



California Department of Transportation

Division of Mass Transportation

Survey for Rural Transit Assistance Program

(February 2006)

Survey for Rural Transit Assistance Program

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Survey for Rural Transit Assistance Program

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Monitoring Branch

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Executive Summary

For

Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP) Survey

Currently, the California Association for Coordinated Transportation Inc. (CalACT) is under contract to the Department of Transportation, Division of Mass Transportation (DMT) to implement all aspects of Rural Transit Assistance Program. (RTAP). RTAP was created by Congress in 1986, under Section 18(h) of the Surface Transportation Act administered by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). The program provides training, technical assistance and other resources to rural and urban transit operators throughout the State of California. CalACT is a statewide, non-profit organization that has represented the interests of small, rural, and specialized transportation providers since 1984, and has been instrumental in conducting RTAP training programs under several contracts with the Department since 1990.

The DMT conducted an Internet survey among rural transportation agencies to obtain information regarding the implementation of the RTAP. This survey was conducted between January 12, 2006 and February 10, 2006, and was intended to assist the Department in determining Transit Agency's satisfaction with RTAP trainings and how RTAP can be improved.

This report presents the overall effectiveness of the RTAP. Graphical presentation of the survey results describe the number of employees in the transit operator's organization, their service areas, training programs, training budgets and other related information regarding RTAP activities and CalACT's implementation of the program. Table 1 summarizes responses to the survey questions, and percent distributions of the total surveyor's. For your reference, unedited survey participant's suggestions and comments are shown in Tables 2 and 3.

RTAP Survey Findings

The results of the RTAP Survey revealed that the level of overall satisfaction with the RTAP program is very high. Chart 1 represents the respondents' perception of CalACT's implementation of the RTAP for rural transit operators. A total of 57 percent of the respondents answered that they were "Very satisfied" with the program, while 42 percent responded that they were "Satisfied", and only 1 percent responded that they were "Dissatisfied". Chart 2 describes the respondent's response to the CalACT effectiveness for their organization; while 56 percent reported "Very satisfied", 41 percent reported "Satisfied", and only 3 percent responded that they were "Dissatisfied".

As illustrated in Chart 3, 48 percent of the survey respondents indicated that they served transit service areas with a population less than 50,000, 31 percent respondents provided transit service serving small urban populations of less than 200,000, and 21 percent identified that they were operating transit service in urban areas serving populations greater than 200,000.

Chart 4 indicates that the majority of the respondents were in the position of authority to decide who attends training programs while 36 percent were not in a position of authority. The RTAP survey revealed that 36 percent of the respondents supervised 1 to 10 employees, 9 percent supervised 11 to 20 employees, 15 percent supervised 21 to 50 employees and only 7 percent had more than 50 employees to supervise. Of the total respondents shown in Chart 5, 33 percent did not supervise any staff.

Chart 6 reports that the survey showed 19 percent of RTAP providers allocated 10 days or more per person for management and staff to attend transportation related training, workshops and conferences during each calendar year, 17 percent allocated 6 to 10 days, 27 percent allocated 3 to 5 days, 19 percent 1 to 2 days while 27 percent responded that this question is not applicable to their organization.

The survey question of how much RTAP agencies budget for training, Chart 7 shows that 12 percent indicated they had an annual employee training budget of over \$10,000, 18 percent allocated \$5,000 to \$9,999 to training, 30 percent budgeted \$1,000 to \$4,999, and 23 percent budgeted less than \$1,000 for their training program.

Chart 9 indicates that 82 percent of the survey respondents reported that RTAP bulletins they received provided sufficient information for the agency to decide if management or staff should attend the RTAP training, while 11 percent did not receive the RTAP training bulletin, and only 7 percent were not aware of the RTAP training program.

Regarding the \$1,500 scholarship fund that is available through RTAP for travel and lodging expenses incurred while traveling to and from workshops and training, Chart 10 indicated that 45 percent indicated that CalACT responded to them in a timely manner, while 19 percent were not aware of the fund and 34 percent had not requested scholarship funds.

Chart 12 indicates that 43 percent of RTAP survey respondents were aware of the RTAP Catalog of Resources on the Internet and had accessed it, while 23 percent were not aware of the catalog, and another 23 percent were aware of the catalog, but had not accessed it.

Survey Conclusion

Out of a total of 520 transit agencies that were invited to participate in the survey, 128 or 26 percent, consisting of transit managers, transit staff, and other transit related occupations completed the survey. Overall, the 2006 RTAP survey indicated that the RTAP administered by CalACT has been very effective and successful. A significant 99 percent of the survey respondents were either "Very Satisfied", or "Satisfied" with the RTAP program. In addition, 97 percent of the rural transit providers reported that their organization was "Very Satisfied" or "Satisfied" with the effectiveness of the CalACT program. The opinions of 83 percent of survey participants indicated that the RTAP conferences provided content beneficial to their organization's needs, while 17 percent answered "Other". Conversely, none of the agencies reported that the conferences were not beneficial.

Chart 1 - Overall, what is your perception of CalACT's implementation of RTAP for rural transit operators?

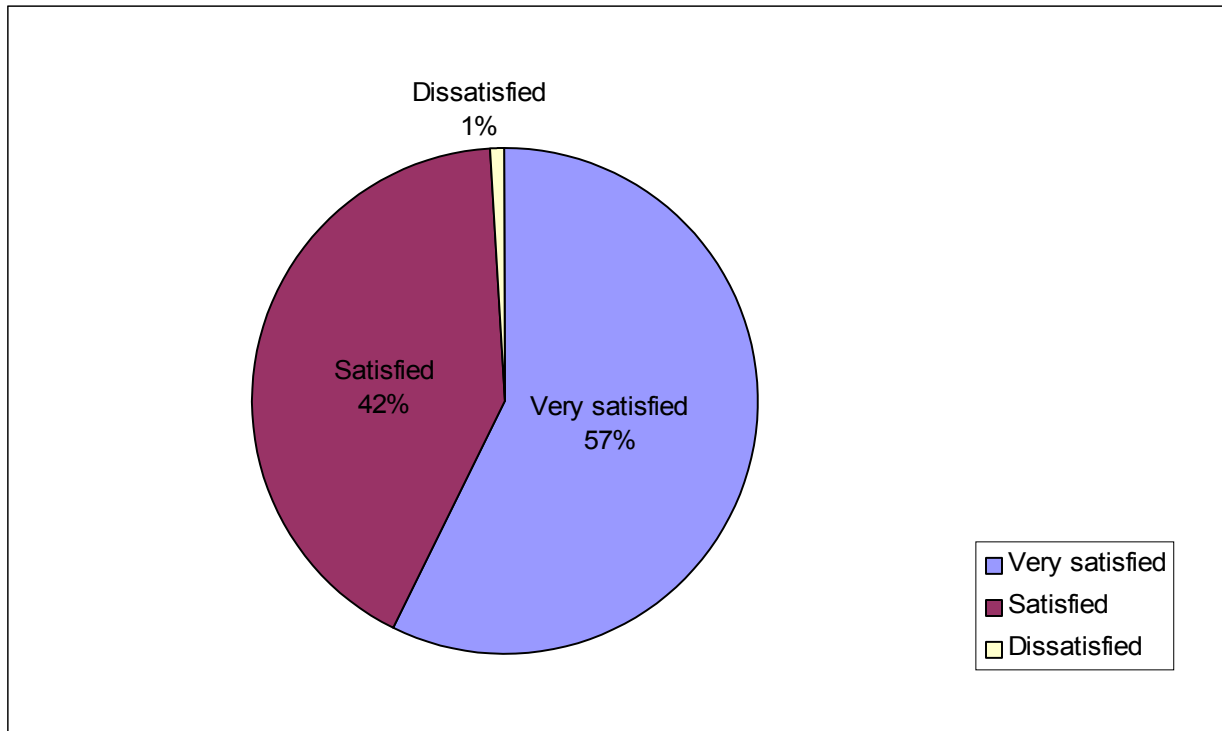


Chart 2 - How effective have the CalACT conferences been to your organization?

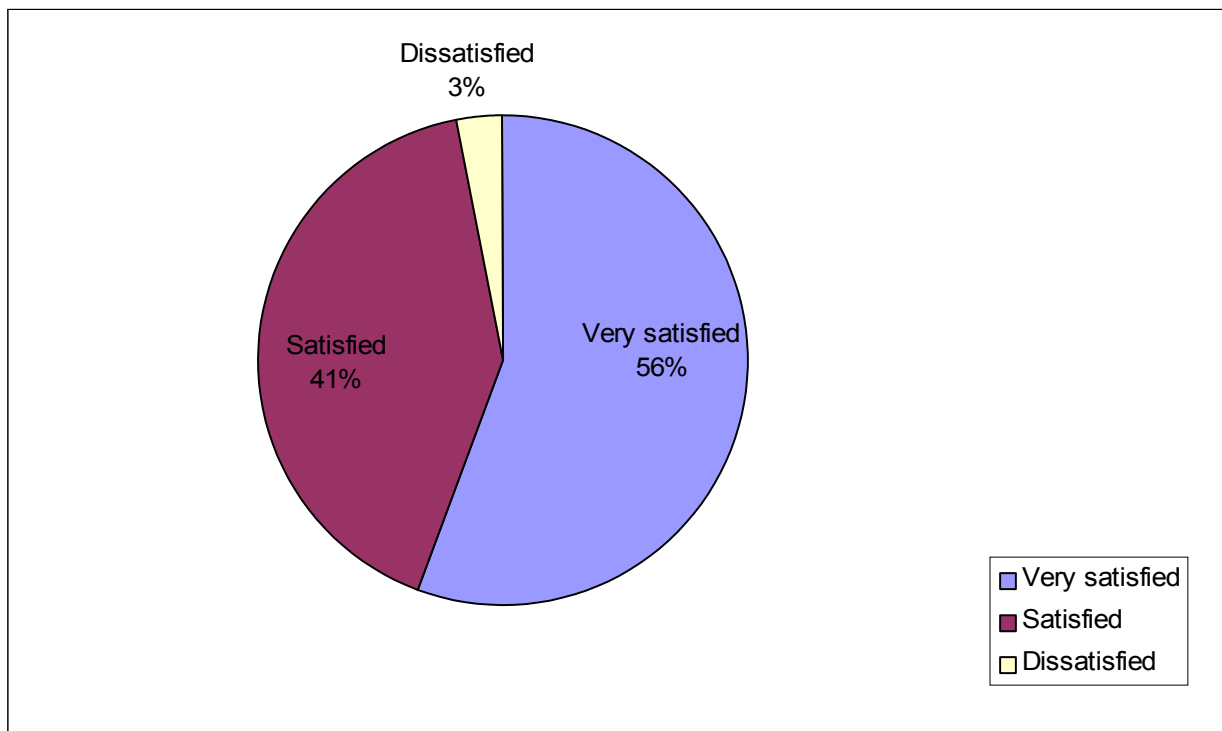


Chart 3 - Please identify which best describes your transit service area

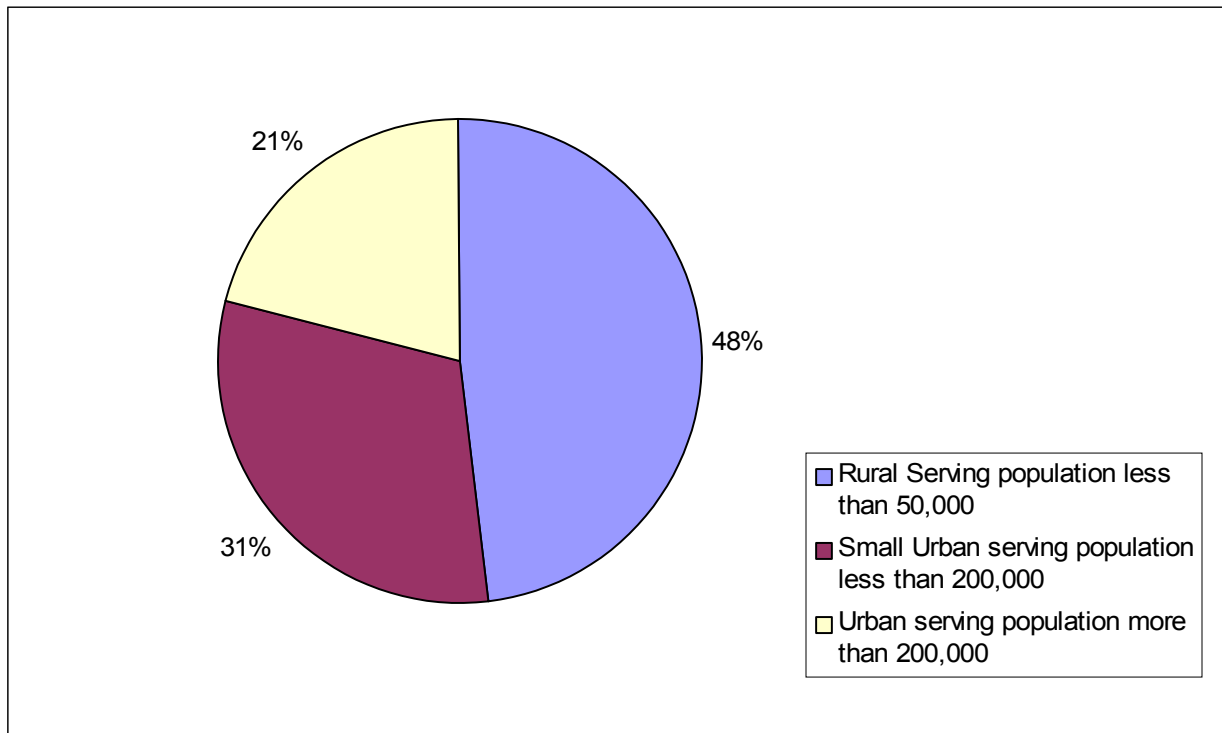


Chart 4 - In your position, do you have the authority to decide who attends training programs?

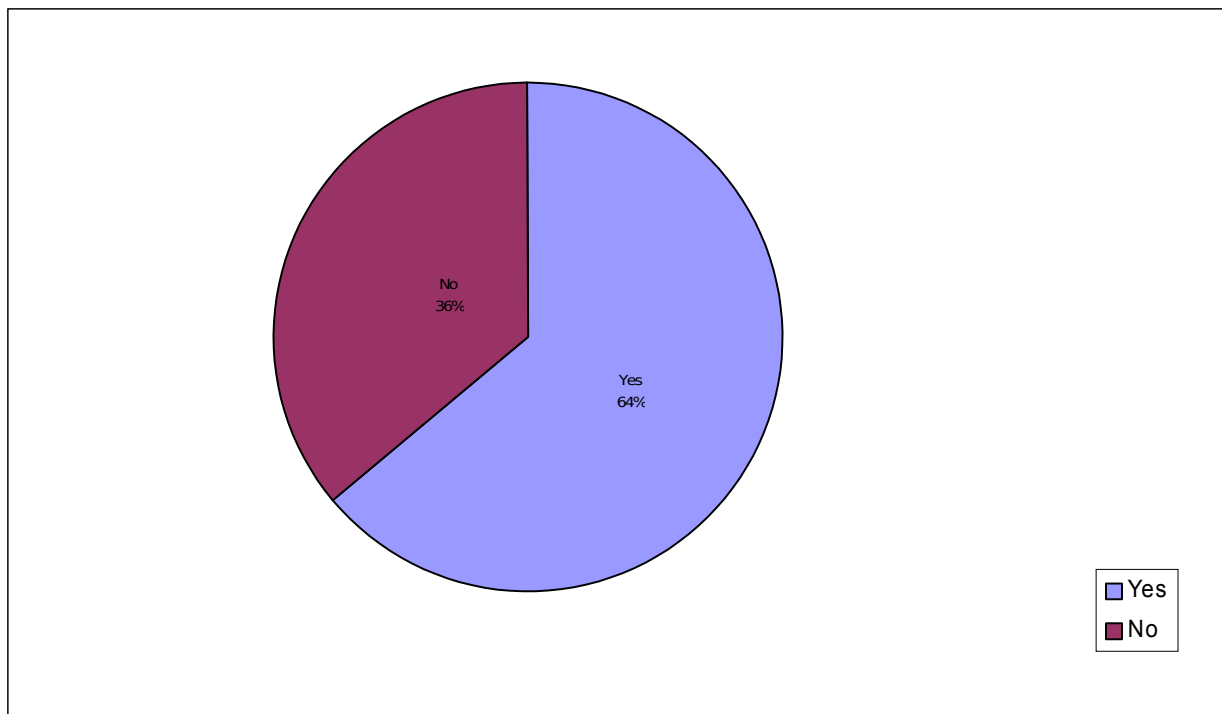


Chart 5

-

How many employees do you supervise in your organization?

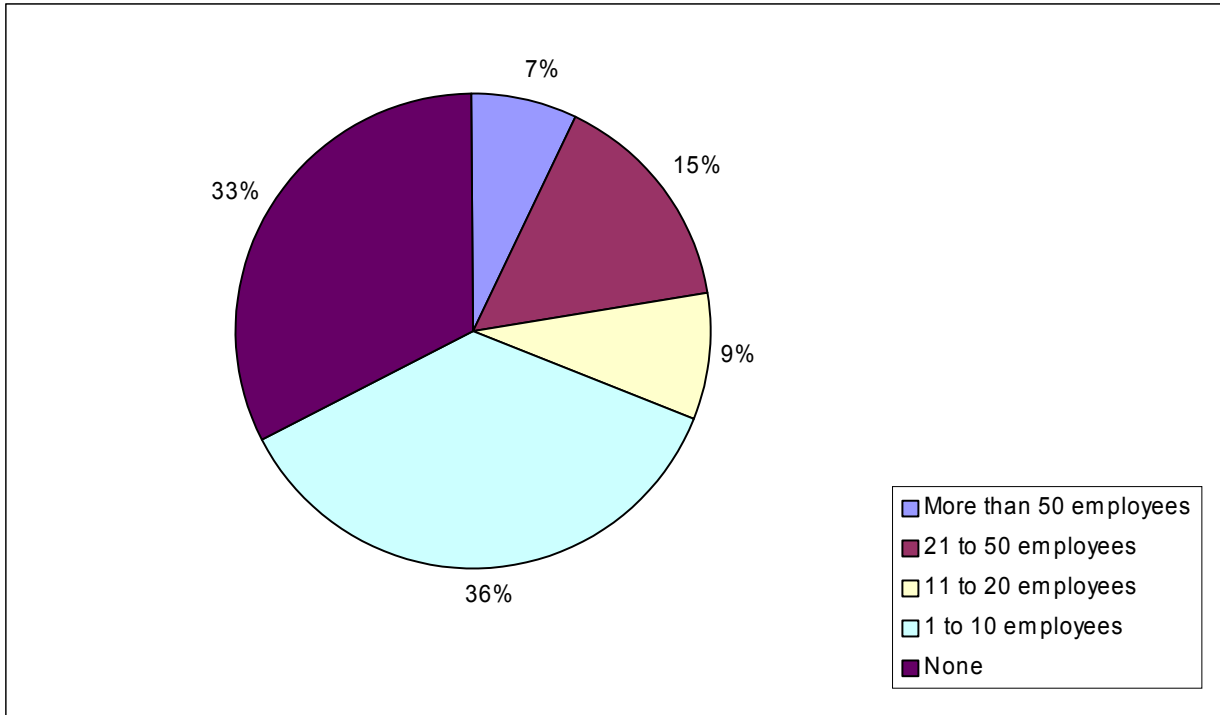


Chart 6 - How many days per person do you allow for management and staff to attend transportation related training, workshops and conferences each calendar year?

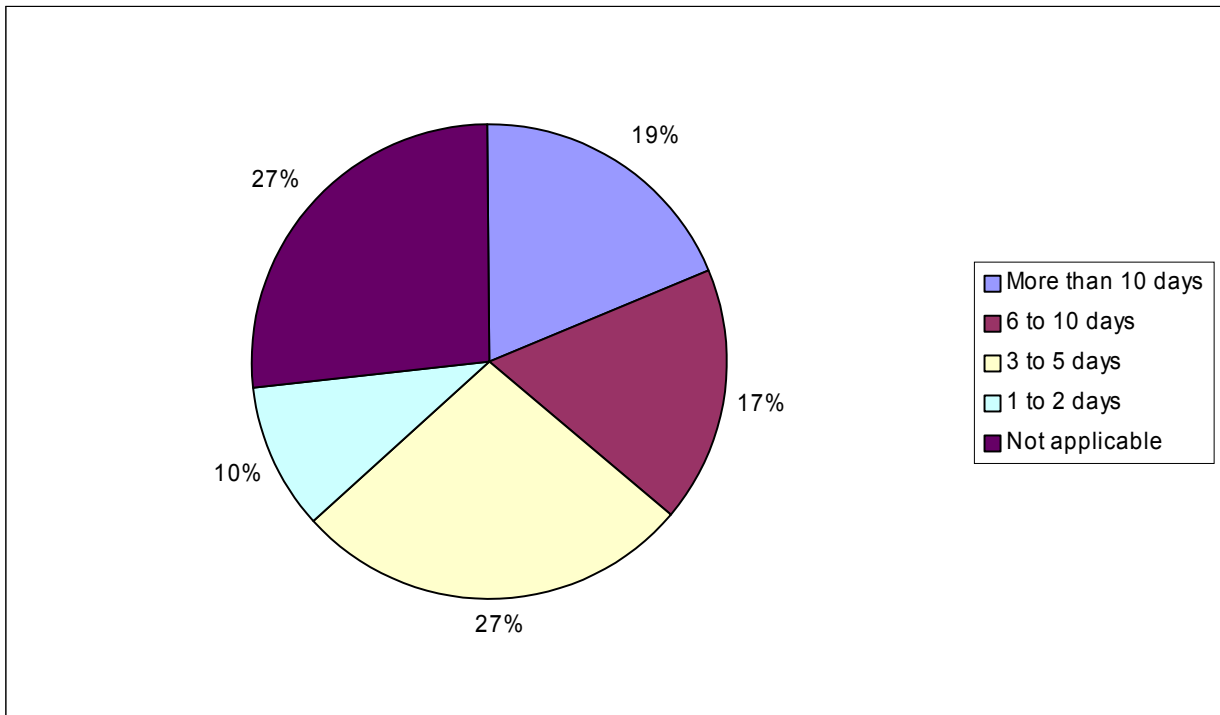


Chart 7 - How much does your agency budget in regards to your management and staff training, workshops and conferences (include travel expenses and registration fees)?

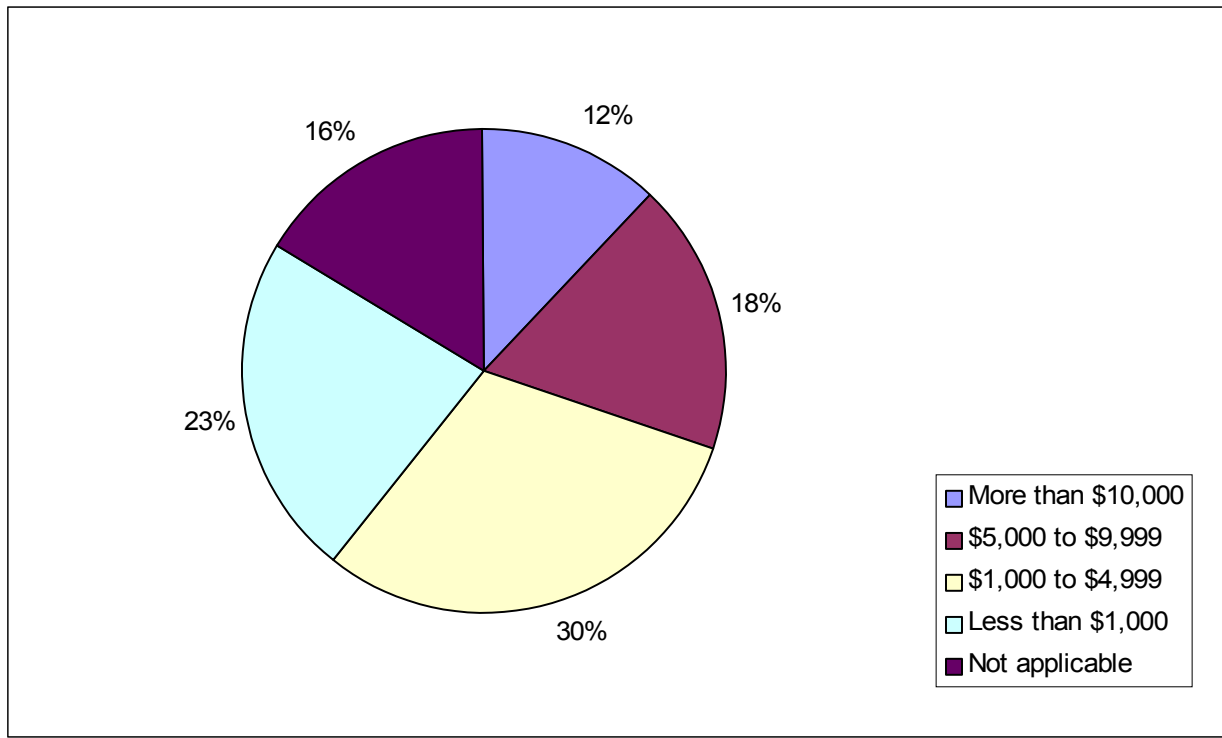


Chart 8 - How did you learn about RTAP activities? (Choose one or more answers)

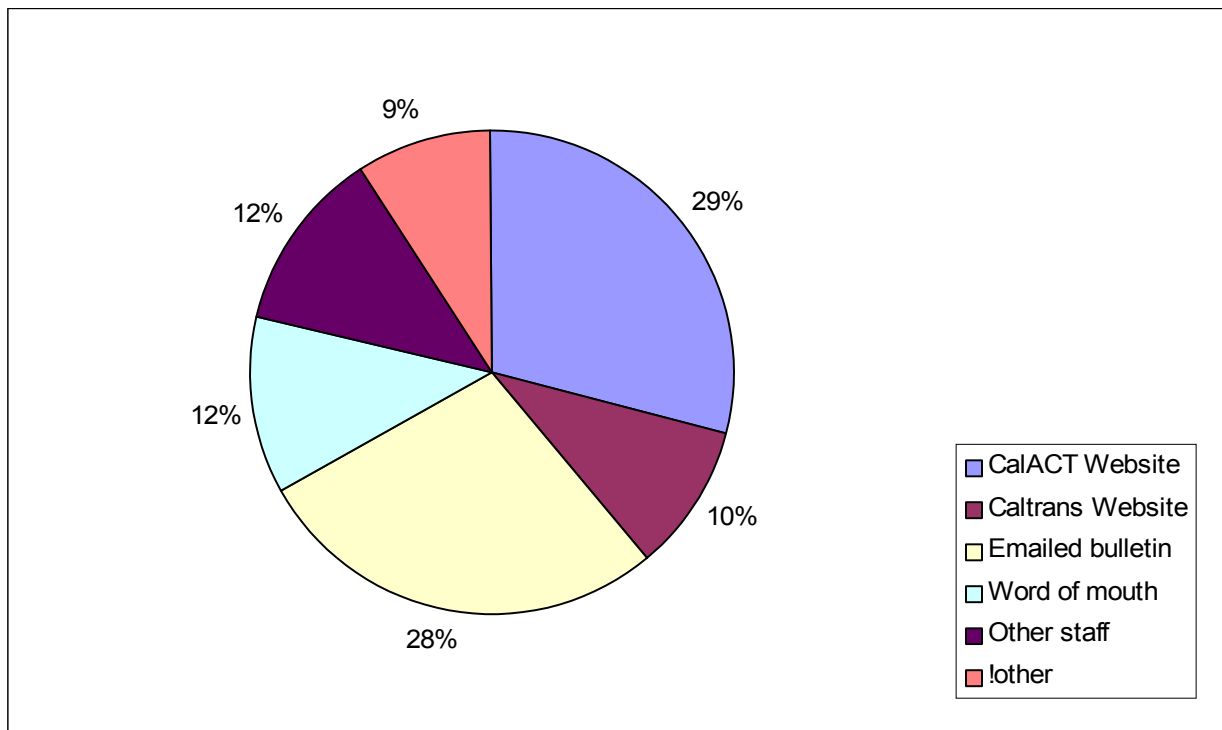


Chart 9 – If you receive RTAP Bulletin, do the Bulletins provide sufficient information to decide if you or staff should attend?

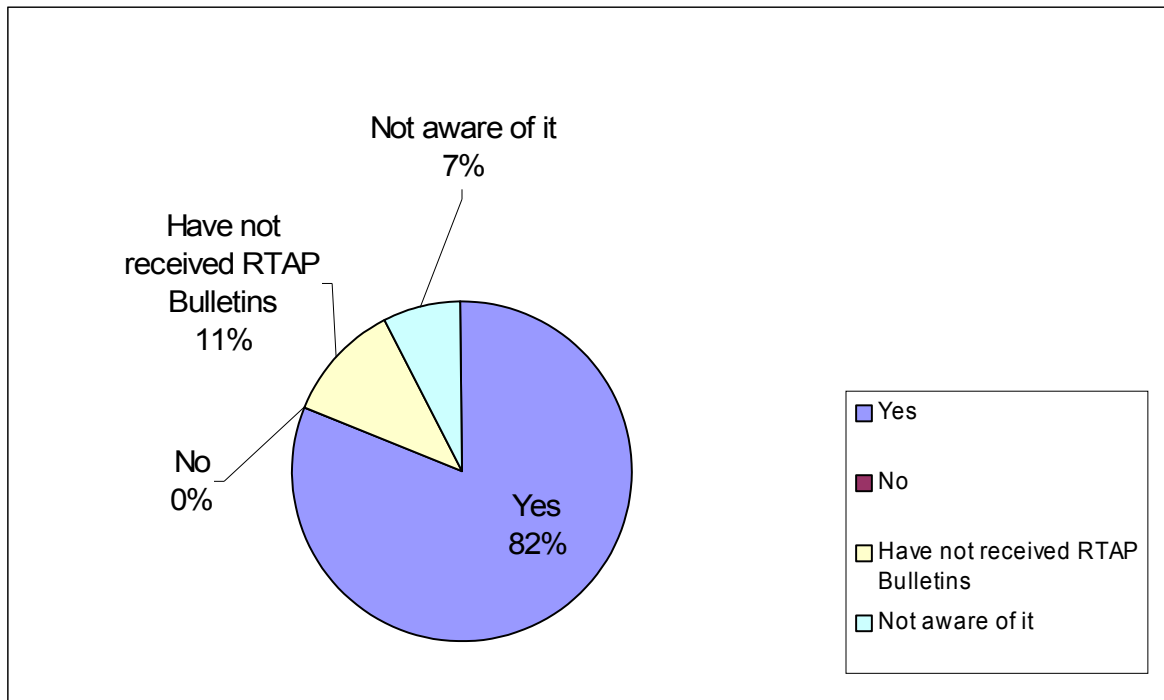


Chart 10 - RTAP provides up to \$1,500 to rural agencies for registration, travel and lodging expenses incurred while traveling to and from workshops, and training. Does CalACT respond in a timely manner to your requests for information or approvals?

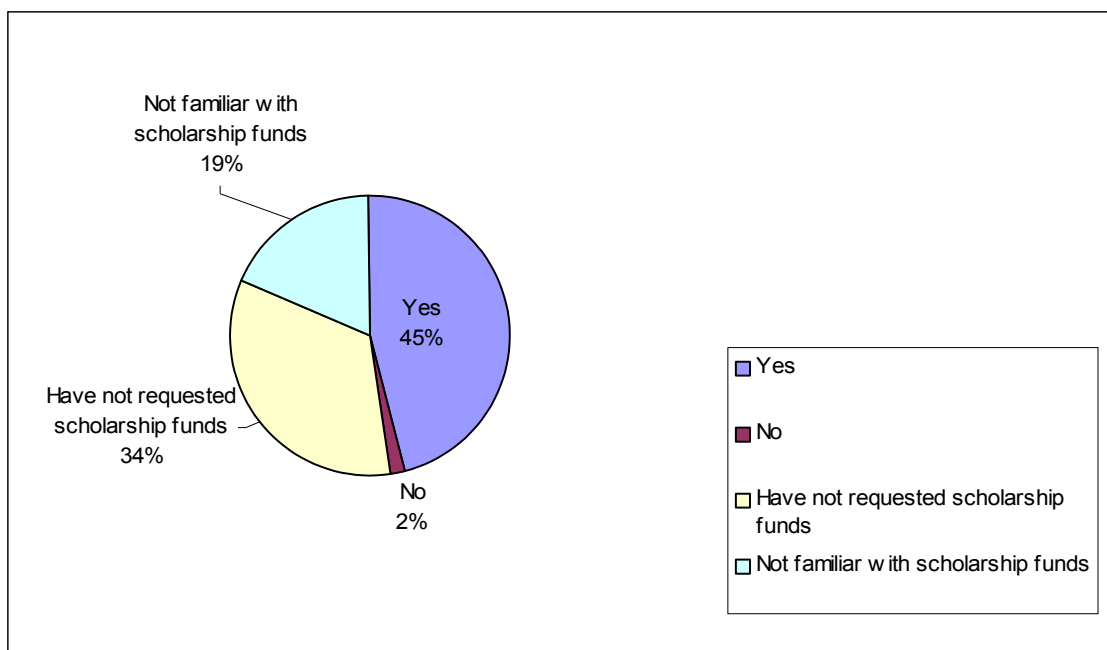


Chart 11 - After you submit your post expense form, receipts and write-up to CalACT, does your organization receive the scholarship reimbursement within 90 days?

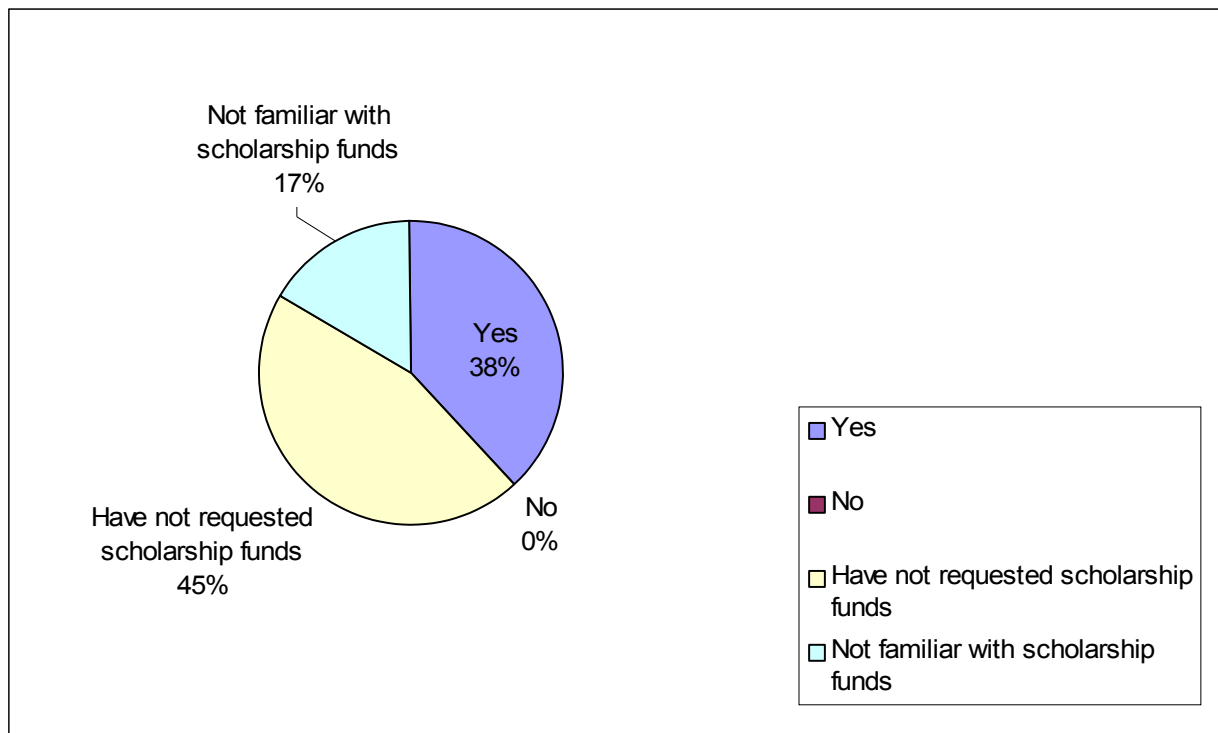


Chart 12 - RTAP maintains a Catalog of Resources that is available in hard copy and on the Internet. Do you access any of the materials in the RTAP Catalog of Resources?

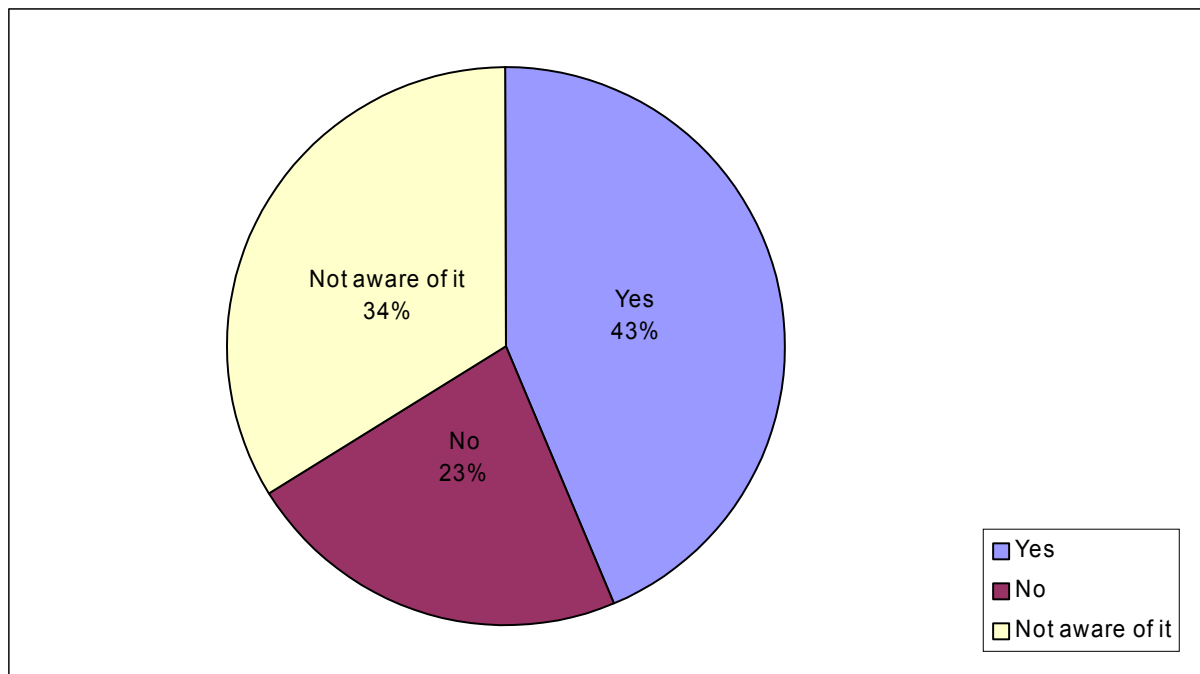


Chart 13 - RTAP funds are used to assist in planning the content of CalACT conferences. Have you attended any of the following CalACT conferences? (Choose one or more answers)

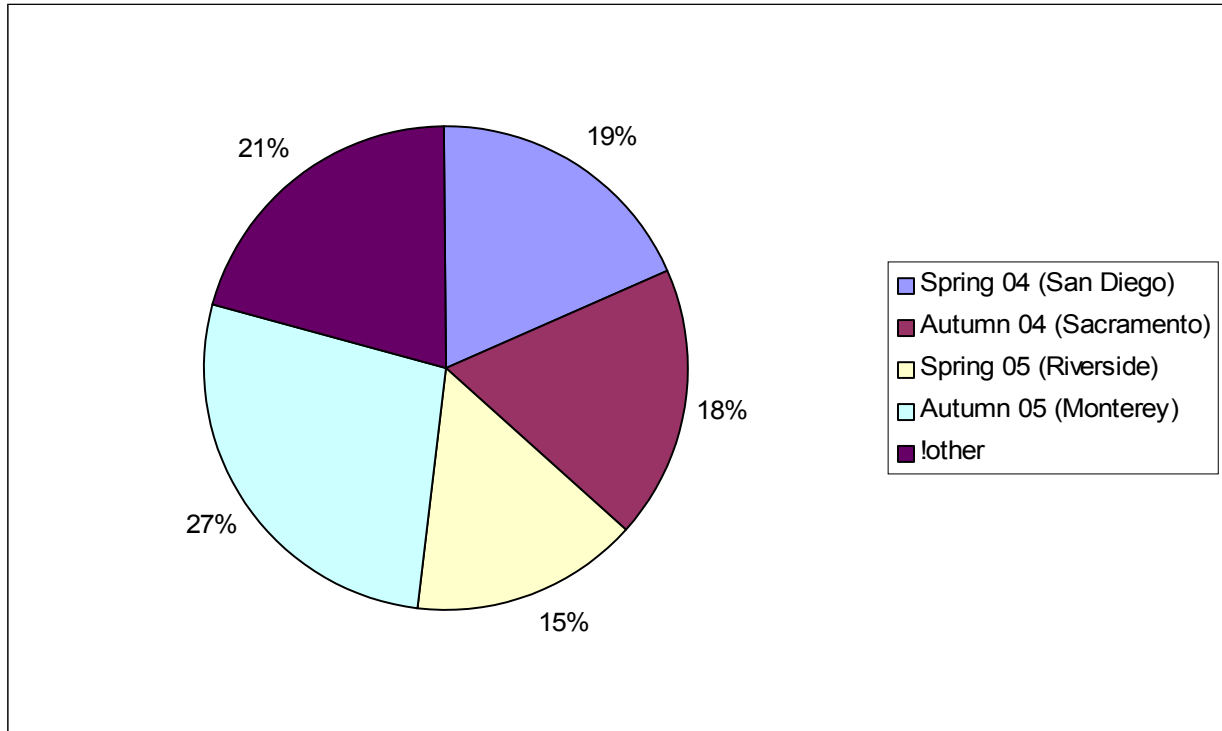


Chart 14 - Was the content of the conferences beneficial to your organization's needs?

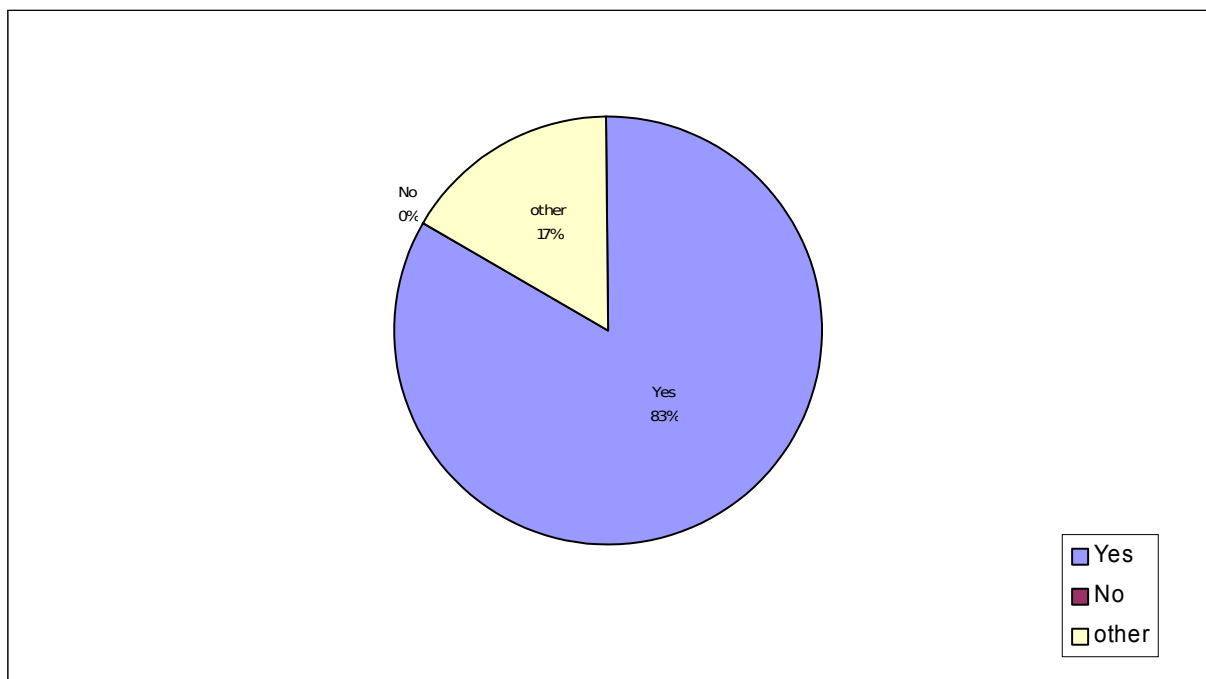


Table 1 - RTAP Survey Summary

SURVEY SUMMARY	Total	Percent
1. How effective have the CalACT conferences been to your organization?		
Very satisfied	55	56%
Satisfied	41	41%
Dissatisfied	3	3%
<i>Total</i>	99	100%
2. Overall, what is your perception of CalACT's implementation of RTAP for rural transit operators?		
Very satisfied	59	57%
Satisfied	43	42%
Dissatisfied	1	1%
<i>Total</i>	103	100%
3. Please identify which best describes your transit service area. (Choose one or more answers)		
Rural Serving population less than 50,000	66	48%
Small Urban serving population less than 200,000	42	31%
Urban serving population more than 200,000	29	21%
<i>Total</i>	137	100%
4. In your position, do you have the authority to decide who attends training programs?		
Yes	80	64%
No	45	36%
<i>Total</i>	125	100%
5. How many employees do you supervise in your organization?		
More than 50 employees	9	7%
21 to 50 employees	19	15%
11 to 20 employees	11	9%
1 to 10 employees	45	36%
None	41	33%
<i>Total</i>	125	100%
6. How many days per person do you allow for management and staff to attend transportation related training, workshops and conferences each calendar year?		
More than 10 days	23	19%
SURVEY SUMMARY	Total	Percent

SURVEY SUMMARY	Total	Percent
6 to 10 days	21	17%
3 to 5 days	33	27%
1 to 2 days	12	10%
Not applicable	33	27%
Total	122	100%
7. How much does your agency budget in regards to your management and staff training, workshops and conferences (include travel expenses and registration fees)?		
More than \$10,000	15	12%
\$5,000 to \$9,999	22	18%
\$1,000 to \$4,999	37	30%
Less than \$1,000	28	23%
Not applicable	20	16%
Total	122	100%
8. How did you learn about RTAP activities? (Choose one or more answers)		
CalACT Website	63	29%
Caltrans Website	21	10%
Emailed bulletin	60	28%
Word of mouth	26	12%
Other staff	26	12%
Other	20	9%
Total	216	100%
9. If you receive RTAP Bulletins, do the bulletins provide sufficient information to decide if you or staff should attend?		
Yes	99	82%
No	0	0%
Have not received RTAP Bulletins	14	11%
Not aware of it	9	7%
Total	122	100%
10. RTAP provides up to \$1,500 to rural agencies for registration, travel and lodging expenses incurred while traveling to and from workshops, conferences and training. Does CalACT respond in a timely manner to your requests for information or approvals for scholarship assistance under the RTAP program?		
Yes	57	45%
No	2	2%
SURVEY SUMMARY	Total	Percent

SURVEY SUMMARY	Total	Percent
Have not requested scholarship funds	42	34%
Not familiar with scholarship funds	23	19%
<i>Total</i>	<i>124</i>	<i>100%</i>
11. After you submit your post expense form, receipts and write-up to CalACT, does your organization receive the scholarship reimbursement within 90 days?		
Yes	46	38%
No	0	0%
Have not requested scholarship funds	55	45%
Not familiar with scholarship funds	20	17%
<i>Total</i>	<i>121</i>	<i>100%</i>
12. RTAP maintains a Catalog of Resources that is available in hard copy and on the internet. Do you access any of the materials in the RTAP Catalog of Resources?		
Yes	54	43%
No	28	23%
Not aware of it	42	34%
<i>Total</i>	<i>124</i>	<i>100%</i>
13. RTAP funds are used to assist in planning the content of CalACT conferences. Have you attended any of the following CalACT conferences? (Choose one or more answers)		
Spring 04 (San Diego)	32	19%
Autumn 04 (Sacramento)	31	18%
Spring 05 (Riverside)	26	15%
Autumn 05 (Monterey)	47	27%
Other	36	21%
<i>Total</i>	<i>172</i>	<i>100%</i>
14. Was the content of the conferences beneficial to your organization's needs?	Total	Percent
Yes	90	83%
No	0	0%
Other	18	17%
Total	108	100%

Table 2 – Please suggest any additional topics you would like to see incorporated into the RTAP workshops

"Asking for money" you can do it "media interaction" how to prepare for it and use it to enhance your organization
A DOT workshop that would cover every aspect of DOT requirements. I would also like to see the Transit and Paratransit Management Certificate Program offered in Sacramento all at once with no breaks in training.
Baby Seat / Child tie downs in 5310 Paratransit vehicles
Breaking Down the Regulatory Barriers to Trip Sharing and coordination of services
Buses to view at both conferences.
Bus Procurement process (funding, specs, inspection, etc.) Fare Box Recovery Ratio reporting ("optimizing" operating -vs.- capital expenses) for agencies with trouble meeting the ratio
Can you get a lift maintenance class in the LA area? How about a Supervisor's Drug & Alc class?
Certified Community Transit and Supervisor Course
Changes in legislation under SAFETEA-LU
Context Sensitive Solutions in Transit Planning Using/navigating the Caltrans website effectively Caltrans organization and how it relates to local transit/transportation (mini CT planning academy) GIS in transit
Contracting for service in maintenance. Budget preparation
Customer service module for front-line staff (e.g. dispatchers and reservationists)
Have not attended yet.
How to find reliable and affordable vehicle maintenance
I think cal act does a good job overall. I should use the services more. It seems when I do have a problem with a vehicle I usually get a good response from the cal trans. crew. (Dan, Robert, Chris H.)
I would like to see the "managing Contracts" workshop provided in Northern California again.
Impact of new SAFETEA-LU programs and provisions (such as New Freedom and Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan) to planning agencies and transit operators.
Intercity bus issues, planning, and marketing. Auditing operating statistics...current practices and recommendations.
ITS innovations and integration to increase services to the general public while containing "ADA only" expenses. New freedom act training. FTA grant management. DBE goal setting and reporting training. Drug and Alcohol compliance training.
Keep the ADA reviews. Training the trainer opportunities. Emergency evacuation topics. Disaster preparedness topics. Thanks!
Table 2 – (Continued)
LET THE AGENCIES KNOW IN ADVANCE ABOUT THE WORKSHOP WITH THE INFORMATION REGARDING THE SCHOLARSHIP.
More ADA Operational Subjects
More Human Resource specific workshops that are roundtables with breakout groups.
More maintenance training for new Shop Supervisors and additional training for new

**Table 3 - Please provide any additional comments regarding
RTAP**

Although the limit has been increased for scholarships I don't believe the limit was set high enough to enable rural operators to participate in very many workshops and/or conferences. It would also be helpful if funds were available to help offset the costs of the Transit and Paratransit Management Certificate Program.
As a new Transit Manager here at the County I have found the RTAP a valuable tool and informative base. I would not have been able to attend the fall 2005 conference without the RTAP scholarship. As a result I have made relationships with peers and neighbors that have proven to be beneficial. I rely on this program and appreciate the support that I receive when I have questions.
CalACT has been very aggressive in promoting the RTAP
CalACT has done an outstanding job administering the California RTAP Program for Caltrans. The goals and objectives have been realized. The Conferences and Workshops have been well attended, and scheduled through the State to have opportunities to attend session within two hours of very rural agency. The networking experiences have been exceptional. Caltrans staff participation and presentations have been the best in recent years. Everyone has been working very well together. Definite progress has been realized to ensure transit access to an ever-greater segment of California's rural population. The small urban and social service operators have also benefited. I'm just glad Congress and the President agreed to continue funding the RTAP Program for us rural operators another six years!!!
CalACT is a wonderful organization and an asset to the transit industry. I have always felt that the RTAP program is effectively administered.
Great training avenue. Keep up the good job.
I appreciate your services.
I have leaned and enjoyed the workshops. I send 2 to the conferences as we are a small transportation program providing dial -a-ride transportation for seniors and the mobility impaired.
I would appreciate more information, to see if these workshops would be of benefit to my staff and service area.
I would like to learn more. I am interested in the scholarship funds, as little or no funding is available for travel and lodging outside of Sacramento County by the County to attend workshops.
If it were not for the RTAP scholarship program I could not attend the CalACT conferences nor could I send staff to overnight workshops. This program is VITAL to our agency. THANK YOU!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
It is a good program for small to medium operators.
More notice of workshops. First one I have seen and have had several state vans for past three years.
None
Not familiar with RTAP we service our community mainly the City of San Francisco.
Table 3 – (Continued)
Not typically a RTAP scholarship user as I work for Caltrans. I receive considerable very favorable comments from agencies regarding the RTAP scholarship program and courses that have been conducted.
Pete, Meg and Ursell among others at CalACT do a fantastic job. I can always count on them

