

Public Meeting #1: Transit Choices
6:00 – 7:30 PM, March 3, 2021 (*Virtual*)

Total Participants: ~173

Link to Video of Presentation: [Public Meeting #1 Video](#) - Passcode: ?3oNZTNG

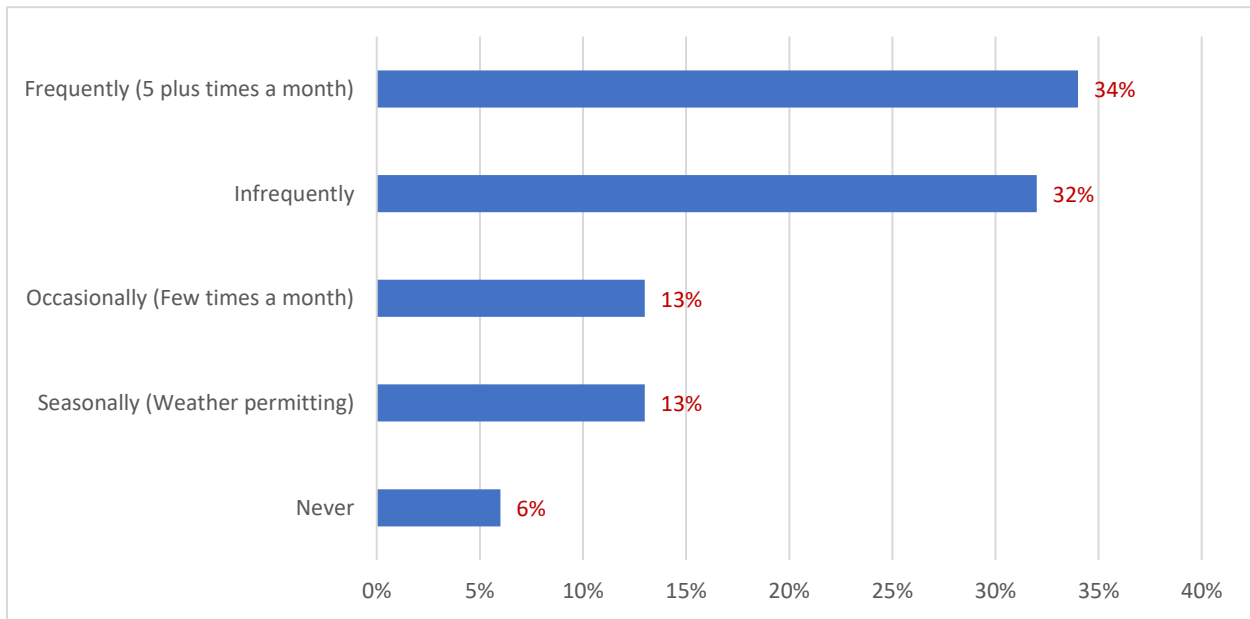
Format

The meeting began with interactive live polling of meeting participants, directly followed by an introduction from Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway, and a presentation from City staff and the consultant team to share information about the project background, goals and objectives, planning process, and anticipated trade-offs and potential choices for the redesigned network.

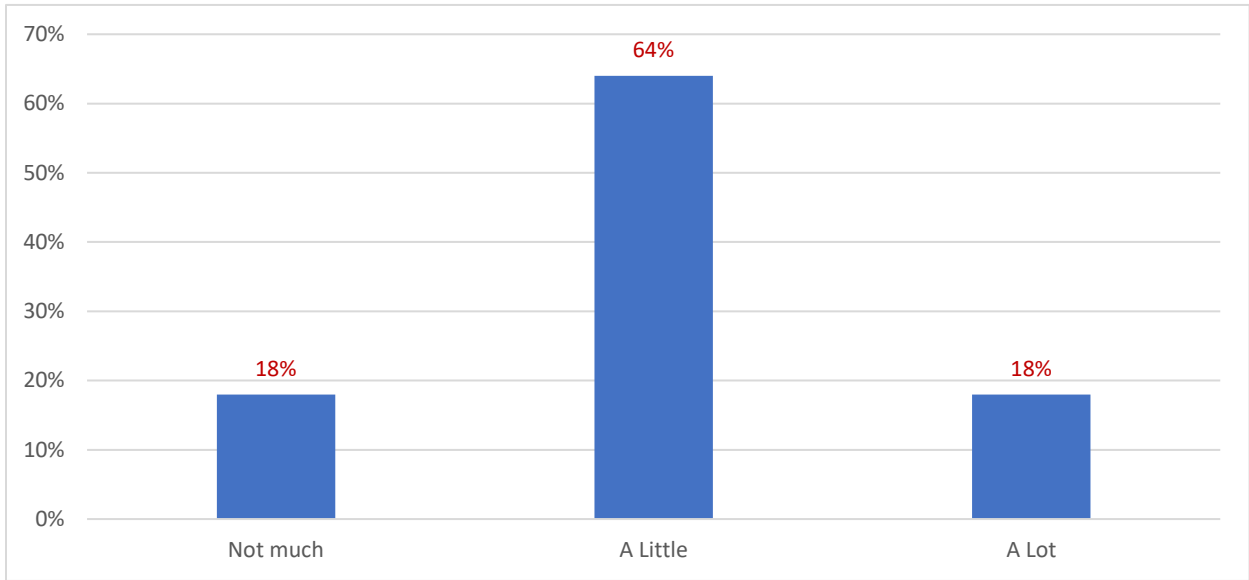
Live Polling Results

Below are results from live polling of meeting participants:

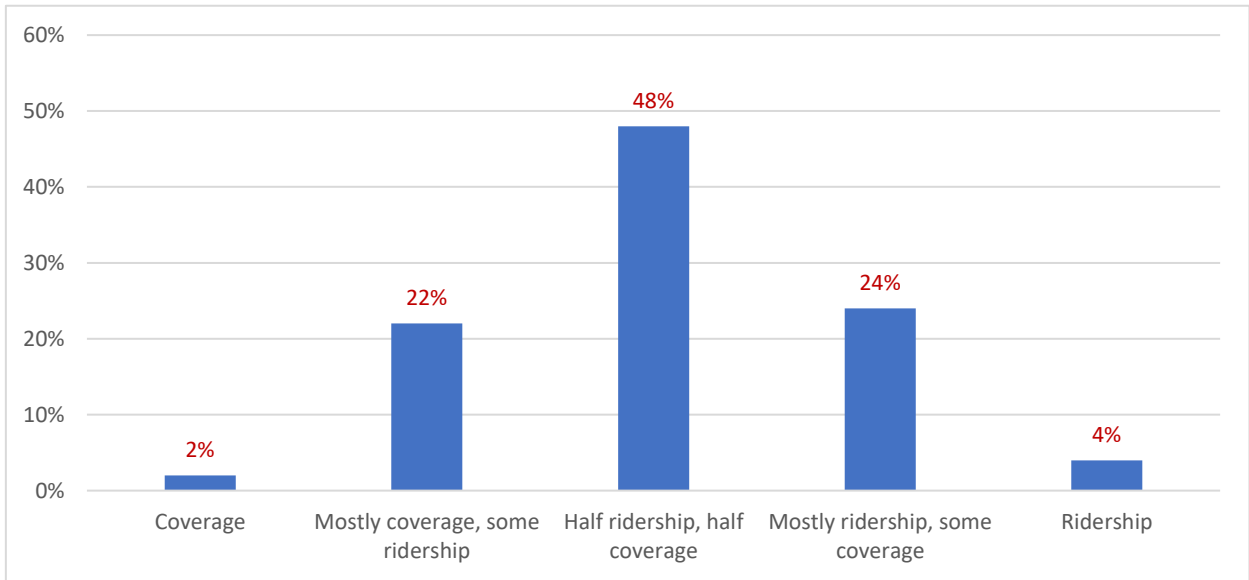
How often do you use Metro Transit service?



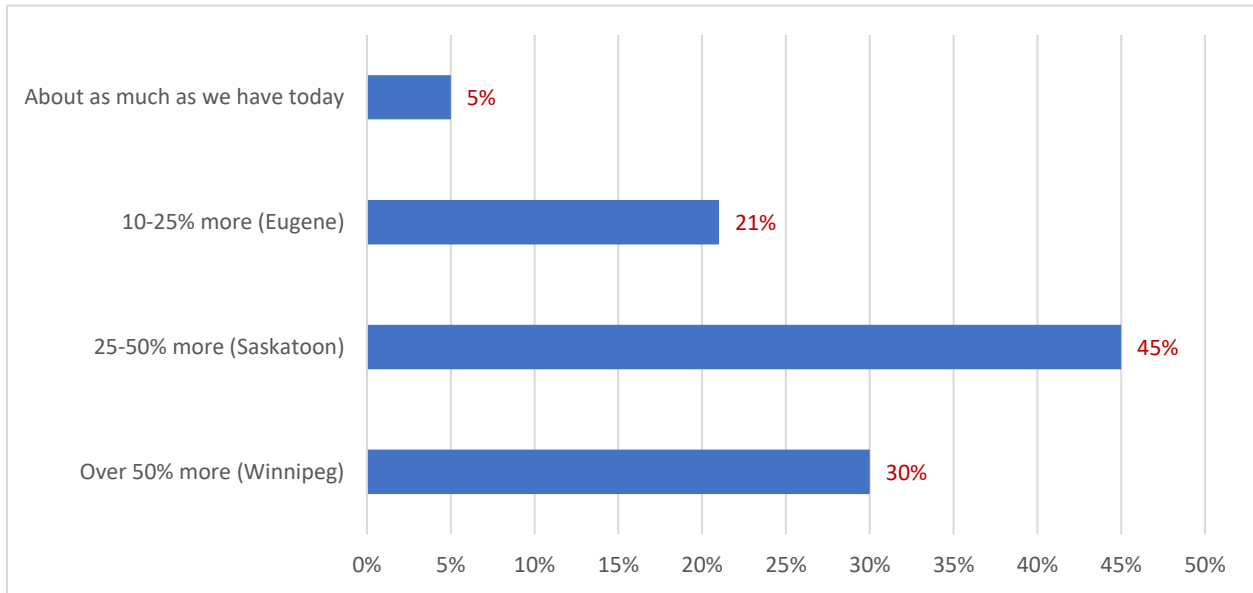
How much do you know about the Madison Metro Network Redesign?



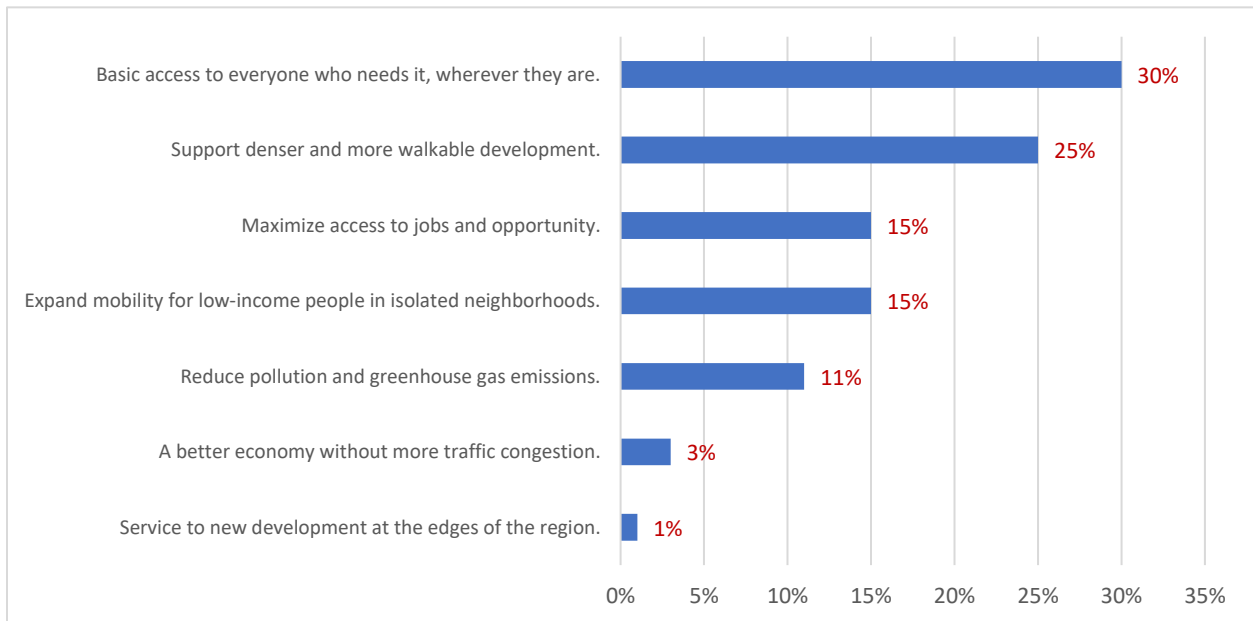
When you think about the ridership-coverage tradeoff, what do you think the overall priority should be?



In your opinion, how much transit service does Madison need?



Public transit can do many things for the community. Which of these things do you think are most important?



Q&A Notes

Following the presentation, participants were offered the opportunity to provide any input or have their questions and concerns addressed by City Staff and the consultant team. Below are notes from the Q&A portion of the meeting:

Questions and Answers:

- **Is the Jarrett Walker team aware that Madison College tax is aiming to deliver 95% of its offerings via internet post-pandemic that has huge implications for BRT and network routing, please share this question via chat for the group, which has been removed from my options?**
 - I did not know that. It is going to be really important to know that in understanding how relatively big of a destination Madison College is in the future. So, thanks for the information. It becomes a larger question of what is going to happen with everything. How many offices and other places are going to be virtual and to what split? Our basic assumption is people still have to go places but things like that will start to emerge as the pandemic lifts. Fortunately, this project is taking place over the course of about a year or so. So, we will incorporate that information as we get more of it.
- **Is there any concern about cutting down on commuter traffic from outside Madison to accommodate future suburban population growth?**
 - Our goals with the transit system and the Transit Network Redesign are about attracting ridership. And presumably, some of that ridership will be people that would have otherwise driven cars places which frees a capacity on streets and allows us to not emit as many greenhouse gases, and not do as many road projects and things of that nature, and that is kind of fundamental to what we are asking you today, is to kind of help us with those priorities and goals. And so that is fundamental to the ridership versus coverage debate.
- **What is the main reason for ignoring established rail corridor? The established rail corridor that extends from Middleton across the Isthmus to Sun Prairie or from Oregon to the airport through the isthmus?**
 - This project is fundamentally about our bus system and what we have and how it works today and redesigning it to work better. This is not a project that is looking at the commuter rail, light rail, or BRT. We have a separate project. That is Bus Rapid Transit. That is of course closely related, and it is all the same staff people, working on that but just for tonight I want to keep this focused on the bus network and redesigning the buses which I will drive on roads today.
 - Also, we are really looking at what can be changed in a relatively short amount of time. We would like this project to lead to a redesigned network that is up and running, you know in late 2022 if we can or sometime in 2023 if we cannot. And so, projects like reopening rail corridors to passenger service take many years.
- **How possible is it for Madison Metro to go electric and how much extra would it cost to implement?**

- We are in the process of electrifying the fleet. We have taken delivery of 3 Proterra electric buses. That should be hitting the street sometime, relatively soon. And then with the Bus Rapid Transit project will be purchasing 40-some BRT buses and I think over half of those buses will be electric.
- To answer the question directly, an electric bus is about twice as much as a diesel bus, maybe not quite that much of a difference, but the BRT electric buses will be just over a million dollars. I think the equivalent diesel articulated bus would be maybe in the \$700,000 range.
- **Establishing a public transit option along a fixed guideway provides an incentive for development for people who have no transit alternatives rather than reacting only to where people are today. Should some thought be given to making the city more efficient by incentivizing development along routes that are likely to retain high demand? Fixed guideway provides assurance of long-term service.**
 - Fixed guideway helps to some extent, but you may recall that the US used to have fixed guideways and all its major cities, on all their major streets and does not anymore. The streetcar lines were ripped out and so a fixed guideway can also go away. The fixed guideway is not magic. What ends up making a transit service attractive is the fact that it is usable, many times to go to many places. While I certainly would not want to discourage anyone in Madison from advocating for, or planning to, or creating a fixed guideway system on some of your major corridors. What Metro Transit can do in the short-term to help create the conditions for the kind of corridor that you are imagining is concentrating frequent service in this kind of corridor.
- **What is Madison doing to promote more dense transit-friendly development as part of the state? Urban sprawl is really hindering efficient transportation in the Madison area.**
 - The city has long supported and tried to encourage dense development and infill development in the central area and along transit corridors. There are incentives for building housing along transit corridors. We completed the comprehensive plan a few years ago. If anybody has been along East Washington Avenue recently, it looks a lot different today than it did about 10 years ago. The city has definitely embraced the vision of densely transit-oriented places.
 - We are in the middle of a process of updating some of our zoning code to make it easier to build the missing middle housing. So small multi-unit housing developments by right in the City of Madison without having to go through a tremendous amount of review. And that is part of the solution. We are working hard on the housing and on the planning and development front. To make sure that it is easy to create the kind of density that people are asking about, I would encourage anybody who is interested in that to please get involved and to support those zoning changes. Your alders need to hear from you that you are interested in dense walkable development in Madison and because there are changes that we need to make in our zoning code to make that more possible.
- **Who ultimately approves the redesign proposal -- the buck stops where? And, when are you anticipating this decision?**

- The Transit Network Redesign is driven by the Transportation Policy and Planning Board. That is one of the city's many boards and committees. They will ultimately approve the plan and guide the project. Now ultimately, there is a separate Transportation Commission which approves Metro route and fare changes as well as other things like parking changes and roadway geometrics, and other things. Ultimately any route changes and route schedule changes will be also approved by the Transportation Commission. This is a little bit higher level than just the typical round of route and schedule changes that Metro does regularly. And so that is why it is being driven by the Transportation Policy and Planning Board.
- This project will basically run through this year 2021 with the final plan adopted in early 2022. Now if everything lines up perfectly, normally Madison Metro Transit makes route and schedule changes in August because that lines up with our internal schedule as well as the school year and everything. So, if everything goes very smoothly and very quickly and easily, hypothetically, we could implement the system in August of 2022 due to the potential large-scale changes. I think we are planning on most of the changes being made in August 2023, so that will come on before Bus Rapid Transit which will be implemented in 2024.
- **Will the study identify any areas for future road connections that do not currently exist, for example, crossing Verona Road and Raymond Road to create a continuous East-West transit route South of the Beltline? Currently, there is no way to cross Verona Road at Raymond Road.**
 - No, it will not. We are assuming that the road network will exist as it currently does.
- **Is it possible or is it a good idea to redo the maps by adjusting for less than full-year resident students? Bus ridership and coverage would be different for 8 to 9 months of the year versus 3 to 4 months a year.**
 - That is something we get asked if should we have a system that scales up and down in, has more service in the winter less than the summer. A lot of people ride only when the UW is in session or they bike in the summer and we do some of that. If you look in our ride guide, we do have some trips that say, "this trip only operates." I do not know, September to May or something but to have a system that scales drastically again becomes very difficult for people to use, and really, we do not save that much. Almost all of our bus operators are full-time.
 - One of the things that make figuring out the transit system for a potential rider in Madison so complicated is that you do have relative to in and outlying areas pretty different service patterns in the daytime, in the evening, and on weekends versus weekdays. When you start adding on top of that variation by season. Well, you can get to your job using this route 9 months a year, but not these 3 months a year. That makes things even more difficult. And so even though we could perhaps optimize for specific demand by doing that the more we do that, the more we make things difficult for everyone else who uses the system.
- **Which communities have indicated they will continue to contract with Metro Transit?**
 - At this point, we expect all of our current partners to continue. We are always in close contact with our partners to make sure that our service is meeting their needs. But at this point we expect the services to continue in all the partner areas.

- **In any of the communities you have compared Madison with, do they have Lakes and an Isthmus to deal with?**
 - Every community has its own geographic particularities. Obviously, Madison has its own very specific particularity, which is that you have the Isthmus, that Isthmus happens to be at the center and it happens to be a big choke point. As a result of that you, inevitably, are going to have a lot of transit service that gets routed through the isthmus.
 - That is going to look particular on a map and a little different from what you might see somewhere else no matter what. It is not a unique problem though, that Madison happens to be a pretty centralized place with a downtown that is much denser than everywhere else. And a series of landscape obstructions that mean that you've got to go through downtown to get from the East to the West. So no, those places are not necessarily the same but that does not mean that we cannot compare them. For instance, having water barriers in cities is more the standard than the exception – New York, San Francisco, Eugene, Twin Cities deal with water features.

- **Another important factor in the ridership coverage question is how it affects the need for parking. Parking is extremely limited on the Isthmus. If we reduce service to the Isthmus in order to provide more coverage to outlying areas with fewer or more people choose to drive downtown and need parking.**
 - That is a really excellent point. And yes, ridership is not just associated with a lot of people on the bus. Having a lot of people on the bus has a lot of other benefits as well. There is a parking issue. There are also environmental and pollution concerns. And if you want transit to have environmental benefits and reduce pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, then that arises out of having many people use transit, which is what happens when you plan for ridership. Some of these benefits do require high ridership and ridership on its own is not necessarily the goal. It is also has benefits that arise out of that ridership.

- **Does an increase in ridership reduce the amount we would spend on car infrastructure and by how much?**
 - I could not tell you by how much, but yes. People on buses and on bikes for that matter, take less room than people in their cars. The more people are riding transit and choosing to do that rather than say driving in a car, the less road space you will require in the long run.

- **How are you engaging with these communities?**
 - We are going to be launching a survey that is going to run for about two months. We will also be reaching out to community partners to conduct focus groups and interviews. For anyone on this call who would like to organize a focus group, please get in touch with us, and we would gladly come and talk to you and listen to you. We anticipate for this to happen during each phase of the project. Hopefully in the summer months, when we are in Phase 2 and sharing alternatives, we will be able to be out in the community. Urban Assets will be out there tabling at events to listen and learn from you all.
 - We are having conversations now with Mayor's office staff such as a Reuben, who is on the call, and we are also working with Tariq, the first coordinator for the city's neighborhood

resource teams, which help deliver services, promote equity, and improve quality of life, within more at-risk or fragile areas. We are working on coordinating opportunities to listen and learn from residents.

- **How is the bus barn proposal for Oscar Mayer turning out? Is this still a possibility?**
 - You may have seen in the papers and we have actually shifted gears and we are pursuing a facility on Hanson Road near the airport which is currently a FedEx operations facility as they are building a new facility and moving out of. This actually has already been approved by Council and we expect to close that purchase in July of this year and that enables us it is a lower-cost facility, but also a much larger facility so we can accommodate growth well into the future. It also allows us to move in and make use of that facility almost right away rather than having a multi-year process to renovate a facility to be able to move into. So overall, I think it is a great solution for Metro and it will allow us to supply service more quickly.

- **Has there also been thought given to the night bus service?**
 - All of the number routes are part of the plans that include the service at - I assume you are talking about routes 81 and 82, the late-night service.
 - The assumption is that our service plan, which means the hours that we operate is going to be essentially the same which is roughly five-thirty to midnight or so, generally.

- **Would the bottleneck of the Capitol Square slow down the BRT routes with all the other routes going through there?**
 - A fundamental part of this project is reacting to the Bus Rapid Transit system. We have a Bus Rapid Transit system that is going to come online in 2024, hopefully, and we know that we cannot simply drop that system on top of the existing bus network. Part of the issue is that we have duplicate service on East Washington and University and other places where capacity issues currently exist. Some streets like State Street are completely saturated with bus service. Fundamental to putting this network together is making sure that there is enough capacity for BRT to not be hindered by local service.

- **Will you be reaching out to the school district to reach low-income families?**
 - Yes. Absolutely!

- **What are the partners Justin mentioned? Do they include Monona? How does the existence of Monona affect routing on the far east side?**
 - The partners mentioned do include Monona.

- **Is this public session being recorded and if yes, will it be available on the city website?**
 - This session is being recorded and will be available on the website: mymetrobus.com/redesign.

Comments

- I live downtown but work on Rimrock Road except, for now, working from home during COVID, and do not have a car. Both the ridership and the coverage goals are important.
- One thing we have not talked about is the geographic limitations that Madison has. If people do not take transit, there just is not that much space for people to drive into downtown and many other areas are also geographically constrained besides the downtown. This is an argument for more people being able to bike, but we will leave that aside for the moment.
- Seems to me that getting people to give up a car in exchange for a bus is probably the largest problem.
- How can we say that the Madison ridership is increasing when in 2019 was the second lowest over the past 10 years, even though the population has increased?
- No adding new night busses.
- The Madison College online goal of 95% was shared with staff during the BRT route input sessions. It is surprising that this issue did not make it out of that silo.
- I suggest to Urban Assets that you send flyers home with all the school children. That will reach the low-income sections of the city.
- Survey should be translated into Hmong as well.