



Regional Return to Work Employer Survey Results

Receive and File

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Attachments: Yes

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Referring Committee: Transportation

1. Issue:

As part of the Regional Transit Network project, SACOG in partnership with Valley Vision, has completed two phases of Return to Work Employer Surveying. The survey results will assist the Regional Transit Network project staff working with regional transit operators to identify and plan future transit network routes.

2. Recommendation:

None; this item is for information only.

3. Background/Analysis:

In November 2021, SACOG was awarded, as part of the 12 percent SACOG Discretionary Share of the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), Section 5307 funds to complete a Regional Transit Network (RTN) Plan project to begin implementation of the 2021 Next Generation Transit Strategy. The RTN project started in May 2022. As travel patterns have changed in recent years, particularly those for downtown Sacramento-focused commutes, the region's transit operators requested that SACOG conduct surveying to assist in identifying future transit network routes with an understanding of the changes in place-based work that have occurred since the COVID-19 pandemic.

4. Discussion/Analysis:

SACOG partnered with Valley Vision in May 2022, to conduct two employer surveys over a one-year period. The survey efforts were staggered to try to determine the staying power of new modes of working including remote and hybrid, and to see the level of movement back to fully in person work as the region recovers from the pandemic.

The first Return to Work Employer Survey Report was completed in November 2022, and the second was completed at the beginning of September. The survey questions were centered around two major themes: transportation needs and workplace structure trends.

In comparing the 2023 survey effort results with those from 2022 the analysis found that:

- The majority of employers, 66 percent, continue to utilize a hybrid work structure and expect to maintain this structure for the next year to two years.
- More employers are seeing team members coming into the office more often than one year ago with many

workers able to choose their own schedule. Nearly three-quarters of all employer respondents, 68 percent, indicated that more than 75 percent of their workforce comes into the office at least once a week. This is a large increase over the 50 percent reported in 2022.

- Most employers surveyed indicated that only a small number of their staff are utilizing public transportation, and the majority are not offering any kind of transportation incentive. The exception being nonprofit organizations, public agencies, and industries that require high foot traffic for their business model. Sixty-three percent of survey respondents said that their workplace does not offer any transportation-related incentives for their employees, which means that this number nearly doubled from last year's 35 percent.
- Employers surveyed were not interested in utilizing or considering the use of co-working spaces, and on-site parking is not a primary concern except in the downtown area of Sacramento. Only 3 percent of respondents supported employees utilizing co-working spaces compared to 31 percent in 2022.
- Leasing agents were surveyed to try to see the future of employment siting. Employer tenants are looking for shorter leases and smaller spaces with increased interest outside the urban core because tenants are concerned about managing costs.

There is a clear relationship between transportation and improved economic outcomes. Lower income households consistently reflect lower vehicle ownership rates. SACOG may consider further surveying of regional residents soon that could focus on individuals and households in disadvantaged communities to better understand their transportation needs, how they would prioritize those needs, and gain information on strategies that might be beneficial. The resulting survey data could allow for the opportunity to significantly inform transit decisions by the proportion of the regional population that most relies on public transportation as a major source of their mobility. The additional survey could focus on transport needs related to travel to work, school, medical, support and training destinations. Results of this individual survey could find ways to explore ways to operate transit services in a way that improves regional economic equity.

Both the 2022 and 2023 Return to Work Employer Data Survey Reports are included as Attachments A and B. A presentation showing the findings and key takeaways from the 2023 Employer Survey with comparisons to the 2022 Survey is included as Attachment C.

5. Fiscal Impact/Grant Information:

The Return to Work Employer Surveying is a component of the Regional Transit Network Plan effort. The Regional Transit Network, including the Surveying, is funded by 2021 Federal Transit Administration American Rescue Plan Act. This funding source provided 100 percent federal funding for these efforts without requiring a local match.