Appendix 3: Phase I Public Outreach Report

Introduction and Methodology

Public outreach is a key component of the Regionally Coordinated Transportation Plan update. There are three phases of outreach for this process, of which this report covers the first one. This phase of outreach had several goals as follows:

- Raise awareness about the RCTP planning process
- Gather information about unmet transportation need and barriers to transit use in the region
- Provide an opportunity for members of the public to offer feedback on transportation options and gaps
- Ensure that participation is equitable and reflects the population of the Houston Gulf Coast region

To meet these goals, H-GAC created a phase I public outreach process with several components. There were three main ways members of the public could provide feedback:

1. Attend one of five virtual interactive engagement events
2. Take an engagement survey
3. Participate in a mapping activity to highlight transportation gaps

A project engagement website was developed, using the Bang the Table platform, at https://engage.h-gac.com/rctp. This site contains key information about the project, including a project contact and FAQ section, and also housed vital elements of the public outreach process, including registration links for virtual events and the public survey and related mapping activity. This website, along with the survey and mapping activity, launched on July 28, 2021. Virtual events were held between August 3 and August 11, 2021, while the survey and mapping activity closed on September 6, 2021. A total of 927 individuals visited the engagement site between July 28 and September 6.

Virtual Outreach Events

Five virtual outreach events were held in August 2021. These events split the region geographically, with each event targeting a specific county or set of counties, with the counties grouped by the transit agency or agencies serving them. Each agency serving the geography of a given event was invited to attend the event to answer questions and provide feedback about their transit service. Table 1 shows each event with its corresponding geography and transit agencies.

Table 1: Target Geographies for Virtual Interactive Outreach Events

Date of Event	Counties	Transit Agencies
August 3, 2021	Chambers, Harris	METRO, Harris County Transit
August 4, 2021	Fort Bend	Fort Bend County Transit
August 5, 2021	Austin, Colorado, Waller, Wharton	Colorado Valley Transit
August 10, 2021	Brazoria, Galveston, Matagorda	Island Transit, Gulf Coast Transit District, R-Transit
August 11, 2021	Liberty, Montgomery, Walker	Brazos Transit District, The Woodlands Township, Conroe Connection

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, each event was held virtually via Zoom. Attendees were required to register to receive a link to the event, with online registration accessed via a link on the project engagement website. Spanish language and American Sign Language translation/interpretation services were offered at every event, with Mandarin Chinese and Vietnamese translation services also made available at events focused on areas with substantial Chinese and Vietnamese populations. Table 2 shows the number of attendees for each event: note that the number of attendees includes transit agency representatives.

Table 2: Attendance at Virtual Interactive Outreach Events

Date of Event	Counties	Number of Attendees
August 3, 2021	Chambers, Harris	16
August 4, 2021	Fort Bend	11
August 5, 2021	Austin, Colorado, Waller, Wharton	1
August 10, 2021	Brazoria, Galveston, Matagorda	16
August 11, 2021	Liberty, Montgomery, Walker	12

Each event included a presentation by H-GAC staff, explaining the Regionally Coordinated Transportation Plan, describing its key elements, and helping attendees understand the value of their feedback. To keep attendees engaged from the beginning, each presentation offered them the opportunity to share the first word or phrase that came to mind when asked about public transportation in the region. At each event these reflected the mixture of positive, negative, and neutral feelings participants held. After the presentation, attendees were offered the opportunity to ask questions or provide comments. Following this, the virtual interactive activity began, with participants split into smaller breakout groups, when necessary, to ensure that every attendee had a chance to participate.

In the virtual interactive activity, participants were presented with an origin and a destination, each of which were located in the focus geography for that event, along with a day of week and time of day. Origins and destinations were pre-selected, to ensure that a transit resource serving the general public could provide a trip between the two points at the given day and time. Chosen origins and destinations included major shopping locations, medical facilities, apartment complexes, and leisure destinations. It reflected the diversity of purposes for which people use public transportation. Where feasible, trips chosen included one transfer, to allow this activity

to illuminate the extent to which a need to transfer would complicate the process of planning and carrying out a trip.

Participants were asked to work together to plan a transit trip between the two points. They were asked to name the provider and route(s) that would be used for this trip, the total fare and fare payment method, and the total travel time the trip would require. While participants went through this process, the moderator provided guidance where necessary, and observed participants' actions to gauge which parts of the process were easy for the participants, and which were more difficult. At some events, transit agency representatives also supported participants in completing the activity.

Once participants had figured out how to navigate the trip on public transit, the moderator led a discussion, asking participants to answer the following questions:

- What did you find most difficult in the process of planning this trip?
- What did you find easiest in the process of planning this trip?
- Would you have experienced anything different in planning the trip for yourself?
- Do the fares associated with the trip seem reasonable to you?
- Are there any issues you might experience trying to pay that fare?
- Would you use transit for this trip if you had a choice? Why or why not?
- What do you think would make the trip easier to plan and execute on transit?

These questions helped participants think critically about the exercise they had just completed, and also helped the moderator better understand the transportation gaps and barriers participants faced as they planned this transit trip.

Because a different origin and destination was used for this activity at each event, each event had a unique slide deck. A sample slide deck can be found in Appendix 3A.

Survey

An online survey, posted on the project engagement website, offered an additional opportunity for public feedback. The survey was designed by H-GAC staff, and included questions about transportation needs, transportation barriers, and survey takers' demographics. The survey was open to the public from July 27 to September 7, 2021. The survey was published in four languages: English, Spanish, Vietnamese, and

Mandarin Chinese. 172 individuals completed the survey, including 155 English-language responses, four Spanish-language responses, and 14 Mandarin-language responses. A copy of the (English-language) survey instrument can be found in Appendix 3B.

Mapping Activity

In addition to the survey, a mapping activity also provided an opportunity for members of the public to provide location-specific feedback about barriers to transportation use. This activity, hosted on the project engagement website, provided participants an opportunity to drop pins on a map of the region to identify locations they would like to be able to access using public transit, but currently cannot. They were then provided the opportunity to explain why that location was inaccessible to them on transit. Individuals were also asked to provide their home zip code, to provide a sense of where the origin of the trip to the locations they pinned would be. Individuals could place as many pins as they wanted. This activity was open to the public from July 27 to September 7, 2021. 20 participants placed a combined total of 34 pins on the map.

Promotion

These opportunities for public participation were promoted in a variety of ways. Members of the RCTP Steering Workgroup played a key role in spreading the word about outreach: they were given flyers and social media graphics and asked to distribute them through their email lists and social media platforms. These flyers and social media graphics were also distributed to a wide variety of H-GAC partners regionwide, who helped recruit both survey takers and virtual meeting participants. These graphics were distributed in English, Spanish, Mandarin Chinese, and Vietnamese. English-language versions of the flyer and social media graphic are shown in Appendix 3C.

H-GAC staff also used the organization's social media channels for promotion and posted to community pages on Facebook and NextDoor. H-GAC used four social media platforms to promote the event: Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Twitter. Across all four platforms, these posts reached a total of 8,940 users, generating a total of 199 clicks. Additionally, these posts generated reactions (e.g. Facebook likes or Twitter

favorites), comments, and shares/retweets, which broadened their reach. Across all platforms, these posts received 98 reactions, 6 comments, and 37 shares/retweets.

Additionally, two paid social media advertising campaigns were used to reach people who may not be well-connected with community organizations. The first campaign, timed to the launch of the engagement site at the end of July, spent $400 across three platforms: Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn. Across all three platforms, the ads were seen a total of 36,730 times, generating 294 clicks. The second campaign, launched in late August to drive additional survey responses, spent $300 across Facebook and Instagram. This campaign, unlike the first campaign, included ads in Spanish and Mandarin Chinese as well as English. Across both platforms, these ads were seen a total of 34,724 times, generating 361 clicks.

H-GAC's communications team worked with local media to generate earned media, leading to the publication of an article in the Fort Bend Star about the RCTP update and opportunities for public input.

Findings

Virtual Events

This section summarizes the findings of the virtual events. Each virtual event is discussed in chronological order below. The origin and destination used for each activity is listed above the discussion of the activity, along with the day of week and time of day provided for the exercise

Harris and Chambers County event, August 3rd, 2021

When asked about the first word or phrase that comes to mind about transportation, responses included "limited but quickly improving", "limited range", "better connectivity", and "difficulty on my work commute". These comments show that attendees want to use transportation, but find that it does not serve all of the locations where they would like to use it. These comments are evidence of a spatial gap: transportation services do not take people to all the places they would like to go. This event saw a large enough attendance that it was broken into two breakout groups, each working on a different transit system. These are described separately below:

As participants started thinking about planning their trip on METRO, one participant suggested using the trip planner on the agency's website to plan the trip. They expressed familiarity with the system, providing with some accuracy both the cost of the trip and approximate travel time. Other participants were then asked by the moderator if they had ridden METRO before: the majority had, but not all. These participants also suggested that they would use METRO's trip planning app or Google Maps.

When asked whether or not they would take transit, and why, one participant said that they would, due to the cost and difficulty of parking at the destination. Another also suggested that they would, but went on to point out that many of their clients (they had previously identified themselves as a social service worker helping individuals with disabilities) live in places where there is no transit availability, so they would not be able to use the bus.

Asked about the most difficult part of planning the trip, one participant noted that transfers are stressful, because it is often difficult to figure out where the second bus stops in relation to where the first bus stops, and that transfers between lines are often time-consuming. Another participant, when asked about the easiest part of planning the trip, pointed to the trip planner app's ease of use, and a third participant expressed agreement. All participants agreed that the fares associated with the trip seemed reasonable. Participants had few suggestions for ways to make the trip easier, but one participant did point out that transfers may make the trip more difficult than it seems in the trip planner app. They suggested that the agency's mobile ticketing app incorporate trip planning and navigation features.

While participants experienced few barriers to planning and executing a trip on transit, they did note opportunities for improving transit access: they pointed to the areas of the

region with no service at all, and also emphasized potential navigation pitfalls, particularly around transfers.

When asked to plan the provided trip on Harris County transit, one participant was immediately able to describe the exact routes one would use, as well as the transfer point between the two and the fare required. They were able to do so because, as a regular rider of the system, they have extensive knowledge of the services it provides. Participants used the Harris County Transit website to confirm the route and determine the total travel time, though they found they needed to click around the site more than they would have liked to find all the relevant information.

The moderator then launched into a discussion about this trip. When asked if they would consider using transit for this trip, the participant who had been able to navigate the trip without the help of a map or schedule said that they would, and in fact make similar trips on Harris County Transit regularly. They expressed happiness with the quality of the service. They also spoke about their personal effort to inform more people in their community about the existence of the service, including conversations with friends and neighbors as well as promoting it to the passengers they serve while working as a rideshare driver.

This participant suggested that the biggest barrier preventing others from using the service is that they simply aren't aware it exists. Participants, transit agency representatives, and H-GAC staff then began a conversation about ways to better spread the word about the services that Harris County Transit provides. These suggestions included:

- Advertise at local high school football games

- Use trusted community members to spread information:
  - Work with pastors and other religious leaders
  - Start a transit agency ambassador program
- Direct phone calls to community members
- T-Shirts, bumper stickers, and other promotional giveaways

This exercise generated a thoughtful discussion of a key information gap: many potential riders in the service area are unaware that this bus service exists. Participants also found the agency's website somewhat difficult to navigate, but were much more concerned about raising awareness in their community about the existence of Harris County Transit. In the discussion, participants provided creative suggestions to address this challenge.

Fort Bend County event, August 4th, 2021
Origin: Rosenberg Railroad Museum, 1921 Avenue F, Rosenberg, TX 77471
Destination: First Colony Mall, 16535 Southwest Freeway, Sugar Land, TX 77479
Day and Time: 12:00 PM, Thursday

When asked about the first word or phrase that comes to mind about transportation, attendees provided no responses.

As participants started thinking about planning their trip on transit in Fort Bend County, none expressed any awareness of existing transit options, or any ideas about how to start looking for transit options. The moderator jump-started the process by using an internet search to find the Fort Bend County transit website, with a participant then suggested looking for a map or a list of routes. The moderator then navigated to the services page and showed that the only fixed-route services are commuter services. Next, the moderator navigated to the demand-response services page, demonstrating that this would be the option available to a person trying to get around within Fort Bend County on public transit. The moderator went on to navigate around the County transit website to show fare information.

To close out the activity, the moderator then kicked off a discussion about this trip. When participants were asked if they would use public transit for this trip, one said yes, citing the low fare. Another agreed with this assessment. One participant noted that they may not have been able to figure out the process of planning the trip quickly. Another suggested that people trying to plan the trip were more likely to use Google Maps or a similar mapping app rather than visit the transit agency's web site. The moderator then navigated to Google Maps to test this and discovered that the information available on the application was inaccurate, as it showed the availability of a fixed-route transit trip that does not exist. Participants also noted the long travel time and the high number of transfers involved in that trip, with one saying "I would Uber after seeing this trip." One participant asked about the availability of fare and route information on Google Maps.

When asked about the easiest and most difficult parts of planning the trip, one participant noted that paying the fare seemed easy, but that understanding the demand-response system would be intimidating, and that it would be difficult to find relevant information about the transit trip online. Another participant asked about the possibility of finding a phone number to call to ask for information. The moderator located a phone number on the agency website after a bit of digging. A participant noted that this might make it easier for a senior to plan the trip, but that they would have a lot of questions about eligibility and ease of use that would be difficult to answer online. Participants noted that it was easier to find information about the agency's commuter services than their demand response services and suggested that having updated information in google maps would be helpful.

The moderator asked participants if they had been familiar with transit services in Fort Bend County prior to the meeting. Three participants expressed awareness of the system, from having seen it pick up or drop off riders at various locations, but all of them said they had never used the service before. When asked what could be done to make them more likely to try the service, one participant said they had never had a need to use the service, and two others said they did not live in the demand-response service area. One person asked if trips on the service could have one end outside the county,

and the moderator replied by informing them that demand-response trips had to both start and end in Fort Bend County.

This exercise demonstrated information gaps about Fort Bend County, particularly as far as navigating on transit is concerned. Participants were already aware of the existence of the service, but did not know how to use it, and were likely to find inaccurate information about it if they had tried to figure out how to use the service on their own. While participants generally expressed positive feelings about the existence of the service, especially its low price and door-to-door service, they also expressed little interest in trying it, with all participants suggesting that it would not meet their needs. This points to a spatial gap in transit availability in Fort Bend County: existing service does not serve origins and destinations that participants want to travel to.

Austin, Colorado, Waller, and Wharton Counties Event: August 5th, 2021
Origin: H-E-B, 306 North Mechanics Street, El Campo, TX 77437
Destination: Oakbend Medical Center, 10141 US-59 North, Wharton, TX 77488
Day and Time: 9:00 AM, Thursday

When asked about the first word or phrase that comes to mind about transportation, attendees provided responses including, "difficult to navigate" and "unsure of where pickup and drop-off locations are". These responses suggest that prior to attending the event, participants had tried to use public transit in the area and had struggled to do so, finding basic information about services difficult to find.

When asked where they would start with planning a transit trip in the area, one participant suggested trying Google Maps. The moderator demonstrated that this app found no transit trips between the designated start and end locations. After seeing this, another participant suggested visiting the transit agency's website. The moderator navigated to the website and demonstrated how to find the map and timetable for the route that would connect the origin and destination. A transit agency representative at the event also noted that people could obtain route and schedule information by dialing 211. A participant then suggested finding fare information on the website. This was found on the website and confirmed by a transit agency representative at the event. The

moderator then demonstrated the amount of time the trip would take, including wait time, at about two hours.

Participants were then asked to indicate the parts of the process of planning the trip they found easiest and most difficult. One participant noted that the route map was difficult to read and that it was not easy to figure out where the bus stops were, particularly for individuals accessing the website on a phone. One participant noted that the fare seemed reasonable and easy to pay while another noted that schedule information was clear on the website. When asked about how they might have done things differently were they planning the trip for themselves, a transit agency representative suggested that rather than trying to plan their trip online, they could have called the agency directly, while a participant suggested that planning it online made the most sense to them.

Participants agreed that fares for the trip were reasonable, and did not anticipate any issues in trying to pay the fare. One H-GAC staff member asked the agency representatives in attendance to discuss any issues that they are aware of as far as navigation and trip planning are concerned. An agency representative replied by noting that they do not turn any rider away for inability to pay the fare.

When asked if they would use public transit for this trip, one participant said no, on account of the long wait time for a bus. A transit agency representative noted that the actual time on transit was only about 15 minutes. This led the moderator to clarify how the bus operates for the given route, leading to the understanding that a transfer would be required for this trip. Upon this clarification, the member of the public changed their answer to suggest that they would use transit for the trip. This led a participant to note that the relevant timetable actually shows the schedule for two different routes, and that clarifying this might make the trip easier to plan and carry out. A transit agency representative noted that they were in the process of updating route information. A participant asked if fares could be paid by cash or only by fare card, and the agency representative explained that both cash and fare cards were accepted on buses.

One participant noted that the lack of information on Google Maps would make the trip difficult to plan for them, and that the lack of availability of information there would likely

lead them to not choose transit for this trip. The moderator then asked the transit agency representatives on the call about whether or not they found the lack of information about their services on Google Maps posed a problem for their agency. The agency representative responded that people generally find out about their services by word of mouth or by seeing their buses travel through the community, and that people often reach out to them by phone to get service and fare information. The representative continued by noting that they are a rural agency, and most of their customers are seniors, who often don't feel comfortable finding information about transit online.

This exercise demonstrated that web-based information gaps exist for service in this area: in particular, the timetable was confusing for the moderator and some participants. However, this may have limited impact on the agency's riders, as they seem to generally use the phone as a source of information more often than the internet. That said, information about stop locations and routes were identified as a problem, as was the fact that one of the services needed to take this trip only operates three times per day.

Brazoria, Galveston, and Matagorda Counties Event: August 10th, 2021
Origin: Brazos Crossing Apartments, 4501 Brazosport Boulevard North, Richwood, TX 77531
Destination: Walmart Supercenter, 121 Highway 332 West, Lake Jackson, TX 77566
Day and Time: 12:00 PM, Thursday

When asked about the first word or phrase that comes to mind about transportation, attendees provided responses including, "can be complicated" and "not knowing routes". These responses suggest that attendees had previously attempted to use public transit in the area and found it a struggle due to the complexity of the services.

When asked how to plan the provided trip on transit, the first suggestion from a participant was to look at the city website to try to find information. When the moderator did so, they found a broken link. At this point, a transit agency representative suggested going directly to the transit agency website instead. The moderator did so and was able to find the relevant map and timetables in PDF form. Using these, the moderator was

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able to find the destination on the relevant trip. A participant noted that the map and schedules used small print that was difficult to read. A transit agency representative stepped in to help explain which routes the traveler would need to use and where the transfer would take place. The moderator then found fare information on this PDF but struggled to interpret the timetable for the relevant routes. A transit agency representative described the timetables and time of travel.

When asked what they found easiest in planning the trip, one participant noted that they couldn't have done it without the transit agency representative guiding them through the process, and that they would give up if they had to plan the trip themselves. They suggested an online trip planner app would make the process easier. A transit agency representative noted that they were currently testing a trip planning application and plan to have it available to the public in the near future. The participant then suggested that many people would not even know where to begin in terms of finding the transit agency's website in the first place. Another participant noted that there are local community organizations that help their clients navigate transportation services, but that not everyone is aware of them or has access to them, so a lot of people who could benefit from transit services may not be able to take advantage of them.

When asked what they would do if planning this trip by themselves, one member of the public suggested they would give up and ask a relative for a ride. Another noted that they would use Google Maps, which does allow people to navigate transit trips in the area. A third suggested that there was a need for training for key populations to be able to use transit, because many people still do not or cannot use web or mobile applications. Another asked how difficult it would be to design an app targeted specifically at those populations. A member of the public described the difficulty of getting transportation around the region for people who live in more remote areas, noting that the time it takes them to access services in more densely populated areas can often be several hours.

Asked if they would use transit for this trip, one said "in certain situations I would", while another said "if I have no other options I would". A transit agency representative reminded attendees that there was also an ADA paratransit option available for this trip,

as well as a demand-response service available for those who live further from an existing fixed-route. Another participant said that they would not, due to the trip time and the difficulty planning the trip.

A participant asked the transit agency representative to clarify the trip time and the frequency of the relevant routes. The representative noted that the routes operate every half-hour. The participant responded by noting that this may pose a problem for people who will have to wait outdoors for their bus or for their transfer, especially in high summer heat. The participant also noted that local officials needed to do a better job of communicating with potential users about the transportation options available to them.

This discussion indicates several gaps in transportation services in the region: low-frequency services make transportation use more difficult, especially when the weather is bad. Additionally, there are substantial information gaps noted here: people found it difficult to learn about their transit options and to understand how to take a trip on transit. There are improvements underway to make transit in this area easier to navigate, but lack of knowledge of available services continues to be a barrier to transit use.

Liberty, Montgomery, and Walker Counties Event: August 11th, 2021

Origin: Conroe Regional Medical Center, 504 Medical Center Boulevard, Conroe, TX 77304

Destination: Walmart Supercenter, 1407 North Loop 336 West, Conroe, TX 77304

Day and Time: 12:00 PM, Thursday

When asked about the first word or phrase that comes to mind about transportation, attendees provided responses including, "moving people", "bus", "accessibility", "wheelchair accessibility", "resources", "growing but not as robust on the east side", and "elderly". These indicate that participants see transit as having an important role in moving seniors and people with disabilities, and perhaps others as well, around the region.

Asked how they would start the process of navigating the trip, a participant suggested looking at schedule pamphlets. The moderator responded by asking where someone might go to find a pamphlet if they didn't happen to have one on them. Another participant recommended that there be designated places with a recognizable symbol where people could get information about transit services or arrange a pick-up. A participant noted that there is service between the two desired locations, and that one could call the city to request schedule and fare information. A transit agency representative described the routes needed to take the presented trip, and also noted that route and fare information is available through Google Maps. A participant suggested that they would use Google Maps to get transit information.

When asked what they thought would be easiest or most difficult in planning the trip, one member of the public noted that they would probably find it difficult if they weren't savvy about technology or had mobility difficulties. Another suggested that it would be an overwhelming experience for a person unfamiliar with using transit, or for people who can't afford the fare. A transit agency representative noted that fares can be paid by cash, and that ticket books currently valued at $50 would soon be reduced in price to $20, and there is also a near-term future plan to introduce $35 monthly passes for bus users. They also noted that the system currently has free transfers, so any trip anywhere in the system costs just $1.00.

The moderator then asked participants about their thoughts about reducing the intimidation factor in planning and taking a transit trip. One participant suggested fare-free days and transit ambassadors to help people navigate the system. A transit agency representative discussed their experience helping people navigate on transit and discussed the possibility of hiring staff to serve as ambassadors as the system grows. A participant suggested building relationships with local non-profits that serve vulnerable populations and use them as resources to help people learn more about the system and feel more comfortable using it. A participant asked about connecting job counselors with transit information so they could pass that information on to their clients. An H-GAC staff member noted that a pilot project had been done on this topic, but that job counselors

found it overwhelming to provide transportation information when they are not transportation experts.

Participants were then asked to provide opinions on the fare. One suggested that fares seem reasonable, and that the local hospital and other major organizations could buy vouchers for patients to help them get around. Another suggested that cash-only payments might pose an issue for some.

Asked if they would take transit for this trip, multiple participants said they would. One pointed to the proximity of a good pizza place to one end of the trip. Another suggested that they would do so to encourage others to take transit, but that the trip is long. Another indicated that frequency would be an issue, with some routes only operating once every two hours. A participant asked the transit agency representative about the capacity of buses, which the representative answered.

A participant asked about the funding streams available to expand transit availability in the region. An H-GAC staff member discussed some of the upcoming funding opportunities coming up at the federal and state levels but suggested that there was a need for additional local funding. This participant suggested that local leaders were unwilling to fund transportation at the necessary level, and that there needs to be additional advocacy for transit to promote funding.

These responses indicate that while availability of information about transit is strong in this area, it may still not be enough for those who are unused to using transit or those with limited access to technology. Additional barriers to transit use mentioned include cash-only fares and infrequent service.

Survey

This section summarizes results of the public survey.

Frequency of Use

Survey takers were asked two questions relating to the frequency with which they use transportation services. The first asked about current use of all transportation services, specifying the inclusion of taxi and rideshare services and human service transportation providers as well as public transit and associated paratransit services. The second

asked about lifetime use of public transit. The results of these questions are shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2, respectively. Most respondents currently use transportation services only infrequently, or not at all: 46% report never using transportation services in their community, and a further 30% report using those services five times a month or less. Furthermore, a majority of respondents (55%) report having never used public transit in their community. Survey takers were asked to list the transportation services they use: the most common answers provided include METRO, Uber, and Lyft.

Figure 1: Current Frequency of Use of All Transportation Services

- Never
- Rarely (1-5 trips per month)
- Sometimes (6-10 trips per month)
- Often (more than 10 trips per month)
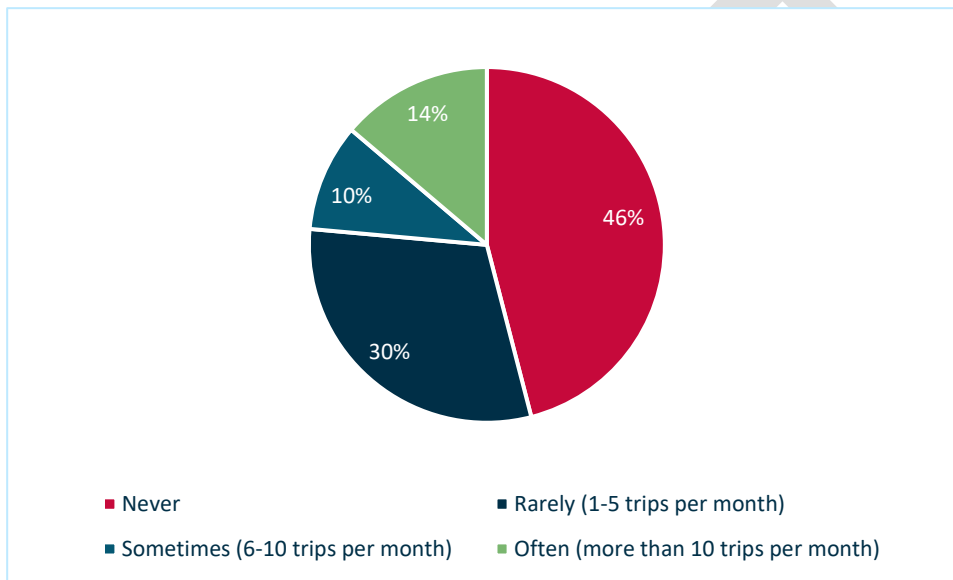
Figure 2: Lifetime Use of Public Transportation Services

- Yes
- No
- Not Sure
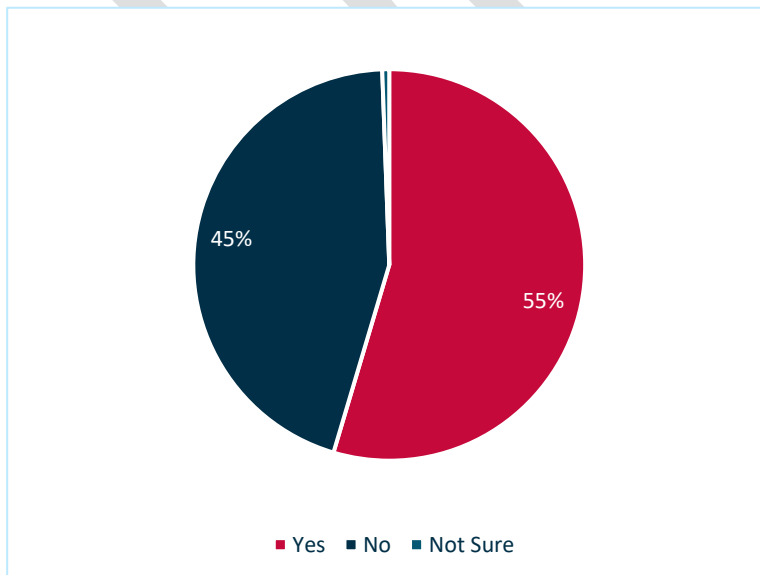
Knowledge of Service Availability and Information Sources

Respondents were asked two questions relating to their knowledge about transportation services, and the sources of information they use to learn about their transportation options. The first asked survey takers if they know how to access transportation services in their community, while the second asked participants about where they look for information about transportation. (Note that both questions permitted participants to select all the options that applied, meaning that there are more responses than total survey takers.) Responses to these questions are shown in Figure 3 and Figure 4, respectively.

Survey takers were most likely to be aware of services operating from park and ride facilities, while the second most-common response was that respondents are unaware of any transportation service in their community. Respondents were least likely to be aware of door-to-door services. Notably, most respondents who reported being aware of transportation options also reported understanding how to use those options: only 32 survey takers reported knowing about transportation services but not having the knowledge necessary to use them. Among respondents who reported looking for information about transportation options, the most common sources of information include local government and transit agency websites, mobile apps provided by local governments or transit agencies, and H-GAC's Mobility Links one-click resource. Providers of public services, such as medical facilities, educational institutions, libraries, and community centers, are used as sources of transportation information by only a small number of respondents.
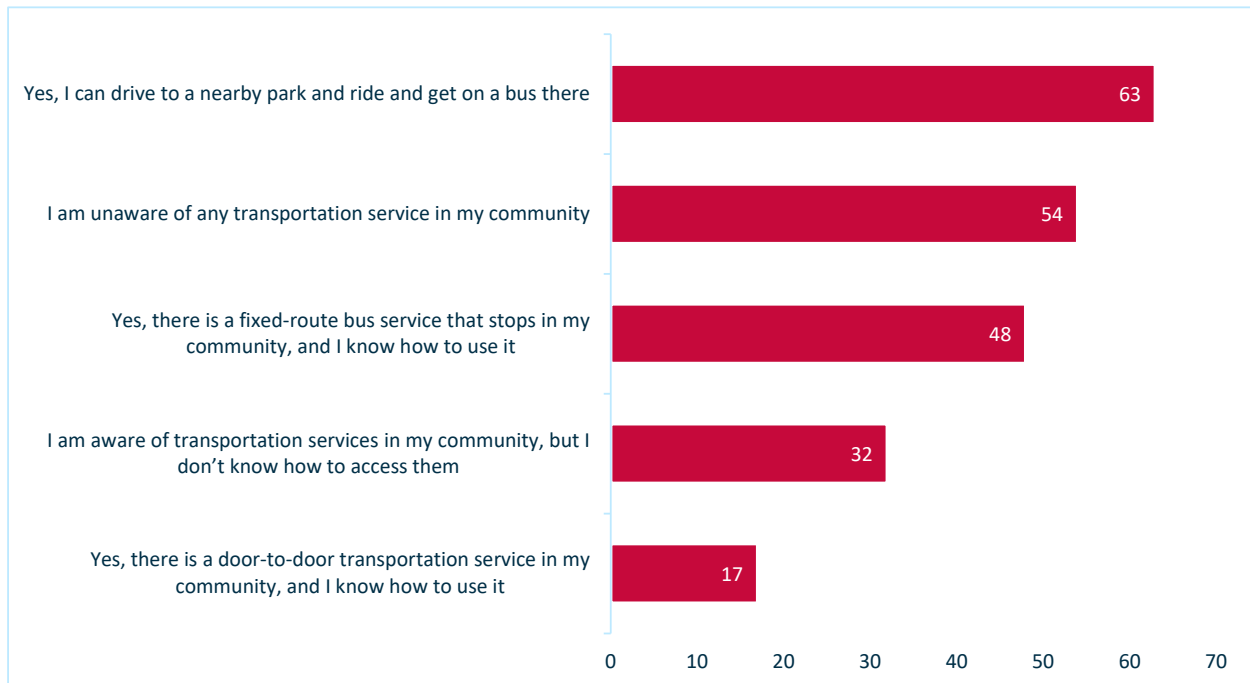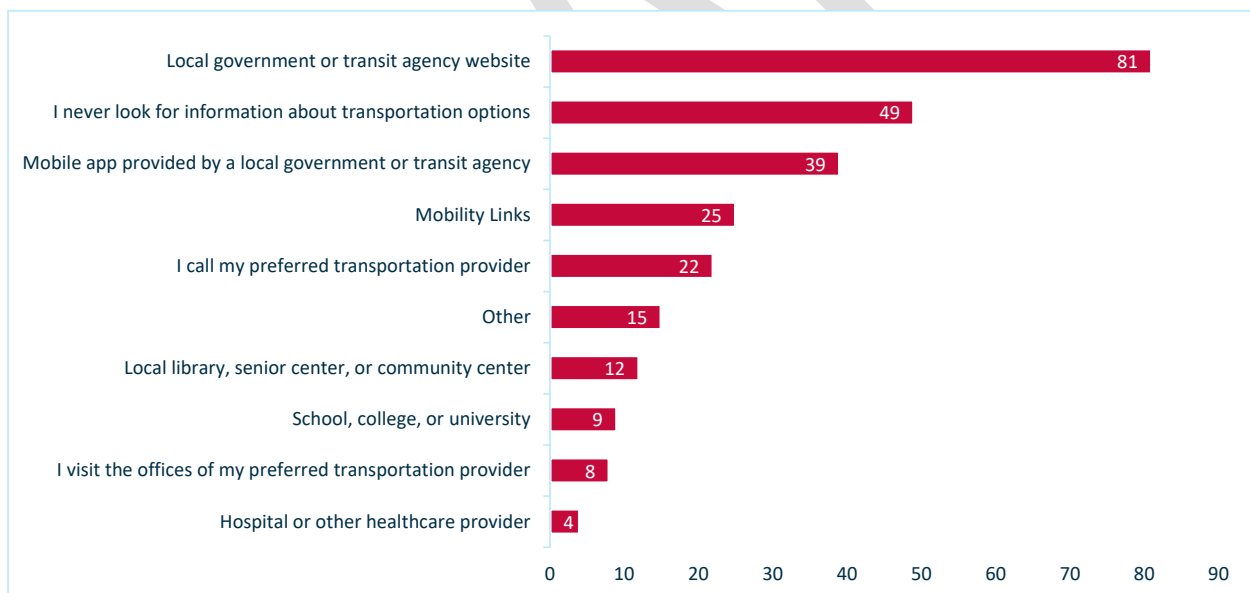
Figure 3: Knowledge of Local Transportation Options

Category	Value
Yes, I can drive to a nearby park and ride and get on a bus there	63
I am unaware of any transportation service in my community	54
Yes, there is a fixed-route bus service that stops in my community, and I know how to use it	48
I am aware of transportation services in my community, but I don't know how to access them	32
Yes, there is a door-to-door transportation service in my community, and I know how to use it	17

Figure 4: Sources of Information About Transportation Options

Category	Value
Local government or transit agency website	81
I never look for information about transportation options	49
Mobile app provided by a local government or transit agency	39
Mobility Links	25
I call my preferred transportation provider	22
Other	15
Local library, senior center, or community center	12
School, college, or university	9
I visit the offices of my preferred transportation provider	8
Hospital or other healthcare provider	4

Getting Around Without a Car

Respondents were asked to indicate the options they use to get around in situations where they are unable to drive or do not have access to a car. Results of this question are shown in Figure 5. Respondents generally indicated that when unable to drive themselves, they rely on other car-based solutions, including getting a ride from a family

member or friend, or using a taxi or rideshare service. Survey takers were far less likely to report using public transportation or active modes such as walking or cycling. Notably, only 29 respondents reported having no other options and being unable to get anywhere when they travel.

*Figure 5: Available Alternatives to Personal Automobile Travel*
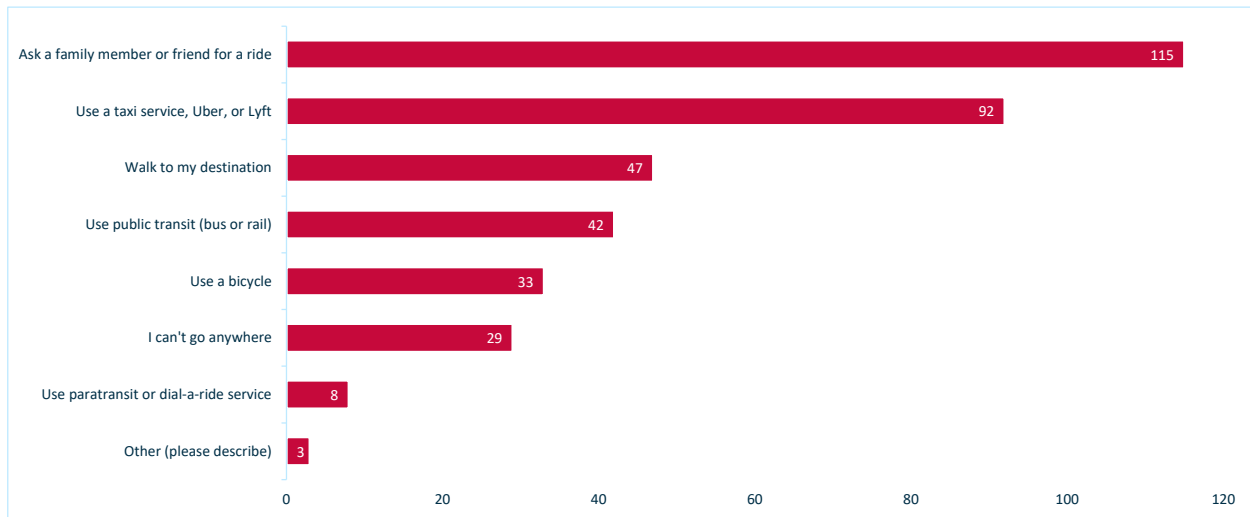
Transit Trip Purpose

Respondents were asked to indicate the trip purposes for which they use public transportation. Figure 6 shows their responses. While a plurality of survey takers reported never using public transportation, those who do use these services use them for a variety of different reasons. The most commonly reported public transportation trip purpose is leisure and entertainment, followed closely by commute trips.

Figure 6: Public Transportation Trip Purposes
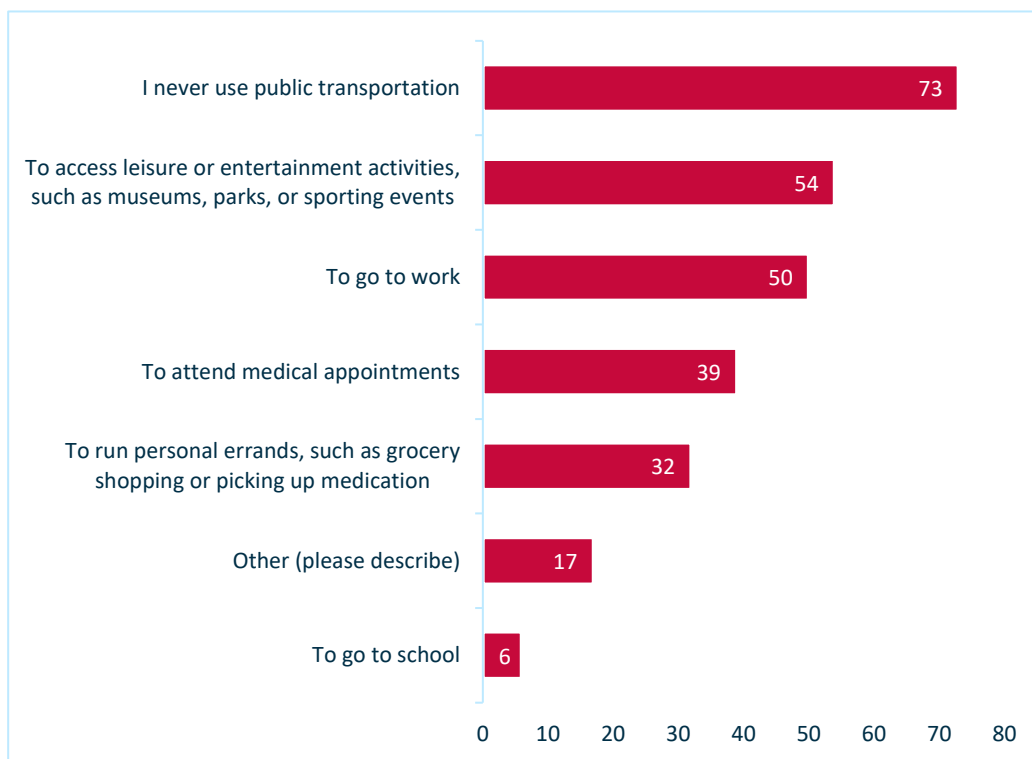
Those who reported never using public transportation were asked to select the reasons motivating this choice. As shown in Figure 7, the most frequently cited reason for not using public transportation is that it simply isn't an option: 35 respondents reported that there is no public transit in their community, while 28 indicated that public transit does not serve either their origin or their desired destination. Other commonly cited barriers to using public transportation are a lack of knowledge about transportation options (17 respondents) as well as concerns about timeliness: 15 respondents report that transit is not a timely option for completing their trip, while the same number report that public transportation options available to them are not reliably on-time.

Figure 7: Reasons for Never Using Public Transportation
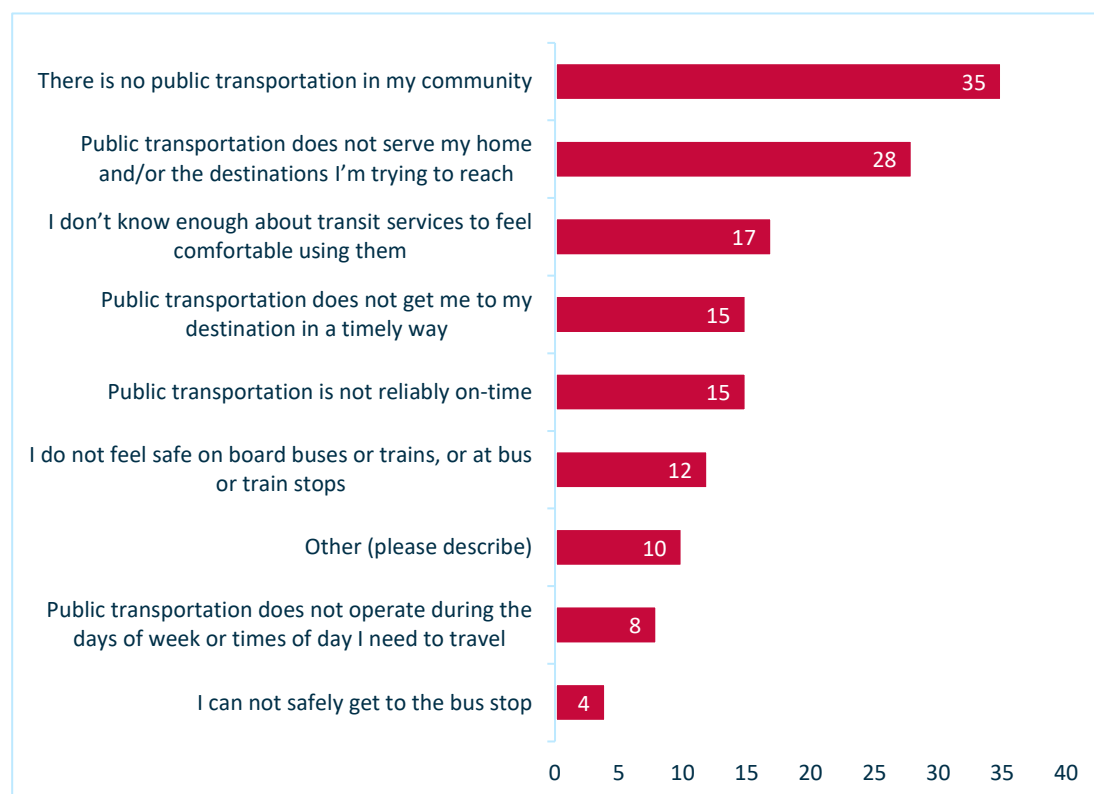
Positive and Negative Opinions of Existing Transit Services

Survey takers were asked to indicate what they like best about public transit in their community, as well as their biggest concerns about public transportation in their area. For each question, respondents could choose up to three options: the results are shown in Figure 8 and Figure 9, respectively. Many survey takers struggled to find positive things to say about public transit in their communities: By far the most common response to the positive opinion question is "None of the Above". Among those who did express positive opinions about public transit, the most common points of praise were for easy to purchase and affordable fares, as well as convenience to both origins and destinations. Negative opinions of public transportation were most likely to focus on a lack of service availability, as well as timeliness issues: The most common response, chosen by 66 respondents, was that their community lacks public transit entirely, while 54 indicated that buses don't operate close enough to their origin or desired destinations. 59 respondents reported that transit was not a sufficiently timely option for them, while 32 indicated that they could not rely on transit service to be on-time. Other

issues of note included bus or bus stop safety (28 responses) and cleanliness (14 responses), as well as difficulty navigating on transit: 21 individuals reported struggling to figure out where to board the bus, while 19 reported finding it hard to figure out which destinations they can reach on transit.

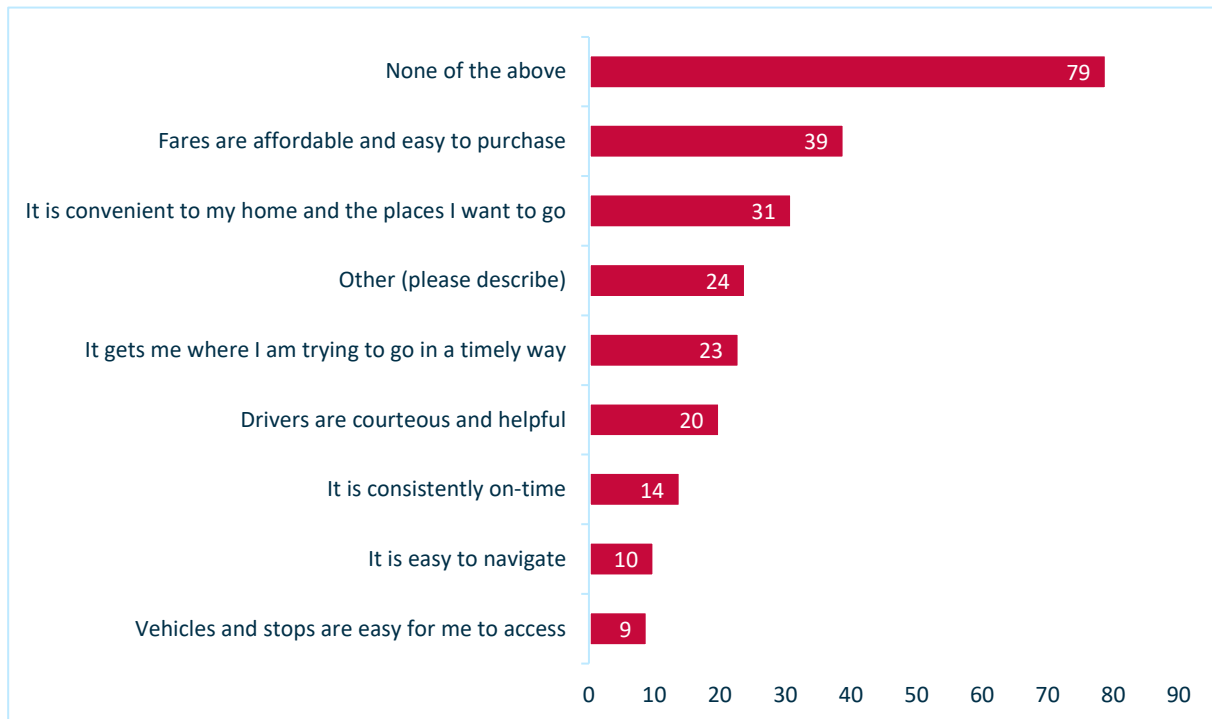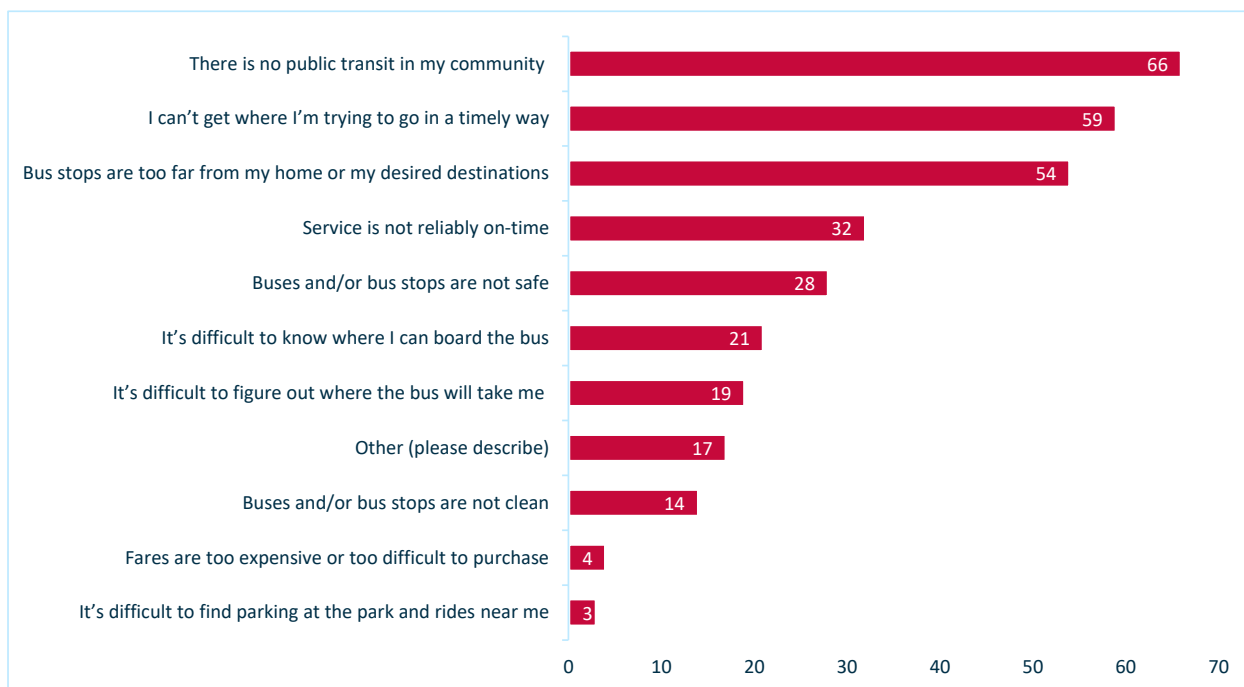*Figure 8: Positive Opinions of Transportation Options*

Category	Value
None of the above	79
Fares are affordable and easy to purchase	39
It is convenient to my home and the places I want to go	31
Other (please describe)	24
It gets me where I am trying to go in a timely way	23
Drivers are courteous and helpful	20
It is consistently on-time	14
It is easy to navigate	10
Vehicles and stops are easy for me to access	9

There is no public transit in my community	66
I can't get where I'm trying to go in a timely way	59
Bus stops are too far from my home or my desired destinations	54
Service is not reliably on-time	32
Buses and/or bus stops are not safe	28
It's difficult to know where I can board the bus	21
It's difficult to figure out where the bus will take me	19
Other (please describe)	17
Buses and/or bus stops are not clean	14
Fares are too expensive or too difficult to purchase	4
It's difficult to find parking at the park and rides near me	3

Likert Scales: Importance of Transit and Quality of Transit

Respondents were asked to respond to two statements about transit on a five-point scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". The two statements were, "Having accessible public transportation is important to me," and "There is high-quality public transportation in my community." As shown in Figure 10, most survey takers believe that having accessible public transportation is important: 93 respondents (54%) strongly agree with that statement, while a further 45 (26%) agreed. Only 18 respondents (11%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. However, opinions were more mixed on whether current service is high-quality: Only 30% of survey takers strongly agreed with this statement, while a further 25% agreed. 24% of respondents disagreed or disagreed strongly, while 21% were neutral on this question.

Figure 10: Likert Scale Rankings of Transportation-Related Statements
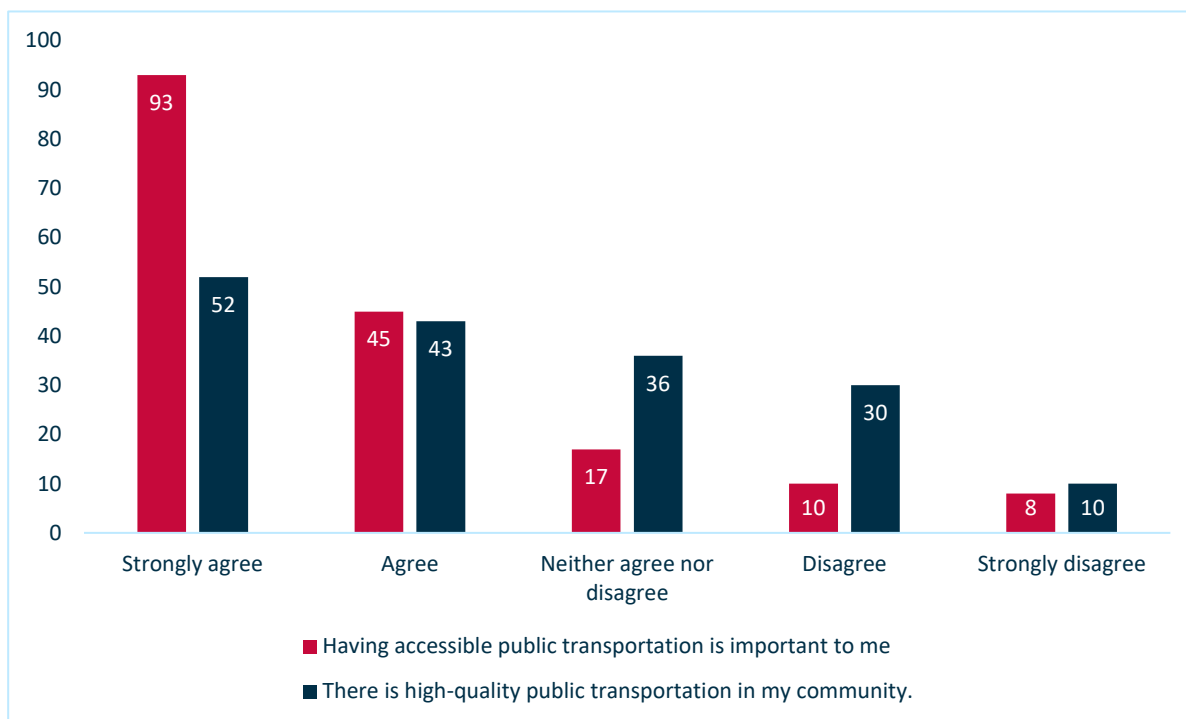
Preferred Improvements to Public Transportation

Respondents were asked what would make them more likely to use public transportation in the future and were allowed to select up to three from a long list of choices. By far the most common response, as shown in Figure 11, is a request for new routes serving their origin and/or preferred destinations: 102 respondents selected this option, while no other choice was selected by more than 44 survey takers. Other notable responses included more evening and late-night service (selected by 44), better on-time performance (37), a better understanding of available options (36), and feeling safer at bus stops or on board the bus (30).

Figure 11: Preferred Changes to Existing Transportation Options

Category	Value
New routes that serve my community and/or the places I want to go	102
More evening and/or weekend service	44
Better on-time performance	37
A better understanding of the transportation options available in my community	36
Feeling safer waiting at the stop or on board the bus	30
More frequent bus service in my community	27
Feeling safer traveling to and from the bus stop	26
Faster travel times to my desired destinations	23
If I didn't have to drive to a park and ride	20
Cleaner vehicles and/or stops	16
Reduced cost to ride	14
Other (please describe)	13
More parking availability at park and rides	10
More comfortable vehicles and/or stops	8
Friendlier, more courteous drivers	

Other Comments

Respondents were provided an opportunity to add any additional comments about transportation that they wished. Seventy-one respondents chose to provide comments. Thirty-three of those comments (46%) requested additional service: either service in an area where it currently does not exist, service earlier in the morning or later at night than current operations, or more frequent service. Seven comments (10%) expressed opposition to public transit service in the respondent's community. Oher comments addressed fears of crime at stops and on-board trains, preferences for rail service over bus service, paratransit service availability issues, or difficulties faced trying to navigate on public transit.

Survey Taker Demographics

Zip Code

Eighty-two different zip codes were reported as a home location by survey respondents, covering 45 unique cities and towns. Two respondents reported zip codes outside the 13-county region, both of which were locations in California. The largest number of

27

respondents from any one town was the 35 respondents who reported a zip code located in the city of Houston.

Age

The reported ages of survey respondents are shown in Figure 12. Apart from the 18-24 age group, which had only five respondents, responses were relatively even across all other adult age groups. The age group with the largest number of respondents, those age 65 and older, had 40 responses, and 39 people in the 55-64 age group responded as well.

Figure 12: Age of Survey Respondents
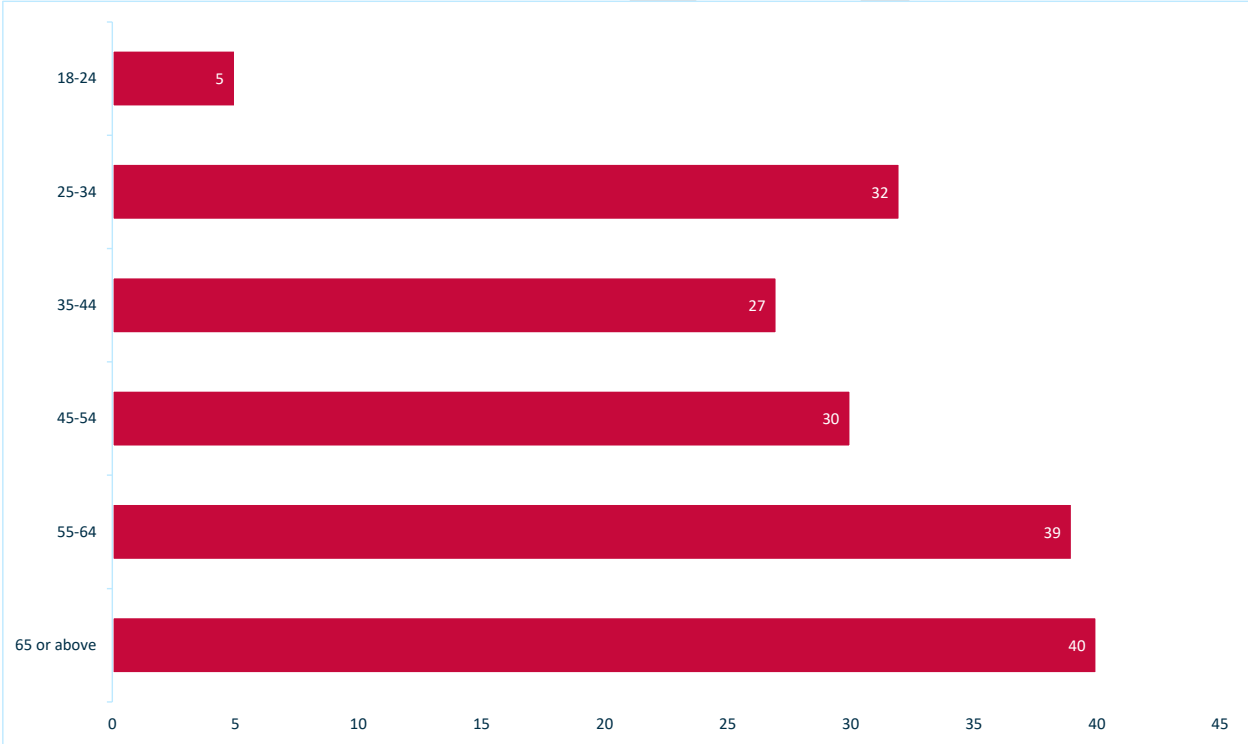
Race and Ethnicity

A majority of survey respondents (55%) identify as white, as shown in Figure 13. No other racial or ethnic group accounted for even 20% of survey respondents, with those identifying as Hispanic/Latino having the second-most responses, at 17%. (Respondents were allowed to select as many race/ethnicity options as they chose.)

Figure 13: Race and Ethnicity of Survey Respondents
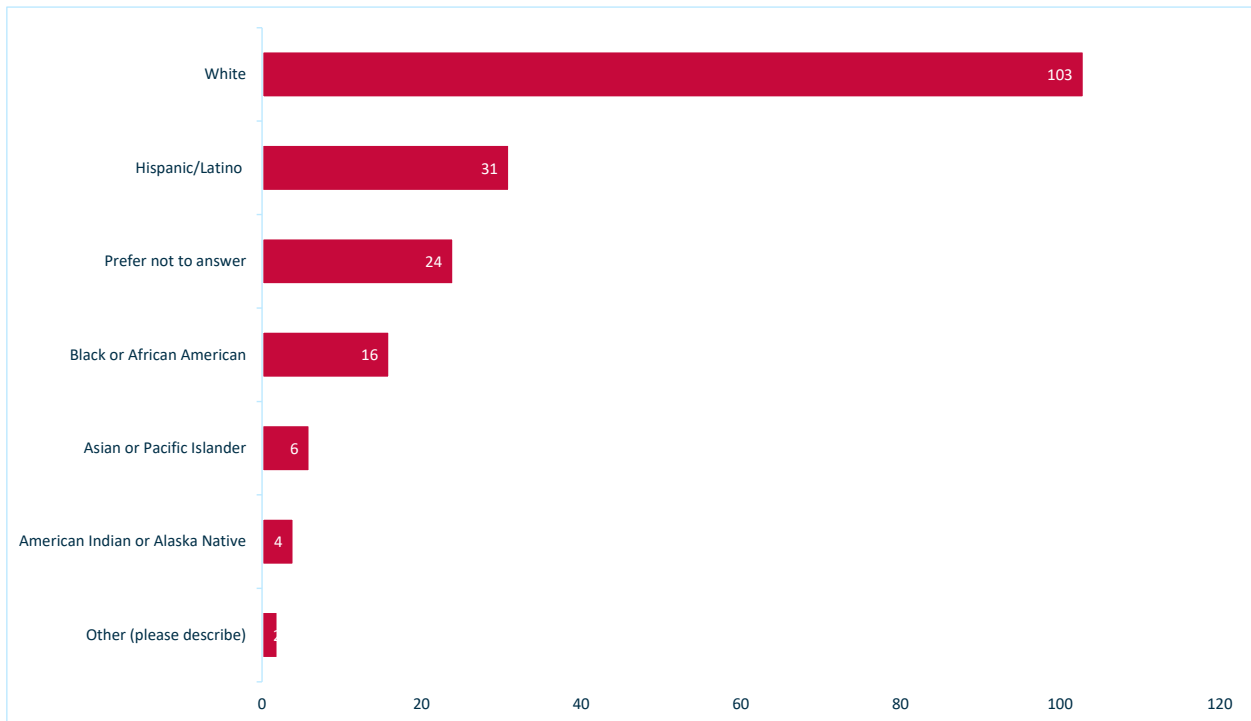
Auto Access

Survey takers were asked to indicate if they always, sometimes, or never, have access to a car. The majority (61%) reported always having access to a car, as shown in Figure 14, with 29% having access to a car sometimes, and 10% never having access to a car.
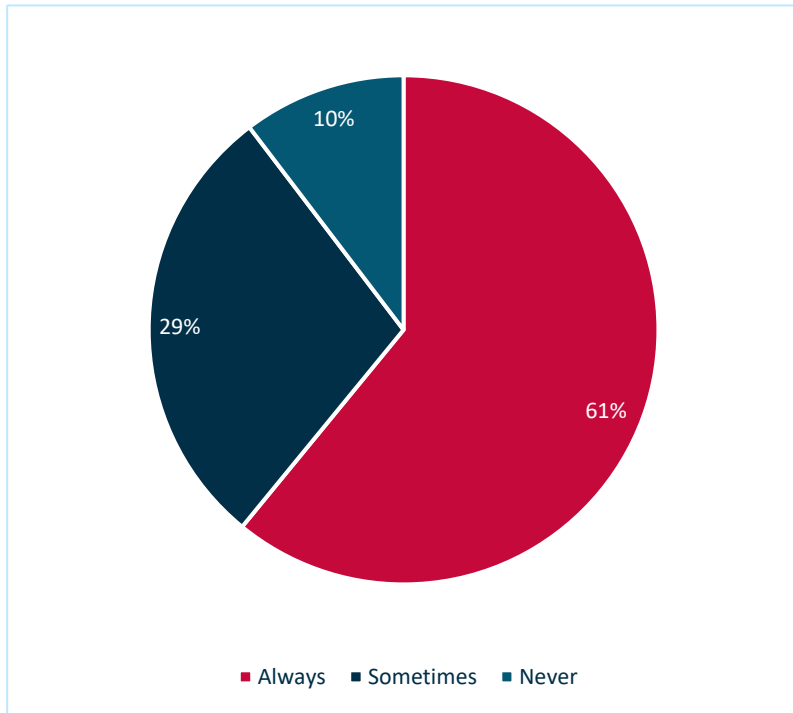
Veteran and Disability Status

Survey takers were asked to indicate whether or not they are a veteran, and whether or not they have a disability. Most respondents (81%) reported not having a disability, as shown in Figure 16. Similarly, the vast majority of respondents (88%) are not veterans, as shown in Figure 15.

Figure 16: Disability Status of Survey Respondents
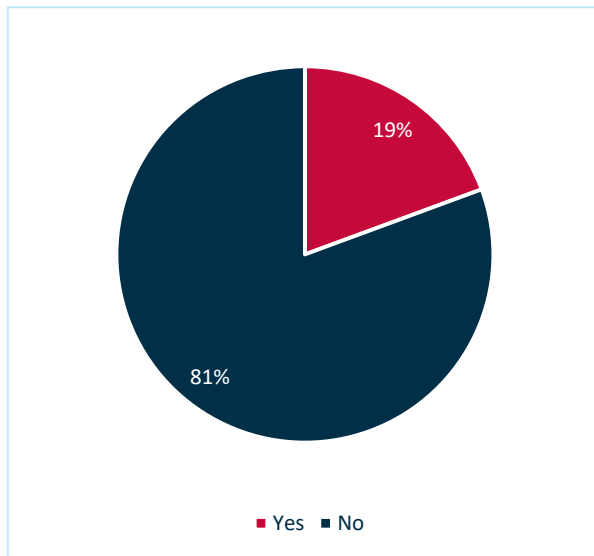
Figure 15: Veteran Status of Survey Respondents
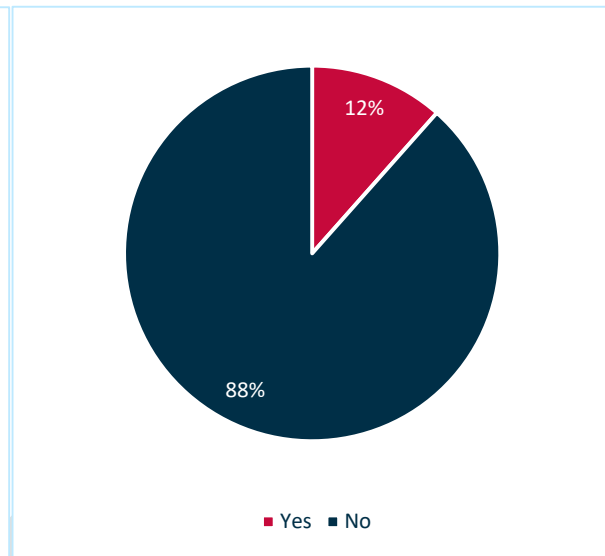
Income and Employment Status

Survey takers were asked to provide their monthly household income, as well as their current employment status. The results of these questions are shown in Figure 17 and Figure 18, respectively. A plurality of respondents (36%) reported a household income of at least $6,000 per month, or $72,000 per year. However, a slim majority of respondents make notably less than that: 52% of respondents reported a household income of less than $4,500 per month, or $54,000 per year. A majority of survey takers

Figure 17: Monthly Household Income of Survey Respondents

Figure 18: Employment Status of Survey Respondents
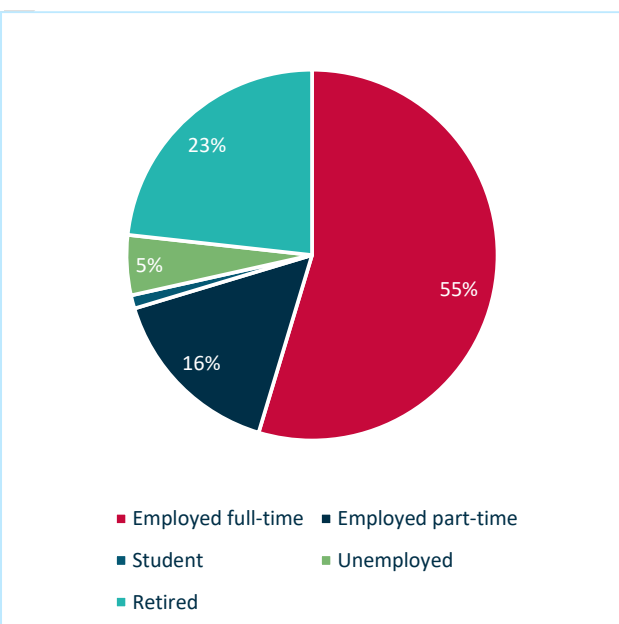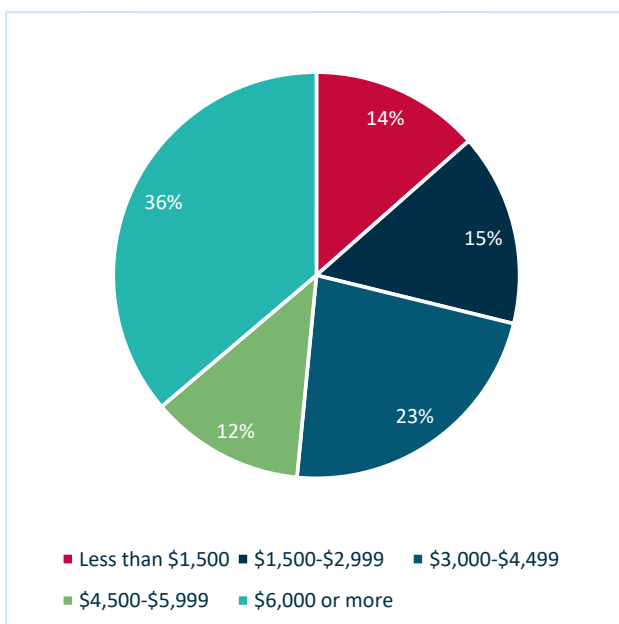
(55%) reported having full-time employment, while an additional 16% employed part-time. Most of the remaining respondents are retirees, making up 23% of all survey takers.

English Language Proficiency

Respondents to were asked to describe their level of proficiency in English, regardless of which language they chose to take the survey in. As shown in Figure 19, almost all survey respondents (88%) reported being native speakers of English. A further 7% reported speaking English very well despite not being a native speaker of the language. Only 5% of respondents reported limited proficiency in English.

Figure 19: English Language Proficiency of Survey Respondents

- ■ I am a native speaker of English
- ■ I am not a native speaker, but I speak English very well
- ■ I speak English, but less than very well
- ■ I have little to no knowledge of English
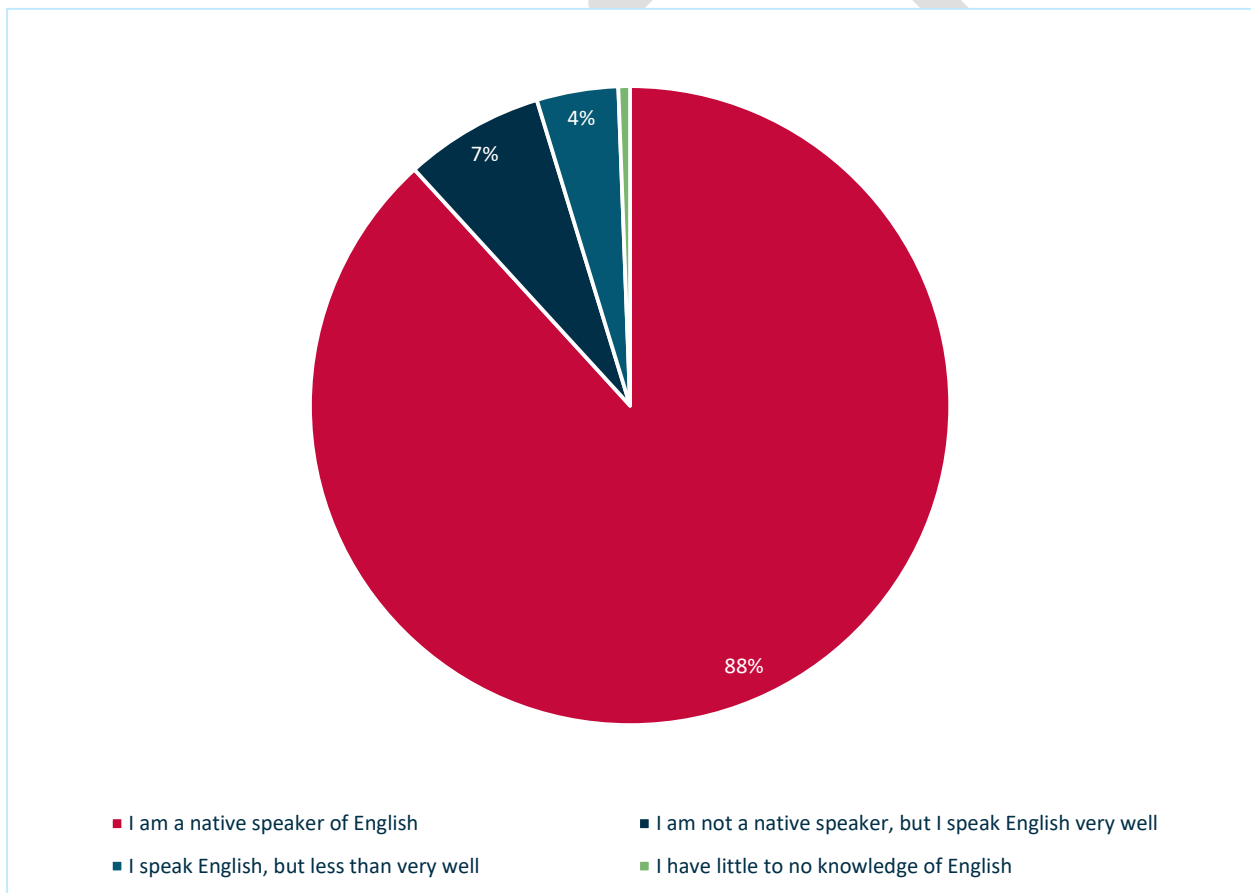
Mapping Activity

In this activity, participants were asked to identify locations they would like to be able to access via public transportation but cannot currently do so. They were also asked to provide a comment to describe the barriers to transportation use for that trip, as well as

their home ZIP code in order to illuminate where the trip might be originating from. In Figure 20, these points have been mapped, with a line drawn from the centroid of the origin ZIP code to the destination. This is another way of looking at unmet transportation need in the region: each line represents a desired transit trip that cannot currently be taken on transit.

While desired destinations can be found throughout the region, there is a notable concentration in southwestern Harris County and Fort Bend County. The most common reason cited for being unable to carry out the desired trip on transit is simply that transit does not serve either the origin, destination, or both: of the 34 pins placed, 25 were placed to note an origin-destination pair not currently served by any transit service at all. Of the remaining nine pins, seven reported a temporal barrier to using transit: either transit does not operate at the time the respondent wants to travel, or the transit service that exists is so much slower than driving, or even cycling, that it isn't a usable option.

Comment Locations w/Lines to Zip Code of Respondent

Legend:
- Response Points
- Line to ZIP Code
- Waterways
- Interstate Highways
- Gulf of Mexico
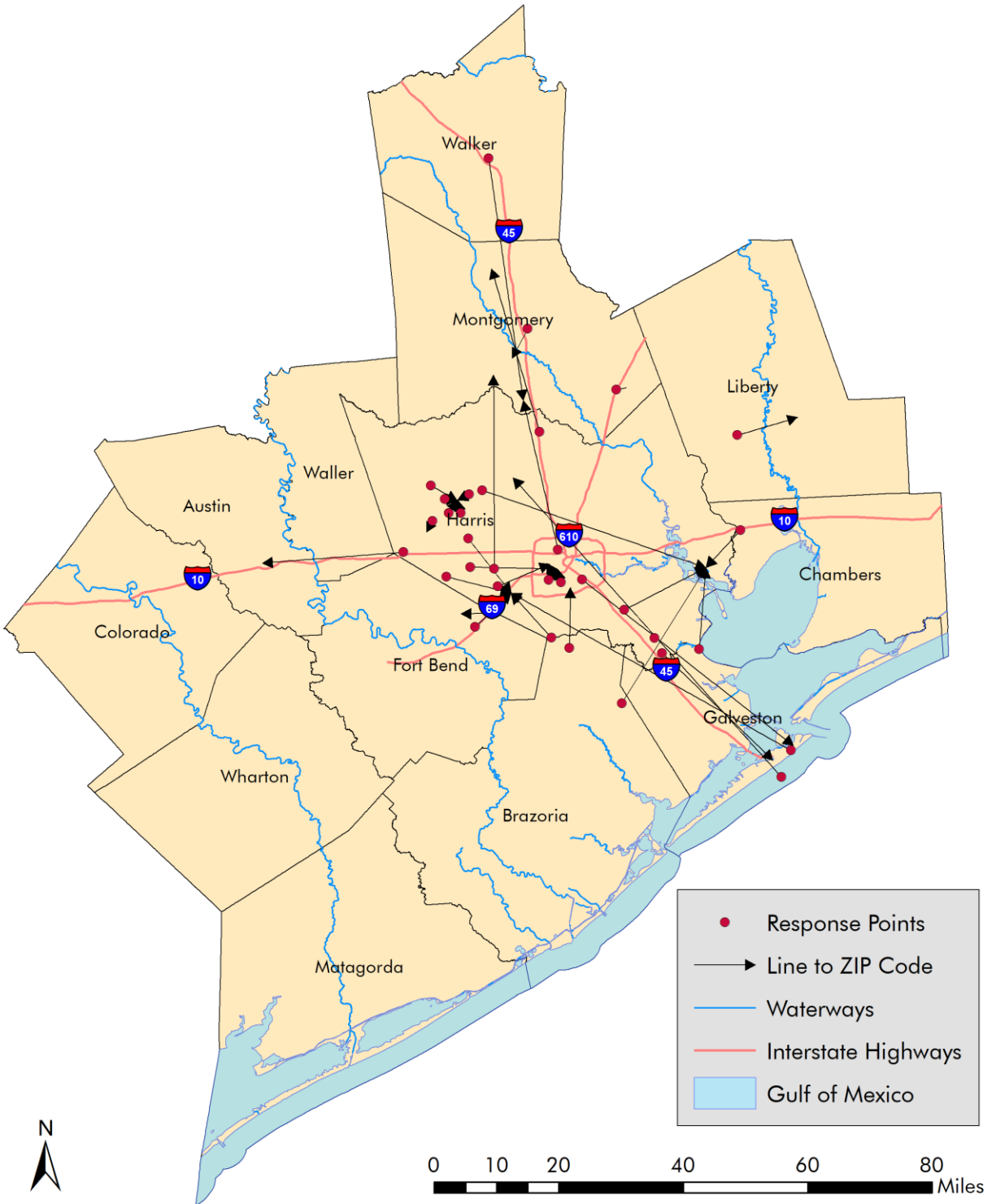
Key Takeaways

- Public outreach participants demonstrated strong interest in having high-quality transit services in their community

- Many participants either do not have access to public transportation at all, or are dissatisfied with the quality of the transportation options available to them

- Inability to find and understand key information about transportation options was shown to be a key barrier to transit regionwide

- Other notable barriers to transit use include a lack of service at desired origins and destinations, slow and unreliable service, and safety concerns

- Most participants find the cost of transportation services reasonable and current fare payment methods acceptable

Regionally Coordinated Transportation Plan Update 2022

Virtual Interactive Outreach Event

August 4, 2021

h-gac.com   Serving Today • Planning for Tomorrow

Agenda

- Introductions & Ground Rules
- What is the Regionally Coordinated Transportation Plan (RCTP) Update?
- Why Does It Matter?
- About the Planning Process
  - Project Overview
  - Project Elements
  - Project Timeline
- Breakout Groups/Interactive Activity

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Ground Rules

- Please mute yourself when you are not speaking
- Please raise your hand to ask a question
  - If calling in, press *9 to raise your hand
  - If on the Zoom app, click reactions at the bottom of the screen, then click the raise hand button
- Please be respectful of others on the call
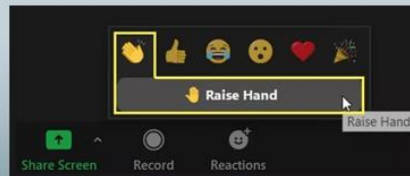
Translation and Interpretation Services

- Spanish, Vietnamese and Mandarin translation services are available at this meeting
  - Please raise your hand if you need translation services at any time
- ASL interpretation services are also available
  - Pin the video of the ASL interpreter to keep them on your screen
  - Click on "..." on the top right of the video and click "*Pin Video*"
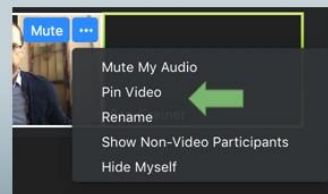
Introductions

- **When you think about public transportation in your community, what's the first thing that comes to mind?**
  - If you're on Zoom, please type your answers into the comment box.
  - If you're joining by phone, please press *9 to raise your hand to recognized to speak.

What is H-GAC?

- Regional planning body to help counties and cities come together to solve shared problems
  - Transportation
  - Air Quality/ Pollution
  - Hurricane Evacuation
  - Regional 911 System
  - Workforce Solutions

What is the RCTP?

- Plan to help improve transportation in the region
- Required to be updated every five years
- Covers 13-county region centered around Harris County

What is the RCTP?

- Looks at all transportation providers in the region, not just public transit agencies
- Focus on cost-effectively filling gaps in the transportation network
- Paying close attention to the needs of seniors, persons with disabilities, students, and others, but inclusive of EVERYONE in the region

Why Does It Matter?

- This plan does not just sit on a shelf
- RCTP leads to real changes in the region's transportation systems
  - Mobility Links
  - Regional Fare Initiative
- Your feedback helps determine what's next

Project Elements

- Vision, Goals, Objectives
- Provider Inventory
- Needs Assessment
- Gaps Analysis
- Financial Analysis
- Public Outreach

Project Vision

- "Equitable access to jobs, healthcare, and other opportunities will be guaranteed to everyone in the Gulf Coast Region, through the provision of abundant, safe, reliable, and well-connected public and human service transportation."

Provider Inventory

- Contains key information about all public transit providers, and all other providers that responded to the survey
  - Where do they operate?
  - When do they operate?
  - How much do they cost?
  - Who do they provide services to?

Needs Assessment

- Looking at both origins and destinations
- Variety of different analyses
- Will include feedback from this outreach process

Employment Density (2030) in 8 Counties
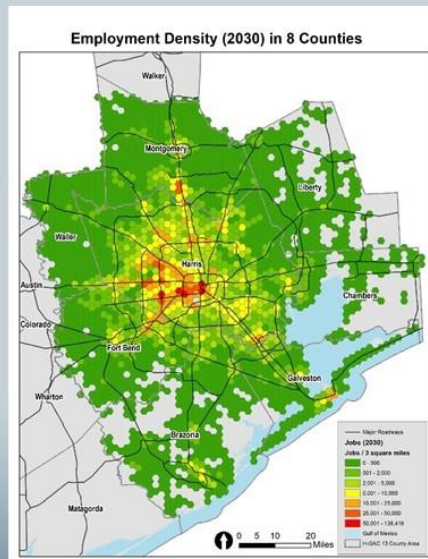
Gaps Analysis

- Builds off the work done in needs assessment
- Looking at gaps in the network:
  - Where is need for transportation NOT being met?
- This public outreach effort feeds into this part of the process as well
- We will be developing a way to prioritize gaps as part of this process

Financial Analysis

- Looks at the gaps identified and prioritized in the gaps analysis
- Looks at all the funding opportunities available
- Will use this information to figure out how we can most cost-effectively fill gaps and improve transportation in the region

Public Outreach

- Extremely important piece of the process
- We need to know where you want to go and your experiences getting around the region
- This round of outreach: public survey and workshops
- Future rounds of outreach
  - Focus Groups
  - Public Meetings
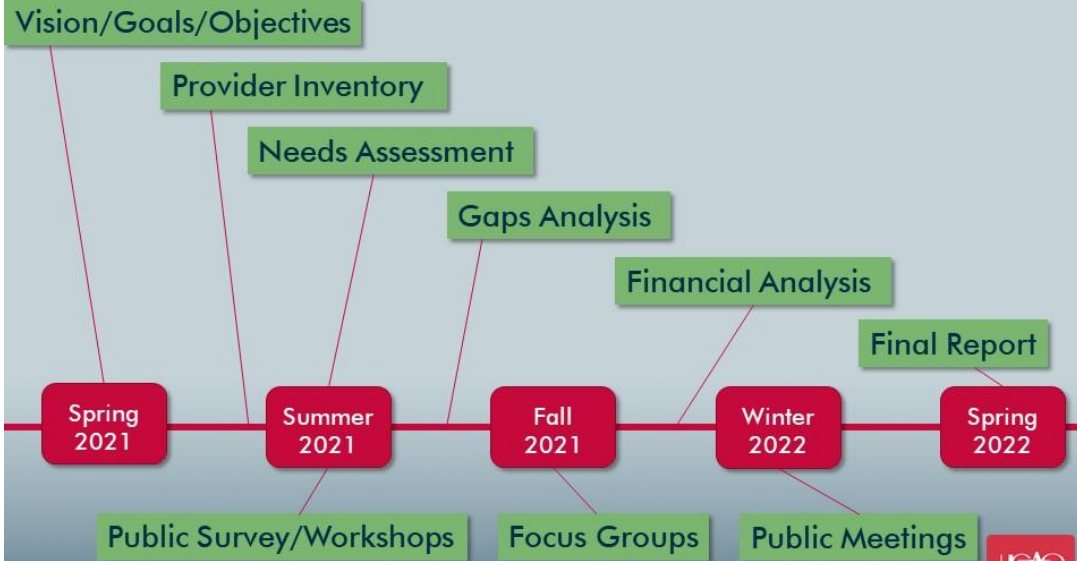
It's noon on a Thursday. Your friend has asked you to help them use public transit to get from the Rosenberg Railroad Museum to First Colony Mall.
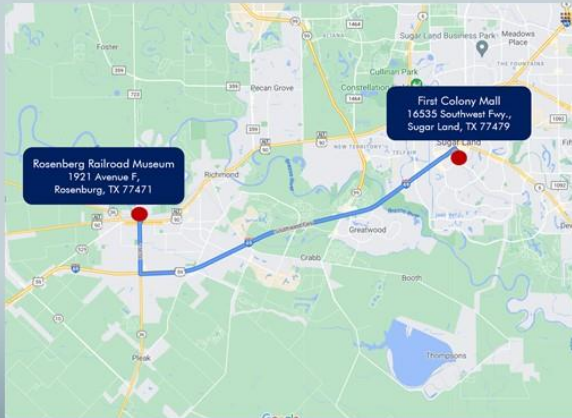
- How will your friend figure out what provider and routes your friend can use for this trip?

- How much will it cost, and how will they be able to pay the fare?

- How long will it take them to make this trip?

Stay Connected!

- Take our digital survey and see project updates at
  - engage.h-gac.com/RCTP
- Follow us social media @HouGalvAreaCOG
- Sign-up for our newsletter
  - Leave your email in the chat box below!
- Learn more about upcoming projects in the region at H-GAC.com

Thank you for attending this workshop!

Please don't forget to visit engage.h-gac.com/RCTP to take the survey!

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Appendix 3B: Survey Instrument

Your Transportation Choices

These questions help us better understand how you travel around your community and why you make the choices that you do.

1. How often do you currently use transportation services, including public transit, taxi or rideshare services, or paratransit and human services transportation for seniors, veterans, students or persons with disabilities?

○ Never

○ Rarely (1-5 trips per month)

○ Sometimes (6-10 trips per month)

○ Often (more than 10 trips per month)

2. Have you ever taken public transportation in your community before?

○ Yes

○ No

○ Not Sure

3. Do you know how to access transportation services in your community? (select all that apply)

☐ Yes, there is a door-to-door transportation service in my community, and I know how to use it

☐ Yes, there is a fixed-route bus service that stops in my community, and I know how to use it

☐ Yes, I can drive to a nearby park and ride and get on a bus there

☐ I am aware of transportation services in my community, but I don't know how to access them.

☐ I am unaware of any transportation service in my community

4. Where do you look for information about the transportation options that exist in your community? (select all that apply)

- ☐ Mobility Links

- ☐ Local government or transit agency website

- ☐ Mobile app provided by a local government or transit agency

- ☐ I call my preferred transportation provider

- ☐ I visit the offices of my preferred transportation provider

- ☐ Local library, senior center, or community center

- ☐ School, college, or university

- ☐ Hospital or other healthcare provider

- ☐ I never look for information about transportation options

- ☐ Other (please describe)

5. When you do not have access to a vehicle or are unable to drive, what do you do? (select all that apply)

☐ Ask a family member or friend for a ride

☐ Use a taxi service, Uber, or Lyft

☐ Use paratransit or dial-a-ride service

☐ Use public transit (bus or rail)

☐ Use a bicycle

☐ Walk to my destination

☐ I can't go anywhere

☐ Other (please describe)

6. Why do you use public transportation? (select all that apply)

- ☐ To go to school

- ☐ To go to work

- ☐ To attend medical appointments

- ☐ To run personal errands, such as grocery shopping or picking up medication

- ☐ To access leisure or entertainment activities, such as museums, parks, or sporting events

- ☐ I never use public transportation

- ☐ Other (please describe)

Your Transportation Needs

These questions help us understand how your needs are or are not being met by existing public transportation options, and what can be done to help those options better meet your needs.

7. What do you like best about public transportation in your community? (select up to three)

☐ It is convenient to my home and the places I want to go

☐ It is consistently on-time

☐ It gets me where I am trying to go in a timely way

☐ It is easy to navigate

☐ Fares are affordable and easy to purchase

☐ Vehicles and stops are clean and safe

☐ Vehicles and stops are easy for me to access

☐ Drivers are courteous and helpful

☐ None of the above

☐ Other (please describe)

8. What are your biggest concerns about public transportation in your area? (Select up to three)

- ☐ There is no public transit in my community

- ☐ Service is not reliably on-time

- ☐ Bus stops are too far from my home or my desired destinations

- ☐ I can't get where I'm trying to go in a timely way

- ☐ Buses and/or bus stops are not safe

- ☐ It's difficult to figure out where the bus will take me

- ☐ It's difficult to know where I can board the bus

- ☐ Fares are too expensive or too difficult to purchase

- ☐ Buses and/or bus stops are not clean

- ☐ It's difficult to find parking at the park and rides near me

- ☐ Other (please describe)

9. What is your opinion on these statements about public transportation?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Having accessible public transportation is important to me.	○	○	○	○	○
There is high-quality public transportation in my community.	○	○	○	○	○

10. Which of the following would make you more likely to choose public transportation in the future? (Select up to three)

☐ Reduced cost to ride

☐ Better on-time performance

☐ New routes that serve my community and/or the places I want to go

☐ More evening and/or weekend service

☐ More parking availability at park and rides

☐ Feeling safer traveling to and from the bus stop

☐ Feeling safer waiting at the stop or on board the bus

☐ Cleaner vehicles and/or stops

☐ More comfortable vehicles and/or stops

☐ Friendlier, more courteous drivers

☐ More frequent bus service in my community

☐ Faster travel times to my desired destinations

☐ A better understanding of the transportation options available in my community

☐ If I didn't have to drive to a park and ride

☐ Other (please describe)

11. Do you have any additional comments about public transportation service in your area?

Please add your comment here...

12. What is your ZIP code?

13. What is your age?

○ 18-24

○ 25-34

○ 35-44

○ 45-54

○ 55-64

○ 65 or above

14. What is your race/ethnicity? (select all that apply)

☐ American Indian or Alaska Native

☐ Asian or Pacific Islander

☐ Black or African American

☐ Hispanic/Latino

☐ White

☐ Prefer not to answer

☐ Other (please describe)

15. Do you have access to a car?

○ Always

○ Sometimes

○ Never

16. Are you a veteran?

   Choose an option ▾

17. Do you have a disability?

   Choose an option ▾

18. What is your monthly household income?

   ○ Less than $1,500

   ○ $1,500-$2,999

   ○ $3,000-$4,499

   ○ $4,500-$5,999

   ○ $6,000 or more

19. What is your employment status?

- ○ Employed full-time

- ○ Employed part-time

- ○ Student

- ○ Unemployed

- ○ Retired

20. How would you describe your English-language proficiency?

- ○ I am a native speaker of English

- ○ I am not a native speaker, but I speak English very well

- ○ I speak English, but less than very well

- ○ I have little to no knowledge of English

Contact Information

H-GAC will be hosting focus groups this fall to learn about the region's transportation needs in more detail. If you are willing to participate in a focus group, please provide your phone number or email address below so we can contact you.
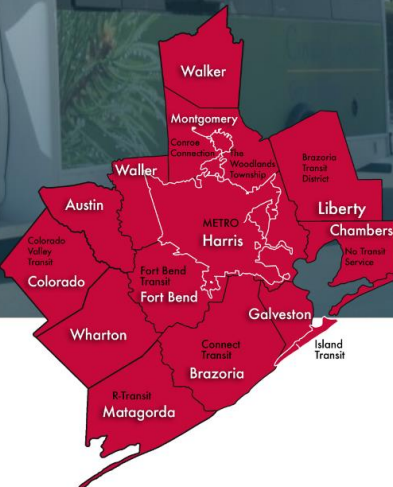
21. Phone Number

22. Email Address

Please add your comment here...

0/200

Appendix 3C: Flyer and Social Media Graphic

HOW CAN WE MAKE PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION BETTER IN YOUR COMMUNITY?

The Houston-Galveston Area Council is hosting a series of public workshops and a digital survey for you to provide your thoughts on the Regionally Coordinated Transportation Plan. Your feedback will help us understand how public transportation can better connect you with where you need to go, identify where to invest resources, and close the gaps in our region's transportation system.

WHAT
Regionally Coordinated Transportation Plan Public Workshops & Digital Survey.

WHERE
The public workshops will all be held via Zoom. Digital survey available online.

FOR MORE INFORMATION
Visit engage.h-gac.com/RCTP or scan the QR code below to register for a meeting and access the online survey.

H-GAC will provide a Spanish, Vietnamese, and Mandarin translator, as well as an American Sign Language interpreter for the hearing impaired.

WHEN
- Harris & Chambers Counties
  August 3, 2021 at 6:30 p.m.
- Fort Bend County
  August 4, 2021 at 6:30 p.m.
- Waller, Austin, Colorado, & Wharton Counties
  August 5, 2021 at 6:30 p.m.
- Galveston, Matagorda, & Brazoria Counties
  August 10, 2021 at 6:30 p.m.
- Montgomery, Walker, & Liberty Counties
  August 11, 2021 at 6:30 p.m.

How Can We Make Public Transportation Better in Your Community?

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