Visitor Travel Surveys: Issues, Solutions, Findings

Gregory Newmark, Regional Transportation Authority
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Chicago has a lot of Visitors

- Total visitors in 2011:
  - 43.6 Million
- Average stay:
  - 2.41 Days
- Typical number of visitors in Chicago:
  - 288,000 People

288,000 People

Seating Capacity of . . .

- **Doubled!**

288,000 People

Average weekday boardings on Metra. . .

Plus seating capacity of . . .

Visitors More Likely to Ride Transit

Little is Known about Visitor Travel

Household surveys necessarily exclude visitors

Traditional visitor surveys focus on economic development not intraurban travel behavior

RTA Interested in Surveying Visitors

1. Who is a visitor?
2. Where can you catch a visitor?
3. What can you ask a visitor?

Who is a Visitor?

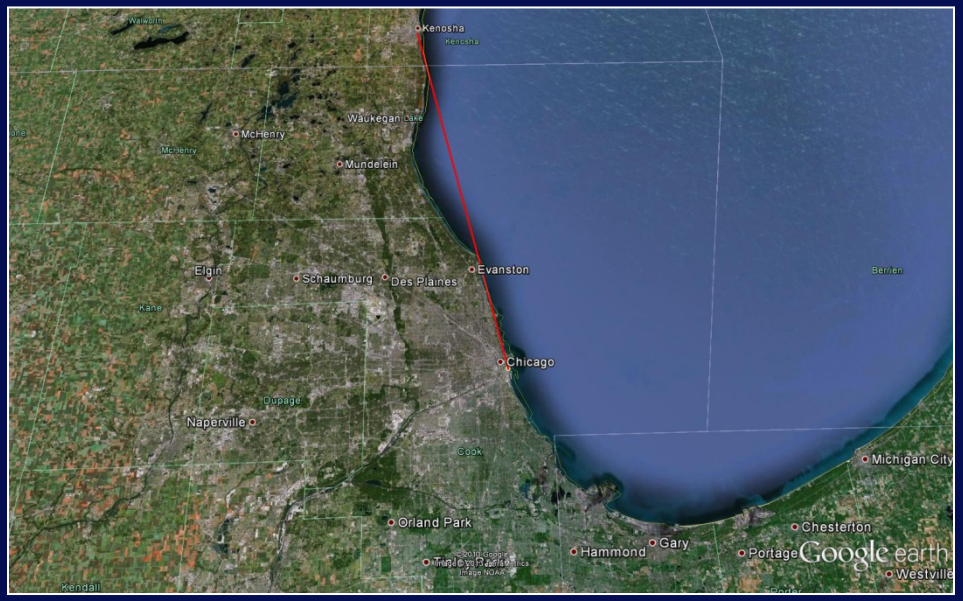
Visitor definitions combine:

- **Spatial Characteristics**
  - **Do you live here?**
- **Temporal Characteristics**
  - **How long are you staying here?**
- **Trip Purpose Characteristics**
  - **What are you doing here?**

Spatial Characteristics

Two main approaches:

1. Cordon
2. Linear-distance



Temporal Characteristics

Establish thresholds:

1. **Minimum duration**
2. **Maximum duration**
3. **Interim gradations**

Trip Purpose Characteristics

Identify non-qualifying purposes, such as:

1. **Commuting**
2. **Routine Non-work Trips (Groceries)**
3. **Appointments (Dentist, Hairdresser)**

Where Can You Catch a Visitor?

Visitors, in their visit location, lack:

1. **Landline Telephone**
2. **Permanent Addresses**

Are a hard-to-reach/hidden population (National studies target households)

Physical Interception

Visitors share certain traits:

1. **Need to enter/exit the region**
2. **Activity purposes motivating the trip**
3. **A need for lodging (for overnight trips)**

Entry/Exit Location

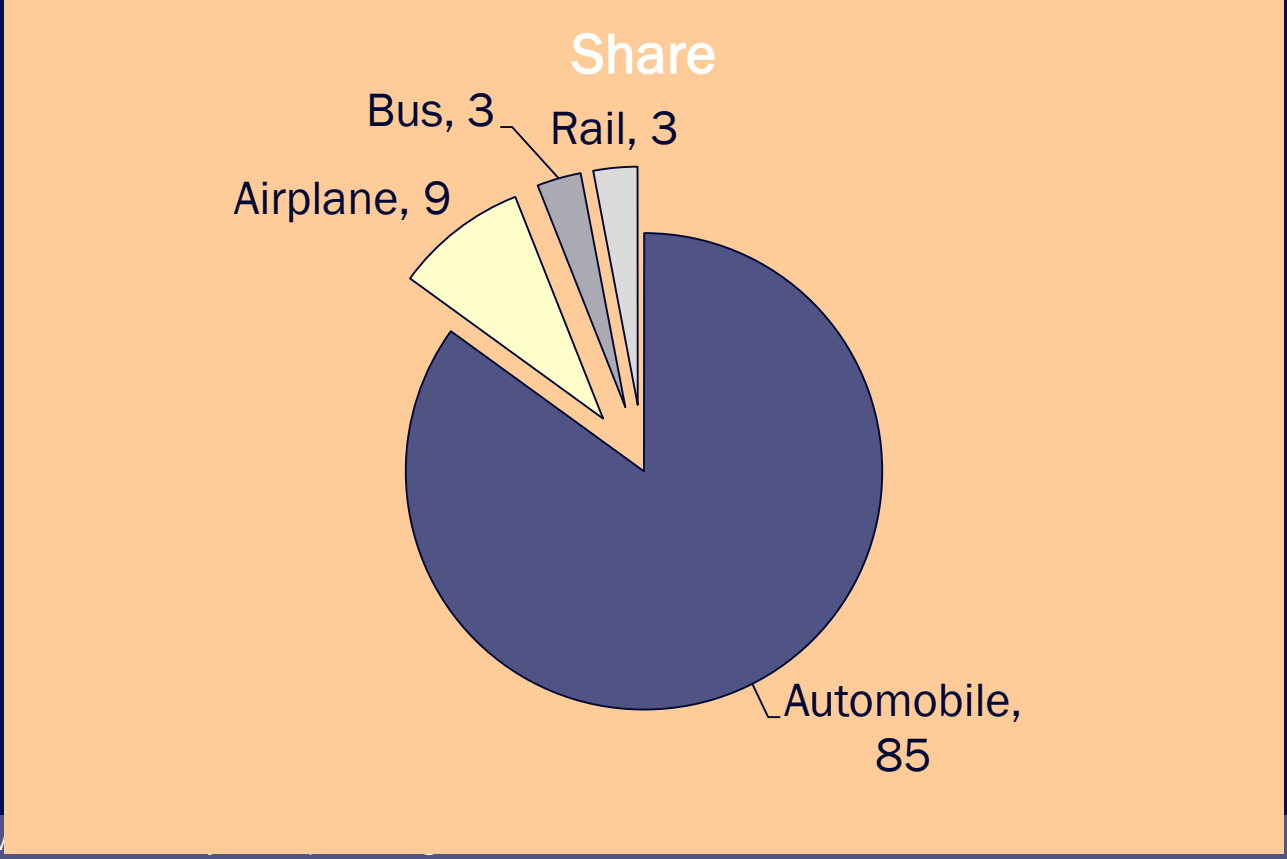
- **Long distance transportation network channels visitors along set paths and through set portals**

Entry/Exit Location

- **Facilities that require a transfer between long distance and local transportation modes are particularly convenient for surveying**

Problem: Most Visitors Drive

Access mode shares to Toronto for domestic visitors



Solution? Two Main Access Roads

Activity Purposes

Some activities offer easier intercept opportunities

1. **Conventions**
2. **Concerts**
3. **Sporting Events**
4. **Cultural Events**
5. **Museums**
6. **Landmarks**

Lodging

Many, but not all visitors require lodging

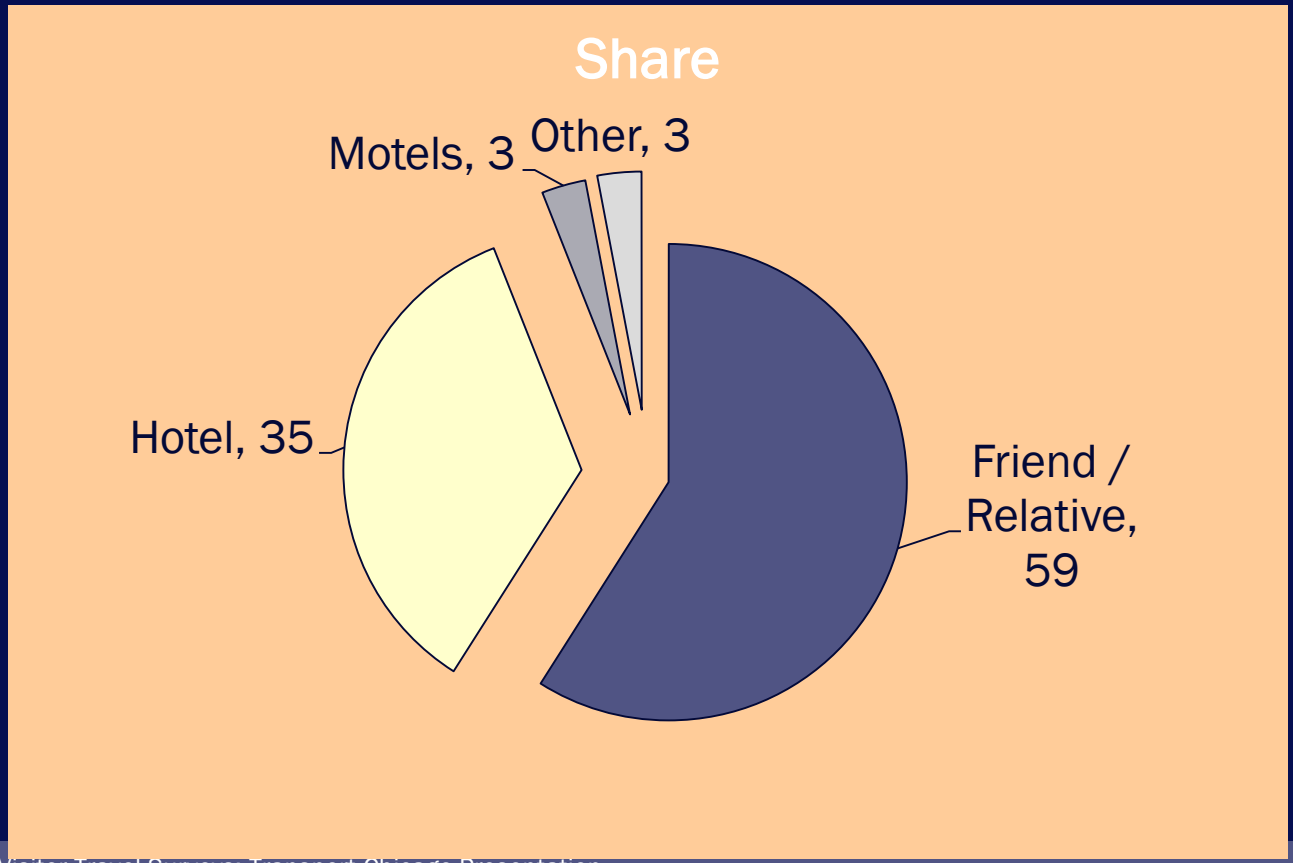
- **A minority (44%) of domestic visitors to Toronto even stay overnight**

Overnight visitors can either:

- **Stay with friends / relatives**
- **Pay for accommodation**

Most Overnight Visitors Stay Free

Share of lodging for overnight domestic visitors to Toronto



Virtual Interception

Possibilities

- Work with airlines to contact people who check in online
- Work with toll authority to contact people with out-of-region toll tags
- Set up license recognition cameras to identify cars entering the region on road infrastructure (but not passing through)

What Can You Ask a Visitor?

Main topics of a visitor travel survey

1. Local travel and activity behaviors
2. Demographic information
3. Customer satisfaction
4. Stated and revealed preferences
5. Visit details

Core Travel Topics

Key Questions to Answer:

- Did you go anywhere where transit was a competitive option?
- Why did you use / not use transit?
- What would encourage you to use transit?

Methodological Issues

- Level of travel detail
- Characterizing party composition
- Selecting time unit of analysis, i.e., previous day vs. total visit
- Accounting for seasonal effects
- Incentivizing participation
- Probability sampling / expansion

Visitor Travel Survey

Thank you and stay tuned for the RFP!