


2016

Life in Hampton Roads Survey Press Release #4: Transportation

Social Science Research Center, Old Dominion University

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Life in Hampton Roads Survey Press Release #4

Transportation

This report examines regional perceptions of transportation related issues from the 2016 Life In Hampton Roads survey (LIHR 2016) conducted by the Old Dominion University Social Science Research Center. Data from prior years is also provided when available to show comparisons in responses over time. Responses were weighted by city population, race, age, gender, and phone usage (cell versus land-line) to be representative of the Hampton Roads region. For additional information on survey methodology, and analyses of other issues, please see the SSRC website at www.odu.edu/ssrc.

Every day, people traverse the eleven bridges and five tunnels in the Hampton Roads area, commuting for work, family, and other activities. The 2016 Life in Hampton Roads survey asked 962 residents of the Hampton Roads area about their driving habits, opinions on bridge and tunnel tolls, and views on alternative transportation.

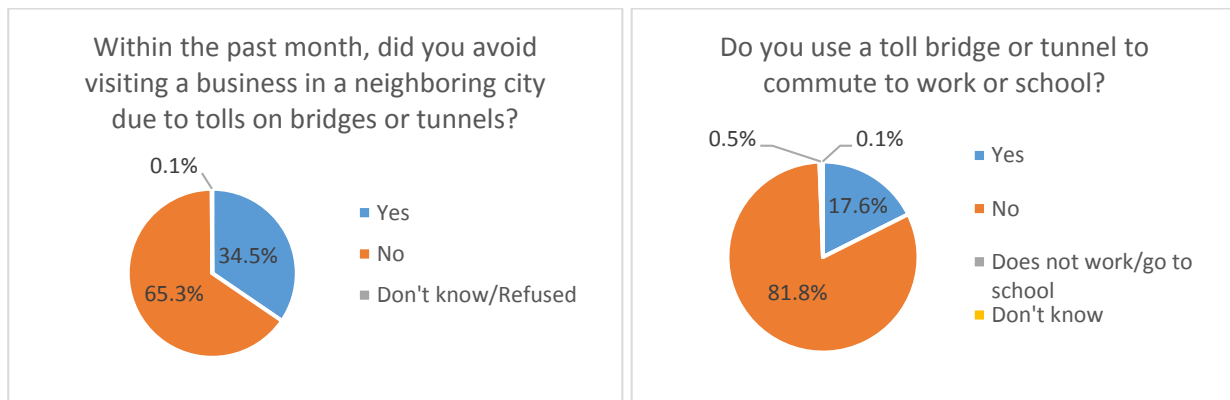
Hampton Roads residents report systematic declines in average commute times to work or school. From 2012 to 2014, average commute times hovered around 24 minutes, then decreased to an average commute time of 20 minutes in 2015, and decreasing even further to 18.1 minutes in 2016, the lowest reported commute time of the survey. However, in the past month, 45.5 percent of residents reported avoiding visiting a business in a neighboring city due to concerns about traffic congestion. This percentage slightly decreased by 0.7 percent from last year (46.2%). Despite the percentage being slightly lower than last year, Hampton Roads residents are avoiding visiting businesses that require them to drive through traffic congestion at fairly high rates.

Commute	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Average one-way commute, in minutes, to work or school.	23.9	24.8	24.4	20.0	18.1

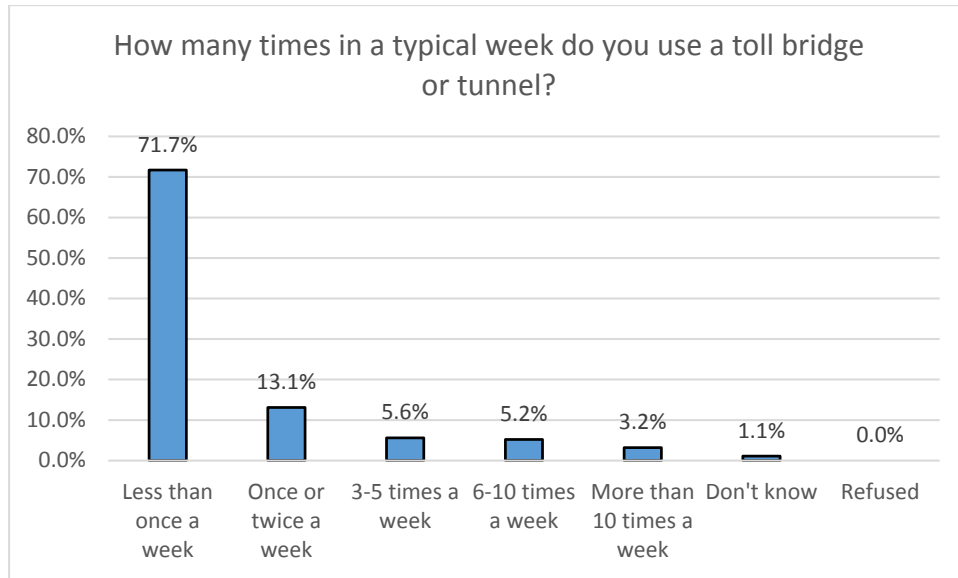


Bridge and Tunnel Tolls

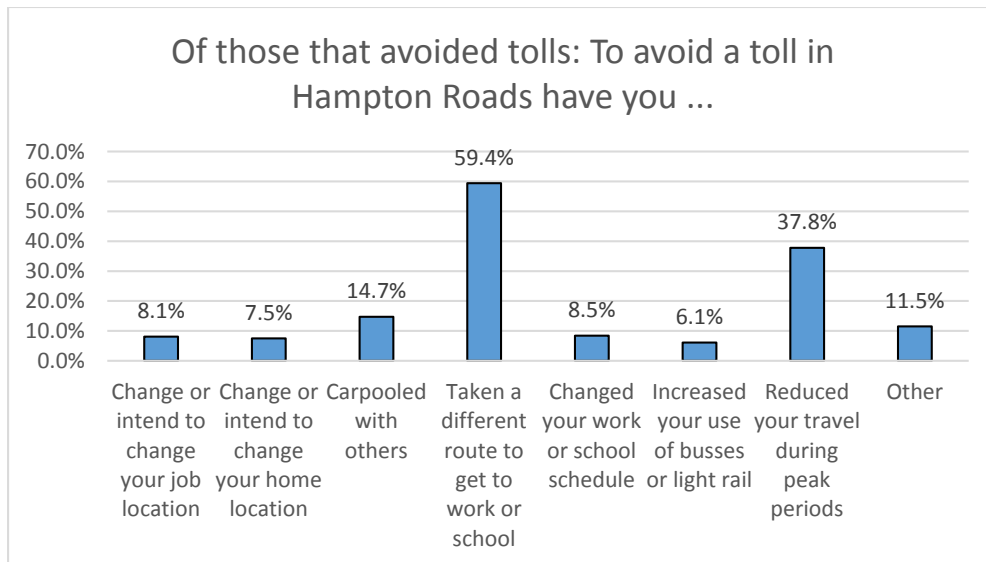
The 2016 Life in Hampton Roads survey asked several questions to help gauge opinions about the recently implemented tolls. When asked, 34.5 percent of respondents said they avoided visiting a business in a neighboring city due to tolls on bridges or tunnels in the past month. Only 17.6 percent said they use a toll bridge or tunnel to commute to work or school.



Respondents were asked how many times in a typical week they use a toll bridge or tunnel. The majority of respondents (71.7%) said they use a toll bridge or tunnel less than once a week. Another 13.1 percent said they use a toll bridge or tunnel once or twice a week and only 14 percent said they use a toll bridge or tunnel more than three times in a typical week.

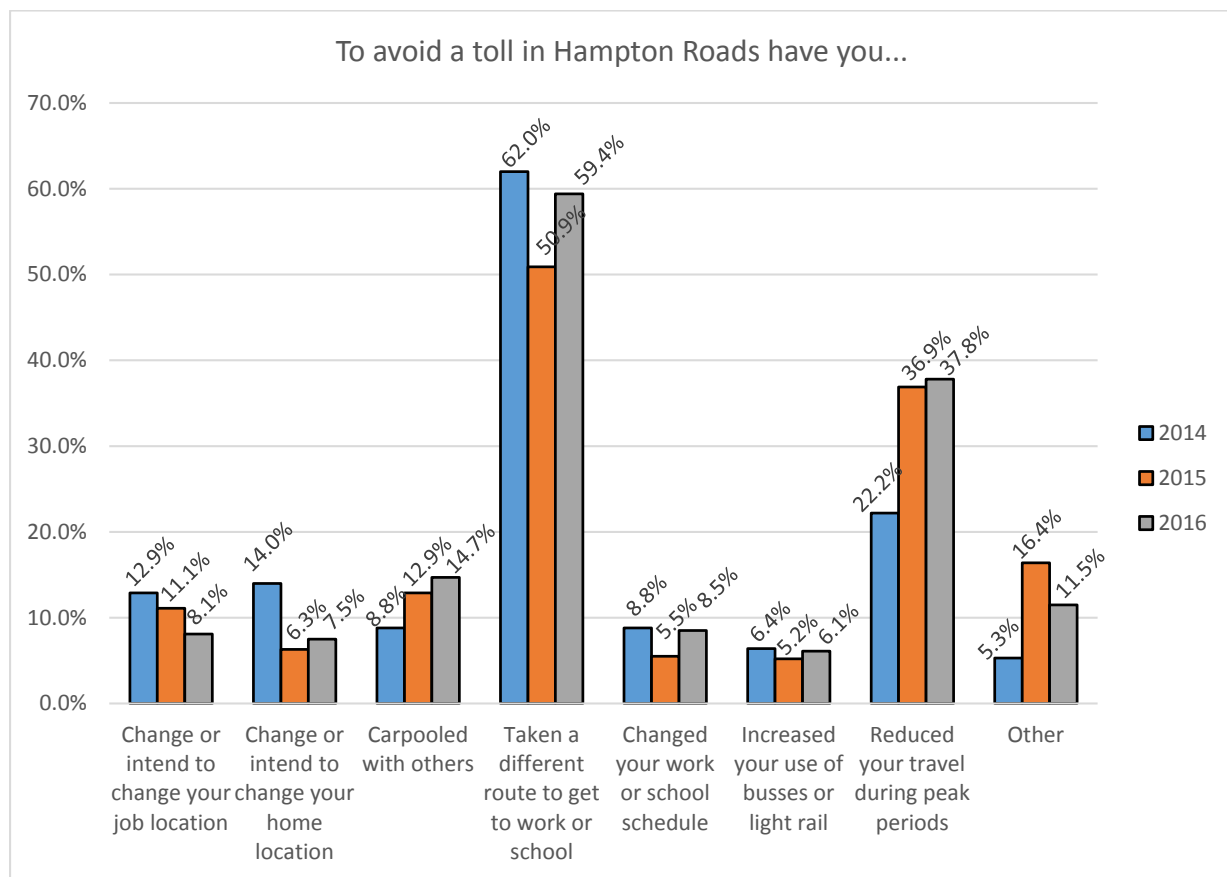


Respondents were also asked about whether they avoid tolls and the different methods used to avoid toll bridges and tunnels. Almost half (46.9%) said that they did not intentionally avoid the tolls. For those respondents who reported that they intentionally avoid tolls, two of the most commonly cited alternatives include taking a different route to work or school (59.4%) and reducing travel during peak hours (37.8%).



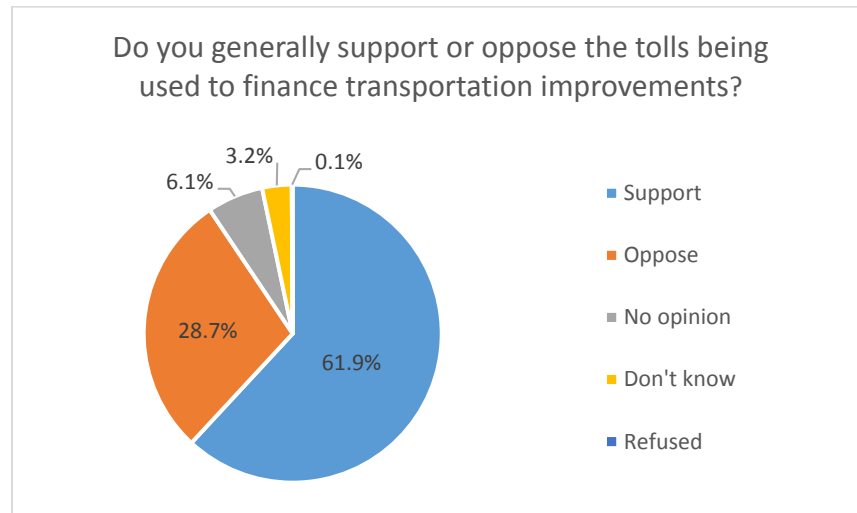
Almost half (46.9%) of the respondents reported not intentionally avoiding tolls, a 1.2 percent decrease since last year (48.1%), indicating that fewer respondents are changing their commutes and/or

travel budgets to bypass the tolls. However, of those respondents who avoid tolls, there was an 8.5 percent increase in those who took different routes from 2015 to 2016 (50.9% to 59.4%, respectively), returning to a similar percentage reported in 2014 (62.0%). Additionally, of those respondents who avoid tolls, there was a slight increase in those respondents who reduced their travel during peak periods from 2015 to 2016 (36.9% to 37.8%, respectively). Respondents who reported changing their work or school schedule also increased 2.9 percent from 2015 to 2016 (5.5% to 8.4%, respectively). Overall, these results point toward the effect tolls have had on regional commute and travel patterns.

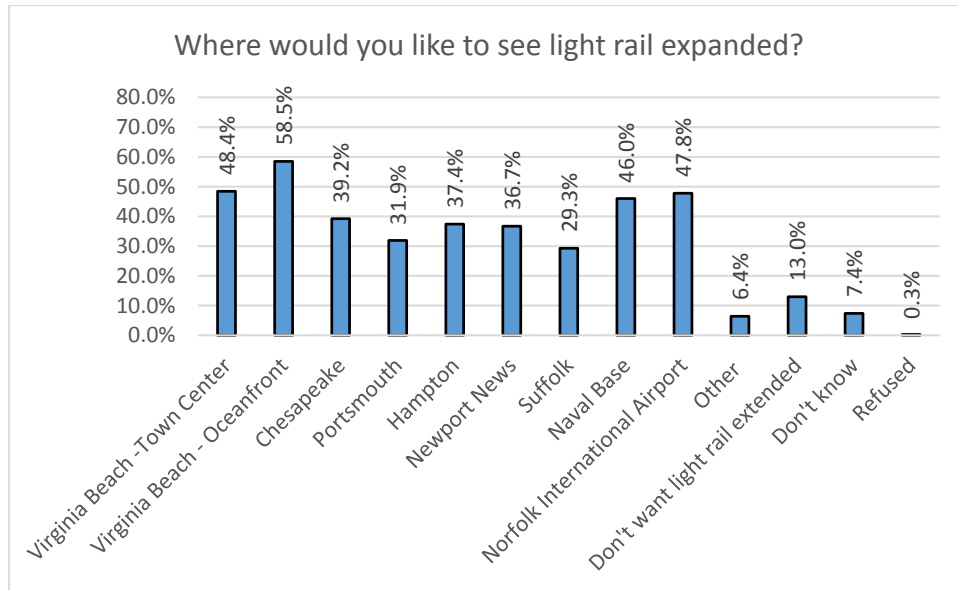


After asking respondents about their toll practices, respondents were asked if they generally support or oppose the tolls being used to finance transportation improvements, such as the Midtown and Downtown tunnel rehabilitation projects. Less than two-thirds of respondents reported they generally support the tolls being used to finance transportation improvements (61.9%), while less than a third of

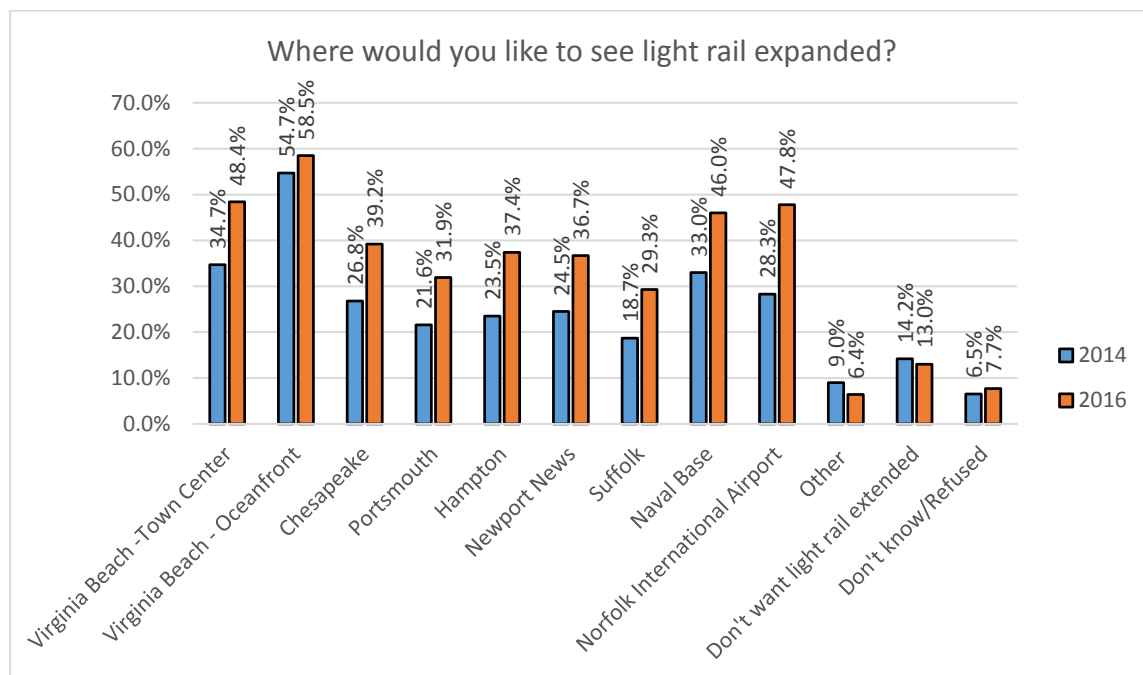
respondents reported they oppose the tolls being used to finance transportation improvements (28.7%). Another 6.1 percent of respondents reported they had no opinion on the tolls being used to finance transportation improvements and 3.2 percent of respondents reported they did not know if they support or oppose the tolls being used to finance transportation improvements.



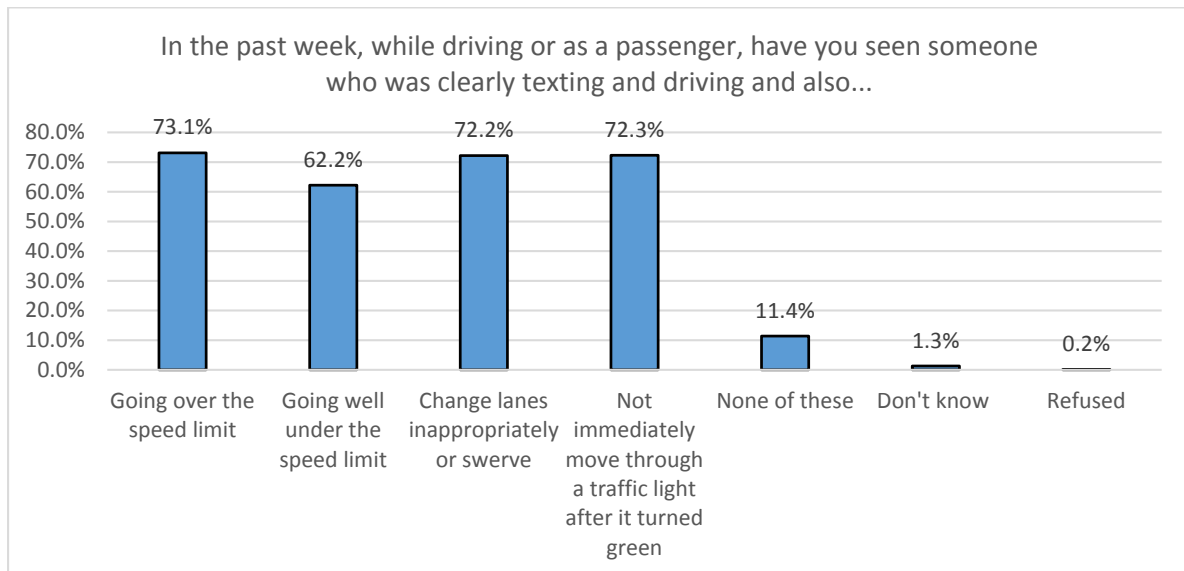
Respondents were also asked about where they would like to see light rail expanded in Hampton Roads. More than half of respondents reported that they would like to see light rail expanded to the Virginia Beach Oceanfront (58.5%). To a slightly lesser extent, respondents reported that they would like to see light rail expanded to Virginia Beach Towncenter (48.4%), the Norfolk International Airport (47.8%), and the Naval Base (46.0%). Respondents also reported that they would like to see light rail expanded to Chesapeake (39.2%), Hampton (37.4%), Newport News (36.7%), Portsmouth (31.9%), Suffolk (29.3%), and 6.4 percent to another location. Only 13 percent of respondents reported that they did not want light rail expanded. Another 7.4 percent reported that they did not know where they would like to see light rail expanded.



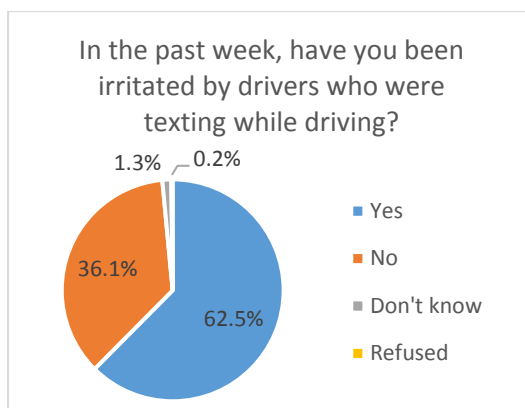
The percentage of respondents wanting light rail expanded to all provided options increased between 2014 and 2016. This question was not asked in the 2015 Life in Hampton Roads survey. The largest increase was for respondents wanting to see the light rail expanded to Norfolk International Airport. In 2014, only 28.3 percent of respondents wanted to see the light rail expanded to Norfolk International Airport, but this percentage increased almost 20 percent in 2016 (47.8%).



Additionally, respondents were asked questions about texting and driving. Most respondents indicated that within the past week, they had seen someone who was clearly texting and driving and also going over the speed limit (73.1%), going well under the speed limit (62.2%), changing lanes inappropriately or swerving (72.2%), and not immediately moving through a traffic light after it turned green (72.3%). Only 11.4 percent of respondents reported that they had not seen someone who was clearly texting and driving and committing any of the listed driving infractions.



Respondents were also asked if they had been irritated by drivers who were texting while driving in the past week. Almost two-thirds of respondents reported that they were irritated by drivers who were texting while driving (62.5%) while 36.1 percent of respondents reported that they were not irritated by drivers who were texting while driving.



The 2016 LIHR survey reveals a region with ongoing and substantial transportation challenges. The imposition of tolls on regional bridges and tunnels has led to substantial changes in traffic and commute patterns with 59.4 percent of those who intentionally avoid tolls reporting taking a different route to work or school. Less than two-thirds of respondents support tolls being used to finance transportation improvements. More respondents report being deterred from visiting neighboring cities due to congestion (45.5%) rather than tolls (34.5%). However, the average one-way commute reported (18.1 minutes) was the lowest reported in the last five years.

All Life in Hampton Roads data summaries will be placed on the Social Science Research Center website as they are released (<http://www.odu.edu/al/centers/ssrc>). Follow-up questions about the 2016 Life in Hampton Roads survey should be addressed to:

Randy Gainey, PhD
 Faculty Director
 The Social Science Research Center
 Professor of Sociology and Criminal Justice
 Old Dominion University
 757-683-4794 (office)
rgainey@odu.edu

Or

Tancy Vandecar-Burdin, PhD
 Associate Director
 The Social Science Research Center
 Old Dominion University
 757-683-3802 (office)
tvandeca@odu.edu