

# **Sheridan Expressway**

## **Community Perceptions**

A report by the Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice and  
the Tri-State Transportation Campaign

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### ***About the Study***

In July and August of 2001, Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice and the Tri-State Transportation Campaign designed and carried out a study of opinions regarding the Sheridan Expressway. Lisa Schreibman of Tri-State, a certified planner and adjunct professor at Hunter College along with Maricruz Badia of Youth Ministries designed the study. Approximately 18 young people who are part of the River Team ranging in age from 13 to 21 surveyed people who worked, lived or otherwise spent time near Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice located on Stratford Avenue in the Bronx during July and August of 2001. Four hundred people, 91% of who are Bronx residents, were surveyed. Between 200 and 400 people answered each of 23 questions. The study questions have a margin of error of +/- 5% to 7% (as denoted after the question) with a 95% confidence rating.

### ***Perceptions of the Sheridan***

For the past three years, advocates have said that the Sheridan Expressway should be removed rather than repaired. This argument was premised on the highway being of little use to those who surrounded it and the great need for open space in the area. City, state and national standards showed that the area was park deficient.

But what about the usefulness of the highway? It seemed reasonable to assume that the Sheridan, which is used by just 38,000 vehicles-a-day, was not a great resource to the communities that surround it. More vehicles can be found on Fordham Road or Third Avenue. The survey confirmed that assumption. Of people old enough to drive, 17% did not know where the highway was located. Just over half the people – 56.8% – use it. Most of those who travel on the Sheridan do so infrequently with only 16.9% using it daily. Put another way less than 10% of the population near the highway uses it daily.

Another way to gage the value of the highway is to ask them what think it is worth. When asked if it is worth the proposed investment of \$420 million – the State DOT's projected cost of rebuilding the northern and southern interchanges – a majority of residents both users and non-users said no. Only 26.9% of those who use the highway thought that the expenditure was worthwhile.

Further, the study showed that a majority of people would like the highway shut down on Sundays as a recreation path, as happens in Westchester on the Bronx River Parkway. Of people who are old enough to drive, 83.5% thought shutting the highway on Sundays was a good idea.

### ***Findings***

The surveyors asked people a set of questions about their use of the Sheridan Expressway. [The results are Appendix A and the survey is appendix B.] They asked if the participants used the highway, how often they used the highway and the type of destination when using the highway. Next they asked participants a series of opinion questions - whether they thought the Sheridan served their community, if they thought

investing in the highway was a good use of resources, how they would use the land on which the Sheridan sits if the highway were gone, and if they would support closing the expressway on Sundays for recreational purposes.

Question 3: “Do you know where the Sheridan is?” +/-5%

	<b>yes</b>	<b>no</b>
<b>All participants</b>	77.6%	22.4%
<b>Driving Age</b>	82.9%	17.1%

Question 5: “Do you use the Sheridan Expressway?” +/-5.7%

	<b>yes</b>	<b>no</b>
<b>All participants</b>	56.8%	43.2%
<b>Driving age</b>	60.9%	39.1%

Question 5A: For those who answered yes to using the highway, “How many times a week do you use it?” +/-5.7%

<b>Less than once a week</b>	34.2%
<b>Once or twice a week</b>	48.9%
<b>Everyday</b>	16.9%

Question 6: For those who answered yes to using the highway, “What is your destination?” +/-7%

<b>Work</b>	33.0%
<b>School</b>	12.7%
<b>Shopping</b>	12.2%
<b>Leisure</b>	25.9%
<b>Other</b>	15.8%

Question 8: “Is the Sheridan Expressway useful for your community?” +/-5.7%

	<b>yes</b>	<b>no</b>	<b>don't know</b>
<b>All participants</b>	40.3%	34.0%	23.7%
<b>Driving age</b>	41.5%	35.0%	23.5%
<b>Who use the Sheridan</b>	60.9%	24.2%	19.9%

Question 13: “The Department of Transportation is proposing to reconstruct the Sheridan Expressway’s two interchanges, which will cost approximately \$420 million. Do you think this is a good investment?” +/-5%

	<b>yes</b>	<b>no</b>	<b>don't know</b>
<b>All participants</b>	24.5%	53.2%	22.3%
<b>Driving age</b>	22.5%	55.0%	22.5%
<b>Who use the Sheridan</b>	26.9%	53.8%	19.3%

Question 14: “If the Sheridan Expressway did not exist, what do you think the land should be used for?” +/-5%

<b>Park</b>	<b>Housing</b>	<b>Both</b>	<b>Other</b>
53.2%	20.5%	20.5%	5.8%

Question 15: “Would you be interested in having the Sheridan Expressway closed on Sundays, as happens in Westchester on the Bronx River Parkway, in order to use the area for a park, bicycling and recreation space?” +/-5%

	yes	no
All participants	82.2%	17.8%
Driving age	83.5%	16.5%
Who use the Sheridan	76.8%	23.2%

### **Health of Those Surveyed**

One of the arguments for reducing automobile use in the Bronx is the poor health of many residents. The survey asked participants if anyone in their family had a respiratory disease and if so, what they felt the cause of the disease was. Two-thirds of all people said that pollution was a major factor. More than half listed car exhaust specifically and just under half mentioned diesel trucks.

Disease	# of respondents who answered that someone in their family has the disease	% of those surveyed
asthma	202	54.2%
emphysema	16	4.3%
allergies	138	37.0%
lung cancer	10	2.7%
other	10	2.7%

Suspected Cause	# or respondents	%	Suspected Cause	# or respondents	%
car exhaust	201	53.9%	smoking	186	49.9%
diesel trucks	176	47.2%	pollution	249	66.8%
roaches	139	37.3%	lack of open space	128	34.3%
dust	170	45.6%			

### **Who Was Surveyed**

Members of the River Team interviewed people near Youth Ministries headquarters located at 1384 Stratford Avenue, Bronx, 10472. Nearly three-quarters of those surveyed live in zip codes that abut the Sheridan Expressway. The age, income and race of those surveyed are in keeping with the 1990 census.

**Where participants live:** Of those interviewed 63.3% lived in zip code 10472, 10% in other zip codes that abut the Sheridan, 18.1% in other Bronx zip codes and 8.5% in other New York City zip codes.

**Age of participants:** The following table presents the age of the participants in the survey and the 2000 census figures of zip code 10472 by age for comparison.

Age	Surveyed	2000 Bronx Census
0-9	0.30%	17.20%

10-16	26.20%	11.90%
17-29	37.65%	19.10%
30-39	14.46%	15.30%
40-49	9.04%	13.10%
50-59	9.34%	9.80%
60-69	0.00%	6.10%
69+	3.01%	7.60%

**Average income:** Nearly half of the participants declined to tell the surveyors their household income – 56.9%. Of those who did, 36.7% had incomes of under \$20,000, 34% had incomes between \$20,000 and \$34,999, 15% had incomes between \$35,000 and 49,999, 8.2% had incomes between \$50,000 and \$74,999 and 6.1% had incomes of more than \$75,000.

**Gender:** Half the people surveyed were women and half men – 49.9% and 50.1% respectively. In the Bronx, 53.5% of the population is female according to the 2000 census.

**Race/Ethnicity:** Participants were asked to define themselves as one ten races/ethnicities.

Latino	63.7%	Middle Eastern	0.8%
African American	22.5%	Native American	1.1%
West Indian	5.7%	Caucasian	3.8%
Asian	0%	Other	1.4%
Southeast Asian	0.8%		

**Household size:** Participants were also asked how many people lived in their household and how many children lived with them. The table below shows the number of respondents whose household is of a given size and who have a given number of children.

Household size	All People	Children
0	0	94
1	28	87
2	53	53
3	86	57
4	94	19
5	60	9
6	22	4
7	15	
8+	4	

**Car ownership by household:** Participants were asked how many cars their households had. 45.2% answered that their household did not have a car, 35% had one car, 14.4% had two cars, 4.3% had three cars and 1.1% had four or more cars. This is somewhat higher than expected based on the 1990 census but may be in keeping with the increased median family income of the area over the past 10 years.