Informing the Debate

Report on Preferences of Michigan Communities along the Wolverine Corridor For the future of Michigan's High Speed Rail Service

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BROADER CONTEXT OF THE HSR STUDY

The Midwest Regional Rail Initiative (MRRI) is a plan to implement a high-speed rail network in the Midwestern United States, using Chicago as the hub. As denoted in Figure 1, planned routes stretch across Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin.
A milestone for Michigan's recovery could be an upgrade to a high-speed railway line of the existing Amtrak route called Wolverine, connecting major Michigan centers, Detroit, Ann Arbor, Battle Creek, and Kalamazoo to the Midwestern train network. Therefore, Governor J. Granholm announced on August 24th 2009, that Michigan had applied for $832 million in federal stimulus money for a high-speed rail link between Detroit and Chicago (thickest route in Figure 1) (Olander, 2009).

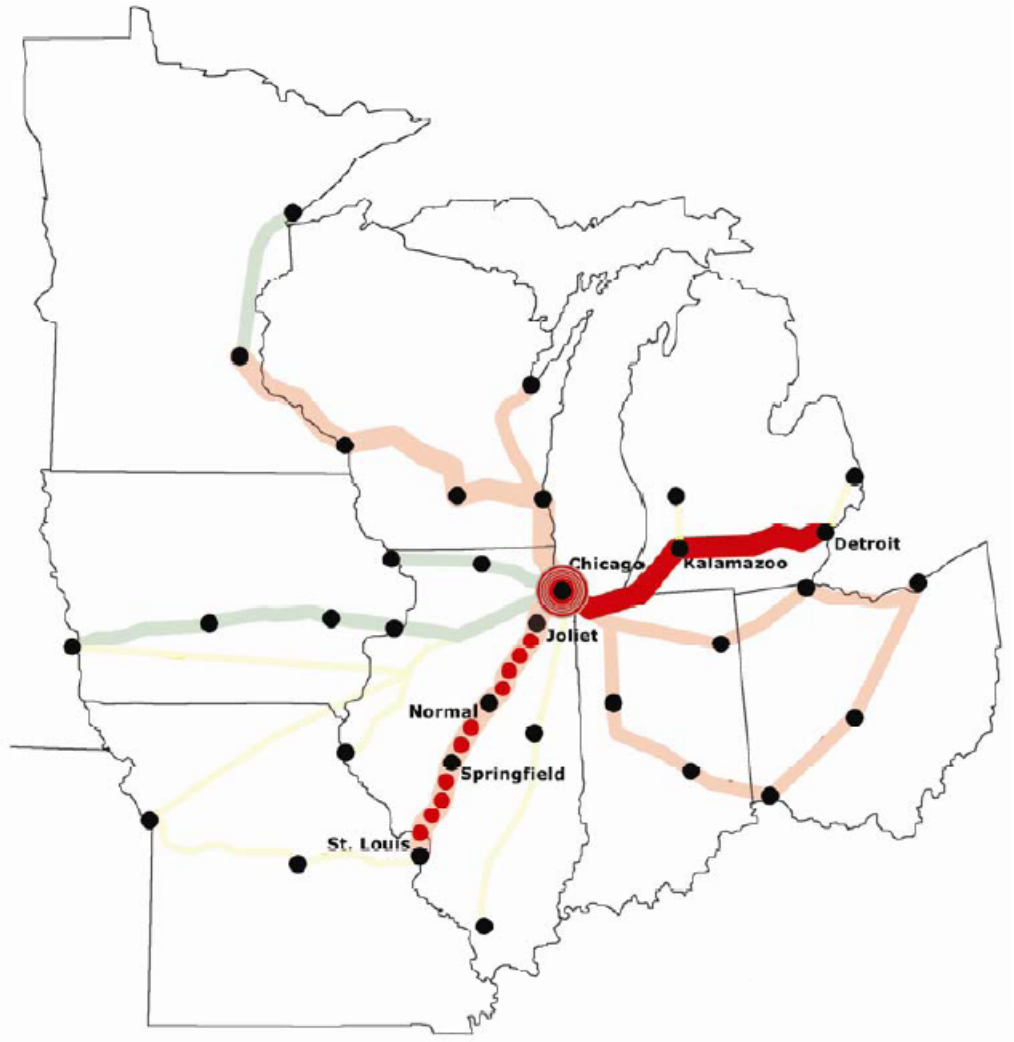


Figure 1: Midwest Regional Rail Initiative
Source: (Learner and Brubaker, 2009, slide 5)

PROJECT OBJECTIVES AND BACKGROUND

The Governor's proposal primarily calls for an upgrade of existing tracks and stations along with major technological improvements, so that trains would travel at about 110 miles per hour while

avoiding conflicts with freight schedules. The predicted user, environmental, community and station development benefits include fostering regional economic development, creating jobs, lessening Michigan's dependence on foreign oil, improving air quality, reducing highway and airport congestion, reducing trip times, creating more convenient travel etc. (MDOT, 2005).

As a key factor, the proposal projects a significant increase in annual ridership. For the entire network, the Midwestern planning committee expects 13.6 million annual riders by the year 2025 (Bay-Lake Regional Planning Commission Work Program Committee, 2008). The Wolverine Line – according to Granholm's speech in Dearborn on August 24th 2009 – would play a significant part in Michigan's recovery by mastering the distance between Detroit and Chicago in 3:46 hours instead of 5:36 hours after the upgrades were implemented (MDOT, 2005, p. 5). For Michigan this means a total of 6,970 jobs and $138(million) in additional household income.

Problem Statement

These estimations and expectations are drawn on the statewide level, whereas the greatest improvements and changes this rail network, and particularly the Wolverine line will bring, are on the local communities adjacent to the rail stations. For example, the property values around the stations are expected to increase significantly.

Table 1:

	Property value increase (in $ million)
Detroit	$76-$114
Dearborn	$36-54
Ann Arbor	$48-72
Battle Cree	$40-57
Kalamazoo	$53-$80

Source: (MDOT, 2004, p. 2)

It is crucial, especially when analyzed under a long-term sustainable development framework that these communities continue to use the train and leverage the benefits these upgrades will bring to the region. Hence, to sustain the economic benefits continuous ridership of the line is essential in reaching operational profitability of the route and ensuring its future operation. The Federal Railroad Administration (FDA) assumes that 40% of the ridership increase will be diverted from car travel, 30% from air travel and 8% would be induced (Federal Railroad Administration, 2003). These estimates seem fairly high, given that the quality of public transportation services in Michigan has forever lacked well behind most other states of the USA. Hence, Michiganders do not prioritize public transportation and overall prefer car travel (Kaplowitz and Lyles, 2008; MDOT, 2006).

In a recent MDOT survey (Grengs, 2009), found that the most important incentives for travelers to use the public transport included: transit mode schedule meets passenger schedule, comfort while traveling, safety while traveling, while Wifi was not a top incentive for passengers. Rail users prefer clean facilities, comfortable seats, proper lighting and security, good signage, and parking availability. Preferable activities on the rail include reading and eating. Playing games (cards) is only important to 50% of users. Surprisingly, price of gasoline was not considered a high priority reason for traveling via rail. UoM methodology to only interview riders of respected public transport option introduces a potential bias regarding ridership incentives. Instead, surveying people that may or may not ride the train might lead to a better understanding of what incentives

will motivate current non-riders, which could be completely different than the incentives that regular riders have.

Research goal and question:

This proposal seeks to explore the expected impacts of the rail route improvements on the community level around rail stations in the top five cities in Michigan expected to draw the most passenger numbers for high-speed rail service (MDOT 2004, 2005): Detroit, Dearborn, Ann Arbor, Battle Creek and Kalamazoo. It will test the expected ridership and identify local incentives on how to increase the ridership and sustain its growth in the long-run. Furthermore, the researchers will explore on how to best leverage the local investments for sustainable communities.

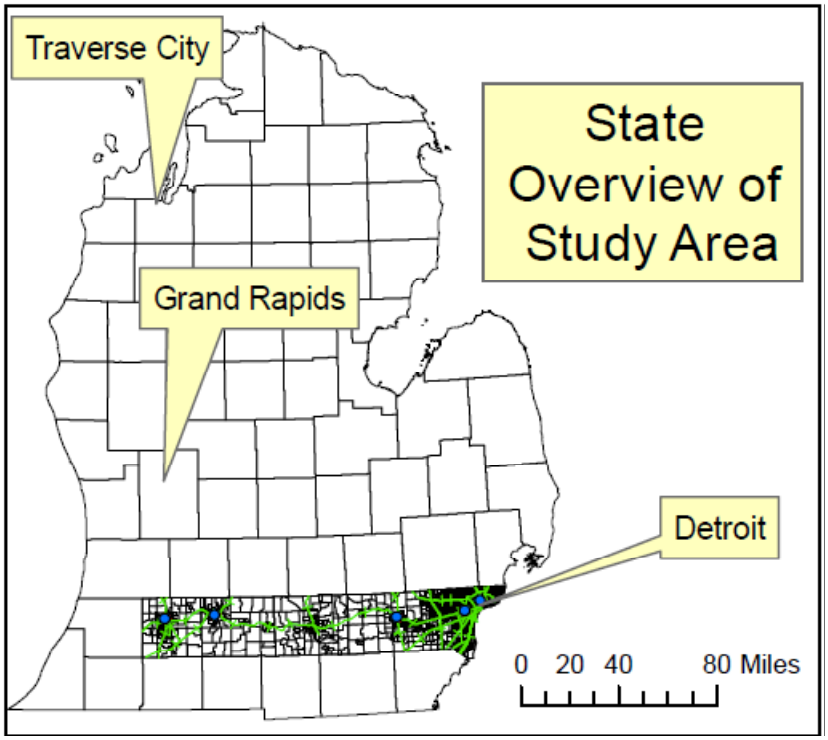


Figure 2: Overview of Study Area
Source: map created by J. Vertalka (2010)

METHODOLOGY

The research team conducted a large-scale survey in communities living close to rail way stations in Detroit, Dearborn, Ann Arbor, Battle Creek and Kalamazoo that identified their interest, preferences, and willingness to pay for high speed rail service between Chicago and Detroit. In a survey the researchers tested the actual expectation of ridership of those communities adjacent to the railway stations and identify incentives to increase their ridership.

Interviews

Interviews with local transport planners of the five cities provided in-depth knowledge on their individual communities and their needs/expectations in regards to the high-speed rail. Furthermore, these interviews were used to verify, create new ideas, and support the draft survey design.

Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire was developed in close collaboration with the Office of Survey Research at Michigan State University. It contained 22 questions including sub-sections, which surveyed the residents on three topics: current ridership, potential ridership (through incentives), and expected impacts on the communities. The survey was pre-tested by several local transportation planners and MDOT employees.

Sampling Strategy

We first identified the block groups, for which more than ½ of the block-group area fell within a 2-mile radius of the railway stations. Based on the identified block groups, Survey Sampling Inc. (http://www.surveysampling.com/) drew a random sample of people residing within those block groups. For each of the five cities, 400 samples were selected, except for Detroit, for which 600 samples were drawn.

The mail survey was conducted according to Dillman et al. (2009) from March 2010 through September 2010. The pre-notice letter was sent out on March 12th 2010, the questionnaire was sent out on March 19th 2010, the postcard was sent out on March 31st 2010, the replacement questionnaire was sent out on April 20th 2010. Despite Dillman's advice of using first class mail, we decided to send all mail through non-profit. This mailing method had the distinct advantage of not getting forwarded in case the residents had moved in the mean time – as only those households were targeted that lived within the 2 mile radius.

After MSU mail office reran the data sampled by Survey Sampling Inc. to avoid sending questionnaires to vacant households, 2050 questionnaires were sent out. Households within a 2-mile radius around railway stations were asked to fill out the survey while it should be completed by the adult (18 and over living in the household), who had the most recent birthday.

Overall, the research team received 569 completed questionnaires, which correspond to a 27.8% response rate.

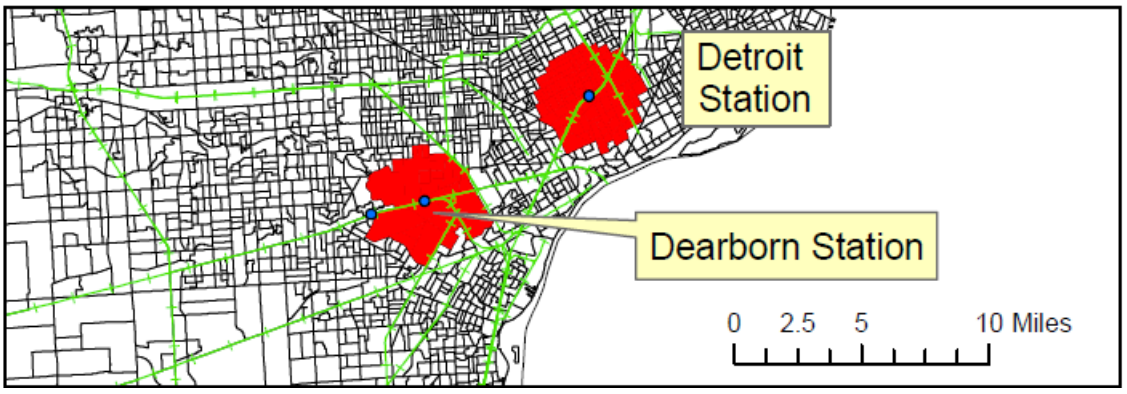
AMTRAK STATIONS OBSERVATION REPORTS

While conducting interviews with local transit planners, the researchers observed the condition of the Amtrak stations and their surroundings.

Detroit Amtrak Station
11 W. Baltimore Ave.
Detroit, MI 48202
(by Ann Sojka)

The Detroit Amtrak station is not a dive, but seems to be headed that way. First of all, the building structure is certainly outdated. The outside façade does not look too old, but it could certainly be updated. It is made of brick and a sort of metal sheeting for the roof. The parking lot is very small, holding maybe 20 or so cars. This seems unrealistic given the dependence on cars to get anywhere in Detroit, so one would figure that most taking the train would need to park their car first. The parking lot was in fact almost full. Inside the ticket counter seemed a bit unfriendly, and the brown floors and wall made the place somewhat drab. However, windows allowed for sunlight to stream in and the seating did look newer and comfortable to sit on while waiting for a train to come.

The surrounding environment outside the station area is on the path of dilapidation, with some sure blight. As Timothy mentioned, the only cuisine right next to the station is a White Castle across the street. However, there is one block or so of office and educational buildings. The roads around the station are in bad shape, and the area is relatively un-walkable. It seems as though when planned, more of a preference was given to cars than to pedestrians and the train. But even with these setbacks, there were a good amount of people, about 20 or 30, boarding the train when it came.



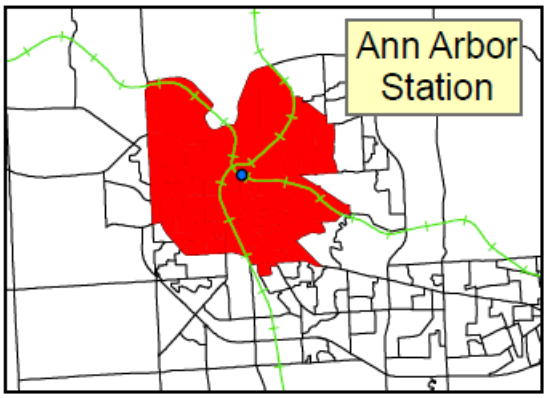
Dearborn Amtrak Station
16121 Michigan Ave.
Dearborn, MI 48126
(by Ann Sojka)

When arriving at the Dearborn Amtrak Station, a car is certainly needed to be able to easily access it. The station is about ½ a mile or so from any main road that would have a bus station, and the path to that road does not consist of any sidewalks. Clearly the station was planned for automobile-oriented development. It was tucked away on a small street next to the Police Department and Performing Arts Center. The area around the station is nice and safe, as the Police

Department adds a higher level of security. The parking lot was very big to accommodate all of the riders of the Amtrak, and it was about ½ full.

The station itself is in the same shape as the Detroit Amtrak Station. The building's outside looks very outdated with its brick and plastic siding, even more so than Detroit's building. The inside looks almost exactly the same as the Detroit station, although maybe a bit cleaner and brighter. This station also had the same comfy-looking seats. Again, there were a good amount of people waiting for the train – about 20 to 30.

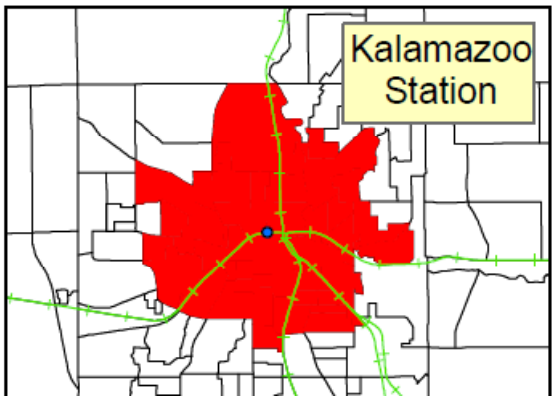
Ann Arbor Amtrak Station
325 Depot St.
Ann Arbor, MI 48104
(by Ann Sojka)



The Ann Arbor Amtrak Station is located on a two-lane road in a residential neighborhood on the edge of the city. The area looked safe, and there were a few people walking along the sidewalk when I arrived. The outside of the station is similar to the Dearborn station. It had the same brick and plastic outdated siding. The parking lot was a decent size, holding maybe 30 to 40 cars. A difference from this station compared to the others is that the parking was metered, meaning one must pay to park if they want to use the train. When I was there, there were about 10 cars parked.

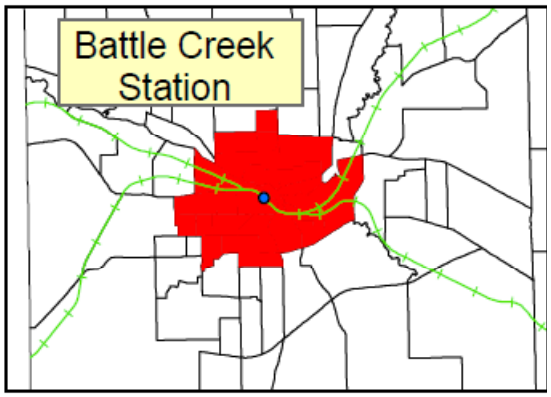
Again, the inside of the Ann Arbor station looked almost exactly the same as the Dearborn and Detroit stations. While the interior decorations were outdated and drab, there was natural lighting that made the area more aesthetically pleasing. There was, again, the same seating as the other two stations that looked comfortable to sit in while waiting for the train. There were only a few people in the Ann Arbor Amtrak Station when I was there, but this is probably because there was not a train coming any time soon.

Kalamazoo Train Station
449 North Burdick St
Kalamazoo MI
(by Josh Vertalka)



The Kalamazoo Station is not run down but could use some very minor repairs. The building itself seems to be in pretty good condition. For the most part, the outside has some architectural significance. The inside resembles a more historic train station; wooden benches, tile floor that almost looks like stone. However, the historic-ness of the interior is offset by having a permanent steel gate around the ticket booths.
The train station is also used a central point for inner-city and intra-city buses. With this multi-modal point the station is unable to provide adequate parking. While there are a couple of temporary parking spaces many long term travelers are required to use city parking in garages a couple of blocks away. Being located on the north side of downtown, you would think that the buildings surrounding the train station would be very well maintained. While buildings to the south of the train station are, buildings to the north are dilapidated and in some cases appeared abandoned.

Battle Creek Train Station
104 Capital Avenue
Battle Creek MI
(by Josh Vertalka)



This was an interesting station. According to Jerry Hutchinson, the station was architecturally designed and received awards for such merits. However, today the station is completely run down. Glass pillars cracked, raggeity looking paint and neglected exterior. In general, the exterior needs to be updated. Interiorly, the station also needs updating. While the seating is very abstract, it almost resembles seating in a bathroom. The ticket booth is easy to recognize and feels welcoming to customers with a sleek steel and glass design. Again though, in general the station needs to be updated. On a similar note, Jerry Hutchinson also mentioned that a pipe began to leak causing damage to the interior. This damage has been largely ignored.

This train station is also utilized as a bus station. Surrounding the train station is single level

parking for short and long term. However, there may not be ample parking for the expected increase in ridership. Just outside of the parking area is a water park for whatever reason. The closest buildings surrounding the station appeared to boring however it was difficult to tell if they were abandoned or not.

INTERVIEW ANALYSIS SUMMARIES

Incentives for HSR:

A majority of the transportation planners associated with the high-speed rail view the number one incentive as the decrease in travel time between destinations. This reduced travel time will increase the rail's competitiveness against the automobile; thus, further influencing people's choice to ride rail. However, reduced travel time is useless if the system as a whole cannot generate a reliable, on-time service while maximizing patron convenience.

A proposed resolution to increase reliability is to switch from a freight priority rail system to a passenger priority rail system. In other words, if the system can produce reliable, on-time services, travelers will have the opportunity to orchestrate various inter and intra-city activities of which could be coordinated through the high-speed rail and its connection with multiple modes of transportation. Another strong indicator to increasing ridership is the price of gasoline. As many rail services across the country saw increases in ridership when gas prices were $4+ a gallon. While this promotes increases in ridership, planners need to address convenience issues.

One method, several cities are utilizing to build patron convenience, is the re-location or re-building of their respected train station. These new stations will provide travelers with enhanced protection from environmental elements through the use of canopies between the loading areas and station. In addition, these new stations will provide strategic locations that offer multi-modal connections in close proximity to tourist locations.

By providing connectivity to multi-modal transportation hubs, travelers will be able to choose which mode(s) to travel depending on various travelers goals. For example, Chicago is a tourist destination for many travelers; given the right transportation incentives travelers will be more apt to take the train or perhaps the bus and connect to a train. Another possibility of attracting ridership is transit orientated development. However, there are mixed views of whether transit orientated development (TOD) is possible for an inter-city rail line. It appears locations that currently offer attractive tourist activities are expected to experience TOD, especially if the station is located in the downtown area. However, if the area has minimal attractions for tourists, transit orientated development will not occur, in such cases like Battle Creek. In other words, for TOD to occur there needs to be tourist activities available, then the HSR will act as a catalyst for the TOD.

Once people are attracted to the high-speed rail, various factors influence the retention of the ridership. These factors include a clean, safe, and affordable trip. If users do not feel safe then they will simply find alternative transportation methods whether car, bus, or plane. In addition, if users view the station as old or dirty it can repel the users from riding the train. Travelers also need to have the proper customer services in place to minimize confusion of the various aspects of the rail service i.e., tickets, prices, complaints, etc.

For the system to fully maximize ridership, all the elements that are associated with the HSR, reliability, convenience, clean, safe, and speed, must be accounted for and properly implemented.

Impacts on the Community

Impacts on the community include a wide spectrum of effects caused by the high-speed rail.

There are several types of impacts the HSR will have on the local community, including: intangible, tangible, and social. Within the intangibles include such effects like increase in rent prices and property values. The tangible benefits include new stations (in select cities), some have predicted an increase in suburbanization. Social benefits include an attractive alternate mode of transportation to city centers that offer various events, conventions, or other social activities. The most obvious impact community members around the rail station will experience is the convenience of living in close proximity to high-speed public transportation. In addition, many of the rail stations are hubs that offer multi-mode transportation thus, the high-speed rail would increase the desirability of using such stations.

Additional impacts related to the physical layout surrounding the train station; here, the planners are in disagreement about whether the HSR will produce development. Some (Ann Arbor, Dear born,) believe that the train will stimulate business development (TOD) due to the increase of tourists stopping at the location. Supporters of TOD believe the transition to HSR is the perfect opportunity to optimize public and private resources and tourist attractions (museums, restaurants, universities, downtown, etc), whether through the re-location of the station or through policy approaches, that incentivizes movement of people to the attractions. The opposition believes that development will only occur around communities that are major destinations (Chicago and Detroit) because the HSR line is a regional system unlike the TOD which usually encapsulates all rail stations on a commuter rail system. However, one planner believes that bedroom communities could be constructed in Michigan to serve inner-city Chicago due to the reduced travel time and the timing of the rail services.

One community (Ann Arbor) may experience excessive noise, depending on the number of rail trips, resulting in the disturbance of community members and thus, additional communities will not want to form around the rail station because of the noise. In other words, noise can not only create a nuisance in the community but also deter further residential development.

It appears that the impacts associated with HSR are uncertain. However, the obvious impact local community members will experience is the close access to a high-speed transportation system.

Government Support

A majority of the planners agree that the first and most important provision the government can provide is money; money for the track, stations, and train carts. In addition, the money will be used to help maintain the system. Some progressive cities, such as Ann Arbor, have the ability to quickly adapt local policy to leverage the opportunities of the HSR system. However, some planners believe HSR can only be successful if the ridership changes and this requires a cultural shift in the way American's think about transportation. In summary, government funding is necessary and can be increased by local communities petitioning their respective representatives for high-speed rail, thus receiving money.

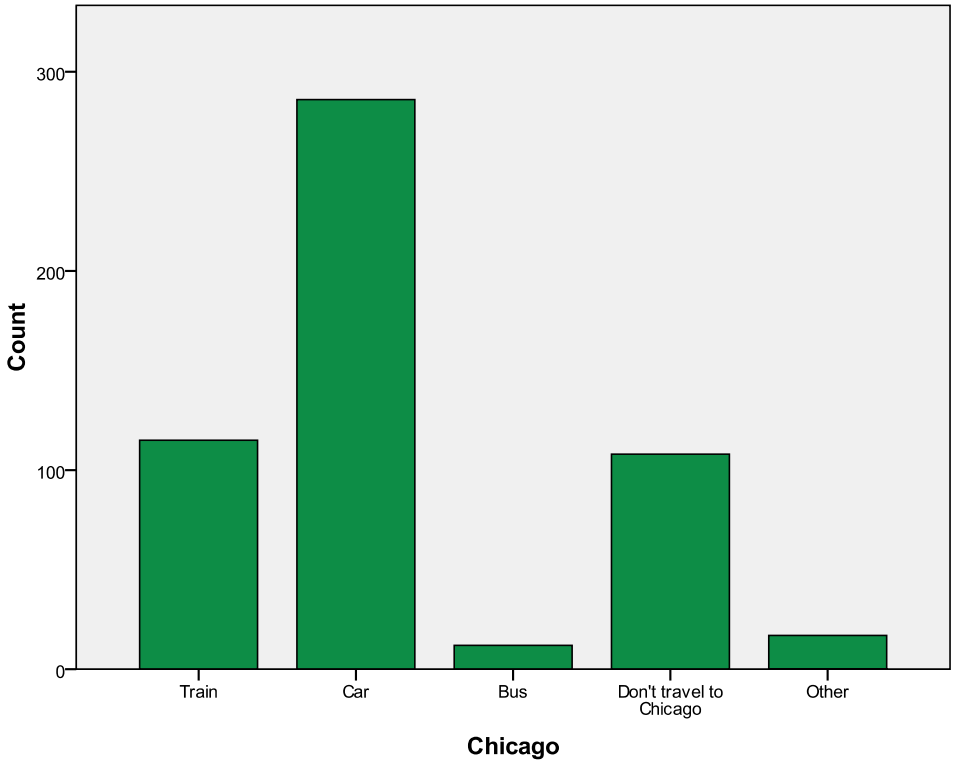
Switching People's Mindset

To switch the mindset of travelers, all planners agree that there needs to be cultural switch in the way American's think about HSR. In other words, people need to be educated about HSR and its benefits, whether it's through friends, classes, or advertisements. This method could take as long as 6 months to an entire generation depending on how people approach and view HSR. To quicken the adaption processes, the HSR needs to offer services and amenities that people need while providing a clean, safe, and convenient ride. In other words, people need not only to have a switch in transportation ideology but to also have that ideology proved by a competent transportation system.

SURVEY ANALYSIS SUMMARY

Current train ridership of Amtrak for work and for leisure by city
The current ridership of the Amtrak train stemming from people who live within a 2-mile radius around railway stations is astonishingly low. On average, people reported to have ridden the train within the past year not even once. If people did ride the train though, they primarily did so for leisure travel.

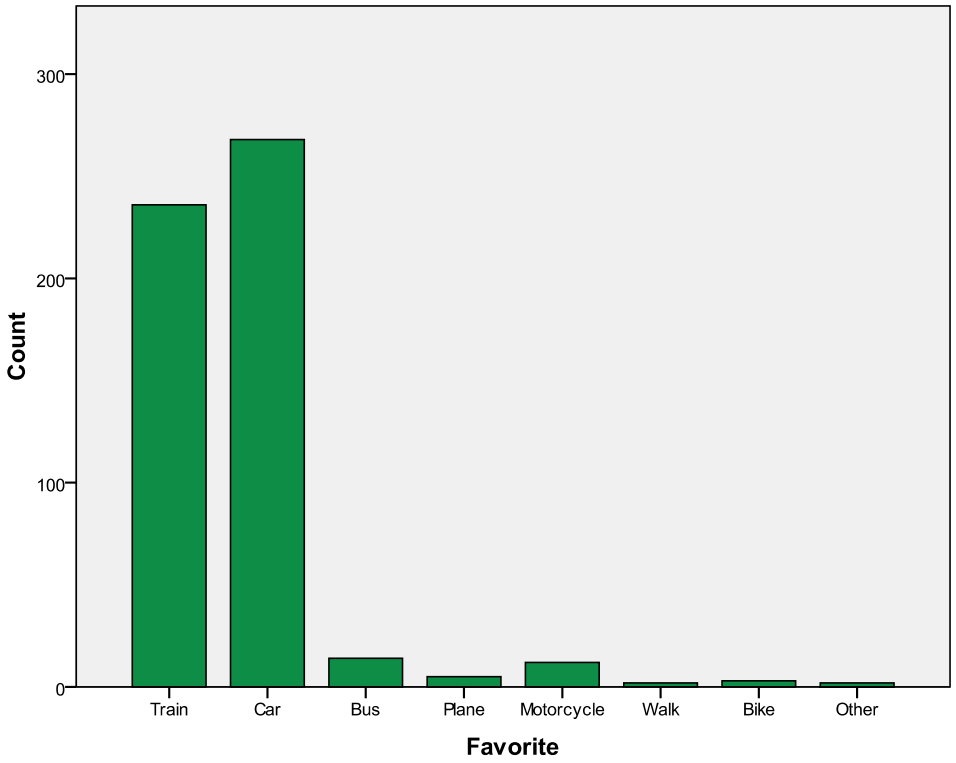
Travel preference to Chicago on the Wolverine line



One of the primary destinations along the Wolverine line is Chicago. In particular, because Chicago is going to be the hub of the Midwest regional rail corridors, the assumption of rail companies has been that people travelling to Chicago, would have a strong preference of using the train. As shown above, even though train connections were available, most residents preferred driving instead of taking the train, even though the station was within a 2-mile radius.

Favorite mode of travel within Michigan

While many travelers frequently take their car for trips, the favorite mode of travel for Ann Arbor and Detroit residents is the train (closely followed by car). The other three cities preferred the car over the train, but only to a small margin.

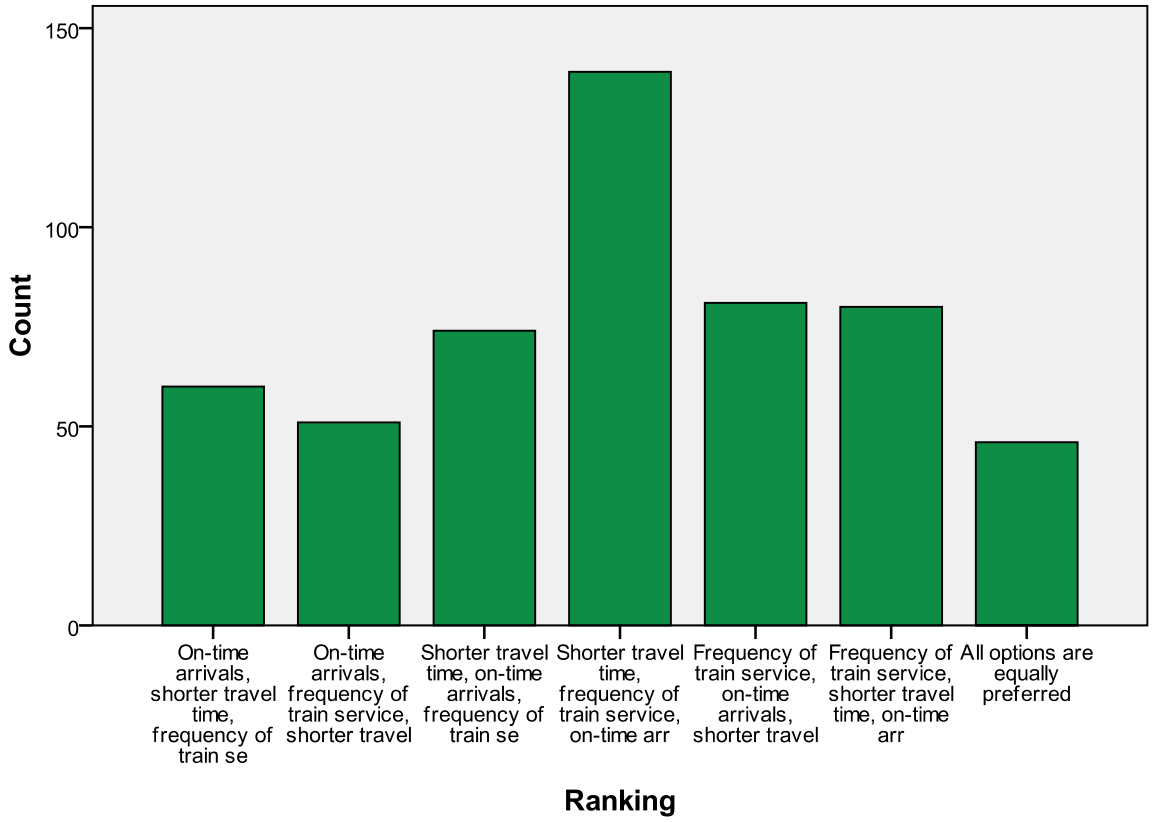


This suggests that people would like to take the train more frequently, but other factors, e.g. too few parking spaces, hinder them from taking the train more frequently.

Ridership increase: speed vs. on-time vs. frequency

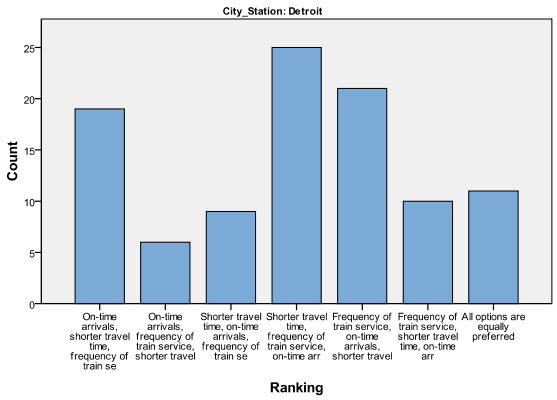
½ of the surveyed population indicated that an increase in either the train speed, or the frequency of train service, or the on-time arrival improvements of trains would change their travel behavior in favor of riding the train more often per month. ¼ of the surveyed population would ride it once or twice more often, whereas the other 25% would ride the train even more frequently.

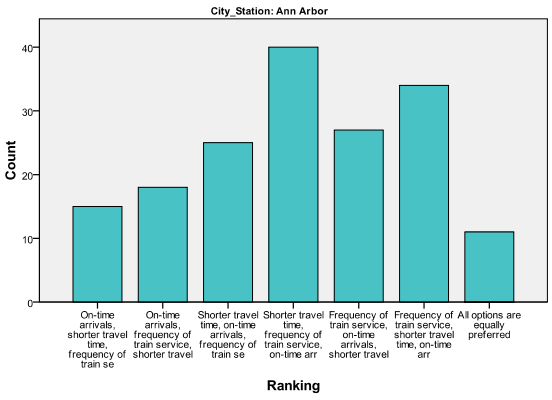
Comparatively speaking, the most important factor in increasing ridership is increasing the speeds on the train.

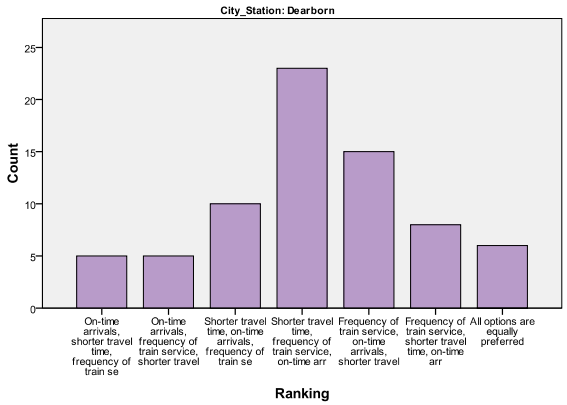


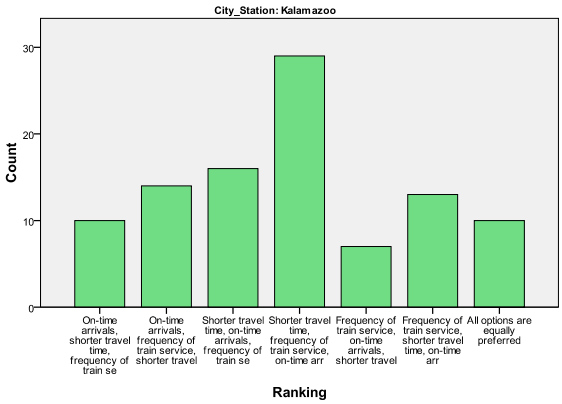
As outlined above the single most important factor for people to ride the train more frequently is shorter travel time in between stations, hence higher speeds. This preference is closely followed by an increase in the frequency of train services. The lowest priority among riders is given to the train's on-time arrivals.

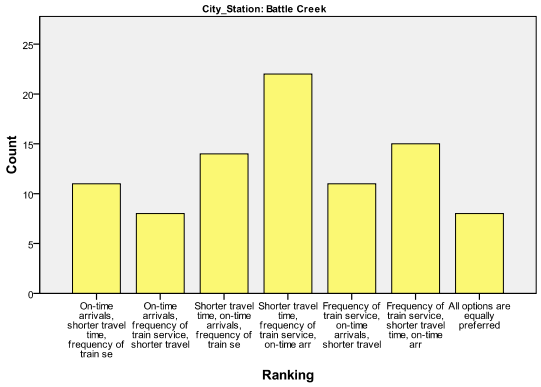
The same picture is reflected when comparing the five different case study cities:











All communities within the five cities individually ranked shorter travel time, thereafter frequency of trains and finally on-time arrival as their preferences when it comes to improving train services on the Wolverine line. Shorter travel time overall is ranked by all cities as the primary motivator, combined the frequency of trains is most important for Ann Arbor than any other of the five case-study cities.

Factors to increase ridership on the trains

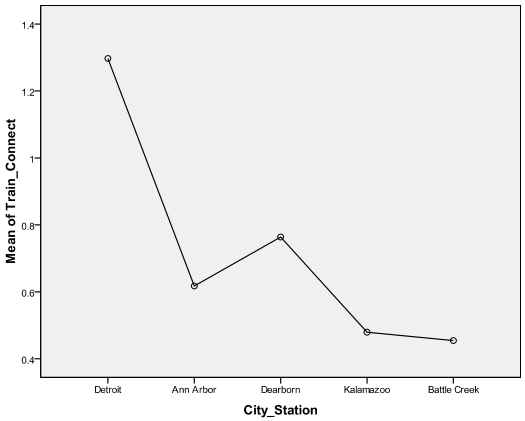
Based on the results of the following ANOVA tests, all factors that could potentially increase ridership show a significant difference in between groups.

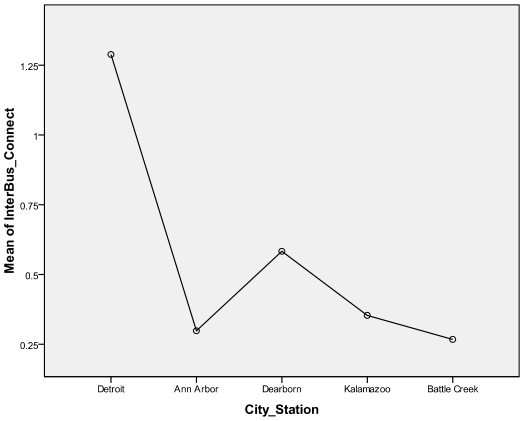
ANOVA

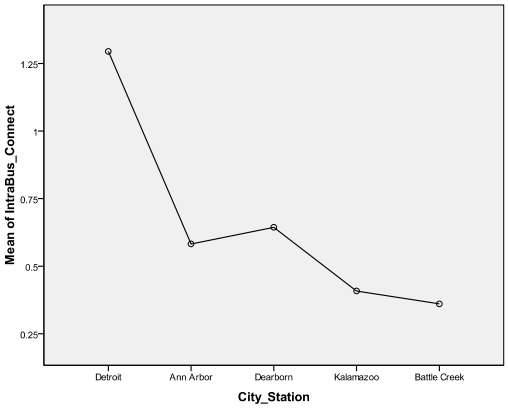
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Train_Connect	Between Groups	47.398	4	11.850	11.118	.000
	Within Groups	558.500	524	1.066		
	Total	605.898	528			
InterBus_Connect	Between Groups	74.221	4	18.555	20.413	.000
	Within Groups	472.682	520	.909		
	Total	546.903	524			
IntraBus_Connect	Between Groups	53.211	4	13.303	11.954	.000
	Within Groups	575.333	517	1.113		
	Total	628.544	521			
MoreCar_Parking	Between Groups	42.609	4	10.652	9.229	.000
	Within Groups	596.734	517	1.154		
	Total	639.343	521			
Safe_car_park	Between Groups	57.794	4	14.448	13.087	.000
	Within Groups	577.386	523	1.104		
	Total	635.180	527			
Comfort	Between Groups	82.465	4	20.616	17.310	.000
	Within Groups	625.287	525	1.191		
	Total	707.753	529			

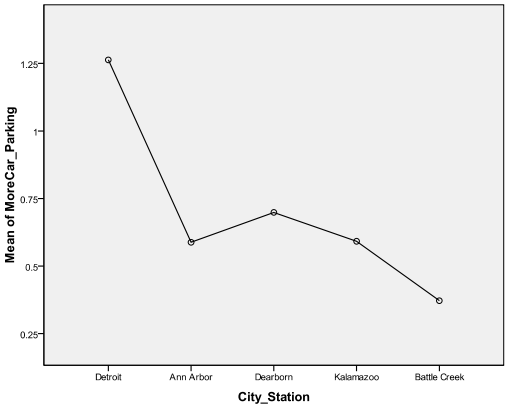
The main difference is caused by the responses from the Detroit metropolitan area, as they are significantly different in their preferences. Detroit residents would ride the train significantly more, if further connection (no matter which transport mode) and more car parking would be provided.

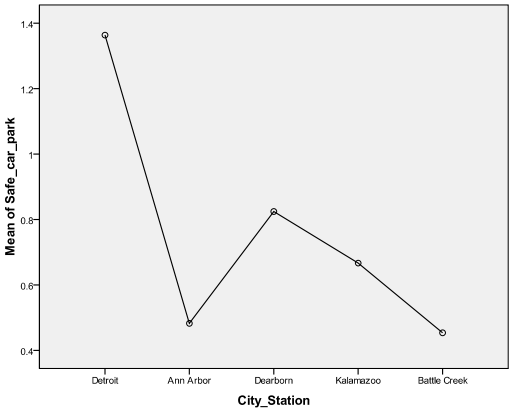
As depicted in the Mean-Plot Diagrams below, investments targeting Detroit would experience a higher response in ridership than in any other of the four Michigan cities analyzed.

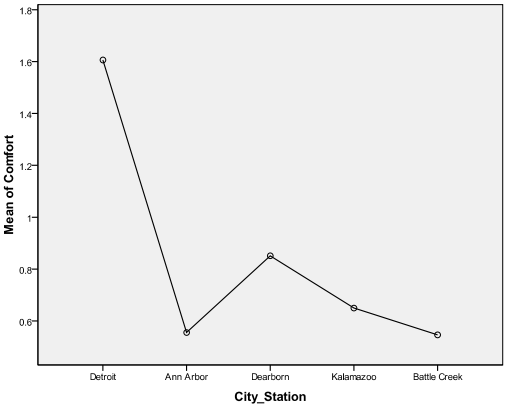






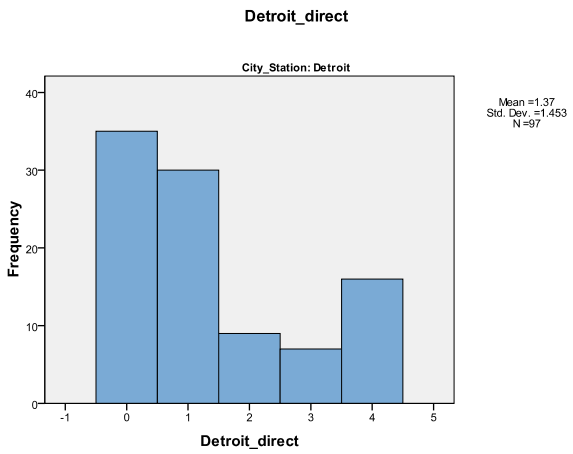
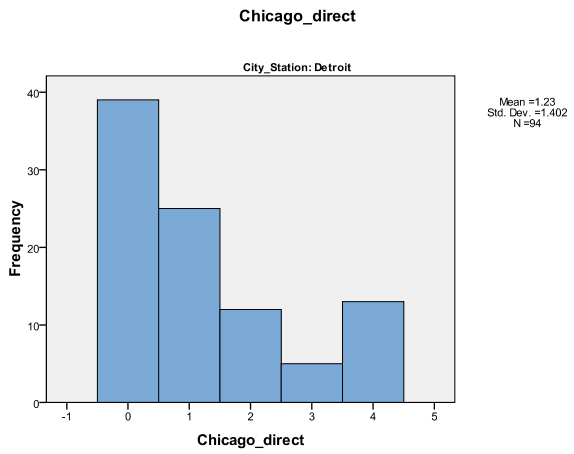
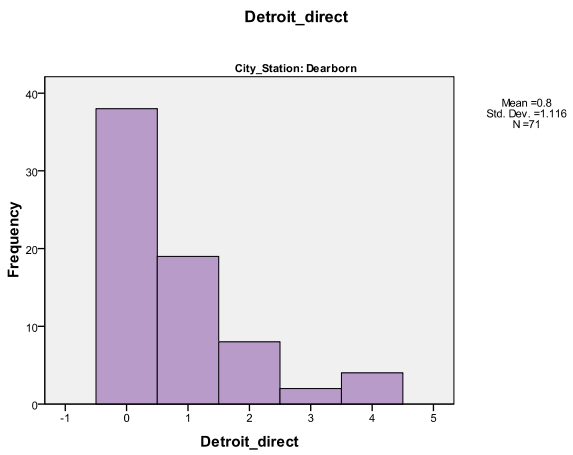
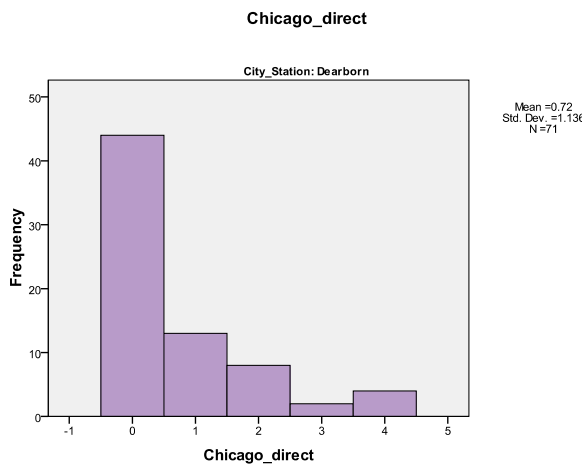




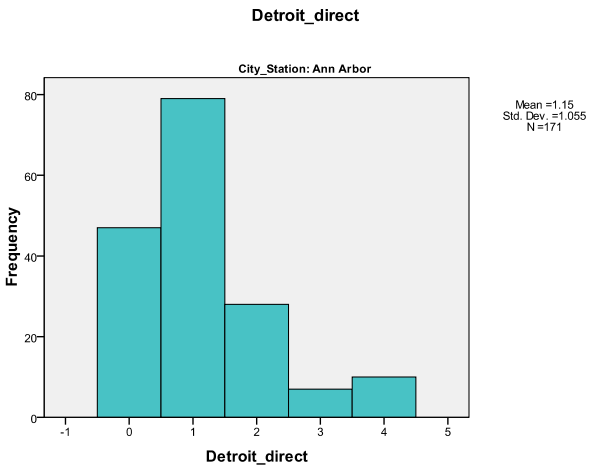


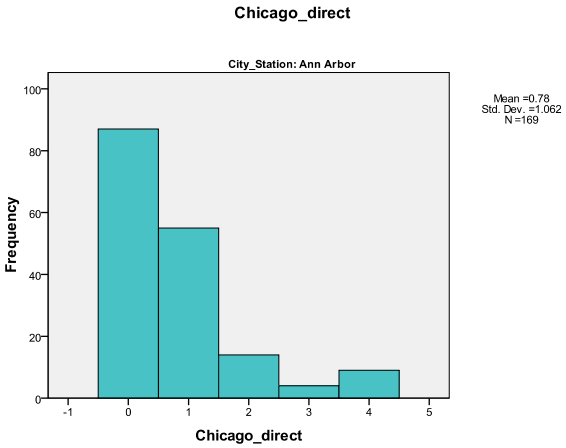
Direct rail links to the state airports

One of the most important factors in increasing the ridership on the rail, is to establish a direct rail link to the Detroit and the Chicago airports. As depicted in the individual cities below, the rail links would significantly enhance ridership for all cities

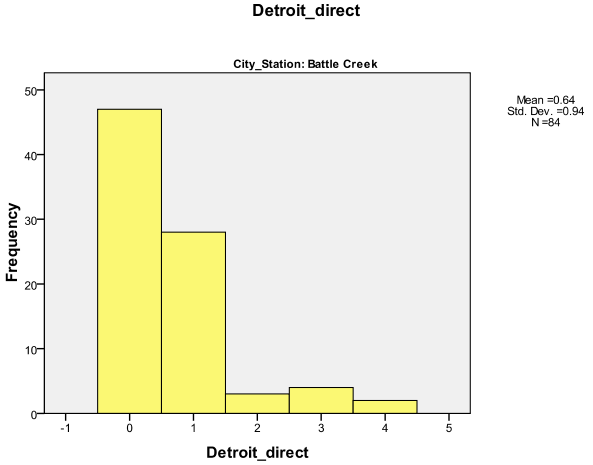
	DTW – airport link	ORD airport link
Detroit		
Dearborn		

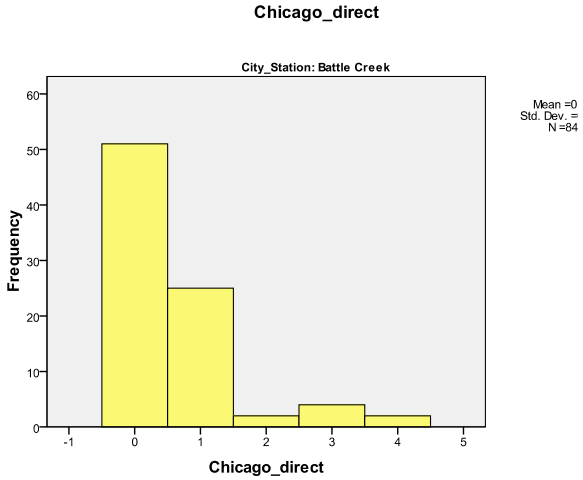
Ann Arbor



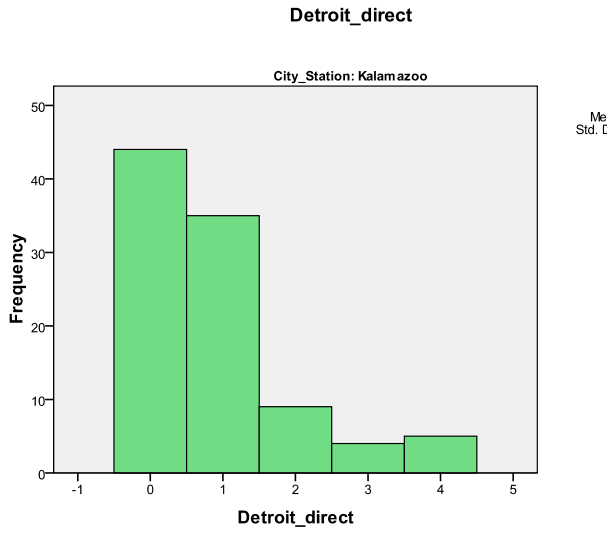


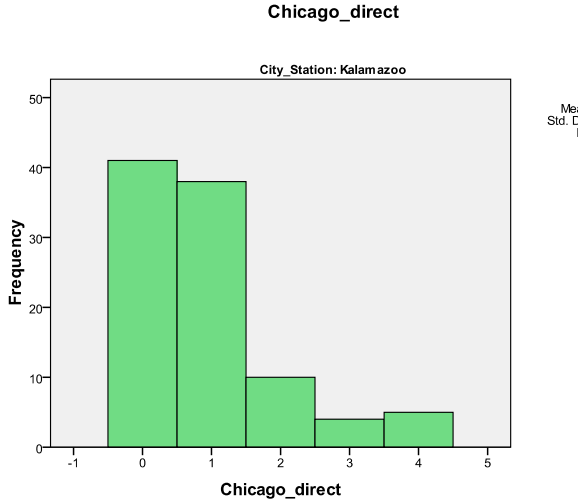
Battle Creek





Kalamazoo





Cost comparisons

One of the reasons to reflect on the question of preferences is to consider the opportunity cost question. A comparison among all transport modes available reveals that the current rail services are competitive in terms of its pricing structure.

Distances between Cities (miles)

	Detroit	Dearborn	Ann Arbor	Battle Creek	Kalamazoo	Chicago
Detroit	null	9.4	40.9	117	138	281
Dearborn			36.5	112	133	276
Ann Arbor				78	98.3	242
Battle Creek					25.9	169
Kalamazoo						147
Chicago						

Cost of Transportation One-Way - Amtrak Rail (dollars)

	Detroit	Dearborn	Ann Arbor	Battle Creek	Kalamazoo	Chicago
Detroit	null	5	11	21	24	29
Dearborn			11	21	24	29
Ann Arbor				18	20	29
Battle Creek					7	20
Kalamazoo						19
Chicago						

Cost of Transportation One-Way - Greyhound Bus (dollars)

	Detroit	Dearborn	Ann Arbor	Battle Creek	Kalamazoo	Chicago
Detroit	null	N/A	8.50 - 13	21.68 - 30.50	22.95 - 32	25 - 42.50
Dearborn			N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Ann Arbor				19.55 - 28	20.83 - 29.50	25 - 42.50
Battle Creek					5.95 - 10.50	23.38 - 32.50
Kalamazoo						22.53 - 31.50
Chicago						

Cost of Transportation One-Way - Car* (dollars)

Detroit	Dearborn	Ann Arbor	Battle Creek	Kalamazoo	Chicago

Detroit	null	1.18	5.11	14.63	17.25	35.13
Dearborn			4.56	14.00	16.63	34.50
Ann Arbor				9.75	12.29	30.25
Battle Creek					3.24	21.13
Kalamazoo						18.38
Chicago						

*Where gas is $2.50/gallon, car highway MPG is 20

Cost of Airfare One-Way* (dollars)

	Chicago (O'Hare)
Detroit	145

*Source: kayak.com

** Date used to find travel costs: December 15th, 2009

RECOMMENDATIONS

In 2009, Michigan received $40 million in federal funds to improve high speed rail service along the Chicago-Detroit rail corridor. After receiving about 12% of what the state had asked for, Michigan's legislators decided to invest exclusively in rail stations, renovating the existing ones in Troy and Battle Creek, while constructing a new station in Dearborn. In 2010 alone, MDOT has asked the federal government for over $350 million to prepare the corridor for high speed rail service. If history is any indication, Michigan will only receive a portion of the funds it had applied for. Therefore, this report provides an analysis of community perception's about high speed rail and advises Michigan policy makers on how to use federally awarded funds for high speed rail and what type of federal fund to apply for in order to comply with desires of local communities.

1. Aggressively pursue federal funds for high speed rail in Michigan

Almost **80%** of the surveyed population **wants a high speed rail link** between Detroit and Chicago. Ridership could potentially become competitive in the long-run, because rail transport is the second favorite mode of travel in Michigan (car is the first) for over 40% of the surveyed population. The local communities also believe that through investment in high speed rail, local economies will be stimulated; **over 75% expect better job accessibility**. Residents also expect new businesses, more tourists, and a general increase in their quality of life. However, **their willingness to pay for *the option*** of having high-speed rail service **averaged at only $20 per month**. About 40 % of the respondents were not willing to pay anything for creating high speed rail service. Therefore, federal funds have to be aggressively pursued in order to have maximum local support from local communities.

2. Expand rail service to the Detroit metro airport

According to communities directly affected by potential high-speed rail service, **over 50% would ride the train more frequently** if there was a connection to the Detroit metro airport (DTW). Comparatively, **this response on future travel behavior** (if a high speed rail was to become operational) was **by far the strongest motivator in increasing ridership** on the train. The airport link factor exceeded all other possible service improvements that could potentially enhance high speed rail service, such as better connectivity to other transit option or further parking possibilities. Therefore, future planning studies and analytical assessments should evaluate the option of access to DTW through high speed rail.

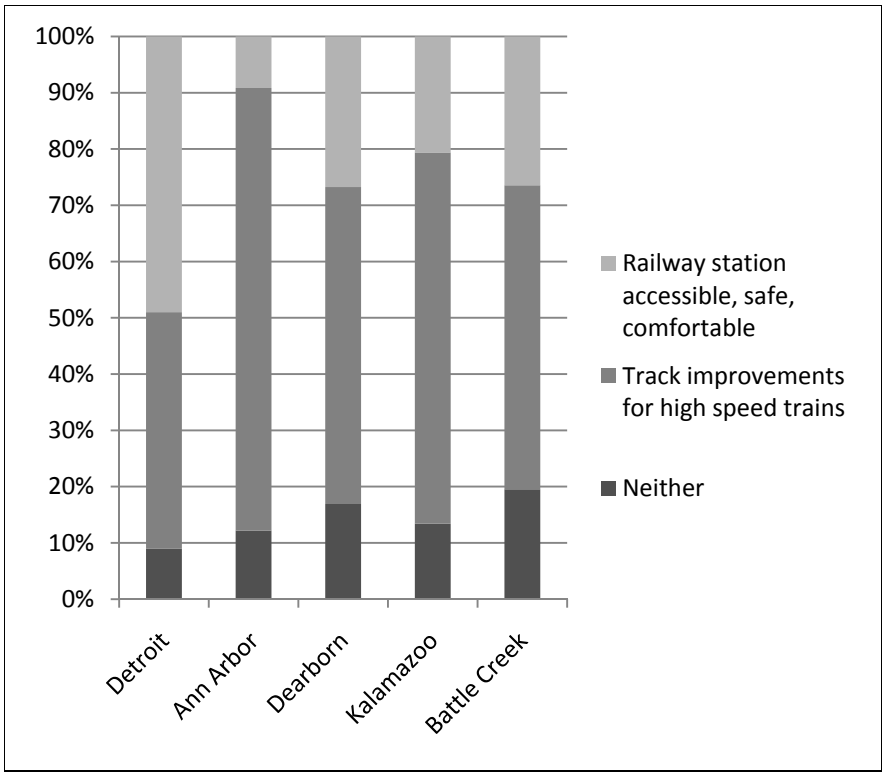
3. Invest in technology, infrastructure, and services that increase train speed

According to a ranking of preferences in the survey among train speed, frequent service and reliability, **the most important indicator for increasing ridership on the Wolverine line is having shorter travel times (train speed)**. The second factor to increase ridership is service (frequency of trains) and the last reliability (on-time performance). Therefore, future investments in high speed rail service should be first directed to increase train speed.

4. Invest in track improvements rather than in rail stations

Over 60% of the surveyed community members **support future investments in tracks for higher speeds**. In comparison, less than 25% of the communities approve of investments in rail stations. (The remainder wanted to invest in neither.) Even communities that have received federal funds for their own railway station prefer investments in track improvements rather than railway station. **This finding opposed the past spending decisions on high speed rail service**, as those new investments have been made exclusively into train stations. **The only exception** to that spending

policy **is Detroit**, where more people living in local communities around railway stations prefer investments in their rail station rather than in track improvements. Better accessibility to rail stations, such as train & bus connections, car parking or even more comfortable train stations have an almost negligible effect on ridership frequency,.



Summary

Communities living around railway stations support investment in high speed rail service, in particular through federal funds. The strongest driver for increasing ridership on the Wolverine line would be a stop at the Detroit metro airport. If a choice has to be made, surveyed communities prefer investment in technology, infrastructure and services that increase train speed (rather than on time performance or frequency). Especially, investments in rail stations compared to track improvements are not desired.

INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

- Bob Kuehne, MDOT, Passenger policy specialist in the office of high-speed rail and innovative project advancement (interviewed on Feb. 10th 2010), East Lansing
- Gerald P. Hutchison, Transit Manager at Battle Creek Transit (interviewed on Feb 12th 2010), Battle Creek
- William Schomisch, Executive director for the transportation department for the City of Kalamazoo (interviewed on Jan. 22nd 2010), Kalamazoo
- Timothy Roseboom, Manager of Strategic Planning, Detroit Department of Transportation, (interviewed on Feb. 5th 2010), Detroit
- Eli Cooper, Transportation Program Manager with the city of Ann Arbor, (interviewed Feb. 12th 2010), Ann Arbor
- Barry S. Murray, Director, Economic and Community Development, City of Dearborn (interviewed on Feb. 5th 2010), Dearborn

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