

CHAPTER 4 :

Community Engagement



Public Engagement

The Miami Valley Regional Planning Commission conducted a month-long series of public input meetings and focus groups to receive public input regarding current conditions and proposed improvements for walking, bicycling and transit access.

The majority of the public input sessions were conducted in an open house format at public libraries across the Region, supplemented with maps and an online survey, as well as a focus group with the Miami Valley Chapter of the National Federation of the Blind to learn more about their specific needs.

Dates and locations of input sessions:

- » November 1, 2021 Trotwood Branch Library
- » November 3, 2021 Springboro Public Library
- » November 5, 2021 Regional Bikeways Committee
- » November 8, 2021 Centerville Public Library
- » November 8, 2021 Troy-Miami County Public Library
- » November 9, 2021 Fairborn Community Library
- » November 16, 2021 Dayton Metro Main Library
- » November 23, 2021 Xenia Community Library
- » November 30, 2021 Milton-Union Public Library
- » December 8, 2021 National Federation of the Blind



Online Survey

An online public opinion survey was designed to provide opportunities for residents across Greene, Miami, Montgomery and northern Warren County to share their perception of walking, cycling and transit access in their communities. The survey was distributed widely as a flyer on public buses and transit facilities, local libraries, senior centers and other local institutions, as well as published in major news sources and local social media platforms across the Region. Despite the outreach efforts, the public opinion survey produced only 62 responses. As a result, it is hard to draw strong conclusions from the sample size. A summary of the full survey results can be found in the Appendix on page 137.

The Active Transportation Survey asked respondents to identify their primary sources of transportation and why they may choose to walk or bike. The general results indicated respondents identified bicycling as a more practical form of transportation than walking. Conversely, the respondents consider walking to be an activity more related to health or fitness.

The survey asked respondents what are your primary source(s) of transportation, providing multiple choices to pick from (Figure 10). It also provided a list of destination types and asked how often the respondent walked or biked to those destinations. Parks, stores, transit, personal visits, and school/daycare were more popular destinations to walk to than to bike, while work/school, errands, and faith-based communities were the more popular biking destinations. The results of the survey indicates the important role of walking and biking in daily travel which is often not recognized by the general public as a mode of travel.

What are your primary source(s) of transportation?

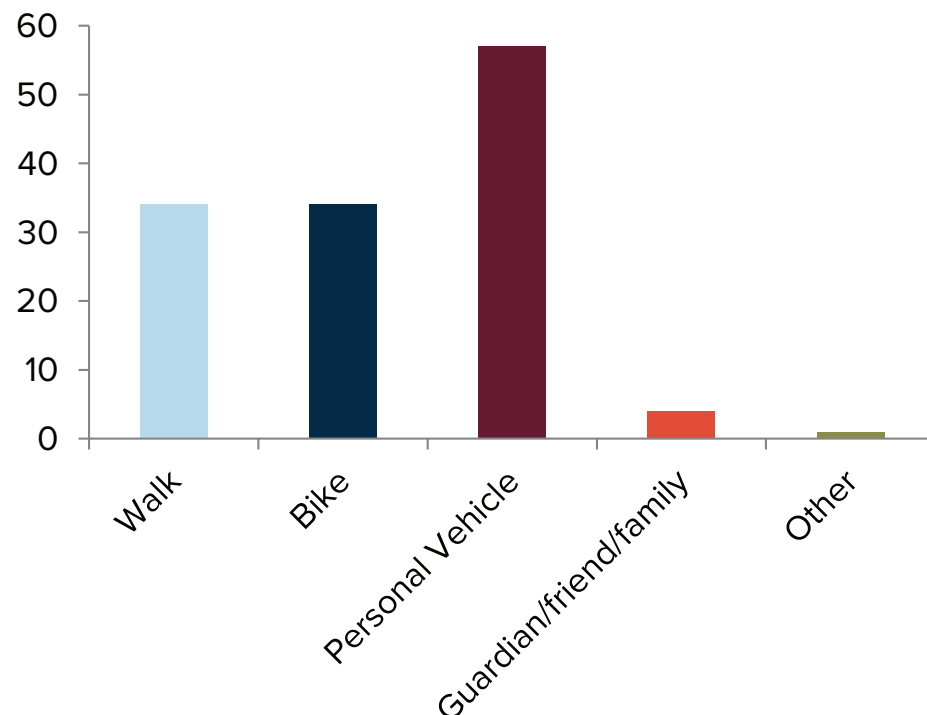


Figure 10: Survey Results - Primary Source of Transportation

Another series of questions asked what would encourage respondents to walk or bike more. The top responses for increasing both walking and biking is providing better lighting and maintained sidewalks, adding more bike lanes on busy streets and neighborhoods and adding more destinations within walking or biking distance.

Suggestions related to walking – lighting and sidewalk repair – are elements that can be included in transportation projects, which may increase use of pedestrian infrastructure on the Region’s roads. Roadway lighting is specifically addressed in U.S. Department of Transportation National Roadway Safety Strategy as a critical intervention to increase safety (page 148).

Other suggestions related to biking speak to bicyclists’ preference for separation from motor traffic. This was clearly indicated by the public survey conducted for the Miami Valley Bike Plan Update 2015. The hierarchy of preferences – from separated bike paths, to bike lanes on busy streets, to more routes on neighborhood streets – speaks to the desire for safety that separation from traffic provides. Finally, “slower vehicle traffic” is also a direct call to improve safety for cycling from the survey respondents. The complete set of survey responses can be found in the Appendix of this plan.

Suggestions relating to both walking and biking – more destinations within walking or bike distance – touch on land use planning. The Going Places Land Use Visioning process conducted by MVRPC recommended a “concentrated development” pattern to minimize infrastructure investment and protect natural resources, such as prime farmland and open space. Concentrated development would also facilitate active transportation use by shortening distances between destinations.

Why do you choose to walk or bike in your community?

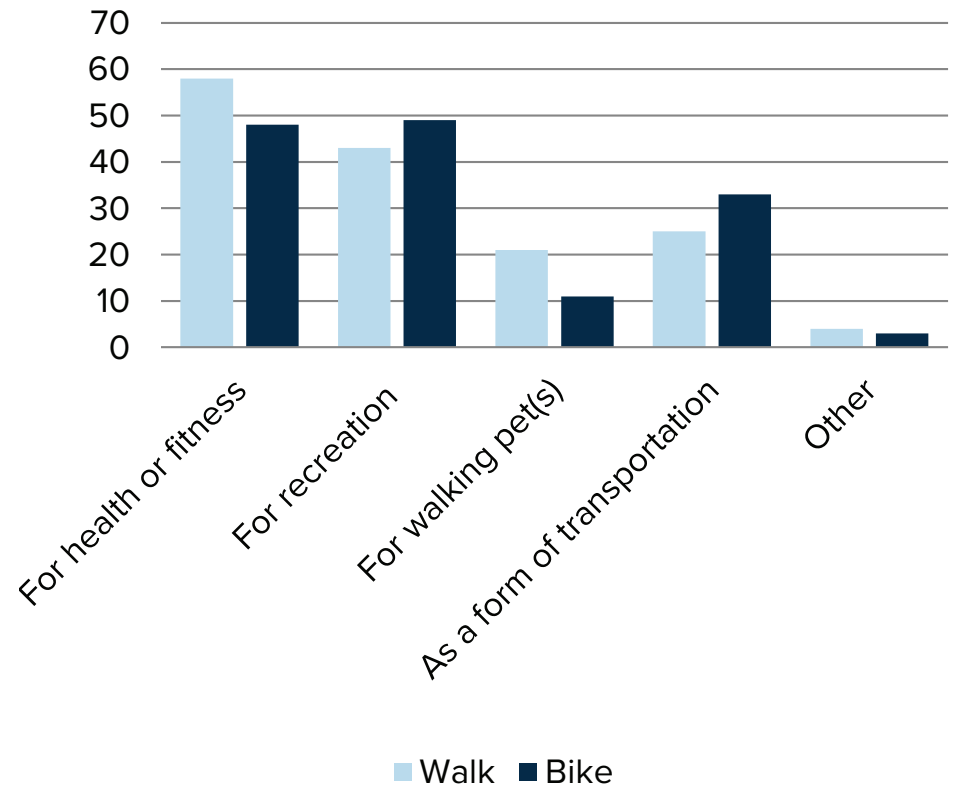


Figure 11: Survey Results - Why You Choose to Walk or Bike

Below are general statements about your neighborhood/community:

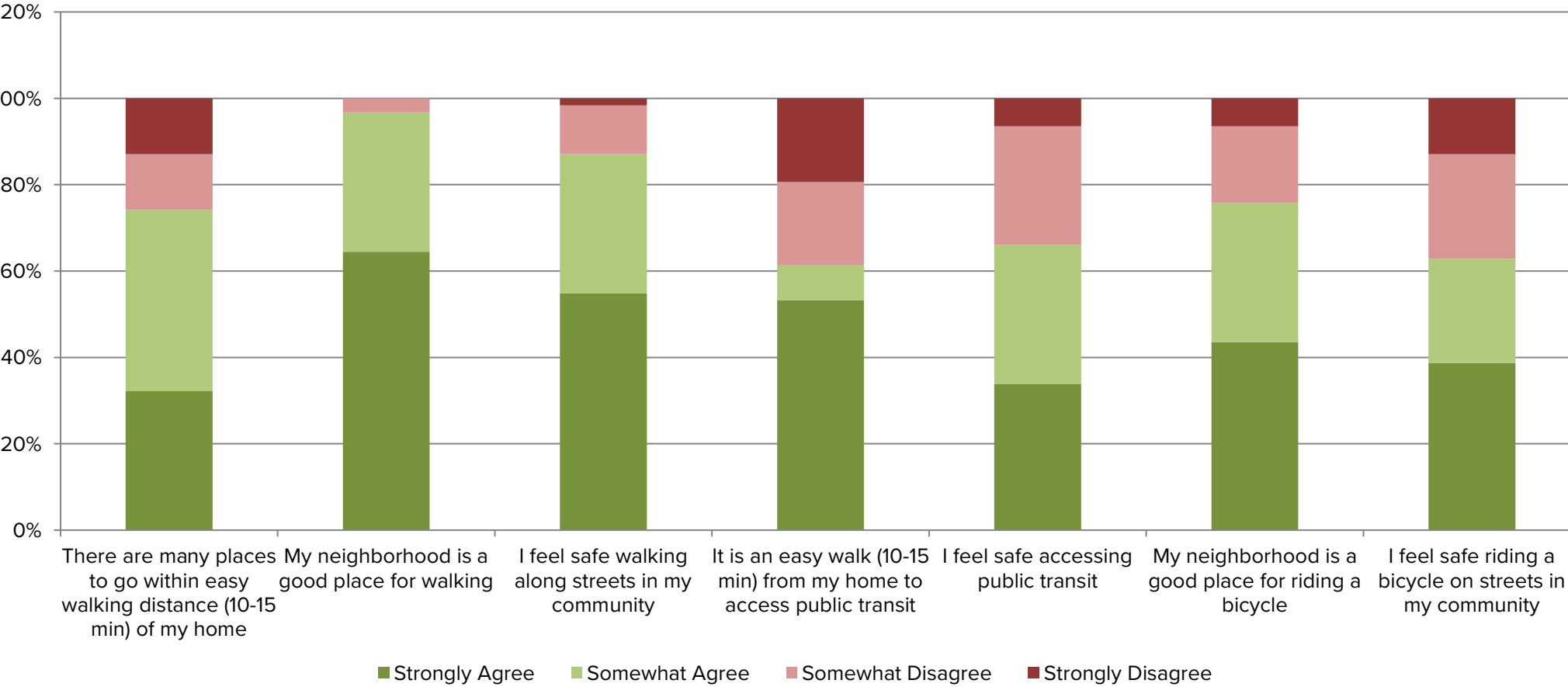


Figure 12: Survey Results - General Statements About Your Community



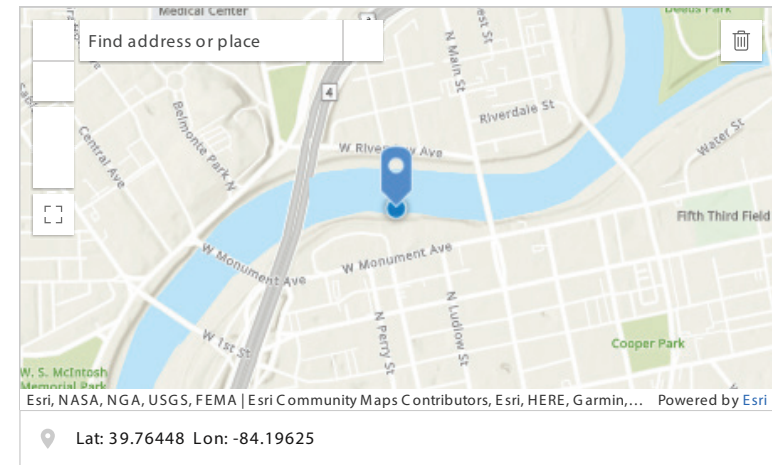
Online Comment Map

An online comment map provided through ArcGIS Survey 123 was created as a supplement to the online survey and in person input sessions. The comment map was designed to allow respondents to highlight location-specific issues and make improvement recommendations for walking, biking and/or getting to the bus. Those using the online survey were able to select a category that described the nature of the input being provided. General categories such as improving safety, adding signage could apply to either mode. Inputs collected in the physical maps were added to a GIS geodatabase, categories were assigned as appropriate by MVRPC staff, and later created into project recommendations. Inputs collected on the physical maps at the public input sessions were added to a GIS geodatabase, categories were assigned as appropriate by MVRPC staff, and later contributed to development of project recommendations.

A total of approximately 185 unique mapped comments were received, where duplicate comments have been combined in to single comments. Verbal comments received during the National Federation of the Blind focus group session were also translated into mapped locations.

The majority of the map inputs by the public were comments related to bicycling infrastructure, which is intuitive due to the local nature of walking for transportation, compared to cycling which can serve trips between communities. By contrast, many of the transit access-related comments were pedestrian focused.

Tell us more about a specific location where there could be improvements for walking, biking and/or getting to the bus*



Describe what can be improved*

-Please Select-

Please provide a detailed description*

Email address*



Upload an image

Select image file



Summary of the mapped public comments

- » Comments and suggested improvements came from all parts of the MVRPC transportation planning area (MPO area).
- » Most comments reflected conditions within the urbanized area of the Region, in locations where active transportation is more likely to occur.
- » Pedestrian related comments for new infrastructure were equally divided between “Add sidewalk” and “Add crosswalk,” indicating crossings are as important to pedestrians as walking along corridors.
- » Bicycle related comments for new infrastructure were decidedly in favor of separated facilities. Comments indicated preference for separate bike paths while only a handful recommended adding a bike lane.
- » Overwhelmingly, inputs suggesting safety improvements were associated with pedestrian facilities.
- » The ODOT Walk.Bike.Ohio process developed data at the Census block group level to identify “High Need” areas where populations are likely to be more reliant on active transportation. Of the public input suggestions the majority of project recommendations are located within block groups in the highest quartile (top 25 percent) of need.
- » MVRPC staff compared submissions from the public to the intersections and segments analyzed in the Pedestrian Crash Risk Assessment (PCRA). Half of the suggestions were at higher risk score intersections or segments. Another quarter of the suggestions were at along higher risk score segments or included higher risk score intersections.

Comments by County

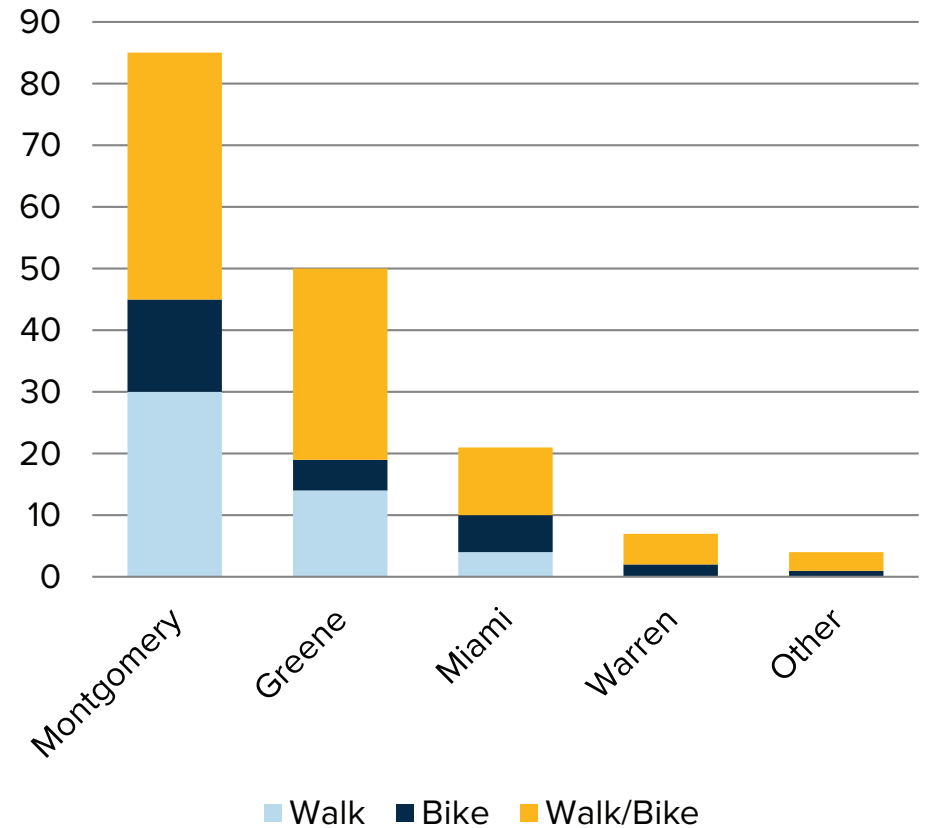


Figure 13: Online Map Comments by County

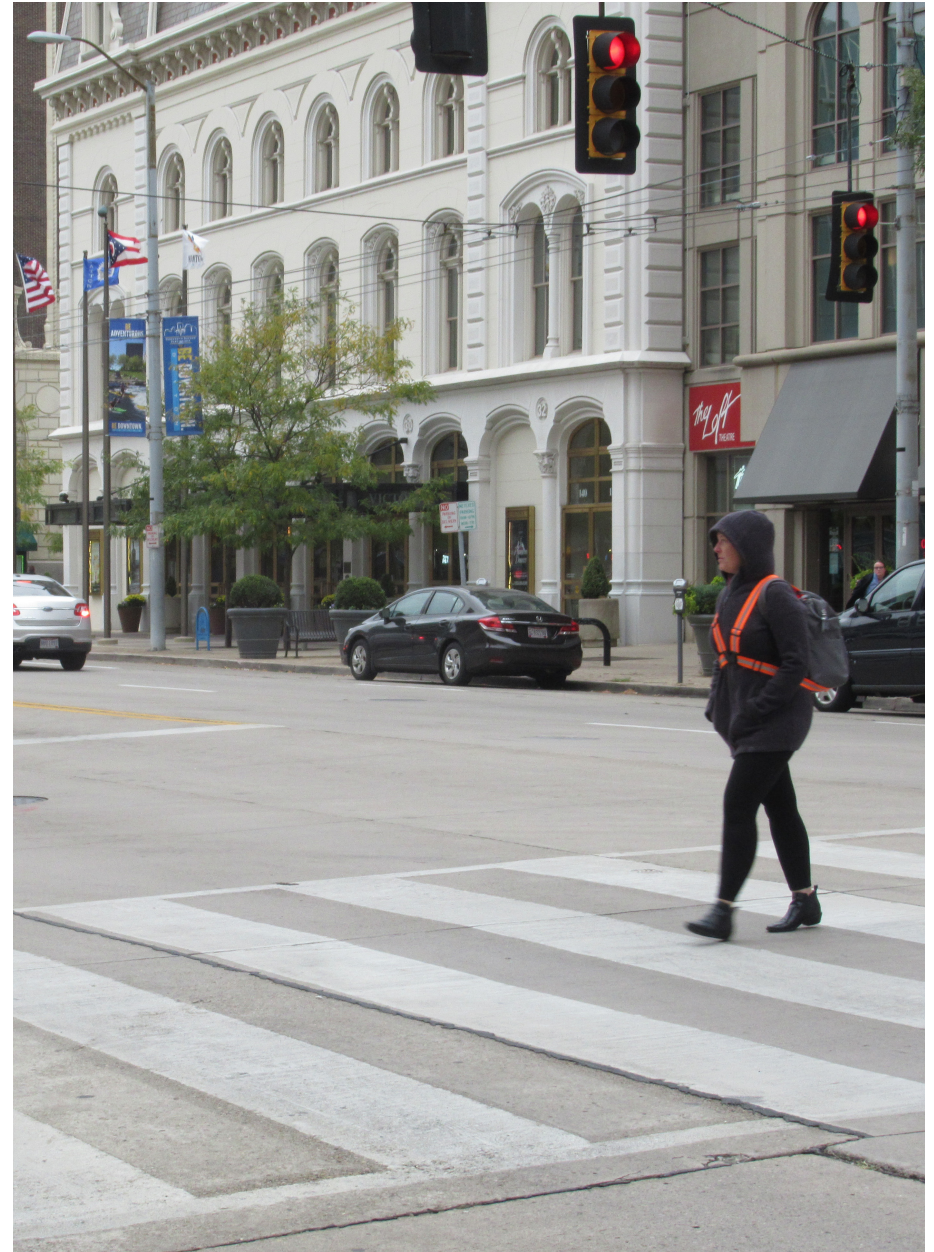
Broad themes from the public input process were used to guide project and policy prioritization for the overall AT Plan:

Urban/Rural

The urbanized area of the Region is where most active transportation trips are likely to take place. Continued and increased emphasis of the importance of complete streets elements in future projects in these areas will have better return on active transportation investment. That said, safety and connectivity of local pedestrian networks in rural villages, and continued development of connecting bikeways in rural parts of the Region will benefit all, as well.

Pedestrian Facilities

It will be important in the future to emphasize pedestrian crossings equally with sidewalks and paths in evaluating projects and roadway design.



Bicycle Facilities

Building on findings from the Miami Valley Bike Plan Update 2015, we see a continued preference for separated facilities for bicycling. Protected bike lanes, shared use paths and side paths in some contexts should be incorporated preferentially into complete streets project designs as opposed to shared lanes or ordinary bike lanes.

Safety

Safety concerns can be a barrier to walking. As of 2021, there was a 13 percent increase in pedestrian roadway fatalities caused by cars and trucks compared to 2020 according to U.S. DOT.²² Design choices that give preference to safety over vehicle speed or congestion reduction should be emphasized to reduce safety concerns.

Populations

Locations with the highest proportions of people who rely on active transportation garnered a disproportionate share of the suggestions from the public input process. Census block groups identified as having high active transportation need should receive increased active transportation infrastructure investment to improve safety and convenience of active modes.



Trail User Survey

In partnership with ten trail managing agencies or advocacy groups across the greater Miami Valley, MVRPC coordinated a month-long trail user survey at various locations along the Miami Valley Trails in August and September 2021. In total 1,715 responses to the survey were received, of which 1,158 were from respondents who reported residing in Greene, Miami, Montgomery, or northern Warren County.

The Trail User survey is specific to residents using the shared use path system within the Region. Given the preponderance of cycling use on these trails, the survey is weighted towards cyclists. However, there are survey responses with some applicability to this Active Transportation Plan (AT Plan).

Responses to the demographic questions in the trail user survey highlight the fact that the Region's trail users are a particular subset of the Region's overall population. Nearly two-thirds (60 percent) of trail user survey respondents reported their age as 46 or older. American Community Survey (ACS) data from 2019²³ estimates that in Greene, Miami, Montgomery and northern Warren County, the share of the population aged 45 or older is 43 percent. Similarly, among trail user survey respondents who responded to the question asking to identify their race, 89 percent reported White, while the ACS 2019 estimate shows the Region as 79 percent White. Reported household income showed a similar result. Sixty percent of trail user survey respondents reported a household income of \$75,000 or more. ACS data indicates that the median household income in the Dayton-Kettering Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) is \$57,631. Overall, these survey responses indicate that the typical trail

user is older, has a higher income and more likely to be White than the average resident of the Region. It is reasonable to infer the relative lack of trail access in the areas of the Region where households with low income or persons of color live may contribute to this difference in demographics for trail users. An emphasis on adding trail and improving access in these areas is one way this AT Plan can contribute to shifting these differences towards greater equity.

A total of 6 percent of survey respondents from the MPO counties indicated that "Commuting" was among the reasons they used the Miami Valley Trails. This group of commuting trail users reported using the trails more frequently than the survey population as a whole (74 percent reported using the trails "3 to 5 days per week" or "Daily" versus 50 percent for all respondents) while reporting more short duration trips on the trails (7 percent reported using the trail for 30 minutes or less compared to 3 percent of the full survey population). Even with the shorter usage, these Trail Commuters are likely accomplishing a large part (if not all) of the recommended weekly physical activity simply by getting to work or school. More than half of MPO residents surveyed (55 percent) got to the trail by an active transportation mode – biking (413), walking (214), or transit (8). Also, more than half of MPO residents (63 percent) who bike on the Miami Valley Trails reported that they also bike on roads.

Finally, among all respondents, 34 percent took the survey in a county different from the county in which they live. Of course, some trail users drive to another county to use the trails. When looking only at those respondents who got to the trail by an active mode (walk, bike, or transit) that figure drops to 28 percent. Still, roughly two out of seven trail users are using the trails for county-to-county trips.

TALE of the TRAILS

The Miami Valley Region boasts the Nation's Largest Paved Trail Network, offering many benefits to the people that utilize those trails.

For more information, visit MiamiValleyTrails.org.

By The NUMBERS

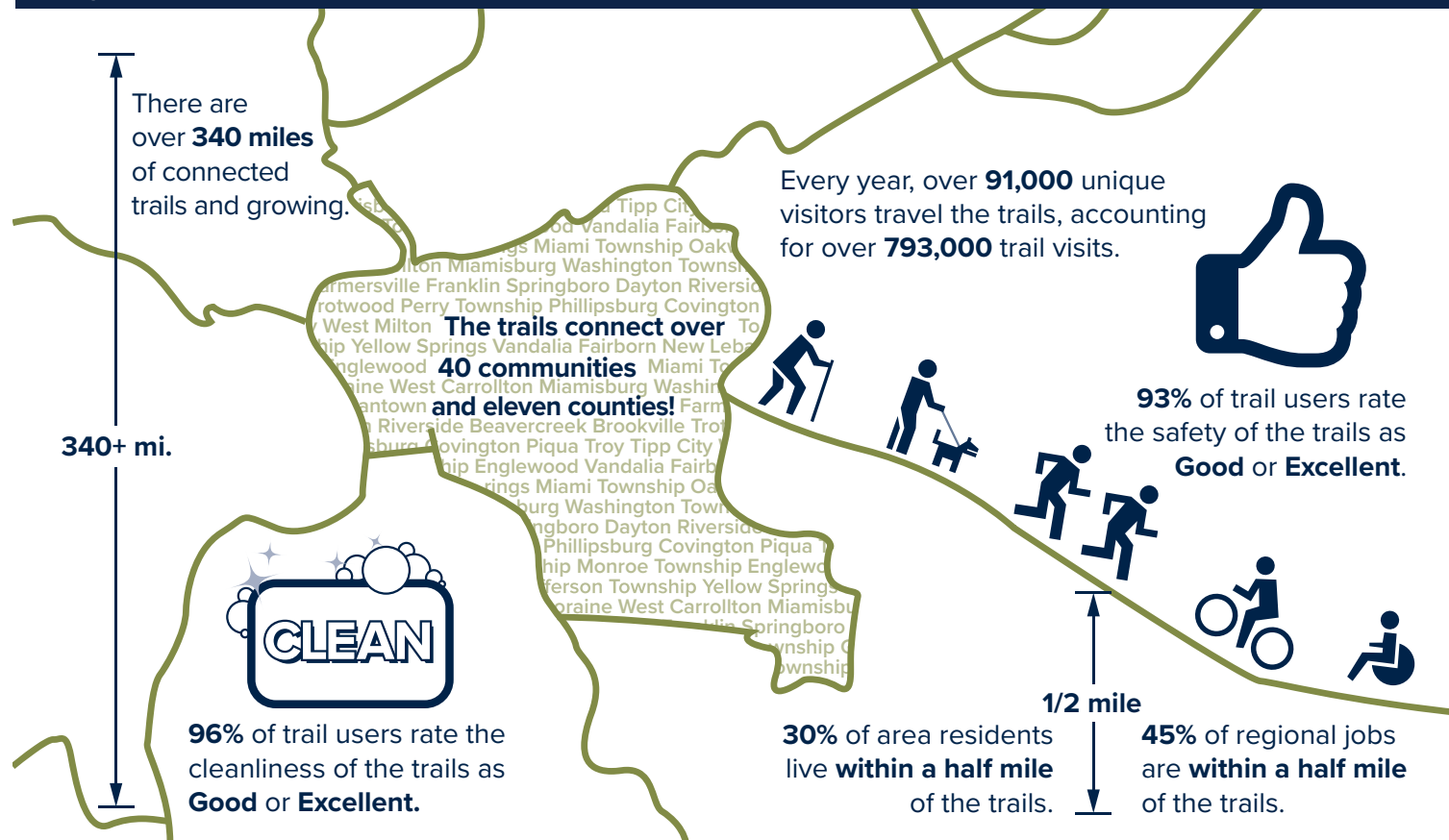


Figure 14: MVRPC Trail User Survey Infographic 2017