Digitally Connected Commuter: Tracking the Rising Use of Personal Electronic Devices on Commuter Trains

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The 20 Top “Transit Suburbs”
Metropolitan Chicago
An Index Approach

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THE DIGITALLY CONNECTED COMMUTER:
Tracking the Rising Use of Personal Electronic Devices on Chicago Suburban Trains
Digital Conveniences and Mobility
Audio Activities: Devices, such as cell phones or CD players, which can be used with earphones, speakers, or headsets, that are being used strictly for an audio function.

Visual or Audiovisual Activities on Devices, not including iPads, Kindles and other Tablet Use: Visual or audiovisual features, such as laptop computers, Blackberries and other smart phones, DVD players, and iPods. (This category includes any traveler looking at an LCD screen for the purpose of engaging in an activity more substantial than placing a phone call).

Visual or Audio-Visual Activities on iPads, Kindles and other Tablets: Same as Category 2 except focusing specifically on tablet usage. This final category was newly-introduced last year to better calculate how small and lightweight devices affect traveler behavior.

Table 1
Types of Activity Recorded

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</table>
Figure 1

Number of Commuter Rail Passengers Observed
Metra and South Shore Line
Figure 1
Passenger Use of Personal Electronic Technology by Mode
2010-2014
Figure 2
Percent of Commuter Rail Riders Engaged with Technology

- 2010: 25.6%
- 2011: 29.9%
- 2012: 38.2%
- 2013: 47.8%
- 2014: 54.4%
- 2015: 56.2%
Percent of Chicago Commuter Rail Riders at Observed Points Engaged in Electronic Tasks Illegal When Driving
Figure 3: Percentage of commuter rail passengers using tablets/reader devices at randomly observed points. The percentages are as follows:
- 0% in 2012
- 4% in 2013
- 8% in 2014
- 12% in 2015

The chart shows an increasing trend in the use of tablets/reader devices among commuter rail passengers from 2012 to 2015.
Explaining Rail Transit Growth
Question added to survey of 15,000 East Coast and Pacific Northwest travelers to determine link between:

- Value traveler places on having access to the internet while traveling

- Propensity to travel by bus and rail
How Important is Wi-Fi?