

2016 Westport Transit District Survey



Prepared for The Westport Transit District

By Beresford Research

December 2016



Background

- The Westport Transit District (“WTD”) provides public transportation in the Town of Westport with minibuses operated under subcontract with the Norwalk Transit District
- Services include commuter shuttles operating to and from Saugatuck and Greens Farms rail stations and daytime Door-to-Door transportation for seniors and citizens with disabilities
- WTD wishes to improve its understanding of evolving transportation preferences and citizen attitudes about public transportation to help inform future decisions about WTD services

Background and objectives

- The WTD commissioned Beresford Research to develop and field a survey with four primary objectives:
 1. Measure awareness of the WTD services
 2. Quantify the level of satisfaction with the WTD services
 3. Provide insights to increase ridership
 4. Measure the perceived importance of WTD services to the community

Methodology

- Beresford Research worked collaboratively with the Westport Transit District Directors to develop an online survey with “branch” questions for Town residents, commuter bus riders, other Metro North train riders and local employees
 - The survey was reviewed with selected Westport elected officials, including Jim Marpe, First Selectman, and Peter Gold, Chairman of RTM Transit Committee
- Personalized survey invitations from Jim Marpe were emailed on November 4, 2016, to 12,863 Parks & Recreation, Railroad parking permit holders, and those on the waiting list; reminders sent on November 10th
- Pre-printed postcards with a QR code were distributed to commuter bus riders by the WTD drivers on Friday, November 4, Tuesday, November 8, and Thursday, November 10

Methodology (continued)

- The survey was also promoted by *06880*, *Westport News*, *Westport Now*, The Westport Senior Center, the Downtown Merchants Association, The Westport-Weston Chamber of Commerce and the Westport Transit District website
- As an incentive, two local restaurants offered a \$100 gift card prize for a random drawing among the 941 respondents who provided their email addresses
- The survey was in the field from November 4, 2016 – December 2, 2016, and 1,539 surveys were collected
- 39 responses are from local employees who live outside of Westport
 - These responses have been excluded from the analysis

Methodology (continued)

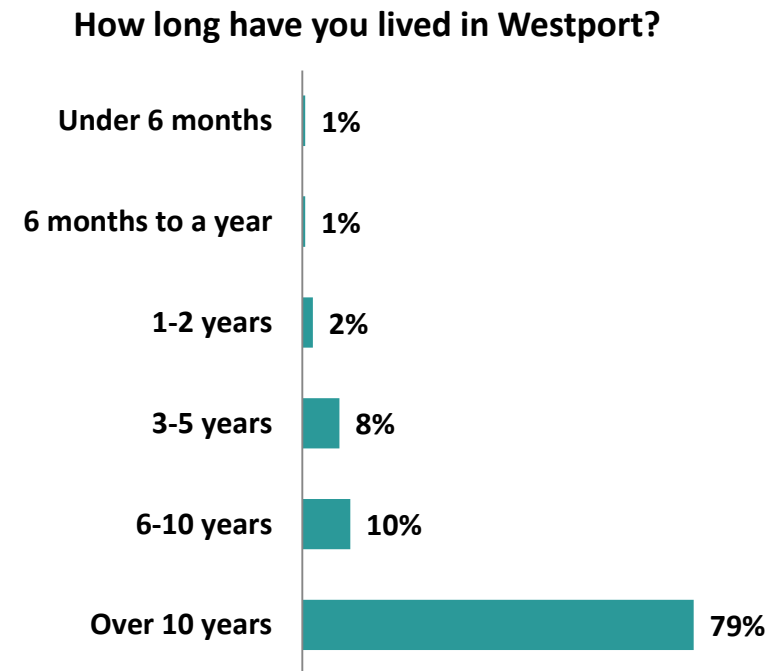
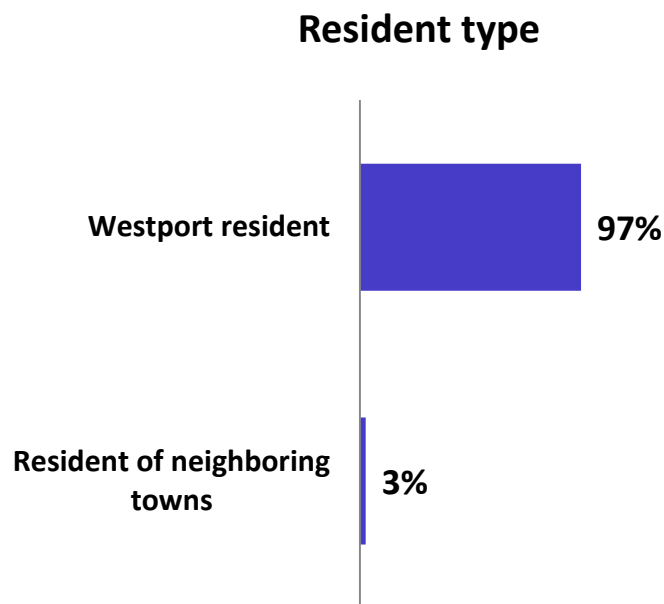
	Sample size	Margin of error (95% confidence)
Commuter bus riders	145	5.3 pts.
Train riders excluding bus riders	318	4.9 pts.
Westport train commuters	463	4.0 pts.
Westport residents excluding train riders	958	3.1 pts.
Westport residents	1,421	2.5 pts.

- Since both the Commuter bus riders and train riders were “oversampled,” the total results have been reweighted to compensate

Demographics

Demographics

- Nearly all (97%) are Westport residents and most (79%) have lived in town for over 10 years

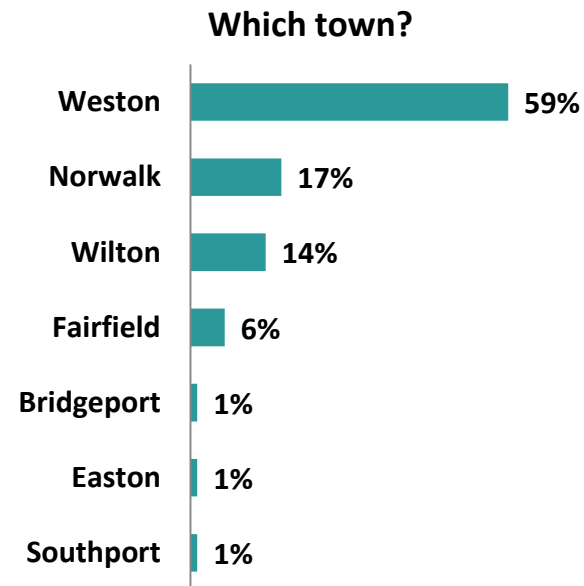
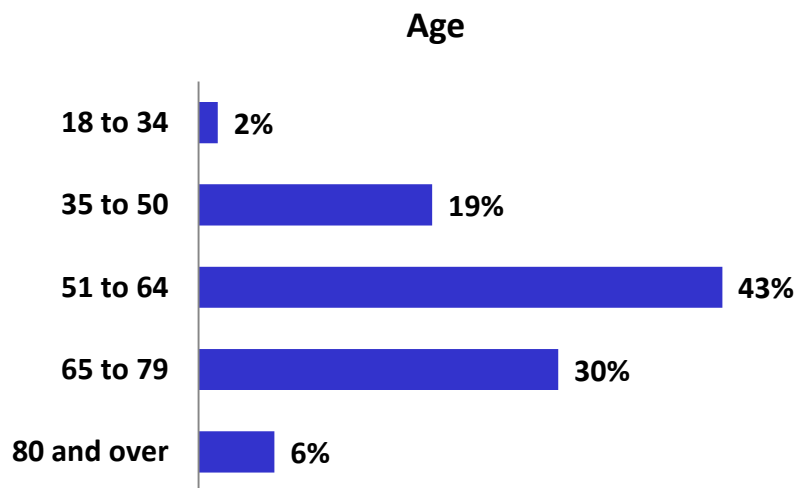


Source: 2016 Westport Transit District Survey

Note: P1. Which of the following best describes you? *Select all that apply.* (n=1,500, reweighted) AND P1b. How long have you lived in Westport? (n=1,421, reweighted)

Demographics (continued)

- Over three-fifths (62%) of respondents are 35-64 years old
- Those not residing in Westport are most likely to live in Weston (59%)

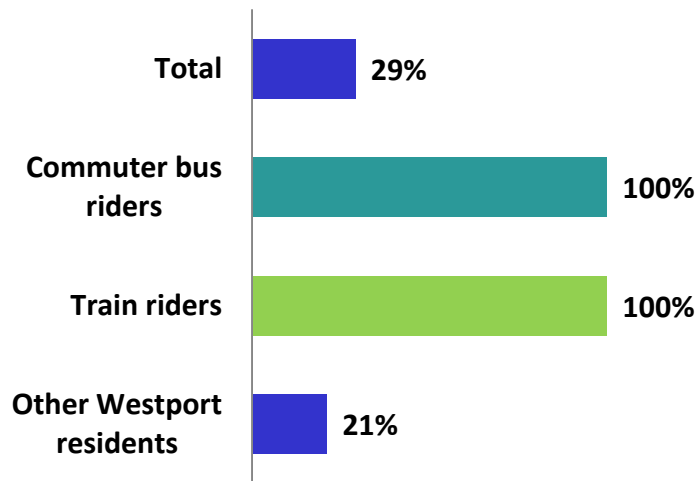


Note: P1c. Which town? (n=85, reweighted) AND P2. How old are you? (n=1,500, reweighted)

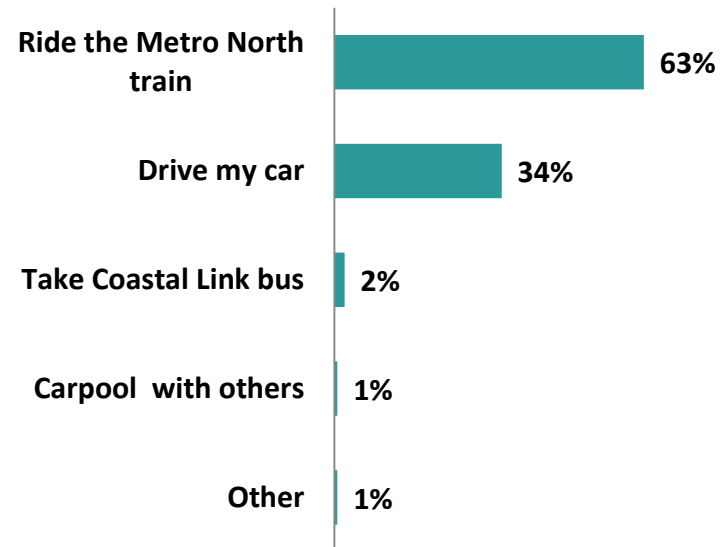
Commuting

- Other than train riders, only 21% of other Westport residents commute more than 10 miles
- Of those that commute more than 10 miles, 63% ride Metro North

Do you commute > 10 miles?



How do you commute?



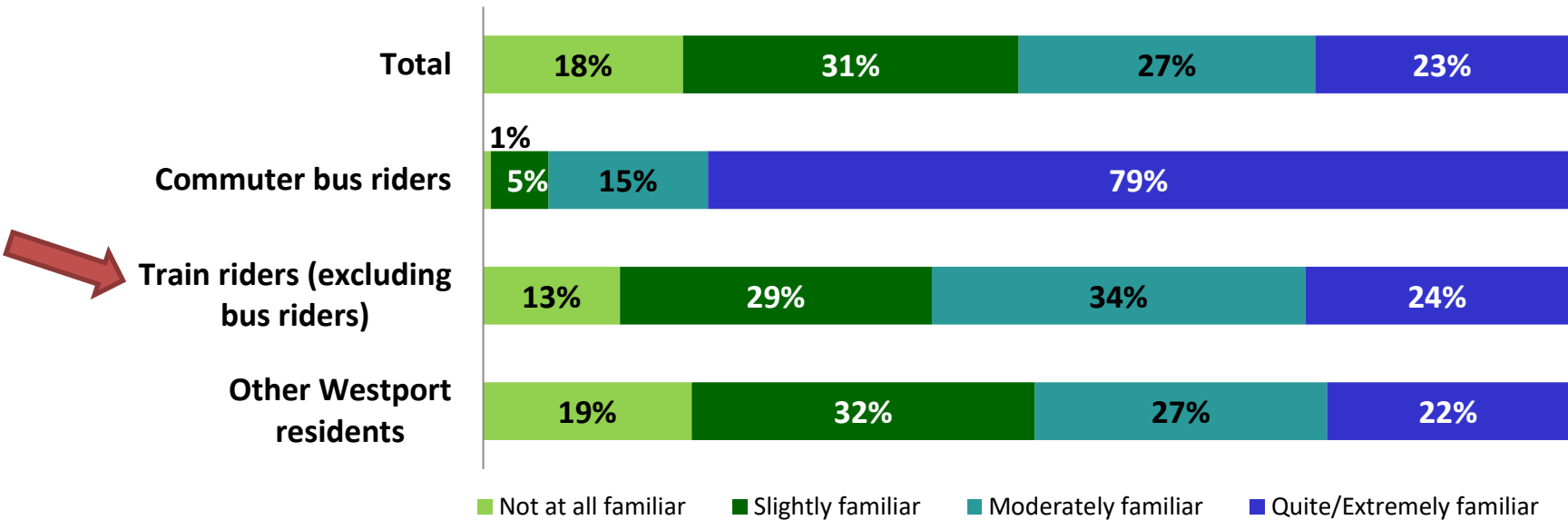
Source: 2016 Westport Transit District Survey

Note: P3. Do you commute more than 10 miles most days? (n=1,500 reweighted) AND P3b. How do you primarily commute to work? *Select one.* (n=696 reweighted)

1. Awareness of the WTD Services

Familiarity with Westport's minibus bus system

- Overall, under a quarter of respondents (23%) are “extremely” or “quite familiar” with Westport's minibus system
 - 42% of train riders (excluding commuter bus riders) have no or slight familiarity

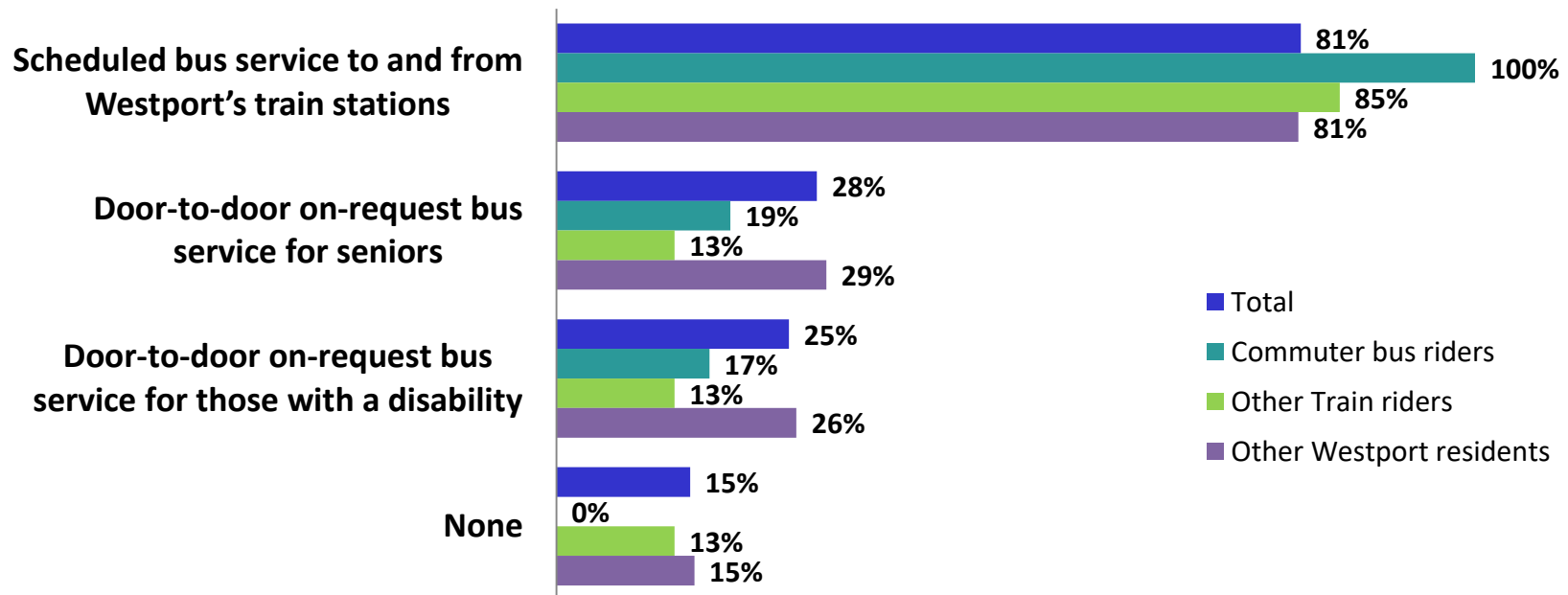


Source: 2016 Westport Transit District Survey

Note: Q1. First, before taking this survey, how familiar would you say you are with Westport's minibus bus system? (n=1,500, reweighted)

General awareness of Westport Transit District services

- Respondents are generally aware of the scheduled bus service to and from Westport’s train stations (81%), much less so for door-to-door services
 - Seniors (those 65+) are more likely to know about door-to-door on-request bus services

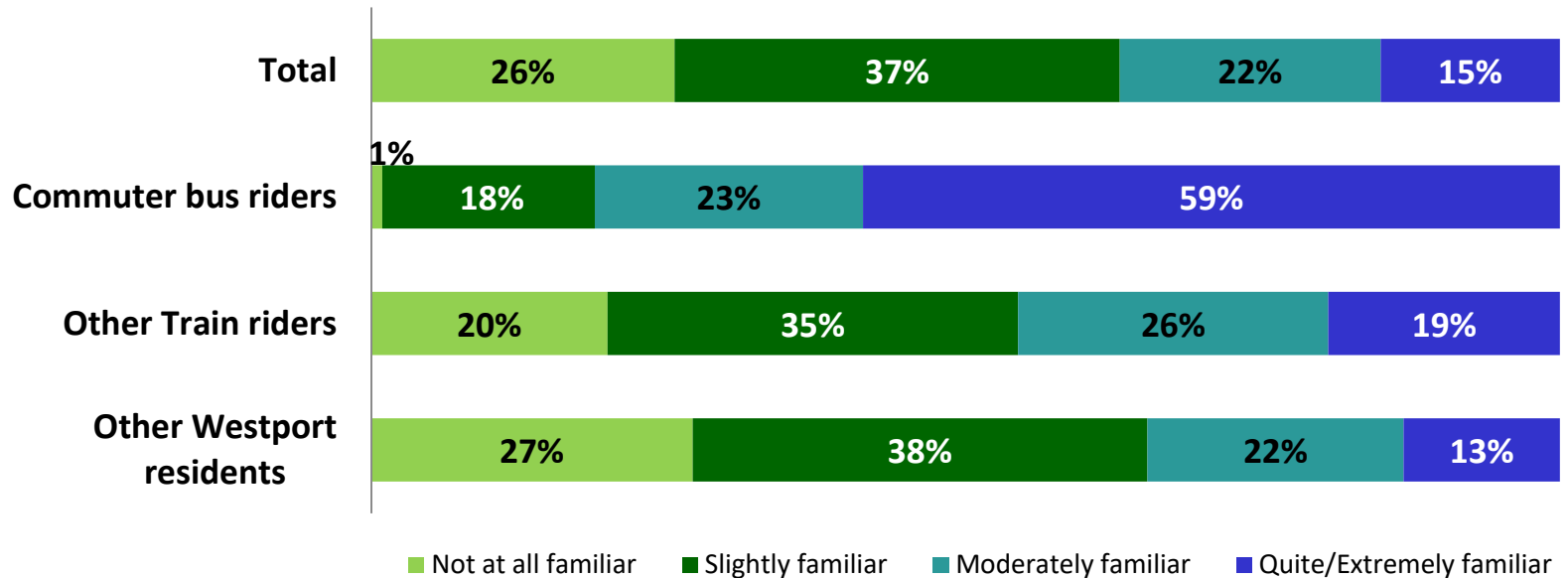


Source: 2016 Westport Transit District Survey

Note: Q2. Which of the following Westport Transit District services (provided under contract by Norwalk Transit), if any, are you aware of? *Select all that apply.* (n=1,500, reweighted)

Familiarity with Route System

- Only 19% of Other Train riders are “extremely” or “quite” familiar with the route system, and more than half (55%) are “not at all” or only “slightly” familiar



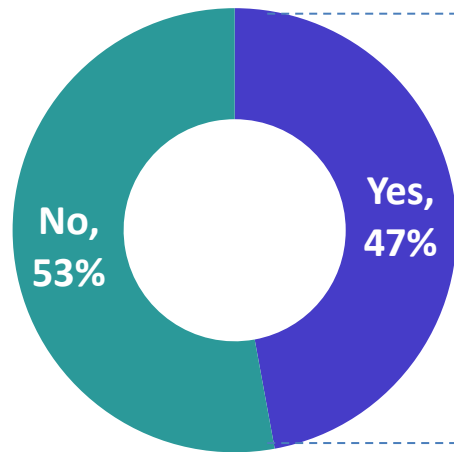
Source: 2016 Westport Transit District Survey

Note: Q2a. How familiar are you with the route system? (n=1,256, reweighted)

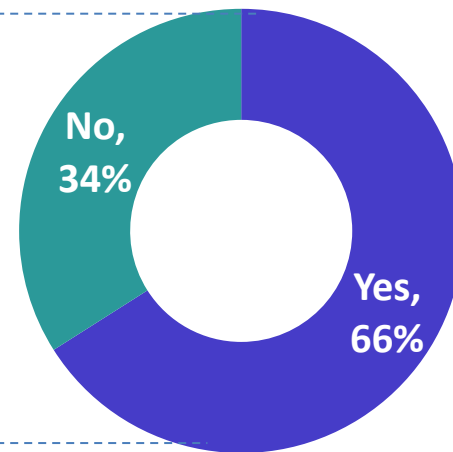
Considered/tried commuter bus to train station

- Just under half of Other Train riders (47%) have considered taking the bus to the train station
 - Of those who have considered it, two-thirds (66%) have tried the bus (31% of Other Train riders)

Considered taking the bus



Tried taking the bus

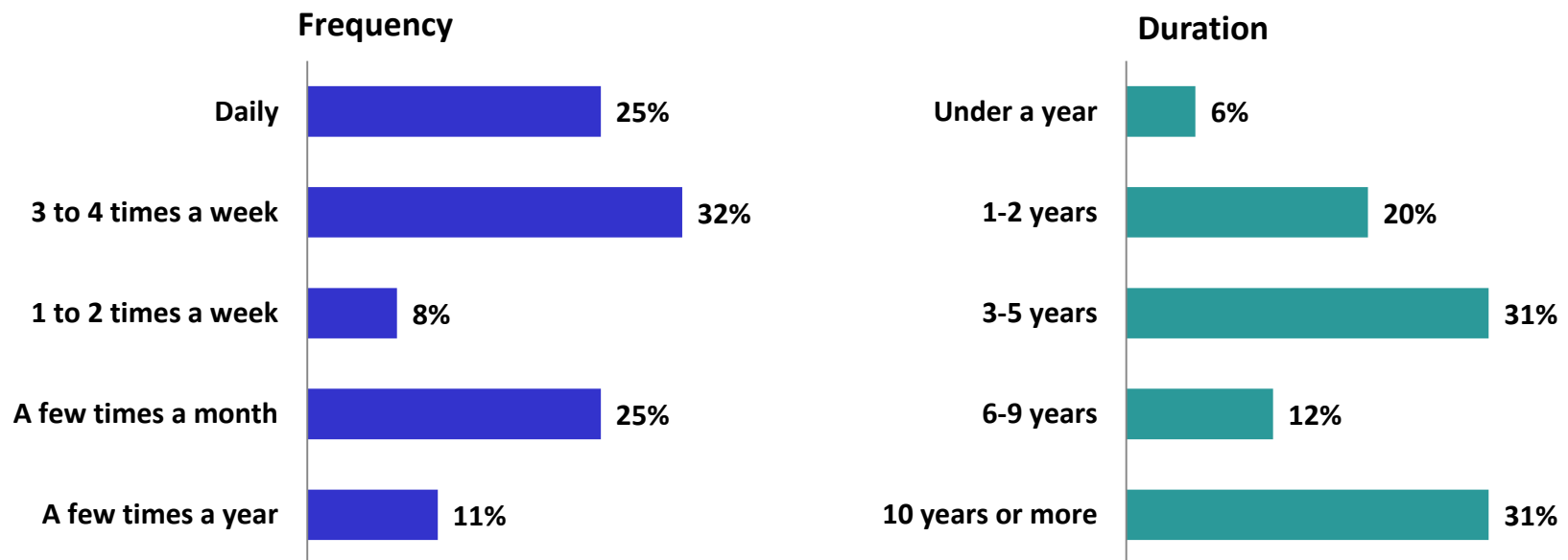


Note: Q8. Have you ever considered taking the bus to and from the train station? (n=316) AND Q8b. Have you ever tried the bus to or from the train station? (n=148)

2. Level of Satisfaction with WTD Services

Bus rider frequency and duration

- Nearly three in five bus riders (57%) ride the bus at least 3-4 times/week
- Just under a third of bus riders (31%) have been doing so for 10+ years
 - An additional 43% have been using the bus for 3-9 years

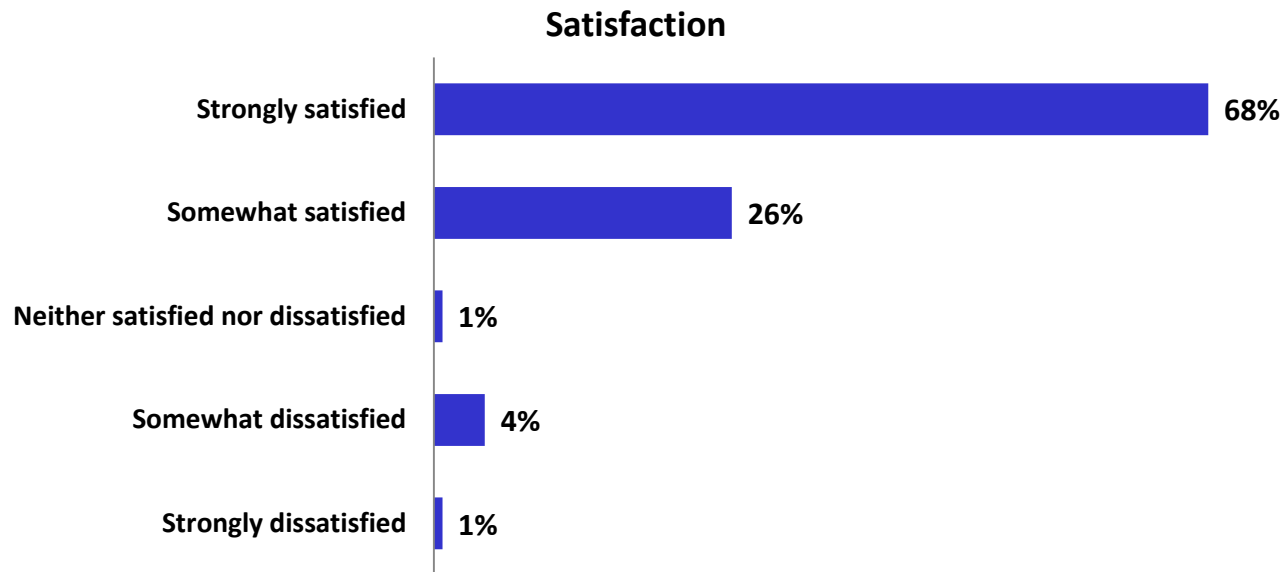


Note: Q28. How frequently do you ride and how long have you been riding the Westport bus service for train commuters? (n=145; 137)

Source: 2016 Westport Transit District Survey

Bus rider satisfaction

- Almost all (94%) bus riders are “somewhat” or “strongly” satisfied with the Westport bus service for train commuters

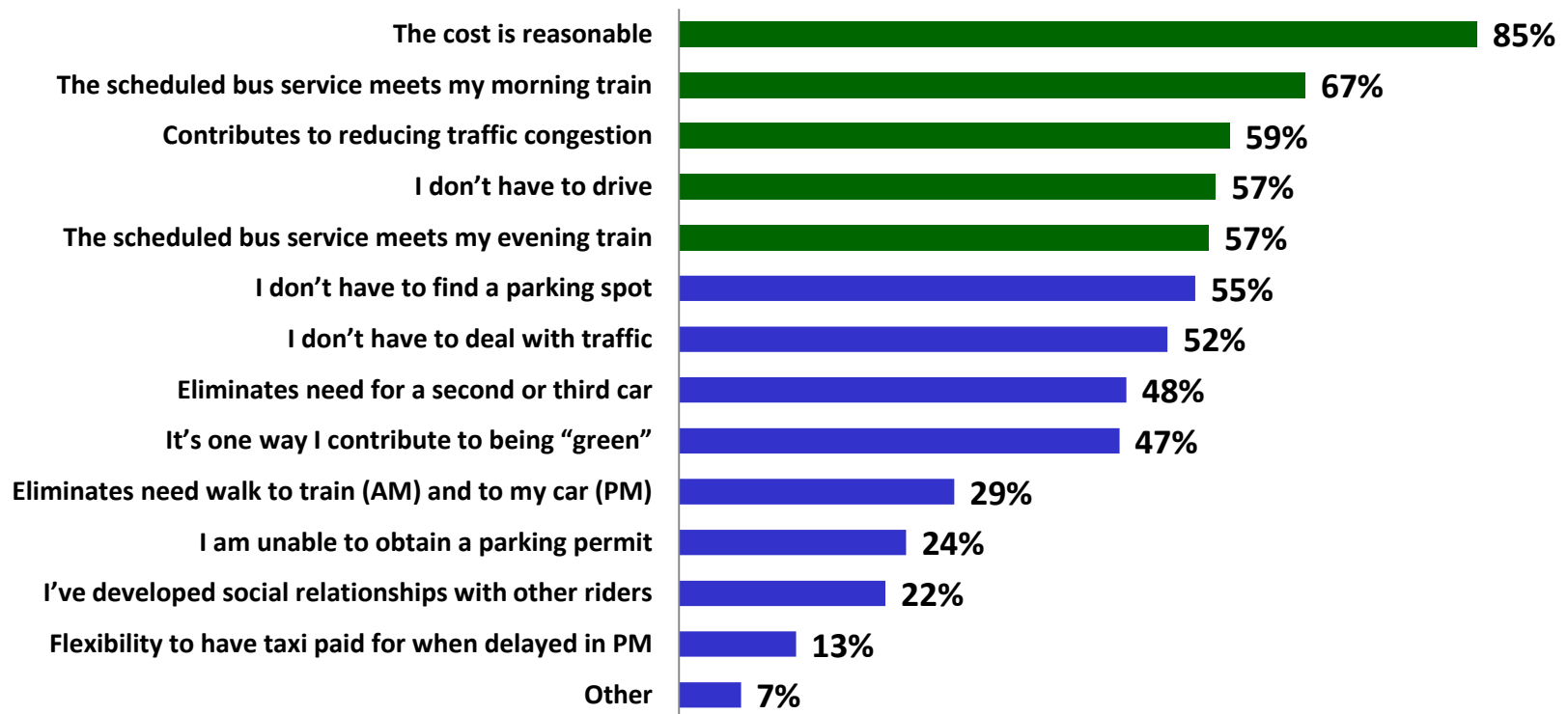


Source: 2016 Westport Transit District Survey

Note: Q30. Please rate your overall satisfaction with the Westport bus service for train commuters. (n=136)

Reasons to ride the bus

- Reasonable cost, reducing congestion and not driving are top reasons for riding bus

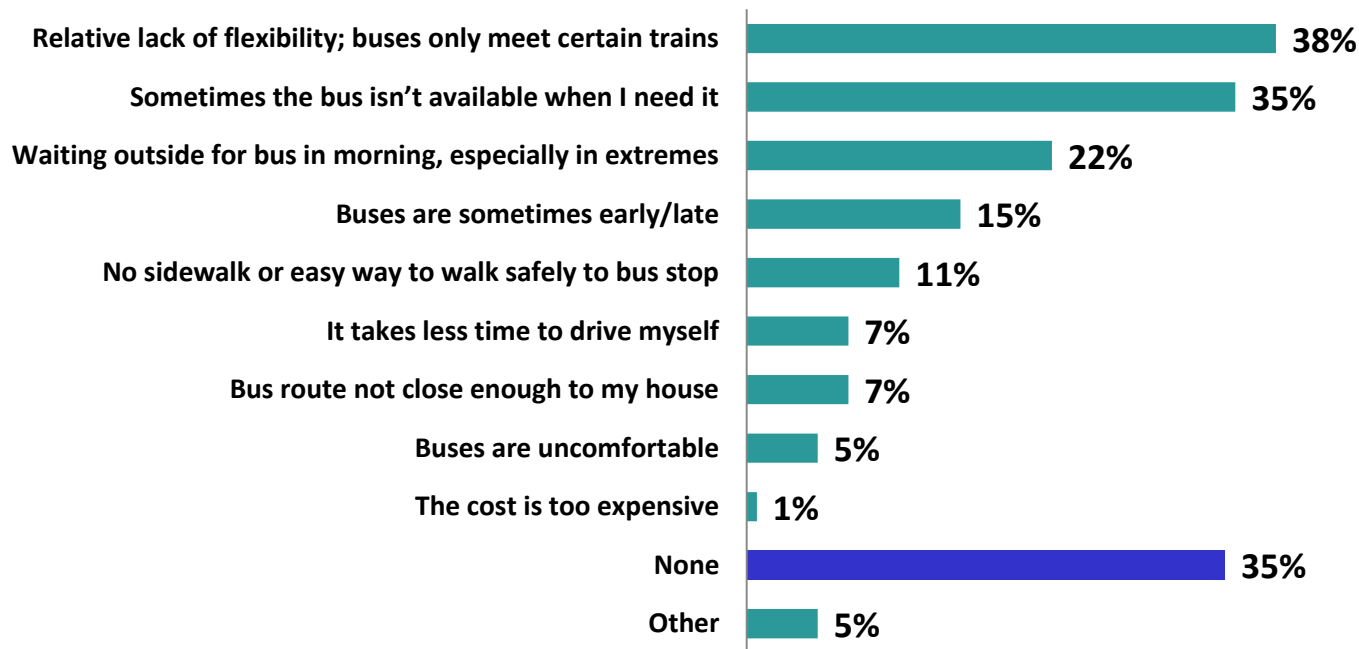


Source: 2016 Westport Transit District Survey

Note: Q32. Which of following are reasons you ride the bus? *Select all that apply.* (n=136)

Reasons to dislike riding the bus

- Over a third of bus riders dislike riding the bus because of lack of flexibility (38%) and bus not always being available when needed (35%)



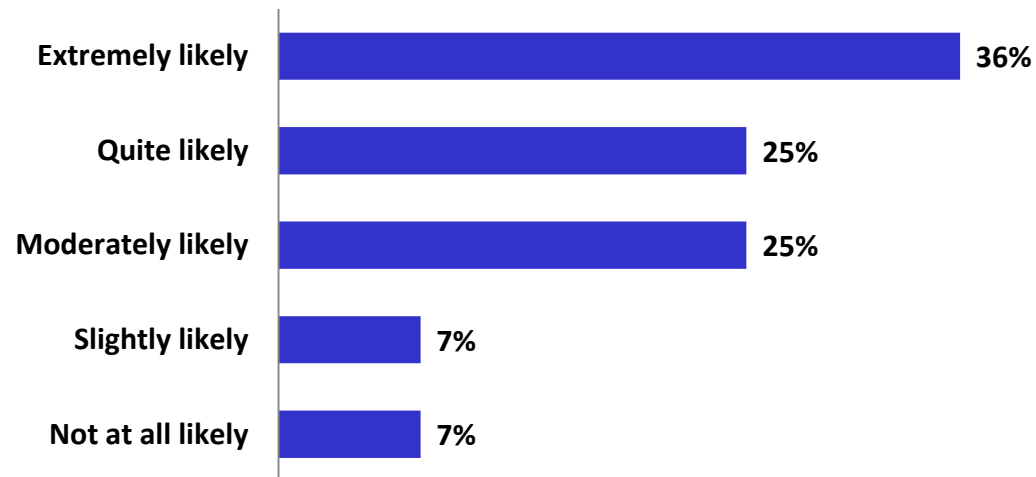
Source: 2016 Westport Transit District Survey

Note: Q33. Which of following, if any, are reasons you dislike riding the bus? *Select all that apply.* (n=136)

Bus rider “loyalty”

- Three of five bus riders without a parking permit (61%) would be “quite” or “extremely likely” to continue riding the bus if they were able to purchase a parking permit

Likelihood of riding bus if you could purchase a parking permit

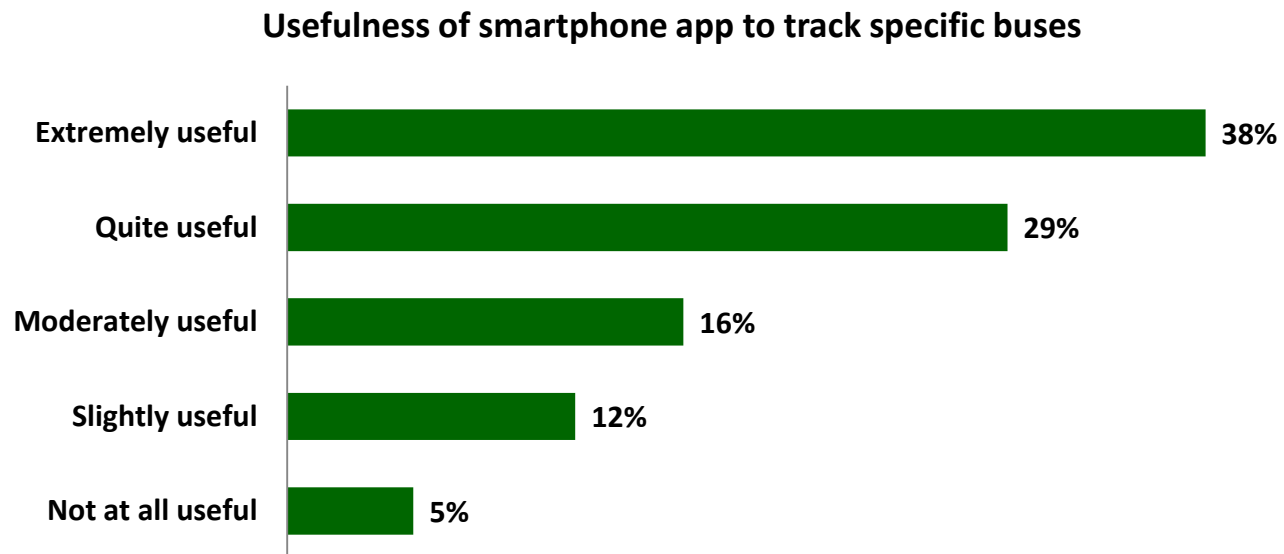


Source: 2016 Westport Transit District Survey

Note: Q34. How likely, if at all, would you be to continue riding the bus if you were able to purchase a parking permit? (n=69)

Appeal of smartphone app

- Two-thirds (67%) of bus riders would find a smartphone app that allowed them to track specific buses “quite” or “extremely” useful



Source: 2016 Westport Transit District Survey

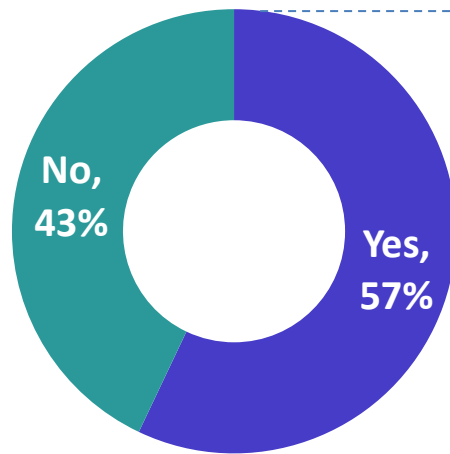
Note: Q35. How useful would you find a smartphone app that allowed you to track specific buses and their arrival times (à la Uber)? (n=136)

3. Insights to Increase Ridership

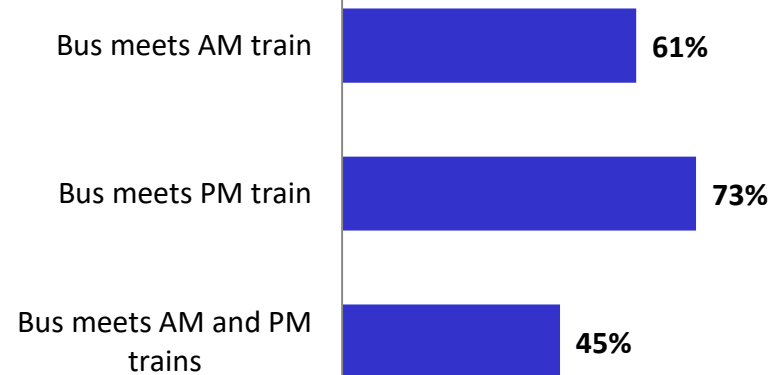
Bus routes

- Nearly three-fifth (57%) of train riders who do not currently take the bus believe one of the bus routes **could be** beneficial to them
- For this group of Other Train riders, nearly half (45%) **typically** take trains that are met by the commuter buses in both the morning and evening (excludes Imperial shuttle)
 - This means that about a quarter of Other Train riders *could take the commuter bus*

Could one be valuable to you?



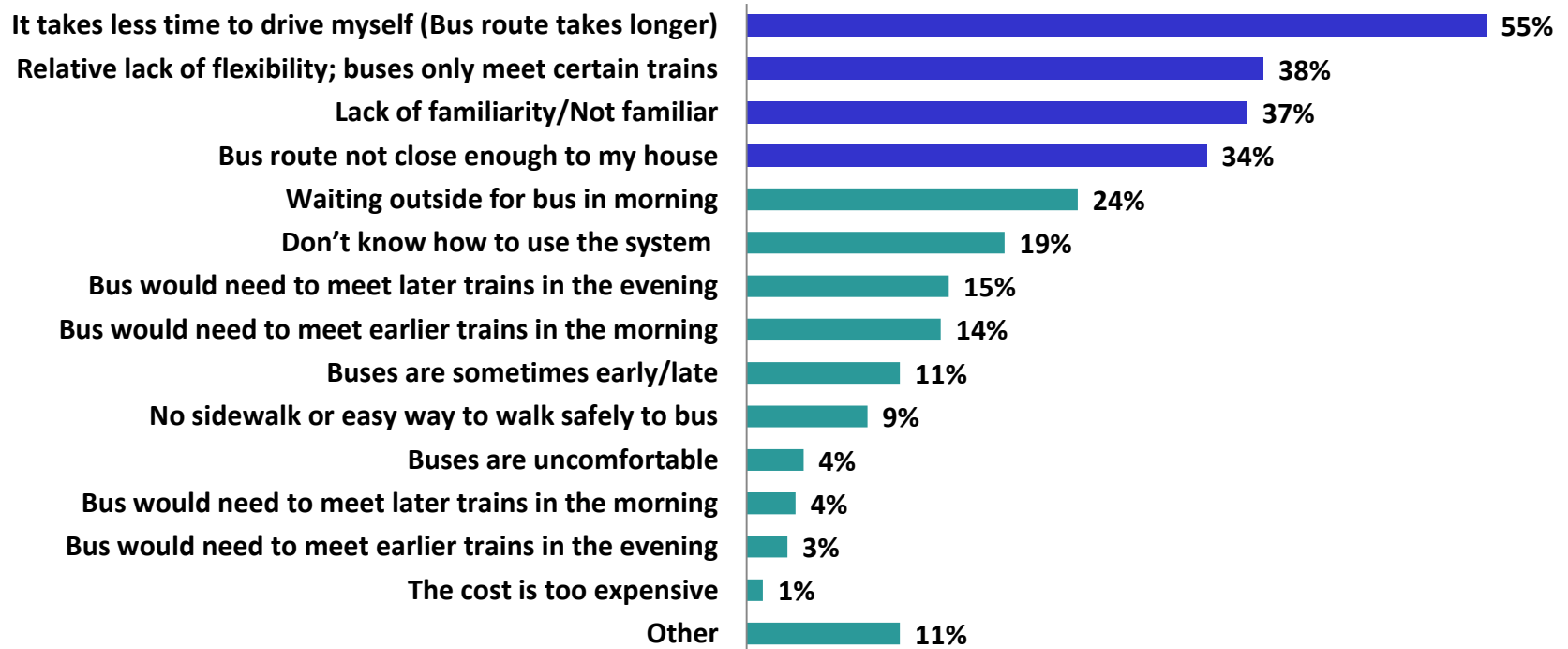
Typical trains are met by a commuter bus



Note: Q10. Could one of these routes be valuable to you? (n=316); Q5. Which train(s) do you typically take from {Q4} response} in the morning (n=178) AND Q6. Which train(s) do you typically take back to {Q4 response} in the evening? (n=178)

Reasons for not considering the bus to the train

- Of those Other train riders who *have not considered* taking the bus, over half (55%) say it takes less time to drive themselves than to take the bus

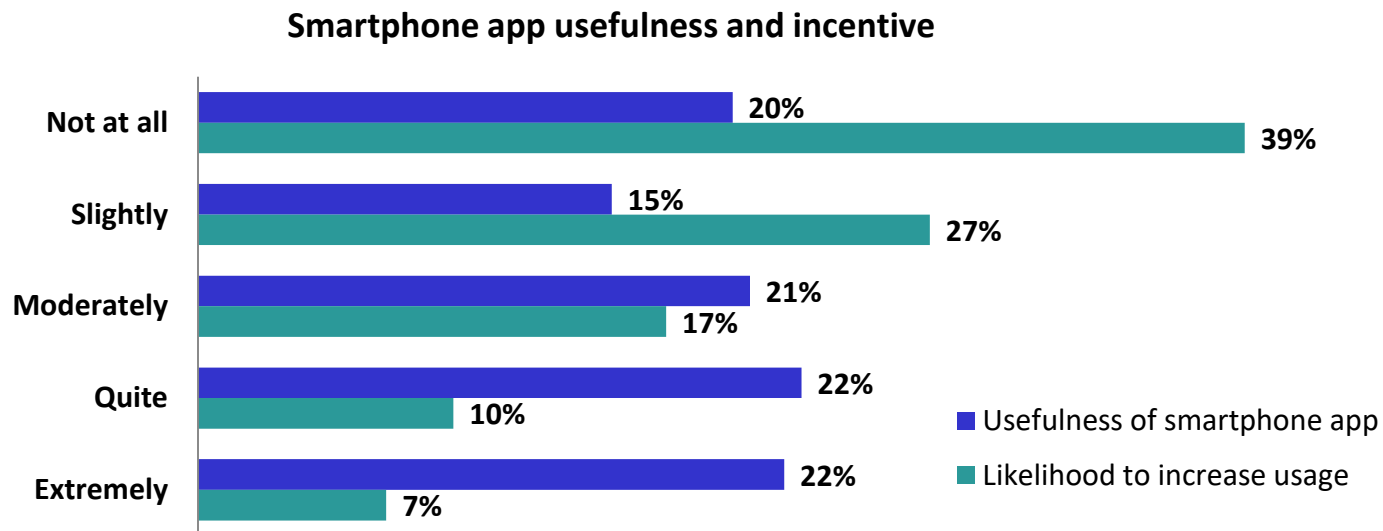


Note: Q8c. Which of the following reasons apply? *Select all that apply.* (n=168)

Source: 2016 Westport Transit District Survey

Smartphone app for commuter bus

- Over two-fifths of Other Train riders (44%) feel a smartphone app for the bus would be quite or extremely useful
- One in six of Other Train riders (17%) say app would be quite or extremely likely to increase their use of the bus system



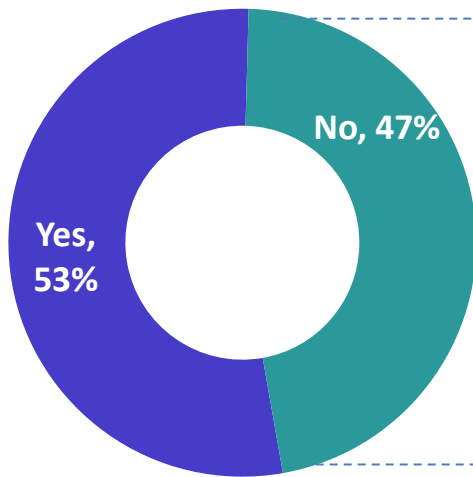
Source: 2016 Westport Transit District Survey

Note: Q11. How useful would you find a smartphone app that allowed you to track specific buses and their arrival times (à la Uber)? (n=316)
AND Q12. How likely would the availability of such a smartphone app increase your ridership of the Westport commuter bus system? (n=316)

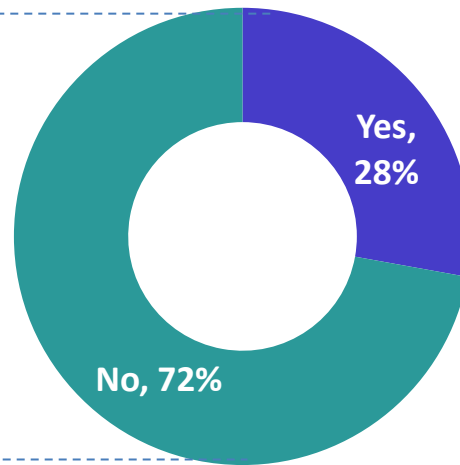
Imperial lot

- Just over half of Other Train riders (53%) are aware of free parking at Imperial lot
- Learning about free parking at Imperial lot interests 28% of those who were previously unaware of it, and 22% would be more likely to try it if bus were free

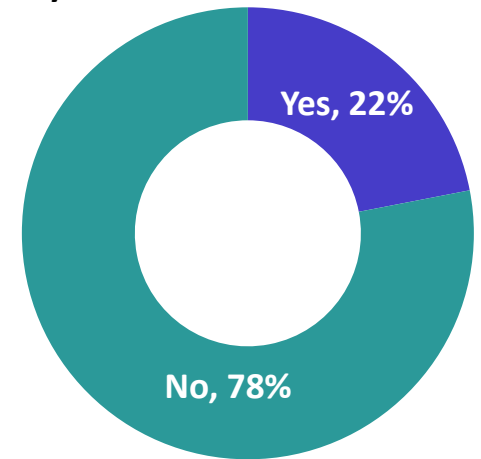
Aware of Imperial lot



Does learning about the Imperial lot create any interest?



Would you be more likely to try if bus service were free?



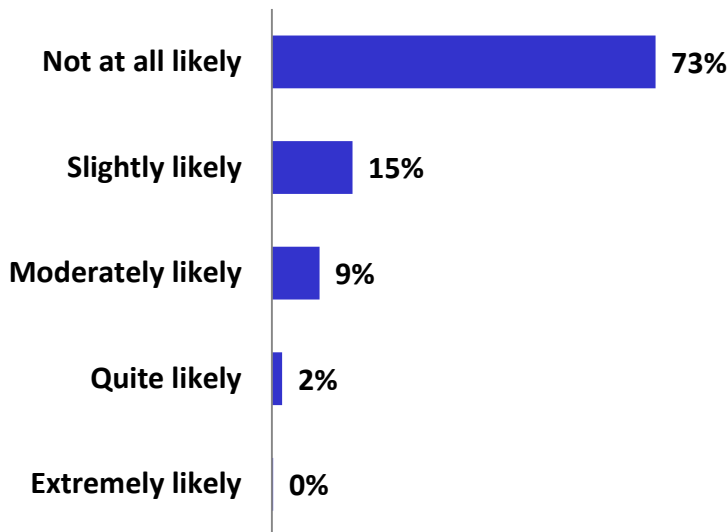
Source: 2016 Westport Transit District Survey

Note: Q13. Are you aware of the free parking at the Imperial Lot (located besides the Westport Woman's Club on Imperial Avenue), with scheduled bus service to and from the Saugatuck train platform from 6 AM through 8:30 AM, and 6 PM through 9:15 PM? (n=318); Q13c. Does learning there is free parking and low-cost (\$3 round trip; approximately half with a monthly UniTicket) bus service that drops you right at the Saugatuck train platform create any interest in learning more about it? (n=99) AND Q16. Would you be more likely to try parking in the Imperial Lot and riding the bus if the service were provided without any cost? (n=291)

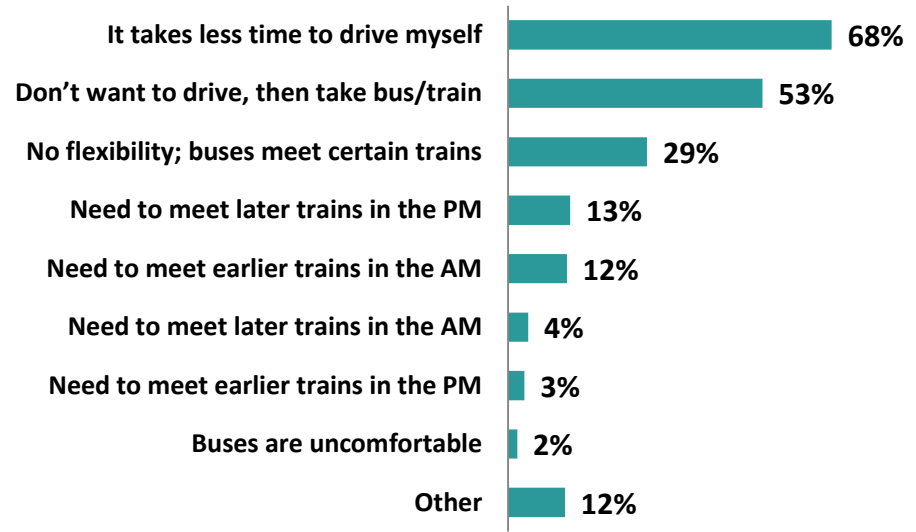
Imperial lot (continued)

- Only 2% of Other Train riders are “quite” or “extremely likely” to try the Imperial lot
- Of those that are “not at all” or “slightly” likely to try the Imperial lot, two-thirds (68%) feel it takes less time to drive, and half (53%) don’t want to drive/bus/train

Likelihood of trying Imperial Lot



Why not?

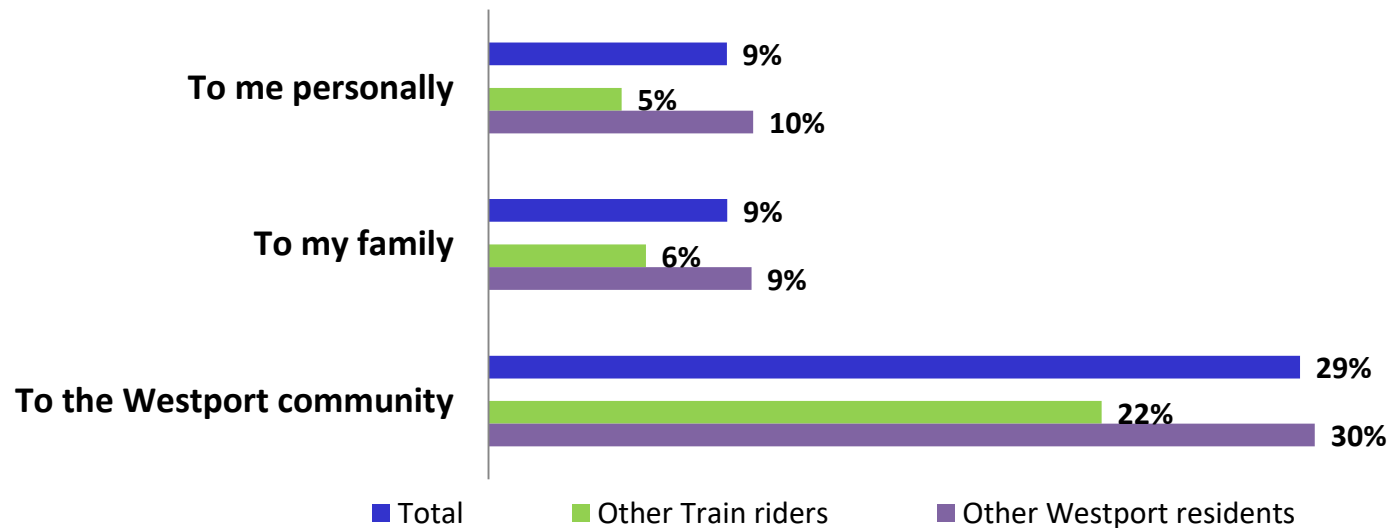


Note: Q14. How likely would you be to try parking at the Imperial Lot? (n=298) AND Q15. Why are you Not at all/Slightly likely about the Imperial Lot. Select all that apply. (n=261)

Source: 2016 Westport Transit District Survey

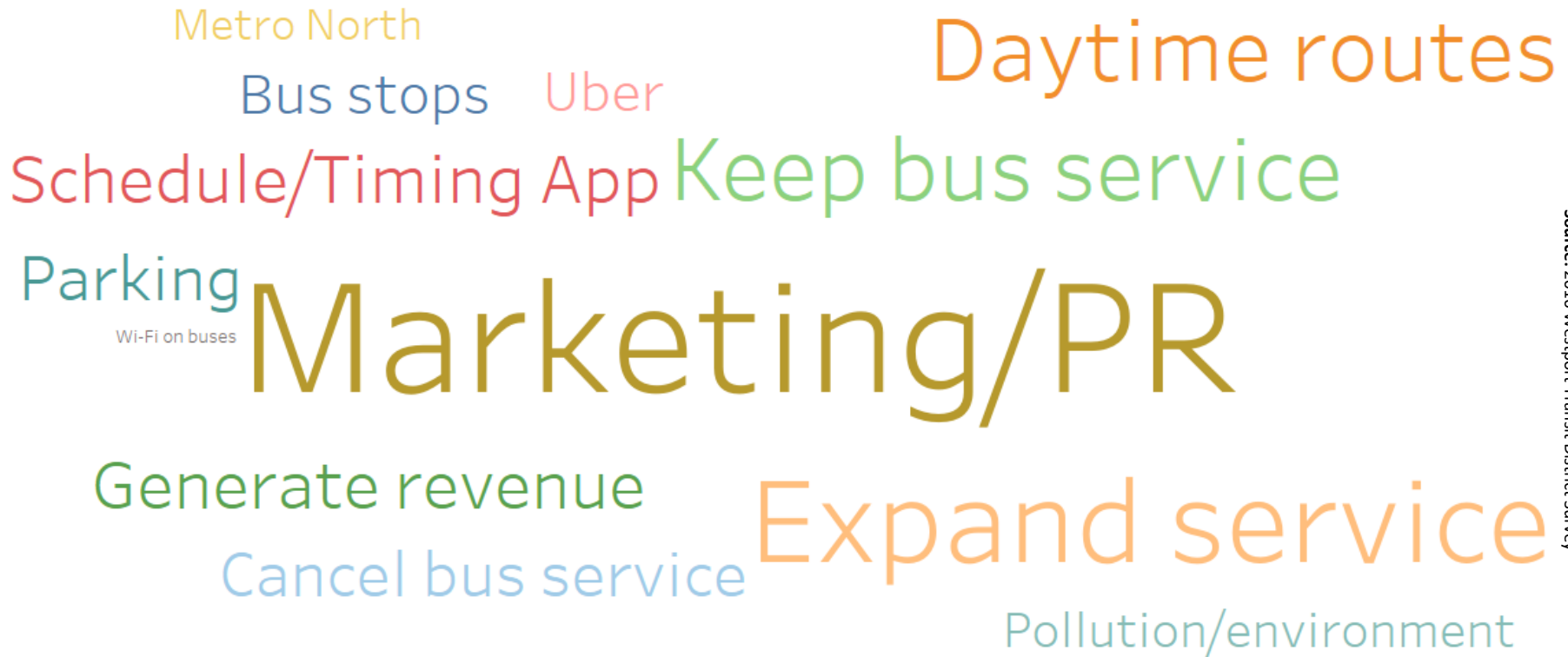
Value of low-cost middle-of-the-day bus service between Main St and the Saugatuck train station

- Overall, nearly three in ten of Westport residents (29%) feel low-cost, middle-of-the-day bus service to the train is “quite” or “extremely” valuable to the Westport community as a whole
 - Fewer than 1 in 10 feel the same in relation to themselves and their families



Note: Q21. How valuable do you believe regular low-cost, middle-of-the-day bus service between Main Street and the Saugatuck train station would be to you personally, your family and the Westport community as a whole? (“quite valuable” and “extremely valuable” shown) (n=1,239-1,278, reweighted)

Suggestions to increase ridership or improve service



Source: 2016 Westport Transit District Survey

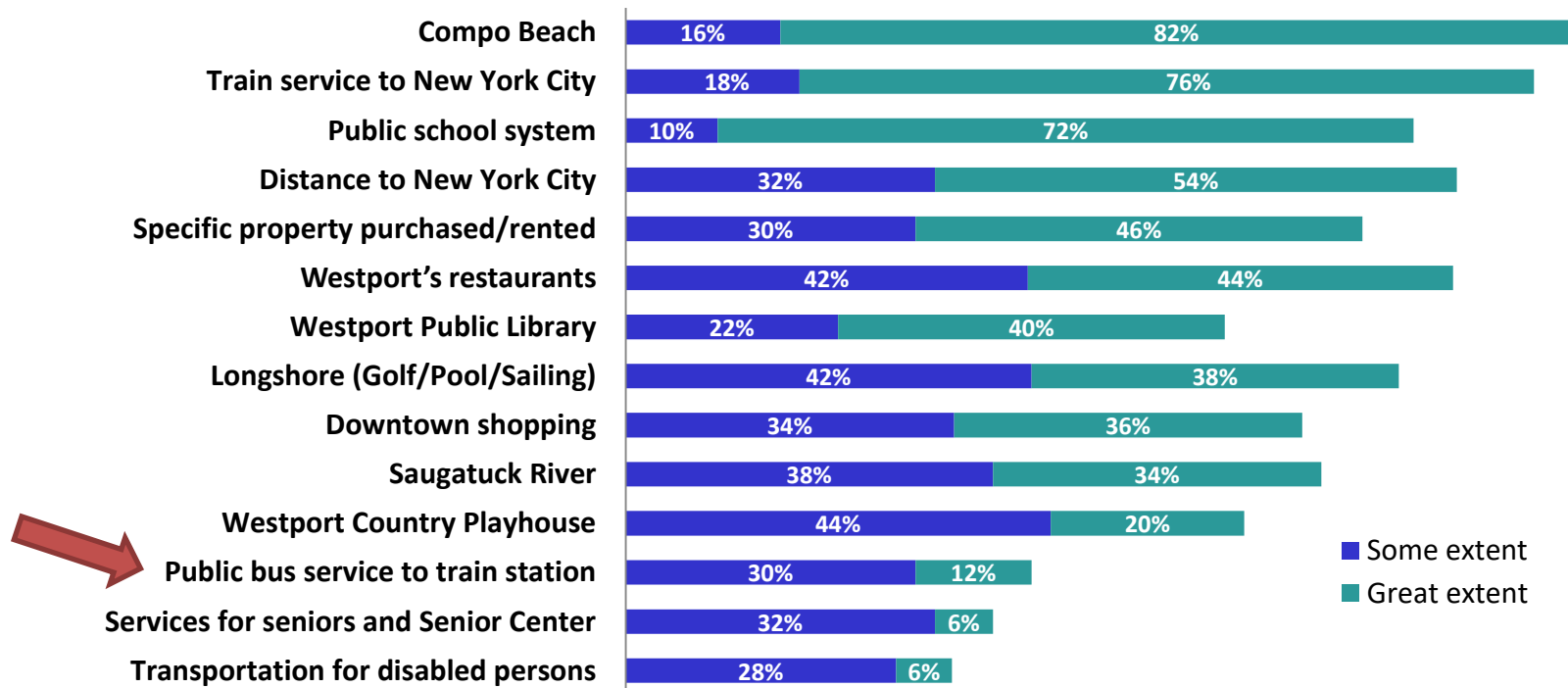
Note: Q43. Please add any suggestions to increase ridership of, or to improve the Westport bus system here. *Open-ended responses recorded (n=536)*

4. Perceived Importance of WTD Services to the Community



Attractive aspects of Westport for new residents

- Public bus service is not a major reason for new residents to move to Westport

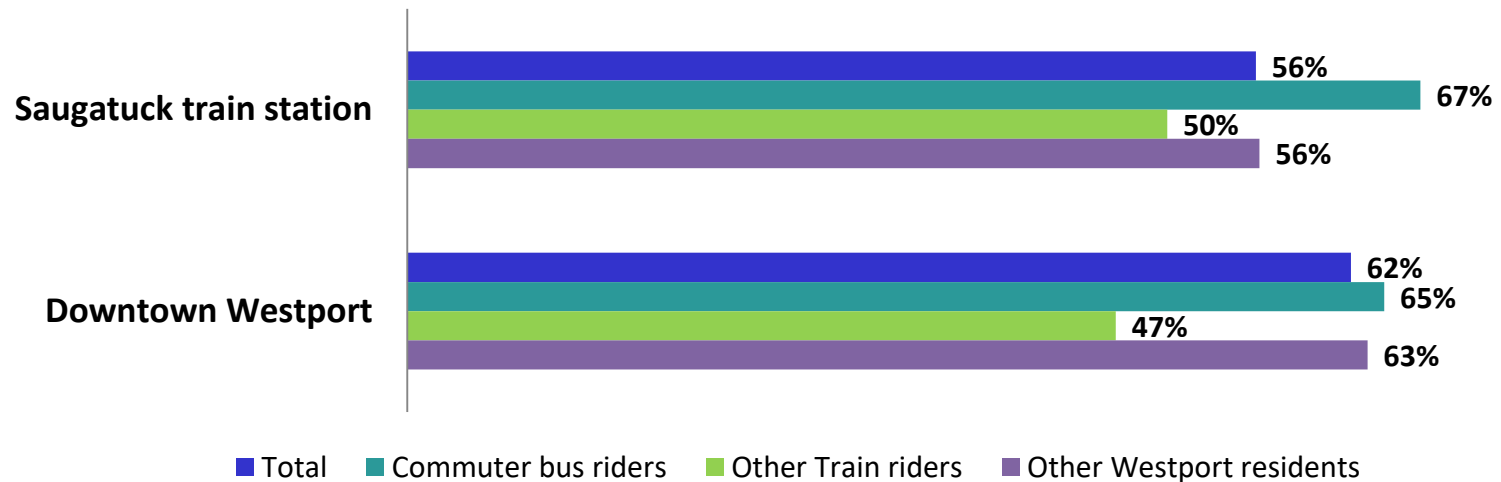


Source: 2016 Westport Transit District Survey

Note: Q27. To what extent, if any, did each of the following aspects attract you to living in Westport? (New residents, <3 years; n=50, reweighted)

Reducing congestion

- Over half of commuters believe it is “quite” or “extremely” important to reduce congestion around the Saugatuck train station (56%) and downtown Westport (62%)

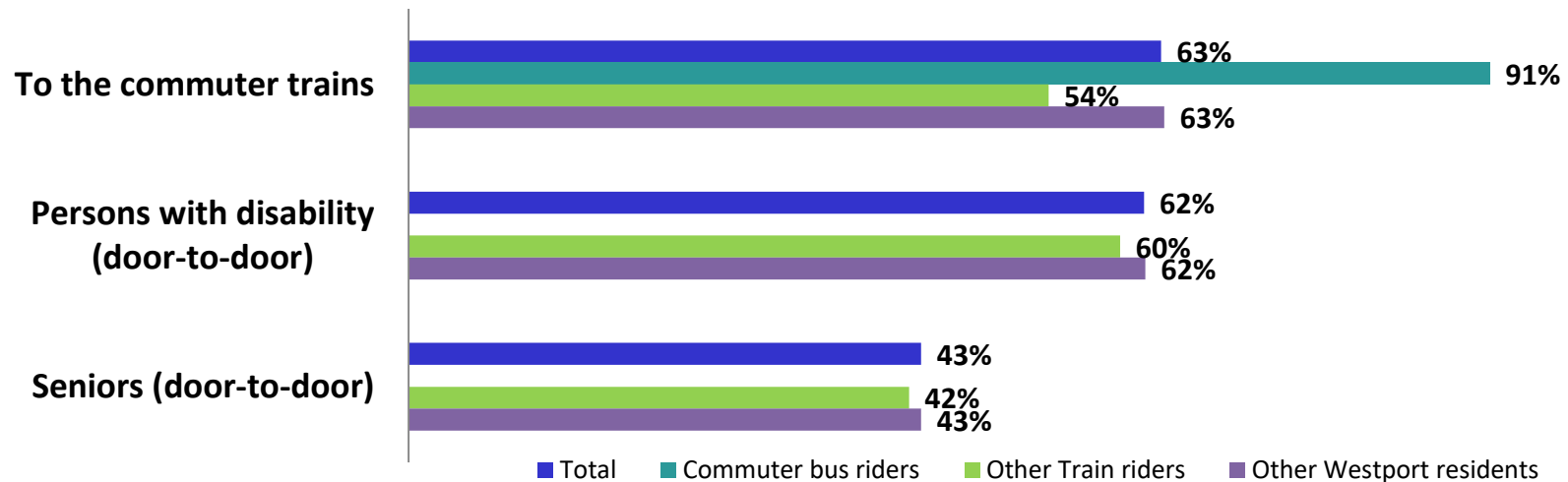


Source: 2016 Westport Transit District Survey

Note: Q19. How important do you believe reducing congestion around the Saugatuck train station and downtown Westport is to Westport’s quality of life? (“quite important” and “extremely important” shown) (n=1,314-1,393 reweighted)

Value of low-cost bus service to the community

- Over three-fifths of Westport residents feel low-cost bus service to the train and door-to-door service for persons with disabilities is “quite” or “extremely valuable” to the Westport community as a whole
- Support is lower for door-to-door service for seniors without disabilities (43%)



Source: 2016 Westport Transit District Survey

Note: Q20. How valuable to the Westport community as a whole, is regular low-cost bus service to the train? (“quite valuable” and “extremely valuable” shown) (n=1,356, reweighted); Q25. How important is it to you, your family and to the Westport community as a whole to have the Town provide low-cost (subsidized) door-to-door bus service for persons with disabilities? (“quite valuable” and “extremely valuable shown”) (n=1,094, reweighted) AND Q26. How important to the Westport community as a whole is low-cost (subsidized) door-to-door bus service within Westport for all seniors without disabilities (including those who can drive themselves)? (n=1,094, reweighted)

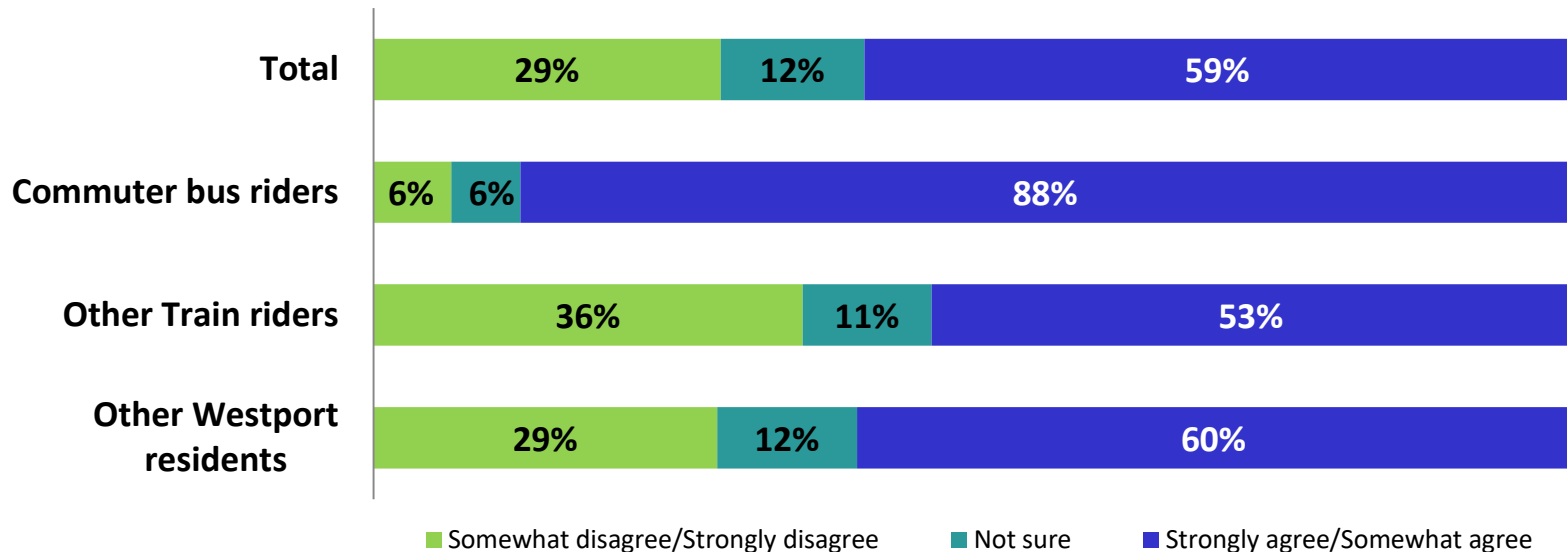
Financial support for commuter bus service

- Westport residents were shown the following statement:
 - In cities and towns across the United States, fares provide only a portion of the cost of public transportation. Westport's commuter shuttles are supported by a significant subsidy from the state of CT. Additionally, the Town of Westport currently spends close to \$200,000 annually (0.1% of the Town's \$200 million operating budget) on the commuter bus service, which is currently utilized by an estimated 125 to 150 regular riders (with more people using the service occasionally).

Source: 2016 Westport Transit District Survey

Financial support for commuter bus service

- Westport residents were then asked to rate their level of agreement
- Three-fifths (59%) agree and three in ten (29%) disagree that the Town should continue funding the commuter bus service

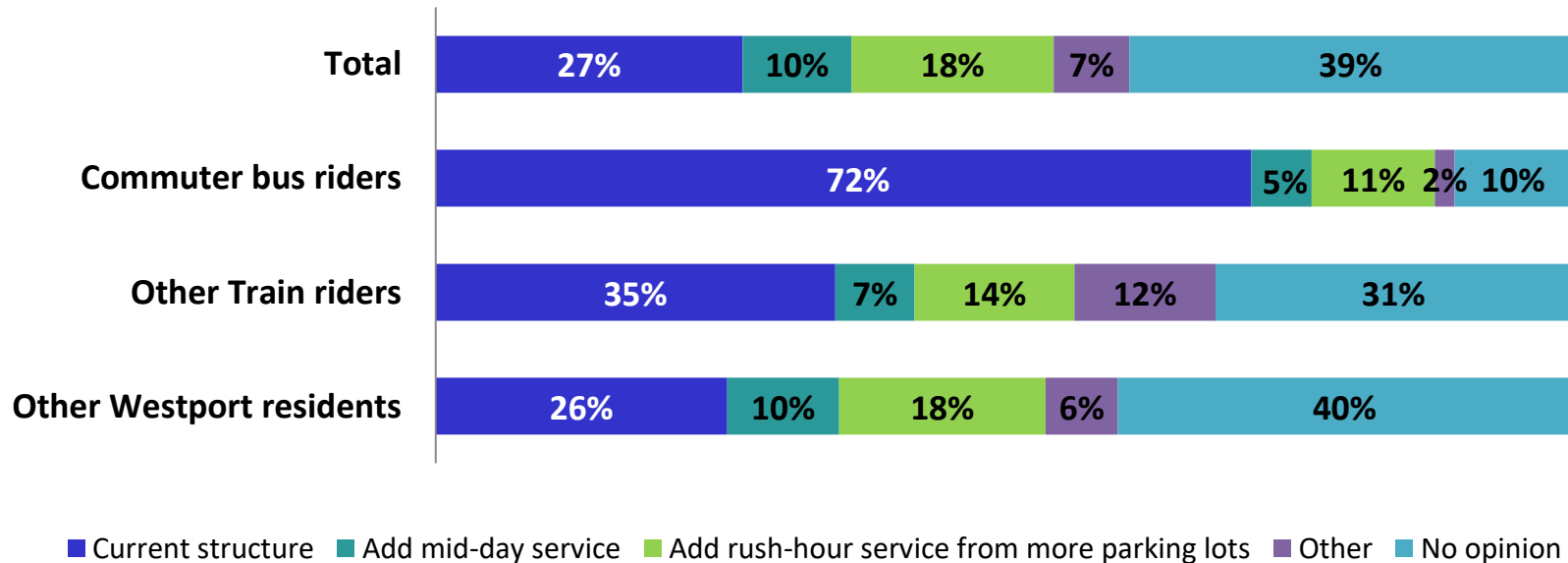


Source: 2016 Westport Transit District Survey

Note: Q23. Given this information above, please indicate whether you agree or disagree that this community service should receive public financial support from Westport. (n=1,419 reweighted)

Funding allocations for the commuter bus (includes “No Opinion”)

- Overall, 27% feel funding for the commuter bus service should follow the current route structure; an additional 39% have “no opinion”

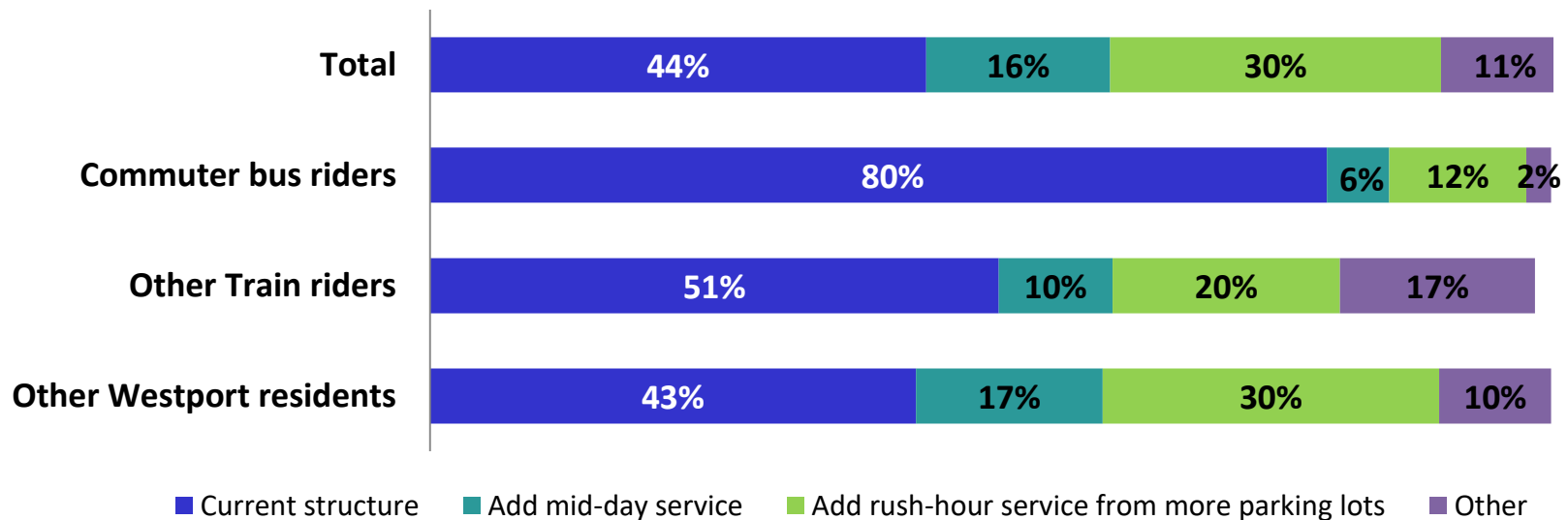


Source: 2016 Westport Transit District Survey

Note: Q24. How do you believe the funding for the commuter bus service should be allocated? Enter values 0 to 100 so that the total equals 100; if “No opinion,” please enter 100 for this response. (n=1,419, reweighted)

Funding allocations for the commuter bus (excludes “No opinion”)

- 44% of those with an opinion support current route structure
- Support for mid-day service is weak, but three in ten (30%) support adding rush-hour service between train stations and additional commuter parking lots



Source: 2016 Westport Transit District Survey

Note: Q24. How do you believe the funding for the commuter bus service should be allocated? Enter values 0 to 100 so that the total equals 100; if “No opinion,” please enter 100 for this response. (n=1,419, reweighted) No opinion responses excluded.

In summary

Summary of findings

1. 42% of Westport's Metro North Train riders (excluding bus riders) have no or only "slight familiarity" with the bus service
 - Familiarity with Town's door-to-door service predictably low across Westport
2. 57% of train riders (excluding bus riders) believe a commuter bus route could be valuable to them, and an estimated 45% of those (one quarter overall) typically take AM/PM trains that busses meet
 - 17% say that a smartphone tracking app would likely increase their use of the bus system
3. Commuter bus rider satisfaction very high – with reasonable cost, reducing congestion and eliminating need to drive as top reasons
 - 61% of bus riders without parking permits would be quite/extremely likely to continue riding the bus even if they had a parking permit; 14% would be "not at all" or only "slightly likely" to continue

Summary of findings (continued)

4. Imperial lot and mid-day service not popular – for individuals, family or community
5. Over three-fifths of respondents believe commuter buses and door-to-door services for citizens with a disability are valuable to the community
6. 59% agree that the commuter bus service should be supported by Town funds (29% disagree)

Thank you