

# 2024 Berkshire Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)

Community Transportation Survey

Preliminary Results

January 2023



**BRPC**  
Berkshire Regional Planning Commission

# Purpose, Survey Methodology, and Caveats

Purpose: To gain insight into:

- How residents and visitors *interact* with the transportation network;
- Levels of *satisfaction* with different transportation components;
- Transportation *challenges*, *priorities*, *desired changes*, and potential *future uses* of the network.

Survey Distribution Methodology:

- Email Blasts
- Press Releases
- Every-Door-Direct-Mail (EDDM)
- Flyers and Business Cards
- Attended Local Events
- Survey will remain open through the end of January 2023 (Mid-October 2022 to January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2023).

Survey Caveat: Results are not statistically valid based on statistical sampling, (i.e., respondents do not evenly reflect significant cross section of Berkshire residents). Thus, results are good window into transportation challenges and aspirations – but not the whole picture. (Preliminary Analysis: N=307)



RTP Community Transportation Survey Flyer on public announcement board at Tunnel City Café located at MASS MoCA

# Survey Respondent Demographics

- Age: Most respondents were 55 years-old and older
  - Over half (54%) of all survey respondents were 55 years of age and older.
  - 17% of all respondents were 18-34 years old; 0% were under 18 years-old
- Household income: Most respondents are at or above median income
  - 73% of participants identified their annual household income as \$50,000 or more.
  - 26% of respondents identified their annual household income as \$49,999 or less.
  - 20% have an annual household income of \$150,000 or more.
- Where you work: Most respondents work in Pittsfield or are not working
  - Pittsfield (28%)
  - Not in the workforce (23%)
  - Work outside Berkshire County (8%)
  - North Adams (8%)
  - Williamstown (6%)
  - Great Barrington (5%)
- Vehicle ownership: Most respondents have two (2) vehicles per household
  - Most participants identified their household as owning two vehicles (39%), followed by one vehicle (38%)

# Survey Respondent Demographics

Monthly Transportation Costs: Fuel and Car Insurance represent the two highest monthly transportation costs

- Below is the average cost for transportation expenses based on all survey responses:

Transportation related Expense	Average Monthly Cost (for all respondents)
Fuel	\$174.50
Car Insurance	\$150.69
Maintenance	\$78.32
Other	\$24.38
Rideshare Options	\$9.87
Public Transportation	\$8.57

# Future Travel Behavior

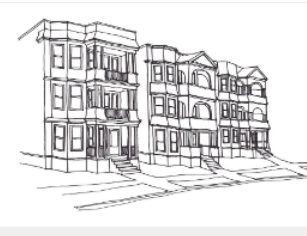
- Most respondents said they will continue to live in the Berkshires 5-years from now, (88% Yes v. 8% No)
- Consumer habits vary – but on average, respondents shop online as much as they do in-person, though slightly leans toward in-person shopping.
- Most respondents envision themselves and their family living in a detached house on a large lot in the next stage of life:
  - Detached house on a large lot (39%)
  - Detached house on a small lot (29%)
  - Multi-family building (17%)
  - Other (10%)
  - Accessory unit (5%)
- Housing affordability and travel time to and from destinations are the two most important factors to consider when deciding where to live:
  - Housing affordability
  - Travel time to and from destinations
  - Environmental quality/pollution
  - Employment opportunity



Detached house on a large lot



Detached house on a small lot



Multi-family building

# Employment Based Shuttle Service Support

Very little support among survey participants willing to pay for an employment-based transportation service

- Nothing/it should be paid for another way (35%)
- The same as BRTA bus fare (34%)
- Less than BRTA bus fare (23%)
- More than BRTA bus fare (8%)

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## Commuting Habits: Travel Characteristics

Most respondents use their personal vehicle to travel around the county:

- Personal vehicle (89%)
- Walk (4%)
- BRTA transit (2.4%)
- Bicycle (2.13%)
- Get a ride from friends and family (1.42%)
- Taxi, Uber, Lyft, or other ridesharing (0.7%)
- Something else (0.35%)
- Carpool (0.35%)
- BRTA paratransit (0%)

The average commuting time for survey respondents was ~16.5 minutes

## Commuting Habits: COVID Impacts on Commuting/Transportation Options

Most respondents did not see any disruption to their commute or in the types of transportation options available as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic:

- No major impacts: **68%**
- I now travel to the office fewer than 5-days a week: **13%**
- Limited my public transportation options: **11%**
- I can work virtually/remotely 100% of the time: **10%**
- I now have more options available: **8%**
- I drive more now: **7%**
- I no longer can afford to own/drive my personal vehicle: **1%**

# Levels of Satisfaction with Various Transportation Components

- Maintenance:
  - 'Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' (44%), followed closely by 'not satisfied' (41%)
- Transportation Safety & Enforcement:
  - 'Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' (51%), followed by 'not satisfied' (30%)
- Accessibility:
  - 'Not satisfied' (48%), followed closely by 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied'
- Sustainability:
  - 'Not satisfied' (50%), followed by 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' (42%)
- Active Transportation:
  - 'Not satisfied' (53%), followed by 'I don't know' (36%)
- Transit:
  - 'Not satisfied' (67%), followed by 'Stop asking these questions' (24%)

## Key Takeaway

Levels of satisfaction with different components of our transportation system scored low, including pavement condition and signs & striping

# Primary Transportation Challenges: Rating Significant Challenges

## Top 8 Transportation Challenges identified by respondents:

1. Lack of bike paths/bike lanes prevent me from biking more (34%)
2. Sidewalk condition/availability prevent me from walking more (32%)
3. BRTA bus not available when I need it (29.6%)
4. BRTA bus not available where I need it (29.5%)
5. Having my opinion be heard when transportation decisions are made by local leaders (29.5%)
6. Finding transportation options for seniors or disabled individuals (24%)
7. Understanding which BRTA routes will take me to my destination, or get me close enough (23%)
8. Finding affordable transportation options (22%)

## Key Takeaway

Primary challenges relate to pedestrian infrastructure, BRTA service times and locations, a sense that residents' input does not affect transportation decisions, finding options for seniors and disabled individuals, and affordability.

# Desired Changes or New Services to Add to Our Transportation System

- Rank (highest to lowest):

1. More rideshare services (taxi, Uber, and Lyft) (46%)
2. BRTA: bus service that connects with other transit systems (PVRTA, CDTA, etc.) (40%)
3. BRTA: increased bus frequency (40%)
4. BRTA: increased evening bus service (40%)
5. BRTA: increased weekend bus service (38%)
6. Other (29%)
7. Access to bikeshare (23%)
8. More car share options (e.g., Zipcar) (22%)
9. None of the above (14%)
10. Carpooling assistance (13%)

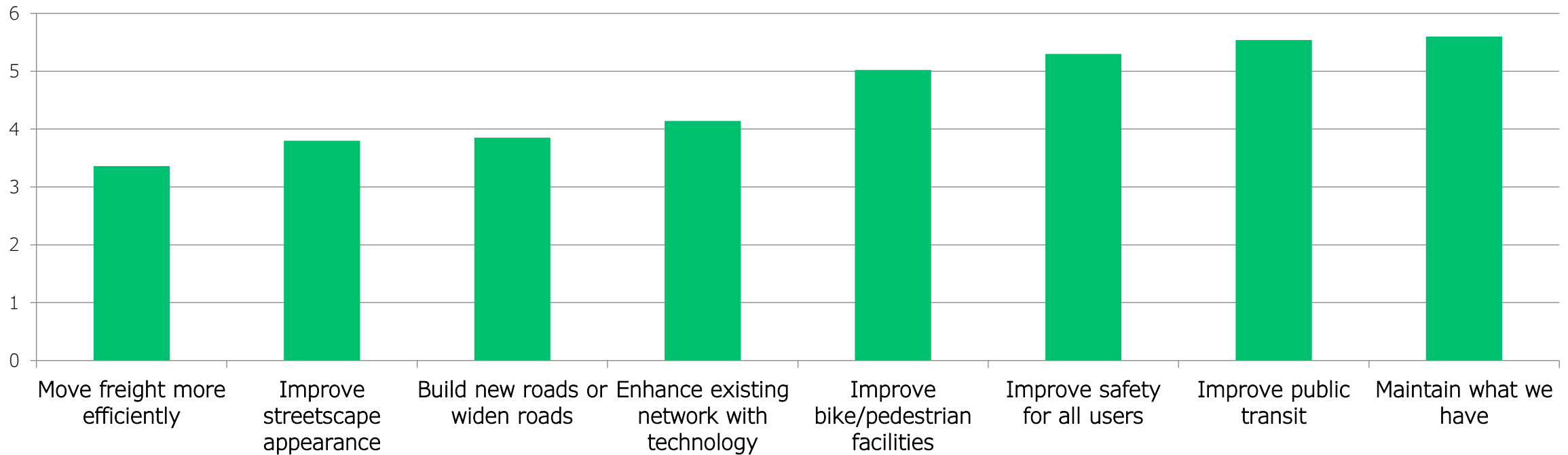
## Key Takeaway

Desired changes/new services include more rideshare services, bus service that connects to other transit systems, increased BRTA bus frequency and evening service, access to bikeshare, and more car sharing options.

# Budget Priorities

Most respondents prioritized maintenance, improving public transit, safety, better bike/pedestrian facilities, and implementing new technology to augment the existing network.

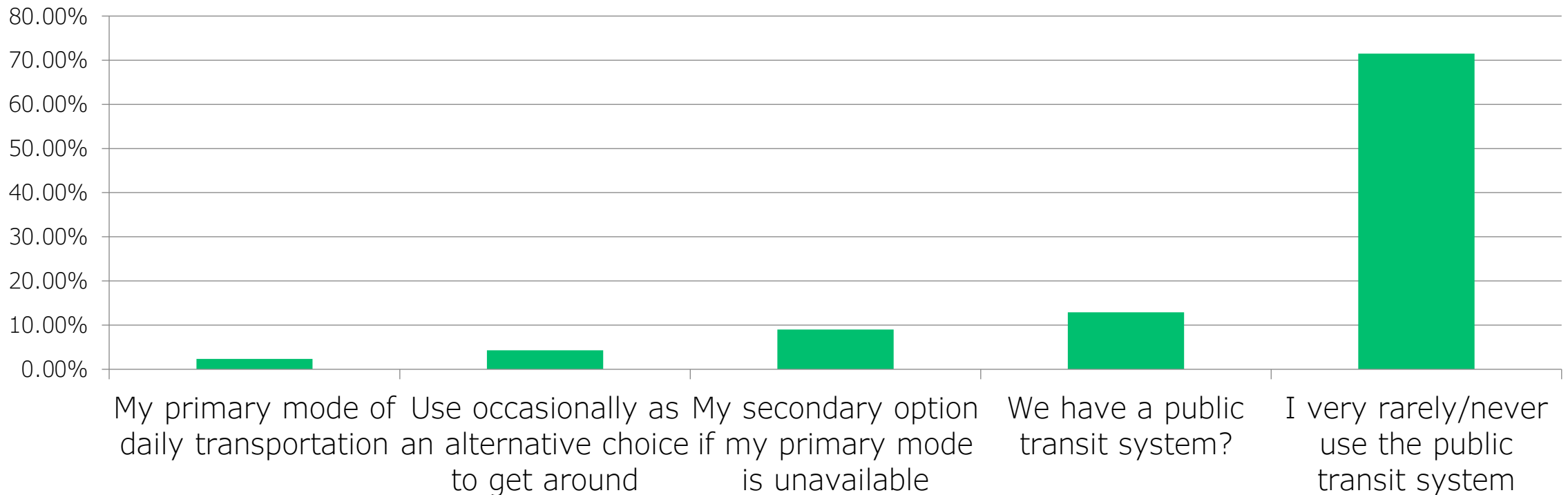
Please rank these regional budget priorities in order of what matters most to you.



# Public Transit

Most respondents do not use public transit in Berkshire County.

**How do you currently utilize the Berkshires' public transit system?**



# Public Transit

Desired updates to BRTA system that would make you more likely to use or continue to use public transit (Top 6):

1. Reaching more areas within Berkshire County (41%)
2. Serving areas outside Berkshire County (such as service to Northampton, MA / Albany, NY) (40%)
3. No updates will make me more likely to ride public transit (27%)
4. More frequent bus departures and arrivals (26%)
5. Earlier or later operating hours (19%)
6. "Flexible" service that is booked on demand (18%)




Expand the reach of BRTA transit service areas

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Potential future use of passenger rail connection to Springfield, Boston, NYC, other NE destination:

1. If the connection exists, I'd use passenger rail to get to my destination (either leisure or work) (77%)
2. I'm unsure if I would use a passenger rail connection in the future (10%)
3. Other (please specify) (6.6%)
4. I am unlikely to use rail in the future to travel to a destination (either leisure or work) (6.2%)

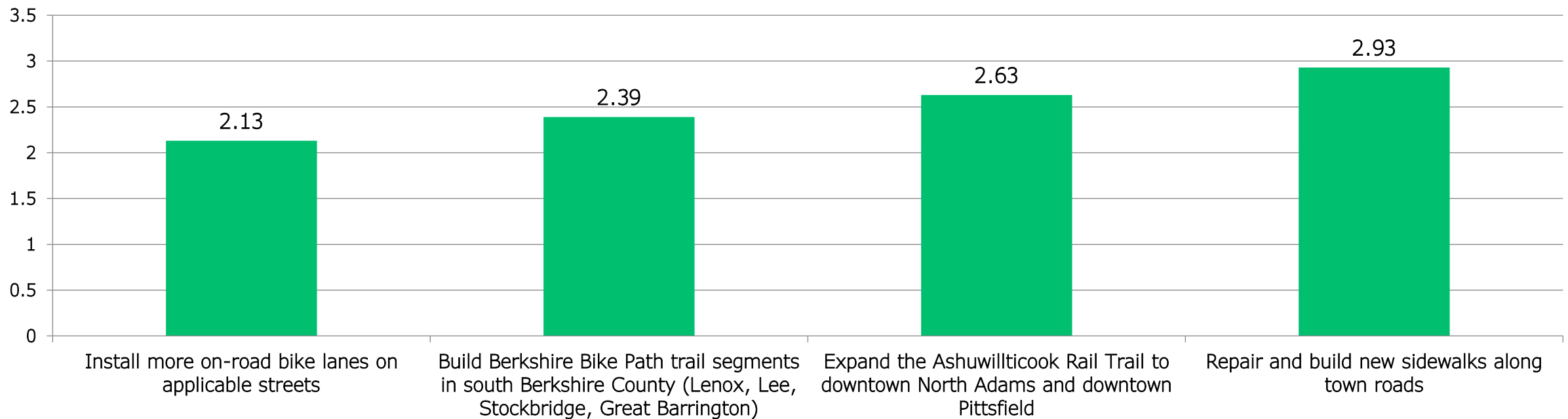


Most respondents are in favor of passenger rail options that connect to Springfield, Boston, NYC, and other NE destinations

# Active Transportation Investments

Repairing and constructing new sidewalks along town roads was identified as the most important active transportation investment that could be made for Berkshire County.

Which of the following active transportation investments do you think would be most beneficial to Berkshire County? Please rank them from most to least beneficial in your opinion:



# Active Transportation Investments

Most respondents are in favor of establishing a bikeshare service in their town, but most would not use it:

- Yes, but I would not use it (29%)
- Yes, and I might occasionally use it (26%)
- No (25%)
- Yes, and I would likely use it (20%)



ValleyBike Share station at UMass, Amherst,  
outside Herter Hall.

# Sustainability and Resilience

Over the past three (3) years, the following weather events that have impact local roads or other transportation infrastructure include:

1. Downed trees or power lines
2. Ice accumulation
3. Bridge damage
4. Road flooding/washouts
5. Impassable dirt/gravel roads due to mud
6. Sinkholes
7. No major effects
8. Other
9. Mudslides or rockslides onto roadways

## Key Takeaway

Downed trees or power lines, ice accumulation, bridge damage, road flooding/washouts, impassable dirt/gravel roads due to mud were the top-five weather-related impacts to our transportation system

Still to Come:

Specific towns and specific roads that have experienced weather-related impacts.

# Transportation Technology

Survey Respondents were asked how likely they would be to use emergent transportation technologies of the future. Five (5) stars means very likely while one (1) star is very unlikely.

Autonomous vehicles (self-driving cars)



Ride hailing (Uber, Lyft, local taxi)



Vehicle sharing (renting vehicles for on-demand, local, short-term use)



Personal rideable technology (electric bikes, electric scooters, bike-sharing)



Other new technologies (drones, robots, etc.)



# Primary Findings

## Demographics:

1. Most respondents were older, financially stable individuals, centrally located in Berkshire County.

## Housing:

1. Most respondents are currently living or envision themselves living in a detached house on a large lot in the next stage of life.
2. Housing affordability and travel time to and from destinations greatly influence where respondents choose to live.

## Commuting:

1. Most respondents travel using their personal vehicle.
2. Average commute time is under 17 minutes (EV & micromobility implications).
3. Little to no disruption to commuting from COVID.

## Rating of Transportation Infrastructure/Services:

1. Satisfaction with different transportation components is low, including ratings for pavement condition along with signs and striping.

## Transportation Challenges:

1. Pedestrian infrastructure, BRTA service times & locations, an inability to influence transportation decisions, finding transportation services for seniors or disabled individuals, and affordability represent top challenges.

## Desired Changes/New Services:

1. More rideshare services, bus service that connects to other transit systems, increased BRTA bus frequency and evening service, access to bikeshare, and more car sharing options.

## Budget Priorities:

1. Most respondents prioritized maintenance, improving public transit, safety, better bike/pedestrian facilities, and implementing new technology to augment the existing network.

# Primary Findings

## Sustainability/Resilience:

1. Downed trees or power lines, ice accumulation, bridge damage, road flooding/washouts, impassable dirt/gravel roads due to mud were the top-five weather-related impacts to our transportation system.

## Active Transportation:

1. Repairing and constructing new sidewalks along town roads would be the most important active transportation investment.
2. Most are in favor of a bikeshare service in their town but would not use it.

## Transportation Technology:

1. Little to moderate desire among respondents to utilize various transportation technologies and services.

# Most Effective Forms of Outreach to Ensure Participation in Transportation Decisions

- Rank (highest to lowest):

1. Press release or news article (ex: Berkshire Eagle) (51%)
2. Via Email (49%)
3. Social Media (ex: BRPC Facebook) (38%)
4. BRPC monthly newsletter (Common Ground Newsletter) (29%)
5. BRPC Webpage Announcements (BRPC 'Calendar' and 'Metropolitan Planning Organization' webpage) (18%)
6. Not interested in transportation updates (6%)
7. Other (6%)

# Thank You

[www.berkshireplanning.org](http://www.berkshireplanning.org)