CHAPTER VI

Public Involvement

INTRODUCTION

An integral part of any planning process is the public participation effort. During the course of this plan, several methods for involving the local public in the process are being undertaken. Based upon comments and suggestions from the Advisory Committee, an aggressive survey program was initiated, including on-board surveys and employer and employee surveys. Along with this survey effort, a number of public meetings and open houses were hosted by the LSC Team in the Big Sky area. Several meetings were held for the presentation of Technical Memoranda. Additional meetings will be held to present this Draft Report.

PUBLIC MEETINGS AND OPEN HOUSES

Throughout the planning process, public involvement is key to the success of the transportation plan for the community. At critical points during the process, public meetings are announced and held where citizen participation is openly welcome and appreciated.

Public open houses were scheduled following submittal of the first interim report. The open houses offered members of the community an opportunity to provide public input regarding transportation issues which were addressed as part of the Plan. Community residents were asked to comment on future transportation service in Big Sky. The public was given the opportunity to state which services and other alternatives they believe necessary to address the identified issues and meet the established goals.

The LSC Team worked with the local Advisory Committee which provides guidance and direction to the Consultant throughout the project. An initial "Kick-off Meeting" was held in Big Sky on February 11, 2005 with the Committee. This project team met to discuss project goals, priorities, and a time line for completion

of the final study. This team discussed local stakeholders who would be critical in completing the transit study for the area.

A second Transportation Committee meeting was held on March 16, 2005. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss Technical Memorandum #1 and provide feedback and comments to the LSC Team. The LSC Team conducted field observations and collected additional data during this visit as well.

Public meetings were held at the Big Sky Post Office on March 14, 2005 and on March 15, 2005 at the Mountain Mall to solicit comments on the plan and recommendations from the public. The Advisory Committee reviewed the preliminary recommendations and comments received at the public meetings and open houses.

A second round of public meetings and open houses was held the week of July 4, 2005 to present Technical Memorandum #2. This was comprised of a presentation to the Advisory Committee, the Big Sky Transportation District, as well as open houses located at the post office and Buck's T-4. Appendix B presents a summary of public comments received to date.

During the Big Sky Owners Association's annual meeting held on September 2, 2005, representatives from LSC were present to provide information to homeowners.

SNOW EXPRESS ONBOARD SURVEY

Onboard surveys were provided to Snow Express patrons during a two-day period in March 2005. Survey data in the planning process helps to gauge the effectiveness of the current system and identify how the public perceives the system. A similar survey program has been done in recent years. Trends were analyzed to see how perceptions have changed in recent years. A copy of the Snow Express onboard survey is provided in Appendix C.

Onboard Survey Methodology

The survey instrument collects essential information for the evaluation of current services. The Snow Express survey was designed to include transit trip characteristics, trip purposes, socioeconomic data, and attitudes toward Snow Express. The LSC Team worked with Western Transportation Institute, through the College of Engineering at Montana State University - Bozeman (WTI), to formulate an appropriate survey for Snow Express which would allow for trend information to be extracted as well as ask trip-specific information. The data collection was performed by Western Transportation Institute.

ONBOARD SURVEY FINDINGS

Responses from the usable questionnaires were entered into a database for analysis. The responses are summarized in the following sections. Survey comments are also included for review in Appendix D. The questionnaires were distributed to individuals on Snow Express vehicles on March 11 and 15, 2005. A total of 68 questionnaires were either partially or fully completed for analysis. The percentages shown in the analysis are based on the number of responses to the specific question, not the total number of responses. This does not represent a statistically significant sample; however, it may reflect the general attitudes and responses of the passengers. While we cannot be certain that there would be deviations from the responses from the 68 received in March, it is the best available data to date. Comparisons with previous years will aid in determining if there are distinguishable differences in patron attitudes or preferences.

The Western Transportation Institute (WTI) completed the initial analysis of the survey responses. While these results were analyzed and used to help plan for transportation options in the Big Sky area, the complete results are not restated in this Plan. Please refer to the Draft WTI Report completed in May 2005 for specific results.

The following section will highlight those key points in the survey which have the greatest impact on transit planning. Those questions which focus on travel

patterns and desires, service characteristics, and level of importance are presented in the following discussion.

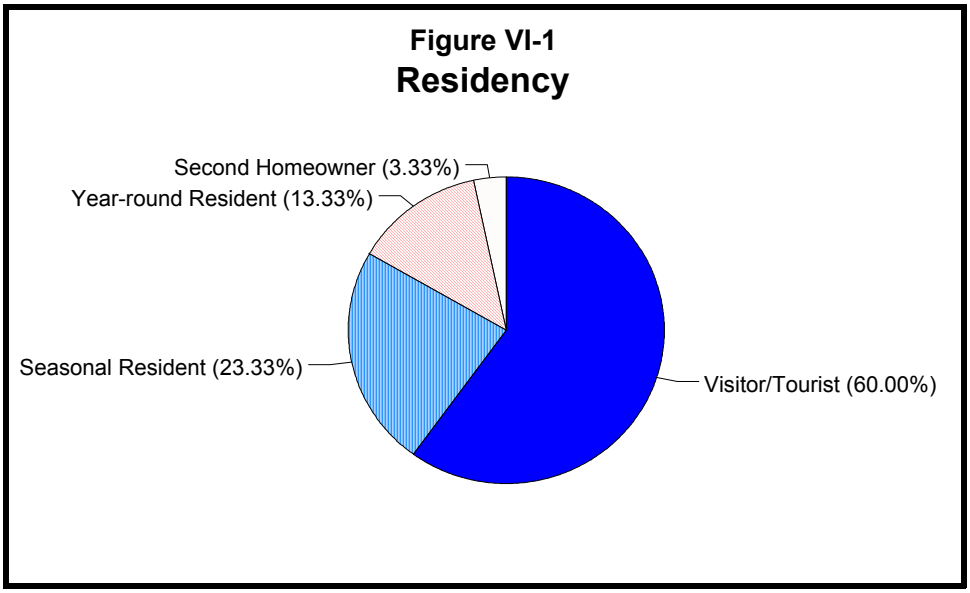
The survey asked passengers to provide information about the individual trip they were making on Snow Express. Passengers were asked to provide this information each time they boarded the bus.

Demographics

Residency

Respondents were asked a series of general demographic questions. First, respondents were asked to indicate their residency status. The question asked if they were a visitor/tourist, seasonal resident, year-round resident, and whether they owned a second home. Nearly 60 percent of those surveyed reported being visitors/tourists. Thirteen (13) percent indicated being year-round residents. Figure VI-1 provides those responses by percentage.

Figure VI-1
Residency

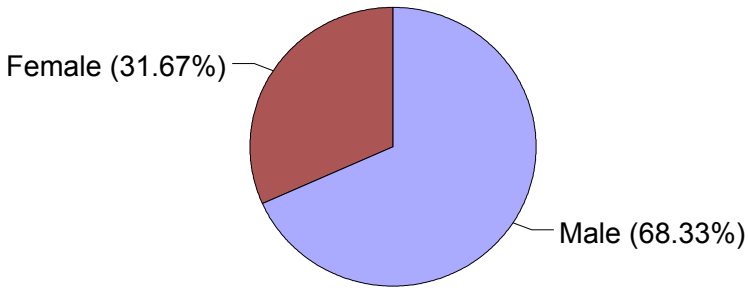


Gender and Age

Next, riders were asked to indicate their gender. Sixty-eight (68) percent reported being male. Figure VI-2 presents the respondents by gender. Riders were also asked for their age. The average age of all respondents was 35 years. The greatest proportion of riders fell into the 18 to 25-year range. This age range has steadily

increased in recent years, while the 36 to 49-year range has steadily declined. There may be several reasons for this, such as the time of year the survey was conducted, as earlier months may indicate a higher age range when families are taking winter vacations. The ski area may be drawing a younger crowd of skiers later in the season.

Figure VI-2
Gender



Vehicle Availability

Finally, respondents were asked to indicate if they had a vehicle available to make the trip. Fifty-nine (59) percent indicated that "Yes" they had a vehicle available to make the trip, while 41 percent reported they did not have a vehicle available. This allows us to determine those "choice" riders versus those who rely upon transit for travel. The percentage of respondents who indicated not having a vehicle available is a high percentage. This is an indication that there may be a large percentage who depend on Snow Express for travel in the Big Sky area.

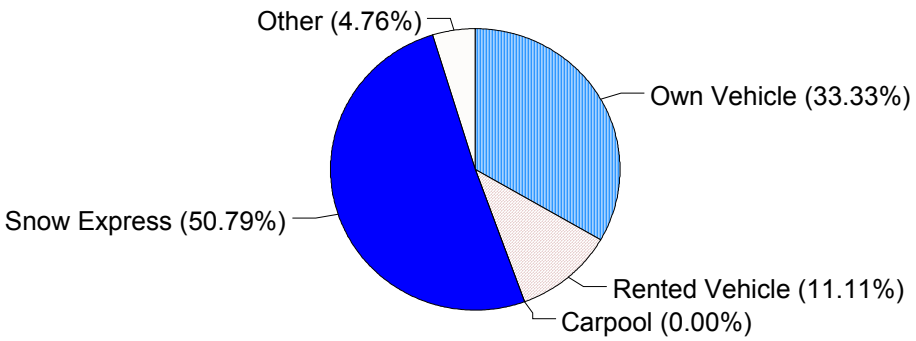
Trip Characteristics

Reason for Use

Respondents were asked several questions to determine why they were in Big Sky. The primary reason (67 percent) was for skiing and/or outdoor recreation. The second most common reason (23 percent) was for work. Respondents were then

asked to indicated their normal mode of travel in Big Sky. Figure VI-3 provides the normal mode of travel in Big Sky by respondent.

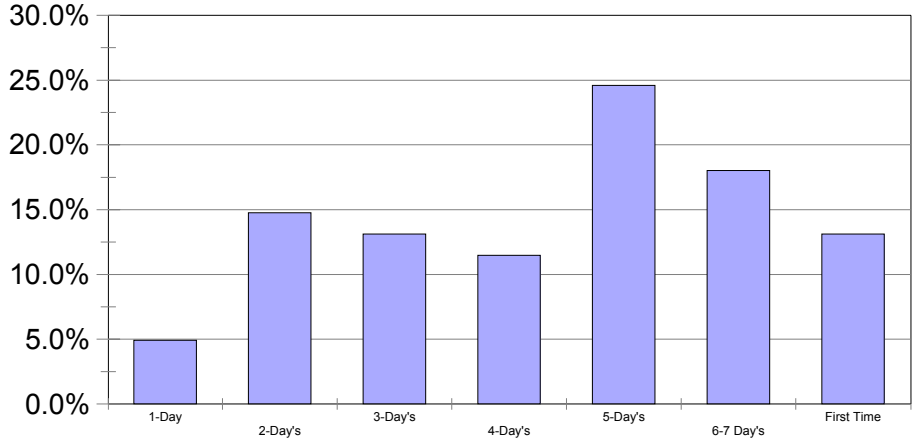
Figure VI-3
Normal Mode of Travel in Big Sky



Frequency of Use

Respondents were asked how often they rode Snow Express. Results are shown in Figure VI-4. Surprisingly, nearly 25 percent reported they rode five days per week. Nearly 50 percent reported they ride between three and five days per week. Thirteen (13) percent reported that this was their first trip on Snow Express.

Figure VI-4
Frequency of Use



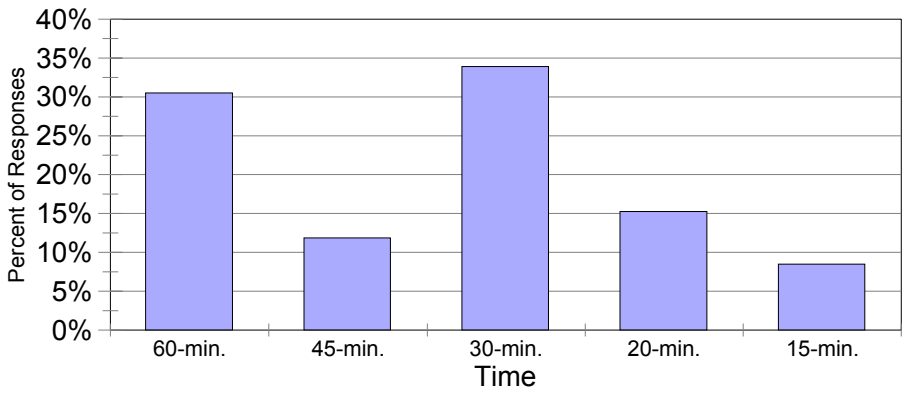
Patron Preferences

Bus patrons were asked several preference questions, such as frequency of service and willingness to pay for service. Certain transportation features were scored through an indication of importance to a particular statement.

Frequency of Service

To determine individuals' preferred frequency of service, Question 4 asked how frequently a bus would need to pass by a pick-up point for the respondent to consider using the service. As is indicated by the summarized results shown in Figure VI-5, a 30-minute frequency was the most popular response. Historically, this has been the most reported preferred frequency, with 60-minute service coming second.

Figure VI-5
Preferred Frequency of Service



Fare Preference

The Snow Express is currently free to those who ride. Funds for operating the service are provided by the Resort Tax Board. To determine if individuals were willing to pay for the service, respondents were asked how much they would be willing to pay for a one-way ride within Big Sky. While nearly 22 percent of the respondents indicated that they would not pay for the service, the same number of respondents also indicated that they would pay at least $1.00 for a one-way trip. Thirty-eight

percent reported they would pay more than $1.00 for a one-way trip. Figure VI-6 summarizes the fare preferences from respondents.

Figure VI-6
Willingness to Pay for One-Way Trip

Trip Origin-Destination

The survey included a question that asked where the respondent was traveling from and to. Question 14 was used to help determine the most frequent origins and destinations. The responses to this question are summarized in Table VI-1. The largest number of respondents indicated they were traveling from Condos. The largest number of riders then reported they were traveling to the Mountain Village Center. Typically, the origin-destination information is cross tabulated to determine an origin-destination matrix. However, the particular way data were entered prevented this analysis from being performed.

Table VI-1
Most Frequently Reported Origins and Destinations

Location (stop)	Origin (from)	Destination (to)
Meadow Village Center	6	10
Moonlight Basin	1	4
Buck's T-4	12	3
Hidden Village/The Pines	2	1
Firelight	2	0
Westfork Center	1	0
Mountain Village Center	9	33
Other Condos	20	7
Other Area	3	4

Perceptions about Snow Express

Passengers were asked to rate the quality of service provided by Snow Express. The respondents indicated their level of agreement or disagreement with each statement which ranged from their satisfaction with the buses to how easy the schedule is to read. Each statement was given a numerical value from one to five, and the average response was then calculated for each attribute. The middle point of responses would be 2.5, so an average score of 3.0 or higher would indicate positive perceptions for that particular attribute. The responses are shown in Table VI-2.

Table VI-2
Level of Satisfaction

Attribute	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005
Buses are attractive	3.3	2.9	2.8
Driver courtesy	4.6	4.5	4.3
Vehicle comfort	4.0	3.4	3.1
Vehicles appear clean and well-maintained	4.0	3.7	3.2
Adequate information about service	3.5	3.6	3.9
Schedule is easy to understand	3.0	3.5	3.5

Not all characteristics of Snow Express were scored positively. The rating of service attributes should relate to the goals for Snow Express. Minimum standards for all categories should be established as a goal for Snow Express. For example, bus attractiveness scored the lowest rating (2.8) for 2004-2005, and a goal should be to maintain at least an average score of 3.0 in the future. This certainly may indicate that the buses need to be changed in the future. Although not scored as low—driver courtesy, vehicle comfort, and vehicle cleanliness all show a steady decline.

Additional Comments

Passengers were given the opportunity to include additional comments regarding Snow Express service as well as answer several open-ended questions. A variety of comments were received, both positive and negative. Some of the comments were critical of the service and especially the drivers. The most common comments were that more appropriate buses should be used, there are "holes" in the service,

and the schedule is difficult to read. However, several others felt the service is great and easy to use.

EMPLOYER/EMPLOYEE SURVEY

Local employees were surveyed through local employers. Surveys were distributed to local employers who then were to distribute an additional employee survey to their employees. Copies of the surveys are provided in Appendix E. However, only two employers—Buck's T-4 and Yellowstone Club—returned a great number of responses. Therefore, a limited discussion of those results is provided. Information is provided about employee demographics, trip characteristics, and transportation needs that they have. Responses from the usable questionnaires were entered into a survey program for analysis.

Demographic Characteristics

There were a number of questions asked to determine demographic characteristics of employees in Big Sky. The demographic information is summarized from 60 *unduplicated* individuals responding to the questions. The surveys received were 71 percent from Yellowstone Club, 24 percent from Buck's T-4, and the remaining 5 percent were from other businesses in Big Sky.

Age

The average age of the employees who responded was 31.9 years.

Vehicle Ownership

Vehicle ownership for employees and the ability to drive play key roles in the demand for public transportation. Lack of a private vehicle or the inability to drive influence people to use public transportation. This comparison provides an indication of the number of *choice riders* compared to those who are transit-dependent. Figure VI-7 shows the proportion of employees who own a vehicle. Approximately 93 percent of the respondents own a vehicle while the remaining 7 percent reported that they do not own a vehicle.

Figure VI-7
Vehicle Ownership

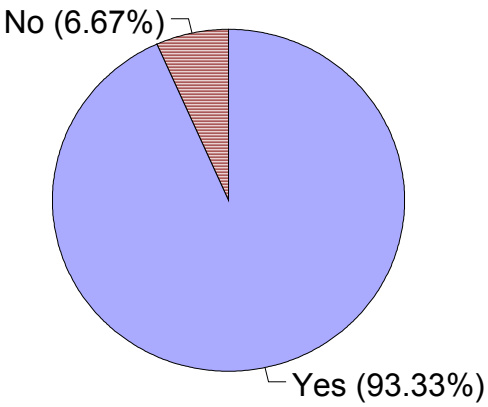
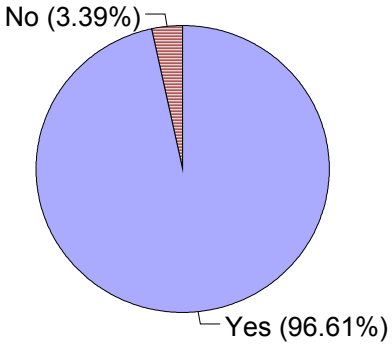


Figure VI-8 shows the proportion of respondents who are licensed drivers. A large percentage (approximately 97 percent) of employees who responded have a license to operate a vehicle.

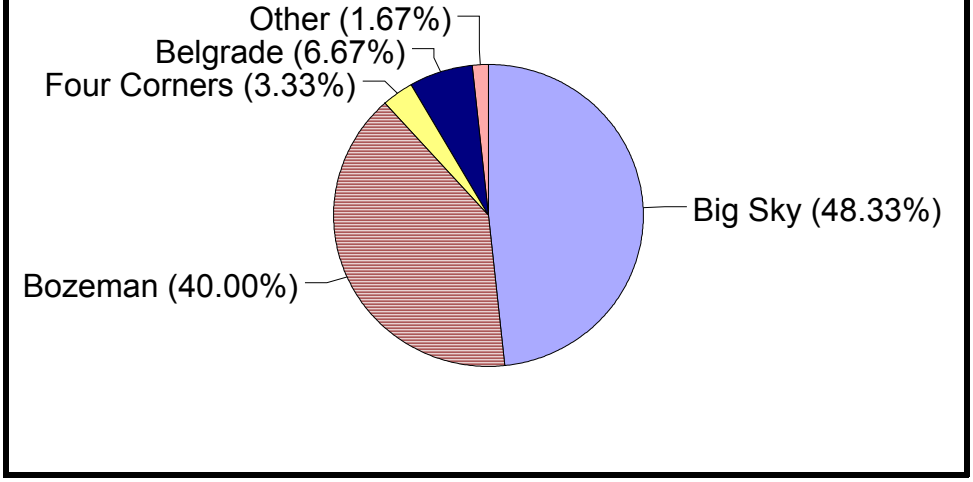
Figure VI-8
Driver's License



Origin of Commute

Employees were asked to indicate where they generally commuted from. The results are shown in Figure VI-9. As shown in this figure, 48 percent of employees lived and worked in Big Sky, 40 percent commuted from Bozeman, and 7 percent commuted from Belgrade.

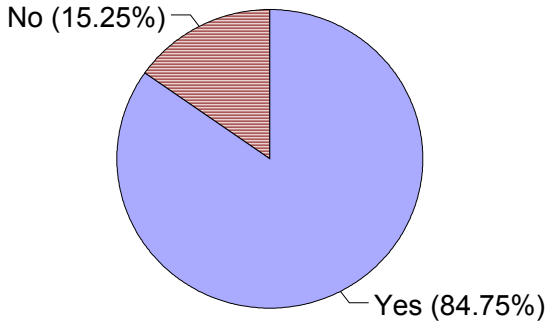
Figure VI-9
Origin of Commute



Need for Year-Round Bus Service and Frequency of Ridership

Employees were asked to indicate whether they believe there is a need for regular scheduled year-round bus service. Approximately, 85 percent of respondents from the employee survey believed that regular scheduled year-round bus service was needed, while 15 percent indicated that they did not think that regular scheduled year-round service was needed. Figure VI-10 shows the summary of those who believed that regular scheduled year round bus service is needed.

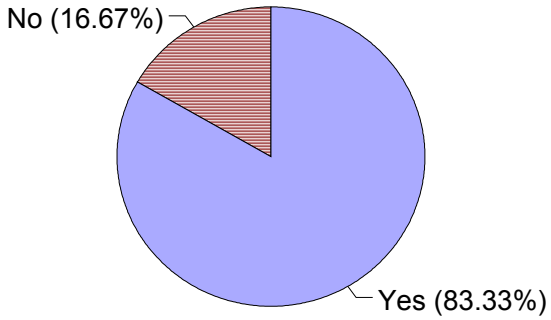
Figure VI-10
Need for Year-Round Service



Employees were also asked whether they would benefit from a year-round bus service in Big Sky. Approximately, 74 percent of respondents believed that they would benefit from a year-round bus service, while 24 percent did not believe that a year-round service would benefit them (mostly because they live in the area only in winter). The remaining two (2) percent of respondents were unsure whether they would benefit from the year-round bus service.

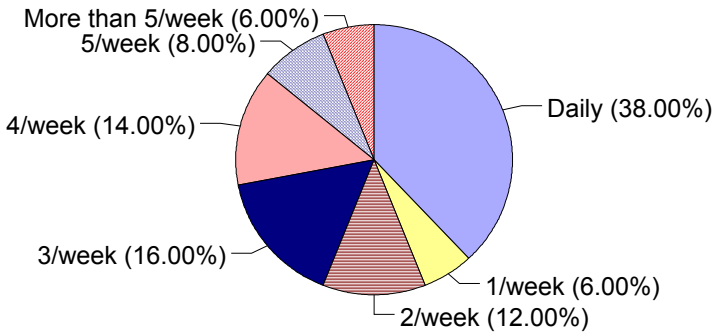
Employees were also asked whether they would be in favor of increased taxes to support service. Approximately 83 percent (17 responses) favored increased taxes, while 17 percent (5 responses) did not favor an increase in taxes. Figure VI-11 summarizes those results. However, this question only inquires if they are in favor of increasing taxes to support service, not by how much.

Figure VI-11
In Favor of Increased Taxes



Employees were also asked how often they would ride the bus during the typical week if a regularly scheduled bus met their travel needs. Thirty-eight (38) percent of the passengers reported that they would ride the bus daily, 30 percent reported that they ride the bus more than 3 to 4 days per week, and 12 percent reported that they ride the bus two days per week. Figure VI-12 shows how frequently the respondents would ride the bus during a typical week.

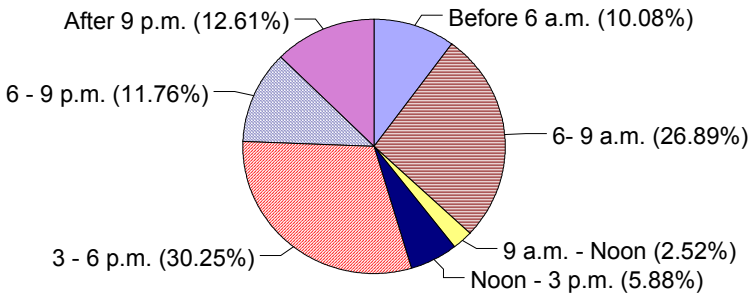
Figure VI-12
Frequency of Ridership



Temporal Analysis

Respondents were asked what time they needed transportation for work. Approximately 27 percent reported that they needed to travel between 6:00 and 9:00 a.m. Thirty (30) percent of the respondents said that they needed transportation for work between the hours of 3:00 and 6:00 p.m., and 13 percent reported that they needed transportation after 9:00 p.m. Figure VI-13 shows the comparison of responses by time period.

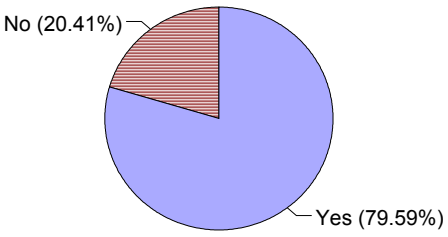
Figure VI-13
Transportation Required by Time Period



Carpool or Vanpool Service

Employees were asked whether they were interested in carpooling or vanpooling to work. Eighty (80) percent of respondents were interested in carpooling or vanpooling, while 20 percent were not interested in carpooling or vanpooling to work. Figure VI-14 shows the proportion of passengers willing to carpool or vanpool.

Figure VI-14
Carpooling or Vanpooling



The respondents were also asked what would make them join a carpool/vanpool service. The small number of employees who were not interested in carpooling or vanpooling to work believed that they would join the service if it met their schedule. Some respondents said they already did carpool, while others believed that since they did not live in Big Sky, it would be difficult to coordinate a carpool to Big Sky. However, passengers who were interested in joining a carpool or van-pool service indicated that the schedules for the car/vanpool, the pickup/drop-off locations, safety issues, and high gas prices were some of the main reasons to make them join a carpool or vanpool service.

Local Bus Service to Reach Local Eating Establishments

Participants were asked to indicate whether they would use the local bus service to reach local eating establishments. All of the respondents reported that they would use the local bus service to reach local eating establishments.

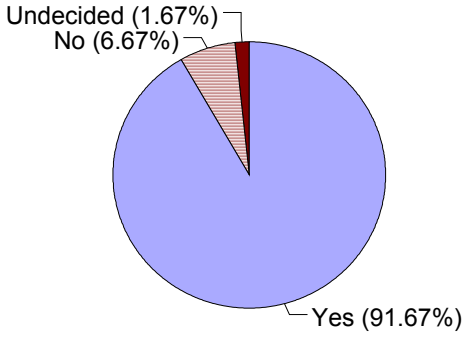
Transportation to Work

Employees were asked how much transportation affected them getting to work. Sixty-three (63) percent of the respondents reported that transportation did not affect them getting to work, mostly because they had a car, while 32 percent believed that transportation did affect them getting to work, and 5 percent were undecided whether their commute to work was affected by transportation.

Ride Snow Express

Employees were asked if they would use the service if Snow Express provided regular service to their place of employment. Approximately, 92 percent of the respondents reported that they would use the service, 7 percent reported that they would not use the service, and 2 percent were unsure whether they would use Snow Express service. Figure VI-15 shows the percentage split of passengers who would ride Snow Express if it provided regular service to their place of work.

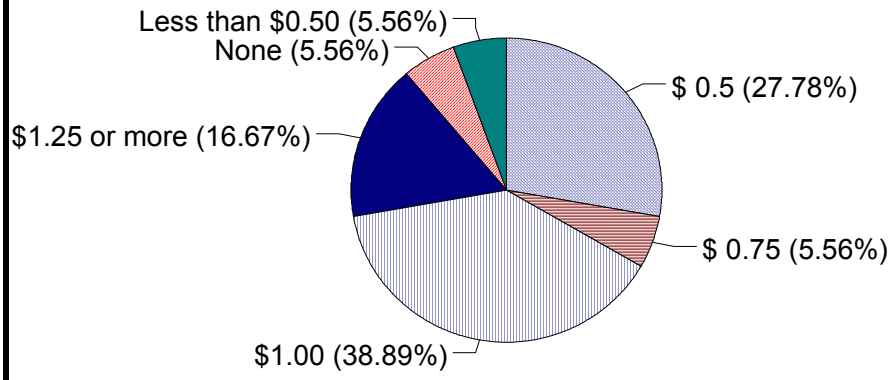
Figure VI-15
Would Use Snow Express to Get to Work



Reasonable Fare

Respondents were asked to indicate what they thought was a reasonable one-way fare for regular service in Big Sky. Out of the 18 employees who were asked this question, approximately 39 percent of the respondents indicated that $1.00 was a reasonable fare, while 28 percent of the respondents indicated $0.50 was a reasonable fare. Another 17 percent indicated that $1.25 was a reasonable fare. Figure VI-16 shows the split of what passengers believed was a reasonable amount for a one-way fare for regular service in Big Sky.

Figure VI-16
Reasonable One-Way Fare



Stops/Locations to be Served in Big Sky

Employees were asked what stops or locations should be served in Big Sky area. The actual answers are included in the Appendix F. Many of the respondents indicated that Meadow Village Center, Mountain Village Center, Westfork Center, and the Moonlight area should be served.

Additional Comments

Respondents were given the opportunity to include additional comments regarding Big Sky service. The actual comments are included in Appendix F. Many of the comments were very positive about the service. The major comments relate to late night service, frequency of service, more service, and service down the valley to the Bozeman area.