

COVID-19 Pass Partner Survey Report

Updated 07.01.2020

Background & Methods

Public transit ridership is down everywhere and Utah is no exception. UTA is making every effort to keep customers safe and protect public health, while still getting people where they need to go. In an effort to bring additional community-informed perspectives into planning for continued COVID-19 response and recovery at UTA, a series of surveys was developed to assess ridership trends and changes, as well as understand from a public perspective what has worked well, what can be improved, and what factors will influence decisions to get riders onboard in the future.

From May 19 – June 7, 2020, UTA collected survey responses from 699 UTA Pass Partner employees. The survey was coordinated through UTA's Product Development & Sales Department working with transit coordinators at ECO Pass Partner companies. Pass Partner companies sent the survey to employees via company listservs and newsletters. Some pass partner companies opted out of participation in the survey. UTA also utilized social media platforms to promote the survey by targeting major pass partner employees.

Quantitative & Qualitative Analysis

Survey results have been compiled and analyzed for presentation in this document. Qualitative responses were thoroughly reviewed – each comment was read and assigned overarching themes to best reflect the participants' comments. Themes have been synthesized and summarized for context.

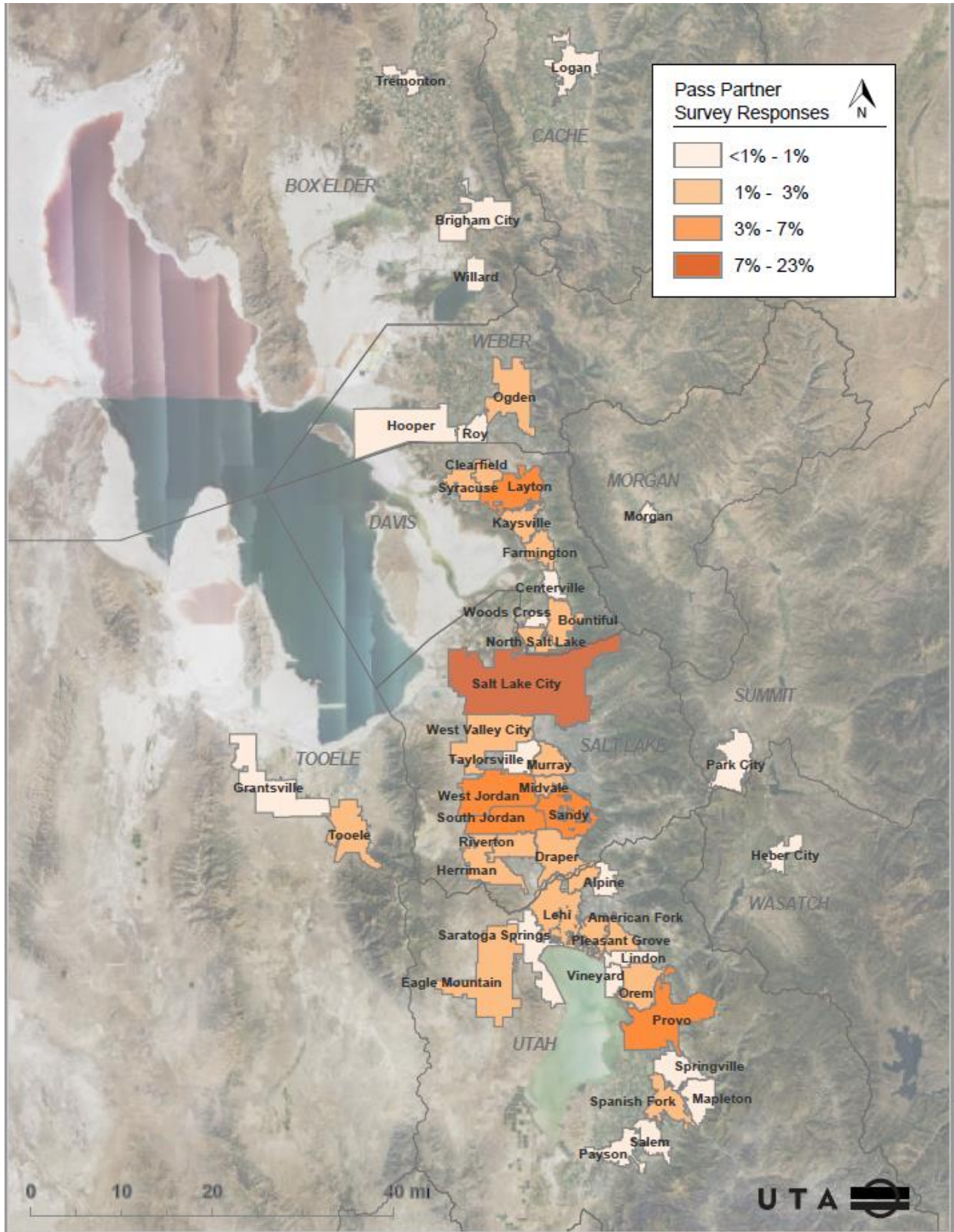
Survey Findings

Participant Demographics

There were a total of 699 responses. Responses came from 18 unique zip codes in Utah (N=696); a map of the geographic distribution is shown on the next page. Employees from at least 78 different organizations/companies responded to the survey. The business sector, as well as government/nonprofit agencies, are the most represented in the survey results. 19 responses were not valid and therefore deemed unknown or unspecified. Among the responses, large response volumes came from the following organizations:

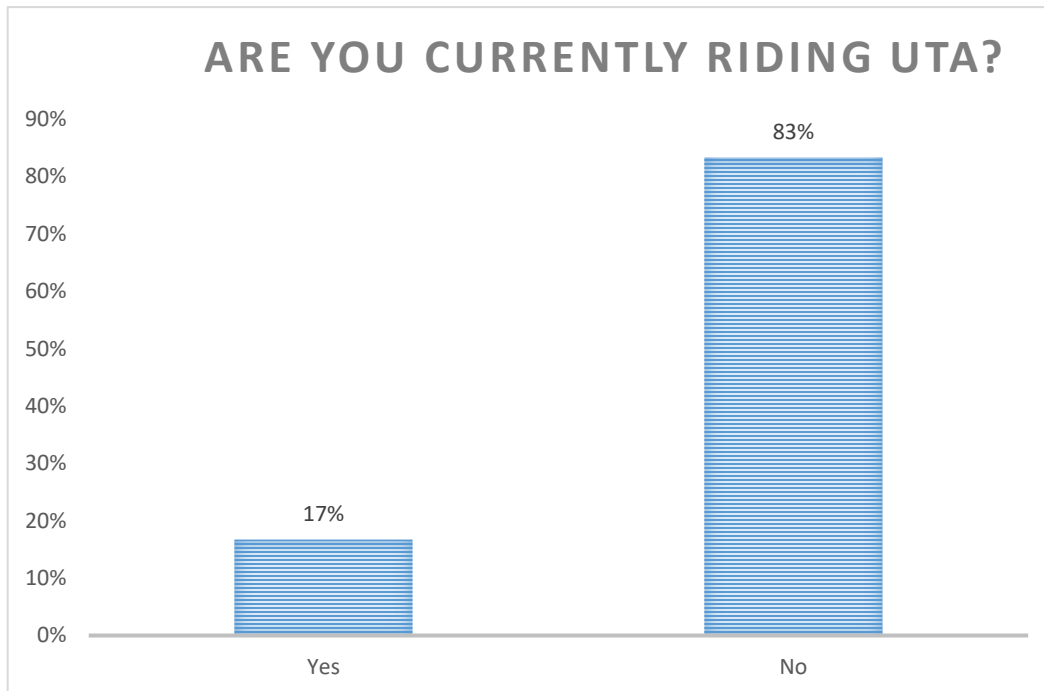
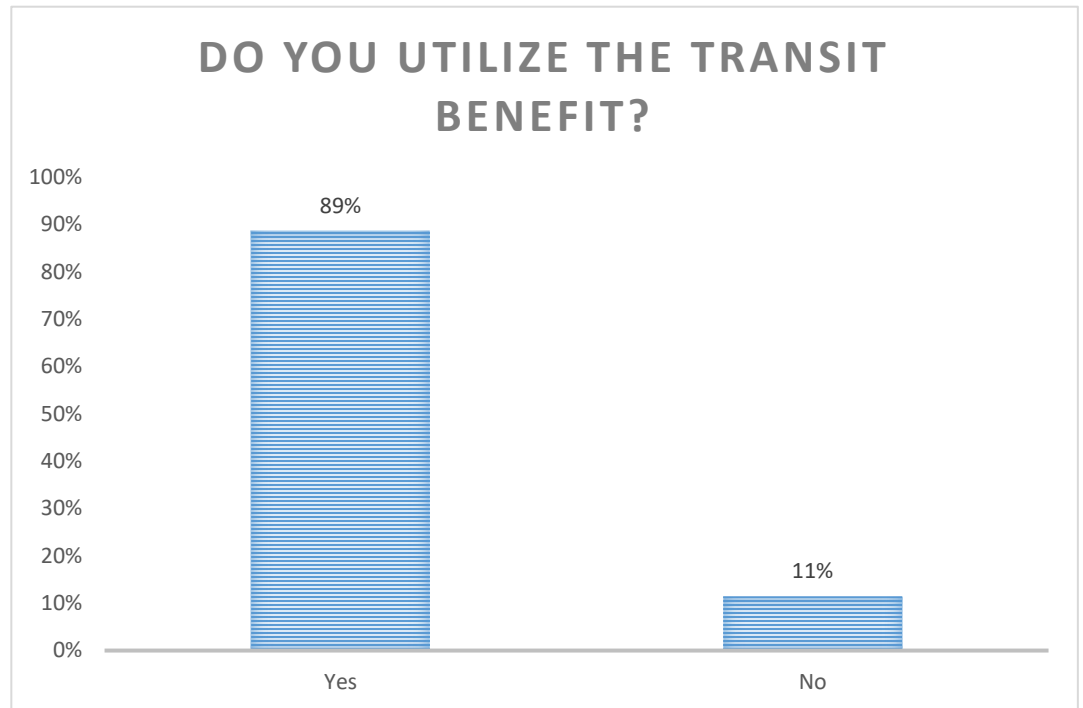
Sector	Response Count
Business	273
Government/Nonprofit	220
Healthcare	38
Schools/Universities	86
Cities (Unspecified)	57
Unknown	19

Organizations with Largest Response Volumes	
Salt Lake City Corporation	Lucid Software
AgReserves, Inc.	Mountainland Technical College
Dominion Energy/ Questar	The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints
FFKR Architects	Utah Retirement Systems/PEHP
Intermountain Healthcare	WesTech Engineering
LDS Business College	



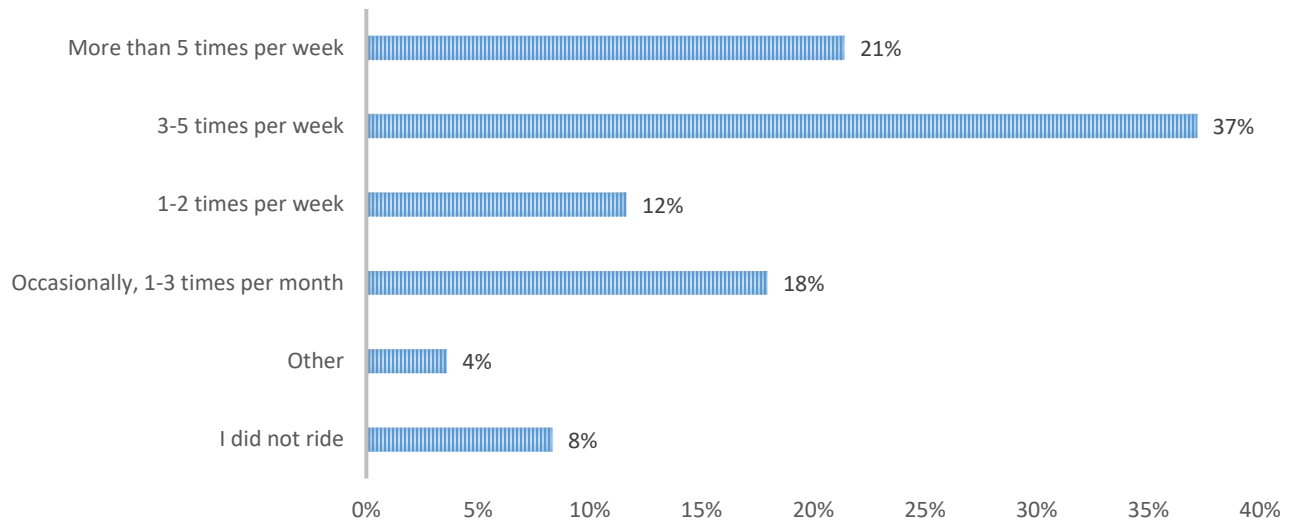
Use of Transit

89% of participants utilize the transit benefit offered by their employer. (N=691)



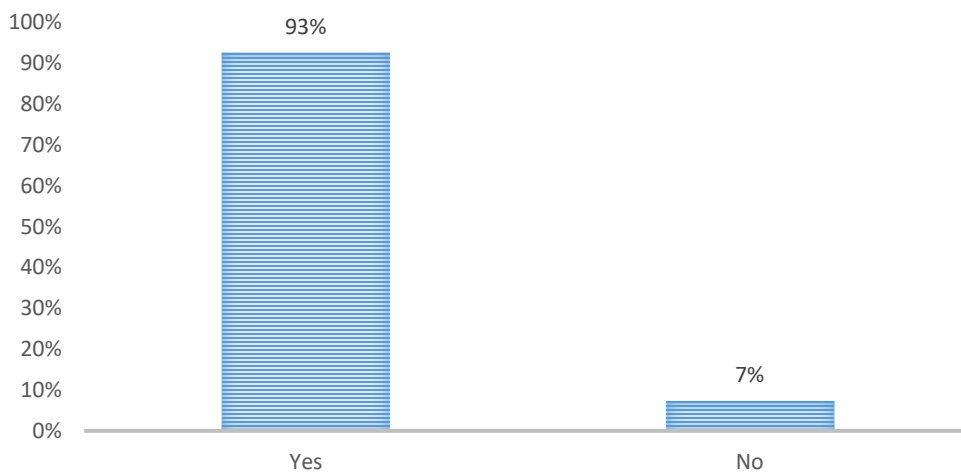
Currently, 83% of survey participants are not riding the system. (N=695)

FREQUENCY OF RIDING PRIOR TO COVID-19



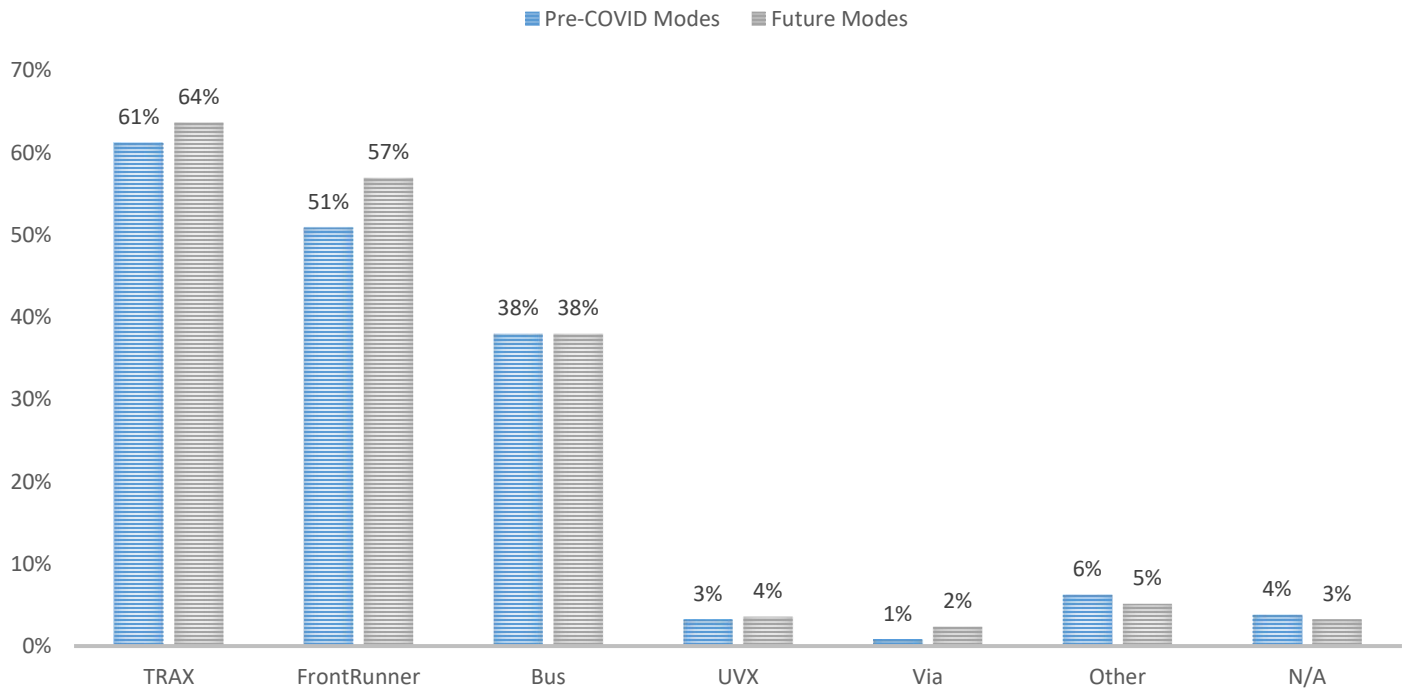
Survey participants were asked about frequency of riding prior to COVID-19. 70% indicated they rode at least once per week and 88% at least once per month. 12% rode 1-2 times per week; 37% rode 3-5 times per week; and 21% rode more than 5 times per week prior to COVID-19. Additionally, 18% indicated that they rode occasionally, about 1-3 times per month, and 4% responded “other” and indicated rare use. 8% did not ride transit prior to COVID-19. (N=697)

DO YOU HAVE AN ALTERNATIVE MODE OF TRANSPORTATION?



The majority (93%) of survey participants have access to an alternative mode of transportation if bus or rail were not available. (N=698)

COMPARISON OF MODE CHOICE PRE-COVID & FUTURE (N=699)



Prior to COVID-19, survey respondents indicated they most used TRAX (61%, N=428), FrontRunner (51%, N=356), and Bus (38%, N=264), followed by UVX (3%, N=23), and UTA On Demand by Via (1%, N=6). Another 45 responses (6%) indicated their most used mode of transportation prior to COVID-19 was something other than listed. Many of these responses indicated people traveled by car; used active transportation, such as biking and walking; or other UTA options including paratransit, vanpool, express, streetcar, and ski bus. There were 27 “N/A” responses (4%) to this question.

When asked what modes individuals would be most likely to ride in the future, or post-COVID-19, survey respondents indicated they would use TRAX (64%, N=445), FrontRunner (57%, N=398), and Bus (38%, N=267), followed by UVX (4%, N=25), and UTA On Demand by Via (2%, N=17). Another 36 responses (5%) indicated they would likely use a mode of transportation other than listed options. Many of these responses indicated people would likely travel by car; use active transportation, such as biking; or select other UTA options. There were 23 “N/A” responses (3%) to this question. Most modes increased in likelihood of riding in the future compared to modes used prior to COVID-19.

Only 9% of survey participants indicated that the mode they are likely to ride in the future is different than the mode they rode prior to COVID-19 (N=664).

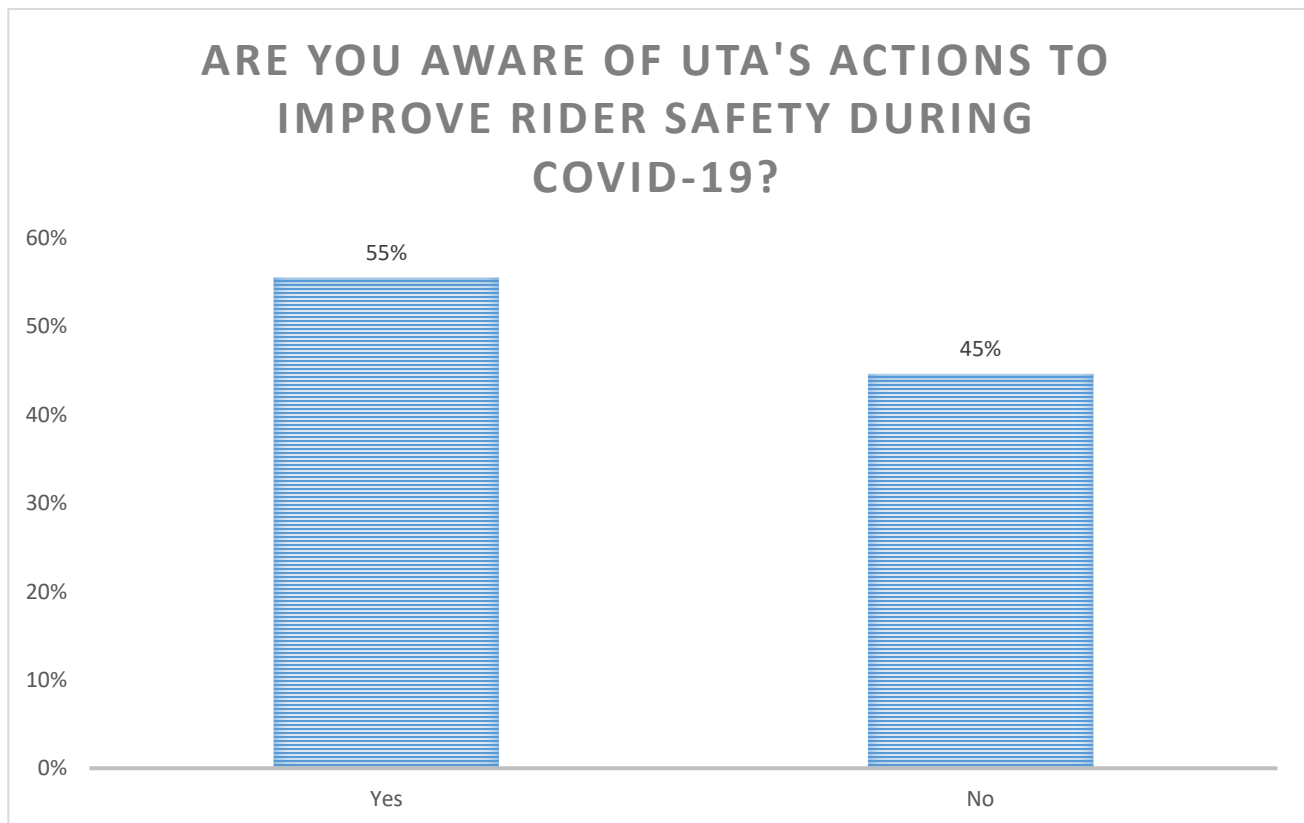
Use of Transit – Key Takeaways

- Most survey participants utilize the transit benefit offered by their employer (89%).

- Many of the pass partner survey participants were regular UTA riders pre-COVID-19, with 70% riding at least once per week (58% rode three or more times per week).
- The majority (83%) have stopped riding since the COVID-19 outbreak in Utah.
- The majority (93%) also have access to alternative modes of transportation should they need it.
- The modes individuals used pre-COVID-19 are largely the same as the modes they say they are likely to use in the future. Among this group, TRAX and FrontRunner are the most popular modes.
- All modes appear to have an increase in the number reporting that they will use post-COVID-19, suggesting that there is a willingness to ride transit again in the future.
- Few people have used UTA OnDemand by Via pre-COVID-19 (6), but this mode saw a marked increase in the number of individuals reporting that they would use it post-COVID-19 (17).

UTA's COVID-19 Response

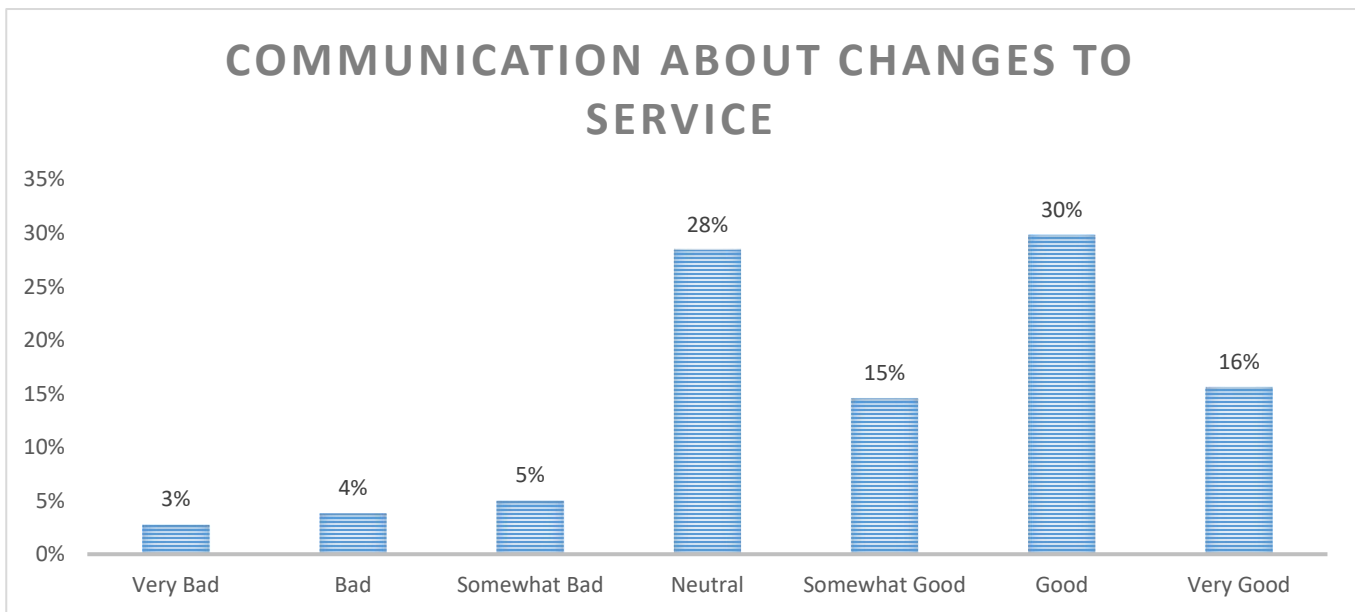
Survey participants were asked a series of questions regarding UTA's response to improve rider safety during COVID-19.



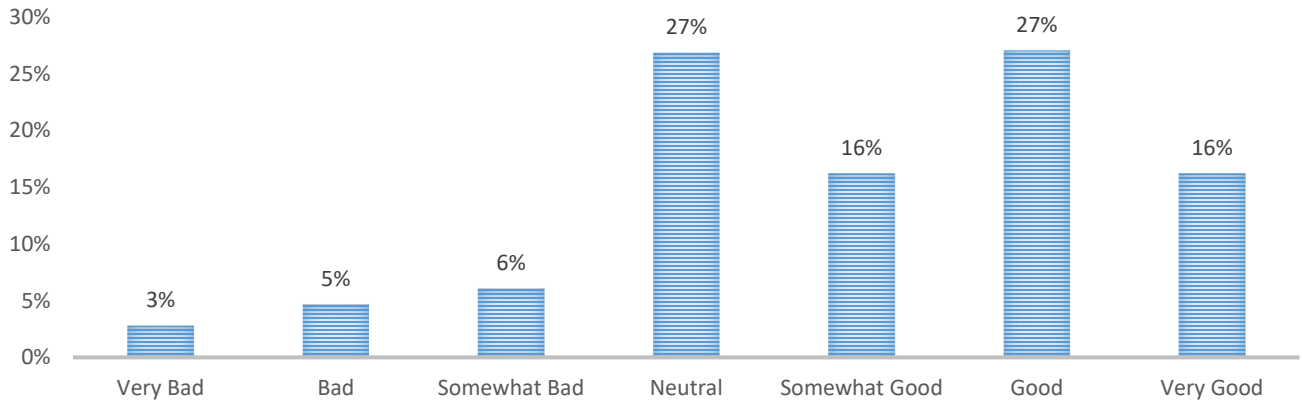
55% indicated that they were aware of actions that UTA has taken to improve rider safety during COVID-19, while 45% said they were not aware. (N=698)

Survey participants were asked to rate UTA’s response on several measures. A scale of 1 to 7 was used, 1 being “Very Bad” to 7 being “Very Good”. The mean score ratings are displayed in the table below and the distribution of responses on each measure can be seen in the charts on the following pages.

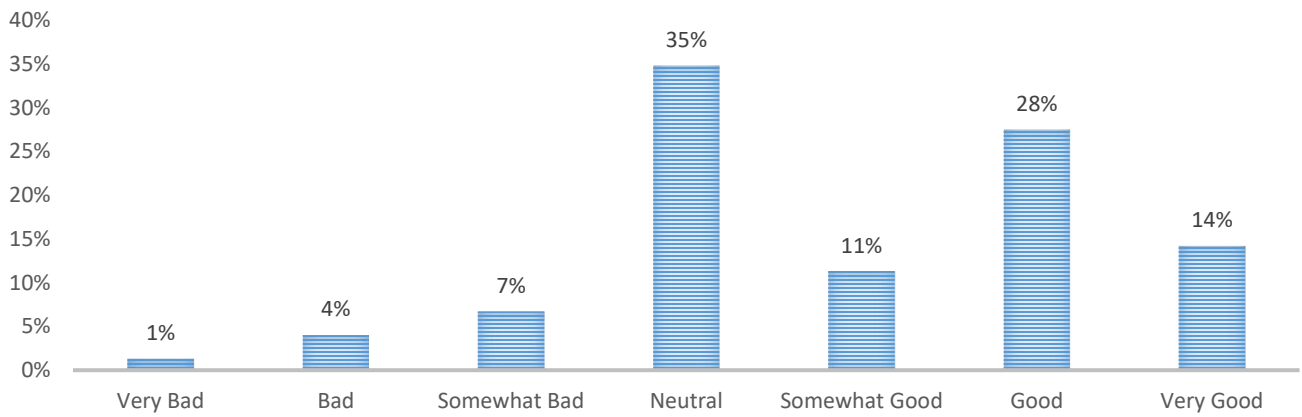
Measure	Rating	N/A	(N) – N/A
Communication about changes to service	5	114	577
Communication about changes to cleaning	4.9	115	573
Safety while riding	4.9	168	520
Cleaning of vehicles	4.9	178	511
Providing service	5	153	533

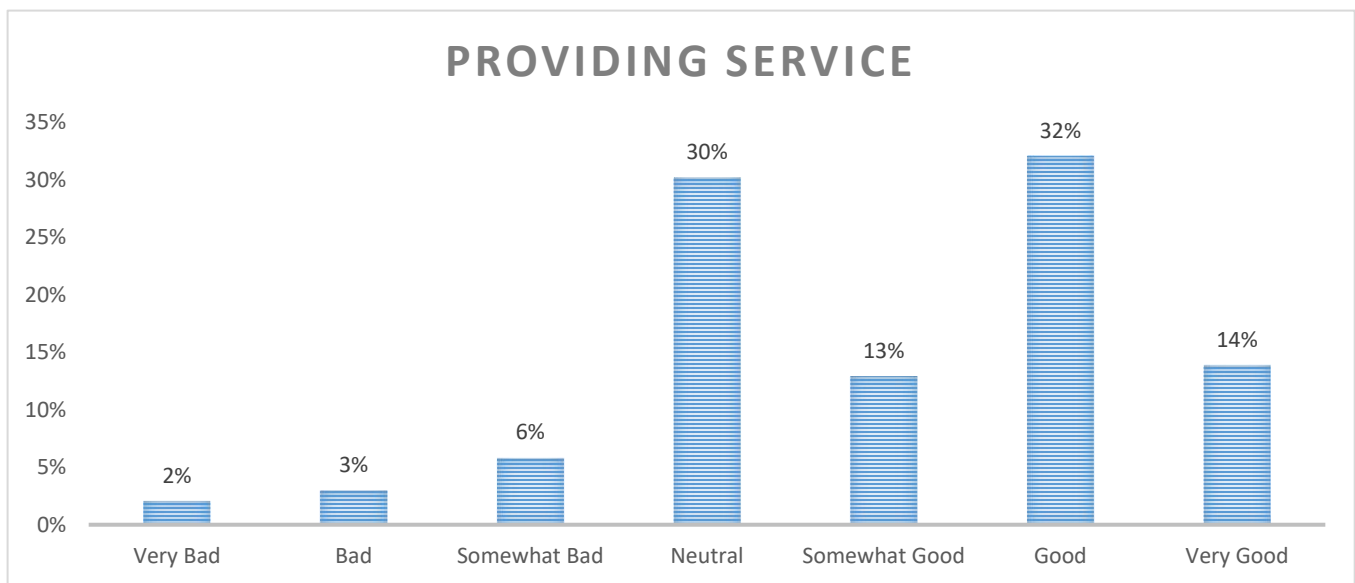
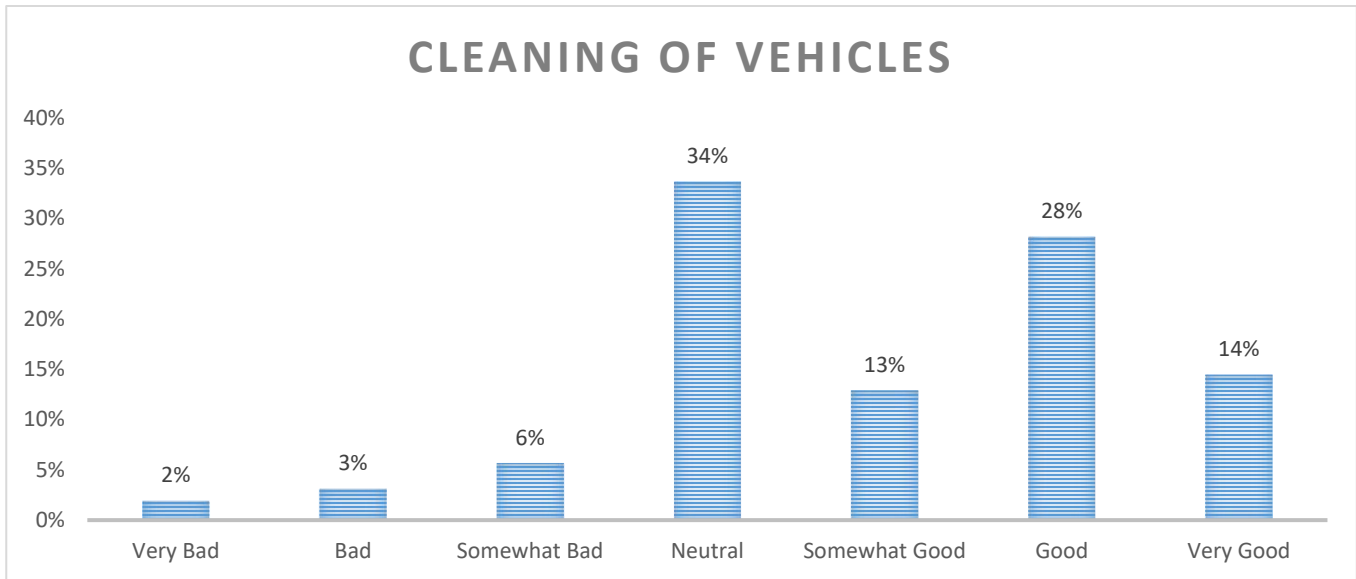


COMMUNICATION ABOUT CHANGES TO CLEANING



SAFETY WHILE RIDING



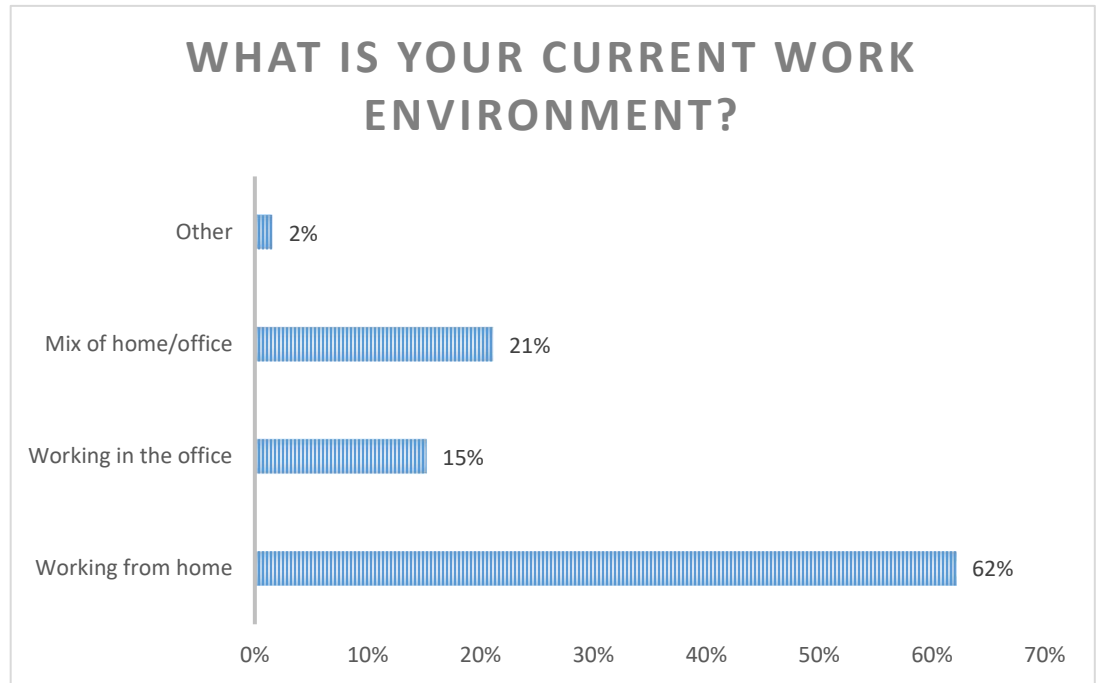


UTA’s COVID-19 Response – Key Takeaways

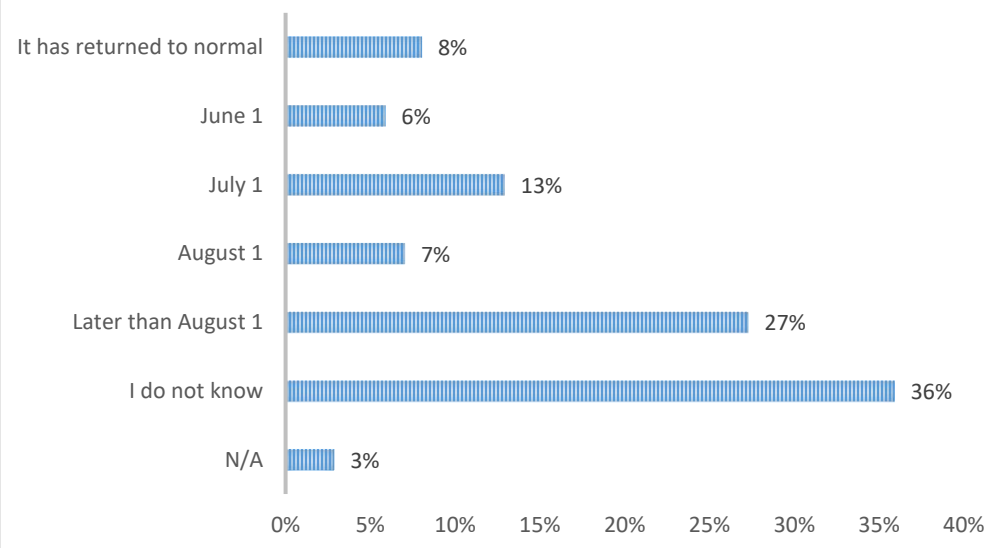
- Just over half (55%) of survey participants were aware of UTA’s actions in response to COVID-19. This is most likely a result of the majority (83%) of survey participants not riding or engaging with the system during the past few months.
- On the five rating measures survey respondents leaned “Neutral” to “Very Good” on all measures. There was a significant number of “N/A” responses to these measures, most likely a result, again, of the majority of survey participants not riding during COVID-19.

Ridership Outlook

Survey participants were asked to describe their current work environment. Many are working from home at 62%, while another 21% are doing a mix of work from home and from the office. Only 15% are working only from the office. (N=697)



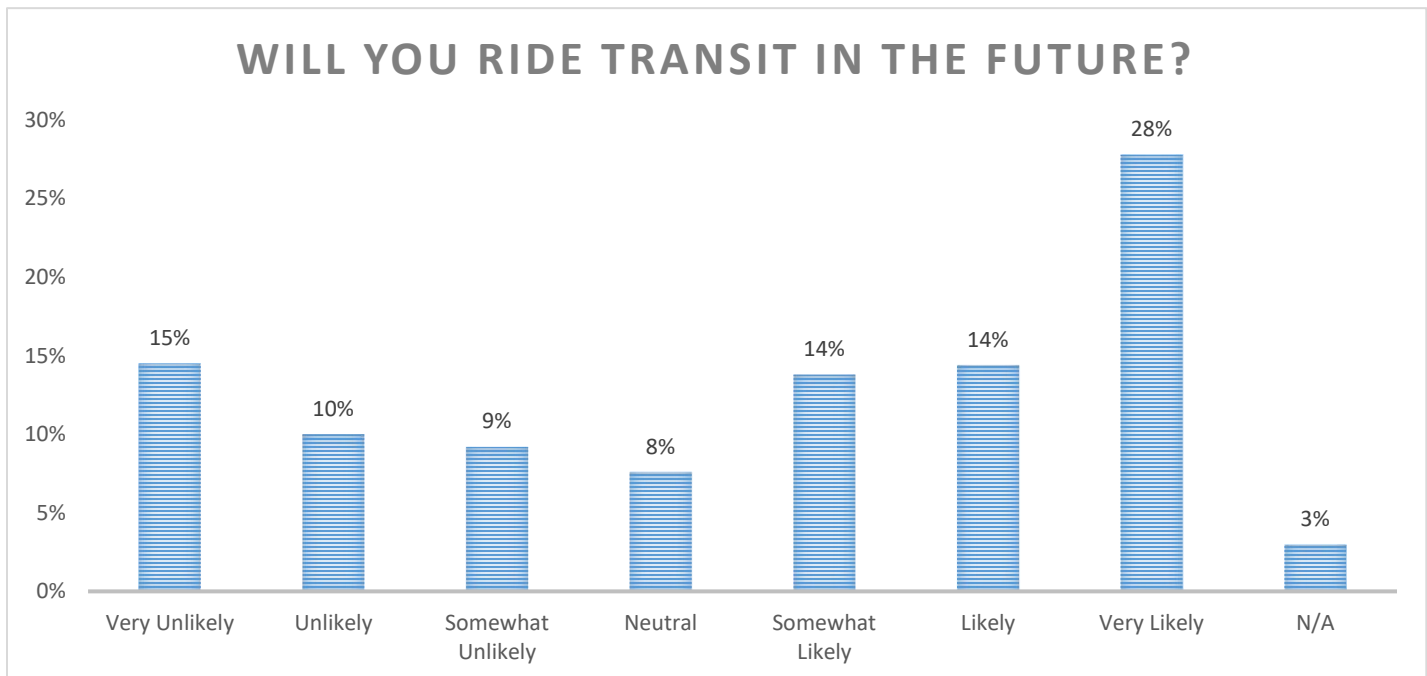
WHEN DO YOU ANTICIPATE YOUR WORK TO RETURN TO NORMAL?



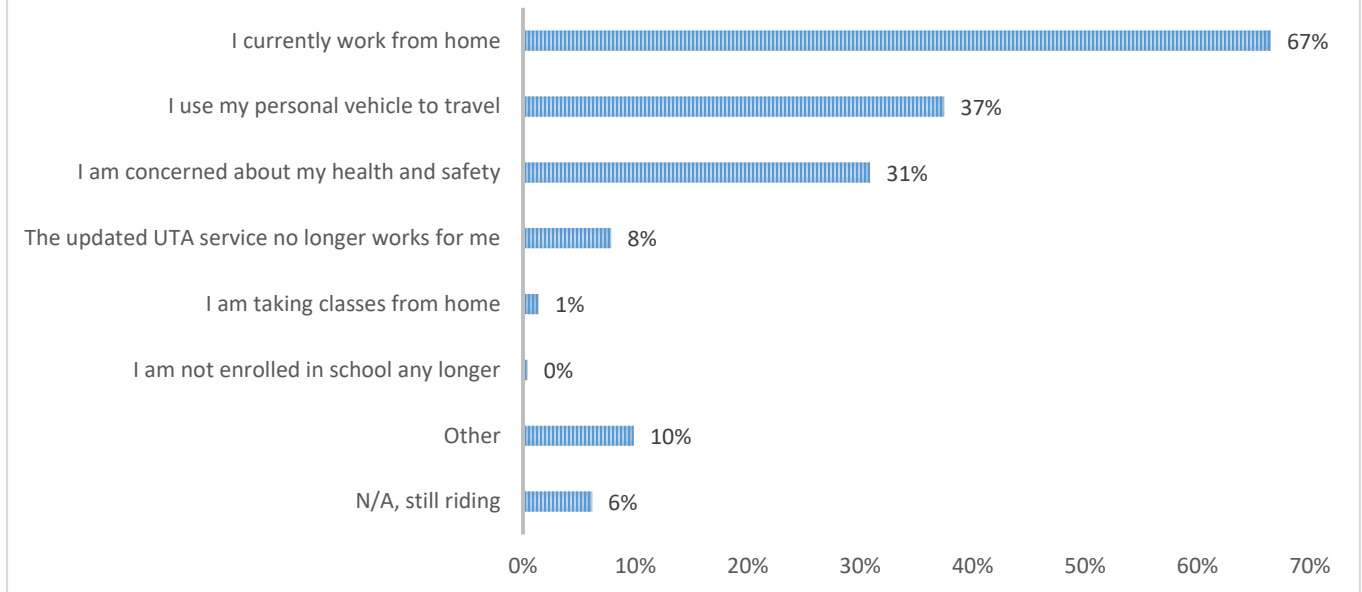
When asked when individuals anticipate their schedules and school/work locations returning to “normal”, or similar to how things were pre-COVID, many did not know (36%). 27% anticipate their schedules returning sometime later than August 1. 7% anticipate a return to normalcy by August 1; 13% by July 1; and 6% said June 1. Only 8% indicated that their workplaces had already returned to normal schedules. (N=696)

Likelihood of Riding Transit in the Future	Percent of Responses
1 – Very Unlikely	15%
2 – Unlikely	10%
3 – Somewhat Unlikely	9%
4 – Neutral	8%
5 – Somewhat Likely	14%
6 – Likely	14%
7 – Very Likely	28%
N/A	3%

Survey participants were asked to indicate how likely they would be to use public transit once things returned to a more normal schedule. Participants were asked to rate their likelihood on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 being “Very Unlikely” to 7 being “Very Likely”. About 34% indicated they were “Somewhat Unlikely”, “Unlikely”, or “Very Unlikely” to return to transit, while 56% indicated they were “Somewhat Likely”, “Likely”, or “Very Likely” to return to transit in the future. (N=695)

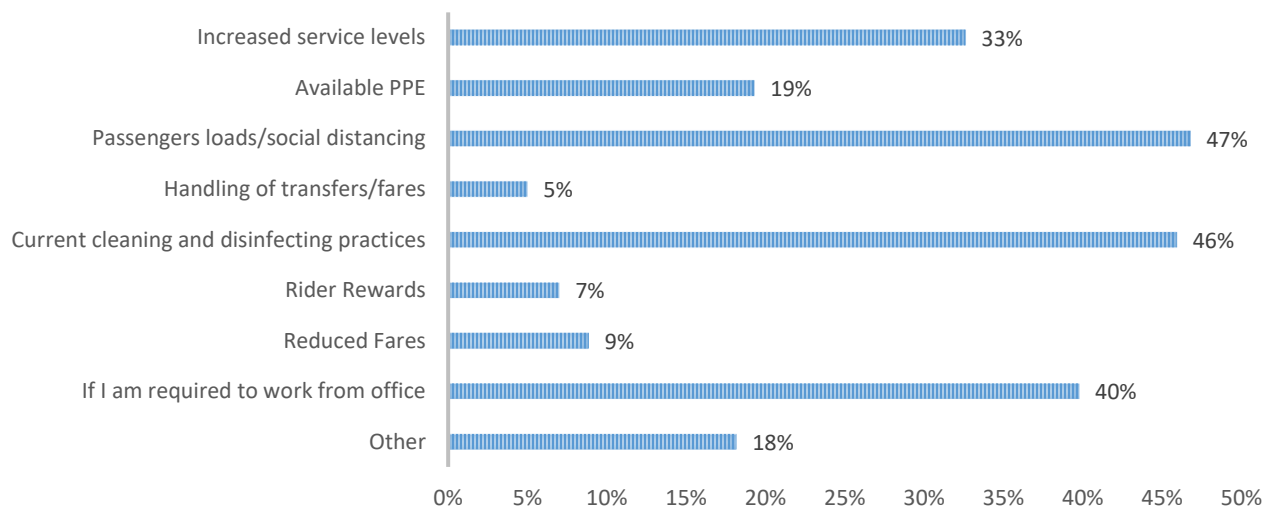


WHY ARE YOU NOT CURRENTLY RIDING TRANSIT?



Survey participants were asked about their reasons for not currently riding public transit. Respondents could select more than one answer. Many indicated they were not riding because they are working from home (67%, N=465). A significant number of participants said they use their personal vehicle for travel instead (37%, N=262). Many indicated that they are concerned for their health and safety (31%, N=216), while others indicated that the updated service no longer works for their schedule (8%, N=55). There were quite a few “other” responses (10%, N=69) for why individuals are not riding transit. Among these other reasons for not riding transit include travel time and convenience-related issues, other health concerns, service levels and availability, choosing alternative modes, and no need to ride.

WHAT FACTORS WILL INCREASE YOUR LIKELIHOOD OF RIDING?



Survey participants were asked to indicate which factors would make individuals more likely to keep riding, ride again, or start riding transit. Respondents could select more than one answer. The most common factors include passenger loads and social distancing (47%, N=327) and cleaning and disinfecting practices (46%, N=321). 40% (N=278) indicated they were more likely to take transit if they were required to work from the office. Beyond that, increased service levels (33%, N=228) and available PPE (19%, N=135) were important to riders and potential riders. Less common factors influencing riders' decisions to get back onboard included reduced fares (9%, N=62), rider rewards (7%, N=49), and handling of transfers/fares (5%, N=35). 18% (N=127) specified other factors that would make them more likely to ride. Among these other factors are convenience, reliability, travel time, hours of operation, and concerns for safety/security. Many indicated that they have health concerns about riding transit and worry about the broader COVID-19 situation, including COVID-19 precautions. These factors likely will be influential in their decisions to ride. The public has concerns beyond UTA's control about getting back onboard, including the status of the pandemic and available vaccines.

Ridership Outlook – Key Takeaways

- Most people are working from home or have a mixed home/office schedule (73%). This is a main reason most people have ceased riding transit during this time.
- Many (36%) do not know when their schedules will return to “normal”.
- Another 34% say their schedules will return to normal by August 1 or later.
- Over half (56%) said they're somewhat likely to very likely to return to transit in the future, but the timeline is unclear.
- About 30% of survey participants are concerned with health and safety and thus have chosen not to ride. It's clear that COVID-19 precautions, including passengers loads and social distancing (47%), as well as current

cleaning and disinfecting practices (46%), are the top factors that will increase likelihood of these pass holders riding again.

- 40% of survey participants said they will be more likely to ride transit if they are required to work from their offices. This suggests that depending on how workplaces decide to proceed in the wake of COVID-19, with potential for more permanent telecommuting policies, these riders may not return to transit for work commuting because they won't need to. It may be pertinent to understand more about transit needs outside of commuting for work in the case of this pass partner group.

Considerations about riding transit/returning to transit

Survey participants were asked an open-ended question about their considerations and concerns related to riding or returning to transit. A total of 459 participants responded to this question. All responses were read thoroughly and themes were identified. Each comment was coded for a theme and categorized to create a summary. The word cloud below is a quick snapshot of the themes – theme popularity is indicated by font size. Below the word cloud is an in-depth look at riders' considerations from pass partner programs by assigned themes and number of mentions, including direct quotes. The top four themes that emerged include: 1) Social Distancing, 2) Cleaning & Disinfecting, 3) Passenger Issues, and 4) Masks/PPE.



Cleaning and Disinfecting Practices

Cleaning & Disinfecting: comment mentions that the cleaning and disinfecting practices are of concern. (80)

Cleaning supplies onboard: comment recommends providing cleaning supplies to have onboard for customers. (10)

Seats: comment mentions seats on system. (8)

High touch points: comment expresses concern over high touch points on transit. (17)

Cleaning and disinfecting practices, as well as availability of cleaning supplies onboard UTA vehicles was overwhelmingly a consideration of pass partner riders. Through the comments survey participants suggested more information about cleaning schedules, increasing frequency of cleaning throughout the day, and providing hand sanitizer and disinfecting wipes on the vehicles for passengers to wipe down their areas. Related to cleaning, several comments were made specifically about the seats and replacing cloth with a surface (i.e. plastic) that is more easily and visibly cleaned. Additionally, comments called out high-touch points being concerning (buttons, railings, tables, etc.) Moving forward, it's clear that current cleaning and disinfecting practices will be a key component in increasing public trust in and willingness to ride the system.

*“My biggest concern would be the **frequency of surface cleaning** depending on the number of riders per hour. Prior to COVID-19, I tried to limit the amount of touching that I did while traveling because so many people are not careful about keeping their hands clean. Now, my concern increases tremendously. Since UTA is only disinfecting buses and trains 1x per day, I would be wary of taking TRAX.”*

COVID-19 Precautions & Health Concerns

Exposure to COVID-19: comment indicates respondent is concerned about exposure to COVID-19. (60)

Exposing family to COVID-19: comment indicates respondent is concerned about exposing family members to COVID-19. (4)

Health concerns: comment expresses concern for health beyond COVID-19. (14)

As expected, many comments expressed concern about exposure to COVID-19 while on transit, including exposing their own family members to COVID-19. Some pointed out their ability to take alternative modes of transportation, freeing up space on vehicles for those who depend on it. Additionally, others expressed general health concerns beyond or not specific to COVID-19.

*“Personally, I am not high risk and would probably be fine but I am 100% trying to be part of the solution rather than the problem. **I don't want to be responsible for spreading it more, so I will keep my distance.**”*

*“**I am concerned about sick people on the train** who are both displaying symptoms and those that are sick that are not displaying symptoms.”*

Masks/PPE: comment mentions masks and other PPE (gloves, etc.) for customers, operators, employees, etc. (63)

The large majority of comments about masks were advocating for more masks on transit, some suggesting that this precaution should be mandatory.

“COVID spreads when people don't wear masks. It has to be a requirement when on transit.”

Social distancing: comment mentions social distancing on the system. (107)

Passenger Load: comment refers to passenger loads on transit. (60)

Social distancing was the most common reference in the comments. People are concerned over their ability to social distance on public transit and a lack of awareness of social distancing guidance by other riders. Additionally, passenger loads came up as a major concern related to social distancing. There were comments providing feedback on the reduced services, including reduced train cars (see below), creating larger passenger and making social distancing more difficult.

*“If we could **safely distance** on the ride I would be more likely to ride”*

*“Right now UTA routes are only running at half strength which means **more riders on fewer vehicles**. I don't feel like this is following the CDC advice for keeping a safe distance during this Pandemic especially now that more people are returning to working in the offices.”*

Ventilation: comment refers to ventilation on transit. (12)

Several comments raised concerns over being enclosed/confined spaces with others and made suggestions to improve ventilation (filters, open windows, etc.) on transit vehicles to improve airflow.

*“Even with social distancing, riding the bus involves **breathing circulated air in close quarters** with strangers.”*

Public Health guidelines: comment mentions they're not riding transit due to public health, CDC guidelines, vaccines, pandemic, etc. (7)

Similar to previous comments, some participants specifically called out CDC and public health guidelines being a deterrent to getting back on transit. General concern with the scope of a global pandemic and no vaccine available suggested people would be waiting longer to get back onboard.

*“COVID 19 still increasing. **We have been [advised] to social distance and stay in homes** until the stats drop. Has not happened at this point.”*

*“**CDC guidelines** suggesting individuals should **travel by car alone to and from work**.”*

Concerns about Other Passengers

Customer/Passenger Issues: comment indicates there are customer/passenger issues, including other customers increasing their risk of COVID-19, additionally other customers displaying inappropriate behavior such as, substance use, fighting/aggressiveness on the system, etc. (68)

Many comments indicated that other passengers on transit cause them concerns. Most common among these concerns was an increased likelihood of exposure to COVID-19 based on other customers' regard for precautions like social

distancing, mask-wearing, staying home with symptoms, and personal hygiene. A few commenters mentioned concerns over inappropriate behavior on transit including substance use and physical/verbal altercations.

"Many people take precautions, but I'm worried about the people who don't."

Homelessness: comment mentions customers experiencing homelessness. (20)

Comments pointed out the seemingly increased number of customers experiencing homelessness on the public transit system and identified some specific concerns over availability of resources for those customers to practice good hygiene and help prevent the spread of COVID-19. Some participants expressed concern over behaviors potentially stemming from customers who appear to be experiencing homelessness, such as substance use and panhandling on the system.

*"I'm worried about them **not being able to take certain precautions.**"*

Fares

Fares: comment mentions fares. (12)

Some comments mentioned concerns related to fares, largely fare collection and enforcement, along with affordability and cost.

*"I am worried about ridership and I believe that **if fares were lower more people would ride.** Now more than ever with so many people out of work public transportation should be there for people."*

UTA Service

Scheduling: comment mentions that schedules are of concern, including mention of specific routes not running currently. (55)

Travel Time: comment mentions concern for amount of travel time required on transit. (28)

Request to increase service, routes: comment requests an increase in transit service or mentions additional routes. (15)

Transit Connections: comment expresses concerns about connections. (11)

Frequency: comment mentions transit frequency. (10)

Reliability/consistency: comment mentions reliability or consistency of service. (9)

Train cars: comment mentions train cars. (8)

Many comments were made in reference to UTA service provision. Some concerns were raised about the system reliability and consistency, including vehicle breakdown and timeliness (on-time vehicles vs. early/late departures). Some participants mentioned that the service is inconvenient or there were not routes that worked for them in their neighborhoods. The schedule changes did receive a large number of comments and people were concerned the reduced

service levels would not be conducive to riding. Related to this, the comments suggest that convenience, travel time, and frequency are major factors in deciding whether transit will work for them. The reduction in number of train cars was specifically called out for creating difficulty in maintaining social distance.

*“Frequency of service; **current schedules due to COVID would make a long commute even longer with wait times for buses and trains.**”*

*“Service has been cut so much that **it isn't convenient anymore or not possible to get where I need to go in the required time frame.** In order to get people back service needs to be increased to make it convenient gain and not require a lot of extra time to get to and from work.”*

*“The **time change no longer fits my schedule.** Reducing the number of train cars is artificially increasing riders per train car and makes it difficult to social distance.”*

Safety: comment expresses general concern for safety. (31)

Comments mentioned safety, both in the context of health and safety, as well as physical and personal safety while riding transit. A few comments pointed to past negative experiences with safety on the system and suggested implementing increased measures such as monitoring, emergency notifications, and transit police presence.

*“... Taking TRAX anytime there's a special event which occurs downtown. These events often require returning on TRAX late night. There is a **high level of risk about personal safety during these times.**”*

Rule enforcement: comment expresses concern over the enforcement of rules on UTA. (7)

Some comments mentioned rule enforcement both related to COVID-19 guidance, but also general rider rules (feet on seats, earbuds, etc.)

UTA Communication

Communication from UTA: comment mentions concern about UTA's communication. (10)

Several comments highlighted that riders would appreciate additional communication particularly regarding cleaning and disinfecting practices and cleaning schedules, COVID-19 precautions including masks and social distancing enforcement, and transit schedule changes and updates.

*“I would **need to know how often everything is getting cleaned....**”*

UTA Employees

Employees: comment provides feedback on employees, including employee behavior, conduct, driving, etc. (7)

Several comments provided feedback on employees including wearing masks, as well as availability and responsiveness of employees, including transit police.

“Many drivers were not wearing masks.”

Other Comments

Choosing not to ride: comment expresses a decision to not ride transit. (12)

Some comments explicitly stated they would not ride transit either temporarily until the pandemic subsides or just that they prefer alternative modes.

“Since I have my own car, I will plan on driving until a vaccine is available.”

No concerns: comment indicates the respondent has no concerns. (54)

A significant number of comments indicated they did not have concerns about returning to transit. Some participants are still riding, some indicated they just don't need it currently and will return in the future when workplaces return to a more normal day-to-day.

“Not concerned. Just don't need it right now.”

Notable/Quotable: comment not able to be categorized, and/or a quote-worthy comment. (23)

A few comments stood out and could not be categorized, but may be notable, including a request for bike racks on rail cars. Additionally, there has also been concern raised about crowding on platforms in addition to crowding on vehicles. Several comments were coded as notable because they provided specific feedback – these have been pulled out and will be shared with Customer Service for follow up.

Summary of Findings

1. Social distancing is a concern for pass partners.
2. UTA pass partners will most likely return to transit if work schedules return. However, the likelihood and timeline of that is still to be determined.
3. Continued communications of disinfecting and safety measures is a priority to regain ridership.
4. The pass partner program is dependent on the commuter worker, which is unreliable at this time. Service models must align with transit dependent riders or accommodate alternative transit needs.
5. Building a better communication email /listserv with pass partners for disruptions and other important communication is needed.

Conclusion

The pass partner survey provided rich data from a unique subset of the rider population. This group has largely not been riding transit during the pandemic, but the majority were regular or frequent transit riders and commuters prior to COVID-19. They have a promising likelihood of riding transit again in the future, although the timeline for getting back onboard is unclear. This group of survey participants is more likely to have alternative modes of transportation available to them and flexible work structures that allow for work from home, at least during COVID-19. In other words, they are less likely to need public transportation. There are some definable factors (both within UTA control, as well as outside of it) that will help them make their decision to ride again. Social distancing and passenger loads, along with current cleaning and disinfecting practices are the most influential factors. It is very clear UTA will need to implement strong practices and service models that allow for safe distancing while onboard transit. Keeping up current, and even increasing current, cleaning and disinfecting practices will be important in building public confidence and sense of safety while on the system. There is understandably a lot of stress around exposure to and spread of the COVID-19 virus. Additional precautions, including masks, will be important. These practices will need to be communicated clearly and often to riders to ensure the community has the information they need to make informed decisions regarding their health, safety, and transportation preferences.