Stride Forward – Regional Transportation Plan

Public Participation Report and Policy Assessment

Introduction

Stride Forward is MetroPlan's mandated update to the regional transportation plan. This plan is unique coming on the heels of a City of Flagstaff declared climate emergency and subsequent Carbon Neutrality Plan (CNP). The CNP calls for the maintenance of vehicle miles travelled at 2019 levels.

Stride Forward implemented a robust public involvement plan including a random sample survey, online surveys, virtual public meetings, pop-up events and stakeholder engagement. This report summarizes the results of those efforts and evaluates policy against this public feedback.

The public involvement effort served several purposes:

- Validation of existing policies in Blueprint 2040, the basis for the Onward Plan
- Assessing potential public sentiment toward possible Upward Concept policies

The random sample telephone survey served as a statistically significant foundation for further outreach. A random sample permits a high confidence of projecting survey responses accurately across the larger population. The online surveys repeated one or two questions from the telephone survey for comparison purposes – revealing differences and similarities between the telephone and online populations - and then sought to gain further understanding behind the answers provided in the telephone survey.

The Upward Concept, a hypothetical implementation of the Carbon Neutrality Plan, requires ambitious funding and rigorous policies to meet CNP targets. Decision-makers and the public will benefit from a

deeper knowledge of the depth, breadth and quality of perceptions that might lead to support or opposition of CNP-supportive policies and funding. Results also help staff and leadership understand where knowledge gaps might exist between public concerns and Upward Concept implications. Economic impacts and market access via transit, pedestrian and bicycle modes versus current automobile plans and policies is one such area to further explore.

Summary of Findings

Stakeholder Feedback Round 1 of 2

Finest transportation systems experienced: The predominant answers identified large metro transit systems in the United States and Europe and intercity rail systems in Europe, China, and Japan. Trails, pedestrian, and bike facilities was a distant but important second. The Netherlands and Copenhagen were frequently mentioned. Washington, D.C. was also listed as were Boulder and Fort Collins, CO. Flagstaff's FUTS system also received many compliments. Highways and streets were mentioned less often with roughly half of comments being negative.

Participants in the survey or in person listed several features that contributed to their positive experience.

- Easy
- Access to destinations
- Clean
- Efficient
- Convenient
- Inexpensive
- Fun

Questions to answer through the process: In rough order of frequency.

- *Transit Service to Surrounding Areas & Regions*
- *Representation – underserved/broader region*
- *Density and Growth*
- *Access/Accessibility*
- *Vehicle Miles of Travel (VMT)*
- *Safety*
- *Other topics:* Less frequently cited are questions about funding, electric vehicles and vehicle charging, incentives for people to change behaviors, induced traffic, and students.

Random Sample Telephone Survey

Initial outreach efforts focused on informing the community of the *Stride Forward* Regional Transportation Plan update. Presentations were made to ten Boards and Commissions and 9 different community organizations and information shared with a stakeholder list of nearly 250 people. At the same time, a random sample telephone survey was conducted exploring community values. Key findings from the survey's 674 respondents:

- Valued Regional Characteristics: Schools, protecting beauty, protecting clean air

- Community type preference: 49% large lots vs. 47% small lots (60/40 nationally)
- Time spent traveling: 77% drive 14% walk, 5% bike, 2% transit
- Projecting future, big shift from driving to biking, walking and transit, driving down 26%
- System Performance: 78% rate the system well
- Priority investments: Roads, sidewalks, trails
- Climate change perspectives: 94% climate change is real, 74% say action is needed

Three online surveys were held over the following months digging deeper into questions from each previous survey. These were not random sample surveys and respondents tended to live in the City, be more educated, wealthier, and more likely to ride bicycles.

Online Survey #1 – 640 respondents

System satisfaction: 75% of respondents find the transportation system serves them Very Well or Somewhat Well. This falls off significantly when viewed by mode with only 35-38% satisfied with transit, pedestrian, and bicycle facilities and 22% satisfied with transit frequency. More County residents are dissatisfied with transit service. Minority and lower-income individuals are more satisfied with transit service and many people selected "Don't know" regarding transit service.

Driving as a necessity: 68% said driving is sometimes a necessity most often because distances are too far. Too many stops or packages were also stated. Lack of transit access was less often listed.

Driving for safety reasons: Fear of bike crashes and poor weather conditions were most cited for safety reasons to drive.

Willingness to change community types: 53% said they would be willing to move to a more walkable community. Of these, buildings over 3 stories tall would make them less likely or much less likely to move. Parks and access to transit are two reasons that would make them more likely or much more likely to move.

Willingness and motivation to switch travel modes: 62% indicated a willingness to change from driving alone. Minority, low-income and county residents were less willing to change. The most motivating factors are health (83%), safe bike lanes (78%), closer destinations (68%), access to transit (67%); and secure bike storage (65%).

Online Survey #2 – 579 respondents

System preference: 44% of respondents selected bicycling as their preference for transportation if all modal systems were equally safe and convenient. However, the low-to-moderate-income group skews far less at 29% for bicycling. Compared to the other groups, low-to-moderate income demonstrates a stronger preference (24%) for bus travel. Driving as a preferred means is 14% higher for minority populations compared to the overall results.

Influence of gas prices: 48% of respondents selected that gas prices have not changed their daily travel decisions. 37% stated they combine errands. However, a greater percentage of minority and low-to-moderate-income groups chose to reduce how often they travel.

Transportation network support of walking, bicycling and transit: Only 35% of total respondents feel that the transportation network supports walking, bicycling, and transit. Most noticeably, 90% of the

low-income group do not feel that the transportation networks support walking, bicycling and transit modes. Similar percentages of county (32%) and city (36%) residents find these modes sufficiently supported.

Travel time duration trade-off for bike and pedestrian safety: 44% of respondents stated that they were willing to take an additional 1 to 3 minutes driving to improve walking and bicycling on Milton Road.

Walking and biking in bad weather: Across all groups, falling on cinders or ice was of the top concern for walking or biking in bad weather. 6% of participants selected "might get sick" as a reason. However, minority groups reported at 12%, low-moderate-income at 12%, and low-income reported at 22%. Respondents indicated they would be willing to walk or bike up to 10 minutes in bad weather if they had the right gear.

Monetary support for transit to county communities: 37% of respondents selected $0 in contribution to transit services for areas outside of city limits. 46% selected some form of contribution with the preferred amount of $50 selected by 28% of total respondents.

Perceptions of multi-family housing: There is a general rejection of multi-family housing with the strongest dislike expressed for the largest complexes. Buildings over 5-6 stories tall and 3-4 stories tall dissuade most people from changing communities. Large complexes are viewed as sources of nuisance and traffic and only 47% view them as safe as other neighborhoods. 41% of people believe small 2-3 story apartment buildings or tri-plexes could fit into their existing neighborhoods. At the same time, large majorities of people see owner and renter-occupied multi-family housing as important to meeting affordable housing needs and 49% see multi-family housing as likely to create demand for shopping and services within walking distance.

Online Survey #3 – 194 respondents

Preferred personal carbon footprint reduction strategies: Riding a bike or walking was the highest rated strategy with 62% of respondents responding that they "Already do" or are "Very willing" to participate. Minorities, those over 65, and the disabled were less likely to select this strategy. Working from home was second at 44%, followed closely by shopping online at 43%. The disabled were more likely to choose these strategies. County residents were more likely to choose work from home. Minorities more likely to choose shop online. Low to moderate income individuals and those over 65 were less likely to choose the fourth rated strategy, trading for an electric vehicle. Low to moderate income individuals were more likely to take the bus, with 54% of those in the lowest category rating this highly versus 26% overall. Choosing a closer destination was the lowest rated strategy at 13%. Notably, minorities rate this at 48%, their second highest strategy.

Preferred government carbon footprint reduction strategies: Completing the trail network scored highest at 91%, followed by separated bike lanes (85%), walkable neighborhoods (84%), and increasing bus service (78%). Providing electric vehicle charging stations received 70%. Two strategies fell below 50% support – Add bus only lanes (48%) and increasing parking fees (40%). Minorities were more supportive of increasing bus service and the low to moderate-income respondents supported bus only lanes in greater numbers. This contrasts to the disabled and county residents who are less supportive of bus only lanes. Low-income respondents are the only group where a majority favored higher parking

fees. A majority of low income, people over 65 and disabled respondents supported walkable neighborhoods, just not as strong as the overall population.

Influence of greater information on strategy selection: When given additional information on the gap size between "business as usual" and carbon neutrality goals only 22% of respondents were willing to change their answer. Most increased their willingness by one level on the strategies they already supported.

Intercept Surveys – 53 respondents

Intercept surveys replicating Online surveys 1 and 2 were placed in boxes at two library branches, three community centers, and administered at the Mountain Line Transit Downtown Connection Center. Inconsistent responses due to administration made quantifiable results difficult, so broad observations are provided here. The respondents were much less wealthy, more likely to be minority, and possessed much less education. Because of the locations, participants were also much more likely to be bus riders. Theses participants were more supportive of moving to walkable communities and like respondents to other surveys are deterred by buildings of 3 or more stories. Safety and convenience are major motivating factors when considering changing modes.

Stakeholder Feedback Round 2 of 2 – 26/250 survey responses

Respondents were asked to rate the impacts to elements of the regional economy, housing, wellness, and environment of these vehicle mile reduction strategies:

- Increasing density and mixing of land uses to create walkable neighborhoods
- Providing more and safer services and facilities for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders to make them more appealing
- Providing information and incentives to use those modes
- Making travel by car relatively less convenient (charging more for parking, deferring road widening plans)

For all four regional aspects, more than 2/3 of respondents rated impacts as Strongly Positive or Positive. Comments associated with Negative or Neutral ratings were usually associated with making driving less convenient or access to goods and services, presumably by modes other than car.

Field Events – 340 participants

The table below summarizes the participant's selection of strategies across all 8 events. Participants were asked to select three each from the individual and regional strategies.

	Total Responses	*% Of Responses*
Exercise 1: Support of individual strategies		
Ride or Walk	298	85%
Take the bus	152	49%
Work from home	138	38%
Choose local activities	124	38%
Trade gas car for electric vehicle	108	36%
Rideshare	107	30%

Online Shopping	84	24%
Exercise. 2: Support of regional strategies		
Create walkable neighborhoods	267	79%
Complete the trail system	256	75%
Add separated bike lanes	173	48%
Increase bus service *(frequency, routes, duration of service*)	163	48%
Add EV charging stations	81	23%
Create bus-only lanes	54	16%
Charge more for parking	40	11%

Virtual Public Meetings – 44 Attendees

Events were held in October and polling questions put to attendees. The total of all three meeting is presented here. 5 people reported being from the County and 2 from elsewhere in the state.

	Total Responses	*% of Responses*
Poll 1: Support of individual strategies		
Ride or Walk	30	68%
Work from home	26	59%
Take the bus	22	50%
Online Shopping	16	36%
Trade gas car for electric vehicle	14	32%
Rideshare	13	30%
Choose local activities	11	25%
Poll 2: Support of regional strategies		
Increase bus service *(frequency, routes, duration of service*)	35	80%
Create walkable neighborhoods	27	62%
Add separated bike lanes	25	57%
Complete the trail system	20	46%
Add EV charging stations	10	23%
Create bus only lanes	9	21%
Charge more for parking	5	11%

Policy Assessment

This assessment focuses exclusively on the implications of public feedback for Upward Concept policies. Onward Plan policies are existing and presumed supported by the public. Two guiding principles are established as underlying all policies: Equity and Sustainability. Three overarching policies set the tone, dealing with funding, transportation, and community design. A full set of policies is available in other reports.

Equity and Sustainability

Public input revealed concerns and support for the social, economic, and environmental aspects of sustainability. Socially, the matter of equity was raised by several stakeholder groups. Surveyed stakeholders feel that vehicle miles travelled reduction (VMT) strategies can be good for physical and mental health. Several survey comments were left supporting the social connections that walking, bicycling, transit and walkable neighborhoods afford. Economically, affordable housing was raised as an important issue. Stakeholders responding to a survey, though few, see positive impacts to business and housing affordability from vehicle miles travelled reduction strategies. Environmentally, a large majority of random sample survey respondents recognize climate change as real (94%) and support action (74%). Scenic beauty is highly valued. A few comments were left calling for or inferring the need for equitable treatment of drivers.

When considering Title VI and Environmental Justice groups there is an array of equity concerns to be drawn from public input with the caveat that these are small subsets from online surveys, so not statistically representative. The very low-income, those making less than $25,000 per year, have real mobility needs that are not being met by the current system. This same group expressed security concerns when walking or bicycling. Considering those making less than $49,900 per year, driving is the slightly favored mode of transportation. However, this same group is more likely to travel less when gas prices are high. Minorities have a more favorable view of transit service and are more likely to support increasing service. At the same time, they are more disposed to cite driving as their preferred means of transport. Those over 65-years old are less supportive of walking, biking, and moving to walkable neighborhoods.

MetroPlan and its partners will seek funding to achieve as much of Upward as possible. (FUNDING)

Few questions were asked about cost or willingness to pay. Reasonable inferences can be made that the public considers transit, pedestrian, and bicycle investments to be lacking. This is supported by the combination of stated preferences for those modes and concerns related to those modes about safety, convenience, and lack of service. Safety concerns included maintenance of bicycle and pedestrian facilities during the winter months, particularly.

Some trade-offs of current traffic flow efficiency in favor of these modes would be acceptable. Some willingness to pay modest amounts for transit service to County communities was expressed by a plurality of City and County residents.

MetroPlan and its partners will prioritize the safety, comfort, and convenience of bicyclists, pedestrians, and transit users, in the design, operation, and maintenance of transportation infrastructure while ensuring vehicle access. (TRANSPORTATION)

Per industry research, investments in non-automotive transportation modes are not as effective as land use and design changes. However, if funded, they are of more immediate impact. The public input solicited shows aspirational support for these investments and is NOT indicative of how much investment the public seeks or how much they are willing to pay. This last point is critical given the $75.5 million needed annually through 2030 estimated to reach carbon neutrality.

Asked in different ways across multiple surveys, there is a stated preference to walk, bike, and take the bus more. Inferences reaching a similar conclusion can also be made from responses regarding satisfaction with the different modal systems: People are generally satisfied with the roads and

streets system and generally dissatisfied or neutral about the pedestrian, bike and transit systems. To successfully manage a mode shift from automobiles to other modes those systems must be improved and managed for year-round use according to the public input. Inferences drawn from questions about changing neighborhoods and changes to neighborhoods may lead one to conclude that retrofitting connectivity will meet opposition, especially if not well-designed.

MetroPlan and its partners will prioritize the safety, comfort, and convenience of bicyclists, pedestrians, and transit users, in community design decisions while ensuring vehicle access. (COMMUNITY DESIGN)

Industry research shows that increased density and intentional community design are the most effective means to reduce vehicle miles travelled. So, public input implications for community design are perhaps the most significant. Much political will sustained over time will be needed to effectively influence market forces, counter public perception of density, and overcome existing development rights and patterns. Attention to neighborhood and architectural detail, including the provision of amenities and how density is built will be essential.

Many participants support walkable neighborhoods and desire to walk or bike to destinations. Countering that, driving is seen by a majority of respondents as a necessity. 40% consider the distances too far to walk or ride. Many participants recognize the need for multi-family housing, owner and renter-occupied, as important for meeting affordable housing needs. Likewise, many recognize that more dense, mixed, and compact residential uses are more likely to support nearby shopping and employment opportunities. Countering that, large majorities of respondents expressed dislike for 5 to 6-story building and 3 to 4-story buildings, with many seeing them as a source of nuisance, traffic and as being less safe than other neighborhoods. 41% of respondents felt that small 2-3 story apartments or tri-plexes could fit into their neighborhoods. 44% felt they would not. This is true for all groups except the very low-income. That majorities felt parks and access to transit would make more dense neighborhoods more attractive (or less unattractive) speaks further to the need for holistic neighborhood planning.

Log of Public Outreach Activities, Attendance and Participation

Stakeholder Outreach - 250 +/- Stakeholders

- 12 email contacts
- 2 surveys
- Commission & Organization Meetings
    - Spring: 10 Commission meetings / 9 Organization meetings
    - Fall: 3 Commission meetings / 4 Organization meetings

RTP Advisory Group

- 12 meetings

Surveys

DEMOGRAPHIC OR CHARACTERISTIC	RANDOM SAMPLE SURVEY (JAN. 2022)	ONLINE SURVEY #1 (MAR. 2022)	ONLINE SURVEY #2 APR. 2022)	ONLINE SURVEY #3 (AUG. 2022)	Intercept Survey (April-May)
Total Number of Participants	**674**	**640**	**579**	**194**	**53**
Primary Travel Mode - Bike	5%	14%	11%	19%	10%
Transportation system service Somewhat well / Not well	63%	84%	N/A	N/A	50%
Age 65+	24%	38%	21%	22%	20%
Education Bachelor / Post-Graduate	74%	82%	85%	87%	35%
Income Over $100k	29%	40%	42%	41%	5%
Race White	80%	87%	75%	77%	38%
City / County City residents	61%	84%	83%	89%	84%

Field Events - 340 people

Event Information	
Event:	*Earth Day*
Hours:	*3*
# Participants:	*49*
Event:	*Bike Bazaar*
Hours:	*3*
# Participants:	*57*
Event:	*Wed. Market*
Hours:	*4*
# Participants:	*21*
Event:	*Movies on the Sq.*
Hours:	*3*
# Participants:	*27*

Event Information	
Event:	*Farmers Market*
Hours:	*4*
# Participants:	*86*
Event:	*Wed. Market*
Hours:	*4*
# Participants:	*31*
Event:	*Movies on the Sq.*
Hours:	*3.5*
# Participants:	*18*
Event:	*Farmers Market*
Hours:	*4*
# Participants:	*53*

Virtual Public Meetings: 44 People

Social Media (July-August):

- Facebook: 114 Profiles
    - 667 view of MetroPlan content
- Twitter: 19 Profiles
    - 767 impressions
- Instagram: 83 Profiles
    - 227 unique accounts viewed our content

Media releases: 3 releases

Appendices

(Individual reports to be appended here – most are available at www.metroplanflg.org/strideforward-documents)