



BETTER STOPS

APPENDIX C: Survey Open-ended Comments and Pop-up Community Engagement Analysis

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Introduction

This is a synthesis of the open-ended answers received from the Metro Transit Better Bus Stops Survey question, “*What else would you like us to know or consider (500-character limit)?*”, and comments received through Metro Transit pop-up engagement at Transit Centers and bus stops.

Metro Transit staff categorized comments and combined them with similar comments to identify the themes described here. The Community Engagement Team advised on the process used for analysis.

745 comments were reviewed and categorized.

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Summary

Categories and themes	Count
<i>Priority Shelter Locations</i>	
Stops serving people with disabilities, seniors, children, low income people, people that depend on transit	23
Comment is a neighborhood or stop specific request	16
Stops serving jobs or schools	7
Stops where there isn't a nearby shelter	6
Stops where there are traffic safety concerns	5
Stops where there are many riders	4
<i>Priority Shelter and Bus Stop Features</i>	
Shelter lights and street lighting	37
Heaters, and better heaters	31
Benches	21
Real time information	12
Signage	11
Shelters	11
<i>Shelter Design and Orientation</i>	
Accessibility and urban design: site design at the bus stop; need for level bus stop landing (ADA pads), safe street crossings, sidewalks; neighborhood context like putting the stop near businesses; designing shelters and bus stops for all ages and abilities; designing for traffic safety and personal security.	26
More shelter from the weather	17
<i>Regional Equity</i>	
Prioritizing ACP50s/transit-reliant	28
Geographic-based disparities	24
<i>Bus Service and Operations</i>	
New service	37
Timeliness	27
Frequency	22
Stop consolidation	20
Respectful and safe drivers	18
Span of service	18
On board experience, priority seating area, strollers	17
Better timed transfers	11
Crowded buses	10

Categories and themes	Count
<i>Transit Information</i>	
Route Info	21
Up-To-Date Information	13
Real Time Signs	8
More communication	8
Apps	5
Language, making information accessible to people with limited English proficiency	5
<i>Fares</i>	
Lower fares	5
Free passes	3
Fare enforcement	3
<i>Maintenance</i>	
Bus stop and shelter cleanliness	30
Snow and ice clearing	18
<i>Safety</i>	
Safety features (cameras, emergency buttons)	13
Lighting	11
Policing	11
Pedestrian safety	9
Youth	7
Drugs/alcohol	6
<i>Other comments</i>	
General compliment	25
Comment about the survey	23

Shelter Locations

With equity as the goal, what do community members think is important in deciding which bus stops have customer shelters? What community priorities could factor into decisions related to locating shelters?

What are the dominant themes?

22 comments were about prioritizing shelters at bus stops serving vulnerable people, seniors, children, low income people, people that depend on transit is a dominant theme.

16 comments were asking for shelters at specific bus stops or in specific neighborhoods.

Other themes were prioritizing stops that serve jobs or schools, stops where there isn't a nearby shelter, stops where there are traffic safety concerns, and stops where there are many riders.

What are the unique themes/comments?

Comments that were unique (haven't come up in the engagement results I've seen to date) were to use customer requests to prioritize shelter locations, and to put shelters where there is a commitment to adopt the shelter.

What quotes especially tell the stories of the data?

"Low income neighborhoods, racially diverse neighborhoods"

"Disabled people and children"

"Even though ridership may not be as high, shelters are needed near senior housing."

"New bus shelters really change how an area looks, for the better. It would be great to see more shelters like the A-line ones in areas that feel more unsafe for folks, or where most residents rely on the bus."

"This community relies on public transportation! Other communities that are wealthier and do not rely on public transportation as much have more comfortable bus stops."

"Shelters where many folks with limited mobility pass board & alight is very important."

"Central Ave is improving and bringing more people to the area. Bus usage will be increasing and shelters are needed."

Priorities from the Quarterly Reports:

- Similar comments
- High traffic areas, near popular destinations, near schools, and hospitals
- Locations close to High Schools
- In areas where people don't own vehicles, near clinics, hospitals, schools, housing, jobs, businesses, senior housing and social service centers

- Length of time between buses and personal safety concerns
- In areas with no trees and/or buildings nearby to break the wind and cold
- Change the ridership from 40 to 20 riders at a stop to be eligible for a shelter

Shelter Features

With equity as the goal, how do community members prioritize the addition of a heater and interior light within the shelter? What community priorities could factor into decisions related to the addition of a heater and interior light? What priority does community place on transit information at the bus stop?

What are the dominant themes?

37 comments had themes of shelter lighting and street lighting. Comments noted safety concerns and the importance of lighting, both inside shelters and around the bus stop.

31 comments stated need for heaters in shelters, and need for better heaters.

21 comments were about benches. People want the option to sit outside of a shelter, and to have a bench at bus stops where there is no shelter. This was raised as a need for seniors, people with disabilities, and where there are longer wait times.

12 comments were about real time information at the bus stop, including need for accurate real time information.

11 comments were about signage – Route and schedule information, maps, wayfinding, no smoking/no foul language/no spitting, and placement of signage.

11 comments were about the importance of shelters, and to prioritize shelters over adding features to shelters.

7 comments were about need for trash and recycling receptacles.

7 comments were about security cameras and emergency call buttons.

What are the unique themes/comments?

Water fountains, snow shovels placed at the bus stop, smoke alarm inside shelters to call police when people are smoking, the value of a tree where there isn't a shelter, power plug-in at the shelter, change machine for the bus, faster Ticket Vending Machines and where people are frequently paying with cash, hooks to hang bags in shelters, air conditioning, annunciators, snack machines.

What quotes especially tell the stories of the data?

"As the population ages, benches are very important. My downtown stop on Hennepin provides NO place to sit despite being served by eight high frequency routes. Hundreds of people wait at that stop every day and it is in the heart of Minneapolis but no place to rest is available."

"Via smart phones I can get schedules and real time information. But when a bus isn't coming for longer than 15 minutes it is nice to have a dry place to sit. Also, some folks like my ma need a place to sit due to old age pains."

"I absolutely hate the lean things at the light rail stations. I'm old and I need to sit, not lean as I stand."

"If nothing else can you at least put out more benches. If we can't get heated shelters a shelter would be better than nothing in Minnesota, snow, rain and cold."

“What I want is good quality bus shelters.”

“Schedule, system map, connections to other routes, destinations”

“All stops should have a smaller version of the real-time transit prediction machines. This makes it easier for those without phones, as well as those hesitant to text to figure out when the next vehicle comes (especially if they do not know the Stop ID #) to figure out when the next bus is coming. There have been several times where I arrive at a bus stop and wonder when the next bus will arrive but can't find out because there is no Stop ID.”

“In addition to route schedules, stop info should help with connections and nearby destinations.”

“Larger No Smoking Signs, Enforce the “No Smoking Area” with ticket, Large signs NO FOUL WORDS”

“Parents with small children are not safe at bus stops with poorly lit areas.”

“People want light, heating, and safety – when it's dark and there's only one person at the bus stop, they feel unsafe”

“Feel less safe in lighted bus shelter with bad street lighting, others can see me, but I can't see them”

“Bus shelters with lighting, heat, benches and maps are extremely helpful to those of us who rely on transit.”

“Heaters in most shelters I've used are nearly worthless. the shelters have only a back and 1/2 of each end which doesn't contain the heat and the heaters are so high (understandably) that they don't get the heat down where it's needed. most are a waste of money and electricity.”

“More heated shelters are essential. It's hard to wait in the cold!!”

Observations from the Quarterly Reports:

- Similar comments
- People with young children and who are women stated that they would love to see more lights, because it is dangerous at night

Shelter Design and Orientation

How much does the shelter style and its location in the sidewalk area affect the customer, pedestrian and property owner experiences?

What are the dominant themes?

There were 26 comments about accessibility and pedestrian-centered urban design. These comments were about the placement and site design at the bus stop, need for level bus stop landing (ADA pads), safe street crossings, sidewalks, neighborhood context like putting the stop near businesses, designing shelters and bus stops for all ages and abilities, designing for traffic safety and personal security.

There were 17 comments about designing and orienting shelters to provide greater protection from the weather. Comments were about wanting shelter walls to go to the ground, for more shelter enclosure, and orienting shelter walls to protect against north and west winds.

Less dominant themes (3 comments each): that people with direct experience should design the shelters, that the frit glass is not transparent enough, that shelters are problematic in high crime areas, and decorate shelters and make bus stops more fun.

What are the unique themes/comments?

Put markers on the glass of shelters so birds don't fly into them, bus shelters should be identical to the shelters at gas stations with very wide roofs with no walls.

What quotes especially tell the stories of the data?

"Don't ask just what adults need. A lot of children ride buses too. Wider sidewalks are a must. Too often I can't be visible to flag the bus without being dangerously close to fast driving automobile traffic. When I have a toddler with me I'm 10 times more anxious doing this."

"Legible, easily visible signs, a safe place to stand out of the grass and snow, adequate lighting, a big enough no parking zone so that the bus can pull up to the stop, and a safe way to walk to the stop should be included at all stops. This is 1000x more important than more shelters."

"Make the person who designs the shelter wait in it for 15 mins when its 20 below. Do it!"

"The design on the glass of the shelters makes it difficult to see an approaching bus."

"Stops alongside freeways are dangerous design"

"Bus stops should be safe, less isolated, closer to businesses/churches"

"I would like to suggest allowing persons or organizations to be able to "decorate" individual shelters, much like the original blue line light rail stations were done. All like the quirky and artistic it seems. They would have to meet an approval process. Example, making one look like a 50's grill. Most could be done with some kind of paint or flat, permanent type construction materials. I realize you would want safety in visibility but art can be accountable in that way."

"Once you've accomplished all of these tasks, it would be great if you made stops more interesting and more fun!"

"Bus stops should not be an afterthought - they should be well designed, safe, and provide amenities to serve regular riders and help new riders feel at ease."

"Make every stop look like a place"

"Good crosswalks where kids ride a lot are much needed."

"Shelters are good only for able-bodied people. Current shelters are too small for people with wheel chairs."

"There is a fear that you would be more visible to possible assailants in a shelter"

"Should consider areas that have high crime, shelters are not good because they are used to hide."

"Need to factor accessibility (=ease of use!) across wide range of abilities into bus stop features and locations. Some of us don't fit the "usual" categories (deaf, blind, or use wheelchair), but just plain cannot stand for prolonged periods (no seating at Chicago and Franklin?!). Also, put the no smoking signs in shelters at 4' height, not out of sight!"

"Most of the shelters Metro Transit uses are not sufficient for the winters in Minnesota. They're especially vulnerable to winds, since there are usually gaps at the bottom of the shelter. And LRT and A-Line shelters usually have one side completely open to wind."

"Shelters are primarily to protect us against wind and weather."

"Not good when shelter opens to the North and West, especially in winter (rain and wind). Could the openings to the shelter be on either end/both ends instead?"

Observations from the Quarterly Reports:

- Similar comments

Regional Equity

In what other ways is Metro Transit able to help community in accessing opportunity and achieving more just and fair inclusion in our region?

What are the dominant themes?

28 comments were about prioritizing ACP50s and transit-reliant riders.

24 comments were about geographic-based disparities – urban vs. suburban service, local vs. express service, neighborhood vs. neighborhood.

Other themes included prioritizing people with disabilities, seniors, and people with limited English proficiency.

What are the unique themes/comments?

Overcrowding on buses

What quotes especially tell the stories of the data?

“Metro Transit should serve the people who NEED it first”

“It’s critical to address the inadequate (and inequitable) distribution of stop amenities in RCAPs -- it’s intolerable that low-income and racially concentrated communities have fewer stops that meet the guidelines for shelters but don’t have shelters.”

“Make investments in low-wealth communities and communities that rely on transit”

“Please make sure that other communities who are more reliant on metro transit and have less automobile access receive the bulk of upgrades, as they are the communities most significantly affected by the lack of shelters and safe bus stops.”

“Bus shelters are essential to surviving for a lot of people, they are needed, not a luxury.”

“Racial equity”

“There is a lot of attention on new lines and new service, but not the same commitment to regular bus service”

“Equity is: fairness to everyone on a bus. This includes access to the bus for people with canes, walkers, wheel chairs, etc. This includes both the bus itself and snow removal to the bus stop.”

“Provide the same service to my community that you do to others”

“Make inner city bus service as pleasant as suburban buses”

Observations from the Quarterly Reports:

- Very similar comments – no new themes

Bus Service and Bus Operations

What are the dominant themes?

37 comments were about wanting new transit service to places that don't currently have it.

27 comments were about timeliness and late transit service.

22 comments were about wanting more frequent transit service.

20 comments were about bus stop consolidation, that fewer stops would mean faster service.

18 comments were about wanting respectful and safe bus drivers.

18 comments were about wanting an increased span of service, earlier in the morning or later at night.

17 comments were about transit customers' experience onboard the bus, such as design and enforcement of the priority seating area, wanting space for strollers, and comments about strollers in the priority seating area.

11 comments were about needing better timed transfers.

10 comments were about crowded buses.

What are the unique themes/comments?

Allow dogs on buses (not just service dogs), work with the school district on school start times, encourage people who have been drinking to take the bus.

What quotes especially tell the stories of the data?

"Add routes to areas that don't have routes. Extend bus service hours for those who leave work late at night. Example: Have the 219 run from 5am-midnight. There are people walking around 5am to get to the Maplewood Mall Transit Center because there aren't buses running at that time. And also have it run later when the 64 gets to the mall at night, there's no bus, I've seen women with babies walking home in the rain because they missed it"

"We NEED more bus lines on the East side!! So many people here don't drive and my nearest bus stops are a half mile from my house. I often do not feel safe walking at night around here and a closer bus line would make my life so much easier!"

"There aren't enough stops/routes around Lake Phalen to make public transit very useful for me. It takes significantly longer to get anywhere via bus than by driving from here."

"Please don't waste the money on the Trolley on Nicollet. The electric buses are great! When the new train lines are put in there is no reason people can't transfer to a bus!"

"The bus stops are too close together. People could get to their destination faster if there wasn't a stop every block. People can walk an extra block and get there 15 minutes faster."

“Having more options to get to suburbs. And buses that run more frequently and on the weekends that don’t now. Like the 61 doesn’t run on Sundays.”

“It is very frustrating when buses run 5 to 10 minutes ahead of schedule, especially when the buses are infrequent. When it is cold, I have to get to an un-sheltered stop 15 minutes early in order to not miss my bus.”

“The 22 stops very fast, takes off quick. Rude driver. Discrimination because of Spanish speaking”

Observations from the Quarterly Reports:

Quarterly reports also identify better connecting routes and transfers as an important issue, and echoed the need for more timely buses.

Quarterly reports also commented on improving the priority seating area on the bus. They state the bus needs to be equipped with space to accommodate a couple wheel chairs and strollers at the same time.

Transit Information

What are the dominant themes?

21 comments about Route Information on signs, and the new signs.

13 comments about the need for up-to-date information on signs and about detours.

8 comments about Real Time Signs, about information inaccuracy, their benefit, and wanting them in more places.

8 comments about communication, such as promoting event passes, employment at Metro Transit, and communications about guidelines for bus stop amenities.

5 comments about mobile Apps.

5 comments about Language, making information accessible to people with limited English proficiency, people who don't read.

What are the unique themes/comments?

Include connections and nearby destinations

Prefer Real Time signs compared to shelters

Positive feedback on the new signs with bus frequency

Necessary for drivers to announce the stops

What quotes especially tell the stories of the data?

"Provide accurate bus schedule. Sometimes hard to tell which stop I have to get on, or which ride I have to be on to get on. Example, Wabasha and Water in downtown St. Paul."

"I realize that schedules at every stop would be expensive, but I'd like to see basic stops with route numbers on the sign. I shouldn't need a cell phone just to tell me if the route I need stops there."

"Routes, time tables and bus stops work well for able people without kids or equipment, but don't work well for the disabled, people with kids, and people who don't speak English."

"Individuals who can't see well, speak a language other than English, or can't read have a hard time"

"proper signage! Construction is all over the city, signage is confusing, missing or frustrating."

"A Metro Transit app with real-time bus tracking and push notifications when buses are delayed would be very helpful! The current mobile site doesn't let us know when buses are late via the trip planner."

"Please put the schedules at a height where people can read them without stooping over or standing on a ladder. The shelter at 5th and Cedar has the schedules posted down by my knees and many seniors cannot read them because they can't stoop low enough to read the times. Also, the electronic sign is often wrong in terms of when the next bus will come."

Observations from the Quarterly Reports:

- Language troubles for Somali Elders
- The Quarterly reports echo the findings outlined in the survey categorizing – need to improve Route/Bus stop info.
- The implementation of real time signs is a highlighted desire.

Fares

What are the dominant themes?

5 comments made about lowering fares

3 comments made about free passes

3 comments made about fare enforcement

What are the unique themes/comments?

Increase access to discount student passes. Fare disparity, that lower income people who rely on transit should get the best, most affordable service.

What quotes especially tell the stories of the data?

"Too expensive to ride whenever I want to"

"More free passes"

"Greater enforcement of the payment of fares"

Observations from the Quarterly Reports:

- Similar comments

Maintenance

What are the dominant themes?

Overall cleanliness of bus stops and shelters (30 comments), and clearing of snow and ice at bus stops (18 comments) were the great majority of comments about maintenance.

What are the unique themes/comments?

Maintenance of landscaping, replacing bulbs in shelter lighting, put in a water filter at a transit center drinking fountain, and a complaint about temporary removal of a shelter in winter.

What quotes especially tell the stories of the data?

"Can someone please make sure that there's no ice/icy/snow and better access during winter seasons."

"The sidewalk needs to be adequately cleared down to the cement and longer than the length of the bus for ease of on and off boarding."

"When the stops aren't shoveled it's hard to get on with walker"

"Please clean the snow and ice at the bus stops in winter. This is a huge problem."

"Snow removal is important, its dangerous to climb over piles of snow to get on the bus"

"Cleaning bus shelters on a fairly frequent basis - urine, spit, vomit and trash are never-ending in shelters along Eat Street/Nicollet between downtown and Lake Street."

"Even if a shelter is available, I will usually stand outside it--I'd rather be outside in the rain than in a shelter. This is because shelters are often dirty, smell bad (like urine), and full of litter. I sometimes set my bags on a bench in a shelter, but never sit on the bench. I do like outdoor benches, though! I'd like to have many more bus stops with outdoor benches. Trash cans? Seems like bus stops should have them, but maybe not, as they usually are overflowing/dirty and add to the ick factor."

"More important than building: MAINTENANCE!!! keep stops clean and PLOWED!!!!!"

Observations from the Quarterly Reports:

- Similar comments

Safety

What are the dominant themes?

13 comments made about wanting safety features such as cameras and emergency buttons

11 comments made about wanting lighting/better lighting

11 comments made about policing (mainly wanting more police presence)

9 comments made about pedestrian safety and safer street crossings

7 comments related to youth (both concerns for children's safety and concerns about youth behavior)

6 comments related to drugs or alcohol use (drug-dealing, people drinking in the shelter/at the bus stop/on the bus)

What are the unique themes/comments?

Community initiative/ownership of bus stops to decrease safety concerns, and Safety features such as seat belts, securing strollers, baby seats.

What quotes especially tell the stories of the data?

"Any improvements to mass transit are welcome and greatly appreciated. One other thing might be cctv and panic alarms at bus stops because if you ride the bus in the city and at off hours it might make it feel safer to know someone is watching."

"Better lighting, seating, policing"

"When it comes to her (the respondent's daughter) needs, safety and security are most critical - lighting in and around shelters, more shelters where there aren't any within 2-3 blocks, and safe crossings near bus stops."

"We need more police on the bus"

"Safe crossings to shelter"

Observations from the Quarterly Reports:

- Street accessibility for mobility devices: "Curbside safety for bus access: lawns not mowed hide holes/dips, curb cuts not Wheel Chair accessible."
- Exploring alternatives to policing: "Many riders have spoken about feeling unsafe during their commute and have requested security cameras or security details on the buses. However, most available security options—such as Metro Transit Police—are actually more endangering to riders. My team is interested in looking for creative means of increasing transit rider security at shelters and during commutes."
- Otherwise very similar comments

Other Comments

There were 25 general compliments, such as “love metro transit. keep improving it.”

There were 23 comments that were either clarifying the answers to the demographic questions, such as “I have a drivers license but no car” or were comments on the survey itself, such as “This survey would be better if it was easily viewed on mobile devices.”

Pop-up engagement at Transit Centers and busy bus stops

Metro Transit staff asked transit customers to identify up to three criteria with sticky dots on a poster. Below are the results:

<h2>What Criteria Should Metro Transit Use to Prioritize Investments at Bus Stops?</h2>		
<p style="text-align: center;">↓ Place Your Dots Below to Vote ↓</p>		
Lots of Bus Riders		Total of 87
Lengthy Bus Wait Times (15 minutes or more)		Total of 100
No Car		Total of 65
Limited Mobility		Total of 22
Bus Transfer Point		Total of 36
Personal Safety Concerns		Total of 22
Traffic Safety Concerns		Total of 13
Near Commercial Hubs, Employment or Education Centers		Total of 27
Near Senior Housing, Hospitals Social Service Centers, Schools		Total of 42
No Bus Shelter Within 2-3 Blocks		Total of 49
Distribution Across the Region		Total of 3
Other?	Place Post-It Here with your Suggestion	