

Carbon Reduction Program - Waco MPO Project Submission

Submission date: **1 May 2023, 5:02PM**

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Introduction

Proposed Project Details

City Name:	Waco Texas
Contact Name, Title:	Serena M. Stevenson, General Manager
Email:	serenas@wacotx.gov
Phone Number:	2547501919
Project Title:	Mobilizing Microtransit
Project Location:	Waco Texas
Project Location	City of Waco No coordinates found

Project Description:

Mobilizing Microtransit sets out to redesign the city's existing transit system to enhance mobility and connectivity. This project will improve transit for existing riders today and well into the future. It has the capacity to attract new passengers based on a fully integrated service model component The integrated offerings of mobile ticketing, multi-modal trip planning, and on-demand services in a common framework, create a seamless option that enhances the overall customer experience.

This project will introduce a new concept to riders whereby WTS can customize and deploy a mobility service application from the cloud, create an efficient service by maximizing fleet usage and service productivity, and additionally introduce the use of E-Transit Electric passenger vans that are fully accessible.

Alignment with Prioritization Criteria:

1. Is your project a listed, eligible activity? **Yes**

If yes, which eligible category does your project fall under? If no, how and to what degree would your project measurably reduce transportation emissions?

2.

Does your proposed project reduce transportation emissions? In what ways?

The Reimagine Waco Transit plan calls for each microtransit zone to use one vehicle for service with an additional spare in the fleet for contingency. With the purchase of E-transit passenger vans, Waco Transit System would be able to reduce transportation emissions by decreasing the dependence on diesel and unleaded powered vehicles which will reduce CO2 from the atmosphere.

3.

Does your proposed project address racial equity, workforce and economic development, remove barriers to opportunity in both rural and urban communities, or which redress prior inequities and barriers to opportunity? How? (Project prioritization considers both AOPP and overall mobility needs.)

Integrating on-demand microtransit into existing services will allow Waco Transit to serve the community with affordable, convenient public transit, promoting economic mobility. Microtransit is unique as it creates dynamic routing. It takes a mobile smartphone app and puts it to use to create an efficient mode of transport that adapts to each passenger's individual trip needs. Microtransit can be easily accessible and highly efficient for many lower-income individuals who can't afford to own a car and have therefore been greatly underserved by traditional transit networks. This on-demand public transit option can serve as a mobility lifeline for those in low-income areas. Public transportation's role has always strived to improve equity and inclusion for those who need it most. Initially, public transit was for the elderly and those with mobility challenges, and now, it's focused on those who are underserved. Introducing this new mode to the citizens of Waco, and integrating on-demand options into our existing public transit infrastructure, will better serve our community as a whole with affordable, convenient public transportation and promote economic mobility for all.

4.

Will your proposed project benefit future generations? In what ways?

This project is aligned with the City of Waco's values and strategic goals. It facilitates economic development, creates equity, is aligned with being a resilient city, enhances the quality of life, and supports sustainability. Microtransit will decrease the number of 35-foot diesel buses traveling in community neighborhoods; however, it will expand service coverage and fill the fixed-route gaps. This project will provide a flexible coverage option for all citizens and contributes to the betterment of road users by decreasing congestion.

5.

Does your proposed project take into account the ways in which it interacts with surrounding areas and influences current and future accessibility and uses? How?

Our project can be expanded and adjusted based on land use and city growth. Our project also can leverage third-party transportation providers and applications seamlessly. The integrated software to launch microtransit will also allow for countless integrations to include intercity bus passengers i.e. Greyhound, electric bike, and electric scooter platforms. This allows for a transportation ecosystem that can commingle multiple services to maximize efficiency.

6.

What is the Local match committed to this project?

Waco Transit System would be working with a 20% match.

7.

What is the readiness level of the project? Project funds are available for obligation for a maximum of 4 years (3 years after the last day of the fiscal year for which funds are authorized). Please indicate project status for design, engineering (if applicable), ROWs, and cost estimates.

If approved for funding, the electric vans are available for purchase with no delay. WTS would look to purchase from a currently approved contractor, which would not require an RFP. The software would require an RFP which can be up to a 90-day process, to advertise, review, award, and execute the contract. WTS's goal is to provide a seamless transition to microtransit to ensure high ridership. We want to develop a strong outreach program for both internal and external stakeholders. Our goal would be full turn-key service by October 2023.

8.

Does proposed project have community support? If yes, to what extent?

The Reimagine Waco Transit plan which outlined the micortransit project underwent intensive public engagement, documented positive public comments, and was endorsed by Waco City Council on July 19, 2022. The public engagement activities and comments are attached.

Please include letters of support, public comments, endorsement from public officials, or other related documentation demonstrating type and caliber of community support.

[Public Engagment RWP.pdf](#)



CHAPTER 4 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT



PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

The Reimagine Waco Transit study presented a critical opportunity to engage a broad spectrum of stakeholders. The team used effective and inclusive approaches that encouraged open dialogue and generated informed feedback. Through this effort, the project team gained unique familiarity and understanding of the history of the transit system in Waco, including insights about the specific values and motivations of key stakeholders.

The engagement process aided the WTS project team in building trust and transparency within the community. Moreover, the Reimagine Waco Transit study team deployed a combination of online and in-person participation strategies based on lessons learned and best practices from previous transit studies in Waco, including the Waco Rapid Transit Corridor (RTC) Feasibility Study and the Waco Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Preliminary Engineering and Environmental Review Study. The qualitative data from these sessions was used to supplement the quantitative research of the project team's existing conditions, scenario development, and recommendations.

Goals and Objectives

The overarching goal of the public engagement effort for the Reimagine Waco Transit study included providing continuity and education on transit realignment possibilities and collecting essential insights on opportunity areas. The team strived to foster respectful and informative community dialogue.

Stakeholder and public input were imperative to develop a plan that accurately identified and addressed rider needs. As part of the project team's engagement objective, the public was involved early by providing continuous, transparent, and effective access to information about the study and the decision-making process used to determine final recommendations. By involving the public throughout the life of the study, the project team employed a transparent decision-making process that encouraged the development of community-driven final outcomes.

Cultural knowledge of Waco from participants also helped articulate issues and establish additional project objectives. This feedback created dynamic solutions to enhance the fixed route transit system. A diverse project steering committee engaged a full range of voices in the regional planning area, especially disenfranchised communities historically excluded from decision making processes. Throughout this process, the project team remained committed to listening to and seeking input from throughout the community.

The following objectives were established and utilized to evaluate the success of the project's outreach efforts and to ensure the goal of the public engagement process was met:

- Establish early and continuous public participation opportunities that provide timely information to all interested parties.
- Provide access to quantitative findings on the project to enhance the public's knowledge and ability to participate in the development of the system realignment.
- Provide adequate notice of participation opportunities, plus time for public review and commentary at key decision points.

- Ensure public participation opportunities are held at convenient and accessible locations and times (in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as amended).
- Make information accessible using visualization techniques and appropriate electronically accessible formats.
- Include measures for seeking input from and for considering the needs of communities that are most affected by transit system changes and historically underserved populations.
- Collaborate with the stakeholders on identification of issues, prioritization of alternatives, and potential final recommendations.
- Provide a contact to listen, acknowledge, and respond promptly to public questions and issues.
- Target questions and conversations directly to performance measures that can enhance access and use of the bus system.

Who is “the public”?

The section below describes the various members of the public that were engaged as part of the Reimagine Waco Transit study.

General Public

The team engaged with residents throughout the Waco metropolitan area to understand their goals and priorities for the future of public transportation in the community. The project team gathered feedback to help better understand mobility issues in the area and implement changes to offer improved accessibility and connectivity. The team placed a focus on capturing input from a variety of different groups by making the process accessible to everyone.

Key Stakeholders

The Reimagine Waco Transit study identified key stakeholders in the metropolitan area of Waco based on previous studies and familiarity with the community. Stakeholders that were identified included university administration, elected officials, transit leaders, economic development professionals, and those with local expertise as well as a strong influence in the community. Engaging contributors to the success of the local transit system provided an unparalleled understanding of the challenges and threats within the area.

Steering Committee

A project steering committee consisted of a predetermined group of people that helped guide strategic decisions throughout the study process. The steering committee played a major role in the execution and maintenance of the recommendations that resulted from the study. The committee consisted of representatives from both the Waco Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and Waco Transit System (WTS), in addition to other community leaders.

Public Engagement Process

The public engagement process for the Reimagine Waco Transit study took place between October 2021 and June 2022 and included the following three phases.

Public Engagement Phase 1

The first public engagement phase was designed to raise awareness about the Reimagine Waco Transit study and to gauge attitudes towards the current system and planning gaps. The input collected during this phase helped inform the needs assessment for the study and the development of future transit scenario recommendations.

Public Engagement Phase 2

The second public engagement phase focused on soliciting input on the future transit scenario recommendations that were created based on feedback from the previous public engagement phase and the results from the quantitative analysis of the transit system. Phase two emphasized the overarching themes from the input collected during the first public engagement phase. Public feedback results from this phase informed the final plan recommendations.

Public Engagement Phase 3

As part of the third public engagement phase, the final plan was presented to City Council along with any comments received during the period for final adoption and selection of a scenario.

Public Engagement Strategies

WTS utilized multiple strategies to support the engagement process for the Reimagine Waco Transit study.

Key strategies to support the public engagement effort for the study included a blend of socially distanced in-person events and online tools as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. These strategies are described below.

In-Person Events

Meet the Public

Reaching the transit systems' customers was a critical goal for WTS. Further, the safe implementation of drop-in, pop-up tabling, and in-route advertising and engagement methods worked well to drive interest and increase feedback on the study. Meeting the public where they are helped facilitate crucial conversations for better understanding the daily uses of the transit system. Additionally, conversations helped build trust through transparency during the planning process. These small community discussions took place at public events, transit service locations, schools, community sporting events, and popular commercial areas.

The following listing identifies the various events where the project team hosted information tables and interfaced with community members.

Public Engagement Phase 1

- Find Your Waco Life Festival - Oct. 22, 2021



- CROctober Fest - Oct. 22, 2021



- Waco Transit Center - Oct. 22, 2021



To help inform and educate the public and encourage their participation in the study, an informational display board was used at the in-person events conducted during Public Engagement Phase 1.

FIGURE 22: PROJECT INFORMATION DISPLAY BOARD

Reimagine Waco Transit

We are Reimagining Waco Transit to improve connectivity and mobility for everyone in the community. Our engagement process aims to provide information about what makes transit work and gather input about what transit should look like in Waco.

Whether you take the bus, ride a bike, use a mobility device, or drive a car, we need your input to help develop transit recommendations.

Your insights will directly shape the future of transit in Waco!

GOALS OF THE PROJECT

- 1 IMPROVE CONNECTIVITY
- 2 MINIMIZE TRAVEL TIME
- 3 PROPOSE COST-EFFECTIVE SOLUTIONS

HIGH FREQUENCY VS INCREASED COVERAGE

HIGH-FREQUENCY ROUTE



HIGH-COVERAGE ROUTE



Frequency refers to how often a bus comes to each stop. Increasing the frequency of a bus route means that the bus comes more often.

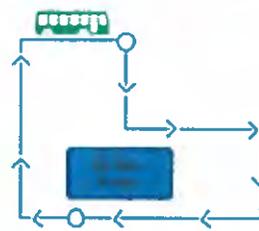
Coverage refers to the area the bus route services. Increasing a route's coverage means the bus travels through in more places, but can take longer.

TAKE THE SURVEY ONLINE:

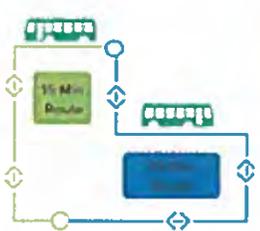


Visit us online for project updates and ways to get involved:
<https://reimaginewacostransit.atginc.hub.arcgis.com/>

CIRCULATOR VS BI-DIRECTIONAL SERVICE



CIRCULATOR ROUTE

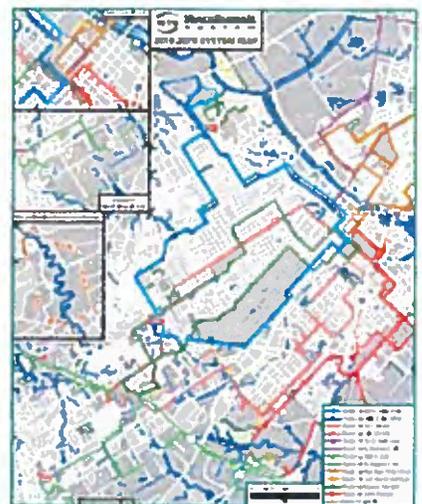


BI-DIRECTIONAL ROUTES

Circulator buses follow their route in one direction.

Bi-Directional routes have buses run in both directions. These routes tend to be more direct.

EXISTING TRANSIT SYSTEM



 | REIMAGINE WACO TRANSIT

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Public Engagement Phase 2

- **Kick Off – April 7th, 2022**

The team kicked off Phase 2 with a presentation to the Waco Metropolitan Organization’s Technical Advisory Committee.

The project team created flyers to disseminate project information. Below is a map showing the locations where flyers were distributed.



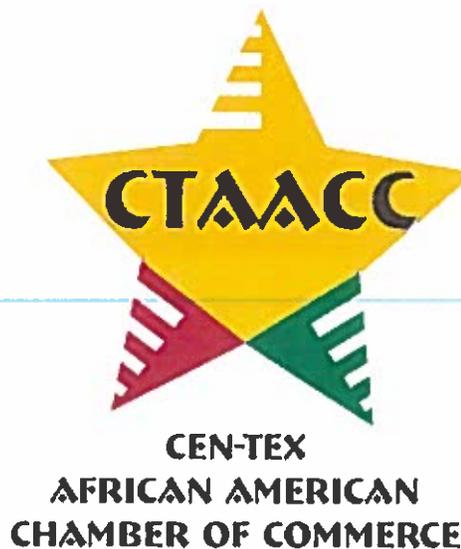
- **Waco MPO Policy Board Meeting – April 21st, 2022**

- **Business Community Outreach Meeting (virtual) – April 21st, 2022 at 10:00 a.m.**

This meeting directly engaged local businesses and business chambers. The Greater Waco Chamber of Commerce hosted this virtual meeting to hear more about the proposed changes to the transit system, ask questions, and learn how to promote the survey. The following participants were included in the meeting and invitees were encouraged to share information and survey materials with their members and networks. Organizing with the business community allowed the project team to expand its engagement reach to inform and engage residents:

- AT&T
- Catholic Charities of Central TX
- Heart of Texas Workforce Solutions
- City of Waco
- Bitty & Beau’s Coffee
- Waco Hispanic Chamber of Commerce

- McGregor Chamber of Commerce
- Bear Mountain
- Friends for Life
- Mosaic Waco
- Hotel Indigo
- The Warren Group
- Cuppie Cakes
- Richland Mall



**GREATER
WACO
CHAMBER™**

- **Open House at Waco Transit Center** – April 28th, 2022, at 12:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.
The open house event held at the Waco Transit Center invited the community to learn about the proposed scenarios. The project team distributed printed material about the proposed scenarios, including time travel maps to illustrate changes in travel times between origins and destinations. The project team also informed residents about microtransit integration and had laptops on-site for attendees to complete surveys at the event.
- **Neighborhood Leaders’ Network meeting** – April 28th, 2022, at 6:00 p.m.
This network meeting brought together neighborhood associations of Waco to distribute information through their networks and encourage others to submit survey responses.

The neighborhood association representatives were able to serve as stewards of the plan and speak to the specific changes that would impact their neighborhood to community members. Attendees included representatives from the following neighborhood associations:

- Parkdale Viking Hills
- Brookview
- Alta Vista
- Cameron Park
- Brook Oaks
- Cedar Ridge
- Dean Highland
- Oakwood

Public Engagement Phase 3

Following final public comment, the final plan and alternative scenarios were submitted to Waco City Council for approval and a preferred alternative with public comments documented.

Public Survey

During Public Engagement Phase 1, a public survey was used to help the project team gain a better understanding of community concerns and ideas.

The survey served two purposes:

- Provided an opportunity for the public to provide valuable input about transit that was used to directly inform recommendations.
- Helped educate the public about what a great transit system can look like and accomplish.

The survey was made available October 2021 through December 2021 and was distributed by email to key stakeholders, placed on the project webpage, and shared with the public at tabling events. A QR code was also developed to enable mobile access to the online survey at public transit stops and tabling events.

Multiple social media postings were placed on WTS's Facebook page to encourage community members to complete the online survey. Distributing surveys through both physical and digital mediums facilitated the opportunity for participants on both sides of the digital divide to provide meaningful feedback.

Hard copies of the survey that were made available to the public at events were coded to help track the results and trends associated with the event area or event. The hard copies of the survey and online survey were made available in English and Spanish.

Hosting in-person events and conducting the survey helped the project team better understand community values in relation to transit service.

During Public Engagement **Phase 2**, community survey responses were collected in person and online at various outreach meetings. The survey presented maps of the three draft scenarios:

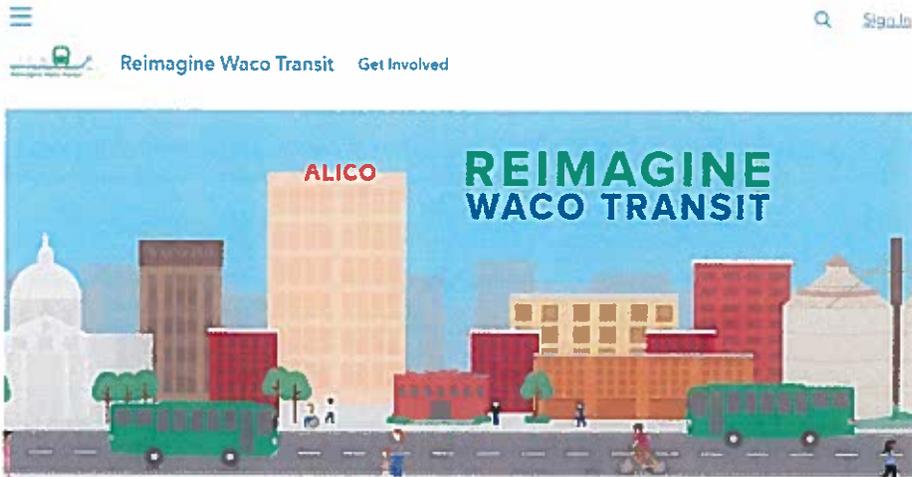
<p>Scenario 1A: <i>Full BRT Alignment</i></p>  <p>A realigned fixed route transit network that is designed to minimize travel time, improve connectivity and leverage the investment being made in a full build out of the BRT system.</p>	<p>Scenario 1B: <i>MOS BRT Alignment</i></p>  <p>A hybrid scenario that blends elements from both scenarios to achieve the same goals of Scenario A but for a scaled back version of the BRT system.</p>	<p>Scenario 2: <i>Blank Slate</i></p>  <p>A "blank slate" with focus on developing a network that balances the needs and the wants of the community by matching transit service with the underlying markets.</p>
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The survey had a system map for each scenario with information on destinations, and a question about whether the proposed scenario would save the respondent's time or not. Space was provided below the prompt to check a box so that respondents could explain why they selected a response.

Webpage

A webpage with key information about the study and details about how to stay involved in the project was made available throughout the entire study process. As the study progressed, the webpage was updated to reflect key updates and public input opportunities. The webpage was also linked to the WTS and Waco MPO websites.

FIGURE 23: REIMAGINE WACO PROJECT WEBPAGE



Information Distribution Through Third-Party Organizations

English and Spanish language project-related marketing materials designed for website and social media use were shared with various third-party organizations such as local universities, politicians, business interest groups, and small businesses. The organizations were requested to help inform their respective audiences about the Reimagine Waco Transit study and the opportunities to inform the study.

Project-related marketing materials were provided to the following organizations:

Public Engagement Phase 1

- Art Locally Waco
- Downtown Waco
- Prosper Waco
- Waco Bicycle Club
- Waco Walks

Public Engagement Phase 2

- Union Food Hall
- Running Home
- Letterpress
- Coming Home to Waco
- EOAC Community Services
- City of Waco Development Center
- Spice Village
- Bitt and Beau's Coffee
- Fabled Bookshop and Café
- Provident Heights Elementary School
- Poco Loco Supermercado
- Waco Car Audio
- Twenty-Fifth Street Bazaar
- N&S Grocery Store
- Pollos El Rey
- Waco Charter School
- Pinewood Coffee Bar
- Yaki Texas Food Truck
- South Waco Recreation Center
- Waco Ale Company
- Downtown Barbershop
- New Day Bar
- Waco Work
- Lighthouse Coffee & Wine

FIGURE 24: MARKETING MATERIALS (PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PHASE 1)

We Want to Hear from You!

Waco Transit System, The City of Waco, and the Waco MPO are conducting **Reimagine Waco Transit** to improve connectivity and mobility for everyone in the Waco Community. We are looking for **your input** on how we can improve our transit systems to better connect you! Use the **QR code** or visit our website to take the survey today.

<https://reimaginewacotransit-etginc.hub.arcgis.com/>

Reimagine Waco Transit

¡Queremos saber de ti!

Waco Transit System, la ciudad de Waco y Waco MPO están llevando a cabo **Reimagine Waco Transit** para mejorar la conectividad y la movilidad para todos en la comunidad de Waco. ¡Estamos buscando **su opinión** sobre cómo podemos mejorar nuestros sistemas de tránsito para conectarlo mejor! Utilice el **código QR** o visite nuestro sitio web para realizar la encuesta hoy.

<https://reimaginewacotransit-etginc.hub.arcgis.com/>

Reimagine Waco Transit

FIGURE 25: MARKETING MATERIALS (PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PHASE 1)

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ALICO

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ALICO

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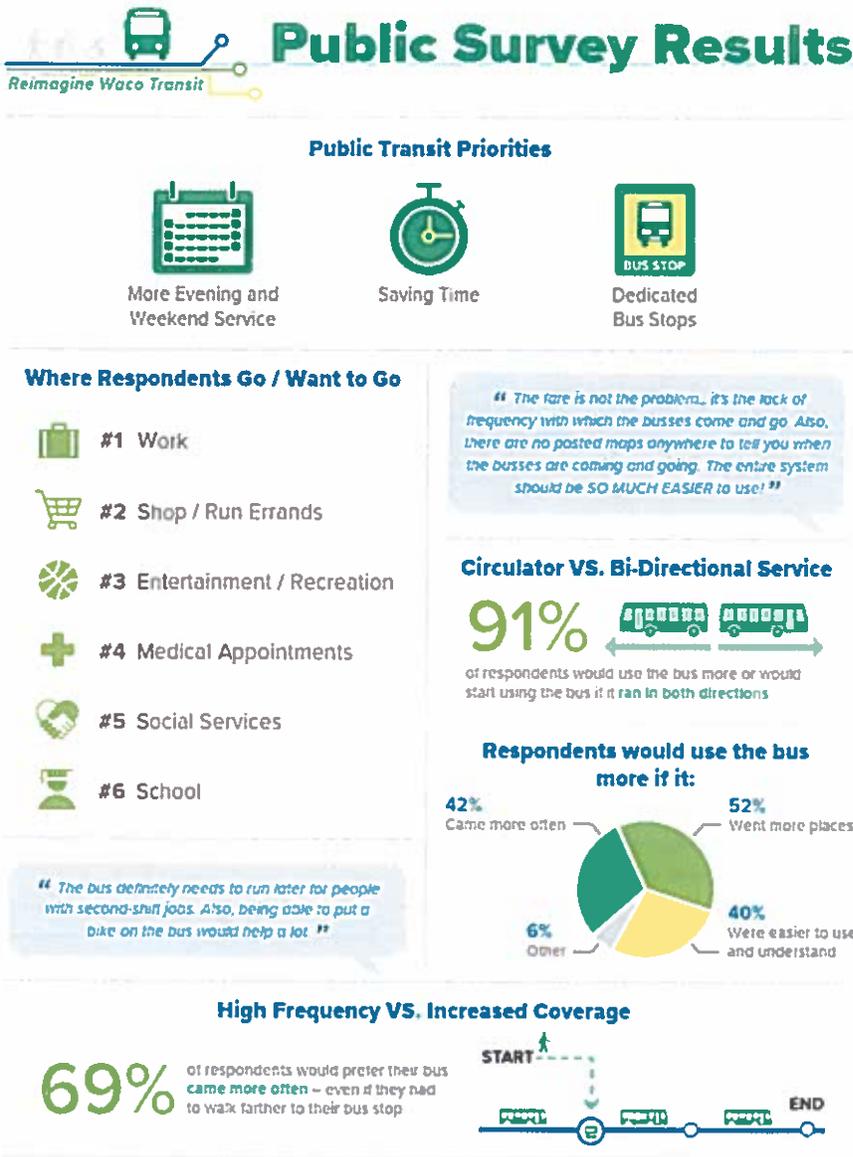
Email Updates

Email messages were distributed to over 325 stakeholders using the listservs from the previous RTC Feasibility and BRT studies; including stakeholders that provided comments on the Reimagine Waco Transit study and/or that requested to be added to the listserv for the study. The email messages were used to create awareness about the Reimagine Waco Transit study, provide key updates about the study, and encourage stakeholder participation.

FEEDBACK RESULTS

As mentioned earlier in this plan, the project team incorporated survey feedback into the scenario plans and made changes to routes in response. By using surveys and soliciting feedback, the team was able to craft system plans that respond to resident needs.

FIGURE 26: PUBLIC SURVEY RESULTS (PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PHASE 1)



CONCLUSION

The Waco community demonstrated overwhelming support for rethinking and realigning public transit and expressed the desire and need for transit growth and expansion. Stakeholder support and participation ensured that public engagement efforts had broad reach using both traditional in-person and virtual methods. Comments from both bus operators and members of the public stressed the need for improving connectivity and the desire for more intuitive route design, as well as for greater frequency and span of service.

As the City of Waco continues to grow and invest in transformational projects such as the Riverfront Development and the Franklin conversion, so must the investment and expansion of its transit system. Buses that come more often and provide greater connection to the places riders want to go will create a more convenient system, saving transit users time. This exhaustive and robust public engagement effort has ensured that the technical recommendations of each scenario are truly representative of the Waco community.
