



## MEMORANDUM

To: Danette Brannin and Mike Ringgenberg, Mason Transit Authority

From: Cristina Barone and Jody Trendler, Nelson\Nygaard

Date: June 7, 2018

Subject: Public Input Survey Results

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This memorandum reviews the findings from Mason Transit Authority's (MTA) April/May public input survey. The survey provided Mason County residents the opportunity to provide feedback on MTA services and convey their vision for the agency's future. The survey was able to capture feedback from non-riders as well as current MTA customers. Results from the public survey will inform service concepts for the MTA Comprehensive Service Analysis currently underway. The main findings are:

- The most requested service improvement was greater frequency; frequent riders requested later service
- Respondents who never ride MTA reported being most likely to ride if the bus took them where they wanted to go
- A number of respondents requested MTA service in areas where it is currently provided, suggesting an opportunity to improve service marketing
- All rider types were most likely to report riding MTA because it saves them money
- All rider types were most likely to plan trips and check bus schedules on the MTA website
- Respondents were complimentary of MTA when given an open response opportunity
- Survey respondents were primarily rare users or have never used MTA services
- Survey respondents were skewed towards an older, whiter, and wealthier demographic
- Frequent riders were different from occasional users in that they were more likely to ride MTA because they can't afford to drive and/or because they don't have a driver's license

## METHODOLOGY

This survey was conducted as a part of Phase I public outreach for MTA's ongoing Comprehensive Service Analysis. The survey was hosted online and was open for responses from April 19 to May 17, 2018. There were a total of 172 responses (an average of seven per day).

The survey link was sent to all Mason County residents via a physical postcard and was also messaged to residents at public open houses held in May, via social media (Figure 1), and through e-mail. Although the vast majority of responses were returned electronically, approximately seven surveys were filled out on paper at public open houses.

Figure 1 MTA Survey Invitation Tweet



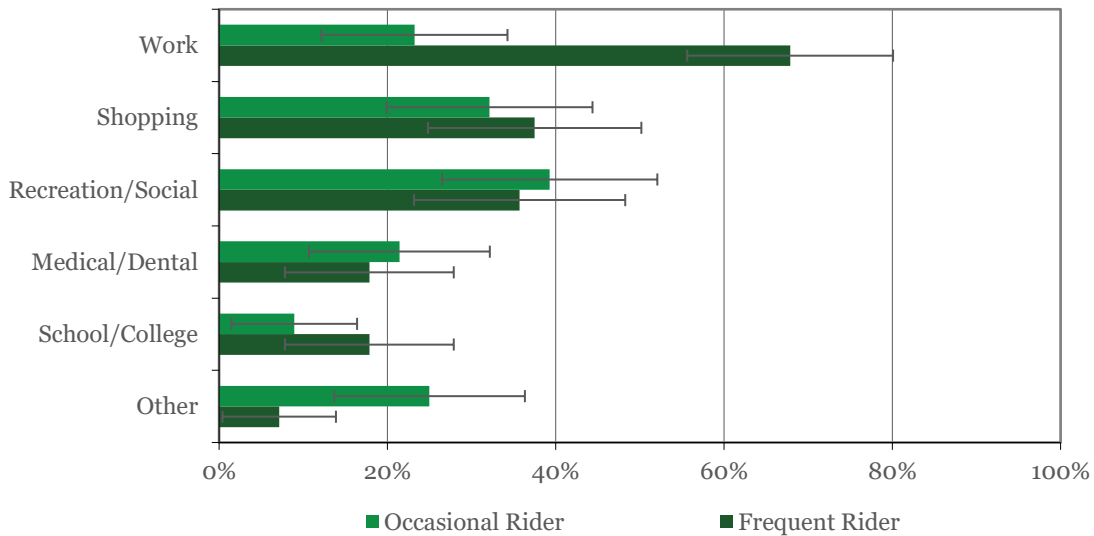
## RIDER TYPES AND BEHAVIORS

Survey respondents were subset into groups of frequent (ride two or more days per week) and occasional (ride less than once per week) riders, and those who never ride. Each subset of respondents was asked questions about their travel behaviors and about what might encourage them to ride transit more often (or at all).

### Frequent and Occasional Riders

Frequent riders' primary trip purpose on MTA was for work, which was different from occasional riders, who made MTA trips more recreation/social and shopping purposes. Frequent riders also made trips for shopping and recreation/social activities. The only statistically significant differences in travel patterns between the two rider categories were for work trips (Figure 2). Trips categorized as 'Other' were described by respondents as being to other transportation modes, for sleeping, and to visit family.

**Figure 2** Frequent and Occasional Riders - What is the purpose of your trips on MTA? (n=56 each)<sup>1</sup>

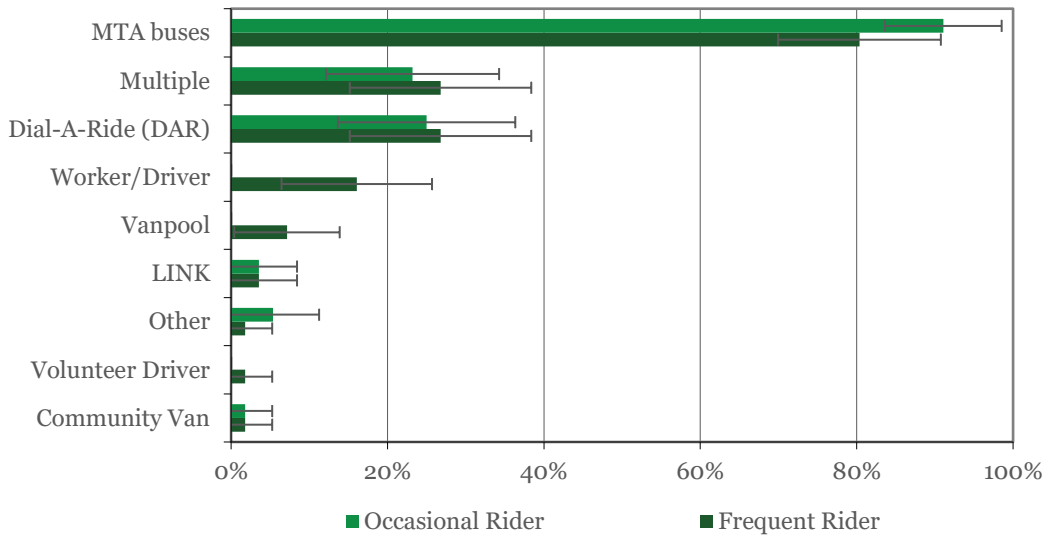


<sup>1</sup> All error bars in this memorandum represent margins of error for a 95% confidence level.

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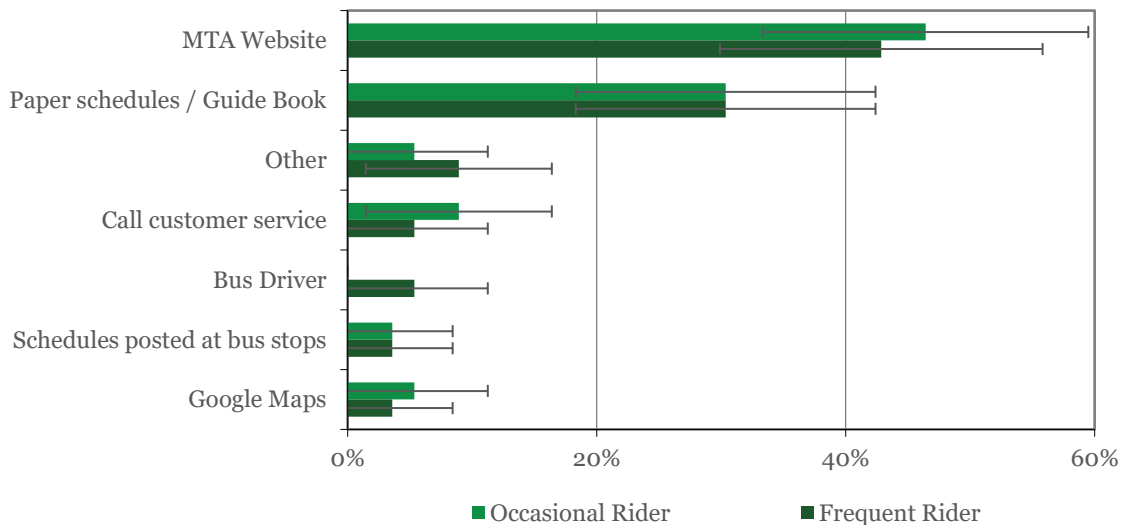
Both frequent and occasional riders showed similar patterns to one another in terms of the types of MTA service they used, with the exception of trip-making on Worker/Driver and Vanpool services, and as volunteer drivers (Figure 3). There were no occasional riders that reported using these three service types. For both rider types, over 80% of respondents reported using MTA buses. Approximately 25% of both rider types used DAR and/or multiple MTA services.

**Figure 3** Frequent and Occasional Riders - What types of MTA service do you use? (n=56 each)



As with service types used, there were no significant differences in trip planning behaviors between frequent and occasional riders, with the exception of asking a bus driver, which was reported by three frequent riders (Figure 4). For both rider types, the MTA website and paper schedules/guide books were far and away the most popular ways to plan trips and/or check bus schedules.

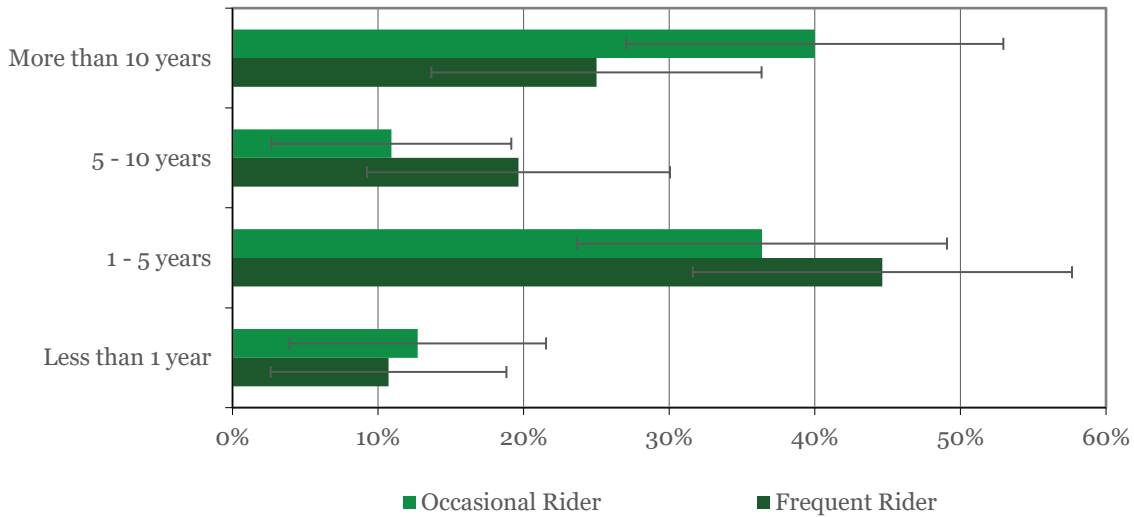
**Figure 4** Frequent and Occasional Riders - When you plan for a bus trip or check a bus schedule, which do you use most often? (n=56 each)



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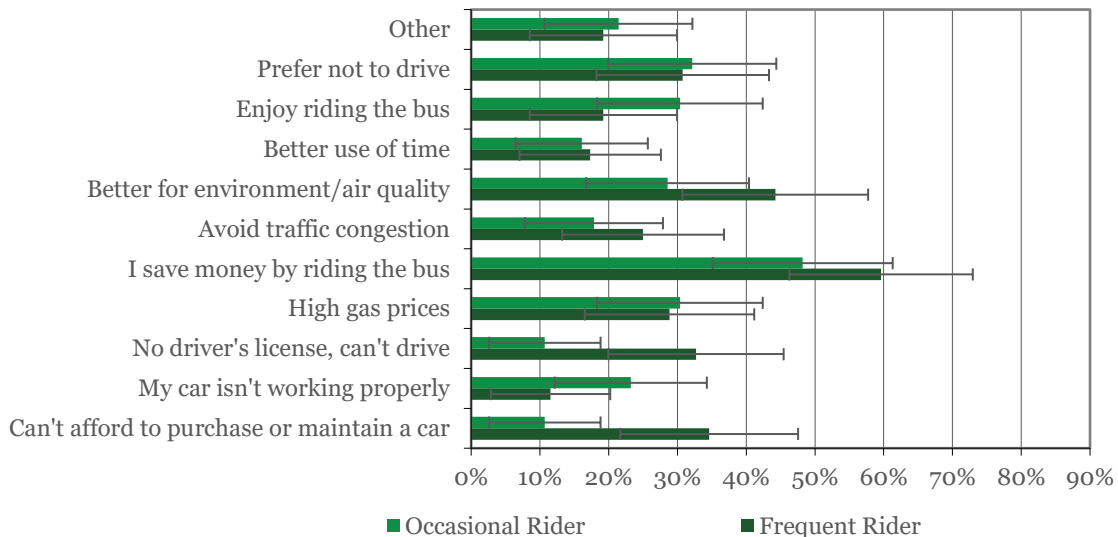
Only a small portion of occasional rider and frequent rider respondents had been riding MTA for less than a year and—notably—five to ten years (Figure 5). Most respondents reported riding MTA for one to five years or more than ten years, with no significant difference between frequent and occasional rider responses in these categories.

**Figure 5** Frequent and Occasional Riders - How long have you been riding MTA? (n=56 and 55, respectively)



Respondents were asked about their primary reasons for using MTA instead of other transportation options. In most response categories, occasional and frequent riders did not respond in significantly different proportions (Figure 6). Frequent riders were, however, more likely than occasional riders to take transit because they cannot afford to purchase or maintain a car and because they don't have a driver's license. Both categories of respondents were most likely to report that they rode MTA because they saved money.

**Figure 6** Frequent and Occasional Riders - What are the main reasons you use MTA instead of a different means of transportation? (n=52 and 56, respectively)



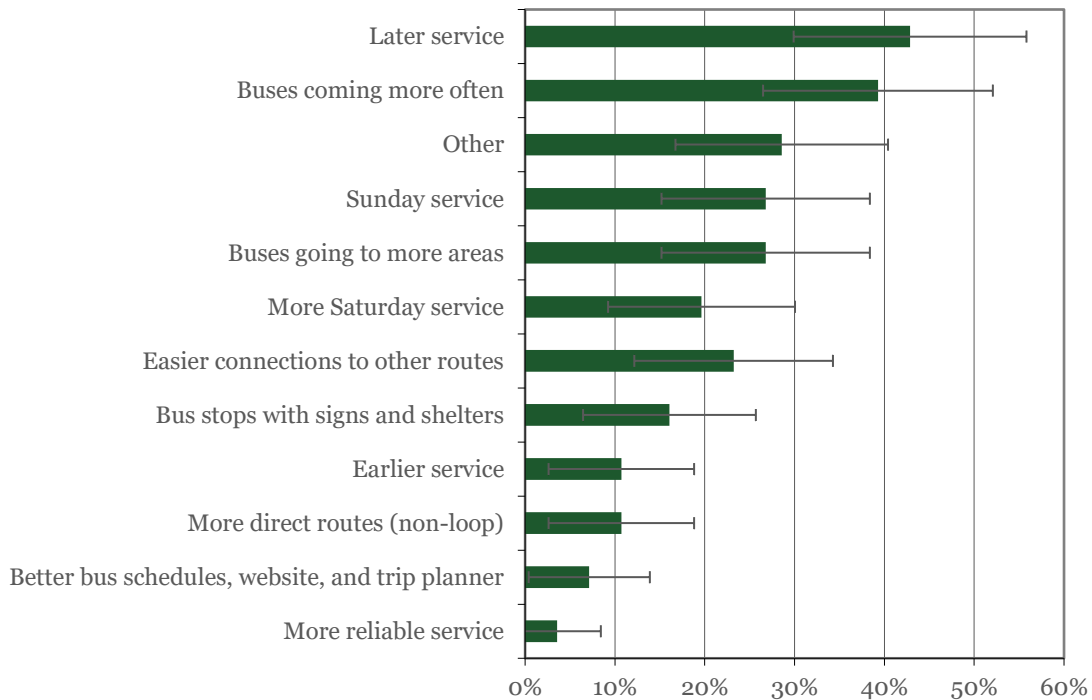
## Frequent Riders

Among frequent riders, the most important reported service improvements were later service and more frequent service, followed by Sunday service and buses going to more areas (Figure 7). The least important service improvements were reported as more reliable service and better bus schedules, website, and trip planner.

When respondents asked for buses going to more areas, they specifically requested service to Elma, the west shore of Hood Canal, Lake Cushman, Lynch Cove, areas around Shelton, Steamboat Island, and Tahuya.

A large number of frequent riders (29%) included responses that were categorized as 'Other'. These comments were complaints about the cleanliness and comfort of MTA vehicles, requests for additional bike racks, requests for larger buses on routes to Bremerton, and concerns about confusion when scheduling DAR trips. One respondent described how they were sometimes confused about whether or not a DAR vehicle or bus would be picking them up.

**Figure 7** Frequent Riders - which service improvements are most important to you? (n=56)



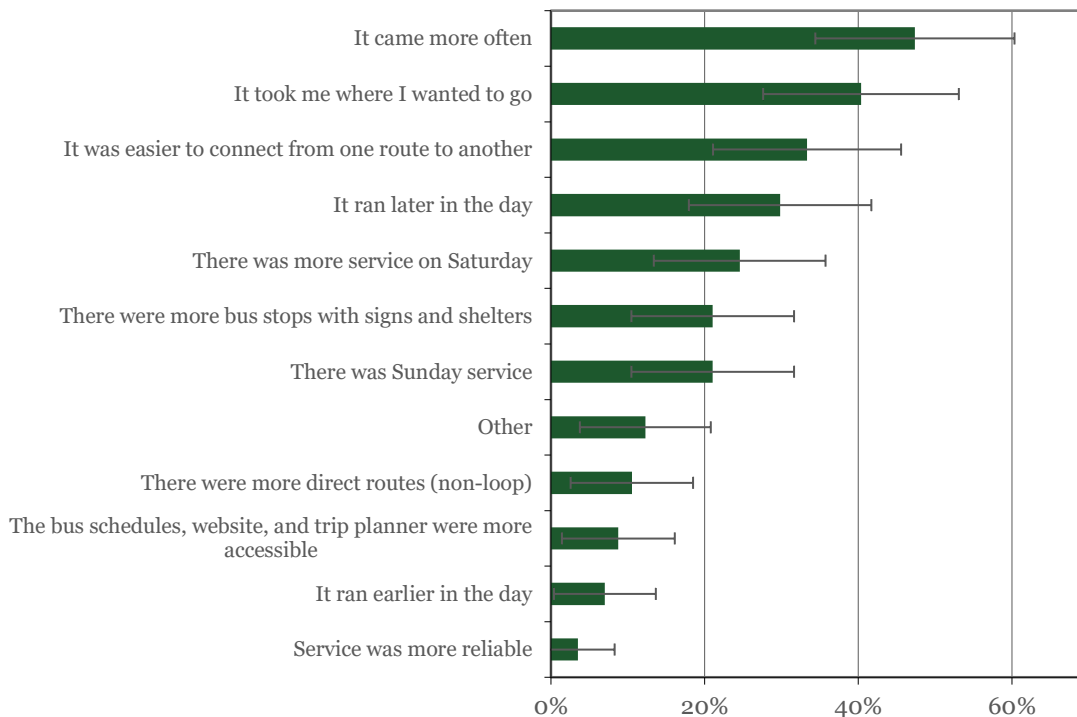
## Occasional Riders

Occasional riders reported that they would use transit more if vehicles arrived more often, took them where they wanted to go, and had simpler transfers (Figure 8). The least common reasons that occasional riders would ride transit more often were if service was more reliable, the buses ran earlier in the day, and if the schedules, website, and trip planner were more accessible.

When riders answered that they would ride transit if it took them where they wanted to go, they reported these places as the Lynch and Cole Road park-and-rides, the Bremerton Ferry Terminal, Fawn Lake, Hammersly, Lake Cushman, various Olympia locations, Silverdale, South Puget Sound Community College, Tacoma Medical Center, Union, and others. It is worth noting that MTA already serves some of these locations, which means that improved marketing of existing service may better inform some occasional riders and encourage them to ride more often. Changes to existing service, such as trip timing that more closely matches demand, may also be prudent.

‘Other’ responses included requests for bike racks and bike infrastructure, more comfortable seating, and questions about STAR Pass (the Intercity Transit free pass program for government workers) usage on MTA, amongst other things. The STAR Pass program partially reimburses riders who use MTA for commute trips by providing a voucher for an MTA monthly pass.

Figure 8 Occasional Riders - I would ride transit more if... (n=57)



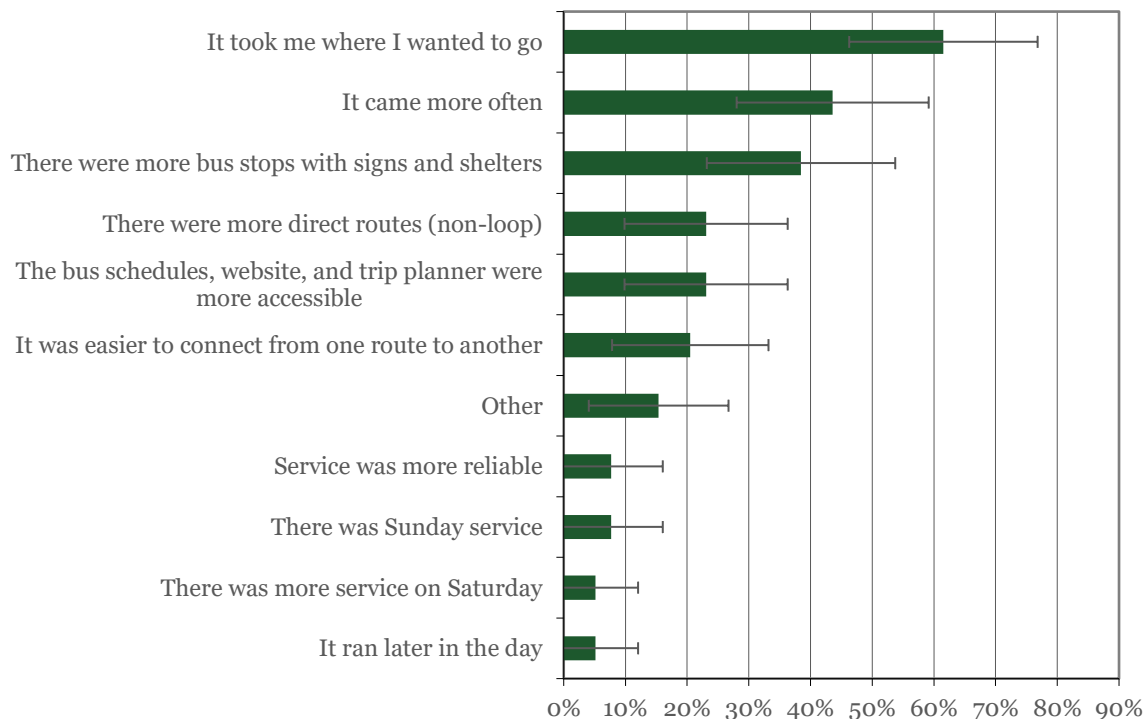
## Non-Riders

Respondents who said they never ride MTA reported that they would be more likely to ride transit if it took them where they wanted to go, came more often, and/or there were more bus stops with signs and shelters (Figure 9). The fact that nearly 40% of non-riders selected 'more bus stops with signs and shelters' suggests that adding more formalized bus stops may be a good way to market the system and advertise where service is available. The reasons non-riders were least likely to report as encouraging them to ride transit were if it ran earlier in the day (zero respondents selected this option), later in the day, or if there was Sunday or Saturday service.

Those respondents who indicated that they would ride transit if it took them where they wanted to go identified these places as Belfair, the Bremerton Ferry Terminal, east of Oakland Bay, Olympia, Phillips Lake, Shelton, Shorecrest, Tahuya, Tumwater, Trident Cove, and other locations. Respondents also requested connections to Jefferson and Kitsap Transit routes. Again, it should be noted that some respondents requested service to areas that *are* currently served by MTA; this may represent an opportunity for MTA to better inform non-riders and encourage them to try transit. These responses could also be understood as a chance to better match MTA service with community demand.

Responses categorized as 'Other' were a compliment about the free fare, a complaint about the free fare, a request for more rider instructions on the MTA website, a complaint about rude drivers, and other responses.

**Figure 9** Non-Riders - I would ride transit if... (n=39)

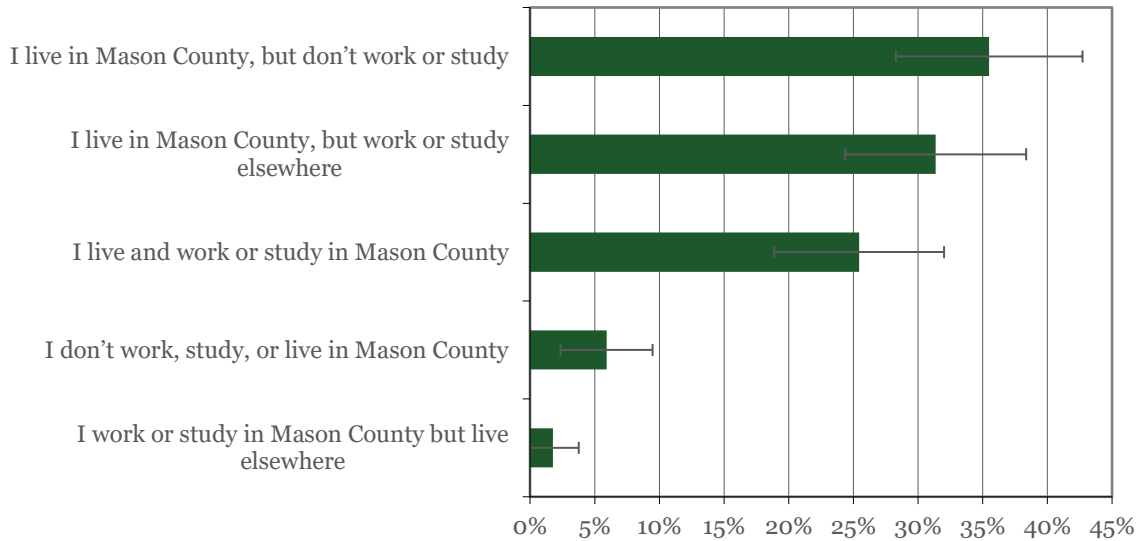




## TRAVEL BEHAVIOR

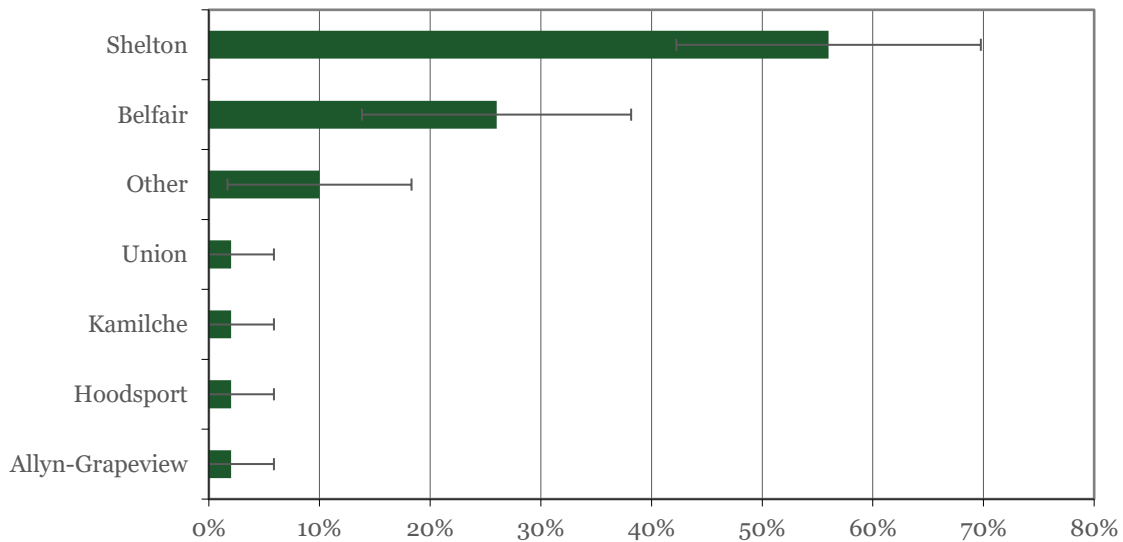
This survey asked a number of questions about where respondents live and work. The majority of respondents reported living in Mason County, with only 8% of respondents reporting living outside the county. The split between Mason County residents that worked inside and outside of the county was roughly 50/50 (see Figure 10).

**Figure 10 Work and Residence Status (n=169)**



Amongst those respondents that worked or studied in Mason County, the majority (56%, see Figure 11) reported Shelton as their work/study location. Belfair and 'Other/Multiple Locations' also scored highly.

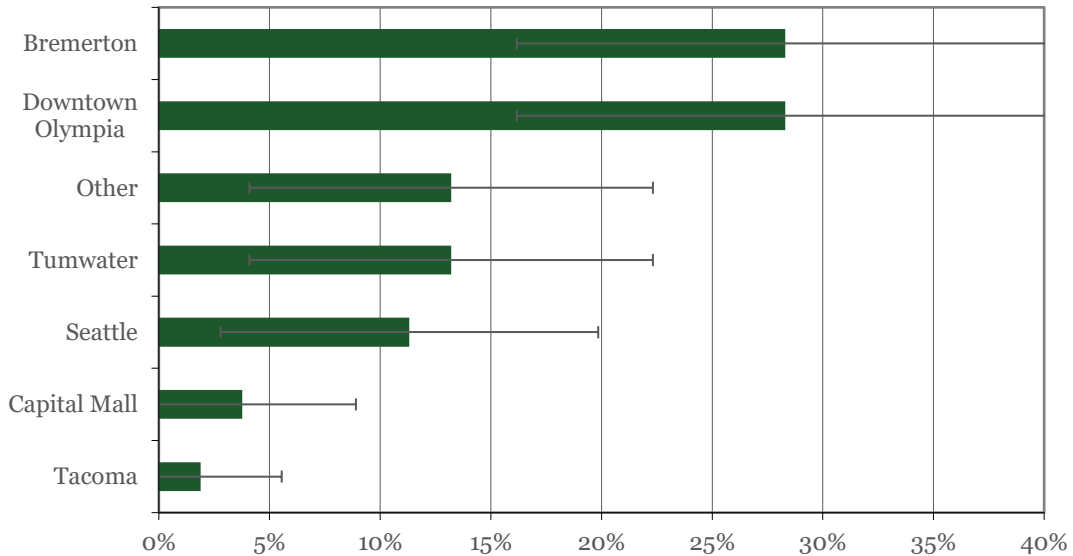
**Figure 11 Where do you work or study within Mason County? (n=50)**



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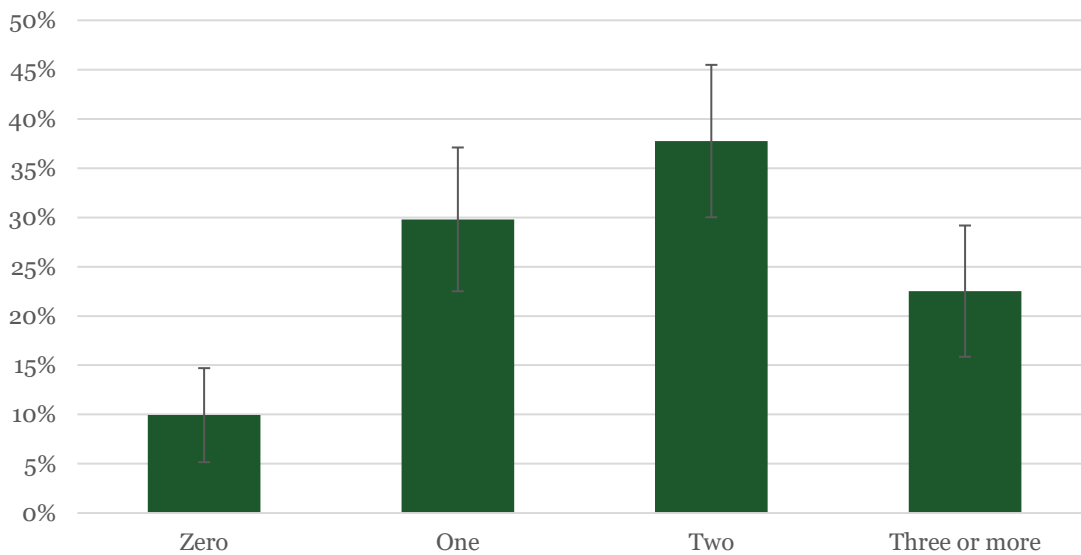
For those respondents that worked or studied outside Mason County, the majority reported Bremerton and Downtown Olympia as their work locations (Figure 12). Just over 10% reported working in Seattle. ‘Other’ responses included people with multiple worksites, Elma, and South Puget Sound Community College in Olympia.

**Figure 12** Where do you work or study outside of Mason County? (n=53)



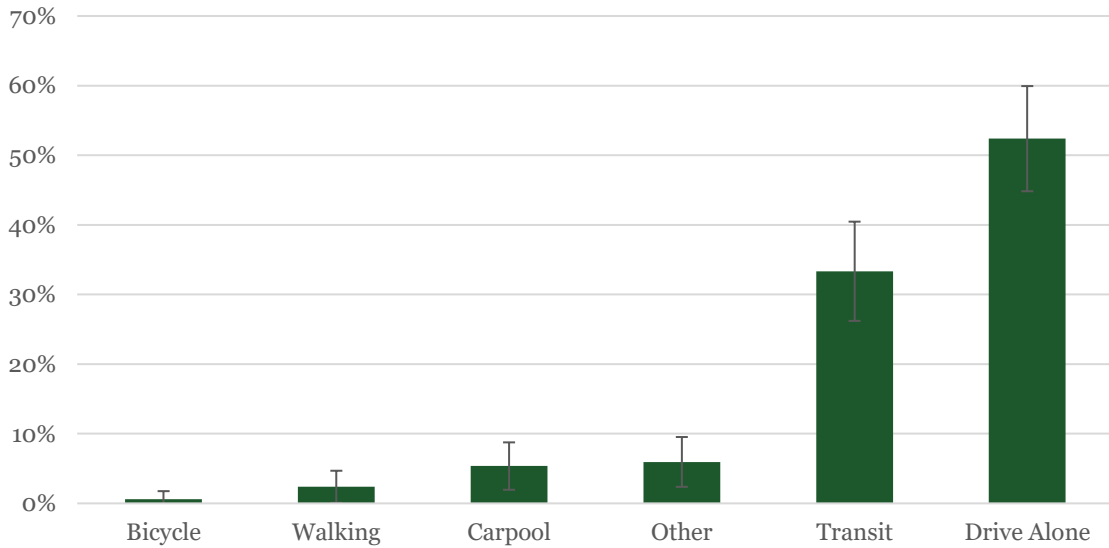
Approximately 10% of respondents reported not having access to a household vehicle and nearly 25% reported having access to three or more vehicles. Most households, however, had one or two vehicles (30% and 38%, respectively, Figure 15).

**Figure 13** Number of vehicles in household



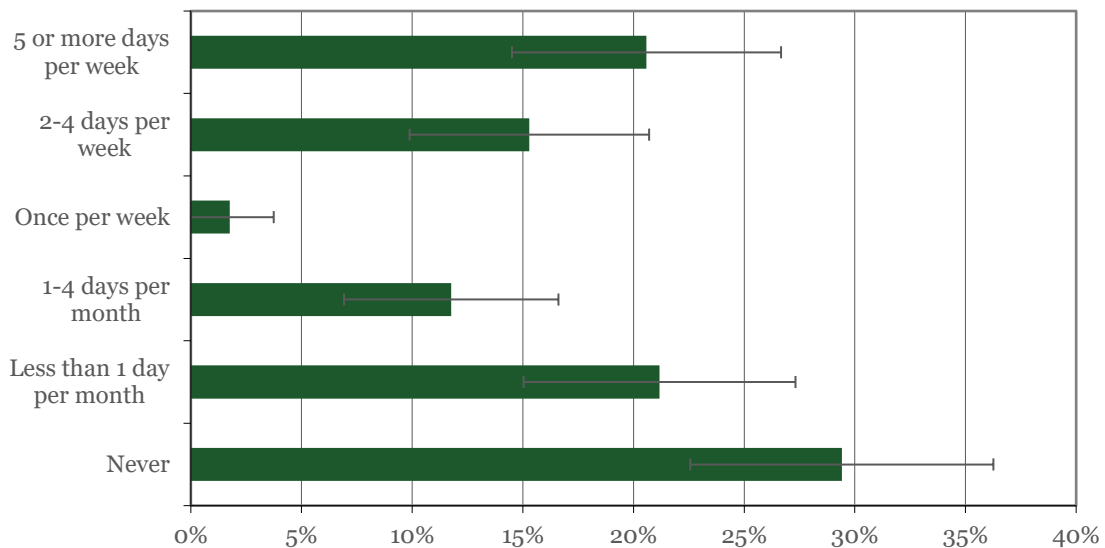
Respondents overwhelmingly chose 'Drive Alone' as their primary mode of transportation (Figure 14). That being said, 33% of those who answered the survey used transit as their primary mode of transportation and small portions of respondents selected 'Other', carpool, walking, or biking.

**Figure 14** What is your primary mode of transportation? (n=168)



Many respondents (29%) reported that they never ride MTA (Figure 15). The high number of responses by people who don't regularly ride transit correlates with the high percentage of respondents that reported driving alone as their primary mode of transportation (Figure 14). Overall, survey respondents tended to be either people who rode transit very frequently or not often at all. Those who reported riding once per week were a very small percentage of respondents.

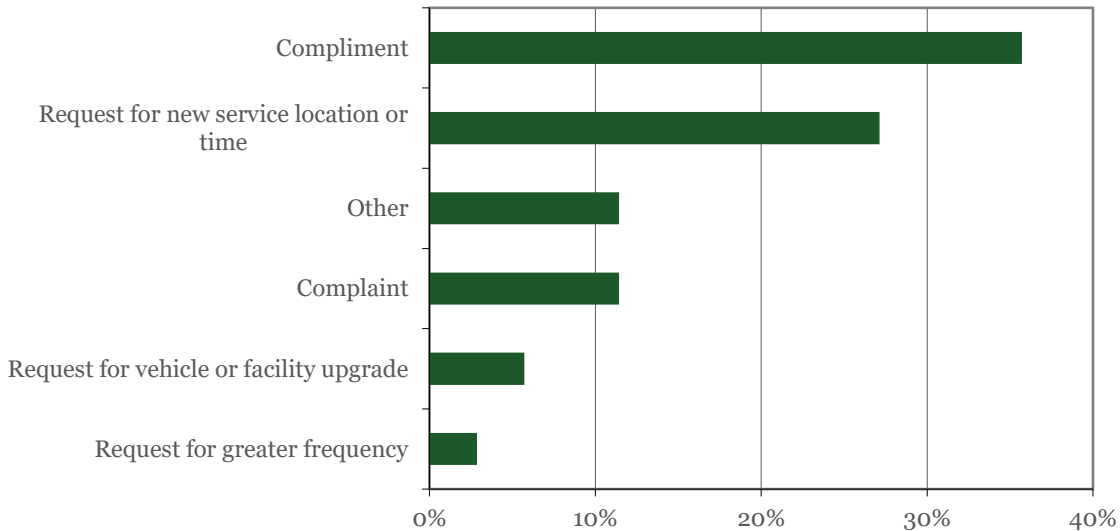
**Figure 15** How often do you ride MTA? (n=170)



## OPEN-ENDED COMMENTS

As was the case with the earlier on-board survey conducted as a part of the MTA Comprehensive Service Analysis, respondents were largely complimentary when filling out the open-ended comment field (Figure 16). A number of comments also included specific requests for new service areas or trip times, and a little more than 25% of respondents either wrote ‘no comments’, were incomprehensible, or fell into the ‘other’ category. Eight respondents took the open-response field as an opportunity to complain about MTA service.

Figure 16 Open-ended comments (n=70)



Sample comments are included below, and all public comments are included in the Appendix:

*“Late night service would be a huge improvement, especially between Olympia and Shelton on Saturday nights...”*

*“A big bus is needed on the 05:30 Bremerton run”*

*“You need a bus route that goes to elma so people don’t have to wait 3 hours going to Olympia then to elma. It would be way more convenient to just go straight to elma.”*

*“It would be very helpful if Route 1’s Belfair to Shelton run stopped at the North Mason Library bus stop or the Belfair Assembly of God Park & Ride bus stop on weekdays in the 5PM hour and in the 7PM hour.”*

*“Drivers are very friendly and courteous.”*

*“Please keep MTA fare free. You’re doing a great job, thank you.”*

*“The bus doesn’t give kids enough time at the Boys & Girls Club. I came outside with all my stuff and the bus had just started driving and would not stop for me.”*

*“The connections from Belfair to Bremerton are so limited as to be useless to many students of OC, particularly the Running Start students...”*

RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

By and large, respondents were over 55, white, English-speakers living in households earning more than \$50,000 per year.

Among the 172 total respondents, approximately 150 answered demographic questions. Slightly more respondents were female (Figure 17), and most respondents were above age 45 (Figure 18). Only seven respondents were below the age of 18.

Figure 17 Respondent Gender (n=151)

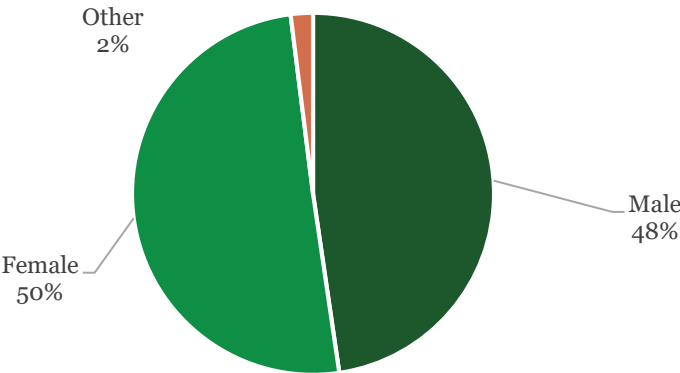
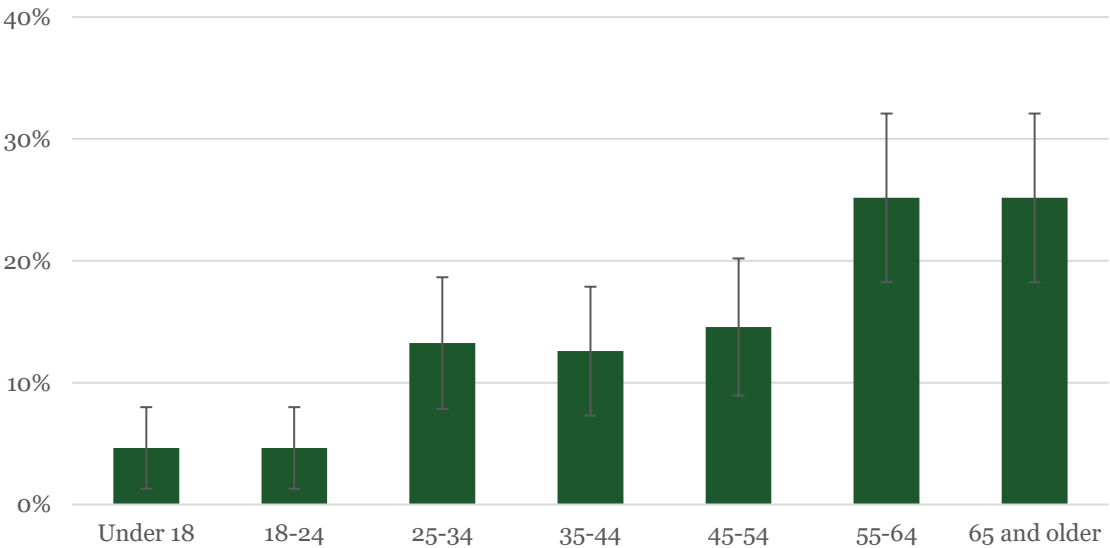


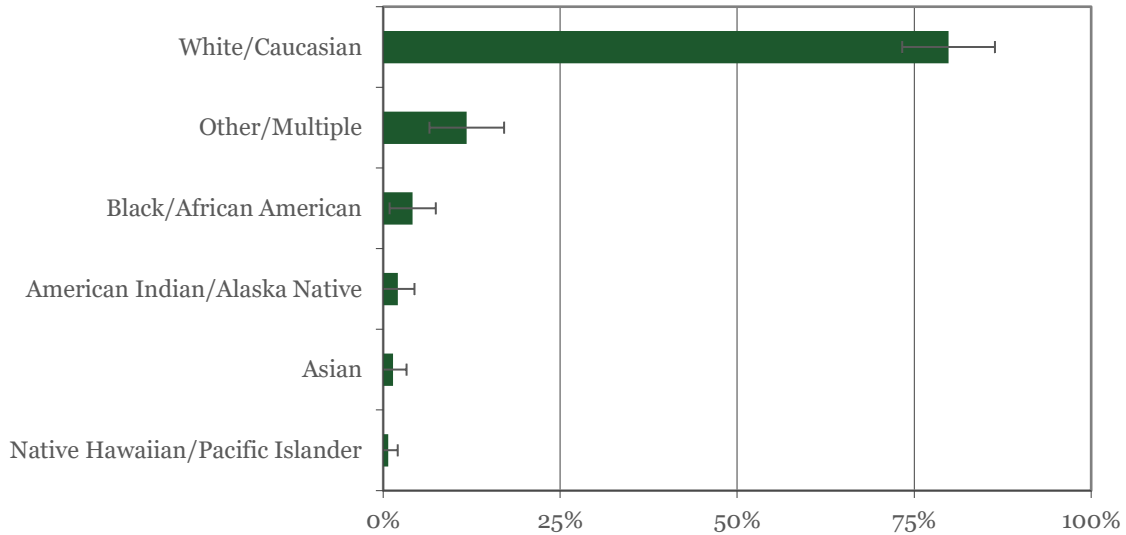
Figure 18 Respondent Age (n=151)



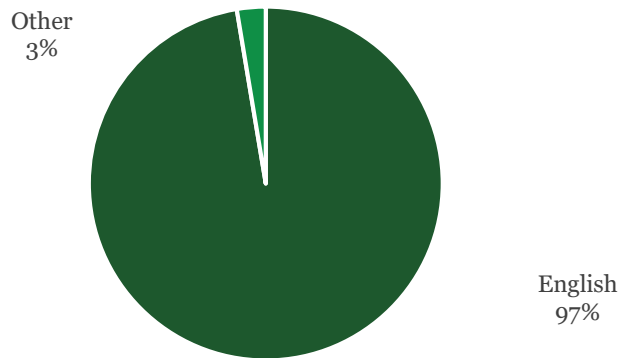
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The vast majority (79%, Figure 19) of respondents were white; less than 5% each were Black/African American, American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. Amongst the 145 respondents that reported their race, 12% identified as ‘other’ or provided multiple race/ethnicities. Nearly all respondents reported English as their primary language (Figure 20).

**Figure 19 Respondent Race/Ethnicity (n=145)**



**Figure 20 Respondent Primary Language (n=152)**

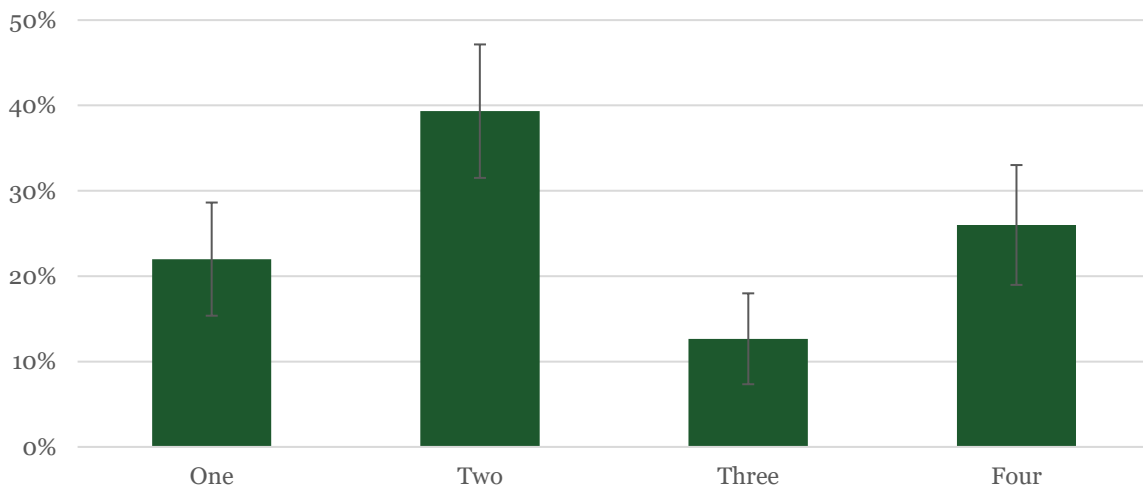


Respondent household size was varied. Approximately 22% of respondents reported living alone, 39% with one other person, and 39% with three or more people (Figure 21).

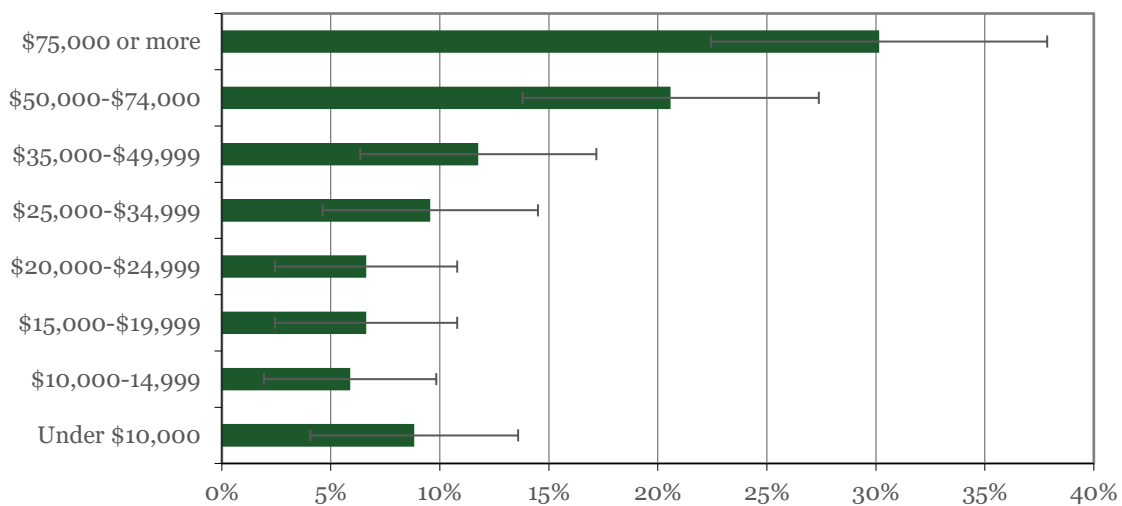
The largest portion of respondents (30%) reported living in households earning more than \$75,000, which is significantly higher than the Mason County median household income of \$51,764.<sup>2</sup> About 15% of respondents reported living in households earning under \$15,000 per year (Figure 22).

The high proportion of respondents that reported living in households earning \$75,000 or more is likely due in some part to a strong response rate from workers at the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard and other high-wage Bremerton-area workplaces. Eight of 18 respondents that reported living in households earning \$75,000 or more reported working in Bremerton.

**Figure 21 Respondent Household Size (n=150)**



**Figure 22 Respondent Household Income (n=136)**



<sup>2</sup> American Community Survey 5-year estimates, 2016. Table B19013. Margin of error of +/- \$2,240.

## Appendix A Open-Ended Comments

Comment	Categories
1.) Fare-free bus service is a brilliant concept and encourages us to make the right travel choice. But the routes have great spans where no flag stops are allowed. This defeats some of that brilliance. 2.) People on the Tahuya peninsula call dial-a-ride every day, because there is no scheduled service anywhere except at Belfair. One morning and one evening bus to Tahuya as part of the Belfair loop route would alleviate much of those extraneous dial-a-rides and improve life for the thousands who live there.	Compliment, Request for new service location or time
A big bus is needed on the 05:30 Bremerton run	Request for vehicle or facility upgrade
About 5 years ago I lost my driving license and still had to get to work and started taking the Bus. I found it much better than driving. I can drive now but rather take the Bus into Olympia.	Compliment
After years of paying for a shuttle van to SeaTac, we are pleasantly surprised at the ease of riding on MTA to Bremerton, and then taking the ferry and light rail in Seattle to SeaTac. Please continue to connect to the ferry.	Compliment
Although I currently use the service rarely, I will be retiring soon, and once I am no longer commuting to Gig Harbor, I plan to take the bus more often.	Other
Although this transportation is currently paid for through sales tax, might it be necessary to think about the need to charge fares in the future?	Other
Always clean, friendly, on time, and I've always felt safe. Thank you for taking such good care of Mason County. I hope this initiative allows you to expand services and keep doing what you do best.	Compliment
appreciate reaching out for public opinion- thank you	Compliment
Daily round trip tickets available in paper form	Other
Disabilites services. Please. Sight	Request for vehicle or facility upgrade
do the buses come all the way out to where i live? (on Wilchar Blvd, near boat landing for Phillips Lake	Request for new service location or time
Drivers are very friendly and courteous which cannot be said for many other systems(?) I have used.	Compliment
Drivers are very friendly and helpful.	Compliment
Getting to Airport, Blacklake, Olympia is horrible..any improvement on public transportation would be a blessing	Request for new service location or time
Good job	Compliment
Great to have free service with in County! Sunday service for church and engagement in regional weekend activities is needed. Higher visibility to regional transit collaborations are needed - or if none exist - need to collaborate!	Compliment, Request for new service location or time
Hi Mason transit hi there intercitytransit in olympia it is so yes	None/incomprehensible
I always supported MT in the past but, it has been a turn off to see how you bite/reject the hand that feeds you	Complaint



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Comment	Categories
I appreciate that the service is available but I don't feel comfortable riding the regular MTA routes. I hope that when I can no longer drive myself that the transit system is still providing service in our county.	Compliment, Other
I appreciate the friendly, helpful attitude of (at least) most of the drivers.	Compliment
I appreciate the services provided.	Compliment
I have to supply cars to children because of conflict in schedule differences. This cost me a lot in insurance and of course the purchase of vehicles	Other
I have two teenagers going to OC in Bremerton. The connections from Belfair to Bremerton are so limited as to be useless to many students of OC, particularly the Running Start students, yet most North Mason Running Start students attend OC-Bremerton. We also house two 'homeless' teens who are eager to work, but have very little opportunity because of the lack of bus routes in North Mason.	Request for new service location or time
I love the bus service, I just wish I could actually use it more often, but can't because of the lack of extended hours of operation and lack of service on weekends for dial a ride route. Very frustrating. As well as lack of bike route leading to town from outer areas... really frustrating and limiting.	Compliment, Request for new service location or time
I rely on the flag stops to get picked up and dropped off. Please don't reduce flag stop service.	Request for new service location or time
I think MTA does a fine job in providing transportation locally as well as to Olympia and Bremerton. The fares are affordable. The drivers are professional, but also kind.	Compliment
I was involved in a bus accident the last time I rode with MTA. My mother-in-law was in in one less than a month before that. You need to focus on safety!	Complaint
I would appreciate a bus stop on Hwy 3 at Krabbenhoft along with an online schedule listing estimated times for arrival at this stop.	Request for new service location or time
In the last year or so, the front of our house has become a bus stop. Out of no where, we started to notice random people standing outside our home or a bus letting people off in front of our mailbox (also where we get in and out of our car). We can keep an eye on things when we are home, but we are not always able to monitor the additional traffic. We have school aged children who like to play outside. I no longer consider our yard a safe place for them to play. One of my children spends half of the school day at home, due to an anxiety disorder. The presence of strangers outside has not helped curb his fears about our home being a safe place. It would be great to assess who lives in a residence, request approval, offer bus passes, a stipend or lock for garbage/recycling, etc., before designating bus stops in front of homes. When we take the bus, we walk to the stop by the old Red Apple, a clearly marked bus stop. Please consider marking bus stops and speaking to homeowners about providing service at their property. Thanks. P.S. We live at 903 Ellinor Ave.	Complaint
It would be very helpful if Route 1's Belfair to Shelton run stopped at the North Mason Library bus stop or the Belfair Assembly of God Park & Ride bus stop on weekdays in the 5PM hour and in the 7PM hour .	Request for new service location or time
it would be cool to have a route 1 or 2 times daily to aberdeen or ocean shores during summer months for like \$3 dollars each way	Request for new service location or time

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Comment	Categories
Its great to have free service in the county and to the casino! Please keep this. Thanks for drivers that support riders who need extra information and help. I have seen drivers really be kind to people riding after release from WCC and have no orientation of where they are going.	Compliment
Keep up your work expand your service more folks are coming to live in this county lets get them in the bus, bikes and bike lanes. Gas prices rising!	Compliment
Late night service would be a huge improvement, especially between Olympia and Shelton on Saturday nights. Shelton doesn't have significant live music or social opportunities at night, Olympia does. Thank you! Also, please keep MTA fare-free. This is what makes it possible for me to ride MTA on a regular basis. I intend to use Link and DAR in the future.	Request for new service location or time
More Timberlake service	Request for new service location or time
MTA Options (i.e. dial a ride, vol medical, rideshare) not available to me when needed	Request for new service location or time
MTA should service the county better and not so much out of county bus service. When the time comes to ask the county resident's for a tax increase MTA will need our support.	Other
N/A	None/incomprehensible
No	None/incomprehensible
no	None/incomprehensible
No	None/incomprehensible
No	None/incomprehensible
No fares	Other
No thanks	None/incomprehensible
On 12th St by hospital Route 7 comes on 50 min after the hour. Route 5 comes 17 min later. I have teenagers if buses come at 30 min between each other they would not be at school 30 min early. getting in trouble @ school. Buses used to turn on street before Saratoga Springs. Shelton closed buses off that street due to road problems. Large buses has problems picking up clients with electric wheelchairs (hard to board).	Request for greater frequency
Please don't let the Dial-A-Ride leave without waiting 5 min.	Complaint
Please keep MTA fare free. You're doing a great job, thank you.	Compliment
Please research and implement more bike racks for buses!	Request for vehicle or facility upgrade
Sell t-shirts and hats that say 'I ride MTA!' and make it fashionable to take the bus! Keep up the good work on keeping the buses clean, inside and out. Have a free floating monitor who rides the buses to assist drivers with everything from rowdy riders and curtailing foul language and assist in loading people with wheelchairs, walkers and baby carriages. These monitors can also help with questions like what time?..., how do I? ... Will we get to Shelton in time to?... New drivers should be encouraged to ride with long time drivers several times before going out on their own. Mason County Drivers are some of the best in	Compliment, Other

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Comment	Categories
the state. This coming from someone who has 'taken the bus' for close to 60 years in Washington state and often rides through the 4 counties between Shelton and King County. We need buses to run on time, but we also need to keep the unique friendly service that Mason County drivers have developed. They are the heart of the system.	
signed up for phone texting alerts, but don't get hardly any, always have to go to twitter for service disruptions which uses up my phone data	Complaint
So often the buses are running with no one or one person only. How is that cost or environmentally effective and now you want to add more routes.	Other
Southshore direct to a Kitsap Co or Ferry Terminal would be great.	Request for new service location or time
Stops at lake limerick please	Request for new service location or time
Thank you for the good job you are doing, your center & community outreach. We do need to connect to Olympia with more stops, especially the good connection stop in Capitol Mall.	Compliment, Request for new service location or time
Thank You for YOUR Service!	Compliment
thank you very much for making this effort to upgrade the current great service, fix the link service first!!	Compliment
Thanks for everything you do to help mitigate climate change by being a public transportation option. I hope for more for all of our sakes!	Compliment
The bus doesn't give kids enough time at the boys and girls club. I came outside with all my stuff and the bus had just started driving and would not stop for me.	Complaint
The bus drivers should be more polite and respectful of riders. Many of them are rude.	Complaint
The buses are comfortable, but some spots are way too tight for anyone of average size.	Complaint
The transit community center is great!	Compliment
Tried long ago to arrange outings using public transit but it would take all day and have to start very early and end very late for any trip and then theres the issue of getting out of Mason county. The car is the only practical means of going to anywhere from where we live. Sad	Request for greater frequency
We are new in the area and rode MTA to ferry from QFC - could have used an acceptable place to leave the car when traveling on MTA to ferry/Seattle.	Request for vehicle or facility upgrade
We need better roads for the buses to drive on	Other
Yes i would like service in my area we only have the one car and teenagers and myself would like to have another alerntative for transportation	Request for new service location or time
Yes. I will discuss these with someone at MTA directly	None/incomprehensible
You need a bus route that goes to elma so people don't have to wait 3 hours going to Olympia then to elma. It would be way more convenient to just go straight to elma.	Request for new service location or time

**COMPREHENSIVE SERVICE ANALYSIS | PUBLIC INPUT SURVEY RESULTS**  
Mason Transit Authority

Comment	Categories
You need to have a Sunday Air Port Grocery to Cole Rd loop, to help locals get to Church, shopping, and movies / parks.	Request for new service location or time
You provide quality service.	Compliment
Your service and maintenance are top notch. Your administration is friendly and helpful. Thank you.	Compliment