

**DATE**

06/14/2018

**FROM**

Halff Associates, Adisa Communications, Civic Collaboration

**SUBJECT**

South Congress Avenue PER – Public Input Summary

---

## SUMMARY

This memo includes a summary of input received from February 10, 2018 through April 30, 2018. During this time period, communications and engagement activities included the following:

- February 10, 2018 Pop-Up Meeting – 20 participants
- February 27, 2018 Open House – 62 participants
- March 14, 2018 South Congress Avenue Merchant Association/Preservation and Improvement District Meeting – 18 participants
- April 18, 2018 Business Stakeholder Meeting – 2 participants
- Paper and Online Surveys – 314 participants (open from February 27, 2018 through April 30, 2018)

---

## COMMUNICATIONS PLAN OVERVIEW

### GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The goal of the South Congress Avenue Corridor Mobility Plan is to enhance mobility, safety, and connectivity for everyone – whether you drive, walk, bike or take transit. The Corridor Mobility Plan will promote public outreach by:

- Providing clear and consistent information to generate awareness by providing clear and consistent information about the Corridor Mobility Plan process, how it is related to the 2016 Mobility Bond, and the opportunities to provide input.
- Communicating how the project will affect stakeholders' lives and why their involvement is important to the process.
- Fostering an open and accessible process by providing various opportunities for public participation and comments, including in-person and online methods.
- Gathering input from a diverse array of participants, including individuals whose primary language is not English, to comply with the City's Language Access Program.
- Compiling the community's mobility priorities, concerns, needs, and preferences and incorporating public input into the Corridor Mobility Plan.

### PURPOSE AND PLANNED PROCESS

To support the development of the Corridor Mobility Plan, the Corridor Program Office implemented a public outreach process that informed stakeholders within and around the study area and provided them with opportunities to document their comments and desired improvements for the South Congress Avenue corridor. To achieve the public outreach goals for the first phase of the project, the communications team:

- Provided several opportunities for public participation and comments. Opportunities included one pop-up meeting, one public open house, two business stakeholder meetings, and paper/online surveys.

The public events were hosted at different times to provide options for participants with varying schedules to participate.

- Connected with hard-to-reach stakeholders to help inform and engage their personal networks.

## PARTICIPANTS

An essential element in achieving the Communications and Community Outreach Plan (CCOP) goals was identifying key stakeholders from diverse backgrounds. The communications team worked with the Corridor Program Office staff to build an outreach database that includes the following stakeholder groups:

- Existing stakeholders – Neighborhood, civic, professional, religious, school, and community organizations currently using the South Congress Avenue corridor and connecting adjacent facilities for recreational, work, school, and living purposes.
- Under-represented stakeholders – Arts and cultural groups, minority populations, homeless or physically impaired advocates, and other community-based and multicultural organizations.
- Influencers and leaders – Elected officials, business, and civic leaders for ongoing communication, updates, and surveys.

## PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT APPROACH AND VALUES

The Corridor Program Office has encouraged participation from people with a variety of demographic, socioeconomic, education, and other identifying characteristics along the South Congress Avenue corridor. The strategies and methods of this public outreach approach are designed to effectively involve stakeholders in the process of developing the South Congress Avenue Corridor Mobility Plan to ensure the community’s values, needs, and concerns regarding mobility are considered. The efforts to accommodate the needs of diverse stakeholders included the translation of postcards and flyers, invitations, surveys, and other materials into Spanish. Spanish-language interpretation was available at both the pop-in meeting and the public open house, and American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation services were also provided at the public open house.

## COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROCESS

### POSTCARD DELIVERY

More than 5,200 direct mail postcards were designed, printed, and delivered during the week of February 13, 2018 to addresses and neighborhoods on or adjacent to South Congress Avenue. These 6.5” x 9” postcards provided recipients with details on the project, the time and location of the open house meeting, and links to the online survey in English and Spanish.

Description	Quantity
Postcard Mailings	5,244

### ONLINE AND SOCIAL MEDIA OUTREACH

The communications team worked with the Corridor Program Office to draft five Facebook posts in English. Information about the public engagement events and the project survey were posted on Facebook, Twitter, and Next Door.

Description	Number of People Reached
January 18, 2018 Posting	4
January 29, 2018 Posting	4
February 21, 2018 Posting	419
February 26, 2018 Posting	433
March 13, 2018 Posting	1,044

### SURVEY IMPLEMENTATION

The project survey was a principal tool used to gather public comments, concerns, and desired changes for the corridor. Paper copies were made available during all public events. An online version was shared electronically through Facebook, Nextdoor, City’s project webpage, and the project email list starting in February 2018 and ending in April 2018. The effort garnered 314 survey completions.

Description	Completions
Paper and Online Survey	314 surveys

### POP-UP MEETING AT JO’S COFFEE

A pop-up meeting was held on February 10, 2018 at Jo’s Coffee, located at 1300 South Congress Avenue, to inform retail guests and passers-by of the project, to solicit their input by completing a survey, and to encourage attendance at the public open house. Information and materials was delivered in both English and Spanish. The Corridor Program Office staff engaged with 20 individuals, five of which also completed a survey at that time.

Description	Quantity
Pop-Up Meeting	20 people

### OPEN HOUSE MEETING AT FULMORE MIDDLE SCHOOL

A public open house was held on February 27, 2018 at Fulmore Middle School, located at 201 East Mary Street, to gather input regarding existing issues on South Congress Avenue for those who drive, walk, bicycle, or take transit along and around the corridor. The event provided exhibits on the 2016 Mobility Bond Program, existing conditions on South Congress Avenue, Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Capital Metro) transit service, and large-scale roll plot images of the study area for participants to write comments. A separate station encouraged attendees to complete the online survey in English or Spanish (paper surveys were also available). Spanish-language and ASL interpretation services were also provided. The Corridor Program Office staff conversed with more than 60 individuals, 10 of whom also completed a survey at that time.

Description	Quantity
Public Open House	62 people

### BUSINESS STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS

The communications team presented information about the corridor planning process at the South Congress Avenue Merchant Association/Preservation and Improvement District meeting on March 14, 2018 at Guerro's Taco Bar located at 1412 South Congress Avenue. The purpose of the meeting was to inform business and retail owners in the SoCo Business District about the project, share details about existing conditions, and solicit their input via surveys. There were 18 individuals present at the meeting, including several board members, and six surveys were gathered.

The communications team also convened a stakeholder meeting targeted to business and retail owners located along the corridor from Oltorf Street to Slaughter Lane. Invitations were made to over 70 business and retail owners along the corridor via phone calls and tailored email messages. This meeting was held April 18, 2018 at the Austin Independent School District Science and Health Resource Center located at 305 North Bluff Drive. During the meeting, information about the project was shared via informational boards, handouts, and a large-scale roll plot image of the study area. Two individuals attended the meeting and provided input.

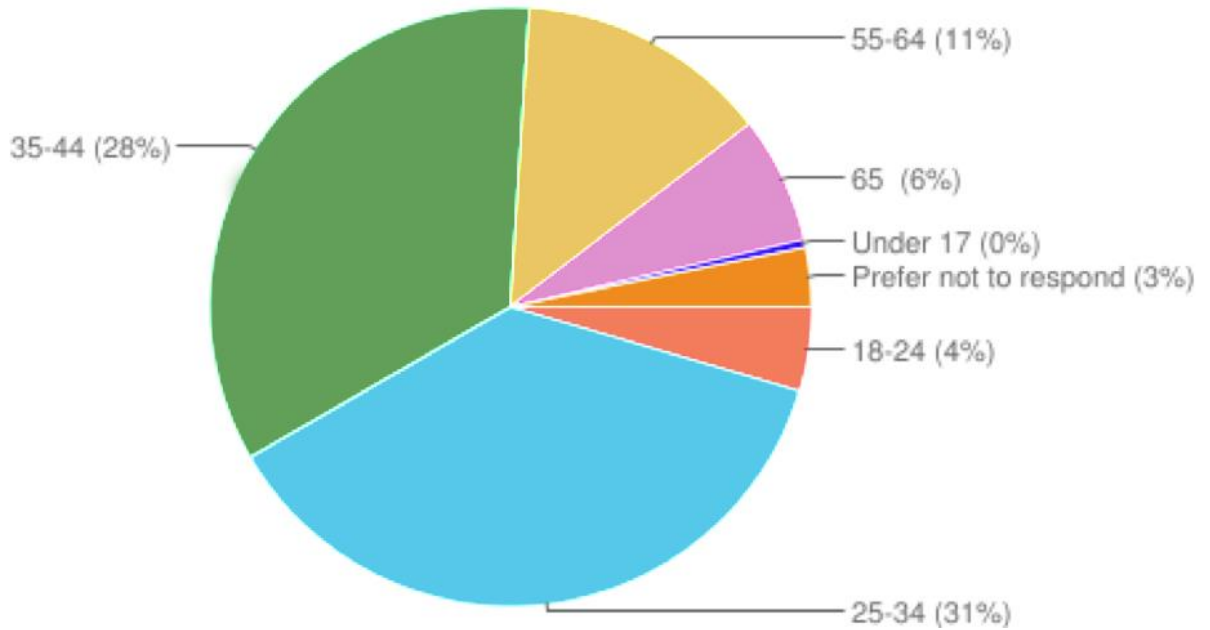
Description	Quantity
Business Stakeholder Meetings	20 people

## STUDY OBSERVATIONS

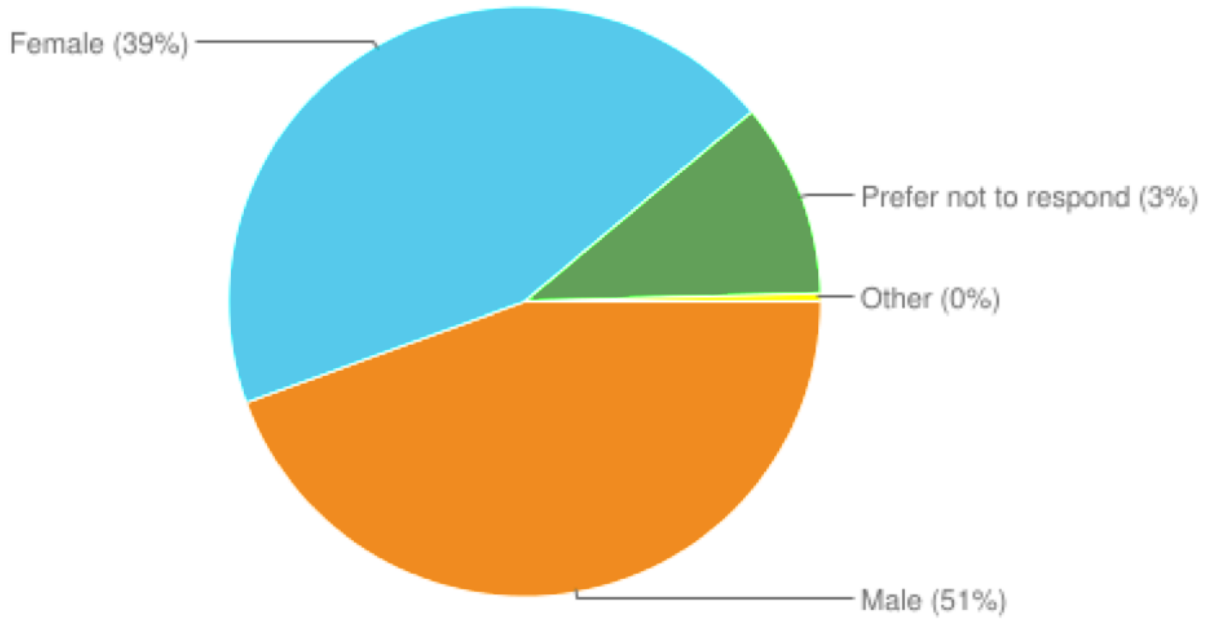
### DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

The variety of the age group, gender, and racial/ethnic background of the 314 respondents are shown in the following three (3) charts.

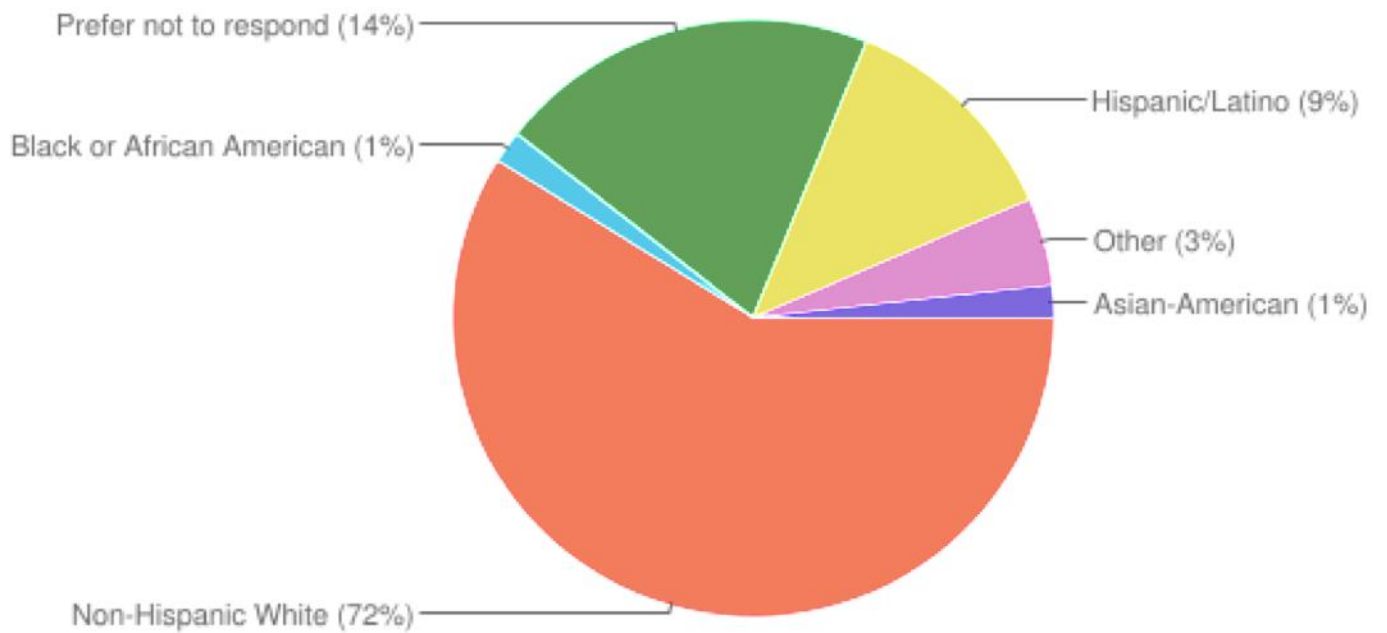
#### Age Group



**Gender**



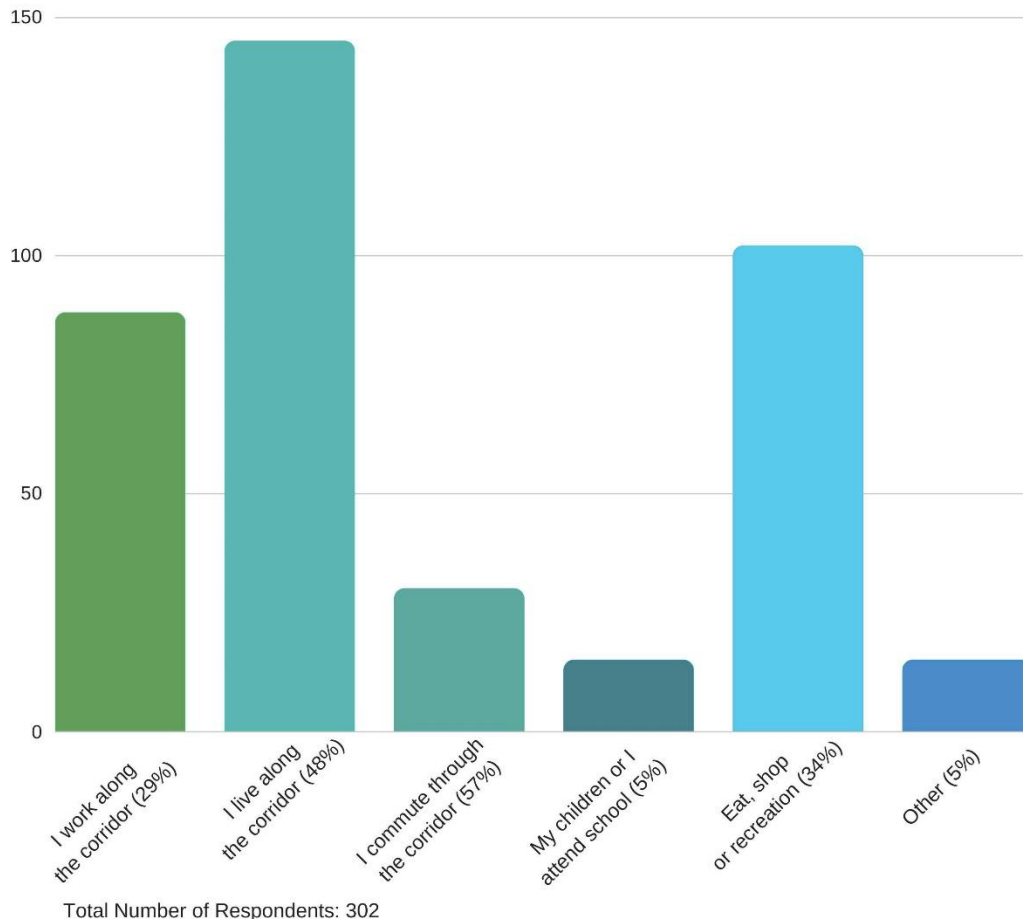
**Race and Ethnic Background**



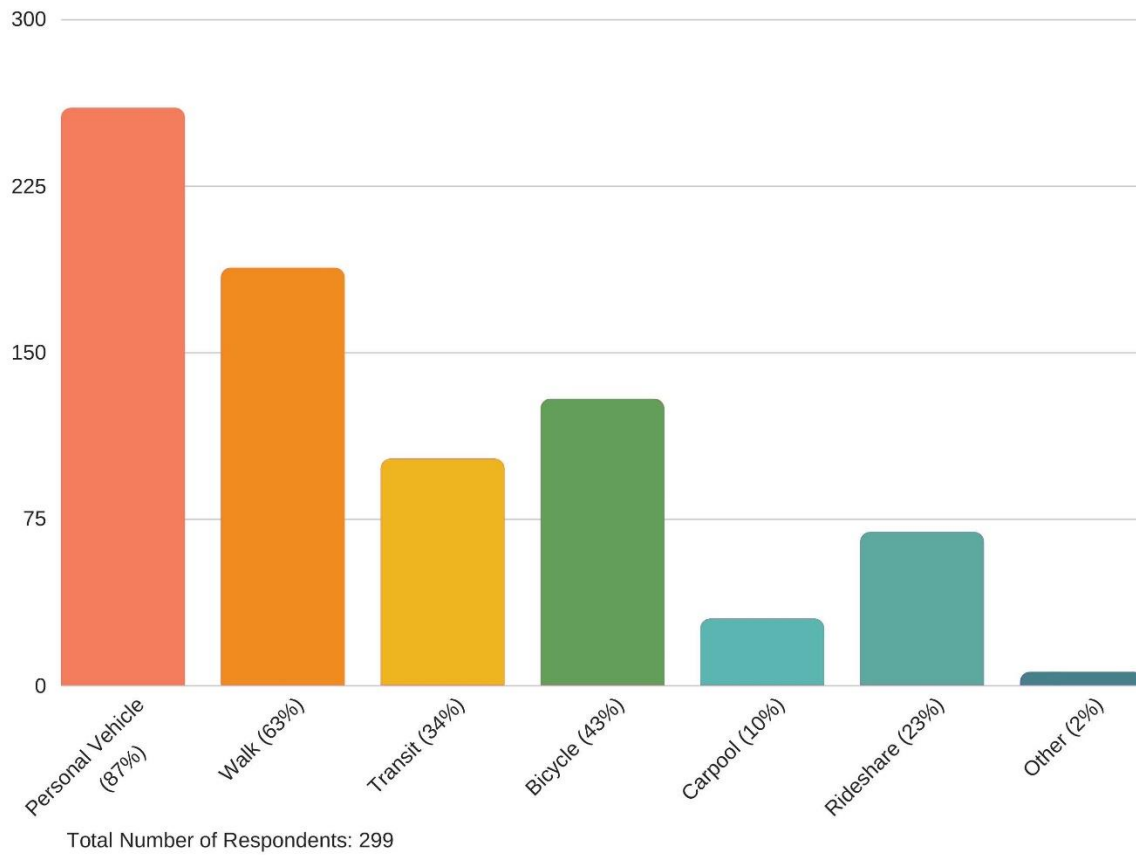
## RESPONDENT TRAVEL BEHAVIOR

The survey respondents answered questions regarding their travel behavior as summarized in the charts in the following three (3) charts.

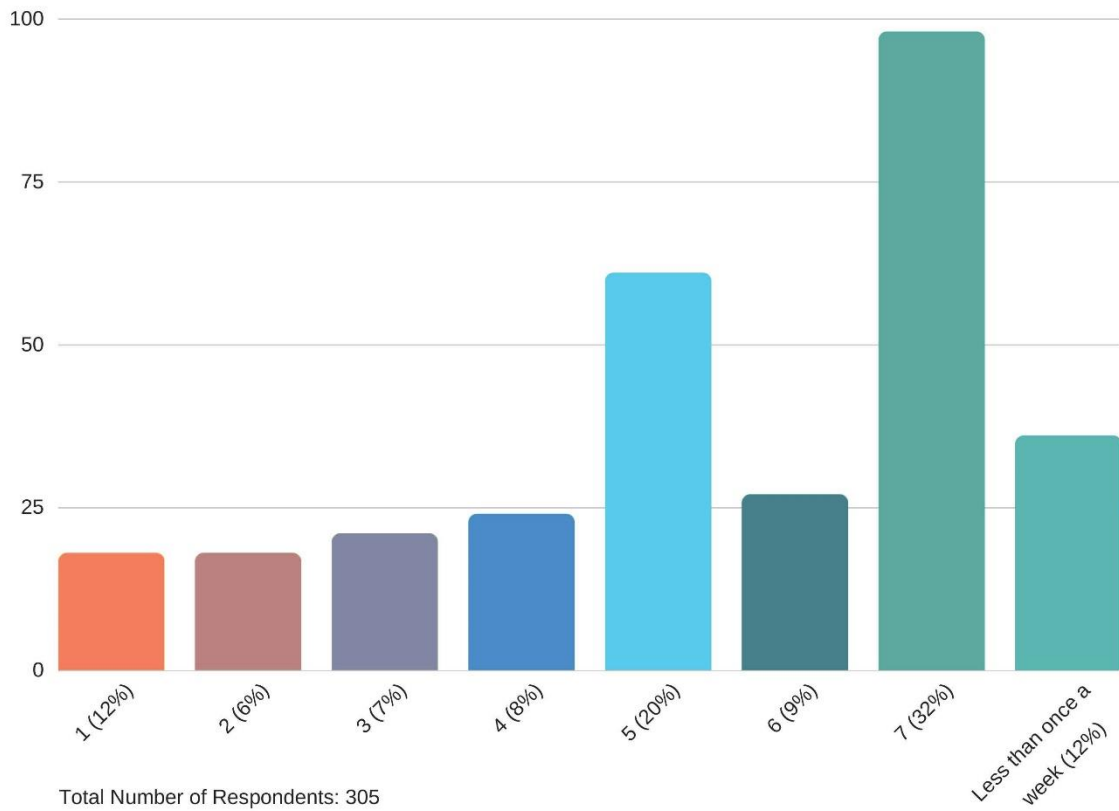
### How do you use the South Congress Avenue corridor?



**What mode of transportation do you use along the South Congress Avenue corridor?**

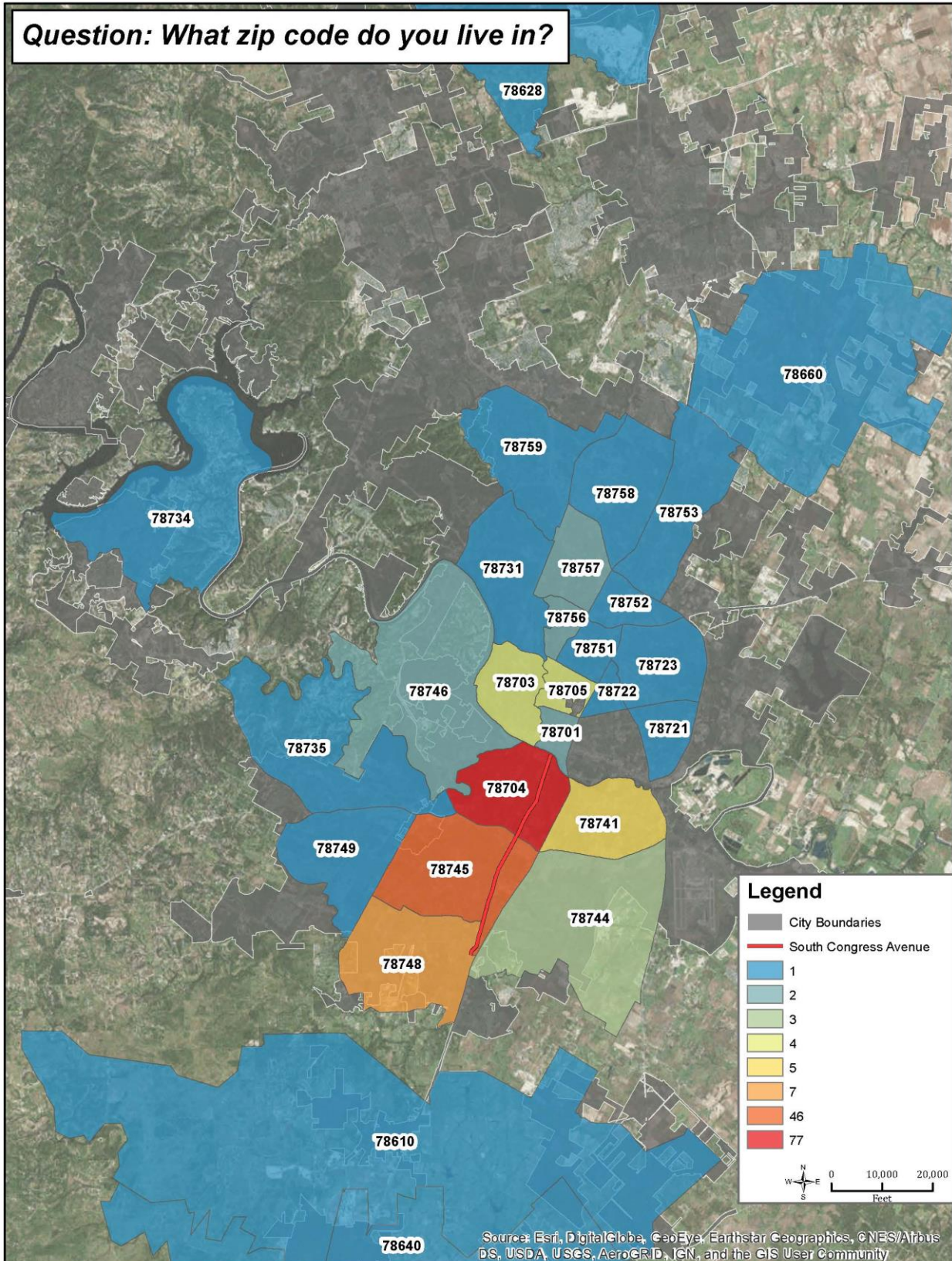


**How many days per week do you travel along South Congress Avenue?**

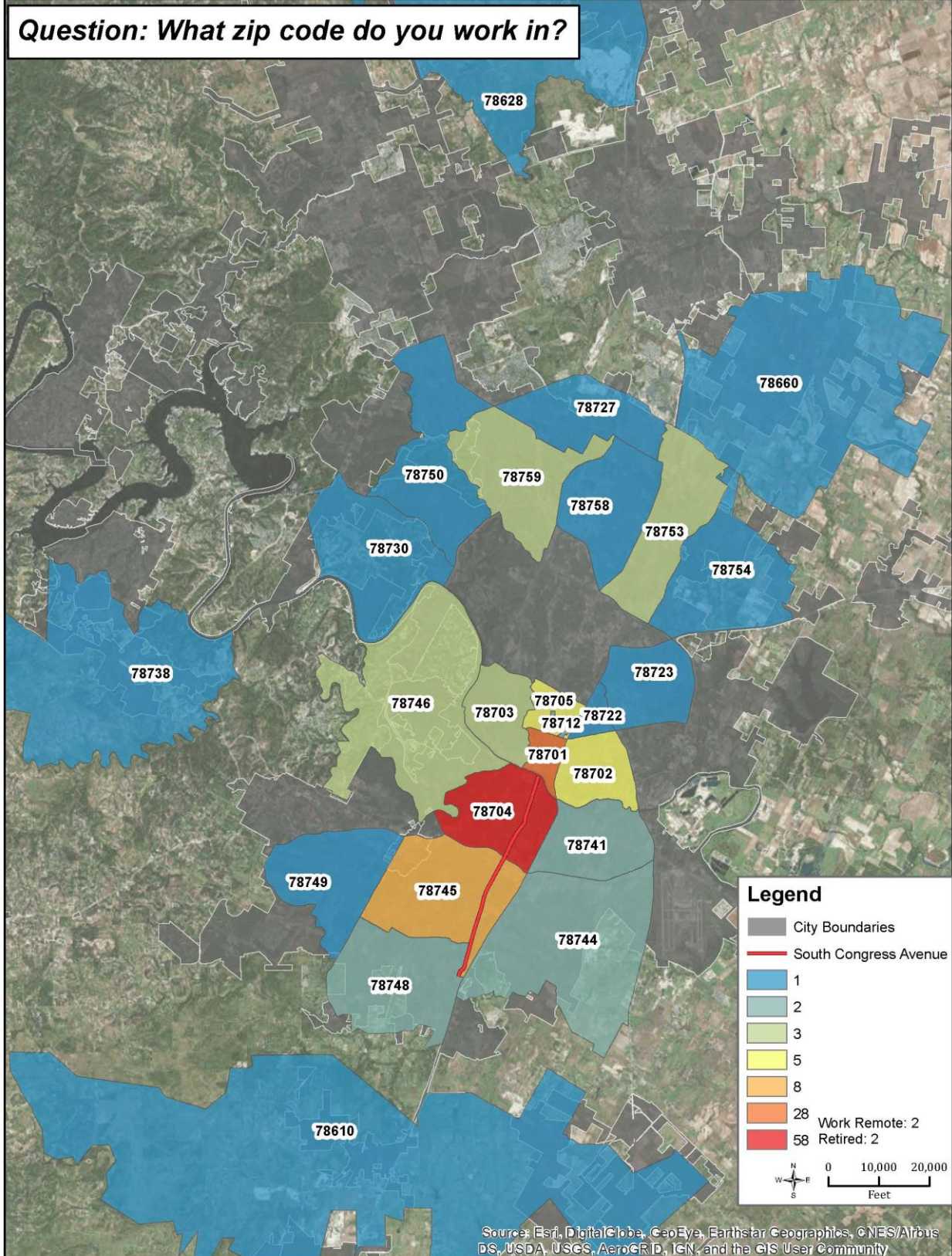


The 314 respondents were split between nearby residents and those who commute along South Congress Avenue. The following two (2) maps on display where the respondents live and work by zip code.









## TOPICS OF INTEREST TO RESPONDENTS

On the survey, respondents were instructed to pick their top three concerns pertaining to the South Congress Avenue corridor from a list of six topics. The ranking of these topics are as follows:

- Managing Congestion (54% of respondents)
- Accessibility to and from destinations / neighborhoods (37% of respondents)
- Safer environment for walking (62% of respondents)
- Attractive public spaces (41% of respondents)
- Cycling-supportive environment (49% of respondents)
- Transit service improvement (42% of respondents)

## SURVEY COMMENTS RECEIVED

The comments have been categorized by common themes in the responses. Comments that were received multiple times and that are illustrative of common survey responses are shown in the sections below.



### **Safety:**

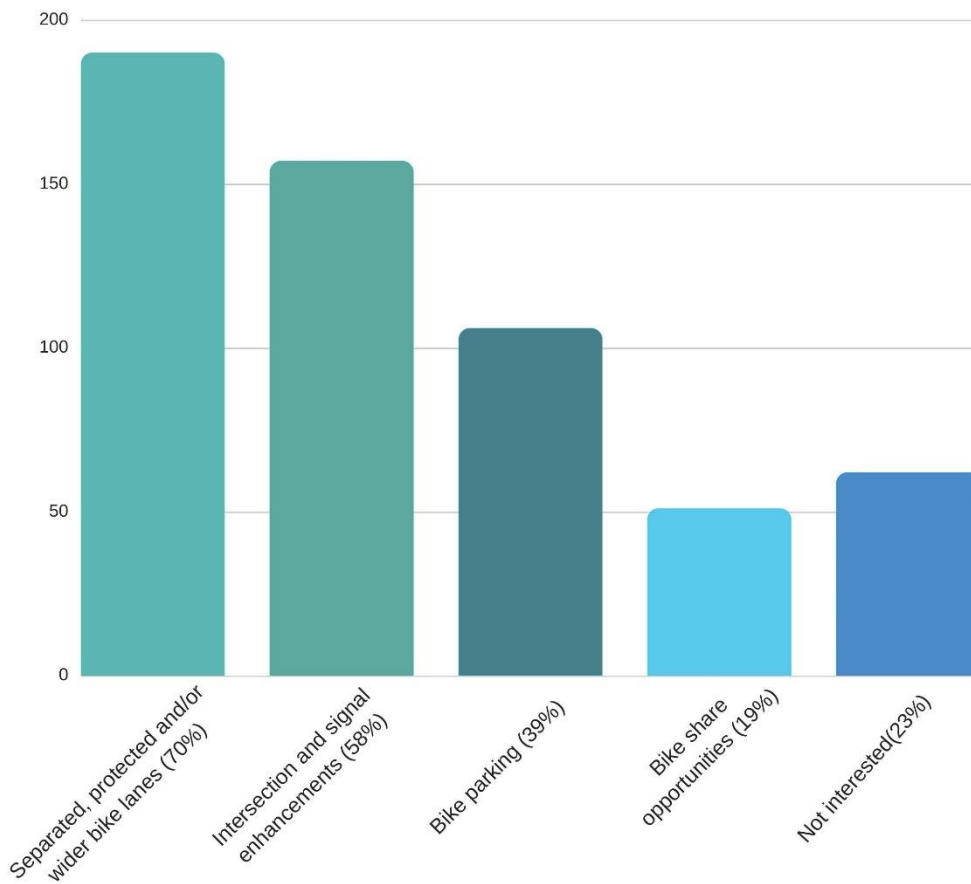
- South Congress Avenue is currently dangerous to navigate.
- US Highway 290/Ben White Boulevard and South Congress Avenue is adverse for pedestrians – several comments were made about the fear pedestrians and cyclists had when using this intersection.
- Reduce the speed limit (40 MPH is too fast).
- Add medians to prevent cars from making dangerous turns or cutting into businesses (causing congestion).



**Cycling:**

- Bike lanes should be protected.
- Bike repair stations are needed.
- Protected bike lanes all the way down to Oltorf Street, even Stassney Lane (a dangerous street for cyclists).
- Difficult for cyclists to make a left onto Riverside Drive safely.
- Allow bicycles to trigger light on Cumberland Road.
- Oltorf Street intersection is very dangerous for cyclists.
- Back-in parking is dangerous for cyclists.

**Which of the following improvements are most important for people who ride a bike along South Congress Avenue? Please choose the three improvements that are most important to you.**



Total Number of Respondents = 277

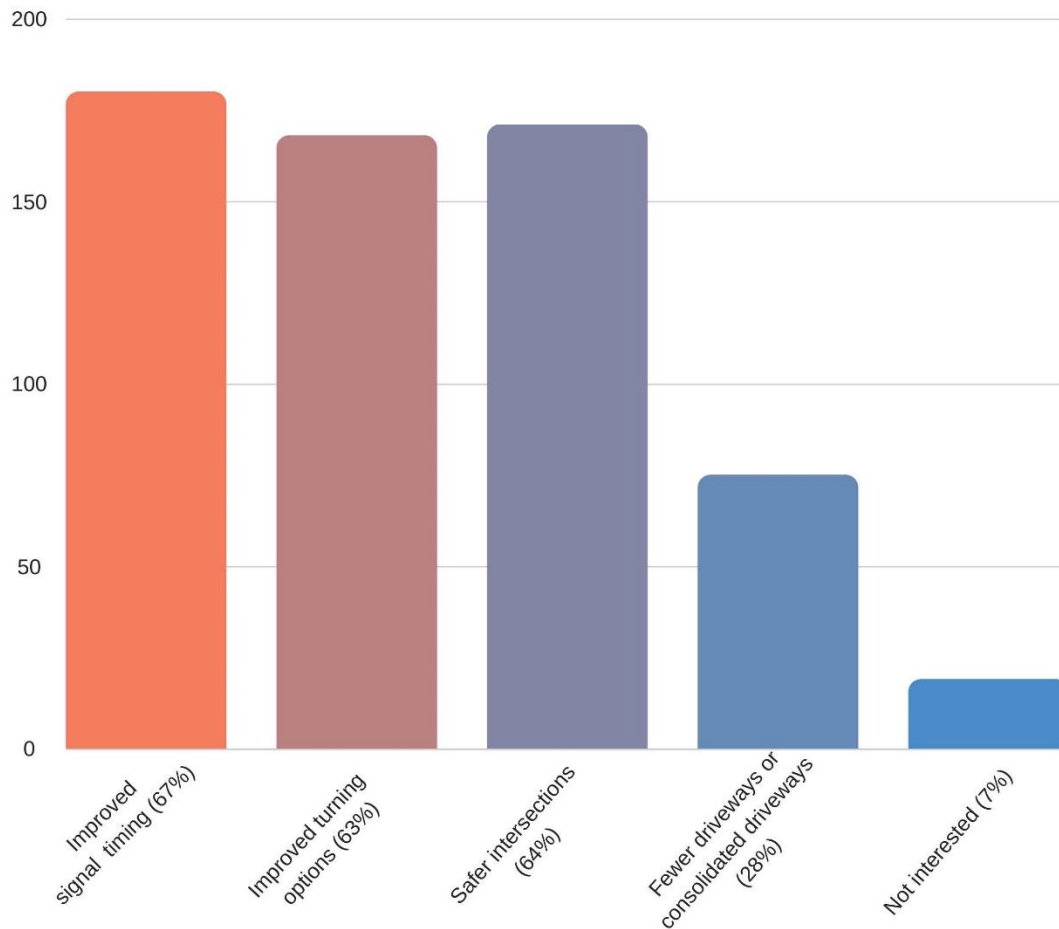




**Mobility for Drivers:**

- Parking is limited.
- Do away with back-in parking.
- Increase the hours/frequency of public transit.
- Southbound lane turning right onto Stassney Lane has no dedicated turn lane.
- St. Elmo Road area needs attention, intersection gets backed up.
- Southbound turning right onto William Cannon Drive is poorly designed.
- Radam Lane intersection causes congestion and should be improved (South 1st intersection and between Radam Lane and St. Elmo Road).

**Which of the following improvements are most important for people who drive along South Congress Avenue? Please choose the top three that are most important to you.**



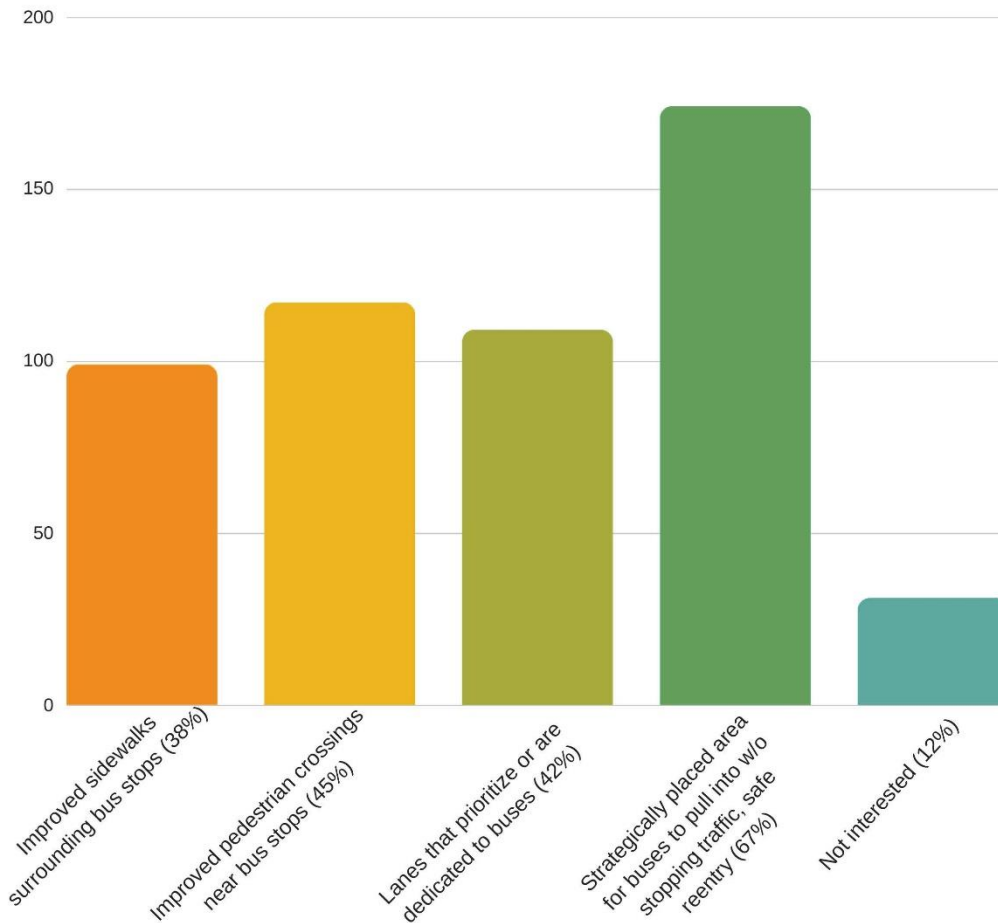
Total Number of Respondents: 268



**Transit:**

- Please add rail system.
- Dedicated bus lanes increases congestion.
- No bus pullouts/turnouts.
- Improve the conditions of bus stops (add shelter).
- Increase the amount of bus stops.

**Which of the following improvements are most important for people who ride transit along South Congress Avenue? Please choose the three most important to you.**



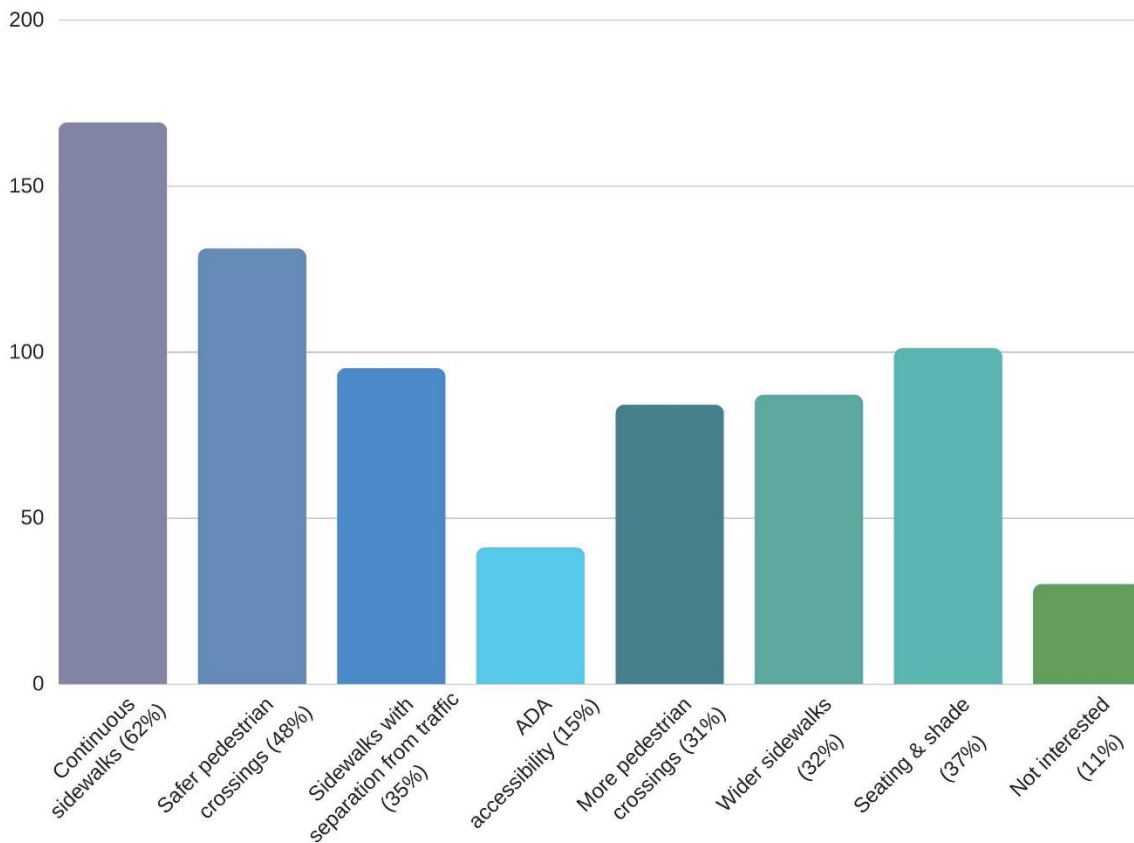
Total Number of Respondents: 260



**Pedestrian Experience:**

- Expand sidewalks - businesses and artists block pedestrian traffic.
- More shade and seating areas.
- Sidewalk along San Jose hotel should be widened and improved (there is a sharp drop).
- More lighting along the corridor.
- Make a sidewalk for pedestrians to cross Cumberland Road safely.
- Change the timing of the lights during peak hours.

**Which of the following improvements are most important for people who walk along the South Congress Avenue? Please choose the three improvements that are most important to you.**



Total Number of Respondents: 272

## APPENDIX

Comments received at the public open house and business stakeholder meeting have been categorized by corridor objective.

### Development/Land Owner Access Concerns

- Abolish residential parking permits (RPP).
- It is not fair the short-term rentals get parking in the neighborhood, but other businesses do not. All businesses should be treated equally.
- Re-evaluate RPP, open up 50% of every street that has both sides of the street restricted.
- RPP creates a massive swathe of under-utilized parking and empty streets but not for employees to park.
- In past years, streets have gone to 'resident only' but they have driveways and are relatively empty most of the time.
- Due to ongoing development this area has seen a sharp rise in parking pinch (Live Oak Street, Annie Street, Mary Street).
- Change RPP to the following: 1) one side of street resident parking only and 2) other side of same street public parking.

### Motorized Vehicle Users

- Direct connection from Congress to Southbound Interstate 35.
- Cumberland at South Congress Avenue dead-ends onto an apartment complex. The parking lot spills onto South Congress Avenue several yards North of Cumberland Road. This makes left turns difficult and dangerous. You can't change the exit because there's a building and an old and large tree.
- Apartment exit going south toward US Highway 290 hard to navigate (along Cumberland Road intersection).
- Automobiles need to stop south of Gibson Street when heading north and then they are stopped at a red light at Gibson Street and South Congress Avenue.
- Back-in parking is a mess.
- Fix the timing of the lights.
- Speeding thru entire character zone (from Lady Bird Lake to Johanna Street).
- Time the lights, 80% of parking congestion is due to timing of lights.

### Transit

- Protected bike lanes and bus or light rail, please.
- 106 East Annie Street, backed up traffic blocks bus parking access.

### Bicycle

- 25 MPH design standard throughout for pedestrian and cyclist safety.
- Keep closed always, South Congress Avenue Bridge for cyclists (referring to Barton Springs Road).
- Protected bike lanes would help – whole way along Southbound Interstate 35 feeder road.
- Dangerously tight bike lane along Williamson Creek.
- Make bike lanes continuous the whole length of South Congress (US Highway 290/Ben White Boulevard intersection).
- Protect the bike lanes all the way (around US Highway 290/Ben White Boulevard intersection).
- Bike lanes/facilities are good, like the idea of keeping bike/ped separate.
- Prohibit bikes in off leash dog area.
- Traffic downhill accelerating to go right, unsafe for cyclists.
- No bike lanes along South Congress Avenue between Barton Springs Road and East Riverside Drive.
- Sidewalk and bike lanes have been eliminated due to construction at Academy Drive and South Congress Avenue forcing pedestrians and bicyclists into traffic, safety needed.
- Back-in parking is more dangerous for bicyclists.
- Bikes forced into traffic northbound toward Annie Street.



- Bike boulevard off of South Congress Avenue one-way street.
- Make one-way street with bike boulevard (Nickerson Street).
- Bike detection – Annie Street, Mary Street, Mitton Street, etc.
- Death trap for cyclists (along Oltorf Street).
- Protected bike lanes please! Is not next to back-in parking (near Texas School of the Deaf).

### **Pedestrian**

- 25 MPH design standard throughout for pedestrian and cyclist safety (also included in bicycle comments).
- This intersection scares me in a car. One would be suicidal to try it on foot. (referring to South Congress Avenue and Slaughter Lane intersection).
- Better lighting and sidewalks along parallel roads to southbound.
- Need crossing capacity to get across South Congress Avenue, Pickle Road, and Alpine Road.
- Add pedestrian hybrid beacon (PHB) at Alpine Road.
- Cars honk at me walking southbound at SoCo/US Highway 290-Ben White intersection because cars and pedestrians share the same lane.
- Need crossing capacity adjacent to St. Edwards University.
- Widen and make accessible sidewalk entire length.
- Better lighting between Riverside Drive and Live Oak Street.
- Better hike and bike lighting, live on South Congress Avenue but had to connect because no trail lighting.
- Lighting on offshoots.
- Better lighting on west side by Texas School for the Deaf sidewalk.
- Is there room for a barrier protected sidewalk so people don't have to cross on South Congress Avenue and Academy Drive?
- Concerned about safety when waiting at bulb-outs to cross South Congress Avenue. Almost hit by a speeding car while standing and waiting for the walk sign.
- Need sidewalks on both sides of the street. Too many pedestrians walk in the street (Monroe Street and South Congress Avenue intersection).
- Obstructions in sidewalk.
- Pedestrian intensity zone – make it safer.