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How effective is Leeds Travel Info?

Informing people and promoting journey choice

Questionnaire analysis and results

December 2008

Summary

This document presents the results and analysis of an online survey conducted to determine visitor usage and perception of the Leeds Travel Info real-time travel information website. The site receives in excess of 1,000 visits per day, rising to 5,000 - 10,000 on days when major incidents occur.

Website visitors were queried about their opinion and usage of the site, including their frequency of access, use of site information and facilities; how the information influenced their travel decisions, and what additional facilities they would make use of if made available.

The voluntary survey was conducted over a 6 month period from June to December 2008. A total of 304 responses were received. Key survey findings include:

- 80% of visitors to the site will occasionally or often make a change to their journey plans based on information they find on the site
- The perception of the website was favourable, with almost three-quarters of respondents finding the information useful or very useful.
- The majority of visitors to the site are regular commuters in Leeds. Most are car or public transport users and fall into the 31 to 60 year old age group.
- Almost half of respondents access the site most weeks or with greater regularity, and do so from both home and at work in similar proportion.
- Most visitors were using the website to seek information on current traffic and road conditions, with a particular interest in congestion and roadwork data. Live CCTV images were very popular, as was motorway and general travel information.

Most importantly, many visitors were using the information to make informed decisions about their choice of travel, as indicated by the large proportion of respondents who frequently or occasionally chose another route as a consequence of the website indicating problems on their normal route.

As the number of visitors to the website continues to increase, it will play a greater part in influencing journey decisions made by travellers around Leeds. Ultimately this will result in a significant impact on congestion in the Leeds area.

1 Introduction

Leeds Travel Info (www.leadstravel.info) is Leeds City Council's public access website providing real time traffic and travel information in the Leeds area. The purpose of the site is to provide the public with high quality, timely travel information to allow them to make informed journey choices. The site was launched in March 2007 and has seen a general gradual growth in visitor numbers since then.



Figure 1: The Leeds Travel Info website

The site centres around map-based traffic and travel information. Information available on the site includes:

- events, accidents, incidents and roadworks, derived from a number of sources including Leeds City Council
- live car park occupancy and space data obtained directly from car parks in the city
- live CCTV images from cameras around the city
- Blue Badge space availability, taxi rank information and Whizz Go car hire information

- links to other sources of travel information, in particular trains, buses and the airport

In addition to the desktop website, the above information is also available via Really Simple Syndication (RSS) feeds. This allows users to receive live updates to their desktop utilising a web browser or dedicated RSS software. Such technology is in common use for delivering news information from sources such as the BBC. A Short Messaging Service (SMS or text) information service and mobile device access are also available. These allow users to access the information while on the move.

The site receives in excess of 1,000 visits per day, rising to 5,000 - 10,000 on days when major incidents occur. It is believed to be a market leader in Europe, and possibly the world, due to the breadth and quality of the data provided.

In order to gain some objective measure of how the web site affected people's behaviour, in particular its effectiveness in helping people avoid congestion, a survey of those visiting the web site was undertaken.

2 The Survey

Between June and December of 2008 Leeds City Council ran a web-based survey on Leeds Travel Info. The survey was conducted with the aim of gauging visitor perceptions and opinions about the site, as well as garnering insights into visitor demographic profiles and usage habits. The information was gathered with the intention of facilitating the improvement and enhancement of the site, as well as helping direct the planning and development of further travel information facilities.

The survey took the form of an online questionnaire which was displayed to visitors upon their first visit to the site. Taking part in the survey was voluntary with visitors given the option of completing the questionnaire immediately, at a later date or not at all.

The survey queried respondents in relation to their frequency and modes of access, as well as their opinion and use of information and facilities provided by the site.

They were asked how the information on the site had influenced their travel plans, and what future planned developments they would make use of.

Finally respondents were prompted to comment on existing travel information facilities and the development of further facilities.

Responses were emailed and archived for later analysis. A total of 304 responses were received.

3 Survey Findings

3.1 Who uses the website?

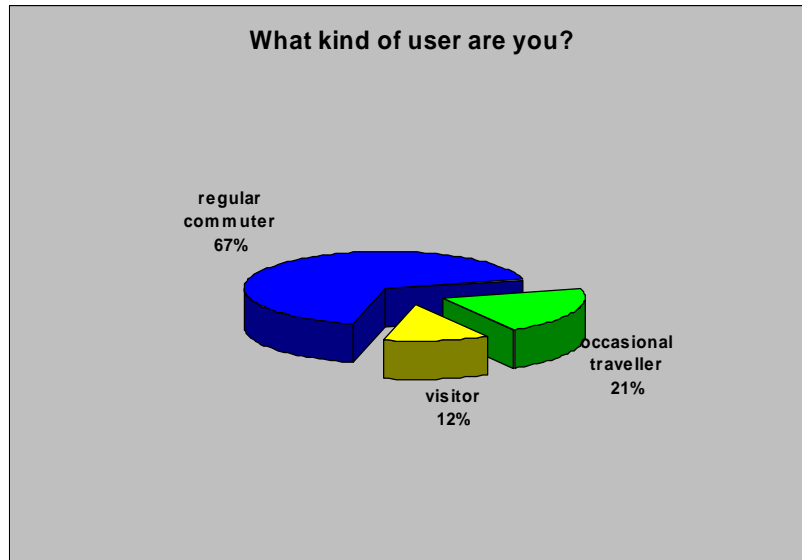


Figure 2: Types of travellers visiting LTI

Most users are regular commuters in Leeds (67%) with occasional travellers (21%) and visitors to Leeds (12%) making up the remainder (Figure 2). The majority fall into the 31-60 year old age group (68%), with 21-30 year olds (15%) and over 60 year olds (14%) equally represented.

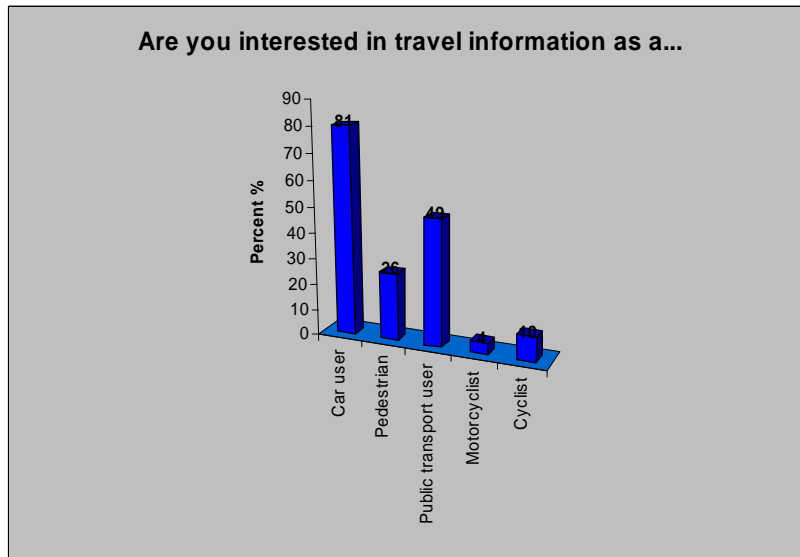


Figure 3: Modes of transport used by those visiting LTI

Car users (84%) comprised the single largest group interested in traffic and travel information, with public transport users (48%), pedestrians (26%), cyclists (10%) and motorcyclists (4%) completing the picture (Figure 3).

One in eleven (9%) of people classified themselves as having some form of mobility disability.

3.2 How often and where do they use it?

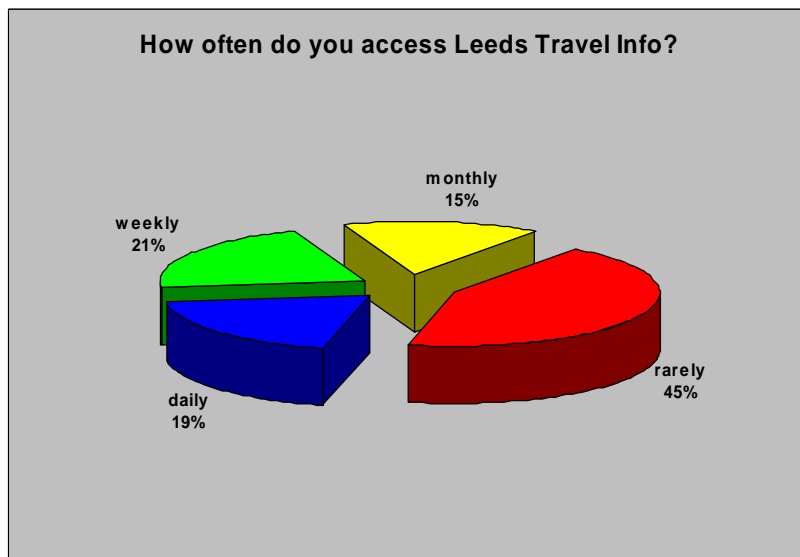


Figure 4: Frequency of access

One in five (19%) visitors return to the site most days, with others returning most weeks (21%) or monthly (15%). The remaining are infrequent or irregular visitors to the site (Figure 4).

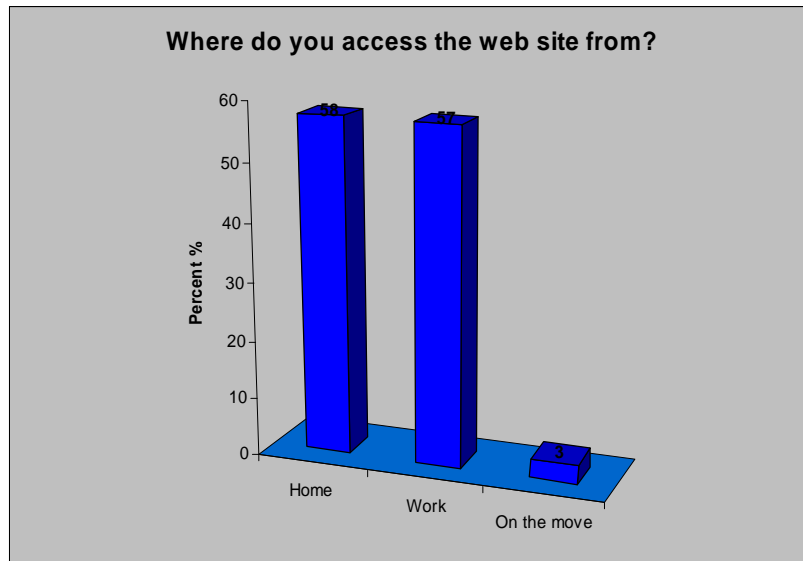


Figure 5: Access location

More than half of respondents access the site from work (57%) and from home (58%). A small proportion access travel information while on the move (3%) (Figure 5).

In terms of online access, respondents variously had Personal Internet access (93%), Work Internet access (69%) and Mobile Internet access (31%).

3.3 What do they use it for?

Most respondents seemed to be using the website to seek information on current traffic and road conditions. This was especially apparent in the frequency of use of congestion, roadwork, and CCTV information.

A large proportion of visitors seemed to be accessing this information on a regular basis. The majority of respondents were often (34%) or occasionally (29%) making use of congestion information (Figure 5.), while a similar number (33% and 34% respectively) used roadwork data. More than half of users frequently or occasionally viewed the live CCTV images on the site (Figure 6). Motorway and general information was similarly used.

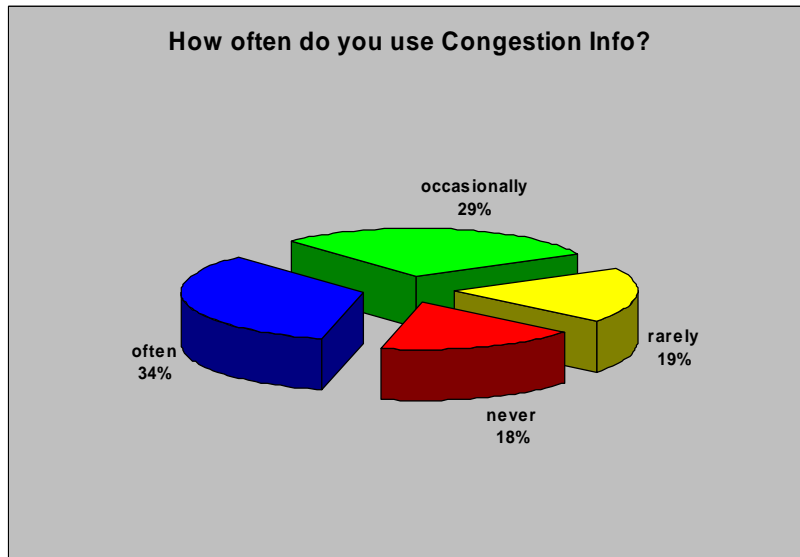


Figure 6: Usage of congestion information

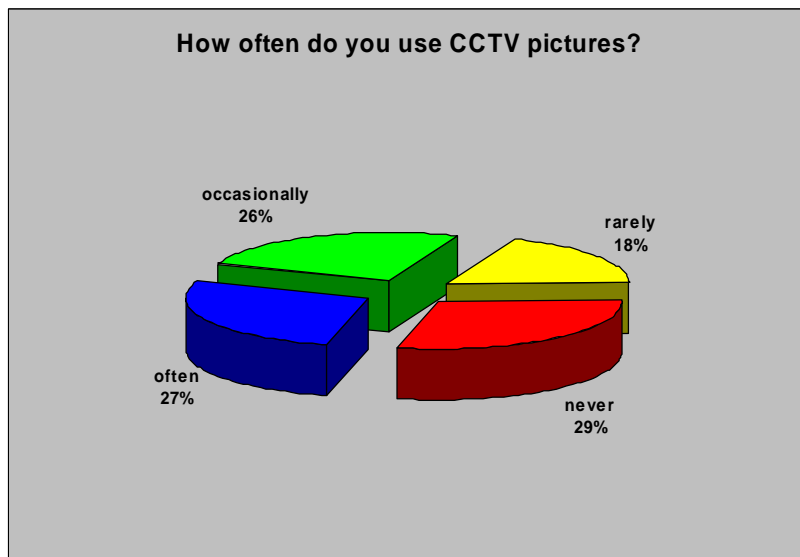


Figure 7: Usage of CCTV images

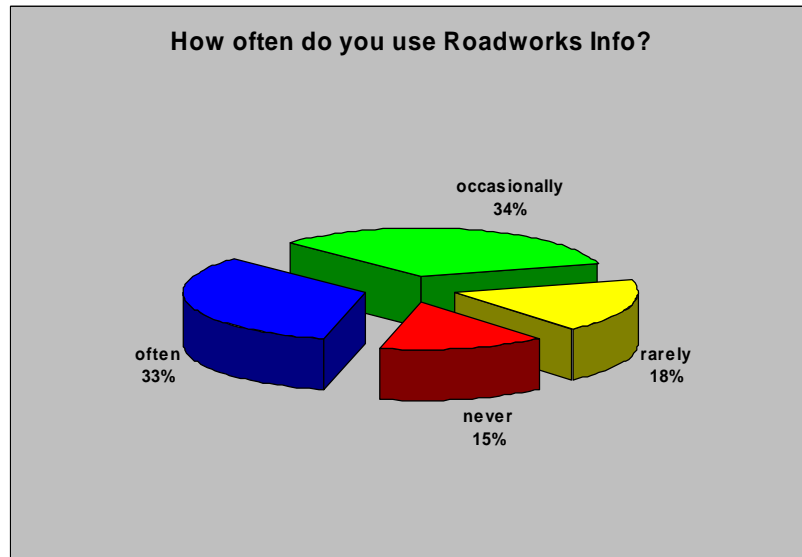


Figure 8: Use of roadworks information

Leeds Travel Information provides comprehensive information on roadworks in the Leeds area. 33% of visitors to the site often make use of roadworks information (Figure 8), while 34% do so occasionally.

Car park information, the Journey Planner, and Train/Airport arrival boards seemed less popular, with only around one in ten respondents using these facilities on a regular basis.

3.4 How successful has it been in making a difference to people's travel?

The information people are getting from the site does seem to be influencing some of the decisions they are making regarding travel. This is particularly apparent in affecting their choice of travel route, but far less so when delaying, cancelling or taking other modes of transport.

A large proportion of respondents (37%) have frequently chosen to take another route (Figure 9) when the website has shown a traffic problem. Smaller proportions have consistently opted to use public transport (13%), delay their journey (9%), or cancel their journey altogether (2%) (Figure 11).

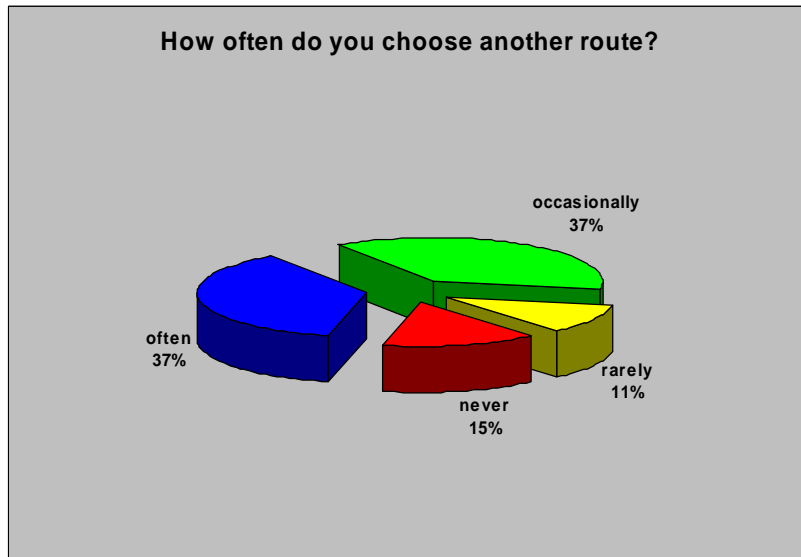


Figure 9: Frequency of route choice



Figure 10: Frequency of journey delay

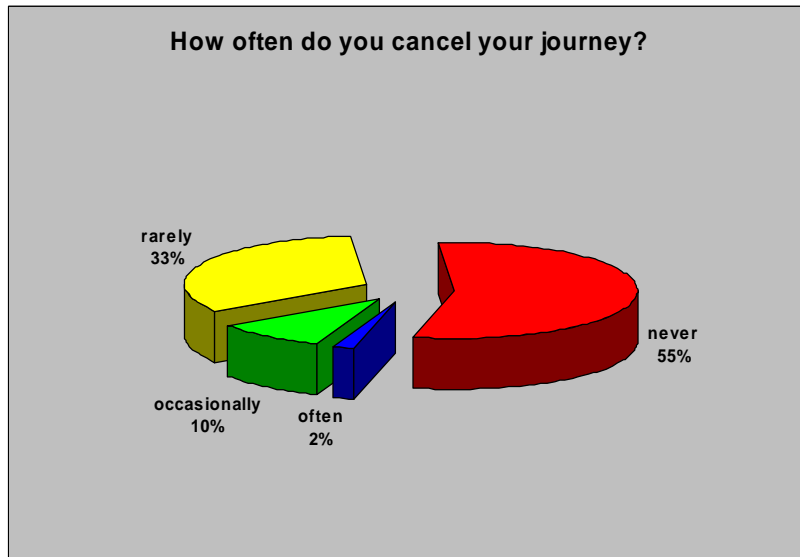


Figure 11: Frequency of journey cancellation

Respondents were asked how often they chose to use public transport in preference to their private vehicle as a result of the information provided on the website. Figure 12 shows that 13% often make this decision, while a further 19% do so occasionally.

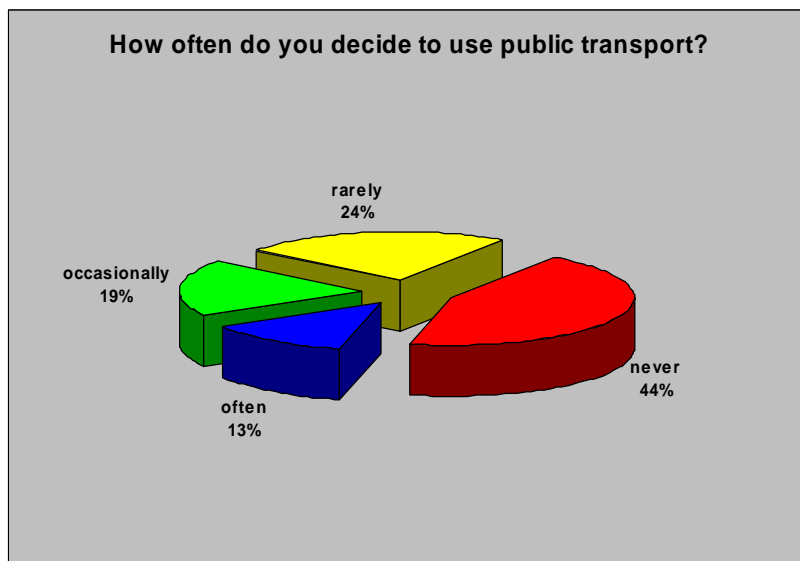


Figure 12: How often is public transport used

In total, 44% of people *often* make a change to their journey based on information on the site. 61% of people *occasionally* make a change to their journey. When aggregated together, 80% of visitors to the site will occasionally or often make a change to their journey plans based on information they find on the site.

3.5 What improvements/functionality are people looking for?

When queried about planned website improvements, respondents were clear about what they would use.

The suggestion of providing more CCTV cameras on the site was a popular one; with a large proportion (34%) indicating they would use them often if they were available.

Journey times displayed on the website would also be frequently utilised by a third of respondents (30%) and occasionally by almost one half (45%) (Figure 13); though journey times and delay alerts sent via text or email would seemingly not be used at all by a similar proportion.

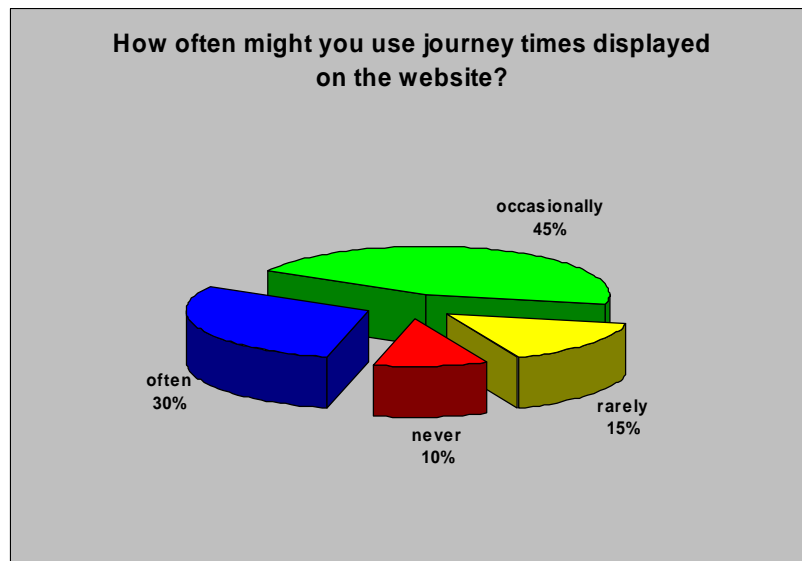


Figure 13: Interest in journey times

When asked about what future developments they would like to see for travel information facilities, requests for more CCTV images on the site were common. In particular, wider coverage, faster refresh, and streaming CCTV images were called for, along with more Park and Ride information [Appendix A.3].

3.6 What people liked about the website?

The overwhelming majority of respondents (Figure 14) found the information on the website useful or very useful (74%).

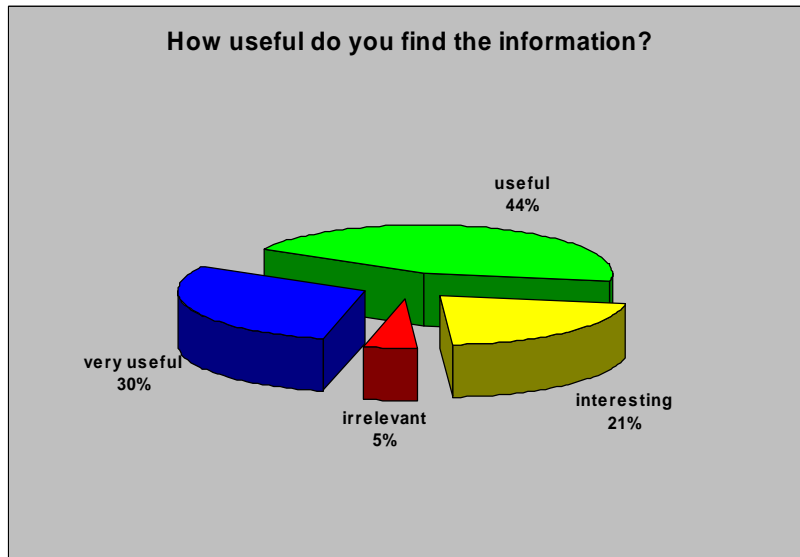


Figure 14: Opinions on the usefulness of the information provided

Judging from the use of website information and features, and from comments made [Appendix A], respondents found the CCTV images particularly useful, along with live traffic data including traffic congestion and roadwork information.

Comments were largely positive and constructive, and there seems to be a general appreciation of the facilities and quality of information provided by the website.

4 Conclusions

The Leeds Travel Info website is steadily increasing in popularity. The public find it particularly valuable when major incidents occur. The survey responses show that 74% of users consider the information *useful* or *very useful*. A key finding is the public's willingness to alter their travel route in response to information on the site, with 37% choosing to do so *often*.

As the site continues to grow in popularity, it is anticipated that the journey choices made by the public in response to information provided on the site will have a significant impact on congestion in the Leeds area.

Appendix A Positive comments

- Great site. Especially like the feed of CCTV cameras.
- As a coach company manager it helps us to forewarn our drivers of incidents that could affect the scheduled running of contracts or we can divert coaches on private hires away from affected areas. This helps our clients to get to their destination without too much delay and also helps to keep the vehicle away from the affected area.
- You're doing a great job.
- Very good clear and concise and most importantly up to date.
- Very informative information used by family & friends, Leeds is leading the way forward
- Very useful
- I love it!!
- Excellent journey planner! Was about to give up after looking on First's website but then I found this. Brilliant!
- Very good keep it going
- Very handy
- Excellent site, especially the frequency of updated information.
- It's a crackin' site...keep it up....more info the better esp...cameras, live footage instead of static cams would be nice too