



Iowa's Living Roadways

**community
visioning**

designing livable communities, 2020

Fairfax, Iowa



Introduction

The Iowa's Living Roadways Community Visioning Program is a collaboration involving the Iowa Department of Transportation, the Living Roadway Trust Fund, Iowa State University and Trees Forever. One of the primary objectives of the Community Visioning Program is to assist participants in the process of building livable communities—that is, creating an environment that not only meets residents' basic needs but is also aesthetically appealing.

With assistance from Iowa State University's Center for Survey Statistics and Methodology, ISU visioning program staff conducted a survey to better understand the transportation patterns and behaviors, needs and desires of Fairfax residents. Surveys were mailed to 300 randomly selected residents living in Fairfax and the surrounding area. To increase the response rate, the study was publicized through the local media and follow-up packets were mailed to nonrespondents.

With adjustments for ineligible respondents (e.g., incorrect addresses, no longer living in the community), the final sample size was 252. A total of 110 people returned surveys, for a response rate of 43.7%. (A response rate of 20% is considered valid.)

Why Do A Survey?

The survey gives the visioning steering committee objective, representative information for the goal-setting phase of community visioning. The quantitative data collected from survey responses complements the qualitative information gathered from the focus groups at the transportation assets and barriers workshop.

The modes of transportation that residents use and the routes they take suggest suitable types of transportation enhancements in these areas. Having a sense for people's willingness to help either financially or with their time is important because many transportation enhancements are funded from multiple sources, including grants, private donations, in-kind contributions, and volunteers. Understanding what types of improvements are important to residents gives the committee insight into how to prioritize projects.

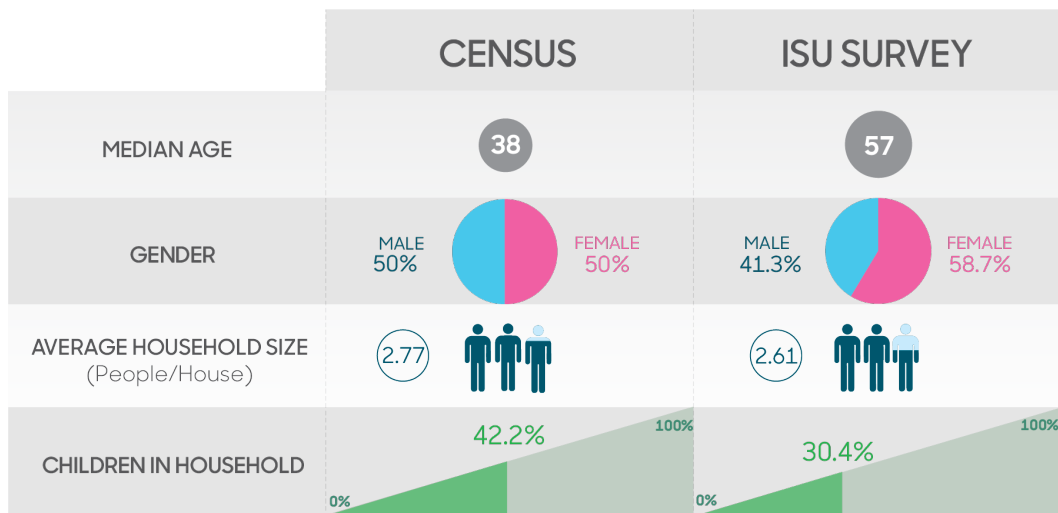
What Did We Find Out?

We asked survey recipients what routes they used most often for going to work, walking, and biking. We also asked whether or not residents would like a recreation trail and where they think it should be. We also discovered what residents think is most important in terms of transportation enhancements that address issues such as accessibility, mobility, and safety. Finally, we learned whether or not residents are willing to contribute their time or their financial resources to making enhancements to Fairfax. This report summarizes the results of the survey as follows:

- Willingness to Help
- Enhancement Priorities
- Commuting Routes
- Walking Routes
- Desired Qualities

How Did We Do?

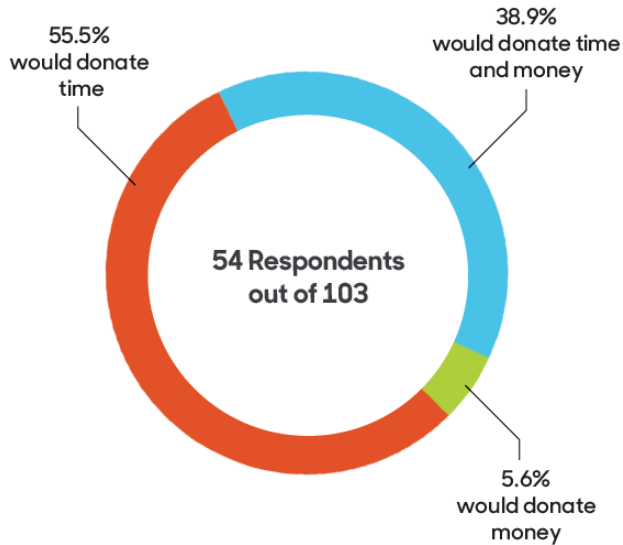
The demographics of the respondents are somewhat different from those obtained from the 2019 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimate. For example, the survey respondents median age of 57 is significantly older than the 2019 estimated average age for Fairfax residents of 38. In terms of gender, the percentage of male survey respondents is approximately 10% lower than that of the census. The average household size of survey respondents is somewhat lower than the 2019 estimate, and the percentage of households with children is approximately 12% lower than the census estimate.



Source: US Census Bureau, 2019 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates.

ARE PEOPLE WILLING TO HELP?

More than 52% said YES!



Willingness to implement change

Most survey participants who answered this question are willing to contribute their time to community improvements (52.4%), while 38.9% would contribute their time and talent. More than 5% of respondents indicated that they would be willing to contribute financially.

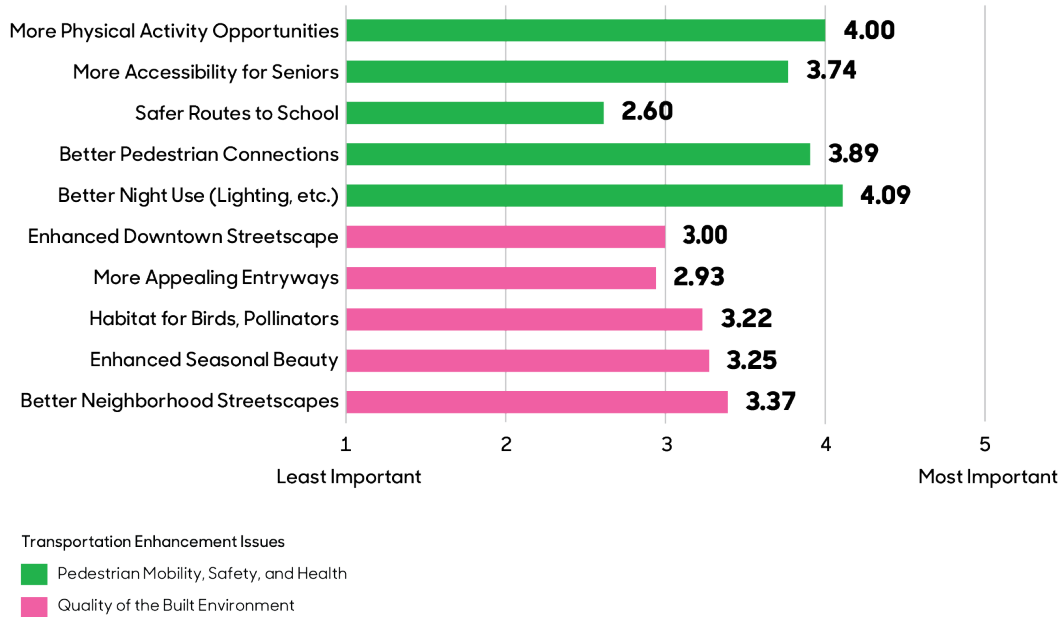
Compared to other small towns in Iowa, Fairfax residents are more willing to become involved in improving their community. In 2014, on average, 43% of residents in small, rural towns volunteered to help with a community project.¹ Fairfax exceeds this average by 9%.

How Do You Get People to Help?

In 2014, the most common reason residents in small-town Iowa said they didn't become involved in community projects is that no one asked them (34%). Twenty-eight percent on average said that they don't have time, which is significantly lower than the 2004 average of 59%. Sixteen percent indicated that they didn't know how to become involved, and 7% said that no community project needed volunteers.¹ These results indicate that the best ways to get people involved in community projects is to simply ask, along with advertising opportunities through traditional and social media outlets.

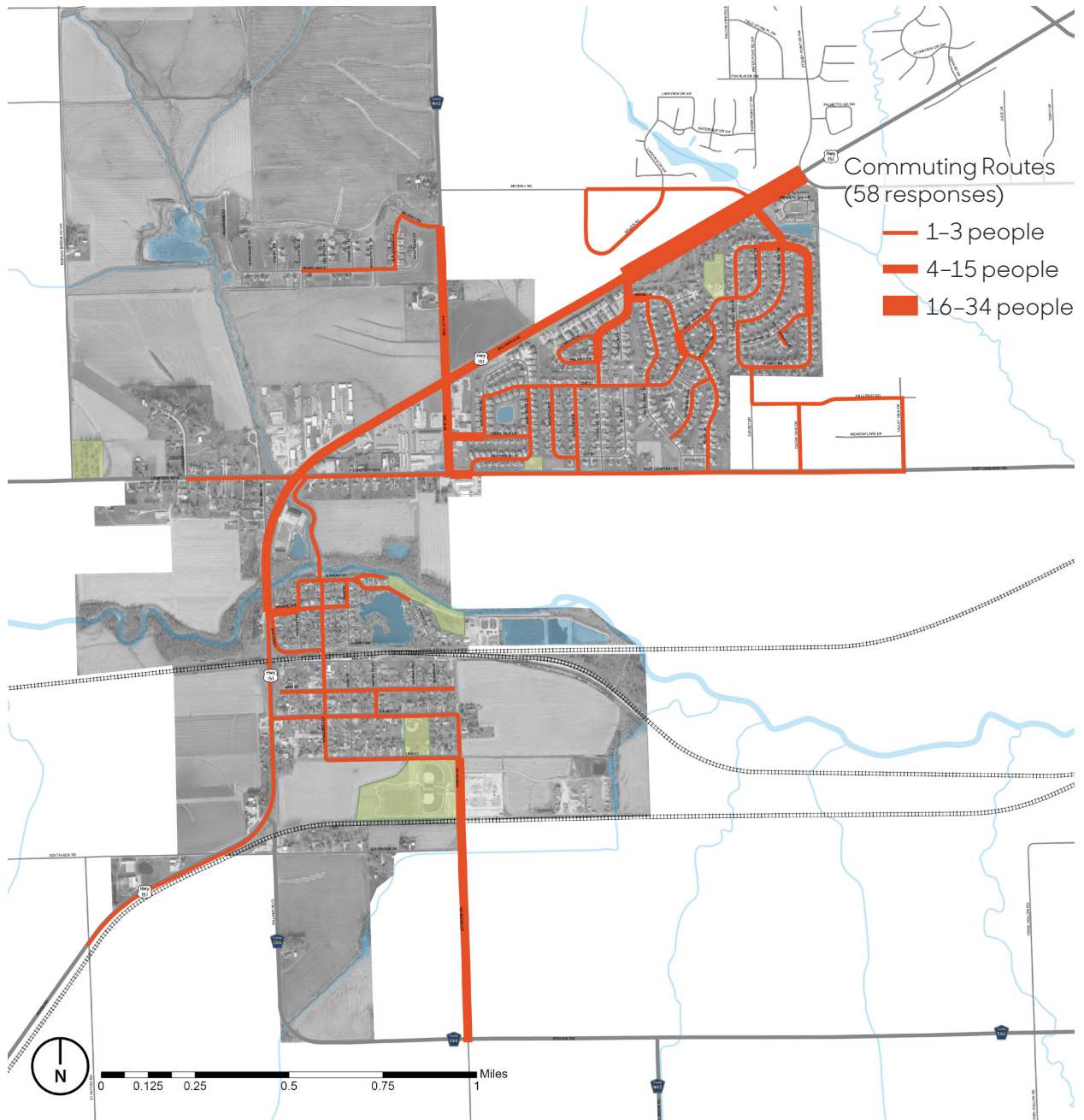
¹ *Sigma: A Profile of Iowa Small Towns 1994 to 2014* (Ames, IA: Iowa State University College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, 2015).

WHAT TYPES OF ENHANCEMENTS ARE IMPORTANT? Mobility, Safety, and Health!



Importance of transportation enhancement by type (95 responses)

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the most important, participants in Fairfax ranked better night use (lighting, etc.) as most important, with a mean value of 4.09. Other types of transportation enhancements that address pedestrian mobility, health, and safety are also considered important, such as opportunities more physical activity opportunities (4.00), better pedestrian connections (3.89), and more accessibility for seniors (3.74). In terms of quality of the built environment, survey respondents consider better neighborhood streetscapes (3.37), followed by enhanced seasonal beauty (3.25) and habitat for birds and pollinators (3.22) as important.

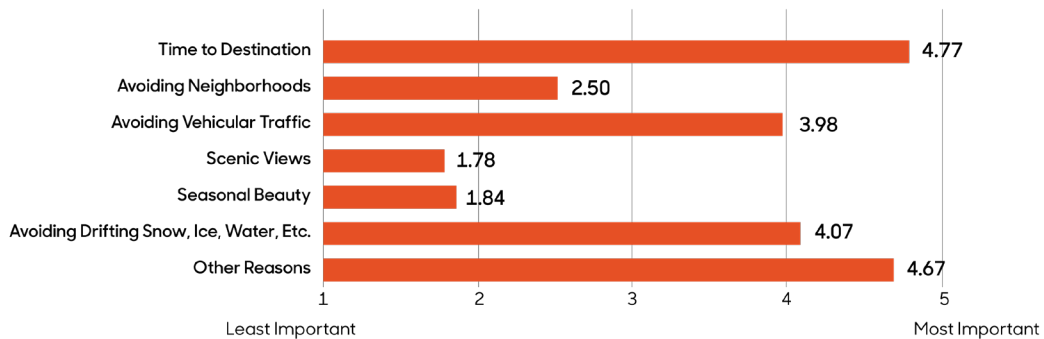


How People Get To Work

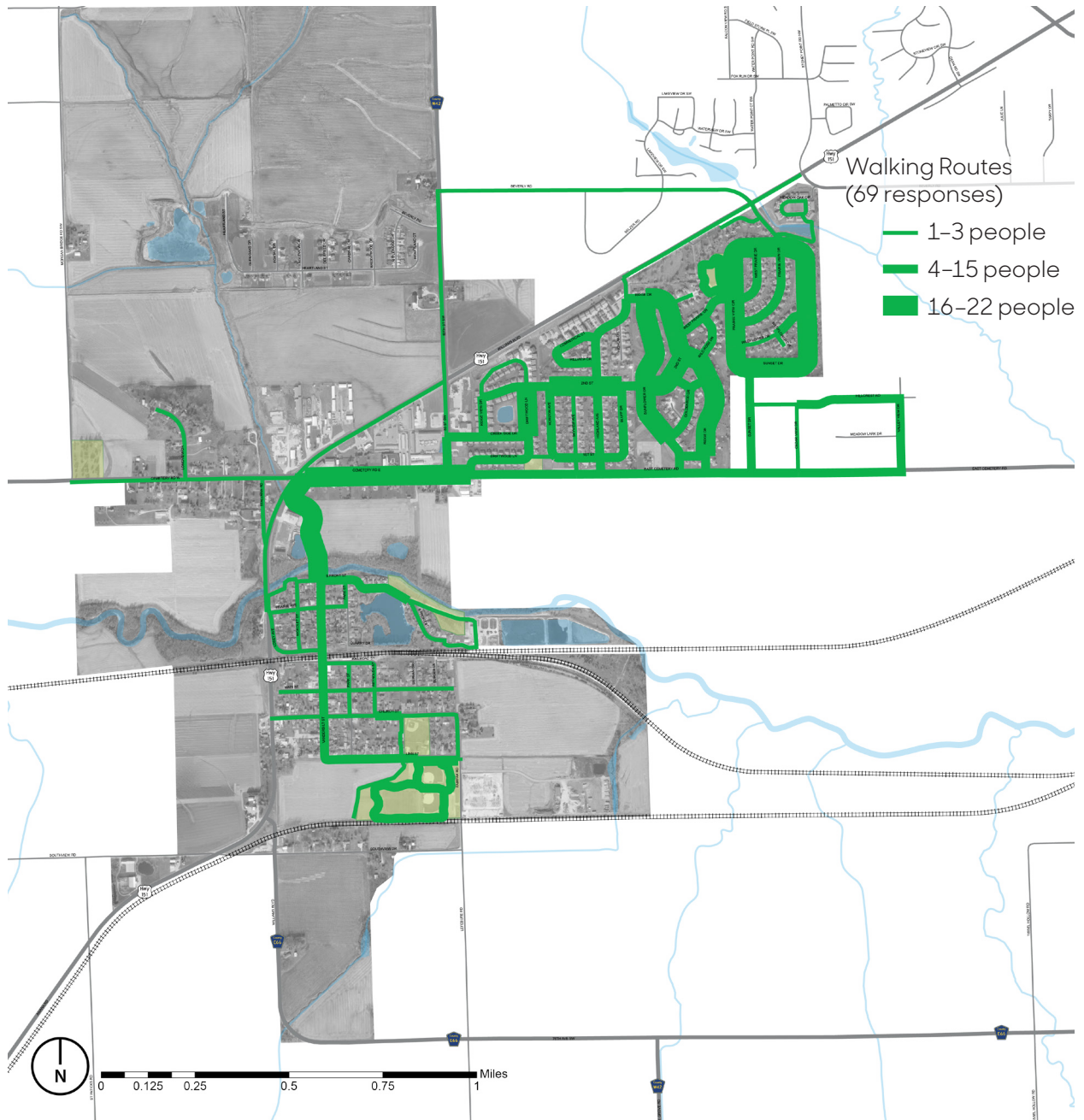
This map shows the commuting routes identified by 58 survey respondents. The frequency that the routes are used is depicted by their width, with most frequently used routes being the thickest. The primary commuting corridor in Fairfax is Highway 151 to the north, presumably because many commuters work in Cedar Rapids. A number of people also travel north-south on Fairfax Road/Lefebure Road SW. Other frequently traveled streets that feed into various neighborhoods include 80th Street SW, Prairie View Drive, Highland Avenue, Creekside Drive, and East Cemetery Road.

The circulation patterns that emerge when routes for biking, walking, and commuting are overlaid suggest suitable types of transportation enhancements. For example, where pedestrian and vehicular traffic intersect, such improvements could include creating better visibility, defining crossing points, or improving signage.

Why They Go That Way



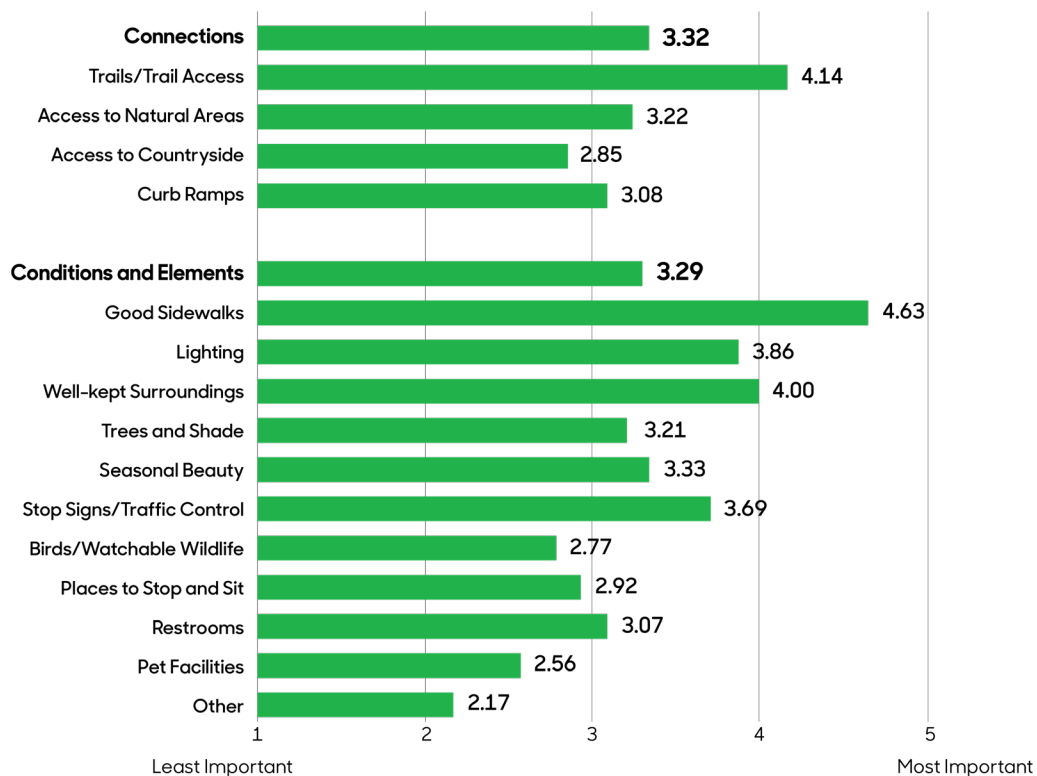
On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the most important, survey participants ranked the characteristics and features that factored into their choice of commuting route. Among Fairfax participants, time to destinations is the most important factor, with a mean value of 4.77. Other reasons such as safety, avoiding gravel, and difficulty making left turns (4.67) are the second most important factor determining commuting routes. Avoiding drifting snow, ice, water, etc. is also considered important, with a mean value of 4.07. Avoiding vehicular traffic is somewhat important with a mean value of 3.98. Scenic views, seasonal beauty, and avoiding neighborhoods are not critical factors in determining commuting routes.



Where People Walk

This map shows the walking routes identified by 69 survey respondents. The frequency that the routes are used is depicted by their width, with most frequently used routes being the thickest. Survey respondents indicated that they walk primarily along neighborhood streets in the northeast part of the community, as well as along the trail running along East Cemetery Road and south across Prairie Creek. In addition, some people walk at the sports complex, and some walk along the streets the Westport Estates development outside city limits.

Why They Go That Way



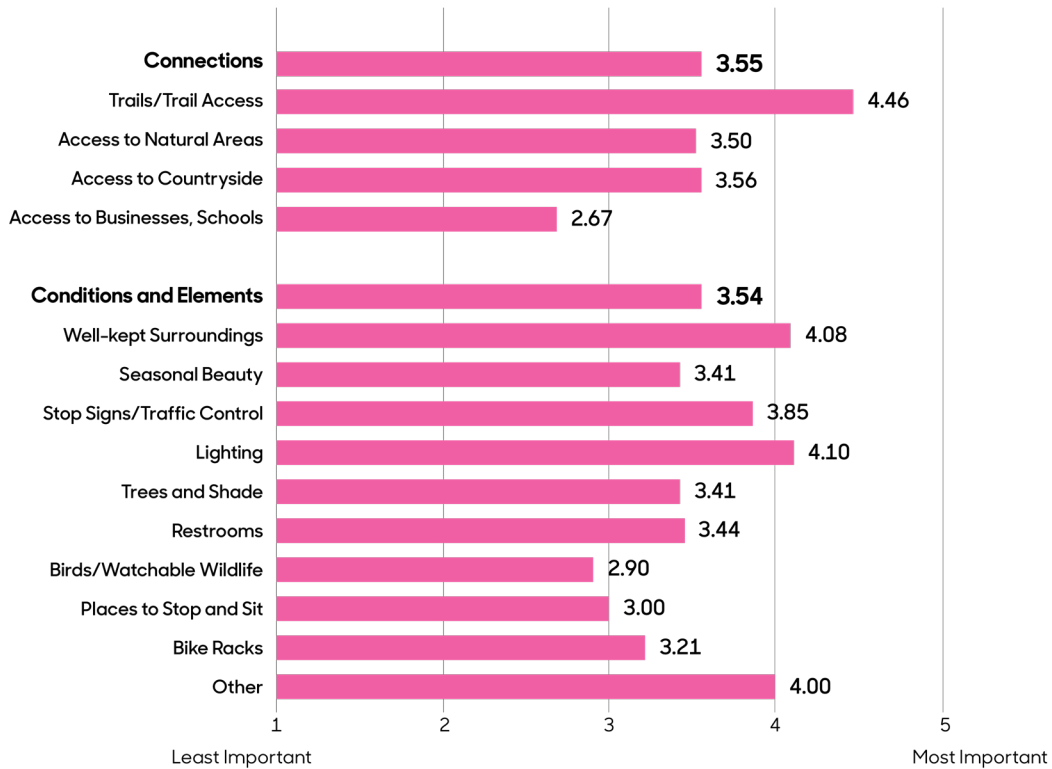
On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the most important, survey participants ranked the characteristics and features that made their walking experience better. These features are categorized as either "connections" or "conditions and elements." Among Fairfax participants, connections are of slightly more important than conditions/elements, with mean values of 3.32 and 3.29, respectively. In terms of connections, access to trails is most important with a mean value of 4.14. Good sidewalks (4.63) are the most important element to walkers, followed by well-kept surroundings. (4.00). Other significant factors include lighting (3.86), stop signs/traffic control (3.69), and seasonal beauty (3.33).

Desired Bike Route Features

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the most important, survey participants ranked the characteristics and features that made their biking experience better. These features are categorized as either "connections" or "conditions and elements." Among Fairfax participants, connections are of slightly more importance than conditions/elements, with mean values of 3.55 and 3.54, respectively.



In terms of connections, access to trails is most important with a mean value of 4.46. Lighting is the most important element to cyclists, with a mean value of 4.10. Well-kept surroundings (4.08), other factors such as keeping vehicular and bike traffic separated and access to bike paths (4.00), and stop signs/traffic control (3.85) are also important features.

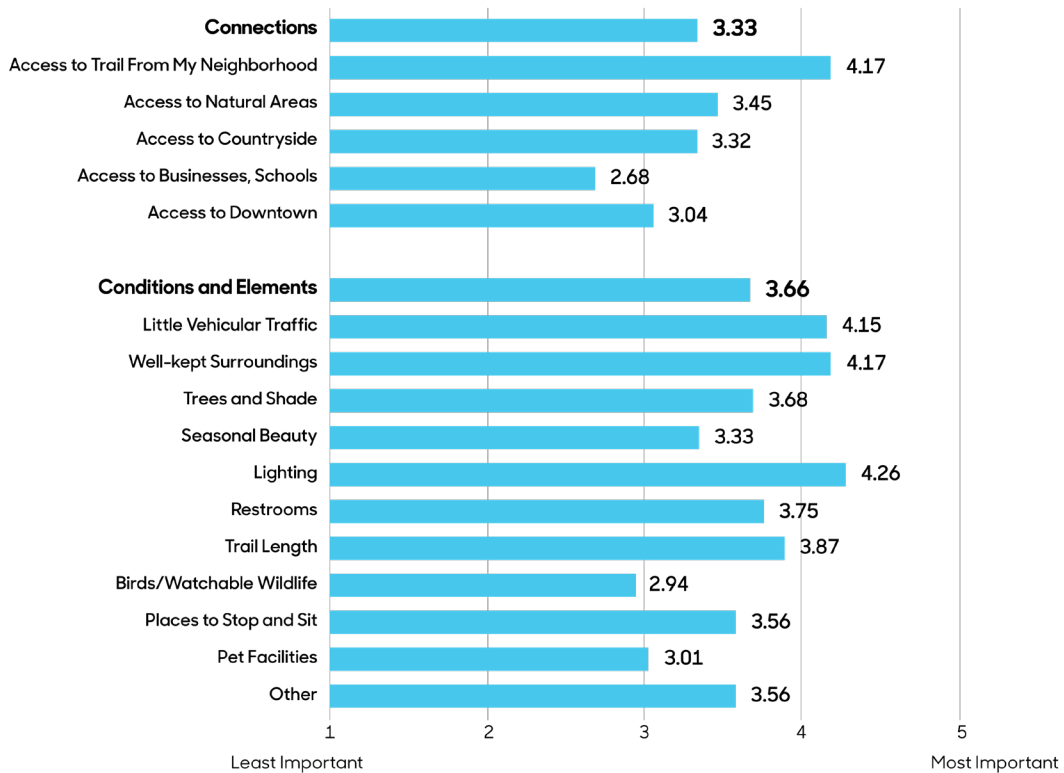


Desired Trail Features

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the most important, survey participants ranked the characteristics and features that made their trail experience better. Like the bike route features, they are categorized as either “connections” or “conditions and elements.”



Conditions and elements are somewhat more important to Fairfax trail users than conditions/elements, with mean values of 3.66 and 3.33, respectively. In terms of connections, access to the trail from their neighborhoods is considered most important, with a mean value of 4.17. In terms of conditions/elements, lighting (4.26) is the most important element, followed by well-kept surroundings (4.17), and little vehicular traffic (4.15).



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