

# New Rapid Transit for a Growing, Equitable Rochester: Phase 1 Public Engagement Summary

MARCH 2020



## Contents

Executive Summary .....	3
Introduction .....	4
Phase 1 Public Engagement.....	4
Themes .....	6
Input.....	8
Open Houses .....	8
Pop-Ups .....	8
Questionnaire .....	9
Survey .....	11
Polco Survey Summary February 4 <sup>th</sup> – February 19 <sup>th</sup> 2020 .....	15

## List of Figures

<b>FIGURE 1: TYPICAL DESTINATIONS</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>FIGURE 2: PRIMARY MODE OF TRANSPORTATION</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>FIGURE 3: DESIRED RAPID TRANSIT FEATURES</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>FIGURE 4: EXISTING NEIGHBORHOOD AMENITIES</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>FIGURE 5: CURRENT NEIGHBORHOOD NEEDS</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>FIGURE 6: DESIRED FUTURE AMENITIES AND ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>14</b>

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In February 2020, Transit Oriented Development (TOD) planning staff, City of Rochester team members, and Destination Medical Center (DMC) staff conducted an initial round of public engagement to inform and solicit feedback from residents, employees, visitors, and other stakeholders about the TOD planning process. The public was asked for input regarding their transportation behavior, existing neighborhood amenities, ideas for station locations, and any future amenities or activities they want to see in the corridor area.

Staff interacted with more than 200 people throughout this round of public engagement activities, which included two open houses, three pop-ups, an online survey, a station-location questionnaire and a series of stakeholder presentations.

From the engagement conducted with the public, below are the key themes that emerged regarding rapid transit and transit oriented development along the transit line.

Community members indicated a desire to see:

- **A vibrant downtown.** It is important to have a vibrant downtown, with more amenities, retail and destinations for residents.
- **Walkability.** Improve the downtown pedestrian experience. More people need to be drawn to the streets.
- **Housing options.** Meet the needs of a range of residents by income, job type and age.
- **Family-oriented communities.** The neighborhoods are valued by residents as places to live and raise families. There is a perception that rental housing and short-term rents are increasing prices and reducing housing availability for long-term residents.
- **Context-sensitive transit.** Rochester is a winter city, and transit and development should reflect this and emphasize the comfort of people using Downtown.
- **Accommodation of all modes.** Traffic and transportation will need to be managed if growth is to be accommodated – there is a risk of future traffic congestion.

Community members also indicated the rapid transit line should:

- **Be high-quality.** The rapid transit needed to be accessible, easy to use, and aesthetically pleasing.
- **Have well-designed station areas.** Consider the design of station areas – how they will function and who they will serve.
- **Locate station areas to access amenities and parking nodes.** Station areas should be located near key amenities and be accessible to park and ride lots.

Details from all public engagement activities are included in the full report on the following pages. A second round of engagement will be held during the month of April.

## INTRODUCTION

Rochester Rapid Transit is a proposed bus rapid transit (BRT) route in Rochester, Minnesota. The route is approximately four miles long and will provide service to downtown Rochester, the Mayo Clinic and the Gonda Building along 2<sup>nd</sup> Street SW and Broadway Avenue S between the Mayo West Lot and Graham Park. In January 2020, the City of Rochester initiated a transit-oriented development (TOD) planning process to evaluate existing Rochester Rapid Transit stations, identify potential sites for development and redevelopment, and highlight key opportunities for pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure improvements.

## PHASE 1 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT



In February 2020, TOD planning staff, City of Rochester teammates, and Destination Medical Center (DMC) staff conducted an initial round of public engagement to inform residents, employees, visitors, and other stakeholders about the TOD planning process. The public was asked for input regarding their transportation behavior, existing neighborhood amenities, and any future amenities or activities they want to see. TOD planning staff also sought feedback on several potential station locations through a questionnaire.

Staff interacted with more than 200 people throughout this round of public engagement activities, which included two open houses, pop-ups, an online survey, and a series of stakeholder presentations. All phase 1 engagement activities are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Phase 1 Public Engagement Events and Activities

Event	Date	Approximate Attendance
<b>Open house at University of Minnesota—Rochester</b>	Tuesday, February 4, 11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.	60 attendees
<b>Open house at Bethel Lutheran Church</b>	Tuesday, February 4, 5 - 7 p.m.	50 attendees
<b>Pop-up at Mayo Clinic – Methodist</b>	Thursday, February 6, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.	15 attendees
<b>Pop-up at Mayo Clinic – Saint Marys</b>	Monday, February 10, 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.	20 attendees
<b>Pop-up at the Rochester Public Library</b>	Monday, February 10, 1:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.	20 attendees
<b>Polco Survey</b>	Tuesday, February 4 <sup>th</sup> – Wednesday, February 19 <sup>th</sup>	171 respondents
<b>Diversity Council Meeting</b>	Thursday, February 20	15 attendees
<b>R Neighbors Meeting</b>	Tuesday, February 25	18 attendees
<b>Rochester Downtown Alliance Stakeholders</b>	Wednesday, February 26	40 attendees

### Reaching Under Representative Populations

Outreach to groups of individuals that have historically been under represented in government and transportation engagement outreach remains a key focal point for the City of Rochester and the New Rapid Transit for a Growing, Equitable Rochester (TOD) Project. Other than the POLCO on-line survey respondents who voluntarily offered such information, no formal record was kept of the racial, ethnic, age, or disability representation as part of this first public outreach phase. The in-person open houses held on February 4th did provide an opportunity for people of diverse backgrounds to offer input. Unfortunately, other than a few individuals attending the midday session at UMR, these sessions lacked significant under represented populations but this not unique to this project. The same was true of direct outreach efforts to RNeighbors and Rochester Downtown Association. In comparison, Pop-up events traditionally are better at reaching under represented populations and the three events held during this phase were successful in achieving a cultural mix.

The most successful engagement techniques typically involve going directly to diverse populations. The Rochester Diversity Council meeting held on February 20th offered the greatest opportunity to reach and communicate with people of different racial and ethnic backgrounds. As such, regularly attending Diversity Council meetings will be part of outreach efforts moving forward.

## Themes

TOD planning staff, City of Rochester teammates and DMC staff heard the following themes through the first phase of public engagement efforts:

- **A vibrant downtown.** There is a desire for a more vibrant downtown, with more amenities, retail and destination for residents.
- **Walkability.** Downtown needs to be walkable, and more people need to be drawn to the streets.
- **Housing options.** There is a call for a more diverse offerings of housing; meeting the needs of a range of residents by income, job type and age.
- **Family-oriented communities.** The neighborhoods are valued by residents as places to live and raise families. There is a perception that rental housing and short-term rents are increasing prices and reducing housing availability for long-term residents.
- **Context-sensitive transit.** Rochester is a winter city, and transit and development should reflect this and emphasize the comfort of people using Downtown.
- **Accommodate all modes.** Traffic and transportation will need to be managed if growth is to be accommodated – there is a risk of future traffic congestion.
- **High quality transit needed.** Participants highlighted the need for high-quality transit.
  - The mid-day open house had a lot of support and very little questioning of the need for high-quality, high-frequency transit service serving downtown. One attendee wanted an elevated tram, but otherwise residents seemed comfortable with BRT as the mode.
  - Pop-up participants shared desire for service to the north and east.
  - Two mid-day open house attendees thought the route should extend farther to the south. One suggestion was that the airport would be a logical terminus.
- **Station area design important.** Many attendees expressed desire to see the station areas and understand how they will function and who they will serve.
  - Pop-up participants noted current cultural dynamics at transit stations - people line up and wait in line because the seats are first-come-first-serve. This points to the need for considerations around ticketing systems, linear waiting accommodations, more frequent busses so seats are not scarce etc.
  - Several open house attendees noted the importance of providing station heating
- **Park and ride access.** Participants raised questions regarding park-and-ride locations and access.
  - Pop-up participants shared concern about access to parking at the East and West Transit Village and asked if more than just Mayo users would be able to use this as a sort of downtown park-and-ride access.
- **Station locations.** There was general interest in station locations and how they were determined.
  - There were questions at the open houses and pop-ups about the number of stations, spacing, and access to parking near the stations.



# INPUT

## Open Houses

Two open houses were held on Tuesday, February 4<sup>th</sup>. The first open house was held over the lunch hour at the University of Minnesota – Rochester. It was set up as a drop-in experience, with boards and activities stationed around a room. A PowerPoint providing information on the project was playing in the background. The second open house was held in the evening at Bethel Lutheran Church. This open house included the same boards and activities, but also included a 15-minute presentation from the consultant team regarding the project. Themes from community input at these events is gathered below.

Table 2: Open House Preference Board Results – What would you like to see more of in the corridor?

Category	Count - UMR	Count - Bethel	Total
Parks	12	8	20
Entertainment	7	5	13
Sustainable Spaces	7	6	13
Places to Eat	4	8	12
Housing Choices	8	2	10
Access to Water	7	3	10
City Amenities	3	4	7
Shopping Options	2	4	6
Job Opportunities	2	3	5

### Mid-day Open House – University of Minnesota Rochester

Feedback included engagement with the preference boards and mapping activity. Most participants supported the need for improved transit along the corridor. There were general questions and thoughts about the alignment and potential station areas.

### Evening Open House – Bethel Lutheran Church

Participants at this open house skewed older and generally had concerns about the route and how it would benefit them. There were concerns about individuals with disabilities being able to access downtown, and about how the bus would impede or alter car traffic.

## Pop-Ups

The pop-up activities were held at three locations in early February.

- February 6 - Mayo Eisenburg Building 11:00-1:00pm in employee cafe
- February 10 - St. Mary's Campus 11:00-1:00pm in employee cafeteria
- February 10 - Rochester Public Library 1:30-3:30pm in main entryway

Major themes gathered from these events included:

- **Hours of service.** Ensure that routes sync up with staff schedules who do not work on typical 9am-5pm shifts. Many nurses do not have access to Mayo parking and have non-regular schedules, leading to negative transit experiences with long wait times late at night - which in turn cause them to drive.

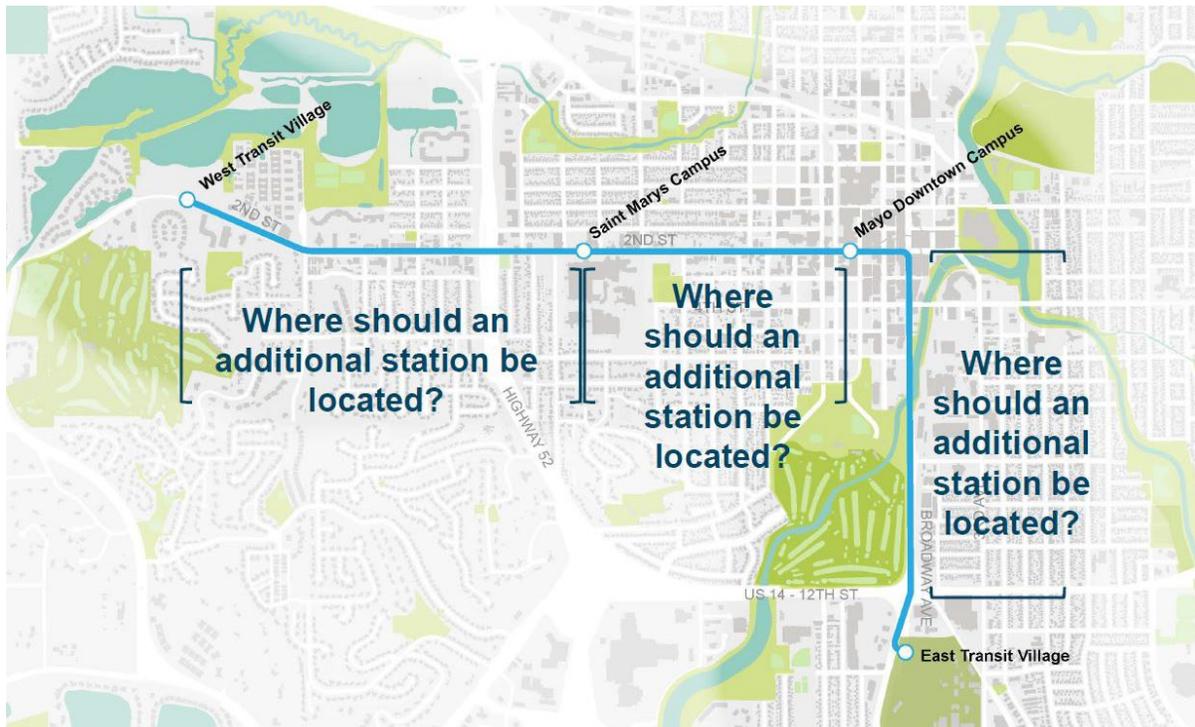
- **Mid-day service.** There is a heavy interest in having service during the middle of the workday between St. Marys and the central Mayo campus.
- **Access to parking.** Regarding access to parking at the East and West Transit Villages, will more than just Mayo users be able to use this as a Park-and-Ride access to downtown?
- **Service routes.** There is a desire for service to the north and east.
- **Access to grocery stores.** Having a small grocery/convenient store along transit lines was a popular priority (Ex. Milk/eggs/bread type locations).
- **Access to restaurants.** There is a desire for more quality places to eat a quick meal along transit lines.
- **Social environment.** Many people currently chose not to linger downtown after work, but could see value if transit created more spaces you would want to spend time outside of work hours.
- **Smoking.** Smoking was listed as a common issue at transit facilities currently.
- **Bus shelter facilities.** There is a need for seating, shelter, heat during the cold months, and real-time arrival information.

### Questionnaire

Four Rochester Rapid Transit station locations have been identified: the West Transit Village at the existing Mayo West Lot, Saint Marys campus, Mayo Downtown Campus, and East Transit Village south of the intersection of Broadway Avenue and 12<sup>th</sup> Street in or near the former Seneca Food plant. TOD planning staff developed a questionnaire to identify community priorities for planning Rochester Rapid Transit stations in addition to these four stations. For this questionnaire, TOD planning staff divided the route into three segments. Segment 1 spans from the West Transit Village to Saint Marys Campus, Segment 2 spans from Saint Marys Campus to Mayo Downtown Campus, and Segment 3 spans from Mayo Downtown Campus to the East Transit Village. Proposed stations and additional station locations for evaluation are shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1: Rochester Rapid Transit Planned Stations and Station Areas for Evaluation



- In **Segment 1**, survey respondents indicated a preference for placing a station at 19<sup>th</sup> Avenue because it is near commercial destinations such as Thesis Beer Project. Many respondents indicated that they would like to see a station halfway between West Transit Village and Saint Marys Campus without stating a specific location. The halfway point between these two locations is approximately at 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue; thus, comments requesting a station at the halfway point were recorded as votes for this location. One respondent stated that they would like to have a station at 23<sup>rd</sup> Avenue to provide access to Cascade Lake Park.
- In **Segment 2**, station locations at 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue were most popular for their proximity to existing healthcare facilities and supportive buildings such as the Ronald McDonald House as well as existing and future commercial and residential developments. Each of these options received the most votes.
- In **Segment 3**, station locations at 4<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, and 9<sup>th</sup> streets were all approximately equally popular. The seven respondents who stated that they would like to have a station at 4<sup>th</sup> Street expressed that it would provide easy access to downtown retail and employment destinations as well as the Olmsted County Government Center. The six people who stated a preference for a station at 6<sup>th</sup> Street cited reasons including its proximity to the future University of Minnesota—Rochester campus and the existing YMCA. The nine people who said they would like to see a station at 9<sup>th</sup> Street cited reasons including proximity to Soldiers Field Park and accessibility to Slatterly Park and anticipated future development at the former Kmart site.

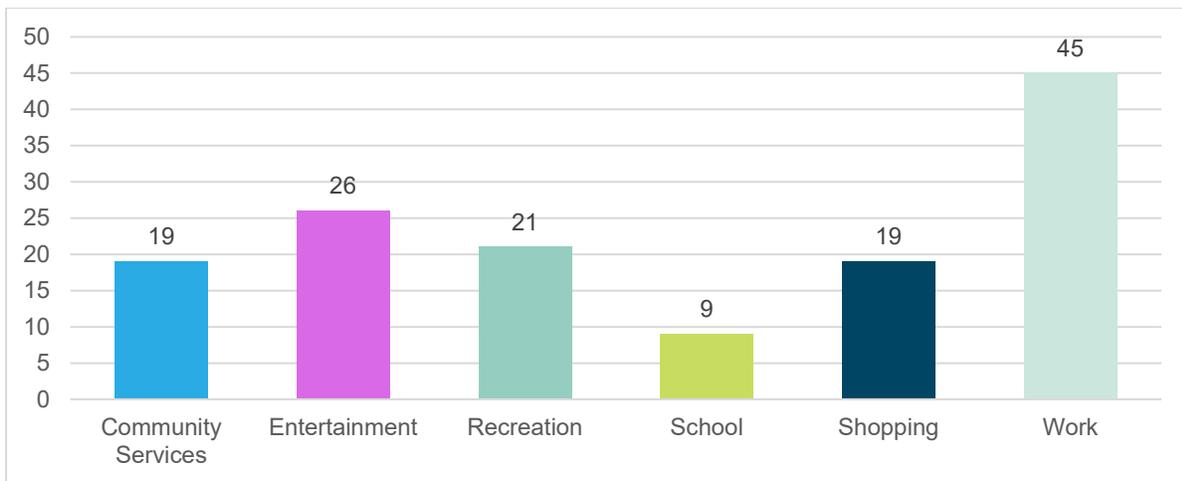
## Survey

Phase 1 of engagement utilized a paper survey to solicit community ideas for the future of the circulator station areas for a proposed rapid transit corridor that runs along 2<sup>nd</sup> Street SW and South Broadway Avenue. The paper survey garnered 68 responses. It was distributed at the open houses and pop-ups and asked six questions regarding how respondents currently use the area and what they would like to see in the area in the future. The survey asked respondents to identify the following:

- Typical destinations visited in the TOD planning area.
- Primary mode of transportation through the TOD planning area and downtown Rochester.
- Most-desired features for Rochester Rapid Transit.
- Existing neighborhood amenities.
- Current neighborhood needs.
- Future neighborhood needs.

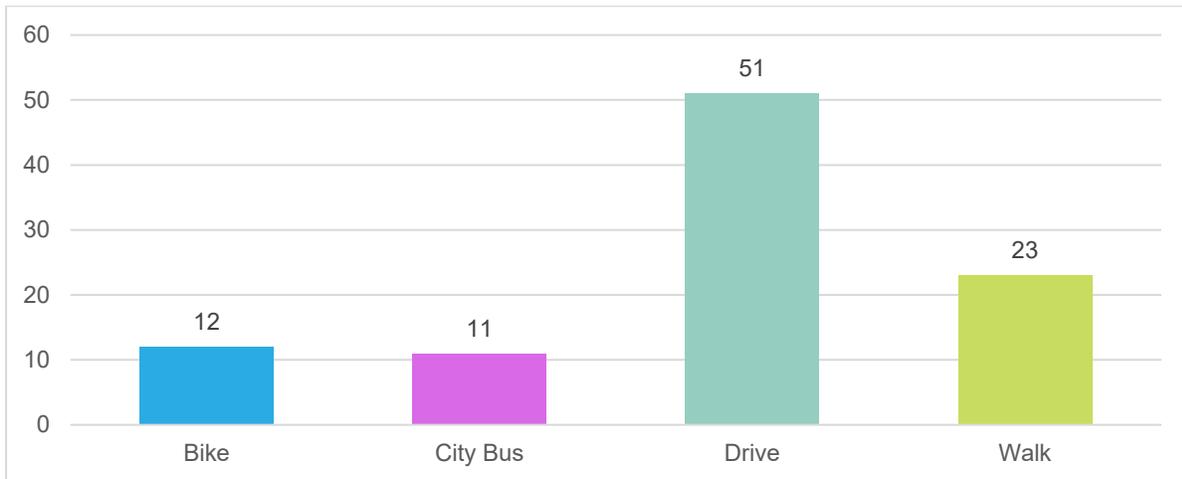
The most popular typical destination among respondents was work, followed by entertainment, recreation, community services, and shopping; only nine of the 68 respondents indicated that they typically visit the project area to attend school (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Typical Destinations in the TOD Planning Area



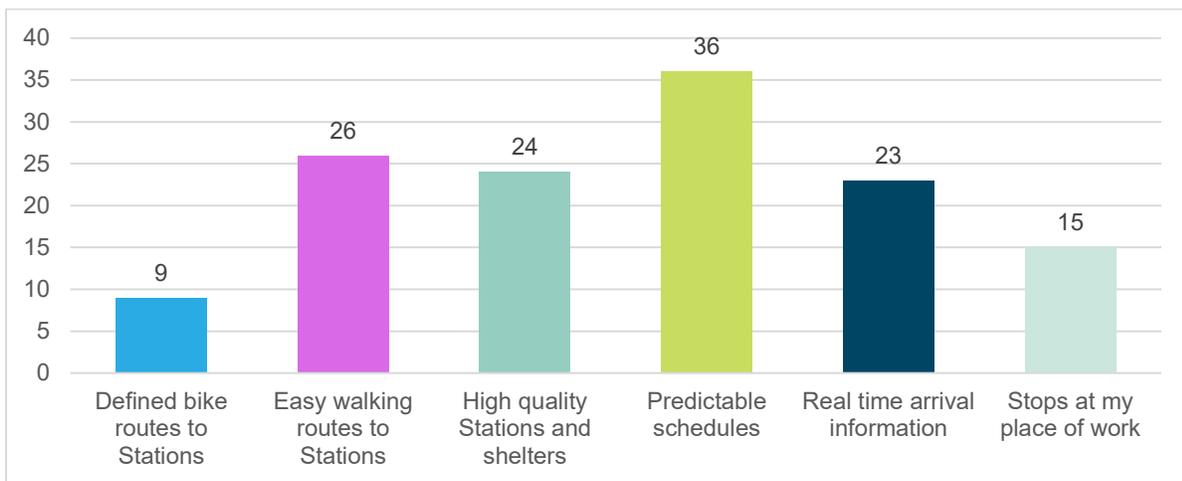
The majority of respondents indicated that they primarily drive in the TOD planning area and downtown Rochester; about half as many respondents indicated that they walk to access destinations, while just 12 and 11 people, respectively, indicated that they bike or take the bus to access downtown destinations (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Primary Mode of Transportation



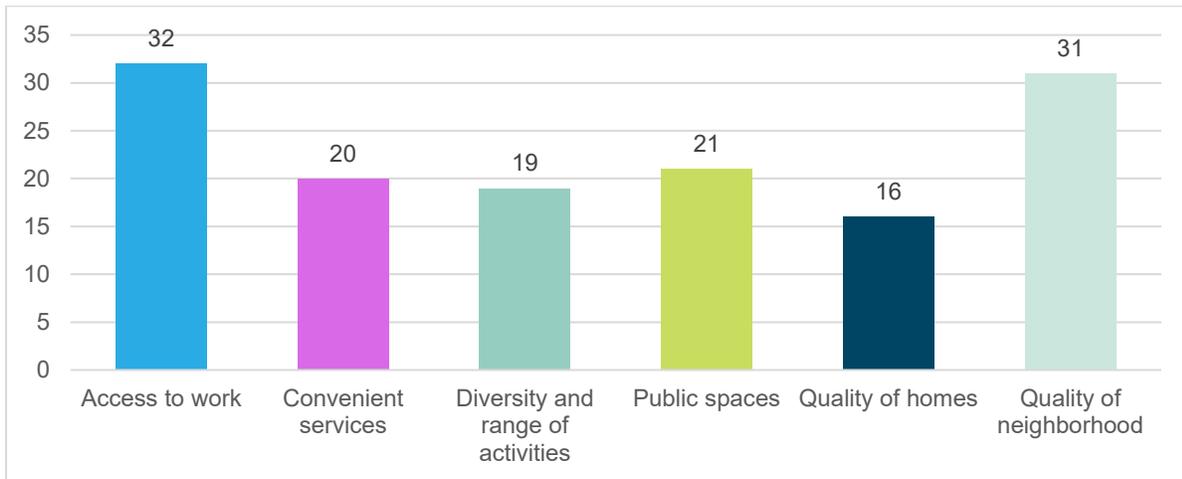
The most desired feature was predictable schedules and many respondents also indicated a desire for easy walking routes to stations, real-time arrival information, and high quality stations and shelters (Figure 4). Survey respondents placed less priority on bus stops proximate to workplaces and defined bike routes to stations.

Figure 4: Desired Rapid Transit Features



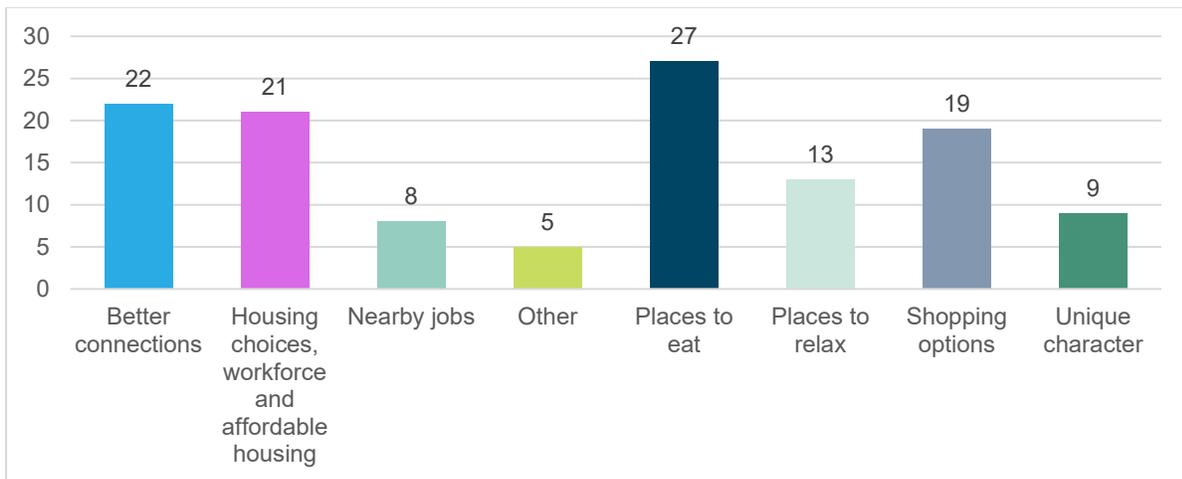
Respondents were asked what neighborhood amenities and features they value most. Proximity to work was the most popular answer, followed closely by neighborhood quality, with nearly half of respondents selecting each of these answer choices (Figure 5). Approximately one-quarter of respondents indicated that they valued public spaces, convenient services, diversity and range of activities, and quality of homes.

Figure 5: Existing Neighborhood Amenities



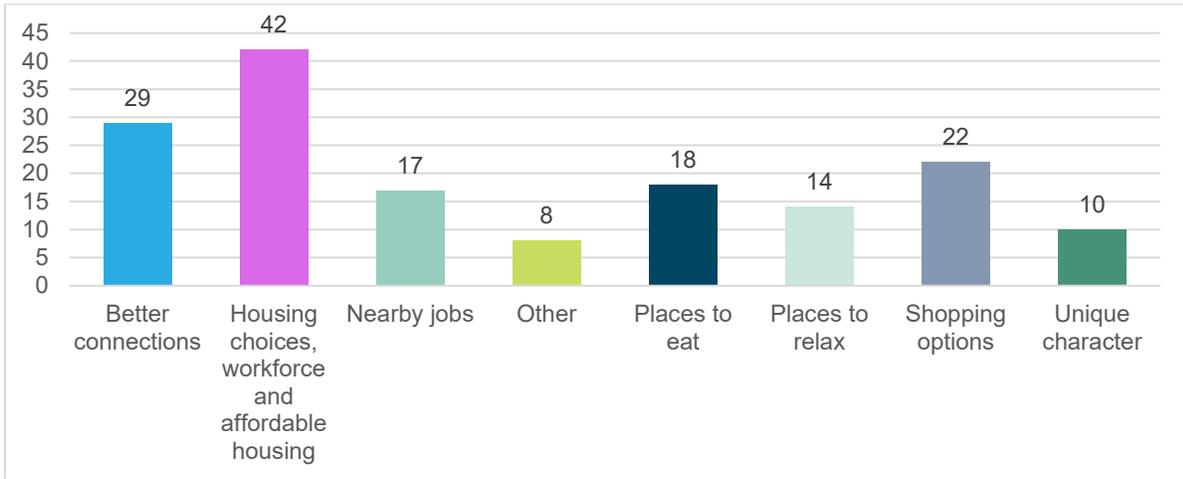
Survey respondents identified additional places to eat as their top priority for needed neighborhood amenities (Figure 6). Other popular selections were better connections, more housing choices, and increased housing options, while places to relax, unique neighborhood character, and additional nearby jobs received less interest. Those who selected “other” stated that they would like to have more parks in their neighborhood.

Figure 6: Current Neighborhood Needs



Respondents indicated that housing choices, including workforce and affordable housing, will be the top priority for their neighborhood in the future (Figure 7). Better connections, additional shopping options, more places to eat, and more nearby jobs were also popular, while respondents indicated little prioritization for needing to develop unique neighborhood character.

Figure 7: Desired Future Amenities and Activities

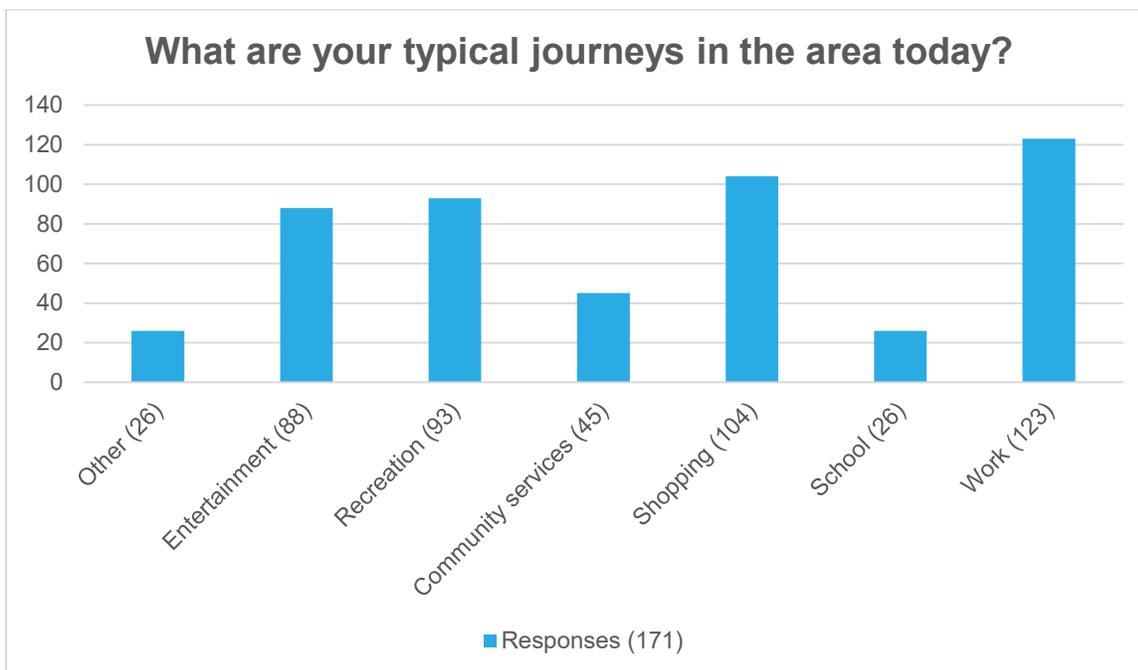


## Polco Survey Summary February 4<sup>th</sup> – February 19<sup>th</sup> 2020

The City of Rochester developed a Polco survey to supplement phase 1 in-person engagement events. The community survey asked the same six questions as the in-person paper survey regarding how respondents currently use the area and what they would like to see in the area in the future. The survey was open from February 4<sup>th</sup> to February 19<sup>th</sup> and received 171 responses. More than 60% of respondents were under the age of 50. The survey asked respondents to identify the following:

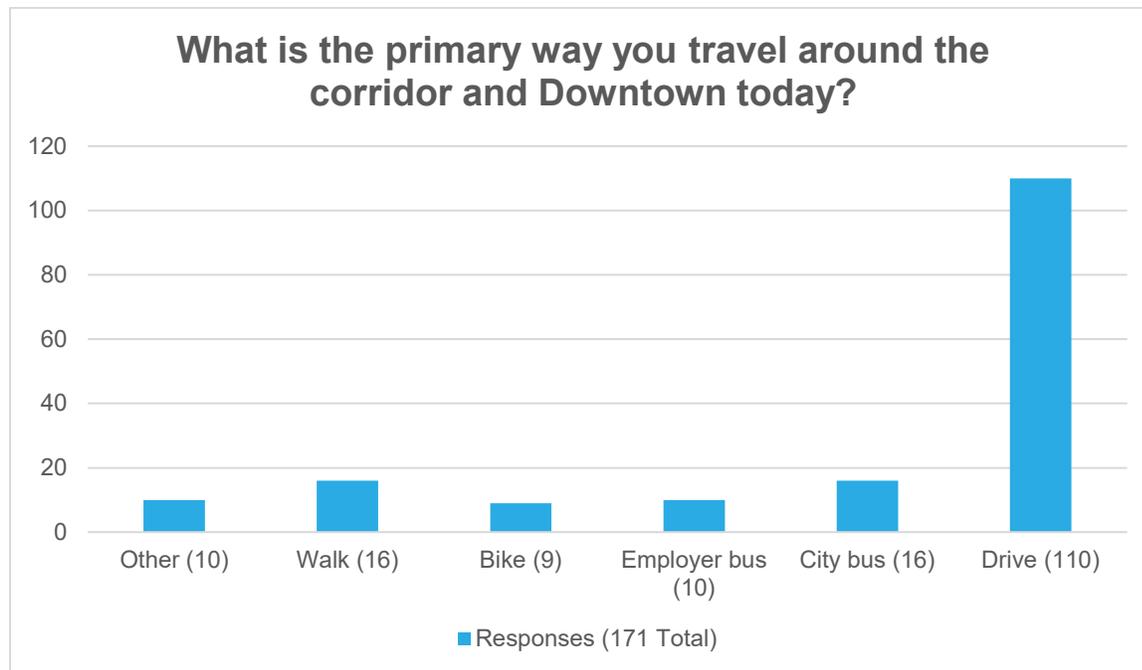
- Typical destinations visited in the TOD planning area.
- Primary mode of transportation through the TOD planning area and downtown Rochester.
- Most-desired features for Rochester Rapid Transit.
- Existing neighborhood amenities.
- Current neighborhood needs.
- Future neighborhood needs.

*Question 1: What are your typical journeys in the area today? Select all that apply*



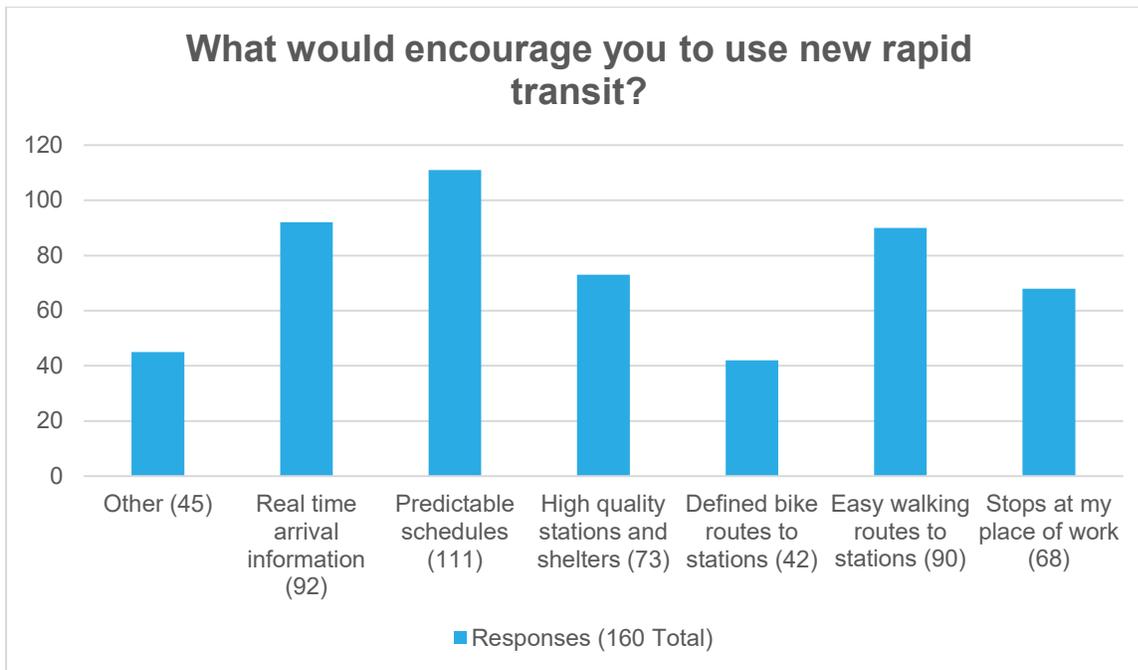
- **Themes from open-ended responses included:**
  - Medical appointments and Mayo Clinic (10)
  - Dining and Restaurants (8)
  - Going to daycare
  - Going to church
  - Going to the library
  - Avoid traveling in the area due to construction, congestion and lack of parking

Question 2: What is the primary way you travel around the corridor and Downtown today?



- **Themes from open-ended responses included:**
  - Bike (3)
  - E-scooter / Lime (2)
  - Apartment Building Shuttle (2)
  - Avoid driving downtown because parking is limited (2)
  - Volunteer Drivers, UCARE provided medical transport

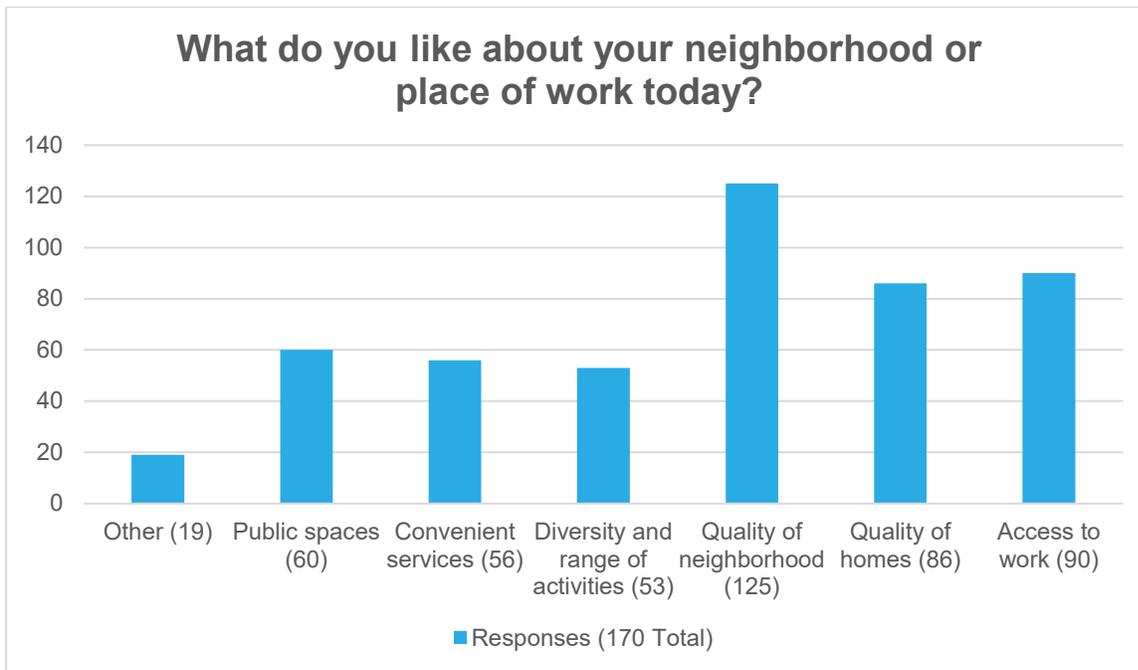
Question 3: What would encourage you to use new rapid transit? Select all that apply



- **Themes from open-ended responses included:**

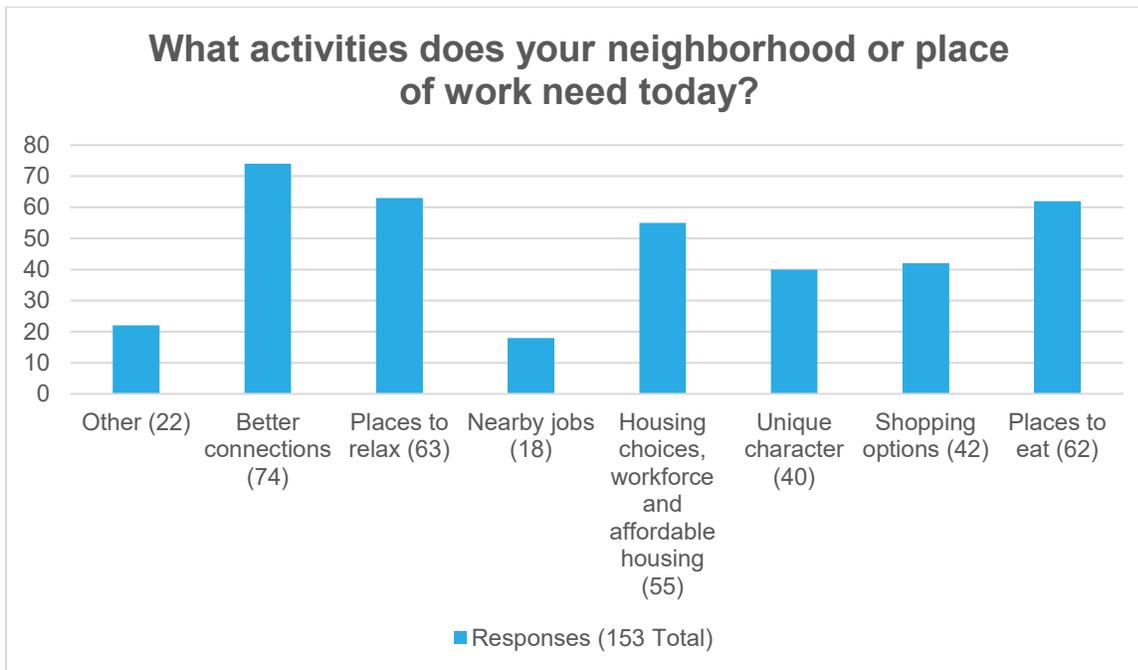
- Parking available at transit hubs (6)
- Signage and wayfinding needed
- Well-maintained station areas (i.e lighting, emergency phone, shoveled, heated waiting areas)
- Additional stations/access across the city

Question 4: What do you like about your neighborhood or place of work today? Select all that apply



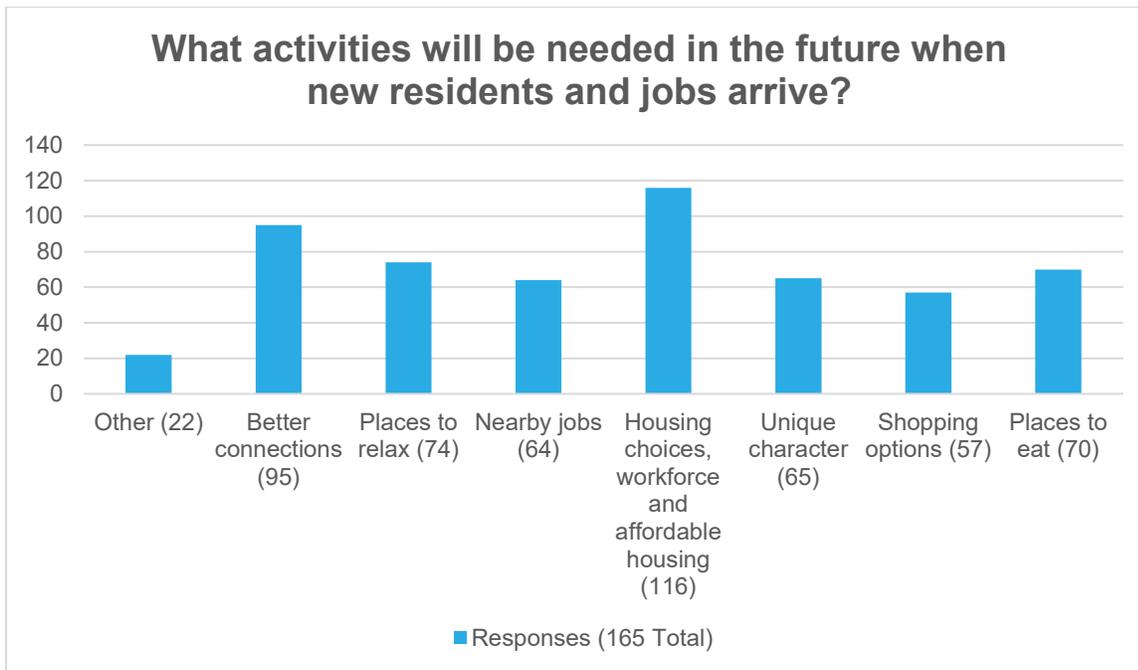
- **Themes from open-ended responses included:**
  - Greenspace and parks (4)
  - Proximity to city bus routes (3)
  - Safety (3)
  - Bike paths (2)
  - Nearby shopping and amenities (2)

Question 5: What activities does your neighborhood or place of work need today? Select all that apply



- **Themes from open-ended responses included:**
  - Expand green space and parks (5)
  - Need for accessible shops and Restaurants (4)
  - Electric Vehicle charging infrastructure (2)
  - Parking access (2)
  - Improved walking and biking connections

Question 6: What activities will be needed in the future when new residents and jobs arrive? Select all that apply



• **Themes from open-ended responses included:**

- Housing / Affordable Housing (8)
- Recreation and Family Activities (6)
- Additional Parking (5)
- Parks and Green space (2)
- Handicap Accessible Transportation Services
- Schools
- Bike Facilities