



# EXPLORING TOMORROW'S TRANSIT



## Public Engagement Effort Final Report

February 2024





# Exploring Tomorrow's Transit

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# 1 Overview

As part of the 2022-2023 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), the Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council (SMTC) agreed to assist the Central New York Regional Transportation Authority (Centro) with a public engagement process to solicit community feedback on the future design of the Centro system in Onondaga County, including mobility services beyond Centro's traditional fixed-route bus service. This process, which was branded as "Exploring Tomorrow's Transit" or ETT, was intended to gather information about the community's wants and needs related to public transportation services and summarize that feedback for use by Centro in their long-term service planning.

This report summarizes the outreach conducted and feedback received through the following engagement activities:

- Project website
- Background information presentation
- Community engagement survey
- Pop-ups (tabling events)
- Open houses (in person and virtual)
- Community Discussion meetings

## 2 Introductory presentation and project website

SMTC staff created a presentation, originally in PowerPoint, to provide context for the ETT effort. The presentation described the purpose of the overall effort, then provided relevant background data (commute mode, vehicle ownership, etc.) and results from the 2017 Rider and Non-rider Surveys completed by SMTC for Centro and the SMTC's previous Work Link study. The presentation also reviewed the SMTC's 2018 Syracuse Metropolitan Area Regional Transit Study Phase 1 (SMART 1), which recommended a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system for the Syracuse area, and briefly described the on-demand service options currently offered by other Upstate transit systems. Maps of Centro's 2019 and 2021 ridership were included. Finally, the presentation urged listeners to complete the ETT survey, and to stay engaged in the process.

The presentation was recorded as a video with narration and captions, and linked from the study webpage within the SMTC's website ([www.smtcmpo.org/centroett](http://www.smtcmpo.org/centroett)). A version with Spanish subtitles was also made available on the website. As of May 26, 2023, (just after the survey closed) the English presentation had 256 views and the Spanish version had 19 views.

## 3 Survey administration

The online survey was launched in mid-January 2023, with the link to the ETT website first published in the Winter 2023 edition of the SMTC's *Directions* newsletter, which was mailed to over 4,000 addresses on January 20, 2023. The survey was created in MS Forms, and vetted by SMTC and Centro staff. Versions of the survey were posted in English and in Spanish. SMTC staff also created printable versions of the survey in both English and Spanish that were available at various community events and could be returned to a staff member at the event or mailed to SMTC (mailing address included at the end of the survey instrument).

The survey considered a respondent as a Centro “rider” if they reported having used Centro bus service at least once in the previous year other than a special event service (such as NYS Fair or SU athletics shuttles). Riders received a set of questions about their bus trips (how often they ride, what route they most often ride, how they typically pay their fare, etc.). Branching was set up so that non-riders did not receive these questions. There were no questions that were exclusive to non-riders. The remaining questions on the survey asked about priorities for potential service improvements, locations where respondents would like to have more Centro service, frequency versus distance to a bus stop, and respondents’ interest in an on-demand service option. There was also a demographics section at the end of the survey; all the demographic questions were optional.

Centro incentivized the survey by offering two pairs of AirPods Pro 2<sup>nd</sup> Generation to be raffled off after the close of the survey. After completing the online survey, the “thank you” screen included a link to an additional online form where participants were asked to provide their first name, last name, phone number, and email address. These responses were not linked to the original survey responses. A paper AirPods entry form was also available. Both the online and paper entry forms were also available in Spanish.

After the initial notification through the SMTC’s newsletter, the survey was also publicized through:

- SMTC email announcing availability of Winter 2023 newsletter on website (January 25) – 1,203 recipients, 457 opened
- SMTC emails focused solely on ETT effort
  - January 31 – 1,199 recipients, 412 opened
  - May 12 – 1,194 recipients, 407 opened
- SMTC March 2023 e-newsletter, sent March 29, 2023 (including link to survey and dates for Open Houses) – 1,204 recipients, 462 opened
- Multiple SMTC Facebook posts
- Centro service alert (January 30)
- Digital displays in the Centro Hub
- “Take our survey!” informational hangers on Centro buses starting on January 27, replenished as needed through end of April
- Email to Centro’s Accessible Transportation Advisory Council on March 3.
- Tabling events (distribution of “Take our survey!” informational cards) at the following locations:
  - Gordon Student Center at Onondaga Community College (February 7 & 8)
  - Salt City Market (February 16 & 18)
  - DestinyUSA (February 18)
  - Syracuse University Men’s Basketball Game at JMA Wireless Dome (February 28)
  - Central New York Regional Market (March 4)
  - OCM BOCES service fair (March 9)
  - Jubilee Homes job fair at Beauchamp Library (March 10)
  - Interfaith Works/Syracuse Housing Authority “Senior Fun Fairs” at Pitcher Hill (Mattydale, May 4) and Ross Towers (Syracuse, May 18)

- Distribution of “Take our survey!” cards at Centro Hub at various bus line-up times (10:00 a.m., noon, 2:00 p.m.) on five different dates (April 3 & 4; May 3, 4, and 16)
- Presentations and/or participation by Centro and/or SMTC staff at community meetings:
  - SMTC Forum on Active Transportation (December 1 – prior to survey launch)
  - Syracuse Common Council Airport (Public Transportation) Committee Meeting (January 24)
  - Greater Syracuse Works Direct Service Meeting (February 7)
  - FOCUS Greater Syracuse Citizens Academy (February 8)
  - Moving People Transportation Coalition (February 15)
  - City of Syracuse’s Community Grid Cooperative (March 16)
  - Southside Tomorrow’s Neighborhoods Today (TNT) meeting (May 1)
- Onondaga County Public Library system: flyers for community bulletin boards and tent cards for placement near public access computers were distributed through the Central Library to all city and suburban branch locations.
- Flyers (English and Spanish) provided to the SCSD Office of Family Engagement for distribution and posting throughout the district.
- Hard-copy surveys provided to Interfaith Works and distributed at a senior services staff meeting.



*Distribution of “Take Our Survey!” cards at Centro Transit Hub.*



*ETT tabling set-up at the JMA Wireless Dome.*

Community groups such as Moving People Transportation Coalition, Human Services Leadership Council, Greater Syracuse Works, Syracuse-Onondaga Food Systems Alliance, and FOCUS Greater Syracuse also sent the survey link and/or forwarded SMTC’s emails to their own contact lists.

The online survey remained open to the public through May 21, 2023. A total of 1,049 responses were received, including 10 hard-copy surveys and four responses to the Spanish version of the survey online (no paper versions of the Spanish survey were returned). There were 412 entries submitted to the AirPods drawing. SMTC staff provided Centro with a spreadsheet of the entry data after the survey closed, and Centro conducted the drawing. Attachment A includes all of the survey questions and a summary of responses to each question.



## 4 Open Houses

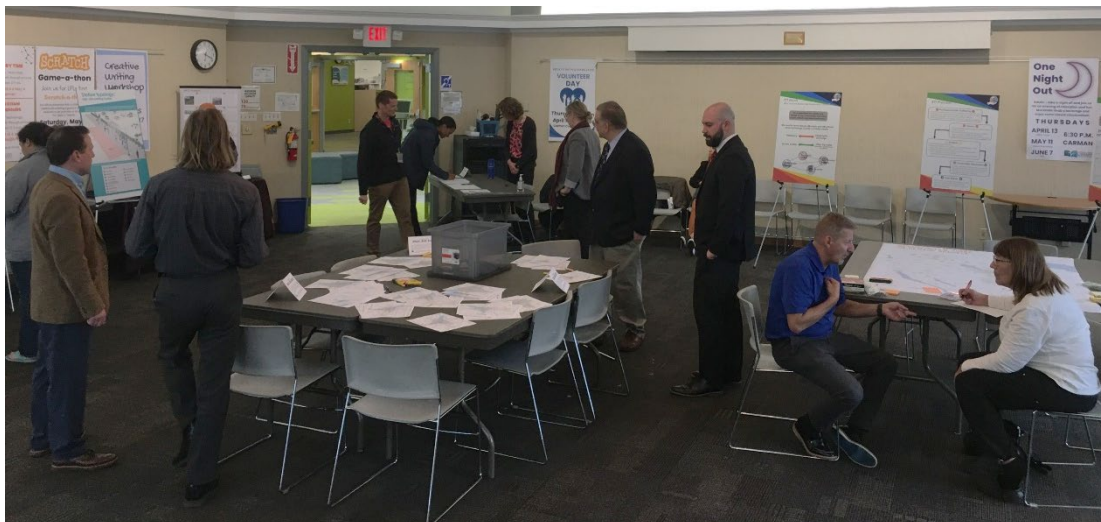
SMTC and Centro held three “Open Houses” while the survey was open. The purpose of the Open Houses was to provide another avenue for the community to learn about the ETT effort and to continue encouraging people to participate in the survey.

Two Open Houses were held in-person: April 20 (4-6 p.m.) at the Salt City Market and May 2 (5-7 p.m.) at the Liverpool Public Library. These events included about a dozen poster-sized display boards (see Attachment B) set up in the room that included the information available in the online presentation (purpose of ETT, demographics, commuting patterns, current ridership) plus a few display boards from the SMTC/Centro’s previous SMART 1 study. The in-person Open Houses also included two interactive activity stations. One station included a large map of Onondaga County, and participants were asked to mark (using markers and stickers) where they would like to see on-demand transit service and additional bike/scooter share services. The other station provided participants with an opportunity to draw their “ideal bus route” on maps at three different scales (Onondaga County, City of Syracuse, and city plus nearby suburbs). Open House attendees were encouraged to take the online survey, which they could do using iPads at the meeting or by using their own device. Paper copies of the survey were also available.

A virtual Open House was held on April 26 (11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.). This was held on Zoom and pre-registration was required. People that registered were encouraged (via email) to review the presentation and other materials available on the project website prior to the meeting, and the meeting was conducted as a drop-in question-and-answer session. The “ideal bus route” exercise maps were provided to the meeting attendees as a PDF through the Zoom chat.

An ASL interpreter attended all the Open Houses, and a Spanish interpreter attended the Salt City Market event. No participants requested the services of an interpreter.

Sign-in sheets from the in-person meetings show 26 attendees at Salt City Market and nine attendees at Liverpool Public Library. Fourteen people registered for the virtual Open House and five people attended.



*Centro and SMTC staff discuss the ETT effort at the Open House at Liverpool Public Library on May 2, 2023.*



The Open Houses were publicized through the following:

- SMTC March 2023 e-newsletter (March 29, also forwarded by ACTS to their list serve on April 12)
- SMTC emails about ETT Open Houses on March 31 (1,195 recipients, 416 opened) and April 17 (1,193 recipients, 383 opened)
  - ACTS forwarded notice to over 2,000 people on April 18
- Numerous individual emails to community partners with flyer: Interfaith Work staff, Greater Syracuse Works staff, SCSD Office of Family Engagement staff.
- Included in Liverpool Public Library's spring program guide and on their website
- Facebook ad targeting Spanish-speakers within 15 miles of downtown Syracuse, April 12-19.
- Multiple SMTC and Centro Facebook posts
- Announced at April 4 Greater Syracuse Works (GSW) meeting and flyer included in follow-up email from GSW
- Discussed at ATAC meeting on April 18; English and Spanish printable surveys provided to staff from ARISE.
- Information included on Centro homepage.



Example SMTC Facebook post for ETT Open Houses.

**Upcoming ETT Open House Events**

The Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council (SMTTC) and Centro invite you to join us at an **OPEN HOUSE** to learn more about how we are **EXPLORING TOMORROW'S TRANSIT**.

Exploring Tomorrow's Transit (ETT) is an outreach initiative designed to gain an understanding of our community's public transportation needs and expectations.

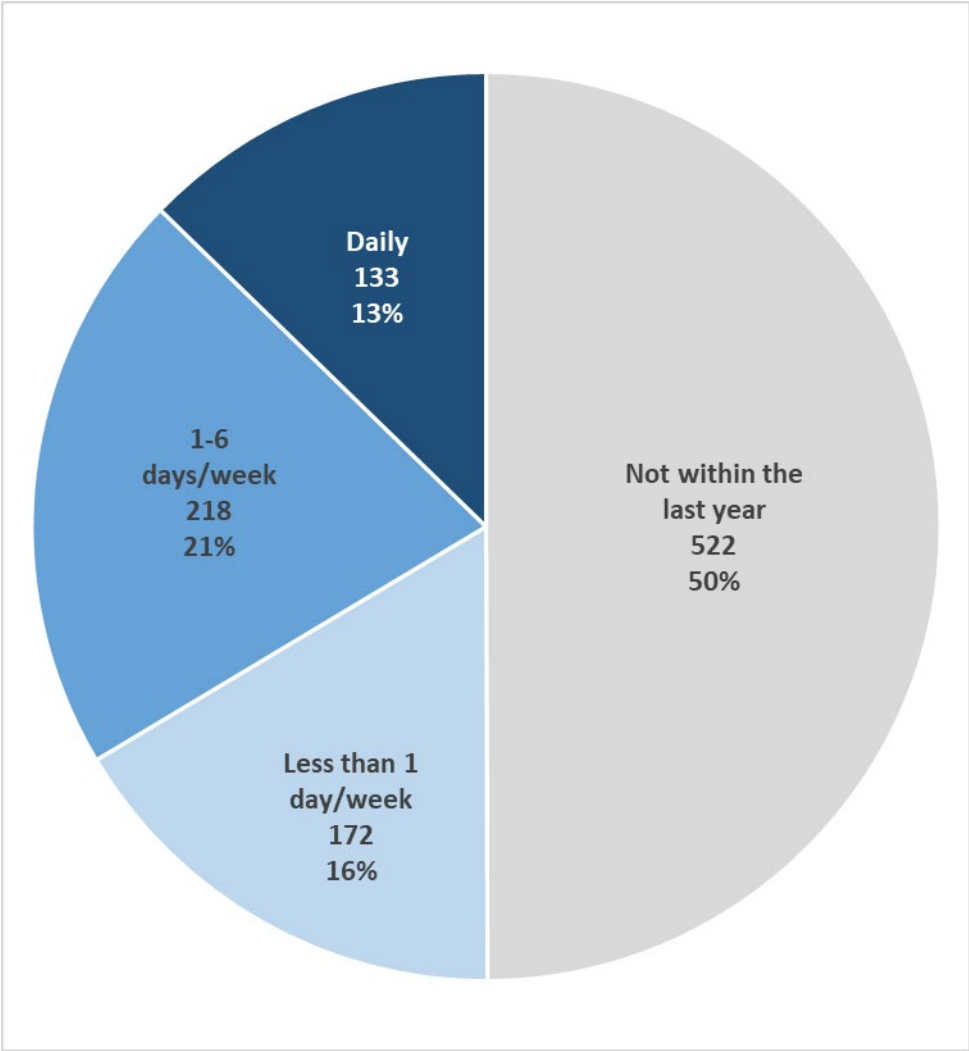
[CLICK HERE](#) for details regarding dates, times and locations.

Centro homepage, announcing ETT Open Houses.

## 5 Survey and Open Houses Key Takeaways

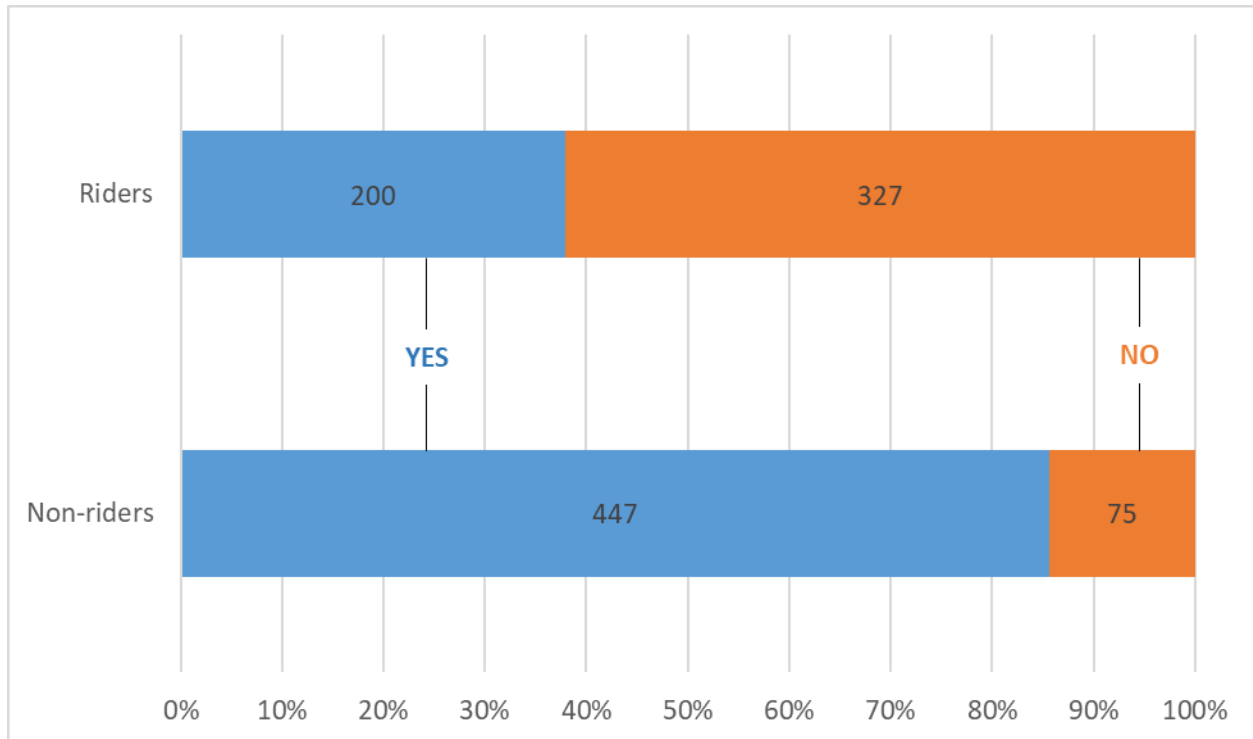
The first few questions on the survey asked about typical commute mode and access to a personal vehicle. Many “riders” that responded to the survey are infrequent bus riders. Of the 1,049 total respondents to the survey, 522 were considered “non-riders” because they reported that they had not used Centro bus service at all within the past year (other than for a special event, such as the NYS Fair or SU athletics). The 527 survey respondents that were considered “riders” had varying degrees of reported transit use, with only 13% of the total survey respondents reporting that they use Centro bus on a daily basis. Sixteen percent of the total survey respondents reported using Centro bus service less than once a week. Figure 1 provides a summary of all survey respondents’ reported frequency of using Centro bus service.

Figure 1: Frequency of using Centro bus – all survey respondents



Most riders that responded to the survey do now own a car, while an overwhelming majority of the non-riders that responded to the survey do own a car, as shown in Figure 2.

**Figure 2: Survey respondents that own (“yes”) and do not own (“no”) a car**



Once all survey questions were summarized and Open House feedback organized, SMTC staff used the data to compile key take-aways from this first round of public engagement.

Four key take-aways were identified:

1. Frequency is the highest priority improvement for both current riders and non-riders.
2. People want more bus service where there is already a relatively high level of service.
3. Both current riders and non-riders expressed strong interest in Mobility On-Demand service as well as expanding Veo's bike/scooter share service area.
4. Centro riders use the bus for many different types of trips. In addition to the crucial role that Centro plays in the community connecting people to employment and educational opportunities, riders also use the bus for many other trips including shopping, recreation, and getting to appointments.

Each of these key take-aways is explored in more detail below.

➤ ***Frequency is the highest priority improvement for both current riders and non-riders.***

The ETT survey asked both riders and non-riders to rank eight possible transit service improvements in order from most important to least important. Service frequency was the highest priority improvement for both riders and non-riders. More direct service also ranked highly. Stop amenities such as benches and shelters were ranked as low priorities by both riders and non-riders.

**Figure 3: Importance of possible service improvements – RIDERS ONLY**

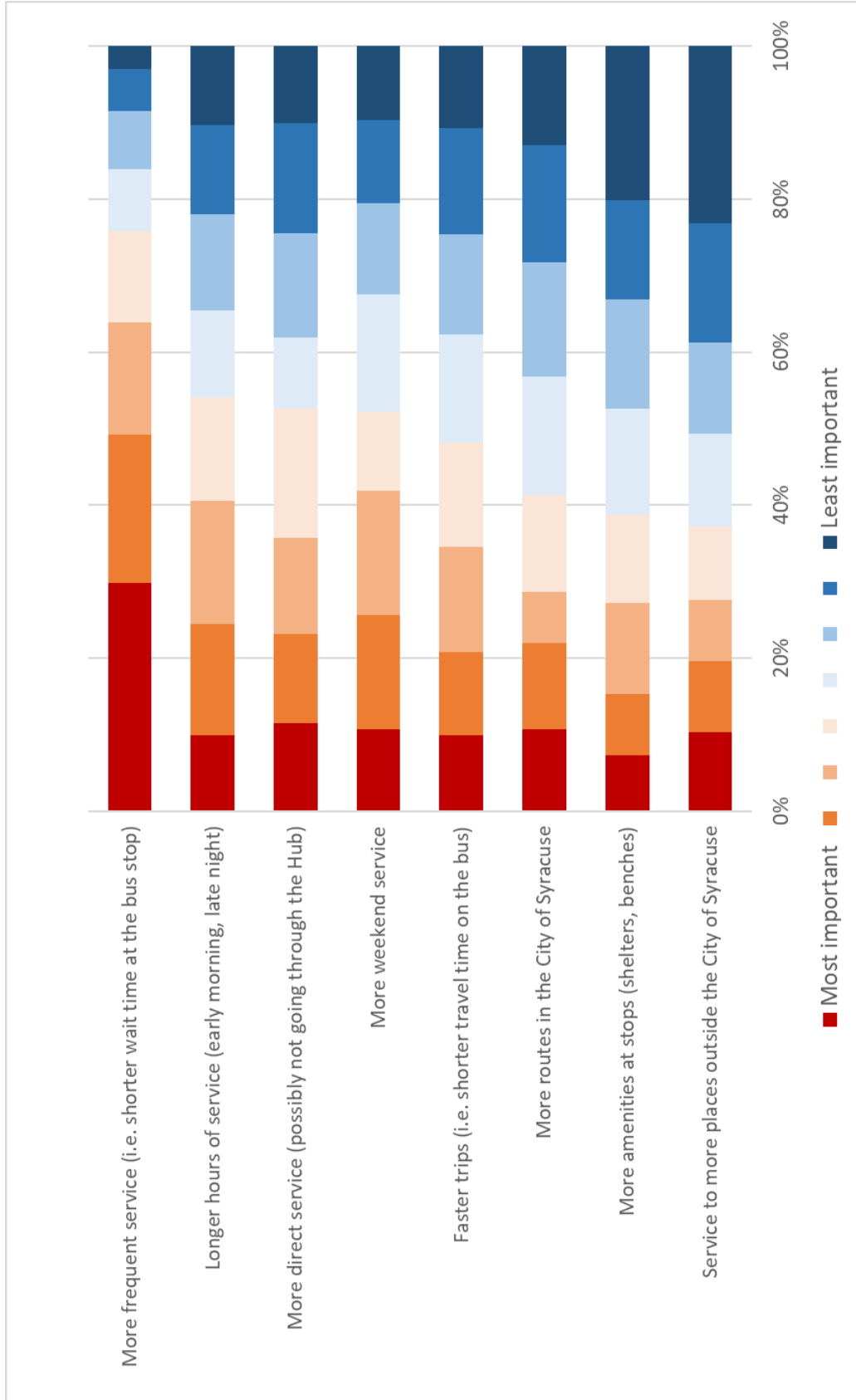
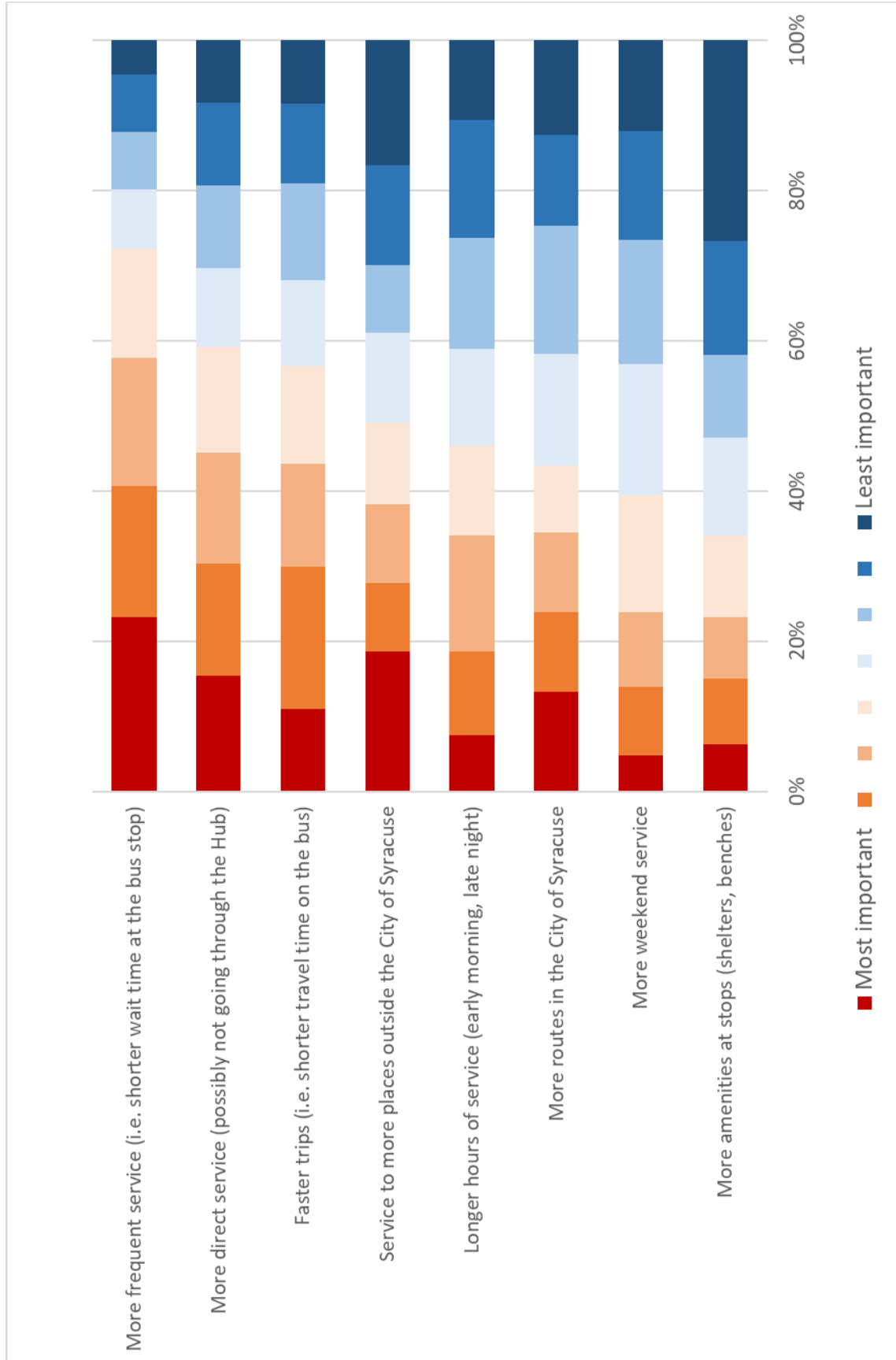


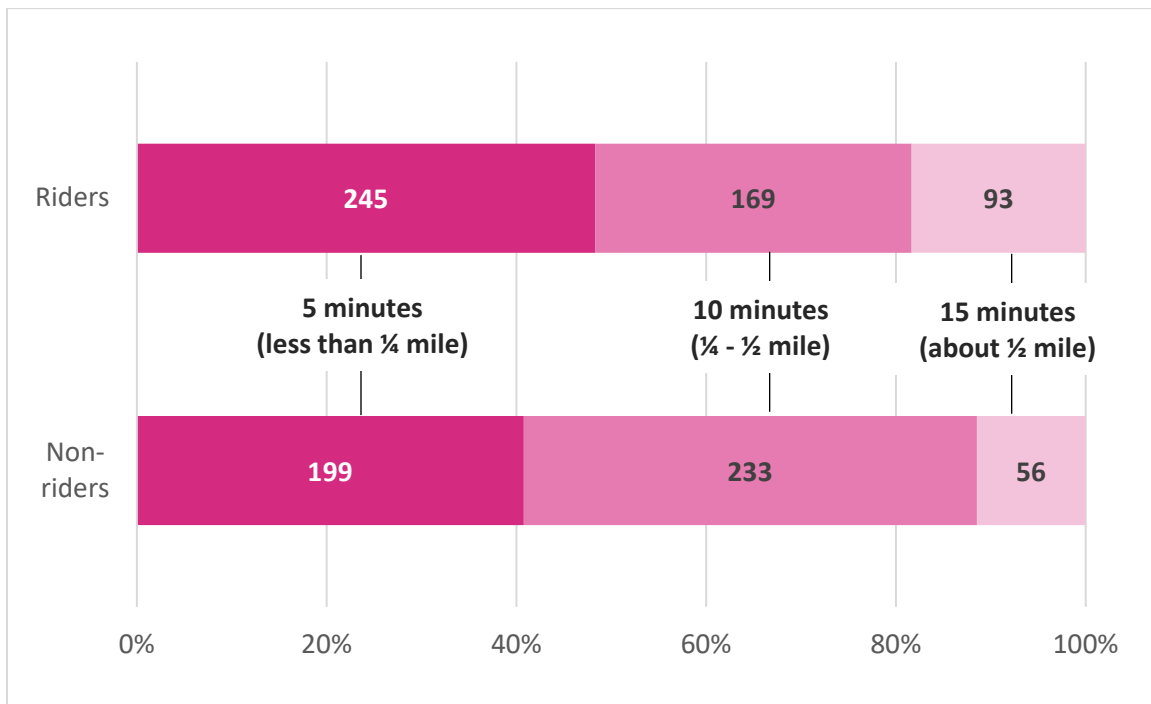
Figure 4: Importance of possible service improvements – NON-RIDERS ONLY





The survey noted that providing more frequent, faster service on some routes might require reducing service on other routes or eliminating some stops, and then asked how far an individual would be willing to walk for a bus that runs at high frequency (10 minutes or less between buses) throughout the day. About 45 percent of all respondents to this question said they would be willing to walk only up to 5 minutes – or about a quarter mile – with another 40 percent willing to walk up to 10 minutes or up to about a half-mile, depending on walk speed (Figure 5). More of the current non-riders indicated a willingness to walk up to 10 minutes.

**Figure 5: Distance that current riders and non-riders would be willing to walk for high-frequency bus service**



➤ **People want more bus service where there is already a relatively high level of service.**

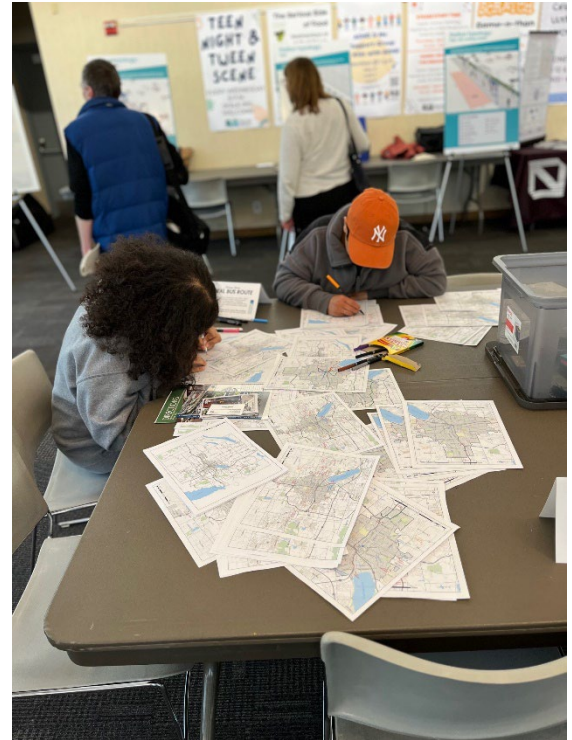
When asked where they want more transit service, most participants identified busy shopping, education, and employment centers that are already some of the most well-served location in the Centro system, such as Syracuse University, Destiny USA, Shop City, and Onondaga Community College (OCC). Other destinations such as the airport were also mentioned as locations for additional service (note: survey was conducted before Centro implemented the modified SY84 service to the airport).

As noted previously, ‘more direct service’ was ranked highly by both riders and non-riders in the list of possible service improvements. A later survey question asked respondents to provide desired endpoints for potential new direct service, i.e. a route that might not go through the Hub. Although 590 individuals provided a response to this write-in question, results were literally ‘all over the map’; no clear consensus emerged from this question. Downtown or destinations in downtown, SU area, and DestinyUSA were the most frequently requested endpoints, with many survey respondents requesting direct service from their residence to these destinations. This result reinforced the previous conclusion that the locations where

people want more service (and more frequent service) are the locations that already have some of the highest levels of service, with a focus on employment and education destinations.

Participants at the Open Houses also had an opportunity to 'draw your ideal bus route' on maps at various scales. A total of 27 maps were returned at the Open Houses and are included in Attachment C. Most of the maps included more than one route drawn and some indicated specific locations that routes should serve. Suggestions included:

- Regional / intercity connections to: Binghamton, Watertown, Auburn, Utica, Ithaca
- County-wide circulator routes: city to northern suburbs (Route 31), city to west (Elbridge) and southwest (Skaneateles), eastern villages (Manlius, Fayetteville, East Syracuse)
- Medical center connector (North Med, University Hill, East Med)
- "Smaller" bus routes and local circulators that would not pass through Downtown Syracuse (Manlius, Fayetteville, Pompey)
- University Hill to Village of Liverpool, through Hub and RTC
- More service from Hub to northern part of Town of DeWitt
- Suburban circulator primarily connecting shopping centers outside of the City of Syracuse: Township 5, Camillus Commons, Green Hills Plaza, Fayetteville Towne Center, Northern Lights
- Routes that do not go through the Hub:
  - James St / Grant Blvd from East Syracuse/James St Wegmans to RTC/DestinyUSA (5 suggestions)
  - Valley Plaza to Westvale Plaza along Valley Dr, South Ave, Delaware Ave, Wilbur Ave
  - Erie Blvd / Genesee St from Westvale Plaza to Wegmans DeWitt
  - Park St
  - Teall Ave / Westcott St
  - Geddes St from Corcoran High School to DestinyUSA
  - Nob Hill Apartments to OCC
  - Nob Hill / Brighton Towers to Green Hills Plaza
- Routes that go through the Hub / variations on existing routes
  - SU area to RTC (similar to proposed BRT line)
  - Service closer to storefronts on Erie Blvd
- City circulators that go through the Hub
  - SU / southeast quadrant
  - James St / Oak St / Park St / North Salina St
  - W Onondaga St / Geddes St / W Genesee St
  - Downtown to Inner Harbor



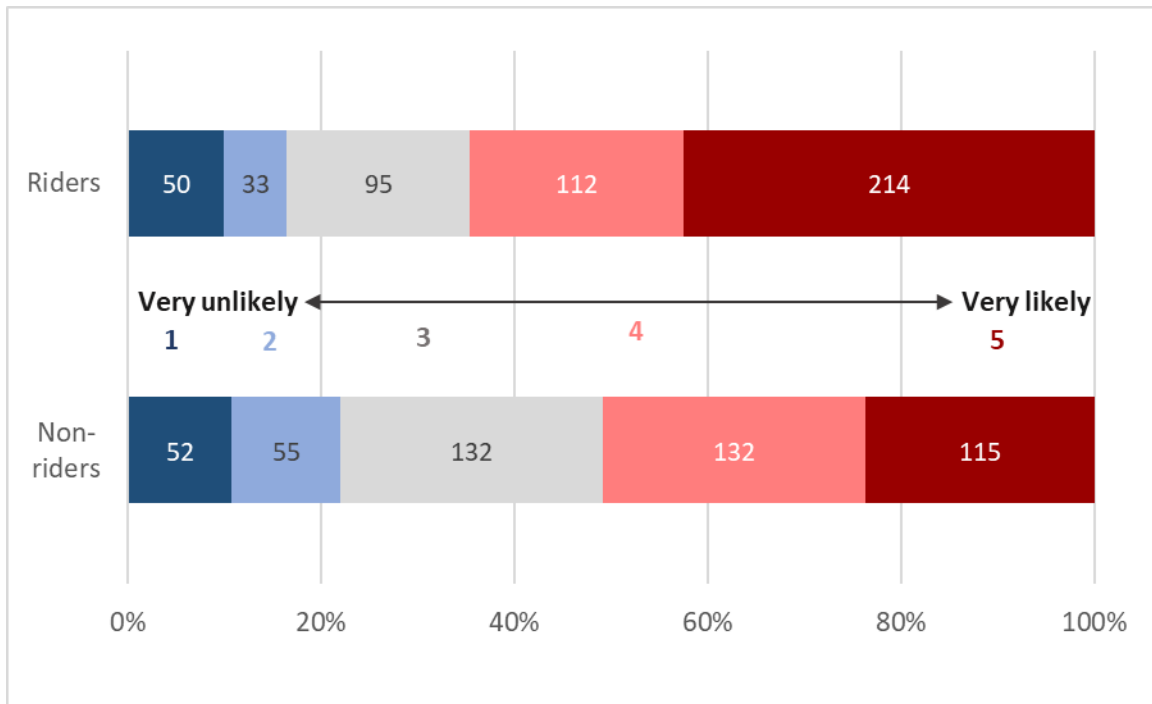
*Participants at the Open House at Liverpool Public Library complete the "Draw Your Ideal Bus Route" exercise.*

Attachment D includes the meeting evaluation forms and comment forms that were received at the Open Houses, as well as additional public comments received via email or online comment form through July 2023.

➤ **Both current riders and non-riders are interested in on-demand service and bike/scooter share.**

The survey included a question that briefly described a potential on-demand type of service that might include smaller vehicles, online or phone reservations up to 15 minutes prior to a trip, not limited to existing Centro routes, more direct service, and sharing rides with other customers with similar pick-up/drop-off locations. On a scale of 1 – very unlikely to 5 – very likely to utilize this service, over half of the total respondents indicated a 4 or 5. This was a slightly higher percentage for current riders.

**Figure 6: How likely current riders and non-riders are to use an on-demand type service provided by Centro**



About 30 percent of total respondents indicated they would pay up to \$2 per ride for this service, and another 40 percent said they would pay up to \$5 per ride. Current riders tended to be willing to pay less for the service than current non-riders.

The survey also asked where VeoRide bike/scooter share service should be expanded (beyond the current service area at that time, which was only in the City of Syracuse). The top locations indicated by survey respondents were:

- Liverpool
- DeWitt
- Onondaga Hill/OCC
- Camillus
- North Syracuse
- Onondaga Lake Park
- Solvay
- Downtown
- East Syracuse

(Note that since the time the survey was conducted, Centro began operating VeoRide on the OCC campus.)

Areas for bike/scooter share and on-demand service were also a topic of discussion at the Open Houses. Table 1 below summarizes suggestions received at the Open Houses for on-demand service and bike/scooter share expansion locations.

**Table 1: Locations suggested by Open House participants for bike/scooter share expansion and for on-demand transit service**

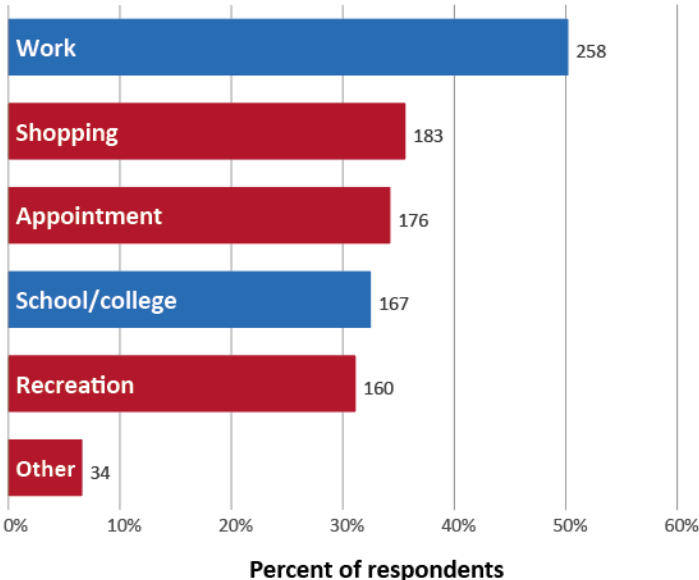
Location	Bike/scooter share	On-demand service
Baldwinsville		X*
Camillus		X
Cicero	X	
Downtown Syracuse	X	
East Syracuse		X*
Eastwood		X
Fairgrounds	X	
Fayetteville	X	X
Green Lakes State Park		X
Inner Harbor	X	
Liverpool	X*	X*
Manlius		X
Minoa		X
North Syracuse	X	X*
Onondaga Community College	X	X
Onondaga Nation	X	X
Salina (Town)	X	
Skaneateles		X
Syracuse University area	X	
Valley	X	
Van Buren		X
Western Lights	X	
Westvale Plaza	X	
Willow Bay	X	

\*this location was suggested by more than one person Note: this list includes all locations suggested by participants. Some locations suggested are within the City of Syracuse and are, therefore, already within the Veo service area.

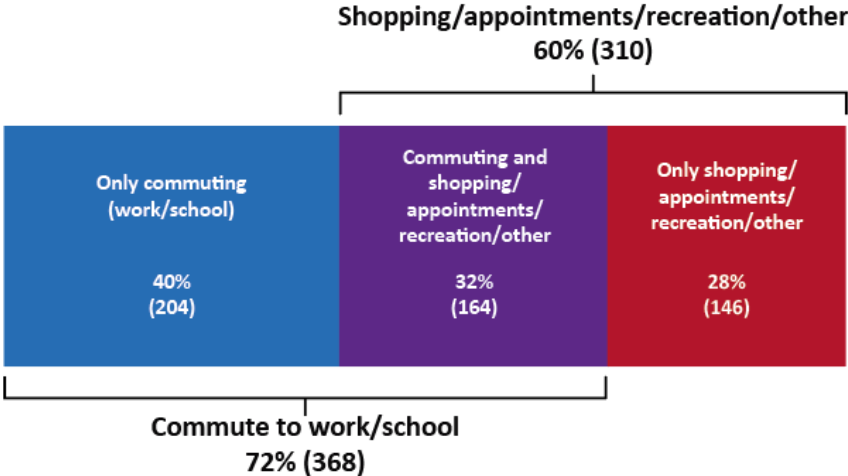
➤ **Centro riders use the bus for many different types of trips.**

One of the survey questions asked riders: “for what purpose do you use Centro most often?” While over half of the respondents indicated that they use Centro bus to go to work, many riders reported using the bus for other types of trips as well (respondents could choose more than one answer). Over a quarter of the riders reported using the bus only for non-commuting trips, such as shopping, appointments, or recreation. This suggests that the transit system needs to fulfill a broad range of mobility needs in the community. Figure 7 shows all the individual trip types included as choices on the survey, and Figure 8 summarizes these as commuting/non-commuting trips.

**Figure 7: Trip purpose for Centro riders**



**Figure 8: Summary of trip types for Centro riders**



## 6 Community Discussion meetings planning and design

The second phase of the ETT effort was a series of Community Discussions in September 2023. The intent of these meetings was to explore the key takeaways from the survey/Open Houses in more depth with the public. Prior to hosting the community discussions, an ETT Interim Report was published on the ETT website. The interim report included a summary of the work conducted up to that point: introductory presentation, survey, and Open Houses.

Five Community Discussions were held:

- Monday, September 11, 5 – 7 PM at the Liverpool Public Library (310 Tulip St., Liverpool)
- Monday, September 18, 5 – 7 PM at the East Syracuse Free Library (4990 James St., East Syracuse)
- Wednesday, September 20, 11:30 AM – 1:30 PM at the Salt City Market Community Room (484 S. Salina St., Syracuse)
- Tuesday, September 26, 5 – 7 PM at the Solvay Fire Department (1925 Milton Ave., Solvay)
- Thursday, September 28, 5 – 7 PM at the Bob Cecile Community Center (174 W. Seneca Tpk., Syracuse)

These were all in-person, drop-in style sessions, with a series of poster-sized display boards around the room and some activities for participants. See Attachment E for a copy of the display boards. Each meeting was organized into four stations.

Station 1 introduced the ETT process, provided important demographic information, and described the key conclusions from the survey. This station contained six boards, some from the previous Open House meetings.

Station 2 explored the bus riding experience. Participants who rode Centro bus within the last year were asked to identify any alternative modes of travel they use by placing stickers and sticky notes on a board of various modes of transportation.



*ETT Discussion Meeting at Salt City Market, September 20, 2023.*

Station 3 highlighted feedback about Veo bike/scooter share from the survey. Large format maps of the region were available, and participants were encouraged to draw on the maps to indicate where they wanted to expand Veo's service area as well as suggestions for additional bike infrastructure. Whenever possible, the same maps were brought to meetings



with the previous meetings' comments still on them to allow participants to continue conversations across meetings.

Station 4 asked participants to share their vision for tomorrow's transit in Syracuse and Onondaga County. This station contained four boards and one activity. The boards included a Centro ridership map, the recommended BRT routes from SMTC/Centro's SMART1 study, examples of Mobility On-Demand services in nearby cities, as well as survey results including priorities for bus service improvements, how far respondents would be willing to walk to a high frequency bus line, and where respondents were most interested in mobility-on-demand service. Large maps of the region were available at this station, showing the proposed BRT routes and the high-activity segments of the current bus system. Participants were encouraged to draw their suggestions for new high-frequency bus routes and mobility-on-demand zones.

SMTC and Centro staff were available throughout the meetings to answer questions and facilitate discussion. Spanish interpreters were present for two Community Discussions (Salt City Market and Bob Cecile Community Center) and ASL interpreters were present for four (all except Salt City Market).

The Community Discussion meetings were publicized through the following:



*ETT Discussion Meeting at Cecile Center, September 26, 2023.*

- Summer 2023 issue of DIRECTIONS, the SMTC newsletter
  - Mailed to over 4,000 addresses (week of August 21)
  - Emailed on August 22 (1,193 recipients, 624 opened) (This was also shared by the Moving People Transportation Coalition to their email list)
  - Posted to the SMTC Facebook page on August 23
- Three additional SMTC emails specifically about the meetings to entire SMTC list
  - August 25 (1,188 recipients, 437 opened)
  - September 7 (1,202 recipients, 423 opened)
  - September 25 (1,208 recipients, 442 opened)
- Email from SMTC staff to people that provided an email address for the AirPods raffle during ETT Survey, August 25 (386 addresses)
- SMTC Facebook posts (10)
- Centro Facebook posts (5) and Instagram posts (4)
- Notice on SMTC (ETT page) and Centro websites
- Email to agencies serving the deaf and/or disabled community in Central New York including Whole Me, Inc., Aurora of CNY, and Deaf New Americans on September 7
- Facebook message to Valley Views group on September 25
- Liverpool Public Library included the meeting on their online calendar

- SMTC provided enough flyers to the Central Library for distribution to all branches in the Onondaga County Library System, and staff personally delivered flyers to eight locations:
  - Central Library
  - East Syracuse Free Library
  - Betts Branch Library in the Valley neighborhood
  - Paine Branch Library in the Eastwood neighborhood
  - Fairmount Community Library
  - Solvay Public Library
  - Hazard Branch Library near the Tipp Hill neighborhood
  - Mundy Branch Library in the Skunk City neighborhood

On September 19, WAER public radio published an article featuring Exploring Tomorrow's Transit and the upcoming Community Discussion meetings.

Sign-in sheets show 51 attendees in total across the five Community Discussions. ASL interpretation services were utilized by participants at the Liverpool meeting. No other accommodation was requested.

The meeting display boards (in PDF format) and a video presentation were made available on the ETT website (through the SMTC's YouTube page) starting on September 8. The narrated and captioned video presentation provided the same information that was available at the meetings, utilizing many of the same graphics as the display boards. The video concluded by encouraging people to either reach out to the SMTC with any questions or comments, or to attend one of the upcoming meetings to speak directly with staff. As of September 28 (the day of the final Community Discussion), the video had received 73 views.

 **Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council**  
Published by Meghan Vitale · August 25 at 9:18 AM · 🌐

SMTC and [Central New York Regional Transportation Authority - Centro](#) invite you to stop by one of our upcoming COMMUNITY DISCUSSION MEETINGS to learn more about how we are EXPLORING TOMORROW'S TRANSIT.

These meetings will not include a formal presentation. You are welcome to drop in at any point during the scheduled time. All meetings include the same content. Meeting locations are ADA accessible. ASL interpreters will be available at all meetings, and Spanish interpreters will be available at Salt City Market and Cecile Center meetings. For additional accommodation requests, please contact the SMTC at 315-422-5716 or [contactus@smtcmpo.org](mailto:contactus@smtcmpo.org) two weeks prior to the meeting.

Meeting materials will also be available online at [smtcmpo.org/centroett](https://smtcmpo.org/centroett) starting on Sept. 11.



## EXPLORING TOMORROW'S TRANSIT COMMUNITY DISCUSSION MEETINGS

Review what we learned from the ETT public survey conducted in spring 2023.

Engage in discussion with SMTC and Centro staff about the future design of the transit system including fixed-route bus service, on-demand service, bus rapid transit, and bike/scooter share.

<b>Monday, September 11, 5-7 p.m.</b> Liverpool Public Library 310 Tulip St., Liverpool	<b>Wednesday, September 20 11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.</b> Salt City Market Community Room 484 S. Salina St., Syracuse
<b>Monday, September 18, 5-7 p.m.</b> East Syracuse Free Library 4990 James St., East Syracuse	<b>Tuesday, September 26, 5-7 p.m.</b> Solvay Fire Department 1925 Milton Ave., Solvay
	<b>Thursday, September 28, 5-7 p.m.</b> Bob Cecile Community Center 174 W. Seneca Tpk., Syracuse

 **SMTC**

Example SMTC Facebook post for ETT Open Houses.

## 7 Feedback from Community Discussions

Attachment F includes all the comments participants provided on the large maps at Station 3 (Bike/scooter share) and Station 4 (Vision for Tomorrow's Transit) during the Community Discussion meetings. Attachment G includes additional public comments received through September 2023.

Table 2 summarizes feedback across all Community Discussion meetings from Station 2, which asked what other modes of travel bus riders use. Most participants indicated that they drive their own car when not riding the bus, while many also carpooled or walked. The largest groups of participants who walked came from the two Community Discussion meetings within the City of Syracuse.

**Table 2: Modes of transportation used by bus riders besides the bus**

Mode of transportation	Total
Drive my own car	24
Walk	14
Get a ride from family/friends	13
Uber/Lyft	8
Work from home	7
Veo bike/scooter	5
Bike (personal bike)	4
Other	0

Table 3 summarizes the additional feedback received at the Community Discussions regarding Veo expansion areas, suggestions for bike infrastructure, mobility-on-demand locations, routes for high-frequency bus service, and other general comments/recommendations.

**Table 3: Feedback/suggestions from Community Discussion participants**

<p>Veo expansion areas</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LeMoyne College Campus</li> <li>• East Syracuse</li> <li>• Eastern suburbs such as Fayetteville</li> <li>• St. Joe’s Amphitheater and the New York State Fair</li> <li>• Regional Transportation Center</li> <li>• Walmart in East Syracuse and Camillus</li> <li>• Towns in the southern hills</li> <li>• Along Milton Ave to Fairmount Fair</li> </ul>
<p>Bike infrastructure</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connections to existing infrastructure including Loop-the-Lake trail and Bear Trap Creek Trail</li> <li>• Separated bike lanes, not simply restriping</li> <li>• Enforce no parking in bike lanes</li> <li>• More bike boxes</li> <li>• Bike parking at Amphitheater and New York State Fair</li> <li>• Bike lanes in the Town of Geddes, Town of Onondaga (specifically on Routes 173/175), Milton Avenue from Tipp Hill to Fairmount Fair, and along James Street</li> <li>• Bike lockers at the Regional Transportation Center, Downtown, and on the Empire State Trail</li> <li>• Bike racks at Destiny USA, Inner Harbor, and Downtown</li> </ul>
<p>Mobility-on-demand zones and hubs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wegmans Plaza in DeWitt</li> <li>• Northern Lights Plaza in Mattydale</li> <li>• Onondaga Community College in the Town of Onondaga</li> <li>• Camillus Commons in Camillus</li> <li>• Skaneateles</li> <li>• Elbridge/Jordan</li> <li>• Northern Camillus</li> </ul>
<p>High-frequency bus service</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Salina Street, specifically Valley Plaza, Valley neighborhood, and Nedrow</li> <li>• Genesee Street</li> <li>• James Street</li> <li>• West Genesee Street to Erie Boulevard East</li> </ul>
<p>Other suggestions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A general need for more transit service in: Nedrow, Strathmore, Oswego County, farming/migrant communities in the southern hills, Onondaga Community College, Amazon, suburban medical centers</li> <li>• Better connections between:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Western Lights and OCC</li> <li>○ Village of Camillus and Solvay/Destiny/Liverpool</li> <li>○ Southside/Valley neighborhoods and a grocery store</li> </ul> </li> <li>• More public outreach, specifically to disabled and elderly people</li> <li>• A bus stop closer to Marshalls Plaza (Erie Boulevard) storefronts, or a nearby shelter</li> <li>• More direct routes</li> <li>• Electronic fare payment (such as Apple Pay)</li> <li>• Planning for trip deviations from snow-routes and expected construction.</li> <li>• More accessible info on the bus – better stocked pamphlets, more languages on the automated voice on the bus</li> </ul>

A few common themes emerged from this phase of Exploring Tomorrow's Transit:

- *Suggestions for suburban shopping centers as mobility-on-demand connection hubs.* Additional destinations noted for future mobility-on-demand service include suburban medical centers (those on Brittonfield Parkway, in Carrier Circle, and in the eastern suburbs), education centers (OCC), and large grocery stores (DeWitt Wegmans and East Syracuse/Camillus Walmarts).
- *There is public interest in expanding Veo to nearby suburbs, especially to those with existing bike infrastructure.* These primarily included off-road trails such as the Loop-the-Lake trail, Empire State Trail, Bear Trap Creek Trail, Butternut Creek Trail, and Chittenango Creek Trail. Communities and corridors interested in Veo expansion, but that need better bike infrastructure, include Milton Avenue from Bridge Street to Fairmount Fair, Routes 173 and 175 in the Town of Onondaga, James Street, and the Town of Geddes in general. Bike parking was also identified as an issue in and around the city, with many participants noting limited bike racks and a desire for bike lockers. Language accessibility issues were noted for the Veo app.
- *Participants were excited for BRT to come to Central New York.* Future corridors suggested as potential candidates for either high-frequency traditional fixed-route transit service or additional branches of the BRT system include West Genesee Street and South Salina Street.
- *Desire for multimodal connections at the Regional Transportation Center,* such as better bike connectivity and parking infrastructure, mobility-on-demand, and BRT.
- *Desire for more public outreach to disabled and elderly people, namely those with limited personal mobility.* Additional demographic questions could be asked in future surveys to gain a better understanding of the specific wants and needs of those with limited personal mobility or those who use a mobility assistance device such as a cane or wheelchair. Participants advocating for seniors and people with disabilities expressed a desire for future meetings to include more potential designs and concepts. Overall, these participants were largely interested in mobility -on-demand.

## 8 Conclusion

SMTC assisted Centro with public engagement exploring the future of transit in Onondaga County through this effort known as Exploring Tomorrow's Transit. Outreach included online video presentations, a public survey, many pop-up and tabling events, Open Houses, and a series of Community Discussion meetings. This effort began in late 2022 and wrapped-up in the fall of 2023.

Higher frequency service is desired by both existing and potential future bus riders. Providing more frequent, faster service on some routes might require reducing service on other routes or eliminating some stops, and this idea was included in the ETT survey and was part of the conversation at the public meetings. More than half of the ETT survey respondents indicated that they would be willing to walk 10 minutes to reach a high-frequency route (including some respondents that said they would walk 15 minutes for this service).

People are excited about the potential for BRT in Syracuse and interested in the addition of other new modes of transportation including more bike/scooter share and mobility-on-demand service. Employment and education destinations continue to be the most-requested locations for additional bus service, as well as large retail centers (which are also significant employment centers). Many existing bus riders use the



system to reach education and employment destinations, but riders are also using the system to fulfill many other daily mobility needs such as shopping, medical appointments, and recreation.

Public outreach should continue, especially in areas with high existing ridership, which is mostly concentrated in the City of Syracuse. Additional suggestions for continued outreach include Baldwinsville, Fayetteville and Manlius areas, and Onondaga Nation, plus additional outreach to communities with limited personal mobility including disabled and senior populations.

Overall, well over 1,000 individuals engaged with the ETT effort, mostly through the online survey. This feedback will be utilized by Centro in their future service planning, and by the SMTC in our long-range Metropolitan Transportation Plan process.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment A: Survey Results Summary

Attachment B: Open House Display Boards

Attachment C: “Draw Your Ideal Bus Route” maps from Open Houses

Attachment D: Open House evaluations, Open House comment forms, and additional public comments received through July 2023.

Attachment E: Community Discussion Display Boards

Attachment F: Public comments on bus system and Veo system maps from Community Discussions

Attachment G: Community Discussion evaluations, comment forms, and additional public comments received through September 2023.