

## Regional Transportation Plan: Survey Insights

Public input is a key component of the 2024 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) currently under development. The RTP will lay out the regional priorities for transportation investments over the next twenty years. Listening to and learning from the residents of Berkshire County helps us to gain a fuller understanding of what transportation investments should be made.

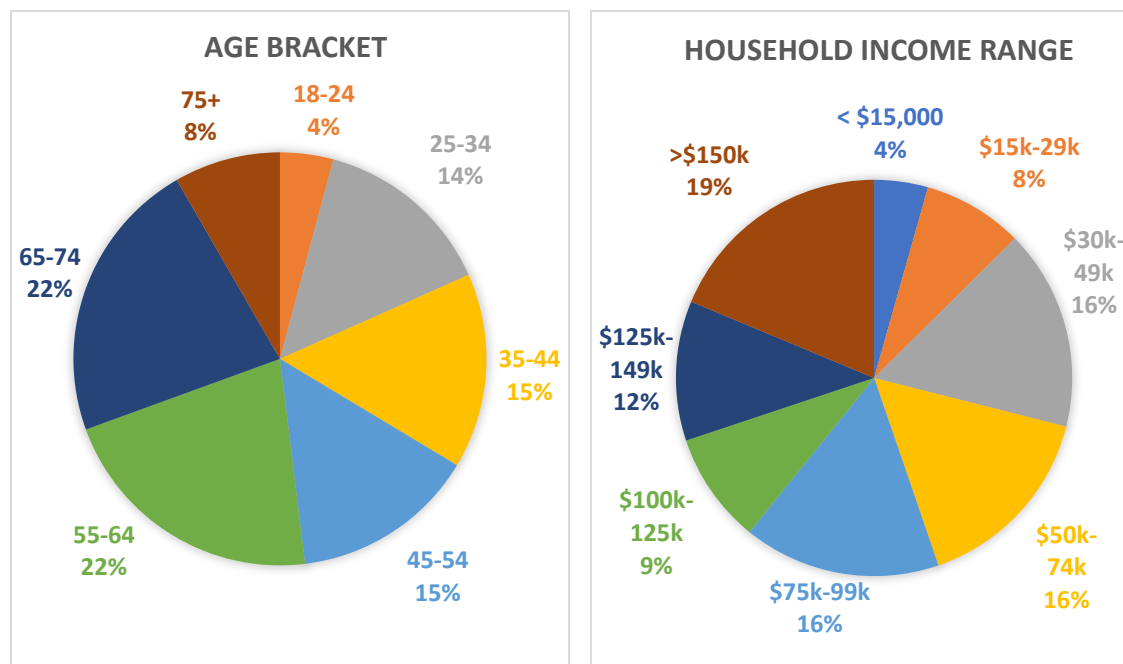
To gain community input, BRPC's administered a Community Transportation Survey across Berkshire County between November 2022 and January 2023. This survey was one of the major sources of public feedback to inform our work on the RTP. Along with the survey, BRPC staff hosted three in-person information sessions in Great Barrington, Pittsfield, and North Adams. Staff identified several key takeaways from the 360 survey responses. Below is a summary of responses received in the survey.

It is important to note that the survey data obtained is not considered statistically valid, as respondents were not chosen from a random, scientific sample. As such, the respondents do not represent an even cross-section of regional demographics. Nevertheless, the survey results provide a good window into our transportation perspectives and aspirations, but not the whole picture.

The community survey was conducted via an online platform. Links to the survey were distributed virtually through email blasts, social media postings, and on the BRPC webpage. Survey invitations were physically distributed via flyers, business cards with QR codes, and postcards via Every-Door-Direct-Mail (EDDM) from the United States Postal Service. Display materials were distributed to local businesses and civic buildings, at the public information sessions, and local events like farmer's markets.

### Survey respondent demographics:

Over half of the survey respondents (52%) were 55 and older, and 48% were between 18 and 54. Nearly three-quarters of respondents reported a household income of \$50,000 or above.



### Key Survey Takeaways:

- **Lifestyle:** Most respondents (88%) said they see themselves living in the Berkshires five years from now.
- **Housing:** The largest proportion of respondents (39%) said they see themselves living in a detached house on a larger plot of land in the next stage of their life. 29% saw themselves in a detached house on a small lot.
- **Employment shuttle services:** There was low support for paying out-of-pocket for employment-based shuttle services. 35% said such a service should be paid for another way besides user fees. 34% indicated they would pay a fee comparable to a BRTA bus fare.
- **Mode of travel:** 89% of respondents listed using their personal vehicle to travel around the county.
- **COVID impacts:** Most respondents (68%) noted little to no impact on their travel options due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Satisfaction:** Levels of satisfaction with different components of our transportation system scored low, including pavement conditions and signs and striping. Categories polled included Maintenance, Safety & Enforcement, Accessibility, Sustainability, Active Transportation, and Transit.
- **Challenges:** 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.
- **Changes:** 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.
- **Public transit:** Most respondents (70%) did not use public transportation in Berkshire County. The biggest desired changes to the public transit system were expanding the reach of BRTA services, including connections to neighboring transit systems like CDTA in Albany and PVRTA in the Pioneer Valley.
- **Passenger rail:** 77% of respondents indicated they would use a passenger rail option to connect to regional destinations for leisure or work.
- **Active transportation:** Repairing and constructing new sidewalks along town roads was identified as the most important active transportation investment that could be made for Berkshire County.
- **Bike share:** Responses generally supported a county bike share system. Of the responses, 29% expressed support for a system but would likely not use it themselves, 26% support and would occasionally use it, 20% would support and likely use it, and 25% would not support starting a bike share system.
- **Sustainability and resilience:** Downed trees or power lines, ice accumulation, bridge damage, road flooding/washouts, and impassable dirt/gravel roads due to mud were the top-five weather-related impacts to our transportation system.
- **Transportation Technology:** Respondents were most likely to use ride hailing technology such as Uber or Lyft and personal rideable technology such as e-bikes, e-scooters, or bike share.

- **Outreach:** Finally, the majority (51%) of respondents said that press releases or news articles would be the most effective way for our organization to stay engaged with the public, followed by email (49%) and social media (38%)

Development of the RTP will continue through the spring and summer of 2023, with final adoption by the MPO by July 2023. The draft RTP is expected to be available for public review/comment beginning in May 2023. We look forward to the opportunity to continue sharing our work with the Berkshire County community and furthering the work of maintaining a safe, reliable, and equitable transportation system.