



Phase I Outreach Summary

Capital District Transportation Authority Transit Development Plan

December 2023

Contents

Introduction.....	1
Public Meetings	2
Public Meetings, Key Takeaways.....	2
Summary of Findings from Public Meetings	3
Stakeholder Meetings.....	6
Stakeholder Meetings, Key Takeaways.....	6
Summary of Findings from Stakeholder Meetings	6
Employee Forums	8
Employee Forums, Key Takeaways	8
Summary of Findings from Employee Forums.....	9
CDTA Inreach	12
CDTA Inreach, Key Takeaways	12
Summary of Findings from Inreach Meetings.....	12
Community Survey.....	15
Community Survey, Key Takeaways.....	15
Most Common Trips.....	21
Trade-Off Questions.....	24
Demographics.....	27
Free Responses.....	34
FLEX, CDPHP Cycle!, and DRIVE Survey	35
Results	36
Key Takeaways	36
Conclusion and Next Steps.....	49

Figures

Figure 1: Presentation at Albany Public Meeting	3
Figure 2: Attendees providing feedback at Albany Public Meeting.....	3
Figure 3: Operators providing feedback at Employee Forum in Schenectady	9
Figure 4: Frequency of Transit Use	15
Figure 5: CDTA Routes Used (Survey Respondents)	16
Figure 6: Rider Opinions on CDTA Service	17
Figure 7: Rider Opinions on Sources of Rider Information	18
Figure 8: Reasons for Transit Use	19
Figure 9: Reasons for Not Riding Transit.....	20
Figure 10: Purpose of Trip.....	21
Figure 11: Frequency of Trip	21
Figure 12: When do you most commonly take this trip?	22
Figure 13: When do you typically return from this trip?	22
Figure 14: Duration of Most Common Journey	23
Figure 15: How would you get to your destination were CDTA service not available?.....	23
Figure 16: Fewer Stops or More Stops?.....	24
Figure 17: Improve Service in Existing Areas or Expand to New Areas?	25
Figure 18: Increase Weekend Service or Weekday Service?	25
Figure 19: More Frequent Service or Longer Service Span?	26
Figure 20: More Streets or Fewer Streets?.....	26
Figure 21: CDTA Survey Results by Age	27
Figure 22: CDTA Survey Responses by Employment Status.....	28
Figure 23: CDTA Survey Responses by Race/Ethnicity.....	29
Figure 24: CDTA Survey Responses by Income	30
Figure 25: CDTA Survey Responses by Access to Vehicle	31
Figure 26: Home Locations of Survey Respondents, Capital Region	32
Figure 27: Home Locations of Survey Respondents, Albany	33
Figure 28: Which of the following services do you use?.....	35
Figure 29: Frequency of Use	37
Figure 30: When do you most commonly use the service?.....	38
Figure 31: How long does your most common trip using this service take?	39
Figure 32: What are the three most common types of trips you make using this service?	40
Figure 33: Reasons for Using the Service.....	41
Figure 34: What are the reasons you don't use this service?	42
Figure 35: Do you ever use this service to connect to or from another CDTA service?	43
Figure 36: Do you use this service as a replacement for missing the bus?	44
Figure 37: How would you have made the trip if this service had not been available?.....	45
Figure 38: How available is this service when you need it?	46
Figure 39: Improve Service in Existing Areas or Expand to New Areas?	46
Figure 40: Agree or Disagree: The service area covers where I need to go.	47
Figure 41: Agree or Disagree: Using the app (Navigator, CDPHP Cycle!, or Miocar networks) is easy.	47

Figure 42: How satisfied are you overall with this service?.....	48
--	----

Tables

Table 1: Public Meetings Held for TDP Development	2
Table 2: Stakeholder Meetings Held for TDP Development	6
Table 3: Employee Forums Held for TDP Development	8
Table 4: CDTA Inreach Meetings Held for TDP Development	12

Introduction

In September and October of 2023, the Capital District Transportation Authority (CDTA) conducted outreach with stakeholders, riders, and the general public. Additionally, a survey for FLEX (microtransit), CDPHP Cycle! (bikeshare), and DRIVE (carshare) was conducted throughout February 2024. The purpose of this first round of public engagement was to receive input from current riders and community members about the way they use transit, reasons for riding transit, and their opinions and priorities for future service.

As part of the development of CDTA's Transit Development Plan (TDP) Update, the study team will engage in three phases of public outreach. Phase I of public outreach is summarized here, which included:

- Public meetings conducted in person in Albany, Troy/Rensselaer, and Schenectady and one virtual public meeting held via Zoom.
- Virtual stakeholder meetings held with representatives from universities and educational organizations, major employers, and health and social service organizations.
- Employee forums for CDTA drivers and operations staff.
- CDTA Inreach meetings: one with directors and superintendents and another with senior staff.
- A community survey distributed online as well as in paper at public meetings.

Stakeholders, operators, and the public were asked questions about transit services in the Capital Region, including what is working well and what could be improved. Survey respondents were asked about their ridership habits, most common trip, opinions about transit, demographics, and trade-off questions about their preferences for transit services in the region. Survey respondents were also given the opportunity to provide free-form responses and comments. The input collected through the meetings and surveys will be used to inform service scenario development for CDTA.

Public Meetings

To solicit feedback from the public about CDTA services, CDTA held four public meetings: three in-person meetings and one virtual meeting. Overall, 50 individuals participated in public meetings (**Table 1**).

Table 1: Public Meetings Held for TDP Development

Meeting Name	Location	Date and Time	Number of Participants
Albany Public Workshop	Washington Avenue Branch	September 18, 2023: 6:30 PM – 8:00 PM	14
Schenectady Public Workshop	Schenectady County Public Library	September 19, 2023: 6:30 PM – 8:00 PM	5
Troy/Rensselaer Public Workshop	Rensselaer Public Library	September 20, 2023: 5:30 PM – 7:00 PM	2
Virtual Public Workshop	Virtual Zoom	September 26, 2023: 6:00 PM – 7:00 PM	29

Public Meetings, Key Takeaways

Several key themes emerged from the public meetings, highlighting areas for improvement and development:

- **Enhance Customer Information:** Customers want more information to make using CDTA simpler to understand and use, including more accurate real time information and improvements to the Navigator app. Employers suggested more services helping orient new employees and students to CDTA.
- **Expand Service Hours:** There is a need for extended service hours, including more coverage on nights and weekends.
- **Provide Greater Connectivity:** Residents seek additional travel options to and between outlying areas, improving access to CDTA buses for broader regional connectivity.

Figure 1: Presentation at Albany Public Meeting



Figure 2: Attendees providing feedback at Albany Public Meeting



Summary of Findings from Public Meetings

Comments made at the Public Meetings are summarized below, grouped by key takeaway.

ENHANCE CUSTOMER SERVICE

Participants across all public meetings discussed the need for enhanced customer service and access to rider information. Specifically, participants at the Albany meeting reported that the Navigator app can be difficult to use, and this additional hurdle can discourage people from riding the bus. Some participants suggested “tap-to-pay” or integrating the Navigator app with smartphone wallets for quicker payment processes. Other participants at the Albany meeting suggested adding better wayfinding and more maps at bus stops to provide better access to information.

Additionally, participants at the Troy meeting suggested that the Flex app should be integrated into the Navigator app for a more streamlined experience. Attendees also suggested having a kiosk at bus stops to serve as a trip planner. At the Schenectady meeting, participants did note some improvements to the Navigator app but indicated that adding funds to the app can still be difficult and does not always work properly. Schenectady participants also expressed a desire for more accurate real-time information at bus locations. When prompted on potential areas for growth, participants at the virtual meeting explained that bus arrival times are often inconsistent and more real-time information should be available to the public.

INCREASE SERVICE FREQUENCY

Several participants at the public meetings discussed the importance of increasing service frequency. During the Albany meeting, participants praised the frequency of CDTA service in the Downtown area and noted that buses are typically dependable and on schedule. However, several participants requested more frequent service to the Rensselaer Rail Station and Albany International Airport.

Additionally, participants in Troy expressed that improving frequency during peak times would be beneficial as well as extending peak times given the variety in riders' schedules. Routes 10, 11, 106, 114, and 115 were mentioned by participants as needing increased frequency during later hours of the day. Attendees in Schenectady were particularly grateful for the frequent service on the 905 but expressed a need for increased frequency on other routes such as Route 18.

Participants requested greater frequency on six routes:

- 10
- 11
- 106
- 18
- 114
- 115

EXPAND SERVICE HOURS

Participants at Albany and Troy requested longer service spans during earlier and later hours of the day. Furthermore, participants at the virtual meeting provided several comments about places or routes in need of more service. Several participants noted that more service should be available in areas where there are mobile homes or affordable housing developments. Virtual attendees also mentioned that routes 224, 351, 354, and 540 should have increased service. Lastly, one participant requested expanded paratransit service, explaining that service for people with disabilities is currently limited.

Participants requested expanded service hours on four routes:

- 224
- 351
- 354
- 540

PROVIDE GREATER CONNECTIVITY

Several participants at the Albany and Troy public meetings praised CDTA's coverage, explaining that the system is well-connected and enables riders to live car free. However, participants in Schenectady noted that Altamont needs bus routes that are not dead-end routes. Specifically, a member of the public expressed that there are destinations of interest in Forest Hills and Altamont, but they are unable to get back to Albany due to the lack of return service.

Additionally, several areas were mentioned at the virtual meeting that would benefit from new service to improve connectivity in the region, including Balltown Road in Niskayuna; Saratoga County between Wilton, Moreau, and South Glens Falls; and the Town of Guilderland on

weekends. Attendees in Albany also said they would like to see several of CDTA's other services expanded, including Flex, CDPHP Cycle, and Drive.

Stakeholder Meetings

In addition to public meetings, CDTA conducted meetings with institutional stakeholders to solicit input on how to improve transit service in the Capital Region. The details of the stakeholder meetings are provided in **Table 2**.

Table 2: Stakeholder Meetings Held for TDP Development

Meeting Name	Location	Date and Time	Number of Participants
Universities and Educational Stakeholders	Virtual	September 18, 2023: 10:00 AM – 11:30 AM	5
Major Employer Stakeholders	Virtual	September 19, 2023: 10:00 AM – 11:30 AM	3
Health and Social Services Stakeholders	Virtual	September 20, 2023: 10:00 AM – 11:30 AM	12

Stakeholder Meetings, Key Takeaways

The main themes that emerged from the meetings were:

- **Enhance Access to Employment and Education:** There is a need to improve access to employment sites and educational institutions through fixed-route bus service or FLEX service.
- **Align Service with Shift Work:** There is a desire for bus schedules to better align with shift work to accommodate varying work hours.
- **Increase Education and Collaboration:** More effort is needed to educate and collaborate with students and employees on how to effectively use CDTA services.

Summary of Findings from Stakeholder Meetings

Comments made at the Stakeholder Meetings are summarized below, grouped by key takeaway.

ENHANCE ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT AND EDUCATION

Participants praised CDTA for providing dependable and safe transportation options throughout the Capital Region but noted a few opportunities for improvement. Educational stakeholders requested faster, more frequent service between Troy and Albany, increased service from Clifton Park to Schenectady, and more frequent service from Schenectady through Amsterdam along the Route 5 corridor. Participants noted that these improvements would be beneficial to students travelling throughout the region, especially those with long commutes to class or work.

Participants at the major employers meeting noted that CDTA does an excellent job moving people to and from downtown for traditional working hours. Attendees also explained that

retaining their employees has improved since implementing the universal access program and has been a valuable selling point for recruiting new employees. However, a suggestion from the meeting was to implement a rail system throughout the Capital Region to further improve commuter connections. Furthermore, health and social service stakeholders stressed that the region needs greater transit access to community learning centers and community colleges. Specifically, participants requested increased transportation options in Saratoga County, such as an additional North-South route or more East-West connections to Route 50.

ALIGN SERVICE WITH SHIFT WORK

While major employers felt that CDTA generally does a good job of connecting riders to shift work, health and social service stakeholders noted there is room for improvement, particularly to help with recruiting and retaining healthcare workers. Specifically, participants requested an increased span of service on Sunday evenings to align with shift workers' schedules. Additionally, they suggested more bus service from Troy and Schenectady to medical facilities along Washington Avenue Extension. Health and social service stakeholders also suggested expanding FLEX service to Schenectady so older individuals can have more convenient access to medical appointments.

INCREASE EDUCATION AND COLLABORATION

A common theme throughout stakeholder engagement was the need for more education on how to use CDTA's services. Educational stakeholders noted that collaboration with students is key to ensure they understand how to use the services. They requested improvements to rider information and marketing as well as more regular outreach tailored to students. Stakeholders at the major employers meeting suggested providing "how to" collateral to employees on universal pass benefits. Another suggestion was to host an open house on how to use CDTA services to encourage public transit use.

Other educational strategies could include travel training for HR managers so they can assist other employees on how to use CDTA services or providing a month-free trial card and additional rider information to increase transit use. One participant at the health and social services meeting suggested providing discounted prices to non-profits that hand out bus passes to avoid budget strain on the non-profit organizations.

Employee Forums

The project team held three forums with CDTA front-line staff to gain feedback on the system's service from operators, shift leads, and dispatchers. The dates and locations of the forums are detailed in **Table 3**.

Table 3: Employee Forums Held for TDP Development

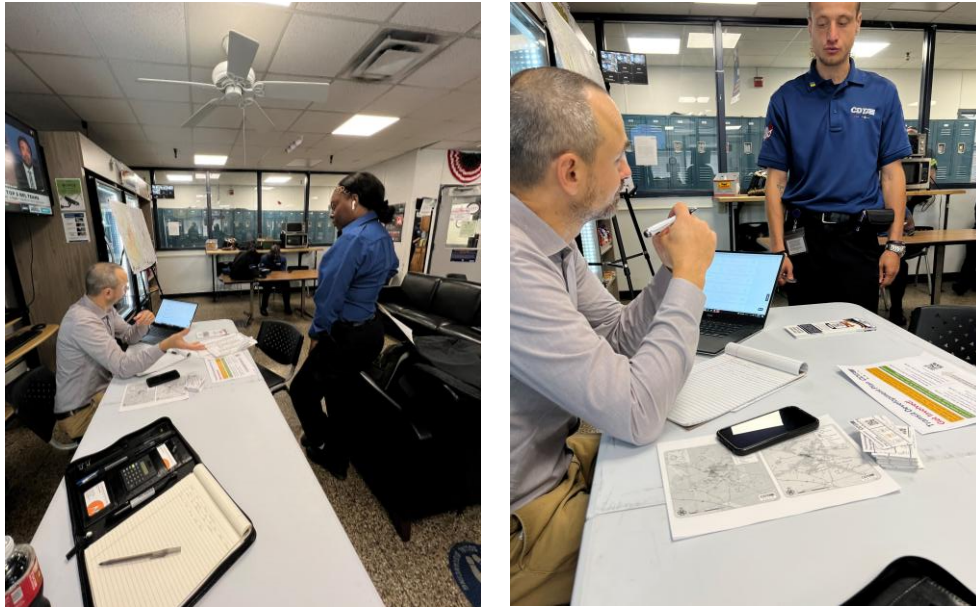
Meeting Name	Location	Date and Time	Number of Participants
Albany Employee Forum	Albany Garage	September 18, 2023: 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.	Informal
Schenectady Employee Forum	Schenectady Garage	September 19, 2023: 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.	Informal
Troy Employee Forum	Troy Garage	September 20, 2023: 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.	Informal

Employee Forums, Key Takeaways

While operators highlighted challenges unique to their specific services, several key themes emerged across the listening sessions:

- **Increase Running and Recovery Time:** Many routes require additional running time or recovery time, and consideration for operator bathroom breaks need to be more effectively integrated.
- **Prioritize Service to Empire State Plaza:** Drivers suggested more service to Empire State Plaza, including restoring express routes cut during COVID and re-routing the Blue Line to Empire State Plaza.
- **Enhance Campus Connectivity:** Colleges and universities require more frequent service both to and from campus, as well as improved service within campus areas.
- **Adjust Current Route:** Many routes could benefit from service and alignment changes to improve efficiency and convenience for operators.
- **Improve Wayfinding and Legibility:** Route head-signs and stop locations should be easy to follow and clearly marked to improve rider experience.

Figure 3: Operators providing feedback at Employee Forum in Schenectady



Summary of Findings from Employee Forums

Comments made at the meetings are summarized below, grouped by key takeaway.

INCREASE RUNNING AND RECOVERY TIME

One of the most common responses from operators at each garage was that many routes do not have enough running time and recovery time. Specifically, operators at the Albany garage noted the following routes need improved or re-optimized operating schedules:

- Route 11, Route 12, and Route 525 do not have time for bathroom breaks;
- Route 13 and Route 18 (interlined) do not have enough layover for the combined route;
- Route 106 does not have enough running time; and,
- Route 115 has too much deadhead.

At the Troy garage, operators noted that the following routes do not have enough running or recovery time:

- Route 85;
- Route 289; and,
- Route 922/923.

Troy operators also explained that interlines are not consistent, so they sometimes forget they are supposed to do a run on a particular route.

Additionally, Schenectady operators said the following routes do not have enough running or recovery time:

- Route 353;
- Route 354; and,
- Route 905.

PRIORITIZE SERVICE TO EMPIRE STATE PLAZA

Operators at the Albany and Troy garages stressed that many BusPlus passengers request direct service to Empire State Plaza, suggesting these routes should accommodate this demand.

ENHANCE CAMPUS CONNECTIVITY

Troy operators noted that HVCC needs more frequent service at peak times. In Schenectady, operators suggested that Route 451 serve Skidmore College. Other operators agreed that Skidmore College needs better coverage and suggested a loop through campus.

ADJUST CURRENT ROUTING

Several other issues were discussed at each garage that provided critical insight into potential concerns from an operator perspective. Operators in Albany and Schenectady suggested that the following routes could benefit from service and alignment changes:

- Route 10 should go into Stuyvesant Plaza in the eastbound direction only, or not at all;
- Route 12 should stay on Washington Avenue to avoid North Lake Avenue, which is too narrow;
- Route 87 has a challenging time getting through farmers market traffic on Saturdays;
- Route 106 should start downtown instead of at St. Peter's;
- Route 451 should start at the train station where drivers could use the bathroom;
- Route 451 should serve Kirby Road but drop Buff Road due to few riders;
- Route 452 should serve the bowling alley on Broadway; and,
- Route 452 serves Henry Street at night only, but is negatively impacted by traffic congestion while generating little ridership.

IMPROVE WAYFINDING AND LEGIBILITY

Operators at each garage also had the following comments about legibility and wayfinding along routes and within CDTA's operational systems:

- Route 106 riders do not understand what clockwise and counterclockwise mean; CDTA should consider a different way to label trips;
- Route 106 head-sign should say "drop-off only" at CVS so passengers do not try to board;
- Drivers are not always made aware of new stops and end up missing them;

- Route 107 passengers get on at Walmart expecting to go inbound, but instead go to Marker 32 first;
- Route 452 still serves Veterans Way, even though stops were removed there; and,
- Buses no longer serve Excelsior, but it still shows up on Copilot.

OTHER

Operators in Albany also expressed concerns about the passenger boarding process, explaining that the Navigator app is taking longer to pay fares, thereby slowing down boarding. Another operator added that the new FLEX app is taking longer to book trips and does not show the driver the exact location of where passengers are waiting, which can hold up the pickup times. Other comments included improving the cleanliness and security on board the buses as well as the need for service to Clifton Park and to the Target and Amazon distribution centers in Amsterdam.

CDTA Inreach

The project team held two meetings with internal CDTA representatives to discuss successes, potential areas of growth and to determine goals and direction for the TDP. The dates and locations of the two meetings are detailed in **Table 4**. CDTA also engaged with the Capital Region Transportation Council (CRTC) for additional insight into CDTA’s strengths and opportunities for improvement.

Table 4: CDTA Inreach Meetings Held for TDP Development

Meeting Name	Location	Date and Time	Number of Participants
Internal Directors and Superintendents Meeting	CDTA Board Room	November 15, 2023: 11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.	25
Internal Senior Staff Meeting	CDTA Board Room	December 13, 2023: 2:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.	6

CDTA Inreach, Key Takeaways

The following key takeaways emerged from the CDTA inreach meetings:

- **Integrate Service:** Respondents felt CDTA services don’t always work together well, one example being the number of different apps needed to use all CDTA’s services. The names of apps often differ from the CDTA name for the service, making things more confusing.
- **Enhance Employee Experience:** To improve recruitment and retention, there must be a focus on enhancing work-life balance and overall employee satisfaction.
- **Define Clear Performance Metrics:** Performance metrics and evaluation criteria need to be clearly defined, tailored to specific modes and regions, to ensure effective assessment and improvement.

Summary of Findings from Inreach Meetings

Comments made at each inreach meeting are summarized below, grouped by key takeaway.

INTEGRATE SERVICE

CDTA staff explained they are doing well in several initiatives, including expanding the service area and offering various mobility options. However, participants at each inreach meeting discussed the importance of integrating CDTA’s services in a more cohesive manner. For example, CDTA directors and superintendents recognized there is an identity crisis regarding FLEX service and a need for clear planning and development of how FLEX should fit into the agency’s mobility goals. CDTA representatives at the meeting noted that there is a need for a more comprehensive approach to transportation services that considers all services collectively.

Senior staff members echoed this sentiment, specifically noting that there may be efficiencies to be had by merging STAR and FLEX services. They discussed the overall theme for the TDP, with a focus on making good service even better. Since the theme of the 2014 TDP was centered around BRT, some participants suggested focusing on the shift from BRT-lite to more advanced and extensive BRT service. Others suggested focusing on headway management or on fare creativity, such as changing the price of services or implementing modern technologies. During the CRTC meeting, participants praised CDTA for doing an excellent job providing a range of services that are valuable to users and benefit CDTA's reputation as a mobility provider. However, CRTC explained that the success of Cycle! and DRIVE suggests there is room for growth and expansion.

While CDTA provides excellent connecting services, CRTC expressed concern about not offering free transfers, explaining that this limits the benefits of the system and potentially doubles the cost of a ride. They noted that there is potential to provide free transfers to riders and expand the offering to other services such as Cycle!. CRTC suggested supporting this change organizationally through schedule planning, driver training to wait for transfers, and fare restructuring. Fare capping to cover all CDTA services could also be introduced as a solution to keep multimodal trips affordable.

Lastly, CRTC mentioned that CDTA should continue to encourage municipalities to create dedicated space for buses and amenities for riders, especially in the denser urban areas. They noted that the rider experience can be enhanced by adding countdown clocks, especially at BusPlus stops, so riders can plan their trips better and be informed about delays. Furthermore, connections at regional transportation facilities, such as CDTA rail stations and Albany Airport, may benefit from enhanced wayfinding emphasizing where to access the bus. As part of this process, CRTC suggested that CDTA identify locations to municipalities that would be ideal for dense transit-oriented development to maximize the benefits of the system as a whole.

ENHANCE EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE

CDTA directors and superintendents noted that employee recruitment and retention are top of mind issues for the agency. Specifically, they expressed the need to improve work-life balance for operators, improve support and satisfaction for internal employees, and improve efforts to recruit maintenance staff. Senior staff members agreed that employee retention and maintaining headcount is key to providing the service CDTA wants to provide. Specifically, participants expressed that difficulties with operator retention are often due to long schedules leading to operator fatigue.

However, staff members noted that operator shortages are likely not going away. When asked what kinds of cuts could be considered first if cuts needed to be made to deal with operator shortages, staff agreed that frequency should be maintained over coverage. One staff member suggested that the solution may vary by route, as some services may be overly frequent and require adjustments, such as Route 905.

DEFINE CLEAR PERFORMANCE METRICS

CDTA directors and superintendents discussed the challenge of evaluating numerous metrics and the need to prioritize based on performance goals. When discussing future priorities, senior staff agreed that services should be evaluated differently based on region. As part of their evaluation processes, CDTA would also like to define a way to measure the success of Flex service. Specifically, staff members would like to determine thresholds to indicate when Flex service should either be upgraded to fixed route or be eliminated entirely.

OTHER

Participants expressed that CDTA is doing well in several initiatives, including:

- Implementing recent improvements in bus services (such as BusPlus) and fare structures;
- Improving marketing efforts and making people more aware of services offered;
- Securing funds for capital investments, such as procurement of additional technology and electric buses; and,
- Improving safety and service through effective maintenance.

However, directors and superintendents noted the need for strategic planning regarding future technologies, especially in transitioning to zero-emission vehicles. Staff members agreed that the transition to zero emission vehicles does not belong in the TDP but should be mentioned as a planning challenge. Specifically, participants expressed concerns that CDTA is falling behind in providing infrastructure and support for expanded or advanced service, such as lack of space in garages.

Additionally, several challenges related to the current TDP were discussed, including land use. Staff members noted that other agencies have gotten more directly involved in transit-oriented development, such as King County Metro, which maintains a development loan program to support TOD near its stations. Staff members also explained there is a possible need for more service in Saratoga County because of recent growth.

At the CRTC meeting, participants noted that CDTA can potentially attract more choice riders by increasing reliability through implementing the recommendations from the Bus Lane Feasibility Study. This decreases the amount of time riders need to budget for trips and increases the distance they can travel by making transfers better timed without requiring greater resources.

Another opportunity for improvement is streamlining the fare system. CRTC explained that many options can be confusing and fare payment improvements could potentially reduce dwell times. CRTC suggested increasing the number of Navigator card vendors and increasing Navigator card use by senior/disabled riders as two potential options. They also suggest that Navigator vendors allow riders without access to a credit card or smartphone to benefit from reduced fares and fare-capping. Lastly, CRTC noted that there is potential to expand half-fares to people who receive government benefits such as SNAP.

Community Survey

In addition to targeted stakeholder meetings and public outreach, an online survey collected feedback about transit service from the public. The survey was available online from September through October 2023 and received a total of 1,277 responses. About 52 percent of the responses were from regular riders, who ride transit at least weekly; 37 percent from occasional riders, who ride transit less than weekly; and 11 percent from non-riders, who reported never riding transit. Throughout this report, the term “riders” includes regular riders and occasional riders.

The survey also asked respondents to provide basic demographic information, details about their transit usage, information about their most common transit trip (if applicable), opinions about existing service, and preferences for future service.

Community Survey, Key Takeaways

Several key themes and findings emerged from the summary and analysis of the community survey responses:

- **Transit Dependency:** Participants who regularly use CDTA services typically do not have access to a car and primarily rely on public transportation for commuting to work.
- **Satisfaction, But with Areas for Improvement:** While respondents are generally satisfied with CDTA services, they expressed the greatest dissatisfaction with amenities such as benches and shelters, as well as service hours.
- **Prioritization of Bus Frequency:** Respondents indicated a preference for increasing bus frequency during peak periods over expanding service hours or extending routes to additional streets.

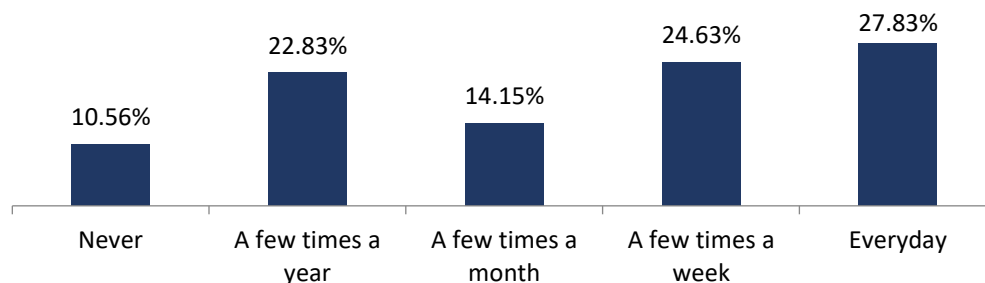
Rider Behavior

CDTA riders were asked several questions about their typical transit usage.

RIDER STATUS FREQUENCY OF TRANSIT USAGE

Nearly 90 percent of survey respondents were transit riders. Over half of respondents reported using CDTA transit services at least a few times a week (**Figure 4**).

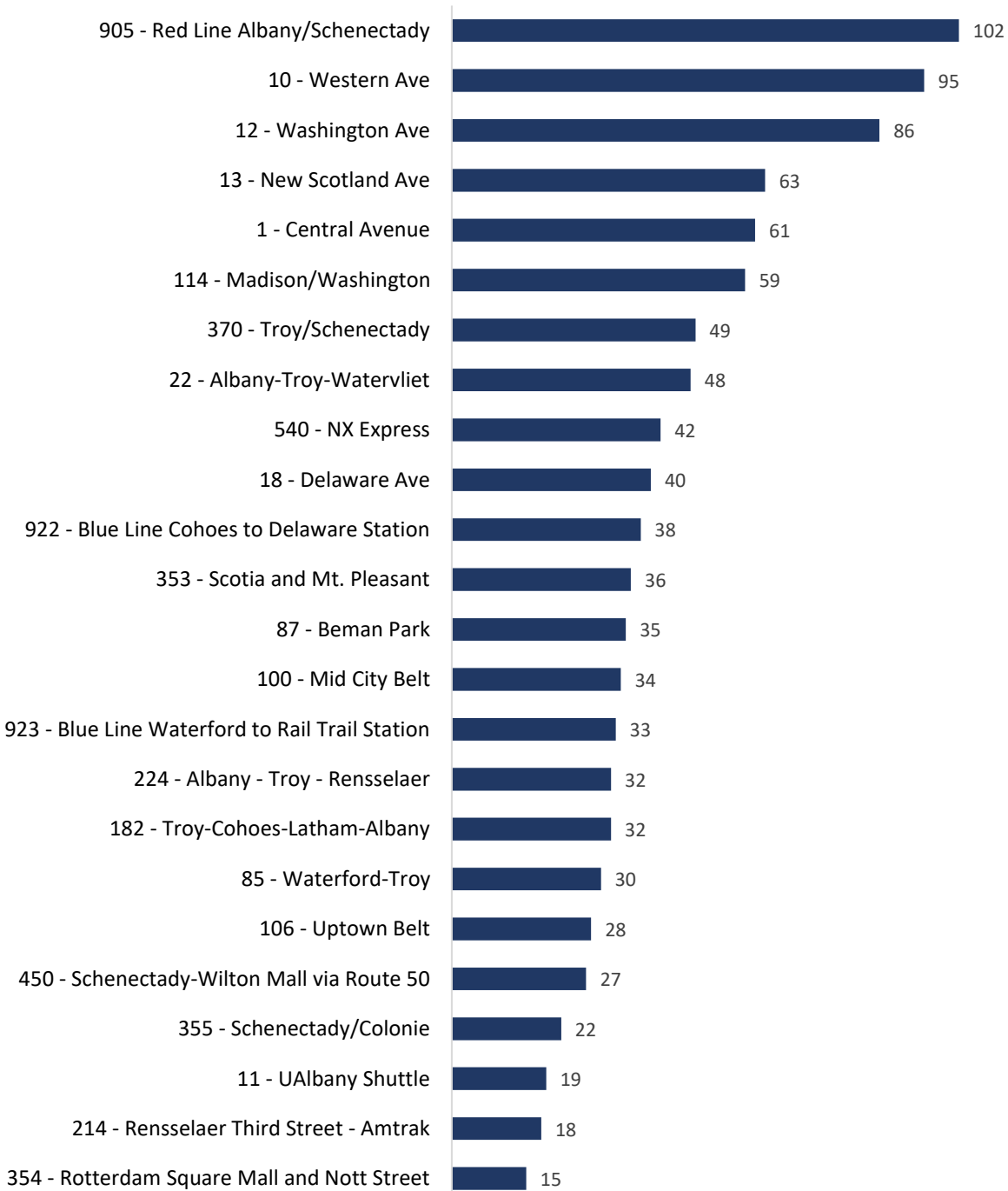
Figure 4: Frequency of Transit Use



ROUTES USED

Among CDTA riders who responded to the survey, routes 905, 10, and 12 were the most ridden among survey respondents (**Figure 5**).

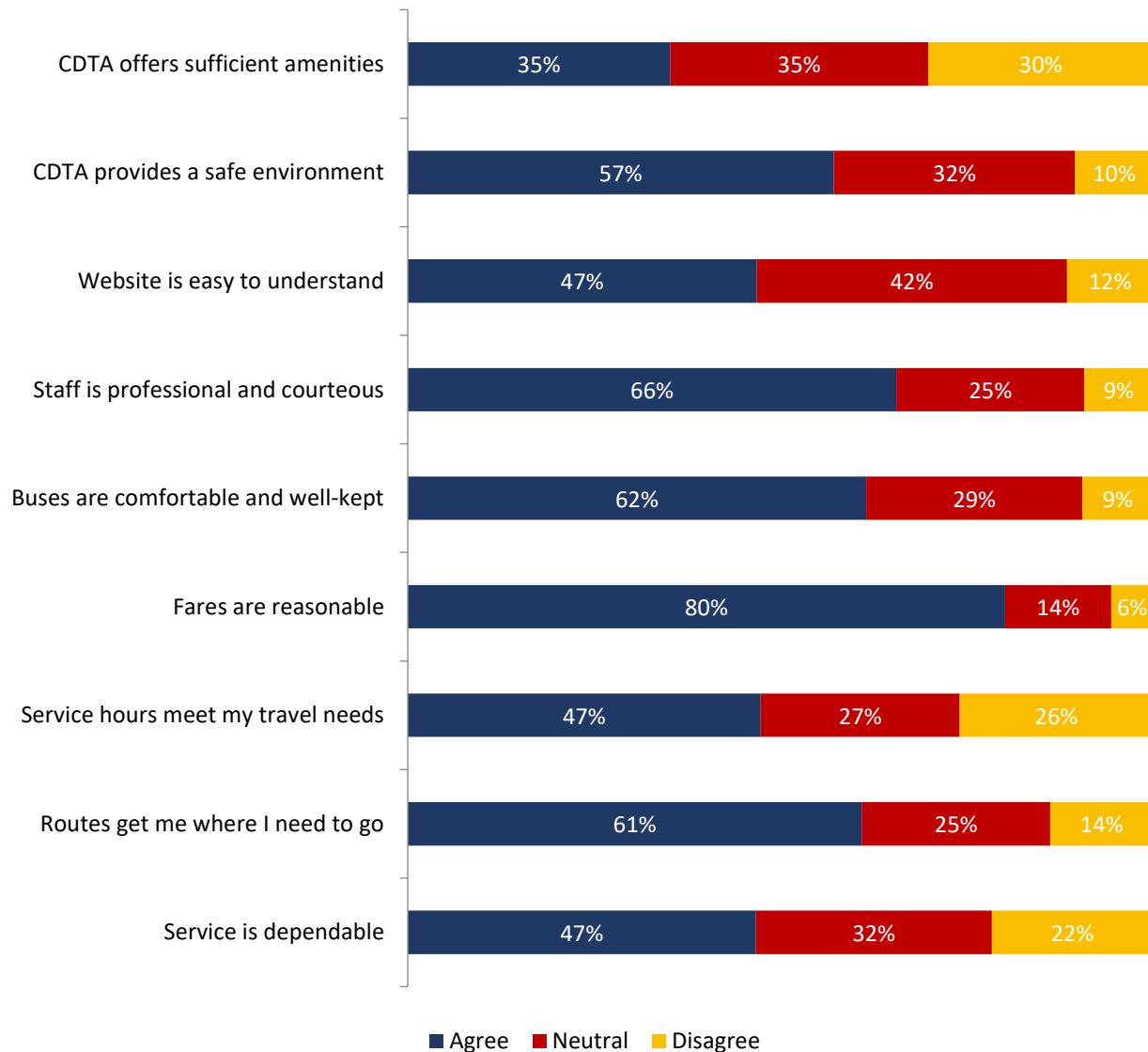
Figure 5: CDTA Routes Used (Survey Respondents)



RIDER OPINIONS

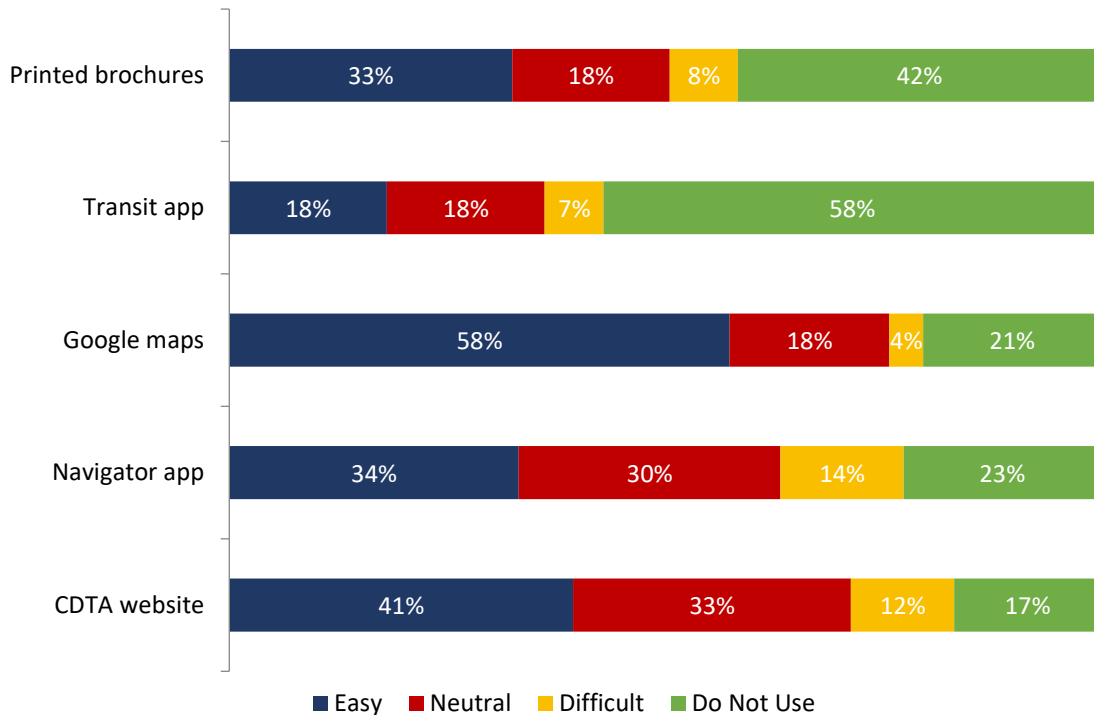
Respondents who reported riding transit at least occasionally were asked how strongly they agree with a series of statements about CDTA service. As shown in **Figure 6**, a majority of respondents agreed with most statements. Specifically, over 60 percent of respondents agreed that fares are reasonable, CDTA staff is professional, buses are well-kept, and routes go where riders need. However, over 20 percent of respondents disagreed that service is dependable, service hours meet travel needs, and that CDTA offers sufficient amenities.

Figure 6: Rider Opinions on CDTA Service



Riders were also asked how easy or difficult it is to use various route and schedule resources (**Figure 7**). Google Maps received the most favorable results, with nearly 60 percent of respondents reporting it is easy to use. The Navigator app received more mixed reviews, with a third that find it easy, a third that are neutral, and a third that either find it difficult to use or do not use it at all.

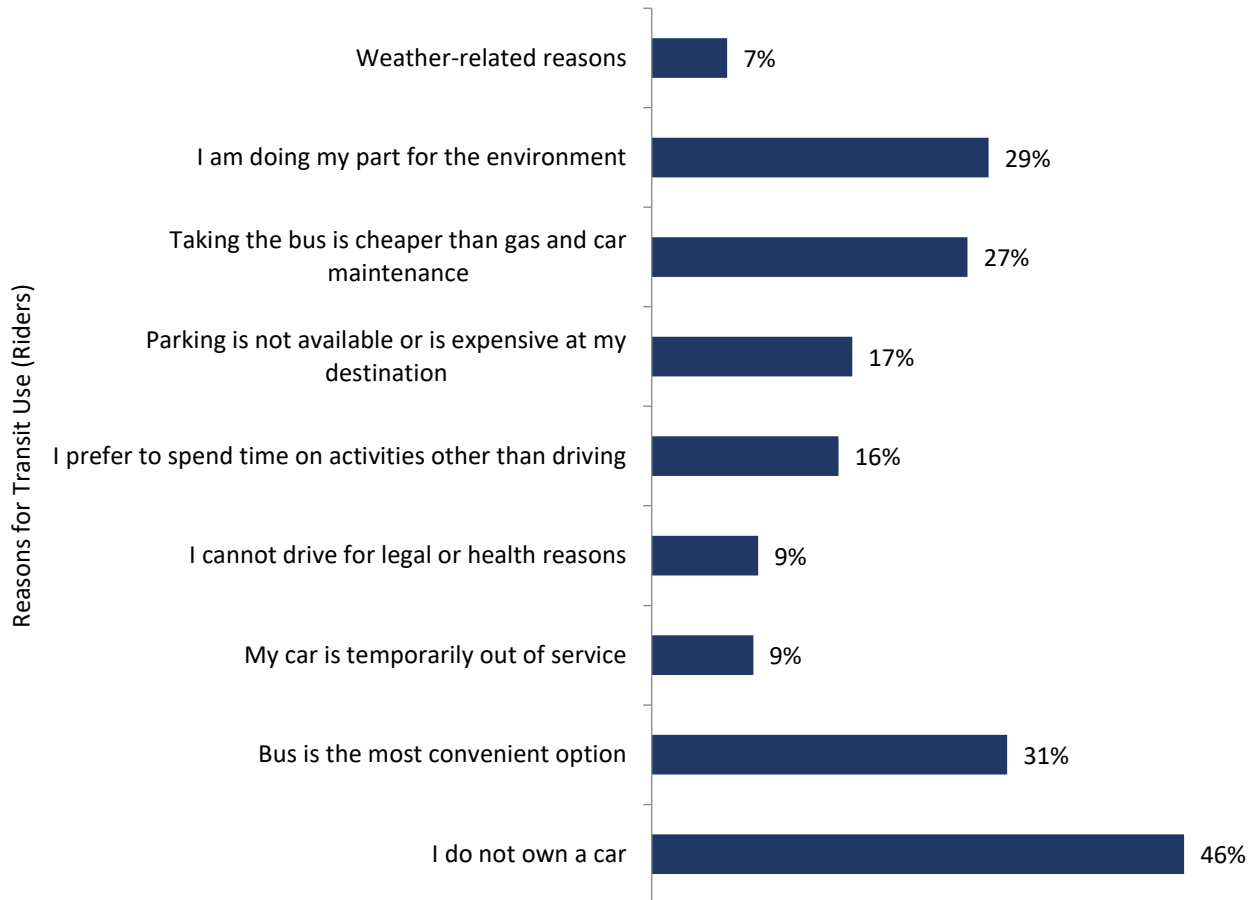
Figure 7: Rider Opinions on Sources of Rider Information



REASONS FOR TRANSIT USE

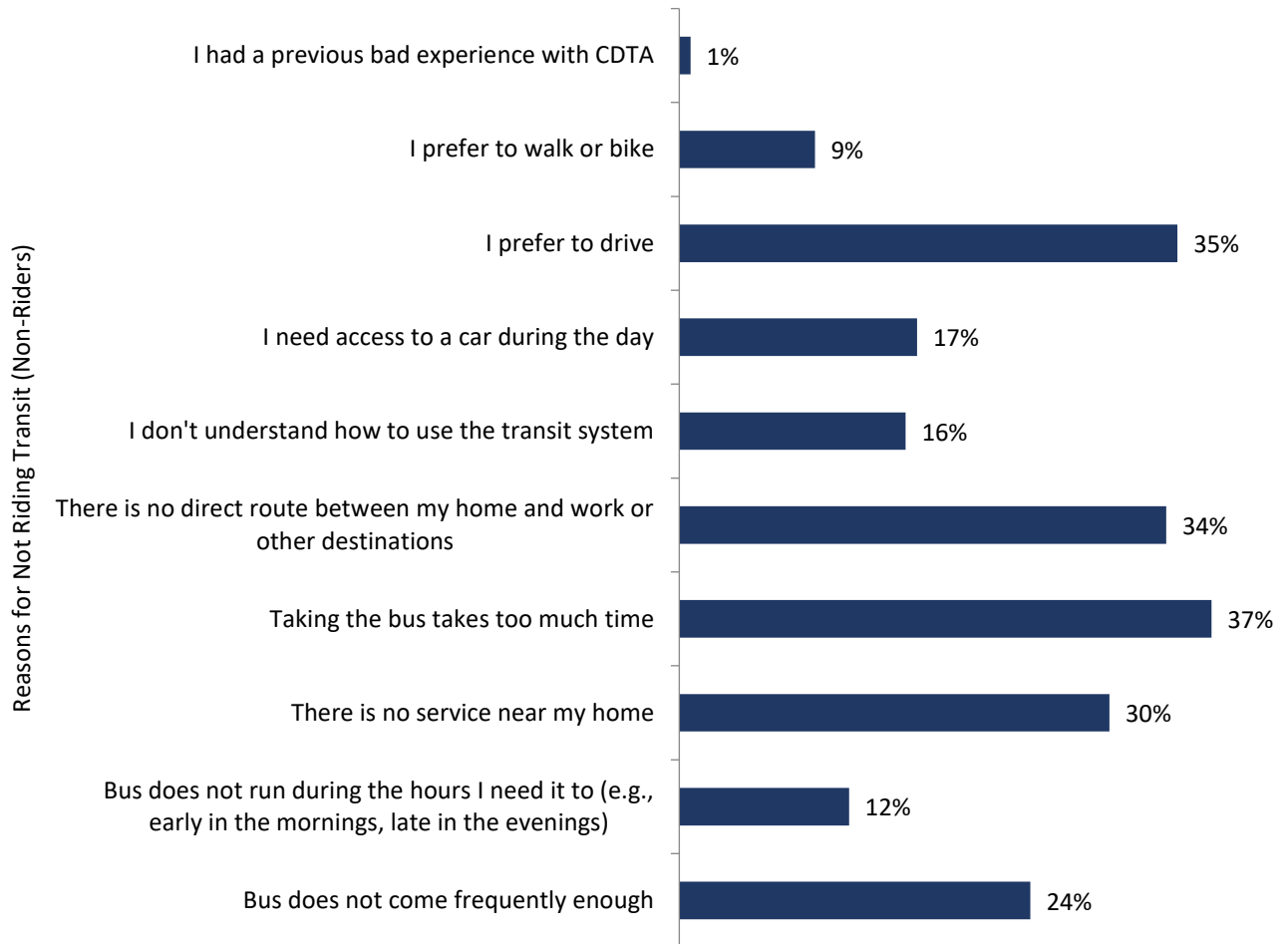
CDTA riders were asked to select reasons why they ride transit (**Figure 8**); respondents who do not ride transit were asked to select reasons why not (**Figure 9**). The most common reason among riders for riding transit was not owning a car (46 percent). In addition, about 30 percent of respondents said that “doing their part for the environment” and convenience contributed to their ridership.

Figure 8: Reasons for Transit Use



Non-riders were mixed in their reasons for not riding transit. Nearly 40 percent non-riders said taking the bus takes too much time and 35 percent of non-riders said they prefer to drive. Over 30 percent also said there is no direct route between their home and place of work or other destinations of interest.

Figure 9: Reasons for Not Riding Transit



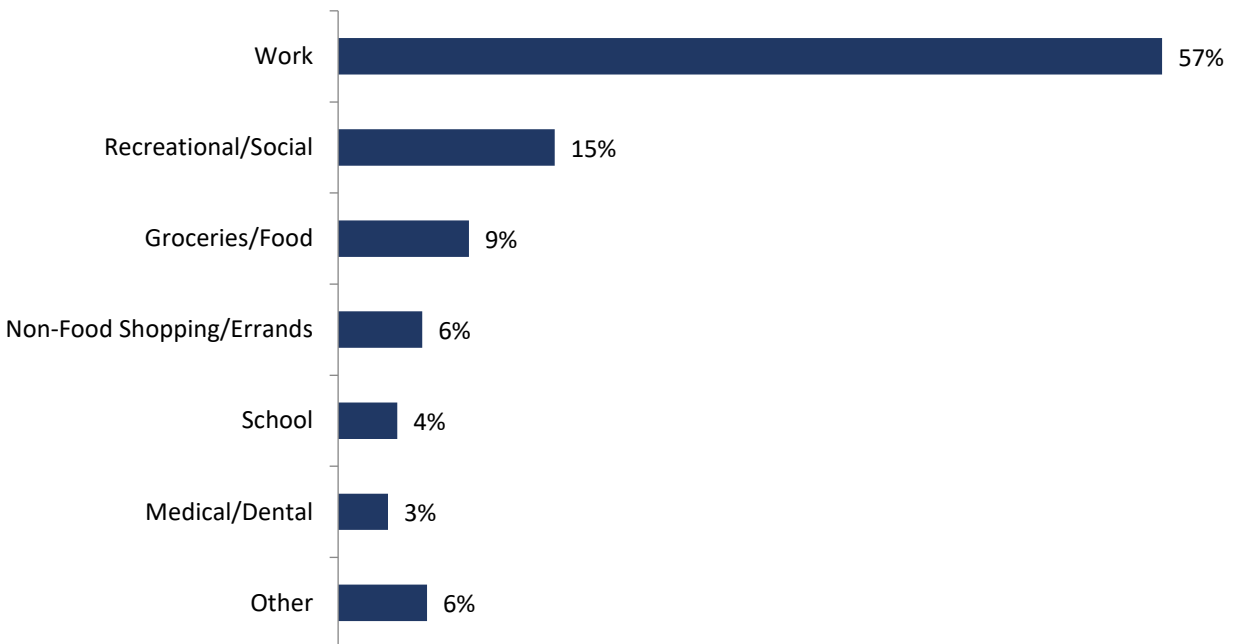
Most Common Trips

CDTA riders who responded to the survey were asked about the most common trip they take on CDTA services.

PURPOSE

For survey respondents who indicated they are transit riders, getting to and from work was the most common reasons for using CDTA transit services. Respondents who listed “other” provided a variety of other reasons for using CDTA services, including alternative transportation when their car is being repaired, accessing the airport, and engaging in volunteer work in downtown Albany.

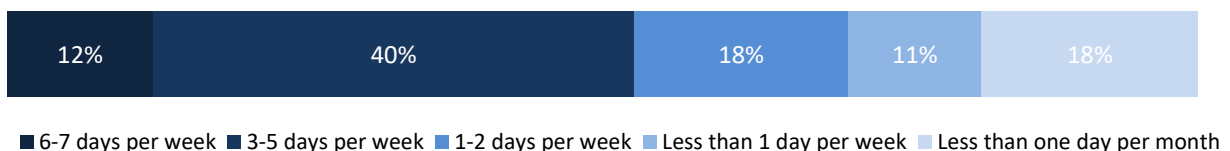
Figure 10: Purpose of Trip



FREQUENCY OF TRIP

Over 50 percent of CDTA riders said they make their most common trip at least three days a week (**Figure 11**).

Figure 11: Frequency of Trip



TIME PERIOD

Rider-respondents for CDTA indicated that they most often travelled during the week, departing in the morning and returning in the afternoon (**Figure 12** and **Figure 13**)

Figure 12: When do you most commonly take this trip?

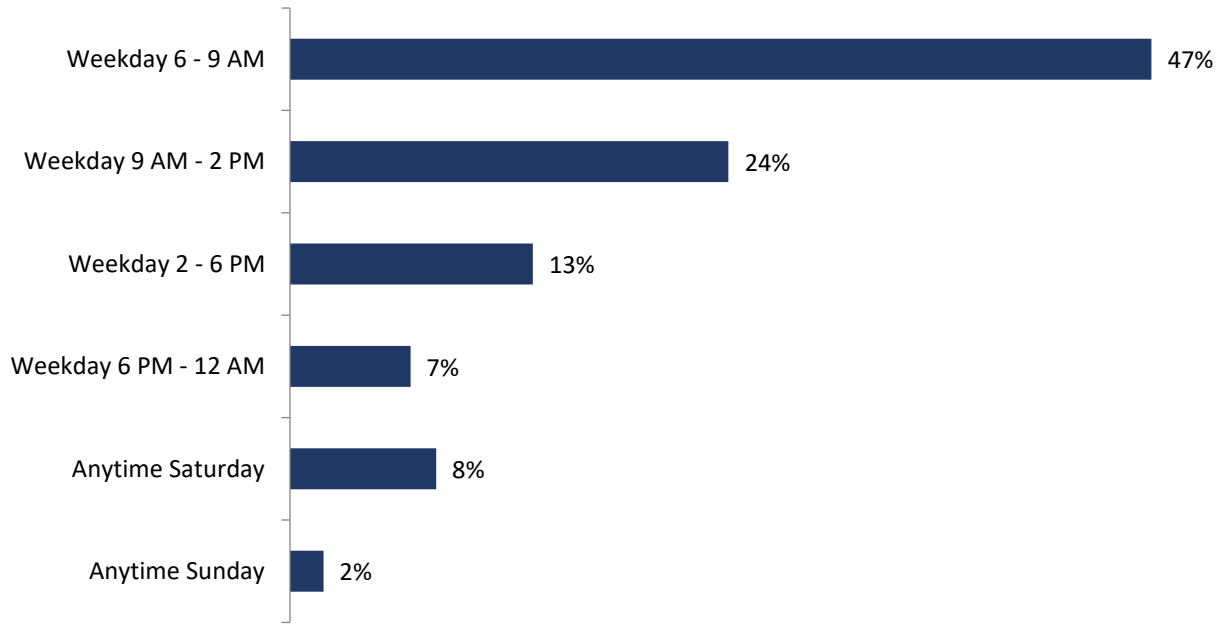
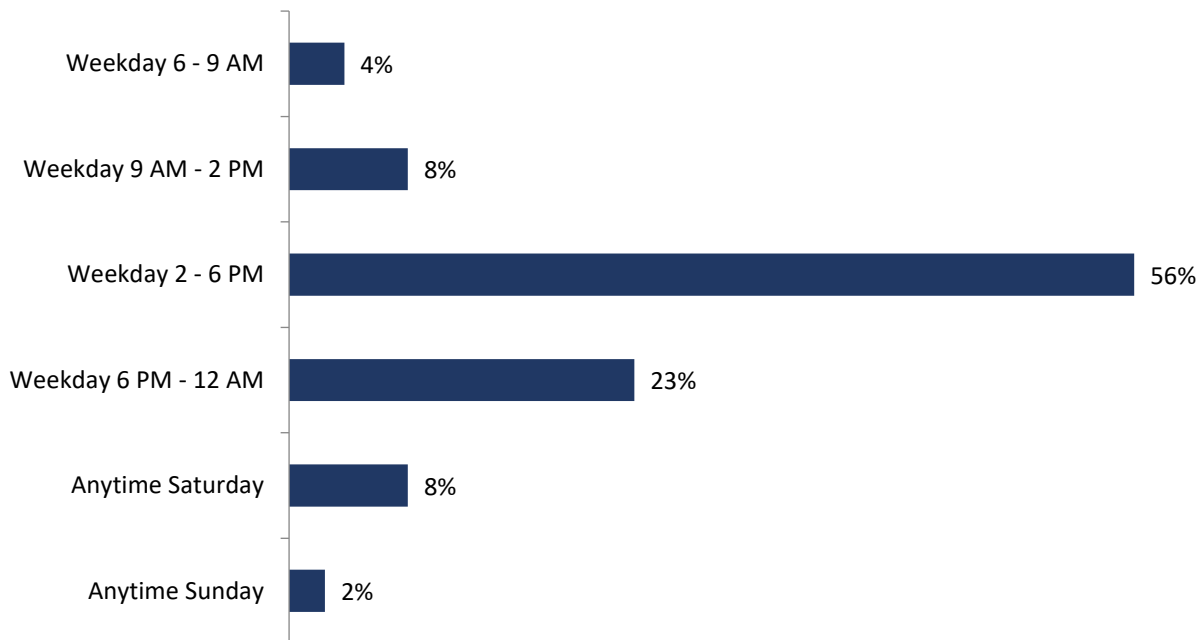


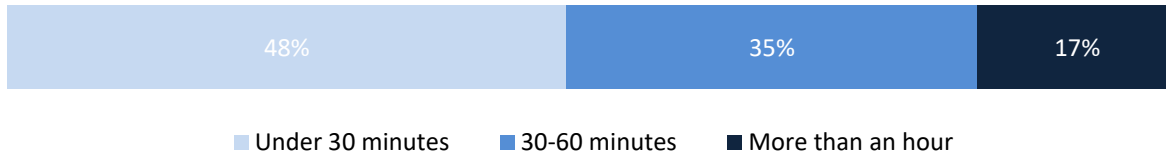
Figure 13: When do you typically return from this trip?



JOURNEY DURATION

About half of rider-respondents said the most common trip they take on CDTA is under 30 minutes and 17 percent said their most common trip takes over an hour (**Figure 14**).

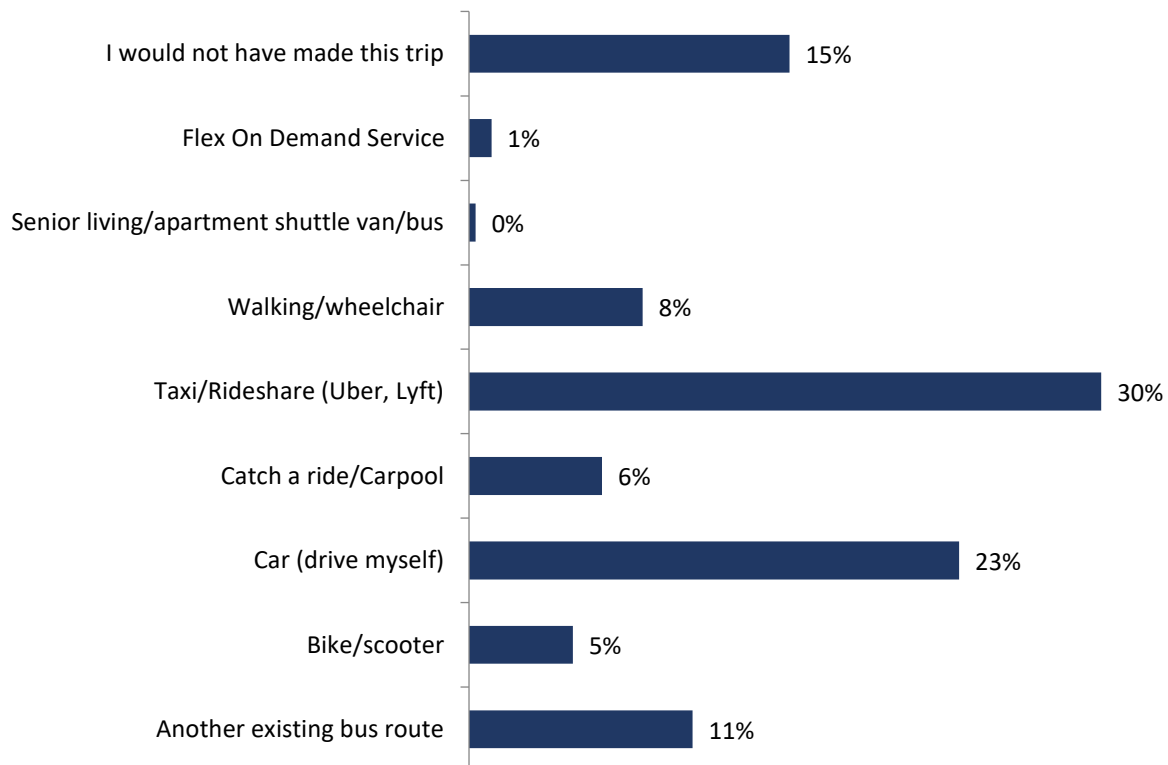
Figure 14: Duration of Most Common Journey



ALTERNATIVE MODE

When asked how they would have gotten to their destination had the CDTA route they usually take not been available, rider-respondents were most likely to say they would have used a rideshare app like Uber or Lyft or driven themselves. Fifteen percent of CDTA riders said they would not have made the trip at all (**Figure 15**).

Figure 15: How would you get to your destination were CDTA service not available?



Trade-Off Questions

Respondents were asked to indicate their preference between two options for improving service. These questions received responses from 806 riders and 98 non-riders.

Survey respondents were asked their preferences regarding the following tradeoffs:

- Fewer bus stops along route for faster bus travel versus more bus stops along a route for shorter walking distances to/from destinations.
- Expanded service to new areas versus improved service/schedules and reliability in the existing service area.
- More weekend service versus improved weekday service schedules
- Longer service hours versus more frequent service
- Buses running more frequently on fewer streets versus buses running less frequently on more streets.

Among riders and non-riders, respondents were slightly more likely to prefer adding bus stops to removing them (**Figure 16**). Non-riders differed from riders in that they were more likely to prefer adding service to new areas rather than expanding service in existing areas; this is unsurprising, since riders are people for whom existing service is most convenient (**Figure 17**). Half of riders indicated they would prefer adding weekend service over improving weekday service whereas non-riders slightly preferred more weekday service (**Figure 18**).

Responses to the final two tradeoff questions indicate that riders and non-riders are interested in improving the frequency of buses. Both groups strongly preferred more frequent bus service rather than longer service hours (**Figure 19**). Riders and non-riders also agreed that they would rather see more buses on fewer streets than vice versa (**Figure 20**).

Figure 16: Fewer Stops or More Stops?

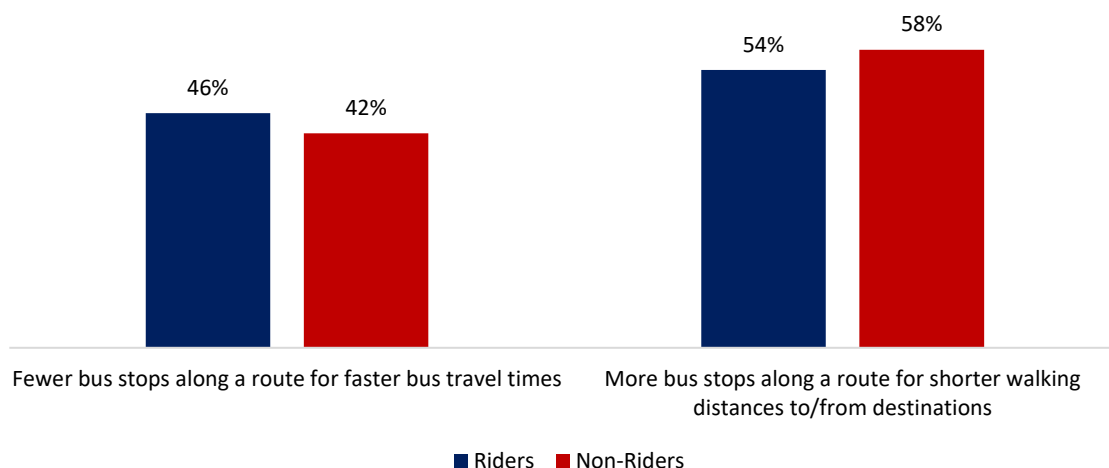


Figure 17: Improve Service in Existing Areas or Expand to New Areas?

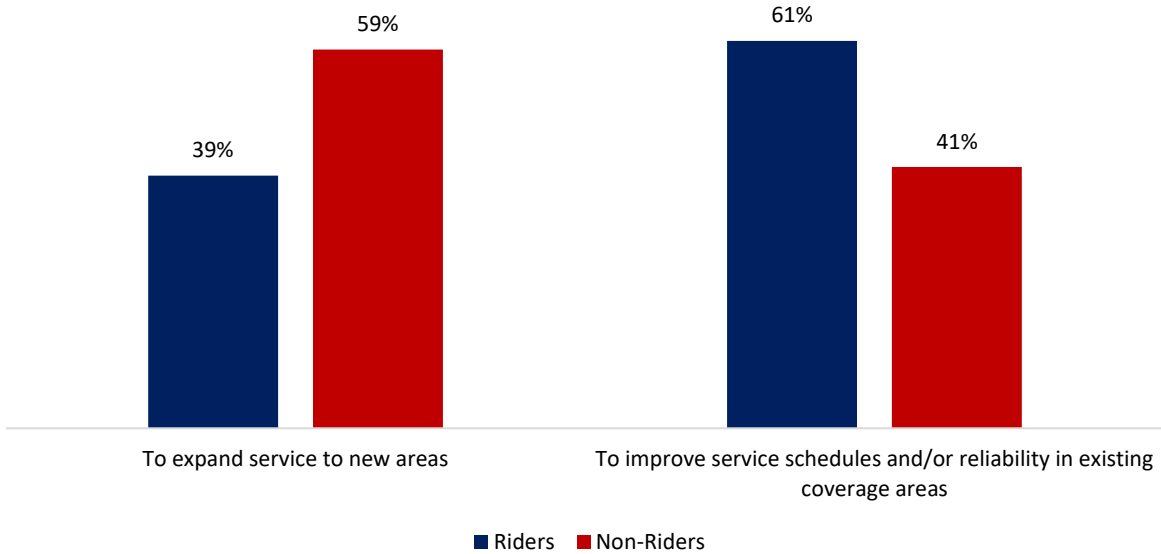


Figure 18: Increase Weekend Service or Weekday Service?

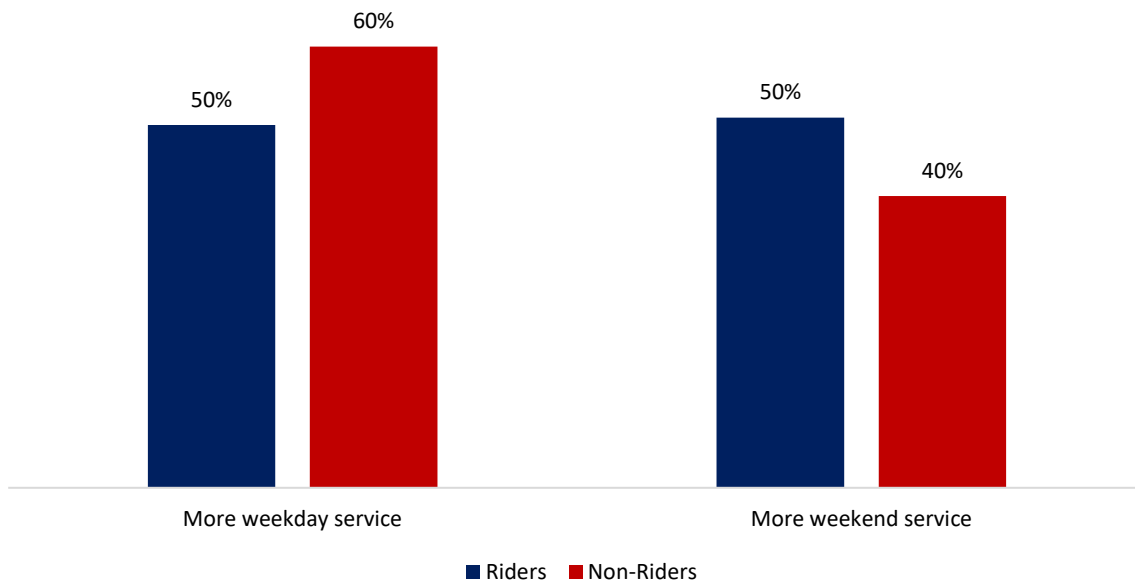


Figure 19: More Frequent Service or Longer Service Span?

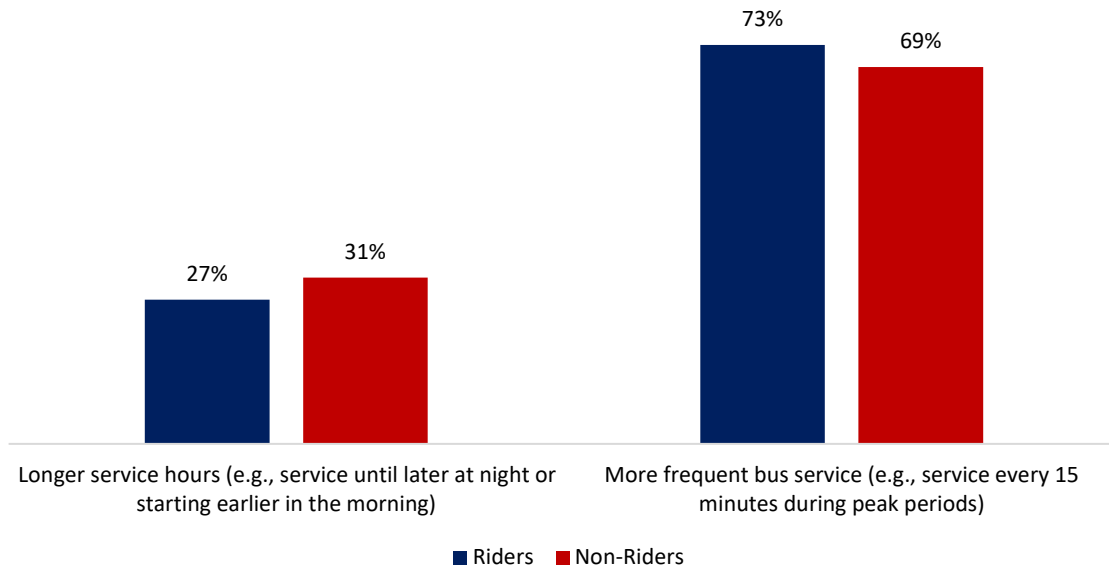
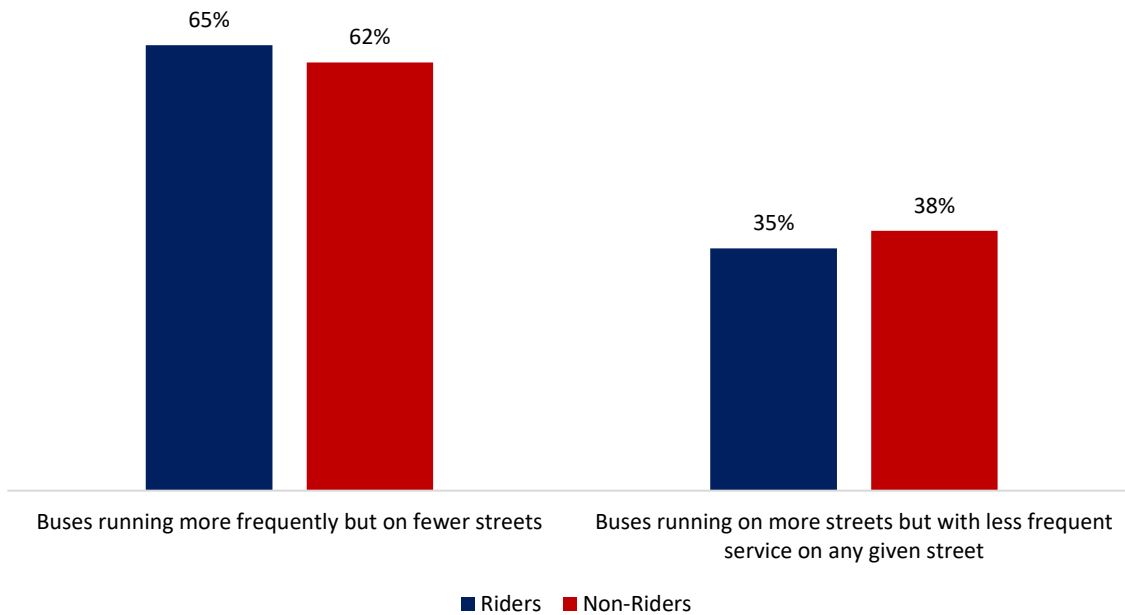


Figure 20: More Streets or Fewer Streets?

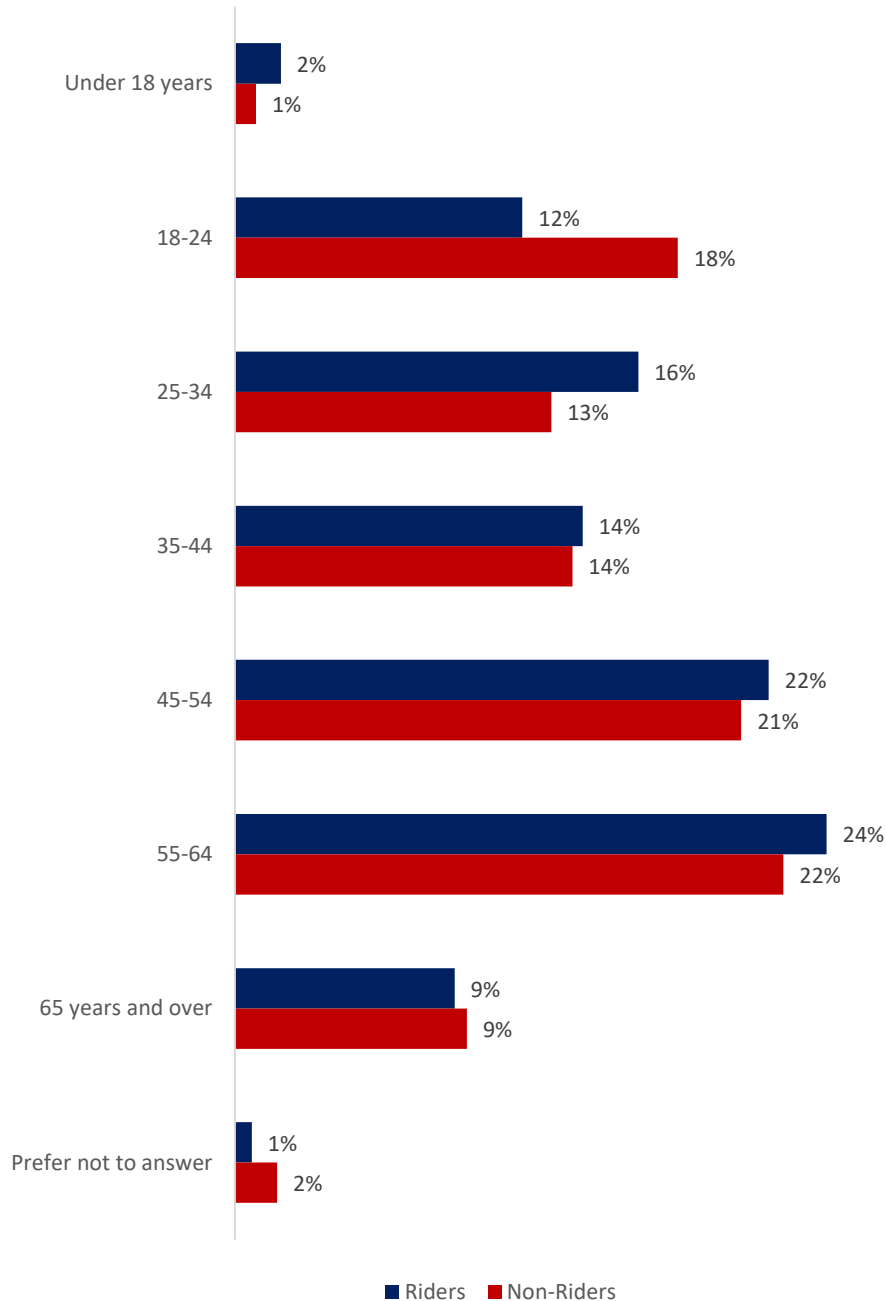


Demographics

AGE

Survey respondents were asked to indicate the age bracket they fall into. As shown in **Figure 21**, the largest group of both riders and non-riders was age 55-64 (24 percent and 22 percent, respectively).

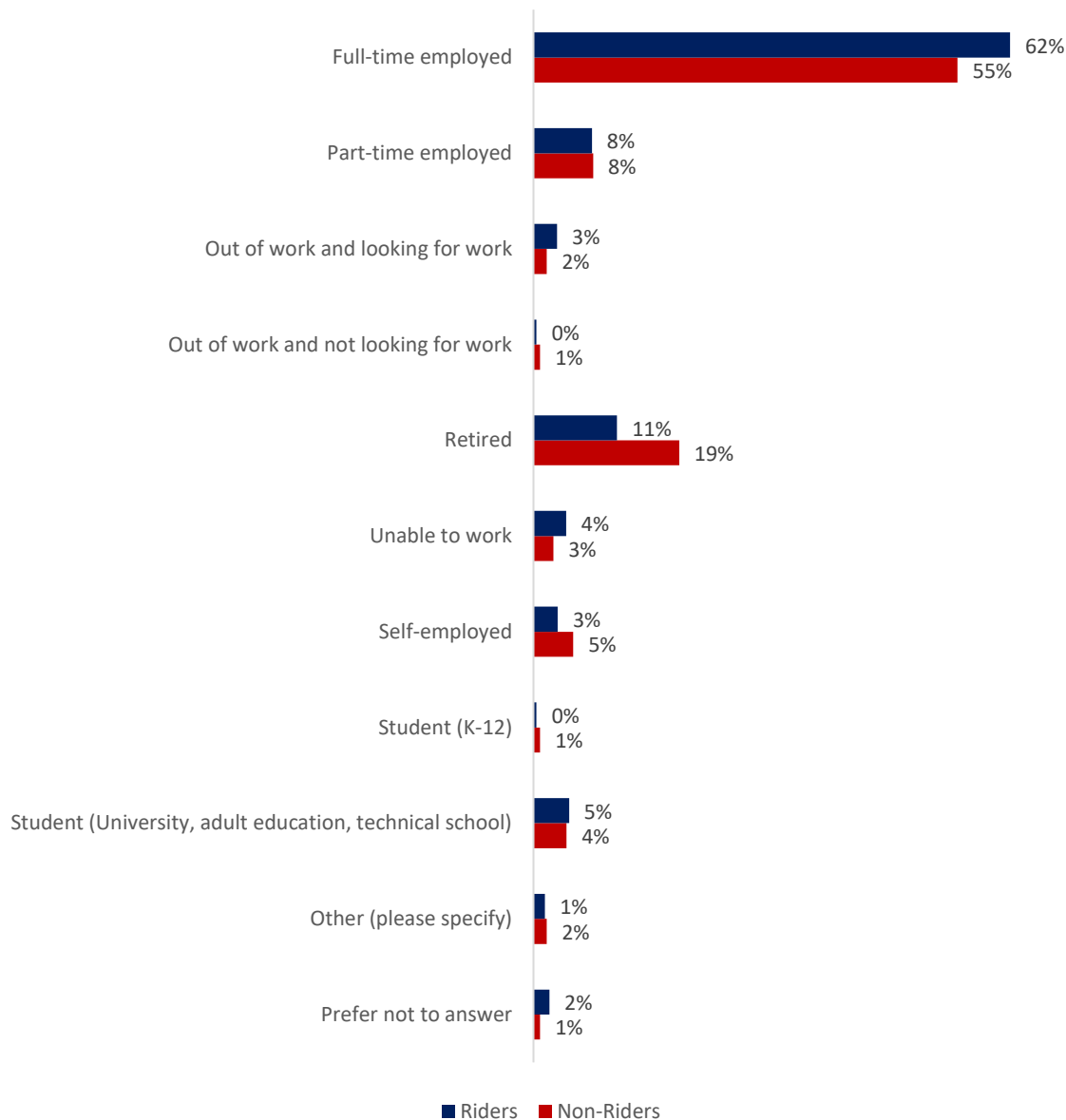
Figure 21: CDTA Survey Results by Age



EMPLOYMENT STATUS

Most survey respondents reported being employed full-time; over 60 percent of riders and 55 percent of non-riders. The percentage of non-riders who are retired was nearly double that of riders (**Figure 22**).

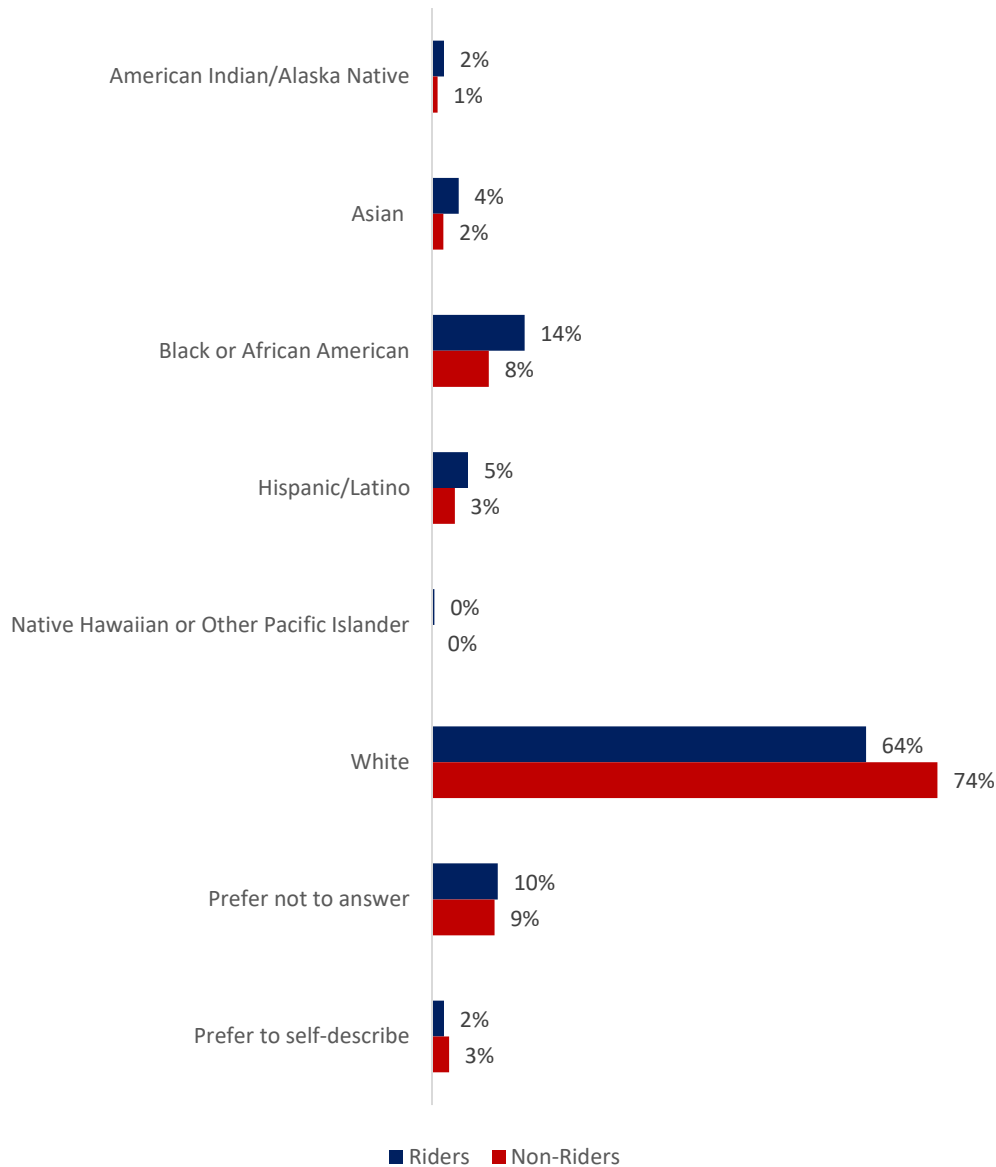
Figure 22: CDTA Survey Responses by Employment Status



RACE AND ETHNICITY

Most survey respondents indicated they are White. A slightly larger share of riders indicated belonging to a minority group (**Figure 23**).

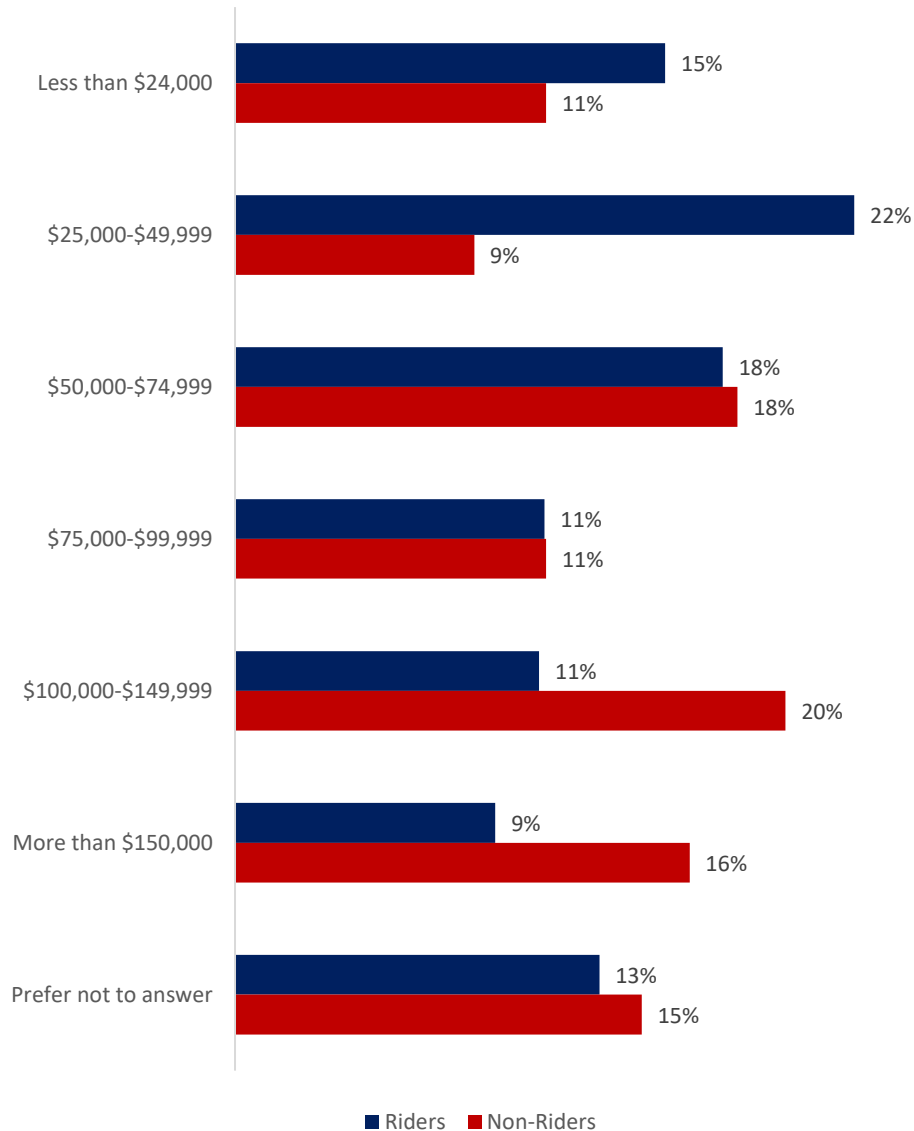
Figure 23: CDTA Survey Responses by Race/Ethnicity



HOUSEHOLD INCOME

Among survey respondents, riders reported having lower household incomes than non-riders. The largest income range among riders was \$25,000 to \$49,999 a year, whereas the largest income range among non-riders was \$100,000 to \$149,999 a year (**Figure 24**).

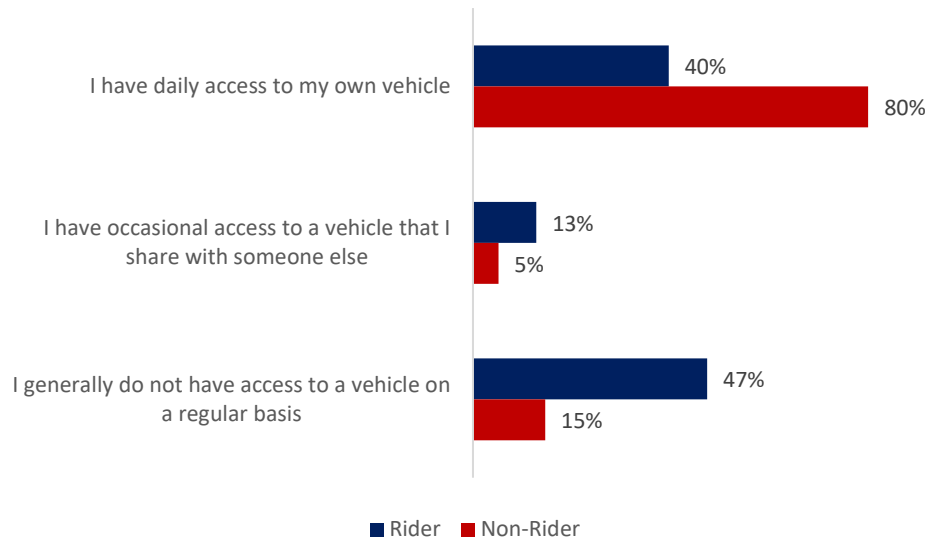
Figure 24: CDTA Survey Responses by Income



ACCESS TO A PERSONAL VEHICLE

Among survey respondents, 40 percent of CDTA riders have daily access to their own vehicle. By comparison, 80 percent of non-rider respondents have daily access to a vehicle (**Figure 25**).

Figure 25: CDTA Survey Responses by Access to Vehicle



HOME LOCATION

The survey asked respondents to provide the zip code where they live. Responses were clustered most densely around Albany, Troy, and Schenectady and became more scattered further from the core service areas (**Figure 26** and **Figure 27**).

Figure 26: Home Locations of Survey Respondents, Capital Region

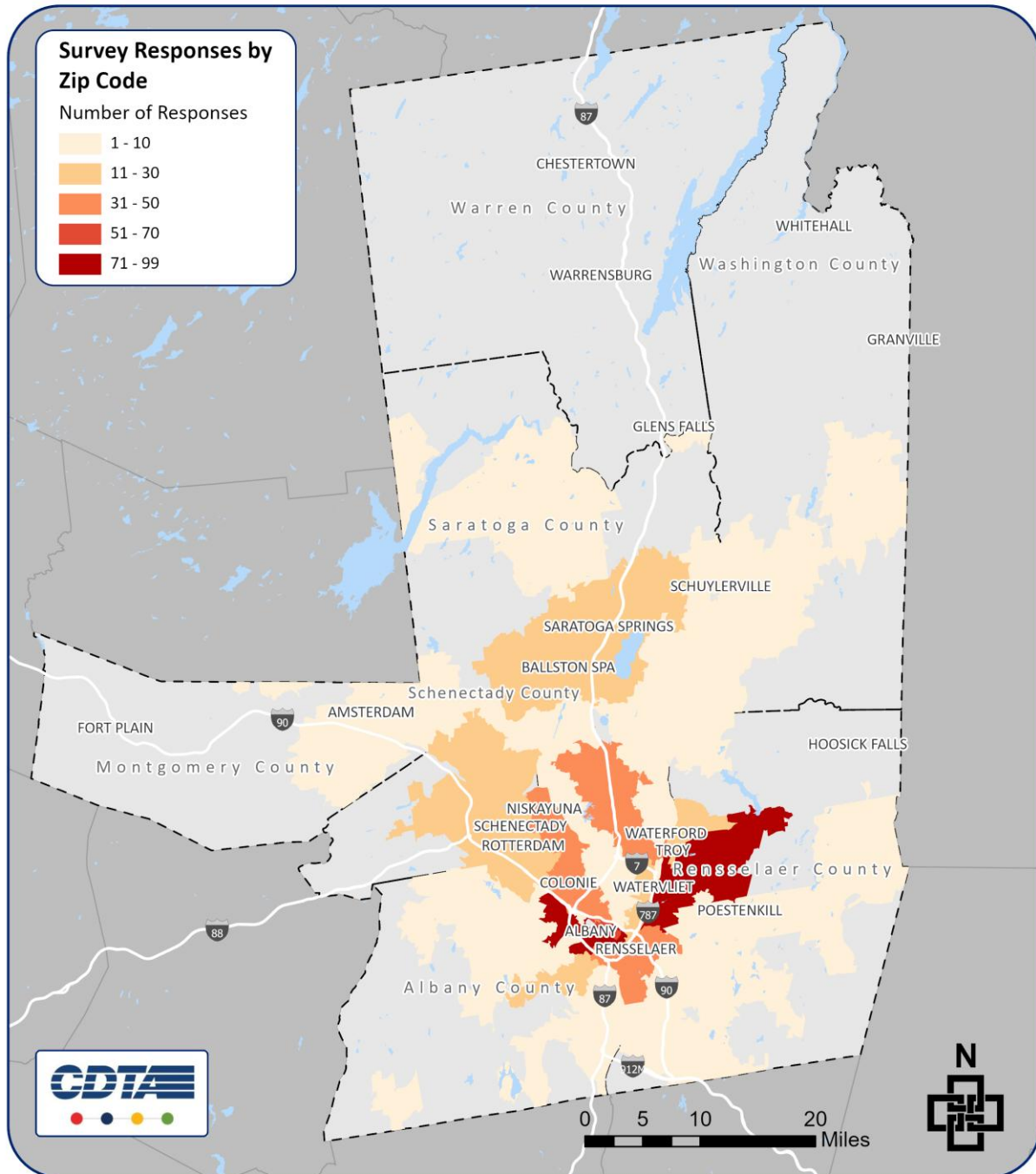
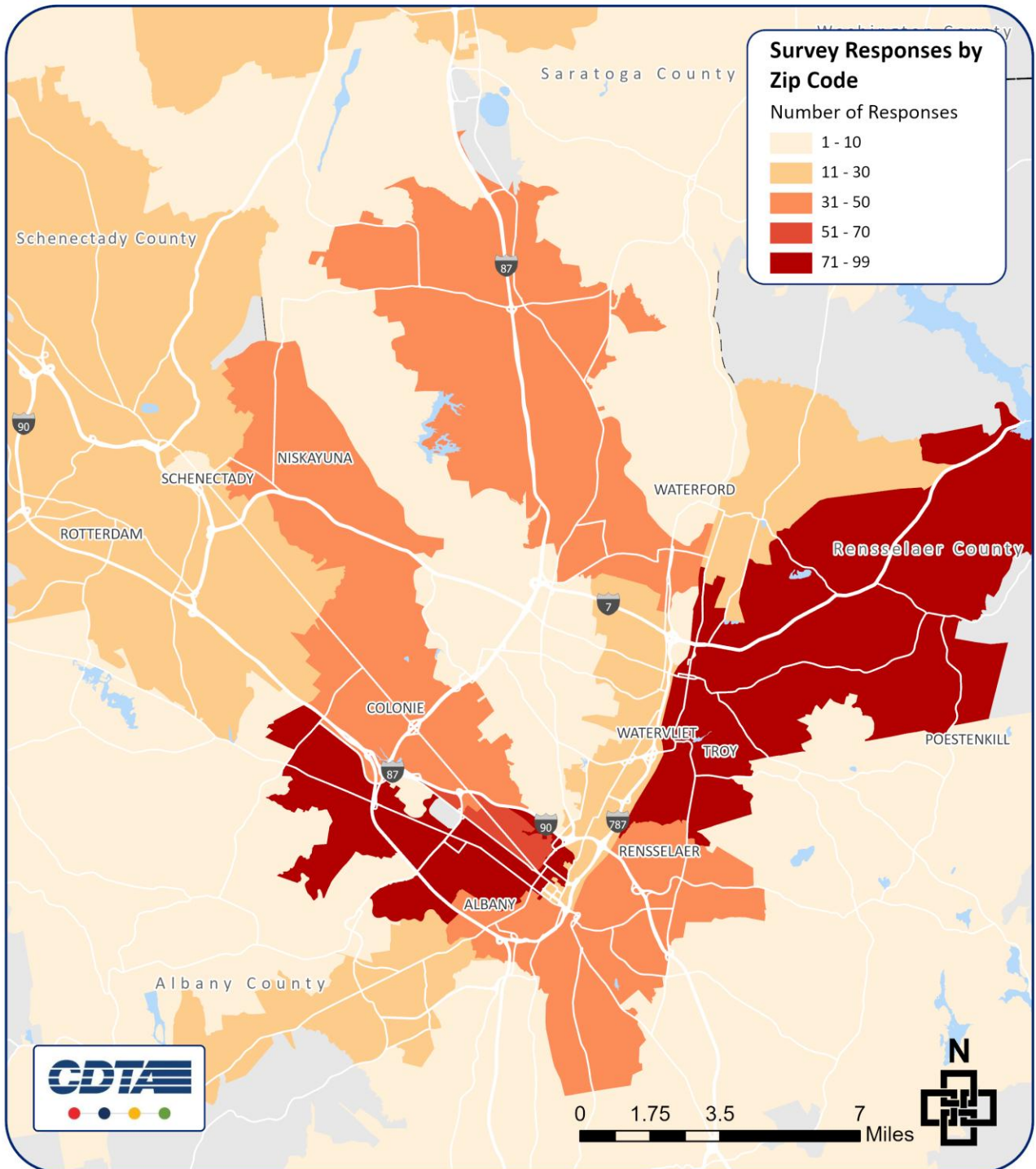


Figure 27: Home Locations of Survey Respondents, Albany



Free Responses

The survey also asked respondents for other comments regarding CDTA service. The most-commonly mentioned issues and concerns raised by respondents are summarized here.

Requests for new or additional routes and destinations

Many responses included suggestions for new or additional routes and destinations, including:

- Empire State Plaza
- Clifton Park
- Glens Falls
- Ravena/Greenville
- Poestenkill
- Skidmore College
- Target and Amazon distribution centers

Increase in frequency of buses and span of service

Respondents requested an increase in weekend service span and an increase in bus frequency, especially during commute hours.

Reliability of bus service

Several riders expressed that buses are frequently running late and expressed frustration about missed trips.

Improved bus stops and shelters

A common theme of the survey responses was the need for improved bus stops. Riders requested more benches and shelters for protection from the elements as well as more frequent trash pickup at bus stops.

Improved rider information

Riders said they would appreciate access to accurate real-time tracking and notifications on schedule changes in the Navigator app.

Concerns about operator behavior

Respondents expressed concern about behavior of CDTA operators and customer service representatives, complaining of rudeness and frequently driving past riders at stops.

Increased access to jobs

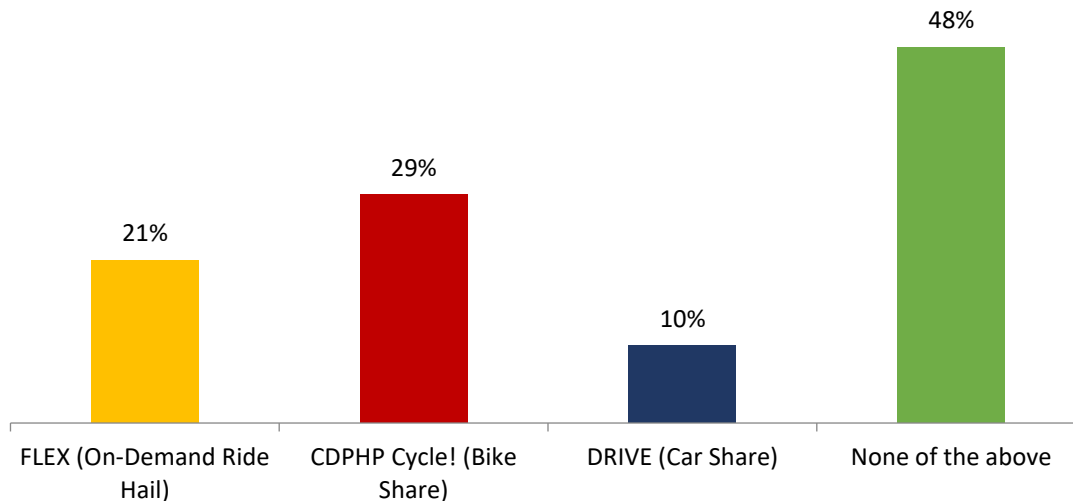
Employees said they would like to see more access to retail job centers and service schedules that align with atypical working hours.

FLEX, CDPHP Cycle!, and DRIVE Survey

In addition to the community survey focused on CDTA's fixed-route transit, a separate online survey collected feedback about FLEX, CDPHP Cycle!, and DRIVE. The survey was available online throughout February 2024 and received a total of 962 responses. Of these, approximately 21 percent were from FLEX users, 29 percent from CDPHP Cycle!, 10 percent from DRIVE users, and 48 percent from individuals who do not utilize any of the three services (**Figure 28**).

The survey asked respondents to provide details about their use of the respective service, including when and why they use the service, opinions about the existing service, and preferences for future improvements.

Figure 28: Which of the following services do you use?



Key Takeaways

The following key themes and findings emerged from the analysis of the FLEX, CDPHP Cycle!, and DRIVE survey results.

FLEX

- **Frequently Used, but Higher Dissatisfaction:** FLEX is the most frequently used service compared to CDPHP Cycle! and DRIVE but has higher dissatisfaction among users.
- **Desire for Lower Wait Times:** Many users said the service is only sometimes available and indicated a strong preference for wait times to be under 30 minutes.
- **Often Used as a Commute Option:** The most common trip purpose among FLEX users was work, with the majority of trips occurring on weekdays.
- **FLEX as a Complement to Fixed-Route:** Most respondents use FLEX because they do not have a car available or current fixed-route service does not go where they need. Many riders also use FLEX to connect to CDTA fixed-route bus service.

CDPHP CYCLE!

- **Mostly Used for Exercise and Enjoyment:** Most respondents use CDPHP Cycle! for exercise, enjoyment, or other recreational purposes, particularly on weekends.
- **Rarely Used for Connections:** CDPHP Cycle! users are least likely to use the service to connect to another CDTA service, such as FLEX, DRIVE, or fixed-route bus.
- **High Satisfaction Rates:** CDPHP Cycle! has the best availability and highest satisfaction compared to FLEX and DRIVE.

DRIVE

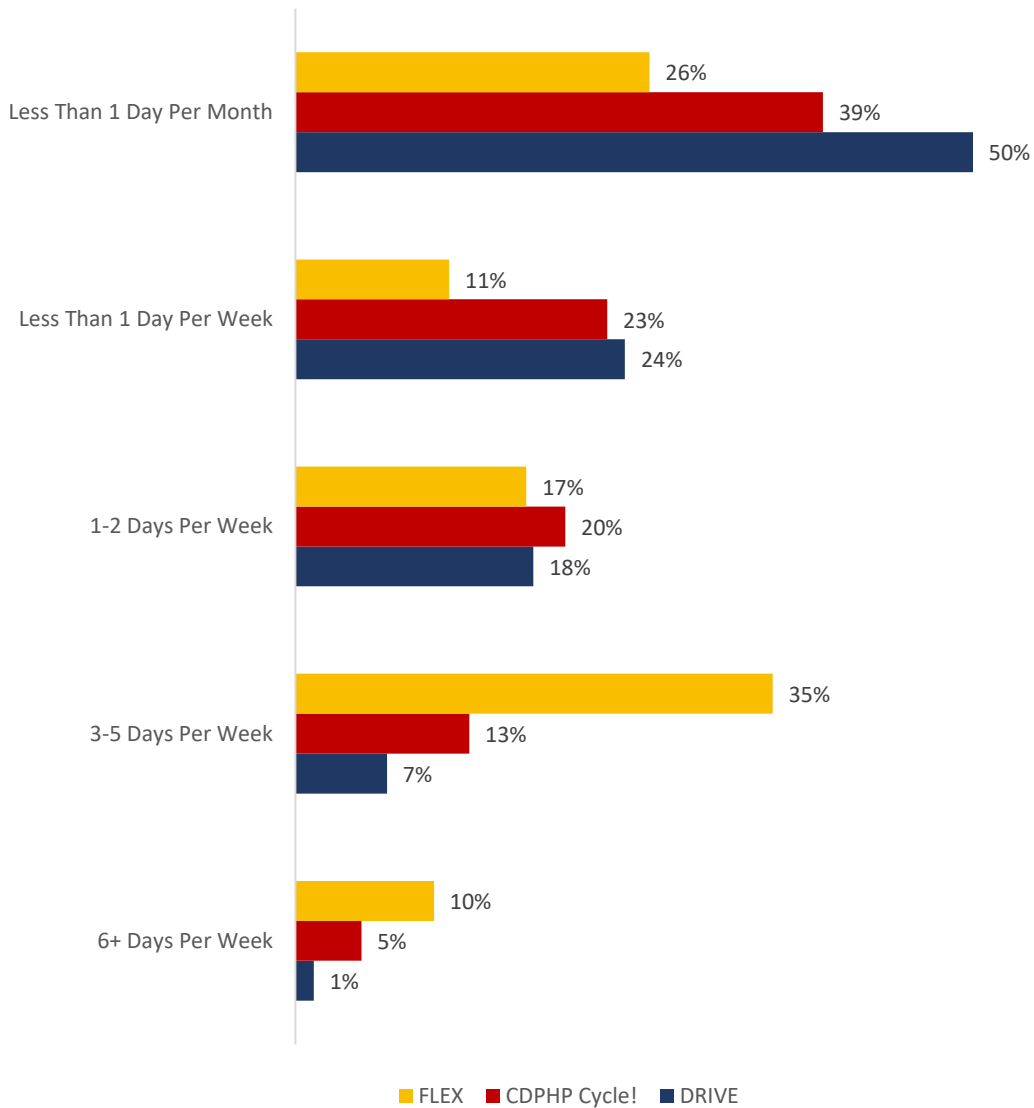
- **Often Used for Long, One-Seat Trips:** Many DRIVE trips are over an hour long and are less likely to be used as a connection to or replacement for other CDTA services.
- **Difficulty Using App:** Respondents indicated that the Miocar Networks app is difficult to use compared to FLEX and CDPHP Cycle!.
- **Desire for More Vehicles:** Respondents slightly prefer to add more vehicles to existing DRIVE service areas, rather than expand the service to new areas.
- **Low Availability, but High Satisfaction:** DRIVE users are generally satisfied with the service but noted that it is often not available when they need it.

Results

FREQUENCY OF USE

Figure 29 indicates that FLEX is the most frequently used alternative mode, with nearly half of respondents using the service at least three days a week. CDPHP Cycle! and DRIVE are used less frequently, with 39 percent of respondents using CDPHP Cycle! less than one day a month and 50 percent of respondents using DRIVE less than one day a month.

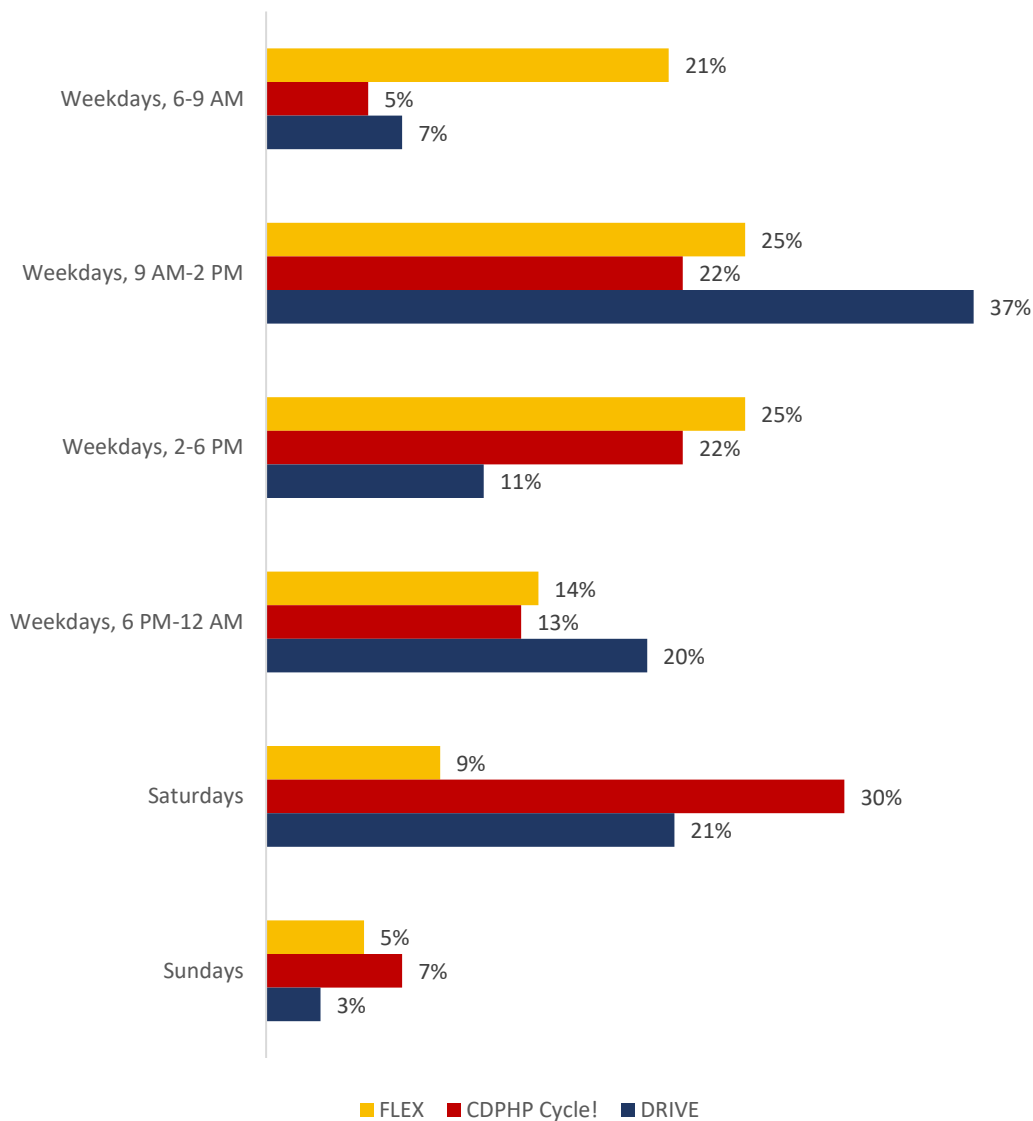
Figure 29: Frequency of Use



TIME PERIOD

As shown in **Figure 30**, FLEX is most commonly used on weekdays and trips are relatively evenly split throughout the day, with about half of trips occurring between 9:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. Only 14 percent of respondents said their most common FLEX trip occurs on weekends. On the other hand, over a third of CDPHP Cycle! trips occur on weekends, with 30 percent occurring on Saturdays. Similar to FLEX, most weekday CDPHP Cycle! trips occur between 9:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. DRIVE trips were also more evenly split between weekdays and weekends than FLEX. Specifically, DRIVE trips most commonly occurred on weekdays between 9:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m., with over a third of trips occurring at this time. However, nearly a quarter of trips also occurred on weekends, with 21 percent occurring on Saturdays.

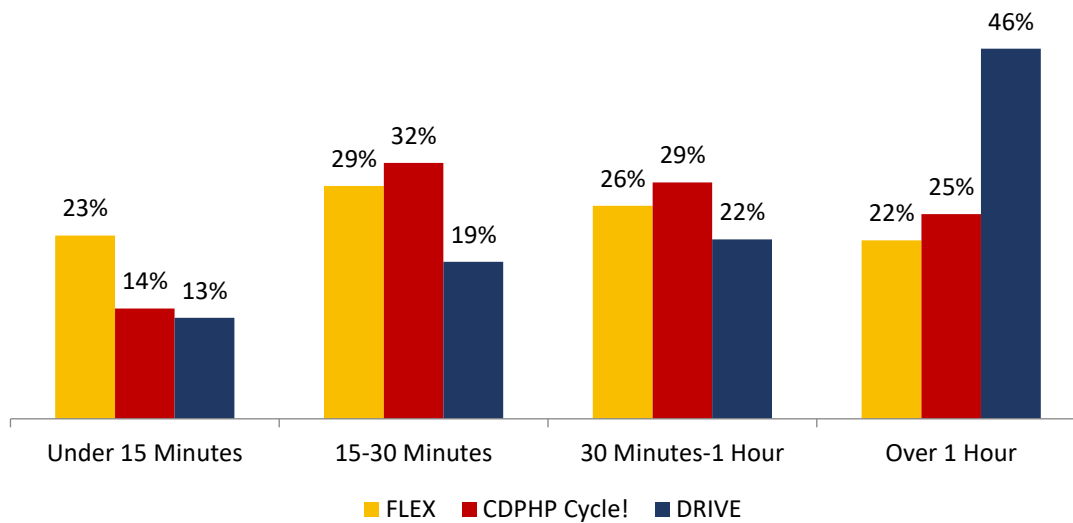
Figure 30: When do you most commonly use the service?



TRAVEL TIME

Travel times for FLEX and CDPHP Cycle! trips are relatively evenly split, with 15 to 30 minutes being the most common duration for both services. However, responses indicate that DRIVE trips are generally longer than the other two services, with nearly half of respondents saying their most common trip is over an hour long (**Figure 31**).

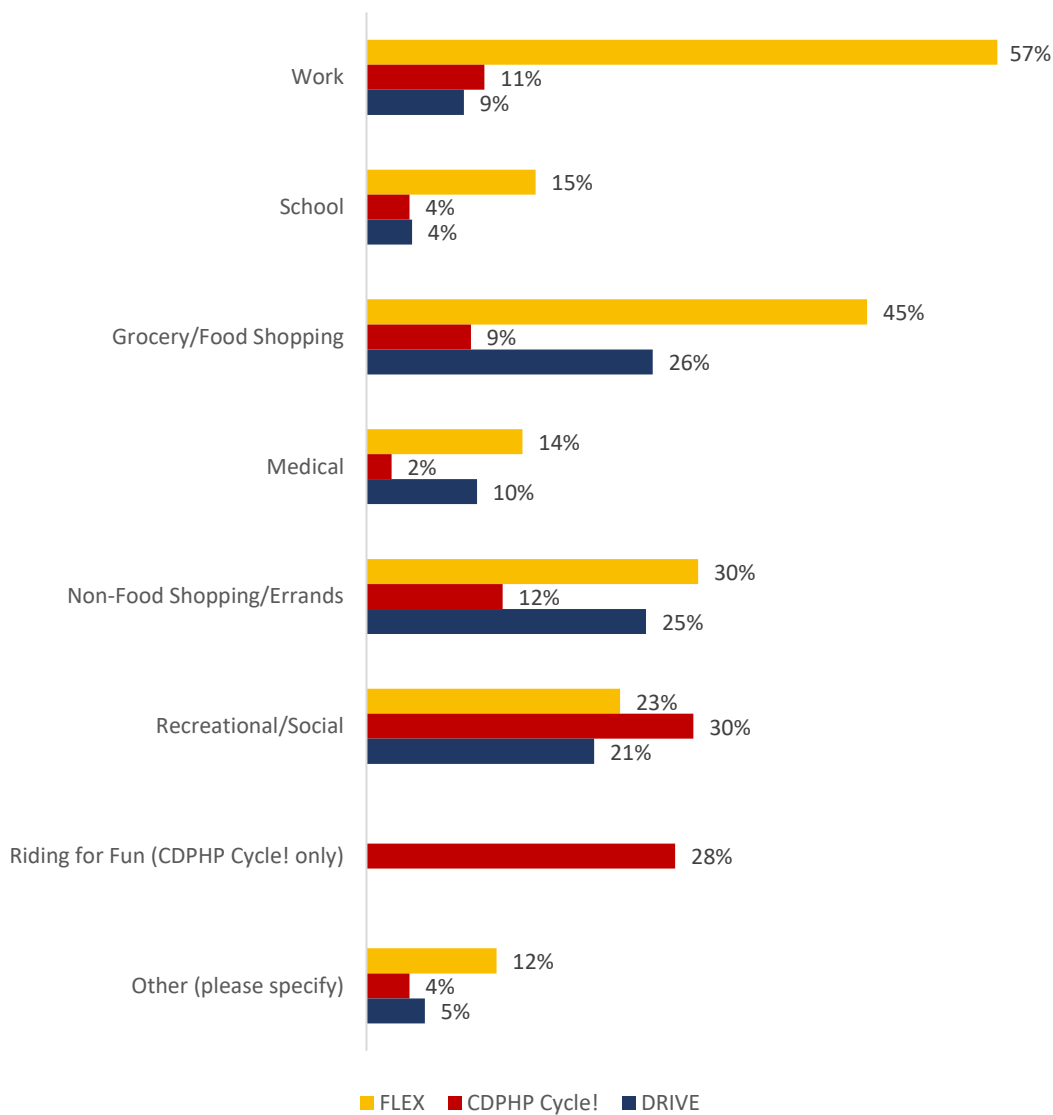
Figure 31: How long does your most common trip using this service take?



PURPOSE

Figure 32 indicates that work trips are the most common reason riders use FLEX, with 57 percent of respondents using FLEX to get to work. This is followed by 45 percent of respondents using FLEX for grocery shopping and 30 percent using FLEX for other shopping or errands. This is in contrast to CDPHP Cycle!, with 30 percent of respondents using CDPHP Cycle! for recreational or social reasons and another 28 percent of respondents using CDPHP Cycle! to ride for fun. Trip purposes for DRIVE were dispersed, with a quarter of respondents using DRIVE for grocery shopping, a quarter using DRIVE for other shopping or errands, and nearly a quarter using DRIVE for recreational or social activities.

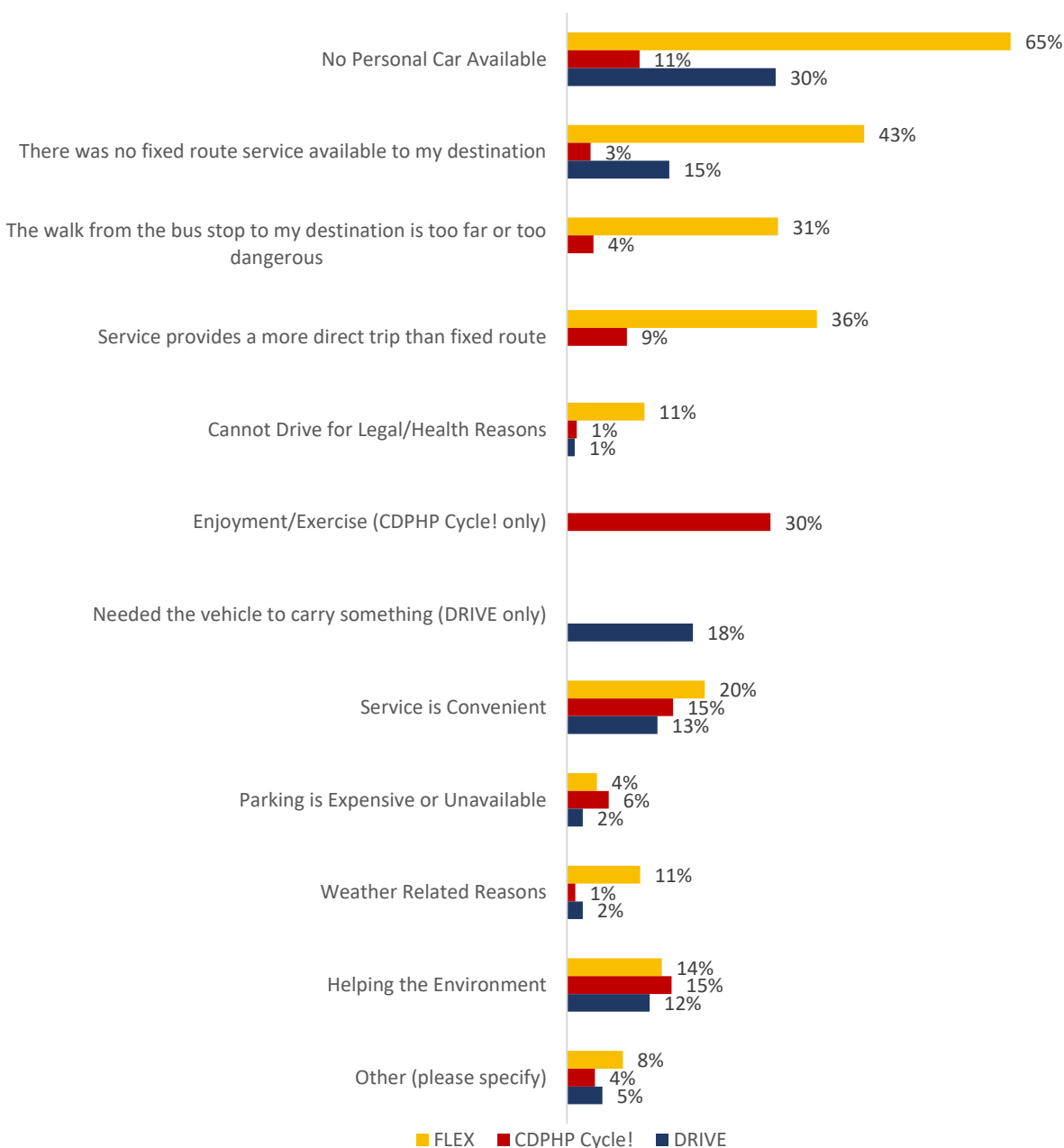
Figure 32: What are the three most common types of trips you make using this service?



TRAVEL BEHAVIOR

The most common reason respondents choose to use FLEX and DRIVE is due to not having a personal car available, with 65 percent of respondents using FLEX for this reason and 30 percent of respondents using DRIVE for this reason. Several respondents also indicated using FLEX and DRIVE because there was not fixed-route service available to their destination. Additionally, 18 percent of respondents use DRIVE because they needed a vehicle to carry something. On the other hand, the most common reason for using CDPHP Cycle! was for enjoyment and exercise, with 30 percent of respondents riding for this reason (**Figure 33**).

Figure 33: Reasons for Using the Service



For non-riders, the most common reasons for not using these services are that the service does not go where they need it to, the service takes too long, is not available when they need it, or they do not understand how to use it (**Figure 34**). Several respondents also indicated they do not use CDPHP Cycle! or DRIVE because they do not know how to ride a bike or drive a car. Over a third of respondents chose “other” as the reason for not using each service, with several respondents specifying that they were unfamiliar with the service, that their transit needs were met by CDTA fixed-route bus service, or that they already have their own car or bike.

Figure 34: What are the reasons you don't use this service?

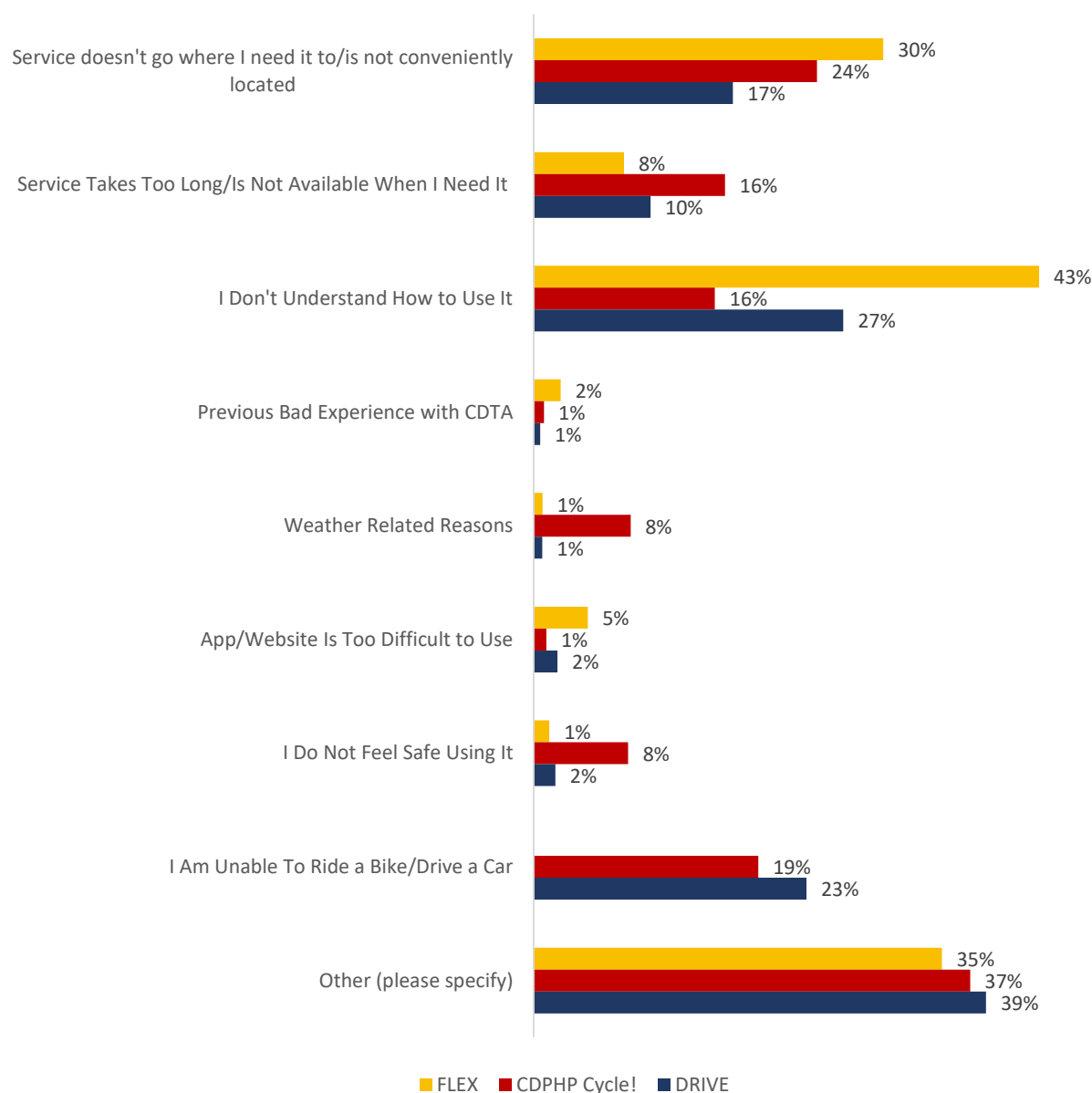
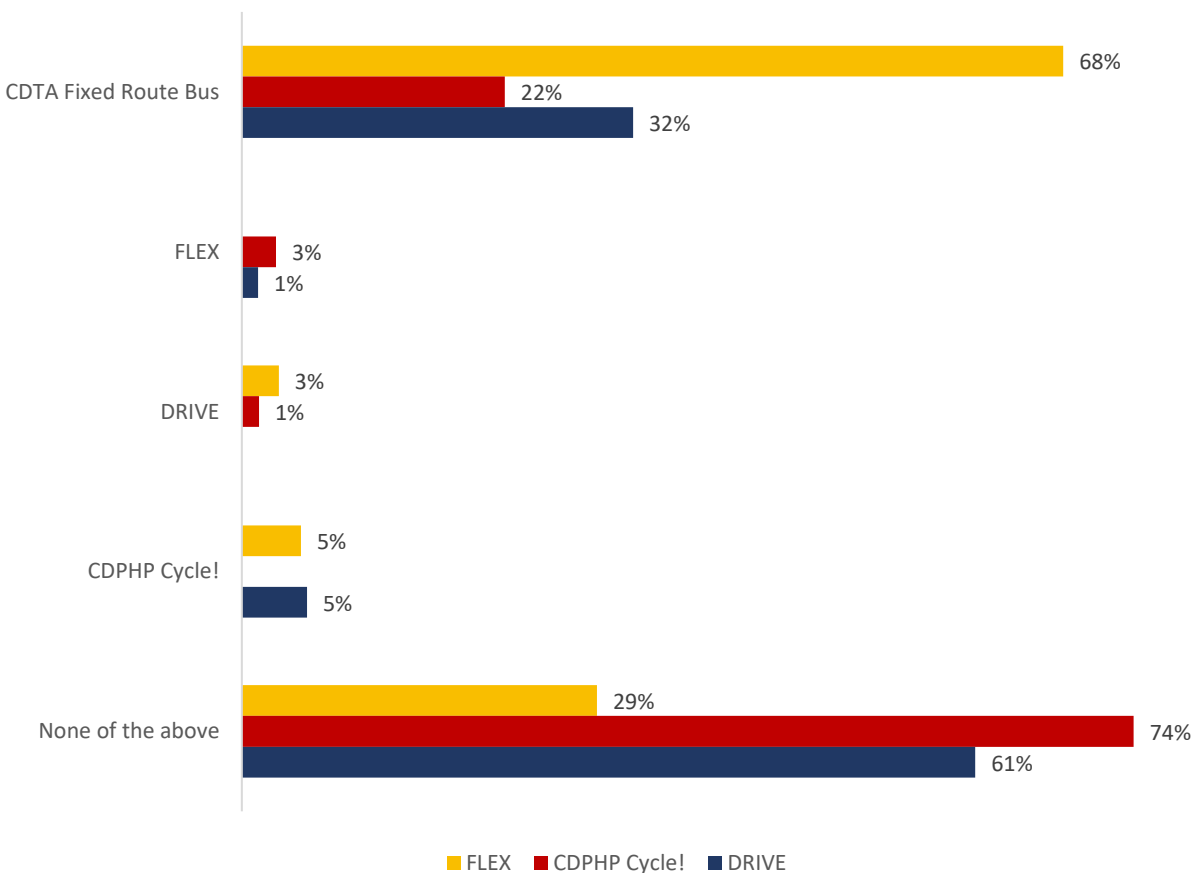


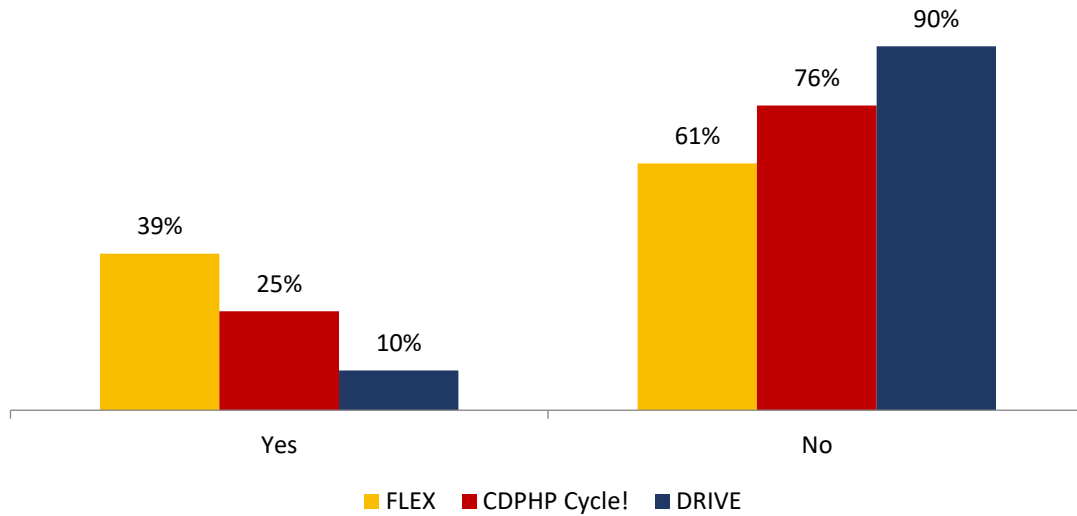
Figure 35 indicates that respondents generally do not use these services to connect to each other but do occasionally use them to connect to CDTA's fixed-route services. Connections are most common among FLEX users, with 68 percent of respondents using FLEX to connect to fixed-route bus services. The percentage of connections decreases for CDPHP Cycle! and DRIVE, with 22 percent of respondents using CDPHP Cycle! to connect to fixed-route bus services and 32 percent of respondents using DRIVE to connect to fixed-route bus services. The majority of respondents do not use CDPHP Cycle! or DRIVE to connect to any other CDTA service, with 74 percent and 61 percent choosing none of the above, respectively.

Figure 35: Do you ever use this service to connect to or from another CDTA service?



The majority of respondents do not use FLEX, CDPHP Cycle!, or DRIVE as a replacement for missing the bus (**Figure 36**). However, among respondents who do use these services as a replacement for missing the bus, FLEX was the most common service used for this purpose at 39 percent.

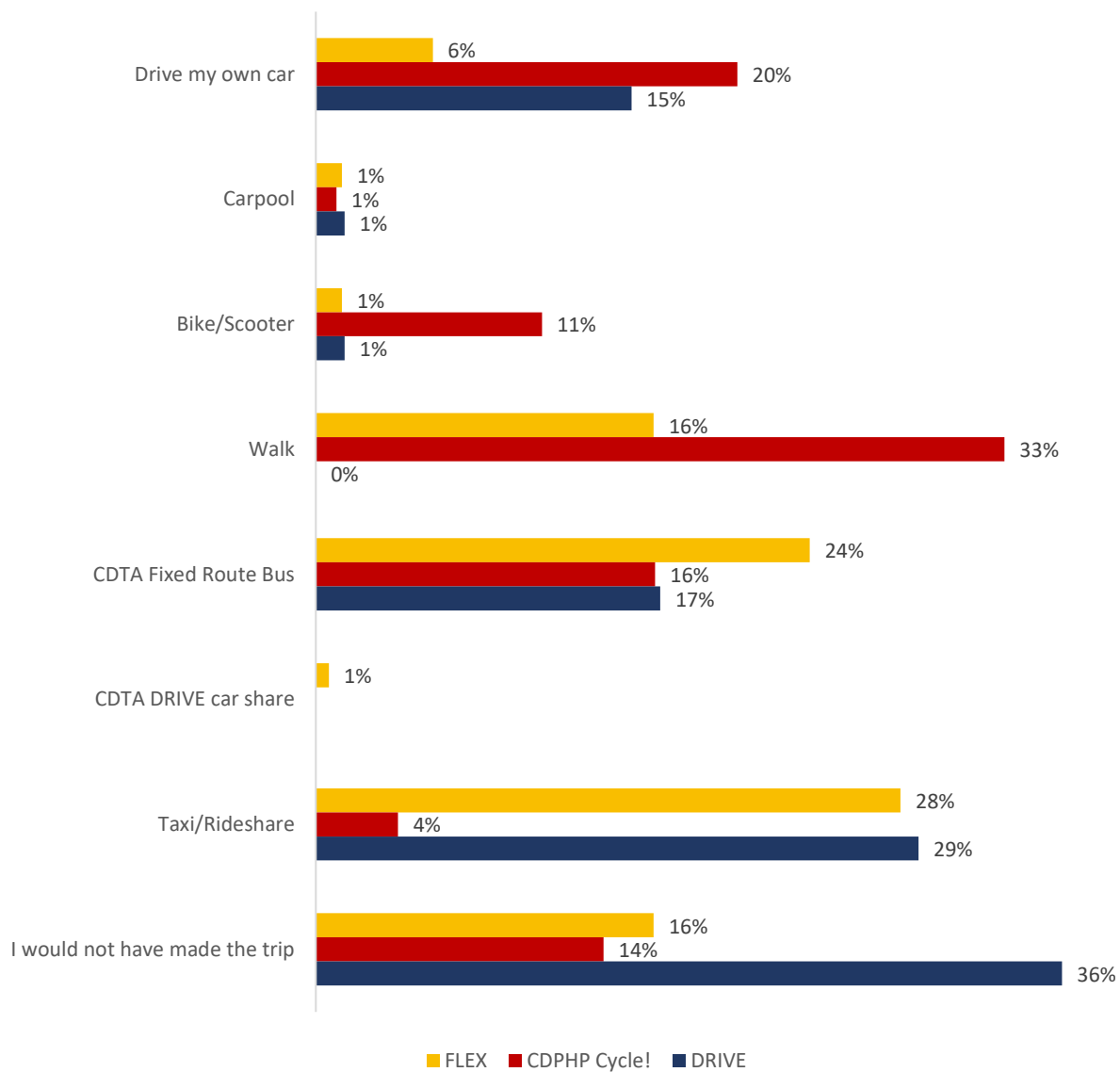
Figure 36: Do you use this service as a replacement for missing the bus?



ALTERNATIVE MODE

If these services were not available, respondents for FLEX are most likely to take a taxi or use rideshare, take the bus, or walk as alternative modes. CDPHP Cycle! users responded that they would walk, drive their own car, or take the bus if the service was unavailable. DRIVE users said they would either take a taxi or use rideshare, take the bus, or drive their own car as a replacement. However, over a third of DRIVE users said they would not have made the trip if the service was unavailable. This is compared to 16 percent of FLEX users and 14 percent of CDPHP Cycle! users who said they would not have made the trip under the same circumstances (**Figure 37**).

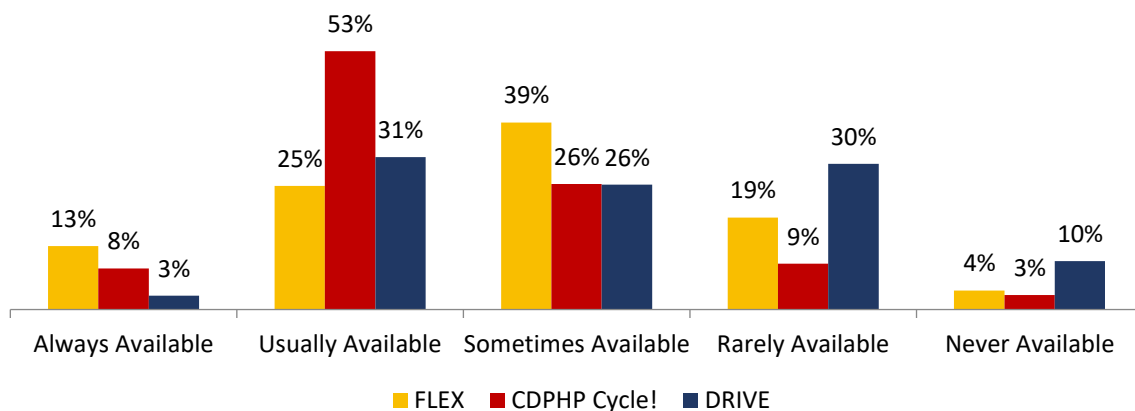
Figure 37: How would you have made the trip if this service had not been available?



AVAILABILITY OF SERVICE

As shown in **Figure 38**, the service with the best availability according to respondents is CDPHP Cycle!, with 53 percent saying the bicycles are usually available and 8 percent saying they are always available. FLEX responses were more divided, but over 75 percent of respondents said FLEX was at least sometimes available. When considering availability for FLEX, it is important to note that 83 percent of respondents feel that wait times over 30 minutes are unreasonable. Additionally, results indicate that DRIVE has the most issues with availability, with 40 percent of respondents saying the service is either rarely available or never available. This is compared to 23 percent for FLEX users and 13 percent for CDPHP Cycle! users.

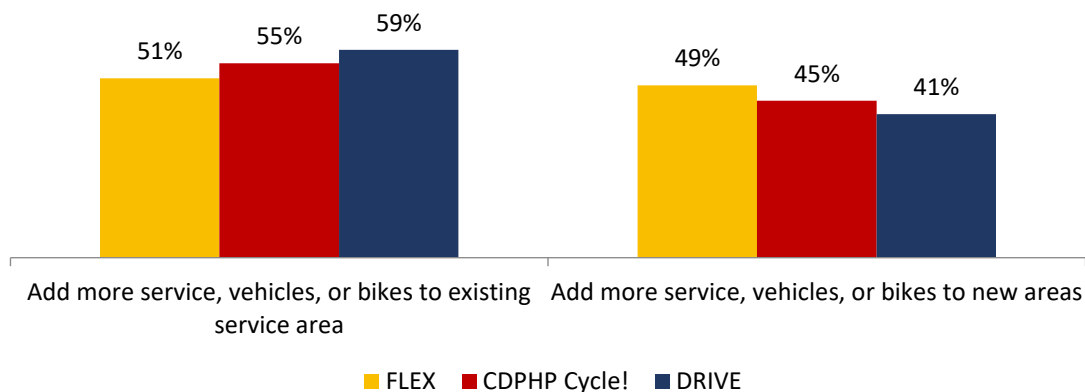
Figure 38: How available is this service when you need it?



RIDER OPINIONS

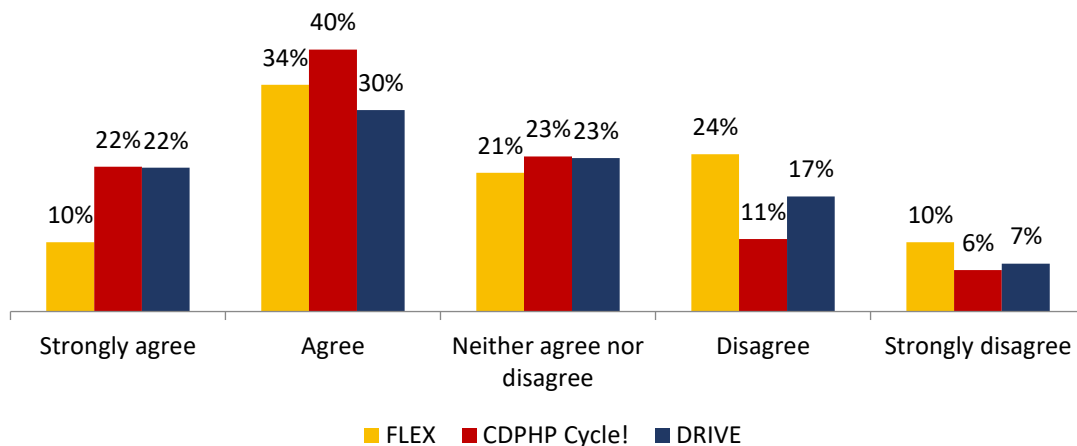
For each service, respondents were asked if they would prefer to add more service to existing areas or add service to new areas. The results in **Figure 39** reveal that respondents were nearly evenly split, with a slight preference for increasing service in existing areas across all services, especially DRIVE.

Figure 39: Improve Service in Existing Areas or Expand to New Areas?



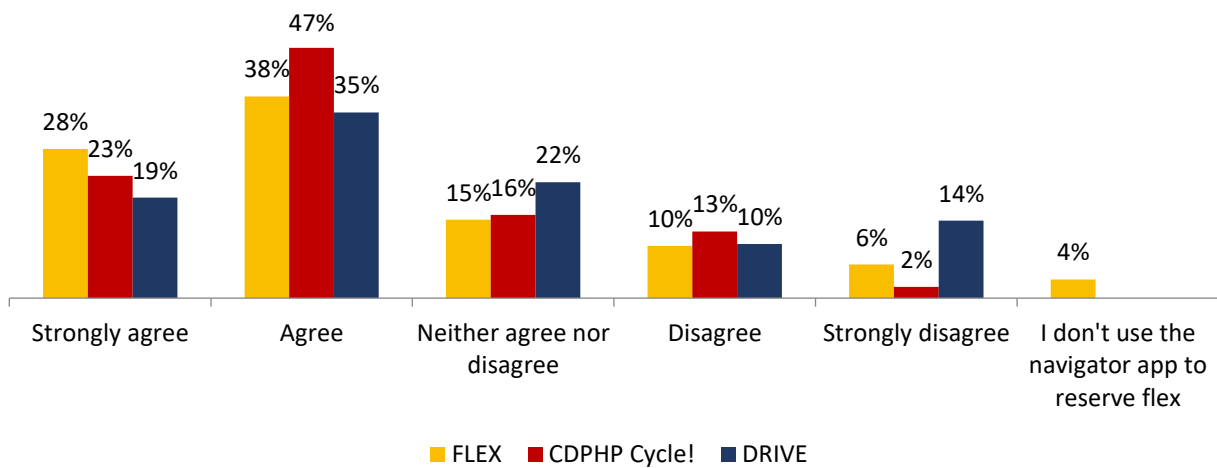
Respondents generally agree that all service areas cover where they need to go (**Figure 40**). Specifically, over 60 percent of CDPHP Cycle! users either agree or strongly agree and over 50 percent of DRIVE users either agree or strongly agree. Results for FLEX were slightly lower, with about 45 percent of FLEX users agreeing or strongly agreeing that the current service areas cover where they need to go. Furthermore, there was the most disagreement among FLEX users, with about 35 percent of FLEX users either disagreeing or strongly disagreeing that the current service area goes where they need it to.

Figure 40: Agree or Disagree: The service area covers where I need to go.



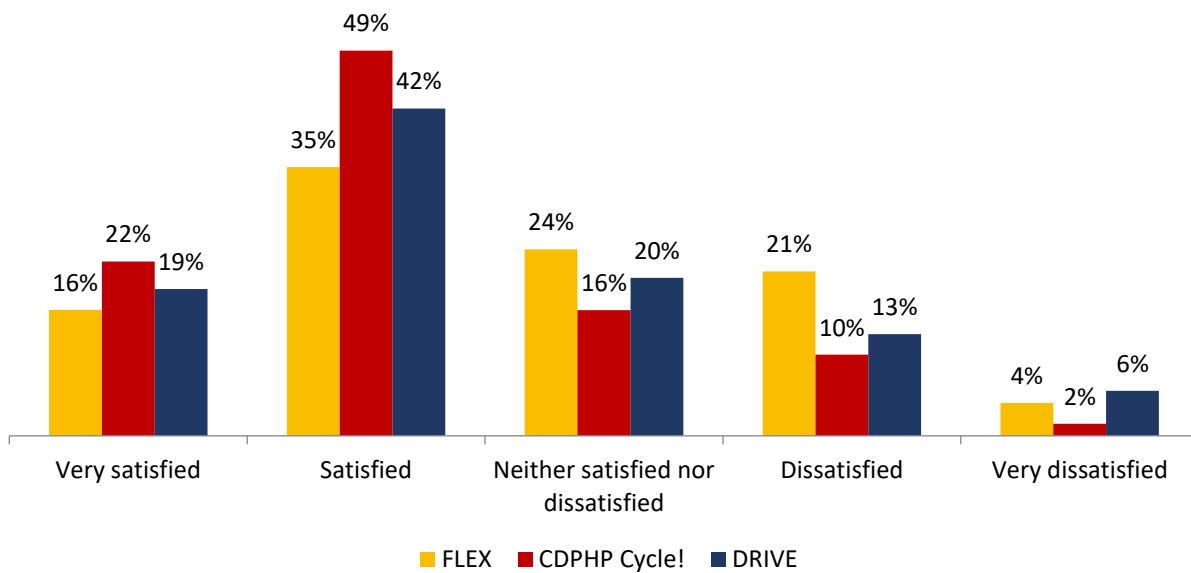
When asked whether or not the application to book each service is easy to use, most respondents either agree or strongly agree that the application is easy to use (**Figure 41**). Specifically, 70 percent of CDPHP Cycle! users either agree or strongly agree that the app is easy to use, followed by 66 percent of FLEX users and 54 percent of DRIVE users. There was the most disagreement among DRIVE users compared to other services, with 24 percent either disagreeing or strongly disagreeing that the Miocar Networks application is easy to use.

Figure 41: Agree or Disagree: Using the app (Navigator, CDPHP Cycle!, or Miocar networks) is easy.



Respondents are generally satisfied with FLEX, CDPHP Cycle!, and DRIVE services, with the strongest satisfaction among CDPHP Cycle! users at 71 percent (**Figure 42**). This number falls to 61 percent satisfaction among DRIVE users and 51 percent satisfaction among FLEX users. Additionally, a quarter of FLEX users said they were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with FLEX service, compared to 19 percent among DRIVE users and 12 percent among CDPHP Cycle! users.

Figure 42: How satisfied are you overall with this service?



Conclusion and Next Steps

The initial phase of outreach has yielded several key insights that will guide CDTA in developing service enhancements. Survey participants and public meeting attendees emphasized the need for increased frequency of bus routes. CDTA should therefore consider restructuring the current bus network to prioritize frequent service on main corridors. This may result in splitting routes and having to transfer more to connect to crosstown services. CDTA should also explore strategies to manage the cost of transfers, such as fare capping, to mitigate the impact on riders.

Feedback from outreach participants also provided several comments on the need for improved bus stop amenities and improved technology. Many riders reported a shortage of benches and shelters and expressed frustration about the lack of real-time information at bus stops and within the Navigator app. Moving forward, CDTA should harness this feedback to re-evaluate the current bus stop amenities and prioritize improvements for an enhanced customer experience.

Engagement with regional stakeholders underscored the importance of connecting directly to employment sites and educational institutions, particularly to align bus schedules with shift work. CDTA should collaborate closely with stakeholders in the community to ensure bus routes are deviating to necessary locations and safely connecting essential riders to their destinations. Additionally, there is a noted need for better education on how to use CDTA services. Targeted educational campaigns for employees and students could help bridge this knowledge gap and boost ridership.

Phase I of public outreach has provided valuable insights into areas for improvement. Based on the results, CDTA should consider further exploring public sentiment in the Phase II outreach on the following planning concepts:

- Developing a frequent network centered around trunk routes
- Evaluating deviations to key points of interest versus maintaining a quicker ride for onboard passengers
- Splitting long routes into two separate routes which allows for different schedules and frequencies based on ridership demand in the corridors
- Optimizing stop spacing
- Improving wait times and locations for FLEX on-demand service
- Enhancing high-priority stop amenities
- Exploring various fare payment options

Outreach participants offered a range of comments and suggestions on each of these key planning concepts during Phase I. Therefore, the Phase II round of outreach will involve additional exploration and feedback on potential enhancements in these areas, which will be

crucial for CDTA in laying the groundwork for developing, prioritizing, and implementing future service changes.