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82% in Glenwood drive to work alone

Survey shows untapped demand for downvalley transit

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CARBONDALE — A large, untapped demand for mass transit exists below Carbondale, where little or no transport exists today, according to a travel patterns survey sponsored by Healthy Mountain Communities.

With 23 percent of Carbondale residents commuting by bus and 30 percent of Basalt residents doing the same, the fact that less than one percent of Glenwood and downvalley residents use the bus attests to that pent-up demand.

"Although the average bus trip is subsidized by about \$1.68, the savings to the valley in pollution, congestion and traffic delays has a real value to the community," said Dan Blankenship, general manager of the Roaring Fork Transit Agency.

Many transit critics have suggested that mass transit only relieves about 5 to 10 percent of highway traffic, but the potential for mass transit in our valley is much greater, said Jim Charlier, the travel survey consultant.

Not surprisingly, communities with the best bus service have

the lowest percentage of drive-alone commuters. Drive-alones make up 39 percent of Basalt residents, 46 percent of Aspen residents and about 55 percent for El Jebel and Carbondale.

Glenwood leads the valley with 82 percent of drive-alone commuters, with downvalley communities close behind. Only 44 percent of Glenwood residents work in the city. The Glenwood commuter drives an average of 14.6 miles to work, one way.

The average valley commuter travels 18.3 miles one way. Aspen commuters drive only an average of 5.2 miles one-way, while Rifle and Silt residents drive almost 30 miles and Parachute residents drive an average of 36.9 miles.

"People know that rents are less expensive as you move downvalley; however, they may not be aware of size of commuting costs," Charlier said. Using a cost of auto travel of 45 cents-per-mile, Parachute households are spending over \$14,000 a year, about 28 percent of household income, to get to work, according to the survey.