



WESTSIDE TRAIL MASTER PLAN

May 2012 open house summary

Introduction and overview

In May, the Westside Trail master plan project team and stakeholder advisory committee members hosted two open houses at the following locations:

- Stoller Middle School (north open house) on May 30 from 6 to 8 p.m.
- Deer Creek Elementary School (south open house) on May 31 from 6 to 8 p.m.

Approximately 125 people attended the open houses and offered feedback on potential trail segments, trail design characteristics and how they would use the trail if constructed. Open house materials included display boards, project maps and a questionnaire. The same information was provided through a virtual open house posted on the project's web page for those unable to attend one of the meetings but interested in providing feedback. The questionnaire was available online from June 1 to June 15.

128 questionnaires were completed: 59 at the north open house, 22 at the south open house and 47 through the online questionnaire. This document provides a summary of the feedback from the questionnaires and comments recorded on flip charts and maps at the open houses.

Open house outreach

18,000 postcards announcing the open houses were mailed to neighbors and local businesses within one half-mile of the trail study segments. An e-mail was also sent to the project's interested person list.

Information about the project and the open houses appeared in the Oregonian and Portland Tribune and in newsletters for Citizen Participation Organizations (CPOs) 1, 4k, 4b and 7. The open houses were also advertized in the Asian Reporter and the Portland Observer.

An announcement about the open houses was posted on Metro's website, and appeared in a number of blogs and pages including ouroakhills.org, topix.com, and bicyclepaper.com. Information was posted along portions of the trail already completed by the Tualatin Hills Park and Recreation District and on their website. A media release was issued to local newspapers the Thursday prior to the first open house.

Open house format

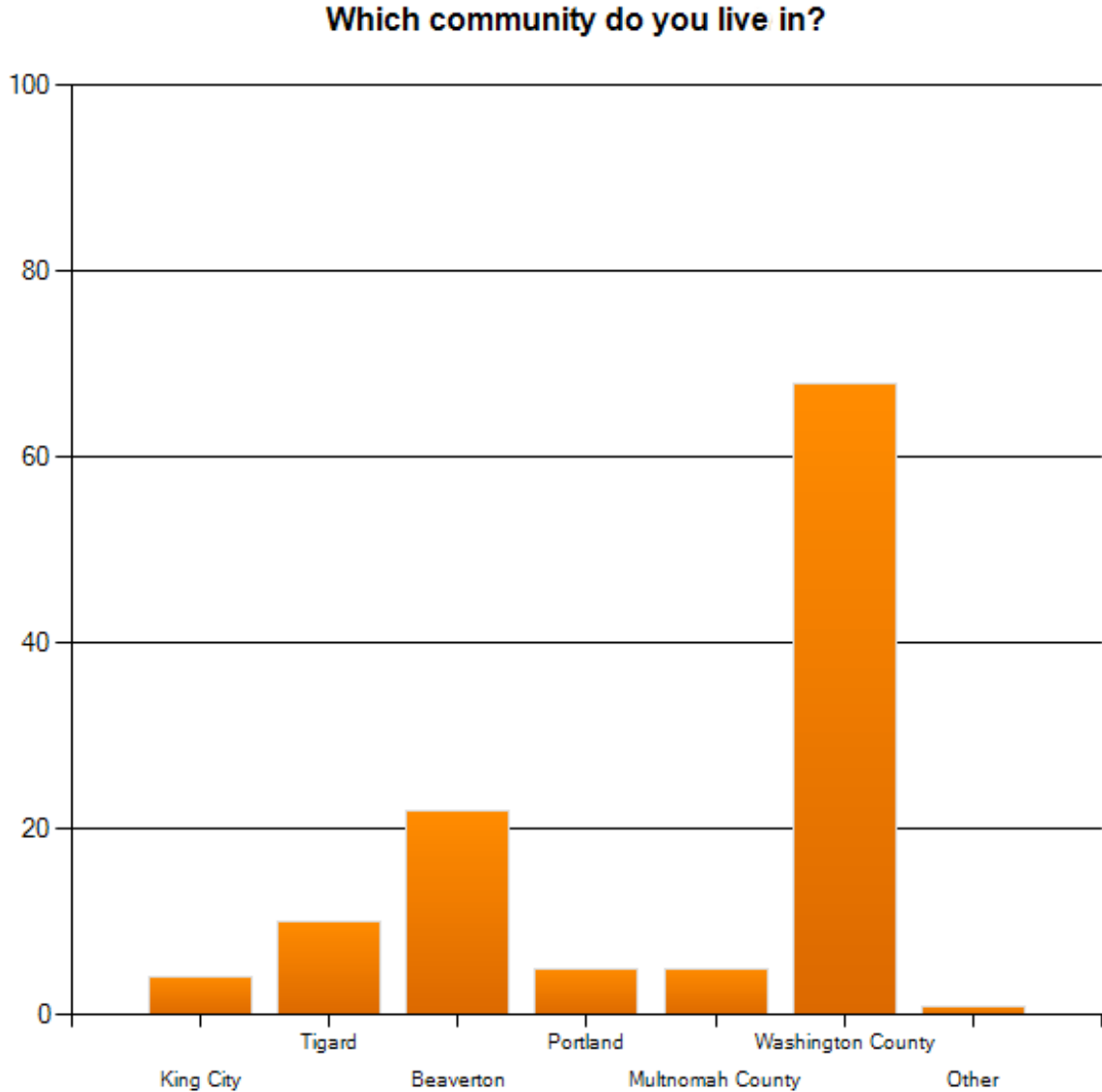
Metro staff, project consultants and members of the project stakeholder advisory committee staffed the two open houses. At the open houses, participants visited different stations, reviewed displays and discussed the project with team members. Metro councilors Carl Hosticka and Kathryn Harrington attended the open house in their district and spoke briefly about the project. Project manager Robert Spurlock also spoke briefly at the open houses. There were 5 stations at each open house:

- Station 1 – welcome/sign-in. Staff at this station welcomed participants and made sure they signed in. Participants were given a questionnaire and asked to fill it out before they left. Greeters also oriented attendees to the station flow and pointed out the children’s activity area and refreshments.
- Station 2 – project background. This station included a map of the study area and boards showing the project timeline and project goals. This station also included a looped PowerPoint presentation providing an overview of the project.
- Station 3 – trail segments. The north open house had five aerial maps showing proposed trail segments for the public to review and provide comments. The south open house had three aerial maps.
- Station 4 – children’s activity table. This station provided an art project connected to the Intertwine.
- Station 5 – refreshment table.

Respondent profile

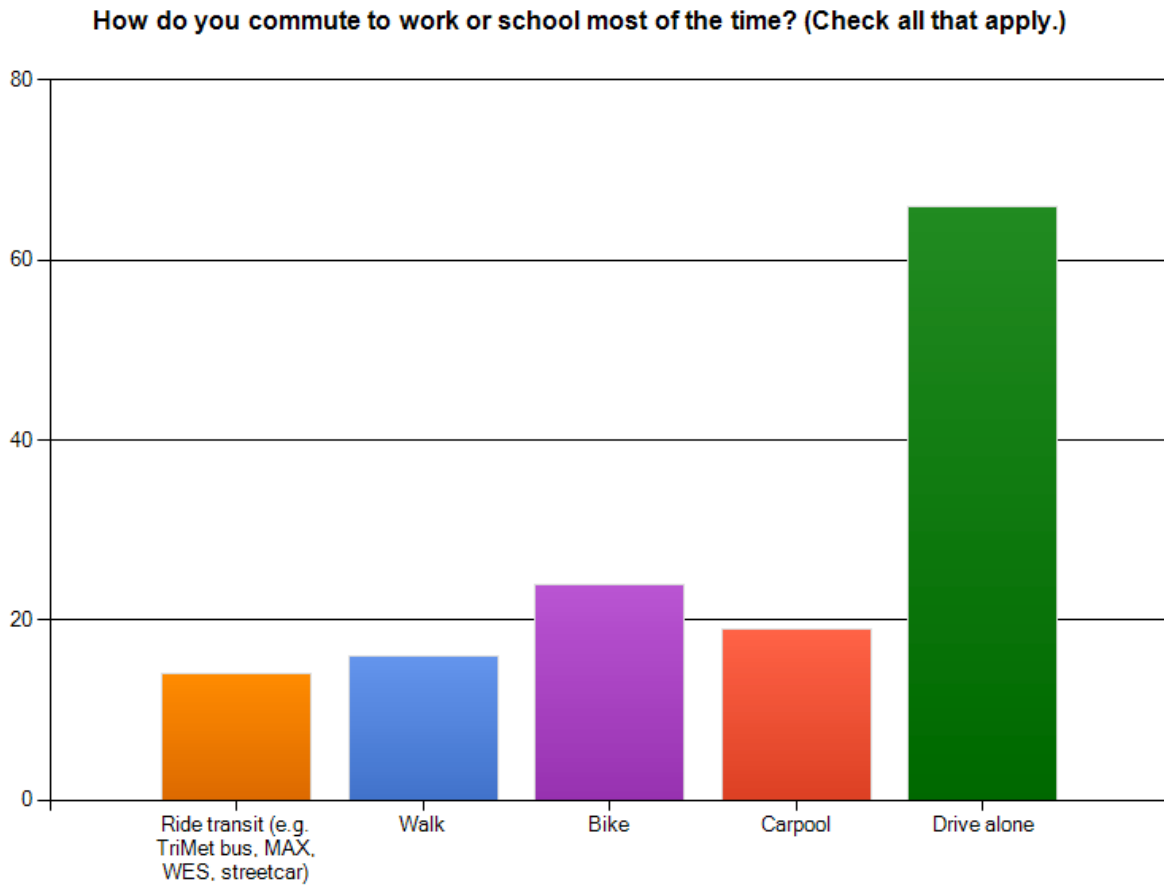
The questionnaire asked respondents where they live, how they commute and how they currently use trails. As shown in Figure 1, more than half the respondents reported living in unincorporated Washington County. Beaverton and Tigard were the second most identified areas of residence. Few respondents reported living in Portland, unincorporated Multnomah County or King City.

Figure 1.



The questionnaire asked respondents to identify all the ways in which they regularly commute to work and school. Several respondents identified themselves as frequent users of two or more forms of travel. As shown in Figure 2, while all typical forms of commuting were represented, driving alone was the most common response. 27 respondents did not answer this question.

Figure 2.



As shown in Figures 3 and 4, almost 90 percent of those responding indicated that they currently use neighborhood or regional trails. Of trail users, more than 80 percent reported using trails at least a few times a month.

Figure 3.

Do you use trails in your neighborhood or in other areas of our region?
(Check one.)

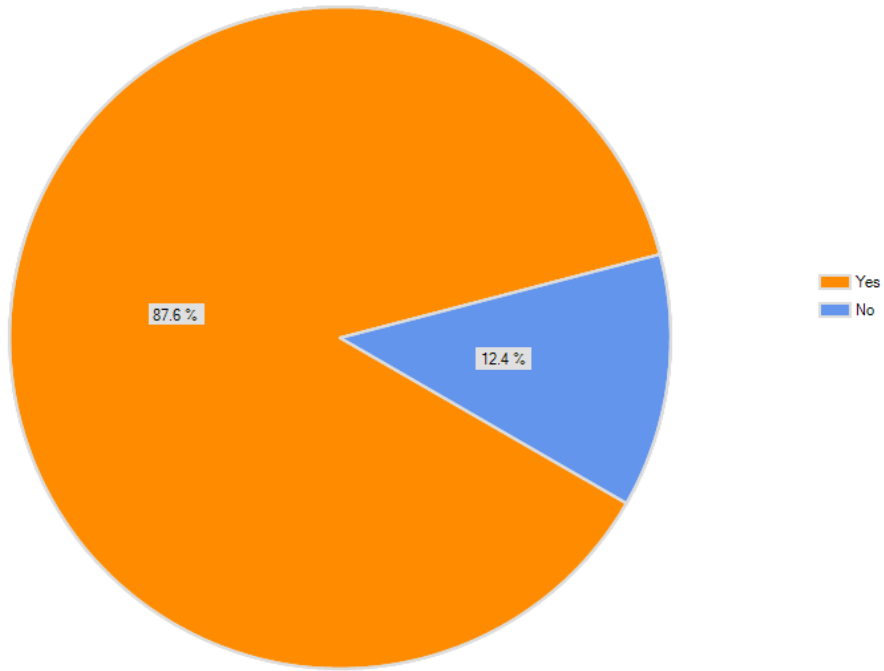
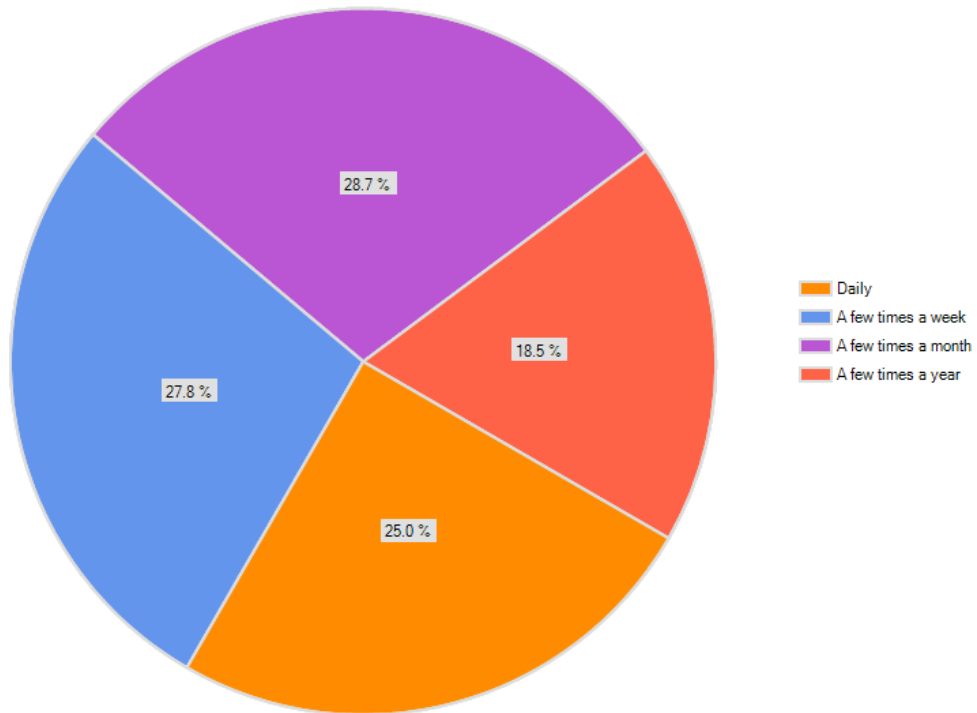


Figure 4.

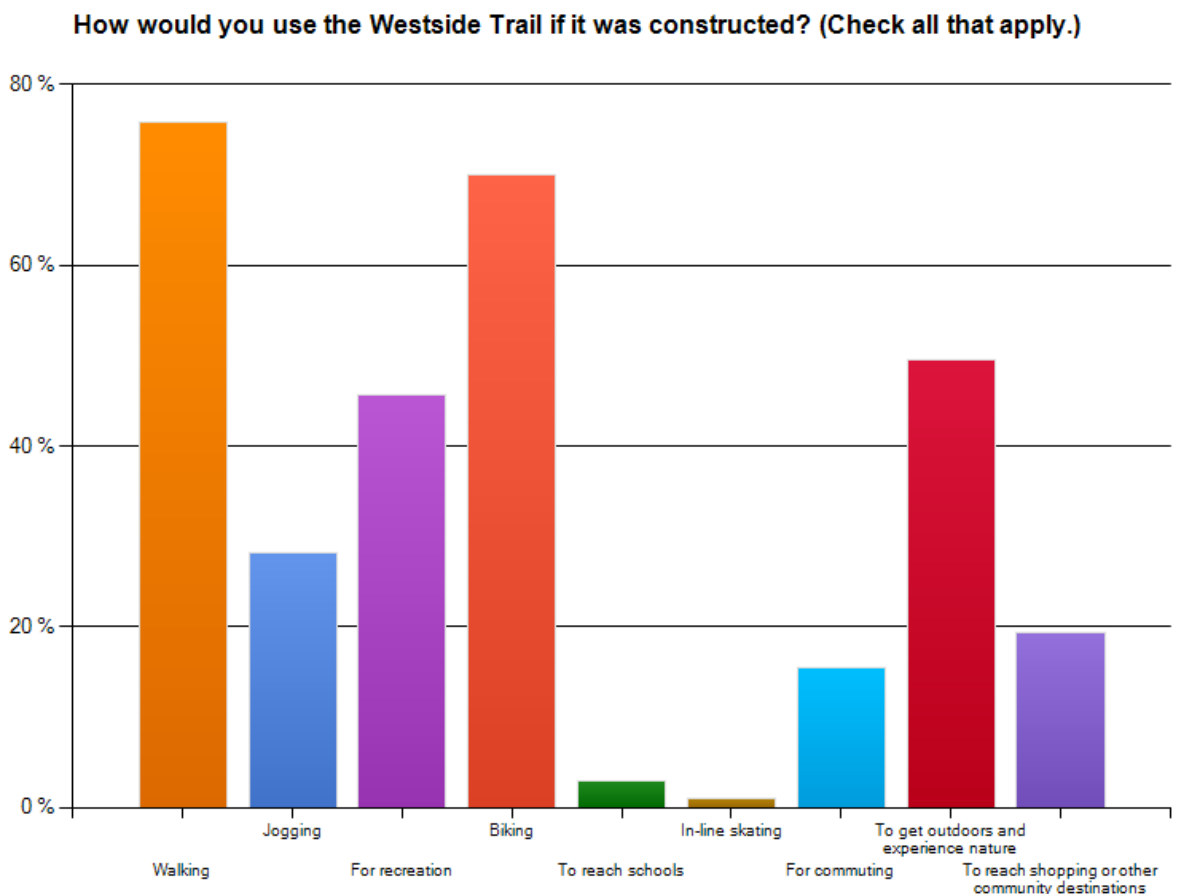
If yes, how often? (Check one.)



Respondent priorities

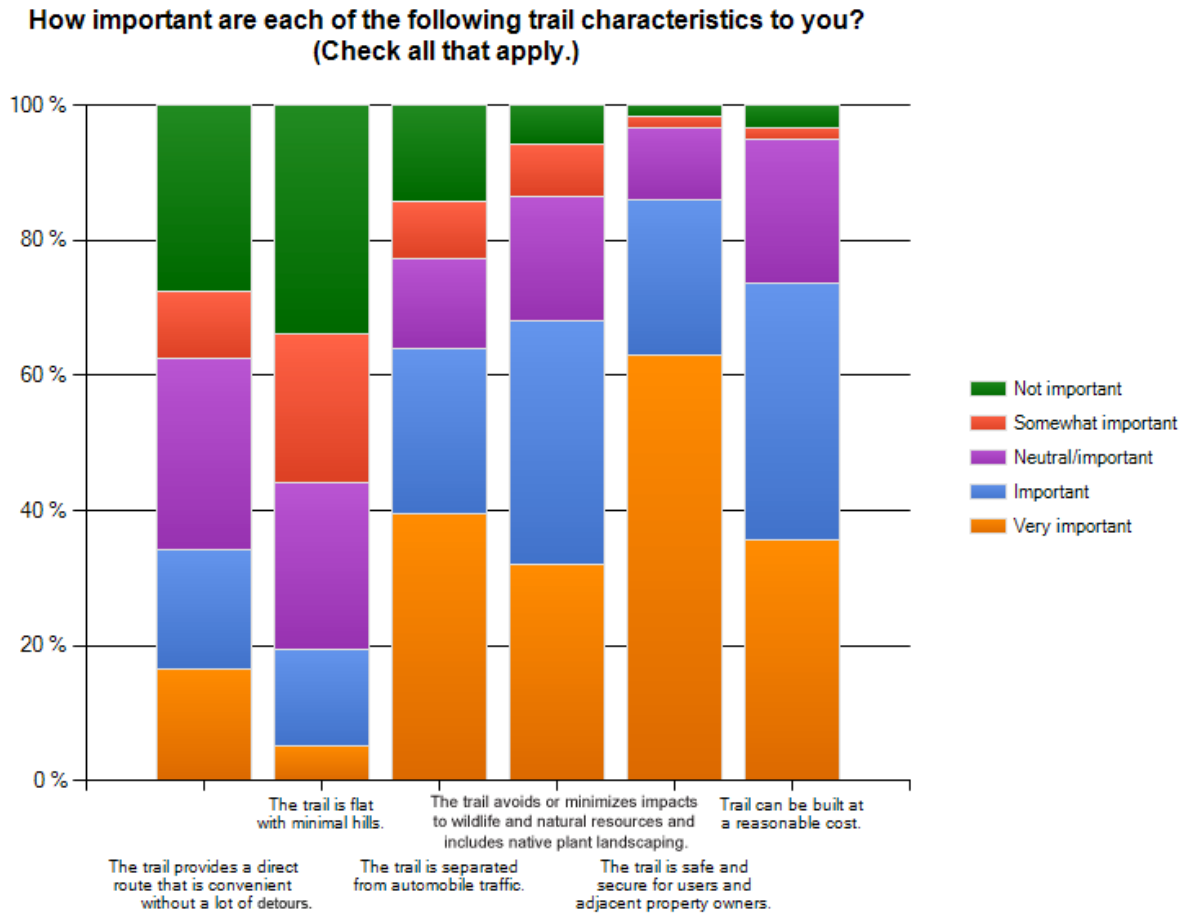
Respondents were asked how they would use the Westside Trail if constructed, including both the form by which they would travel as well as the purpose of the trips. Respondents were asked to select as many forms and types of trips as applicable. More than 80 percent of respondents indicated they would use the Westside Trail in some manner. As shown in Figure 5, walking and biking were the most common forms of travel anticipated and recreation and experiencing nature the most common trip purposes. Roughly 20 percent of respondents did not answer the question. In the open-ended portion of the questionnaire, several commenters stated they did not anticipate using the Westside Trail.

Figure 5.



Respondents were also asked to comment on the importance of different characteristics for the future Westside Trail (see Figure 6). Making sure “the trail is safe and secure for users and adjacent property owners” was identified as the most important characteristic, with more than 80 percent of respondents considering it important or very important and less than 2 percent considering it not important. 20 percent agreed that having a trail that is “flat with minimal hills” was important or very important and roughly 35 percent agreed that providing a direct route was important or very important.

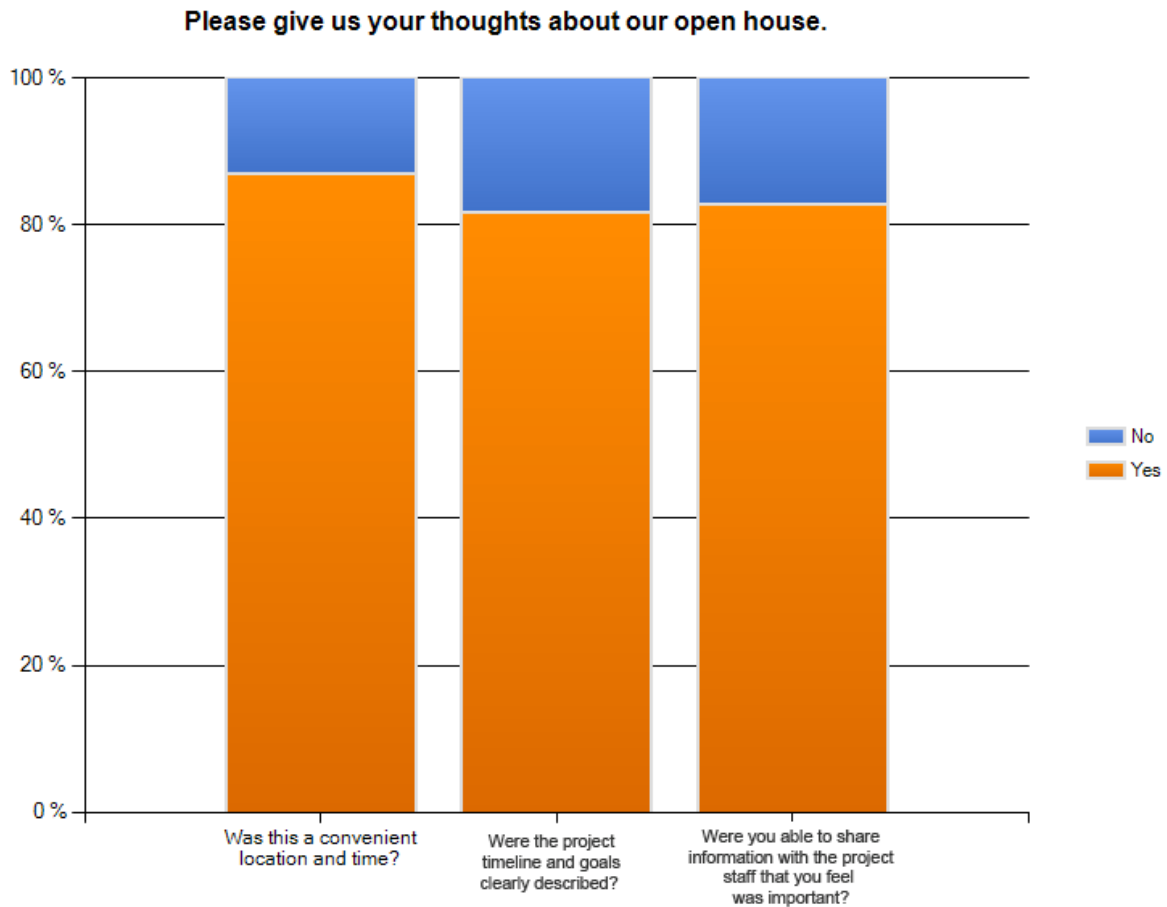
Figure 6.



Feedback on the open houses

The questionnaire asked about the convenience and effectiveness of the open houses (see Figure 7). More than 80 percent of those who responded felt the open houses were held at a convenient location and time, that the project’s timeline and goals were clearly communicated and that the respondents were able to share information with project staff.

Figure 7.



Responses to open-ended questions

In addition to the questions described above, the questionnaire posed two open-ended questions:

- “Please share any other comments about the trail or tonight’s open house that you’d like us to consider,” and
- “After reviewing the maps, do you have any concerns or ideas about the proposed trail segments? Please be as specific as possible in describing the segment’s location”

A summary of responses to these questions is included on the following pages, grouped by the location in which they were submitted. These responses also summarize comments recorded on flip charts and maps at the meetings.

North open house

Nearly all of those filling out questionnaires at the north open house answered at least one of the two open-ended questions. Comments included:

- General expressions of support and opposition to the project.
- Concerns regarding potential impacts to the Oak Hills neighborhood, including issues of crime, parking, traffic safety, congestion, vandalism, privacy, historic status and property values.
- Comments about project alignment, including support for connections to light rail, other regional trails, parks and other destinations.
- Comments in favor of, and opposed to, on-street bike lanes as a part of the trail alignment.
- Concerns and recommendations about crossings of transportation and natural features, including the costs of creating new crossings versus using existing crossings.
- Recommendations related to trail design, including ensuring ease of vegetation maintenance, adequate width to support multiple forms of transportation, limiting steep slopes and ensuring visibility between those using the trail and areas outside the trail.
- Support for protecting natural habitats, including creeks.
- Statements about the public involvement aspect of the project, including that the postcard did not provide enough information about the open houses, that the project's stakeholder advisory committee does not adequately represent the community and that the questionnaire was slanted in favor of the project.
- Confusion as to how the project can be at the planning stage even though portions of the trail are already under construction.

South open house

The south open house generated fewer comments than the north open house, including fewer questionnaires completed and fewer comments on flip charts and on maps. About half the questionnaires included answers to the open-ended questions. Comments included:

- Support for the project based on a variety of reasons, including reducing traffic congestion and increasing traffic safety by encouraging non-motorized travel and providing safe recreational opportunities for children.
- Concerns about the potential for large project costs.
- Comments about trail operations, including support for limiting the hours of operation from dawn until dusk and a request for allowing equestrian and dog off-leash access.

- Comments about trail alignment, including support for using the transmission corridor for most of the trail and a desire to avoid steep grades to support bicycling and ensure compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- A request to ensure that respondents receive feedback to their comments.
- A discussion of other needs, such as a desire for park development along the trail corridor and the addition of other trail and bike investments along other routes.

Virtual open house

Almost half of those that filled out the questionnaire online included answers to the open-ended questions. Comments included:

- Expressions of general support for the project.
- Questions and concerns about impacts to the Oak Hills neighborhood, including issues of crime, parking, traffic safety, congestion, vandalism and privacy.
- Concerns that local residents will have too much or not enough say in which alignments are accepted.
- Concerns that trail supporters are overly represented on the stakeholder advisory committee.
- Questions about crossings of highways and other roadways, including the costs of creating new crossings versus using existing crossings.
- Statements that the trail alignment decisions had been made prior to the open houses.
- A desire to see equestrian needs considered in the trail planning process.