

Southern Georgia Regional Transit Development Plan

Public Survey #1

March 2025



1.0 Overview

The first public survey for the Southern Georgia Regional Transit Development Plan (TDP) occurred during the existing conditions analysis and needs identification phase of the planning process. A total of 85 community members participated between January 9, 2025 and February 28, 2025 and included 60 online responses and 25 hard copy responses.

All but 2 of the 18 counties in the region garnered at least one response. Echols and Irwin counties were the only two counties where no residents participated. The highest participation came from Lowndes County, with 31 percent of the total responses, followed by Pierce County, with 12 percent of the total.

Table 1. Participants by County

Residential County	Number of Participants	Percent of Total
Atkinson	2	2%
Bacon	6	7%
Ben Hill	3	4%
Berrien	9	11%
Brantley	3	4%
Brooks	3	4%
Charlton	1	1%
Clinch	6	7%
Coffee	1	1%
Cook	3	4%
Echols	0	0%
Irwin	0	0%
Lanier	1	1%
Lowndes	26	31%
Pierce	10	12%
Tift	1	1%
Turner	1	1%
Ware	8	9%

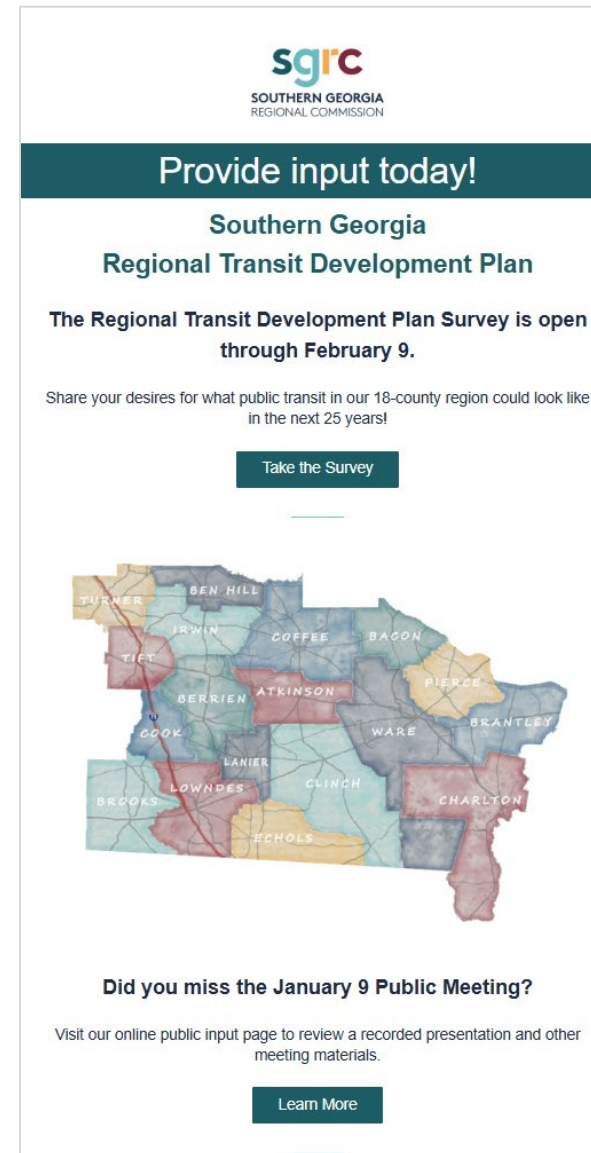
1.1 Format and Distribution Methods

The planning team launch the survey at the first public meeting, which was held in-person at the McMullen Southside Library in Valdosta on January 9, 2025. The following promotional methods were used to raise awareness about the survey:

- Social media – Both Southern Georgia Regional Commission (SGRC) and Valdosta-Lowndes Metropolitan Planning Organization social media accounts shared social posts to promote the survey period.
- Email campaigns – The planning team sent multiple email campaigns during the survey period to the outreach list (which consists of anyone who signs up for information via the project website).
- Promotional handouts and business cards – Several sets of handouts and business cards containing a QR code linking to the survey were provided to Project Advisory Committee members.
- Hard copy surveys – The SGRC Area Agency on Aging staff distributed printed surveys and promotional handouts to senior centers across the region. In addition, SGRC Transit provided hard copies and promotional handouts on the transit vehicles.

Roadshow events – The SGRC team attended community meetings around the region to share information about the Regional TDP and distribute the promotional handouts. SGRC Council members received handouts at their January Council meeting.

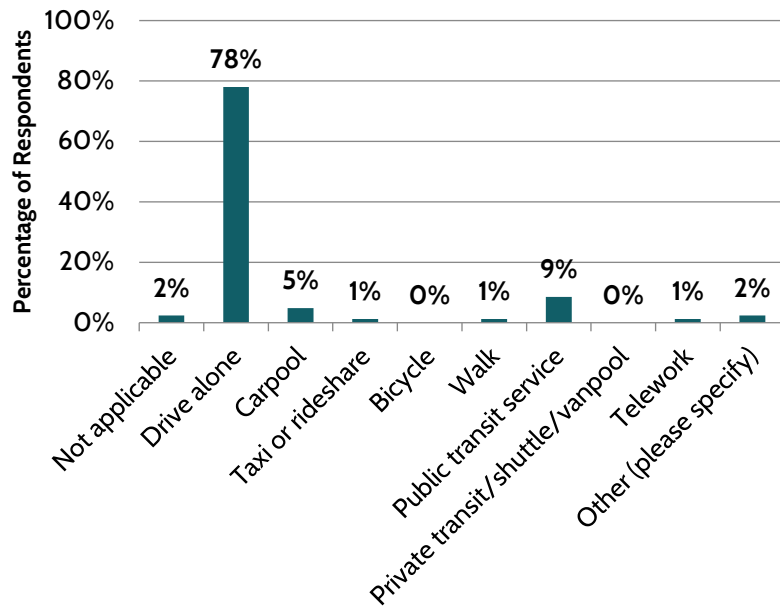
Figure 1. Excerpt from Email Campaign Promoting the Survey



2.0 General Travel Questions

The following set of questions gathered information about participants general travel habits. The majority of survey respondents indicated that they drive alone to get to work, school, and other destinations. More people indicated that they use public transit for work or school trips than those that use public transit trips for other purposes (including grocery, services, and non-emergency medical trips), at 9 percent and 4 percent respectively.

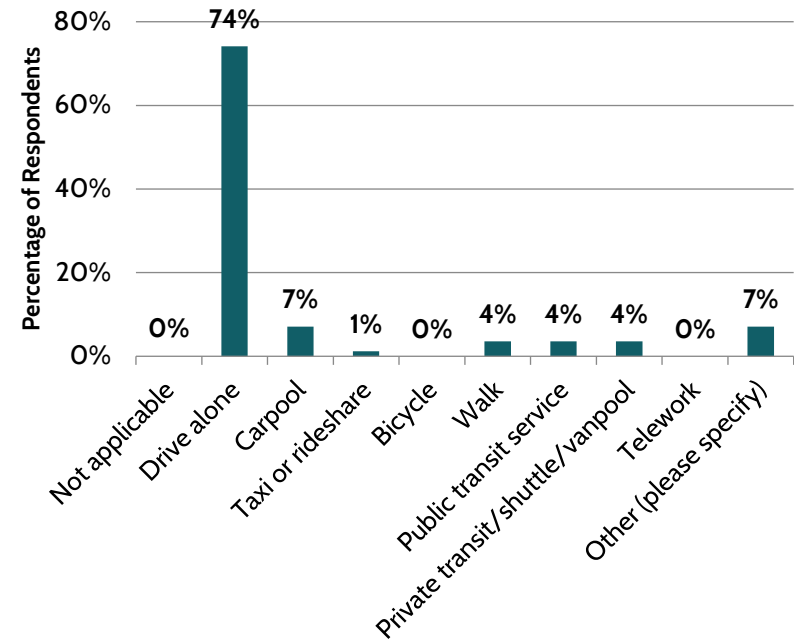
Figure 2. If applicable, how do you usually get to work and/or school?



Other Responses:

1. Public Transportation service, Private transit/shuttle/vanpool. It's hard to get a ride.
2. Lyft

Figure 3. How do you usually make other trips, such as groceries/shopping, access to services, and non-emergency medical trips?



Other Responses:

1. My brother in law takes me
2. Caregiver/ Granddaughter
3. Own car
4. Motivcare
5. Very rarely make these trips, other family does for me
6. Family

*Note: The open-ended responses are listed exactly as provided; the planning team did not make any adjustments for spelling or grammar.

As the following two charts show, the breakdown of respondents who frequently travel to Florida is about half, with leisure being the most popular type of trip to Florida.

Figure 4. Do you frequently travel to Florida?

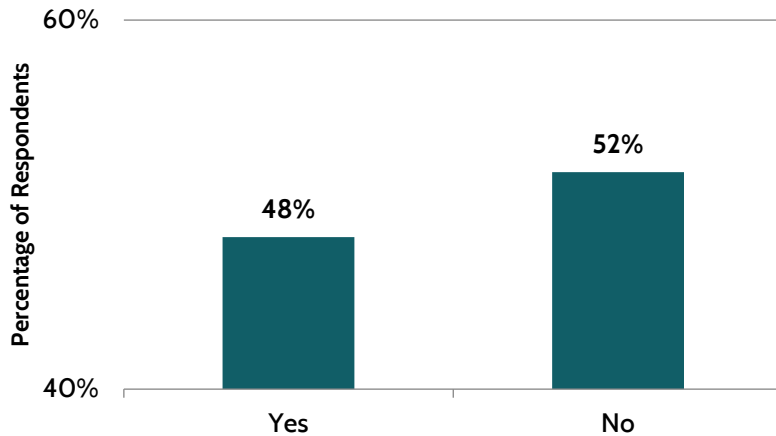
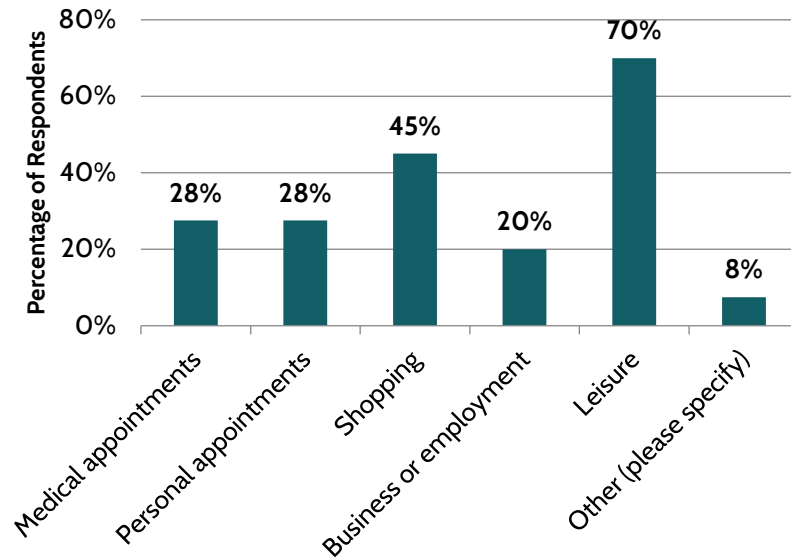


Table 2. Frequent Travel to Florida based on Participant’s Residential County

Residential County of Participant	Respondents who Indicated Frequent Travel to Florida
Atkinson County	1 of 2 (50%)
Ben Hill County	2 of 3 (67%)
Brantley County	2 of 3 (67%)
Brooks County	3 of 3 (100%)
Clinch County	3 of 6 (50%)
Coffee County	1 of 1 (100%)
Lowndes County	20 of 26 (77%)
Turner County	1 of 1 (100%)

*Note: Only the residential counties where at least half of that county’s participants indicated frequent travel to Florida are included in the table above.

Figure 5. What type of trips do you make to Florida?



Other Responses:

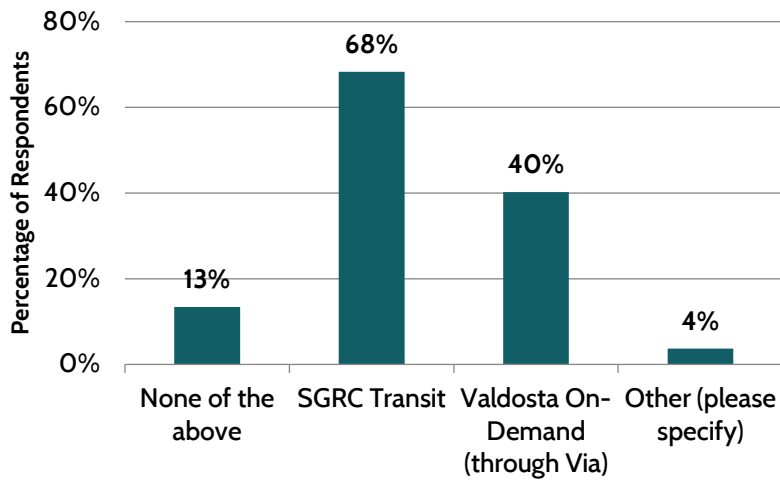
1. Ministry
2. Family vacation
3. Visiting family

*Note: The open-ended responses are listed exactly as provided; the planning team did not make any adjustments for spelling or grammar.

3.0 Transit Experience Questions

The Transit Experience questions sought to learn about the level of familiarity with the transit services in the region. These questions also gathered service-specific feedback,

Figure 6. There are several different transit services within the Southern Georgia Region. Which ones are you familiar with? Select all that apply and list any others not mentioned.



Other Responses:

1. i dpn't know
2. Ware Transit
3. Taxi services within the city and county

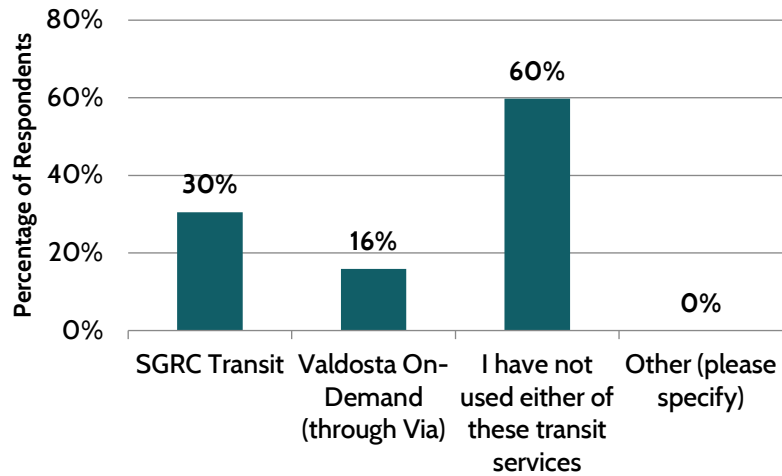
*Note: The open-ended responses are listed exactly as provided; the planning team did not make any adjustments for spelling or grammar.

The level of familiarity with SGRC Transit was high, with 56 out of 82 respondents (68 percent) indicating that the service was familiar. A lower proportion of respondents were familiar with Valdosta On-Demand, with 33 out of 82 participants, or 40 percent, responding that they were familiar with this service.

When broken down by the residential county of the respondent, Valdosta On-Demand was most familiar to Lowndes County residents (22 out of 25 Lowndes residents were familiar with Valdosta On-Demand). However, only 2 of 25 Lowndes residents were familiar with SGRC Transit. Residents of the other 17 counties were more familiar with SGRC Transit than Valdosta On-Demand.

Further analysis found that no notable relationship exists between age of respondents and familiarity with transit services. For example, a similar proportion of respondents in the 25-35 age bracket are familiar with SGRC Transit (75 percent) and Valdosta On-Demand (38 percent) as those respondents in the 65 and up age bracket, with 77 percent familiarity with SGRC Transit and 38 percent familiarity with Valdosta On-Demand.

Figure 7. Which transit service(s) have you taken?



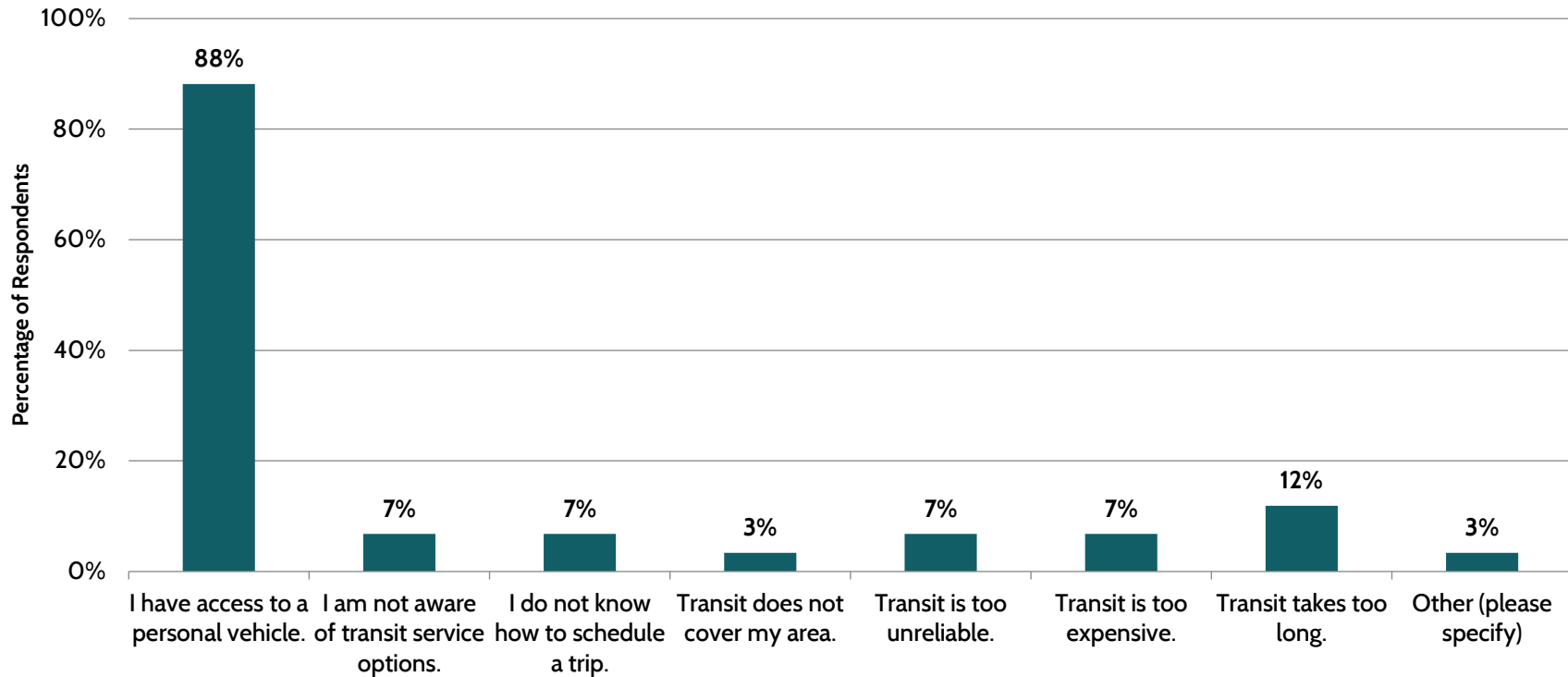
The percentage of survey respondents who have taken transit in the region is much lower than the percentage of respondents who are familiar with these services. Only 30 percent of respondents had used SGRC Transit, and an even lower percentage (16 percent) had used Valdosta On-Demand. While age does not seem to be a factor in transit service familiarity, it does impact who has used the transit services. Table 3 shows that 15 of 26 respondents in the 65 and up age bracket have used SGRC Transit.

Table 3. Use of Each Transit Service by Age of Respondents

Age Group	Number of Participants	Percent of Age Group who has used SGRC Transit	Percent of Age Group who has used Valdosta On-Demand
18 - 24	1	100%	100%
25 - 34	8	38%	13%
35 - 44	7	0%	14%
45 - 54	9	0%	0%
55 - 64	10	30%	0%
65 and up	26	58%	12%

Sixty percent of respondents indicated they do not ride public transit. For most of these respondents (88 percent), having access to a personal vehicle is their primary reason for not using transit. Another 12 percent of these respondents indicated their reason for not using transit is the length of time associated with a transit trip.

Figure 8. If you do not ride public transit, why not?



Other Responses:

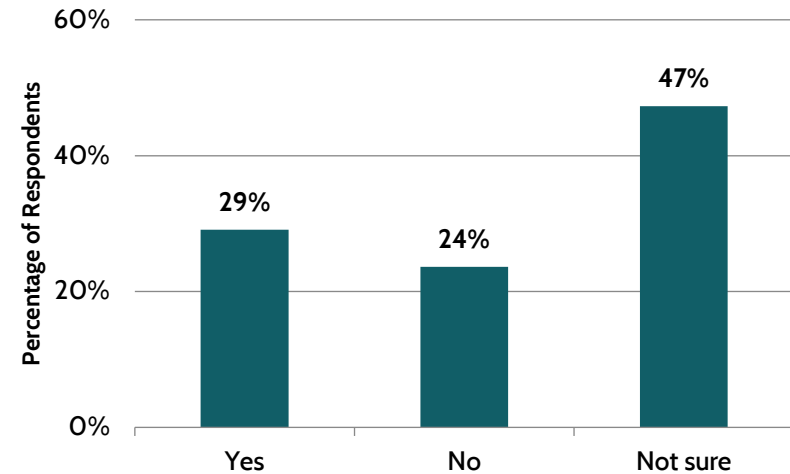
- We do not have a transit system
- I use transit

*Note: The open-ended responses are listed exactly as provided; the planning team did not make any adjustments for spelling or grammar.

A review of respondents’ reasons for not riding public transit by their residential county unveils some interesting insights:

- Some respondents who live within counties served by transit (Lowndes and Tift counties) are unaware of the transit options.
- Seven respondents selected, “transit takes too long.” One of these respondents lives in Pierce County, and the other six respondents are residents of Lowndes County.
- Four respondents selected, “transit is too unreliable.” Three of these respondents live in Lowndes County, and the other respondent lives in Pierce County.
- Four respondents selected, “transit is too expensive.” Three of these respondents live in Lowndes County, and the other respondent lives in Pierce County.
- Four respondents selected, “I don’t know how to schedule a trip.” Three of these respondents live in Lowndes County, and the other respondent lives in Berrien County.

Figure 9. If the reasons you do not ride public transit were addressed, would you be inclined to ride transit?



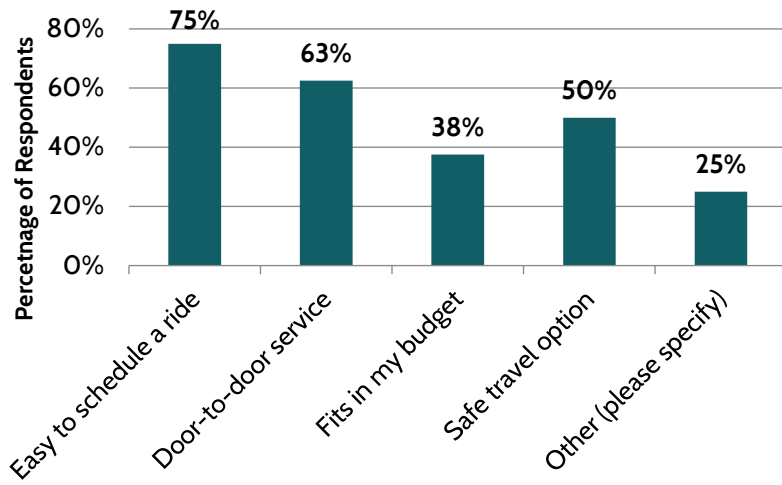
Of the 55 respondents who answered, 16 selected “yes,” indicating that they would be inclined to ride transit if their concerns could be mitigated. The residential counties of the respondents who selected “yes” are:

- Berrien (2 respondents)
- Brooks (1 respondent)
- Lowndes (8 respondents)
- Pierce (1 respondent)
- Tift (1 respondent)
- Turner (1 respondent)
- Ware (2 respondents)

3.1 SGRC Transit Service Feedback

Fifteen riders of SGRC Transit responded to this set of questions. The most popular types of trips among this group are senior center (62 percent) and medical (38 percent) trips. About one-fourth of this group use SGRC Transit daily, and about one-fourth use it weekly.

Figure 10. What do you like about SGRC Transit? (Select all that apply)



Other responses:

1. n/a
2. n/a
3. like. drivers-friendly.
4. Sometimes Hard
5. None
6. Great customer service

*Note: The open-ended responses are listed exactly as provided; the planning team did not make any adjustments for spelling or grammar.

Figure 11. How often do you ride SGRC transit?

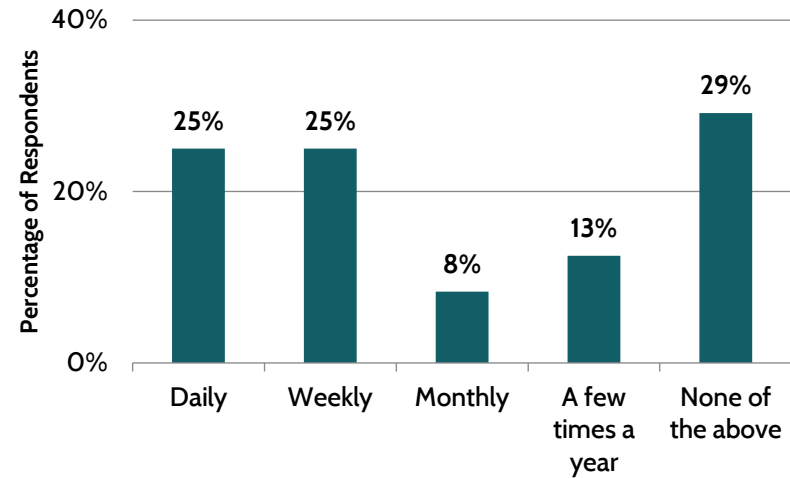


Figure 12. What types of trips do you book with SGRC Transit? (Select all that apply)

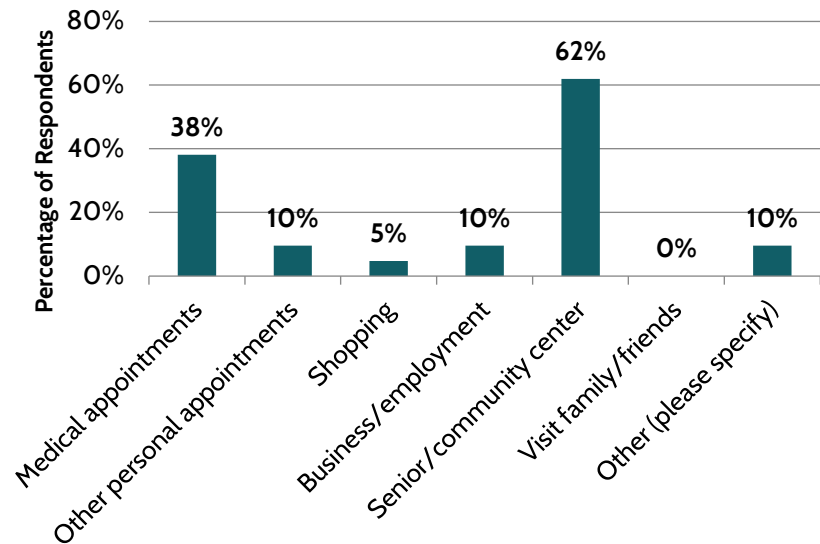
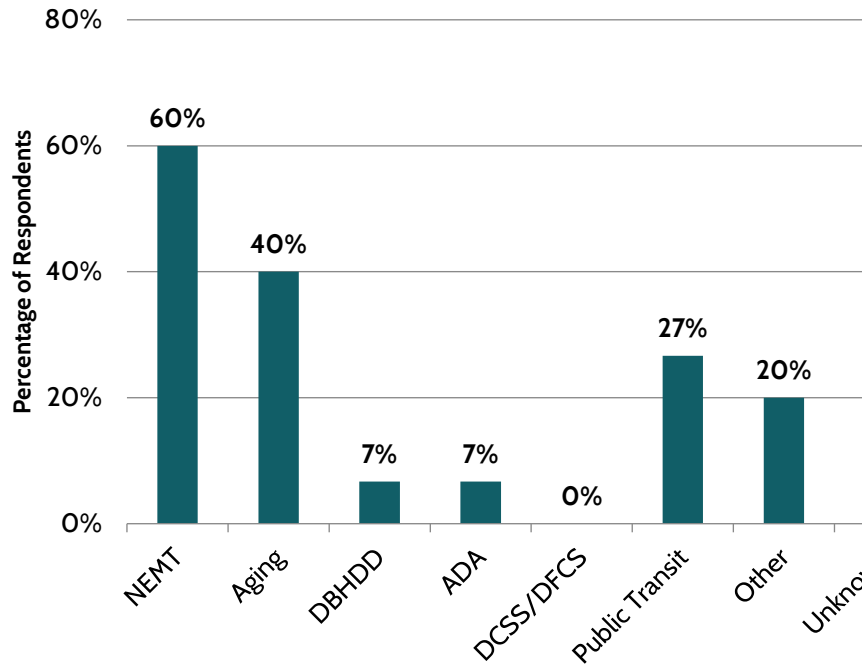


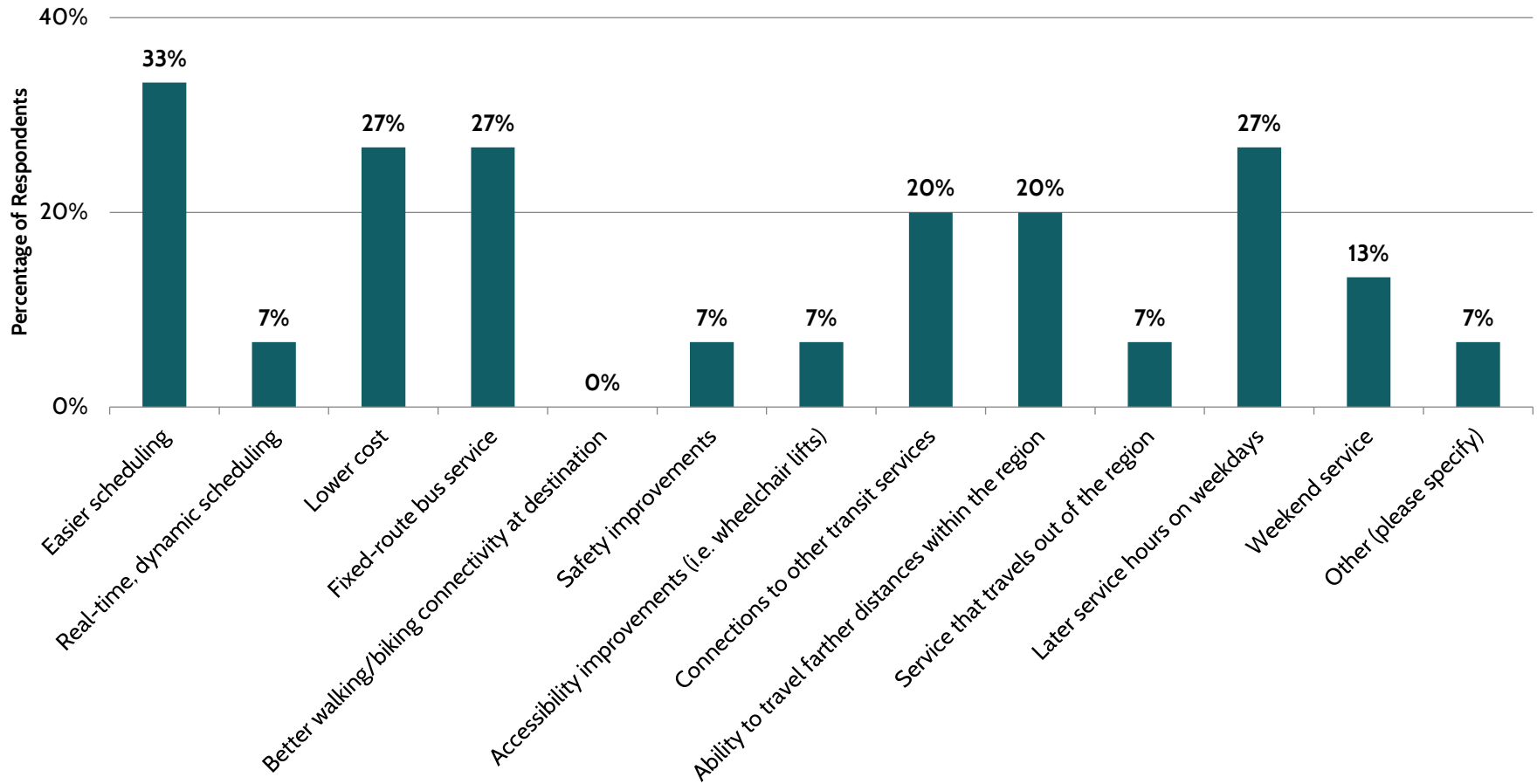
Figure 13. For medical trips, please specify the type(s) of trips that you are utilizing (if known)?



Acronyms in Chart

- **NEMT:** Non-Emergency Medical Transportation
- **DBHDD:** Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities
- **ADA:** Americans with Disability Act
- **DCSS/DFCS:** Department of Child Support Services/Division of Family and Children Services

Figure 14. What improvements could be made to SGRC Transit's service? (Select all that apply)



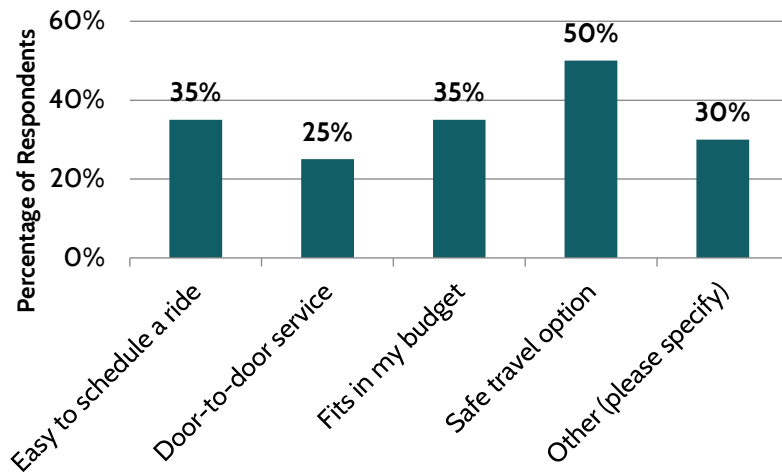
Other responses:

1. I'm fine.

3.2 Valdosta On-Demand Service Feedback

Fifteen riders of Valdosta On-Demand responded to this set of questions. While these respondents do not rely on transit for daily transportation needs (based on the ride frequency question), the top trip type (37 percent) is senior/community center trips.

Figure 15. What do you like about Valdosta On-Demand? (Select all that apply)



Other responses:

1. n/a
2. n/a
3. n/a
4. n/a
5. I don't use Valdosta on-demand
6. Its ok we need shuttle buses similar what vsu has that would do good for the city Valdosta on demand is just a bandaid for the city we need bigger transportation vehicles like a bus it don't have to be traditional buses but something nice so people will know Valdosta is a metropolitan city they have a bus system not just vans riding around people still don't know we have transportation here because Valdosta on demand is not go fix alot . Valdosta is too big not to have a fix transportation for the city and county.

*Note: The open-ended responses are listed exactly as provided; the planning team did not make any adjustments for spelling or grammar.

The respondent pool was comprised of people who are not regular users of Valdosta On-Demand, based on the reported frequency of using the service, as depicted in Figure 16. Of these users, the most common trip types (shown in Figure 17) are 1-senior/community center (37 percent), 2-business/employment (32 percent), and 3-medical appointments (26 percent).

Figure 16. How often do you ride Valdosta On-Demand transit?

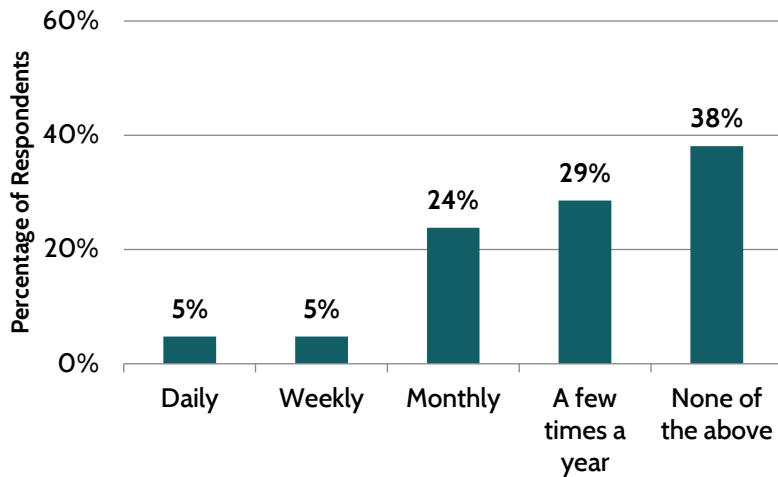
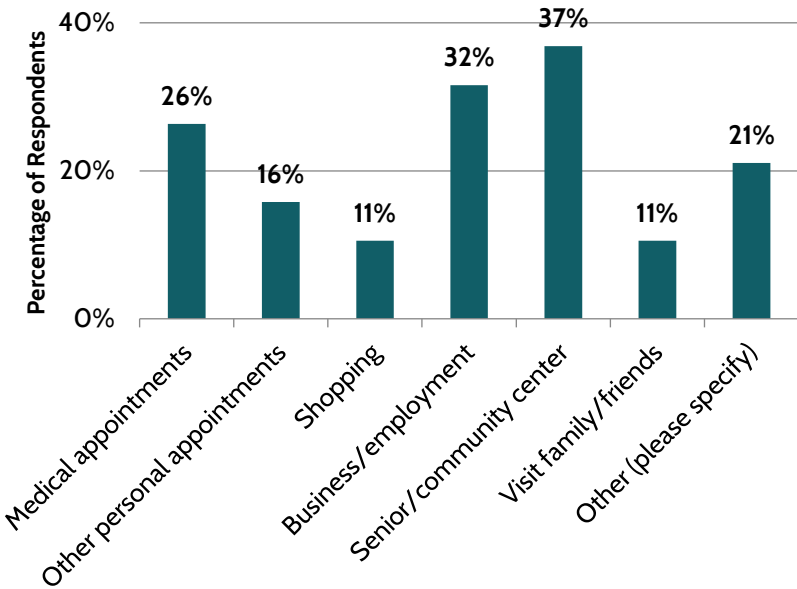


Figure 17. What types of trips do you book with Valdosta On-Demand? (Select all that apply)

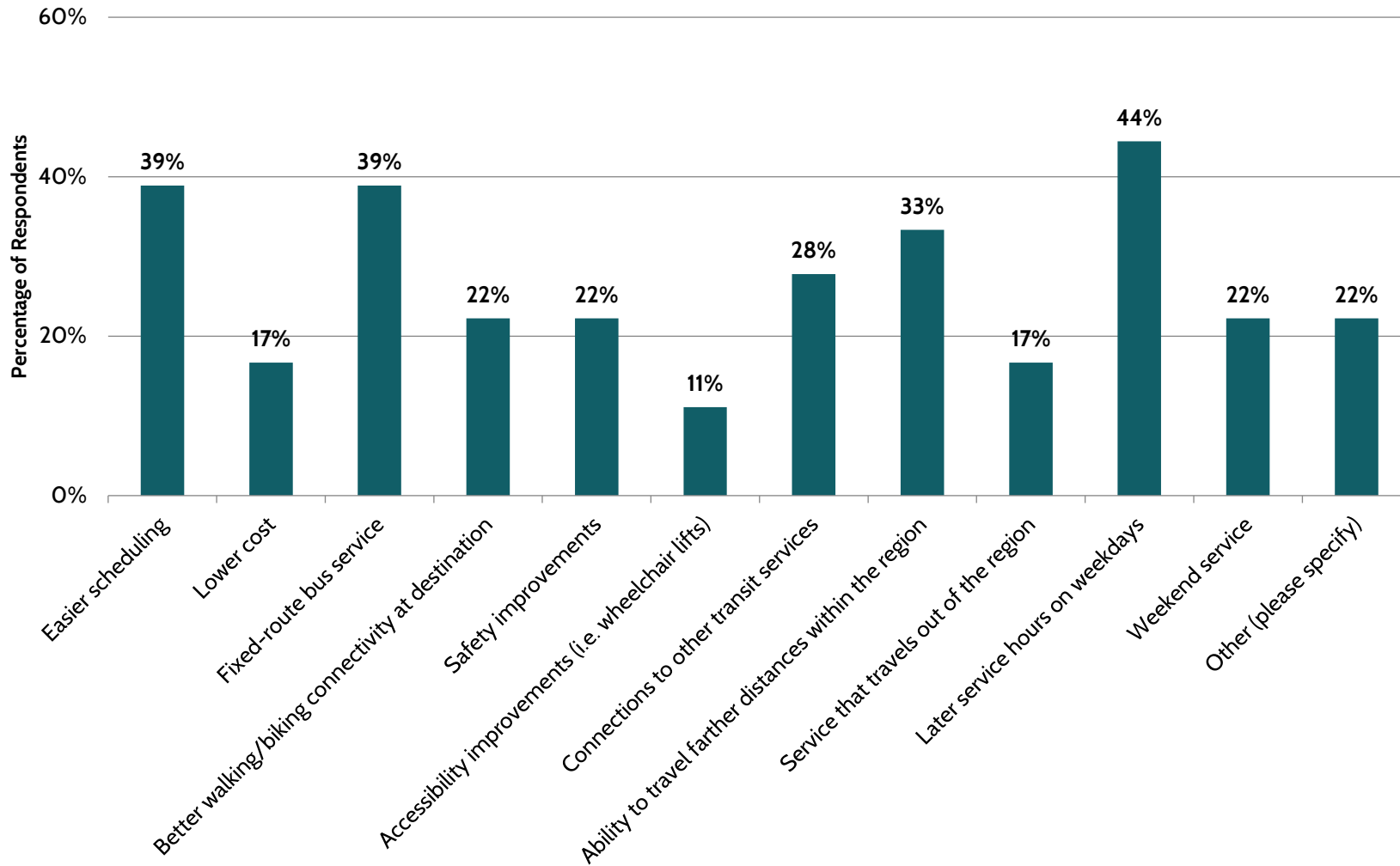


Other responses:

1. N/a
2. None
3. N/a
4. Work and shopping

As shown in Figure 18, the top desired improvement for the Valdosta On-Demand service was “later service on weekdays,” selected by 44 percent of respondents. There was a tie for the second desired improvement type, with 39 percent of respondents selecting both “fixed-route bus service” and “easier scheduling.”

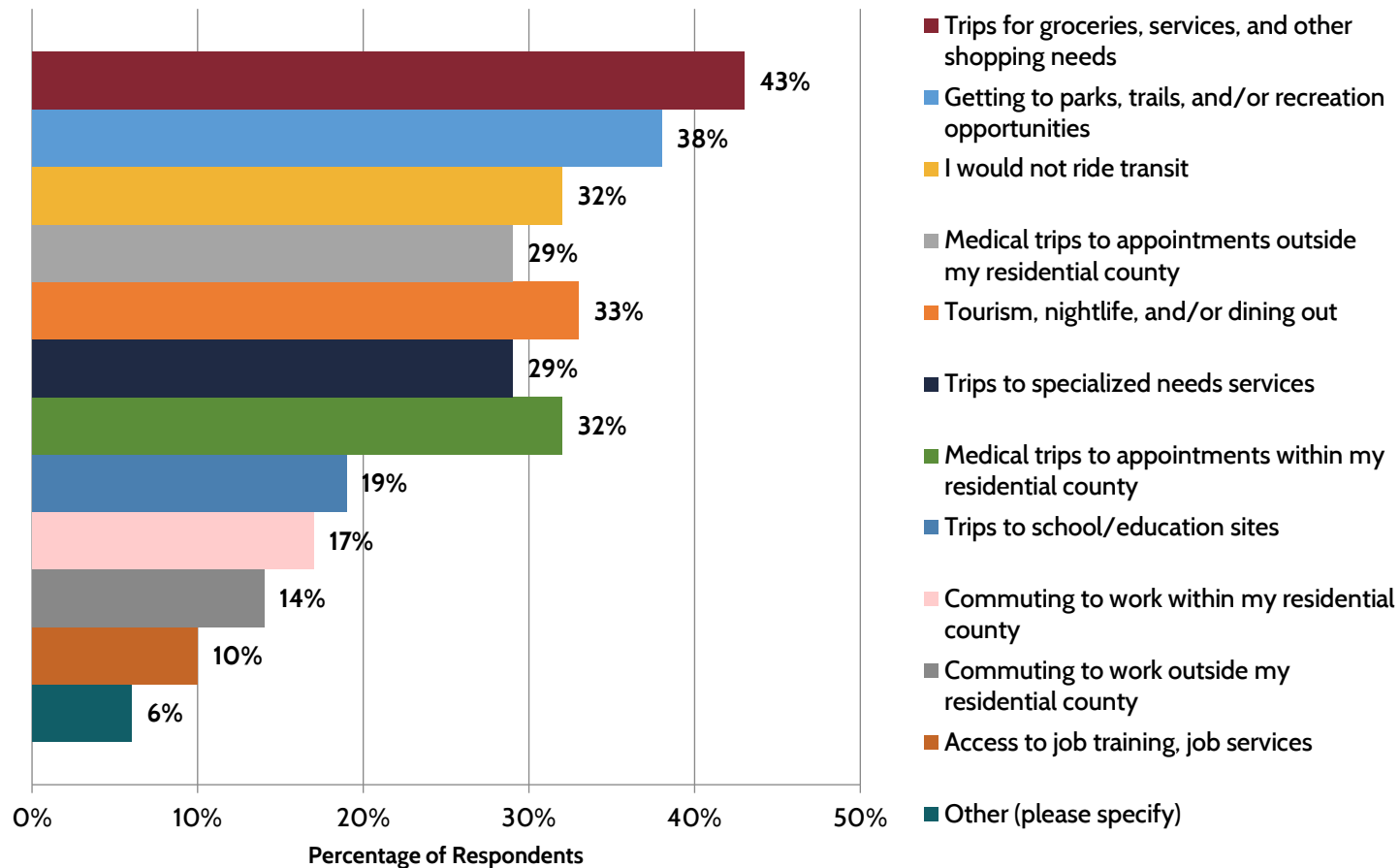
Figure 18. What improvements could be made to Valdosta On-Demand's service? (Select all that apply)



4.0 Imagining our Transit Future Questions

The next set of questions focused on the desired future conditions of transit in the region. The first “Imagining our Transit Future” question asked about the types of trips that respondents would use transit for if expanded offerings were available. The most popular answer choice was “trips for grocery, services, and other shopping needs” (selected by 27 of 63 respondents on this question, or 43 percent).

Figure 19. What types of trips would you take public transit for if expanded offerings were available? (Select all that apply)



Based on a review of the desired trip type responses along with the respondents’ residential county, some county-specific desires emerge, as shown in Table 4. These observations are only reported for those counties that had at least five respondents for this question.

Table 4. County-Specific Preferences for Future Transit

Residential County	# Responses to Question	Desired Transit Trip Types (or Disinterest in Transit)
Berrien	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trips for groceries, services, and other shopping needs (6 out of 7 respondents, or 86 percent) • Medical trips to appointments outside my residential county (4 out of 7 respondents, or 57 percent) • Medical trips to appointments within my residential county (4 out of 7 respondents, or 57 percent) • Trips to specialized needs services (4 out of 7 respondents, or 57 percent)
Bacon	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism, nightlife, and/or dining out (4 of 6 respondents, or 67 percent) • Getting to parks, trails, and/or recreation opportunities (3 of 6 respondents, or 50 percent) • Trips for groceries, services, and other shopping needs (2 of 6 respondents, or 33 percent)
Clinch	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I would not ride transit (5 out of 5 respondents, or 100 percent)
Lowndes	17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Getting to parks, trails, and or/recreation opportunities (12 out of 17, or 70 percent) • Trips for groceries, services, and other shopping needs (11 out of 17, or 64 percent) • Tourism, nightlife, and/or dining out (10 out of 17, or 59 percent)
Pierce	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I would not ride transit (4 out of 6 respondents, or 67 percent) • Trips for groceries, services, and other shopping needs (2 out of 6 respondents, or 33 percent)
Ware	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical trips to appointments outside my residential county (2 of 5 respondents, or 40 percent) • Tourism, nightlife, and/or dining out (2 of 5 respondents, or 40 percent) • Getting to parks, trails, and/or recreation opportunities (2 of 5 respondents, or 40 percent)

The second “Imagining our Transit Future” question asked about locations people would like to access with transit. Both Figure 20 and Table 5 summarize responses to this question.

Figure 20. Where would you like to be able to go using public transit? List as many locations as you wish to provide.

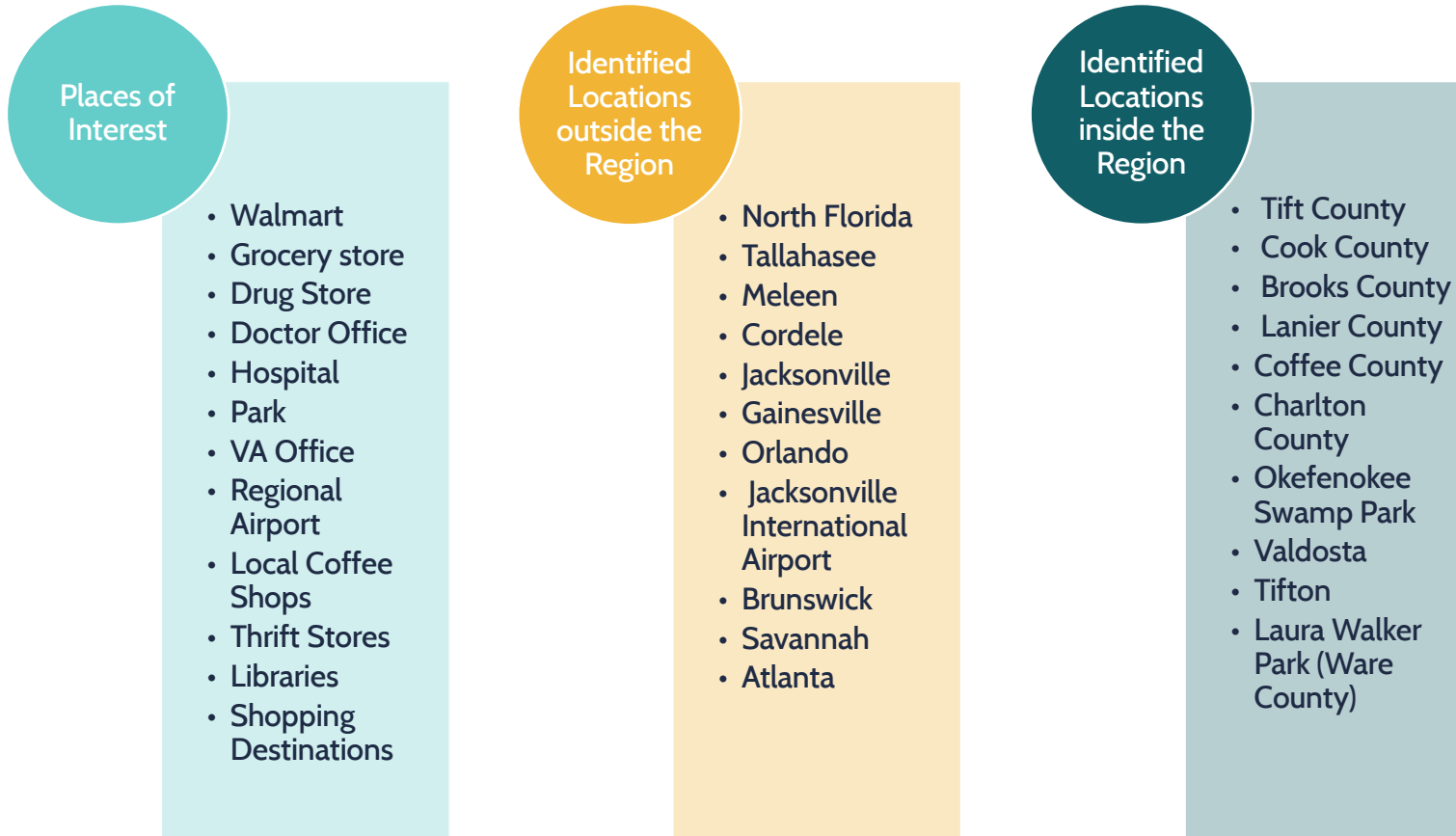


Table 5. Desired Destinations by Participants' County of Residence

County of Residence	Desired Destinations
Atkinson County	Within living area
Bacon County	Special trips to parks, restaurants, day trips
	Recreational day trips
Berrien County	Walmart Grocery Store Drug Store
	Grocery Store
	to go buy groceries stuff i need for my home
	Doctors, shopping, recreation
Lowndes County	Anywhere
	Jacksonville, Tallahassee, and Atlanta
	Direct connections to TAL or JAX
	Everywhere within lowndes county limits.
	Gainesville, FL Atlanta, GA Orlando, FL
	Anywhere throughout the southern reason
	Cook, Brooks, Tift, Lanier
	All over the city to appointments and grocery shopping
	regional airport, local coffee shops and thrift stores, local libraries, libraries in different counties, shopping in other counties and towns, specialty shopping in other counties.
	Na
	Work
Pierce County	I do not travel without my granddaughter outside of going to the senior center.
	Tift County Coffee County Charlton County
	Parks Shopping mall
Tift County	Dr Grocery shop Hospital Park Valdosta Atlanta
Turner County	North FL - Tallahassee, Meleen, Douglas, Tifton, Cordele
Ware County	Okefenokee Swamp Park, Laura Walker Park, Shopping and/or dinner in Valdosta, Brunswick, Tipton, Savannah, Florida
	Jacksonville International Airport

*Note: The open-ended responses are listed exactly as provided; the planning team did not make any adjustments for spelling or grammar.

If not for yourself, do you have family members or friends/neighbors/colleagues that would benefit from public transit service? Please describe any unique transit needs.

A common theme among these open-ended responses (provided in Table 6) was that transit would benefit senior citizens, particularly those who can no longer drive. Multiple comments note the need for medical trips among seniors and people with disabilities. A couple responses highlight that transit could provide a way for people to get to work or technical colleges.

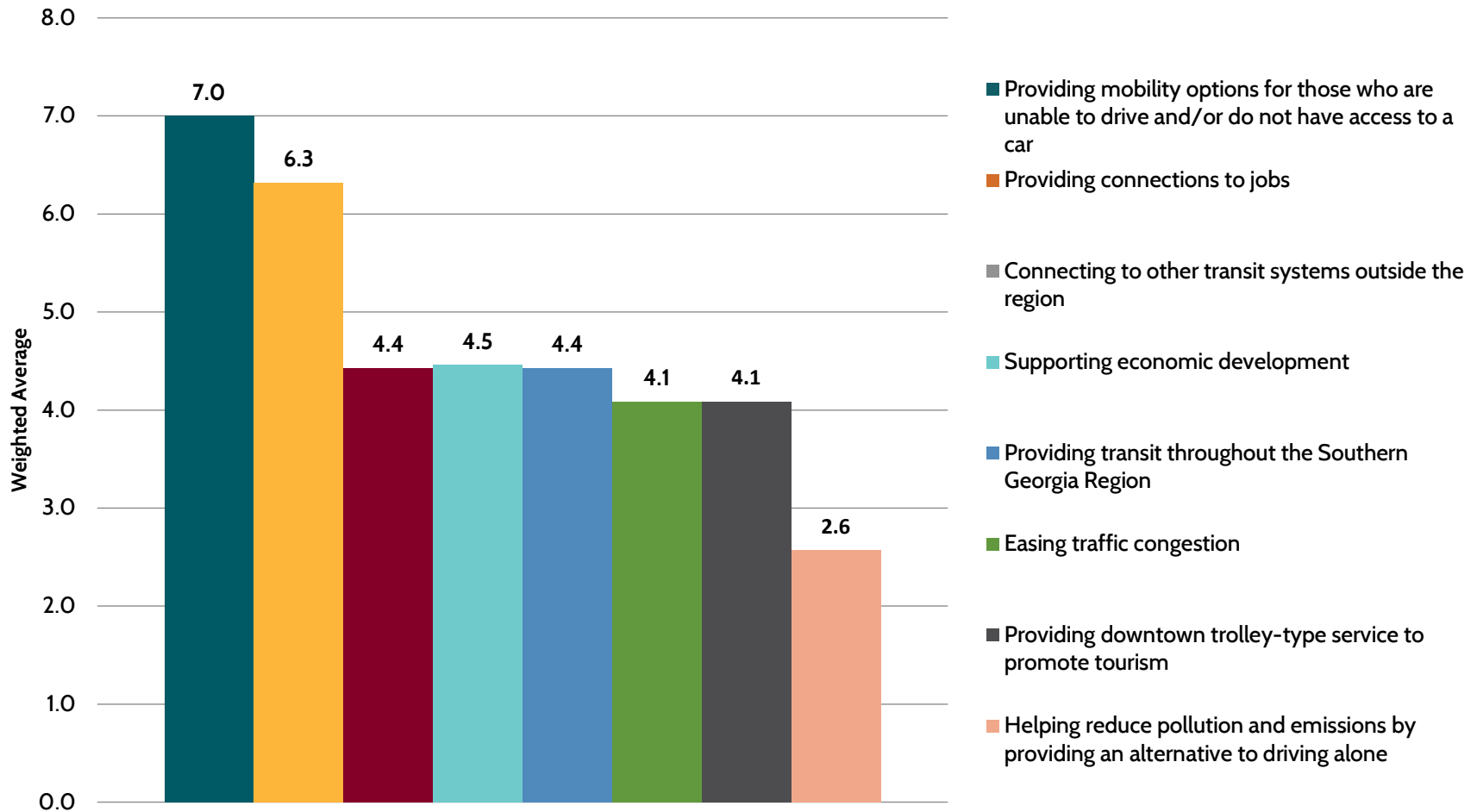
Table 6. Open-Ended Responses for “If not for yourself, do you have family members or friends/neighbors/colleagues that would benefit from public transit service? Please describe any unique transit needs.”

ID	Comment	Comment Tag(s)
1	n/a	
2	n/a	
3	No	
4	None	
5	No	
6	no	
7	N/A	
8	N/A	
9	I believe everyone can benefit from public transportation options.	Transit benefits all
10	Not really	
11	yes	
12	Same as mine	
13	Elderly travel alternatives	Senior
14	Yes, they ride a shuttle to work.	Employment
15	Yes, elderly friends & relatives who can no longer drive have to rely on friends & family for rides.	Senior
16	The elderly population would benefit from public transit.	Senior
17	Yes lots of senior citizens need this!	Senior
18	Elderly people who do not have someone that is available to help them.	Senior
19	elderly needs access to transit for food, medical	Senior
20	no	
21	Yes	
22	My dad he is 85	Senior

ID	Comment	Comment Tag(s)
23	Medical trips	Medical
24	No	
25	Maybe some of the senior citizens may need it for doc appointments and grocery shopping	Medical Grocery
26	My aunt does not have a car in Brantley County.	
27	yes. Transit to the technical college and employment centers are most important.	Employment Technical College
28	No	
29	Yes, many in our community would benefit having a regularly scheduled transportation route from residential neighborhoods to industrial work areas, shopping districts, medical districts, food districts, and downtown in Waaycross and Ware County	Employment Shopping Medical Leisure
30	"My sister and my niece need to go to pay bills and grocery shop. They need to go to the drug store and sometimes to the emergency room, or Dr's appointment.	Grocery Services Medical
31	Yes. Several elderly neighbors and people with physical and mental disabilities	Senior Disability
32	Yes, there are many who would benefit from a way to get to the grocery and dr appts	Grocery Medical
33	yes - those unable to drive for long distances alone or lack the car modifications to do so, those with disabilities that rely on transit if family/friends are unable to have licenses.	Disability No Vehicle
34	They don't have a personal vehicle	No Vehicle
35	Yes	

**Note: The open-ended responses are listed exactly as provided; the planning team did not make any adjustments for spelling or grammar.*

Figure 21. Which of the following goals are most important for the future of public transit options in Southern Georgia Region? Please rank in order from most important to least important, with 1 being most important and 8 being least important.



The top two goals, as indicated in the chart above, are “providing mobility options for those who are unable to drive and/or do not have access to a car” (weighted average score of 7.0) and “providing connections to jobs” (weighted average score of 6.3).

Do you have suggestions for additional goals for transit in the Southern Georgia Region that were not covered in the previous question?

Multiple responses to this question allude to a desire for a fixed-route service, such as a bus route or a streetcar. The streetcar idea was noted as a possibility for making Valdosta more unique and attractive to tourists. Some respondents want to see greater connectivity to other regions and into Florida. One comment expressed the need to improve mobility of seniors and youth, and another comment discussed education on how to access the system and a mobile application for convenient booking.

Table 7. Open-Ended Responses for “Do you have suggestions for additional goals for transit in the Southern Georgia Region that were not covered in the previous question?”

ID	Comment	Comment Tag(s)
1	no	
2	Bring back the streetcar! It would make Valdosta completely unique and draw national attention, we'd be the smallest city in the US with municipal rail service. Change a very ordinary, generic city into something unusual!	Fixed-route service Unique to Valdosta - tourism
3	No	
4	It could be a public transit bus like the Meta train in Atlanta.	Fixed-route service
5	We need plane travel to somewhere other than ATL. We also need rail service! Florida is getting high speed rail & it will eventually connect allover the state & beyond.	Fixed-route service
6	Ways to cut down on waiting time between appointments	Reduce wait times
7	no	
8	no	
9	No	
10	Bus stops or bus line added	Fixed-route service
11	More Education on how to access and use, APP for convenience	Ease of Use
12	Provide access outside of the region	External Destinations
13	None	
14	Providing transportation to the seniors or young adults that do not have transportation to and from jobs.	Senior Youth
15	No	
16	More stops and an actual bus route that continuously runs with multiple buses	Fixed-route service
17	No	
18	None	

ID	Comment	Comment Tag(s)
19	No	
20	n/a	
21	Please pickup sometime real late waiting long time dr. office Go Home.	Reduce wait times
22	Make seniors a priority, The reason I no longer ride is all the trips outside of my trip. I go to the center and back for seniors. I'm picked up late or have to go to other places. I am 94 years old.	Senior
23	No	
24	No	
25	NO	
26	n/a	
27	n/a	
28	No	
29	No	

**Note: The open-ended responses are listed exactly as provided; the planning team did not make any adjustments for spelling or grammar.*

Is there anything else you would like to share with us about current or future transit service in your community or the Southern Georgia Region?

As shown in **Table 8**, the comments are generally positive regarding the existing transit options. Some of the comments speak to populations with mobility needs (elderly, low-income people, and students). Others focus on the key places where people require transit access, such as medical appointments outside of the region and connections to larger cities.

Table 8. Open-Ended Responses for “Is there anything else you would like to share with us about current or future transit service in your community or the Southern Georgia Region?”

ID	Comment	Comment Tag(s)
1	i need transportation	Need for transit
2	n/a	
3	NO	
4	N/A	
5	No Thanks	
6	Debra is a great driver for us seniors in Blackshear. Communication is also important. Unless my granddaughter calls to see whats going on I never know. There should only be seniors to and from the center only. Other scheduled outside of that time. Also the employees in the transit office have terrible attitudes. My granddaughter had to set them straight.	Positive Feedback for SGRC Transit Driver

ID	Comment	Comment Tag(s)
	Debra always keeps me informed when we will have a sub driver. She does a great job. I no longer ride due to my granddaughter being fed up. I would get home late or travel outside of my area to pick up someone who wasn't going to the senior center. It was to much on me and my granddaughter worrying over my whereabouts.	
7	Not at this time	
8	N/A	
9	Consider small communities and our need to connect to larger cities to have needs met.	Destinations Connecting rural and urban areas
10	Medical appointments outside of region.	Destinations Trip types
11	No	
12	need more	
13	No	
14	Yes, I'm ready for it to be more reliable	
15	I have heard some people find it hard to access the system	Difficulty booking trips
16	no	
17	no	
18	No	
19	Future travel routes	Infrastructure Destinations
20	Cost for elderly and less fortunate	Serving populations with no other transportation options (Senior & Low-Income)
21	A more effective way for the community to know that transit service is available - hours, cost of service.	Awareness of transit service operating hours and fares
22	For safety of drivers and buses we need county roads without roots under them that have destroyed the quality of the road, repaved and wider. All county roads in 18 counties need to be repaved and maintained. Pierce County has failed to keep out roads better.	Infrastructure and safety
23	Have a system like Marta or other systems in big cities. A bus stop on every corner and shopping centers,or markets.	Transit service type
24	In Columbia sc we had a great public transportation system that many college students were able to utilize along with the whole community	Students

ID	Comment	Comment Tag(s)
25	No	
26	No	
27	n/a	
28	appreciate your service	Positive feedback for SGRC Transit

**Note: The open-ended responses are listed exactly as provided; the planning team did not make any adjustments for spelling or grammar.*

5.0 Demographic Questions

The following set of optional questions gathered demographic and socioeconomic participant information. This information helps the planning team gauge the reach of the survey and also understand how well overall participants reflect the demographic makeup of the Southern Georgia Region.

Compared to the demographics of the region as a whole, the survey had an overrepresentation of white participants (70 percent in the survey pool compared to 60 percent of the region’s population). Participants that identified as Black or African American – 28 percent – matched the actual population share of this segment of the population. The survey did not capture many responses from the Hispanic/Latino ethnic group, which makes up about 8 percent of the region’s population. Only 2 percent of survey participants identified as Hispanic or Latino.

A greater proportion of seniors (65+) participated (43 percent) compared to the senior share of the region’s population (21 percent).

Participants reflected the range of annual household incomes in the region, representing spectrum of lower-income to higher-income brackets.

Figure 22. Do you have your own, personal vehicle?

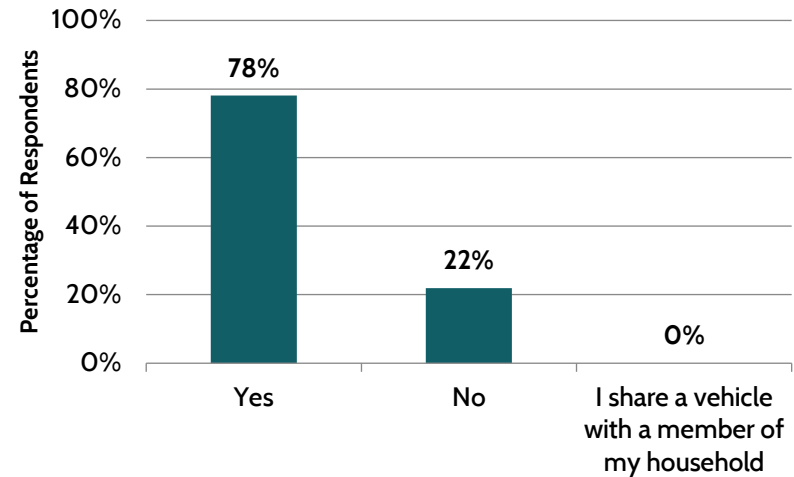


Figure 23. What is your age?

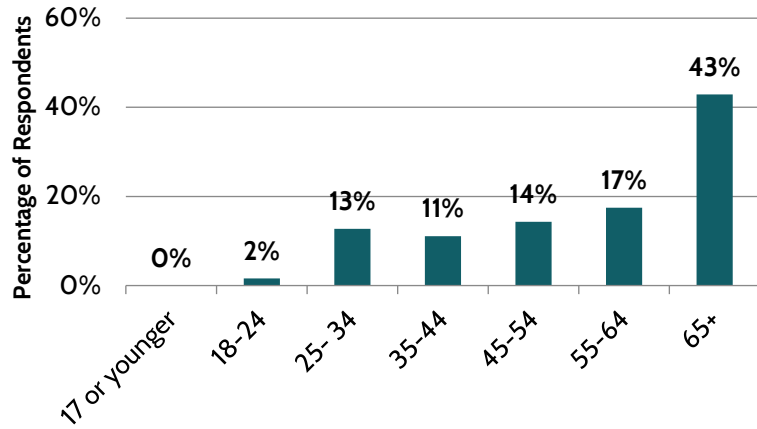
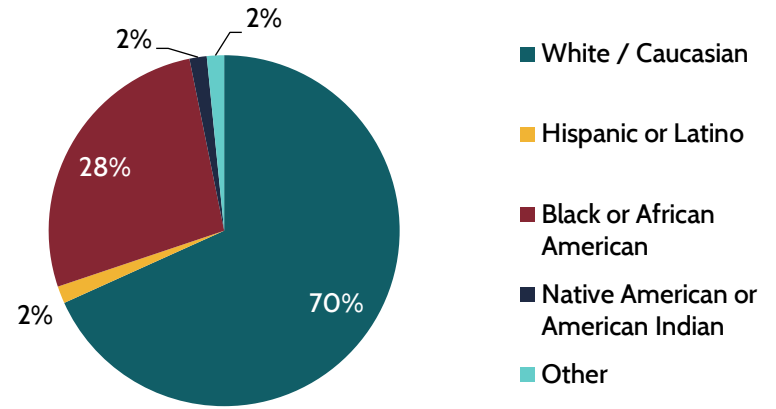


Figure 24. Please specify your race/ethnicity (Select all that apply).



*Note: Zero participants identified as Asian or Pacific Islander.

Figure 25. What is your approximate annual household income?

