

# APPENDIX E: Allegheny County Transit Survey Summary

## Prepared for Michael Baker International / Port Authority of Allegheny County

### Methodology

In collaboration with Michael Baker and Port Authority, Campos created and fielded an online survey of Port Authority riders and non-riders using the [publicinput.com](https://publicinput.com) platform. The 5-minute survey instrument asked respondents about their priorities and values for public transit, their current transit riding patterns, transit gaps or barriers they experience, and demographics. Respondents were not required to answer every question.

The survey was fielded from August 10 to October 1, 2020. Survey responses were solicited via multiple methods. The survey was available to the public on the NEXTransit website and promoted by NEXTransit and Port Authority marketing efforts, and email solicitations were sent to those in Port Authority's ConnectCard database and to respondents from a panel provider. In addition, recognizing that many lower-income communities lack internet access, hard copies of the survey with return postage were distributed by community engagement teams via pop-up tents set up in traditionally under-represented communities.

The survey garnered 760 total responses. 79% of respondents were riders (i.e., had ridden on Port Authority transit in the past year), and 21% were non-riders.

Respondent demographics closely reflected the overall County demographics. 86% of respondents were White and 11% were Black / African American, as compared to a county population that is 80% White and 13% Black / African American.<sup>1</sup> Household income of respondents also closely mirrored that of the county, with a slight overrepresentation of those in the \$50-99K range (36% of respondents vs. 30% of the county) and a slight underrepresentation of those with incomes below \$25K (15% of respondents vs. 21% of the county).<sup>2</sup>

### Summary

To begin with, we asked respondents to prioritize the values important to them when considering the future of transit in the region. Respondents selected and ranked up to eight values from a list developed with input from Port Authority's board and staff, community stakeholders, and the public. The following were the top five values among all respondents, and the same five values in roughly the same order were the top among almost every demographic subgroup.

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<sup>1</sup> United States Census Bureau. (2019). *American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates Tables*. Retrieved from <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=allegheny%20county%20race&tid=ACSDT5Y2019.B02001>

<sup>2</sup> United States Census Bureau. (2019). *American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates Tables*. Retrieved from <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=allegheny%20county%20income&tid=ACSST5Y2019.S2503>

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|----------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Affordable        | 74% selected; 22% top choice |
| 2. Efficient         | 68% selected; 14% top choice |
| 3. Fast              | 64% selected; 14% top choice |
| 4. Accessible to All | 56% selected; 14% top choice |
| 5. Walkable          | 52% selected; 10% top choice |

The next part of the survey focused on riders' current riding patterns. We found a barbell-like distribution in riding frequency—riders are most likely to ride almost daily (30% riding 4-5 days per week), or else not very frequently (26% riding less once a month). The reasons for riding help explain this. Among those who ride 4+ days per week, 95% use Port Authority to get to work. Among those who ride less than monthly, on the other hand, the most common use for Port Authority is to get to entertainment destinations such as sporting events or concerts. Those who ride less than monthly skew older (43% are 55 or older), while those who ride 4+ days a week skew younger (38% are ages 25-34).

Among those who have ridden in the past year, a sizable majority of 59% say they are at least somewhat dependent on public transit to get around, but only a smaller portion, 17%, are *completely* dependent on public transit. Certain demographics are particularly likely to be dependent on public transit: those without access to a vehicle (63% completely dependent), those with a household income under \$50K (34% completely dependent), Black / African American riders (28% completely dependent), and those under age 35 (22% completely dependent).

Those who are not dependent on transit tend to use it mostly for traveling to work or entertainment, while those who are dependent on transit use it almost equally for a wide variety of reasons: work, shopping, personal errands, medical care, social visits, or entertainment.

Those who ride Port Authority were asked what types of public transit "gaps" they most often experience. The most commonly experienced gaps across all respondents were "Public transit is too infrequent" (51%), "Public transit takes too long to get where I want to go" (49%), "I have to ride multiple vehicles (transfer)" (46%). These were consistently the top three gaps across all demographic subgroups, although the order varied. Notably, among Black / African American riders, the most common gap is "I have to ride multiple vehicles (transfer)", with a 57% majority experiencing this. The same is the case among those who are completely dependent on public transit.

"Public transit doesn't serve the place(s) I want to go" ranked as the 4th-most common gap among all riders (35%). This indicates that, among riders, expanding service to new locations is important, but less of a priority than increasing the frequency of service, making journeys faster, and reducing the necessity of transfers.

The survey also explored reasons why *non-riders* don't use public transit. Here, respondents fell into several groupings. Those who selected only one reason typically chose "I prefer the experience of other

transportation types (driving, cycling, etc.)—indicating that these respondents simply do not wish to use public transit. Those who selected several reasons, however, often said “Public transit doesn't serve the place(s) I want to go” (the most common answer overall, selected by 39% of non-riders), in addition to reasons such as ride length, infrequency of service, or not knowing how to use public transit. It's clear that expanding service to more locations is the top priority of non-riders.

Finally, the survey asked where respondents would like to take public transit that they can't currently do so. Overall, the top destination points are in the core cultural and employment hubs, i.e., Downtown, Oakland, and the Strip District. Other than these central hubs, respondents often wanted to be able to make specific neighborhood-to-neighborhood trips that don't require connecting Downtown.

Based on both this survey and the NEXTransit team's analysis, the highest-propensity areas for transit are largely located 5-8 miles east or southeast of Downtown. This is consistent with what we know about Pittsburgh's demographic changes in the past few decades, with gentrification pushing Black / African American and/or lower-income residents further out of the city core, particularly east and southeast. Just like the overall survey population, respondents who live in these areas most commonly want to be able to travel to the city's core cultural and employment hubs (directionally, based on a small sample).

Based on the survey responses from lower-income and Black / African American riders, the issue for these riders is less that routes don't go to these desired destinations, and more that the process is unpleasant and can be too unpredictable/infrequent to rely on as a primary mode of transportation. Living in those east and southeast neighborhoods often means having infrequent service, long trips, or required transfers to get to the employment and cultural hubs.