



Network**NOW**

Chapter 3: Engagement and Customer Feedback

DRAFT - SEPTEMBER 2023



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INTRODUCTION

[Network Now](#) establishes Metro Transit’s priorities over the next four to five years. This plan will recognize the changes to the region’s transit network that have occurred since 2019, build on the success of regional transitways and BRT networks advanced in [Network Next](#), and guide how Metro Transit will invest in service from 2024 to 2027.

The Network Now project is divided into three main phases. The first phase took place during spring and summer 2023 and included a review of regional policy guidance, assessment of recent transit network performance, and extensive public outreach to understand customers’ priorities for transit. Results are documented in the Establishing the Foundation Report and its component chapters as follows:

- **Establishing the Foundation Report**
 - **Chapter 1: Regional Policy Guidance**
 - **Chapter 2: Network Performance and Opportunities**
 - **Chapter 3: Engagement and Customer Feedback**

This document, Chapter 3: Engagement and Customer Feedback, summarizes the results of Metro Transit’s outreach efforts in spring and summer 2023. This feedback will help guide Network Now’s development of principles, evaluation criteria, and future service recommendations.

ENGAGEMENT AND CUSTOMER FEEDBACK

Summary

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic brought many changes to the daily lives of Metro Transit users. People have not only altered their transit use and travel patterns, but they may have also re-evaluated their personal priorities and values as they relate to travel habits and their everyday lives¹.

During the pandemic Metro Transit needed to make abrupt changes to service. The usual processes when making significant cuts, such as conducting equity analyses and engaging with the community to ensure that the agency’s decision-making aligns with the region’s priorities, were not possible. Now that the need to make emergency service changes has subsided, Metro Transit is looking ahead to reposition its services to ensure the system meets the community’s needs and priorities.

This section summarizes the engagement activities and feedback received for this phase of the Network Now project. The findings in this chapter helped to inform the decision-making framework established in the body of this report.

Engagement Timeline

In January and February 2023, Metro Transit prepared materials and began discussing the project with internal stakeholders. From March to May, systemwide active engagement occurred. Metro Transit took feedback in the following forms:

- Intercept conversations
- Organization, group, and individual meetings
- Public survey
- Customer relations

Goals

Metro Transit wanted to hear from current Metro Transit riders and those who have discontinued using transit

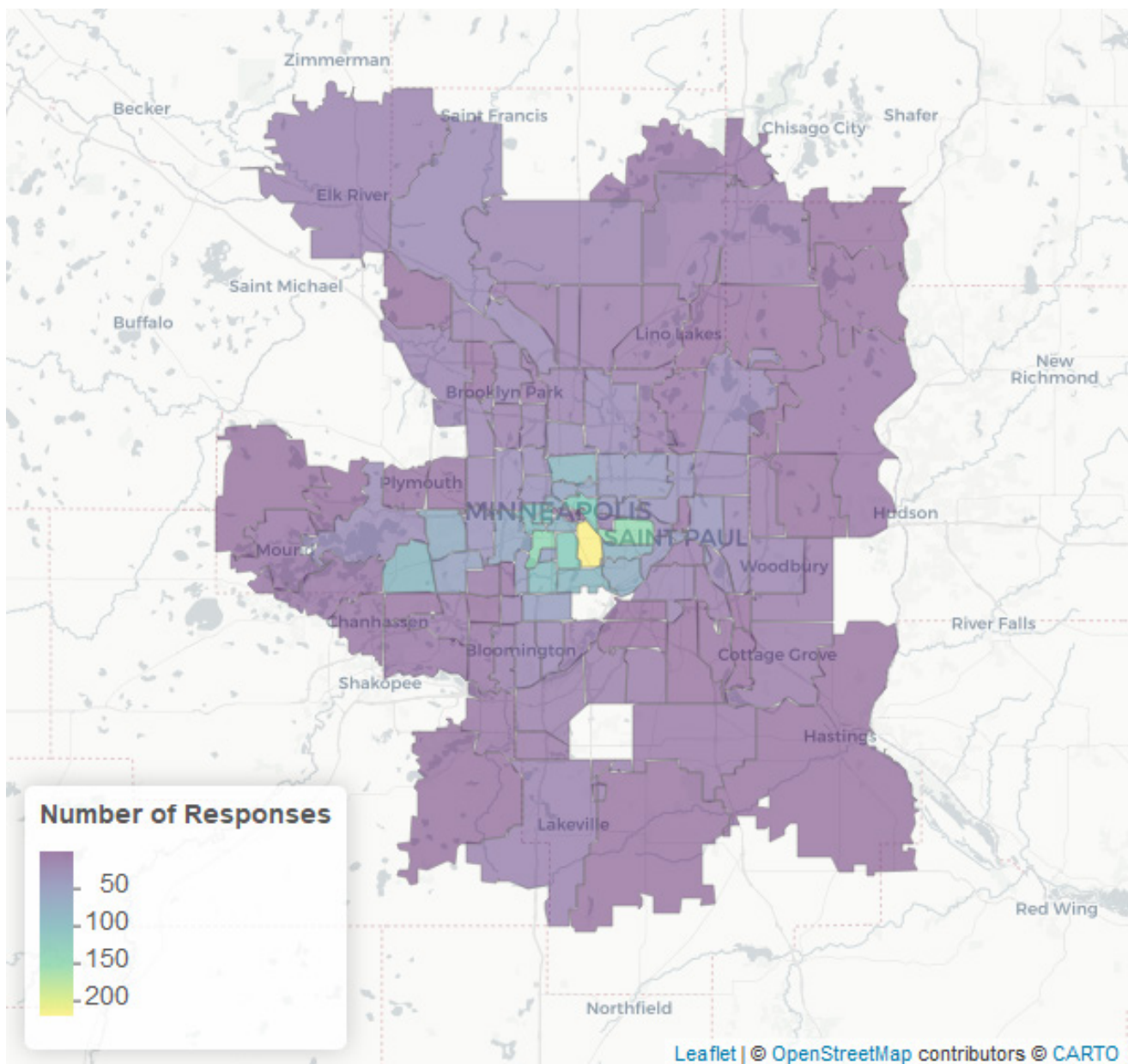
¹ [How Americans say their priorities changed during COVID-19 | Pew Research Center](#)

services. Additionally, it was important that this project targeted input from communities most impacted by Metro Transit’s investments. Engagement goals included targeted numbers and strategies to reach diverse audiences. Engagement response goals included:

- 2,500 total participants
- 35% response rate from Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) individuals
- 50% response rate from women

From a geographic standpoint, the response distribution from surveyed individuals within Metro Transit’s service area was intended to reflect a percentage similar to the general population of the cities served. Metro Transit received responses from every region in the service area. Figure 1 shows a map of response rates by zip code, with the highest response rates in densely populated areas of Minneapolis and Saint Paul, followed by inner-ring suburbs.

Figure 1. Response rates by zip code



Strategies

Electronic information: Newsletter subscribers received promotional alerts advertising the project and scheduled events. An internal survey link was also embedded within the Met Council’s monthly e-newsletter and Insights, Metro Transit’s weekly newsletter available on MetNet. Connect, Metro Transit’s customer-newsletter, and Rider’s Club, an email subscription list for customers to complete transit-related surveys, were used to promote the study as well. Partners also were asked to email their networks.

Developing the project with partners: Feedback was requested from the Transit Accessibility Advisory Committee (TAAC), and the Equity and Inclusion Committee (E&I) to verify that the presentation’s material was inclusive and communicable to the communities being contacted. Additionally, the presentation included graphs and maps to assist the audience in conceptualizing and comprehending the information.

Translated materials: Once the survey questions became finalized, they were translated into Spanish, Somali, Hmong, and additional languages frequently spoken by communities within Metro Transit’s service areas.

Social media and print advertisement: The Spokesman-Recorder, Hmong Times, KMOJ, and Mshale were some of the designated avenues used to reach diverse populations. Geo-Fencing was another strategy employed to notify local individuals about the survey and events opportunities relevant to them.

Rider alerts and interior cards: Physical posters were installed in bus shelters with the highest number of boardings. Electronic rider alerts were posted online and sent to subscribers signed up to receive rider alerts.

Network Now Intercept Conversations

Network Now engagement efforts included conversations with riders on vehicles and at busy transit stations. The purpose of these conversations was to:

- Ensure riders were aware of Network Now and the survey
- Reach riders who might be illiterate or less familiar with electronic surveys
- Listen to rider feedback and needs
- Engage with organizations that support marginalized communities

Methodology

Metro Transit staff boarded some of the highest ridership routes during peak hours and spoke with riders at transit centers. A list of locations and number of riders engaged at each is shown below in Table 1. Staff engaged with every single rider who was willing to talk. Staff offered the survey QR code as well as a flyer and engaged riders on the themes of the survey as well as the purpose of Network Now. Transit operators were engaged when possible. Metro Transit engagement staff that conducted the intercept work were fluent only in English and Spanish but had handouts in multiple languages. Metro Transit concurrently identified and presented to organizations that support or interact with marginalized communities.

Table 1. Intercept conversation location and engagement rate

Route #	Riders Engaged
21	80
A Line	80
C Line	50
D Line	120
MOA Transit Center	50
Sun Ray Transit Center	30



Intercept notes

Four key themes emerged from the conversations Metro Transit staff had with riders. They are listed below along with example quotes from conversations to support the themes.

Safety – Most riders mentioned safety as their primary concern. For Network Now this could take the form of increasing frequency and extending service later at night.

“It is more dangerous for young ladies and women with kids but I am a grown man and I don’t feel safe at the Chicago Lake station. More frequency could also help people be safer.”

Frequency – Many riders mentioned wanting more frequency of buses. This was most often coupled with the request for more service at night or service to the suburbs. Many A Line riders mentioned reduced service on local routes being a real hardship, especially those with mobility issues. Although this engagement was done in the summer, many riders mentioned the hardship of waiting 30-45 minutes for a bus in the winter.

Coverage – Riders expressed their need to get to the suburbs for work and needing to get to food centers to shop. Many of these conversations involved reductions in service over the last year.

“I have a real concern for the folks who live in Brooklyn [Center] with the Walmart closing. It will be a lot harder for them to get groceries. They will have to take a lot more transfers and spend more time on the bus to get what they need.”

Stop Spacing – Several riders discussed changes to their service based on BRT lines opening. While many folks enjoyed the new BRT lines several folks who were older or who had mobility issues discussed the impact it has had on them by increasing the distance they needed to travel to get to their bus stops.

“The 84 stopped and I have to walk further up the hill now. The hill is a real problem.” (older rider with a cane)

Feedback From Organizations

Outreach coordinators emailed all the neighborhood groups in Minneapolis and Saint Paul, transit focused groups, business associations, and many social service non-profits asking to attend their meetings to present and gather feedback for Network Now. Metro Transit staff attended meetings of the following groups listed in Table 2.

Table 2. Organization feedback summary

Organization Name	Community Members Engaged	Feedback Summary
Metro Urban Indian Directors	8	Leaders asked that Metro Transit continue to engage with community members in the area.
Kasmel Masjid	5	Safety and Security was the major concern for the Imam at the Karmel Mall. The community at the Mosque was interested in hiring efforts for Metro Transit.
Street Voices of Change	20	Span and safety and security were the two major themes from this group. "The change in times, making buses start later and end earlier is a price that we pay for in toes during the winter. Transit is the last resort when shelters are full."
Hennepin County Emergency Shelter	2	The Hennepin County housing team is writing a grant for warming shelters and would like to make sure that transit will continue to serve them.
Ramsey County Food Security	15	Met with food shelter operators, food security planners and other food suppliers. They have developed a map ² to show which transit routes are key to food access in Ramsey County. This will be considered during the development of Network Now.

Hosted Events

To have more in-depth conversations between riders and stakeholders, Metro Transit staff hosted a series of virtual and in-person events. The in-person events were all located by transit centers or other major routes and were spread across the Metro area. An in-person and a virtual meeting were also hosted with agency partners to better understand the needs of their city or county. Table 3 shows the list of meeting locations and number of attendees. An example sheet with game results is shown in Figure 2.

The meetings included a presentation and explanation about trends and trade-offs in the transit system. Then attendees played a transit game where they were asked to cut two trips from multiple route options and then add three trips. To make these decisions, participants were given information about routes' ridership, frequency, proximity to other routes, and average income of riders.

Table 3. Hosted event responses

Location	Attendees
Rondo Public Library	25
Sun Ray Library	6
Augsburg Park Library	8
Brookdale Library	7
Brian Coyle Center	10
Two Virtual Meetings	15

2 <https://ramseygis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=afe8d7067726472da336deaecb957c9d>

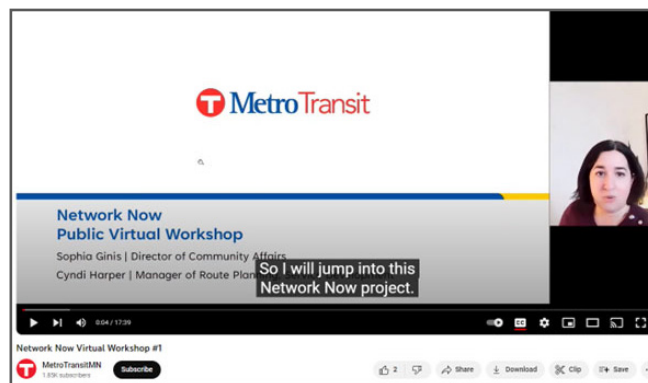
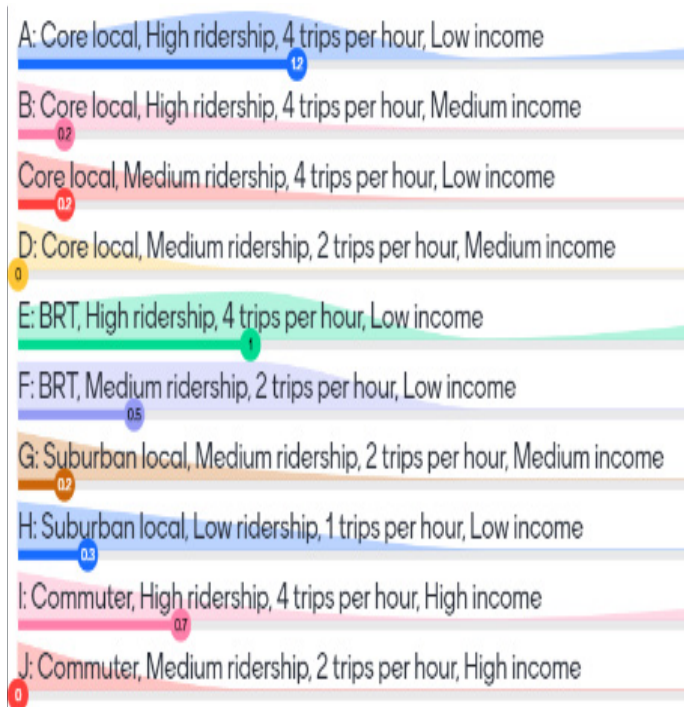


Figure 2. Example game results of participants adding trips



Based on the results from all meetings, the following themes for travel behavior emerged from the game exercise:

- Trips to save or add were chosen to preserve ridership and minimize impact/maximize benefit to lower income riders
- Trips to cut were chosen because riders had other transportation options, such as car ownership
- Trips to cut were chosen because the reduction in frequency would not be as impactful (example: 15 to 20 minutes)
- Trips were chosen to add because routes with too little frequency are not very useful to riders (example: hour frequency)
- Some groups focused on having more core-urban routes, where others wanted more options to reach suburban places

Additional feedback for service planning from the meeting included:

- Complaints that transfers add a lot of time and make a trip less desirable
- Specific route requests to reach more locations
- Requests to consider different users, such as those that work from home or those that have to commute
- Desire for more reliability and frequency overall, but particularly on BRT
- Request for easier/better scheduled transfers

Network Now Survey

As part of the Network Now engagement efforts, Metro Transit developed and distributed a public survey. The survey was available to the public from late February to late May 2023. In the survey, Metro Transit posed some service trade-offs to respondents (ex. more service vs. larger coverage) to gather community feedback that could inform planning for future transit service. The survey was designed to assess community's preferences on abstract concepts such as values at this stage of project, not about specific route changes. The input from public engagement will be used to help shape a decision-making framework based on transit values and priorities, which will provide service guidance through 2027 as Metro Transit updates the transit network to meet new travel patterns and transit demand.

Survey Format

Trade-Off Questions

For each of the 12 trade-off questions, respondents chose between two desirable options, (A and B) that would have contrasting implications for future transit service. Respondents selected whether they agreed with Option A, leaned towards Option A, leaned towards Option B, or agreed with Option B. With the forced dichotomy between answer choices, participants had to choose one option over the other even if they supported both or neither.

Allocation Questions

For the three allocation questions respondents were asked to create the best Metro Transit system possible by distributing 100 points across different categories of values, areas with different levels of demand, and types of service. This question format allowed respondents to think about trade-offs between more than two options. The allocation question format was based on survey questions from other works that address budget scenarios³ where respondents allocate funds from a hypothetical budget to different services.

Open-Ended Questions

The open-ended questions asked participants about their experiences and personal relationship with Metro Transit, what they thought Metro Transit should prioritize in the next five years, and for any other comments.

Demographic Questions

The survey also included multiple choice/open-ended questions that asked participants about their Metro Transit ridership habits, age, race/ethnicity, gender, ZIP Code, (dis)ability status, and household income. The responses to these questions are not addressed in this section, but they are included in Appendix A. Metro Transit will use this information to examine whether opinions differ across demographic groups, and make sure that all voices are heard.

Survey Versions

The public version of the survey was translated into Hmong, Spanish, Somali, and Vietnamese.

A version of the survey was also sent to Metro Transit employees and to local government/agency partners of Metro Transit. These surveys included the same trade-off and allocation questions but asked for job department (Metro Transit) or job title and agency (for government/agency partners) instead of demographics. Metro Transit employees answered the same open-ended questions as the public. Agency partners were asked for the most important considerations related to transit for their agency in the next five years and opportunities to engage with their residents/stakeholders.

³ Zhao, F., Li, M.T., Chow, L.F., Gan, A., & Shen, L.D. (2002).

Results

To retain as much data as possible, all survey responses with at least one question answered are included in the results. This amounted to 4,422 responses: 4,254 of these were from the public version of the survey; 45 were from government/agency partners of Metro Transit; and 123 were from Metro Transit employees. If a participant did not answer a question, their response was recorded as N/A or unanswered in the results below.

The results in this report come from the public version of the survey. Of note, the responses are not weighted to match the demographics of the region or of Metro Transit ridership. Results are presented as findings from survey respondents and the subgroups thereof. They should not be interpreted as fully representative of the entire region, Metro Transit ridership, or their demographic subgroups.

The following sections contain key results from the Network Now survey. Full results are included in Appendix A. The results are organized according to themes that broadly match allocation questions: values, service areas, and types of service. Responses to key trade-off questions are discussed subsequently. Notable differences in responses to survey questions by demographic categories (race, income, disability, and location) are identified in their respective sections. A full set of tables and graphs of responses to the trade off questions by demographics can be found in Appendix A.

Values

Survey participants were asked to distribute 100 points over four values commonly used to make decisions about transit service. Each value was defined to ensure that all participants were answering with the same meanings in mind.

The results, listed below in Table 4, showed that respondents dedicated the most points to ridership, followed by equity, coverage, and geographic evenness. The rank order of these values (ridership > equity > coverage > geographic evenness) remained the same across different demographic groups.

Table 4. Value statement results

Value	Mean Points
Ridership – Good service for the most people, but not everywhere	43.94
Equity – Good service to neighborhoods with low-income or BIPOC communities, but not everywhere	26.89
Coverage – Reaching more places, but not as good service	18.67
Geographic Evenness – Each community gets similar service, but not as good service	10.50

Participants' responses to the following three trade-off questions generally aligned with how they distributed 100 points across the four values.

DIFFERENCES ACROSS DEMOGRAPHICS

The rank order of the values remained the same across all demographic groups – participants most valued ridership, followed by equity, coverage, and lastly geographic evenness. However, on average, BIPOC respondents allocated about two to three fewer points to the value of ridership than white respondents did (Figure 3). Low-income respondents – defined as respondents with yearly household income less than \$50,000 – assigned about five fewer points to the value of ridership than non-low-income, on average (Figure 4). Respondents with at least one disability or impairment, on average, assigned about seven fewer points to the value of ridership than respondents without a disability or impairment did (Figure 5).

Figure 3. Responses by BIPOC/Non-BIPOC

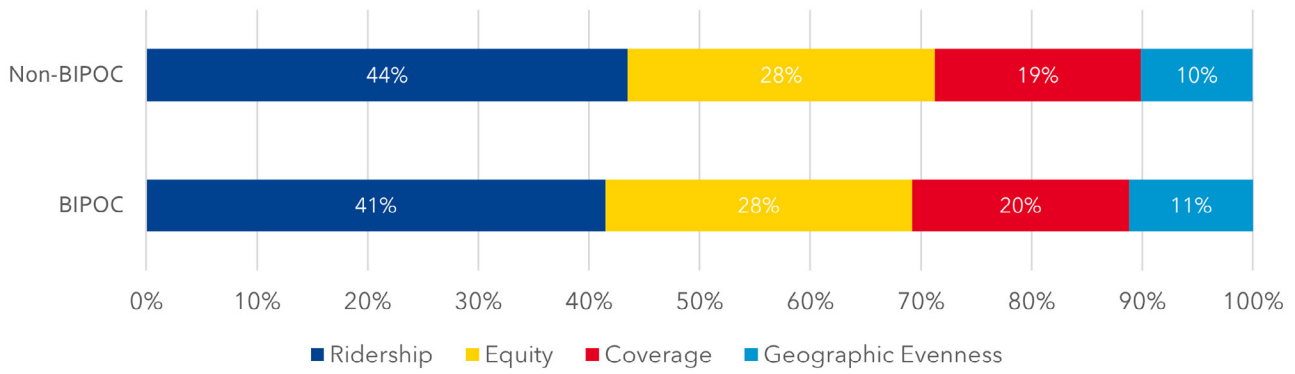


Figure 4. Responses by low-income/non-low-income

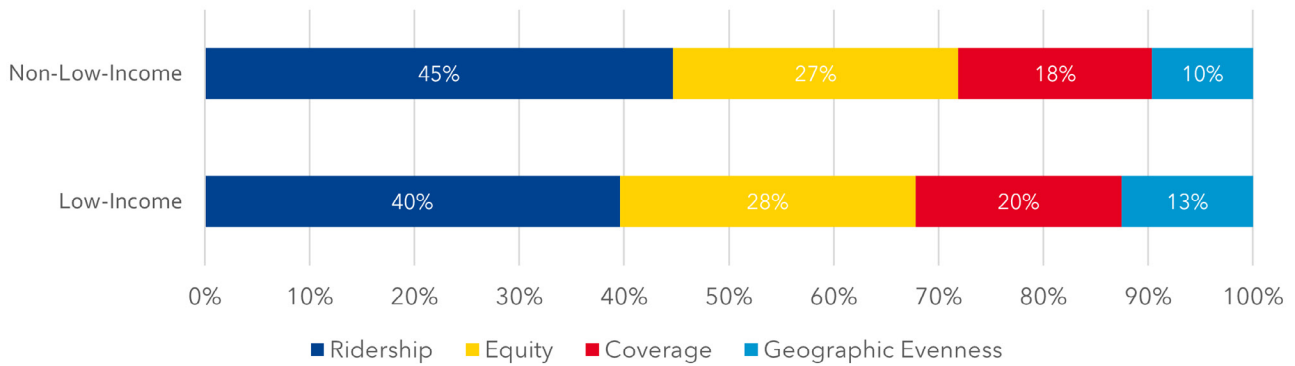
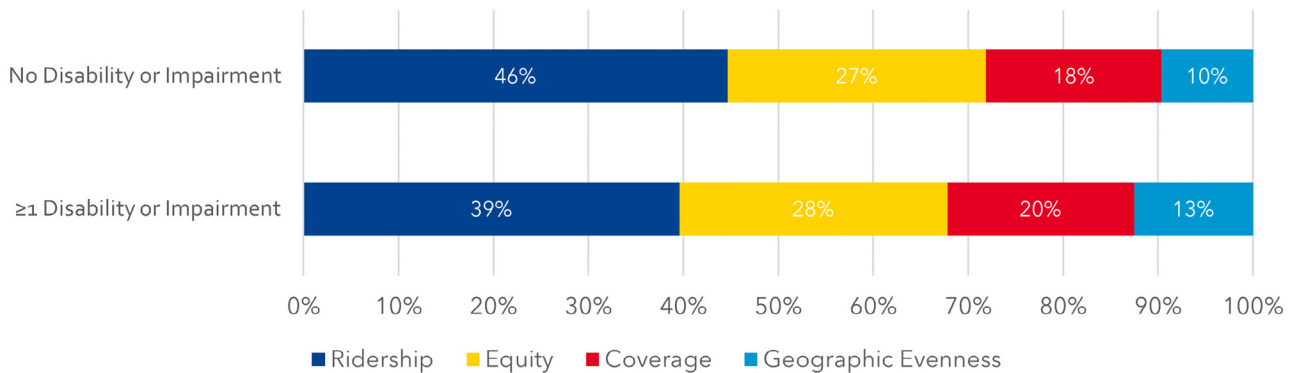


Figure 5. Responses by disability status



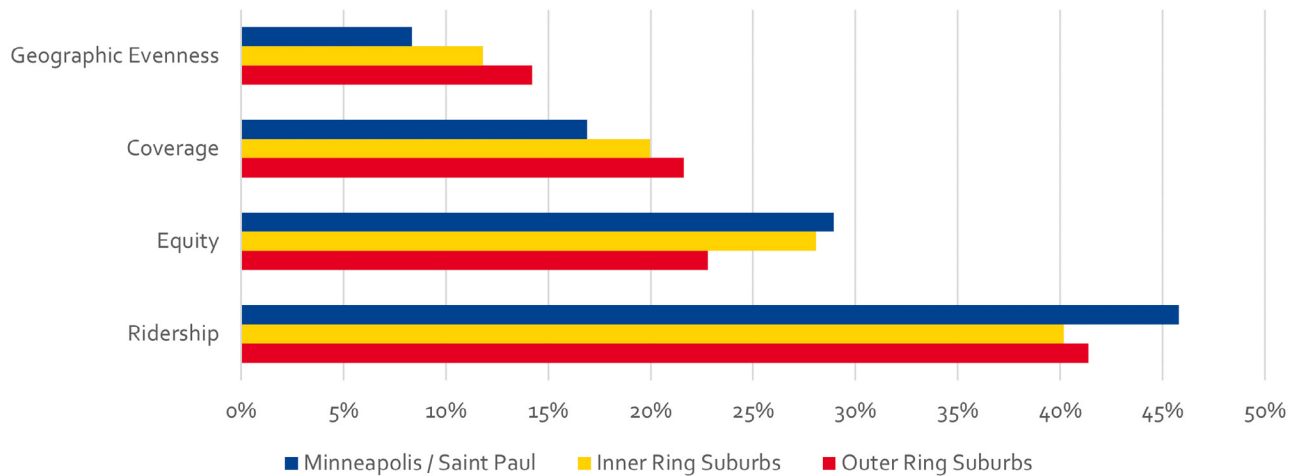
BIPOC, low-income, and respondents with disabilities allocated more points to other values. BIPOC respondents allocated about one more point each to Coverage and Geographic Evenness. Low-income respondents and respondents with disabilities gave more points to coverage and geographic evenness, respectively. Though the provided definition of equity included prioritizing service for BIPOC and low-income communities, participants from these groups did not dedicate significantly more points to equity than participants from other groups did.

Responses also differed based on where respondents live in the service area. Residents of Minneapolis and Saint Paul dedicated more points to ridership and fewer to coverage than residents of the inner⁴ or outer ring suburbs. Residents of Minneapolis and Saint Paul and inner ring suburbs dedicated more points to equity than residents

4 Inner ring suburbs are generally defined as within the I494/I-694 beltway, except for the west metro, where Hwy 169 is the boundary)

of outer ring suburbs. Finally, outer ring suburban residents gave more points to geographic evenness than inner suburban residents, who gave more points to the value than core cities' residents. The more urban/central the area where participants lived, the fewer points they assigned to geographic evenness.

Figure 6. Responses by resident location



Service Areas

Next, survey participants were asked to allocate 100 points over three geographic areas. The points represent level of service. These areas were based on Transit Market Areas, outlined by the Metropolitan Council's Transportation Policy Plan. Transit Market Areas describe the type and level of transit that various areas of the region can reasonably support based on population and employment density, land use patterns, and automobile availability. The results of this exercise, shown in Table 5, demonstrate that participants generally prioritized providing transit service where there is most demand for it.

Table 5. Areas of service results

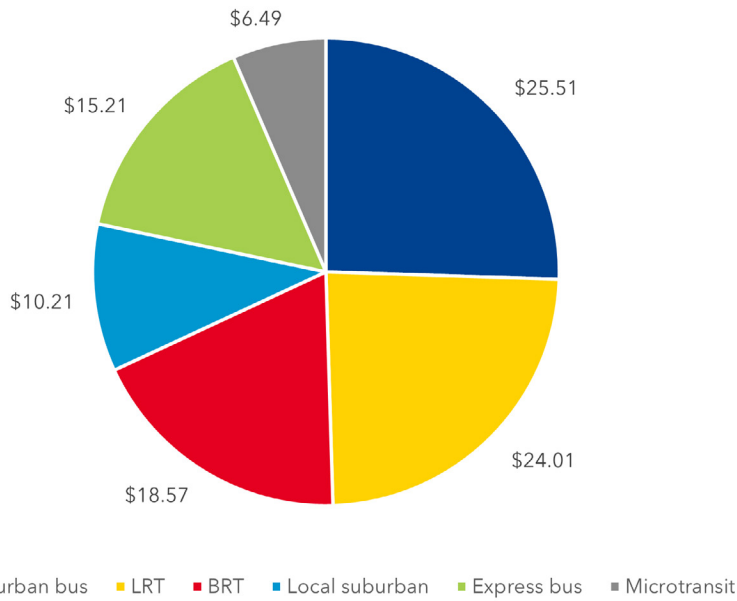
Areas of Service	Mean Points
Core urban areas with widespread high demand	54.78
Urban and suburban neighborhoods with demand in some places	31.03
Car-oriented suburbs with lower demand	14.17

Service Types

The final allocation question asked respondents to allocate 100 points across six types, or modes, of transit service: LRT, BRT, urban local, suburban local, express bus, and microtransit. The results, shown in Figure 7, indicate that participants would prioritize service on urban local bus routes, LRT, and BRT, with smaller portions of the region's resources spent on suburban local, express bus, or microtransit service.



Figure 7. Allocation from \$100 budget based on mean responses



DIFFERENCES ACROSS DEMOGRAPHICS

Respondents who identified themselves as BIPOC, low-income, and/or individuals experiencing disability or impairment assigned relatively more points to local bus service (both urban and suburban) and fewer points to LRT, BRT, and express bus service. These demographic groups also gave more points to microtransit. Viewed together, these responses indicate that equity populations prioritize local bus and demand-response service to a greater degree than the general public does.

Figure 8. Transit mode budget allocation by race

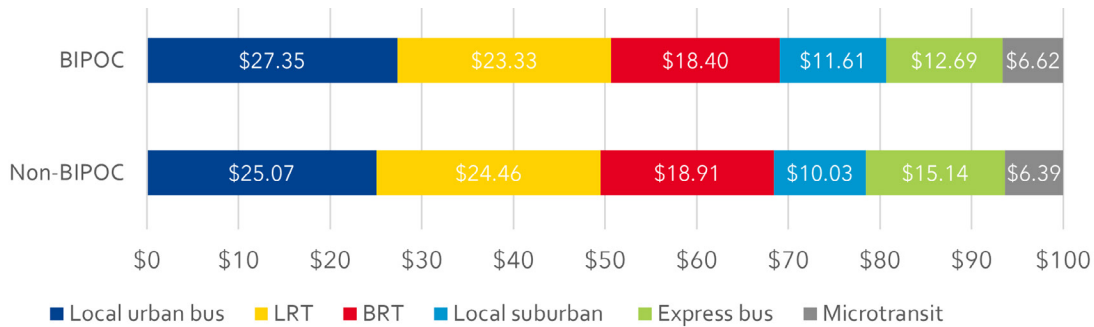


Figure 9. Transit mode budget allocation by income

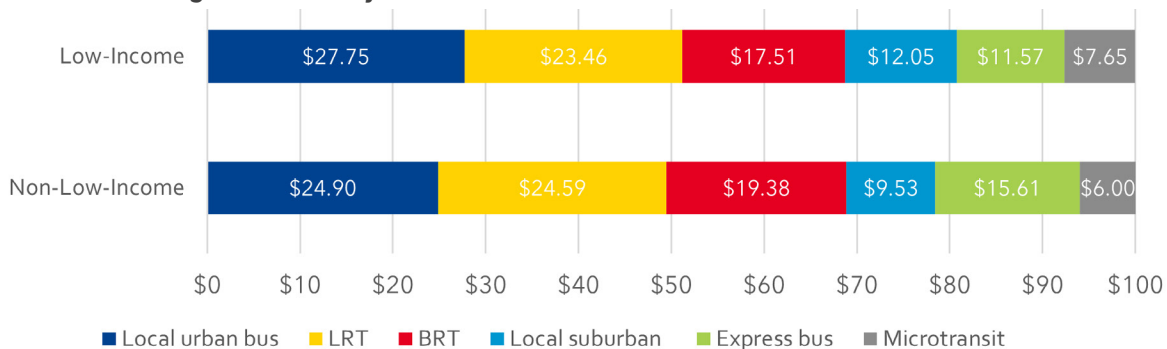
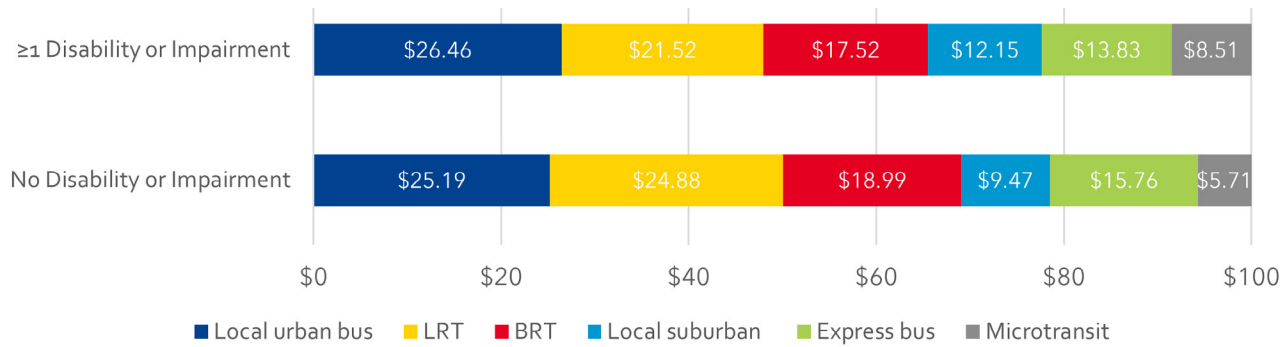


Figure 10. Transit mode budget allocation by disability status



Trade-Off Questions

In addition to the values-based and service allocation questions described above, Metro Transit asked Network Now survey respondents to answer a series of trade-off questions by indicating the extent to which they agree or disagree with two opposing statements. Responses to select trade-off questions are reported in the following section. For full results, see Appendix A.

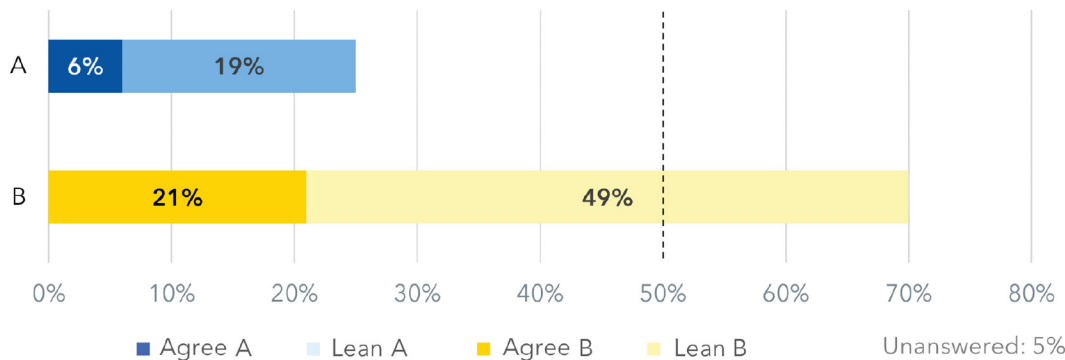
COVERAGE VS. RIDERSHIP

Trade-Off 10 asked participants to weigh values of coverage (represented by Option A) and ridership (represented by Option B). As shown below in Figure 11, most respondents (70%) selected that they leaned towards or agreed with B, supporting that they valued ridership more than coverage.

A: Transit should let people reach most destinations throughout the region, but with long travel times and limited options.

B: Transit should let people quickly and conveniently travel between busy places, but to a smaller share of the region.

Figure 11. Trade-Off results



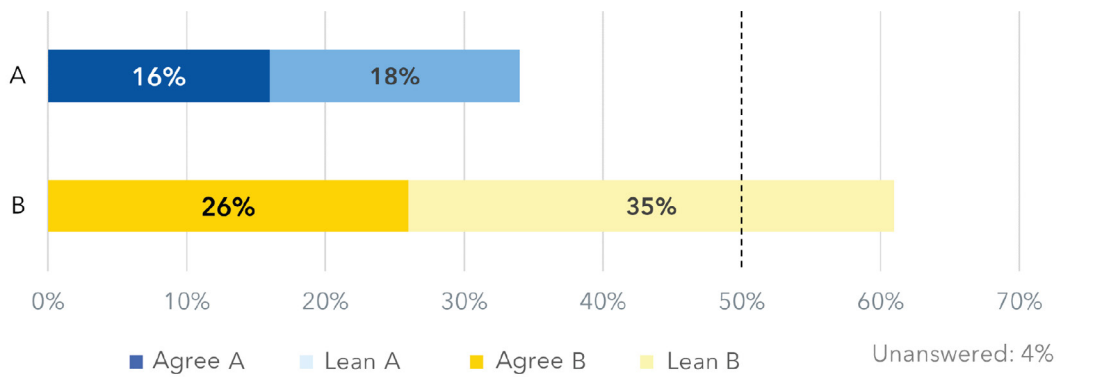
GEOGRAPHIC EVENNESS VS. RIDERSHIP

Trade-Off 9 asked participants to choose between options representing geographic evenness (A) and ridership (B). Again, most respondents (61%) chose the ridership statement, indicating that they valued service in high-ridership areas over geographic evenness.

A: Transit service in the suburbs should be provided equally around the region (east gets as much as west, north gets as much as south).

B: Transit service in the suburbs should focus on places of most ridership.

Figure 12. Trade-Off results



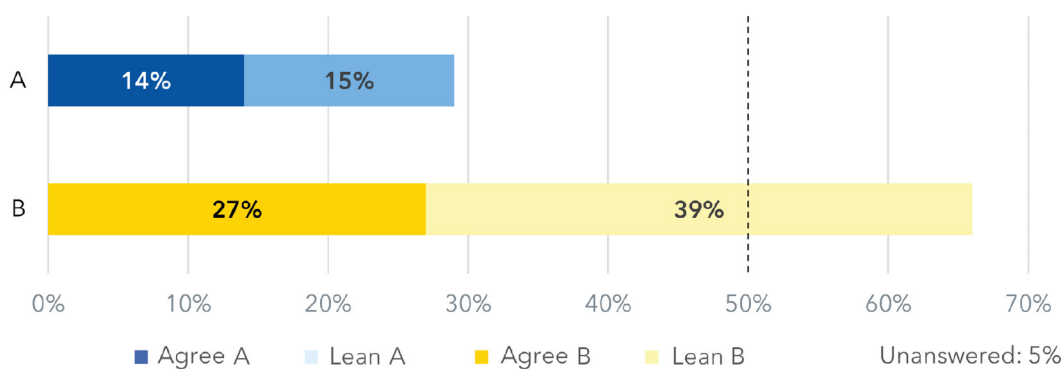
GEOGRAPHIC EVENNESS VS. EQUITY

Trade-Off 8 presented an option that highlights the value of geographic evenness (A) and an option highlighting the value of equity (B). 66% of participants leaned towards or agreed with the equity statement, showing that they valued equity over geographic evenness.

A: Similar transit service should be provided to all communities in the region.

B: More transit service should be provided to communities that need it most.

Figure 13. Trade-Off results



Overall, participants' answers to the trade-off questions addressing the values of ridership, equity, coverage, and geographic evenness matched how they distributed 100 points across the four values. Though not every match up of values was addressed in the trade-off questions, these results add confidence to the idea that residents in Metro Transit's service area think transit service decisions should be based on ridership followed by equity, coverage, and geographic balance.

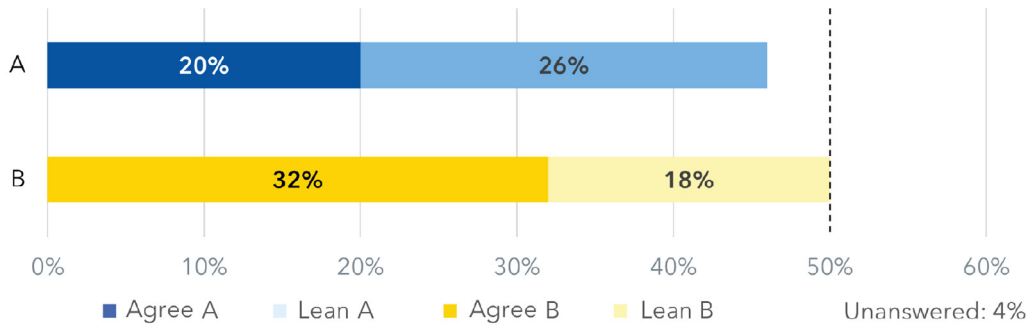
EVENING/WEEKEND VS. PEAK PERIOD SERVICE

Trade-Off 11 asked respondents about making service decisions to increase temporal span (A) versus to improve frequency and convenience during peak periods (B). Option B received slightly more responses of agreement (50%) than option A (46%), indicating that support for both values was fairly even. Taken in conjunction with Trade-Off 10 results, respondents favored frequency over geographic span, but prioritized frequency almost equally with temporal span.

A: More transit service should be provided later in the evening or on weekends.

B: More transit service should be provided during the times of day when most people are travelling.

Figure 14. Trade-Off 11 results



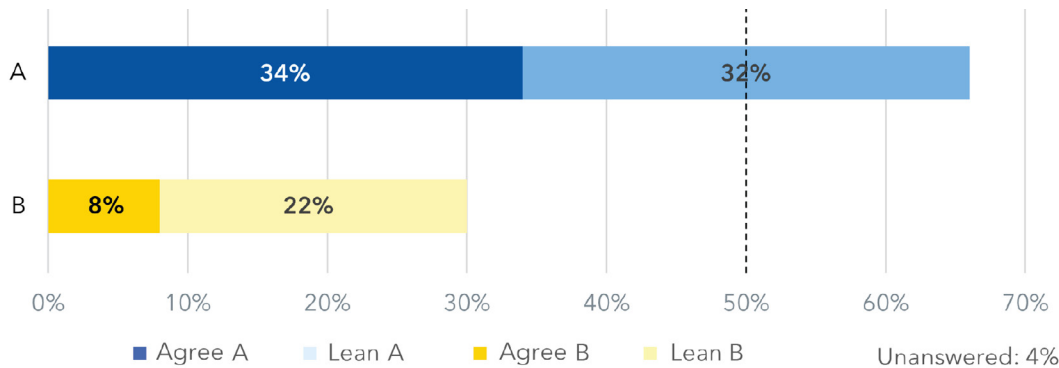
RELIABILITY VS. FREQUENCY

Trade-Off 5 asked respondents about making service decisions to optimize reliability (A) or frequency (B). Most respondents favored option A (66% agreed or leaned toward it). This is an indicator that reliability could be a top priority for future service planning.

A: Transit should aim to be reliable, even if that means scheduling fewer daily trips.

B: Transit should aim to provide the most trips possible, even if that means occasionally having to cut some of them with little notice.

Figure 15. Trade-Off results



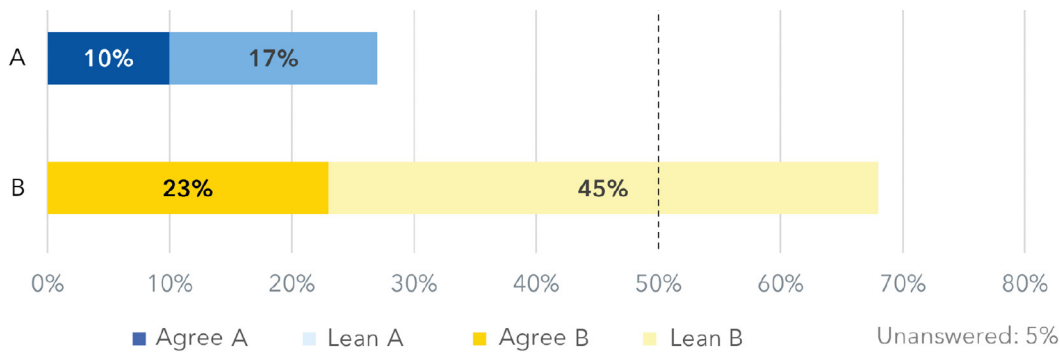
SUPPLY BASED ON REQUEST VS. SUPPLY BASED ON USE

Trade-Off 2 asked participants to select between providing service based on request (A) and providing service based on use (B). 68% of respondents selected that they leaned towards or agreed with B. This finding aligns with participants' allocation of points to prioritize areas of widespread high demand.

A: Transit service should be provided to those communities that ask for it.

B: Transit service should be provided to those communities that are more likely to use it.

Figure 16. Trade-Off results



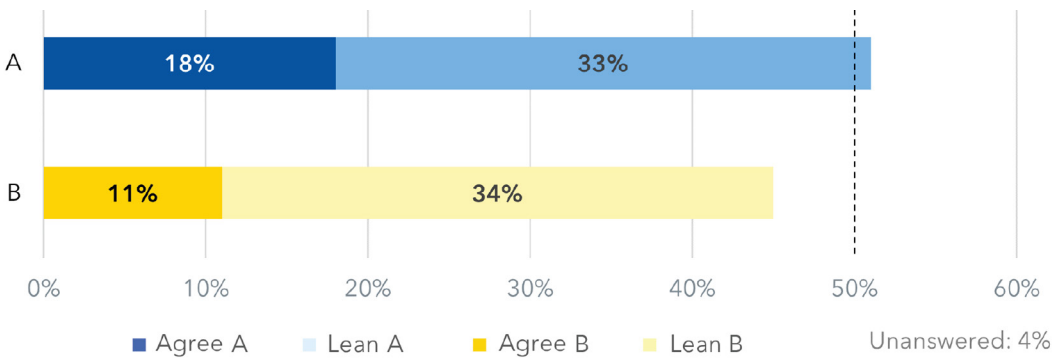
RESPOND TO DEMAND WITH SUPPLY VS. PROMOTE DEMAND WITH SUPPLY

Respondents also acknowledged the complexity of allocating service geographically. Trade-Off 12 addressed whether supply should respond to demand (A) or supply should be added where demand is anticipated (B). Here, respondents were divided in their choices. 51% sided with A, while 45% sided with B.

A: Transit service should be added where there are already riders.

B: Transit service should be added where it does not already exist to create new riders.

Figure 17. Trade-Off results



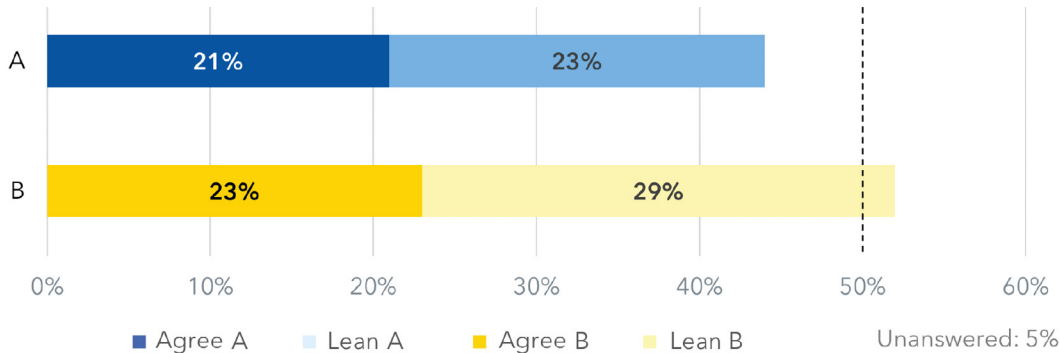
PROMOTE DENSITY VS. RESPOND TO DENSITY

Trade-Off 3 asked respondents about making service decisions to promote density (A) versus to respond to existing density (B). Once again, responses were split; 44% of participants favored option A, while 52% favored option B.

A: One of the purposes of transit is to promote density of housing and jobs around transit lines.

B: Transit should respond to existing density of housing and jobs, but not try to alter it.

Figure 18. Trade-Off results



When it came to service areas, survey respondents clearly indicated that transit should be prioritized where there is already demand and ridership. Respondents were slightly more supportive of the idea that transit should respond to existing conditions, such as existing ridership and density, rather than promote new ridership and density.

Existing Customer Relations Feedback: 2022 – Q1 2023

Metro Transit frequently receives feedback from the community regarding their views on transit in the region. This feedback can be part of larger studies on transit (like Network Now), done with the sole goal of gathering feedback from riders, or initiated by riders and the public contacting Metro Transit Customer Relations with concerns and suggestions. This section outlines the common themes that the public has shared with Metro Transit Customer Relations about their views and requests for transit service in the region through the early part of 2023. Metro Transit continues to evaluate ongoing feedback as it is received from customers. The common themes included, but were not limited to:

- Improvements in transit frequency and span
- Restoration of routes and branches previously suspended
- Access and coverage on existing routes
- Addressing capacity concerns
- Reliability of the transit network

Customer Relations Responses: Common Themes

Metro Transit maintains a database of customer comments received via e-mail and US Mail, through the website, and by phone. The database helps track trends and ensure comments are responded to appropriately. All responses from 2022 and the first quarter of 2023 were queried from the database and downloaded. Over 800 comments related to service planning were submitted during this period. Each comment was individually reviewed and categorized for common themes.

Each section details the percentage of comments that mentioned that theme. Importantly, many comments referenced multiple themes, specifically about 10% of responses discussed issues that fell into multiple categories. Responses related to issues that were already resolved or out of scope of Network Now were filtered out to provide the clearest picture of comments for this timeframe. Across all the sources of feedback, common themes emerge around the types of transit improvements riders and potential riders would like to see.

FREQUENCY AND SPAN OF SERVICE

Respondents contacting Metro Transit often mentioned concerns about the frequency of service, and the period it is available during the day. This was the most common concern with 40% of comments referring to it. Many comments centered around missed transfers and extensive wait times for connecting buses due to infrequent service.

Transit riders would like to see more service on weekends and evenings, especially for jobs outside of the traditional work shift times and days. This also includes more off-peak service so they can complete personal errands outside of the busiest parts of the day. Many individuals discussed how traveling during the weekend was much more difficult because of how infrequently buses operate.

Waiting prolonged periods of time can be unpleasant, especially in inclement weather, meaning reducing wait times makes transit more appealing for riders. Riders who use peak period express buses want better frequency of service, especially for routes that currently only have one to two trips per direction.



RESTORING ROUTES AND BRANCHES

As a result of changes in travel patterns and demand during the COVID pandemic, such as the steep reduction in demand for express service, as well as service reductions due to workforce shortages, 64 routes have been suspended. As demand for service rebounds, there have been increasing calls to restore service; about 35% of customer relations comments during this period mentioned a request for service restoration.

Because most routes suspended are limited stop and express routes, these constituted most requests for restoration, spanning the full region of Metro Transit's service area. Respondents cited numerous reasons for requesting service restoration including changed employment location, demand for faster travel time and concerns about safety on existing transit options.

EXPANDED ACCESS AND COVERAGE

A common request, encompassing 20% of customer relations comments, was to expand transit coverage to serve areas not currently served. Metro Transit's service does not meet the needs of everyone in the Twin Cities region and commenters offered suggestions on routes that would better suit their needs. This included expanding access to shopping destinations like Mall of America and Maplewood Mall, educational institutions like the U of M Twin Cities, and places of employment, such as in Bloomington and Brooklyn Center.

Riders requested additional stops to make accessing routes more convenient on some routes like the D Line, Orange Line and Route 23. Some commenters expressed concern about stop eliminations as part of the Better Bus Routes Stop initiative on Routes 17 and 22, as well as longer distances required to reach BRT stops. Riders also expressed dismay that the underlying local service of BRT routes is reduced.

Other suggestions had existing routes being extended or modified, such as Routes 5 or 10, to better serve regional destinations and trip generators like retail outlets and medical campuses. Other comments noted the fre-

quency of stops on some corridors significantly slowed down the duration of the trip making the travel inconvenient on transit.

MORE CAPACITY

In response to experiencing crowded conditions on buses, customers requested high-capacity buses, so riders do not need to stand, and are not turned away due to full buses or concerns about social distancing. About 10% of respondents noted this issue to Customer Relations. Riders of express routes mentioned crowded conditions due to the decreased number of trips per day. Many also noted that a 40 foot transit vehicle was used when riders would have preferred a coach or articulated bus.

Some customers noted they did not feel safe traveling at highway speeds while standing in the aisle due to the overloaded bus. Others noted they saw the bus arrive already full and had to drive due to the lack of capacity.



RELIABILITY

A reliable service that arrives on time and provides consistent travel times with minimal disruptions is important to customers. Five percent of respondents specifically mentioned the issue. Running time can vary due to congestion or construction and this creates issues for customers who rely on timed transfers or depend on Metro Transit to arrive at their destinations at a particular time. Due to the operator shortage, the rate of route trips cut during this period was sometimes higher than prior to the pandemic, leading to increased issues with transit reliability.

Many respondents cited trips running late as a significant concern, leading to individuals being late to school, work, or appointments, with negative outcomes. A quite common concern discussed was missing transfers due to trips running late. This meant that riders often had to wait at least 15 minutes or more for the next trip, which if also running late, caused the rider's travel duration to increase substantially. Some respondents mentioned safety being a concern with cut trips necessitating longer travel to a different stop or waiting for extended periods at locations that some considered dangerous.

OTHER

Respondents to Customer Relations included other concerns that did not neatly fit into the previously detailed categories. These included suggestions about alternative detour routing, fare collection methods, maintenance of transit facilities, safety, street design alternatives like dedicated bus right-of-way, downtown zone boundaries, special event service, communication of transit alerts as well as other issues. These types of comments appeared in four percent of comments.