

New Transit System Rider Feedback Survey What We Heard Report

February 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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 - A. New transit System – Rider Feedback Survey





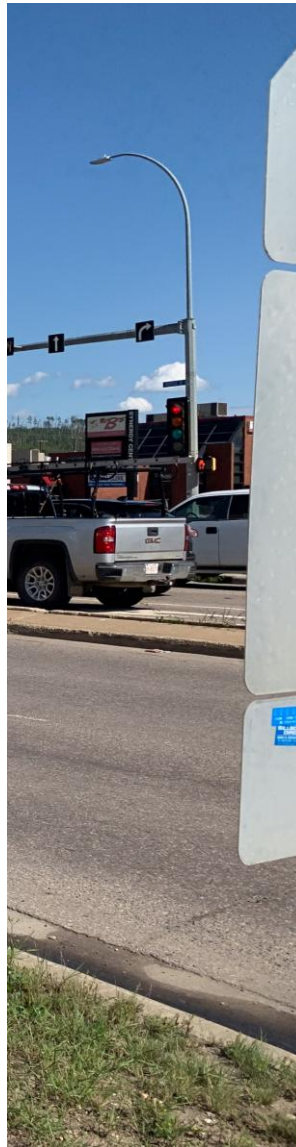
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A redesigned transit system was implemented in Fort McMurray on Aug. 22, 2025. The new system includes higher frequency routes to major destinations, neighbourhood routes and Transit On Demand service. The changes reflect the direction set out in the 2023 Transit Master Plan, developed through community input and approved by Council.

From **Aug. 21 to Dec. 15, 2025**, opportunities to provide initial feedback on the new system were offered through a variety of engagement activities, including:

- **Survey:** 445 surveys completed online, in person and through Pulse
- **Presentations:** 13 presentations to community partners and local groups
- **Pop-up events:** 30 information-sharing pop-ups at community events, popular locations and transit terminals
- **Open House:** One community connection open house at a local high school

Feedback gathered offers perspective on rider awareness and initial experiences with the new transit system. This feedback is being used for ongoing evaluation and to guide ongoing adjustments and improvements.



PARTICIPANTS

Who did we talk to?

Opportunities to share input were available to the following audiences:

- All Fort McMurray residents
 - Transit riders
 - SMART Bus / Specialized riders
 - High schools – (students, teachers and parents)
 - Keyano College (students and teachers)
 - Newcomers



ENGAGEMENT IN NUMBERS

aware

Ways people saw communications and advertisements.

27,455	Digital impressions (social media posts, website visits and views)
2,733	Participate Wood Buffalo newsletter subscribers
16	Direct email invitations to community partners



ENGAGEMENT REVIEW

Where did we engage with the community?

A total of 846 engagement actions were recorded

445 Completed surveys

- Printed surveys were also available at in person events and could be completed over the phone through Pulse

30 Pop-up events

- 23 pop-up events Aug. 21-Sept. 3, 2025, at the Timberlea, Thickwood and Downtown terminals, and new downtown bus stops
- Main concourse of MacDonald Island Park (approx. 18 attendees)
- Keyano College student events (x3)
- Homeless Connect event
- Lobby of the Jubilee Centre (x2)

1 Community connection open house

- Holy Trinity Catholic High School (approx. 15 attendees)

13 Presentations

- Fort McMurray International Airport
- Golden Years Society (x3)
- St. Aidan's Society Fort McMurray
- Newcomers Interagency Network
- YMCA
- English Language Learners Group (WBRL) (x2)
- LINC Students at Keyano College
- Council Appointed Committees - Advisory Committee on Aging and Downtown Revitalization Committee
- RMWB internal departments



OVERALL KEY FINDINGS/THEMES



1. On Demand and Specialized service and reliability

- 41% (183/445) of survey respondents indicated that they use RMWB Transit On Demand. Of those users, 51% (92/183) indicate they understand the Transit On Demand Zones and how the service works.
- Positive and negative feedback about the new RMWB Transit On Demand system appears consistently across the survey, in open comments and at in-person engagement activities. Some participants described the service as fast and efficient while others raised concerns about reliability and convenience.
- 66% (121/183) of survey respondents who use RMWB Transit On Demand indicate they are *dissatisfied* or *very dissatisfied* with the service.
- During in-person pop-up events hosted with the Golden Years Society on Nov. 21 and Dec. 5, 2025, attendees who use Specialized Transit expressed appreciation for the service and described the recent Transit system changes as manageable while also noting concerns about late arrivals for scheduled appointments. Attendees also cited they were pleased with the recent update to Route 4 that now services, Walmart, Canadian Tire, Staples, etc.
- Accessibility challenges for seniors, families, and commuters were also mentioned at in-person engagement activities along with concerns that drivers are not properly trained to support Specialized riders.



OVERALL KEY FINDINGS/THEMES



2. Route coverage, scheduling and access to key destinations

- Survey respondents indicate the following as the top three routes they use:
 - 50% (223/445) Route 2 – Timberlea / Keyano
 - 41% (181/445) Route 1 – Thickwood / Gregoire
 - 33% (147/445) Rout 6 – Thickwood / Timberlea
- 76% (337/443) of survey respondents *disagree* or *strongly disagree* that the updated routes, schedules and On Demand service meet their needs.
- Through open-ended questions and in-person engagement activities, participants described issues with navigating the new routes and schedules, the lack of evening and weekend hours especially for working riders and limited service in getting to places like the airport, MacDonald Island Park and Taiga Nova.



3. School routes

- Through open-ended survey responses (school routes were mentioned 42 times) and in-person conversations, participants raised concerns around safety and service consistency, citing that students have extended walking distances, along with undependable service and long wait times due to misalignment with school start and end times. Some respondents did not understand the difference between regular transit routes and designated school routes.



OVERALL KEY FINDINGS/THEMES



4. Service satisfaction

- 71% (315/443) of survey respondents indicate that trips are not faster since the new transit system was implemented.
- When asked to rate the overall satisfaction of the new Transit system, 77% (340/445) of survey respondents responded that they are *dissatisfied* or *very dissatisfied*.
- Concerns with the overall transit system, extended walking distances, relocated or removed bus stop locations, accessibility challenges along with additional complications related to winter temperatures and weather were consistently shared through open-ended survey questions (mentioned 233 times).
- High satisfaction with fixed routes, particularly Routes 1 and 2, the frequent service along Franklin Ave. and that the updated Transit system is a significant improvement was expressed in 36 open-ended survey responses.



5. Communication, support and change management

- Through open-ended survey questions and in-person events, participants expressed frustration with the following key issues:
 - Call Centre and information providers not able to help riders in real time when trips are disrupted or they have specific questions
 - Confusion about specific changes to routes and schedules upon implementation
 - Perceived lack of public involvement in the rollout



Community Connection Open House

Overview:

Hosted by RMWB Transit and Strategic Communications, one open house was held at Holy Trinity Catholic High School on Dec. 3, 2025, from 4:30-7:30 p.m.

Format:

This drop-in event was held in the main concourse of the high school, with multiple Transit staff available to share information and answer questions.

Attendees raised very specific questions related to their personal use of the new Transit system and shared concerns about their experiences.

Discussions provided first-hand insight into current needs, challenges and opportunities for improvement.

Key Themes:

- School route reliability and alignment with bell times
- RMWB Transit On Demand reliability, coverage and wait times
- Extended walking distances due to stop and route changes
- Service changes do not support community needs
- Call Centre and information support are not helpful
- Route and schedule specific questions including concerns about:
 - Transit service to the airport
 - Challenges for students travelling from Beacon Hill to Father Patrick Mercredi High School



Pop-up Events

Overview:

RMWB Transit hosted a total of 30 pop-up events from Aug. to Dec. Some were aligned with the launch of service changes to inform transit riders and help them adjust to the new system, while later events focused on actively gathering feedback and still providing education.

Format:

Bus terminals and stops

- Transit staff were in person at main terminals and the new downtown bus stops assisting riders and answering questions.

Community events:

- Information tables were set up at several community events to target specific rider audiences (I.e., newcomer events, college student events, etc.) to share information and answer questions.

MacDonald Island Park (main concourse):

- Staff engaged with residents at an information table answering questions and discussing transit services.

Conversations highlighted rider experiences, what is working well and potential areas for improvement.

Key Themes:

- Questions about routes, schedules and service coverage
- Explanation and comparison of Specialized Transit and the previous SMARTBus services
- Transit On Demand usage and limitations
- Attendees of the MacDonald Island pop-up expressed concerns with:
 - Seniors and vulnerable riders navigating the new system
 - Loss of fixed routes replaced by On Demand service
 - Extended hours needed to accommodate working riders
 - Lack of access to MacDonald Island Park for staff, youth and program and event attendees
 - Longer walking distances due to relocated bus stops and route changes



Presentations

Overview:

RMWB Transit staff delivered 13 presentations to community partners to ensure as many riders as possible received information about the new transit system, had the opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback.

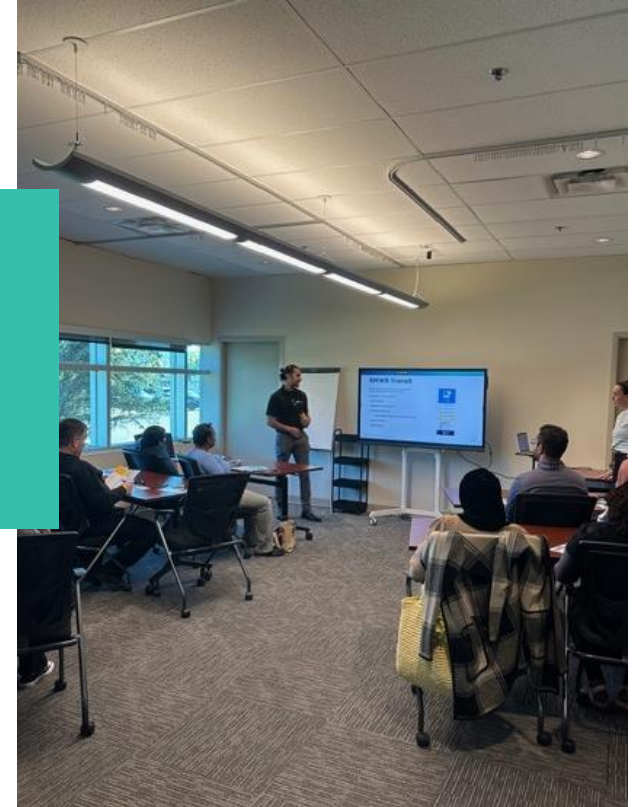
Format:

Events included a presentation and both large and small group discussions, where Transit staff were able to answer questions, address concerns and gather feedback.

These events provided an opportunity for Transit staff to learn about rider experiences and address concerns.

Key Themes:

- Questions about routes, schedules and service coverage
- Specialized vs. the former SMART Bus service
- Questions about Transit On Demand



NEXT STEPS

- RMWB Transit staff will present to Council in March 2026.
- Future transit engagements will be held to assess the effectiveness of ongoing service improvements.
- For more information including the Council meeting schedule, agendas and packages visit rmwb.ca/council.

For project updates follow
rmwb.ca/TransitFeedback



Thank You

For more information on this report email participate@rmwb.ca.



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Appendix A

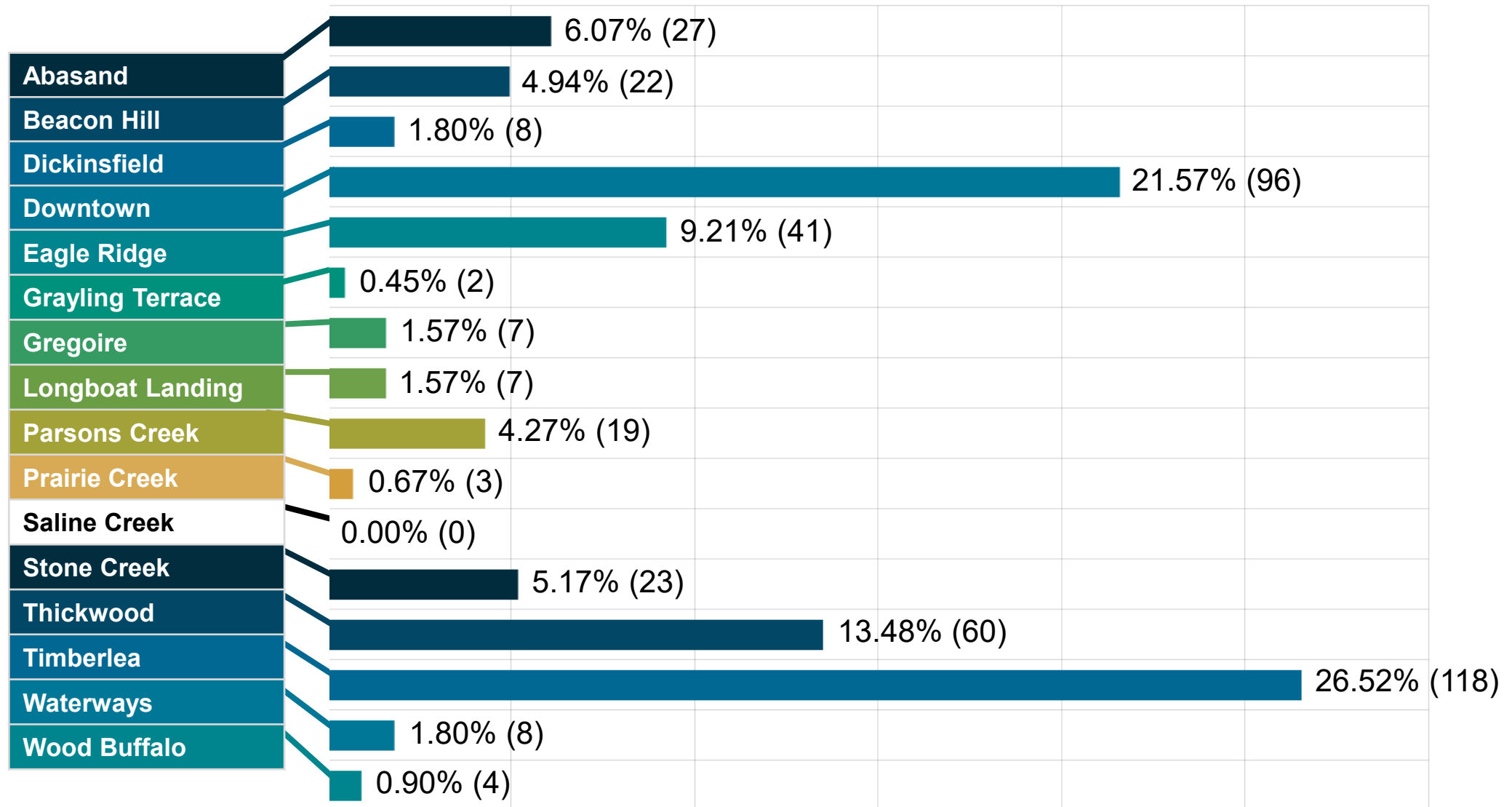
New Transit System Rider Feedback Survey

(Total of 445 responses)

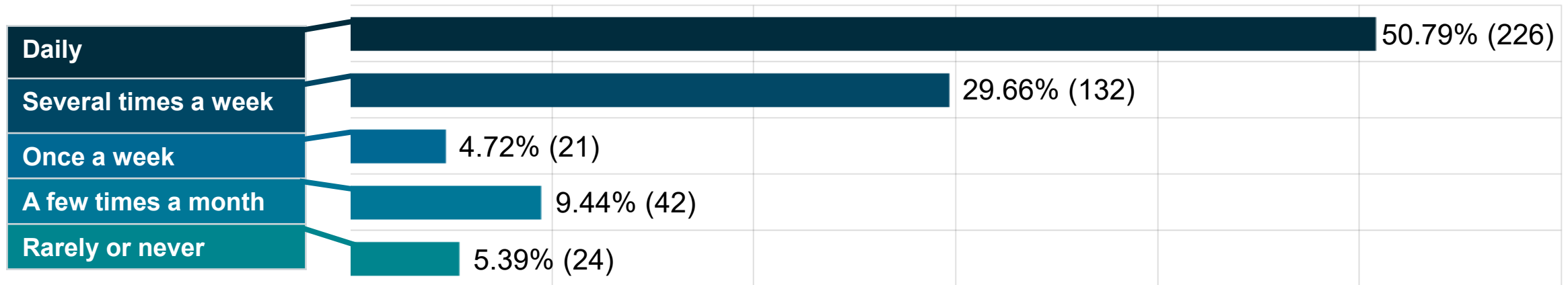


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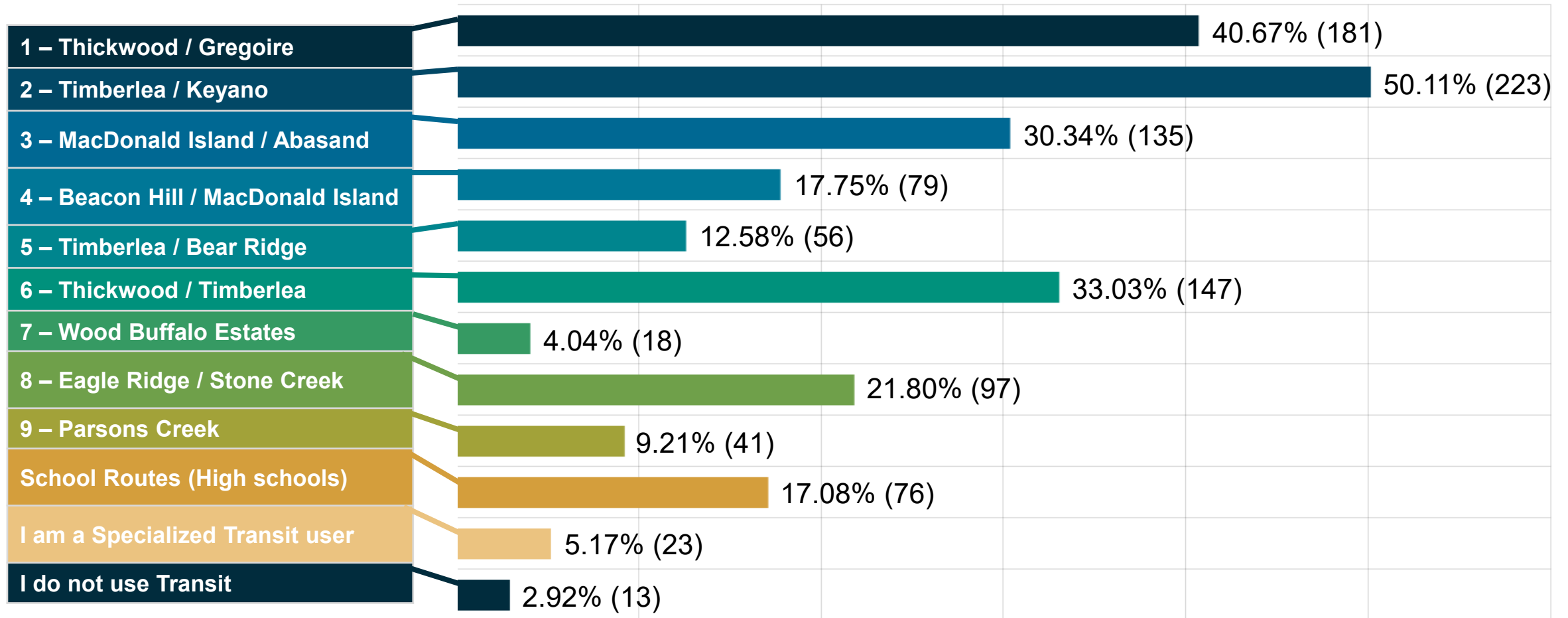
Q1 – What neighbourhood do you live in? (Total of 445 responses)



Q2 – How often do you use RMWB Transit? (Total of 445 responses)



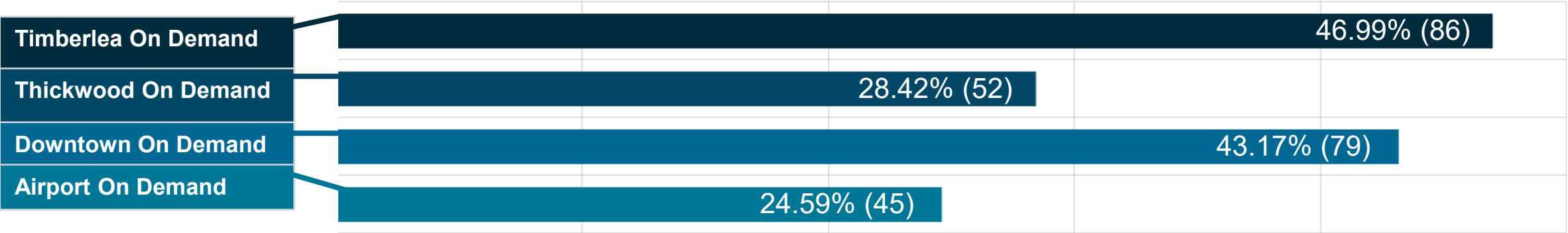
Q3 – Select all the Transit routes you use. (Total of 445 responses)



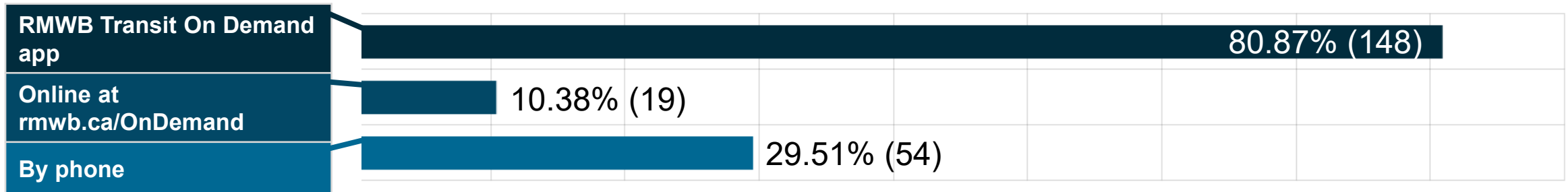
Q4 – Do you use Transit On Demand? (Total of 445 responses)



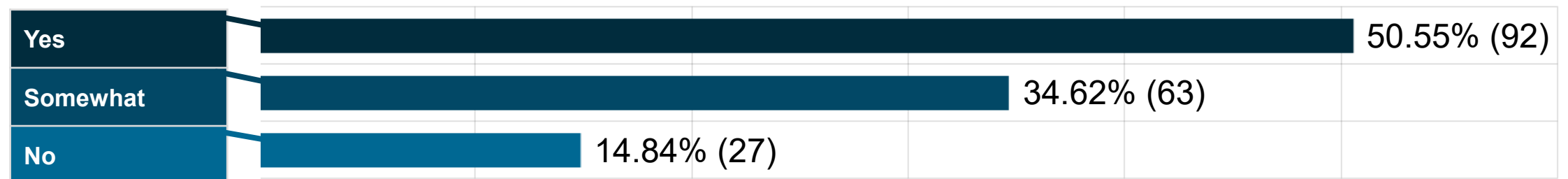
Q5 – Select all the On Demand zones you use. (Total of 183 responses)



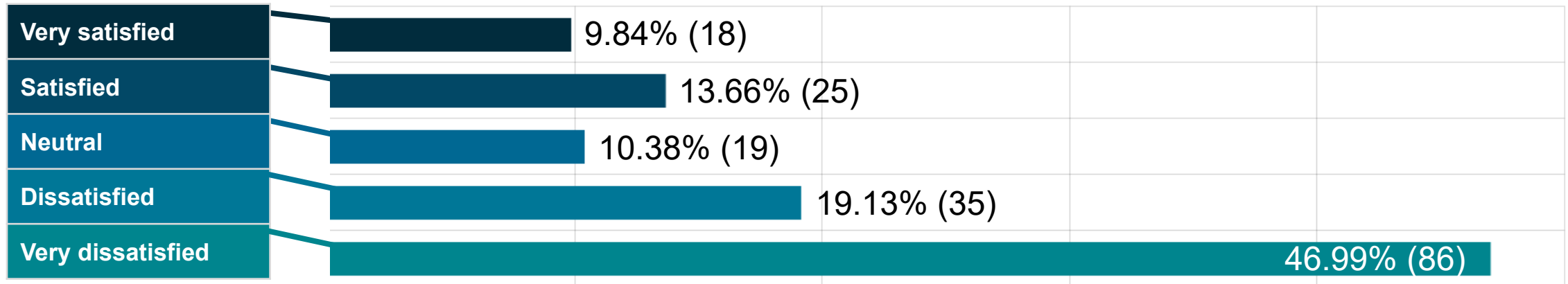
Q6 – How do you book On Demand trips? (Total of 183 responses)



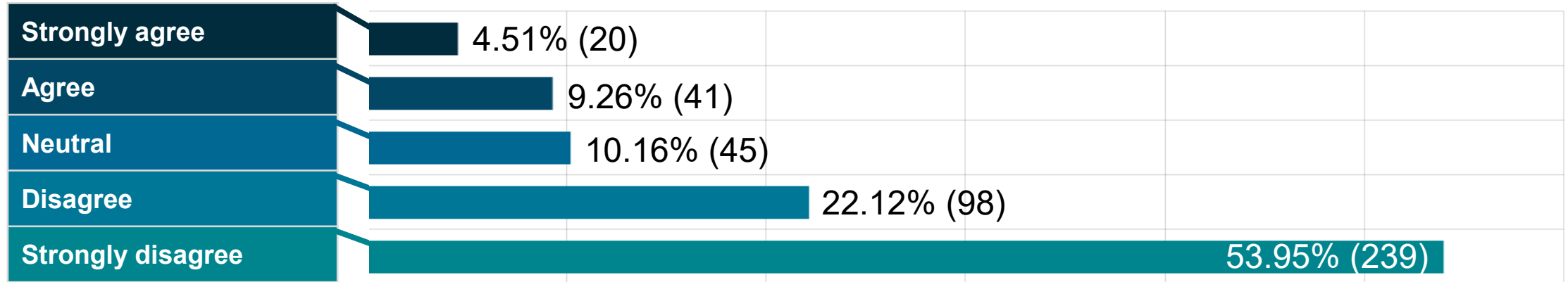
Q7 – Do you understand the Transit On Demand Zones and how they service works? (Total of 182 responses)



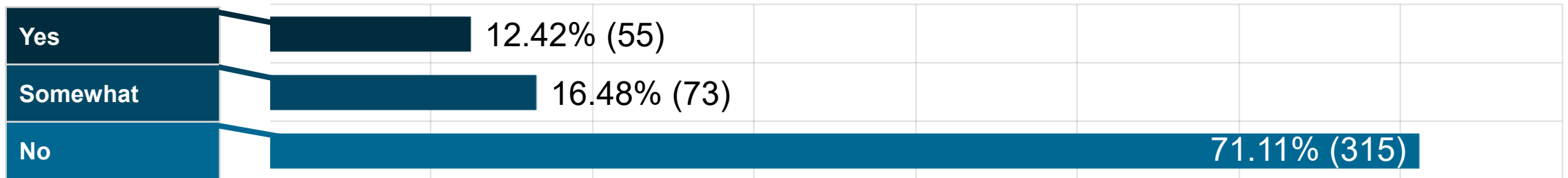
Q8 – Please rate your overall satisfaction with transit On Demand. (Total of 183 responses)



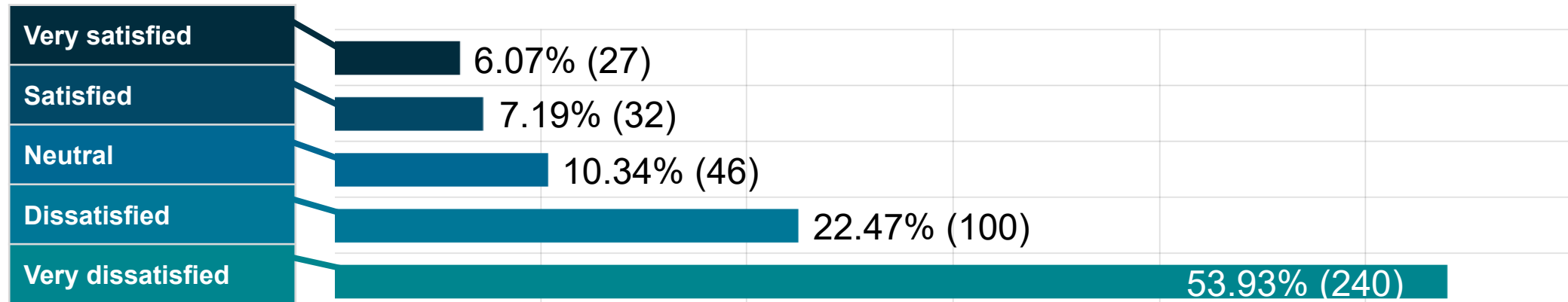
Q9 – The routes, schedules and On Demand Service meet my needs. (Total of 443 responses)



Q10 – Are your Transit trips quicker after the updates? (Total of 443 responses)



Q10 – Please rate your overall satisfaction with the Transit system in Fort McMurray. (Total of 445 responses)



Q12 – Please share any other feedback you have about RMWB Transit.

(Total of 367 responses by theme)

1. Overall Transit system and route performance (258 mentions)

- Reliability and consistency of service is a concern; some routes are described as unpredictable
- High satisfaction with fixed routes, particularly Routes 1 and 2
- Frequent service along Franklin Avenue appreciated
- Positive experiences with driver professionalism and customer service
- Perception that the updated Transit system is a significant improvement
- Service hours not aligned with rider needs, including evenings and weekends
- Reduced access or coverage in some neighbourhoods and to key destinations
- Long walking distances resulting from route changes, stop removals, or On Demand issues
- Limited route connectivity and difficulty traveling between key areas
- Bus shelters in need of repair
- Requests to restore or relocate shelters at specific locations and more frequent inspections for damage
- Challenges understanding route changes, stop locations, and schedules

2. On Demand service experience (76 mentions)

- On Demand service described as convenient, reliable, and efficient
- Improved connections between On Demand and fixed routes
- Reliability and wait-time issues, including trip disruptions and inaccurate timing
- Limited capacity; some trips unavailable due to high demand
- Gaps in coverage, including access to certain neighbourhoods and key destinations
- Lack of alternatives when trips are unavailable or cancelled
- Accessibility challenges for seniors, families, and commuters
- Service hours and scheduling not always aligned with user needs



Q12 Continued – Please share any other feedback you have about RMWB Transit. (Total of 367 responses by theme)

3. Airport and Taiga Nova service challenges (48 mentions)

- Airport service not aligned with flight schedules, making trips unpredictable
- Airport routing and schedules described as inefficient or difficult to understand
- Requests for a dedicated airport route or extended service hours
- Concerns about bus availability and reliability for airport On Demand trips
- Long wait times and inconvenience serving Taiga Nova
- Requests to reinstate a regular route or create a separate On Demand Zone to service taiga Nova

4. School routes (42 mentions)

- Long wait times and frequent delays on school routes
- Schedules not aligned with school start and end times
- Route changes or removals without a replacement option
- Bus stops located farther from homes, increasing walking distances
- Safety concerns related to walking routes and overcrowded buses



Q12 Continued – Please share any other feedback you have about RMWB Transit. (Total of 367 responses by theme)

5. Issues with technology and apps (31 mentions)

- Limited access for users without smartphones or data
- App functionality issues (lagging, unreliable) and difficult navigation
- Stops and trip information in apps not always consistent or accurate
- Trip times can change without notification
- Data in Transit apps and Google Maps not consistently updated

6. Safety, accessibility and personal security (23 mentions)

- Personal safety concerns when using Transit or On Demand services
- Better service to the Waypoints Unity House
- Bus stop locations perceived as unsafe
- Pedestrian safety around buses needs improvement
- Passenger behaviour impacting comfort and security



Q12 Continued – Please share any other feedback you have about RMWB Transit. (Total of 367 responses by theme)

8. Specialized Transit service (21 mentions)

- Mixed feedback on ease of use and driver interactions
- Reliability concerns, including late arrivals, delays, and missed pick-ups
- Scheduling challenges affecting medical or time-sensitive trips
- Concerns about shared service with On Demand trips resulting detours
- Vehicle suitability and accessibility for passengers using mobility devices
- Training and consistency concerns for drivers

9. Customer support, communication and other feedback (15 mentions)

- Phone and email support described as unresponsive or not helpful
- Long response times for inquiries and follow-up
- Call centre staff perceived as having limited local knowledge
- Requests for more public engagement, feedback sessions, and transparency
- Feedback related to fares and programs, including LIFT program
- Isolated reports of bus condition issues (e.g., lack of air conditioning)

