



Transportation Needs Survey Summary

I. Purpose and Background

Transportation continues to be a barrier for non-driving, older adults and people with disabilities in Milwaukee County, but additional assessment is needed to understand the nuanced needs of these target populations. The purpose of this transportation needs survey was to better understand the unmet transportation needs and gaps in transportation services for non-driving, Milwaukee County older adults and people with disabilities.

Two surveys completed in the recent past began this assessment and were a starting place to expand upon with this transportation needs survey. First, in 2021, the Milwaukee County Area Agency on Aging underwent a comprehensive planning and engagement process to gather public feedback on existing services, identify unmet needs, and discern the goals that are most important to the public as a part of the 2022-2024 Area Aging Plan. This process included a survey with two transportation questions.

The first survey question asked respondents to *“think about the services, supports, and opportunities available to older adults in Milwaukee County”* and rank the quality of the service from excellent (5) to poor (1). The results below show the composite scores for each service. While these results suggest that MCTS TransitPlus offers the best service, and the volunteer driver programs in the county are lacking, it is important to understand that all services had composite scores that were average (around 3 on the scale of 1 to 5) and that these results tell us little about why the service quality meets expectations or needs improvement, or what types of improvements may be needed. The transportation needs survey sought to expand on these preliminary results.

3.36	Transit Plus for people with disabilities
3.25	MCTS Public Transit System
3.16	MCDA Transportation for older adults
3.13	Accessible and affordable private transportation
2.96	Accessible sidewalks, walkways, and bike paths.
2.90	Volunteer driver programs

Figure 1: Results of transportation service question in Area Aging Plan Survey

An additional question in the Area Aging Plan survey gathered information about the destinations served by the Milwaukee County Older Adult Transportation Service (OATS) and asked respondents to rank the destination options from least important to most important. Respondents reported access to a park, trail or outdoor recreation site as the most important, followed by visiting a friend/relative in a hospital or nursing home, going to the pharmacy, a healthcare appointment, and attending a social activity. The transportation needs survey sought to validate and expand upon the destination limitations that older adults and people with disabilities experience.

A second set of survey data was produced as part of the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC) 2021 planning process to update the federally mandated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Coordination Plan of 2016. This plan seeks to assist agencies in improving public transit and human services transportation by assessing the existing public transit and human services transportation services and needs in the County, identifying unmet needs or service gaps, and presenting a prioritized list of strategies to address those needs. As a part of this process, SEWRPC sent a survey out to organizations representing seniors and individuals with disabilities, transportation and

human service providers, and municipal representatives. Notably, however, this survey did not garner information directly from service users, rather from the agencies that support the service users. Furthermore, the 2021 survey asked respondents to rank progress that was made on the 2016 unmet needs, possibly leading to some bias in updated recommendations. A summary of unmet needs identified in this plan includes needs for increased funding for transportation services, increased coordination and communication related to existing transportation services, service improvements, including increased availability, convenience, and safety of existing services, additional T-19 transportation providers, increased affordability, and increased intercounty transportation options. The DHHS-Aging and Disability Services (ADS) transportation needs survey sought to contextualize some of these recommendations by hearing directly from service users.

II. Summary of Survey Outreach Efforts

The DHHS ADS survey was active for one month (March 14th to April 15th 2022) and was distributed in both online and in paper format. The survey link was hosted on the County's Aging Services website, and shared broadly throughout the Aging network, including Aging vendor organizations, committees and councils, and outreach listservs. The paper surveys were distributed with a pre-paid envelope available for respondents to mail in. The DHHS ADS Transportation Coordinator tabled and provided outreach at the five County-owned Senior Centers, distributing and collecting paper surveys on site. Paper copies were also available on Milwaukee County Older Adult Transportation Service (OATS) vans, distributed by organizations providing in person services and outreach (United Community Center and ERAS Senior Network), and distributed to senior housing facilities throughout the county.

III. Summary of Survey Results

Survey results consist of respondents' demographic information for context, followed by responses to closed-ended questions about the transportation options respondents currently use and transportation issues they experience, and lastly, open-ended questions to gather more in-depth information.

a. Demographics

We received a total of 92 responses to the survey. Thirty percent of the responses were received online, and the remaining 70% were received in paper form. Females, Black or African American respondents, and respondents of Hispanic or Latino origin were overrepresented in the survey responses, compared to the County's older adult population based on the American Community Survey (ACS) 2020 5-year estimates. The demographics of the respondents can be seen below.

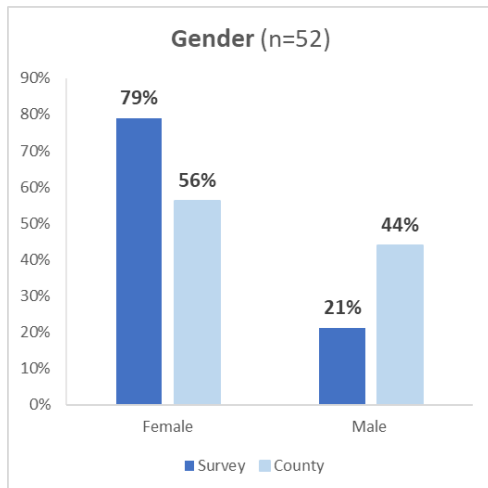


Chart 1: Gender of Survey Respondents

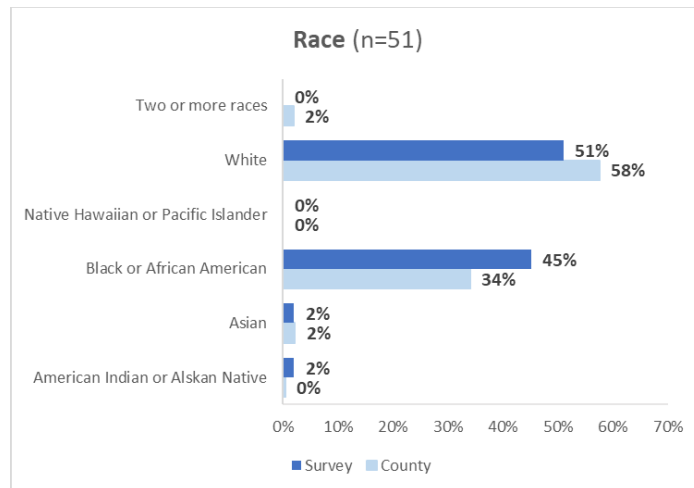


Chart 2: Racial Breakdown of Survey Respondents

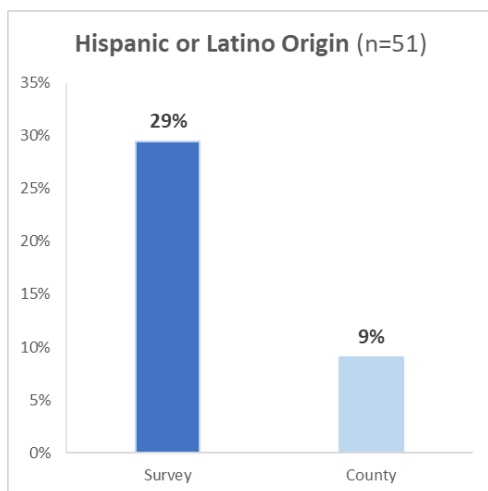


Chart 3: Ethnicity of Survey Respondents

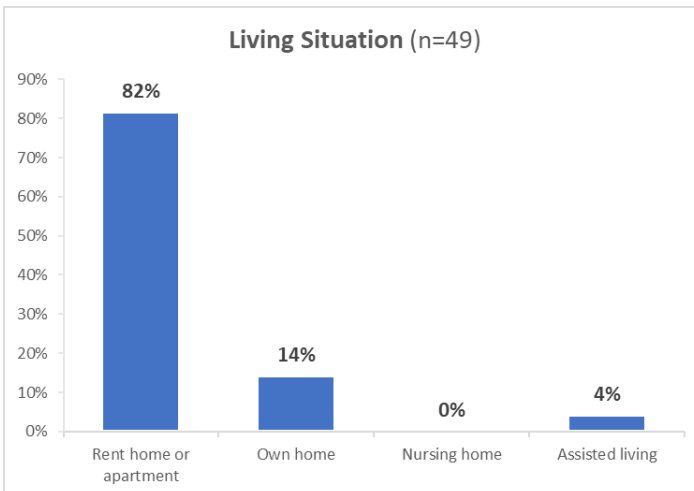


Chart 4: Survey Respondents' Living Situations

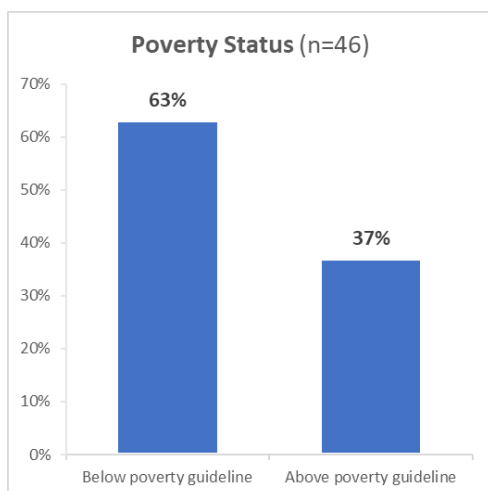


Chart 5: Poverty Status of Survey Respondents

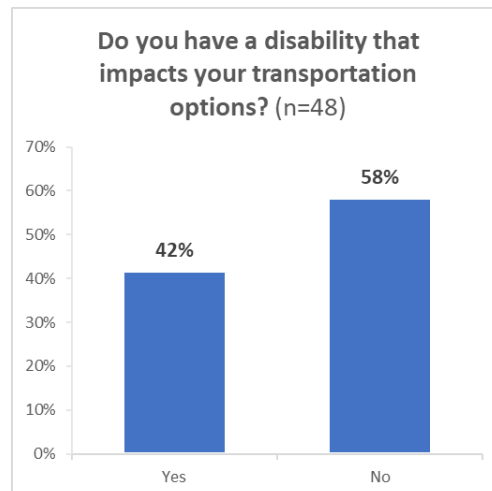


Chart 6: Disability Status of Survey Respondents

b. Transportation Options

As seen in Chart 7, the most used transportation options among respondents are rides from friends and family and MCTS buses, followed by Milwaukee County Older Adult Transportation Service (OATS) and MCTS Transit Plus. Because surveys were distributed on OATS vans, the share of the target population using OATS is likely to be over representative.

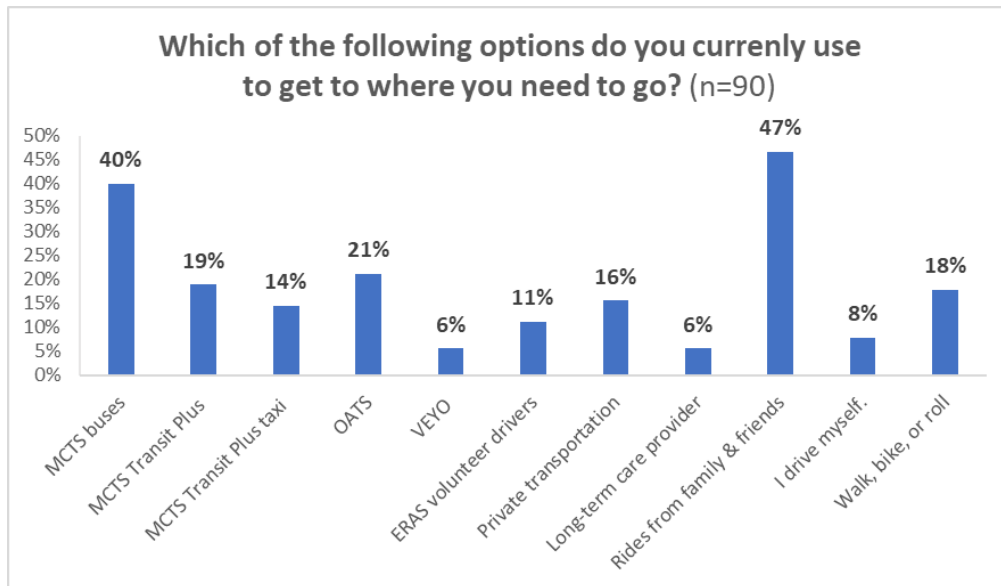


Chart 7: Transportation Options Used by Survey Respondents

c. Transportation Insecurity

There were ten questions included in the survey which aimed to understand the level of transportation insecurity among respondents. The following charts group the questions by topic area. Chart 8 below shows the survey responses for questions related to waiting and being late, which most respondents experience.

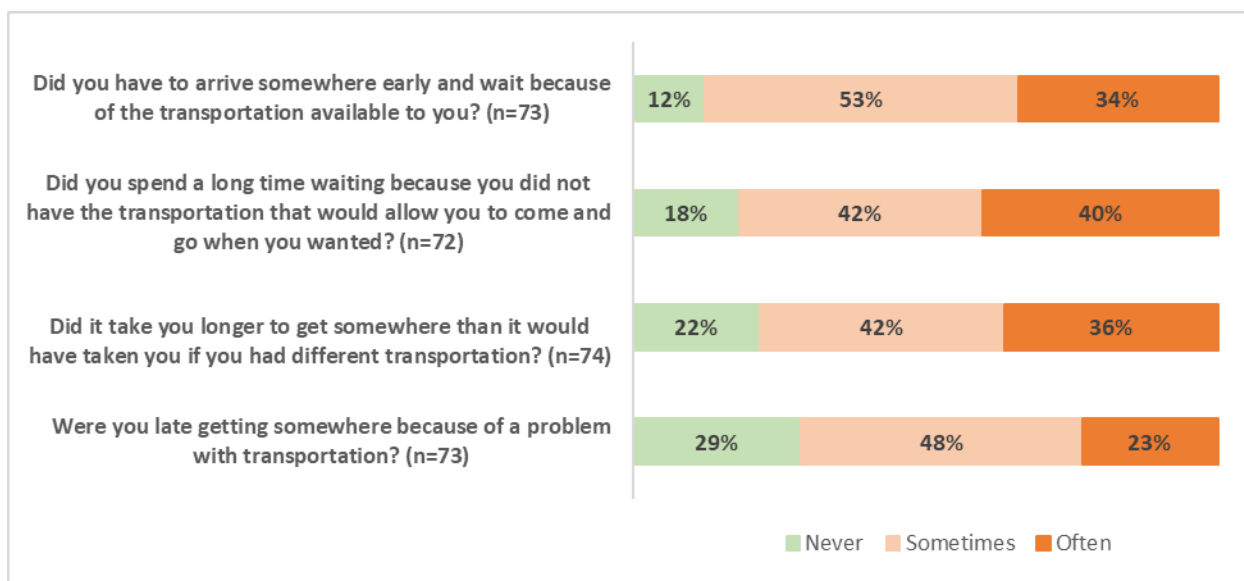


Chart 8: Survey Questions Related to Transportation Wait times and Being Late

Problems with transportation interrupt respondents' plans. 67% of respondents said that they have sometimes or often had to reschedule an appointment because of a problem with transportation. Only 18% of respondents said that they had never had to skip going somewhere because of a problem with transportation.

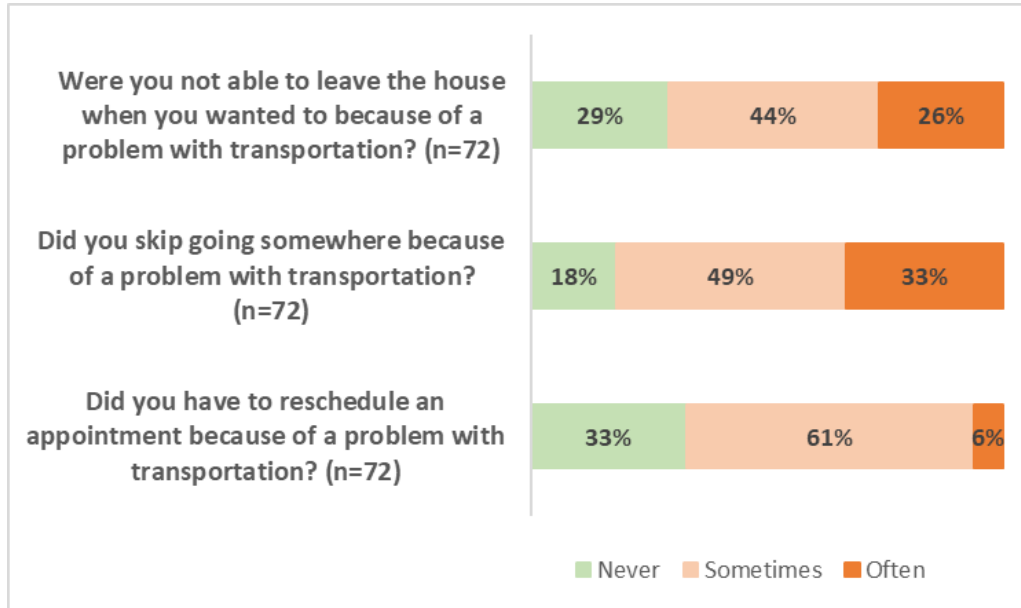


Chart 9: Survey Questions about Transportation and Interruption of Plans

Transportation insecurity contributes to stress among respondents, with 83% of respondents saying they often or sometimes feel bad because they did not have the transportation they needed, and 80% of respondents saying they often or sometimes worry about inconveniencing others because they needed help with transportation.

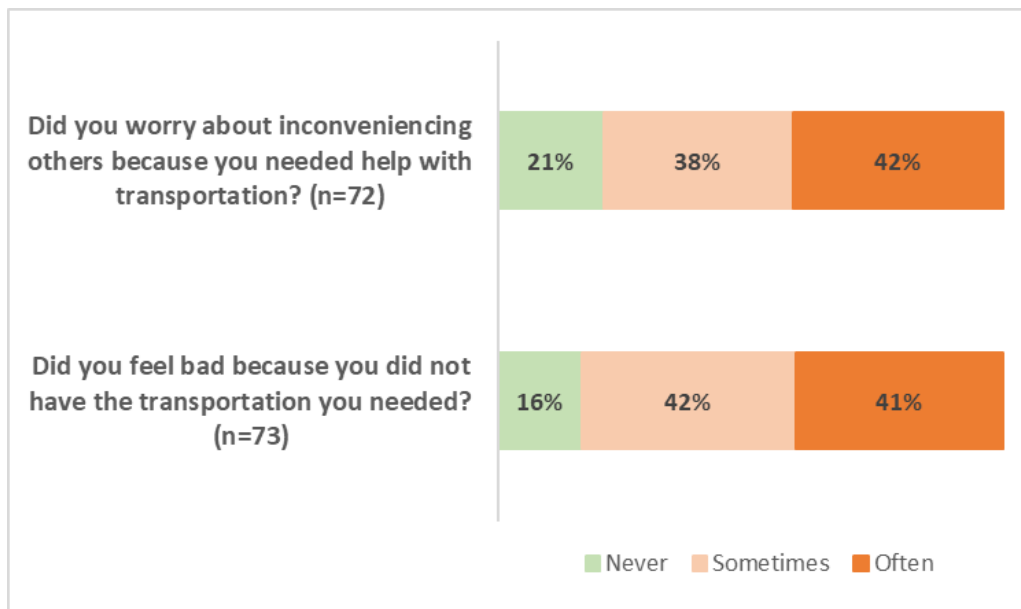


Chart 10: Survey Questions about Transportation and Stress

Most respondents cannot reach all the destinations they would like to, given their current transportation options. 18% of respondents reported that they often were unable to reach a destination and 54% said that they sometimes were unable to reach a destination.

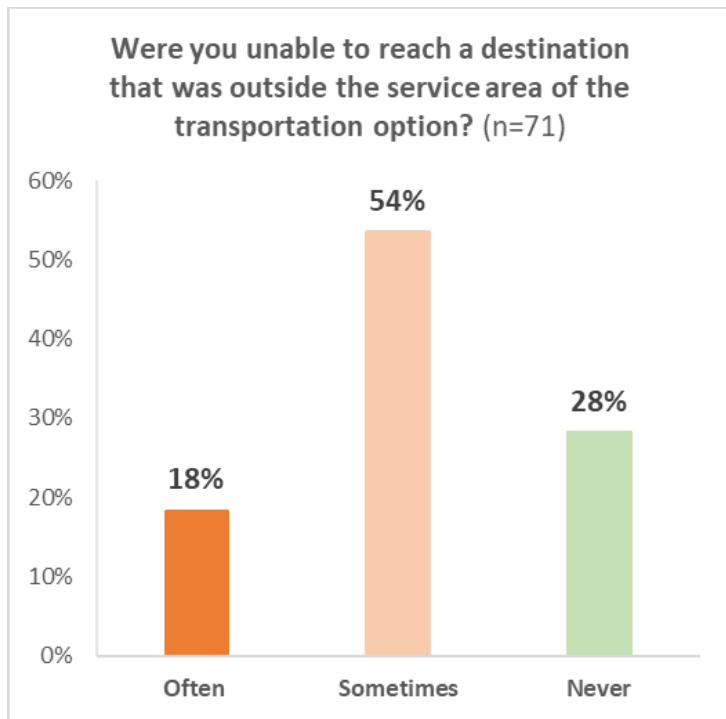


Chart 11: Service Area Limitations

d. Transportation Issues

The survey asked respondents to rate transportation issues on a scale of one to five, where one meant the issue was not at all significant and five meant the issue was very significant. The following are the top five transportation issues are ranked by greatest significance to least significance for respondents, where for each issue, the percentage in parenthesis represents the total respondents that rated the issues as a three, four or five on the scale.

1. Service hours are limited. (82%)
2. Options for traveling beyond the border of Milwaukee County are limited. (80%)
3. Rides are required to be scheduled too far in advance and are not on-demand. (78%)
4. Real-time tracking for on-demand services is limited. (76%)
5. Wait times are long. (75%)

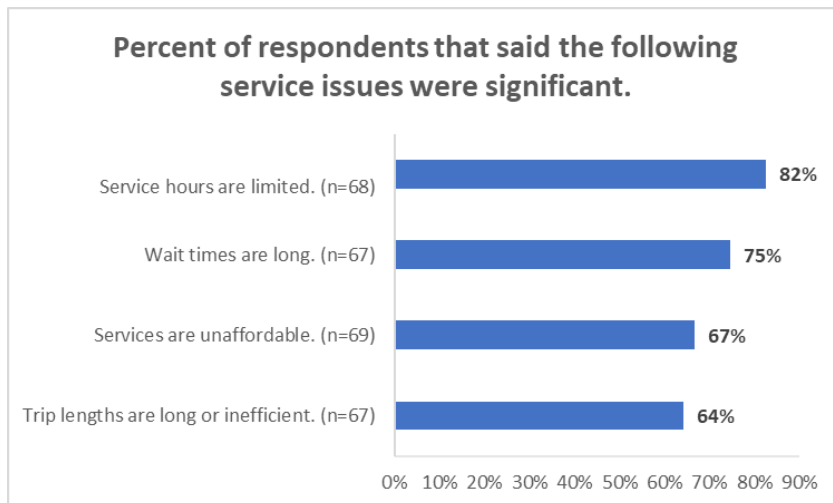


Chart 12: Service Issues

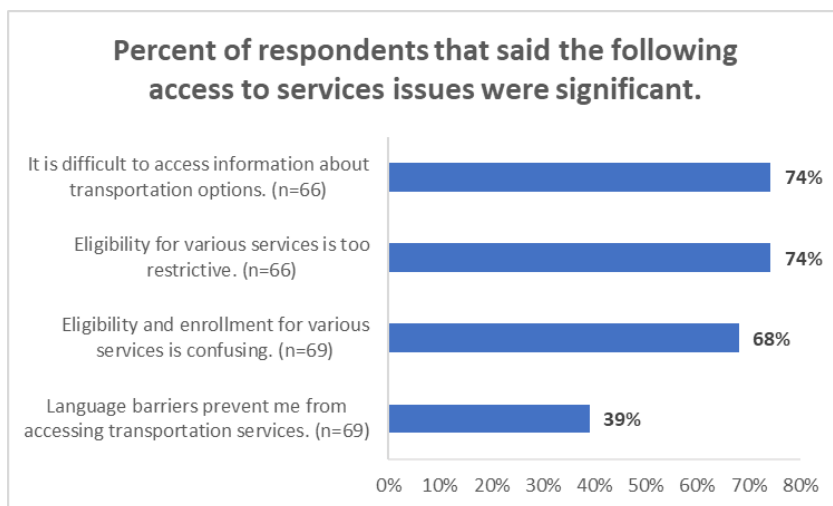


Chart 13: Service Access Issues

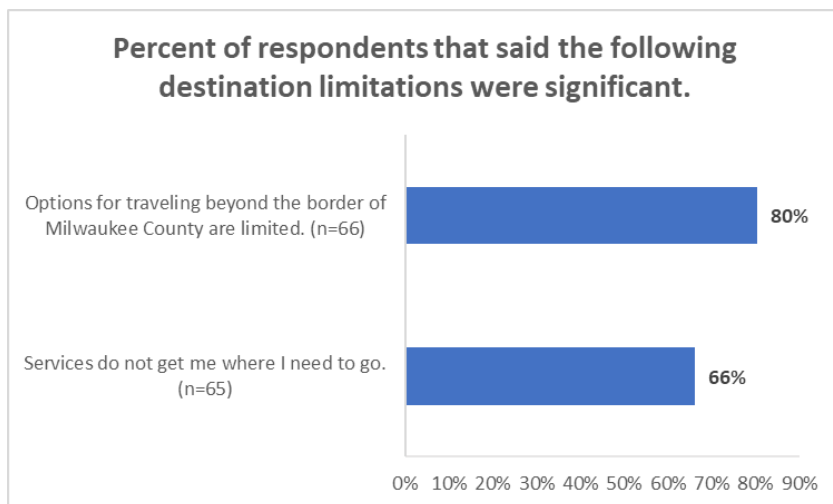


Chart 14: Destination Limitations

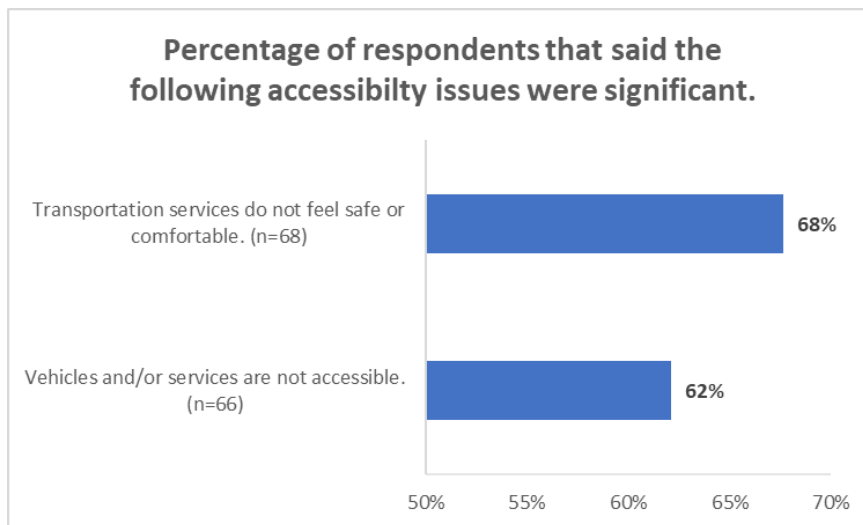


Chart 15: Safety and Accessibility Issues

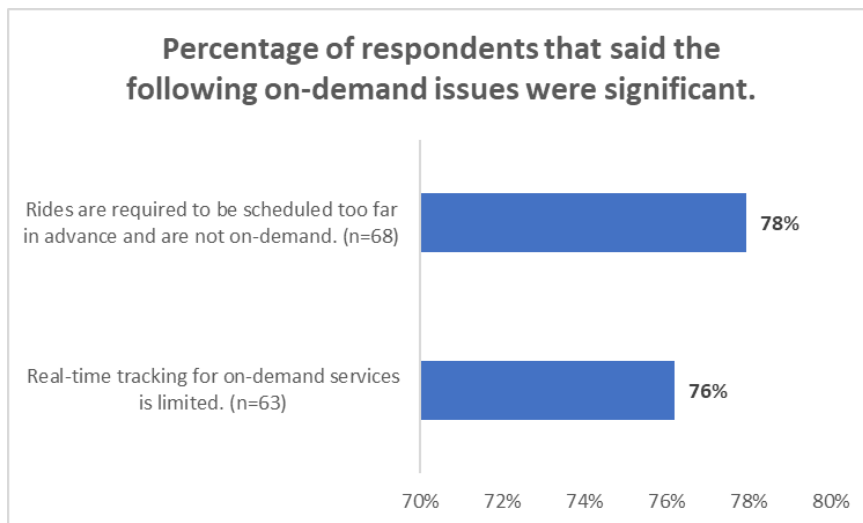


Chart 16: On-demand Issues

e. Open-ended Questions

Open ended questions allow survey respondents to share their thoughts and opinions freely, without the bias of pre-determined answer choices. While open-ended questions have great value in the qualitative and detailed information they collect, they also typically have a lower response rate because they require more time and work on the end of the respondent. The three open-ended questions included in the Transportation Needs Survey had lower response rates, but gathered useful information regarding existing transportation needs among older adults and people with disabilities. Below is a summary of the questions that were asked and a summary of each question's responses:

Q: What destinations do you have challenges reaching using existing transportation options? (n=34)

- Nearly two-thirds of the respondents (63%) reported having challenges getting to destinations that meet their daily needs, including grocery shopping and doctor's appointments, as well as haircut appointments, pharmacies, general shopping and work.
- Almost half of respondents (42%) reported having challenges travelling beyond the Milwaukee County border using existing transportation options.

Q: Where do you look for information about transportation options? (n=28)

- Most respondents learn about transportation options by word of mouth (27%), including through friends and family and healthcare providers, and through online resources (27%). A smaller number of respondents learn about transportation options through printed resources (15%). Also, about one in five responses (19%) indicated that they did not know where to look for information about transportation resources.

Q: Is there anything else you would like to comment on related to transportation options or barriers in Milwaukee County? (n=30)

- **Accessibility** related comments were most frequently shared. Comments in this category included:
 - "The time to get to the ride after the driver arrives is too restrictive."
 - "A need for wheelchair assistance getting into buildings."
 - "[Drivers] need to park as close to the curb in order for patients to get off. Most of the time, drivers park in the middle of the street putting patients at risk of getting run over by incoming traffic."
 - "A need for more accessible transportation providers."
 - "A need for more accommodations for deaf individuals."
 - "Quite often, minivans and 4X4 vehicles are used to transport patients with disabilities like me. It is very difficult and painful to access the passenger sit."
 - "Ramps should be added to improve accessibility."
- Comments related to **wait times**, included:
 - "Wait times are too long."
 - "I have to wait an hour before I am picked up from my appointment."
 - "I am having problem waiting for transportation coming back home, wait time between 1-2hrs. I have to wait too long to get picked up."
 - "I have to wait for a return home for grocery shopping."
 - "It is difficult to obtain rides on short notices to Walgreens or groceries, hair salons, and church."
 - "For pick up back to home, too long of wait."
- One comment was specific to **fixed-route transit**:
 - "Enclosed bus stops, with heat in the winter."

IV. Next Steps

While not representative of the entire older adult and disabilities populations in Milwaukee County, the survey results provide a targeted snapshot into existing transportation needs and gaps in services. In

order to improve services for these target populations, a series of possible next steps are suggested. The sections below summarize the possible next steps based on topic area, and include their timeframe for completion (short-term, intermediate, and long-term).

Limited service hours

Limited service hours rose to the top of transportation issues rated by survey respondents. This issue area requires further investigation into the variance in service hours. MCTS Transit Plus services are offered 7 days of the week, at all times that fixed-route transit runs, including evenings, weekends and holidays. Other services, such as OATS, are more limited in scope.

- **Intermediate next step:** Conduct feasibility assessment of extending service hours of OATS (weekends, evenings, holidays).

Wait times

Long wait times, especially for return rides, were frequently cited by respondents, and also ranked among the top five transportation issues.

- **Short-term next step:** Clarify wait time expectations for return rides with riders for different transportation services.
- **Intermediate next step:** Assess how transportation provider supply and capacity impacts wait times for rides. Explore whether additional providers and/or additional capacity of current providers (vehicles, drivers, etc.) could improve wait times.

Access to transportation information

Many respondents noted that they do not know where to look for transportation options and most respondents learn about options through friends and family. Many respondents reported daily needs destinations, like medical appointments and grocery shopping, as places they have difficulty getting to. These findings reinforce the need for transportation service providers to prioritize outreach and education about existing services.

- **Short-term next step:** Continue to conduct outreach and public education about transportation options. Share information about transportation services that help to meet daily needs, such as MCTS (fixed-route and paratransit), OATS and ERAS volunteer drivers.
- **Intermediate next step:** Assess new communications channels for sharing transportation information. Explore avenues such as healthcare organizations, faith-based communities, and public institutions for sharing transportation information.
- **Intermediate next step:** Develop a targeted marketing and advertising campaign for OATS.

On-demand Issues

A majority (78%) of respondents reported the advance scheduling requirements and lack of on-demand options as being significant. Additionally, respondents reported a desire for real-time tracking options for on-demand rides.

- **Intermediate next step:** Assess how transportation provider supply and capacity impacts the required ride reservation times. Explore other factors that influence the advance scheduling requirements (ex. Federal regulations in the case of paratransit).
- **Long-term next step:** Explore technology options for real-time tracking of on-demand transportation options. Coordinate with MCTS to understand plans for technological improvements for fixed-route and paratransit.

Accessibility

Though accessibility issues ranked lower among the transportation issues areas in terms of rated significance, accessibility issues came up most frequently in the open-ended question that allowed respondents to freely share any other thoughts related to transportation.

- **Short-term next step:** Share the accessibility concerns voiced by respondents with transportation providers in order to identify where service improvements can be made.
- **Intermediate next step:** Assess the transportation provider supply and capacity of accessible services.

Transportation Coordination

Many survey respondents reported having challenges reaching destinations outside of Milwaukee County, due to transportation service area limitations. Existing transportation needs should be highlighted among local governing bodies, to improve transportation coordination.

- **Short-term next step:** Share survey results summary with Milwaukee County Commission on Aging and Advisory Council, Aging and Disabilities Resource Center (ADRC) Governing Board, Combined Community Services Board (CCSB), Commission for Persons with Disabilities (CFPWD), Milwaukee County Executive Office, Milwaukee County Board Chair, Milwaukee County Transportation Public Works and Transit Committee Chair, and Milwaukee County Department of Transportation.
- **Long-term next step:** Explore opportunities with County and regional partners to expand intercounty transportation options. Coordinate with the Milwaukee County Executive Office, Milwaukee County Board Chair, Milwaukee County Transportation Public Works and Transit Committee Chair, Milwaukee County Department of Transportation, Milwaukee County Transit System, Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC), and neighboring counties (Transportation Departments, transit systems and mobility managers). Coordination could take the form of a formal Transportation Coordination Council¹ and subsequent subcommittee focused on regional transportation.

¹ Transportation Coordination Councils are included as a possible coordination strategy in SERPAC's 2021 Public Transit-Human Service Transportation Coordination Plan, and consistent with Wisconsin Administrative Code Trans 2.10, are given responsibilities including monitoring, reviewing and commenting on transportation funds for services for older adults and people with disabilities (state 85.21 and 85.22), reviewing transportation plans for the service area, and serving as coordinators of transportation service for older adults and people with disabilities for the purpose of becoming eligible for assistance under the federal sec. 5310 program.