

Community Report Card

Examining the quality of life in Sarasota County through data and indicators



The above illustration represents the Natural, Built, Economic, and Social environments. They are represented as a streetscape to highlight that despite being identified as separate environments, they interact to make up the whole of Sarasota County.

The Built Environment

The buildings and infrastructure we place on the natural environment

2007-2008 Community Report Card: Examining the quality of life in Sarasota County

From August 2007 through August 2008, SCOPE's *Community Report Card* will use data about our community to share information about Sarasota County's quality of life. The *Community Report Card* hopes to ask and answer questions about our community and encourages you to do the same.

The next year is split into four sections, or environments: the natural, built, economic, and social. Each environment is highlighted for three months, and each month will focus on a different indicator, or data set, that reveals information about our community. The indicators will use data to tell a story about a different aspect of life in Sarasota County.

social How we support human growth. Our community, families, systems of governance and decision-making.

economic Exchange, money, and the ways we create wealth or add value to our world.

built The buildings and infrastructure humans construct on the natural environment.

natural Everything that was part of Sarasota County before humans came along.



Graphic from the Florida House Institute for Sustainable Development

Through learning about these data and what they tell us our community can put together a picture of our quality of life. Throughout the coming year SCOPE will highlight community gatherings and sources of more information on our website. If you enjoy reading the *Community Report Card* and know someone else who you think would as well, please forward this to them! If you would like to learn more, SCOPE encourages you to download these supplements. You can find more information about the supplements and the whole report on our website at www.scopexcel.org. If you have immediate questions, comments or reactions to what you have just read, please email Kate Irwin at kirwin@scopexcel.org.

Question:

“How do Sarasota County residents get around?”

The uniqueness of Sarasota County is found all over, from the Crosley Estate on our northern border, to Myakka River State Park in the east, to the Venice jetty in the south, and the many places in between. However, to experience these places a resident must first get to them. This indicator addresses the issue of how Sarasota County residents get around by looking at our transportation choices.

Mobility is an essential asset in the 21st century. As Sarasota County residents, we move between our jobs, schools, shopping, and recreation which are frequently far apart from each other and from our homes. Much of our built environment is designed to be accessed primarily by car. This design often makes the use of other transportation options (such as walking and bicycling) difficult or dangerous. Design is a key factor in thinking about how we can create a built environment that supports diverse transportation options, increases community health, and cuts down on pollution.

Indicator:

Transportation in Sarasota County

This indicator measures the ways Sarasota County residents get around and how much time they spend traveling. It does this through two separate, but related, indicators: daily vehicle miles traveled per capita and the method of transportation used to commute to work. These indicators were chosen because they offer insight into transportation in Sarasota County.

VEHICLE MILES TRAVELED DAILY

These numbers tell us that we are driving slightly more on a daily basis than we did a year ago. As of 2005, Sarasota County residents drive 33 miles per day. Between 1998 and 2005, Sarasota County residents have increased the number of miles we drive daily. Since 2000, data show a clear and steady upward trend.

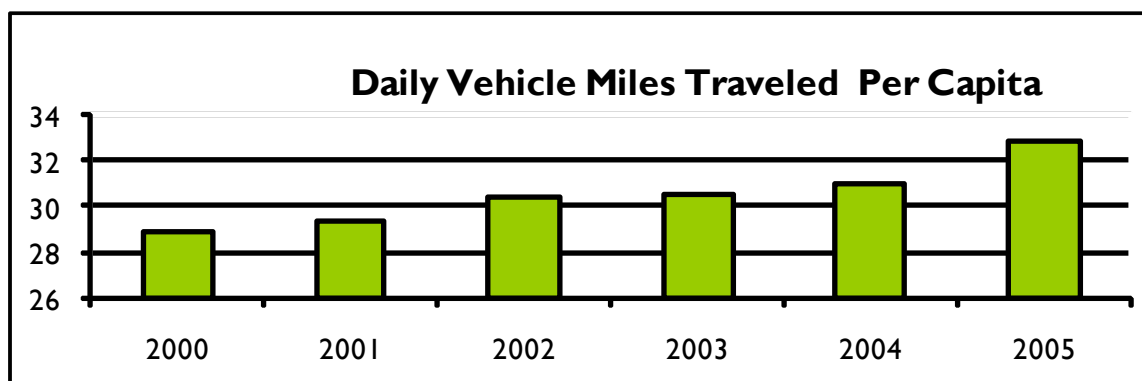
How is this measured?

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) keeps track of the average daily traffic count, which they use to calculate total vehicle miles traveled on public roads. Public roads

include the State Highway System, the County Road System and the City Road Systems. The number of vehicle miles are compared with population numbers based on estimates from 2000 Census data to get the per capita average.

How do we compare?

Sarasota County residents drive fewer miles on average than people in Charlotte County. In 2005, Charlotte County residents traveled 42 vehicle miles per capita. Residents of Manatee County travel fewer miles each day, traveling only 29 miles in 2005.



METHOD OF COMMUTING TO WORK

These numbers tell us that, due to a 10% population increase from 2000-2005, there are more drivers commuting than ever. However, proportionally fewer people are driving alone to work. From 2000-2005, that percent dropped 1%, to 79%. A comparison between 2000 and 2005 tells us that a slightly larger percentage of people are using other means to get to work.

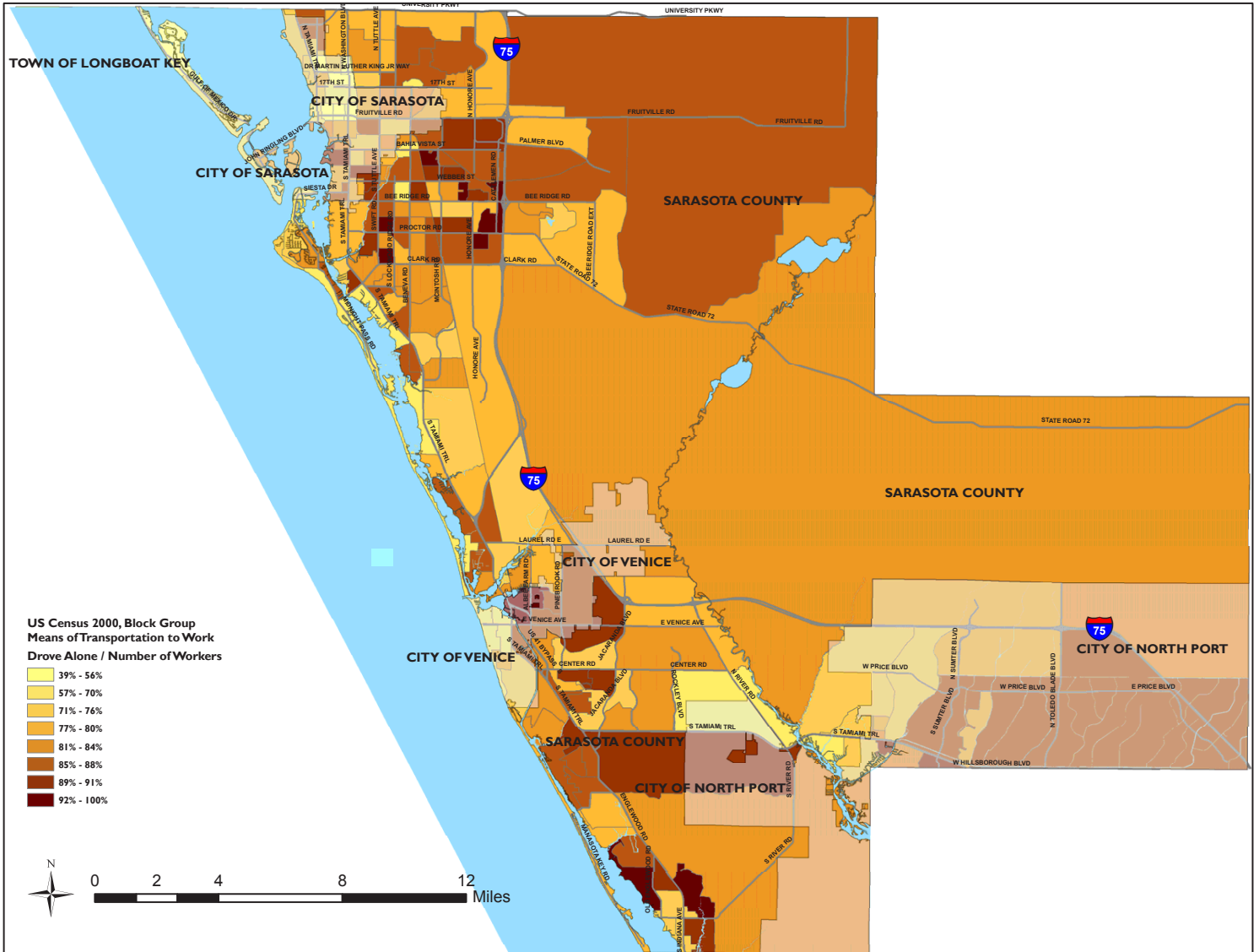
How is this measured?

These numbers are based on data collected in the 2000 US Census and the 2004 and 2005 American Community Survey.

How do we compare?

Residents of Sarasota, Charlotte, and Manatee Counties overwhelmingly use cars to commute to work. In 2005, residents of Sarasota County drove alone to work slightly less than residents of Manatee and Charlotte Counties. 80% of Sarasota County residents drove alone, while 81% of Manatee County residents and 84% of Charlotte County residents drove alone to work.

Means of Transportation to Work



This map shows the geographic distribution of workers (age 16 and over) who drive alone to work compared with all other methods of transportation. The darker areas have a higher percentage of people who drive to work alone than the lighter areas.

Method of Commute by Year

	2000		2005	
	Number	%	Number	%
Workers 16 & over	132,765	-	147,716	-
Car, truck or van - drove alone	107,208	81%	117,865	80%
Car, truck of van - carpooled	13,464	10%	14,946	10%
Public transportation	1,070	1%	1,636	1%
Walked	2,156	2%	2,337	2%
Other means	2,688	2%	2,586	2%
Worked at home	6,179	5%	8,356	6%



This map is produced from Sarasota County GIS, and is representative information only.
The County does not warrant, guarantee, or assume any responsibility for geographic information completeness and/or accuracy.
This map should not be used as guide to navigation.
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Prepared by Sarasota County Planning & Development Services GIS Planning Services - Nov. 7, 2007
Sources: US Census 2000 Summary File 3, Universe: Workers 16 years and over

Linkages

Natural Environment:

Gasoline-fueled vehicle use creates pollution and traffic congestion. In addition, roads take up valuable land, reduce wildlife habitat and deprive the community of open space.

Built Environment:

The roads necessary to support an auto-centric environment also influence building design. For example, most buildings are built with large parking lots around them – in fact, parking lots are often required to conform to zoning standards.

Economic Environment:

Transportation is closely tied to the economic environment. The rising cost of gasoline has impacted many people's driving habits. However, because most of us can do little to change these habits, the increased cost of gasoline is shown in reduced purchases of other items.

Social Environment:

The lack of widely used public transportation in our county directly impacts older adults. For many older drivers, cancellation of their license amounts to a loss of independence. Due to this, people are hesitant to give up their license even if they are no longer capable of driving safely.

Why is this important?

The profile of most Sarasota County residents' transportation habits includes daily driving and solo commutes to and from work. These statistics have a short and long term impact on our lives. An increase in the number of miles traveled daily by Sarasota County residents reflects a growing dependence on non-renewable energy sources, an increased amount of time allocated to a stressful activity, and a declining ability to work, live and participate in a neighborhood or community.

Professor Robert Putnam has found that every 10 minutes spent commuting cuts the time you have to dedicate to your family and community by 10%. Also, many of our roads and developments are designed with only cars in mind, which makes it dangerous for people who would prefer to walk or ride a bicycle. The car-centric design of our built environment restricts the mobility of Sarasota County residents who are too old or young to drive or who cannot afford to buy and maintain a car.

The car is intertwined with many American locales, and Sarasota County is one of them. Our county "grew up" during the age of automobiles, so our road systems are designed to accommodate the car. Cars allow for a great amount of freedom of movement and independence, as where and when to go is left completely up to the driver, which impacts why so many Sarasota County residents choose driving as their primary form of transportation.

According to the data, Sarasota County residents choose to travel by car in increasing numbers and for longer times. By doing so, we are making a choice about our current and future transportation. Public transportation systems, sidewalks, bikepaths, and new roads are long-term construction projects that take time to enact. If we want to see a different type of transportation system in our county and the surrounding areas, we need to begin to plan it now.

What else would we like to know?

It would be useful to know if people would prefer driving cars as their primary form of transportation if they were given another option. A resident opinion survey to find out how people feel about their transportation choices in Sarasota County would be informative.

In 2005, Sarasota County residents traveled an average of 33 miles per day. At 30 miles an hour, that means the average person spends an hour in the car each day.

Also, work commutes are only part of the picture in Sarasota County. We have a large non-working and seasonal population, which affects traffic in a very real way. It would be helpful to know how much of an impact this group has on our county's traffic patterns, the mode of transportation used by the group, and how their driving patterns differ from yearlong residents.

What can I do?

- Try to reduce your vehicle trips. Be conscious of where you need to go and how you can combine trips.
- When you buy a new car, buy a "green" one! Go to www.greencars.org for information on fuel efficient cars.
- Set up a carpool with your office or building mates. Carpooling cuts down on wear and tear on your car, gas expenses, and traffic.
- Ride the bus. The bus system will improve if there is an increased demand for bus service.
- Consider bicycling! If you don't have a bike, want to know how to be safer on the road or learn the best routes, contact the local Alliance for Responsible Transportation. (<http://www.bikewalklive.org>)

Daily Vehicle Miles Traveled Per Capita

County	Miles
Sarasota	33
Manatee	29
Charlotte	42

Based on 2005 data

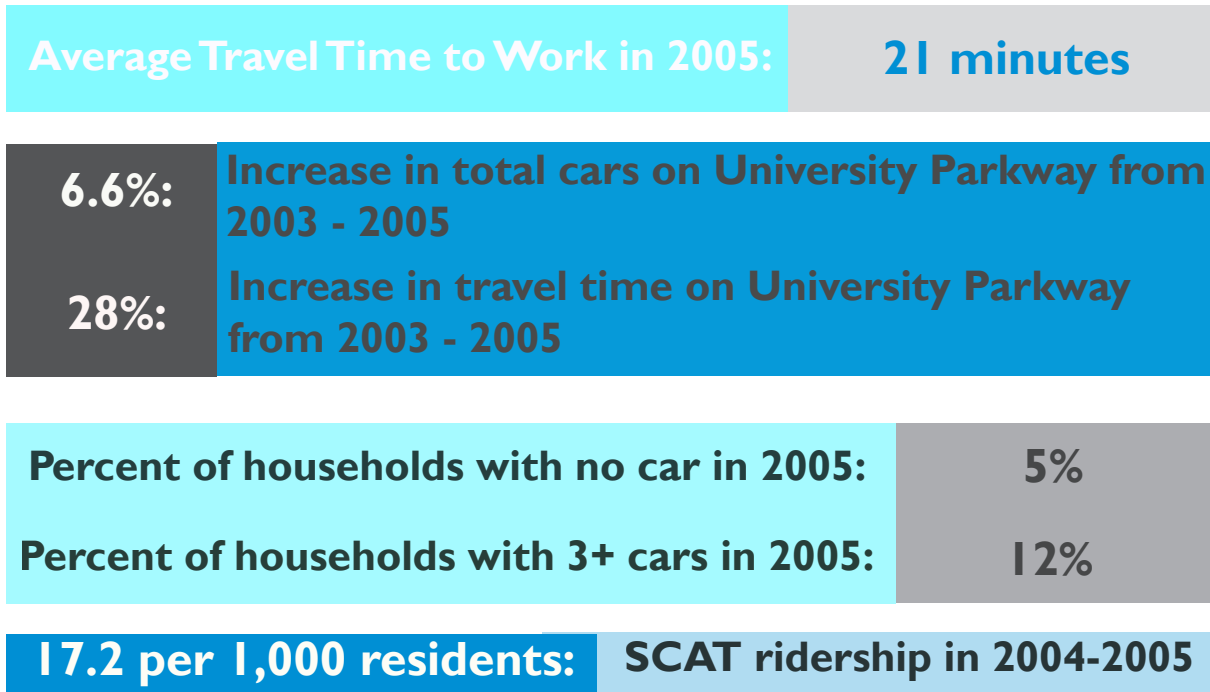
Reservations and Caveats

The 2005 data is from the American Community Survey, a product of the Census Bureau. However, this survey uses a much smaller sample size than the Census, so its estimates may be off as many as a few thousand people, which is significant in a county the size of Sarasota. Regarding the "Commuting to work" indicator, in 2000 the category "public transportation" includes taxicabs, while in 2005 it excludes taxicabs. The percentage of people taking taxicabs to work is probably not significant, but it can not be known since the measurements differ from year to year.

Data Sources: Florida Department of Transportation, Census 2000, 2005 American Community Survey, Sarasota County Area Transit, Sarasota County Public Works **References:** Sarasota County Geographic Information Services **Illustrations** by Mark Villarreal

By the Numbers - Sarasota County Transportation Statistics

Indicator Releases



- Introduction
August
- Accessibility
September
- Water Quality
October
- Connectivity
November
- Hurricane Preparation
December
- Transportation
January
- Land Use
February
- Jobs & Industry
March
- Workforce Housing
April
- Wealth & Income
May
- Health
June
- Education
July
- Civic Engagement
August

What is SCOPE ?

“To connect and inspire citizens to create a better community.”

SCOPE is a not-for-profit organization that focuses on building community connections. Our goal is to engage a diverse group of people in conversations to look at what we want our future to be instead of problemsolving the past.

- Connected communities have:**
- Lower rates of school dropout
 - An increased ownership of the decision-making process
 - Lower crime rates
 - Fewer colds and heart attacks

In addition to publishing a community indicators report (the *Community Report Card* you are reading), SCOPE conducts studies on topics such as Affordable Housing (2002), Mental Health (2003), and Family Violence (2004). Our two current studies are *Aging: The Possibilities* and *Race and Cultural Relations*.

If you were forwarded this message & would like to receive the *Community Report Card* in your inbox, please email kirwin@scopexcel.org. If you want to get connected with SCOPE and our community, please visit www.scopexcel.org or call (941) 365-8751