



Regional Transit Feasibility Study

Community Engagement (Draft)

September 2023



Content

REGIONAL TRANSIT FEASIBILITY STUDY COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community Survey	3
Survey Overview	4
Key Takeaways	8
Respondent Overview	11
Survey Results: Questions 1-12	17
Survey Results: Question 13	32
Stakeholder Interviews	41
Public Meetings	45

Community Survey

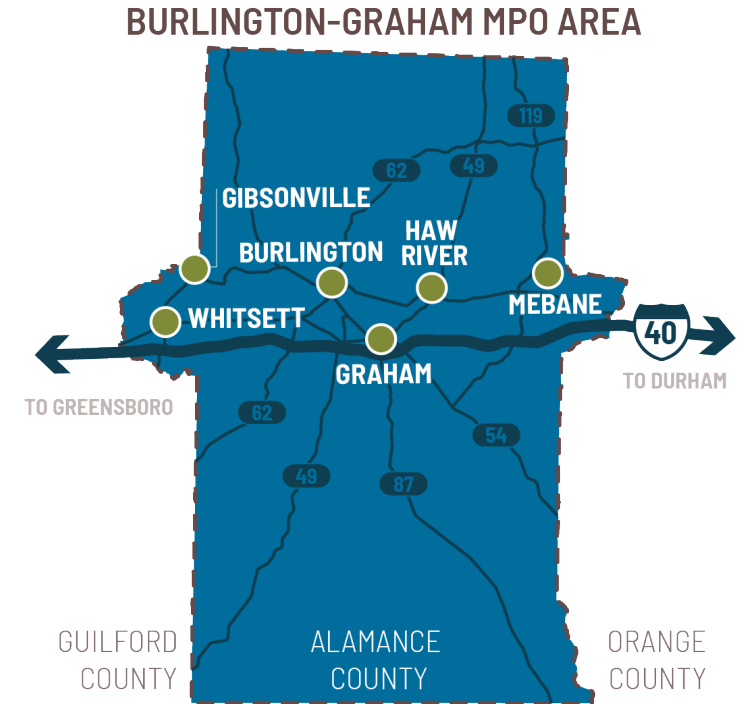
Survey Overview

About The Project

This community survey was conducted as part of the Burlington-Graham Metropolitan Planning Organization's (BGMPO) *Regional Transit Feasibility Study*. This study is looking at ways to improve regional transit access to nearby destinations like Greensboro, Durham, and Chapel Hill. It is considering equitable and innovative approaches to providing transit service, assess multimodal connections, reduce service duplication, determine cost-effective ways to enhance service, evaluate safety performance targets and measures, and develop funding recommendations. With limited available transit funding, understanding tradeoffs and priorities for service improvements will be central to the project.

This study is being developed by the BGMPO with support from partners at GoTriangle, Alamance County Transportation Authority (ACTA), Orange County Public Transportation, Link Transit, and Piedmont Authority for Regional Transportation (PART). It is supported by funding from the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) Integrated Mobility Division.

More information about the project is available at bgmpo.org/transitstudy.



Community Survey Overview

This survey was an opportunity for community members to give input on their priorities for potential transit improvements.

The 18-question survey took about 10 minutes to complete, with questions focused on:

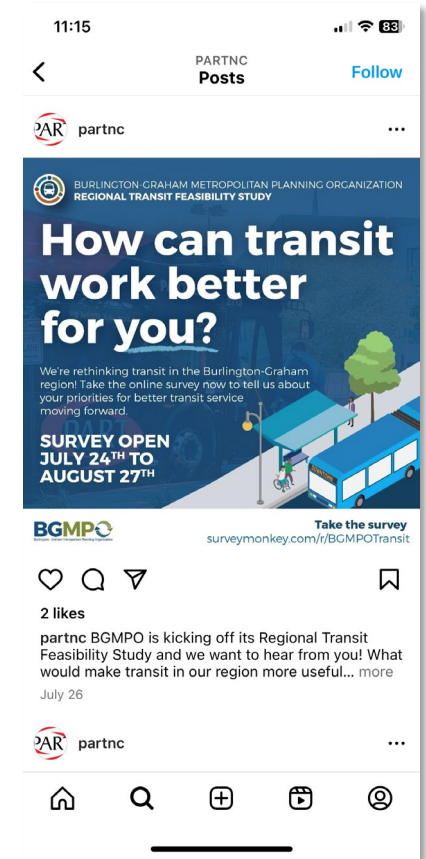
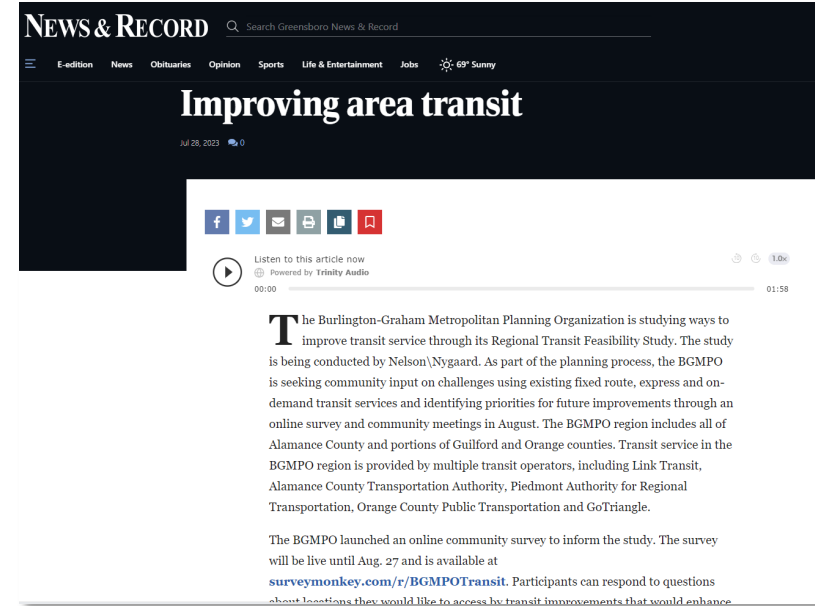
- *Experience with and purposes for riding transit in the region (Q1 – Q6)*
- *Priority improvements for fixed route local bus service, on-demand transit service, regional express bus service, and vanpool/carpool (Q7-Q11)*
- *How to prioritize spending across different types of improvements (Q12)*
- *Open-ended comments about improvements (Q13)*
- *Respondent demographics/background (Q14-Q18)*

In addition to this survey, community members were invited to join an in-person or virtual meeting in August 2023 to share their input on key issues.



Survey Process & Responses

- Live for 5 weeks from July 24 to September 4, 2023
- Available in English and Spanish
- Promoted via:
 - Social media on BGMPO, partner transit agency, and city accounts
 - Press release with articles in local publications
 - Flyers and posters at bus stops
 - Tabling at community events
 - Direct outreach to community organizations
 - Project mailing list
 - Project website
- **267 completed surveys**
 - 255 online + 12 paper



Key Takeaways

Key Takeaways from Survey

- ✓ Respondents generally have limited knowledge about existing available transit services in the region
- ✓ Those that do have some knowledge of available transit services do not believe its coverage meets their travel needs and/or do not find service to be frequent enough
- ✓ Respondents believe that better coordination is needed between the existing transit service providers
- ✓ Respondents identified the importance of good pedestrian access to bus stops

Top 3 Desired Improvements by Service Type

Local Transit Service

- **Make it easier to learn about current available transit service**
- **Work with local government to improve sidewalk access to stops**
- **Improve coordination between transit providers so transfers are easy from one service to another**

On-Demand Transit Service

- **Provide option to schedule trips by smart phone with the transit provider's mobile app**
- **Make it easier to learn about available on-demand transit services**
- **Improve coordination between transit providers so transfers are easy from one service to another**

Regional Transit Service

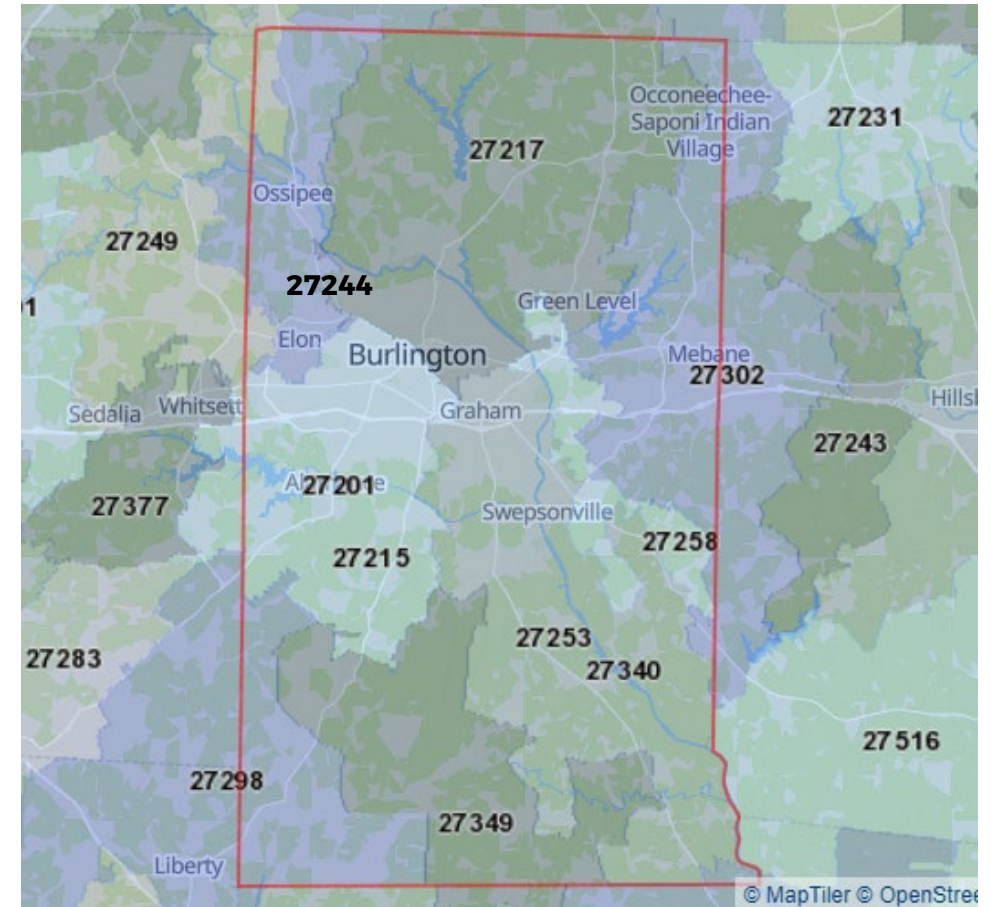
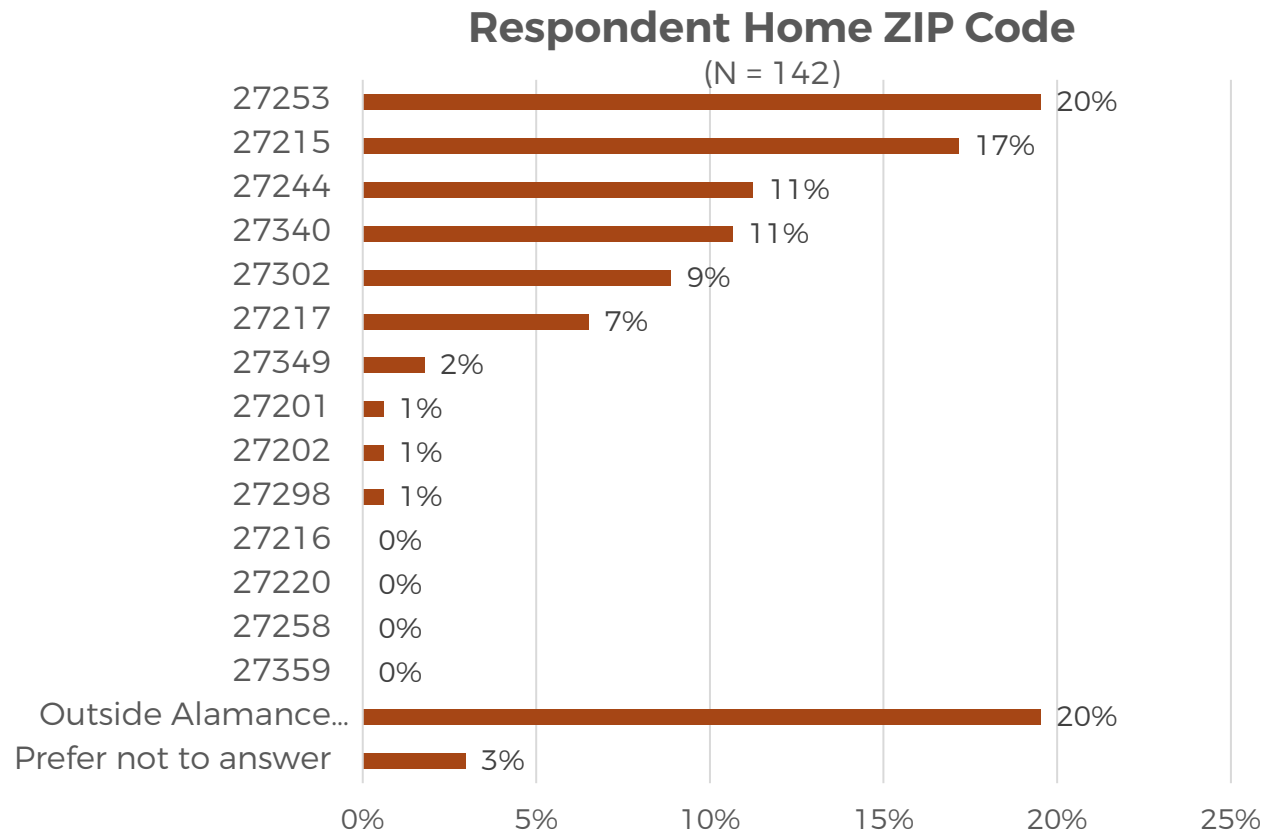
- **Expand regional transit service to offer new connections from our area to additional destinations**
- **Increase the frequency of existing regional transit service**
- **Improve coordination between transit providers so transfers are easy from one service to another**

Respondent Overview

Demographic & Background Questions (Q14 – Q18)

Question 14: Which ZIP code do you live in?

People who live across the study area were represented, including both urban and rural areas, as well as people who work in the study area but live elsewhere (20%).



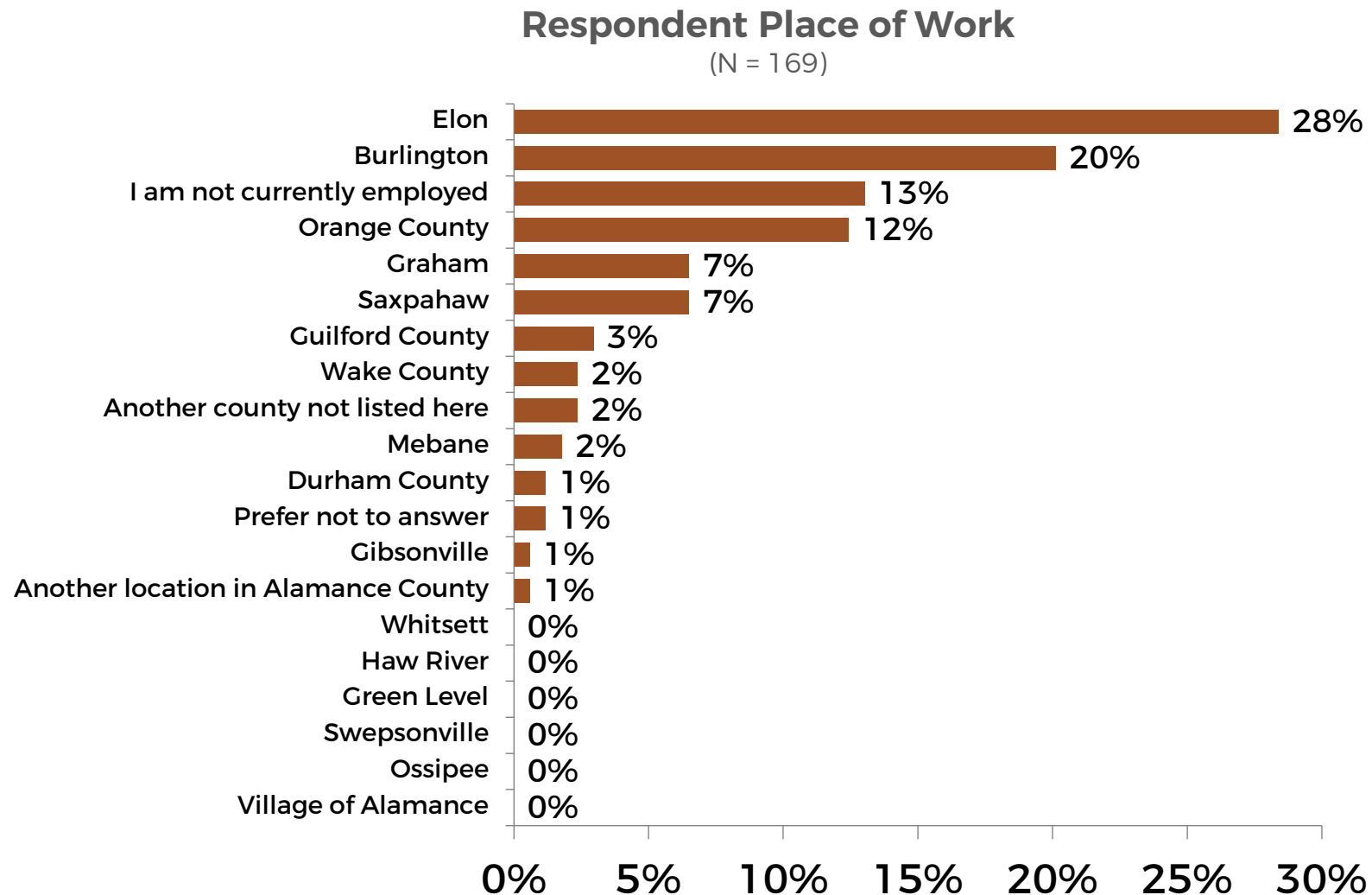
Note: Demographic and personal questions were optional and not every respondent answered these questions.

Q15: Where do you work?

About half of respondents work in Elon (28%) or Burlington (20%).

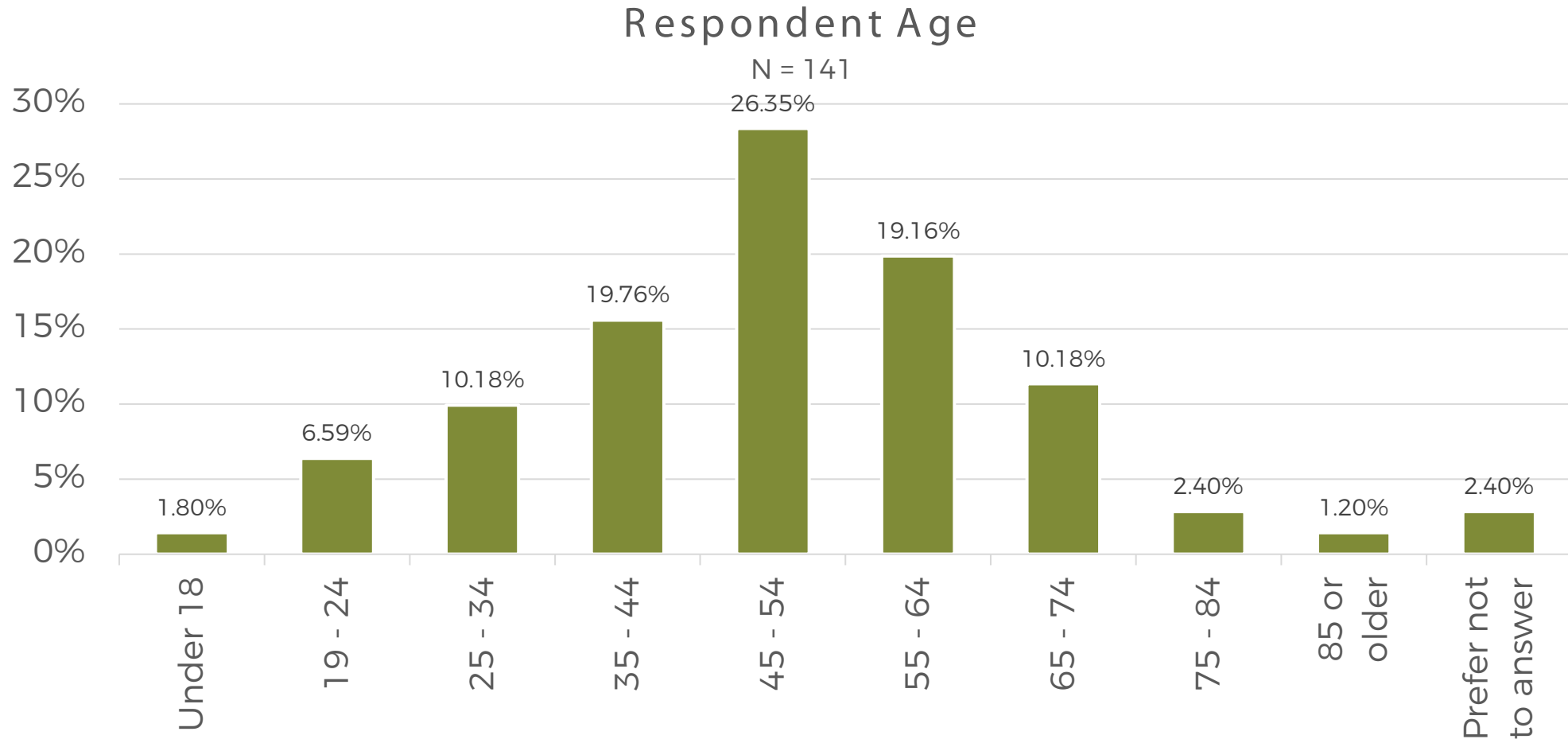
13% of respondents are not currently employed.

The most common place respondents worked outside of Alamance County was Orange County (12%).



Note: Demographic and personal questions were optional and not every respondent answered these questions.

Q16: How old are you?



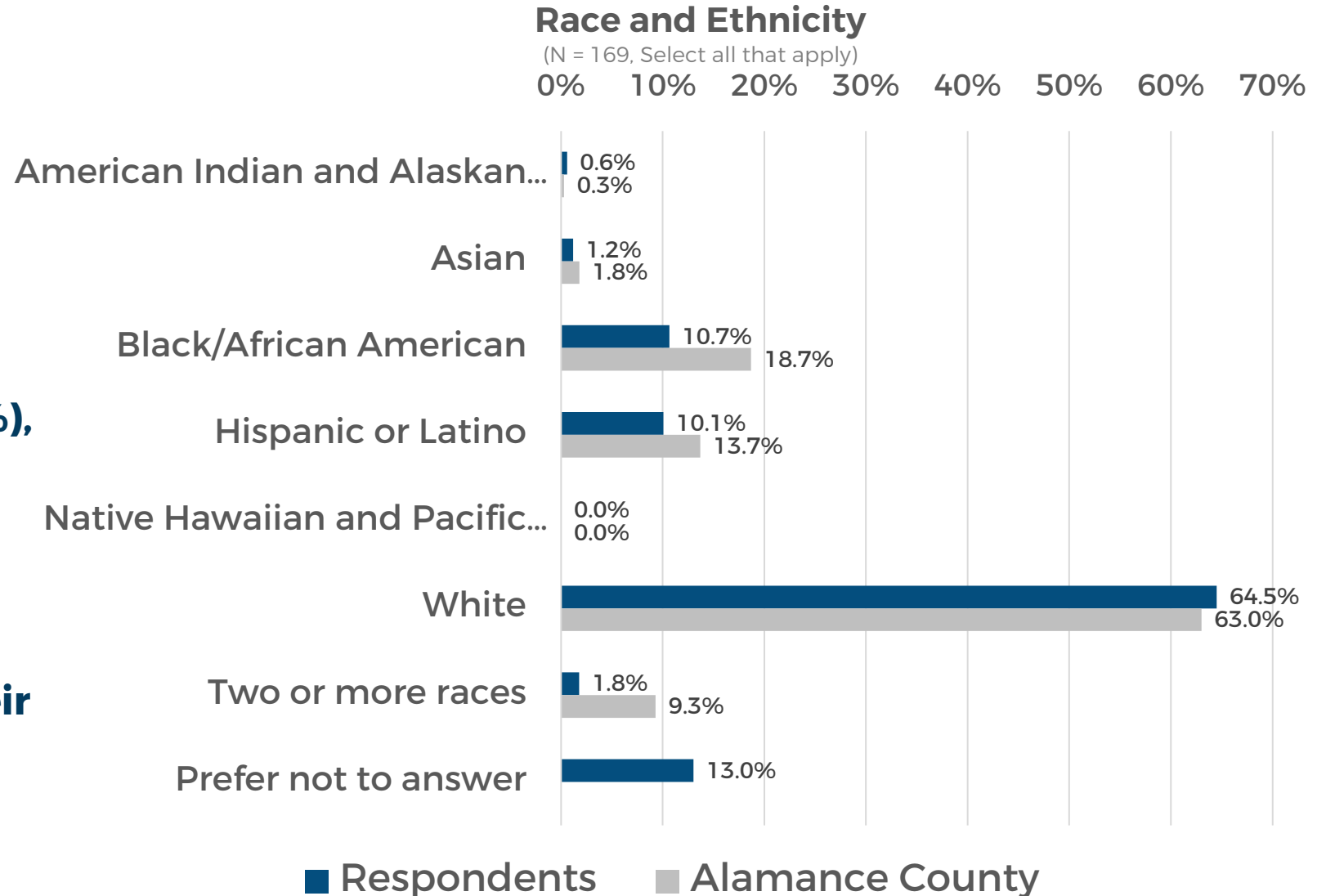
Note: Demographic and personal questions were optional and not every respondent answered these questions.

Q17: How would you describe your race/ethnicity? (Select all that apply.)

Compared to the Alamance County population as a benchmark, there were slightly more white respondents than the population overall (+1.5%).

There were fewer Black (-8%), Hispanic/Latino (-3.6%), or Asian (-0.6%) respondents than would be expected.

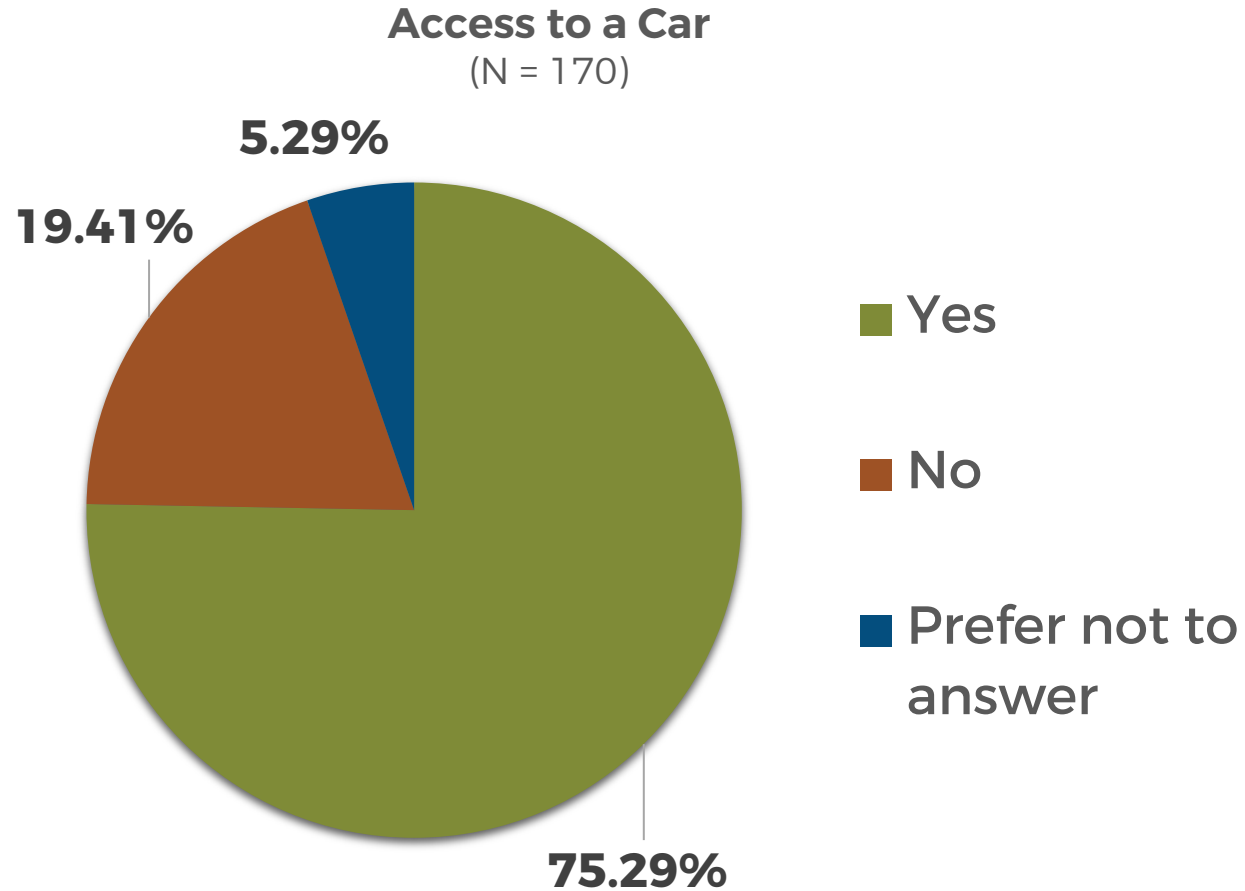
13% of respondents did not share information about their race or ethnicity.



Note: Demographic and personal questions were optional and not every respondent answered these questions.

Q18: Do you have reliable access to a car?

Most respondents (75%) have reliable access to a car and do not have to rely on transit to get around.



Note: Demographic and personal questions were optional and not every respondent answered these questions.

Survey Results

Multiple Choice Questions (Q1 – Q12)

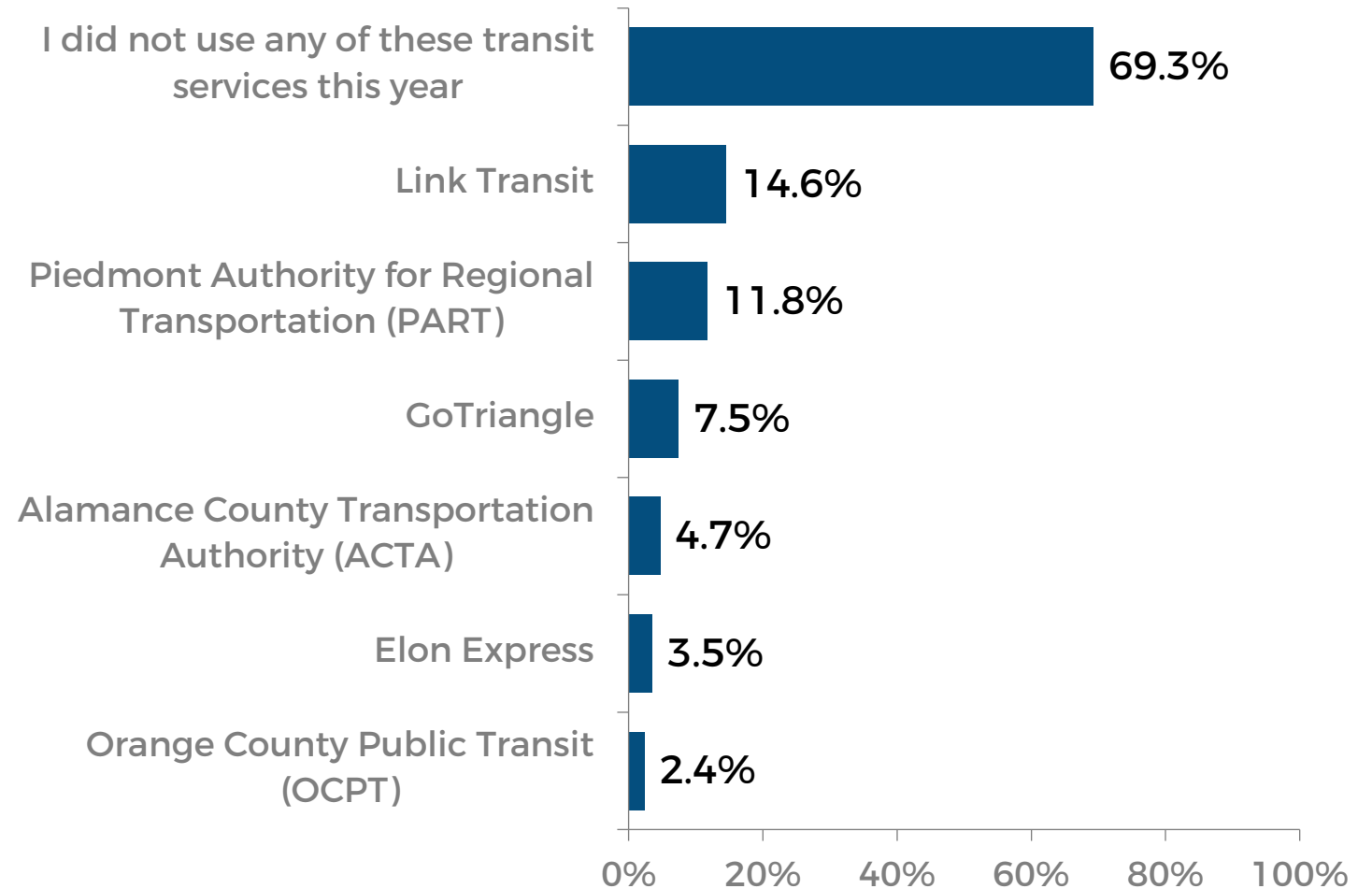
Q1: Which of the following transit services have you used in the past year? (Select all that apply) *Answered: 265 Skipped: 2*

30.7% of respondents used some form of transit this year.

Link Transit was most popular (14.6%), followed by PART (11.8%).

Of the people who responded they did not use transit this year:

- *About 29% of respondents do not get access to transit at the time when they need to travel.*
- *About 24% of respondents do not have transit as frequent enough to meet their needs*
- *About 41% of respondents do not know much about existing transit services in the area.*



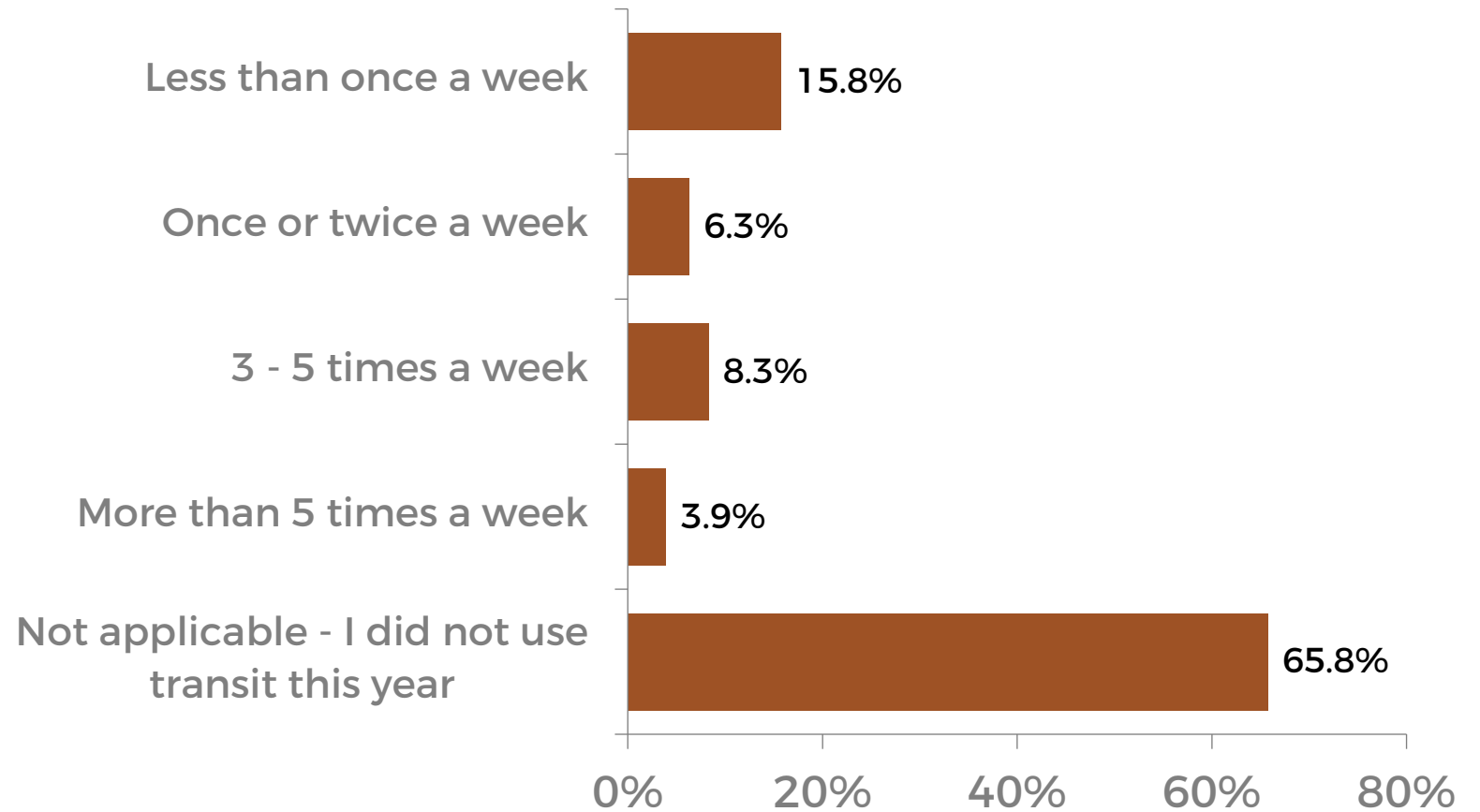
Q2: If you have used any of these transit services in the past year, how often do you typically use transit?

Answered: 254 Skipped: 1

Of the 12.2% of respondents use transit 3+ times per week...

Most use transit for work and running errands.

Most were from ZIP codes 27215 and 27217, the two ZIP codes covering most of Burlington and the adjacent areas to the north and south.



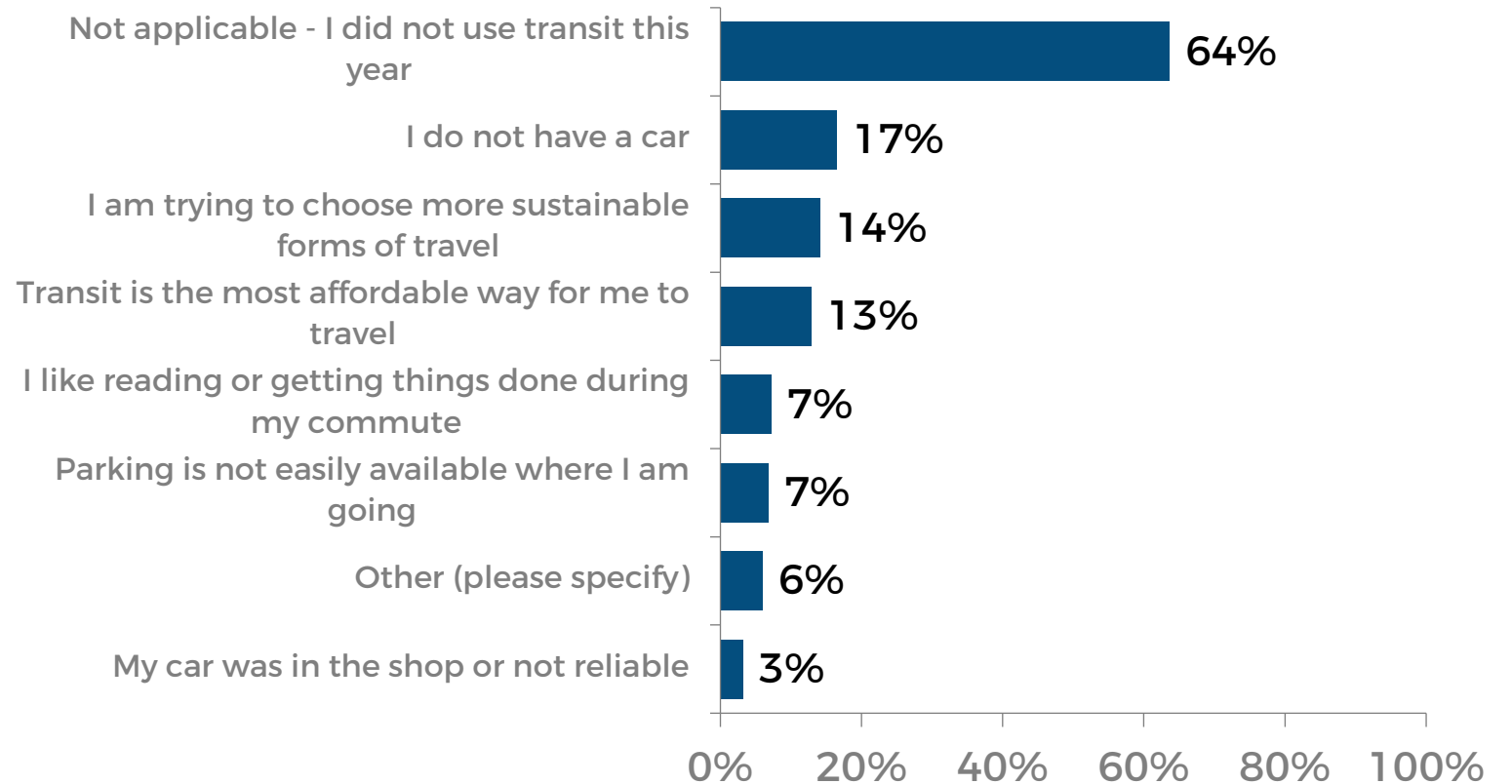
Q3: If you have used any of these transit services this year, why do you typically ride transit? (Select all that apply)

Answered: 254 Skipped: 1

The most common reasons people use transit are because they do not have a car (17%), sustainability (14%), or affordability (13%).

For respondents who selected “other,” many say they use transit because they cannot drive due to a disability.

About 22 respondents who take transit because they do not have a car say they would not make their trips if transit was not available.



Q3: If you have used any of these transit services this year, why do you typically ride transit? (Select all that apply)

Answered: 254 Skipped: 1

For respondents who selected “other,” unique responses included:

“Car centric infrastructure is expensive (and hence exclusionary), unsustainable, and antisocial. I do not have a car and believe I should have the right to choose how I move about the world, rather than be forced to depend on a car and all that supports.”

“I cannot drive due to medical reasons.”

“Physical impairment, no NCDL.”

“I needed wheelchair transportation.”

“Visits and integrating the bicycle into my travel.”

Q4: If you have not used any of the above transit services this past year, why not? (Select all that apply)

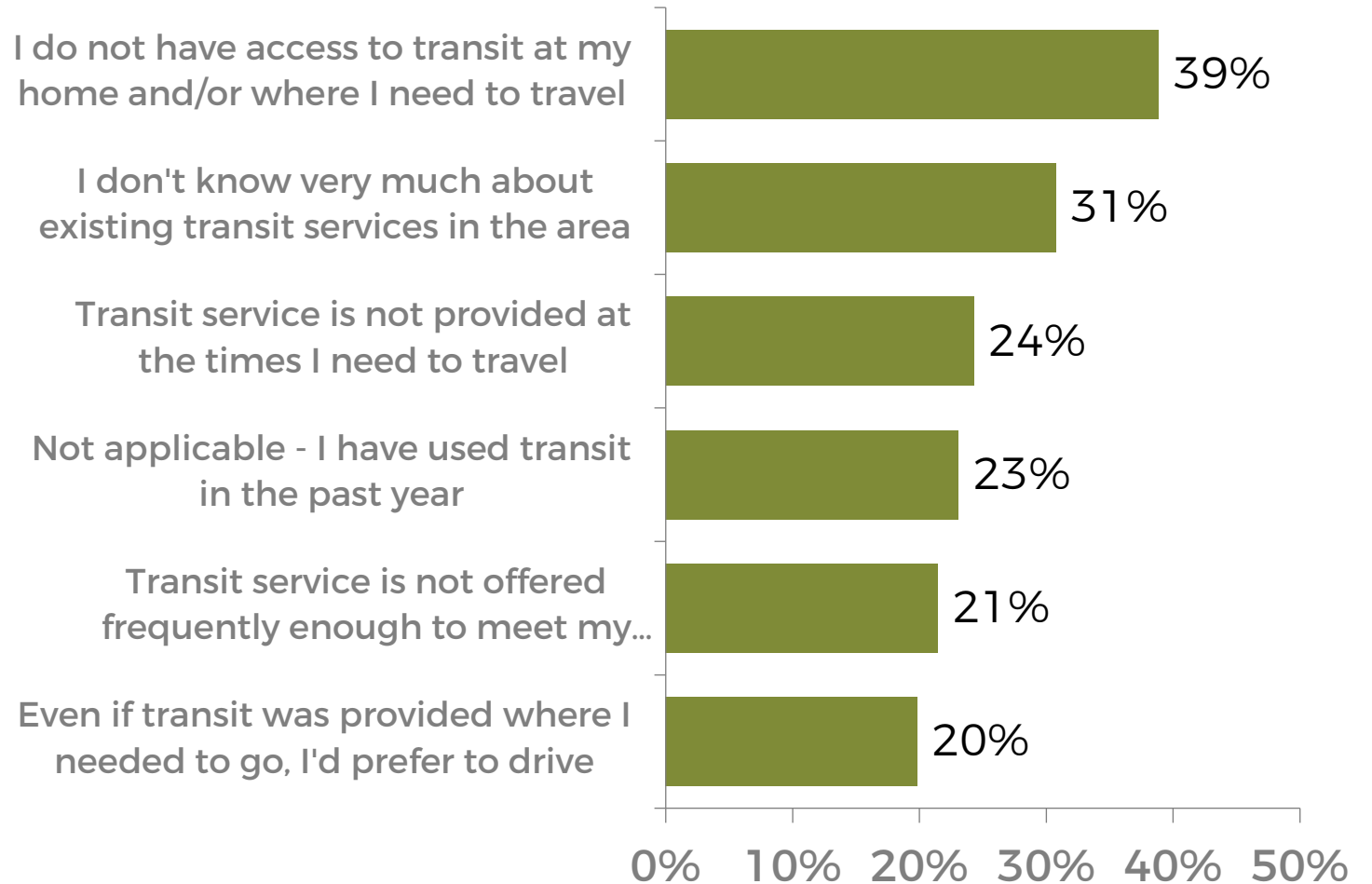
Answered: 254 Skipped: 1

Top reasons for not using transit were:

1. **No access near home/destination (39%)**
2. **Don't know much about transit service (31%)**

Majority of respondents who reported not knowing much about transit services in the area live in 27253 (Graham/Swepsonville/Saxapahaw area).

Most people living in 27215 (western Burlington and area to the SW) reported not having transit service as frequent enough to meet their travel needs.



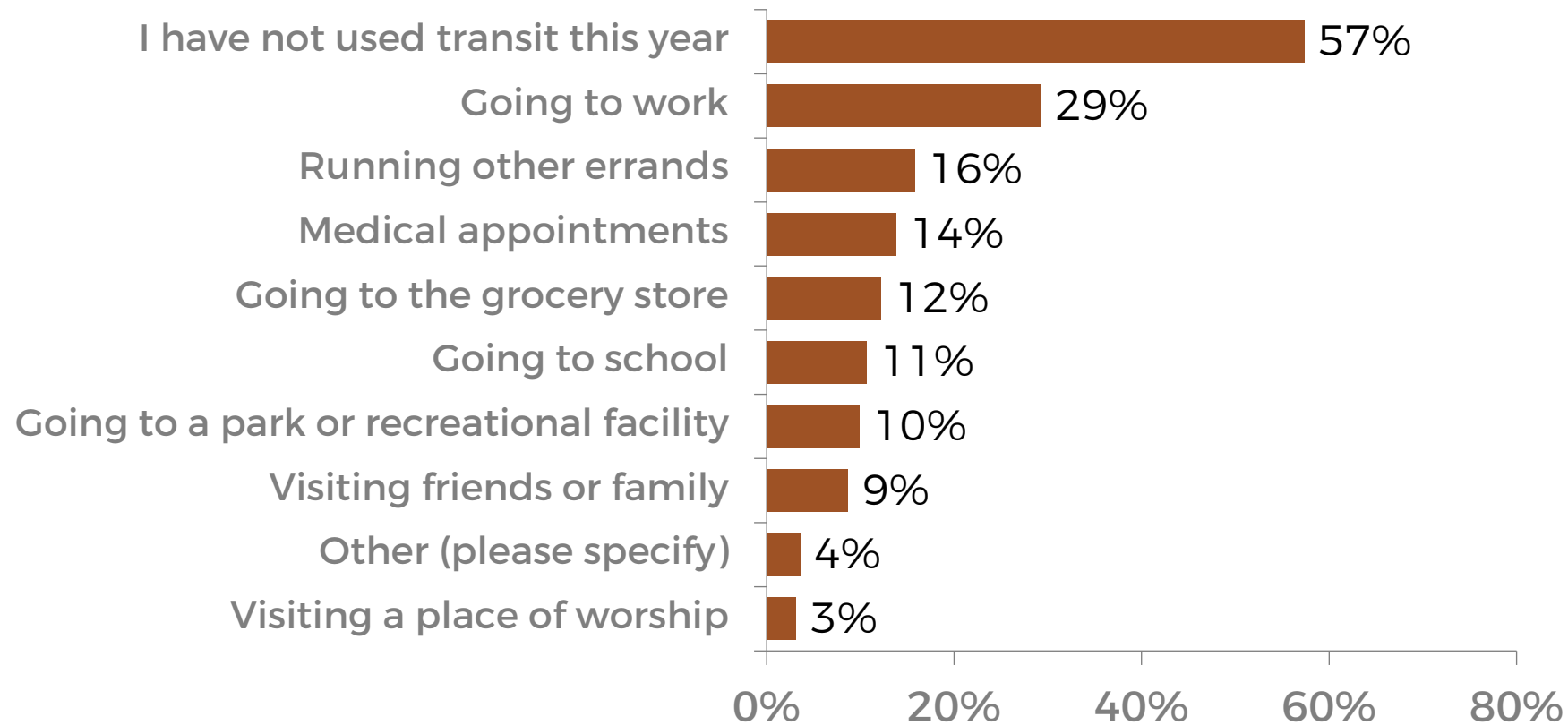
Q5: When you use transit, what kind(s) of trips are you typically taking? (Select all that apply) *Answered: 254 Skipped: 1*

Most popular reasons for using transit were:

1. **Going to work (29%)**

2. **Running other errands (16%)**

3. **Medical appointments (14%)**



Q5: When you use transit, what kind(s) of trips are you typically taking? (Select all that apply) *Answered: 254 Skipped: 1*

For respondents who selected “other,” unique responses included:

“I live about 1.3 miles from work, and when I need to get around downtown Elon from work, I walk.”

“Entertainment”

“Tourism”

“Going to a museum .”

“I do not have a car, which makes it difficult to do much. But surely I and so many other deserve the right to travel without depending on cars, right?”

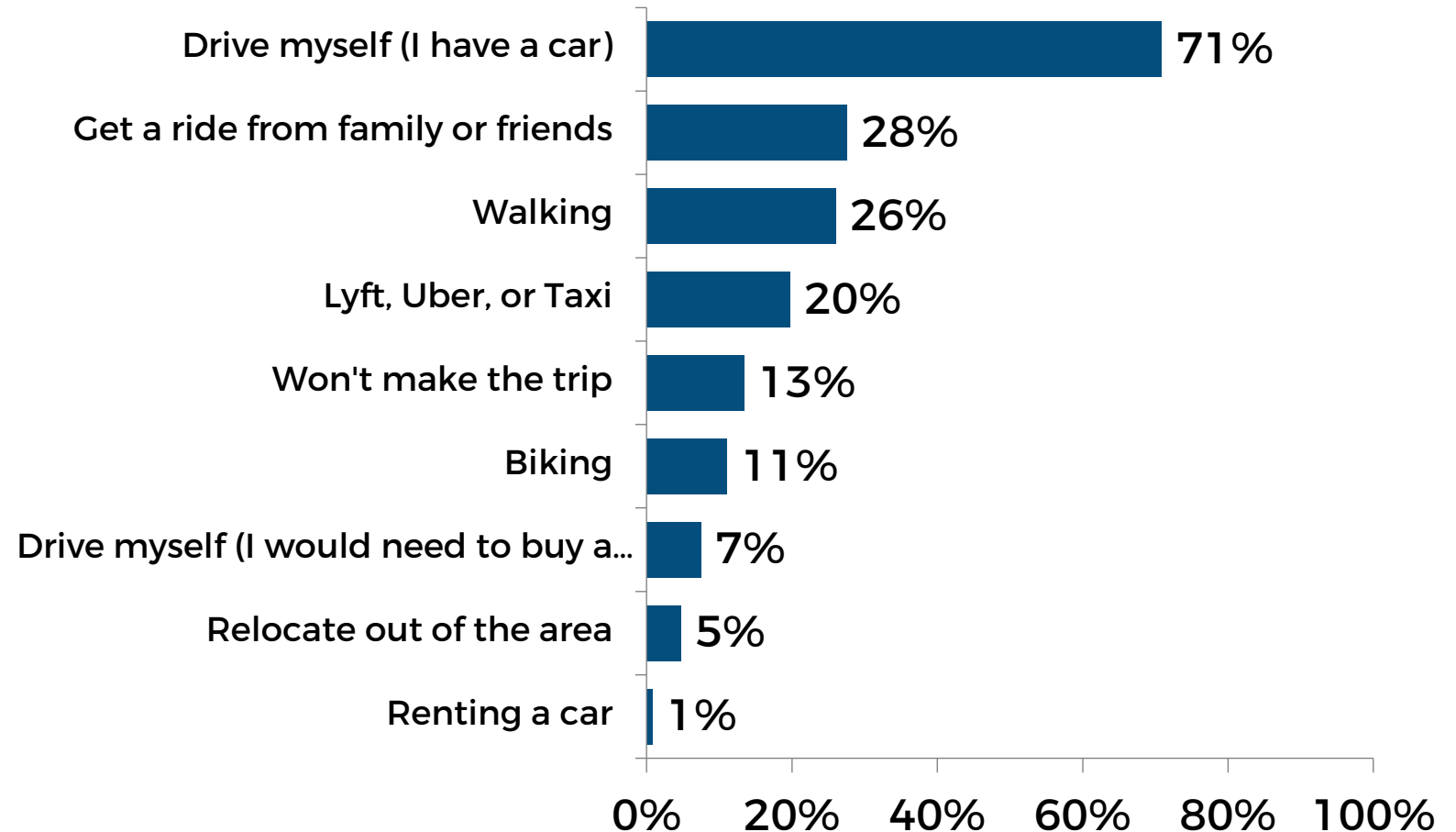
“Using it for work travel, not traveling to an office.”

Q6: If transit did not exist in our area, how would you get around? (Select all that apply) *Answered: 254 Skipped: 13*

Without transit access, most respondents would:

- 1. Drive in a car they already own (71%)**
- 2. Get a ride from family or friends (28%)**
- 3. Walk (26%)**

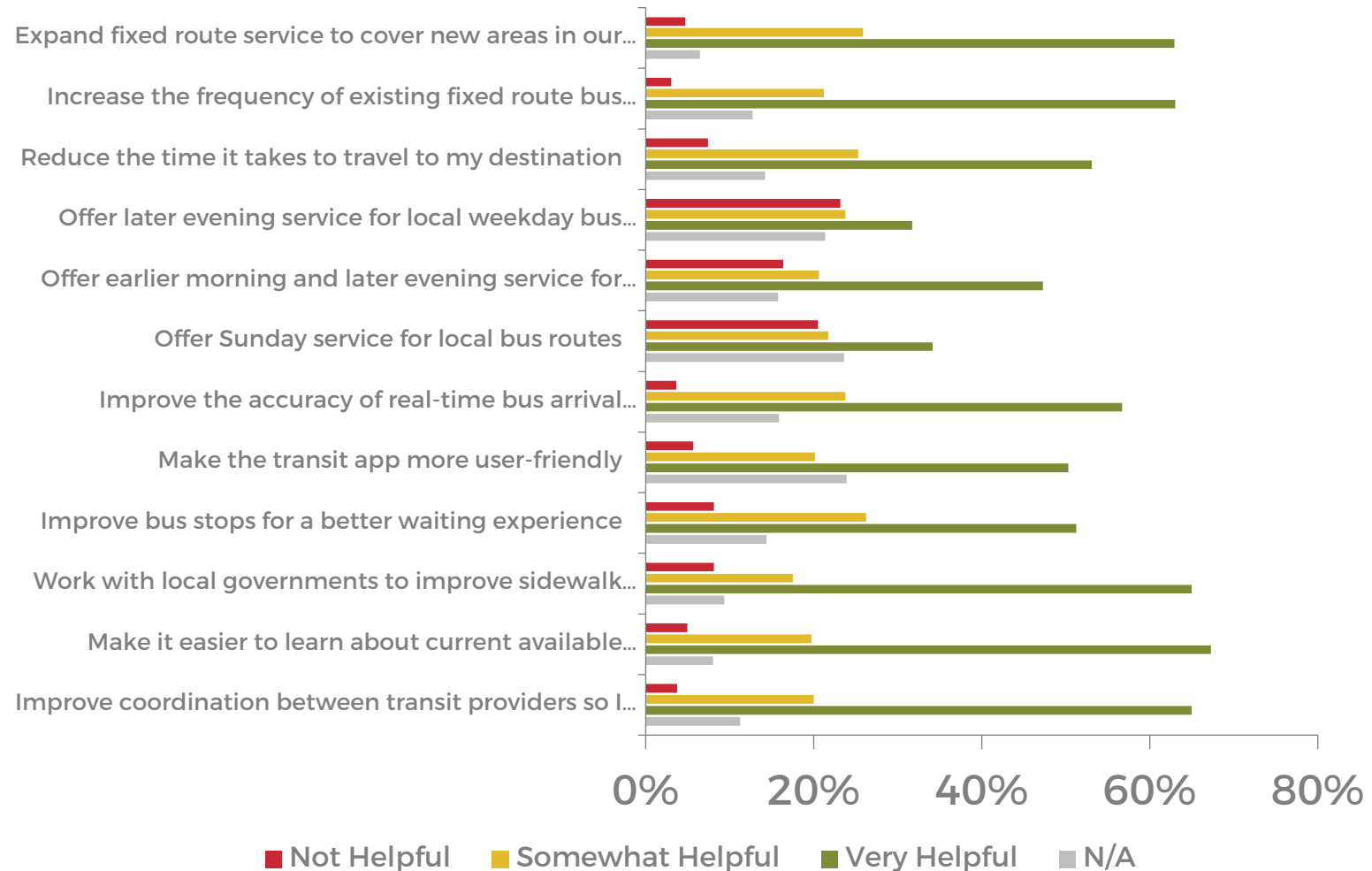
7% of respondents would have to buy a car and 5% would relocate from the area.



Q7: How helpful would each of the following potential improvements to enhance local fixed route bus service be for you? *Answered: 174 Skipped: 93*

Top rated potential improvements:

1. **Make it easier to learn about current available transit service (67.3%)**
2. **Work with local government to improve sidewalk access to bus (65%)**
3. **Improve coordination between transit providers so I can easily transfer from one service to another (65%)**
4. **Increase the frequency of existing fixed route bus service (buses coming more often than every 90 minutes as they do today) (63%)**
5. **Expand fixed route service to cover new areas in our region (63%)**

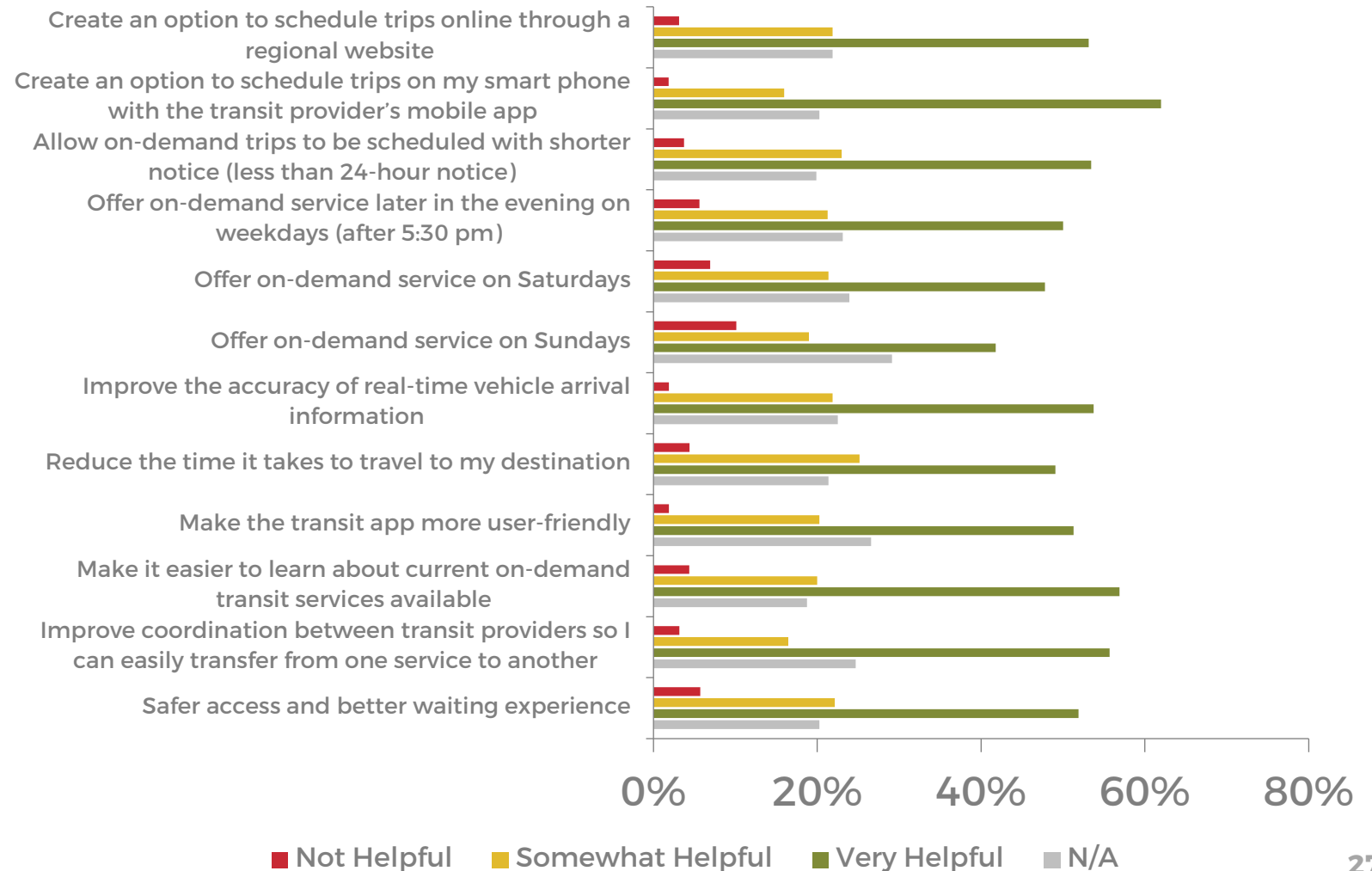


Q8: How helpful would each of the following potential improvements to enhance on-demand transit service be for you? *Answered: 169 Skipped: 98*

Top rated potential improvements:

- 1. Create an option to schedule trips on my smart phone with the transit provider's mobile app**
- 2. Make it easier to learn about current on-demand transit services available**
- 3. Improve coordination between transit providers so I can easily transfer from one service to another**

(Scores range from 1 - Not Helpful to 3 - Very Helpful)

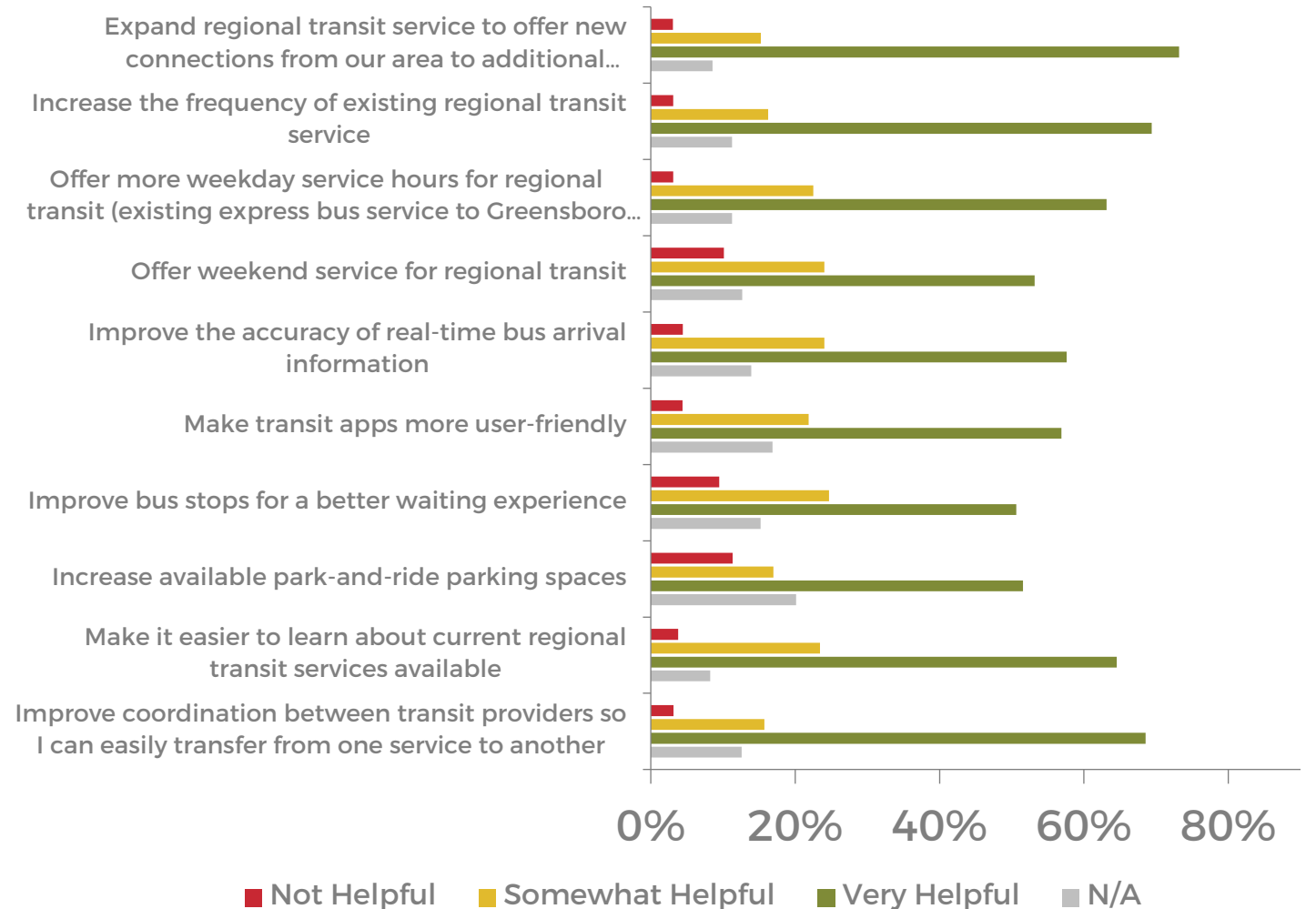


Q9: How helpful would each of the following potential improvements to enhance regional transit service be for you? *Answered: 166 Skipped: 101*

Top rated potential improvements:

1. **Expand regional transit service to offer new connections from our area to additional destinations in the Piedmont Triad and Triangle regions (73%)**
2. **Increase the frequency of existing regional transit service (69.4%)**
3. **Improve coordination between transit providers so I can easily transfer from one service to another (68.5%)**
4. **Make it easier to learn about current regional transit services available (64.6%)**
5. **Offer more weekday service hours for regional transit (existing express bus service to Greensboro and Chapel Hill) (63.1%)**

Scores range from 1 - Not Helpful to 3 - Very Helpful)



Q10: Which additional destinations (if any) do you wish you could go to using regional transit service?

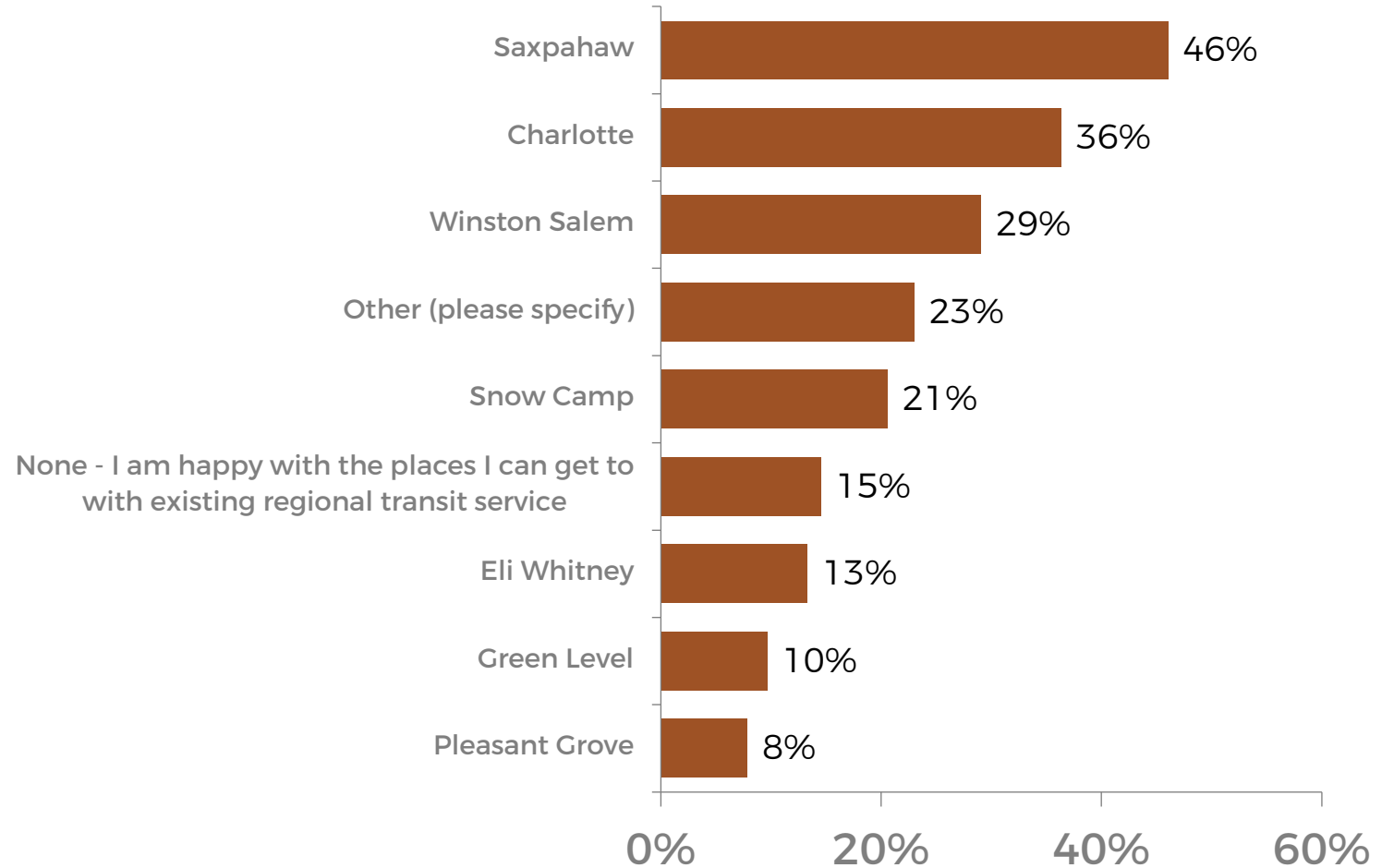
Answered: 254 Skipped: 1

Top requested destinations:

1. Saxapahaw (46%)
2. Charlotte (36%)
3. Winston-Salem (29%)

About 20 respondents would like to make work-related trips to/from Saxapahaw.

“Other” locations suggested by respondents are Raleigh, Elon, Durham and Chapel Hill, notably places where there is existing service.

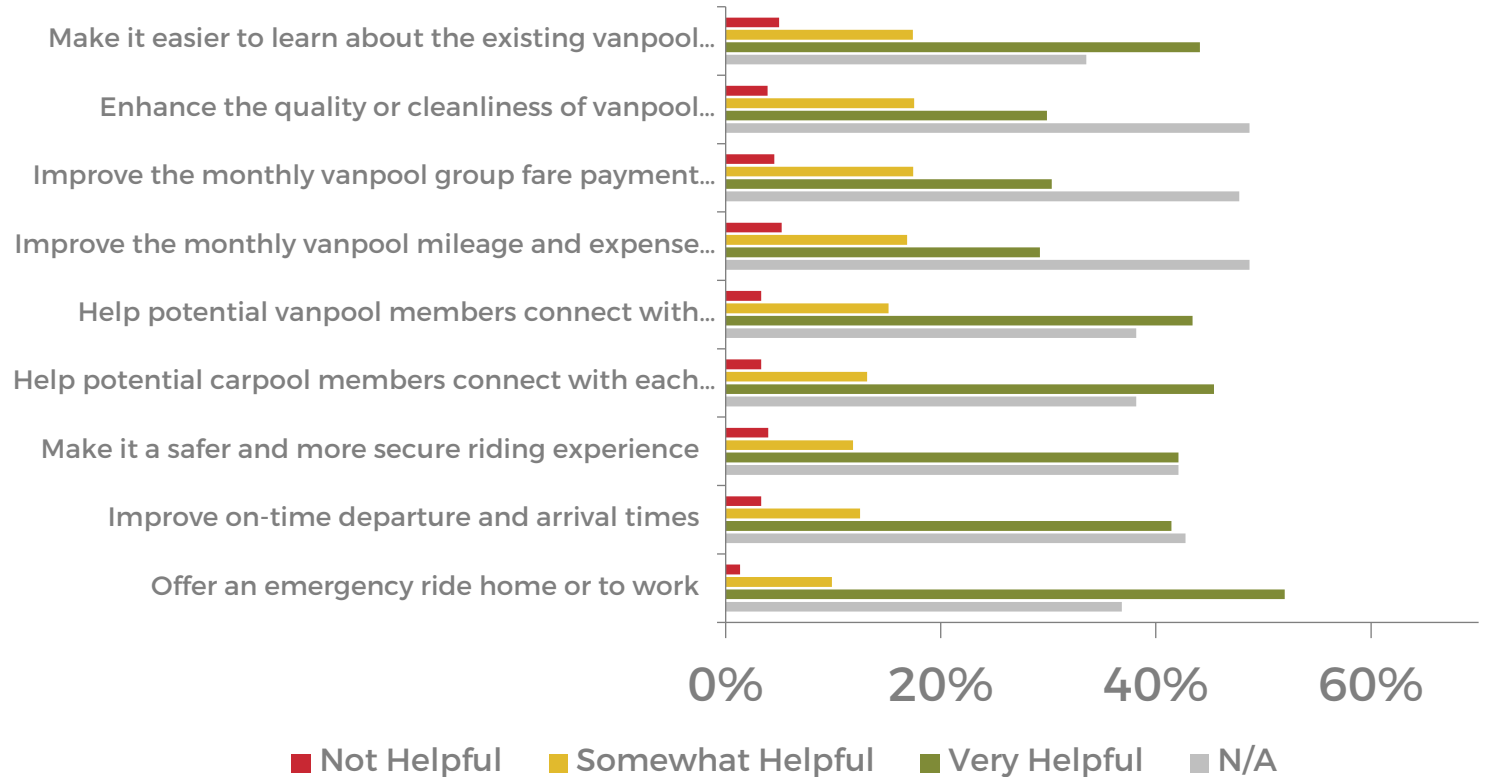


Q11: How helpful would each of the following potential improvements to enhance vanpool or carpool services be for you? *Answered: 162 Skipped: 105*

Top rated potential improvements:

1. Offer an emergency ride home or to work (60%)
2. Help potential carpool members connect with each other (45.4%)
3. Make it easier to learn about the existing vanpool services (44.1%)
4. Help potential vanpool members connect with each other (43.4%)
5. Make it a safer and more secure riding experience (42.1%)

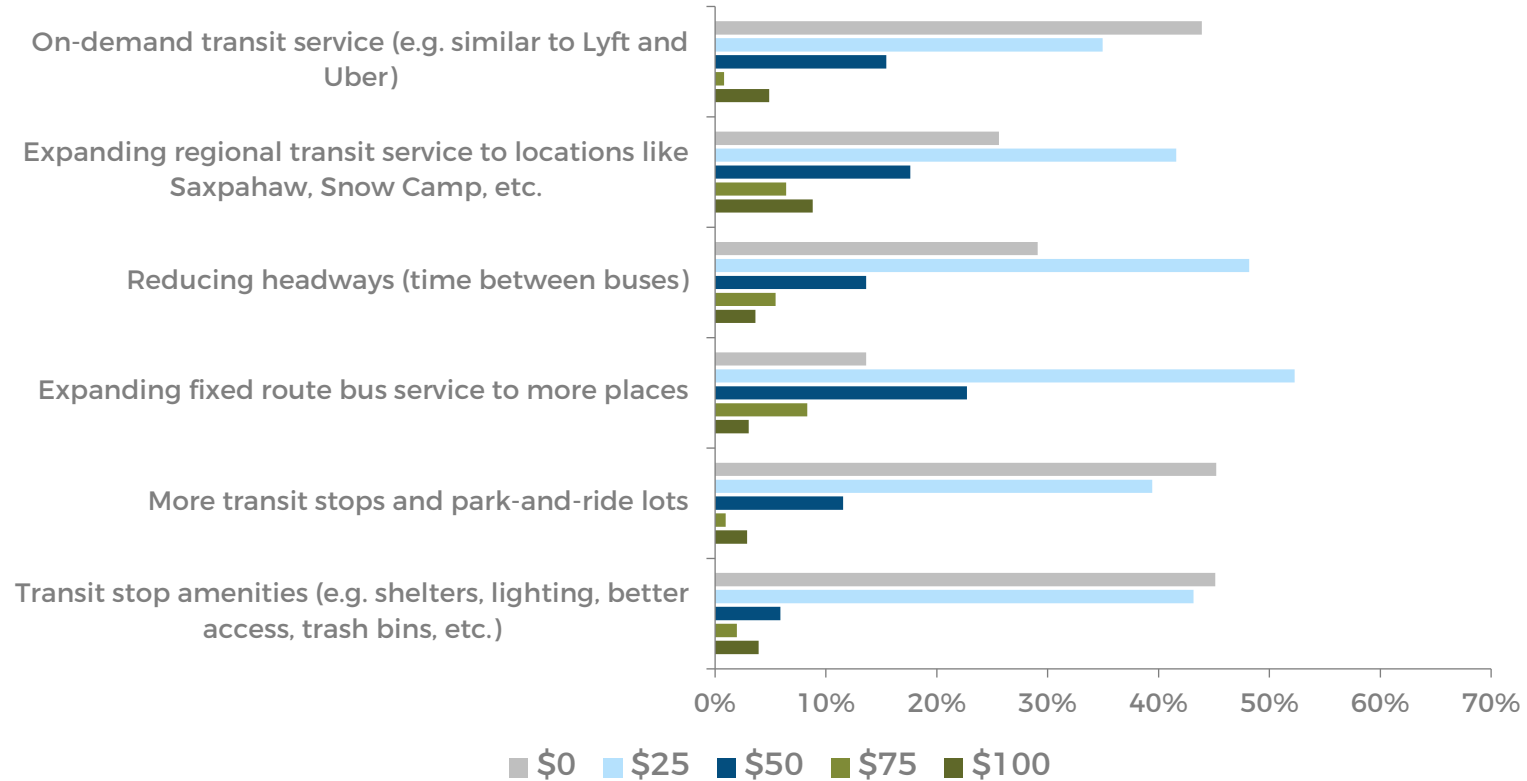
Scores range from 1 - Not Helpful to 3 - Very Helpful



Q12: With limited funds, transit service improvements must be prioritized. As an example, if you had \$100 to fund transit in our region, how would you allocate that money between the following transit service options? The total amount must add up to \$100 or less. *Answered: 160 Skipped: 107*

Overall, the categories to which respondents allocated the most funds were:

- 1. Expanding local fixed route bus service to more places (24.5%)**
- 2. Expanding regional transit service to locations like Saxpahaw, Snow Camp, etc. (22.6%)**
- 3. Reducing headways (time between buses) (14.8%)**
- 4. On-demand transit service (e.g. similar to Lyft and Uber) (14%)**



Survey Results

Free Response Questions (Q13)

Q13: Please share any additional comments about what would make transit service in our region more useful to you.

THEME 1

Expand transit service coverage area, especially to Southern Alamance communities, Elon, and the airport.

THEME 2

Improve walking & biking connections to stops.

THEME 3

Invest in more frequent service throughout the day

THEME 4

Extend service times, with hours that align with work schedules.

THEME 5

Add more transit stops.

THEME 6

Offer rail service, especially Amtrak to Burlington Station.

THEME 1

Expand transit service coverage area, especially to Southern Alamance communities, Elon, and the airport.

“Offer services to rural areas.”

“Include Saxapahaw, please, please, please.”

“Expand service to Haw River as well as Swepsonville and Greensboro.”

“It would be so helpful to have bus services in southern Alamance specifically Saxapahaw.”

“Residents in Southern Alamance need transportation to UNC Hospital and Duke Hospital for medical services.”

“The rural areas are in need of transportation some residents can attend classes at ACC or work jobs up in Graham or Burlington. Please consider adding routes in Saxapahaw, Eli Whitney, Snow Camp, etc.”

“We need more fixed routes between services and major work hubs.”

“I would use a transit service that connected Elon University to the Burlington Amtrak station.”

“If there were good public transit between Elon (where I work) and Chapel Hill (where I live), I would use it.”

“Express from Burlington to Durham, Raleigh, and/or RDU/GSO airports.”

“Transit to Elon's campus from Greensboro/Chapel Hill/Durham/etc or easy transit between PART stop at ARMC to Elon.”

“Should look into partnering with Elon to expand/create a bus service to RDU and GSO airports...”

Sample comments

THEME 2

Better walking & biking connections to stops

“Saxapahaw *really* needs sidewalks and better traffic control. Thank you!”

“Better ways for people who are walking to get to transit stops, safer sidewalks etc”!

“Public transit is useless if there is not a safe way to get from my home to a transit stop. I live in Elon and we need sidewalks or bike lanes to help us get to the bus stops. I don't mind walking a half a mile to a bus stop, but I need to be able to safely walk that half a mile.”

“Provision for multimodal and bicycle support / connections too.”

“Don't waste our tax-payer money. Invest on methods for crosswalks to travel safely on bike or foot. Buses are less essential.”

“We need more sidewalks and bike lanes. I live less than a mile from the park-and-ride lot where I catch my bus each morning, but walking or biking is not a safe option. There are no sidewalks leading to the park-and-ride lot from downtown Graham, or even a crosswalk to help you cross the road at the nearest intersection...”

“More sidewalks to get from place to place and bus stops would be outstanding. Sidewalks are needed everywhere, but I can speak to more suburban areas of Burlington.”

Sample comments

THEME 3

Invest in more frequent service throughout the day

“More buses and less wait time .”

“I will likely not become a transit user, as I live 1.3 miles from work, and frequently use my care during the day. Generally, more reliable/frequent times, easier transfers between LINK lines and more stops would benefit transit users...”

“I think we need to invest in reducing the headways, then increasing locations beyond the city.”

More morning and afternoon buses between GSO and Burlington/Elon

“I commute daily from Burlington to UNC on PART from Mebane. I would love a Burlington park-and-ride but really, my biggest issue is the huge gap of time in the middle of the day when there is no service between UNC and Mebane between 11:30am-ish and 4:30pm-ish. With two little kids in daycare back in Burlington, this is a big gap that is hard to overcome if something goes wrong and I need to get home ASAP...”

Sample comments

THEME 4

Extend service times, with times that better align with work schedules

“Burlington train station to Elon University Campus... before 8am, after 5pm, M-F.”

“Open Door Clinic and the hospital have many appointments set after 5 pm. It would be great to get to them, especially between Mebane, Graham, and Burlington.”

“The latest bus between these stops leaves at 4:19... why is that? No one gets off that early. There needs to be a bus that runs later in the evening. I literally cannot move to Chapel Hill because of this. I can't drive for medical reasons and Uber is unreliable and entirely too expensive to commute back and forth even just one way (if I was to just take the morning bus, which works for my schedule). It's \$30-\$35 plus a tip. There are NO other public transit systems that run this route, which I would imagine is mostly 54, and commonly used. I appreciate everything you guys do but would love for later buses.”

THEME 5

Add more transit stops

“We need more stops in Mebane on the south side of 40- Collington farms, the meadows etc.”

Lack of sidewalks and small shelters in areas where the bus picks up are the main reasons I won't use the bus now. I think the buses should pick-up riders who get a pass "any where" along the route who simply "wave" for pick-up.

“More bus stops are needed in Gibsonville. To make a connection with regional routes, Link Transit needs to begin services earlier. Currently, I must get a ride to ARMC to access the regional route to be at work on time.”

I'm a nonprofit employee working with formerly-incarcerated women in rural Graham, NC (on Hwy 87 between Graham and Saxapahaw). I regularly drive 100 miles or more every month to provide transportation for necessary trips our residents take (none of them have cars because they are just leaving prison). These trips usually include going to the probation department, grocery store, medical appointments, therapy appointments, court appointments, and sometimes taking them to their part-time jobs. Having more stops in the rural parts of our community would be an indescribably huge help to our organization, and I'm sure it would be hugely beneficial to other folks living around our farm. Since that area is not very walkable and necessary appointments are so far apart, having the transit out there would allow our residents a greater sense of independence and agency, as well as put less wear and tear on staff cars. Even just putting one bus stop on Thompson Mill Road would be infinitely helpful to us!

Sample comments

THEME 6

Offer rail service, especially Amtrak to Burlington Station

“You didn't ask about the train service, which should be an important element of regional transit. The reduction of the Burlington stop on the Amtrak line to/from Greensboro was an AWFUL decision. We used the train to get to/from work...”

“It would be helpful to have more services on the Amtrak from Durham to Elon with an easier transport from the Elon train station to campus.”

“We need a rail system. I will NOT use a bus for transportation! Having just been to the NY region, which has a fantastic rail system. I am amazed that we don't offer trains and light rail here in our state. So many European cities and US cities now offer light rail in addition to train service (both express and ones with many stops). It's terrible that we don't. No busses for me! Our friends and family want light rail and a more efficient train system”

NCDOT recently cut train stops at Burlington Station, which is devastating for so many of the commuters who have depended on this service for years. There are so many people who are now nearly ruined by this devastating decision. Just getting back the old routes is a must.

Sample comments

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Other unique comments from respondents included:

“Previously rode PART to commute to work; now work from home; was/is a valuable resource, would like to see its use increase.”

Leave the southern part of the county alone. We won't have any green space left at the rate we're going, and some of us enjoy a more rural home life.

The cost for van rental is too high to make economic sense. It is cheaper for 5 people to drive individually (factoring in gas and maintenance on separate cars) than to rent a van from you.”

“The reason I don't use transit is that it doesn't exist where I live in Sax. I will probably never use transit as much as someone living in a near city, I think it would enhancer visitor access for people coming from nearby cities to engage in recreational activities available in our larger area...”

“It would be great to create specific service to help people request rides within 48 hours to get to court in Graham. Many first appearances are set within 48 hours and yet there's no way to schedule a ride that fast, especially for folks in Southern Alamance.”

“Thank you for your expansion into Elon!”

“I would fund on-demand services for better access and service times for people with disabilities.”

Sample comments

Stakeholder Interviews

Stakeholder Interviews

- **Invitations sent to 24 stakeholders with follow up resulting in 9 interviews (38%)**
- Conducted virtually through MS Teams during month of August
- **Stakeholders come from 5 primary types of organizations**
 - Governmental, Educational, Business, Healthcare, Non-Profits
- **Initial respondents included community members from:**
 - Alamance Chamber of Commerce
 - Alamance Wellness Collaborative
 - City of Burlington
 - Ebenezer Baptist Church
 - United Way of Alamance County
- **Open ended questions covered:**
 - Personal and constituent/community members' experience with transit usage
 - Transit challenges
 - Perceived/known current issues
 - Existing state of local and regional services
 - Suggested improvements

Stakeholder Interviews

Usage/Familiarity

- Most had little personal experience with transit but had experience using other regional services like Amtrak
- Many know of local community members taking advantage of transit, especially Burlington residents

Current Issues

- **Confusion:** System overall and high number of operators is confusing along with overlap issues
- **Lack of access:** childcare, food sources, public/senior housing, other communities (Graham), rural areas, workforce
- **Lack of information:** transit options, schedules/general information, connections, Elon Express
- **Lack of political support** in Graham vs. local demand
- **Limited service:** span, lack of Sunday service, long headways
- **Perceived issues:** Graham city council and unhoused population in Graham
- **Cutback of Amtrak** service detrimental for regional access

Stakeholder Interviews

Existing Conditions

- Bike racks on buses are appreciated to augment travel
- Support for transit seems to be high, but awareness is low
- Elon was recently included but their service is relatively unused by the public due to lack of information/awareness
- East Burlington is high minority and low-income with high transit needs
- A 500-seat call center was located at Holly Hill Mall because of transit access
- Service for workforce population is lacking

Suggested Improvements

- **Better local access** to destinations (more stops, more coverage, more access in Graham)
- **Improved information/awareness** of local and regional services
- **More service:** longer spans, Sunday service, increased frequencies
- **Improve multimobility options**/connections and transfers
- **Improve governance;** include community members on advisory board
- **Capital improvements**/facilities and shelters are needed

Public Meetings

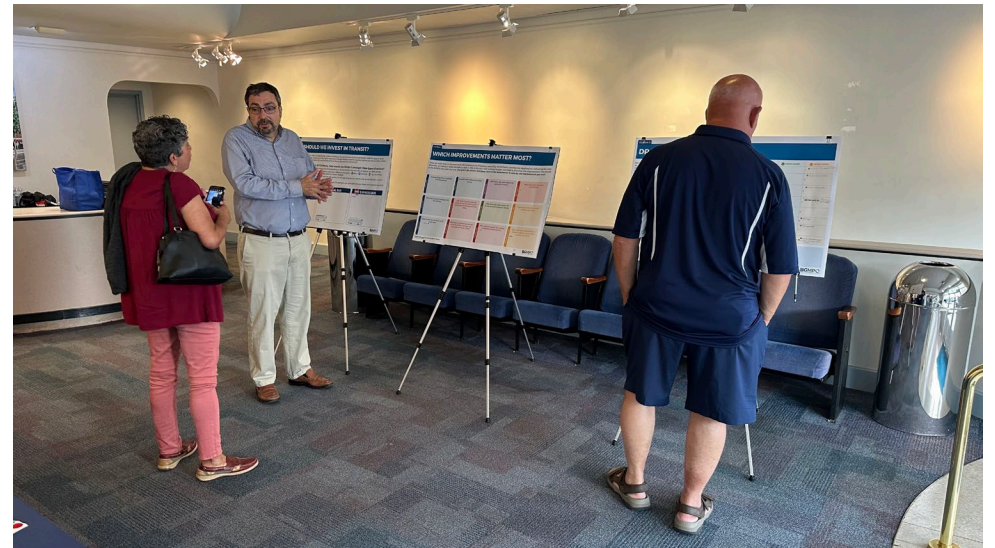
Round 1 Public Open Houses

- **Virtual**

- August 22, 2023, via Zoom
- Representatives attended from BGMPO, ACTA, NC DOT, and public

- **In-Person**

- August 24, 2023
- Paramount Theatre, 4 – 7 pm
- Several stations summarized existing conditions analysis, solicited feedback on improvements
- Attendees included:
 - ACTA
 - City of Burlington
 - City of Graham
 - Link Transit
 - Town of Elon
 - Interested residents of BGMPO area



Round 1 Open House Input

- **When asked about local transit service needs, requested locations included...**

- Mebane and Tanger Outlets
- Swepsonville
- Green Level
- Haw River
- Webb Avenue

- **When asked about regional transit service needs, requested locations included...**

- Downtown Durham
- Duke Hospital
- Chapel Hill/UNC
- Greensboro Airport
- Greensboro shopping areas

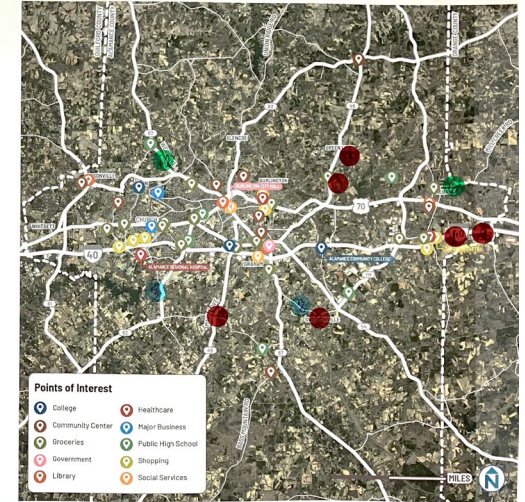
WHERE DO YOU WANT LOCAL SERVICE?

What additional destinations within the BGMPo area would you like to access by transit?

Place a dot sticker on the map to show where you would like to get to by transit in the BGMPo area. Add a comment on the line with the matching number to tell us more about where you want to go.

1. Mebane-Outlet	15. _____	29. _____
2. Swepsonville	16. _____	30. _____
3. Village of Alamance	17. _____	31. _____
4. Green level	18. _____	32. _____
5. Haw River	19. _____	33. _____
6. Webb Ave	20. _____	34. _____
7. _____	21. _____	35. _____
8. Swepsonville	22. _____	36. _____
9. _____	23. _____	37. _____
10. _____	24. _____	38. _____
11. _____	25. _____	39. _____
12. _____	26. _____	40. _____
13. _____	27. _____	41. _____
14. _____	28. _____	42. _____

I think the existing bus network connects to the right destinations within the BGMPo area. (Place your sticker in this box.)



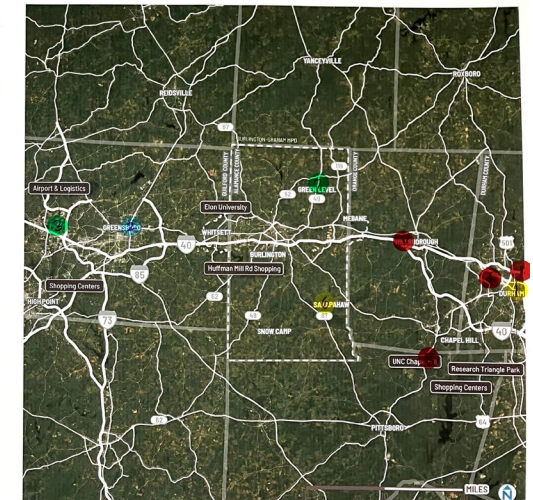
WHERE DO YOU WANT REGIONAL SERVICE?

What additional destinations outside the BGMPo area would you like to access by transit?

Place a dot sticker on the map to show where you would like to get to by transit outside the BGMPo area. Add a comment on the line with the matching number to tell us more about where you want to go.

1. Downtown Durham	15. _____	29. _____
2. Greensboro shopping	16. _____	30. _____
3. Greensboro Airport	17. _____	31. _____
4. Duke Hospital	18. _____	32. _____
5. Chapel Hill/UNC	19. _____	33. _____
6. Greensboro	20. _____	34. _____
7. Green Level	21. _____	35. _____
8. Hillsboro	22. _____	36. _____
9. _____	23. _____	37. _____
10. _____	24. _____	38. _____
11. _____	25. _____	39. _____
12. _____	26. _____	40. _____
13. _____	27. _____	41. _____
14. _____	28. _____	42. _____

I think the existing bus network connects to the right destinations within the BGMPo area. (Place your sticker in this box.)



Round 2 Public Open Houses

- **Virtual**
 - Planned for October 24, 2023, via Zoom
- **In-Person**
 - Planned for October 26, 2023
 - Paramount Theatre, 4 – 7 pm





Contact Information

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