

## **GWTA holds customer satisfaction study**

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By [From staff reports](#)

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The Goldsboro-Wayne Transportation Authority held its first customer satisfaction survey the week of March 7. The study was designed to set benchmarks for company improvement moving forward.

Surveyors interviewed 137 fixed-route passengers and 78 rural van passengers over the course of three days. GWTA Director Fred Fontana said that this accounted for around one third of total passengers during the period.

Traci Missildine, from Quest Corporation of America, said that the GWTA focused on four areas of service; safety, cleanliness, reliability, and courteousness. QCA is a transportation communication company which assisted GWTA with the study.

The results were largely positive. Of those interviewed, an average of 97 percent said they felt either "safe" or "very safe" while riding GWTA vehicles.

Ninety-one percent of all passengers said they were either "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with the cleanliness of the vehicles. Ratings for the fixed route buses sat at 86 percent, while the rural vans had a 96 percent satisfaction rate.

Cleanliness of GWTA amenities received the lowest ratings, with 82 percent of customers saying they were satisfied. Bus stops and shelters received a 75 percent satisfaction rating, while the transfer center and restrooms garnered 89 percent approval.

Fixed route operators received an 81 percent satisfaction rating for helpfulness, while rural van operators scored 99 percent approval for an overall 90 percent operator helpfulness satisfaction rating. Eighty-nine percent of those surveyed also said they felt the operators were well trained.

Ninety-two percent of those surveyed were satisfied with the on-time performance of GWTA vehicles, with an 87 percent approval rating for fixed route and a 96 percent rating for rural vans.

The study is the first of what will become an annual occurrence for the GWTA. Ms. Missildine said that the survey helps the GWTA determine what goals can be met quickly and what will be relegated to longer-term projects.

In the short term, passengers most requested that customer service be improved. In particular, the survey found that riders wanted phone operators to be more friendly. Ms. Missildine said that programs are in place already to help address these concerns.

"We're doing customer service training, as well as better educating phone operators on route structure." she said. "We want people to know we hear their concerns."

Drivers will also be training to speed up their departures from the transfer center.

Fontana said that the GWTA is currently undertaking a five-year plan with the North Carolina Department of Transportation to tackle some of the long-term goals. Chief among these is expanding the reach of service the GWTA can provide.

"We're looking at expanding service out to Pikeville and Fremont, as well as potentially Mt. Olive." Fontana said. "We could do almost anything, we just need to figure out how to pay for it."

Fontana said that the GWTA will need to undertake another study to learn about the financial feasibility of expanding its service. This study could take between six and nine months to complete.

For now, the GWTA is preparing to begin a new round of surveys aimed at some of the other agencies and organizations which it partners with. These will include social services, senior services, and dialysis centers.