

# Public Engagement

JUNE 2025



## Contents

INTRODUCTION .....	3
ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY .....	6
COMMUNICATIONS .....	6
ADVISORY & PARTNER NETWORKS.....	9
PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES .....	10
WHAT WE HEARD.....	16
OVERVIEW.....	16
BOARD VISIONING WORKSHOP .....	18
LET'S TALK! FORUMS .....	24
SURVEY .....	37
POP-UP EVENTS .....	47
SPECIALIZED OUTREACH .....	52

## About the NJTPA

**THE NJTPA IS THE FEDERALLY AUTHORIZED** Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for 6.7 million people in the 13-county northern New Jersey region. Each year, the NJTPA oversees more than \$2 billion in transportation improvement projects and provides a forum for interagency cooperation and public input. It also sponsors and conducts studies, assists county planning agencies and monitors compliance with national air quality goals.

A Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is a federally mandated and federally funded transportation planning agency made up of representatives from local government and key transportation agencies. Congress created MPOs to give local elected officials a stronger role in guiding federal transportation investment and to ensure that these decisions are based on a continuing, cooperative and comprehensive (“3C”) planning process.

THIS REPORT WAS PREPARED BY CONSULTANTS OF THE NJTPA - MCCORMICK TAYLOR AND MERCER PLANNING ASSOCIATES



# Introduction

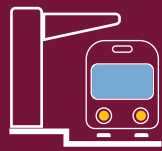
NJTPA's **CONNECTING COMMUNITIES** Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) reflects the priorities and values of residents, workers, and communities across North and Central New Jersey. The outreach process was designed to be inclusive, accessible, and meaningful, centered on the idea that everyone should have a voice in shaping the region's transportation future.

Outreach strategies were developed to reach a broad cross-section of the public, with specific attention to ensure participation from individuals and communities who are often underrepresented in planning processes. These efforts helped shape the LRTP and provided a strong foundation for regional transportation investment decisions.



# HOW WE LISTENED

**1,861  
SURVEY  
RESPONSES**



**17  
POP-UP  
EVENTS**

**1,307 + 347**  
IN-PERSON PARTICIPANTS  
ONLINE SURVEY RESPONSES

**18  
STAKEHOLDER  
ADVISORY  
COMMITTEE  
MEMBERS**

**32  
BOARD  
VISIONING  
WORKSHOP  
ATTENDEES**

**1,836  
PAPER SURVEYS**

**8,125  
BOOKMARKS**

**395** DISTRIBUTED  
TO 51  
FLYERS LIBRARIES

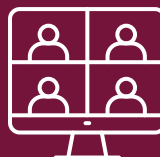


**6  
LANGUAGES  
USED TO  
OUTREACH**

**95  
VIRTUAL  
STAKEHOLDER  
FORUM  
PARTICIPANTS**

**274  
YOUTH  
COLORING  
CONTEST  
ENTRIES**

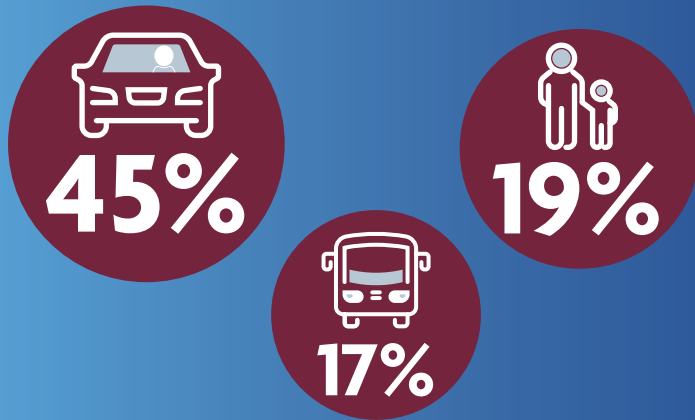
**365  
SOCIAL  
MEDIA  
POSTS**





# WHAT WE HEARD

## CURRENT TRAVEL MODE



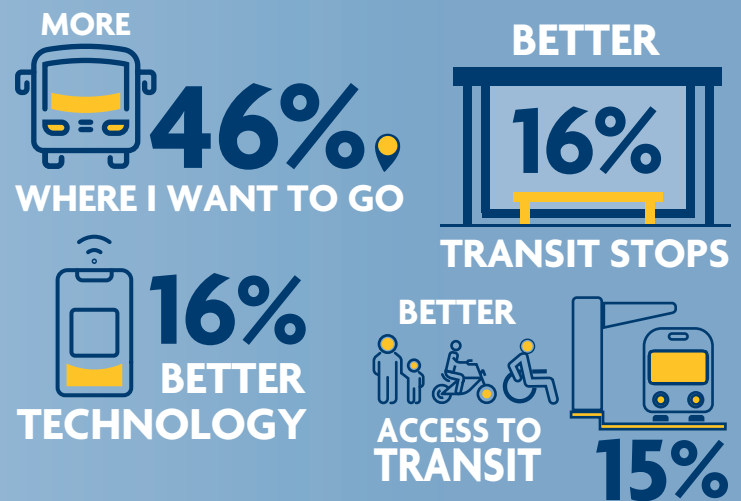
## FUTURE TRAVEL MODE



### SAFER STREETS

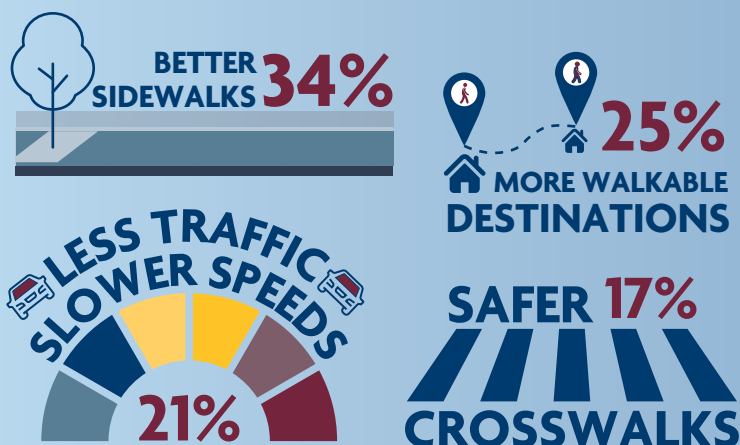


### TRANSIT ACCESS

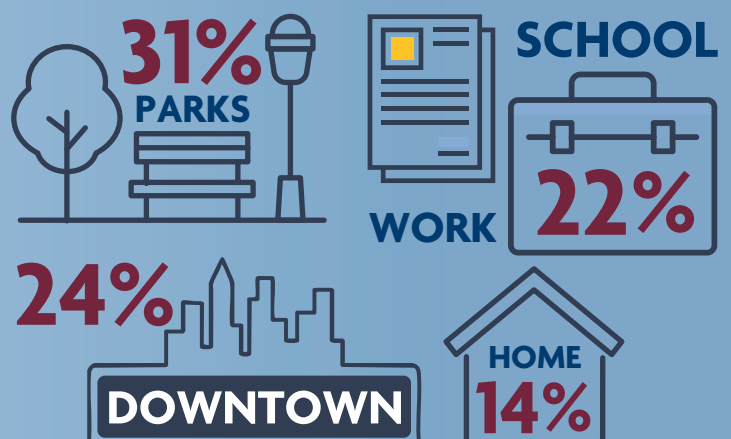


59% said their transportation needs are not being met

### WALKING IMPROVEMENTS



### BIKING IMPROVEMENTS



# Engagement Strategy

Public engagement for *Connecting Communities* was designed to ensure broad participation across the NJTPA region. The approach focused on informing, involving, and learning from the public throughout the plan development process. Engagement was structured in three phases to allow for early input and continued dialogue. Phase 1 concentrated on building awareness and collecting initial feedback. It relied primarily on digital tools, including a multilingual public survey, virtual forums, and targeted online advertising. Phase 2 shifted to in-person outreach, with a focus on meeting people in their communities to deepen conversations and refine priorities identified during Phase 1. Finally, Phase 3 provided a final opportunity for stakeholders and community members to provide feedback on the draft LRTP.

This multi-phase structure supported both reach and depth, offering multiple avenues for a range of communities to participate. Outreach efforts were designed to be inclusive and responsive to the needs of residents with limited internet access, limited English proficiency, disabilities, or other barriers to traditional engagement. Each activity was developed with the intent of listening to a wide range of voices and reflecting their concerns in the final plan.

## Communications

Communication materials were developed to be clear, engaging, recognizable, and accessible. Outreach content was written in plain language and most materials were translated into five languages in addition to English, namely Spanish, Hindi, Chinese (simplified), Korean, and Portuguese. The same visual identity and content was used across platforms to reinforce consistency.

A variety of communication tools were used to make participation easy, inclusive, and accessible throughout the planning process. These included social media posts, printed flyers and bookmarks, youth coloring contests, and in-person community pop-ups. Together, these tools supported NJTPA's broad and flexible engagement strategy to reach communities across the region and meet residents "where they are".

### Website

A dedicated project website ([www.njtpa.org/connecting](http://www.njtpa.org/connecting)) served as a central hub for outreach. It provided background information, updates, translated resources, surveys, and events. The website emphasized the online survey to encourage residents to share their feedback. It also provided information about Connecting Communities and the importance of public engagement in developing the LRTP. The home page listed all events and meetings with links to register. A partner resource page provided public event flyers, social media post templates,



and materials in six languages: English, Spanish, Hindi, Chinese (simplified), Korean, and Portuguese. The website also included a plugin for visitors to translate the website into other languages.

### *Social Media*

Social media played a central role in raising awareness about Connecting Communities and encouraging public participation. The project team leveraged NJTPA's existing social media channels, including Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), LinkedIn, and Instagram, to reach followers already engaged with transportation planning topics. These platforms were used to share general information about the LRTP, promote the survey and website, and invite the public to register for virtual events.

To expand reach, the team developed a series of pre-written, multilingual posts and graphics for NJTPA partner organizations to share with their networks. These materials highlighted a range of transportation modes and reflected the diversity of people and communities across the region. The goal was to provide accessible and ready-to-use content that would reinforce consistent messaging while enabling trusted community groups to communicate in ways that resonated with their audiences.

A targeted paid advertising campaign complemented the organic social media posts, using tailored messages and imagery to reach specific audiences. Ads were created for speakers of each of the five translated survey languages, as well as women, low-income residents, and individuals with interests in walking, biking, hiking, and public transit.

Visual content was carefully selected to reflect the identities and neighborhoods of the intended audiences, with text, captions, and links provided in the relevant language. Each post directed people to the corresponding version of the survey. During the campaign, the project team tested different images to see which ones generated the most interest. Based on this information, the most engaging ads were used for the remainder of the campaign. The team also monitored response demographics and adjusted targeting and budget allocations to ensure broader regional and demographic representation.



The Phase 1 campaign reached over 250,000 individuals across the NJTPA region and generated more than 5,000 direct clicks to the survey. Spanish-language ads were particularly successful, with over 1,300 link clicks and more than 120,000 impressions. The project team monitored ad performance and survey demographics throughout the campaign, adjusting outreach strategies to ensure a representative sample of participants.

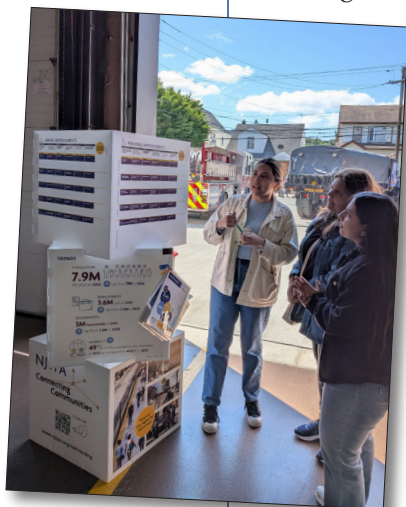


## Other Digital & Print Collateral

Other materials to publicize the Phase 1 survey included flyers that could be shared digitally or posted on public bulletin boards, print surveys, and bookmarks.

## Library Collaboration

The NJTPA conducted targeted outreach to the region's libraries to help disseminate information and resources to help promote the Phase 1 Survey, prioritizing collaboration with regional libraries and those in traditionally underrepresented communities. Over 8,000 bookmarks and 400 flyers advertising the survey, as well as more than 1,800 print versions of the survey were distributed to 51 public library locations across the region. Bookmarks and flyers included QR codes linking directly to the online survey.



## Outreach Activity Display

At in-person events, the team used a stacked display cube to present information in an interactive and flexible format. Each side of the cube highlighted a different aspect of the plan, allowing participants to engage with content in a self-guided way.



## Advisory & Partner Networks

In addition to broad public outreach, NJTPA engaged with leadership and community-based organizations to help shape the outreach strategy and expand its reach. These advisory and partner networks played a central role in identifying priorities, tailoring outreach methods, and connecting with populations that may be underrepresented in regional planning processes.

### *NJTPA Board Visioning Workshop*

Before launching public outreach activities, NJTPA hosted a Visioning Workshop with its Board of Trustees to help shape the direction of the LRTP. The Board includes representatives from each of the subregions, a citizen representative, and relevant agencies, including the NJ Department of Transportation, NJ TRANSIT, the Port Authority of NY and NJ, and the Governor's Authorities Unit.



The workshop was held in person at NJTPA's offices and provided an opportunity for Board Members to share their perspectives on long-term transportation needs and challenges across the region. To prepare for the session, Board members completed a pre-meeting survey identifying the region's transportation strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. During the workshop, they participated in facilitated breakout discussions and group dialogue focused on regional priorities.



Input from the Visioning Workshop helped inform the design of the Phase 1 outreach strategy, including the focus of the public survey and the framing of topics addressed in virtual forums. Board Members were also encouraged to support public engagement by promoting the plan and outreach activities within their subregions and agency networks.

### *Stakeholder Advisory Committee*

As part of the early planning for public engagement, NJTPA formed a Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC) to provide input on outreach strategies and help the project team connect with communities. The SAC served as a resource for reviewing materials and advised on methods that could support engagement efforts.

The committee included representatives from organizations with local ties and experience in serving a range of populations, including older adults, people with disabilities, immigrants, low-income residents, and youth.

SAC Member Organizations	
Age-Friendly Englewood	NJ Advocates for Aging Well
Amtrak	NJ Bike & Walk Coalition
Bike JC	Passaic County Planning
Disability Rights NJ	Somerset County Planning Division
Hands Inc	Statewide Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of NJ
Jewish Federation of Ocean County	Tri-State Transportation Campaign
New Jersey Bike & Walk Coalition	UpNext North Jersey

The SAC met virtually on January 14, March 20, and June 25, 2025. Members reviewed outreach materials before they were finalized and shared ideas for how to adapt messages and tactics for different communities. Several organizations also helped distribute materials and shared engagement opportunities through their networks, strengthening the accessibility and reach of the overall engagement effort.

## Public Engagement Activities

To reach the public directly, NJTPA organized a range of engagement activities tailored to different audiences and participation preferences. These efforts included virtual forums, in-person pop-up events, targeted youth outreach, young professionals outreach, and a formal public comment period. Activities were designed to be interactive, inclusive, and easy to access, ensuring broad representation from voices across the region. The insights gathered from these events helped shape the plan's priorities and strategies.

### *Phase 1 Engagement*

Phase 1 concentrated on building awareness and collecting initial feedback. It relied primarily on digital tools, including a multilingual public survey, virtual forums, and targeted online advertising.

### Survey

A central component of the public engagement effort was a short survey designed to understand how people in the NJTPA region experience the transportation system today, what challenges they face, and what improvements they would most like to see. It aimed to gather input on residents' needs, priorities, travel behavior, and preferences for future transportation options.

The survey was available online and in print from January through April 2025. To support



participation among non-English-speaking residents, it was translated into five additional languages, including Spanish, Chinese (simplified), Korean, Hindi, and Portuguese. Participants were given the option to enter a raffle for a chance to win a \$25 gift card for completing the survey. The online version was hosted on the project website and promoted through NJTPA's social media channels, email outreach, and partner organizations. As described earlier, paper versions of the survey were distributed to libraries throughout the region. At its conclusion, the Phase 1 survey received 1,861 responses.

### Let's Talk! Forums

NJTPA hosted three virtual public forums focused on specific transportation topics. Each session included brief presentations from guest speakers, followed by breakout discussions to gather public input, which was used to guide the development of outreach materials and topics for Phase 2. Forums were promoted through NJTPA's website, social media, and partner networks. Forum recordings were posted to the project website following each event.



The first session, *Walking, Biking & Rolling Investments: Creating Active and Accessible Communities*, was held on January 28, 2025, and focused on strategies to improve active transportation. The NJ Bike and Walk Coalition was the co-sponsor of the forum, helping to set the messaging and advertise to their members and contacts.

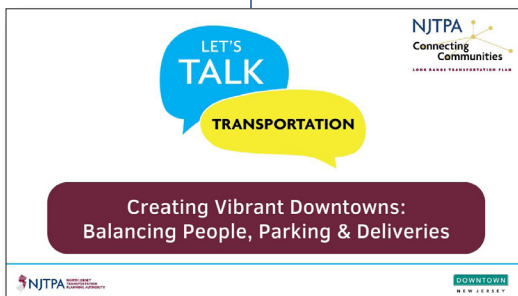
Speakers included Leigh Ann Von Hagen of the Voorhees Transportation Center and Tiffany Robinson of the NJ Bike and Walk Coalition. Presentations highlighted safety risks faced by seniors, low-income, and immigrant communities, and discussed trail networks, Vision Zero, and other planning initiatives. During breakout room discussions, several themes emerged: improving regional connectivity, engaging local officials to pass county- and region-wide policy changes for safer biking and walking, reducing car dependency by expanding bike and pedestrian infrastructure, and improving public transit services while addressing first-mile/last-mile connectivity to transit.



The second session on March 3, 2025, *Going Places: Improving Access to Transit*, explored how land use and community design can support public transportation. Topics included pedestrian and bicycle safety and housing near transit. NJ TRANSIT and NJTOD (formerly the The Transit Friendly Planning Newsletter), were co-sponsors, helping to set the messaging of the forum and

advertise to their members and constituencies.

Megan Massey of NJ TRANSIT and Kyle Skala of NJDOT were among the featured speakers. The event also included a case study of the Route 9 TOD Plan, presented by Tamanna Tiku of Perkins Eastman. During breakout room discussions, several recurring themes emerged: first and last-mile connectivity, the need to reassess service requirements and address the lack of intra-state connections, inadequate transit facilities and amenities that discourage usage, and ways to make transit more accessible and user-friendly for everyone.



The third forum on March 25, 2025, *Creating Vibrant Downtowns: People, Parking, and Deliveries*, focused on managing multiple demands in commercial districts. Downtown New Jersey was the co-sponsor of the forum, helping to set the messaging of the forum and advertise to their members and contacts.

Alison Conway of City College of New York and Mike Manzella of the Jersey City Division of Transportation Planning presented on strategies to balance the needs of pedestrians, delivery vehicles, ride-hailing services, and parking users. During break-out room discussions, several key themes emerged: parking as a major challenge, street and curb space constraints, challenges in public engagement and enforcement, barriers to connectivity and walkability, regulatory and institutional challenges, data-driven and innovative approaches to curb management, infrastructure design for emergency access, and pedestrian and cyclist safety improvements.

### *Phase 2 Engagement*

Phase 2 shifted to in-person outreach, with a focus on meeting people in their communities to deepen conversations and refine priorities identified during Phase 1.



### **Pop-Up Events**

NJTPA hosted 15 in-person pop-up events, one in each subregion, to gather public input in casual, relaxed settings. Pop-up materials were also used to gather feedback at the NJ TransAction Conference and during an UpNext North Jersey event. The 15 main events were held at community gatherings such as farmers markets, festivals, and regional events. The goal was to meet people where they already were and make it easy to participate in the planning process.

*“The bike lanes are not connected to one another, so I can’t travel safely by bike with my kids. The bus/rail routes become very infrequent in the evenings, so I can’t use them for after work/school errands and activities.”*

— Jersey City resident

Each event featured a stacked display cube designed to present information in a visually appealing way that invited interaction. Participants responded to four questions about walking, biking, transit, and street safety to help refine plan priorities. These questions aimed to explore perspectives raised during Phase 1 in greater detail. Materials were available in English as well as Spanish, Chinese (simplified), Korean, Hindi, and Portuguese. Staff were present to assist participants and collect input, including Spanish and Hindi-speaking staff as appropriate to the

event location. Participants were able to enter into a raffle for a chance to win a \$25 gift card for participating at the pop-ups.

Pop-up locations were selected with support from NJTPA subregional staff and the Stakeholder Advisory Committee to ensure a wide geographic and demographic reach. Events emphasized engagement with communities that may not typically attend formal public meetings. In total, the pop-ups engaged more than 1,300 visitors, whose input helped validate and refine the themes developed during Phase 1.

## Survey

An online survey asking the same questions as the pop-ups was available to those who could not attend the in-person events. The survey was advertised on NJTPA’s social media platforms and paid social media ads focused on hard to reach populations. Nearly 350 people responded to the online survey, supplementing the overall Phase 2 outreach results.

## Youth Engagement

Recognizing the importance of including younger voices in the long-range planning process, NJTPA partnered with Rutgers Public Outreach and Engagement Team (POET) to design activities specifically for children and teens. These efforts encouraged creative expression and offered age-appropriate ways to participate in the conversation about the region’s transportation future.

NJTPA launched a youth-facing page on its website, inviting kids and teens to share ideas through drawings, audio recordings, and an online survey. Submissions were featured in the *NJTPA On*





*Air Studio*, an interactive platform that explained how their input would be incorporated into the draft plan.

To further encourage participation, NJTPA hosted a coloring and drawing contest, offering a \$100 gift card prize, which was featured at the pop-up events, and provided small giveaways, such as stickers and bracelets, to thank children for participating. The contest proved to be a highly effective way to engage children and spark interest from accompanying adults. In total, approximately 274 youth submitted artwork through pop-up events and the on-air outreach.

These activities helped broaden participation and added a fun, accessible entry point for younger audiences.

### Specialized Outreach

To expand the reach of the engagement effort and ensure diverse perspectives were included, NJTPA partnered with POET to conduct outreach with specific populations that may be underrepresented in traditional planning processes. Two examples of this targeted engagement included outreach to young professionals through UpNext North Jersey and the LGBTQ+ community.



ON AIR STUDIO! - SAMMY THE SQUIRREL

<https://youtu.be/goLnam947Bo>



### UpNext North Jersey

NJTPA collaborated with UpNext North Jersey, a network of young professionals, to host a virtual engagement session using the platform Slides with Friends. Participants joined the interactive activity by responding to questions on their phones and discussing four core LRTP topics: pedestrian improvements, bicycling improvements, public transportation, and safety.

The session was promoted via the UpNext email list and social media platforms. Feedback emphasized the need for safer streets for walking and biking and more frequent, reliable public transportation, particularly on weekends.

### LGBTQ+ Outreach

POET also conducted outreach focused on the LGBTQ+ community through both synchronous and asynchronous engagement methods. Individuals attended a small virtual session used a journey mapping exercise to capture the thoughts and emotions of an individual as they navigate a journey (in this case, a typical trip in the NJTPA region). This was complimented by a short supplemental questionnaire, designed to gather feedback from individuals who could not attend the live session.

This outreach was promoted via LGBTQ+ social media channels, organized outreach lists, and flyer distribution. While participation numbers were modest, the responses highlighted meaningful concerns about personal safety and security, especially for individuals identifying or presenting as LGBTQ+. Responses highlighted safety and mobility concerns and suggested that better walking and biking infrastructure could improve both mobility and perceived safety.

### *Phase 3 Engagement*

Phase 3 provided a final opportunity for stakeholders and community members to provide feedback on the draft LRTP.

### Public Comment Period and Virtual Open House

To support public review of the draft LRTP, NJTPA hosted a 30-day public comment period in summer 2025. As part of this process, NJTPA held a Virtual Open House on July 17, 2025 to present the draft plan and enable participants to share feedback. The event included a rolling presentation in the main room and topic specific breakout rooms, including a Spanish language breakout room. The Virtual Open House served as a capstone to the engagement process, allowing NJTPA to share how public input shaped the draft plan and to invite final reflections before adoption.

The public comment period was advertised on the website, emails, social media posts, and paid social media ads. In addition to accepting comments during the Virtual Open House, NJTPA accepted comments via email and via phone.

# What We Heard

## Overview

Input gathered through surveys, forums, and pop-up events reflected strong interest in safer, more connected, and more accessible transportation options. Participants expressed a desire for a system that offers more choices beyond driving, addresses safety concerns, and improves access to everyday destinations.

In the Phase 1 survey, nearly half of the participants said they use car-oriented transportation (car, taxi, or ride-share) as their primary mode of getting around today, yet 72 percent of respondents said they would like to take transit more often in the future, over half said they wanted to walk more, and nearly 39 percent hoped to bike or use scooters more frequently. Meanwhile, nearly two-thirds of respondents ranked driving as their least desired future travel mode.

*“I can’t drive due to my disability and transit options limit my ability to get work.”*  
— Bergen County resident

Nearly 60 percent of respondents said the current transportation system does not fully meet their needs, with public transit concerns topping the stated reason for their dissatisfaction. Top changes that would encourage transit use included more increased availability, more frequent service, more flexible hours, faster travel times, and better reliability.

Comments also emphasized developing a more connected bike network and improving safety for pedestrians. While some respondents raised concerns about congestion and road conditions, most focused on improving access to transit and enhancing options for walking and biking.

At pop-up events and through the supplemental online survey, participants responded to four simple questions. Their top priorities were:

- **Transit:** Service that goes to more places people want to go
- **Safety:** Streets designed for all users—walkers, cyclists, and drivers
- **Walking and Mobility:** Connected and well-maintained sidewalks
- **Bicycling:** Better connections to parks and community spaces



In addition to structured responses, many participants shared comments reflecting local challenges and personal experiences. These firsthand accounts reinforced broader themes and highlighted the importance of addressing infrastructure gaps, safety concerns, and multimodal accessibility across the region. This input shaped the draft plan's goals and strategies and will continue to guide NJTPA's planning and project development.

*"County roads have no shoulders or sidewalks in my town, Oceanport [...] They keep passing the buck. But the next town has sidewalks on the same county road."*  
- Monmouth County Pop-up Participant

*"I won't ride [bike] on the street anymore because I recently got hit by a car."*  
- Essex County Pop-up Participant

*"Lower traffic speeds need to be enforced."*  
- Ocean County Pop-up Participant

*"More ADA-accessible, low-floor buses."*  
- Monmouth County Pop-up Participant



## Board Visioning Workshop

### *Pre-Workshop Survey*

Prior to the workshop, Board members and Subregional staff were asked to take a short survey to identify priorities, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. There were 30 responses to the pre-Visioning Workshop survey, including at least one response from every subregion. Collectively, the Board identified the Region's major strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, as related to transportation planning.

### STRENGTHS

- Geographic location
- Demographic diversity
- Educated workforce
- Existing transportation assets (roads, bridges, freight, port facilities, etc.)

### WEAKNESSES

- Transit network access, capacity, and reliability
- Road congestion and unreliable travel times
- Aging or outmoded facilities

### OPPORTUNITIES

- Development/redevelopment around rail stations and bus terminals
- Expanding infrastructure and programs to give people more local travel options, including walking, biking, scooters, demand responsive shuttles, etc.
- Increased commitments to Vision Zero and Complete Streets.

### THREATS

- Uncoordinated land use and transportation investments
- Unmet funding needs for transportation projects
- Regulations that delay and increase the cost of infrastructure.

*When asked to rank the Region's top priorities, the top four were:*

- 1. Safety*
- 2. Transit*
- 3. Accessibility*
- 4. Active Transportation*



### **Access & Opportunity Discussion**

During the workshop, a facilitated discussion about access and opportunity to the transportation system for all users began with a review of factors the NJTPA uses for its demographic analysis. Newark also provided insights into their community-centric approach and focus on connecting projects and neighborhoods. The importance of engaging communities through meaningful outreach was also highlighted.

#### *Challenges*

- Funding is an issue
- Meeting the needs of people with disabilities in rural areas
- Younger people do not want to obtain a license or a car
- Difficult for undocumented people to obtain a license
- Return on investment for microtransit
- Accessible transit
- Safety and accessibility
- Quality of life
- Improve sidewalks
- ADA ramps at intersections
- Trail connections

#### *Suggestions*

- Support small entities that have limited resources
- Make data-driven funding decisions
- Multiple transportation options
- Research funding opportunities
- Incentivize transit users
- Institutionalize access and opportunity in the planning process
- Local partnerships to provide access to transit
- Provide essential transportation services
- Complement fixed route with on-demand microtransit system
- Permanent microtransit program
- Systematic approach to safety
- More partnerships



### *Breakout Groups*

Three breakout groups discussed land use, transportation needs, affordable housing, and safety. Overarching challenges included a lack of coordination between towns and counties, new infrastructure to support the increase in residential development and increased demand for both freight and local deliveries, and the need for affordable housing near transit. Popular solutions included better utilization of master plans to identify and address transportation needs in line with land use, taking a data-focused approach, and prioritizing collaboration between municipalities and counties.

#### **BREAKOUT GROUP 1**

##### **Land Use and Transportation Coordination**

###### *Challenges*

- Home rule
- Counties cannot make policies or mandates
- Towns do not coordinate with counties
- Infrastructure cannot support increasing residential development

###### *Suggestions*

- Address challenges with the state legislature (County Planners Act, Municipal Land Use Law [MLUL], etc.)
- Require developers to pay a share of transportation improvements
- Consider transportation in zoning and planning decisions and approvals
- Go back to a statewide master plan

##### **Existing Transportation Infrastructure**

###### *Challenges*

- Limited funding
- Transit Village program does not work everywhere
- Transit service cannot keep up with demand from newer transit villages
- Focus is too heavy on rail transit as opposed to buses, bike lanes, etc.

###### *Suggestions*

- First and Last-Mile Transportation needs to be incorporated into master plans



## Affordable Housing

### Challenges

- New development near transit is not affordable
- Obtaining higher density development approval in some locations

### Safety

#### Suggestions

- Need a data-focused approach
- Counties and municipalities should collaborate
- Earlier education about bike/ped/driver safety in schools
- Treat distracted walking/biking as a more serious problem
- Partner with Transportation Management Associations (TMAs)
- Need better metrics to evaluate the success of safety investments



## BREAKOUT GROUP 2

### Land Use and Transportation Coordination

#### Challenges

- Counties are not always included in discussions about municipal redevelopment plans (and often do not even receive a copy)
- There are no requirements to update redevelopment plans to adjust to changing needs

#### Suggestions

- Municipalities and counties should collaborate
- Address transportation impacts that arise because of new development
- Community benefits agreements
- Engage municipalities in planning studies
- Plan for future opportunities

### Safety

#### Suggestions

- Need adequate sidewalks and other infrastructure
- Create a process for implementing Complete Streets policies
- Counties and municipalities should partner to develop implementation plans – SS4A is opening dialogues and should continue to be an impetus for collaboration

- Counties support municipalities that have limited resources
- Expand the NJTPA's Planning for Emerging Centers program
- Assist locals in applying for federal grants
- NJ could help funnel federal funds to municipalities
- NJDOT could use more federal funds for projects and put state funds into other programs

### Staffing

#### *Challenges*

- Newark needs staff to review ordinances and meet current standards
- Shortage of inspectors
- Subregions in need of qualified planning staff

#### *Suggestions*

- Legislation to help the inspector certification process needs improvement
- Internships
- Targeted workforce development programs

### BREAKOUT GROUP 3

#### Land Use and Transportation Coordination

#### *Challenges*

- Lack of coordination
- NJTPA has limited control

### Affordable Housing

#### *Challenges*

- Transit villages have the highest need for affordable housing
- Need workforce housing
- Microtransit
- Capacity of the system vs number of new residents

#### *Suggestions*

- Encourage affordable housing within transit villages

## Safety

### *Challenges*

- Need safe access to transit
- Speeding

### *Suggestions*

- Need camera enforcement to acknowledge driver behavior and careless driving
- Improve driver visibility of pedestrians
- Timing pedestrian signals would also help cross safely
- Paint and maintenance are important for safety even though it is less exciting

## Existing Transportation Infrastructure

### *Challenges*

- Transit Oriented Development (TOD) is being oversold as a concept
- Transit network is linear
- Getting to work
- Train from Hackettstown is not efficient
- Need transit that isn't focused on New York City
- Local roads are becoming more congested

### *Suggestions*

- Consider a microtransit study, presentation, or working group
- Don't build for today; build for the future
- Add incentives to expedite site plan approval process
- Convert New York City offices to apartments
- Consider shift to work from home in the LRTP
- Consider active transportation differently in urban and rural areas
- Future need for electric vehicle infrastructure



## Let's Talk! Forums

Each virtual Let's Talk! forum focused on a key theme and invited the public to share insights, experiences, and priorities to help guide future investments. The sessions were well attended by a diverse group of stakeholders, including residents, advocates, and professionals from across the region.

Forum Participants		
Topic	Date	# of Participants
<b>Walking, Biking, &amp; Rolling Investments:</b> Creating Active & Accessible Communities	January 28, 2025	36
<b>Going Places:</b> Improving Access to Transit	March 3, 2025	20
<b>Creating Vibrant Downtowns:</b> Balancing People, Parking, & Deliveries	March 25, 2025	39
Location	Live	Work or School
Bergen	11%	10%
Essex	19%	19%
Hudson	17%	8%
Hunterdon	2%	3%
Middlesex	3%	10%
Monmouth	3%	8%
Morris	1%	2%
Ocean	5%	2%
Passaic	1%	2%
Somerset	5%	10%
Sussex	1%	2%
Union	5%	5%
Warren	2%	2%
Newark	3%	5%
Jersey City	13%	8%
<i>Outside the Region</i>	10%	8%
<i>*Newark &amp; Jersey City Respondents are also included in their respective County tallies.</i>		



## *Forum 1: Walking, Biking, & Rolling Investments*

### **Introduction**

The first forum in the Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) series focused on investments in walking, biking, and rolling. A total of 36 participants attended, and among those who responded to an in-meeting demographics poll, most of whom were white males, along with several African American men. The majority were members of Generation X or Baby Boomer age cohorts, had high incomes, access to vehicles, and were active in the workforce.

David Behrend, Executive Director of the NJTPA, introduced LRTP, highlighting the critical role of transportation in connecting the region to opportunities. Ted Ritter, Manager of External Affairs at the NJTPA, welcomed the attendees and introduced the speakers to the forum.

Leigh Ann Von Hagen, Executive Director of the Voorhees Transportation Center, presented the role of active transportation within the LRTP, emphasizing safety, economic resilience, and inclusivity. She raised key questions, including “Can people get around safely without a car?” and highlighted the higher traffic fatality risks for seniors, low-income, and foreign-born communities. During an interactive exercise, participants discussed school zone speed limits, noting that drivers tend to speed in areas lacking safety features but slow down when interventions, like raised medians and crosswalks, are in place. Von Hagen also discussed critical safety initiatives such as Vision Zero, the Federal Highway Administration’s (FHWA) Safe Systems Approach, and the Complete Streets Initiative while outlining the transportation planning “playbook,” which covers roadway ownership, funding, and strategies for improving safety and accessibility.

Tiffany Robinson, Trails Network Manager at the NJ Bike and Walk Coalition, presented the benefits of trails, emphasizing their role in safety, sustainability, and community connectivity. She explained how trails are integral to the larger transportation network, supporting the local economy, providing active transportation options, protecting the environment, improving wellness, and promoting access and opportunity by offering community spaces to gather. Robinson highlighted key planning documents like the Pedestrian and Bicycle Connectivity and Access Plan (PCAP) and discussed how LRTP offers an opportunity to integrate active transportation and traffic safety.

### **Discussion Highlights**

After the presentation, attendees were divided into smaller groups for a facilitated discussion focused on key questions related to bicycle and pedestrian safety. During the discussions,

several themes emerged: improving regional connectivity, engaging local officials to pass county- and region-wide policy changes for safer biking and walking, reducing car dependency by expanding bike and pedestrian infrastructure, and improving public transit services while addressing first-mile/last-mile connectivity to transit.

### Political Will & Policy Barriers

Participants highlighted political reluctance and resistance among leaders, who often prioritize cars over pedestrians and bikes, block bike lane projects, and resist road capacity reductions as a significant concern. Progress is frequently slowed or obstructed by local officials and agencies, while certain local regulations, such as bans on biking in parks, contradict broader bike-friendly policies.

The participants emphasized the need for regional coordination, such as models like the Morris Canal Working Group, to ensure connectivity across municipal boundaries. They also emphasized the importance of engaging local leaders to support and implement transit plans and securing dedicated funding pipelines for off-road trails and bike infrastructure. Establishing concrete goals, such as reducing vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and exploring partnerships with counties to leverage bus services for first and last-mile connections, were suggested as potential solutions.

### Street Design and Infrastructure Prioritization for Drivers vs. Active Transportation

Participants expressed concern that street design overwhelmingly prioritizes vehicle movement, often at the expense of pedestrian and cyclist safety. Funding tends to favor road features that benefit drivers, such as angled parking, rather than improvements for vulnerable road users. Participants called for more studies, such as county-level Complete Streets policies, to ensure that the infrastructure supports all modes of transportation, thereby fostering safer and more accessible environments for walking, biking, and e-mobility.

Additionally, there is a need for a cultural shift in public perception, where biking and walking are viewed as fundamental transportation rights, rather than optional amenities. The current planning framework prioritizes vehicle Level of Service (LOS) over multimodal accessibility. A mindset shifts toward planning for all users, not just drivers, is crucial.

### Improving Safety for All Road Users

Participants highlighted significant safety risks for pedestrians and cyclists due to the lack of protected bike lanes, unsafe at-grade rail crossings, and outdated infrastructure in areas like Red Bank. They emphasized that new developments often overlook critical safety needs, such

as those at railroad crossings, which contribute to crashes near transit stops. Simply adding signage is not enough—proper lane delineation and traffic calming measures, such as speed humps, are also essential. As a potential solution, they suggested converting streets to one-way to accommodate bike lanes without removing parking. Additionally, they stressed the need to improve safety around train stations and enhance train speeds to encourage ridership.

### Infrastructure Gaps and Connectivity Challenges

Participants identified major gaps in biking, walking, and transit connectivity across municipal and regional boundaries. While some transit-heavy areas have bike lanes, a lack of coordination between municipalities leads to inconsistencies and a fragmented network. Specific challenges include missing bike lanes in Bergen County, poor sidewalk conditions in underserved areas, and unsafe crossings near key destinations, underscoring the need for targeted improvements. The lack of cohesive planning at the local, county, and regional levels has resulted in fragmented and inefficient bike and pedestrian networks, creating “bike lanes to nowhere” with limited connectivity. To address these issues, participants emphasized the crucial role of the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) in facilitating regional bike, bus, and pedestrian corridors supported by dedicated funding pipelines.

### Improving Public Transit Service and Accessibility

Participants raised concerns about public transit access and service, particularly for seniors and individuals with adaptive mobility needs. They highlighted the lack of consistent bus services in areas like Ringwood and South Orange, which negatively impact local economies and school transportation and contribute to increased car dependency and road congestion. To address these issues, participants called for improved bus connectivity, more frequent services, and a more integrated transit system to reduce reliance on cars. Participants also noted the need for a more robust and dependable public transit system with improved regional connectivity. Enhancing bus routes between Bergen County and Jersey City, along with services tailored to meet the needs of vulnerable populations—especially seniors—was seen as essential to improving accessibility and removing barriers to essential services.

### First and Last-Mile Connectivity

Participants emphasized the importance of enhancing access to public transportation and reducing car dependency. They pointed out the financial strain of high parking costs, often leading people to explore alternative travel options, such as ferries or driving longer distances to find cheaper parking. Additionally, participants emphasized the need to integrate walking and biking with transit systems to improve access to stations and key destinations to further reduce their reliance on cars. They advocated for creating infrastructure, such as bike lanes

that seamlessly connect to transit hubs. Enhancing first and last-mile connectivity would provide more convenient travel options, encouraging greater use of public transportation and active mobility.

### Emerging Micromobility Needs and Solutions

Participants emphasized the growing use of e-bikes and e-scooters, which the current infrastructure and policies fail to support. They highlighted innovative solutions, like cargo bike delivery models, that could help reduce congestion and improve safety. Additionally, expanding micromobility options, like bike-sharing systems and scooters, could serve as vital links between suburban areas and larger urban centers. E-bikes were considered an effective solution in areas with steep terrain, offering energy efficiency and a low carbon footprint, as long as proper facilities were in place. Participants also advocated for creating a North Jersey Trail Network to enable uninterrupted bike and e-bike travel across the region, thereby improving accessibility to shopping centers, transit hubs, and job centers.

### Education and Awareness

Participants emphasized the need for education and awareness through temporary street closures, allowing the public to experience biking and walking infrastructure, citing models like the weekend closures on the Bronx River Parkway. They also noted the need to engage officials by encouraging them to go car-free for a day and help them understand the challenges non-drivers face. Additionally, participants suggested that educational campaigns could also help people realize the actual costs of driving versus using transit. Engaging youth in advocacy, such as walking to school, could help decision-makers be more receptive to changes.

## *Forum 2: Improving Access to Transit*

### Introduction

The second session focused on strategies to improve access to transit, with a particular emphasis on addressing challenges such as last-mile connectivity and opportunities for transit-oriented development. A total of 20 participants attended. Among those who responded an in-meeting demographics poll, most were white men, spanning from Generation Z to Baby Boomer age groups. The majority had access to a vehicle and represented working-age adults with higher household incomes.

David Behrend, Executive Director of the NJTPA, welcomed attendees and introduced the Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), emphasizing the critical role of public input in connecting the region to opportunities. Melissa Hayes, Senior Director of Communications & External Affairs at the NJTPA, provided a brief overview of the plan, encouraged



participation through an online survey, and introduced the forum's speakers.

Megan Massey, Director of Transit-Friendly Planning at NJ TRANSIT, presented the *Transit-Friendly Planning Guide*, which promotes development and infrastructure improvements that enhance access to public transit. The guide also outlines strategies for creating transit-friendly environments, including complete streets and integrating trails with transit. One key focus is active transportation, ensuring that walking and biking infrastructure supports transit access. This includes complete street policies that accommodate all road users and trail connections that enhance mobility, health, and economic opportunities. A case study in Dunellen examined transit access, crash data, and community feedback to identify barriers and improve bicycle and pedestrian safety.

Massey then introduced the Route 9 TOD Plan, a federally funded project in collaboration with Perkins Eastman, focusing on transit-oriented development (TOD) along the busy Route 9 bus corridor. Covering a 21-mile stretch from Old Bridge (Middlesex County) to Howell (Monmouth County), the study assessed TOD potential at 17 station areas before narrowing the focus to Old Bridge Park & Ride, Old Bridge Central, and Franklin Lane in Manalapan.

Tamanna Tiku, Associate at Perkins Eastman, outlined the design approach for the Route 9 TOD Plan, emphasizing the importance of ensuring that all roads lead to transit. Each station area was evaluated for its unique opportunities and challenges, focusing on increasing density near bus stops, preserving green spaces while concentrating development, promoting pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly infrastructure, and incorporating stormwater management into the designs. Tiku then highlighted site-specific proposals, pointing out the benefits of TOD along Route 9. She noted that TOD and other transit-friendly planning initiatives aim to create safer, more accessible, and economically vibrant transit corridors, benefiting a wide range of stakeholders.

Kyle Skala, manager of NJDOT's Local Division Office, presented the various funding opportunities available to municipalities and counties, specifically those focusing on improving transit access. He mentioned that over half a billion dollars in grants are distributed annually, and NJDOT's Local Aid provides multiple grant programs focusing on construction projects. There are six programs, each with distinct eligibility criteria, types of improvement, and goals. Skala stressed the importance of applying for these grants, as substantial funds are available to improve transit access.

## Discussion Highlights

After the presentation, attendees were divided into smaller groups for a facilitated discussion on key transit-related topics. During the discussions, several recurring themes emerged: first and last-mile connectivity, the need to reassess service requirements and address the lack of intra-state connections, inadequate transit facilities and amenities that discourage usage, and ways to make transit more accessible and user-friendly for everyone.

### Transit Accessibility and Inclusivity

A central theme across the discussions was making transit stops, stations, and surrounding infrastructure accessible for all, especially people with disabilities, seniors, and others with mobility challenges. Suggestions included improving sidewalks for pedestrians and those accessing the station without a car, adding solar-lit shelters for better nighttime safety, standardizing shelter designs to include seating, shade, and weather protection, and enhancing wayfinding signage to help those unfamiliar with the area. Specific attention should be given to the needs of people with disabilities, particularly people on the autism spectrum. The importance of clear, accessible signage and secure spaces to make transit systems more navigable and independent for these groups was emphasized. Additionally, participants recommended installing electronic kiosks with real-time transit information to ensure transit is usable and user-friendly for everyone.

### Improved First/Last-Mile Connectivity

Participants discussed the significant challenge of first/last-mile connectivity, which affects people's ability to access transit stops easily. While some pedestrian improvements have been made, issues such as inconsistent pedestrian signal operation and problematic pedestrian crossings persist. Suggestions included standardizing pedestrian signals and improving crosswalk safety. It was noted that in some areas, like Leonia, pedestrian safety beacons are not always effective, and adopting a consistent approach to these features across municipalities could significantly improve safety. The group also highlighted the importance of secure bike and scooter parking, suggesting the implementation of well-lit, secure bike racks to encourage cycling as a viable alternative to driving. Additionally, they noted that rural and suburban areas face challenges with isolated stations accessible only by car, and there is a need to reduce car reliance by providing better access to these stations through pedestrian paths or bike routes.

### Safety and Security

Another major theme was safety, emphasizing the importance of lighting, cleanliness, and security at transit stops. It was noted that clean, well-maintained spaces are essential to

ensuring that transit users feel comfortable and safe. Participants raised concerns such as stations being closed in the evening or locked vestibules discouraging public transit use after hours. Suggestions for improvement included better trash management and enhanced lighting around stations, particularly at night, to increase safety. The group also discussed the need for a Safe Streets approach to ensure lower speed limits around bus stops and stations.

### Developing Transit Hubs and Villages

The idea of transforming transit stations into vibrant community hubs was widely supported. Participants suggested that redevelopment around transit stops should include a mix of residential, retail, and community spaces to increase density and activity in the area. They emphasized the need to integrate development with transit infrastructure, where new residential or commercial buildings would connect to transit hubs via sidewalks, bike lanes, or multi-use paths. They also proposed that retail opportunities, such as libraries or fitness centers near transit stops, would make the area more inviting and increase foot traffic. Furthermore, they recommended designing buildings with views of transit areas to encourage people to use transit and make it visible and normalized for the entire community.

### Education and Cultural Shifts

A cultural shift from a car-first mentality to one that embraces walking, cycling, and public transit was seen as essential for long-term improvements in transit access. They highlighted community education as a crucial tool to address behavioral issues such as double parking and drivers failing to yield to pedestrians. Advocacy efforts should focus on engaging communities at a hyper-local level, where grassroots organizations can collaborate with local Transportation Management Associations (TMAs) to promote safer behaviors. They also identified educating the public about available transit options and promoting programs as key to improving the effectiveness of transit services.

### Adapting To Changing Needs

The changing travel patterns due to remote work and fluctuating commuter needs were discussed as significant challenges in planning future transit services. Participants noted that ridership trends have become less predictable, making planning for future transit demand difficult. While commuter rail and bus ridership in Manhattan have fluctuated, local bus and train ridership within New Jersey has remained relatively stable. However, with non-traditional commuting on the rise (mid-day, late-night, and weekend travel), they emphasized the need to reassess transit schedules to better reflect the current needs of the community.

## Investment and Funding for Infrastructure Development

Participants identified the need for more significant investment in early-stage planning as many municipalities face funding challenges when securing resources for shovel-ready projects. They proposed creating a non-competitive funding program for bike and walking facilities to simplify the process, especially for municipalities with limited capacity. They suggested allocating funds specifically for projects that improve access to transit to ensure that funding issues do not delay infrastructure development. Additionally, participants saw vision plans for transit stations as a necessary investment. These plans should focus on active transportation and accessibility to ensure that stations are usable for all residents, regardless of mobility level.

### *Forum 3: Creating Vibrant Downtowns*

#### Introduction

The third session focused on the complex balance between people, parking, and deliveries in downtown areas. A total of 39 participants attended. Among those who responded to an in-meeting demographics poll, the majority were white males from the Gen X and Baby Boomer age groups, with high household incomes, access to vehicles, and active participation in the workforce.

David Behrend, Executive Director of the NJTPA, welcomed attendees, emphasizing the vital role transportation plays in connecting residents to jobs, education, healthcare, and cultural opportunities. He stressed the importance of community input in shaping the plan and highlighted two NJTPA programs that support municipal planning: Vibrant Places, which provides technical assistance for placemaking projects, and Planning for Emerging Centers, which promotes walkable, transit-oriented development.

Ted Ritter, Manager of External Affairs at the NJTPA, thanked Downtown New Jersey for co-sponsoring the event. Natalie Pineiro, Executive Director of Downtown New Jersey, described the organization's mission to strengthen downtowns across the state, noting that managing curb space remains a key challenge. She encouraged attendees to engage and share their experiences to inform both NJTPA's LRTP and Downtown New Jersey's future programming.

Alison Conway, professor at the City College of New York, discussed the often-overlooked complexity of freight in downtowns, noting it includes everything from large trucks to handcarts used in last-mile delivery. She emphasized the need for street designs that account for diverse vehicle types, loading requirements, and delivery behaviors. Conway outlined three key players shaping freight outcomes: receivers, carriers, and the public sector. She emphasized



the importance of freight-sensitive planning that supports safe and efficient deliveries, integrating curb access, land use, and enforceable policies.

Mike Manzella, Director of Transportation Planning for Jersey City, outlined the City's comprehensive approach to balancing parking, deliveries, and public space in its downtown areas. He highlighted key projects, such as the Newark Avenue Pedestrian Plaza and the revitalization of Bergen Square in Journal Square, both of which have been transformed into welcoming public spaces that have stimulated new retail activity. Manzella also emphasized Jersey City's strong support for public transportation, noting its extensive bus network, protected bike lanes, a popular bike-sharing program, and an on-demand micro-transit service. To accommodate evolving delivery methods, the City is adapting to new technologies, including e-bikes and autonomous delivery robots. Additionally, Jersey City has invested in over 23 miles of protected bike lanes, secure bike parking facilities, and electric vehicle charging stations to support sustainable urban mobility.

### Discussion Highlights

After the introductory remarks, meeting attendees were divided into smaller breakout rooms to engage in facilitated discussions focused on critical concepts about balancing the needs of pedestrians, parking, and deliveries in downtown and commercial districts. During the discussions, several key themes emerged: parking as a major challenge, street and curb space constraints, challenges in public engagement and enforcement, barriers to connectivity and walkability, regulatory and institutional challenges, data-driven and innovative approaches to curb management, infrastructure design for emergency access, and pedestrian and cyclist safety improvements.

### Parking as a Major Challenge

Parking emerged as a key issue in all breakout rooms. Residents and businesses highly value on-street parking, which often leads to conflicts over the limited curb space. Although structured and municipal parking lots exist, they are frequently underused due to factors like inconvenient locations, reluctance to walk longer distances, or poor wayfinding. Proposals to reduce or remove on-street parking consistently face strong public resistance, highlighting the struggle to balance parking needs with other curb space uses such as parklets and outdoor dining.

Participants shared some short-term solutions, like 15-minute parking zones, which have been successful in Doylestown, Ambler, and Summit, improving turnover and access for food pickups or quick visits. Dynamic pricing and employee parking relocation were also noted

as essential management tools. Municipalities like Summit have developed layered parking strategies with varied time limits, kiosks, and zones that better balance the needs of residents, visitors, and commuters.

### Street and Curb Space Constraints

Many downtown and commercial districts face challenges due to narrow streets and outdated designs that were not built for today's volume of traffic, deliveries, and multimodal activity. These spatial limits often cause conflicts among delivery trucks, ride-hailing vehicles, parked cars, pedestrians, and cyclists. Commercial vehicles frequently double-park illegally, blocking travel and bike lanes and creating safety risks. Due to the limited availability of side streets, event closures or pedestrian-only zones tend to be rare or temporary.

Participants shared that cities like Hanover, Germany, and several New Jersey municipalities have tested design solutions—such as retractable bollards—to balance deliveries with pedestrian use. Despite these efforts, space constraints continue to be a persistent challenge. One participant proposed repurposing travel lanes through road diets or converting two-way streets into one-way streets to reclaim space for deliveries or expanded sidewalks.

### Challenges in Public Engagement and Enforcement

Participants emphasized that advancing new street uses requires strong public engagement and consistent enforcement. Many towns lack professional planning staff to proactively manage trade-offs or address concerns from residents, who are often focused mainly on parking access. Limited resources and competing law enforcement priorities often lead to weak enforcement of existing parking and curb regulations. Poor communication and inadequate signage in areas with underutilized parking create perception and trust issues around proposed changes.

Municipalities struggle to communicate changes—such as EV charging installations or new curb rules—resulting in misuse or confusion. Programs like EZ Ride's Street-Smart Campaign work to improve safety and community awareness. Participants stressed the importance of involving businesses and residents early in the process to build buy-in and avoid backlash, especially when repurposing parking spaces for parklets, loading zones, or bike lanes.

### Connectivity and Walkability Barriers

Many communities face challenges in creating continuous, connected pedestrian and bike infrastructure. When improvements only focus on single intersections, they fail to build usable networks that encourage walking and biking. Physical barriers like large parking lots, state

highways, and rail corridors isolate neighborhoods from downtown and other destinations. Even where walking is possible, people often hesitate to walk short distances if convenient parking isn't available. Off-street parking is available, but it only works well if it connects smoothly to pedestrian routes. Poor access from garages or rear parking lots discourages use.

Clear wayfinding signs and safer walking paths are necessary to shift demand away from curbside parking. Similarly, EV charging stations in places like New Brunswick and Westwood remain underused due to poor visibility, inconvenient locations, and lack of signage. Trail systems and safer crossings, such as those in Frenchtown and similar communities, provide strong models for expanding non-motorized connectivity for both recreation and everyday travel.

### Regulatory and Institutional Challenges

State and local regulations, particularly on state-owned roads or constrained corridors, were frequently cited as barriers to innovation. Communities frequently face long approval processes, unclear rules, and conflicting jurisdictional responsibilities when they try to implement outdoor dining, delivery zones, or pedestrian plazas. Coordination among different agencies, especially for signal upgrades, EV infrastructure, or curb space repurposing, varies widely across New Jersey.

Nevertheless, several communities have found creative solutions, such as partnering with the NJTPA, Green Acres, or local arts organizations to fund placemaking projects and activate public spaces despite regulatory hurdles.

### Data-Driven and Innovative Approaches to Curb Management

As demand for limited curb space increases, there is growing interest in using data and technology to better manage loading, ride-hailing, and other curbside activities. Participants emphasized the need to prioritize these uses, particularly in areas with high traffic and conflicting demands. Municipalities like Hoboken have taken proactive steps—such as removing corner parking to improve visibility—but many others still struggle with disorganized curb use due to weak enforcement and limited policy tools. The broader adoption of innovative curb technologies, timed delivery zones, and demonstration projects could help balance curb space more fairly, while improving safety and access for everyone. Participants also noted that Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) and business coalitions can play a key role in mediating between merchants, property owners, and the public to allocate curb functions more effectively.

### Infrastructure Design for Emergency Access

Participants stressed the need to improve infrastructure supporting emergency vehicle access in dense urban areas. Outdated traffic signal systems and limited use of signal preemption technology make it difficult for fire trucks, ambulances, and police vehicles to navigate congested streets quickly and safely. Many municipalities lack the resources or coordination to implement emergency signal prioritization, and existing infrastructure often cannot support newer systems.

Inconsistent training for engineers means emergency access is not always considered during traffic signal upgrades. Although funding exists for these improvements, successful implementation varies widely across New Jersey due to fragmented jurisdiction, limited local capacity, and competing priorities. Participants expressed strong interest in having NJTPA lead regional coordination efforts and provide technical assistance to expand the use of emergency vehicle preemption systems.

### Pedestrian and Cyclist Safety Improvements

Participants identified several effective strategies to enhance pedestrian and cyclist safety while still accommodating deliveries and personal vehicles. Permanent curb extensions were praised for preventing illegal parking near intersections and creating space for critical infrastructure such as stormwater systems, EV charging stations, and bike racks, while maintaining ADA accessibility. Leading Pedestrian Intervals (LPIs), successfully implemented in Somerset County, give pedestrians a head start at crossings, improving safety without significantly affecting traffic flow. Municipalities can schedule LPIs during peak pedestrian times, such as school start and dismissal hours, to strike a balance between safety and efficiency. Additionally, improved street lighting, especially pedestrian-focused lighting, offers a cost-effective way to create safer and more inviting streetscapes near crosswalks and downtown areas.

## Survey

The public involvement process included a short online survey to gather insights from across the region about desired transportation improvements, future transportation demand, and anticipated transportation priorities. The survey also included an open-ended opportunity to provide additional comments about transportation in North Jersey. The survey included optional demographic questions and was available in six languages, including English, Spanish, Hindi, Chinese (simplified), Korean, and Portuguese. To encourage broader participation in the survey, respondents were offered an opportunity to enter a raffle to win one of four \$25 gift cards.

### *Survey Respondent Demographics*

Ultimately, the survey yielded 1,861 responses. Participants were asked to identify their ZIP code of residence and work/school. Seventeen percent of all respondents live in Hudson County, and 75% of whom live in Jersey City. Bergen County was the next most represented, with 12 percent indicating they live there. Most respondents work or go to school outside the region (25%), followed by Hudson, Essex, and Bergen Counties each hovering around 10 percent.

The survey included optional demographics questions. Survey respondents skewed younger, were less racially and ethnically diverse, and more affluent than the population of North Jersey. Men were also slightly overrepresented. Car ownership of survey respondents was generally in line with residents of the region.

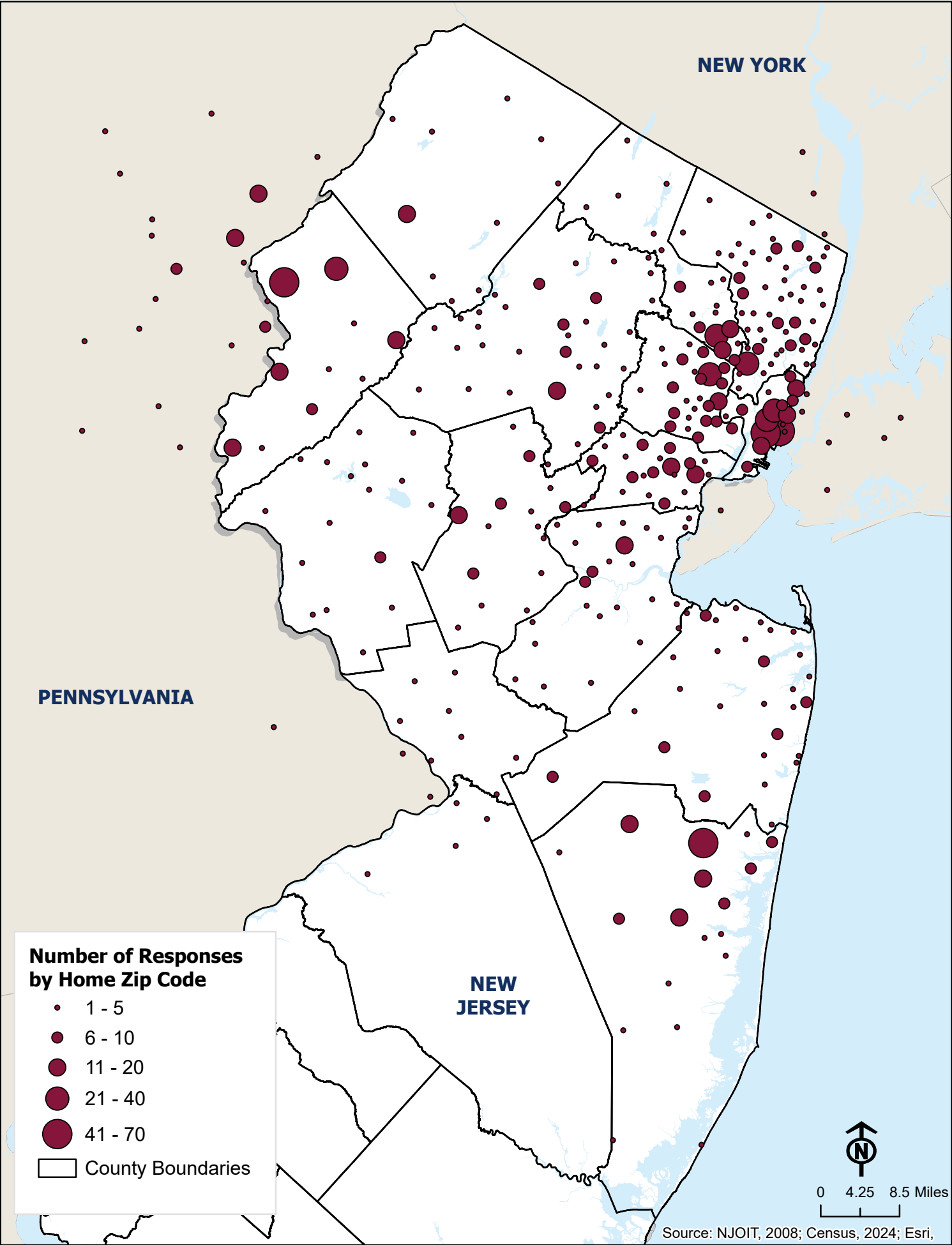
**Survey Respondent Zip Codes**

Location	Live	Work or School
Bergen	12%	9%
Essex	10%	11%
Hudson	17%	12%
Hunterdon	2%	2%
Middlesex	5%	6%
Monmouth	5%	4%
Morris	7%	7%
Ocean	9%	6%
Passaic	6%	3%
Somerset	4%	4%
Sussex	1%	1%
Union	7%	4%
Warren	9%	5%
Newark	3%	7%
Jersey City	12%	8%
Outside the Region	7%	25%

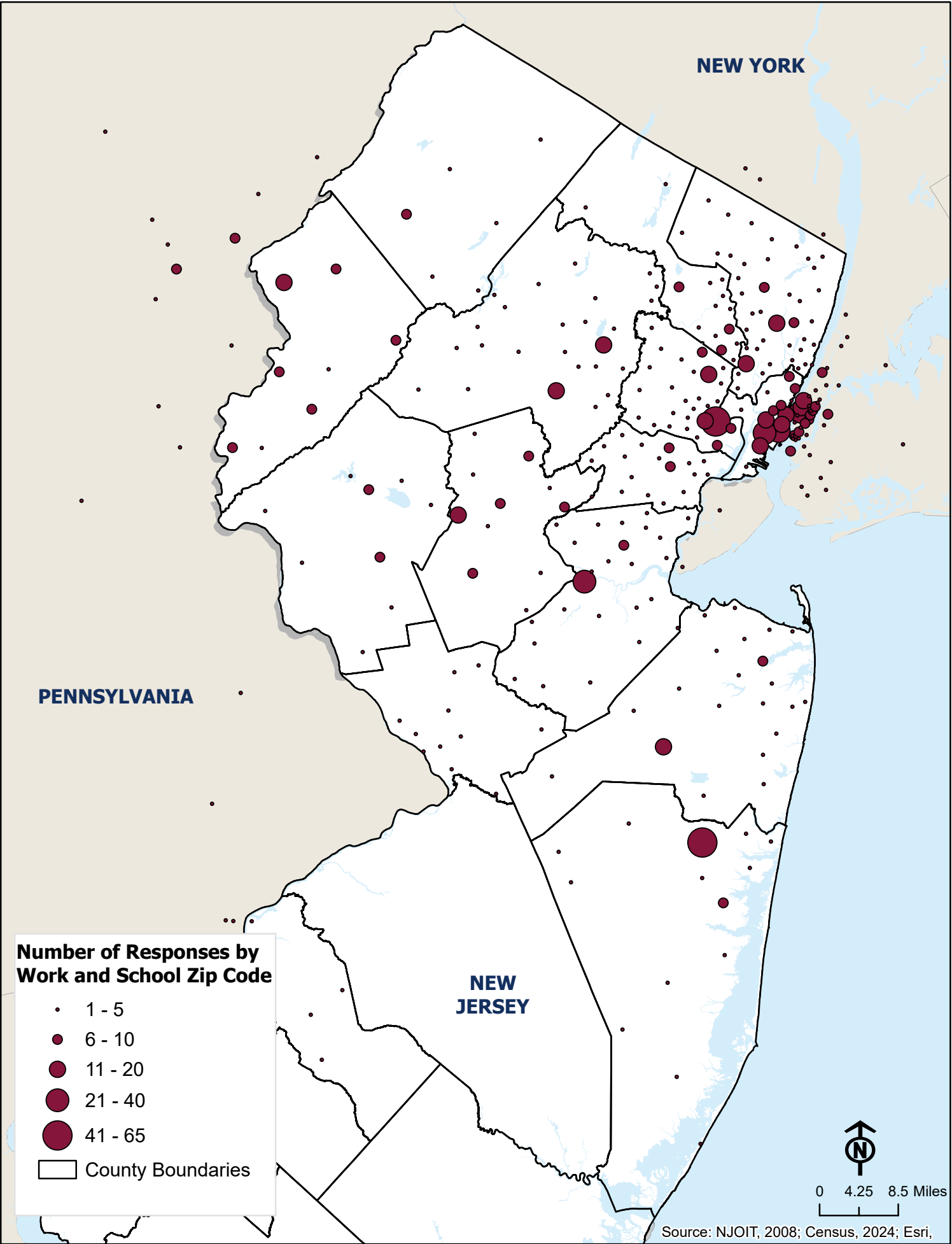
*\*Newark & Jersey City Respondents are also included in their respective County tallies.*



# Survey Respondents Home Zip Code

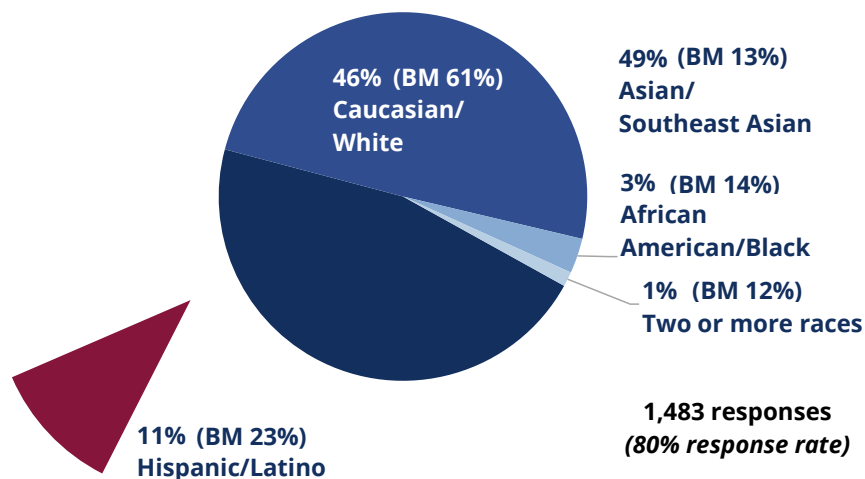


# Survey Respondents Work/School Zip Code

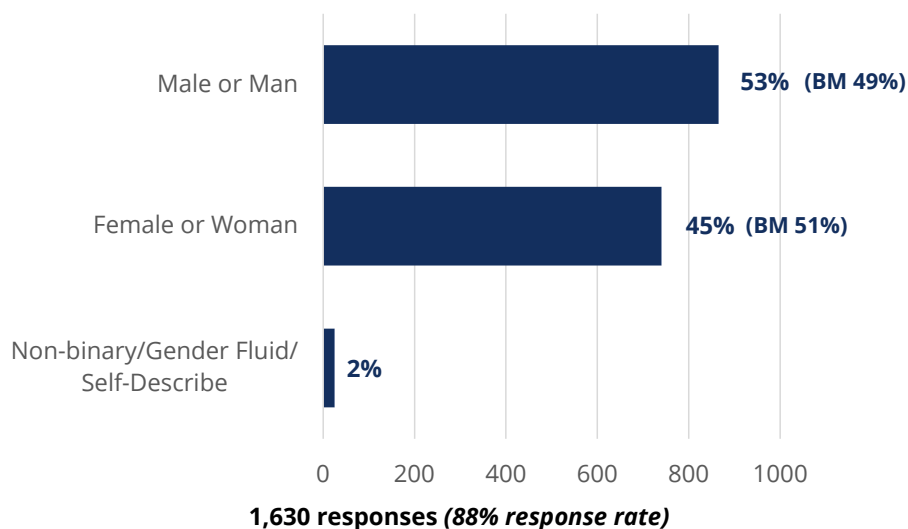


# Survey Respondents Demographics

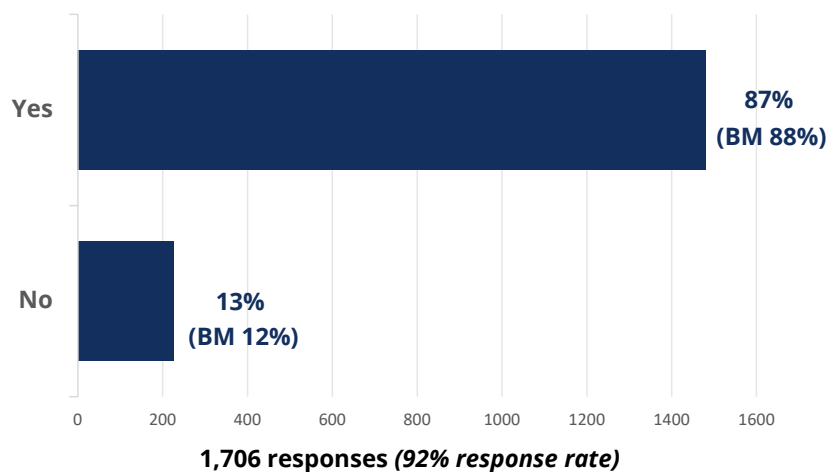
## RACE & ETHNICITY



## GENDER

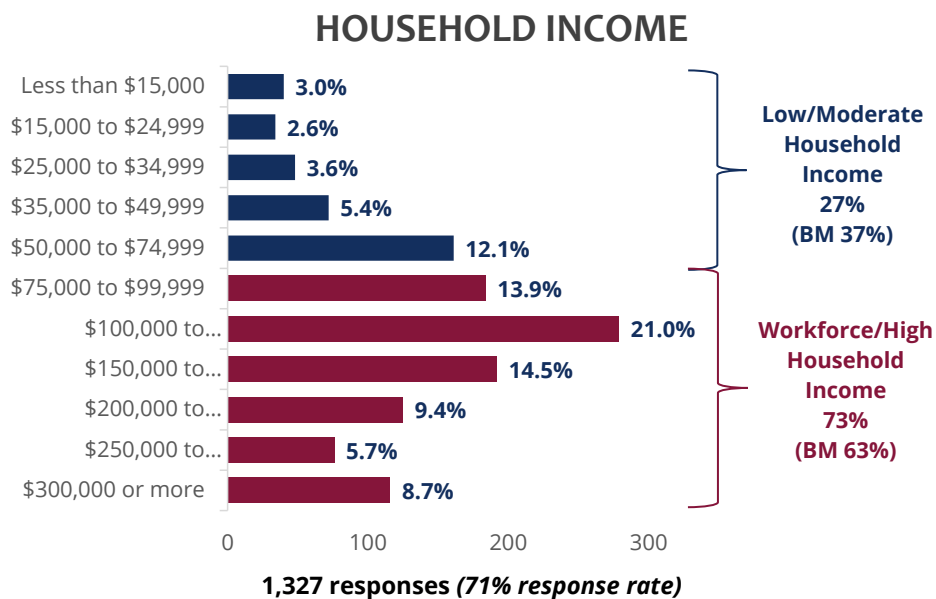
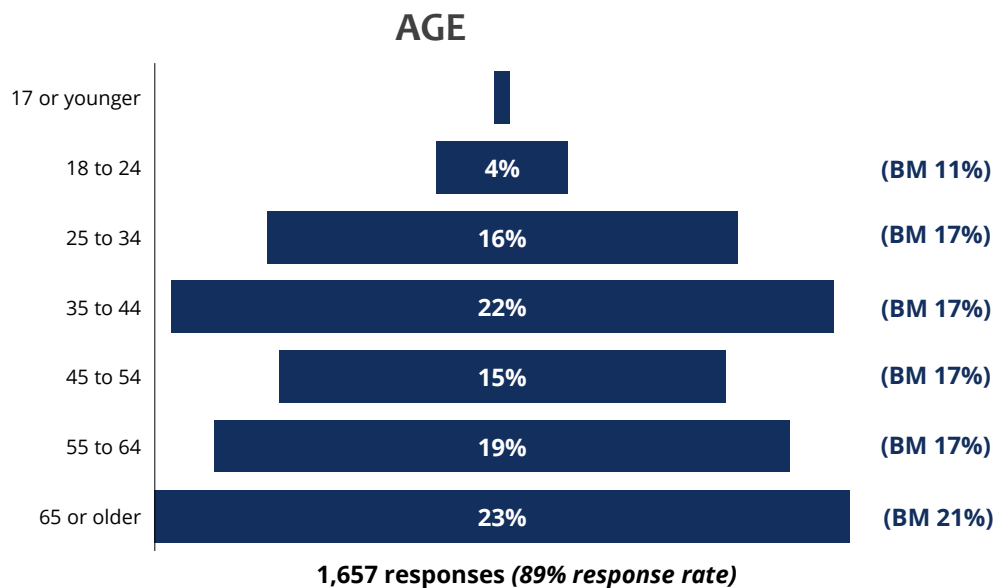


## ACCESS TO PERSONAL VEHICLE



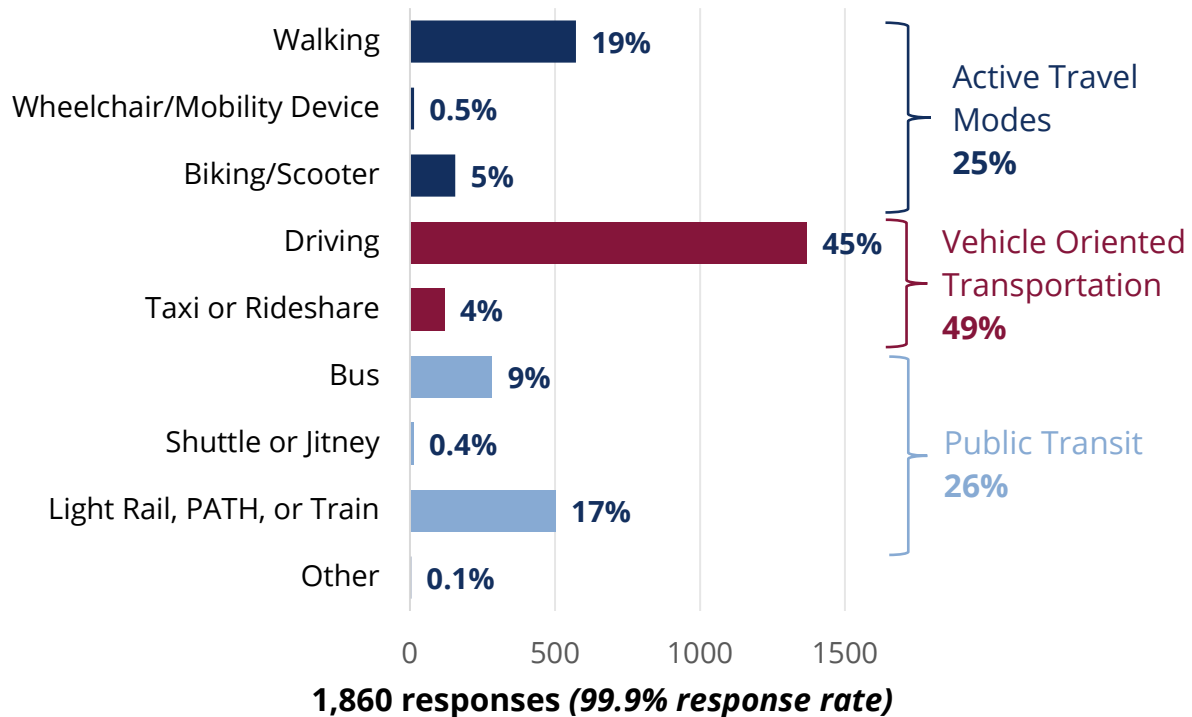
*\*Benchmark (BM) is the representation of a particular demographic within the Region according to the US Census.*

# Survey Respondents Demographics

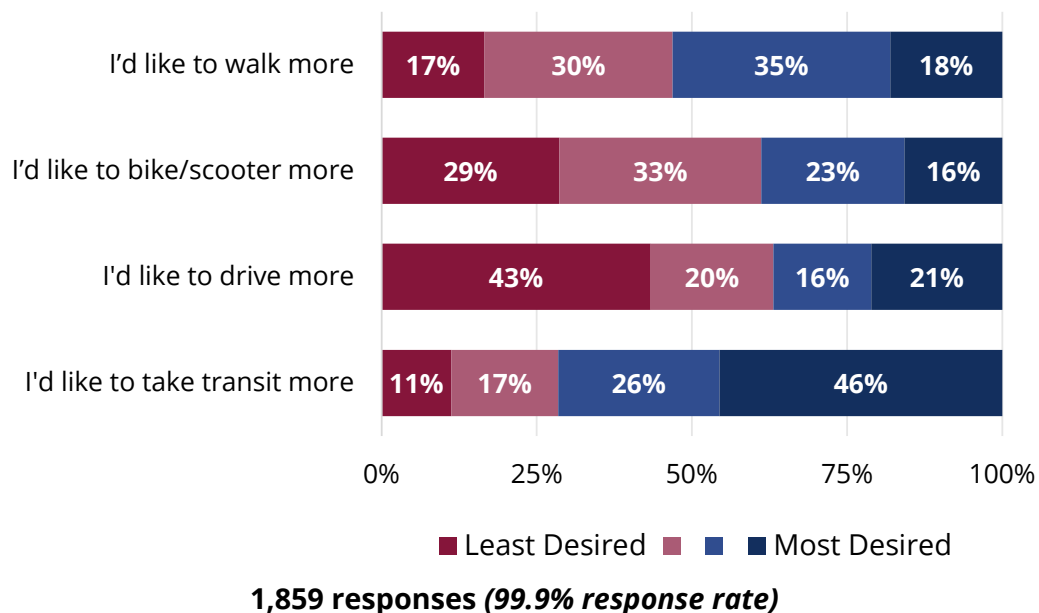


\*Benchmark (BM) is the representation of a particular demographic within the Region according to the US Census.

## CURRENT TRAVEL MODE

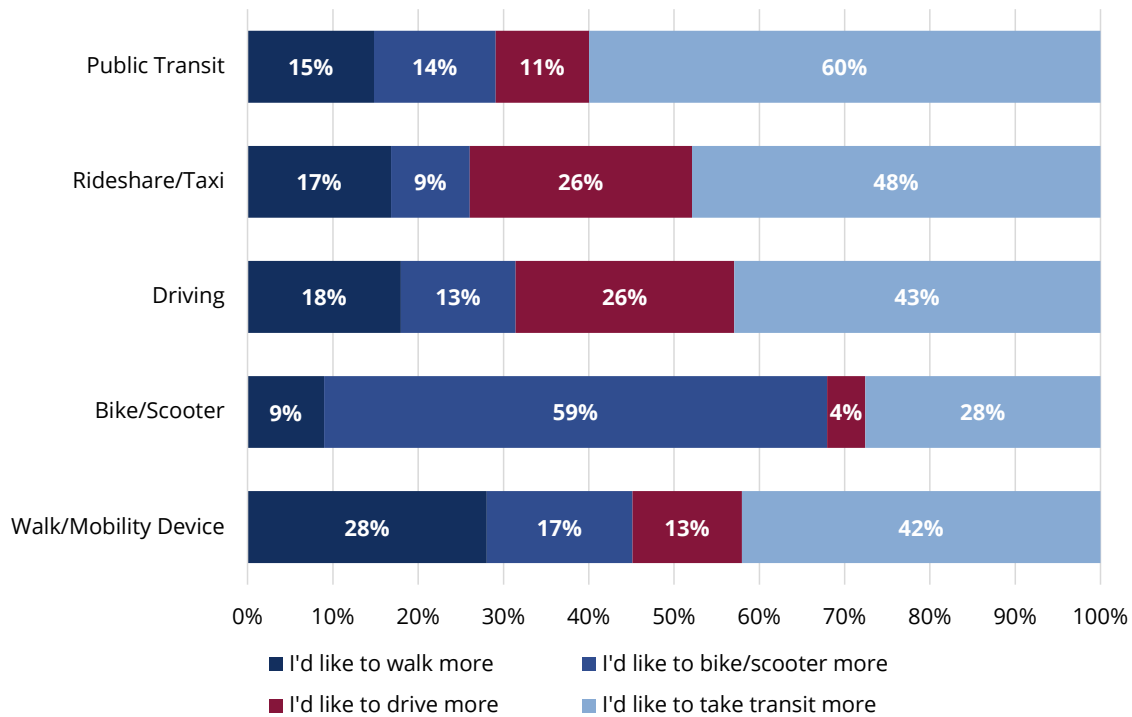


## FUTURE TRAVEL MODE

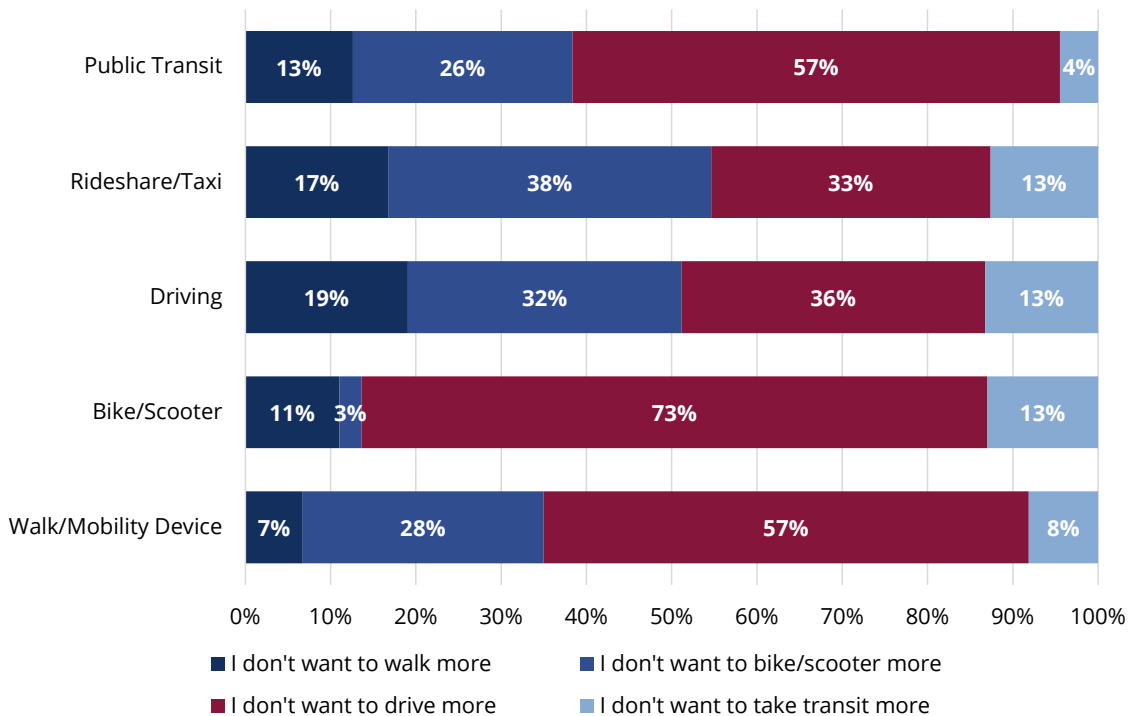




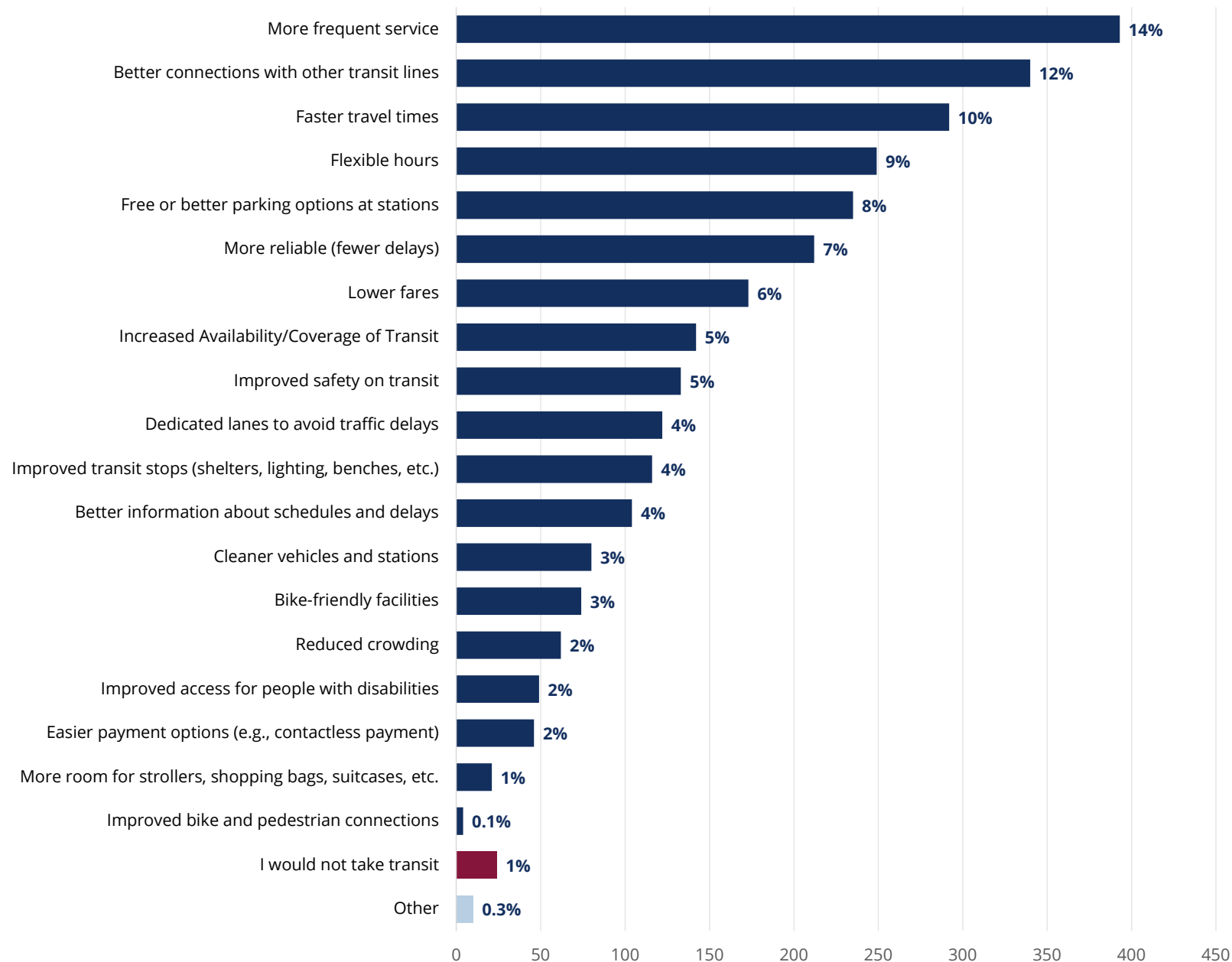
## CURRENT VS MOST DESIRED FUTURE TRAVEL MODE



## CURRENT VS LEAST DESIRED FUTURE TRAVEL MODE



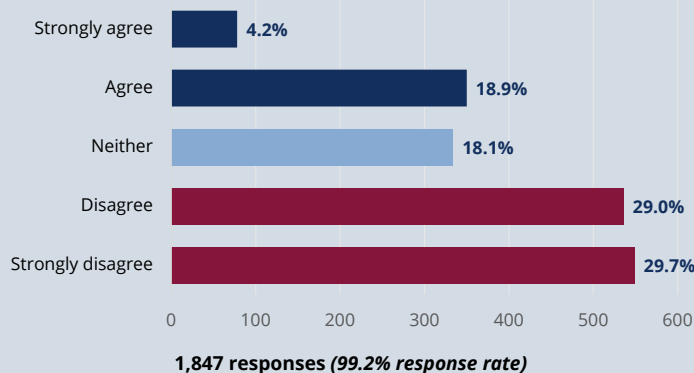
## WHAT WOULD ENCOURAGE YOU TO TAKE TRANSIT?



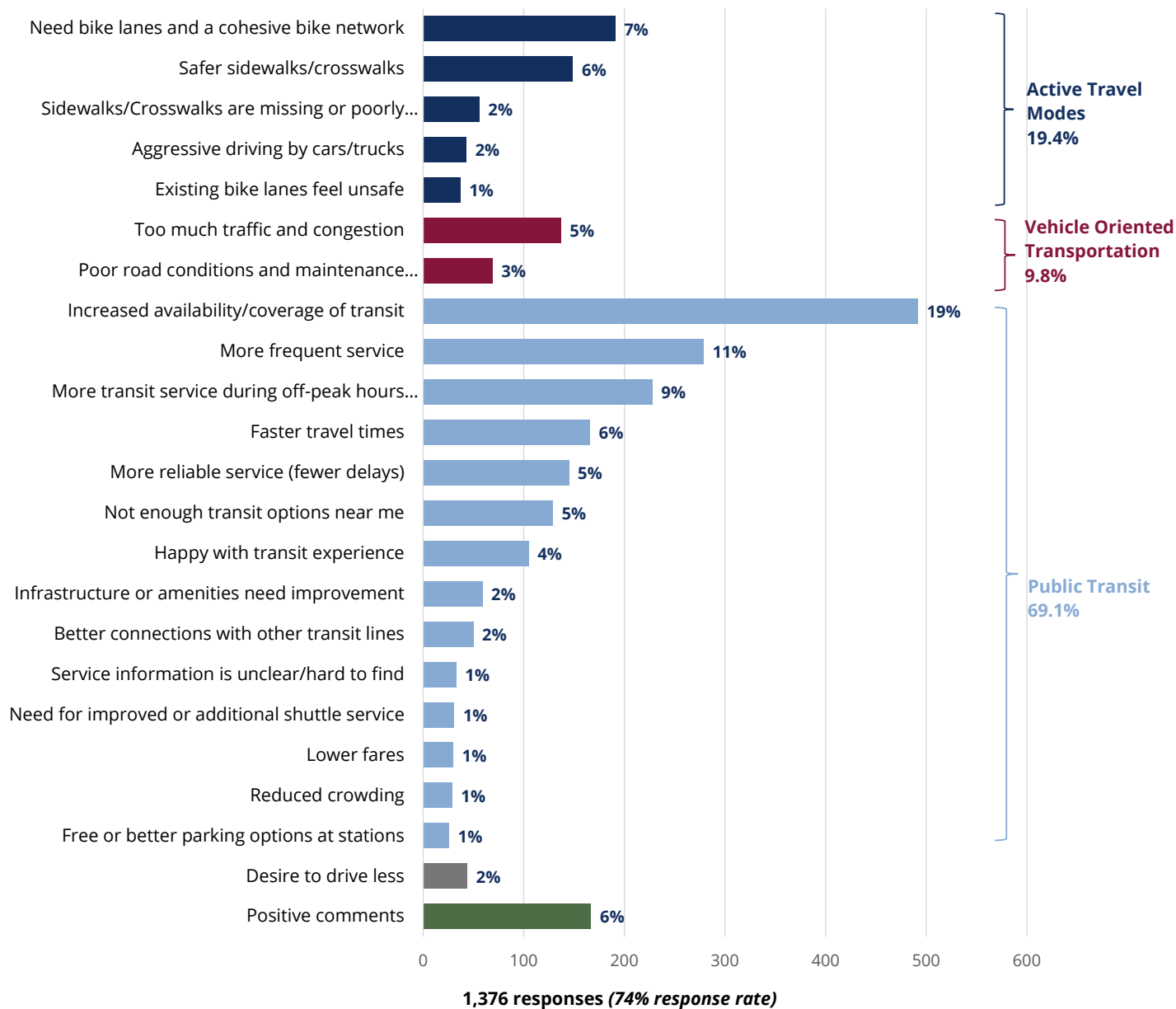
**1,443 respondents (61.4%) Directed to Question**  
**1,110 responses (97% response rate)**

*\*Only those who DID NOT select a public transportation mode for the “current travel” question were directed to this question about what would encourage them to take transit more.*

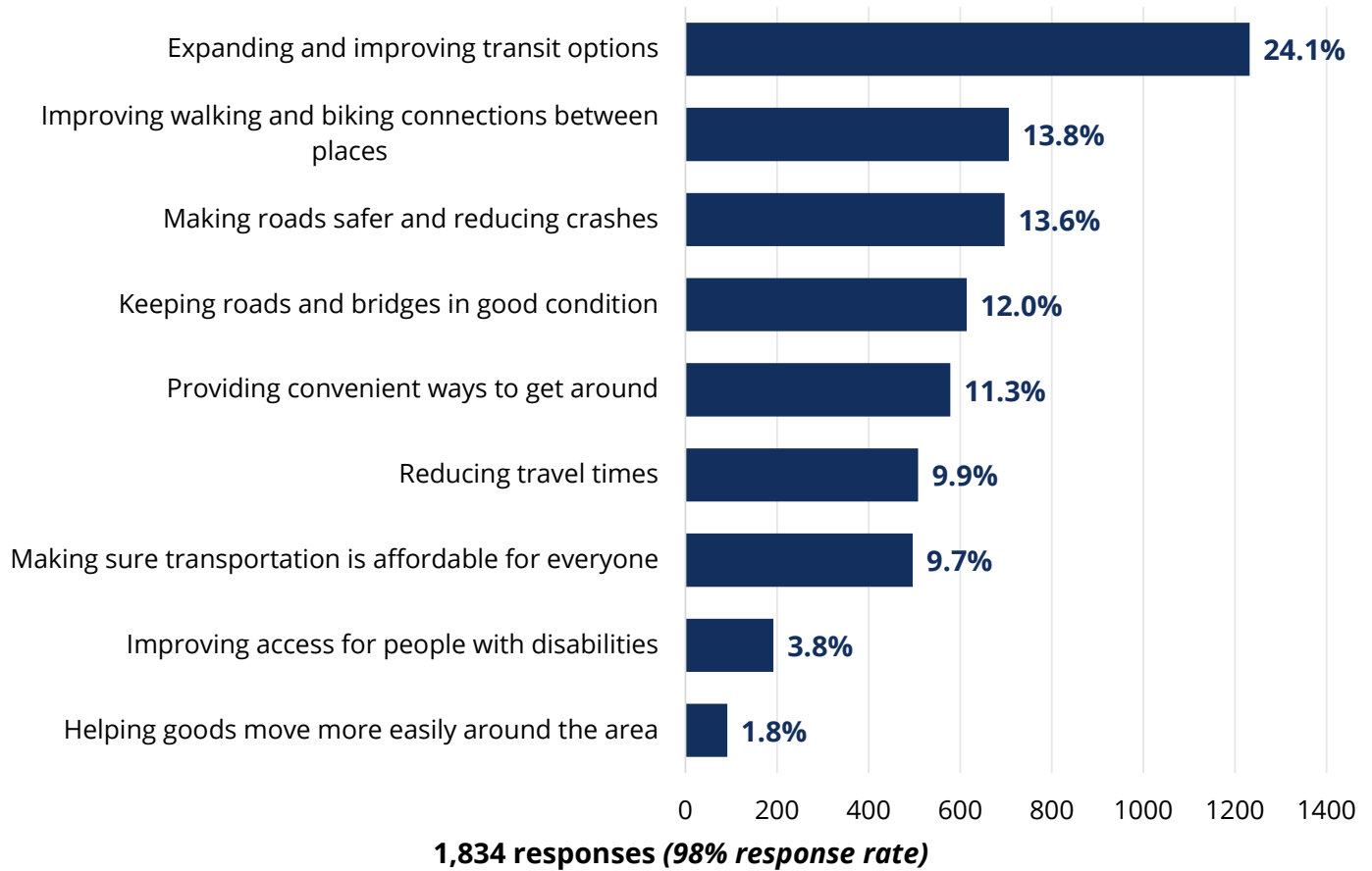
## DOES THE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM MEET YOUR NEEDS?



## TELL US WHY YOU FEEL THIS WAY... (OPEN-ENDED RESPONSES)



## IMPROVEMENTS WITH THE BIGGEST POSITIVE IMPACT



## Pop-Ups Events

In-person public outreach was conducted in each of the 15 subregions during April through June. Pop-up materials were also used to gather feedback at the NJ TransAction Conference and during an UpNext North Jersey event. The outreach was held at a variety of well-attended community events, hosted by non-profits, municipalities, counties, and others. The questions posed at these events were based on the top four topics identified in the initial online survey: walking, biking, safety, and public transit. The in-person outreach was supplemented by an online survey posing the same questions. Materials were translated into five non-English languages, including Spanish, Hindi, Chinese (simplified), Korean, and Portuguese. To encourage broader participation, pop-up and supplemental online survey respondents were offered an opportunity to enter a raffle to win one of four \$25 gift cards.

Ultimately, over 1,700 people participated in either the pop-ups or the online survey. Participant representation generally reflected the diversity of the region and of each host location, including a range of races and ethnicities, spoken languages, and ages. Over 300 children also participated, with older children answering the main questions and younger children participating in the drawing activity.



BERGEN COUNTY



ESSEX COUNTY



HUDSON COUNTY



HUNTERDON COUNTY



MIDDLESEX COUNTY



MONMOUTH COUNTY





MORRIS COUNTY



OCEAN COUNTY



PASSAIC COUNTY



SOMERSET COUNTY



SUSSEX COUNTY



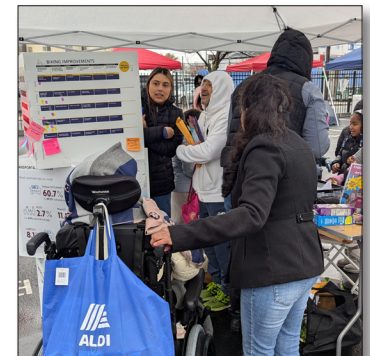
UNION COUNTY



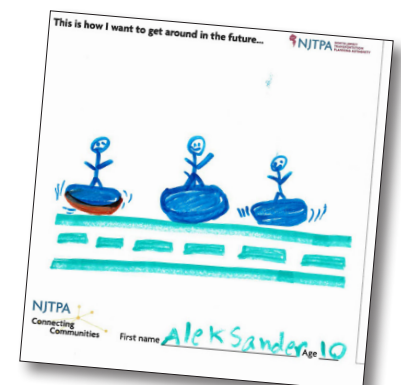
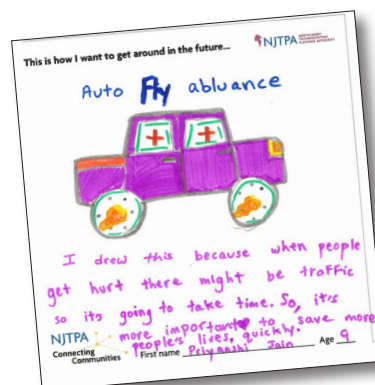
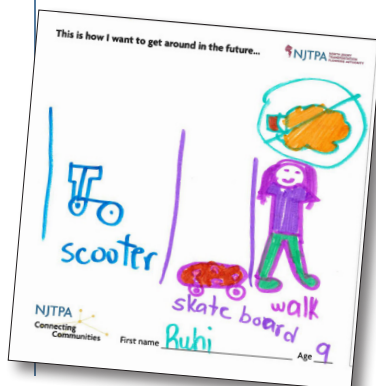
WARREN COUNTY



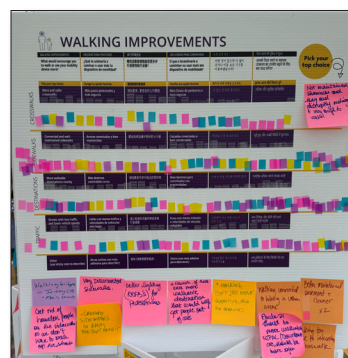
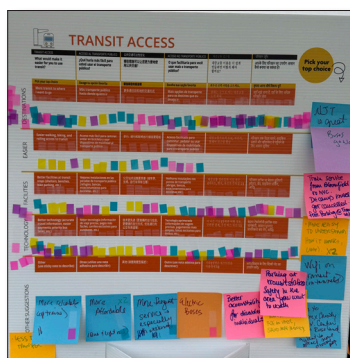
JERSEY CITY COUNTY



NEWARK COUNTY

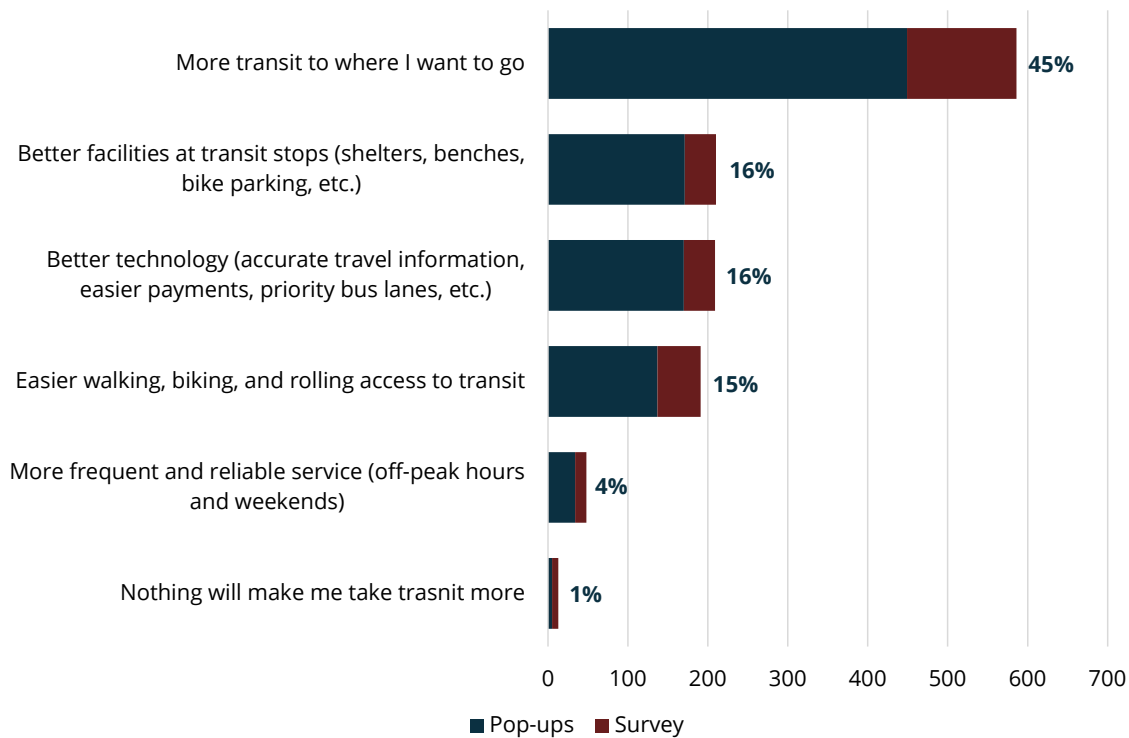


Pop-Up Participation			
Sub-Region	Event/Location	Date	# of Participants
Bergen	EarthFest/Leonia	May 18, 2025	115
Essex	Bloomfest/Newark	April 13, 2025	201
Hudson	Earth Day Festival/North Bergen	May 3, 2025	88
Hunterdon	Farmers Market/Frenchtown	May 10, 2025	79
Middlesex	KMM Bike Rodeo/Piscataway	May 31, 2025	54
Monmouth	Made in Monmouth/Middletown	May 3, 2025	172
Morris	Block Party/Lake Hopatcong	May 17, 2025	91
Ocean	Kids Stuff Flea Market/Lakewood	May 4, 2025	51
Passaic	Touch-a-Truck/Paterson	May 10, 2025	74
Somerset	Girls Night Out/Somerville	May 15, 2025	102
Sussex	Newton Day/Newton	June 7, 2025	61
Union	Touch-A-Truck/Cranford	June 1, 2025	34
Warren	Earth Day Festival/Hackettstown	April 27, 2025	44
Newark	Girl Scout Leadership Center/Newark	April 12, 2025	50
Jersey City	Earth Day Festival/Jersey City	May 17, 2025	92
N/A	TransAction Conference/Atlantic City	April 15-17, 2025	17
N/A	UpNext North Jersey Event/Newark	June 7, 2025	52



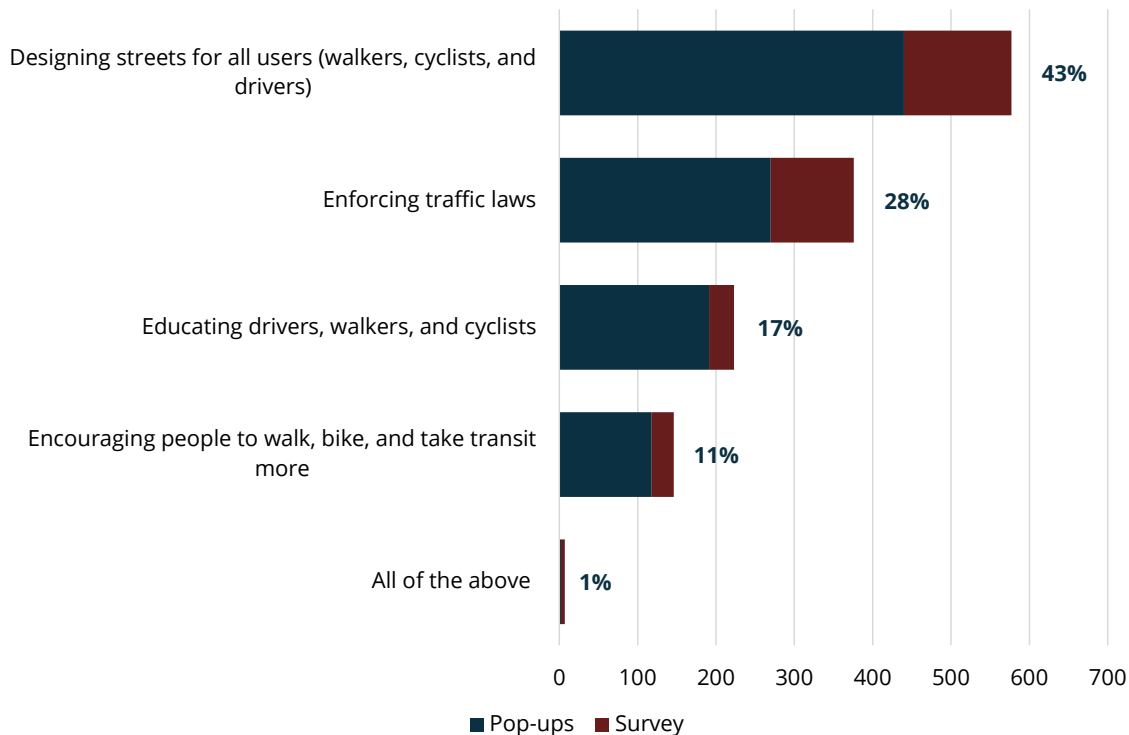
## TRANSIT ACCESS

(All Pop-Up Locations and Survey Results Combined)



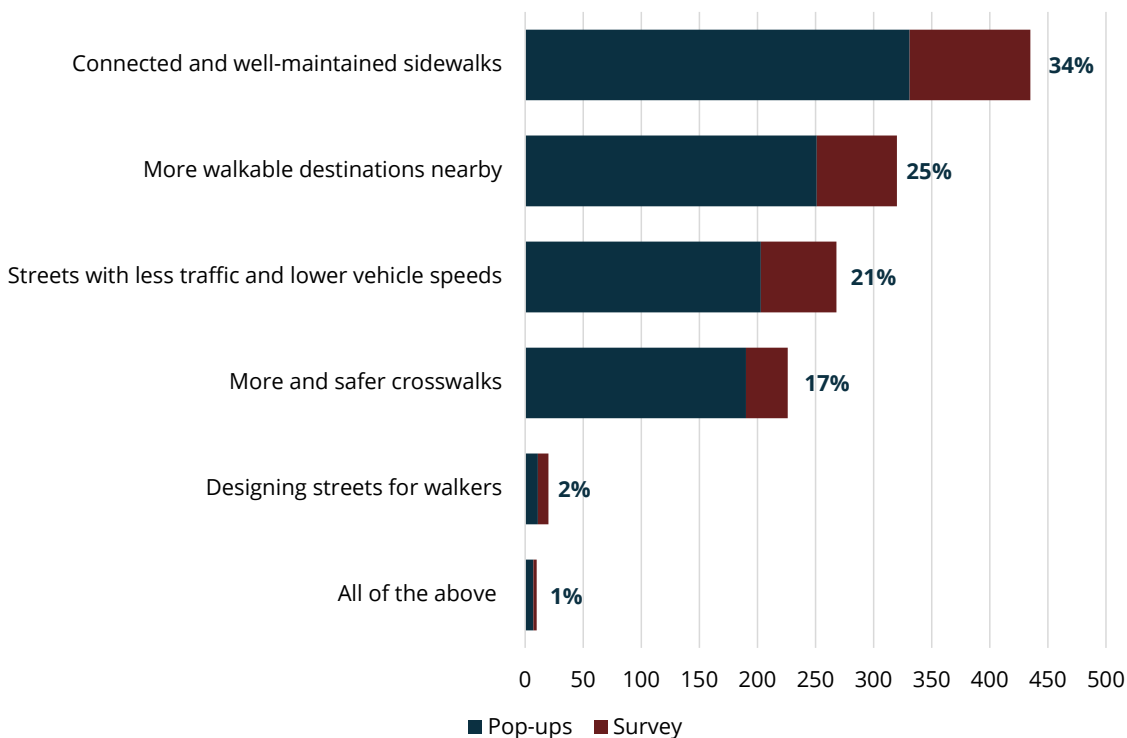
## SAFER STREETS

(All Pop-Up Locations and Survey Results Combined)



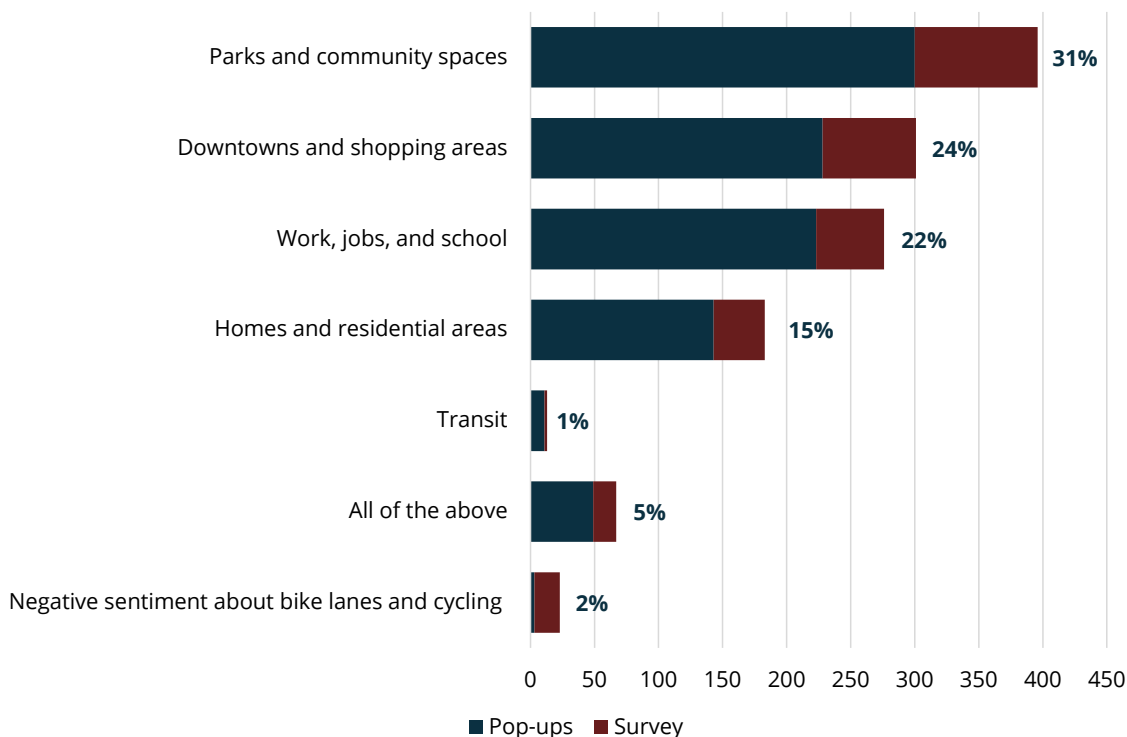
## WALKING IMPROVEMENTS

(All Pop-Up Locations and Survey Results Combined)



## BIKING IMPROVEMENTS

(All Pop-Up Locations and Survey Results Combined)



# Specialized Outreach Summary

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ESL OUTREACH KEY FINDINGS	52
LGBTQ+ OUTREACH SUMMARY REPORT	64
NJTPA ON AIR STUDIO	98
TEENS SET THE TABLE: KEY FINDINGS REPORT	105
UPNEXT NORTH JERSEY	108



## ESL OUTREACH KEY FINDINGS

### Innovative Public Engagement FY25

#### *Background*

In support of the NJTPA, the Public Outreach and Engagement Team (POET) at Rutgers collaborated with an NJTPA Outreach Liaison to develop a lesson plan and materials for ESL classes that focused on transportation and the NJTPA's Long Range Transportation Plan. The materials included a survey based on the NJTPA's ground-truthing outreach covering the following topics: public transportation, pedestrian improvements, biking improvements, and safety. This outreach was conducted in communities in Hudson and Union Counties. In addition to the survey, discussion groups were conducted in the Hudson County ESL classes. This document summarizes the key findings from this outreach.

#### *Outreach Event Locations*

This outreach was conducted in North Bergen (Hudson County) and Linden (Union County). Below are some key characteristics of these communities.

##### *Hudson County*

Hudson County is one of the most racially and ethnically diverse counties in New Jersey with a population of 679,756 people. The population features strong representation from Hispanic (particularly Dominican and Puerto Rican) and Asian communities. A significant 43% of the county's residents are foreign-born, hailing primarily from the Dominican Republic, India, and the Philippines. Spanish is the predominant language spoken at home, with many speakers having limited English proficiency. Other languages such as Arabic, Hindi, Tagalog, and Urdu are also common.

Hudson County, due to its high urban density and proximity to New York City, features a highly developed and widely used public transportation infrastructure. The county provides different modes of transportation for its residents including the PATH trains, NJ TRANSIT buses, the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail, and ferries.

##### *Union County*

Union County, with a population of 557,320, is a racially and ethnically diverse county featuring a large Hispanic or Latino population (30.7%) and a substantial Black or African American community (20.1%). The largest Hispanic sub-groups include Puerto Ricans, Colombians, and Dominicans, with significant populations from Peru and Mexico as well. Foreign-born residents account for 29.9% of the county's population, with Colombia, the Dominican Republic, and El Salvador among the top countries of origin. Linguistically, more than 40% of residents speak a language other than English at home, primarily Spanish and Portuguese. About 18% of the population has limited English proficiency, with Spanish-speaking LEP residents making up the

majority. Union County also has a relatively high poverty rate of 10.3%, indicating ongoing economic challenges for many households, particularly within immigrant and minority communities. Union County exhibits urban density in cities like Elizabeth and Plainfield. These characteristics influence the county's transportation landscape, which includes NJ TRANSIT rail and bus service. Linden is less dense than other cities mentioned but has a train station and bus lines as public transit options.

### *Participant Demographics*

A total of 62 people participated in ESL classes and took the survey. All participants are students in ESL classes in the NJTPA region. While most of the demographic characteristics are evenly distributed across groups, most participants in both Hudson County (76%) and Union County (73%) identified as Latino or Hispanic. In addition, participants were primarily women (79% in Hudson County and 64% in Union County). Notably, two-thirds of participants in Union County were between the ages of 35 and 44. A detailed breakdown of demographics is illustrated in Figure 1.

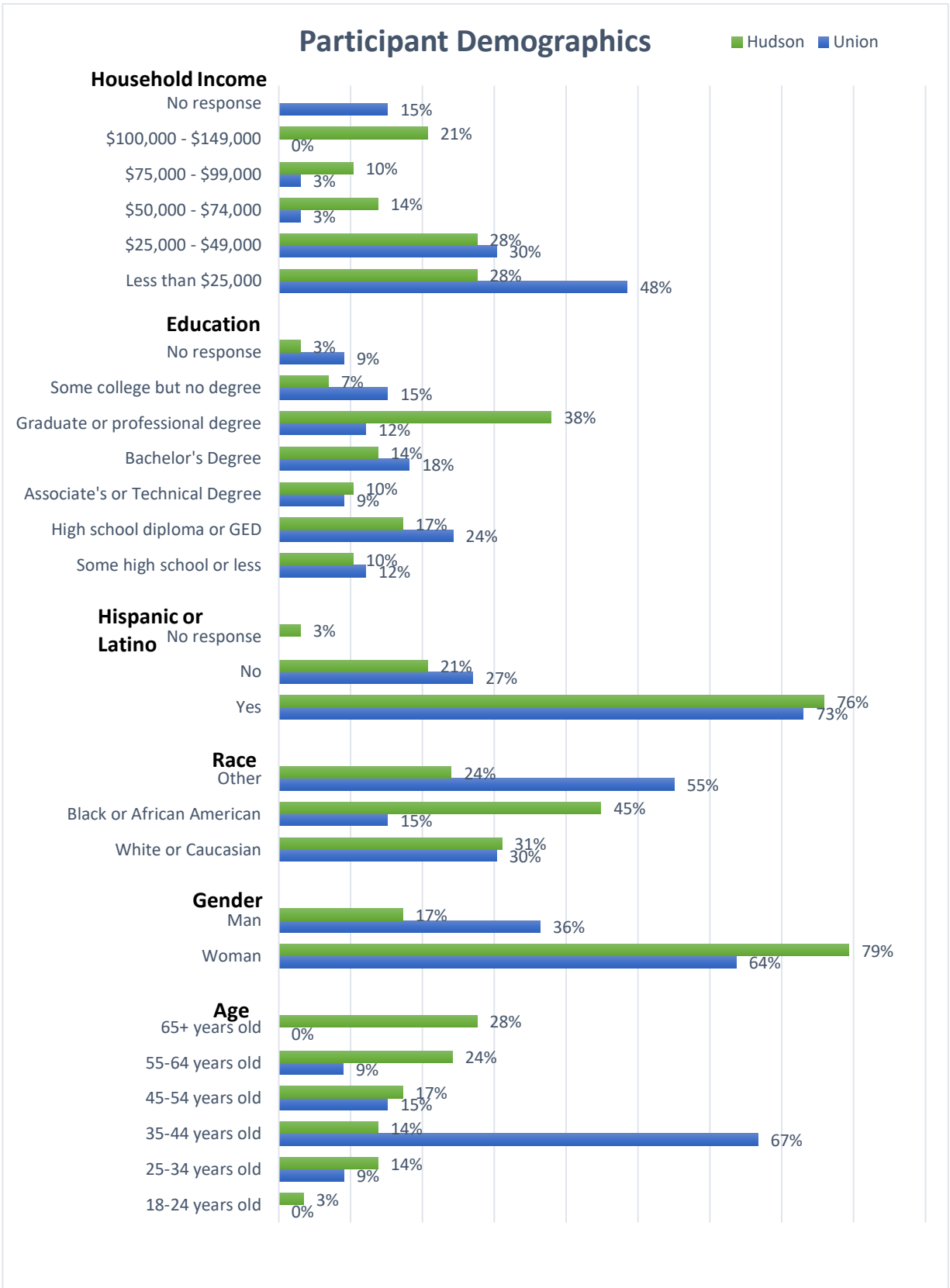


Figure 1

## Key Findings

The following section contains a presentation of data collected in the survey, an analysis of this data, and a presentation of the discussions that took place in Hudson County. Due to limited time and large class size, the discussion portion was not held in Union County.

Overall key findings are:

- **Improvements to public transportation, particularly in Hudson County, is the main topic of interest.** Participants provided the most feedback on ways to improve public transportation.
- **Improving bicycle infrastructure may not be a priority.** Although several participants in Hudson County indicated that adding bike lanes would make roads safer, most participants do not regularly use bicycles as a mode of transportation. Rather, it is more often for recreation.
- **Education for drivers and pedestrians was a popular improvement for road safety.** Participants see road user behaviors as a primary safety concern, more so than road design.

## Public Transportation

Public transportation usage varied by location. Those in Hudson County reported higher use of public transportation as a primary way of traveling (59%) versus those in Union County (24%). This is shown in Figure 2.

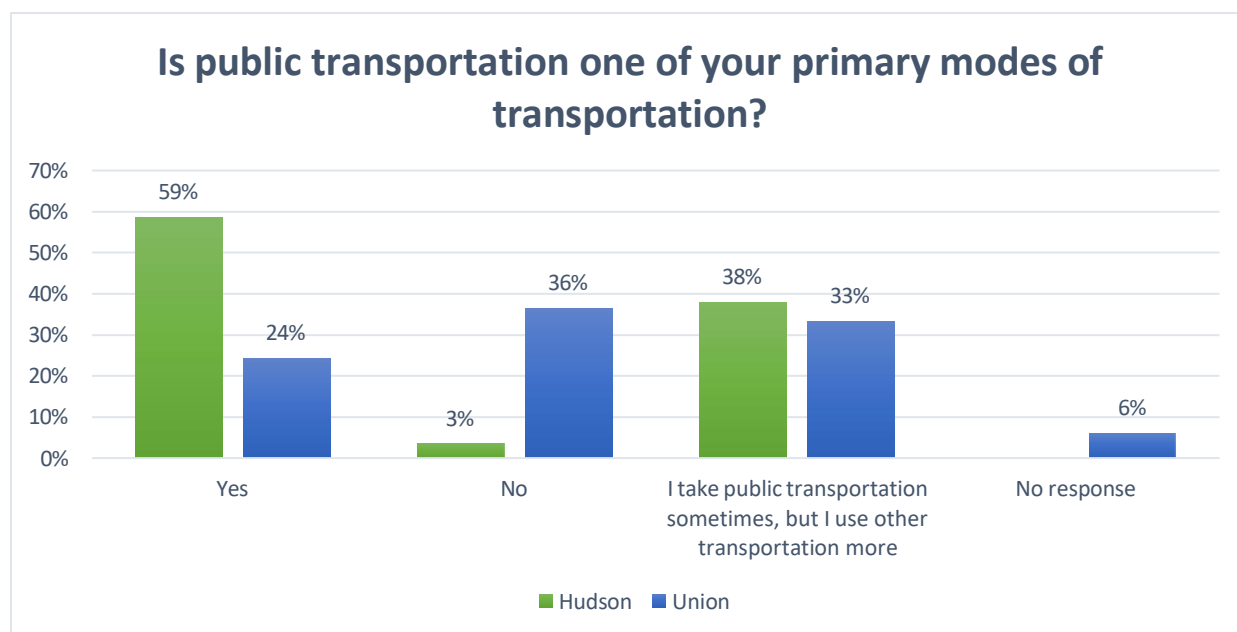


Figure 2

When asked what would make it easier to use public transportation, most participants in both counties included “More housing close to transit” and “More or improved bus shelters” (Figure 3)

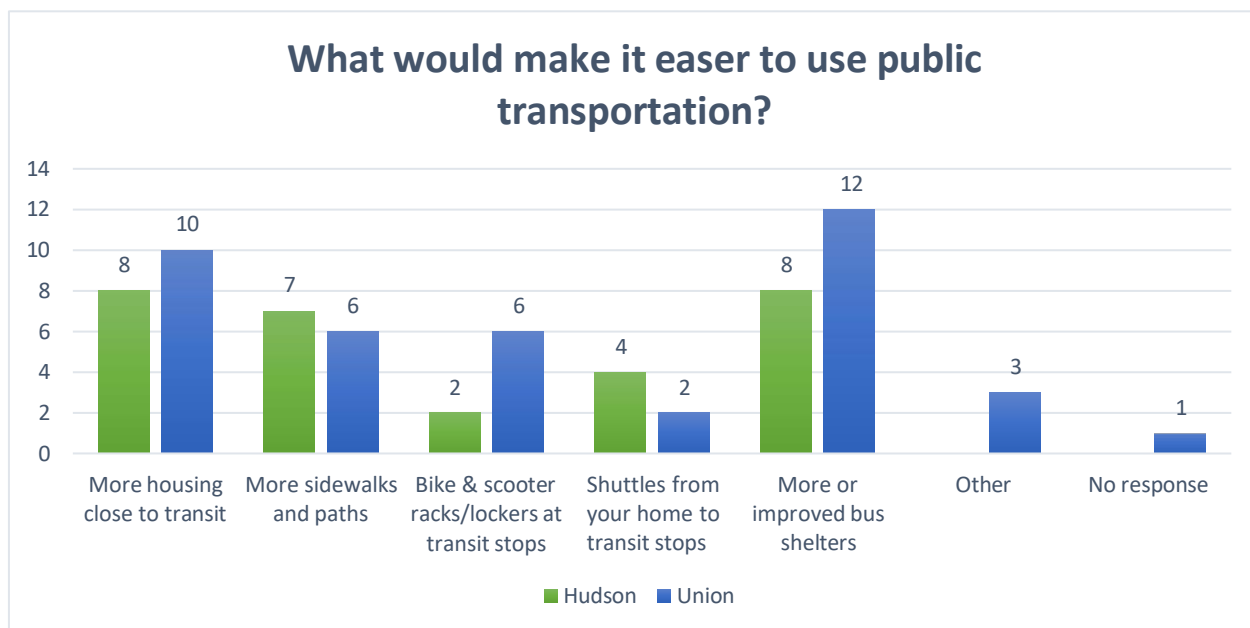


Figure 3

### Survey Data

In both Hudson County and Union County, most participants said, “more or improved bus shelters” and “more housing close to transit” would make it easier to use public transit, followed by “more sidewalks and paths.” These responses suggest communities want convenient access to transit stops and routes. Less popular in Hudson County was “bike and scooter racks” and “shuttles from your home to transit stop.” This suggests that micromobility options are less of a priority in Hudson County; rather, these communities desire easier access to stops by walking and adequate shelters upon arrival. As mentioned in the discussion summary below, biking is a more recreational mode of travel. However, “bike and scooter racks” are more desirable in Union County, where transit usage is lower.

### Discussion in Hudson County

Most participants indicated that they use public transportation. Participants were asked to identify the public transportation options in their communities. The most popular answers were bus, train, and ferry. However, participants focused primarily on sharing detailed experiences related to bus services and bus stops.

Overall, most participants mentioned they were satisfied with the public transportation in their area, though some contrasting opinions were noted. Many participants also had suggestions for improvement. Within the discussion groups, the most popular answers included:

- More frequent service:** Participants said they wanted buses to arrive more often. They shared examples of having to wait a long time for a bus. Others highlighted that evening and weekend service is not frequent enough.



- **Better information:** Participants also wanted more information about routes and arrival times. For example, we heard participants wanting to know when the next bus would arrive (some participants were surprised to learn that this information was available in the NJ TRANSIT app). Another mentioned wanting information about which stop was next or upcoming while onboard the bus.
- **Speed & reliability:** A few others noted that the buses make too many stops - making the ride too slow. They also mentioned the need for buses to arrive on time so that riders can make connections to other routes.

Some specific comments from this discussion include:

- "I like it, but I don't like the frequency."
- "I think we need more buses because we have to wait a long time."
- "More information on when the bus is arriving."
- "Frequency and provide more information on the times and stops."
- "They need to arrive at the exact time. Sometimes I have to make a transfer to a different location."
- "It should be more frequent"
- "Improve the bus/train frequency during rush hours"
- "Moving the bus shelter" (this participant didn't say why, but they may have meant moving it to an area that feels safer)
- "Cleaner streets and more trash bins"
- "Clearer bike lanes"

### Pedestrian Improvements

As seen in the discussion of public transportation, the use of walking as a primary mode of transportation differed between Hudson and Union Counties. In Hudson County, most participants (48%) indicated that they *do* use walking as a primary mode of transportation. In Union County, most participants (58%) said they *do not* use it as a primary mode of transportation, but 36% of participants sometimes walk while relying primarily on other modes of transportation (Figure 4).

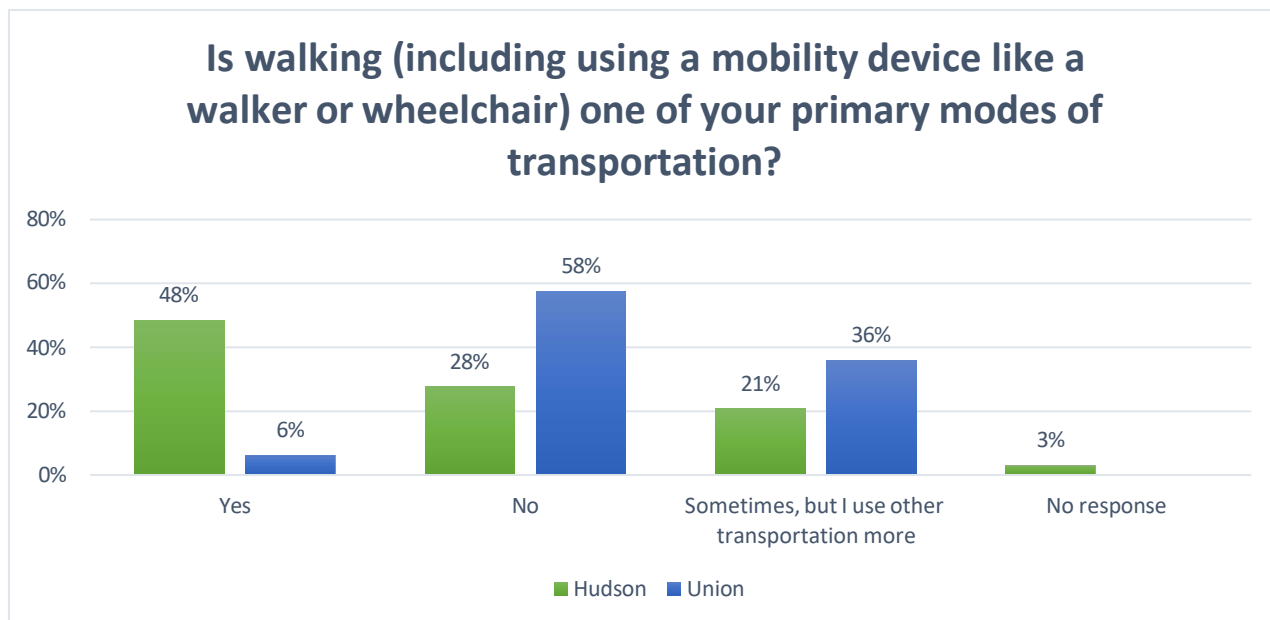


Figure 4

Participants were asked what improvements could be made to make walking safer. In Hudson County, the participants' most frequent response was "Better-connected sidewalks," whereas in Union County, it was "Making crosswalks safer" (Figure 5).

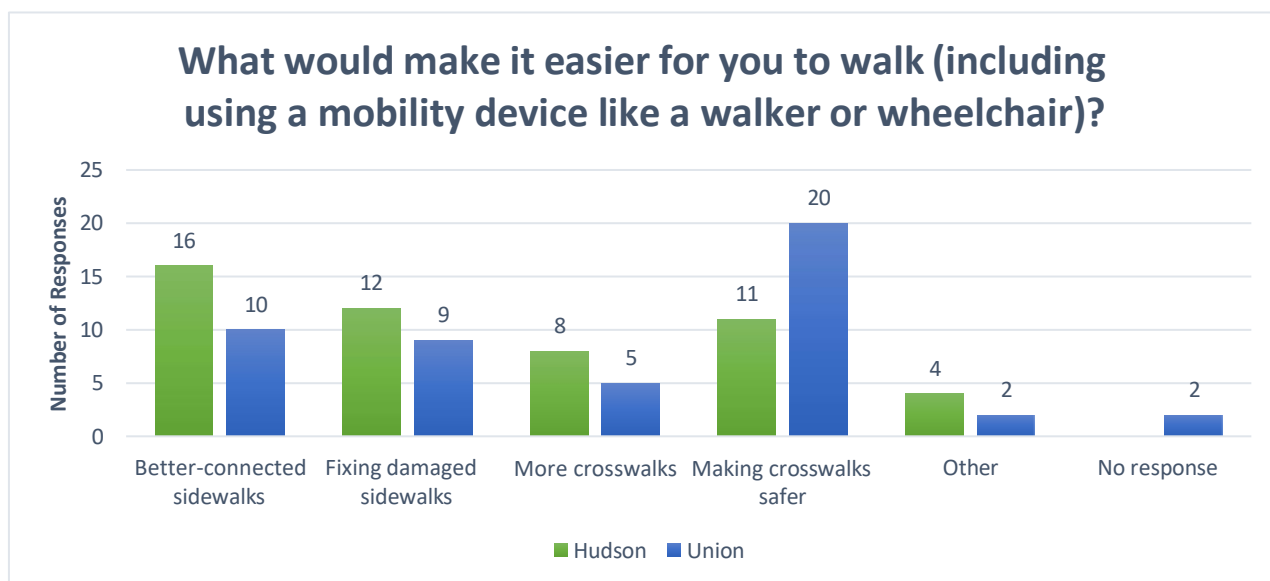


Figure 5

## Survey Responses

While all the suggested improvements received some interest, the most popular was different between the two counties. In Hudson, the concern is improving the sidewalk network, which

may relate to the high usage of public transportation in the county and walking as a primary mode of travel.

In Union County, there is more interest in safer crosswalks; because the population in Union is more car-dependent, participants may prefer this option to avoid dangerous interactions between pedestrians and drivers.

#### Discussion in Hudson County

Most of the participants mentioned that they walk frequently around their community – whether to access public transportation or as a primary mode of transportation.

#### Biking Improvements

For the participants in both Hudson and Union County, biking is not a primary mode of transportation (Figure 6)

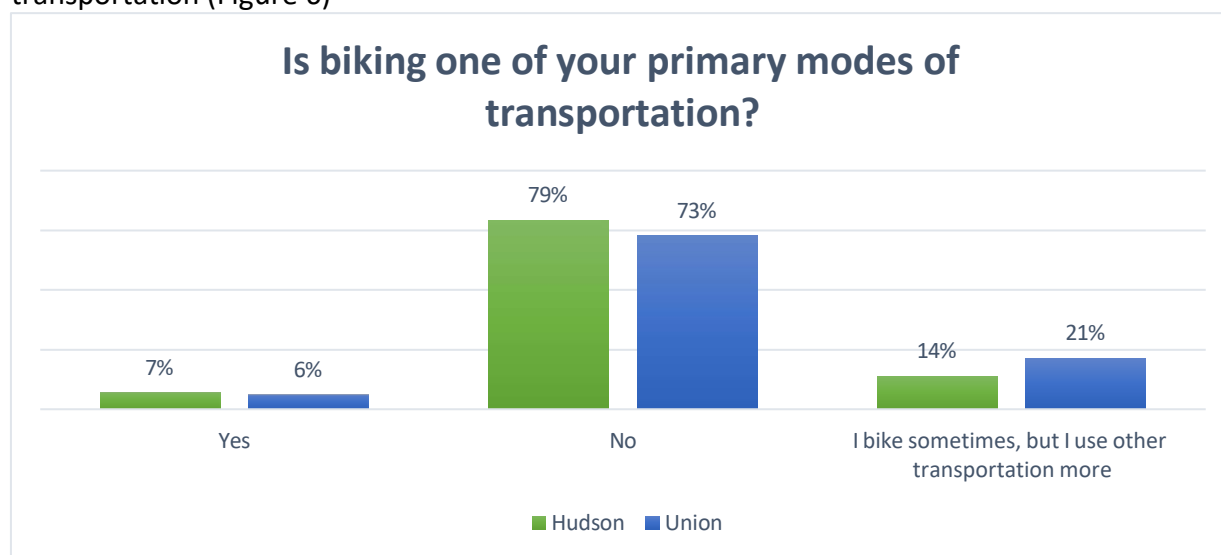


Figure 6

Participants were asked which places should be more connected by bike lanes; most said, “Homes and residential areas” or “Parks and green spaces” (Figure 7); notably, accessing work by bike was not a popular choice.

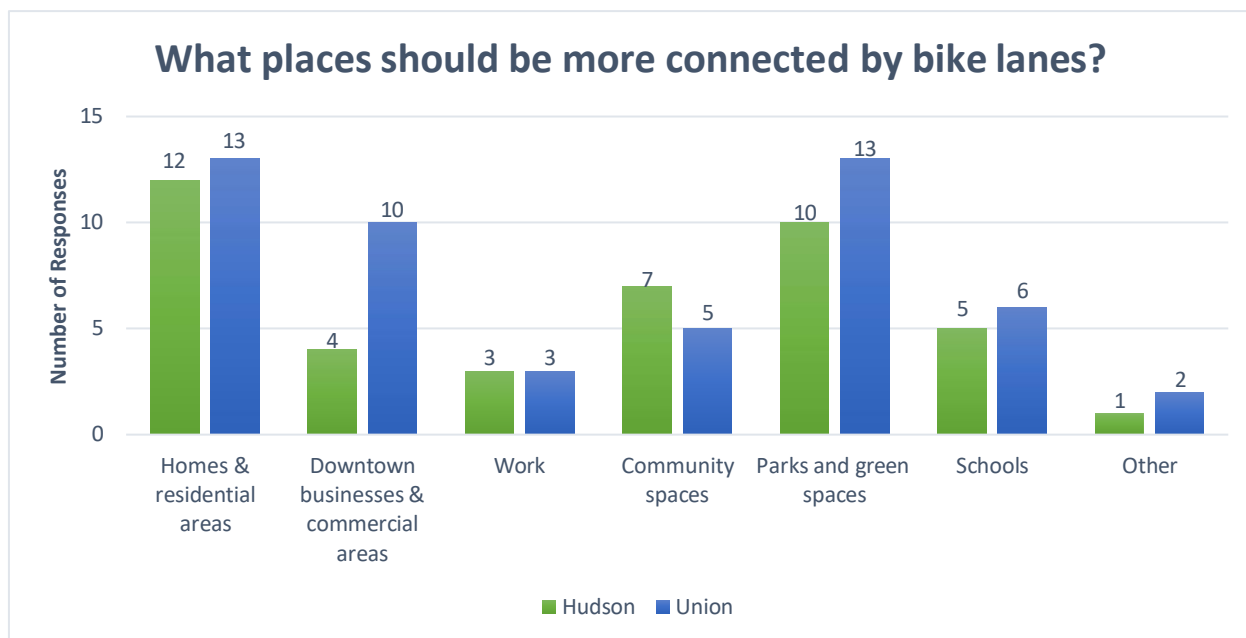


Figure 7

### Survey Responses

It is important to consider how people want to use transportation modes to better plan improvements; in both Hudson County and Union County, participants in these classes were generally not interested in using bicycling as a mode of transportation, especially to commute to work.

### Discussion in Hudson County

A very small number of participants mentioned that biking was their primary mode of transportation and others mentioned that they do it recreationally.

### Safety

Participants were asked about general safety on the roads in the region. In Hudson County, most respondents (90%) believe that roads are safe. However, in Union County, there was a more mixed response, as shown in Figure 8.

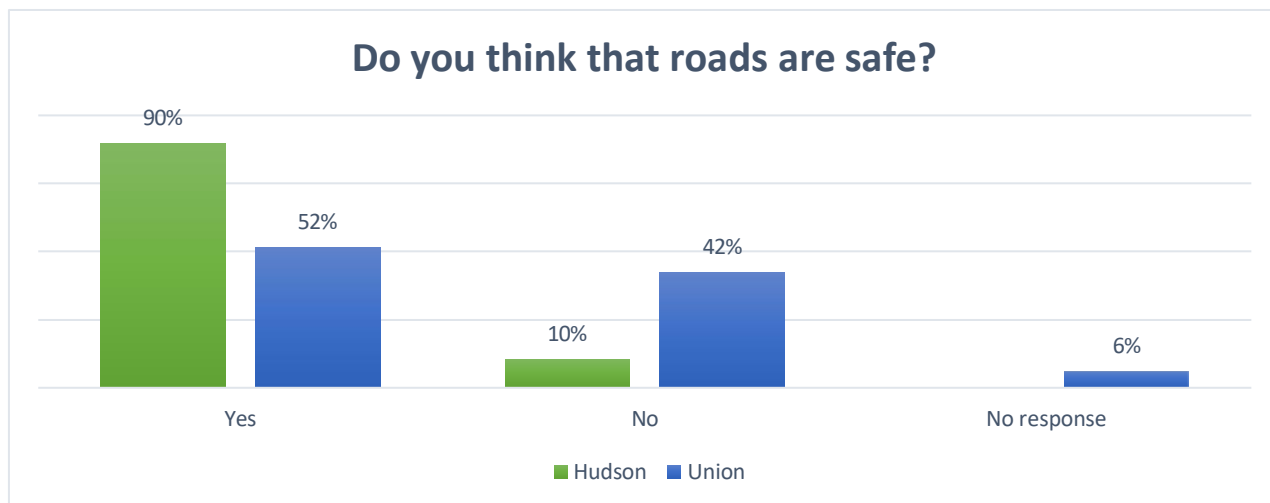


Figure 8

In both Hudson and Union Counties, “Driver and pedestrian education” was the most popular suggested improvement. In Hudson County, the next most popular was “More bike lanes/fewer vehicle lanes.” In Union, the next most popular was “Signals that adjust based on traffic” (Figure 9)

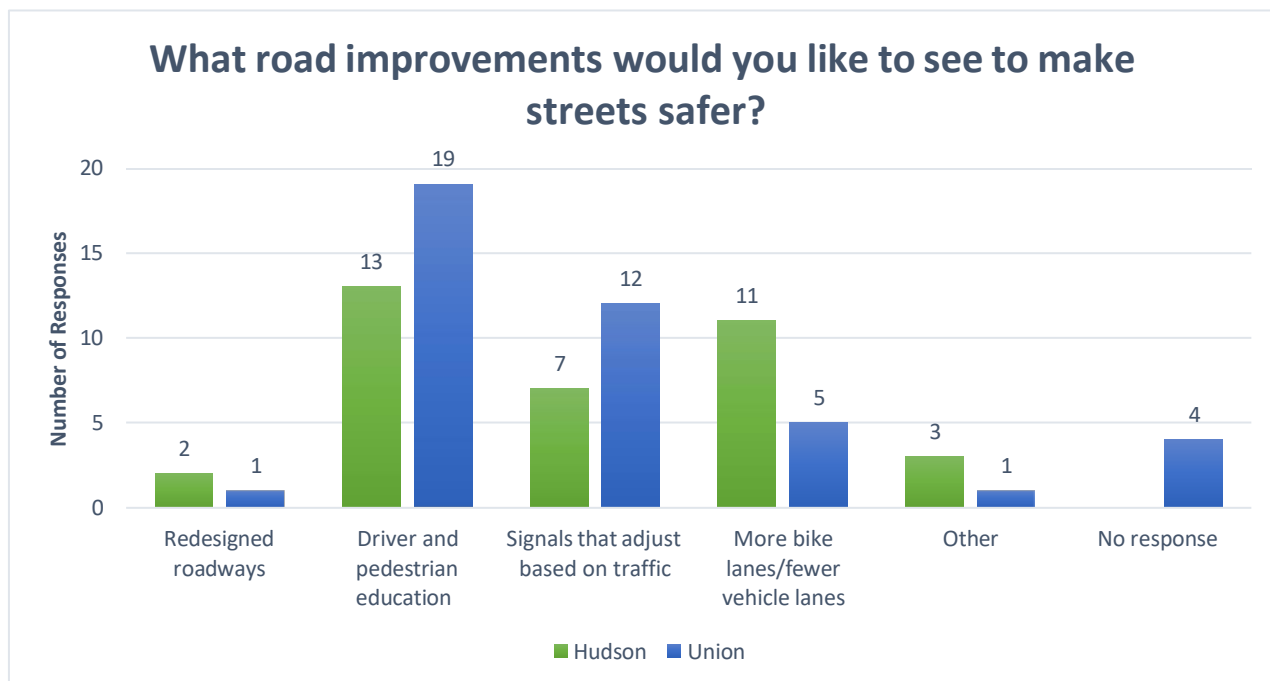


Figure 9

### Survey Responses

Both groups expressed the most interest in driver and pedestrian education, suggesting that they believe driver and pedestrian behaviors, rather than design, create unsafe roads in their communities. In Hudson County, more respondents are interested in adding more bike lanes; however, in Union County, more respondents were interested in adjusting traffic signals. These



responses speak to the higher use of public transit and walking in Hudson County compared to Union County.

#### Discussion in Hudson County

Even though most of the participants stated that they felt safe, a few mentioned they felt unsafe. The safety concerns were mainly at night; some drivers, for instance drivers run red lights not respecting pedestrians.

# LGBTQ+ OUTREACH SUMMARY REPORT

## Innovative Public Engagement FY25

### *Introduction*

Throughout Fall 2024 and Winter 2025, the NJTPA and the Public Outreach and Engagement Team (POET) at Rutgers University conducted targeted outreach to Lesbian, Gay, Transgender, Queer and other sexual minority (LGBTQ+) populations for the NJTPA's Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), Connecting Communities. Conducting intentional outreach to LGBTQ+ New Jersey residents aimed to uncover and highlight concerns, feedback, and hopes for the future of transportation in the NJTPA region that might not otherwise be discussed. The NJTPA is one of the first metropolitan planning organizations (MPO) to conduct outreach addressing the unique transportation experiences of LGBTQ+ populations. However, the project team had difficulty recruiting participants. This summary describes POET's research and preparation of engagement activities, outreach and recruitment, outcome of outreach efforts, key findings, and lessons learned.

### *Background Research on LGBTQ+ Populations and Transportation*

As this was the first year the NJTPA implemented a LGBTQ+ targeted effort, the project team conducted desktop research. Research provided an overview of how best to interact with LGBTQ+ populations and how these individuals are often especially impacted by transportation-related challenges or issues.

Intentional outreach to LGBTQ+ populations is important for several reasons. LGBTQ+ individuals are a part of the planning region, and their needs, therefore, should be incorporated into planning documents. There are generally also differences in the travel patterns of LGBTQ+ populations versus those who do not identify as LGBTQ+. For example, LGBTQ+ populations are often over-represented in shared mobility usage like public transit, biking and walking. In New Jersey, individuals in same-sex relationships use public transit more often than those in opposite-sex relationships, especially for work trips. Women in same-sex relationships use transit for commuting significantly more than their opposite-sex counterparts, showing that transit is a key mode for LGBTQ+ communities<sup>1</sup>. In turn, public transportation is a key topic for the NJTPA's LRTP.

Public transportation is not only used often by LGBTQ+ populations, but it is often used to access important services and community spaces. LGBTQ+ individuals aged 18-24 and those over 65 use

---

<sup>1</sup> Analysis based on National Household Travel Survey (NHTS) data and American Community Survey (ACS) Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) data, incorporating both national and New Jersey-specific findings where available.

transit more often for social and recreational trips, while those over 65 also frequently use transit for essential trips such as medical appointments and shopping. These trends highlight the importance of transit accessibility for social and essential trips, especially among older and younger LGBTQ+ groups.

### *Engagement Strategies*

The project team selected methods to engage the region's LGBTQ+ community based on best practices for inclusive public engagement. The project team selected both synchronous activities and an asynchronous activity (survey questionnaire) to allow multiple options for public participation. For the synchronous engagement, the project team conducted journey mapping exercises for various transportation modes that are present in the region. In addition, the team developed a questionnaire for LGBTQ+ communities for those who could not participate in journey mapping activities and to supplement the general LRTP public survey with questions specific to gender and sexuality.

### *Journey Mapping*

The project team selected "Journey Mapping" as an engagement tool, a process in which the participant moves through a hypothetical journey and their thoughts and feelings are documented. Journey Mapping is an innovative approach for considering the entirety of an individual's experience through a 'journey'; in other words, transportation is not just a way of getting from one place to another, but an experience itself. Often used as a strategy in user experience or marketing, journey mapping looks at a person's thoughts, emotions and sensations as they move through a series of decisions and actions towards a goal. In the case of transportation, these journeys are the entire process between deciding to make a trip and reaching the destination.

Journey Mapping is a useful tool for determining what pain points exist and where they are located within a system. Finalized journey maps can allow planners to begin to consider solutions. Data collected from journey maps are specific to the individual, though often these 'individuals' are created as 'profiles' and are used to represent a larger population with a shared characteristic. Co-creating journey maps for different members of the LGBTQ+ community can give insight to the specific issues these individuals may face—as well as the impact the challenges may have on their overall experience.

The project team adapted journey mapping to be contextual to the region's transportation by developing separate journey maps by mode of transportation. The modes included were: biking, train, bus, personal car, walking, and shared transportation (rideshare). Participants had the opportunity to self-select two modes of transportation that they would use to share their "journey."

The project team hosted two Journey Mapping events, one virtual and another in-person:

- **Virtual Event:** Hosted on Zoom for 90 minutes, utilizing Mentimeter to simulate journey mapping. Modes included: walking, biking, shared transportation, personal car, and bus. The Mentimeter presentations are found in Appendix E.
- **In-Person Event:** Held at Newark Public Library from 7:00pm to 8:30pm. Large scale posters for each transportation mode were posted on the wall. Participants wrote thoughts on sticky notes and placed them on corresponding posters. The posters are found in Appendix C.

## Questionnaire

While a general questionnaire for the LRTP was already being used, the team created an LGBTQ+-specific version. The goals were to identify challenges specific to LGBTQ+ populations and provide an alternative form of engagement. Questions were informed by best practice research, past LGBTQ+ and transit studies, and input from subject matter expert Bernie Wagenblast. The questionnaire was available throughout the outreach period. The full questionnaire is in Appendix D.

## *Outreach and Engagement Strategies*

The project team used a variety of outreach strategies to engage the LGBTQ+ community. Graphics and flyers created for recruitment can be found in Appendix C. The outreach email for recruitment can be found in Appendix A. These included:

- **Social Media Pushes:** Informative posts (some featuring Bernie Wagenblast) were shared through NJTPA social channels.
- **Flyer Distribution:** Flyers included QR codes to the survey and event registration and were distributed to LGBTQ+ organizations, state universities, and colleges across the NJTPA region.
- **Outreach List:** The team compiled a list of LGBTQ+ organizations and influencers for outreach, recognizing the importance of leveraging trusted networks. (See Appendix B for the full list.)

## *Engagement Outcomes*

- Virtual Journey Mapping Event
  - Number of participants: 7
- In-Person Journey Mapping Event
  - Number of participants: 1
  - Only one individual attended the in-person event; they had also participated in the virtual event. The team adapted the activity to allow for an informal conversation about identity, transportation planning, and transportation needs.

- LGBTQ+ Specific Questionnaire
  - Number of responses: 12

## *Key Findings*

Participants selected one or more transportation modes to discuss. No responses were received for walking, train, or shared transportation.

### Biking

- Time of day and weather strongly influenced biking decisions.
- Route selection prioritized speed, directness, and safety over crowd levels.
- Desired infrastructure: wide paths, clear markings, fewer car crossings, delineated lanes, and grade separation.
- Emotional experiences ranged from joy to fear. Many respondents explained that moving into the driving lane (“taking the lane”) is a useful strategy for slowing down and feeling safer. Another common coping strategy is dismounting (from their bike) and taking a moment to regroup before continuing riding.

### Bus

- All respondents walked to bus stops; challenges included unsafe crossings, walking alone at night, and unclear schedules.
- Concerns while waiting included safety, visibility, and timing.
- Most used mobile payment methods.
- Seating was chosen based on perceived safety; emotions during travel ranged from relaxed to hyperaware.

### Personal Car

- Used for destinations not served by transit, convenience, and flexibility.
- Gas station stops preferred in well-lit, populated areas.
- Safety is not a major deterrent except in certain neighborhoods.
- Cars were valued for independence and the ability to transport goods.



## *Lessons Learned and Recommendations*

The outreach process provided valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities of engaging LGBTQ+ communities in planning efforts. Low turnout and participation highlighted structural, social, and logistical barriers that must be addressed through more intentional, inclusive strategies. The following lessons and recommendations offer guidance for improving future engagement by aligning efforts more closely with community realities, building sustained trust, and adapting methods to better meet participants' needs.

### Political Climate and Trust.

- **Lesson:** Political climate may discourage LGBTQ+ community participation in government outreach. Traditionally, there is distrust between marginalized communities and government organizations.
- **Recommendation:** Partner with well-established LGBTQ+ organizations and engage during Pride Month to boost visibility. Build long-term trust by showing up consistently. Consider informal conversations or presence at LGBTQ+ events year-round.

### Rethink Outreach Methods.

- **Lesson:** Limited turnout suggests a disconnect between outreach methods and community needs. Attending in-person outreach events should not be a burden on participants. Ensure that the audience is reached and do not rely on social media profiles that are not already engaged with the target audience.
- **Recommendation:** Meet people where they are; create partnerships with trusted organizations to reach audiences and invest in long-term, ongoing outreach. Coordinate outreach events with existing LGBTQ+ events, such as community meetings or Pride events. Incentivize participation to ensure participants know their input is valued.

### Prepare for Unexpected Outcomes.

- **Lesson:** In-person engagement faces unpredictable barriers like weather, transportation issues, or other unexpected events.
- **Recommendation:** Maintain flexible engagement tools that can be adapted to different sized groups; include virtual options as well.

### Continue to Explore Journey Mapping as an Engagement Technique.

- **Lesson:** Journey mapping did provide opportunities for in-depth discussions.
- **Recommendation:** Continue to explore journey mapping, testing it in different spaces and contexts.

## ***Appendices***

- Appendix A: Full list of outreach organizations and platforms by county
- Appendix B: Flyers and sample outreach materials
- Appendix C: Questionnaire in full
- Appendix D: Mentimeter data and individual mode responses

## **Appendix A: Full list of outreach organizations and platforms by county**

### **Bergen County**

- Bergen County LGBTQ+ Alliance
- Teaneck Pride Awareness Advisory Board
- PFLAG of Bergen County
- Bergen Pride
- Fair Lawn Pride Coalition
- Center for Hope and Safety – LGBTQ+ Services
- West Bergen Mental Healthcare

### **Essex County**

- Newark LGBTQ Community Center
- LGBT RAIN Foundation
- Pride+ (Family Connections)
- Garden State Equality
- HMI: New Jersey (Hetrick-Martin Institute)

### **Hudson County**

- Hudson Pride Center
- Hoboken Rainbow Family
- Hyacinth AIDS Foundation
- Jersey City Medical Center

### **Hunterdon County**

- PFLAG Flemington/Hunterdon County
- Hunterdon Healthcare LGBTQIA Navigation
- GLBT of Hunterdon County of NJ

### **Middlesex County**

- The Pride Center of New Jersey
- City of New Brunswick LGBTQ Liaison
- Middlesex College LGBTQ+ Resources – Queer Identity and Lifestyle Club

### **Monmouth County**

- Jersey Shore LGBT Community Center
- PFLAG Jersey Shore
- Make It Better for Youth
- Your Authentic Self (YAS) Teen Support Group
- LGBTQ Center for Health and Wellness
- QSpot LGBT Community Center
- Monmouth County Democrats LGBTQ Caucus

### **Morris County**

- EDGE Pride Center
- Gay Activist Alliance of Morris County (GAAMC)

### **Ocean County**

- PFLAG Jersey Shore (Toms River location)

### **Somerset County**

- Babs Siperstein PROUD Center

## Appendix B: Flyers and sample outreach materials

### B.1 Text for Posts

Item	Image(s) to Use	Text
Facebook Post	IMAGE 1	Do you have ideas for making transportation more LGBTQ+ friendly in North Jersey? We want to hear from you! <a href="#">Sign up</a> to attend one of two community outreach discussions for self-identifying LGBTQ+ residents in the NJTPA region. All input, opinions, and experiences will help shape the NJTPA's new Long Range Transportation Plan! Connecting Communities will guide transportation investments and improvements for the next 25 years. Can't attend the events? Take a quick survey to share your thoughts! Visit: <a href="https://linktr.ee/njtpa_lgbtq">linktr.ee/njtpa_lgbtq</a>
Instagram Post	IMAGE 2,3,4,5	Learn more and sign up here: <a href="https://linktr.ee/njtpa_lgbtq">linktr.ee/njtpa_lgbtq</a>
Instagram Reel	REEL 1	Learn more and sign up here: <a href="https://linktr.ee/njtpa_lgbtq">linktr.ee/njtpa_lgbtq</a>
LinkedIn Post	IMAGE 1	The North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority is working on a new Long Range Transportation Plan and seeking valuable input from self-identifying LGBTQ+ residents. What are your unique transportation needs in the region? Sign up for in-person or virtual outreach events here: <a href="https://linktr.ee/njtpa_lgbtq">https://linktr.ee/njtpa_lgbtq</a> Unable to attend? A quick survey is also available!

NJTPA  
Connecting  
Communities

# Have Ideas For making North Jersey's transportation system more LGBTQ+ Friendly?

We want to hear from you!

Join our  
discussion



Hosted by  
transportation advocate

**Bernie  
Wagenblast**

**Virtual:**  
February 26, 2025  
7 PM

**In-Person:**  
March 19, 2025  
7 PM

Registration is required for both  
in-person and virtual events.



# Have ideas for making North Jersey's transportation system more **LGBTQ+** Friendly?



## We want to hear from you!

Join our **discussion** or  
take our **survey!**





**Virtual:**  
February 26, 2025  
7 PM

**In-Person:**  
March 19, 2025  
7 PM


Registration is required for both  
in-person and virtual events.

Hosted by  
transportation  
advocate  
**Bernie Wagenblast**


B.4 Promotional Image 1

Do you have  
ideas about  
North Jersey  
transportation?

Join a discussion with NJ's  
Transportation Advocate,




**Bernie  
Wagenblast**



**Join Virtually**  
February 26, 2025  
7 PM

\*Registration is required Link in Bio.



**Come in Person**  
March 19, 2025  
7 PM  
@Newark Public Library

**NJTPA**  
Connecting  
Communities

LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN

B.5 Promotional Image 2





B.6 Promotional Image 3



B.7 Promotional Image 4

The graphic features a background with a vertical color gradient from orange at the top to dark blue at the bottom. In the top right corner, the NJTPA logo is displayed, consisting of the text 'NJTPA' in a bold, sans-serif font, followed by 'Connecting Communities' in a smaller font, and 'LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN' in a very small font below it. To the right of the text is a stylized network diagram with yellow dots and lines. The main title 'Share your Thoughts!' is centered in a large, white, sans-serif font. Below this, a light pink rectangular box contains two event options. The first option, 'Join Virtually', is followed by the date 'February 26, 2025' and time '7 PM', with an icon of a person at a laptop to the right. The second option, 'Come in Person', is followed by the date 'March 19, 2025' and time '7 PM', with an icon of two people and a speech bubble to the right. Below the pink box, an orange rectangular box with a torn-edge effect contains the text 'Can't make the events?' and 'Share your thoughts in a short questionnaire'. At the bottom left, a small line of text reads '\*Registration is required. Link in Bio.'

**Share your Thoughts!**

**NJTPA**  
Connecting Communities  
LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN

**Join Virtually**  
February 26, 2025  
7 PM

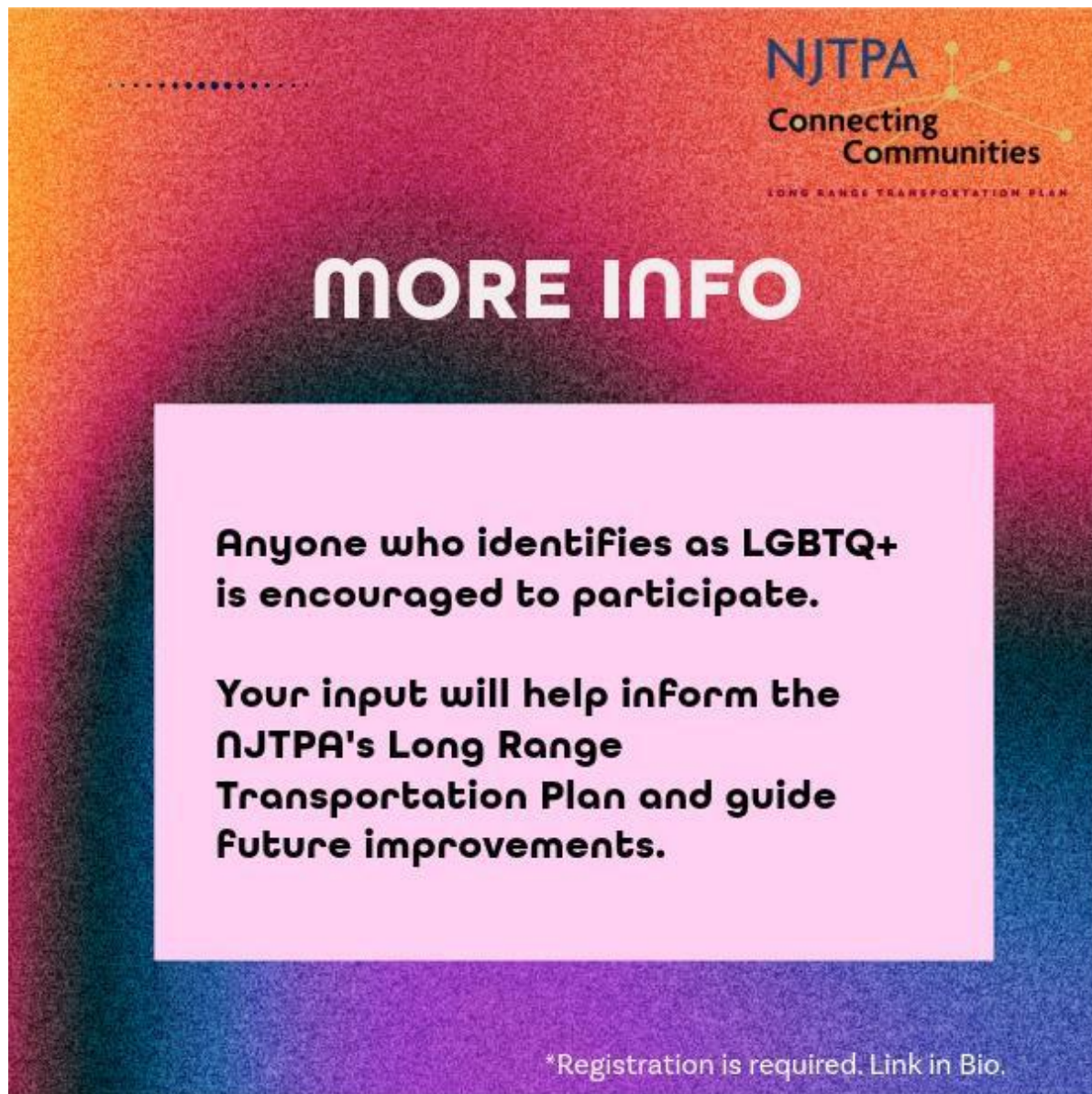
**Come in Person**  
March 19, 2025  
7 PM  
@Newark Public Library

**Can't make the events?**  
Share your thoughts in a  
short questionnaire

\*Registration is required. Link in Bio.



B.8 Promotional Image 5

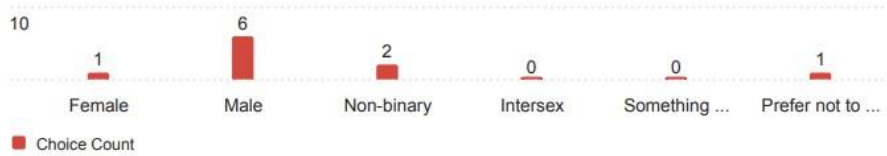




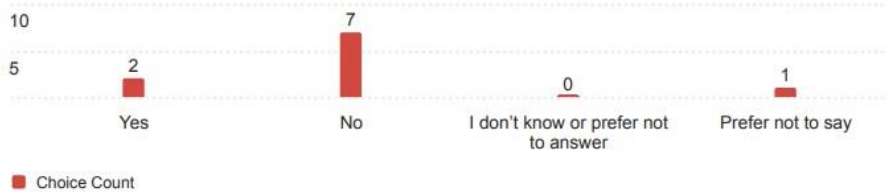
## Appendix C: Questionnaire in full

### LGBTQ+ Online Questionnaire Results

Q2 - How do you currently describe yourself? (select one) - Selected Choice



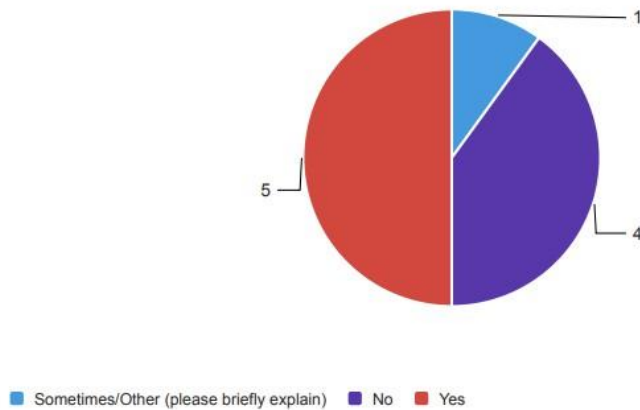
Q3 - Do you identify as transgender?



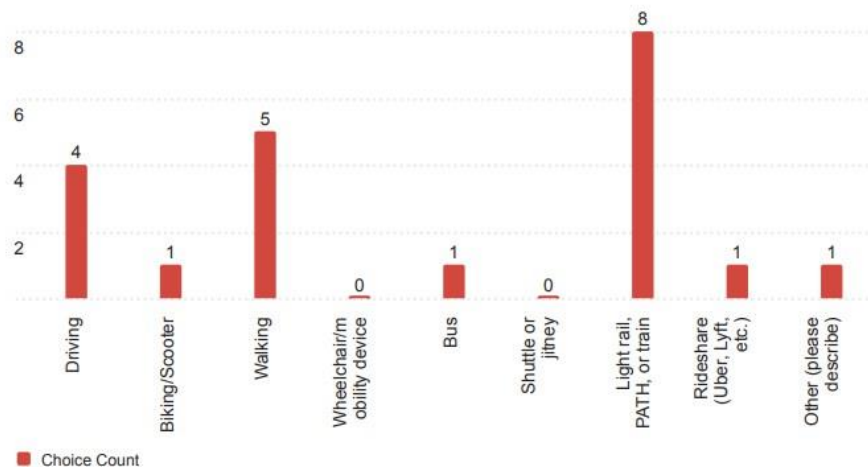
Q4 - Which of the following best represents your sexual orientation? (select one) - Selected Choice



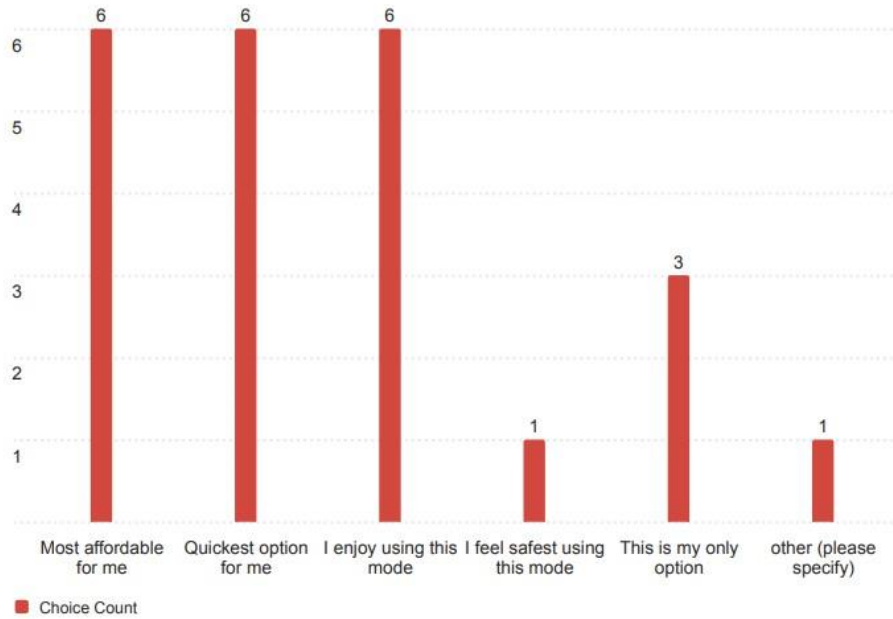
Q5 - Does identifying as a member of the LGBTQ+ population impact your travel decisions? - Selected Choice



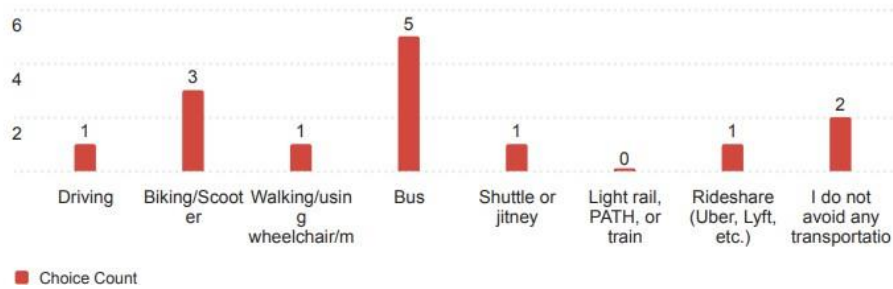
Q6 - What modes of transportation do you most frequently rely on? (select top 2) - Selected Choice



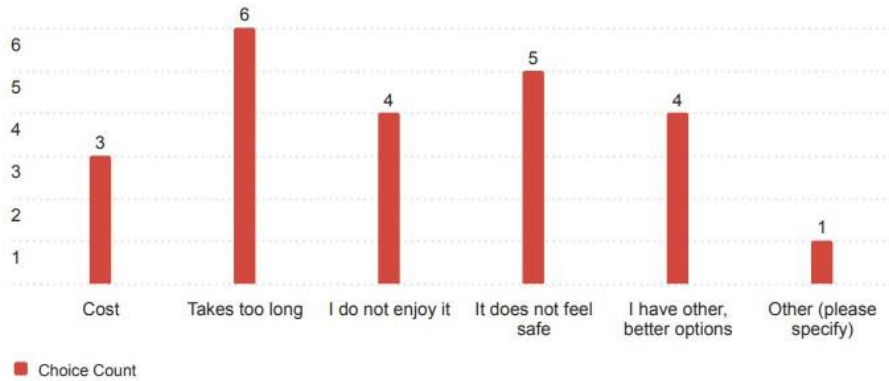
Q7 - Why do you choose these modes? (select all that apply) - Selected Choice



Q8 - Are there any modes of transportation you avoid? (select modes that are available in your community, and you could use, but choose not to)



**Q9 - Why do you avoid these transportation mode(s)? (select all that apply) - Selected Choice**



**Q10 - As a member of the LGBTQ+ population, what issue(s) with transportation do you think is/are the most pressing or important for you and other members of the LGBTQ+ community?**

As a member of the LGBTQ+ population, what issue(s) with transportation do you think is/are the most pressing or important for you and other members of the LGBTQ+ community?

Safety

Access/ability to get to certain places

Harassment of people who show a visible gender nonconformity.

I haven't noticed any queer-related problems when it comes to transportation, but I have noticed problems when it comes to accessibility- especially in the more suburban areas in NJ.

When I used to take public transit, it didn't always seem like the route to busstops were wheelchair, or even person friendly. Busstops on the sides of busy roads with no sidewalks, no shelters, sometimes even no signs.

safety and security

Probably safety - the possibility of hate crimes if taking public transit (due to being with other people). Access to transportation as well, be it price or availability.

Zero. No issues. This is absurd.

In my community, Newark, walking is great in SOME neighborhoods, and in others I have been harassed for being/appearing LGBT+.

### Q11 - As a member of the LGBTQ+ population, what changes would you like to see in the overall transportation system of this region?

As a member of the LGBTQ+ population, what changes would you like to see in the overall transportation system of this region?

Better infrastructure to make more places in NJ accessible to each other via train/public transportation

More accessibility to travel using public transportation to areas like work, grocery store and home.

For public transit- more stops would mean less walking needed for those without personal vehicles, and less dangerous situations. Shelters at all bus stops without hostile (anti-homeless) architecture would be best case scenario.

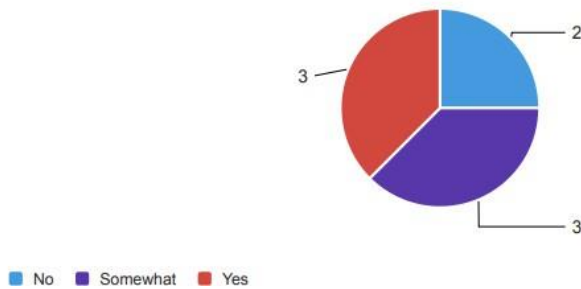
more inclusivity/representation in messaging (e.g., NJ TRANSIT ads).

Improved safety

Better service. But has zero to do with my sexual preferences.

This lies outside the purview of NJTPA perhaps but it's definitely by far the most important thing to me -- more police presence on the streets would make me feel safer (in downtown Newark, specifically).

### Q18 - As an LGBTQ+ person, do you believe housing options are safe, affordable, and in appealing locations in your community?



## Q19 - What are some LGBTQ+ friendly destinations in the NJTPA region? (neighborhoods, towns, public spaces, etc.)

What are some LGBTQ+ friendly destinations in the NJTPA region? (neighborhoods, towns, public spaces, etc.)

Jersey City & Hoboken

Feathers, Maywood, Hackensack, Propagate Studios, Montclair, Howling Basset Books

Highland Park, Jersey City, Montclair

THE LIBRARY!!!!

And Asbury, VNACJ in Asbury is where i get my HRT, right across the street is Georgies (gay bar) and Wolfe & Kron (Queer bookstore). And theres a park nearby <3  
And Trinity's Magickal Intentions in Downtown Toms River!

Jersey City, Montclair, Madison

Everywhere

The Ironbound, Newark

Downtown Jersey City

## Q20 - What makes these places LGBTQ+ friendly?

What makes these places LGBTQ+ friendly?

An active and diverse community

Some of them are businesses owned/operated by queer people, some of them are towns with large gay populations, etc. Places where it doesn't feel like gay people are such a minority or silenced presence

They show a clear sign of welcome to the queer community through flags, festivals and events. Additionally, many queer live there and I don't feel like I'm the only queer person in the room.

The library is one of the few places that exist in modern day where you can be in an indoor space, and are not expected to spend money. Theres usually displays of pride books in June and October. The Ocean County Library just held its first LGBT+ resource faire last October, and it plans to be yearly. Ive also seen OCL at many pride events, like Asbury Pride and Seaside pride.  
VNACJ is where i get my HRT, so theyre queer friendly by default. Georgies, Wolfe, and Trinity's are all either lgbt+ owned or have queer people as the target audience.

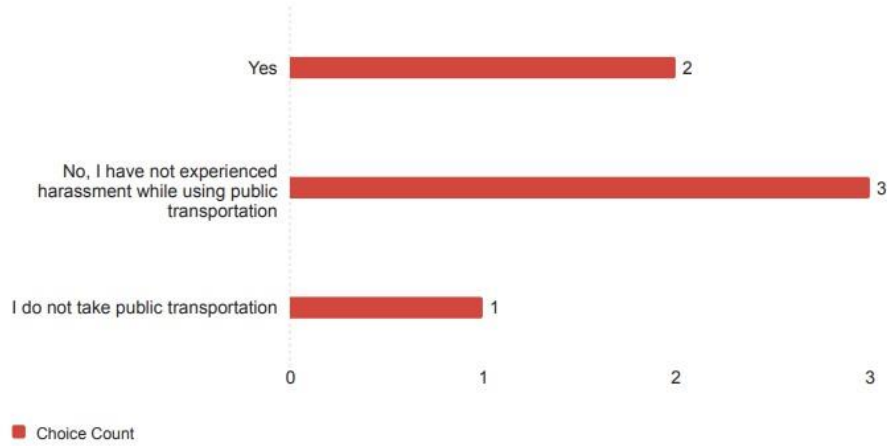
Openly supportive businesses, homes that flag the rainbow flag, visible queer community that protects each other

The same thing that makes any place friendly.

Presence of other LGBTQ+ people.



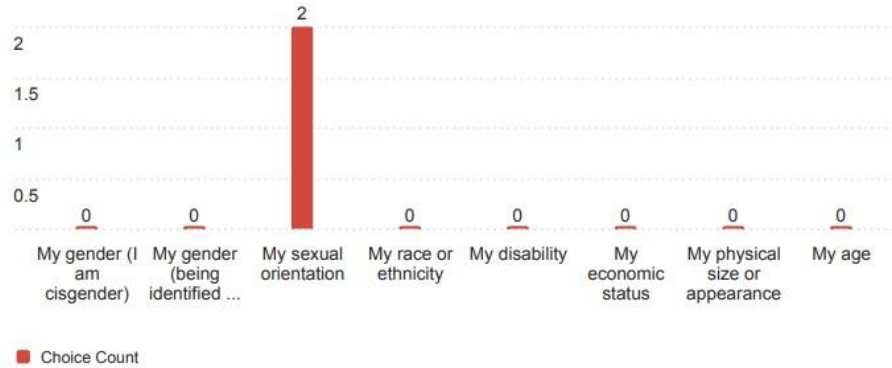
Q13 - In the past six months have you experienced direct harassment when using public transportation in the NJTPA region?



Q14 - Which mode(s) were you using when the incident(s) occurred?



Q15 - Which of the following do you think motivated the harasser or attacker? (Select all that apply to your situation)



Q16 - In the past six months, have you witnessed other people experiencing harassment while using public transportation?

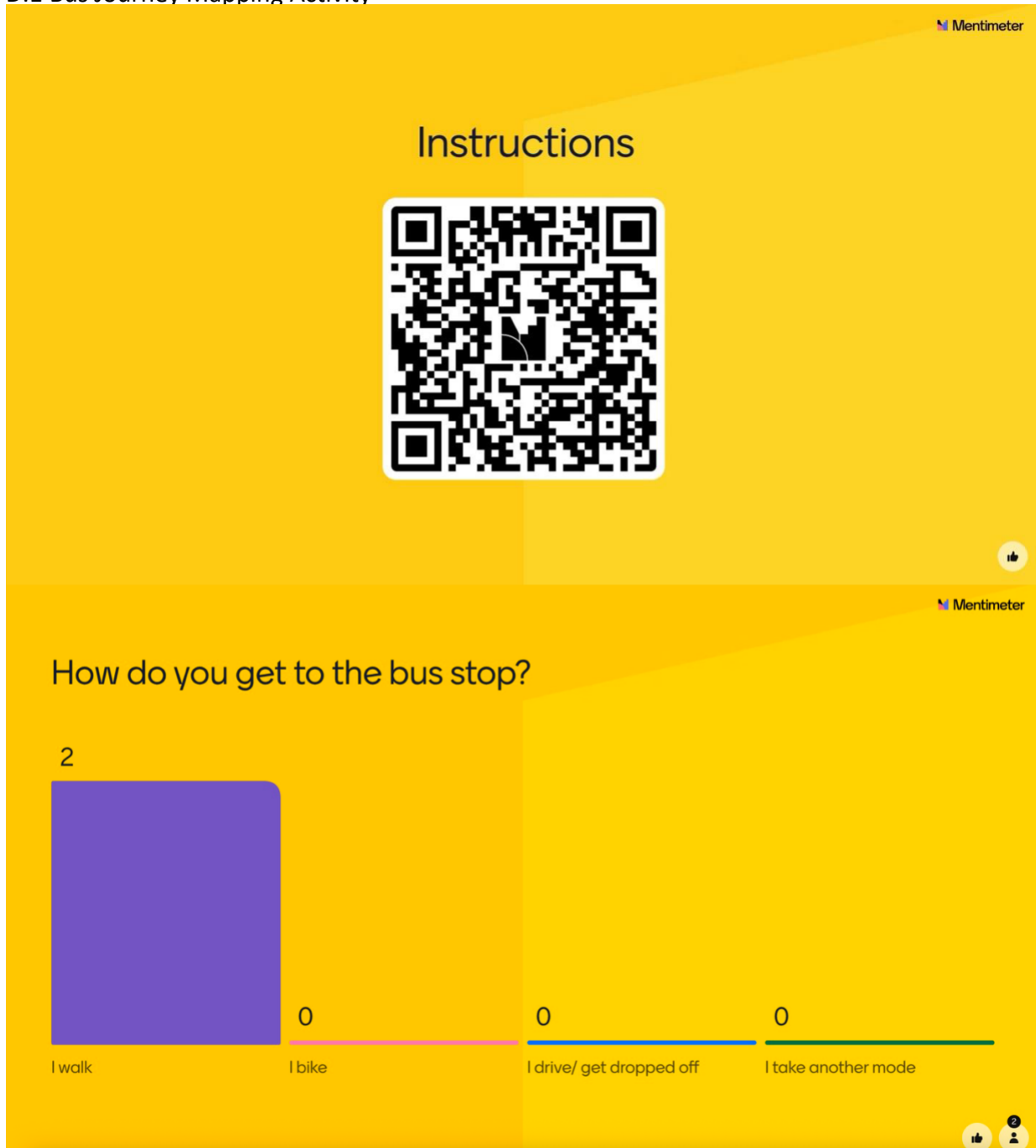


Q17 - Which mode(s) were you using when the incident(s) occurred?

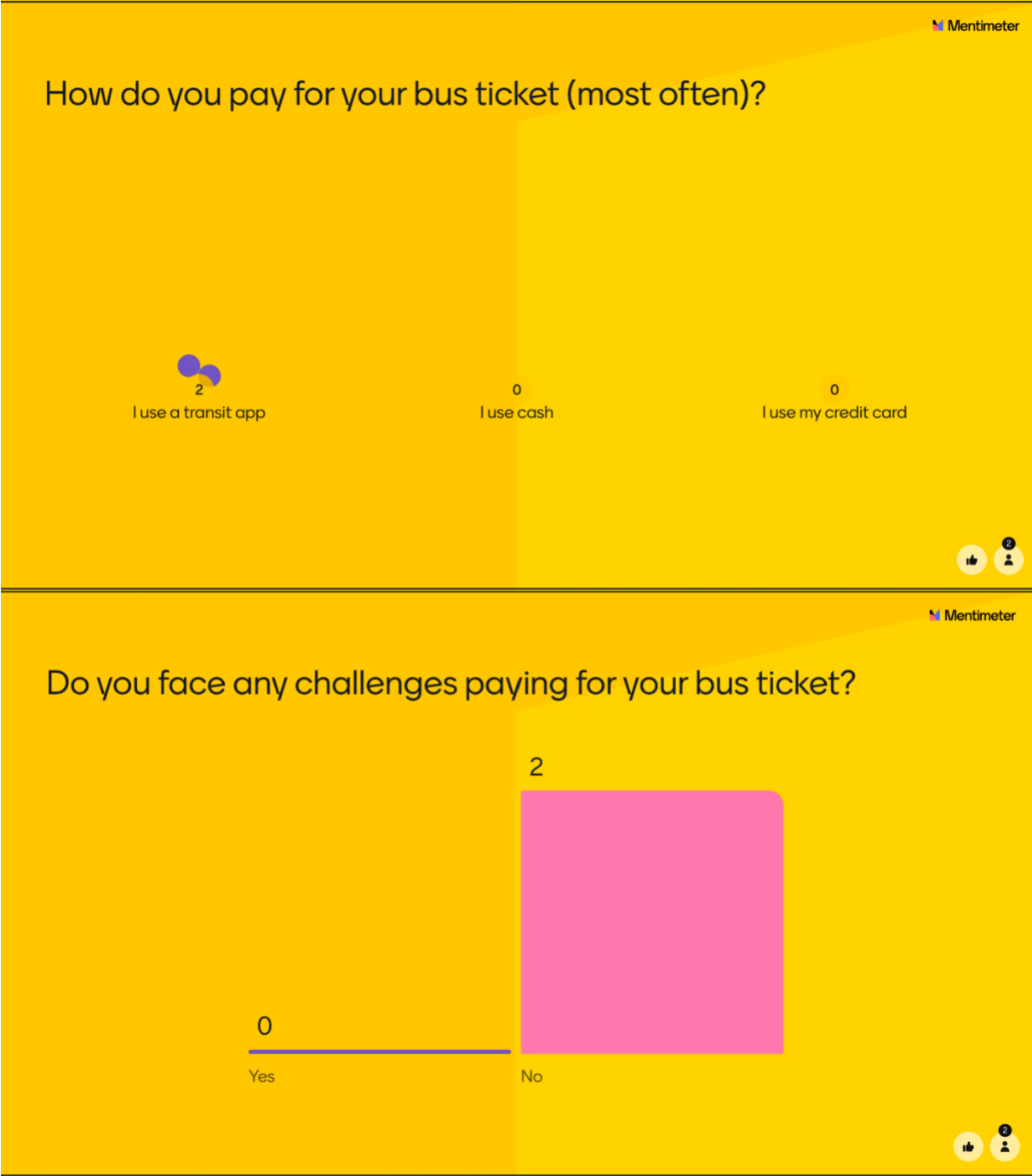


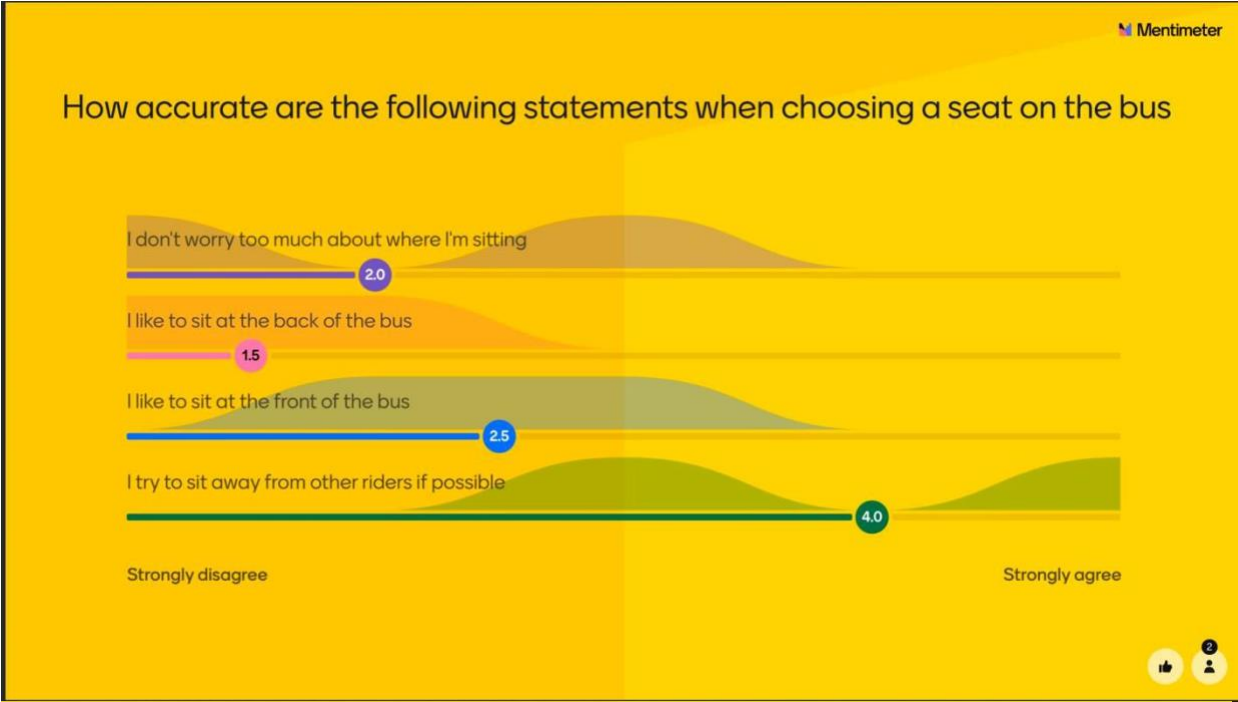
## Appendix D: Mentimeter data and individual mode responses

### D.1 Bus Journey Mapping Activity

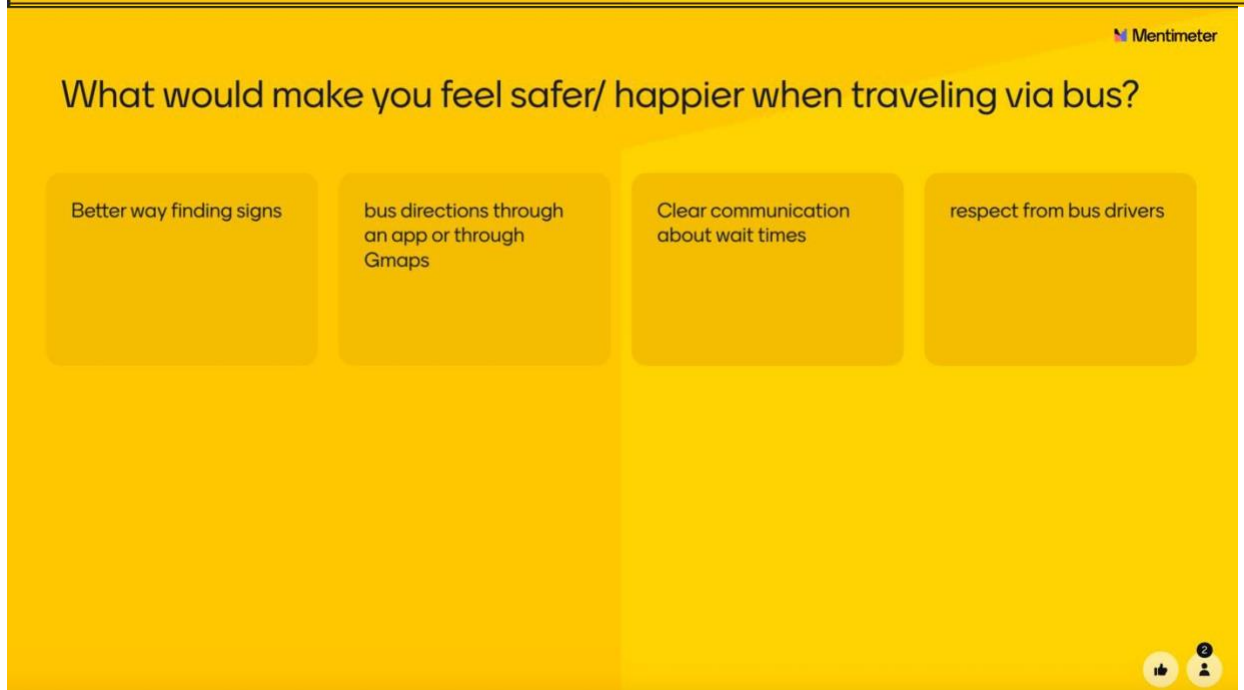












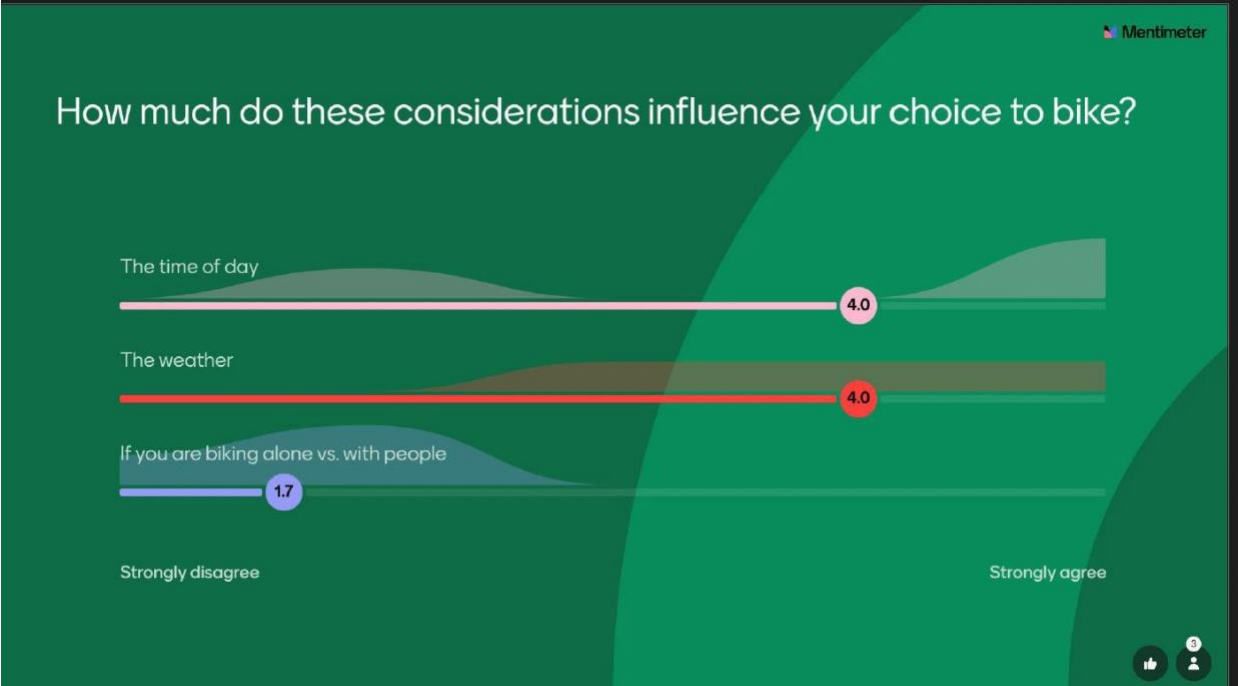
## D.2 Biking Journey Mapping Activity

Mentimeter

# Instructions



Like



Mentimeter

How does the time of day influence your choice to bike?

👍 👤

Mentimeter

What weather will you not bike in?

dark	snow	rain	high winds
Wet streets. Heavy	when it's wet	Ice	super hot and humid

👍 👤

Mentimeter

What weather will you not bike in?

Salt on roads following snowstorms

👍

3

Mentimeter

Please rank the characteristics you look for when planning your biking route

1st

The safest infrastructure (I choose paths based on how safe I feel)

2nd

The length (I choose the quickest route)

3rd

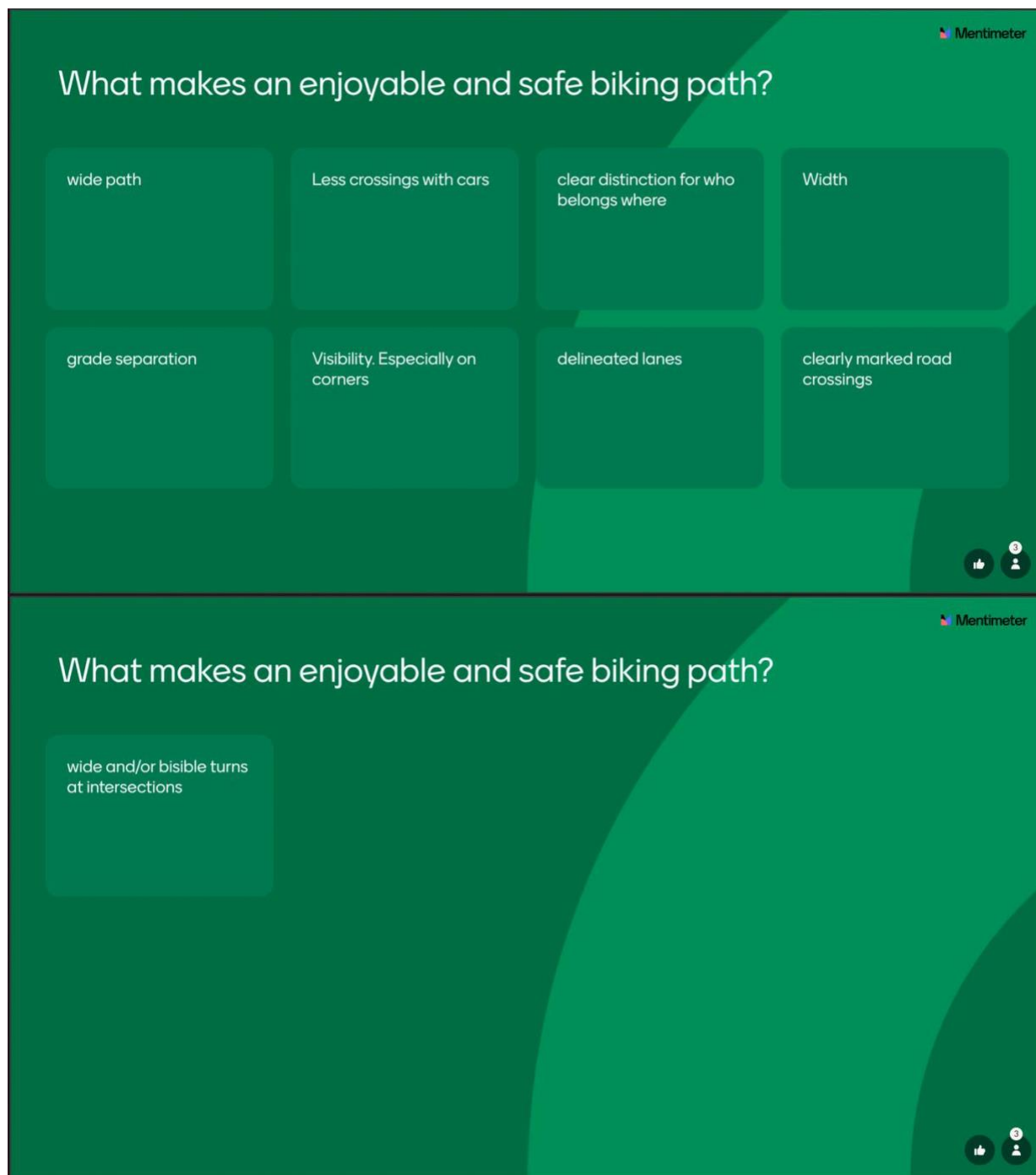
The most straightforward (I like to choose a path with the least amount of turns)

4th

The busiest (I like to choose a path with other pedestrians/ cyclists)

👍

3







# NJTPA OnAir Studio: Engaging Kids and Teens

## Key Findings Report Innovative Public Engagement FY25

### *Background*

To collect input from North Jersey residents for *Connecting Communities*, the Rutgers-POET team implemented innovative public engagement strategies to reach people of all ages. POET continued to use of the NJTPA “On Air” initiative, conducted as part of public outreach for the NJTPA’s Plan 2045 and for Plan 2050. This year, POET reimagined On Air to create the *NJTPA On Air Studio*, a hybrid in-person and virtual space with multiple activities for engagement: a recording booth to create a short voice message about their ideas for the future of transportation, the “Future of Transportation” multimedia art contest, and a survey. The studio also featured Sammy the Squirrel, a character to bring emotion and identity to the outreach campaign.

### *Outreach Activities*

POET created three engagement activities, offered in both English and Spanish. The three different activities were designed to allow kids and teens to participate in the ways in which they are comfortable, using their voice, creating art, or completing a survey. A description of these activities are detailed below.

#### Recording Booth

The recording booth activity focused on how kids and teens feel about transportation in their communities today. Questions for this activity included:

- *How do you get around? Walk? Bike? In a car? In the train or on the bus? What do you like or dislike about it?*
- *If you could choose how you would like to get around, what would it be? Something different?*
- *How do you feel when you’re getting around?*



Figure 1: Sammy the Squirrel at an outreach event in Newark, NJ.

Participants were able to record directly onto the On Air Recording Booth website. Recordings can be up to 30 seconds. In addition, POET created a physical booth designed like a recording studio; this was used at in-person events. In person-events also featured a puppet of Sammy the Squirrel, giving kids a character to interact with, and a reason to approach the On Air booth.

### Multimedia Art Contest

The NJTPA On Air Studio also hosted a multimedia art competition to collect ideas about transportation futures for the region. Participants had an opportunity to submit short videos or audio recordings, drawings or digital images, or poems or short essays to share their visions. To encourage



Figure 2: Recording booth set up at outreach event in Rahway, NJ.

participation and quality submissions, participants had the incentive to win gift cards (\$100 for the winner; \$50 for the runner-up) based on age-group and the creativity of the ideas submitted. Like the last version of the On Air Contest, participants will watch a short video with the rules and the prompt *“What do you think transportation will be like in the future when you’re an adult?”*

### Survey



Figure 3: Set the Table game with participants.

The On Air Survey was open to kids and teens in the region to participate in an adapted version of the Region-wide survey administered by the NJTPA. The questions were targeted to the transportation needs of youth.

### Additional Activity: Set the Table

In addition to the On Air Studio, POET created *Set the Table... For Game Night*, an interactive presentation game for teens. This game featured discussion and trivia questions and required participants to join using a mobile device or computer.

## Participant Characteristics

Through the various outreach activities, POET reached 388 kids and teens from 10 of the 13 counties in the NJTPA region. The majority of participants were under the age of 10. The group with the lowest number of participants are teens over 14 years old. Participating counties included:

- Bergen
- Essex
- Hudson
- Middlesex
- Monmouth
- Morris
- Ocean
- Passaic
- Somerset
- Union

The distribution of participation of each activity by age group is displayed in Table 1 below:

*Table 1: Participants by age and activity.*

	Activity				
	Radio Booth	Art Contest	Survey	Set the Table	Total by Age Group:
Ages					
Under 10	123	87	3		213
10 to 14	73	33	10		116
Over 14	4		24	31	59
Total by Activity:	Radio Booth 200	Art Contest 120	Survey 37	Set the Table 31	Total Participants: 388

## Key Findings

### Responses

Across all activities, the NJTPA and POET received a total of 388 submissions from youth ages 5 to 17. POET reviewed all responses and identified four recurring themes: transportation that is efficient, safe, and reliable; transportation that is better for the environment; transportation as a component of social issues; and transportation that is a fun experience. The overwhelming majority of submissions touched on at least one of these themes.

## Theme #1: Transportation that is efficient, safe and reliable

Youth across all outreach efforts voiced a strong desire for transportation that gets them where they need to go – quickly, safely, and on time. Elementary and middle school students emphasized dependency on parents and wished for transportation options that gave them more freedom when adults weren't available. High schoolers focused on needing reliable transit, noting that lateness or confusing systems posed real barriers to use. Teens in Jersey City also critiqued the unreliability of transit apps and long waits for the light rail, citing those delays as deterrents. Others flagged traffic congestion, especially during school drop-off hours, and expressed the desire for better traffic flow.

Selected quotes on efficiency, safety and reliability, with the activity used to collect the information:

- “Sometimes I want to get to a place fast and the buses or cars are delayed.” (Radio Booth)
- “Transit service should also be more reliable.” (Set the Table)
- “Having something that can get me there in the rain when my mom is in a meeting.” (Survey)
- “I think cars should have rocket boosters.” (Radio Booth)
- “In the mornings, there’s a lot of traffic... people dropping their kids off blocks the road.” (Radio Booth)
- “Transit apps are unreliable and difficult to navigate.” (Set the Table)
- “I get around by Uber every single day.” (Radio Booth)
- “There’s certain times of the day where traffic is crazy.” (Radio Booth)
- “If my parents are not available to give me a ride, I can’t go to those events.” (Survey)



Figure 4: Artwork by Sarai, age 7.



Figure 5: Artwork by Avari, age 10.

## Theme #2: Transportation that is better for the environment

While fewer youth focused directly on sustainability, there was a small cluster of older students who referenced the need for environmentally responsible transportation. These students suggested electric flying cars, planes that use biofuels, or vehicles that do not rely on fossil fuels. Mostly, these ideas were voiced in the On Air Radio Booth sessions, but they were visually echoed in a few of the art submissions. In some art contest submissions, children drew futuristic vehicles floating above ground or powered by abstract, clean energy sources. These entries suggest awareness of climate and pollution impacts, even among very young participants.

Selected quotes on transportation and the environment:

- “Airplanes made out of biofuel.” (Radio Booth)
- “Flying cars that don’t use fuel – electric flying cars.” (Radio Booth)
- “Buses should change their environment and cleanliness.” (Radio Booth)
- “Flying cars powered by magnets instead of gas.” (Radio Booth)

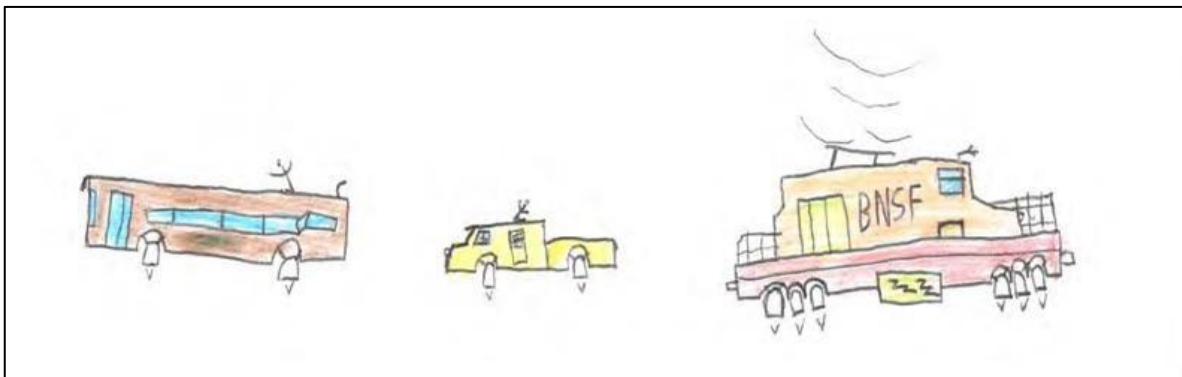


Figure 8: Artwork by Jaden, age 11.



Figure 7: Artwork by Lea, age 10.

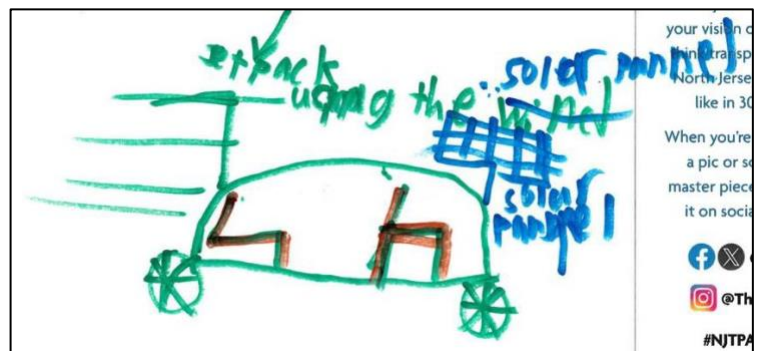


Figure 6: Artwork by Unknown.



### Theme #3: Transportation as a component of social issues

Youth also articulated how transportation intersects with broader social issues like safety, gender, access, and emotional well-being. In the On Air recordings, several students described navigating areas impacted by gang activity, expressing a need for transportation that also provides a sense of protection and support. Teens in Jersey City noted that even where transit existed, they avoided it due to fears around harassment or safety, especially in the evening. Girls in particular shared discomfort around biking or waiting for the light rail. The survey reinforced these findings, with responses noting that lack of parental availability often translated into missed opportunities. Together, these insights help build understanding of the emotional and social context in which transportation systems are used or avoided by young people.

Selected quotes on social issues:

- “There should be something that takes kids that are around gang violence... [so that] they could walk around safely.” (Recording Booth)
- “Transit... not only to serve as transit, but a way to vent about what you’re going through.” (Recording Booth)
- “Security concerns on PATH.” (Set the Table)
- “Unsafe to walk [to light rail stop].” (Set the Table)
- “Girls don’t feel comfortable biking near cars.” (Set the Table)
- “Disconnected bike lane networks... the nearest ones aren’t close.” (Set the Table)
- “If my parents are not available, I can’t go.” (Survey)
- “I think there should be a kid under 20 years old on the bus, and teachers should pick up their students.” (Recording Booth)

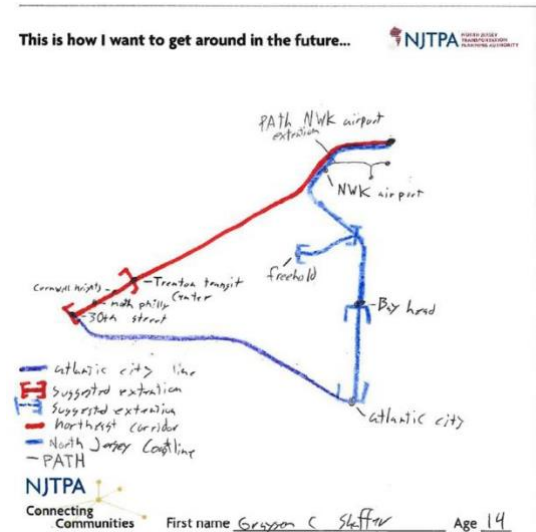


Figure 9: Artwork by Grayson, age 14.

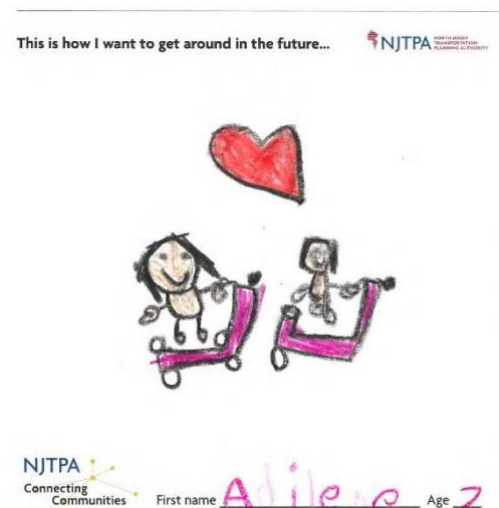


Figure 10: Artwork by Adilene, age 7.



## Theme #4: Transportation that is a fun experience

For many kids, transportation isn't just a practical tool. The On Air recordings were filled with whimsical and imaginative ideas: cars made of candy, flying skateboards, and Lamborghinis everywhere. Even in the most outlandish suggestions, there is a clear desire for autonomy, fun, and identity. While planners and engineers often focus on safety, reliability, and cost, youth prioritize freedom, wonder, creativity and play. These visions also remind us that joy is a valid metric of success in youth mobility planning.

Selected quotes on transportation as fun experiences and expressions of identity:

- “There should be Lamborghinis everywhere.” (Recording Booth)
- “[I want a] coach bus to get to school. It has TVs, a bathroom, and very comfy seats.” (Radio Booth)
- “Flying cars going through the rainbow.” (Recording Booth)
- “I want a candy car.” (Recording Booth)
- “Flying bikes.” (Recording Booth)
- “A teal bike and a boat.” (Recording Booth)
- “Cars should have inflatable wheels so it can transport on water.” (Recording Booth)
- “A car that can levitate over air, water, and land.” (Recording Booth)
- “Ride my bike... that’s epic.” (Recording Booth)
- “I like to walk... or use a car that drives itself.” (Recording Booth)
- “Racecars.” (Recording Booth)



Figure 11: Artwork by Aakifah, age 12.

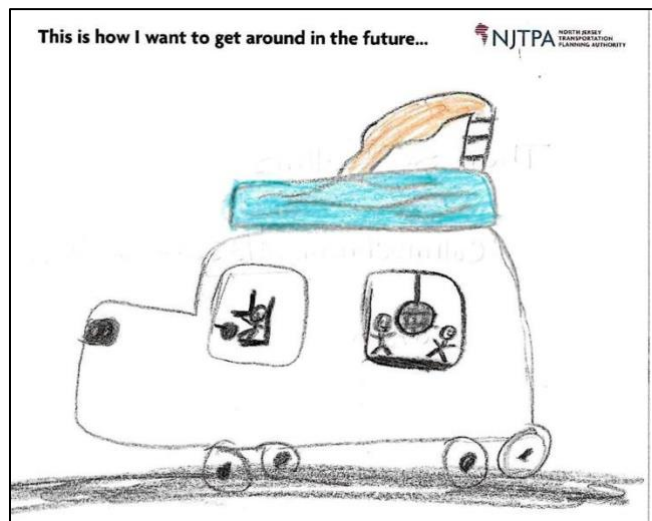


Figure 12: Artwork by Makayla, age 9.

# TEENS SET THE TABLE: KEY FINDINGS REPORT

## Innovative Public Engagement FY25

### *Background*

In support of the NJTPA, the Public Outreach and Engagement Team (POET) at Rutgers collaborated with an NJTPA Outreach Liaison to develop an interactive activity, *Set the Table...For Game Night*, as a tool to engage teens in the NJTPA's Long Range Transportation Plan. The materials included feedback and trivia questions relating to the NJTPA's ground-truthing outreach covering the following topics: pedestrian improvements, biking improvements, public transportation, and safety. This outreach was conducted in communities in Bergen, Hudson, and Middlesex Counties. This document summarizes the key findings from this outreach.

### *Locations and Participants*

This outreach was conducted in three of the NJTPA's subregions: Bergen County, Hudson County, and Middlesex County. There were various levels of participation at each of the three events. The breakdown of participation is below:

- **Lodi Keystone Club** (part of the Boys and Girls Club of Lower Bergen County)
  - Number of participants: 6
- **Youth Foundation of Jersey City**
  - Number of participants: 17
- **Highland Park Public Library** (with high schoolers from various high schools in Middlesex County)
  - Number of participants: 6

### *Key Findings*

#### Pedestrian Improvements

- **Experience is impacted by the design and maintenance of the built environment.**

Across all three groups, participants felt safe as pedestrians in places with well-designed pedestrian infrastructure, such as well-maintained sidewalks, board walks, and spaces that are well-lit with availability of crosswalks. In addition, placemaking and aesthetics influence perceptions of safety, as these places are seen as more vibrant and welcoming. Many participants responded that places like Downtown Jersey City, Hoboken, Metuchen, and East Rutherford feel safe as pedestrians. Participants also discussed the appeal of pedestrian-only zones, like part of Newark Avenue in Jersey City.

- **More pedestrian infrastructure is needed.** As far as improvements are concerned, all groups mentioned the need for more, highly visible crosswalks. Participants pointed out a need for well-trained crossing guards and more complete sidewalk systems in their communities.

### Bicycling Improvements

- **Sharing the road with cars is a concern.** When it comes to cycling, participants' major concern is the behavior of drivers. Drivers in vehicles creating unsafe conditions, such as occupying the bike lane, ignoring traffic signs, and creating conflict discourage participants from using bicycling as a mode of transportation. In addition to cars, some participants are also concerned about e-bikes, which are a prevalent mode of transportation, especially in urban areas such as Jersey City. Participants are unsure about how e-bikes "fit" into a street's bicycle infrastructure.
- **Bicycle lanes and parking would make bicycling easier.** Bike lanes, especially those that are highly visible and protected, would encourage more participants to use a bicycle as a mode of transportation. For those that live in communities without bike lanes, like those at the event in Lodi, there is uncertainty about where it is acceptable to ride a bike; they do not feel safe on the road but also are concerned about pedestrians if riding on the sidewalk. Because of feeling unsafe using bicycles or scooters in the roadway, sidewalk repair is needed to make biking and scooter use safer. Designated spaces for bicycles could address these concerns. Other concerns are bike parking; participants worry about not having secure parking, including at their schools, and risk their bike being stolen or damaged.
- **Bicycling is not always an option.** In both Jersey City and Highland Park, participants brought up new concerns about bicycling as an accessible transportation option. In Jersey City, some participants cannot ride a bicycle for various reasons: their bike was stolen, they can't afford a bike, and the cost of bikeshare (Citibikes) is too expensive. In Highland Park, participants pointed out that some parents do not allow their children to ride their bikes because conditions are not safe.

### Public Transportation

- **Transit experiences vary across the region.** Participants have diverse experiences with public transportation in the region; public transportation availability varies by place type. Across these groups, "public transportation" was understood in different ways: In Lodi and Highland Park, participants primarily discussed buses, whereas in Jersey City, participants focused on light rail.
- **Transit is not always reliable or convenient.** Participants who live in places with less public transportation options, such as Lodi and Highland Park, experience long wait times and infrequent service, making it an undesirable transportation option. Some of these participants have had better experiences using transportation outside of their own home communities. In Jersey City, the light rail does not have stops that are convenient for these participants.

- **Transit is not always accessible or safe.** Participants do not always feel safe using public transportation; in Jersey City and Highland Park, participants discussed concerns about poor lighting at stops and stations and the maintenance of stops and stations. In addition, accessibility is a concern; participants discussed feeling unsafe using public transportation in certain conditions (such as at night) as a woman, and others pointed out that transit needs to be accessible to riders of all ages. In addition, participants suggested that the cost of transportation should be more affordable for students.

## Safety

- **Lighting is a concern.** Participants who rely on walking, biking, and public transportation feel unsafe in areas that are not well lit, such as roadways, sidewalks, and bus stops. Improved lighting would improve safety for teens.
- **Infrastructure should be repaired and maintained.** Participants across groups discussed the need for improvements to infrastructure, including fixing potholes and other damage to roads and repairing sidewalks and bicycle lanes. Infrastructure that is in good repair and well-maintained increases feelings of safety and accessibility.
- **More infrastructure for pedestrian safety is needed.** Participants expressed the most interest in pedestrian infrastructure improvements (as opposed to roads, bike lanes or paths, or rail). Suggestions included adding more sidewalks, crosswalks, stop signs, crossing guards, and better lighting and improved visibility.
- **Signage should be improved.** Across all groups, participants brought up signage as a safety concern. They said signs should be clear, visible, and better communicate with drivers. They suggest that this could improve driver behaviors, creating safer environments for other road users. In addition, some suggested that there should be improved enforcement of road laws when drivers create unsafe conditions.

## Conclusion

Participation varied across the three groups, but some key consistencies suggest that teens in the region seek similar improvements. They emphasize the importance of pedestrian infrastructure improvements that could increase feelings of safety when walking, such as better, visible crosswalks and better-connected sidewalks. Bicycling is not always seen as a safe transportation option, as much of the region lacks infrastructure to protect cyclists. Public transportation is not always seen as reliable or accessible, but the reasons for this varies between groups. In Jersey City, participant experiences were either neutral or negative due to concerns about safety and the convenience of stops (specifically the light rail). In Lodi and Highland Park, public transportation service is infrequent and not seen as an efficient mode of transportation. Improvements to infrastructure would improve perceptions of safety in the region, especially when addressing pedestrian needs.

## UPNEXT NORTH JERSEY

### Innovative Public Engagement FY25

#### *Background*

UpNext North Jersey (UpNext) is an advisory group that engages young North Jersey residents in a dialogue with the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA). The NJTPA seeks to better understand the values and needs of this demographic group regarding key transportation issues. The NJTPA provides UpNext members with unique opportunities to learn about and discuss timely topics related to regional planning and public policy, develop a network of peers who share similar interests, and engage with regional thought leaders and decision-makers.

The Public Outreach and Engagement Team (POET), part of the Voorhees Transportation Center at Rutgers University, worked with the NJTPA to plan and conduct an event for members to provide their feedback and participate in the development of the NJTA's Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP).

#### *Overview Set the Table...For Game Night*

POET created an interactive engagement tool to collect the feedback of community members, including those in UpNext North Jersey. Set the Table was an engagement strategy based on the "meeting in a box" concept and was implemented by POET and the NJTPA for previous years' LRTP outreach efforts. For this cycle of LRTP outreach, POET adapted the Set the Table concept to create an interactive, web-based game, calling this new iteration Set the Table...For Game Night.

Using the platform Slides with Friends, POET created a series of interactive slides that included questions with opportunities to provide feedback on four LRTP topics: pedestrian improvements, bicycling improvements, public transportation, and safety. In addition, POET included trivia questions to retain participant interest. Participants used their cell phones or other devices to join the game and respond to the prompts and questions.

The UpNext North Jersey meeting was held at the NJTPA office in Newark, New Jersey on May 13, 2025. Six UpNext members were joined by members of the NJTPA's outreach team and POET. The purpose of the discussion was to gain valuable insight from young professionals who live/work in the region and better understand their housing needs, especially these transportation-related needs.

**Agenda:**

6:00 to 6:30 pm – Welcome, pizza, and socializing.

6:30 to 6:35 pm – Introduction to the LRTP and self-introductions from participants. 6:35 to

8:00 pm – *Set the Table* activity.

8:00 pm – Wrap up.

**Discussion Summary:**

UpNext members were given a quick introduction to the NJTPA's LRTP and outreach efforts. Members, NJTPA staff, and POET staff provided self-introductions. Then, POET led the participants in the guided discussion using the Slides with Friends tool as a conversation guide. The conversation addressed four topics: pedestrian improvements, bicycle improvements, public transportation, and safety. Below is a summary of UpNext member feedback on these topics.

*Pedestrian Improvements*

A majority of the participating UpNext members indicated walking was one of their primary transportation modes. When presented a list of options to encourage participants to walk more, the most frequently selected option was "Better-connected sidewalks" followed by "Making crosswalks safer." Members were primarily concerned with a lack of sidewalks along roadways and/or leading to bus stops, as well as road conditions and designs that encourage dangerous behaviors by motorists.

Participants were asked to identify a place in New Jersey where they feel safe walking. Responses varied from specific municipalities to types of environments. For example, most participants agreed that trails (and specifically off-road trails) and parks were safe places to walk. Some included a specific trail, the waterfront in Hudson County. Specific places in the NJTPA region include Asbury Park (which had the highest rate of consensus), Hudson County (as a whole), Downtown Jersey City, Cranford, Hoboken, Lambertville, Morristown, Ridgewood, Westfield.

*Bicycle Improvements*

Although biking was not one of the primary modes of transportation for the participating members, one participant was an avid cyclist. UpNext members offered feedback on biking improvements for the region. Participants were provided with options for places that should be better connected by bike lanes. While all the options received votes, there was the most support for "Downtown businesses & commercial areas." Participants were asked to identify obstacles for biking in the region; most said cars and drivers were the biggest obstacle. In the words of UpNext member Garren Lewis, there are "too many high stress roads and a lack of dedicated infrastructure (bikeways, protected bike lanes, etc.)."

*Public Transportation*



The third topic of discussion was public transportation. Participants had a range of experience with public transportation in the NJTPA region. For some, they live in places with solid transit options, especially during the week. Others live in areas where transit is infrequent or “nonexistent.” For example, one participant described walking for hours because of limited frequency of transit. Limited service and low frequency on weekends remain a major issue. PATH trains also have long wait times on weekends. Additionally, NJ Transit trains to and from NYC tend to be bunched together due to Amtrak dispatching constraints, so a missed connection may result in a long delay.

### *Safety*

Safety was discussed as a competent of the other three discussion topics but is a key concern from a multi-road user perspective. Members were asked: “What road improvements would you like to see to make streets safer?” Their responses included:

- Better road repair and paved roads
- road diets
- daylighting
- more sidewalks and curb extensions
- narrower streets
- Improved connectivity
- Improved lighting
- More frequent transit service (including bus service)

These responses support the NJTPA’s complete streets approach to projects.

### **Member Feedback About Event:**

Participants enjoyed the opportunity to meet with other young people that are interested in improving transportation in the region. The use of *Slides with Friends* as a discussion tool received positive feedback for its interactive nature. In the words of member Zach Forstot, “It was informative to learn how the different transportation agencies in NJ operate separately and together, and also to learn about the challenges UpNext participants have in getting around.” Members are interested in participating in upcoming events, especially after the LRTP has been adopted and new projects are implemented.

The meeting concluded with the NJTPA staff acknowledging the valuable input gathered from UpNext members and a commitment to continue engaging the group in the future.