

INTRODUCTION

The Rush Line Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Project is a proposed 15-mile transit route with stops between Union Depot in Lowertown Saint Paul and downtown White Bear Lake. Rush Line BRT will operate daily with 10- to 15-minute frequencies and will have stations with amenities like shelters with light and heat, raised platforms with fare payment machines and real-time departure signs. The Rush Line BRT Project is led by Ramsey County in partnership with the Metropolitan Council, Metro Transit, the Minnesota Department of Transportation and the municipalities along the route.

In July 2020, Ramsey County conducted a survey to gather input regarding station design for project partners to incorporate into planning efforts in the next phase of project development. The survey ran for approximately five weeks and garnered 471 responses. The survey was available in English, Spanish, Hmong, Somali and Karen, and was advertised via boosted Facebook posts, Twitter posts, the Rush Line BRT e-newsletter and yard signs posted along the Bruce Vento Regional Trail. The purpose of this document is to summarize this input.

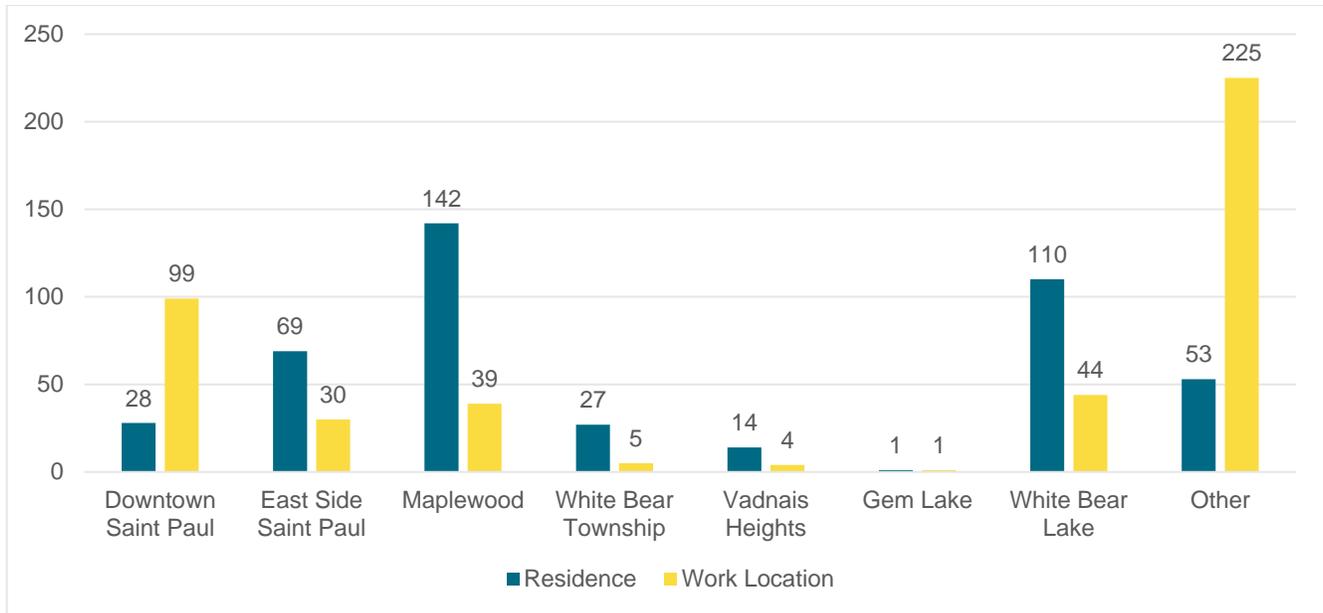


Station design survey yard sign

RESIDENCE AND PLACE OF WORK

The majority of respondents indicated that they lived in Maplewood, White Bear Lake, and downtown and the east side of Saint Paul; most of the remainder indicated living elsewhere in the corridor, while approximately 12 percent listed residences including Minneapolis, Little Canada, North St. Paul, and Saint Paul neighborhoods such as Midway, Frogtown and Highland Park (Figure 1). In contrast, while just one fifth of respondents indicated that they work in downtown Saint Paul, nearly half work outside of the project area in locations including Minneapolis, Roseville, Woodbury and Stillwater, and approximately six percent of respondents stated that they are retired.

Figure 1: Residence and Workplace of Survey Respondents



TRANSIT USE

The survey asked what would encourage respondents to use Rush Line BRT and allowed multiple selections. Safety at stations was the most popular choice, followed by safe pedestrian connections to stations, convenient locations for vehicle drop-off and pick-up, and safe bicycle connections, as shown in Figure 2. These priorities were fairly consistent for respondents from all project area municipalities, as shown in Figure 3. Those who selected “other” indicated that parking options, safety and cleanliness on the bus, and convenience and access to destinations such as restaurants would encourage them to use Rush Line BRT; some stated that they have no intent of using Rush Line BRT regardless of what features are included.

Figure 2: Features that Would Encourage Rush Line BRT Use

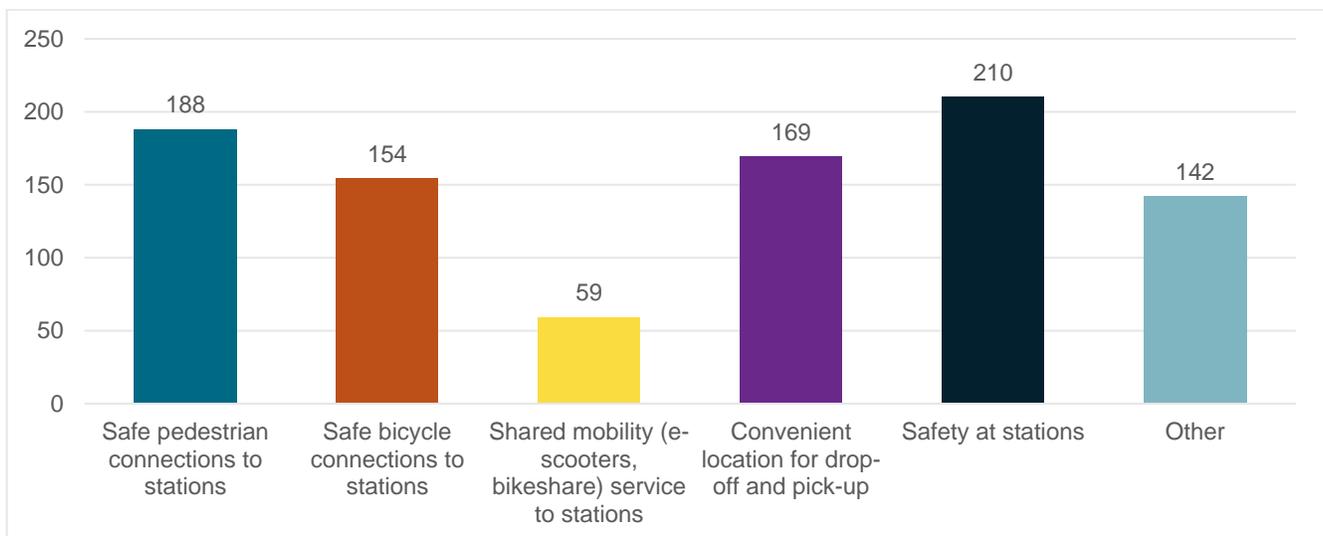
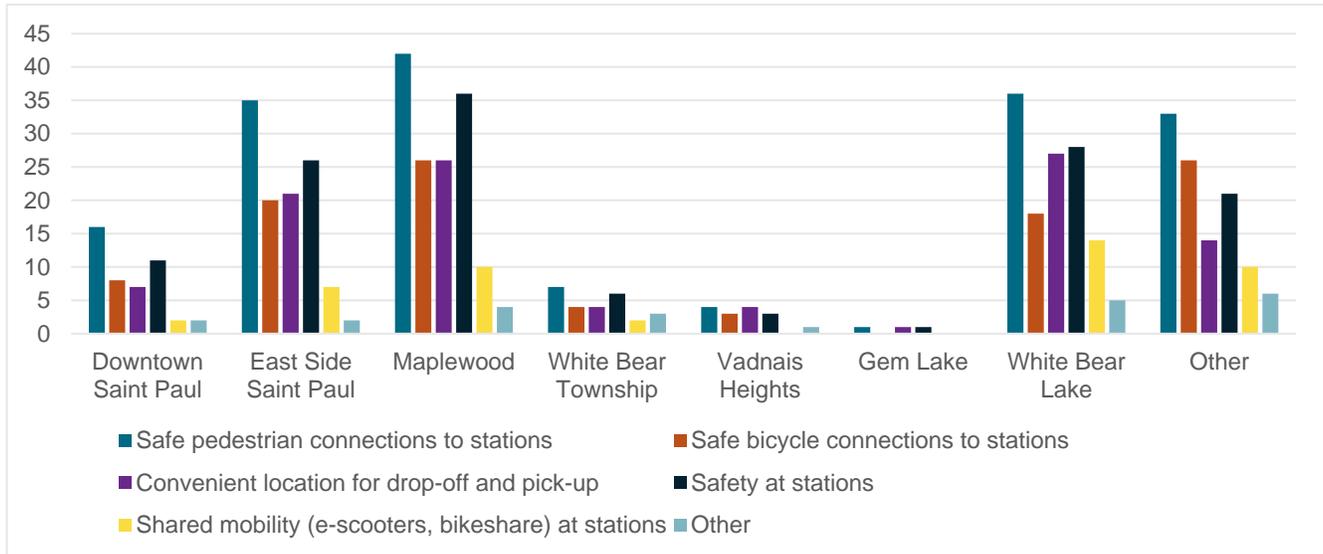
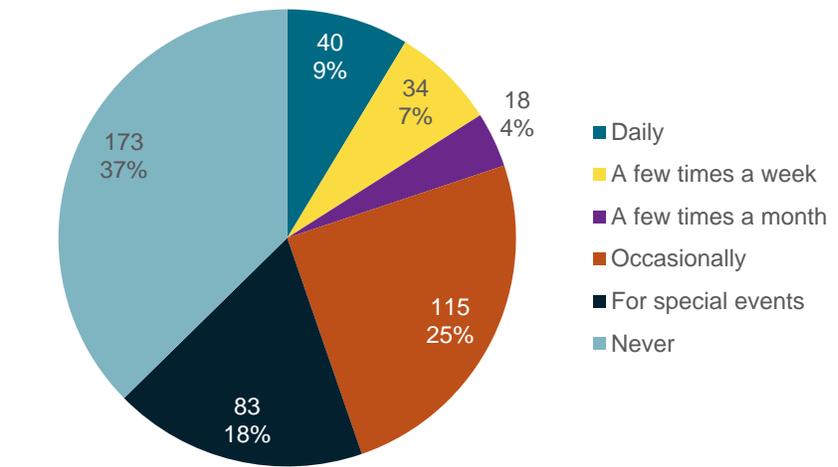


Figure 3: Features that Would Encourage Rush Line BRT Use by Respondent City of Residence



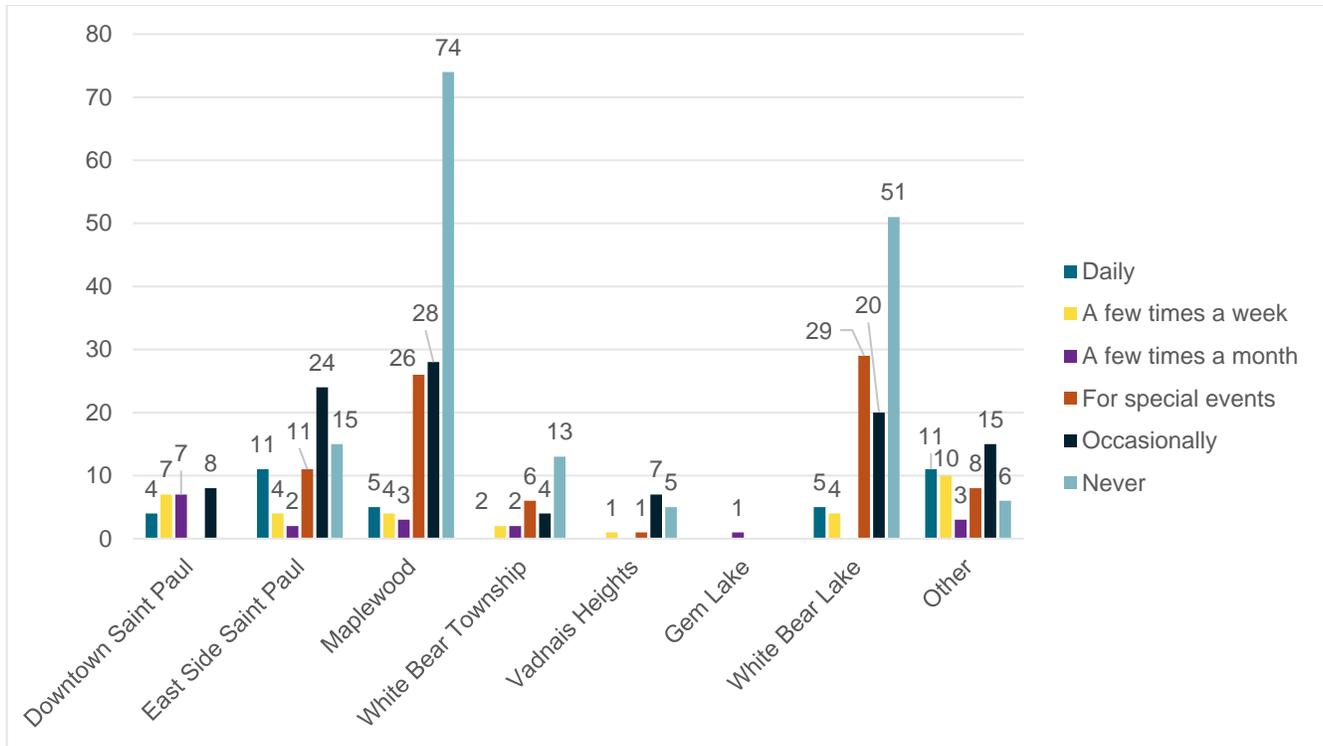
More than two thirds of respondents shared that they have some experience using transit, either on a regular basis or for special events. Approximately one fifth stated that they use transit for special events, nearly one quarter said they ride transit occasionally, and one fifth said they use transit a few times a month or more; the remaining one third of respondents indicated that they never use transit (**Error! Reference source not found.**). For reference, approximately 15 percent of metro area residents use transit a few times a month or more.¹ The frequency of transit use by city of residence is shown in Figure 5.

Figure 4: Respondents' Frequency of Transit Use



¹ Metropolitan Council 2019 Travel Behavior Inventory, available at <https://gisdata.mn.gov/dataset/us-mn-state-metc-society-tbi-home-interview2019>.

Figure 5: Frequency of Transit Use by City of Residence



STATIONS NEAR DESTINATIONS

The survey asked respondents to indicate each of the 21 stations that is located near where they live, work, go to appointments, go to school, go to restaurants or shopping, or pursue other activities. Station locations are shown in

Figure 6 and responses are illustrated in Figure 7.

Saint Paul

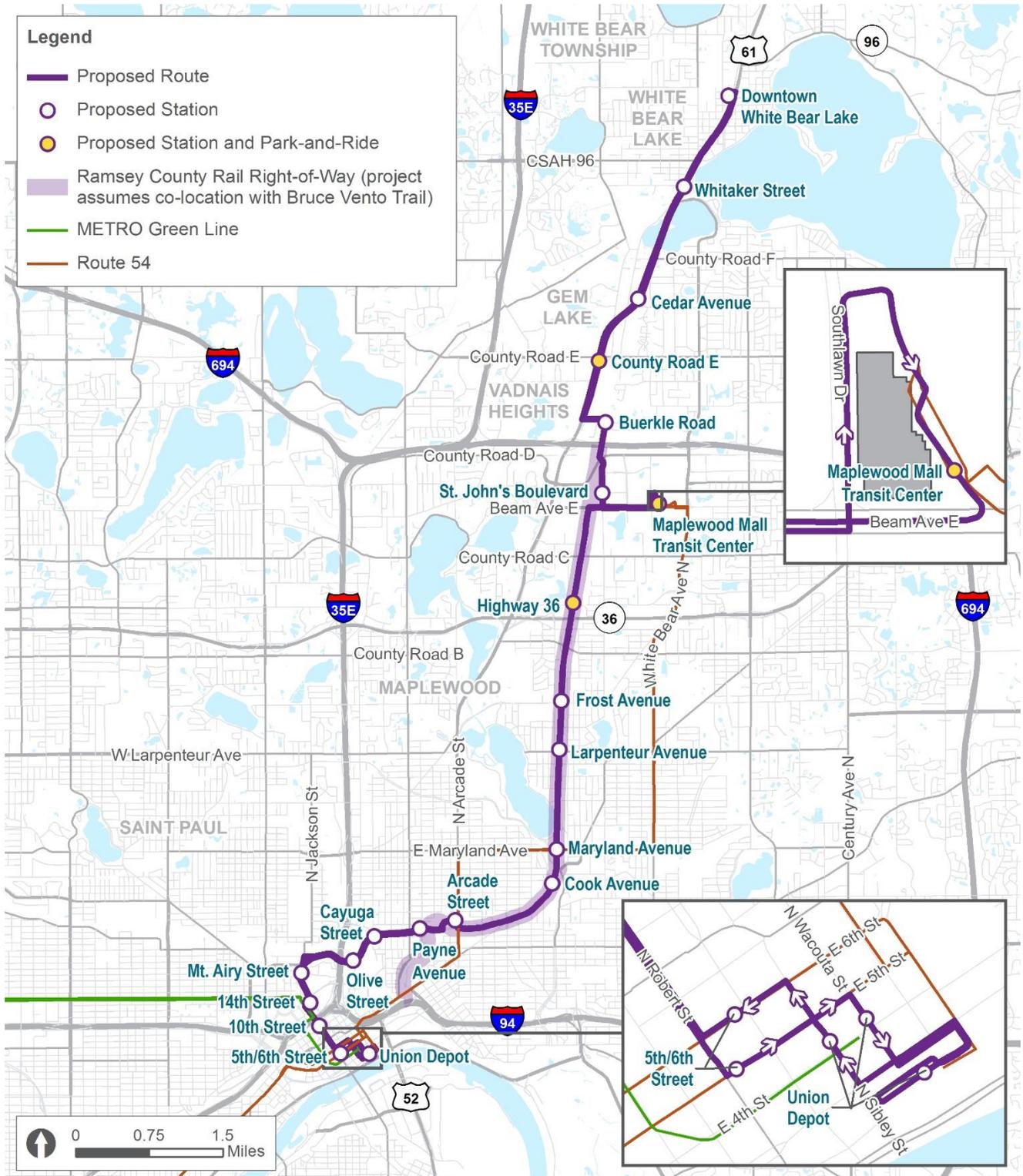
The downtown Saint Paul station areas are popular destinations for work, restaurants and shopping, appointments and residences. Many respondents live or work in the Olive Street station area, and several go to appointments near the Cayuga Street station. The Payne Avenue and Arcade Street station areas are popular among respondents for restaurants and shopping, and many live in these areas. Those who shared that they go shopping near the Cook Avenue station highlighted its proximity to Hmong Village. The primary destination for people near the Maryland Avenue and Larpenteur Avenue stations is home; those who selected “other” shared that these stations are near recreational opportunities at Lake Phalen, and a few respondents said that the Maryland Avenue station is conveniently located to local shopping and restaurants.

Maplewood and White Bear Lake

A number of respondents indicated that the Frost Avenue and Highway 36 stations are near where they live or go to restaurants or shopping, and some noted that the Frost Avenue station’s proximity to the Gateway State Trail is a benefit. Many respondents indicated that they go shopping and to

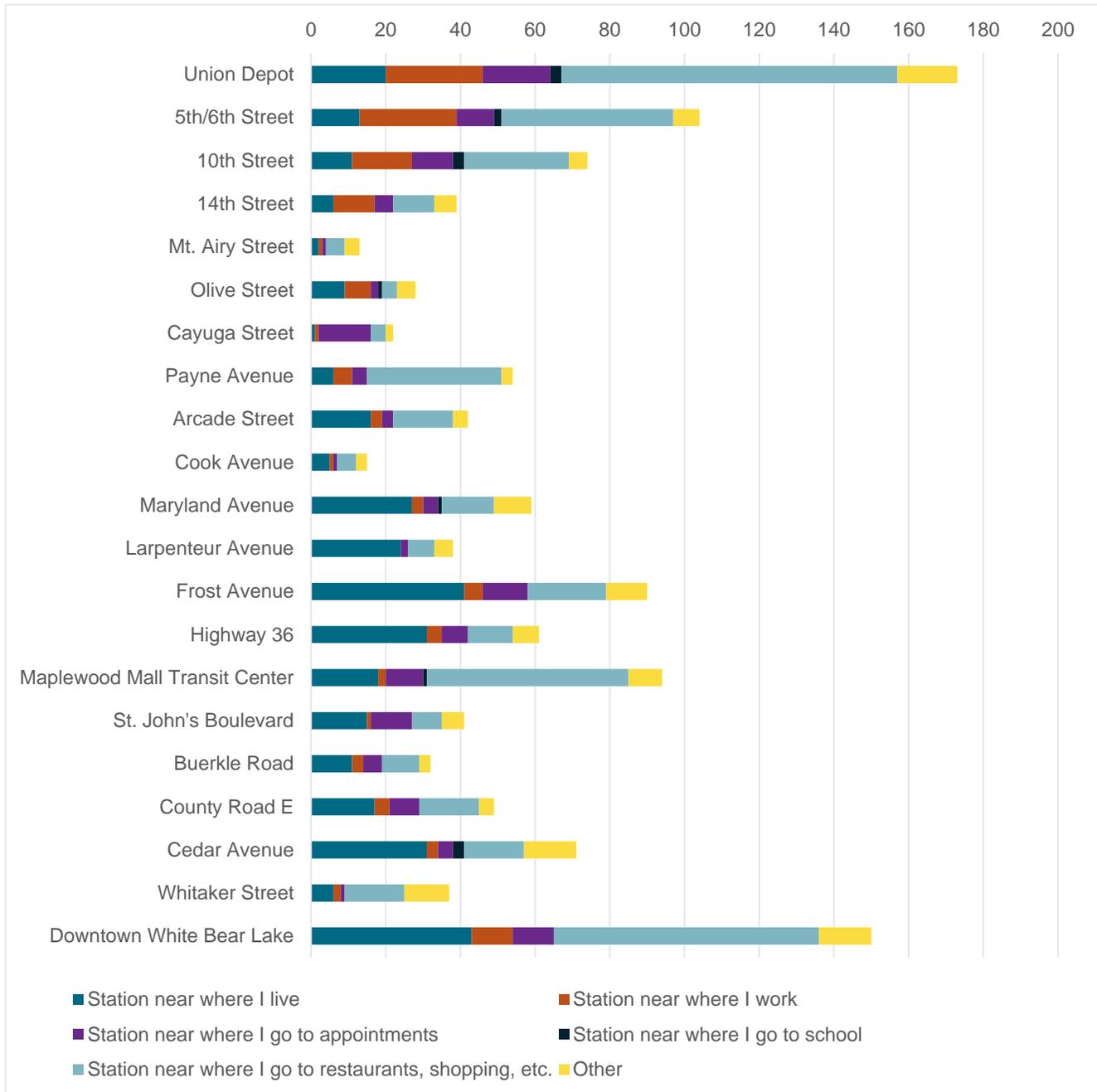
restaurants near the Maplewood Mall Transit Center station, and those who selected “other” stated that they go to this station area to transfer to other transit lines.

Figure 6: Proposed Rush Line BRT Route and Stations



A few respondents indicated that they live, go to appointments and go to restaurants and shopping near the St. John's Boulevard, County Road E, Buerkle Road and Whitaker Street stations. A significant number of respondents live, go shopping and to restaurants, work and/or go to appointments near the Cedar Avenue and Downtown White Bear Lake stations. Those who selected "other" for these six stations generally used this option to say that they would not use this station.

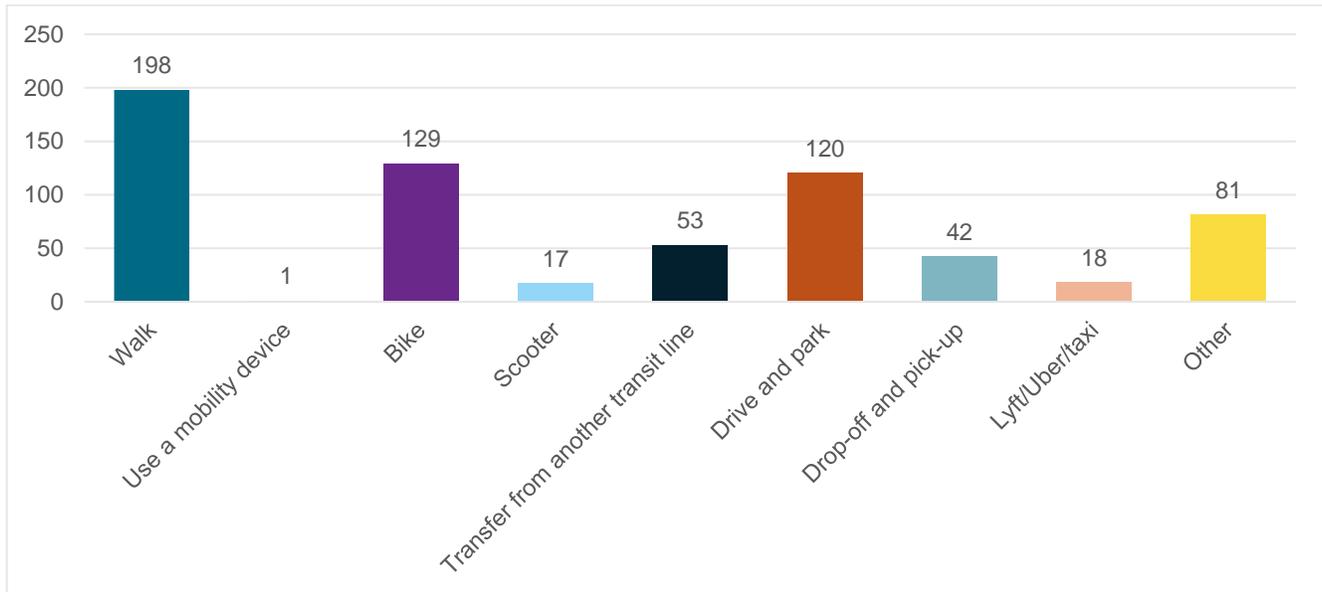
Figure 7: Respondent Activities by Station Area



USING RUSH LINE BRT

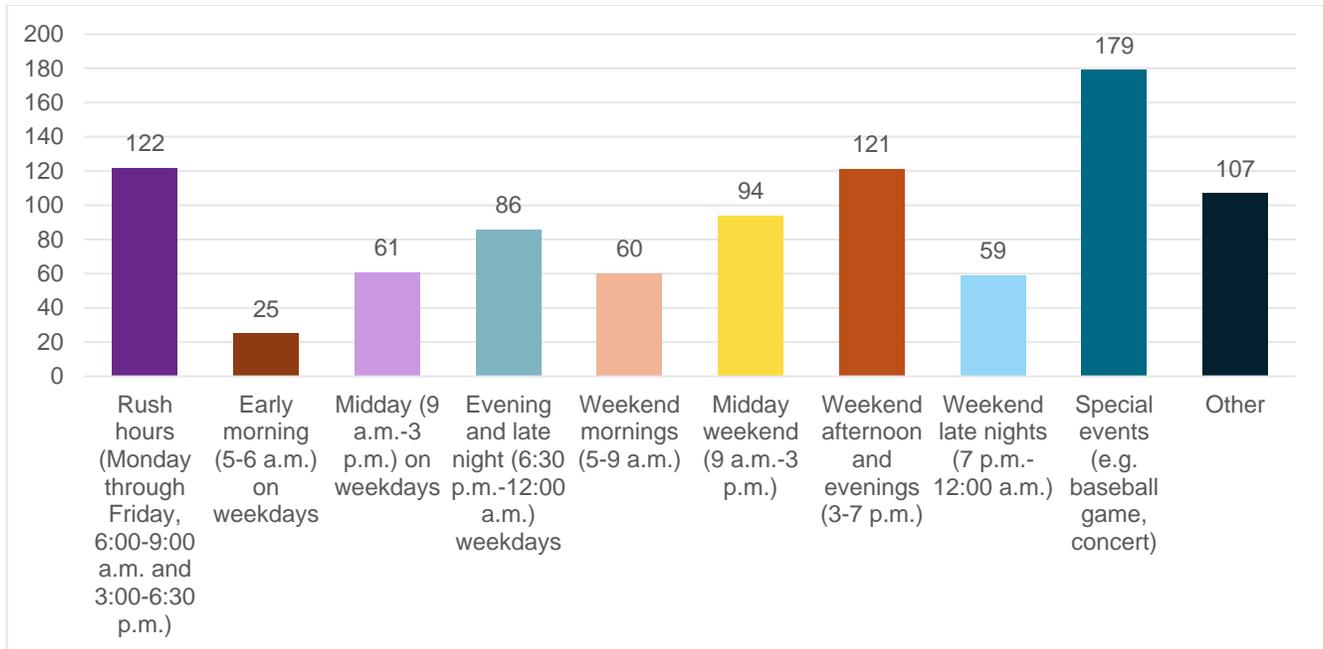
The survey next asked how respondents anticipated accessing Rush Line BRT. The most popular response was walking, followed by bicycling (Figure 8). Driving and parking to access a station was the third most popular option with one-quarter of respondents indicating that they would use a park-and-ride facility to access a station. As with the station area responses, the majority of respondents who selected “other” said that they would not use Rush Line BRT.

Figure 8: Accessing Rush Line BRT



When asked at what times they expect to use Rush Line BRT, nearly 40 percent of respondents stated that they anticipate using the Rush Line to attend special events (Figure 9). Approximately one-quarter indicated that they would use the line during rush hours and weekend afternoons. The next most popular times were midday weekend days and nighttime on weekdays. A few who selected “other” said they would use Rush Line BRT to go to doctor’s appointments, meetings or other occasional obligations; the remainder said that they do not expect to use Rush Line BRT.

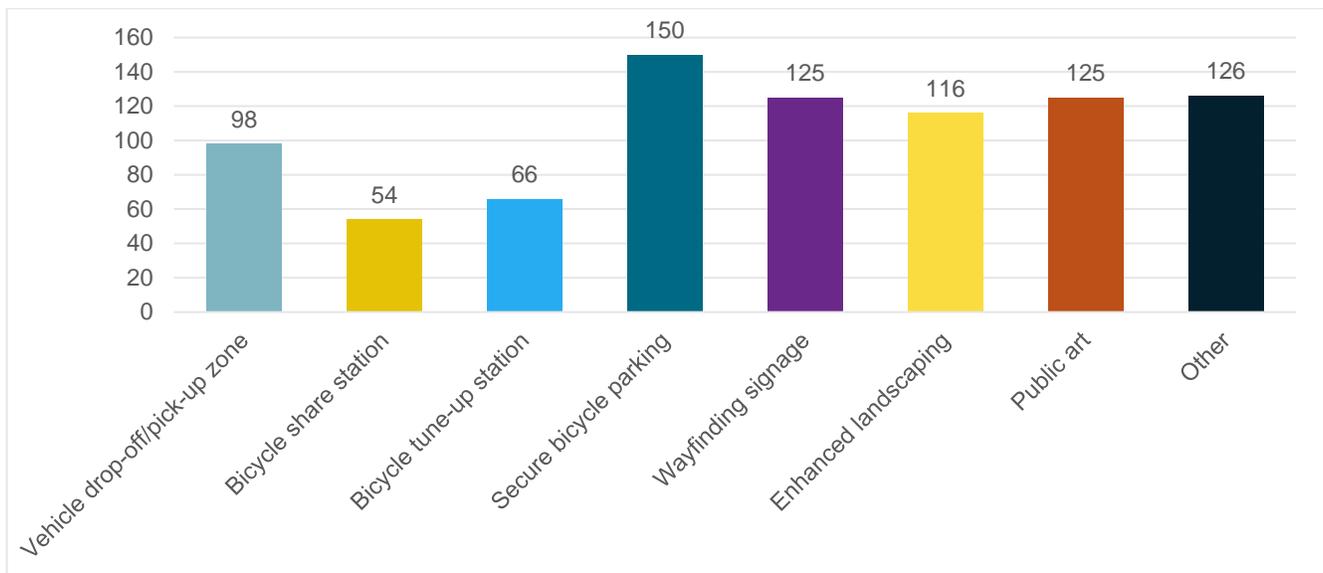
Figure 9: Expected Time of Use for Rush Line BRT



ADDITIONAL AMENITIES AND KEY FEATURES

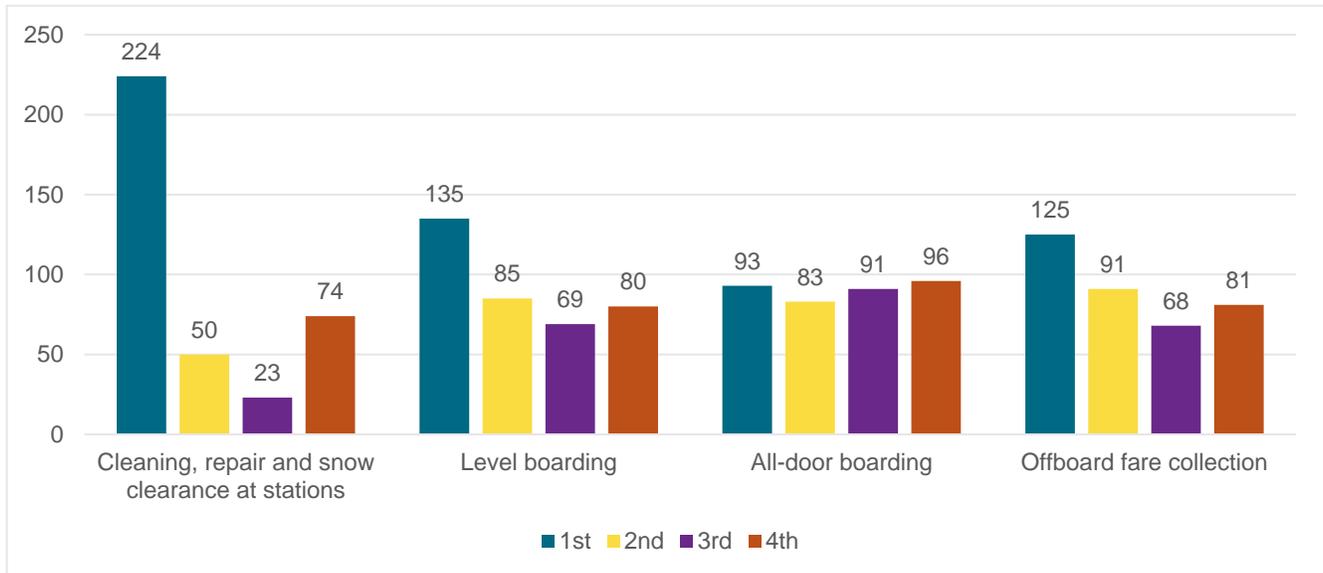
The survey asked which additional station amenities and features would improve the experience of using Rush Line BRT. The most popular answer was secure bicycle parking, with 32 percent of respondents stating that this would enhance the experience (Figure 10). Wayfinding signage, public art and enhanced landscaping were the next most popular options with 26 percent of respondents indicating a preference for each of these features. Those who selected “other” stated that they were interested in features including additional bike facilities, parking and security.

Figure 10: Preferred Additional Station Amenities and Features



This section of the survey also asked respondents to rank their priorities for an easy boarding experience. Cleaning, repair and snow clearance was the leader, with 224 respondents ranking it as most important; level boarding was the second most popular feature, with 135 respondents ranking it as most important; offboard fare collection was third with 125 first-priority rankings; and all-door boarding was least often ranked as a top priority (Figure 11).

Figure 11: Priorities for Boarding Experience



STATION AREA CHARACTERISTICS

The survey concluded by asking respondents to describe the unique characteristics of their station area, neighborhood or city in two to three words. Many respondents emphasized the quaint nature of their neighborhood, the quiet atmosphere, the historic quality and the proximity to amenities such as the Bruce Vento Trail or a downtown center.

SUMMARY

The responses received on the station design survey demonstrated community priorities for safety, convenience and accessibility, as well as access to destinations including parks and retail hubs. Many respondents are looking forward to increased transit options on Saint Paul’s East Side and in the northeast metro. Other comments expressed interest in the following:

- Potential private property impacts.
- Changes to the Bruce Vento Regional Trail.
- Desired pedestrian improvements.
- Station size and siting.
- Access to destinations including Hmong Village and the Gateway State Trail.

This input will be incorporated into planning efforts in the next phase of project development.