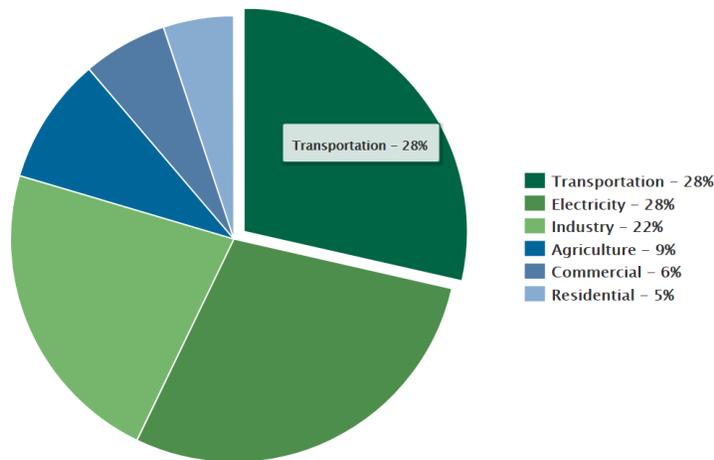




## Commuter Survey Findings

If you were one of the more than 300 people who took the 2018-2019 PSC Commuter Survey, **thank you!** Your insights into the commuting behavior of the PSC community have made this report possible, and will help us enable more convenient, enjoyable, and sustainable commutes in the future.

2016 U.S. GHG Emissions by Sector



A 2016 inventory of greenhouse gas emissions in the United States found that the **transportation sector was the largest emitter**, just ahead of electricity production. About 60 percent of those transportation-related emissions came from “light-duty vehicles,<sup>1</sup>” the same type of vehicles that we use to get to and from Prairie State College (PSC) every day<sup>2</sup>. That means that, in the U.S., cars produced more emissions than all of the semi-trucks, airplanes, trains, boats, and every other mode of transportation COMBINED.

PSC’s Sustainability Department is working to get a picture of what the college’s overall carbon footprint looks like. While a lot of this comes down to how much electricity and gas we use on campus, understanding our commuting emissions is important to get a big-picture look at our overall impact.

There are many different ways to commute to and from the college. Here’s how the different commuting options listed in the commuter survey rank from least polluting (left) to most polluting (right), in terms of greenhouse gas emissions.

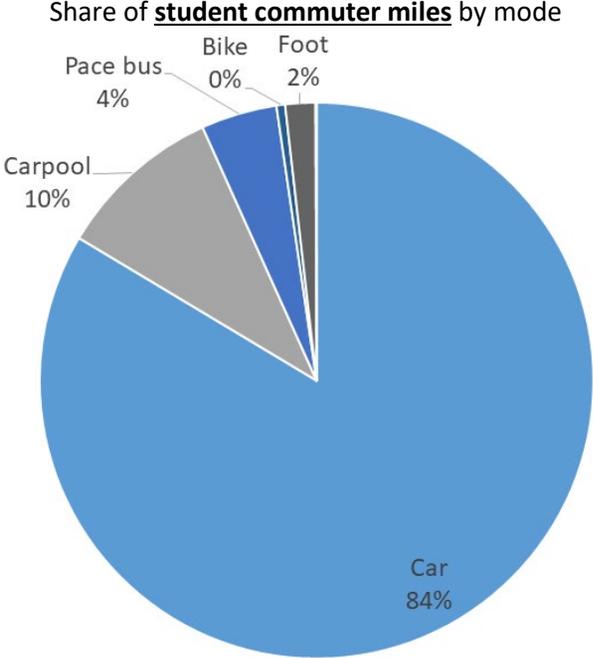
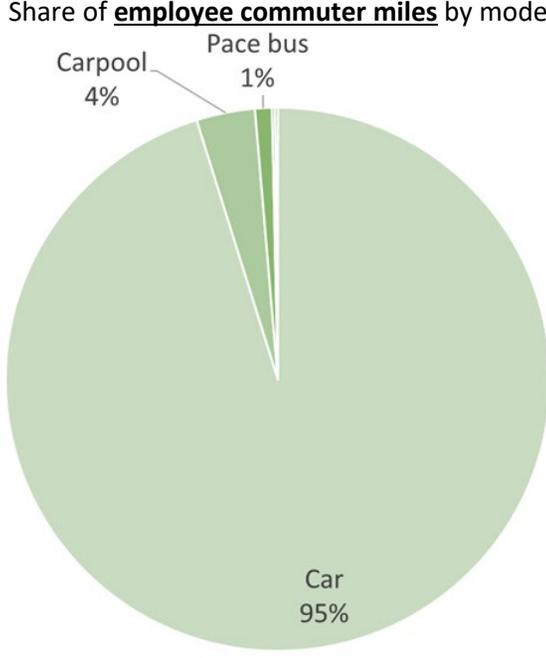


<sup>1</sup> “Light-duty vehicles” includes both passenger cars (with capacity to transport 12 people or fewer) and light-duty trucks (with gross vehicle weight rating of 8,500 pounds or less)

<sup>2</sup> **Source:** Fast Facts on Transportation Greenhouse Gas Emissions. United States Environmental Protection Agency, 27 Aug. 2018, [www.epa.gov/greenvehicles/fast-facts-transportation-greenhouse-gas-emissions](http://www.epa.gov/greenvehicles/fast-facts-transportation-greenhouse-gas-emissions).

## Typical PSC Commuters

Before we get into the ways we can improve our commuting situation, *here is a profile of typical PSC commuters*. These averages will be used to calculate the carbon footprint associated with our community's commuting habits.

STUDENTS (n=172)	STAFF (n=67)	FACULTY (n=55)																			
<p>Students make the trip to PSC about <b>4.4 times</b> (median = 4) each week, <b>32.5 weeks</b> each year.</p> <p>Our average student commute (one way) is <b>7.4 miles</b>.</p>	<p>Staff make the trip to PSC about <b>6.3 times</b> (median = 5) each week, <b>47.3 weeks</b> each year.</p> <p>Our average staff member commute (one way) is <b>14.5 miles</b>.</p>	<p>Faculty make the trip to PSC about <b>4.1 times</b> (median = 4) each week, <b>36.8 weeks</b> each year.</p> <p>Our average faculty member commute (one way) is <b>16.6 miles</b>.</p>																			
<p>Share of <b>student commuter miles</b> by mode</p>  <table border="1"><caption>Share of student commuter miles by mode</caption><thead><tr><th>Mode</th><th>Share</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>Car</td><td>84%</td></tr><tr><td>Carpool</td><td>10%</td></tr><tr><td>Pace bus</td><td>4%</td></tr><tr><td>Foot</td><td>2%</td></tr><tr><td>Bike</td><td>0%</td></tr></tbody></table>	Mode	Share	Car	84%	Carpool	10%	Pace bus	4%	Foot	2%	Bike	0%	<p>Share of <b>employee commuter miles</b> by mode</p>  <table border="1"><caption>Share of employee commuter miles by mode</caption><thead><tr><th>Mode</th><th>Share</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>Car</td><td>95%</td></tr><tr><td>Carpool</td><td>4%</td></tr><tr><td>Pace bus</td><td>1%</td></tr></tbody></table>	Mode	Share	Car	95%	Carpool	4%	Pace bus	1%
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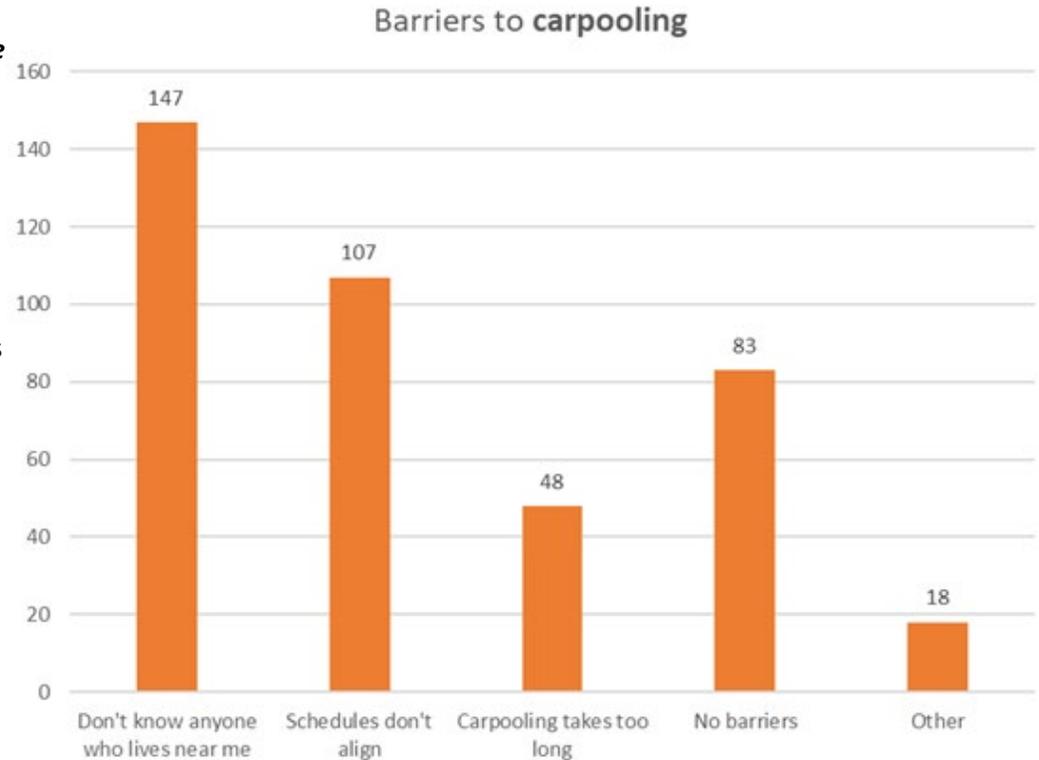
## Carpooling

Being a suburban non-residential college, it's not surprising that the vast majority of our commuter miles are logged in a car, but **why aren't more of our commuters carpooling?**

For some people, having complex commutes (like going to work or picking up/dropping off kids before and after class) makes it difficult to carpool. But *over half of respondents* said that they simply did not know of people making a similar commute.

As it happens, there are tools out there that could help us overcome this primary barrier:

- **Waze carpool:** The #2 Navigation app in Apple's app store (after Google Maps), [Waze](#) now allows drivers to match with other commuters along their routes. If riding with a stranger freaks you out, you can filter riders/drivers to only show those who have a verified Prairie State College email address. While the Waze Carpool app is free to download, drivers can choose how much they charge riders to help cover their costs (and can even give rides for free!).
- **Pace Rideshare:** If you don't trust big data (Waze is owned by Google), Pace has another option called [Pace RideShare](#). This is essentially doing the same thing, but on a more local scale. In it, you create a profile including your commute, schedule information and other preferences which are then used to match you with others on a similar commute.



**Get in the pool!**

*For any commute matching service to work for the most possible people, there needs to be a large enough pool of riders and drivers to make matches! This means that the more PSC staff, faculty, and students (drivers and riders) who use these services, the more opportunities there will be for solving our biggest barrier to carpooling: connecting riders with drivers.*

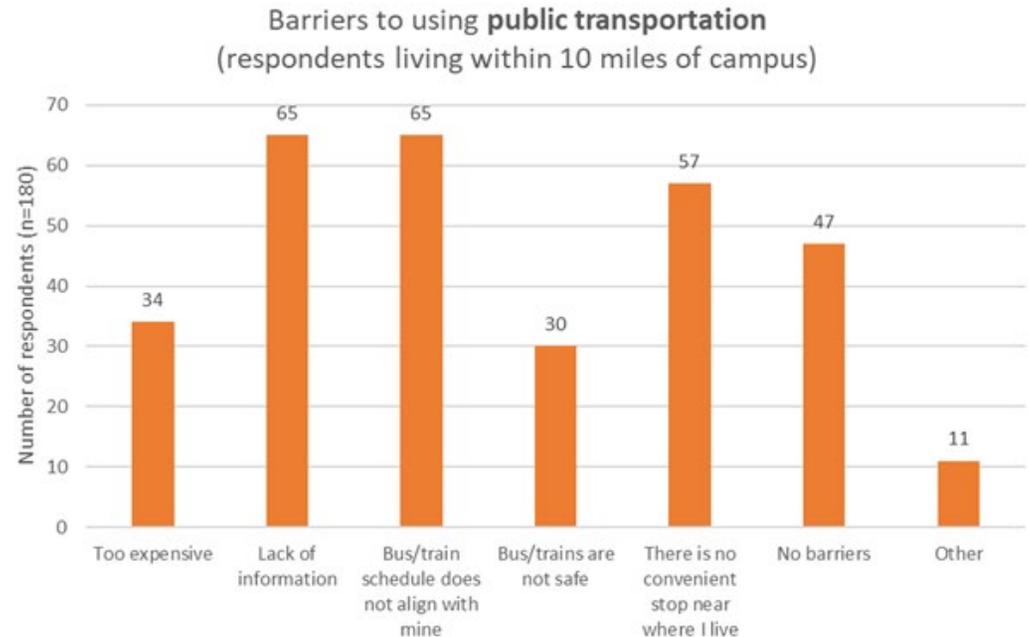
## Public Transportation

While buses and trains run all over Chicago, their routes are a bit sparser in the suburbs. Public transportation is one of the best options for commuters looking to reduce their carbon footprints, but only about **four percent** and **one percent** of PSC student and employee commuter miles, respectively, are made on buses and trains. ***What do we have against public transit?***

Well, a lot of people *simply live too far* to make public transportation an attractive option, so we filtered this chart to only show responses from folks who live within 10 miles of PSC (it's not perfect, but it helps narrow things down to what is really getting in people's way). The top barriers noted by these respondents were a lack of information and issues timing trips that align with class/work schedules. It's a bit ironic that in the "Information Age" we still struggle to find what we're looking for! But here are a few ways to get the info you need to get to/from PSC.

- **Google Maps:** The [ever-helpful navigation tool](#) can switch seamlessly between various preferred transportation methods including public transit. It also does a good job of navigating between different modes of public transportation (CTA to Pace, or Metra to Pace, etc.) for those commuting to/from Chicago.
- **PSC Welcome Center :** Located at the northeast corner of the atrium, there is a well-stocked display of Pace bus route brochures to help familiarize you with the local system. These low-tech, pocket-sized pamphlets are easy to take with you and will help you save your phone's battery for your #GreenCommute posts.
- **RTA Trip Planner:** [This tool](#) works across CTA, Pace, and Metra territory to allow folks to find the best way to get from point A to point B using various modes of transportation including bus, train, car, bike, or foot.

The issues with scheduling and not having convenient stops, are unfortunately on Pace, Metra and/or CTA to figure out. But results from surveys like this one can be important evidence for decision-makers within transit organizations when determining where to add lines, stops, or more frequent service. Until more convenient services are added that include larger portions of the PSC district, you can refer the carpooling section of this report, above<sup>3</sup>!



<sup>3</sup> Some of you mentioned the lack of a simple way to get between the Metra station and PSC (shuttle, carpool, adding a PSC stop on the 372 Pace bus line, etc.) While there isn't anything to report at the moment, we'll be exploring opportunities to help with that and will keep you posted moving forward.

## Non-Motorized Transportation

Big surprise here: people don't like walking/biking in a polar vortex! Who would've guessed? But we have plenty of beautiful days in NE Illinois too; **so why don't people get out in the fresh air on foot or on a bike?**

Again, for the average PSC employee a 16-ish mile walk or bike ride each way may be a bit overkill, but the chart here shows the "excuses" of people living within five miles of campus (well within biking range!). And as it turns out, more than half of these respondents had a pretty good "excuse": there's a significant lack of pedestrian and biking infrastructure.

Without the infrastructure for safe pedestrian and bike traffic, it wouldn't feel right to encourage the PSC community to use these modes of transportation; and based on the quotes below, some in our community clearly don't feel safe as bikers/walkers in this area.

*I would not mind at all bringing my bicycle to school every other day but the problem is that **I don't feel safe riding my bicycle** because of lack of sidewalks for safe travel.*

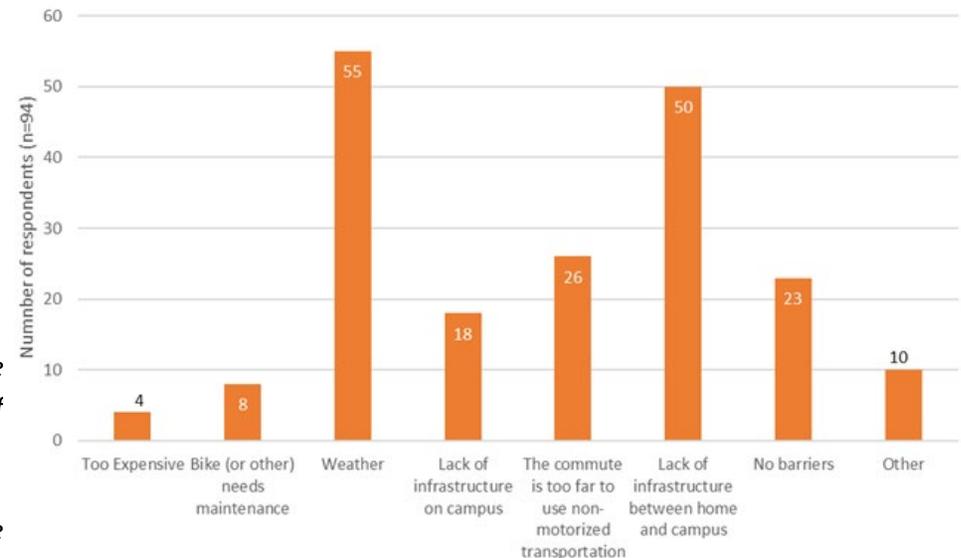
*I would love to walk on days when I have the time, however the roads are typically muddy with **no sidewalk or side area**. With cars and semi trucks routinely going 50 miles per hour in a 35 [MPH] zone, the **commute on foot or bicycle is extremely dangerous**, and I was almost struck by a car three times.*

And it isn't just the PSC community that feels this way. In the [Chicago Heights 2015 Comprehensive Plan](#), one key transportation-related finding was that "the City's existing transportation network creates unsafe conditions for bicycle and pedestrian circulation." They added that many residents "lack safe and convenient pedestrian and bicycle connections to employment locations and community amenities."

A few points here:

1. If you have a safe route to bike or walk to PSC, go for it!
2. If you are a driver, share the road with bikes and pedestrians. Everyone is just trying to get around safely, so don't be entitled about the road. If you don't like bikers getting in your way, advocate for them to have their own trail or bike lane!
3. No matter who you are, talk with your local elected officials about building "[complete streets](#)" that allow safe access to all modes of travel.

Barriers to using non-motorized transportation  
(respondents living within 5 miles of campus)



# Summary

The big takeaway here is that the PSC community could be using much cleaner and healthier ways to commute. Single passenger cars make up the vast majority of commuting miles to and from the college. The reasons for this are many, but include:

- Making multiple stops before and after class
- Having limited access to public transit options
- Contending with scheduling conflicts
- A lack of safe biking/walking infrastructure
- Harsh weather conditions

Some of these things aren't within our direct control as commuters or even as a college (e.g. weather and access to public transit), but we do have power over some of them.

<b>Carpooling</b>	There are some useful tools, like the ones in the Carpooling section, that can connect riders with empty seats, but they only work if both drivers and riders participate! Drivers can recoup some gas money; riders can get to the college; and less pollution goes into the air! Win! Win! Win!
<b>Public Transit</b>	Public transportation isn't something we can readily change nor is it available to everyone in our district, but understanding the systems available (see the resources in the Public Transportation section) is a step towards being able to take advantage of this cheap and low-impact commute option.
<b>Non-motorized Transportation</b>	We also have control over our own actions. As drivers we can drive in a way that puts pedestrians and bikers out of harm's way. We can also talk to our communities and municipalities about creating infrastructure that supports different modes of transportation. Even if <i>you</i> can't walk or bike on your commute, making sure others can is a great way to support a vibrant, sustainable community!

