



**Appendix C: Community and Stakeholder Outreach  
Summary of Phase 2 Findings  
February 2016**

## Table of Contents

|   | <b>Page</b> |
|---|-------------|
| <b>1 Introduction.....</b>  | <b>1</b>    |
| Overview.....   | 1           |
| Community Engagement Methods .....                                      | 1           |
| <b>2 Summary of Meetings, Workshops, and Neighborhood Sessions.....</b> | <b>4</b>    |
| Overview.....   | 4           |
| Key Findings: Meetings and Workshops .....                              | 5           |
| <b>3 Interactive Online Survey .....</b>                                | <b>12</b>   |
| <b>4 Connect Columbus Coordination .....</b>                            | <b>21</b>   |
| <b>5 Conclusion .....</b>   | <b>22</b>   |
| <br>  |             |
| <b>Appendix C.1 – Summary of Activities</b>                             |             |
| <b>Appendix C.2 – Public Meeting Handouts</b>                           |             |
| <b>Appendix C.3 – Meeting Presentation</b>                              |             |
| <b>Appendix C.4 – Meeting Summaries</b>                                 |             |
| <b>Appendix C.5 – Meeting Comments</b>                                  |             |
| <b>Appendix C.6 – Online Survey Instrument</b>                          |             |
| <b>Appendix C.7 – Online Survey Comments</b>                            |             |

## Table of Figures

|   | <b>Page</b> |
|---|-------------|
| Figure 1 Summary of Phase 2 Outreach Activities .....   | 2           |
| Figure 2 Enhancing Local Service: Number of Votes for Each of the Seven Investments .....               | 6           |
| Figure 3 Percent of Respondents Voting “Yes” by High Capacity Transit Corridor – Written Responses..... | 8           |
| Figure 4 26 Potential High Capacity Transit Corridors.....  | 9           |
| Figure 5 Responses by Survey Screen.....  | 12          |
| Figure 6 Ranking of Transit Investment Priorities.....  | 13          |
| Figure 7 Percent of Respondents Voting “Yes” by High Capacity Transit Corridor – Online Responses.....  | 15          |
| Figure 8 Respondent Age .....   | 16          |
| Figure 9 Respondent Ethnicity .....   | 17          |
| Figure 10 Percent of Respondents with Access to Vehicle .....   | 17          |
| Figure 11 Respondent Income.....  | 18          |
| Figure 12 Number of People in Respondent Household .....  | 18          |
| Figure 13 Percent of Respondents by Home Zip Code .....   | 19          |
| Figure 14 Survey Respondent Home Zip Code.....  | 20          |

# 1 INTRODUCTION

## Overview

The second phase of the Central Ohio Transit Authority's (COTA) planning effort, COTA Next Generation 2050 (branded as "NextGen"), involved the development of a series of transit projects and initiatives designed to strengthen the overall system.



The Transit Needs Assessment developed at the conclusion of Phase 1 of the project took into account: public and stakeholder input collected from Phase 1; local and regional plans; existing and projected population and employment patterns, congestion levels, and regional and local travel patterns; demographic data; and site and streetscape design. The results of this assessment included a variety of potential service improvements to enhance local transit service and identified 26 potential High Capacity Transit (HCT) corridors. These potential service improvements and High Capacity Transit corridors were then presented to the public for their input.

## Community Engagement Methods

NextGen's Phase 2 community engagement efforts included workshops, public meetings, presenting information at pre-existing community events (neighborhood sessions), and an online survey. The project team used these outreach activities to broadly identify and prioritize which local service investments and High Capacity Transit corridors are most important to the community.

In total, COTA staff and the NextGen team sponsored, participated, and/or staffed 15 public engagement activities between September 28, 2015 and November 3, 2015 (see Appendix C.1). Activities were held in Downtown Columbus, Columbus State Community College, the Far East Side, the Hilltop, Northland, Dublin and Gahanna. More than 1,750 comments were received through Phase 2 outreach activities from people who attended a public meeting or submitted comments online. Specific strategies used in the Phase 2 community engagement process included:

- **Public Meetings** – The NextGen team held four public meetings, including meetings in Downtown Columbus, the Far East Side, the Hilltop and Gahanna. An online version of the public meeting materials was also posted to the project website and promoted heavily. The meetings were designed in a workshop format. The team provided an overview presentation explaining the meeting purpose and expectations, followed by interactive discussion exercises. This format was designed to solicit focused, practical input on potential service improvements and preferred High Capacity Transit corridors. Publicity efforts included news releases, fliers, web postings, social media notifications, email blasts and paid advertisements. Project Advisory Group members also spread the word through their networks. In total, 62 people participated in at least one of the public meetings.
- **Stakeholder Workshops** – As a complement to the public meetings, the NextGen team hosted two workshops with community developers/planning officials and campus officials. The workshops presented similar information to what was used for the public meetings, but the approach was tailored towards each audience. The study team emailed invitations to these targeted groups. A combined total of 28 people participated in the two workshops.
- **Neighborhood Sessions** – COTA staff made presentations and distributed materials about the project at pre-existing community events and meetings around central Ohio. An estimated 76 individuals participated through these forums.
- **Online Survey** – An interactive online was launched to engage the public and give them an opportunity to select their investment priorities and preferred transit corridors. The survey tool included interactive map capabilities that allowed respondents to view proposed transit corridors. Similar to the public meetings, the online survey was heavily publicized and accessible through a link to COTA’s website. The online survey was available to the public between September 28 and November 2, 2015. Approximately 1,635 individuals participated through the online survey.

Figure 1 Summary of Phase 2 Outreach Activities

| Outreach Activity     | Number of Events | Location  | Dates               | Number of Participants |
|-----------------------|------------------|---|---------------------|------------------------|
| Public Meetings       | 4                | Downtown Columbus, Far East Side, Hilltop, Gahanna              | September           | 62                     |
| Stakeholder Workshops | 2                | Downtown Columbus, Columbus State University                    | September           | 28                     |
| Neighborhood Sessions | 8                | Downtown Columbus, Columbus State University, Northland, Dublin | October - November  | 344                    |
| Online Survey         | 1                | Website   | September - October | 1,635                  |
| <b>Total</b>          | <b>15</b>        | -   | -                   | <b>2,071</b>           |

Source: Nelson\Nygaard Consulting Associates and IBI Group

The findings described in the following sections were reviewed in conjunction with technical analysis being conducted as part of this study. As the public outreach results were compiled, the study team was in the process of conducting the Tier 1 screening of High Capacity Transit corridors. The prioritization of High Capacity Transit corridors by the community were compared to the results of the technical analysis in order to ensure that the community's highest priorities were reflected in the corridors that proceed to the Tier 2 evaluation. The most desired transit investment priorities were used to guide the development of the holistic vision for transit.

## 2 SUMMARY OF MEETINGS, WORKSHOPS, AND NEIGHBORHOOD SESSIONS

### Overview

The public engagement activities conducted during Phase 2 focused on how the region should plan for future transit. Discussions included collecting people's input and ideas on how the region can enhance the local transit service and create faster service in central Ohio over the next 10-35 years.

**“The success of the CBUS is a phenomenal indicator of the need for public transit.”**

The most consistent themes heard across all formats and interactions include:

- Strong level of support for public transportation in central Ohio
- More frequent bus service on more routes and more days
- High capacity service
  - This includes services such as light rail, streetcars and bus rapid transit (BRT)
- Connecting people to job centers
  - Business parks in Rickenbacker and New Albany, Downtown Columbus, OSU and Polaris
  - “Reverse commutes” from Downtown Columbus to suburban job centers
- Transit should be developed with a diverse population in mind
  - Low income populations
  - Seniors and people with disabilities
  - Students and young professionals
  - New Americans
  - Visitors and tourists
- Better connections to suburban areas / “last mile service” between the bus stop and home
- Permanent bus commuter lanes

- 24 hour, frequent service to serve those working non-traditional work hours (2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> shifts)
- Stronger communication, marketing and ridership incentives
- Investment in bus stop facilities
- Transit connection between the airport and Downtown Columbus
- Transfer locations outside of Downtown Columbus
- Investment in transit technologies such as cashless fares, smartphone apps and real time information

## Key Findings: Meetings and Workshops

Among the various community engagement strategies used in the second phase of the NextGen study, live interactive meetings were held with the public, including public meetings, stakeholder workshops, and participation in other public meetings or neighborhood events. Handouts and materials for these meetings can be found in Appendix C.2 and C.3, while meeting summaries can be found in Appendix C.4.

Because the same feedback form was used for all meetings, the summarized results and key findings were combined for these outreach methods.

### Enhancing Local Service

One of the key objectives of the meetings and workshops was to understand which local service investments were most important to the community. Participants were presented seven investments based on the Transit Needs Assessment completed in Phase 1. Participants were asked to choose the top four that are most important to them.

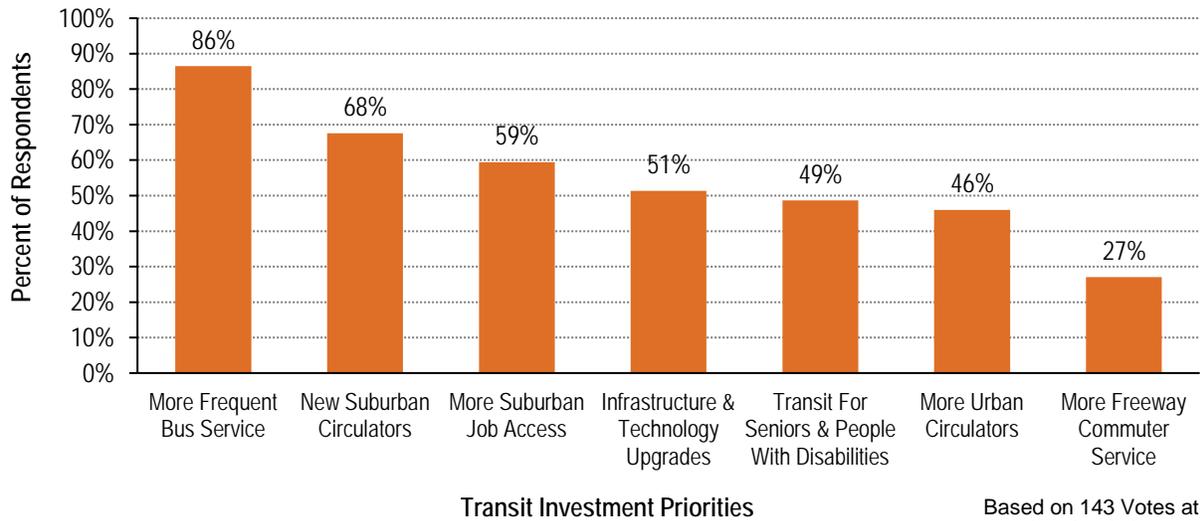
The seven investments included:

1. **More frequent bus service, on more routes, on more days**
2. **New suburban circulators and additional service connecting suburban areas**
3. **More suburban job access (reverse commutes)**
4. **Infrastructure and technology upgrades to improve service quality**
5. **More transit for seniors and people with disabilities**
6. **More urban circulators like CBUS**
7. **More freeway commuter service**

For this objective, the NextGen team collected roughly 143 votes cast by an estimated 37 people (see Appendix C.5).

Among the seven choices provided, More Frequent Bus Service received the most votes with 32, or 86% of respondents. New Suburban Circulators received the second highest number of votes, with 25 (68%). More Suburban Job Access received the third highest number of votes, with 22 (59%). The top four investments were rounded out with Infrastructure and Technology Upgrades, which came in with 19 votes (51%). More Transit for Seniors and People with Disabilities (49%) and More Urban Circulators (46%) were valued similarly. More Freeway Service received the lowest number of votes (27%).

**Figure 2 Enhancing Local Service: Number of Votes for Each of the Seven Investments**



The results differ slightly by meeting location. A higher percentage (62%) of voting participants attended public meetings outside Downtown Columbus. These participants preferred suburban circulators, suburban job access and more transit for seniors. Those who attended meetings in Downtown Columbus preferred investments that would upgrade the infrastructure and technology and create more urban circulators. Both groups agreed that more frequent bus service was their top priority.

### High Capacity Transit

Another goal of the meetings was to determine where people want High Capacity Transit service. Participants were presented a map highlighting 26 potential High Capacity Transit corridors. These corridors were determined based on the Transit Needs Assessment developed through technical analysis and community engagement conducted in Phase 1. Participants were asked to prioritize their top five corridors (see Figure 4 for map).

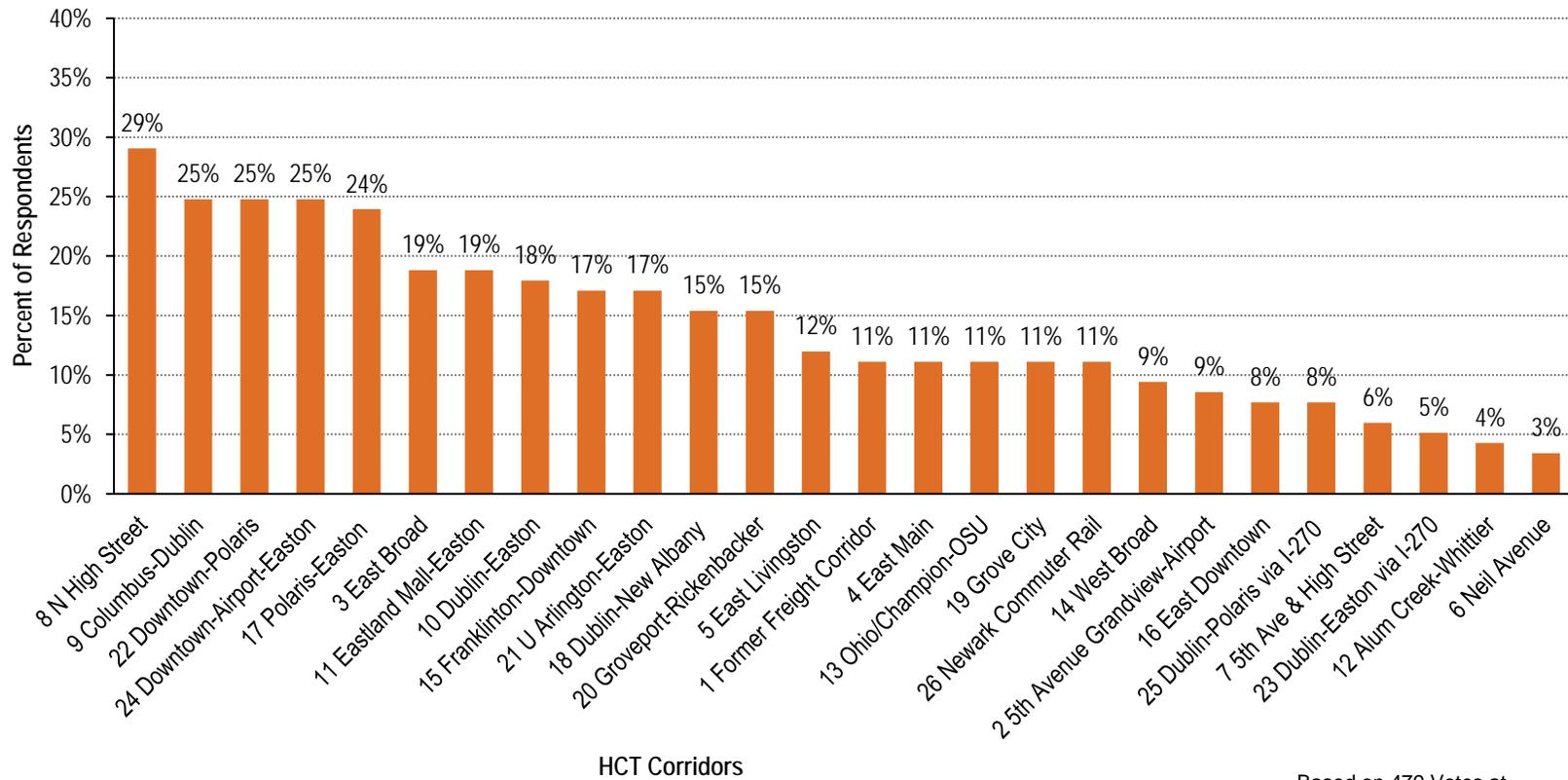
For this exercise, 479 votes were cast by an estimated 117 people. While most respondents chose from the 26 provided transit corridors, 32 people drew additional corridors or locations. These participants cast 49 votes for 37 different corridors or locations. None of the additional transit corridors garnered a significant vote (less than 3 votes) compared to the original 26 corridors.

The results of this exercise demonstrate a prevailing desire for service from downtown to destinations along the northern ring of suburbs (Dublin, Easton, Polaris), service within the northern suburbs (Polaris-Easton), and from downtown to the airport.

The top five potential High Capacity Transit corridors included:

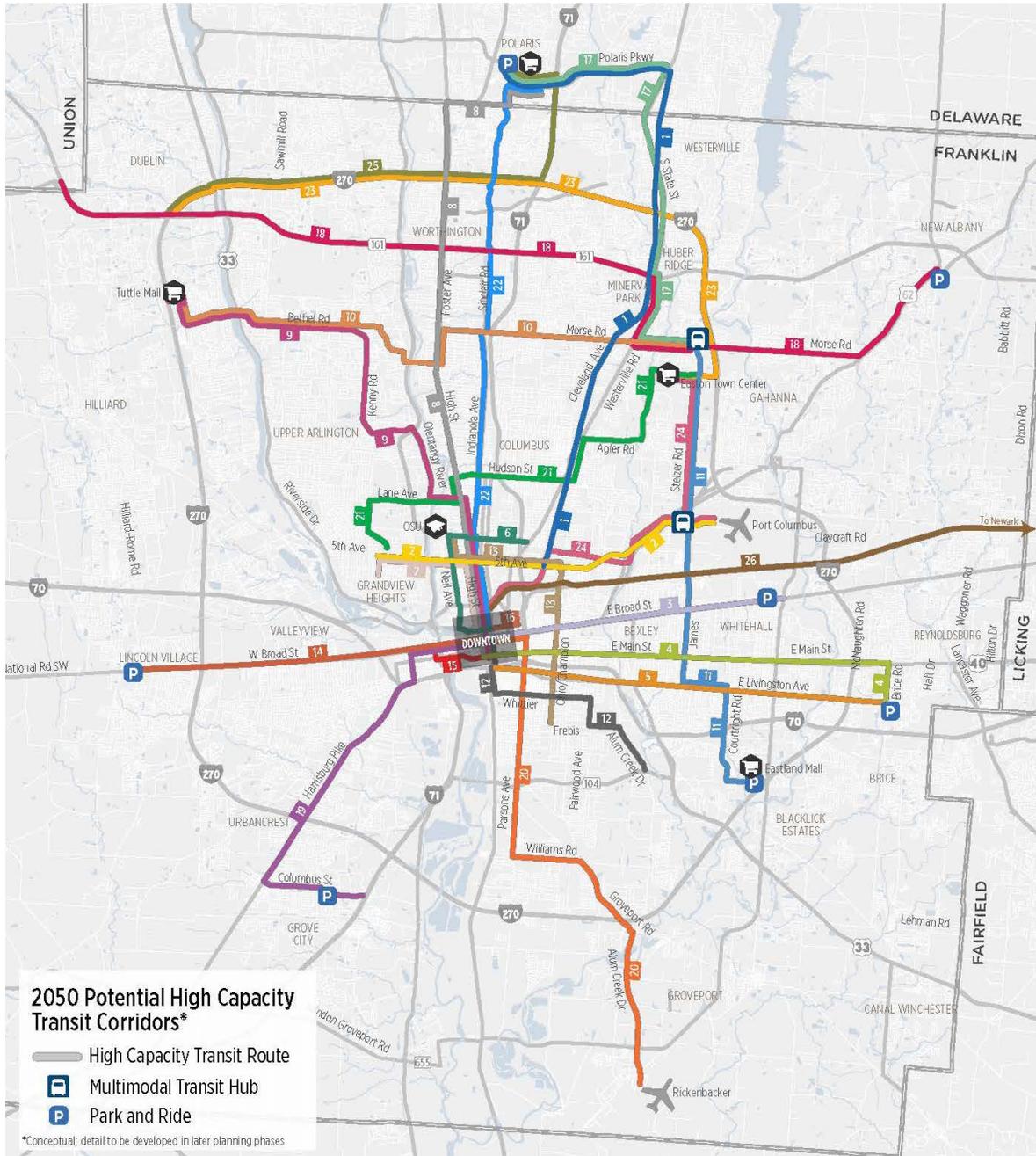
| Rank            | Transit Corridor                  | Percent of Respondents<br>(# of votes) |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------|--|
| #1              | <b>8</b> N High Street            | 29% (34)                               |
| #2 (T)          | <b>9</b> Columbus-Dublin          | 25% (29)                               |
| #2 (T)          | <b>22</b> Downtown-Polaris        | 25% (29)                               |
| #2 (T)          | <b>24</b> Downtown-Airport-Easton | 25% (29)                               |
| #5              | <b>17</b> Polaris-Easton          | 24% (28)                               |
| <b>(T) Tied</b> |                                   |  |

Figure 3 Percent of Respondents Voting “Yes” by High Capacity Transit Corridor – Written Responses



Based on 479 Votes at meetings/workshops

Figure 4 26 Potential High Capacity Transit Corridors



- |                                       |                                |                                  |                                    |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <b>1</b> Former Freight Corridor      | <b>8</b> N High Street         | <b>15</b> Franklinton-Downtown   | <b>22</b> Downtown-Polaris         |
| <b>2</b> 5th Avenue Grandview-Airport | <b>9</b> Columbus-Dublin       | <b>16</b> East Downtown          | <b>23</b> Dublin-Easton via I-270  |
| <b>3</b> East Broad                   | <b>10</b> Dublin-Easton        | <b>17</b> Polaris-Easton         | <b>24</b> Downtown-Airport-Easton  |
| <b>4</b> East Main                    | <b>11</b> Eastland Mall-Easton | <b>18</b> Dublin-New Albany      | <b>25</b> Dublin-Polaris via I-270 |
| <b>5</b> East Livingston              | <b>12</b> Alum Creek-Whittier  | <b>19</b> Grove City             | <b>26</b> Newark Commuter Rail     |
| <b>6</b> Neil Avenue                  | <b>13</b> Ohio/Champion-OSU    | <b>20</b> Groveport-Rickenbacker |                                    |
| <b>7</b> 5th Ave & High Street        | <b>14</b> West Broad           | <b>21</b> U. Arlington-Easton    |                                    |

## Ideas for Future Transit Service

Participants were also asked “What else should we keep in mind as we plan for transit in the future?” (See Appendix C.5).

These 176 comments were organized into 13 categories:

- Routes and Service Locations: 34 comments
  - Service along a specific corridor
  - Circulators
  - Service to a specific location
  - Airport to downtown connection
- Transit Service Values: 31 comments
  - Frequent service
  - High capacity service
  - Expanded coverage
  - Efficient service
  - Flexible service
  - Convenient service
- Access to Employment/Business Incentives: 11 comments
  - Access to employment
  - Business development/employee incentives
- Desire for Rail Service: 11 comments
- Bus Infrastructure Improvements: 10 comments
  - Dedicated bus lanes
  - Bus stop improvements
- Connections: 9 comments
  - Last mile
  - Multi-modal options
- Bus Passes and Transfers: 8 comments
  - Bus passes
  - All day transfers
- Transit Ideas: 8 comments
  - Using smaller buses
  - Investing in reverse commutes
  - Adding more buses
- Service Network Design: 8 comments
  - Transit hubs
  - Transit grid network
  - Reduce transfers
- Technology: 7 comments

- Extended Commute Service Times: 6 comments
  - Extended commute service times
  - Faster commutes
- Provide a Diversity of Transit Options: 6 comments
  - Design services to meet the needs of different user types and travel patterns
- Other: 27 comments
  - General observations
  - Concerns
  - Partnerships
  - Support for addressing current transit needs
  - Suggestion regarding meeting format

### 3 INTERACTIVE ONLINE SURVEY

Between September 28 and November 2, 2015, an interactive online survey was conducted to collect feedback on community priorities for transit investments and High Capacity Transit corridors. Screen captures of the survey instrument can be found in Appendix C.6. There were approximately 2,300 visitors to the survey website, of which 1,635 responded to at least one of the survey questions.

Figure 5 Responses by Survey Screen

| Survey Screen                            | Respondents  |
|--|--------------|
| Screen 1 – Welcome                       | No questions |
| Screen 2 – Transit Investment Priorities | 1,483        |
| Screen 3 – Voting on 26 HCT Corridors    | 1,393        |
| Screen 4 – Demographic questions         | 1,296        |
| All Screens                              | 1,145        |

Screen 2 asked respondents to rank their top four (out of eight) transit investment priorities in order, with “1” being most important. Each investment priority included an image and description of what the investment would entail.

Urban Circulator Service was most frequently ranked as the top priority, with 28% of respondents ranking it as “1”. Frequent Transit Network was most frequently selected as one of their top four priorities by 73% of respondents. Suburban Circulator Service was least frequently ranked as the top priority, ranked “1” by 4% of respondents. Senior and Disabled Transit was selected as one of their priorities by only 25% of respondents, fewer than any other priority.

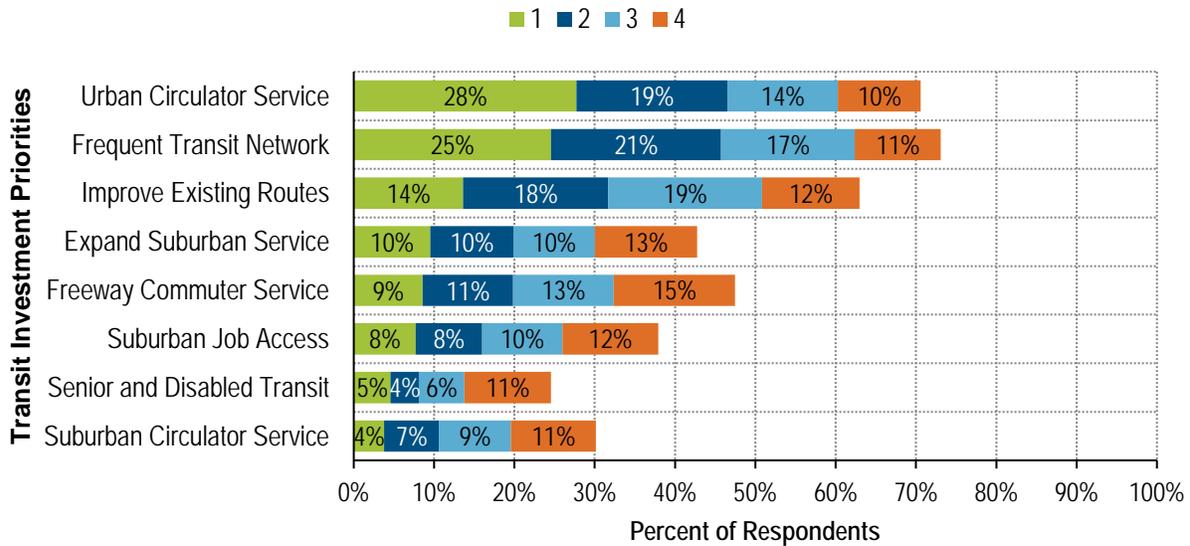
Based on the frequency with which a transit investment was their top priority (“1”), the following four priorities were the most important among survey respondents:

- Urban Circulator Service
- Frequent Transit Network
- Improve Existing Routes
- Expand Suburban Service

Based on the frequency with which a transit investment was selected as a priority (“1”-“4”), the following priorities were important to respondents:

- Urban Circulator Service
- Frequent Transit Network
- Improve Existing Routes
- Freeway Commuter Service

Figure 6 Ranking of Transit Investment Priorities



Participants were able to provide comments on each transit investment priority, as well as make a suggestion for an investment not listed. Many comments made in response to a particular investment were general or unrelated to that particular topic.

Key themes from the 242 open-ended comments included:

- Some form of rail (light rail, commuter rail, streetcar, subway)
- Expanded span of service earlier and later for job access and entertainment purposes
- All-day Express service and use of dedicated lanes to reduce travel time
- Technology improvements, specifically cashless fare payment methods and real time tracking data
- Praise for the CBUS and/or desire for expansion of the service
  - Several respondents stated concerns regarding equity, due to the CBUS being free despite serving an area that they do not consider “high need.”

A more detailed list of these comments can be found in Appendix C.7.

Screen 3 showed an interactive map of the 26 potential High Capacity Transit corridors. Participants could zoom, pan, and isolate individual corridors to understand each specific alignment. Participants were asked to vote “yes” on up to 5 corridors that they would prioritize for High Capacity Transit investment. Figure 7 shows the percent of respondents who voted “yes” for each corridor. The top 5 are shown below.

Two strong desires emerged from these results: connection from downtown to the north via High Street or a parallel route, and to Port Columbus Airport.

| Rank   | Transit Corridor                      | % of Respondents |
|--------|---------------------------------------|------------------|
| #1     | <b>22</b> Downtown-Polaris            | 43%              |
| #2     | <b>24</b> Downtown-Airport-Easton     | 40%              |
| #3     | <b>7</b> 5th Ave & High Street        | 37%              |
| #4 (T) | <b>8</b> N High Street                | 32%              |
| #4 (T) | <b>2</b> 5th Avenue Grandview-Airport | 32%              |

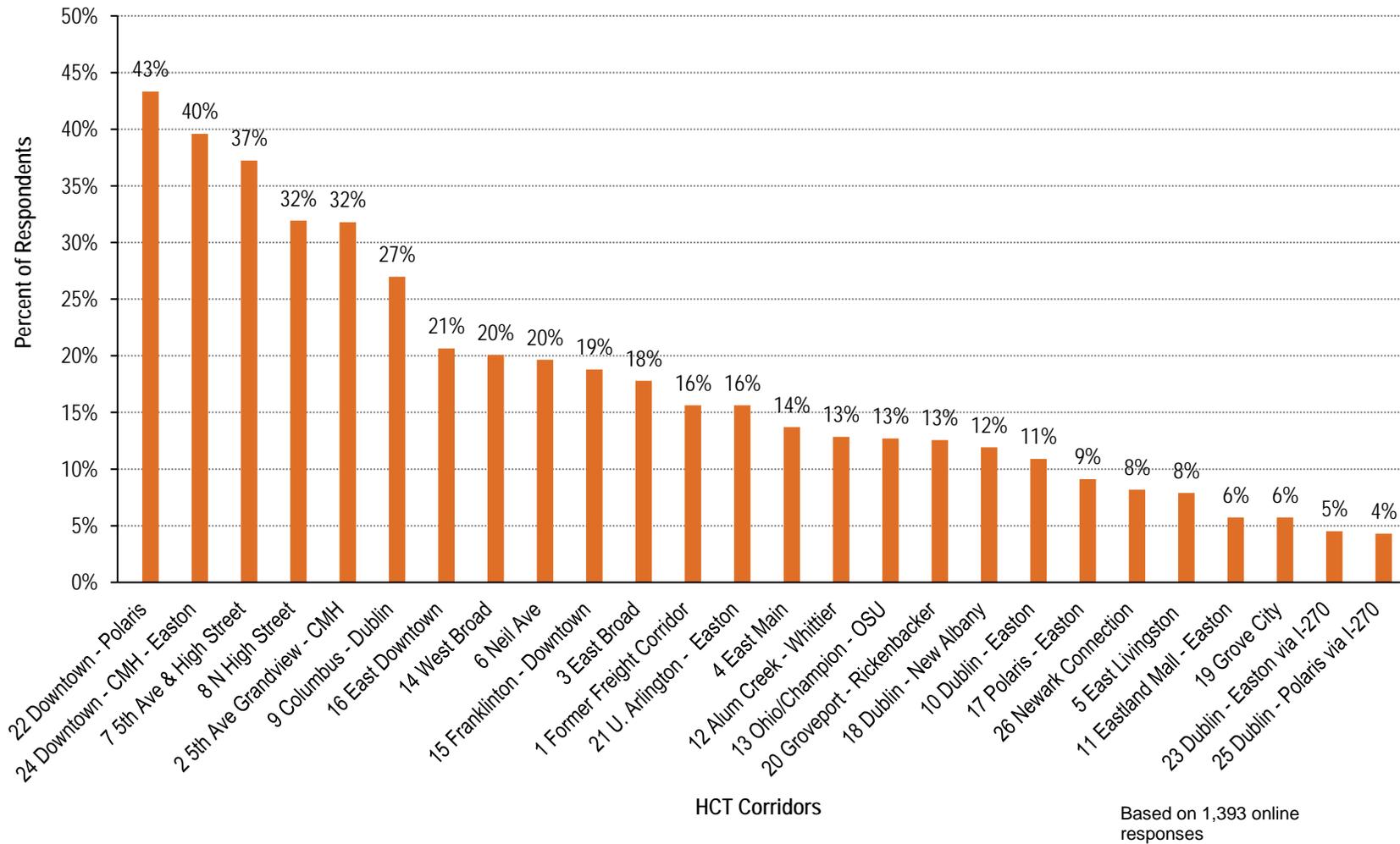
(T) Tied

Participants were able to provide comments on each of the 26 corridors, in addition to their votes. Most corridors had five or fewer comments, and many comments simply affirmed that the respondent agreed with the proposed service. For some corridors, comments indicated a specific reason for opposition to a corridor or a suggestion for extending/changing the corridor, such as:

- Concern regarding existing bike facilities on the alignment of 1 (Former Freight Corridor)
- Keep 6 (Neil Avenue) oriented toward bike travel with traffic calming, rather than the addition of transit
- Extend 9 (Columbus-Dublin) further north to Bridge Street
- Extend 12 (Alum Creek-Whittier) to Canal Winchester or Hamilton Road
- Use 26 (Newark Connection) to also serve Port Columbus Airport

A detailed list of these comments can be found in Appendix C.7.

Figure 7 Percent of Respondents Voting "Yes" by High Capacity Transit Corridor – Online Responses

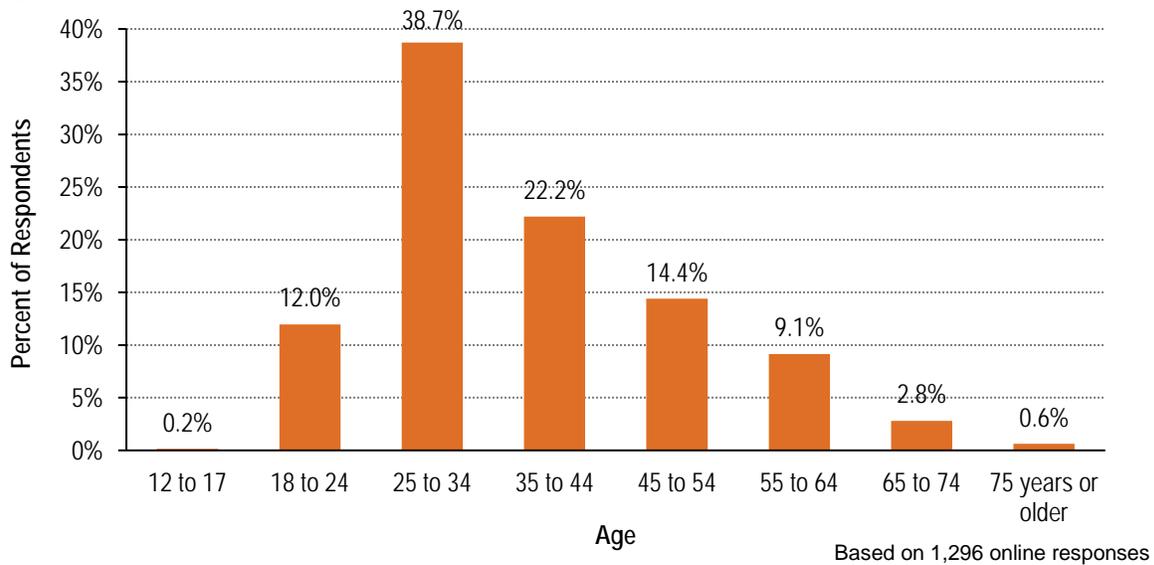


Screen 4 contained optional questions regarding respondent demographics. Results are shown in Figures 8 through 13.

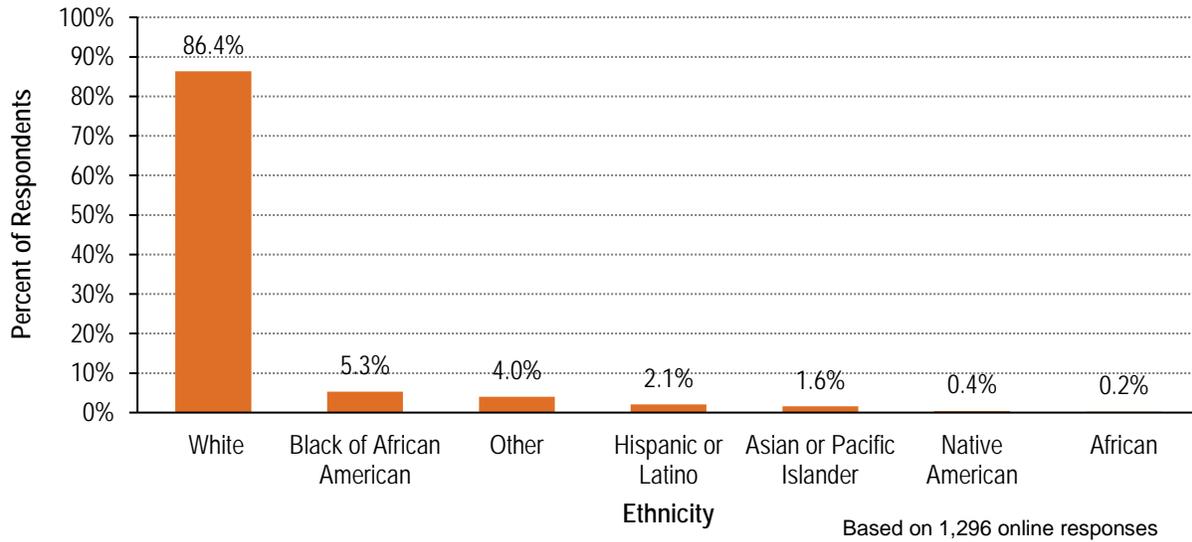
More than two-thirds of respondents are between the ages of 25 and 34, 86% are white, 80% typically have access to a vehicle, and almost half make more than \$75,000 per year. Cross-tabulation of household income and number of persons in household indicated that about 5% of respondents live in households below the poverty line.

Respondents live in 60 zip codes. Respondents in 43201 – which generally covers Italian Village, Milo Grogan, and areas east of OSU campus between High Street and 4th Street – had the largest share of respondents (10%). Respondents in 17 of the zip codes live outside the COTA service area. These 17 zip codes made up less than 3% of the responses, half of which came from zip codes in areas bordering the COTA service area, such as Newark, Pataskala, and Delaware County. Due to their close proximity, these areas could benefit from potential transit improvements despite being outside of COTA’s service area today. Responses by zip code are mapped in Figure 14.

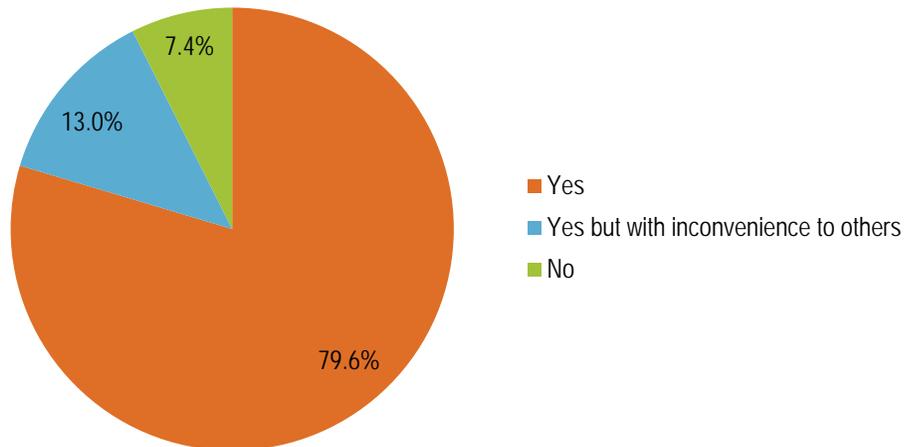
**Figure 8 Respondent Age**



**Figure 9 Respondent Ethnicity**

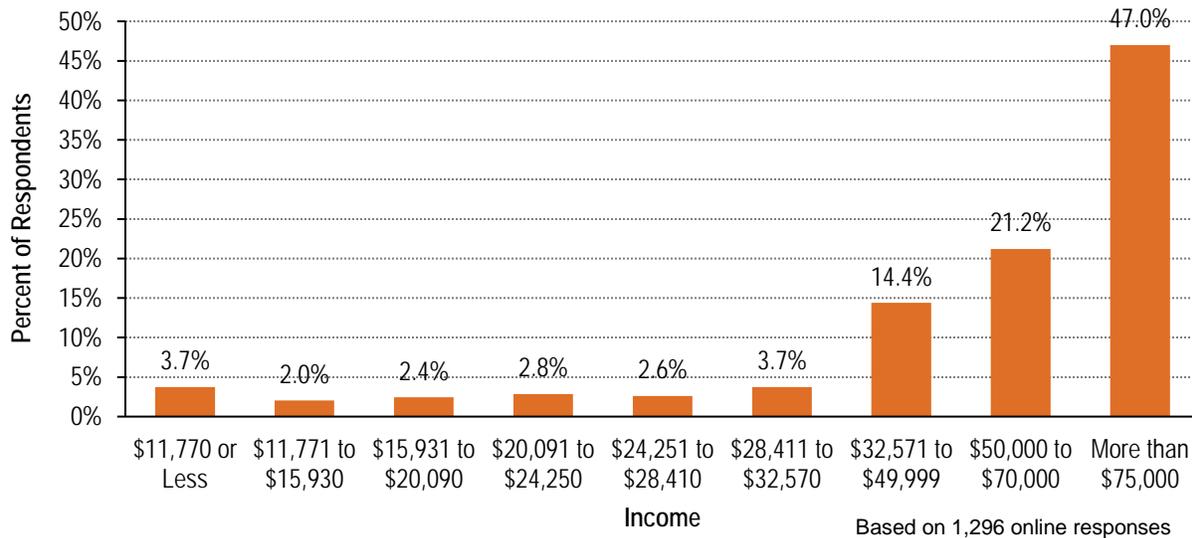


**Figure 10 Percent of Respondents with Access to Vehicle**



Based on 1,296 online responses

**Figure 11 Respondent Income**



**Figure 12 Number of People in Respondent Household**

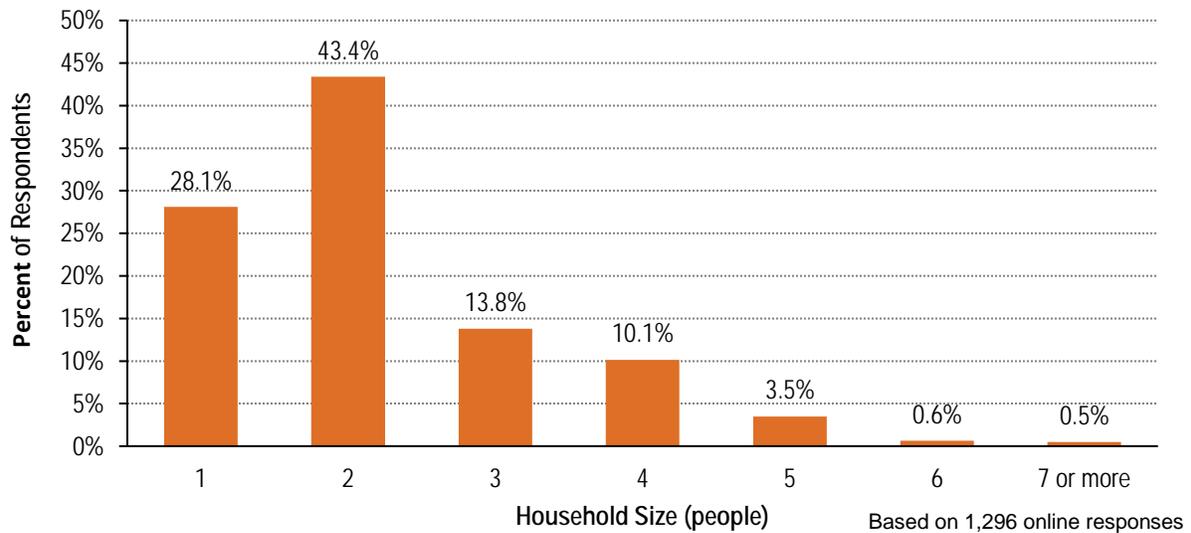
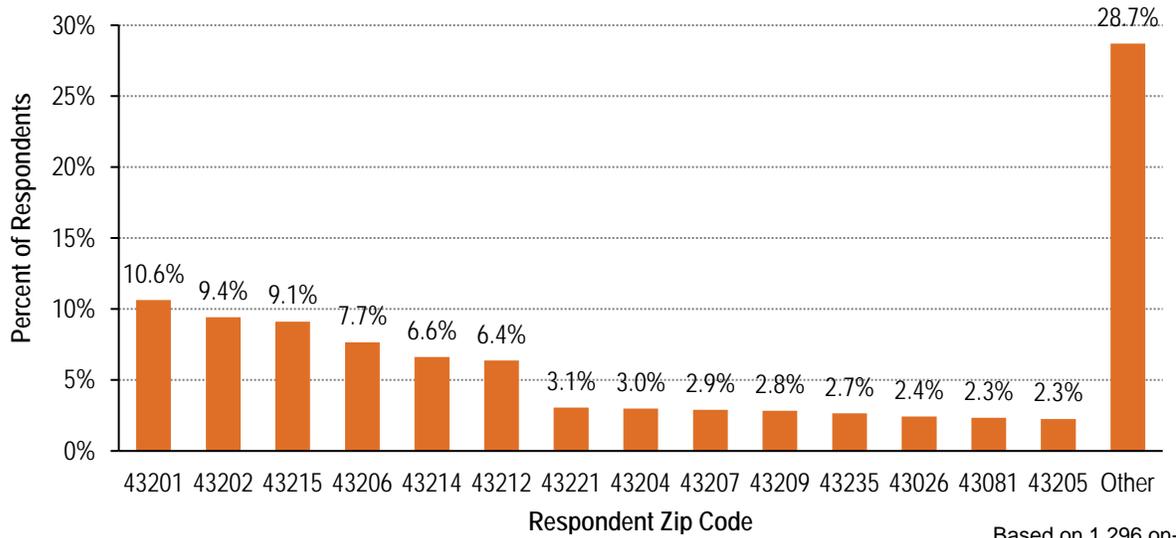


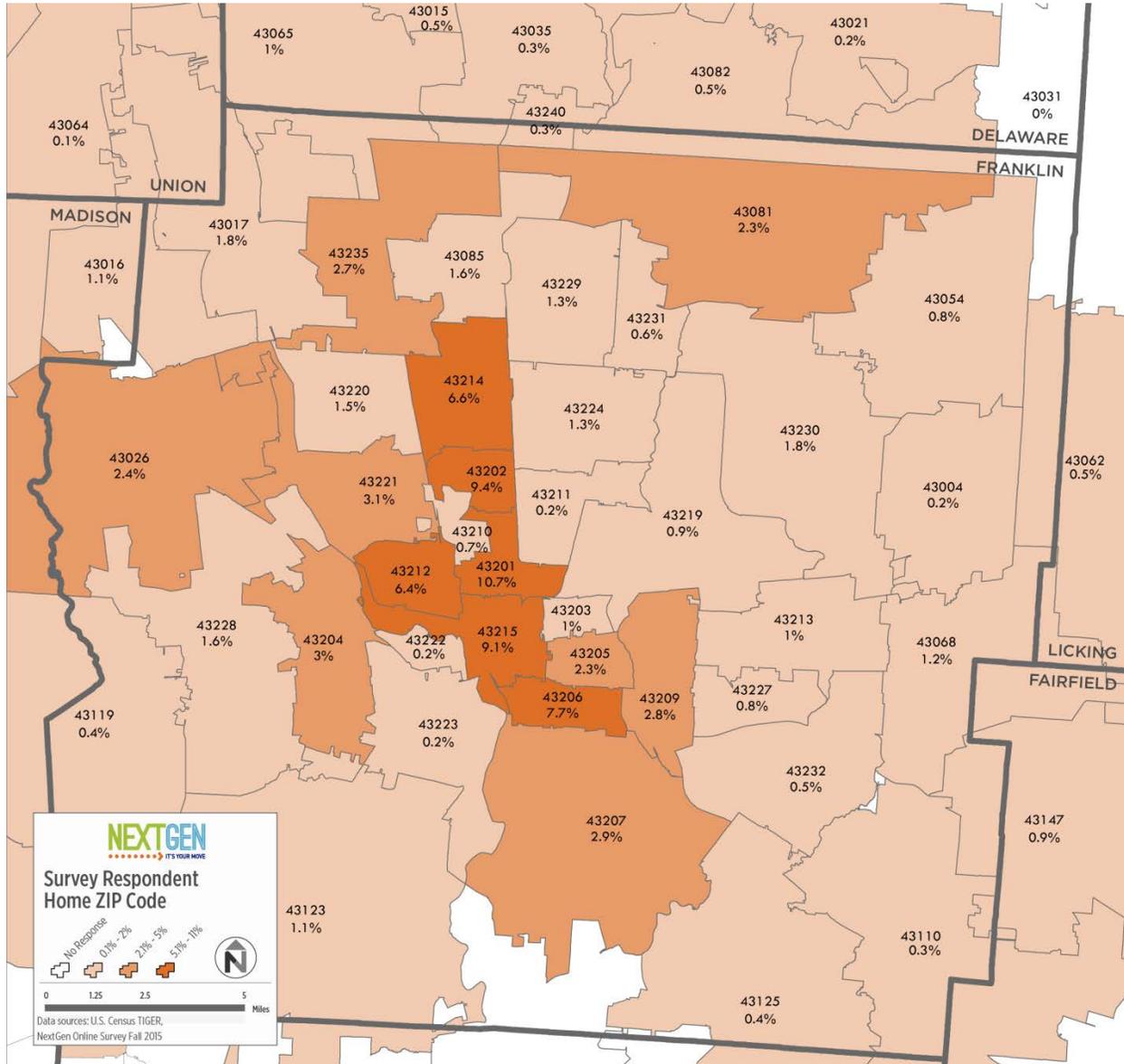
Figure 13 Percent of Respondents by Home Zip Code



Note: The "Other" category groups all zip codes with less than 2% of respondents

Based on 1,296 on-line responses

Figure 14 Survey Respondent Home Zip Code



Based on 1,296 online responses

## 4 CONNECT COLUMBUS COORDINATION

The Columbus Multimodal Thoroughfare Plan (branded as Connect ColumbUS) is being conducted by the City of Columbus. This planning effort is simultaneous with NextGen, and in some cases, staff from the NextGen team participated in the Connect ColumbUS outreach to help widen the reach of the NextGen study. Members of the NextGen study team working on both projects participated in three multi-day community workshops held in June, July and September. These workshops included a design open house, where community members were encouraged to discuss their transportation needs and provide comments about central Ohio's future transportation needs. While workshop attendants did not participate in the specific exercises crafted for NextGen, they did provide general comments about central Ohio's future transit needs.

In total, the team collected approximately 270 comments about central Ohio's transit service development through the Connect ColumbUS workshops during the NextGen Phase 2 public outreach period. The NextGen team reviewed these comments and broadly classified them into the following comments types (number of comments shown in parenthesis):

- More and better bus service (107):
  - Improve coverage, serve more places
  - Increase service frequency and service hours
  - More direct service from suburbs
- High Capacity Transit (95)
  - Light rail system (48)
    - Between downtown and the suburbs
    - Between downtown and the airport
  - Commuter rail service to connect suburbs to downtown (20)
  - Bus rapid transit system (9)
  - Streetcar system in downtown (9)
  - Regional rail network, with service to Chicago and Cincinnati (9)
- Support for COTA's service in general, particularly CBUS (13)
- Information technology (14)
  - Fare collection system
  - Real-time passenger information
  - More and better bus apps
  - Technologically advanced fare payment systems

## 5 CONCLUSION

The primary goal of Phase 2 community and stakeholder outreach was to solicit feedback on potential transit improvements that were developed in Phase 1. Specifically, the public was asked to prioritize types of transit investments and specific High Capacity Transit corridors.

The highest priority transit investment identified by meeting and workshop attendees as well as online survey respondents was more frequent bus service. Suburban circulator and suburban job access services were high priorities for meeting and workshop attendees, while urban circulator services and improvements to existing routes were high priorities for online survey respondents.

Overall Phase 2 outreach revealed a desire for High Capacity Transit corridors between downtown, OSU and Polaris as well as to the airport.

| Rank | Transit Corridor                      | % of Respondents |
|------|---------------------------------------|------------------|
| #1   | <b>22</b> Downtown-Polaris            | 42%              |
| #2   | <b>24</b> Downtown-Airport-Easton     | 38%              |
| #3   | <b>7</b> 5th Ave & High Street        | 35%              |
| #4   | <b>8</b> N High Street                | 32%              |
| #5   | <b>2</b> 5th Avenue Grandview-Airport | 30%              |

General comments related to future transit needs were collected through meetings, workshops, neighborhood sessions and the online survey as well as workshops hosted by Connect Columbus. Both sources of community input reflected a desire for improved transit (frequency and span) and technology that would make service more convenient. More than one third of Connect Columbus comments focused on a desire for High Capacity Transit, which is consistent with the findings from the NextGen outreach and is a primary focus of the NextGen process overall.