



# PHASE I Outreach Summary Report



prepared for:  
New Orleans  
Regional Planning  
Commission

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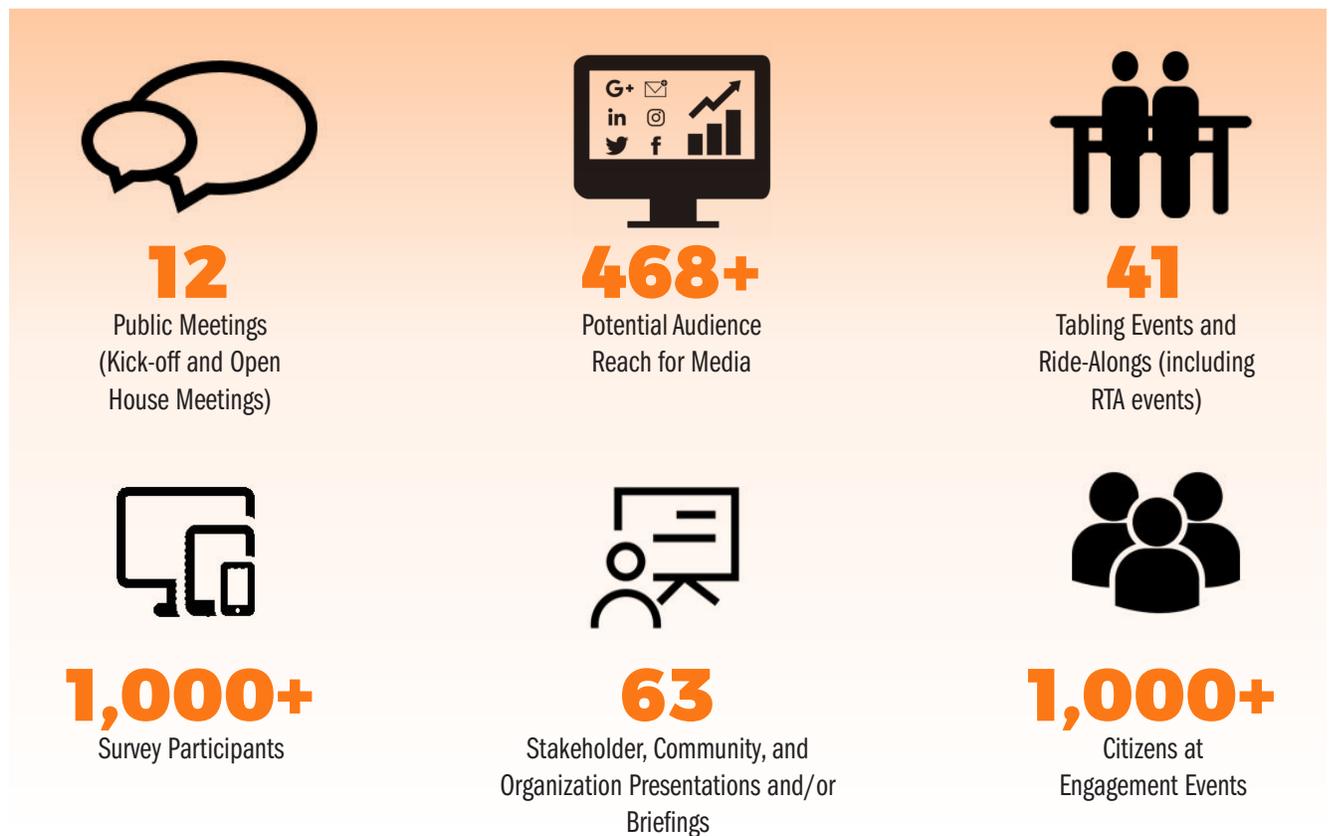
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# Executive Summary

The New Orleans Regional Planning Commission (RPC) is developing a plan for a network redesign of public transit for Greater New Orleans. Called “New Links,” this project focuses on transportation services provided by the New Orleans Regional Transit Authority (RTA), Jefferson Transit (JeT), and St. Bernard Urban Rapid Transit (SBURT). The New Links project team is evaluating how to provide improved transit service where people live and work by implementing better connections within and between parishes. These connection strategies are based on the concepts identified by RTA and JeT as part of their recent strategic planning initiatives.

Public and stakeholder input is critical in developing the proposed network redesign. This document summarizes New Links Phase I engagement efforts, as well as key themes and trends from public input.

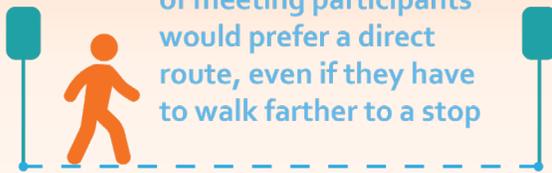
The project team used several methods of in-person and online strategies to engage a broad range of people in New Orleans, Jefferson, and St. Bernard parishes:



### Key Findings

MEETING ACTIVITIES (KICK-OFF AND OPEN HOUSE MEETINGS)

80%



of meeting participants would prefer a direct route, even if they have to walk farther to a stop

MEETING ACTIVITIES (KICK-OFF AND OPEN HOUSE MEETINGS)

71%



of meeting participants are willing to transfer if it means a shorter travel time and more trips per day



Frequent riders, occasional riders, and infrequent riders all have

**SIMILAR TRANSIT PRIORITIES**



Better **FREQUENCY** and expanded **SERVICE HOURS** are common themes from all participants



**RELIABILITY** is an important concern

## 1. Introduction

New Links is a project to reimagine public transportation in Orleans, Jefferson, and St. Bernard parishes, focusing on service operated by RTA, JeT, and SBURT. New Links will recommend a plan to redesign public transit to better meet riders' needs by including more direct service between popular origins and destinations, creating better connections between parishes in the New Orleans metropolitan area, and incorporation of strategies previously developed by RTA and JeT.

New Links is the second step in the regional service improvement process, and builds on the recommendations of RTA's 2018 Strategic Mobility Plan (SMP) and JeT's Strategic Plan. One of the key recommendations of the SMP was the conduct of a "Comprehensive Operations Analysis (COA) with recommendations for a network redesign." New Links will provide a detailed plan to implement many of the goals and action items identified by the RTA including scheduling adjustments, fare integration, higher frequency service, and high-capacity transit corridors.

### 1.1 RTA Strategic Mobility Plan

The RTA adopted its SMP in 2018. This Plan states a new organization mission, vision and a roadmap for improving public transportation in the region over the next 20 years. The Plan's six goals, 31 strategies, and 129 action items guide the RTA's policy decision-making and budgeting. Six goals and their associated strategies relevant to the New Links project are:

- 1) **Earn trust:** Be transparent in decision-making.
- 2) **Be equitable:** Provide mobility services in a just and fair manner.
- 3) **Prioritize the rider experience:** Provide mobility services that are safe, easy to use, and comfortable.
  - By 2022, comprehensively update fare structure, pass options, and related policies to incorporate emerging best practices.
  - As part of network redesign, simplify schedules so they are more consistent throughout the day

Figure 1: New Links Project Launch Public Meeting



New Links Phase 1 Public Kick-Off Meeting  
Source: New Orleans RPC

Figure 2: New Orleans RTA Strategic Mobility Plan



and predictable.

- By 2022, as part of network redesign, brand transit routes by frequency.
- By 2022, complete studies for Downtown, New Orleans East, and Algiers transit centers and smaller mobility hubs, including evaluation in COA.
- Establish a Downtown Transit Center.
- Establish New Orleans East and Algiers Transit Centers.
- Establish smaller mobility hubs at targeted locations.

4) **Be reliable:** Provide on-time and predictable service.

- Reduce conflicts with automobiles and study special transit lanes.
- By 2022, identify potential dedicated lanes, High-Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes, signal priority improvements, queue jumps, and other priority treatments for transit routes to minimize delay from areas with high congestion.
- By 2022, pilot transit priority treatments along one or more transit routes.
- Work with local governments, the Regional Planning Commission, and the State to begin implementing dedicated lanes, HOV lanes, signal priority improvements, queue jumps, and other priority treatments for transit routes.
- By 2020, as part of COA, develop a plan for increasing pre-boarding payments.
- By 2022, as part of a network redesign, adjust routes where schedules are too tight and implement stop-spacing guidelines to reduce redundant stops.

5) **Connect to opportunities:** Provide good access to destinations utilizing all transportation options available.

- Pilot Central Business District (CBD) circulator options and on-demand/ flexible services in areas to be determined.
- Study creating High-Capacity Transit routes within Orleans Parish.
- Study creating High-Capacity Transit routes that cross parish lines.
- Pilot more circulators and on-demand/flexible services.
- Establish Select Service and Regional Express routes.
- Study options for integrating all transportation services in the region.

6) **Support a sustainable, healthy region:** Mitigate climate change and improve public health.

**Market Analysis**

The SMP “Market Analysis” appendix provides an in-depth examination of the different drivers of transit demand in the New Orleans region. Overall, it found that Orleans Parish areas with the highest demand “generally receive the level of service that their demand warrants,” yet that the service in areas with the highest demand in Jefferson Parish is inadequate. Other major findings include:

- Providing a regional backbone of high-frequency transit routes is a crucial gap in the existing

system. Several areas can be considered for high-frequency transit and improved off-peak and nighttime service.

- There are many neighborhoods with low-income populations and low-paying jobs that lack convenient late-night transit options.
- Residential neighborhoods in parts of Jefferson Parish have limited services and may be able to support more.
- There is demand for improved transit service that crosses parish boundaries.
- Schedules should be made easier to understand, especially for lower frequency routes.
- Alternative modes of transportation, such as bikesharing, carsharing, and ride-hailing, are likely to play increasingly important roles in the mobility industry. Stakeholders must carefully consider how these new modes can work together with existing transit services.

### Mobility Options and Corridors

The SMP recommends many existing and new mobility options to achieve its service goals. The Mobility and Corridors appendix of the SMP identifies several areas and corridors for their implementation:

HIGH-CAPACITY TRANSIT ROUTES

Available Modes (BRT, Streetcar, and LRT)	Every 10 min. (peak) Every 15 min. (off-peak)	20-24 hrs per day	Stops every 1/4 to 1/2 mile	Pay before boarding	Extensive use of dedicated roadway space and/or coordinated traffic signals

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SELECT SERVICE ROUTES

Available Modes (Bus and Streetcar)	Every 15 min. (peak) 20 min. (off-peak)	18-24 hrs per day	Stops every 1/4 mile	Pay before boarding	Use of dedicated roadway space and/or coordinated traffic signals

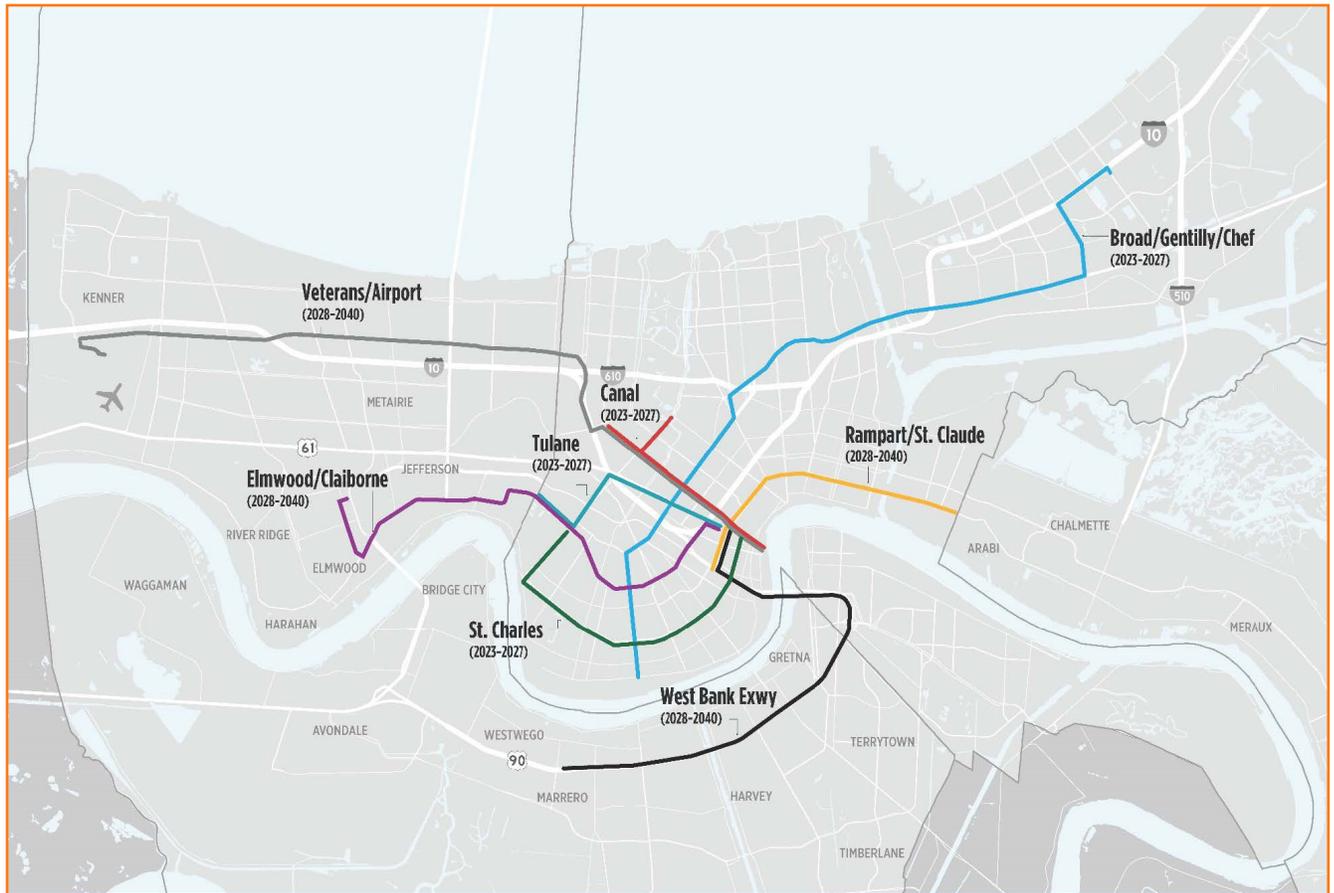
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PLUS...

<p><b>Regional Express Connections</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commuter bus</li> <li>• 30 min (peak only)</li> <li>• Limited stops</li> </ul>	<p><b>Water Transportation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modern and traditional ferries</li> <li>• Every 15-30 min., 7 days/week</li> <li>• Longer hours of operation</li> <li>• Existing plus new terminals</li> </ul>	<p><b>Downtown Mobility Improvements</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service type TBD</li> <li>• Every 10-15 min., 24 hours/day</li> <li>• Looping around high demand travel areas</li> </ul>	<p><b>Pilot Programs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Microtransit</li> <li>• On-Demand connections</li> <li>• Autonomous vehicles</li> </ul>

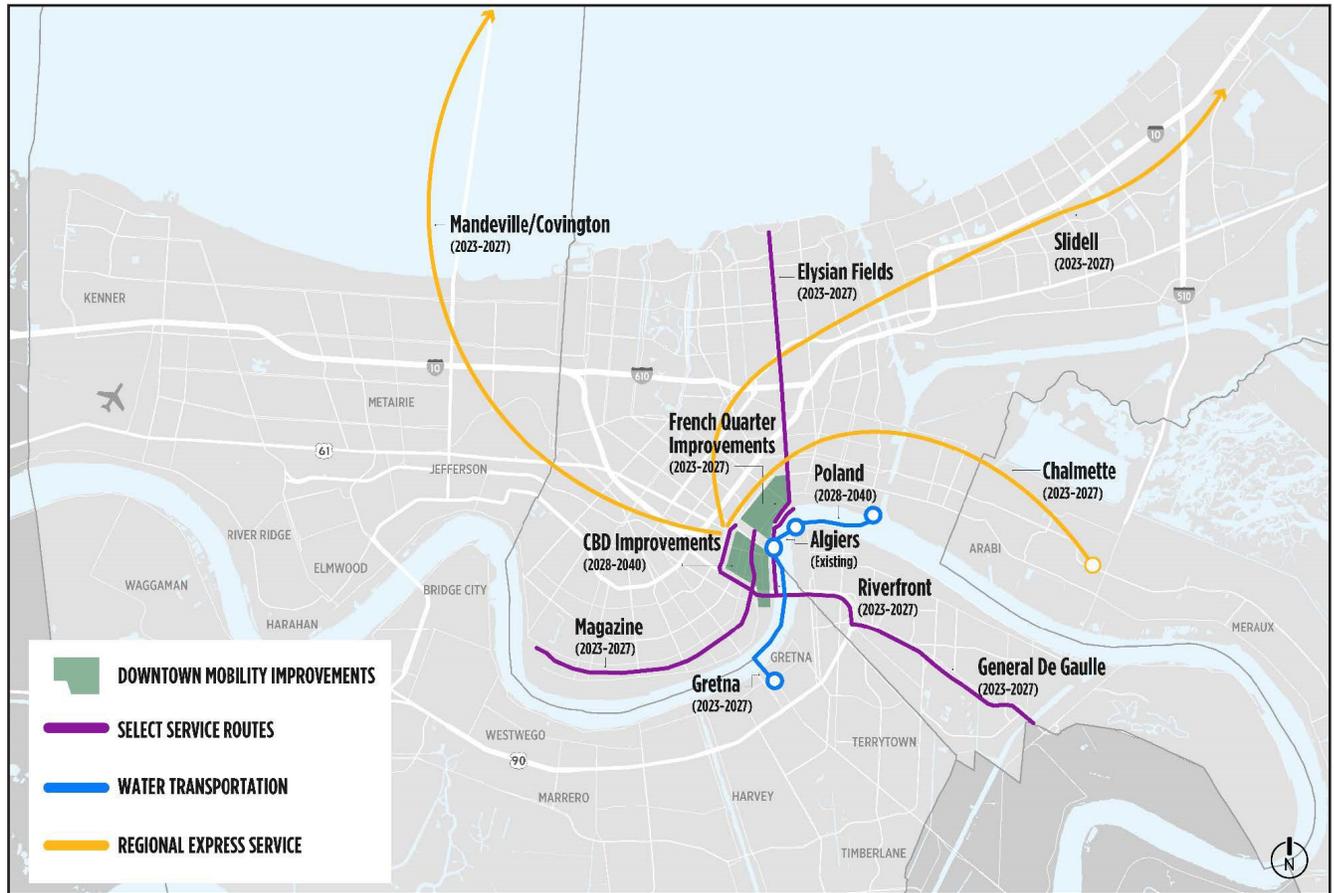
The SMP recommends several corridors – including three that cross parish boundaries – for high-capacity transit service offering fast, frequent and reliable trips through areas with the greatest propensity for transit ridership, shown in the map below. It does not recommend specific modes for each of these corridors, but rather indicates that modal alternatives require further study.

Figure 3: New Orleans SMP Map



The SMP also specifies a handful of corridors for “Regional Express Service,” “Water Transportation,” and “Select Service Routes,” which stop more often and which do not run as frequently as high-capacity corridors, but which merit more frequent service than other routes. These routes, like high-capacity corridors, “will rely heavily on targeted measures to speed up service, such as dedicated lane segments, queue jump lanes (short bus lanes to bypass backups at traffic signals), traffic signal priority, and off-board fare payment (Ticket Vending Machines).”

Figure 4: New Orleans SMP Map



### Community Participation

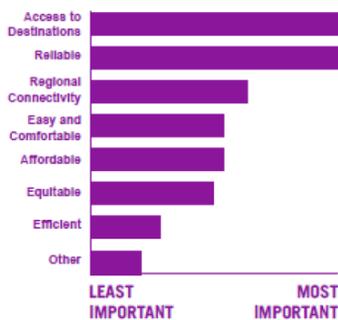
The RTA made over 4,500 engagements during the SMP planning process. These included meeting attendees, stakeholder interviews, and submitted surveys and comment cards. Engagement occurred over several phases. The theme of improving existing service, particularly with regard to on-time performance, emerged repeatedly throughout the multiple phases of engagement, underscoring the agency’s decision to pursue a comprehensive network optimization effort prior to investing in new services.



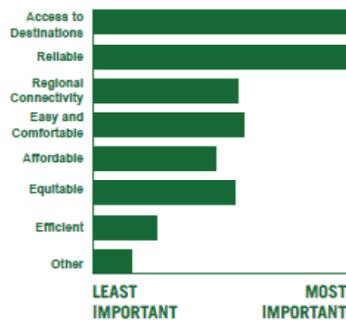
The first phase of SMP, Listening and Learning outreach, sought to establish the plan’s Mission, Vision, Goals, and Objectives and reached over 2,000 people in Orleans, Jefferson, St. Bernard, and St. Tammany parishes. The RTA solicited the public’s values and big ideas to inform these measures, and divided responses by degree of the respondent’s usage of public transportation. Regardless of how often they used public transportation, all respondents ranked the same four values above all others in importance: Access to Destinations; Reliable; Regional Connectivity; and Easy and Comfortable.

What four (4) values are most important for the future of public transportation and mobility in the region?

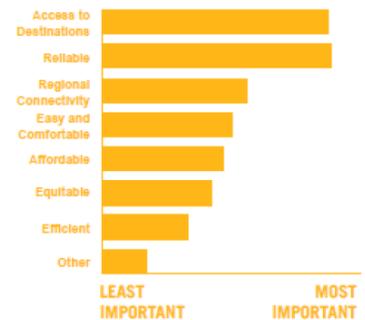
**FREQUENT RIDERS**



**OCCASIONAL RIDERS**



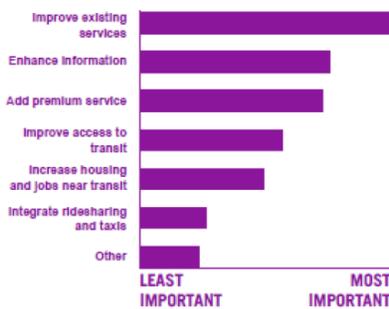
**INFREQUENT AND NON-RIDERS**



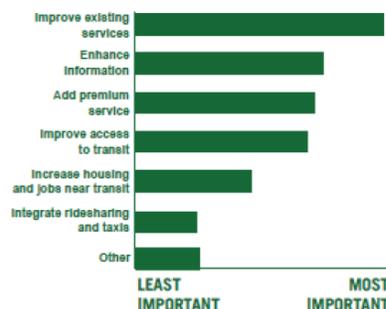
Similarly, all respondents ranked big ideas in nearly the same order of importance. The top four were (in order of descending priority): “Improve existing services,” “Enhance information,” “Add premium service,” and “Improve access to transit” (i.e. walking and bicycling infrastructure).

What are your four (4) big ideas to improve mobility and public transportation in the region in the future?

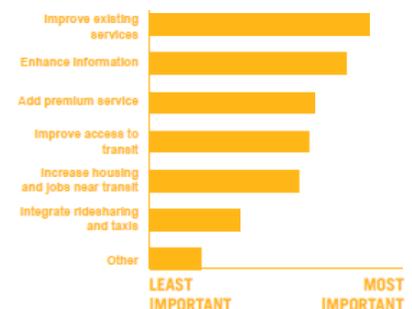
**FREQUENT RIDERS**



**OCCASIONAL RIDERS**



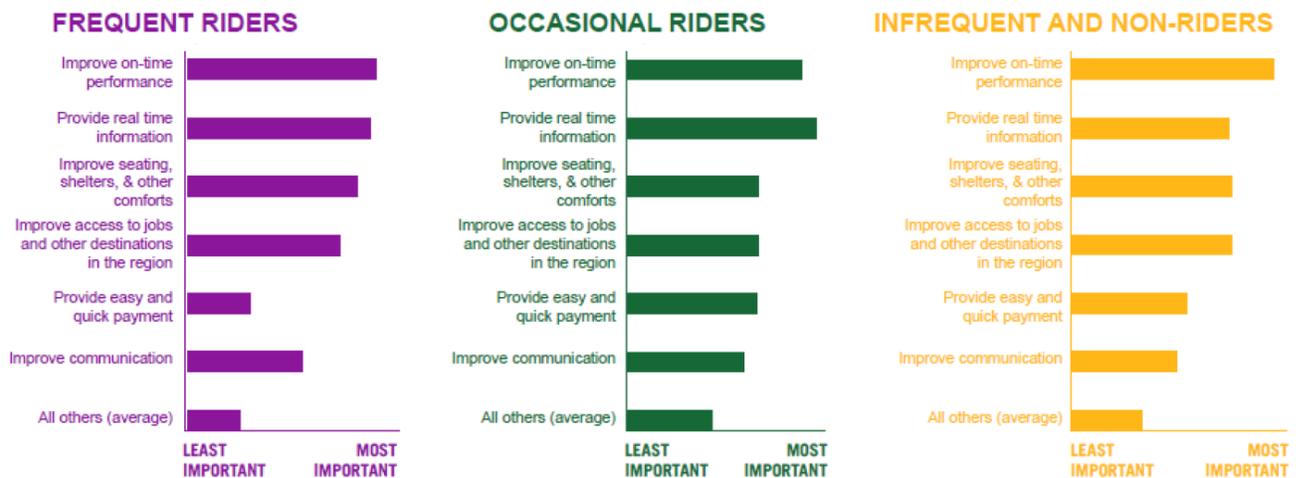
**INFREQUENT AND NON-RIDERS**



Visioning was the next phase of engagement, in which stakeholders and the public provided feedback on the project’s proposed Mission, Vision, Goals and Objectives. The RTA engaged over 1,000 people through public meetings, standing community meetings, pop-up events at busy transfer stops, and an online survey. The overwhelming majority of respondents approved the proposed Mission, Vision, and Goals. Levels of support for each individual item ranged from 73 percent to 93 percent.

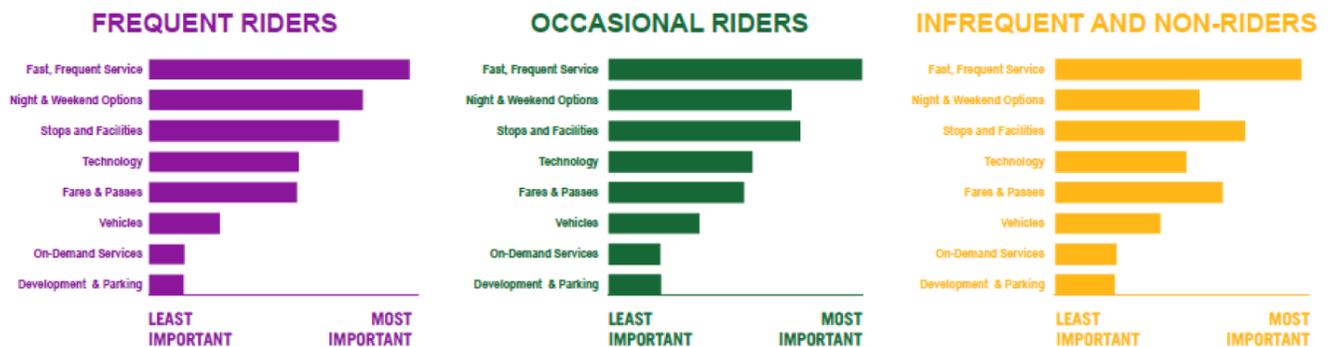
Frequent transit riders and infrequent and non-riders each named “Improve on-time performance” the most important proposed objective, whereas occasional riders said “Provide real time information” was most important. All three groups named both in their top four objectives, along with “Improve seating, shelters, and other comforts,” and “Improve access to jobs and other destinations in the region.” The priority for increasing on-time performance echoes public support for the “Reliable” value from the first phase of engagement.

**What five (5) objectives would you most like to see RTA accomplish in the future?**



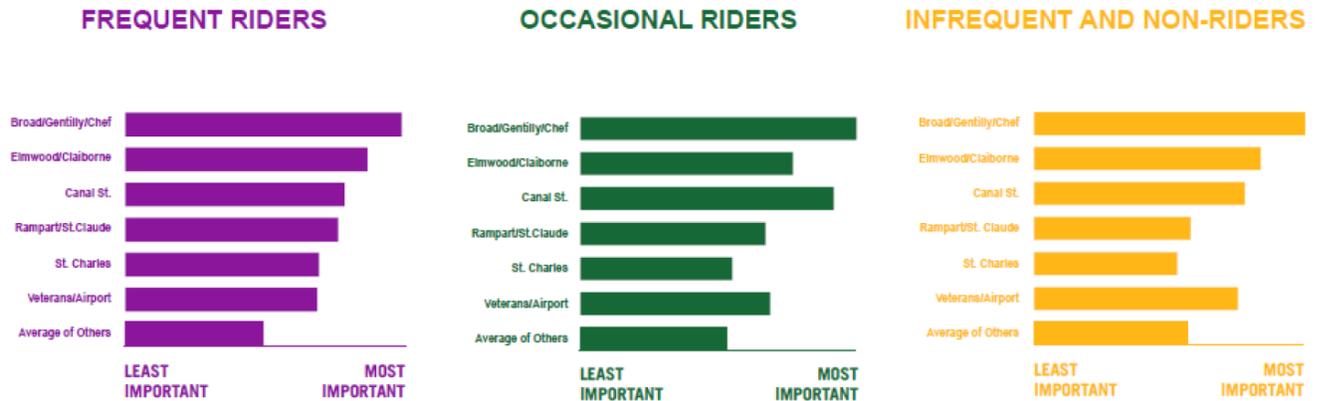
The last phase of engagement, “Evaluating Options,” presented the public with high-level strategies to achieve the plan’s Goals and Objectives. All rider types ranked “Fast, Frequent Service” as the highest priority strategy. Frequent riders ranked “Night & Weekend Options” and “Stops and Facilities” as the next most important.

**What four (4) types of strategies are most important to improve public transportation?**



Given the importance of fast, frequent service to participants in the planning process, RTA also asked the public in this phase to rank the most important major corridors on which to deploy high-capacity transit. All three rider groups ranked Broad Street/Gentilly Boulevard/Chef Menteur Highway first. Elmwood/Claiborne, Canal Street, Rampart/St. Claude, St. Charles, and Veterans/ Airport rounded out the following top five corridors across all rider groups.

What five (5) major corridors should be prioritized for fast, frequent service?



The SMP findings reveal that riders and non-riders alike both want high-quality public transportation throughout the region. Stakeholders also noted the need to change the public perception of transit, add more late-night service, and make transit accessible for all.

### 1.2 JeT Strategic Mobility Plan

In 2019, Jefferson Parish completed the Jefferson Transit Strategic Plan, with its own mission, goals, and objectives. (Its goals are to be Connected, Convenient, Innovative, Collaborative, and Financially stable.) Its service related strategies are to:

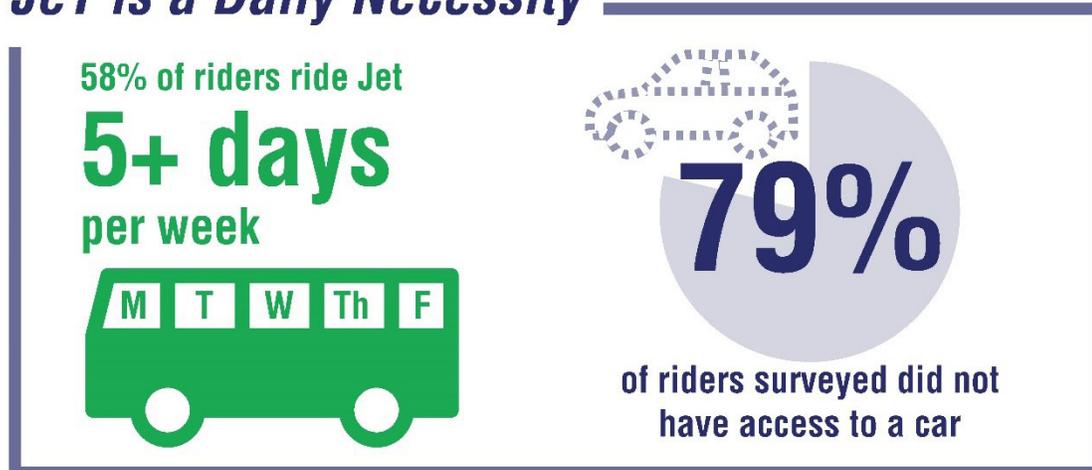
- Increase early morning, late evening, and weekend service;
- Offer transit service alternatives in areas that lack enough density for traditional corridor-based fixed-route transit service;
- Improve on-time performance on all routes, but especially those operating on corridors that are part of the region’s congested arterial roadway, freeway, and interstate highway network;
- Increase frequency of service in areas within key employment and population centers during peak commute periods (at least every 20 minutes);
- Increase trip speed by consolidating redundant stops, implementing transit signal prioritization on key corridors and cashless fare collection where practicable, and;
- Eliminate routes which are not financially feasible & serve few riders.

Figure 5: Jefferson Parish Public Transit Strategic Plan



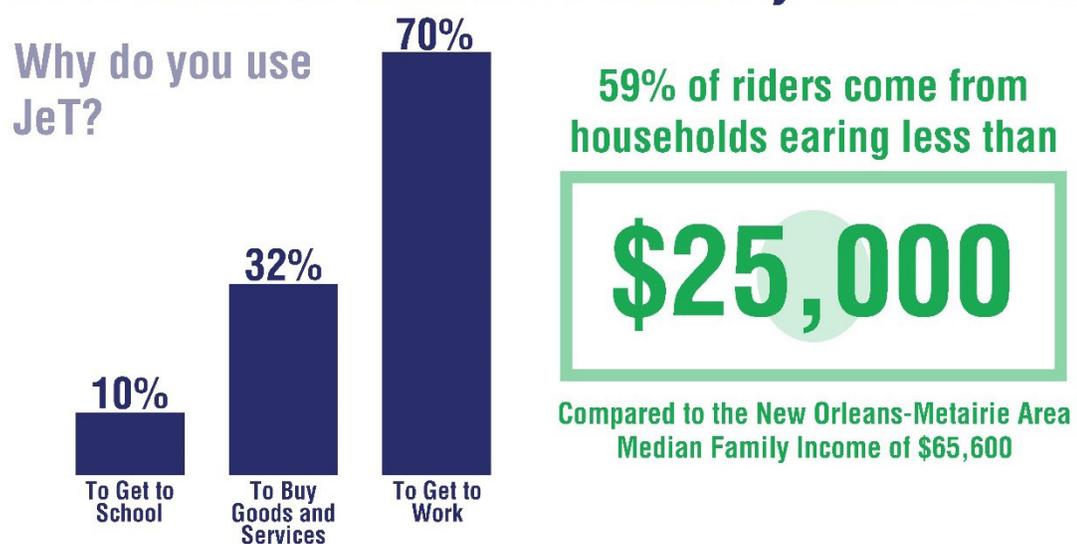
To engage Jefferson Transit customers in the process, JeT conducted on-board surveys of over 460 riders. The survey sought to understand JeT’s role in the local economy, and the types of service improvements riders desire. It found that JeT riders rely on the service for everyday transportation needs. Nearly six in ten riders use JeT at least five days a week, and nearly four in five do not have access to a car.

## JeT is a Daily Necessity



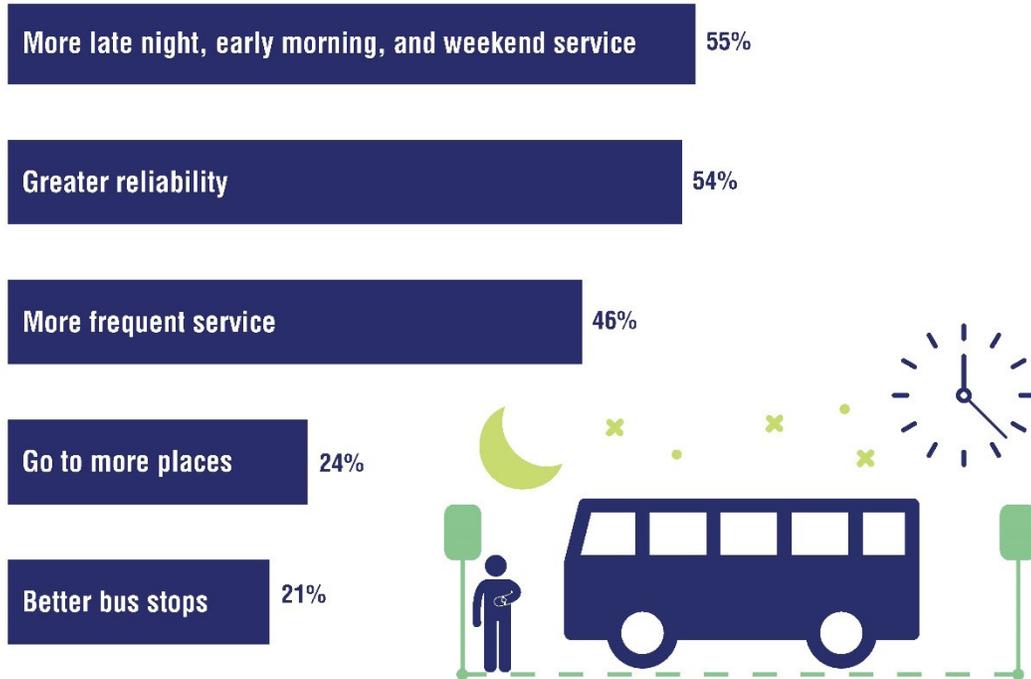
The survey also found that most passengers use JeT to either make or spend money – 70 percent ride to get to work, whereas 32 percent use it to go shopping.

## JeT Advances Economic Mobility and Growth



Consistent with participants in RTA's SMP process, riders registered greatest support for strategies that improve existing bus service quality, namely "More late night, early morning, and weekend service" and "Greater reliability," followed by "More frequent service." Greater coverage ("Go to more places") and "Better bus stops" ranked lower in priority.

## *Riders Want More Frequent and More Reliable Service*



The full RTA SMP Civic Engagement Summary and the Jefferson Parish Public Transit Strategic Plan are included in Appendix A.

While each strategic plan analyzes existing service challenges and opportunities, neither prescribes specific service plans or capital plans, but rather defers to the New Links process to make such recommendations.

## 2. Public Engagement

The New Links planning process emphasizes public engagement to seek broad, representative participation to understand the priorities of current and potential riders, and to determine the impacts of any changes to transit services.

Phase I engagement was conducted between April and August 2019.

Phase I outreach goals include:



**Raise awareness** about the project and inform people about the process and timeline



**Understand issues**, concerns, and general priorities of the community regarding public transportation



**Incorporate community feedback** into the transit scenarios

The New Links project team used a suite of strategies to engage transit riders, advocacy groups, neighborhood organizations, and other stakeholders to better understand public needs of transit in the region. This document details information about outreach efforts, engagement, and public input during Phase I.

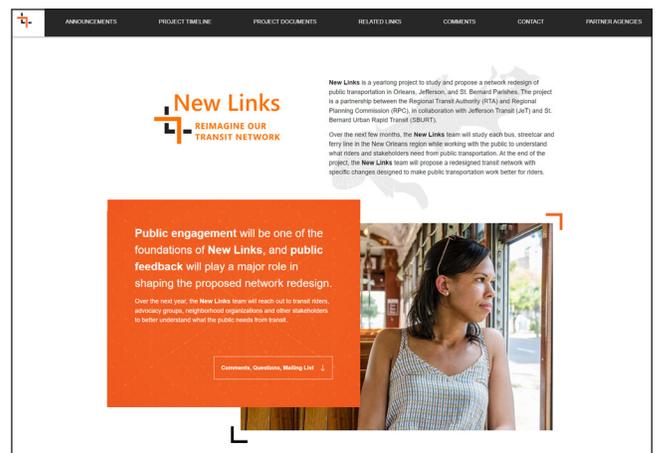
### 2.1 Outreach and Education

Public outreach efforts began in early 2019 with the announcement of the New Links public kick-off held on April 9, 2019. Outreach materials informed the public how to learn about the project and participation opportunities. Materials were translated into Spanish and Vietnamese. The New Links project team used the following methods to publicize public meetings and educate the public and stakeholders:

**Website:** The New Links website - [www.newlinksnola.com](http://www.newlinksnola.com) - functioned as a hub for project information, including web announcements about upcoming events and important project documents. Website visitors could also provide comments, ask questions, and sign up for project updates.

**Social media:** A Facebook page - [www.facebook.com/NewLinksNOLA/](https://www.facebook.com/NewLinksNOLA/) - promoted the New Links project activities on the New Links website. Posts included information about the first public meeting and participation information for the community. The April 9th public meeting presentation was shared using Facebook Live to increase audience reach to

Figure 6: New Links Webpage



those who were not able to attend in person.

**Advertisements:** Advertisements promoted the New Links project and public kick-off event on RTA and JeT vehicles. Additionally, an advertisement ran twice in *The New Orleans Advocate*, Louisiana’s largest daily newspaper.

**Traditional media:** The New Links project received extensive media coverage. Media reached over 468,000 viewers between April to July 2019 through television, online, internet blogs, newspaper, and consumer media outlets.

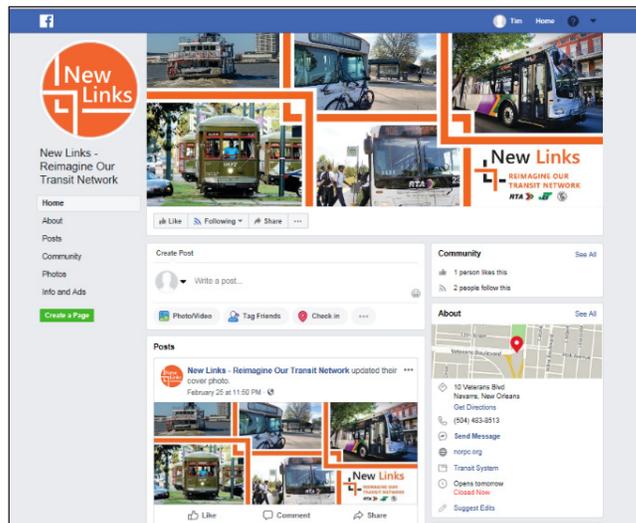
**E-blasts:** The project team sent three e-blasts to 1,294 individuals promoting the first public kick-off meeting.

**Letters to elected officials:** The project team emailed and hand delivered informational letters to 27 elected officials from the City of Gretna, City of Harahan, Jefferson Parish, City of Kenner, City of New Orleans, St. Bernard Parish, and City of Westwego prior to the public kick-off event.

**Flyers:** The project team distributed over 20,000 flyers promoting the kick-off event at key transit stops, churches, hotels, and community organizations, including:

- Beacon Light Church
- Canal Boulevard & City Park (transit center)
- Canal Street at Elk Place (transit stop)
- Carrollton & Claiborne avenues (transit stop)
- Delgado Community College
- Dillard University
- First Baptist Church
- Greater St. Stephen Full Gospel Church
- Harrah’s Casino
- Hilton Riverside
- Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Louisiana
- Household Faith Church
- Hyatt Hotel Loyola
- Jefferson Parish Libraries (East Bank Regional & West Bank Regional)
- Lakeview Christian Church
- Maria Goretti Church
- Marriott Hotels
- MLK Center (Jefferson Parish)
- Orleans Parish Libraries (Main, Rosa Keller, Algiers, Norman Mayer, NOE & MLK)
- Southern University of New Orleans
- Superdome/Smoothie King Center
- University of New Orleans
- Wilty Terminal (transit center)
- Xavier University

Figure 7: New Facebook Page



## 2.2 Engagement Activities

The New Links team hosted and/or attended several engagement events strategically placed throughout the region to engage a diverse and broad range of citizens. This section details the various engagement activities held during Phase I.

### Public Kick-Off Event

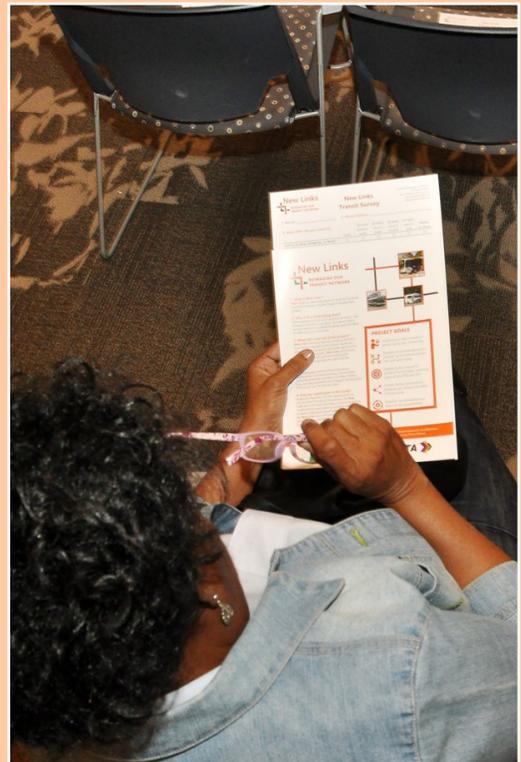
Sixty people attended the project kick-off event held on April 9, 2019, at the University Medical Center (UMC) near downtown New Orleans.

The purpose of the kick-off event was to introduce New Links to the public and seek initial feedback through a comment form and a series of trade-off activities. The trade-off activities were designed to encourage attendees to think about what is most important to them regarding transit service. The trade-off activities allowed community members to explore four different scenarios, ask questions, and provide feedback. The scenarios included:

- Many Stops versus Few Stops
- Coverage versus Frequency
- Short Trip versus Longer Trip without Transfer
- Direct Route versus Indirect Route

Figure 8: Public Kick-Off Event

Residents attending kick-off event heard a presentation, participated in trade-off exercises and received an informational handout.



Source: New Orleans RPC

**Open House Meetings**

Open House meetings - small-scale public meetings hosted by the RPC - were held in each of the five New Orleans City Council districts, with two meetings in Council District C (one meeting in West Bank and another meeting in East Bank) and Council District E (one meeting in New Orleans East and another meeting in Lower Ninth Ward). The meeting held in the Lower Ninth Ward targeted Lower Ninth Ward and St. Bernard Parish riders. Meeting locations were selected to encourage maximum participation throughout the region. Over 200 people attended the 11 meetings. The list of open house meetings is included in Appendix B.

**Neighborhood and Community Meetings**

The project team attended 35 Neighborhood and Community meetings (meetings hosted by other organizations, including neighborhood groups, community partners, and the RTA) to present New Links information and survey attendees. A list of neighborhood and community meetings is included in Appendix B.

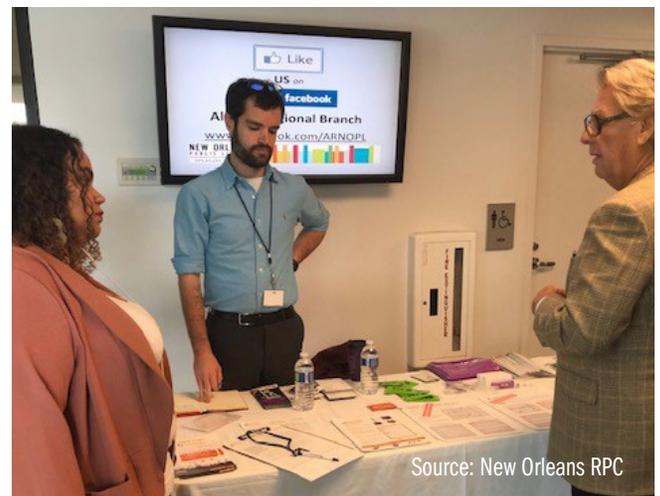
**Tabling and Ride-Along Events**

The project team partnered with RTA and the City of New Orleans Neighborhood Engagement team to host a table at several events throughout the community. Additionally, the project team participated in two “ride-along” events. These events helped reach people who do not typically attend public or community meetings. The project team provided passers-by with project materials and asked for feedback through the New Links survey. The project team engaged with over 300 people at tabling events and ride-along events. The full list of the tabling and ride-along events is included in Appendix B.

**Project Stakeholder Committee**

A Project Stakeholder Committee was developed to serve as a sounding board for project ideas and recommendations. The Project Stakeholder Committee included geographically and demographically diverse representation from businesses, faith-based organizations,

Figure 9: Tabling Events and Presentations



Source: New Orleans RPC

New Links Team with Resident at District C Housing Summit



Source: New Orleans RPC

New Links Phase 1 Closing Meeting

and broad-based civic groups. The first Project Stakeholder Committee meeting was held on May 14, 2019, at Union Passenger Terminal. An overview of the project was presented and stakeholders strategized issues and project direction. A second Project Stakeholder Committee meeting was held on June 10, 2019, at RPC as a make-up session for stakeholders unable to attend the May 14th meeting.

### **Elected Official Briefings**

The New Links project team conducted briefings with elected officials to introduce New Links prior to the public kick-off event. The project team met individually with Mayor LaToya Cantrell, Councilmember Kristin Palmer and the chiefs of staff of members of the New Orleans City Council.

### **Stakeholder Briefings and Presentations**

The project team attended several stakeholder meetings and/or met with stakeholders to provide information about New Links. These briefings occurred throughout engagement. Briefings included meetings with Lighthouse Louisiana, Greater New Orleans Inc., Friends of Lafitte Greenway Trail Extension. The full list of dates and locations is included in Appendix B.

Figure 10. New Links Engagement Events



**Surveys**

Surveys were distributed online via the project website and in-person via tabling events, open house meetings, and neighborhood and community meetings. The survey period was from April through September 2019. One additional survey was received during October 2019 and is included in the summary. The survey form is included in Appendix C.

Figure 11 depicts all the event and meeting locations. Figures 12 through 15 show event locations by type of event.

Figure 11: New Links Engagement Events and Meetings Map

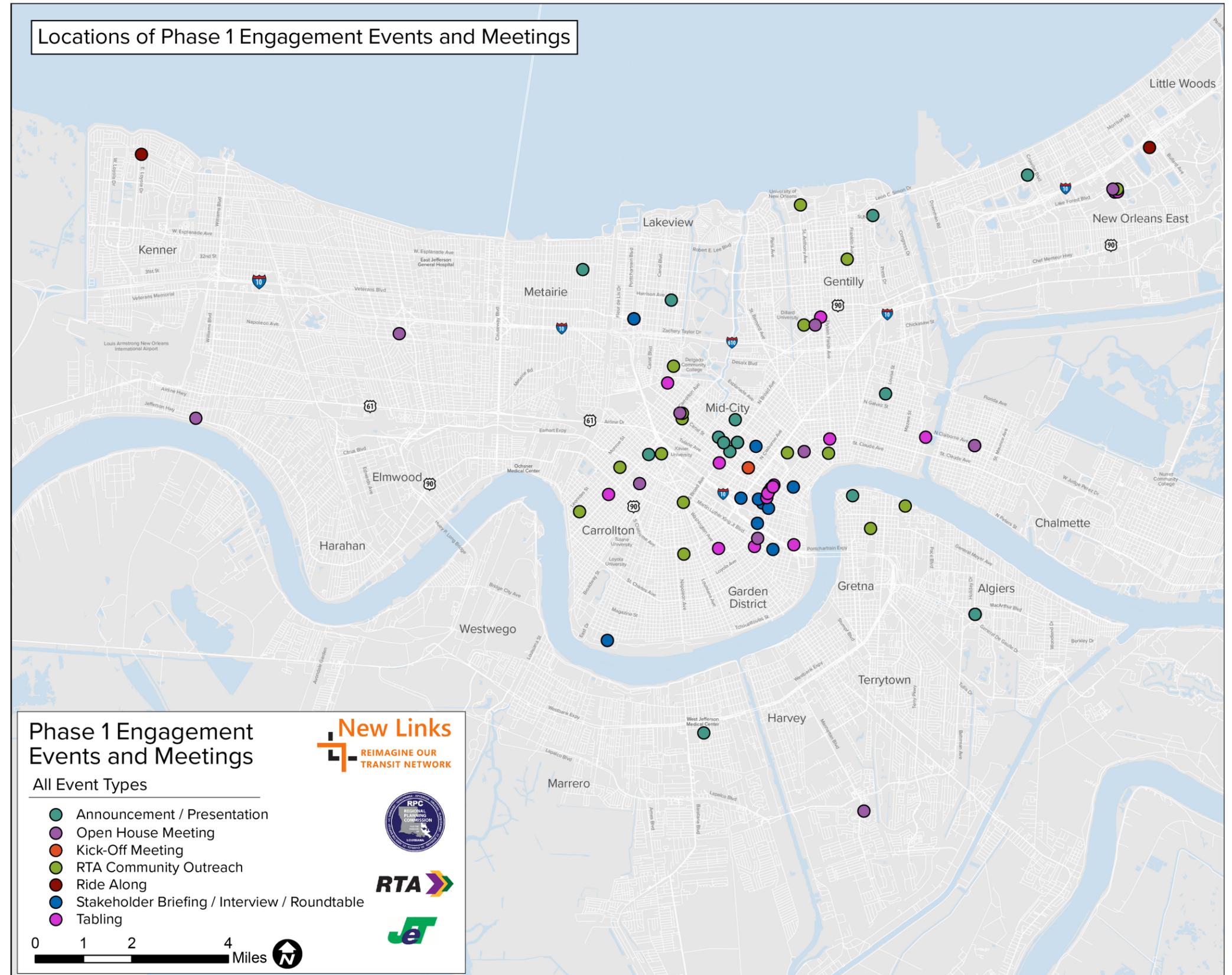


Figure 12: Kick-off Meeting and Open House Meetings

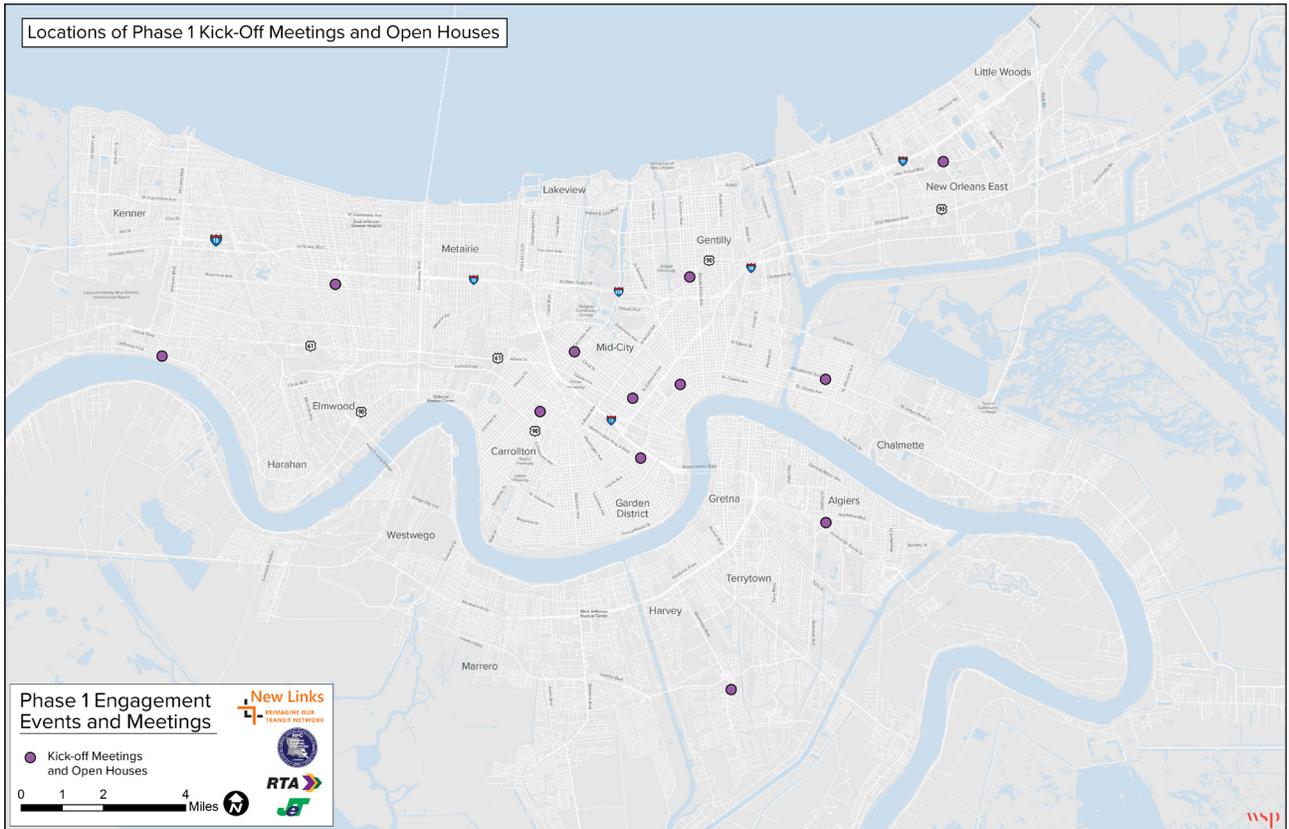


Figure 13: RTA Community Outreach Events

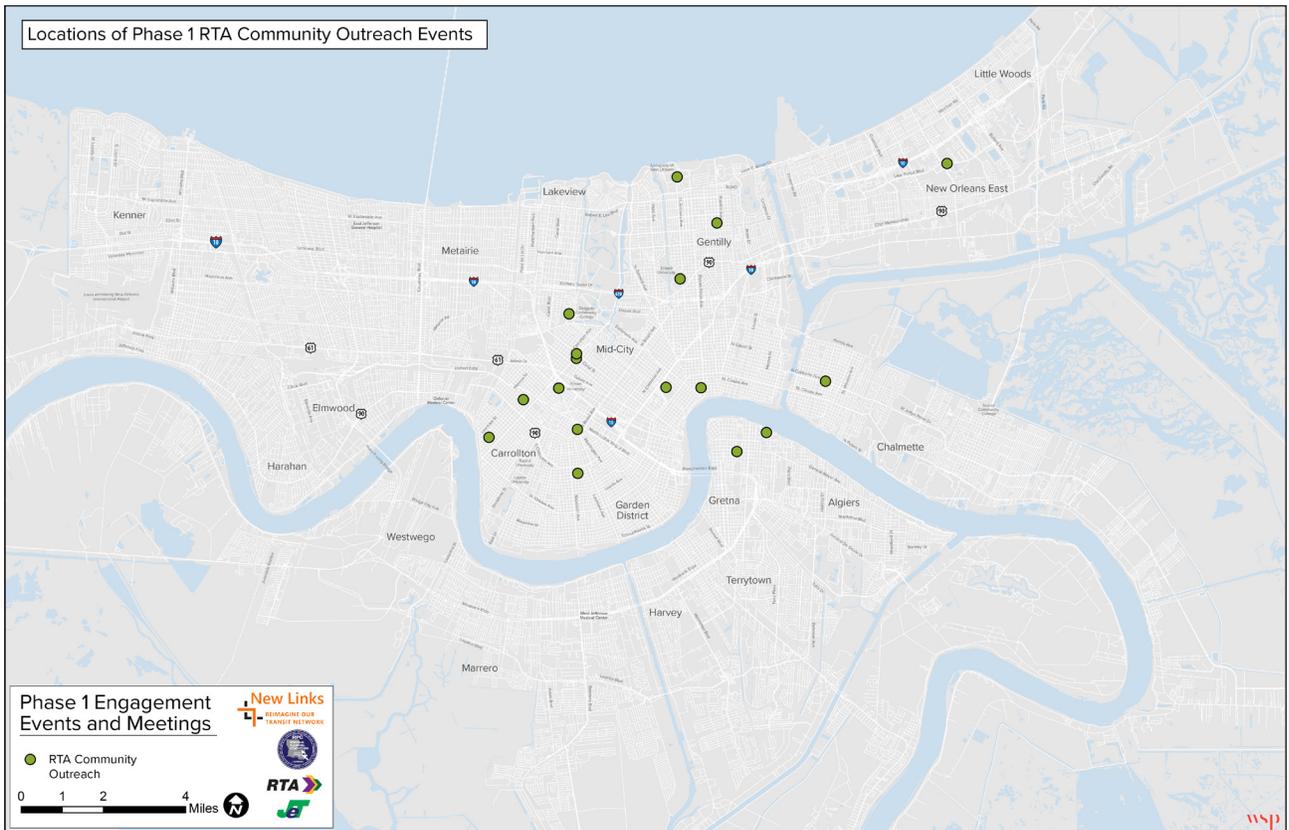


Figure 14: Stakeholder, Community, and Organization Presentations and Announcements

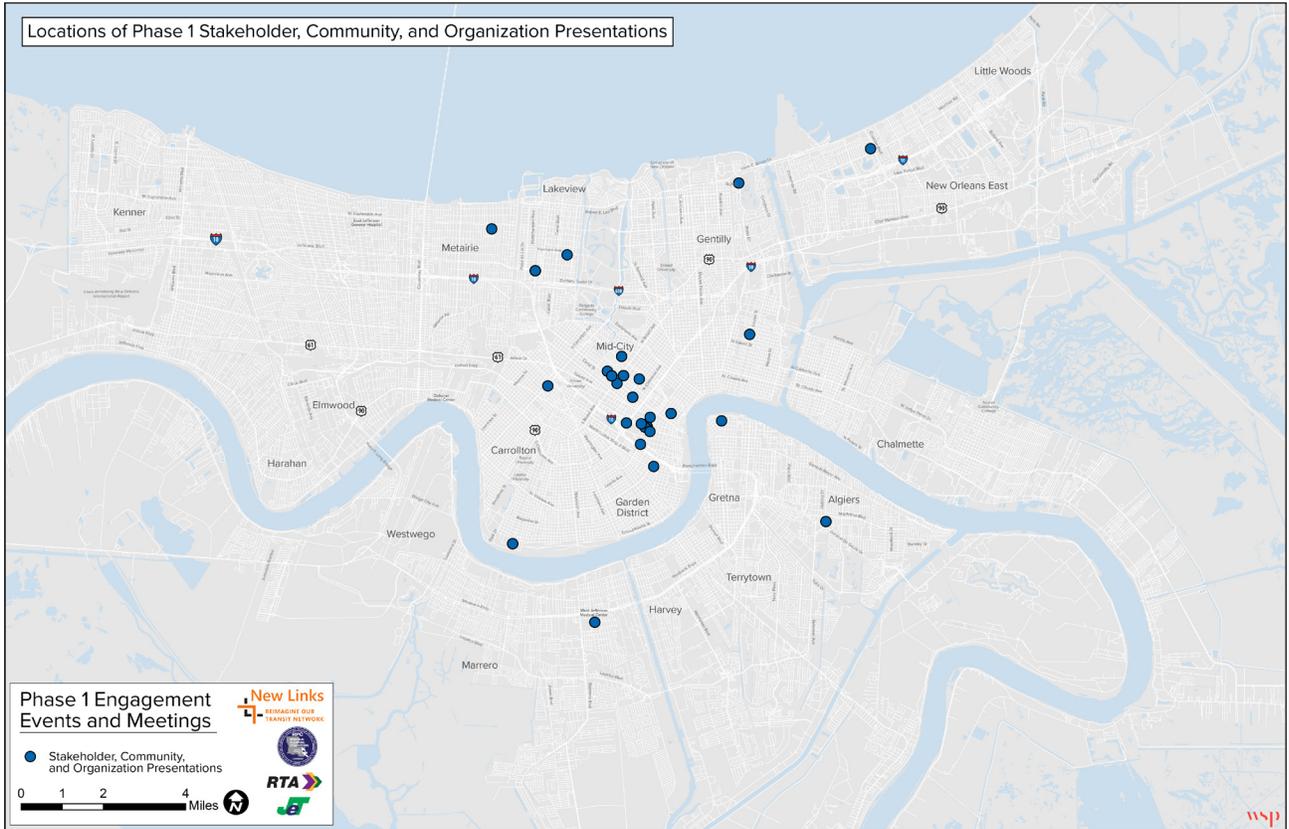
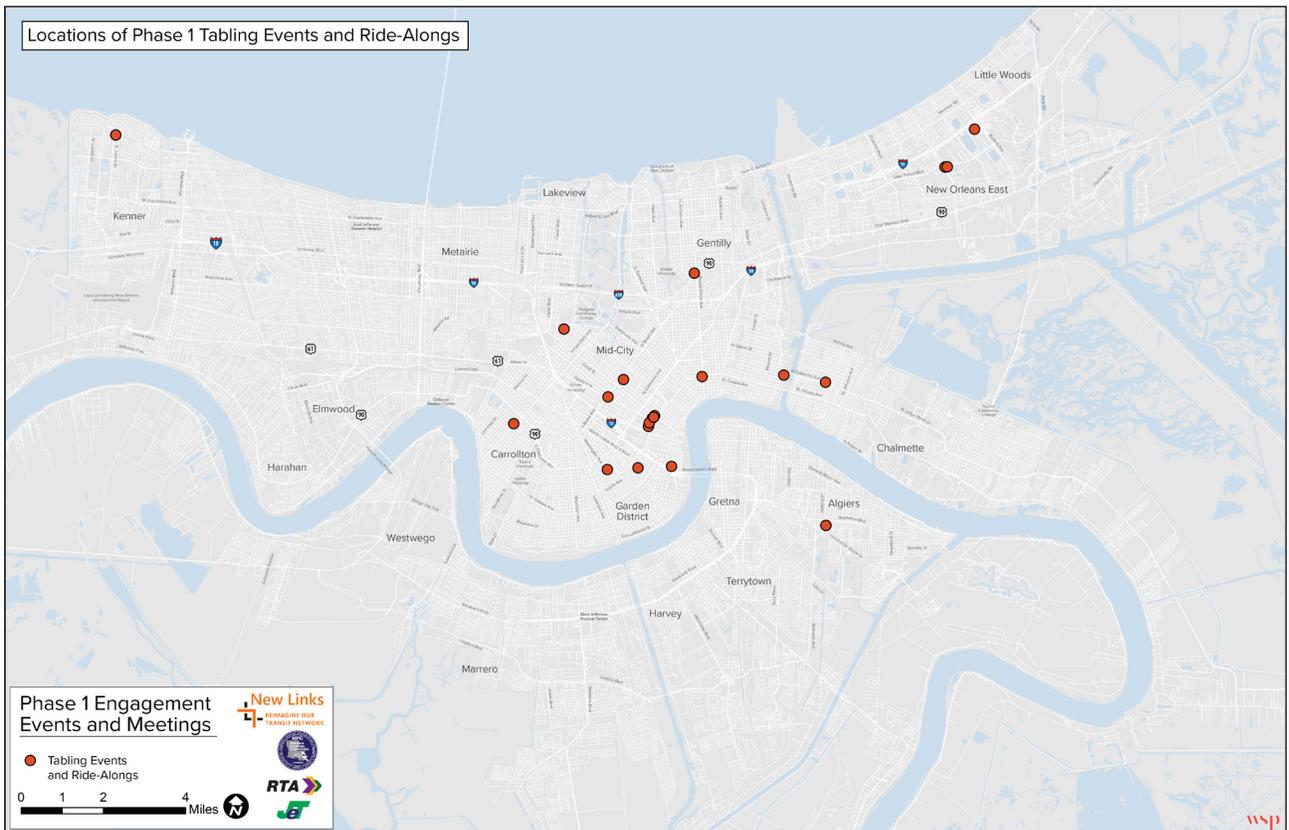


Figure 15: Tabling Events and Ride-Alongs





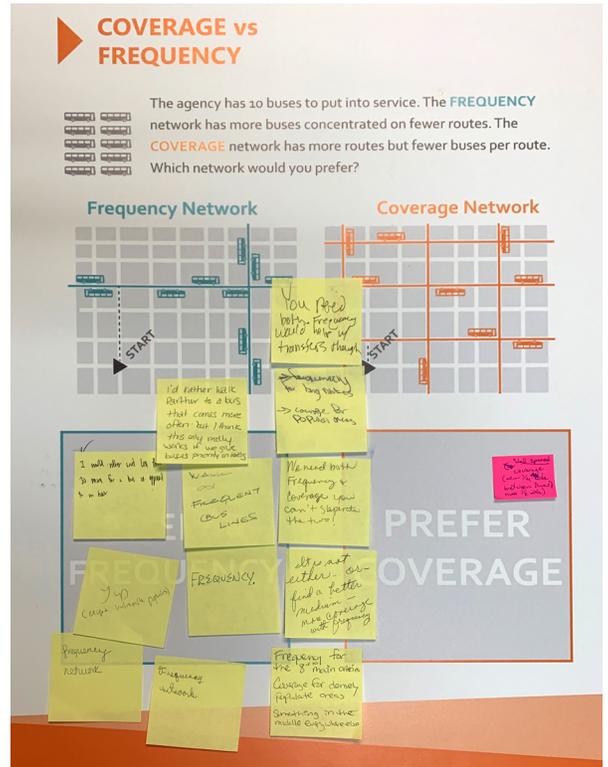
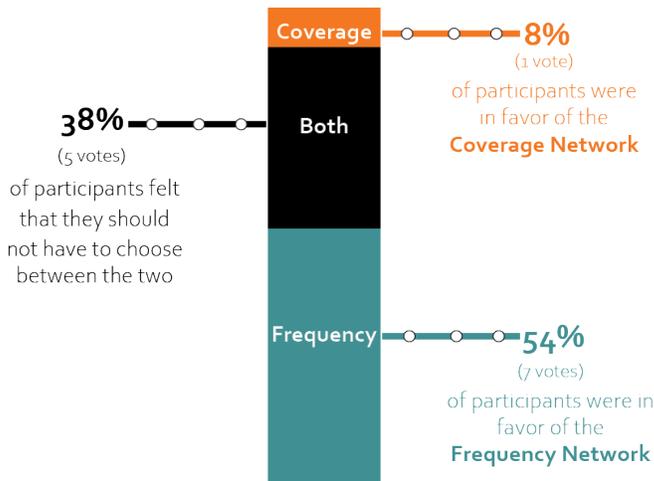
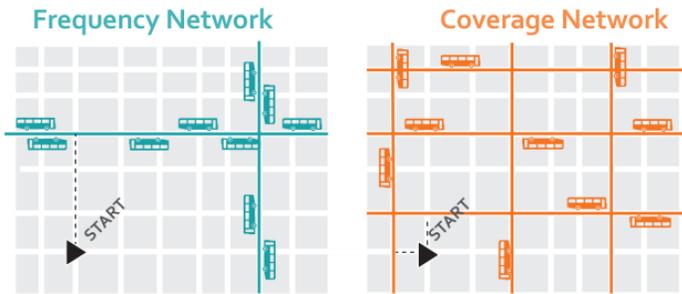
**Trade-Off 2: Coverage vs Frequency**

The “Coverage vs Frequency” trade-off feature asked participants if they would rather have more coverage but fewer buses per route or more buses on fewer routes with more frequent service. This exercise received 13 responses with the majority favoring frequency over coverage.

Figure 17: Trade-Off: Coverage vs. Frequency

**COVERAGE vs FREQUENCY**

The agency has 10 buses to put into service. The **FREQUENCY** network has more buses concentrated on fewer routes. The **COVERAGE** network has more routes but fewer buses per route. Which network would you prefer?



**Trade-Off 3: Short Trip vs Longer Trip without Transfer**

The “Short Trip vs Longer Trip without Transfer” trade-off feature gave participants the choice of single route but with a longer travel time or a transfer to reach their destination but with a shorter travel time. This exercise received 14 responses with most participants favoring transfer routes.

Figure 18: Trade-Off: Single vs. Transfer Route

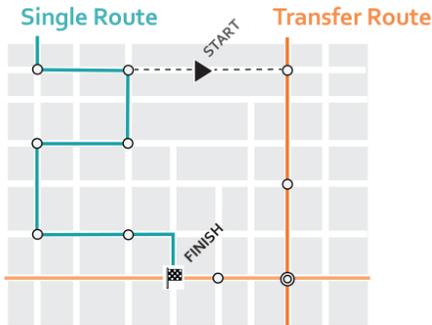
**TRANSFER FOR A SHORT TRIP vs LONGER TRIP WITHOUT TRANSFER**

You want to take transit from start to end.

The **Single Route** takes one route to your destination, but is a longer overall trip.

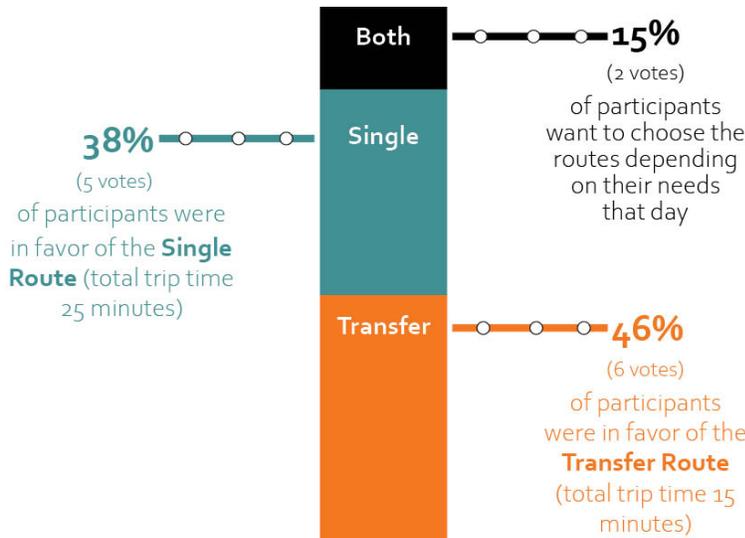
The **Transfer Route** takes you to your destination more quickly, but requires connecting to another line.

Assuming the cost is the same, which route would you prefer?



Single Route Total Trip Time: 25 Minutes

Transfer Route Total Trip Time: 15 minutes



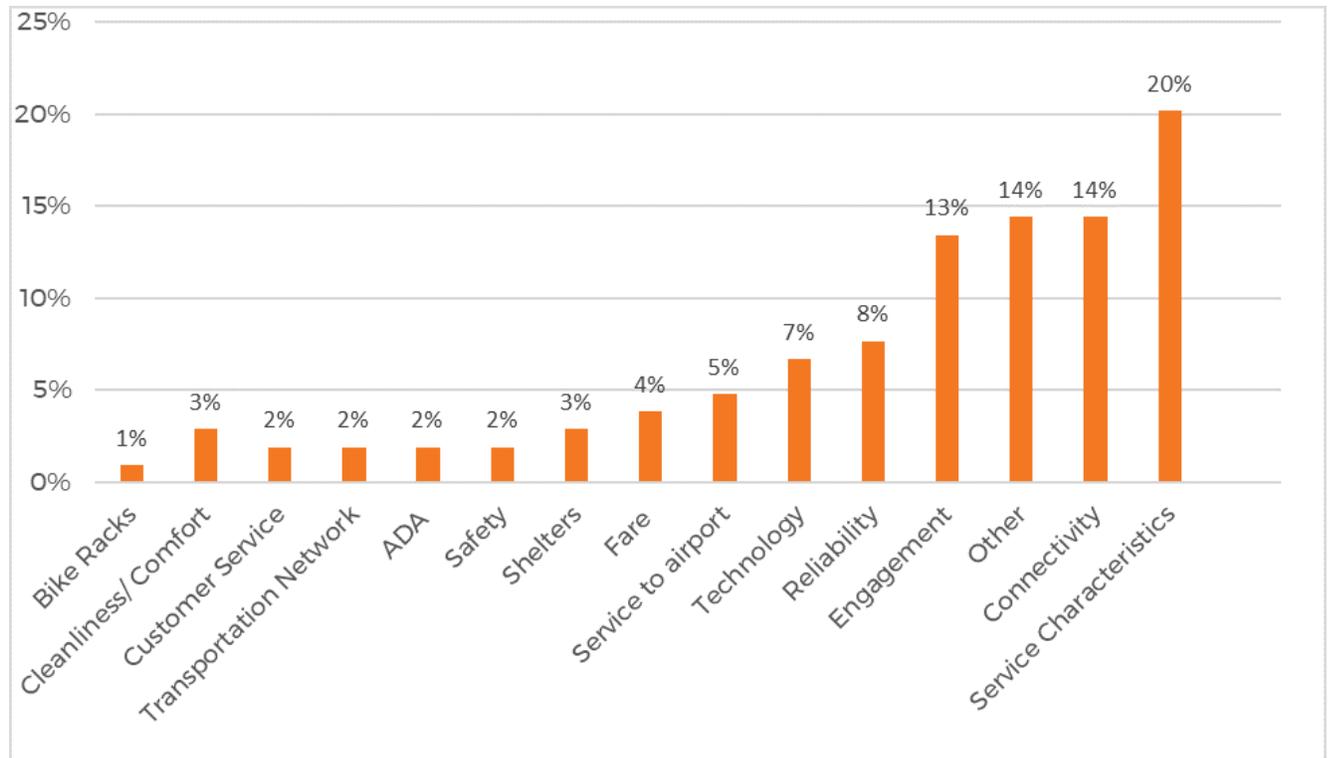
This section contains a smaller version of the diagram and text from the previous section, along with a collage of handwritten sticky notes. The notes express various opinions, such as 'I don't mind a transfer if both lines are busy', 'I would prefer a single route if the transfer route is a straight line', and 'Both! I like options'. Other notes mention 'transfer route is better' and 'single route is better'.



### 3.2 Public and Stakeholder Comment Database

The project webpage, [www.newlinksnola.com](http://www.newlinksnola.com), included a comment feature to enable the submittal of comments electronically and a sign-up for the email distribution list. The project team received 87 mailing list sign-ups and 72 comments submitted via the webpage or through the project email address. Comments are categorized by theme in Figure 20 and explored in greater detail on the pages that follow.

Figure 20: Webpage and Email Comment Submissions



- Service Characteristics:** Most comments were related to frequency, coverage, and span. They included additional service to areas that do not currently have service, extending service hours to account for transit-reliant customers working outside of typical business hours, and additional service to better accommodate riders on existing services.
- Connectivity:** Connectivity refers to better connections between RTA, JeT, and SBURT services, but also better connectivity to currently underserved areas, such as lower income neighborhoods.



#### Some Comments Related to Service Characteristics

“I hope extending hours of the 11 bus is being considered. Service industry workers in the FQ have had to use taxi and Uber for far too long! It would be awesome to extend the hours to at least 2 or 3 a.m.”

“Again, leaving around 5:00 p.m., streetcar packed with tourists. It should not take 1 1/2 hours to get to the Carrollton area. Please consider putting buses on the line during peak hours and during times when there are a lot of tourist in town. Before linking up to other parishes; transit systems, you need to be able to get to that transit stop!”

- **Engagement:** Engagement refers to people who were either excited about the opportunity to participate, had questions related to engagement itself, or said they want to stay engaged in the project as it progresses.
- **Reliability:** Travel times were a reoccurring theme throughout the comments, with many citing frustration over late arrivals.
- **Technology:** Comments included using pre-boarding fare collection, installing GPS trackers to give real-time travel data, and having cohesion of applications between transit systems.
- **Service to Airport:** Several comments expressed the need for transit to the airport or asked if it would be added as part of this project.
- **Fares:** This category captures comments related to free transfers across parish lines, transit fare passes, and incorporating discounts, such as student discounts.
- **Shelters:** Shelters were mentioned several times as a necessity during rain and to help provide shade on hot sunny days.
- **Transportation Network:** Two comments related to the overall transportation network. One comment noted that vehicles and streetcars sometimes block one another. Another suggested using transit signal priority to keep transit moving and on time.
- **Safety:** Two comments expressed concerns related to safety and suggested security or additional police patrols in areas with a relatively high crime rate, such as Canal Street, Rampart Street, and Elk Place.
- **Customer Service:** Two comments mentioned that drivers could provide better customer service, especially when behind schedule.
- **Cleanliness/Comfort:** Comments suggested more comfortable seating and a desire for cleaner vehicles.
- **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA):** There were two mentions of ADA concerns related to the streetcar, specifically about the ability for people to use the rear-exit doors, height from ground to vehicle, and that “streetcars are not useful” for persons with disabilities.
- **Bike Racks:** This comment stated the need for bike racks on streetcar.
- **Other:** The second highest comment category is “other;” however, many of these are not applicable toward service improvements.

The full list of comments (minus personal information) received via email and the New Links website are included in Appendix E.

### 3.3 Open House Meetings and Neighborhood and Community Meetings Feedback

The project team held a series of Open House and Neighborhood and Community Meetings throughout the region. The project team advertised these meetings through the following methods:

- Facebook promotions, paid for by the RPC
- Press releases by partner agencies (RTA, City of New Orleans, City of Kenner, and Jefferson Parish)
- Mass media stories and interviews
- Bus and streetcar advertisements
- Neighborhood organizations

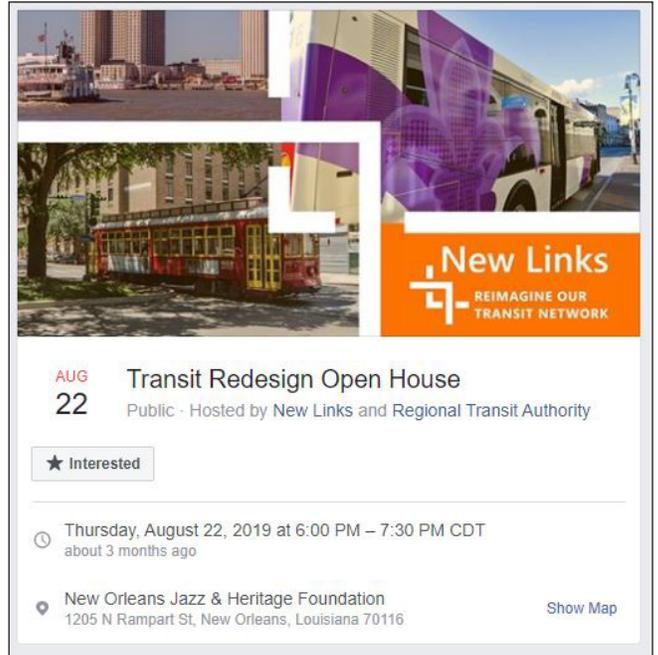
The project team collected data from 265 participants who attended the open house, neighborhood, and community meetings. Participants received a comment form that expanded upon the public survey. Questions that were on the comment form and the survey have been combined and analyzed in Section 3.4. This section summarizes the questions that were on the comment form listed below and meeting activities.

#### Reporting Questions

To better understand the audience that attended each meeting, a set of additional questions asked participants the following:

- How did you travel to today’s meeting?
- How many blocks do you usually walk when you take a bus, streetcar, or ferry trip (one-way)?
- How many transfers do you usually make when you take a bus, streetcar, or ferry trip (one way)?
- How did you hear about the meeting?

Figure 21: Open House Facebook Event Notice and Bus Advertisement



**New Links**  
REIMAGINE OUR TRANSIT NETWORK

The RTA and JeT are looking at ways to redesign bus and streetcar lines to better connect our region and meet your travel needs. Learn more at:  
[www.newlinksnola.com](http://www.newlinksnola.com)

**> we need your input!**  
*Tell us how we can improve your ride!*

Email the project team at:  
[info@newlinksnola.com](mailto:info@newlinksnola.com)

RTA JeT

The graphic includes a vertical column of orange arrows on the left, the New Links logo, and a city skyline at the bottom with a red streetcar and a yellow bus.

Nearly half (43 percent) of meeting attendees arrived by car while 19 percent arrived by transit. The average transit trip involved a three-block walk and one transfer. The remaining 38 percent of meeting attendees arrived by bike, blue bike, motorcycle, carpool, paratransit, walking or another form of transportation that was not listed on the survey. Most attendees (33 percent or 60 respondents) heard about the meeting through an advocacy group, such as Friends of Lafitte Greenway, Girl Trek, Liberty Kitchen, neighborhood engagement groups, American Planning Association (APA), Bike Easy, or Mid-City Neighborhood Organization (MCNO). The second most popular response was from word of mouth, by 14 percent of attendees (26 responses). Other reasons include:

- **Email 9%** (16 responses) – Attendees received emails from the City of New Orleans, East New Orleans Neighborhood Advisory Commission (ENONAC), RIDE NOLA, RTA, neighborhood associations, and the City of Kenner.
- **Through a Transit Agency 9%** (17 responses) – Attendees heard about the meeting through RTA or JET.
- **Social Media 8%** (15 responses) – Of the attendees that noted they heard through social media, 60 percent heard through Facebook, 27 percent through NextDoor, and 13 percent through Twitter.
- **Work 7%** (13 responses) – Attendees noted they learned about the meeting through work or were required/encouraged to attend as a part of their job.
- **Advertisement 4%** (8 responses) – Attendees saw advertisements at various locations, such as libraries, transit, and community spaces.
- **News 4%** (8 responses) – Attendees learned about the meeting through their local news broadcast.
- **Project Website 4%** (8 responses) – Attendees saw information about the meeting on the New Links project website.
- **Public Meetings 4%** (7 responses) – Attendees were told about the meeting during other public meetings, including ENONAC and other non-specified community meetings.
- **Walk-ins 3%** (5 responses) – These attendees had no prior knowledge of the meeting but happened to be at the location while it was occurring.

### Meeting Activities

Similar to the public kick-off event, attendees of the open house, neighborhood, and community meetings participated in exercises to choose trade-offs. The following sections describe the trade-offs and responses:

#### Trade-Off 1: Walking Distance

Participants could vote for a Direct Route (with longer walking distance to stops, more trips per day, and short overall commute) or a Circuit Route (with shorter walking distance to stops, fewer trips per day, and longer overall commute).

The total results are:

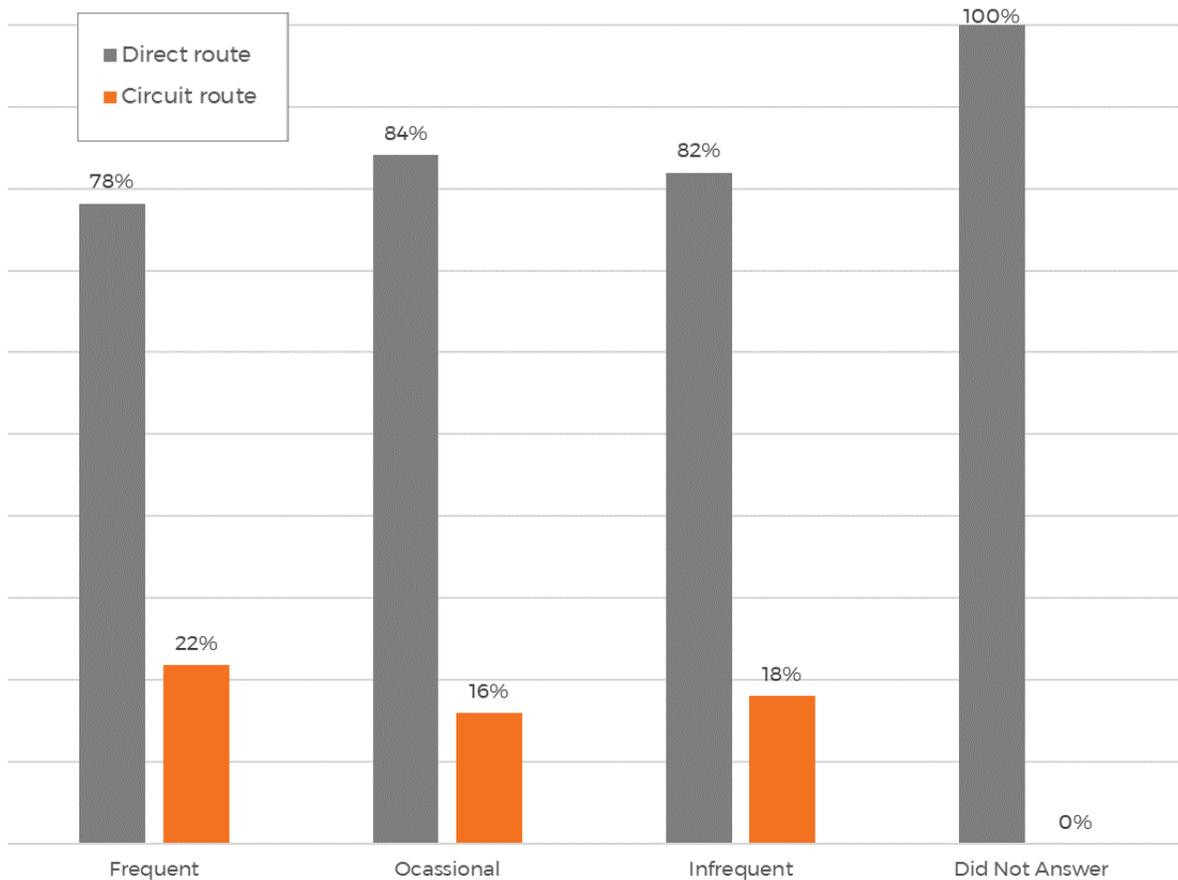
- Direct Route: 82% of responses (165 votes)
- Circuit Route: 18% of responses (36 votes)

The results by how often participants use transit are shown in Figure 23. Frequent, occasional, and infrequent riders all preferred a direct route.

Figure 22: Trade-Off: Walking Distance



Figure 23: Trade-Off: Walking Distance by How Often Participant Uses Transit



### Trade-Off 2: Transfers

The second activity asked participants to choose between two trade-offs regarding transfers. Participants could vote for connecting routes, with more trips per day and shorter overall commute, or a single route, with fewer trips per day and longer overall commute. The total results are:

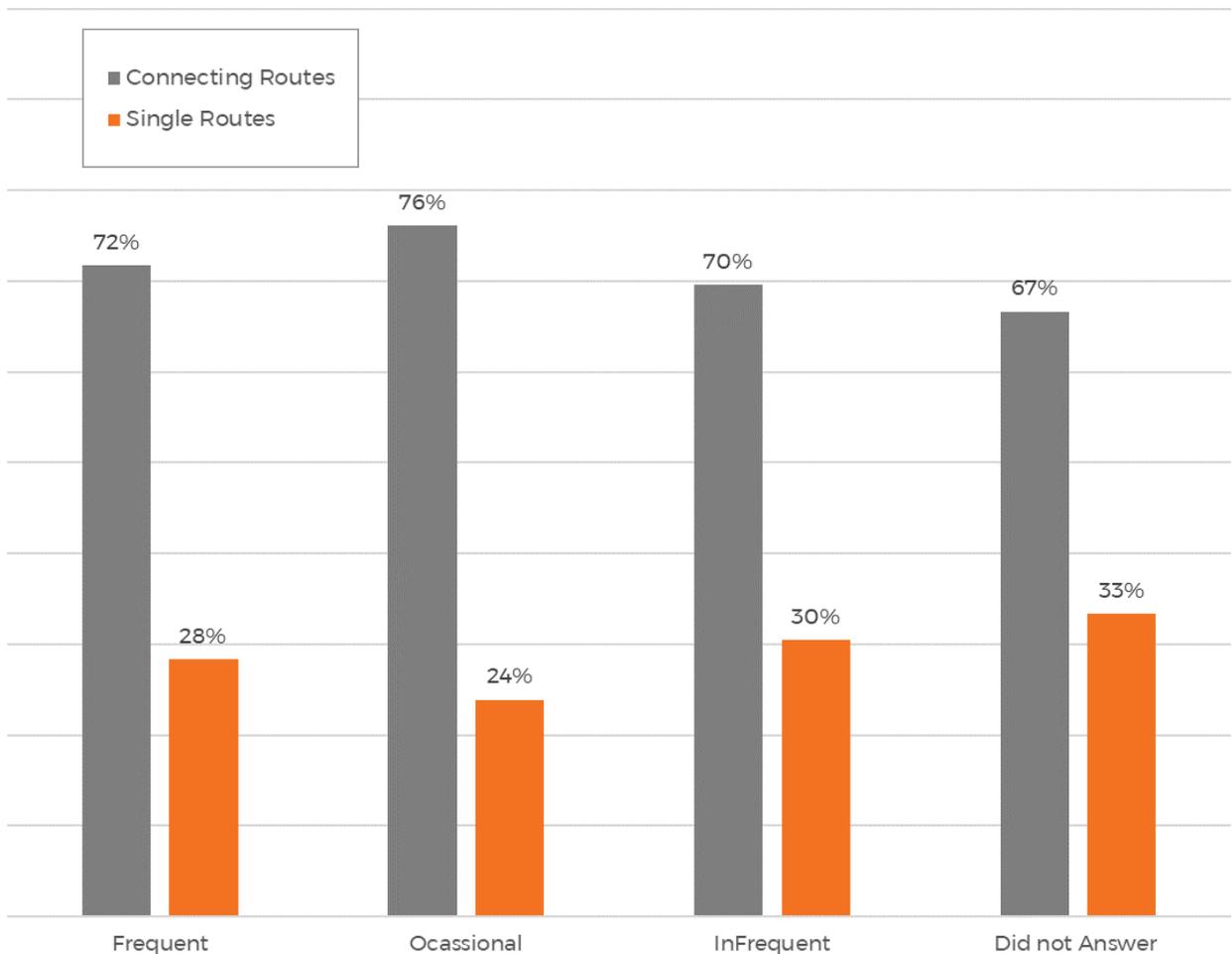
- Connecting Route: 72% of responses (141 votes)
- Single Route: 28% of responses (54 votes)

Figure 25 shows preferences by how often participants use transit. Frequent, occasional, and infrequent riders all preferred connecting routes.

Figure 24: Trade-Off: Transfers



Figure 25: Trade-Off: Transfers by How Often Participant Uses Transit

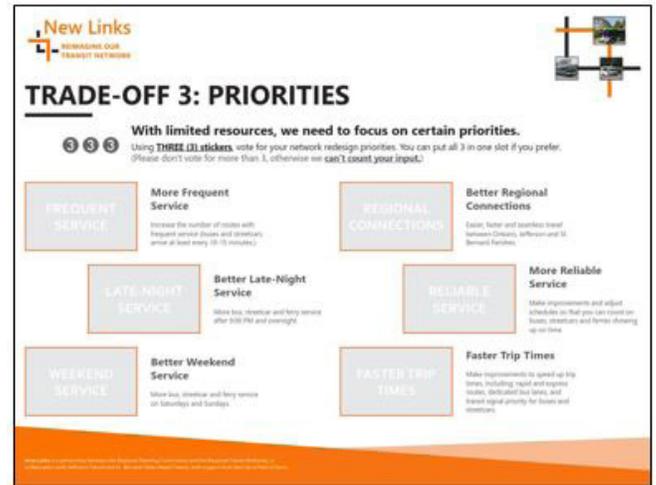


**Trade-Off 3: Priorities**

Attendees received three stickers to vote for their network redesign priorities. Participants were given the choice to use all three stickers on one redesign priority if preferred. Their choices included:

- **More Frequent Services** – Increase the number of routes with frequent service.
- **Better Late-Night Service** – More bus, streetcar and ferry service after 9:00 PM and overnight.
- **Better Weekend Service** – More bus, streetcar and ferry service on Saturdays and Sundays.
- **Better Regional Connections** – Easier, faster and seamless travel between Orleans, Jefferson and St. Bernard parishes.
- **More Reliable Service** – Make improvements and adjust schedules so that you can count on buses, streetcars and ferries showing up on time.
- **Faster Trip Times** – Make improvements to speed up trip times, including: rapid and express routes, dedicated bus lanes, and transit signal priority for buses and streetcars.

Figure 26: Trade-Off: Priorities



Results:

OPEN HOUSE MEETING TRADE-OFF PRIORITIES (600 TOTAL RESPONSES)

*Riders want more frequent and reliable service*



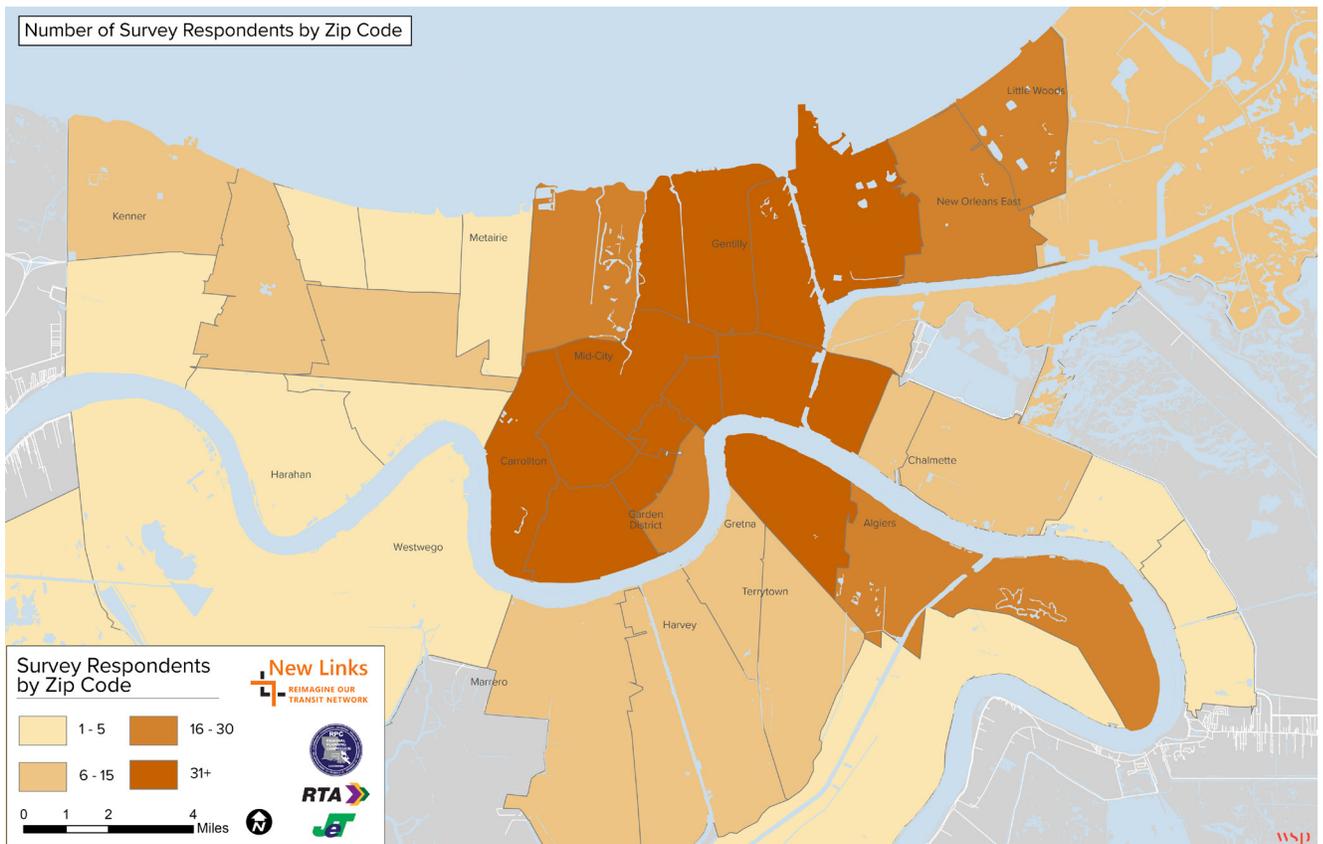
These priorities were compared between frequent, occasional and infrequent transit riders. All participant types have “more frequent service” and “more reliable service” as their top two priorities.

### 3.4 New Links Survey

The project team collected 1,080 surveys. Responses were collected both through paper surveys given at various events and meetings, as well as through an online survey hosted on SurveyMonkey, an online survey program. The survey was open between April and September 2019; an additional survey response is included from October 2019. The survey focused on how participants currently travel and asked for ways to improve the current bus, streetcar, and ferry transit services.

The survey asked participants for their zip code. Figure 27 shows the number of survey respondents by zip code. The heaviest concentration of respondents was in the Orleans Parish, as shown by the dark orange color. The largest amount of responses received in any zip code was 154, in zip code 70119 (Mid-City).

Figure 27: Survey Respondents by Zip Code



The first question asked participants how often they travel by the various modes. Of the respondents who said that they travel by car, 50 percent use this mode daily or several times a week. Fifty-six percent of participants stated they walk either daily or several times a week. Travel by car accounts for 50 percent of people’s travel mode (daily or several times a week). Transit was the third most popular transportation mode with 41 percent of participants using it daily or several times a week. Twelve percent of respondents use bikes either daily or several times a week to travel. Other modes include motorcycles, carpools, and taxis.

As a follow-up, participants were asked, “why do you usually travel by car, bus, bike, etc.?” This question aimed to understand how participants view the current transportation system and to determine if there are specific gaps that should be addressed. Participant comments for this question are categorized into one of six themes. Figure 28 shows the breakdown of comments based on which mode participants selected using either “daily” or “several times a week,” and their reason for using the mode. The categories are shown by percentage for each mode. It should be noted that the comments do not necessarily correlate to the respondent’s most frequently chosen mode of transportation. Each theme is described in more detail based on the comments received:

- **Convenience:** Most of the comments are related to convenience. These comments include responses such as a car being convenient because they can travel on their own schedule, bikes being convenient because of the availability of bike lanes, and transit being convenient because they did not have to worry about traffic or parking.
- **Preference:** The second highest theme was preference, including enjoying that mode the most, the environmental benefits, or just because it was a personal preference.
- **Reliability:** Reliability is the third most mentioned theme. Comments mainly refer to car or bike travel being reliable because it is quicker than other modes.
- **Only Option:** Participants noted their most frequently used transportation mode as the only mode available to them.
- **Affordability:** Comments mention the high cost of car ownership, the cost to park, and the affordability of public transit as their reason for traveling by bus, bike, or walking.
- **Safety:** Comments mentioned lack of safety using bikes as a primary mode of travel (due to lack of safe bike routes/lanes).



21%

of participants say transit is their only option



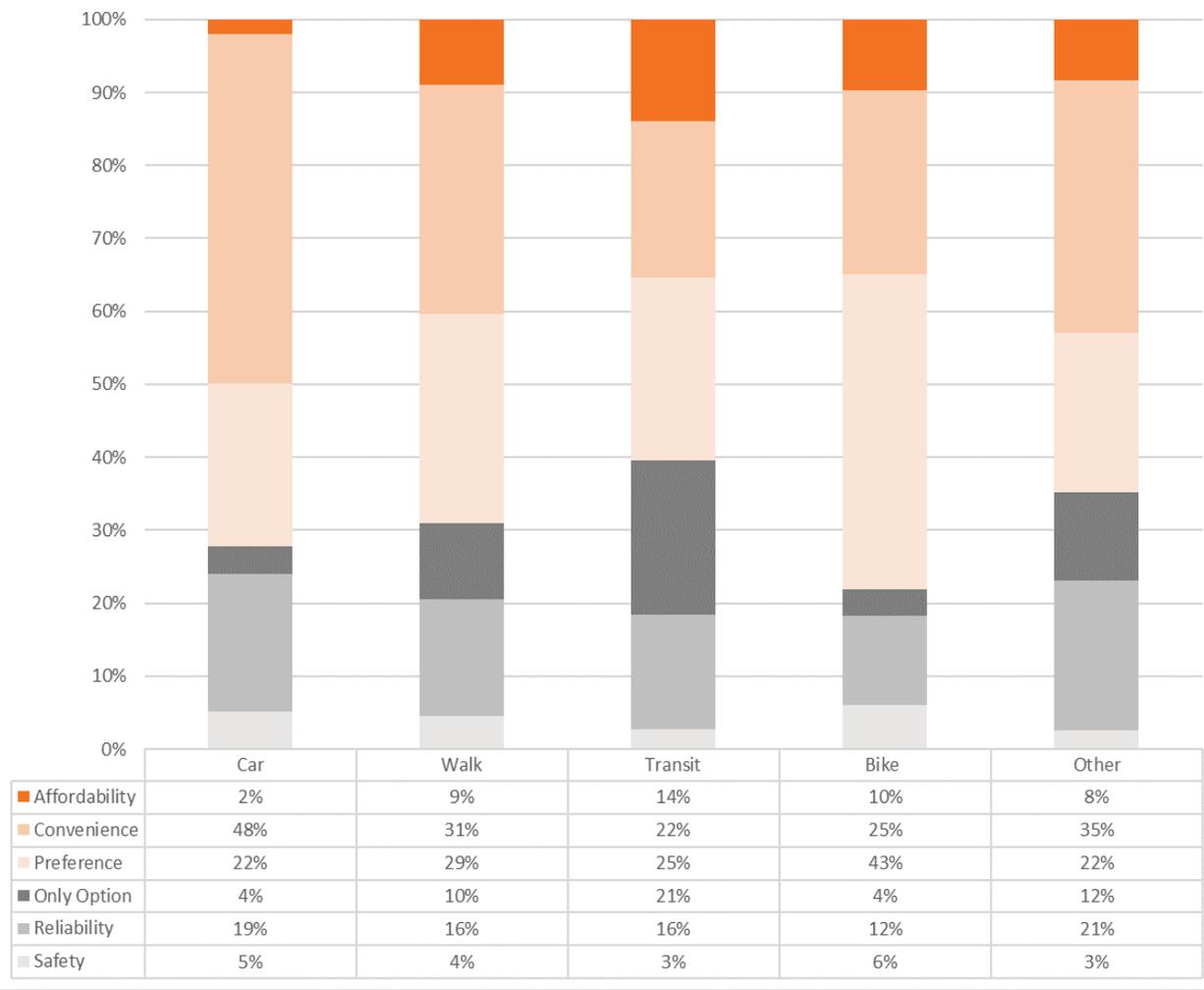
48%

of participants drive because it is most convenient to them



**Personal preference** is the most popular reason to bike or walk

Figure 28: Mode Choice by Reason



\*Percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

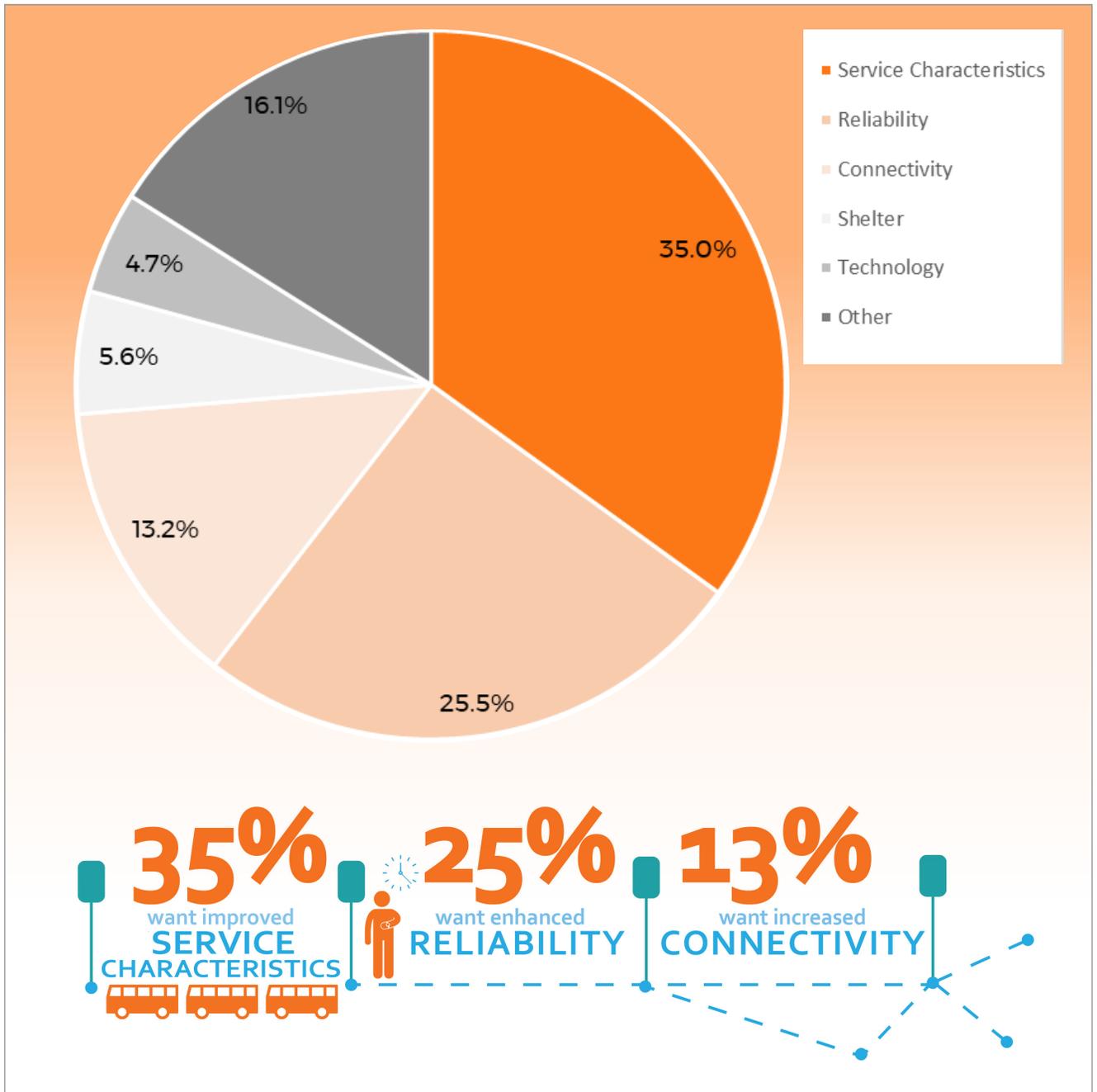
The following question in the survey asked, “If you take the bus, streetcar, or ferry, which specific RTA or JeT lines do you use most often?” The top answer was the Canal Streetcar – Cemeteries line. Total results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Transit Routes by Participant

Route	Number of Responses	Route	Number of Responses
<b>RTA Streetcar Routes</b>		<b>RTA Bus Routes continued</b>	
12 St. Charles	183	90 Carrollton	27
47 Canal-Cemeteries	234	91 Jackson - Esplanade	84
48 Canal-City Park	202	94 Broad	86
49 Rampart-St. Claude	65	100 Algiers Loop Owl	8
<b>RTA Bus Routes</b>		101 Algiers Point	17
5 Marigny-Bywater	8	102 General Meyer	24
10 Tchoupitoulas	23	106 Aurora	5
11 Magazine	83	108 Algiers Local	8
15 Freret	24	114 General DeGaulle-Sullen	14
16 S. Claiborne	39	115 General DeGaulle-Tullis	18
27 Louisiana	34	201 Kenner Loop	15
28 M.L. King	33	202 Airport Express	6
32 Leonidas - Tremé	33	<b>Other Transit</b>	
39 Tulane	19	Paratransit	8
45 Lakeview	9	Ferry	96
51 St. Bernard - St. Anthony	18	<b>JeT Bus Routes</b>	
52 St. Bernard - Paris Avenue	25	E-1 Veterans	26
55 Elysian Fields	55	E-2 Airport Express	32
57 Franklin	29	E-3 Kenner Local	12
60 Hayne	22	E-4 Metairie Road	0
62 Morrison Express	40	E-5 Causeway	5
63 New Orleans East Owl	12	E-8 Clearview	1
64 Lake Forest Express	31	W-1 Avondale	2
65 Read - Crowder Express	18	W-2 Westbank Expressway	19
80 Desire - Louisa	11	W-3 Lapalco	15
84 Galvez	22	W-8 Terrytown	7
88 St. Claude	52	W-10 Huey P. Long	7

The final question on the survey asked participants, “If you could change one thing about the bus and streetcar system, what would it be?” Comments are categorized into six themes: connectivity, service characteristics, reliability, shelter improvements, technology, and other. The most popular responses in the “other” theme covered topics such as comfort, ADA needs, bicycle amenities, driver complaints, ticket fare, and safety. Reliability and service characteristics are the prime rider concerns with transit use. The third largest concern is connectivity. Full results are shown in Figure 29.

Figure 29: Service Improvement Priorities



The following is a sample of the types of comments in each of the categories:

■ **Service Characteristics 35%**



*"More frequent buses for areas with poor access. My students who live in New Orleans East have to few options to get to Ben Franklin and if they miss the bus, they suffer major inconvenience."*

*"More service: evenings, weekends, holidays, rush hour."*

■ **Reliability 25%**



*"Speed. I would be so much more likely to use and benefit from the public transit if I could rely on it to get me where I need to be in a timely fashion."*

*"Ensuring that residents of New Orleans East and Algiers can reliably get to jobs in Jefferson & St. Bernard Parishes."*

*"I'm typically uncertain how long the streetcar takes so only take it if I don't have a time constraint. If I knew for sure, I'd recommend it more."*

■ **Connectivity 13%**



*"That there are more bus lines and more options in areas like N.O. East" "More routes."*

*"If I could change one thing about the bus system it would be to have better access to the different parishes."*

■ **Shelters 6%**



*"More benches, better A/C, more shelter from rain."*

*"More benches. Needs somewhere to sit at bus stops."*

■ **Technology 5%**



*"Tracker/app for bus delay or station."*

*"To add free wi-fi, fast working!"*

*"On board smart cards and/or multiple modern forms of payment."*

■ **Other 16%**



**Comfort (4%) -**

*"Cleaner buses," "More seats," "Air conditioning."*

**ADA (1%) -**

*"Easier access for handicap on the streetcar system."*

**Bikes (1%) -**

*"Streetcars don't allow bikes, and busses only allow the space for 2 bikes..."*

**Drivers (2%) -**

*"Better service from drivers."*

**Fare (3%) -**

*"Price of fare."*

**Safety (2%) -**

*"Better security response."*

**Other (3%) -**

*"More park and ride areas." "Play music on streetcar."*

The full list of survey open-ended questions is included in Appendix E.

### 3.5 Collective Public Input

Over 1,000 surveys were collected during Phase I. The comments gathered from the survey, online comments, emails to the project team, and comment forms at the kick-off meeting are displayed in Figure 30 using the categories used in Section 3.2 of this report. “Service Characteristics” is a trend throughout public feedback. The trade-off activities in Section 3.3 show frequency (a service characteristic) is a top priority among frequent, occasional, and non-transit riders. “Service Characteristics” is also the top theme when all types of public comments are combined. Another common theme is reliability. Residents are willing to make transfers for more frequent transit service if service is reliable.

Figure 30: Phase I Public Comments

