



# BUS NETWORK REDESIGN – PHASE 1

## Engagement Report

December 19, 2025



# CONTENTS

- Contents ..... 2
- Engagement Summary ..... 3
- 1 Background..... 5
  - 1.1 Summary of Engagement Strategy ..... 5
  - 1.2 Participants..... 6
- 2 Engagement Activities..... 7
  - 2.1 Survey ..... 7
  - 2.2 Community Engagement Sessions ..... 7
  - 2.3 Marketing Techniques ..... 7
- 3 What We Learned ..... 8
  - 3.1 Survey ..... 9
  - 3.2 Community Engagement Sessions ..... 17
- 4 Evaluation of Engagement ..... 18
- 5 Next Steps ..... 18



# ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

From September – November 2025 the City of Saskatoon (City) engaged the community about their priorities and preferences for re-designing Saskatoon’s bus network.

## We asked and listened on the following topics:



- **Key principles for the bus network re-design** (e.g. frequency, coverage, all-day service and connectivity)
- **Top priorities for improvements** to Saskatoon’s bus network
- **What is working well** about the current bus network

## Why Are We Doing This Work?

The Link system, set to launch in 2028, will bring Bus Rapid Transit to Saskatoon. As a result of introducing three new rapid transit lines, the neighborhood (or local) bus routes will need to be re-designed to work together with Link. The Bus Network Redesign project will take place over several phases between now and 2028.

## How Feedback Will Be Used

The results of this engagement will help inform the updated Service Standards for Saskatoon Transit, as well as the next phase of engagement for the bus network re-design. A summary of this engagement will be included as part of a report to City Council in 2026.

## WHAT WE DID



**The City** engaged with various community members and community organizations through a lunchtime engagement session, come and go information sessions during different times of day, and dedicated presentations to newcomers. An Engage Page and two online surveys were also available to inform residents and collect feedback.

## Who We Engaged With:

- ⊕ Transit riders
- ⊕ Bus Riders of Saskatoon
- ⊕ Indigenous Peoples
- ⊕ Newcomers
- ⊕ People experiencing disabilities
- ⊕ Older adults
- ⊕ Secondary (high school) students
- ⊕ Post-secondary students

## WHAT WE LEARNED

### *Priorities for the new bus network:*

- **Greater frequency** is the top priority for most respondents
- **Increased connectivity and coverage** were also important for many people
- **Better all-day service** is a priority for people who work evening and weekend shifts, while students stressed **better service at rush hour** peak times
- **Reliability** of the bus network is a key area for improvement
- **Minimizing transfers** was the least important priority for participants

### *What's working well:*

- **Direct, frequent routes** such as 8<sup>th</sup> Street were noted as a plus
- **Free fare for children** has been a positive step for Saskatoon Transit



### *Other comments:*

- Additional concerns include better **bus stop and shelter maintenance, cleanliness on buses, and safety and security**
- **Community-specific needs** such as accessible bus stops and student service are important

## Who Participated

- 61% of respondents take the bus regularly (at least a couple of times a month)
- Respondents were fairly evenly represented by gender and age
- Community organizations, students, people experiencing disabilities, and newcomers
- Limited responses from Indigenous people, members of the LGBTQ2IA+ community

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***Thank you to all participants who provided their feedback for this and other City of Saskatoon projects.***

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# 1 BACKGROUND

In 2028, Saskatoon Transit will introduce three new Link Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) lines. In preparation, Saskatoon Transit is carrying out a comprehensive review of the existing bus network to develop a more efficient and effective transit network in Saskatoon.

The four phases of the Bus Network Redesign project include:

- 1) **Phase 1 (Design Principles) – 2025:** Gather feedback on network design principles to inform the plan. This phase also informs updates to Saskatoon Transit’s Service Standards. No proposed route changes are shared in this phase.
- 2) **Phase 2 (Proposed Plan) – 2026:** Share proposed service plan for a redesigned network with the public for feedback.
- 3) **Phase 3 (Revised Plan) – 2027:** Revise and update the proposed service plan. Share with the public for additional feedback, including tailored opportunities for specific locations.
- 4) **Phase 4 (Implementation) – 2028:** Close the loop with the community and begin implementation of the new service plan.

## Phase 1:

The focus of Phase 1 engagement is on understanding the community’s preferences on network design principles. This includes understanding trade-offs between a coverage-focused network and a ridership-focused network.

Understanding the balance between these two sets of principles will help to inform an update to Saskatoon Transit’s Service Standards including the standards for bus frequency and coverage, as well as the proposed service plan that is developed.

From September to November 2025, engagement happened through two online surveys, a community engagement session, public information sessions, and dedicated engagements with newcomers.

## 1.1 Summary of Engagement Strategy

The engagement goals for the Bus Network Redesign – Phase 1 were to:

- **Involve:** Understand transit riders’ values in relation to the new bus route network and network design principles of a coverage-focused vs. ridership-focused transit network.
- **Ask:** Gather feedback on the network design principles to inform updated Service Standards and new bus route network design.
- **Inform:** Provide clear, transparent communication about project timelines and decision points, reporting back on what we have heard and how feedback will be used.



**The City** engaged with various community members and community organizations through a lunchtime engagement session, come and go information sessions during different times of day, and dedicated presentations to newcomers. An Engage Page and two online surveys were also available to inform residents and collect feedback.

*Table 1: Summary of engagement activities*

Participants	Activity	Timeframe	Participants
Post-Secondary Students (USask and SaskPolytech)	Survey	September 2025	72
Public	Survey	September 22 – November 6, 2025	1486
Community organizations, transit riders, community members	Community Engagement Session	October 6, 2025	40
Public	Come and Go Info Sessions (joint with Link/Transit Fare)	October 23 and 27, 2025	170
Newcomers	Community Engagement Sessions	November 2025	105
<b>Total Participants:</b>			<b>1,873</b>

## 1.2 Participants

A specific focus was on engaging with transit riders and groups highly impacted by potential changes to Saskatoon Transit's Service Standards. This includes people experiencing disabilities, Indigenous people, newcomers, older adults and youth.

These groups included:

- Transit riders
- Bus Riders of Saskatoon
- Indigenous Peoples
- Newcomers
- People experiencing disabilities
- Older adults
- Secondary (high school) Students
- Post-secondary students

## 2 ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Participants provided their feedback through the surveys, open houses or by contacting the project team directly. Each engagement activity is described below.

### 2.1 Survey

Two surveys were offered as part of this engagement. The first was targeted towards students at start of term activities at both the University of Saskatchewan and Saskatchewan Polytechnic the week of September 2-5, 2025. The survey was promoted at Saskatoon Transit booths on both campuses and follow up communications to both groups. A total of 72 responses were received to this survey.

The second survey was open to the general public and hosted on the project's Engage page. Question wording was adjusted slightly based on the responses to the student survey. Paper copies of the survey were available at Transit Customer Service, at the community engagement session, the Link open houses, and at the newcomer presentations. A total of 1486 responses were received between September 22 – November 6, 2025.

#### 2.1.1 Analysis

Survey responses were analyzed thematically to group responses using M365 Co-Pilot. Quantitative results were compiled using Excel. Open-ended responses were coded thematically and summarized by frequency. Results were reviewed and verified by the engagement team.

### 2.2 Community Engagement Sessions

A number of community engagement sessions were held throughout October and November 2025:

**Transit Talk** - A Transit Talk lunch event was held on October 6, 2025 to gather feedback and share information with invited community organizations and community members at the Frances Morrison Public Library. Approximately 35 community members and organizations attended. The project team shared information on the bus network redesign, answered questions and gathered feedback on priorities for the new bus network.

**Link Information Sessions** - Additional community engagement opportunities were available at the Link Information Sessions on October 23 and 27, 2025. Paper and online surveys were available and Transit staff were able to engage on the network redesign as well as Link questions.

**Newcomer Language Classes** – The project team visited several English-language classes to engage with newcomers about Link, Saskatoon Transit and promote the bus network redesign survey. These visits were arranged in collaboration with the Saskatchewan Intercultural Association and the Global Gathering Place. Approximately 105 people participated in these sessions.

### 2.3 Marketing Techniques

The following channels were used to reach the intended audiences.

1. City Website
  - a. An Engage Page was developed with details about the project and call to action for participation in the online survey.

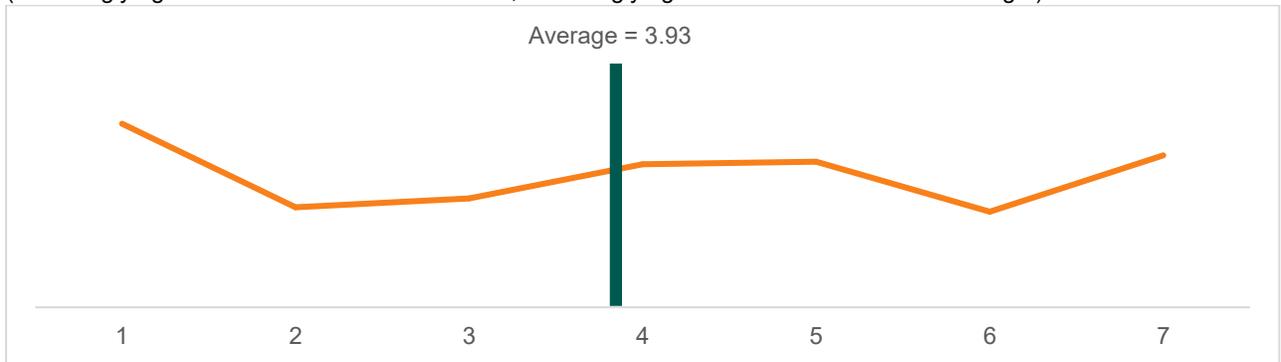
- b. A new Project webpage was developed to encourage participation in the online survey and links access design drawings and rendering to inform the survey responses.
    - c. Internal advertising included correspondence to Mayor and Council, Engagement calendar alerts and a MyCity article for City employees, who are all service ambassadors.
  2. Transit app
    - a. A banner with a link to the project page and survey encouraged bus riders to learn about the network redesign and take the survey.
  3. On-bus and at Terminals
    - a. Posters on the bus included a call to action for bus riders to scan the QR code for the survey and project page.
    - b. Staff handed out postcards with the project website link and call to action to take the survey out in the terminals.
    - c. The downtown terminal Customer Service Centre and City Hall kiosk had a poster and printed copies of the survey for people who preferred that format.
  4. Social Media
    - a. Posts to Facebook and Instagram linked to the survey and publicized the open house events.
  5. Email
    - a. Emails were sent to community partner groups, Community Associations, the City's Citizen Advisory Panel and Business groups outlining the purpose of the project and encouraging them to provide their feedback by completing the survey and to share the survey with their networks.
  6. News Release
    - a. A news release was circulated to share the event and engagement opportunities, which generated some local news coverage.
  7. Radio
    - a. Radio ads informing listeners of the project and encourage participation ran on Harvard, Rawlco and Saskatoon Media Group radio stations (7 stations total).
  8. On-Campus
    - a. Posters and staff at Welcome Week promoted the survey to students during the student fair.
    - b. Advertising screens on USask Campus included a QR code for students and faculty to scan for the survey.
  9. Digital Media
    - a. Digital posters were posted in washrooms at popular restaurants and fitness centres in all quadrants of the city
    - b. Digital Billboards with a captive audience shared event information to the patrons visiting the Center Mall and Lawson Heights Mall.
    - c. Digital Banners shared information on CKOM, Cruz FM, Bell and Corus.
  10. Printed
    - a. Project posters were featured on community bulletin boards at all leisure centres and libraries with the project website and QR code for the survey.
    - b. Two separate ads ran in the City Pages in the StarPhoenix promoting the project survey

# 3 WHAT WE LEARNED

## 3.1 Survey

Respondents were asked to rate their agreement with a series of two statements related to the bus network redesign principles. Each set of statements represented a tradeoff between different types of network principles. Responses to each set of statements are shown below.

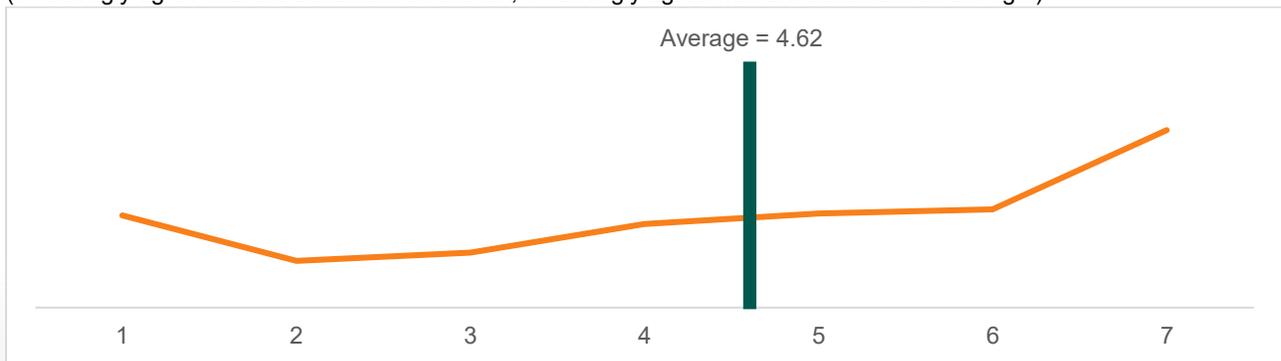
**Q1. Circuitous vs. Direct** – Which of the following statements is more important to you?  
(1= strongly agree with the statement on the left, 7= strongly agree with the statement on the right)



I want to have a bus stop close to me, even if it means the bus takes longer to get to my destination.

I want my bus to get to my destination faster, even if I have to walk further to a bus stop.

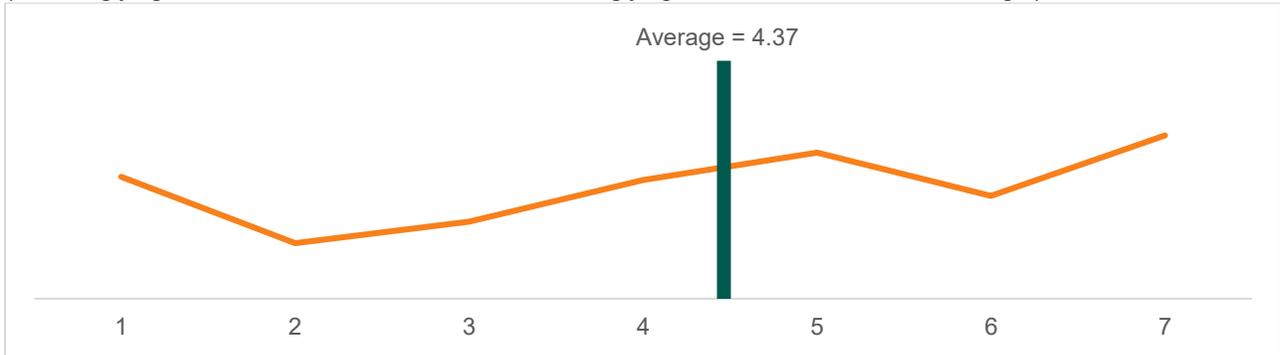
**Q2. Duplicative vs. Connective** – Which of the following statements is more important to you?  
(1= strongly agree with the statement on the left, 7= strongly agree with the statement on the right)



I don't want to transfer, even if it means my bus doesn't come as often or go to as many places.

I want the bus to come more often, even if I have to connect to another bus route to reach my destination.

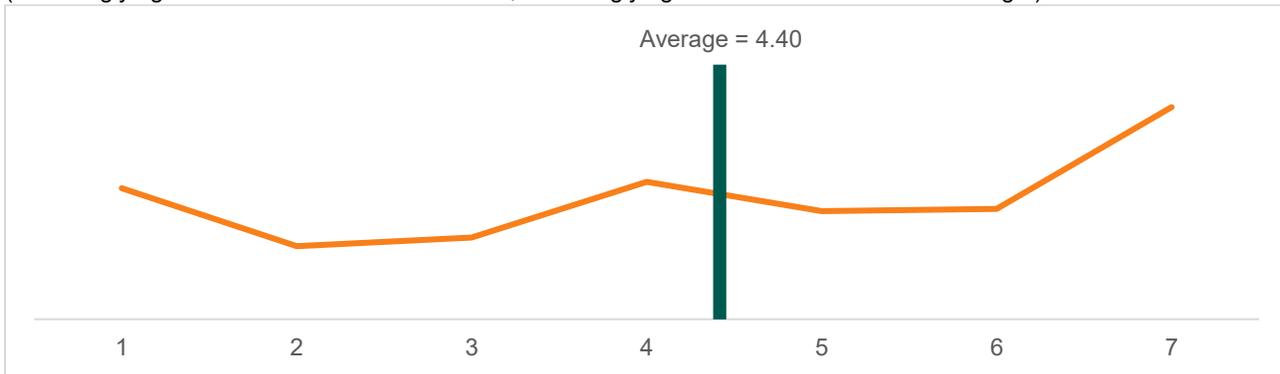
**Q3. Coverage vs. Frequency** – Which of the following statements is more important to you?  
 (1= strongly agree with the statement on the left, 7= strongly agree with the statement on the right)



I want to have a bus stop close to me, even if the bus doesn't come as often.

I want my bus to come more often, even if I have to walk further to a bus stop.

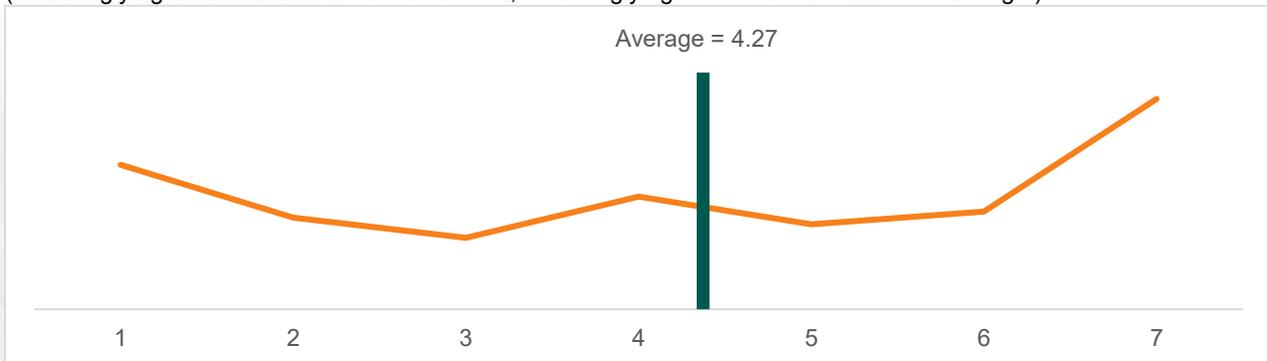
**Q4. Peak vs. All-Day Service** – Which of the following statements is more important to you?  
 (1= strongly agree with the statement on the left, 7= strongly agree with the statement on the right)



I want better service at rush hour, even if buses come less frequently or not at all on evenings and weekends.

I want better service on evenings and weekends, even if buses may be crowded during rush hours.

**Q5. Peak vs. All-Day Service** – Which of the following statements is more important to you?  
 (1= strongly agree with the statement on the left, 7= strongly agree with the statement on the right)



It should be easier and more convenient to travel to one or two places I need to go.

It should be easier and more convenient to travel to many different places I need to go.

## Principles for the new bus network

Survey results indicate that the principles riders value most are Frequency and Connectivity. The highest average agreement was with the statement **'I want my bus to come more often, even if I have to connect to another bus route to reach my destination.'** 42% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. This suggests that many riders are willing to transfer buses if it means having more frequent buses and more direct routes. More respondents also agreed they would be willing to walk further to a bus stop in order for the bus to come more often.

However, Coverage was also highly valued by respondents, with high levels of agreement with the statement **'I want to have a bus stop close to me, even if it means the bus takes longer to get to my destination'** (31% agreed or strongly agreed). Directness, or the length of time spent on the bus, was less important than close bus stops and frequent buses in terms of this statement.

Respondents favored statements regarding All-Day Service (**'I want better service on evenings and weekends, even if buses may be crowded during rush hours'** (37% agreed or strongly agreed) and **'It should be easier and more convenient to travel to many different places I need to go'** (37% agreed or strongly agreed)) over Peak Service. This suggests riders prefer a shift towards better all-day service over prioritizing peak/rush hour services.

Interestingly, respondents tended to answer away from the middle of the scale, indicating strong opinions about each of the values. This demonstrates the tension between a majority of people who value a higher frequency network and those who value a focus on coverage.

## Student Survey Feedback

Pilot questions were included in the student survey which framed the tradeoffs above with slightly different wording. Respondents were asked to rate their agreement with each statement from 1-10 (1=strongly disagree, 10=strongly agree).

Findings are largely similar to the overall survey, with the statement about connective, frequent routes rating the highest overall level of agreement (**'I want the bus to come more often and to get to my destination more quickly, even if it means I have to transfer buses'**, average= 6.65).

Good bus service during rush hour was also highly rated by the student survey, demonstrating the high priority placed by students on peak service to and from the University and Polytechnic campus.

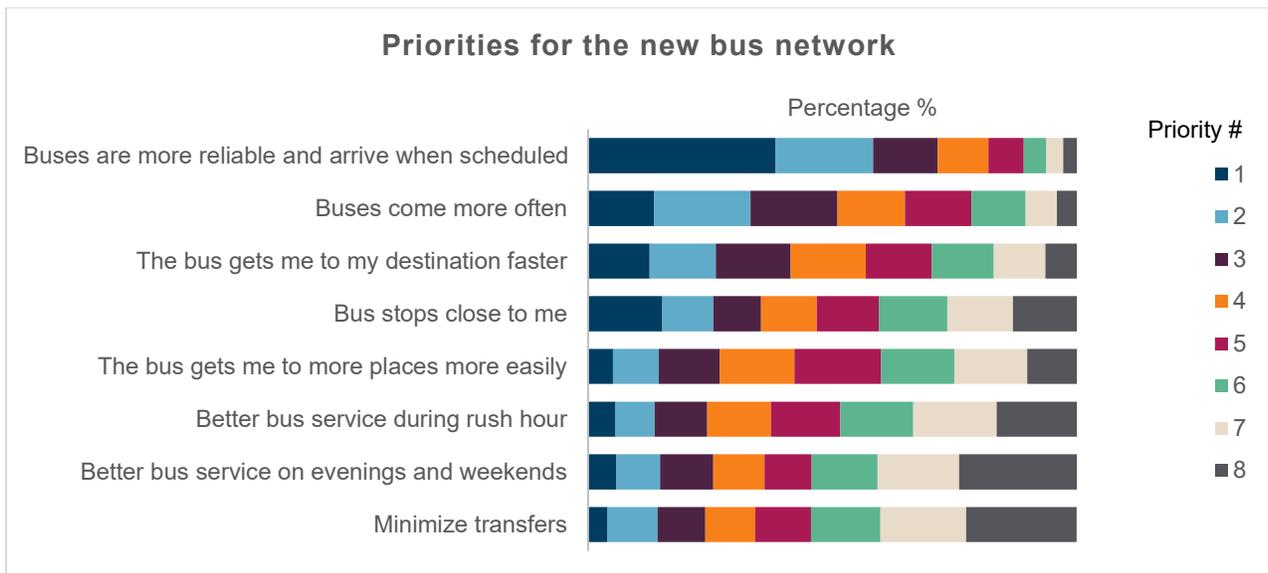
Respondents rated frequency and coverage questions almost identically, indicating once again the desire for both higher frequency and greater coverage in the overall bus network.

The lowest level of agreement among student respondents was with the statement **'I want to have a shorter trip on the bus, even if it means I have to walk further to a bus stop'** (average=4.06). This shows agreement with the overall survey results that show directness, or time spent on the bus, is less important than coverage of bus stops and frequent buses.

## Priorities for the new bus network

Respondents were also asked to rank a set of eight priorities for the new bus network from 1 (top priority) to 8 (lowest priority). Reliability was the top-ranked priority for respondents in this question, followed by more frequent buses and bus stops close by. These rankings echo the findings above that show both coverage and frequency as priorities for the new network. Minimizing transfers and improving service at off-peak times was viewed as the least important priority.

Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with Saskatoon’s current bus routes and schedules. Just 22% of respondents indicated they were either very or somewhat satisfied with the current state of Saskatoon Transit. 56% of people said they were somewhat or very dissatisfied with the current network.

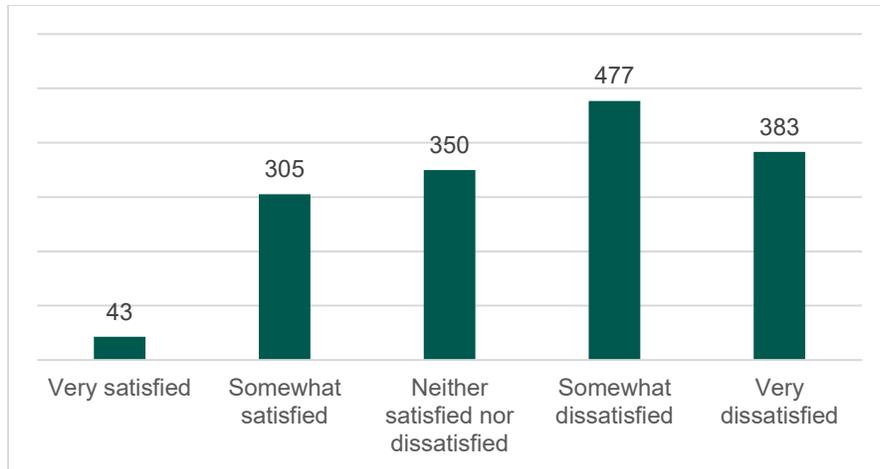


## Who Responded to the Survey

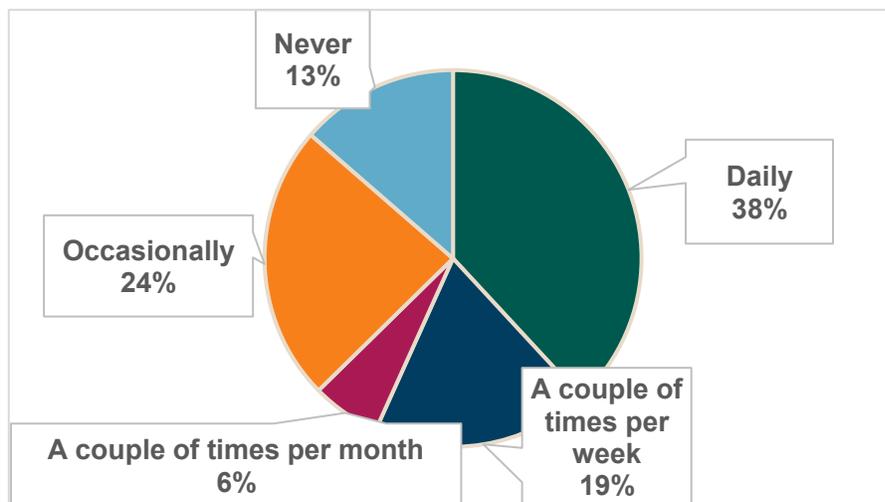
Respondents were asked a series of questions about their transit use, age, gender, and identity to determine who was responding to the survey.

Approximately 61% of respondents were regular transit users, taking the bus at least a couple of times a month (6%), a couple of times a week (18%) or daily (37%).

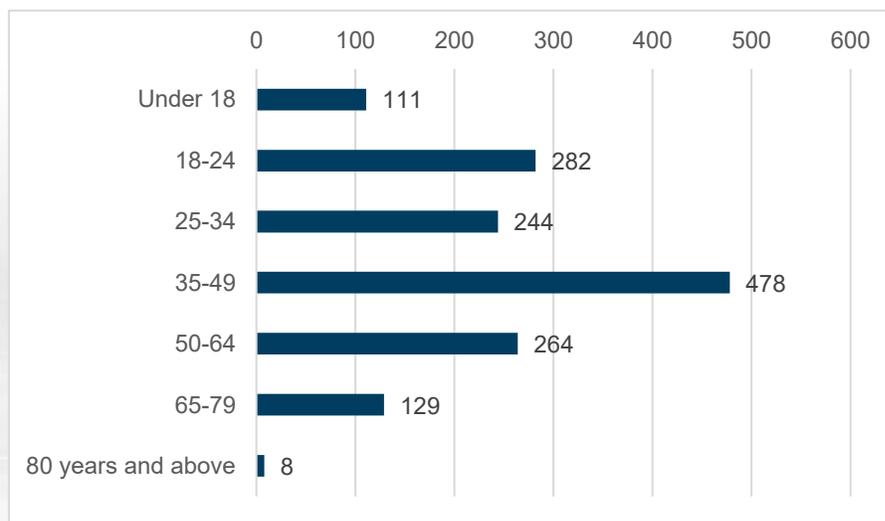
More respondents were female (46%) than male (36%), while 2% of respondents identified as part of the LGBTQ2IA+ community.



Question 8 - How satisfied are you by the current state of Saskatoon's bus routes and schedules?



Question 7 - How often do you take transit?



Question 12 - What is your age?

	Yes	No	Prefer not to say
Q14. Do you identify as an Indigenous person?	112	1239	149
Q15. Are you a person experiencing a disability?	253	1107	143
Q16. Are you a member of a visible minority group?	258	1077	166

Summary of demographic question responses

Gender of respondents	#	%
Female	677	46%
Male	538	36%
LGBTQ2IA+	34	2%
Prefer not to say	40	3%

Question 13: What is your gender?

## What Works Well

Respondents were asked about what is working well about Saskatoon's current transit network, as well as what could be changed or considered in the re-designed system.

Some highlights of things that are currently working well included:

- **Direct, Frequent Routes** – People expressed satisfaction with direct, frequent buses to main destinations such as downtown, the University, or malls. Frequency was related to these comments, stating that getting to work / school in a timely manner was a benefit of taking the bus.
- **Proximity to Bus Stops** – Living close to a bus stop was highlighted as a positive by many respondents who appreciated a short walk to be able to catch their bus. Living near a major bus route was mentioned by several respondents as a plus.
- **Easy or Minimal Transfers** – Routes that did not require a transfer were a highlight for many people, especially for routes travelling to and from the University or downtown.
- **Reliability** – Some respondents praised the current bus system for being fast and reliable, stating they do not currently experience issues with the bus arriving on time and appreciate this.

## What Should Be Changed

When asked what should be changed about the City's current bus routes and schedules, responses were grouped into the following themes. Themes are shown below in order of frequency mentioned.

- **Greater Bus Frequency** – The top theme raised by respondents was a desire for shorter wait times for the bus and more frequent buses. People felt more frequent service would offer greater flexibility in planning trips and reduce crowding on the bus.
- **Increased Reliability** – Relatedly, having the bus arrive on time was a key concern for survey respondents. With 30, 40 or 60-minute frequency, the consequences of missing one

bus can mean a long wait time to catch the next. Late buses were especially frustrating, resulting in missed transfers or late arrivals to school and work, while early buses can also be problematic if riders miss the bus entirely. Increased reliability of Transit app information was a related element within this concern where riders saw room for improvement.

- **Coverage** – Many respondents wanted increased coverage for different parts of the City, as well as for those routes to reach key destinations more quickly. A lack of coverage for neighborhoods with routes going directly to the University or to downtown was a key concern. Newer neighborhoods were also highlighted as areas where increased coverage was a priority.
- **Directness** – This theme is closely related to coverage. Respondents felt that time spent taking the bus was significantly longer than driving or even biking in some cases, making Transit a less attractive way to travel. One tension in this theme is the desire for more direct routes, which can be seen as conflicting with the desire for greater neighborhood coverage, as a bus that goes directly to its destination will be less able to provide full coverage for the neighborhoods it is passing through. Routes with multiple bus stops close together were mentioned as an opportunity to consolidate or shorten routes. Routes with multiple transfers or being forced to travel downtown just to transfer buses was another frustration. More than one transfer in a route was seen as highly undesirable.
- **Extend Service Times and Days** – This theme was about extending the times and days that the bus runs. Comments suggested increasing the frequency and hours of evening and weekend bus service as a major improvement for riders. Seven days a week service was especially important for people working evenings and weekends, or looking to return home after school or the university at more frequent times.
- **Bus Stop Maintenance and Safety** – Bus stop improvements and safety considerations was another general theme. Providing better shelters, lighting, and cleanliness at bus stops was noted as a key concern for respondents. Increasing the number of stops with bus shelters was also a part of this theme. General bus safety was also a concern, with some respondents worried about violence and disruptions on the bus.
- **Community-Specific Needs** – This theme is related to transit services for groups with unique needs such as key locations or populations. For example, more high school “specials” was a common request, as well as improved bus stops with seating located close to seniors buildings or child care centers. Ensuring all stops are accessible for wheelchairs and strollers was another comment within this theme.

## Other Considerations

Other themes related to Saskatoon Transit in general, including:

- **Safety & Security** – This theme is about feeling safe taking the bus, and encompassed concerns about disruptive behavior on buses, fare evasion, feeling safe at bus stops, and comments asking for more security present on buses. Pedestrian safety near bus stops and while crossing the street to and from stops was also mentioned here.
- **Cleanliness** – These comments often related to the Link rapid transit project and concerns about barriers to ridership given the current state of the bus network. Some respondents felt

money was better spent investing in increased cleanliness on bus stops and shelters than the Link system.

- ***Crowding & Capacity*** - This theme includes an emphasis on allocating larger buses to the busiest routes to alleviate crowding, ensuring smaller buses run on routes with lower ridership and efficient allocation of resources. Students also stressed the importance of reducing crowding to and from the University at peak times.
- ***Trust in the Bus Network*** – Overall, some respondents felt a lack of trust in the current bus network. These responses viewed the current challenges with the network as a barrier to riding the bus and felt that until improvements in reliability and safety were observed, ridership would struggle.

## 3.2 Community Engagement Sessions

Feedback collected from the community engagement sessions is qualitative in nature and consists of key themes from table discussions, group discussion and feedback forms. Paper and online surveys were also available at each of the sessions, so attendees had the opportunity to participate in multiple ways.

Discussions were structured around key questions, such as what is most important to participants in designing the new bus network, and what is working well about the current system that should not be changed.

Feedback themes from the community engagement sessions included:

- **Increase Coverage, especially in winter!** Participants stressed that taking the bus in winter comes with a unique set of challenges. Walking to the bus is harder with snow, shelters may be difficult to access and sidewalks may not be cleared. Newcomers in particular felt that good route coverage was especially important in the winter.
- **More frequency** – Relatedly, many people said that greater frequency of buses would help with this challenge. One participant expressed the fear of walking further to a bus stop in winter, only to find the bus is full or not on time. Greater frequency of buses would help lessen these challenges for riders.
- **Reliability** – Concerns about reliability were also highlighted. People felt frustrated with buses coming late or not at all, inaccurate app information and difficulty catching transfers with unreliable bus trips. This was another clear priority for community members.
- **Bus Shelters / Amenities** – Additional feedback talked about making bus stops and shelters accessible for riders, particularly seniors and people with disabilities. Suggestions to ensure stops are placed strategically near apartment buildings, high schools, and seniors buildings were also heard. Ensuring clean, consistent bus stop layout was key feedback from vision loss advocates and community members representing people with disabilities.
- **Weekend and Evening Service** – Community members also stressed the importance of improving weekend and evening bus service. This was particularly important for getting to and from shifts at work for people who work long or overnight hours.

In terms of what is currently working well in the Transit network, participants also praised the current system for:

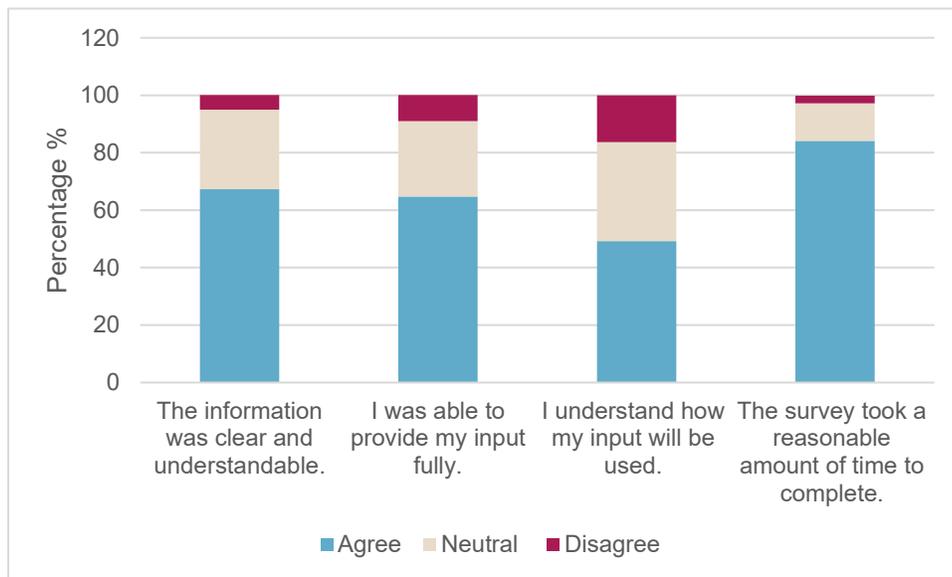
- Free fares for children in Grade 8 and under being a positive change in recent years
- Increasing reliability of the app and bus schedules, particularly for weekday, peak time trips
- High frequency routes (like 8<sup>th</sup> Street) are convenient and fast ways to get around
- More kneeling buses and bus stop improvements at certain locations
- Importance of driver education and friendly drivers, particularly for helping newcomers or people with disabilities navigate their routes
- Excitement about the future Link system and improved Transit service

# 4 EVALUATION OF ENGAGEMENT

## Engagement Survey Results

Survey respondents and information session attendees were able to provide feedback on the engagement process, either through the survey or in-person feedback forms.

Feedback was generally positive, particularly with regards to length of the survey and the information being clear and understandable. The lowest agreement was with the statement ‘***I understand how my input will be used,***’ which indicates some challenges communicating the purpose of the project and how community feedback will be included.



## Limitations

Survey results reflected a diverse range of participants, however these results should be viewed with limitations in mind. About 60% of respondents were regular Transit users, suggesting the other 40% of responses were from people who do not regularly use the bus. Additionally, there may be some community perspectives that are less represented in these results, such as Indigenous people and members of the LGBTQ2IA+ community.

# 5 NEXT STEPS

The results of this engagement will help inform the updated Service Standards for Saskatoon Transit, as well as the next phase of engagement for the bus network redesign. A summary of this engagement will be included as part of a report to City Council in 2026.