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Survey: Shorter commute is main reason for moving
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It wasn't the schools. It wasn't the lousy boss. It wasn't even nearness to family or size of the house. In a new survey of 4,000 metro Atlantans, of those who changed residences or jobs last year, the top reason was the commute.
[Post comments below.]

Three-quarters of people who moved or changed jobs said the ease of commuting was equal to or more important than the other factors in the decision to make the change.

That's no surprise to Richard Kim, a 30-year-old loan processor who moved from Marietta in 2002, when he was commuting to school in Dunwoody. He says when he decided to move, even knowing his workplace would probably change, consideration of his commute time sent him inside the Perimeter.

"I moved to Buckhead, so no matter where I go to work it's against traffic," he said. He now works in Norcross, and as he predicted, he still has a reverse commute.

"It's like no traffic – or a lot less traffic, a lot less," he said. "I'm less frustrated at work. It made a huge difference."

Metro Atlanta researchers have spent years charting surging traffic congestion, a decline in individual driving distances, the condo boom and the move toward live-work-play centers. Anecdotal evidence — and common sense — suggested those trends were linked, that people were moving closer to work or working closer to home to avoid traffic.

But it was hard to know for sure, cautioned researchers like those at the Georgia Regional Transportation Authority, who publish an annual report showing a virtually ceaseless plunge in the number of miles the average licensed driver here has driven since 1998.

Now, the study says, they know.

Researchers caution that survey results always depend on how you slice the numbers, and combining categories gives different results. But combining movers and job-changers in one survey showed how Atlantans' trip to work is having an overwhelming influence on some of the most fundamental and disruptive decisions in their lives.

The initial survey results were released Friday by the Center for Transportation and the Environment at a seminar by the Clean Air Campaign. The results show the vast majority of those who changed residence or jobs within the previous year weren't even leaving the metro area.

Asked, unprompted, what was the top reason for moving or changing jobs, 23 percent said their commute was, far and away the highest for any factor. Career advancement got 12 percent. Size of house was 9 percent.

The study also queried employers. Of the 20 percent of employers who opened new locations or moved existing ones within the past five years, 42 percent said they did it to get better access to workers.

David Tufts is one of them. He still remembers his first commute from his home in Buckhead to offices he opened this January in Midtown, after years of slogging to the Perimeter. Gone was the traffic ooze on Ga. 400.

"It was amazing," he said. "My mileage on my car is so different, I think I log three miles a day now."

"Everyone loves it for many reasons," he said of his employees. "There's the ability to walk to great places for lunch."

But it's not just Midtown that's drawing people closer to jobs, Tufts added.

"I think transportation has people moving closer to a job, but some of the closest job centers aren't the city of Atlanta," he said, but in places throughout the metro area like the Perimeter.

In that case, he said, "it's not move into town, it's move closer to Perimeter."