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Expenditures on Public Transportation

Bureau of Labor Statistics

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Expenditures on Public Transportation

Abstract
Public transportation expenditures consumed 6 percent of the average household’s transportation budget in 1997, divided between intracity and intercity travel (22 percent and 78 percent of total public transportation expenditures, respectively). Intracity transportation modes include mass transit, taxi and limousine service, and school bus. Intercity transportation modes include air, bus, train, and ship. This report highlights public transportation expenditures by consumer units in 1997, classified by income quintiles and by regions.

Keywords
Public Transportation, Labor Statistics, expenditures, travel, transportation

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**Income quintile**
The proportion of total expenditures allocated to transportation ranged from 16 to 21 percent for different income groups. The proportion of total transportation expenditures allocated to public transportation ranged from 5 to 8 percent. Consumers in the highest income quintile (quintile 5) spent the most on public transportation, $911, which was more than twice the expenditure by consumers in the fourth income quintile, and almost six times the expenditure by those in the first quintile. (See table.) Households in quintile 5 also allocated the highest share of transportation expenditures to public transportation (8 percent). This seeming anomaly is largely due to the fact that intercity travel is more expensive than intracity travel, and consumer units in the fifth income quintile spent about five times as much on intercity travel as on intracity travel. Those in the lowest income quintile spent less than twice as much on intercity travel as on intracity travel (see chart).

For intracity travel, the allocation of public transportation expenditures was highest for mass transit across all income groups, with the lowest quintile making the largest allocation, 25 percent, and the highest making the smallest allocation, 10 percent. For intercity travel, all quintiles allocated the highest proportion of public transportation expenditures to air travel, and this allocation was progressive across income quintiles: consumers in the lowest income quintile allocated the least, about 50 percent, those in the highest allocated the most, 70 percent. As a proportion of public transportation expenditures, the two lowest income groups spent two to three times more on intercity bus fares than the higher income quintiles, as might be expected.

**Region.** The share of total expenditures that households allocated to total transportation ranged from 17 percent in the Northeast to 21 percent in the South. However, households in the Northeast allocated the largest share of total transportation expenditures to public transportation, 10 percent, whereas those in the South allocated the smallest share, 4 percent. Households in the Northeast spent an average of $587 on public transportation, which was more than twice the expenditures by consumers in the south.

In the Northeast, households also exhibited a difference from the other three regions in the use of public transportation for intracity versus intercity travel. The Northeast had the highest proportion of public transportation expenditures allocated to intercity travel, 37 percent, more than twice the other three regions. The greater use of public transportation in the Northeast relative to the other regions is consistent with the lower percentage of private vehicle ownership in the Northeast, 79 percent, relative to the other three regions (see table). It also likely reflects the more extensive public transportation network that exists in the more densely populated Northeast region.

For intracity travel, the allocation of public transportation expenditures was highest for mass transit across all regions, with the share in the Northeast, 29 percent, being more than three times those in the other three regions. Air travel accounted for the largest share of intercity travel spending for public transportation across all regions; the West allocated the most,
71 percent, and the Northeast the least, 50 percent.

**Additional information**

For more information about the data presented here, contact Lucilla Tan in the Division of Consumer Expenditure Surveys, Bureau of Labor Statistics at (202) 606-6900, or by e-mail at [tan_l@bls.gov](mailto:tan_l@bls.gov). To find Consumer Expenditure Survey data on the Internet, access [http://stats.bls.gov/csxhome.htm](http://stats.bls.gov/csxhome.htm), the BLS Consumer Expenditure Survey homepage. Material in this publication is in the public domain, and with appropriate credit, may be reproduced without permission. This information is available to sensory impaired individuals upon request. Voice phone: (202) 606-7828; Federal Relay Service: 1-800-877-8339.

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**Table 1: Average annual expenditures on public transportation by income quintile and region, Consumer Expenditure Survey, 1997**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>All consumer units</th>
<th>Total complete reporters</th>
<th>Quintile 1</th>
<th>Quintile 2</th>
<th>Quintile 3</th>
<th>Quintile 4</th>
<th>Quintile 5</th>
<th>North-east</th>
<th>Midwest</th>
<th>South</th>
<th>West</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Income before taxes</td>
<td>$39,926</td>
<td>$39,926</td>
<td>$7,086</td>
<td>$15,245</td>
<td>$22,054</td>
<td>$29,500</td>
<td>$40,432</td>
<td>$63,393</td>
<td>$33,971</td>
<td>$31,885</td>
<td>$345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average annual expenditures</td>
<td>$33,072</td>
<td>$34,139</td>
<td>$15,245</td>
<td>$22,054</td>
<td>$29,500</td>
<td>$40,432</td>
<td>$63,393</td>
<td>$33,971</td>
<td>$31,885</td>
<td>$345</td>
<td>$511</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average annual expenditure on public transportation (as percent)</td>
<td></td>
<td>$397</td>
<td>$390</td>
<td>$156</td>
<td>$202</td>
<td>$280</td>
<td>$400</td>
<td>$587</td>
<td>$345</td>
<td>$345</td>
<td>$127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At least 1 vehicle owned or leased (percent)</td>
<td></td>
<td>87</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share of average annual expenditures allocated to total transportation (percent)</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share of total transportation expenditures allocated to public transportation (percent)</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent distribution of public transportation expenditures (percent)</td>
<td></td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[1] Intracity travel

Mass transit

Taxi and limousine

Private school bus

Taxi and limousine fares on trips

Local transportation on trips

[2] Intercity travel

Airline

Intercity bus

Intercity train

Ship

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