

# Connections 2025 Community Survey Summary



A TRANSIT PLAN FOR THE FUTURE



Prepared by:



## **ABSTRACT**

This Community Survey Summary provides an overview of survey responses received as part of Capital Metro's Connections 2025 transit study. The survey, posted online via SurveyMonkey.com, was available between Dec. 21, 2015, and Mar. 13, 2016, and was publicized via the project website, emails, online and print ads, at stop outreach, partner cross-promotion and public meetings/events. The survey included a range of questions designed to capture respondents' travel patterns, demographic information, priorities, and opinions on transit in Central Texas.

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# Introduction

Capital Metro and the Connections 2025 project team developed a community survey in order to better understand rider and non-rider travel patterns, preferences, and suggestions for service improvement. Demographic questions were also included. Whenever possible, questions and answer categories were designed to mirror previous Capital Metro surveys to allow for comparisons over time. The intent of the survey was to gather valuable information on community wishes and priorities early on the project process, which would help the team to develop recommendations for service improvement.

The survey was posted online via SurveyMonkey.com on December 21, 2015. Capital Metro publicized the survey via the project website (Connections2025.com), email notifications, digital and print ads, partner cross-promotion and public and “pop up” meetings/events. Paper copies of the survey were also available at public meetings and events, and for those without internet access. A Spanish version of the survey was available online and in print, as well as an accessible version compatible with online screen readers. The survey period, initially proposed to close on February 29, 2016, was extended as additional meetings and events were scheduled for early March. The survey officially closed on March 13, 2016.

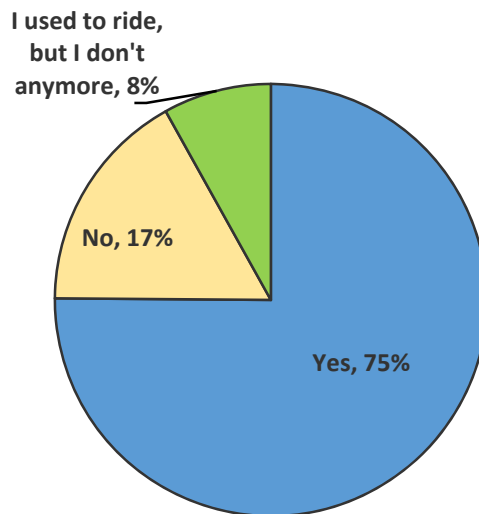
Initial summaries of survey results (which included a subset of survey questions) were posted on the project website, Connections2025.com, while the survey was still open. The first summary reflected responses received through February 3, 2016; the second reflected those received through February 24, 2016. The Connections2025 team also presented initial survey results to the Capital Metro Board of Directors on March 21, 2016.

A total of 4,886 responses were received during the survey period. Not all respondents answered every question. Some questions were dependent on previous answers (e.g. follow-up questions for Capital Metro riders were different than for former or non-riders). The following sections summarize the survey responses received.

# Summary of Survey Responses

## Question 1: Did you ride Capital Metro in the past year?

Responses: 4,886

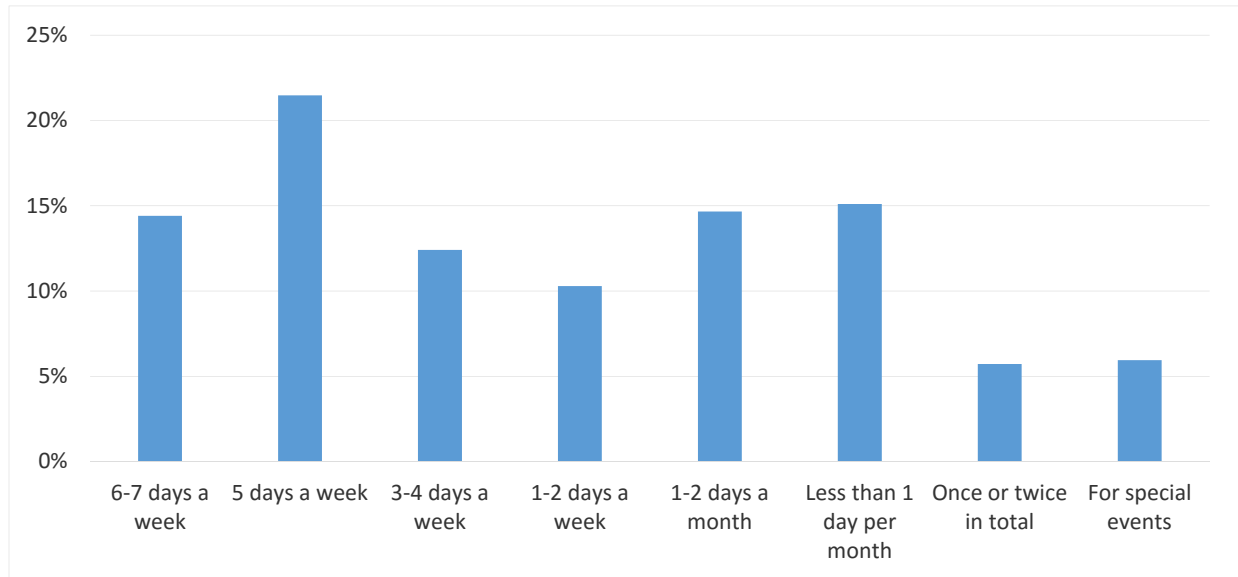


Three-quarters of survey respondents replied that they rode Capital Metro in the last year. Survey questions 2 – 8 were dependent on the respondents' answers to this question.

## Questions for Riders

### Question 2: How often do you ride Capital Metro?

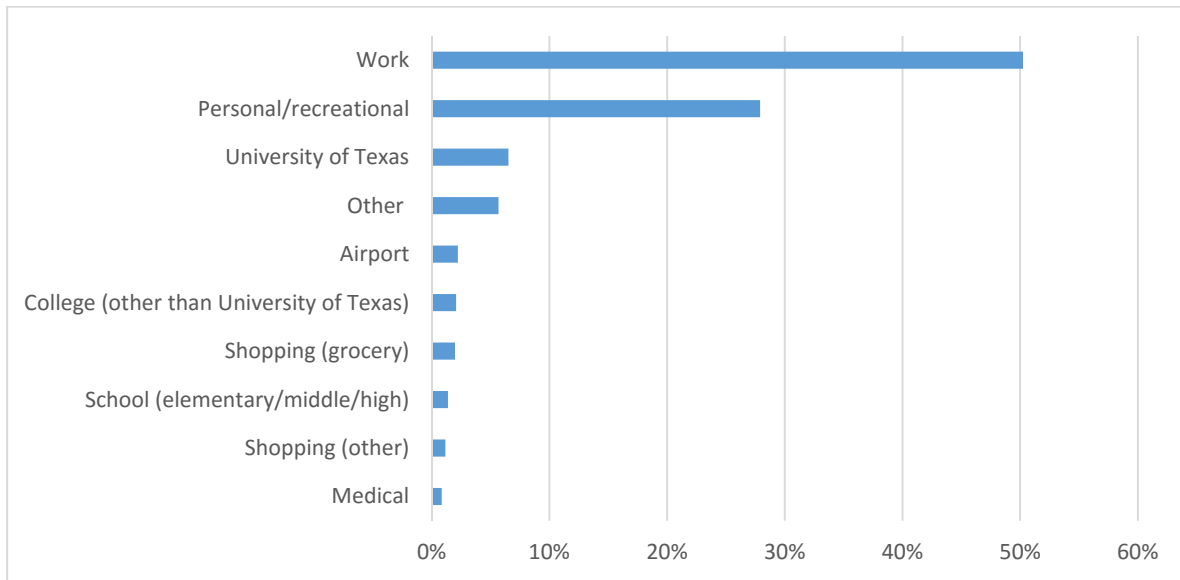
Responses: 3,199



The largest group of respondents ride Capital Metro 5 days a week, which is typical of weekday commute patterns. Thirty-six percent of respondents ride either 5, 6, or 7 days a week, and would be considered frequent riders. A large percent of respondents ride Capital Metro only occasionally, however – over 41 percent ride a couple of times a month or less.

**Question 3: For what purpose do you most often ride Capital Metro? Choose one.**

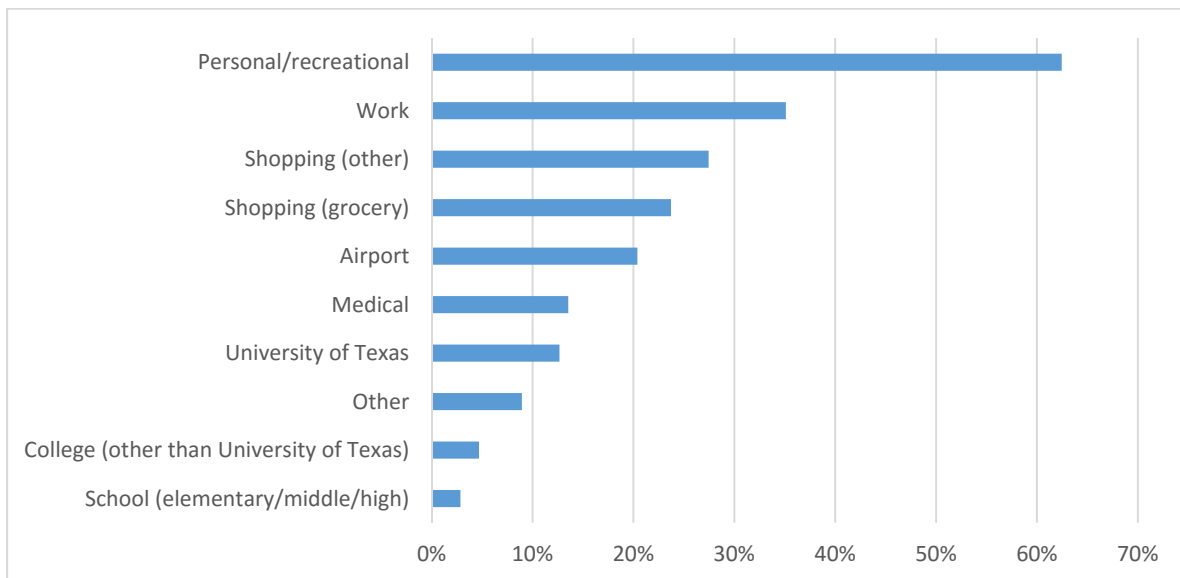
Responses: 3,189



Work is by far the most common trip purpose among survey respondents, followed by personal/recreation travel. Other trip purposes garnered less than 25 percent of responses total.

**Question 4: For which other purposes do you ride Capital Metro? Please check all that apply.**

Responses: 2,732



Aside from their most common trip purpose (captured in Question 3), respondents were most likely to choose personal/recreational travel as another reason they rode Capital Metro.

**Question 5: Which routes do you normally ride? Please choose up to three.**

Responses: 3,101 (chose at least one route)

The top route choices in order of most responses were MetroRail, Routes 801, 1, 803, and 3. The number of respondents who chose those routes as either their top choice or top three choices are included below. When combined into corridors, the MetroRail, Congress/N. Lamar and Burnet/S. Lamar corridors are highly popular among survey respondents.

Route	Overall	Top Choice
MetroRail	905	638
801 (MetroRapid)	605	238
1 (Local)	530	207
803 (MetroRapid)	517	181
3 (Local)	496	182

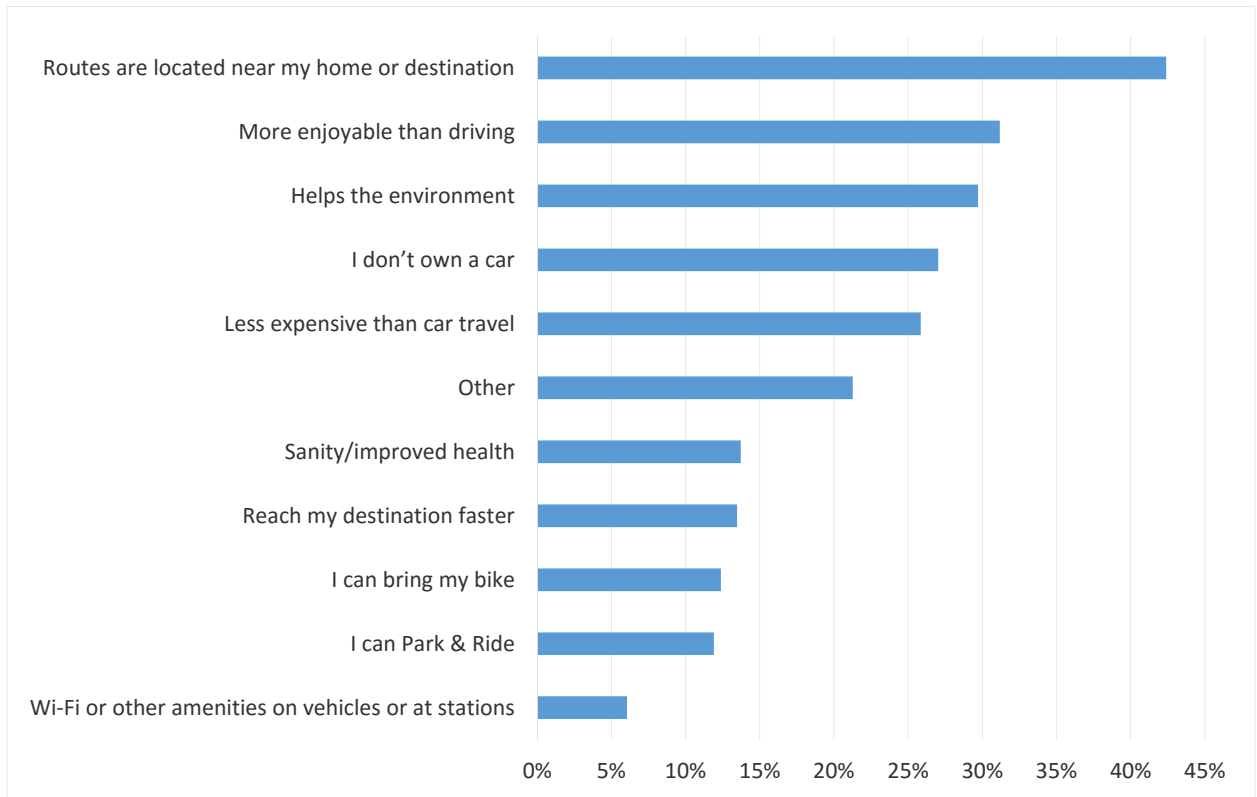
Capital Metro routes are classified into various categories including MetroRail, MetroRapid, Local Bus, Limited/Flyer, Feeder, Crosstown, Special Services, and Express. The following chart shows the number of respondents who chose each type of route as either their top choice or top three choices.

Route Type	Overall	Top Choice
Local Bus	3,157	1,326
MetroRapid	1,122	419
MetroRail	905	638
Crosstown	857	261
Express	501	191
Limited/Flyer	354	144
Feeder	163	66
Special Services	151	24
UT Shuttles	119	47



**Question 6: What are the main reasons you ride Capital Metro? Please choose up to three.**

Responses: 3,208

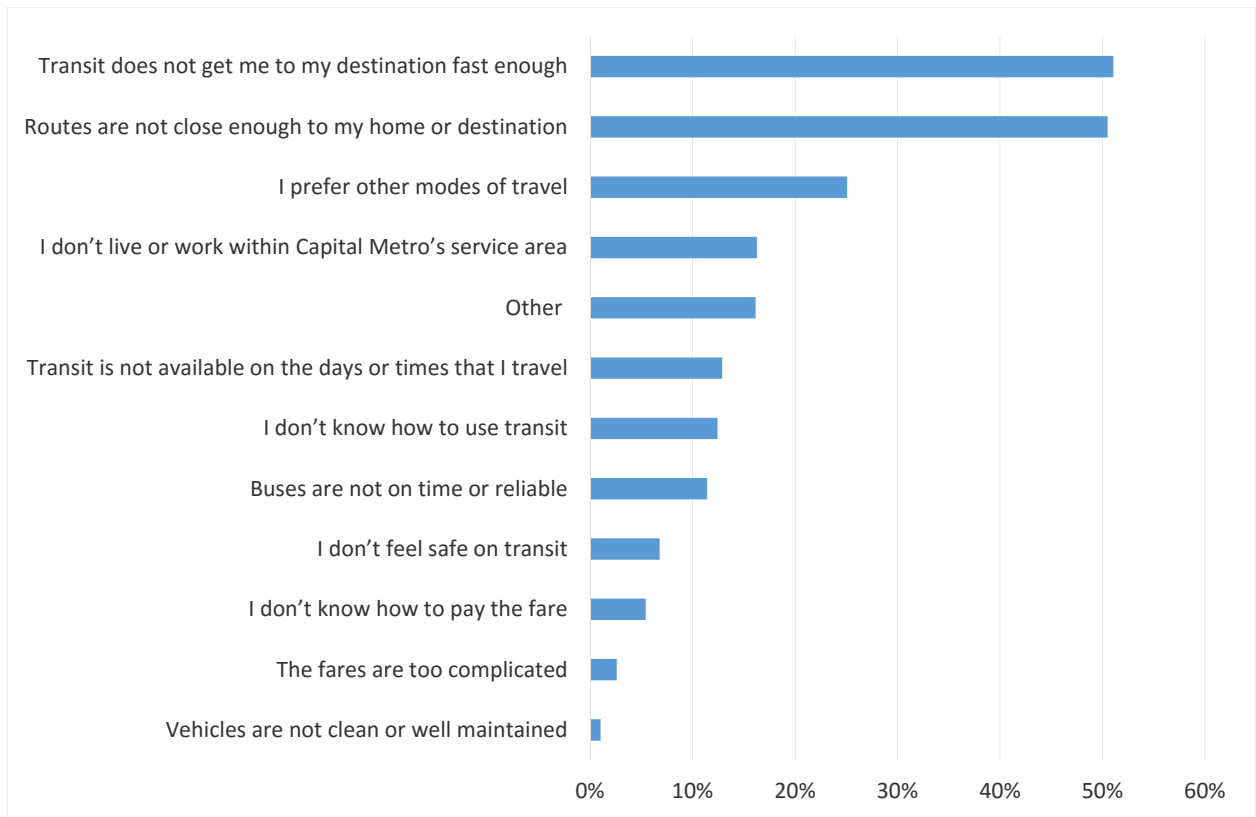


Over 40 percent of riders choose Capital Metro because routes are located near their origins or destinations, making transit access convenient. Many also either preferred transit to driving, did not own a car, or found Capital Metro less expensive than car travel. Others noted environmental reasons.

## Question for Non-Riders

### Question 7: What are the main reasons you do not ride Capital Metro?

Responses: 885

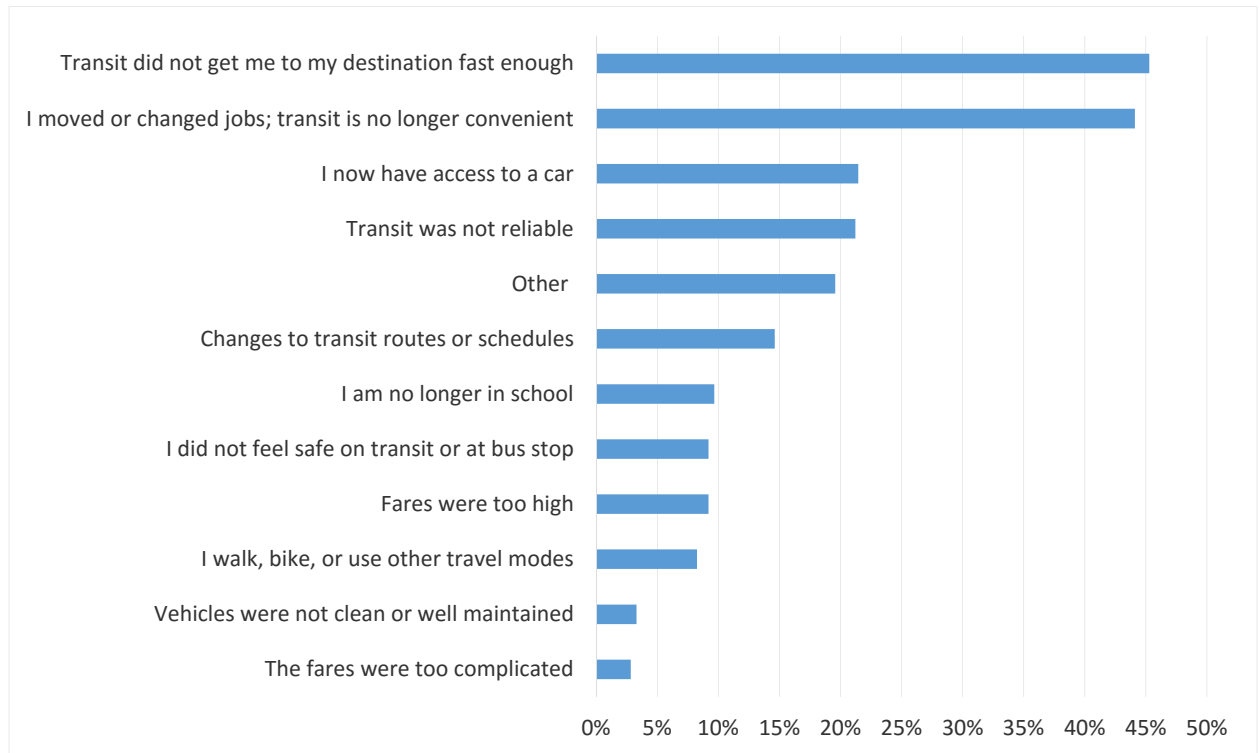


Two choices stood out as the top reasons why respondents do not ride Capital Metro – it does not get respondents to their destination fast enough (presumably as compared with other modes of travel), or it does not operate close enough to either their origins or destinations to allow for convenient access.

## Question for Former Riders

### Question 8: What are the main reasons you no longer ride Capital Metro?

Responses: 424

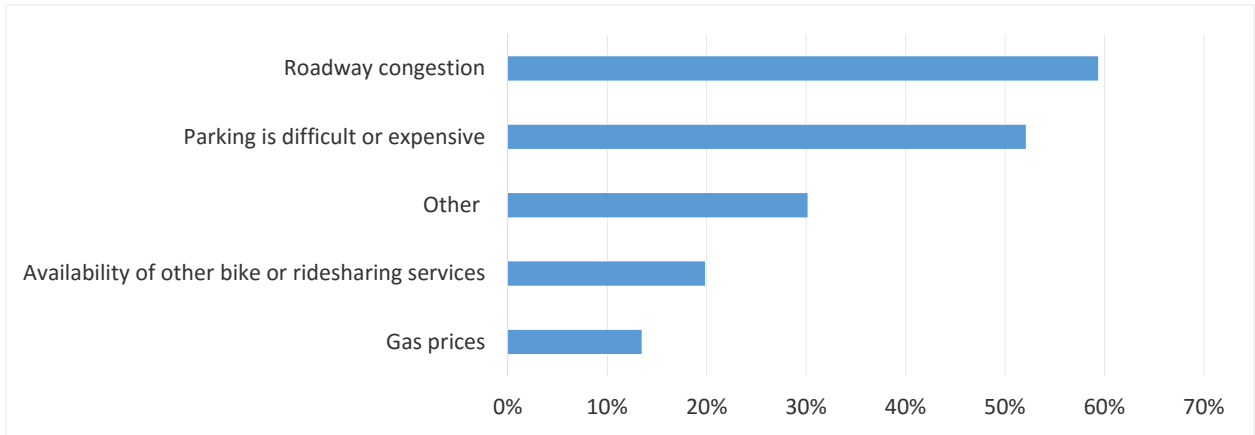


The top two choices are closely related to those selected by non-riders – transit is not fast enough as a travel option (presumably as compared with other modes of travel), or transit is no longer close enough to origins or destinations to allow convenient access.

## Questions for All Respondents

**Question 9: Which factors influence your decision on whether to use transit? Please choose up to three.**

Responses: 3,669

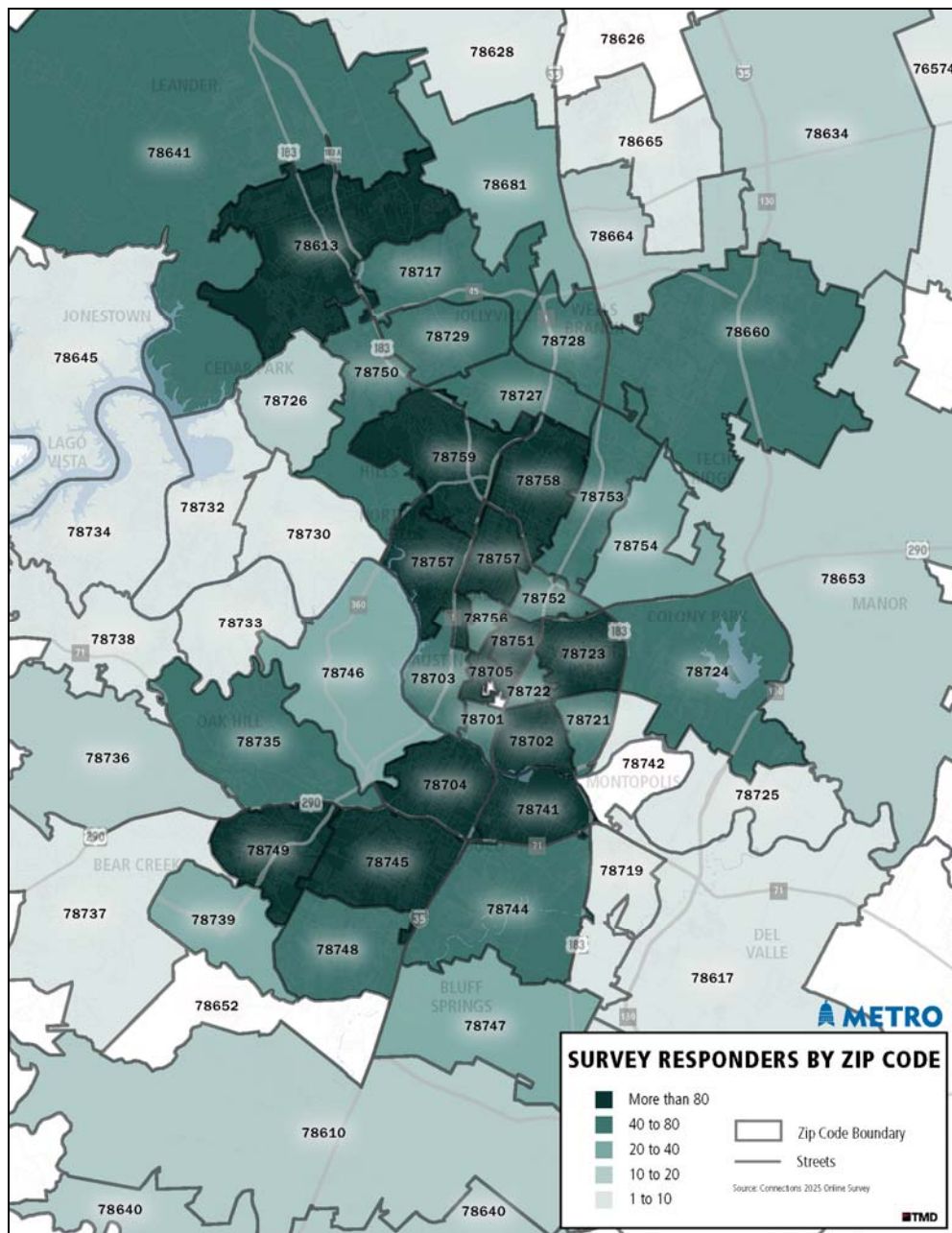


Respondents chose roadway congestion and/or limited, expensive parking as reasons affecting their decisions on whether to use transit. Gas prices, which are often cited as a reason for fluctuating transit ridership, scored much lower.

**Question 10: Where do you live? (Participants were given options to list a major intersection, city/neighborhood, and/or ZIP code).**

Responses: 3,593

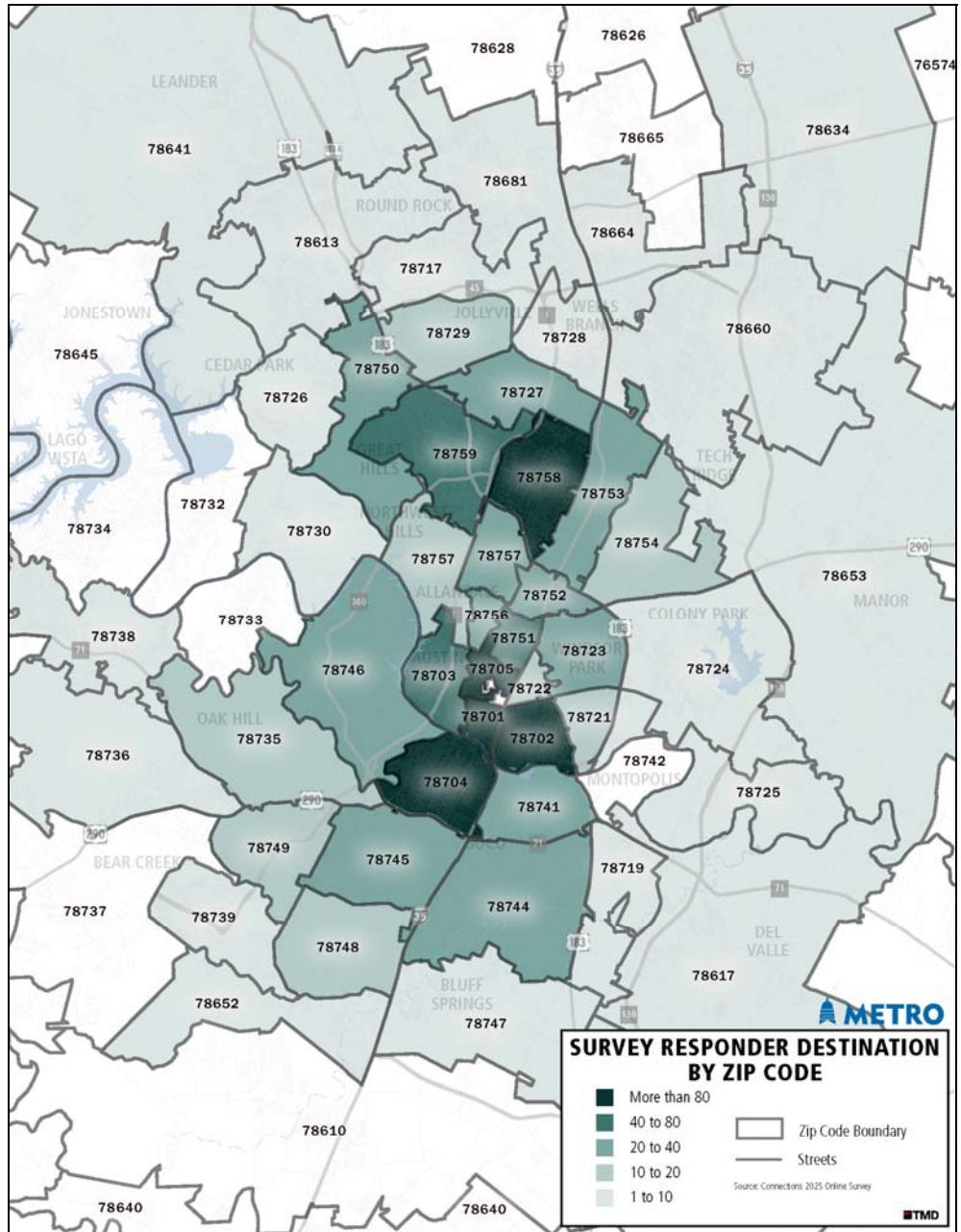
Resident ZIP codes were mapped to show how many responses were received from each area. Responses were received from over 100 ZIP codes. More responses were received from areas in central Austin, and fewer from areas further out. A large amount of responses also came from the 78613 ZIP code (Cedar Park area).



**Question 11: What is your most common destination (job, school, retail, etc.)? (Participants were given options to list a destination name, major intersection, city/neighborhood, and/or ZIP code).**

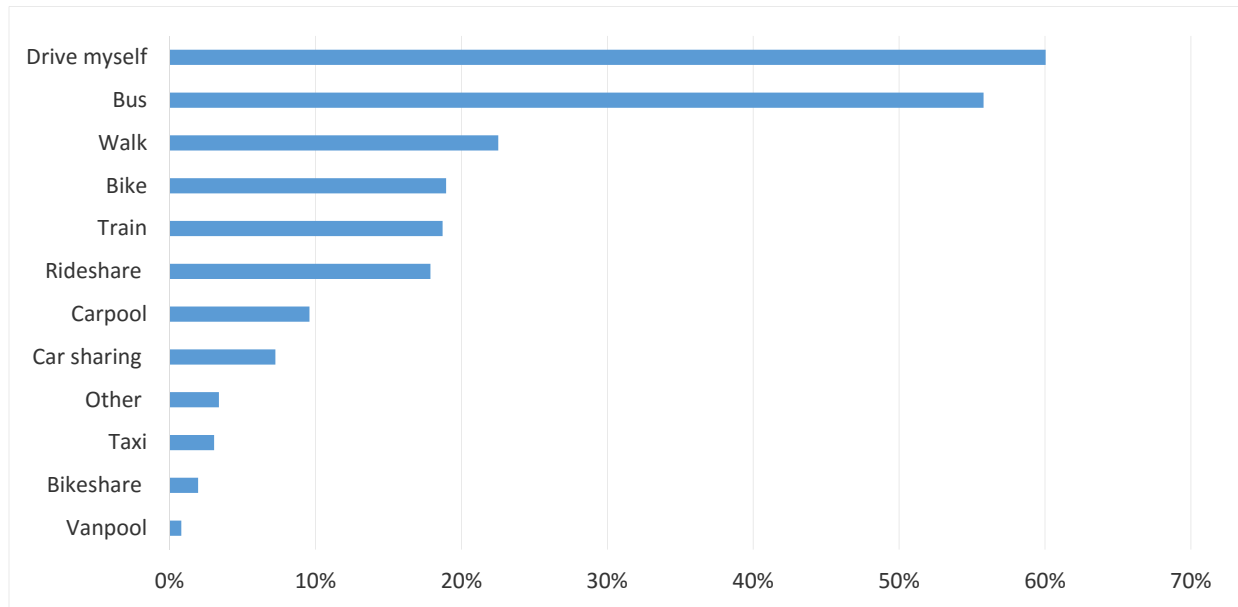
Responses: 3,447

Destination ZIP codes were mapped to show how many responses were received from each area. Destinations are much more tightly clustered near central Austin than origins, suggesting a large amount of respondents regularly travel to areas near downtown Austin.



**Question 12: What mode(s) do you use to reach that destination? Please select all that apply.**

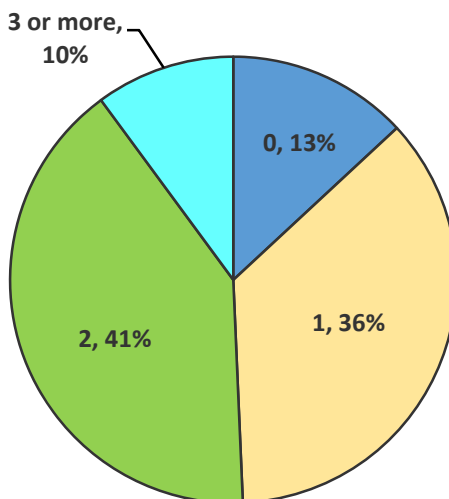
Responses: 3,641



When asked how they reach their most common destinations, driving and riding the bus were respondents' top choices. Given that three quarters of survey respondents are Capital Metro users, this information suggests that a large percentage of riders also drive regularly.

**Question 13: How many working cars, trucks, or vans are available for use by your household?**

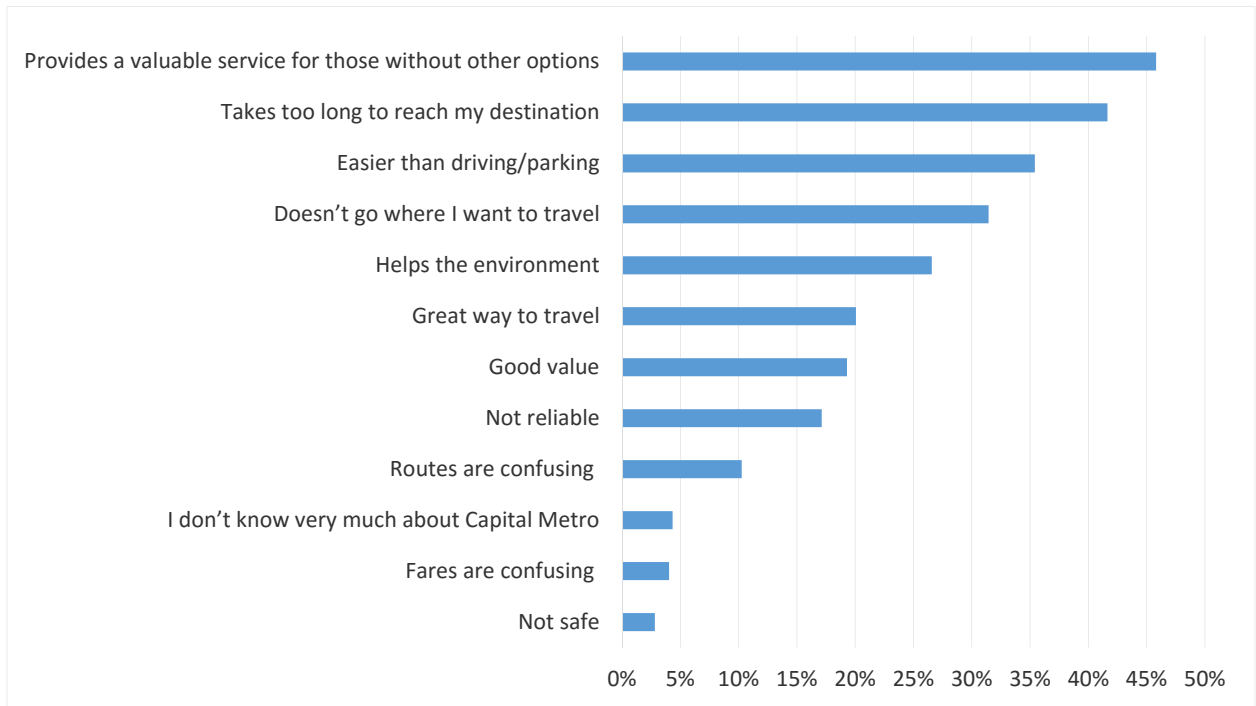
Responses: 3,641



While 13 percent of respondents have no vehicles available, 87 percent have access to at least one vehicle in their household. The largest percentage of respondents have access to two vehicles on a regular basis.

**Question 14: What are your impressions of Capital Metro’s service? Please choose up to three.**

Responses: 3,674

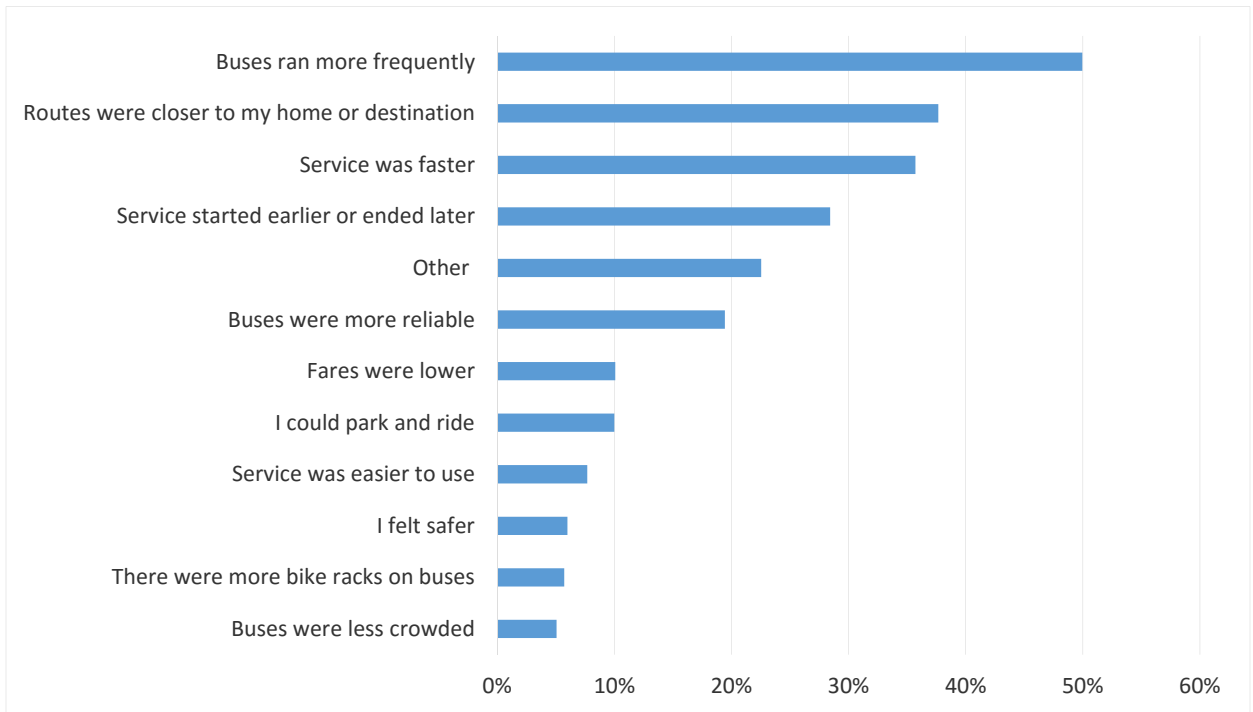


The largest percentage of respondents felt Capital Metro provided a valuable public service, especially to those with few other ways to get around. Over 40 percent also felt their trip takes too long on Capital Metro, as compared with other options. This opinion was echoed in earlier responses to questions on why respondents did not ride transit, or no longer use transit.



**Question 15: I would ride Capital Metro more often if... Please choose up to three.**

Responses: 3,669



Fifty percent of respondents stated they would use transit more often if buses came more frequently (frequency cuts down on waiting times, and in some cases removes the need to consult schedules). Over thirty percent also felt they would ride more often if routes were closer to their homes or destinations, or if transit was a faster travel option.

**Question 16: Which Capital Metro services or amenities would you like to see more of? Please rate the following options from 1 (least important) to 5 (most important).**

Responses: 3,454

Transit service option	Average Score*
Frequent local bus service (local buses that run at least every 15 minutes)	3.93
MetroRail (urban or commuter rail service)	3.83
Dedicated lanes (bus-only lanes which allow transit to bypass traffic)	3.62
MetroRapid (frequent, limited-stop service on major corridors with upgraded stations and real-time information)	3.55
Downtown Austin circulator/shuttle	3.49
Neighborhood circulators/shuttles (locally-focused routes providing connections to transit and other destinations)	3.45
Express buses (peak-hour commuter buses with limited stops serving major employment centers, such as downtown Austin)	3.39
Park & Ride (park your car at a transit station and ride buses or trains)	3.04

\*Average score is determined by multiplying the score value by the number of people who selected that score, and dividing by total responses.

Scores were similar for most service options, without wide differences between the choices. Frequent local bus service was the most popular option for expansion; this echoes Question 15 where respondents stated they would ride more often if buses came more frequently. Notably, MetroRail and dedicated lanes were also highly-ranked – both of which provide ways for people to ride transit without interference from traffic congestion. Express buses and Park & Ride lots ranked lowest on the list, but both still scored at least a 3 on a scale of 1 to 5.

**Question 17: Based on the options you ranked in the previous question, where would you like to see these improvements? Please be specific.**

Responses: 2,531

Answers to this open-ended question varied widely, but many respondents noted they would like to see more frequent service on specific bus routes (or rail). Other popular suggestions included additional rail lines, a downtown circulator, additional/expanded Park & Ride lots, and dedicated lanes. A complete listing of responses is included in Appendix 1.

**Question 18: How would you rate the importance of each of the following for Capital Metro? 1 (least important) to 5 (most important).**

Responses: 3,473

Capital Metro priorities	Average Score*
Providing an alternative to congested roadways	4.36
Providing fast, frequent, reliable service on key corridors	4.34
Helping to create an environmentally-friendly, sustainable city not dependent on car travel	4.01
Serving persons with a disability, low-income, or senior populations with few other transportation options	3.96
Making it easier to get to/from transit (better sidewalks, stops, Park & Ride facilities, etc.)	3.85
Expanding Capital Metro's service area	3.70
Supporting economic development and access to jobs	3.56
Adding more bus shelters	3.32
Adding Wi-Fi on buses	2.95

\*Average score is determined by multiplying the score value by the number of people who selected that score, and dividing by total responses.

Scores varied more on this question, suggesting clearer differences between the priorities. Providing an alternative to congested roadways and providing fast, frequent, reliable service on key corridors were the highest-ranked options, continuing the themes of frequency and faster service as top priorities among survey respondents. Adding Wi-Fi on buses was the lowest-ranked option, at under a score of 3.

**Question 19: Is there anything you would like to add to the above list? Please be specific.**

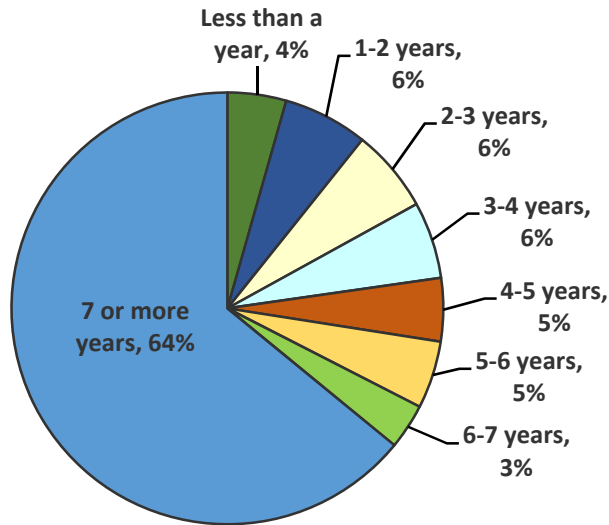
Responses: 1,018

Answers varied widely to this open-ended question. Some ideas that appeared repeatedly include additional rail service and improving bus stops (more benches and shelters). A complete listing of responses is included in Appendix 2.

## Demographic Questions

### Question 20: How long have you lived in the Austin region?

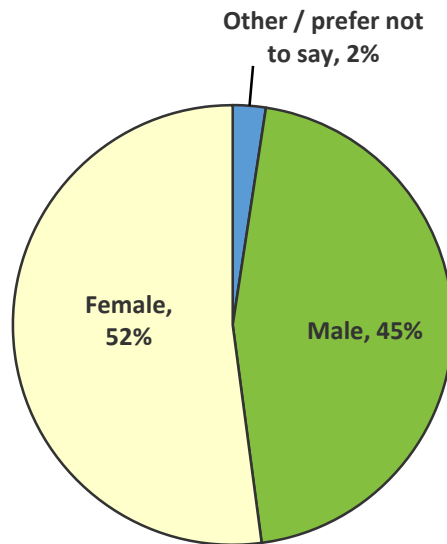
Responses: 3,615



Almost two-thirds of respondents reported they have lived in Austin for 7 years or more. Similarly, 46 percent of Capital Metro riders reported having lived in the Austin region for 7 years of more according to the Capital Metro 2015 Origin & Destination Survey.

**Question 21: Gender**

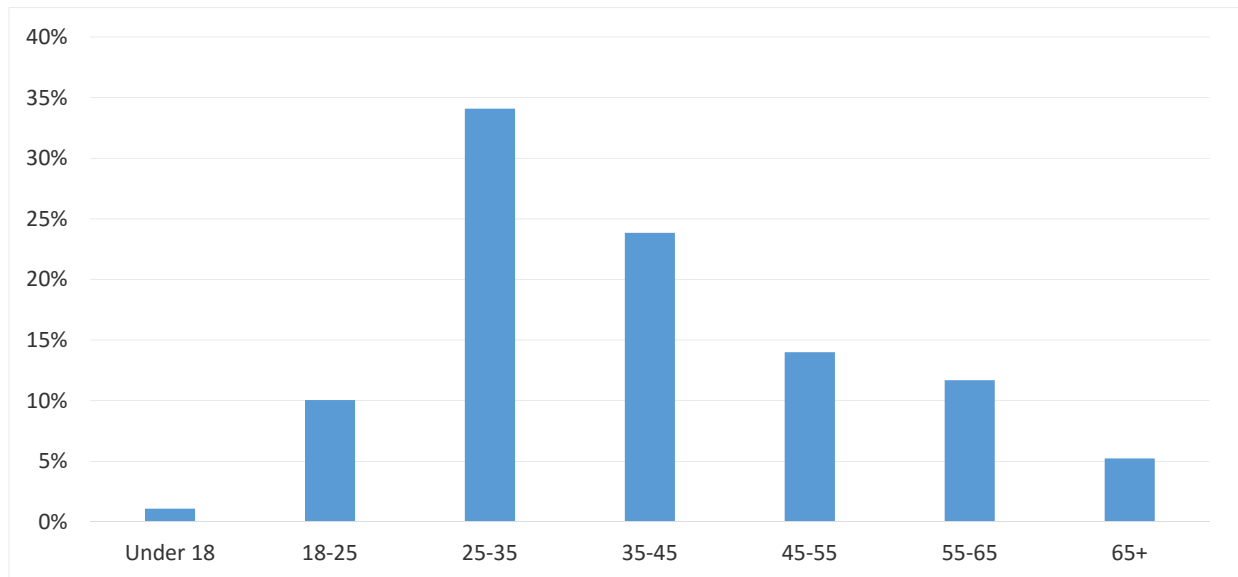
Responses: 3,597



Responses were fairly evenly split with slightly more female than male respondents. As of 2015, Capital Metro ridership was comprised of 59% males and 41% females (Capital Metro 2015 Origin & Destination Survey).

**Question 22: What is your age?**

Responses: 3,593

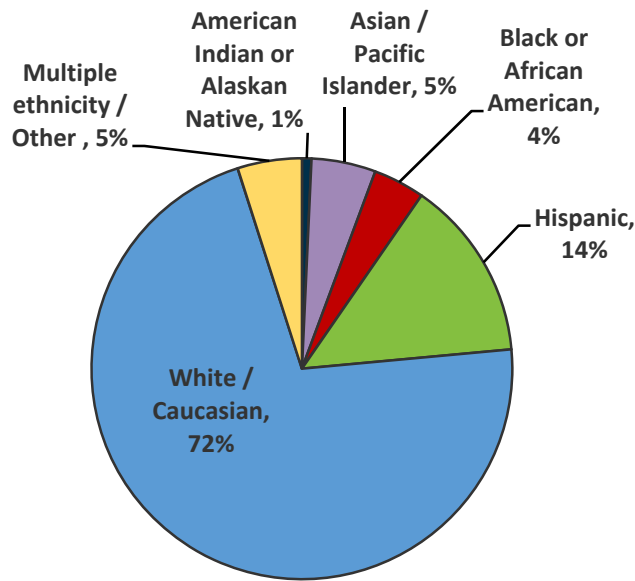


The highest percentage of respondents were in the 25 – 35 age bracket, suggesting a large proportion of young professionals. Similarly, the highest percentage of City of Austin residents

falls into the 25-34 age range according to 2014 American Community Survey (ACS) 1-year estimate data. The average Capital Metro rider, however, is 35 years old. Nearly even proportions of age ranges 19-25 (32 percent), 26-39 (30 percent), and 40-64 (30 percent) are represented in Capital Metro’s 2015 Origin & Destination Ridership Survey.

**Question 23: Which race/ethnicity best describes you? Please select only one.**

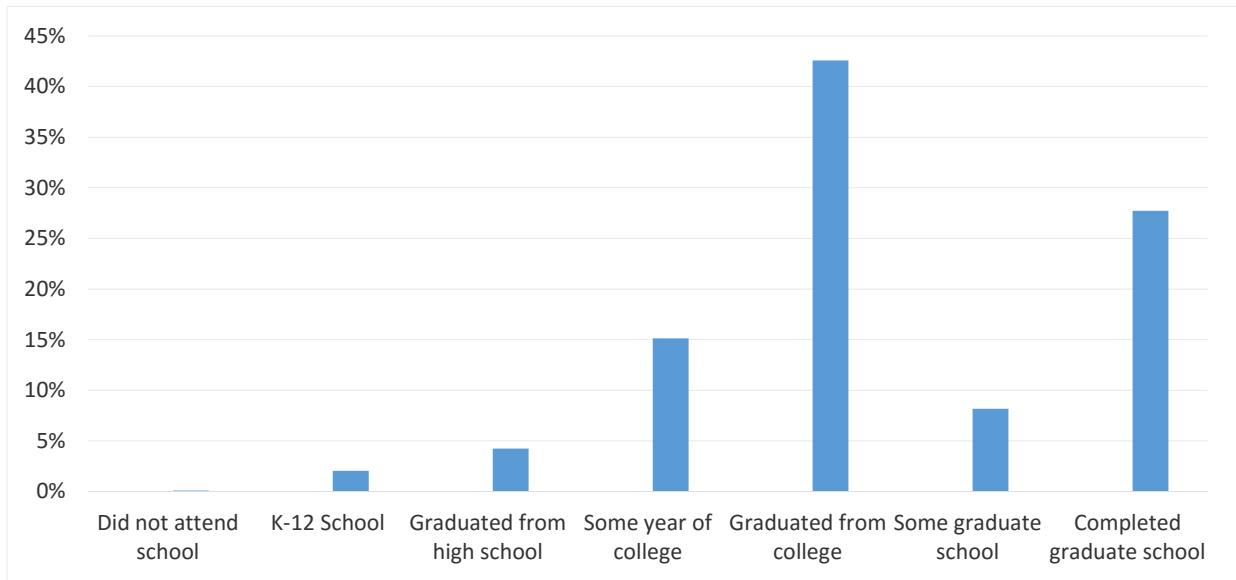
Responses: 3,544



Over 70 percent of respondents reported their race/ethnicity as white/Caucasian, while 14 percent reported Hispanic. According to 2014 ACS 1-year estimate data, 48 percent of Austin’s population is White, 34 percent Hispanic, 8 percent Black, and 7 percent Asian. Meanwhile, Capital Metro ridership is represented by 37 percent White, 31 percent Hispanic, 20 percent Black, and 7 percent Asian (Capital Metro 2015 Origin & Destination Survey).

**Question 24: What is the highest level of education you have completed?**

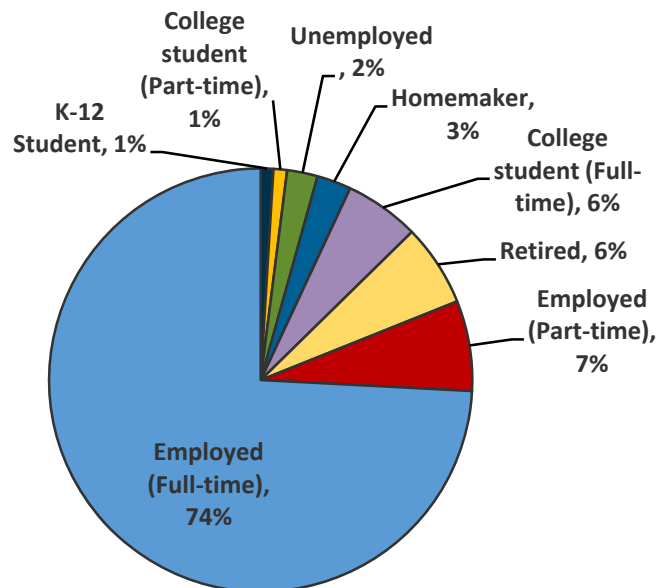
Responses: 3,351



Approximately 94 percent of respondents reported at least some college education; the highest percentage of respondents were college graduates.

**Question 25: What is your employment status?**

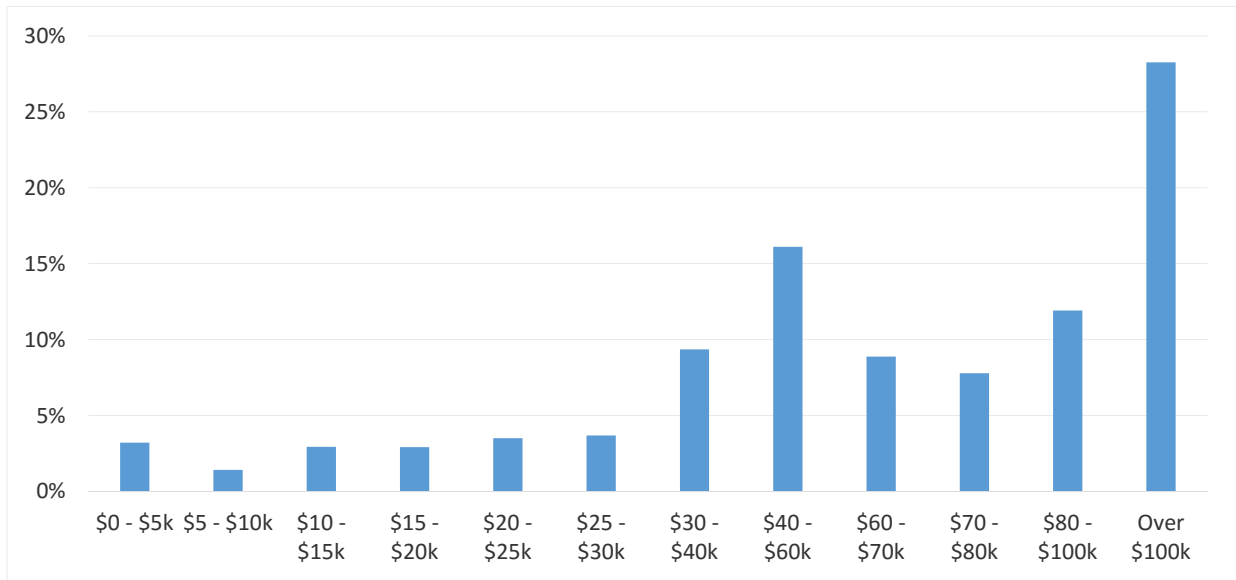
Responses: 3,550



Almost three-quarters of respondents are employed full time.

**Question 26: What is your annual household income?**

Responses: 3,365



The largest percentage of respondents reported a household income of over \$100,000. These results are similar to 2014 ACS 5-year estimate data, where approximately 27 percent of City of Austin household incomes are above \$100,000 and 17 percent are in the second most popular bracket above of \$40-60K. According to the Capital Metro 2015 Origin & Destination Survey, however, only 10 percent of Capital Metro riders report a household income above \$60,000 and 7 percent report household income between \$40-60K.



# Summary & Conclusions

The Connections 2025 Community Survey provided valuable insight on Central Texans' travel patterns, choices, priorities, and wishes for transit in their communities. This data will help the project team make decisions on short- and long-term recommendations for the Capital Metro system.

Certain key themes appeared repeatedly throughout the responses to survey questions.

- Many respondents felt that transit in Central Texas takes too long, as compared with other travel modes (driving being the most popular). Many respondents would like to see more frequent service, additional rail lines, dedicated lanes, or other options to improve the speed of transit and/or bypass congested roadways.
- Frequency is a top priority among survey respondents. Approximately 50 percent said they would take transit more often if service operated more frequently, and frequent bus service was the top choice for service expansion.
- Many former and non-riders reported they did not use transit because it does not operate close enough to their home or destination to allow convenient access.
- Survey respondents' demographic information, when compared with previous Capital Metro surveys and other information on regional population characteristics, more closely resembles the overall Central Texas population than Capital Metro riders in particular.

While the survey elicited common themes, there were conflicting opinions on some topics, particularly within the open-ended responses. Some felt it was important for Capital Metro to expand service to outlying areas, while others recommended concentrating service in areas of greatest population/need. Many respondents wished to see additional rail service in Central Texas, while others felt Capital Metro should invest in frequent bus service and dedicated lanes as a lower-cost alternative.

These survey responses will provide valuable input for Connections 2025; however, the survey is only one piece of a greater public outreach effort that spans throughout the study. The project team is looking to engage riders and non-riders in multiple ways in order to reach a broad cross-section of citizens. Other outreach methods include public meetings and events; "pop up" meetings at key transit stops and transfer points; stakeholder working groups; neighborhood association meetings; and webinars and other online outreach. The public involvement process is occurring in tandem with significant data analysis on demographics, land use/development, system ridership, and system operations which will inform plan development.



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