BCRTA TRANSIT PLAN

Phase 1 Public Engagement Summary

May 2022

Bcrta
Butler County Regional Transit Authority

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY – PHASE I

Introduction

Project Overview

Butler County Regional Transit Authority (BCRTA) is developing its first ever transit plan. The transit plan will outline recommendations to grow and improve BCRTA's system based on the changing demographics and transportation needs within Butler County. The plan will make immediate and near-term recommendations for:

New or improved bus routes

Identification of needed bus stop enhancements
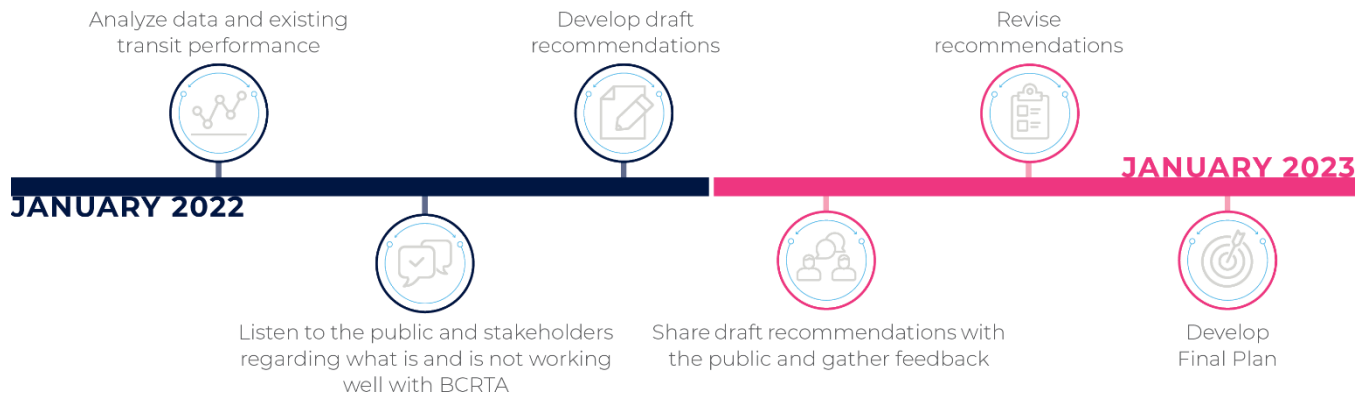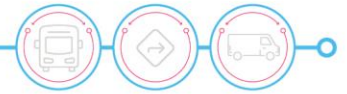
Transit funding and financing strategies

Support for existing and future BCRTA operations at transit facilities

Transit fleet and technology enhancements

Public and Stakeholder Engagement Overview

Two phases of engagement are planned for the BCRTA Transit Plan process: Phase I (Spring 2022) and Phase II (Fall 2022). The following schedule outlines the key time periods during which the public and stakeholders are engaged in the project as well as what takes place before and after engagement.

Analyze data and existing transit performance

Develop draft recommendations

Revise recommendations

JANUARY 2023

JANUARY 2022

Listen to the public and stakeholders regarding what is and is not working well with BCRTA

Share draft recommendations with the public and gather feedback

Develop Final Plan

The goal of public engagement is to build and strengthen relationships in the community while gathering stakeholder and public input, responding to comments and concerns, and keeping decision-makers and other stakeholders informed throughout the Transit Plan process.

Purpose of this Document

The purpose of this document is to provide a summary of Phase 1 of public engagement for the transit plan. In this first round, the study team gathered feedback from the public and stakeholders about their personal experiences using BCRTA and learned about what is and is not working well currently.

Engagement Methods and Results

Phase 1 engagement methods fall in to two primary categories: surveys and meetings. The study team tailored the surveys and meeting information to each stakeholder group. This section discusses key results and findings from each engagement method.

Surveys

More detailed findings from the surveys and interactive map can be found in the appendices:

➤ Appendix A. Public Survey Results

Public Survey

Methods

The public survey was live March – August 2022 and was administered to both current riders of the system and as well as those who do not ride today. The questions asked respondents what was working well and not working well, what changes could better serve their travel needs, as well as basic demographic information.

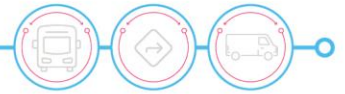The survey questions were developed and administered in consultation with BCRTA staff.

The study team made a special effort to reach people who are traditionally underrepresented in planning processes by engaging organizations that directly serve students, senior citizens, people with low-incomes, people with disabilities, and people of color. To further promote the survey, BCRTA staff placed posters inside buses, at key transit stops, and popular destinations around Butler County. Paper surveys were also distributed on the buses and locations such as senior centers and social service organizations. The project team also rode buses and engaged riders at strategic transit stops to raise awareness about the project and the survey.

Results

OVERVIEW

308 responses were collected for the public survey. The following are some key service and demographic findings from the survey results:

➤ Two-thirds of survey respondents are between the ages of 18 to 44 years old, with 40% being between the ages of 18 to 24 years old
➤ Nearly ¾ of survey respondents identified as White
➤ 27% of respondents have a household income less than $25,000 per year
➤ 36% of respondents said they cannot drive/do not have access to a personal vehicle
➤ 70% of responses were from current riders or those who rode prior to the COVID-19 pandemic
➤ 41% of respondents said they ride/rode BCRTA daily, and an additional 22% said they ride/rode BCRTA on a weekly basis
➤ Most people ride BCRTA services to go to school (39%), work (40%), or stores/restaurants (37%)
➤ 36% of respondents ride transit about the same amount as they did before the COVID-19 pandemic
➤ 60% of respondents feel riding BCRTA is *very easy* or *somewhat easy*

➤ The top two barriers to taking transit are that *the bus doesn't come frequently enough* (43%) or *the bus doesn't go where I need to travel* (41%)

➤ Around 60% of respondents said they are supportive of a local tax to pay for transit improvements and around 30% said they are supportive of a local tax to pay for improvements to roads *and* transit.

TRADE-OFF SCENARIOS

Respondents were presented with two scenarios and were asked to give feedback. Respondents expressed the following preferences:

➤ More respondents would prefer increases to service frequency (47%) over an expansion of span of service (30%)

➤ More respondents would prefer increased weekend service (44%) over increased weekday service (38%)

➤ More respondents would prefer having more bus stops per route to reduce walking distances (45%) over having fewer bus stops per route for faster travel (24%)

➤ Respondents were almost evenly split in their preferences to have buses running on fewer streets, but the bus comes more often (35%) or buses running on more streets, but the bus comes less often (37%). 29% of respondents expressed no preference on this issue.

➤ Respondents were almost evenly split in their preference for BCRTA to improve existing service in the same locations (41%) or expand service to new areas (40%). 19% of respondents expressed no preference on this issue.

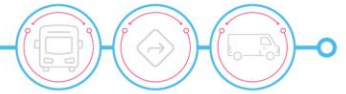## STRENGTHS AND AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Respondents were asked questions about their experiences using BCRTA services today, including strengths of BCRTA and opportunities for improvement.

Strengths

➤ The bus drivers are friendly and do their jobs well

➤ Buses are clean

➤ Services are generally reliable

Customer Experience

➤ The app can be glitchy (e.g., shows inaccurate bus arrival times, would like clearer stop list)

➤ Need to know when the bus will show up, when the next bus is coming, when a bus won't show up/changes in schedule

➤ Can be confusing to ride the first time; consider employing bus guides or having YouTube tutorials of how to ride the bus

Service Improvements

➤ Weekend, early morning, and evening service (after 6 p.m.)
➤ More reliable service – buses show up on time, don't skip stops, better transfers, etc.
➤ More efficient travel times
➤ Need for service in neighborhoods (transit is attractive for students but not residents)
➤ Expand service to West Chester
➤ Increase frequency of service (e.g., R3 summer schedule, U1, U4)
➤ Need for bi-directional routes instead of a loop (e.g., U1)
➤ Need for transportation for senior citizens and people with disabilities (like an on-demand service or routes that have short walking distances to stops)
➤ Feel that the bus waits too long at Farmer
➤ BGo service and app Improvements:
  o Difficult to schedule rides even when scheduling two weeks in advance
  o Need more drivers
  o Offer discounted fares, $5/ride is too high (e.g., cheaper monthly pass)
➤ Some routes fill quickly and need increased capacity (e.g., Red route, R6
➤ Bring back the R2
➤ Offer better wages/benefits to attract drivers so you can expand service

Locations That Need Transit Service

➤ Cincinnati (e.g., outlet mall, from Oxford)
➤ Fairfield (e.g., downtown around Village Green, hospitals/medical centers, Lakewood subdivision, Pleasant Ave, Nilles, River Rd)
➤ Hamilton (e.g., south/west side, residential areas, weekend service, from Middletown, main venues like Spooky Nook)
➤ West Chester
➤ Ross
➤ Trenton
➤ Miami university - North campus, West campus, Middletown campus

➤ Oxford (e.g., uptown; residential areas; along West Chestnut St, Oxford Reily Rd, Poplar; community parks, the Knolls)
➤ Monroe (e.g., Mt. Pleasant area, Amazon warehouse)
➤ Middletown (e.g., to Dayton, to Oxford
➤ Hospitals, clinics, and medical centers (e.g., Kettering on Eaton Ave in Hamilton, Mercy in Fairfield)
➤ Airport
➤ Hueston Woods State Park
➤ Need to bring back Dayton service (connect with Cincinnati buses)
➤ Millett remote parking
➤ Liberty Township
➤ Cross county service between cities

BCRTA TRANSIT PLAN

Bcrta
Butler County Regional Transit Authority
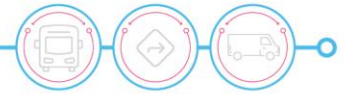
Operator Survey

Methods

Transit operators know the system better than most due to their daily interaction with customers and experience driving the routes. An operator survey was facilitated to gain insight about the system and give operators an opportunity to voice existing issues with the system. These surveys were available at the garage for operators to complete either before or after their shifts.
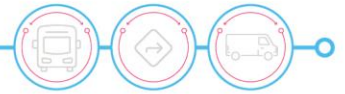
Results

20 responses were received from transit operators. The transit operators identified which routes they mainly operated. Routes that were represented included: U1, U3, U4, PR, R1, R3, BGo, and BCare. A high-level summary of the feedback received from operators are bulleted below.

ROUTE OR SYSTEM CHANGES

- Dispatch coordination:
  - Ensure they are ready with morning routes in a timely manner
  - Dispatch should keep a close eye on destinations and times; buses sit for too long
- Adjust the schedule and sync the route with the computer for better timing
  - R3 – adjust northbound and southbound times for Meijer's
  - BCare
- U3 weekend Chestnut and Beech stop, cars are usually parked up to the stop; need a no parking sign
- U4 and U4D need stops at Farmer or Cook Field
- U3X needs a stop in front of BCRTA office
- R3 University Hall stop (southbound) needs to move farther down University Blvd to Sojourner Center; also need a stop near BC Behavioral on Central (northbound)
- Need for a shelter at the Park and Ride like Miami Station D
- BGo service:
  - Have denied many rides; problem begins with employee pay/retention
  - Routes have improved with the reduction in reservations; routes were busy and frantic before
- Need to charge for rides, even if small amount
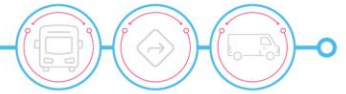
LAYOVER AND RUNTIME ISSUES

- Mixed feedback about layover time

  - Some feel they have sufficient layover time
  - Some feel they have too much layover time (e.g., U4 and U4D)
  - Some feel they have little to no layover time (e.g., Green Line, R6, Gold Line, Middletown)

➤ Need for restroom closer walking distance to the bus stop U3
➤ Stops are added/removed at times and drivers aren't notified throwing off travel times
➤ U3 on Sundays – if on-time at Chestnut and Campus stop, drivers arrive early to all stops until Wells Mills; leave a couple of minutes late from Farmer to alleviate the issue
➤ R1 – scheduled stops are given too much time in between

  ➤ High/Fair to High/Erie, Kohls to Americana, Americana to Countryside
  ➤ Butler Tech to Hampshire Apartments

➤ R3 times need adjustment

  ➤ Miami Hamilton to 3rd/Dayton
  ➤ Southbound – Miami station C leave at 5 after, Meijer leave 20 mins after

➤ Schedules do not match up – printed schedules, app schedule, tablet schedule

  ➤ Programming is faulty (e.g., early/on-time/late)

➤ BGo routing software sets drivers up so they fail to arrive on-time
➤ Blue Line – run time issues on days when the bus fills with passengers; when we have wheelchairs/other mobility devices, it causes drivers to be late
➤ Green Line – Tytus/Eldora to Tytus/Germantown
➤ Gold Line – when going to the strip mall

SAFETY CONCERNS

➤ Benton Hall stop – bus blocks traffic, difficult to re-enter the through lane from the right turn lane; passengers board near taller shrubs/bench area, difficult to tell who is getting on the bus vs. just sitting
➤ Tight turns:

  ➤ On Minnesota turning onto 14th (Green Line)
  ➤ On Williams onto Pleasant

➤ Concern about passenger safety

  ➤ Step out into the street to see if bus is coming
  ➤ Marsh/flooded grass at the northbound Kroger stop on Main St (R3) is hazardous for handicapped riders, needs to be moved

➤ Driver visibility issues

  ➤ Tablet mounts are in a place where drivers can't keep their eyes forward
  ➤ Need better mirrors on the buses (like school buses have)

➤ Felt safer and had better contact with dispatch with the hand radios; now if a driver is outside the bus, they have not company supplied communication

➤ We are denying many rides on BGo; problems start with employee pay and retention

➤ Concern about needle exchanges on Tuesdays and riders bringing/leaving dirty needles on the buses (R1)

➤ Difficult to find safe places to back up (BCare)

➤ Feel that Safe Ride shouldn't wait in front of Skippers or Brick St; crowded/too many drunk kids; Uptown Safe Ride should only pick up at Uptown Park

LOCATIONS THAT NEED SERVICE/MORE SERVICE

➤ Trenton (e.g., go down Trenton Rd)

➤ Blue Line

➤ R1 on Saturdays

➤ Oxford Park and Ride

➤ Stops needed:

   ➤ Along Princeton Rd – move southbound stop to light at Bridgewater Falls (Lakewood Dr)

   ➤ At Todhunter Rd/Salzman Rd

   ➤ R1 along Eaton Ave/Washington Blvd

   ➤ Along Hwy 63 close to Salman Rd

   ➤ R3 (certain areas), at least two stops per side, going northbound and southbound
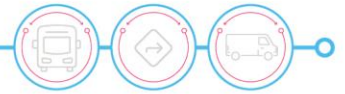
Decision Makers Survey

Methods

The study team distributed a survey to decision-makers representing the service area, including elected and appointed government officials and staff at the Cities of Oxford, Hamilton, Middletown, Fairfield, West Chester Township, and partner agencies. The survey collected information about issues with the existing transit system as well as priorities for the system.

Results

13 decision-maker surveys were received as a part of this process. Respondents represented the City of Oxford, City of Hamilton, City of Middletown, Oxford City Council, Butler County Board of Developmental Disabilities, West Chester Township – Senior Van Transportation Service, MidPointe Library System, and SELF (Supports to Encourage Low-Income Families).

Respondents were asked to rank BCRTA's service on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest, and to provide an explanation for their selection. The average response for each question and comments about the question from respondents are shown below:

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Based on what you have heard from constituents or community members, how well does BCRTA's transit system serve those you represent on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being outstanding service? 7/10

Respondents cited the following as their reasoning:

➤ Routes and services are mainly oriented to Miami University students; need to work on having service available year-round for residents
➤ Need for more advertisement and education around BCRTA's services and how to ride transit; not many people know
➤ Hear positive feedback about:

  ➤ Free fares
  ➤ Quality and variety of services BCRTA offers
  ➤ Responsiveness to customers

➤ Need for more access to BCRTA services (e.g., need service in West Chester and Liberty Townships)
➤ The frequency of stops makes the service inconvenient to use

In your opinion, how well does BCRTA's transit system serve those you represent on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being outstanding service? 7.5/10

STRENGTHS, AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT, AND BCRTA PRIORITIES

Decision-makers were asked several questions about strengths, areas for improvements, and priorities for BCRTA service. Responses to these questions are summarized below.
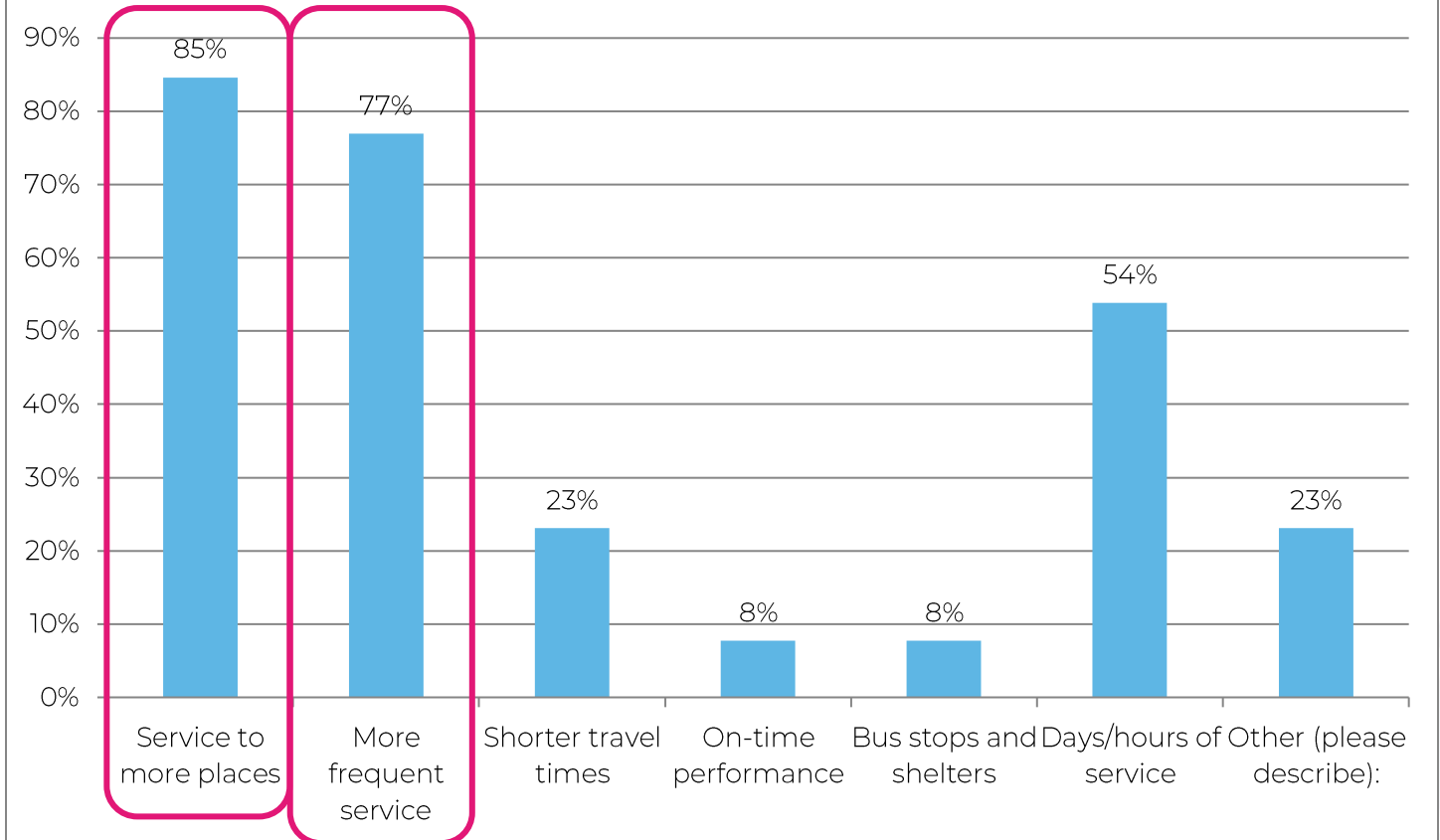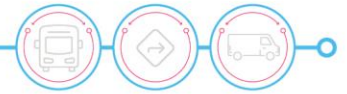
Kimley»Horn

Based on what you have heard from those you represent and your opinion, what are the strengths of the current BCRTA transit system? (select all that apply)

Kimley»Horn
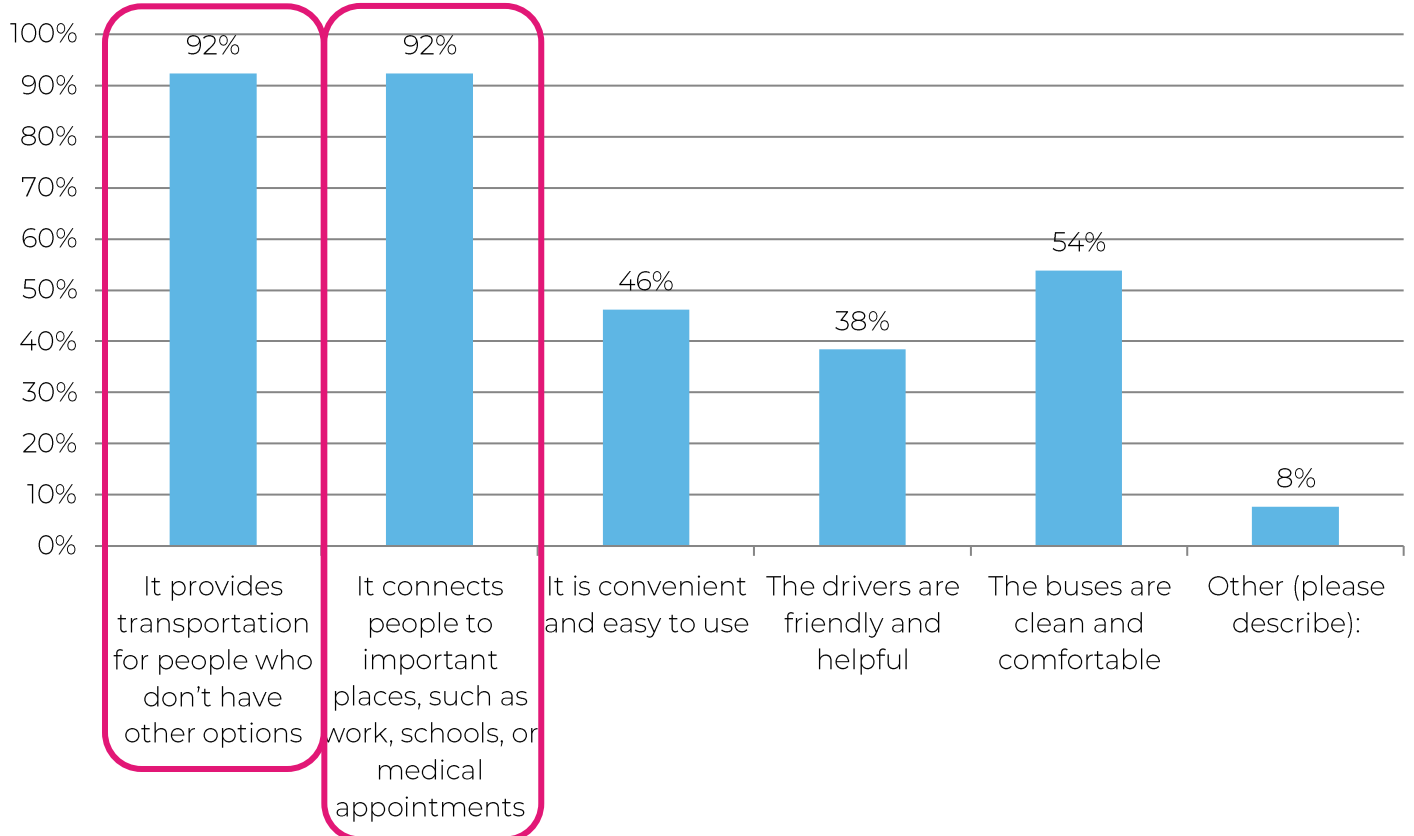
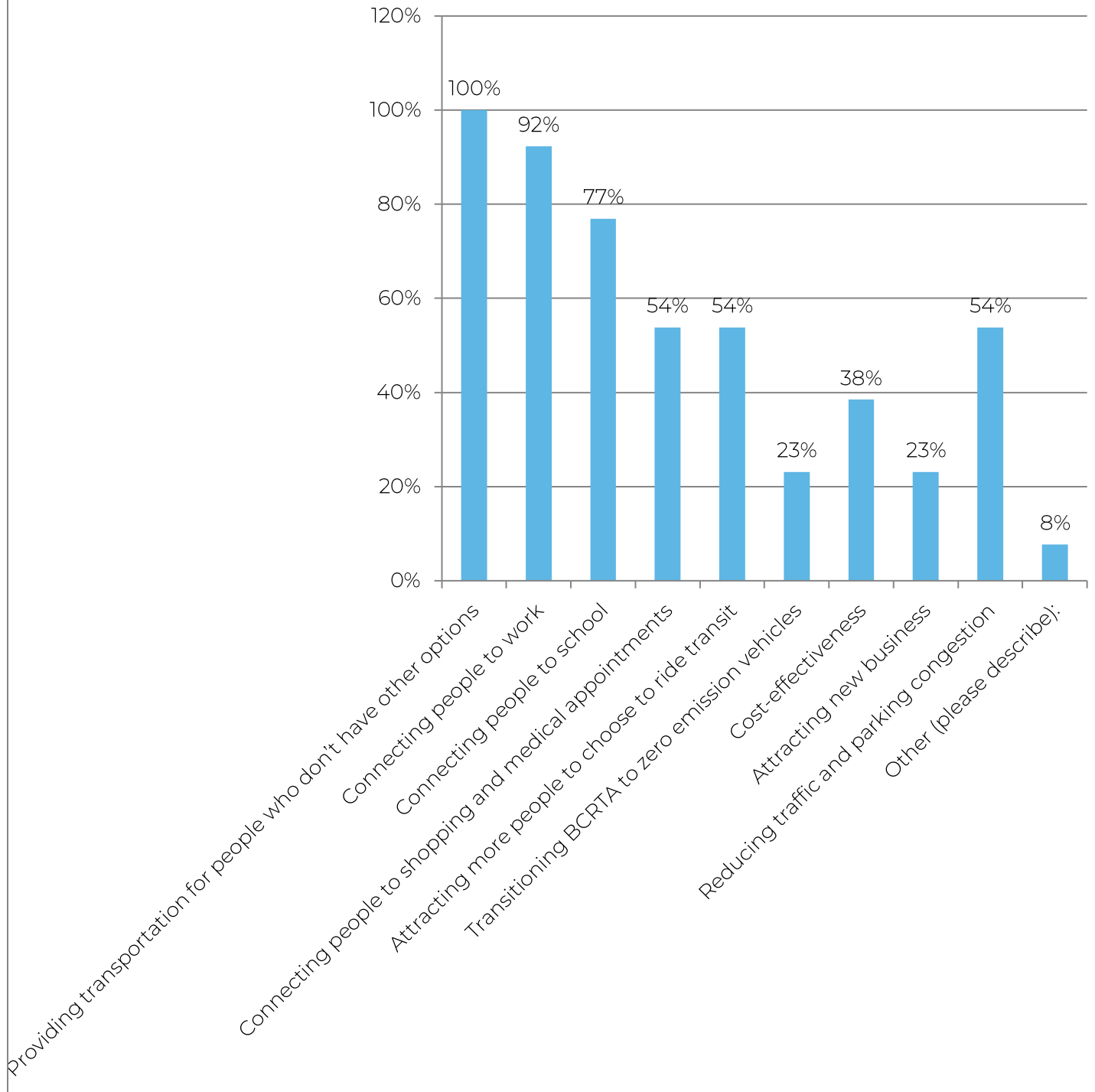# Based on what you have heard from those you represent and your opinion, what improvements can be made to the BCRTA transit system? (select all that apply)

Category	Percentage
Service to more places	85%
More frequent service	77%
Shorter travel times	23%
On-time performance	8%
Bus stops and shelters	8%
Days/hours of service	54%
Other (please describe):	23%

What are your priorities for the BCRTA transit system? (select all that apply)

Bar chart showing priorities:
- Providing transportation for people who don't have other options: 100%
- Connecting people to work: 92%
- Connecting people to school: 77%
- Connecting people to shopping and medical appointments: 54%
- Attracting more people to choose to ride transit: 54%
- Transitioning BCRTA to zero emission vehicles: 23%
- Cost-effectiveness: 38%
- Attracting new business: 23%
- Reducing traffic and parking congestion: 54%
- Other (please describe): 8%

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Other:

➤ Reducing carbon emissions (e.g., electrification of bus fleet, solar charged, expanding transit service)

LOCATIONS THAT NEED MORE SERVICE
➤ Job centers
➤ Spooky Nook
➤ Main Street, High Street
➤ Downtown Hamilton
➤ Connections to Dayton and Cincinnati
➤ Oxford Aquatic Center
➤ West and north sides of residential Oxford
➤ West Chester
➤ Serve Miami students/employees that live outside Mile Square
➤ Make transit a competitive service to driving

FUNDING
The survey asked decision-makers about their support for a local tax dedicated to transit. 83% of respondents said they are supportive of a local tax to pay for transit improvements, while 17% said they are not supportive of a local tax dedicated to roads or transit.

Business/Employer Survey

Methods

The study team distributed a survey to businesses and employers in Butler County to understand more about their employees' transportation needs. The survey was live June – August 2022.

Results

12 responses to the survey were received from businesses/employers. Key takeaways of the survey are summarized below.

➤
➤ Respondents represented 11 different organizations in Butler County
➤ Respondents work for organizations ranging in size, with 7 organizations having less than 500 employees, 2 having between 500 and 1,000 employees, and 2 having more than 1,000 employees
➤ Almost 70% of respondents said their organization's entry level wage is between $16 - $20 per hour
➤ 92% of respondents said their organization does not have parking challenges

- Almost all organizations have 3 or fewer work shifts per day
- Common shift start and end times include:
  - 7/8 a.m. – 3:30/4/5 p.m.
  - 6 a.m. – 2/2:30/3:15 p.m.
  - 2 p.m. – 10/10:30/11:15 p.m.
  - 10 p.m. – 6/6:30 a.m.
- The number of employees working per shift varies for each organization, with 2 organizations having fewer than 10 employees per shift, 3 having between 10 and 100 employees per shift, and 4 having more than 100 employees per shift
- Respondents most commonly said employees at their organization live in Hamilton, Fairfield, and other cities in Butler County
- When asked to provide other feedback about the transit system, respondents:
  - Asked for expanded service – Monroe, Thunderbird Ln. to serve the Industrial Park beltway in Fairfield
  - Generally, felt that having public transit would improve their chances of finding good employees who lack access to transportation

Interactive Map Comments

Methods

The Kimley-Horn team developed an interactive map to gather feedback about important destinations and to identify where there are areas that need improvement or change. Map users could select a pin and drop it in a location where they wanted to provide feedback. Pin categories included: *Add bus service, Places I Go,* and *Needs Improvement.* The map was prominently advertised on the TDP project website.

Results

In Phase 1, ten comments were received on the interactive map (see Figure 1). A detailed summary of the interactive map comments is in Appendix B.
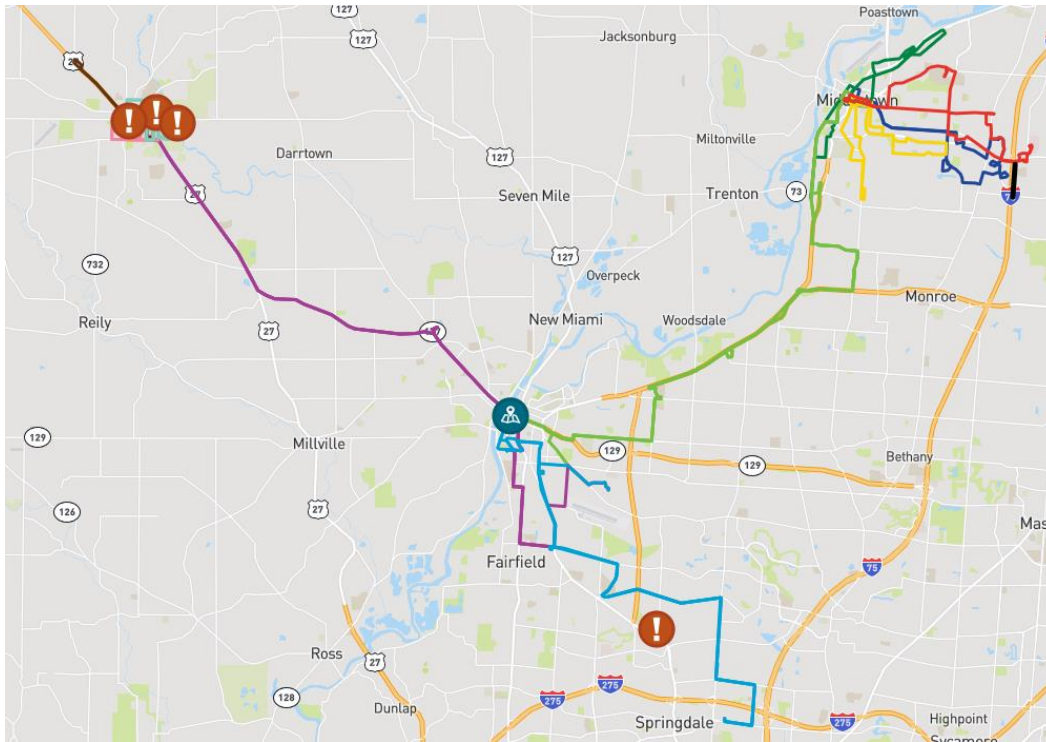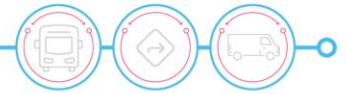
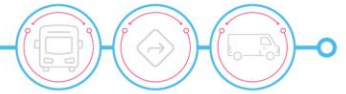*Figure 1 Interactive Map Comment Locations*

Meetings

Focus Groups

Methods

The study team held four focus group discussions on the following dates/times:
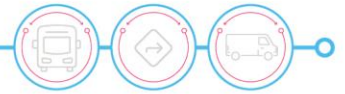
➤ Rider focus group: May 2, 2022; 2 p.m. – 3 p.m.
- o   2 attendees
➤ Rider focus group: May 2, 2022; 4 p.m. – 5 p.m.
- o   4 attendees
➤ Business focus group: May 9, 2022; 12 p.m. – 1 p.m.
- o   2 attendees
➤ Non-profit organizations focus group: May 12, 2022; 11 a.m. – 12 p.m.
- o   13 attendees

The purpose of these focus groups was to hear from businesses, non-profit organizations, and current riders of BCRTA. The study team gathered interest for the rider focus groups through the public survey. For the business and non-profit focus groups, they reached out to the following organizations:

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- Butler County Regional Airport
- Butler Tech - Project Life
- Fairfield Ohio Chamber of Commerce
- Greater Hamilton Chamber of Commerce
- Oxford Chamber of Commerce
- The Chamber of Commerce (Middletown)
- West Chester Liberty Chamber Alliance
- Bridgewater Falls
- Kettering Health Hamilton
- McCullough-Hyde Memorial Hospital
- Mercy Health Heart Institute - Hamilton
- Mercy Health Heart Institute - Oxford
- TriHealth Bethesda Butler
- Atrium Medical Center (Middletown)
- Mercy Health Fairfield
- TriHealth Good Samaritan Hospital
- Lane Libraries – Hamilton and Fairfield
- MidPointe Libraries – Monroe, Liberty Trenton, West Chester
- Miami University
- Butler County Board of Developmental Disabilities
- Butler County Educational Service Center
- Butler County Mental Health & Addiction Recovery Services Board
- Butler County Health District

- Butler County United Way
- Big Brothers Big Sisters of Butler County
- Boys and Girls Club of Hamilton
- Catholic Charities
- Community First Solutions
- Easterseals
- Haven House
- Hamilton Living water Ministry
- Hope House - Middletown
- Mary's Helping Hands
- Lifespan
- Neighborhood Housing Services of Hamilton, Inc.
- Open Door Food Pantry
- Oxford Elderly Services
- Oxford Family Resource Center
- Salvation Army
- SELF - Community Action Agency
- Serve City
- Sojourner Recovery Services
- YMCA
- YWCA
- Ohio Means Jobs
- Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities
- Metropolitan Housing Authority
- Elderly Services

Focus group discussions were leveraged for this planning process to create intentional opportunities for experience-sharing and more detailed discussions regarding strengths and challenges to the system. To increase access and accessibility, focus groups were held virtually.

Kimley»Horn

Results

Below is a summary of the feedback received from all focus group meetings.

TRAVEL PATTERNS

➤ Meijer's P&R to downtown Cincinnati
➤ Oxford to Hamilton and Middletown
➤ Around Miami University campus
➤ Routes R3, Tollgate Loop, Walmart Flyer, Red Line, U3, U1, Park and Ride
➤ Social services clients need service in early morning (5 a.m. – 8 a.m.), early afternoon (3 p.m. – 5 p.m.), evenings, and weekends
➤ Atrium Medical employees have 12-hour shifts (e.g., 7 a.m. – 7 p.m.)

➤ Many are coming from Middletown and some from Warren County (Franklin area) and Monroe
➤ Entry level employees have difficulty getting reliable transportation to work

➤ In Hamilton, many jobs start by 7 a.m. – 8 a.m., 3 p.m. – 5 p.m., and then later in the evening
➤ Medical appointments
   o Local survey found that mothers miss health appointments due to lack of transportation, traveling to the bus stop (unless it's close) is challenging with children and gear

LOCATIONS THAT NEED SERVICE

➤ Liberty and West Chester (e.g., around shopping areas like TJ Maxx)
➤ Chestnut/Oxford Reily Road (towards the middle school/bowling alley)
➤ The airport
➤ To Community Park (on the outskirts of Oxford)
➤ Edges of Oxford
➤ The Knolls
➤ From downtown Hamilton to/from Liberty Center (want more park and ride options), the business park (e.g., Vital Max)
➤ To Monroe
➤ Hamilton
➤ Hospitals (e.g., UC West Chester)
➤ Destinations in Fairfield (e.g., Village Green on Wessel Drive, Mercy Hospital on Mack Road)
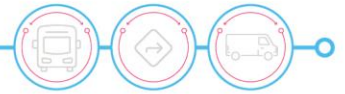
STRENGTHS OF THE CURRENT SYSTEM

➤ The service is reliable
➤ Drivers are friendly and helpful, try to get to know the riders
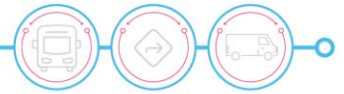
➤ Like the app that helps track the bus in real time, although it's not always accurate about how many people are riding the bus; would be nice if it could tell you exact stop you need to get on/off at

➤ Like the free fare

➤ Like the BGo and BCare services

 ➤ Like reduced fare for Medicaid/Medicare holders

 ➤ Like wheelchair accessibility and travel trainers that show people how to ride

➤ Oxford Group important for students and shoppers

➤ BCRTA staff is responsive and easy to collaborate with

BARRIERS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

➤ When Miami students have breaks, route offerings go down; need to balance needs of Miami students and locals who use the routes all the time

➤ Need for better advertising around driver positions, routes, and services that BCRTA offers (e.g., BGo, paratransit)

➤ Need for education on how to ride the bus for new riders (e.g., cheat sheet, presentation at Miami University's Freshman orientation, put info on panels inside the bus, "Learn to ride" days)

➤ Need for more accessible, easy-to-understand rider info (e.g., PDFs online are confusing)

➤ Need for expanded hours of services like midday and on weekends (e.g., to go to downtown Cincinnati for events, for commuters only working a half day, for travel between cities on weekends)

 ➤ Would like the R3 to run during its existing gaps in service (e.g., 7 p.m., 9 p.m.) and on weekends

 ➤ Need increased frequency on the Walmart Flyer; difficult to plan day around 1x/hour frequency

➤ Some routes need increased capacity

 ➤ R1 shouldn't reduce to one bus between 1 p.m. – 4 p.m. due to amount of people going to/from school, work, doctor's appointments, etc. at this time

 ➤ R3 gets completely full around 3 p.m. – 4 p.m.

 ➤ R4/R6 needs increased capacity (or run two buses per hour)

 ➤ Middletown (especially on Tuesdays during needle exchanges)

 ➤ Red (MTS route) fills up quickly and needs a bus with increased capacity

➤ Need for route changes:

➤ Would like Middletown routes to go both directions so you do not have to ride the whole loop to get to your end point (if it is near where you started)

➤ R1 should run on Saturdays for people that need to get to Middletown (since MTS routes run on Saturdays)

  ➤ If you add Saturday service, consider running a shuttler to/from the Market Street hub to connect to the R1

➤ If the U3 is not in service, would like to extend the R3 to stop at Chestnut Fields

➤ County Courthouse stop (inbound, towards Market Street Hub) needs to be moved to corner of Second and Court Streets, impossible to use this stop if you have a mobility device or use the chair lift

➤ Consider moving the Tri-County Mall stop across the street where the Lowes, Chick-Fil-A, etc. are since the mall is closing; moving the stop here would feel safer/be more populated than the existing mall stop

➤ Fixed route service should pull into parking lots of major stores, shopping centers, and medical centers vs. going to the nearest intersection; prevents people from having to cross busy intersections and makes it easier on disabled people who utilize the fixed routes

➤ Blue (MTS route) should split into two routes (north/south) like the Gold and Green lines; 75 stops for one route are too many

➤ With BGo service:

  ➤ Drivers can show up anytime in given window; can make it difficult to plan/time your trip
  ➤ Wasn't made clear that drivers make multiple pick-ups, depending on the demand/route
  ➤ Use smaller vehicles when there are only 1 to 2 passengers at a time

➤ Need for facilities improvements:

  ➤ More stops need shelters and benches (near apartment complexes and shopping centers especially)
  ➤ Would be nice to have the solar powered schedules at more stops
  ➤ Would be nice to have more stops with real-time transit info like at the stop at Kroger in Oxford (shows the bus ETA)
  ➤ Need a better stop in Hamilton near all the restaurants
  ➤ Need for more regular trash pick-up at shelters and better lighting

➤ Concern, with much of the transit info existing online/mobile devices, that seniors may have a more difficult time using transit

➤ Would be nice if BCRTA and Metro apps were integrated

➤ Difficult to use transit for grocery shopping, not enough space for groceries, especially when crowded

OTHER FEEDBACK

➤ Lack of parking at Miami University and in Uptown encourages people to ride BCRTA
➤ In the future, would like the BCRTA system:

  ➤ To be more fleshed out and coordinated with Cincinnati and Dayton system's so people can move throughout the area/get to major cities easily
  ➤ To be better integrated into the community (i.e., provide bus service for community events)

➤ Consider loyalty card program (hotels, Spooky Nook)
➤ Arts program could partner with BCRTA to shuttles
➤ New development coming to Hamilton, will be bigger than Spooky Nook

Lessons Learned and Next Steps

While Phase 1 engagement efforts on the BCRTA Transit Plan were beneficial, the study team has a few key lessons learned that can be factored into the next phase of engagement:

➤ Phase 1 of engagement had a high participation on the public survey, but relatively low participation amongst operators and decision-makers. Future engagement strategies may need to be adjusted to engage these groups in a different way.
➤ Of the decision-makers who responded to the survey, many were from or affiliated with the city of Oxford. Future efforts will need to look to engage decision-makers from other areas of Butler County.
➤ The interactive map only received ten comments. Phase 2 advertising efforts should look to promote commenting on the interactive map in addition to taking the project survey.
➤ Focus groups were promoted broadly to businesses, social service organizations, and people who live, work, and visit Butler County. Despite this, only 8 attendees participated among all three focus groups. Insightful feedback was received from these discussions but for future focus group efforts, higher attendance would be preferred.

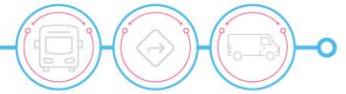Table 1 provides a count of participants by method for Phase 1.

Table 1. Phase Public Engagement Participation by Method

Method	Number of people engaged
Public Survey	308
Operator Survey	20
Decision Maker Survey	13
Business/Employer Survey	12
Interactive Map	10
Focus Groups	21

Several common themes were identified through this round of engagement.

➤ Strengths

➤ Fare-free system
➤ Generally reliable, and on-time service
➤ Bus operators' friendliness and knowledge of routes and riders

➤ Areas of improvements to BCRTA service:

➤ Focus on serving residents (not just students)
➤ Expanding service to neighborhoods and having the same level of service available during the school year available year-round
➤ More service to cities across the county and to Cincinnati vs. within cities
➤ More service outside of typical commute hours – early mornings, nights, midday, and on weekends
➤ Bi-directional routes so customers do not have to ride the full loop
➤ Increased capacity on certain routes/during certain times of day
➤ Finding more drivers to limit service cuts
➤ Matching schedules, rider app, and operator tablet programming

➤ Areas of improvement to BCRTA facilities:

➤ Real-time transit information
➤ More shelters
➤ More benches, particularly around apartment complexes and shopping centers.

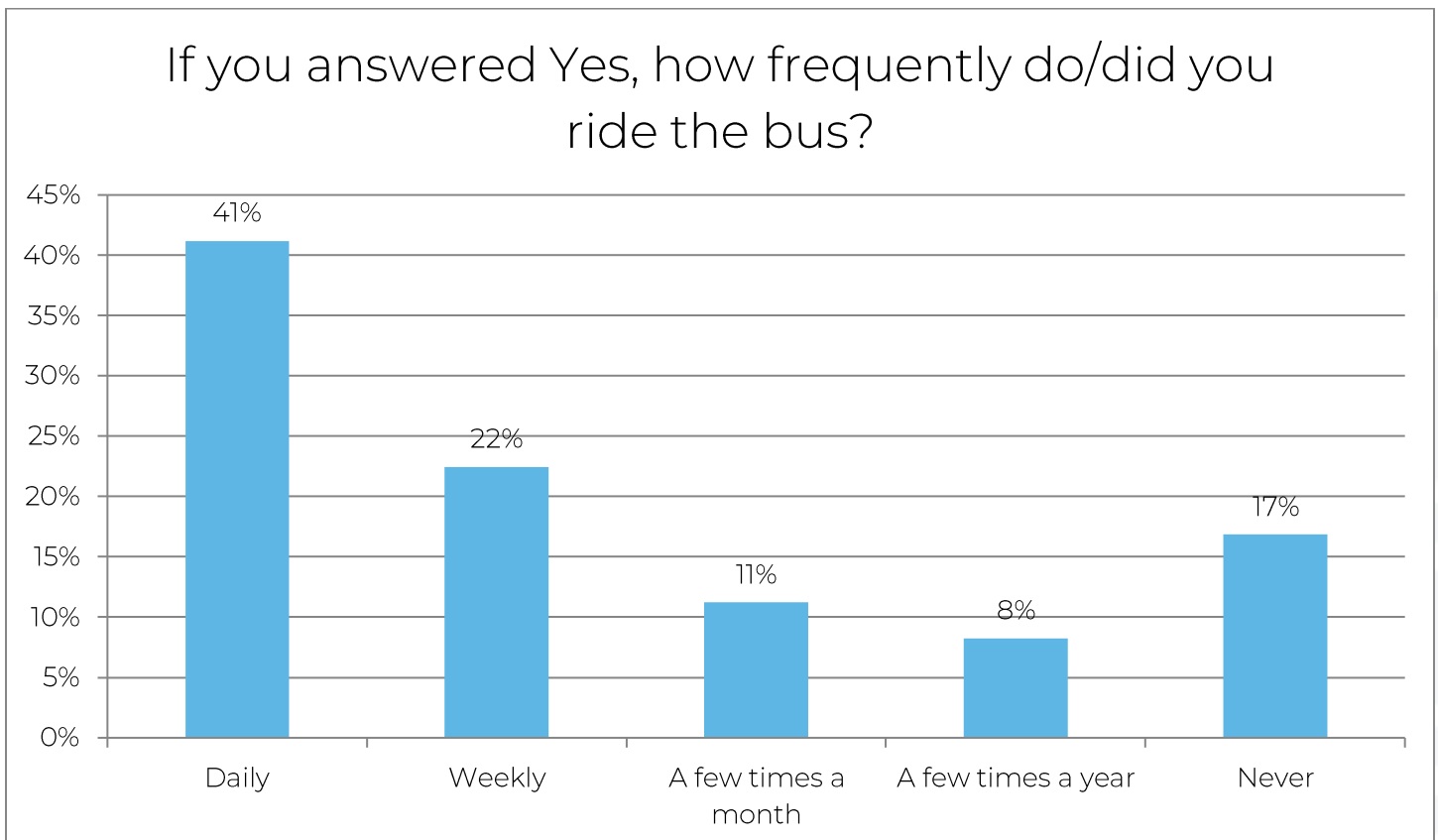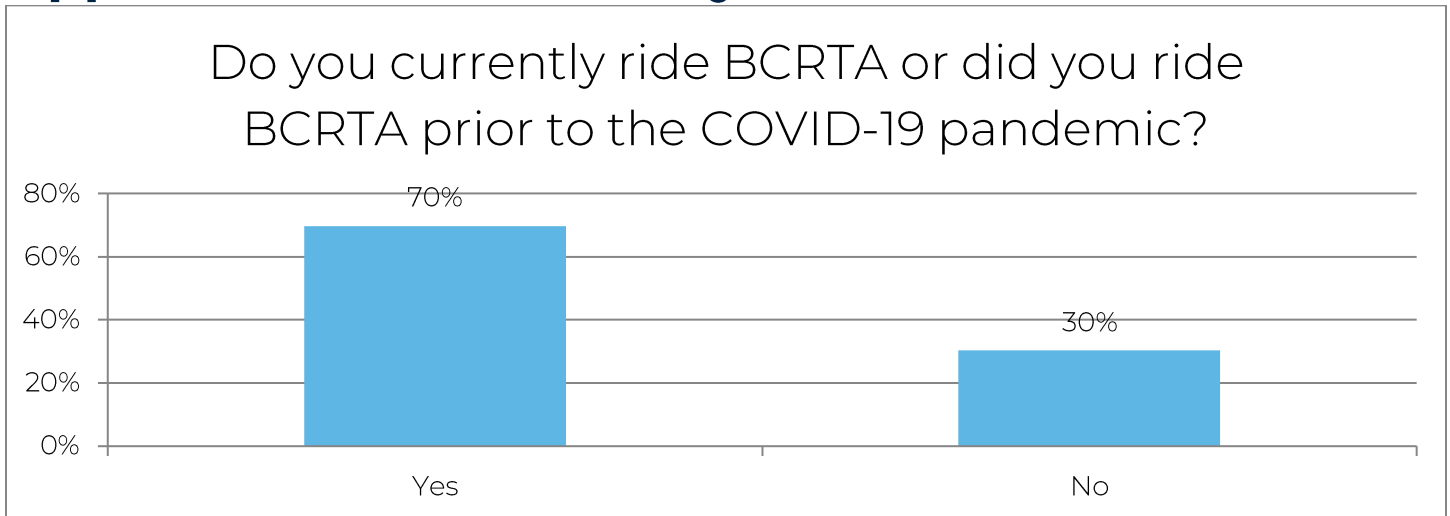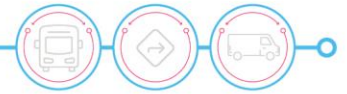➤ Areas of improvement for customer information and customer experience:

➤ More accessible/easy-to-understand transit information (e.g., more accuracy on bus tracking app, better information at shelters and online)

➤ Robust advertising around driver positions, routes, and services that BCRTA offers (e.g., BGo, paratransit)

➤ Robust education around how to ride transit (e.g., "learn how to ride days", info panels inside buses, presentations at Miami Freshmen orientation)

As the plan moves to subsequent phases, the strengths, areas for improvement, and locations that need improved transit service identified in Phase 1 engagement will inform the recommendations that ultimately are identified as a part of this plan.

Appendix A. Public Survey Results

Do you currently ride BCRTA or did you ride BCRTA prior to the COVID-19 pandemic?

- Yes: 70%
- No: 30%

If you answered Yes, how frequently do/did you ride the bus?

- Daily: 41%
- Weekly: 22%
- A few times a month: 11%
- A few times a year: 8%
- Never: 17%

Kimley»Horn

Where do/did you typically go using public transit? Select all that apply.

Category	Percentage
School	39%
Work	40%
Medical services	16%
Social or county services	10%
Stores or restaurants	37%
To visit family or friends	13%
Parks and recreation facilities	12%
Special events	10%
I do/did not ride the bus	22%
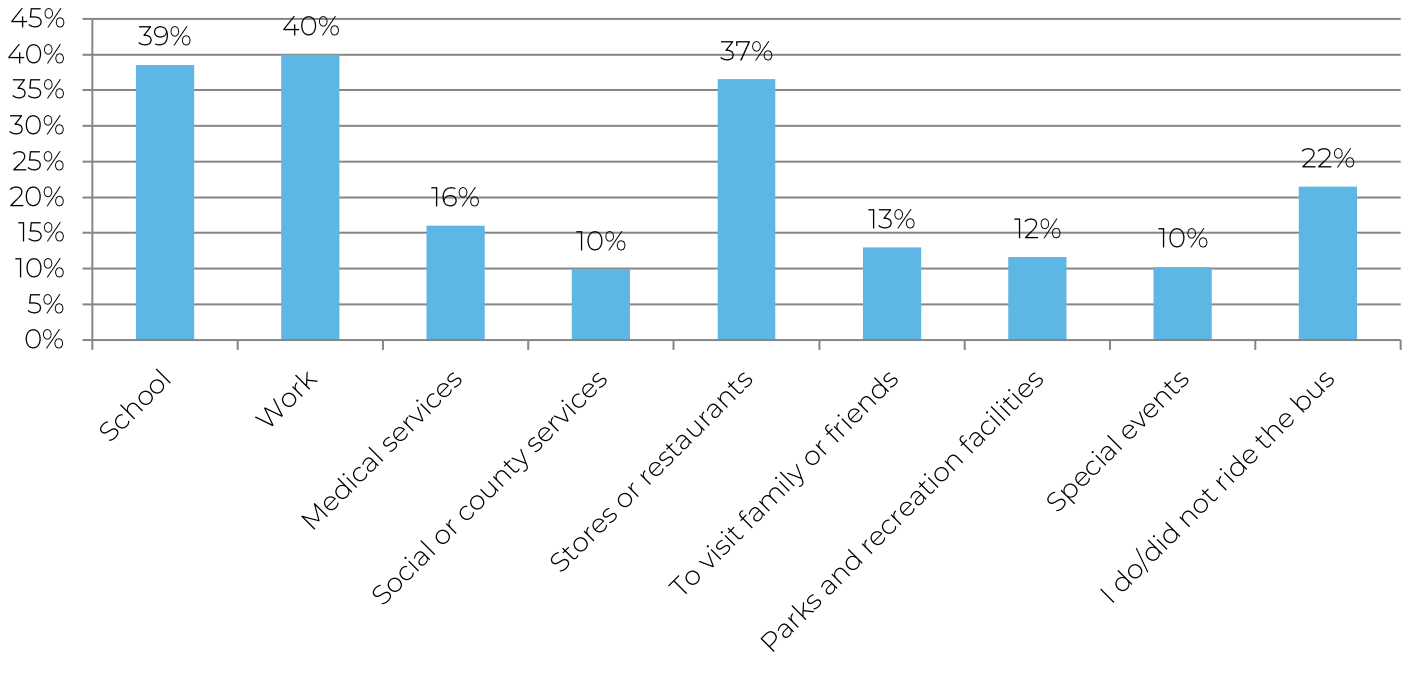
Which route/service do/did you ride the most? Select one.

Kimley»Horn
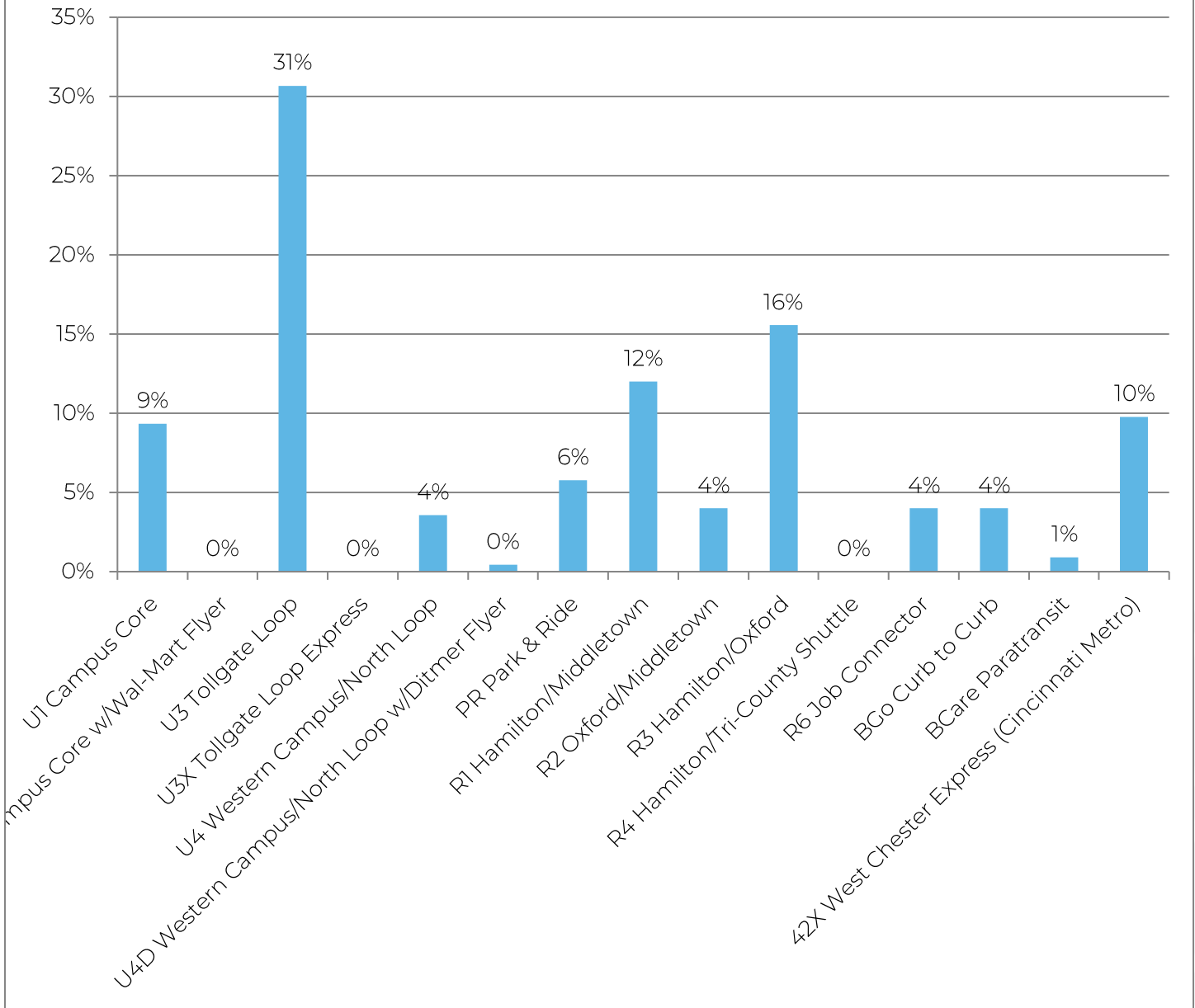
How often do you use transit now compared to before COVID-19?

- About the same: 36%
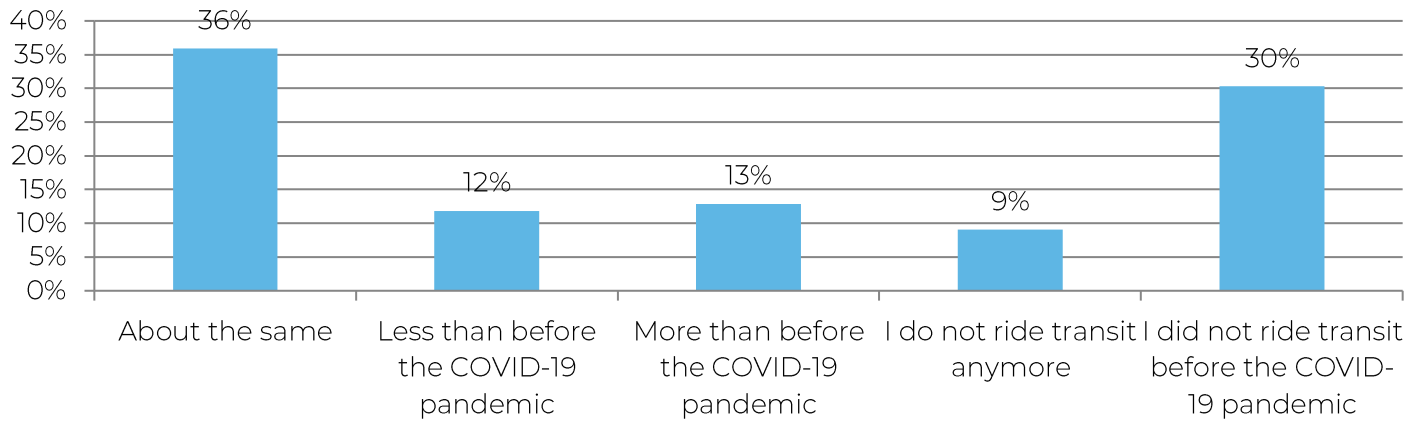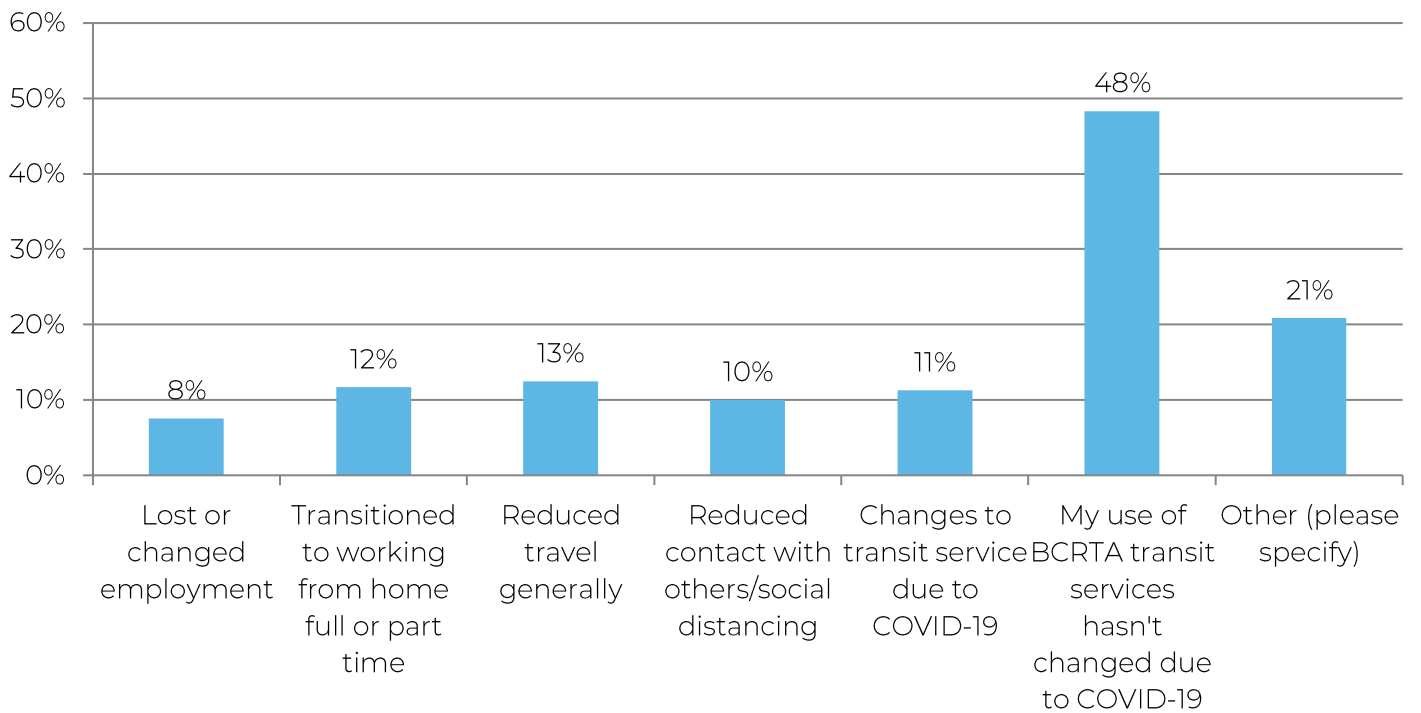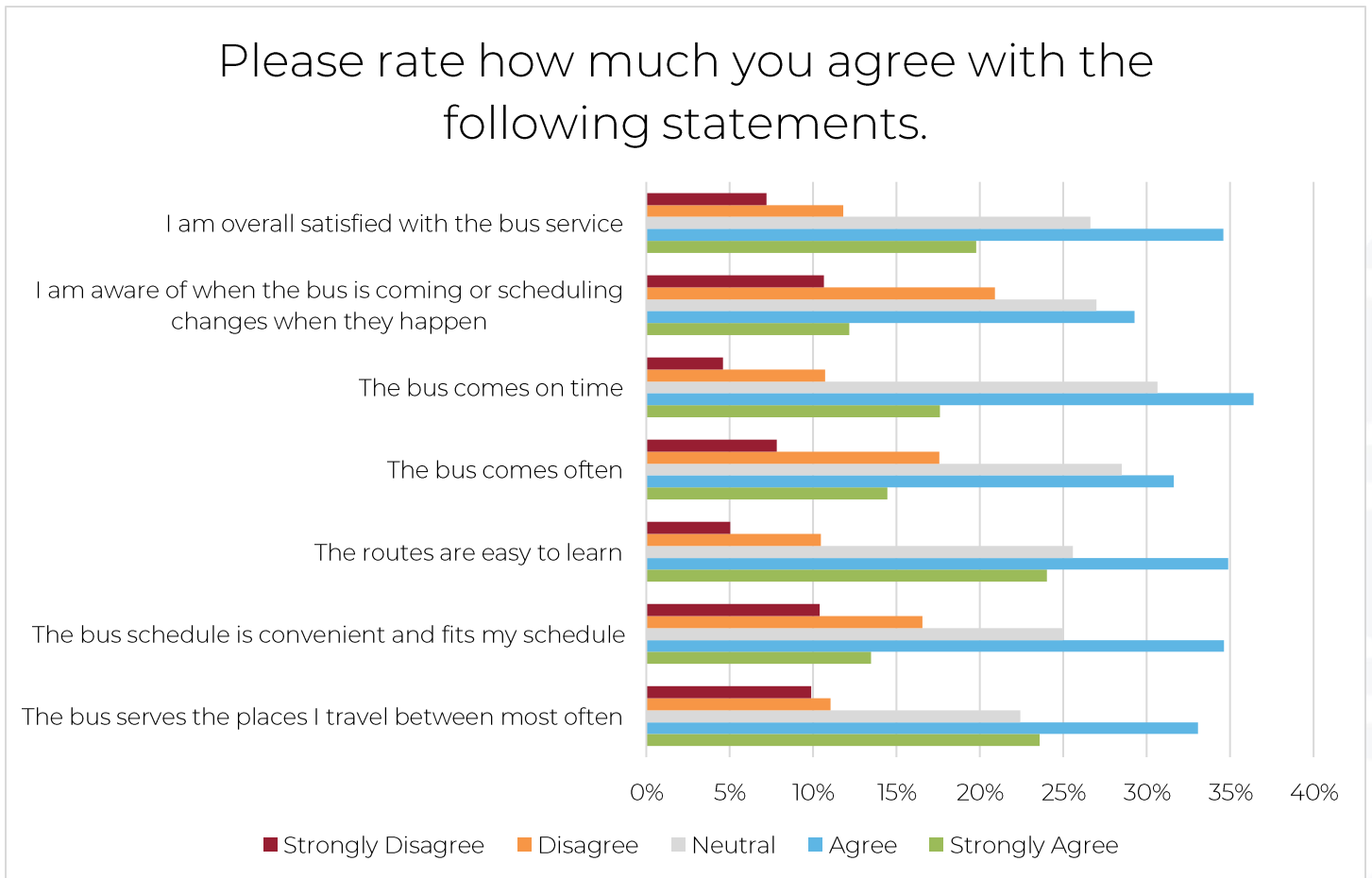- Less than before the COVID-19 pandemic: 12%
- More than before the COVID-19 pandemic: 13%
- I do not ride transit anymore: 9%
- I did not ride transit before the COVID-19 pandemic: 30%

If your use of BCRTA transit services changed due to COVID-19, why? Select all that apply.

- Lost or changed employment: 8%
- Transitioned to working from home full or part time: 12%
- Reduced travel generally: 13%
- Reduced contact with others/social distancing: 10%
- Changes to transit service due to COVID-19: 11%
- My use of BCRTA transit services hasn't changed due to COVID-19: 48%
- Other (please specify): 21%

Kimley»Horn

In your opinion, how easy is it to ride BCRTA?

Category	Value
Very difficult	5%
Somewhat difficult	8%
Moderate	11%
Somewhat easy	25%
Very easy	35%
I have not used this system	15%

Please rate how much you agree with the following statements.

- I am overall satisfied with the bus service
- I am aware of when the bus is coming or scheduling changes when they happen
- The bus comes on time
- The bus comes often
- The routes are easy to learn
- The bus schedule is convenient and fits my schedule
- The bus serves the places I travel between most often

Legend: ■ Strongly Disagree ■ Disagree ■ Neutral ■ Agree ■ Strongly Agree

Kimley»Horn

What barriers have you experienced to taking transit? Select all that apply.

Bar chart values:
- I don't know where the bus goes: 19%
- The bus doesn't come frequently enough: 43%
- My trip requires too many transfers: 11%
- There is not enough information at bus stops: 25%
- Traveling on the bus takes too long: 16%
- The bus doesn't go where I need to travel: 41%
- Other (please specify): 32%
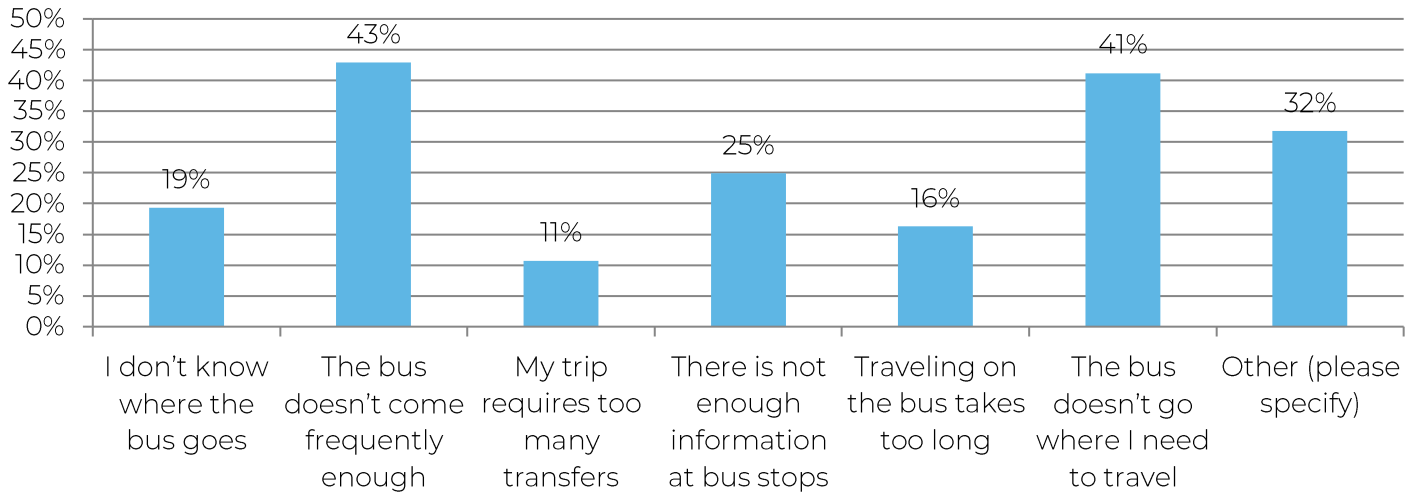
What would make riding the bus more appealing to you?

Bar chart values (Average Ranking):
- Earlier service: 2.95
- More midday service: 2.93
- Later service: 3.44
- The bus comes more often: 4.21
- Bus serves more locations: 4.33
- More weekend service: 3.53

■ Average Ranking

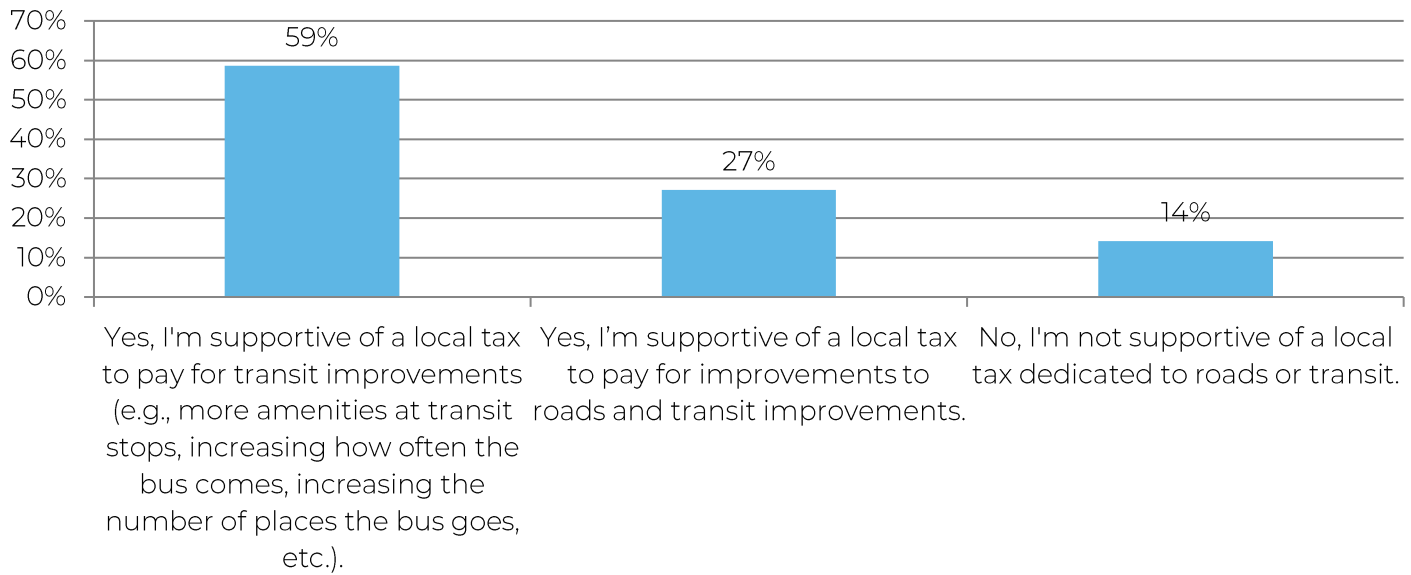Kimley»Horn

Transit service sometimes requires trade-offs. Please help us understand what is most important to you by selecting which option you prefer more in each scenario.
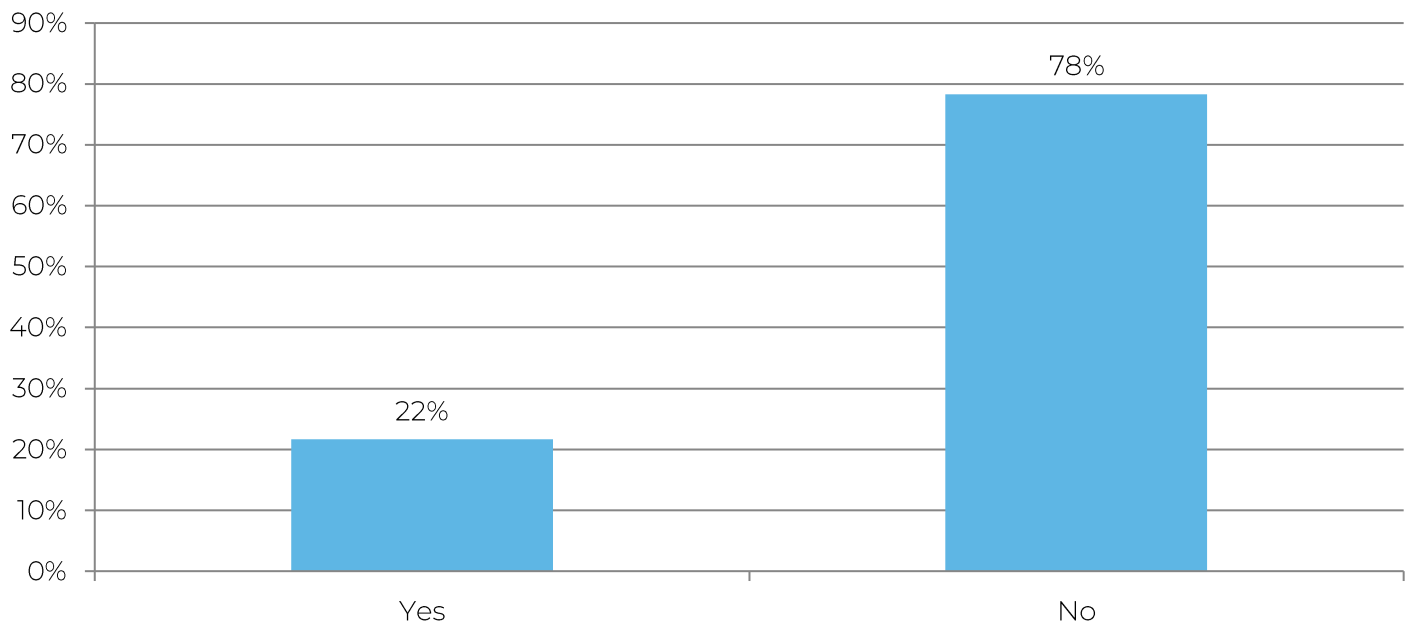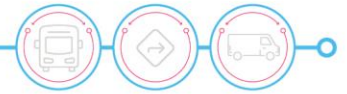

	Strongly prefer first option	No preference	Strongly prefer second option
The bus comes more often OR The bus operates more hours in the day	47%	22%	30%
More weekday service OR More weekend service	38%	18%	44%
More bus stops per route for shorter walk distances to/from stops OR Fewer bus stops per route for faster bus travel	45%	31%	24%
Buses running on more streets, but the bus comes less often OR Buses running on fewer streets but the bus comes more often	35%	29%	37%
Improve existing service in the same locations OR Serve new areas	41%	19%	40%

Kimley»Horn

Are you supportive of a local tax to help pay for transit services?

Yes, I'm supportive of a local tax to pay for transit improvements (e.g., more amenities at transit stops, increasing how often the bus comes, increasing the number of places the bus goes, etc.). — 59%

Yes, I'm supportive of a local tax to pay for improvements to roads and transit improvements. — 27%

No, I'm not supportive of a local tax dedicated to roads or transit. — 14%

Would you like to participate in a focus group regarding BCRTA service?

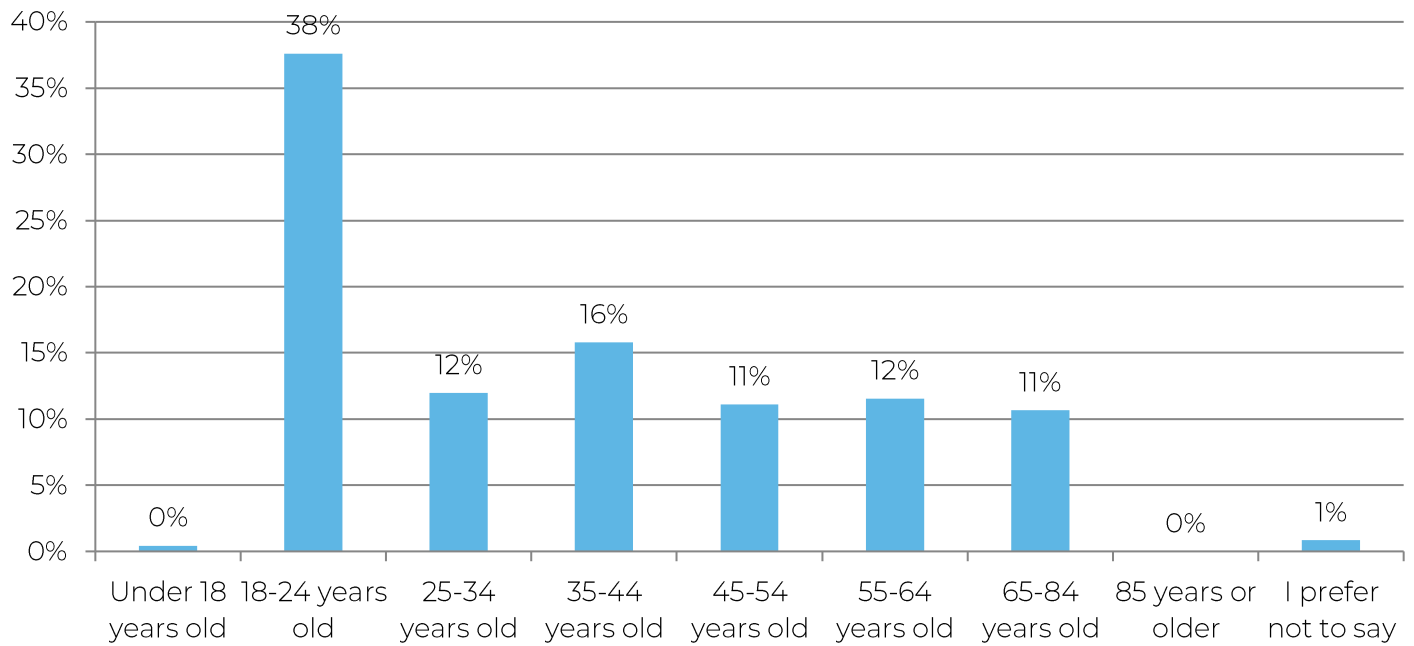Yes — 22%

No — 78%

Kimley»Horn

Are you able to drive a vehicle/do you have access to a vehicle?

What is your age?

Kimley》Horn
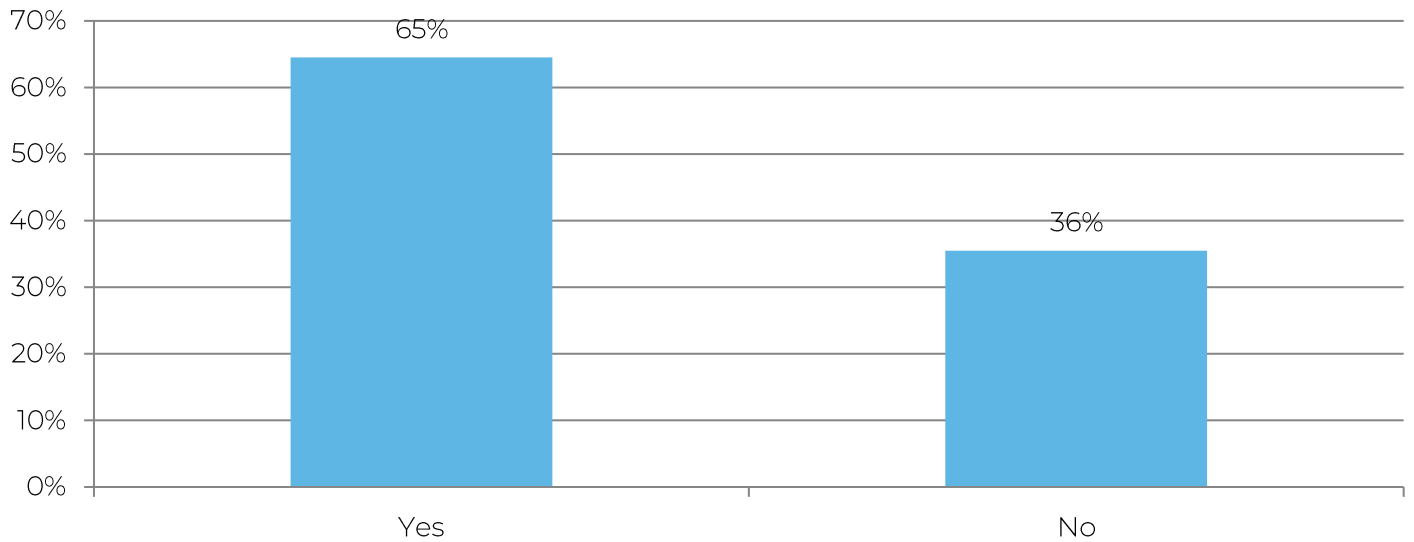
With which gender do you identify?

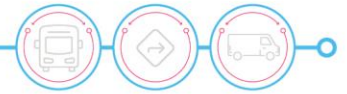| Male	Female	Gender non-binary	I prefer not to say	Not listed:
42%	52%	3%	3%	0%
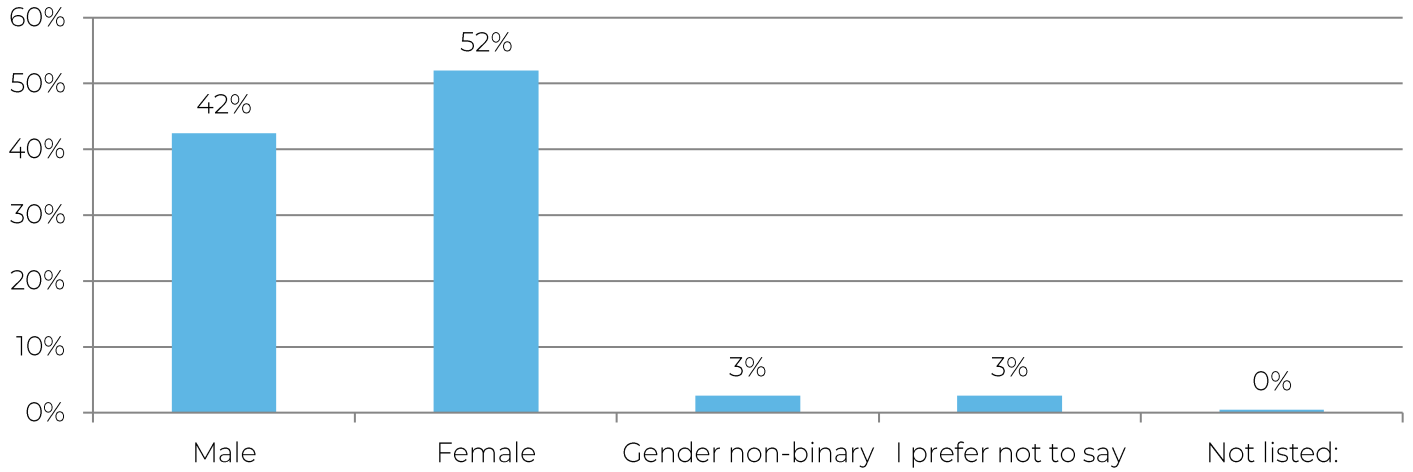
What is your racial, ethnic, or Indigenous identity? Select all that apply.

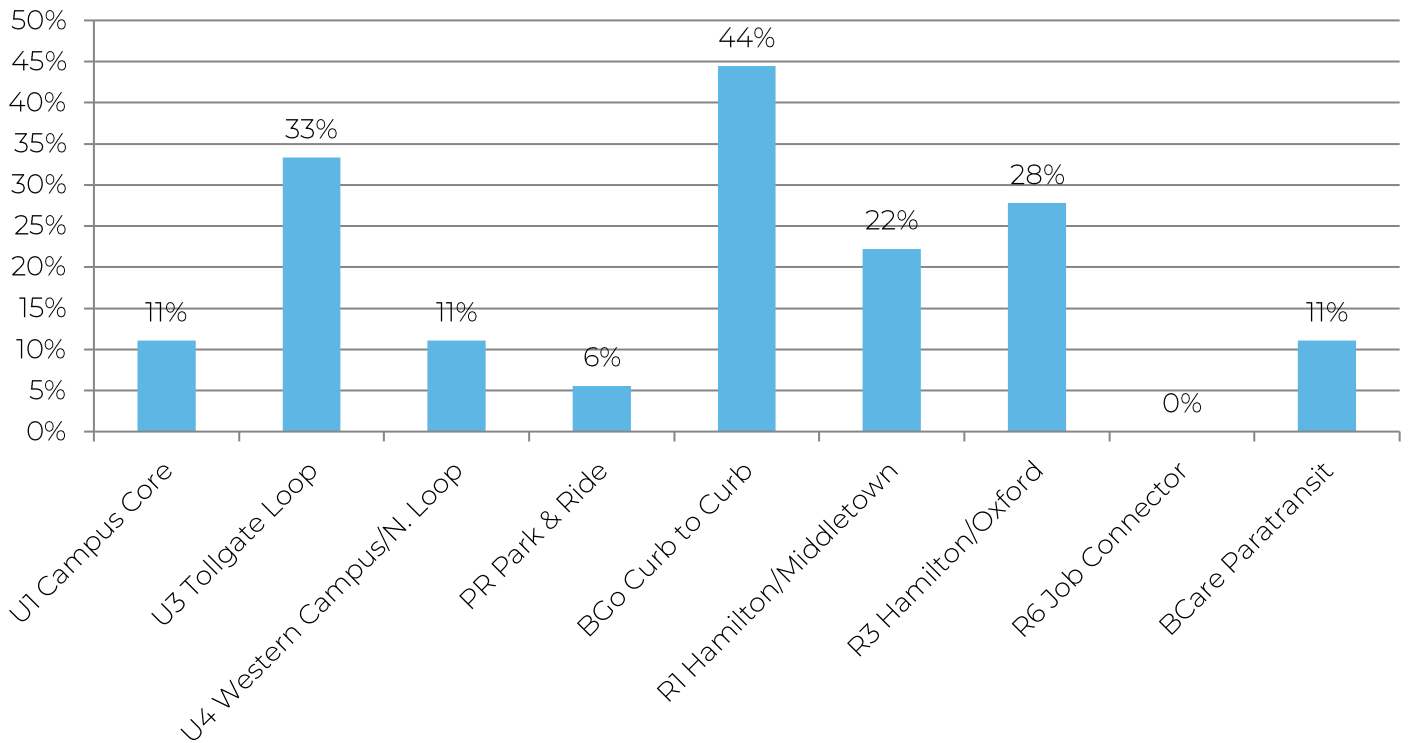| American Indian or Alaska Native	Asian	Black or African American	Hispanic/Latino	Middle Eastern or North African	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific...	White	Prefer not to say	Other (please specify)
1%	11%	9%	3%	1%	0%	73%	7%	2%

Kimley»Horn
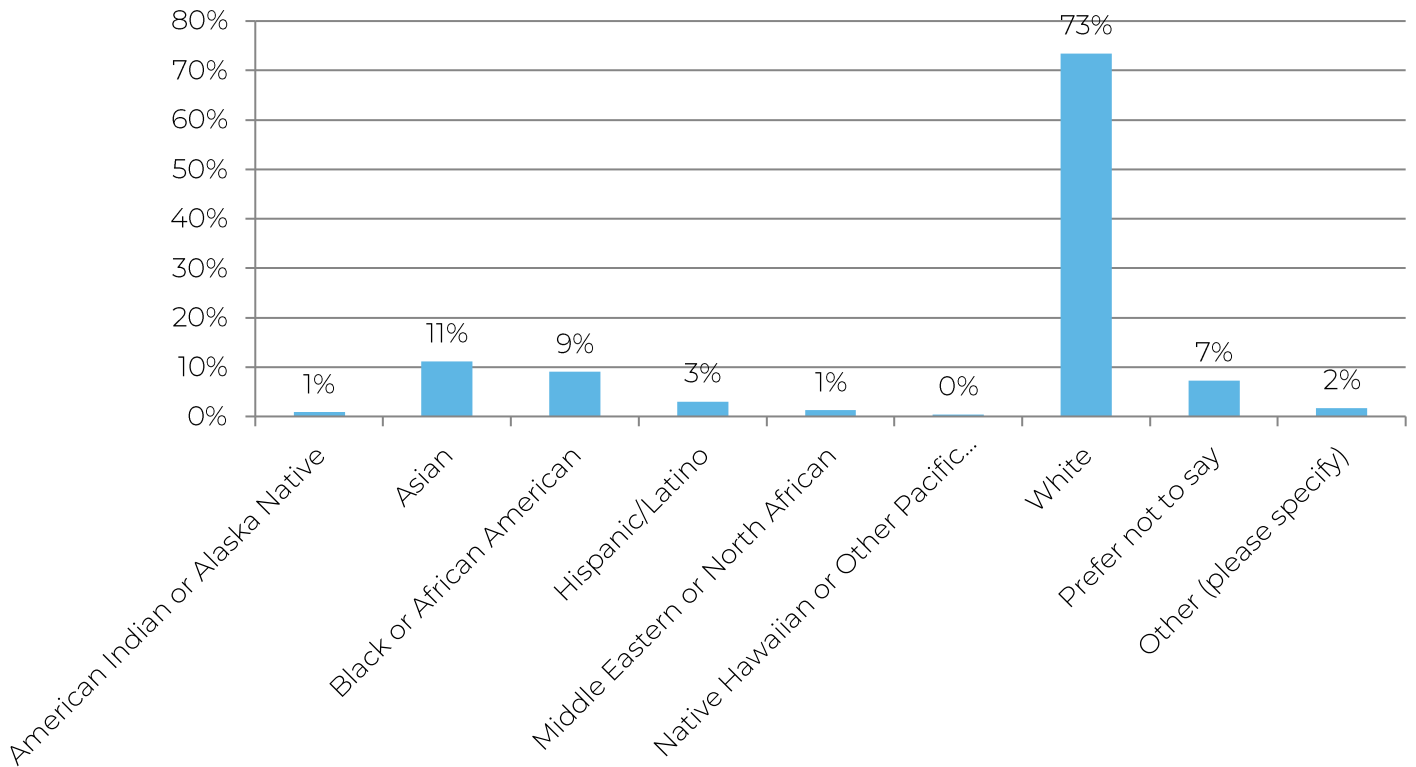
What is your household income? (Combined incomes of everyone in the household that is over 15 and working).

Kimley»Horn
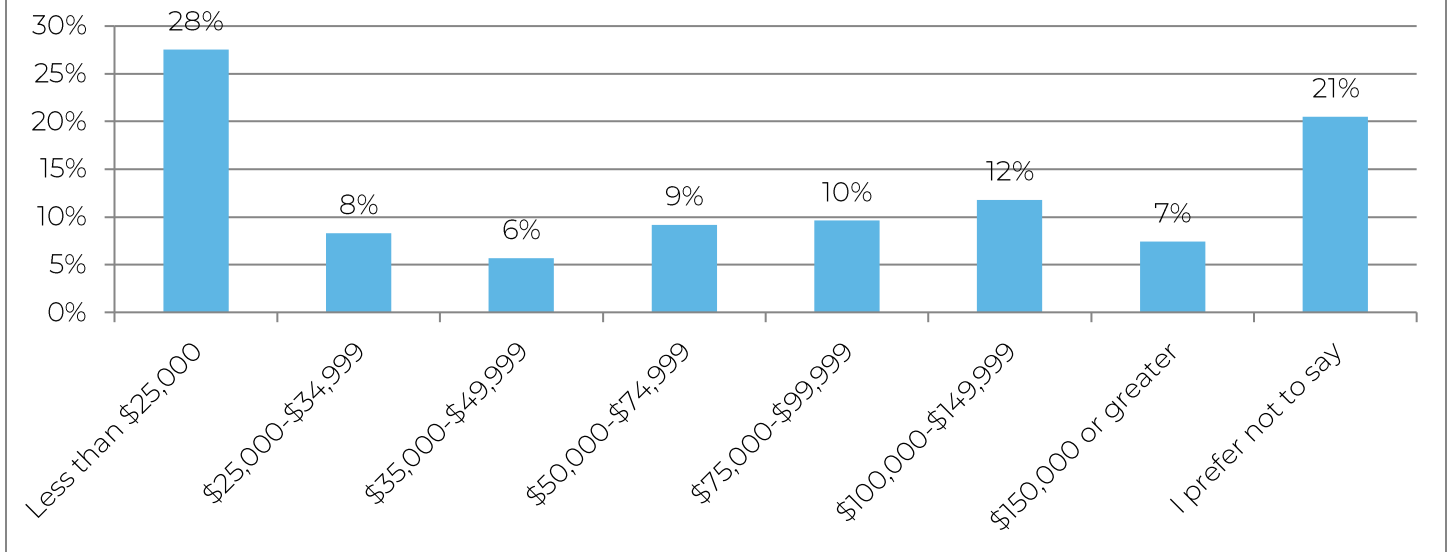
Appendix B. Operator Survey Results
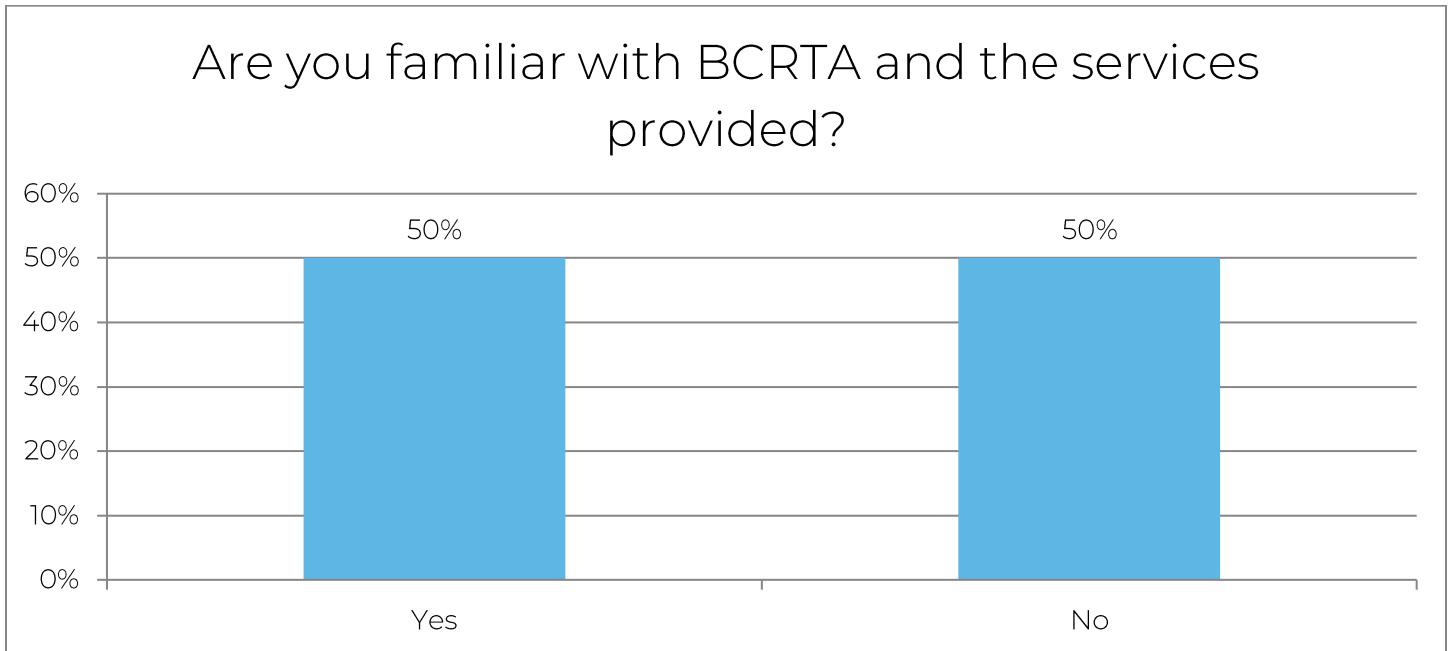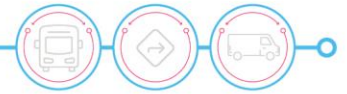
Which route(s) do you operate? Select all that apply.

Route	Percentage
U1 Campus Core	11%
U3 Tollgate Loop	33%
U4 Western Campus/N. Loop	11%
PR Park & Ride	6%
BGo Curb to Curb	44%
R1 Hamilton/Middletown	22%
R3 Hamilton/Oxford	28%
R6 Job Connector	0%
BCare Paratransit	11%

What time of day do you drive? Select all that apply.

Time	Percentage
Morning	68%
Midday	47%
Evening	32%
Weekdays	37%
Weekends	32%

Kimley»Horn
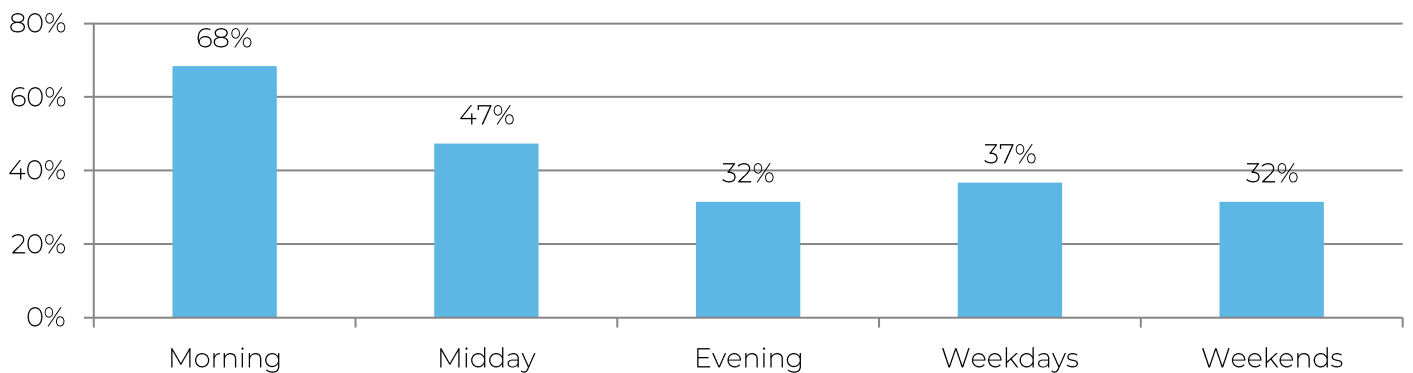
Appendix C. Business/Employer Survey Results

Are you familiar with BCRTA and the services provided?

Kimley»Horn

Would you like someone from BCRTA to provide materials for you to distribute to your employees?

Bar chart:
- Yes*: 50%
- No: 50%
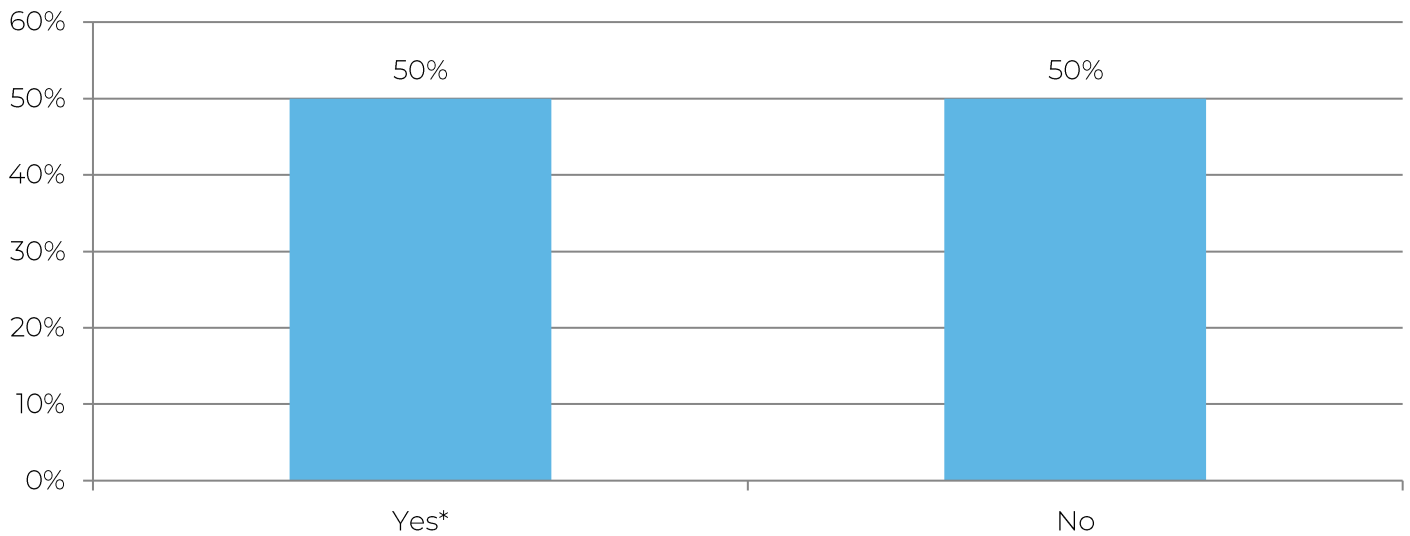
What is your entry level wage?

Bar chart:
- $10 per hour or less: 0%
- $11 - $15 per hour: 25%
- $16 - $20 per hour: 67%
- $21 - $25 per hour: 8%
- More than $25 per hour: 0%

Kimley»Horn

Does your organization have any parking challenges?

Bar chart showing:
- Yes: 8%
- No: 92%
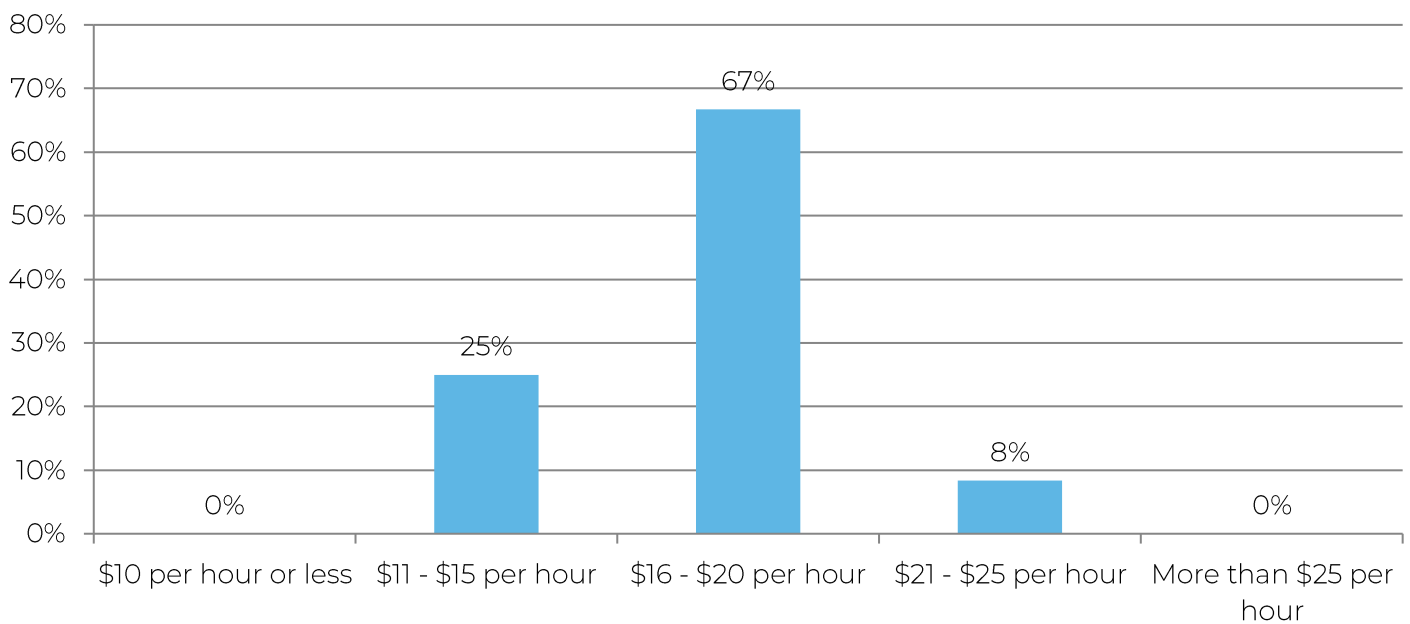
Appendix D. Interactive Map Comments

Map feedback is summarized by comment pin category.

Needs Improvement

➤ Need for service to Monroe, Ross, and West Chester for medical appointments and access to jobs and schools

➤ Need for the bus to go both ways on Spring St; would like to be able to go west on Spring St

➤ During peak hours, transit through High Street area at Miami University takes too long; consider removing car access

➤ Increase service frequency throughout the day on the Park & Ride route. In the mornings, use larger buses since there are more commuters arriving between 8 a.m. – 9 a.m. for classes

➤ The bus stop at Tallawanda Rd and E High St is in the right turn only lane and causes issues with cars trying to turn right; would like the bus stop to be moved or to create a pullout stop

Places I Go

➤ Bus stop at the Butler County Courthouse going towards are in a bad location for people who use the bus lift; cars/poles often block the stop; consider moving it closer to the light at Court St/Second St intersection

➤ At Market Street Station:

  ➤ Need for signs on Third St and Second St. to identify this hub/direct passengers to the stops mid-block
  ➤ Need for more benches and trash cans
  ➤ Like the murals inside/outside at this station
  ➤ Operators and public need a restroom; consider one opposite the elevators past the stairs
  ➤ Wind tunnel effect at Market St. is comfortable in the summer, miserable in the winter

➤ When arriving, on-board display should only show connecting departures (e.g., passengers arriving on R6 don't need to know when the next R6 arrives)

➤ The "next stop" announcement on buses comes too late for people to be able to gather their belongings, and the actual "arrival" announcement often comes past the street side signpost

Kimley»Horn