



# ONLINE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

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# PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

## ONLINE ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

This section details the public engagement efforts developed and implemented by the project team. The following engagement opportunities were provided throughout the planning process:

- Project Website
- Interactive Map
- Interactive Ideas Wall
- Online Survey
- Open House(s)

### PROJECT WEBSITE

At the beginning of the project process, a website was developed to help provide information, inform community members of upcoming project-related events, and created a space for members of the community to participate and engage in the process.

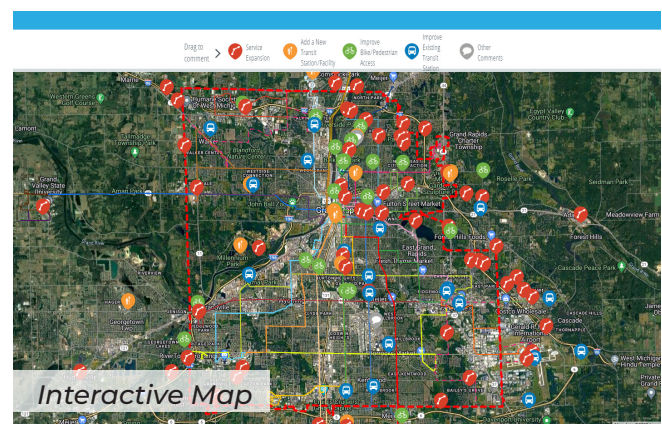
### INTERACTIVE MAP COMMENTS

The interactive map allowed users to provide comments within the project area. Comments were available publicly and map visitors could agree/disagree with comments submitted to the interactive map. As of December 2023, there were 143 map comments placed.

The map comments fell into five (5) categories:

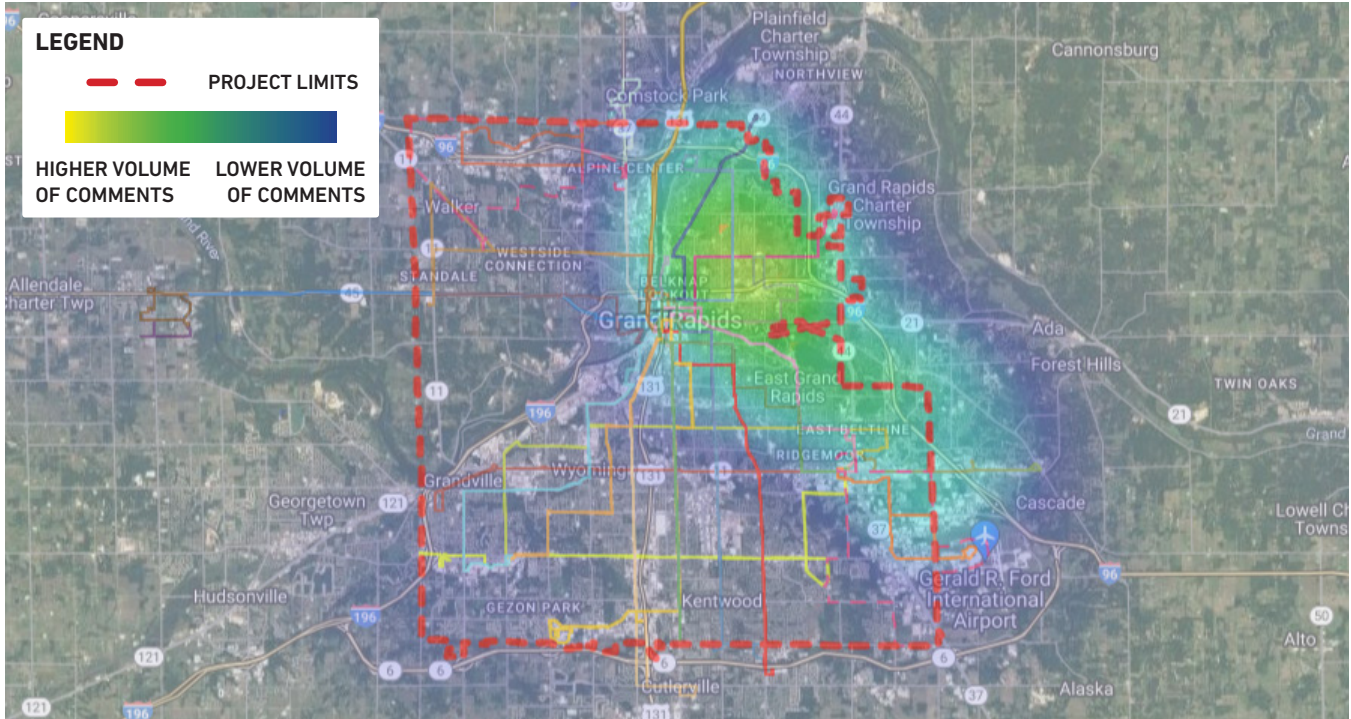
- Add a new transit station/facility
- Service expansion
- Improve bike/pedestrian access
- Improve existing transit station
- Other comments

The most common comment types, with over 50% of the total comments for service expansion and over 16% of total comments for improve existing transit station(s). The following pages show heat maps demonstrating the interactive map responses.

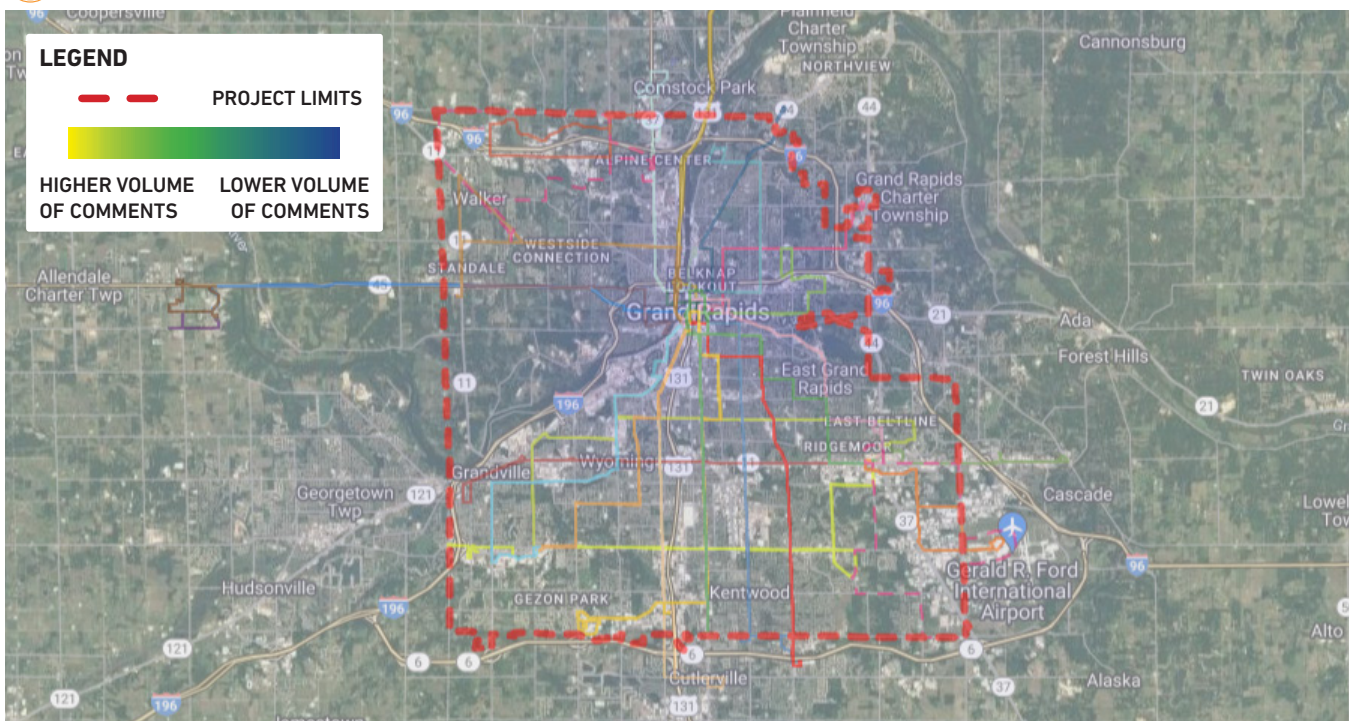


# ONLINE ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

## SERVICE EXPANSION COMMENTS



## ADD A NEW TRANSIT STATION/FACILITY COMMENTS



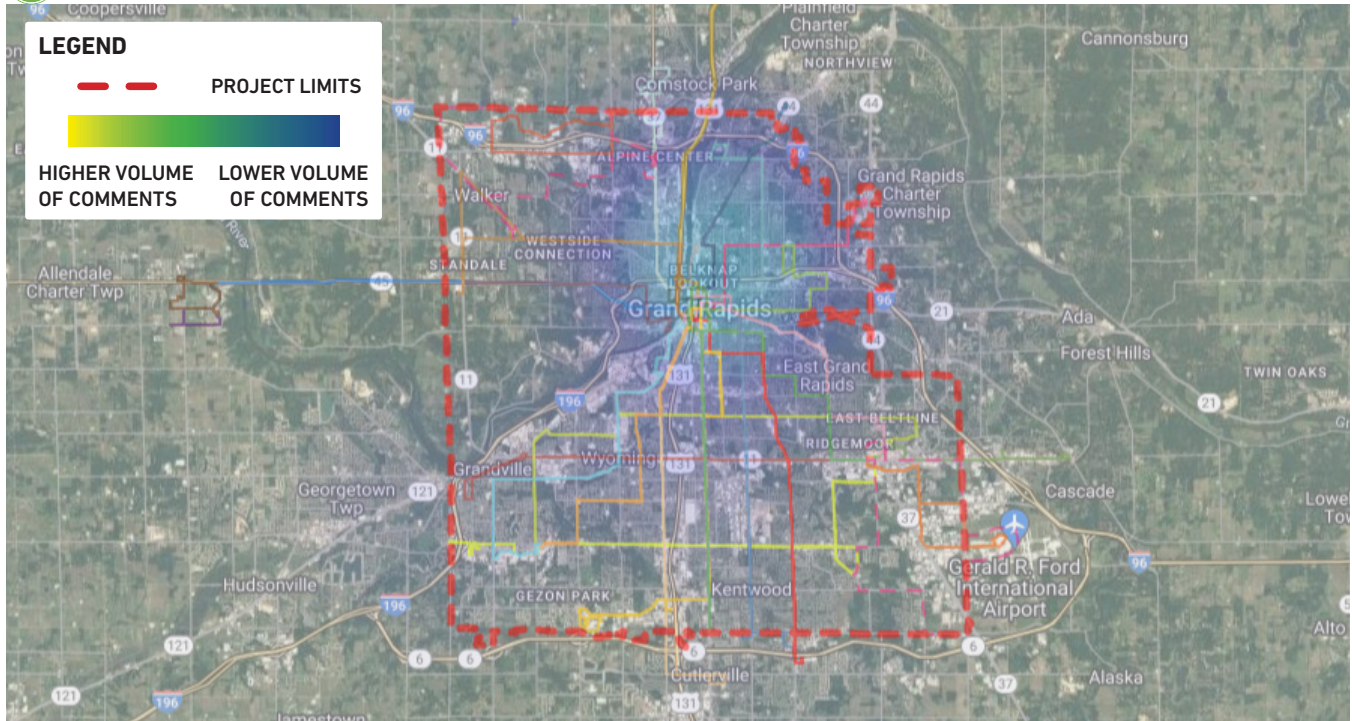


# PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

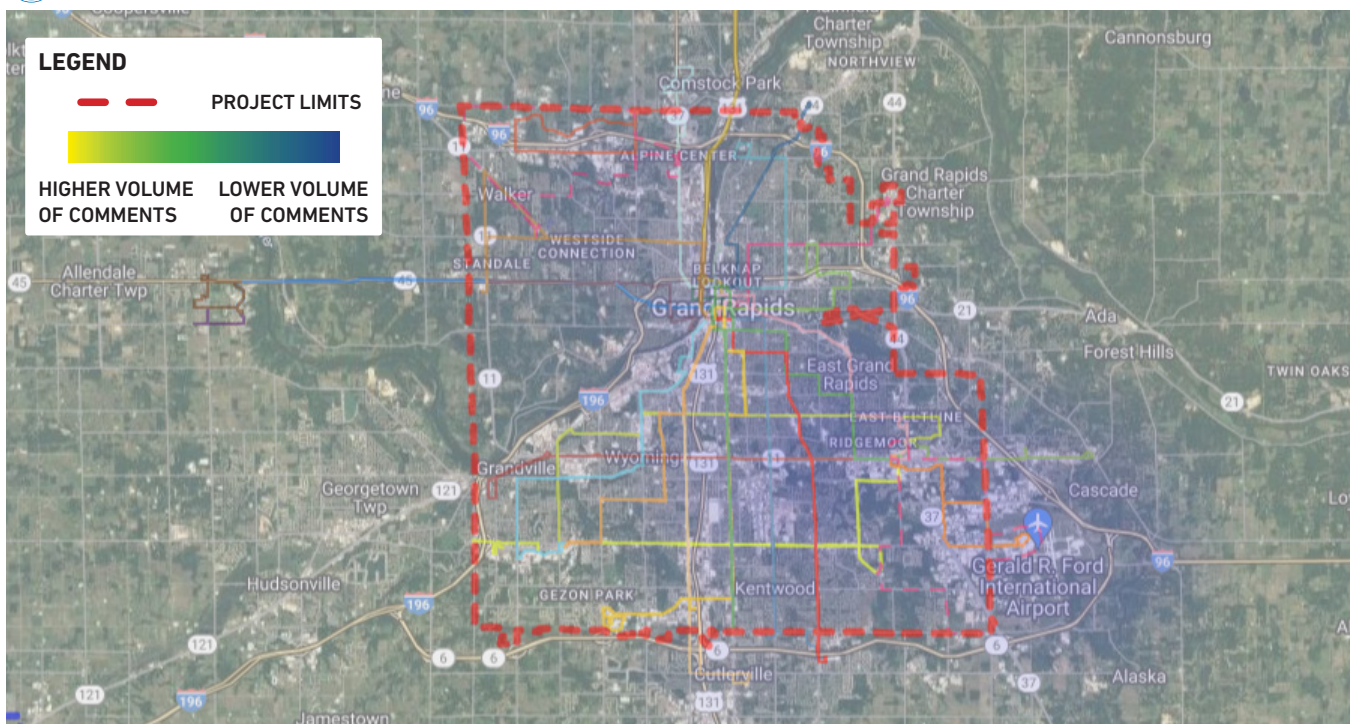
## ONLINE ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY



### IMPROVE BIKE/PEDESTRIAN ACCESS COMMENTS



### IMPROVE EXISTING TRANSIT STATION COMMENTS



# ONLINE ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

## WALL COMMENTS

The ideas wall is a digital wall that allowed comments, that were non-location specific, from community members to be placed publicly for all to view, respond to, and like/dislike. As of **December 2023**, there were a total of **94 comments** placed. The digital wall comments fell into three (3) categories:

- Ideas and suggestions
- Make a comment
- Something I like

The following topics were the most commonly placed and liked comments within the ideas wall:

- Continue thinking long term by adding light rail systems and increased bike infrastructure.
- Increase transit options through light rail, separated bike lanes, increased service (coverage and frequency), and commuter rail options to jurisdictions throughout the region.
- The Silver Line should become a true bus rapid transit system with dedicated bus lanes, signal priority, increased frequency, and the ability to pre-pay.
- Increased connections between surrounding jurisdictions, airport, downtown, and the lakeshore.
- Increased service options allowing replacement of cars, later service hours, and connections for tourism.

## WALL COMMENT EXAMPLES

*“Let’s think long-term! Continuing to add lanes to highways is short term thinking, adding a light rail system through major corridors with bike racks and increased bike infrastructure is the way to go! So many young people (and young talent for businesses) see cities with good public transit as a major bonus. Adding a light rail system would be a huge leap forward in making GR an attractive and vibrant city.”*

*“We need a LOT for better transit options. 1) Light rail addition would be incredible if added in spokes out to the suburbs and in downtown. I only live as far as Wyoming and getting into downtown by the Rapid is a 50 minute trip from my place. 2) Dedicated bike lanes with physical barriers separating bikes from cars. 3) Increased service of the Rapid - both in coverage and frequency 4) Commuter rail options to outer cities and towns further than the direct suburbs (ideally as far as the Lake)”*

*“We should increase the service of all GR buses so that they run every 10-15 minutes, buses will never be a good replacement for cars until they reach that minimum quality of service.”*

*“8-15 minute frequency for every route is the aspirational goal”*

*“Need to enhance current system before connecting to other communities – the first priority is the current service area enhancements”*



# PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

## ONLINE ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

### ONLINE SURVEY

The online survey was launched on **September 12th, 2023** and closed on **December 8th, 2023**. It was available both digitally and at the first open house. The survey included 21 questions, covering topics such as transit perceptions, travel preferences, goals for the TMP, in addition to general demographic, and geographic information. It received a total of **1131 responses**. To review the full results from this survey refer to the Appendix.

### SURVEY MARKETING

Marketing of the online survey followed a comprehensive media outreach plan to ensure broad awareness. Outreach began in early **September 2023** with the distribution of a news release that announced the Transit Master Plan (TMP), the online survey, and dates of October open houses. The week before the October open houses, an event advisory was distributed to Grand Rapids area media that garnered four at-event or day-of-event media stories. A final round of media pitching occurred in **late November** and aimed at attracting media stories before the **Dec. 8** survey deadline. The public relations outreach garnered a total of **14 unique stories**, reaching over **750,000 people** throughout West Michigan.

### SURVEY FINDINGS

From the responses provided from the digital survey, the following key findings were determined:

- **Travel Time.** Over 60% of respondents noted they would be willing to add between 5-20 minutes of additional time to their existing travel times if they could take an

alternative mode of travel, including transit. This demonstrates that other factors may be considered as part of an individual's decision making process when choosing mobility modes. These factors include convenience, safety, and accessibility among others, as identified in the survey.

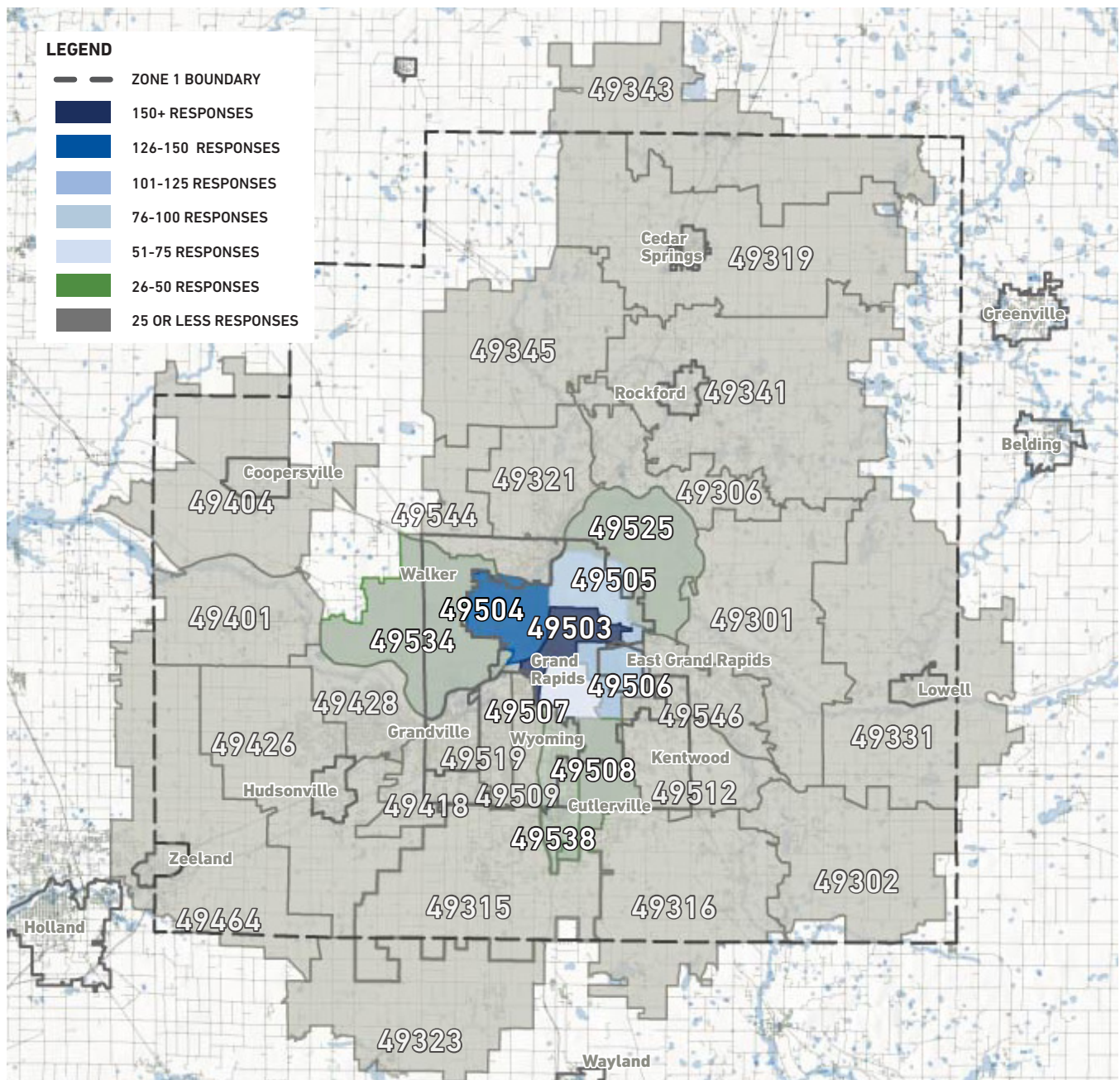
- **Future of Transit.** When asked about current transit challenges and the future of transit, respondents noted the expansion of routes, increased destination options, and frequency of service were a top priorities to address common transit challenges. Respondents often expressed a desire for rail transit options.
- **Challenges.** Respondents who previously used transit services or stopped using transit services noted location of routes, lack of service frequency, and travel time as barriers to using transit as an option for travel.
- **Route Frequency & Access.** Respondents frequently expressed interest for increased frequency of service, more routes that access the places individuals need to go and shorter trip times. Requests for these types of features directly connect to the challenges and barriers respondents encountered when using The Rapid as a transit option.



# ONLINE ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

## Q1. What is your zip code?

The majority of respondents identified as living in the 49503 and 49504 zip codes, within the Grand Rapids Metropolitan Area. While a majority of respondents identified as living within a zip code that overlapped with the Rapid service area, most of respondents identified as living outside the service area.

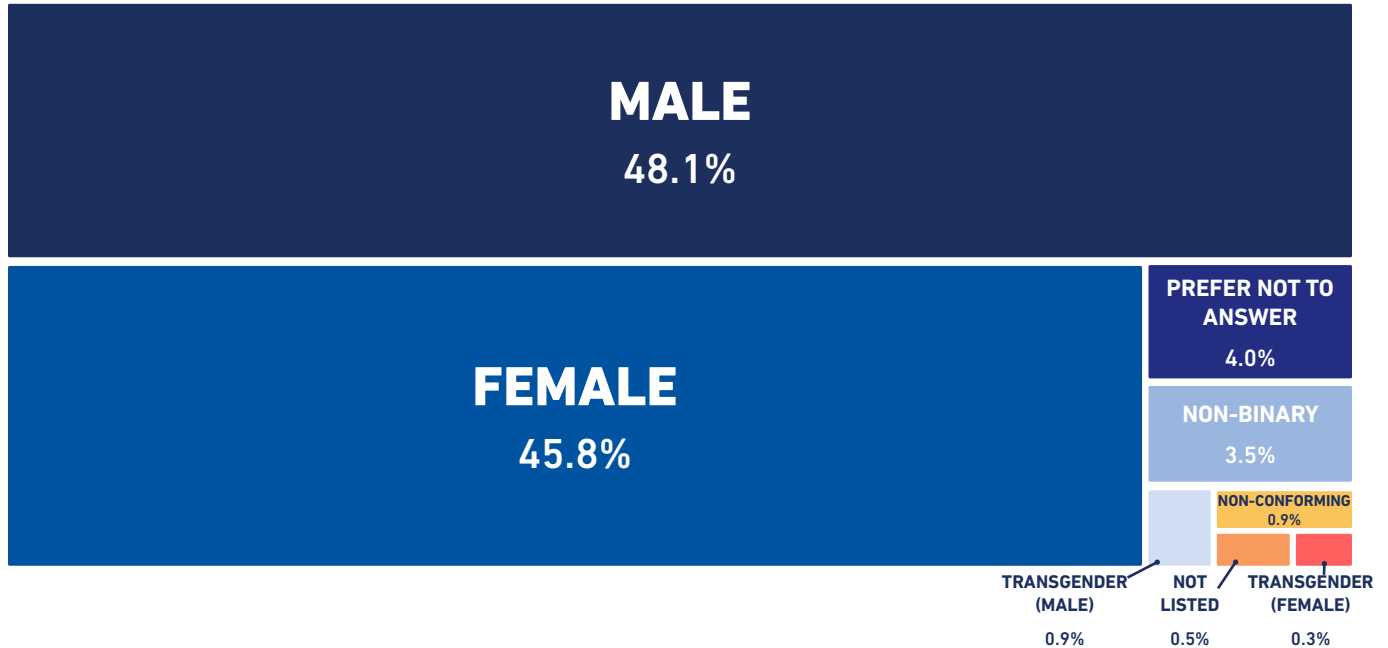




# PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

## ONLINE ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY - ONLINE SURVEY

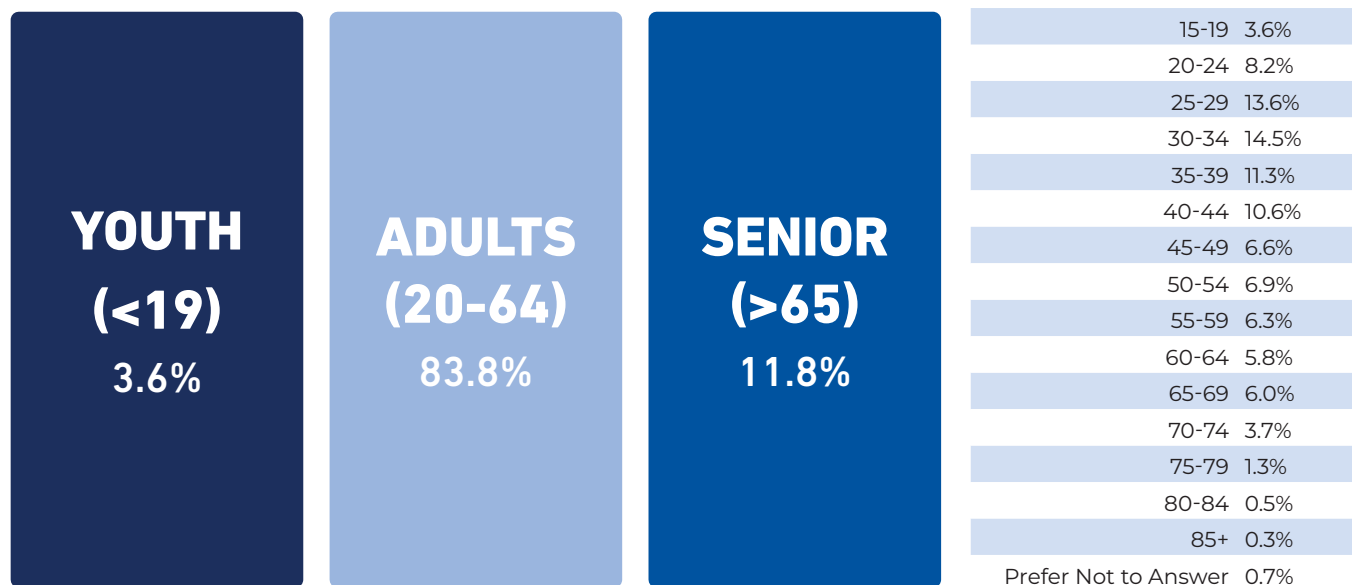
Q2. Please choose from the following options related to identity (Optional):



Q3. Please select your age group (Optional):

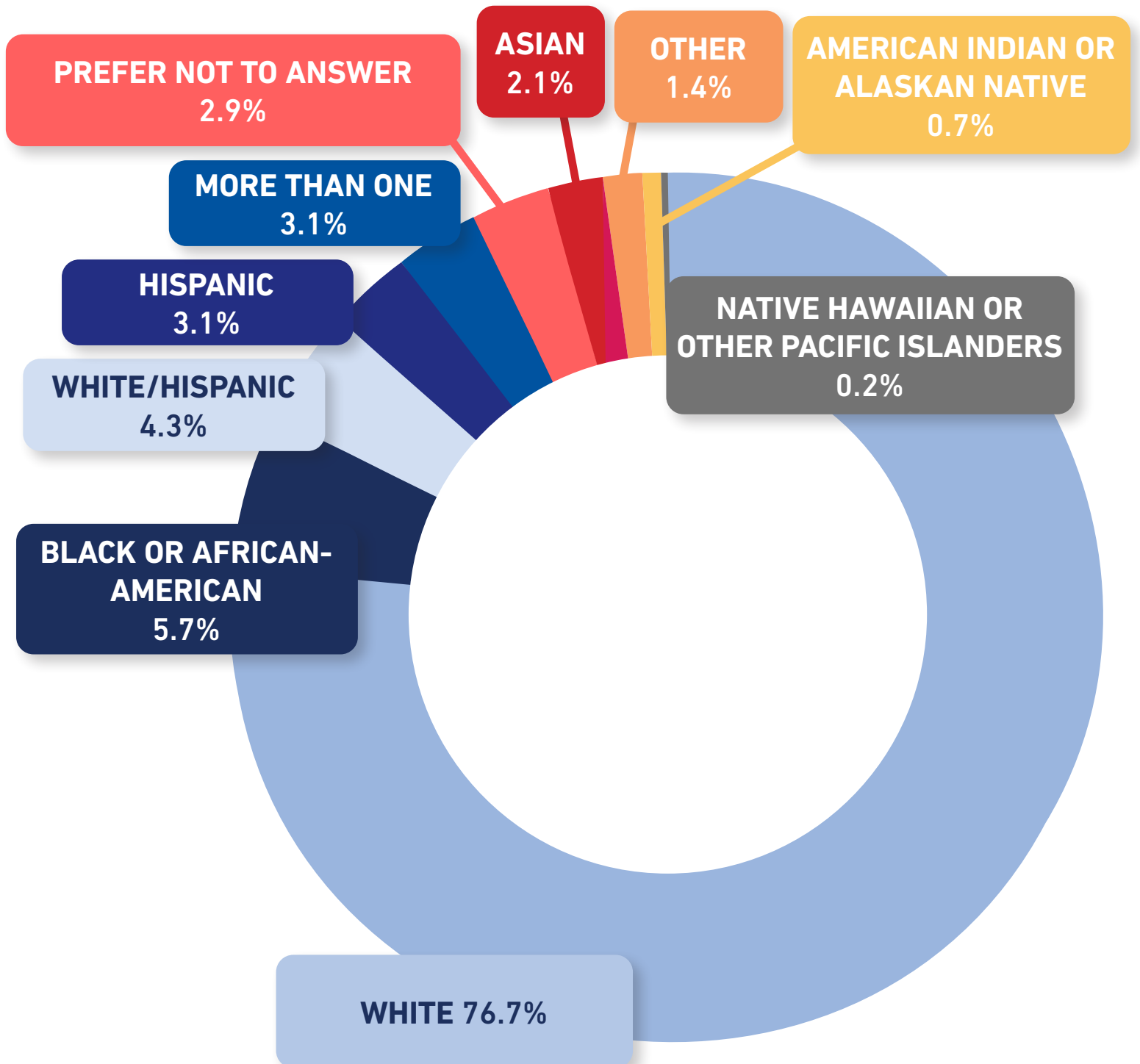
The majority of respondents were between the ages of 25-39 and make up 39.4% of total survey respondents.

### AGE GROUP RESPONDENTS:



## ONLINE ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY - ONLINE SURVEY

Q4. Please select the race/ethnicity you most closely identify with (Optional):

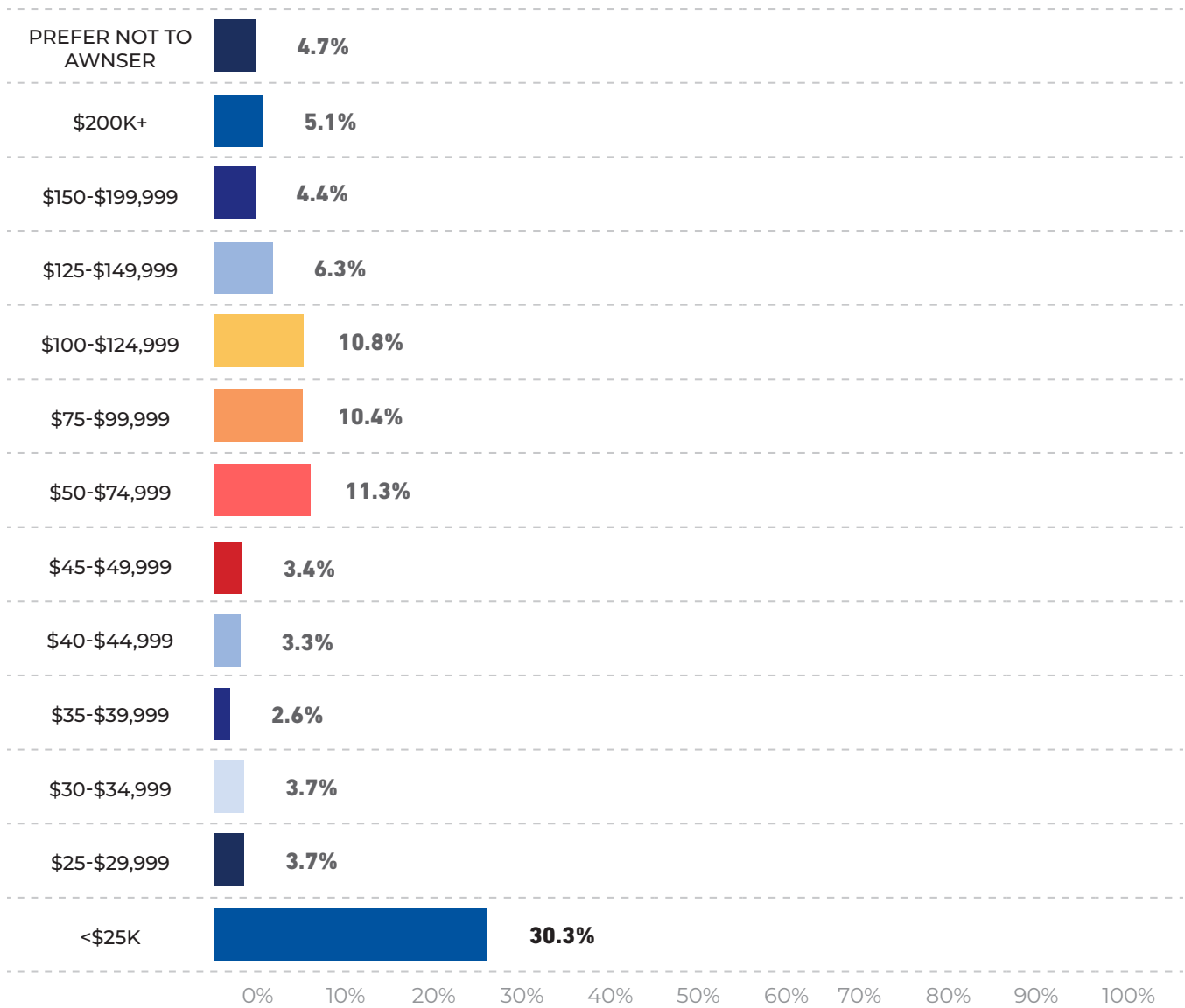


# PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

## ONLINE ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY - ONLINE SURVEY

### Q5. What was your household's total combined income in 2022? (Optional)

About 30% of all respondents were under the \$25,000 annual income threshold and around 43.9% fell within a range of \$40,000 to \$124,999 annually. Of those identifying as earning less than \$25,000 annually, 64% were more likely to not have access to a vehicle (see question 7 on page 30), while 81% of those identifying in the middle range of \$40,000 to \$124,999 annually were more likely to have access to a vehicle.

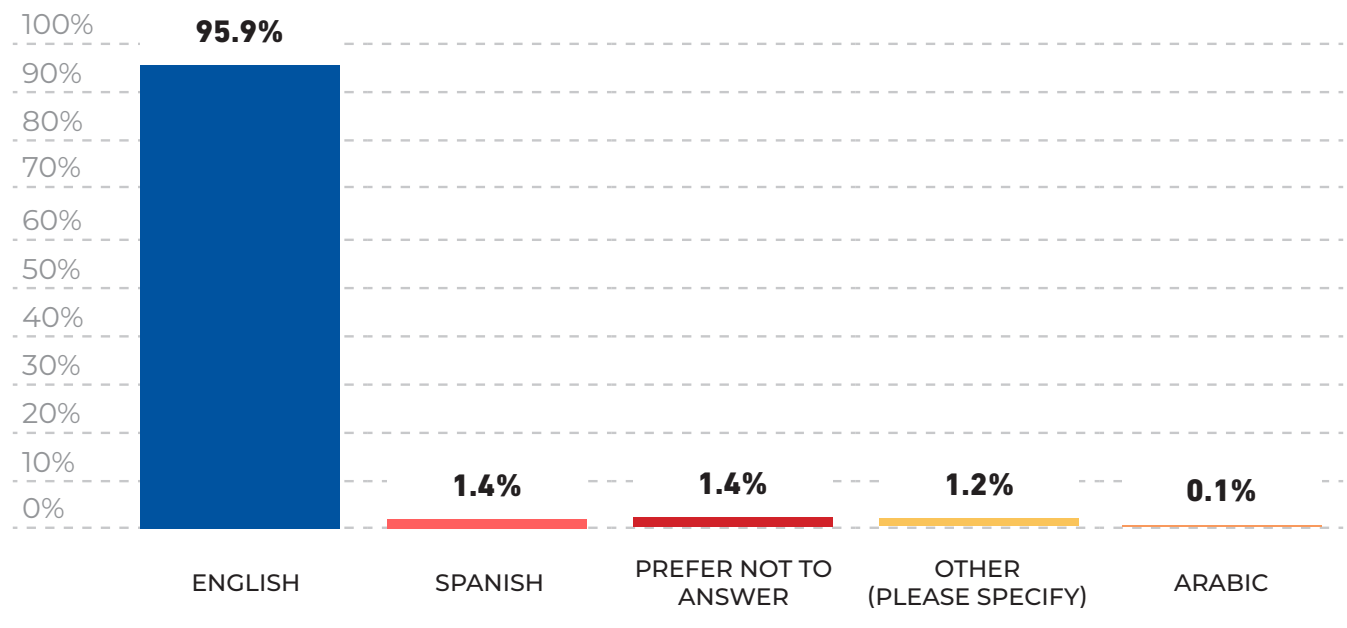




## ONLINE ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY - ONLINE SURVEY

### Q6. What language do you typically speak at home?

Although almost 96% of survey respondents spoke English as their primary language, the 4% of survey respondents who spoke other languages at home noted the following as top improvement priorities: higher service frequency (bus comes more often), expanded service areas, reducing the cost to ride, additional routes and Improve travel time. Those that do not primarily speak English at home choose priorities that aligned with improvement of frequency, cost and access.



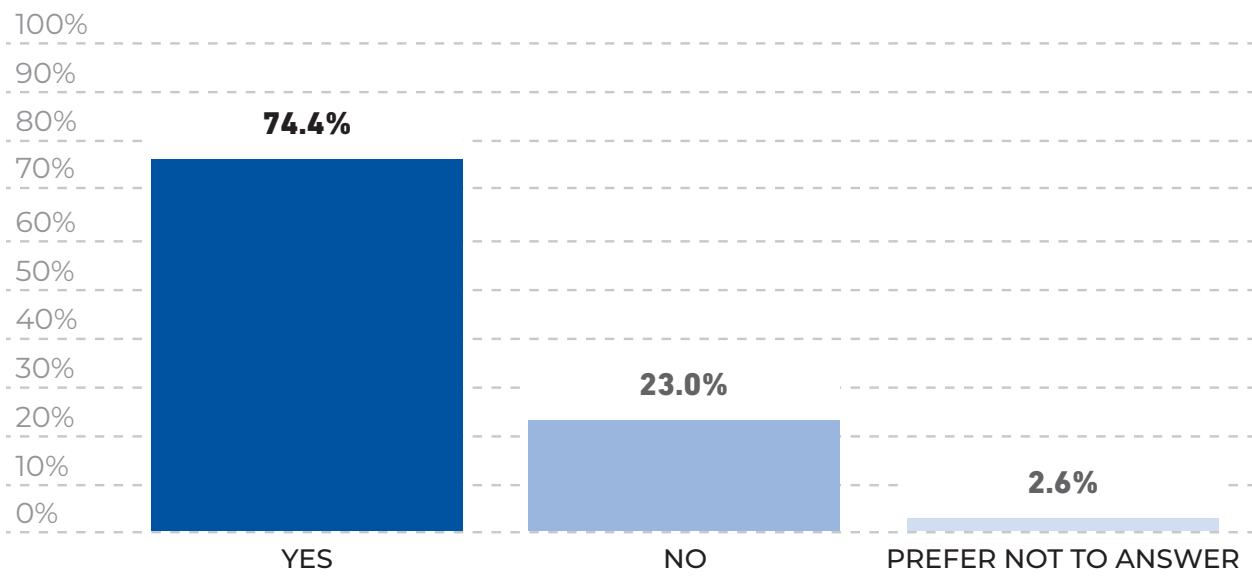
*OTHER: AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE, DUTCH, PORTUGUESE, KINYRWANDA, CATALAN, TURKISH, SEVERAL, NON-VERBAL, JAPANESE, NJEREP, KOREAN & CELTIC*

# PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

## ONLINE ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY - ONLINE SURVEY

### Q7. Do you have access to a vehicle?

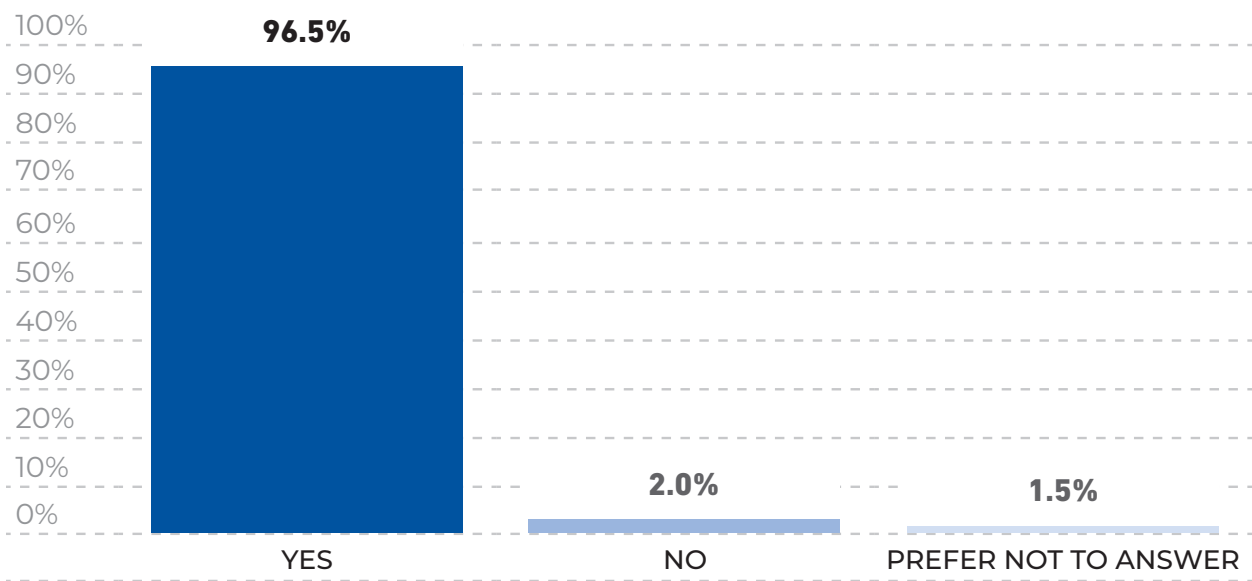
Respondents who do not have access to vehicles consisted of individuals who made less than \$25K a total income and used transit as their most frequent mode of transportation.



## ONLINE ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY - ONLINE SURVEY

### Q8. Do you have access to an internet-enabled mobile phone (smartphone)?

Respondents who did not have access to an internet-enabled mobile phone were primarily individuals over the age of 60. The respondents over the age of 60 used transit currently, had access to vehicles, and drove themselves. The most common challenges respondents over 60 faced were routes and stops are not conveniently located near them. They also do not feel safe riding the bus and the buses do not operate during the times/days they need. These respondents would like to see more dependable service that meets the needs of people within Grand Rapids and would like there to be additional marketing and amenities.





# PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

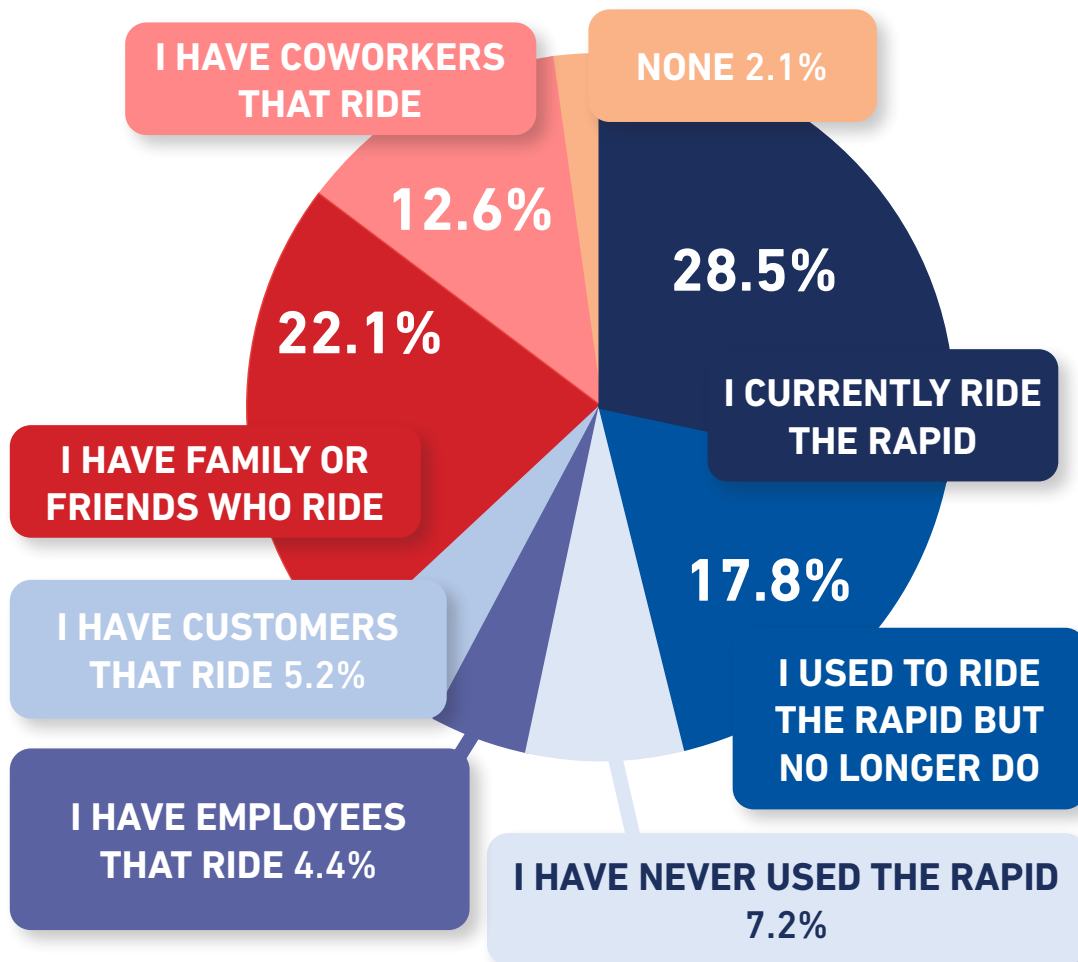
## ONLINE ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY - ONLINE SURVEY

### Q9. What is your relationship with The Rapid (Check all that apply):

Respondents who currently ride The Rapid are primarily individuals who are below the age of 40 and have an income below \$30K annually. These individuals responded that more frequent service and servicing more locations where they need to go were of highest importance and would increase the appeal of transit.

Respondents who used to ride The Rapid but no longer do were primarily above the age of 30 and had an income above \$50K annually. These individuals responded that their most frequent transportation mode was driving their own vehicle and similarly noted that more frequent service and servicing more locations was of highest importance.

Those that have never used The Rapid were primarily individuals who made more than \$75K annually and noted that more frequent service and servicing more locations was of highest importance.



## ONLINE ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY - ONLINE SURVEY

Q10. If you have never used The Rapid services previously, or stopped using, why did you stop using public transportation? (Check all that apply)

**IT TAKES TOO LONG TO  
COMPLETE A TRIP**  
14.6%

**THE BUS ROUTES ARE NOT  
CONVENIENTLY LOCATED FOR ME**  
10.7%

**THE SERVICE IS TOO INFREQUENT**  
10.6%

There are not any stops near my home 9.4%

The bus does not take me to my destination 9.1%

The bus does not operate on the days/times I need 8.5%

I use other modes (bike, walk, uber/lyft) 8.2%

I've gained access to a private automobile 7.1%

It's too unreliable (Poor on-time performance) 7.1%

Other 6.1%

I don't feel safe while waiting for the bus 2.8%

I don't know how to use public transportation 2.8%

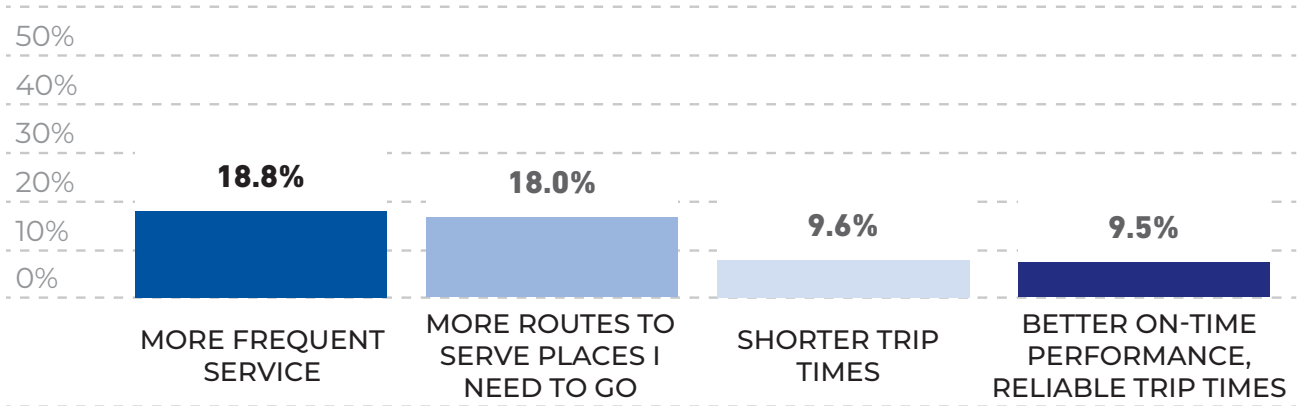
I don't feel riding the bus is safe for my health 1.8%

It's too expensive 1.3%

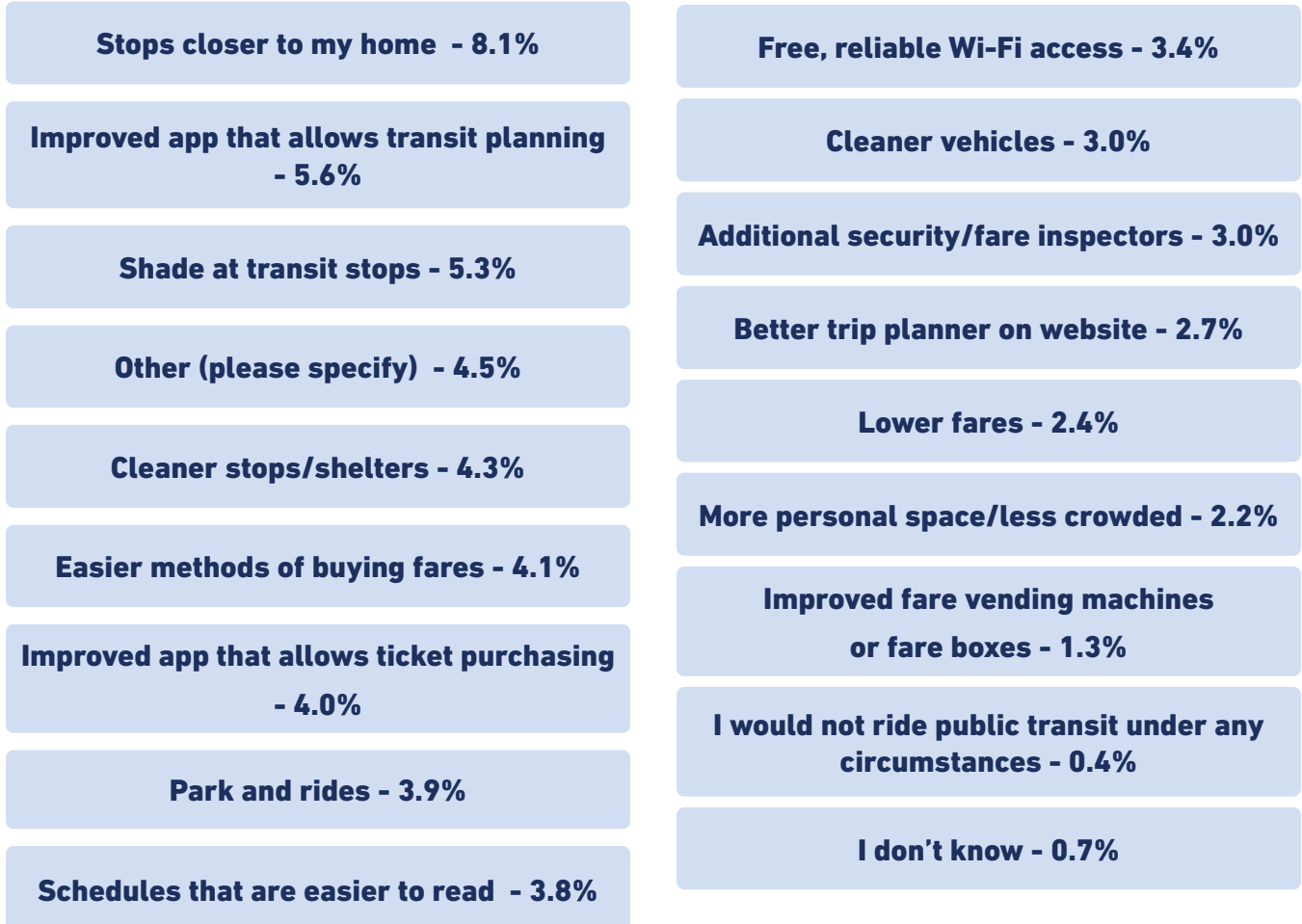
# PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

## ONLINE ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY - ONLINE SURVEY

Q11. Which three features/amenities would increase your appeal for using public transportation?



### OTHER AMENITIES CATEGORIES:

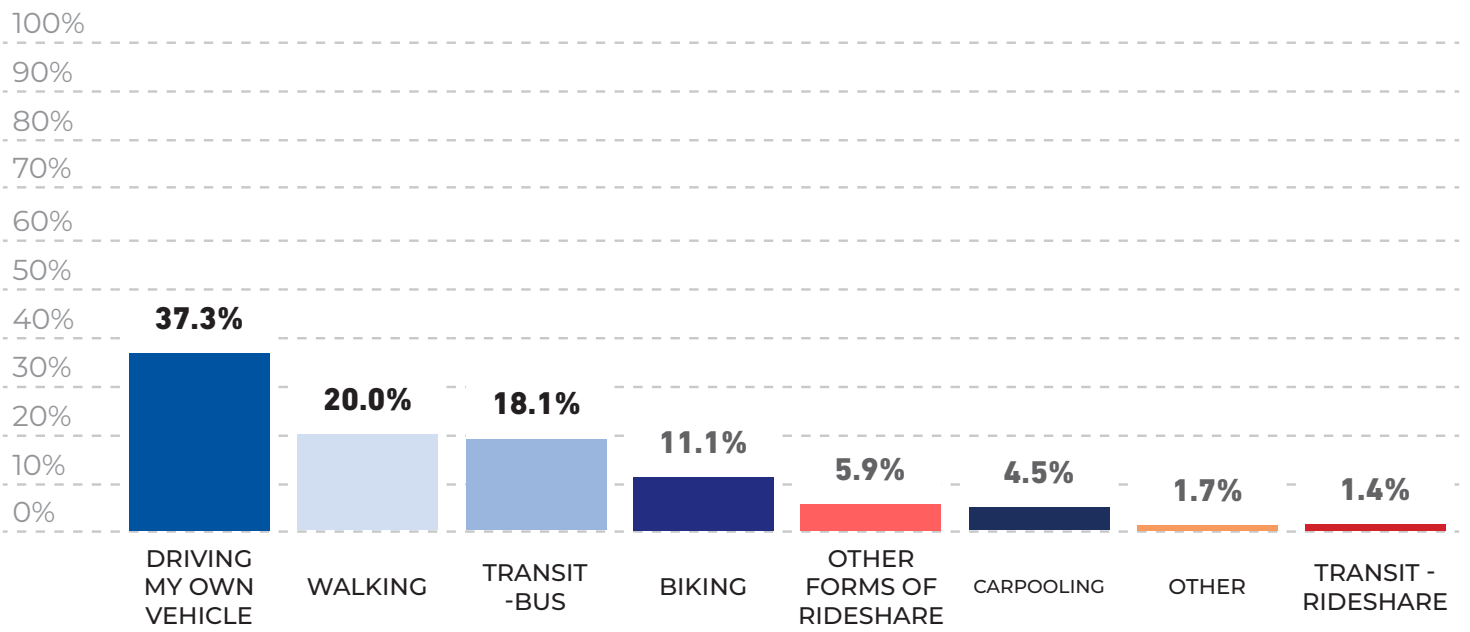




## ONLINE ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY - ONLINE SURVEY

### Q12. My most frequent mode of transportation is... (Select up to 2)

Respondents who chose Bus Transit more frequently chose walking and driving my own vehicle as additional modes of transportation. Additionally those who chose driving my own vehicle selected walking as their most frequent mode of transportation. Those who did not select driving as their most frequent mode of transportation, selected bus transit, walking and biking as their most frequent modes of transportation.



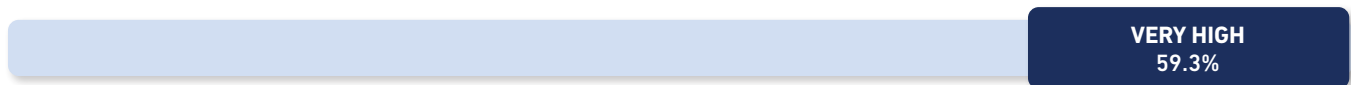
# PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

## ONLINE ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY - ONLINE SURVEY

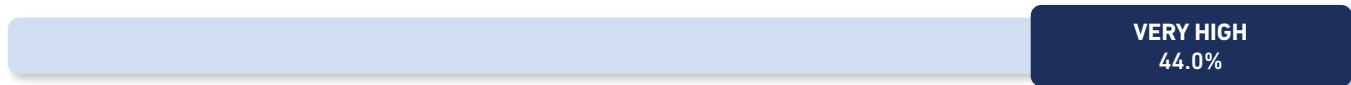
Q13. Rank how important you consider the following factors when choosing your most frequent mode of transportation:

Respondents had the options to select from Very High, High, Neutral, Low, and Very Low to determine how important they considered the factors below. The highest rated factors were reliability of my travel mode, travel time, and accessibility.

### RELIABILITY OF MY TRAVEL MODE (I KNOW IT WILL BE THERE WHEN I NEED IT)



### TRAVEL TIME



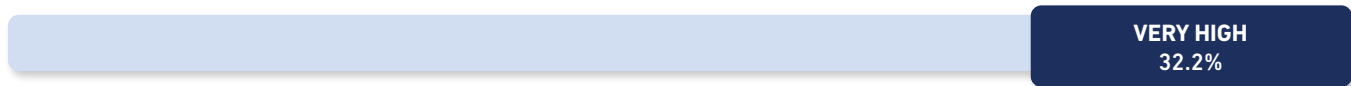
### ACCESSIBILITY (I CAN USE IT WITH LITTLE TO NO HELP FROM OTHERS)



### SAFETY



### PARKING COST/AVAILABILITY



### COST/AFFORDABILITY



### PARKING COST/AVAILABILITY



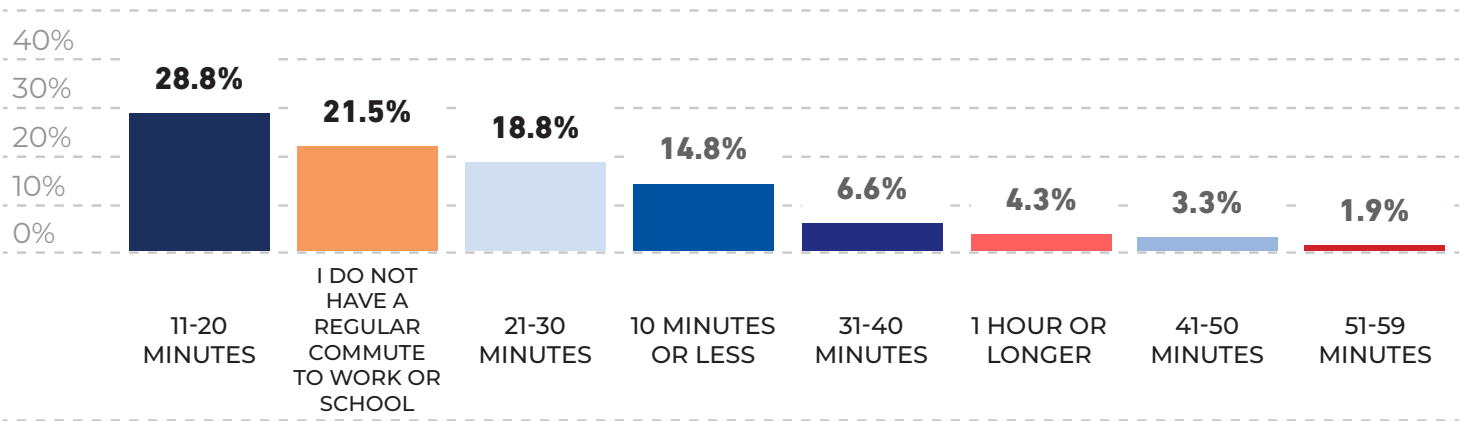
### CONGESTION/TRAFFIC



## ONLINE ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY - ONLINE SURVEY

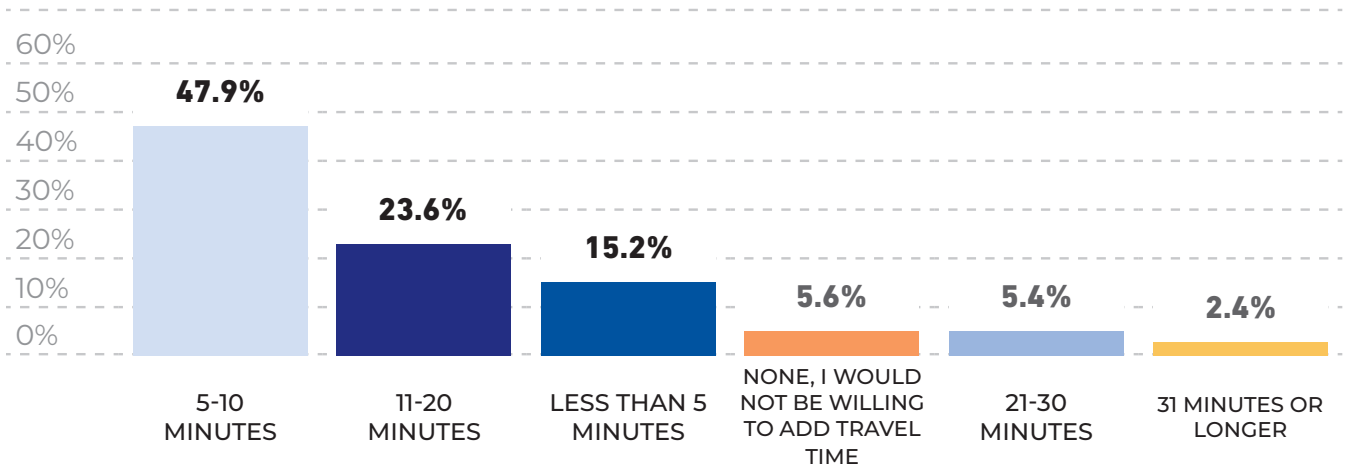
Q14. Do you have a regular commute to work or school? If so, on average, how long is your commute (one-way only, including waiting time)?

Respondents whose commute was over 30 minutes were primarily (62%) bus transit users, who noted the need for more frequent service and more routes to the locations they would like to go. Those with shorter commutes were mostly (56%) individuals driving a vehicle.



Q15. What is the additional travel time you would be willing to add to a short trip (less than 20 minutes) if you had a safe and convenient alternative to driving? Select all that apply.

Respondents who used driving their own vehicle as their most frequent mode of transportation, were more willing to add between 5-20 minutes to a short trip if they had an alternative to driving.

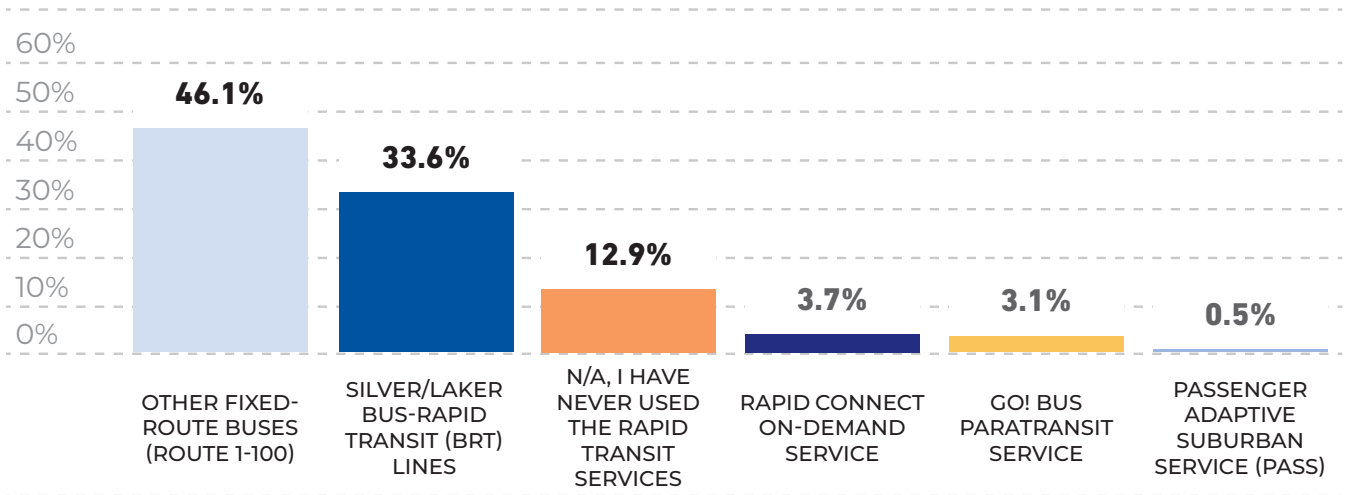


# PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

## ONLINE ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY - ONLINE SURVEY

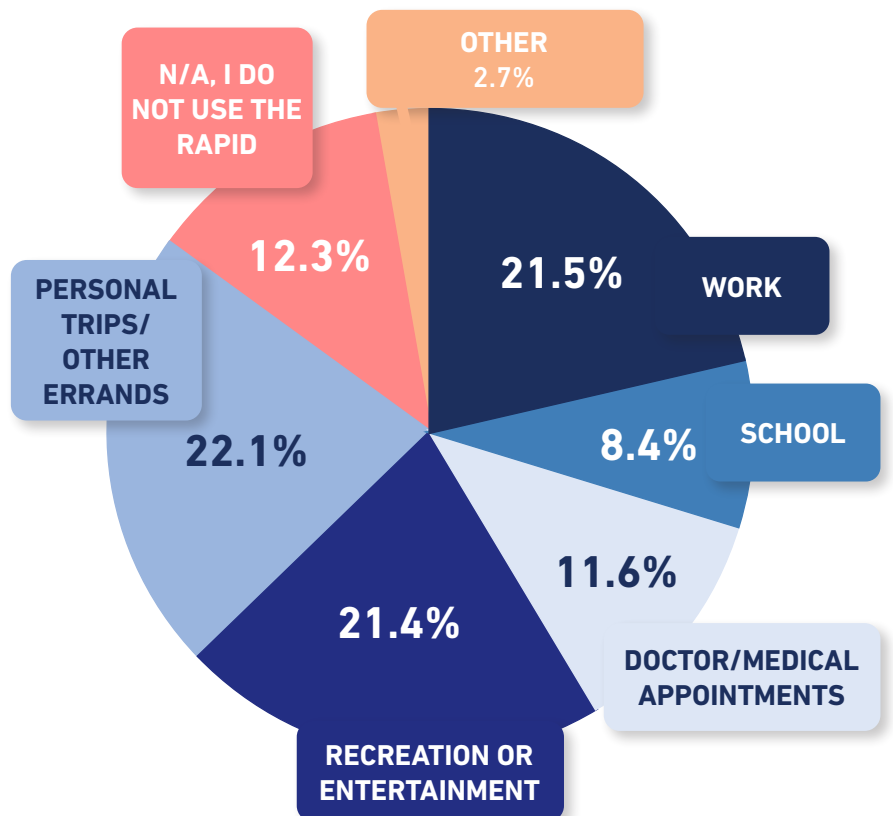
Q16. Have you ridden on any of the following The Rapid transit services? (Check all that apply).

Both senior respondents (age 65 and above) and those that noted driving as their most frequent mode of transit primarily rode the Silver/Laker Bus-Rapid Transit (BRT) Lines and other fixed-route buses (Route 1-100).



Q17. Which types of trips do you typically use The Rapid for? (Check all that apply)

Respondents across the board use The Rapid for a variety of trips, with the highest concentration of use for work, recreation or entertainment and personal trips/other errands.



## ONLINE ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY - ONLINE SURVEY

Q18. What do you consider to be the most important to improve the current transit system?

Respondents rated expanded service areas, higher service frequency, and more or all routes running on weekends as of high importance. Respondents who chose driving as their most frequent mode of travel selected High Service Frequency, More Routes on Weekends, Expanded Service Areas and Improved Travel Time as most important. Respondents who made below \$25,000 in annual income selected More Routes on Weekends, Longer Service Hours (Day/Night) and Expanded Service Areas as most important. Senior respondents (aged 65 and above) selected Longer Service Hours (Day/Night), Expanded Service Areas, More Routes on Weekends and Improved Travel Time as most important.

### EXPANDED SERVICE AREAS



### HIGHER SERVICE FREQUENCY (BUS COMES MORE OFTEN)



### MORE OR ALL ROUTES RUNNING ON WEEKENDS



### IMPROVE TRAVEL TIME



### LONGER SERVICE HOURS (DAY/NIGHT)



### INCREASE FUNDING TO OPERATE ADDITIONAL TRANSIT SERVICES





# PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

## ONLINE ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY - ONLINE SURVEY

Q18. What do you consider to be the most important to improve the current transit system? (cont.)

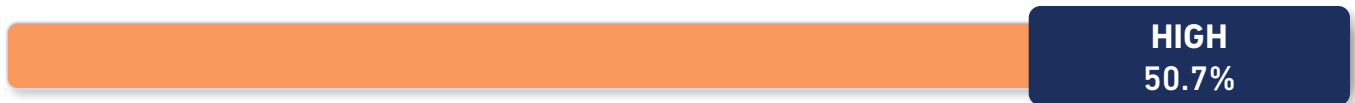
### MORE DENSE, WALKABLE DEVELOPMENT NEAR TRANSIT SERVICES



### BETTER WALKING/BIKING ACCESS TO TRANSIT SERVICES



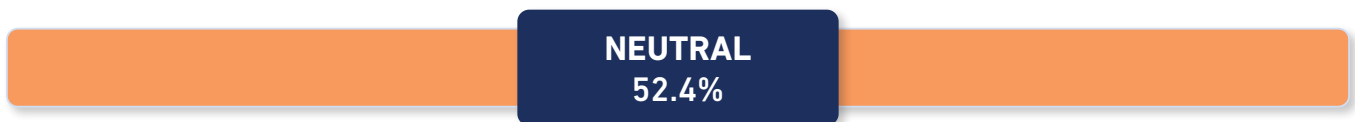
### MORE AFFORDABLE HOUSING OPTIONS NEAR TRANSIT SERVICES



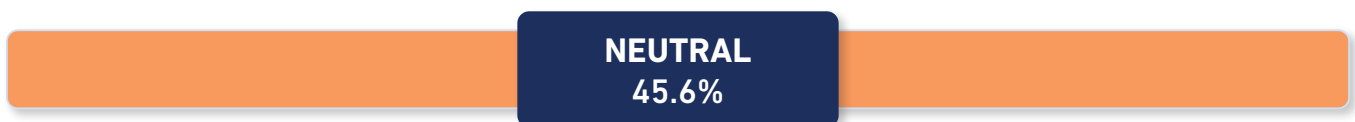
### SYSTEM OPERATIONS EFFICIENCY



### REDUCE THE COST TO RIDE



### IMPROVED MARKETING/COMMUNICATIONS FOR SERVICES PROVIDED



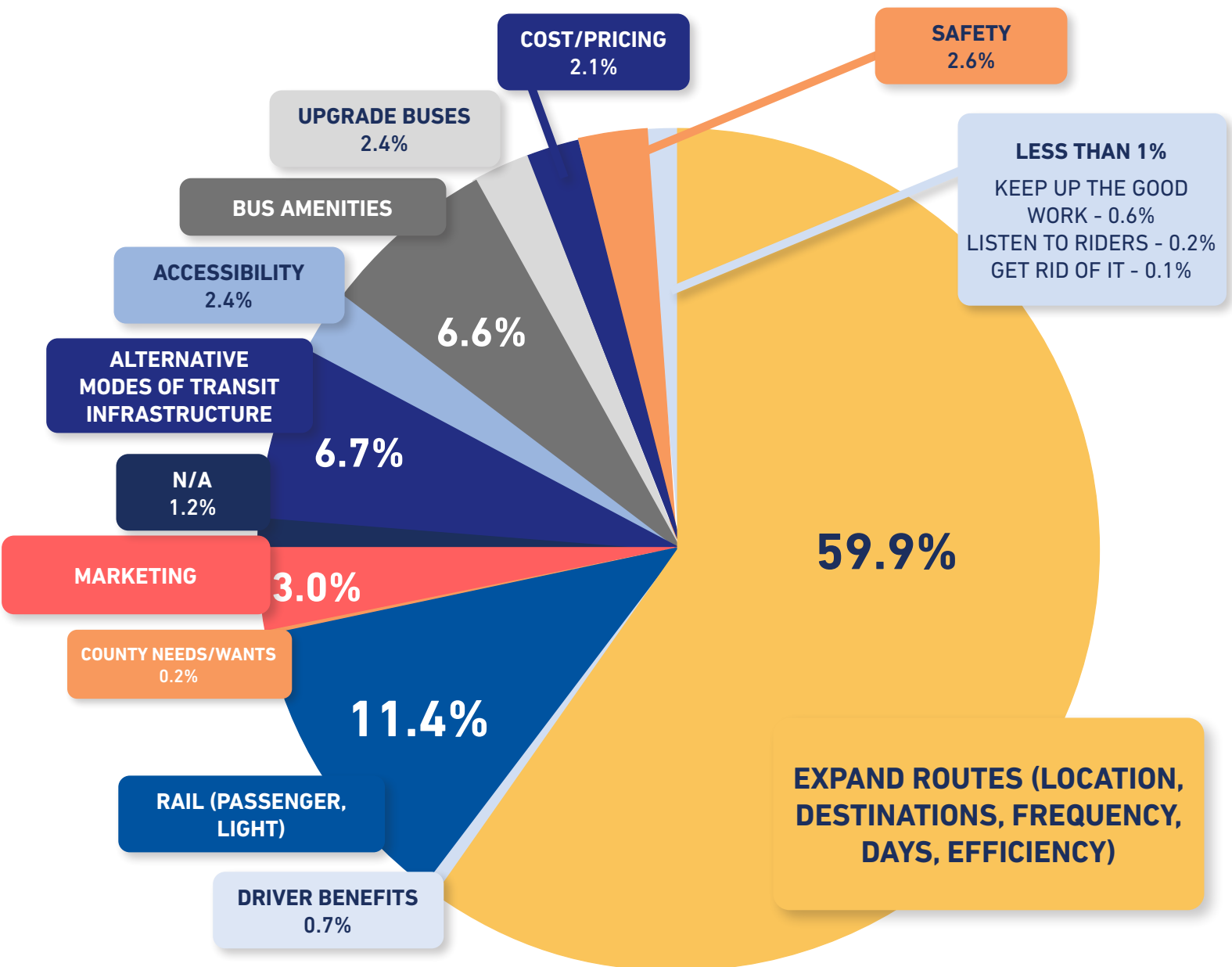
### INFORMATION/ACCESSIBILITY (EASIER TO UNDERSTAND HOW TO USE THE SERVICE)



## ONLINE ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY - ONLINE SURVEY

Q19. What would you like to see in the future of transit for Grand Rapids and the surrounding region?

Expansion of routes through increased frequency and destinations were common threads through all income levels and transit users vs non-transit users. This sentiment can be seen throughout all questions related to the future of The Rapid. Additionally, 11.4% of respondents noted Rail, both passenger and light rail, as something they would like to see for the future of The Rapid.



# PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

## ONLINE ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY - ONLINE SURVEY

Q20. Please rank your priorities for the Transit Master Plan (1 is a top priority and 3 is the lowest priority):

Respondents ranked providing mobility to low-income families and individuals who cannot afford the costs of owning a car, providing transit options to people with special mobility needs, providing access to places of employment and improving quality of life as the highest priorities for the Transit Master Plan.

Respondents who chose driving as their most frequent mode of travel selected providing access to places of employment, mobility to low-income families and individuals who cannot afford the costs of owning a car and a convenient alternative to driving as top priorities. Respondents who made below \$25,000 in annual income selected mobility to low-income families and individuals who cannot afford the costs of owning a car, transportation options to people with special mobility needs, such as the elderly, disabled, and people who are medically unable to drive and access to medical facilities/healthcare as top priorities. Senior respondents (aged 65 and above) selected mobility to low-income families and individuals who cannot afford the costs of owning a car, transportation options to people with special mobility needs, such as the elderly, disabled, and people who are medically unable to drive, access to medical facilities/healthcare, and affordable transportation options as priorities.

### PROVIDING MOBILITY TO LOW-INCOME FAMILIES AND INDIVIDUALS WHO CANNOT AFFORD THE COSTS OF OWNING A CAR



### PROVIDING TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS TO PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL MOBILITY NEEDS, SUCH AS THE ELDERLY, DISABLED, AND PEOPLE WHO ARE MEDICALLY UNABLE TO DRIVE



### PROVIDING ACCESS TO PLACES OF EMPLOYMENT



### IMPROVING QUALITY OF LIFE



### PROVIDING A CONVENIENT ALTERNATIVE TO DRIVING



### PROVIDING AFFORDABLE TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS



### MAKING ROADS SAFER FOR ALL USERS



### REDUCING POLLUTION/CARBON FOOTPRINT



## ONLINE ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY - ONLINE SURVEY

Q20. Please rank your priorities for the Transit Master Plan (1 is a top priority and 3 is the lowest priority): *(cont.)*

### PROVIDING ACCESS TO MEDICAL FACILITIES/HEALTHCARE



### CONNECTING TO OTHER TRANSIT SYSTEMS BEYOND THE GRAND RAPIDS REGION



### REDUCING TRAFFIC CONGESTION



### ATTRACTING & RETAINING A QUALIFIED WORKFORCE



### ATTRACTING & RETAINING MORE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN THE REGION



### PROVIDING ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE HOUSING



### OPERATING MORE SUSTAINABLY/WITH GREENER VEHICLES



### SUPPORTING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



### PROVIDING ACCESS TO PLACES OF LEISURE AND RECREATION



### IMPROVING PROPERTY VALUES



# PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

## ONLINE ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY - ONLINE SURVEY

Q21. Do you have any additional thoughts regarding transit in metropolitan Grand Rapids and the surrounding region or the planning process? (Open ended)

The categories below and comment bubbles on the following page represent the responses provided by survey takers.

<b>Expand Routes</b> (Location, Destinations, Frequency, Reliable, Days, Efficiency, Regional, Airport, Lakeshore, Seasonal Access)
<b>Bus Amenities (Bike Lanes, Seating, Trees, Park-and-Ride, Apps/Tech, Shelters, Bus Lanes, Lighting, Bike Storage)</b>
<b>Promote Transit Options (Marketing, Communications)</b>
<b>Promote/Expand Alternative Modes of Transit Infrastructure (Pedestrians, Bikers, Scooters, Rideshare)</b>
<b>Rail (Light Rail, Passenger, Highspeed)</b>
<b>Cost/Pricing (Cash, Where to Buy, Machines, Affordability, Cost of Lightrail, Funding)</b>
<b>Keep up the good work!</b>
<b>Safety (Transit Police)</b>
<b>More Connected System (Regionally, Schools, Alternative Transit)</b>
<b>Accessibility</b>
<b>Upgrade Buses (Electric, Trams, Alternative Fuels, Eco-Friendly, Lights)</b>
<b>Zoning, Economic Development, Congestion Pricing, Transit Oriented Development</b>
<b>Driver Benefits</b>
<b>Cleanliness (Lost/Found, Smell, Bugs, Bathroom Issues)</b>
<b>Other Comments:</b> Better Surveys, Open Planning Process, Terms, Ability to Make Suggestions Planning and Execution of Master Plan, Increase Car Access, Decrease Uses for Bus/Bike, Remove Road Diets, Get Rid of Transit, Driver Training, Stop Growth, Driver Training, Stop Growth (Increase Reliability)



## ONLINE ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY - ONLINE SURVEY

*"I think that the cities of Michigan need to be linked with rapid transit. This would benefit everyone as it would keep people from having to drive an hour to go to the beach, or 5 hours to get to the Mackinaw bridge. Being connected by regional rail would significantly reduce travel time and traffic congestion, as well as make these locations more accessible to everyone. Connections should go to at least Holland, Kalamazoo, Lansing, Detroit, Mackinaw, Marquette and Traverse City. Larger cities should have direct connections to more national rail. In terms of Grand Rapids, the city needs to prioritize buses, bikes, and pedestrians above cars. They can do this by adding protected bike lanes, providing shade and comfort on sidewalks, and making dedicated bus lanes. If transit and biking become more convenient than driving, people will stop driving. I would love to offer more feedback and design ideas for Grand Rapids as well."*

*"I use the bus to get to school and I know a lot of other people who do because the busing GRPS provides is bad and they don't provide it for high schoolers. Transit access to schools is very important and a lot of people rely on it. It's also important that young people have access to transit for extracurriculars, leisure, and outdoor spaces because they are likely to not have access to cars. Making transit accessible and safe for young people should be considered in the planning process."*

*"I would like to see us shift away from a hub and spoke model."*

*"I would like to see The Rapid take a data driven approach to increasing overall ridership and encouraging people to find alternate forms of transit outside of single occupied cars."*

*"Protected bike lanes and a light rail system are the two things I'd like to see most."*

*"It would be great to see expanded service and multiple transit options."*

*"Please continue to push for more public transit. It's such a shame how we've become so dependent on our personal vehicles for everyday transportation. I'd love to see the next decade be one of transition to affordable, accessible, clean public transit for a better climate future for our community! Climate change is here and is accelerating rapidly, requiring our immediate action!"*

*"I would love for the mass transit infrastructure in GR to be more comprehensive, interconnected, and convenient. Regular and convenient connections to neighboring communities, the Lakeshore, and even more distant communities (like Holland, Detroit, and Kzoo) would be ideal. The limited service to areas outside of GR and its immediate neighbors makes travel for work or leisure very difficult without regular access to a car."*

*"I think there are a lot of opportunities to improve the quality of life in the region with mass transit solutions. I would happily make mass transit part of my daily life if it was reasonably convenient, but as is, almost any travel I would be considering would take at least twice as long using current mass transit options."*