



# Bus Route Review

*As We  
Heard It*

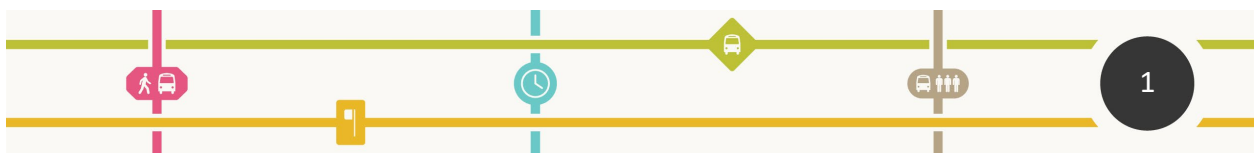




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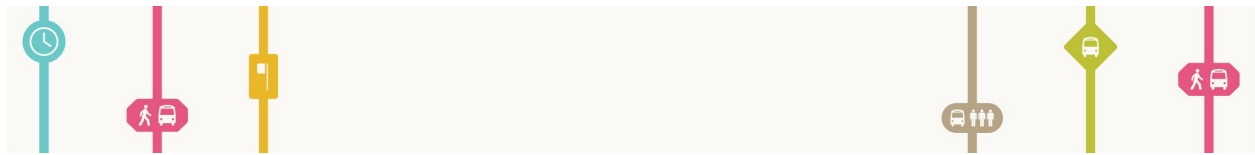
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# Summary





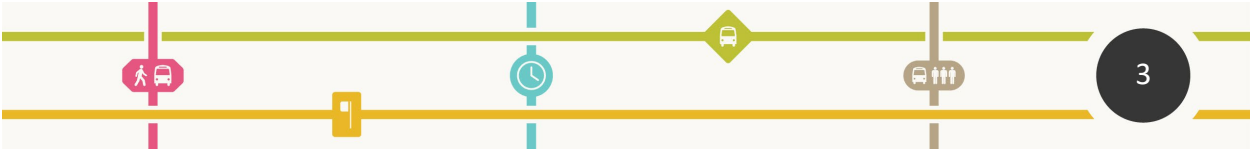
## SUMMARY

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OC Transpo’s Bus Route Review was launched in January 2023. The Bus Route Review is being conducted to re-establish planning principles and determine network design changes that should be considered based on changes in travel need related to the opening of the Stage 2 O-Train extensions and on changes to customers’ usage and travel patterns since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

OC Transpo has previously conducted thorough and fundamental reviews of its service standards and service delivery in 1997, 2005, 2011, and 2016. The most recent review, in 2016, identified how bus routes would be changed in connection with the opening of O-Train Line 1, to be consistent with Council’s directions on building the new rail line.

This report summarizes the results of the public consultation on the Bus Route Review. As part of this consultation, the public was invited to provide feedback on how they use OC Transpo and what they consider to be important for the future of our bus system. Feedback was collected via an online survey, four public open houses, and by contacting the project team via email.



# *Approach*





The Bus Route Review will consider industry standards for service planning principles, along with feedback from customers, residents and stakeholders. It will also apply the City of Ottawa’s Equity and Inclusion lens. Potential changes to the bus route network will be developed, including calculations of changes to operating costs and bus fleet size. This review will guide potential changes to the bus route network in 2024 and beyond.

A core staff team is leading a focused group of contractors to work in collaboration with subject-matter staff leads. The review has engaged transit customers, Councillors, customer advocacy groups, major employers and other stakeholders using appropriate consultation methods, as outlined below. The review is developing options for evaluation using transit industry best-practice methods. Staff will reach conclusions and make recommendations based on the technical work carried out by the contractor. The contractor will train City staff to take over management of the ridership and service model, including a technology and knowledge transfer.

OC Transpo’s Bus Route Review includes four phases, as outlined below. Recommendations will be made to Transit Commission and Council through the 2024 budget process and beyond, and implemented as appropriate beginning in 2024.

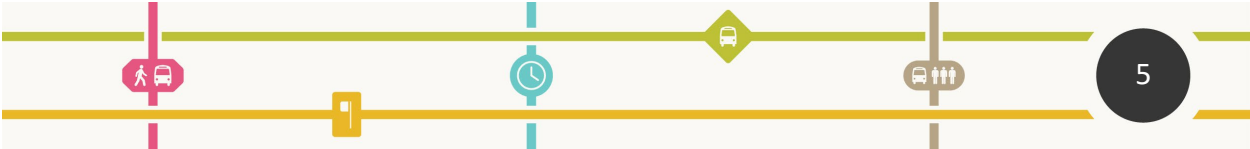
**Phase 1:** *Defining the future of our bus system.*

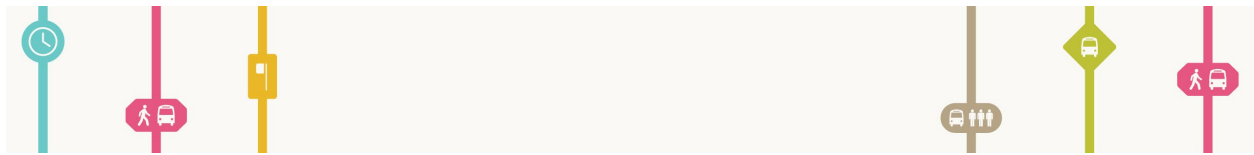
The consultation phase of the Bus Route Review was conducted to help staff better understand how the public uses OC Transpo and what is important for the future of our bus system. Residents provided feedback through an online survey, at four public open houses and by contacting the project team directly by email. The focus of this report is on the results of this first phase.

**Phase 2:** *Designing our future bus system.*

Based on feedback from the survey and open houses, and guided by updated service planning principles, a transit service and ridership model is being created and possible new bus network scenarios are being designed.

**Phase 3:** *Recommending our future bus system.*

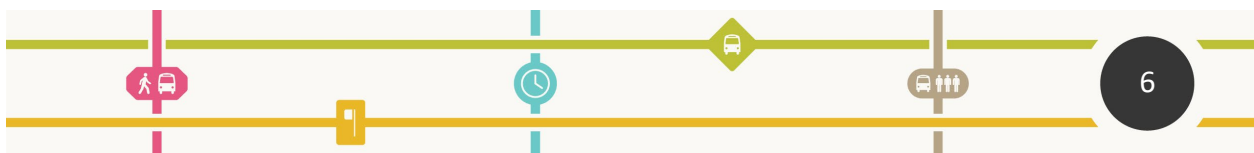




Transit Commission and City Council will be presented with bus network scenarios so they can provide direction on the future of the bus system in Ottawa. This will occur as part of the 2024 budget process.

**Phase 4:** *Implementing our future bus system.*

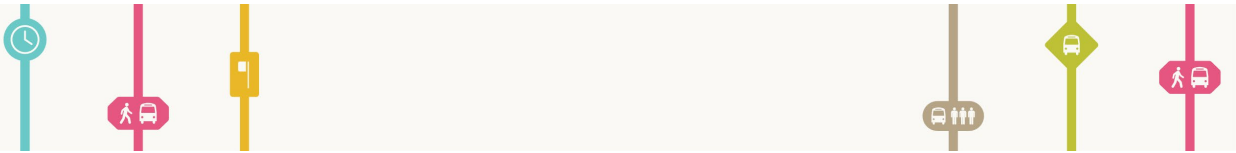
Changes to the service planning principles will be adopted in 2024 and any subsequent changes to bus routes would be implemented when appropriate.



# Overview of engagement







## OVERVIEW OF ENGAGEMENT

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During the first phase of the Bus Route Review project, staff presented the following information at the public open houses, internally to transit staff, and online through the project webpage:

- A summary of past reviews conducted by OC Transpo of its bus routes
- Objective and scope of the review
- Timelines of the review's various phases
- Open houses and their associated registration
- A link to the survey
- How to contact the project team and how to provide feedback

The communication channels listed below were used to provide information about the project and to notify residents about opportunities to give feedback:

- [OC Transpo Route Review website](#)
- [City of Ottawa website](#)
- Newspaper advertisements (Ottawa Citizen, Le Droit, The Ottawa Sun)
- Information packages given to Councillors for use in their communication channels such as social media and newsletters
- Open house presentation boards
- Social media posts and paid advertising (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn)
- Email distribution list
- Brochure style information sheets handed out at various locations
- Staff outreach at major transit hubs

The following table summarizes the consultation outreach and activities that were used to collect feedback:

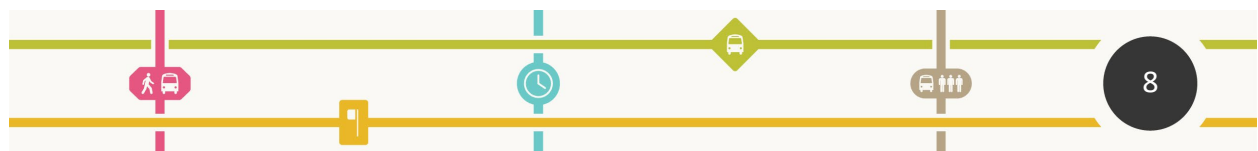
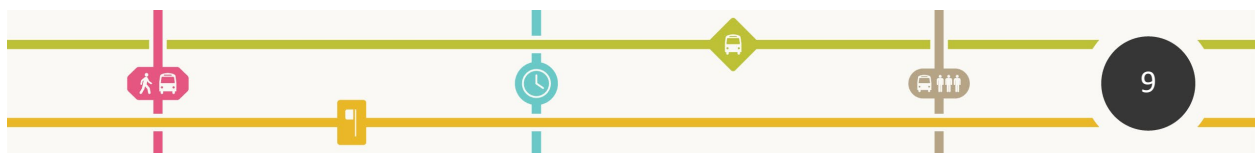
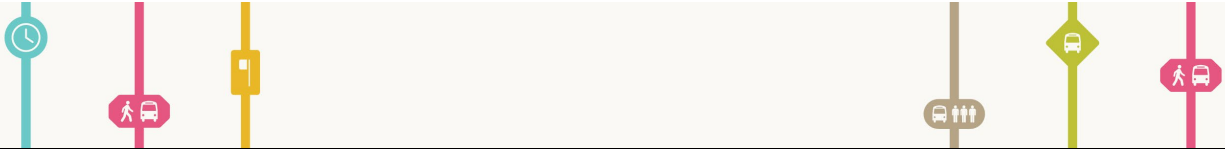




Table 1: Tactics used to collect feedback.

Consultation Type	Details
<b>Online survey</b>	Approximately 8,200 respondents initiated the survey. 6,700 respondents completed the survey in full, while 1,500 respondents partially completed the survey.
<b>In-person open houses</b>	Over 90 attendees in total, with several Councillors in attendance at various open houses.
	Ray Friel Recreation Complex – <i>May 17, 2023</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 22 attendees</li> </ul>
	Nepean Sportsplex – <i>May 24, 2023</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 35 attendees</li> </ul>
City Hall – <i>June 1, 2023</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 35 attendees</li> </ul>	
<b>Virtual open house</b> – <i>May 23, 2023</i>	Approximately 70 attendees with several Councillors in attendance
<b>Outreach staff at major transit hubs</b> – <i>various days between May 13 and May 18</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Over 285 surveys completed on staff tablets</li> <li>• Over 100 customers scanned the QR code for future completion of the survey</li> </ul>





<p><b>Councillor-led open houses (general transit discussions)</b></p>	<p><i>Virtual Open House hosted by Councillors King, Plante and Troster</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May 10, 2023</li> </ul>
<p><b>Email to the Bus Route Review inbox (<a href="mailto:routereview@ottawa.ca">routereview@ottawa.ca</a>)</b></p>	<p>Over 190 emails received</p>
<p><b>Internal consultation</b></p>	<p>Staff spent three hours at each of OC Transpo’s garages and had open conversations with operators. Times were coordinated with shift changes (after morning peak period).</p> <p>Staff met with the Service Planning team within the Transit Services Department to collect feedback.</p>

# *Key Themes*





**KEY THEMES**

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The Bus Route Review project team received a variety of feedback on what is important for the future of OC Transpo’s bus transit system including 192 emails from residents, over 8,000 responses to the open-ended survey question and 160 participants in the staff led open houses.

Most residents who participated in the consultation expressed support for the Bus Route Review project and enthusiasm for being invited to share their thoughts. A high level of requests to improve reliability was vocalized. As outlined in the [Transit Services Five-Year Roadmap](#), although out of scope for the Bus Route Review project, OC Transpo has focused efforts on improving service delivery in a number of ways over the last year as a collaborative effort throughout the department.

Many residents asked for increased frequencies and faster, more direct routes. A topic-specific summary of key themes from the feedback is provided below. Additionally, [Appendix A](#) provides a summary of the full survey results. [Appendix B](#) includes more detail on the specific feedback received from internal consultations with bus operators.

Feedback received through the survey that is within the scope of the Bus Route Review:

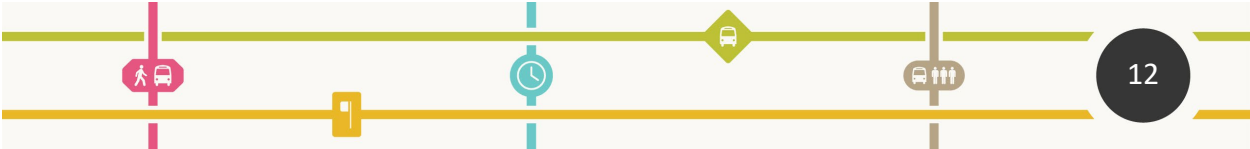
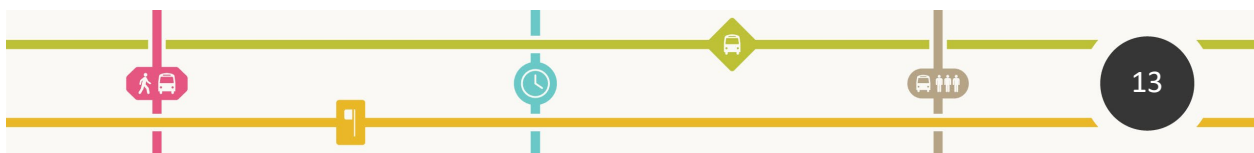
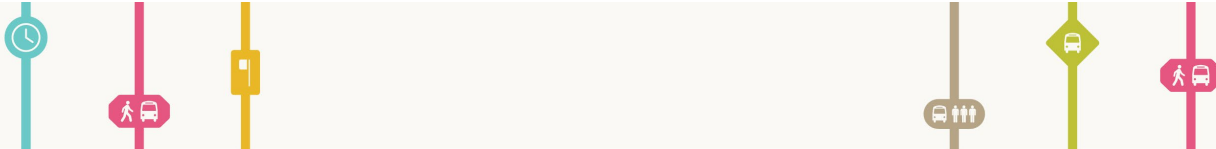




Table 2: Summary of key themes within scope of the Bus Route Review.

Topic	Key themes
More direct routes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct routes to schools, O-Train, Park and Rides</li> <li>• Fewer transfers</li> </ul>
Routes / connection to major hubs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crosstown routes</li> <li>• Suburb-to-suburb routes</li> <li>• Better connections</li> </ul>
More route options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand service area</li> <li>• More local, rural, Connexion routes</li> <li>• Re-instate pre-LRT routes</li> <li>• Parallel service to the O-Train</li> <li>• On-demand service</li> </ul>
Service hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 24/7 service</li> <li>• Start earlier</li> <li>• End later</li> </ul>



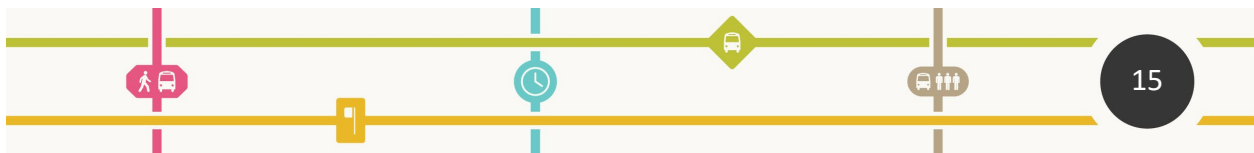
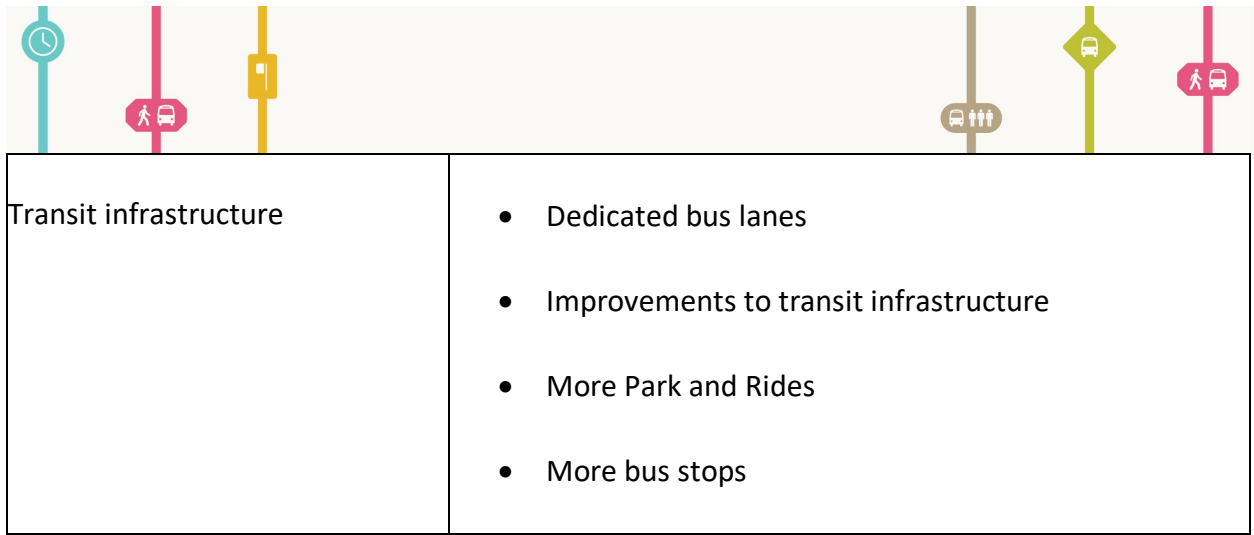


	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More weekend hours</li> </ul>
Increase frequency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Off-peak</li> <li>• During peaks</li> <li>• On weekends</li> </ul>
No change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some respondents said no changes were needed</li> </ul>

Feedback out of scope of the Bus Route Review but was shared internally:

Table 3: Summary of key themes out of scope of the Bus Route Review.

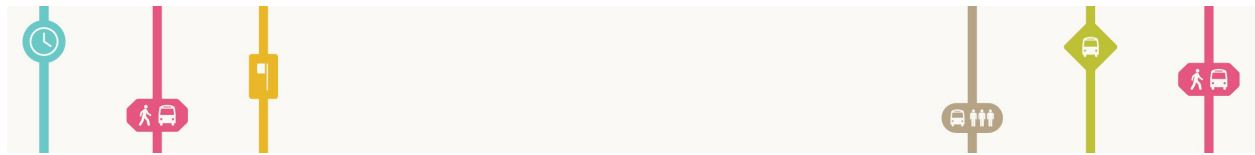
Topic	Key themes
Safety / comfort / informative / user friendly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fare structure</li> <li>• Real-time information</li> <li>• Apps</li> <li>• Safety</li> <li>• Comfort for users</li> </ul>
Increase reliability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many respondents want increased reliability</li> </ul>





# *Next Steps*





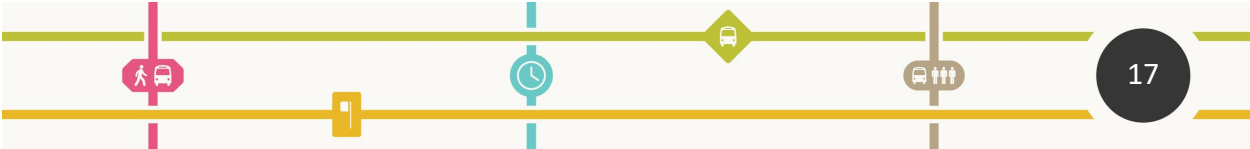
**NEXT STEPS**

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Using this information on how travel patterns have changed since the COVID-19 pandemic and how residents want to connect to the upcoming O-Train expansions, OC Transpo and their contractor will develop a set of alternative route network scenarios for Ottawa’s bus network.

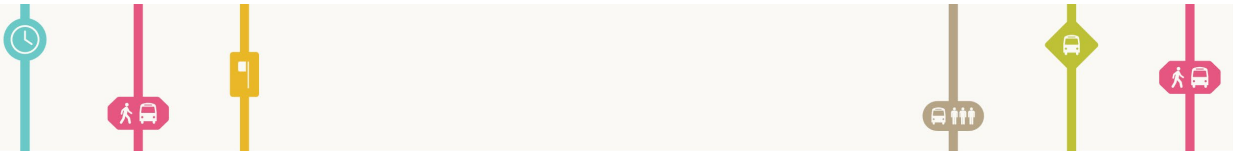
These scenarios will be presented to Transit Commission and Council. Information on the cost and adjusted service principles for each of the scenarios will be included with Councillors having the opportunity to suggest minor changes to the routes.

The project team aims to complete this study by the end of 2023 with any route changes to be implemented in 2024 and beyond as appropriate with the opening of the Stage 2 extensions.



# *Appendix A: Customer Feedback*





## APPENDIX A – CUSTOMER FEEDBACK

### KEY DEMOGRAPHICS

This survey asked for information on the demographics of the respondents. 0.6 per cent of Ottawa’s population responded with statistically good representation from across the City. Some responses were received from postal codes outside of the City as well. Participation from postal codes in the downtown core was highest. The majority of respondents were female and the average age of respondents was between 19 – 49 years old.

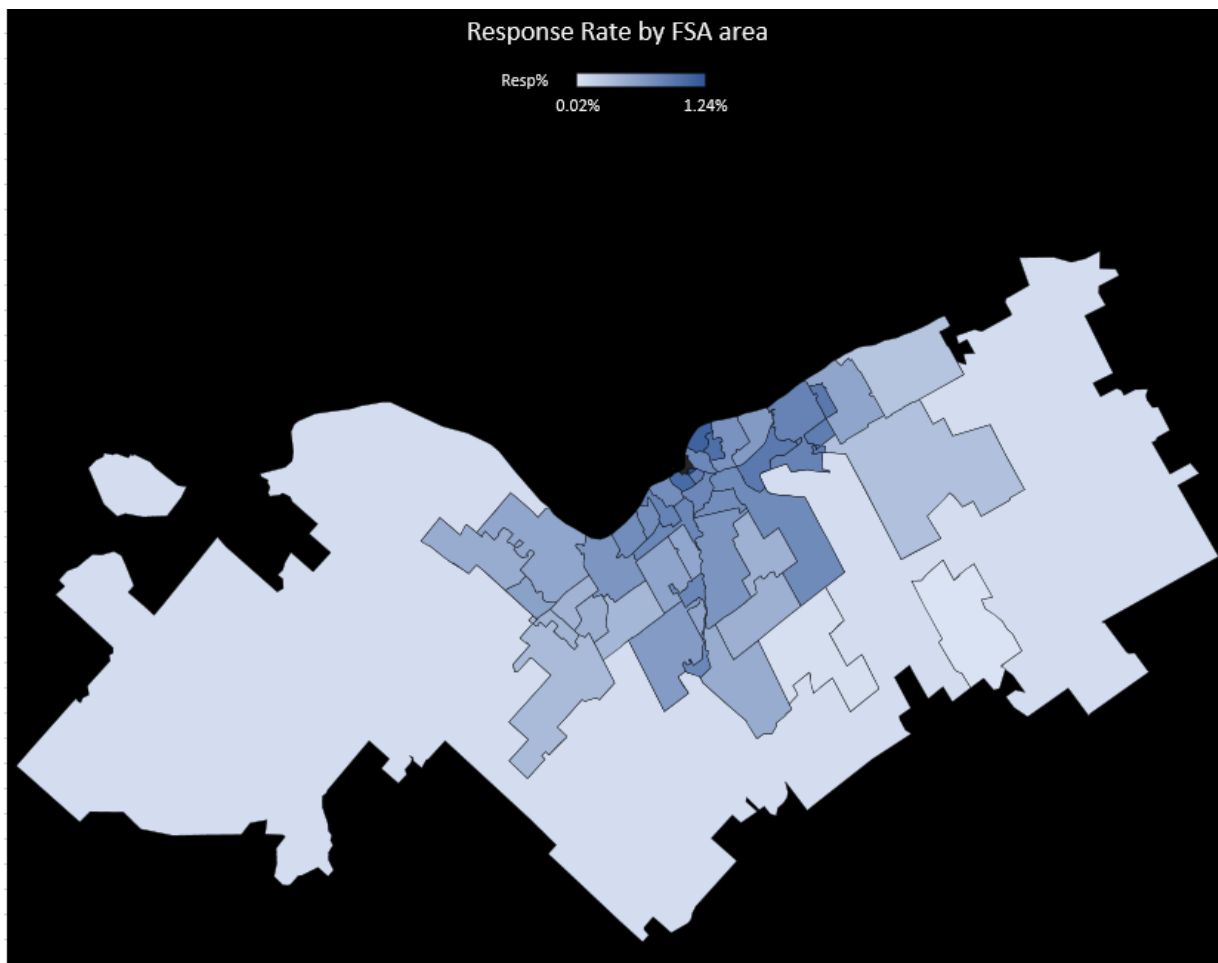
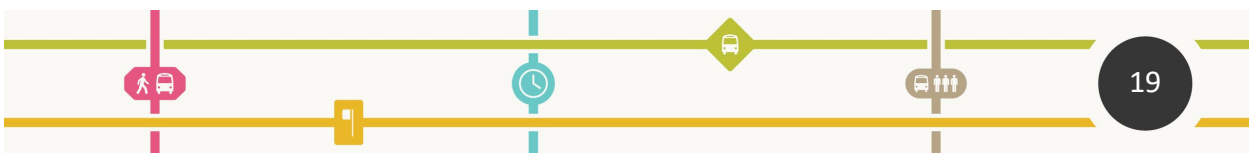


Figure 1: A map of the City of Ottawa depicting the survey's response rate by the respondents' first 3 digits of their postal code.





### To Which Gender do you Most Identify?

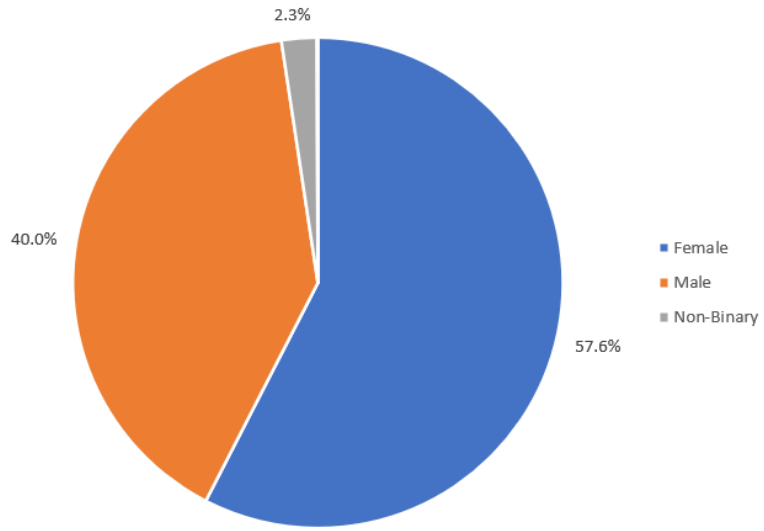
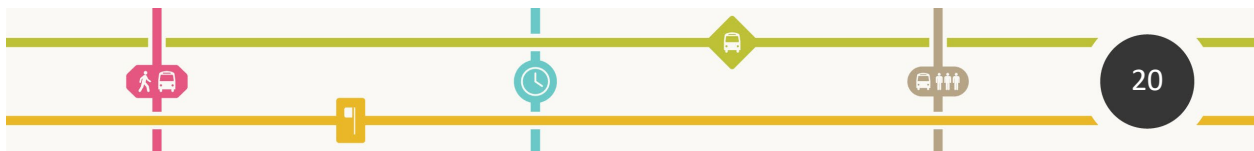


Figure 2 A pie graph of which gender survey respondents most identified with.

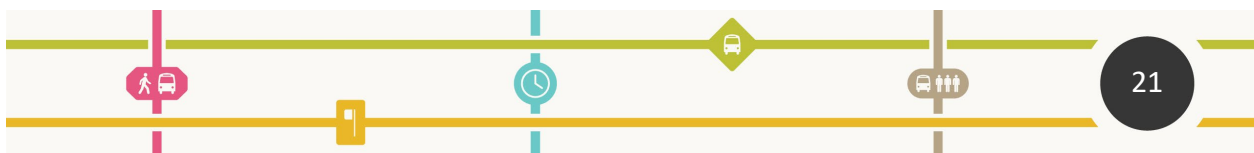
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## TRANSIT USAGE

Of all survey respondents, 89 per cent reported making at least one transit trip per week. Of those who did make a transit trip, 7.5 trips were made per week, on average. 61 per cent of respondents reported making their trips on weekdays, between 06:00 – 09:00 and between 15:00 – 18:00, the morning and afternoon peak periods. The average length of a respondent's trip was reported to be 51 minutes. The majority of respondents reported using transit to get to and from work, with the second most common reason being leisure (for example, visiting with friends). Travelling to / from school falls at the fourth reason respondents use transit. Some factors that could have influenced this are that the survey was launched after university / college was out for the summer and nearing the end of the elementary / secondary school year. There were approximately 1000 student aged respondents (ages 12 to 25) vs. over 4500 other respondents not school aged. The COVID-19 pandemic caused more than 1900 respondents to use transit less than they did before the pandemic. However, over 1800 respondents reported their usage was not affected by the pandemic.



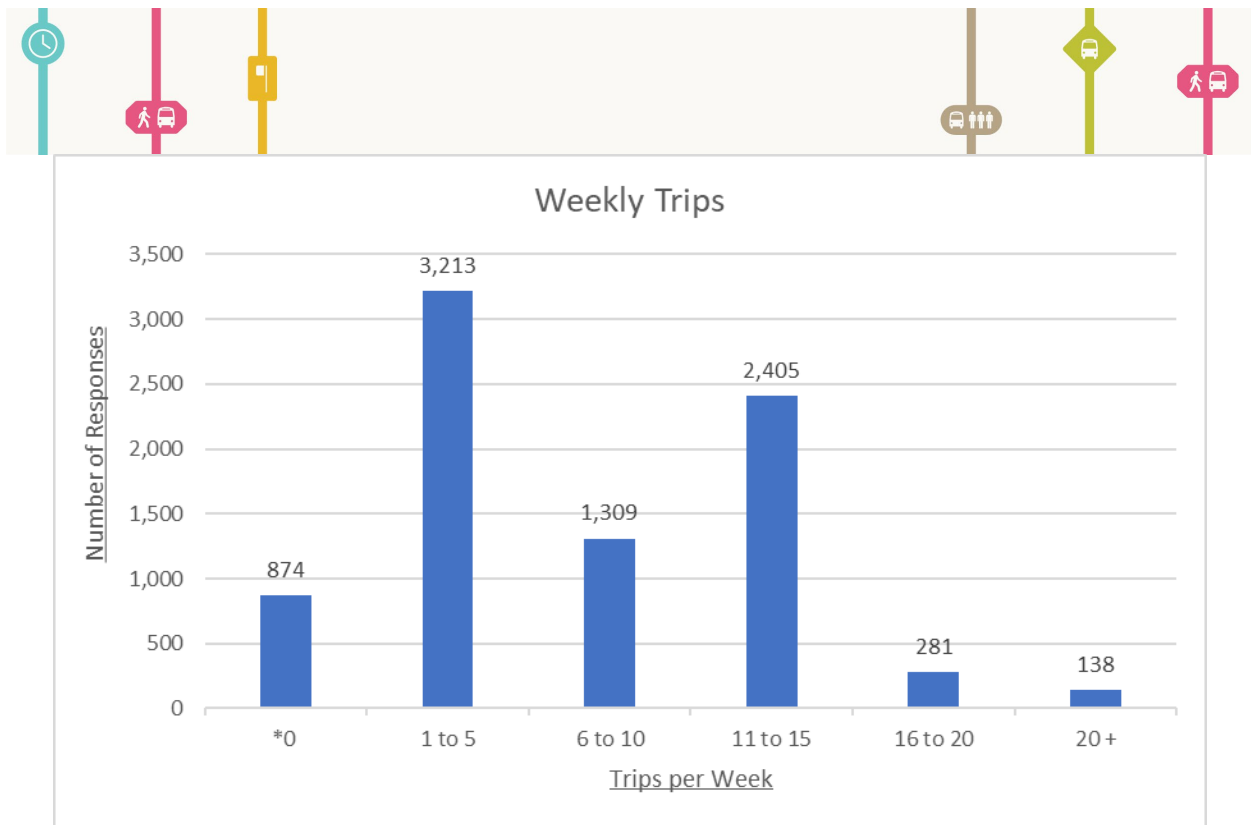


Figure 3 A bar chart showing how many trips per week respondents take on public transit in an average week.

\*0 trips per week are categorized as, "I no longer use transit", "I use transit for events or more occasionally", "OC Transpo does not service my area".

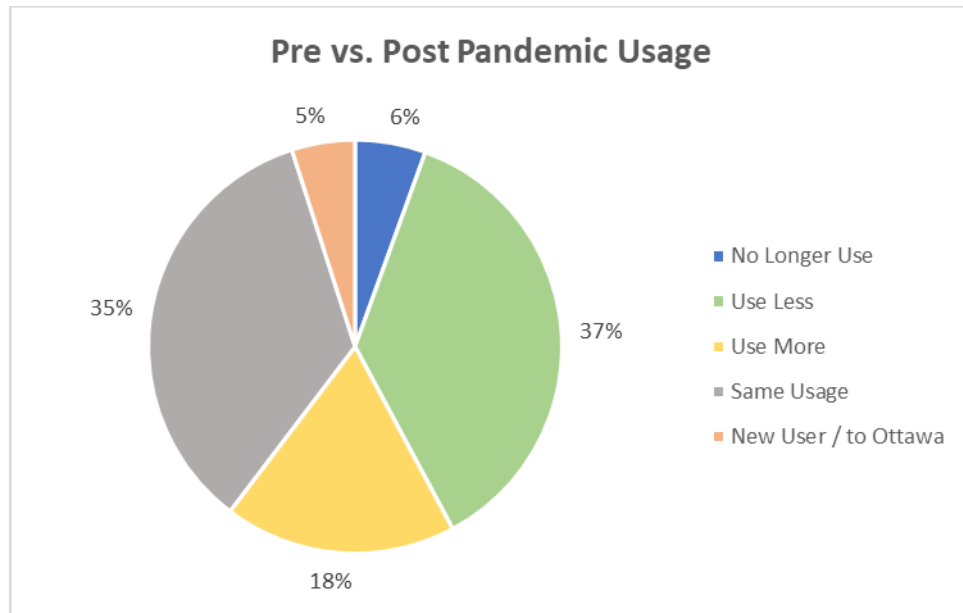


Figure 4 A pie chart depicting how respondents transit usage has changed since the pandemic.



## THE TRANSIT TRIP

84 per cent of respondents reported it takes under 10 minutes to get to their bus stop. The average length of time it takes a respondent to get to their bus stop was reported as 7.7 minutes, and 70 per cent of respondents reported the distance to their stop is just right.

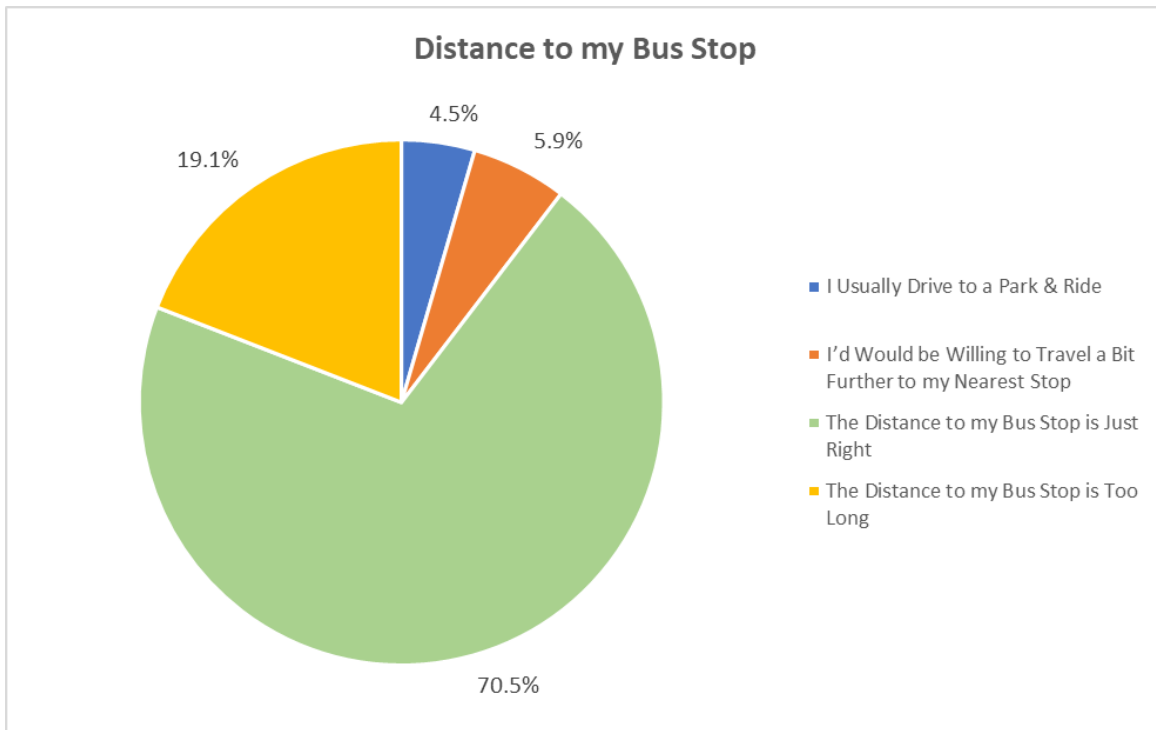
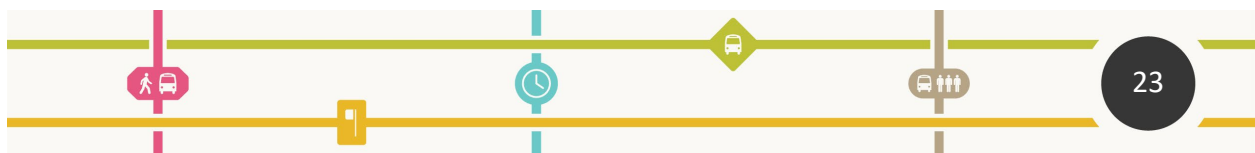


Figure 5 A pie chart showing respondents attitudes about the distance to their bus stop.

84 per cent of respondents reported being able to find a seat when they board the bus. There was a divided response when respondents were asked about their typical bus being too crowded.





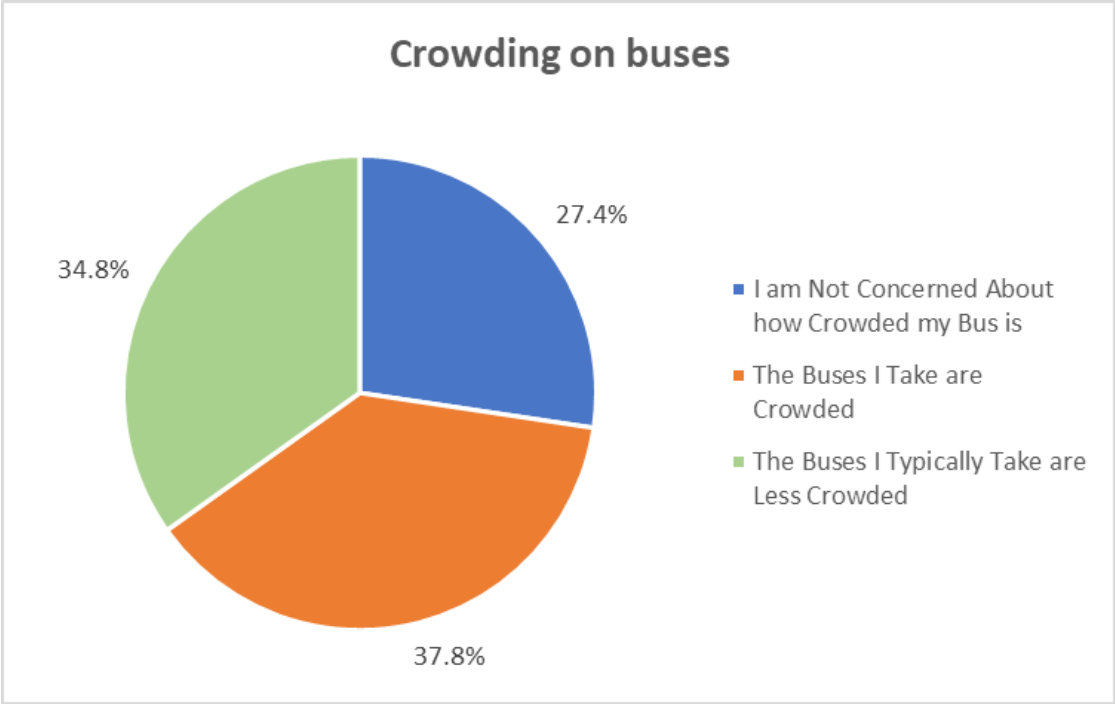
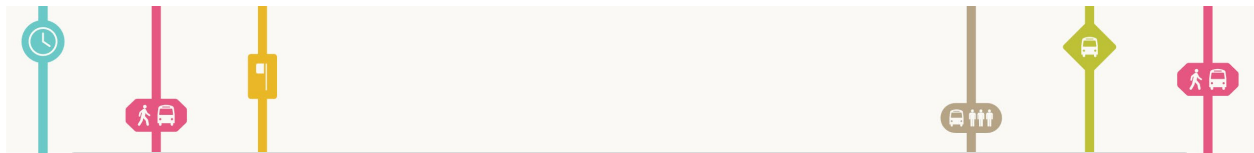
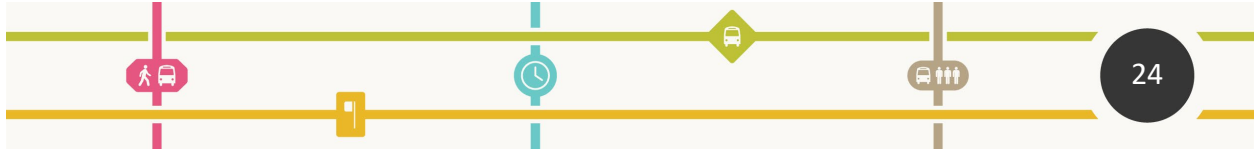


Figure 6 A pie chart showing respondents attitudes about their experience with crowding on buses.



When asked to think of possible changes to OC Transpo’s bus service hours, many respondents felt no changes were required. Of those respondents who felt changes to service hours should be implemented, many wanted service hours to end later.

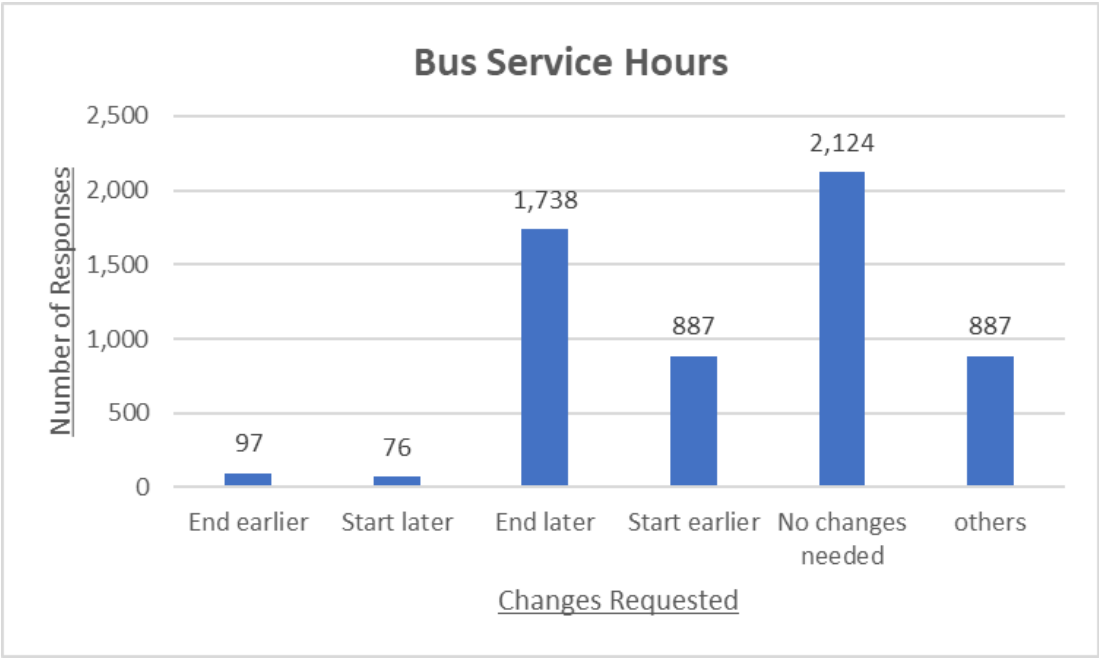


Figure 7 A bar graph showing respondents attitudes about OC Transpo's bus service hours.

When asked to think about changes to OC Transpo’s bus frequency, 47 per cent of respondents reported they would like to have more frequent service for routes in their neighbourhood.

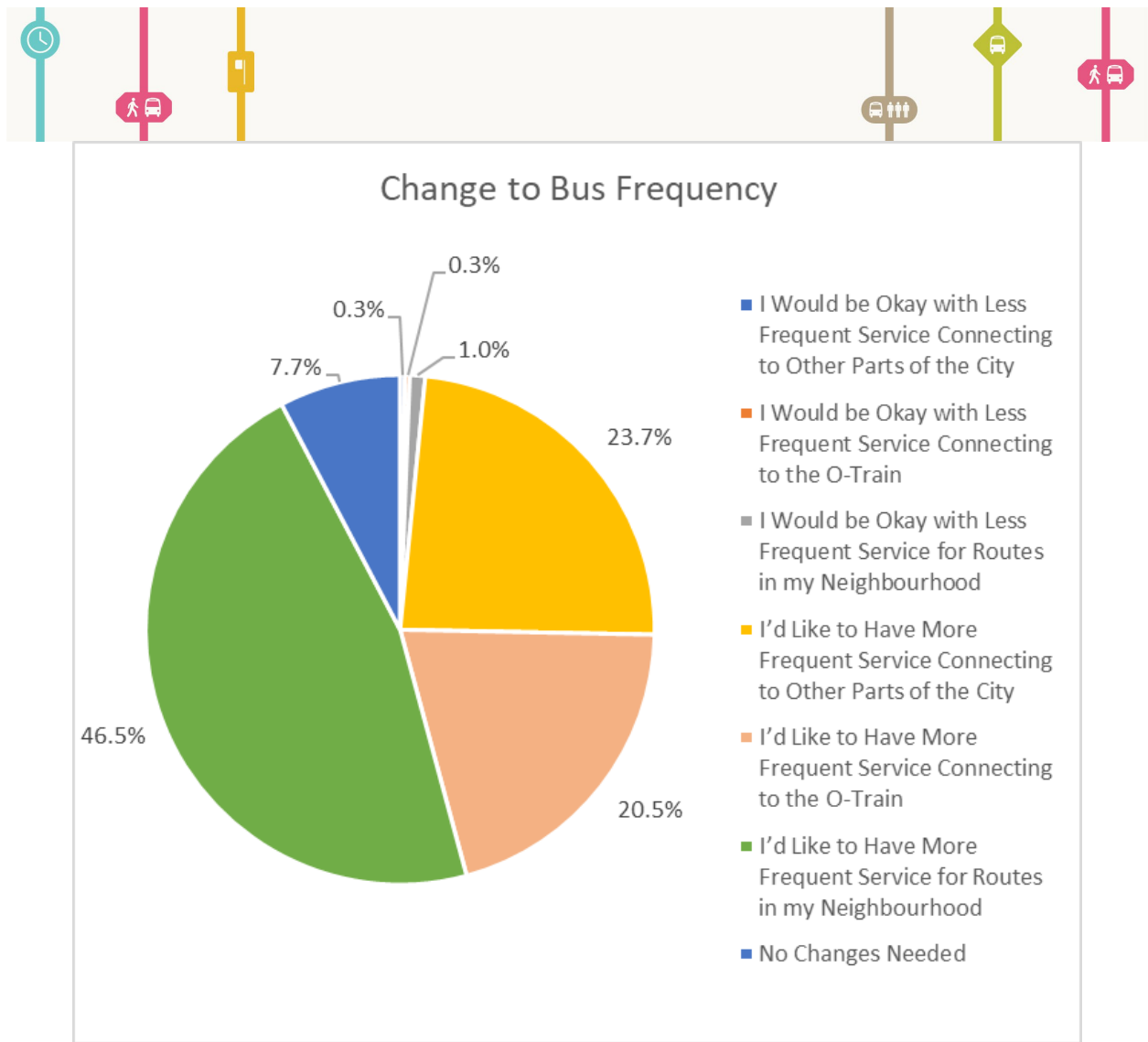


Figure 8 A pie chart showing respondents attitudes about the frequency of the buses they typically use.

When asked to think about changes to OC Transpo’s bus routes many respondents reported wanting faster, more direct routes to their destination, and more frequent service options.

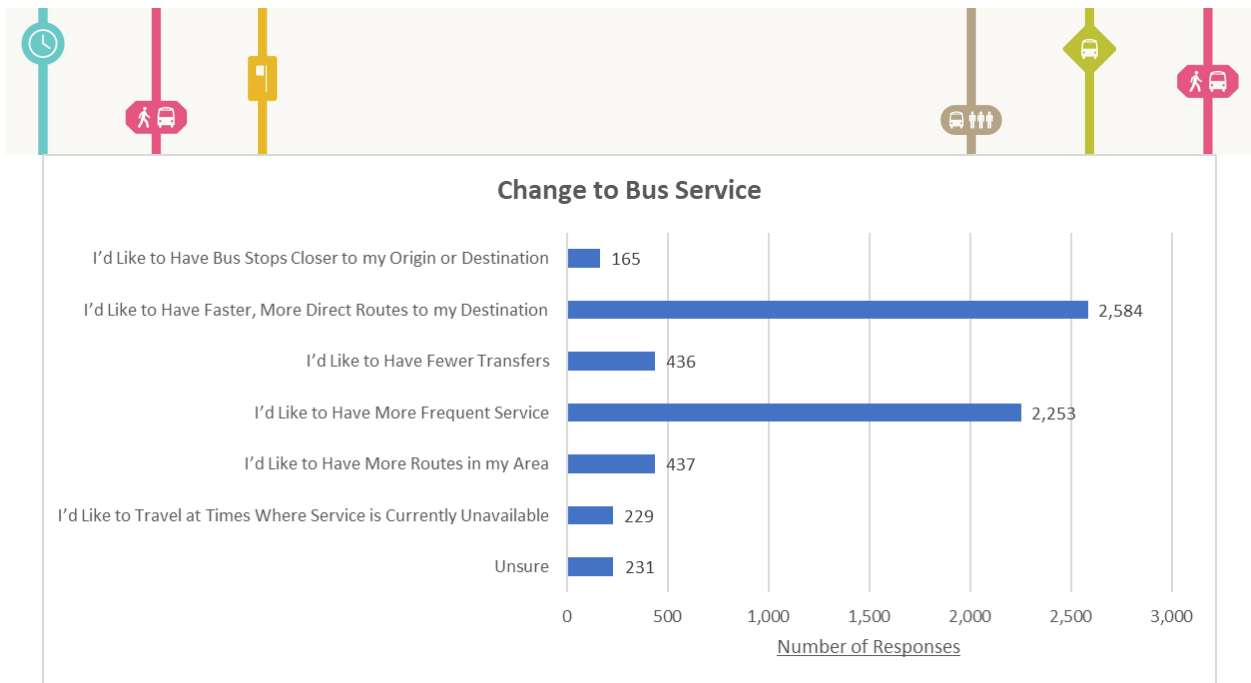
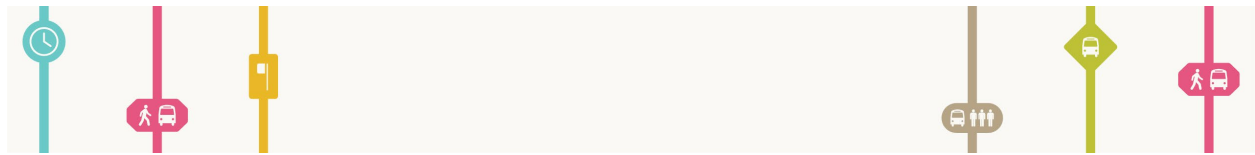


Figure 9 A bar graph depicting changes respondents want to see for OC Transpo's bus service.



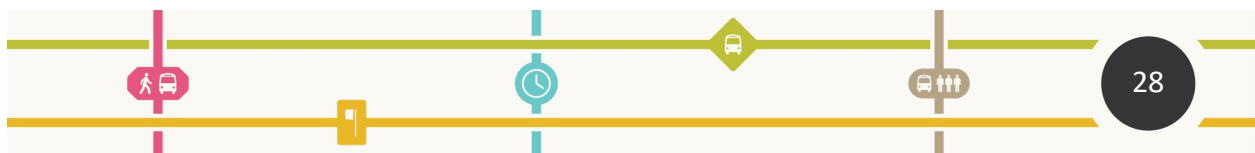
## WHAT DO RESPONDENTS WANT TO SEE IN OTTAWA'S BUS TRANSIT SYSTEM

Over 8,200 open ended responses were submitted. The major themes, outlined here, show tallies of how many respondents had similar requests.

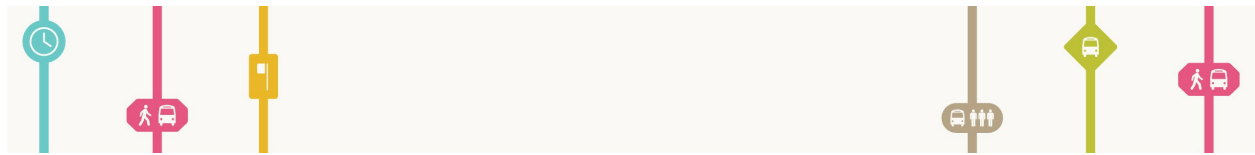
Feedback received through the survey that is within the scope of the Bus Route Review:

Table 4: Tally of key themes within scope of the Bus Route Review.

Topic	Key themes
More direct routes	1,998 requests for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct routes to schools, O-Train, Park and Rides</li> <li>• Fewer transfers</li> </ul>
Routes / connection to major hubs	1,116 requests for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crosstown routes</li> <li>• Suburb-to-suburb routes</li> <li>• Better connections</li> </ul>
More route options	1,388 requests for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased service area</li> <li>• More local, rural, Connexion routes</li> <li>• Re-instate pre-LRT routes</li> </ul>



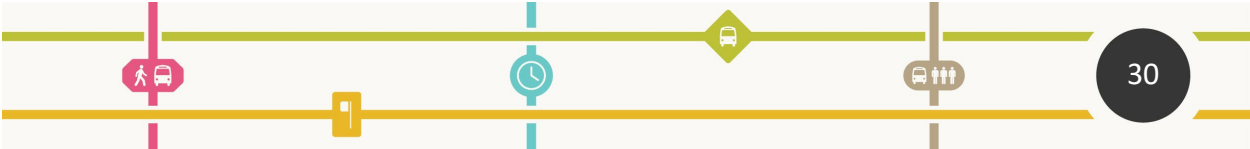
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parallel service to the O-Train</li> <li>• On-demand service</li> </ul>
Service hours	<p>335 requests for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 24/7 service</li> <li>• Start earlier</li> <li>• End later</li> <li>• More weekend hours</li> </ul>
Increase frequency	<p>2616 requests for increased frequency:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Off-peak hours</li> <li>• During peak hours</li> <li>• On weekends</li> </ul>
No change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 84 respondents said no changes were needed</li> </ul>



Feedback out of scope of the Bus Route Review but was shared internally:

Table 5: Tally of key themes out of scope of the Bus Route Review.

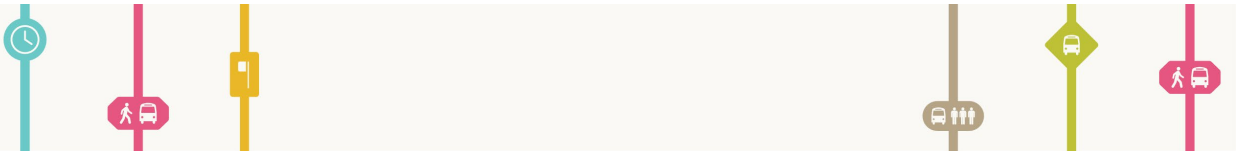
Topic	Key themes
Safety / comfort / informative / user friendly	1,336 requests for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A new fare structure (296)</li> <li>• Real time information and applications (510)</li> <li>• Safety and comfort for users (530)</li> </ul>
Increase reliability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1,923 respondents wanted increased reliability</li> </ul>
Transit infrastructure	340 requests for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dedicated bus lanes (41)</li> <li>• Improvements to transit infrastructure (158)</li> <li>• More Park and Rides (52)</li> <li>• More bus stops (89)</li> </ul>



*Appendix B:  
OC Transpo  
Bus  
Operator  
Feedback*







## APPENDIX B – OC TRANSPO BUS OPERATOR FEEDBACK

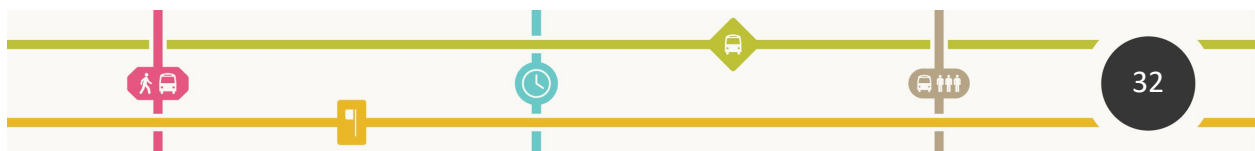
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### *Internal consultation feedback from bus operators*

The project team spent three hours at each of OC Transpo's garages to hear what Bus Operators thought the future of our transit system should look like. Times were scheduled after the morning peak ended, when many operators were between shifts. Bus Operators were encouraged to fill out the survey and provide any specific suggestions, not covered in conversation, to the Bus Route Review email.

In addition to information on specific corridors and routes where operators encounter the most congestion, the following statements reflect the range of feedback that was heard:

- More service is required to Riverside South
- Traffic is heavier now than it was pre-pandemic;
- Service needs to be more staggered for similar routes;
- More service required to new neighbourhoods;
- Later service required on express routes;
- Faster more direct routes;
- More time to complete the route and more recovery time at the end of the route; and
- Need more transit priority signals.





**OC** *Transpo*

