



Public Engagement Summary Report

Highway 16



Background

1.1 About the Highway 16 Service Review

BC Transit, in partnership with the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako and Regional District of Kitimat-Stikine, are developing a Service Review of the Highway 16 transit service. The Service Review's primary goals include:

- To engage with the public along the Highway 16 corridor between Terrace and Prince George to solicit feedback on the transit service
- To reaffirm and reprioritize transit service and infrastructure priorities over the next one to five years
- To evaluate system and route performance and provide targeted improvements

1.2 Engagement Objective

The engagement objectives for the Service Review are:

- To involve key interested and affected parties on how communities along Highway 16 should be engaged
- Involve First Nation communities in how BC Transit and local government partners can build an ongoing relationship with their communities
- Inform the public of the Highway 16 Service Review process and scope, how to participate, and how their feedback will be used
- Gather feedback on the Highway 16 transit service
- Report back on what feedback was provided

1.3 Engagement Strategy

The engagement approach for the Service Review was comprised of the following tools:

Pre-engagement meetings

Inform & Consult

- To meet with local government stakeholders and First Nations to determine how to best engage with their communities. The feedback provided through these meetings shaped the rest of the engagement strategy.

Mail-out Survey

Inform & Consult

- Based on the pre-engagement meetings, it was determined that a mail-out survey would be the best way to reach the most people. The mail-out survey was sent via unaddressed mail to residents along Highway 16 between Terrace and Prince George, excluding urban

residents of Prince George. A return envelop with postage was included in the mail-out to reduce barriers to participation. Copies of the survey were also available at local government and band offices.

Project Website

Inform & Consult

- A project website was developed to support the mail-out and provide additional information on the project. This was the primary method for people who may not have received a mail-out survey to participate. An online version of the mailed-out survey was also available.

Engagement Overview

Mail-out Survey

The mail-outs were sent out at the end of May 2022, with the target delivery date being May 29, 2022. The engagement period was from May 29, 2022 to June 29, 2022. 22,418 surveys were mailed out and 772 responses to the mail-out survey were received.

Project Website

The project website was launched at the end of May 2022, with the online survey being available from May 29, 2022 to June 29, 2022. 155 responses to the online survey were received. The website remains active and information and project updates are available.

Promotional Tools



Internal Bus Ads

Ads displayed in the buses advertising the project and ways to participate.



Social Media

Facebook and Twitter posts were used to raise awareness of the project. Cross promotion through local community pages.



Bus Stop Ads

Ads placed at bus stops advertising the project and ways to participate.



Radio Ads

Project information was announced over radio.

Figure 1: Promotional tools used for Highway 16 Service Review engagement

Demographics

Community

People from over 46 communities responded to the survey. The communities with the most responses are Terrace (194), Smithers (101), Burns Lake (77), Vanderhoof (74), Thornhill (48), Rural Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako (35), Fraser Lake (34), Houston (33), Telkwa (32), Prince George (30), and Fort St. James (28). The remaining communities had under 20 responses each.

Age

Figure 2 below shows the age range of participants who indicated their age (n=884).

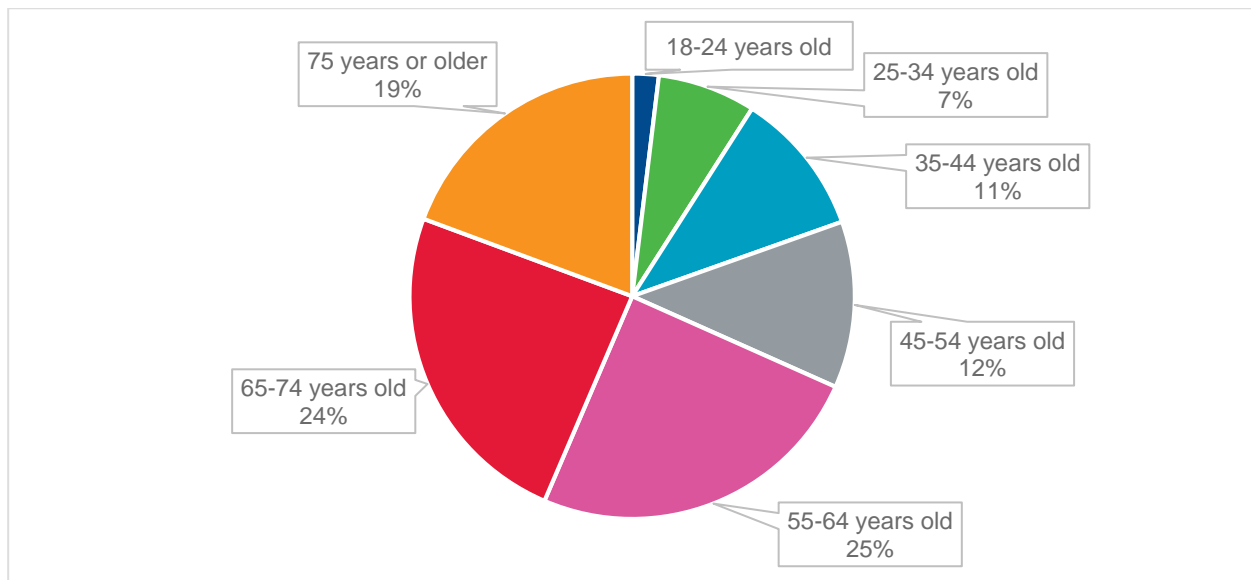


Figure 2: Age range of survey participants

Gender Identity

Figure 3 below shows the gender identify of participants who indicated their gender (n=875).

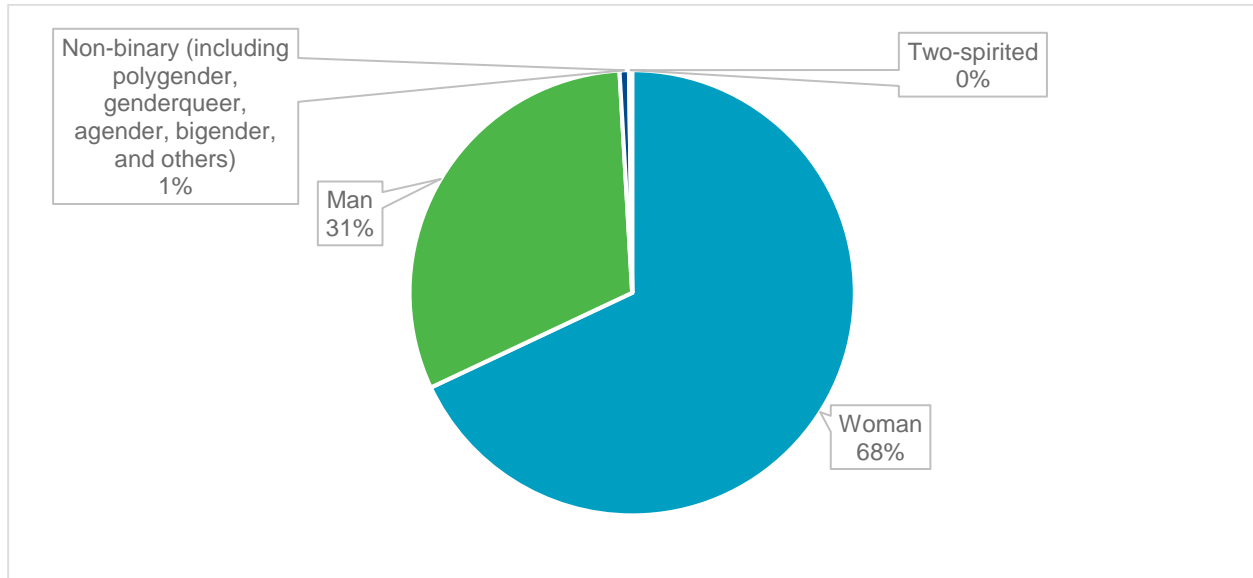


Figure 3: Gender identity of survey participants

Indigenous Persons

Figure 4 below shows the proportion of participants who identify as an Indigenous Person (n=853). This includes a person who identifies with Aboriginal, First Nations (Status/Non-Status), Metis, or Inuk (Inuit) cultural and/or ancestral background.

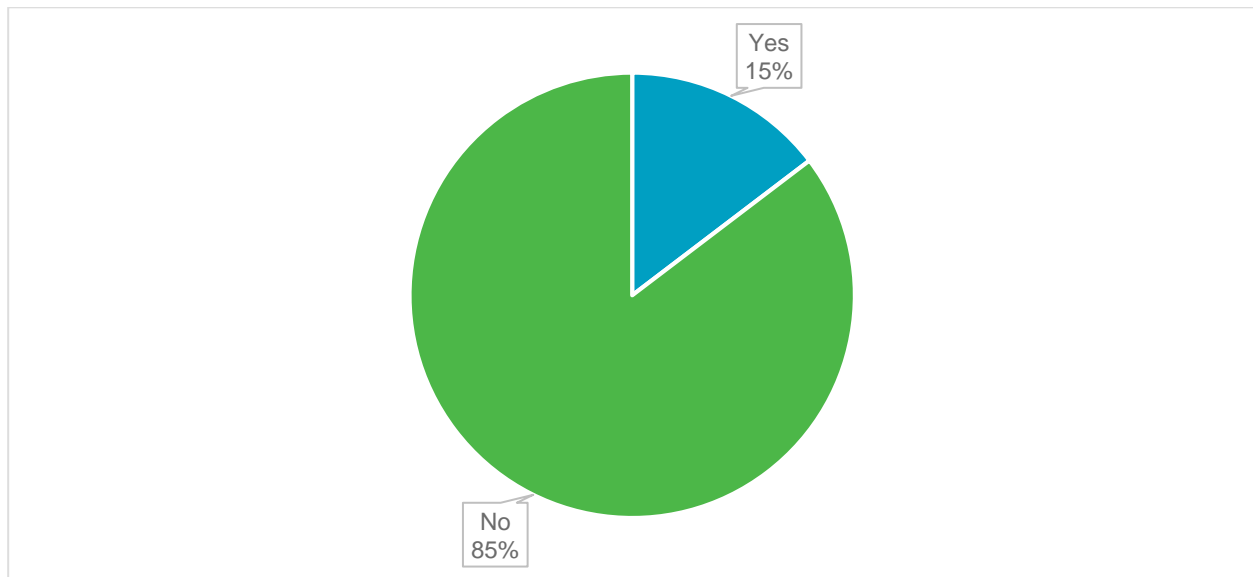


Figure 4: Proportion of survey participants who identify as Indigenous

Persons with a Disability

Figure 5 below shows the proportion of participants who identify as a person with a disability (n=867). Examples of disabilities include, but are not limited to:

- Mental health disability, such as psychiatric disorders such as major depressive disorder, anxiety disorder, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, or substance abuse
- Physical disability, such as paraplegia, multiple sclerosis, cancer, epilepsy, or diabetes
- Sensory disability, such as hearing loss or vision loss
- Neurodevelopmental, such as autism spectrum disorder, ADHD, intellectual disability
- Learning disorder, such as dyslexia

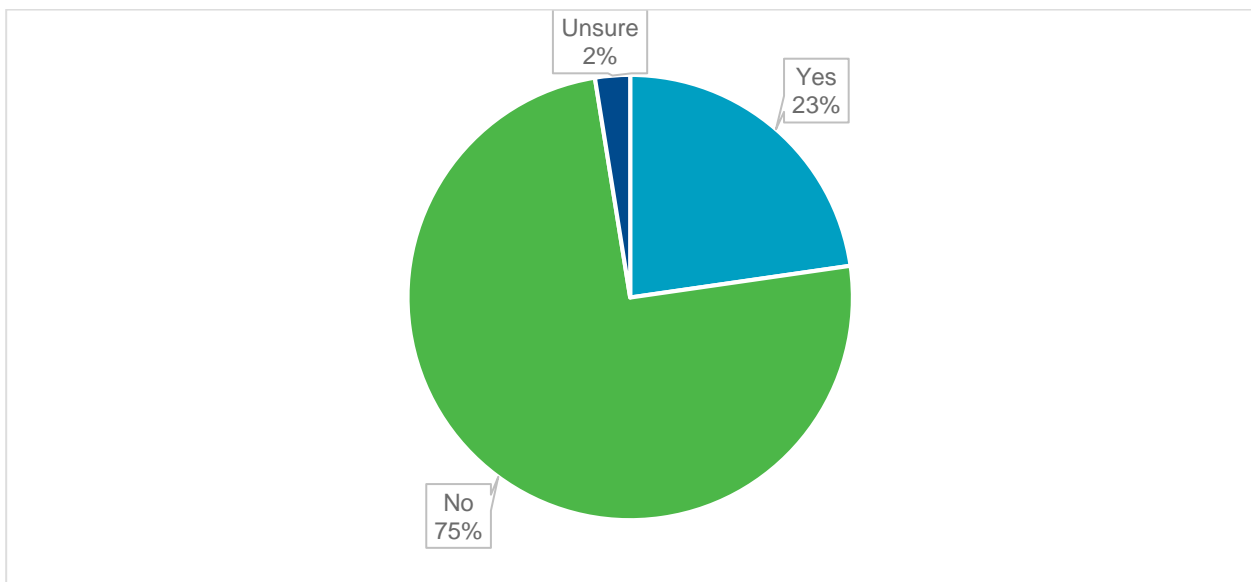


Figure 5: Proportion of survey participants who identify as a person with a disability

Intersectionality

Figure 6 below shows the proportion of participants who, in addition their gender identity, and/or identity as an Indigenous Person, and/or identity as a person with a disability, belong to an additional equity-seeking group (n=792). These additional equity-seeking groups include:

- People of colour or racialized people
- Deaf people
- People with disabilities
- People living with mental illness
- People whose gender identity or gender expression differs from their sex assigned at birth
- People who identify as a member of the LGBTQ*2S community

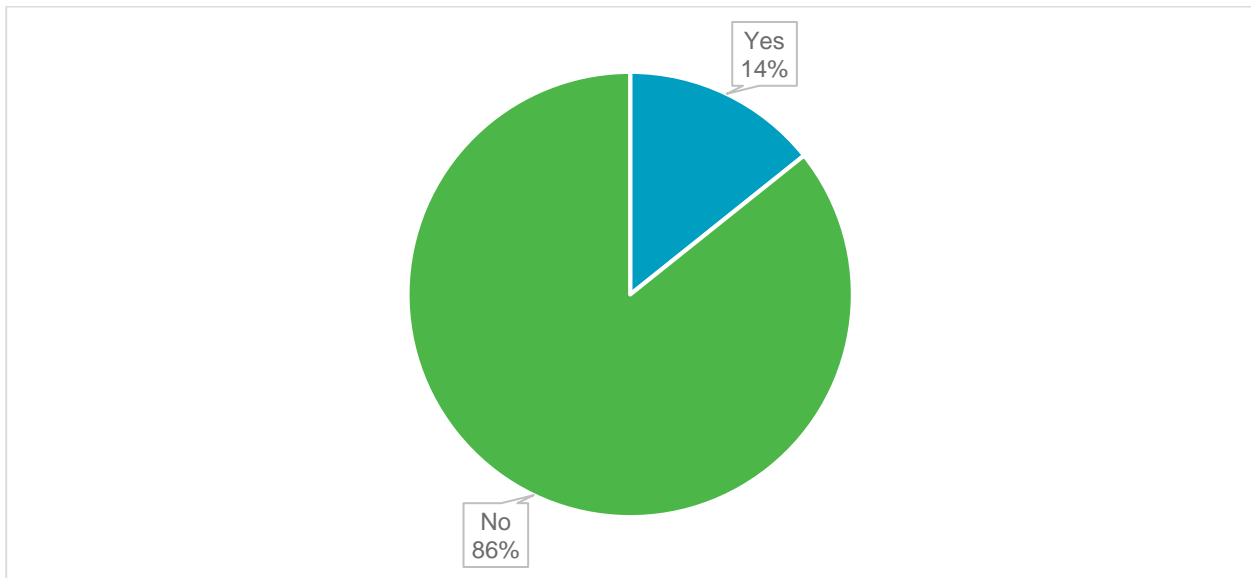


Figure 6: Proportion of survey participants who belong to additional equity-seeking groups

Survey Results

Below are the questions and quantitative results of the surveys. These results include both mail-out and online survey results. Answers in which the participant indicated “Not applicable” or “Don’t use the service” are excluded in the results below.

Do you use the Highway 16 transit service to connect to any of these transportation services? These people have indicated that they do use these connecting services.

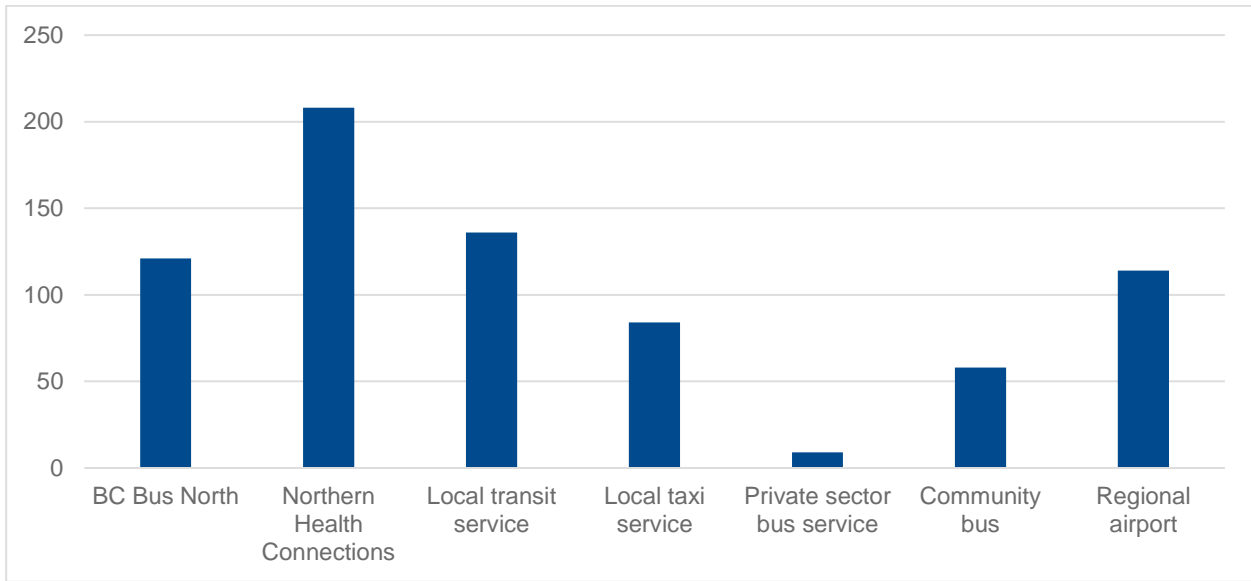


Figure 7: Do you use the Highway 16 transit service to connect to any of these transportation services?

How often do you use the Highway 16 transit service?

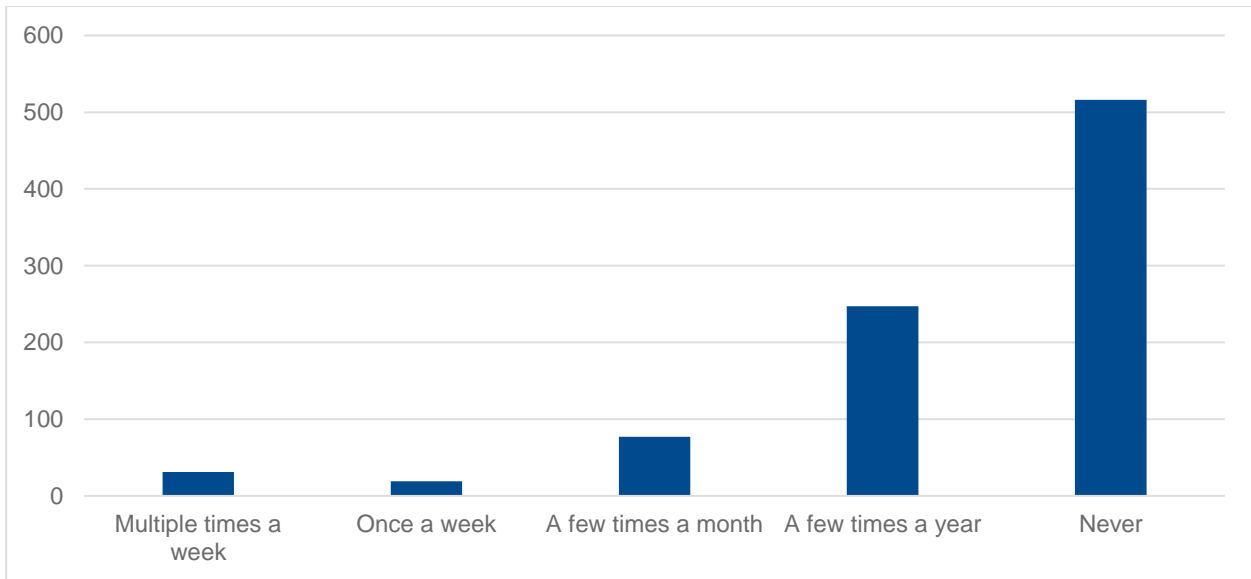


Figure 8: How often do you use the Highway 16 transit service?

What do you use the Highway 16 transit service for?

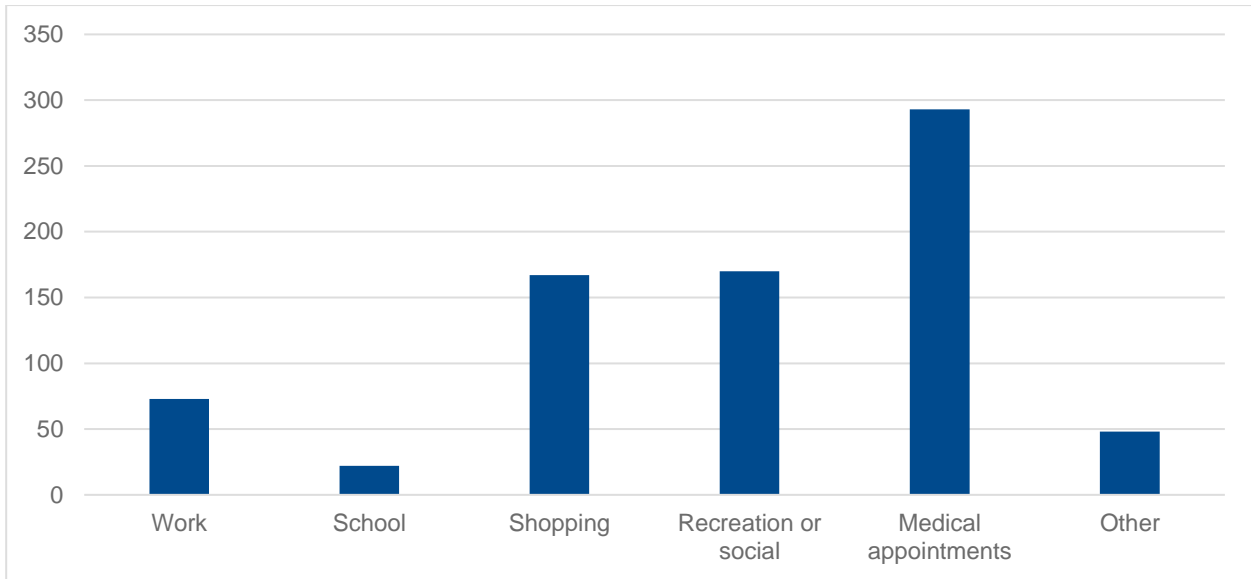


Figure 9: What do you use the Highway 16 transit service for?

Why do you use Highway 16 transit?

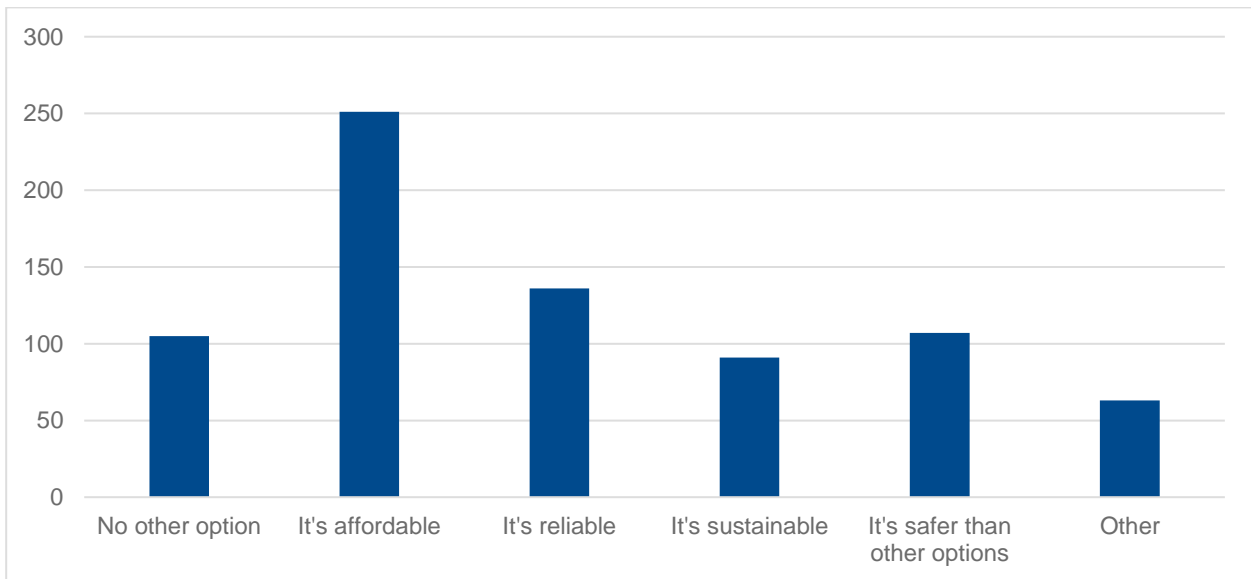


Figure 10: Why do you use Highway 16 transit?

How do you typically travel?

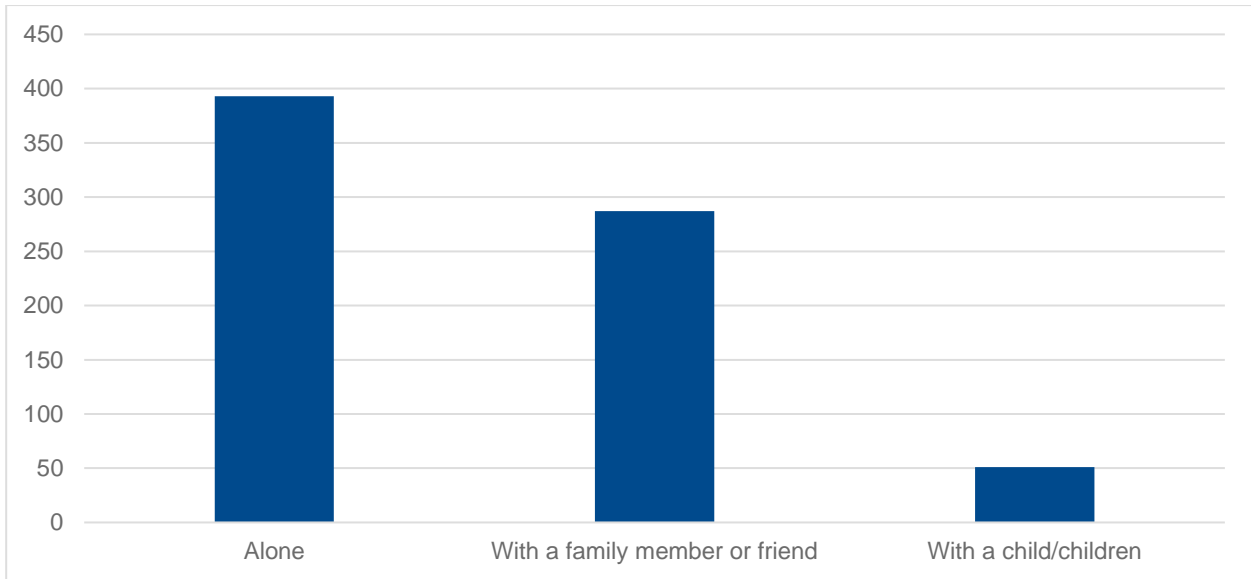


Figure 11: How do you typically travel?

Would you be comfortable with your child using the service unaccompanied?

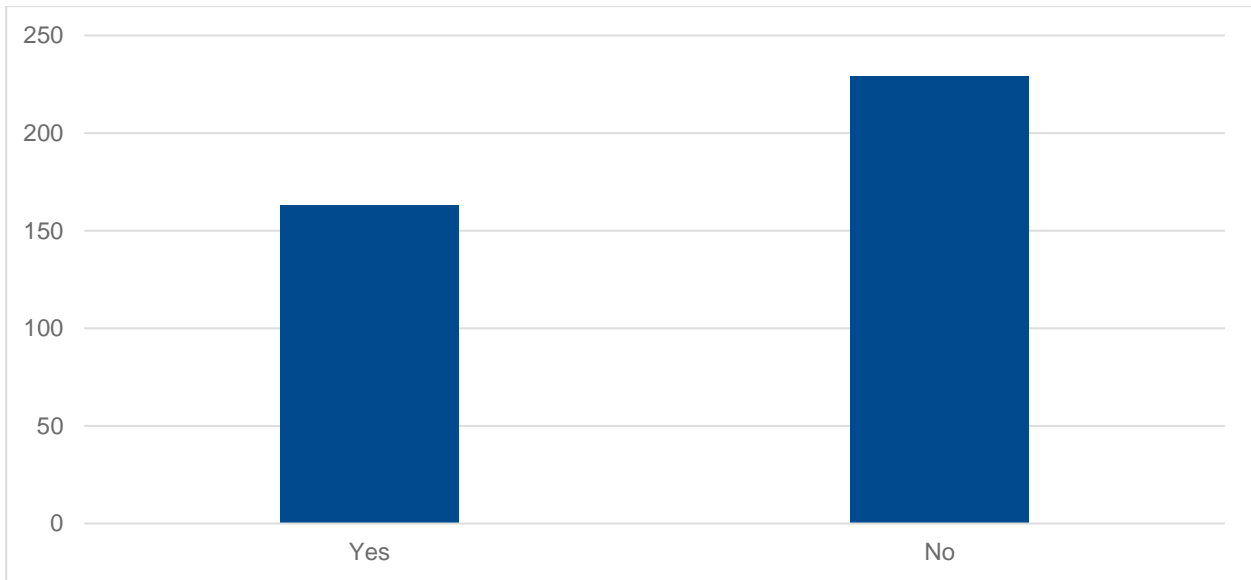


Figure 12: Would you be comfortable with your child using the service unaccompanied?

How satisfied are you with the overall Highway 16 transit service?

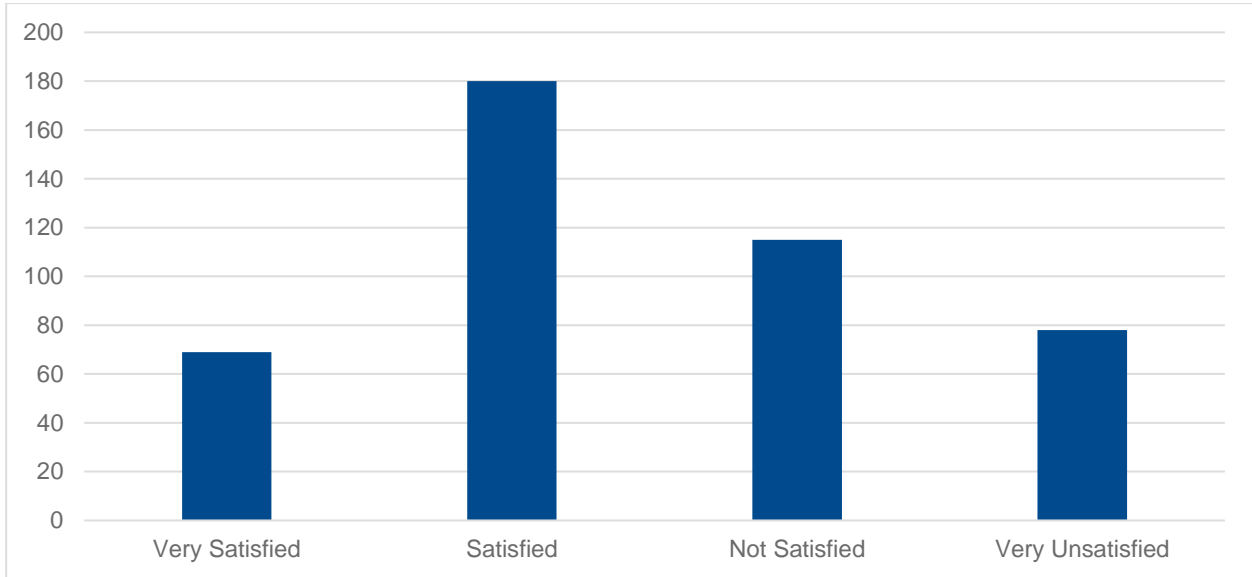


Figure 13: How satisfied are you with the overall Highway 16 transit service?

How reliable do you find the Highway 16 transit service?

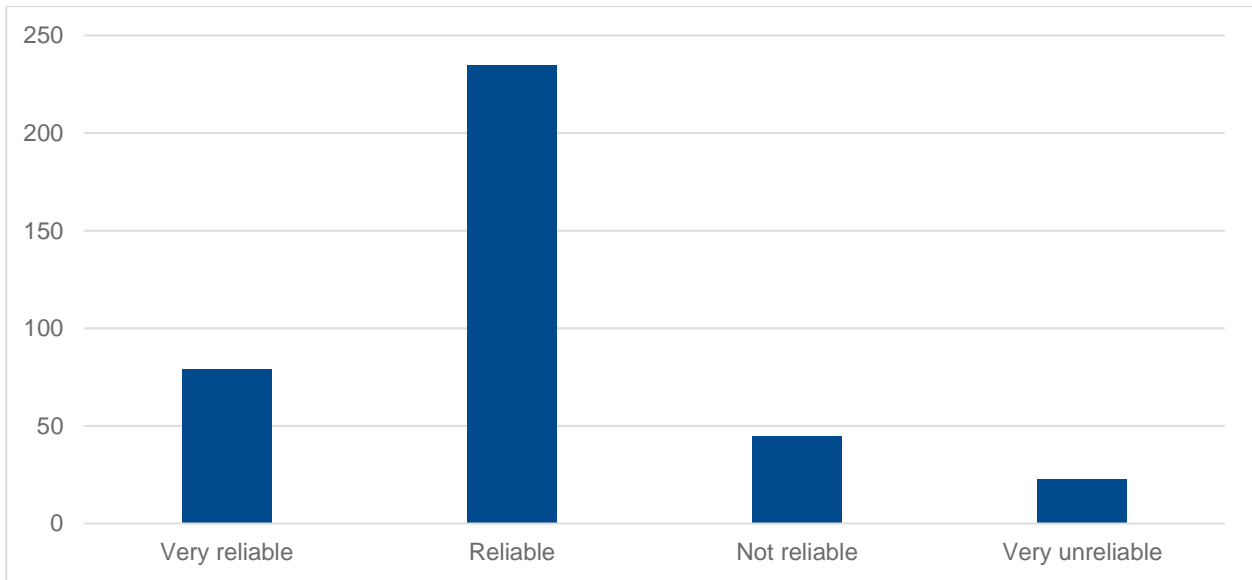


Figure 14: How reliable do you find the Highway 16 transit service?

Have you ever not been able to board the bus because it was full?

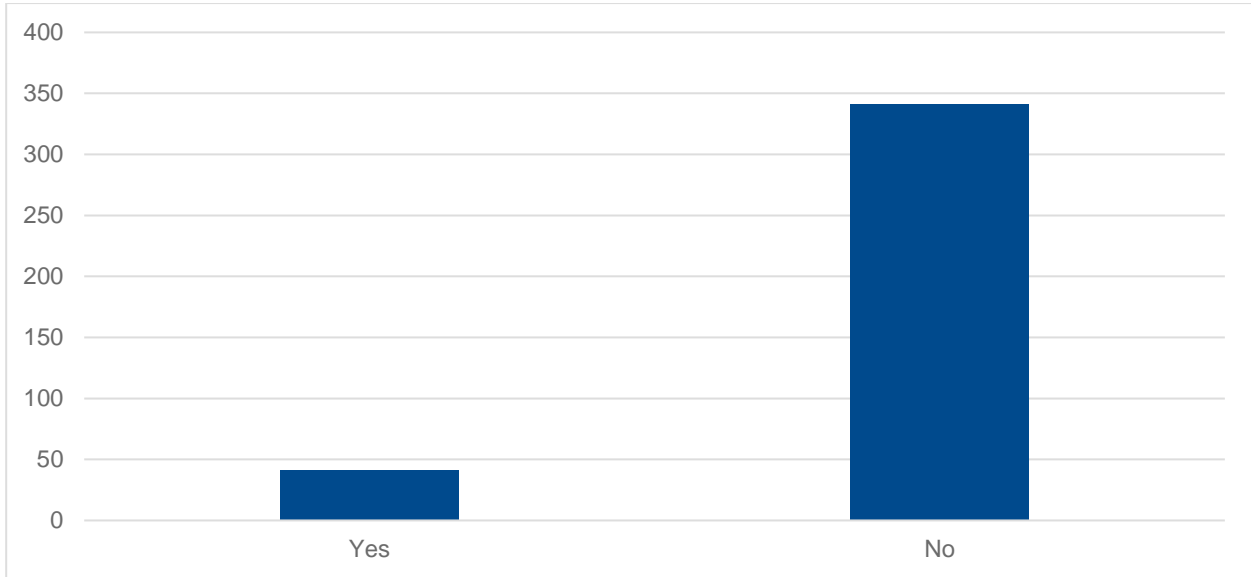


Figure 15: Have you ever not been able to board the bus because it was full?

How safe do you feel using the Highway 16 transit service?

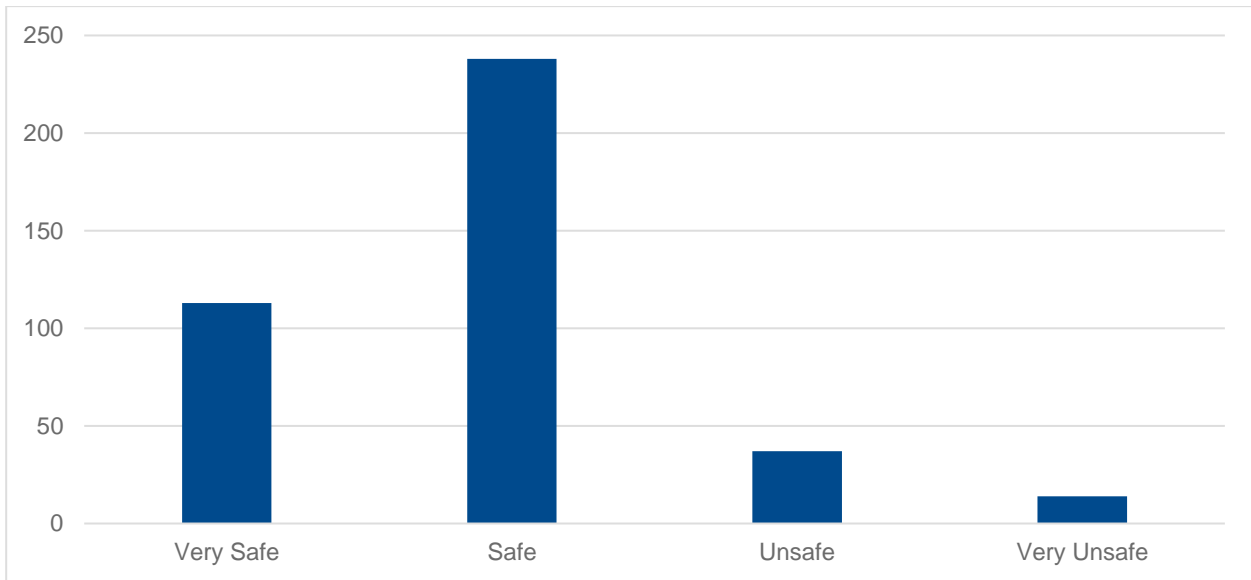


Figure 16: How safe do you feel using the Highway 16 transit service?

Which routes do you use?

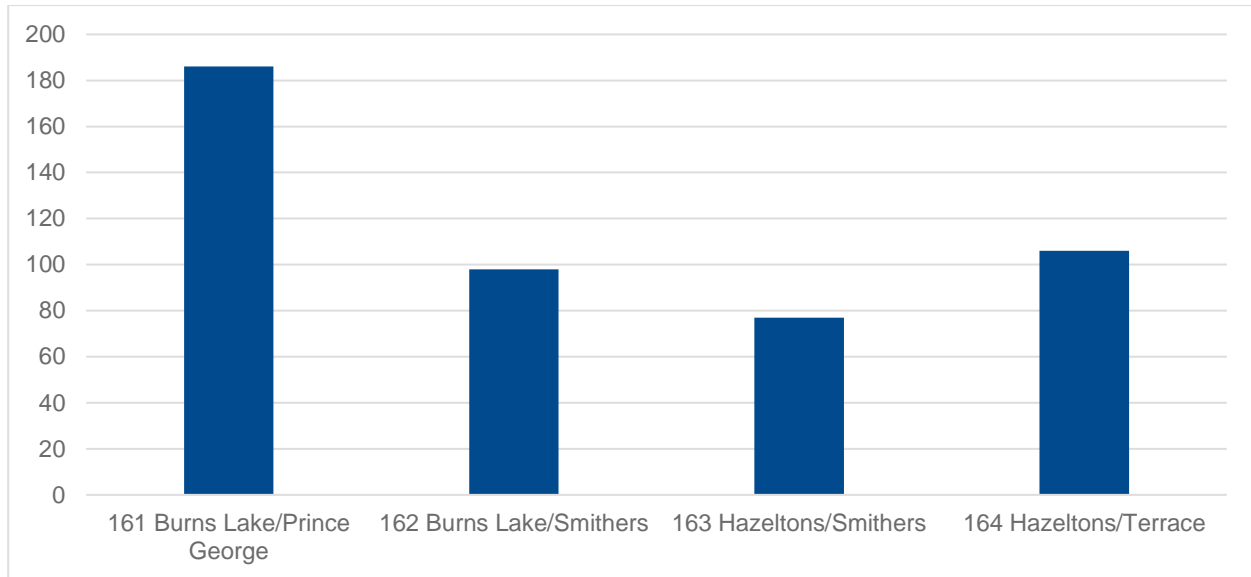


Figure 17: Which routes do you use?

Schedule Changes

When asked about possible changes to the existing routes, similar patterns emerged. Generally there isn't a strong desire to change the existing schedules earlier or later within the day; however, based on the qualitative information provided through the survey there is a desire for additional time in the destination community. With all routes, there was a strong desire for an additional service day on Friday or Saturday, depending on the current schedule. At the moment it wouldn't be feasible to change the service days around between the routes as the demand is highest on Friday or Saturday; expansion resources would be required to address this service gap.

Additional Comments

When asked if participants had any other comments or suggestions, participants responded with a range of answers. Below is a summary of their comments or suggestions.

Having to over-night somewhere to get to their destination is a barrier. Having to take additional travel time and needing overnight accommodations can make the trip costly. For example, a person wanting to travel from Smithers to Prince George would first need to catch the 162 to Burns Lake, over-night there, then take the 161 to Prince George the following day. While same day service is available through BC Bus North, it is more expensive than the BC Transit service.

Expanding service to other communities. There are many requests to provide connections to other communities in the region and beyond. Prince Rupert, Fort St. James, and Valemount are the most commonly requested areas to expand to in the region. Beyond the region, requests

further north up to Fort St. John, further south to Vancouver, and further east to Jasper have been received.

Having trips everyday. Currently each route only operates three days a week, with service days alternating within regions. There is a desire to have trips everyday of the week and to allow for connections between the routes.

Additional trips per day. With the exception of the route 163, each route only offers one round trip per day. Having additional trips would provide more flexibility for customers while traveling.

Maintaining affordability. Many people in the area are concerned with affordability and may live on a fixed income. Maintaining the affordability of the service is very important to users of the service.

Improving or introducing local service. Many participants indicated the lack of transportation options within their communities once they arrived, and would like to see a local transit system or some local transit routing within these smaller communities.

Promoting the transit service and improving customer information. Many participants indicated that they were unaware of the service or that there was a stop nearby. Additional work can be done to further promote the service and make information, such as schedules and stop locations, easily available and accessible to the public.

Looking to utilize the transit service as they get older. Many participants indicated that they currently don't use the service but have an interest in using the service as they age and their ability to drive deteriorates.

Improving or adding shelters at stops. Customers need a comfortable place to wait for the bus and be protected from the elements.

Stops are too far from their homes or destinations. Some customers have indicated that the nearest bus stop is too far for them to walk to and there are no Park & Rides.

Lack of washrooms. There are no washrooms aboard any BC Transit vehicle, which can be an issue on long distance trips such as those along Highway 16. Participants also mentioned not having enough time to use the washrooms that are available at select stops.

Safety at bus stops. People have indicated that they have felt unsafe while waiting for a bus at a bus stop due to environmental factors, such as a lack of lighting, and social factors, such as perceived threats from others.

Safety on-board. On-board the bus, the primary thing making people feel unsafe is other passengers. Complaints were raised about people who are intoxicated, loud, or aggressive.

Combating hate. Racism, classism, homophobia, transphobia, and other hateful comments and actions have no place in society and should not be tolerated. More work needs to be done to combat hateful comments and actions both at bus stops and on-board.

Next Steps

The responses for the engagement process have been tabulated and analyzed to support the development of the Service Review. The next step in the process is the development of the Service Review, following that the Service Review will be shared with a variety of stakeholders and partners along Highway 16.

For more information on this project, and to keep up-to-date, please visit <https://engage.bctransit.com/highway16>