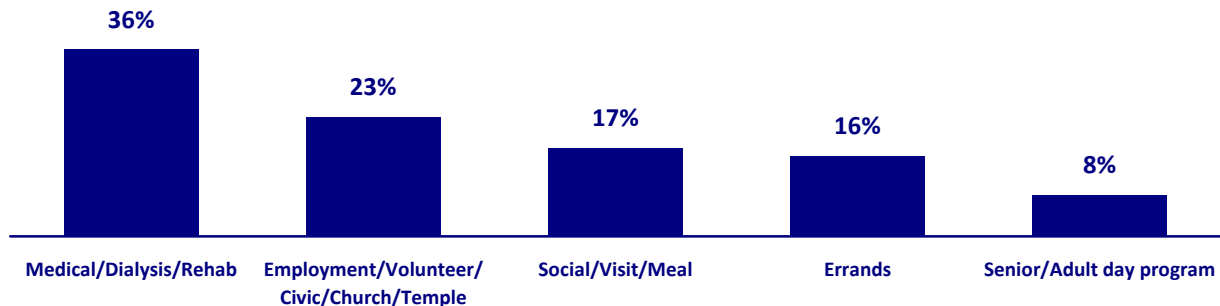


Calling DAL Customer Service

- Among all respondents, 19% indicated they had called customer service in the past month for a reason other than reserving a ride. Frequent riders (20%) were twice as likely to do so as infrequent riders (10%).
- The most common reasons given for calling customer service were no-show/cancellation issues, a question related to a ride being taken (e.g. “Where’s my ride?”), and changing a reservation.
- Respondents rated the interaction with customer service agents highly, with 96% rating the courtesy of the customer service agent as excellent/good and 87% rating the skill of the customer service agent in solving the problem/handling the question as excellent/good.
- Only 73% of riders said the length of time they had to wait on hold before speaking to a customer service agent was excellent/good, but 88% said the length of time to finish the entire call was excellent/good.

Trip Purpose and Demographics

- The most commonly cited trip purpose was a medical appointment (other than dialysis or rehabilitation), which was the purpose given by 25% of respondents overall.
 - Frequent riders were far less likely (20%) to give a medical appointment as the trip purpose than infrequent riders (66%).
 - Frequent riders were also more likely to be out for a meal or other social visit, running errands, going to work, going to a senior center, volunteering, or doing other non-essential/life-enhancing activities.



- Over half (54%) of riders surveyed cited a mobility impairment as their primary disabling condition, while 24% said a developmental/cognitive disability was their primary impairment, 12% said their primary disability was related to frailty/low energy, and 9% said their primary impairment was blindness or low vision.
- The ‘typical’ rider is white (89%), has a household income of \$23,432 per year, and is 68 years old. They are more likely to be female (69%) than male (30%). However, age varies by primary impairment and riding frequency.
 - Frequent riders have an average age of 67, compared to the average age of 72 for infrequent riders.
 - Those with a developmental disability as their primary impairment are among the youngest, with an average age of 55 years. Those with a frailty/energy impairment are among the oldest, with an average age of 79 years.
- While 42% of respondents have ridden on public transportation at some point in their adult lives, use of other modes of transportation vary by impairment type and rider frequency. For example, infrequent riders are more likely to say they have used a taxi or driven themselves in a car in the past month.

- As with use of other transportation, fare payment habits vary by rider frequency. About half of frequent riders (51%) purchase a daily, monthly, or yearly pass from customer service to pay for their ride, while about a quarter (27%) say they purchase a pass from the driver. By contrast, nearly two-thirds of infrequent riders say they either purchase the pass from a driver (32%) or pay cash (32%).

Database Summary

The study also included a database analysis, which is included in this report. The analysis concluded that, of those who used Dial-A-Lift in the past year:

- 55% used Dial-A-Lift within the past 30 days
- 45% used Dial-A-Lift more than 30 days ago

Frequent riders (that is, those who rode within past 30 days) took 88% of all trips. The average frequent rider takes 12 trips/month.

The analysis also found that the service is heavily impacted midday/afternoon. About half of all trips (51%) are started between 12 noon and 4 pm.

Recommendations

- The results from the survey are very positive. Dial-A-Lift is to be commended for such high ratings from a survey of this type.
- Dial-A-Lift drivers clearly 'drive' much of the satisfaction, as seen from both the quantitative ratings and the verbatim comments. Keeping drivers aware of the important role they play – the primary human interface of Dial-A-Lift – will ensure continued success.
- As with drivers, ride schedulers and customer service agents also play important roles in riders' satisfaction.
- Possible areas of improvement, based on both survey results and verbatim comments, might include: a) addressing the crush of ride requests during midday/early afternoon during the week so as to minimize wait times/increase ride availability; and b) consider ways to improve communication among ride schedulers and drivers so that reasonable last-minute changes (e.g. medical appointments that run shorter/longer than expected, or urgent medical appointments to be made within 1-2 days) can be accommodated.
- CC&G conducts surveys of this type among various paratransit providers. CC&G recommends Dial-A-Lift consider conducting this survey on a semi-regular basis to track changes/improvements.