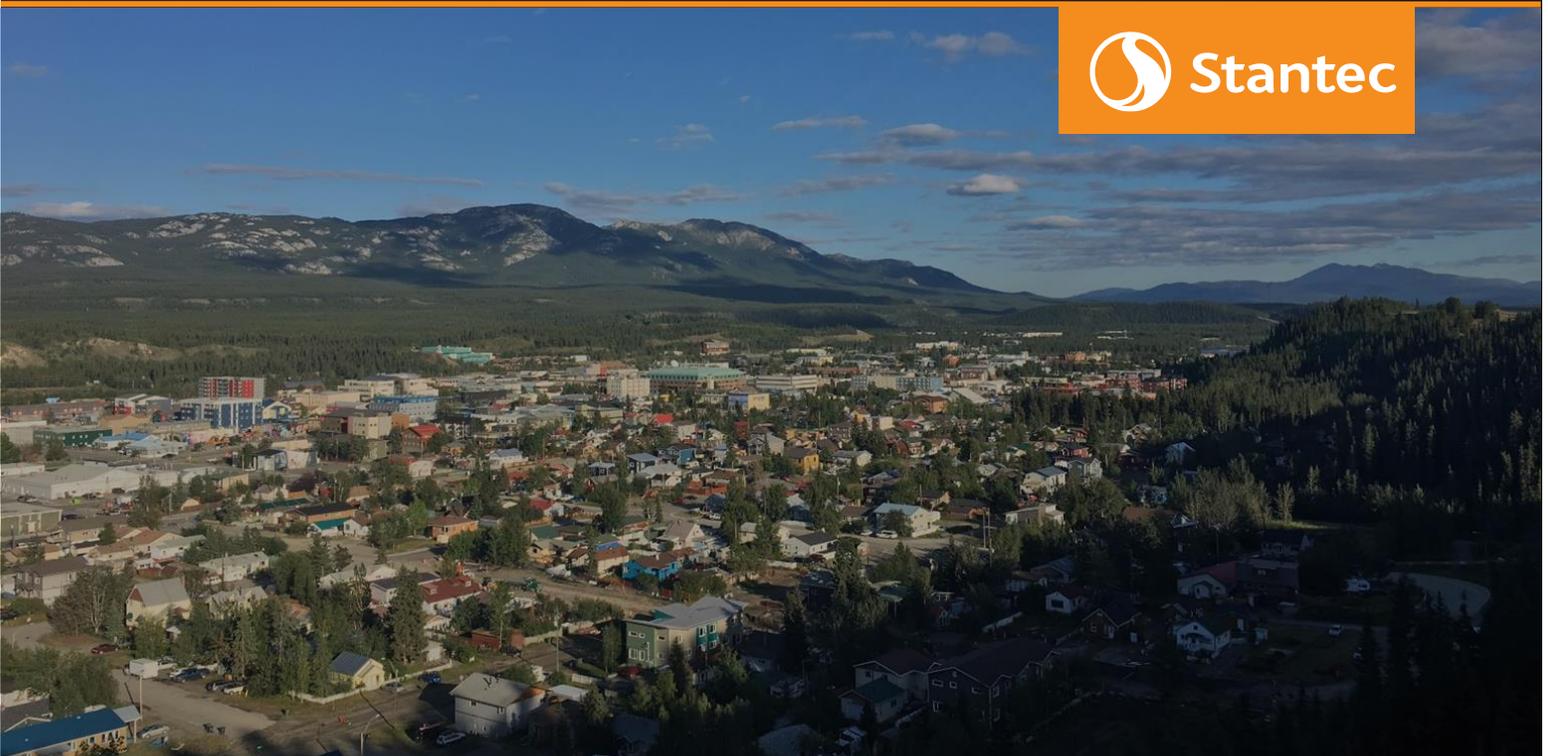


City of Whitehorse Modernized Transit Route Plan

What We've Heard Report

December 2020





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Draft What We've Heard Report

December 9, 2020

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INTRODUCTION

A survey was conducted to determine whether the proposed changes from the 2018 Transit Master Plan will address the needs of the community today. The survey questions asked residents about their satisfaction with the proposed changes and requested input about how the transit network and schedules could be improved. A total of 215 responses were received from members of the public. A summary of the survey results is presented below.

In addition, one virtual town hall was held as well as stakeholder meetings with transit operators, transit management, Yukon University Students and Yukon University Staff. Attempts were made to consult with the First Nations, as well as Raven's Ridge and Lobird representatives, but responses to our requests to engage were not received. The stakeholder meetings revealed some further opportunities to improve the proposed 2018 transit system. The feedback from these meetings and the major themes that emerged are summarized below and will be incorporated into the final network and schedule recommendations.

ONLINE SURVEY RESULTS

TRANSIT USE

The majority of survey respondents are current transit riders, where 70% indicated they have ridden transit in the past year, an additional 16% have ridden transit in the past year but only before the pandemic, and the remaining 14% have not ridden transit in the past year (**Figure 1**). Based on the number of respondents who have not ridden in the past year and/or have not ridden since the start of the pandemic, it is unsurprising that 25% of survey participants indicated they use transit less than once a month. Approximately one-third of survey respondents reported taking transit at least five days per week (**Figure 2**).

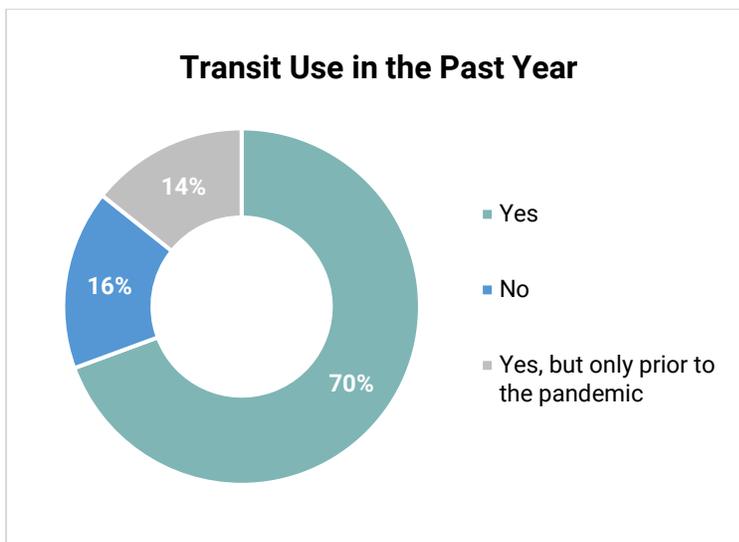


Figure 1: Respondents who have Ridden Transit in the Past Year

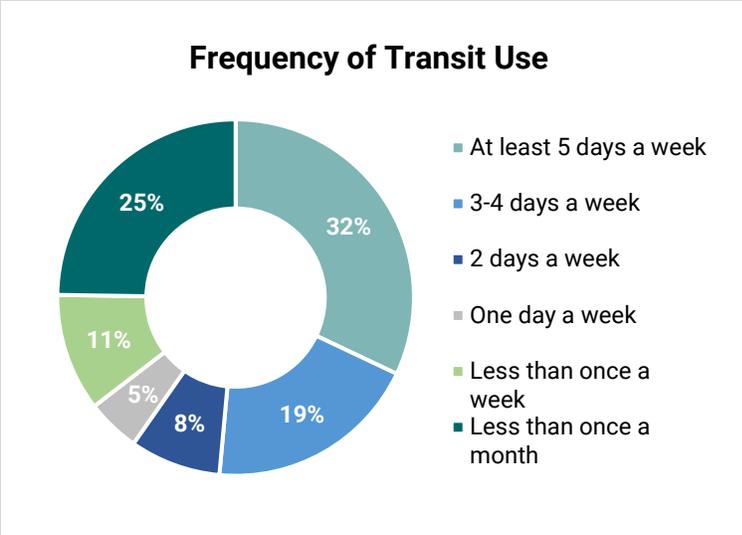


Figure 2: Frequency of Transit Use

Survey participants were asked which route or routes they use on a typical trip (can be more than one route). Routes 1 and 5 were the most popular routes identified by respondents (**Figure 3**), which differs slightly from the overall system ridership where Route 2 has the greatest ridership.

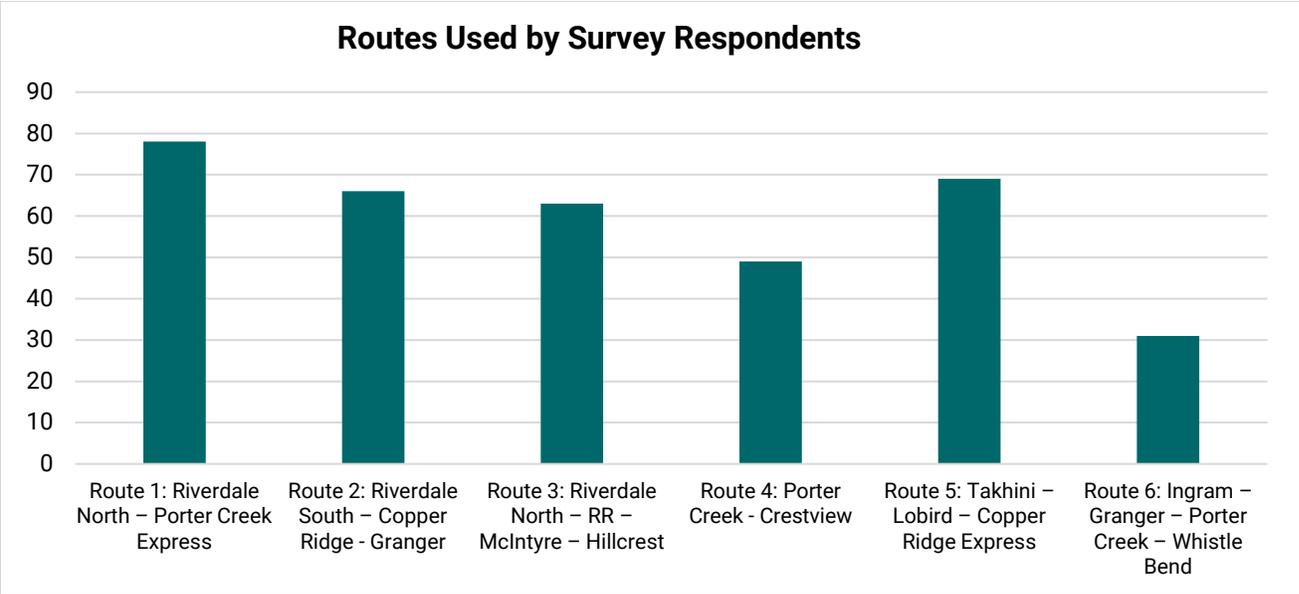


Figure 3: Routes Used by Survey Respondents

PLACE OF RESIDENCE

The greatest portion of survey respondents were residents of Porter Creek and Riverdale followed by Copper Ridge (**Figure 4**), which means the feedback received from the survey may reflect the popular opinions in these neighbourhoods more than others. The routes serving these three neighbourhoods have greater planned changes to their alignments and schedules than some of the other routes, so getting feedback from these groups is valuable for understanding comments and concerns about the proposed changes.

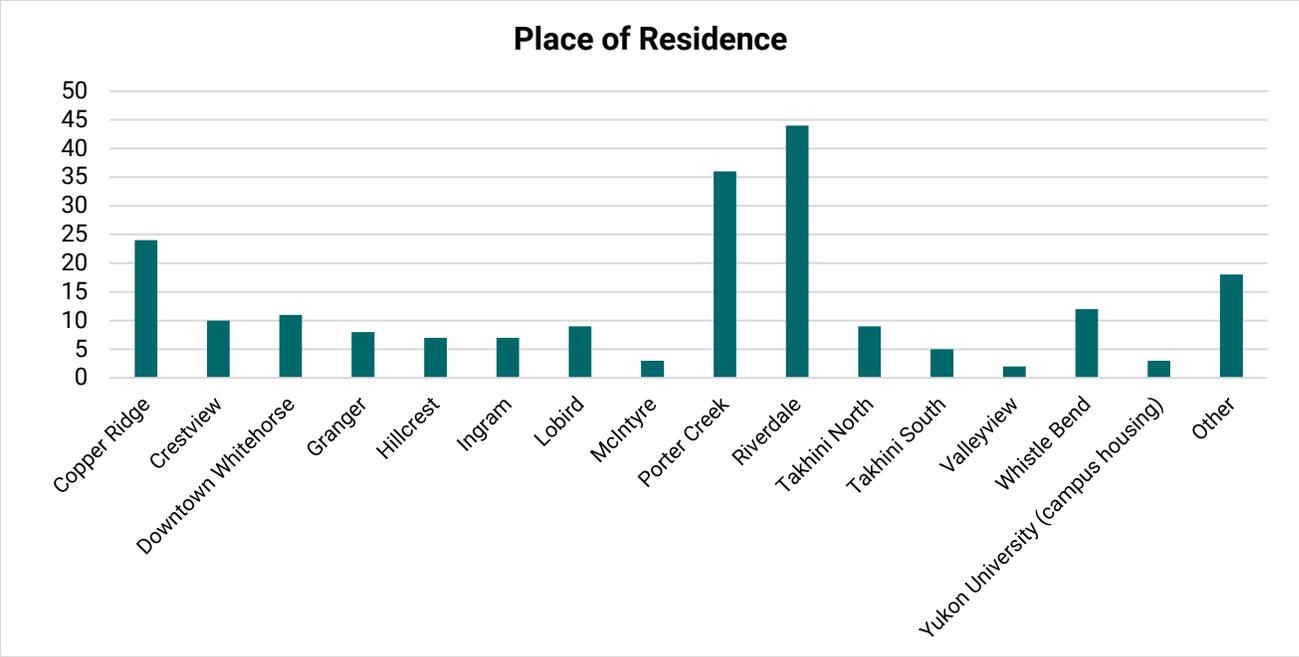


Figure 4: Survey Respondents' Place of Residence

SATISFACTION WITH PROPOSED CHANGES

GENERAL SATISFACTION

As shown below in **Figure 5**, there are varying levels of satisfaction with the proposed network. When first asked to agree or disagree with the statement that 'the proposed changes are easy to understand', only half of the respondents (52%) indicated that they *agree* or *strongly agree* with the statement. This shows that communication channels and messaging of the proposed changes will require careful consideration as these changes are implemented. This may also impact the answers to the subsequent statements, where approximately half of the respondents either *disagree* or *strongly disagree* that the changes align with the needs of the community (50% of respondents), address the existing challenges facing Whitehorse Transit (50%), improve respondents' travel (55%), and are overall satisfied with the changes (55%). The high level of disagreement with these statements presents concerns about the community's acceptance of the changes and indicates that the changes may require further review and/or that better communication is needed to illustrate the service improvements to the public. At the same time, it also sheds light on a likely correlation between ease of understanding and acceptance of the changes, further emphasizing the importance of effective communication.

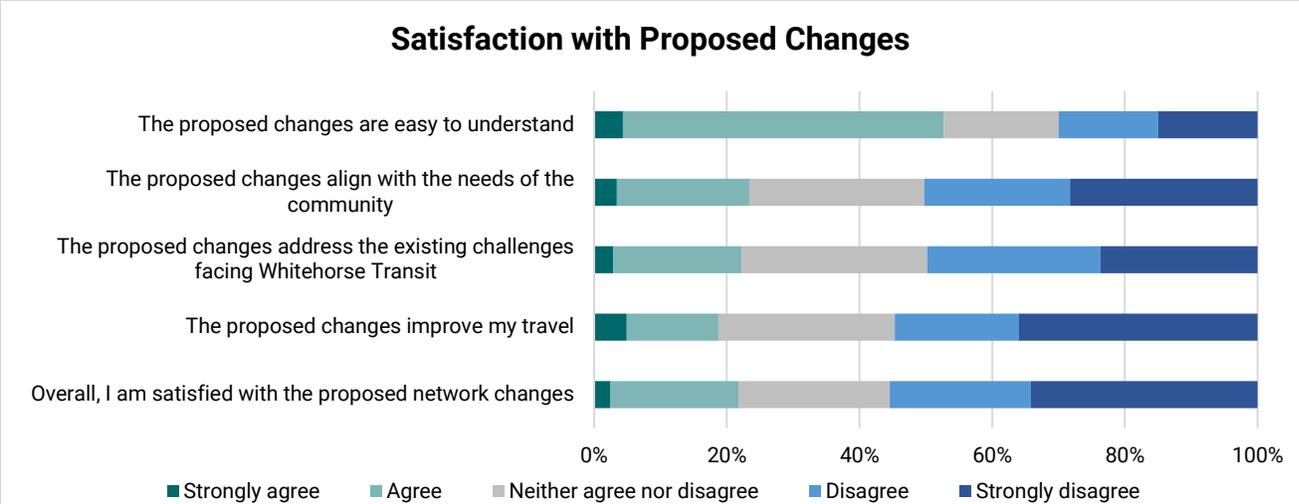


Figure 5: Satisfaction with Proposed Changes

A review of satisfaction levels by neighbourhood was then conducted to determine which communities are expressing the greatest dissatisfaction with the proposed recommendations (**Figure 6**). In seven neighbourhoods, more than 50% of respondents *disagreed* or *strongly disagreed* with the statement that overall, they were satisfied with the proposed changes: Copper Ridge, Crestview, Hillcrest, Ingram, Lobird, Porter Creek, and Takhini South. The greatest disagreement came from Hillcrest (86%); however, it should be noted that only seven surveys were collected from this community (one response of *neither agree nor disagree* and six responses of *strongly disagree*).

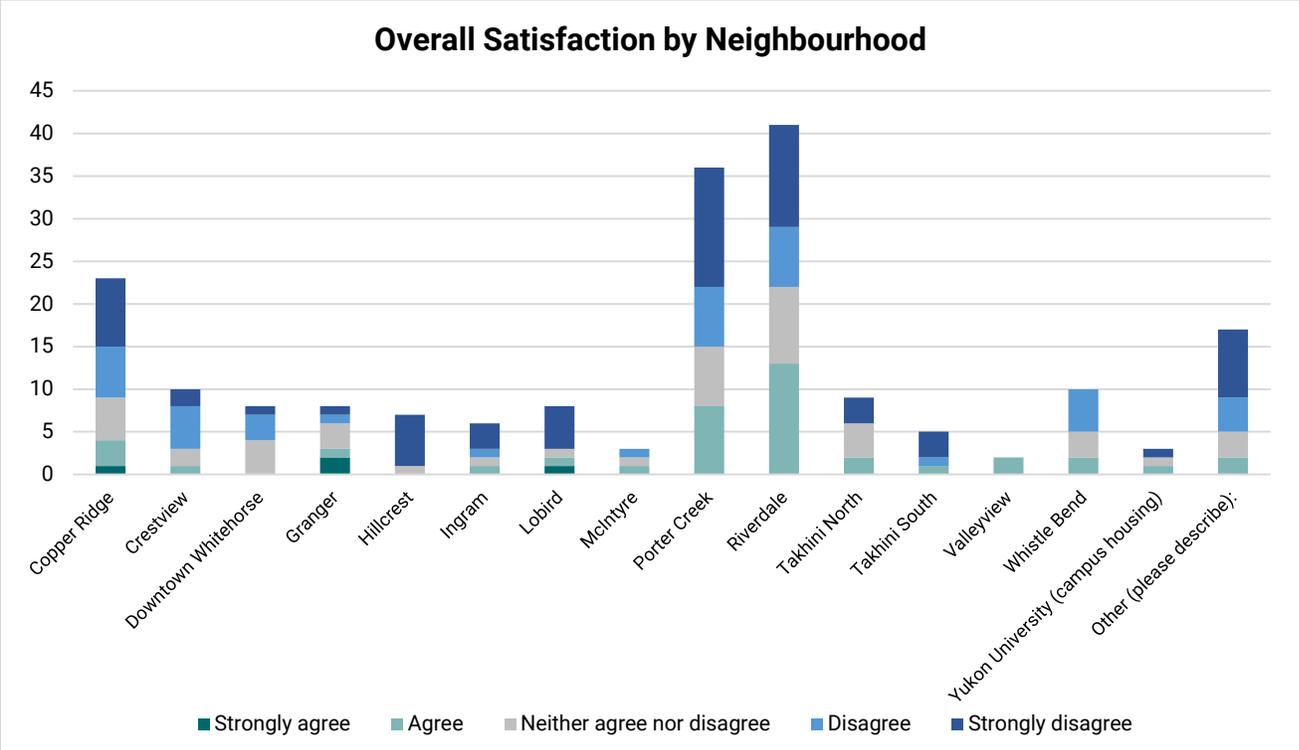


Figure 6: Overall Satisfaction with Proposed Changes by Neighbourhood

The main concerns from each neighbourhood that expressed dissatisfaction are summarized below.

Neighbourhood	Concern	Response
Copper Ridge	The new Copper Ridge route (Route 2) bypasses Copper Ridge Place, a retirement home in Copper Ridge. This is a concern for seniors and residents with mobility challenges who rely on public transit.	Realignment of Route 2 to serve this location will be explored in the options development; however, Copper Ridge Place is located within a 400-metre walking distance of a bus stop. Specialized transit is also available for residents with mobility challenges.
	Copper Ridge and Granger do not have a direct connection to Yukon University; having to go Downtown to transfer is inconvenient.	Riders will not need to transfer Downtown to travel between Copper Ridge/Granger and Yukon University. Riders can transfer to Route 1 at Range Road, or can transfer to Route 3 at CGC and walk from Mountainview Drive and Range Road.
Crestview	Downtown is vital as a transit hub today, therefore there are some concerns regarding the emphasis on Yukon University and Canada Games Centre (CGC) as the primary hubs.	Downtown will continue to be an important destination and will offer 15-minute combined frequency (routes 1 and 2) during peak hours. Adding Yukon University and CGC means that not all riders are required to go Downtown to transfer.
	There should be direct connections between Porter Creek/Crestview and Downtown. The Yukon University transfer is out of the way and will add considerable travel time to trips.	Routes 1 and 4 will interline at Yukon University and riders will not be required to alight from the bus to make the transfer, which will save travel time for passengers. An express service between Porter Creek and Downtown will also be explored as part of the transit network options.
Hillcrest	All buses should continue to travel Downtown. The trip from Hillcrest to Downtown will be much longer in this system.	The trip from Hillcrest to Downtown will be possible with only one transfer, and is expected to have similar travel times as today.
	This plan does not address tourism and the need for direct travel from the airport to Downtown.	The trip from the Airport to Downtown will be possible with only one transfer, and is expected to have similar travel times as today.
	Requiring transfers at CGC is a challenge for residents with mobility challenges, people with strollers, luggage, groceries, etc.	Transfers are required to offer greater frequency of service and more direct routes between origins and destinations. Most destinations will be able to be reached with one transfer.
Ingram	Transfers should be located Downtown where most riders' destinations are instead of at Canada Games Centre.	Downtown will continue to be an important destination and will offer 15-minute combined frequency (routes 1 and 2) during peak hours. Adding Yukon University and CGC means that not all riders are required to go Downtown to transfer.
Lobird	Concerned about the requirement to schedule home-to-hub trips to and from work every day and being late for work due to pick-ups of other customers.	It will be possible to schedule "standing order" trips where users can book recurring trips instead of booking each trip individually. Trips can also be booked based on arrival time at the destination, which will account for picking up and dropping off other passengers.
Porter Creek	Consider running buses in both directions (clockwise and counterclockwise).	Buses running in both directions would require twice as many resources to run the route and is not feasible given existing operating constraints. Switching directions every other trip would introduce more confusion to the network.

Neighbourhood	Concern	Response
	Too many buses travel to the university. Students should walk from the Mountain View Drive stop instead of taking buses away from other destinations.	A new transfer hub location will be established at the university based on feedback received during the 2018 Transit Master Plan to address the growing student travel demand.
	The commute will be too long from Porter Creek to Downtown.	Routes 1 and 4 will interline at Yukon University and riders will not be required to alight from the bus to make the transfer, which will save travel time for passengers. An express service between Porter Creek and Downtown will also be explored as part of the transit network options.
Takhini South	This plan seems to reduce service Downtown, but Downtown is where the majority of services and employment are. Buses Downtown are already full so service should be increased.	Downtown will continue to be an important destination and will offer 15-minute combined frequency (routes 1 and 2) during peak hours. Adding Yukon University and CGC means that not all riders are required to go Downtown to transfer.
General	Buses are unreliable and often run very early or very late.	Revised schedules will account for actual running time and will include longer layover time at terminal stops for operators to get back on schedule, addressing issues with on-time performance.
	Service should be more frequent (30 minutes all day and 15 minutes during peak hours) and should run later and on Sundays.	The proposed plan improves service frequency across the network. Sunday service will be proposed as a future phase of implementation while additional funding is identified.
	Transit service should be free.	Revenue from fares is used to recover a portion of the costs to operate the system. Reducing the price of fares would result in a reduction of service levels. A review of fare policies also goes beyond the scope of the MRTP.
	Sunday is important for non-white collar workers.	Sunday service will be proposed as a future phase of implementation while additional funding is identified.
	Buses should run in both directions (every other trip) instead of one-way loops.	This proposed plan minimizes one-way loops compared to the existing system, simplifying the network. One-way loops are required to provide coverage in some areas where the street network is circuitous.
	Pedestrian and cyclist safety are important and separated facilities should be provided.	The plan will recommend pedestrian and cycling improvements that can improve multi-modal integration and safety.

Some of these comments illustrate a level of misunderstanding of the proposed changes. For example, Downtown will continue to be an important transit hub in the future, offering a combined 15-minute frequency during peak periods, while Yukon University and Canada Games Centre will be new hubs added to improve travel options for residents.

Many comments also focus on maintaining or creating direct connections between destinations (e.g. from Porter Creek to Downtown), as well as requests for more frequent service (e.g. every 30 minutes throughout the day and every 15 minutes during peak periods). With limited resources available, it is challenging to provide coverage and “one-seat rides” to and from all destinations, while also offering more frequent services. During the last transit master

planning process, residents had indicated a preference for frequency over coverage, meaning a more frequent network that relies on transfers is the preferred solution.

Many comments also arose about general concerns with transit or transportation in Whitehorse. While many comments are beyond the scope of this particular project, listening to and recording these comments is valuable for providing context to the study and informing future transit or transportation-related plans.

HOME-TO-HUB

Figure 7 shows the satisfaction with proposed home-to-hub service from participants who answered that they either live in or travel to/from Lobird or Raven’s Ridge. Overall, there is hesitation about the proposed service, which was also expressed in the write-in comments. Some participants identified that not all residents have access to a smartphone to book trips. As discussed above, there are also questions about how booking will work and how they can ensure they will make it to their destinations on time. Providing alternative booking methods, such as a dial-in option, as well as communicating information about how the service will work will likely reduce the initial dissatisfaction with the proposed service. There will also be an opportunity to test the service during a pilot period and provide feedback, which will allow riders to experience how it works and understand the benefits of it compared to lower frequency traditional fixed-route service. Initial dissatisfaction is not atypical for what other transit properties have experienced prior to launching home-to-hub (or similar) services; however, after the services are launched and customers have tried it out, responses tend to be quite positive.

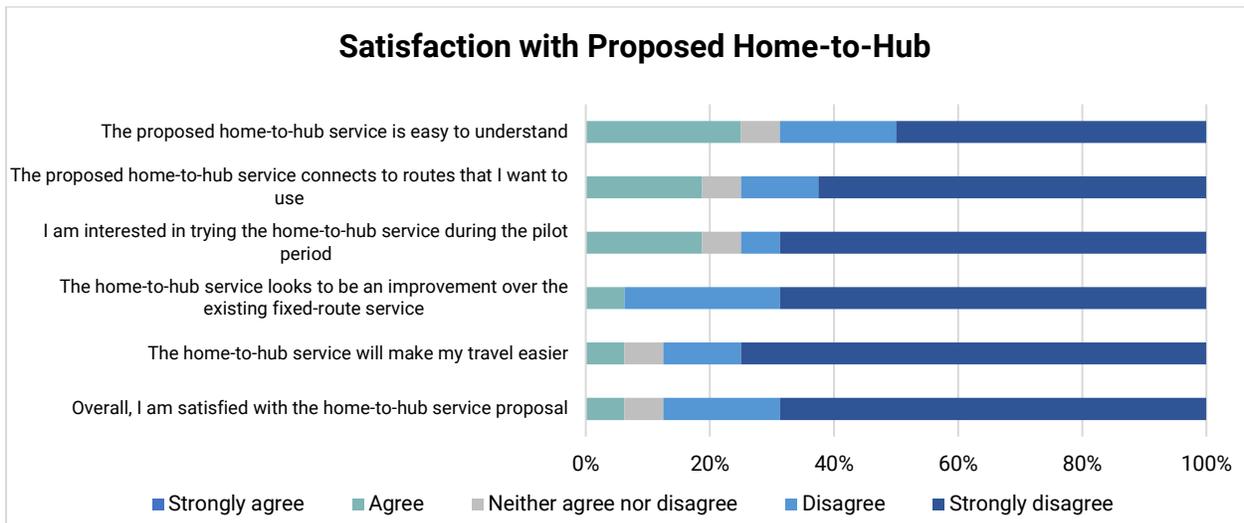


Figure 7: Satisfaction with Proposed Home-to-Hub Service

COMMUNICATIONS

Communication of service changes is important to generate buy-in and ensure riders are not surprised by changes.

Figure 8 shows the communication methods typically used by residents to access transit information. The main method people use to hear about service changes is through social media such as Facebook and Twitter (31%), followed by the City of Whitehorse website (25%), and information posted at bus stops and onboard vehicles (17%). Many of the 6% who indicated they use ‘other’ methods (10 out of 11 participants) use the newspaper as a way to stay informed.

Typical Communication Methods

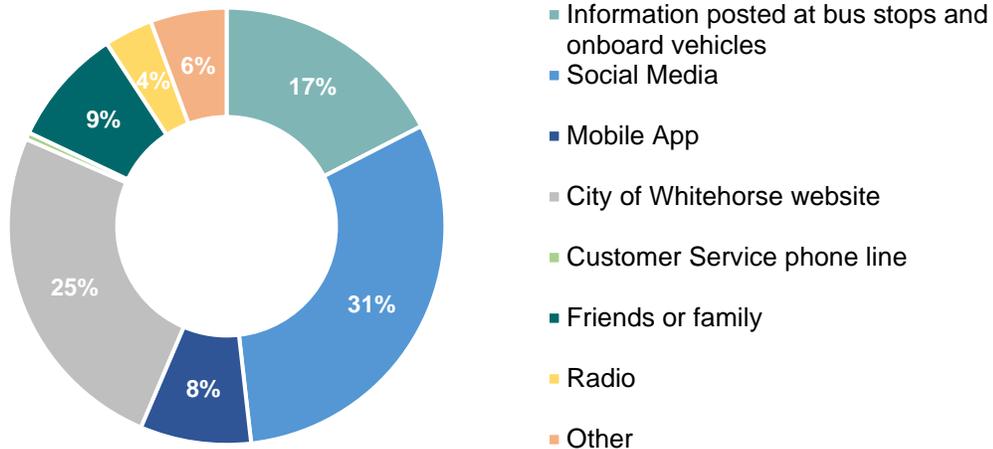


Figure 8: Communication of Transit Information

STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

Through a combination of meetings with the public, transit operators, transit management, Yukon University students and staff, common comments and themes emerged that echoed the results of the survey. Feedback from the stakeholder meetings are summarized below:

- **Service span and weekend service**
 - Transit operators indicated that service must be provided until at least 10pm.
 - Yukon University students indicated that students in campus housing generally do not have a vehicle and need transportation options 7 days a week.
 - Many students have jobs with evening shifts that end at 10pm and many students spend time at the CGC, which closes at 10pm.
 - Yukon University staff emphasized that providing transit service during evenings and weekends should be a priority to improve mobility for all residents.
 - On-demand service was identified as a potential solution for late night and weekend service when ridership is low.
- **Student ridership**
 - Students and staff members of Yukon University indicated that the proposed changes are an improvement over the existing network and that they are interested in Yukon University becoming a new transfer hub.
 - The Yukon University students have a discounted transit pass that would be used more often if transit service better suited their needs. The student focus group participants stated that the increase in service to Yukon University is expected to attract more riders to the service but more students would take transit if it were available to them later into the evening and on Sundays.
 - Students also expressed a need for greater active transportation connections such as safe pedestrian walkways and bicycle infrastructure to shift people away from the private automobile and encourage a variety of active and sustainable transportation options.

- **Downtown**
 - Transit operators were concerned about service being taken away from Downtown since most destinations are located downtown. They also indicated that riders may not be receptive to transfers at Yukon University, particularly from Porter Creek to Downtown where riders currently have a one-seat ride.
- **Whistle Bend**
 - Positive feedback was received from members of the public and operators about the increase in service coverage in Whistle Bend, as well as the frequency of service to and from Whistle Bend.

Feedback received from the public engagement process was reviewed and used to modify the previously proposed transit network from the 2018 Master Plan. Three revised service options were developed to address residents' concerns and were presented to the City of Whitehorse Council members for consideration. The updated network options and preferred service concept are described in the next section.