

## REPORT DIGEST

### STUDY

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#### STATE EMPLOYEE TRAVEL

*Modes of Transportation  
Between Chicago and:  
Bloomington, Carbondale,  
Champaign-Urbana,  
Macomb, and Springfield*

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State of Illinois  
Office of the Auditor General

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## SYNOPSIS

Legislative Audit Commission Resolution Number 131 directed the Auditor General to examine the modes of transportation for State employee travel between Chicago and Bloomington, Carbondale, Champaign-Urbana, Macomb, and Springfield.

The State reimbursed employees approximately \$29 million for travel expenses incurred within the State (detail object code 1291) during fiscal year 2005. Agencies estimated that 13 percent of their in-state travel expenditures were for travel between Chicago and the specified cities. Approximately two-thirds of the trips were in a vehicle (personal, State, rental), 18 percent by State or commercial plane, 12 percent by Amtrak, and the rest by other modes.

The State Finance Act creates the Travel Regulation Council, which requires that *"All travel shall be by the most economical mode of transportation available considering travel time, costs, and work requirements."*

More than one-half of the State agencies surveyed (22 of 41) said they have established their own policies regarding the mode of transportation in addition to the policies established by travel control boards. However, approximately 40 percent of the employees from these agencies were not fully aware of their agency's policy, according to their survey responses.

- 14 of 41 State agencies said they did not require employees to obtain prior approval regarding the mode of transportation to use.
- 34 of 41 State agencies said they had established some method for ensuring employees used the most economical mode of transportation, such as reservations through a travel coordinator.
- 25 of 41 State agencies said they did not track employee travel in detail, such as the number of trips, mode of transportation taken, or location of travel.

In their survey responses, both agencies and employees indicated that Amtrak trains needed to be more reliable and offer more or different departure/arrival times. On a scale of 1 ("not important") to 5 ("very important"), agencies and employees rated the need for reliability and more trains at nearly 5 in their responses.

Most of the 96 employee respondents to our survey who used Amtrak during fiscal year 2005 rated their overall experience with Amtrak as either average or above average: 62 percent rated their overall experience as excellent or good, 19 percent as average, and 19 percent as below average or poor.

IDOT statistics showed that one-half of the trains applicable to this Study were less than 75 percent on time during the period of October 2004-August 2005 for which data was available.



## REPORT CONCLUSIONS

The Legislative Audit Commission directed the Auditor General to conduct a Study that examined State employee travel between Chicago and Bloomington, Carbondale, Champaign-Urbana, Macomb, and Springfield. The Resolution directed us to examine the modes of transportation used and requested us to survey agencies and employees, and review a limited number of travel vouchers.

The State reimbursed employees approximately \$29 million for travel expenses incurred within the State (detail object code 1291) during fiscal year 2005. This amount does not include payments directly to vendors (e.g., hotels), which totaled \$5 million, or travel paid from locally held funds. Agencies estimated that 13 percent of their in-state travel expenditures were for travel between Chicago and the specified cities. Approximately two-thirds of the trips were in a vehicle (personal, State, rental), 18 percent by State or commercial plane, 12 percent by Amtrak, and the rest by other modes.

**This Study focused on modes of transportation used for travel between Chicago and the cities specified in the LAC Resolution.**

1. **CONTROLS.** The State of Illinois has established a structure to oversee travel by State employees. The State Finance Act creates the Travel Regulation Council, which requires that *“All travel shall be by the most economical mode of transportation available considering travel time, costs, and work requirements.”*
2. **SELECTION FACTORS.** State agencies estimated that employees took 19,280 trips between Chicago and one of the specified cities during July 1, 2004 to March 31, 2005 using the following modes of transportation:

- 41% – Personal vehicle
- 22% – State vehicle
- 14% – State airplane
- 12% – Amtrak
- 4% – Commercial airplane
- 7% – Other modes

In their survey responses, both agencies and employees indicated that Amtrak trains needed to be more reliable and offer more or different departure/arrival times. On a scale of 1 (“not important”) to 5 (“very important”), agencies and employees rated

<b>Digest Exhibit 1</b>		
<b>AMTRAK RELIABILITY AND SCHEDULE</b>		
<i>Changes Desired by State Agencies and Employees</i>		
<b>Scale:</b> 5 = Very Important 3 = Neutral 1 = Not Important		
	<b>Agencies</b>	<b>Employees</b>
Improve reliability of Amtrak train schedule (e.g., on time performance).....	4.67	4.72
More or different departure/arrival times .....	4.67	4.56
Note: Numbers presented are the mean (average) of the responses. Source: Auditor General’s surveys of State agencies and employees.		

the need for reliability and more trains at nearly 5 in their written responses to our survey questionnaires. For example, some travelers wrote their train was two or more hours late between Chicago and Springfield.

Most of the 96 employee respondents to the Auditor General’s survey – who used Amtrak during fiscal year 2005 – rated their overall experience with Amtrak as either average or above average: 62 percent rated their overall experience as excellent or good, 19 percent as average, and 19 percent as below average or poor.

Statistics provided by the Illinois Department of Transportation showed that one-half of the trains applicable to this Study were on time less than 75 percent of the time during the period of October 2004-August 2005 for which data was available.

3. **TRAVEL VOUCHER REVIEW.** We selected 182 travel vouchers and found 40 vouchers were for travel to the specified cities. Approximately one-half of the trips used by these travelers were in a vehicle (personal, State, carpool), 23 percent were by State or commercial plane, 19 percent were by Amtrak, and the rest were by other modes of transportation. Travelers who did not take Amtrak considered it for 23 of the trips but often did not choose it citing a lack of reliability. (pages 1-4)

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**STATE FINANCE ACT**

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The State of Illinois has established a structure to oversee travel by State employees. The State has already established one important requirement to control travel costs, namely the use of the most economic mode of transportation for the circumstance.

The State Finance Act establishes a Travel Regulation Council that consists of representatives from 10 travel control boards. The Travel Regulation Council is responsible for adopting State Travel Regulations and Reimbursement Rates for all personnel.

INTERNAL CONTROLS
The key to ensuring that the most economical mode of travel is used may depend on agencies establishing and implementing internal controls.

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**Travel Regulations: All travel shall be by the most economical mode of transportation.**

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The Travel Regulation Council regulations require that “*All travel shall be by the most economical mode of transportation available considering travel time, costs, and work requirements.*” Modes of transportation authorized for official travel include automobiles, railroads, airlines, buses, taxicabs, and other usual means of conveyance. (pages 5-7)

**AGENCY SURVEY RESPONSES**

In May 2005, we mailed a survey questionnaire to the 32 State agencies that, according to the Comptroller’s data, expended at least \$100,000 each for in-state employee travel (from detail object code 1291) during the prior fiscal year (FY04), and to all 9 State universities. These agencies estimated that employees took 19,280 trips between Chicago and the specified cities during the first 3 quarters of fiscal year 2005 (not all agencies provided an estimate).

**Most travel for the specified cities was between Chicago and Springfield, and vehicles were the preferred mode of transportation.**

- Most of the travel was between Chicago and Springfield (74%), followed by Chicago and Champaign-Urbana (17%).
- As shown in Digest Exhibit 2, the largest percent of travel was in personal vehicles (41%), followed by the State vehicle motor pool (22%), State airplane (14%), and Amtrak (12%).

<b>Digest Exhibit 2</b>							
<b>NUMBER OF TRIPS TAKEN BY AGENCY EMPLOYEES</b>							
<b>Between July 1, 2004 to March 31, 2005</b>							
<b>TRAVEL BETWEEN CHICAGO AND THE FOLLOWING CITIES:</b>							
<i>Mode of Transportation Used</i>	<i>Bloomington</i>	<i>Carbondale</i>	<i>Champaign -Urbana</i>	<i>Macomb</i>	<i>Springfield</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>%</i>
A) Personal Vehicle	543	129	1,480	171	5,531	<b>7,854</b>	41%
B) State Vehicle (e.g., motor pool)	103	65	1,306	115	2,637	<b>4,226</b>	22%
C) State Airplane	0	12	0	1	2,671	<b>2,684</b>	14%
D) Amtrak	118	122	155	169	1,799	<b>2,363</b>	12%
E) Commercial Airplane	0	15	112	0	737	<b>864</b>	4%
F) Other (e.g., bus, carpooling)	8	9	193	0	576	<b>786</b>	4%
G) Rental Vehicle paid by State (e.g., Enterprise, Hertz)	38	0	120	14	331	<b>503</b>	3%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>810</b>	<b>352</b>	<b>3,366</b>	<b>470</b>	<b>14,282</b>	<b>19,280</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Percentage</b>	4%	2%	17%	2%	74%	100% <sup>1</sup>	

<sup>1</sup>Total does not add due to rounding.  
Source: Auditor General’s survey of 41 State agencies.

**Agencies’ Travel Policies**

The Auditor General’s survey questionnaire asked if agencies had travel policies: “Does your agency have specific written policies, procedures, or criteria that delineate which mode of transportation must be taken for travel?” More than one-half of the State agencies surveyed (22 of 41) said they have established their own policies regarding the mode of transportation in addition to the policies established by travel control boards. However, approximately 40 percent of the employees from these

agencies were not fully aware of their agency’s policy, according to their survey responses. The effectiveness of any policy depends on its implementation, including the internal controls (checks and balances) put into effect.

### Prior Approval

Approximately one-third of the State agencies we surveyed did not require their employees to obtain approval prior to commencing travel regarding the mode of transportation used for State business.

- When asked for their approval process, 20 of 41 agencies said their employees were required to obtain approval before traveling regarding the mode of transportation to use, and 7 more agencies said prior approval was required only for certain types of travel (e.g., for air transportation, out-of-state travel, conferences, vehicle rentals, and use of motor pool).
- The remaining 14 agencies said they did not require employees to obtain approval prior to traveling regarding the mode of transportation to use for travel.

STATE AGENCY SURVEY QUESTION
<i>“Does your agency require employees to obtain prior approval regarding the mode of transportation to use for travel on State business?”</i>

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**Approximately one-half of survey respondents were unaware of their agency’s policy on prior approvals for mode of transportation to use.**

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Answers to our survey question indicated that approximately one-half of the employees were not properly aware of their agency’s policy on prior approvals regarding the mode of transportation to use for travel on State business.

### Methods for Ensuring Economic Travel

More than 80 percent of the State agencies (34 of 41) said in the survey questionnaire they had methods for ensuring employees used the most economical mode of transportation, such as prior approval by the supervisor, reservations through the travel coordinator, use of a travel agent, and/or carpooling. Seven agencies (17%) did not specify any method for ensuring that all transportation is by the most economical method.

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**61% of agencies surveyed (25 of 41) did not track employee travel in detail.**

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### Tracking Employee Travel

A total of 61 percent of the State agencies (25 of 41) said in the survey questionnaire they did not track employee travel in detail, such as the number of trips, mode of transportation taken, or location of travel.

Only 39 percent of the agencies (16 of 41) said they had some means of tracking employee travel in detail. (pages 12-17)

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**EMPLOYEE TRAVELERS**

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The Auditor General’s survey questionnaire asked employees if they had a preferred mode of transportation. Nearly 80 percent of the responding employees (217 of 277) said they had a preferred mode of transportation (see Digest Exhibit 3), mainly vehicles, because of the following types of reasons:

- Amtrak was not a reliable mode of transportation.
- Travel involved multiple stops.
- Equipment or luggage needed to be carried.
- Flexibility.
- Personal reasons, such as safety.

<b>Digest Exhibit 3 EMPLOYEES’ PREFERRED MODE OF TRANSPORTATION</b>		
	<i>Respondents</i>	<i>%</i>
Personal Vehicle/ Automobile	101	47%
Amtrak	38	18%
State Vehicle	26	12%
State Airplane	18	8%
Other (carpooling, commercial airplane, unspecified, etc.)	34	16%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>217</b>	<b>100%<sup>1</sup></b>
<sup>1</sup> Total does not add due to rounding. Source: Auditor General’s survey of State employees.		

**Overall Experience With Amtrak**

The Auditor General’s survey questionnaire asked employees about their overall experience with Amtrak. Ninety-six responding employees said they had traveled on Amtrak during fiscal year 2005 and most gave Amtrak a good to excellent overall rating.

The survey asked employees to provide their reasons if they did not use Amtrak for all their State business travel. Many of the 277 employees cited the lack of reliability as a reason for not using Amtrak, along with train schedules not being convenient:

- 161 employees (58%) said Amtrak schedules were not convenient.
- 141 employees (51%) said Amtrak trains were not reliable (e.g., not on time).
- 141 employees (51%) said location of the office or meeting was not close to the train station.
- 105 employees (38%) said it was their personal preference not to use Amtrak (e.g., physical comfort, safety, food, etc.).
- 112 employees (40%) said total travel cost was lower by not using Amtrak (e.g., traveled with other employees in a vehicle). (pages 20-22)

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**Employees’ reasons for not using Amtrak included reliability, train schedules, location of meetings, personal preference, and cost.**

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**TIMELINESS OF AMTRAK TRAINS**

The cities specified in Legislative Audit Commission Resolution Number 131 were served by 12 Amtrak trains shown below (see Digest Exhibit 4):

- The Springfield–Bloomington–Chicago route had six trains (3 each way);
- The Carbondale–Champaign/Urbana–Chicago route had four trains (2 each way); and
- The Macomb–Chicago route had two trains (1 each way).

Digest Exhibit 4 TRAIN SCHEDULE							
Springfield – Bloomington – Chicago							
Train Number	300	22	304	Train Number	303	21	305
Leaves Springfield	6:33 a.m.	10:34 a.m.	5:07 p.m.	Leaves Chicago	8:15 a.m.	3:20 p.m.	5:15 p.m.
Leaves Bloomington	7:31 a.m.	11:47 a.m.	6:11 p.m.	Leaves Bloomington	10:29 a.m.	5:39 p.m.	7:29 p.m.
Arrives Chicago	9:55 a.m.	2:19 p.m.	8:45 p.m.	Arrives Springfield	11:35 a.m.	6:49 p.m.	8:39 p.m.
Macomb – Chicago							
Train Number	348			Train Number	347		
Leaves Macomb	7:00 a.m.			Leaves Chicago	5:55 p.m.		
Arrives Chicago	10:35 a.m.			Arrives Macomb	9:12 p.m.		
Carbondale – Champaign/Urbana – Chicago							
Train Number	58	392	Train Number	391	59		
Leaves Carbondale	3:16 a.m.	4:05 p.m.	Leaves Chicago	4:05 p.m.	8:00 p.m.		
Leaves Champaign-Urbana	6:10 a.m.	6:49 p.m.	Leaves Champaign-Urbana	6:15 p.m.	10:34 p.m.		
Arrives Chicago	9:00 a.m.	9:35 p.m.	Arrives Carbondale	9:35 p.m.	1:21 a.m.		
Source: www.Amtrak.com							

**Amtrak Timeliness Statistics**

The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) provided performance records for the 12 trains which serve the cities specified in LAC Resolution Number 131, including 34 arrival and/or departure times (or segments) for these 12 trains. For example, the performance records provided for the train from Springfield to Chicago had three segments: Springfield departure time, Bloomington departure time, and Chicago arrival time. Performance records provided by IDOT showed the average timeliness of Amtrak trains during the 11-month period of October 2004 to August 2005 was as follows (see Digest Exhibit 5):

- 5 segments (15%) were at least 90 percent on time.
- 12 segments (35%) were 75 percent to 89 percent on time.
- The remaining 17 segments (50%) were less than 75 percent on time.

<b>Digest Exhibit 5                      AMTRAK'S ON-TIME PERFORMANCE                      October 2004 to August 2005</b>					
<i>Train #</i>	<i>Station</i>	<i>Departure/ Arrival</i> <sup>1</sup>	<i>Tolerance (Minutes)</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>On-Time Performance (Average)</i>	<i>Type</i>
392	Carbondale	4:05 p.m.	10	100%	State subsidized train
391	Chicago	4:05 p.m.	10	99%	State subsidized train
303	Chicago	8:15 a.m.	10	98%	Corridor train
305	Chicago	5:15 p.m.	10	95%	State subsidized train
21	Chicago	3:20 p.m.	10	92%	Long distance train
347	Chicago	5:55 p.m.	10	87%	State subsidized train
391	Carbondale	9:35 p.m.	15 <sup>2</sup>	87%	State subsidized train
348	Chicago	10:35 a.m.	15 <sup>2</sup>	86%	State subsidized train
392	Chicago	9:35 p.m.	15 <sup>2</sup>	86%	State subsidized train
300	Springfield	6:33 a.m.	10	85%	State subsidized train
59	Chicago	8:00 p.m.	10	85%	Long distance train
58	Chicago	9:00 a.m.	30 <sup>2</sup>	82%	Long distance train
300	Chicago	9:55 a.m.	15 <sup>2</sup>	80%	State subsidized train
348	Macomb	7:00 a.m.	10	79%	State subsidized train
300	Bloomington	7:31 a.m.	10	77%	State subsidized train
59	Champaign	10:34 p.m.	10	77%	Long distance train
21	Bloomington	5:39 p.m.	10	76%	Long distance train
305	Springfield	8:39 p.m.	10	73%	State subsidized train
58	Carbondale	3:16 a.m.	10	70%	Long distance train
304	Chicago	8:45 p.m.	15 <sup>2</sup>	67%	Corridor train
303	Bloomington	10:29 a.m.	10	66%	Corridor train
21	Springfield	6:49 p.m.	10	63%	Long distance train
58	Champaign	6:10 a.m.	10	61%	Long distance train
305	Bloomington	7:29 p.m.	10	57%	State subsidized train
391	Champaign	6:15 p.m.	10	55%	State subsidized train
304	Springfield	5:07 p.m.	10	54%	Corridor train
303	Springfield	11:35 a.m.	10	50%	Corridor train
22	Chicago	2:19 p.m.	30 <sup>2</sup>	47%	Long distance train
347	Macomb	9:12 p.m.	10	44%	State subsidized train
59	Carbondale	1:21 a.m.	10	42%	Long distance train
304	Bloomington	6:11 p.m.	10	38%	Corridor train
392	Champaign	6:49 p.m.	10	37%	State subsidized train
22	Springfield	10:34 a.m.	10	29%	Long distance train
22	Bloomington	11:47 a.m.	10	29%	Long distance train
<sup>1</sup> Arrival time is shown if this is the train's final destination. For the other trains the departure time is shown.					
<sup>2</sup> If a train departs within <b>10 minutes</b> of its schedule, it is considered on time. This variance (also called tolerance) is higher for arrival at the <u>final destination</u> – it is <b>15 minutes</b> for short corridor trains (numbers 300, 303, 304, 305, 347, 348, 391, and 392) and <b>30 minutes</b> for long distance trains (numbers 21, 22, 58, and 59).					
Source: IDOT Amtrak Program and Amtrak.					

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**One-half of trains applicable to this Study were less than 75% on time, according to IDOT's statistics from Amtrak.**

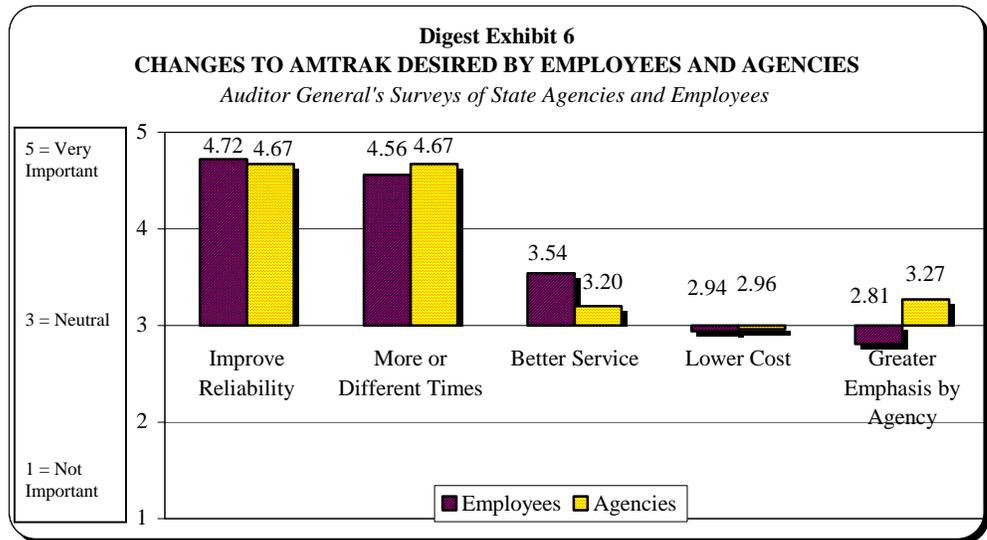
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### Changes Desired by State Agencies and Employees

**Agencies and employees said improved reliability and more or different arrival/departure times would increase their use of Amtrak**

The Auditor General’s survey questionnaires asked State agencies and employees to comment on what would realistically cause employees to increase the use of Amtrak on future State business. Agencies and employees said improved reliability and more or different arrival/departure times would increase their use of Amtrak (see Digest Exhibit 6).

Eleven of 41 agencies, and 40% of employees, said that changes made to Amtrak would not increase their usage.



Source: Auditor General’s survey of 41 State agencies and employees.

Some agencies said Amtrak’s lack of reliability made it difficult to conform to work schedules. For example, one agency said the early morning train in Chicago often arrives late, while other agencies listed the following types of concerns:

- Need for transportation between the Chicago office or campus and the station.
- Safety in transportation between the train station and the Chicago office.
- Need for more seats for State employees.
- Need for high-speed rail.
- Lower priced business class. (pages 23-30)

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## REVIEW OF TRAVEL VOUCHERS

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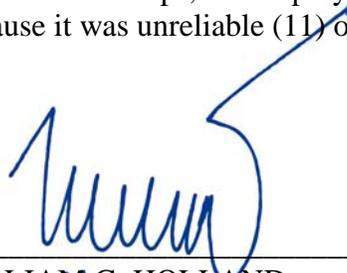
Legislative Audit Commission Resolution Number 131 directed this Study to review a limited number of travel vouchers and follow up with agencies and individual travelers to identify reasons why the specific mode of transportation was used by the selected traveler.

We selected 182 travel vouchers and found 40 vouchers were for travel to the cities that were applicable to this Study. We sent the employees a survey questionnaire and received a response from 35 employees who had taken 54 trips. Approximately one-half of the trips by these travelers were in a vehicle (personal, State, carpool), 23 percent were by State or commercial plane, 19 percent were by Amtrak, and the rest were by other modes of transportation.

These travelers provided the following types of reasons for choosing their particular mode of transportation:

- Personal or State vehicle was needed because the employee was traveling to multiple locations, on-site inspections, unplanned trips, meeting schedules, or carrying multiple files.
- State or commercial plane was needed for reliability and timeliness, working in both Chicago and Springfield during the same day, maximizing time spent at work and accommodating schedules, etc.
- Amtrak was used because it was the most economical mode of transportation (e.g., fuel costs, parking costs in Chicago).

These travelers were asked if they considered other modes of transportation for their trips. Alternative modes were considered on one-half (27 of 54) of the trips, including Amtrak for 23 trips, but employees said they did not select Amtrak often because it was unreliable (11) or due to its schedule (4). (pages 31-33)



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**Vehicles were used when employees were traveling to multiple locations or were carrying multiple files.**

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