

Pop-Up Community Event: Penny McHenry Hydrangea Festival

June 6, 2015

SUMMARY

The 8th annual Penny McHenry Hydrangea Festival, held in Douglas County on June 6 and 7, 2015, encompassed many events across the community, including the main event - the Standard Flower Show, and the popular Artists', Farmers', Flower, and Home and Garden Market.

To continue building awareness of the Douglas County Transportation Services Study currently under way, the Gresham, Smith and Partners (GS&P) team was invited to participate in this year's Hydrangea Festival, as part of the Artists' and Home and Garden Market. Stationed near the center of the marketplace, in front of the courthouse, team members spoke with people passing by about the project and asked for their input. Team members handed out the project fact sheet and asked participants about their transportation needs and common destinations throughout the County. Participants who had not already done so were invited to take the project survey – available online through portable tablets or in paper format. General comment cards were also available as yet another way for attendees to share their thoughts with the County and project team. As a thank you for participating, the team offered packets of flower seeds, stickers, and lollipops. The team also collected contact information from anyone who is interested in receiving updates about the study.



Figure 1. The Project Team Engages Members of the Public at the Penny McHenry Hydrangea Festival, June 7, 2015.

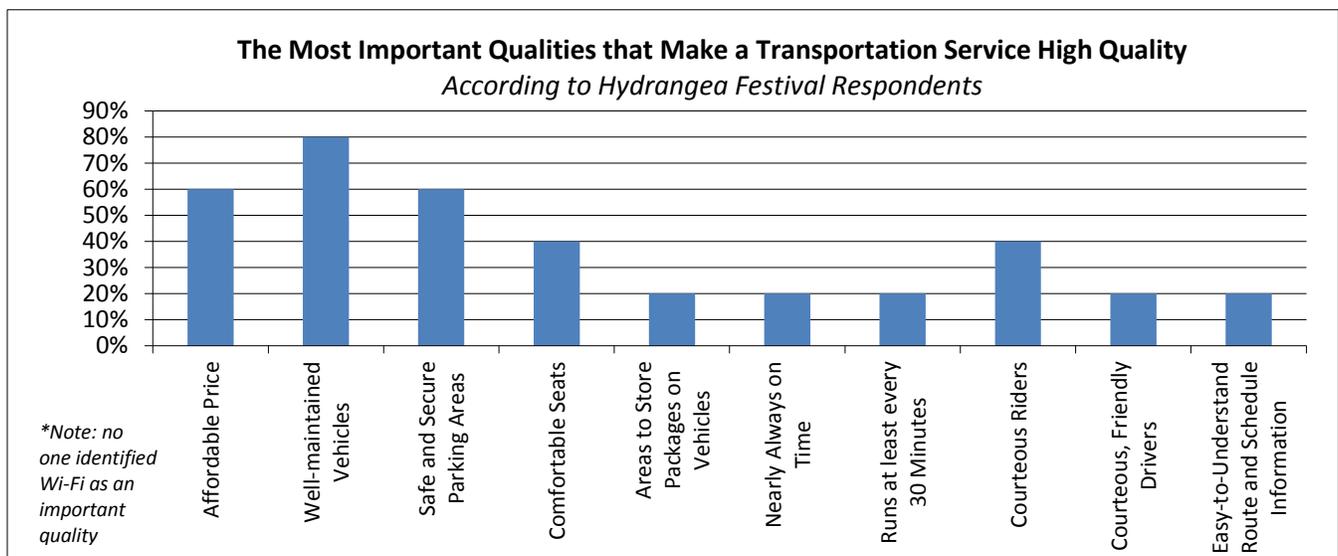
The main reason the team attended the Hydrangea Festival was to continue to build awareness of the study and to let the community know that Douglas County is very interested in their input into future transportation services considerations. The project team heard a range of comments from the public throughout the course of the day. Overall, participants recognized a need and expressed support for some type of service to help those who are unable to drive get around. Several attendees were glad to learn that the County is studying this issue and expressed support for a shuttle-like service, particularly for seniors, and for connections to downtown Atlanta. Others commented on the need for transportation services in and around Douglasville, which functions as a hub of retail and services for the area; on the need for more affordable options than taxis and Uber¹; and the need for

¹ Uber is an international transportation network company that is part of the “sharing economy.” It develops, markets, and operates the Uber mobile application which allows consumers to submit trip requests which are routed to independent contractor drivers, who use their own vehicles to transport trip requesters. For more information, visit www.uber.com.

transportation to and from downtown Atlanta and Hartsfield Jackson International Airport. Some participants expressed hesitation about any public transportation and concern about keeping the character of the County.

Some people took the survey on-site at the event; however, dozens of others took the fact sheet home and pledged to do the survey online at a later time, and to share it with friends, family, and colleagues. Several people noted they had already taken the survey. All responses to the survey, including those from the Hydrangea Festival, are being aggregated and will be analyzed and summarized in a cohesive document.

Three-fourths of those who took the survey during the festival are residents of Douglas County, and half of them work in the county. Of these respondents, most (80%) have not used the existing transportation services such as the County’s vanpool, carpool matching services, transportation voucher service, or the Georgia Regional Transportation Authority’s Xpress service, and most have no friends or family who use these services. Respondents from the Hydrangea Festival identified well-maintained vehicles as the most important quality in making a transportation service high quality. Affordable price and safe and secure parking areas were tied for second most important, followed by comfortable seats and courteous riders (also tied).



When asked what three things the County Board of Commissioners should take into consideration as they evaluate potential future transportation services, Hydrangea Festival attendees offered a range of responses:

- Clear directions and schedules
- Someone available to answer questions
- Communicating where and when service is available
- More availability
- Think beyond just the County
- Consider and train youth in the transportation industry
- Let the community tour and explore different routes
- Affordability for seniors

- Routes that include Mirror Lake, the Mall, and the Senior Center
- Cost
- Impact on traffic and on the environment

One of the activities asked attendees about where they tend to go in and around Douglas County, in an effort to begin collecting information about popular or common destinations and frequency of trips to those destinations. Typical destinations people travel to regularly include places of worship (church), doctors' offices, restaurants in Douglasville, and grocery stores. More occasional destinations include the mall, hair dressers, and County government services. During these activities, participants shared their own observations and stories about their experiences getting around, providing information about common needs and challenges. Below is a synopsis of other comments made by attendees.



Figure 2. A festival attendee speaks with a representative of the project team.

- Elderly clients and neighbors need ways to get to day-to-day activities
- Taxis tend to be expensive (up to \$30 for a short trip)
- People come from neighboring areas and nearby counties for services and activities in Douglasville, such as the mall and the movie theater
- People have been observed walking around areas of Fairburn Road and near the Courthouse, which may indicate a need for transportation services in these areas
- Seniors, particularly residents of nursing homes, need transportation services
 - Day-to-day, such as mall, grocery store, hair salon
 - Special events or trips, such as to the symphony, museums, festivals, and for shopping
- Need to travel to, from, and along the following: Chapel Hill Road, Fairburn Road, Leigh Road, State Route 5 (Bill Arp Road), Hospital Drive, downtown Atlanta, Hartsfield Jackson Airport, and connection to MARTA station
- Would like to see a shuttle service like the one offered for the Hydrangea Festival throughout the year
- It is important to preserve the character of the County
- Look into volunteer driver programs and coordinating with churches

Following the Hydrangea Festival, the project team will continue to solicit input through the project survey and is planning to attend additional events like this, as well as to organize a series of Commission District meetings later this year. Updates will be posted to the project page on the County website:

<http://www.celebratedouglascounty.com/TransportationServicesStudy/>.