



Public Engagement Summary Report

Whistler Transit Future Action Plan
June 2021

Resort Municipality of
Whistler



Background

1.1 About Whistler Transit Future Action Plan

BC Transit and the Resort Municipality of Whistler (RMOW) are developing a Transit Future Action Plan (TFAP). The plan's primary goals include:

- Identification of short-term (1-5 years) service and infrastructure priorities for the system
- Identification of medium- and long-term service and infrastructure priorities, including recommendations for phasing
- Examination of the impact of COVID-19 on the Whistler Transit System and a discussion of strategies to address the pandemic's toll on ridership

1.2 Engagement Objective

To support the development of the Plan, a public engagement process was undertaken to ensure that the service and infrastructure proposals are reflective of community desires, and that the final plan aligns with public interest.

The engagement objective for the Whistler TFAP was to:

- Receive feedback from the public on the specific service and infrastructure proposals being explored in this Plan
- Gather input on areas for improvement, including parts of Whistler where the public would like to see service extended to, as well as route- or stop-level improvements

1.3 Engagement Strategy

The engagement approach for Transit Future Action Plan follows the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum of Public Participation and was comprised of the following tools:

Stakeholder Workshop

Level on IAP2 Spectrum: Inform, Consult, and Involve

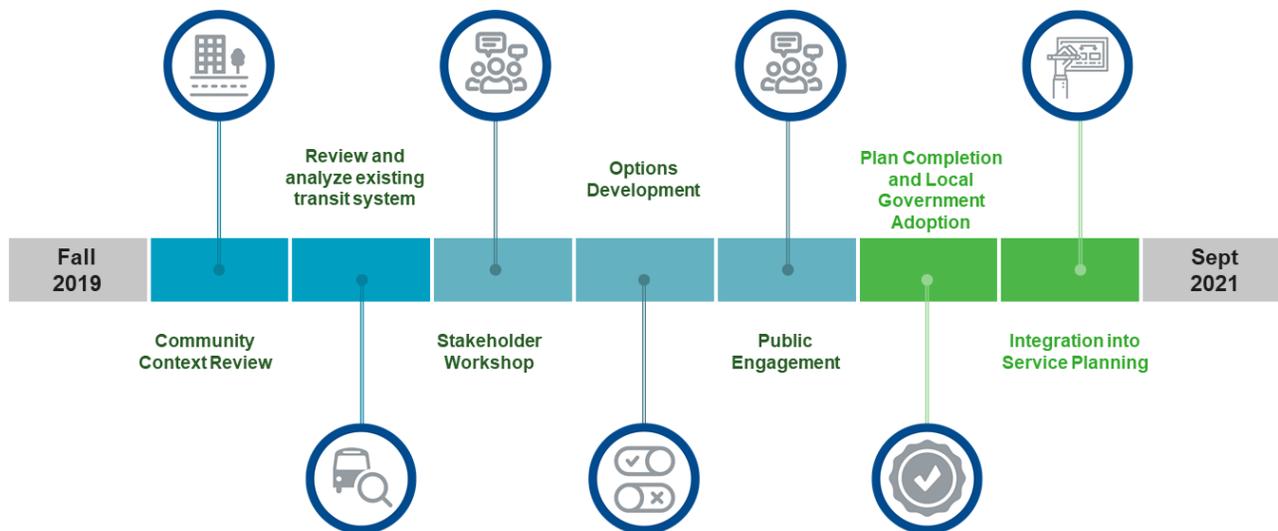
- Purpose: To review previous planning work completed in 2015, to prioritize materials brought to public engagement, as well as to engage the project working group to ensure the plan meets community expectations and captures current needs.

Project Website and Survey

Level on IAP2 Spectrum: Consult

- Purpose: To act as a hub for public engagement for the Whistler TFAP. The project website hosted an online survey (paper copies of which were available for those who required them), displayed the project timeline, and provided the public with an opportunity to identify areas on a map where they wished to see improvements made.

Plan Process



Beginning in fall 2019, a comprehensive review of the Whistler Transit System was undertaken in order to establish a firm understanding of the existing conditions within the system. Based on the initial data collection, draft service improvements and routing modifications were compiled. Items reviewed included:

- Historical and current ridership trend analysis (2017 to 2019)
 - Route, trip and stop level Automated Passenger Counter (APC) data
- Current planning documents
 - Whistler Official Community Plan

- Community Energy and Climate Action Plan
- Climate Actions Big Moves Strategy - draft
- Whistler 2020
- Whistler Transportation Action Plan 2018-2028
- Sea to Sky Transit Future Plan (2015)
- Historical records of customer suggestions and issues

In winter 2020, these priorities were presented to the Resort Municipality for review and refinement through a workshop. Public engagement was scheduled to commence shortly after this review period, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic it was postponed. Due to the need to maintain social distancing, engagement for the Whistler TFAP was restructured to avoid in-person outreach, focusing efforts instead on an online-only platform. Public engagement was conducted over a one month period, and consisted of an online survey and project webpage where participants could learn more about the proposals and identify areas on an interactive map where they would like to see improvements. Paper copies of the survey were also distributed to members of the community who required them, and were made available on buses for riders to fill out.

After the conclusion of the public engagement stage, public response to the service and infrastructure proposals was gathered and analyzed; the outcome of that analysis is presented in this report and will be used to develop the draft TFAP. Following the receipt and approval of the TFAP, the finalized proposals contained within will inform the development of future three-year Service and Financial Strategies and Annual Service Plans for the local governments' approval. These service expansions will be detailed in the annual TIPS memorandums distributed from BC Transit to the Resort Municipality of Whistler.

Engagement Overview

Stakeholder Workshops

A stakeholder workshop took place in February 2020 in Whistler. The purpose of this meeting was to discuss current and historical ridership, identify important goals for the plan, and to gather community and key stakeholder feedback prior to launching public engagement.

Project Website and Survey

An online survey was available from January 5, 2021 to February 7, 2021, with paper copies distributed during the same period. Following the end of the survey, a project webpage was launched where interested individuals could view project updates and identify areas on a map

where they felt improvements were required. The updated project website is available at <https://engage.bctransit.com/whistler>.



755 Online Survey Respondents



1,222 Total Comments



88 Map Pins Placed



1,890 Website Page Views

Promotional Tools



Project Website

Hub for project information, available at engage.bctransit.com/whistler



Internal Bus Ads

Ads placed inside buses, advertising the TFAP and ways to participate



Newspaper Ads

Ads placed in Whistler Pique News on the first day of engagement



Bus Stop Ads

Ads placed on bus stops at key locations within Whistler



Mail out Ads

Post cards were distributed to all residential addresses in Whistler



Social Media

Facebook and Twitter posts were used to raise awareness of the project on social media



Radio Ads

Radio advertisements were broadcast at the start of engagement in Whistler

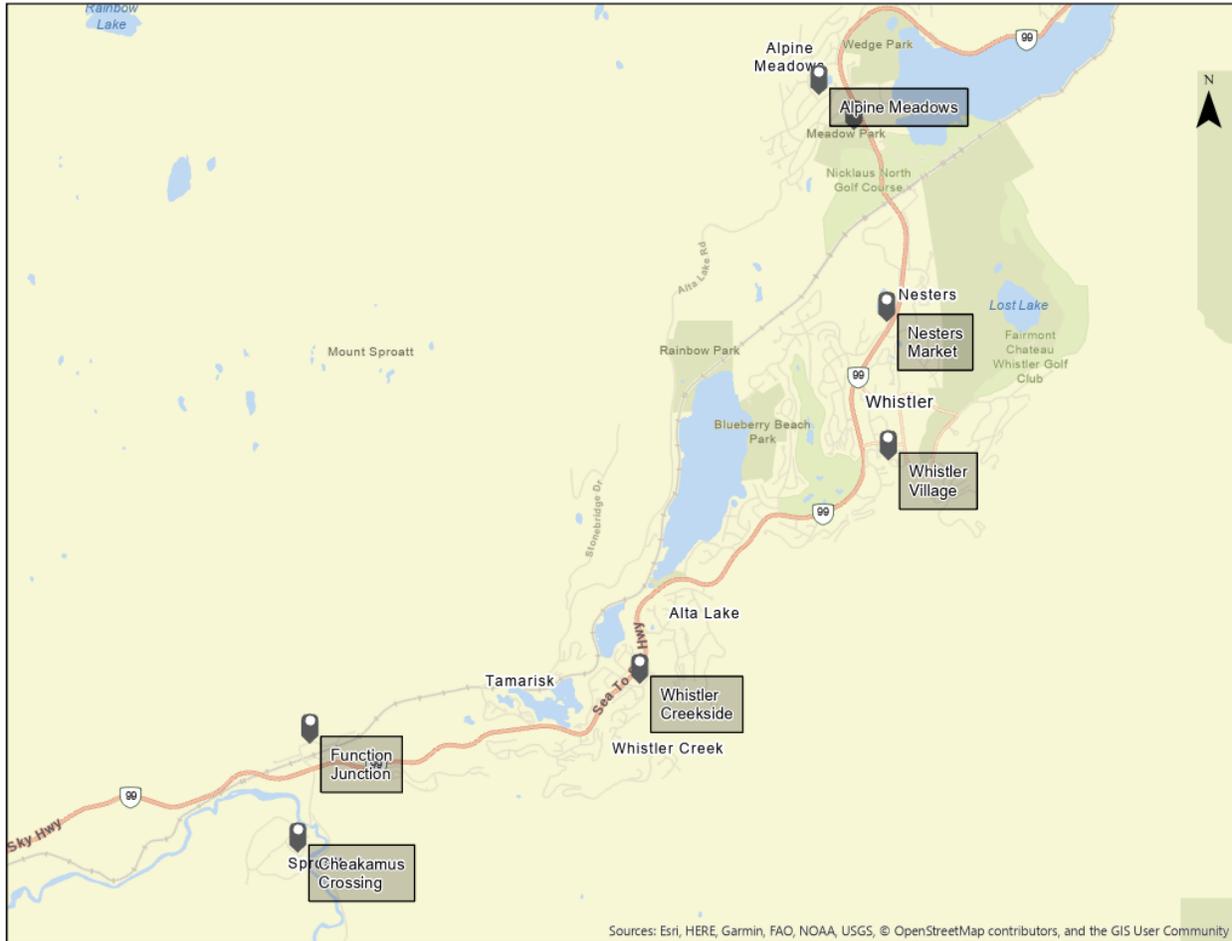


Direct Emails

Email from RMOW staff to stakeholder groups

Key Destinations

Residents were asked where their key destinations were in Whistler. The top six destinations included Alpine Meadows, Meadow Park, Nesters Market, Whistler Village (including work and recreation), Whistler Creekside, Function Junction and Cheakamus Crossing.



What We Heard

Support for Neighbourhood Transit Service Improvements

Support for service improvements varied depending on the neighbourhood that the improvement was intended for. Respondents indicated whether or not they felt improving service in a specific location was a priority, and if it was, were prompted further to answer what specifically needed improvement.

The most important priority to respondents was improving service to the southern neighbourhoods in Whistler. 65% of respondents indicated that improving transit service frequency between Function Junction, Creekside and the Village was a priority. Out of the potential improvements (Figure 1) the top improvement was seeing more express service along the highway from Cheakamus Village and Function Junction to the highway stop at the Village year-round. Following this was improving bus stop infrastructure on the highway and the inclusion of transit priority measures. Respondents did not want to see a decrease of transit service into Nordic during the summer period.

The key themes that were included in the “Other” open-text responses included providing service to Alta Lake Road as well as providing reverse routing on Route 6 Tapley’s/Blueberry. Additional comments included specific notes about where to improve bus stop infrastructure, which was predominately around access to Spring Creek and improving the current stop on the highway at Alta Lake Road in the southbound direction.

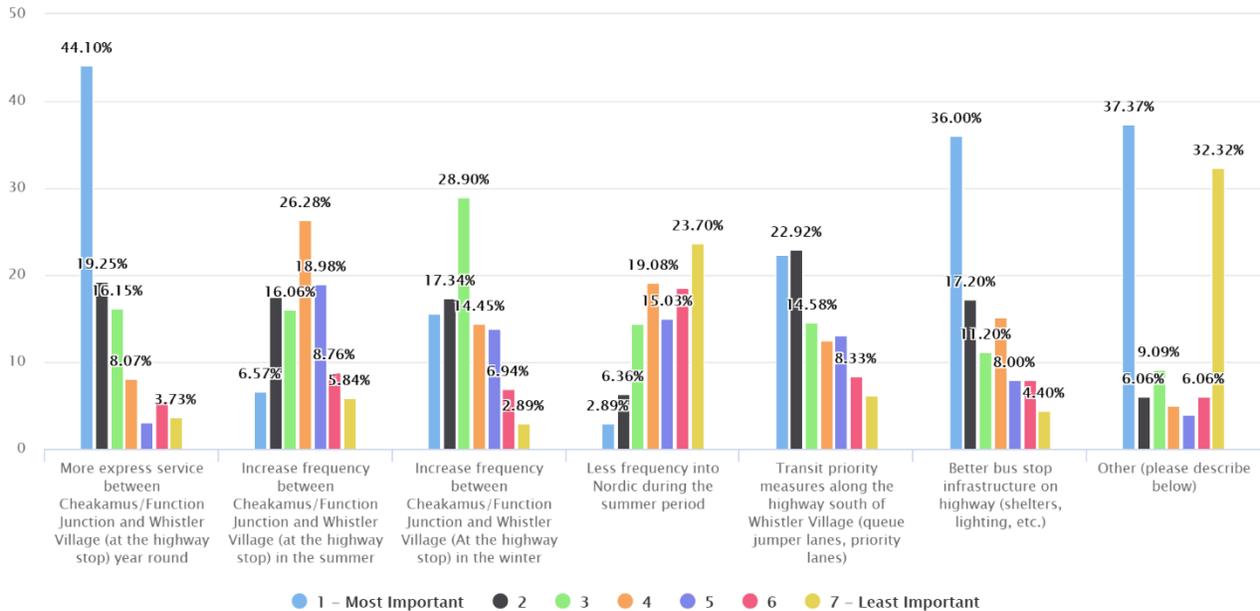


Figure 1 - Whistler South ranked improvements N:321

The second most important priority was providing service to new areas within Whistler with 49% of survey respondents choosing it. Specific neighbourhoods were not presented to the public to choose but rather were captured in open-text responses. The leading area to service in expansion in all responses was providing service to Alta Lake Road. Following this was adding service to Whistler Olympic Park in the Callaghan Valley. Other areas included Upper Nordic Estates, Millar's Pond, Black Tusk/Pinecrest, Taluswood Road, the Bayshores community and WedgeWoods. Outside of local areas, there was interest shown in having inter-regional service provided from Vancouver through Squamish to Whistler, as well as improved service from Whistler to Pemberton.

Following this, the next most important priority was providing more frequency between Emerald Estates and Whistler Village. 45% of respondents believed this was a priority. Out of the potential improvements (Figure 2) the top improvement was seeing more express service along the highway from Emerald Estates and Function Junction to the highway stop at the highway year-round. Interestingly the least important improvement overall was transit priority measures even though it would directly improve the potential for express service.

The key themes that were included in the “Other” open-text responses included separating the combination of Alpine and Emerald routing, and have a permanent express option for both. Providing service to WedgeWoods was another requested improvement.

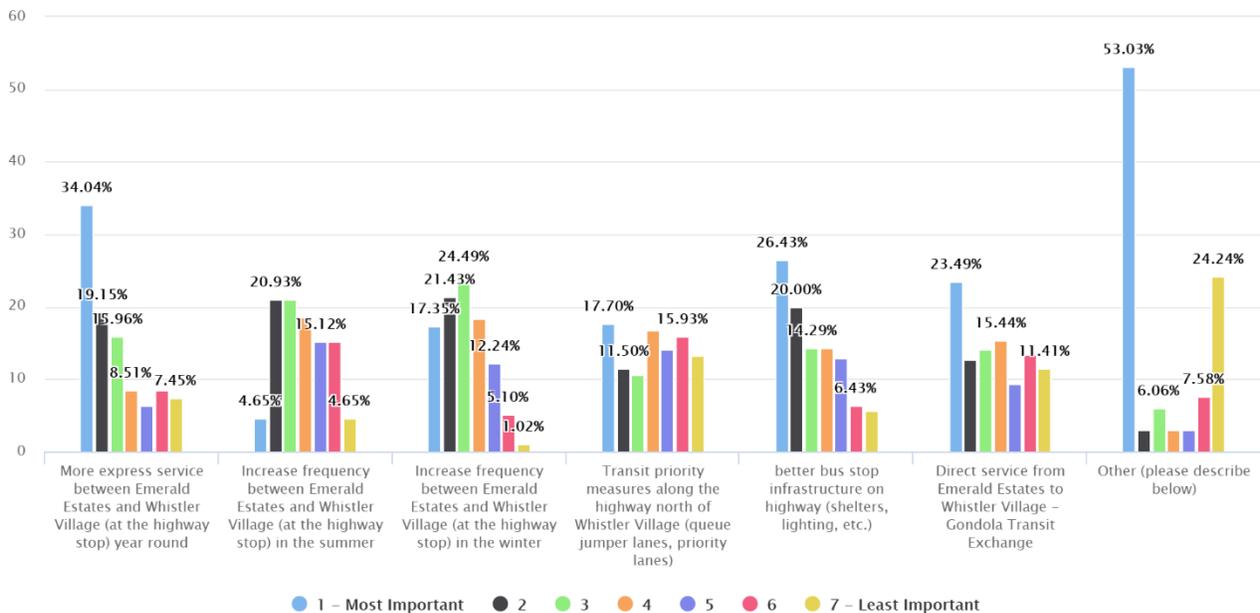


Figure 2 - Whistler North ranked improvements N:222

21% of all respondents felt that improving service in Spring Creek was a priority. 97% of Spring Creek residents believed it was a priority. The most important improvement was to eliminate seasonality in the schedule and have consistent year-round service (Figure 3). Following this, improved bus stop infrastructure along the highway was considered the next most important

improvement. The least important improvement to respondents was having later service during the winter period.

Key themes that were included in the “Other” open text responses included servicing new areas and improving infrastructure. Comments included requests to provide service to the Bayshores area and Millar’s Pond area. Additionally there was interest to have southbound bus stops for Spring Creek access.

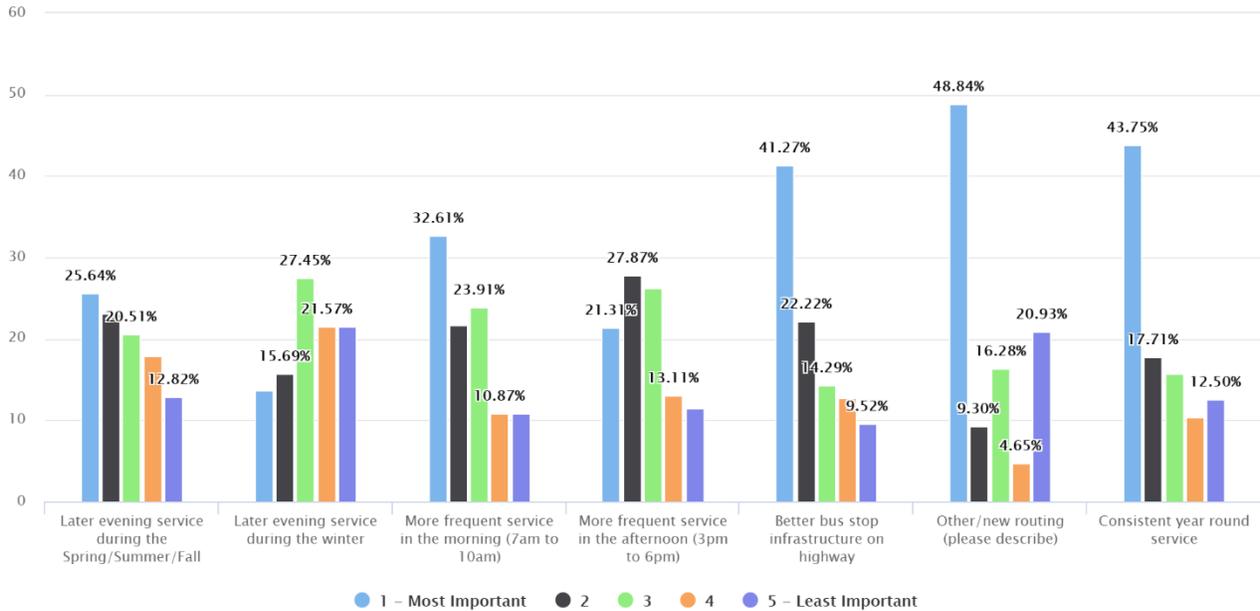


Figure 3 - Spring Creek ranked improvements N:144

The neighbourhood in Whistler which received the least support for improvement was Spruce Grove/White Gold Estates. 12% of all respondents felt that service improvements should be prioritized here. 96% of Spruce Grove/White Gold residents believed it was a priority. The most important improvement was eliminating seasonality from the schedule and have consistent service year-round, followed by more frequent transit service in the winter (Figure 4). The least important improvement was to have local routing which does not extend to Emerald Estates.

The key themes that were included in the “Other” open text responses providing service to the Bayshores area and Millar’s Pond area. Other comments included rerouting service to provide more coverage within Spruce Grove/White Gold Estates, as well as looping the route to include Nesters Mall without travelling further north.

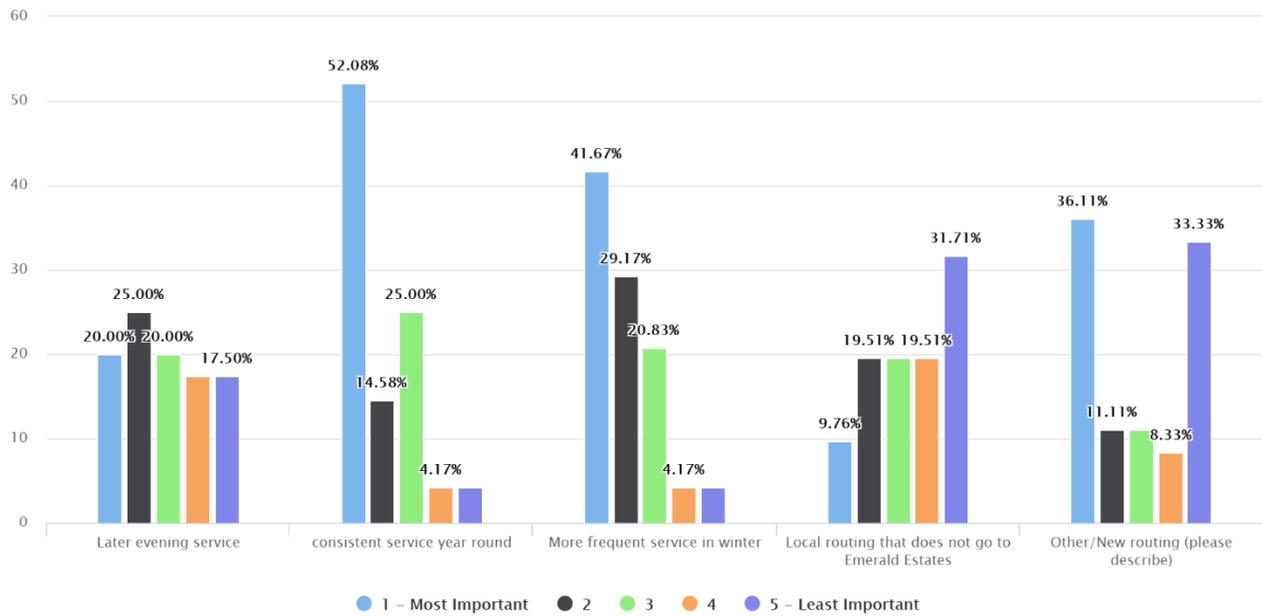


Figure 4 - Spruce Grove/White Gold Estates ranked improvements N:87

Express Transit Service Support

Respondents were split on whether to improve express service or local service in Whistler (Figure 5). Express service directly related to improving the 10 Valley Express, where local service improvements would look to improve all other routes that travel through neighbourhoods. Non-residents were more inclined to lean to express service (68%) where part-time residents supported local transit improvements over express service (60%). Permanent residents were split with 55% preferring express service improvements over local service improvement. More detailed information as to what transit rider groups prefer which type of service can be seen in Appendix A.

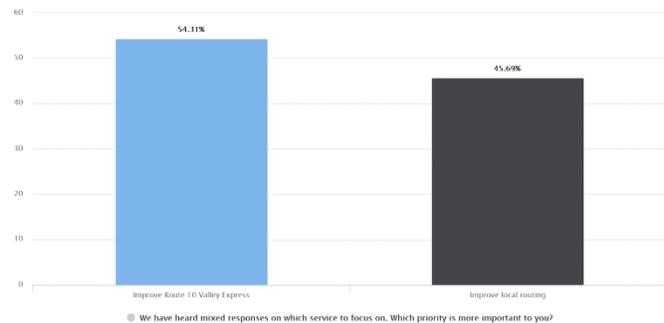


Figure 5 - Express versus local transit service N:545

All respondents were given the option to provide further details as to what they would want to see improved specific to either option. Out of the respondents that chose improving the Route 10 Valley Express, 54% felt that frequency should be focused on. 18% of respondents felt there could be improvements to routing and/or coverage, with most comments focused on re-routing into Whistler Village as well as bypassing Nesters Market. 16% of respondents felt improvements to bus stops and infrastructure was required, with comments ranging from adding bus stops at

Nesters Market as well as ensuring there are matching stops in both the northbound and southbound direction. The remaining respondents wanted to see the service span increase (12%). 65% wanted later service and the remaining 35% wanted to see it start earlier.

Respondents that chose local routing improvements indicated that frequency improvements to that service type were important (43%). Comments included ensuring that trip start times are more spread out on routes that are similar, and improving frequency to Alpine and Spring Creek neighbourhoods. Routing improvements were also important to respondents with 25% of comments directed towards modifying routing to local routes as well as providing service to new areas, namely Alta Lake Road and Westside/Rainbow Park. 13% of respondents wanted to bus stop and infrastructure improvements, with requests specific to adding shelters and lighting at busy stop locations. The remaining comments included seasonal service improvements (6%) on-time performance (4%), service span (4%) and miscellaneous comments making up the last 5%.

COVID-19 Pandemic Impacts

A majority of respondents indicated that when [British Columbia's Restart Plan enters Phase 4](#) they will go back to riding transit as they once did (Figure 6).

Respondents who indicated that they would not return to regular transit usage noted that they didn't use transit before so they wouldn't return to usage of it afterwards. Others indicated that they wouldn't return to regular usage because they purchased a vehicle to use, would continue to work from home, or were unsure if they were going to.

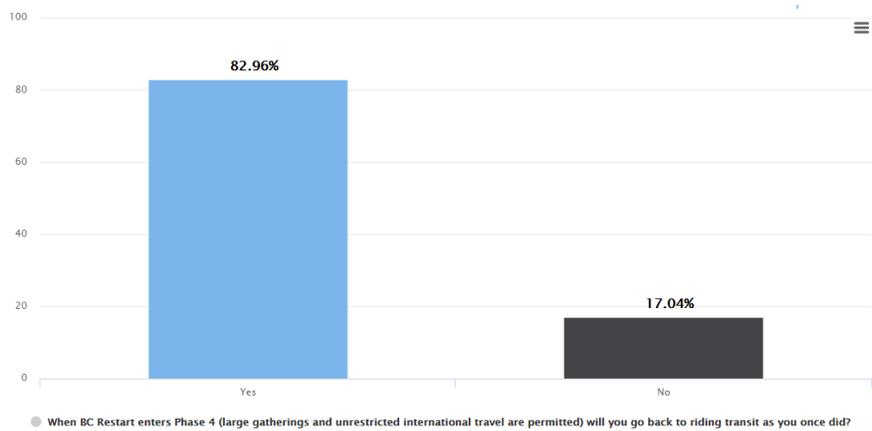


Figure 6 - Returning to regular transit usage

Currently, respondents are using their private vehicle more as a driver (55%) as well as walking (45%) and biking (35%) more often (Figure 7). As expected, transit usage decreased the most

amongst respondents with 55% indicating that, as well as 37% of respondents using ride share and taxis less (Figure 8).

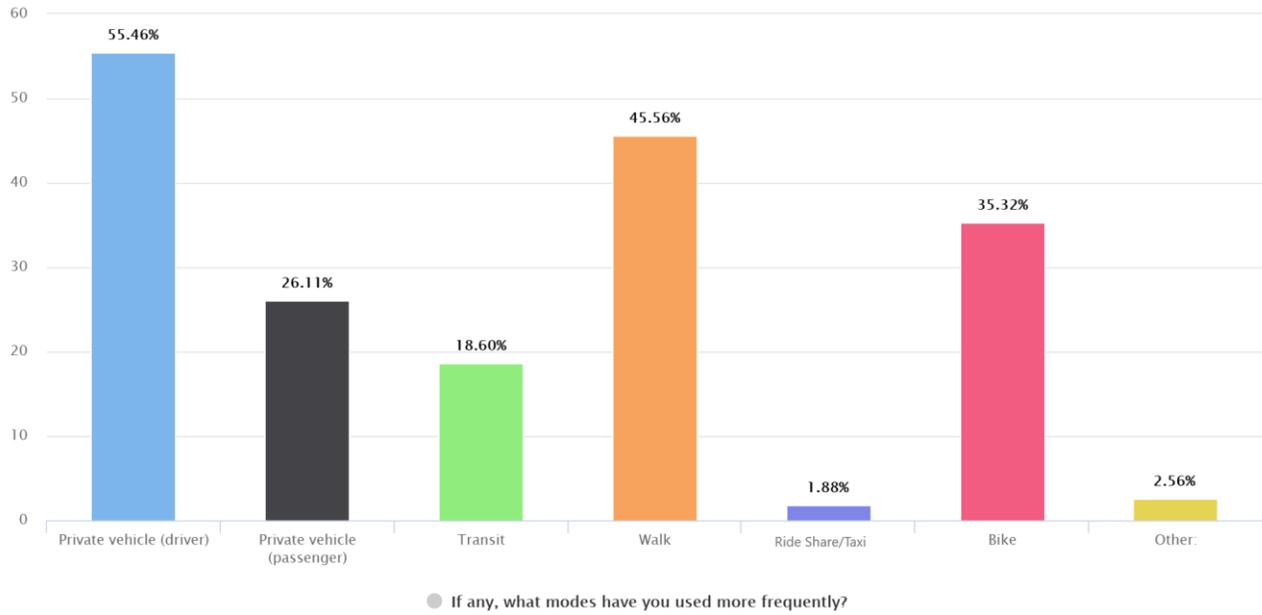


Figure 7 - Transportation modes used more frequently during the pandemic N:586

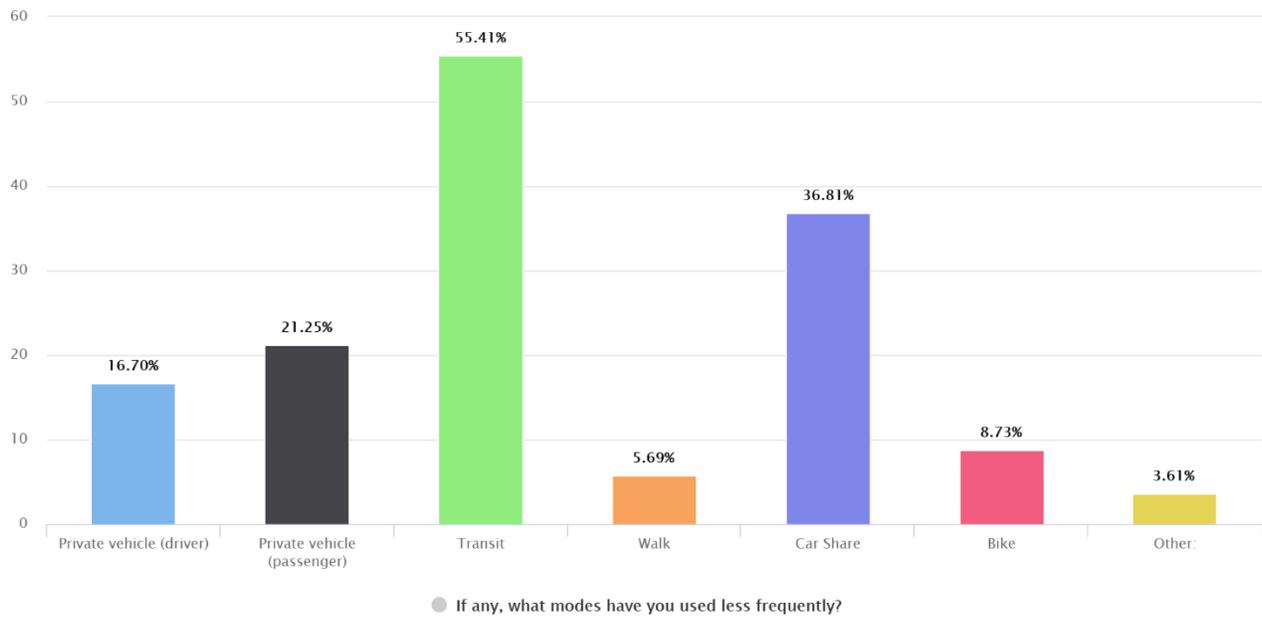


Figure 8 - Transportation modes used less frequently during the pandemic N:527

Most respondents indicated that they do not work from home (67%). The remainder of respondents vary between working from home at different rates, with 10% of respondents working from home permanently now.

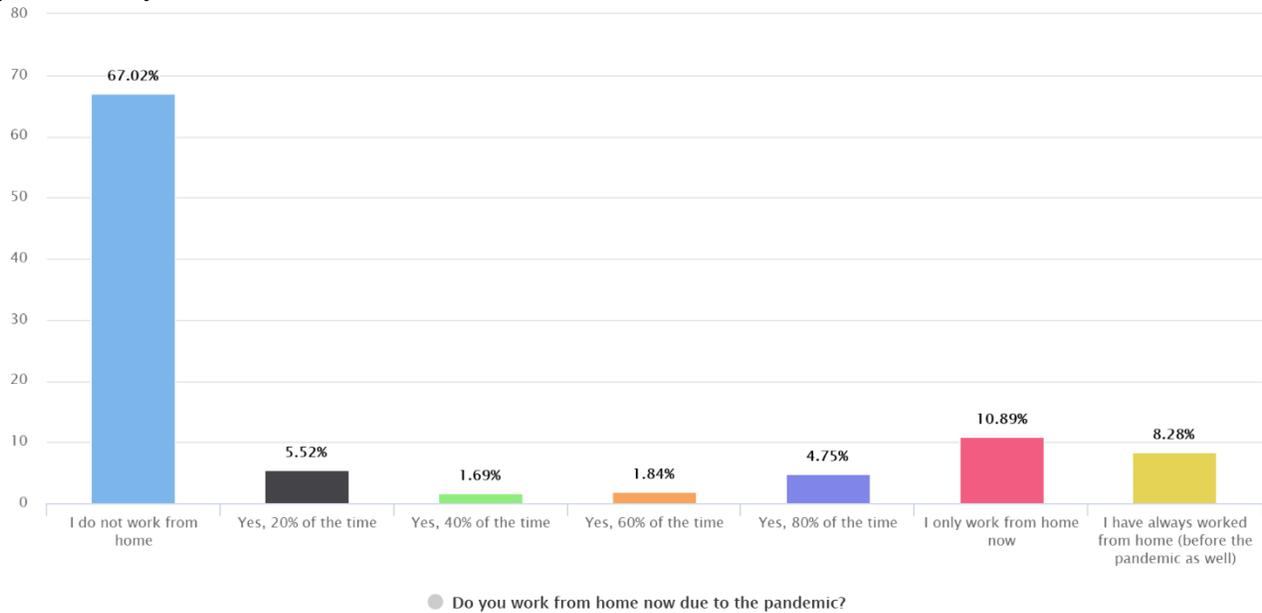
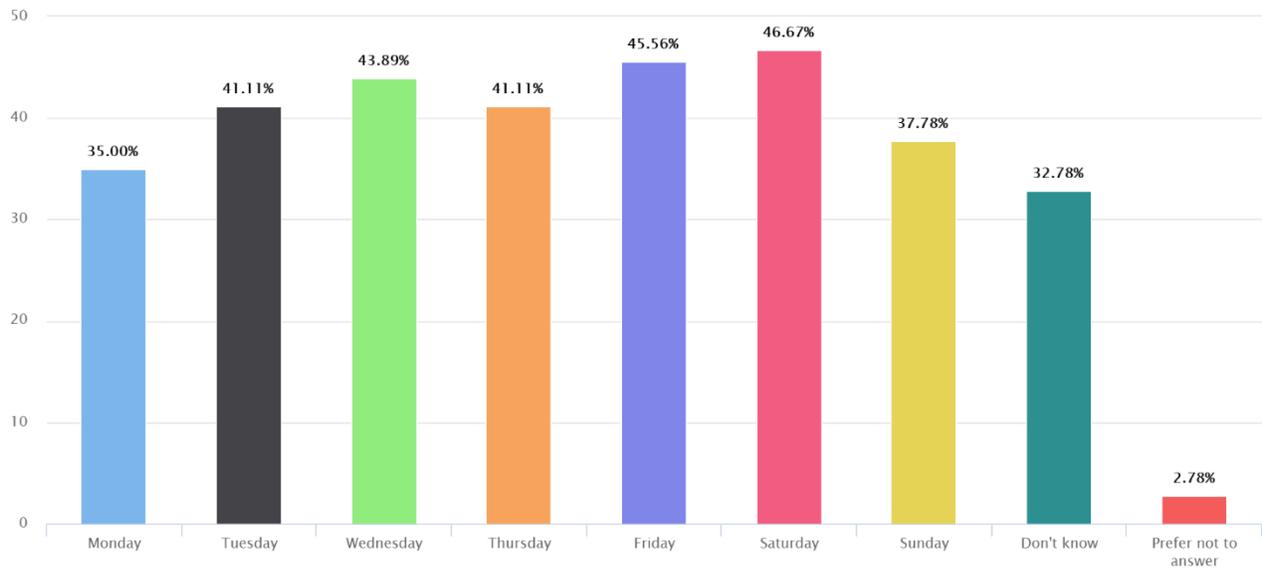


Figure 9 - Work from home status N:652

Non-Transit Riders

Respondents that indicated they did not use transit were prompted to indicate why they didn't use it. The majority of respondents indicated that they only stopped using it for a period of time, and would resume after a vaccine is available. Other comments included no transit service within walking distance, frequency being insufficient, and parking being readily available at their workplace. Respondents were also asked which day they would prefer to use transit. 47% indicated Saturday. Friday (46%) and Wednesday (44%) followed (Figure 10).



● Which of the following days are you most likely to ride the bus?

Figure 10 - Preferred day to use transit N:180

Respondents would most likely use transit between 2:00pm and 4:00pm (58%). 8:00am to 10:00am and 6:00pm to 8:00pm (45%) were the next two time periods that respondents would

most likely used transit (Figure 11)

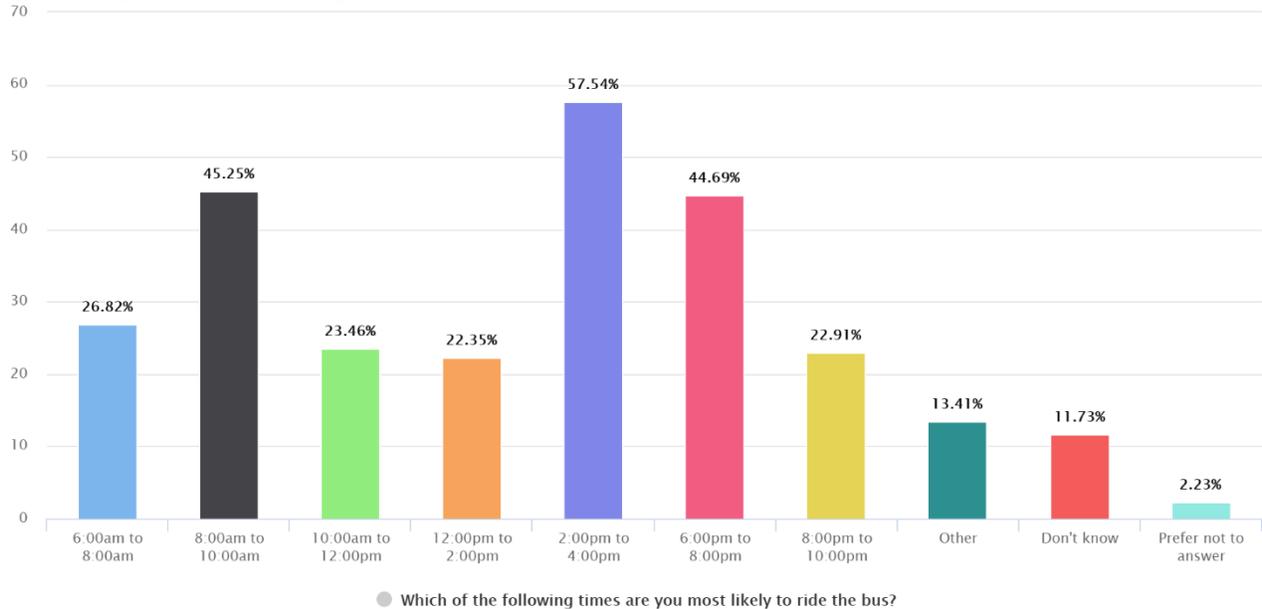


Figure 11 - Preferred time to use transit N:179

. It should be noted that 4:00pm to 6:00pm was omitted through survey creation error. Nine respondents indicated in open-text responses that they would like to see service at this time.

Who We Heard From

The majority of respondents live permanently in Whistler, with 9% only living there part-time and 6% not living there. 76% of respondents work in Whistler, 5% work there part-time and 19% do not work in Whistler. The survey received completions from all neighbourhoods in Whistler, with the most being received from Alpine Meadows (14%) and Whistler Creekside (8%).

Respondents of all age groups were well represented. Based on Statistics Canada 2016 Census Profile the 15-29 age group was over-represented where the 30-44 age group was slightly under-represented (Figure 12).

Travel Patterns

Respondents used transit at different frequencies at different times of the year both before and after the pandemic began. Before the pandemic during the winter

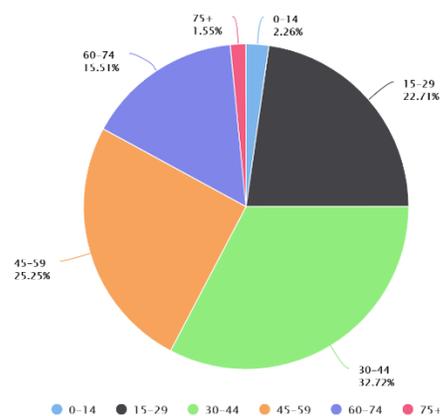


Figure 12 - Age of respondents

(December to April) 29% of respondents used transit over five times a week. The remaining respondents used transit at different rates, with 12% of the respondents not using transit at all during the winter (Figure 13).

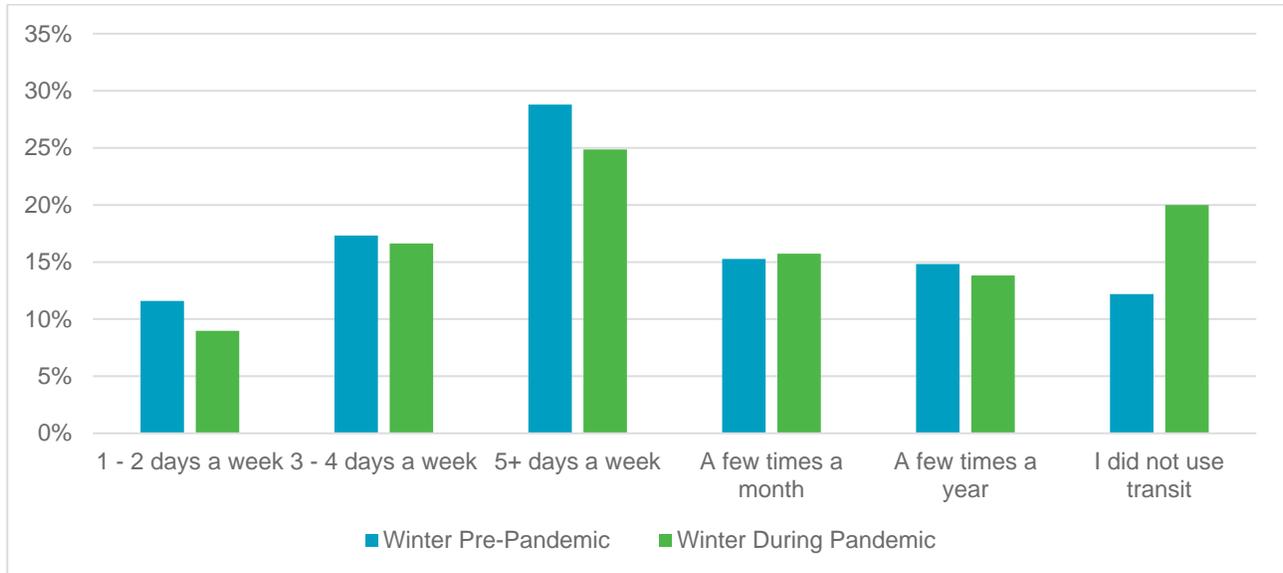


Figure 13 - Pre-pandemic VS post-pandemic winter transit usage frequency N:681

During the pandemic, transit usage trends changed. 25% of respondents continue to use transit over five times a week, dropping 4%. Infrequent transit users (a few times a month to three to four times a week) decreased from pre-pandemic to during the pandemic between 1% and 5%. 20% of respondents indicated they do not use transit at all, an increase of 8%.

Similar trends occurred in the Spring/Summer/Fall season (May to November). Frequent transit riders dropped 3%, where infrequent riders dropped between 1% and 3%. Non-transit riders increased by 7% (Figure 14).

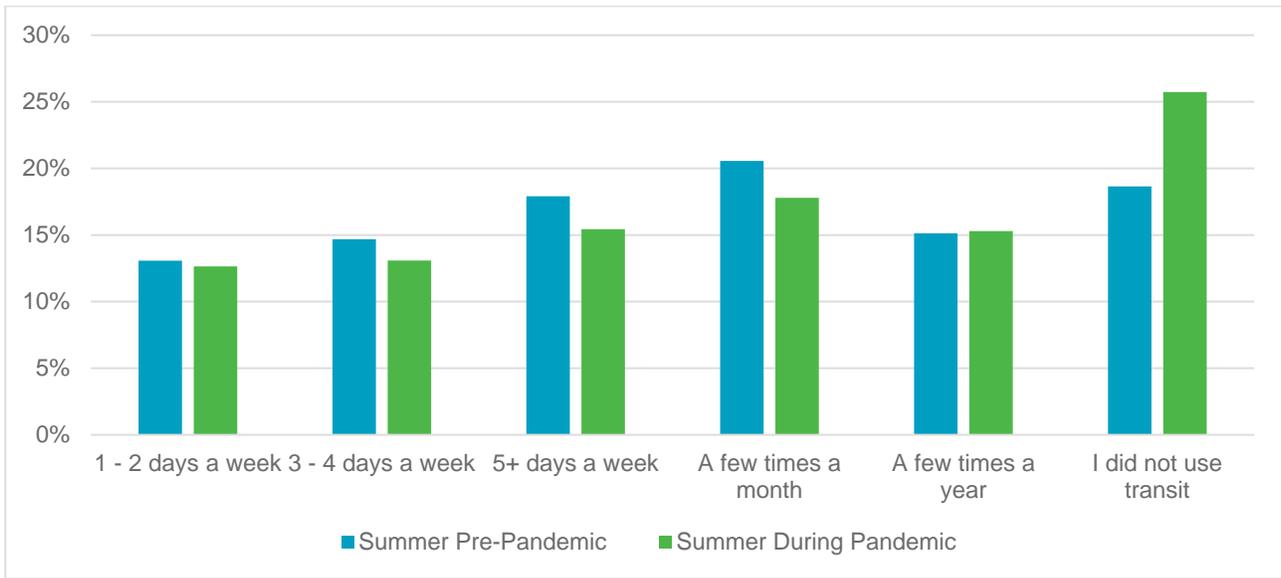


Figure 14 - Pre-pandemic VS post-pandemic summer transit usage frequency N:681

Graphs detailing demographics and all remaining questions are included in Appendix A.

Next Steps

The responses for the engagement process have been tabulated and analyzed to support the development of the Transit Future Action Plan. The next steps in the process are to discuss the contents of this report with the core project team, refine service proposals as appropriate, and draft the final TFAP for core project team review and comment.

Date	Milestone
June 2021	Core project team meeting to discuss the contents of this engagement report. Service proposals to be revised as appropriate, given the feedback received during engagement and by the core project team. If requested by the local government partners, engagement results may be presented to the Resort Municipality of Whistler Council.
July 2021	Prepare draft Transit Future Action Plan for review by the core project team. Revise draft based on feedback received from the core project team.
August 2021	Present the final Transit Future Action Plan to the Resort Municipality of Whistler Council for endorsement.
January 2022-onwards	Begin integrating proposals into service planning.

For more information on this project, please visit engage.bctransit.com/whistler.

Appendix A

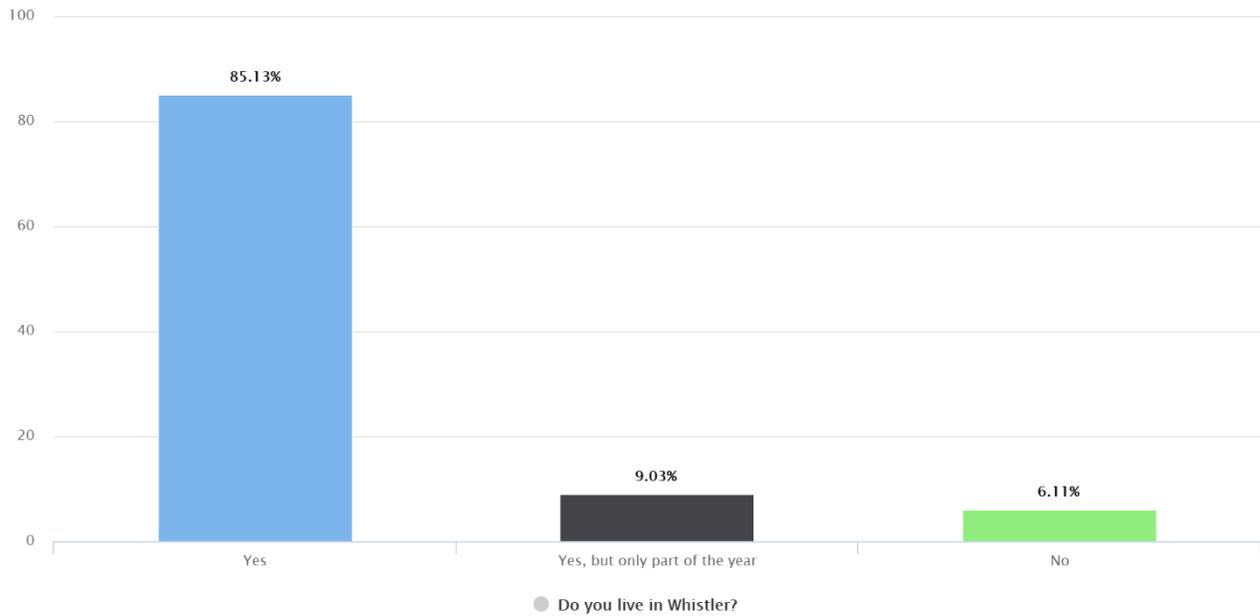


Figure 15 – Residency N:755

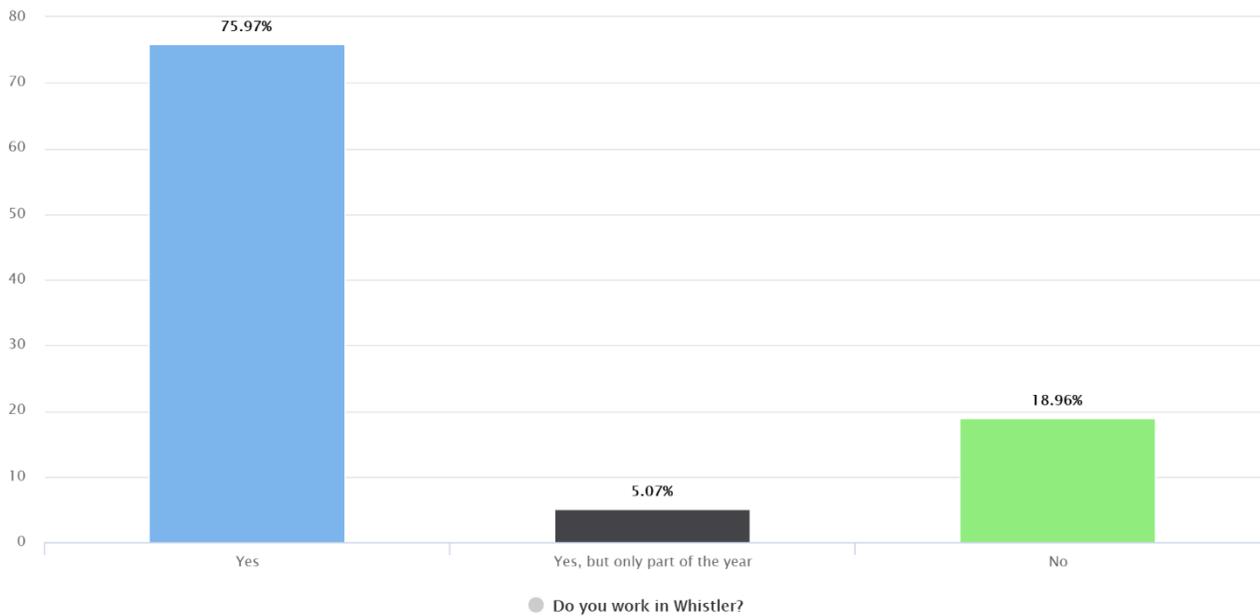


Figure 16 - Employment in Whistler N:750

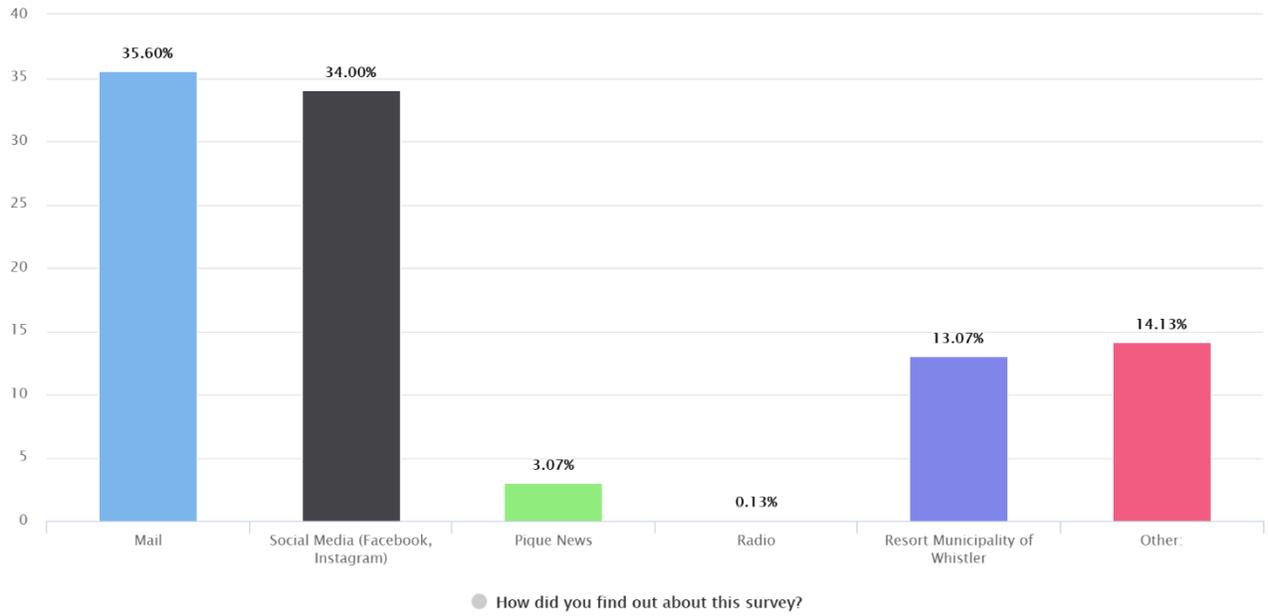


Figure 17 - How respondents were informed about survey N:750

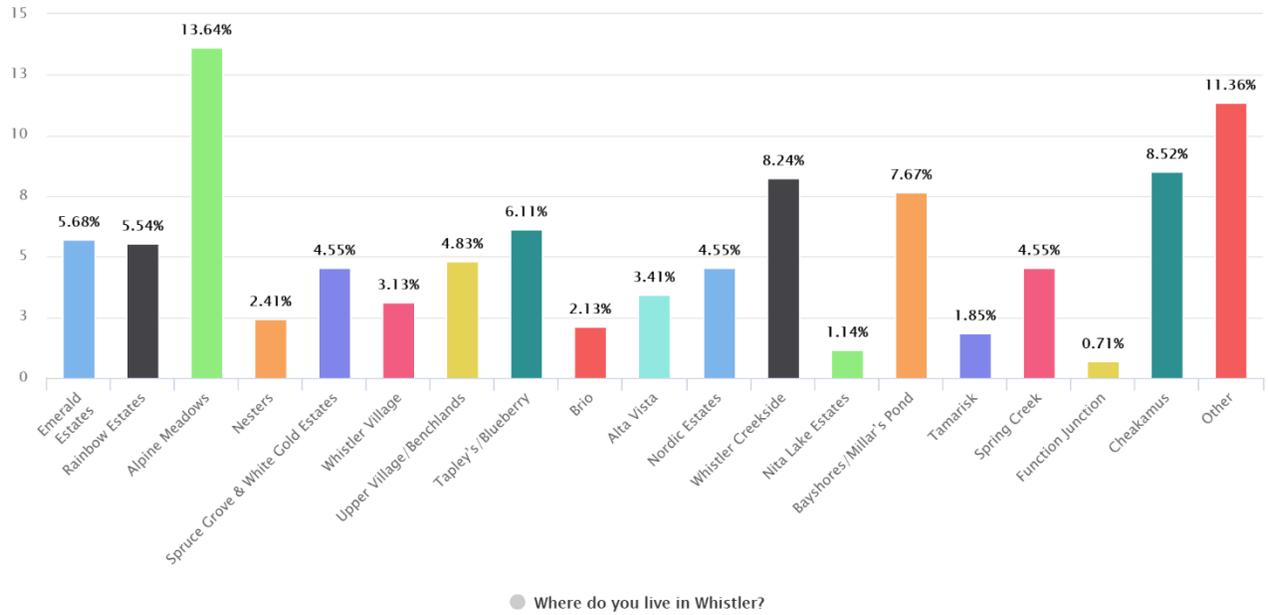


Figure 18 – Where respondents live N:704

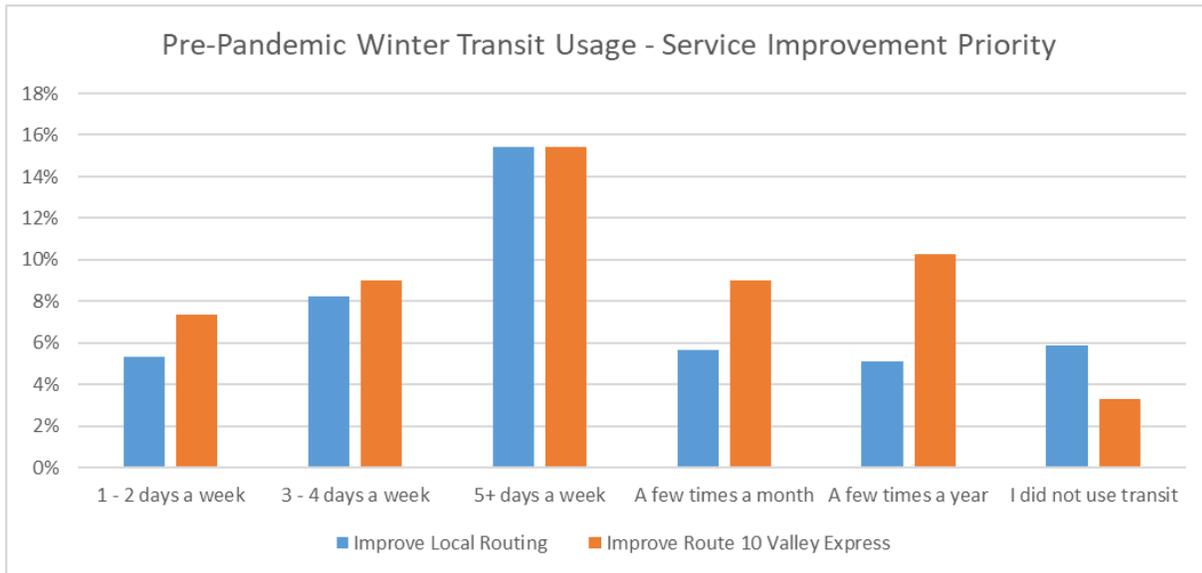


Figure 19 - Pre-pandemic winter transit usage - service improvement preference N:681

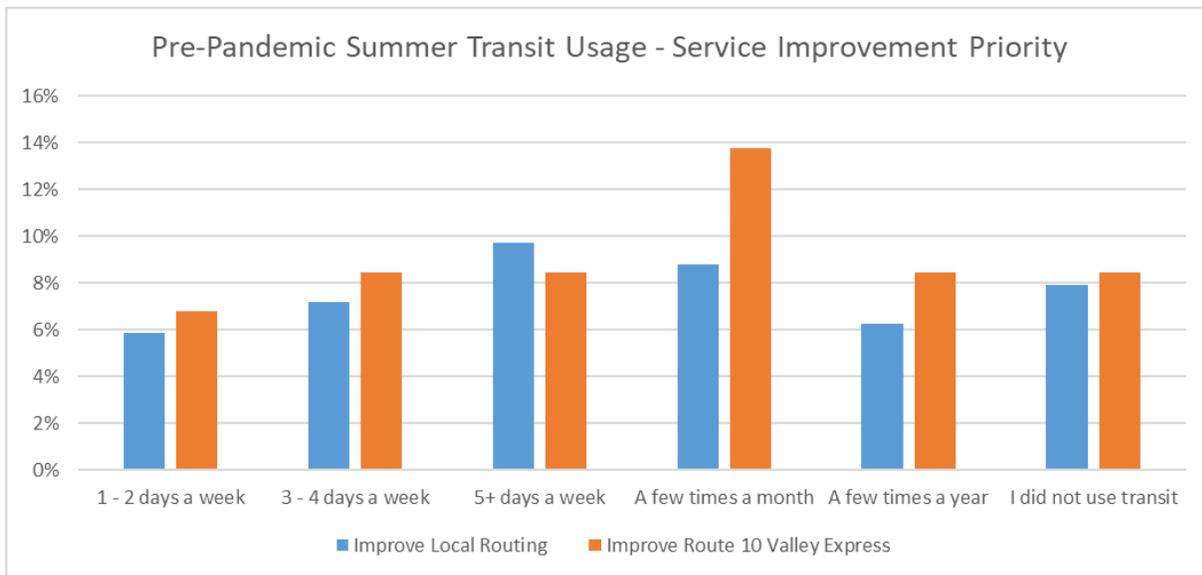


Figure 20 - Pre-pandemic summer transit usage - service improvement preference N:681

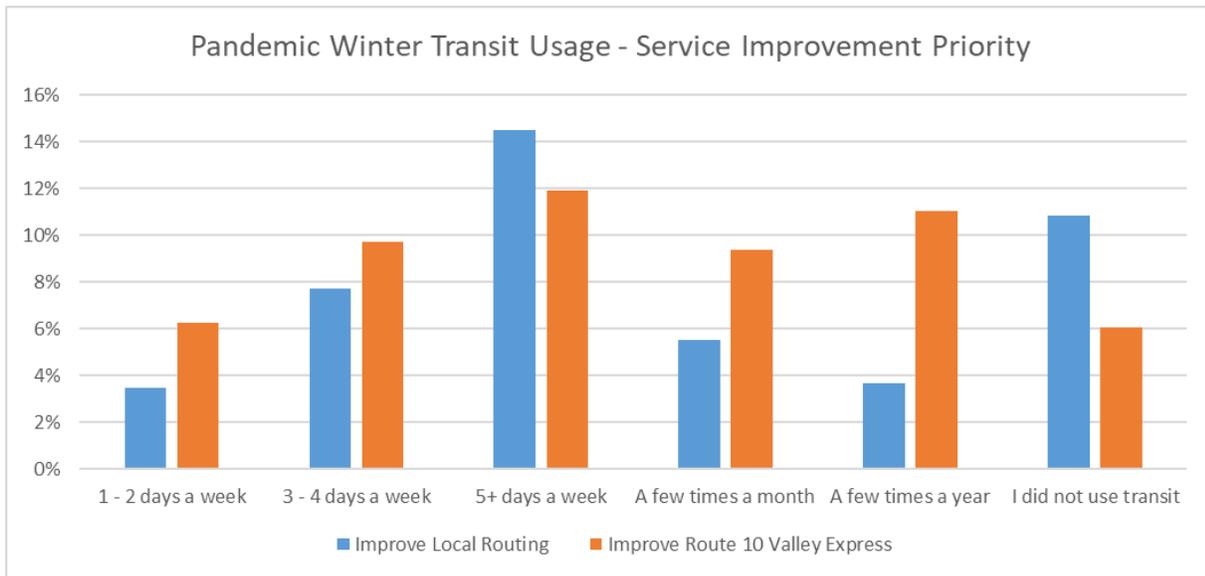


Figure 21 - Pandemic winter transit usage - service improvement preference N:681

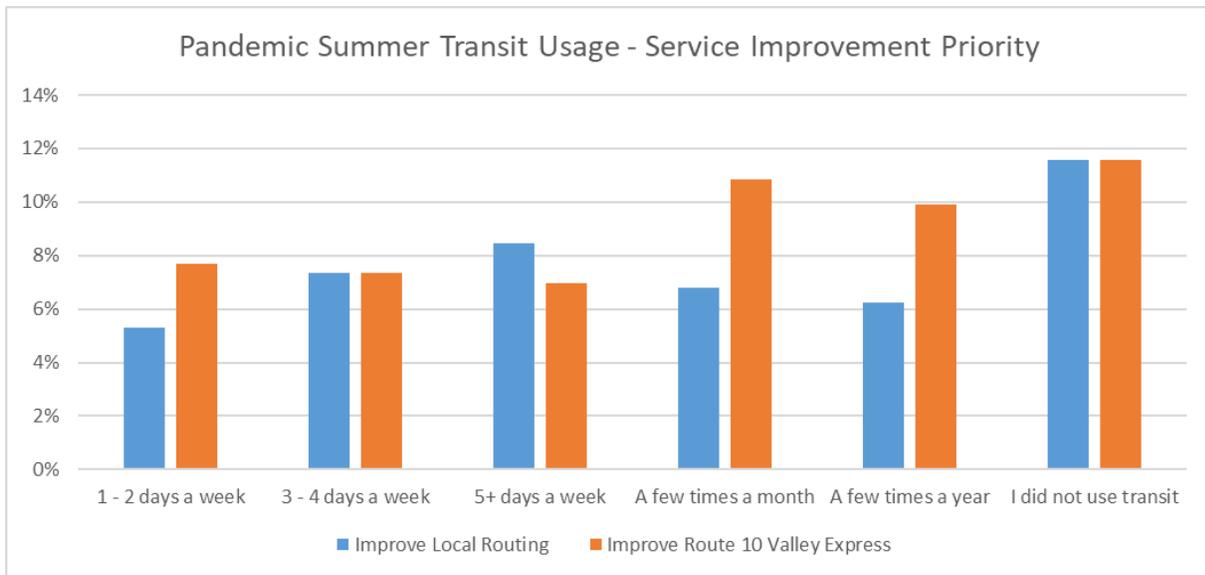


Figure 22 - Pandemic summer transit usage - service improvement preference N:681

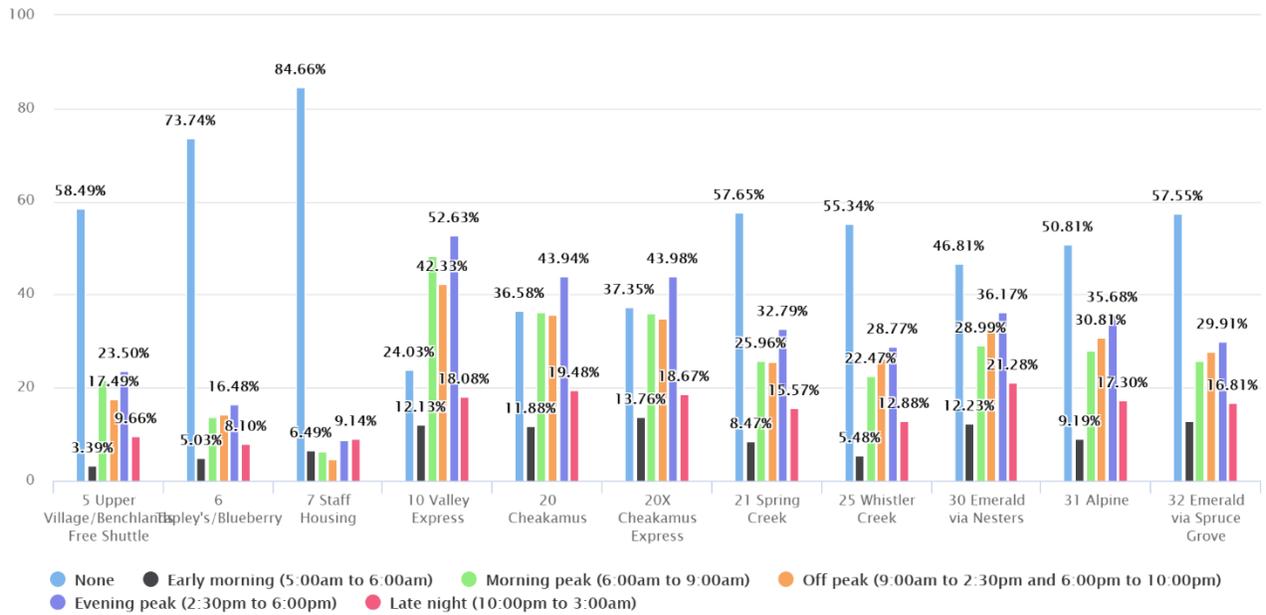


Figure 23 - Route specific trip window improvements N:597

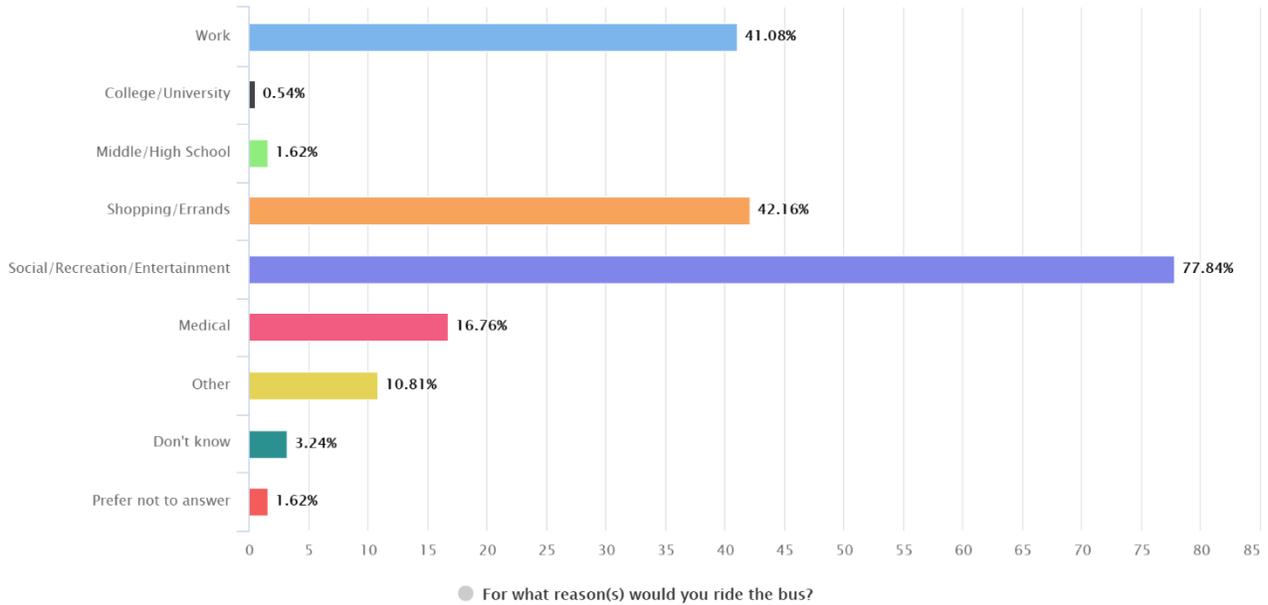


Figure 24 - Reasons for riding the bus N:185