



Iowa's Living Roadways

**community
VISIONING**

designing livable communities, 2020

adult random-sample survey &

high school student study

Reinbeck, 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 Reinbeck residents. To supplement the data collected from adult residents, program staff also conducted focus groups and a survey at Gladbrook-Reinbeck Community Jr/Sr High School.

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 We Did

RANDOM-SAMPLE SURVEY OF ADULTS

Surveys were mailed to 300 randomly selected residents living in Reinbeck 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 283. A total of 127 people returned surveys, for a response rate of 44.9%. (A response rate of 20% is considered valid.)

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 Reinbeck. The results of the survey are summarized as follows:

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

HIGH SCHOOL STUDY

ISU design interns held focus groups with five 9th graders and four upperclassmen to understand the factors and conditions that affect transportation use among these unique users. The high school focus groups employed small-group conversations, mapping, and photos of the best and worst to understand local transportation.

The survey addressed high school students' experiences and needs as drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists. The questionnaire was similar to that used in the random-sample survey mailed to adult Reinbeck-area residents. Respondents were asked to identify routes to school, walking routes, and biking routes. In addition, we asked what qualities and features are important to youth when they engage in these activities. Survey respondents

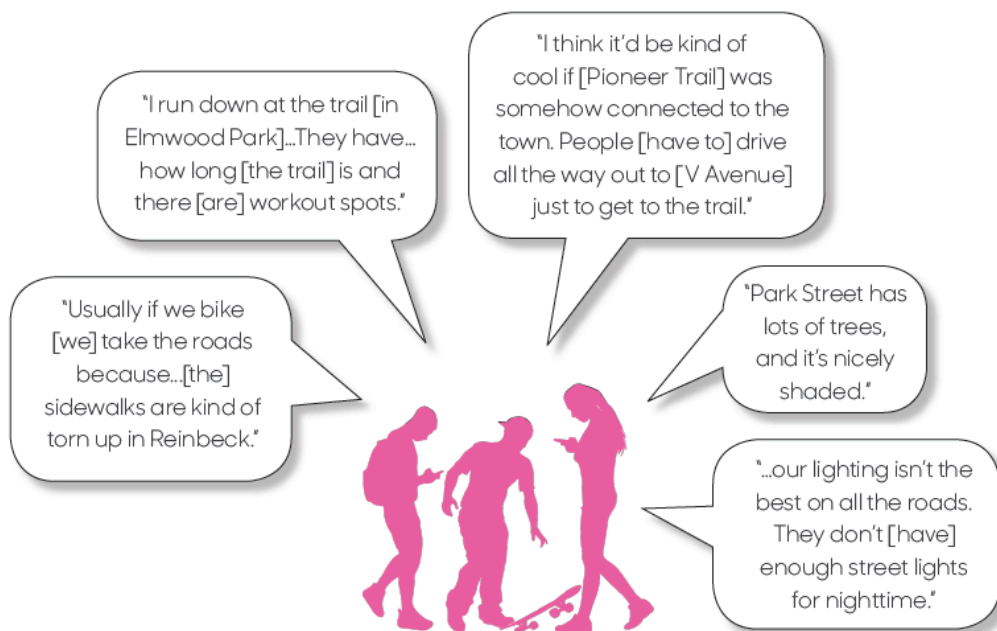
were self-selected; 11 students completed the questionnaire. The results of the high school study are presented as follows:

- Focus groups: what they said
- How students travel and why they go that way
- Priorities and desired features
- Biking routes

Routes to school and walking routes are combined with the commuting and walking routes identified by adult respondents.

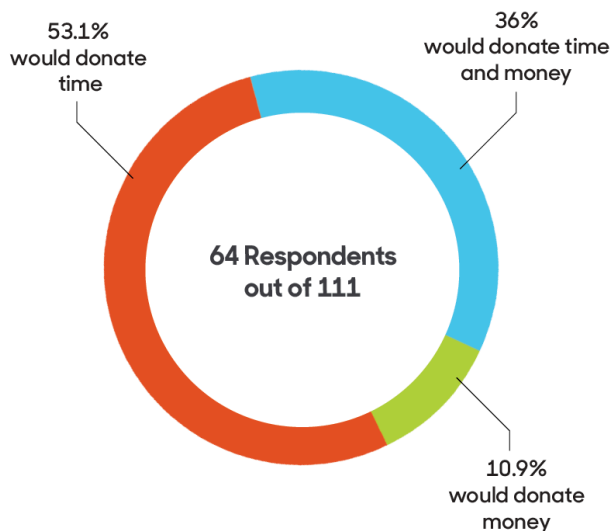
High School Focus Groups: What They Said

High school focus-group participants drive, walk, and bike to local destinations in town. Their concerns include the conditions of the sidewalks, rough streets, lighting, and flooding. They also said that ice and snow on the roads during the winter make driving challenging. Students value the trail in Elmwood Park, but noted that it is not shaded. Participants like the Pioneer Trail, but would like to see it connected to town. They would also like a trail loop around town and more opportunities for activities for their age group.



ARE PEOPLE WILLING TO HELP?

More than 57% said YES!



Willingness to implement change

Most survey participants who answered this question are willing to contribute their time to community improvements (53.1%), while 36% would contribute their time and talent. More than 10% of respondents indicated that they would be willing to contribute financially.

Compared to other small towns in Iowa, Reinbeck 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 Reinbeck exceeds this average by 14.7%.

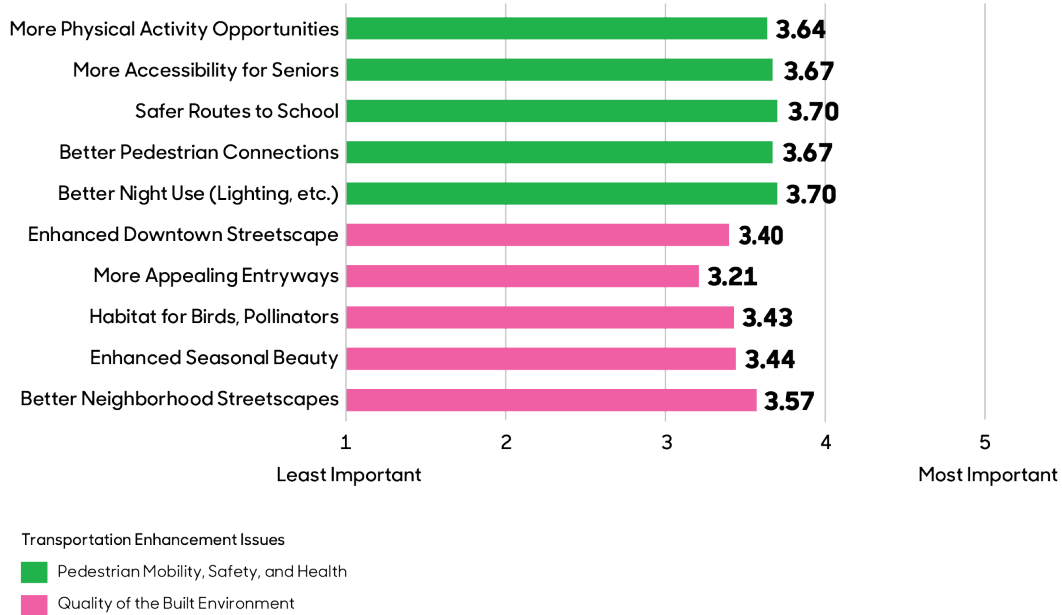
How Do You Get People to Help?

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).

IMPORTANT ENHANCEMENTS AMONG ADULTS

Mobility, Safety, and Health!

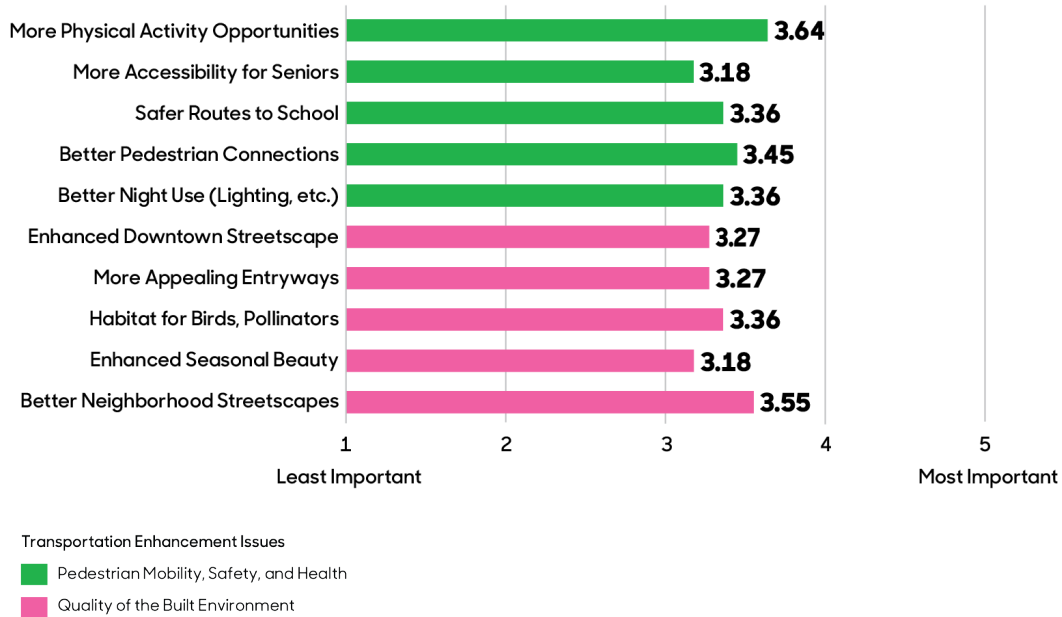


Importance of transportation enhancement by type (113 responses)

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the most important, participants in Reinbeck ranked creating safer routes to school and providing better night use as most important, both with a mean value of 3.70. Other types of transportation enhancements that address pedestrian mobility, health, and safety are also considered important, such as providing better pedestrian connections (3.67) and creating more accessibility for seniors (3.67). In terms of quality of the built environment, survey respondents consider better neighborhood streetscapes as most important (3.57), followed by enhanced seasonal beauty (3.44) and habitat for birds and pollinators (3.43).

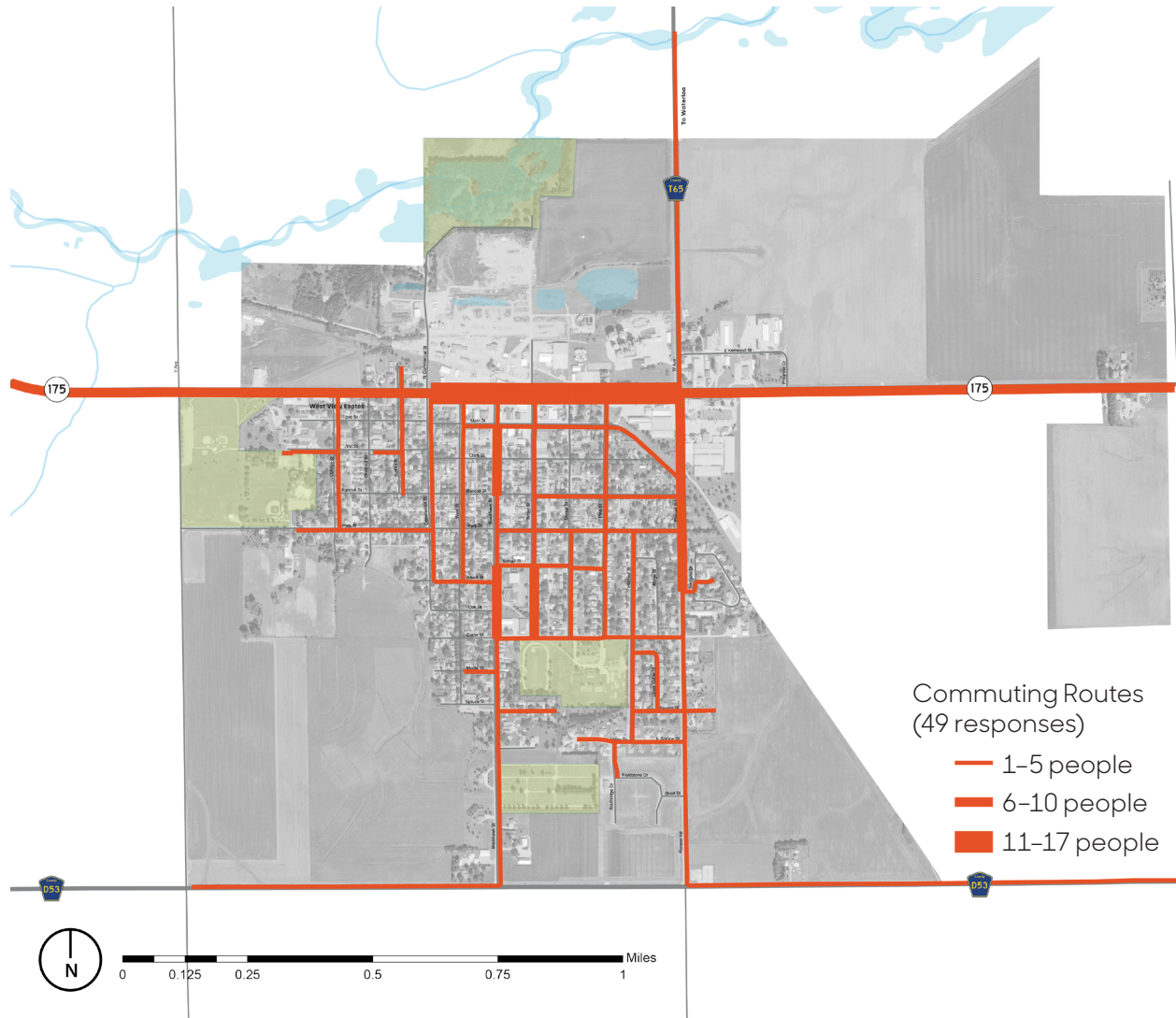
IMPORTANT ENHANCEMENTS AMONG STUDENTS

Mobility, Safety, and Health!



Importance of transportation enhancement by type (11 responses)

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the most important, high school survey participants ranked providing more opportunities for physical activities as most important, with a mean value of 3.64. Other types of transportation enhancements that address pedestrian mobility, health, and safety are also considered important, such as creating better pedestrian connections (3.45) and providing safer routes to school and better lighting for night use (3.36). In terms of quality of the built environment, survey respondents consider better neighborhood streetscapes as most important (3.55). These results are similar to those of adult survey respondents and consistent with themes that emerged during the focus groups.



Routes to Work and School

This map shows the commuting routes identified by 49 survey respondents, 11 of whom were self-selected high school students who identified the routes they take to school. 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 Reinbeck is Highway 175 east-west. The main north-south route is Pioneer Road, particularly from Highway 175 south to Eastgate Drive. Sections of Blackhawk and Broad Streets are also frequently used by commuters.

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.

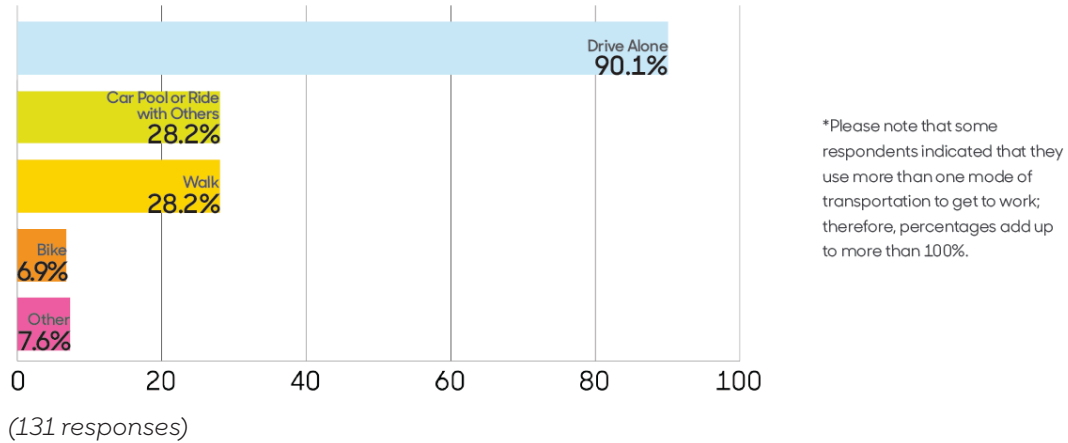
"[I feel safe going to and from school] because if I walk the way I go is safe. If I get a ride I know and feel safe with the people I'm with."



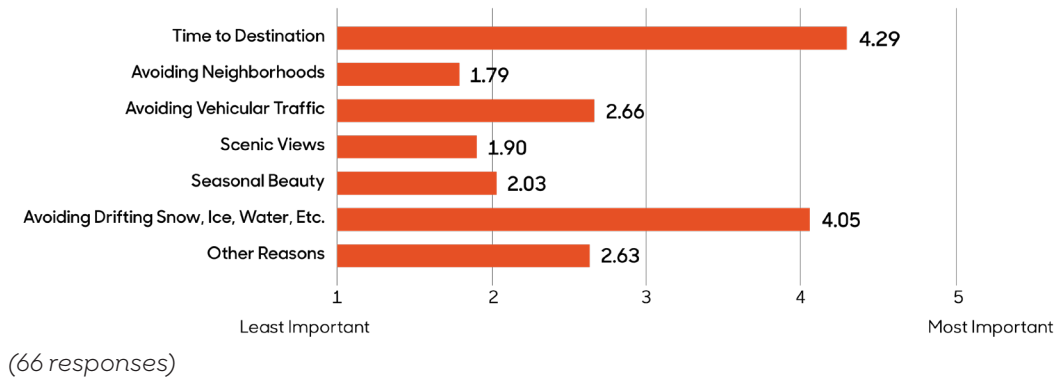
"We need more sidewalks for our students to get safely to and from school. For many of my students they must walk on the streets to get home. [The] main problem road would be Pioneer."

How Adults Travel

Most survey respondents drive to important destinations such as the convenience store, the post office, school, and church (90.1%). More than 28% car pool, ride with someone else, or walk. Nearly 7% of participants indicated that they bike to destinations and 7.6% drive golf carts.



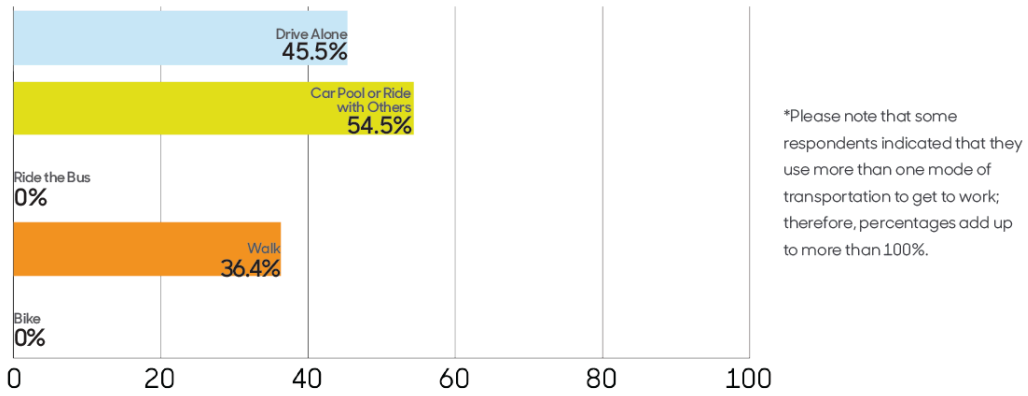
Why They Go That Way



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 Reinbeck participants, time to destinations is the most important factor, with a mean value of 4.29. Avoiding weather-related issues such as snow and ice (4.05) is the second most important factor determining commuting routes. Scenic views, seasonal beauty, avoiding vehicular traffic, and avoiding neighborhoods are not critical factors in determining commuting routes.

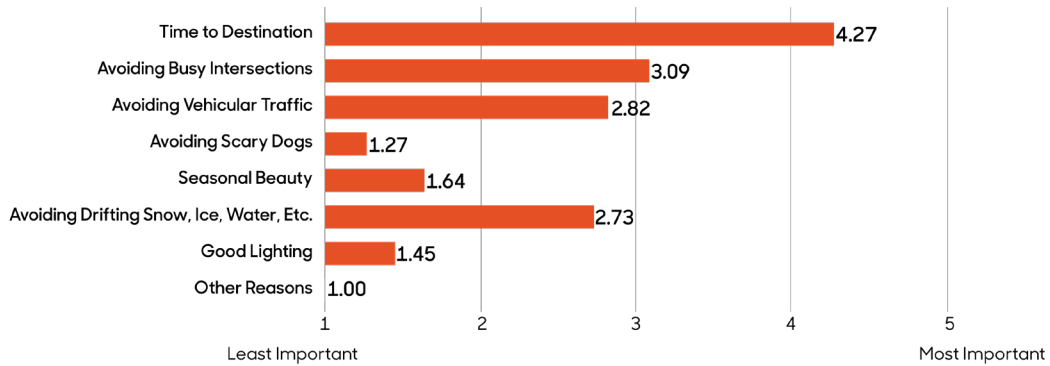
How Students Travel

Most high school survey participants car pool or ride with others to local destinations (54.5%). More than 45% drive alone and 36.4% walk to get around town. None of the high school survey respondents ride the bus or bike.



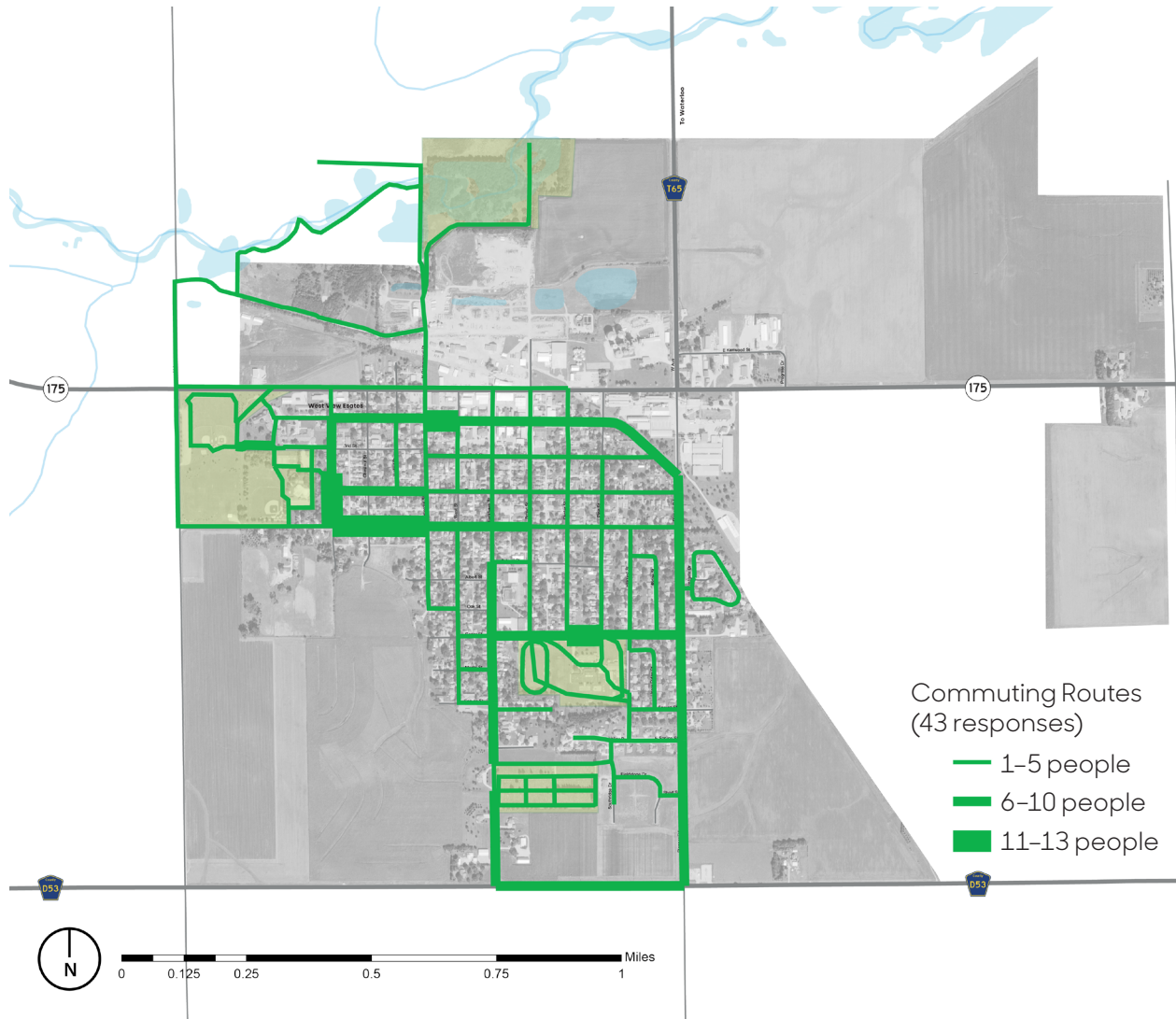
(11 responses)

Why They Go That Way



(11 responses)

High school survey respondents were asked to draw the routes that they take to school on a map. These routes are included with the commuting routes identified by Reinbeck residents. They were also asked to rank characteristics and features that factored into their choice of route to school on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the most important. Among high school survey participants, time to destination is the most important factor, with a mean value of 4.27. Avoiding busy intersections (3.09) is somewhat important in determining routes to school. Avoiding vehicular traffic, avoiding weather-related issues such as snow and ice, avoiding scary dogs, seasonal beauty, and good lighting are not considered important.



Map Source: Iowa Department of Natural Resources, "Natural Resources Geographic Information Systems Library," <http://www.igsb.uiowa.edu/nrgislibx/>.

Where People Walk

This map shows the walking routes identified by 43 survey respondents, five of whom were self-selected high school students. 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 the streets of Reinbeck, with the most frequently walked streets in town being College Street, Park Street, Cedar Street by the school, Main Street, and Pioneer Road. In addition, some people walk the trails in Elmwood Park, some walk in the cemetery, and some use the school track.



"I prefer walking in nature, but walking in town between businesses needs good sidewalks [and curb ramps]."

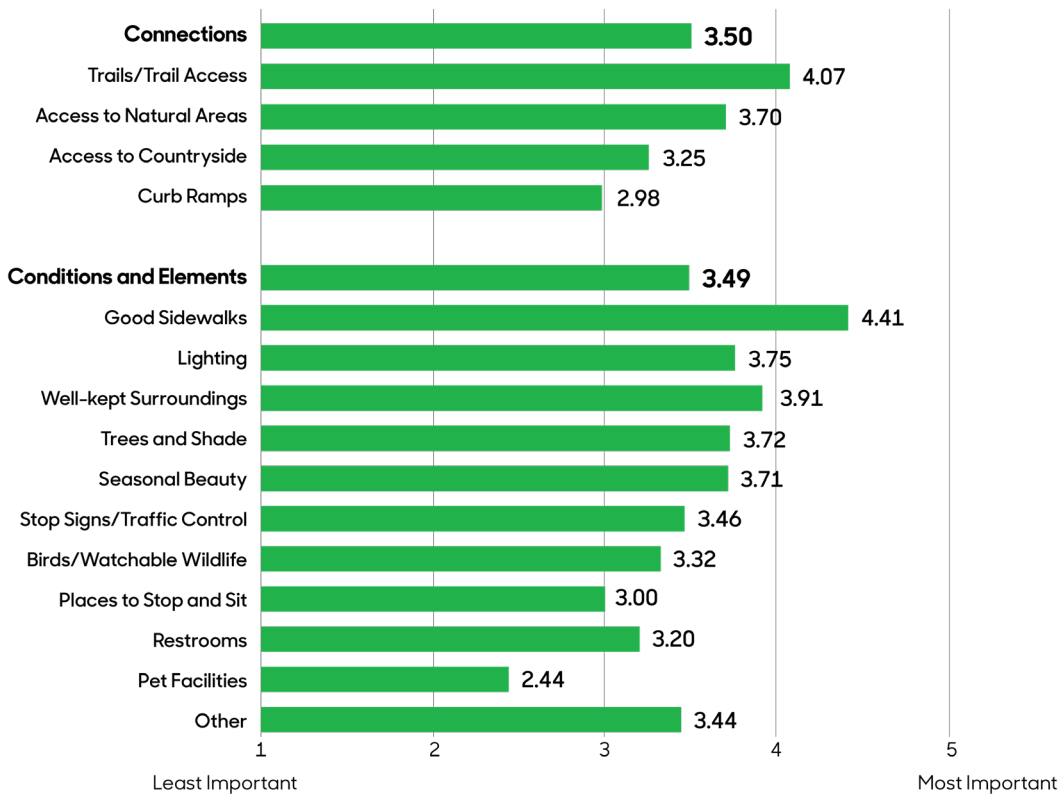
"[The Pioneer Trail] is kept fairly well, but it sometimes has obstacles (sticks, rocks, walnuts)."



Adults' Desired Walking 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 walking experience better. These features are categorized as either "connections" or "conditions and elements." Among Reinbeck participants, conditions and elements are of slightly more important than connections, with mean values of 3.17 and 3.01, respectively. In terms of connections, access to trails is most important with a mean value of 3.77. Good sidewalks (4.36) are the most important element to walkers, followed by well-kept surroundings (3.88). Other significant factors include lighting (3.84), trees and shade (3.55) and seasonal beauty (3.51).

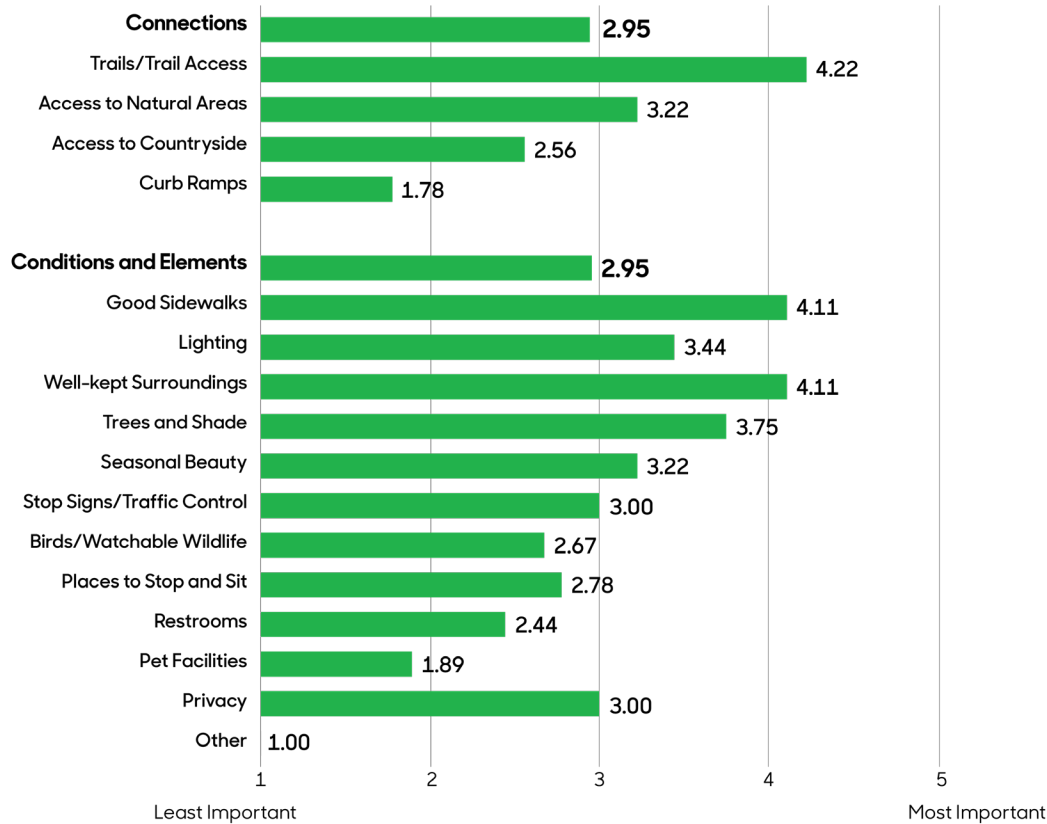


(78 responses)

Students' Desired Walking Route Features

High school survey respondents were asked to draw the routes that they take when walking on a map. These routes are included with the walking routes identified by Reinbeck residents. They were also asked to rank characteristics and features that factored into their choice of walking routes on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the most important. These features are categorized as either "connections" or "conditions and elements." Among participants, connections and conditions/elements nearly equal in importance, with mean values of 2.42 and 2.40, respectively. In terms of connections, access to trails has the highest mean value at 2.83. Good sidewalks (3.83) are the most important elements to walkers. Other conditions and elements are not considered important to high school students.

Students' responses are similar to those of adult survey respondents in that both user types consider good sidewalks as the most important element for walking and that trail access is the most important connection. Adults' responses differ in that they assign more importance to conditions/elements than to connections. In general, adults tend to assign higher importance to all features than high-school students do.



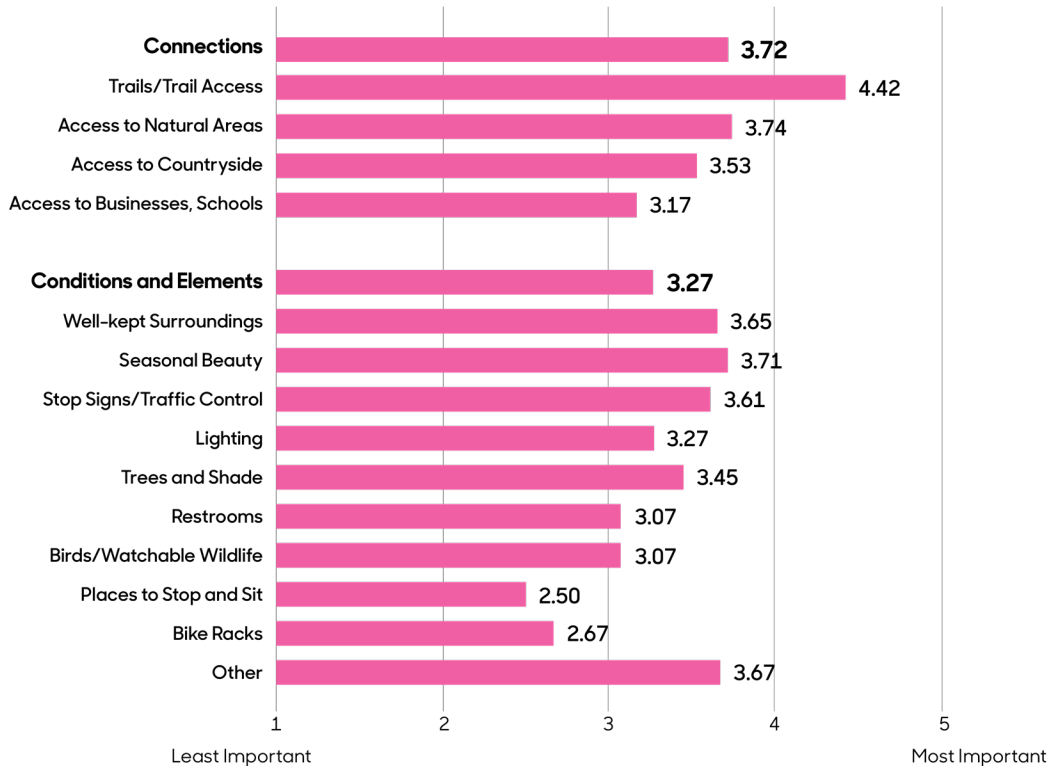
(6 responses)

Adults' Desired Bike Route Features

Bike routes consist of roads, sidewalks, off-street trails, or anywhere one can ride a bike. 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."



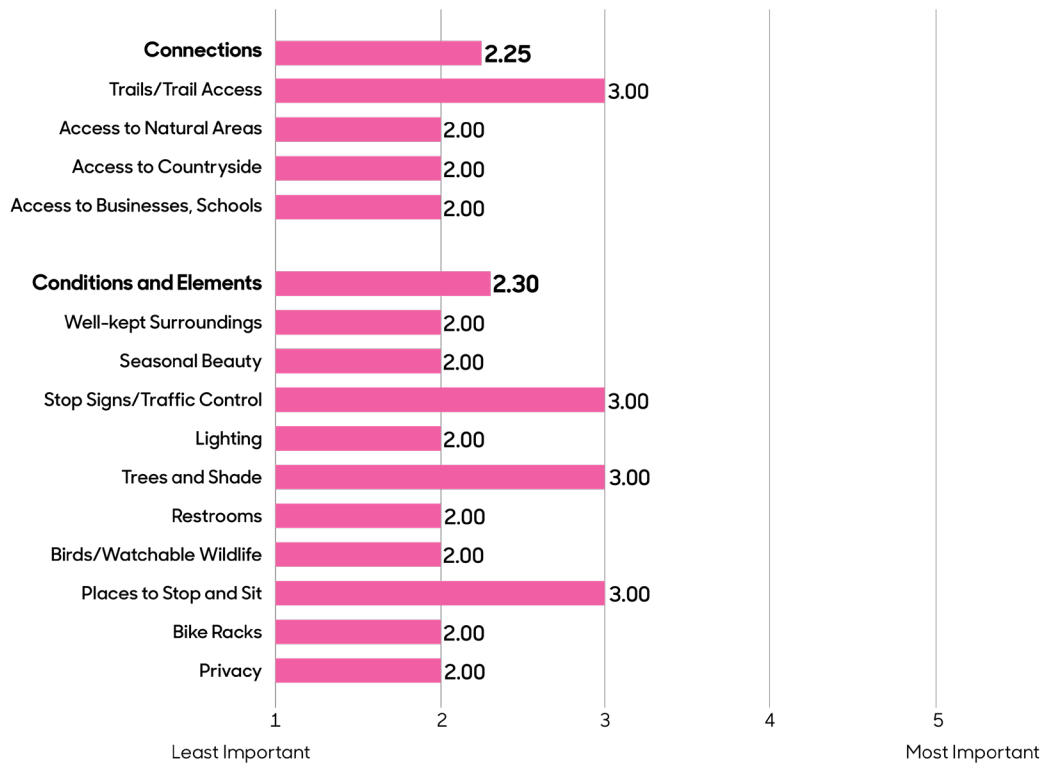
Among Reinbeck participants, connections are of more important than conditions/elements, with mean values of 3.72 and 3.27, respectively. In terms of connections, access to trails is most important with a mean value of 4.42. Seasonal beauty (3.71) is the most important element to cyclists, followed by other features (3.67), such as sidewalks and off-street trails with smooth surfaces. Well-kept surroundings (3.65) are also valued by trail users. Places to stop and sit and bike racks are less important elements.



(31 responses)

Students' 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 trail experience better. These features are categorized as either "connections" or "conditions and elements." Among participants, neither connections nor conditions/elements are considered important in determining bike routes, with mean values of 2.25 and 2.30, respectively. In terms of connections, access to trails scored highest at 3.00. Stop signs/traffic control, trees and shade, and places to stop and sit scored highest, all with a mean value of 3.00. In contrast with adult survey participants' responses, the high school students assign less importance to connections and conditions/elements in general.



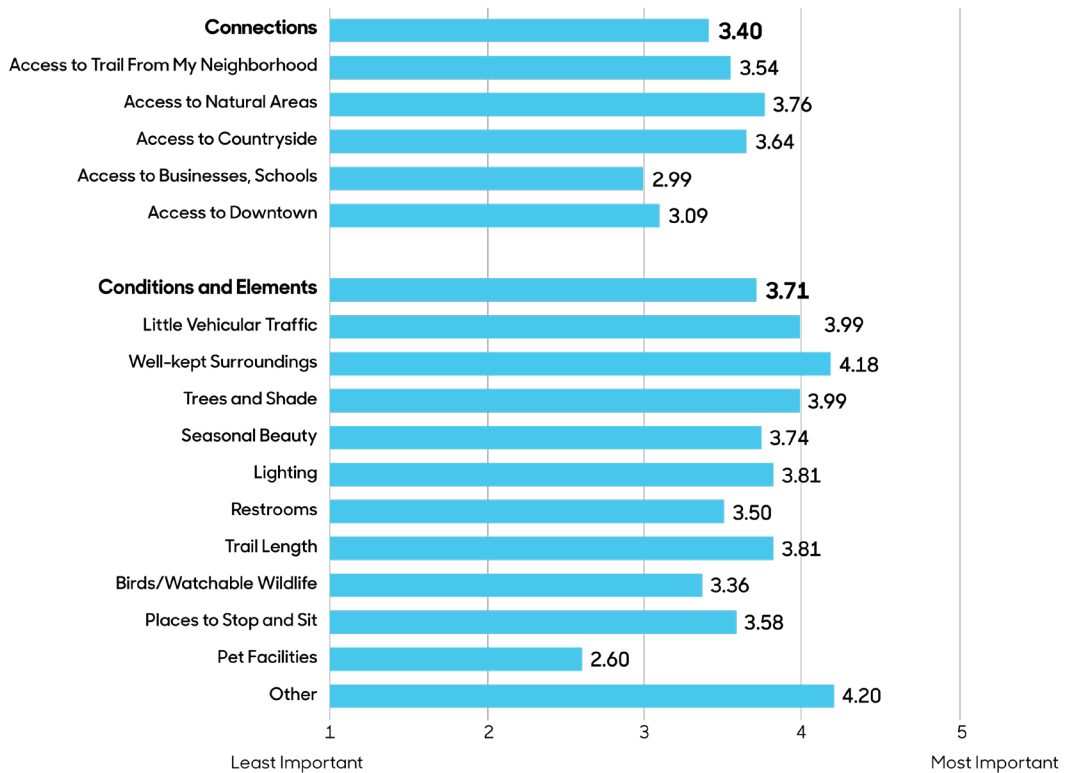
(1 response)

Desired Trail Features

Trails are off-street paths that are paved or unpaved and can be used by pedestrians and cyclists. 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/elements are more important to Reinbeck trail users than connections, with mean values of 3.71 and 3.40, respectively. In terms of conditions/elements, other features (4.20) such as safety, smooth surfaces, and connections to other communities, are most important. Well-kept surroundings (4.18) is also valued. In terms of connections, access to natural areas is considered most important, with a mean value of 3.76.

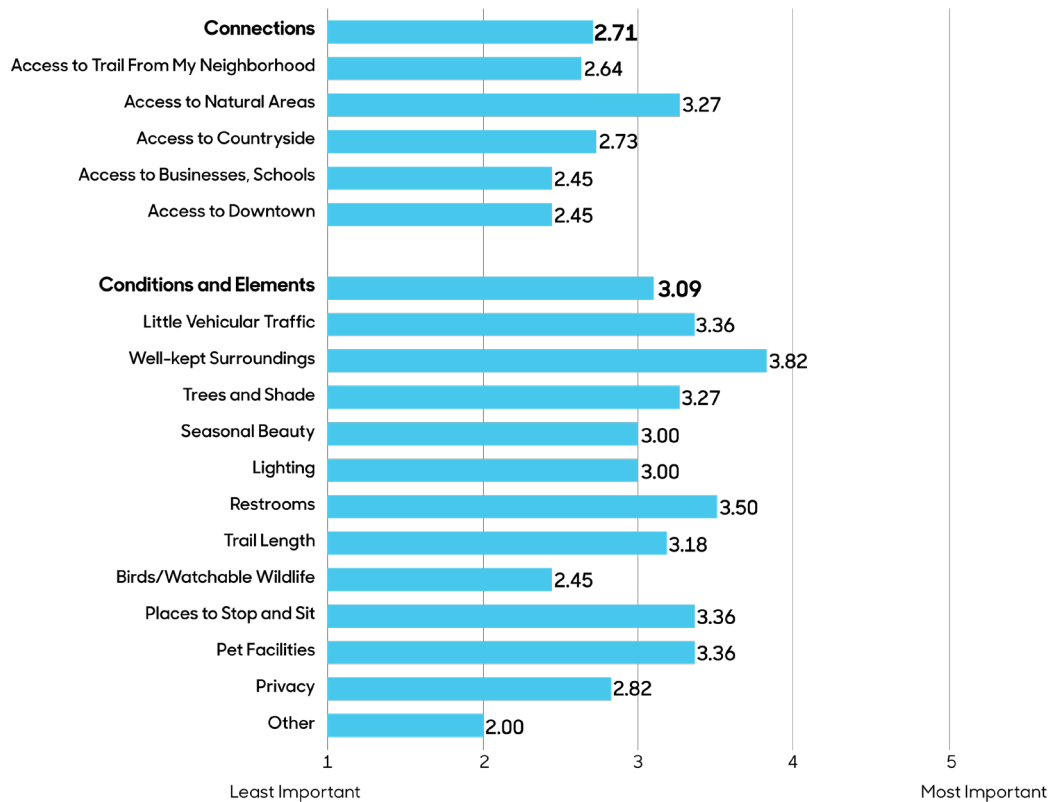


(108 responses)

Students' 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 walking and biking route features, they are categorized as either "connections" or "conditions and elements." Conditions/elements are more important than connections, with mean values of 3.09 and 2.71, respectively. In terms of connections, access to natural areas is considered most important, with a mean value of 3.27. In terms of conditions/elements, well-kept surroundings (3.82) is the most important element, followed by restrooms (3.50).

Like adult survey respondents, students consider conditions/elements more important than connections in terms of trail features. Both groups also assign importance to Well-kept surroundings and access to natural areas. However, adults consider other features such as safety, smooth surfaces, and connections to other trails as most important.



11 responses)

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