

Appendix C

Transit Optimization Study

Preliminary Summary of Feedback – Round 1

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July 8th, 2021



Project Context

The City of Owen Sound is undergoing a Transit Optimization Review process. It aims to assess the existing transit service delivery model and identify any areas of improvement to optimize the current transit system. The evaluation may also result in a request for a proposal process to secure additional transit service providers that meet the community's needs in a financially feasible manner.

Overview of Engagement Process

The project involves a three-stage process, starting with a Guiding Principles Workshop followed by two rounds of Stakeholders and Public Engagement which includes two virtual sessions per round.

Overview of Engagement Participation

- Guiding Principles Workshop: 15 participants
- Round 1 Stakeholder and Public Engagement Session #1: 1 participant
- Round 1 Stakeholder and Public Engagement Session #2: 5 participants
- Round 1 Online and Telephone Questionnaires: 120 participants
- Round 1 Paper Questionnaires: 11 participants

Round 1 Stakeholder and Public Engagement Sessions

Round 1 Stakeholder and Public Engagement Sessions were designed to inform the review of the existing services and provide input to potential service options. Two sessions were held at different times of the day to accommodate different participant schedules. The first session was held on June 22, 2021 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. The second session was held on June 23, 2021 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. Both sessions were held virtually on Zoom and were facilitated by LURA Consulting and included a project presentation and feedback discussion.

Round 1 Questionnaire

Round 1 questionnaire was designed to present information and gather feedback from the public and stakeholders about existing services and potential alternative service options. The questionnaire was available online, by phone and in hard copy format from June 21 to July 5, 2021. Given restrictions related to COVID-19 and the increasing focus on digital engagement, the different formats that were made available helped to ensure that people with limited or no internet access can also participate in the project

Overview of Communication Activities

Project Webpage

The City of Owen Sound hosted a webpage for the project, which provided information about the project, how to participate in the process and information about potential service options. The project webpage is <https://www.owensound.ca/en/city-hall/transit-study.aspx#>

Social Media

Social media was used to inform community members about the project and encourage participation in engagement activities. Social media platforms used included Facebook (City of Owen Sound) and Twitter (@CityOwenSound and @OwenSoundHub)

Poster/Signage

Posts and signage were made available in transit stops to inform community members about the project and encourage participation in engagement activities.

Next Steps: Round 2 - Upcoming Activities

Round 2 Engagement will be designed to provide an opportunity to review and comment on proposed alternatives. An overview of engagement activities to be scheduled is outlined below.

- Round 2 Stakeholder and Public Engagement Session #1:
- Round 2 Stakeholder and Public Engagement Session #2:
- Round 2 Online and Telephone Questionnaires:
- Round 2 Paper Questionnaires:

What We Heard – Round 1 Preliminary Summary of Feedback

The following is a preliminary summary of feedback received through Round 1 Engagement Activities, including two virtual stakeholder and public engagement sessions as well as the online and telephone questionnaires. *Please note paper questionnaires are not incorporated into this preliminary summary.*

Feedback on the Current Transit System

The Importance of Transit in Owen Sound

Participants were asked to provide feedback on how important it is for the City of Owen Sound to provide transit services. **Nearly all participants across the virtual engagement sessions and questionnaires noted that providing transit is a top priority and an essential part of the City of Owen Sound.**

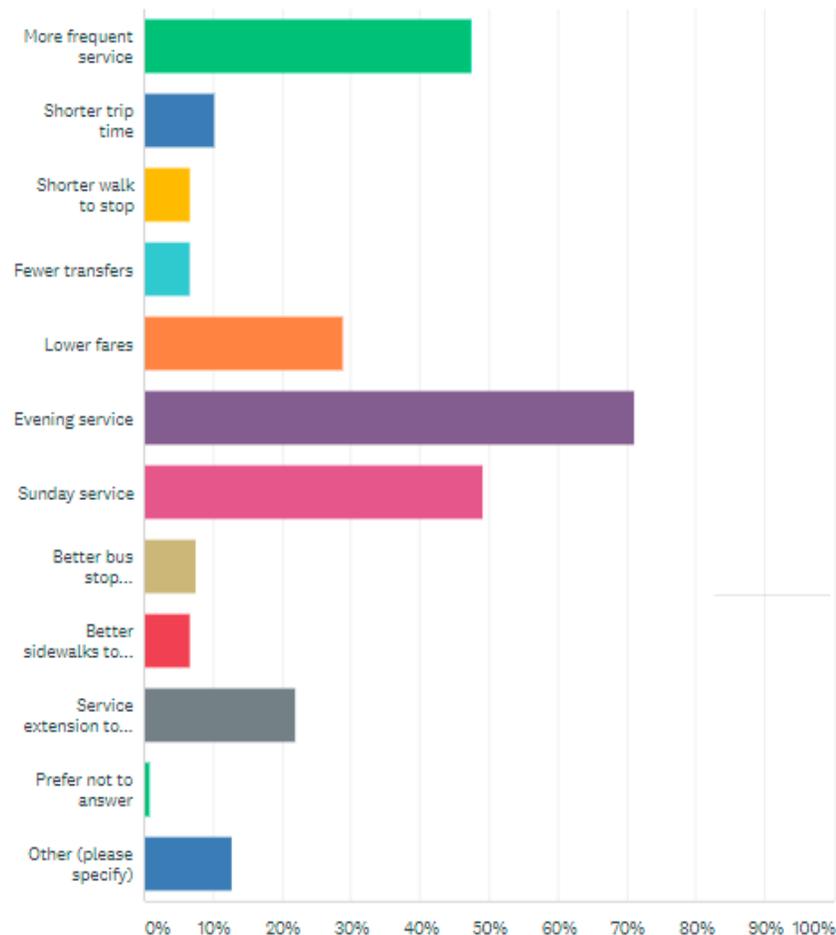
When asked "*What top 3 transit service features would encourage you to use transit or to use it more?*" (Figure 1), the most important features are:

- Evening services – 71%
- Sunday services – 49%
- More frequent services – 47%
- Lower fares – 29%
- Services extension to certain locations – 22%

Some participants also suggested there should be better buses and a smooth transfer system because a single bus route may not reach their destination. A few also mentioned that some bus drivers should be more professional and have better driving habits to ensure riders' safety.

What top 3 transit service features would encourage you to use transit or to use it more? Please select only 3 options.

Answered: 118 Skipped: 0



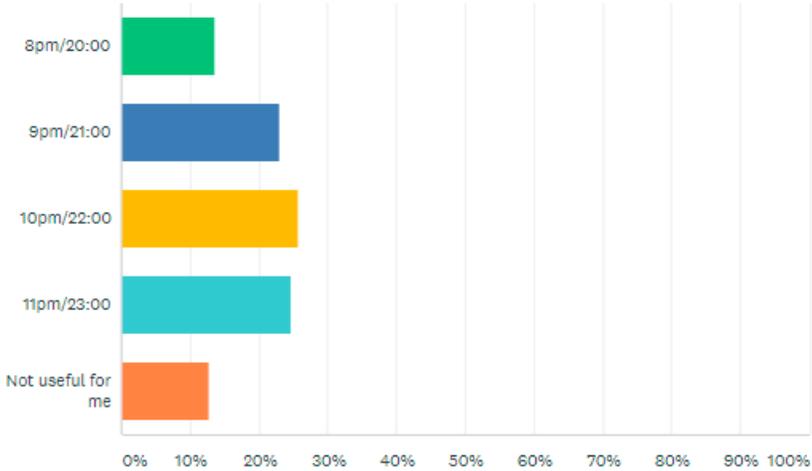
Appendix Figure 1: Participants' response to "What top 3 transit service features would encourage you to use transit or to use it more?"

Participants were asked "If evening service was added to Owen Sound Transit, how late would it need to run to be useful to you?" (Figure 2). Participants indicated that it would be useful for buses to run until:

- 8:00 p.m. – 14%
- 9:00 p.m. – 23%
- 10:00 p.m. – 26%
- 11:00 p.m. – 25%
- Evening service is not useful – 13%

If evening service was added to Owen Sound Transit, how late would it need to run to be useful to you?

Answered: 117 Skipped: 1



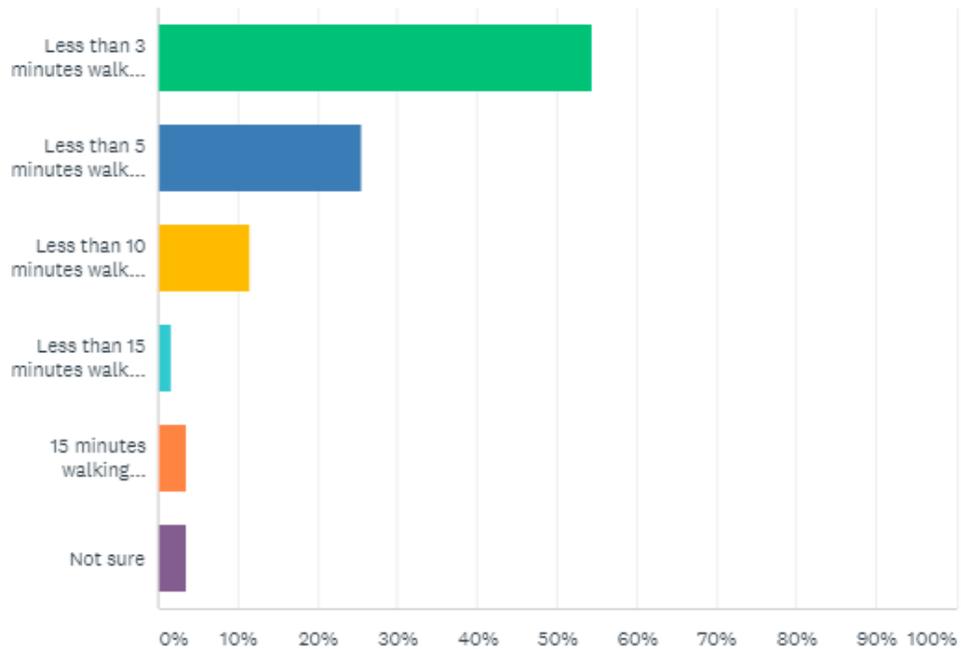
Appendix Figure 2: Participants response to "If evening service was added to Owen Sound Transit, how late would it need to run to be useful to you?"

When asked "How far is the nearest bus stop to their current home/residence" (Figure 3), most of the participants live relatively close to a bus stop.

- Around 54% indicated that it is less than 3 minutes walking distance.
- 25% answered less than 5 minutes;
- 11% indicated less than 10 minutes;
- 2% answered less than 15 minutes; and
- 4% indicated they live more than 15 minutes walking distance away.

How far is the nearest bus stop to your current home/residence?

Answered: 114 Skipped: 4



Appendix Figure 3: Participants' response to "How far is the nearest bus stop to your current home/residence?"

Challenges Around Current Transit in Owen Sound

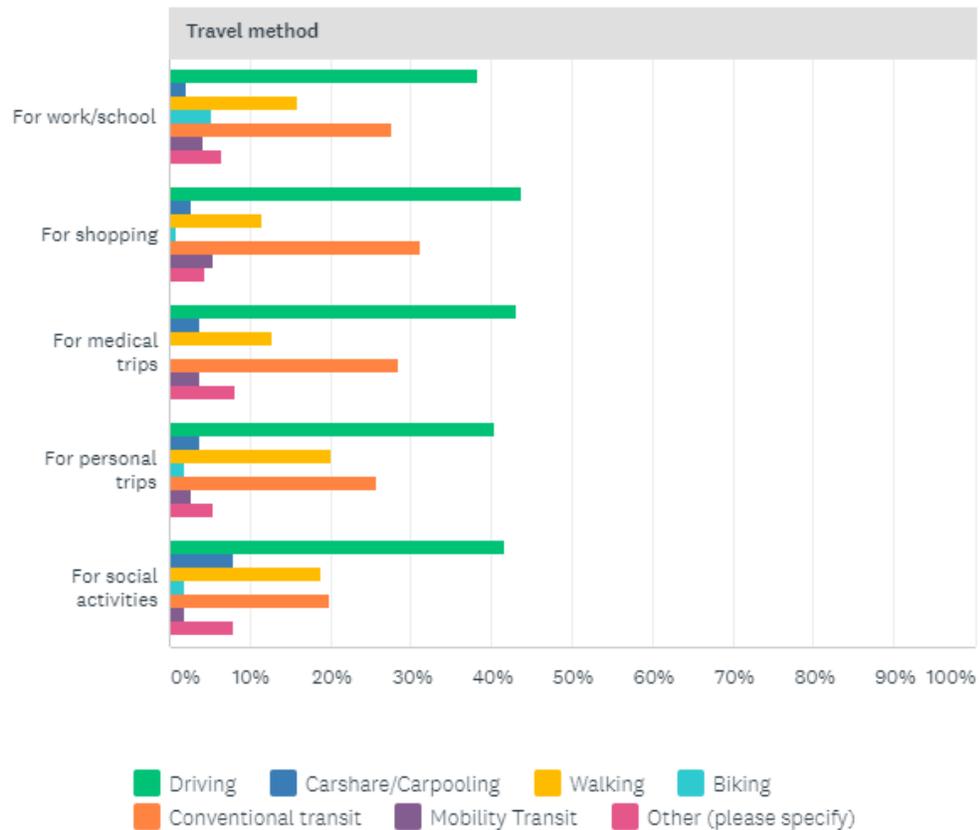
When asked "How do you most commonly travel within the City for each of the following purposes?" (Figure 4), the majority of the participants indicated they mainly drive to their destinations for purpose compared to using conventional transit or other methods. The comparison between driving and using conventional driving are as follow:

- Work or school – 38% driving vs. 28% conventional transit
- Shopping – 44% driving vs. 31% conventional transit
- Medical trips – 43% driving vs. 28% conventional transit
- Personal trips – 40% driving vs. 26% conventional transit
- Social activities – 42% driving vs. 220% conventional transit

Some participants mentioned that they sometimes carpool with others, and many use taxi services too. A participant noted that although taxi service is not very affordable, they had to use it since they face accessibility challenges in using conventional transit. It is more difficult for them to get on and off the buses without assistance due to mobility disabilities.

How do you most commonly travel within the City for each of the following purposes? Please select for each travel purpose listed.

Answered: 113 Skipped: 5



Appendix Figure 4: Participants' response to "How do you most commonly travel within the City for each of the following purposes?"

Participants were also asked "What top 3 challenges that are preventing or discouraging you from using the current transit services?" (Figure 5). The most challenging aspects of the current transit system in Owen Sound are:

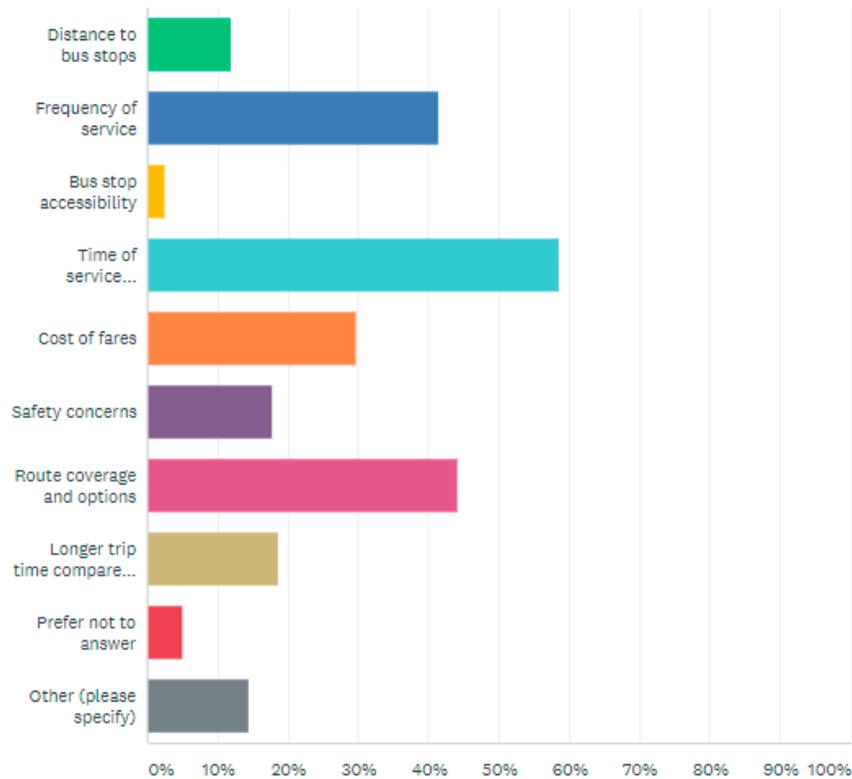
- Time of service – 58%
- Route coverage and options – 44%
- Frequency of service – 42%
- Cost of fares – 30%
- Longer trip time compared to driving – 19%

Participants expressed that evening shifts are very difficult, especially since there are safety concerns for people who work till 9:00 p.m. or later at night as they have to walk home. Many also had problems with buses not going up to the Georgian Bluff area as it is a significant shopping, entertainment, and employment area for Owen Sound residents. Some participants mentioned that they have issues with the drivers' professionalism and driving habits. A

participant also thought that transfer passes expire too quickly and suggested extending them to incorporate one bus cycle instead of expiration at the terminal.

What are the top 3 challenges that are preventing or discouraging you from using the current transit services? Please select only 3 options.

Answered: 118 Skipped: 0



Appendix Figure 5: Participants response to "What top 3 challenges that are preventing or discouraging you from using the current transit services?"

When asked "Do you think Owen Sound Transit should offer more direct service or special services to the following event venues and attractions?" (Figure 6), 82% of the participants indicated that they want direct service to Harrison Park. The Harry Lumley - Bayshore Community Centre and Julie McArthur Centre are also highly demanded stop destinations at 45% and 43%.

Do you think Owen Sound Transit should offer more direct service or special services to the following event venues and attractions? Please select all that apply.

Answered: 95 Skipped: 23

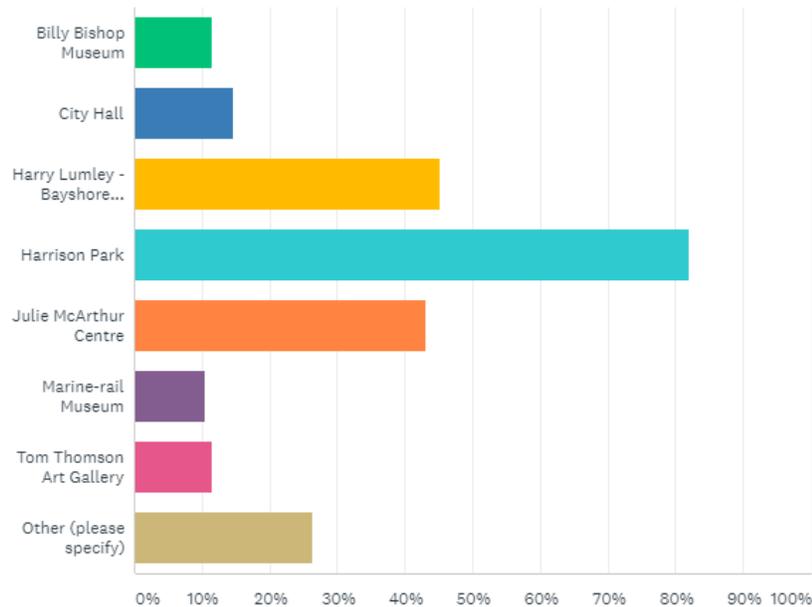


Figure 6 Appendix Figure 6: services to the following event venues and attractions?"

Other popular locations mentioned by participants through comments include the shopping at the south edge of Owen Sound, specifically No Frills, Staples and Value Village. Kelso Beach was also mentioned a few times as a desired destination.

General Advice and Feedback for the Project Team on the Current Transit System

General advice and feedback were provided by participants to the project team on Owen Sound's current transit system. Generally, participants suggested that partnerships with surrounding municipalities be established to increase connectivity. It was also noted that buses need to be less noisy, more comfortable, clean and accessible. Additionally, participants suggested that the bus schedule and routes should support recreational and work/study related destinations and timing. This was particularly noted for evening and weekend service. The feedback received is organized by themes below.

Partnerships

- Establish partnerships with surrounding municipalities like Meaford and Georgian Bluffs
- Look at social enterprises to partner with to provide more innovative and responsive service

Maintenance and Accessibility

- Buses need to be better maintained and comfortable, particularly for seniors
- Noise and cleanliness need to be addressed
- More and bigger buses are needed
- Bus stops need to be better cleared in the winter
- Make buses more accessible for people with disabilities and mobility issues
- Reduce the distance between stops, particularly noted for the winter season

Engagement/Education

- Create easy to read bus routes available in both online and paper formats
- Educational campaign for business and residential areas to inform and encourage residents and visitors to take the bus
- Specifically seek feedback from drivers

Destinations

- Routes should be established to:
 - All business locations
 - Industrial work areas
 - Georgian Student campus
 - Grocery stores like No Frills,
 - Shopping Plaza on the west hill
 - Businesses in Georgian Bluffs
 - Kelso Beach
 - Stone Tree housing complex
 - Staples
 - Meaford
 - 6th Ave East
 - Sunset Strip
 - West side strip
 - Walmart
 - Michael's
 - Value Village
- Offer free shuttles into the City to reduce parking

Finance/Costs

- Personal property taxes need to be lowered
- Increase taxes to provide better service

Schedule

- Buses should be on time

- Simplify the bus routes, particularly in the northwest
- Begin service at 6:00 a.m.
- Offer evening and weekend service time. This was a noted importance for residents attending events and bar-goers.

Other Suggested Improvements

- Investigate a "waiting time" app
- Provide day/transfer passes for visitors to park and take the bus to recreational areas and make bus passes available in stores
- Focus also on biking, including bike paths, bike parking, bus racks and bike-sharing programs
- Enhance transfer system that reduces paper
- Taxis would be more efficient than buses. Create a program so taxis are included in transit service and the City reimburses drivers

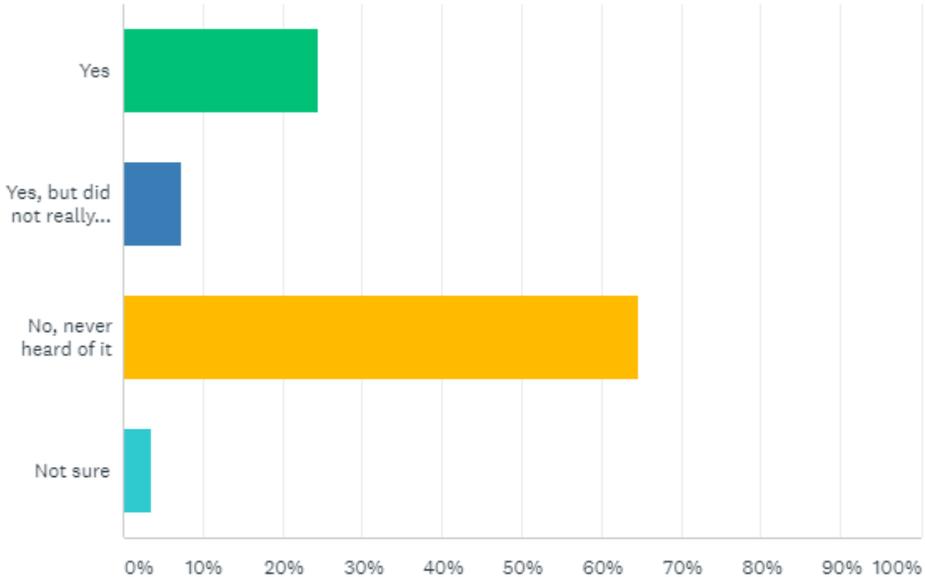
Feedback for On-demand Transit

Introducing On-Demand Transit to Owen Sound Residents

A brief introduction to on-demand transit was included in the virtual engagement meetings and the questionnaire. When asked *“Were you aware of on-demand transit service prior to taking this questionnaire”*, 65% of the participants expressed that they have not heard of this type of service (Figure 7). Only 25% were aware and know what on-demand transit is, and 7% indicated that they heard of this service but do not fully understand it.

Were you aware of on-demand transit service prior to taking this questionnaire

Answered: 110 Skipped: 8

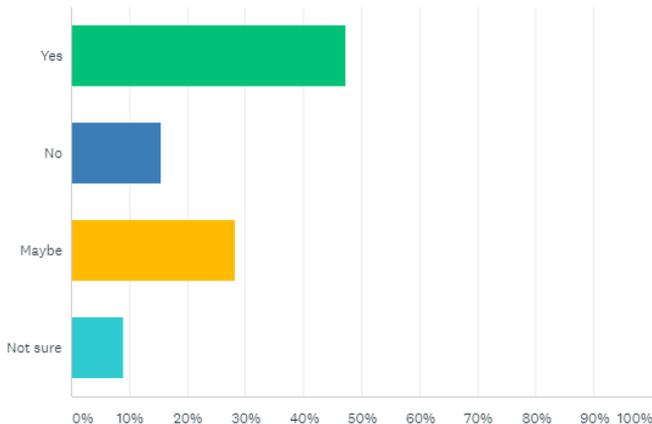


Appendix Figure 7: Participants response to "Were you aware of on-demand transit service prior to taking this questionnaire?"

Participants were then asked *"Based on what you know now, do you think an on-demand service might be a good idea in Owen Sound?"* (Figure 8). 47% of respondents thought it would be a good idea, 15% expressed that they disagreed, and 28% indicated maybe with a final 9% that were unsure.

Based on what you know now, do you think an on-demand service might be a good idea in Owen Sound?

Answered: 110 Skipped: 8



Appendix Figure 8: Participants' response to "Based on what you know now, do you think an on-demand service might be a good idea in Owen Sound?"

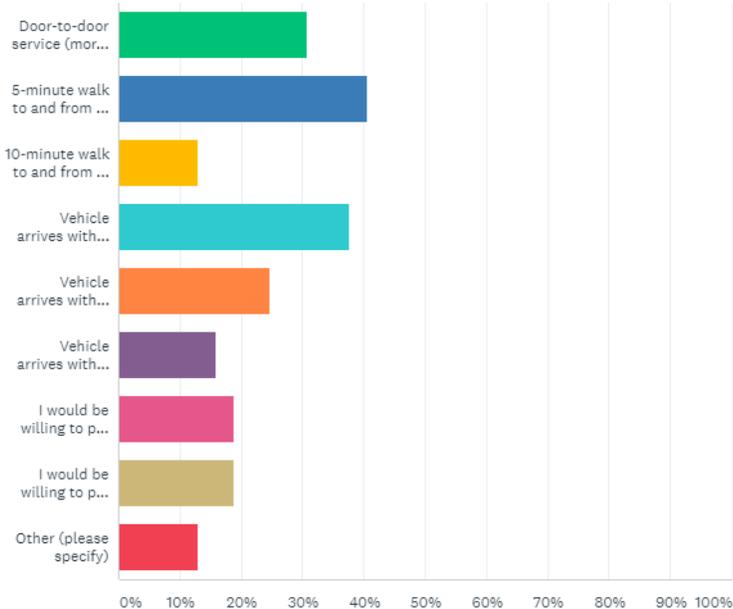
Important Considerations for On-Demand Transit

Participants were asked "What features of an on-demand service might work in Owen Sound? Please select all that apply?" (Figure 8). The top 3 essential aspects are as follow:

- 5 minute walk to and from a stop – 41%
- Vehicle arrives within 10 minutes of booking – 38%
- Door-to-door service (more expensive) – 31%

What features of an on-demand service might work in Owen Sound? Please select all that apply.

Answered: 101 Skipped: 17



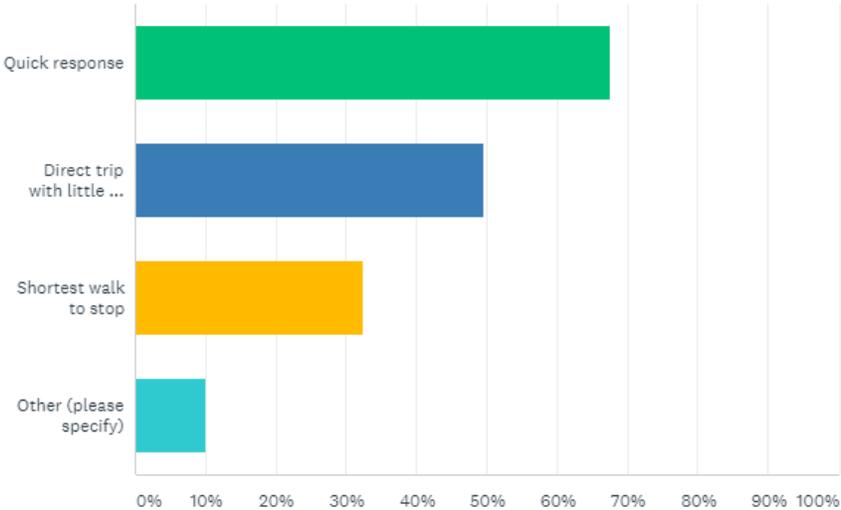
Appendix Figure 9: Participants response to "What features of an on-demand service might work in Owen Sound?"

Participants were also asked "What are the most important features to you for an on-demand trip? Please select all that apply?" (Figure 9). The importance of each aspect is as follow:

- Quick response – 68%
- Vehicle arrives within 10 minutes of booking – 49%
- Door-to-door service (more expensive) – 32%

What are the most important features to you for an on-demand trip? Please select all that apply.

Answered: 99 Skipped: 19



Appendix Figure 10: Participants' response to "What are the most important features to you for an on-demand trip?"

Overall, participants would like on-demand services to have fast and easy access, quick response time, and offer door-to-door services if needed. Many also talked about the affordability of this service, suggesting that the cost must not be higher than taxis. It would also be nice to have the ability to select a range of time options for the vehicle's arrival time. Few participants mentioned that this type of service should only be considered for seniors and others who do not qualify for mobility transit. It can also be used as an extended service for after-hours and weekend services.

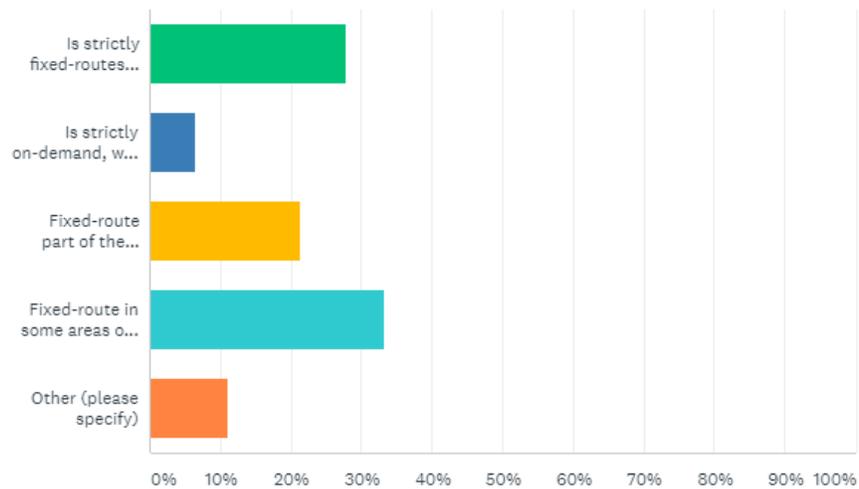
Preference for On-Demand Transit

When asked what kind of transit service is preferred (Figure 10), 33% of the participants want fixed-route in some areas of town and on-demand in others. 28% indicated that they prefer the service to be strictly fixed-routes with no on-demand services, and 21% suggested to have fixed-routes part of the time, and on-demand in others.

While many participants seemed to welcome the idea of on-demand transit, there are also some reservations about this new service. Participants expressed that many people living in Owen Sound are quite adaptable and use technology well, but access to technology and digital payment may be a barrier. A few participants noted that this is more accessible for people as there are more flexibility and inclusivity in the payment methods for on-demand services.

Based on what you know now, would you prefer a transit service that:

Answered: 108 Skipped: 10



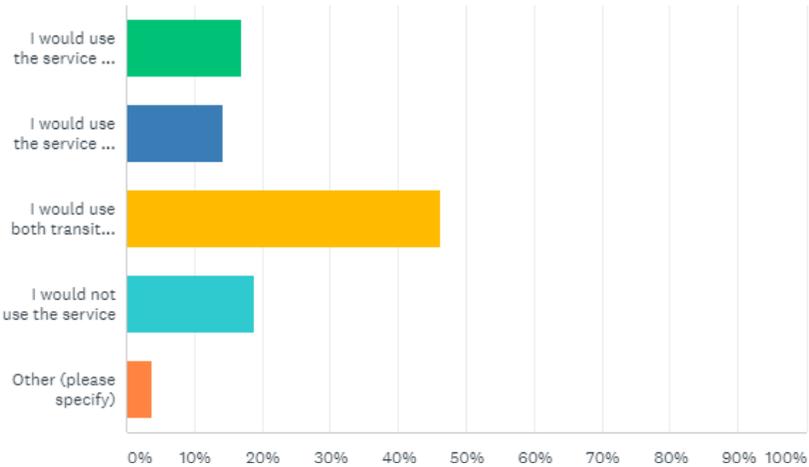
Appendix Figure 11: Participant response to "Based on what you know now, would you prefer a transit service that...?"

Participants were also asked "On-demand service may use the current style of transit vehicle, or smaller vans and sedans. Which do you prefer and think would work best in Owen Sound?" (Figure 11). The response to this is as follows:

- I would use the service if trips were provided using the current style of transit vehicle – 17%
- I would use the service if trips were provided using small vans and sedans – 14%
- I would use both transit vehicle or small vans and sedans – 46%
- I would not use the service – 19%

On-demand service may use the current style of transit vehicle, or smaller vans and sedans. Which do you prefer and think would work best in Owen Sound?

Answered: 106 Skipped: 12



Appendix Figure 12: Participants response to "On-demand service may use the current style of transit vehicle, or smaller vans and sedans. Which do you prefer and think would work best in Owen Sound?"

General Advice and Feedback for the Project Team for On-Demand Transit

General advice and feedback were provided by participants to the project team on the potential of using on-demand transit service. Participants who supported on-demand service noted that it would expand and increase transit access, particularly for seniors and students as well as during off-peak hours. Participants who were opposed to on-demand service noted concerns for costs, increased congestion and emissions as well as suitability overall for the size of Owen Sound. The feedback received is organized by themes below.

Suggestions/Ideas

- Develop education and advertisement campaign. Relate it to Uber experience
- Consider making the group homes and lower-income housing locations a priority.
- Seek feedback from social service agencies such as Grey County Housing (incl. Alpha Housing Complex), M'wikwedong staff and members, Community Living and Reach, Canadian Mental Health and Salvation Army to better understand clients' needs
- This service would be most suited for individuals with disabilities and mobility issues. It must be wheelchair accessible
- This service is feasible if rates for trips are until \$10 and/or subsidies are provided to low-income riders
- This service should be used during off-peak times
- Service should accommodate families/groups of 6 people
- A second mobility bus may be better suited
- Expand and increase access, particularly for students and seniors

Concerns

- This service would require more vehicles, and there are already enough taxis
- This service is better suited for bigger cities
- Concern with sustainability due to increased congestion and emissions
- The current service needs to be fixed before new services are implemented

Questions

- Is the City of Owen Sound gearing towards using this type of system to include other town destinations in Grey County or just City limits?