Journey to School

The National Household Transportation Survey (NHTS) is a comprehensive survey of personal travel in the U.S. conducted by the U.S. Department of Transportation approximately every eight years. Survey participants completed a one-day travel diary and telephone interview. Surveys were conducted throughout the year, providing travel data for all seasons. In this Fact Sheet, TRC researchers explore how Vermont students, ages 5-18, travel to school. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, as of 2005, approximately 28% of Vermont households had children less than 18 years of age. The 2009 NHTS results provide recent data on 220 students in Vermont and their journeys to school. If more than one school-aged child was present in a surveyed household, data was only collected for one child.

Respondents were asked how their child ‘usually’ travels to school, as well as how they traveled to school on their randomly assigned travel day. Many respondents stated that their ‘usual’ mode of transport to school was different than the actual mode they used on the travel day they were questioned. This led to a difference between what respondents said they usually travelled versus what they reported actually travelling.

Respondents’ mean journey to school distance was 5.1 miles ± 5.1. More than 30% of students surveyed live within 5 miles of school, and less than 10% live more than 15 miles away.

Respondents were also asked about factors along their children’s route to school that might impede biking or walking. Both the amount and speed of traffic along the school route were cited as a serious issue by more than half of people surveyed.

The mean grade that parents reported allowing their child to walk or bike to school alone differed for boys and girls: 6.8 for girls and 5.3 for boys.