



# Vinyl Seat Covers Survey Results

BART Marketing and Research

May 2012

## **Background**

BART has conducted a pilot test on its train cars to replace the existing wool seat covers with new vinyl ones. The seats remain the same except the fabric is different and the foam is new. The vinyl seat covers cost less, last longer, are non-porous, more stain resistant, and easier to keep clean. Under a contract approved by the Board, BART plans to purchase up to 300 car-sets of new seat covers. BART initially ordered 100 car-sets for test purposes, and has the option to order more pending customer acceptance.

## **Research Objective**

The primary objective of this research was to determine if BART customers prefer the vinyl seats over the existing wool fabric ones. In addition we wanted to uncover any concerns about the new seat material.

## **Methodology**

An on-board survey was conducted on train cars with the new vinyl seat covers. Quantum Market Research (QMR) was contracted by BART to conduct the field work. QMR sent a team of survey takers onto randomly selected train cars with vinyl seats. Surveys were conducted during morning peak, off peak, afternoon peak and weekends. All lines were surveyed during all time periods. Survey takers handed out a self administered one-page survey to riders on the random cars. The survey covered the following: overall rating of the vinyl seat covers, preference versus the fabric seats, rating of both seat types on appearance and comfort, whether BART should make the change because the new seat covers are easier to keep clean, and standard demographics. The survey was available in English, Spanish, Chinese, Korean and Vietnamese. There were a total of 1,250 completes. Of the completed surveys, 1,182 were in English, 51 were in Spanish, 17 in Chinese, and none in either Korean or Vietnamese. The overall response rate was 70%. In addition to this formal research, we are also tracking calls, emails and texts that are coming in from riders about the vinyl seats (there are car cards on the trains asking for input from riders).

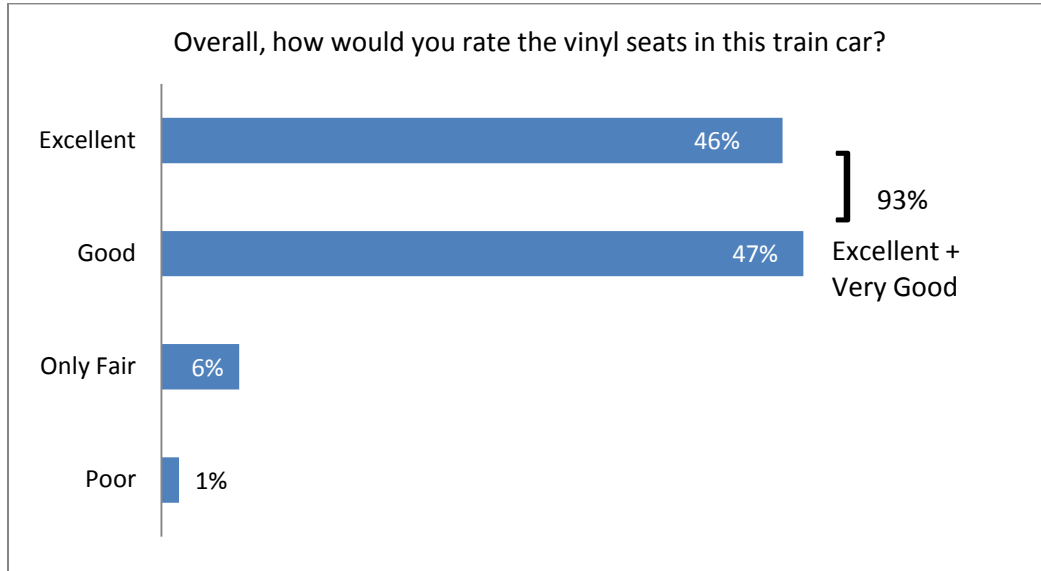
## **Executive Summary**

The results of this study clearly support changing the seat fabric on BART cars. Three-quarters of riders surveyed prefer the vinyl seats, and 93% of riders rate the vinyl seats “Excellent” or “Very Good”. Only 10% prefer the fabric seats. When asked if BART should change out more seat covers because the vinyl is easier to keep clean, 90% responded favorably. Vinyl out-pollled fabric on both overall appearance and comfort.

One concern that surfaced was that the vinyl could get hot in hotter weather, similar to leather and vinyl seats in automobiles. Only 14 comments about this were received in the survey; however it has also come up in the concerns cited in email, text and phone comments. No changes are recommended at this time because overall customer feedback has been so favorable, but car cards for the new seats should remain up until mid October so riders can continue to provide feedback during the summer months.

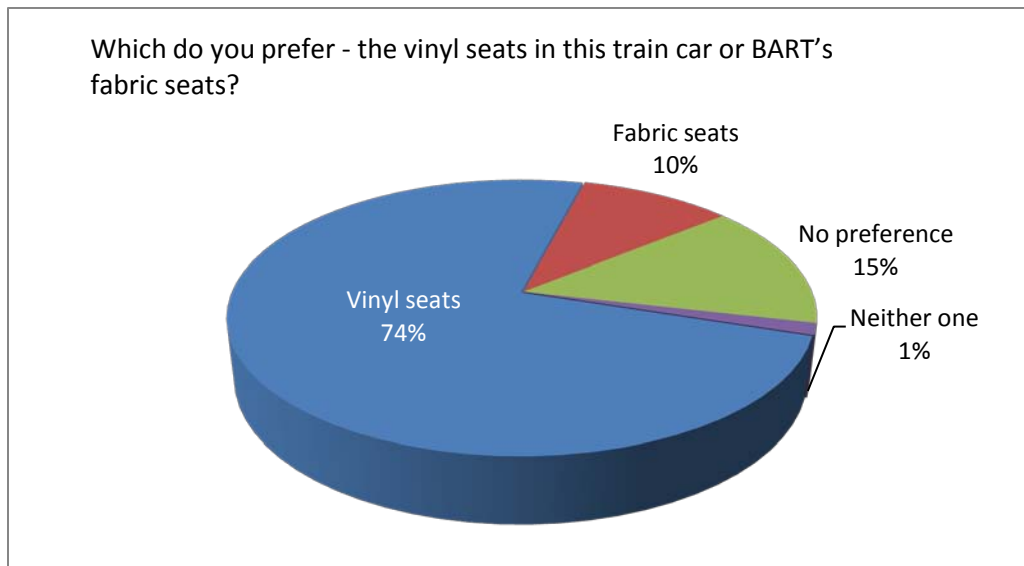
### Overall Rating and Preference

- The new vinyl seat covers are really well received by riders. Ninety three percent rated them as excellent or very good.



n=1,242

- Three-fourths of riders prefer the vinyl seats to the fabric seats.



n=1,229

### Open Ended Reasons for Preference

- The reasons cited most often for why the vinyl seats are preferred are related to cleanliness. Vinyl is also preferred for appearing more durable and longer lasting.

Why Vinyl	# Comments
Cleaner/better stain resistance/more hygienic/health concerns	459
Durability/construction/longevity	248
Easier to keep clean/maintain/maintenance	65
Water absorption/repellent	60
Comfort	50
Texture/feel	43
Age/newness	24
Aesthetics/looks	22
Smell/odor	17
Better (non-specific)	8
All other	21
Not sure	2
Doesn't matter/don't care/no preference	1
Missing/no answer	108

- Those who prefer the fabric seats cited comfort, that the fabric is better in warmer weather when vinyl seats could get hot, and that vinyl is slippery to sit on.
  - Note: About the same number of people (50) preferred the vinyl seats because they are more comfortable as preferred the fabric (53) for comfort.

Why Fabric	# Comments
More comfortable	53
Fabric is more breathable, better in warm weather, don't get hot	14
Vinyl is slippery	12
Don't like plastic/vinyl/synthetic	6
Better (non-specific)	4
Smell/odor of vinyl	3
Cleaner	3
Look Nicer	1
Vinyl might rip	1
All other	12
Missing/no answer	30

### Appearance and Comfort

- Vinyl seats score significantly better on appearance and comfort than fabric.

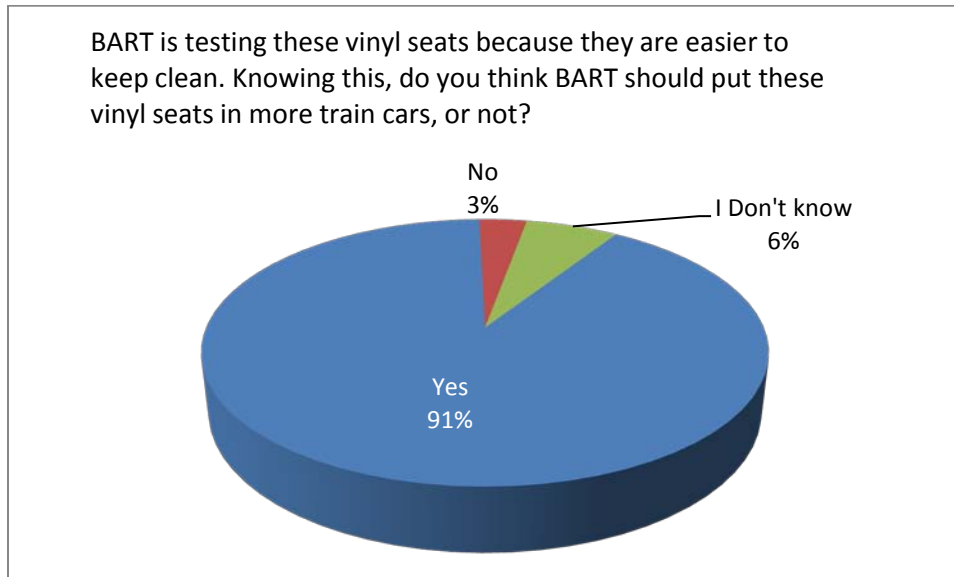
Q. How would you rate the vinyl seats and the fabric seats on appearance and comfort? Please circle a number from 1 to 5 below, where 1 = Poor and 5 = Excellent.

	Vinyl		Fabric	
	Appearance	Comfort	Appearance	Comfort
<b>Top 2 Box</b>	80%	75%	28%	51%
<b>5 (excellent)</b>	40%	31%	12%	18%
<b>4</b>	40%	45%	16%	33%
<b>3</b>	15%	20%	24%	28%
<b>2</b>	3%	3%	25%	12%
<b>1 (poor)</b>	1%	1%	24%	10%

n=1,218

### Decision to Replace More Seats

- When customers were told that the vinyl seats are easier to keep clean, 91% indicated that BART should implement the change.



n=1,235

## Rider Information and Demographics

*Q. What is the primary purpose of your BART trip today?*

Commuter to/from work	62%
School	10%
Airplane trip	3%
Sports event	2%
Visit friends/family	8%
Medical/Dental	1%
Shopping	5%
Restaurant	1%
Theater or Concert	1%
Other	6%

n=1,205

*Q. How often do you currently ride BART?*

6 - 7 days a week	19%
5 days a week	40%
3 - 4 days a week	14%
1 - 2 days a week	8%
1 - 3 days a month	8%
Less than once/month	10%

n=1,234

Gender:

Male	Female
52%	48%

n=1,177

Age:

Under 18	4%
18 - 24	17%
25 - 34	30%
35 - 44	20%
45 - 54	15%
55 - 64	10%
65+	4%

n=1,223

*Q. What is your race or ethnic identification?*

Hispanic or Latino	16%
Multiple, non-Hispanic	3%
White	37%
Asian or Pacific Islander	28%
Black/African-American	11%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	1%
Other	3%

n=1,197

*Q. What is your total annual household income before taxes?*

Under \$25,000	20%
\$25,000 - \$29,999	7%
\$30,000 - \$39,999	7%
\$40,000 - \$44,999	4%
\$45,000 - \$49,999	4%
\$50,000 - \$59,999	8%
\$60,000 - \$74,999	11%
\$75,000 or more	39%

n=1,088

*Q. Including yourself, how many people live in your household?*

1	2	3	4	5	6+
18%	31%	20%	21%	7%	4%

n=1,171



# Train Seat Survey (español en el reverso)

Dear BART Rider,

BART is testing new seat cover materials on a selected number of train cars. As you may have noticed, BART's usual fabric seats have been replaced with vinyl seats on this car. Please complete this survey to tell us what you think about this change, and hand it to the onboard survey coordinator when done. We value your input.

## Seats

1 Overall, how would you rate the vinyl seats in this train car?

- Excellent
- Good
- Only Fair
- Poor

2 Which do you prefer - the vinyl seats in this train car or BART's fabric seats?

- Vinyl seats
- Fabric seats
- No preference - either is fine
- Neither one

3 Why is that? \_\_\_\_\_

4 How would you rate the vinyl seats and the fabric seats on appearance and comfort? Please circle a number from 1 to 5 below, where 1 = Poor and 5 = Excellent.

Vinyl seats	Poor					Excellent
Overall appearance	1	2	3	4	5	
Comfort	1	2	3	4	5	

Fabric seats	Poor					Excellent
Overall appearance	1	2	3	4	5	
Comfort	1	2	3	4	5	

5 BART is testing these vinyl seats because they are easier to keep clean. Knowing this, do you think BART should put these vinyl seats in more train cars, or not?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

6 Have you sat in the new vinyl seats - either today or on a previous BART trip?

- Yes
- No

## About your BART trip today

7 What is the primary purpose of your BART trip today? (Check one.)

- Commute to/from work
- School
- Airplane trip
- Sports event
- Visit friends/family
- Medical/Dental
- Shopping
- Restaurant
- Theater or Concert
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## About you

8 How often do you currently ride BART?

- 6 - 7 days a week
- 5 days a week
- 3 - 4 days a week
- 1 - 2 days a week
- 1 - 3 days a month
- Less than once/month

9 Are you:  Male  Female

10 Age:

- Under 18
- 18 - 24
- 25 - 34
- 35 - 44
- 45 - 54
- 55 - 64
- 65+

11 What is your race or ethnic identification?

- (Check one or more. Categories based on US Census.)
- White
  - Asian or Pacific Islander
  - Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish
  - Black / African American
  - American Indian or Alaska Native
  - Other: \_\_\_\_\_

12 What is your total annual household income before taxes?

- Under \$25,000
- \$25,000 - \$29,999
- \$30,000 - \$39,999
- \$40,000 - \$44,999
- \$45,000 - \$49,999
- \$50,000 - \$59,999
- \$60,000 - \$74,999
- \$75,000 or more

13 Including yourself, how many people live in your household?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6+