

Illinois Department of Transportation Prairie Parkway Public Opinion Study

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Executive Summary

- Residents of both the primary and secondary study areas express moderate levels of concern about traffic congestion in the Prairie Parkway study area, rating the problem a 5.8 to 6.2 on a scale of 1 to 10. Roughly half the population considers traffic congestion to be severe. Approximately three-quarters believe that traffic congestion will get much worse over the next ten years; daily commuters are particularly apt to share this perception.
- Too much development and road construction are rated highly as the factors that most contribute to traffic problems in the area.
- Among the proposed solutions to traffic congestion problems, residents indicate the most support for widening existing roads and better transportation planning. Many feel that residential construction and economic development have not been effectively coordinated with long term transportation planning.
- Very few respondents report currently using public transportation, including Metra, Pace and CTA. Interest in using improved public transit options as an alternative to driving is low, particularly bus options. However, there is moderate support for enhanced rail service to the area.

Executive Summary

- When asked specifically about the need for roads, over half (61%) of respondents in the primary study area agree that growth is inevitable and roads should be built or improved before traffic problems increase. Few believe that new roads are at fault for bringing in more congestion.
 - Those who are in favor of new roads indicate a need for both north-south and east-west roads. However, residents of the primary study area are significantly more apt to express a need for north-south roads.
- Although many residents support working with the existing infrastructure to deal with traffic congestion (e.g. expanding existing roads, widening intersections), just 22% say existing road improvements should actually be favored over new road construction.
- In terms of potential solutions to congestion, residents indicate the highest likelihood of using expanded roads or new freeways/expressways. Commuters are especially apt to be willing to use these solutions.

Executive Summary

- Increased traffic safety and reduced regional and local travel times are perceived to be the most attractive benefits that might be achieved from transportation improvements.
- Respondents express the most concern over the impact that new road construction will have on water quality and the costs that taxpayers will have to bear. While primary study area residents identify those issues as their main concerns, they are likely to identify loss of open space and farmland as secondary concerns.
- Awareness of road building plans and the Prairie Parkway is fairly high, particularly in the primary study area. Respondents most frequently identify news coverage as their prime source of information about the plans/projects. Word of mouth among friends and family is also a frequent source. Proportionally, relatively few residents have proactively sought out information about the study at this point.
- 1000 survey respondents were contacted using a random digit dial method, which targets households with both listed and unlisted telephone numbers. This ensures that responding households are selected randomly and that the results are as representative as possible.

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Background and Objectives

- In 2004, Parsons Brinckerhoff engaged the services of Aeffect, Inc.—a marketing research and consulting firm—to assist them in studying public opinion regarding the Prairie Parkway Study.
- The purpose of the survey research is to assess the extent to which traffic congestion is perceived to be a problem by area residents and to gauge reactions to a variety of potential solutions to the problem.
- Aeffect designed and conducted a random telephone survey of 1000 residents of the study area—850 in the primary study area and 150 in the secondary area. Data was collected from October 17 to November 22, 2004.
- The margin of error for the total sample is +/-3.1%.

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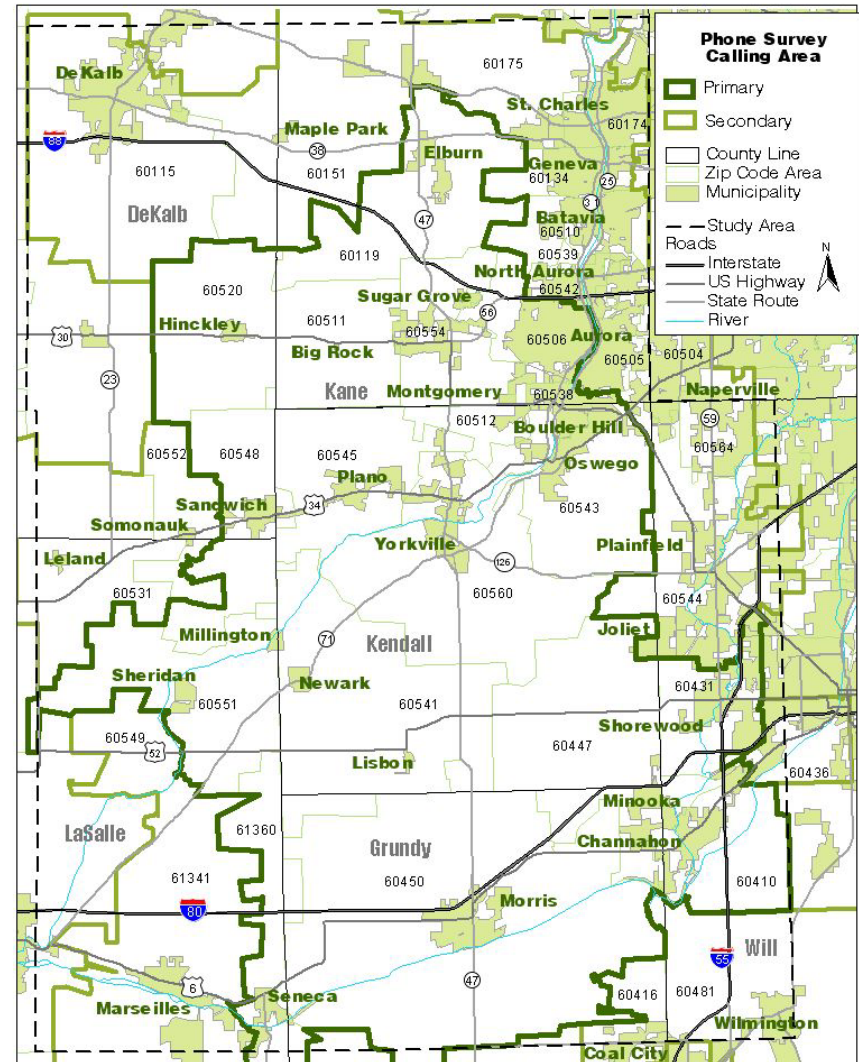
Methodology

- Survey respondents were contacted using a random digit dial (RDD) method, which targets households with both listed and unlisted telephone numbers. This ensures that responding households are selected randomly and that the results are as representative as possible.
- 37 zip codes identified as representing the study area were targeted for the survey. The majority of surveys (850) were collected from zip codes representing the primary focus area. The remaining 150 were collected from residents of the secondary focus area.
 - Where there are statistically significant differences between the opinions of those residing in the primary and secondary focus areas, it is noted in this report.
 - Significant differences between other subgroups within the primary study area who were hypothesized to have differing opinions have also been noted. Specifically, data for business owners and commuters was compared against non-business owners and non-commuters.

Methodology

- The calling areas were defined as follows:

<u>Primary Area</u>	<u>Secondary Area</u>
Aurora (60506)	Aurora (60504 & 60505)
Big Rock	Batavia
Channahon	Coal City
Hinckley	DeKalb
Joliet	Elburn
Minooka	Geneva
Montgomery	Leland
Morris	Marseilles
Newark	Maple Park
Oswego	Naperville (60564)
Plano	North Aurora
Sandwich	Plainfield
Seneca	Somonauk
Sheridan	St. Charles
Shorewood	Wilmington
Sugar Grove	
Yorkville	



Methodology

- Respondents were screened to ensure they currently use a vehicle at least once a week and that they do not work in an industry that might bias their responses. The following industries and employers were excluded from participation:
 - Advertising, marketing or marketing research
 - Public relations
 - Illinois Department of Transportation
 - City, county or state government
 - Road construction

Methodology

- The survey consisted of 39 questions addressing the following topic areas:
 - Driving habits
 - Use of public transportation and other means of transport
 - Use of major area roads
 - Perceptions of the severity and reasons for traffic congestion in the region
 - Lifestyle factors affected by traffic congestion
 - Solutions to traffic congestion
 - Awareness of Prairie Parkway Study
 - Environmental and quality of life concerns
 - Home and business ownership
 - Demographics

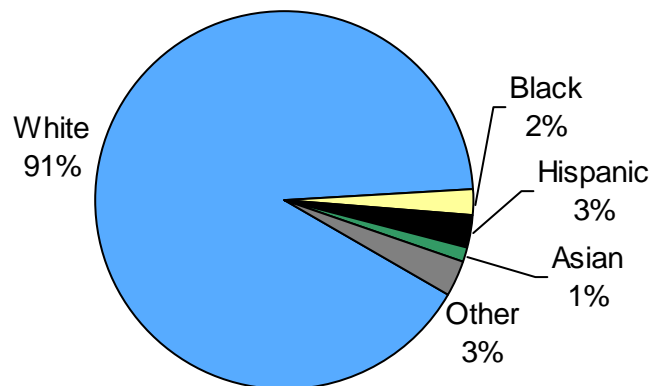
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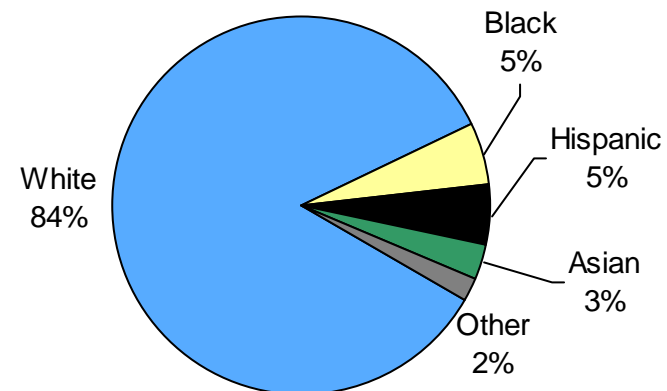
Respondent Profile

- The random sampling approach used to select households for this research resulted in a socio-economic profile of survey respondents that is consistent with the study area.
 - Most respondents in both study areas are Caucasian, with a variety of age and income ranges represented.
 - The secondary study area includes slightly greater representation from non-Caucasian respondents.

Ethnic/Racial Identity:
Primary Study Area

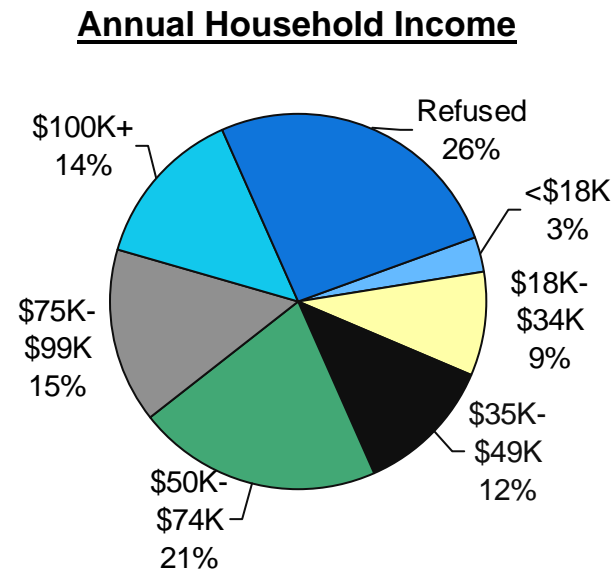
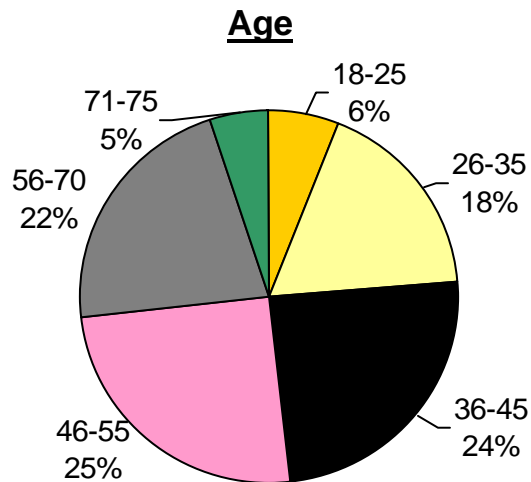


Ethnic/Racial Identity:
Secondary Study Area



Respondent Profile

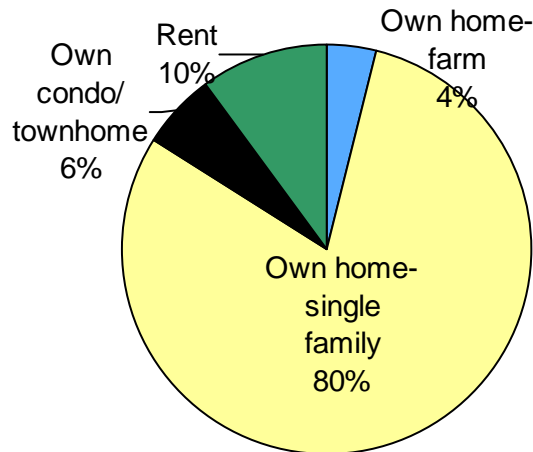
- The respondent base for this survey was 42% male; 58% female.
- Age and income distribution reflect a natural fall-out based on the random selection of households.
 - Income distribution for this survey is comparable with U.S. Census results for the region. Although lower income households appear to be slightly under-represented in the chart below, it is likely that they are actually represented in the 26% of respondents who chose not to provide their income.



Respondent Profile

- On average, respondents have lived in the far southwest Chicagoland area for 24 years.
- Over three-quarters of residents in both the primary and secondary study areas are single-family homeowners.
- 12% of primary area respondents and 11% of secondary respondents are business owners.

Home Ownership:
Primary Study Area



Home Ownership:
Secondary Study Area

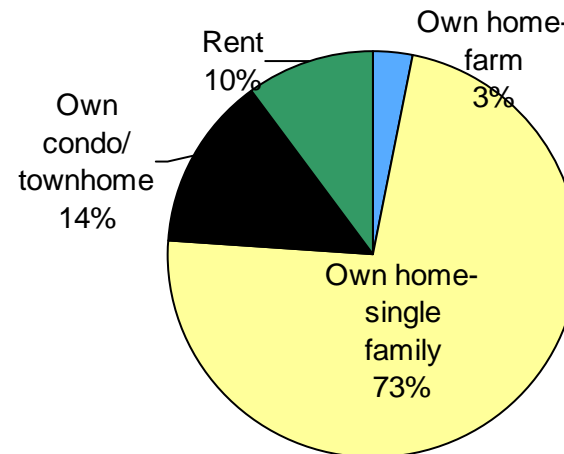


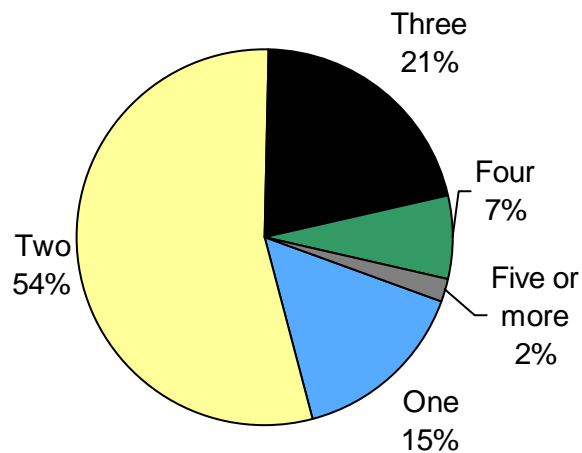
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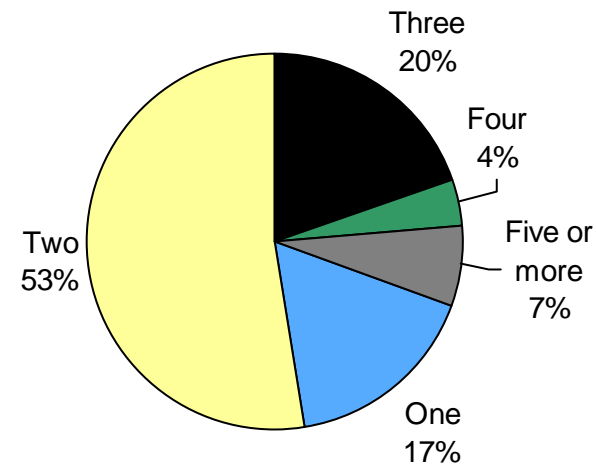
Detailed Findings: Driving Habits

- Across the primary and secondary study areas, respondents report an average of 2.3 cars/trucks per household.
- Those who commute to work and those with higher income levels report more vehicles in the household.

Number of cars/trucks in household: Primary Study Area



Number of cars/trucks in household: Secondary Study Area



Q32. How many cars or trucks are currently used in your household?

Detailed Findings: Driving Habits

- The chart below shows reported regular usage (at least three times per week) of selected roads in the region.

	<u>Primary</u>	<u>Secondary</u>		<u>Primary</u>	<u>Secondary</u>
<u>Road</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Road</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
US 34	32	15	US 52	6	3
IL 47	24	10	Eola	5	7
I-88	21	29	Ridge	5	3
I-55	16	13	IL 126	5	4
US 30	16	9	Plainfield	4	6
IL 59	12	21	IL 56	3	5
Orchard	12	4	IL 23	2	7
I-80	11	9	Grove	2	<1
Randall	9	19	Dauberman	1	<1
US 6	9	5	None	3	7
IL 31	8	15			
I-355	7	11			
IL 71	7	3			

Q8. Which of the following roads do you use at least three times in a typical week? [read list]

Detailed Findings: Driving Habits

- The chart below summarizes usage of selected area roads which showed notable differences based on traffic severity ratings.
- Respondents who regularly use Route 34, Illinois 59, and Illinois 56 are significantly more likely to rate traffic congestion problems as more severe (7 to 10 on a 10-point scale).

<u>Road</u>	<u>Traffic Severity Rating</u>			
	<u>Low-Moderate</u>	<u>Severe</u>	<u>Low-Moderate</u>	<u>Severe</u>
	<u>Primary</u>	<u>Primary</u>	<u>Secondary</u>	<u>Secondary</u>
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
US 34	28	*	13	18
I-88	19		29	28
I-55	14		15	12
IL 59	10	*	17	24
Orchard	10		4	4
IL 56	1	*	6	4
IL 47	26		14	6

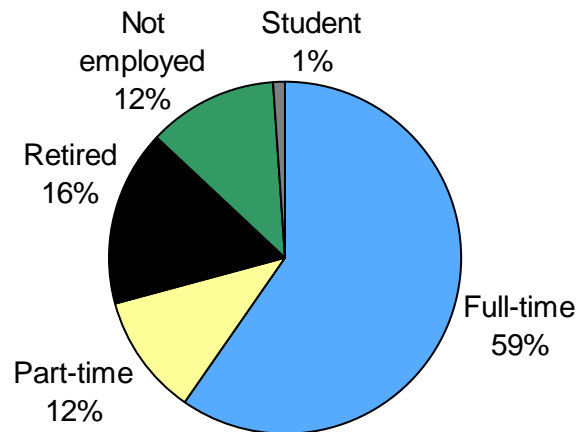
Q11: How would you rate the traffic congestion in your area?

Rows marked with an asterisk (*) indicate a statistically significant difference between columns.

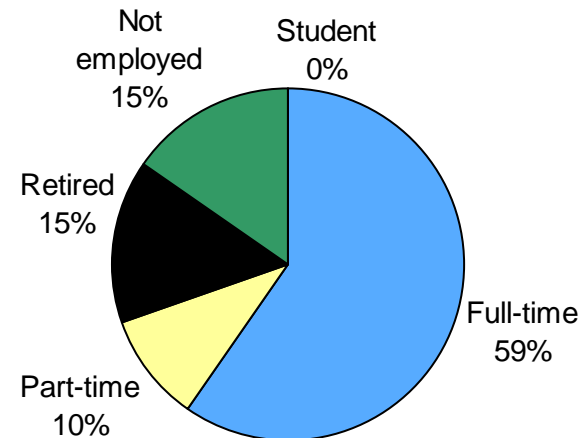
Detailed Findings: Driving Habits

- 71% of survey respondents in the primary study area are employed either full or part-time. In the secondary area, 69% are employed.
- In total, 65% of respondents surveyed are commuters.
 - 63% commute to a job outside their home on a regular basis. Another 2% do so sometimes.
 - Most commuters drive to work in another Chicagoland suburb. Just 2% commute to the city of Chicago.

**Employment Status:
Primary Study Area**



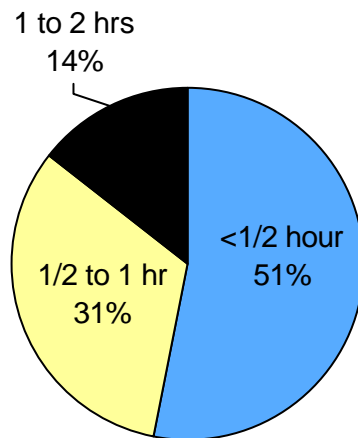
**Employment Status:
Secondary Study Area**



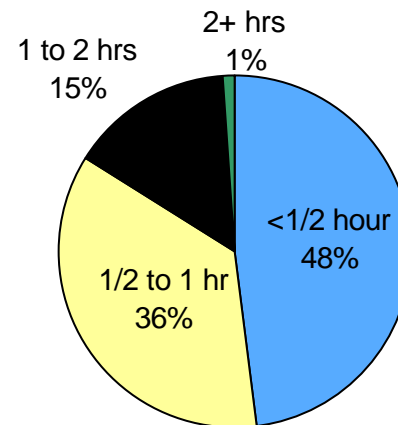
Detailed Findings: Driving Habits

- On average, study area residents spend 29.9 minutes driving to work.
 - Reported commute times range up to 2 hours and 40 minutes.
 - Business owners report significantly shorter commute times, averaging 25.2 minutes (compared to 31.3 minutes among non-owners).

Daily commute time:
Primary study area



Daily commute time:
Secondary study area

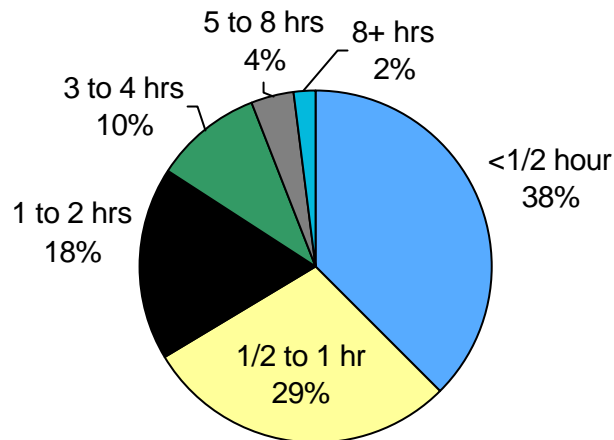


Q5. On an average day, approximately how much time in minutes do you spend driving to work?

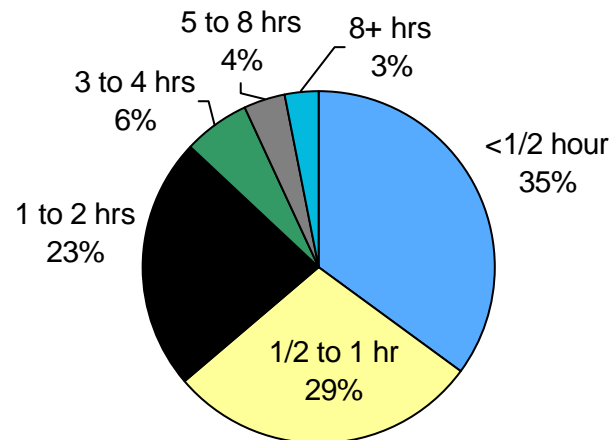
Detailed Findings: Driving Habits

- Daily drive times for reasons other than commuting to work average less than one hour for most respondents.
 - There are no notable differences in the amount of time spent in the car based on area of residence.

Non-commute daily drive:
Primary study area



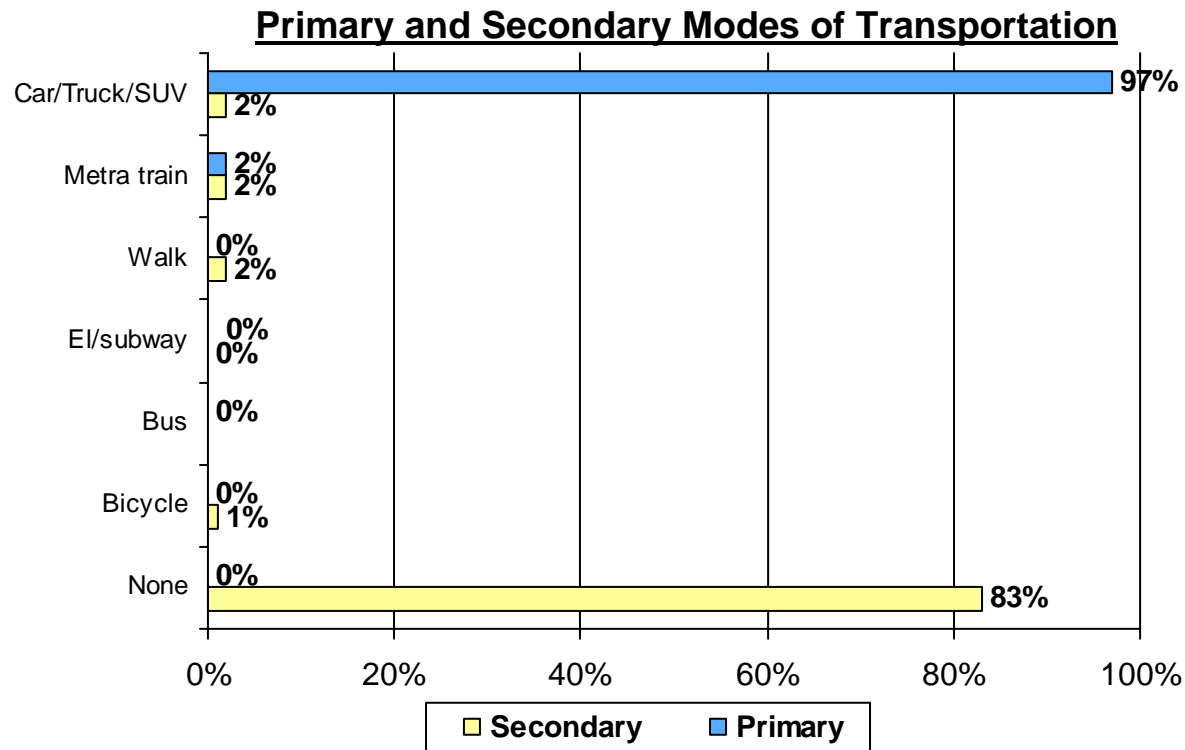
Non-commute daily drive:
Secondary study area



Q5B. On a typical weekday, about how much time do you spend driving for reasons not related to work?

Detailed Findings: Driving Habits

- Respondents overwhelmingly report relying on their cars or trucks as their primary mode of transportation to work. In fact, many (83%) report using no other secondary forms of transportation.
- Metra trains are a distant second as a secondary mode of transportation, used by just 2% of area respondents.



Q2. What mode of transportation is your primary means of commuting to work?

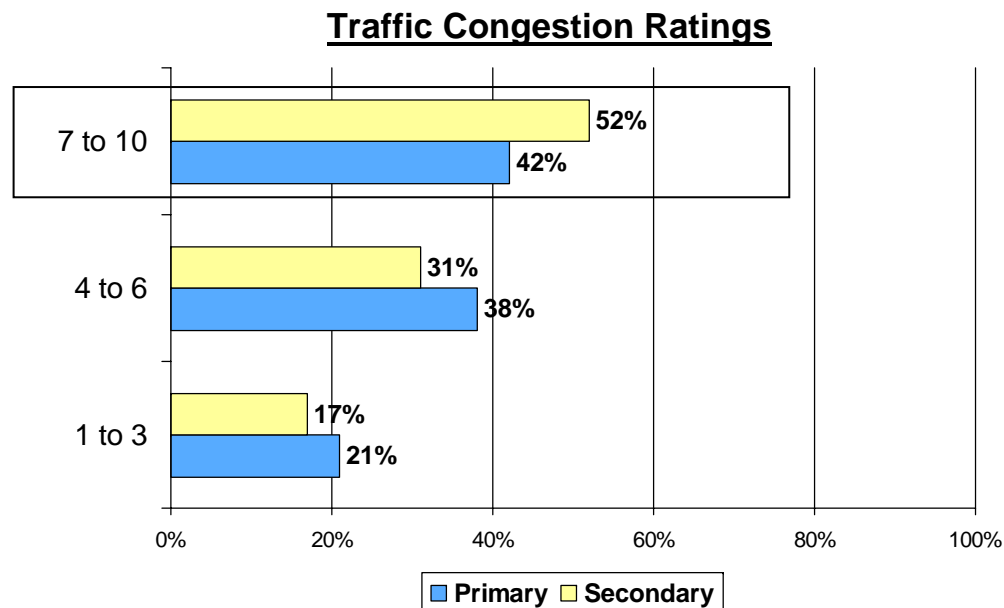
Q3. What other modes of transportation do you use on a regular basis?

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Detailed Findings: Perceptions of Area Transportation

- Residents in the primary study area rate the traffic congestion in their area a 5.8 on a 10-point scale, where 10 means “completely unbearable.” Those in the secondary study area are significantly more likely to rate the congestion as more severe, averaging a 6.2.



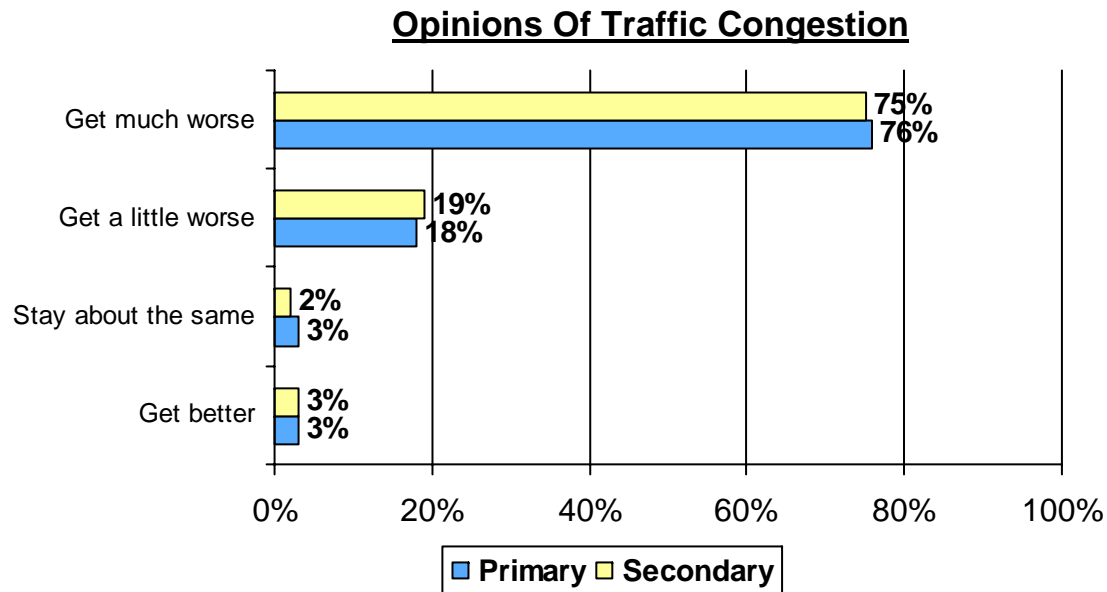
Q11. How would you rate the traffic congestion in your area? Please use a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 means not a problem at all and 10 means completely unbearable.

Q13. Over the next 10 years, do you think traffic congestion in your area will...[read list]?

Boxed results indicate a statistically significant difference between respondent groups.

Detailed Findings: Perceptions of Area Transportation

- Over the next 10 years, most respondents feel traffic congestion in both areas will *get much worse*. Very few believe it will stay the same or get better.

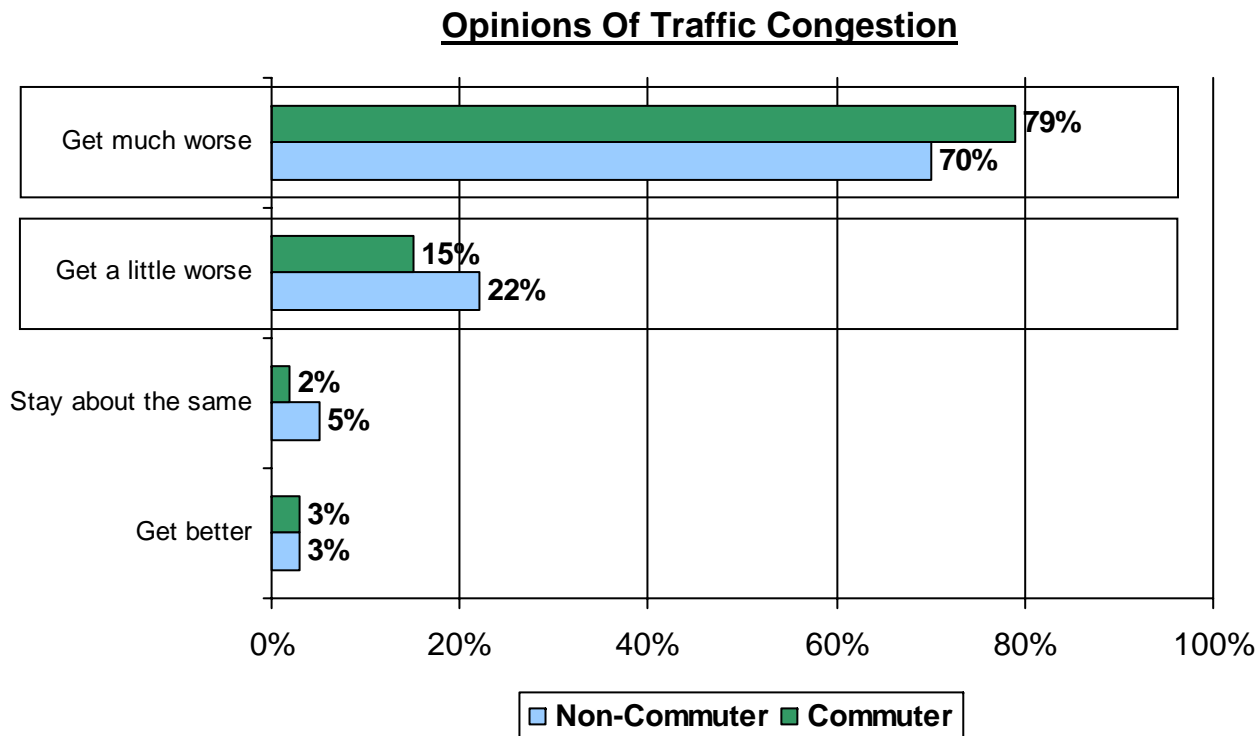


Q11. How would you rate the traffic congestion in your area? Please use a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 means not a problem at all and 10 means completely unbearable.

Q13. Over the next 10 years, do you think traffic congestion in your area will...[read list]?

Detailed Findings: Perceptions of Area Transportation

- Those who commute regularly are significantly more likely to believe the traffic situation will get much worse over the next ten years, compared to those who do not commute.



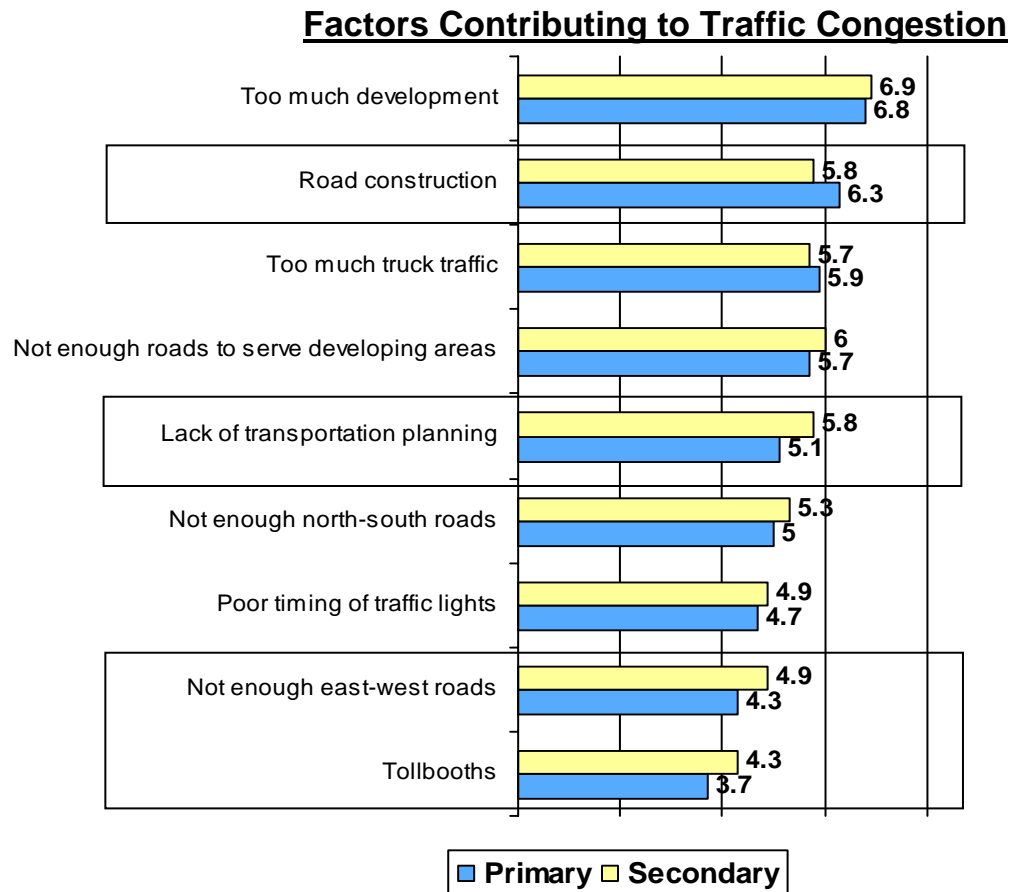
Q11. How would you rate the traffic congestion in your area? Please use a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 means not a problem at all and 10 means completely unbearable.

Q13. Over the next 10 years, do you think traffic congestion in your area will...[read list]?

Boxed ratings indicate a statistically significant difference between respondent groups.

Detailed Findings: Perceptions of Area Transportation

- *Too much development* is most frequently cited as the reason for traffic congestion problems in both areas.

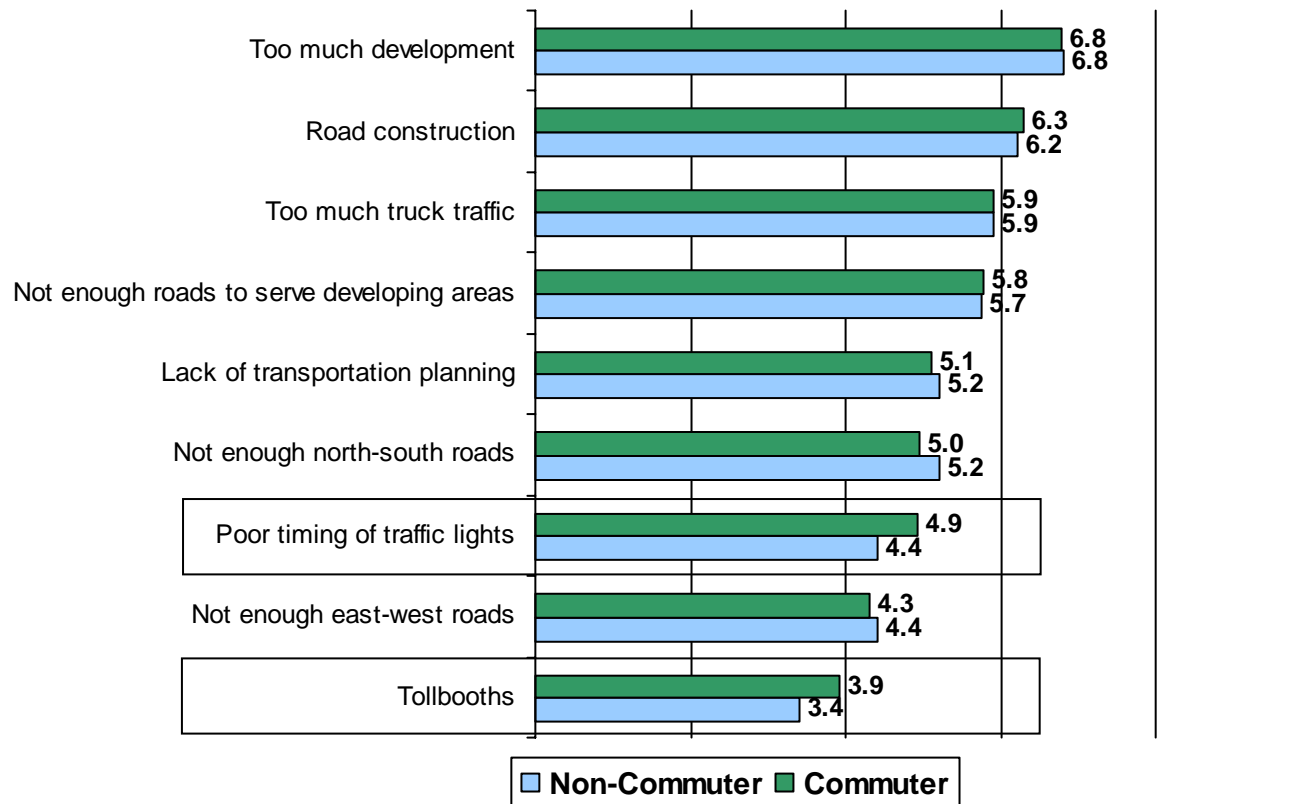


Q12. In your opinion, how do each of the following factors contribute to traffic congestion in your area? (1 to 10 scale)
 Boxed ratings indicate a statistically significant difference between respondent groups.

Detailed Findings: Perceptions of Area Transportation

- Commuters and non-commuters also agree that development is to blame for traffic congestion.

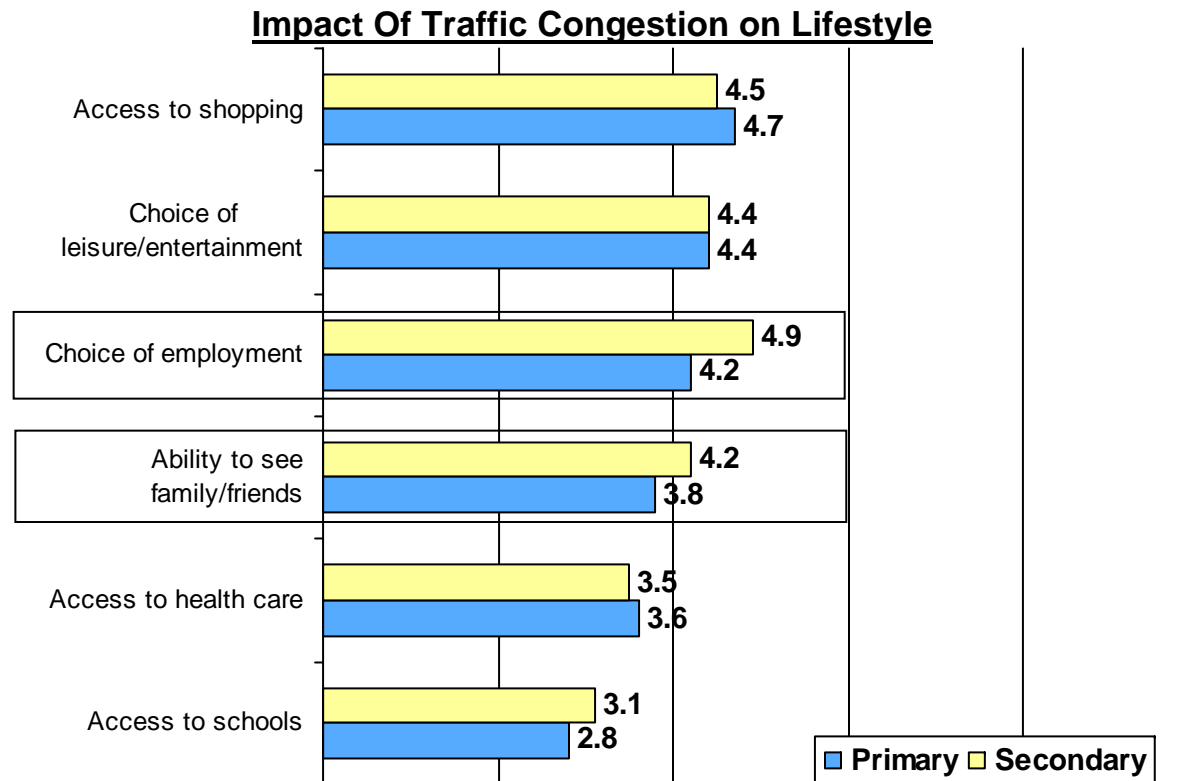
Factors Contributing to Traffic Congestion - Commuters



Q12. In your opinion, how do each of the following factors contribute to traffic congestion in your area? (1 to 10 scale)
Boxed ratings indicate a statistically significant difference between respondent groups.

Detailed Findings: Perceptions of Area Transportation

- Respondents in both study areas rate the impact of traffic congestion on their lifestyles as generally moderate. They indicate traffic places the greatest limitations on their access to shopping, leisure/entertainment activities and choice of employment.

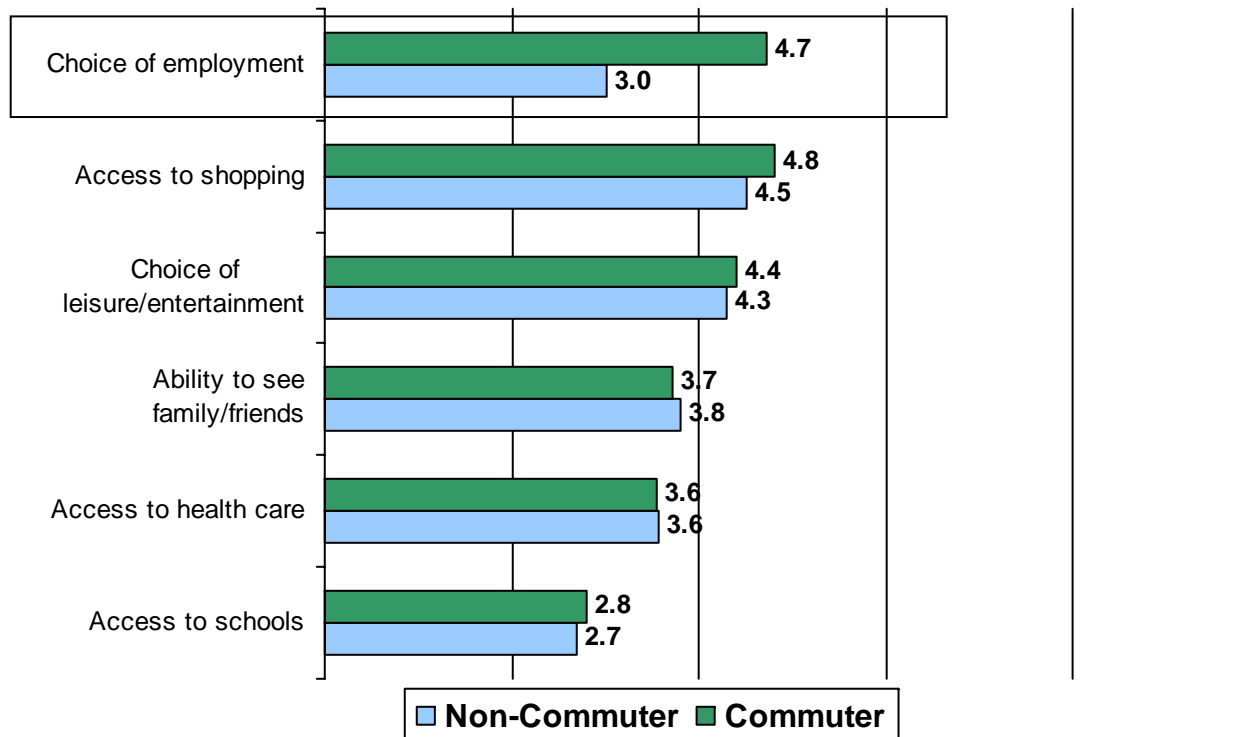


Q14. Rate each one based on the extent to which it is affected by traffic congestion in your area. (1-10 scale, where 1 means traffic has no impact, and 10 means traffic places severe limits on your choices. Boxed ratings indicate a statistically significant difference between respondent groups.

Detailed Findings: Perceptions of Area Transportation

- Daily commuters are significantly more apt to say that traffic congestion places limitations on their choice of employment.

Impact Of Traffic Congestion on Lifestyle



Q14. Rate each one based on the extent to which it is affected by traffic congestion in your area. (1-10 scale, where 1 means traffic has no impact, and 10 means traffic places severe limits on your choices. Boxed ratings indicate a statistically significant difference between respondent groups.

Detailed Findings: Perceptions of Area Transportation

- Most respondents make concessions in their daily schedules to accommodate traffic congestion. Most, particularly those in the primary focus area, combine their errands into a single trip.
 - Residents of the secondary study area are significantly more likely to say they time their trips to avoid congestion.

Planning For Traffic Congestion

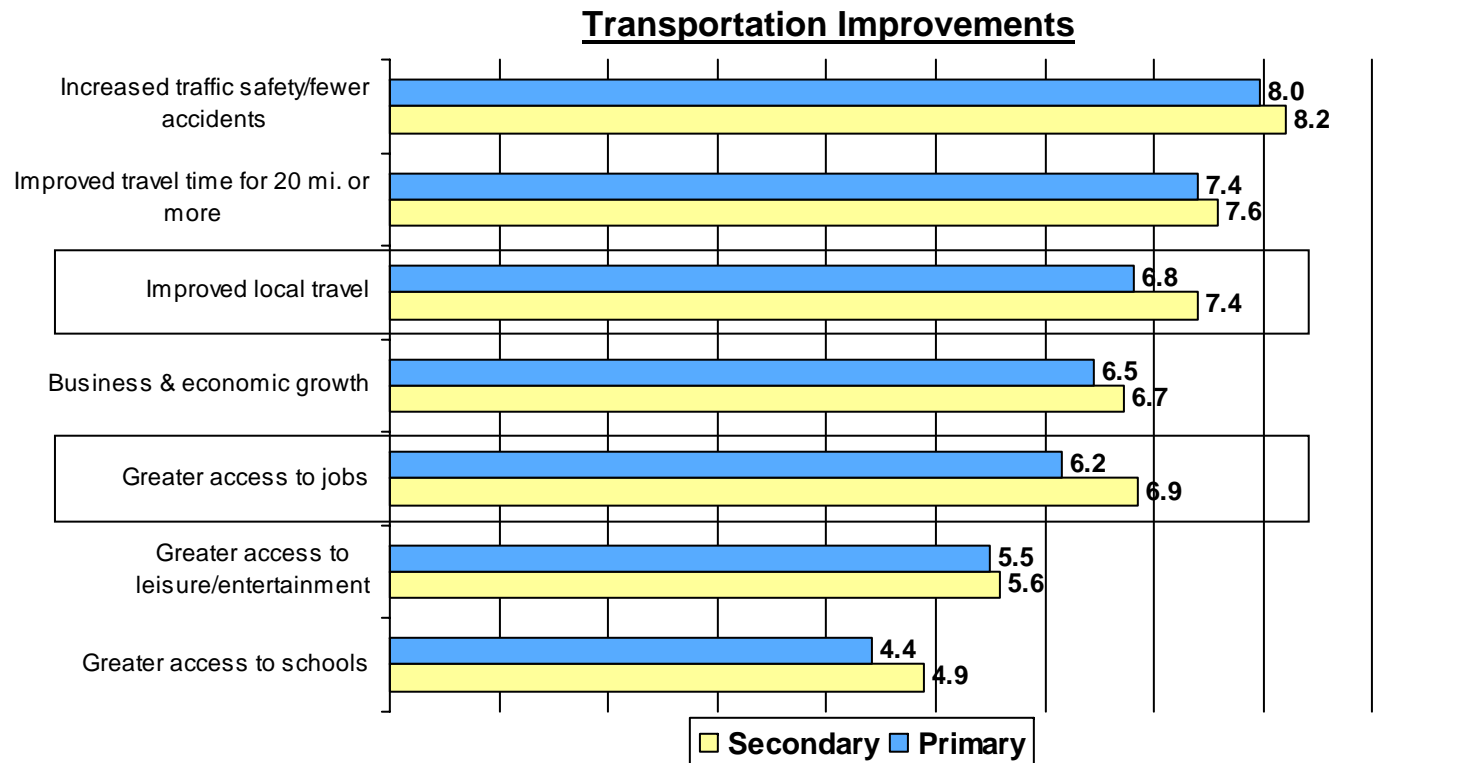
	<u>Primary</u>	<u>Secondary</u>
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
Usually combine multiple errands	65	57
Try to time trips to avoid congestion	19	28
Go out whenever I have something to do	17	15

Q7. Which of the following statements best describes your approach to trip? [read list]

Boxed ratings indicate a statistically significant difference between respondent groups.

Detailed Findings: Perceptions of Area Transportation

- Residents in both study areas are most interested in the increased safety benefits associated with transportation improvements.
 - Those in the primary study area are significantly less apt to express high interest in local travel and access to jobs.

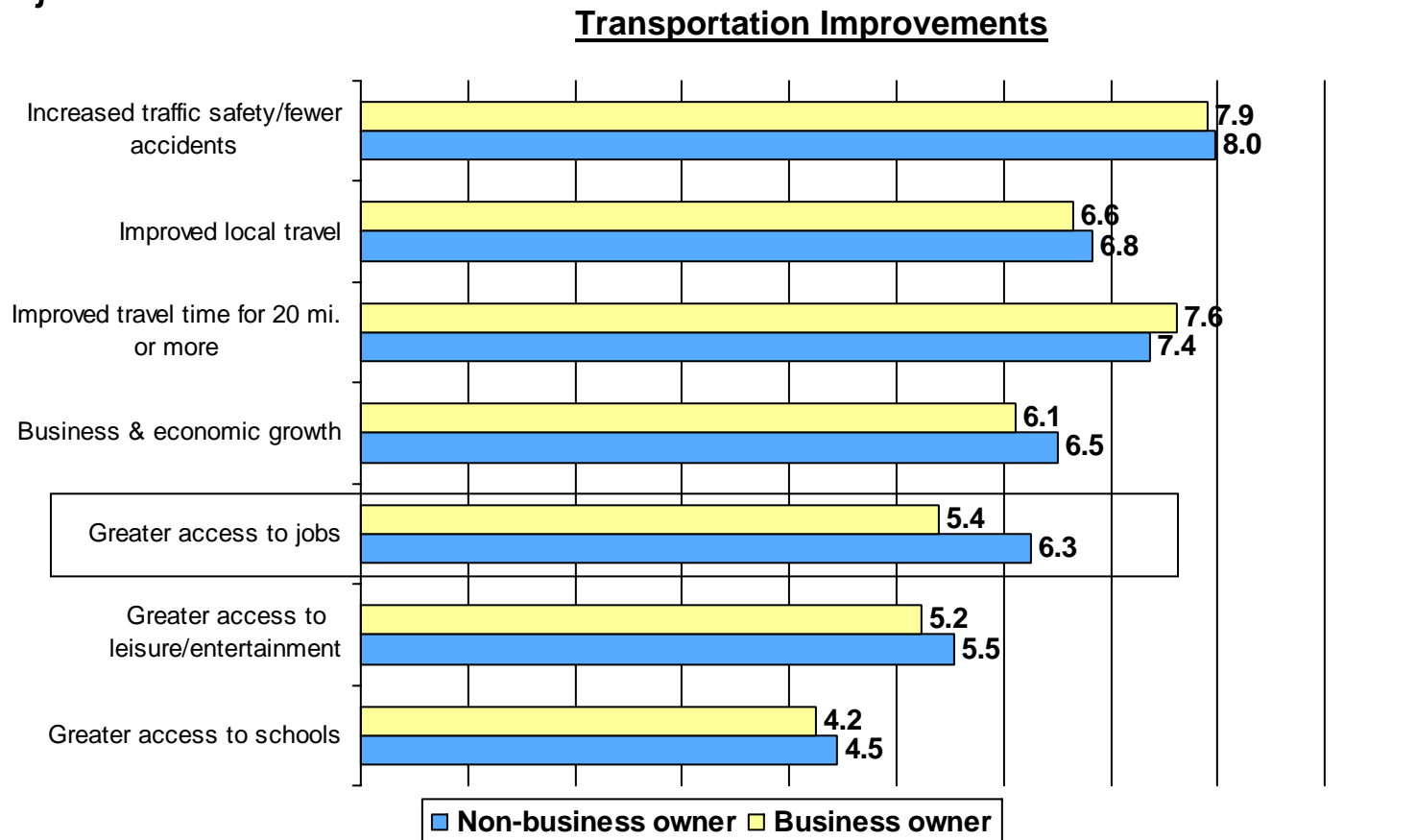


Q21. What would you like to see new transportation improvements achieve in your area? Please rate how important each of the following are to you and your family. (1-10 scale)

Boxed ratings indicate a statistically significant difference between respondent groups.

Detailed Findings: Perceptions of Area Transportation

- Business owners share the same interests, however they are significantly less likely to say they want to see greater access to jobs.

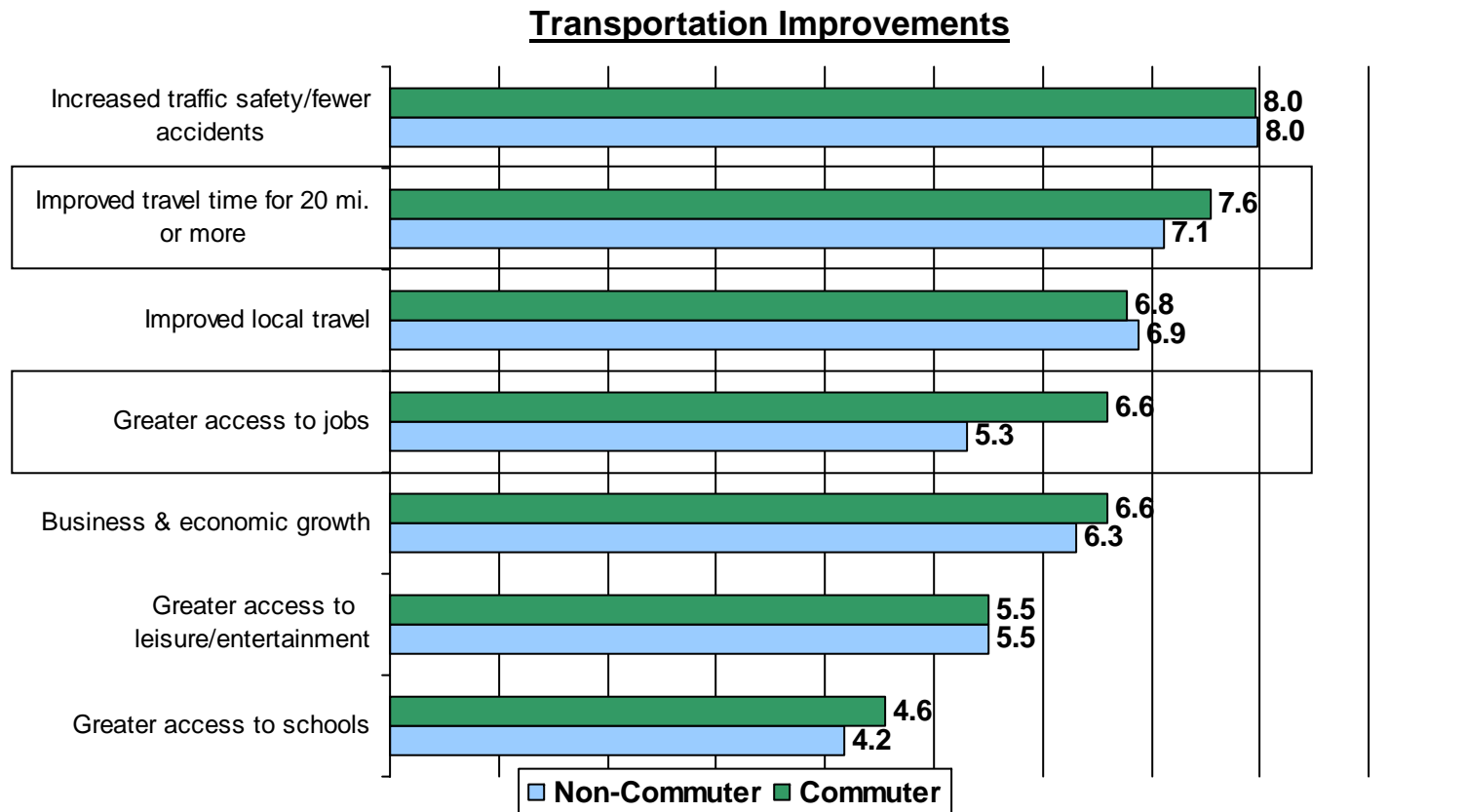


Q21. What would you like to see new transportation improvements achieve in your area? Please rate how important each of the following are to you and your family. (1-10 scale)

Boxed ratings indicate a statistically significant difference between respondent groups.

Detailed Findings: Perceptions of Area Transportation

- Commuters also indicate some specific benefits they seek. They are significantly more likely to express interest in improved travel times for longer trips and greater access to jobs.



Q21. What would you like to see new transportation improvements achieve in your area? Please rate how important each of the following are to you and your family. (1-10 scale)

Boxed ratings indicate a statistically significant difference between respondent groups.

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Detailed Findings: Reactions to Proposed Solutions

- Over half (61%) of respondents feel that growth in the area is inevitable and roads should be built or improved before traffic problems increase.
 - Very few (6%) oppose new roads because of the likelihood of bringing in too many people.

<u>Statement</u>	<u>% Agree Primary</u>	<u>% Agree Secondary</u>
Growth in this area is going to happen anyway. Roads should be improved or built before traffic problems get worse.	61%	59%
Instead of focusing on new road construction, improve existing roads in my area.	22%	20%
Improve public transportation in my area instead of focusing on road construction.	8%	12%
I don't want to see new roads built because they bring too many people and increase congestion	6%	7%
None of these	3%	3%

Q15. Which of the following statements best describes your opinions about development and transportation in your area?

Detailed Findings: Reactions to Proposed Solutions

- A majority of residents of both study areas disagree with the statement “Building major new roads will not reduce traffic congestion, it will only make it worse.”
 - There are no significant differences between the opinions of residents of the primary and secondary focus areas.

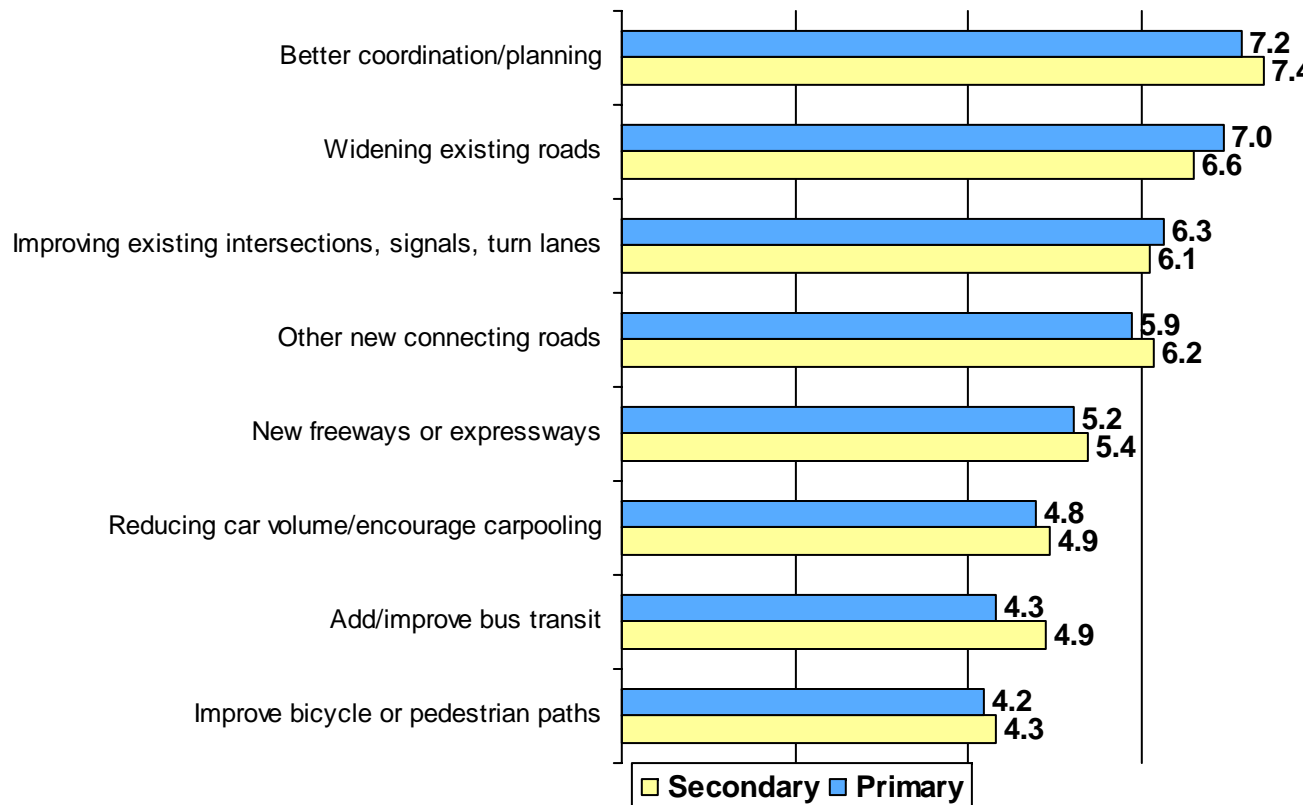
	<u>Primary</u>	<u>Secondary</u>
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
Agree	31	30
Disagree	67	67
Don't know	2	3

Q23. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement.

Detailed Findings: Reactions to Proposed Solutions

- On a scale from 1 to 10, respondents rate *better coordination/planning* and *widening roads* as the best solutions to traffic congestion problems.

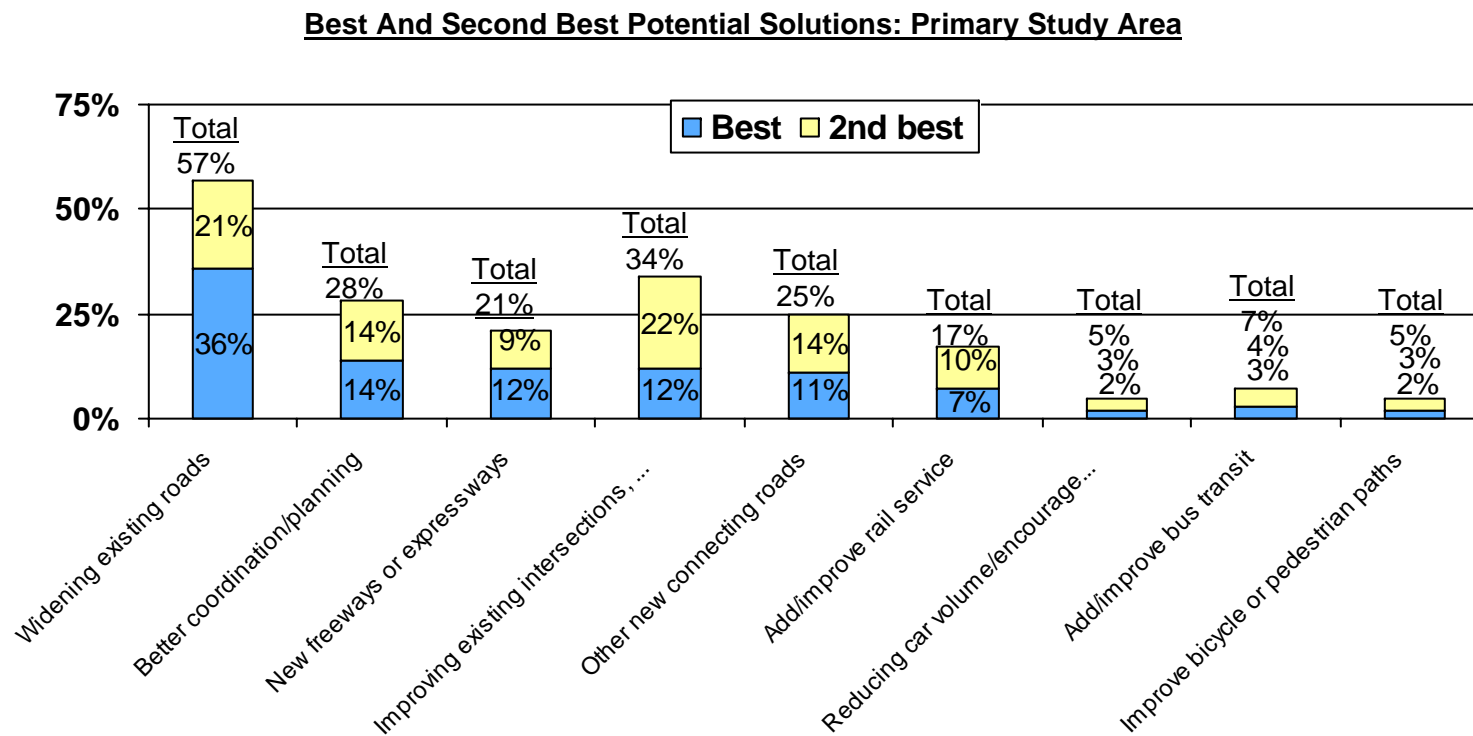
Ratings of Potential Solutions



Q16. I'm going to read you a series of potential solutions to easing traffic congestion in your area. Please rate each one on a scale from 1 to 10 where 1 means it would have no impact on easing traffic congestion in your life, and 10 means it would be the ideal solution.

Detailed Findings: Reactions to Proposed Solutions

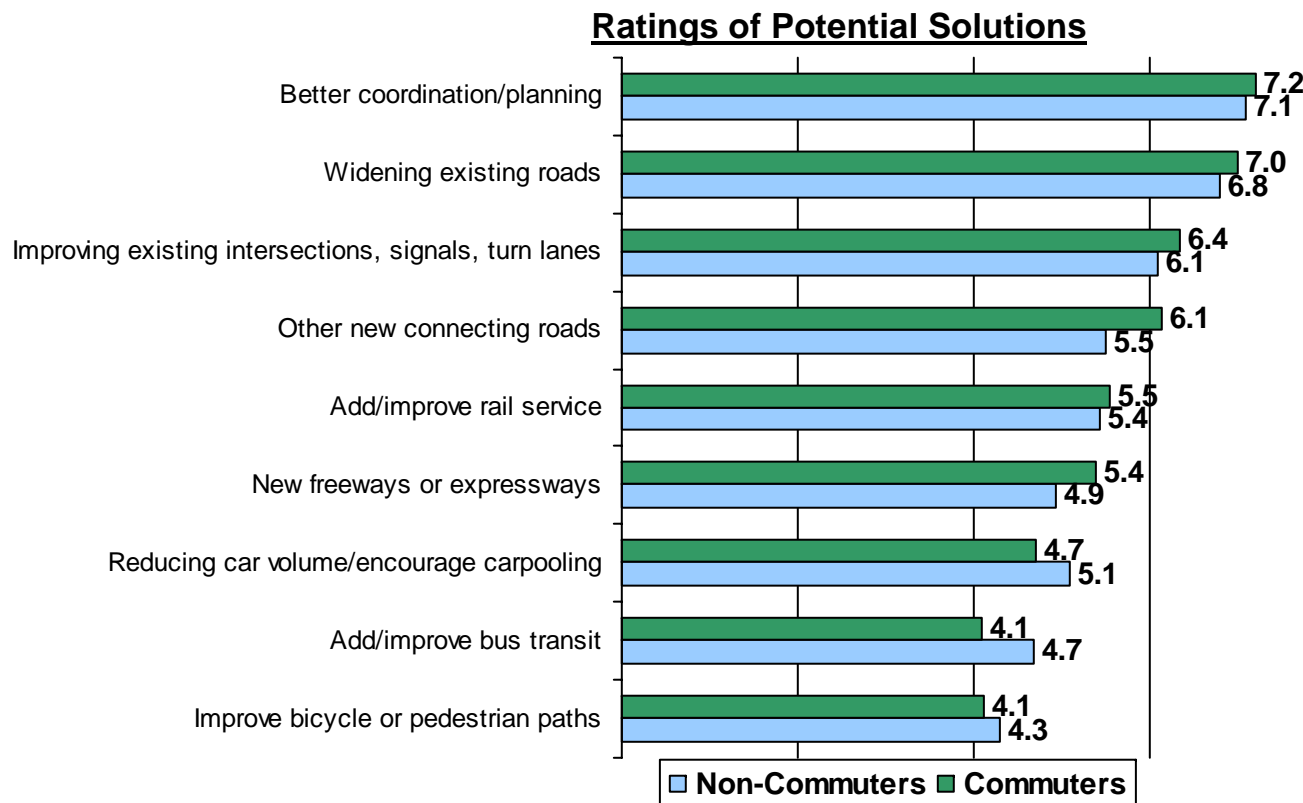
- When asked to choose the best and second best solutions to congestion, most residents of the primary study area (57%) select widening existing roads.



Q17. In your opinion, which of these are the best and second best solutions to easing traffic congestion in your area over the next 5 years?

Detailed Findings: Reactions to Proposed Solutions

- Commuters in the primary focus area indicate more interest in road improvements than do non-commuters. Non-commuters indicate more interest in carpools and additional bus transit.

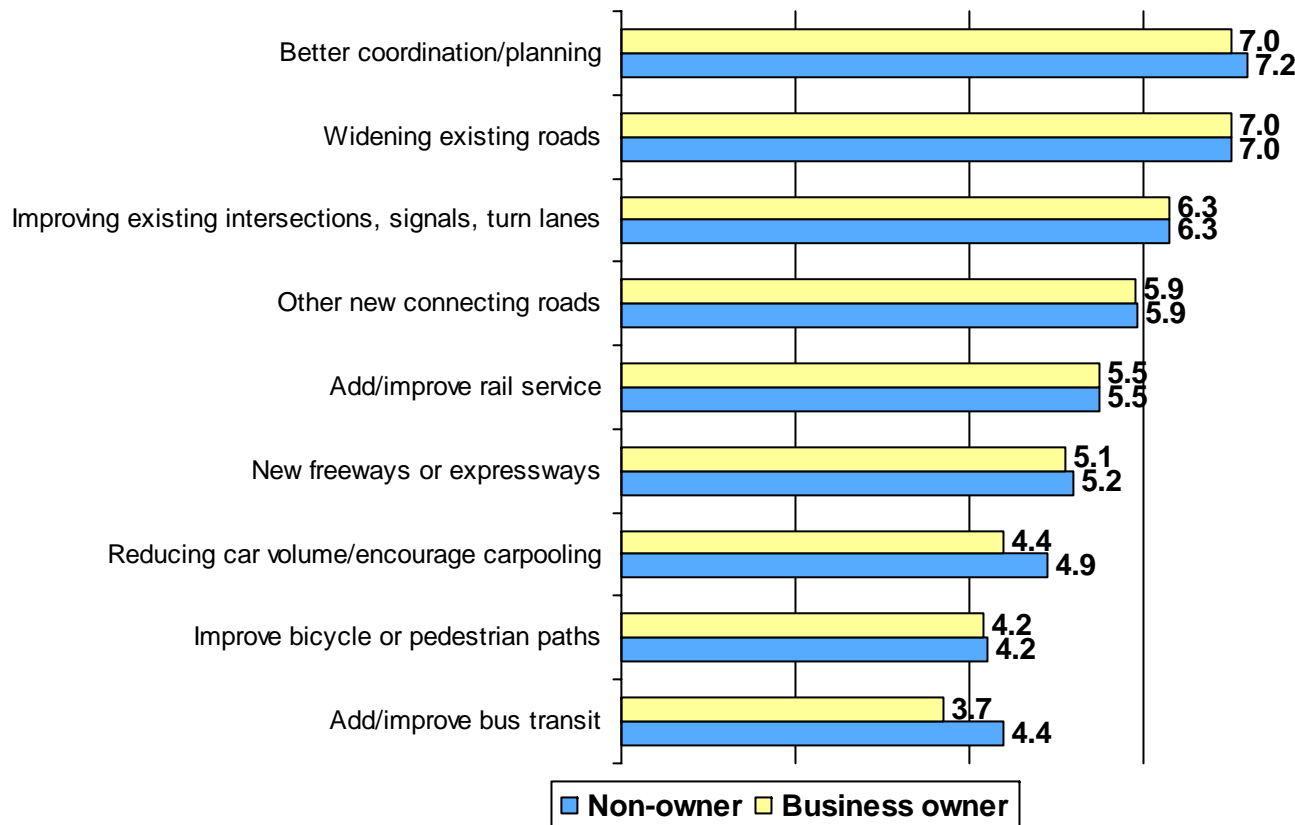


Q16. I'm going to read you a series of potential solutions to easing traffic congestion in your area. Please rate each one on a scale from 1 to 10 where 1 means it would have no impact on easing traffic congestion in your life, and 10 means it would be the ideal solution.

Detailed Findings: Reactions to Proposed Solutions

- Business owners in the primary study area are also less likely than non-owners to say non-highway improvements are a good solution.

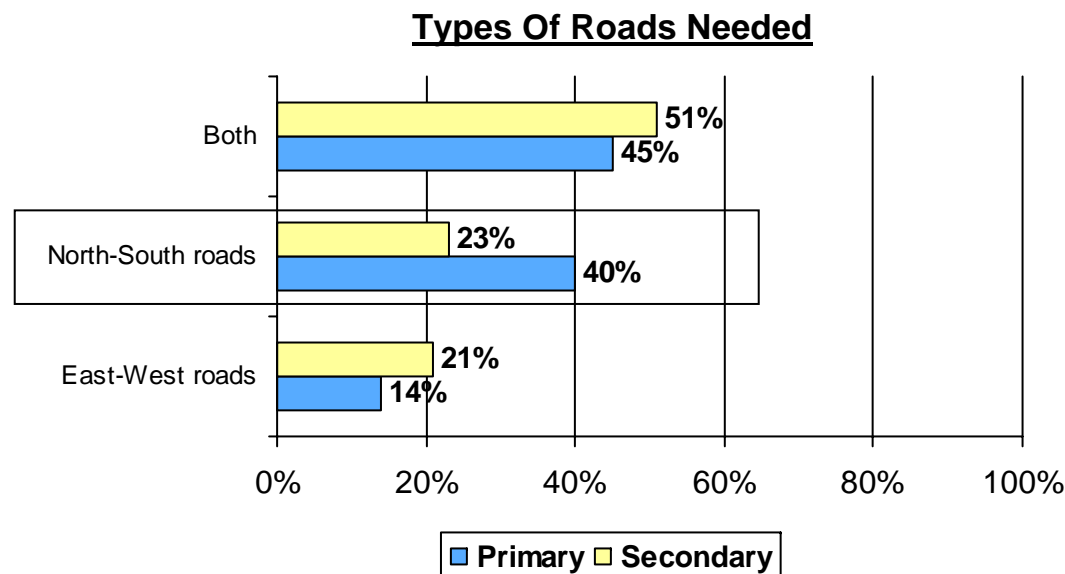
**Ratings of Potential Solutions: Business Owners
In Primary Study Area**



Q16. I'm going to read you a series of potential solutions to easing traffic congestion in your area. Please rate each one on a scale from 1 to 10 where 1 means it would have no impact on easing traffic congestion in your life, and 10 means it would be the ideal solution.

Detailed Findings: Reactions to Proposed Solutions

- Respondents who agreed that new roads are one solution to traffic problems were asked specifically which types of roads were most needed. As shown below, many residents cite both north-south and east-west roads.
 - Residents in the primary study area are more likely to express a need for north-south roads.

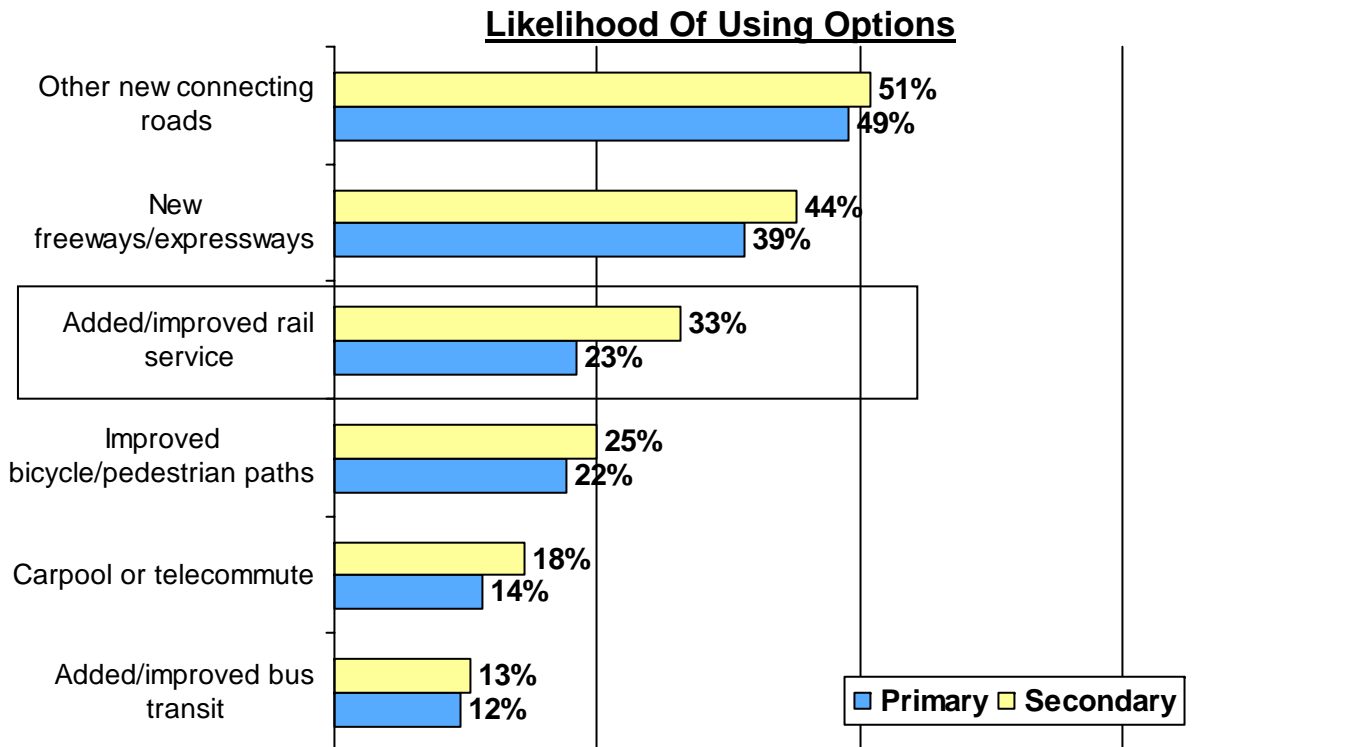


Q19. You mentioned building new roads or expressways. In particular, which of the following types of roads or freeways are most needed in your opinion?

Boxed results indicate a statistically significant difference between respondent groups.

Detailed Findings: Reactions to Proposed Solutions

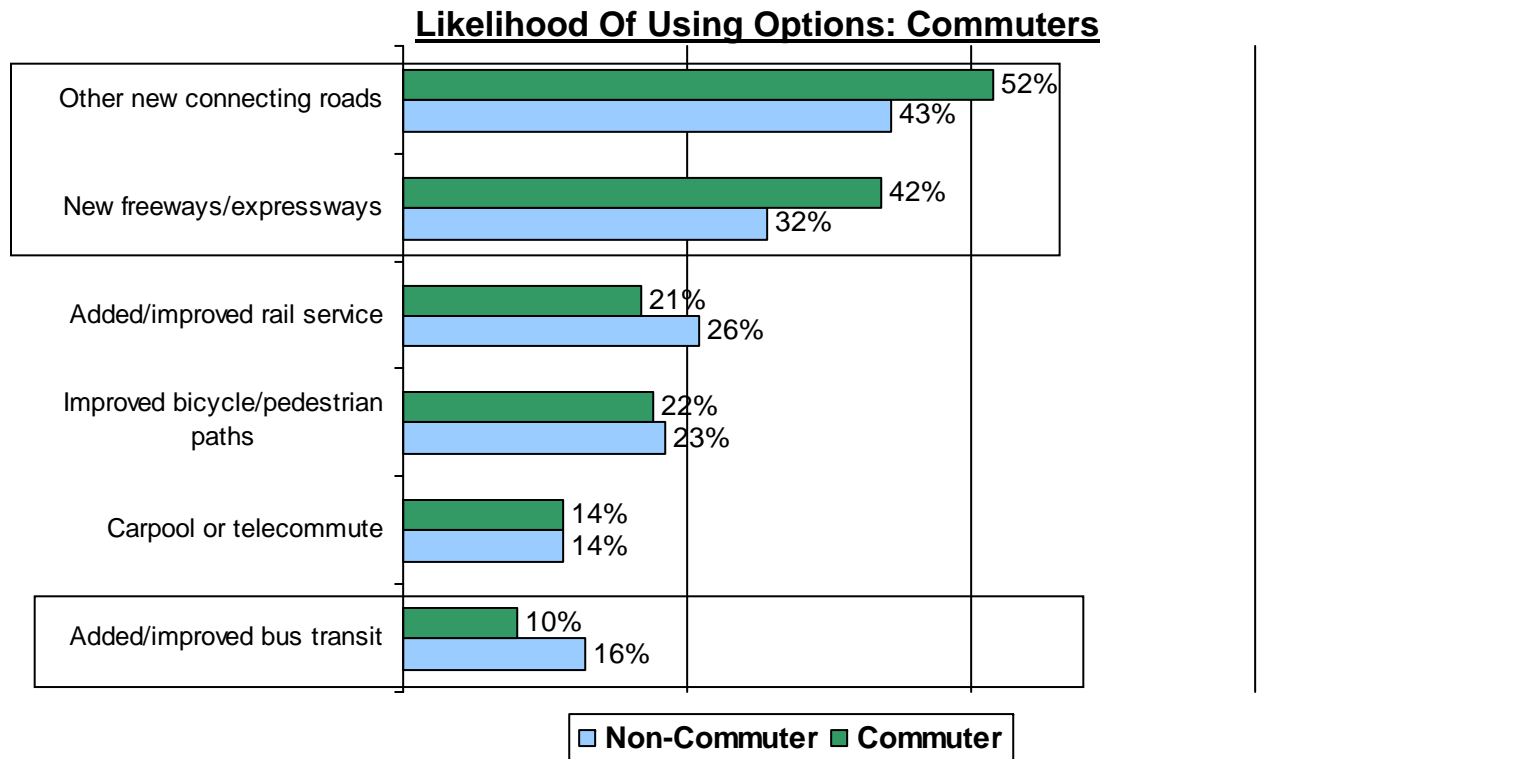
- When asked which of these options they are *very likely* to actually use, a majority agree they would use new connecting roads and/or new freeways and expressways.
 - Residents of the secondary study area are more likely to say they would use improved rail service.



Q20. If efforts were undertaken to [insert option], how likely would you be to use this option?
Boxed results indicate a statistically significant difference between respondent groups.

Detailed Findings: Reactions to Proposed Solutions

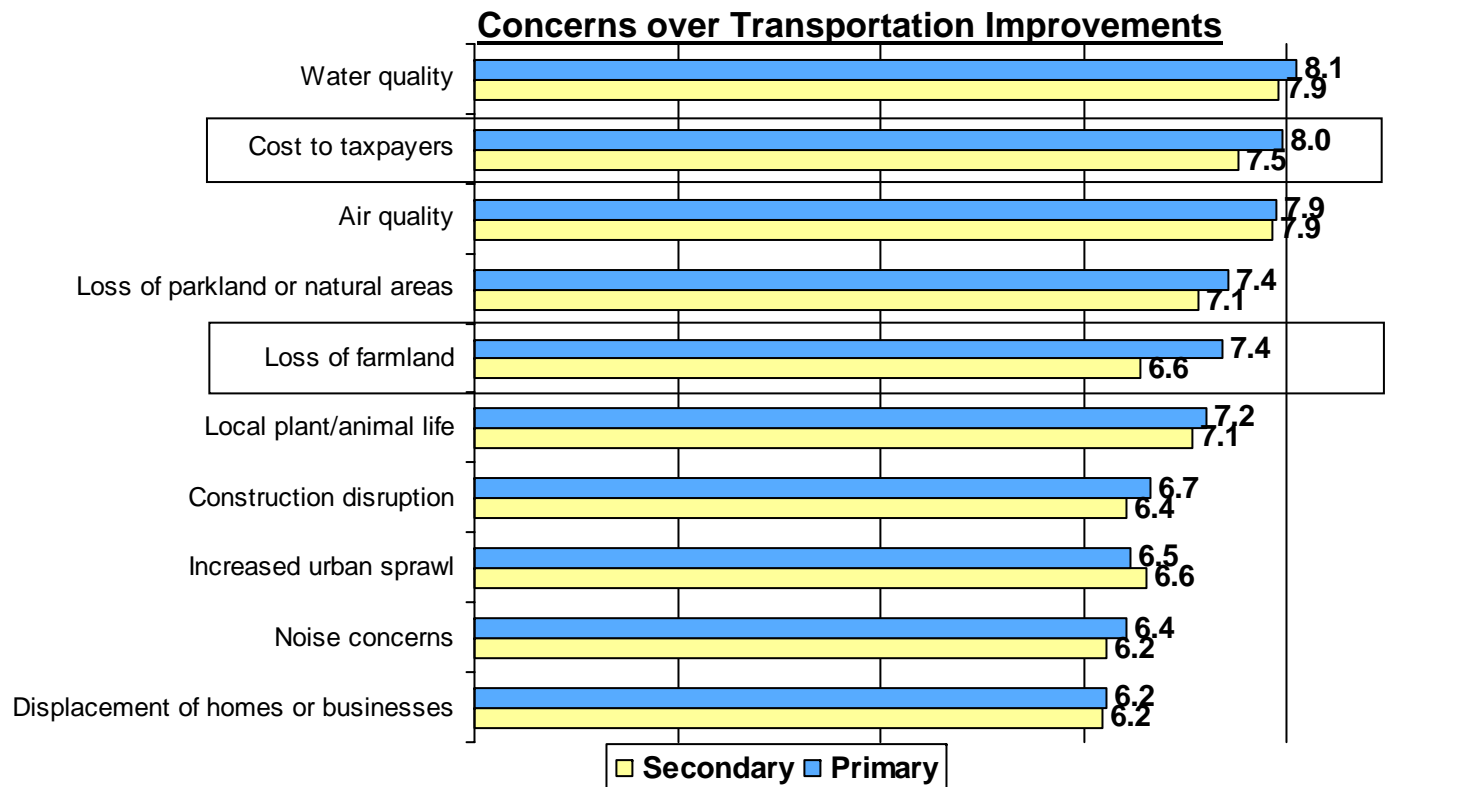
- Commuters in the primary study area indicate significantly greater likelihood to use new connecting roads and new freeways/expressways.
 - Non-commuters are more likely than commuters to say they will use improved rail and bus transit.



Q20. If efforts were undertaken to [insert option], how likely would you be to use this option?
 Boxed results indicate a statistically significant difference between respondent groups.

Detailed Findings: Reactions to Proposed Solutions

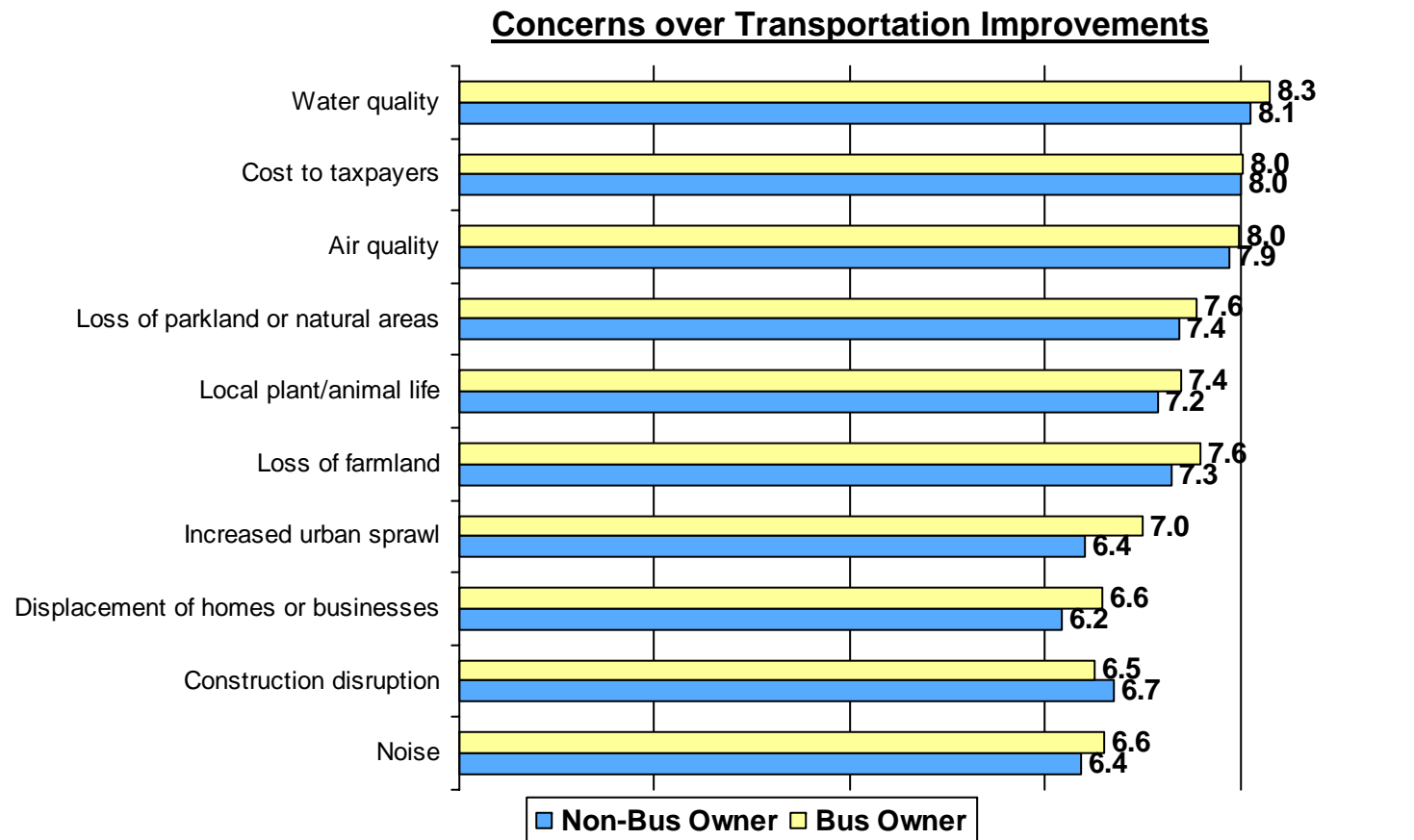
- When asked about concerns residents may have about the impact of transportation improvements, respondents express the most concern over *water quality* and the *cost to taxpayers*.
 - Residents of the primary study area indicate more concern over costs to taxpayers and loss of farmland.



Q22. How would you rate your level of concern with the following factors associated with transportation improvements? For each factor I read, please use a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 means not at all concerned and 10 means extremely concerned?

Detailed Findings: Reactions to Proposed Solutions

- The concerns of business owners in the primary study area do not differ significantly from other citizens.



Q22. How would you rate your level of concern with the following factors associated with transportation improvements? For each factor I read, please use a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 means not at all concerned and 10 means extremely concerned?

Detailed Findings: Reactions to Proposed Solutions

- Residents of the primary study area are significantly more likely to be aware of the Prairie Parkway study and to have taken action to find out more about it.

	%		%
	<u>Primary</u>		<u>Secondary</u>
<u>Awareness</u>			
Heard of plans to build new roads	56	*	43
Heard of Prairie Parkway study	45	*	25
<u>Activity</u>			
Read something about the Study in the newspaper	39	*	23
Talked to another area resident about the Study	23	*	9
Saw or heard something about the Study on TV or radio	20	*	9
Gone on the web to research the Study	6	*	<1
Attended a public meeting on the Prairie Parkway Study	4	*	1
Called/written an elected official or agency about the Study	5	*	<1
Gone to the library to research the Study	2	*	0

Q24. Have you heard anything about plans to build new roads in your local area?

Q25. Have you ever heard of the Prairie Parkway study?

Q26. Have you done any of the following? [read list]

An asterisk (*) indicates statistically significant differences between columns.

Detailed Findings: Reactions to Proposed Solutions

- After completing all questions in the survey, respondents were given the opportunity to provide additional comments about the Prairie Parkway study. These responses were categorized and coded based on common themes. These themes were then tabulated, the results of which appear below.

	<u>% of respondents</u>
Suggestions for specific roadway improvements	12
Negative comments about Parkway project	8
Specific roads mentioned for improvements	6
Comments on planning needs	4
Comments about growth	4
Public transportation needs	3

Q39. Do you have any additional comments you would like to share about the issues we have covered in this survey?

Detailed Findings: Reactions to Proposed Solutions

- Following are representative verbatim comments from survey participants.
 - “They need to plan it out and have a study before they do anymore building. The Prairie study is going to disrupt a lot of farmers. Taxes are outrageous, property taxes. They need to get the money to build the schools from the state, from individuals, from homeowners--other states are doing it.”
 - “I don't think the growth is well monitored enough or planned enough and they are not looking into the impact of the growths to schools and other places. It's ten times what it was when I moved here 20 years ago.”
 - “I am not in favor of the Parkway and they are taking away farmland from friends of mine...I would like to see the train arrive in Oswego. I do not know why the train does not pick up passengers in Oswego?”
 - “We should build the Prairie Parkway from Route 88 to Joliet to Route 80, and extend Orchard to Route 80 also.”

Detailed Findings: Reactions to Proposed Solutions

Road Construction Comments (Cont'd):

- “The Parkway is needed here.”
- “Keep up the roads with the growth - building way too many houses.”
- “Just talk to the political figures about adding bike trails. Anything to promote bike trails. Also they build new roads and don't put wide enough shoulders.”
- “I would like to see the connecting towns coordinate their traffic signals to improve traffic flow.”
- “I would like to see them improve existing roads before adding other roads.”
- “It's very difficult where I'm at to get 188 to 55. They definitely need to do something about that. It's hard to get back and forth.”
- “Route 47 needs to be widened.”
- “Route 59 needs to be widened between Route 52 and Plainfield. There are only 2 lanes, but it should be 4 Lanes.”

Detailed Findings: Reactions to Proposed Solutions

Road Construction Comments (Cont'd):

- “We can use more bridges over Fox River in Kane County because that would ease a lot of traffic.”
- “I would like to see existing Route 47 made four lanes and do not build the new Parkway because it destroys good farm land.”