



Black, Indigenous, and People of Color Owned Small Business Listening Session Summary

Transportation needs and priorities

Active Transportation Return on Investment Study and 2023 Regional Transportation Plan

Lara Media Services

August 2022



Table of Contents

Project Background	3
Methodology	3
Participant Profile	4
Key Findings	5
Accessibility	6
Education	7
Transportation Programs	7
Safety	8
Public Transit	9
Other Key Findings	10
Conclusion	11
Recommendations	11
Appendix	13
Quotes:	13
Accessibility	13
Education	13
Transportation Programs	13
Safety	14
Public Transit	15
Other Key Findings	16

Project Background

Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) businesses are essential to greater Portland's economy. Metro recognizes that BIPOC community members have been disproportionately excluded from and impacted by transportation decisions in the region. Metro aims to improve access for communities of color to regional transportation planning processes and is committed to listening and learning from BIPOC participants to make sure their voices are heard. Metro completed the Active Transportation Return on Investment Study in the spring of 2021. Lara Media Services (LMS) partnered with Alta Planning for this study. This study illustrated the economic benefits of investments in pedestrian infrastructure such as crosswalks, sidewalks and lighting. The project team wanted to understand and learn how the economic benefits of Active Transportation had impacted BIPOC business owners, their needs related to active transportation investments and the transportation needs and challenges they experience.

LMS developed and facilitated a culturally responsive engagement strategy to connect with BIPOC business owners and business leaders in the greater Portland area. The participants' input will help inform the 2023 Regional Transportation Plan and future Metro transportation policy and program work.

At LMS, we believe that every opportunity to engage with the communities our clients want to serve is a valuable gift. We are committed to amplifying the voices of communities that have been underserved and marginalized by regional governments and are fiercely committed to our vision: To create an equitable world where everyone can be seen, heard, and treated as valuable and necessary members of society.

Methodology

LMS coordinated, conducted and facilitated the desired community listening session. This method presents in-depth information to target audiences and then gathers feedback to understand better their lived experiences, observations and ideas about the topic.

1. LMS and Metro identified priority audiences and essential considerations to develop the discussion guide.
 - a. BIPOC business owners and business leaders within the Metro service area and inside and outside the Active Transportation treated areas.
2. LMS and Metro developed an agenda and discussion guide for the session based on Metro's goals. Metro developed the presentations for the session.
3. LMS recruited priority audiences and invited them to participate in the session.
 - a. LMS confirmed 22 participants; 17 attended from across the greater Portland region.
4. LMS offered participants tablets if they needed electronic devices and Zoom Video conferencing training. None requested assistance.
5. The community listening session was on August 10, 2022, from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

6. This report summarizes the information gathered in the community listening session, organized by the key topics uncovered during the session.

Participant Profile

The following demographic information is for the 17 participants who arrived at the session. Please note that multiple participants owned multiple businesses, so the total business type and industry sectors represented are more than the number of participants.

1. Business Type



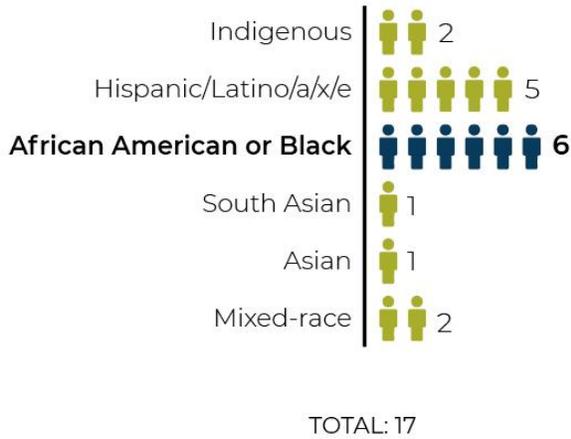
TOTAL: 21

2. Business Industry



TOTAL: 21

3. Race/Ethnicity



4. County



5. Employees



Key Findings

During the community session, participants were asked to focus on how transportation investments impacted their small businesses. The following is a summary of the qualitative information gathered from the session organized by the critical topics uncovered:

- Accessibility
- Transportation programs
- Education
- Safety
- Public transit
- Other key findings

Accessibility

Accessibility: Mixed-Use Property Zoning

Participants believe that the best land use will come from mixed-use property zoning because this allows for greater access to local businesses and makes shopping more convenient. Small business owners often can't offer the lease at malls and large shopping centers. This would also create accessible and affordable housing in the city, vital to combating poverty and homelessness and creating more integrated and inclusive communities.

Accessibility: Mobility and Wheelchairs

There were a lot of comments on this topic.

- A lack of curb cutouts causes difficulty maneuvering streets and public areas.
- People (including these business owners or their clients) end up riding in the streets, stranded, or having to make long and hazardous detours to reach their final destinations due to lack of curb cutouts, unpaved streets, lack of sidewalks, or when unintended barriers such as tents block ramps and accessibility features.
- Participants asked for more American Disability Act (ADA)-compliant motor vehicles and increased hours that Wheelchair accessible cabs and TriMet lifts to operate, citing limited options after 5 p.m. and on weekends. Even if people can afford alternative options, they are often not accessible.
- One participant noted the following as a challenge, *“as long as public transportation is half a mile [from residential housing areas], they don't have to have parking requirements.”*
- Participants suggested that Metro include disability experts on their boards when discussing solutions to ensure accessibility in future projects.

Accessibility: First and Last Mile of Transit

Participants urged a greater focus on the first and last mile of transit. Beautification does not always solve the issue of isolated areas that remain less used. For the people who live on the outskirts of town and near the end of the line, arriving safely to transit stations, having covered areas and knowing that they can return home safely is vital.

Accessibility: Construction

Construction work prevents possible customers from accessing business. Participants urged Metro to consider doing this work in the evening or after hours.

Accessibility: Quotes

“[A] lot of the lower income community, they are going to have these houses without the parking capability: many of those people have disabilities. They might not even be visible disabilities, and at half a mile to walk to the bus stop... I have stage-four cancer, so I have my great days where everything is great, but there are those days where if I'm relying on public transportations, I could not walk a half a mile.”

“Having construction work during the day can be a bit troublesome and problematic for local businesses because it makes people not want to cross and not want to bother

maneuvering around the large machinery. They might be scared of it and don't know what will happen, so they don't bother going to those businesses near it."

Education

Participants acknowledged a significant lack of understanding regarding the public transportation system. Their suggestions and comments were:

- To offer information and training for Metro employees and the public about the needs and the barriers faced by people with disabilities using public transit.
- Training for Metro employees tasked with designing new transportation projects related to accessibility features- possibly having them navigate the city via wheelchair.
- Two participants with disabilities shared their experiences with discrimination on public transit. They have often been denied access to public transportation or left behind.

Education: Quote

"I think that there also needs to be a public re-education about what goes on in our public transportation systems... [E]ducation about specific things and specific areas would also help things go a little bit smoother for the problems that we do have right now. And solving some of that will probably be a bigger help at this very instant by putting things in place that tell you how to solve things and input to make that happen."

Transportation Programs

Programs: Car Maintenance

Participants cited car maintenance costs as an issue. They suggested the idea of a program that provides affordable minor repairs on top of ride-sharing or carpooling.

Programs: Adding other options to Public Transport

Participants also suggested investing in the existing structures of Uber and Lyft drivers to help provide community members with more transportation options. They hope this will create a cheaper, more accessible transit system with reliable hours and generate more jobs. Many also believe this will benefit drivers by increasing workers' pay.

Programs: Quote

"Perhaps creating some type of initiative that comes from the employers or Metro in regard to having programming [in] place to allow for minor repairs to be performed on an employees vehicle, and besides that they are ride sharing or carpooling, [would make] it so that it is not a barrier that would prohibit the employee from being able to participate."

Safety

Safety: High Injury Corridors

Several participants were concerned about the high rate of injuries and accidents occurring in high-speed corridors. Suggestions included an 'All Stop' for pedestrians, cameras making left turns at red lights, and higher-priced tickets.

Safety: Street Crossings

There was concern specifically about the new curb cutouts, which participants described as half curb cutout, half drop-off.

- They are less safe for pedestrians; participants have found themselves stepping off curbs unexpectedly, risking injury.
- Mobility-impaired participants also believe these curb cutouts to be dangerous because they tend to push them into the intersection and closer to the flow of oncoming traffic.

Participants also had issues with pedestrian crosswalks.

- There are not enough crosswalks. Many businesses' clients cross the street mid-road.
- Crosswalks currently have design flaws: some crosswalks are far from intersections and difficult for drivers to see until they must stop abruptly, resulting in accidents.

Safety: Safe Driving

Participants expressed concerns about:

- Cars running red lights.
- The amount of unsafe and distracted driving.
- The number of bikers running lights and not using proper turn signals.

Safety: Encampments

Participants expressed concerns that tents and camps on the sidewalk prevent people from walking safely and should be moved back into greenspaces. Participants also expressed concerns about encampments near school areas. For increased safety, participants suggested increasing outdoor lighting and having buses run after 5 p.m.

Safety: For Businesses

A lack of transportation, safety issues, rain, or an incident or accident can affect small businesses. One participant suggested focusing on beautification and increased accessibility in mixed-use areas to increase sales and create safer communities.

In addition, several participants explicitly noted that some areas have become safer and friendlier after implementing active transportation improvements. One example was the changes to bike lanes in areas with public parking: instead of cutting between the road and available parking spaces, the lanes were made to go around, cutting between the parking areas and the street.

Safety: Quotes

“If it is difficult for clients and vendors to reach a business, for any reason, and if it is a safety issue also it is a psychological spot so they associate that incident with the business... [A]s a small business people choose us, right? We already have that buy in that people find us, choose us, and at that moment if it is not easy to reach us, or if something happens along the way because of either lack of transportation, safety issues, rain, whatever, people associate that incident in their head with our business name, and that is what they pass on.”

Public Transit

Public Transit: Lack of Transit

Participants cited a clear lack of transit options after the late afternoon and its impacts.

- Customers and business owners can get stranded, and potential customers who can't afford a car or paid service or live in rural areas are often the most affected.
- It affects employment options and employees if they cannot rely on public transportation after 5 p.m. and affects business owners' ability to serve their customers.
- Participants find it difficult to access transportation between 12 a.m. to 5 a.m., associating the lack of transportation with current transportation policies.

Participants recommend adding more buses to support and better connect transit throughout greater Portland and expanding Portland's micro transport system to help offset the traffic that piles up after buses stop running.

Public Transit: Cross-Regional

Participants expressed the need for more connected transportation systems when seeking to travel across the Metropolitan area. They would like more ways to cross the city without going Downtown, and they would like 'backup routes' that go to more remote areas (like the first and last mile of transit) so that when one line is under construction, there are other ways to get to work or buy what they need.

Public Transit: Parking

With the declining parking space in residential neighborhoods, mobile businesses have found it difficult to reach clients. However, they had multiple suggestions:

- Participants believe the best solution would be to have designated parking spaces for residents or mobile businesses in residential areas.
- Others requested that the city build specialized loading/pick-up zones in business-heavy areas to help delegate where to load and offload products, as delivery trucks often park in front of small businesses to make deliveries, and it can be disruptive to the business.

Public Transit: Freight and Traffic

Heavy traffic has caused issues for most participants.

- Traffic affects the ability and punctuality of business owners, their employees, and potential clients.
- Some have noticed drops in sales as customers struggle to access their business.

- Due to heavy highway traffic, many drivers seek residential roads to bypass the congestion, bringing too much traffic into communities.

Participants recommend building alternative routes to reroute the pass-through traffic around communities.

Public Transit: Forecasting Growth for Public Transit

Participants suggest analyzing the growth patterns for public transit and working on forecasting the future so that current projects support future development. Participants are particularly aware of the need to forecast the growth of BIPOC communities.

Public Transit: Quotes

“I know we’re trying to encourage people to walk more and not drive their cars as much, but that then creates a problem if we’re going to a client’s house and there’s nowhere for us to park... And it’s mainly most of the time in lower-income neighborhoods where we are seeing this, and it decreases the price for people, but in so many ways it’s already a barrier for some people who can’t afford it.”

“[W]e need to figure out ideas that are going to help everyone. We talked about safety issues. We talked about accessibility for everyone; we need to figure out or forecast where we are going to be 10 [to] 15 years from now. I think that is probably one of the biggest things. We need to figure out not just how to alleviate the pains we are going through now but to plan where we are going to be in the future.”

Other Key Findings

Below is the list of issues and solutions that didn't fit in the other sections.

- It is **hard for business owners who depend on public transit to plan around transit** issues, limiting their ability to service customers.
- Bus **schedules are hard to read**, especially when routes are split or shared, resulting in more confusion and less accessible transit.
- There was frustration at the **increased cost of transit downtown**.
- Participants are frustrated over the **traffic in the city negatively impacting the air quality**.
- Participants noted the need for road repairs and suggested **balancing active transportation investments with essential road maintenance**.
- Improvements currently focus on developed neighborhoods and creating new businesses rather than supporting existing small and local businesses. **Existing businesses do not feel supported by local government agencies**. Participants suggest Metro focus on supporting existing local businesses and communities, primarily BIPOC-owned.
- MAX light rail station **elevators that are out of service** take a long time to repair, limiting accessibility. Participants take long detours to find other light rail stations.
- Participants suggest building more **ADA ramps at light rail stations instead of elevators** to reduce accessibility issues when elevators need repairs.

Conclusion

BIPOC-owned businesses continue to face additional systemic barriers to accessing business resources to maintain and grow their business. Still, they are resilient and vehemently committed to making it work since their families and communities depend on it. During this listening session, the participants generously expressed their thoughts and ideas on how to make a more affordable, accessible, and safe future for transit and investments in active transportation in the greater Portland Area.

Participants stated that policymakers and city planners, especially those who make transportation decisions, must engage community members to plan for future investments. BIPOC-owned businesses should be included in these conversations to ensure the plans reflect the community's desires, needs, and goals. Small business owners had been financially harmed by current and past agency investments and decisions. Because of this, they are willing to participate in future discussions with Metro to contribute to making these investments worthwhile for everyone, especially those who need them most. While recruiting for this session, LMS spoke with some community leaders who did not want to participate due to previous experiences with transportation initiatives and other local transportation authorities. They were tired of not feeling heard by government agencies.

As Metro plans its transportation efforts for the near and distant future, it will be essential to continue providing underserved and overburdened communities with more opportunities to voice their concerns and actively engage with them. These communities are the closest to the issues and are closest to the solutions for the region's needs.

Recommendations

The following are actionable steps that the participants of the BIPOC small business owner listening session recommended Metro and other jurisdictions take to improve the region's transportation system. These recommendations will help Metro continue to move toward fulfilling its mission to ensure that all people who live, work and recreate in the Portland region have the opportunity to share in and help define a thriving, livable and prosperous place.

- Increase investments in resources, activities and policies to deeply listen and learn from BIPOC, people with disabilities, and other underserved, overburdened communities. These investments should include:
 - Co-designing and centering the experiences of overburdened communities that have been harmed by past investments and decisions
 - Prioritizing safety, especially for more vulnerable residents
 - Cultural awareness training
- Create opportunities and spaces that address harm and establish accountability, including:

- Establishing a shared language across the planning department and a commitment to building ongoing knowledge on accessibility and inclusivity for people with disabilities.
- With restorative justice as the foundation, invite and include BIPOC business owners as advisors in your transit planning process and compensate them accordingly
- Prioritize accessibility for wheelchairs. Design more rollable neighborhoods and provide more accessible and affordable methods of public transportation.
- Continue to make improvements to sidewalks. Do not stop until all neighborhoods are rollable.
- Prioritize researching, investing and developing ways for safer crosswalks, ramps, cutouts and parking.
- Prioritize mixed-use zoning areas and add parking, transit, and accessibility to these areas.
- Work with transportation authorities and planners to develop a transit plan that connects different town areas without crossing through the city's center and develop access and backup routes to reach those areas.
- Prioritize investing in clear and culturally responsive education campaigns about awareness of safely sharing the road, which conveys that safety starts with all of us.

Appendix

Quotes:

Accessibility

"[A] lot of the lower income community, they are going to have these houses without the parking capability: many of those people have disabilities. They might not even be visible disabilities, and at half a mile to walk to the bus stop... I have stage-four cancer, so I have my great days where everything is great, but there are those days where if I'm relying on public transportations, I could not walk a half a mile."

"We are very non visionary about micro transportation and micro transit. We think big buses, big things, big things will solve the problem, [when] it is the micro last mile things [that will]."

"[T]here is zero public transportation on Cornelius Pass road, and because of lack of transportation and no bus stops we don't have walking people. Even though the sidewalks are there, they are basically empty and useless."

"Having construction work during the day can be a bit troublesome and problematic for local businesses because it makes people not want to cross and not want to bother maneuvering around the large machinery. They might be scared of it and don't know what will happen, so they don't bother going to those businesses near it."

Regarding construction: "They could start working at 8 to 9 p.m. and end at 6 to 7 a.m. and small and large businesses alike won't be hurt by it."

"Metro should have advisors on their boards or decision making places that could advise them on how people who have chairs or physical disabilities actually move around. And that would help them in terms of creating these structures to actually have accessible ways to get to and from different places."

Education

"I think that there also needs to be a public re-education about what goes on in our public transportation systems... [E]ducation about specific things and specific areas would also help things go a little bit smoother for the problems that we do have right now. And solving some of that will probably be a bigger help at this very instant by putting things in place that tell you how to solve things and input to make that happen."

Transportation Programs

"Perhaps creating some type of initiative that comes from the employers or Metro in regard to having programming [in] place to allow for minor repairs to be performed on an employees

vehicle, and besides that they are ride sharing or carpooling, [would make] it so that it is not a barrier that would prohibit the employee from being able to participate.”

“If Metro has this amount of money that they want to invest, why not tap into the already existing networks of Lyft and Uber drivers and give them an incentive to be able to provide their services in those hours where the neighborhoods that have limited access to the bus service?”

Safety

“WHY doesn't the city create an 'All Stop' so that pedestrians can cross, and also install cameras to catch people making the left [turn] on red, and give them very high tickets? This area is well known for its pedestrian deaths, WITH a school being on NE 82nd Ave at ground zero (between Burnside and Glisan).“

“We have had some areas that have gotten some nice wheelchair accessible curbouts, but I have noticed that it's been kind of awkward. Instead of it being a full cut out, it's like half and half, and as [a] walker, I have fallen off the curb because I've thought that I'm walking down the cut out, but instead, I'm stepping off of the curb. I've almost hurt myself several times just walking to get my lunch from my work place.”

“On [the] TV Highway where people have to cross the street to small businesses, people are at risk because of the large distance between stop lights. There have been lots of accidents as people try to cross streets without stoplights and stop walks, and it is very dangerous for people.”

“I don't like driving downtown, but when I do the cyclists need to be mindful too. I believe that this is something that needs to be remembered... I believe that people on bikes should be required to have some type of insurance, because when they get hit it is on the driver to pay for their damage regardless of whose fault it is.”

Regarding encampments near schools: *“people were doing things that little kids shouldn't be seeing.”*

Regarding encampments: *“Have them back the tents up off the sidewalk instead of kicking them out of the greenspace and forcing them on the sidewalk because I am frequently trapped because tents and vehicles with people living in them are blocking the sidewalk. Some of them have gotten extremely angry when I ask to pass because I'm stuck. This means I'm riding on the street.”*

“If it is difficult for clients and vendors to reach a business, for any reason, and if it is a safety issue also it is a psychological spot so they associate that incident with the business... [A]s a small business people choose us, right? We already have that buy in that people find us, choose us, and at that moment if it is not easy to reach us, or if something happens along the way because of either lack of transportation, safety issues, rain, whatever, people associate that incident in their head with our business name, and that is what they pass on.”

“All of the ideas for beautification and increased accessibility are important – we need to focus on making neighborhoods more livable. This along with installing a theme for the community will make people want to stop in and visit and shop at local businesses.”

Public Transit

“The bus system is very limited, and centered on getting in and out of downtown Portland, [there] needs to be added emphasis on covering moving between areas outside of downtown.”

“[T]ransportation needs to reach more rural communities.”

“I’m in the southwest southwood area, which is known for having great walkability. But the one element is that there are no buses that come out of the 13th avenue business district after -on weekends- at a certain time. That doesn’t help for businesses that want to have something in the evening for the people who get off work... [I]t also affects the folks with lower incomes who can’t afford an Uber. [They] can’t come to my free events. Specifically because they can’t make their way out or if they do come, they can’t leave, unless they have a ride or a car.”

“I know that for some of our employees who perhaps have to travel from Washington County to Hillsboro and Clackamas County rely on the light rail, [but] with the increase [in construction] in the spring and summer months and the delays that occurred because of not being able to travel at their normal speeds for the light rail or the MAX ... it could be anywhere from an hour and a half to an hour and forty-five minutes.”

“I really wrestled with getting into Portland, and that’s unfixable. They dropped the ball on that one when they designed [the tunnels] years ago...”

“I know we’re trying to encourage people to walk more and not drive their cars as much, but that then creates a problem if we’re going to a client’s house and there’s nowhere for us to park... And it’s mainly most of the time in lower-income neighborhoods where we are seeing this, and it decreases the price for people, but in so many ways it’s already a barrier for some people who can’t afford it.”

“We are a cultural business, it’s not an everyday necessity when people come to us: an event that has seen a huge drop because of the traffic on 26th. People don’t want to travel 1:30 hours to come to [my] business in Hillsboro or Beaverton.”

“[W]e need to figure out ideas that are going to help everyone. We talked about safety issues. We talked about accessibility for everyone; we need to figure out or forecast where we are going to be 10 [to] 15 years from now. I think that is probably one of the biggest things. We need to figure out not just how to alleviate the pains we are going through now but to plan where we are going to be in the future.”

Other Key Findings

"I've missed at least fifty doctors appointments being told that I can't get on the bus because a person doesn't want to move. When it clearly says on the side, 'Move for handicap access.'"

"The bus is very affordable in comparison to having a car, but the bus is not predictable for me because sometimes they won't pick me up because I'm in a wheelchair. They state there isn't enough room, there are already two wheelchairs, or simply are behind schedule and will pass me up without explanation."

"Bus drivers need to stay on schedule whether they're behind or ahead... I have seen bus drivers blaze through, and you know some people rely on that app [TriMet's bus schedule app] because of the elements, or to get their kids to a class, or to do whatever they've got to do ... [But,] if they know the bus is coming at 8:46 and that bus driver decides to blaze through that bus stop by 8:40 it doesn't matter if that person got there five minutes earlier by the time they get there that bus is gone."

"As long as the bus drivers know that they need to stay with that schedule I think that that will alleviate a lot of problems that people have with missing the bus."

"I think that if there was some money and investments in the policies then I wouldn't be stranded from Midnight to 5 AM by Broadway or Radio taxi. I would not be waiting for an Uber that was not gonna come, and things etc. like that."

"I usually see that all the development of lighting, sidewalks and bikeways; anything community building, what everyone is trying to say is, "can we have a community? Can we build community through small business?"

"[S]mall businesses actually end up paying the majority of our income back into the community. Either in rent, utilities, employees, food, everything; literally, about 80 to 85% of our income first goes back into business-related expenses, and then we are left with a little bit. So we are constantly keeping the engine churning, but we are not getting served. We are not getting heard."

"Now, the crazy thing is that all development that happens, happens in gentrified neighborhoods. It happens for the cool hip people. It doesn't happen where people are building communities, where communities live, where communities of color live. So all of the investment and transportation/transit improvement cannot work without land use. Talking about it at the same time, what kind of land use is being allowed? If all the rentals, all the businesses, are also fancy small businesses. So if it is only fancy small businesses that can have someone earning \$24K to \$30K, which is \$15 an hour minimum wage, can they afford to shop there? No they can't. So even if they do all of the development... if we make it for fancy neighborhoods it does not serve its purpose; it is not letting us get out and participate. Small businesses don't end up being able to support one another because we are exhausted and we don't have access to transportation."

“It is important that wherever we are developing [we consider,] is it also serving the people who need to be served? Or [are we only serving] all of the people coming up in their fancy cars [and] using their businesses?”