

# What We Heard Report

2026 Abasand OHV Pilot Project

Feb 20, 2026



REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY  
OF WOOD BUFFALO

**We humbly acknowledge that the land on which we live, learn, work and play is Treaty 8 Territory, the traditional lands of the Cree, Dene, and the unceded territory of the Métis.**



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report summarizes what the public shared during the third and final phase of engagement for the Abasand OHV Pilot Project. The pilot is set to end May 1, 2026 and the feedback collected will help inform Council's decision on next steps.

From Jan. 22 to Feb. 11, 2026, a total of 1,930 engagement actions from residents were collected online and in-person through a variety of methods:

- Survey
- Quick Poll
- Dotomocracy Board:
- Coffee and Conversations (Open Houses)
- 1:1 Conversations

The pilot allows Off-Highway Vehicles to travel on designated Abasand roads from home to the staging area, with the option to fuel up en route. The pilot aims to reduce green space damage, improve neighbourhood trail safety and enhance the OHV user experience. The majority of engagement participants believe the pilot has been successful in achieving these goals and would like to see it made permanent.



# KEY FINDINGS/THEMES

## Strong support to make the pilot permanent

- Many respondents describe the pilot as improving ease, safety, and enjoyment of OHV use, with some non-users also noting quality-of-life benefits.
- In the quick poll, **76.55%** selected “make the pilot permanent.”
- **69.71%** of survey respondents selected “make the pilot permanent” as what should happen next.
- Dotmocracy board feedback similarly supported making the pilot permanent.
- When residents were asked about progress toward the project goals, a high majority agreed the pilot has improved user experience (**85.85%**), increased safety on neighbourhood trails (**72.54%**), and decreased damage to greenspaces (**77.14%**).
- Long-answer theme: “Support for the pilot and overall positive experience” (470 responses) with examples including non-OHV users' quality-of-life benefits.



## Desire for expansion and broader access beyond Abasand

- A recurring theme was interest in expanding legal roadway access beyond Abasand, often framed around fairness/equity and practical access (routes, crossings, access points, and additional staging/off-loading areas).
- In the open-ended survey responses, “Expansion and broader access beyond Abasand” was identified as a key theme (**177 responses**).
- Among respondents who selected “Adjust the pilot,” “Program expansion” was the top theme.
- The feedback received during in-person engagements (1:1 conversations and Coffee & Conversation - Open Houses) echoed this theme, with participants noting interest in expanding to other neighbourhoods.

## Ongoing concerns: compliance, enforcement capacity, and spillover impacts

- Respondents also raised concerns about non-compliance, a need for stronger/consistent enforcement, and spillover/misuse outside the pilot area (illegal use of greenbelts/trails/roads, nuisance/noise, safety risks).
- “Spillover and misuse outside the pilot area” was a theme in the Survey long-answer (**41 responses**) describing safety risks, nuisance/noise, damage, and enforcement response limits.
- Enforcement/monitoring and operating conditions (e.g., curfew for noise) were common themes from respondents that selected “Adjust Pilot” in the Quick poll.
- A portion of residents oppose the pilot, citing safety, nuisance, and quality-of-life impacts, and preferring OHVs be trailered to staging areas. This is also reflected in “What should happen next” results where **11.73%** selected “End the pilot” in the quick poll.
- Adjustment recommendations were made through quick poll, survey, 1:1 Conversations, and Coffee and Conversations such as curfews, signal lights added to the machines.



# ENGAGEMENT PARTICIPANTS

## Who did we talk to?

- Urban and rural RMWB residents
- Father Beaugard School:
  - Parent Council
  - Grade 4-6 students
  - Staff
- Wood Buffalo Recreational Riders Association
- Abasand residents

## How did they participate?

- Online survey
- Quick poll
- 1:1 Conversations
- Presentations
- Dotmocracy board
- Coffee and conversations



# ENGAGEMENT IN NUMBERS

## aware

Ways people saw communications and advertisements.

12	Email invites to participate sent to community partners
	Mailout to Abasand residences
	Flyers shared with Father Beauregard students and parents
	Digital and roadside advertisement
168,583	Social media impressions
2,904	Unique visitors to the project page
142,167	Meta and Google ad impressions
146	OHV Presentation participants



# ENGAGEMENT IN NUMBERS

## engaged

Times people took action to provide feedback

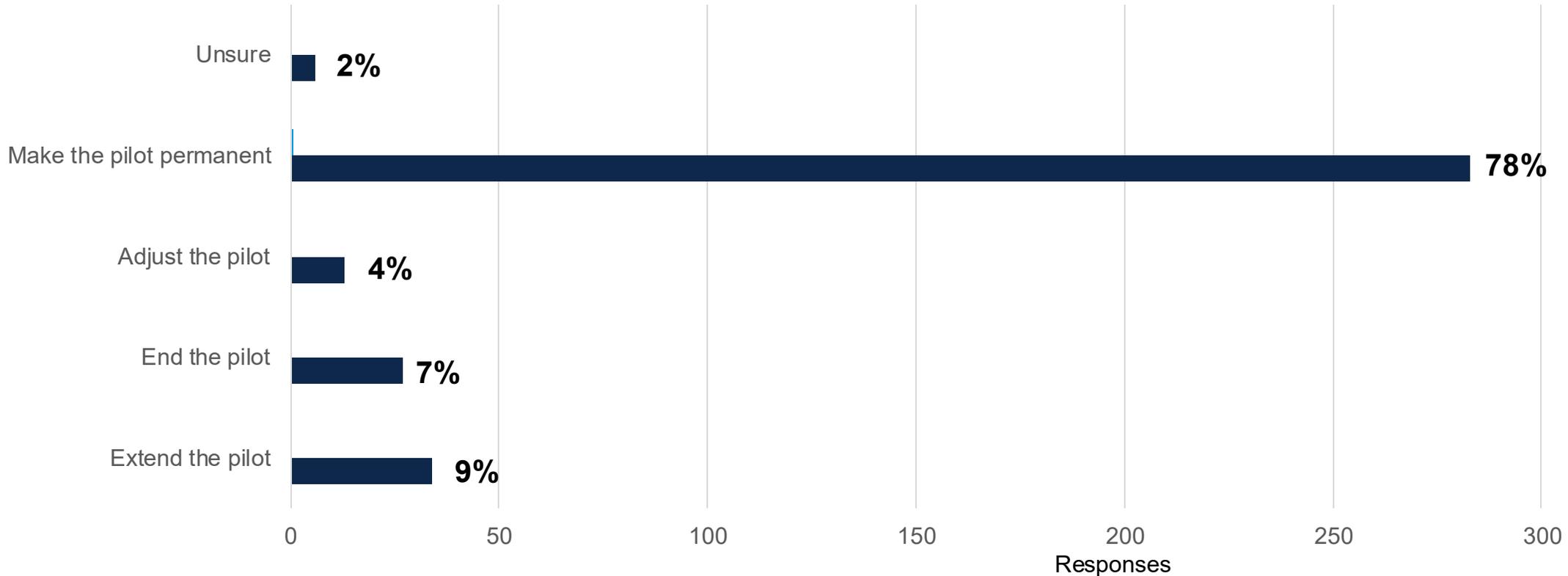
- 954 Survey responses
- 939 Online quick poll responses
- 23 Dotmocracy responses
- 11 Coffee and conversations (Open house) participants
- 2 1:1 Conversation participants



# ABASAND RESIDENTS SURVEY FEEDBACK

The following slides present feedback exclusively from participants who indicated that they reside in Abasand. The complete survey responses and full data set are available in the appendix below.

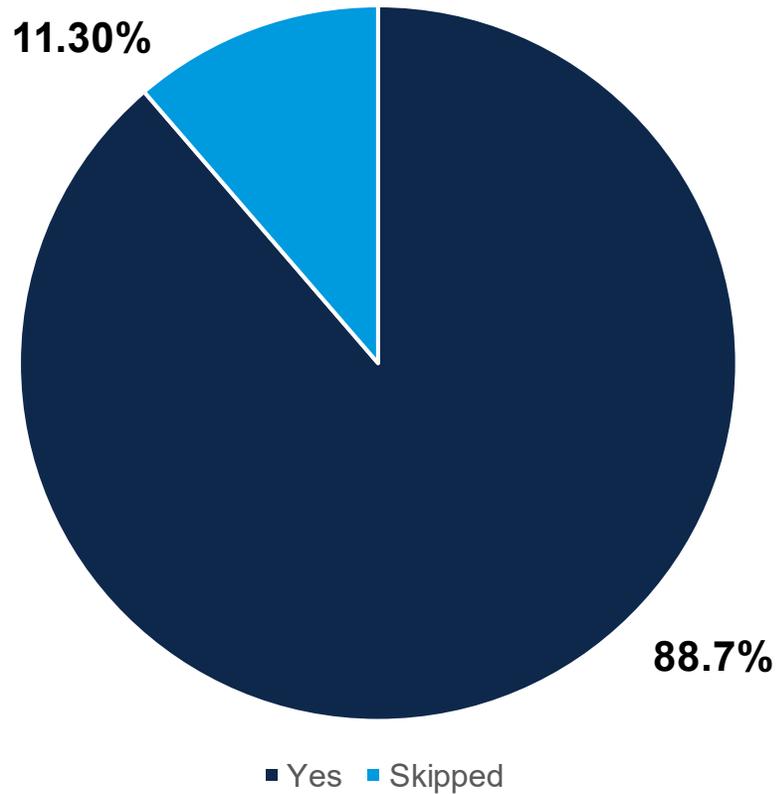
## Q16 – What should happen next? Required to answer (954 responses)



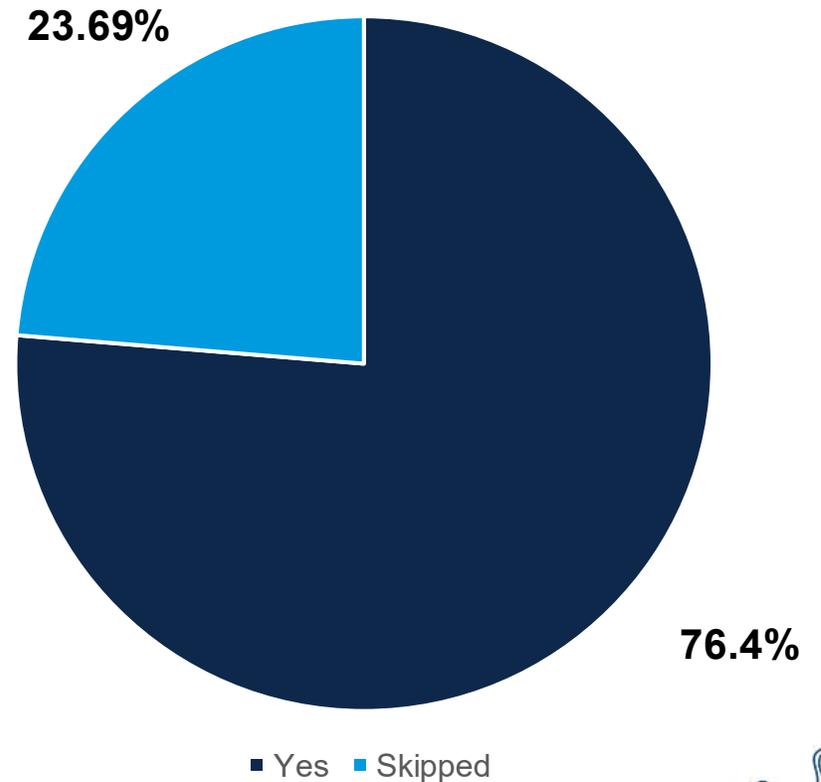
# ABASAND RESIDENTS SURVEY FEEDBACK

\*The complete survey responses and full data set are available in the appendix below.

Q6 – Improving the OHV user experience (819 respondents)



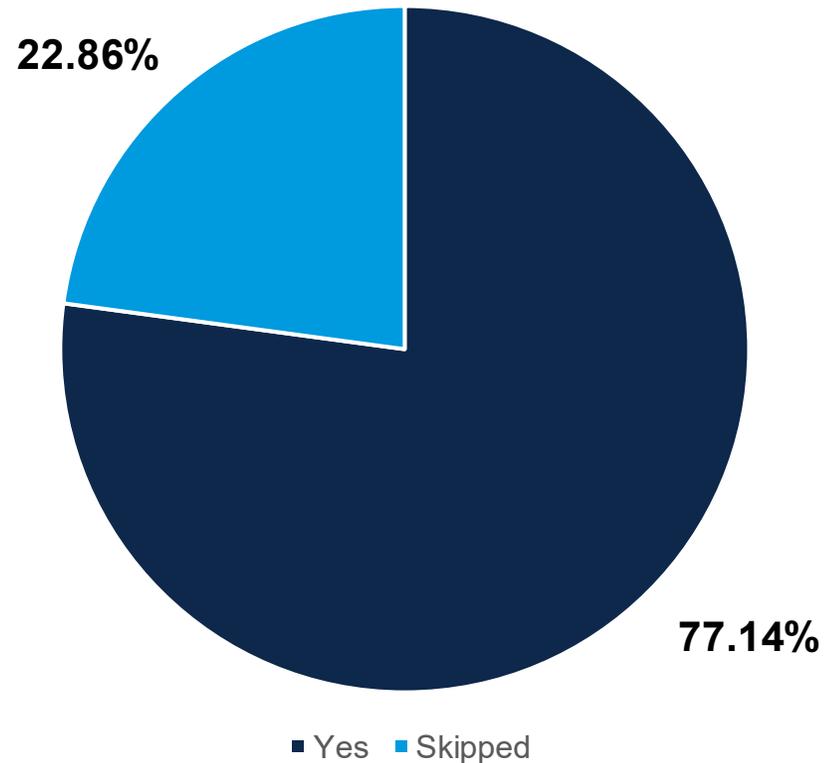
Q7 – Increasing neighbourhood trail\* safety (692 respondents)



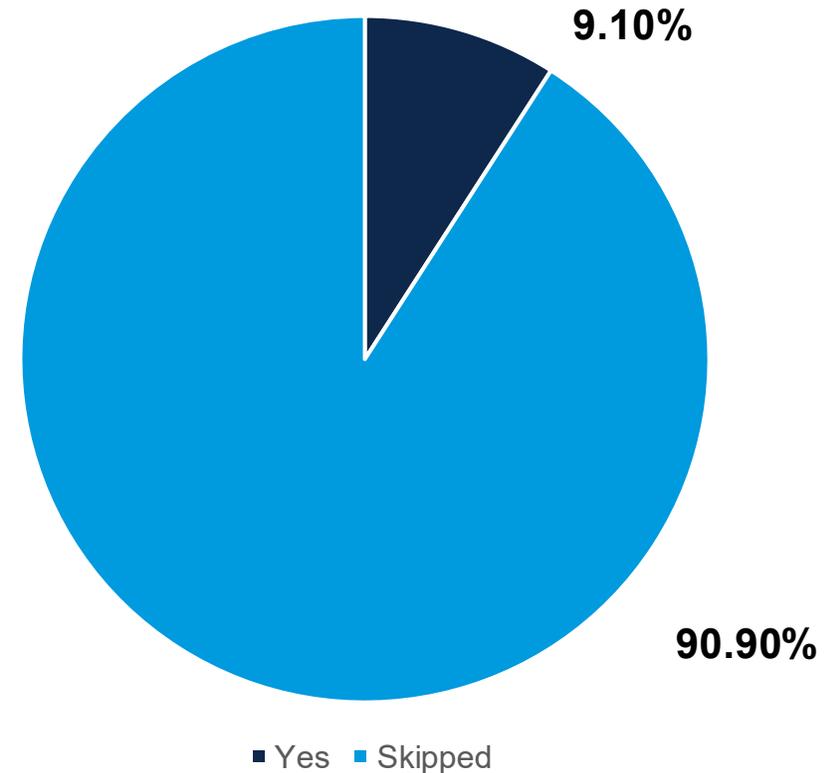
# ABASAND RESIDENTS SURVEY FEEDBACK

\*The complete survey responses and full data set are available in the appendix below.

Q8 – Reducing damage to greenspaces (691 respondents)



Q9 – None of these goals have been achieved (110)



# NEXT STEPS

The OHV Working Group will present recommendations to Council on next steps for the pilot prior to May 1, 2026.

Council has already received a summary of the engagement findings to support their review and decision-making.



# Thank You

For more information on this report contact [rmwb.ca/pulse](https://rmwb.ca/pulse).



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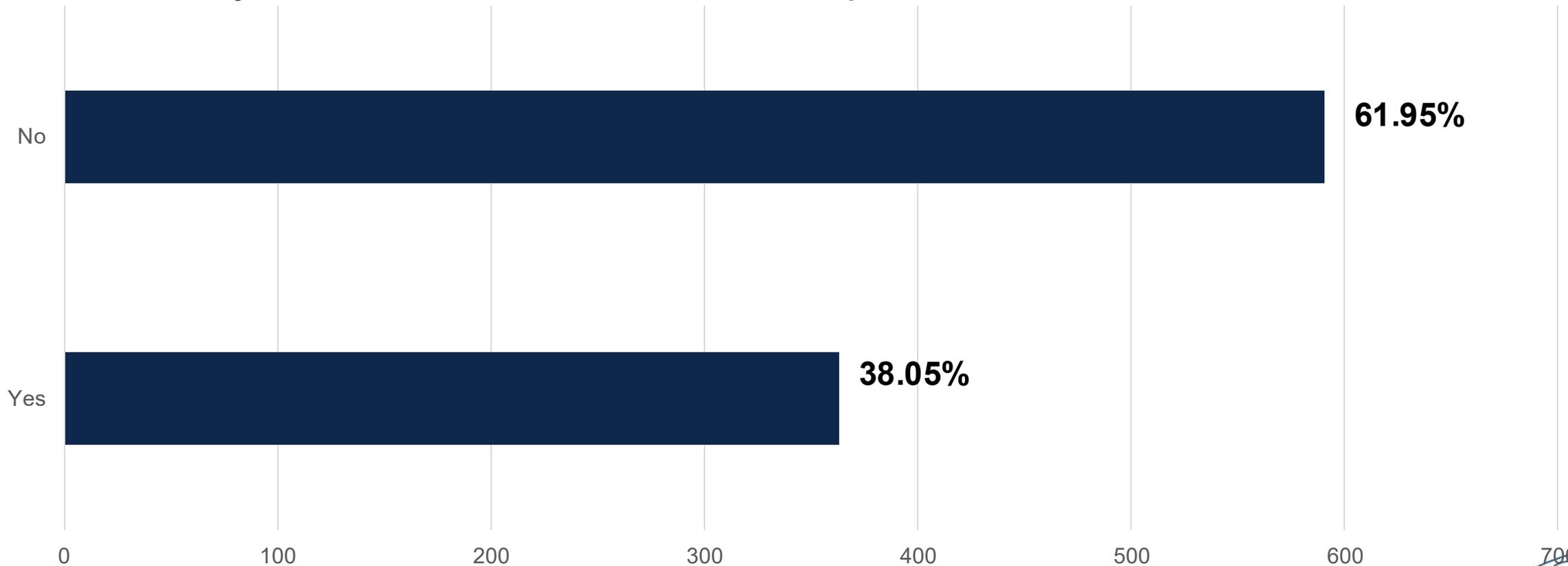
# APPENDIX A – SURVEY RESPONSES

954 total survey responses

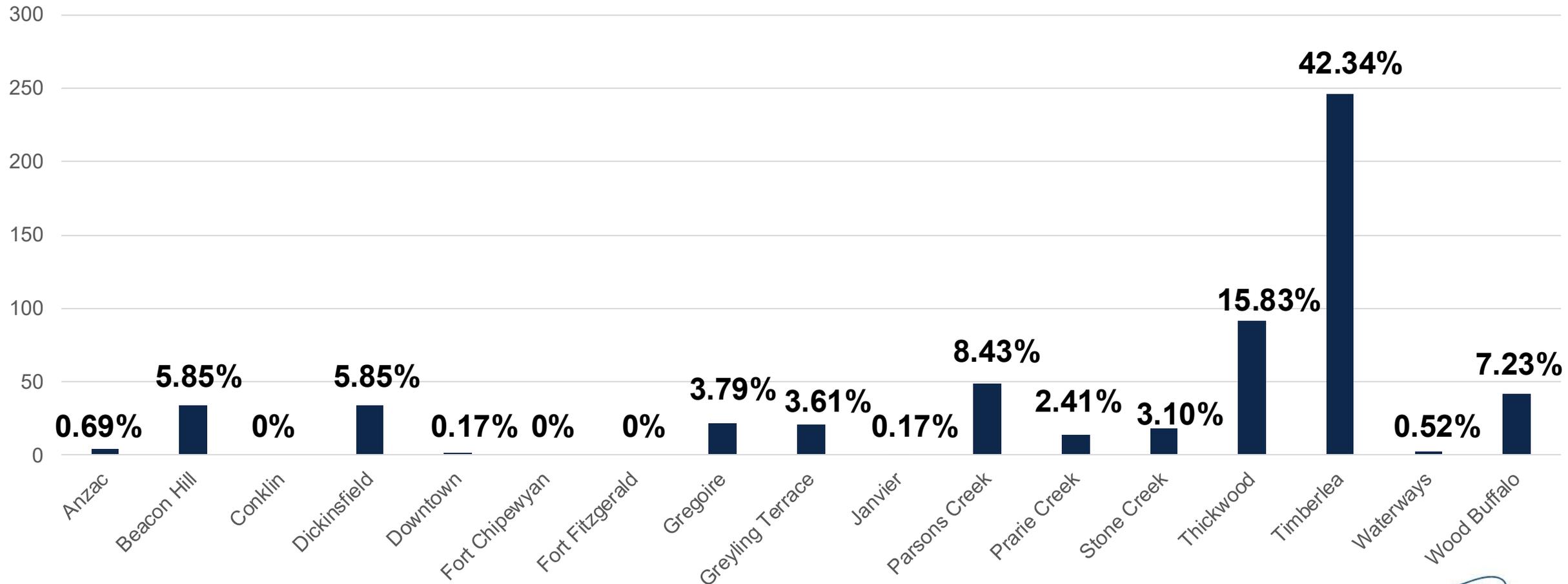
Respondent breakdown:

- 363 respondents identified as Abasand residents (38%)
- 783 respondents identified as OHV users (82%)

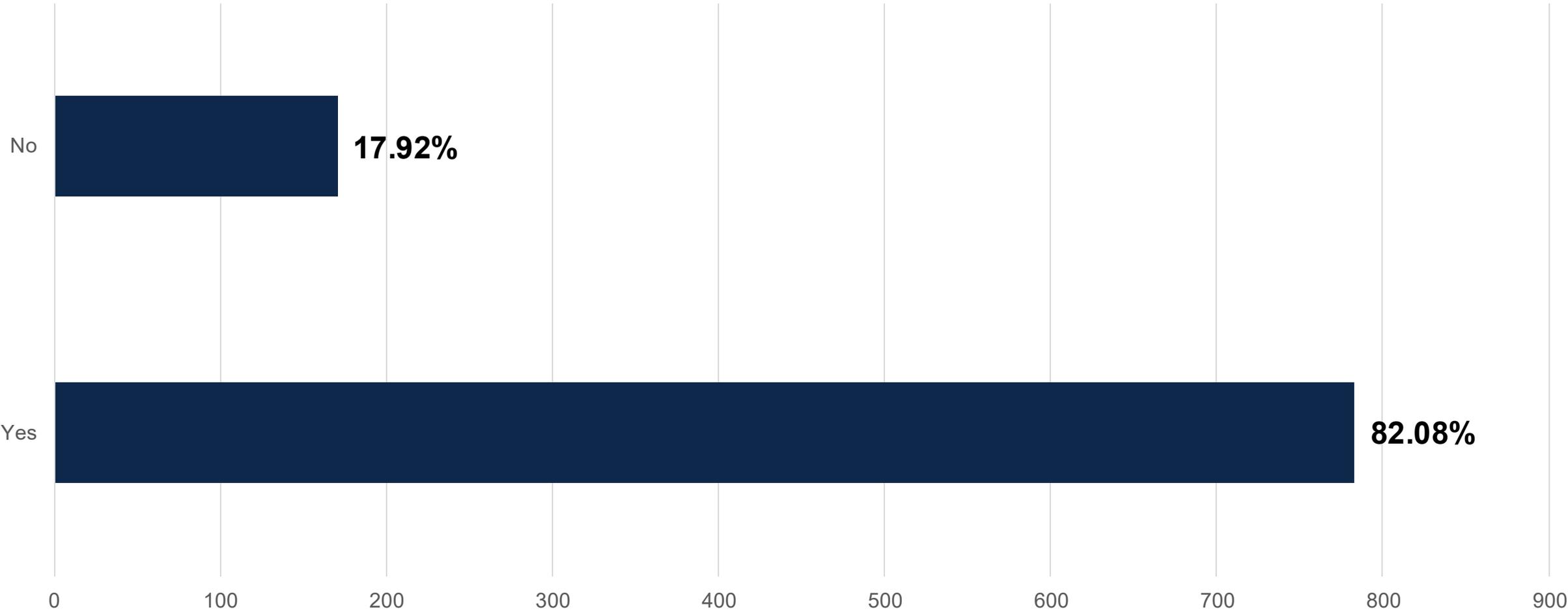
## Q1 – Are you a resident of Abasand? Required



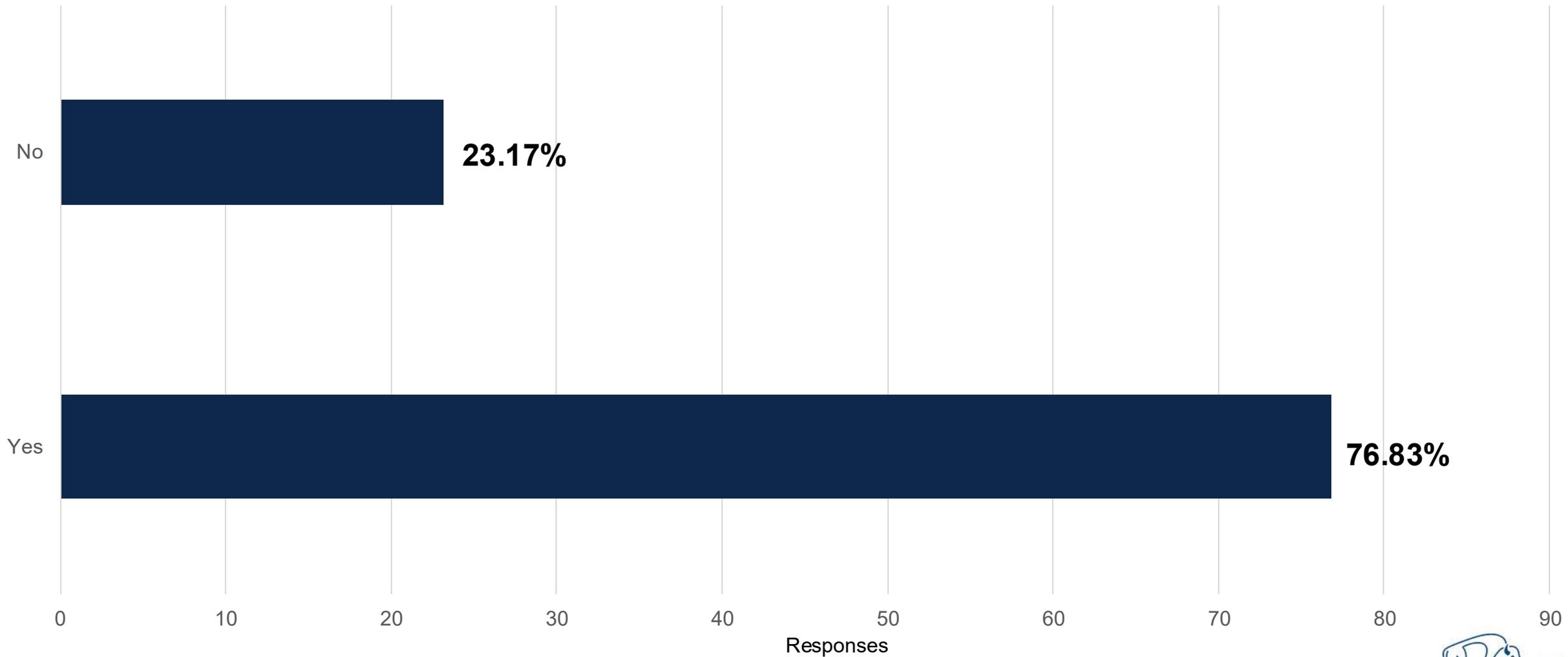
## Q2 – Which neighbourhood/or hamlet do you live in? (581 respondents; asked only of those who indicated they are not Abasand residents)



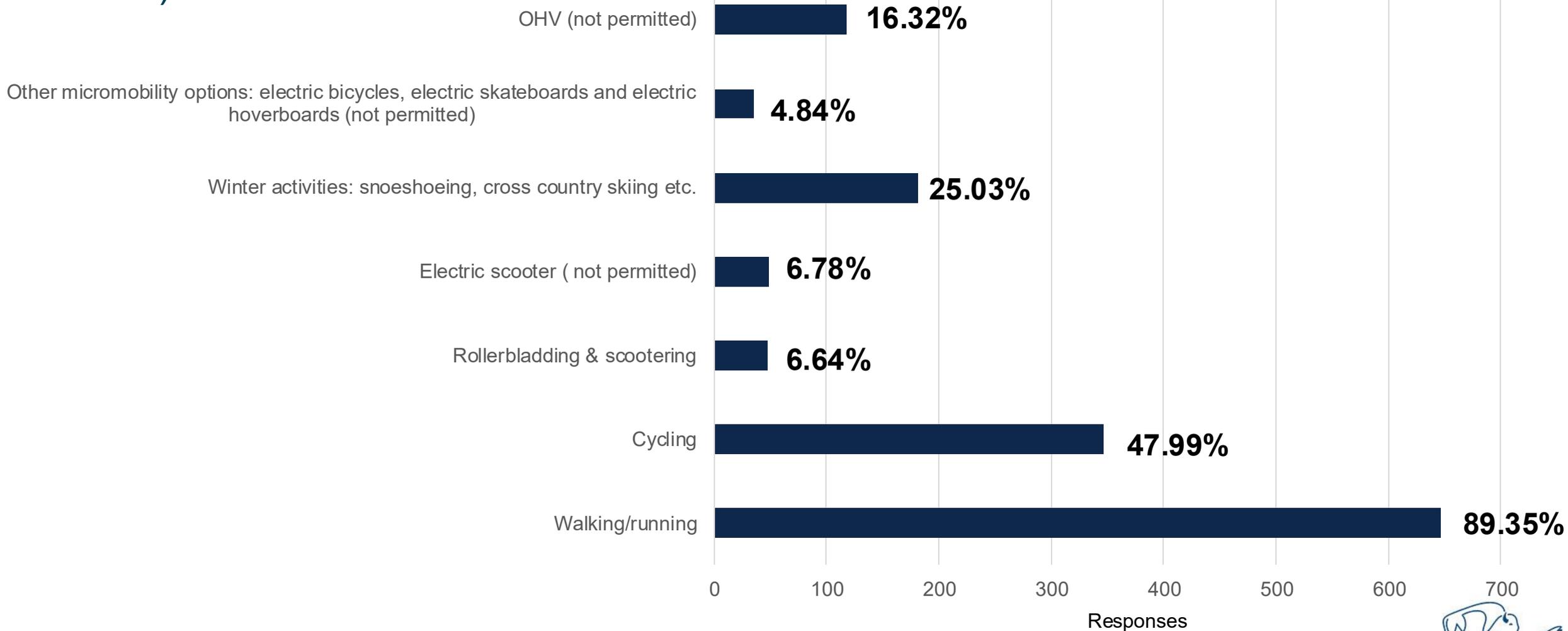
### Q3 – Are you an OHV user? Required (954 responses)



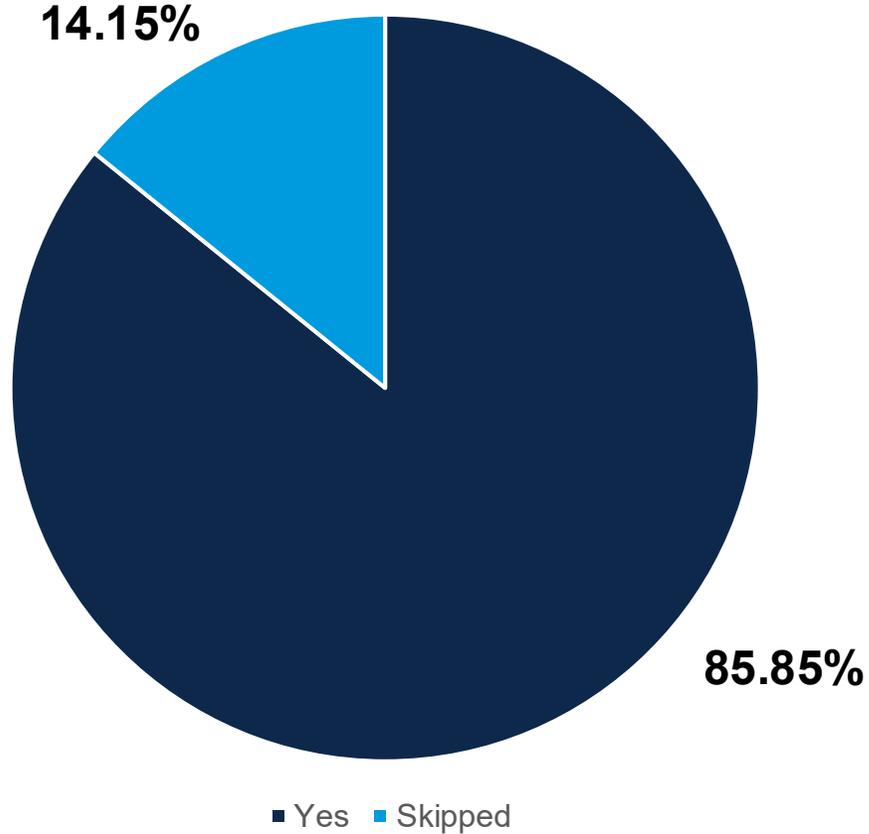
## Q4 – Do you use neighbourhood trails\*? Required (954 responses)



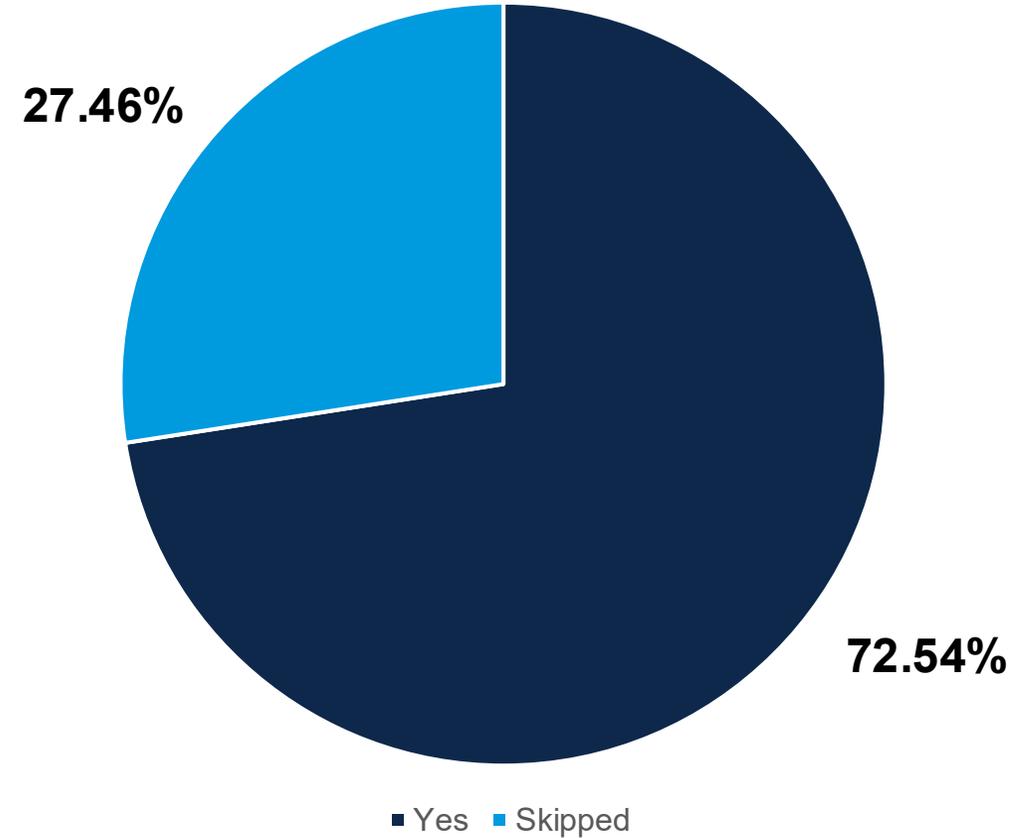
# Q5 – How do you use neighbourhood trails\*: = (723 respondents; multiple selections allowed; asked only of those who selected they use neighbourhood trails)



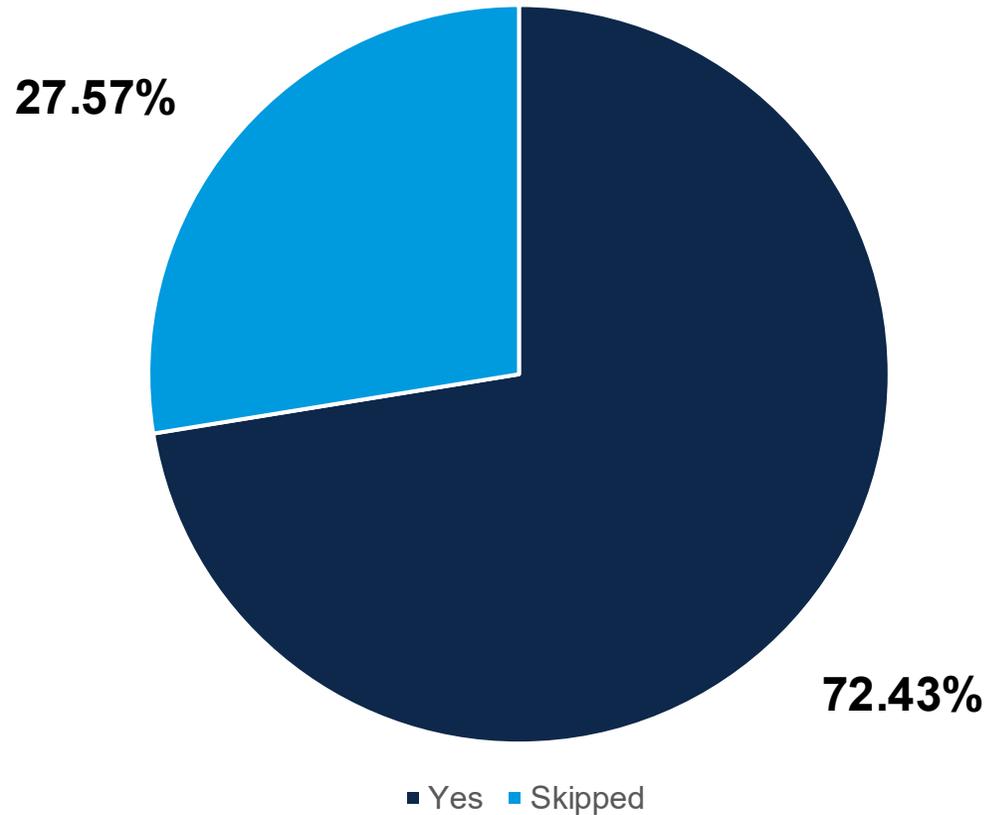
Q6 – Has the pilot improved the OHV user experience (819 respondents)



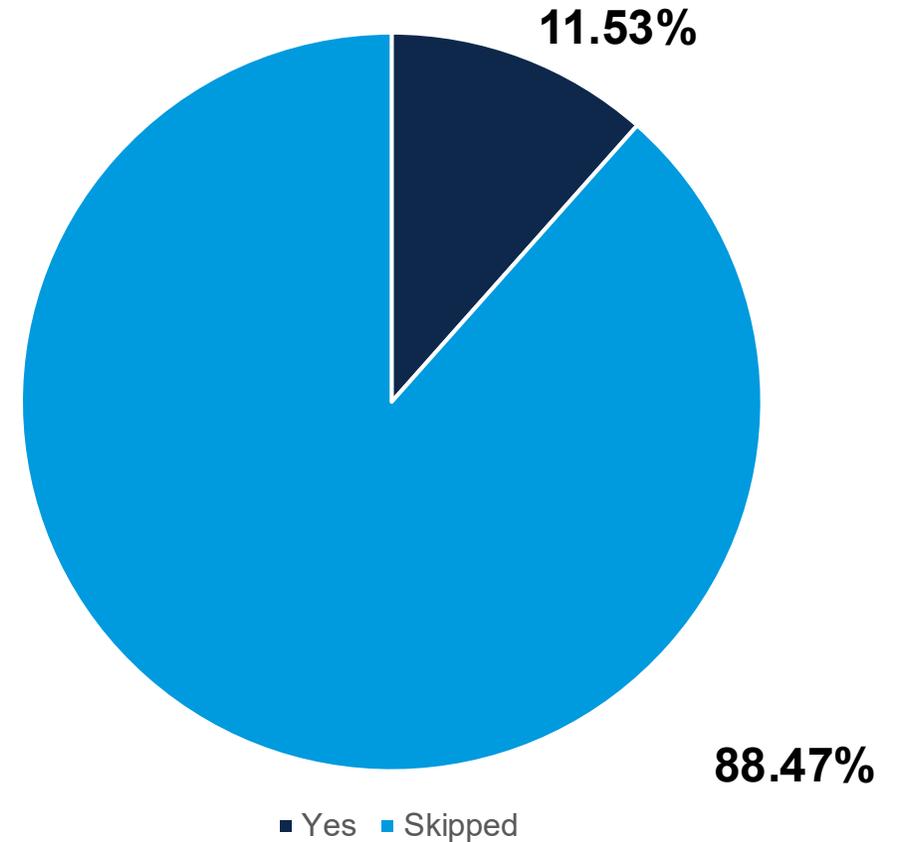
Q7 – Has the pilot increased neighbourhood trail safety (692 respondents)



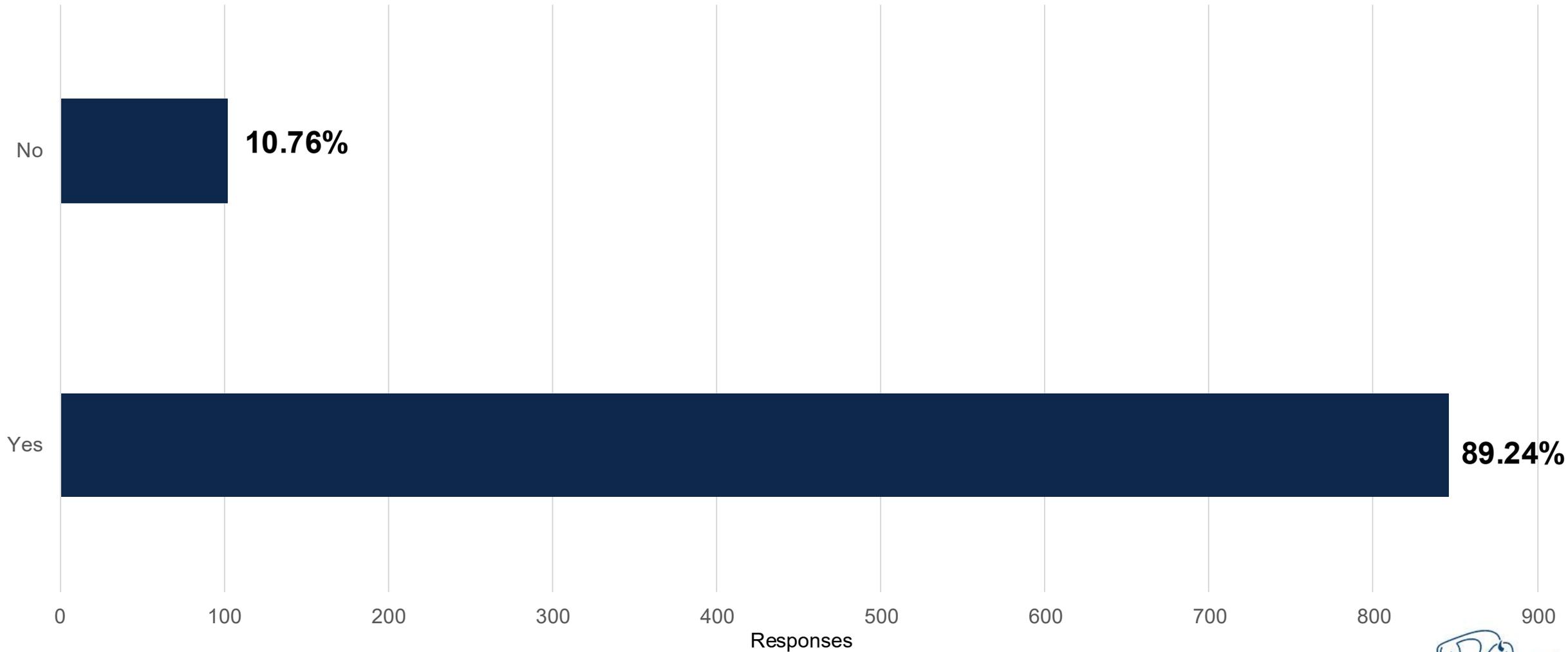
Q8 – Has the pilot reduced damage to greenspaces?  
(691 respondents)



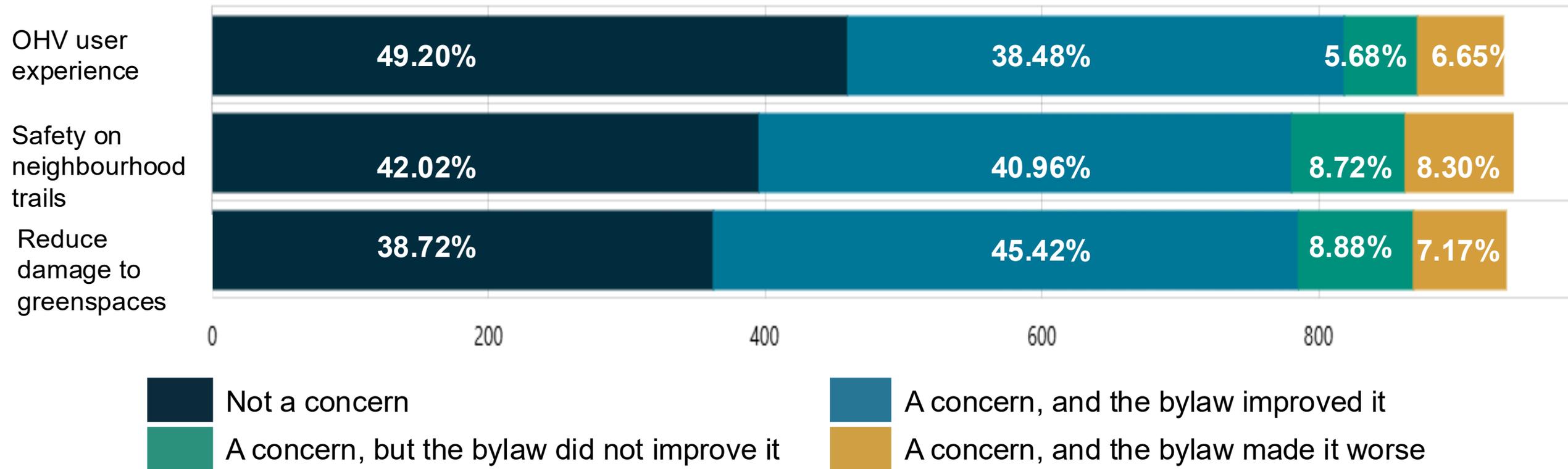
Q9 – Have none of these goals been achieved?  
(110)



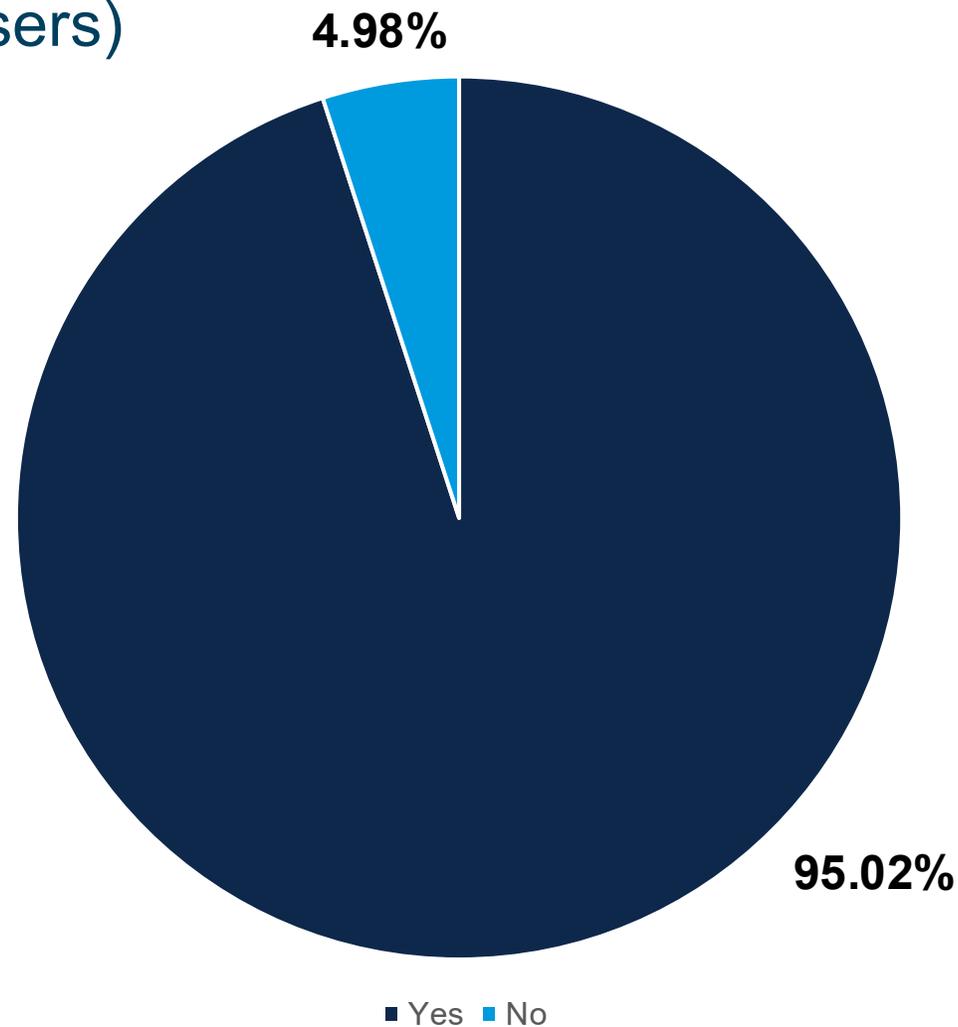
## Q10 – Do you see the benefit of OHVs having direct access to the Abasand staging area via Abasand roadways? (948 responses)



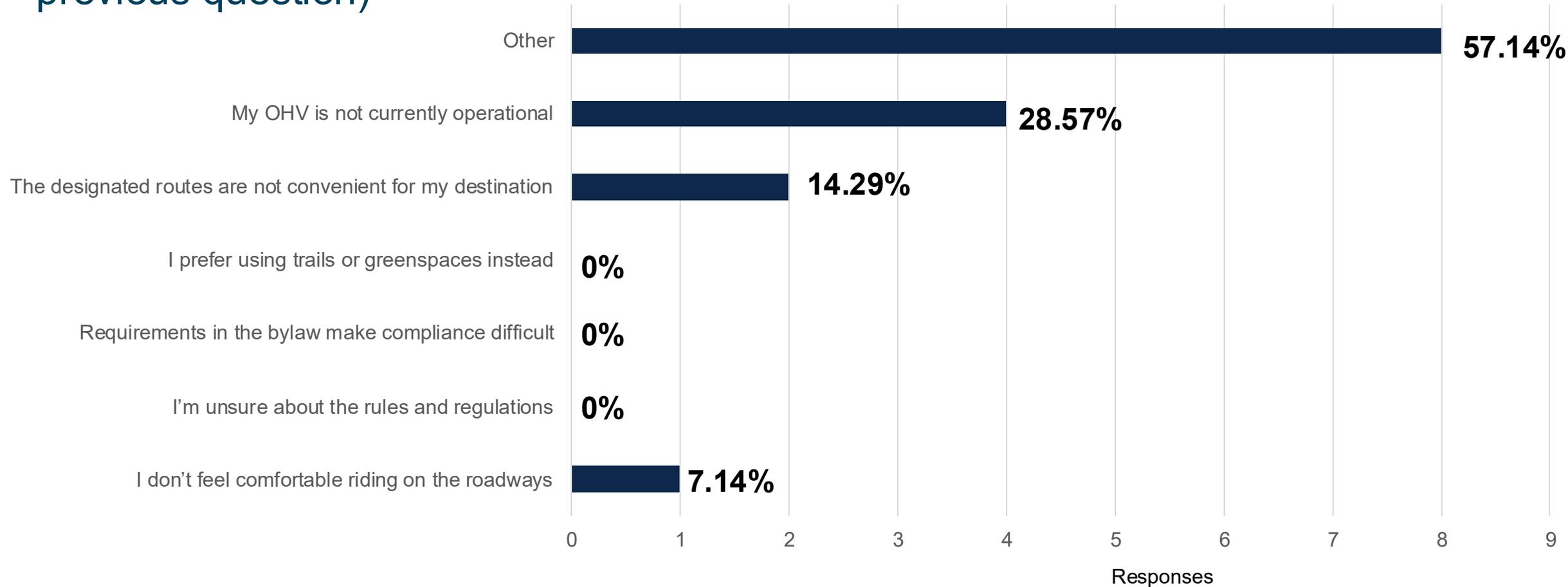
## Q11 – Please select the option that best reflects your experience in the following areas: (946 respondents)



Q12 – Have you driven your OHV on roadways since the bylaw was introduced? (281 respondents; asked only of those who indicated they are Abasand residents and OHV users)

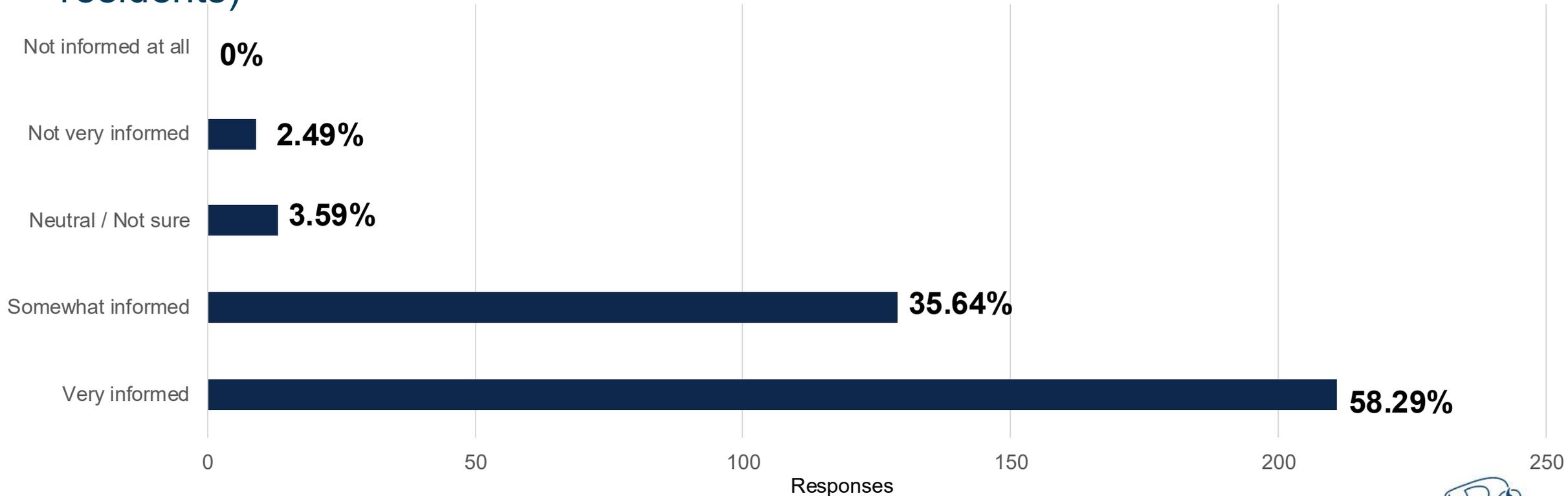


# Q13 – Please let us know why you haven't used your OHV on the Abasand roadways. (14 respondents; asked only of those who selected no to the previous question)

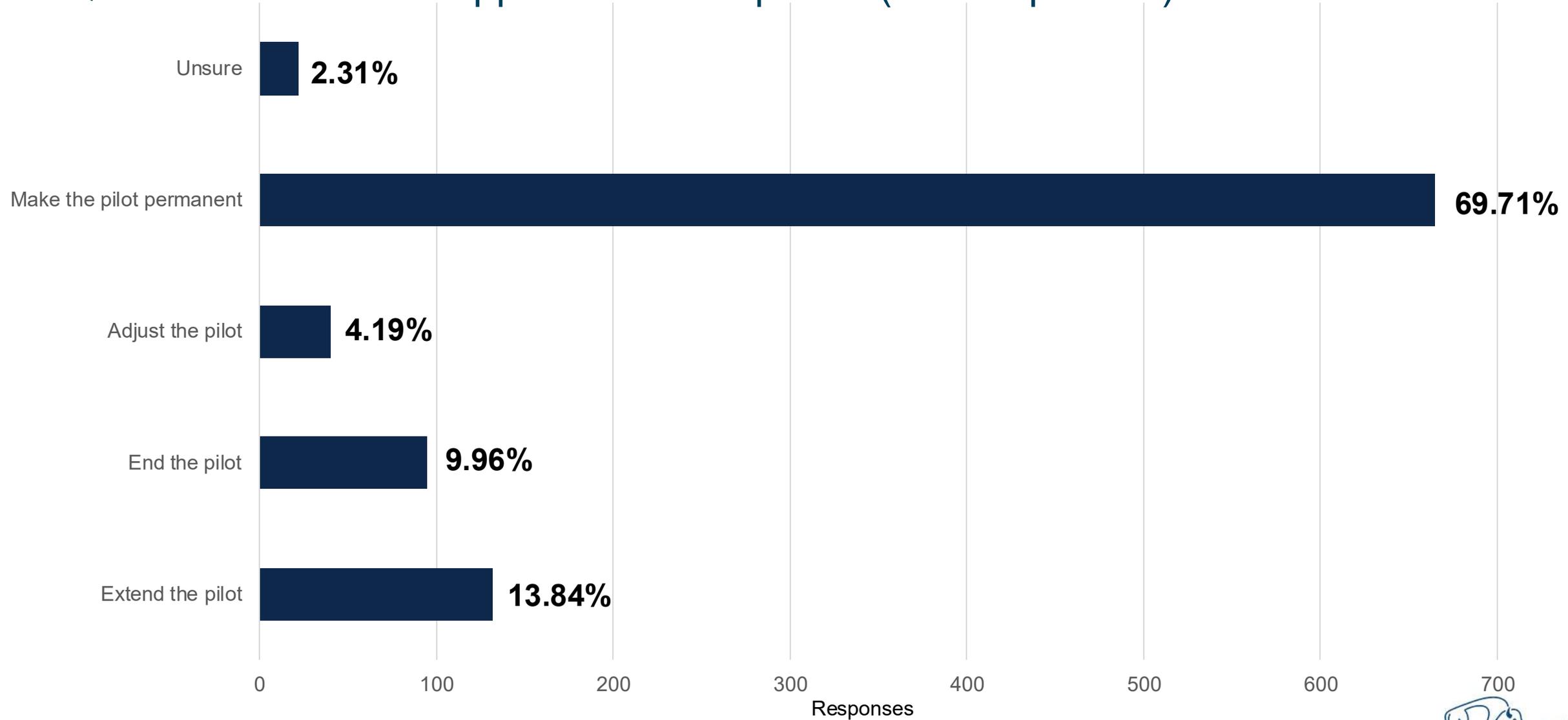


Q14 – What bylaw requirements make it difficult to comply? (0 respondents; asked only of those who selected no in question 12)

Q15 – How informed do you feel about the Abasand OHV Pilot Project Bylaw? (362 respondents; asked only of those who indicated they are Abasand residents)



## Q16 – What should happen next? Required. (954 responses)



Q17 – What aspects of the pilot would you like to see changed or adjusted? (38 respondents; asked only of those who selected “Adjust the pilot” in the previous question.)

### Themes from long-answer responses:

- **Program expansion (21)**  
Requests to expand the pilot/network footprint (more routes/areas/connections).
- **Enforcement presence and compliance monitoring (9)**  
Desire for visible enforcement, consistent monitoring, education and ensuring rules are followed.
- **Rules and operating conditions (7)**  
Suggested changes to the bylaw to include: no urban OHV use permitted, stricter rules, curfew, no aftermarket exhaust, requiring trail passes and including snowmobiles.
- **Shared-use trail access and user experience (3)**  
OHV use on shared neighbourhood trails and related access questions, including how to reduce conflict between user groups through trail design options such as creating dedicated OHV trails or upgrading/paving trails to safely support shared use.



## Q18 – What has been your experience with the Abasand OHV Pilot Project? (683 respondents)

### Top 4 key themes from long answer responses:

#### **Support for the pilot and overall positive experience (470 Responses)**

Many respondents describe the pilot as a net positive and a success overall, saying it's made OHV use easier, safer, and more enjoyable. Support comes from both OHV users and some non-users, who cite reasons such as seeing less green space damage, feeling safer on neighbourhood trails, believing it enables safe, legal recreation, improving access to trails, increasing motivation to ride, and encouraging new participation.

***Examples:** "Positive experience. We're a small northern community. Should be able to leave from your house to access appropriate trails, as long as road rules etc. are followed."*

*"Even though I do not own an OHV. I think it more beneficial to the town to allow OHV's on the roads because it makes it safer for the people who follow the rules and improves quality of life as this is an isolated town with many opportunities for outdoor activities."*



## Q18 – What has been your experience with the Abasand OHV Pilot Project? (683 respondents) Continued

### **Expansion and broader access beyond Abasand (177 Responses)**

A recurring theme is to expand access beyond Abasand, often framed as fairness/equity (either apply it city-wide or not at all) and as practical access for neighbourhoods close to trail systems. Suggestions include adding designated OHV routes and crossings, avoiding major roads, using distance-based eligibility, creating more trail access points and multiple staging/off-loading areas, and expanding carefully with oversight.

**Examples:** *"I absolutely love it. My family spends a ton of time in the bush and this has made it so much more convenient. We also spend a ton of time on the green spaces and not having to worry about OHVs coming down the green spaces because we have access to the roads now is peace of mind. Also this past summer was the first summer in years that our greenbelt space wasn't torn up from OHV's! Big fan of this program and I hope they make it permanent and allow it in more areas of town where it makes sense."*

*"It should be permanent all over town. I have heard nothing but good things about the experience in Abasand and we would love to leave from our house to enjoy the long cold winters."*



## Q18 – What has been your experience with the Abasand OHV Pilot Project? (683 respondents) Continued

### **Make the pilot permanent (62)**

A strong theme is an ask to make the pilot permanent or long-term, with many expressing that the program should continue rather than be removed. Permanence is often tied to the belief that it is working, that it supports safer and more responsible riding, and that it should be stabilized as an ongoing bylaw.

**Examples:** *"The Abasand OHV pilot should be made permanent because it gives riders a clear, legal way to get to trails without cutting through parks or residential areas. Keeping it in place improves safety for everyone and reflects how people in Fort McMurray actually use OHVs year round."*

*"Great experience, I bought my house in Abasand because the convenience of this pilot project. Would really be grateful to see it permanently"*



## Q18 – What has been your experience with the Abasand OHV Pilot Project? (683 respondents) Continued

### **Spillover and misuse outside the pilot area (41 Responses)**

Some residents reported that OHV activity has increased in non-pilot neighbourhoods since the pilot began, including illegal use of greenbelts, pedestrian trails, and roads. They mentioned safety risks (near-misses, speeding, stunting, harassment), noise/nuisance (late-night loud riding), bypassed barriers, property/green-space damage, and enforcement that can't respond quickly enough. Some want the Municipality to act by clarifying boundaries and stopping unauthorized access, and others argue that expanding legal roadway routes beyond Abasand with clear rules could reduce spillover by keeping riders off pedestrian trails and greenbelts.

**Examples:** *"This has caused OHV users in other neighbourhoods to feel entitled to use OHVs on trails and green spaces outside of the piloted area. We see minimum of 10-25 users daily including in the middle of the night waking us up at 2am."*

*"The pilot has made OHV usage more widespread in other areas of town where the pilot project is not taking place. It has led to increased safety issues and destruction of green spaces. Where before we only had a handful of OHV users illegally using the greenspaces in parsons north to access Northern wooded areas it is now taking place nonstop on a daily basis. It is out of control."*



## Q18 – What has been your experience with the Abasand OHV Pilot Project? (683 respondents) Continued

### Other themes from comments:

- **Enforcement, monitoring, and rules compliance:** Residents call for stronger, consistent monitoring focused on non-compliant users, with enough resources to respond effectively.
- **Opposition / negative overall experience:** Some residents oppose the pilot, citing safety, nuisance, and quality-of-life impacts and preferring OHVs be trailered to staging areas.
- **Green space concerns in Abasand:** A portion of feedback notes ongoing green space or trail damage in Abasand, with some unauthorized use continuing despite the pilot.
- **Broader community benefits:** Residents describe ripple benefits beyond OHV users, including more family time outdoors, community vibrancy, and support for local businesses and events.
- **Noise and nuisance impacts in Abasand:** Some residents report ongoing noise and disturbance in Abasand (e.g., loud machines and late-night riding) that affects nearby households.

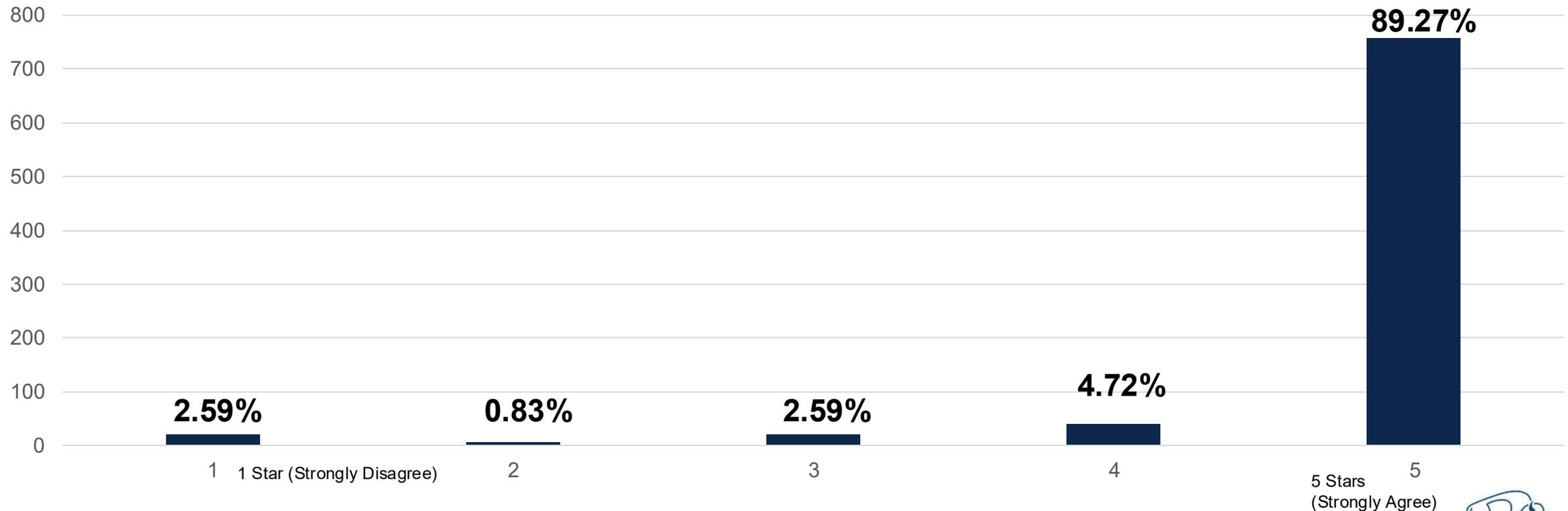


# APPENDIX B – QUICK POLL RESPONSES

939 total quick poll responses

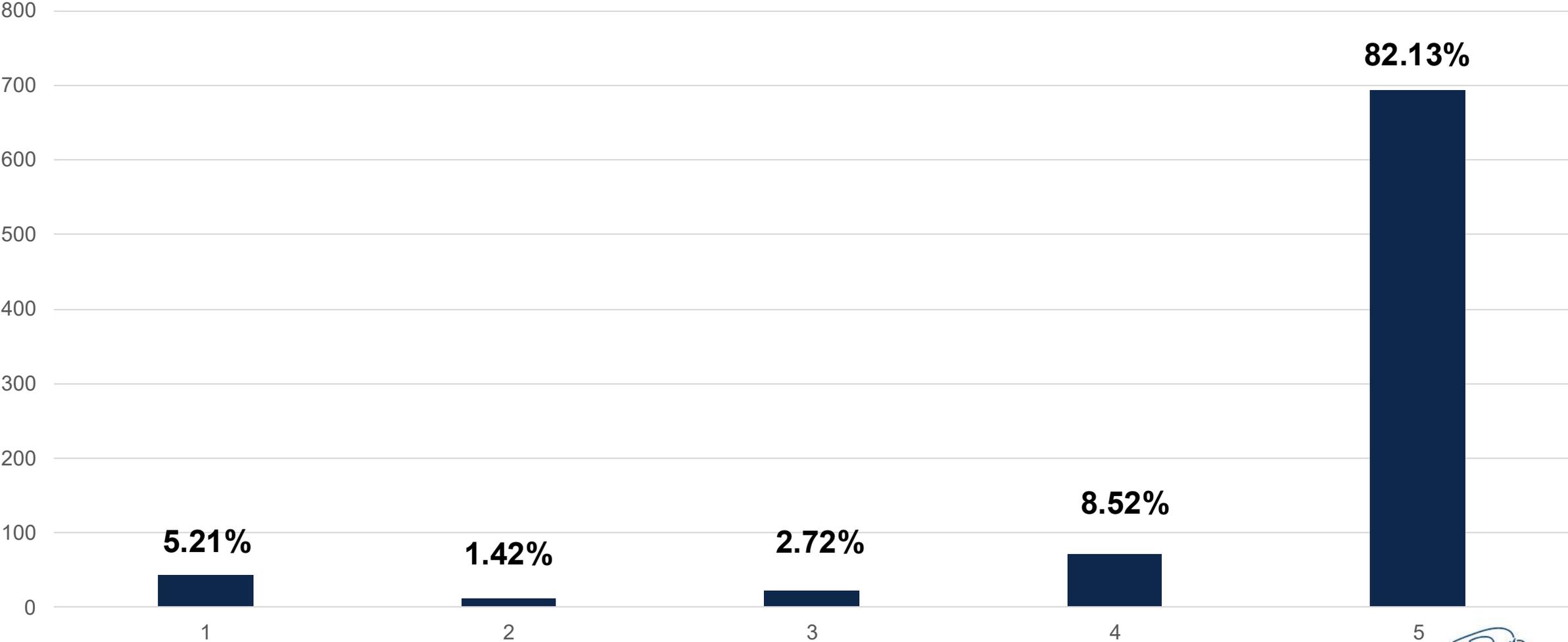
Q1 – Improved the OHV user experience (848 responses)

★ Average 4.77



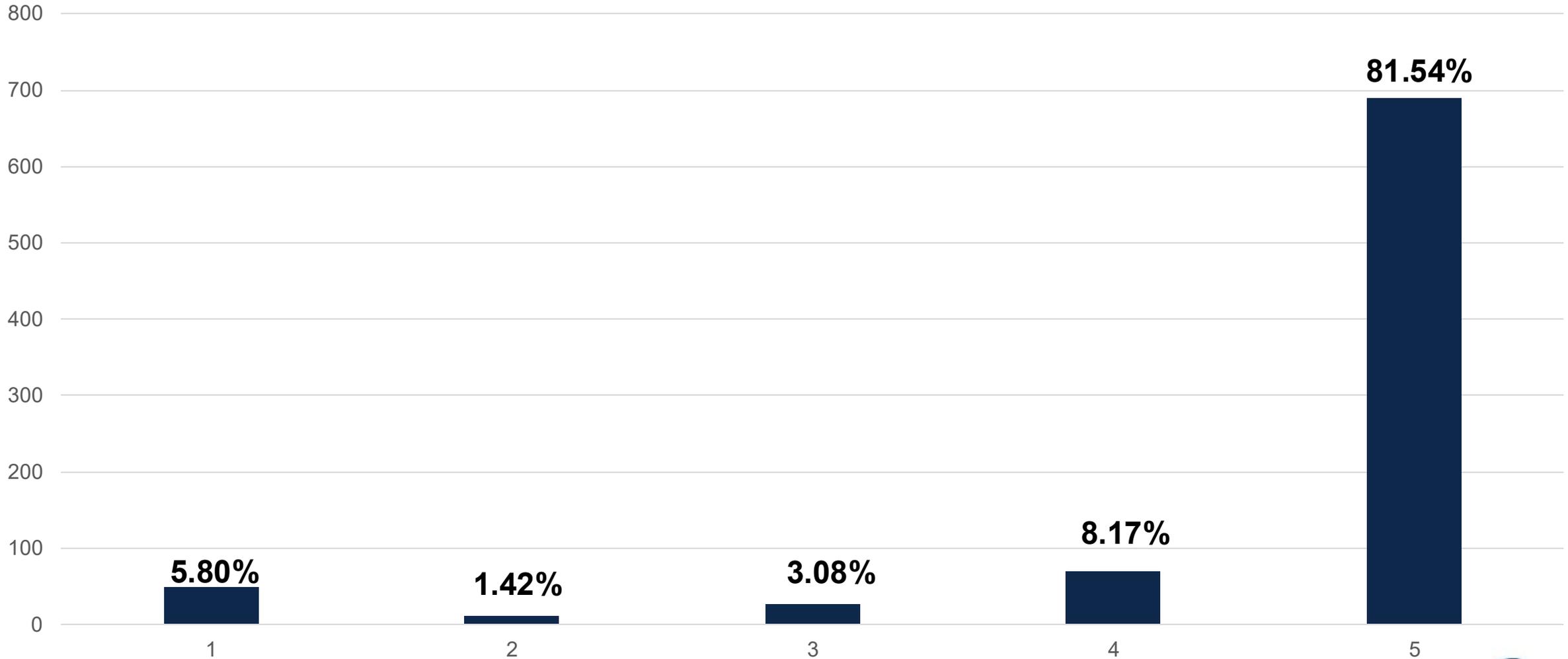
Q2 – Increased neighbourhood trail safety (845 respondents; 5 stars = strongly agree. 1 star = strongly disagree.)

★ Average 4.61

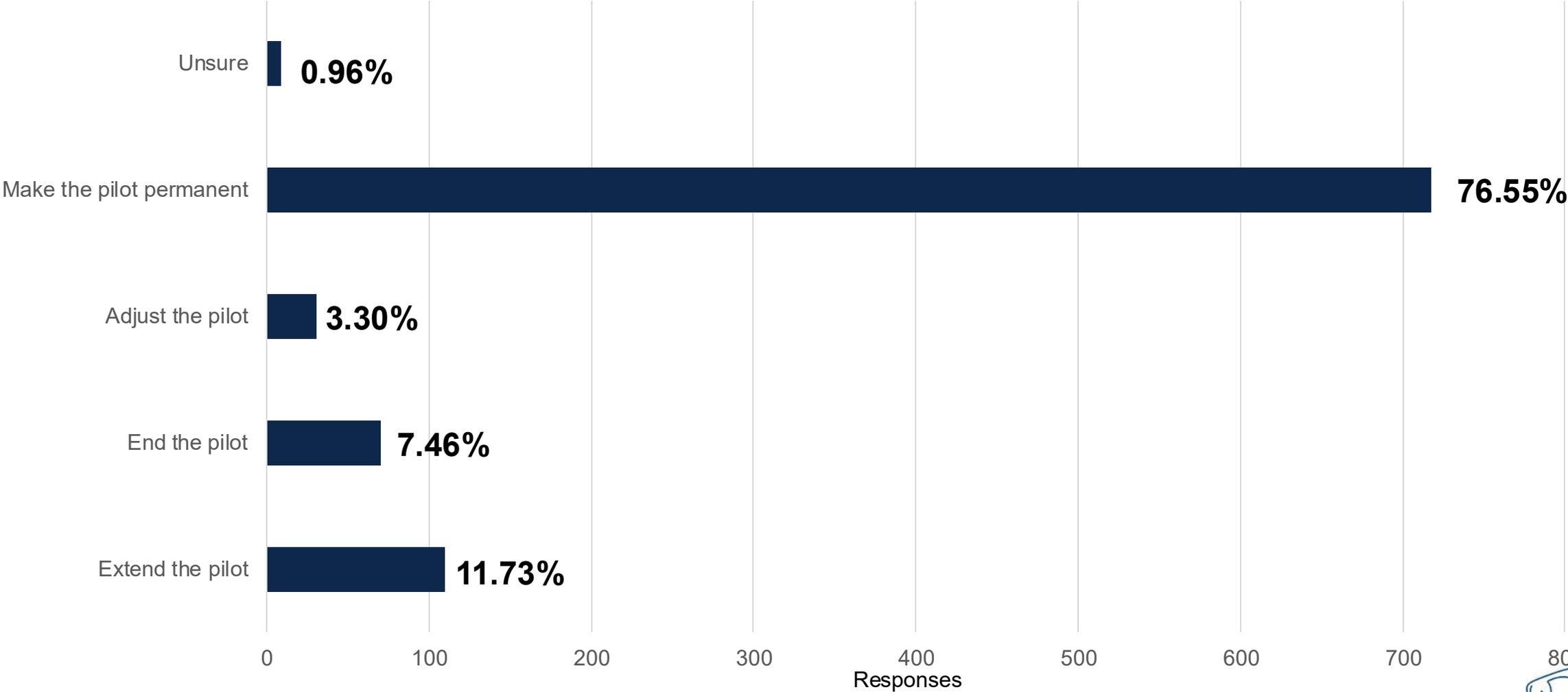


### Q3 – Increasing neighbourhood trail safety (845 respondents; 5 stars = strongly agree. 1 star = strongly disagree.)

★ Average 4.58



# Q4 – What should happen next? (938 respondents)



Q5 – What aspects of the pilot would you like to see changed or adjusted? (30 respondents; asked only of those who selected “Adjust the pilot” in the previous question.)

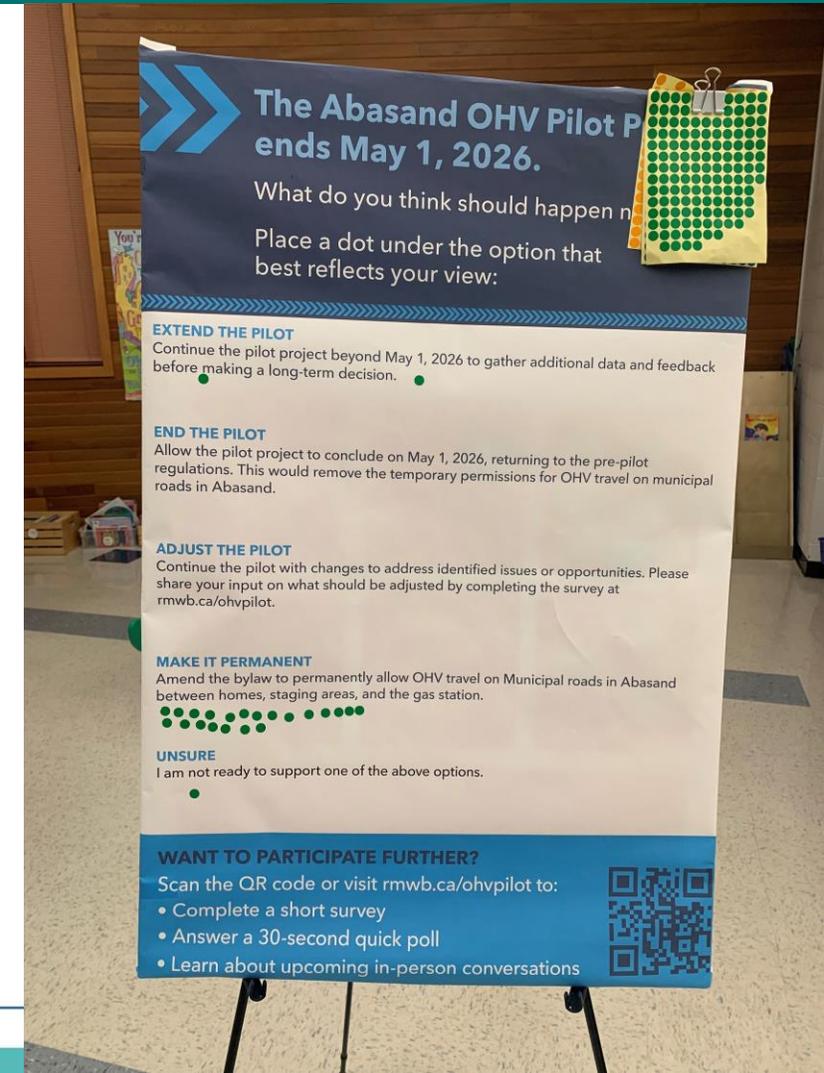
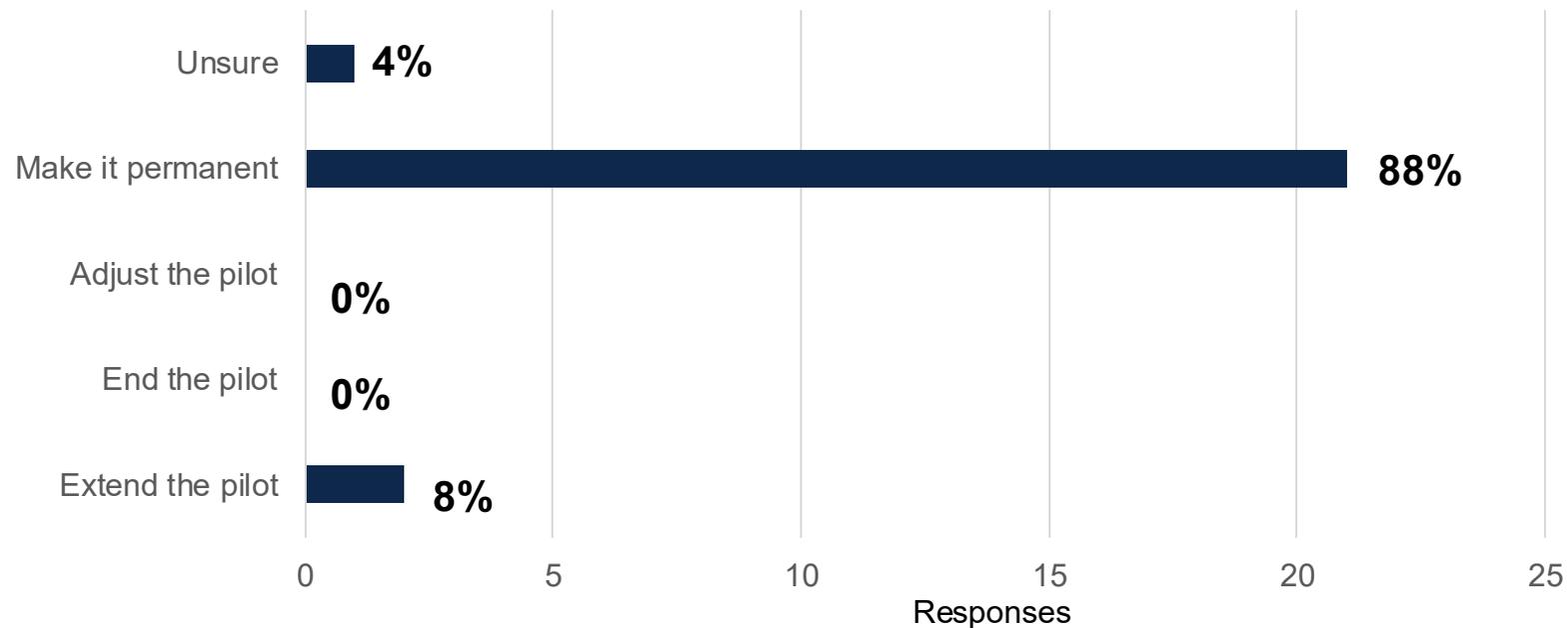
Themes from long-answer responses:

- **Program expansion (21)**  
Requests to expand where the pilot applies, more neighbourhoods, broader coverage across Fort McMurray.
- **Enforcement presence and compliance monitoring (6)**  
Calls for visible enforcement/monitoring and consistent follow-through so existing rules are complied with, including requests focused on dirt bikes, snowmobiles and a dedicated bylaw officer focused solely on OHV enforcement.
- **Rules and operating conditions (4)**  
Suggested changes to the rules/parameters of the pilot specifically requesting a curfew to help with noise complaints.

# APPENDIX C – DOTMOCRACY BOARD

(23 responses)

To provide an in-person feedback option, a dotmocracy board was available in the main office at Father Beauregard School from January 12 to February 11. Participants used adhesive dots to indicate their preference among the listed options. A total of 23 dots were recorded, as shown in the chart below.



# APPENDIX D – 1:1 CONVERSATIONS

Community partners were contacted and invited to participate in one-on-one conversations. The Wood Buffalo Recreational Riders Association (WBARRA) and Father Beauregard School (Abasand) responded and met with the team to share perspectives on the Abasand OHV Pilot Project.

What we heard from our partners:

## Observed changes & overall experience

- Partners noted overall positive sentiment and support, helping build belonging and neighbourhood pride.
- High compliance noted: WBARRA shared that most riders follow the rules, with some ongoing rule-breaking (e.g., driving on greenspaces).
- Father Beauregard School observed more appropriate OHV use (e.g., less trail-system use and greater visibility/presence on roadways).
- Partners described the pilot as helping families spend more time outdoors and be physically active, which they linked to positive well-being/quality-of-life impacts.
- School perspective: families (e.g., parents picking up kids and heading to trails) are using the pilot as part of everyday routines.
- Father Beauregard mentioned that Abasand is experiencing growth, as reflected in increasing school enrolment numbers.
- WBARRA noted strong community/neighbourhood support and the area being seen as desirable (“people are moving there”).



## **Safety & enforcement**

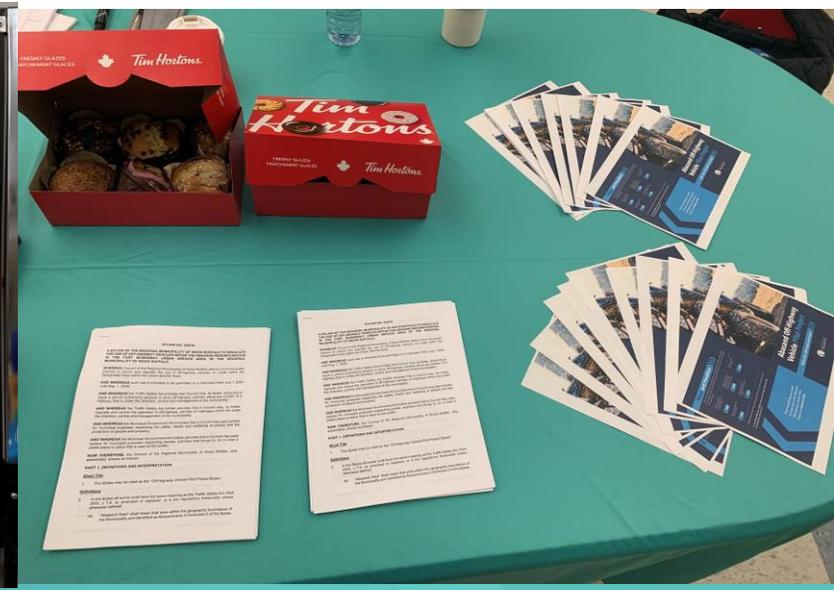
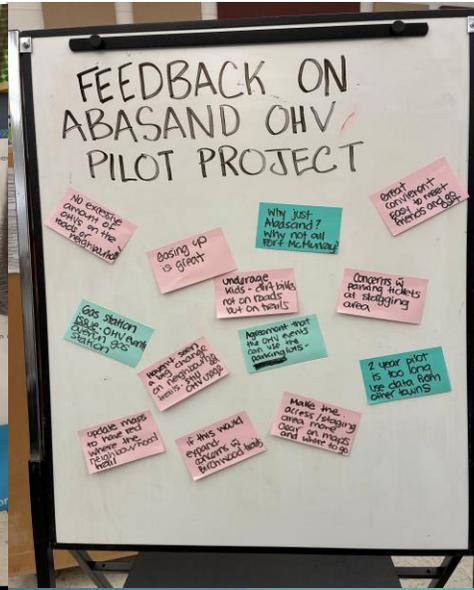
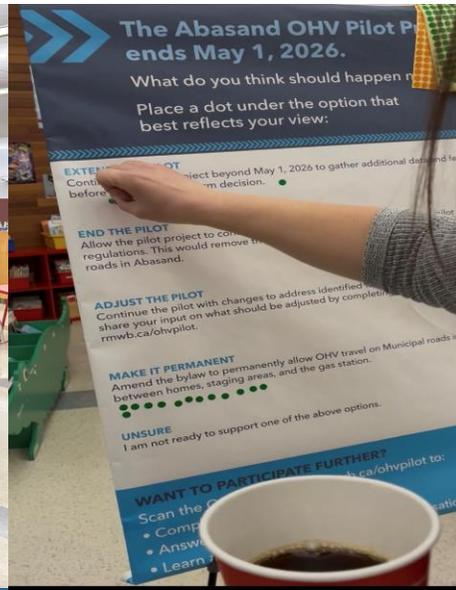
- WBRRA reported no real near-misses and that things have gone well, including police and bylaw interactions.
- Parking/staging pressures: gas station / parking lot use and congestion concerns; suggestion to extend/pave additional parking area.
- Noise: snowmobiles specifically mentioned.
- General acknowledgement: rule-breakers will break rules (need for ongoing awareness/enforcement).

## **Suggestions / adjustments raised**

- Continue the pilot, with ongoing monitoring and adjustments as needed.
- Improve signage/awareness: signage has helped and should continue.
- WBRRA shared desire to see this expand into other neighbourhoods.
- Support for requiring signal lights on OHVs to improve traffic safety and predictability on roadways.

# APPENDIX E– COFFEE & CONVERSATIONS

Coffee & Conversations offered two informal, drop-in sessions where residents could connect directly with municipal staff to learn more about the pilot, ask questions, and share their experiences. Sessions were intentionally open to both OHV users and non-users to gather a broad range of perspectives and help inform next steps. The sessions were held at Father Beauregard School on January 22, 2026 (3:00–5:00 p.m.) and February 11, 2026 (6:00–8:00 p.m.).



What we heard from participants:

**Overall sentiment:** Many comments were supportive of the pilot, describing it as convenient and making it easier to meet up and ride with friends.

**Expansion interest:** Some participants asked why only Abasand, with interest in expanding to other neighbourhoods.

**Safety:** Suggestions included adding signal lights to OHVs for traffic safety; one comment noted ATVs on roads are generally well-behaved. Some noted no excessive OHV volume on roads.

**Parking & staging:** Concerns raised about parking/tickets at the staging area and congestion at the gas station; suggestion to expand/pave additional parking.

**Maps & clarity:** Requests to update maps to clearly show trail access points and staging/access areas (where to go/how to access trails).

**Neighbourhood impacts:** Comments included noise and safety concerns (dirt bikes) and concern about underage riders on trails, stunting on the Egress road.

**Pilot timing:** One comment suggested a two-year pilot may be too long, recommending use of data from other towns.