

# Transportation Advisory Committee Transportation Survey

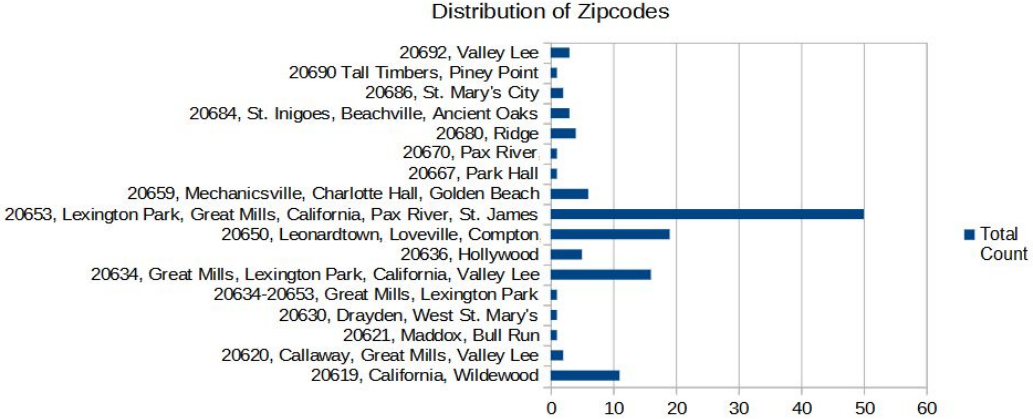
Presented by the TAC Survey Subcommittee

*Ride The Bus With Us!*

# Survey Purpose

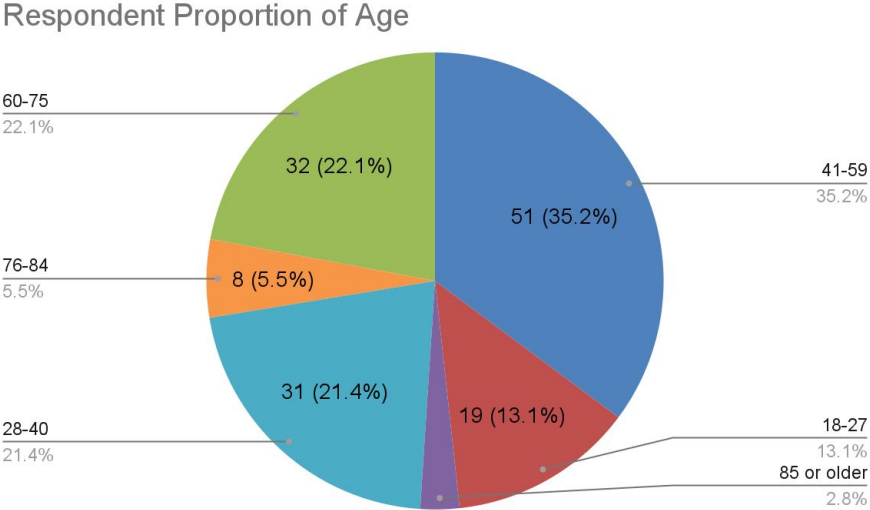
- A public survey was conducted from February 10th, 2023 to April 7th, 2023 to understand where to focus transportation improvements or expansions in St. Mary's County
  - Captured data regarding transportation needs of county residents
  - About 150 responses received
  - English and Spanish electronic/paper versions of survey provided
  - Used SuperSurvey online survey tool to create and administer the survey
- Several questions with multiple choices provided
  - Modes of transportation - STS, STS paratransit, SSTAP
  - Ranking of importance regarding transportation needs

# Data Overview: Distribution of Zip Codes



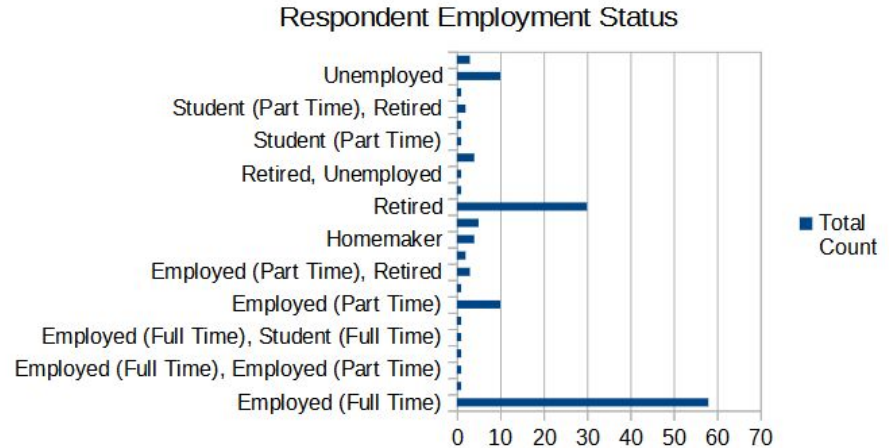
# Data Overview: Respondent Proportion of Age

- Approximately 70% of survey respondents are working-age adults (18-59 years)
- Approximately 30% are at, or near retirement-age (60+ years)



# Data Overview: Respondent Employment Status

- The greatest proportion of respondents are fully employed
- About 27% of respondents are retired or identified themselves as retired in conjunction with some other employment status
- Approximately 6% represent full-time students, part-time students, or students who may also be employed, or engaged in other activities

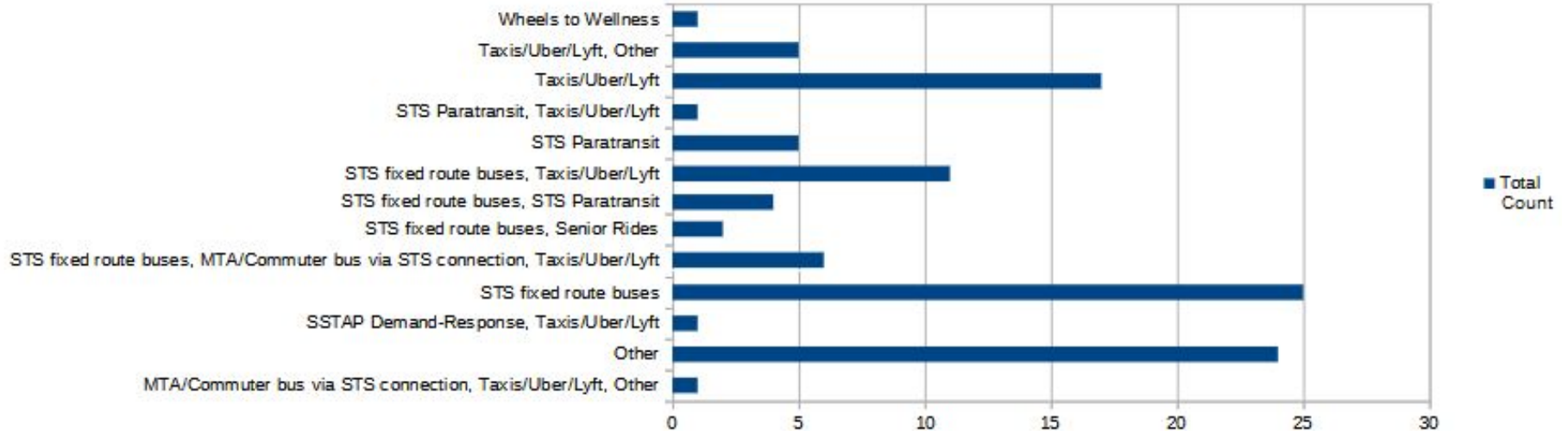


The logo for St. Mary's Transit System is a large, light blue watermark in the background. It features a circular emblem with the letters 'STC' in the center. The text 'St. Mary's Transit System' is arched over the top of the circle. Below the circle, there is a phone number '301-415-4200 Ext. 1120'. At the bottom of the logo, there are two horizontal bars and a stylized wave graphic. The slogan 'Ride The Bus With Us!' is written in a bold, italicized font at the very bottom.

# Transportation Usage Findings

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Most Used Modes of Transportation



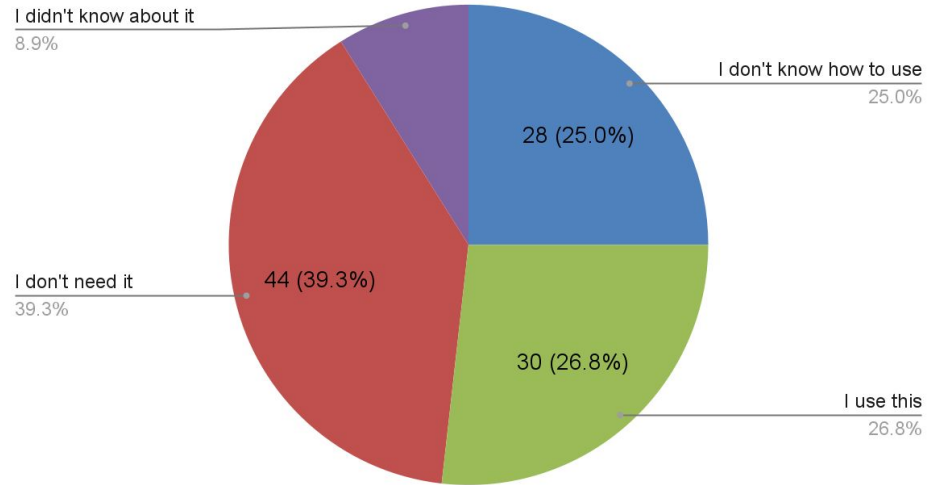
# Transportation Usage Findings

- The most used form of public transportation in St. Mary's County is the STS Bus
- A combined 52% of respondents are STS customers or use the STS bus along with some other means of public or private transportation
- Approximately 43% combined of respondents rely on semi-private modes of transportation, such as taxis and Uber and Lyft services
- Just over 10% of users reported using STS Paratransit

# Transportation Usage Findings

- About 30% of survey respondents use the STS bus service
- Almost as many respondents are unsure of how to use the service
- The greatest proportion of respondents reported that they do not need STS

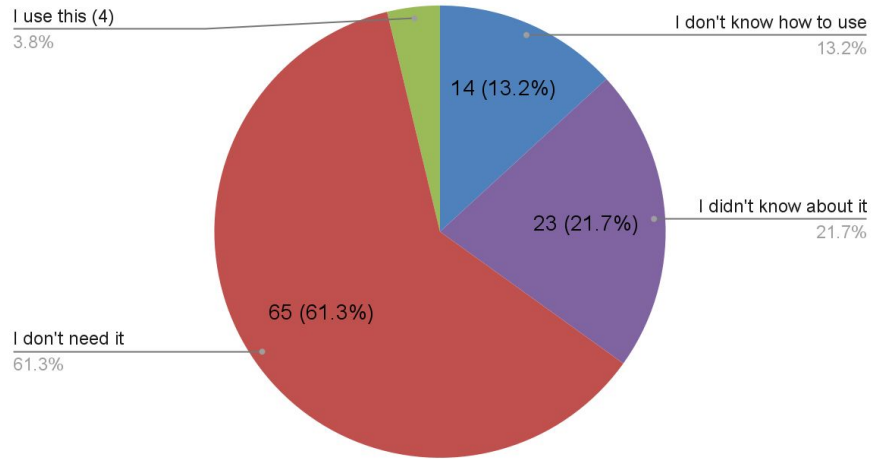
Count of Participants Who Ride STS (111 Responses)



# Transportation Usage Findings

- A total of four respondents reported that they are MTA Commuter bus customers
- Approximately a combined 35% of respondents were either unaware of the service or do not know how to use it
- Approximately 60% of respondents do not need the service

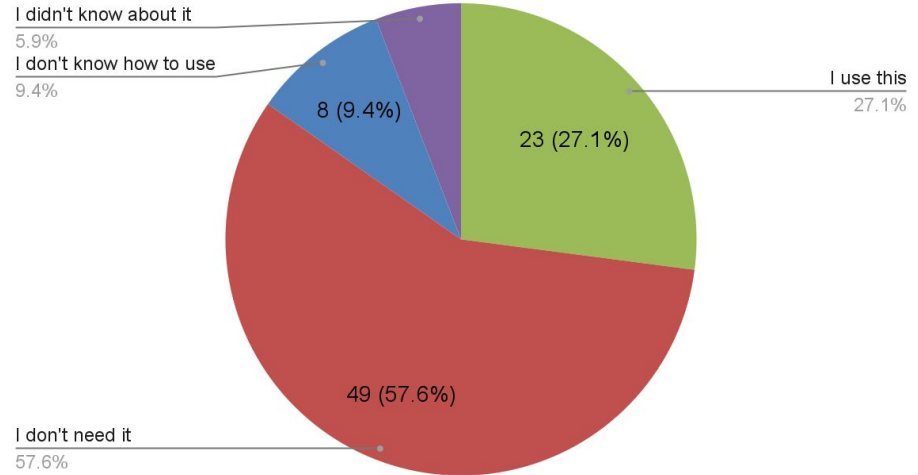
Count of MTA/Commuter Bus Users (106 Responses)



# Transportation Usage Findings

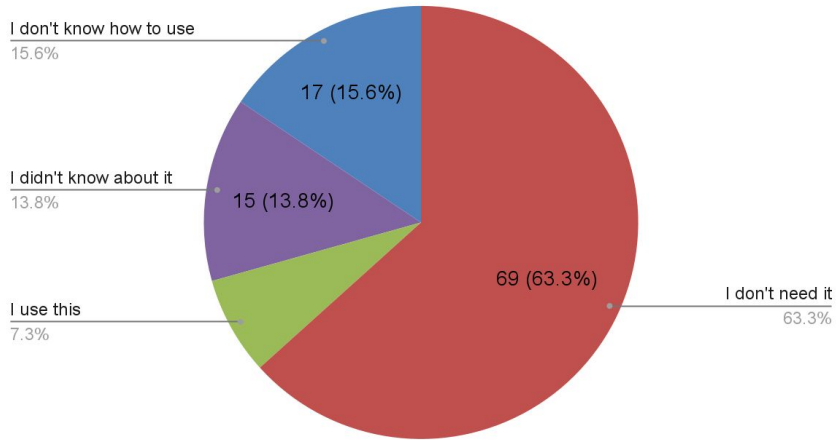
- Approximately 27% of respondents reported relying on taxis or rideshare services for transportation
- Far more respondents were aware of existing taxi or rideshare services operating in the County than those who were aware of most public transportation services offered by the County

Count of Taxis/Uber/Lyft Riders (85 Responses)

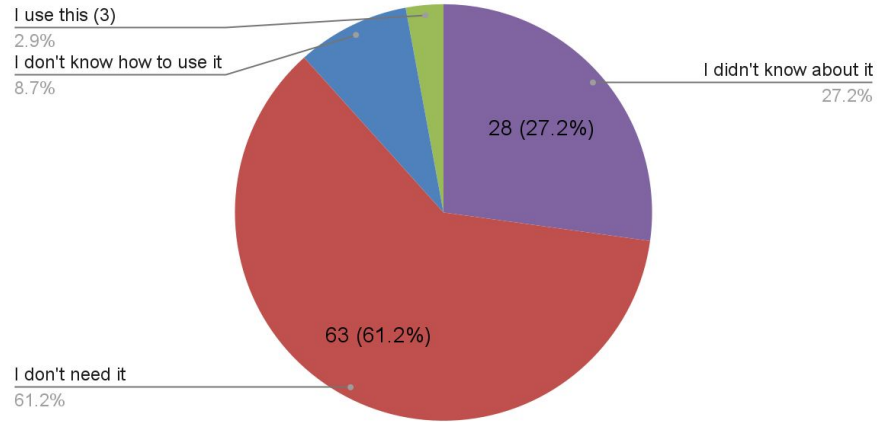


# Transportation Usage Findings

Count of STS Paratransit Users (109 Responses)

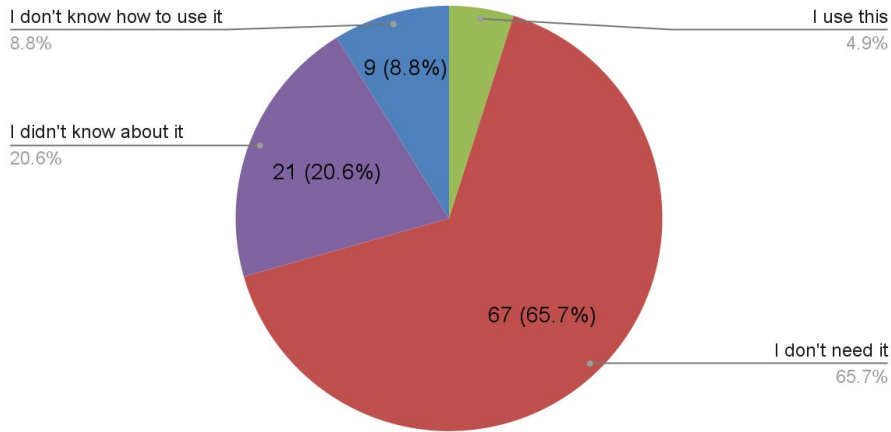


Count of SSTAP (Statewide Specialized Transportation Assistance Program) Demand-Response Users (103)

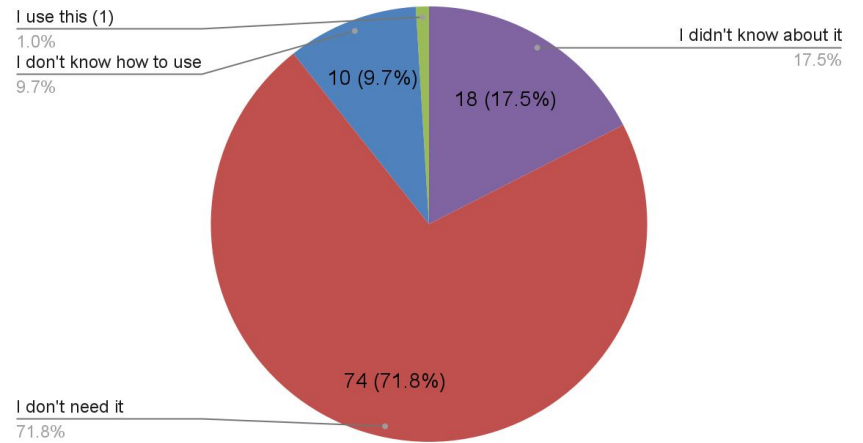


# Transportation Usage Findings

Count of Participants Who Receive Health Dept. Assistance For Transportation to Medical Appointments (102 Responses)



Count of Senior Rides Customers (103 Responses)



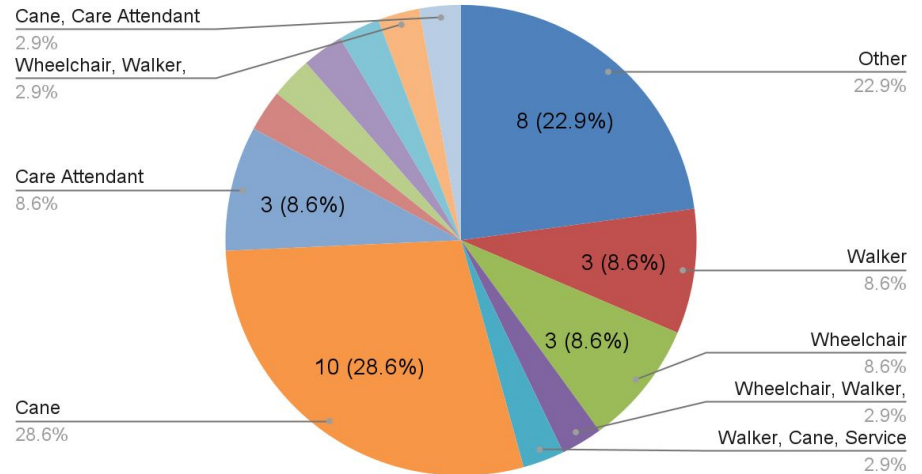
# Transportation Usage Findings

- On average, 66% of survey respondents do not use STS Paratransit, SSTAP, Senior Rides, or receive transportation assistance from the Health Department for medically necessary appointments
- Another 20% did not know about the services, and, 9% of respondents do not know how to use them
- Currently, 4% of respondents make use of these services
- After isolating responses at the age of 60 or over, on average, 30% of respondents either had not heard of these services or reported they didn't know how to use them

# Transportation Usage Findings

- About 28% of mobility assistance respondents reported using a cane
- A combined 26% of respondents use only a wheelchair or use a wheelchair along with other devices for mobility support
- Of respondents who require mobility assistance, most still reported they do not need STS Paratransit, SSTAP, Senior Rides, Wheels to Wellness, or assistance from the health department for medically necessary appointments
- On average, a combined 33% of respondents have not heard of these services or reported they do not know how to use them

Count of Mobility Assistance Usage (35 Responses)



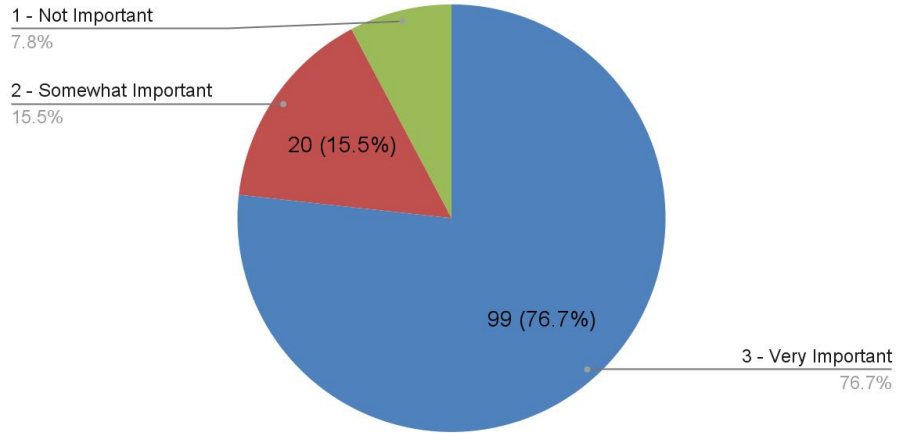
The logo for St. Mary's Transit System is a large, light blue watermark in the background. It features a circular emblem with the text "St. Mary's Transit System" at the top, "SMTS" in the center, and "301-452-4200 Ext. 1120" below it. At the bottom of the emblem are two horizontal bars and a stylized wave. Below the emblem, the slogan "Ride The Bus With Us!" is written in a bold, italicized font.

# Factors that May Improve Public Transportation Usage

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- Lack of access to public transportation is a hindrance to utilizing the service for many survey respondents
- Approximately 77% of respondents reported that proximity to one's origin or destination is a very important factor in their ability to use public transportation
- In total, about 91% reported that a service closer to their locations would allow them to use public transit more frequently

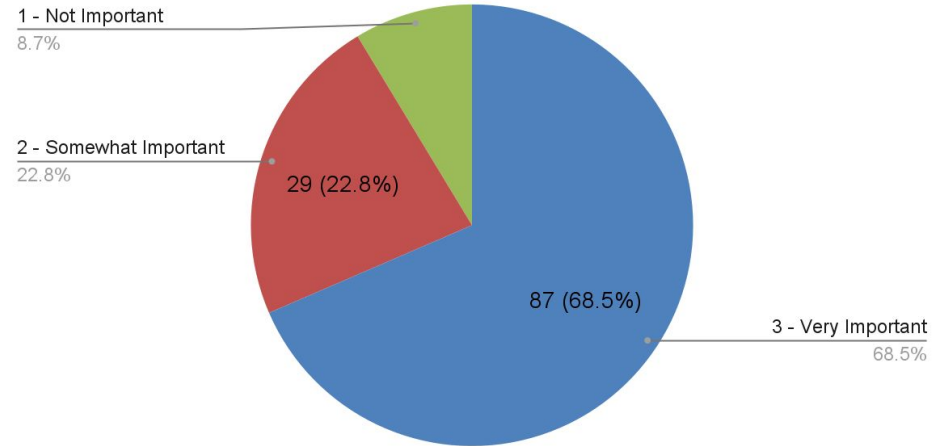
Service Needs to be Closer to My Origin or Destination (Home/Work/School/etc.) [129 Responses]



# Factors that May Improve Public Transportation Usage

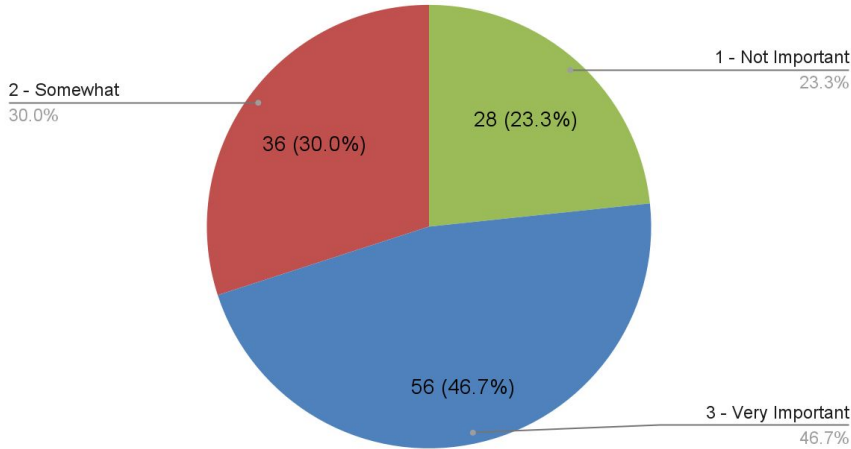
More frequent service is also somewhat or very important to 90% of the survey respondents

More Frequent Service to My Origin or Destination (127 Responses)



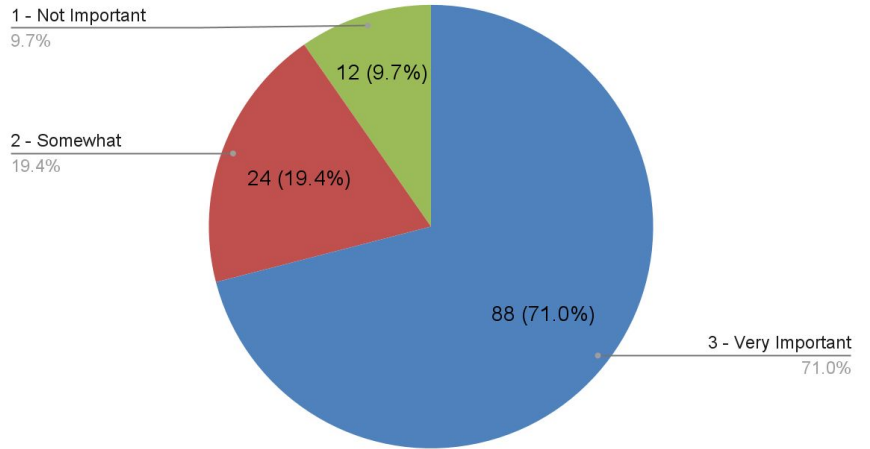
# Factors that May Improve Public Transportation Usage

Better Security on the Bus (120 Responses)



Better security on the bus is somewhat or very important to a large majority of respondents, totalling approximately 87% of all responses to this question

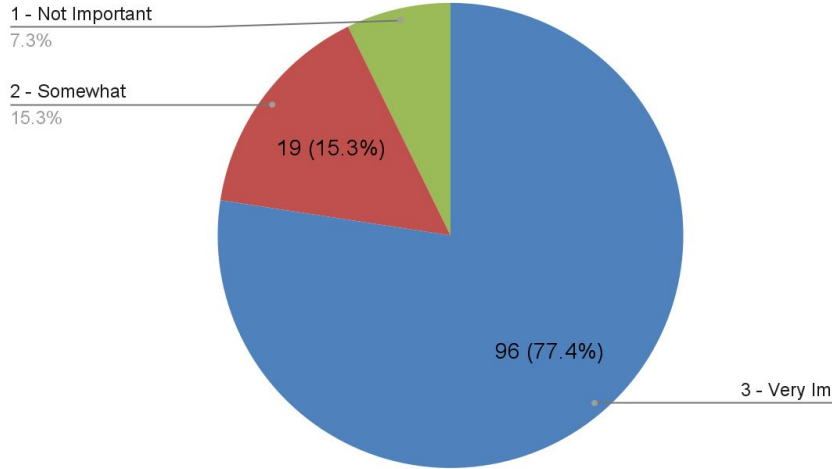
Provide a Safe Area for Me to Wait for the Bus (124 Responses)



An overwhelming majority of respondents reported that having a safe area to wait for the bus is very important to them

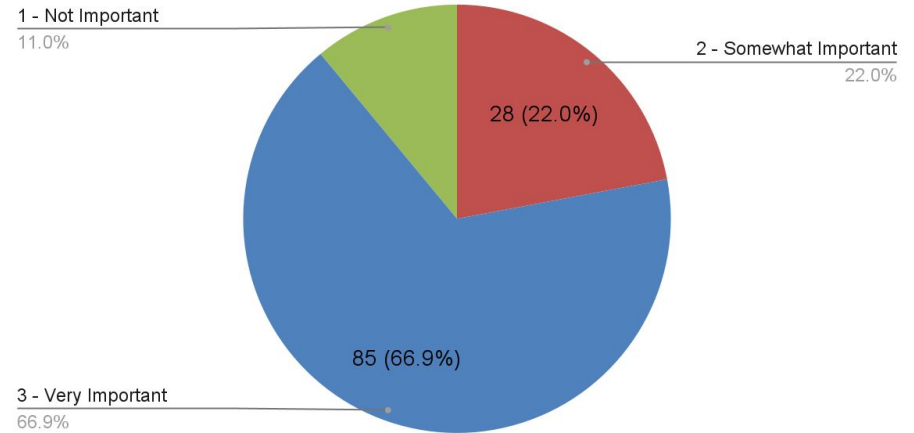
# Factors that May Improve Public Transportation Usage

Improve Reliability of Buses (124 Responses)



Over 90% of respondents state that improving the reliability of the buses is either somewhat or very important to them

Improve Website Information About Fares, Schedules, and Routes (127 Responses)

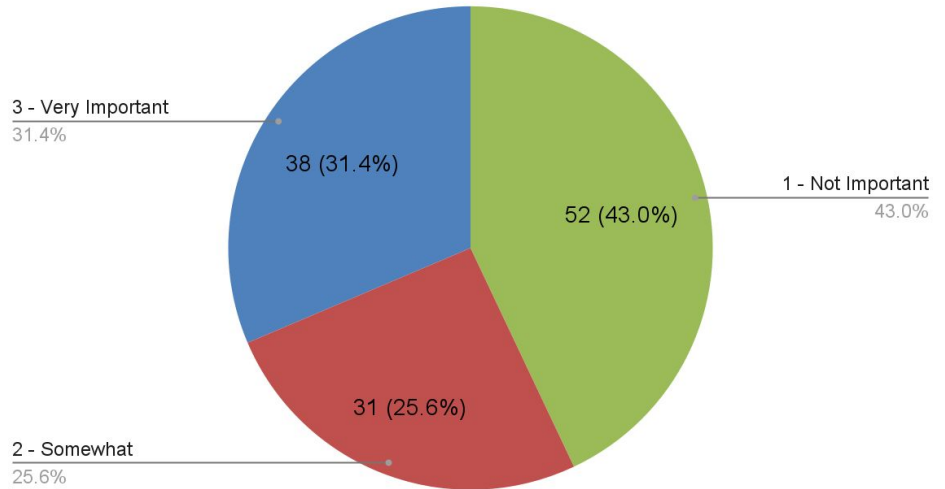


Almost 90% of respondents stated that improving the STS website information is either somewhat or very important to them.

# Factors that May Improve Public Transportation Usage

Some respondents are concerned about having a secure location to leave bicycles, but the largest proportion stated this is not important to them

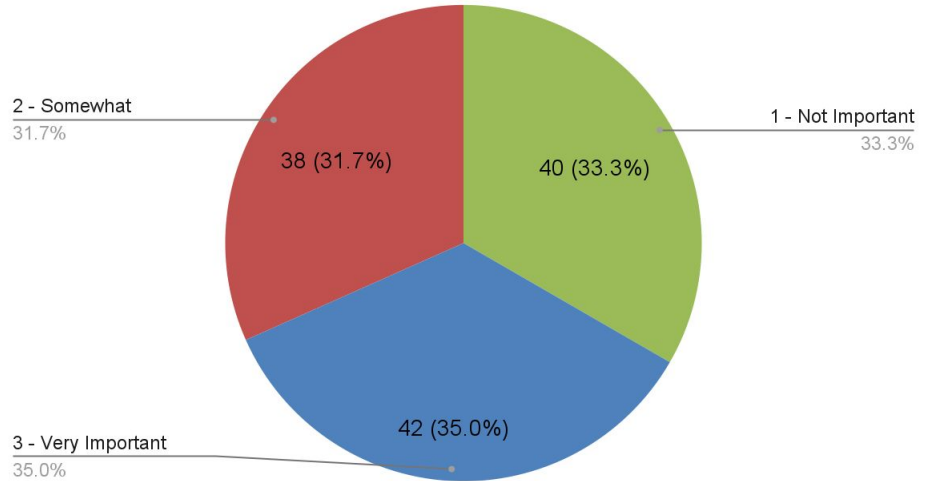
Safe Place to Leave My Bike (121 Responses)



# Factors that May Improve Public Transportation Usage

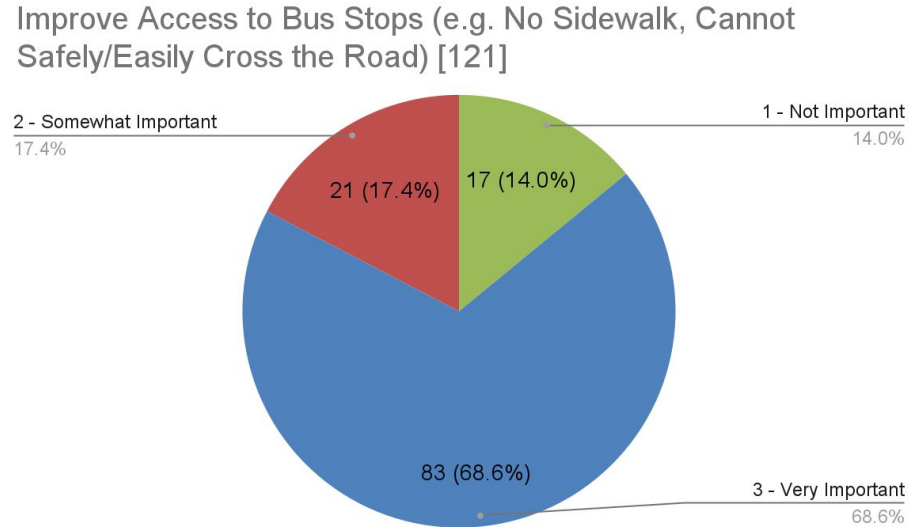
Responses were split almost evenly on how much COVID-19 exposure was a factor in their decision not to use public transportation

Improve Covid Mitigation Measures (120 Responses)



# Factors that May Improve Public Transportation Usage

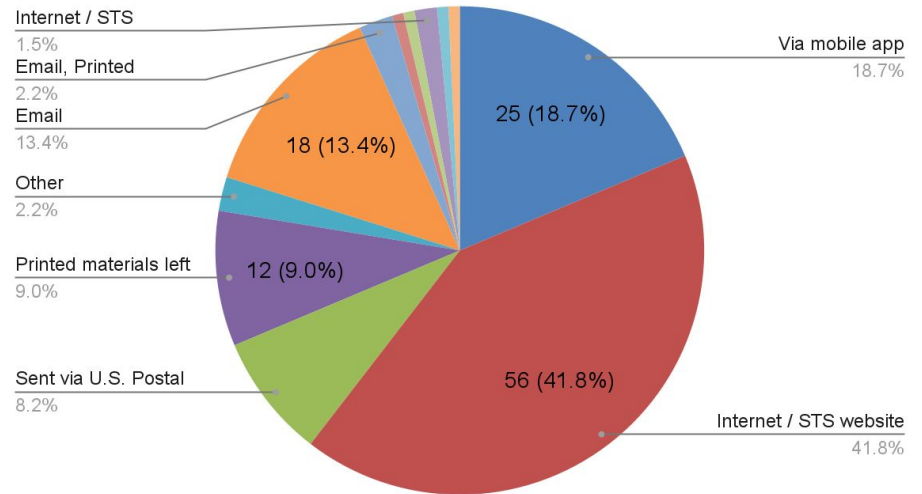
- Improving access to the various bus stops is very important to a majority of respondents
- Expanding the sidewalks and concern for people waiting for buses along Route 235 and other busy roads were frequent comments



# How Do You Prefer to Receive Information

- Around 40% respondents preferred to receive information regarding public transportation from the internet or STS website
- Another 19% listed a mobile app as their top choice
- A combined 75% of respondents elected to receive information via email, mobile app, or the STS website

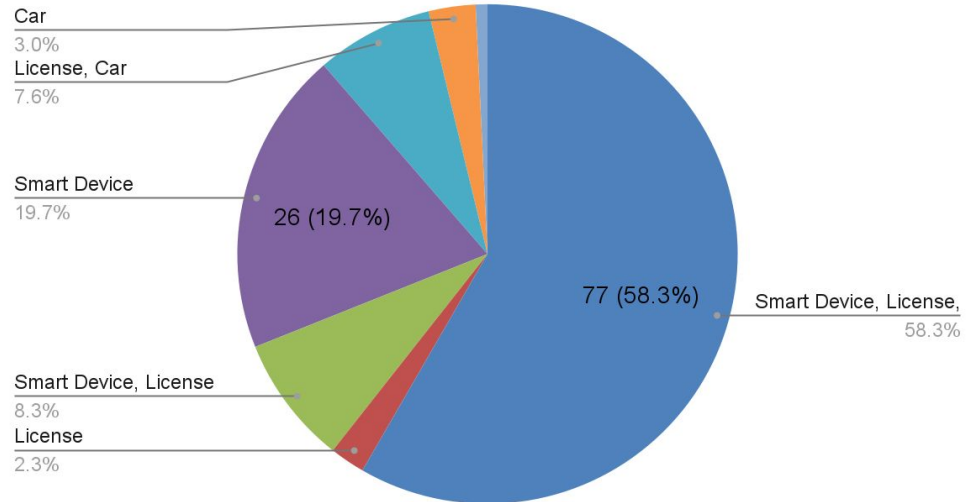
How Do You Prefer to Receive Information? (138 Responses)



# Transportation and Technology Access

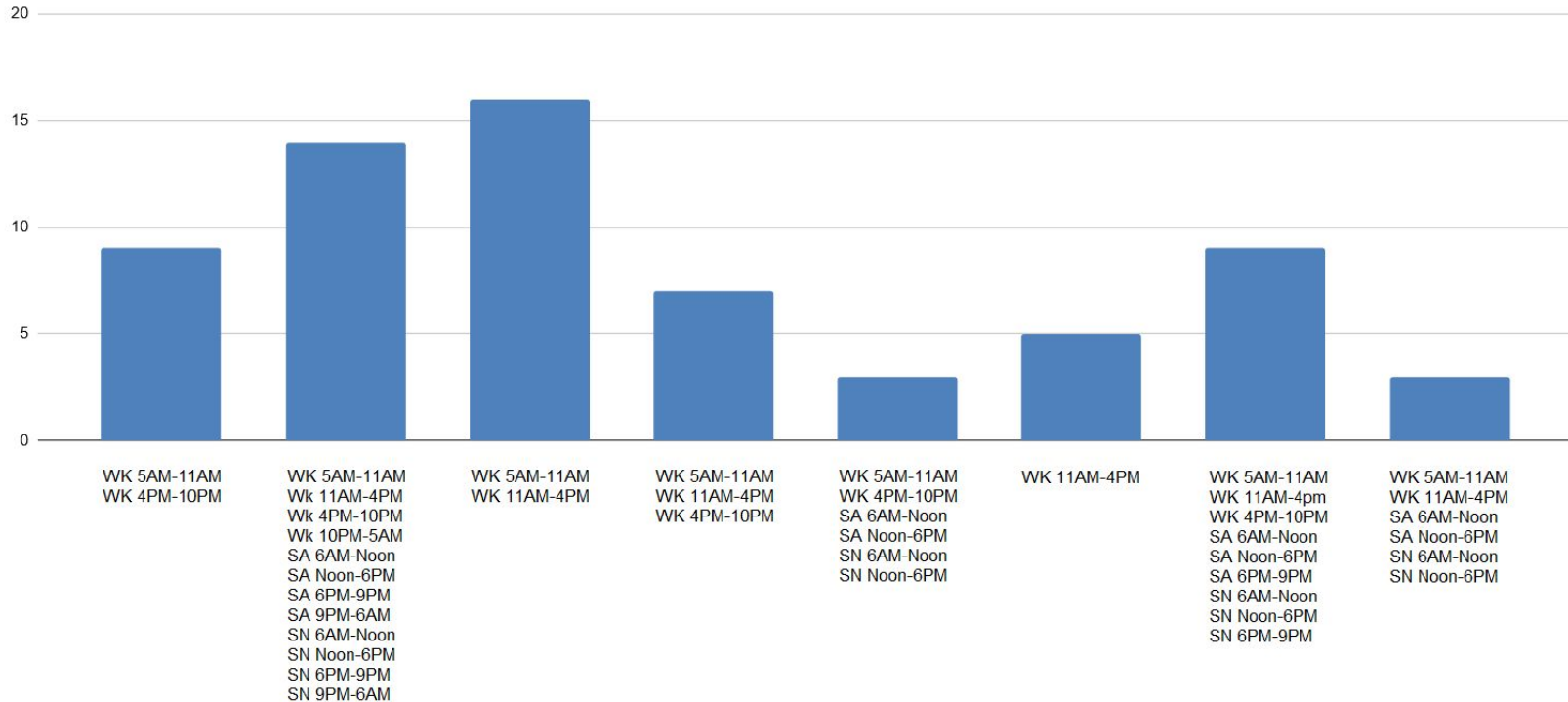
- Approximately 58% of respondents have access to mobile apps, a valid driver's license, and a reliable vehicle
- Around 20% reported only having access to mobile apps
- Approximately 88% total of responder have access to mobile apps

Transportation and Technology Access (136 Responses)



# Times of Day When Transportation is Needed

"What Times of Day Do You Need Transportation?" (124 Responses)



# Times of Day When Transportation is Needed

- Virtually all respondents need transportation every day of the week
- The highest proportion of respondents reported needing transportation only during core weekday commute hours (between 5am to 11am, and 11am to 4pm)
- The next highest proportion (almost 12%) selected all options for times and days of the week.
- There was a tie for the third highest proportion; about 7% of respondents stated they need transportation at all times of the day on weekdays and weekends- except the overnight hours
- Another 7% needed transportation only during the weekdays, between 5am to 11am, 11am to 4pm, and between 4pm to 10pm
- Out of all respondents, approximately 28% reported needing transportation after 10pm or during the overnight hours

# Comment Responses

- The Subcommittee sorted through comment responses to the questions: “How do you feel about transportation in the County”, “Where do you need public transportation access”, and “If you need better access to buses/stops, please provide details”
- Searching for recurring keywords in the comments, like “college”, the Subcommittee found that respondents frequently asked for public transportation access to and from St. Mary’s College
- Most of the comments were in regards to bus shelters and safe passageways to reach the bus stops
- Many commenters were unclear of where the bus stops are

# Conclusions

- There is a great demand for expanding existing STS routes by extending the hours of operation and reaching citizens in more remote parts of the County. Many who need access to public transportation live outside of its range of operations
- Many citizens are unaware of the transportation services available to them and would benefit from greater advertisement
- There is confusion as to where current bus stops are located; lack of shelter and sidewalk access are possible deterrents to using transportation

# Way Forward

- The Subcommittee's immediate short term recommendations are to make use of existing avenues to advertise all public transportation services. Many survey respondents are simply unaware of the options available to them, despite the fact that they may have the most need or would benefit greatly from these services
- County Transportation could seek advertising opportunities with local radio, local news publications, and through existing memberships with the St. Mary's County Chamber of Commerce
- Make STS stops more conspicuous

# Way Forward

- An overwhelming majority of respondents had varying concerns regarding lack of access to the bus stops. Most of these concerns were in regards to the lack of shelter from the elements, incomplete or missing sidewalks, not knowing where the stops are, and aversion to crossing busy roads to reach the bus
- DPW&T has bus shelter and sidewalk expansion projects funded or underway in several regions of the County; the Subcommittee encourages all due haste for the completion of these projects
- The Subcommittee also found that a large number of respondents, of virtually all age groups, expressed a desire for improved website information about fares, schedules, and routes
- The Subcommittee recommends County Transportation engage with the community to determine common, requests for website changes, such as user-friendliness, then implement feasible changes to better serve current and potential STS customers.

# Way Forward

- In the long term, the Subcommittee recommends the creation of a mobile app to track STS buses (and other public transportation services), perhaps with GPS tracking devices, to display arrival, departure, and route information, similar to the “Here Comes the Bus” app that exists for SMCPS students and their parents
- Potentially this provides an avenue for partnership with the College of Southern Maryland or St. Mary’s College of Maryland as development of such an app would make a good capstone project for graduating computer science students

# Conclusions: Lessons and Advice for the Next Survey Group

- Make contact with entities such as local radio and other regional media and educational institutions early in the outreach process, leaving ample time to complete external requirements of other institutions
- Taking full advantage of personal contacts with external organizations works well
- Include other incentives, such as free passes for other modes of public transportation to attract additional respondents
- A canvassing period of at least two months is the most effective period for soliciting responses
- Consider adding a question to assess where respondents were when they completed the survey (bus, bus stop, home, post office, etc) and which method (PC, smart phone, paper, etc.) they took the survey
- Questions regarding safety and bus reliability should be more specific

Questions?

