

5 PUBLIC AND STAKEHOLDER INPUT: SURVEYS AND INTERVIEWS

The importance of soliciting public feedback cannot be understated. One of the key elements of this study is to define potential service options and enhancements to address public demands. A separate memo entitled “Public Involvement Approach” for this planning effort, submitted to BCAG in October 2013, highlights an approach to gather information by talking with stakeholders and residents in interviews and meetings, and through surveys, to get all of the issues “on the table” early in the study process.

This chapter reviews findings from the three preliminary efforts for guidance on this planning effort: an on-board survey of B-Line fixed-route riders, a general public survey about transportation in Butte County, and a set of interviews with key stakeholders.

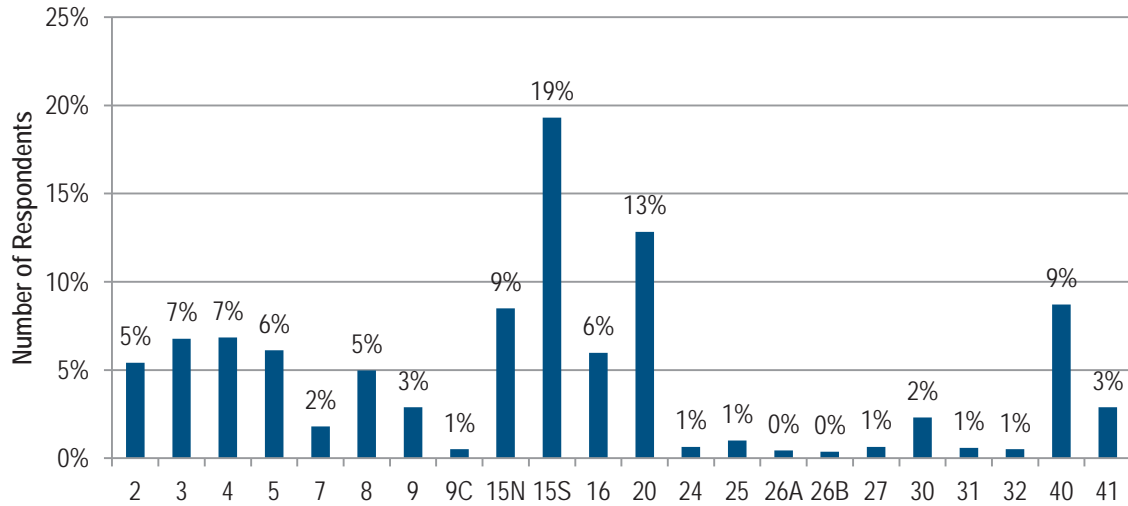
B-LINE ONBOARD SURVEY

Methodology

The onboard survey was designed to understand how each passenger completes his or her trip, why the passenger chose to ride B-Line, and perceptions of the existing services. The survey also collected information on riders’ personal characteristics, such as age, income, employment status, and modes of access to the transit services. Questions about trip purpose, trip origin and destination, and mode of access to the bus stops asked respondents specifically about the trip they were taking that day. The survey form is included in Appendix B.

Passengers on B-Line buses were surveyed Saturday, September 21st through Wednesday, September 25th. The 18-question survey was available in both English and Spanish. A total of 1,428 individuals completed the survey, but not all individuals answered all questions. Nearly 20% of riders completed the survey on Route 15S, and 13% on Route 20, the highest ridership routes in the B-Line system. The percentage of surveys collected by route is shown in Figure 5-1.

Figure 5-1 Survey Responses by Route
 (n=1388)



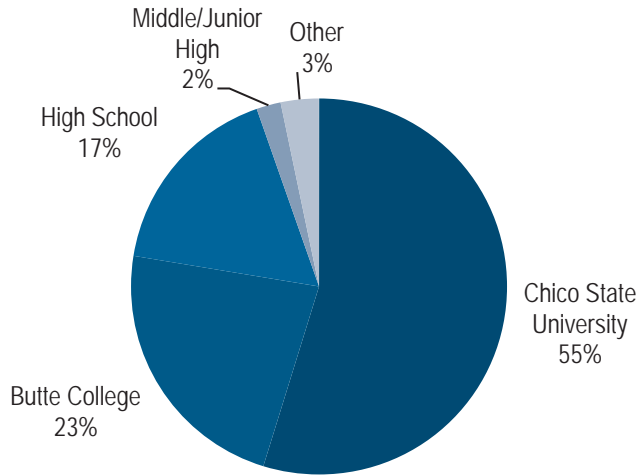
There were some instances in which a survey respondent chose more than one answer for a one-response question. In many cases, the respondent's answer was not included in the data analysis, unless otherwise stated in the following text.

Demographics

The survey included several questions to assess who rides B-Line. Based on the responses to a series of demographic questions, two major findings were identified: (1) a great proportion of B-Line passengers are students (54% of survey respondents), the majority of whom attend Chico State University and (2) most B-Line passengers represent below-average household incomes in Butte County. There is a correlation between student status and lower incomes.

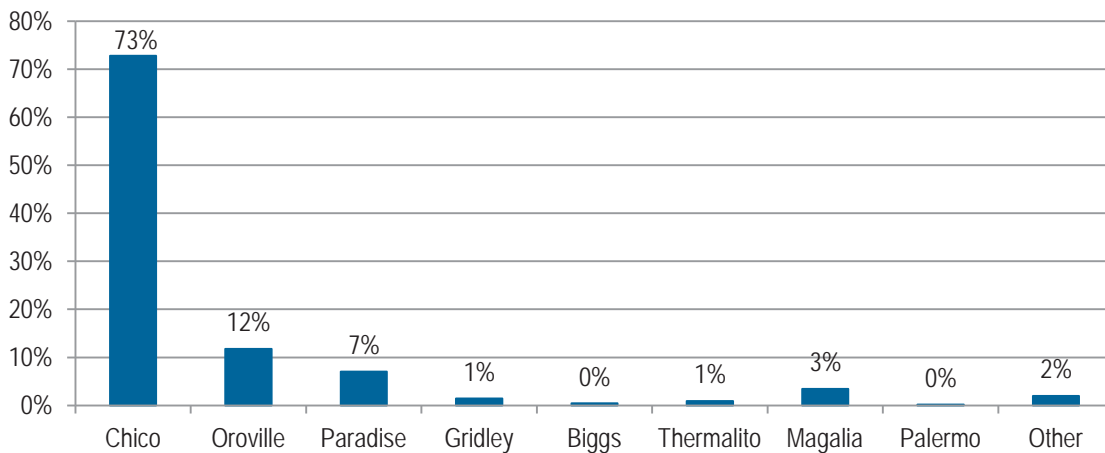
The collection of demographic information from riders is especially helpful in identifying any special needs that bus riders may have that might be different from those of the general population in Butte County.

Figure 5-2 Schools Attended
 (n=670)



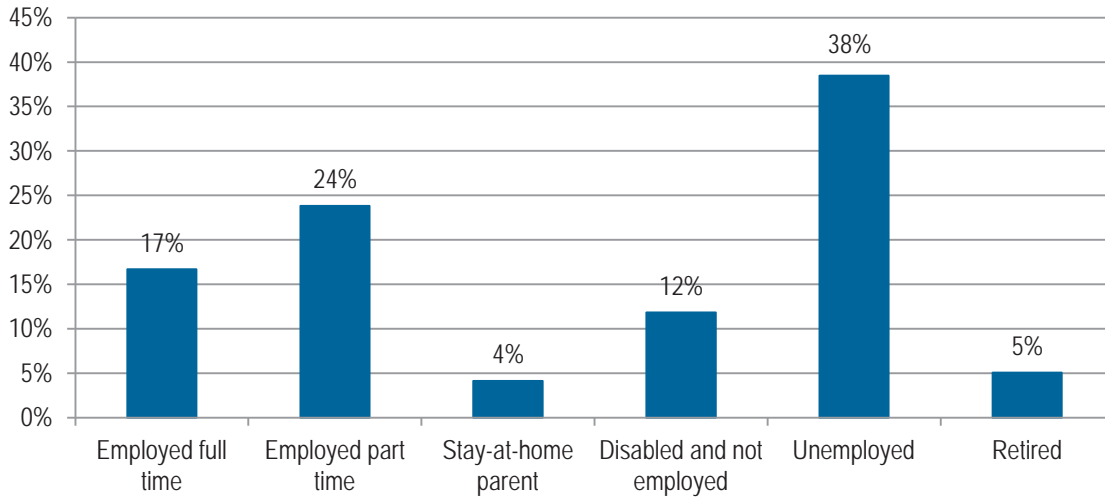
Over half of the survey respondents are students, and as shown in Figure 5-2, more than half of those students attend Chico State University. Other student populations riding B-Line include those who attend Butte College and various high schools. This high representation of students in the survey – despite the fact that two of the five days the survey was administered were weekend days – illustrates how important the student population is within the B-Line passenger profile.

Figure 5-3 City of Residence
 (n=1323)



A majority of the survey respondents live in Chico where B-Line operates its most robust service (Figure 5-3). While 32% of service hours are allocated to rural routes, a considerable share of service hours on some of those routes is within Chico. Oroville, Paradise, and Magalia residents contributed relevant but much smaller shares of passengers for the survey.

Figure 5-4 Current Employment Status
 (n=1385)



According to the survey responses, 41% of B-Line riders are employed and 38% are unemployed (Figure 5-4). The question did not include an option for “full time student;” hence we conducted a crosstab analysis. As shown in Figure 5-5, most respondents who are unemployed are students (close to 75%).

Figure 5-5 Comparison of Employment and Student Status

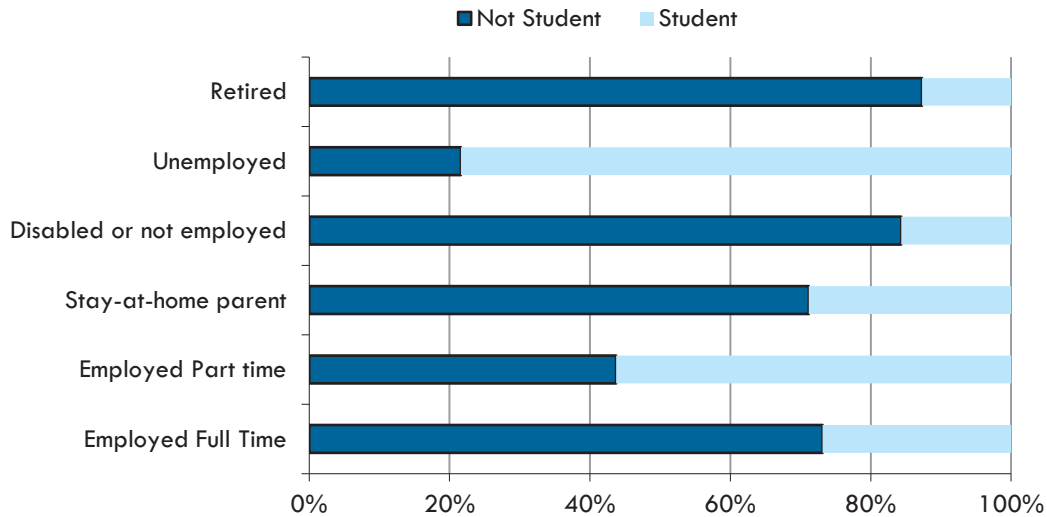
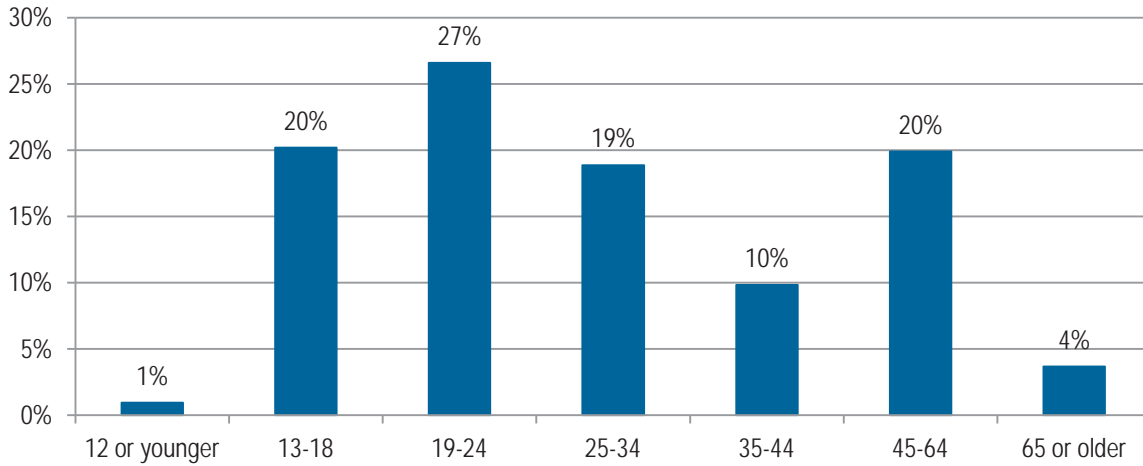
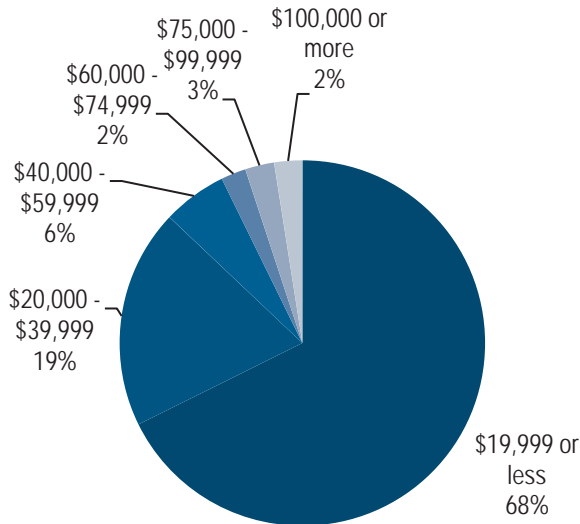


Figure 5-6 Respondent Age
 (n=1362)



As shown in Figure 5-6, the largest group of survey respondents indicated they are between the ages of 19 and 24, again illustrating the prominence of college students among riders on B-Line. A very small percentage (1%) of people surveyed are 12 years or younger and only 4% are 65 years or older. The spread among the remaining ranges of ages is approximately equal and reflective of Butte County's general population characteristics.

Figure 5-7 Total Household Income
 (n=1129)

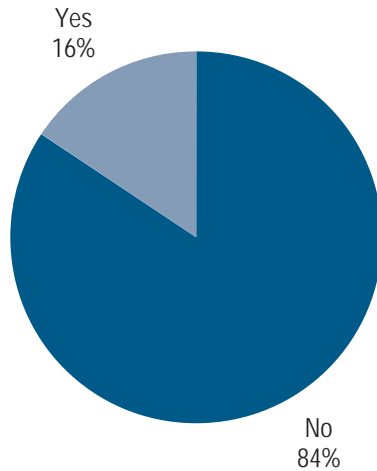


The lower income ranges dominate within the surveyed passenger group. Figure 5-7 shows that 87% of those who were surveyed are from households with a total annual income of \$39,999 or less. According to the US Census, the median household income in Butte County between 2007 and

2011 was \$42,971. Only 6% of the survey respondents fall in this category, while 68% belong to households that earn \$19,999 or less.

Figure 5-8 Mobility Issues Due to Disability

(n=1253)



Disability was indicated as a mobility issue for 16% of respondents. Investments geared to provide improved access to B-Line bus stops may prove to be beneficial for this group, and are considered as part of the pedestrian planning component of this study.

Journey Specifics

Respondents were asked about the specifics of the journey they were making on the day they were surveyed. These questions provide information about the transportation needs that the bus service is used to fulfill, and also help provide an understanding of how the service itself is accessed.

Figure 5-9 Trip Purpose

(n=1482)

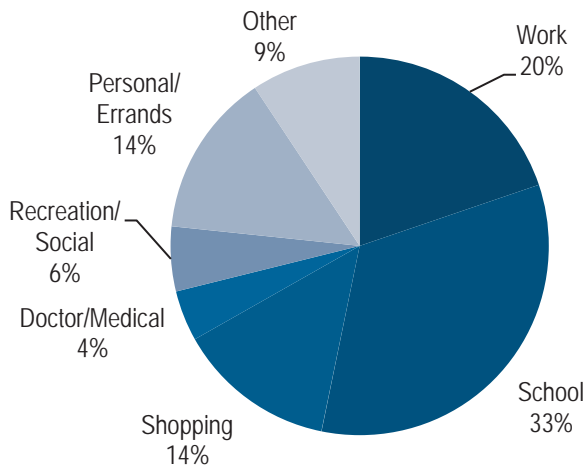


Figure 5-9 shows the primary trip purpose of surveyed passengers. The vast majority of trips were home-based, so the figure illustrates the various non-home origins and destinations indicated by passengers.

An origin or destination of school is represented by 33% of all trips. Work trips represent 20% of all trip purposes, followed by personal/errands at 14%. Shopping trips also accounted for 14% of all trips, and doctor or medical appointments for about 4%. The responses show that although many people perceive the vast majority of riders to be making college-bound trips, B-Line serves the full array of trip types made in Butte County.

Figure 5-10 Access to Bus Stop

(n=1409)

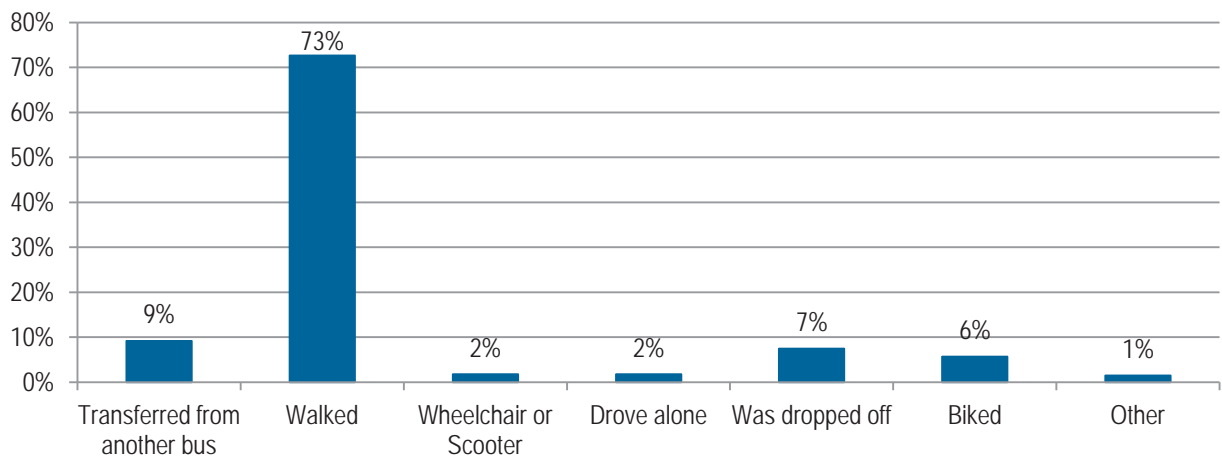
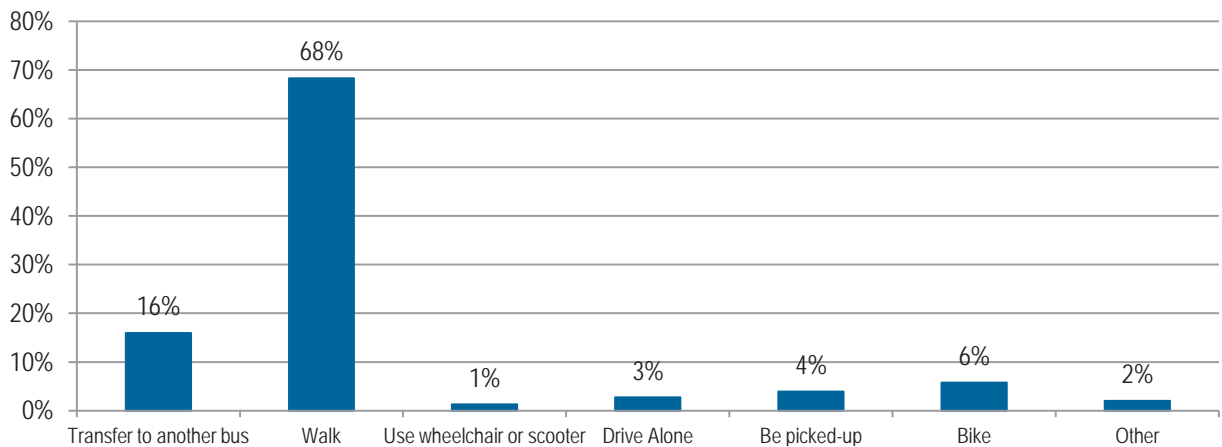


Figure 5-11 Access from Bus Stop to Destination

(n=1389)



Respondents were asked how they got to the bus stop and how they got from the bus to their destination (Figure 5-10 and Figure 5-11). Most made the journey to and from the bus stop on

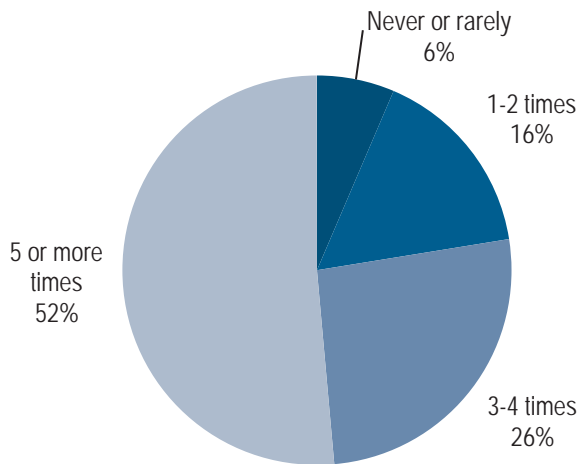
foot: the vast majority walked (68% to 73%). Between 9% and 16% completed their trip by transferring to another bus, while approximately 6% biked. Several stakeholders talked about the need for park-and-ride facilities, and the findings show indeed some people drive to catch the bus.

Bus Riding Habits

The survey sought to identify the reasons, usage patterns, and features that influence passengers to use B-Line service. Major conclusions derived from answers to this part of the survey are that most passengers are regular riders and most passengers ride B-Line because they do not have other transportation options.

Figure 5-12 How Often Do You Ride the Bus?

(n=1400)



As shown in Figure 5-12, most B-Line riders are regular users, with 78% riding at least three times per week. About one-third of riders began using the service in 2013 (Figure 5-13). Most transit operations that serve universities enjoy a high level of ridership from freshmen and other new students, which tends to taper off over time. This may account for the difference between people who began riding more recently and those who have been riding for more than one year. B-Line has also improved its image, in general, and offers significantly more outreach and information than it used to, which may also account for higher numbers of new riders. The goal will be to see how the agency can maintain these riders.

Figure 5-13 Year Began Riding B-Line Regularly

(n=1366)

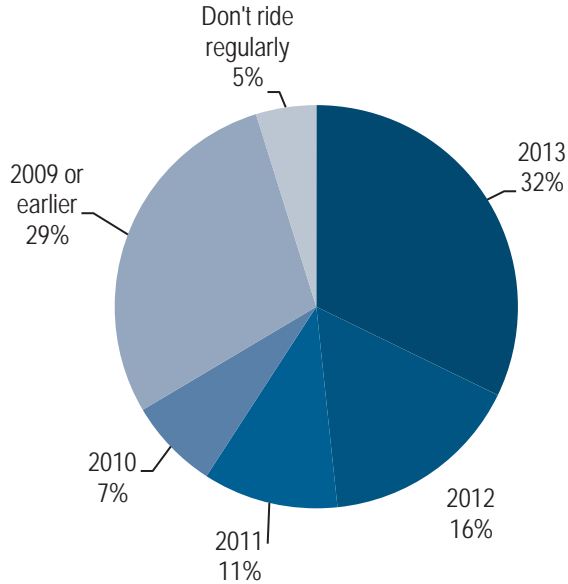
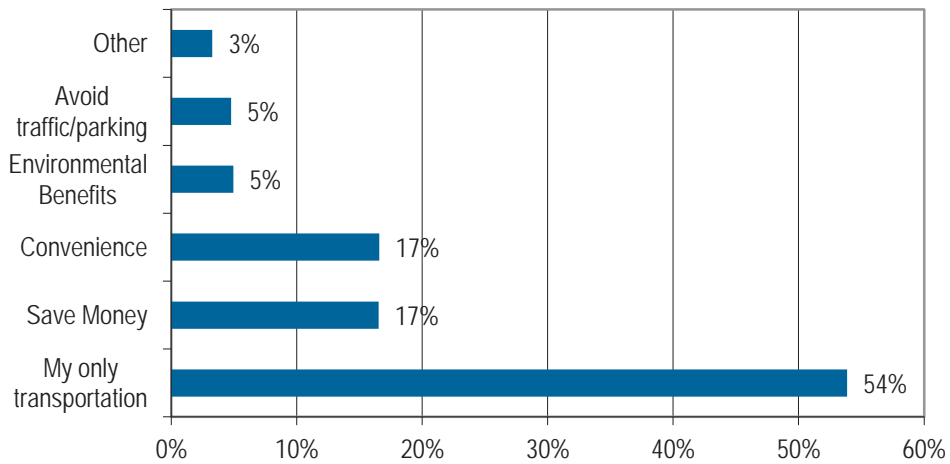


Figure 5-14 Main Reason for Choosing B-Line

(n=1615)



Respondents were asked to indicate their primary reason for choosing B-Line. Although the question was intended to obtain only one answer from respondents, various people cited more than one reason for choosing B-Line. For this question, all choices selected by each respondent were accepted. Most people chose to take B-Line because it was their only transportation option, and at least 74% of responses indicated that riders did not have access to a car for the trip they were making when they were surveyed (see Figure 5-15 below). B-Line's convenience and relatively inexpensive service were also significant reasons for passengers choosing to use transit.

Figure 5-15 Was a Car Available to You for This Trip?
(n=1341)

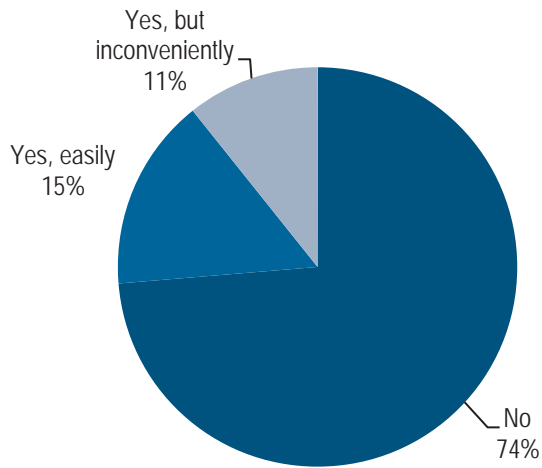
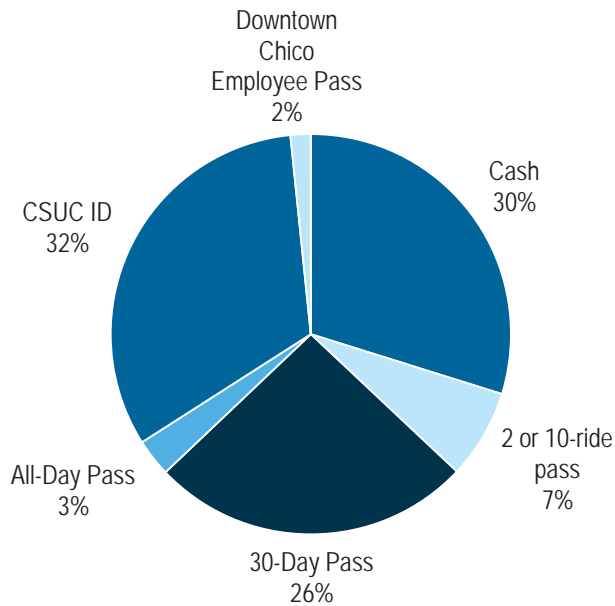


Figure 5-16 How You Paid Bus Fare Today
(n=1348)



Respondents indicated how they paid for their fare (Figure 5-16). A very small number of passengers (2%) used the Downtown Chico Employee Pass, while a majority of passengers used their CSU ID. Cash is an equally important form of payment for B-Line passengers overall. A breakdown between methods of payment and employment status (see Figure 5-17) shows that cash is used most often as a form of payment by passengers who are unemployed and are not CSU students.

Figure 5-17 Comparison of Payment Method and Employment Status

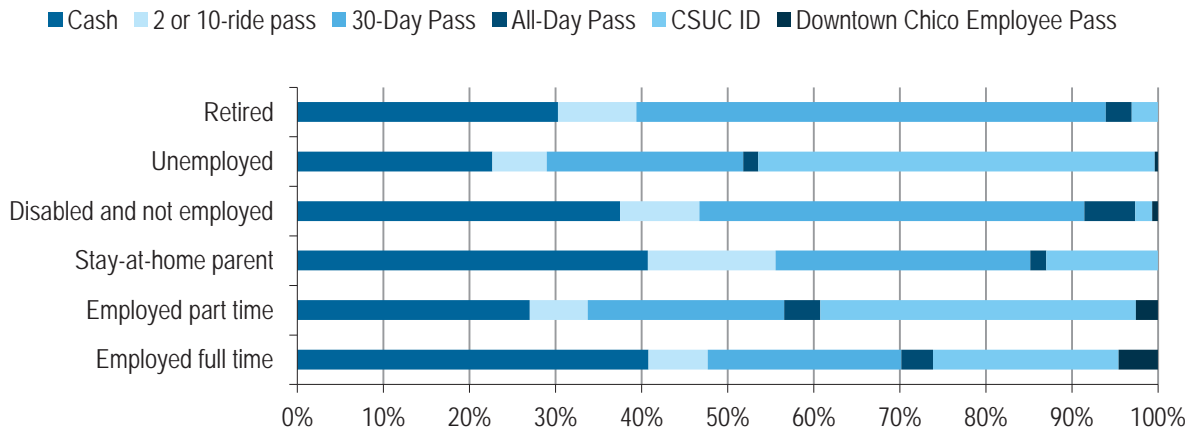


Figure 5-18 How You Get Information about B-Line Services

(n=1829)

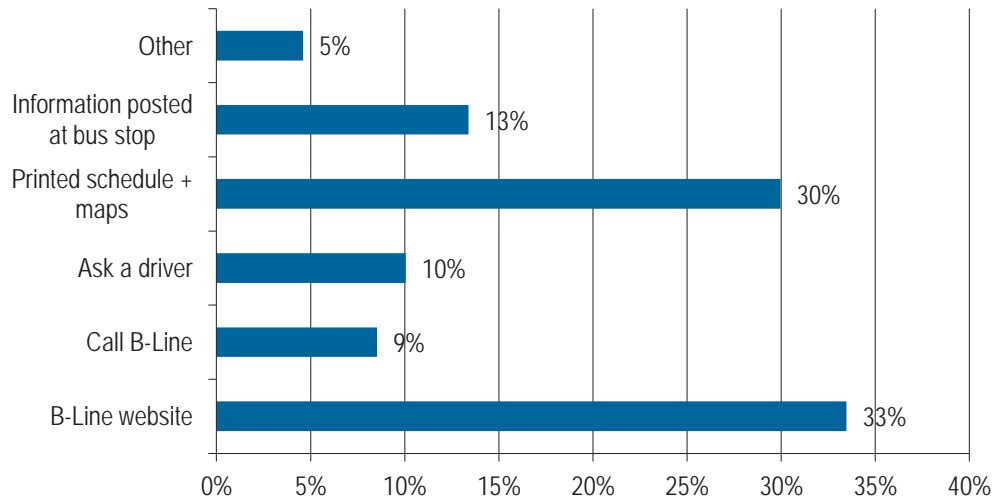
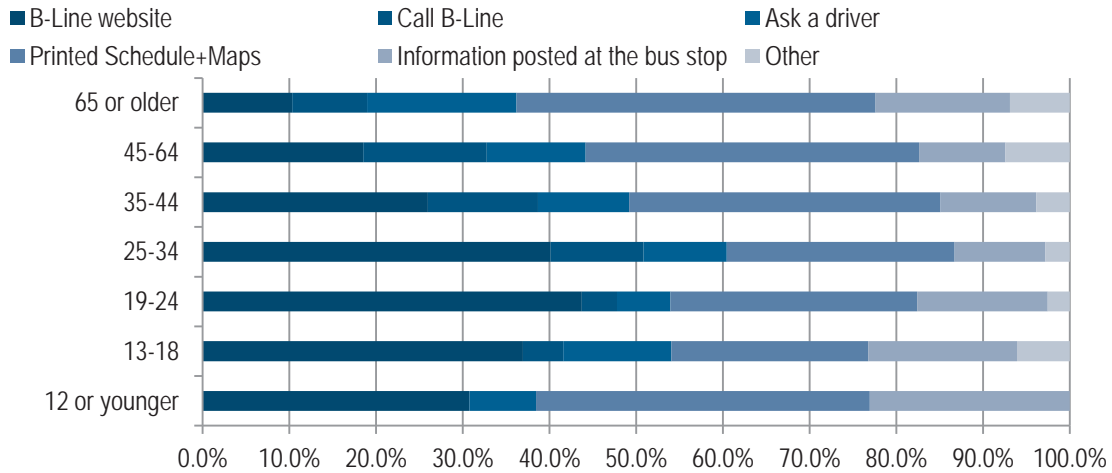


Figure 5-18 shows that most people obtain information about B-Line through the web or through the printed route maps and schedule. Respondents indicated other ways they gather information about B-Line, and many people wrote “friends and family” as an important source. More than one response was accepted for this question, which accounts for the high number of responses.

Delving deeper into the different factors that may impact how passengers obtain information about B-Line service, the following crosstab illustrates how different passenger age groups vary in the way they find information.

Figure 5-19 Comparison of Age and Method of Service Information Retrieval



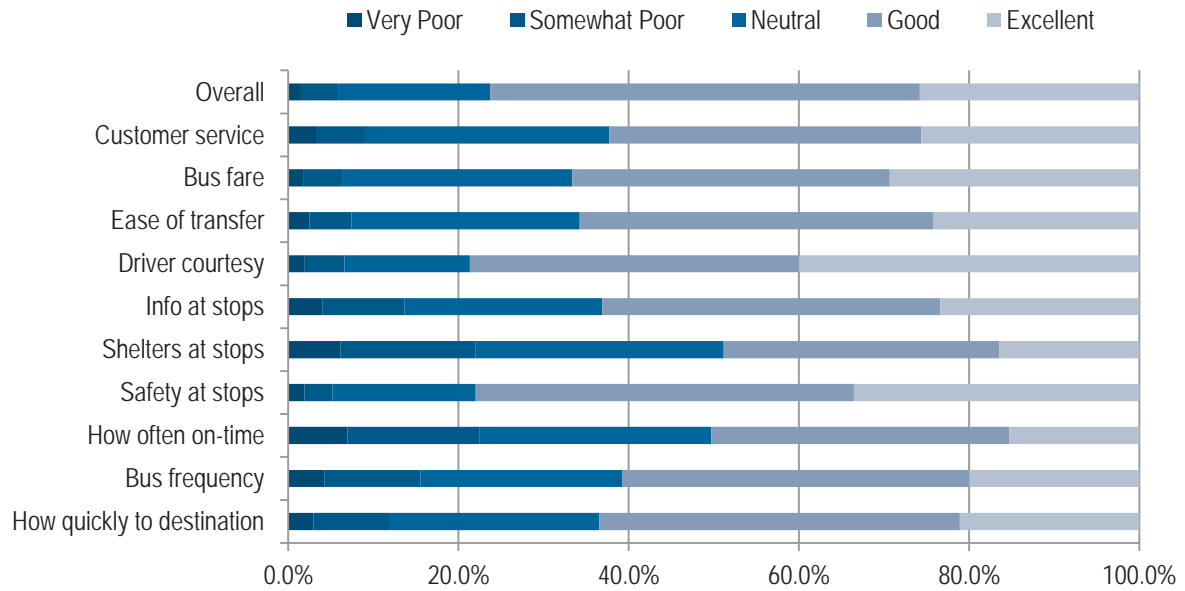
Significant numbers (between 30% and 40%) of individuals in the youngest age groups obtain information through the B-Line website, while greater numbers (between 10% and 26%) of older riders (older than age 35) acquire bus information through printed schedules and maps. This data illustrates the importance of using a variety of tools to provide information about services to riders, and emphasizes the importance of continuing to provide printed materials in the digital age.

Service Rating and Suggested Improvements

Overall, passengers are satisfied with B-line service, but seek more sheltered bus stops and better on-time performance. Other improvements sought by passengers include more frequent weekend and weekday service, as well as later evening weekday service. Respondents were allowed the option of writing additional comments about service enhancements they would like and “Sunday service” was a recurring response.

Figure 5-20 illustrates how passengers rated different aspects of the B-Line service.

Figure 5-20 B-Line Service Ratings



Most people ranked every aspect of the service as “good” or “excellent.” It may be more instructive to focus attention on the service features that received the most “neutral” and “somewhat poor” rankings when considering which investments to prioritize for improved service. “Shelters at stops” and “on-time performance” received a greater proportion of lower and neutral ratings of all B-Line service attributes.

Figure 5-21 shows which improvements people would find most effective, and Figure 5-22 illustrates preferred attributes based on how often an individual rides B-Line. The information is interesting because it shows very little variation between infrequent and frequent riders with regard to their transit service preferences. More frequent weekend service ranks highest among improvements sought by all passengers, followed by more frequent weekday service, more shelters at bus stops, and later weekday service.

Figure 5-21 Improvement Most Likely to Encourage More Frequent Use of B-Line

(n=2153)

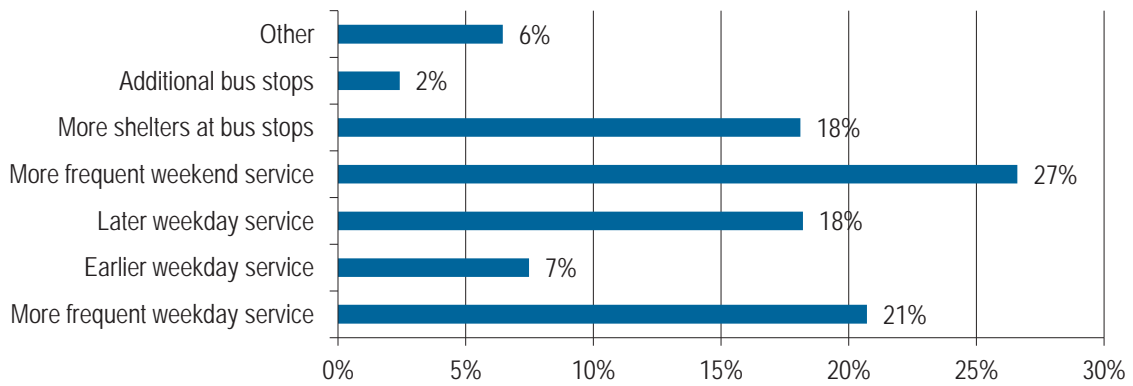
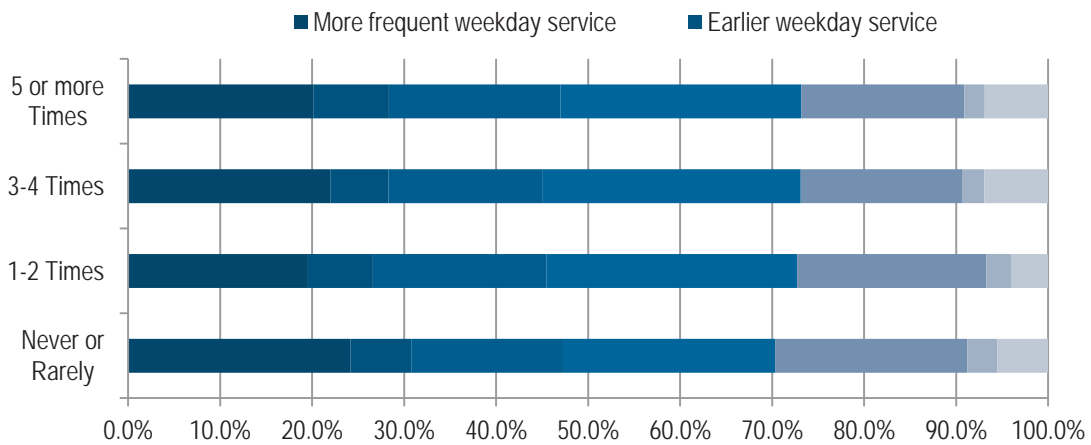


Figure 5-22 Which Improvements You Would Find Most Effective (Based on Frequency of Ridership)



Summary of Key Findings

The survey results indicate that B-Line is primarily used by commuters and students who are dependent on the service and who lack other transportation options. B-Line's focus should be on making the service appealing to a broad range of users, even in the presence of other transportation options.

Although the on-time performance data illustrates some significant challenges for the agency, consumers were relatively neutral about on-time performance. More frequent service was identified as a preferred service improvement, along with more shelters at bus stops, and later-running buses on weekdays.

GENERAL PUBLIC INTERCEPT AND ONLINE SURVEY

Methodology

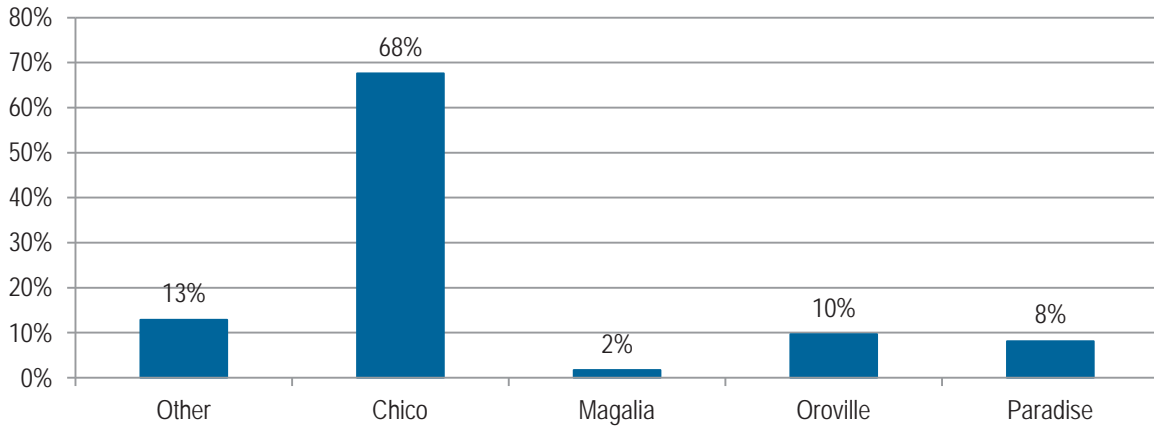
Surveyors administered an in-person intercept survey as well as an online version of the survey. The purpose was to gather feedback from Butte County residents about all forms of transportation in the region, including transit, bicycling, and walking. Intercept surveys were primarily deployed on Sunday, September 22nd, with additional surveys administered during the following week. To ensure a large enough sample across the county, surveyors were located in downtown Chico, at the Oroville FoodMaxx shopping center, and at a special event in Paradise, the Paradise Family Festival. The online version of the survey was hosted for two weeks at buttetransportationsurvey.info. Surveys were available in English and Spanish. A link to this survey was sent by BCAG to a wide array of regional stakeholder groups in an effort to reach as wide an audience as possible. In total, there were 654 respondents for this survey, although the exact number of responses varies for each question. The survey questions are included in Appendix B.

Demographics

Several questions examine the general characteristics of the survey respondents. This information is valuable in understanding factors that may influence a respondent's preference and helps provide context to the overall survey results. An overview of the demographics of the surveyed population also plays a role in determining how effectively the surveyed pool represents Butte County as a whole.

Figure 5-23 City of Residence

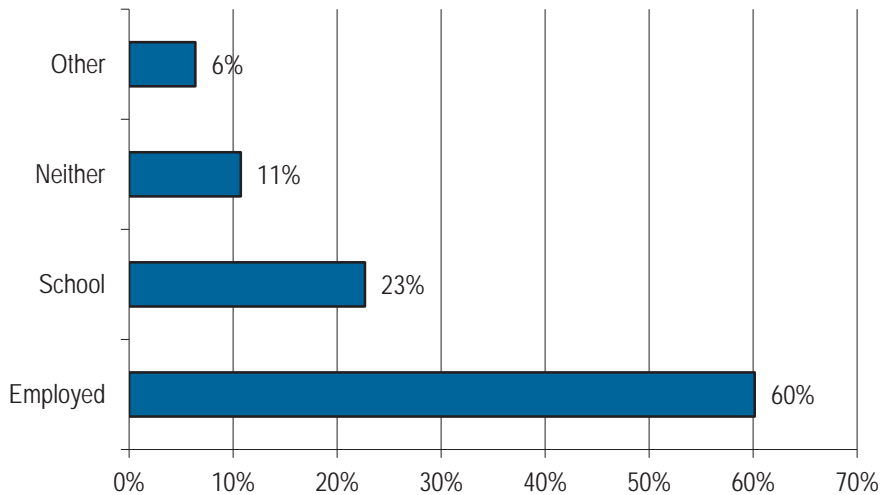
(n=651)



As shown in Figure 5-23 above, a majority of the survey respondents – about 68% – reside in Chico. Other Butte County cities are all represented among the survey responses.

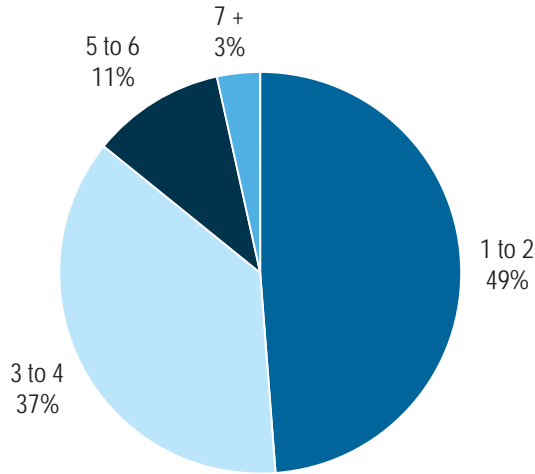
Figure 5-24 Employed or In School?

(n=688)



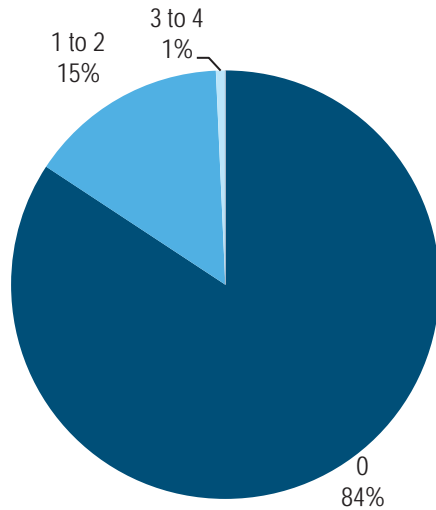
Respondents were asked whether they worked or went to class (Figure 5-24). Most of the survey respondents (60%) are employed and a smaller group (23%) are in school. There were several respondents who are both employed and in school.

Figure 5-25 Number of People in Household
(n=578)



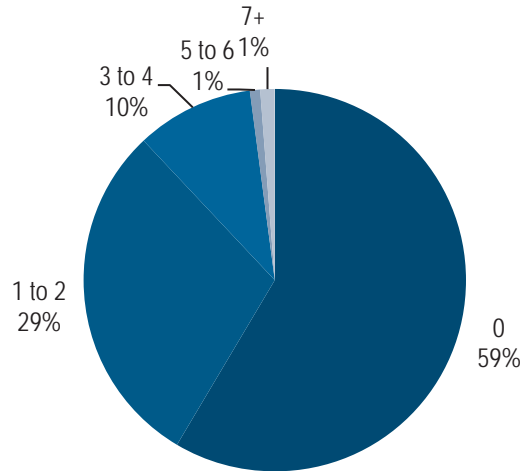
The average household size in Butte County, according to the US Census, is 2.5, and this number is reflected by the survey results. Most survey respondents live in small households, as shown in Figure 5-25: 49% live in a household consisting of 1 to 2 people and another 37% live in household of 3 to 4 people.

Figure 5-26 People in Your Household 65 or Over



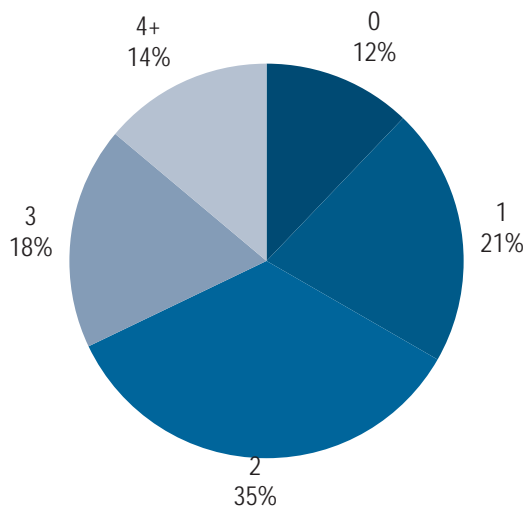
As shown in Figure 5-26, most respondents, about 84%, did not live in a household with anyone 65 years or older. According to the most recent American Community Survey data, persons 65 and older constitute 15.8% of the population, which is reflected by the survey demographic data.

Figure 5-27 People in Your Household 18 or Under
(n=574)



More than half of all survey respondents, about 59%, live in a household without anyone 18 years or younger, while about 29% of respondents live in a household with one or two individuals that are 18 years old or younger (Figure 5-27). According to the most recent American Community Survey data, youth under the age of 18 comprise 15.2% of the overall county population.

Figure 5-28 Number of Automobiles in Household
(n=576)



Approximately 88% of survey respondents live in a household with at least one automobile and 56% percent live in household with at least two automobiles (Figure 5-28). About 12% of people

who took this survey lived in a household with no automobiles. According to Census data, about 8% of households do not have vehicles, so this population is just slightly overrepresented by the survey demographic.

Figure 5-29 Annual Household Income
(n=536)

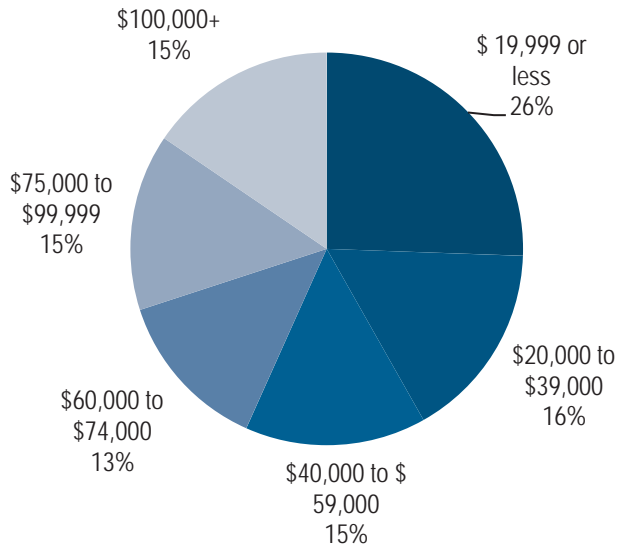


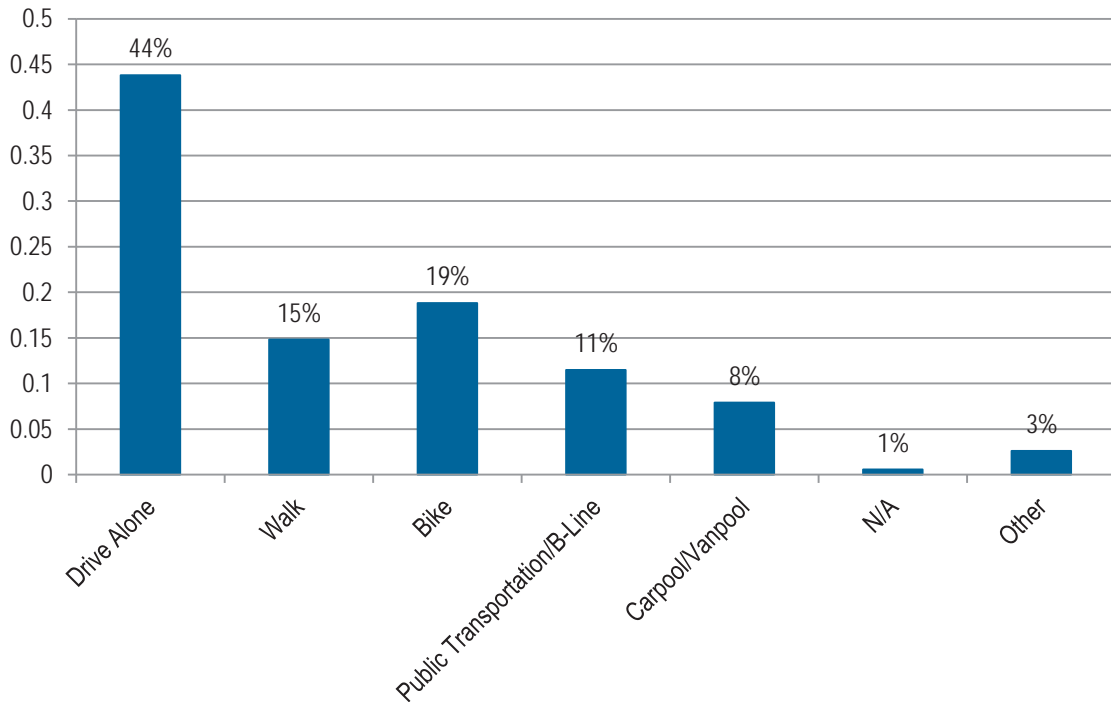
Figure 5-29 illustrates the annual household income of survey respondents. This question had a high number of blank responses; approximately 18% of survey respondents did not answer the question. Of those who answered, the figure shows that various income levels are almost equally represented by the survey respondents. About 26% of respondents fall in the lowest income category, \$19,999 or less, a slightly greater figure than the number of respondents associated with the rest of the income categories. A large proportion of these individuals were found to be students, based on a crosstabulation of the data.

Transportation Options and Preferences

A portion of the survey gathered answers about individual transportation preferences and habits of the respondents.

Figure 5-30 Primary Mode of Transportation

(n=696)



Respondents were asked to indicate their primary mode of transportation, as shown in Figure 5-30. Although this question asked for a single response, some respondents chose more than one answer. The analysis summarized in the chart above allows for more than one answer from each respondent. The survey results show that driving alone is the dominant transportation choice for 44% of survey-takers, substantially leading bicycling (19%) and walking (15%), the next most popular choices, respectively, but which are also somewhat overrepresented in this survey population in comparison with general public characteristics. As shown in the figure above, public transportation ranks below biking, walking, and driving alone, which is reflective of Butte County mode choice.

To investigate whether household income had an impact on primary mode choice preferences, the crosstab shown in Figure 5-31 was developed, showing that people from lower-income households walk or take public transportation to work/school in much greater numbers than people who fall in other income categories. All other income ranges had primarily people who drive alone to work/school.

Figure 5-31 Primary Mode by Household Income

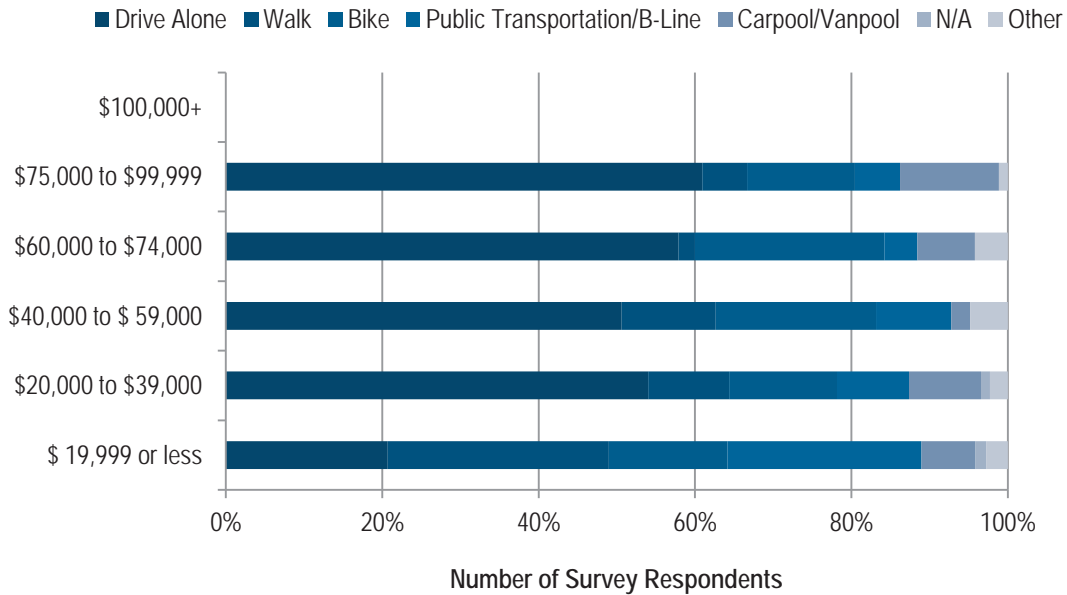
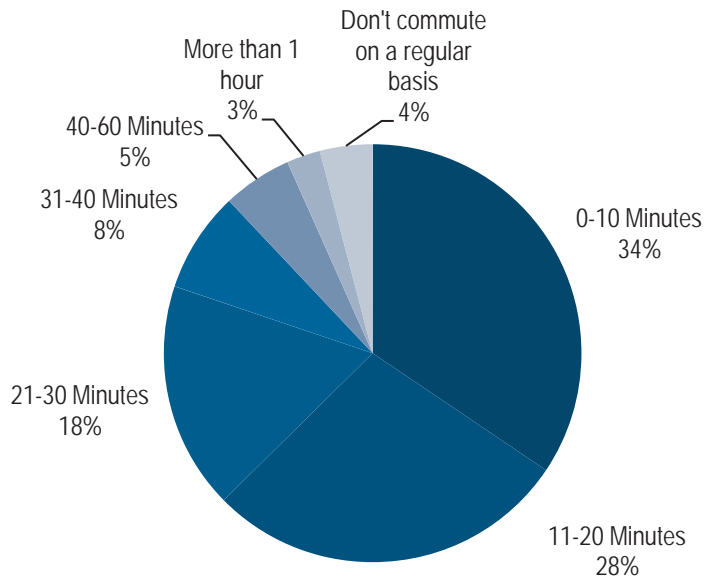


Figure 5-32 Travel Time for Home to School/Work
 (n=540)



Respondents indicated the length of time it takes them to commute to work or school. The largest group of people who took this survey (34%) reported their trip from home to school/work as somewhere between zero and ten minutes long. Fewer and fewer people are associated with increasing trip times.

Figure 5-33 Primary Mode Choice and Home to Work/School Trip Time

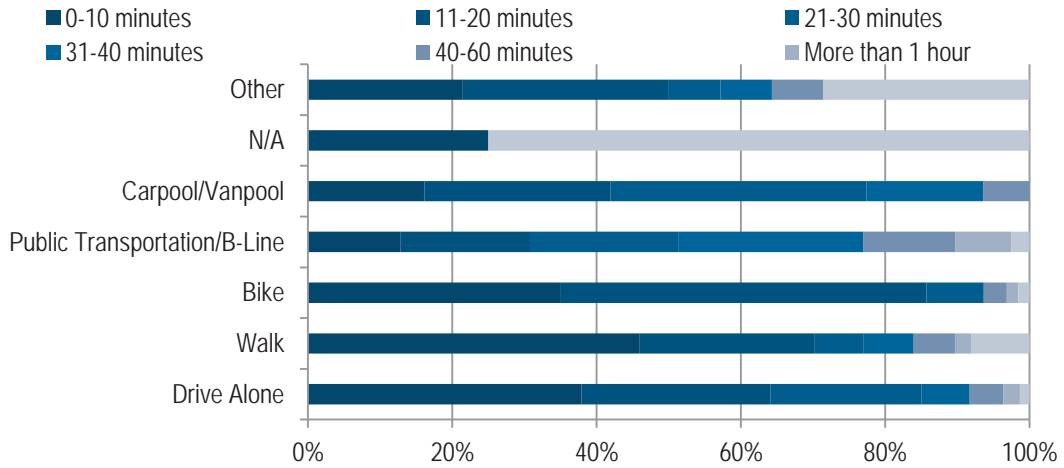
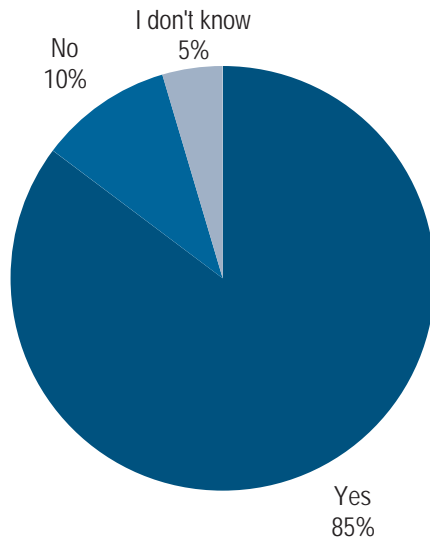


Figure 5-33 shows how primary mode choice and home to work/school trip times affect another. The majority of the people who walk spend 0 to 10 minutes on their commute: most of the people who walk do so because of proximity to their school or work destination. The figure shows that a greater percentage of bicyclists spend 11 to 20 minutes on their home to school/work trip than walkers or drivers, which is the amount of time for a bicyclist to travel just a couple of miles. The largest group of people identifying public transit as their primary mode of transportation spend 31 to 40 minutes on their trip to work/school.

Figure 5-34 Does Public Transportation Serve Your Community?

(n=631)



Respondents were asked whether public transportation as available in their community. Most said it was, suggesting great knowledge of the availability of transit in Butte County. Fully 85% of survey respondents acknowledge that public transportation is present in their community. The bulk of those who said public transportation did not serve their community said they would consider transit if it was available to them.

Figure 5-35 Used Public Transportation in Past Six Months?
(n=607)

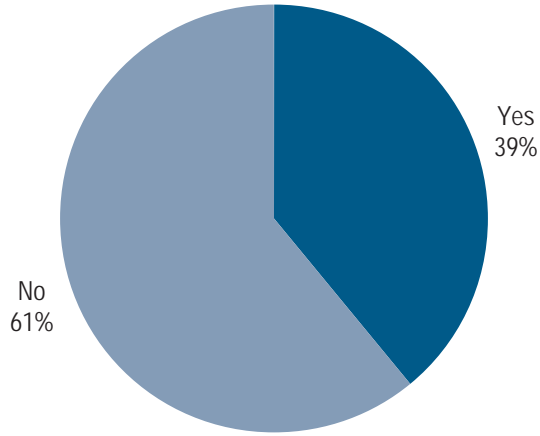


Figure 5-36 How Often Do You Ride Public Transportation?
(n=277)

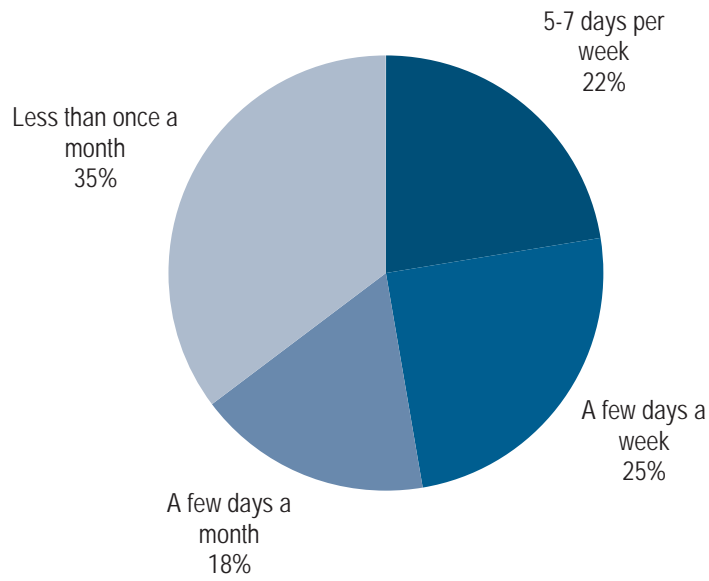


Figure 5-37 Which Public Transportation Services Have You Used?
 (n=241)

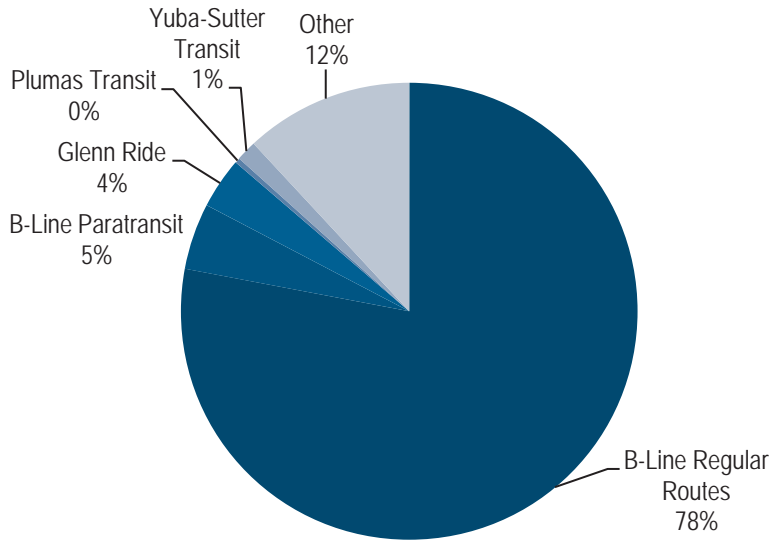
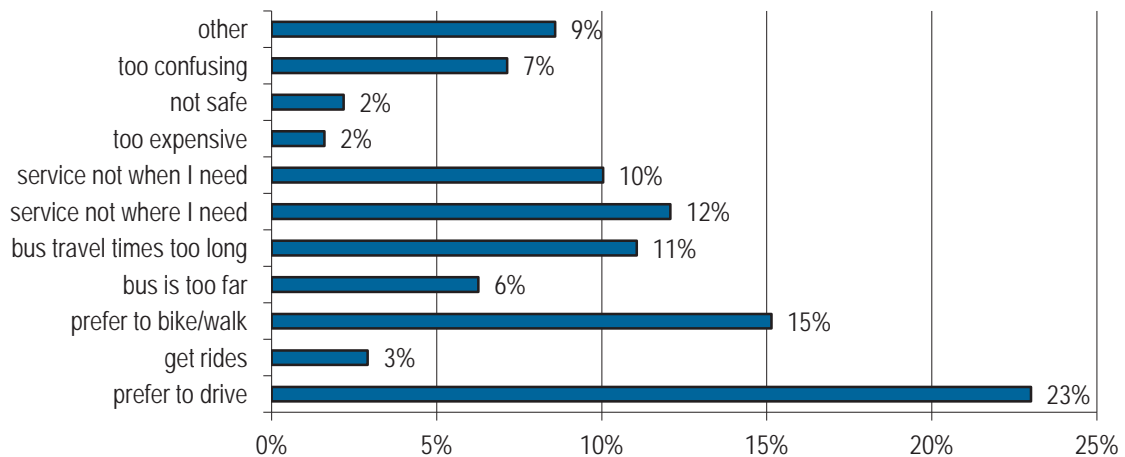


Figure 5-35, Figure 5-36, and Figure 5-37 provide information about transit use. More than half of the survey respondents said they had not used public transportation in the past six months, and 35% of those who had taken transit said they used it less than once a month. Among the various transit providers listed, B-Line service was by far the most popular among those who reported public transportation usage in the past six months (78%), but other transit providers were also indicated by respondents.

Figure 5-38 Why Have You Not Used Public Transportation?
 (n=687)

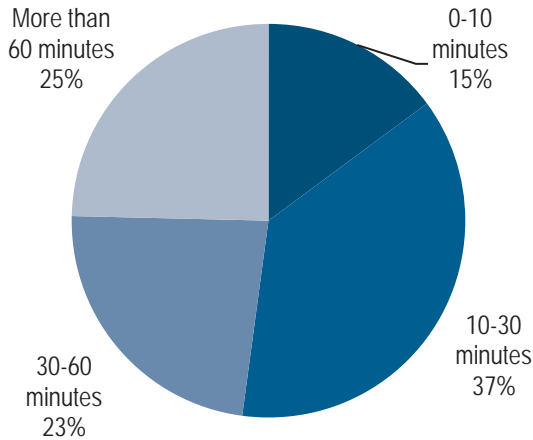


When non-transit users were asked why they had not used transit (Figure 5-38) 23% cited their preference to drive as the main reason. About 33% of the responses cited bus service-related

issues as reasons for not using public transportation: long travel times via buses, inaccessible service, and poor service times were the main reported issues concerning B-Line service. The graph illustrates an important observation about people's transportation preferences: other than driving, the findings are that walking and biking are the preferred alternatives for a majority of the people – reinforcing the observation in the "Primary Mode of Transportation" chart shown in Figure 5-30.

Figure 5-39 Minutes Spent Walking on an Average Day

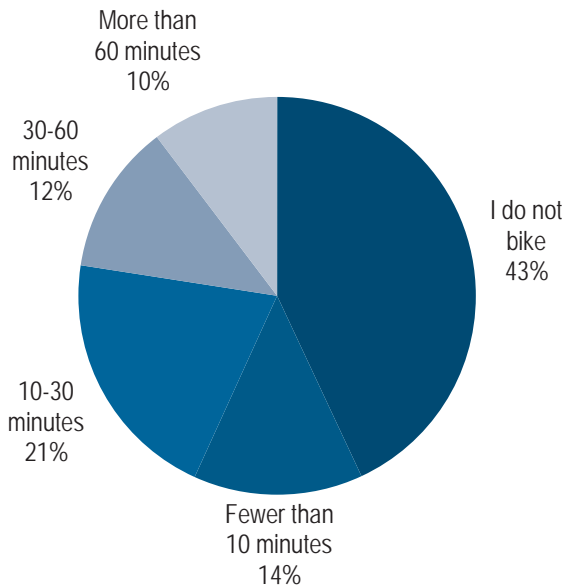
(n=585)



The survey asked individuals to indicate how much time they spent walking and biking outdoors on an average day. Most of the survey respondents (37%) reported that they walk between 10 to 30 minutes outdoors on average, and about a quarter of the survey respondents walk more than 60 minutes on an average weekday (Figure 5-39).

Figure 5-40 Minutes Spent Biking on an Average Day

(n=581)



Nearly half of the survey respondents said they do not bike at all on an average weekday (Figure 5-40). Roughly a quarter of respondents said they bike about 10 to 30 minutes on an average weekday.

Issues and Recommended Improvements

The survey analysis highlights the needed improvements/problems identified by the survey respondents to provide insight into which public transportation investments are likely to be most effective.

Figure 5-41 Which Factors Would Encourage More B-Line Usage?

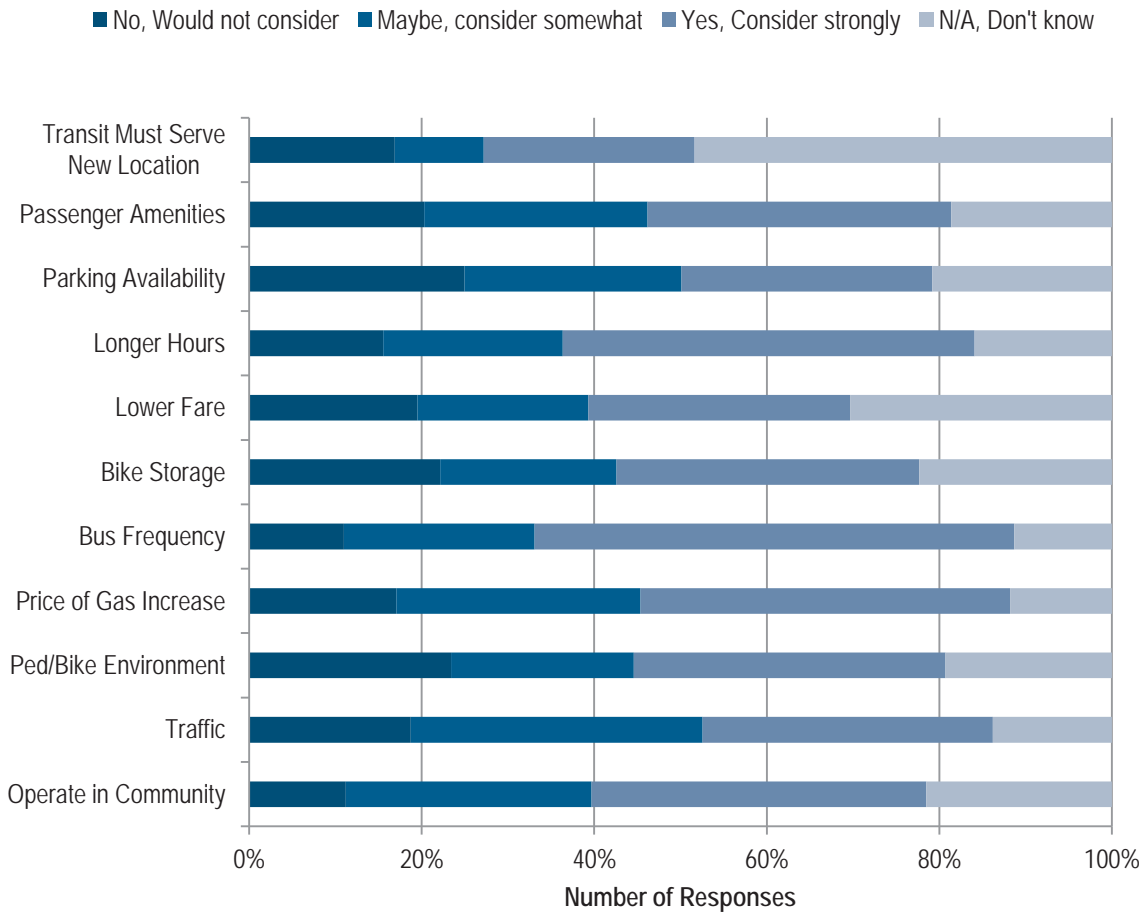
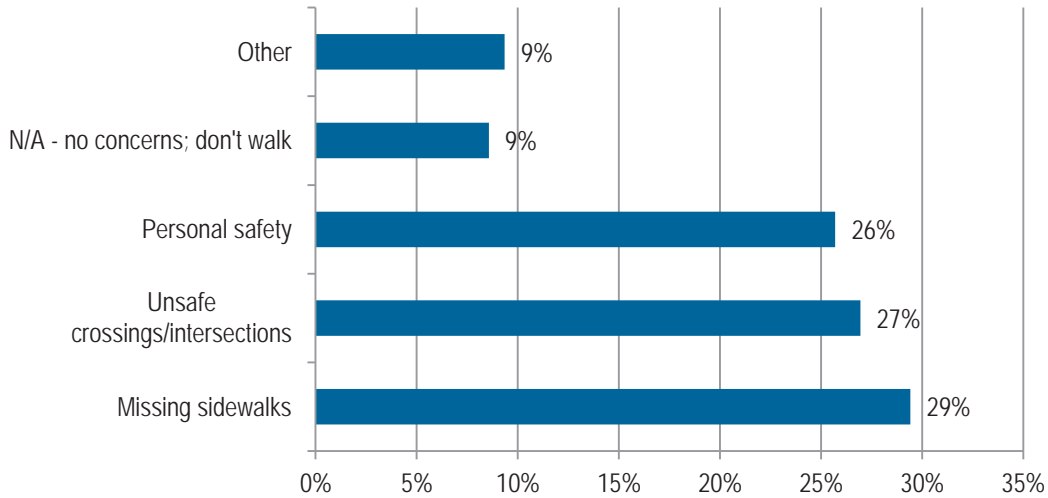


Figure 5-41 illustrates what respondents said would encourage them to ride B-Line more often. Bus frequency (which reflects what current riders indicate), longer service hours, and the price of gas hold the greatest potential to encourage greater patronage of B-Line. Approximately 25% of respondents indicated that increased parking around the bus stops would not induce them to use B-Line more often. In the free response portion of this question in the survey, respondents listed a broad range of locations and voiced general concerns about lack of direct routes and inconsistent on-time performance of the existing B-Line service.

Figure 5-42 Primary Issues for Pedestrians
 (n=887)



Respondents also noted their primary concerns as pedestrians (Figure 5-42). Missing sidewalks, unsafe intersections, and safety were closely ranked high as the primary issues for pedestrians. Respondents also provided information about specific intersections, sidewalk segments, crosswalks and other items that they identified as problematic that were considered in the development of recommendations in Chapter 8.

Figure 5-43 Primary Issues for Bicyclists
 (n=421)

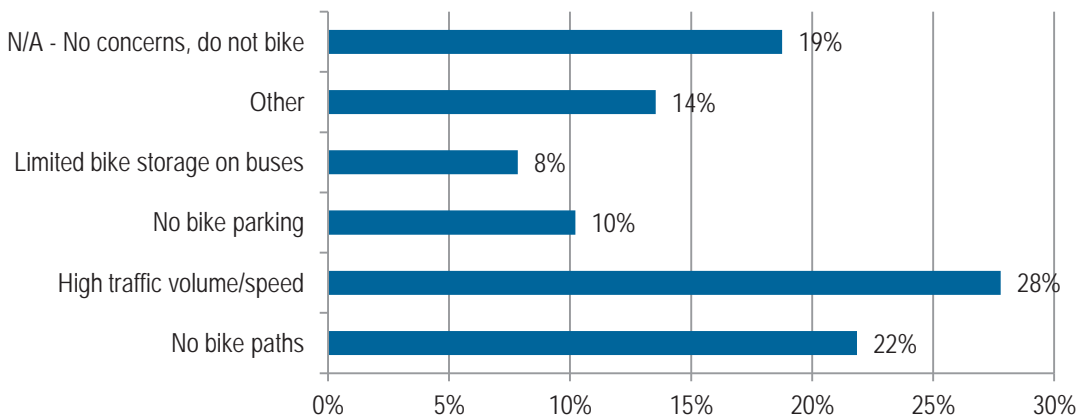


Figure 5-43 shows that the primary issues for bicyclists are the high volumes and speed of traffic, and lack of bike paths or lanes. For many – about 19% of respondents – there were no concerns cited, due to the fact that a great number of the survey respondents do not bike. As with pedestrian improvements, bicyclists offered advice on road segments and bike paths that require improvements and that were considered in the development of alternatives in Chapter 8.

Key Findings

Despite the fact that 85% of survey respondents said public transportation served their community, the majority of people (44%) said their primary mode of transportation for making the trip from home to school/work was driving alone. The intercept survey results offer several reasons for why “driving alone” is preferred over other modes of transportation.

According to the survey, 67% of respondents have at least two automobiles in their household. This suggests that survey respondents have fairly good access to automobiles within their households. Sufficient access to automobiles coupled with bus service that does not necessarily address respondents’ preferences (33% of respondents cited service-related issues as reasons for not using public transportation) is certainly a reason for the lack of mode diversity.

Most people who took this intercept survey made their trip to school or work within 20 minutes, but people who took transit spent 31-40 minutes on their trip to school or work, illustrating that public transportation may result in a longer commute for many people. Nevertheless, many of the people who drive may not have considered the time it takes to find parking or walk from their parking space to their destination.

The greater usage of public transportation by survey respondents from lower-income households corresponds with the finding of the onboard survey: the majority of the people currently using public transportation do so because it is economical or because they have few other options.

The most frequently identified issue reported by pedestrians was a lack of sidewalks. Respondents also noted unsafe crossings or intersections and personal security concerns. Individuals frequently expressed concerns with driver behavior, weather conditions, or deteriorating or poorly maintained sidewalks.

STAKEHOLDER DISCUSSIONS

Through a series of one-on-one interviews with representatives from BCAG member jurisdictions and other key stakeholders who are knowledgeable about transit and non-motorized transportation issues in Butte County, a number of major themes emerged.

It is important to be aware of these perceptions for a number of reasons. First, they allow the consulting team to supplement document review and technical analysis which the team might not otherwise be aware of, and are important to understand if community priorities are to be understood. Second, they can help ensure that the Transit and Non-Motorized Plan ultimately reflects community values and concerns, and is capable of achieving consensus. Finally, they can serve as a source of creative inspiration and ideas for both short and longer-term improvements. For all of these reasons, it is important to speak early in the study process with a broad range of stakeholders representing a diversity of viewpoints and different segments of the community.

Stakeholders

Approximately one dozen individual stakeholder interviews, generally lasting between a half-hour and an hour apiece, were conducted by phone in October and November of 2013.

All stakeholders who were contacted chose to participate. Participants represented a cross-section of experts, community leaders and advocates, and included:

- Ken Albright, Director, Facilities, Planning & Management, Butte College
- Fletcher Alexander, Sustainability Coordinator, Chico State University

- Dan Breedon, Principal Planner, Butte County Department of Development Services
- Scott Friend, Planner, City of Biggs
- Armen Kamian, Planner, Butte County Air Quality Management District (AQMD)
- Marc Mattox, Planner, Town of Paradise
- William Modine, Planner, Butte County Department of Employment and Social Services
- Steve O'Brian, Pullins Cyclery
- Janine Rood, Planner, Chico Velo Bike Club
- Don Rust, Director of Community Development, City of Oroville
- Rick Walls, Interim Traffic Engineer, City of Oroville
- Mark Wolfe, Director of Planning, City of Chico

Major Transportation Challenges

A common theme expressed by many stakeholders is that traveling by car is the dominant mode of travel given the county's low density and long distances many residents need to travel to reach their destinations. Many expressed that it is challenging to develop convenient alternative transportation options especially in the outlying communities. For example, according to one stakeholder, anecdotal evidence suggests that about 85% of students travel by car to get to Butte College because it is located about 15 miles from the nearest town. While B-Line has a route that travels near the college, the bus makes a special stop only by request. The College has its own bus service and carried about 2,000 riders a day.

Meeting the transportation needs in the county is further challenged because many residents want to travel to Chico and to a lesser extent to Oroville from communities scattered throughout the county including Paradise, Gridley, Cohasset, and Feather Falls. With many of the employment, retail, medical and educational opportunities located in Chico and the county offices in Oroville, residents living in outlying areas without access to automobiles have trouble getting there. Other residents who live in Chico need to travel short distances within town.

Stakeholders noted that many jurisdictions are in the process of updating their general plans and climate action plans, and transportation options are being more seriously considered, consistent with the new direction throughout the state. For example, higher density and less dispersed development are being encouraged to reduce the need for long distance travel and make it easier to support transit use.

Major Strengths and Weaknesses of B-Line Service

When asked about the strengths and weaknesses of the B-Line, many stakeholders acknowledged that they did not have firsthand experience with the service. Some respondents said they had not ridden the service themselves, but were speaking for friends and family who regularly use B-Line service or were commenting about what they heard from their constituents or colleagues.

Some stakeholders commented that the image of the B-Line has improved over the years with the attractive new buses which have given the service greater visibility in the community. Other stakeholders thought that the basic commuter routes work well and that the Park-and-Ride lot located at Highway 99 and 32 is heavily used. One stakeholder said that he noticed that the lot is typically full on most weekdays and that it can be difficult to find a parking space. According to stakeholders, Route 20, which runs between Chico and Oroville, is nearly at capacity in both the morning and evening runs and there is occasional overcrowding and standing room only.

Another positive attribute of the service is the Oroville Transit Center that opened two years ago. It was highly praised for its creative design and for improving the downtown area. However, some felt that it is unfortunately attracting homeless people, which could potentially be mitigated by reducing shrubbery in the immediate surrounding area.

A few stakeholders commented on B-Line fares. They are aware that fares are going up in January 2014 with the regional pass increasing to \$48. While they were not complaining about the fare hike, they were noting that it would be nice to bring back the subsidy previously offered to county employees to help encourage greater transit usage.

Weaknesses of B-Line

Stakeholders offered relatively few weaknesses about B-Line service. A few comments were made about B-Line routes not covering enough of the neighborhoods outside of downtown Chico. While many stakeholders thought downtown Chico is well served, the routes do not adequately serve the secondary arterials which means people have to walk long distances to access a bus stop. While overall comments about Route 20, which runs between Chico and Oroville, were positive, a few stakeholders noted that the vast majority of riders want to travel between Chico and Oroville as quickly as possible, so express service would be desirable.

The stakeholder from CSU explained that there was a large meeting on campus in October that focused on transportation with considerable discussion about B-Line. He said that a major issue voiced by students is that they are experiencing difficulty in understanding the service schedule. He said they are “overwhelmed trying to make sense of the schedule,” especially the younger students who are not accustomed to riding buses and reading transit maps and schedules. In some cases, students who want to ride the bus are not doing so because they cannot navigate the system.

One stakeholder said the Butte County Employment and Social Services Department located at 2445 Carmichael in Chico is not directly served by B-Line, although it is actually served by Route 15.

A few comments were made about bus shelters that are not properly maintained and about limitations in the sale of B-Line of tickets and passes in Paradise.

Regarding B-Line Paratransit

Very few stakeholders had experience with B-Line Paratransit and some were totally unaware of the service. One stakeholder thought that there needs to be more information about the service to let people, especially seniors and people with disabilities, know it exists.

A few comments were made about seniors who live in rural areas and no longer drive and need to travel to Chico and to a lesser extent to Oroville for medical appointments. They thought that these trips could be served by B-Line Paratransit even if on a “lifeline” schedule.

Potential Transit Markets

When asked about potential new markets, a common theme was that that several small and outlying communities within Butte County are not served by public transit, such as Forest Ranch, Durham, Bangor, and Cohasset. Many stakeholders observed that there is no connecting bus service further south than Gridley and that there is no B-Line-operated service to neighboring Yuba and Glenn counties. Several stakeholders suggested that service between Glenn and Butte

counties could serve students as well as commuters who work in Orland, a service which actually is available, although not operated by B-Line. Repeatedly, stakeholders noted that there is no commuter service between Chico and Sacramento, nor is there service to Sacramento Airport. One commenter said that since there is a shift in summer travel habits, there could be a market for people wishing to get to the Forebay Aquatic Center north of Oroville that could operate from April 1 to October 1.

While nearly all stakeholders acknowledged that students at the high school and college level are an important market and seem to be fairly well served, some commented that the B-Line does not do a good job of serving CSU students for trip purposes other than to and from school. For example, the perception is that for students who want to go to the mall, grocery stores, parks or other destinations beyond downtown Chico, B-Line does not serve them well. Butte College was cited as another example, because students attending the college who come from Glenn County have limited options for getting to the school.

Short-Term Priorities

Stakeholders were asked to identify their top three priorities for improving transit services in Butte County in the next three years. Increasing headways on B-Line Service, providing service and connectivity to outlying and unincorporated communities, and improving facilities were the top priorities expressed by a majority of stakeholders. Another priority was how to help students navigate the service and schedule information, and restructuring of services to better serve secondary streets and destinations beyond downtown Chico. The specific suggestions under each category are summarized in Figure 5-44.

Figure 5-44 Short-Term Priorities for Improving Regional Transit Services

Frequency Improvements	Infrastructure and Information Improvements	Service to outlying communities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ It would be ideal if people could travel anywhere in the county without having to wait more than 15 minutes for a bus ▪ If B-Line operated with 15-minute headways, especially in Chico, this high level of service would capture more ridership ▪ In Chico, folks want more frequent service – 15 minute headways would be ideal! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Park-and-Ride at Highway 32/99 is very crowded and sometimes no spaces available for autos creates problems for patrons who worry they may get towed. New convenient locations should be explored for Park-and-Ride lots. ▪ Proper infrastructure is needed in Paradise; a formal transit center like one in Oroville and/or a Park-and-Ride to formalize the location where people access the B-Line ▪ Many of the bus shelters are in bad condition; they should be cleaned up! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ We need to make sure that people can get to work and for social service purposes in Chico and Oroville from several communities throughout the county ▪ CSU students need routes that will take them to other parts of town such as shopping malls, movie theatres, etc. ▪ Many people in small communities don't know about transit service; the lack of service prohibits discussion of short-term needs ▪ Routes also need to serve secondary streets, not just main streets

Longer-Term Transit Needs

When asked about long-term priorities, there were few responses. A few stakeholders talked about the demographic shift in the county as the population ages there will be an increase in demand for both fixed routes and paratransit services. At the same time, the younger generation is driving less and will be looking for higher levels of fixed-route service. Other comments were about service extending beyond Butte County in all directions, serving Sacramento, Yuba and Glenn counties. Finally, one stakeholder thought that in the longer-term when B-Line replaces its bus fleet, it should consider hybrid buses and coordinate bus procurements and supporting facilities with other entities such as the College, University, and local jurisdictions.

Bicycle Network and Connectivity

A common theme was the desire for completing and funding the bicycle network in the county. Many stakeholders lamented that Bicycle Plans are in place yet the network is piecemeal because there is inadequate funding to complete it. A high priority expressed by several stakeholders is the need for more bike lanes and bicycle connectivity. A few specific quotes are as follows:

- The Esplanade is terrible for bicyclists. There are no bike lanes and the road surface is cracked and uneven. There are stop sign at every intersection and cyclists have to cross many busy streets.
- Mangrove Avenue is a problem area because there is no shoulder or bike lane.
- Bike lanes adjacent to the railroad tracks near the university campus are dark and unsafe. These lanes should be downplayed and cyclists should be encouraged to use other bike lanes.
- The Memorial Trail is multi-use trail and considered a great asset in Paradise but connectivity is needed.
- Pedestrian and bicycle circulation improvements are underway on the west side from Nord to Warner. Currently, this is a very unsafe crosswalk with no traffic light.

Bicycle-Related Issues and Concerns

Safety was mentioned as a huge concern for all stakeholders and nearly all participants spoke about two recent fatal bicycle accidents. Because of these tragic incidents, cycling has taken on a higher profile and more visibility in the county. Many stakeholders claimed, "Now is the time for a big push in educating the public about bike safety." Some stakeholders suggested education is needed at elementary schools and others would like to see expanded programs to provide helmets to school age and college students. Safety improvements are needed in downtown Chico and around the university, along with clear lane delineation, better signage, and lighting to improve bike safety in Chico and elsewhere in the county. According to one stakeholder, "We need to build separate bikeways and walkways, to separate cycling from vehicular traffic."

A few stakeholders explained that incentives to increase cycling are included in their updated general plans. These include adding outdoor covered bike parking at select locations and providing space for bicycles at residential complexes. According to some stakeholders, a few jurisdictions now require developers to provide bike parking and that these requirements should be expanded to large employers, institutions, and others in keeping with the growing bicycle culture in Butte County.

When asked if there are ways to encourage more people to walk and ride bicycles in Butte County, several suggestions were offered and are listed in Figure 5-45 below.

Figure 5-45 Strategies for Increasing Walking and Biking

To encourage more people to bike	To encourage more people to walk
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Amenities along the trails are needed to promote bike usage ▪ Let's try bike sharing like other cities such as Portland and San Francisco ▪ Provide better and more bike parking including a bike station and/or lockers at the Park-and-Ride lots, employment sites and other locations ▪ Increase distribution of bike maps ▪ Improve signage for cyclists and motorists to increase safety for everyone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ We need sidewalks in our community ▪ Expand Safe Routes to School program at the elementary and middle schools ▪ Educate parents to enhance safety on pedestrian and bike paths ▪ Increase education and enforcement so everyone feels safer

Essential Elements to Support Plan

Stakeholders were asked to identify the necessary elements to support the Transit and Non-Motorized Plan. Two themes emerged:

- **Funding.** Most stakeholders acknowledged that there might not be adequate funding to cover all desired transit and non-motorized improvements recommended in the Plan. Projects should be prioritized and opportunities and strategies identified for increasing funding such as developer impact fees and other innovative ways to maximize funding in the long-term.
- **Consistent Policies.** Several stakeholders mentioned that they are in the process of updating general plans and climate action plans. These important planning documents include policies and action plans that encourage more dense development, greater use of sustainable forms of transportation and other strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It is essential for this Transit & Non-Motorized Plan to support, advance and be consistent with the policies in these complementary planning documents.

CONCLUSION

The surveys and stakeholder interviews provide valuable input for the planning process. They show similar issues as being important to multiple groups, including bicycle safety, improved transit headways, and a comprehensive approach to linking Butte County's various jurisdictions.

