

Downtown Gresham to Mt. Hood Community College: route choice public input summary

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In September and October 2015, the City of Gresham conducting outreach and collecting input to better understand community preferences around options for bus rapid transit (BRT). The engagement effort was focused on receiving input about route options from the Gresham Transit Center to Stark Street and continuing to Mt. Hood Community College. Route options included: 1) Cleveland Avenue, 2) Hogan Drive, and 3) Main Avenue/SE 223rd Avenue. In addition to route preferences, information about the value that respondents placed on certain transit characteristics associated with BRT was collected.

The goal of the outreach was to learn:

- Which route members of the Gresham community might prefer for a potential bus rapid transit line.
- How people who live, work or own property along each route feel about the potential of bus rapid transit on each of those route options.
- Whether community members feel bus rapid transit could enhance the streets and neighborhoods that it passes through, and, if so, how.

To support gathering informed input, the team prepared maps showing the three route choices, renderings illustrating how bus rapid transit might look and operate on each street, and a matrix highlighting tradeoffs among the route choices. This information was prepared in English and Spanish and provided as handouts, posters and on a website.

This memorandum documents the outreach conducted and summarizes the input collected.

Outreach activities

The City of Gresham, supported by CH2M, conducted the following outreach activities:

- Posted online questionnaire – October 1-October 30, 2015
- Placed static displays at Gresham City Hall, Gresham Public Library, and Mt. Hood community College – October 8-October 27, 2015
- In-person distribution of information at Gresham Farmers' Market – October 3 and 10, 2015
- In-person distribution of information at Mt. Hood Community College – October 6 and 8, 2015
- In-person distribution of information at the Gresham Transit Center – October 17, 2015

- In-person distribution of information at Latino Parent’s Night at Gresham High School- October 21, 2015
- Intercept survey of riders at Gresham Transit Center and Kane/Stark bus stop – October 6, 8 and 13, 2015
- Canvassed businesses on Main Avenue/SE 223rd Avenue – October 8 and 27, 2015
- Canvassed homes and businesses on Hogan Drive – October 13 and 20, 2015
- Canvassed homes on Cleveland Road – October 20 and 28, 2015

At all events noted above, people were asked to visit a project website page that included a link to an online questionnaire about the route options. The online materials were also advertised by staff attending meetings of city committees and civic organizations in Gresham, distributed via project interested parties list, and distributed via a press release. The team also used social media directing the public to online information about the project using Facebook and Twitter.

Input summary

Input was collected through written forms at events, through an online comment form and through conversations at events. In total, more than 600 people completed either an online questionnaire or a paper questionnaire. Responses from paper and online questionnaires are shown below (results are combined). This summary reflects responses collected through October 30, 2015.

The majority of respondents preferred bus rapid transit on Hogan Drive regardless of what means were used to collect information. Pedestrian safety and access and schedule reliability also emerged as important attributes of new transit service.

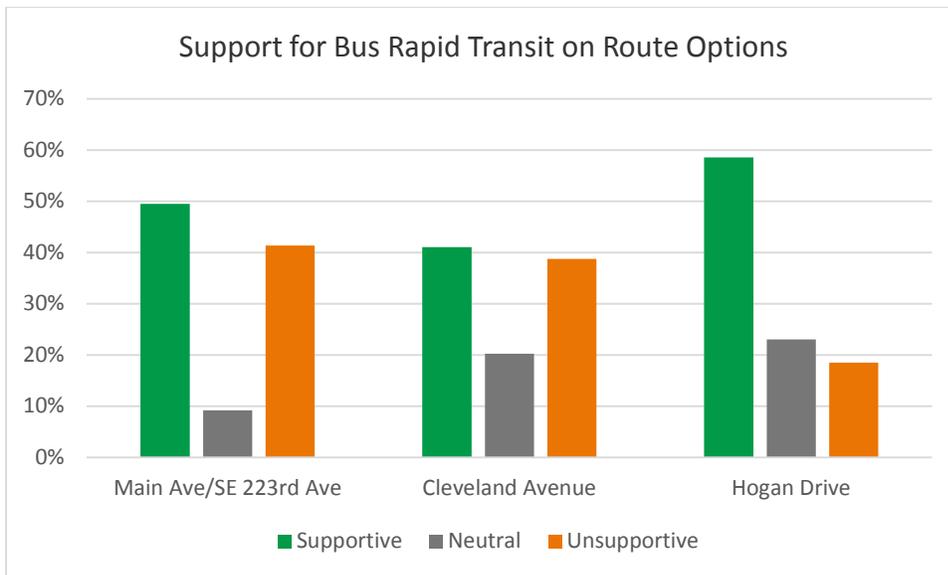
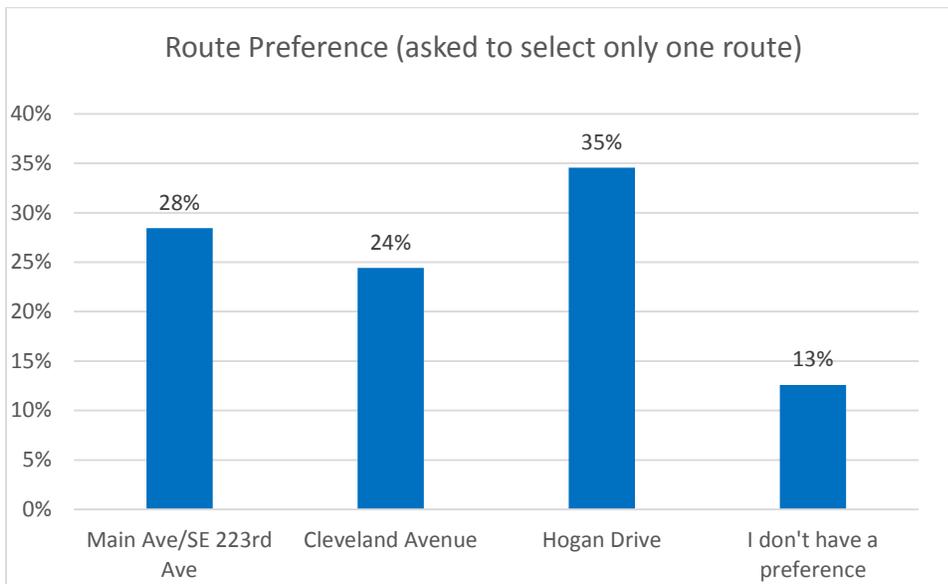
Summary of all responses

During the month of October, 437 people completed the online questionnaire and 165 people completed a paper questionnaire. The online questionnaire and paper questionnaire included questions about:

- Preferred route option.
- Overall support for BRT on the proposed routes.
- Relative importance of transit service characteristics.

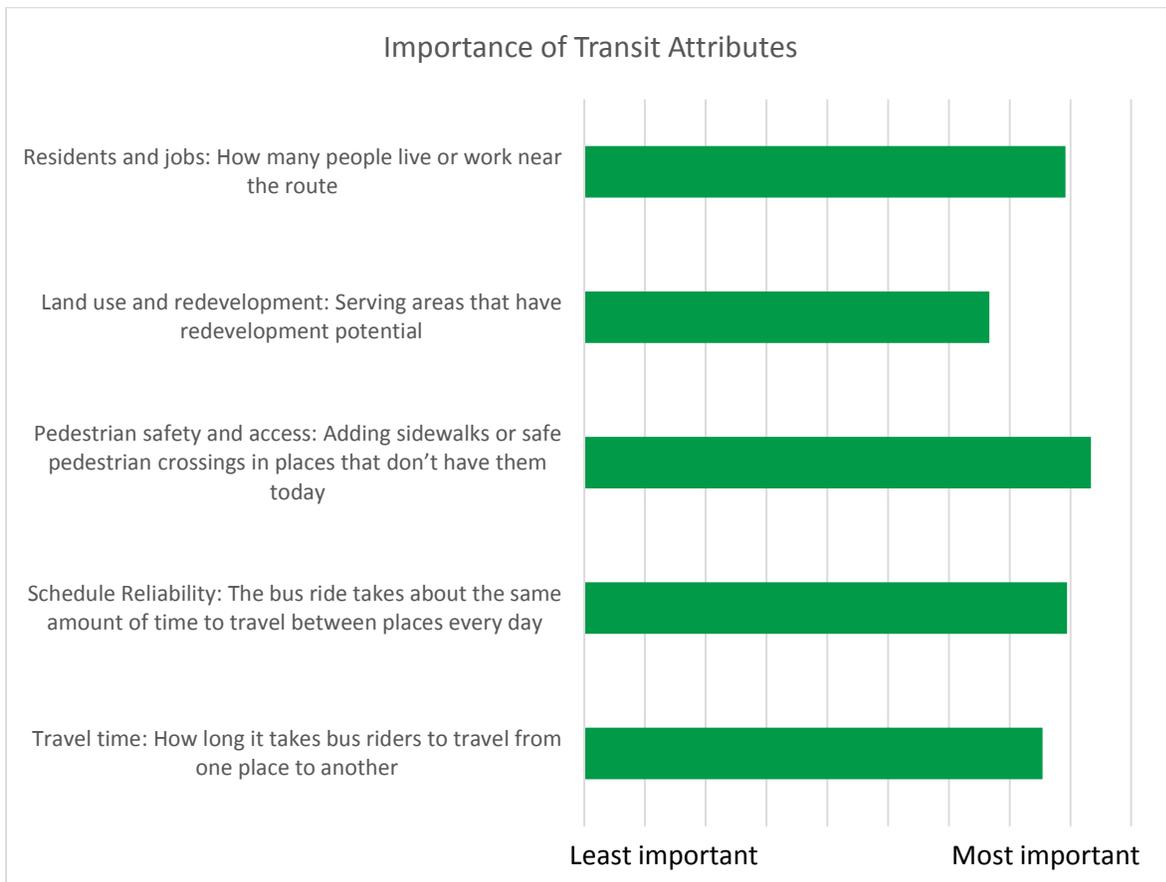
Preferred route options

When asked to select only one route, Hogan Drive was the most frequently preferred route for bus rapid transit from the Gresham Transit Center to Stark Street to reach Mt. Hood Community College. Cleveland was the least preferred route.



Route and transit attributes

When asked how important route and transit attributes were (from most important to least important), respondents rated pedestrian safety and access, serving residents and jobs, schedule reliability as most important. However, on average, respondents said that all attributes were important.



Comments from respondents

Comments from the online survey

The online survey included an option to submit comments. The following were submitted:

Main Avenue/223rd Avenue

- Does not connect with the Gresham Transit Center easily and already has access to public transit.
- Consider that longer traffic signals on busy streets may increase travel time for drivers.
- Stark Street and 223rd Avenue is one of the busiest intersections during rush hour, but the route is the fastest and most convenient route to get to Stark Street to reach MHCC.
- Long routes lead to unreliable travel times, arrivals, and crowded buses during rush periods.
- Access to jobs and education are the most critical concerns – the route needs to access all of Gresham Vista.
- This option acts as a central point for citizens coming from the new housing being built in the southern part of Gresham - they need access to Gresham jobs/educational opportunities.
- Provides less traffic lights, wider streets, and less congestion than the other proposed routes.
- Would touch the new Port development and add potential riders while possibly removing additional traffic as area develops.
- Larger street, less congestion, as well as less direct contact with local residences.

Cleveland Avenue

- This road is a 25 mph zone without businesses – it is not ideal for rapid transit.

- It is the route with the least traffic - it will help commuter traffic on 223rd Avenue and Hogan Drive, and be safer for pedestrians who would be crossing those two roads.
- There is less safety for school children on street, and they would be negatively impacted.
- The route will require improvements to accommodate the current residents.
- The value of the neighborhood would decrease, and the crime would go up.
- Seems less appropriate, due to residential nature and school.
- One lane in each direction is not great for buses.
- A bus would be a drastic change to a fairly calm street.
- Would be very expensive to upgrade the street to handle extra traffic and bus services.
- Route would have to be designed to support and enhance the neighborhood's character - keep the street quiet, speed limit slow, and limit traffic in the neighborhood.
- Route is close to the Kelly stop and would be very convenient for riders who need to connect.
- Increased foot traffic may increase criminal opportunities to these private properties.

Hogan Drive

- The area is underserved with a huge amount of people living along route.
- Hogan is the fastest, most direct, and simplest route.
- There are a lot of businesses on that route along with MHCC.
- Has more space, fewer houses, fewer children, fewer school zones, and will be safer in bad weather.
- The less time spent traveling on Stark Street the better, which makes this the best route.
- It is the only route that connects I-84 to Damascus – it should be saved for freight movement.
- Wide streets that has significant multi-family and senior housing along its route.
- Fewer changes are required if this route is chosen.
- Red Sunset Park is a valuable community resource which the BRT should serve, along with the affordable housing nearby.

Comments on BRT Design

- The bus must have dedicated lanes throughout the entire route or else it is not really BRT.
- There are far too many stops on everyday transit (including MAX) to make it practically useful for time sensitive travelers.
- No matter the route, the bus should connect with the transit center and be able to pull off out of traffic when making stops.
- None of these streets have great pedestrian access or particularly safe crossings; there need to be improvements to infrastructure surrounding the new route in order to maximize ridership.
- Using left-boarding doors will reduce travel times and articulated buses include more seating and more room for bikes and wheelchairs, utility carts, and baby strollers.
- BRT should be a loop instead of an out and back. Collecting people from the new developments south of Powell needs to be considered.
- Considering "bus-turnouts" would allow for safe loading and unloading of passengers and still ensure traffic movement, reducing congestion.
- Strongly urge making them right-side stations to allow the most room for other traffic and to not make riders cross lanes to get to the stations.

General Comments

- Using NE Kane Drive to connect from Stark Street to Division and MHCC should also be considered – Kane Drive and Stark Street are wide and have existing transit service.

- Make sure the investment makes travel easier, faster, and more reliable.
- Bike routes to and from the transit center need to be improved.
- It is important to consider traffic signals and how long cars and pedestrians have to wait at a light especially when they are not going with the busier flow of traffic.
- Speed is the number one reason I don't take transit more often.
- Try to maximize the number of current and future residents served while keeping safety and reliability as top concerns.
- Place bus where land redevelopment will displace the fewest poor individuals and provide more housing for them.
- Focus on destinations for work and shopping, connections to other routes and transportation, and park and rides; important to serve the places that most people need to go.
- Travel time is very important--anything that will make the time longer or unreliable should be addressed up front.
- Safe pedestrian/passenger crossings are necessary.
- Gresham Transit Center remodel would be great, especially larger covered spaces for waiting passengers.
- Impact to Gresham High should be considered as the school is a centerpiece to our community.
- The route should not disrupt residential areas with noise, odors, lights, and increased traffic.
- Would rather get to destination safely than quickly.
- Frequency of bus schedule to and from MHCC, as well as later runs for students at MHCC is important when bus is their only transportation option.
- The most important piece is headways.
- Concerns that bus would bring more crime to the neighborhoods.

Comments from paper surveys and conversations

The following comments were submitted via paper surveys distributed during events noted above, including canvassing of residents and businesses along each route, and intercept surveys.

General Comments

- Pedestrian safety: people frequently expressed concern about pedestrian safety and hoped the project could provide improvements for crossing streets and accessing transit stops.
- Schedule reliability: people were less concerned about the time/ length of the trip as long as it arrived on time each day so they could plan accordingly.
- Many bus riders were excited to hear about improved transit service to the area. Riders said that the buses that currently service the Gresham Transit Center are at capacity so additional service, capacity, and quality are welcome.
- In prioritizing routes that would serve future development areas versus serving where residents and jobs are today, community members largely preferred serving areas that are already developed.
- Business owners had a mix of reactions. Some felt it would help customers reach their business, while other felt it would bring undesirable loitering to the area.

Cleveland Avenue

- Supporters said that buses on Cleveland Avenue would be more reliable because there is currently less congestion. It is also popular because of its central location in the context of the two other options and its straight path to Stark Street. Respondents said that once pedestrian improvements were made along Cleveland Avenue (such as sidewalks and safer crossings), it would be the safest pedestrian environment of the three options

- The most vocal detractors for any of the three routes were opposed to Cleveland Avenue. Both residents and non-resident alike who live on Cleveland Avenue expressed concern about potential disruption to the neighborhood and concern over the safety of children attending the elementary school on Cleveland Avenue. Many others said that the roadway is too narrow to accommodate high capacity transit service and that they were concerned about the lack of sidewalks.

Hogan Drive: Most people preferred bus rapid transit on Hogan Drive because it serves more multi-family residential dwellings, serves more destinations, and extends transit service furthest east.

Main Avenue/223rd Avenue: People were neutral about Main Avenue/ 223rd Avenue. Many said that because the area already has bus service and is out of direction, it would not be the best choice. Some did choose Main Avenue/223rd Avenue because they felt that it provided access to destinations and would serve major employers off Stark Street such as the Gresham Vista Business Park. Some also felt that it was the better choice because Cleveland Avenue is too residential and speed/traffic volumes on Hogan Drive are too great for additional transit service.

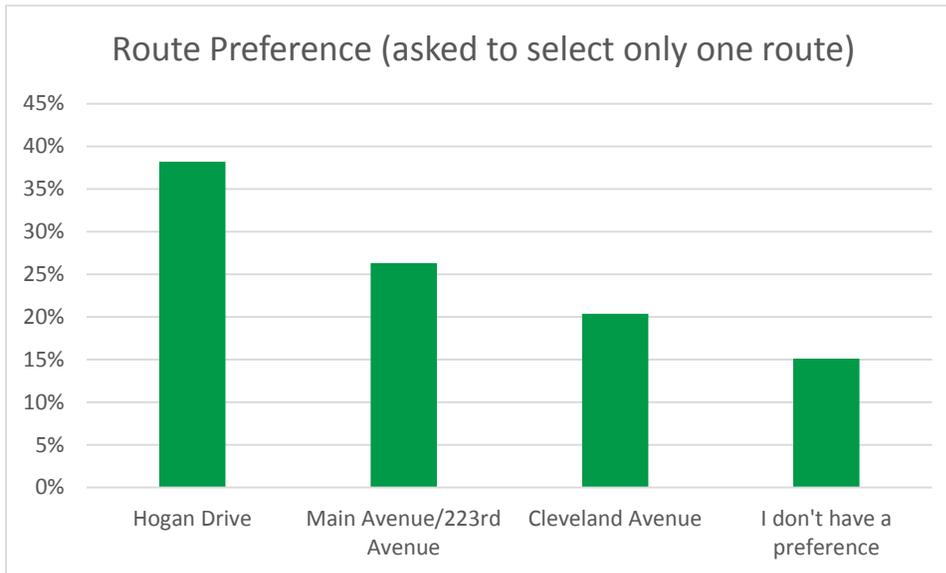
Appendix A

Online questionnaire and paper questionnaire results

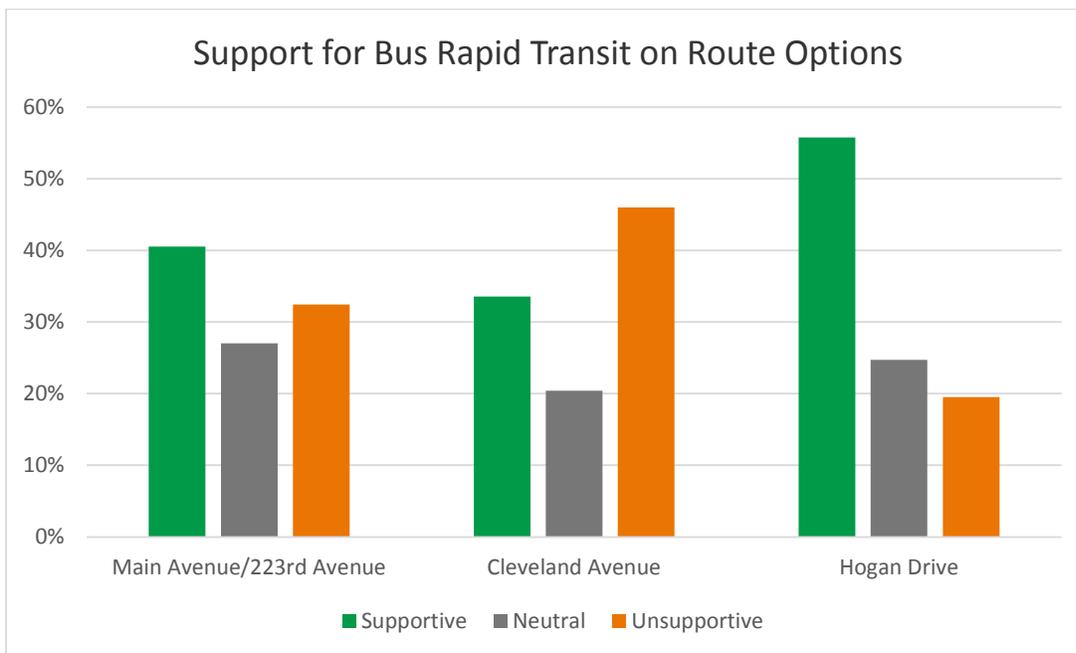
Online questionnaire responses

Preferred route options

When asked to select only one route, Hogan Drive was the most frequently preferred route. The fewest respondents preferred Cleveland Avenue as a bus rapid transit route.

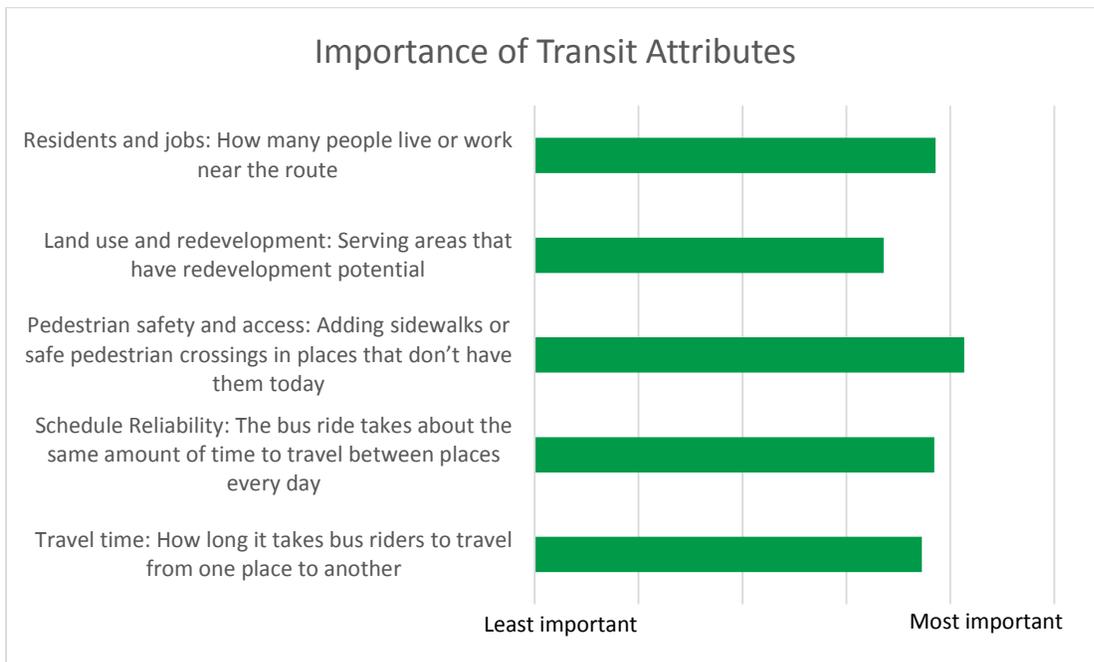


More than half of respondents said that they supported or strongly supported bus rapid transit on Hogan Drive. Nearly half said that they were unsupportive or very unsupportive of bus rapid transit on Cleveland Avenue.



Route and transit attributes

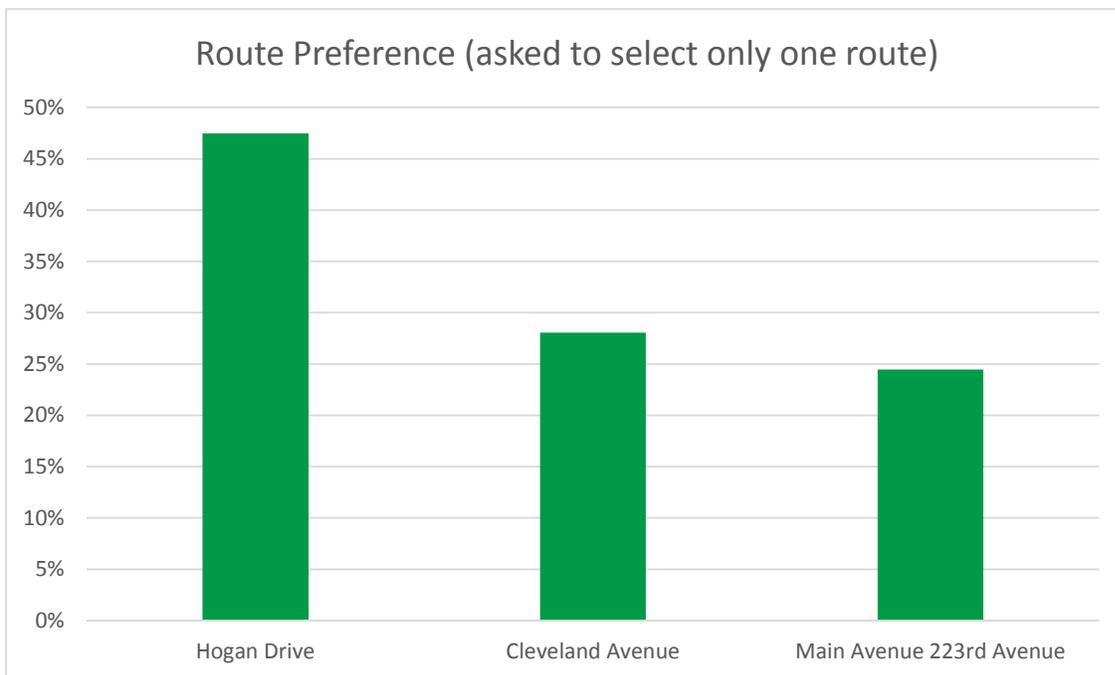
When asked how important route and transit attributes were (from most important to least important), respondents rated pedestrian safety and access as most important. However, on average, respondents said that all attributes were important.



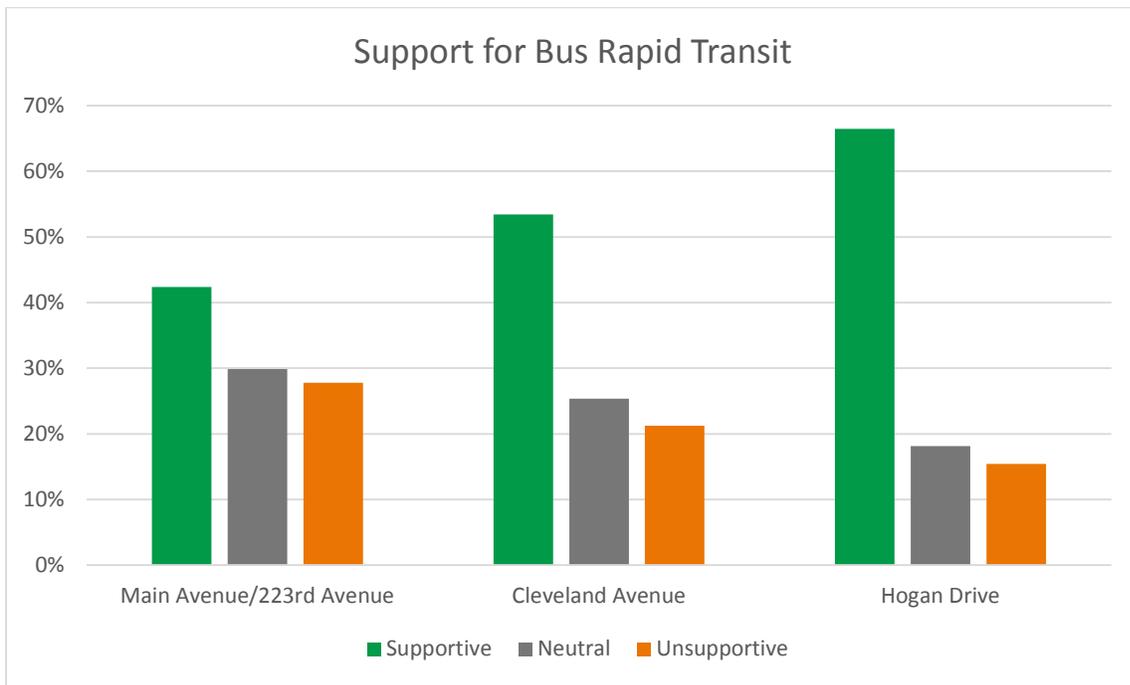
Written questionnaire responses

Preferred route options

When asked to select only one route, Hogan Drive was the most frequently preferred route. Fewer respondents preferred Main Avenue/223rd Avenue and Cleveland Avenue as bus rapid transit routes.

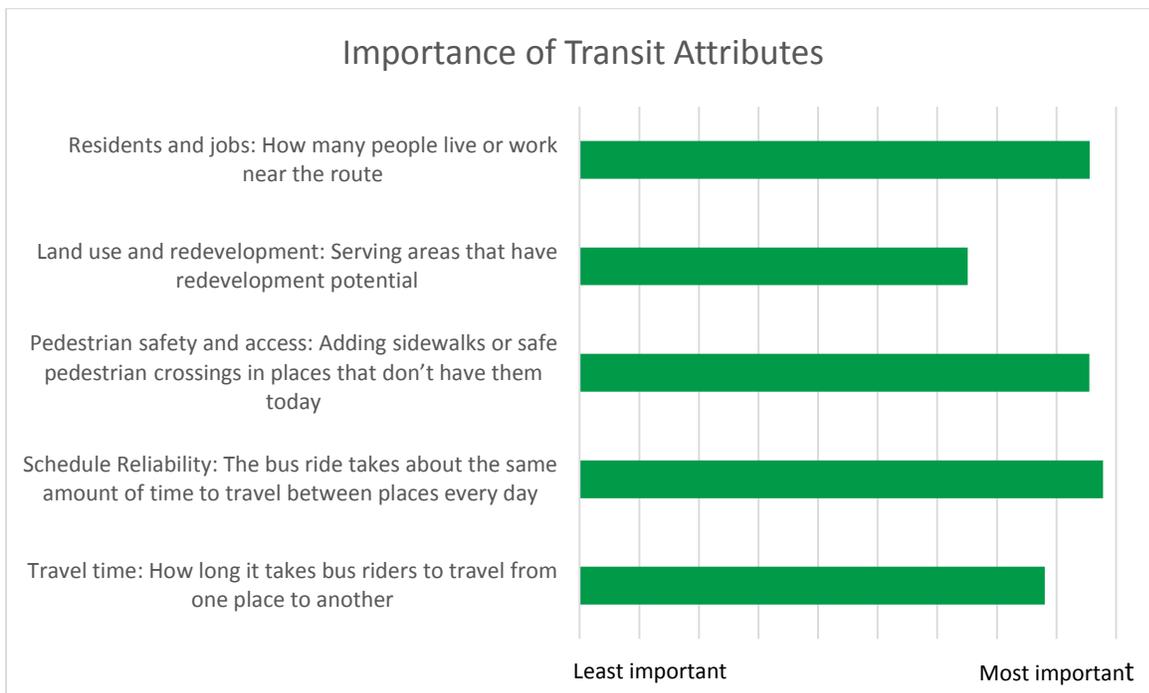


More than two-thirds of respondents said that supported or strongly supported bus rapid transit on Hogan Drive, and more than half said they supported bus rapid transit on Cleveland Avenue. Respondents indicated more mixed support for bus rapid transit on Main Avenue/223rd Avenue.



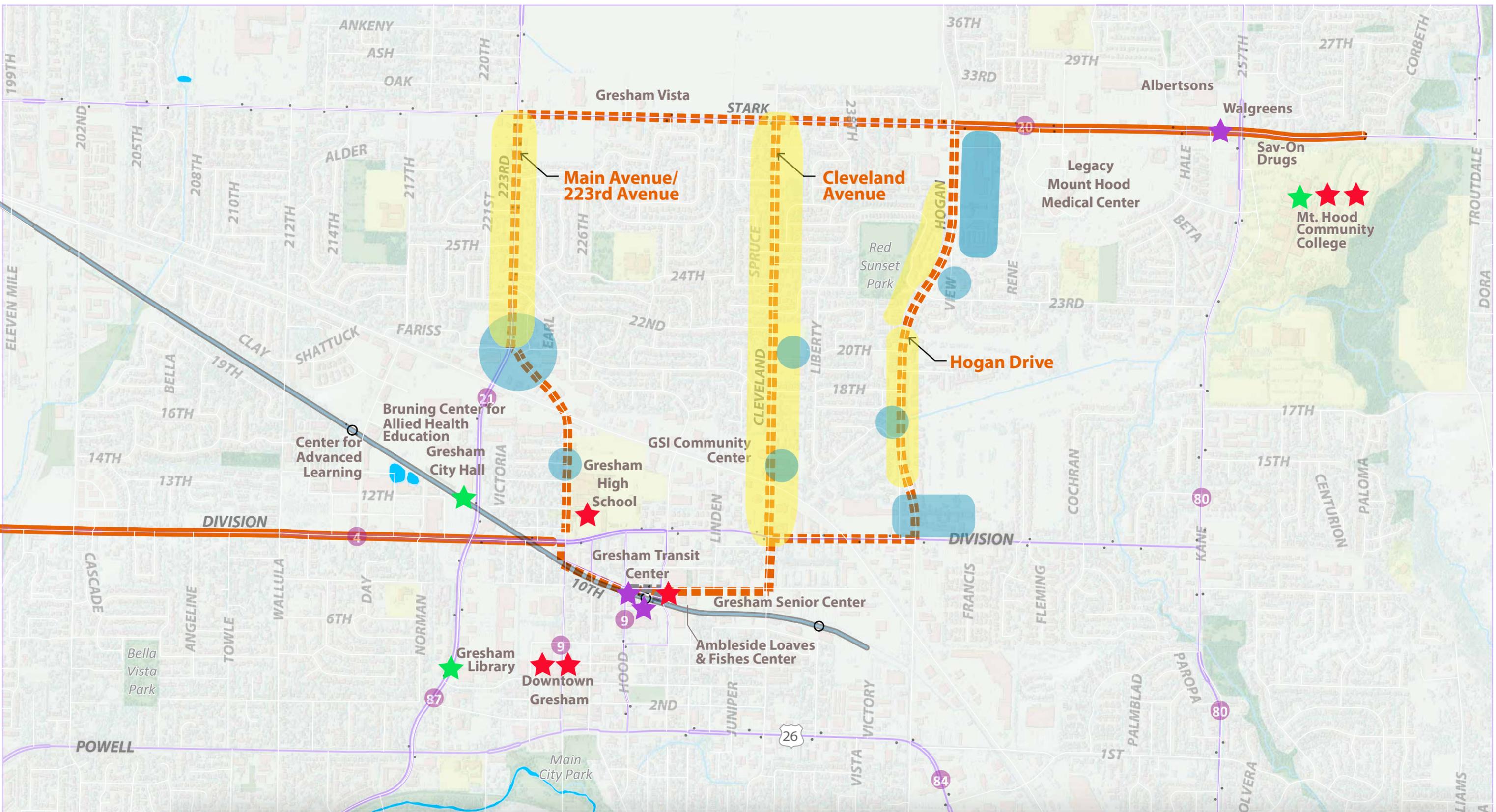
Route and transit attributes

When asked how important route and transit attributes were (from most important to least important), respondents rated schedule reliability as most important. However, on average, respondents said that all attributes were important.



Appendix B

Map of Outreach Activities



Community Outreach Activities		Existing Bus and MAX Service		Powell-Division Bus Rapid Transit	
	Tabling Event		Bus Stop Intercept Surveying		Proposed Route for All Options
	Static Display Placement		Residential Canvassing		Potential Route Options
	Bus Stop Intercept Surveying		Business Canvassing		MAX Blue Line
	Static Display Placement		Standard Bus Service		

