



The MassINC Polling Group
Barr Foundation – Field First Poll
 Survey of 500 residents of town with WRTA bus service
 Field dates: February 27 – March 3, 2024

The Worcester Regional Transit Authority, or WRTA, runs public bus service in Worcester and nearby towns. It also provides on-demand, door-to-door paratransit service for passengers with disabilities who cannot ride the bus.

How often, if at all, do you ride the bus or paratransit service run by the WRTA?

Never	80%
Once or twice in the past year	9%
Once a month	2%
2-3 times a month	3%
Once a week	1%
Multiple days a week	4%
Don't know / refused	1%

For the past 4 years, passengers have been able to ride WRTA buses and paratransit for free. The WRTA will soon decide whether to continue fare-free service, or to make riders pay a fare to ride. How much would you support or oppose continuing fare-free service on the WRTA?

Strongly support	54%
Somewhat support	16%
Somewhat oppose	9%
Strongly oppose	12%
Don't know / refused	9%

ASK IF SUPPORT FARE-FREE BUSES

In a few words, why do you support continuing to keep WRTA services fare-free? **OPEN END.**

Helps those in need / without a car	49%
It's an essential utility / public good	30%
Inflation / cost of living / affordability	27%
Good for Worcester / community	10%
Lowers emissions / pollution	4%
Reduces traffic	2%
Other	10%
Unsure / Not applicable	7%

ASK NEXT THREE QUESTIONS IF HAS RIDDEN THE WRTA (RIDE=2, 3, 4, 5, OR 6)

You mentioned that you have ridden or currently ride the WRTA. When you take the WRTA bus or paratransit service, where do you go? **Select all that apply. RANDOMIZE ORDER.**

School	13%
Work	38%
Childcare	4%
Shopping or errands	47%
Health care appointments	49%
To visit friends or family	31%
Going out (dining / entertainment / nightlife)	28%
Somewhere else	9%
Don't know / refused	6%

In a few words, what difference has not having to pay for the bus made for you and your family? **OPEN END.**

Less stressful / more convenient	19%
Helps save up money	18%
Helps with other bills	13%
Alternative to driving / walking	12%
Empowers people to be independent	5%
Other	22%
No / Not much difference	22%

If the WRTA starts charging riders fares to ride, do you think that you would...

Ride the WRTA less	26%
Stop riding the WRTA altogether	19%
It would not make a difference	39%
Don't know / refused	17%

ASK ALL

In 2022, voters approved an additional 4 percent tax on income over \$1 million, to be dedicated to education and transportation. Some people call this the Millionaire's Tax, or the Fair Share tax. Currently some of the money from that tax is being used to fund the WRTA and the other RTAs that provide bus and paratransit service across the state. How much would you support or oppose continuing to fund the RTAs from this tax in this year's state budget?

Strongly support	52%
Somewhat support	17%
Somewhat oppose	7%
Strongly oppose	17%
Don't know / refused	8%

How willing would you be to take a public bus more often than you do now if it...

ROTATE ORDER	Very willing	Somewhat willing	Not too willing	Not at all willing	Don't know / refused
Ran faster	27%	21%	8%	29%	16%
Ran to more places that I need or want to go	34%	24%	6%	26%	9%
Continued to be free to ride	34%	20%	7%	27%	12%
Came more often	30%	22%	8%	27%	13%
Came on time more reliably	34%	20%	6%	28%	12%
Ran more on the weekends	30%	18%	10%	29%	13%
Ran more in the evenings	25%	18%	10%	32%	15%

Demographics

Gender:	Man	48%
	Woman	51%
	Non-binary	<1%
Age:	18-29	23%
	30-44	25%
	45-59	25%
	60+	27%
Race:	White	65%
	Black	6%
	Latino	15%
	Asian or Pacific Islander	7%
	All other	4%
	Don't know / refused	2%
Party ID:	Democrat	28%
	Republican	18%
	Independent / other	47%
	Don't know / refused	7%
Education:	High School or less	39%
	Some college, no degree	25%
	College graduate (BA/BS)	23%
	Advanced degree	13%
	Don't know / refused	<1%
Region:	Worcester	48%
	West / south of Worcester	29%
	East / north of Worcester	23%

About the poll

These results are based on a survey of 500 residents of the 16 towns with bus service from the WRTA. Responses were collected by text invitation into an online survey and by live interviews via landline and cell phones February 27 – March 3, 2024. Results were weighted by race, age and gender, education, party identification, and geography to reflect known and estimated population parameters for the adult population of these towns. The margin of error for this survey is +/- 4.2 percentage points at the 95% confidence level, inclusive of the design effect. This project was conducted by The MassINC Polling Group with input from the Zero Fare Coalition and sponsored by The Barr Foundation.