

# SOUTHEASTERN WISCONSIN REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

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## MEMORANDUM

TO: Waukesha Area Transit Development Plan Advisory Committee

FROM: Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission Staff

DATE: June 3, 2020

**SUBJECT: SUMMARY OF COMMENTS FROM THE FOCUSED OUTREACH FOR THE WAUKESHA AREA TRANSIT DEVELOPMENT PLAN: 2021-2025**

This memorandum summarizes the comments received on transit services provided by Waukesha Metro Transit and Waukesha County Transit as part of the focused outreach for the Waukesha Area Transit Development Plan conducted between February and April 2020. As requested by the Advisory Committee, Commission staff contacted business groups, educational institutions, and organizations serving individuals who use public transit to identify their preferred methods to generate feedback. The main goal of the outreach was to gather input that would help shape potential transit service alternatives. The outreach generally gathered feedback on transit use, challenges and barriers, and ideas for improvement.

One method that Commission staff utilized to gather feedback included a series of in-person meetings and presentations. The meetings included a workshop at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM) at Waukesha campus, a meeting hosted by the Waukesha County Business Alliance, and a discussion with staff at the Aging and Disability Resource Center of Waukesha County. Comments were also received during a facilitated meeting with various non-profit organizations within Waukesha County and a formal presentation to the Waukesha-Ozaukee-Washington (WOW) Workforce Development Board. Brian Engelking, Waukesha Metro Transit Manager, attended all the meetings and discussions and most meetings had at least one representative from the Advisory Committee in attendance.

In addition to in-person meetings, Commission staff administered an online survey to gather feedback on transit use, challenges, and ideas for improvement from the approximately 12,000 families and students in the Waukesha Public School District.

The public health response to COVID-19 impacted two opportunities to gather feedback on transit services, including a scheduled meeting at Saratoga Heights Apartments and a meeting at the Adaptive Community Approach Program's offices with staff and clients. In lieu of in-person discussions, paper copies of a survey were provided to residents and staff at Saratoga Heights Apartments and electronic copies were provided to staff at East Terrace Apartments for distribution to residents. Two completed surveys from Saratoga Heights were mailed to Commission staff and will be incorporated into the Record of Public Comments when they are received. In addition, surveys were also distributed via email to staff

at the Adaptive Community Approach Program, with three surveys completed. It is anticipated that future in-person discussions will be scheduled with these groups and others, such as La Casa de Esperanza, once it is determined safe to visit these facilities. The information gathered from future meetings will be incorporated as appropriate.

This memorandum provides a summary of the comments received from each outreach effort and includes a summary of challenges and barriers identified when utilizing transit, major themes from the discussion, and improvement ideas for the Advisory Committee's consideration within the alternatives phase of the planning process. A full account of the focused outreach, including all meeting materials, will be provided as part of a Record of Public Comments produced for the final Transit Development Plan.

### **WORKSHOP AT THE UWM AT WAUKESHA CAMPUS**

On Tuesday, February 11, 2020, Commission staff facilitated a series of small group discussions with students, faculty, and staff at the UWM at Waukesha campus. The meeting was promoted through campus emails, faculty communications, and posters placed around campus. The meeting was held during lunch time and a free meal was provided. There were 32 participants, who were divided into six small groups throughout the 60-minute workshop. Participants were asked a series of questions to understand how frequently they used public transit, any challenges or barriers they had to using or while using public transit, other experiences, and to gather suggestions for improvements. Participants were also asked if they were interested in a U-Pass, funded through student fees, which would provide unlimited transit service. County Executive Paul Farrow attended the workshop and listened to the facilitated discussions. The following sections provide a list of key feedback received, including potential areas for improvement that could be addressed in the alternatives chapter.

#### **Challenges and Barriers**

- The main reasons why participants do not take transit were because the commute would take too long, they live in an area with little or no service, or they own a car
- Some participants noted that their busy schedules, including balancing school and work, make transit less attractive due to the length of time transit may take and the lack of frequent service to their destinations
- The added travel time due to transfers was noted as a barrier multiple times by participants

#### **Major themes based on the discussions**

- There was interest in more direct connectivity to Milwaukee County
- Participants requested transportation options between the three UWM campuses (Milwaukee, Waukesha, and Washington County)
- 80 percent of participants were interested in a U-Pass, answering yes or maybe
- A majority of participants were not familiar with the transit services offered by Waukesha Metro Transit or Waukesha County Transit

#### **Ideas for improvement to consider in the alternatives chapter**

- More direct service, including from Milwaukee County and Brookfield Square Mall
- Shuttle service between UWM campuses in Washington County, Waukesha, and Milwaukee
- More information on transit service, including how to use, service areas, and routes

## **WAUKESHA COUNTY BUSINESS ALLIANCE MEETING**

The Waukesha County Business Alliance hosted a lunch meeting of selected businesses on February 25, 2020, which focused on input regarding workforce transportation. Outreach for the business-focused meeting was coordinated with the Waukesha County Business Alliance through an email invitation. There were 21 attendees, including representatives from businesses with varying levels of access to transit that are struggling to attract and retain employees due to a lack of transportation options. The participants were divided among four groups based on their geographic location and proximity to transit services. Commission staff developed a map of attendees, a one-page summary of the transit planning process, a brochure of maps showing employment data and transit service, and three summary boards.

Of the 21 people who attended, 13 participants expressed interest in future discussions on transit services to businesses in Waukesha County. After a short presentation by Commission staff, the attendees provided feedback on transit services in small groups. The groups generally included the following; businesses in the New Berlin Business Park, businesses along the Bluemound Road corridor served by transit, businesses located in the City of Waukesha served by transit, and businesses outside of transit service areas within the City of Brookfield, the City of Pewaukee, and the Village of Menomonee Falls. Waukesha County Board Chair Paul Decker participated in the meeting and small group discussions. Three Advisory Committee members participated in the meeting, including Kathy Gale, Evonne Johnson, and Mike Glasgow on behalf of Mary Check Smith. The major themes are summarized below.

### **Participating businesses**

#### Group 1: Businesses along the Bluemound Road corridor

- Blaze Pizza
- Herzing University
- Courtyard by Marriott Brookfield
- Portillo's
- Waukesha Board Chair Paul Decker

#### Group 2: Businesses without direct access to existing transit

- Froedtert & the Medical College of Wisconsin
- LindenGrove Communities
- ProHealth Care
- Wenthe-Davidson Engineering Co.

#### Group 3: Businesses without direct access to existing transit

- Milwaukee Marriott West
- Embassy Suites by Hilton – Milwaukee/Brookfield
- Leonardo DRS
- Milwaukee Tool
- School District of Elmbrook

#### Group 4: Businesses with some access to existing transit

- Brookfield Square Shopping Center
- Landmark Credit Union
- Eaton
- Firestone Building Products

At the beginning of the small group discussions, businesses were asked a series of questions to understand if they provide transportation information to employees. The results are summarized in the table below.

**Table 1**  
**Waukesha Area Transit Development Plan Focused Outreach Summary**

Questions	Yes	No
Does your company currently offer transportation to employees?	4	12
Do you provide information about transportation options, such as transit or carpooling, to potential, new, or current employees?	6	8
Would you find it helpful to have more information available about transportation options and transit schedules?	11	4

Note: Responses were voluntary and not all attendees responded to each question

Source: Discussion summaries from meeting with Waukesha County businesses on February 25, 2020

### Challenges and Barriers

- Employee attraction and retention due to lack of access to a reliable vehicle is a significant issue
- The length of the commute by bus between the City of Milwaukee and locations along the Bluemound Road corridor can be long, impacting the number of individuals willing to work at businesses in these locations
- Although some businesses are on a transit route, the schedules do not align with their shift times
- Employees do not feel safe walking to bus stops at night, particularly when the walk is over one mile

### Major themes based on the discussions

- Flexible or on-demand shuttles were identified as a preference, particularly for businesses that are located in corporate business parks
- Interest was expressed in bus rapid transit (BRT) along the Bluemound Road corridor
- Additional transit service to the Village of Menomonee Falls is desired
- Employers would like more site-specific information about transportation options, including walk distance from transit, to include in their on-boarding materials

### Willingness to financially contribute to transportation options

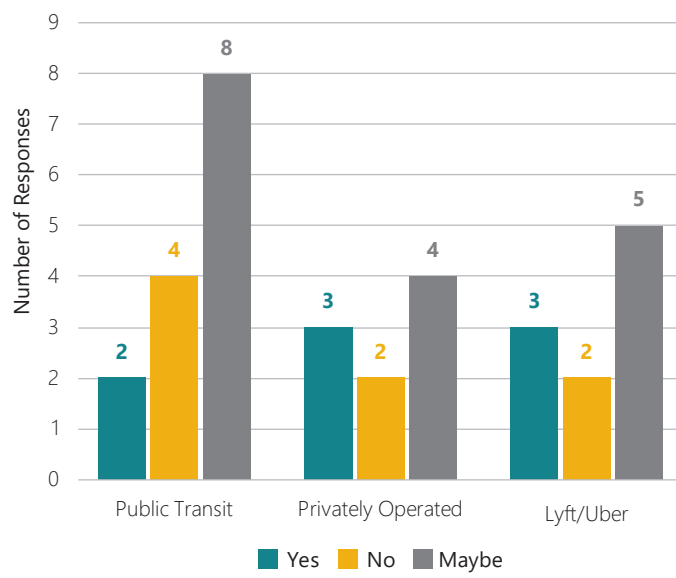
As shown in Figure 1, Willingness to Contribute to Transportation Services, a majority of participating businesses expressed that they might be willing to financially contribute to a transportation solution, with the greatest number potentially willing to contribute to a public transit option. Most participants were reluctant to commit to an option without an understanding of the operations and costs. The costs will be further analyzed in the alternatives chapter of the plan and will be presented during the next phase of public outreach.

### Ideas for improvement to consider in the alternatives chapter

Overall, nearly all participants were interested, conceptually, in shuttle service and requested more specifics on the potential cost to employers and how it would operate. Some participants suggested that shuttles could serve business parks with operating hours that accommodate the shift changes. The following concepts were mentioned in multiple groups:

- Van or shuttle service to areas with significant employment density
- Considering BRT service along Bluemound Road in Waukesha County
- Provision of site-specific information about transportation options to include in employer on-boarding materials
- Partnerships with ridehailing services, including Lyft or Uber

**Figure 1**  
**Willingness to Contribute to Transportation Services**



## **NON-PROFIT GROUP DISCUSSION**

On February 26, 2020, Commission staff held a discussion with non-profit groups that serve clients who utilize public transportation. The meeting was held at the City of Waukesha Public Library. The purpose of the meeting was to understand how each group utilizes transit, what challenges their clients face when riding transit, and identify potential improvements or solutions that should be considered in the alternatives phase of the Waukesha Area Transit Development Plan. The meeting consisted of a short overview by Commission staff and continued with a facilitated discussion among participants. The discussion included seven participants from the following organizations: Hope Center, Waukesha County FOOD Pantry, James Place, Housing Action Coalition for Waukesha County, and Hebron House. Mike Glasgow attended on behalf of Mary Check Smith as a representative from the Advisory Committee.

### **Challenges and Barriers**

- Clients need to access jobs that are typically third shift, outside of transit service hours
- Portions of Waukesha County are not well served by transit, including the western half of the county, Village of Menomonee Falls, Village of Butler, and the City of New Berlin
- Some clients have difficulty reading the time tables due to font size and understanding how to navigate the bus network. For example, if their stop is not at a time point on the schedule, they cannot determine when the bus will arrive

### **Major themes based on the discussions**

- Many clients are interested in accessing jobs but public transit does not work due to service hours, challenges navigating the bus schedules, lack of sidewalks (specifically along Pewaukee Road), or lack of bike racks on buses
- There was interest in shuttles or vans, with specific reference to the Joseph Project, which is a faith-based jobs initiative that connects people to jobs and provides free transportation for the first 30 days of employment, with a nominal fee charged afterward
- Jobs and services that are located beyond current transit service areas are very difficult to access

### **Ideas for improvement to consider in the alternatives chapter**

- Providing shuttle services to accommodate shift changes outside of transit service hours, potentially in coordination with faith-based programs
- Consideration of a countywide shared ride taxi to reach underserved areas in Waukesha County
- Increase travel training to assist potential riders

## **PRESENTATION TO THE WAUKESHA-OZAUKEE-WASHINGTON WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD**

On March 12, 2020, Commission staff presented to the Waukesha-Ozaukee-Washington (WOW) Workforce Development Board and requested feedback from members regarding current conversations they have been engaged in regarding workforce transportation, areas with the greatest need for workforce transportation options, and their opinions about the range of options available. There were approximately 10 members present with four members participating on the phone.

### **Challenges and Barriers**

- The lack of funding for transit was identified as a challenge
- There is a need for seamless cross-county travel
- Smaller and mid-sized businesses need assistance with transportation options

### **Major themes based on the discussions**

- Consider transportation options that meet the needs of small businesses
- Funding levels for public transportation should be increased

- Identify options for cross-county travel
- Provide transportation options that utilize new technologies

**Ideas for improvement to consider in the alternatives chapter**

- Consider new technologies to improve public transportation services
- Consider transportation strategies to help small to mid-sized businesses, which may include partnerships such as Transportation Management Associations
- Identify opportunities to provide cross-county travel
- Discuss different funding scenarios along with transit service alternatives

**DISCUSSION WITH THE AGING AND DISABILITY RESOURCE CENTER OF WAUKESHA COUNTY**

On January 27, 2020, a discussion was held with staff from the Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) of Waukesha County. The purpose of the meeting was to gather input from ADRC staff regarding transportation challenges and opportunities that could be addressed in the Transit Development Plan. ADRC staff included Mary Check Smith, Mike Glasgow, and Lisa Bittman. Mary Check Smith provided an overview of services offered by ADRC and funding sources, including the Section 85.21 Specialized Transportation Grant administered by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation. The following sections summarize the main discussion topics and themes.

**Challenges and Barriers**

- There are locations in Waukesha County that are not served, including the Village of Menomonee Falls, Village of Butler, Village of Sussex, Village of Eagle, and the Town of Ottawa
- The ADRC cannot provide service beyond Waukesha County
- It is difficult to attract volunteer drivers and additional service providers
- The senior taxi services that the ADRC contracts with have other customers, which can limit the amount of service available
- Health care providers do not financially contribute to the transportation services provided by the ADRC
- Due to the dispersed development pattern in portions of Waukesha County, taxis travel many miles to pick up or drop off passengers, resulting in “dead head” where the taxi is traversing long distances without a passenger

**Major themes based on the discussion**

- App-based, on-demand services such as Lyft or Uber may not work for all seniors due to accessibility needs and the extra time needed for certain individuals to be ready
- The hours of operation of the Senior Taxis (8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.) limits access for riders
- Additional marketing and travel training would be helpful
- Faith-based services could potentially help with transportation services
- The ADRC receives positive feedback from customer surveys

**Ideas for improvement to consider in the alternatives chapter**

- Consider options to leverage faith-based programs to provide transportation services
- Consider combining paratransit services and the RideLine program to provide additional service options
- Expand marketing and travel training for older adults

## **WAUKESHA PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT SURVEY OF FAMILIES AND STUDENTS**

In coordination with the Waukesha Public School District, Commission staff administered an online survey between March 5, 2020, and March 18, 2020. The survey was offered in English and Spanish. Invitations to participate in the survey were distributed by the Waukesha Public School District through email to the approximately 12,000 families in the district. There were a total 1,054 respondents to the survey although not all respondents answered every question. The survey included a series of questions for parents and guardians and a similar but separate series of questions for students. The student questions focused on transit use for school trips. The survey questions for parents and guardians included questions related to transit use for their school-aged children and questions about personal travel utilizing Waukesha Metro Transit or Waukesha County Transit. Approximately 25 percent of the respondents were students and 75 percent of the respondents were parents or guardians. A summary of the results is provided below. A complete compilation of survey answers and responses will be provided in the Record of Public Comments.

### **Major themes and challenges**

A majority of respondents were unfamiliar with the bus service offered by Waukesha Metro, with 76 percent of parents/guardians and 56 percent of students indicating they are not familiar with the bus service to area schools offered by Waukesha Metro Transit. This seems reasonable given that most students qualify for yellow bus service paid for by the School District of Waukesha.

Over 90 percent of the students and parents/guardians that participated in the survey do not ride Waukesha Metro Transit or Waukesha County Transit. Therefore, the following summary focuses on the responses from those who utilize the transit services for school trips and personal travel. Of those parents/guardians of students and students that reported they ride Waukesha Metro Transit to or from school, most ride Metro every day as shown in Figure 2, Frequency of Use: School Trips. For those who reported using Waukesha Metro Transit for school trips, the majority utilized Route 15, Route 8, and Route 4, as shown in Figure 3, Routes Utilized: School Trips. The figures are included at the end of the memorandum.

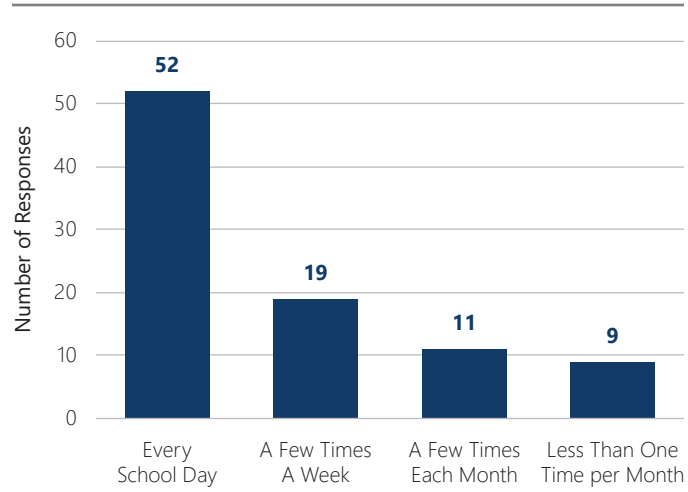
The survey asked what challenges students experience when utilizing Waukesha Metro for school trips. Figure 4, Challenges When Riding Transit: School Trips combines responses from both parents/guardians and students given the overall similarity in responses. The main challenges identified were that the ride takes too long, the lack of shelters, and other reasons as shown in Figure 4. Other challenges expressed included issues such as the lack of a nearby bus stop, concerns about reliability, and specific issues related to safety such as students being bullied on the bus.

There were varying responses as to why students do not take transit. For these responses, the following figures are divided between parent/guardian responses (Figure 5) and student responses (Figure 6). For parents, the top four responses were that they take the yellow bus service, they get a ride, they are not familiar with the service, and they are not old enough. For students, the top four responses were that they get a ride, it's too cold to take the bus, they are not familiar with the service, and that they walk. Safety was identified as a concern by both groups, although more parents/guardians expressed concerns about safety than students.

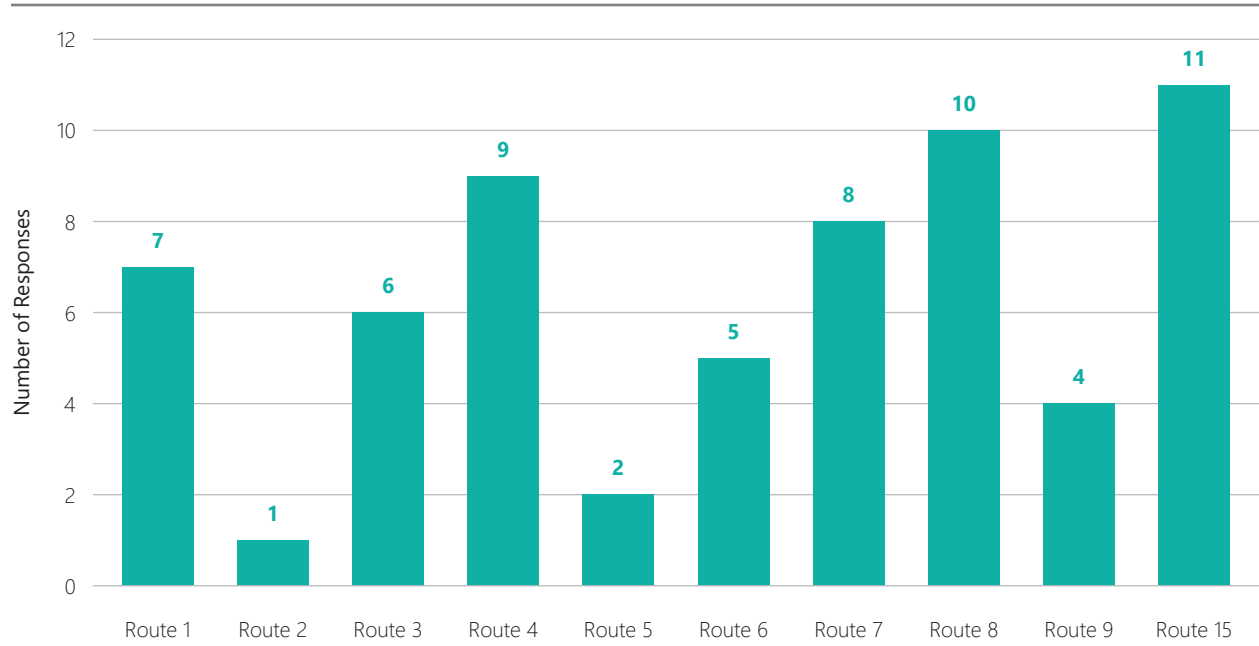
There were 16 parents/guardians that reported they use Waukesha Metro or Waukesha County Transit for personal trips. Since only one parent/guardian indicated that they ride Route 901, the summary graphs focus on responses related to Waukesha Metro Transit. For those individuals that ride Waukesha Metro Transit, the most frequently utilized routes are Routes 1, 4, 5, and 6. Most respondents utilized Waukesha Metro Transit a few times each week and a few times each month.



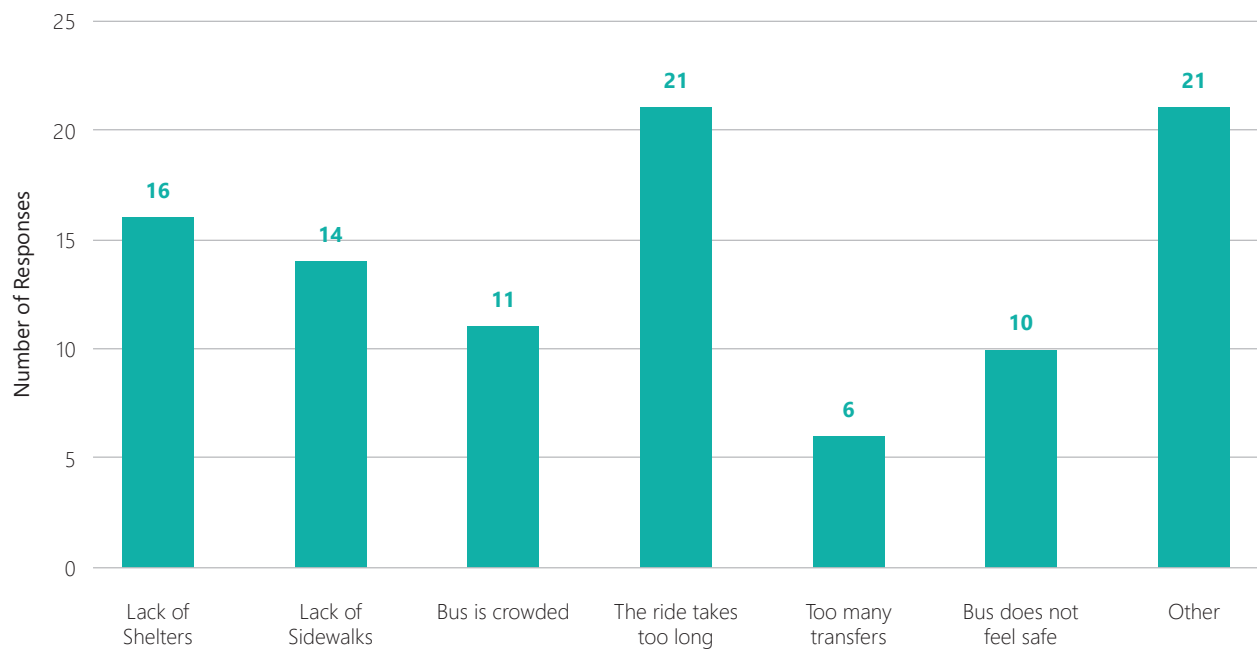
**Figure 2**  
**Frequency of Use: School Trips**



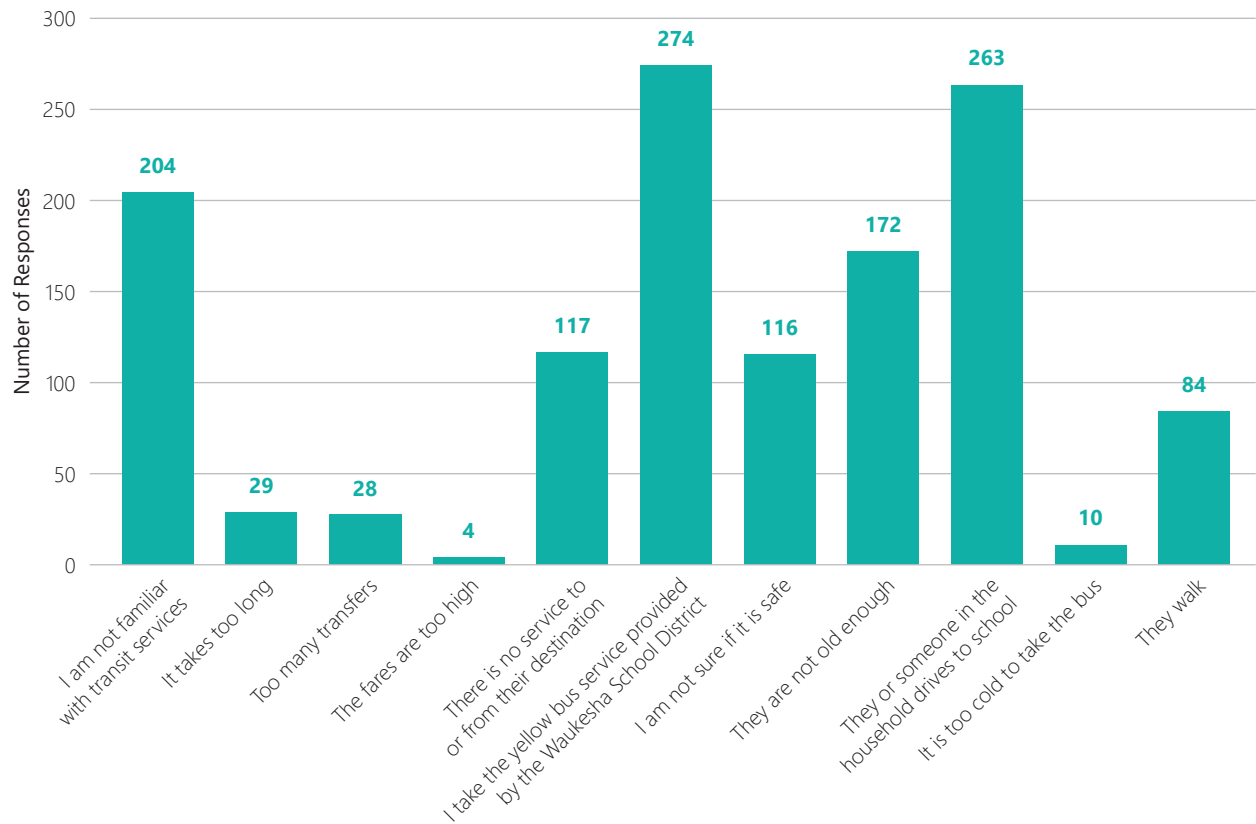
**Figure 3**  
**Routes Utilized: School Trips**



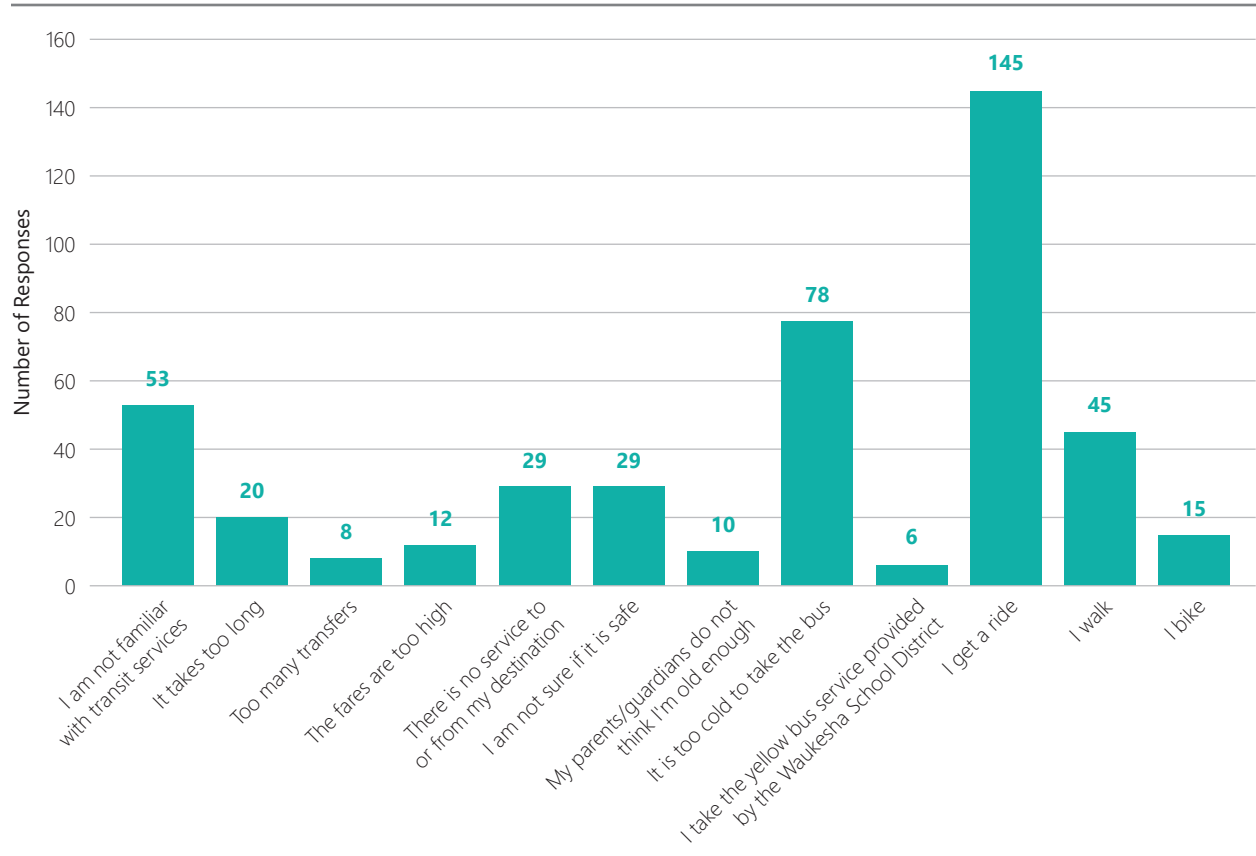
**Figure 4**  
**Challenges When Riding Transit: School Trips**



**Figure 5**  
**Why Students Do Not Use Waukesha Metro to/from School: Parents/Guardians**



**Figure 6**  
**Why Students Do Not Use Waukesha Metro to/from School: Students**



The main challenges identified when riding Waukesha Metro Transit included lack of shelters and that the ride takes too long, as shown in Figure 7, Challenges When Riding Transit: Personal Travel. The key reasons for not taking transit included that respondents have access to a vehicle (624), there is no service to/from their destination (130), and that they are not familiar with the services (98). In reviewing the open ended responses to why individuals do not take transit, the responses expand upon the most frequent response noting that they drive a personal vehicle, that transit is not perceived as convenient, and that the bus routes do not travel to their destinations. In addition, respondents further noted that they have to make multiple trips, including picking up school-aged children.

### **Ideas for improvement to consider in the alternatives chapter**

Based on the survey responses, the following improvements are suggested to be included in the alternatives chapter:

- Additional marketing of transit services for school trips and personal travel
- Sharing information about Waukesha Metro Transit's safety and security measures with the Waukesha Public School District
- Providing additional bus shelters, particularly along segments that serve school trips
- Providing real time travel information using an App

### **SURVEY OF STAFF AT ADAPTIVE COMMUNITY APPROACH PROGRAM**

The in-person meeting planned with the Adaptive Community Approach Program (ACAP) did not occur due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In lieu of a meeting, Commission staff coordinated with ACAP's Executive Director to distribute a survey to staff. The survey questions were answered on behalf of ACAP's clients who frequently use Waukesha Metro Transit, including paratransit services. Three surveys were returned electronically.

In general, the responses indicated that the Waukesha Metro transit services and paratransit services are well utilized by ACAP clients and some staff. The main barriers identified by ACAP staff include the lack of cleared sidewalks, concerns about safety, limited service or no service to their destinations, and lack of awareness of transit and paratransit services. The following improvements were identified by survey respondents:

- Make the Waukesha Metro App compatible with the Apple operating system
- Provide additional travel training and general information about transit services
- Extend paratransit service area and hours

### **SURVEY OF RESIDENTS AT SARATOGA HEIGHTS APARTMENTS**

As stated above, the scheduled in-person meeting at Saratoga Heights Apartments was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Commission staff worked with the manager of Saratoga Heights Apartments to distribute printed surveys to residents, including the 8 individuals that signed up for an in-person meeting. The survey requested input on personal experience utilizing Waukesha Metro Transit, including paratransit services. Commission staff has not yet received any survey responses but will include any future responses in the Record of Public Comments.

**Figure 7**  
**Challenges When Riding Transit: Personal Travel**

