

Summer 2024 Public Engagement Findings

Background

Staff kicked off the second round of engagement in early August 2024 with activities throughout the nine Bay Area counties, including:

- 18 pop-up workshops hosted by MTC-ABAG
- 8 pop-up workshops hosted in partnership with local community-based organizations (CBOs)
- 21 in-person and virtual discussion groups hosted by local CBOs
- 6 in-person and virtual presentations to community groups
- One in-person workshop hosted by a local CBO
- Two in-person partner workshops
- One webinar
- One online survey

Overall, over **13,800** residents and partners participated in summer 2024 engagement activities.

Findings

Staff integrated the results from the 26 pop-up workshops and the online survey, which focused on requesting input on proposed solutions to meet the plan's climate target, proposed transit frequency and safety improvements, potential transit funding priorities and early priorities for implementing Plan Bay Area 2050+.

A summary of the results is provided in the tables and figures below. Figures 1 through 4 include the data from all the pop-up workshops and the survey. Table 1 summarizes the themes that rose to the top from comments received via the survey and pop-ups. Appendix 1 summarizes the findings from the CBO discussion groups, presentations and workshop. All

detailed results, including all correspondence received during the public comment period are available on the Plan Bay Area website at <https://planbayarea.org/get-involved/your-comments/plan-bay-area-2050/public-engagement-round-2-summer-2024>.

Figure 1. Let's Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Participants were asked to indicate their level of support for five proposed solutions to help reduce GHG emissions.

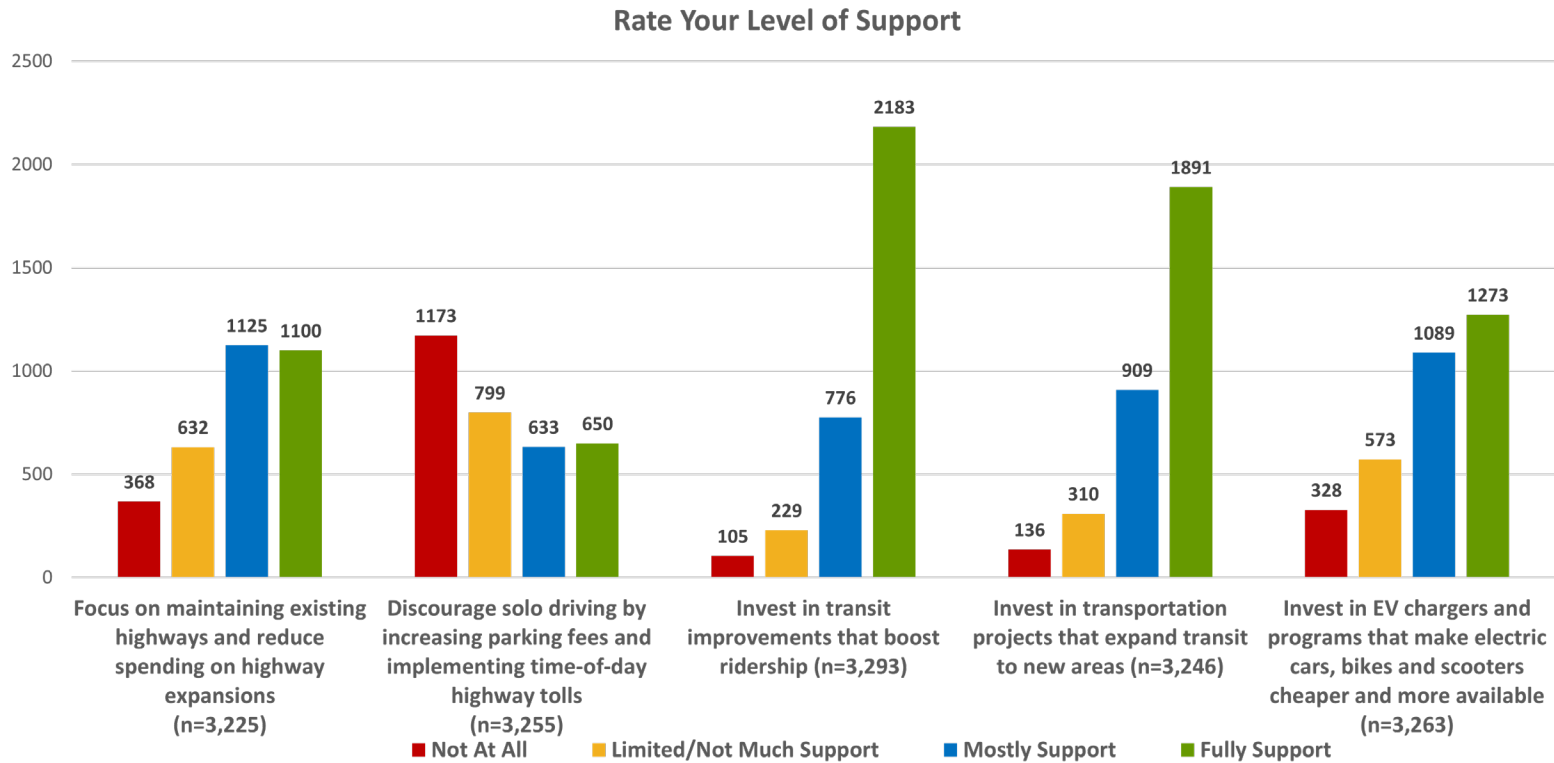


Figure 2. Let's Improve Public Transit

Participants were asked to select their top two frequency improvements from a list of four proposed improvements.

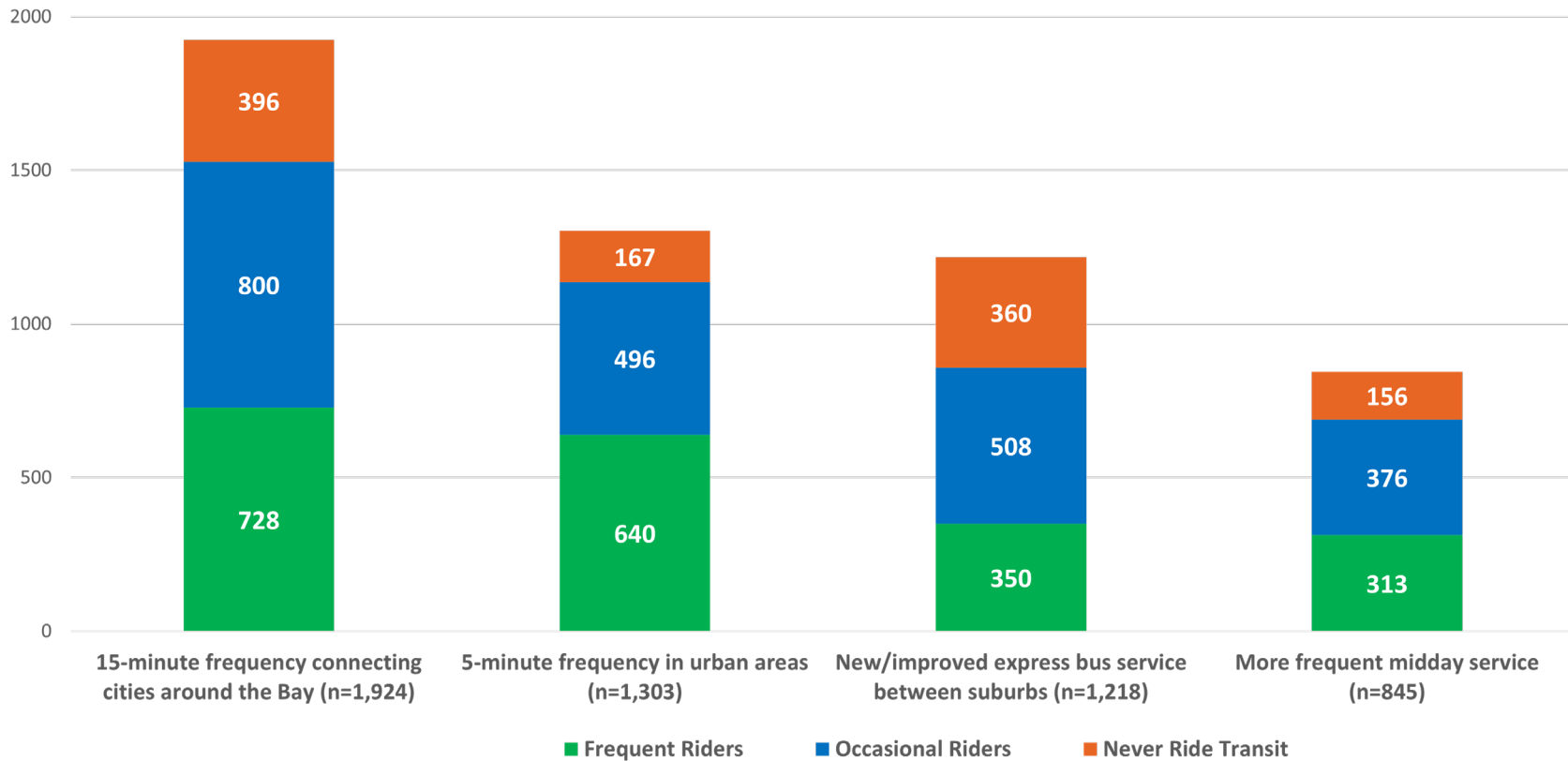


Figure 3. Let's Improve Public Transit

Participants were asked to select their top three safety improvements from a list of six proposed improvements.

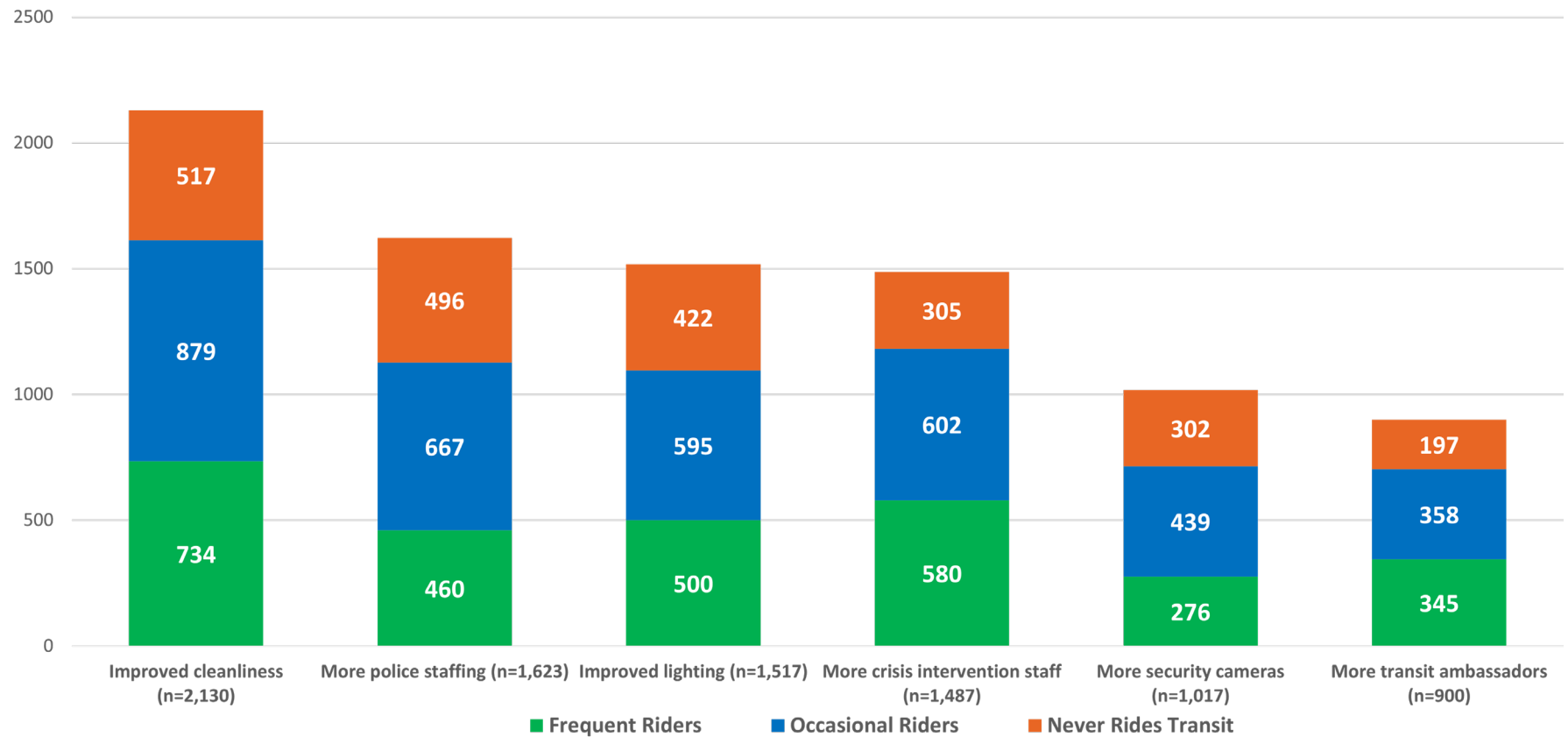


Figure 4. Let's Improve Public Transit

Participants were asked to select their preferred transit funding strategy from two proposed strategies.

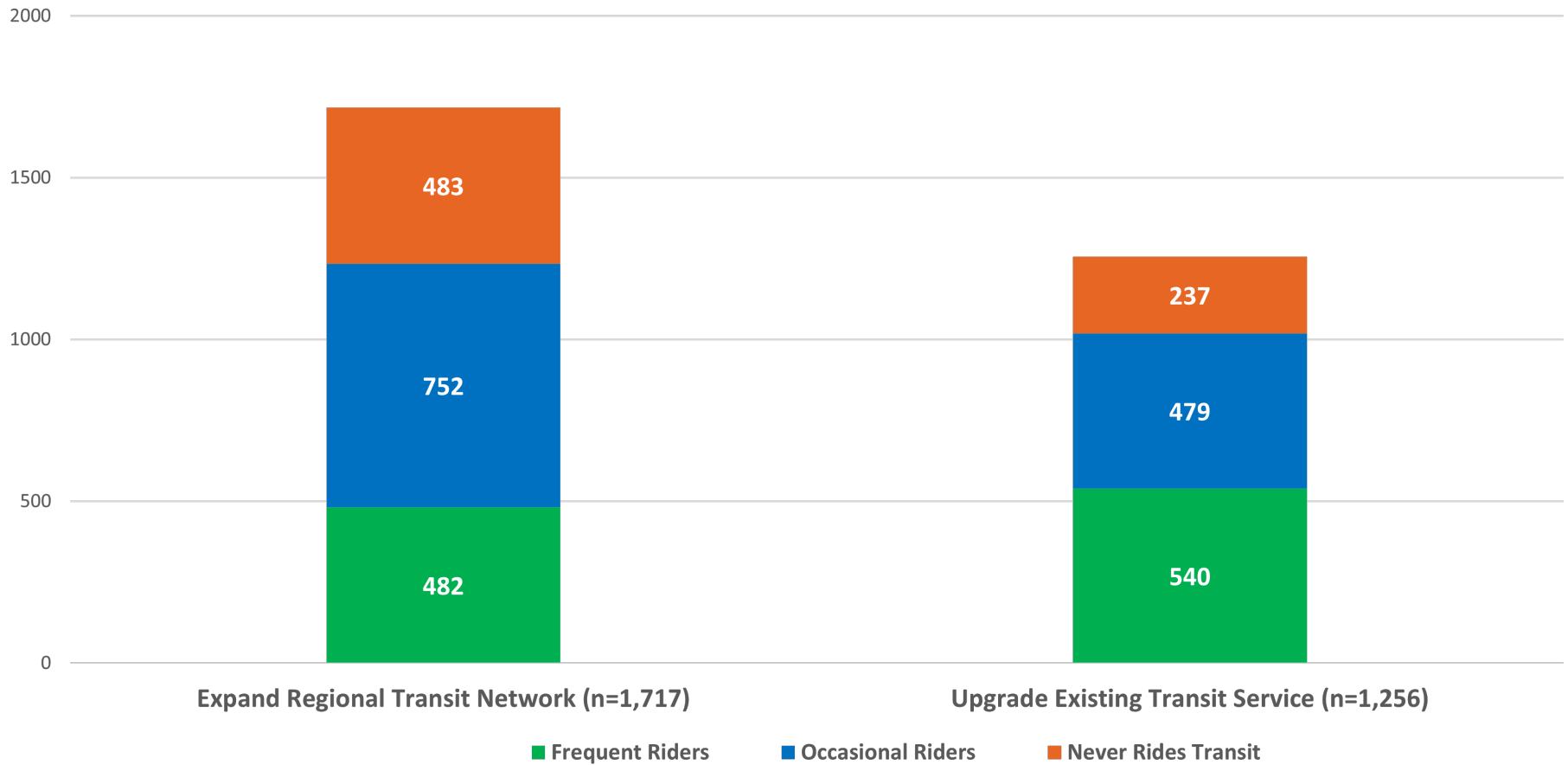


Figure 5. Let’s Make Our Vision a Reality

Participants were asked to select their top three priorities for implementation from the plan’s 11 themes.

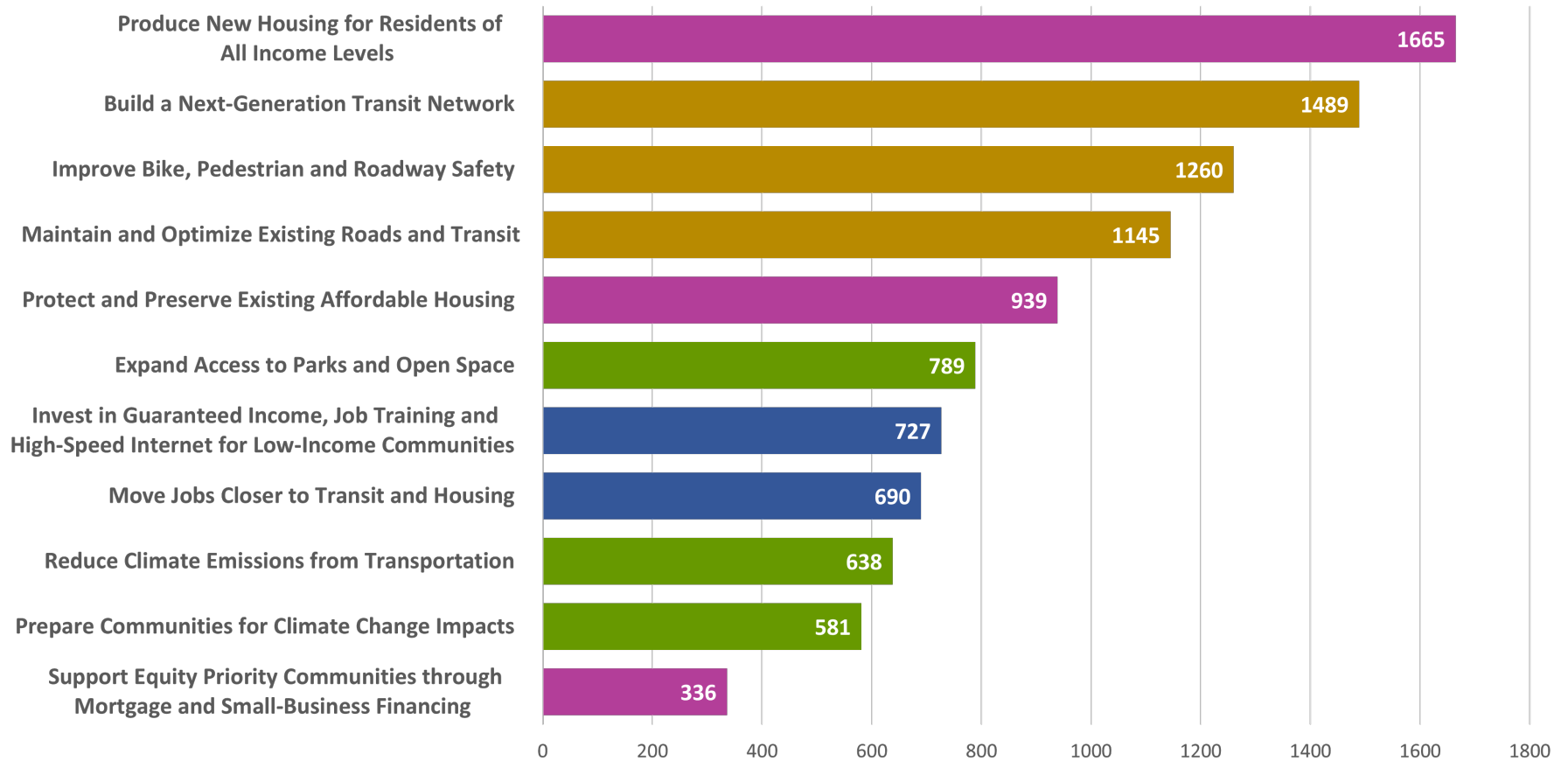


Table 1. Top Themes from Comments Received

Top Themes	Key Issues	Sample Comments
<p>1. Transit</p>	<p>The most common issue raised among transit-related comments was improving transit.</p> <p>These comments primarily focused on improving transit travel times, service frequency and transit priority enhancements (i.e. grade separations, bus-only lanes, etc.).</p> <p>Other transit-related comments focused on expanding transit, making transit more accessible and addressing safety/security.</p>	<p>“For a lot of commuters right now, there isn't a practical and viable transit solution whether it be due to transit time, availability, etc. Focusing goals/metrics on making it possible and *faster* to take transit/walk/bike would have side effect of reducing greenhouse emissions.”</p> <p>“I live 10 minutes from my job and from all my grocery and errands needs. I have to drive everywhere because transit would take me an hour and a half. Let that sink in.”</p> <p>“I would like to see transit solutions where the travel time is less than twice that of driving.”</p> <p>“Transit frequency is important, as well as rezoning for higher densities especially around transit. More seamless transfers and fare/schedule coordination between agencies would be welcome.”</p> <p>“Better, more frequent buses through dedicated bus lanes, signal priority, and multi-door boarding.”</p>

Top Themes	Key Issues	Sample Comments
		<p>“Stop sharing Muni metro tracks with cars. Don’t stop every other block in Sunset. Use traffic lights to allow for speedier trains.”</p> <p>“Post-COVID transit is not safe period. Transit in the Bay Area doesn’t work; it’s just a concentrated crime scene for riders and vehicles, and usually doubles to triples time to destination.”</p>
<p>2. Housing and Land Use</p>	<p>The key issue among housing and land use comments was transit-oriented communities.</p> <p>These comments primarily focused on housing density/zoning reform, increasing jobs near transit and mixed-use housing.</p> <p>Other comments focused on affordable housing and infill development/housing.</p>	<p>“Top priority should be zoning reform to encourage dense, mixed-use, mixed-income, transit-oriented, parking-lite developments throughout the Bay Area.”</p> <p>“Job-housing balance is essential to reduce the commute time to work. If Santa Clara County creates 40% job growth, then ask Santa Clara to add housing equally. Alternatively, if you create job centers around the Bay at transit centers, a broader access to jobs for the working class is achieved.”</p> <p>“Dramatically decrease single-family zoning, allow more mix of business and residential uses, with denser neighborhoods, to reduce car dependency.”</p>

Top Themes	Key Issues	Sample Comments
		<p>“Housing is extremely hard for low-income people. We need more initiatives that help the working class who cannot afford housing.”</p> <p>“More housing supply, without restrictions. I wouldn't drive so much if I could afford to live where I work.”</p> <p>“Housing which is affordable needs to be preserved. New housing needs to include affordable housing on-site with market rate housing.”</p> <p>“Building a better Bay Area is all about dramatically more housing and improving biking/transit networks. Housing costs are crushing people here which causes people to live farther away, drive more and pollute the air with long commutes. Build more housing in our core bay area and expand transit frequency/speed.”</p>
<p>3. Bike/ Pedestrian Infrastructure</p>	<p>The key issue related to bike/ped infrastructure was increasing safety and biking infrastructure.</p> <p>These comments primarily focused on separated bike paths, protected bike</p>	<p>“Improved infrastructure for bicycling and walking should be part of the main set of solutions. These projects can be completed at a fraction of the cost of transit projects and, when done well, significantly impact bike/walk mode shift.”</p>

Top Themes	Key Issues	Sample Comments
	<p>lanes, road diets and improved safety education for both drivers and cyclists.</p> <p>Other comments focused on pedestrian safety/infrastructure and walkability.</p>	<p>“Encourage walkability and bike-ability in every jurisdiction throughout the region.”</p> <p>“Road improvements need to focus on safety for all modes. Bike network improvement need to be balanced with freight and needs of mobility impaired.”</p> <p>“Safer bike/ped systems. Network of lighted routes, not just fragments. Maintenance of this system. More secure bike lockers at bus & rail transit centers that are easy to use by all people.”</p> <p>“Invest in complete streets so that people can bike, roll, walk and enjoy our beautiful cities and towns in the Bay Area. Invest much more in active transit, making safe bike routes for people of all ages.”</p>
<p>4. Roads/Pricing</p>	<p>The key issues raised among comments related to roads and pricing were local road maintenance, highway expansion, roadway safety and tolling.</p>	<p>“Maintenance is key. No expansion until roads are smooth.”</p> <p>“We should stop new freeway and highway expansions entirely (including expansions that are express lanes) to stop creating additional sources of GHGs, then prioritize</p>

Top Themes	Key Issues	Sample Comments
		<p>our resources on transit improvements and bike/ped safety instead.”</p> <p>“Mass transit is so piecemeal in Solano County. It's useless to use it to actually commute into Alameda, Contra Costa or San Francisco. Until mass transit is connected to the North Bay, highway expansion will be necessary.”</p> <p>“Better traffic enforcement - eliminate speeders, slow drivers in fast lanes and lane weavers to cut accident rates and improve flow. Forbid freeway expansion until you can show that we can maintain the existing roadways and patrol them adequately first.”</p> <p>“Additional roadway fees can act regressively, as some lower-income populations do need to drive for their livelihoods and would be disproportionately affected. Driving should be discouraged by reducing road capacity, for example, by removing lanes (which also offers the opportunity for addition of bus lanes and protected bike lanes).”</p>

Top Themes	Key Issues	Sample Comments
<p>5. Equity</p>	<p>Equity-related comments focused primarily on participants’ desire for equitable public investments in transportation, housing, and parks and open space.</p> <p>Participants called for prioritizing the needs of historically marginalized communities and individuals with lower incomes, including seniors and persons with disabilities.</p> <p>Some participants also expressed concerns about tolling, policing and income inequality.</p>	<p>“We should really make public services more equitable for middle class people. Why is it that in the places where people are better able and have the means to pay transit fares, the fares are cheaper? And where transit service is really necessary it is more expensive.”</p> <p>“I’d much rather see subsidies going to electric bikes and scooters than electric cars. It makes a much bigger dent in the overall cost of the vehicle and could help way more people. Electric car subsidies seem to be only helpful for the wealthy.”</p> <p>“Open space investments should be equitable and include recreational facilities serving the interests of low-income and people of color (i.e. transit accessible, active recreation and social outdoor spaces). Invest in nature access near population centers (i.e. along the bay, not just the hills). Nature that is accessible and attractive to people as well as protective of habitat is important.”</p> <p>“My experience of not feeling safe on Bay Area public transit has to do with systemic issues like racism and our society’s biases toward public transit being relegated to</p>

Top Themes	Key Issues	Sample Comments
		<p>lower socioeconomic classes and higher status being given to car ownership. As long as these systemic issues persist and are not addressed as part of any plan, they will not change.”</p> <p>“It’s really horrible to increase the cost of trying to survive in San Francisco. If costs could be proportional to someone’s income, that would be fair. There also need to be in-language, accessible options, such as something like an EBT card for transit specifically that would apply to things like housing, parking, bridge tolls, etc.”</p> <p>“We need FasTrak programs for low-income. Help for single mothers.”</p> <p>“Stop supporting projects that only help the rich! The rich are often the most wasteful and impact climate change to most! If you don’t help the poor and middle class no one will be happy.”</p>

Other themes expressed by participants included electrification, climate resilience, crime and taxes.

Contrary to last year’s engagement, concerns about the high cost of living in the Bay Area did not rise to the top. Overall, the tone of comments was not as somber and gloomy as they were during the last round of outreach. While participants were not as pessimistic about life in the Bay area, they were not optimistic either.

Appendix 1. Summary of Findings from CBO Engagement

Staff partnered with 17 CBOs to reach Equity Priority Communities and other communities that have been historically excluded from the regional decision-making process. Our CBO partners organized 21 facilitated discussion groups, 6 presentations to community groups, and one traditional workshop that included a presentation and breakout groups. These were the issues that rose to the top among CBO communities.

Reducing Climate Emissions

- Community members emphasized the need to prioritize maintaining existing highways over expanding them.
- There was broad support for investing in transit to reduce solo driving and for making electric vehicles (EVs) and EV infrastructure more accessible, but at the same time, participants expressed concern about equitable access to EVs given the high cost of electricity.
- Fee-based strategies to discourage solo driving were unpopular, especially among low-income communities, who highlighted that carpooling or taking transit is often not feasible due to the nature of their employment and/or work hours.
- Participants raised concerns about rising fees for transportation and parking, which disproportionately affect low-income residents. They emphasized that while environmental goals are crucial, they should not come at the expense of marginalized communities.

Improving Transit

- Participants strongly supported improving the frequency and reliability of public transit services, especially in urban areas, as well as expanding transit services to underserved areas like East Contra Costa County and Vallejo.
- Safety was a major concern, with many calling for more transit ambassadors and crisis intervention staff. Youth and Black residents expressed concern about increasing police presence, as this could escalate situations for Black, Indigenous and People of Color

(BIPOC) communities; however, other community members, including immigrants, expressed support for more police.

- Safety concerns included theft and personal security issues on public transit, especially for women and the elderly. There was a strong push for improvements in cleanliness, better lighting and more security cameras at transit stops and stations.
- Youth particularly expressed concern about infrequent transit services and the difficulty in navigating transit systems, advocating for clearer and safer options.
- Youth highlighted the need for a more accessible transit system with shorter wait times, cleaner vehicles and stops/stations and safer conditions. They expressed concerns about the impact of long transit delays on their education and work, particularly in areas underserved by current transit routes.
- Concerns were raised about how transit expansion and rising housing costs might displace low-income and BIPOC residents.

Priorities for Implementation

- The top priorities identified by CBO communities included transportation, housing and climate change mitigation. Participants called for a holistic approach that integrates sustainable transit, affordable housing and job creation with environmental goals.
- There was unanimous support for producing new affordable housing and investing in infrastructure improvements. Participants wanted to see investments that protect existing affordable housing and prioritize underserved communities.
- Participants felt that new housing should benefit both current and incoming residents.
- Rural residents' top priority was ensuring access to high-speed internet, especially during disasters.

Overall, the discussions reflected a need for more equitable and efficient public transportation, alongside strategies to mitigate climate change and ensure affordable housing for all.