North Federal Community-Based Transportation Study

Phase 1 engagement report



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DENVER REGIONAL COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Photo by Nora Kern/DRCOG

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This report was authored by Whitney Leeds, advocacy and community organizing manager of Growing Home, with editing and support from DRCOG staff.

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Phase 1 engagement

(May through August 2024)

Executive summary

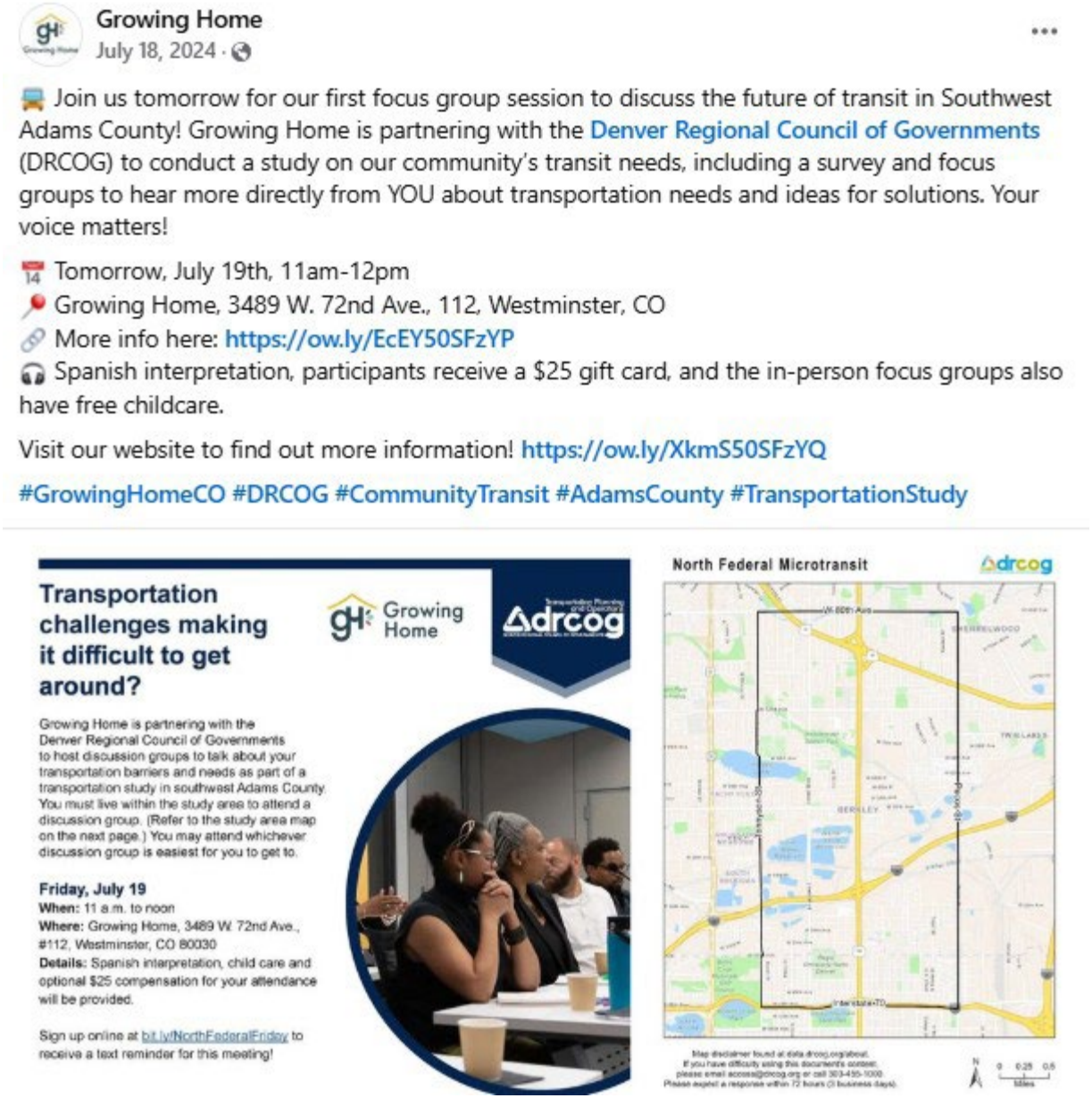
The goal of Phase 1 was for staff from the Denver Regional Council of Governments (known as DRCOG) and Growing Home to gather feedback on current travel patterns, transportation barriers and desired destinations from people living in or traveling through southwest Adams County. This data helps inform where and when people need to travel and if the community would benefit from a microtransit service. Engagement and outreach efforts took on several different forms in this phase:

1. Marketing via DRCOG and partner channels.
2. Steering committee selection and kickoff meeting.
3. Surveying, both in person and online.
4. Focus groups, both in person and virtual.

1. Marketing

DRCOG staff set up a Social Pinpoint site to house information and updates on the project, including a project background, a study area map, information about how to participate in a focus group, the digital survey (available in English and Spanish) and a way to sign up for project updates via email.

Marketing of focus groups and the survey took place through several different channels: DRCOG social media; Growing Home, Adams County, City of Westminster and Speaking for Ourselves partner newsletters and social media; distribution of digital and physical flyers; emails to people who signed up for project updates; and text messages sent by Growing Home and Maiker Housing Partners. Speaking for Ourselves is a self-advocacy group for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, many of whom have experienced transportation difficulties in the study area.



A Facebook post from Growing Home, sharing how to get involved in a focus group for the North Federal Community-Based Transportation Study.

2. Steering committee

With the help of the project management team (DRCOG, Growing Home, Fehr & Peers, Adams County, City of Westminster and the Colorado Department of Transportation), DRCOG staff identified local organizations whose expertise was crucial for this project. Staff hosted a steering committee kickoff meeting to familiarize everyone with the project, offer a background on microtransit and encourage steering committee members to share the survey and focus group opportunities with their communities. Steering committee members included representatives from:

- Atlantis Community.
- Arc of Adams County.
- Adams County Health Department.
- Adams County Community Safety & Well-Being department.
- Adams County Head Start.
- People's Advisory Board for New Educational and Economic Goodwill (known as PABNEEG), a Hmong organization.
- Personal Assistance Services of Colorado (known as PASCO).
- Regis University.
- Smart Commute.
- Speaking for Ourselves.
- Westminster Community Foundation.
- Westminster Presbyterian Church.
- Westminster Public Schools.



Photo by Yangmee Lor/PABNEEG

3. Surveying overview

The first online survey was available on the project website from the end of June to the end of August. The survey was available in Spanish and English, and in August, staff added a survey in Hmong. During this time, DRCOG and Growing Home staff also provided paper surveys to people in English and Spanish on five different occasions at the Growing Home food pantry and collected survey responses from the community near 72nd Avenue on two different days. Participants at in-person focus groups also had the option to fill out a paper survey. DRCOG staff entered all paper surveys manually into the online survey. Refer to Section A for full survey data.

Survey takeaways

The survey provided several key lessons and takeaways that will influence the rest of the study, including the recommended project goals and initial service alternatives.

- Participants filled out a total of 170 surveys: 130 in English, 39 in Spanish and one in Hmong.
- Transportation access is most needed in the morning (6 to 10 a.m.) and afternoon (3 to 7 p.m.).
- Forty-seven percent of respondents said they only sometimes or never have consistent access to affordable transportation.
- The most frequently cited travel barriers were the cost of a Regional Transportation District (or RTD) pass and the cost of fuel.
- Respondents were most likely to say that unreliable transportation makes it difficult to get to health care facilities (46%), access food (44%) and commute to work (39%).

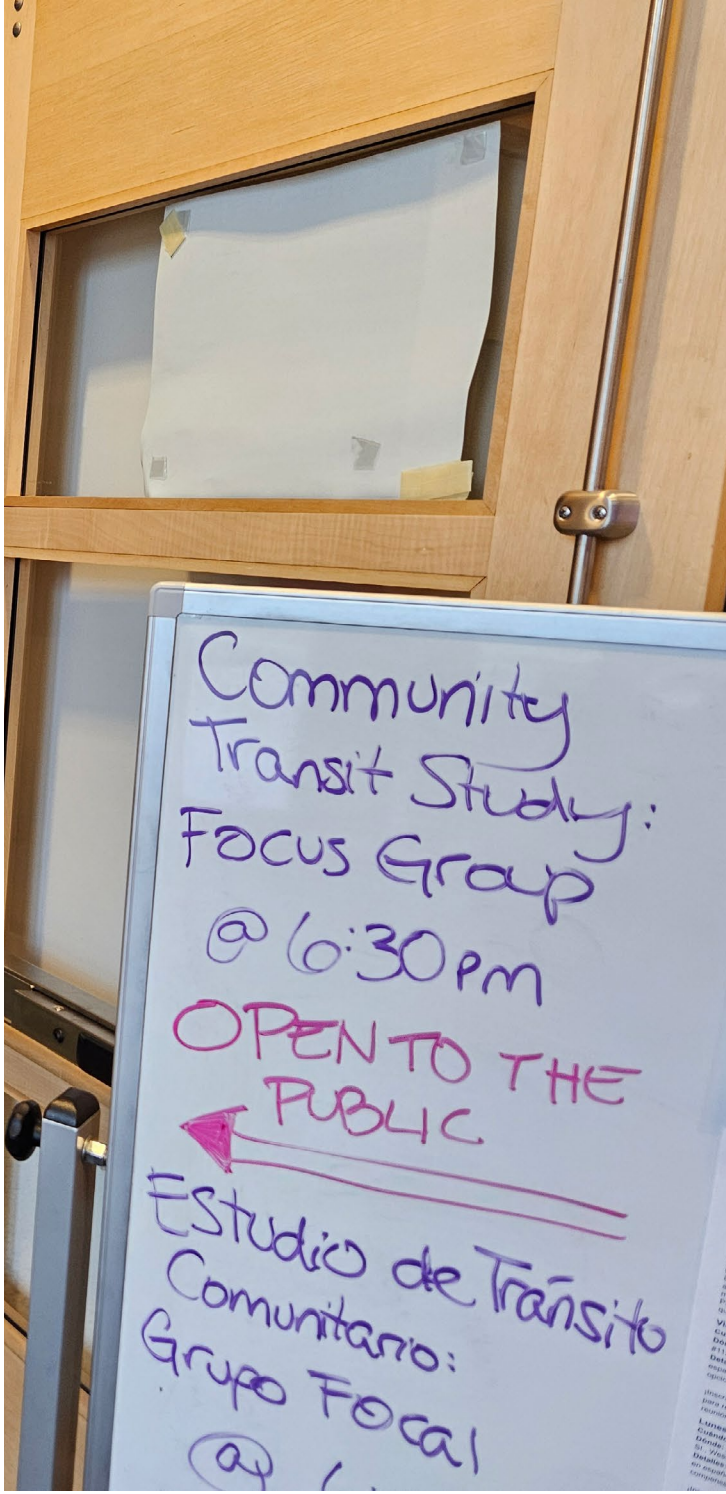


Photo by Nora Kern/DRCOG

4. Focus group overview

Between July and August, Growing Home, with the support of DRCOG, Maiker Housing Partners and PABNEEG, conducted five focus groups to gain a better understanding of the transportation challenges, needs and desires of people who live or regularly travel in the North Federal study area. The team held four focus groups in person, while a fifth was conducted virtually via Zoom.

- Friday, July 19, 11 a.m. to 12 p.m. at Growing Home (about 12 attendees).
- Monday, July 22, 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. at Irving Street Library (about 15 attendees).
- Tuesday, July 23, 3 to 4 p.m. via Zoom (fluctuated between about 67 and 103 attendees).
- Wednesday, July 24, 12 to 1 p.m. at Casa Redonda de Vigil (about 15 attendees).
- Wednesday, August 21, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. at the MAC Recreation Center (about 17 attendees).

The community engagement team elected not to use the data from the July 23 virtual focus group. The Zoom invitation appeared to have been accessed by people far beyond the geographic study area, as the attendee information showed that more than half of attendees joined from outside the United States, while another significant proportion joined from outside Colorado. Moreover, many of the responses to questions seemed to have been generated by artificial intelligence, as many attendees provided the exact same written responses in the chat, many of which were nonsensical. Therefore, the team agreed that because most of the data gathered during the virtual focus group appeared unreliable, and because it was impossible to discern which data was valid and which was not, it should not be used for any substantive purpose in this study and does not appear in this report beyond this reference.



Photo by Yangmee Lor/PABNEEG

The overwhelming consensus across all focus groups is that respondents would use a free door-to-door microtransit shuttle service if it were available.

Across all focus groups, respondents reported an array of challenges in being able to access transportation, most of which could be resolved with a microtransit service.

Older adults and people with disabilities, as well as people who cannot afford even the discounted RTD pass, explained how their current lack of access to transit has negatively impacted their ability to consistently get groceries, access health care and care for vulnerable family members. They also reported how improved access to transit could improve their quality of life.

For example, at Casa Redonda de Vigil, a public housing property for older adults and people with disabilities, although there are two bus stops in the vicinity, getting to either one requires a steep uphill walk, and focus group respondents all agreed, “Only James can get up the hill” to get to a bus. These residents, all of whom are on fixed incomes, said that in the absence of accessible transportation, they often have to pay to have their groceries delivered, a burdensome cost that sometimes forces them to choose between purchasing food and other necessities like medication or paying rent on time. Many respondents described dire economic straits that prevent them from being able to repair undrivable personal vehicles or afford an RTD pass.

People living with disabilities and illnesses voiced especially grave concerns, detailing how current transportation options simply don’t meet accessibility needs, even for those who are able to afford an RTD pass. Respondents reported issues like being unable to cross large intersections within the time allotted for the walk signal, to scale the steps to get up into buses, to walk the distances to bus stops or to stand for long periods on crowded buses or at stops without benches. Others reported being unable to stay in the heat or sun for extended periods, which makes them unable to walk to the bus stop or wait for the bus in certain weather conditions, especially because there are so few

shelters at stops in the area. Others said they cannot walk through the snow to get to bus stops.

People with autoimmune disorders reported falling ill from being in close quarters with large crowds on busy buses. Respondents with Medicaid or Medicare reported that the twice-monthly Access-A-Ride passes covered under those health plans don't come close to meeting the frequency needed. Some at the July focus groups reported that they'd already used all the passes they had available for the calendar year, with nearly another half of the year left and no way to get around.

Respondents also expressed many safety fears and concerns about riding on RTD buses and trains. A breakout group of eight high school and college students all roundly agreed that they fear for their safety on public transit. Young women described being catcalled and feeling "creeped out" when riding the bus or train. When asked whether they would anticipate the same concerns on a microtransit shuttle, they said no, in part because there are fewer people in a small shuttle and because the riders are likely to be neighbors, many of whom they already know.

Importantly, virtually all these challenges could be resolved with door-to-door service in a small, wheelchair-accessible shuttle. Older adults and people with disabilities especially stressed the importance of door-to-door service. People who reported having certain illnesses or anxiety disorders also stressed the importance of having early morning, evening and weekend hours to accommodate their need to go to places like supermarkets when there are smaller crowds, as well as to address the lack of RTD bus service in the area past 6 p.m. Respondents had several recommendations on features that would increase ridership, as well as ways to maximize the shuttle's accessibility for people with mobility challenges and other disabilities or illnesses.

For more information, especially on origins, desired destinations and recommended accessibility features, refer to Section B: Focus group analysis.

Section A: Phase 1 survey report

Respondent characteristics

Qualified respondents

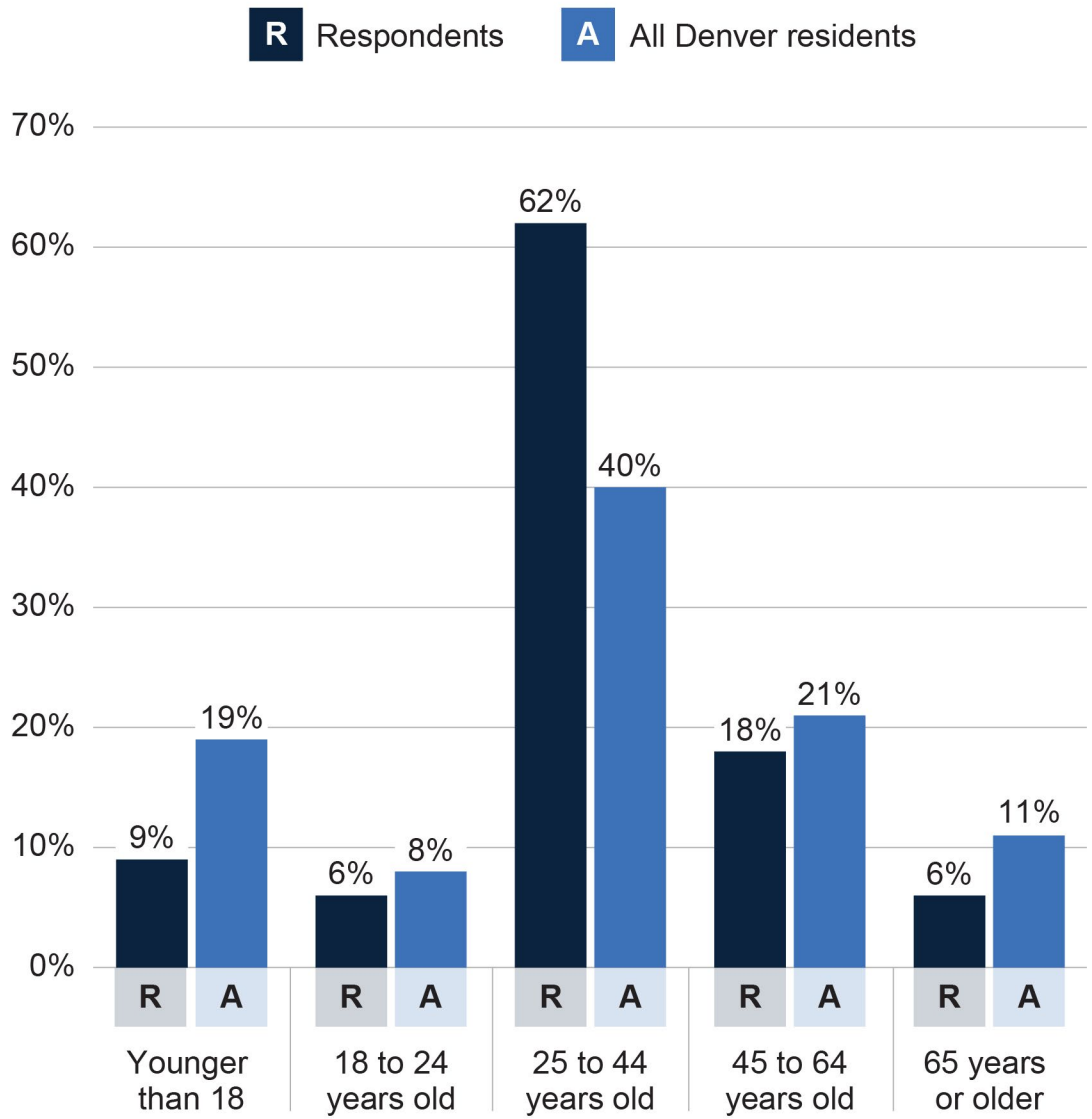
Out of the 170 total respondents, 158 said they lived within the study area and were used in this analysis. Half of the respondents reside in two ZIP codes:

- 80221: 30%
- 80030: 20%

Table 1: Respondents living or traveling within the study area

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	158	92.9%
No	3	1.8%
Don’t know	9	5.3%
Total	**170**	**100.0%**

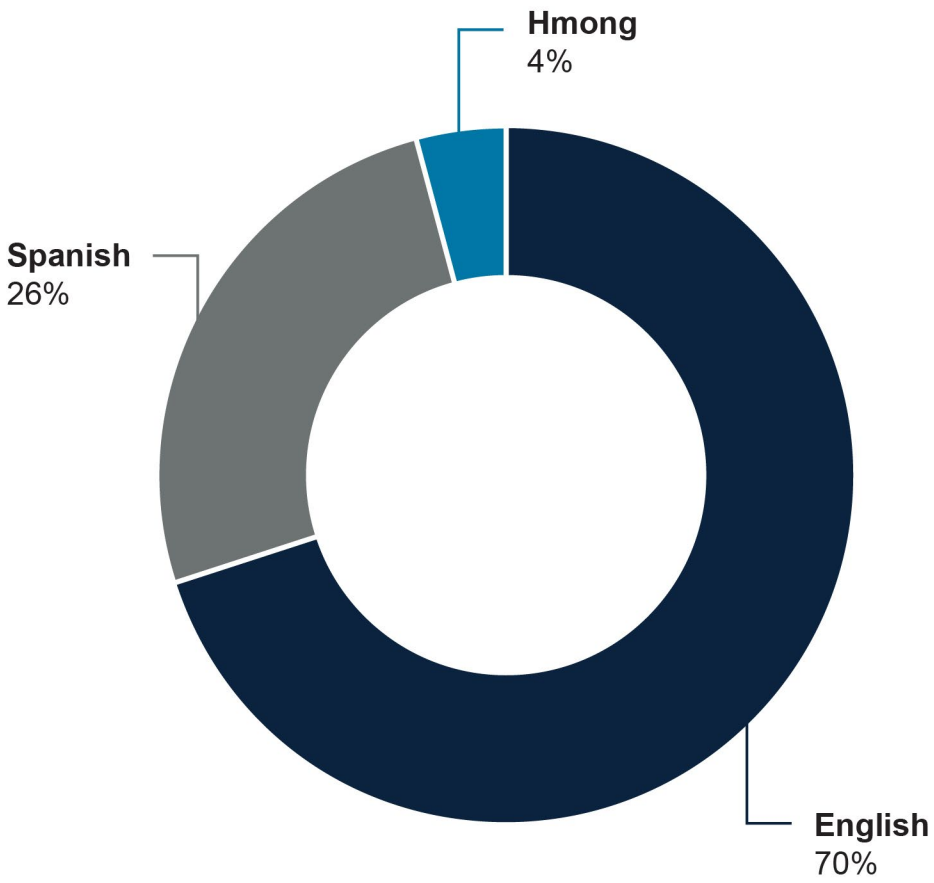
Chart 1: Age



Age of respondents

Most respondents were between the ages of 25 and 44, a much higher proportion than in the Denver population. Both younger and older members of the population were somewhat underrepresented in the survey sample. Nevertheless, the sample is fairly representative of the 18-and-older adult population in Denver.

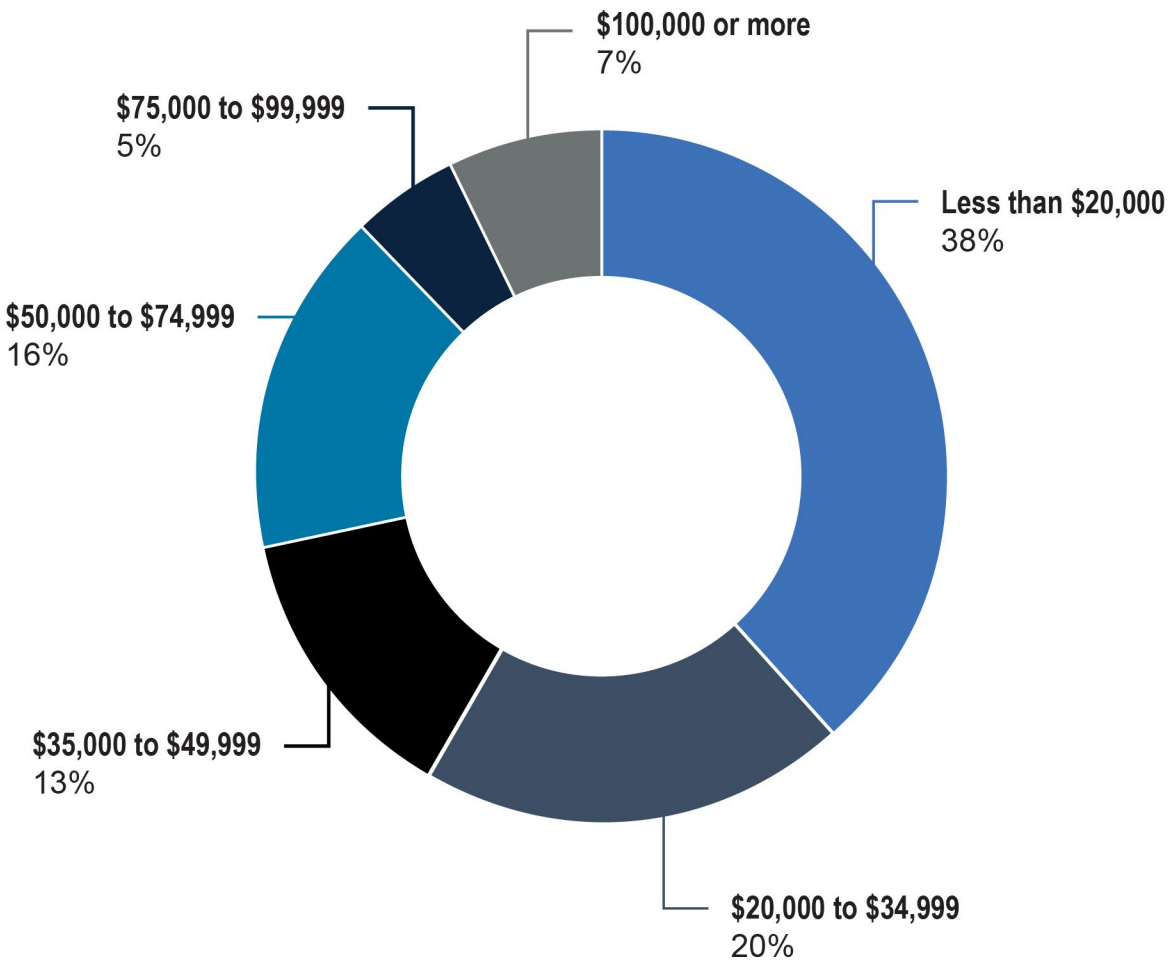
Chart 2: Language spoken at home



Languages spoken

English and Spanish were the two languages most frequently spoken at home.

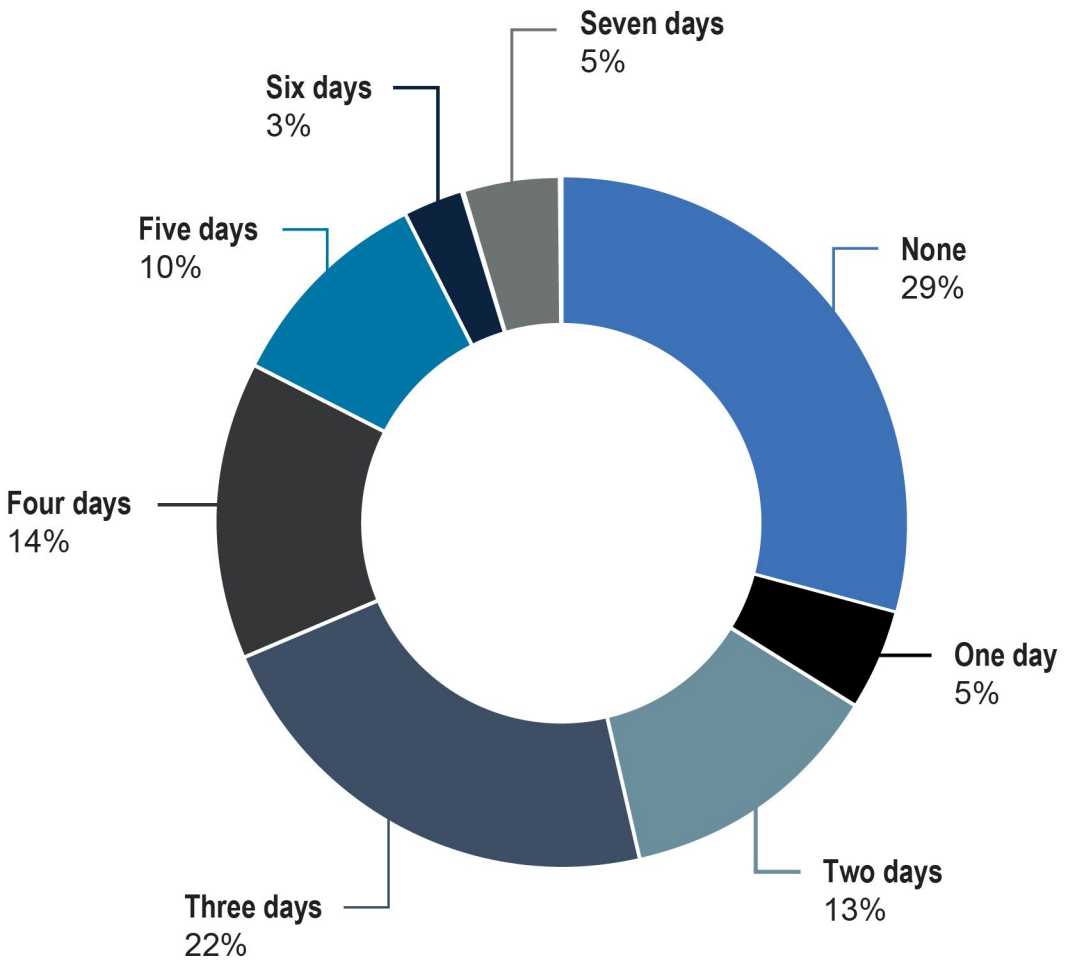
Chart 3: Annual household income



Annual income

A large percentage (38%) of the households surveyed reported annual household incomes under $20,000. In comparison, only 5% of Denver households have annual incomes under $20,000.

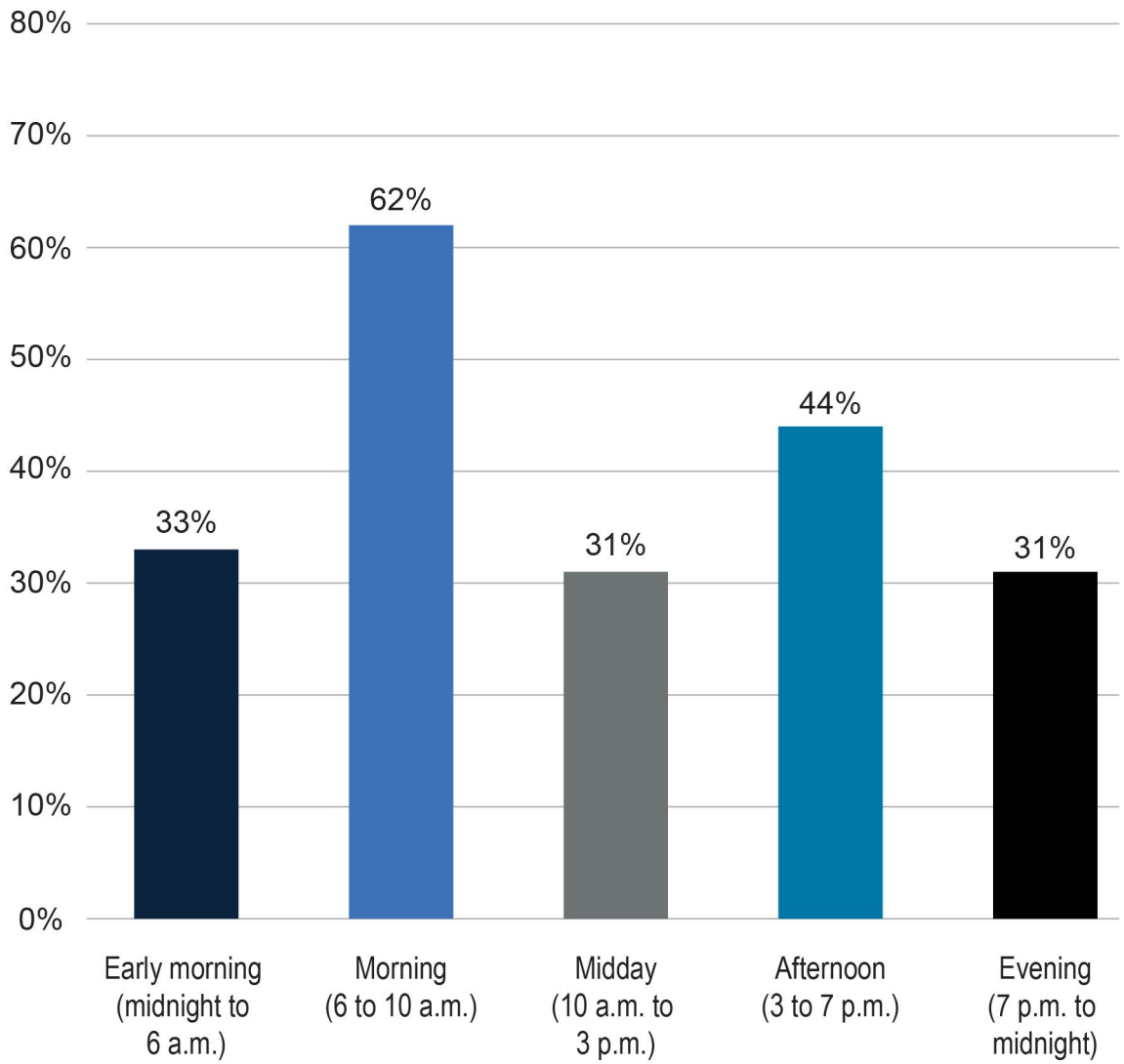
Chart 4: RTD bus or train days last week



RTD travel days in the last week

The survey respondents appear to be heavy public transit users: 71% said they used an RTD bus or train for transportation during the week preceding the survey. Among all respondents, including respondents who did not use public transportation at all, mean usage was 2.51 days for the week.

Chart 5: When transportation is needed



Times of the day when transportation is most needed

Respondents were most likely to say they need transportation access in the morning (62%) and afternoon (44%).

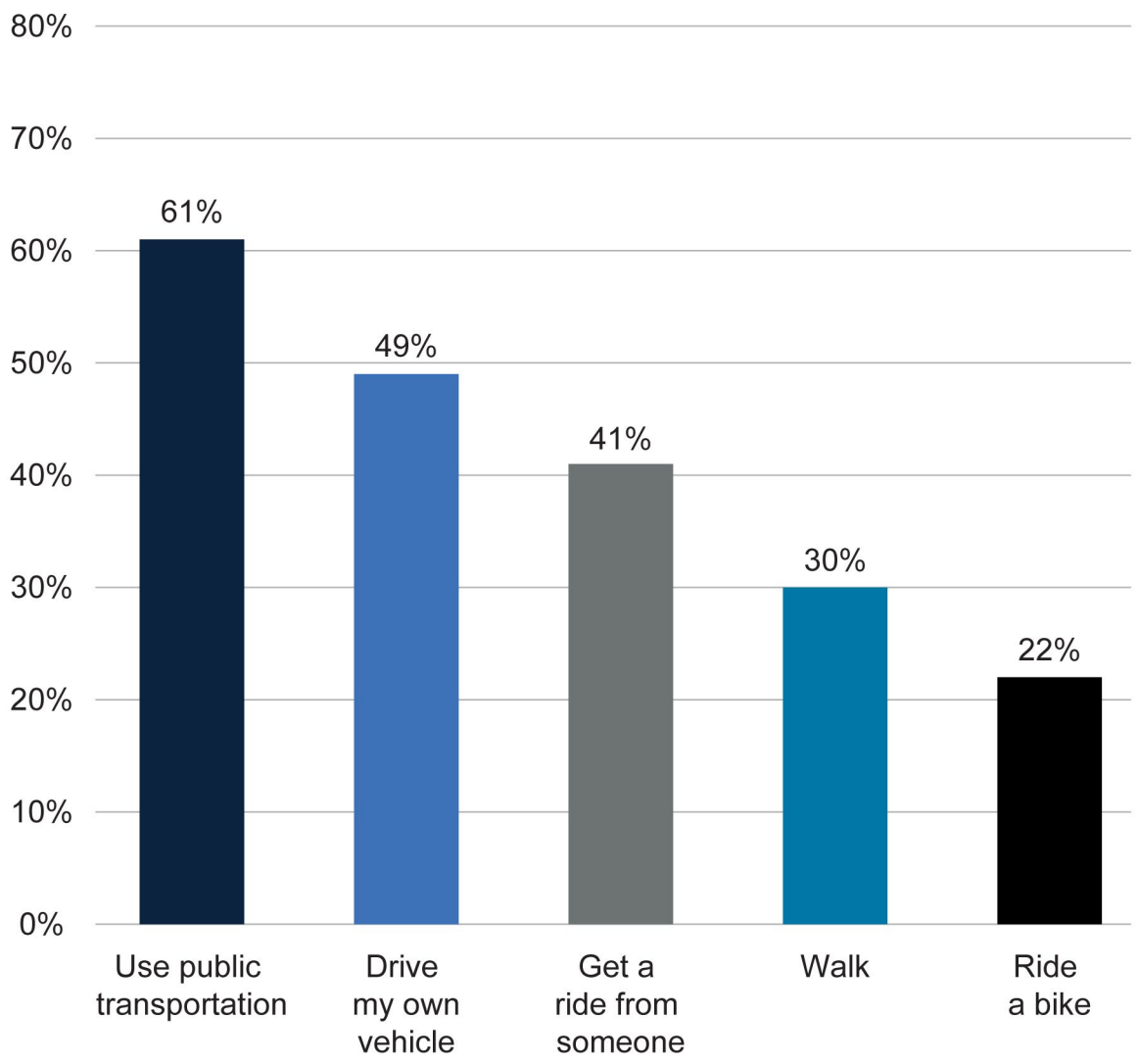
Chart 6: Transportation needed more certain times of the year



Times of the year when transportation is most needed

More than two out of five (43%) respondents said there are certain times of the year when transportation is needed more than others. Frequently mentioned seasons were during the school year, around the holidays (Thanksgiving to Christmas) and during the winter.

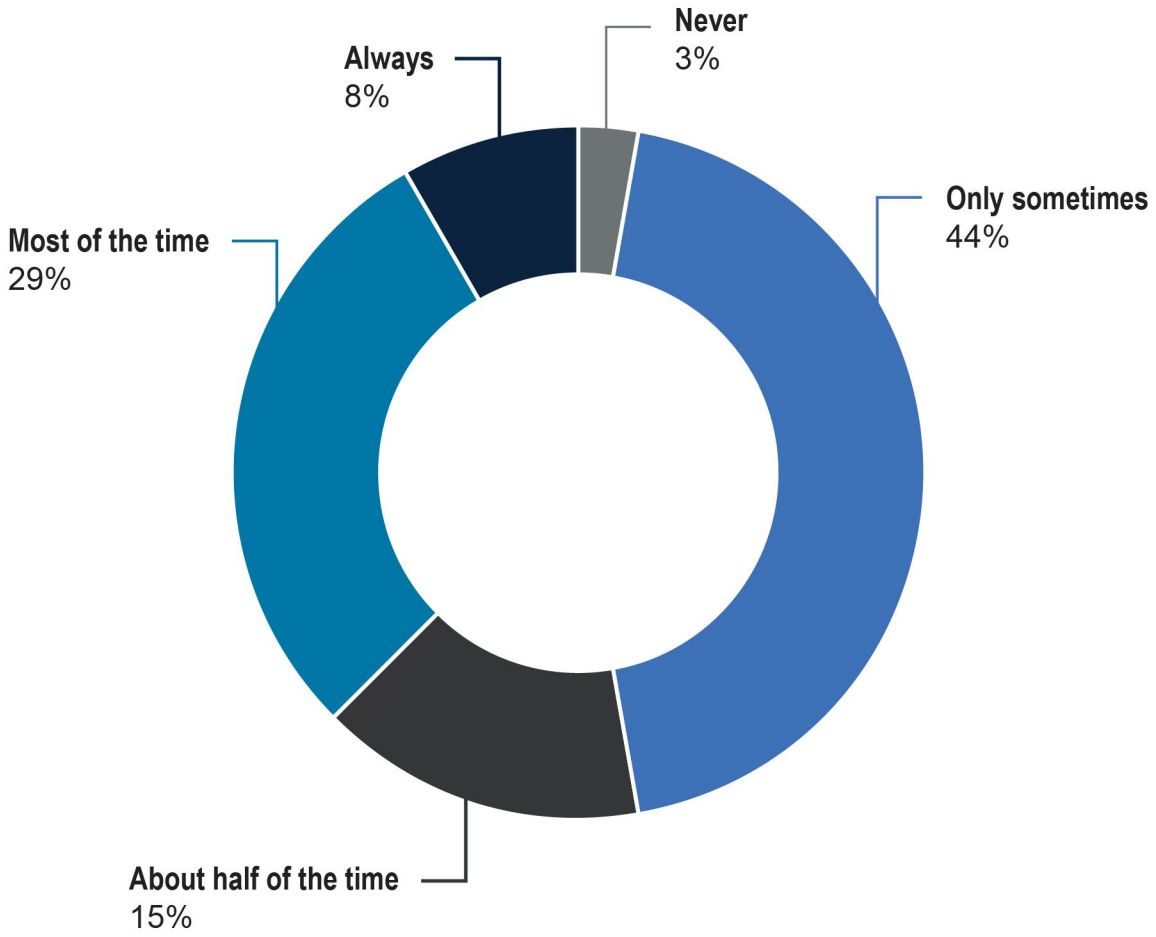
Chart 7: Transportation used



Forms of transportation used

Further supporting the conclusion that survey respondents are heavy public transit users, public transportation was the most frequently selected form of transportation for a variety of activities, including work commuting.

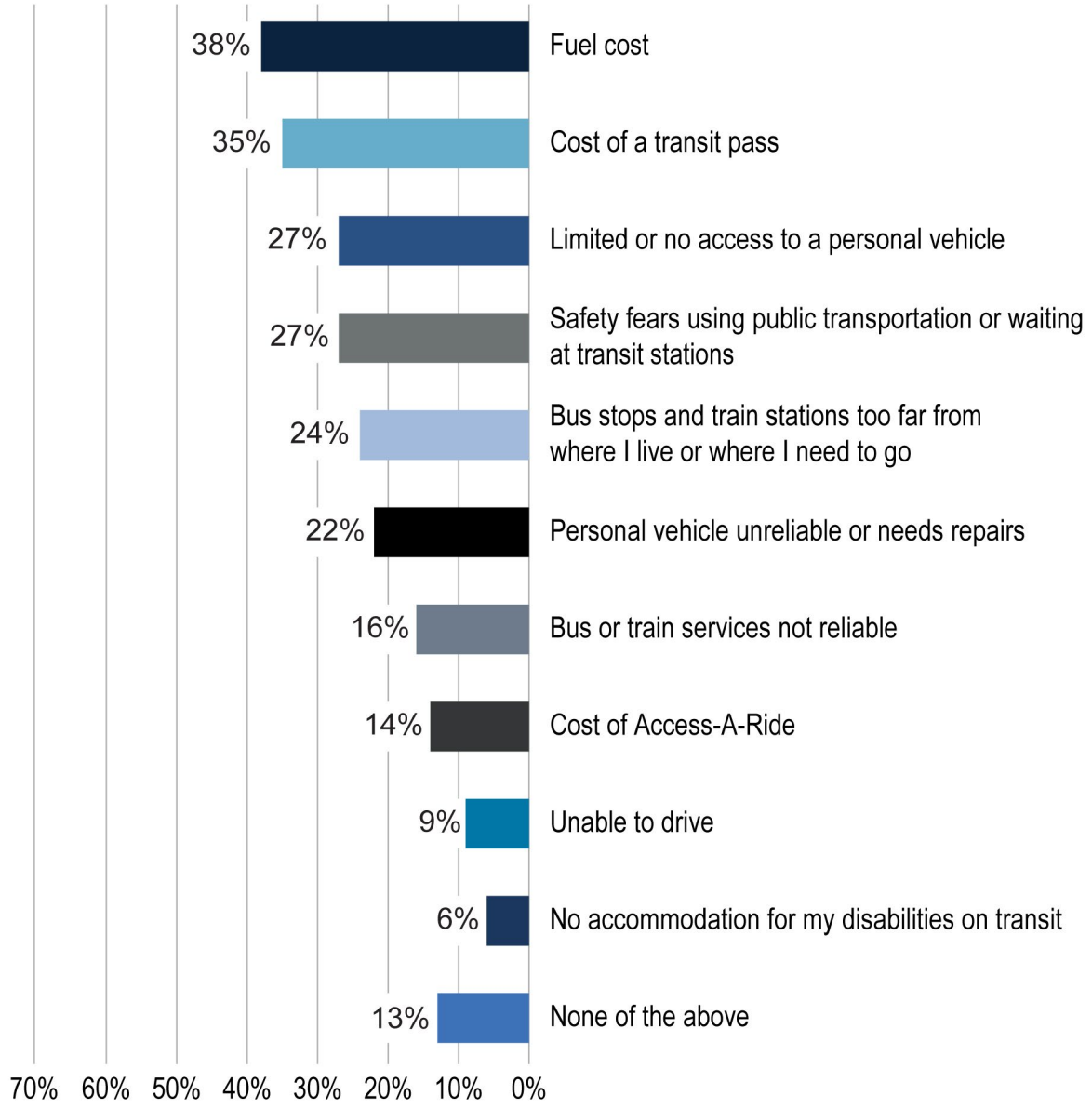
Chart 8: Consistent access to affordable transportation



Access to affordable transportation

Accessing affordable transportation appears to be a challenge for a large proportion of respondents: 47% said they “only sometimes” or “never” have consistent access to affordable transportation.

Chart 9: Issues restricting ability to travel



Travel barriers

The cost of fuel and the cost of an RTD pass were the most frequently cited issues restricting respondents' ability to travel, probably because respondents' top two forms of transportation were public transportation and driving their own vehicle.

More than a quarter (27%) of respondents named "safety fears using public transportation" as an issue restricting their ability to travel.

Reasons behind travel concerns

- “There are almost always suspicious and the stops are alone. Yes, there are many [stops] that are far away, they go by every hour and I arrive late.”
- “72nd bus is delayed [one hour].”
- “A lot of homeless people ask you for money or cigarette or lighter.”
- “Being approached by homeless people. Bus stop distance is too far from where I live, and climbing the hill is hard.”
- “Bus and train stops are far from my house. Hardly every stop [illegible].”
- “Bus stops near my residence are unsheltered and extremely uncomfortable to wait at. Nonreliable service creates more waiting time at these stops. A negative feedback loop creating a pretty frustrating experience.”
- “Fear of getting sick, autoimmune disorder. Walking is hard with breathing difficulties.”
- “Fear of personal safety when traveling alone.”
- “Fear of safety.”
- “Fear of what could happen, kidnapping, staring.”
- “Fear of womanizing.”
- “Federal is not safe to walk down; the sidewalks are way too narrow. I also cannot ride my bike. The stretch between 64th and Clear Creek Station is awful.”
- “Having to wait at the bus station for hours waiting for bus.”

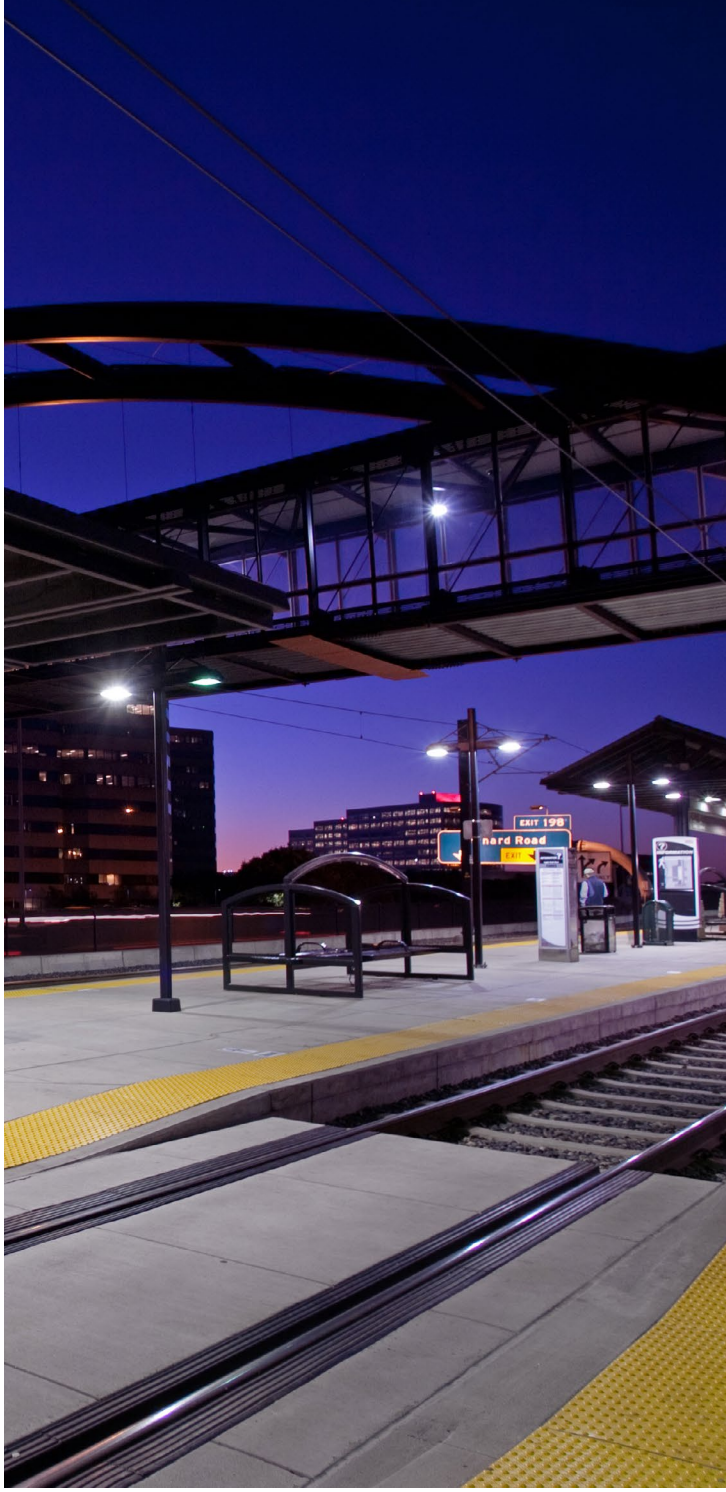


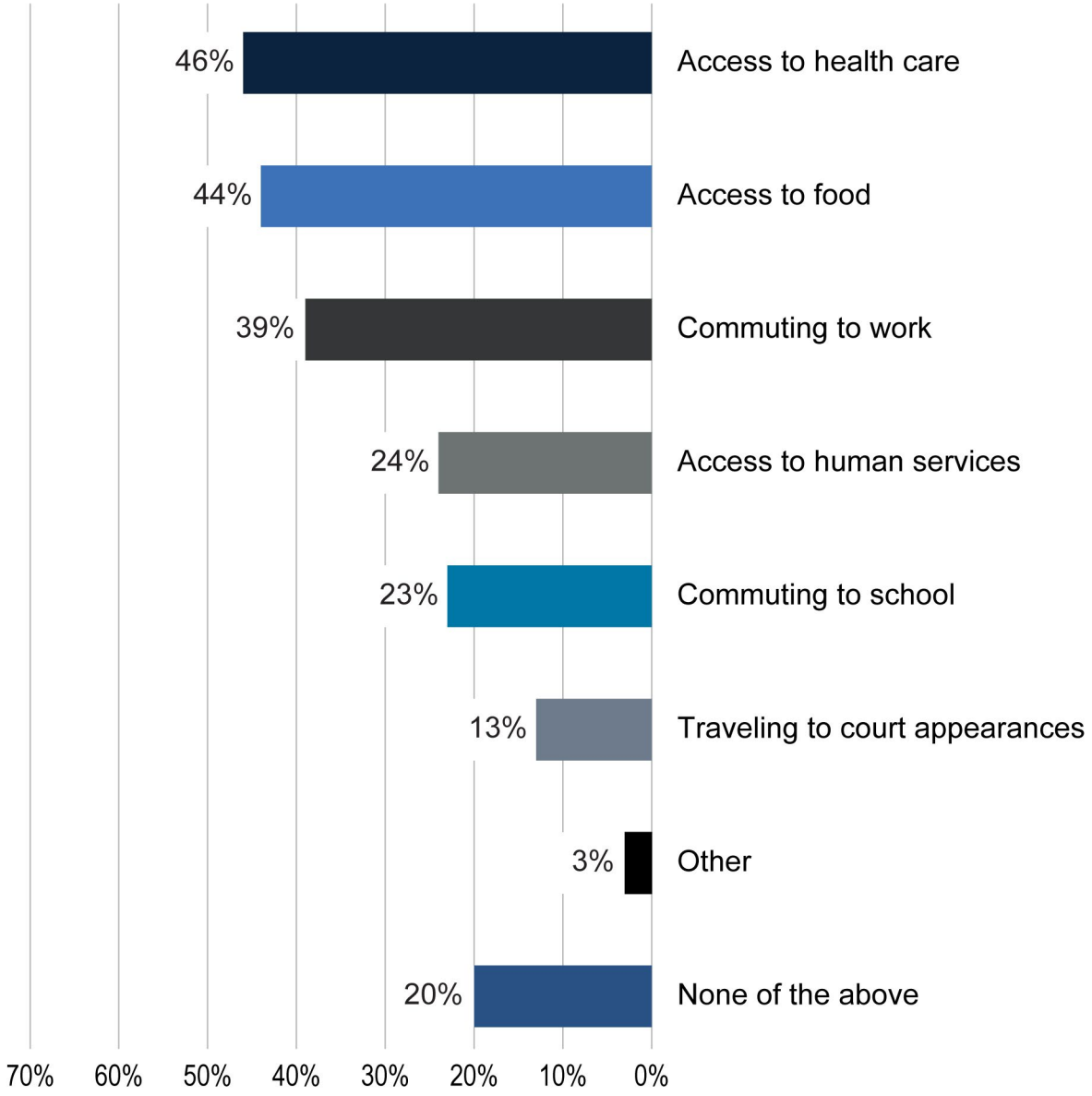
Photo courtesy of RTD

- “I have to travel before time just to make use of the buses or train because the station is far from where I live.”
- “I have to walk 20 minutes.”
- “I haven’t used it; my son takes me places.”
- “I walk some 15 to 20 minutes to bus stop or train station. This has affected my use for this means of transportation.”
- “I’m not used to the environment, so I’m not sure if it’s safe yet.”
- “I’ve been told there is a route on 68th, but I haven’t seen a bus there.”
- “In the past, could not rely on RTD. I do not feel safe while waiting for a bus that doesn’t come. I would need to drive to an area with a bus stop but cannot park car while using RTD because it may be vandalized, stolen or broken into.”
- “It takes a long time when you have to change buses.”
- “Lowell to Sheridan.”
- “Many people, long trips.”
- “Most times I don’t find it safe to use public transportation, and it’s always stressing me out.”
- “Much of the time I’m riding at night, and the bus is really delayed and it makes me scared.”
- “Not clean on train and strange people.”
- “Not convenient, and I’ve heard stories about sketchiness on buses.”
- “Not enough drivers.”

- “People just bringing lots of people, feeling claustrophobic and anxiety.”
- “RTD bus does not run frequently enough or operate when I need to travel.”
- “RTD service along Federal (31 bus) is often delayed because of traffic and other service issues. It makes it hard to get where I need to go on time.”
- “Safety fears using public transportation.”
- “Safety fears using public transportation or waiting at bus stop or train station gives me concern, and the bus stop is far away from my house.”
- “Some [time] is difficult to get a cheap transport.”
- “Someone was stabbed to death on the bus I use. I think about that when choosing to ride. There is no bus that goes down Lowell.”
- “Sometimes they come late.”
- “The bus stop is really far from where I live, so it’s uncomfortable.”
- “The buses aren’t close to where I live.”
- “The distance from my residence to the station is far.”
- “The fuel cost is too much.”
- “The homeless and drug addicts are the biggest concern.”
- “The lack of benches to wait for the cars and shelters to block the sun, the rain and cold. Also the uncertainty of traveling with people who are intoxicated or drugged.”
- “There are some creeps.”
- “Dangerous in the snow/car doesn’t work well in the snow.”
- “To Growing Home from the stop is far. Sometimes the bus doesn’t arrive.”

- “Unsure where bus stops are, no sidewalks.”
- “Unwelcoming bus stops. Train stops in the area are good.”
- “Very far from my place.”
- “Waiting too long at bus stop or train station as they mostly don’t arrive on time.”
- “We need better micromobility to get to transit easier and quicker.”
- “When I go to appointments like at the embassy I have to take three transfers.”
- “When it’s dark and late because I am female. Son is located in Parker/Castle Rock out of the bus stations. On 120th where my daughter goes to school, only hourly, we can walk to where we need to go before another bus comes.”
- “Worried about traveling alone to downtown Denver for school.”
- “Yes, they are a decent distance away.”
- “Cannot walk to and from stop due to safety concerns and unreliability of public transportation. Safety concerns include difficulty crossing major intersections, as well as weather conditions and nowhere to park car safely.”

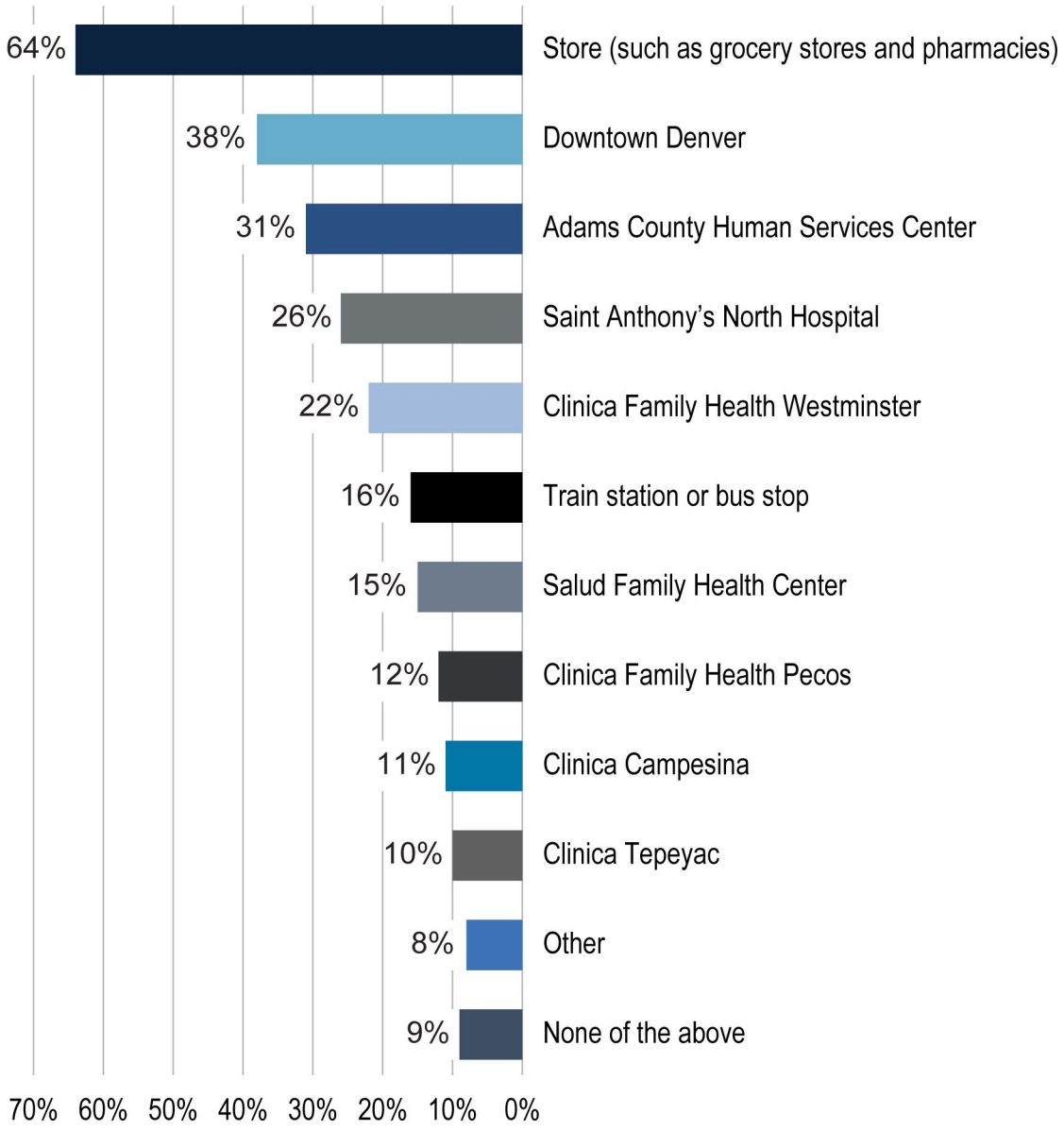
Chart 10: Difficult activities due to unreliable transportation



Lack of reliable transportation

Respondents were most likely to say that unreliable transportation makes it difficult to access health care (46%) and food (44%) or commute to work (39%).

Chart 11: Locations where transportation assistance would be helpful

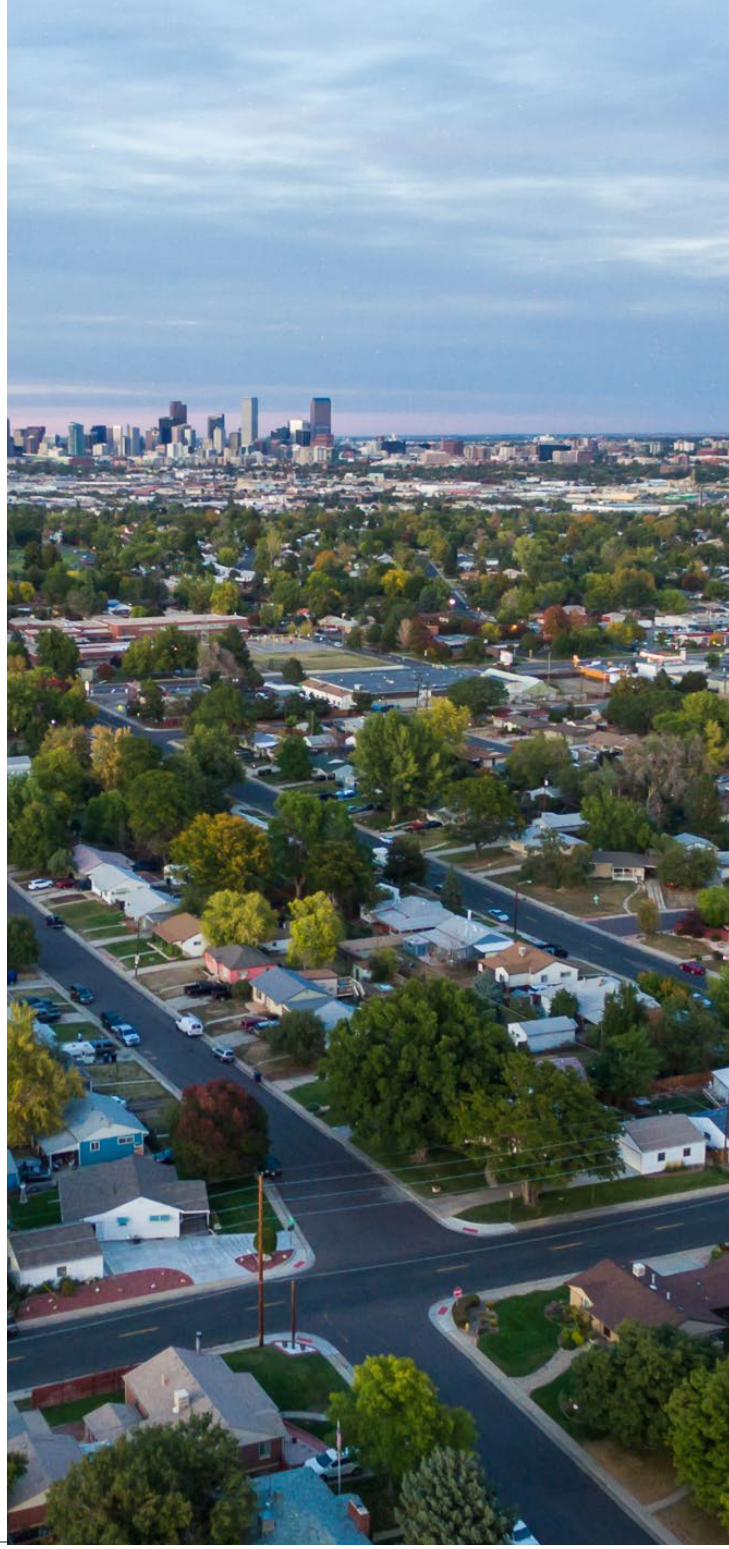


Transportation assistance

When asked about transportation assistance to specific destinations, most respondents (64%) said they would find transportation assistance to the grocery store or pharmacy helpful.

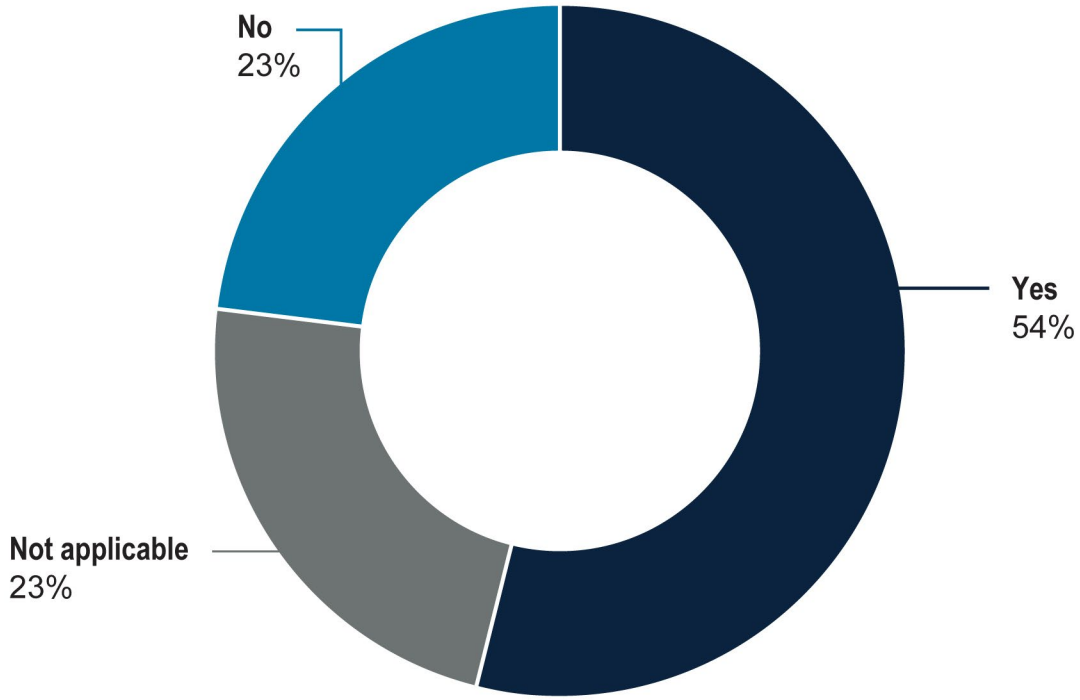
Other locations where transportation assistance would be helpful

- “72nd and Federal.”
- “A shuttle from light rail to Regis University would be sooo helpful to people traveling the I-70 corridor!”
- “Adams County courthouse.”
- “Bus stop.”
- “Community health network.”
- “Denver Health.”
- “Doctor’s appointments.”
- “Emergencies — not to a place in particular.”
- “Gold Strike or Sheridan/Boulder Turnpike.”
- “I can’t go anywhere alone, my son takes me, I always need someone with me.”
- “I would just like the bus to have its own lane along the entire Federal Boulevard corridor. I hear CDOT is working on a BRT project that would do just that.”
- “Make it easier to bike.”
- “More microtransit would be great to get to and from the train stops.”
- “One that goes to Aurora where I work.”
- “Pecos and 70.”
- “School.”
- “Si mesirbe mucho gracias [illegible].”



- “Son’s day care in Parker. Daughter’s school off of 120th and Huron.”
- “Southwest Adams.”
- “To Aurora, immigration appointments, rec center.”
- “All of them.”
- “Work in future.”

Chart 12: Assistance with transportation to work helpful



Assistance with transportation to work

When asked specifically about transportation to work and school, more than half of respondents (54%) said transportation assistance to work would be helpful. Respondents already use public transportation frequently, but assistance with setting up carpools and vanpools might also be beneficial.

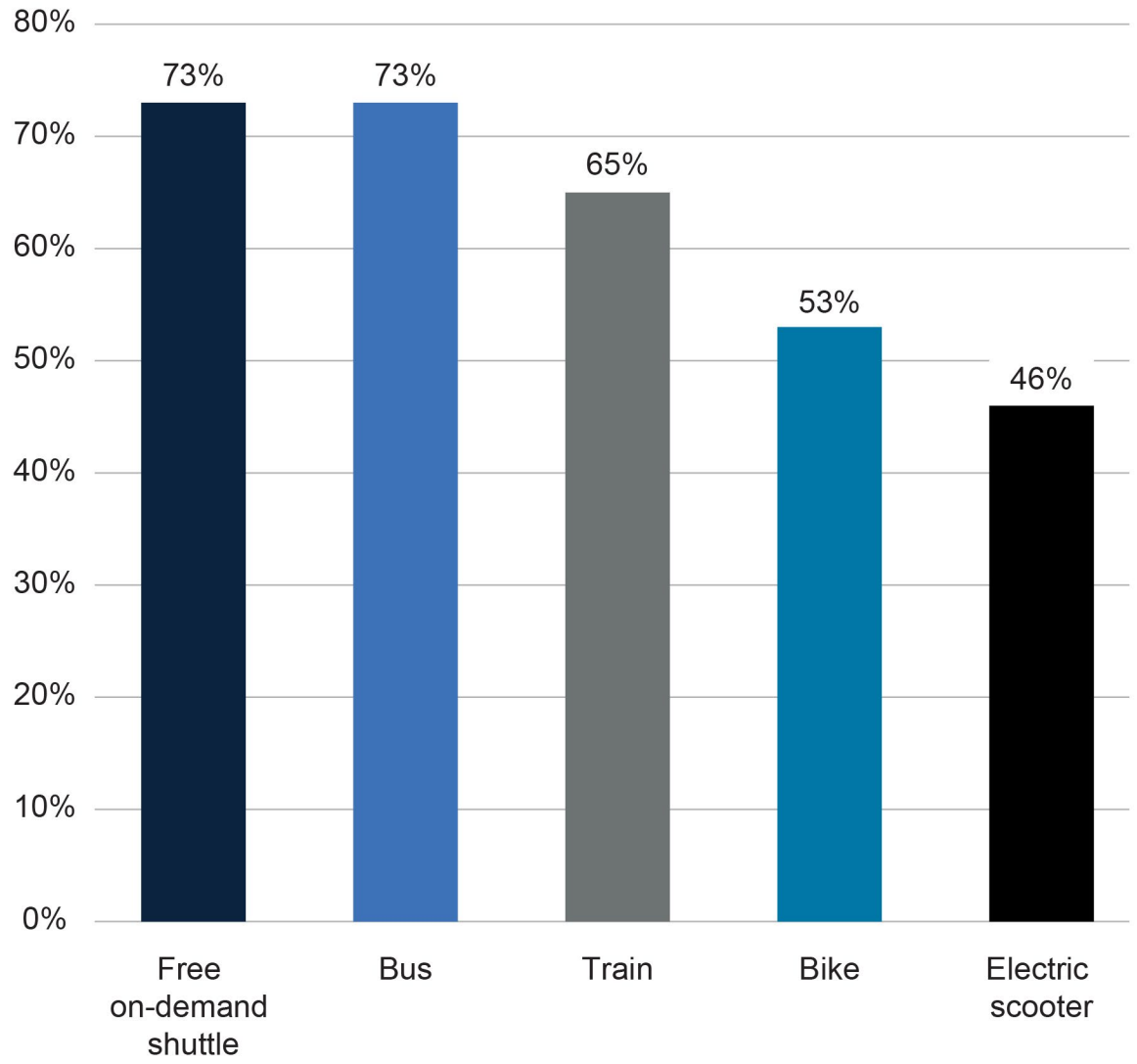
Chart 13: Assistance with transportation to school helpful



Assistance with transportation to school

Slightly less than half (44%) of respondents said they would find transportation assistance to school helpful. DRCOG's Schoolpool program may be able to provide support.

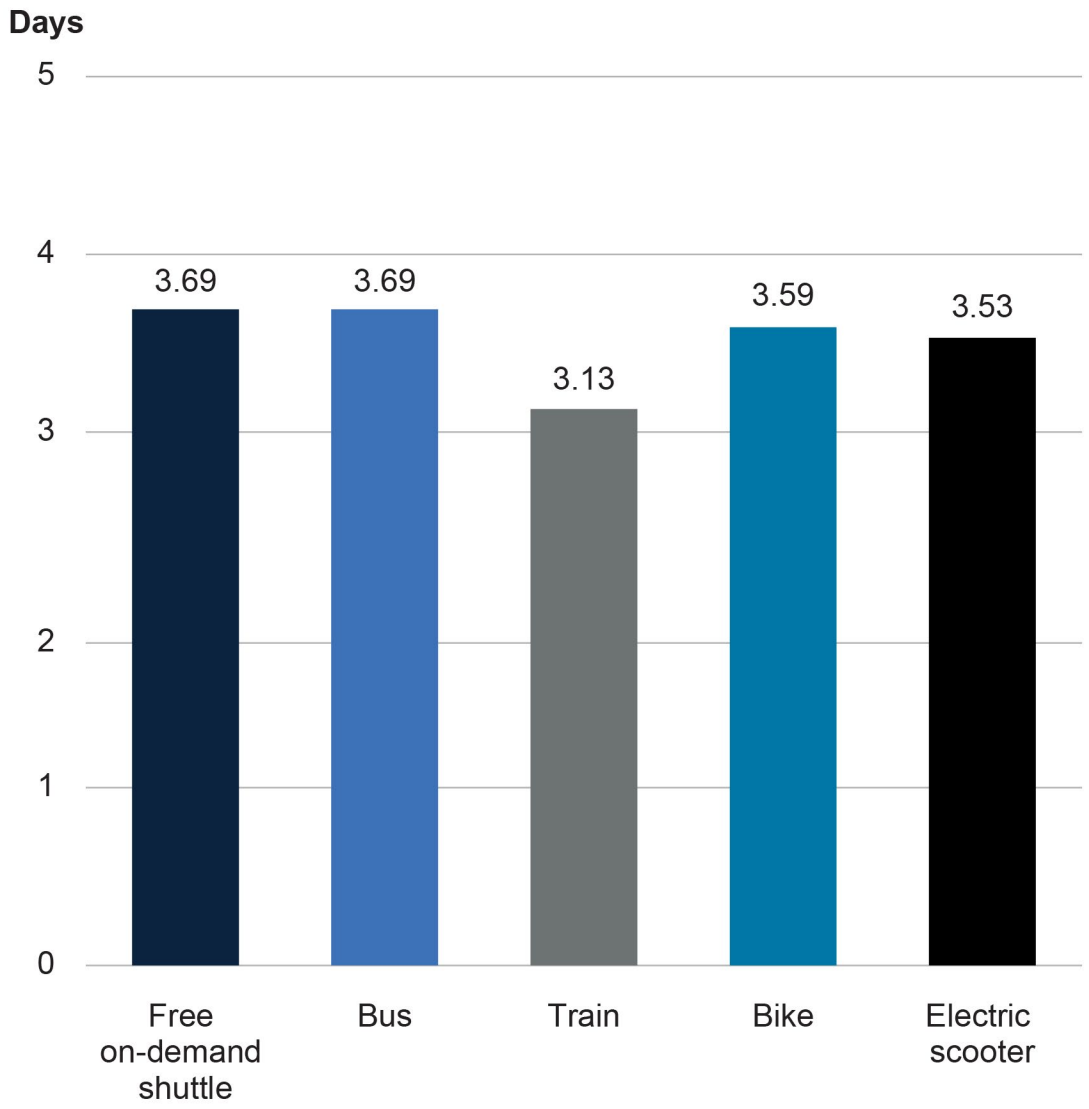
Chart 14: Transportation options respondents would use at least one day per week



Projected use of no-cost transportation services

Among the potential no-cost service options presented, a free on-demand shuttle, RTD bus and RTD rail had the greatest appeal to respondents. Well over half said they would use each option at least one day per week. Substantial percentages would also use a free bike or electric scooter.

Chart 15: Average number of days per week respondents would use each transportation option



Projected frequency of use

Among those who said they would use each option at least one day per week, the average projected usage was at least three days per week for all options.

Reasons for using a free shuttle

- “Why use a free on-demand shuttle service: 1. Convenience: No need to worry about parking, traffic or fuel costs. 2. Time-saving: Shuttles often have dedicated routes, reducing travel time. 3. Environmentally friendly: Sharing a ride reduces carbon footprint. 4. Cost-effective: Free service means no extra expense. 5. Accessibility: Helps those without vehicles or with mobility issues.”
- “Because gas is very expensive, and sometimes my family isn’t available to take me to the appointments I need to go to.”
- “Because I don’t have a vehicle.”
- “Because I don’t have my own transportation.”
- “Because in my household only my husband works, and he doesn’t make much weekly.”
- “Because it is reliable.”
- “Bus doesn’t start up until 6 a.m. I start work at 6 a.m.”
- “Car repair is expensive. Can’t afford plates and insurance.”
- “Convenience and cost-effective.”
- “Depending on the area it served, that would be amazing. I appreciate not having to drive.”
- “Because it’s convenient/free.”
- “Free on-demand shuttle service will ease my transportation burdens.”
- “Free on-demand shuttle will help make my transportation easier, considering the fact that it’s free.”



Photo courtesy of RTD

- “Free!”
- “Gas cost, not being able to always get a ride.”
- “I could go out to eat without needing to know how much I have to pay for the bus and to be limited in my weekly expenses.”
- “I don’t have a car, so it would help me get to the grocery store, work.”
- “I feel it would be safer and definitely less expensive.
- “I think a lot of people love what’s free. I love it because it is free.”
- “I will use the free on-demand shuttle service because it allows me to save money on transportation cost and a make it is faster and most times reliable.”
- “I have no reason not to use a free on-demand shuttle service.”
- “I would absolutely use a free on-demand shuttle service! As someone who values convenience and hates dealing with parking hassles, the idea of having a reliable and free shuttle service at my beck and call is incredibly appealing. First and foremost, it would save me money on fuel and parking costs. Plus, I wouldn’t have to worry about finding a parking spot or dealing with traffic congestion. The shuttle service would also reduce my carbon footprint, which is a bonus. Additionally, I think it would be a huge time-saver. I could use the time I’d normally spend driving to catch up on work, read a book or simply relax. And, with the ability to request a shuttle on-demand, I wouldn’t have to worry about adhering to a fixed schedule. Overall, the combination of convenience, cost savings and reduced stress would make me a frequent user of a free on-demand shuttle service!”
- “It would be convenient to get around without using gas, but also it will help me to have a reliable way to get around.”
- “I would because it is free.”

- “I would because it would be convenient to get me to the light rail faster.”
- “I would definitely use the free service.”
- “I would like a free on-demand shuttle because it allows bookings at every time of the day.”
- “I would love to not depend on a friend to do what I need to do and not go without either, food banks and other resources.”
- “I would [use] this service since it is more reliable as compared to other public means such as trams.”
- “I would use a free on-demand shuttle service because it offers convenient and cost-effective transportation. It reduces the need for personal vehicle use, which can save money on fuel, parking and maintenance.”
- “I would use it.”
- “I would use it a lot right now. I don’t have a vehicle or a job, and many times I can’t afford the cost of a bus pass.”
- “I would use it because I’m a person who is low on resources.”
- “I would use it because if I had to help my grandparents I could do it in the same day and not later that week.”
- “I would use it because it makes it easier to get more groceries at Walmart.”
- “I would use it because it’s free and the safety risk is minimal.”
- “I would use it because it’s reliable.”
- “I would use it just in case anything comes up that I wasn’t expecting like car broke down or school bus running late.”

- “I would use this because it’s less expensive and helps families in need.”
- “I wouldn’t have to pay for it, and it seems it would be easily accessible.”
- “I wouldn’t mind if they picked me up/not worried about stigma.”
- “I’ll use it because it’ll help me save time, reduce cost, and most importantly I’ll feel more safe using it and not have to worry about my disability.”
- “In case of an emergency, someone who needs to leave the hospital and doesn’t have someone to take them or goes late to work.”
- “It would be accessible to my grandparents, and I would not have struggles with transportation.”
- “It would be very easy, save time to move us.”
- “It would help get from the bus to my destination. It would help me get to the grocery store.”
- “It would help in taking my kids to clinics.”
- “It would [be] nice to assist me in my movement easily.”
- “It’s free and would be more convenient.”
- “It’s more flexible; it’s there when you need it.”
- “It’s safe and reliable; it’s always available anytime you need it.”
- “Many commuter students and employees of Regis travel the I-70 corridor from Green Valley Ranch. If it were possible to have a shuttle circuit that linked the Clear Creek and Federal station (and the 6th Avenue and Sheridan station for those from the downtown) to Regis, I think that would be very helpful!”
- “Because I need it.”

- “Most times I might not be financially stable.”
- “Because it’s necessary now that I don’t have a way to get around and I have two small daughters.”
- “Because I have few resources.”
- “Save me money on gas.”
- “Saves cost.”
- “It would be favorable. It would help me economically and time to arrive.”
- “Son needs to visit girlfriend.”
- “The only reason I could think of is — well, none actually. Especially if it was free. Finance is my barrier with most transportation.”
- “The shuttle service would be beneficial for medical appointments, human service appointments, grocery shopping, laundry, etc.”
- “To ease my commute.”
- “To get my satisfaction.”
- “To go to a new city, lack of employment.”
- “To have my own vehicle.”
- “To make transportation easier for me to access the necessary needs for myself and my family.”
- “When age requires me to stop driving, it will become critical for me.”
- “When there is snow.”
- “Would be able to schedule appointments, grocery more easily.”

- “Would use. It would give me the ability to schedule my day without being on a time schedule.”
- “Yes.”
- “Doctor’s appointment, grocery store.”
- “Easy, reliable.”
- “For school for my child.”
- “I do use but not always.”
- “It would help family and anyone else to use little money if none to get a ride to wherever needed. I might not use it if it’s not safe, but it sounds OK.”
- “I have two kids and I don’t know how to drive, and getting around is difficult — the crowding.”
- “Why I would use free on-demand shuttle service is because it provides easy access to transportation without the need for driving or parking.”

Reasons for not using a free shuttle

- “Why not use a free on-demand shuttle service: 1. Limited routes or areas: May not cover all destinations. 2. Unpredictable schedules: Wait times or availability might be uncertain. 3. Crowding: Shuttles can be busy during peak hours. 4. Less flexibility: Fixed routes and schedules might not accommodate individual needs. 5. Personal space: Sharing a ride with strangers might be uncomfortable for some.”
- “For over expenses.”
- “Because I have a car.”
- “Because it’s time-consuming.”
- “Don’t know how.”
- “For security reasons.”
- “I would like help fixing my car [illegible].”
- “Have their own car, their own driving, commuting time is convenient and free.”
- “I always pay for any services rendered to me.”
- “I do not use services like these since I rarely find myself in need. I’m typically mobile, and if not, I plan far enough ahead to get myself to my destination in a timely manner.”
- “I don’t know.”
- “I don’t need it. Would have been great post-surgery, though.”
- “I don’t often like using it, just not in my kind.”
- “I don’t know.”



Photo courtesy of RTD

- “I had never used it.”
- “I support frequent, reliable, affordable local bus service. If we can improve current service levels and infrastructure that supports bus rapid transit, many in my community would benefit. An on-demand shuttle would only add to the other traffic on the road.”
- “I think I would, but I do not have enough information on this, nor do I know where to look. It can be a little overwhelming researching it all, so I can’t imagine what that’s like for older folks.”
- “I think it is not reliable.”
- “I will not use free on-demand because it’s not reliable.”
- “I would if I feel like and won’t if I don’t.”
- “I would like it, but I can’t travel alone; because of this I go with my son.”
- “I would prefer to have my tax dollars back than to pay for a ‘free’ shuttle.”
- “I might not use a free on-demand shuttle service if: 1. The service is unreliable or has poor reviews. 2. The shuttles are not frequently available or have long wait times. 3. The routes are limited and don’t cover my desired destinations. 4. I prefer to have control over my transportation and route. 5. I value my personal space and prefer not to share rides with strangers. Of course, these are just some potential reasons, and individual preferences may vary!”
- “I’m not sure what it is.”
- “I’m not familiar with this.”
- “It helps, but you don’t really know it.”
- “It time to arrive.”

- “It’s not accessible.”
- “Most times it delays my daily activities.”
- “It’s usually complex and demands much.”
- “It’s not convenient and takes more time than driving my own car.”
- “It’s usually uncomfortable for me.”
- “Love to take shuttles but have no phone so can’t call them if that’s needed.”
- “Maybe, because I have alternatives.”
- “Not applicable” or “None” [mentioned six times].
- •“No specific reason.”
- “Not feasible with me.”
- “Not sure I would trust its timely arrival and safety-wise too.”
- “Not trusted.”
- “Public trust.”
- “Safety measures.”
- “Shuttle is not my preferred means of transportation.”
- “The idea sounds nice, and I may use it in special circumstances. But I prefer the idea of having my access to transportation always available to me — for example, walking/rolling is virtually always available, and I’d prefer consistent and regularly scheduled public transit that could be relied upon. Drawing from my experience using ride-share apps, I do view scheduling a ride as a small barrier to my transportation access.”

- “The waiting times wouldn’t be consistent.”
- “They delay.”
- “We just don’t need it. Would have been nice after a surgery, though.”
- “Why I wouldn’t use is because less control over travel times compared to using a personal vehicle.”
- “Would depend on hours, where it goes, etc.”
- “Would only use it if absolutely necessary. Can drive but prefer to use reliable, safe public transportation to alleviate additional cost to my community.”
- “Wouldn’t need it. I prefer bike.”
- “If it was reliable and safe.”
- “Have to carry things.”



Phase 1 engagement report methodology

DRCOG and Growing Home held four focus groups in July and August 2024. Staff reached out to fellow community-based organizations and neighborhood associations, as well as governmental and quasi-governmental entities, to get in touch with potential attendees. Invitations were made via phone, text, social media and personal outreach.

Target populations included the general public residing within the study geography; however, most focus group participation drew on specific populations:

- Respondents at the Growing Home focus group were primarily Spanish speakers and participants in Growing Home's food pantry program.
- Respondents at the Irving Street Library focus group were predominantly English-speaking and unhoused.
- Respondents at Casa Redonda de Vigil, a public housing property catering to older adults and to people with disabilities on fixed incomes, were all residents of the property.
- The MAC Center focus group targeted members of the local Hmong community, and outreach was conducted by PABNEEG, a local Hmong community association.

To incentivize participation, ensure language accessibility and offset the costs of attendance, DRCOG and Growing Home staff provided free child care, food and interpretation services during the focus groups. At the first three focus groups, attendees had the option to receive a gift card upon completion.

Staff asked focus group participants the following questions, with some additional questions posed where further explanation was needed:

1. Introductions: (a) What's your name? (b) What neighborhood do you live in?
2. What modes of transportation do you currently use when you need to leave the house? (Examples: drive my own vehicle, get a ride from someone, use public transportation like bus or train, walk, ride a bike, Lyft/Uber, other.)
3. What transportation issues limit your ability to travel or commute as much as you would like or need to? (Examples: unreliable vehicle, fuel cost, limited or no access to personal vehicle, unable to drive, cost of bus and rail pass, cost of Access-a-Ride, RTD doesn't accommodate my disabilities, bus and rail not reliable, safety fears when waiting for or using public transportation, bus and rail stations or stops too far away from where I need to go.)
4. Where would you like or need to travel to that you can't get to currently? (Examples: grocery store, health care, human services, work, school, court appearances, pharmacy.)
5. If there were a free on-demand shuttle service, tell us why you would or would not use it.
6. Is there anything else we should know about transportation needs in the neighborhood?

Section B: Focus group analysis

This analysis is organized by each question posed to respondents at the four focus groups. Refer to Section C: Quotes from focus groups for illustrative quotes that are mentioned in conjunction with specific responses.

Trip origins (responses to Question 1(b), What neighborhood do you live in?)

Within the study area:

- 69th and Pecos (Casa Redonda de Vigil, 15 respondents).
- West 72nd Avenue and Federal Boulevard (4 respondents).
- West 72nd Avenue “between Sheridan and Federal” (4 respondents).
- Unhoused and residing near Irving Street Library (West 74th Ave and Irving Street, 3 respondents).
- Bradburn Boulevard and West 76th Avenue (2 respondents).
- West 72nd Avenue and Stewart Street.
- Pecos Street.
- West 76th Avenue and Irving Street.
- West 74th Avenue and Federal Boulevard.
- Lowell Boulevard and West 76th Avenue.

Outside the study area (note: some are very close to the study area):

- West 84th Avenue and Federal Boulevard (3 respondents).
- West 80th Avenue and Sheridan Boulevard (2 respondents).
- 80260 ZIP code (2 respondents).
- Shaw Heights neighborhood (near West 84th Avenue and U.S. Route 36).
- West 84th Avenue and Huron Street.
- West 88th Avenue.
- Federal Heights.
- Commerce City (3 respondents).
- Thornton (3 respondents).

Current modes of transportation used (responses to Question 2)

- Personal vehicle (10 respondents).
- Ride from a friend or family member (9 respondents).
- Bus (8 respondents).
- Walking (4 respondents).
- Access-A-Ride (2 respondents).
- Ride-hailing service like Uber or Lyft (2 respondents).
- Light rail (3 respondents).
- Bicycle.
- Rental scooters.



Transportation challenges and their impacts (responses to Question 3)

With buses, bus stops and other public transit:

- Bus stops inaccessible (12 respondents; refer to Quotes A, N, P).
- Bus is unreliable, inefficient or takes too long (11 respondents; refer to Quotes G, J, P).
- Bus stops too far apart or too far to walk to (8 respondents; refer to Quote P).
- Public transit prohibitively expensive (6 respondents).
- Bus stops running too early at night (6 respondents; refer to Quotes P and Q).
- Buses inaccessible (5 respondents; refer to Quotes C and M).
- Safety concerns about riding on crowded buses and light rail, especially for young women and older adults (7 respondents).
- Access-a-Ride insufficient (due to wait times or because Medicaid recipients only receive two rides per month; 5 respondents; refer to Quote O).
- Bus only runs once hourly (4 respondents; refer to Quote P).
- Streets and sidewalks unsafe to get across or walk on (3 respondents; refer to Quote K).
- Bus stops unsafe (examples: no lighting, no weather shelter; 3 respondents).
- Bus stop signage too small or illegible (3 respondents).
- Light rail overcrowded and sometimes impossible to get on (2 respondents; refer to Quote V).



Photo courtesy of RTD

- Flex rides inefficient, lack of coordinated schedules with other public transit.
- Flex rides don't take you to needed locations.
- Failure of communication about bus routes and times (refer to Quote L).
- Health problems make being in crowded spaces like buses problematic (refer to Quote B).

With personal vehicles and other personal modes of transportation:

- Gas to fuel personal vehicle prohibitively expensive (9 respondents).
- Many people in one household unit all share the same vehicle, making scheduling difficult and travel sometimes impossible within the times needed (6 respondents).
- Inability to consistently drive personal vehicle due to health condition or injury, or inability to drive at night or in the winter (4 respondents).
- Unreliable personal vehicle (repairs prohibitively expensive; 2 respondents).
- Personal vehicle unsafe to drive in snow (2 respondents).
- Young people have to set aside time to take elder family members to appointments, which is difficult to accommodate with school and work schedules (2 respondents).
- "Biking is hard with all the hills."

Impacts of transportation challenges:

- Lack of access to health care (7 respondents; refer to Quotes E, F, I, N, O).
- Food insecurity and hunger (4 respondents; refer to Quotes D, H, Q).
- Inability to care for vulnerable family members.

Desired destinations (responses to Question 4)

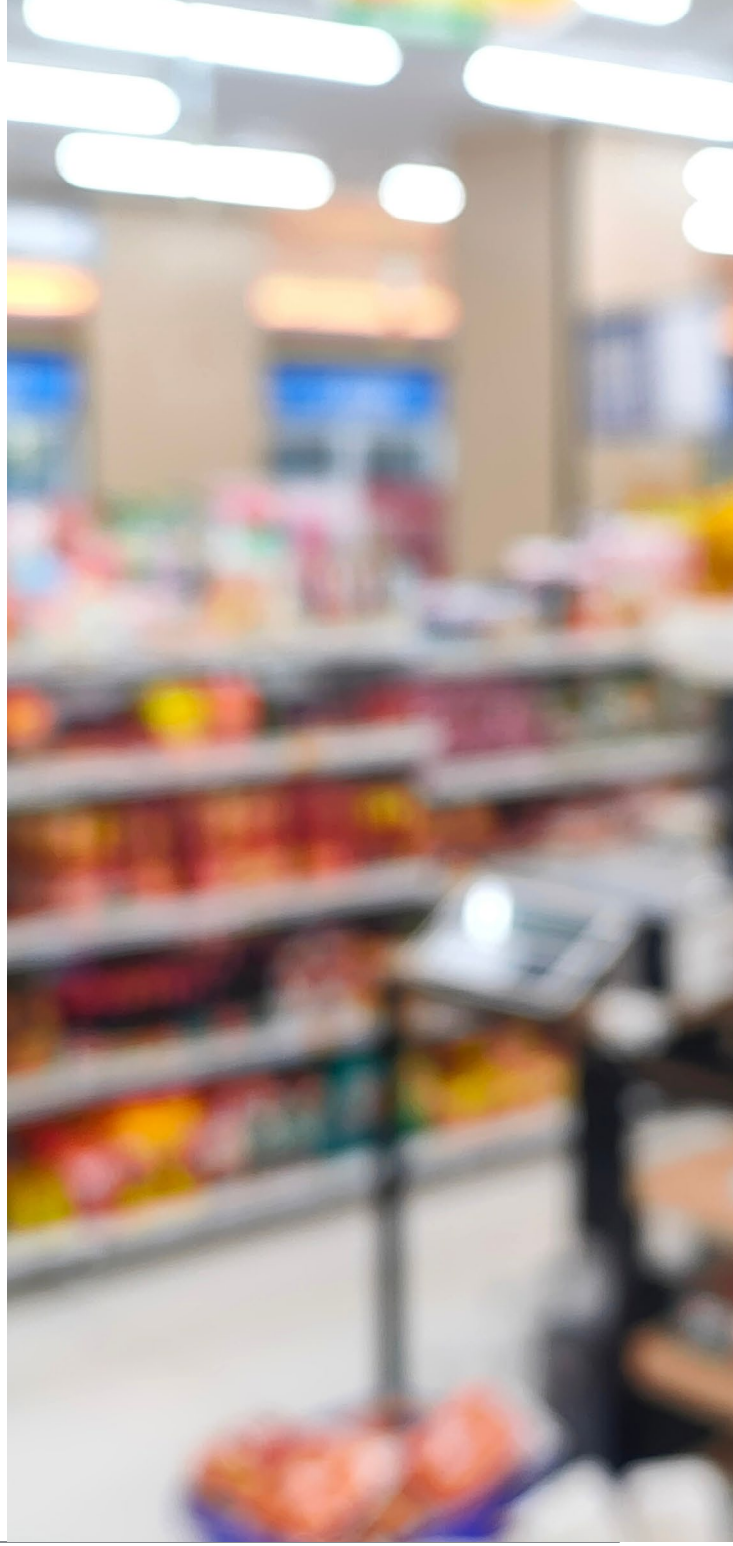
Focus group facilitators asked participants to name desired destinations, and other group members nodded their heads in agreement. However, due to the informal nature of the conversation, this count does not include a specific count of every head nod. Therefore, rather than indicating the specific number of individuals who concurred with destinations mentioned by other respondents, the following breakdown shows how many focus groups made mention of each destination, with no additional notation for a single focus group.

Food- or health-related:

- Medical clinics and hospitals (3 focus groups). Specifically mentioned: physical therapy clinic at West 84th Avenue and Pecos Street; Kaiser Westminster at West 112th Avenue and Huron Street; Community Health Network.
- Grocery stores (4 focus groups). Specifically mentioned: Walmart (West 72nd Avenue and Sheridan Boulevard, 3 focus groups); Target; King Soopers (West 64th Avenue and Sheridan Boulevard, West 80th Avenue and Sheridan Boulevard, 2 focus groups); Lao Market (West 73rd Avenue and Federal Boulevard); H Mart (West 92nd Avenue and Federal Boulevard).
- Pharmacies (2 focus groups). Specifically mentioned: pharmacy at West 84th Avenue and Pecos Street; Walgreens at West 72nd Avenue and Federal Boulevard.
- Food banks. Specifically mentioned: Growing Home.

Community resources, schools and social services:

- Schools (2 focus groups). Specifically mentioned: Westminster High School; Front Range Community College.



- Courthouses (2 focus groups).
- County human services office (2 focus groups).
- Transit hubs (2 focus groups).
- Municipal complex at West 92nd Avenue and Sheridan Boulevard.
- Post office.
- Library. Specifically mentioned: Irving Street Library, West 74th Avenue and Irving Street.
- Child care centers.
- Department of Motor Vehicles.
- Shelters for people who are unhoused.
- Athletic centers and gyms.
- After-school programs.
- Rec centers.
- Senior centers.
- Private probation centers.
- Resource fairs. (A recent fair was held at the Maiker community of Creekside Place on West 92nd Avenue between Huron and Pecos streets.)

Recreational, employment-related or other:

- Water World (2 focus groups; one steering committee member also highlighted this in a call, as many young people in the neighborhood work here over the summer).

- Movie theaters.
- Clothing stores.
- Thrift store on West 88th Avenue and Sheridan Boulevard.
- Church on Sunday mornings. Specifically mentioned: Victory; Holy Trinity at West 74th Avenue and Federal Boulevard; Immaculate Heart of Mary Catholic Parish at West 112th Avenue and Grant Drive; Holy Cross at West 90th Ave and Wigham Street; Flatirons Community Church in Lafayette; Mormon church off Elmwood.
- Laundromat.
- Dispensaries.
- Liquor stores.

Other desired destinations farther outside the study area:

- Children's Museum of Denver (2 focus groups).
- Flatiron Crossing mall (2 focus groups).
- Denver Botanical Gardens.
- Denver Zoo.
- Swedish Hospital on Hampden in Englewood.
- Butterfly Pavilion.
- Elitch Gardens.
- Denver International Airport.

Free microtransit option (responses to Question 5)

Across all focus groups, there was near-unanimous consensus that respondents would use a free, on-demand microtransit option if it became available. As follow-up, respondents at some of the focus groups were asked why, as well as what they would need to make it a desirable and accessible transit option.

Reasons respondents would use a microtransit option:

- Gas for personal vehicles prohibitively expensive (5 respondents).
- Cost to repair personal vehicle prohibitively expensive (3 respondents).
- RTD pass prohibitively expensive.
- Health access (4 respondents; refer to Quotes U and X).
- It's unsafe to cross some of the bigger intersections, and a door-to-door shuttle would prevent the need to do so.
- Health concerns with walking to bus stops, being at bus stops and being on buses.
- Avoids concerns about physical safety and security while riding on large, crowded public transit like buses and light rail (3 respondents; refer to Quote W).
- Efficiency (2 respondents; refer to Quote U).
- Greater physical accessibility compared to other public transit (2 respondents; refer to Quote Y).

Critical components for accessibility:

- Early morning, evening and weekend hours (5 respondents).



- Door-to-door service (4 respondents).
- Must accommodate walkers and wheelchairs (2 respondents).
- Must be low to the ground or have a lift (2 respondents).
- Must be accessible to people who are not computer-literate, such as by calling a hotline (3 respondents).
- 24/7 service (2 respondents).
- Calm, respectful drivers.
- Help getting into the vehicle (refer to Quote T).
- Railing on the vehicle.

Desired components:

- Several (7) respondents stressed that the more information that was available about the service, the more comfortable people would feel using it. Specific recommendations included a newsletter and information on times of the week or times of day that have longer or shorter wait times.
- Within the Hmong community, “word has to come from within the community to trust [a new service] . . . It would help if they knew other people in the community were using it, to build trust.”
- A trial period or demo might be useful to build public trust.
- Reliable service will lead to better trust among community members.
- Ability to track the progress of the shuttle on an app (2 respondents).

- Dedicated Hmong-language phone line to book rides and to learn how to use the service (2 respondents) or, if different languages are available through the same number, the option for the Hmong language should come first.
- The Hmong phone operators should be of the same culture.
- Hotline should be staffed by real people (rather than automated-only systems).
- Typical schedule and pickup or drop-off time frames.
- If picking up multiple people, are there restrooms on the way?

Undesirable components:

- Inappropriate or disrespectful driver behavior.
- Driver wearing perfumes or colognes.

Section C: Quotes from focus groups

A. “Only James can get up the hill!” – Casa Redonda de Vigil respondent, referring to how only one person at an entire community for older adults and people with disabilities is physically capable of walking to the bus stops

B. “I have an autoimmune disease, so riding the bus can sometimes mean a hospital stay for me when there’s so many people in close quarters.” – Casa Redonda de Vigil respondent

C. “It’s hard to get up into the bus. It’s hard when you’re disabled to get on and off buses, and people are rude and impatient. I’m little and have back problems, and trying to get up there and the driver doesn’t lower the bus; meanwhile people are complaining that they’re going to miss their connecting bus. It’s very stressful.” – Casa Redonda de Vigil respondent

D. “Sometimes you just don’t get food.” – Casa Redonda de Vigil respondent

E. “Getting to the doctor is a problem.” – Casa Redonda de Vigil respondent

F. “I can’t get my medication.” – Casa Redonda de Vigil respondent

G. “It takes forever to get places, and the buses don’t connect at the right times.” – Casa Redonda de Vigil respondent

H. “It’s hard to get groceries when you need them.” – Casa Redonda de Vigil respondent

I. “I recently missed an appointment for my physical therapy because I didn’t have a ride.” – Casa Redonda de Vigil respondent



J. “The 72 bus only passes every hour. I get places late everywhere. I wait a lot for the bus.” – Growing Home respondent

K. “I only have 20 seconds to get across Federal and also have to watch for potholes. I need more time to cross.” – Growing Home respondent with physical mobility challenges

L. “Some routes don’t run anymore but the stop is still there, so I wait, and the bus isn’t even running the same route.” – Growing Home respondent

M. “The bus is hard to get on due to my physical mobility issues; they’re not accommodating. The steps are huge and don’t have lifts. And having to be by yourself and stand up creates a challenge. The bus drivers sometimes only drop the bus if you’re carrying groceries.” – Irving Street Library respondent

N. “Sometimes you need to go to a specific location, but the bus won’t pull up, and if you can’t be on your feet that long, you can fall or sometimes you just choose not to go. We need free transportation to doctors’ offices for the elderly.” – Irving Street Library respondent

O. “For Access-a-Ride, sometimes it’s not available for three hours, and if you have an appointment, you’re just out of luck.” – Irving Street Library respondent

P. “We need more bus stops where people actually are. And with the 72 [bus], it’s so inconsistent on timing and then stops running so early.” – Irving Street Library respondent

Q. “If you get off work at 5 p.m. and need to get to the grocery store, you already missed the 72 [bus].” – Irving Street Library respondent

R. “If you need your medication and don’t have a ride, a lot of time you have to pay to get it delivered, and it’s unaffordable.” – Irving Street Library respondent

S. “The more information that’s accessible to folks, the more comfortable people will be using this service.” – Irving Street Library respondent

T. “I’ll need help getting into the vehicle. Just because I’m not in a wheelchair doesn’t mean I have perfect abilities.” – Casa Redonda de Vigil respondent

U. “One week I had to go to three appointments for my [broken] arm. It can take up to two hours to get to an appointment on the bus when it takes 10-15 minutes in a car.” – Growing Home respondent

V. “Wait 30 minutes only to get a full train that can’t take new passengers.” – MAC respondent

W. “I would feel safer because I would call [a microtransit shuttle] for me. I would know a bit about it. If it picks up your neighbor that’s OK, because you know where they live! In the neighborhood it feels safer. Even if you don’t talk to someone, you still know who they are.” – MAC respondent, explaining why she would feel safer taking a small shuttle than the bus or train

X. “We have a lot of grandparents [in the Hmong community] who can’t drive and don’t necessarily have someone to drive them or take them to doctor’s appointments.” – MAC respondent

Y. A lot [of grandparents in the Hmong community] have bad eyesight, so they can’t drive. [A microtransit shuttle] would be great to help them get to where they need to go without having to see well.” – PABNEEG respondent

DENVER REGIONAL COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

1001 17th St., Suite 700

Denver, CO 80202

web: drcog.org

email: drcog@drcog.org

phone: 303-455-1000



Photo by Nora Kern/DRCOG

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