State of Transit Access for Harrah’s New Orleans Hotel & Casino Employees
Executive Summary

86% of Harrah’s employees who rely on transit are “time-burdened” and have total commute times of more than 30 minutes. Nearly half of Harrah’s riders are “severely time-burdened” and have commutes of 60 minutes or longer. This puts them at a disadvantage to employees with access to a personal vehicle.

In addition to the daily time disadvantage transit riders endure, they also are at a higher risk of being late for work due to a lack of frequency and reliability in our transit system. 29% of employees surveyed had been late to work three times or more in the previous month.

These findings are the result of a Ride New Orleans survey of Harrah’s employees commuting patterns and relationship with public transit from December 2016 to January 2017. Employees described their commutes, evaluated how often transit service impacted their ability to get to work on time, and chose the transit improvements that they believe would have the most positive impacts on their lives.

The top three potential improvements are:

- Reliable service picking up every 15 minutes or less
- A safe, comfortable place to wait for the bus or streetcar
- More regular late-night, early morning, and weekend service

The findings are especially notable because Harrah’s, overall, is a model employer when it comes to creating a transit-friendly work environment. The physical location is adjacent to two of the most frequent transit lines in the
city (the Cemeteries and City Park streetcar lines) and several other bus lines, management actively examines issues surrounding employee access via transit, and the company offers transit passes to employees at a 50 percent discount.

Yet, despite that level of focus, employees report reliability and trip time issues with their transit that could make it significantly harder to achieve the quality of life employees with private cars may have.

Harrah’s can help to change this situation by continuing to be an active stakeholder in supporting the top transit priorities identified by Harrah’s employees. Those priorities include increasing frequent and reliable transit service, more shelters and seating at transit stops, and expansion of late-night, early morning, and weekend service hours.

These focus areas will improve the quality of life for Harrah’s workers by increasing reliability, enhancing rider amenities like bus stop infrastructure, and reducing overall commute time.

Ride New Orleans is the leading transit advocacy organization in the New Orleans region. We work with transit riders and residents to win policy improvements for better bus, streetcar, and ferry service. Our vision is a world class, multi-modal transportation system that promotes an equitable, healthy, and sustainable New Orleans region.
Introduction — A Great Deal

Harrah’s New Orleans employs 2,400 employees for a variety of shifts and operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Harrah’s estimates that at least 10% of the employee base, or 240 employees, are reliant on public transit to get them to and from work; however, this number could be much higher.

To support these employees, Harrah’s provides a unique transit perk and offers 100 monthly transit passes at half off the regular price.

Of the one hundred passes sold every month, ninety are from the New Orleans Regional Transit Authority (RTA) and ten are from Jefferson Parish Transit (JeT). RTA month-long “Jazzy Passes” normally cost $55 and are sold for $27.50 while JeT’s “VIP Monthly Passes” normally cost $60 and are sold for $30. The discounted passes sell out every month.

The program has increased from 60 to 75 to 100 passes sold per month. Harrah’s representatives say the company could expand the discount pass program if there is growing demand and positive feedback from employees.

Harrah’s wanted to better understand how employees use transit, the challenges they face as riders, and how they can further support their workers. To this end, Harrah’s and Ride New Orleans partnered to create a more comprehensive analysis of their employees and their use of public transportation via a survey and interviews with selected participants.

Employees voiced how much they appreciated the transit pass sale but also the many challenges of being transit-reliant.

Harrah’s Employee Profiles

After taking the survey, several Harrah’s employees agreed to be interviewed to describe in more detail how they utilize public transportation. The interview questions are listed below:

• Please describe your typical commute.
• What do you like about using transit? What works well for you?
• What are some of the challenges of using transit?
• How does this impact your everyday life?
• What would you like to see changed or improved?
• Describe your ideal commute or how would you describe “quality transit”?

Throughout the report, you’ll meet Harrah’s employees and better understand their daily commutes and what they feel needs to be improved.

“I’d like transit to be available to more people. I’d like it to run later and more frequently. I think more employers should offer monthly discounts. That’s very important, I love that Harrah’s does that and it saves me a lot of money. I use it almost every day.”

—Sarah Davis
Employee Survey

We surveyed 76 Harrah’s employees. The survey was focused on employees that use transit but was not limited to transit riders.

We collected survey responses in three primary ways:

- Via email
- In person during the December 2016 and January 2017 monthly transit pass sales
- At several daily Harrah’s staff meetings.

In addition to demographic information, the survey asked employees:

- Do you use transit?
- If you don’t use transit, why not?
- How long does it take you to get to work?
- What time of day do you typically use transit?
- What times of day would you like to see improved transit service?
- What other transit improvements would you prioritize?

Respondents also ranked their most important transit priorities and how many times they had been late in the previous 30 days because of unreliable transit service.

Of the 76 employees, 59 were classified as “riders,” taking transit either every day, weekly, or sometimes. 17 employees were classified as “non-riders,” who take transit rarely or not at all.

Rider Profile

Sarah Davis

“I live in Mid-City and take the Canal Streetcar straight down to the end of line to get to work. I like that I have one ride, it’s only 20 minutes to get there, and I can sit back, listen to some music, and get into my ‘work mode.’ Mostly I ride the streetcar more than buses. It’s straightforward and you think it would be easy but if I’m going anywhere else [besides work] it’s definitely not easy.

Sometimes I shop in Mid-City or the #94 Broad to Walmart in Gentilly or the #91 Jackson-Esplanade to the Uptown Walmart. I use the St Charles streetcar to take my daughter to her doctor appointments.

My shift is from 9 a.m. – 5:30 p.m., the streetcar is still fast but it can get crowded. Before I had a 7 p.m. to one or two a.m. [shift] on the weekends, [to get to work] it took a long time even though it was a straight shot because traffic would be outrageous, lots of people would be out, and it just took a frustratingly longer time.

Figure 1: Employees gender

Figure 2: Employees age range, in years

Source: Ride New Orleans analysis of Harrah’s Employee Transit Survey

Ride New Orleans Page 4
Findings

86% of Harrah's transit riders have a “time-burdened” commute

The average one-way New Orleans commute is 23 minutes (U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2013). Based on that average, we define one-way commutes over 30 minutes as “time-burdened” and one-way commutes over 60 minutes as “severely time-burdened.”

There is a stark divide in total time between commutes via car and commutes via public transit. Ride New Orleans research shows that the average New Orleanian can access 89% of the region’s jobs within a 30-minute drive, but only 11% of the region’s jobs within a 30-minute transit commute. It’s possible to reach every job in the area within 60 minutes by car, while only 44% of jobs are within reach on public transportation in 60 minutes. This regional analysis includes jobs in Jefferson, Orleans, and St. Bernard parishes.

The survey matched up generally with this regional picture. We asked Harrah’s riders how much time they needed to ensure they got to work on time – from the time they left their house until their shift started – and the results showed long daily trips for transit riders.

86% of Harrah’s employees who rely on transit are “time-burdened” and have commutes of more than 30 minutes. Nearly half of Harrah’s riders are “severely time-burdened,” with commutes of 60 minutes or longer.

25% of the “severely time-burdened” commuters reported daily trip times of 90 minutes or more.

To put that in perspective, 25% of Harrah’s transit-riding employees are losing a minimum of three hours a day to transit travel and transfer wait times. This group experiences extreme time burdens on their daily quality of life. They are losing two hours and 14 minutes every day in contrast to the average commuter in the region.

Rider Profile

“...My shift starts at 7:30 a.m. and I’ll be at the bus stop in Kenner at 10 minutes to 6 a.m. I mainly take the Jefferson Parish E3 bus to Carrollton and Claiborne and can transfer to the RTA to catch the #39 Tulane, the #16 Claiborne, or the St. Charles Streetcar. I have a lot of transfer options there coming from Kenner. It takes about 40 minutes from Kenner to Claiborne. The streetcar is there first usually but I’ll probably take the Tulane because it’s faster than the streetcar. I’ll get off at Poydras and walk 10 minutes to Harrah’s.

The buses not breaking down on me lately that’s what’s working well for me! Indeed. It’s pretty bad, because we have to wait and it impacts me getting there on time. I just deal with it, I don’t really complain. Just call my job and let them know I’m going to be late. Other than that, it works pretty well. At times, it can be a challenge to cross parish lines. Typically my commute takes an hour and half. Quality transit is buses every 15 to 20 minutes.”

Figure 4: Transit-riding employees with a “time-burdened” commute

Source: Ride New Orleans analysis of Harrah’s Employee Transit Survey
Running late, again

Despite riders giving themselves additional time to get to work before their shift, on-time reliability was also a major issue.

- 59% of transit-riding employees reported being late due to unreliable transit connections more than once in the last month.

- Nearly one-third, or 29% of transit-riding employees were late to work three times or more in the previous month because of unreliable transit service.

Figure 5: Number of times late to work, in the previous month

Rhynisha Warsley

“I’m a mother with two kids and it’s really hard getting around on the bus with one or both of my children.

I’m traveling from uptown New Orleans near Martin Luther King and I have multiple buses to work. I can take the #28 MLK to the #16 Claiborne that can take me all the way to Harrah’s. Or walk a couple blocks to the St. Charles streetcar and transfer to catch the Canal streetcar to Harrah’s. Or the #91 Jackson. Or now the #15 Freret—it goes all the way back. It’s awesome, awesome, awesome! I’m so glad it’s back. Now I have more ways to get to work.

However, I leave my house two hours early because you never know what’s going to happen. The bus breaks down or the streetcar stops. There’s blockage in the roadway, you never know so you have to give yourself enough time to do what you got to do.

I start work at 3 p.m. so I’ll leave at 1:18 and then I’ll go all the way and get off at
Employee Priorities

We asked respondents to rank their most important transit priorities. Employees could choose between six community priorities developed from Ride New Orleans rider outreach and engagement. The results show – from a rider perspective – what improvements would most improve transit.

The most important priority for transit-riding Harrah’s workers is more frequent and reliable service overall. They also prioritize better transit stop infrastructure, like more seating and shelters at stops, as well as expanding late-night, early morning, and weekend service.

The least significant transit concern is overcrowding and the ability to always get a seat during their trip. This doesn’t mean that priority is unimportant, just that Harrah’s employees rank other priorities above them.

Employee’s transit priorities are listed below and ranked in order from most important to least important:

- Reliable service picking up every 15 minutes or less
- A safe, comfortable place to wait for the bus or streetcar
- More regular late night, early morning, and weekend service
- The fastest possible trip time to my destination
- Faster transfers between bus or streetcar lines
- Always being able to get a seat on the bus

Canal Street. If the streetcar isn’t there then I’ll walk and sightsee sometimes or if I leave my house at 2:18 p.m. and then I’ll hurry up and catch the streetcar. It takes ten minutes from my house to Canal and about five minutes from there.

It’s about 30 minutes if it worked perfectly but sometimes I’ll leave two hours early just in case.

During the week, I like the #91 Jackson-Esplanade because it runs every 30 minutes and there’s a chance if I miss one then I can catch another. But Saturday’s and Sunday’s it’s really hard because it’s every hour and I don’t want to push it because I have to transfer and the streetcars aren’t running that often either.

I’d like to see RTA communicate with the riders more. My biggest issue is they don’t communicate detours at stops and you think you’re at the right spot and the driver will automatically pass you up. And if you’re late to work, you’re late, and you get written up. That the bus passes you up, that’s not an excuse but it does happen.”

—I leave my house two hours early because you never know what’s going to happen. The bus breaks down or the streetcar stops ... and if you’re late to work, you’re late, and you get written up. That the bus passes you up – that’s not an excuse, but it does happen.”

—Rhynisha Warsley
What times of day does service need to be improved?

Transit-riding Harrah’s employees were asked what times of day they would most like to see service improvements. With the ability to check multiple periods of the day, all options were popular but three periods most stood out.

Consistent with their most popular reported travels times of 6 a.m. to 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., Harrah’s employees prioritize service improvements during the peak morning and evening rush hours.

There is also a significant desire to increase late night service, from 12 a.m. to 4 a.m. Only 11 percent of respondents report currently taking transit during that time-period, indicating a latent demand from Harrah’s employees for better late-night service. This makes sense for employees of a 24-hour business.

Currently, there are no Jefferson Transit lines that run 24 hours, meaning transit-riding Harrah’s employees from Jefferson Parish are unable to use transit to or from their homes between 10 p.m. and 5:30 a.m.

In the RTA system, service from 12 a.m. to 4 a.m. has improved over the last two years. There are currently eleven lines that provide service overnight, with ten providing service at least once an hour.

But service is still inconsistent and inconvenient, according to regular riders. Many routes leave the CBD from Elk Place and Canal, which is difficult for Harrah’s employees to conveniently reach during the overnight hours. New Orleans East and the West Bank are serviced by “Owl” lines that combine several regular lines into much longer, sprawling routes that can be inconvenient for riders.

Rider Profile

Brianca Cayette

“I’m riding from New Orleans East everyday and take the #64 Read-Crowder, #62 Morrison Express, #65 Read-Crowder Express, and also the #94 Broad buses. Then I transfer to the Canal streetcar to get to work at Harrah’s.

The fastest my trip ever takes is one to one and a half hours. My shift starts at 3 p.m. and there’s a two hour window every time and I have to wake up earlier too because the bus isn’t always on time. Sometimes it can take up to two and half hours and it’s usually worse on the weekends because you have to wait longer for transfers.

My neighborhood has more options and I like that I’m not limited to one bus. I also like the affordable fare and that I get a discount being a Harrah’s employee. Just for us employees they give us a monthly pass that’s half off so instead of paying $55 it’s only $27.50.

The buses aren’t always on schedule. It seems that the #94 Broad is more off schedule and the text option that is supposed tell you when the bus is here isn’t accurate. Then you ask the driver about what happened to the bus
that didn’t show up or ask why they’re late and the driver gets an attitude. The drivers could have better attitudes.

It’s unreliable so it makes feel like I can’t depend on them and I have to find an alternative route to get to work because I know they’re not dependable.

What I would like to see improved is more frequent trips on the bus lines. We also need safer stop locations especially at main transfer points and bus drivers with better attitudes.

We need more frequent trips. Because I use public transportation daily—if I’m going to visit my mom, visit my sister, or visit any of my friends or to come downtown just to shop I take public transportation. And my view of the quality transit is to have more frequent options. I want more options.”

“\textit{I’m riding from New Orleans East everyday and the fastest my trip ever takes is one to one and a half hours. What I would like to see improved is more frequent trips on the bus lines ... quality transit is having more frequent options.}”

—Brianca Cayette

\textbf{Figure 6: Transit priorities for all employees}

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\textit{Source: Ride New Orleans analysis of Harrah's Employee Transit Survey}
Rider Profile

Marie Broussard

“I get up in the morning and I’m to the bus stop at 5:15 in the morning. I catch the St. Claude from the upper ninth ward. The bus comes regularly unless the St. Claude Bridge goes up or we get stuck behind a train on Press St.

Some drivers call dispatch to see if they can go around the bridge or train, some drivers don’t. You have a lot of riders angry. I’d like the RTA to be on the same page as far as having a consistent system for RTA drivers to get away from these obstacles and to keep us running properly.

Now I work the 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. shift and I make sure I leave early enough because the inconsistency brings uncertainty. For example, special events like Mardi Gras and the NBA All-Star game, the streetcars don’t go down Canal. I like that I have other options like the #5 Bywater, the #55 Elysian Fields, and the Riverfront Streetcar.

I’d like to see more supervisors on the routes to see the dangers for

“Now I work the 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. shift and I make sure I leave early enough because the inconsistency brings uncertainty. We need consistency with the streetcars and buses running for the locals as well as the tourists. We all can be on the same page and we all can be happy.”

—Marie Broussard
Marie Broussard, continued from pg. 11

commuters. To feel the RTA cares about us, especially in remote areas like my neighborhood.

I’d also like to see better transfer points especially at the main stops downtown. For example, there should be a bus stop for the Jackson-Esplanade Bus at Common and South Rampart Streets so riders can make the most of the Hub on Loyola Avenue near the Public Library.”

“At times, it can be a challenge to cross Parish lines. Typically, my commute takes an hour and a half.”
—Leward Moore

Figure 9: Survey respondents by zip code

Source: Ride New Orleans analysis of Harrah’s Employee Transit Survey
Riders & Non-Riders

Non-riders have diverse reasons why they do not ride transit often:

- Takes too long (24%)
- Doesn’t stop in a convenient location (24%)
- Prefer to drive (29%)
- To maintain flexibility before and after work (24%)

12 out of 17 non-riders said they would ride if there were more frequent and reliable transit service.

Having access to a car is not the sole reason why employees do not ride. Lack of convenient transit services is a greater barrier to employee ridership. If non-riders had more competitive transit options, many of them would likely opt to become more frequent riders.

**90.4% of all employees surveyed said they would take transit more often if service were more frequent and reliable.**
Conclusion & Key Facts

- 86% of Harrah’s employees who rely on transit are “time-burdened” with commutes longer than 30 minutes.

- Nearly half of Harrah’s transit riders are “severely time-burdened,” with a commute of 60 minutes or longer. 25% of transit-riding employees report total one-way commute times of 90 minutes or more.

- 25% of Harrah’s transit riding employees are losing 2 hours and 14 minutes every day in contrast to the average New Orleanian commuter.

- 29% of transit-riding employees surveyed had been late to work three times or more in the previous month.

- The top three employee transit priorities are:
  - Reliable service picking up every 15 minutes or less
  - A safe, comfortable place to wait for the bus or streetcar
  - More regular late night, early morning, and weekend service

- Employees would also like to see more frequent service during peak commute times and late at night.

- 90.4% of all employees surveyed said they would take transit more often if service were more frequent and reliable.
Survey Questions and Raw Data

1. What is your zip-code? (75 responses)

70001: One
70003: One
70006: Three
70008: Three
70002: Two
70007: Two
70009: Two
70112: Four
70113: Four
70114: One
70115: Five
70116: Four
70117: Seven
70118: Four
70119: Five
70122: Five
70126: Two
70127: Four
70128: Two
70130: Two
70131: Four
70363: One

If you checked rarely or not at all:

5. Would you take transit if it was more frequent or reliable? (52 responses)

Yes: 47
No: 5

6. What’s the biggest reason you don’t take transit? (39 responses)

Takes too long: 15
Doesn’t stop in a convenient location to me: 7
Prefer to drive: 7
Don’t feel safe: 2
Maintain flexibility before or after work: 8

If you checked “Daily” “Weekly” or “Sometimes”:

7. What transit lines do you take to work? (58 responses) (Total responses)

#10 Tchoupitoulas
#11 Magazine
#114 / #115 General DeGaulle
#114 / #115 General DeGaulle
#114 / #115 General DeGaulle
#114 / #115 General DeGaulle
#114 / #115 General DeGaulle
#115 General DeGaulle, Canal Streetcar
#32 Leonidas-Treme
#39 Tulane
#39 Tulane, St. Charles Streetcar
#51 / #52 St. Bernard
#55 Elysian Fields
#55 Elysian Fields
#55 Elysian Fields
#55 Elysian Fields, # 88 St. Claude/Jackson Barracks, Loyola and Canal Streetcar

Streetcars
#55 Elysian Fields, #11 Magazine
#57 Franklin
#62 Morrison
#62 Morrison Express
#62 Morrison Express, #64 Lake Forest Express, #65 Read-Crowder Express, Canal Streetcar
#64 Lake Forest Express
#64 Lake Forest Express
#65 Crowder Read, Canal Streetcar
#65 Read-Crowder, #62 Morrison Express
#80 Desire-Louisa
#80 Desire-Louisa
#88 St. Claude/Jackson Barracks,
#84 Galvez, #55 Elysian Fields
#91 Jackson-Esplanade
#91 Jackson-Esplanade
#91 Jackson-Esplanade, #84 Galvez, #94 Broad, #39 Tulane, Canal Streetcar
#91 Jackson-Esplanade, #94 Broad, St. Charles Streetcar, Canal Streetcar
#94 Broad
#94 Broad / #55 Elysian Fields
#94 Broad, #51 / #52 St. Bernard Bus, Canal Streetcar
#94 Broad, Canal Streetcar, St. Charles Streetcar
#94 Broad, Canal Streetcar
#94 Broad, Canal Streetcar or #91 Jackson-Esplanade Bus
Canal Streetcar
Canal Streetcar
Car
I drive to work
JeT
Jet
JeT: W2 Westbank Expressway, W3 Lapalco, W-SL Westbank Sunday Loop
Loyola-Rampart Streetcar, Canal Streetcar
N/A
N/A
N/A
Poydras
RTA
RTA
RTA (bus/streetcar)
RTA and JeT
8. How long does your average trip take? (68 responses)

- Less than 30 minutes: 22
- Between 30 minutes and 60 minutes: 33
- Between 60 minutes and 90 minutes: 7
- Between 90 minutes and 2 hours: 5
- More than 2 hours but less than 3 hours: 1
- More than 3 hours: 0

9. What’s the longest your trip ever takes? (67 responses)

- Less than 30 minutes: 9
- Between 30 minutes and 60 minutes: 28
- Between 60 minutes and 90 minutes: 13
- Between 90 minutes and 2 hours: 11
- More than 2 hours but less than 3 hours: 4
- More than 3 hours: 2

10. What’s the fastest your trip ever takes? (66 responses)

- Less than 30 minutes: 44
- Between 30 minutes and 60 minutes: 14
- Between 60 minutes and 90 minutes: 6
- Between 90 minutes and 2 hours: 2
- More than 2 hours but less than 3 hours: 0
- More than 3 hours: 0

11. Rank in order of importance the following transit features (1 is most important to 6 least important) (Total responses):

- Reliable service picking up every 15 minutes or less

  - One, most important: 39
  - Two: 16
  - Three: 6
  - Four: 3

- A safe, comfortable place to wait for the bus or streetcar

  - One, most important: 36
  - Two: 11
  - Three: 9
  - Four: 3
  - Five: 3
  - Six, least important: 4

- The fastest possible trip time to my destination

  - One, most important: 26
  - Two: 10
  - Three: 11
  - Four: 6
  - Five: 10
  - Six, least important: 2

- Always being able to get a seat on the bus

  - One, most important: 21
  - Two: 14
  - Three: 8
  - Four: 5
  - Five: 3
  - Six, least important: 14

- More regular late night, early morning, & weekend service

  - One, most important: 32
  - Two: 6
  - Three: 9
  - Four: 6
  - Five: 5
  - Six, least important: 9

- Faster transfers between bus or streetcar lines

  - One, most important: 23
  - Two: 10
  - Three: 7
  - Four: 9
  - Five: 8
  - Six, least important: 8

12. What times of day do you typically take public transit? (Check all that apply) (70 responses)

- Early Morning (4 - 6 AM): 18
- Morning (6 AM - 10 AM): 36
- Mid-Day (10 AM - 4 PM): 25
- Evening (4 - 8 PM): 27
- Night (8 - 12 PM): 19
- Late Night (12 - 4 AM): 8

13. What times of day would you like to see more frequent transit service? (Check all that apply) (76 responses)

- Early Morning (4 - 6 AM): 22
- Morning (6 AM - 10 AM): 25
- Mid-Day (10 AM - 4 PM): 22
- Evening (4 - 8 PM): 27
- Night (8 - 12 PM): 24
- Late Night (12 - 4 AM): 25

14. From when you leave your house until your shift starts, how much time overall do you give yourself to ensure that you get to work on time? (73 responses)

- Less than 30 minutes: 11
- Between 30 minutes and 60 minutes: 27
- Between 60 minutes and 90 minutes: 15
- Between 90 minutes and 2 hours: 13
- More than 2 hours but less than 3 hours: 7
- More than 3 hours: 11

15. In the past month, how many times have you been late to work or an appointment because transit wasn’t reliable? (70 responses)

- Zero: 29
- One: 10
- Two: 11
- Three: 14
- Four: 2
- Five: 1
- Six or more: 3