

Survey Shows Parents Misjudge Risk of Driving to School

RALEIGH, N.C. – A new study released in February reports that Wake County parents miscalculate the danger their children face while being transported to school, rating the family car as safer than a yellow school bus.

The School Transportation Group (STG) at the Institute for Transportation Research and Education asked 5,000 households to appraise the safety of three different modes of school transportation: "walking," "riding the school bus" and "driven by parent." STG found that 65 percent of parents think driving their children to school is a "very safe" mode of transportation, whereas 1 percent

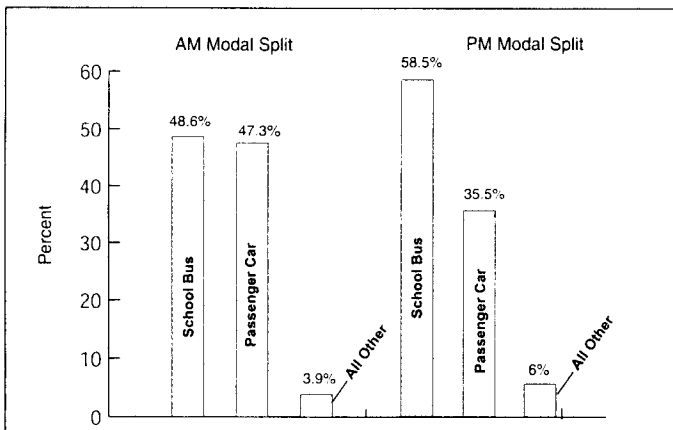
deem it "not safe." Thirty-five percent said the school bus is "very safe" and 3 percent said it is "not safe."

Pointing to parental misconceptions, the survey quoted statistics from NHTSA's Fatality Analysis Reporting System that indicated 600 school-age children are killed annually in

passenger vehicles during regular school hours, as opposed to about 15 school-age children in school buses. The survey also showed that less than 6 percent of students walk or ride

bikes to school, or use contracted vans or public transit. School buses and passenger vehicles transport the remaining number of students about evenly, meaning thousands of children are susceptible to high crash rates.

The two most popular reasons why more students do not ride the bus are morning pick-up times are too early or don't meet parent schedules and concerns regarding student behavior. Of those parents who do utilize school bus services, 70 percent said they are satisfied with the reliability of bus arrival time. As to the level of interest in transportation technologies, the study stated about 50 percent of parents support the Wake County Public School System purchase of GPS tracking systems and 48 percent are willing to pay for a bus alert paging system.



Among the modes of school transportation, school bus usage is highest after school and passenger car usage is highest in the morning.



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