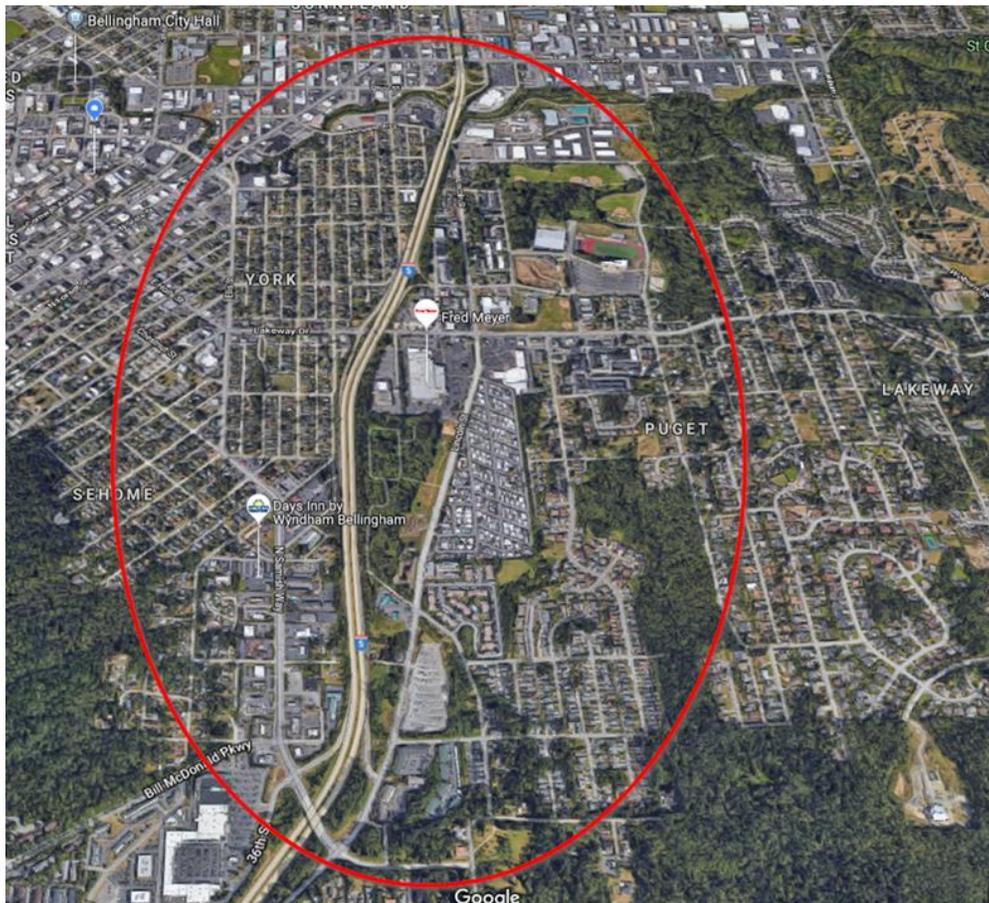




Lincoln-Lakeway Multimodal Transportation Study

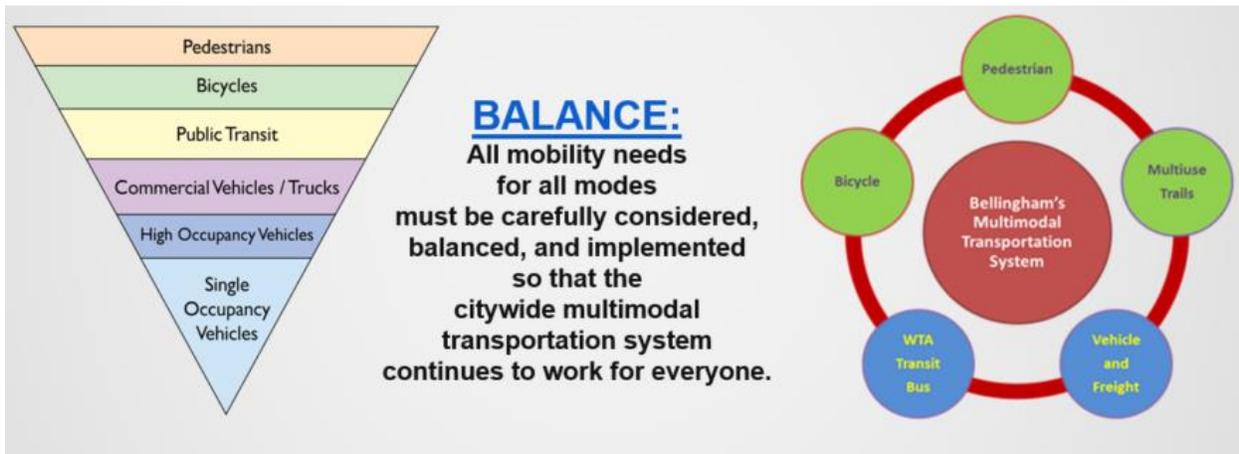
Community Survey Report - August 2020



Community survey created and administered by Bellingham Public Works (Chris Comeau) and TranspoGroup, Inc. (Jon Pascal, Jane Jessen, and Cameron Duncan)
Survey data analyzed and reported by Riley Hine, M.A. Environmental Studies, WWU and Chris Comeau, AICP-CTP, Transportation Planner, Bellingham Public Works

Introduction

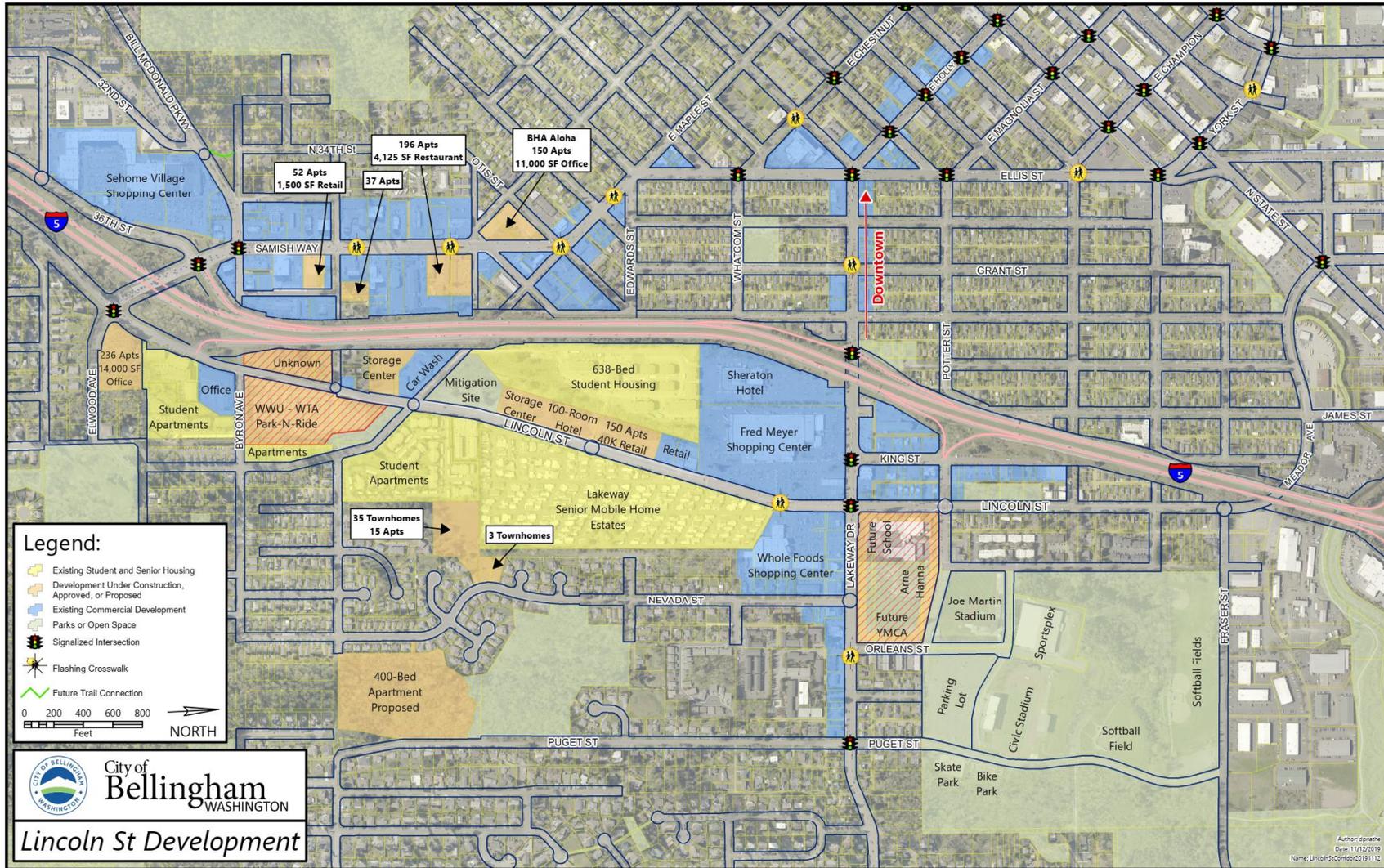
The purpose of the 2020-2021 [Lincoln-Lakeway Multimodal Transportation Study](#) is to identify transportation improvement needs for all user groups – pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and vehicle drivers – consistent with the [Bellingham Complete Networks](#) philosophy (below), the [Pedestrian Master Plan](#), and the [Bicycle Master Plan](#). This is the same approach that has been taken by previous studies in this complicated region of the City, such as the 2016-2017 [Lakeway Drive Bikeway Study](#) and the 2016-2017 [Samish-Maple-Ellis Corridor Study](#), both of which have resulted in millions of dollars of new safety improvements for pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and vehicles while transforming predominantly auto-oriented roadways into multimodal transportation corridors for people.



In locations where there is currently an imbalance of physical space dedicated to various user groups, there may need to be a re-allocation of limited physical space between curbs on predominantly auto-oriented roadways. One example of this in the Lincoln-Lakeway study area is the Bicycle Master Plan recommendation to accommodate bicyclists on Lincoln Street and on Lakeway Drive, both of which carry high vehicle traffic volumes and experience significant traffic congestion during the local evening rush hour (PM Peak). This is further complicated by the presence of the Interstate 5/Lakeway interchange, which impacts both Lincoln Street and Lakeway Drive, as well as the I-5 mainline.

Finding a financially feasible solution to this complex transportation problem will involve a careful balancing effort to try and provide safe physical space for pedestrians and bicyclists while not creating untenable safety problems for vehicles. In other words, in places where there are currently no bicycle facilities, but multiple lanes for automobiles, then consideration must be given to how to rebalance this limited physical space. Compromises may need to be made, such as narrower vehicle lane widths, sidewalk space shared between pedestrians and bicyclists, or removal of vehicle travel lanes in favor of dedicated bicycle lanes. The width of the roadway will not change, but the allocation of roadway space must change.

The 2020-2021 Lincoln-Lakeway Multimodal Transportation Study is a multi-agency partnership involving the [City of Bellingham](#), [Whatcom Transportation Authority \(WTA\)](#), the [Whatcom Council of Governments \(WCOG\)](#), and the [Washington State Department of Transportation \(WSDOT\)](#). Transportation planning and engineering consulting services are being provided by [TranspoGroup, Inc.](#)



Lincoln-Lakeway Multimodal Transportation Study Area

Methodology

The original study planned to collect transit data and normal traffic data in the study area. During Spring 2020, COVID-19 precautions prohibited the collection of normal traffic and transit data, given that people largely stopped driving under the Governor's Stay-At-Home order. Implementing this community survey allowed data collection while people stayed at home. The sampling method for the survey was non-probability, opportunity and snowball sampling. On May 11, 2020 there was a [citywide press release](#) for the Lincoln-Lakeway Survey that invited the general public to participate. The link to the [online survey](#) was also emailed to the Presidents of seven Neighborhood Associations (Puget, York, Sehome, Samish, Downtown, Whatcom Falls, and Sudden Valley) with a request for them to notify their memberships of the opportunity to participate in the online survey.

Special Populations

Senior Citizens: The Lakeway Estates senior mobile home park is located on the east side of Lincoln Street immediately south of the Whole Foods grocery store and special efforts were made to ensure participation and maximize responses to the survey from the residents of this site. The on-site manager was contacted by telephone and, at her advice, paper copies were mailed to the residents of each of the 200 mobile homes.

Western Washington University (WWU) Students: Public Works staff worked with WWU Community Relations staff to inform landlords of many large apartment complexes located in the study area, which house WWU students, that a link to the on-line survey would be sent to their student residents. The City will continue to collaborate with WWU as an institution with interests in the study area, such as the Lincoln Creek Transportation Center park-n-ride.

County Residents Living in Sudden Valley: Lakeway Drive is the one and only route available to the 6,000 residents of Sudden Valley on the southwest shore of Lake Whatcom, about 9 miles from downtown Bellingham. With very limited commercial services and employment opportunities in Sudden Valley, almost all of the residents drive into Bellingham each day for various activities and are heavy users of transportation corridors in the study area. Public Works emailed the link to the online survey to the Sudden Valley Association and requested that the link be sent to as many residents as possible.

Spanish Language Speakers: The Lincoln-Lakeway survey was translated and made available in a [Spanish language version](#) on the web page and notice of availability online and in paper format was emailed to all Neighborhood Associations. The City received no requests for the Spanish language version of the survey and no completed on-line or mail-in surveys were in the Spanish version.

Findings

The survey was composed of 11 questions addressing current state of transportation components in the area, importance of improvements of those components, and how the area is used by survey respondents. A total of 558 responses were collected. The following table is a breakdown of the neighborhoods that the respondents noted that they reside in. Given the relatively low proportions of respondents in each differing neighborhood, analysis of the survey

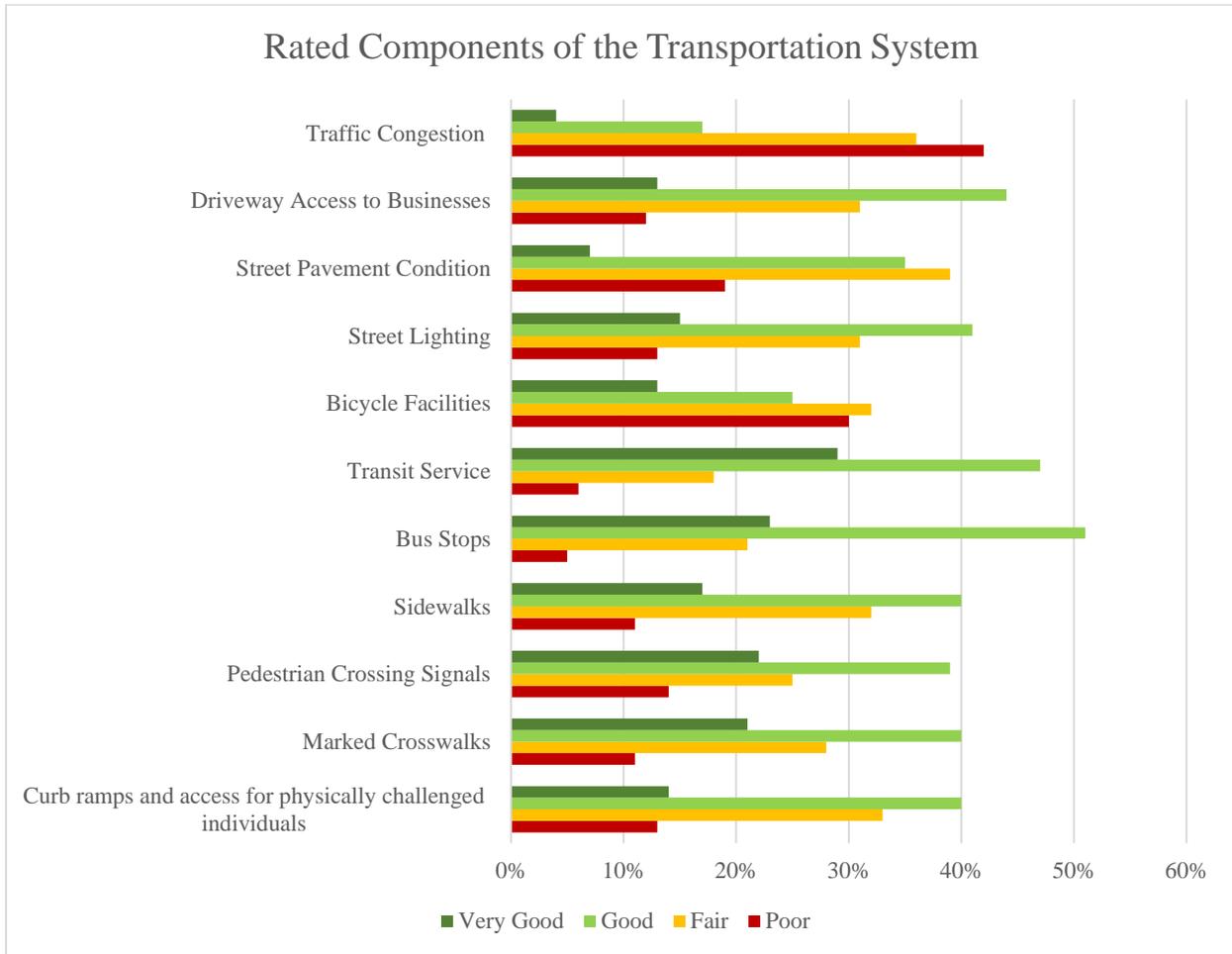
questions related to the geographic neighborhood of the respondent were not helpful for this study. There was a high proportion (23%) of respondents that noted their neighborhood as “Other”. Given that this was the second highest neighborhood reported from the survey and that the City press release invited participation by all citizens regardless of neighborhood residence, inferences based on neighborhood location would not provide much information.

	Count	Proportion
<i>Samish</i>	99	18%
<i>Samish Urban Village</i>	6	1%
<i>Sehome</i>	20	4%
<i>Puget</i>	52	9%
<i>Whatcom Falls</i>	45	8%
<i>York</i>	19	3%
<i>Downtown</i>	139	25%
<i>Puget-Lakeway Estates</i>	47	9%
<i>Other</i>	130	23%

1) Overall, how would you rate the transportation systems in the area?

	Poor =1		Fair = 2		Good = 3		Very Good = 4		Mean	N =
Curb ramps and access for physically challenged individuals	70	13%	176	33%	210	40%	71	14%	3.01	527
Marked Crosswalks	62	11%	150	28%	220	40%	112	21%	2.7	544
Pedestrian Crossing Signals	74	14%	136	25%	216	39%	123	22%	2.7	549
Sidewalks	57	11%	173	32%	219	40%	94	17%	2.65	543
Bus Stops	27	5%	109	21%	264	51%	123	23%	2.9	523
Transit Service	32	6%	94	18%	237	47%	148	29%	2.99	511
Bicycle Facilities	156	30%	163	32%	128	25%	70	13%	2.2	517
Street Lighting	71	13%	162	31%	219	41%	78	15%	2.57	530
Street Pavement Condition	104	19%	208	39%	187	35%	36	7%	2.29	535
Driveway Access to Businesses	62	12%	165	31%	233	44%	70	13%	2.59	530
Traffic Congestion	230	42%	197	36%	93	17%	23	4%	1.8	543

Rated Components of the Transportation System

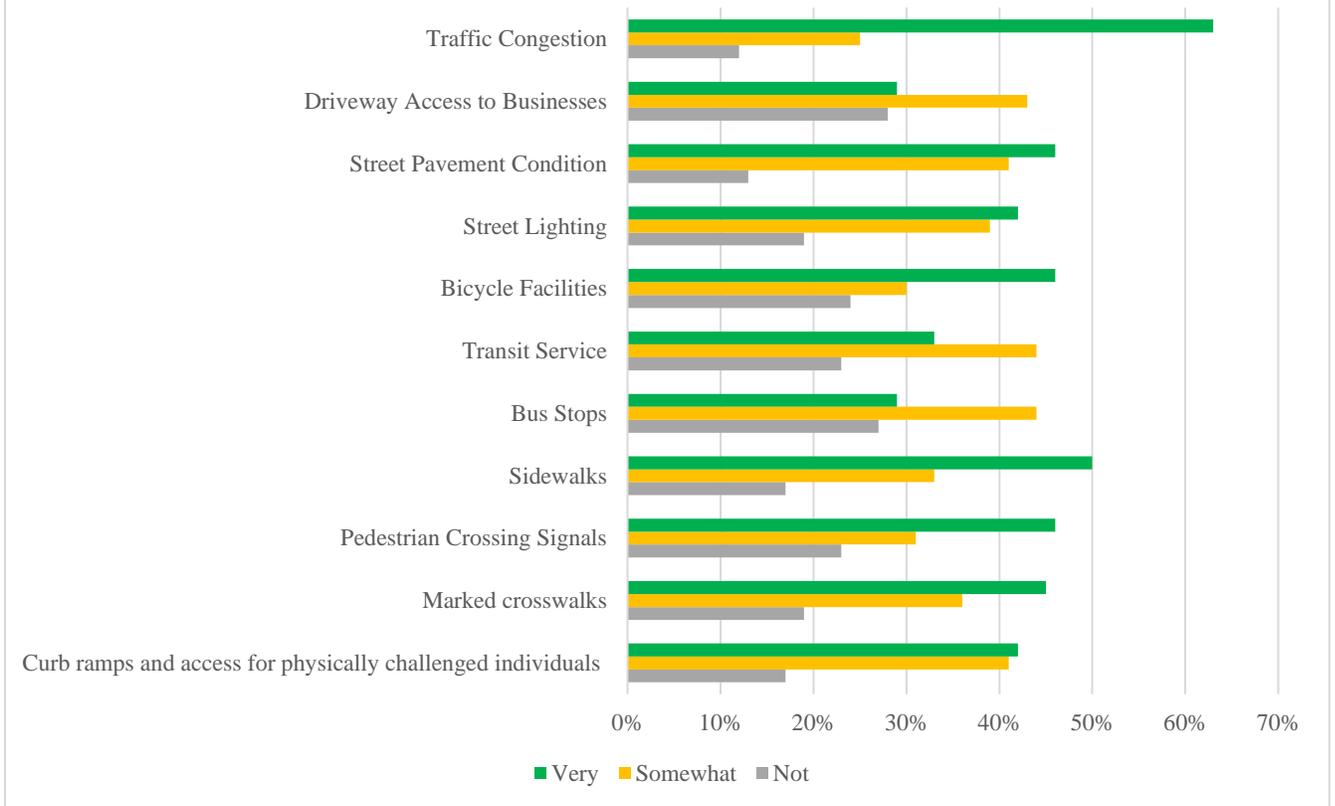


General Observations: Overall, each element of the transportation system was rated as “Good” to “Very Good” by a majority (>50%) of survey respondents with the exceptions of Bicycle Facilities, Street Pavement Condition, and Traffic Congestion, which were the three worst rated categories. WTA bus stops and transit service were consistently rated the highest (74% and 76%), followed by marked crosswalks (61%), pedestrian crossing signals (61%), sidewalks (57%), street lighting (56%), and accessible curb ramps (54%). Traffic congestion was rated the poorest by a very wide margin (42%), followed by bicycle facilities (30%). Combining elements rated Good and Very Good, the highest rated components were Transit Service (76%) and WTA Bus Stops (74%).

2) How important is it to make improvements to these transportation facilities and conditions?

	Not = 1		Somewhat = 2		Very = 3		Mean	N =
Curb ramps and access for physically challenged individuals	91	17%	218	41%	229	42%	2.3	538
Marked crosswalks	103	19%	196	36%	239	45%	2.3	538
Pedestrian Crossing Signals	125	23%	165	31%	249	46%	2.2	539
Sidewalks	92	17%	177	33%	267	50%	2.3	536
Bus Stops	139	27%	234	44%	150	29%	2	523
Transit Service	120	23%	227	44%	173	33%	2.1	520
Bicycle Facilities	128	24%	160	30%	241	46%	2.2	529
Street Lighting	103	19%	207	39%	220	42%	2.2	530
Street Pavement Condition	67	13%	220	41%	247	46%	2.3	534
Driveway Access to Businesses	146	28%	229	43%	155	29%	2	530
Traffic Congestion	64	12%	133	25%	336	63%	2.5	533

Importance of Making Improvements to Components



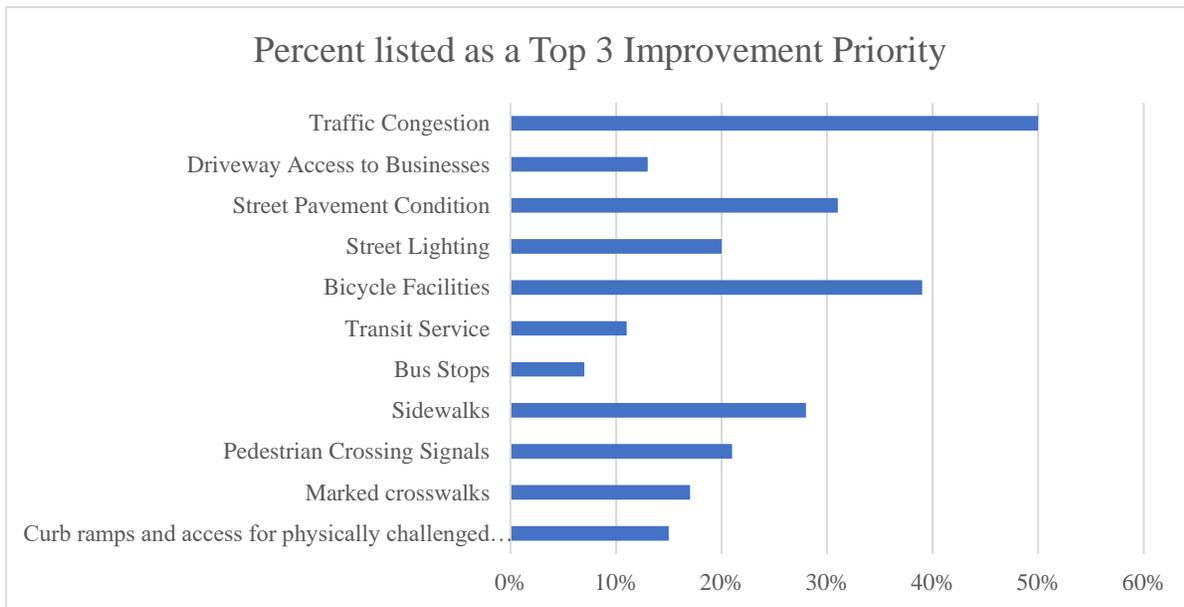
General Observations: Overall, the highest ranked elements that noted as “very important” to make improvements to are Traffic Congestion (63%) and Sidewalks (50%), followed by Street pavement condition (46%), Bicycle facilities (46%), and Pedestrian crossing signals (46%). Elements that rated the lowest need for improvement (noted as “not important”) were Driveway access to businesses and Bus stops. All elements had over 50% support for improvements at either “somewhat important” or “very important” combined.

The City openly acknowledges that there is vehicle traffic congestion in the busiest places at the busiest times of day, as is to be expected in an urban area. There is not a financially feasible way to build out of it, trying to do so would be an irresponsible use of public taxpayer dollars, and would be counter-productive in achieving the City goals to promote safety for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders. This study *will* examine some options to improve vehicle traffic circulation, such as access to and from the northbound on- and off-ramps to Interstate 5, but if found to be feasible, they may be very expensive and unlikely as practical short-term solutions.

The 2012 [Pedestrian Master Plan](#) and 2014 [Bicycle Master Plan](#) include recommendations for improvements within the study area, many of which have been completed. The 2016-2017 [Lakeway Drive Bikeway Study](#) and the 2016-2017 [Samish-Maple-Ellis Corridor Study](#) have both resulted in many improvements on these corridors, but there is more work to be done. ADA upgrades are needed on all corridors, pedestrian crossing improvements are needed in several locations, and bikeway improvements are needed on Lakeway Drive and on Lincoln Street.

3) From the categories listed above, list your top 3 transportation improvement priorities.

	Count	% of Respondents
Curb ramps and access for physically challenged individuals	75	15%
Marked crosswalks	88	17%
Pedestrian Crossing Signals	106	21%
Sidewalks	142	28%
Bus Stops	38	7%
Transit Service	59	11%
Bicycle Facilities	200	39%
Street Lighting	105	20%
Street Pavement Condition	161	31%
Driveway Access to Businesses	68	13%
Traffic Congestion	260	50%



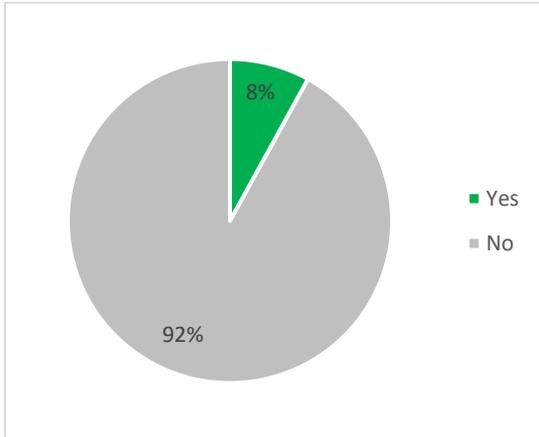
General Observations: The top improvement priority was Traffic congestion, being noted as a top 3 priority by 50% of respondents, followed by Bicycle facilities (39%), and Street pavement conditions (31%). The lowest ranked improvements were Bus stops (7%) and Transit service (11%).

The Lincoln-Lakeway Multimodal Transportation Study *will* examine some options to improve vehicle traffic circulation, such as access to and from the northbound on- and off-ramps to Interstate 5, but if found to be feasible, they may be very expensive and unlikely as practical short-term solutions. It should also be noted that traffic circulation improvements may provide smoother and safer traffic and transit flow, but don't always improve vehicle traffic congestion. Without WSDOT funding, traffic circulation improvements around I-5 cannot occur.

Pedestrian Conditions

4) Did you participate in the Pedestrian Master Planning Process in 2011-2012?

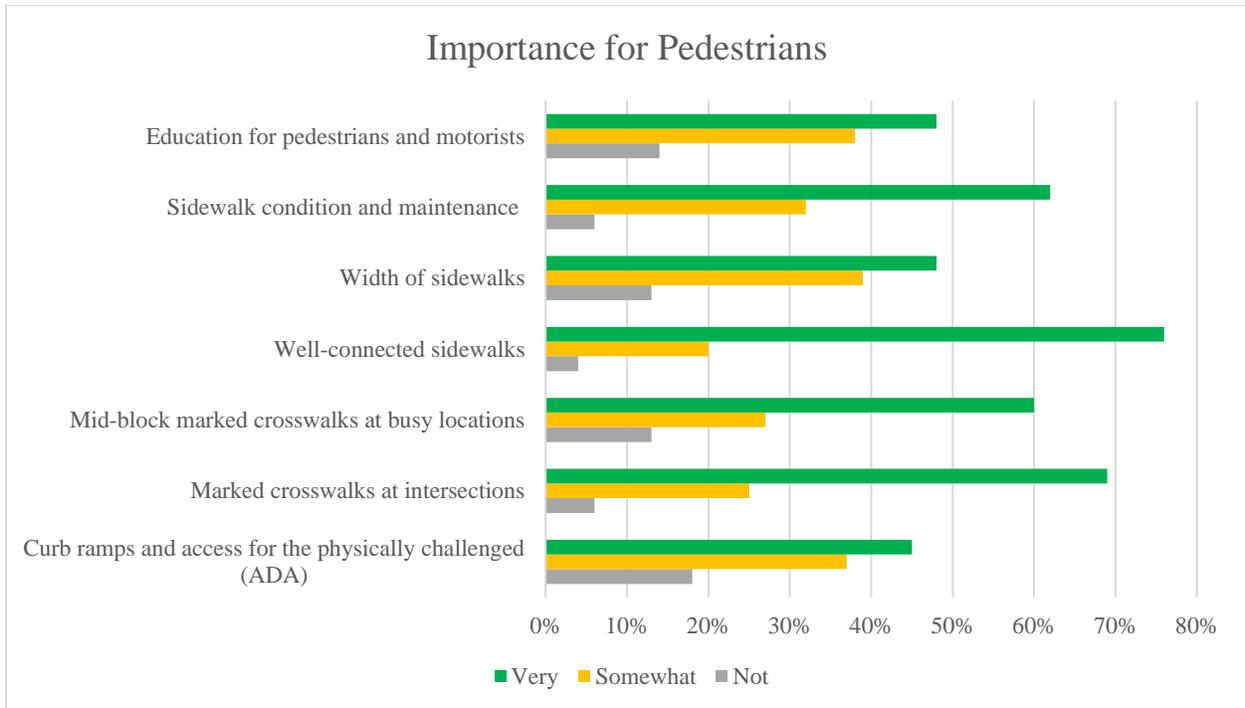
- Yes: 44 → 8% ; No: 511 → 92%



See [Pedestrian Master Plan Community Survey](#), which was done in 2011 and had 800 respondents from every neighborhood in Bellingham.

5) When walking through the study area, how important to you are the following factors?

	Not = 1		Somewhat = 2		Very = 3		Mean	N =
Curb ramps and access for the physically challenged (ADA)	96	18%	201	37%	240	45%	2.3	537
Marked crosswalks at intersections	30	6%	134	25%	377	69%	2.6	541
Mid-block marked crosswalks at busy locations	71	13%	143	27%	325	60%	2.5	539
Well-connected sidewalks	24	4%	107	20%	406	76%	2.7	537
Width of sidewalks	68	13%	208	39%	260	48%	2.4	536
Sidewalk condition and maintenance	31	6%	170	32%	335	62%	2.6	536
Education for pedestrians and motorists	74	14%	201	38%	260	48%	2.4	535

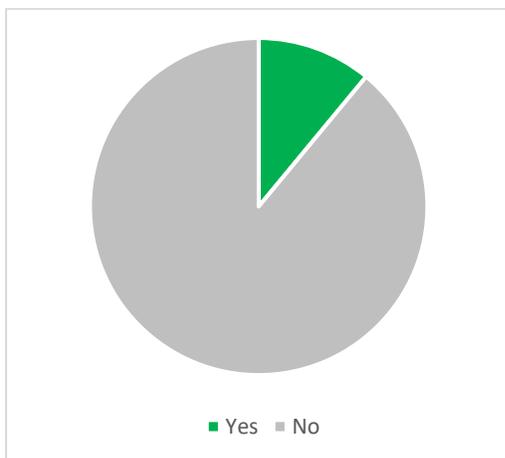


General Observations: Overall, survey responses identified the most important factors (rated as “very important”) for pedestrians walking through the area as Well-connected sidewalks (76%), Marked crosswalks at intersections (69%), and Sidewalk condition and maintenance (62%). Survey responses identified the least important factors (rated as “not important”) as Curb ramps and access for physically challenged* (18%) and Education for pedestrians and motorists (14%).

Bicycle Conditions

6) Did you participate in the Bicycle Master Planning process in 2013-2014?

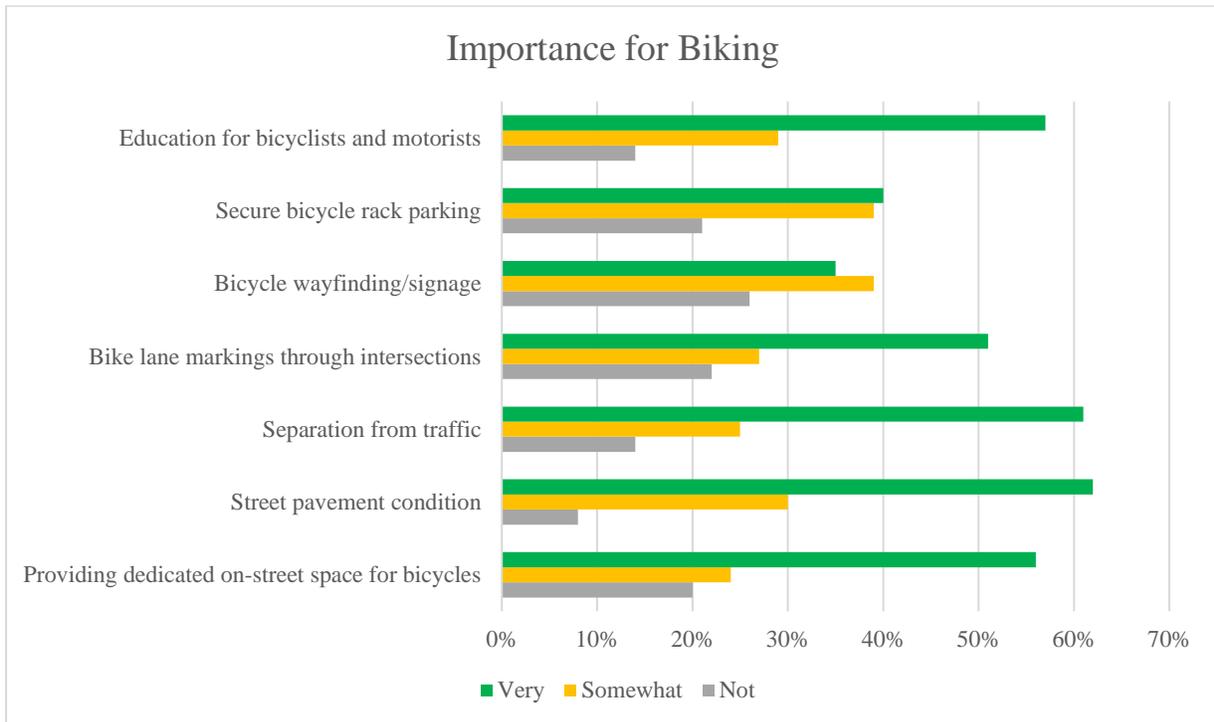
- Yes: 55 → 11% ; No: 446 → 89%



See [Bicycle Master Plan Public Engagement Process](#), which occurred 2013-2014 and involved residents from every neighborhood in Bellingham.

7) When biking through the study area, how important to you are the following?

	Not = 1		Somewhat = 2		Very = 3		Mean	N =
Providing dedicated on-street space for bicycles	102	20%	128	24%	291	56%	2.4	521
Street pavement condition	43	8%	157	30%	315	62%	2.5	515
Separation from traffic	72	14%	133	25%	316	61%	2.5	521
Bike lane markings through intersections	116	22%	138	27%	261	51%	2.3	515
Bicycle wayfinding/signage	135	26%	198	39%	179	35%	2.1	512
Secure bicycle rack parking	110	21%	202	39%	201	40%	2.2	513
Education for bicyclists and motorists	73	14%	145	29%	289	57%	2.4	507

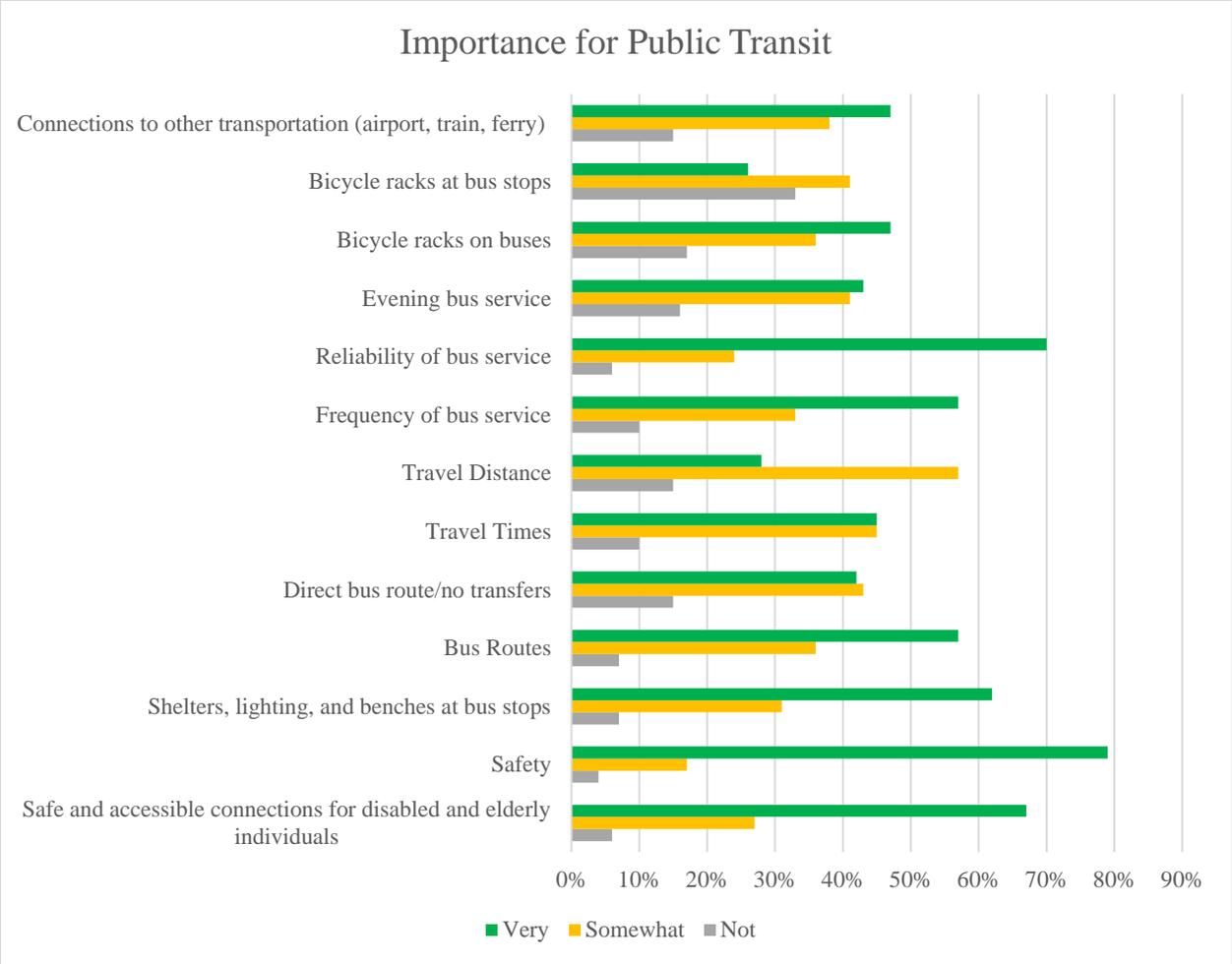


General Observations: Overall, the most important factors (rated “very important”) were Street pavement condition (62%), Separation from traffic (61%), Education for bicyclists and motorists (57%), and Providing dedicated on-street space for bicycles (56%). The least important factors (rated “not important”) were Bicycle wayfinding/signage (26%), Bike lane markings through intersections (22%), and Secure bicycle rack parking (21%).

Public Transit Conditions

8) When traveling by transit through the study area, how important to you are the following factors?

	Not = 1		Somewhat = 2		Very = 3		Mean	N =
Safe and accessible connections for disabled and elderly individuals	31	6%	139	27%	350	67%	2.6	520
Safety	20	4%	87	17%	411	79%	2.8	518
Shelters, lighting, and benches at bus stops	35	7%	163	31%	322	62%	2.6	520
Bus Routes	36	7%	183	36%	296	57%	2.5	515
Direct bus route/no transfers	75	15%	223	43%	214	42%	2.3	512
Travel Times	53	10%	231	45%	229	45%	2.3	513
Travel Distance	74	15%	291	57%	145	28%	2.1	510
Frequency of bus service	49	10%	171	33%	295	57%	2.5	515
Reliability of bus service	33	6%	122	24%	359	70%	2.6	514
Evening bus service	81	16%	211	41%	218	43%	2.3	510
Bicycle racks on buses	88	17%	181	36%	241	47%	2.3	510
Bicycle racks at bus stops	172	33%	209	41%	133	26%	1.9	514
Connections to other transportation (airport, train, ferry)	79	15%	190	38%	238	47%	2.3	507



General Observations: Overall, the most important factors for public transit (rated “very important”) were Safety (79%), Reliability of bus service (70%), and Safe and accessible connections for disabled and elderly individuals (67%). The least important factors for public transit (rated “not important”) were Bicycle racks at bus stops (33%), Bicycle racks on buses (17%), and Evening bus service (16%).

WTA is one of the primary funding partners for the 2020-2021 Lincoln-Lakeway Multimodal Transportation Study, but they are also conducting their own 20-year long-range transit plan in 2020-2021, which is called [WTA 2040](#). As part of this planning effort, WTA has identified and provided the City with all of the bus stop and bus shelter locations that will require ADA upgrades and these are being included in both the Lincoln-Lakeway Multimodal Transportation Study, as well as Bellingham’s citywide ADA Transition Plan. In addition, WTA and the City will look for opportunities to reduce delay to WTA transit buses in congested parts of the Lincoln, Lakeway, and Samish-Maple-Ellis corridors. As mentioned above, while there could be some improvements that help with smoothing traffic and transit flow, such as the realignment or removal of commercial driveways or the re-arrangement of traffic circulations and access to I-5, many will not reduce traffic congestion at the busiest times of day. At intersections, there may be opportunities for additional transit bus queue jumps, such as the one at Lakeway/Lincoln.

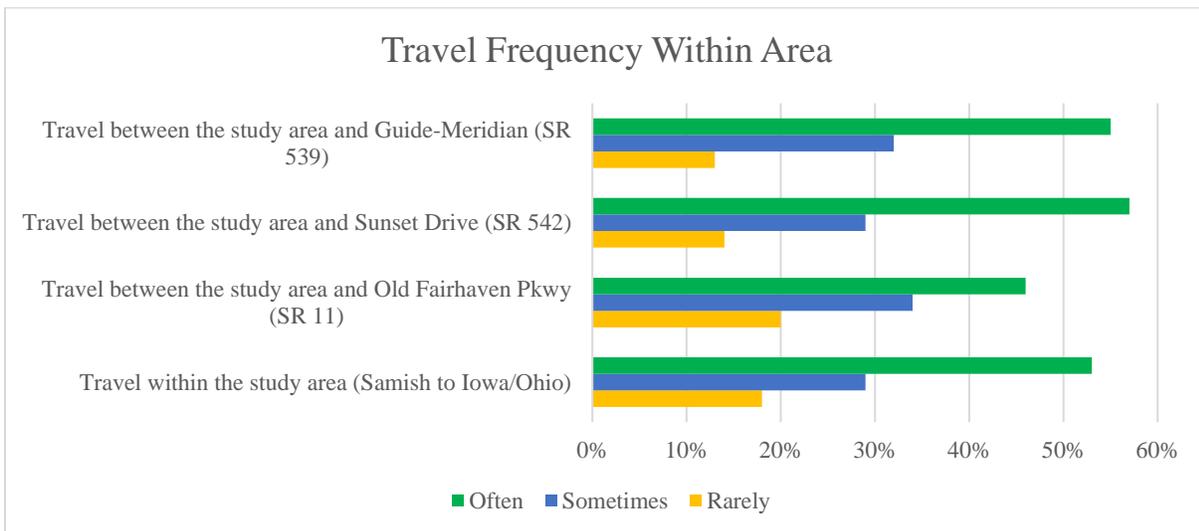
Interstate-5 Conditions

9) Please describe how you use Interstate-5 in the following ways:

	Rarely = 1		Sometimes = 2		Often = 3		Mean	N =
Travel within the study area (Samish to Iowa/Ohio)	97	18%	159	29%	290	53%	2.4	546
Travel between the study area and Old Fairhaven Pkwy (SR 11)	111	20%	185	34%	250	46%	2.3	546
Travel between the study area and Sunset Drive (SR 542)	75	14%	156	29%	314	57%	2.4	545
Travel between the study area and Guide-Meridian (SR 539)	72	13%	174	32%	296	55%	2.4	542

In addition to the above options, there was an open comments section. From these comments the following was noted about using Interstate-5:

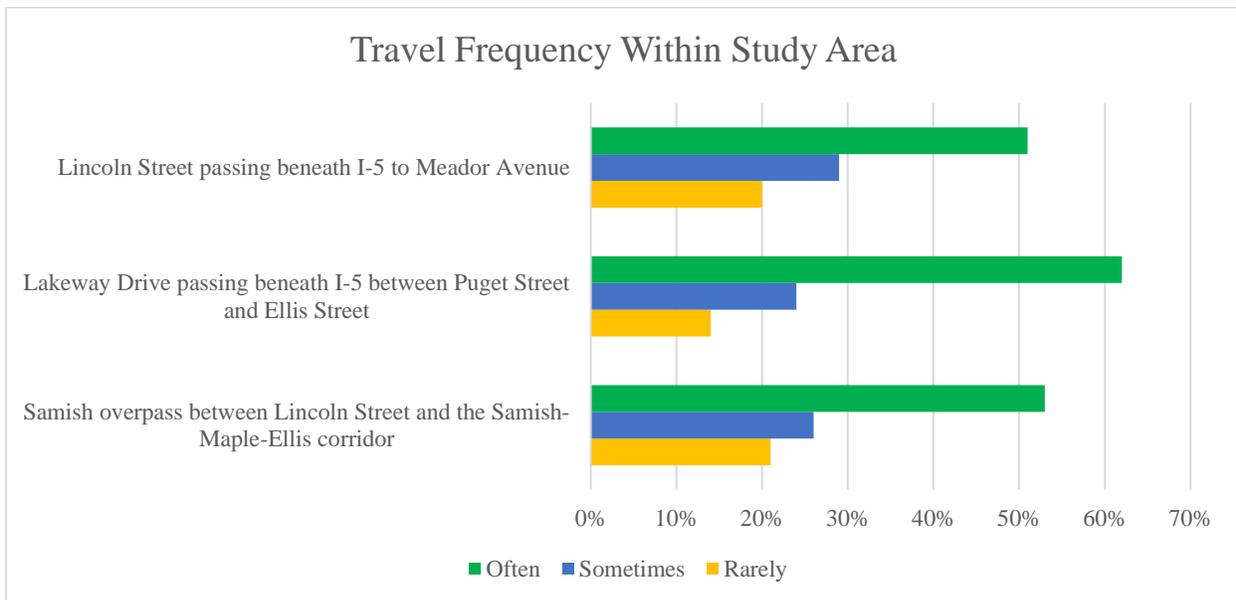
- To go out of town (North or South): 43
- To Bakerview: 14
- To Northwest Ave: 6



General Observations: Overall, each of the options was used often by 46-57% of respondents. The most rarely used section was travel between the study area and Old Fairhaven Parkway (SR 11). Each option on average favored between “sometimes” and “often”. It should be noted that with the exception of Iowa/Ohio, all of the other connections are State highways.

10) How often do you walk, bike, bus, or drive across the following locations?

	Rarely = 1		Sometimes = 2		Often = 3		Mean	N =
Samish overpass between Lincoln Street and the Samish- Maple- Ellis corridor	116	21%	143	26%	285	53%	2.3	544
Lakeway Drive passing beneath I-5 between Puget Street and Ellis Street	75	14%	132	24%	341	62%	2.5	548
Lincoln Street passing beneath I-5 to Meador Avenue	109	20%	158	29%	279	51%	2.3	546

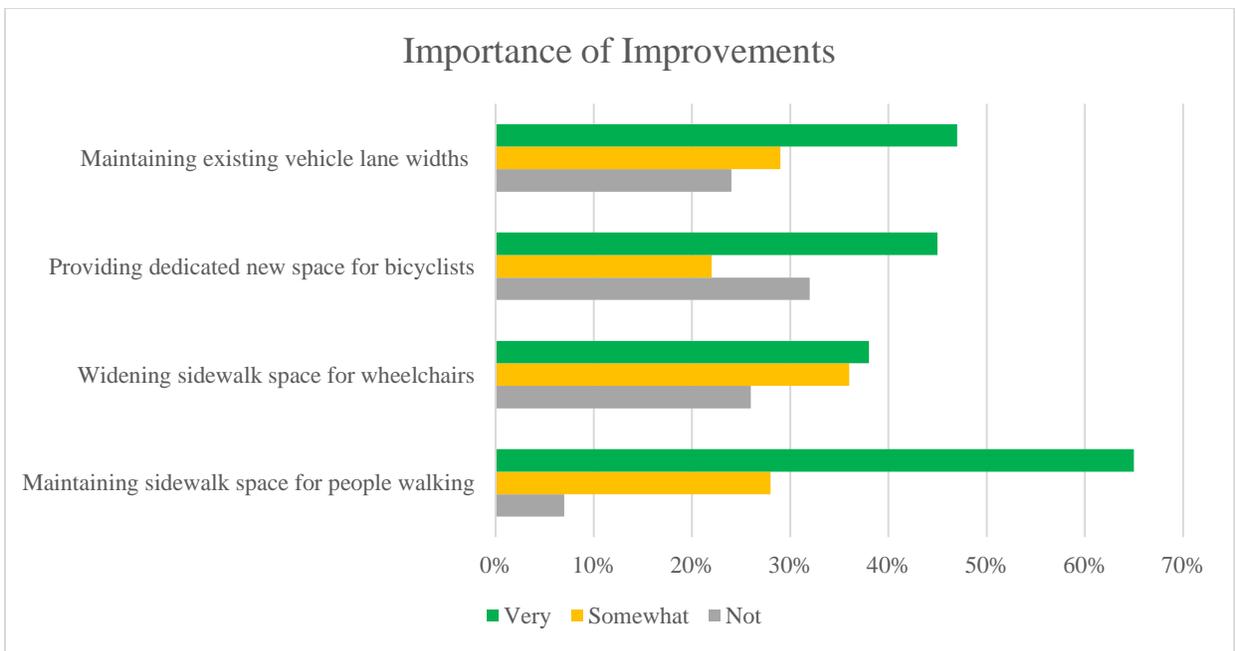


General Observations: Overall, each of the travel options was used often by the majority of respondents (between 51-62%). Less than a quarter of the respondents chose “rarely” for any of the travel options. It should be noted that Lincoln, Lakeway, and Samish are the only local arterial streets that cross Interstate 5. Lincoln Street has an uphill bike climbing lane and a downhill shared lane from Lakeway Drive to the Meador Avenue bike lanes and State Street,

which is the northeastern edge of downtown Bellingham, but does not currently have bike lanes. The Samish overpass of I-5 has bike lanes connecting to marked bike lanes on Lincoln Street and buffered bike lanes on the Samish-Maple-Ellis corridor into downtown Bellingham. Lakeway Drive does not currently have bike lanes from Puget Street through the underpass of I-5 and west to Ellis Street, but this section of Lakeway Drive is ranked as the #2 priority in Bellingham’s [Bicycle Master Plan prioritized project list](#). This section of Lakeway Drive has previously been studied in the 2016-2017 [Lakeway Drive Bikeway Study](#) and will be studied further.

11) Trade-offs will be required in order to provide space for pedestrians and bicyclists on Lakeway Drive beneath I-5. With this understanding, how important to you are the following factors relating to the Lakeway Drive/I-5 underpass?

	Not = 1		Somewhat = 2		Very = 3		Mean	N =
Maintaining sidewalk space for people walking	37	7%	155	28%	355	65%	2.6	547
Widening sidewalk space for wheelchairs	139	26%	194	36%	207	38%	2.1	540
Providing dedicated new space for bicyclists	176	32%	121	22%	246	45%	2.1	543
Maintaining existing vehicle lane widths	132	24%	157	29%	254	47%	2.2	543



General Observations: The top category for needing improvements was Maintaining sidewalk space for people walking (65%), followed by Maintaining existing vehicle lane widths (47%). The least important improvement was Providing dedicated new space for bicyclists (32%) and Widening sidewalk space for wheelchairs (26%).

These are interesting responses considering that there is currently no physical space for bicyclists and the existing sidewalks are the absolute minimum to meet ADA standards. The 2012 [Pedestrian Master Plan](#) and 2014 [Bicycle Master Plan](#) include recommendations for improvements on the Lakeway Drive underpass beneath I-5 and these were studied with WSDOT staff involvement in the 2016-2017 [Lakeway Drive Bikeway Study](#). The need for pedestrian and bicycle improvements on the Lakeway Drive underpass beneath I-5 is also identified in the 2019 [WSDOT Active Transportation Plan](#).

Discussion

This section will discuss the results across the entire survey within the following categories: Pedestrians, Bicyclists, Transit Service, and Motorists.

Pedestrians

For pedestrian conditions, the factors considered throughout the survey are curb ramps and access for physically challenged, marked crosswalks, pedestrian crossing signals, sidewalks (including width, condition, and connectivity), and educational materials for pedestrians and motorists. Overall, existing curb ramps and ADA facilities were rated the highest for pedestrian facilities and overall in “good” condition. Sidewalks were rated the least satisfactory overall. **In terms of the importance of making improvements for pedestrian facilities, the highest rated were sidewalk improvements, pedestrian crossing signals, and marked crosswalks.** For the importance of different pedestrian factors, well-connected sidewalks were rated the highest, followed by marked crosswalks at intersections, and sidewalk condition and maintenance. **Providing and maintaining sidewalk space for people walking was rated the highest out of all categories as the highest importance to improve within the study area.**

Bicyclists

For bicyclists, the factors considered were overall bicycle facilities, dedicated on-street space for bicyclists, street pavement condition, separation from traffic, bike lane markings through intersections, bicycle wayfinding/signage, secure bicycle rack parking, and educational materials for bicyclists and motorists. Overall, existing bicycle facilities were rated fairly poor, with just 38% of respondents rating the facilities “good” or “very good”. As a result, **bicycle facilities were rated one of the highest factors to make improvements on and as a top three priority.** The biggest improvements to be made within bicycle facilities were street pavement condition, separation from traffic, educational materials for both bicyclists and motorists, and providing dedicated on-street space for bicyclists. The least important factor was bicycle wayfinding and signage, bike lane markings through intersections, and secure bicycle rack parking. When it came to choosing the most important overall improvements, **45% of respondents said that providing dedicated new space for bicyclists was very important.**

WTA Transit Service

Whatcom Transportation Authority (WTA) is the regional transit service provider in the Whatcom region and is a funding partner in the Lincoln-Lakeway study. For transit service conditions, the factors considered in this survey were overall transit service, bus stops, safety, shelters and lighting, bus routes, evening service, bicycle racks on buses and stops, and connections to other transportation services. **Overall, transit service was rated very satisfactory in this survey.** Very few respondents said that the transit service or bus stops were poor. Respondents noted that it was only somewhat important to make improvements to bus stops and transit service overall. Bus stops and transit service was also rated low for top three transportation improvement priorities, inferring that improvements for transit did not rank very high across all modes of transportation. **When considering improvements within public transit, the most important factors for respondents were safety, reliability of bus service, safe and accessible connections for disabled and elderly, and shelters, lighting, and benches at bus stops.** Overall, it was not very important to respondents to have bicycle racks at bus stops and travel time was not considered to be very important.

Motorists

For the overall category of motorists, the factors considered were street lighting, street pavement condition, driveway access to businesses, traffic congestion, and vehicle lane widths. Traffic congestion was rated the poorest transportation factor in this survey, followed by poor street pavement condition. **Overall, traffic congestion was rated the highest priority to make an improvement on. Street pavement condition and street lighting was also rated highly to make improvements. Driveway access for businesses was not rated as an important improvement. Overall, maintaining existing vehicle lane widths was rated as highly important by 47% of survey respondents.** It is also important to note that for both pedestrians and for bicyclists, educational materials for motorists was rated as highly important.

Overall Discussion

Interestingly, while traffic congestion and bicycle facilities were rated as the poorest or worst transportation components, they are often in direct competition for limited physical space between curbs on existing roadways or within the available public right-of-way. Sidewalks were noted as in poor condition and the number one priority to improve upon, but sidewalks also add to the competition for limited physical roadway space with vehicles and bicycles. There is only a certain amount of physical space available on each street and therefore, trade-offs and compromises will be required if the City is to successfully provide space for all users.

For many years, Bellingham has been telling its citizens that rather than expecting the City to reduce rush hour traffic congestion, citizens should change their societal expectations about traffic congestion, especially during the local evening rush hour. Basically, the City's position is that if someone decides to get in their car at the busiest time of day and drive to one of the busiest parts of town, then they should expect to sit in traffic congestion with everyone else who wants to be there in their personal vehicles at that time of day. Traffic congestion is a common and normal condition in all urban environments in the United States. It is well-established throughout the transportation planning industry that widening streets and intersections does not improve traffic congestion, but over time makes traffic congestion incrementally worse.

Using public taxpayer dollars to fund what amounts to accommodating auto-convenience at the expense of safety and comfort for people walking, biking, and riding transit is not consistent with Bellingham's transportation plans, policies, or practices and would erode the high-quality of life for Bellingham neighborhood residents. This does not mean that there aren't opportunities to improve safety and circulation for vehicles, but typically, the City will seek those opportunities from within the already existing transportation system. Examples include converting traffic signals to roundabouts, road diets that reduce vehicle collisions and injuries and provide space for on-street bicycle facilities, and making new local street connections that change traffic circulation patterns, but also provide facilities and connectivity for all other modes. Other opportunities to improve vehicle traffic and transit flow include the realignment or removal of commercial driveways along busy arterial corridors.

Bellingham has adopted transportation goals, policies, and practices to adapt streets to serve the various mobility needs of people, not just cars. This requires trade-offs to be made in the allocation of physical space for various transportation modes. While it may not be possible to create dedicated on-street bicycle lanes and widen sidewalks on every street in the study area, looking for opportunities to do exactly that is the intended outcome of the Lincoln-Lakeway study. We are limited not just by space, but also by available funding. Therefore, each mode of transportation, including vehicles, needs to be considered, but as a part of the whole *multimodal* transportation system rather than as isolated and individual components.

Results of the survey indicate that the City needs to continue its efforts to communicate that it acknowledges traffic congestion in the busiest parts of town at the busiest times of day, but will limit its investment in trying to reduce traffic congestion for all of the reasons stated above. The survey respondents also indicate a clear desire for a smooth and safe riding surface for bicycles, as well as dedicated physical space for bicyclists, preferably separated from vehicle traffic, where possible. This is consistent with recommendations in the Bicycle Master Plan, although only 11% of survey respondents reported having participated in the extensive public outreach efforts employed during the development of the Bicycle Master Plan in 2013-2014. In some places, there may be future options for on-street bicycle facilities separated from vehicle traffic by a painted buffer, similar to what the City has provided on Chestnut Street in 2019 and on Samish-Maple-Ellis in 2020. In a few locations there may be options for off-street two-way multiuse pathway facilities that could be shared by people walking and people biking. The cost of constructing these type of bicycle facilities is currently unknown, but some of them are expected to be very expensive, probably beyond the City's ability to fund locally, will require state and federal grant funding, and wherever possible, funding partnerships with other public agencies, institutions, organizations, as well as private development interests.

Survey respondents indicate that providing and maintaining pedestrian facilities is important, which is consistent with recommendations in the Pedestrian Master Plan, although only 8% of survey respondents reported having participated in the extensive public outreach efforts employed during the development of the Pedestrian Master Plan in 2011-2012. It should be noted that the City of Bellingham complies with all requirements of the federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and City transportation improvements always include upgrades to meet current ADA requirements (Curb ramps, crosswalks, sidewalks, driveways, traffic signals, flashing crosswalks, etc.) whether funded with local, state, or federal funding. Regardless of the survey findings for these components, this is a priority that needs to, and will be, maintained. The Lincoln-Lakeway study will also be informed by recommendations from Bellingham's 2020 ADA Transition Plan, which will be completed by the end of 2020.

Next Steps

The next steps for the Lincoln-Lakeway Multimodal Transportation Study will be to:

- Share this survey report with project team partners, neighborhood residents, and the public at-large. This report will be posted to the study web page (August 2020).
- This will be followed by an outreach effort to businesses, institutions, and organizations with interests in the study area to communicate the sentiments of the survey respondents and the City’s transportation planning practices. The City would like to conduct stakeholder interviews to extend the public outreach effort with all of the interest groups listed above (September-November 2020), but this must be done with great sensitivity and care as businesses, institutions, and organizations are under a great deal of stress in trying to manage and survive the negative economic conditions caused by COVID-19.
- Ideally, the City would like to host an Open House event (Date Unknown) to share information collected and proposals for alternatives being considered in the study. The current and on-going COVID-19 pandemic may not allow public gatherings, such as Neighborhood Association meetings and Open House events, but the City will look for acceptable alternatives to continue to engage meaningful input into this study.

About the Survey Data Analyst

The City of Bellingham Public Works Department extends a sincere “Thank you!” to Ms. Riley Hine who voluntarily took on the responsibility of sifting through the 558 survey responses and translating the data into digestible and meaningful public sentiment for this report.

In June 2020, Riley earned her Master of Arts degree in Environmental Studies from WWU. Her thesis, entitled “[Water Resources on the Pacific Crest Trail: Thru-hiker Experiences and Alternate Water Sources in 2019](#)”, utilized a mixed-methods approach, employing online surveys, thru-hiker interviews, and analysis of water report data. She was awarded the Environmental Studies department Outstanding Graduate award for the 2019-2020 academic year at WWU. She has her Bachelor of Arts degree in Geography and Anthropology with a Geographic Information Sciences (GIS) certificate from the University of Minnesota Duluth. Apart from her education, Riley has worked as an outdoor education instructor, international trip leader, wilderness therapy field mentor, and as a research assistant for a sustainable recreation plan in the U.S. Forest Service.

In July 2020, Riley accepted a Team Leader position for the Watershed Stewards Program in the California Conservation Corps in partnership with AmeriCorps, where she will serve for one-year in San Luis Obispo, CA.