SJ 19: INTERIM STUDY OF PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

FINAL REPORT TO THE 70TH MONTANA LEGISLATURE

Transportation Interim Committee
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This report is a summary of the work of the Transportation Interim Committee (TIC), specific to the TIC's 2025-2026 public transportation study as outlined in the TIC's 2025-2026 work plan and Senate Joint Resolution 19 (2025). Members received additional information and public testimony on the subject, and this report is an effort to highlight key information and the processes followed by the TIC in reaching its conclusions. To review additional information, including audio minutes and exhibits, visit the TIC website: https://committees.legmt.gov/#/nonStandingCommittees/32.

INTERIM STUDY ON PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

INTRODUCTION

The Legislative Council assigned SJ 19, a joint resolution requesting a study of ways to improve public transportation, to the TIC at the council's June 10, 2025, meeting. SJ 19 was ranked 27th of 36 study resolutions in the post-session legislator poll. This study resolution was sponsored by Sen. Andrea Olsen.

SJ 19 STUDY RESOLUTION

SJ 19 directed the committee to "*investigate ways to improve passenger transportation and public transit services in the state, including but not limited to the establishment of a passenger transportation commission and a review of applicable laws that may need updating to allow the use of autonomous vehicles and provide for public safety*."

STUDY STRATEGY

Based on the work plan discussions in the first two meetings, the TIC adopted an SJ 19 Study Strategy at its November 2025 meeting. The work plan included:

- receiving presentations from panels of experts;
- hearing perspectives from other states; and
- conducting a statewide online public survey of Montanans.

NOTE ABOUT TERMINOLOGY

It's important to note that some forms of transportation discussed in this report, such as dial-a-ride paratransit services or commercial rideshare services, are not considered "public transportation" under state or federal law and may not receive public funding via citizens' tax dollars. However, the committee conducted its study to glean a better understanding of ***how the public transports themselves***. The goal was to understand the reality of how Montanans get from place to place under the Big Sky — with or without the use of personal vehicles.

See **Appendix B** for a glossary of public transportation terminology and definitions.

COMMITTEE FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

After considering testimony and evidence over the course of the interim, the committee adopted the following conclusions.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Public response indicates broad support for increased public transportation statewide.
    a. Implement a public transportation and passenger transit entity (such as an advisory board or a commission) to continue the work of SJ 19 and improve transit service delivery to Montanans.
    b. Create a dedicated funding source for public transportation.
2. Montana citizens who report the highest usage of public transportation tend to be young (ages 18–34) and lower paid (under $70,000 annual household income).
    a. Require "free fare" public transportation in cities above a certain population threshold (*to be determined by the entity specified in 1a*).
    b. Require cost-adjusted fares for young and low-income citizens.
3. Existing fixed-route public transportation is underused due to route schedules misaligned with the standard workday or route stop locations that don't reach desired destinations.
    a. Require public transportation to be provided between the hours of 6 a.m. and 9 a.m. and between 3 p.m. and 6 p.m. in order to be eligible for state funding.
    b. Implement weekend and late-night public transportation services.
    c. Require route stop locations within a given distance (*to be determined by the entity specified in 1a*) from a city's highest concentration of population.
4. Existing public transportation services are not interconnected enough for users to get to their "last-mile" destination.
    a. Implement shuttle or short-route services to and from areas of high demand, such as shopping centers or hospitals.
5. Citizens in rural counties overwhelmingly cite a lack of access to public transportation.
    a. Consider requiring each county to coordinate publicly available transportation, such as a vanpool or dial-a-ride, and make it available on a weekly basis to a nearby center of commerce.
6. Recreation access is the most frequent and the most desired use of public transportation, both by Montana residents and by tourists visiting the state.
    a. Implement regular public transportation to and from Glacier and Yellowstone national parks and various state parks in Montana.
7. Shared-use pathways are used and viewed positively by Montanans, but the pathways could use some improvements.
    a. Identify gaps in connectivity between shared-use pathways and areas of high risk; then build additional infrastructure to protect citizens.

PUBLIC GROUND TRANSPORTATION

TRAVEL BY ROADWAY

"The most important reason for going from one place to another is to see what's in between, and they took great pleasure in doing just that." — Norton Juster, The Phantom Tollbooth

Montanans are no strangers to long drives on the open road. Some jokingly refer to the Big Sky State as "one small town with very long streets" or the long hours in the car as "windshield time." But roadways are not just for cars: Trucks, buses, bikes, motorcycles, scooters, and even horses get from one location to another via Montana's expansive network of roads.

In September 2025, the TIC conducted a panel discussion[1] that included representation from the Montana Association of Counties, the Gallatin Valley Urban Transportation District (GVUTD), the Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority, Mountain Line of Missoula, Butte-Silver Bow Transit, Billings MET Transit, the Montana Transit Association, the Veterans Transportation Service, Montana's Essential Air Service (EAS) Task Force, and the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) Statewide Planning and Modal Operations Division. The broad discussion covered modalities and usage of existing public transit services (largely roadway-based), funding sources for those services, interactions between tourism and public transit, and ongoing plans for public transit expansion. MDT also provided a map of public transportation services (2023), which is maintained on its website.[2]

BUSES

The September 2025 panelists from the GVUTD, Missoula's Mountain Line, Butte-Silver Bow Transit, and Billings MET Transit described their communities' existing fixed-route services, their costs of operation, and stop-level conditions (such as shelters, lighting, and sidewalk connectivity). The panelists provided brief information about Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funds such as section 5303 (metropolitan planning), 5304 (statewide planning), [3] section 5307 (urbanized area), [4] and section 5339 (buses and bus facilities)[5].



Figure 1 (left): TIC members gather in front of a Streamline bus before visiting multiple sites in the Bozeman/Belgrade area on May 11, 2026.

[1] The discussion begins at 05:02:25 in the recording: https://streaming-video.legmt.gov/browse/item/4a6dd8a4-81cd-4be3-8c2d-5f53959855a4?videoPlayback=true
[2] https://www.mdt.mt.gov/TRAVINFO/public-trans.aspx
[3] https://www.transit.dot.gov/funding/grants/metropolitan-statewide-planning-and-nonmetropolitan-transportation-planning-5303-5304
[4] https://www.transit.dot.gov/funding/grants/urbanized-area-formula-grants-5307
[5] https://www.transit.dot.gov/funding/grants/busprogram

The May 2026 travel meeting in Bozeman was assisted by the GVUTD Streamline bus service transporting TIC members between site-visit locations. During the transports, TIC members were able to view designated bus routes, the downtown Streamline transfer station, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility features of a Streamline bus.

In July 2026, Jefferson Transit provided an overview of its recent study and related efforts to improve the existing public transportation bus services in rural Jefferson County, WA, which includes geographic as well as demographic challenges.

PASSENGER VEHICLES

The September 2025 panel[1] included input from the Montana Transit Association,[6] which provided context and information about county and community transit programs. Programs highlighted included vanpool commuter programs, Councils on Aging transportation programs for seniors, and dial-a-ride services for community members. Programs like these help citizens to reach centers of commerce and help stimulate local economies.

In November 2025, Chair Sen. Russ Tempel and Sen. Denley Loge described a site visit to an autonomous vehicle (AV) facility in Arizona, including pictures and video of the AV in operation. This overview included a caution that overly restrictive policies may prevent AV exploration and innovation in the state.

In March 2026, staff from the Utah Department of Transportation presented to the TIC AV technology and state implementation in Utah and across the nation. Utah has taken a permissive approach to allowing AV testing and does not collect data on those AV operations.

A July 2026 panel discussion with the departments of transportation from Minnesota and Texas provided overviews of those states' approaches to AVs; both have a panel of experts in connected and autonomous vehicles who are involved in studies, analysis, and assorted pilot projects. Minnesota noted that AV shuttle programs and platooning likely wouldn't continue in the state after the pilot projects ended. Staff from Ohio Congressman Bob Latta's office provided a short overview of the SELF DRIVE Act currently making its way through Congress, which establishes a nationwide AV safety case framework.

SHARED-USE PATHWAYS

The TIC hosted a panel discussion in January 2026[7] that included representatives from Ability Montana, Disability Rights Montana, the National Federation of the Blind of Montana, North Central Independent Living Services, the Rails to Trails Conservancy, Bike Walk Montana, and the Rural Institute for Inclusive Communities at the University of Montana. The discussion focused on the crucial need for public transportation for citizens with accessibility or mobility needs, and the need for *interconnected* transportation services and pathways so that users can get to their

[6] https://www.gomttransit.org/
[7] The discussion begins at 02:06:52 in the recording: https://streaming-video.legmt.gov/browse/item/352167e2-bcec-4b22-9b82-09910be65fd1?videoPlayback=true

"last-mile" destination. According to the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT),[8] over 25% of Americans do not have a driver's license and must rely on other forms of transportation besides a personal vehicle.

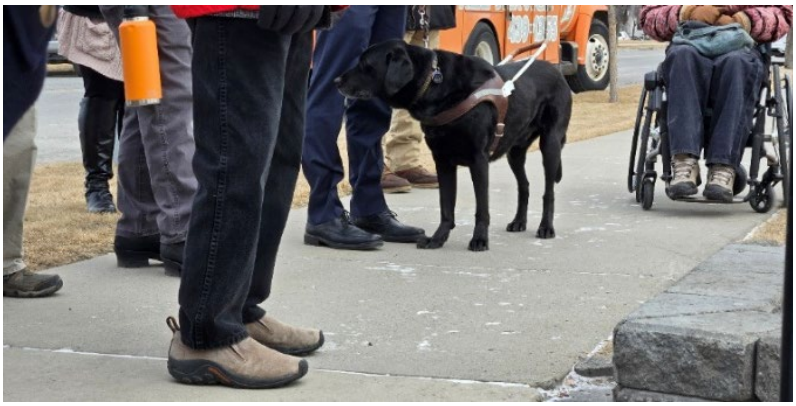


Figure 2 (left). During the January 2026 meeting, the TIC engaged in an "Inclusive, Interdisciplinary Walk and Move Audit" across the Capitol Complex. A wheelchair user and a guide dog team joined the walk, highlighting how gaps in infrastructure planning cause downstream effects to users of all different levels of ability.

TRAVEL BY RAIL

"The United States as we know it today is largely the result of mechanical inventions, and in particular of agricultural machinery and the railroad." — John Moody

The nearly 2,800 miles of Class I rail lines in the state are used for two primary purposes: the movement of freight and the movement of people. Railroads, and rail authorities, are regulated under the Public Service Commission pursuant to section 69-1-102, MCA, and section 69-14-102, MCA.

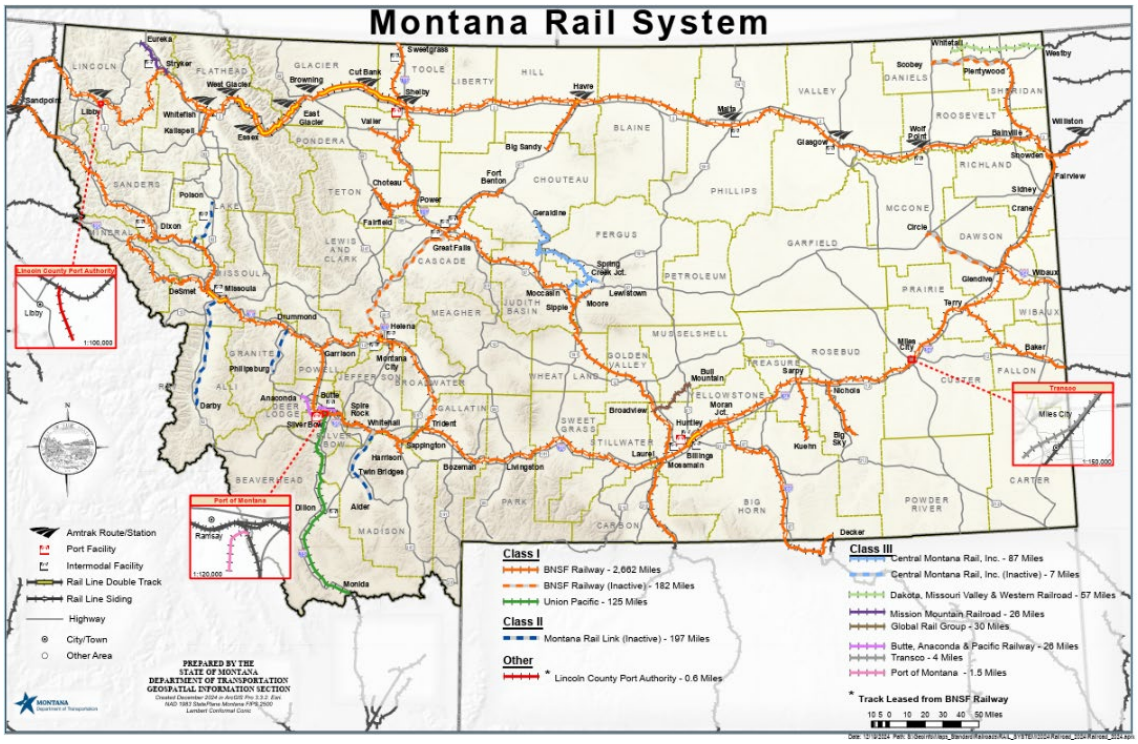


Figure 3 (right). A map of Montana's rail system produced by MDT's Geospatial Information Section in December 2024.

[8] https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/policyinformation/statistics/2023/dv1c.cfm

Since the passage of House Bill 541 in 1993, Montana law allows counties to jointly create rail authorities pursuant to Title 7, chapter 14, part 16, MCA. In 2020, 12 counties passed a joint resolution to establish the Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority (BSPRA)[9] to coordinate efforts to reestablish passenger rail service across southern Montana.

PASSENGER RAIL

Currently, the only passenger rail in Montana is the Amtrak Empire Builder,[10] a daily passenger train connecting Chicago, Minneapolis, Portland, and Seattle, with 12 stations in Montana along the Hi-Line corridor and Glacier National Park.

In December 2023, BSPRA was accepted into the Federal Railroad Administration's Corridor Identification and Development (CID) program to begin planning and designing new passenger rail service on the former North Coast Hiawatha route, now referred to as the Big Sky North Coast Corridor.

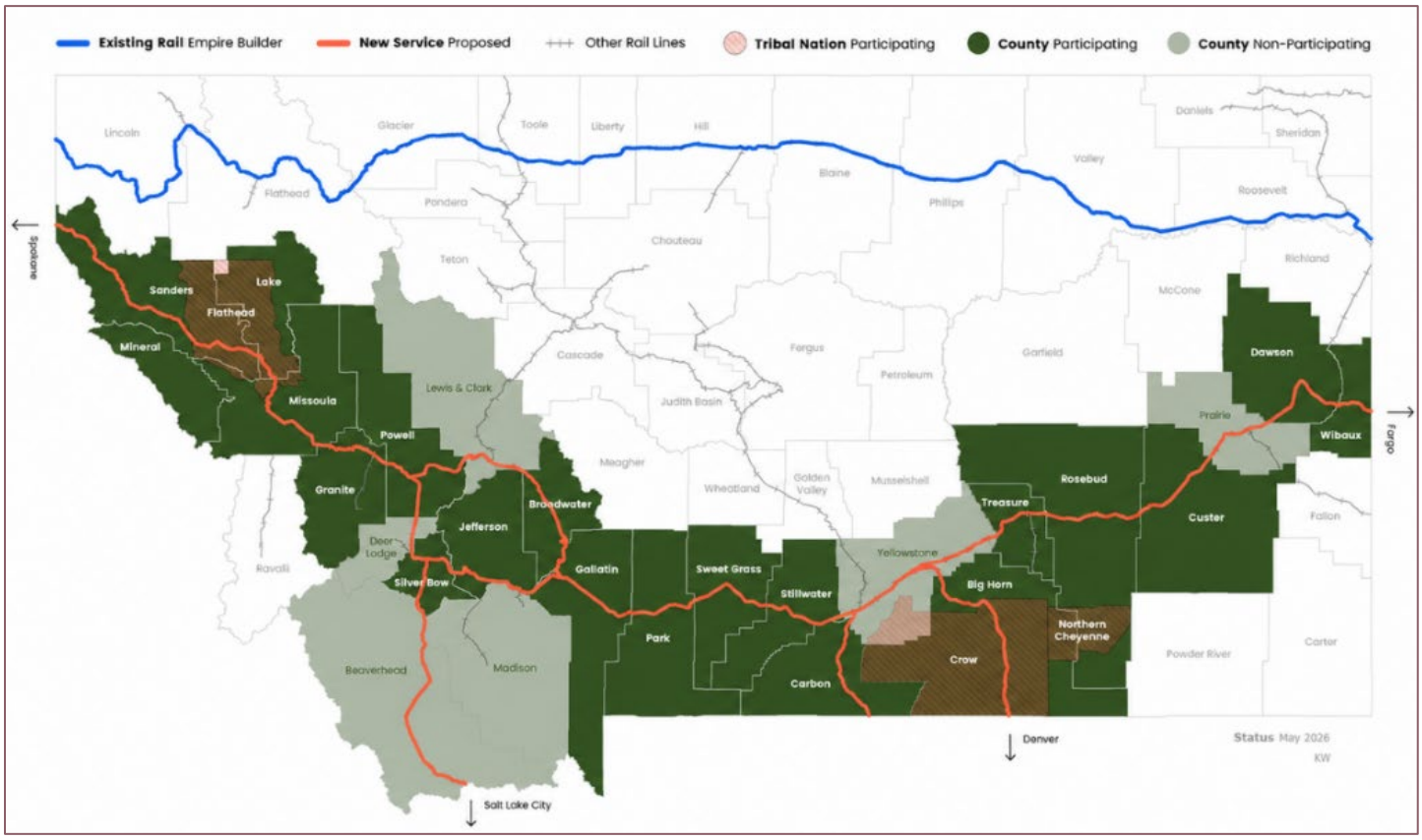


Figure 4 (above). As of May 2026, BSPRA membership is comprised of 20 member counties along the proposed new service route.

[9] https://bigskyrailmt.gov/
[10] https://www.amtrak.com/empire-builder-train

Corridor development under CID occurs in three steps:[11]

1. Corridor development initiation and scope, schedule, and cost estimate for preparing a service development plan
2. Service development plan
3. Project development

BSPRA projects that CID Step 1 will be completed, and Step 2 begun, by the end of 2026.[12]

In November 2026, Rep. Denise Baum and Sen. Andrea Olsen provided information and reflections from the Pacific NorthWest Economic Region Economic Forum and Rail Summit[13] and the BSPRA annual conference.[14] MDT staff provided an overview of Montana's State Rail Plan, including a comparison of the rail plan to the freight plan, which is a separate, similar plan required by the Federal Highway Administration.

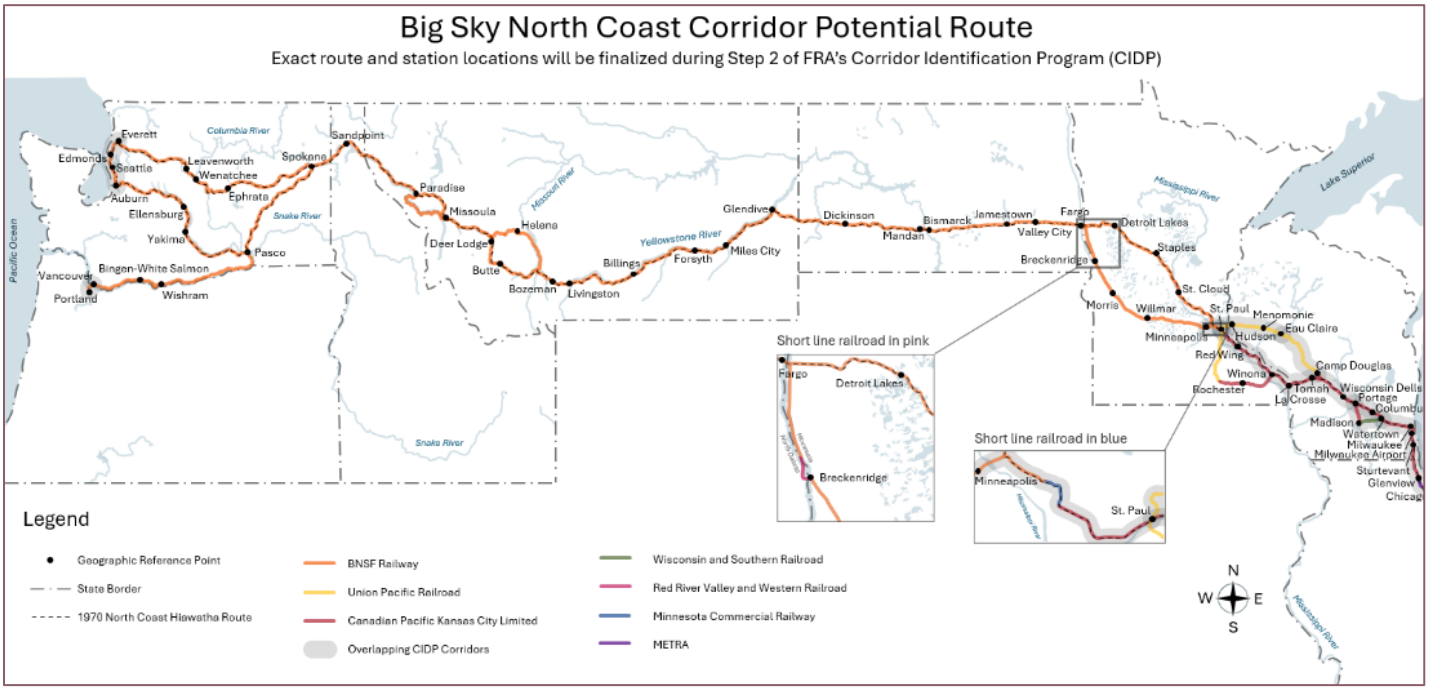


Figure 5 (above). A potential route for the Big Sky North Coast Corridor long-distance route is shown, connecting Chicago, Minneapolis, Fargo, Bismarck, Glendive, Miles City, Billings, Bozeman, Missoula, Sandpoint, Spokane, Seattle, and Portland. Exact route and station locations will be finalized during Step 2 of the CID program.

[11] https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2022/12/20/2022-27559/notice-of-solicitation-of-corridor-proposals-and-funding-opportunity-for-the-corridor-identification
[12] https://bigskyrailmt.gov/s/BSPRA_Fast_Facts-020226.pdf
[13] https://www.pnwer.org/2025-forum.html
[14] https://bigskyrailmt.gov/2025-bspra-annual-conference

FREIGHT RAIL

Any discussion of Montana's railroads must include freight rail. While freight rail infrastructure may not directly relate to public transportation, it is a crucial component of Montana's economy, allowing products like agricultural commodities, manufactured parts, and petroleum products to be shipped all over the country. Additional passenger rail services would likely utilize existing freight track. Any updates to passenger rail infrastructure or services must consider the impacts on freight rail, and should emphasize partnership between passenger and freight, rather than competition for the same resources.

In January 2026, concerned agricultural producers including the Montana Grain Growers Association provided information and commentary on a proposed merger between the Union Pacific and Norfolk Southern railroads and its downstream effects on freight shippers in Montana. BNSF Railway Company was also in the room to provide information and perspective on the merger's predicted effects. A committee letter was sent to the federal Surface Transportation Board in March 2026.

LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

The committee considered **PD 07:** Require MDT to update the state rail plan every 4 years but ultimately did not adopt it as a committee bill.

FUNDING FOR PUBLIC GROUND TRANSPORTATION

MDT provided information at the March 2026 TIC meeting about two sources of funding it administers.

SECTION 5311: FORMULA GRANTS FOR RURAL AREAS

PURPOSE

Section 5311 grants support public transportation in rural areas (populations under 50,000) to improve mobility for residents who rely on public transit to access jobs, health care, education, and other essential services, and that transportation must be open to the public. MDT does not provide any direct transit services; rather, the department acts as a pass-through entity for grants, which MDT monitors to ensure federal compliance.

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

Primary Recipients: U.S. states and federally recognized Indian tribes

Subrecipients: Local government authorities, nonprofit organizations, public transportation operators, and intercity bus (ICB) providers. MDT currently has 35 subrecipients for section 5311 grants

- *Note:* ICB providers must receive **at least 15%** of the annual apportionment.

MDT'S ROLE

MDT acts as a pass-through agency for FTA funds by administering funding and ensuring compliance for local providers.

ELIGIBLE USES & FEDERAL SHARE

Category	Federal Share	Eligible Use
Vehicles	86.58%	Includes ICB
Operating Assistance	54.11%	Fuel, driver wages
Admin & Preventative Maintenance	80%	Advertising, insurance, oil changes
State Administration	100%	Max 10% of apportionment
Rural Transportation Assistance Program (5311(b)(3))	100%	Training/technical support for rural recipients

ADDITIONAL ELIGIBLE USES

- Facilities and equipment
- Planning and technical assistance
- Mobility management programs
- Job access and reverse commute projects
- Emergency medical transportation

FUNDING HISTORY

- Federal fiscal year (FFY) 2019–2021 Average: $11.7 million/year
- FFY 2022–2025 Average: $14.6 million/year

TRANSADE: TRANSPORTATION ASSISTANCE FOR THE DISABLED AND ELDERLY

PURPOSE

Provides state-funded operating assistance to transit providers serving elderly and disabled populations.

FUNDING SOURCE

Montana special revenue from the rental vehicle tax (section 7-14-112, MCA).

KEY FEATURES

- TransADE is used primarily to offset local match requirements on operating contracts.
- TransADE has also been used to cover vehicle cost increases due to procurement delays (e.g., COVID-19 impacts).
- Allocations are based on census and ridership data as required by Montana statute.
- ICB providers are not eligible.

AVERAGE ANNUAL REVENUE

Approximately $2.5 million over the past three years (2023–2025).

OTHER MODES OF PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

TRAVEL BY WATER

"Have you also learned that secret from the river; that there is no such thing as time? That the river is everywhere at the same time, at the source and at the mouth, at the waterfall, at the ferry, at the current, in the ocean and in the mountains, everywhere and that the present only exists for it, not the shadow of the past nor the shadow of the future." — *Hermann Hesse*

Historically, rivers and streams acted as built-in routes for humans to explore and navigate the countryside. Rivers remain important landmarks and continue to act as a mode of transportation in the modern age.

North-central Montana is home to the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument, established in 2001 and spanning 149 miles of the upper Missouri River. To cross the Missouri River and access the monument, a driver must either find a bridge or take one of the three county ferries available.

Montana law empowers boards of county commissioners to operate ferries within their counties and allows for adjacent counties to jointly administer a ferry (section 7-14-2801, MCA). Ferry costs may be supported by county taxes, subject to section 15-10-420, MCA.



Figure 6 (left): Virgelle Ferry viewed from the riverbank, ready for passengers.



Figure 7 (right): "Buzzer box" to call for ferry service. Buzzers are located on both sides of the Missouri River at the Virgelle Ferry crossing.

	Carter Ferry	McClelland-Stafford Ferry	Virgelle Ferry
Location	Located in Chouteau County near Fort Benton, MT. **Address:** Ferry Road — take Highway 87 to Carter, then drive down Ferry Road to reach the riverbank. There is a buzzer on the riverbank that can be used to call the ferry operator.	Located north of Winifred, MT, between Blaine County and Fergus County; the Missouri River acts as the county boundary line. **Address:** Located on Lloyd Road in Blaine County, or Stafford Ferry Road in Fergus County. Follow either road down to the riverbank.	Located in Chouteau County near Virgelle, MT. **Address:** 8337 Virgelle Ferry Road North, Virgelle, MT, 59460
Contact	**Phone:** (406) 734-5335	**Phone:** (406) 462-5513	**Phone:** (406) 378-3194 or press the buzzer to call the ferry operator
Seasonal Hours	**Hours:** Mon-Sat 7am-7pm Sun 9am-5pm **Season:** Operates Easter through Thanksgiving, depending on weather, water flow, and ice dams	**Hours:** Mon-Sat 7am-7pm Sun 9am-5pm **Season:** Operates Memorial Day through Halloween, depending on weather, water flow, and ice dams	**Hours:** Mon-Sat 7am-7pm Sun 9am-5pm **Season:** Operates Easter through Thanksgiving, depending on weather, water flow, and ice dams
Costs	**Costs to operate:** Insurance, operations and maintenance, ferry operator salary	**Costs to operate:** Insurance (6 months), operations and maintenance, ferry operator salary Blaine and Fergus counties have a cooperative agreement in place; both counties pay an equitable portion of the costs, and each county is responsible for construction and repairs on their side of the river.	**Costs to operate:** Insurance, operations and maintenance, ferry operator salary (Uses Montana Association of Counties self-insurance)
Other Notes	**Customers:** Locals, tourists, hunters, anglers **Notes:** Cell reception is inconsistent depending on cell service carrier. There is a new cell tower in Carter, MT, that has improved cell reception in some areas.	**Customers:** Tourists, hunters, anglers **Notes:** Locals on the north side of the river (Blaine County) know this as the McClelland ferry, while on the south side of the river (Fergus County) the locals call it the Stafford ferry. The different names date back to the original landowners when the ferry was put into use in 1921. The north side of the river (Blaine County) has some campground spaces with fire rings and concrete picnic tables available. Cell service and radio signal are limited.	**Customers:** Locals, farmers, tourists, hunters, anglers **Notes:** Cell service is limited depending on cell service carrier. The Upper Missouri River Breaks land formations cause some interference with cell reception. At the Coal Banks landing near the ferry launch, there are some picnic tables and fire rings available for use.

Figure 8 (right): Taken from onboard the Virgelle ferry, this image shows the view looking west.



TRAVEL BY AIR

"Once you have tasted flight, you will forever walk the earth with your eyes turned skyward, for there you have been, and there you will always long to return." — Leonardo da Vinci

Since the Wright brothers' first controlled, sustained flight of an engine-powered, heavier-than-air aircraft in 1903, the field of aviation and aerospace has exploded and expanded. Air travel today includes things like propeller-driven airplanes, jets, gliders, helicopters, and hot-air balloons.



Figure 9 (above): BZN president and CEO Brian Sprenger addresses the TIC, joined by several airport authority board members, while construction on the main terminal continues in the background in Belgrade, MT.

In 2026, MDT conducted an economic impact study (EIS)[15] of Montana's airports to quantify the value of aviation to the state. There is a brochure on the MDT EIS web page for each airport in Montana, specifying each airport's benefits to its community including jobs, payroll, economic impact, and qualitative impacts.

[15] https://mdt.mt.gov/aviation/economic-impact-study.aspx

ESSENTIAL AIR SERVICE (EAS)

After the passage of the Airline Deregulation Act in 1978, the EAS program was implemented to guarantee a continued minimum level of two scheduled round trips per day to eligible communities. The EAS program is administered through USDOT via contracted subsidies directly to the airlines serving each community. As of fall 2024, USDOT provided EAS to 65 communities in Alaska and 112 communities in the 48 contiguous states, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico.[16] In Montana, those communities are:

- Butte: Bert Mooney Airport (BTM) — two round trips per day
- Glasgow: Wokal Field (GGW) — two round trips per day
- Glendive: Dawson Community Airport (GDV) — two round trips per day
- Havre: Havre City-County Airport (HVR) — two round trips per day
- Sidney: Sidney-Richland Airport (SDY) — five round trips per day
- Wolf Point: L.M. Clayton Airport (OLF) — two round trips per day
- West Yellowstone: Yellowstone Airport (WYS) — two round trips per day (seasonally)

Additionally, Montana has an Essential Air Service Task Force, comprised of all seven EAS recipient airports in the state. MDT's Aeronautics Division provides nonfinancial administrative support to assist the task force.

HOT-AIR BALLOONS

During the May 2026 travel meeting, the TIC visited Endeavor Ballooning in Bozeman, the only hot-air balloon operator in the state of Montana. Balloon operators are licensed pilots and must be certified as commercial pilots before taking unlicensed riders up in a balloon. Endeavor welcomed the TIC to the facility to learn how balloon operators are licensed, to view how balloons are stored and maintained, and to see how a balloon gets inflated — a process that requires at least three people to prevent the balloon from floating away!

Figure 10 (right) Endeavor Ballooning owner Colin Graham, with his son, Declan, stands in a basket and controls burners to inflate a hot air balloon while the TIC stands in the foreground. Pictured left to right: Becca Brown, Sen. Denley Loge, Sen. Gregg Hunter, Rep. Denise Baum, MDT Deputy Director Larry Flynn, Rep. Curtis Cochran, Rep. Greg Kmetz, Sen. Russ Tempel, and Rep. Sidney "Chip" Fitzpatrick.



[16] https://www.transportation.gov/policy/aviation-policy/small-community-rural-air-service/essential-air-service

PUBLIC SURVEY OF MONTANANS

The TIC published an online survey to gather data directly and anonymously from Montanans regarding current public transportation availability and usage. The survey was open from February 23, 2026, to April 10, 2026, and received 1,330 responses from a total of 55 counties. A copy of the survey can be found in **Appendix E**.

DEMOGRAPHICS OF SURVEY RESPONSES

The first four survey questions gathered general demographic information: county and town of residence, age range, and approximate annual household income.

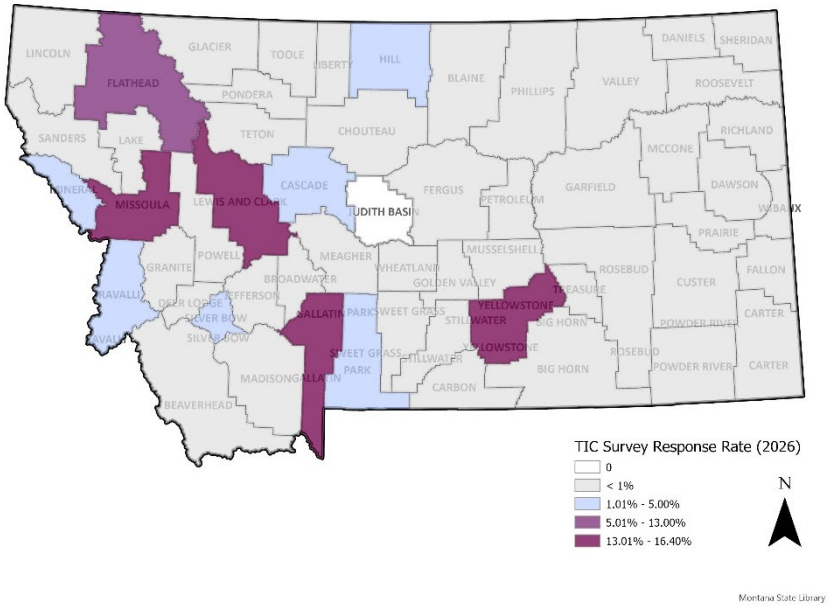


Figure 11 (left). Shaded area map showing proportion of survey responses from each county in Montana.

Age Range	Rural	Urban	Grand Total
18-24	8	35	**43**
25-34	53	143	**196**
35-44	94	151	**245**
45-54	79	127	**206**
55-64	113	143	**256**
65+	170	214	**384**
Grand Total	**517**	**813**	**1330**

Figure 12 (right). Age range as reported by survey respondents, broken down to rural vs urban. (Zero respondents were under 18.)

Figure 13 (below). Estimated annual household income as reported by survey respondents, broken down to rural versus urban.

Approx. Annual Household Income	Rural	Urban	Grand Total
Under $25,000	31	66	**97**
Between $25,000 and $49,999	87	116	**203**
Between $50,000 and $69,999	77	133	**210**
Between $70,000 and $99,999	145	177	**322**
Over $100,000	177	321	**498**
Grand Total	**517**	**813**	**1330**

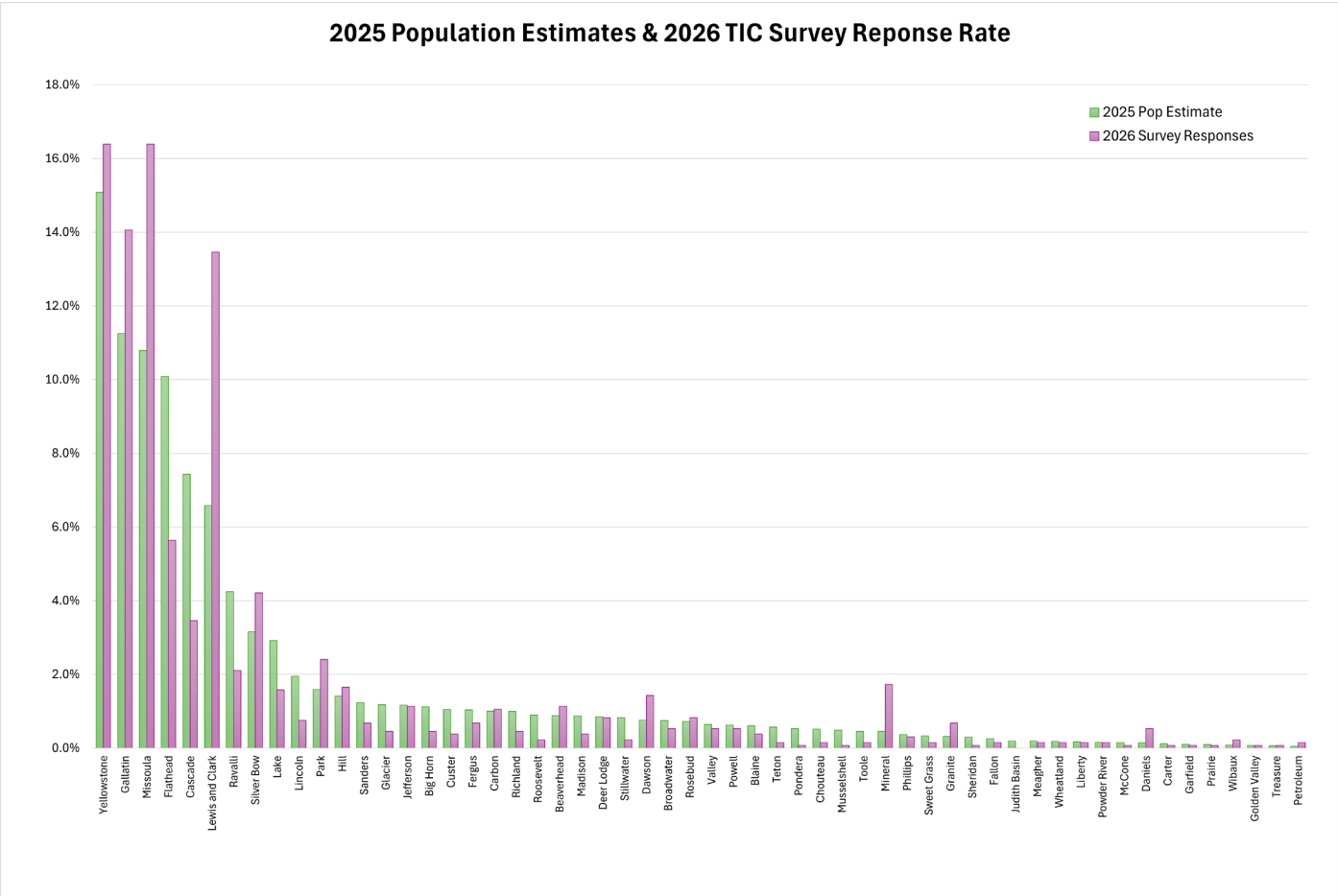


Figure 14 (above). The chart shows survey responses by county compared to 2025 population estimates (using the latest figures from the U.S. Census Bureau's Population Estimates Program) in order to see how survey responses compared to the actual proportion of Montana's population.

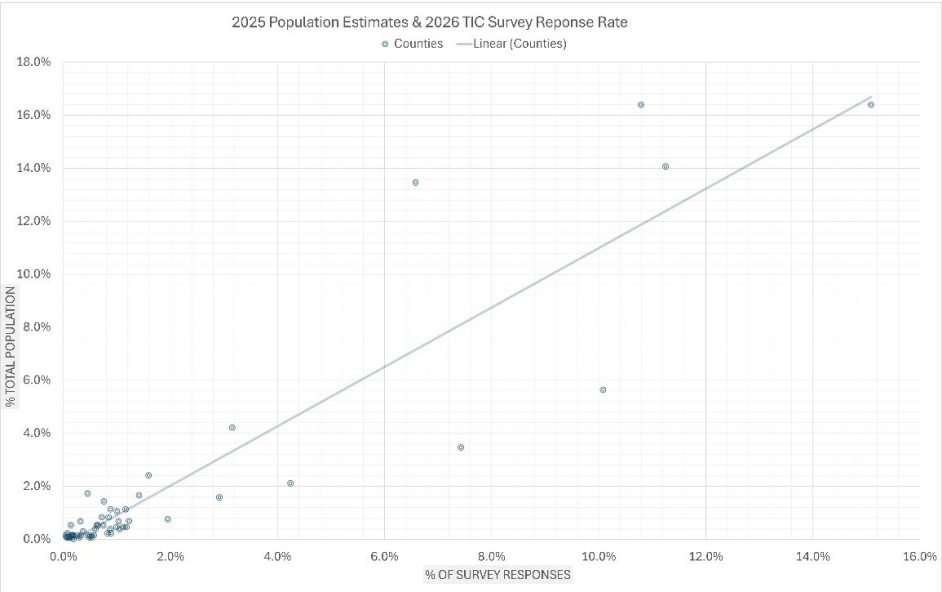


Figure 15 (left). Analysis found that the number of survey responses from a given county was highly correlated with the projected 2025 population of that county (84%), with only a few outlier counties.

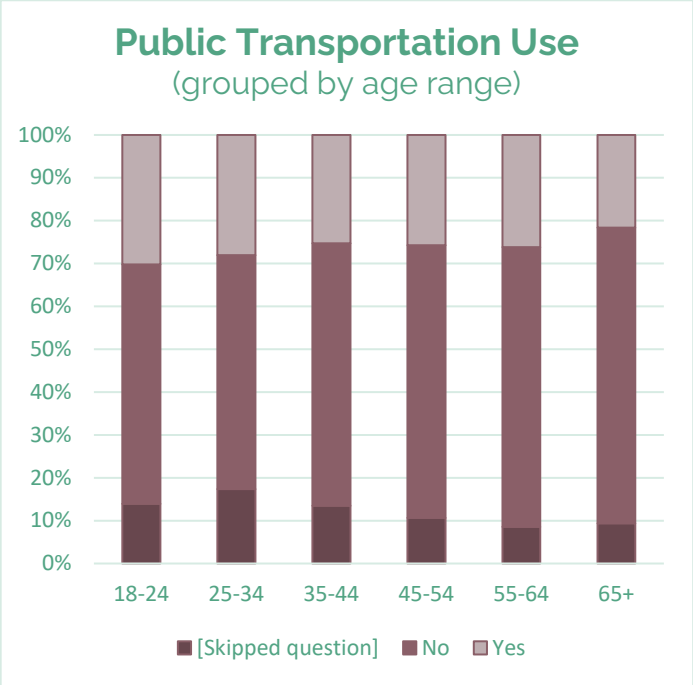
This analysis shows that the survey data was collected from a fairly representative sample of Montanans.

CURRENT USAGE

One purpose of the survey was to understand how public transportation is currently being used across the state.

Figure 16 (right) shows that usage of public transportation is higher in urban counties than rural (survey question 7).

Do you currently use public transportation?	Rural	Urban	Grand Total
[Skipped question]	58	95	**153**
No	382	462	**844**
Yes	77	256	**333**
Grand Total	**517**	**813**	**1330**

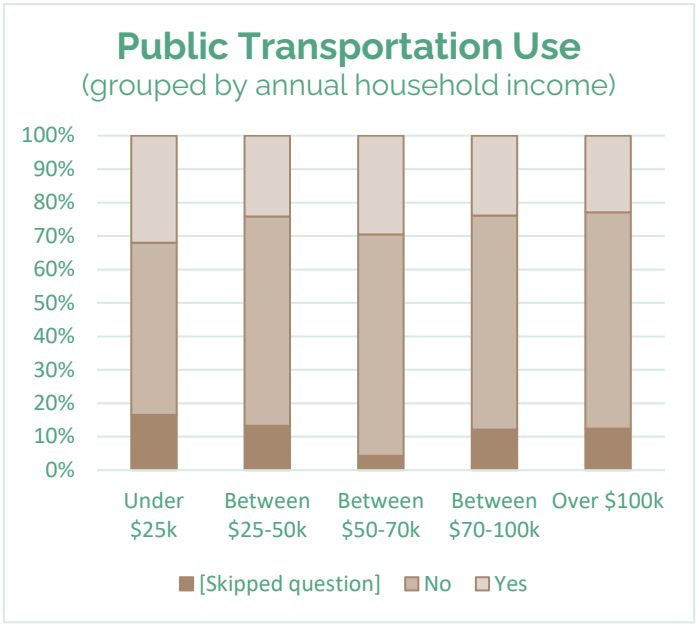


When asked to explain their public transportation usage, respondents highlighted a range of benefits, as well as some concerns.

Many cited challenging route schedules that are misaligned to the standard 8am-5pm workday, or route locations that don't reach respondents' residential areas. Respondents in rural counties overwhelmingly noted a lack of access to publicly available transportation.

To drill down further, responses have been grouped by age range in **Figure 17 (left)**.

For another perspective, question 7 responses are grouped by annual household income level in **Figure 18 (below)**.



Also cited were multiple concerns with accessibility challenges for those living with disabilities. Other concerns included personal safety and low reliability when using existing public transportation services. Respondents who use public transportation noted the environmental benefits and their personal cost savings as positive aspects. Other respondents expressed appreciation for the availability of shared-use pathways in their communities for walking or biking.

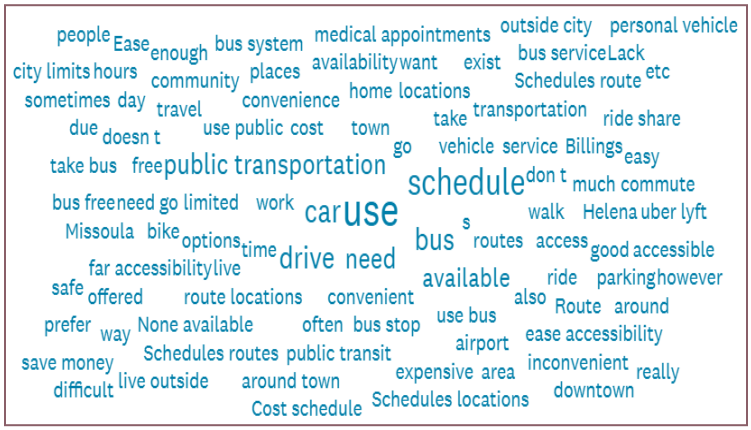


Figure 19 (left) shows a "word cloud" generated from the 100 most frequently used words in responses to survey question 8 (see **Appendix E**).

When asked which forms of public transit they currently use, respondents indicated buses and rideshares are the most common. The data shows Essential Air Service is highly utilized as well.

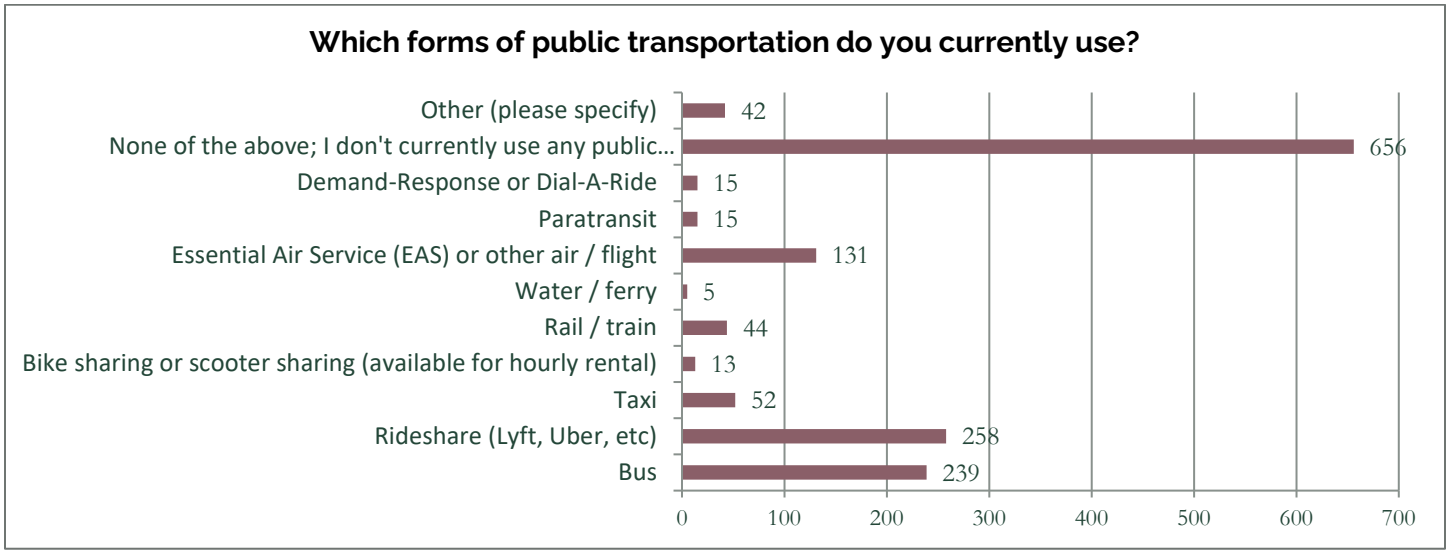


Figure 20 (above) shows how respondents currently use public transportation (survey question 9, **Appendix E**).

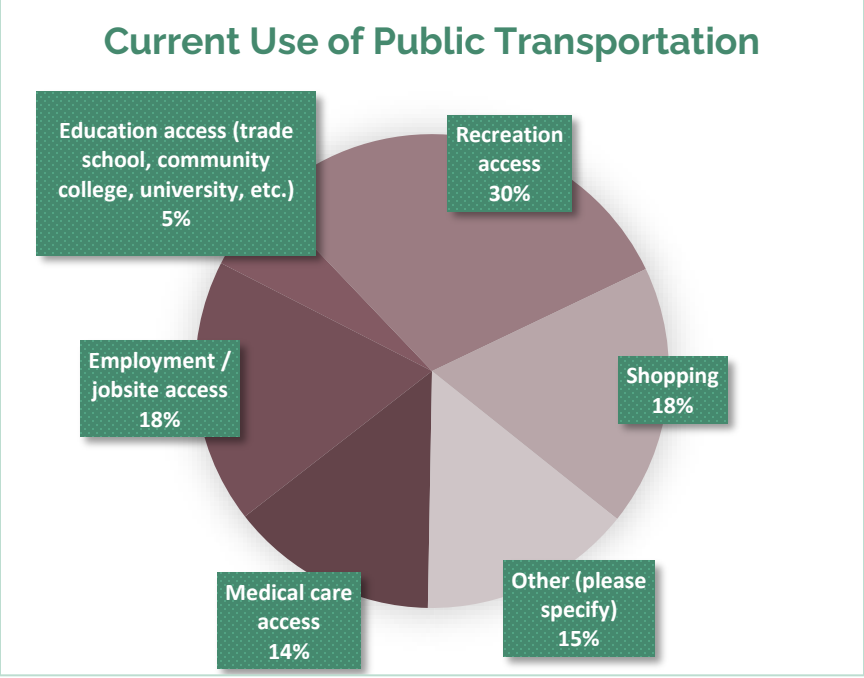
Comments from respondents indicated a desire for expanded passenger rail service, reflecting an interest in more cross-state travel options. Other comments highlighted a need for improved transit information, better bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, and more accessible options for seniors and people living with disabilities. A few comments mentioned the importance of transit availability for Montana's tourism economy.

DID YOU KNOW?

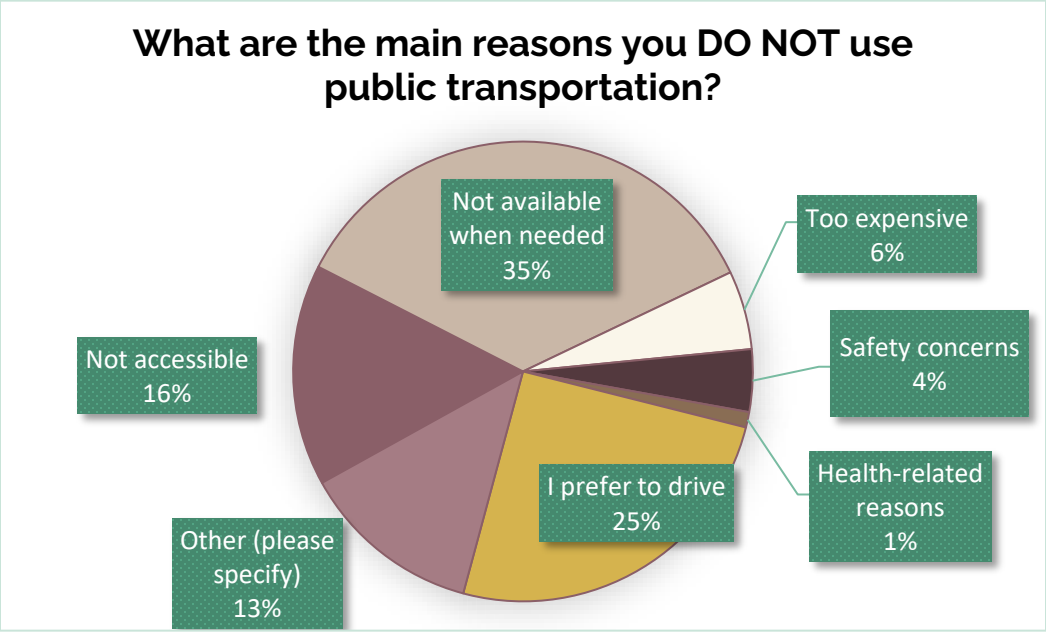
In 2024, over 13 million nonresidents visited the state, contributing an estimated $6.1 billion to Montana's economy[17].

[17] Grau, Kara. (2025). "2024 Estimates — Nonresident Visitation, Expenditures, and Economic Contribution." Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research, University of Montana. Missoula, Montana. https://scholarworks.umt.edu/itrr_pubs/478/

Figure 21 (right) shows a large proportion of respondents indicated they use public transit to access recreation, while other common uses include access to employment and shopping hubs.



Survey respondents cited a few common concerns when asked why they do not use public transportation. The largest concern was that public transportation, if available at all, is not available at the times when it is needed; see **Figure 22 (below left)**.



Respondents' comments indicated that the lack of availability applies to both ***time*** and ***location***. Either the available routes are not run frequently enough to be considered reliable, or the route does not reach a desired location. Both concerns may be addressed by expanding existing services rather than implementing new programs.

LOCAL COMMUNITY LENS

The TIC wanted to understand how average Montanans use public transportation in their local communities.

Does your local community offer public transportation?	Rural	Urban	Grand Total
[Skipped question]	58	95	**153**
I'm not sure	31	18	**49**
No	185	11	**196**
Yes	243	689	**932**
Grand Total	**517**	**813**	**1330**

Figure 23 (left) shows awareness of whether local public transportation is available.

While it may be unsurprising to see that the majority of survey respondents travel by personal motor vehicle, **Figure 24 (below)** shows that respondents also indicate a high rate of walking or biking around their local community.

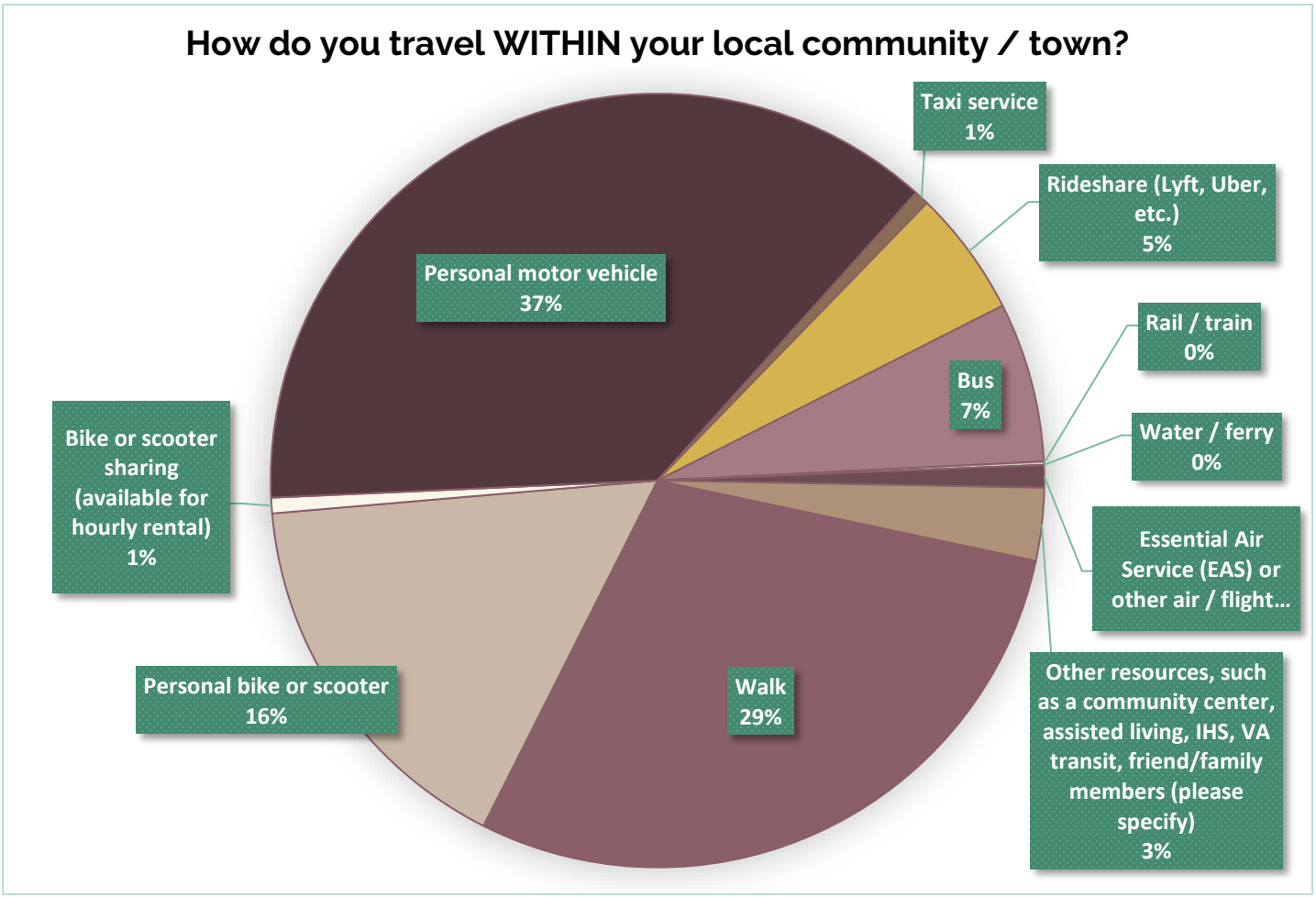
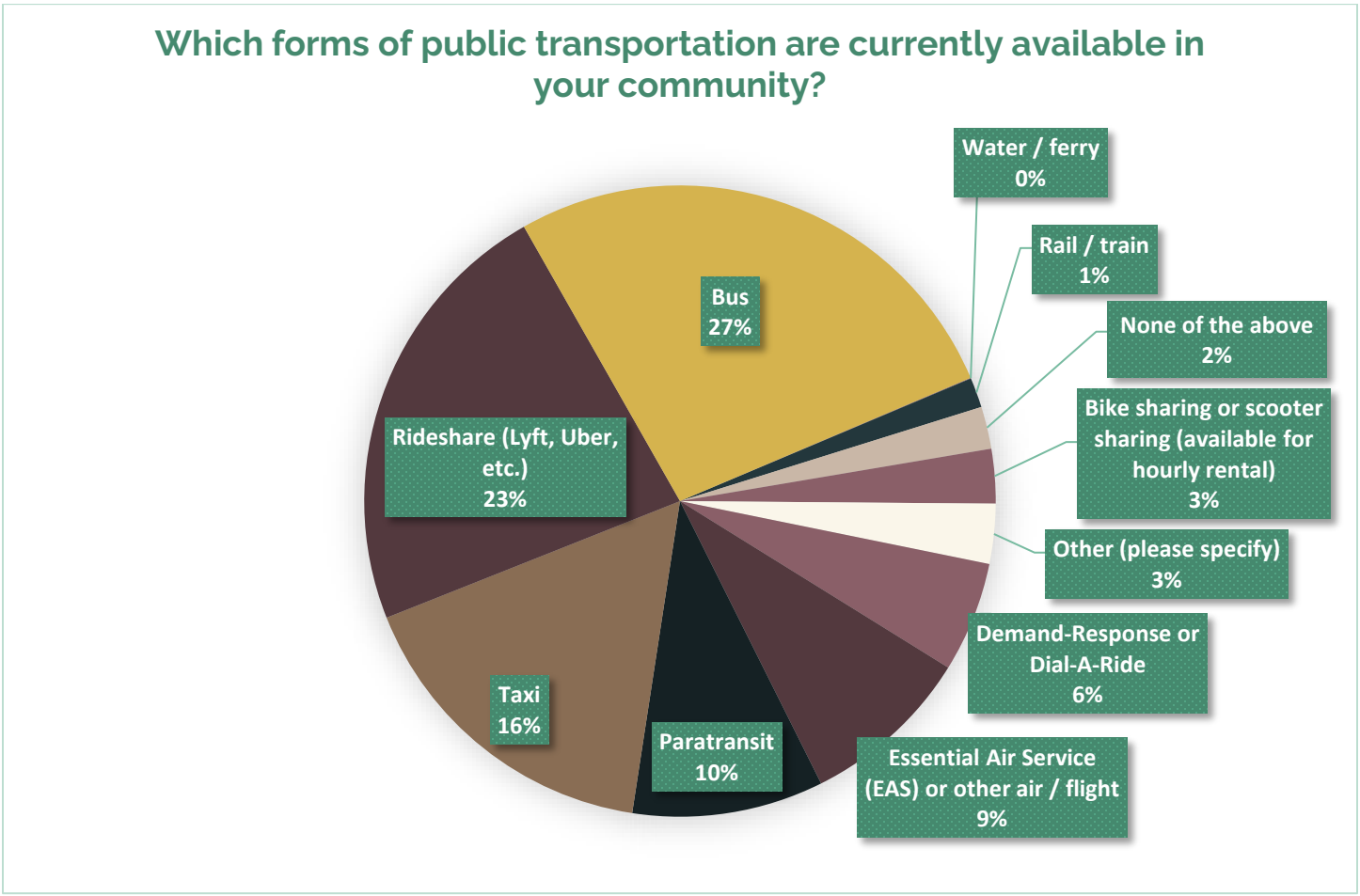


Figure 25 (below). Survey respondents who have public transportation in their community identified bus systems, rideshare, and taxi services most frequently. Smaller proportions of respondents reported having access to paratransit, Essential Air Service, and demand-response services.



When it comes to shared-use pathways in a community, respondents generally have a positive tone.

Figure 26 (right) shows a "word cloud" of the most common terms in responses to survey question 21.



Many responses noted the existence of shared-use pathways or trail systems in the local community, especially in larger towns. Comments highlight the trails' benefits for accessibility, recreation, and even commuting. Some comments do indicate gaps in connectivity, incomplete networks, or limited infrastructure that makes travel challenging or unsafe in certain areas. Overall, responses indicate appreciation for shared-use pathways and show a clear desire for improved infrastructure and connectivity to better serve community needs.

STATEWIDE LENS

After gaining a better understanding of local community needs and resources, the TIC sought to understand how Montanans travel outside of their communities but within the state.

Do you use public transportation to travel OUTSIDE your community but WITHIN the state?	Rural	Urban	Grand Total
[Skipped question]	75	115	**190**
No	325	593	**918**
Yes	117	105	**222**
Grand Total	**517**	**813**	**1330**

Figure 27 (above). Overall, a minority of survey respondents report using public transport to leave their communities.

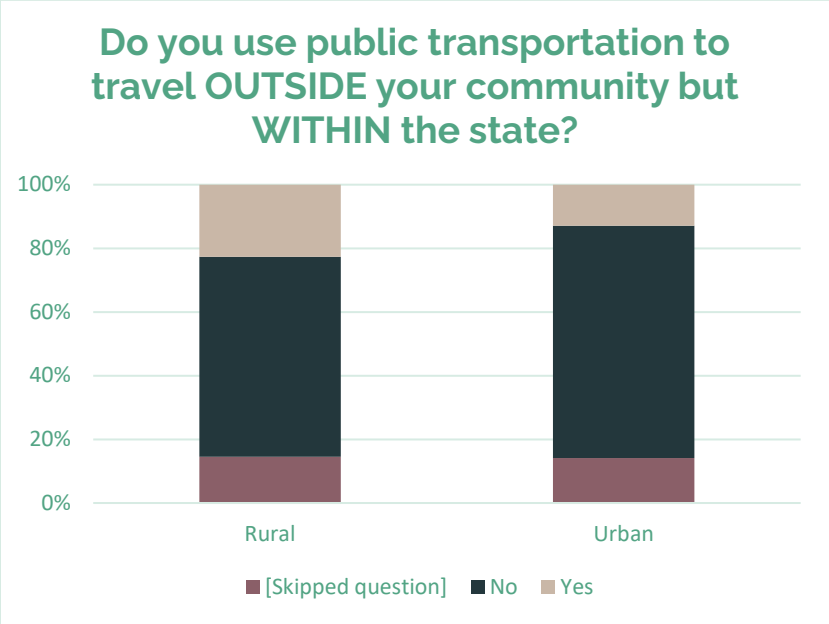


Figure 28 (left). Rural survey respondents report using public transportation services to leave their community more frequently than urban respondents.

Does this mean that rural counties have proportionally more access to public transportation or that respondents in urban counties use their personal vehicle if they want to travel outside of their communities?

Are there more public transportation options in rural counties for leaving the community because they are needed to connect to the centers of commerce elsewhere?

When you travel OUTSIDE your community but WITHIN the state, is the travel usually for work or for personal travel?	Rural	Urban	Grand Total
[Skipped question]	75	115	**190**
Both: I travel outside my community equally for both work and personal reasons.	183	254	**437**
Personal: When I travel outside my community but within Montana, it's usually personal travel.	232	398	**630**
Work: When I travel outside my community but within Montana, it's usually for work.	27	46	**73**
Grand Total	**517**	**813**	**1330**

Figure 29 (above). Respondents were asked whether leaving their community was usually for work travel, personal travel, or approximately equal for both. A majority of respondents said their travel is personal.

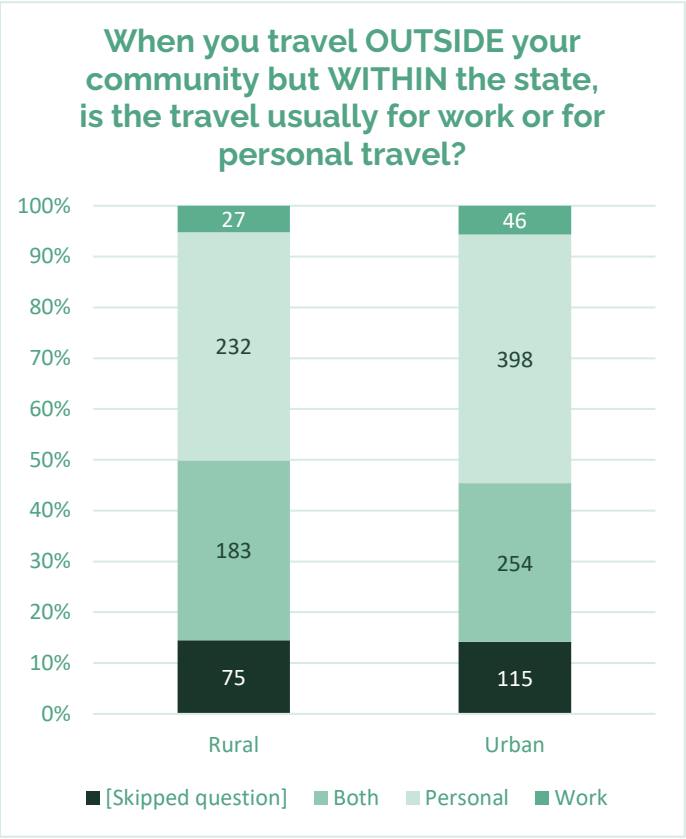
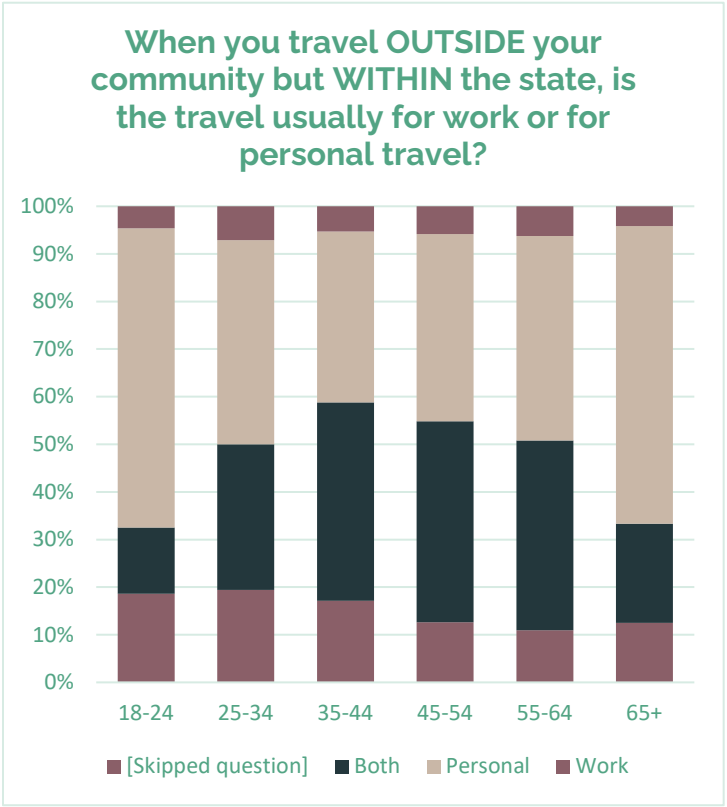


Figure 30 (top left) shows that rural respondents travel outside their communities for "both" work and personal reasons more frequently in proportion to urban respondents. A larger proportion of urban respondents travel outside of their communities for personal reasons.

Figure 31 (middle right) shows that the age group most often traveling outside their communities for work purposes are the respondents between 25-34 years old.



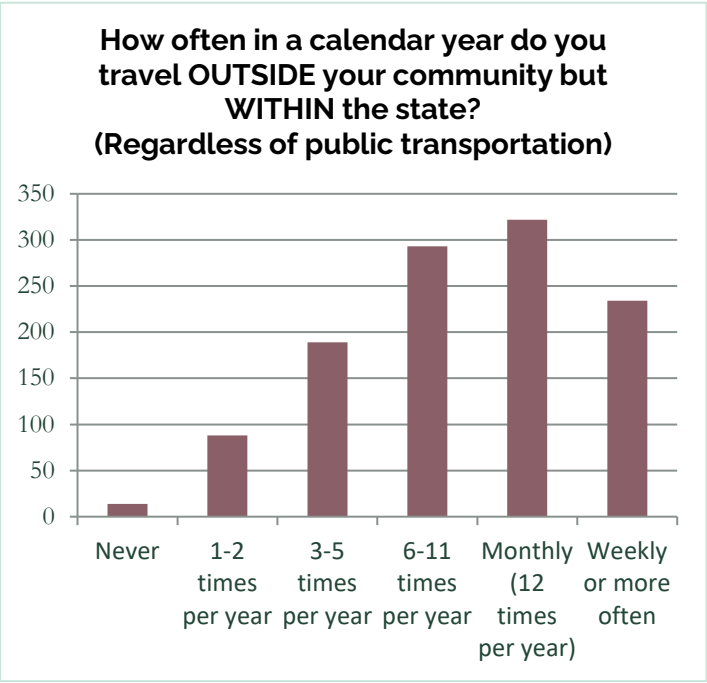


Figure 32 (bottom left). A majority of respondents report traveling outside their communities but within the state of Montana at least once a month.

Figure 33 (below). When survey respondents travel outside their communities, the majority use a personal vehicle.

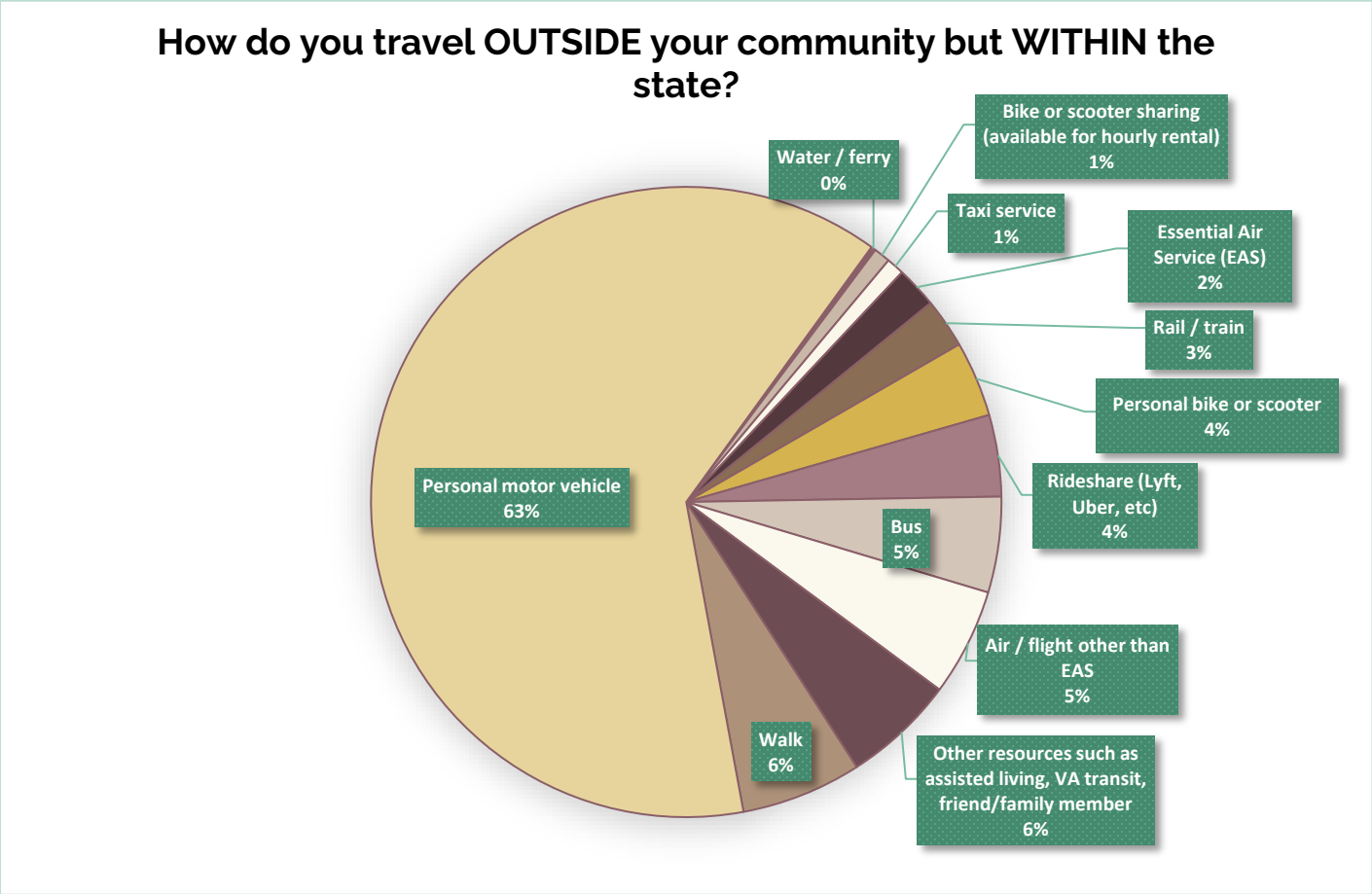
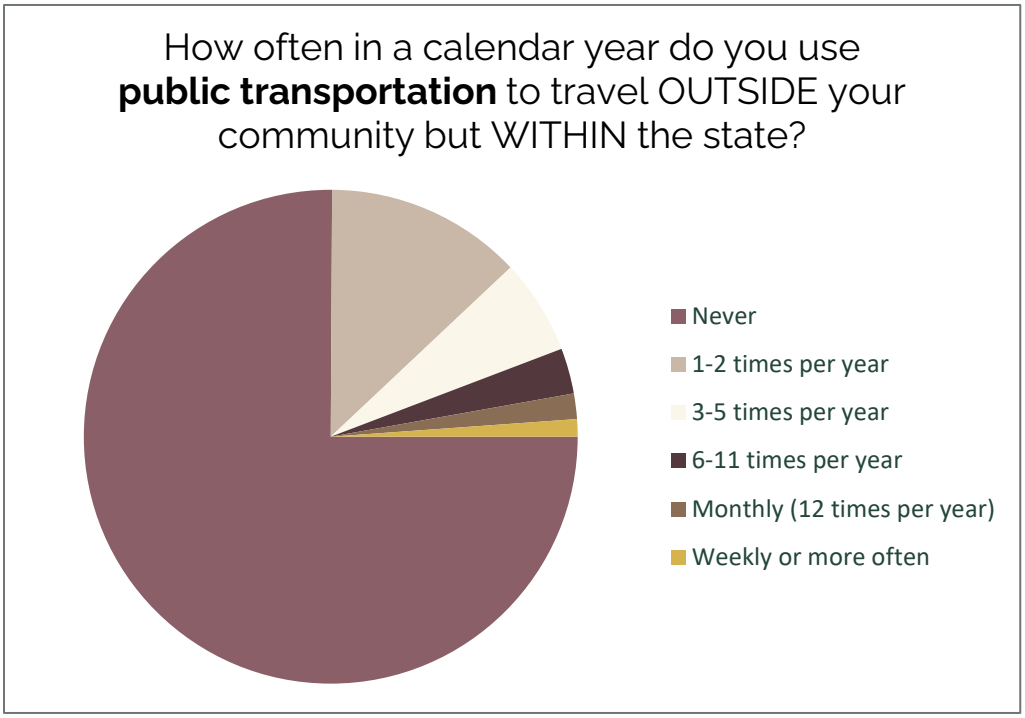


Figure 34 (right). Few survey respondents use public transportation to travel outside their communities. When it does happen, survey respondents indicate it is infrequent, often a "one-off" event.

Rural survey respondents reported using public transportation to travel outside their communities more frequently in proportion to their urban counterparts.



Are the different modes of public transportation services CONNECTED enough to get you to a destination OUTSIDE your community but WITHIN the state?	Rural	Urban	Grand Total
[Skipped question]	75	115	**190**
N/A, I don't know, or I don't use public transportation.	131	207	**338**
No, I cannot get from my community to another destination using only public transportation.	252	415	**667**
Yes, I can get from my community to another destination using only public transportation.	59	76	**135**
Grand Total	**517**	**813**	**1330**

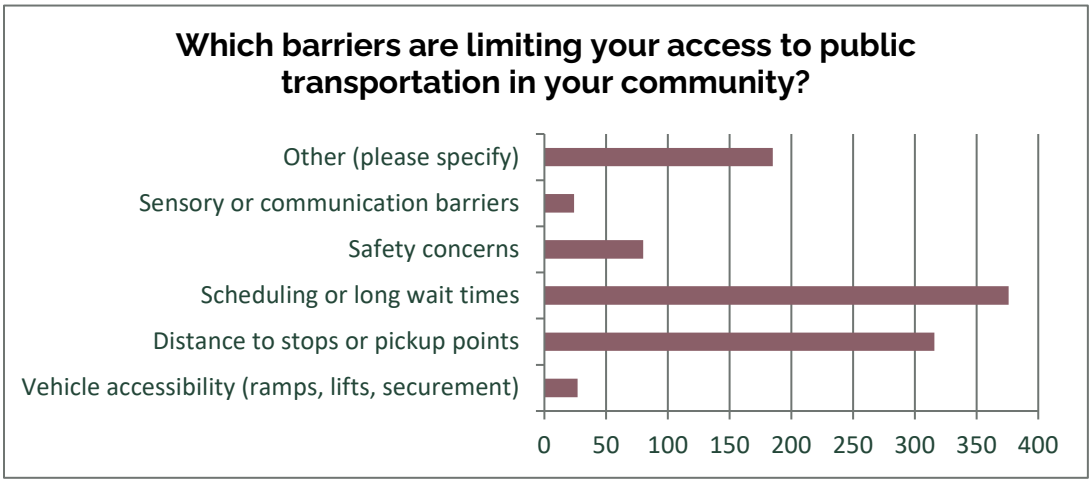
Figure 35 (above). When asked whether existing public transportation services are interconnected enough, few respondents agreed. The majority of respondents indicated a lack of connectivity between services, known as "last-mile" connectivity.

ADA ACCESSIBILITY

When discussing how Montanans are able to move throughout their communities and the state, it is crucial to consider options for citizens who have mobility challenges or accessibility needs.

Do accessibility barriers limit your ability to use public transportation in your community?	Rural	Urban	Grand Total
[Skipped question]	58	95	**153**
N/A, I do not use public transportation, or there is no public transportation available in my community.	239	203	**442**
No, there are no accessibility barriers limiting my ability to use public transportation.	153	387	**540**
Sometimes, there are some barriers preventing my access to public transportation.	30	73	**103**
Yes, I am limited due to accessibility barriers.	37	55	**92**
Grand Total	**517**	**813**	**1330**

Figure 36 (above) and **figure 37 (right)** show an overview of the responses regarding accessibility barriers limiting the use of public transportation.



Common concerns include safety, affordability, and gaps in service. Overall, comments point to a need for more options, improved accessibility, and improved reliability in existing public transportation.

Do you own a personal motor vehicle?	Rural	Urban	Grand Total
[Skipped question]	58	95	**153**
I don't own a vehicle, but **I do have access to one** for personal use.	6	15	**21**
No, I do not own or have access to a motor vehicle.	10	35	**45**
Yes, I own a personal motor vehicle.	443	668	**1111**
Grand Total	**517**	**813**	**1330**

Figure 38 (left). Respondents indicated whether they have access to a personal vehicle for travel.

Respondents' comments on the accessibility questions indicate a high reliance on personal vehicles, due to limited alternatives like public transit, accessibility barriers to the available alternatives, and inadequate infrastructure for walking, biking, or rolling.

Respondents' comments about expanding accessibility within public transportation centered around several themes, listed here in alphabetical order:

- Accessible vehicles require a ramp or lift, proper securement, and a trained, certified driver.
- Interconnectedness and "last-mile" access is crucial when it comes to medical appointments in other towns.
- Lighting and wind shelters are necessary at bus stops for the safety and visibility of riders.
- Medical specialists and critical services are few and far between in Montana, centralized in a few cities.
- Sidewalks and shared-use pathways are vital to wheelchair users and need to be maintained.
- Signage, auditory signaling, and information sharing can all be improved.
- Weekend and late-night availability would provide more flexibility for riders.

Common terms from respondents' text answers are compiled in a "word cloud" in **Figure 39 (below)**.



AFFORDABILITY

Survey question 19 asked respondents: Is the public transport in your community affordable?

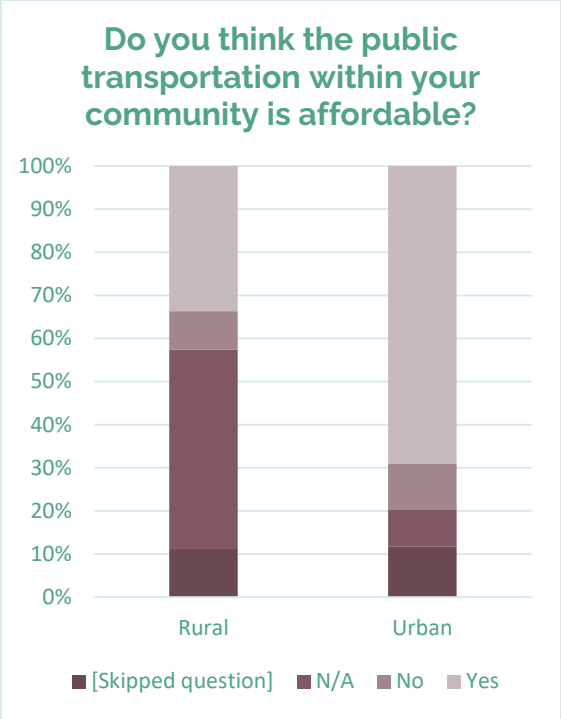


Figure 40 (left) shows that proportionally, urban survey respondents are more likely to feel that their public transportation opportunities are affordable.

Figure 41 (middle right) shows the same data, grouped by annual household income level. Households under $25k/year report affordability concerns at a higher rate than other income levels.

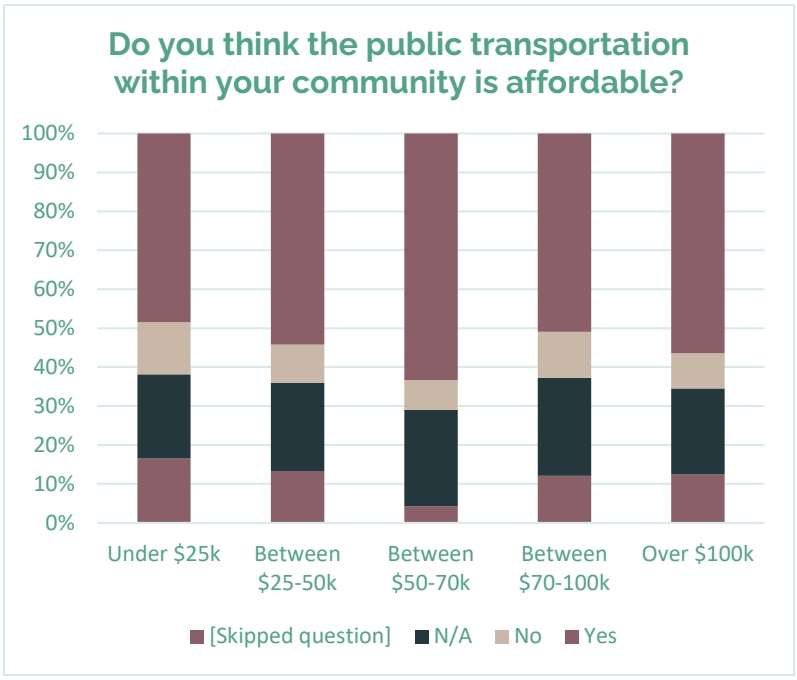




Figure 42 (left). Respondent comments about the affordability of public transportation noted high costs for rideshare services, limited subsidies for publicly available transportation, and limited services for the special needs of certain populations. Some comments do mention the existence of free or low-cost transit nearby but express concerns such as limited route coverage, infrequent service, or difficulty finding information.

DESIRED SERVICES

Another function of the public survey was to determine what Montanans want from public transportation.

Respondents' comments largely focused on expanding intercity passenger rail and developing a broader rail network across Montana. A few comments mentioned the importance of bicycle infrastructure and last-mile interconnectivity of services.

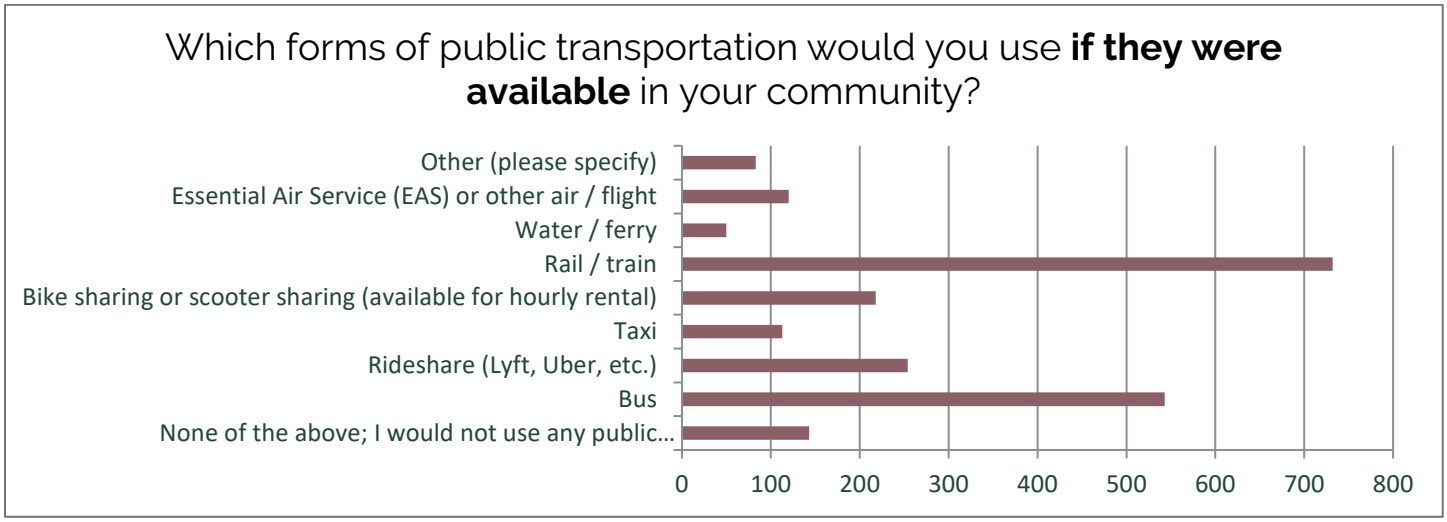


Figure 43 (above) shows responses to survey question 13, indicating a high level of interest in passenger rail as well as bus routes.



Figure 44 (left) shows a "word cloud" of the 100 most frequently used words in text responses to survey question 14.

Figure 45 (below). While a portion of survey respondents indicated no plans to ever use public transportation, there were many others who would use public transportation for things like recreational access and shopping.

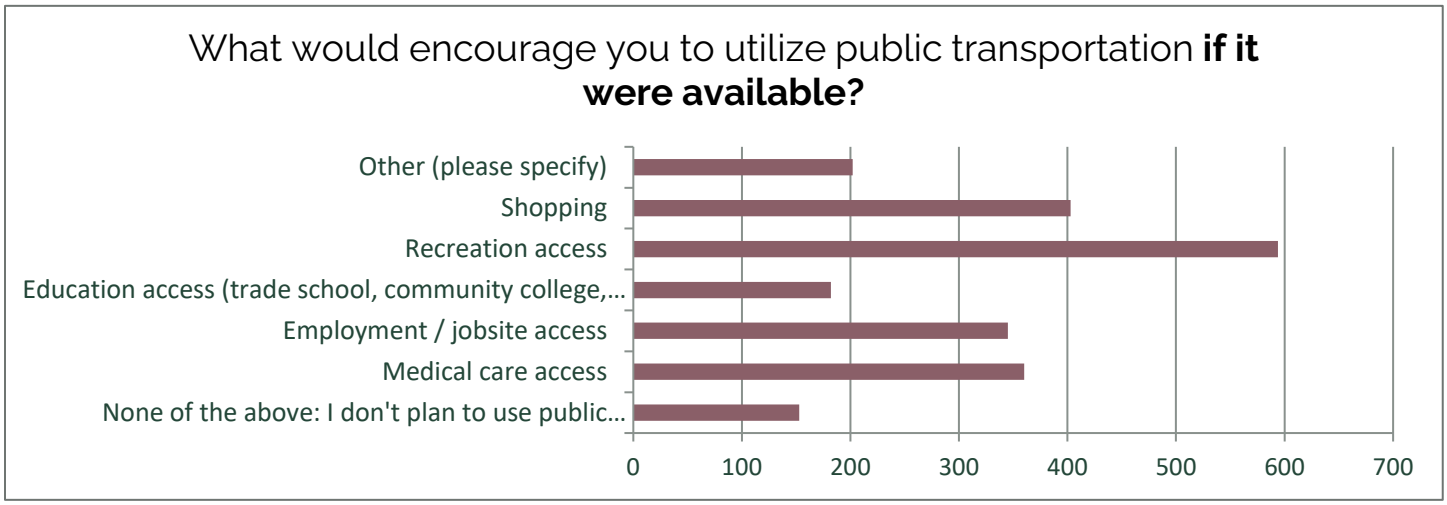




Figure 46 (left). Comments from respondents indicated a variety of reasons someone would use public transit, like visiting family members in another town or running errands on the weekends.

Common threads throughout these comments show a desire for intrastate travel through better connectivity between existing systems, increased frequency of services, and expansion to unserved areas.

Figure 47 (right). Survey respondents had a range of suggestions for improving public transportation in Montana. These were the most common themes:

- Increase the frequency (days and hours) of existing services.
- Improve the interconnectivity between communities.
- Expand local transit options to underserved communities.
- Improve the safety, accessibility, and information-sharing of existing services.

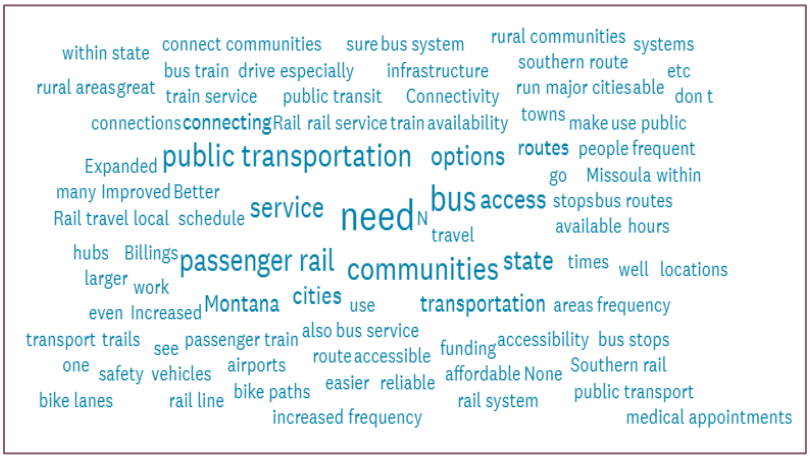
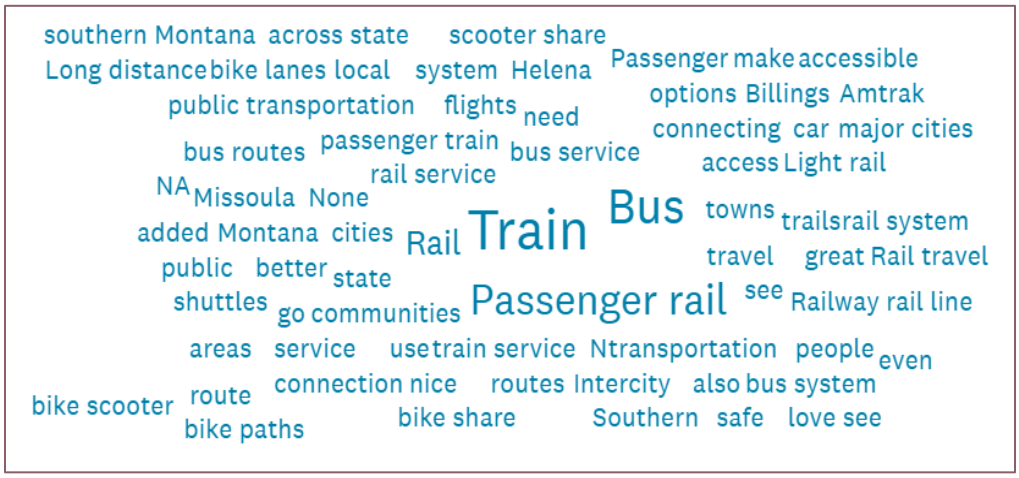


Figure 48 (below). When asked which specific transportation services were desired, most respondents expressed strong interest in expanded passenger rail service, not only to the towns along the southern route, but also to Montana's national parks. Some requested expanded bus routes and better connections for rural areas. Others pointed to improving bike and pedestrian infrastructure.



Overall, comments expressed a clear interest in broader, more accessible, and multimodal transit options across the state.

The survey's final question asked respondents to consider a hypothetical future:

If passenger rail service were restored through southern Montana along the former North Coast Hiawatha route (Glendive, Miles City, Forsyth, Billings, Livingston, Bozeman, Helena, Missoula), how would this expanded availability of passenger rail impact you, your family, and/or your community?



Figure 49 (left). Responses to this question highlighted improved travel accessibility, especially for those unable to drive, and enhanced connections for families and communities.

Many listed benefits such as safer and more affordable travel, reduced reliance on personal vehicles, and increased opportunities for in-state and long-distance trips. Some comments emphasized the importance of making the rail service reliable and efficient, as well as accessible to all users.

A few responses expressed practical concerns about public funding, limitations with the route, or the value compared to other transit options.

Survey respondents were given multiple "text box" opportunities to suggest locations for the TIC to visit or to share insights with the TIC. The individual survey suggestions were given to TIC members. The following is an alphabetical list of common topics:

- Alternative fuels
- Bedroom communities
- Cleanliness and security of existing systems
- Commuter rail service
- Event centers that provide shuttle services
- Interconnectivity between transportation services
- Overseas examples of transit systems
- Public trail systems
- Railroad towns
- Rural communities, transportation "deserts"
- Shuttle and "short line" services
- Tourism impacts
- Transit Oriented Development
- Tribal involvement
- Urban pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure

The complete survey is located in **Appendix E** for reference.

CONCLUSION

Between September 2025–September 2026, the TIC spent a full year examining public transportation in Montana and several regional states. The study was a standing agenda topic at each meeting, and the TIC obtained significant information through the following processes:

- panel discussions with Montana experts;
- presentations from regional states;
- a statewide online survey, which collected 1,330 anonymous responses in six weeks (*see* ***Appendix E***);
- multiple site visits during the May 2026 travel meeting;
- a staff-compiled ArcGIS map of available public transportation services in Montana (*see* ***Appendix C***); and
- a staff summary of Montana statutes governing transportation services (*see* ***Appendix D***).

The TIC has made no specific legislation recommendations pursuant to SJ 19.

More information and resources can be found on the TIC web page: https://www.legmt.gov/committees/interim/tic/studies-topics/#SJ-19.

APPENDIX A:
TRANSPORTATION INTERIM COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Before the close of each legislative session, House and Senate leadership appoint lawmakers to interim committees. The members of the Transportation Interim Committee, like most other interim committees, serve one 20-month term. Members who are reelected to the Legislature, subject to overall term limits and if appointed, may serve again on an interim committee. This information is included in order to comply with section 2-15-155, MCA.

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Representative Zack Wirth
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Transportation Interim Committee Staff:

Joe Carroll, Attorney| Becca Brown, Legislative Research Analyst| Maddelyn Pennington, Research Assistant

APPENDIX B:
TERMINOLOGY OF PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

When discussing public transportation and other transportation options, some industry-recognized terminology is used. To avoid confusion with jargon, selected terms are defined below, listed in alphabetical order.

- **CHARTER SERVICE** — contracted service for specific events (such as a shuttle, intercity, or fixed-route setup or other forms); public operators are generally prohibited from running charter service unless certain criteria are met (*noncompete provisions*)
- **CLOSED DOOR SERVICES** — typically programs for people with developmental disabilities that provide transportation services to clients (*Section 5310 — enhanced mobility of seniors and individuals with disabilities*[18])
- **DEVIATED FIXED ROUTE** — similar to fixed route, but can deviate short distances from the designated route for pickups or drop-offs
- **DIAL-A-RIDE or DEMAND-RESPONSE** — these terms are used interchangeably within the transit world; a user schedules a ride (usually at least one day before), gets picked up at a specified location, and is dropped off directly at the destination; generally publicly funded
- **FERRY** — ferry service is specifically recognized as a form of public transit within certain considerations; most are boats operating on state waterways; ferry service may or may not charge fares
- **FIXED ROUTE** — large buses (such as Streamline or Mountain Line) driving on designated routes, stopping at marked bus stops and terminals; generally publicly funded (*Section 5307 — urbanized area formula grants*[19])
- **INTERCITY** — passenger transportation services *between* cities (such as Jefferson Lines or Greyhound Bus); intercity trips *can* occur on demand-response or dial-a-ride systems, but differ fundamentally in that intercity service usually sells tickets for a designated trip between terminus points; operational support is generally not provided via public funding, but intercity systems may qualify for limited federal capital support (*Section 5311 — formula grants for rural areas*[20])
- **ON-DEMAND or MICRO-TRANSIT** — generally referring to Uber, Lyft, and other private for-hire operators; riders typically book rides via proprietary apps; public operators occasionally partner with these services for "last-mile" feeder operations
- **PARATRANSIT** — demand-response service for an individual whose disabling condition inhibits that person's ability to use fixed-route bus; paratransit service is required of any fixed-route operator and must compliment fixed-route systems by serving roughly the same area (3/4 mile on either side of an established fixed route) and the same operating schedules; trip length and durations should be similar to fixed-route trips; generally publicly funded (*Section 5310,*[18] *TransADE*[21])

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[18] https://www.transit.dot.gov/funding/grants/enhanced-mobility-seniors-individuals-disabilities-section-5310
[19] https://www.transit.dot.gov/funding/grants/urbanized-area-formula-grants-5307
[20] https://www.transit.dot.gov/rural-formula-grants-5311
[21] https://mca.legmt.gov/bills/mca/title_0070/chapter_0140/part_0010/section_0120/0070-0140-0010-0120.html

- **PARK-AND-RIDE** — generally used in conjunction with fixed-route systems, vanpools, rail systems, etc.; an individual drives a personal vehicle to a designated terminus or stop location, parks the vehicle, and completes the trip using the public transit option; *may* occur with demand-response systems; may or may not be publicly funded depending on the provider; MDT has created and maintains many park-and-ride sites along the U.S. Highway 93 and Interstate 90 corridors
- **RIDESHARE** — generally refers to operations such as vanpooling (*Section 5311,*[20] *Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program*[22]) and carpooling
- **SCHOOL BUS SERVICE** — bus service specifically designed to serve school-aged students (K–12); generally, public operators are limited from also providing school bus service unless specific criteria are met, much like charter service; many public transit providers operate service for HeadStart (Pre-K) programs
- **SHUTTLE SERVICE** — generally, a dedicated service for a specific provider or commercial activity that may or may not be a private operator (i.e. can support private operations such as a hotel or convention center, or public operations like airports); generally travel is between designated destinations; limitations on public providers being able to operate these services (*noncompete*)
- **TAXI SERVICE** — traditional taxi service; users can schedule a ride or hail a cab; generally private operators; taxi service can encompass other forms of transportation, such as shuttles; public operators occasionally partner with taxi systems for "last-mile" feeder operations or after-hours operations

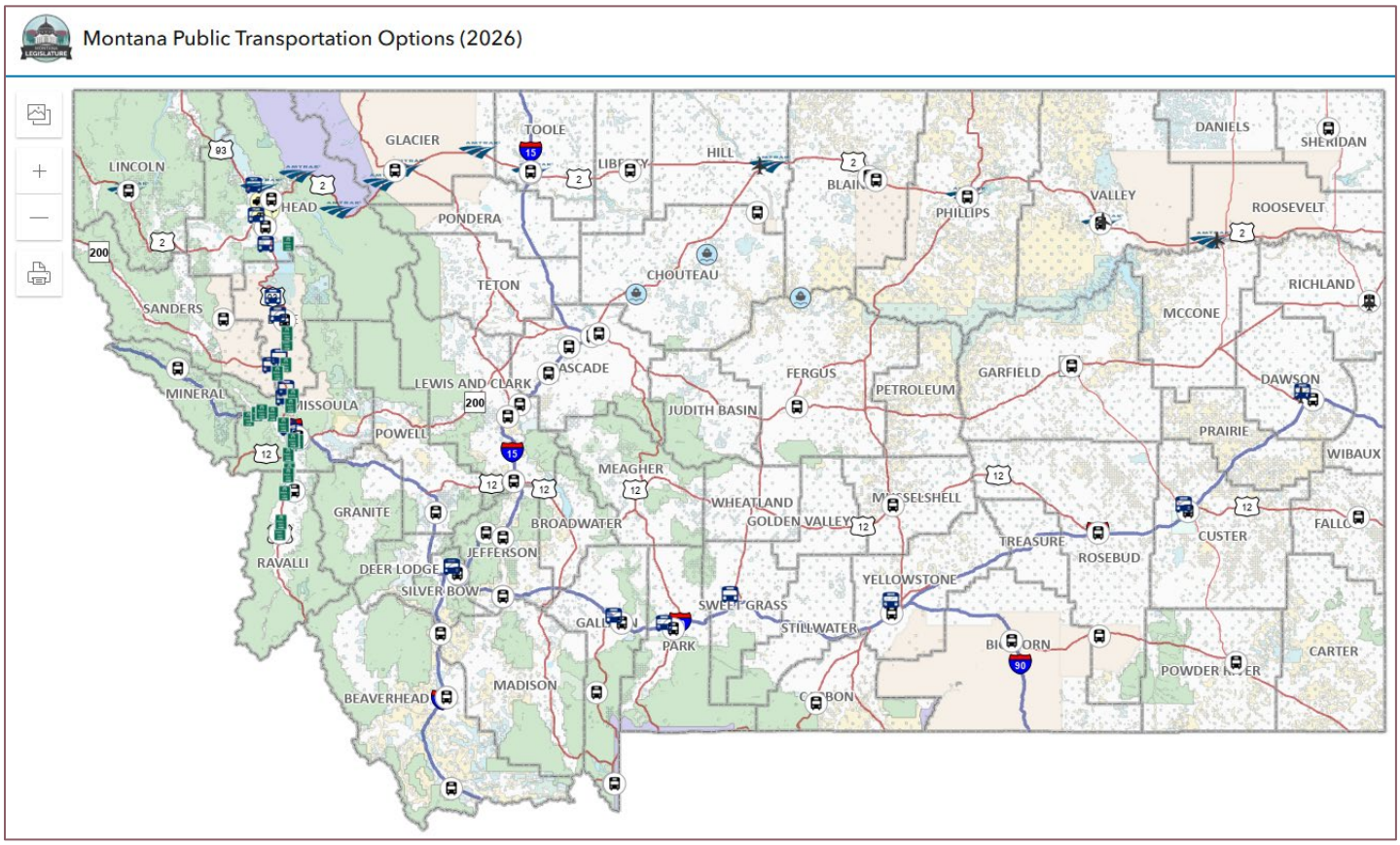
[22] https://www.transit.dot.gov/funding/grants/grant-programs/flexible-funding-programs-congestion-mitigation-and-air-quality

APPENDIX C:
MAP OF PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

Staff compiled available data on transportation services available statewide into a spreadsheet, then used that data to populate an interactive ArcGIS map of services.

The map is available on the TIC web page: https://www.legmt.gov/committees/interim/tic/studies-topics/#SJ-19

It is also available on ArcGIS Online:
https://montana.maps.arcgis.com/apps/instant/basic/index.html?appid=d6f8bb16e4314698b9dc116ff1cfe2c7



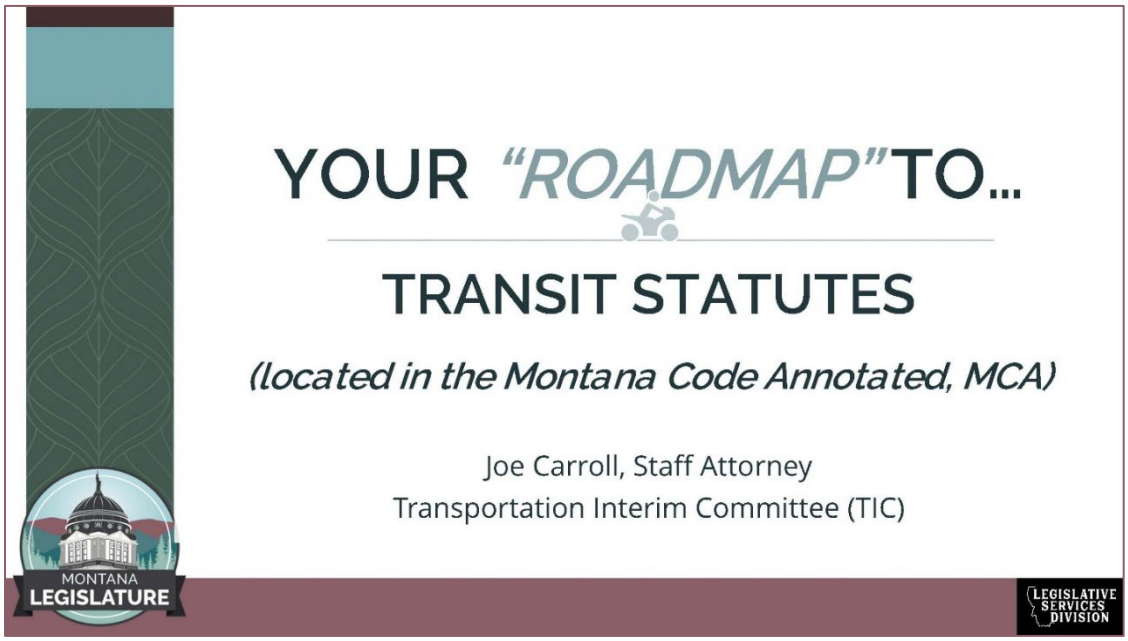
The individual transportation services data is available in table format on the TIC web page at the link above.

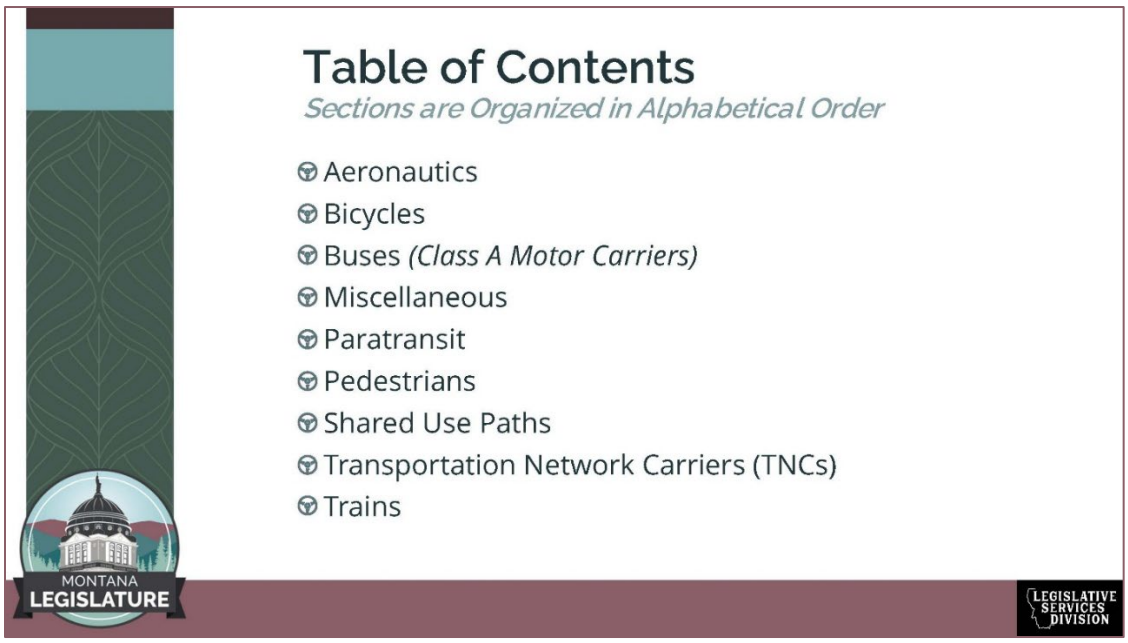
MDT also has a web page with the hours of operation and service areas of all public transit systems in Montana: https://www.mdt.mt.gov/publictransit/

APPENDIX D:
STATUTORY CROSSWALK

This document is available on the TIC web page: https://www.legmt.gov/committees/interim/tic/studies-topics/#SJ-19

A few slides are shown here as examples, but since the text is too small to be easily read, please visit the hyperlink above to view the entire document.





Introduction

- In general, statutes governing transportation can be found in the following Titles of the MCA:
  - Title 60 – Highways and Transportation
  - Title 61 – Motor Vehicles
  - Title 67 – Aeronautics
- As you will see in the following slides, various statutes governing transportation are scattered throughout other Titles of the MCA as well.

MONTANA LEGISLATURE

LEGISLATIVE SERVICES DIVISION

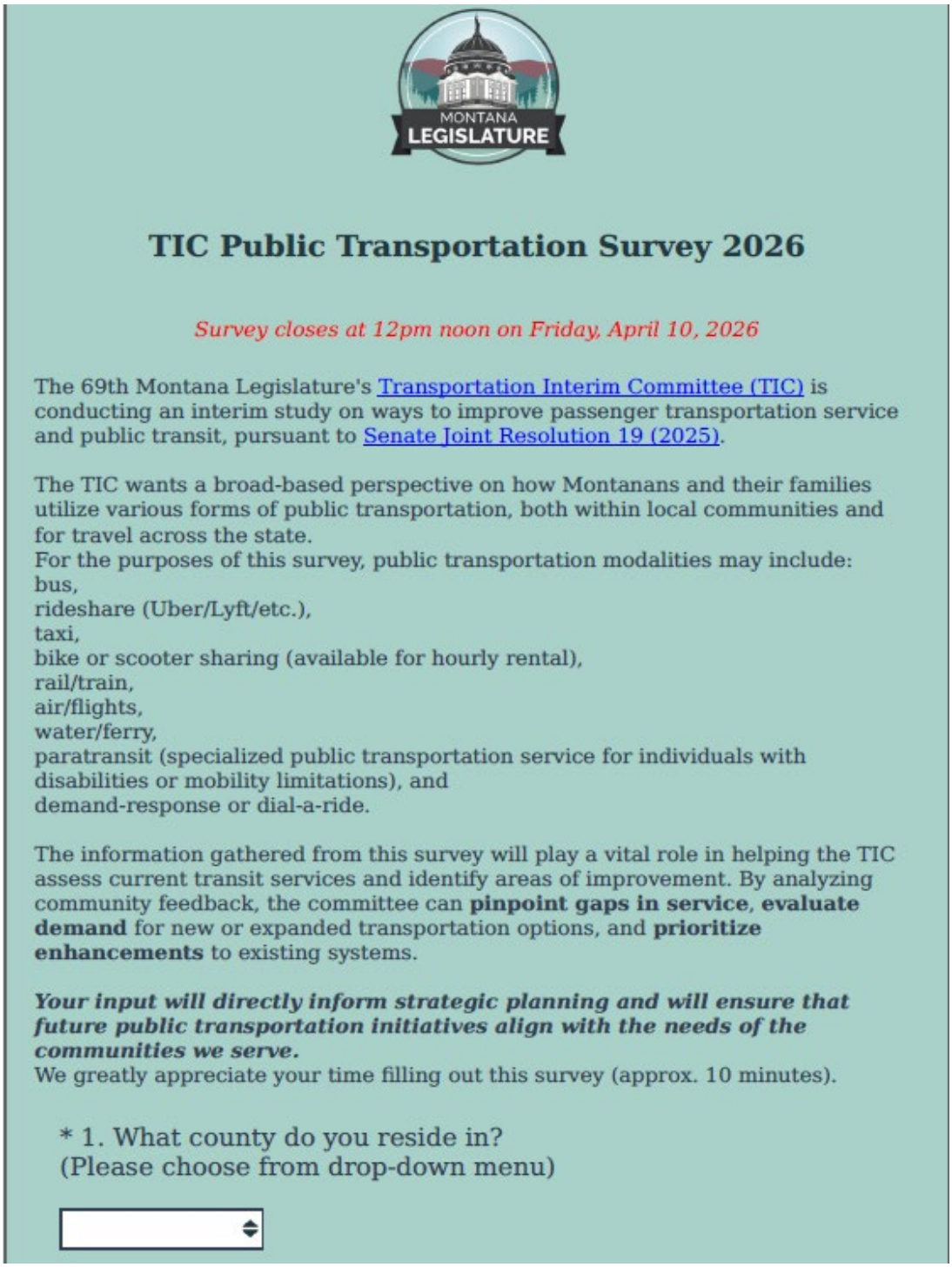
Shared-Use Paths

Title	Chapter/ Part	Concept	Definitions	Specific Provisions	Funds, Accounts, Mills	Interim Committee	Questions/ Issues
2			see 2-15-102, MCA		**2-15-3406, MCA** **State Parks & Recreation Board** (3) A person appointed to the board must be informed or experienced in the conservation and protection of state parks . . . or outdoor recreation."	see 2-15-124, 2-15-3406, and EQC statute	
7							
23	**Chapter 2, Part 1** Development of Outdoor Recreational Areas	FWP administers the trail stewardship grant program, some of which goes to new shared-use path construction/rehabilitation/ maintenance			**23-2-108, MCA** Trails and recreational facilities account. **23-2-109,MCA** Trails and recreational facilities grant program.	**EQC** 75-1-324, MCA	
60	**Chapter 3, Part 3** Shared-Use Paths	separate, paved path for pedestrians, wheelchairs, bikes, horses, and snowmobiles	**60-3-302, MCA** **Shared-Use Path Defined** As used in this part, "shared-use path" means a multiuse path that is separated from motorized vehicular traffic by an open space, pavement markings, or a barrier within a highway right-of-way and that is usable for transportation purposes by pedestrians, runners, bicyclists, skaters, equestrians, and other nonmotorized users. A sidewalk, as defined in 61-8-102, is not a shared-use path.		**61-3-321 (21)(a), MCA** optional $5 at vehicle registration, allocated pursuant to 60-3-309	**TIC** 5-5-233, MCA	
61	**Chapter 3, Part 3** Registration	$1.37 of an optional $9 fee at vehicle registration goes to the 23-2-108 trails and recrational facilities account		**61-3-321, MCA** Registration fees of vehicles and vessels	61-3-321(19)(a)(iii), MCA	**TIC** 5-5-233, MCA	
67							
69							
70	**Chapter 30** Eminent Domain	Eminent domain is not available for shared-use path projects		**70-30-112, MCA** Eminent domain not to be used for certain recreational purposes			

LEGISLATIVE SERVICES DIVISION

APPENDIX E:
PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SURVEY — QUESTIONS LIST

This document is available on the TIC web page: https://www.legmt.gov/committees/interim/tic/studies-topics/#SJ-19



MONTANA LEGISLATURE

TIC Public Transportation Survey 2026

Survey closes at 12pm noon on Friday, April 10, 2026

The 69th Montana Legislature's Transportation Interim Committee (TIC) is conducting an interim study on ways to improve passenger transportation service and public transit, pursuant to Senate Joint Resolution 19 (2025).

The TIC wants a broad-based perspective on how Montanans and their families utilize various forms of public transportation, both within local communities and for travel across the state.
For the purposes of this survey, public transportation modalities may include:
bus,
rideshare (Uber/Lyft/etc.),
taxi,
bike or scooter sharing (available for hourly rental),
rail/train,
air/flights,
water/ferry,
paratransit (specialized public transportation service for individuals with disabilities or mobility limitations), and
demand-response or dial-a-ride.

The information gathered from this survey will play a vital role in helping the TIC assess current transit services and identify areas of improvement. By analyzing community feedback, the committee can **pinpoint gaps in service**, **evaluate demand** for new or expanded transportation options, and **prioritize enhancements** to existing systems.

Your input will directly inform strategic planning and will ensure that future public transportation initiatives align with the needs of the communities we serve.
We greatly appreciate your time filling out this survey (approx. 10 minutes).

* 1. What county do you reside in?
(Please choose from drop-down menu)

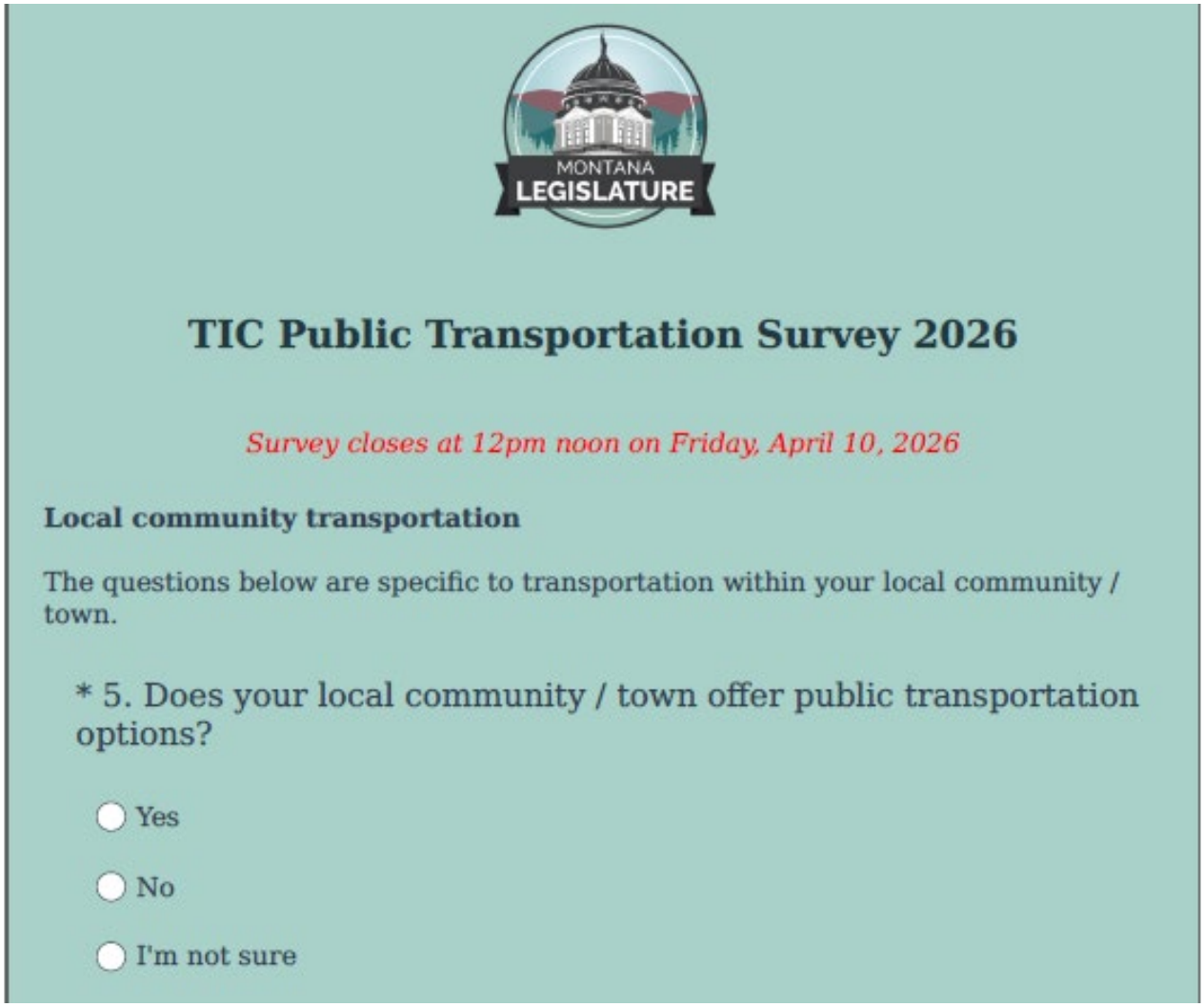
* 2. What community / town do you reside in?
(Please type your answer)

* 3. What is your age group?

- ◯ Under 18
- ◯ 18-24
- ◯ 25-34
- ◯ 35-44
- ◯ 45-54
- ◯ 55-64
- ◯ 65+

* 4. What is your household's approximate annual income?

- ◯ Under $25,000
- ◯ Between $25,000 and $49,999
- ◯ Between $50,000 and $69,999
- ◯ Between $70,000 and $99,999
- ◯ Over $100,000



TIC Public Transportation Survey 2026

Survey closes at 12pm noon on Friday, April 10, 2026

Local community transportation

The questions below are specific to transportation within your local community / town.

* 5. Does your local community / town offer public transportation options?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ I'm not sure

6. If you answered yes, please select which forms of public transportation are **currently** available in your community.

- [ ] Bus
- [ ] Rideshare (Lyft, Uber, etc.)
- [ ] Taxi
- [ ] Bike sharing or scooter sharing (available for hourly rental)
- [ ] Rail / train
- [ ] Water / ferry
- [ ] Essential Air Service (EAS) or other air / flight
- [ ] Paratransit
- [ ] Demand-Response or Dial-A-Ride
- [ ] Other (please specify)

- [ ] None of the above

* 7. Do you **currently** use public transportation?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

8. Please indicate the reason(s) WHY you do or do not use public transportation.
(Examples: cost, schedules, route locations, ease of accessibility, etc.)

* 9. Which forms of public transportation do you **currently** use? (Please select all that apply)

- [ ] Bus
- [ ] Rideshare (Lyft, Uber, etc)
- [ ] Taxi
- [ ] Bike sharing or scooter sharing (available for hourly rental)
- [ ] Rail / train
- [ ] Water / ferry
- [ ] Essential Air Service (EAS) or other air / flight
- [ ] Paratransit
- [ ] Demand-Response or Dial-A-Ride
- [ ] Other (please specify)

- [ ] None of the above; I don't currently use any public transportation.

10. (Optional) Please type any comments about your response to the previous question.

* 11. Do accessibility barriers limit your ability to use public transportation **in your community**?

- ( ) Yes, I am limited due to accessibility barriers. (Please explain below)
- ( ) Sometimes, there are some barriers preventing my access to public transportation. (Please explain below)
- ( ) No, there are no accessibility barriers to limit my ability to use public transportation.
- ( ) N/A, I do not use public transportation, or there is no public transportation available in my community.

12. Which barriers are limiting your access to public transportation in your community?
(Please check all that apply)

- [ ] Vehicle accessibility (ramps, lifts, securement)
- [ ] Distance to stops or pickup points
- [ ] Scheduling or long wait times
- [ ] Safety concerns
- [ ] Sensory or communication barriers
- [ ] Other (please specify)

* 13. Which forms of public transportation would you use **if they were available** in your community?

- [ ] Bus
- [ ] Rideshare (Lyft, Uber, etc.)
- [ ] Taxi
- [ ] Bike sharing or scooter sharing (available for hourly rental)
- [ ] Rail / train
- [ ] Water / ferry
- [ ] Essential Air Service (EAS) or other air / flight
- [ ] Other (please specify)
- [ ] None of the above; I would not use any public transportation even if it was available in my area.

14. (Optional) Please type any comments about your response to the previous question.

* 15. How do you travel WITHIN your local community / town? (Please check all that apply)

- [ ] Walk
- [ ] Personal bike or scooter
- [ ] Bike or scooter sharing (available for hourly rental)
- [ ] Personal motor vehicle
- [ ] Taxi service
- [ ] Rideshare (Lyft, Uber, etc.)
- [ ] Bus
- [ ] Rail / train
- [ ] Water / ferry
- [ ] Essential Air Service (EAS) or other air / flight
- [ ] Other resources, such as a community center, assisted living, IHS, VA transit, friend/family members (please specify)

* 16. Do you own a personal motor vehicle?

- ( ) Yes, I own a personal motor vehicle.
- ( ) No, I do not own or have access to a motor vehicle.
- ( ) I don't own a vehicle, but I do have access to one for personal use.

17. If yes, is your personal motor vehicle an accessible vehicle with a ramp or lift?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

18. (Optional) Please type any comments about your response to the previous question.

* 19. Do you think the public transportation within your community is affordable?

- ◯ Yes, the public transport in my community is affordable.
- ◯ No, the public transport in my community is not affordable. (Please explain below)
- ◯ N/A, I do not have public transport in my community.

20. If you answered NO above, please explain why.

* 21. Are you aware of any multi-use pathways in your community? Are those pathways accessible and connected?
For example, pedestrian pathways or trail systems that are for non-motorized travel, such as walking, biking, or rolling.
(Please type your answer)

TIC Public Transportation Survey 2026

Survey closes at 12pm noon on Friday, April 10, 2026

Statewide transportation

The questions below are specific to transportation throughout the state, outside of your community / town.

* 22. Do you use **public transportation** to travel OUTSIDE your community but WITHIN the state?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

* 23. When you travel OUTSIDE your community but WITHIN the state, is the travel usually for **work** or for **personal** travel?

- ◯ Work: When I travel outside my community but within MT, it's **usually for work**.
- ◯ Personal: When I travel outside my community but within MT, it's **usually personal travel**.
- ◯ Both: I travel outside my community **equally** for both work and personal reasons.

* 24. How often in a calendar year do you travel OUTSIDE your community but WITHIN the state?
(*Regardless of public transportation*)

- ◯ Never
- ◯ 1-2 times per year
- ◯ 3-5 times per year
- ◯ 6-11 times per year
- ◯ Monthly (12 times per year)
- ◯ Weekly or more often

* 25. How do you travel OUTSIDE your community but WITHIN the state?
(Check all that apply)

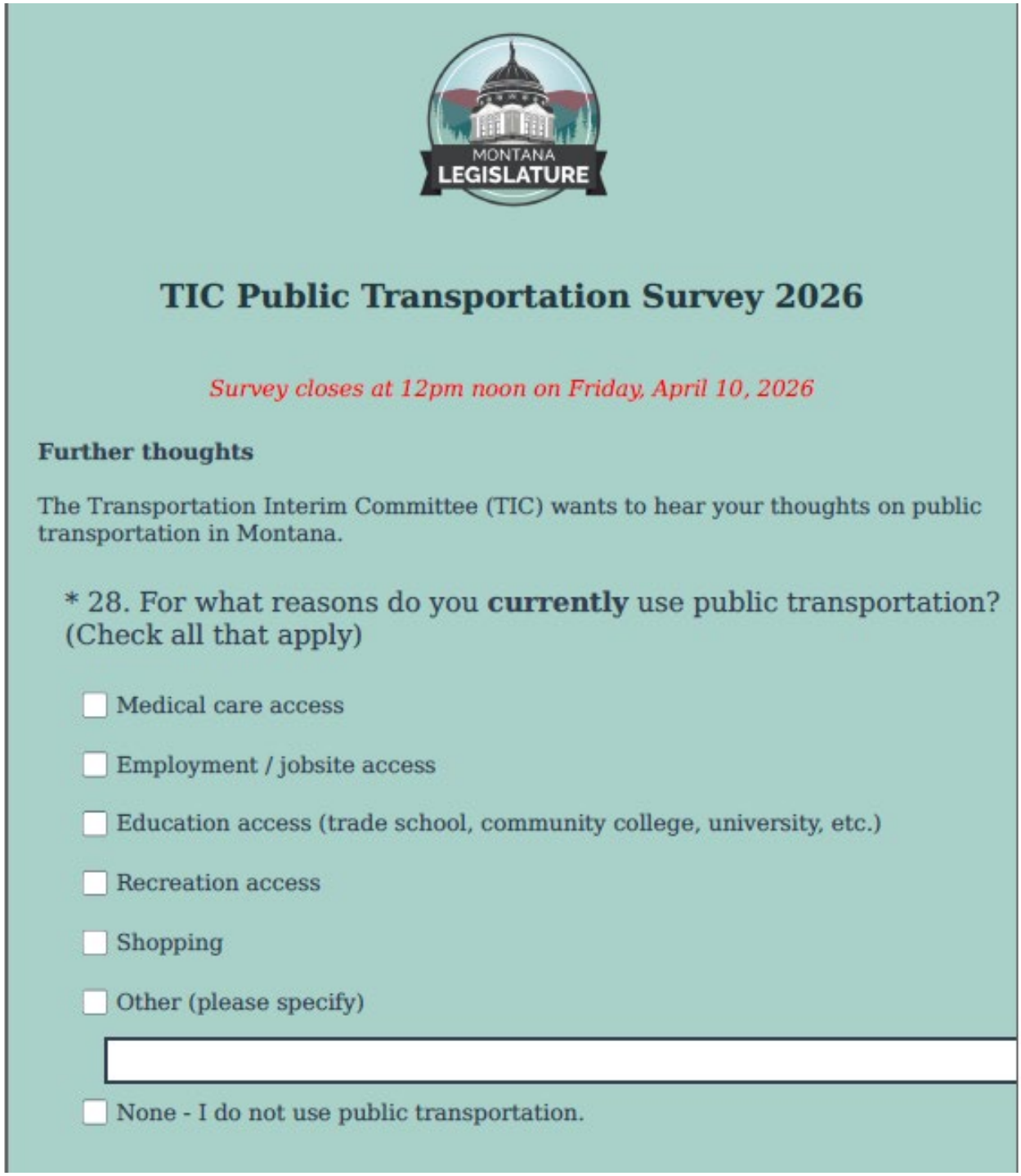
- ☐ Walk
- ☐ Personal bike or scooter
- ☐ Bike or scooter sharing (available for hourly rental)
- ☐ Personal motor vehicle
- ☐ Taxi service
- ☐ Rideshare (Lyft, Uber, etc)
- ☐ Bus
- ☐ Essential Air Service (EAS)
- ☐ Air / flight other than EAS
- ☐ Rail / train
- ☐ Water / ferry
- ☐ Other resources such as assisted living, VA transit, friend/family member (please specify)

* 26. How often in a calendar year do you use **public transportation** to travel OUTSIDE your community but WITHIN the state?

- ◯ Never
- ◯ 1-2 times per year
- ◯ 3-5 times per year
- ◯ 6-11 times per year
- ◯ Monthly (12 times per year)
- ◯ Weekly or more often

* 27. Are the different modes of public transportation services **connected** enough to get you to a destination OUTSIDE your community but WITHIN the state?

- ◯ Yes, I can get from my community to another destination using only public transportation.
- ◯ No, I cannot get from my community to another destination using only public transportation.
- ◯ N/A, I don't know, or I don't use public transportation.



TIC Public Transportation Survey 2026

Survey closes at 12pm noon on Friday, April 10, 2026

Further thoughts

The Transportation Interim Committee (TIC) wants to hear your thoughts on public transportation in Montana.

* 28. For what reasons do you **currently** use public transportation? (Check all that apply)

- [ ] Medical care access
- [ ] Employment / jobsite access
- [ ] Education access (trade school, community college, university, etc.)
- [ ] Recreation access
- [ ] Shopping
- [ ] Other (please specify)
- [ ] None - I do not use public transportation.

* 29. What are the main reasons you **DO NOT** use public transportation?
(Check all that apply)

- [ ] Not accessible
- [ ] Not available when needed
- [ ] Too expensive
- [ ] Safety concerns
- [ ] Health-related reasons
- [ ] I prefer to drive
- [ ] Other (please specify)

* 30. What would encourage you to utilize public transportation **if it were available**?
(Check all that apply)

- [ ] Medical care access
- [ ] Employment / jobsite access
- [ ] Education access (trade school, community college, university, etc)
- [ ] Recreation access
- [ ] Shopping
- [ ] Other (please specify)
- [ ] None of the above: I don't plan to use public transportation

* 31. What do you see as the **most important improvements** that are needed for public transportation service(s) in the state? (Please type your answer)

* 32. What public transportation service(s) do you want to see **added** to your community, or to the state overall? (Please type your answer)

33. Are there specific **locations, destinations, or facilities** you would recommend the TIC visit to better understand opportunities for improving Montana's public transportation network?

34. Do you have any **information, insights, or presentations** you would like to share with the TIC as the committee evaluates opportunities for enhancing public transportation?

35. Do you have any information or suggestions for the TIC to consider, related to **enhancing accessibility and/or mobility** within public transportation?

* 36. The Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority (BSPRA) was accepted into the Federal Rail Administration's Corridor ID program, which will evaluate the restoration of passenger rail service through southern Montana along the former North Coast Hiawatha route (*Glendive, Miles City, Forsyth, Billings, Livingston, Bozeman, Helena, Missoula*).
This would be part of a long-distance route from Chicago to Seattle, which would operate on the current freight rail infrastructure.

How would this expanded availability of passenger rail impact you, your family, and/or your community?

(Please type your answer. Feel free to provide more detail than simply "yes" or "no".)

If you'd like to learn more about the ongoing efforts to restore passenger rail along the southern route, you can contact the Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority (BSPRA) for more information: https://www.bigskyrail.org/
Or, there is general information on the TIC webpage at:
https://www.legmt.gov/committees/interim/tic/studies-topics/#SJ-19

Thank you for taking the time to respond to this survey on public transportation in Montana.
The TIC appreciates your input toward the ongoing study on public transportation.

If you have any further comments or questions, please visit the TIC's webpage at:
https://committees.legmt.gov/#/nonStandingCommittees/32

You can submit public comment in writing, attend TIC meetings virtually, or join the TIC in person in Helena at an interim meeting.

Survey closes at 12pm noon on Friday, April 10, 2026