



3: Public Outreach

METHODOLOGY

Consistent with the goals outlined in MARC's Public Participation Plan⁴ (PPP), the public outreach process for the Coordinated Plan included a variety of outreach activities to inform the public about the plan as well as shape the plan itself. The outreach process included in-person and online engagement through committees and public workshops, rider and provider surveys, as well as social media posts to raise awareness.

All outreach materials were provided in English as well as Spanish, with other language translations available upon request (though none were requested). Workshops where individuals with hearing loss or hearing impairment were present had American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters to translate what was said, and each workshop had a sound system for amplifying speakers to ensure all participants with hearing impairment or deaf individuals could clearly understand what was being said. Insights were also drawn from engagement conducted by other planning efforts, namely Connected KC 2050 (CKC 2050, the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) for the region) and the Transportation Resiliency KC Plan. The sections that follow go into more detail for each engagement category.

IN-PERSON PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Regional data and maps can only get us so far in our analysis; in-person engagement adds another dimension to our understanding. Engaging directly with organization staff, patients, and riders adds the qualitative, human context that grounds the data in personal experiences and may reveal trends the data misses.

Locations

To engage on that deeper level and better connect with these populations, MARC conducted a series of three in-person workshops at locations around the region, with an approximate total attendance of 50 to 60 people. These workshops were held at the following locations, each serving a segment of the population that the Coordinated Plan aims to better understand.

- **Ability KC:** A comprehensive outpatient medical rehabilitation facility that serves people with a wide range of disabilities. Reliable transportation is essential for getting patients to and from their appointments.
- **The Whole Person:** An organization that aims to help individuals with disabilities to live independently by supporting their ability to secure housing, transportation, and employment opportunities.
- **Alphapointe:** One of the Kansas City region's largest organizations dedicated to serving people with vision loss and low vision individuals, they help provide employment and job training opportunities and rehabilitation services. Navigating transportation can be particularly challenging for people with vision loss.

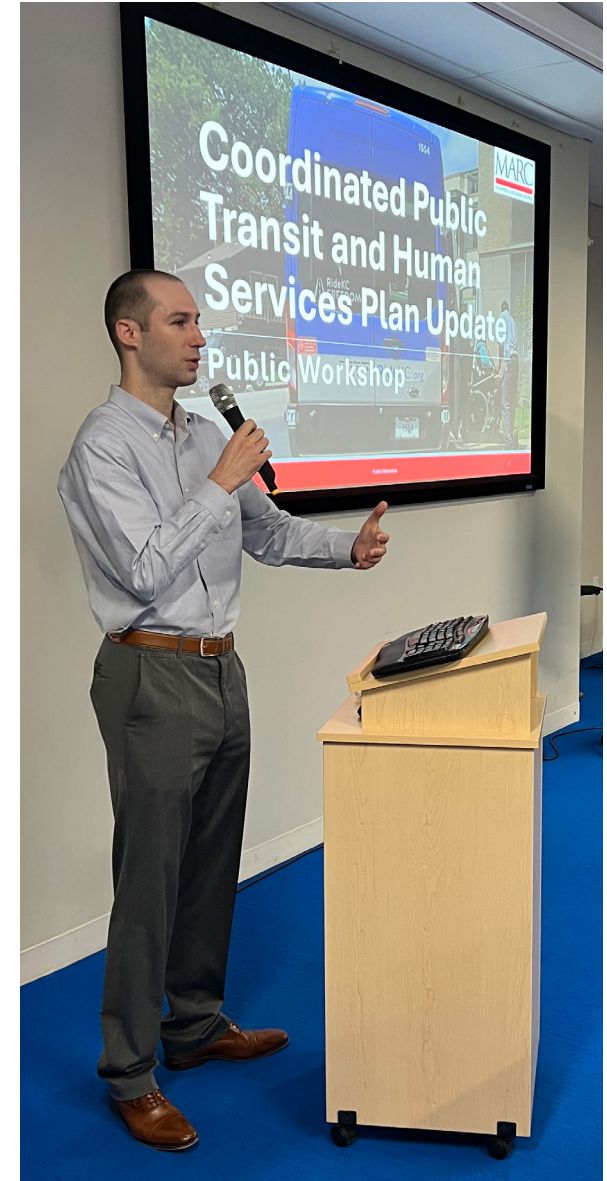
Findings and Key Insights

Conversations covered a wide range of topics and experiences, but several key trends emerged.

- Riders don't have access to easy-to-understand information, especially blind users.
- Changes to the system can come as a surprise and leave transit dependent people stuck if they purchased or leased a home or apartment based on transit access.
- Riders with disabilities feel deprioritized by changes to paratransit service combining with on-demand service.

4. [Public Participation Plan, MARC Transportation Department, December 2023](#)

Figure 20 – Public Workshop at The Whole Person Services



PUBLIC SURVEY

A public survey conducted from late August through the end of October 2025 gathered 265 responses via online and printed forms. Members of the MAC distributed the survey through their networks, including transportation service providers, senior living facilities, disability advocacy groups, and neighborhood organizations such as the Center for Neighborhoods at UMKC. Social media advertisements were also used to expand outreach.

Location And Demographics

Survey participants across the region were required to identify their city of residence. While most respondents reported living in Kansas City, Missouri; Kansas City, Kansas; or Independence, at least one response was recorded from most area cities. A majority of respondents were older than 45, including 32% between ages 45 and 64, 26% between 64 and 84, and 3% who were 85 or older. The 25-to-44 age group also represented a notable share, accounting for 21% of responses.

Figure 22 – Age of Respondents

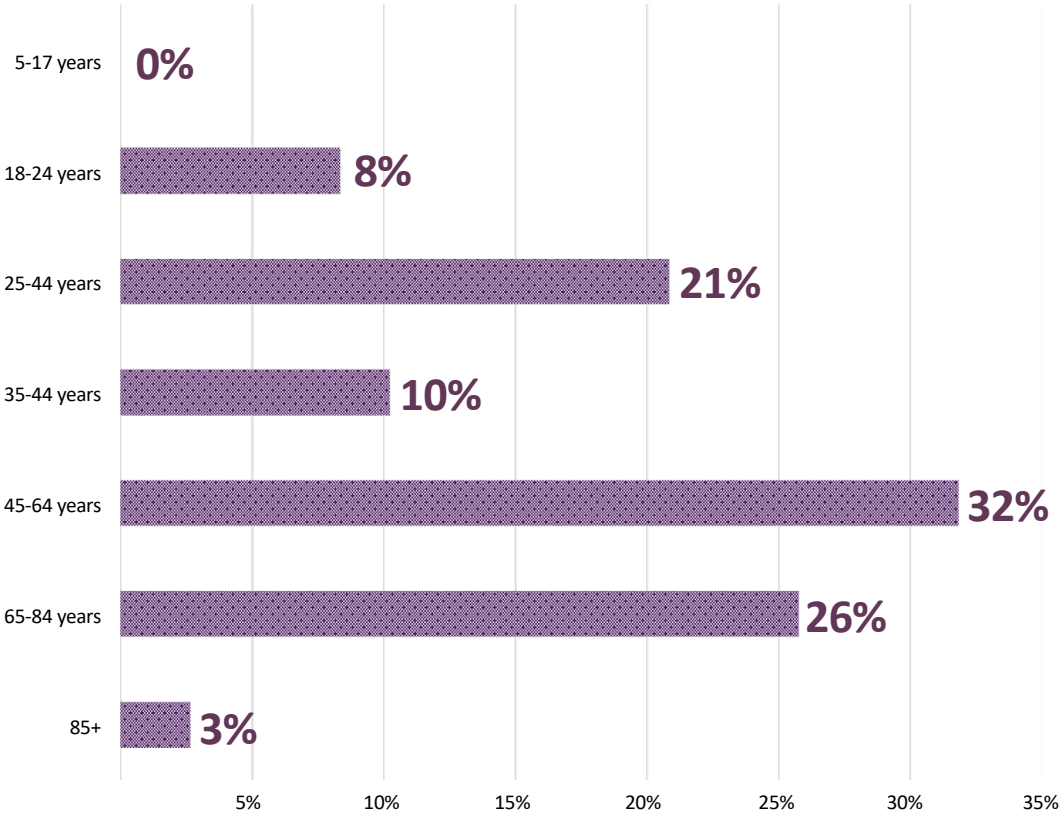
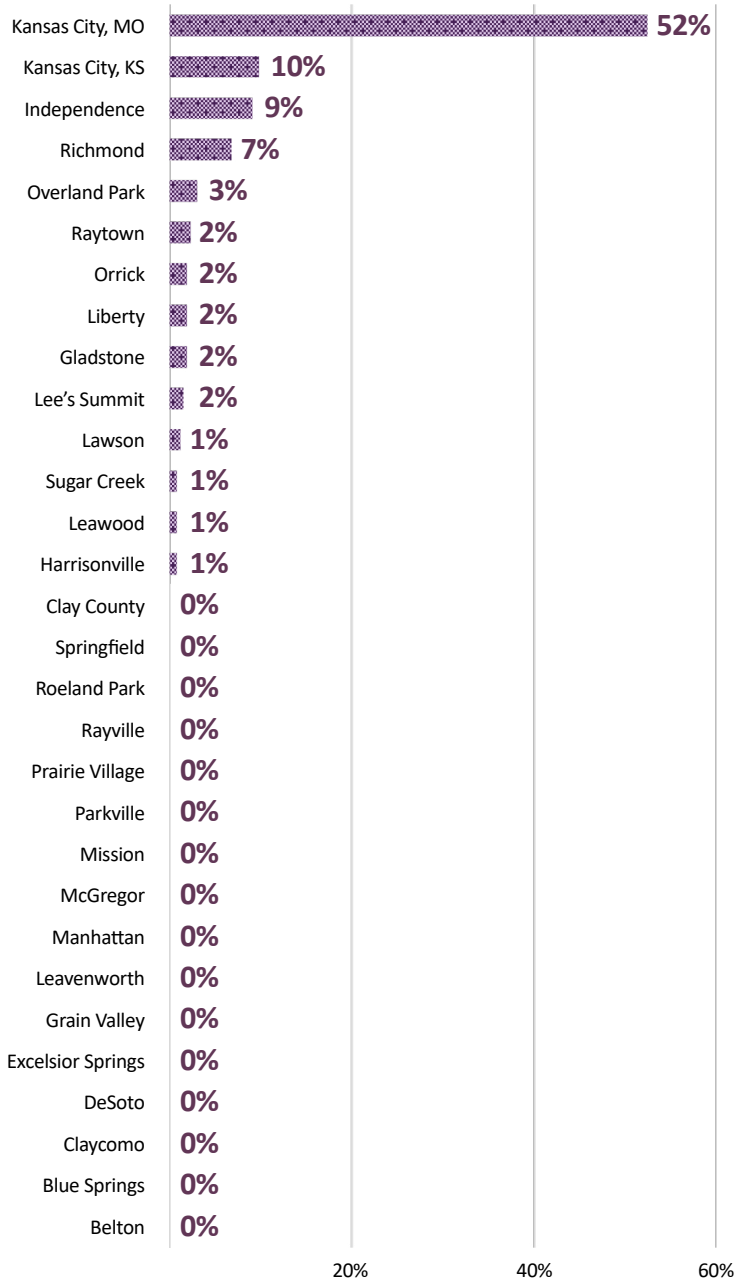


Figure 21 – Percentage of Respondents by City



Income Disparities

Most respondents were at the lower end of the household income scale, with 49% reporting making less than \$25,000 annually. The second largest bracket was between \$25,000 and \$49,000 annually, with 27% of respondents.

ADA Awareness

When asked, the majority (61%) of respondents reported that they did not have a disability, as shown in Figure 24. According to the survey question, a disability was defined as an ambulatory disability, visual impairment, cognitive disability, intellectual disability, or self-care disability. Of those that reported having a disability, the majority stated they had an ambulatory disability (40%), as shown in Figure 25. Respondents could select as many disabilities as applied to them.

Figure 24 – Percent of Respondents with a Disability

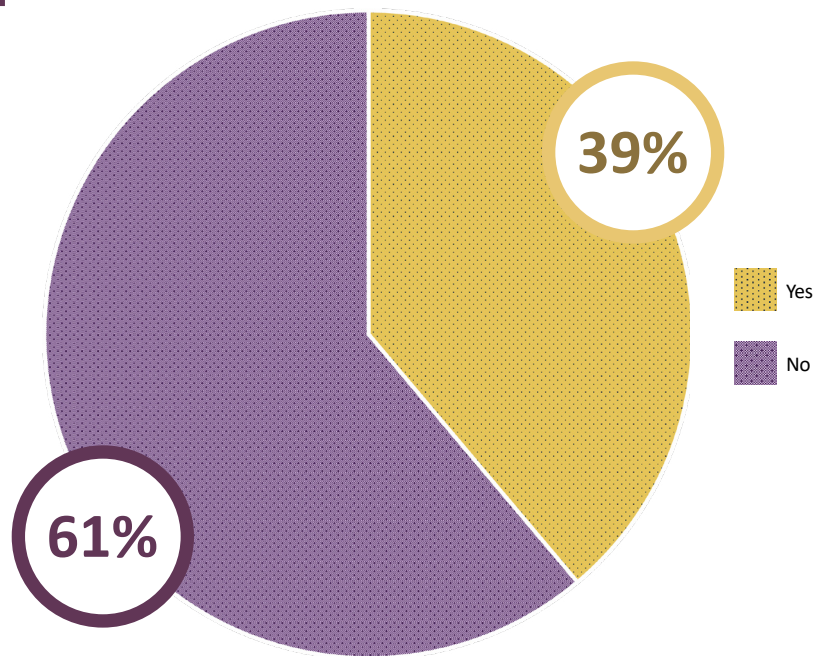


Figure 23 – Annual Household Income

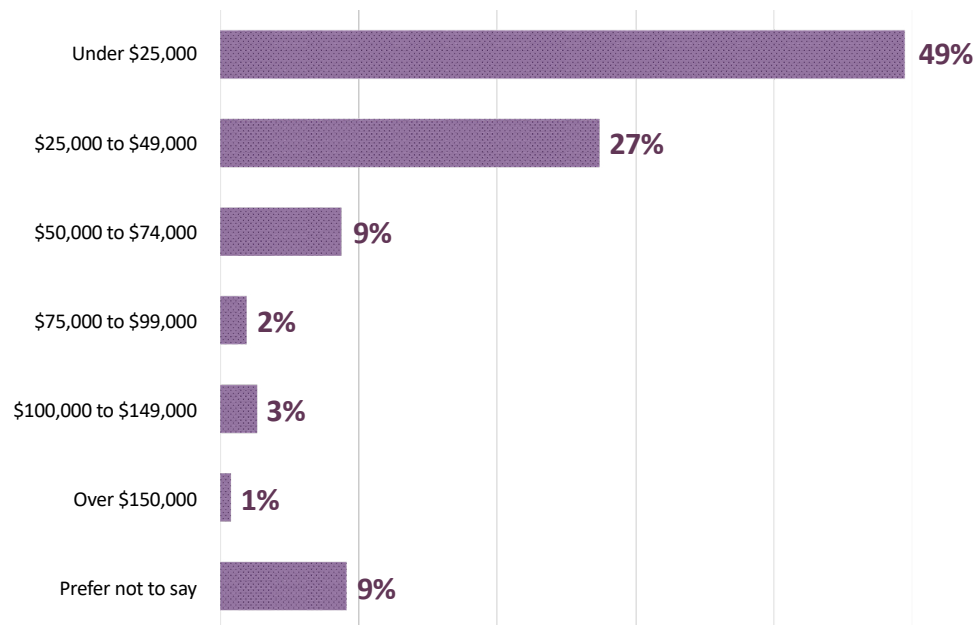
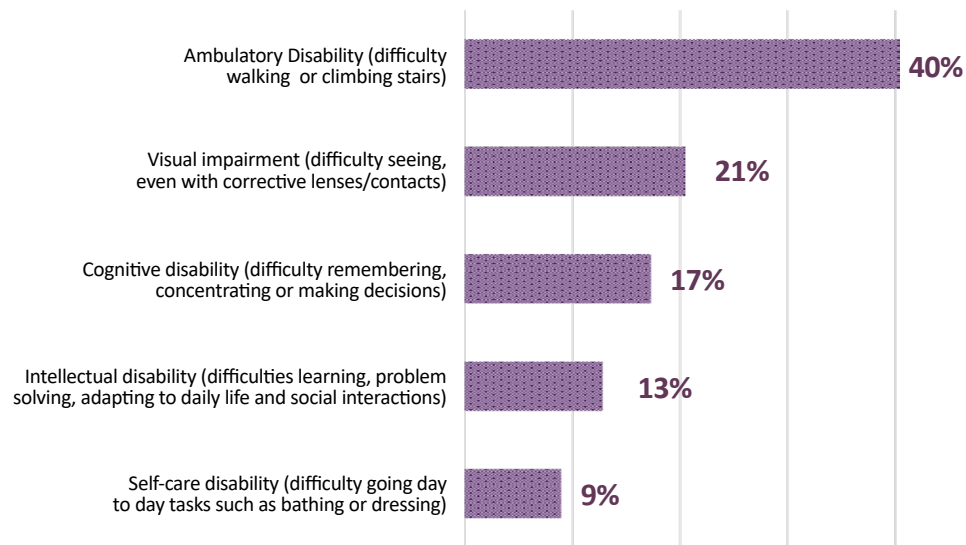


Figure 25 – Disabilities Reported by Respondents



User Satisfaction with Existing Service

As part of the survey respondents were asked to what degree they agreed or disagreed with the following questions on a scale of strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree, or not applicable to me. The approximate percentage trends for each are listed below as positive or negative.

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“I can get where I need to go at any time of the day.”

Negative sentiment was highest at 48%, positive sentiment at 37%, and neutral sentiment at 15%.

“I can get where I need to go, no matter where it is.”

Negative sentiment was highest at 59%, positive sentiment at 26%, and neutral sentiment at 15%.

“My transportation is an affordable part of my budget.”

Positive sentiment was highest at 57%, neutral sentiment at 22%, and negative sentiment at 21%.

“I can get where I need to go any day of the week.”

Negative sentiment was highest at 55%, positive sentiment at 28%, and neutral sentiment at 17%.

“I know and trust my driver(s).”

Positive sentiment was highest at 48%, neutral sentiment at 35%, and negative sentiment at 17%.

“I have many different options for getting around.”

Negative sentiment was highest at 50%, positive sentiment at 30%, and neutral sentiment at 20%.

“I can get where I need to go on time, reliably.”

Negative sentiment was highest at 43%, positive sentiment at 38%, and neutral sentiment at 19%.

“I always know about changes to my transportation service before they happen.”

Negative sentiment was highest at 48%, neutral sentiment at 20%, and neutral sentiment at 16%.

“My transportation provider(s) is adaptive to my needs.”

Positive sentiment was highest at 40%, negative sentiment at 36%, and neutral sentiment at 24%.

”

Mode Usage

Respondents were asked to choose from a number of transportation mode choices. The options presented were rideshare (IRIS, Uber, Lyft, etc.), personal vehicle (whether you drive or a family member or friend drives you), walking, paratransit services, taxis, volunteer services, biking, or a private van service (church van, senior center van, etc.). Respondents were instructed to select all that apply.

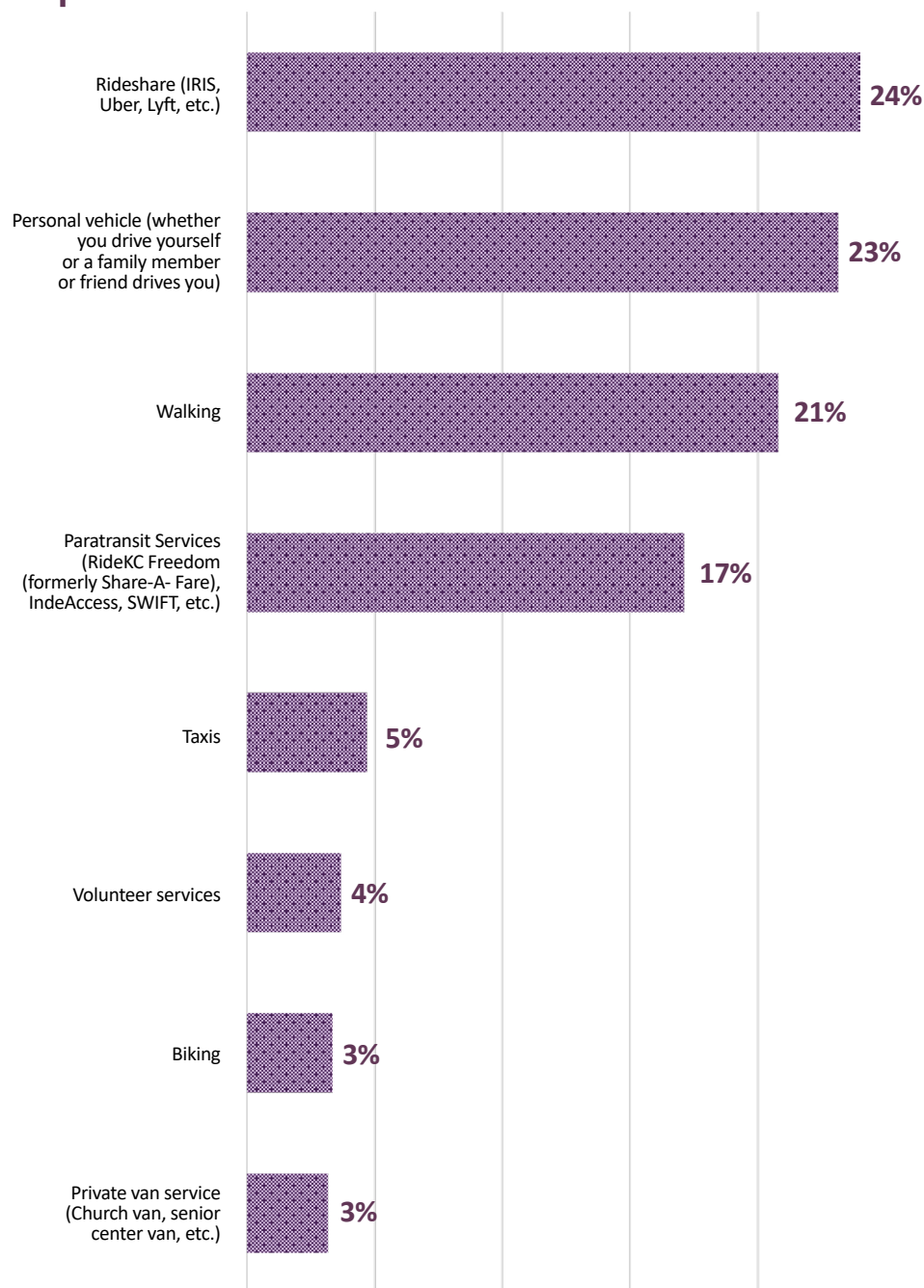
The top modes chosen were rideshare at 24%, personal vehicle at 23%, walking at 21%, and paratransit at 17%. Taxis, volunteer services, biking, and private van all came in under 5% each.

Desired Destinations

OD data is good for getting larger travel trends geographically but doesn't provide specific insights on a human scale. Survey respondents were asked "What specific places in the Kansas City region should specialized transportation be expanded?" The following lists the top 10 location categories respondents mentioned in their answers.

- Grocery Stores and Essential Shopping:** The most frequently mentioned stores specifically were Walmart, Price Chopper, Aldi, Sam's Club, Harps, Apple Market, and Hy-Vee.
- Medical and Healthcare Appointments:** Unsurprisingly healthcare was often cited, specifically doctor's offices, hospitals (especially VA hospitals, KU Med Center), dialysis centers, labs, physical therapy, dental clinics, and pharmacies. These are critical, non-discretionary trips that are often hindered by a lack of direct or reliable service.
- Employment and Job Centers:** Specific areas mentioned included industrial areas, manufacturing hubs in Kansas/Missouri, Olathe, Lenexa, Overland Park, Liberty (Amazon), and North Kansas City. Lack of service to major employment hubs, especially in the suburbs and across state lines, directly impacts earning potential.
- Family, Friends and Social Visits:** In addition to day-to-day trips as mentioned above, many respondents mentioned a desire for visiting family homes, friends' houses, and relatives in suburbs like Lee's Summit, Blue Springs, Independence, and Gladstone. Transportation barriers contribute to social isolation, preventing visits to loved ones.
- Suburban Centers and Retail:** Respondents mentioned Independence (specifically the mall), Lee's Summit, Blue Springs, Overland Park, Gladstone, Raytown, and Grandview. There was a general theme of being cut off from neighboring cities and their commercial/retail centers due to reduced or non-existent cross-regional routes.
- Entertainment and Community Life:** Recreational opportunities were mentioned often, with respondents expressing a desire to go to movies, restaurants, the zoo, Starlight Theatre, Crown Center, the Plaza, museums, parks, lakes, Kansas City Chiefs games, and community centers. Lack of evening/weekend service and poor connections limit access to recreation and cultural activities, reducing quality of life.

Figure 26 – Transportation Modes Used by Respondents



10. **Essential Services and Daily Errands:** These included banks, post offices, laundromats, libraries, and government offices (Social Security Administration, courts, probation). These errands become major obstacles.
11. **Educational and Religious Institutions:** Churches (frequently mentioned), community colleges (specifically Johnson County Community College and Metropolitan Community College), and UMKC. These requests highlight the need for weekend service (for worship) and reliable service to higher education.
12. **Regional and Long-Distance Travel:** Respondents expressed interest in traveling to KCI airport, St. Joseph, Lawrence, and out-of-state travel. The airport is repeatedly cited as poorly connected, having only one hourly fixed-route connection. Desire for connections to nearby cities highlights the lack of a regional network.
13. **Specific High-Demand Corridors:** North Kansas City, 23rd Street in Kansas City Missouri/Independence, North Oak Trafficway (Gladstone), and the former 106 Route in KCK. These are repeatedly mentioned as critical corridors where service has been cut or is insufficient.

Smartphone Ownership and Usage

Smartphones and cell phones have become widespread; zero respondents reported not owning a cell phone or smartphone. As shown in Figure 27, 92% of respondents said they have a smartphone (cell phone with internet access), while the remaining 8% said they have a cell phone that does not have internet access (calls/texts only). Respondents were then asked how often they used a cell phone for trip planning; most respondents (64%) use their cell phone for trip planning daily, shown in Figure 28.

Figure 27 – Cell Phone Ownership

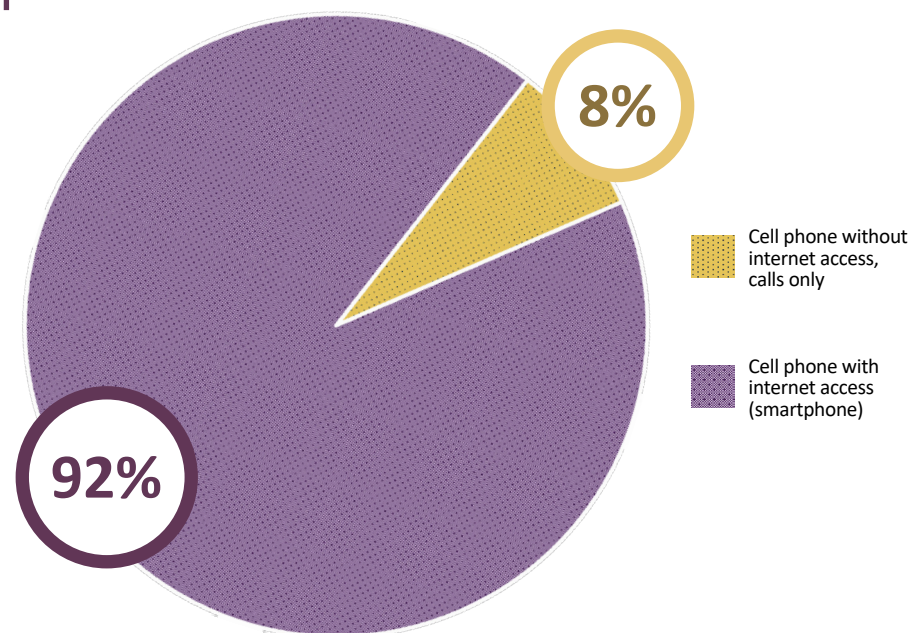
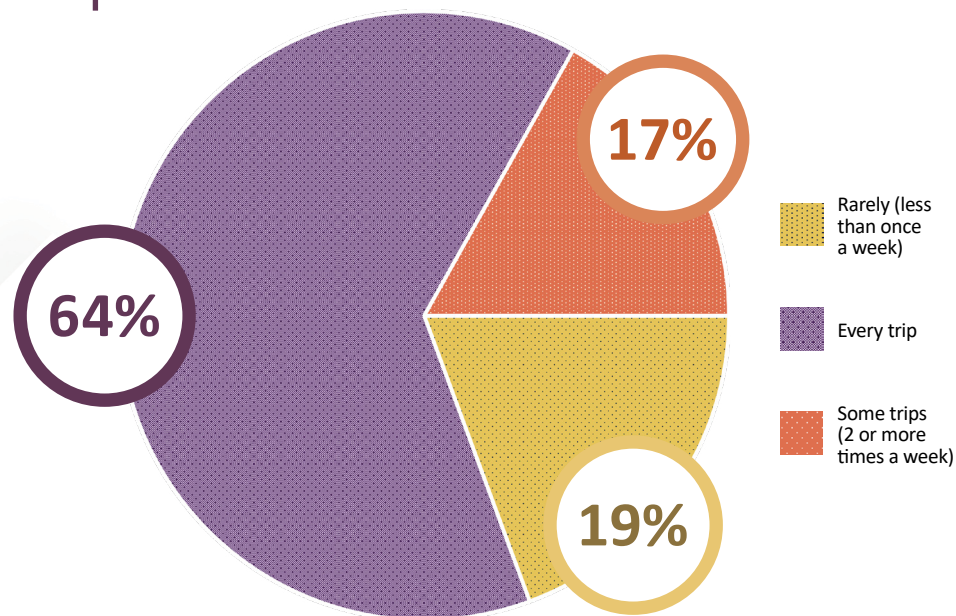


Figure 28 - Cell Phone Utilization for Transportation



Open-Ended Responses

The following are summaries of the key trends that emerged for the two main open-ended questions: what is your biggest obstacle, and what else would you like to tell us?



What is Your Biggest Obstacle to Using the Existing Transportation Services Available?



Cost and Affordability:

The most frequently cited barrier, especially for those on fixed or low incomes.

High expenses for rideshare services (Uber/Lyft) create financial strain.

Many respondents reported choosing not to travel due to cost.



Limited Service Availability/Coverage:

Major gaps in service areas, particularly in suburban and outlying regions (e.g., Raytown, Grandview, Gladstone, Lees Summit, and parts of Independence).

Lack of routes to essential destinations like workplaces, medical facilities, Walmart, and KCI airport. Paratransit and IRIS services often do not serve needed areas or have restrictive boundaries.



Unreliable and Infrequent Service:

Despite KCATA's statistically above average on time performance, buses were cited as frequently late, sometimes not showing at all, especially on weekends, evenings, and holidays. Long wait times along routes with hourly service and in some cases poor transfer coordination cause missed connections and long end to end travel times.

Last-minute cancellations and schedule changes without notification.



Inadequate Accessibility for Disabled and Older Adults:

Physical barriers: lack of sidewalks, benches, shelters, and long walking distances to stops.

Vehicles don't always accommodate wheelchairs or walkers properly; drivers were reported as sometimes untrained in assisting disabled riders.

Services are effectively unavailable for those who cannot walk to stops or wait outdoors in extreme weather.



Communication and Scheduling Challenges:

Respondents expressed difficulty booking rides, especially for same-day or weekend trips. Respondents said apps and schedules were often inaccurate and buses may not stop at posted locations. Inflexible advance-booking requirements (e.g., 2-day notice) don't suit dynamic needs like medical appointments.



Operational Hours and Weekend/Holiday Gaps:

Limited or no service on Sundays, holidays, and outside typical business hours (e.g., after 6 p.m.). This restricts access to jobs, worship, family visits, and essential errands.



Notable geographic and demographic pain points included Wyandotte and Jackson Counties, as they face higher concentrations of poverty and personal vehicle scarcity, amplifying these issues. Suburban residents feel particularly underserved, with few transit options.



What else would you like to tell us about transportation services in the Kansas City region, and how to improve them?



Expand Service Coverage and Restore Routes:

Reinstate eliminated routes (namely in Independence and Gladstone) and expand geographic coverage to underserved suburbs like Lee's Summit, Belton, Raytown, and Overland Park.

Improve connections to job centers, airports, and essential retail (e.g., Walmart, Hy-Vee).



Increase Frequency, Reliability and Service Hours:

Increase frequency from hourly to every 30 minutes or less to reduce missed connections and long waits.

Extend operating hours into evenings, early mornings, weekends, and holidays to serve shift workers and enable social/errand trips. Improve schedule adherence and ensure real-time updates are accurate.



Improve Accessibility and Physical Infrastructure:

Make buses and stops more accessible for seniors and people with disabilities (wheelchair securement, driver assistance). Add benches, shelters, and weather protection at stops.

Ensure cleanliness and sanitation on vehicles. Improve sidewalks and crosswalks for safe access to stops.



Ensure Affordability:

There was strong support to keep fares free or very low-cost, recognizing riders' limited incomes.

Improve communication and accessibility of zero-cost programs and eligibility information.

Address perceived inequity in service cuts for lower-income areas.



Modernize Technology and Customer Service:

Develop a reliable, user-friendly app for scheduling, real-time tracking, and trip planning. Improve customer service and complaint resolution processes; ensure calls are returned.

Provide clear, accessible information for non-tech-savvy users.



Secure Regional Funding and Strategic Vision:

Establish a dedicated, sustainable regional funding source. Foster cross-jurisdictional cooperation to create a truly regional system.

Invest in long-term infrastructure like expanded rail/streetcar lines and bike-share networks.

Learn from other peer region metro models (Minneapolis was mentioned) for funding and service design.



Overall, the responses reveal a community deeply reliant on transit but frustrated by service cuts, perceived inconsistency, and safety concerns.

While many have good relationships with individual drivers and appreciate the value of free fares, there is a desire for a reliable, comprehensive, and regionally unified system that connects people to opportunity and essential services.

Survey Summary and Insights

Demographically, respondents are heavily transit-reliant, with nearly half (49%) reporting household incomes below \$25,000. 61% are over age 45, including 29% who are 65 or older, and 39% report having a disability, the most commonly being an ambulatory disability. User satisfaction was generally negative, with notable positive exceptions regarding driver relationships, service affordability (for public transportation), and service adaptability. Cost was a frequently cited barrier (for private service providers) particularly for rideshare like Uber and Lyft, forcing difficult choices between travel and other essentials.

Geographic isolation, due to major service gaps in suburban and outlying areas that have lost transit service in places like Independence, Lee's Summit, and Gladstone, cuts people off from jobs and services. Infrequent fixed-route service, missed connections, and last-minute cancellations require riders to plan their trips ahead of time and limit their spontaneity. In many places, the lack of sidewalks, shelters, and wheelchair-accessible vehicles makes travel particularly difficult for seniors and people with disabilities. Limited-service hours, especially during evenings, weekends, and holidays restrict access to work, healthcare, worship, and social life.

The open-ended questions yielded good insights into what riders are looking for. Riders mentioned expanding and restoring transit routes, particularly in Independence and Kansas City, Kansas, and extending coverage to underserved suburbs and job centers. There are also calls to increase frequency, moving from hourly to half-hourly service, and to extend operating hours into nights and weekends. Improving passenger amenities like benches, shelters, and real-time signage at stops is also a priority, as is modernizing operations with a reliable trip-planning app and easy and accessible customer service support. Respondents emphasize the need to maintain free or low-cost fares and to ensure all services are fully accessible.

The path forward requires the region to invest in a more robust, frequent, and integrated regional network. Success depends on reversing service cuts, improving operational reliability, and tailoring services to the needs of low-income, senior, and disabled residents who rely on these services.

COMMITTEE ENGAGEMENT

Three regional MARC committees that handle transportation topics were engaged extensively throughout the planning process. These committees were the Mobility Advisory Committee (MAC), Transit Technical Team coordinating staff, and the Total Transportation Policy Committee (TTPC). Each body was made aware of the plan, the objectives, and general timeline they could expect for completion. Input was solicited primarily from the MAC and to a lesser degree the Transit Technical Team, while TTPC received informational updates.

It should be noted that the MARC committee structure is in the process of being reformatted. Pending approval, there would be a new transportation committee, the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). There would also be a new Transit Roundtable, a public forum for transit discussion and presentations from local planners and officials.

Mobility Advisory Committee

The MAC served as the primary stakeholder group engaged in the development of this plan. The committee comprises transportation providers, local government representatives, funders, service providers and individuals representing underserved populations. MAC is responsible for evaluating and selecting Federal Transit Administration Section 5310 funds in coordination with the MARC and the KCATA. The committee meets quarterly, with special sessions convened as needed, typically no more than twice per year. MAC played a key role in distributing the public survey and also completed a provider survey to offer insights into the challenges faced by service operators.

Transit Technical Team Coordinating Staff

The Transit Technical Team includes representatives from regional transit providers, state departments of transportation, community partners and other stakeholders. The team provides a forum for technical discussions about the region's transit needs and does not operate as a public body. The team was engaged twice during the outreach process to stay informed about the plan's development and to provide feedback on the public survey.

Total Transportation Policy Committee

The TTPC sets regional transportation policy and includes elected and appointed officials from federal, state and local levels. TTPC was engaged to ensure awareness of the plan's progress and to review the plan prior to its adoption by the MARC and KCATA boards.

Insights from Related Plans

A review of MARC's Transportation Resiliency Plan provided valuable community feedback relevant to this Coordinated Plan. Survey responses were collected from representatives of local and regional organizations, including Cross-Lines, BikeWalkKC, the National Federation of the Blind, New Growth Transit and The Whole Person. These organizations serve older adults and individuals with disabilities, offering informed perspectives on daily mobility challenges.

When asked about the most pressing transportation issues in their communities, respondents frequently cited inconsistent and last-minute communication. This included missed rides to medical appointments, school and work due to poor or delayed information sharing. Individuals without access to cell phones or the internet were particularly vulnerable, often missing notifications about route changes, weather-related cancellations or other service disruptions.

Improved coordination with local transit providers, more reliable scheduling and better real-time communication tools were among the most commonly suggested solutions.

Weather-related challenges also emerged as a major concern. Respondents described difficulties finding shelter while waiting for transportation and noted that snow, rain and extreme temperatures often created unsafe conditions—especially for riders with mobility limitations. Snowy conditions, in particular, were cited as a barrier to accessing bus stops and boarding areas.

Feedback emphasized the need for stronger support during severe weather events, including coordination with emergency management and human service agencies to ensure access to warming and cooling shelters, emergency transportation and accessible routes.

Other frequently mentioned concerns included a shortage of transit staff, limited access to fixed-route transit, service-animal accommodations, financial instability and difficulty navigating technology.

