

Item No. 4
Committee of the Whole
January 8, 2014

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: Original Signed
Mike Labrecque, A/Chief Administrative Officer

Original Signed
Eddie Robar, A/Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: December 20, 2013

SUBJECT: Metro Transit Moving Forward Together Plan Update

ORIGIN

On February 26th 2013, Regional Council approved the planning process for the new Metro Transit five-year strategic framework:

MOVED by Councillor Karsten, seconded by Councillor Nicoll that Halifax Regional Council approve the Metro Transit planning process for a new, five-year strategic framework.

THE MOTION WAS PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Section 69(1) of the *Halifax Regional Municipality Charter* provides the legislative authority for the municipality to provide a public transportation service. Section 79(1)(o) provides the authority for Council to expend money required by the municipality for public transportation services.

In addition to the *Halifax Regional Municipality Charter*, authority is also provided by Section T-8 of the August 2006 Regional Municipal Planning Strategy which reads "HRM shall prepare a Public Transit Functional Plan as part of the overall Transportation Master Plan to improve existing services and develop new services."

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Committee of the Whole recommend that Halifax Regional Council:

1. Endorse the four (4) Moving Forward principles; and
2. Endorse the change in scope of the “Moving Forward Together Plan” from a five-year plan to an overall system review, as outlined in the January 8, 2014 report to Committee of the Whole.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The existing Metro Transit network has not seen significant changes since the early 1990s, and many routes have been largely unaltered for decades. In the intervening years, adjacent land uses and travel patterns have changed dramatically, and there has not been a wide scale review or system wide improvements made in many years. New services overlay older ones, and the resulting network is a complex web of routes which in some instances are not coordinated or complementary.

The network has been improving incrementally, with changes such as the implementation of the Portland Street High frequency corridor in 2012. This involved the rationalization of existing routes so that they are working together to create an improved level of service, rather than operating in isolation from one another.

In August of 2013, Metro Transit initiated the development of a Five Year Service Plan. As part of the planning process, a number of public engagement activities took place. The participants in the consultation process generally demonstrated that they understood the benefits of a moving towards a simplified, transfer based transit network, and showed an overwhelming support for a move in this direction. These results have provided Metro Transit with an opportunity to pursue significant improvements to HRM’s existing transit network.

Therefore, the planning process as first developed in April of 2013 has broadened from the development of a five year service plan, to a more comprehensive strategic plan, which will include a thorough review of the existing network.

BACKGROUND

On February 26, 2013, Regional Council initiated the development of the new five year strategic planning framework for Metro Transit (called *Moving Forward Together: The Metro Transit Five Year Service Plan*). It was anticipated that the planning process would take approximately one year to complete, and would include two rounds of public consultation.

A multifaceted public and stakeholder engagement plan for the first round of consultation was developed and presented to the Transportation Standing Committee in July of 2013. The formal

public and stakeholder engagement process began in August of 2013, and continued until October 15th, 2013.

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the process which includes a review of the findings gathered from the first round of consultation, and an overview of the next steps towards plan development and implementation.

DISCUSSION

Consultation Summary

The first round of public consultation was values based and was intended to provide an overall direction for the plan development. The consultation process began in August 2013, and was completed on October 15, 2013. Participants were asked to think big and to tell Metro Transit how it should grow, expand, and prioritize resources for the next five years.

In order to engage as many people as possible, a diverse public engagement strategy was developed and heavily promoted in print ads, over the radio, through social media, on-bus advertisements, and through a direct mail-out.

The public engagement strategy included the following elements:

- Stakeholder meetings;
- Public meetings;
- Online engagement; and
- Online and paper-based surveys.

Due to the diversity of engagement opportunities, participants represented all districts in HRM, and approximately one quarter of survey participants were not regular transit users.

The following summarizes participation in the engagement process:

- 25 stakeholder groups participated in three stakeholder meetings
- 135 individuals participated in six public meetings
- 2,115 Registered Site Users on the Project Website
 - 1,600 online surveys were completed¹
- Approximately 60 paper surveys were completed
- Over 130 emails submissions were received

Consultation Findings

All participants were asked to provide feedback on four key themes. The following summarizes the overall findings of the public engagement activities in the first round of public consultation, organized by theme. A more detailed analysis of the consultation can be found in Attachment 1.

¹ This significantly exceeds the number of surveys generally required by HRM to be considered statistically valid (one survey for every 1,000 residents or a total of 400- 500 surveys).

What should the Goal of the network be?

This discussion demonstrated that diverse opinions exist about why public transit is important to HRM. Overall, participants indicated that a shift towards higher ridership services should be the priority in the next five years, however there was some recognition of the importance of routes that have lower ridership. The support for an increased focus on higher ridership services is consistent with the findings of the Office of the Auditor General's Report entitled *A Systems-Level Performance Review of Metro Transit's Service Delivery*. Completed in July 2013, the report stated the following: "It is the view of the OAG the definition of success for Metro Transit should amended to focus on increased ridership which would result in additional revenue."²

While there was some discussion about the importance of low ridership routes in less dense areas, the majority of participants who felt low ridership services were important were focused on maintaining or increasing key services in the off-peak periods.

What role should transfers play in the Metro Transit network?

Across all public engagement activities, participants indicated strong support for increasing the role of transfers in the Metro Transit network if it resulted in shorter, more reliable and frequent routes. This support was contingent on the following conditions being met:

- The frequency of connecting transit services is high;
- The use of transfers make the total trip time faster;
- There is appropriate infrastructure so that passengers are comfortable while waiting for their transfer; and
- Service is reliable so that connections are not missed.

How should resources be split between maintaining the existing network and increasing service?

Participants consistently indicated that both the maintenance of existing service and the introduction of new service were important, although many agreed that there should be slightly more emphasis on improving the reliability of the existing service.

What role should Transit Priority Measures (TPMs) play in the Metro Transit network?

Overall, there was strong support for the implementation of Transit Priority Measures, but many noted that each situation must be carefully considered to ensure that the right measure is implemented in the right location. Both regular transit users and non-transit users agreed that TPMs play a key role in increasing the reliability of transit, and in making it more attractive and user-friendly.

The Moving Forward Principles

The results of the consultation were used to develop the Moving Forward Principles. These are intended to be general, values based statements to help direct the development of the plan, and also to provide guidance to decision making over the life of the plan. They are as follows:

1. Increase the proportion of resources allocated towards high ridership services.
2. Build a simplified transfer based system.

² (The Office of the Auditor General, 2013, p. 16)

3. Invest in service quality and reliability.
4. Give transit increased priority in the transportation network.

The findings of consultation and the direction provided by the Moving Forward Principles represents a shift in priorities for Metro Transit, priorities which can best be achieved by undertaking a network-wide review to ensure that Metro Transit is best meeting the needs of transit users today.

Current Metro Transit Network

Recent investment in transit services in HRM has had a large impact on the quality, accessibility, and availability of transit. In the past 10 years, total service hours have increased by 63%, and today, with the exception of Ottawa (OC Transpo) and Toronto (TTC), Metro Transit provides more service hours per capita than any other Canadian transit property reporting to the Canadian Urban Transit Association. Furthermore, since the implementation of the Regional Plan in 2006, Metro Transit has introduced 14 new transit routes including MetroLink service in 2005/2006, and the implementation of the MetroX service to the Airport, Fall River, Tantallon, Sheldrake Lake, and Porters Lake. Recognizing these improvements, Metro Transit is trending towards a ridership increase of 3.7% in 2013/2014 over 2012/2013, which also represents a 4.7% increase over ridership levels prior to the 2012 transit labour disruption.

However, although there has been substantial growth and expansion in recent years, the pre-existing network has not seen significant changes since the early 1990s. Many Metro Transit routes on the road today have remained largely unchanged for decades despite the fact that in the intervening years, there have been significant changes to adjacent land uses and travel patterns.

The transit network today reflects the thinking of a number of different (and at times conflicting) transit planning ideologies. As a result the network does not operate as a cohesive system, but rather as a complex web of routes which do not always complement one another or integrate well.

In the past, when a new route was added to the network it often overlaid one or more existing services in an attempt to provide as many users as possible with a single seat trip from their origin to their destination. This creates service duplication and in some cases, service redundancy. For example, today there are currently five routes which carry passengers between Highfield Terminal and Bridge Terminal in Dartmouth. Two of these routes (the Route 87 and the Route 16) in fact follow the exact same routing between these two points. In addition to potentially being an inefficient use of resources, it also results in a complicated network for even regular transit users to navigate. Metro Transit has been aware of this for some time and has been looking for ways to reduce redundancy, but wary of making substantial changes to a network on which many members of the public rely.

One strategy to address network redundancies is to couple high frequency routes with strategic transfer points. In the past, it was generally accepted by transit planners that asking users to transfer from one route to the other in order to complete a trip is undesirable and has the impact of reducing ridership. However, it is also now acknowledged by transit planning professionals

that when transfers happen in a carefully integrated network, they can both increase the efficiency and navigability of the network. This is also supported by the findings of the first round of public consultation. Some transfer-based models of network design include the “hub and spoke” service model, or a “high frequency grid” service model.

Some small inroads have been made to simplify the Metro Transit network and improve navigability. For example, a poorly understood and used segment of the Route 58 that duplicated Route 1 service was removed in 2011. However, this change did result in the need for more Route 58 passengers to transfer routes to reach their final destination.

The move towards a more transfer-based service model (indicated as desirable throughout public consultation) is not without its drawbacks. It will mean that some current route alignments will change, and users will likely be asked to transfer one or more times in order to complete a trip.

Next Steps: A Broader Scope and New Timeline

The findings of the first round of consultation and the development of the Moving Forward Principles have caused an expansion in the scope of the Five Year Service Plan. It is no longer an exercise to determine how incremental improvements should be made over the next five years, but instead will include a thorough review of the entire network to facilitate the application of the principles. It is anticipated that this will result in a plan that will be applicable beyond a five year time frame.

In order to reflect the changing scope of work and the lengthening plan horizon, the project will no longer be called *Moving Forward Together: The Metro Transit Five Year Service Plan*, it will instead be called *The Moving Forward Together Plan*.

The goal of the plan given the revised scope will be to conduct a comprehensive review of the entire network and propose a draft plan and network design that has a consistent, cohesive approach to transit planning, reconciling the inconsistencies in the existing network. This type of holistic review has the potential to reduce redundancies, and can also result in a simpler, more understandable system which not only improves the customer experience, but can also increase ridership.

The draft plan will be based on Metro Transit’s current resources and those projected for the life of the plan. While the proposed network and service plan may have many of the same features and characteristics of the existing network, it is likely that there will be substantial changes proposed, resulting in a network that could bear little resemblance to the current system in terms of the number of routes, coverage area, service types that exist, and length and frequency of routes.

While it was initially anticipated that plan implementation would begin in the 2015/2016 fiscal year, due to the increase in the scope of work detailed above, the initial timeline projected to complete the plan will be extended by approximately one year. Furthermore, in order to coordinate the implementation of the new plan with the Macdonald Bridge re-decking project, the expected implementation date is identified as Fall 2016, shortly after the re-decking project concludes.

The following table summarizes the timeline identified above. It is important to note that this timeline is tentative as there is little precedent for completing this type of a review on a network comparable to Metro Transit in size.

Table 1: Updated Project Timeline

Stage	Previous Timeline	New Timeline
Draft Plan complete	January 2014	October 2014
Stage II Consultation	January/February 2014	October/November 2014
Final Plan Submitted	May 2014	April 2015
Plan Implementation	2015/16 – 2019/20	Fall 2016

As a result of the change of scope and timeline, additional resources will be required to complete this project. The process of developing the plan will still be completed internally by staff, but it is anticipated that a consultant will be engaged as a peer review to the process. These changes will be reflected in the 2014/15 budget prepared for Regional Council's consideration.

While the plan is in development, the only service changes implemented will be: the introduction of all day service on the Woodside Ferry; the previously approved urban express routes to complement the enhanced ferry service during peak hours; routing changes required for the opening of the new Lacewood Terminal in 2014/15; and service modifications required to ensure service continuity during the Macdonald Bridge re-decking project in 2015/16. Further changes to the existing network will not be considered until the plan is complete.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

As a result of the change in scope and timelines as outlined in this report, additional resources will be required to complete the Moving Together Plan.

The incremental cost of this new project timeline and deliverables total \$315,000 and are included in Metro Transit's 2014-2015 budget presentation to Committee of the Whole.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

As outlined in the Background and Discussion sections above, the first round of public consultation included a number of ways for citizens and stakeholder groups to provide insight and direction into plan development.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

The intent is that the Moving Forward Together Plan would increase transit ridership, thereby reducing private vehicle usage, resulting in a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

ALTERNATIVES

Committee of the Whole could choose to not forward the recommendations to Regional Council

as outlined in this report. This is not recommended as it would preclude the opportunity to make substantial improvements to the Metro Transit system.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 - *Moving Forward Together: Phase 1 Public Consultation Results*

REFERENCES

The Office of the Auditor General. (2013). *A Systems-Level Performance of Metro Transit's Service Delivery*. Halifax: Halifax Regional Municipality.

A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/cagenda.html> then choose the appropriate meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

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MOVING
FORWARD
TOGETHER

>> MetroTransit



Moving Forward Together

Phase I Public Consultation Results

January 2014

Twitter: [#moving4ward](#)

Email: movingforward@halifax.ca

Consultation Methods Overview

- Stakeholder Focus Groups
- Public Meetings
- Interactive Media Boards
- Online Survey
- Online Promotion
- Mail-Outs
- In-Person Promotion



Participation By the Numbers

- 2,115 Registered Site Users
 - 1,600 Online Surveys
- 64 Paper Surveys
- Public Meetings
 - 135 Members of Public
- Stakeholder Meetings
 - 28 Stakeholder Groups
- 64 Online Forum Posts
- 130 + Email Submissions



Online Participation

Home District	Online Users*
District 10: Halifax- Bedford Basin West	223
District 8: Peninsula North	191
District 4: Cole Harbour - Westphal	170
District 5: Dartmouth Centre	162
District 9: Armdale - Peninsula West	157
District 7: Peninsula South - Downtown	153
District 3: Dartmouth South - Eastern Passage	138
District 12: Timberlea - Beachville - Clayton Park West	134
District 13: Hammonds Plains - St. Margarets	113
District 2: Preston - Chezzetcook - Eastern Shore	108
District 15: Lower Sackville	106
District 11: Spryfield - Sambro Loop - Prospect Road	105
District 6: Harbourview - Burnside - Dartmouth East	104
District 1: Waverley - Fall River - Musquodoboit Valley	87
District 16 Bedford - Wentworth	85
District 14: Middle/Upper Sackville - Beaverbank - Lucasville	78

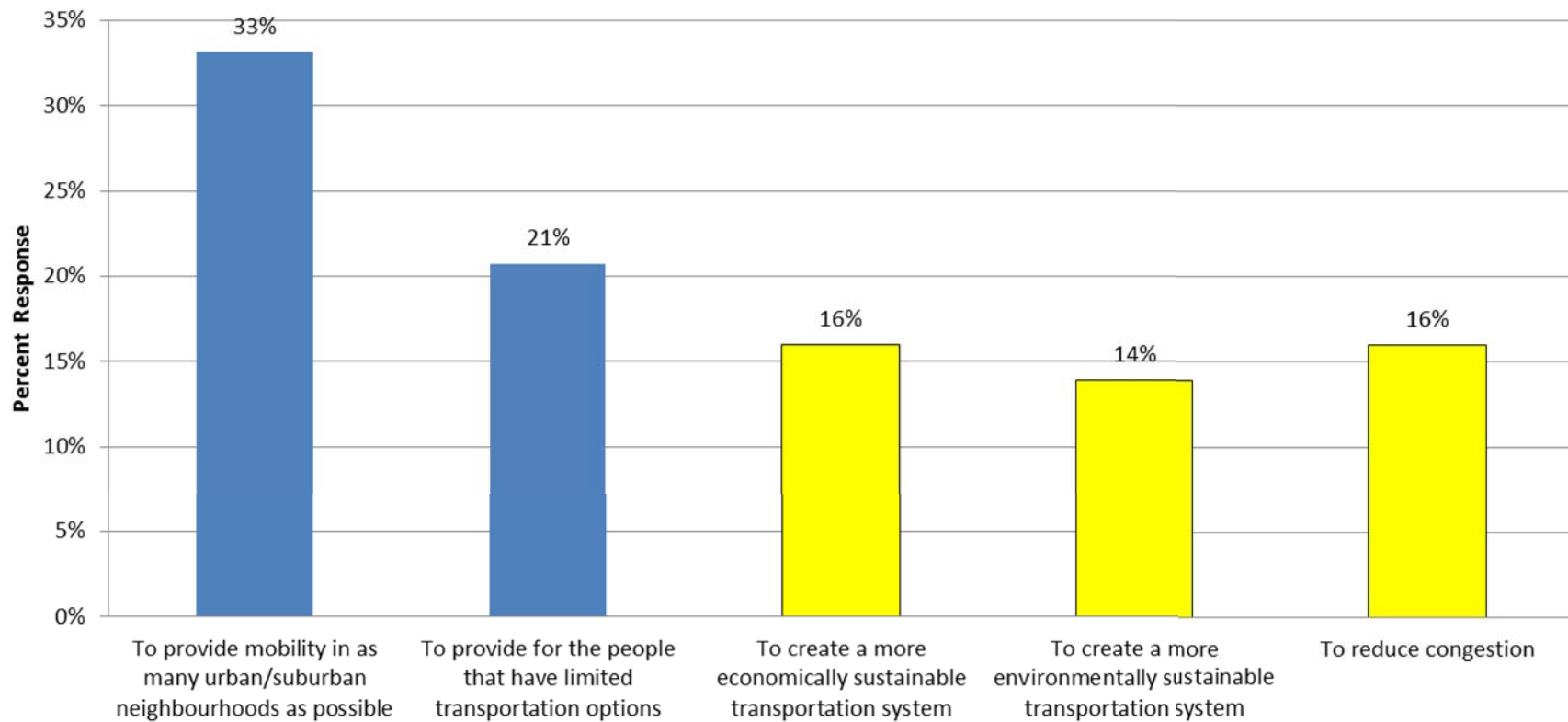
Survey Results

- 1,600 Online Surveys completed
- 64 Paper Surveys completed
- 25% of Surveys completed by residents who are not regular transit users
- Nine Questions, Four themes
- Open September 1st - October 15th



Theme 1: What is the Goal?

Question 1: What should be the goal of the Metro Transit network?



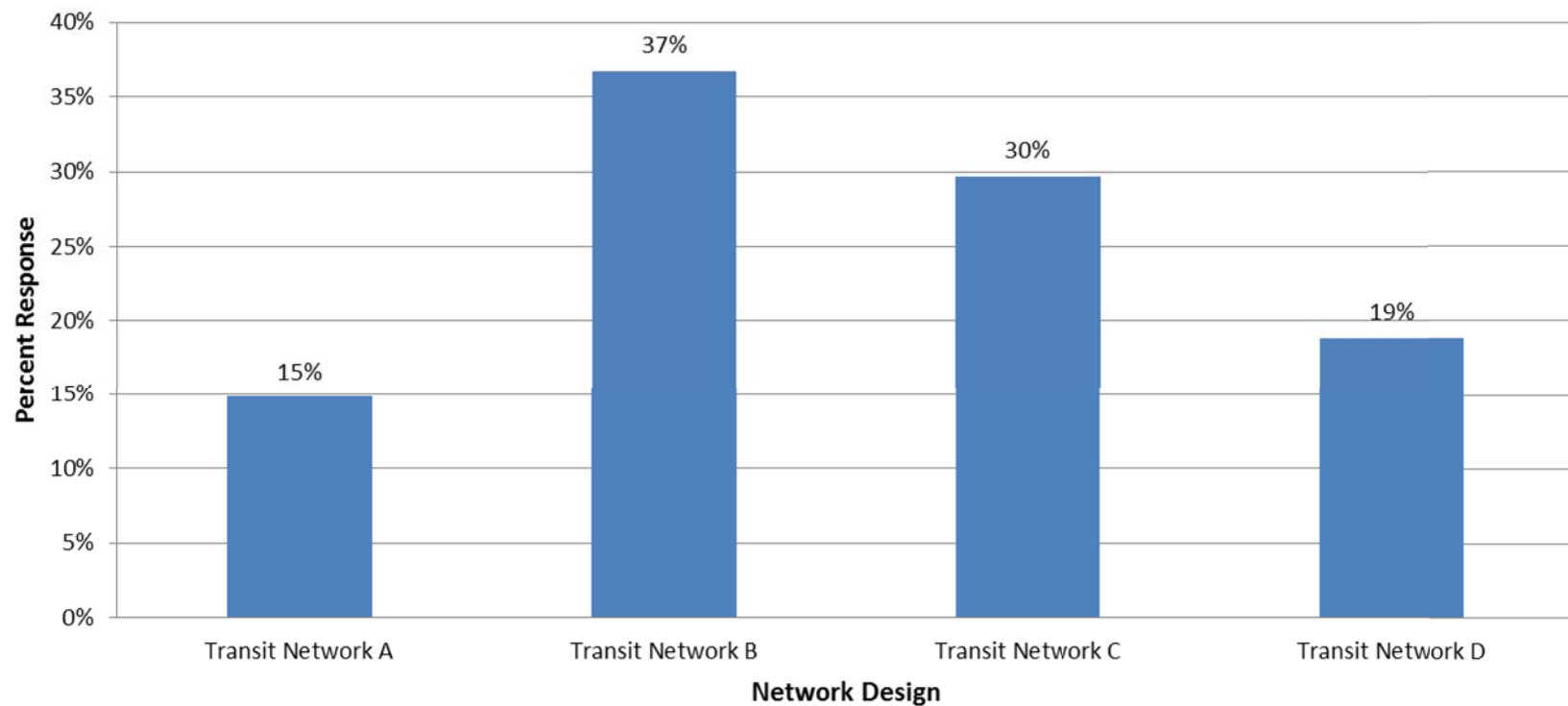
Theme 1: What is the Goal?

Question 2: Which of the networks would provide the best model for Metro Transit in the next five years?

	Transit Network A:	Transit Network B	Transit Network C (Current Metro Transit Balance)	Transit Network D
Resources for Coverage service	All resources allocated to maximizing ridership.	1-10% of resources allocated to increasing coverage.	11-20% of resources allocated to increasing coverage.	21-30% of resources allocated to increasing coverage.
Implications for Coverage Service	All services with low ridership are eliminated	Many services with low ridership would be eliminated	Most existing coverage services would be maintained, despite low ridership.	Services would rarely be cancelled for low ridership, and new services could be created in low density areas.
Cost Recovery	Highest	Moderately high	Moderately low	Lowest
Ridership	Highest	Moderately high	Moderately low	Lowest
Environmental Benefits	Highest	Moderately high	Moderately low	Lowest
Social Benefits	Lowest	Moderately low	Moderately high	Highest
Ability to reduce traffic congestion	Highest	Moderately High	Moderately low	Lowest

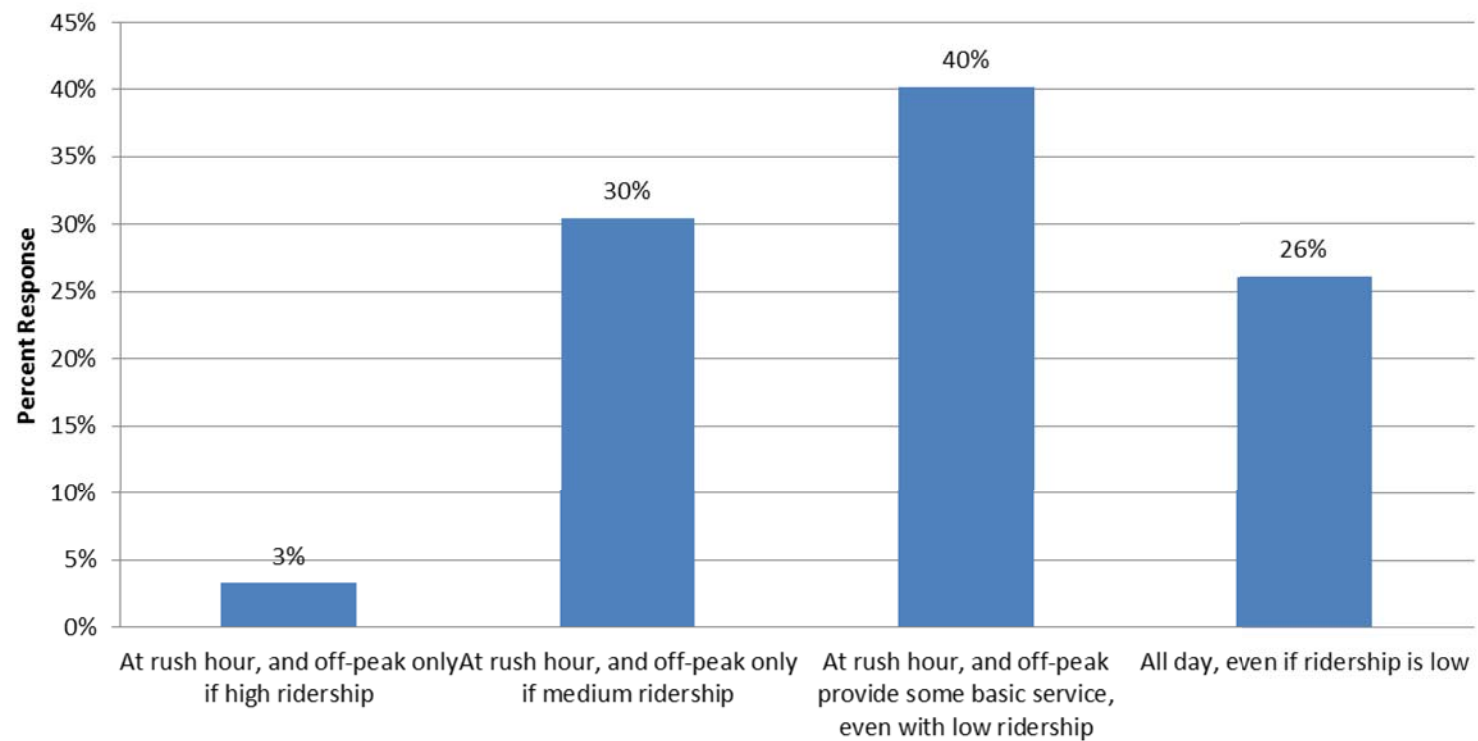
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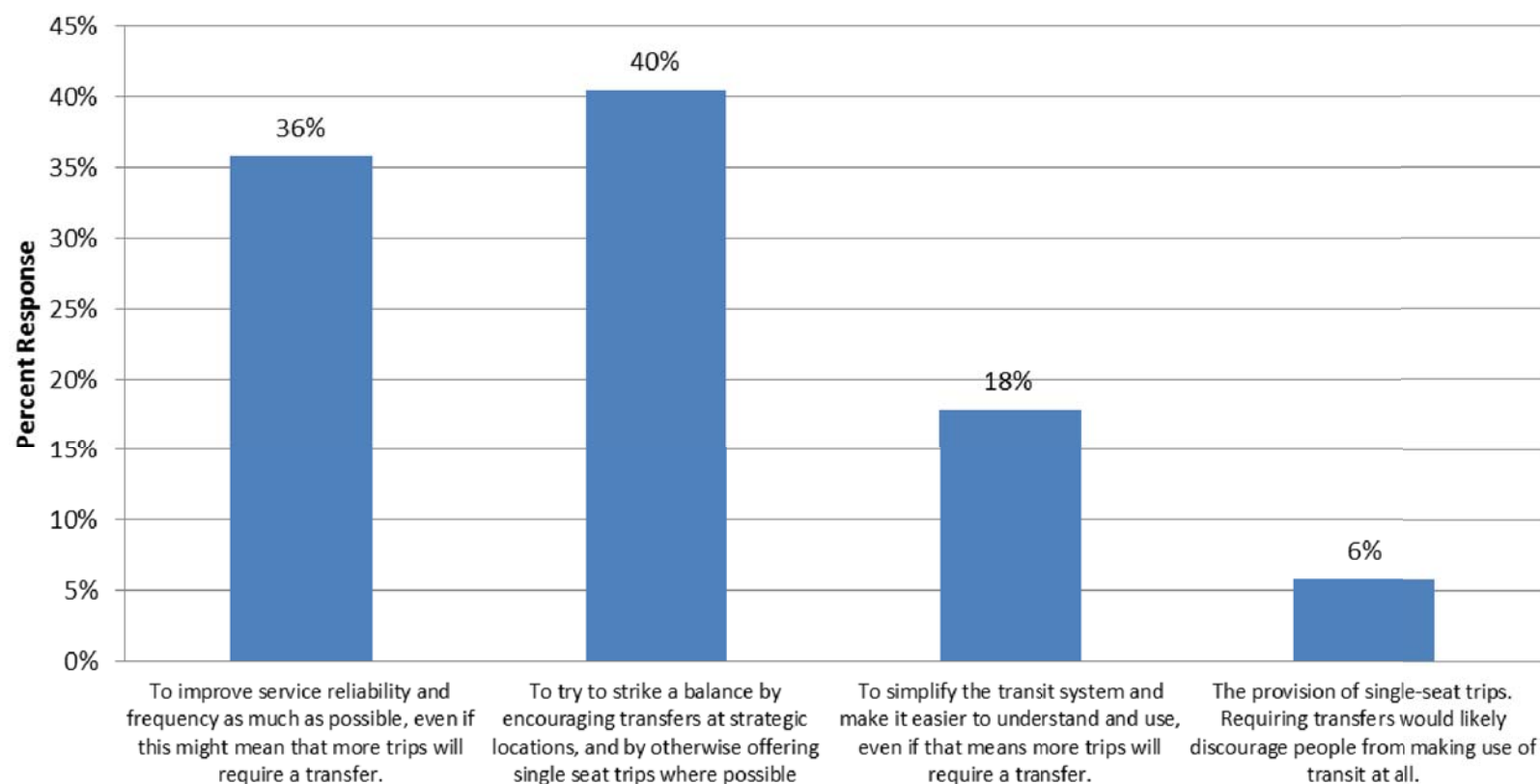
Theme 1: What is the Goal?

Question 3: Metro Transit should focus on providing a high level of transit service....



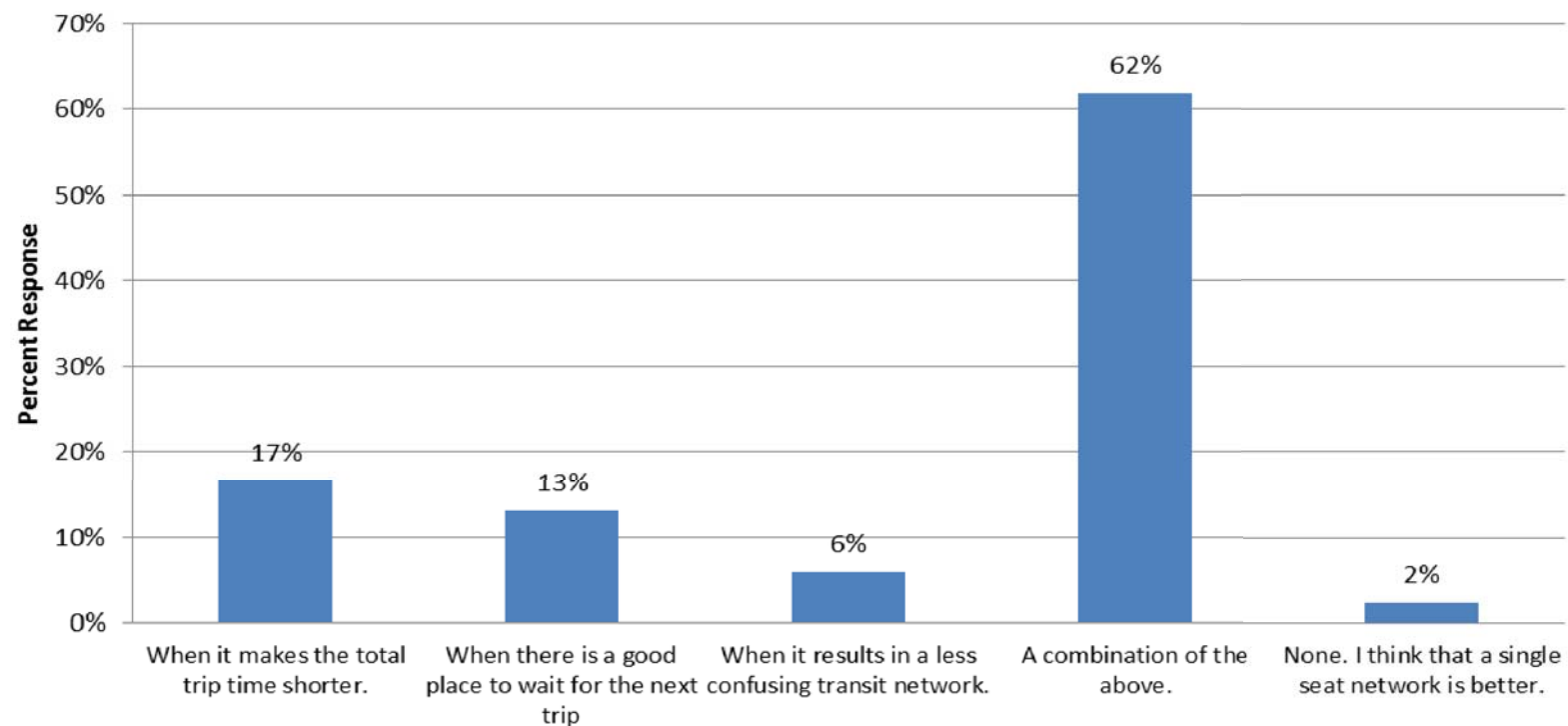
Theme 2 : System Design

Question 4: I think Metro Transit's Priority should be....



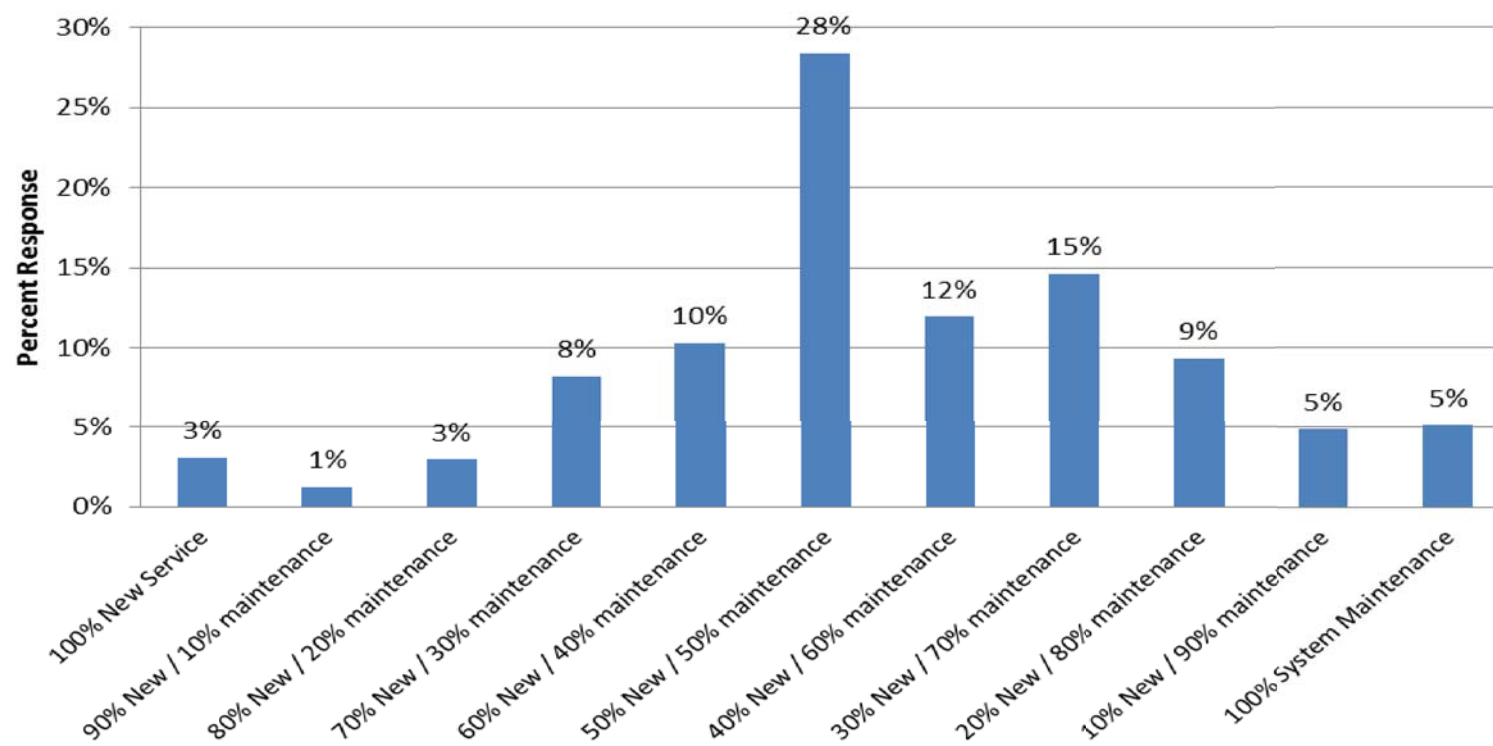
Theme 2 : System Design

Question 5: Under what Condition is it OK to need to Transfer?



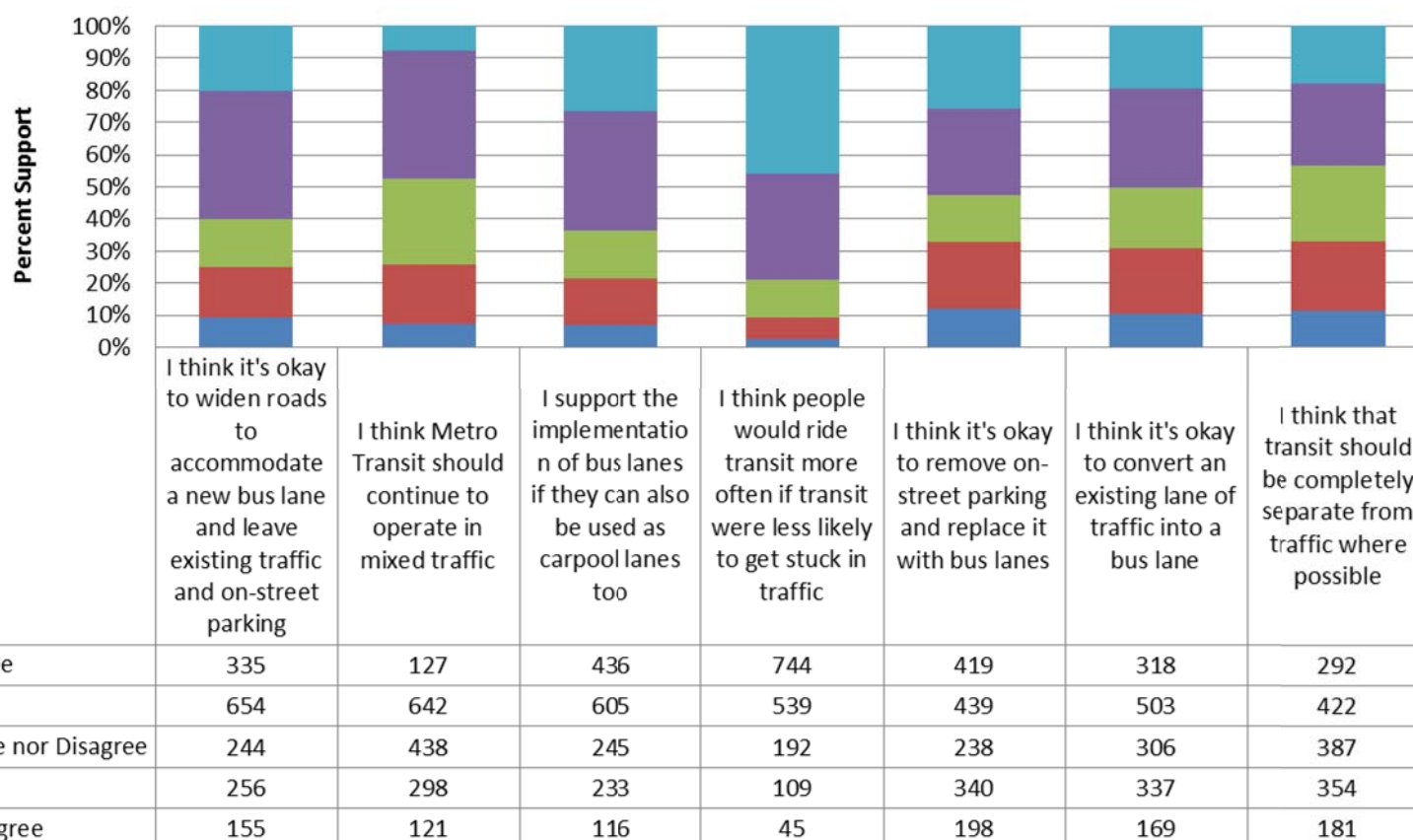
Theme 3 : Managing the System

Question 6: How do you think resources should be split between the maintenance of existing service and the provision of new service



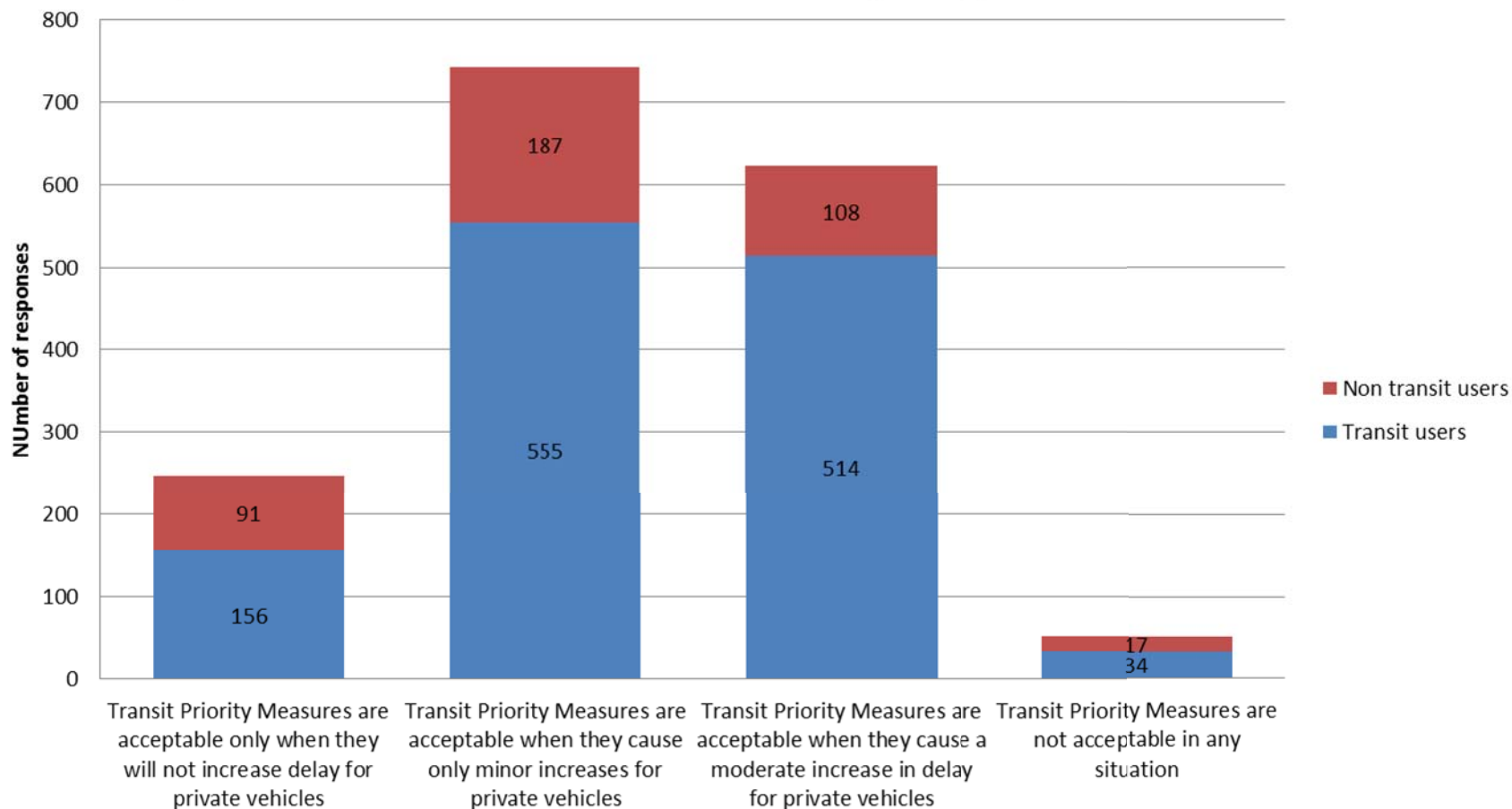
Theme 4: Transit Priority Measures

Question 7: Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements about Transit Priority Measures



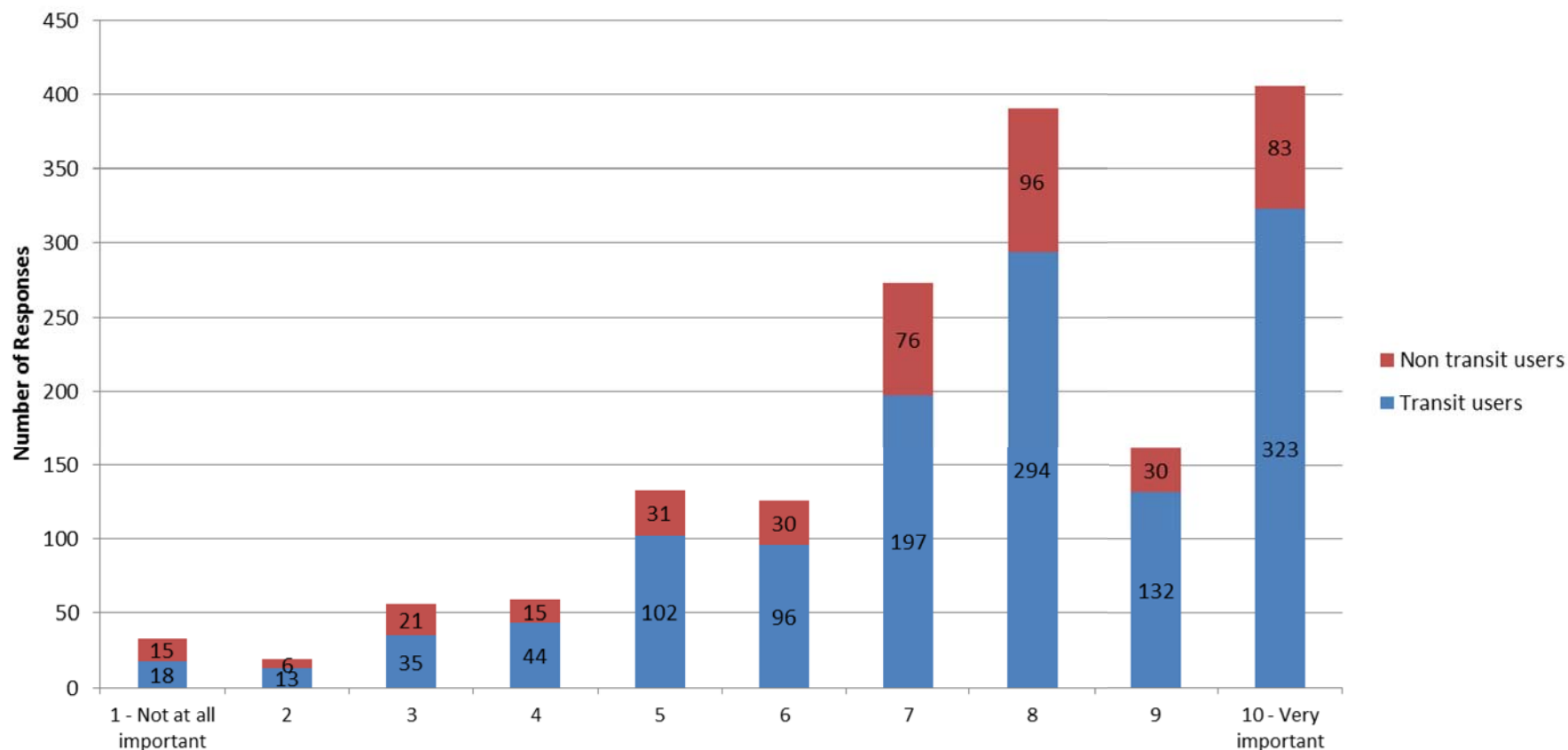
Theme 4: Transit Priority Measures

Question 8: Please select the statement you agree with most



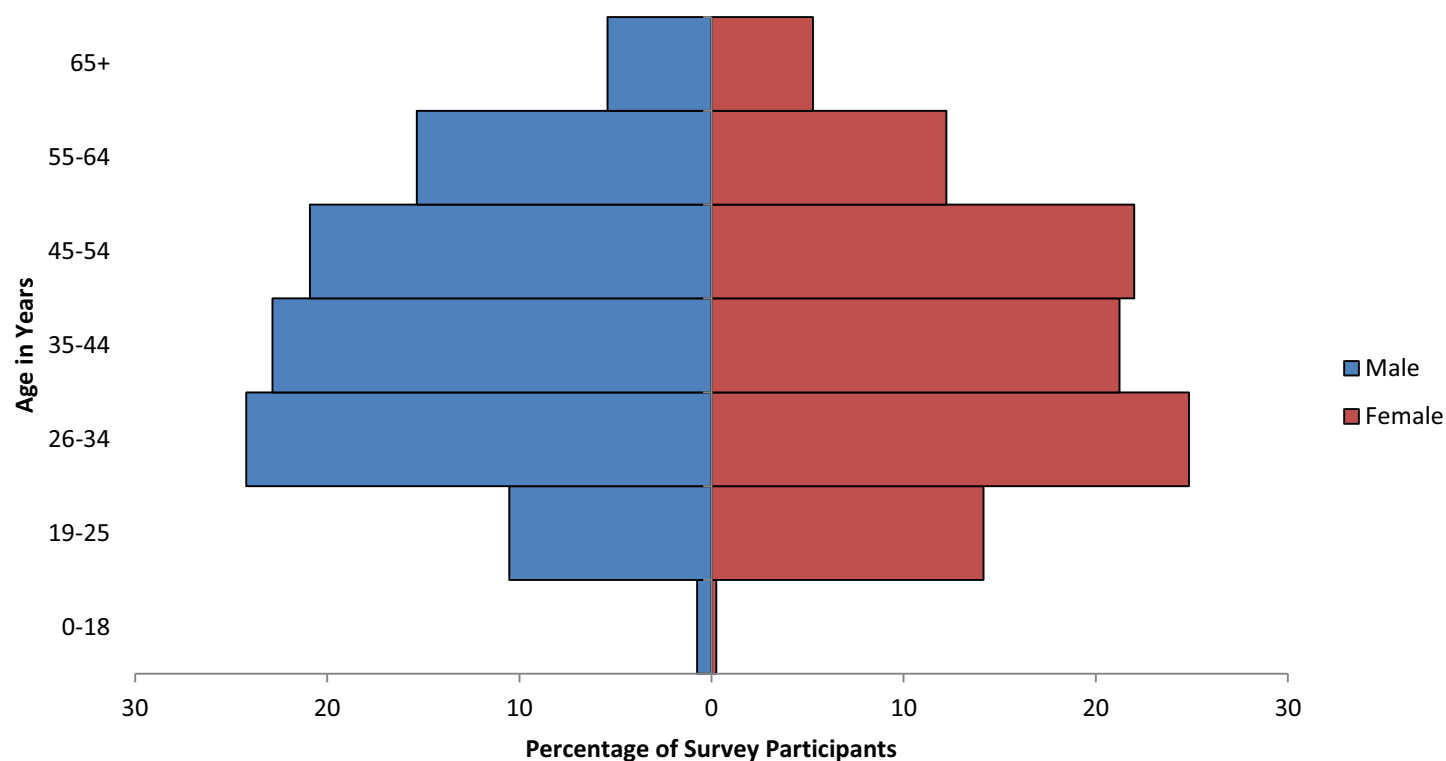
Theme 4: Transit Priority Measures

Question 9: How important is it that HRM pursues more ways to avoid traffic-related delays when providing transit service?



Distribution of Survey Participants

Age and Gender Distribution of Survey Participants



Public Meetings

- Six Public Meetings
 - September 9, 11, and 12
- Two each in Halifax, Sackville, and Dartmouth
- Total of 135 Attendees



Public Meetings

- September 9, 2013
 - Session #1: 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm, St. Agnes Hall, Halifax (22 attendees)
 - Session #2 : 6:30 pm – 8:30pm , St. Agnes Hall, Halifax (36 attendees)
- September 11, 2013
 - Session #3: 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm, Royal Canadian Legion, Sackville (9 attendees)
 - Session #4: 6:30 pm – 8:30pm, Royal Canadian Legion , Sackville (16 attendees)
- September 12, 2013
 - Session #5: 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm, Holiday Inn, Dartmouth (24 attendees)
 - Session #6: 6:30 pm – 8:30pm, Holiday Inn, Dartmouth (28 attendees)

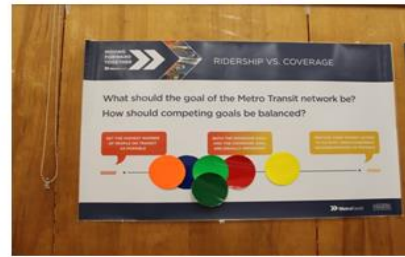


Theme 1: What is the Goal?

What should the Goal of the Metro Transit Network be?



Session 1



Session 2



Session 3



Session 4



Session 5



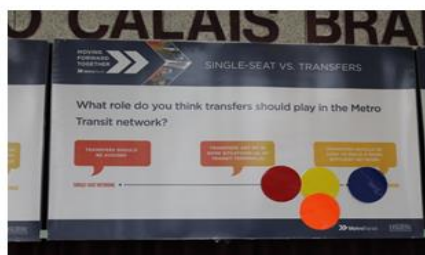
Session 6

Ridership : Get the highest number of people on transit as possible.

Coverage: Provide some service to as many urban/suburban neighbourhoods as possible.

Theme 2 : System Design

What role do you think transfers should play in the Metro Transit network?



Transfers should be
avoided.

Transfers should be used
to build a **more efficient**
network.

Theme 3 : Managing the System

How should Metro Transit split its resources between investing in the existing system and providing new service?



Session 1



Session 2



Session 3



Session 4



Session 5



Session 6

Improve reliability in the system we **already** have.

Focus on providing **new** service.

Theme 4: Transit Priority Measures

What role should Transit Priority Measures Play in the Metro Transit network?



Session 1



Session 2



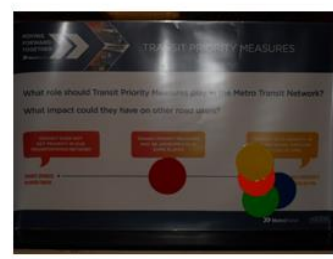
Session 3



Session 4



Session 5



Session 6

Transit **does not** get priority in our transportation network.

Transit **gets priority** in transportation network through the use of TPMs.



Stakeholder Meetings

- Three Stakeholder Meetings
 - August 2013
- Attended by 28 Stakeholder Groups including:
 - Educational Institutions
 - Health and Wellness Organizations
 - Business Community
 - Immigration Associations
 - Provincial Government
 - CFB Halifax



Theme 1: What is the Goal?

What should the Goal of the Metro Transit Network be?



Session 1



Session 2



Session 3

Ridership : Get the highest number of people on transit as possible.

Coverage: Provide some service to as many urban/suburban neighbourhoods as possible.

Theme 2 : System Design

What role do you think transfers should play in the Metro Transit network?



Session 1



Session 2



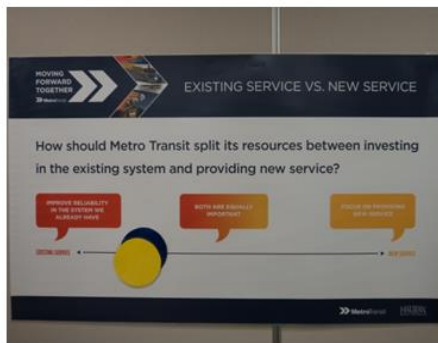
Session 3

Transfers should be **avoided**.

Transfers should be used to build a **more efficient network**.

Theme 3 : Managing the System

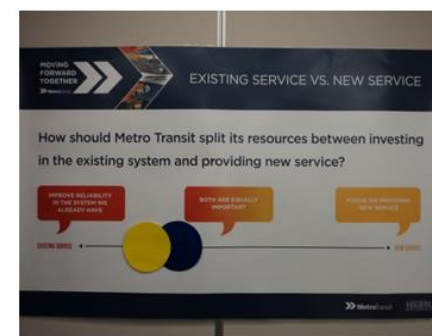
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Session 1



Session 2



Session 3

Improve reliability in the system we **already** have.

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Theme 4: Transit Priority Measures

What role should Transit Priority Measures Play in the Metro Transit network?



Session 1



Session 2



Session 3

Transit **does not** get priority in our transportation network.

Transit **gets** priority in transportation network through the use of TPMs.

