APPENDIX D

Public and Stakeholder Engagement









RTP

2026
Regional Transportation Plan

Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning

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Please note: The 2026 RTP was adopted by the CMAP Board and MPO Policy Committee on October 14, 2026. For information on subsequent amendments to the adopted plan, visit CMAP's RTP Amendments webpage.

Introduction

Public engagement is a cornerstone of the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning's (CMAP) mission to develop a shared vision for a thriving, inclusive, and connected region. For the 2026 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), CMAP's engagement activities ensure that the voices of residents, community leaders, transportation agencies, advocacy organizations, and other stakeholders shape the plan's priorities and strategies. Guided by CMAP's federally required Public Participation Plan, these efforts combine broad engagement with targeted strategies to involve traditionally underrepresented voices, ensuring that engagement meets both regulatory standards and regional values.

RTP engagement fulfills CMAP's commitment to collaborative planning and the federal metropolitan transportation planning requirement to "provide citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation, representatives of users of public transportation, and other interested parties with a reasonable opportunity to comment" (23 CFR 450.316).

2026 RTP engagement at a glance

A regionwide effort to hear from residents, partners, and stakeholders

19 events
in communities across the region

100+ meetings
with transportation partners and agencies

3 resource working groups
convened across key topic areas

Hundreds of students
engaged through school events and Future Leaders in Planning program

40,000+ people reached
through social media

30,000+ subscribers
reached through newsletters

6 Faces of the RTP
showcasing the various ways people get around the region

Why public engagement matters

Engagement is not just a regulatory requirement — it is fundamental to creating a transportation plan that reflects the diverse needs, priorities, and lived experiences of the people who live and work in northeastern Illinois.

As highlighted in the Public Participation Plan, CMAP's vision for engagement is rooted in the agency's mission to advance fairness in northeastern Illinois, by investing resources in strategies that lift the voices of those who have been historically left out of the decision-making process — and working to ensure systemically excluded communities can meaningfully influence decision-making.

Federal requirements at a glance

Under 23 CFR 450.316, metropolitan planning organizations like CMAP must:

- Involve the public early and continuously in plan development
- Provide reasonable opportunities for comment on the draft plan
- Seek out and consider the needs of those traditionally underserved by transportation
- Document engagement efforts and responses to public input

This appendix documents the progress towards meeting these requirements.

Overview of public engagement activities

Engagement for the 2026 RTP relied on a mix of methods to meet people where they are, both in person and online.

- **Resource groups:** Engaged subject matter experts and community leaders on transportation priorities and tradeoffs. Resource groups were convened for subject areas including the congestion management strategy, financial planning, regional capital project planning, and the regional freight system assessment.
- **RTP questionnaire:** Captured regional priorities and transportation experiences from a broad cross-section of residents.
- **Community engagement events:** Hosted pop-up booths, open houses, and workshops across all seven counties.
- **Student engagement:** Engaged with students from Crystal Lake High School District 155, as well as CMAP's Future Leaders in Planning summer cohort.
- **Digital outreach:** Distributed RTP information and questionnaire via email newsletters, blogs, and social media campaigns to inform and invite input.
- **Board and committee presentations:** Provided updates and feedback sessions, for the CMAP Board, MPO Policy Committee, and Transportation Committee.



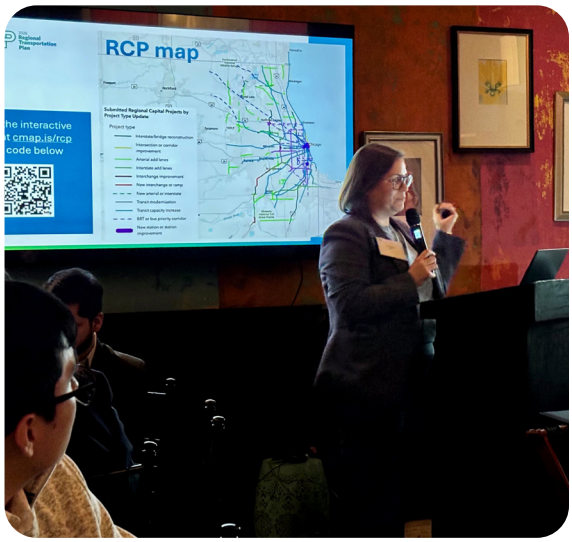


CMAP staff members presenting elements of the RTP to elected officials and members of the public.

Who participated?

Engagement activities reached a wide range of voices, including:

- Residents from all seven counties in the CMAP region
- Municipal and county leaders
- State and regional transportation agencies
- Public transit riders and operators
- Freight and logistics industry representatives
- Active transportation and accessibility advocates
- High school and college students
- Community-based organizations



CMAP Executive Director Erin Aleman presenting the RTP to the Illinois section of the Institute of Transportation Engineers.

Public engagement strategies, tools, and tactics

To keep the public and stakeholders informed and engaged throughout the development of the 2026 RTP, CMAP prioritized regular, timely updates on both the plan itself and its supporting components. As major milestones were reached — such as the release of the Emerging Priorities Report and the Existing Conditions Report — CMAP shared accessible summaries, key findings, and opportunities for feedback. Select materials were also translated into Spanish to broaden access and ensure that residents could fully engage with the process.

This approach maintained transparency, sustained momentum between engagement events, and helped participants see how their input connected to ongoing technical work.

Information sharing

Key plan information was shared through:

- **Online engagement platform:** An RTP hub with plan documents, an introductory video, event information, and feedback tools
- **Printed materials:** An RTP one-pager, flyer, palm card, and stickers shared at in-person events
- **Newsletters**: More than 20 RTP-related articles sent to over 30,000 subscribers
- **Social media:** More than 35 posts on Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram, reaching over 40,000 individuals

Community engagement events

In summer 2025, CMAP hosted or participated in 19 events across the region, from farmers markets to block parties, collecting feedback through interactive displays, the RTP questionnaire, and direct conversations with residents.

At these events, CMAP staff members led activities to better understand how residents travel and the barriers they face. Three interactive posters asked:

- How did you travel here today?
- What transportation barriers do you face?
- How would you have liked to get here today?

The first question functioned as a voting exercise, with participants placing a sticker to indicate their travel mode. The remaining questions were open-ended, with participants using sticky notes to share experiences and preferences.

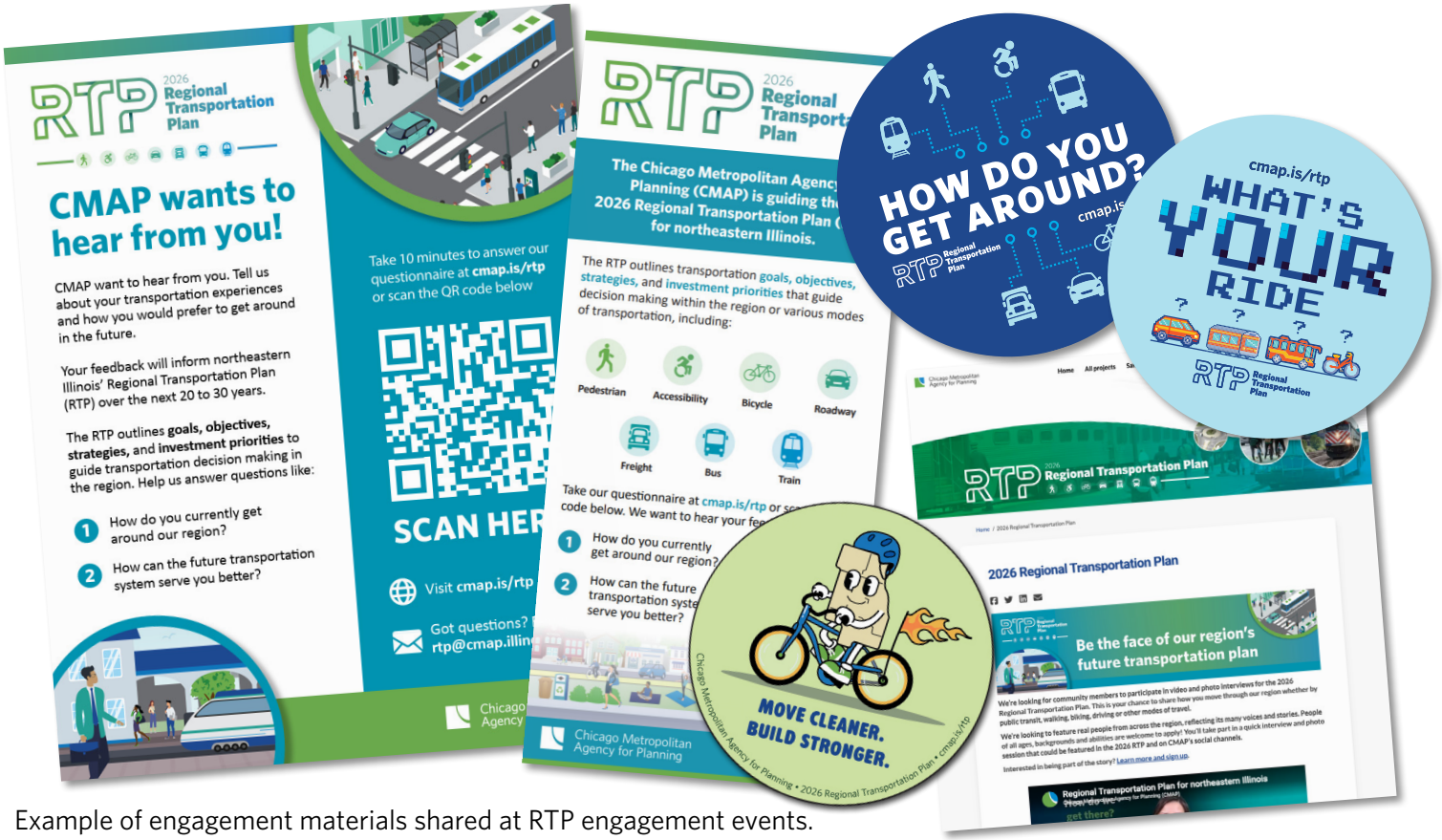
At the majority of events, participants reported traveling by personal vehicle. Exceptions included the Lombard Farmers Market and the Green Jobs Fair. Across events, participants expressed interest in using more transportation options, with barriers varying based on infrastructure, logistics, and weather.



CMAP staff members engaging with residents at events across northeastern Illinois.

Summer 2025 community engagement events

Event	Location
Chicago Architecture Center's Engineering Fest	Chicago, the Loop
Coffee with Mayor Sean R. McDermott	Countryside, west Cook County
Green Sustainable Job/Resource Fair	Chicago, the Loop
Presentation to McHenry School District students	McHenry County
Touch a Truck	Woodstock , McHenry County
Park Party	Romeoville, Will County
Presentation for University of Illinois and Clerk College students	Chicago, the Loop
Aurora Farmer's Market	Aurora, Kane County
Oswego Country Market	Oswego, Kendall County
Taco & Art Fest	West Chicago, DuPage County
North Chicago Community Days	North Chicago, Lake County
Flossmoor Back to School Bash	Flossmoor, south Cook County
Diamond Fall Fun Fest	Diamond, Will County
Fall Nature Fest at LaBagh Woods	Chicago, Albany Park
Transportation Equity Network Meeting	Chicago, the Loop
La Grange Farmer's Market	La Grange, west Cook County
Lombard Farmer's Market	Lombard, DuPage County
CMAP Future Leaders in Planning presentation	Chicago, the Loop
Presentation for DePaul University students	Chicago, the Loop



Example of engagement materials shared at RTP engagement events.

Faces of the RTP: Elevating community voices

To complement its broader engagement efforts, CMAP launched *Faces of the RTP*, a storytelling initiative that highlights how transportation shapes daily life across northeastern Illinois. While surveys, meetings, and data analysis provide critical insights, this effort brings a human dimension to transportation planning by elevating the lived experiences of residents, workers, and business owners who rely on the transportation system every day. Through short videos, interviews, and photography, participants share how they travel, the challenges they face, and what improvements would make it easier, safer, and more reliable to get where they need to go.

CMAP worked with community-based organizations and its digital network of newsletter and social media outlets to invite volunteers that represent a broad cross-section of geographies, travel modes, and perspectives — as well as those from communities historically underrepresented in planning processes. These stories are shared across CMAP's website, social media, and public materials, and are incorporated into presentations and plan content to illustrate key themes and strategies.

By pairing personal experiences with technical analysis, *Faces of the RTP* helps ensure the plan reflects not only system-level needs, but also the people and communities it serves.



LaShawn owns an urban farm and gets around the city by public transit.



Terry is a bicycle advocate from Bartlett

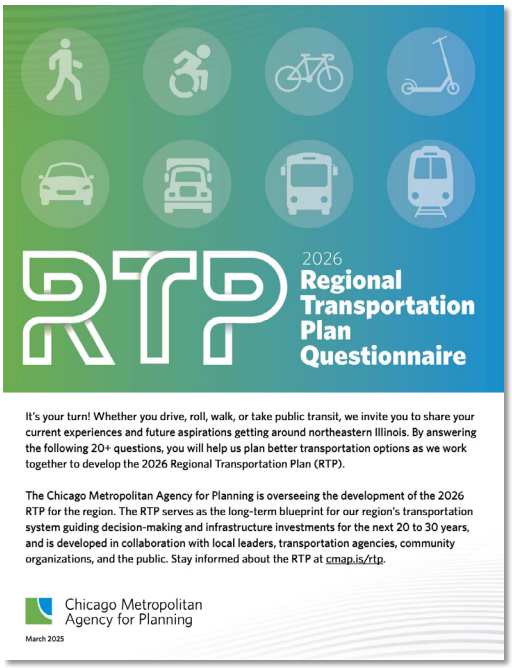


Erik is executive director of the Illinois International Port District.



Bailey is a reverse commuter who bikes from Metra's Libertyville station to her office

RTP questionnaire



The RTP questionnaire was an effective tool for gathering input on regional transportation priorities. CMAP promoted the questionnaire from February through December 2025, in English and Spanish, both online and in print.

CMAP distributed the questionnaire through all communication channels and shared it with its 284 municipalities through the Local Government Network (CMAP's communication platform connecting each community with a dedicated staff member). A communications toolkit supported local engagement via newsletters, websites, and social media. A second targeted effort in late August focused on communities that hadn't responded.

The questionnaire reached an estimated 36,000 people and collected more than 1,700 responses, exceeding the goal of 1,000 responses.

While results are not statistically representative, they provide valuable insight into regional priorities.

Participation snapshot

- **Responses received:** 1,771
- **Geographic reach:** Responses from all 7 counties, with 67 percent from suburban communities and 33 percent from Chicago
- **Demographic diversity:** 15 percent of respondents identified as people of color; 9 percent were from households earning $50,000 or below, annually; 31 percent were aged 18 to 34

Race/ethnicity	Percentage
White	75%
Latino or Hispanic	6%
Asian	5%
Black	2%
Other	2%
Prefer not to say	10%

Average annual household income	Percentage
Less than $25,000	3%
$25,000 - $50,000	6%
$51,000 - $100,000	22%
$101,000 - $200,000	34%
More than $201,000	19%
Prefer not to say	16%

Public feedback shapes the RTP

Feedback from the questionnaire helped shape the direction of the RTP. As plan development progressed and entered the strategy development phase, input from members of the public revealed alignment in some key areas pertaining to transportation policies and investments:

- Residents' experiences on roadways could be improved by prioritizing safety and mitigating congestion
- When investing in new projects, residents are most interested in more infrastructure for non-driving modes such as transit, biking, and walking

- Many residents value the role transportation plays in improving climate resilience and would like to have options to make environmentally sustainable transportation choices
- Residents commonly make travel decisions based on safety, reliability, and — especially for transit — frequency of service

Combined with research, data analysis, and input from transportation stakeholders, these areas of consensus from the questionnaire helped inform the RTP's final strategies.

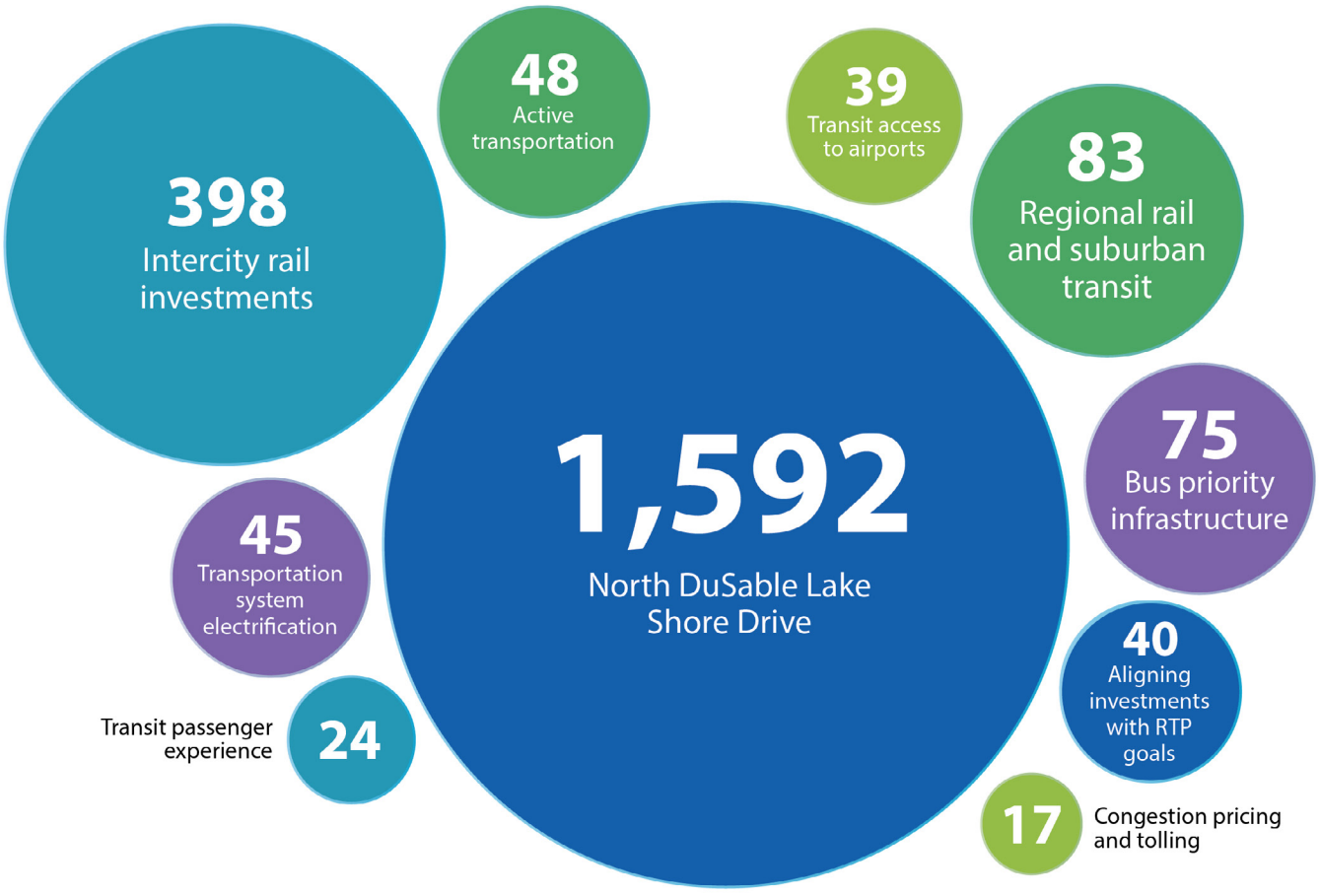
Public comment and hearing

CMAP held the federally required public comment period for the draft 2026 RTP, Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2027-32 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), and air quality conformity determination from June 12 through July 31, 2026. During this period, residents, transportation users, local governments, transportation partner agencies, advocacy organizations and other stakeholders were invited to review the draft plan and share feedback.

CMAP promoted the public comment period through a variety of outreach channels to encourage broad participation. The agency published the legally required public notice in the Chicago Sun-Times on June 12, 2026, and shared information about the draft plan and comment opportunities through CMAP newsletters, social media, website updates, and public meetings. CMAP also developed and distributed media toolkits to partner organizations to help them share the opportunity with their networks.

CMAP received 2,183 comments through multiple channels, including the webform comments, transmitted letters, and emails.

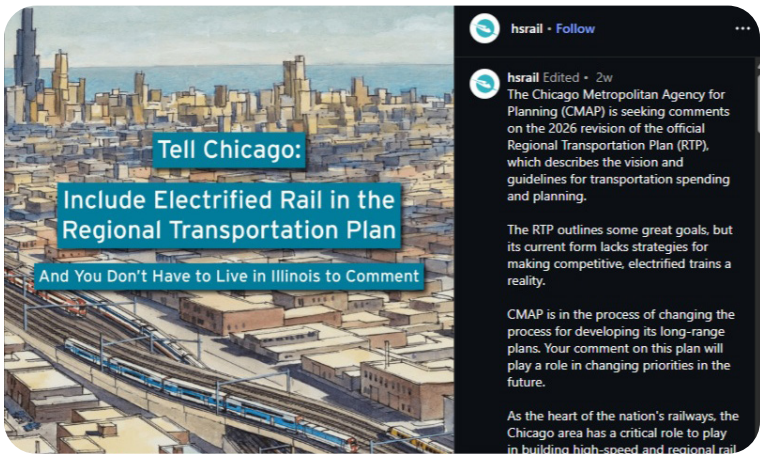
What we heard: Most common themes in comments

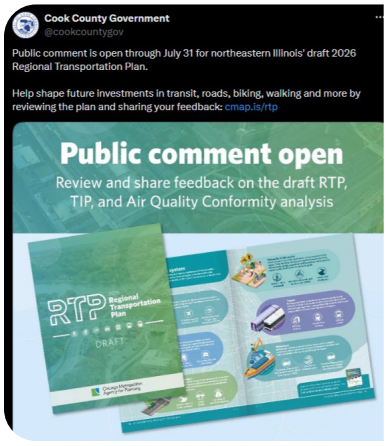


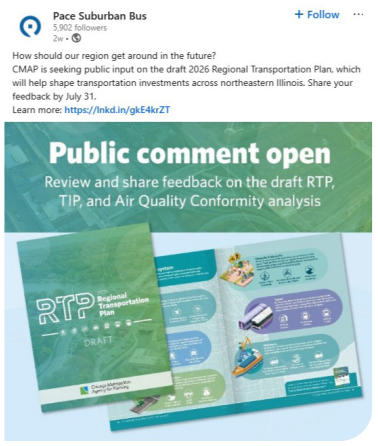
Theme and coded appearances	What we heard	CMAP response and resulting action
North DuSable Lake Shore Drive (NDLSD) preferred alternative **1,557 mentions**	Commenters opposed the previously recommended preferred alternative and called for greater emphasis on transit service, pedestrian and bicycle access to the lakefront, and connections between lakefront communities and public spaces. Some commenters requested that the project be reclassified as "visionary."	IDOT confirmed that it is no longer pursuing the design previously presented as the preferred alternative. CMAP updated the project description in the Regional Capital Projects Benefits Report to match the description in the RTP's priority investments chapter. CMAP does not recommend changing the project's classification because it continues to have implementing-agency sponsorship. IDOT and CDOT are revisiting the project scope and have committed to additional public engagement.
Concerns about proposals that could limit vehicle throughput on NDLSD **35 mentions**	Commenters opposed reconstruction approaches they believed could increase congestion or limit vehicle throughput. They described NDLSD as an important corridor and said they wanted it preserved for continued use by drivers.	IDOT and CDOT are revisiting the NDLSD project scope and have committed to additional public engagement as they continue to stud the corridor and consider alternatives. Therefore, no changes are recommended.
Intercity rail travel **398 mentions**	Commenters supported more frequent intercity rail service, better connections with regional transit, and expanded travel options between communities in Illinois and across the Midwest.	The feedback aligns with the RTP, which highlights the value of intercity bus and rail service and calls for integrating intercity bus and passenger rail into transportation planning at the state, regional, and local levels. Therefore, no changes are recommended.
Regional rail service and suburban transit access **83 mentions**	Commenters called for more transit service in the suburbs, including more frequent weekend and off-peak service, better suburb-to-suburb connections, improved airport access, Metra service extensions, and infill stations.	The feedback aligns with RTP strategies that support transit-oriented development, regional rail, and more frequent service, especially during off-peak hours. Therefore, no changes are recommended.
Bus priority planning and infrastructure **75 mentions**	Commenters supported infrastructure, planning, and roadway design measures that make bus service faster, more frequent, and more reliable.	The RTP supports measures such as transit signal priority, queue jump lanes, improved stops and stations, and dedicated bus lanes. Therefore, no changes are recommended.
Active transportation as a share of overall investments **48 mentions**	Commenters expressed concern that too little funding is anticipated for pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure. They called for greater investment in separated facilities that protect people walking and biking from motor-vehicle traffic.	The RTP identifies connected sidewalks, bikeways, and micromobility infrastructure as a priority investment. Estimated active transportation costs reflect planned facilities in the Northeastern Illinois Greenways and Trails Plan and project costs in county bicycle and pedestrian plans. Therefore, no changes are recommended.
Transportation system electrification **45 mentions**	Commenters supported reducing transportation emissions, including electrifying rail lines and using battery-electric trains and buses.	The RTP highlights the importance of reducing transportation emissions and includes strategies for electrification across multiple modes. Therefore, no changes are recommended.

Theme and coded appearances	What we heard	CMAP response and resulting action
Concerns about conflicts between investments and RTP goals **40 mentions**	Commenters questioned roadway expansion investments they viewed as inconsistent with regional climate and mobility goals. Some also questioned funding for maintaining existing infrastructure when they saw parts of the current system as misaligned with RTP goals.	Transportation agencies submit projects for consideration as regional capital projects. CMAP evaluates the projects against metrics associated with RTP goals. Projects with the greatest regional benefits are considered for inclusion in the fiscally constrained plan, subject to available funding. The Regional Capital Projects Benefits Report provides additional information about the evaluation and selection process. Therefore, no changes are recommended.
Improved transit access to airports **39 mentions**	Commenters called for more frequent transit service to O'Hare and Midway airports.	The feedback aligns with the RTP's goals and strategies for improving multimodal access to the region's airports. Therefore, no changes are recommended.
Concerns about transit passenger experiences **24 mentions**	Commenters reported concerns about transit service reliability, personal safety, and the cleanliness of stations and vehicles.	Reliable, safe, and clean service is important to encouraging more people to choose transit. The region's transition to the Northern Illinois Transit Authority creates an opportunity to address these concerns. Therefore, no changes are recommended.
Support for congestion pricing and expanded tolling **17 mentions**	Commenters supported exploring a road usage charge, expanding tolling to additional facilities, and using congestion pricing to manage traffic and better reflect the costs of driving.	The feedback aligns with RTP strategies to explore a road usage charge and additional tolling. Therefore, no changes are recommended.









Public hearing

CMAP held a public hearing on August 6, 2026, for the draft 2026 RTP, the FFY 2027-32 TIP, and the air quality conformity determination. It provided a formal opportunity for 44 individuals to provide oral comments on the draft materials. A recording of the hearing is available on CMAP's YouTube channel.

Most comments focused on the North DuSable Lake Shore Drive improvements project. Common themes included rethinking the corridor's design, reducing car-oriented infrastructure, prioritizing transit service and transit priority treatments, improving pedestrian and bicycle access to the lakefront, reducing noise and air pollution, addressing public health and climate resilience, and strengthening connections between lakefront-adjacent communities and public spaces. Several speakers also emphasized the need for transparent and inclusive engagement as this joint IDOT and CDOT project advances.

Speakers also raised broader transportation priorities related to the RTP, including increased investment in transit, rail and freight electrification, high-speed and intercity rail, micromobility, sidewalks and bikeways, and transit-oriented development. Public hearing comments were documented and reviewed alongside comments submitted through the online form, email, and letters, to inform the final draft materials.









Conclusion

Public engagement for the 2026 RTP plays a central role in shaping a vision that reflects northeastern Illinois' needs and priorities. By combining broad engagement with targeted strategies to involve traditionally underrepresented communities, CMAP ensures the plan is grounded in real-world experiences and regional values.

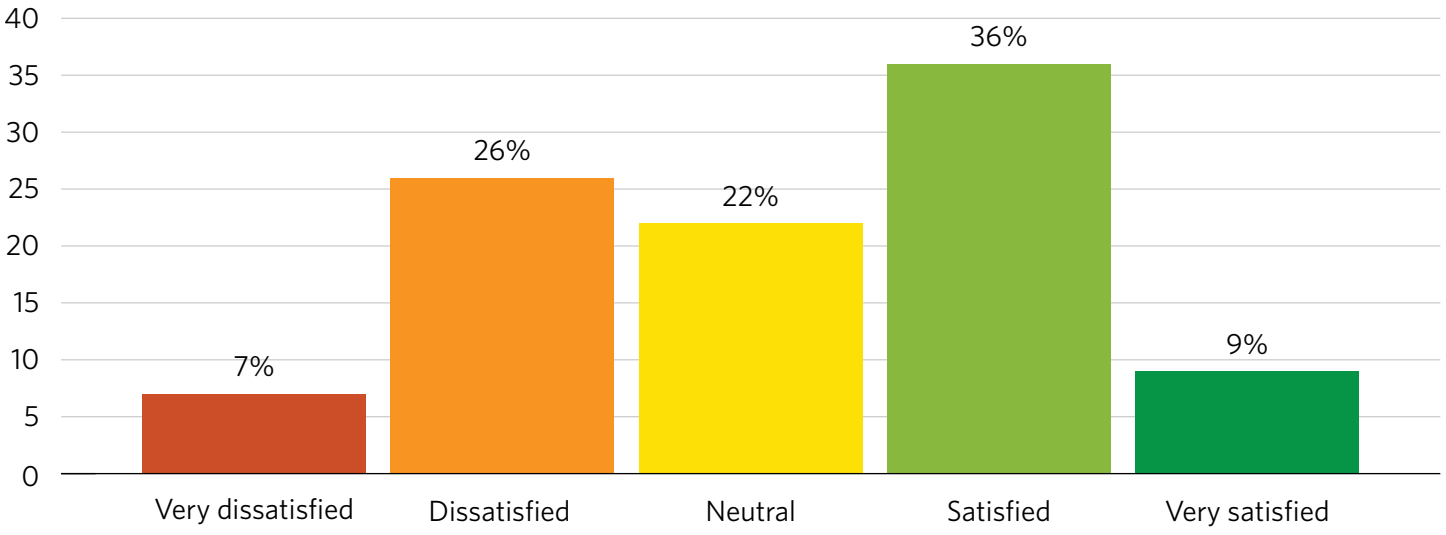
Feedback gathered through events, the RTP questionnaire, public comment opportunities, and ongoing stakeholder dialogue has helped ensure both technically sound and publicly supported priorities and recommendations. This collaborative approach strengthens the RTP as a shared blueprint for transportation investment and policy, guiding the region toward a more equitable, sustainable, and connected future.



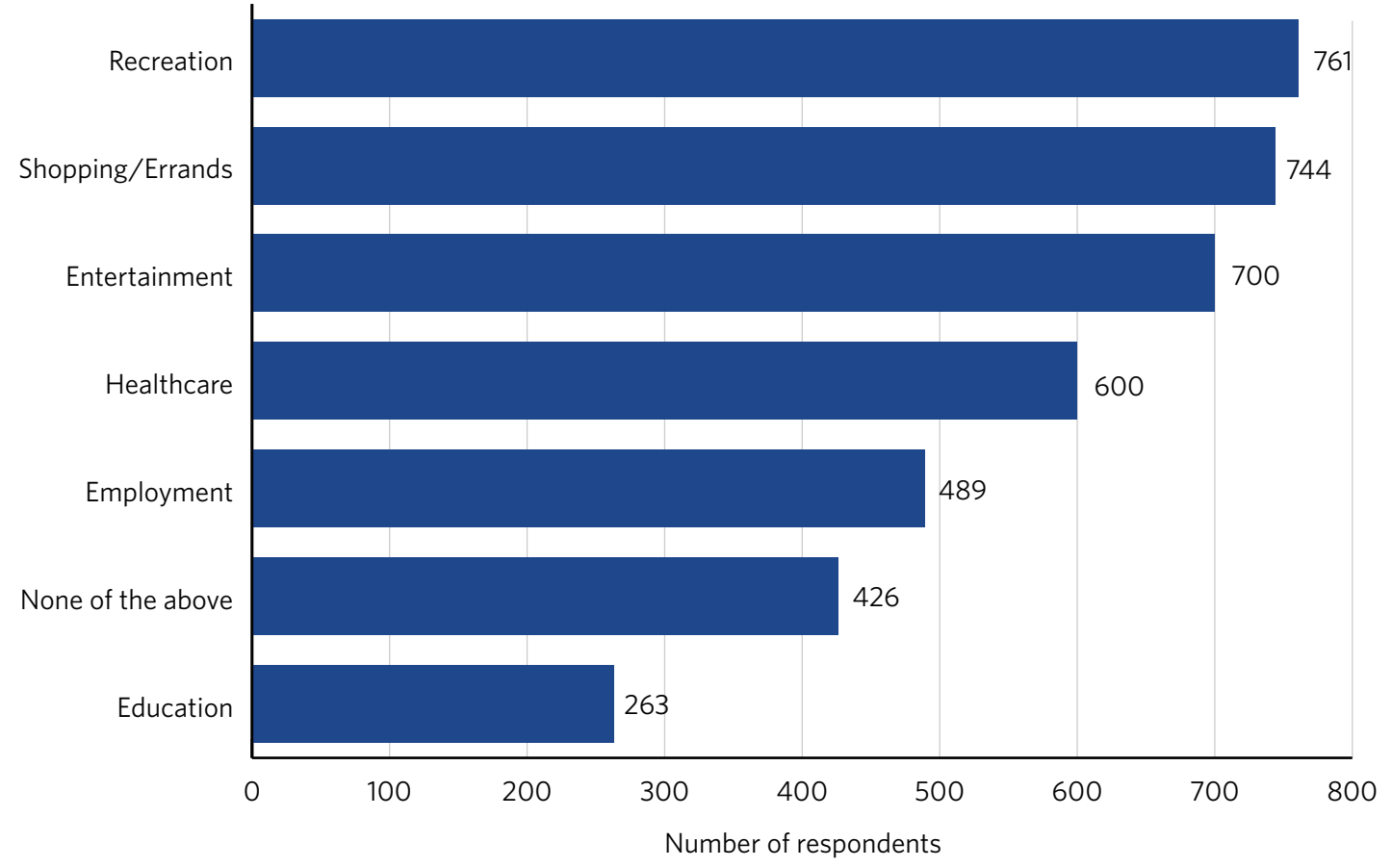
CMAP staff presenting the RTP and the history of regional transportation planning to an audience in Joliet., IL.

Questionnaire results

How satisfied are you with your transportation choices in the community you live in?

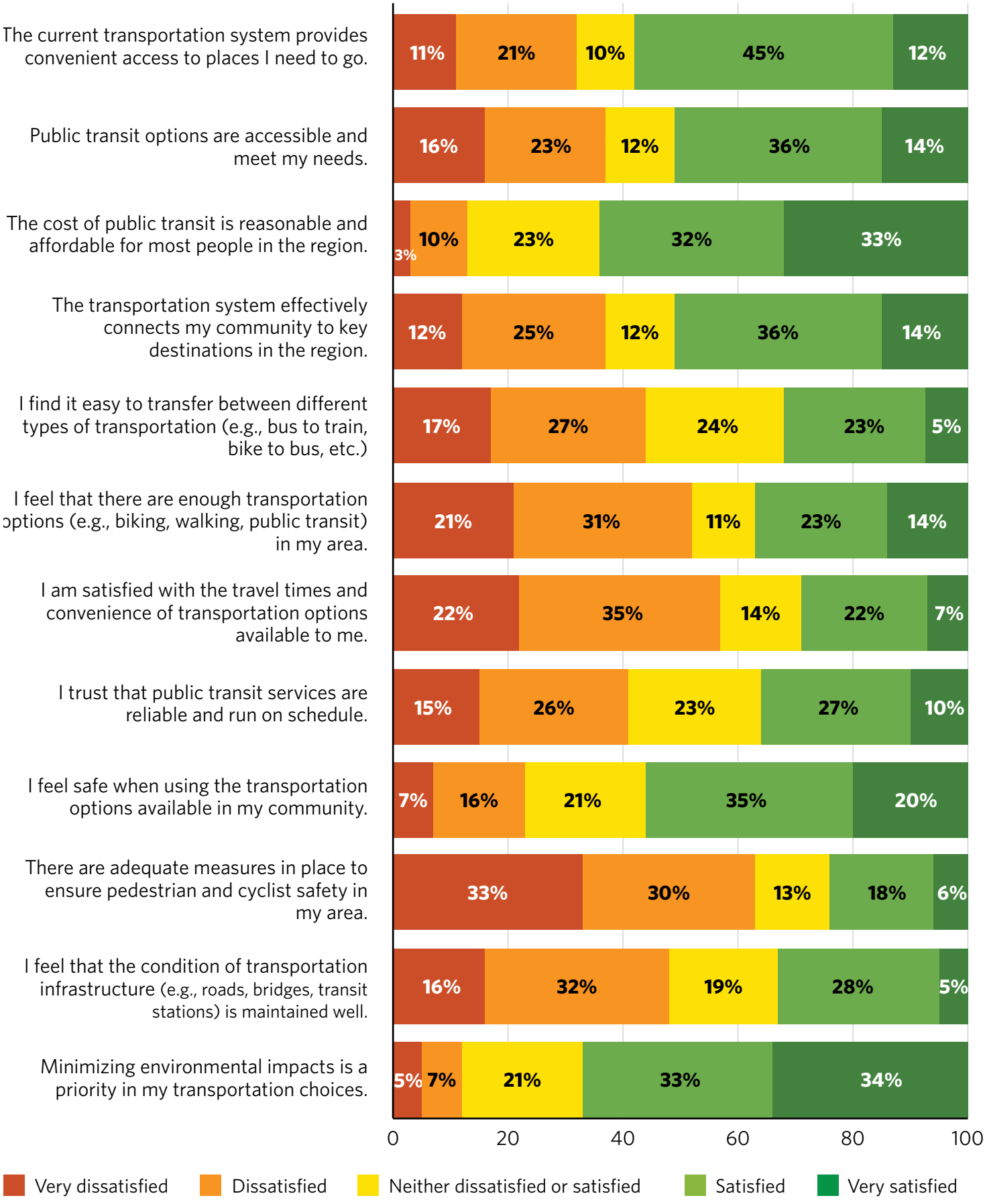


Are there any destinations difficult for you to travel to? Please select all that apply.[1]



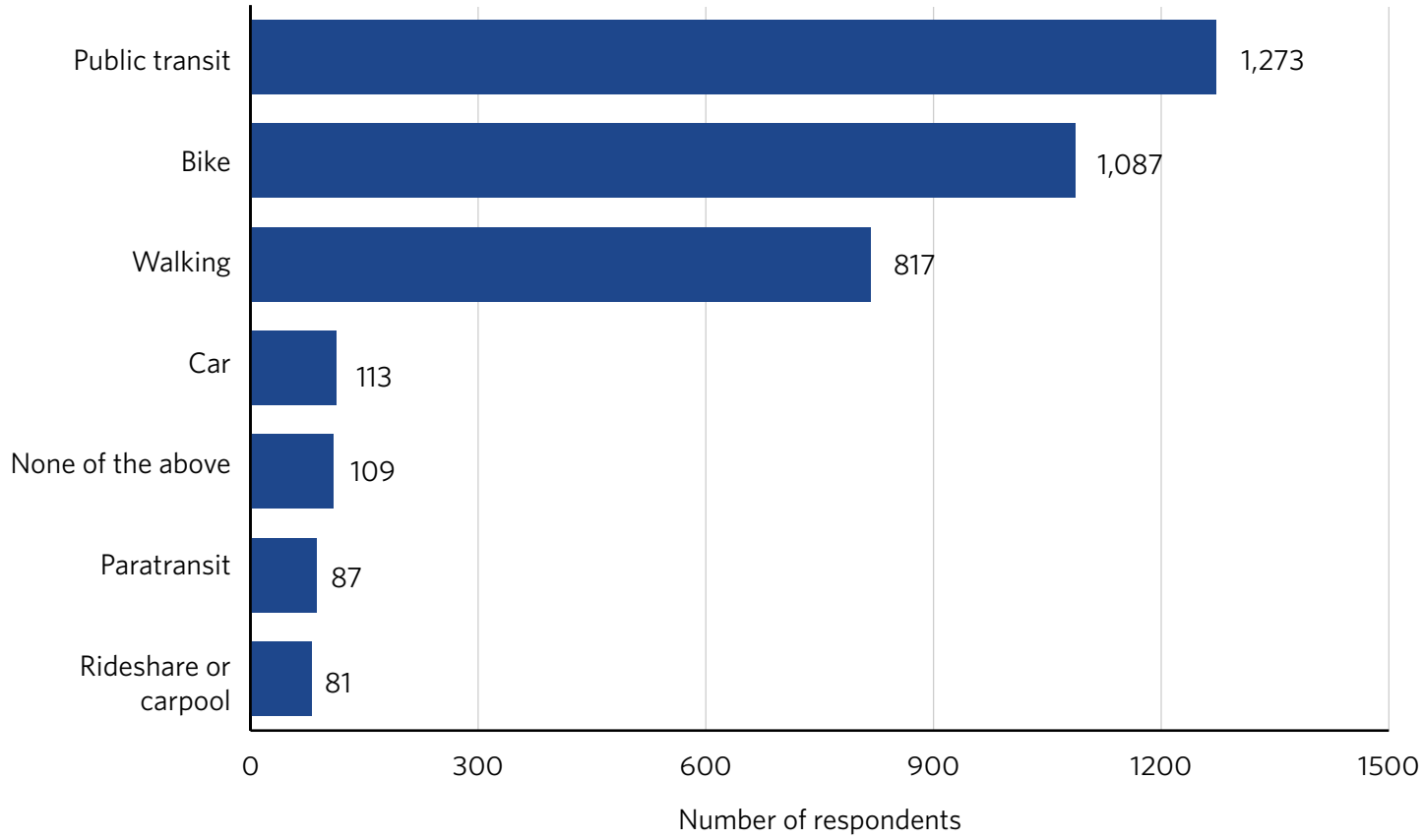
1 Questions stating, "Please select all that apply" represent multiple selections by each respondent.

Please rate your travel experiences based on the following statements.[2]

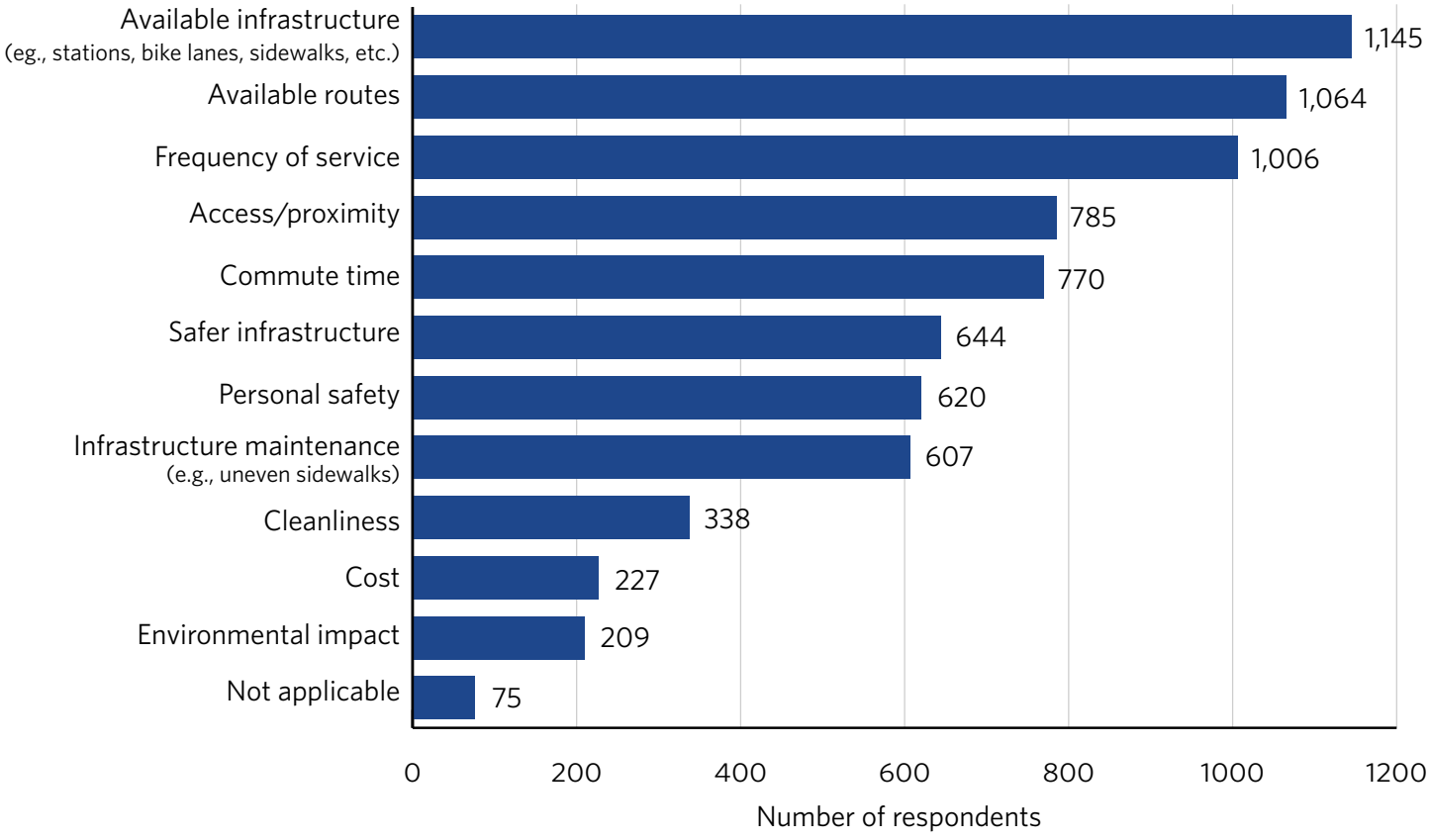


2 Questions stating, "Please select all that apply" represent multiple selections by each respondent.

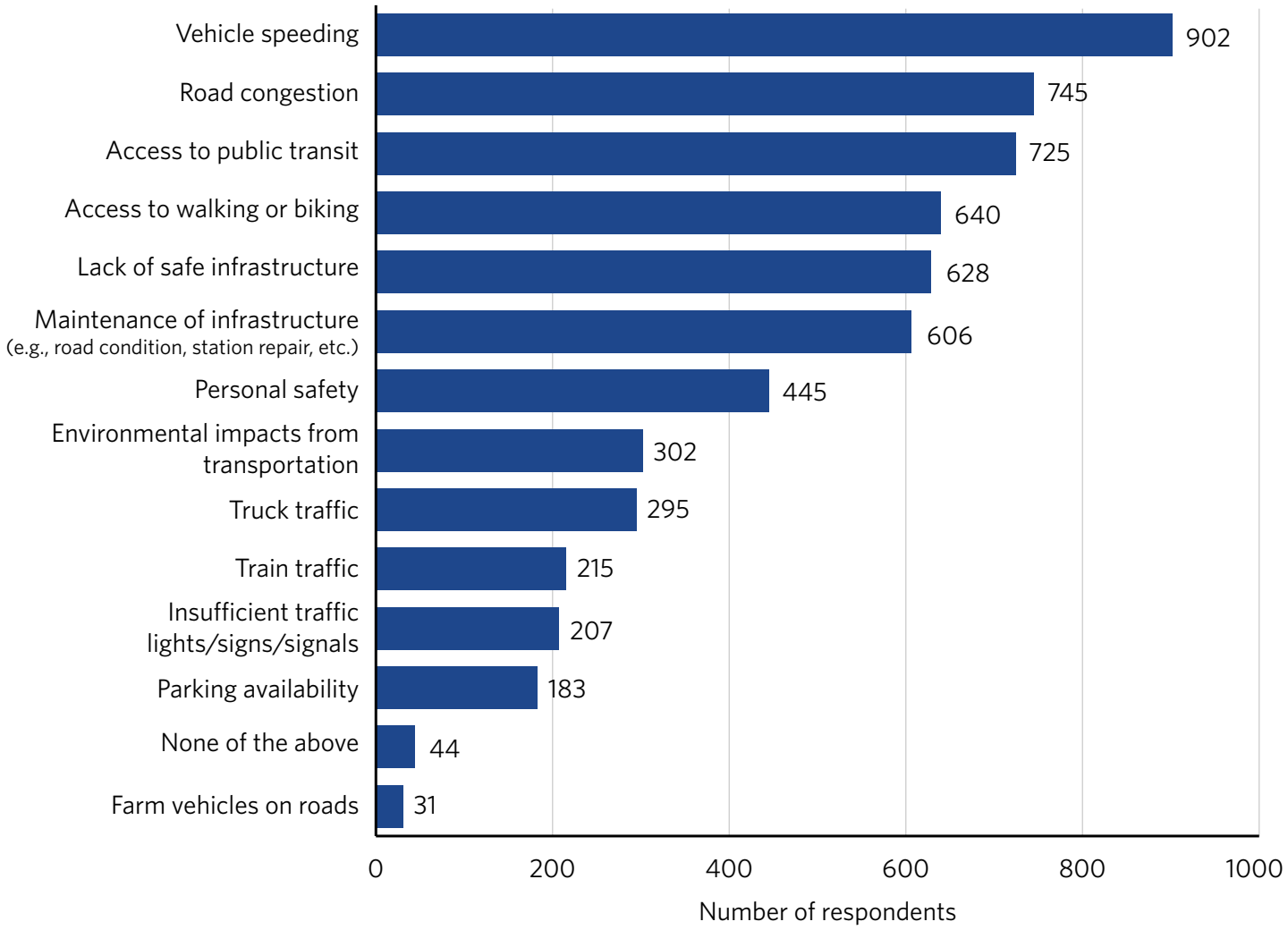
Are there transportation options you would like to use more often? Select all that apply.



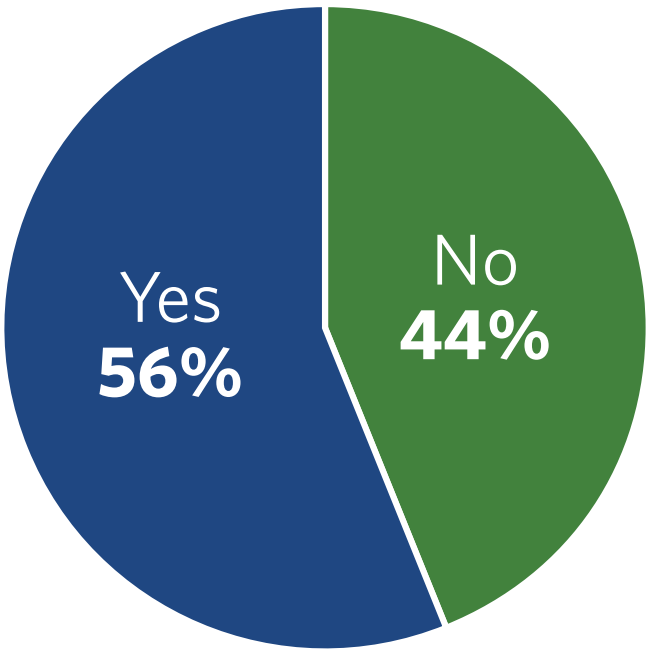
If so, what would allow you to use your preferred mode of travel more often? Select all that apply.



What are the biggest transportation challenges in the community you live in? Select all that apply.

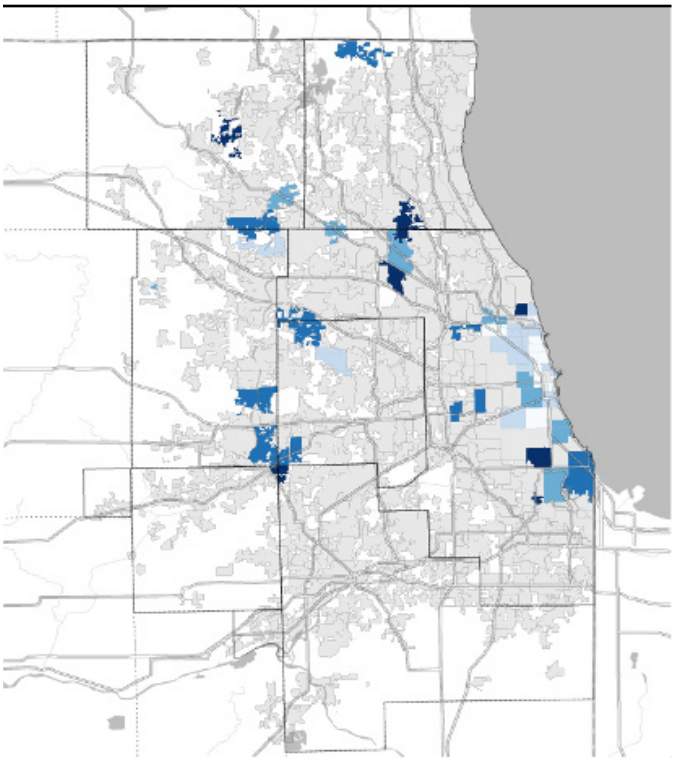


Are there specific areas in your community that you feel are underserved by current transportation options?

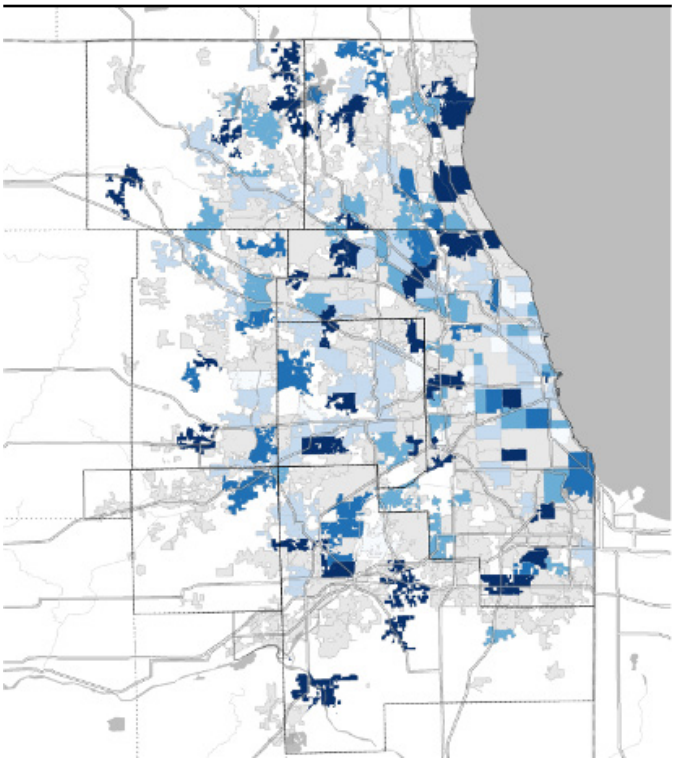


Geographic distribution of responses

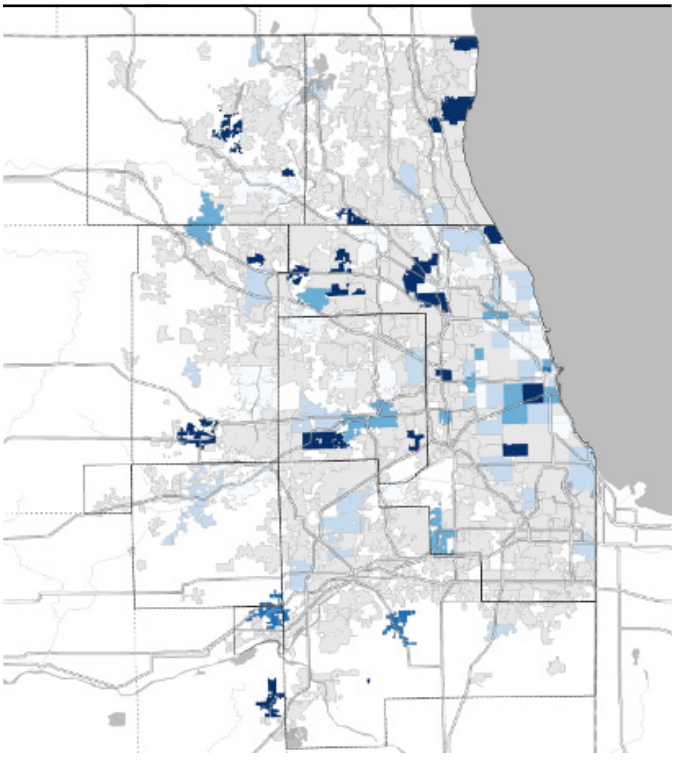
Access to public transit



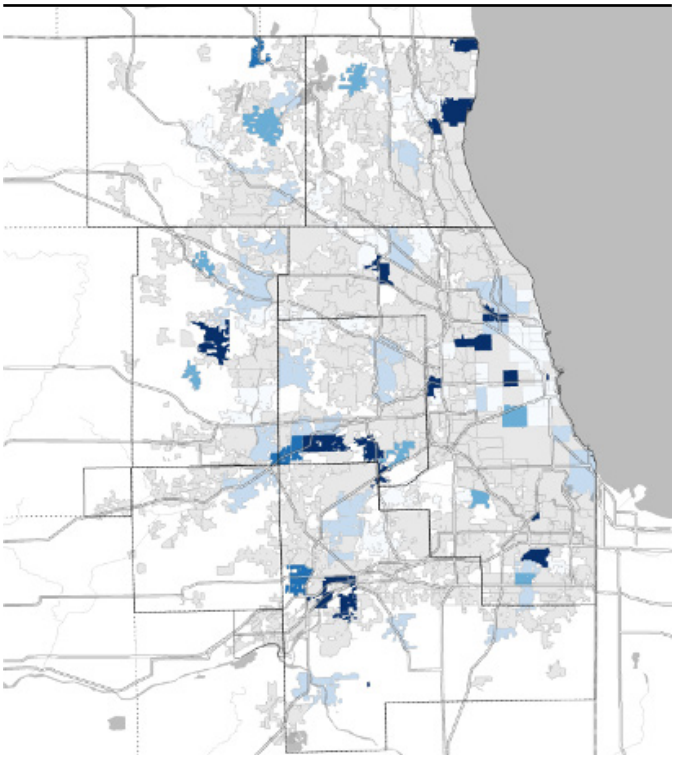
Access to walking or biking



Environmental impacts from transportation

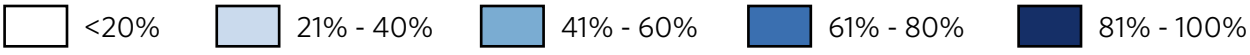


Insufficient lights/signs/signals



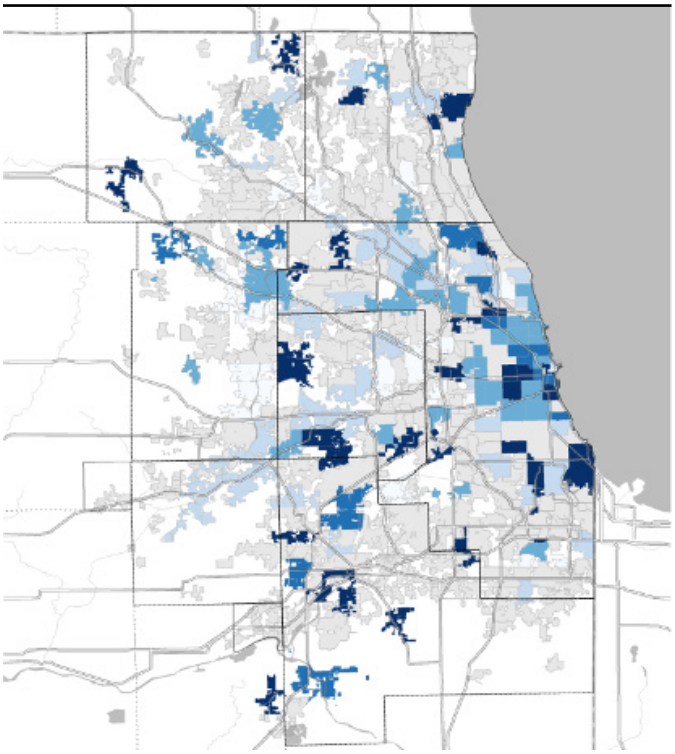
Legend

Percentage of respondents who said the indicator was an issue

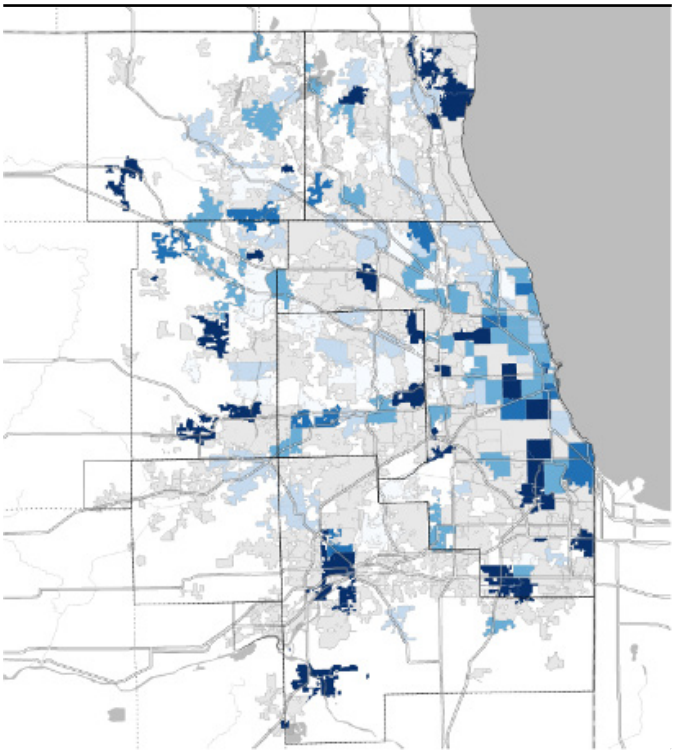


Note: Map excludes geographies with fewer than five responses.

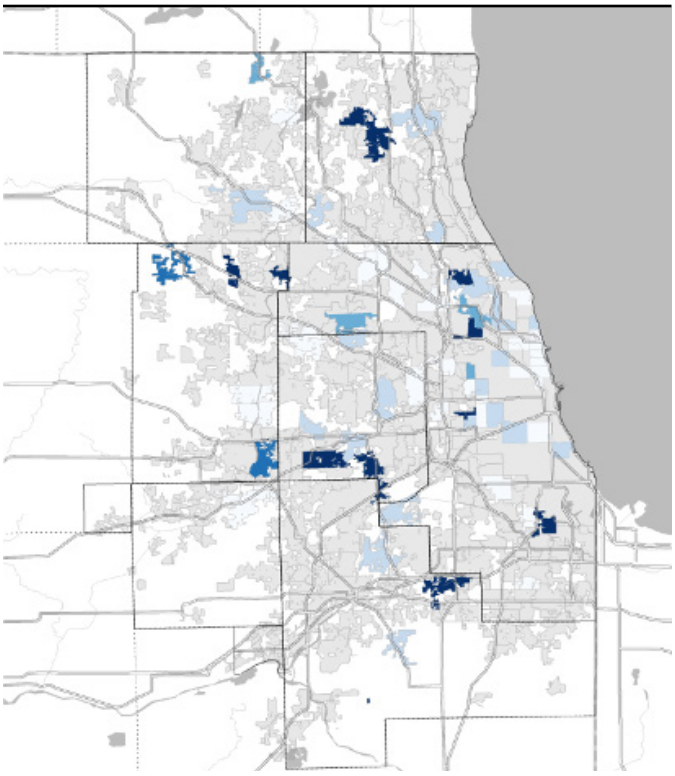
Lack of safe infrastructure



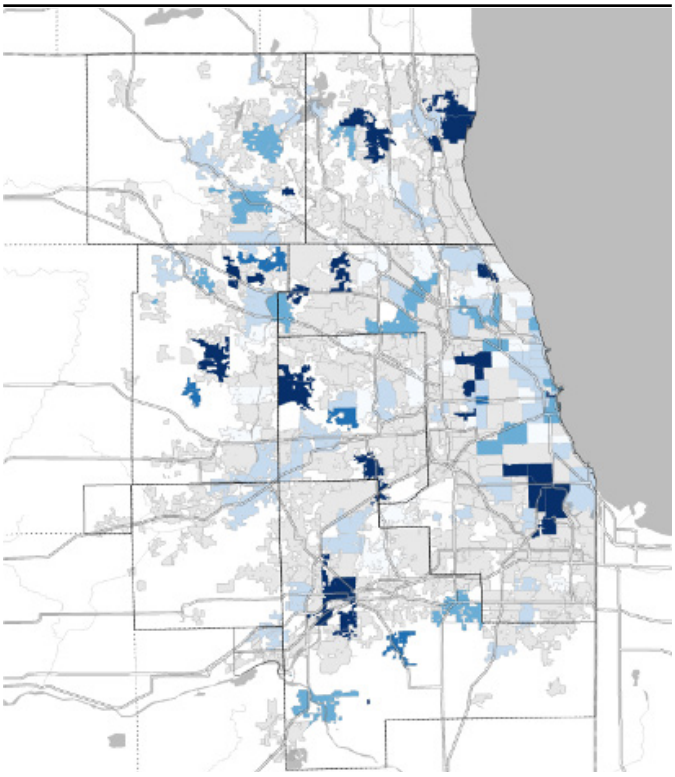
Maintenance of infrastructure



Parking availability



Personal safety



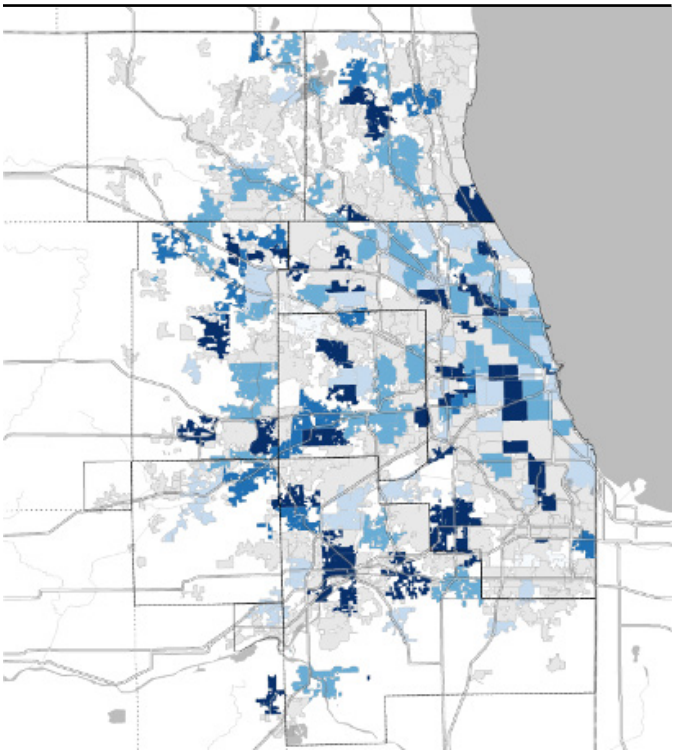
Legend

Percentage of respondents who said the indicator was an issue

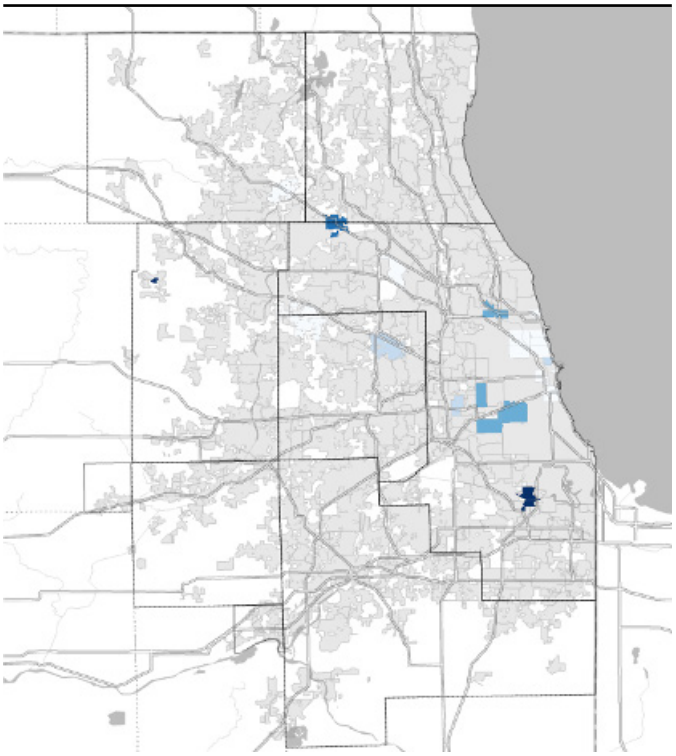
<20% | 21% - 40% | 41% - 60% | 61% - 80% | 81% - 100%

Note: Map excludes geographies with fewer than five responses.

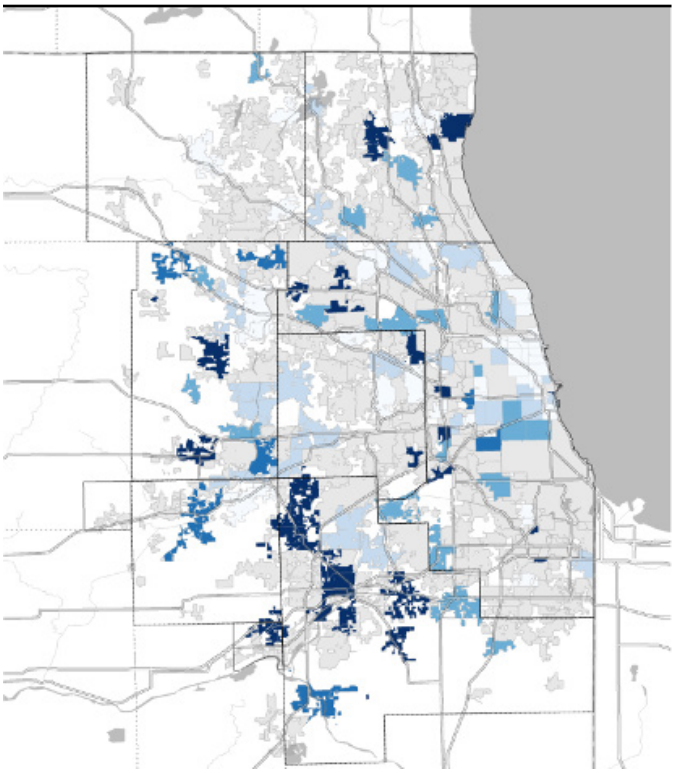
Road congestion



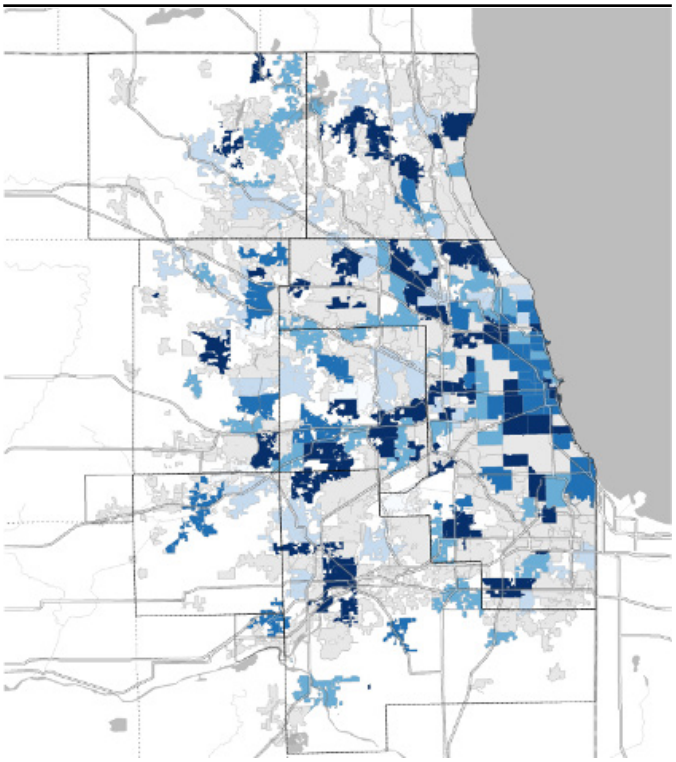
Train traffic



Truck traffic

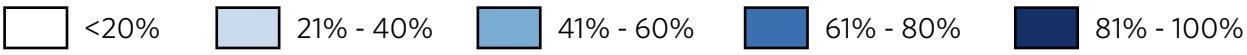


Vehicle speeding



Legend

Percentage of respondents who said the indicator was an issue

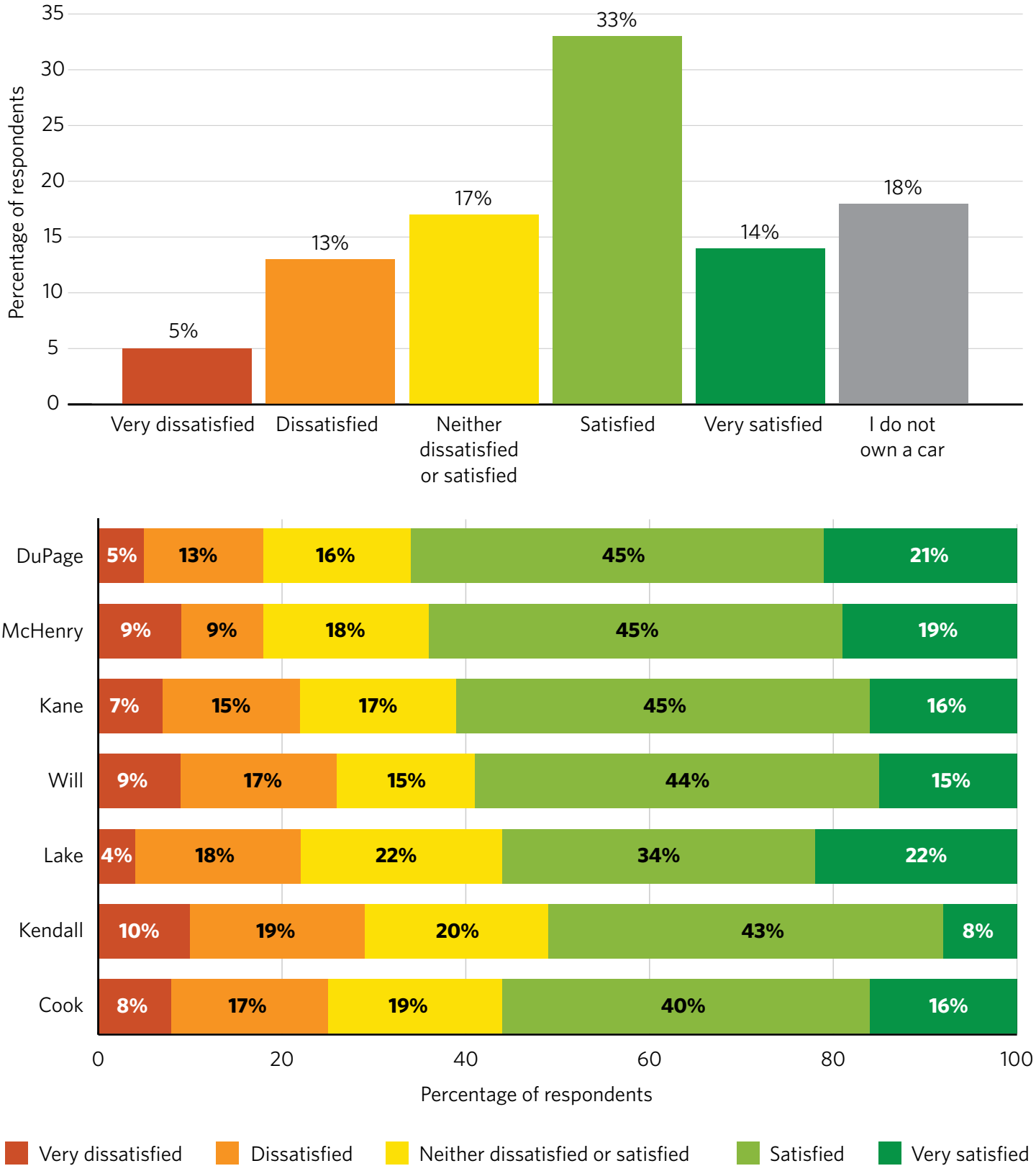


Note: Map excludes geographies with fewer than five responses

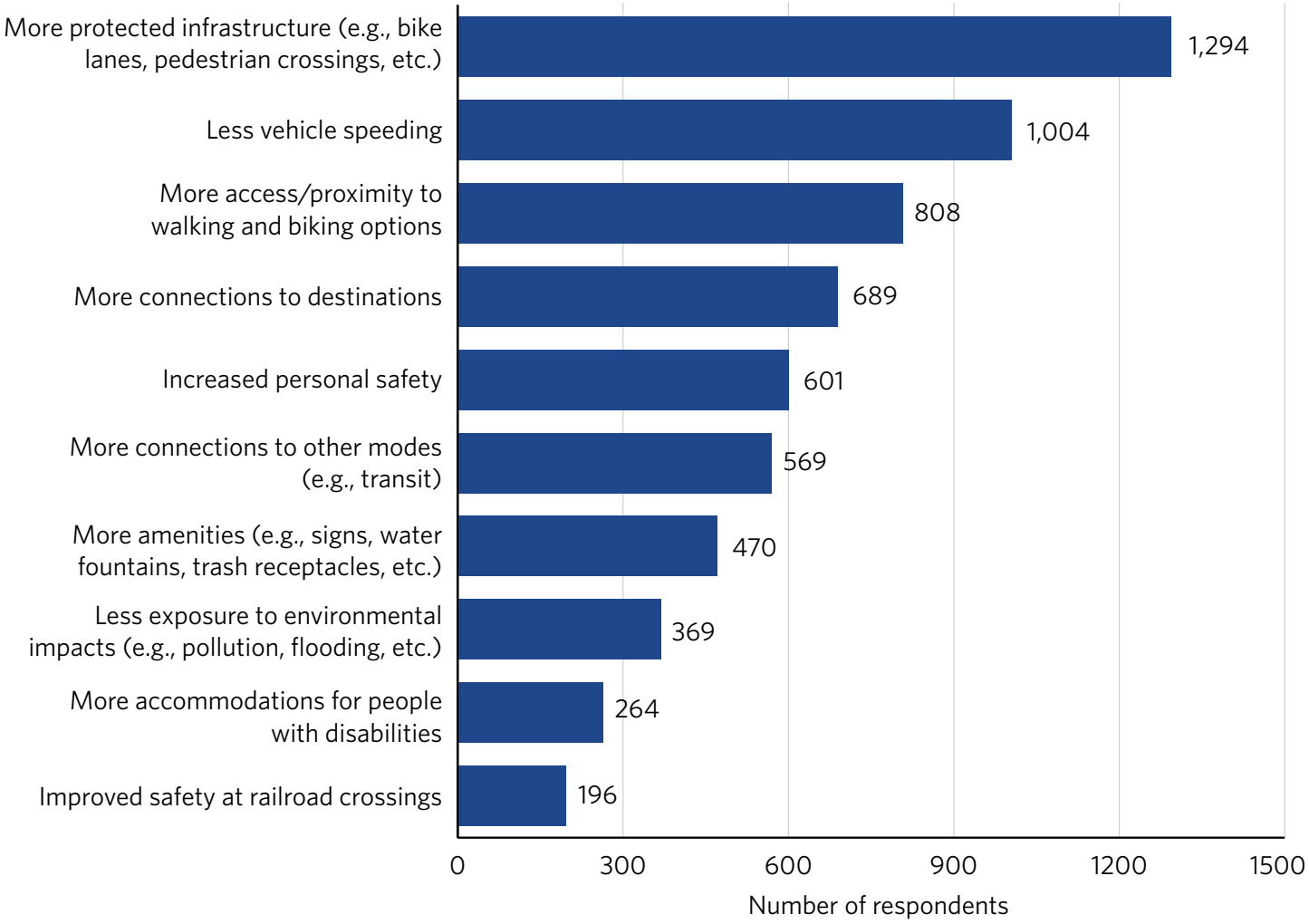
Are there any barriers to accessibility you face when using transportation (e.g., accommodation for mobility devices, audio/visual aids, physical barriers, or other accessibility features)?

View the full list of responses received.

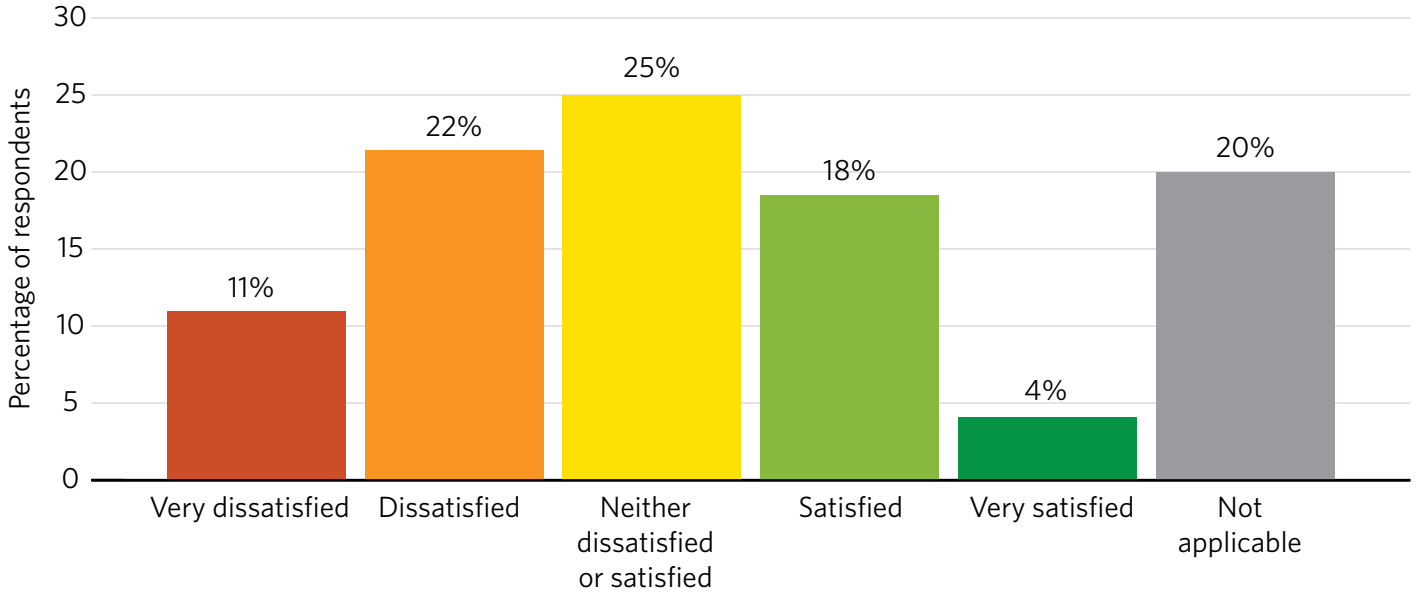
How satisfied are you with getting to destinations using your personal vehicle?



What would make your walking or biking experiences better, or more likely? Select all that apply.

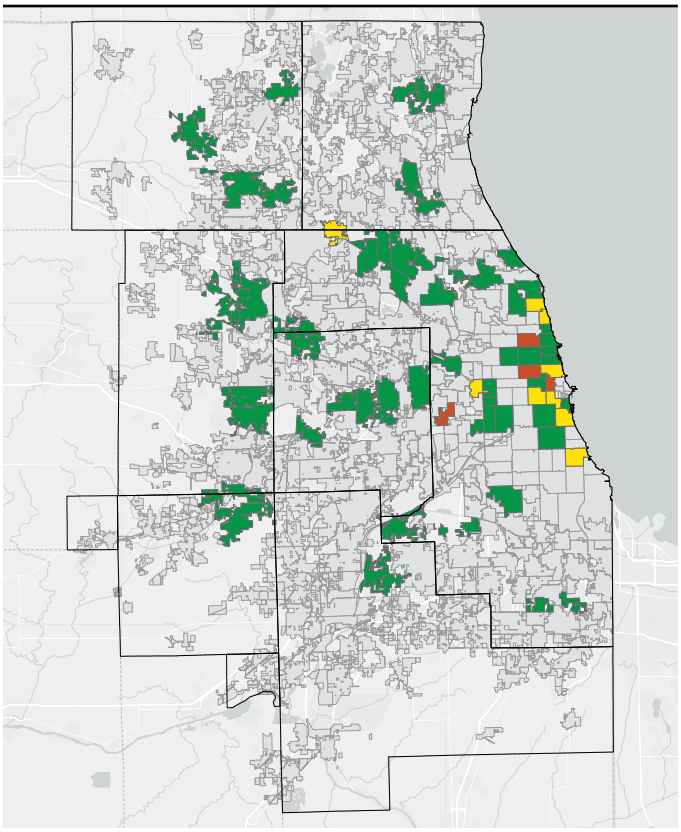


How satisfied are you with options to travel outside of the region via bus or train (e.g., via Greyhound or Amtrak)?

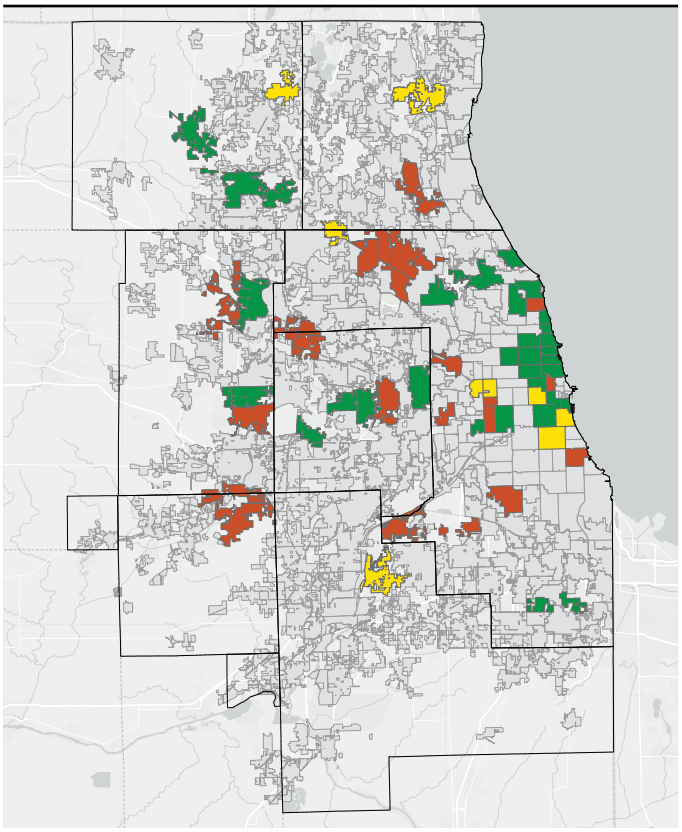


Geographic distribution of satisfaction levels across modes of transport

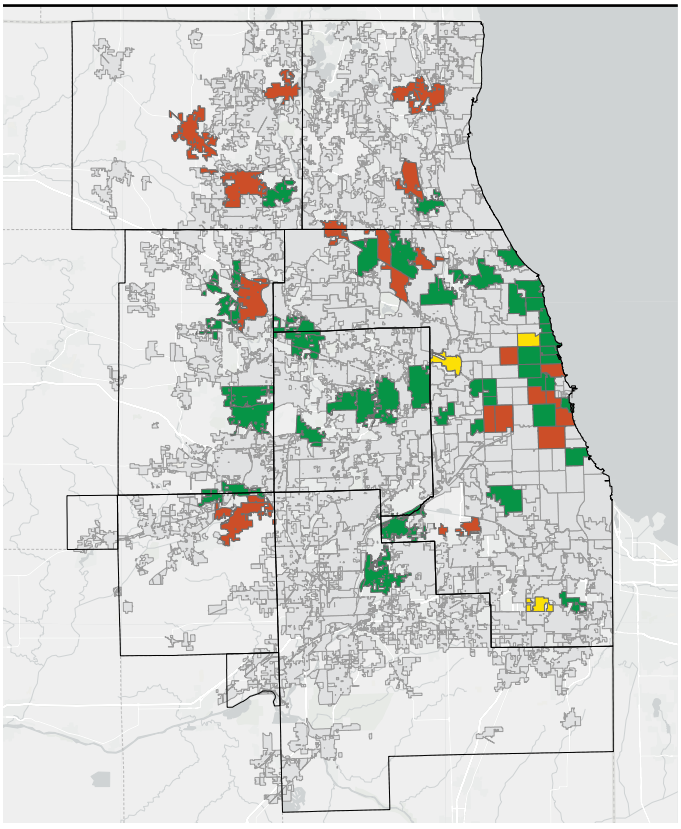
How satisfied are you with getting to destinations using your personal vehicle?



How satisfied are you with getting to destinations using public transit?



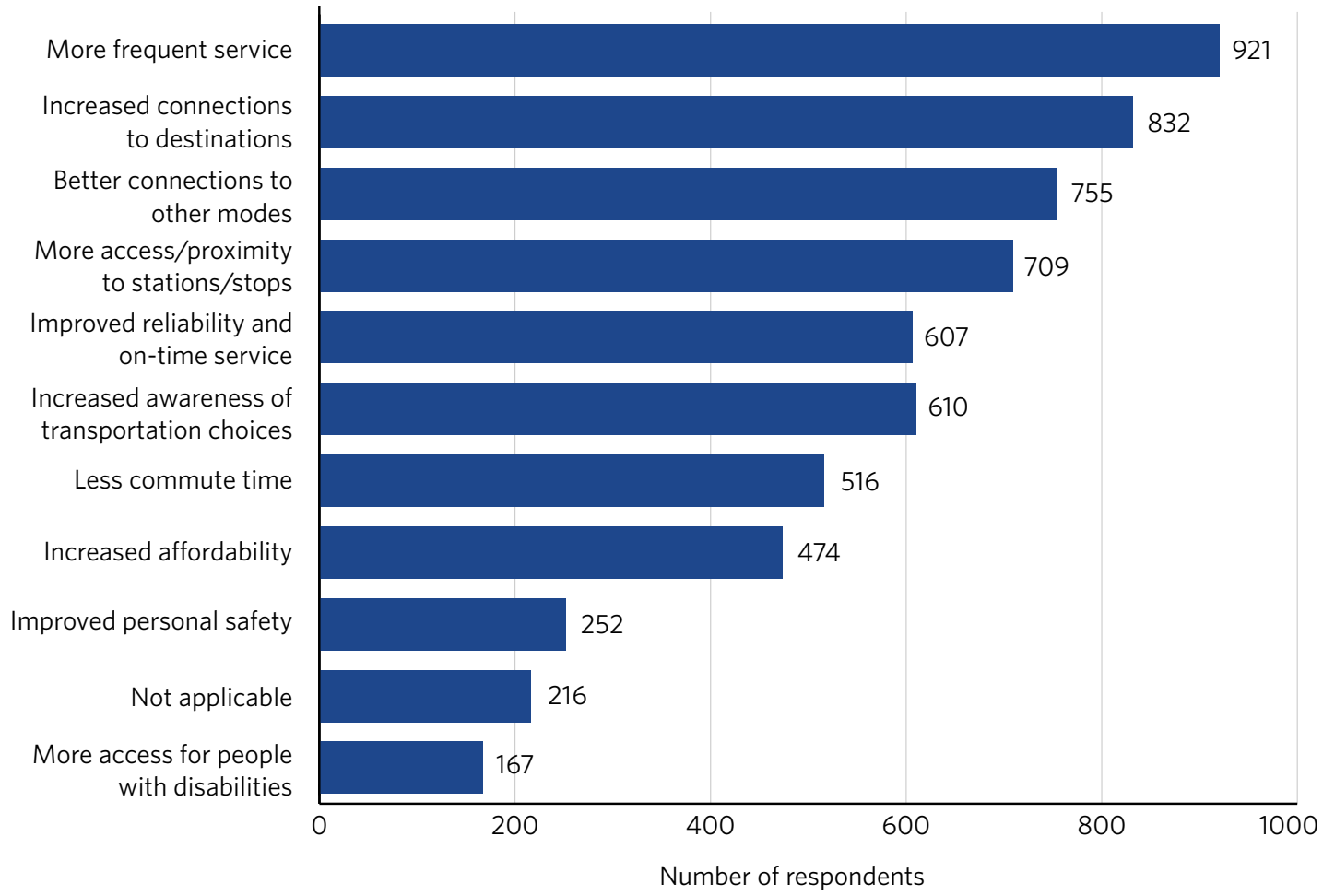
How satisfied are you with walking and biking options in your community?



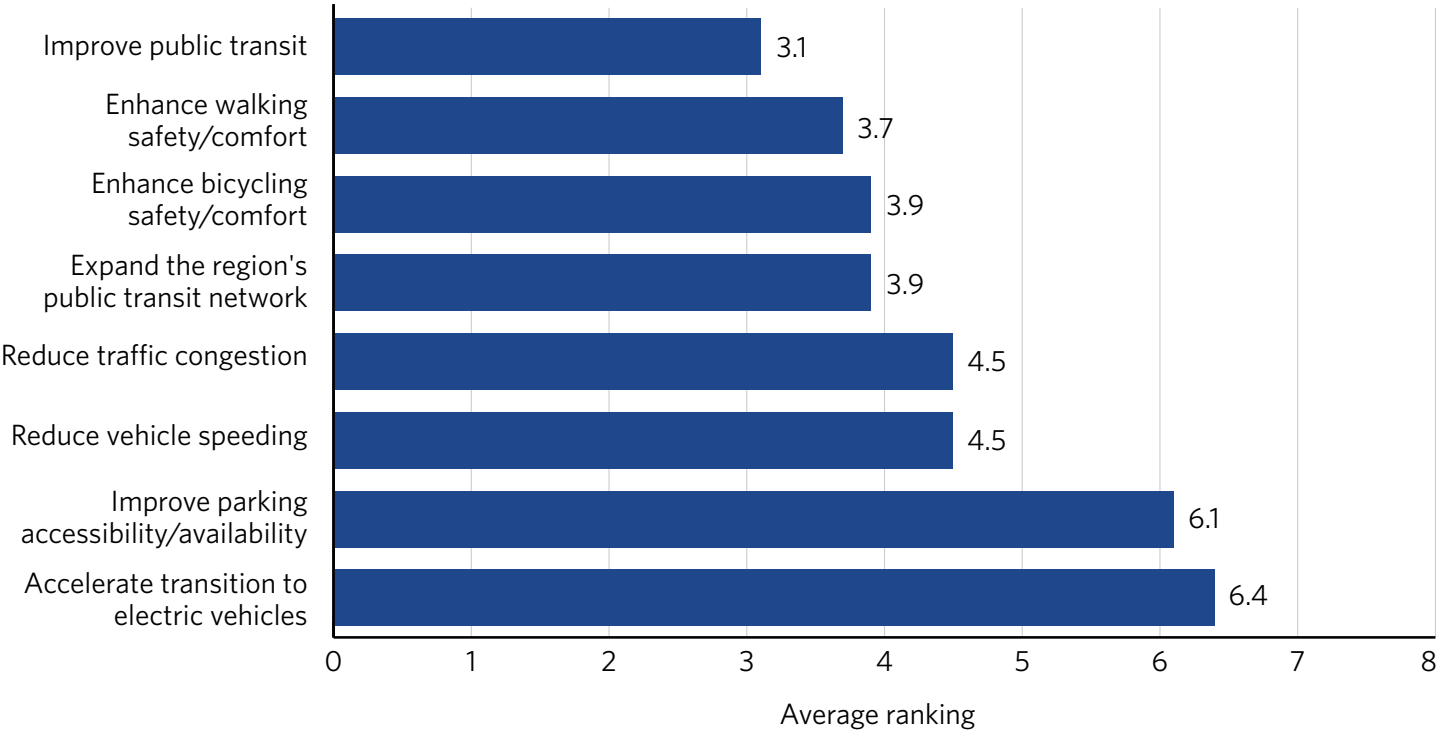
Legend

- Predominantly satisfied or very satisfied
- Predominantly neutral
- Predominantly dissatisfied or very dissatisfied

What would better connect our region to other places? Please select all that apply.



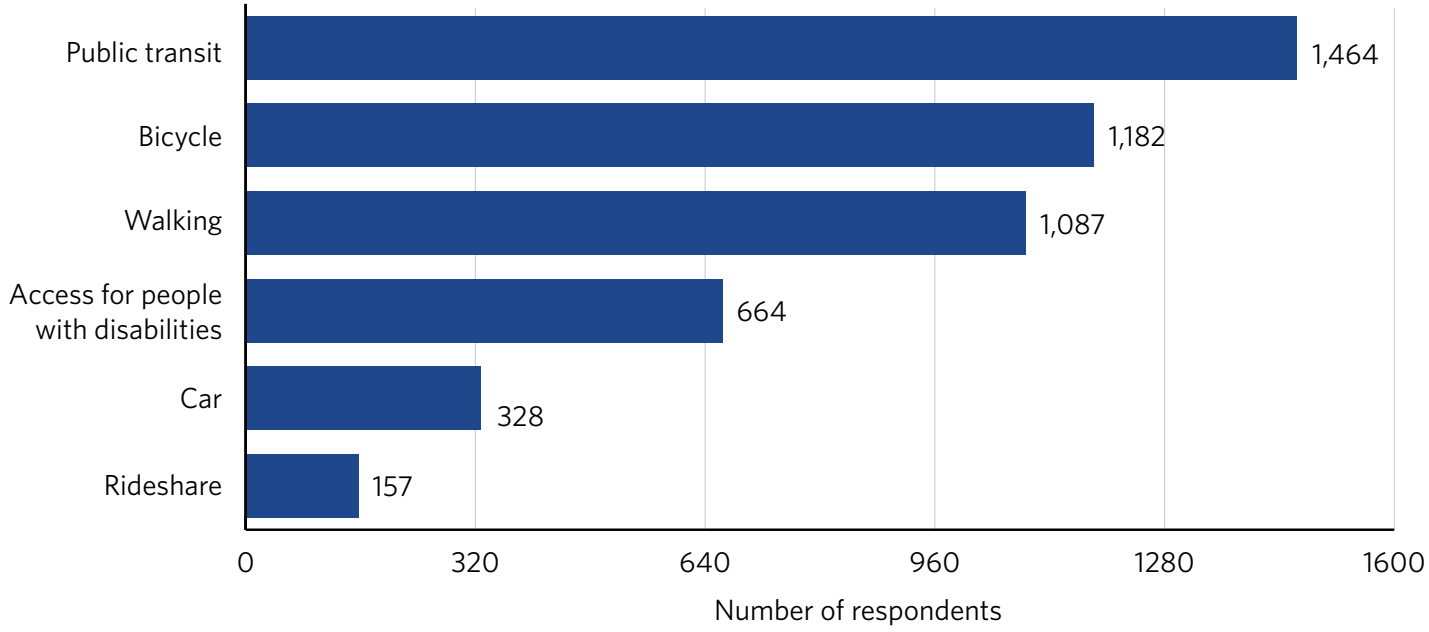
Rank the following transportation strategies in order of importance to you, with 1 being most important (a lower average indicates higher importance)



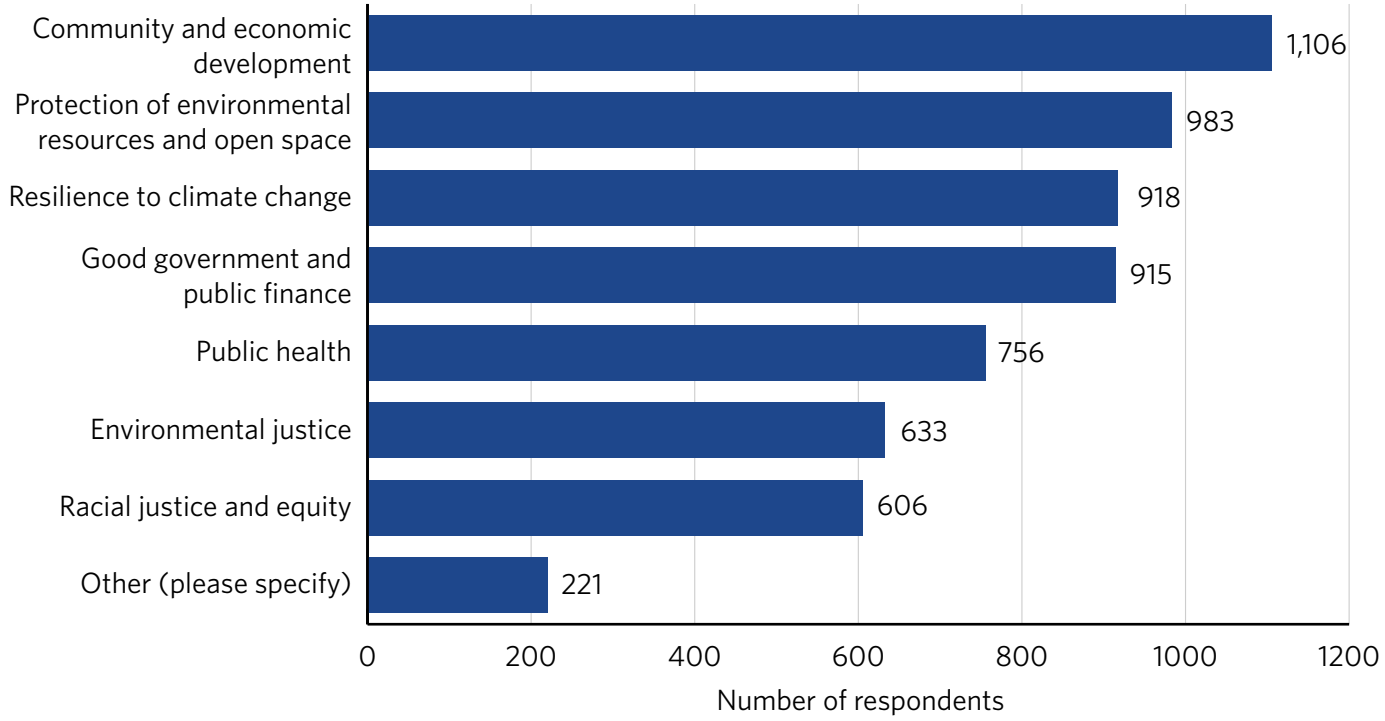
Describe your ideal transportation system in 1-5 words.

View the full list of responses received.

Which transportation modes do you think the region should increase investment in? Select all that apply.



What other topic areas would you like to see the transportation system address? Please select all that apply.



Do you have any additional comments regarding the long-term planning for our regional transportation system?

View the full list of responses received.



2026 Regional Transportation Plan

FY27-0012

The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) is northeastern Illinois' comprehensive planning organization. The agency and its partners developed ON TO 2050, a long-range plan to help the region's 7 counties and 284 communities implement strategies that address transportation, housing, economic development, open space, the environment, and other quality-of-life issues. Visit CMAP's website for more information.

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