



Iowa's Living Roadways

**community
visioning**

designing livable communities, 2023

Slater, Iowa





"[We need to] provide safe crosswalks for people/children to cross the busy highway that runs through town."



"The sidewalks in town are hard on those of us with young kids. They are not conducive to strollers or kid's bikes and scooters."

"When we walk in town, there are fewer sidewalks on the south side. The only good access between the north and south sides of town is the sidewalk on Linn. Marshall needs a sidewalk on one or both sides."



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 Survey Research Services staff in the Center for Survey Statistics and Methodology (CSSM-SRS), ISU visioning program staff conducted a survey to better understand the transportation patterns, behaviors, needs, and desires of Slater residents. Surveys were mailed to 250 randomly selected residents living in Slater 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 228. A total of 85 people returned surveys, for a response rate of 37.3%. (A response rate of 20% is considered valid.)

Why Do A Survey?

The survey provides the visioning steering committee with 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.

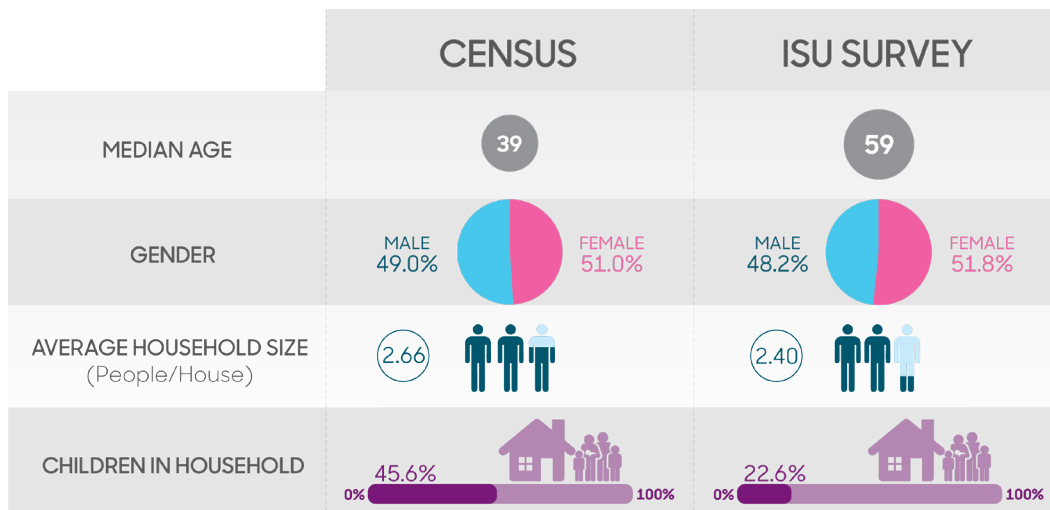
What Did We Find Out?

We asked survey recipients what routes they use most often for going to work, walking, and biking. In addition, we asked what qualities and features are important to trail users. 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 Slater. This series of boards summarizes the results of the survey as follows:

- Willingness to Help
- Enhancement Priorities
- Commuting Routes
- Walking Routes
- Biking Routes
- Desired Trail Features

How Did We Do?

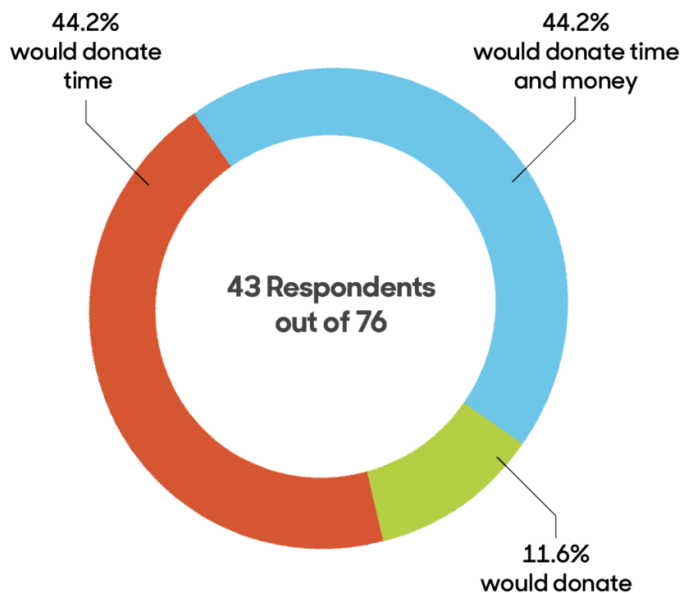
The demographics of the respondents are somewhat different from those obtained from the 2021 American Community Survey (ACS). For example, the survey respondents median age of 59 is significantly older than the 2021 estimated average age for Slater residents of 39. In terms of gender, the percentages of male and female survey respondents are similar to that of the ACS. Average household size among survey respondents is somewhat lower than the ACS estimates, and the number of children in the households of survey responses is much lower.



Source: US Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey.

ARE PEOPLE WILLING TO HELP?

Nearly 60% said YES!



Willingness to implement change

Nearly 45% of survey participants who answered "Yes" to this question are willing to contribute their time to community improvements (44.2%); the same percentage responded that they would help financially and contribute their time. More than 11% of respondents indicated that they would be willing to contribute financially.

Compared to other small towns in Iowa, Slater 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 At 57%, Slater exceeds this average by more than 10%.

How Do You Get People to Help?

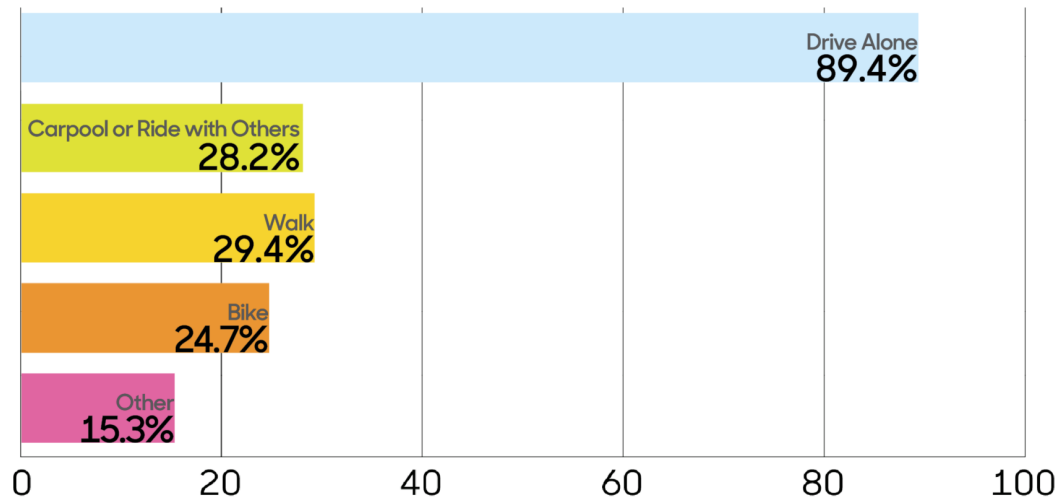
In 2014, the most common reason residents in small-town Iowa said they didn't become involved in community projects is that no one asked them (34%). Twenty-eight percent on average said that they don't have time, which is significantly lower than the 2004 average of 59%. Sixteen percent indicated that 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).

How Do Slater Residents Travel?

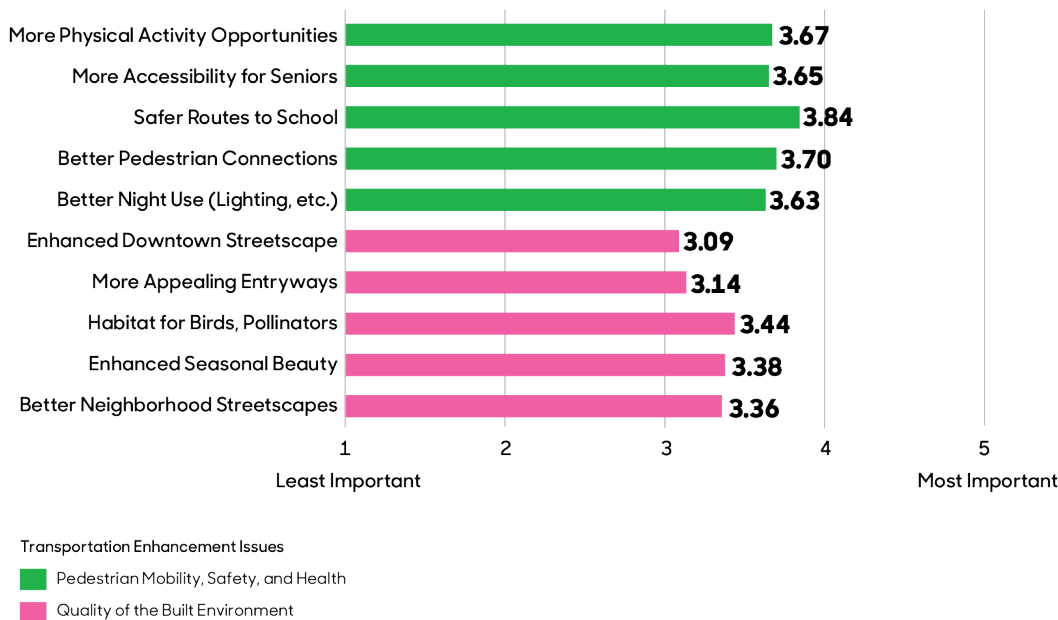
Most survey respondents drive to important destinations such as the convenience store, the post office, school, and church (89.4%). More than 28% carpool or ride with someone else. Nearly 30% of respondents indicated that they walk (29.4%) and nearly 25% bike, but the primary mode of transportation in Slater is by vehicle.

Please note that some respondents indicated that they use more than one mode of transportation to get to work; therefore, percentages add up to more than 100%.



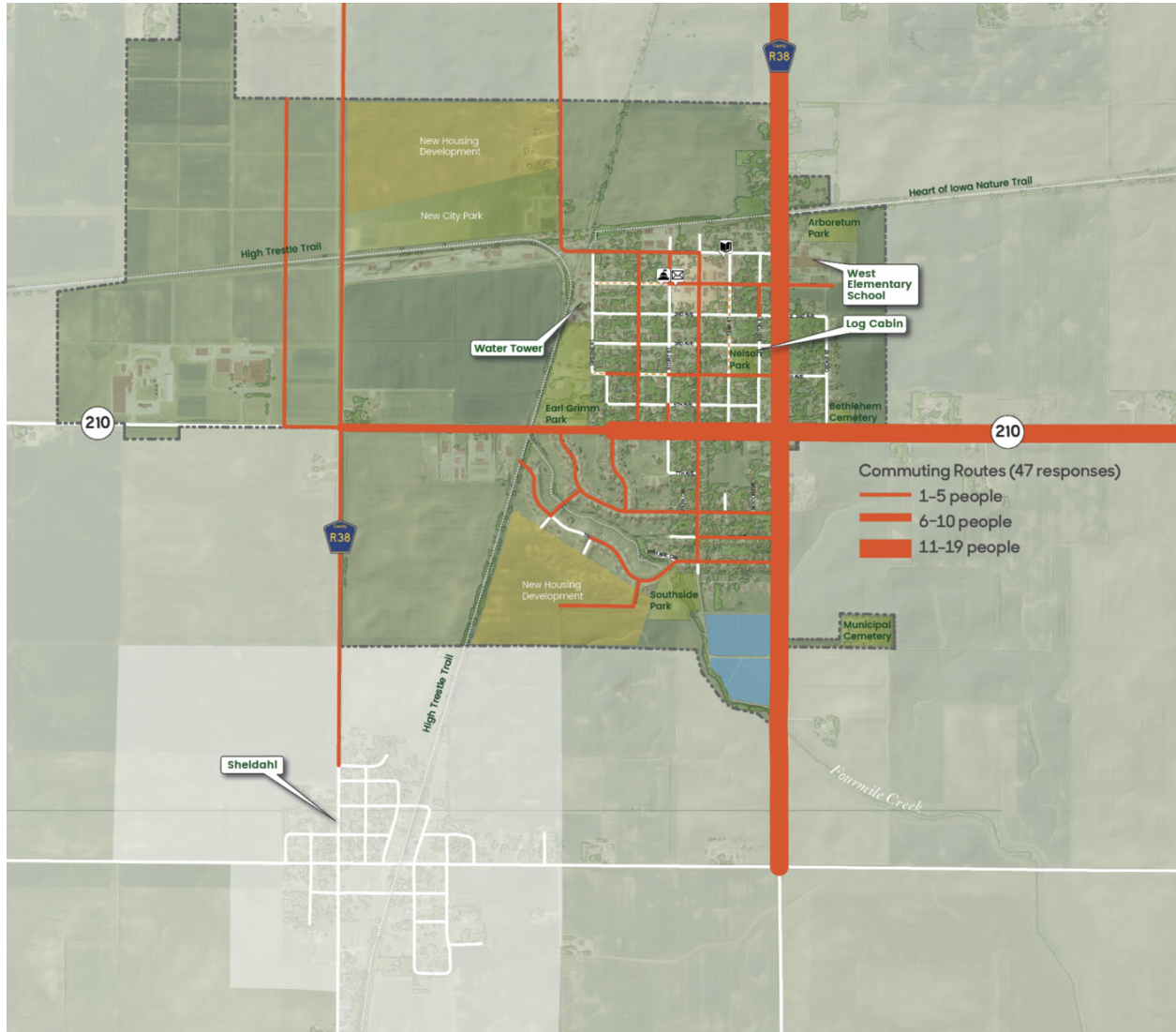
WHAT TYPES OF ENHANCEMENTS ARE IMPORTANT?

Mobility, Safety, and Health!



Importance of transportation enhancement by type (75 responses)

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the most important, participants in Slater ranked creating safer routes to school as most important, with a mean value of 3.84. Other types of transportation enhancements that address pedestrian mobility, health, and safety are also considered important, such as creating better pedestrian connections (3.70), providing more opportunities for physical activity (3.67), and improving accessibility for seniors (3.65). In terms of quality of the built environment, survey respondents consider creating habitat for birds and pollinators as most important (3.44), followed by enhancing seasonal beauty (3.38) and improving neighborhood streetscapes (3.36). These findings are consistent with the views expressed by focus group participants during the Transportation Assets and Barriers workshop held in February 2023.



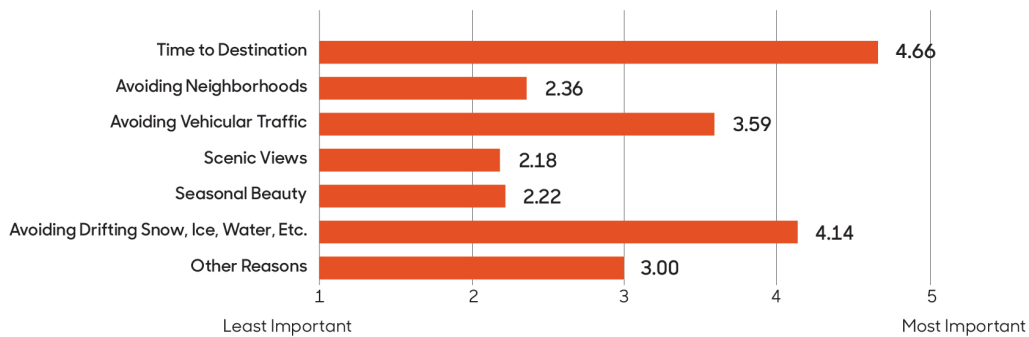
Map Source: Iowa Department of Natural Resources, "Natural Resources Geographic Information Systems Library," <http://www.igsb.uiowa.edu/nrgislib/>.

How People Get To Work

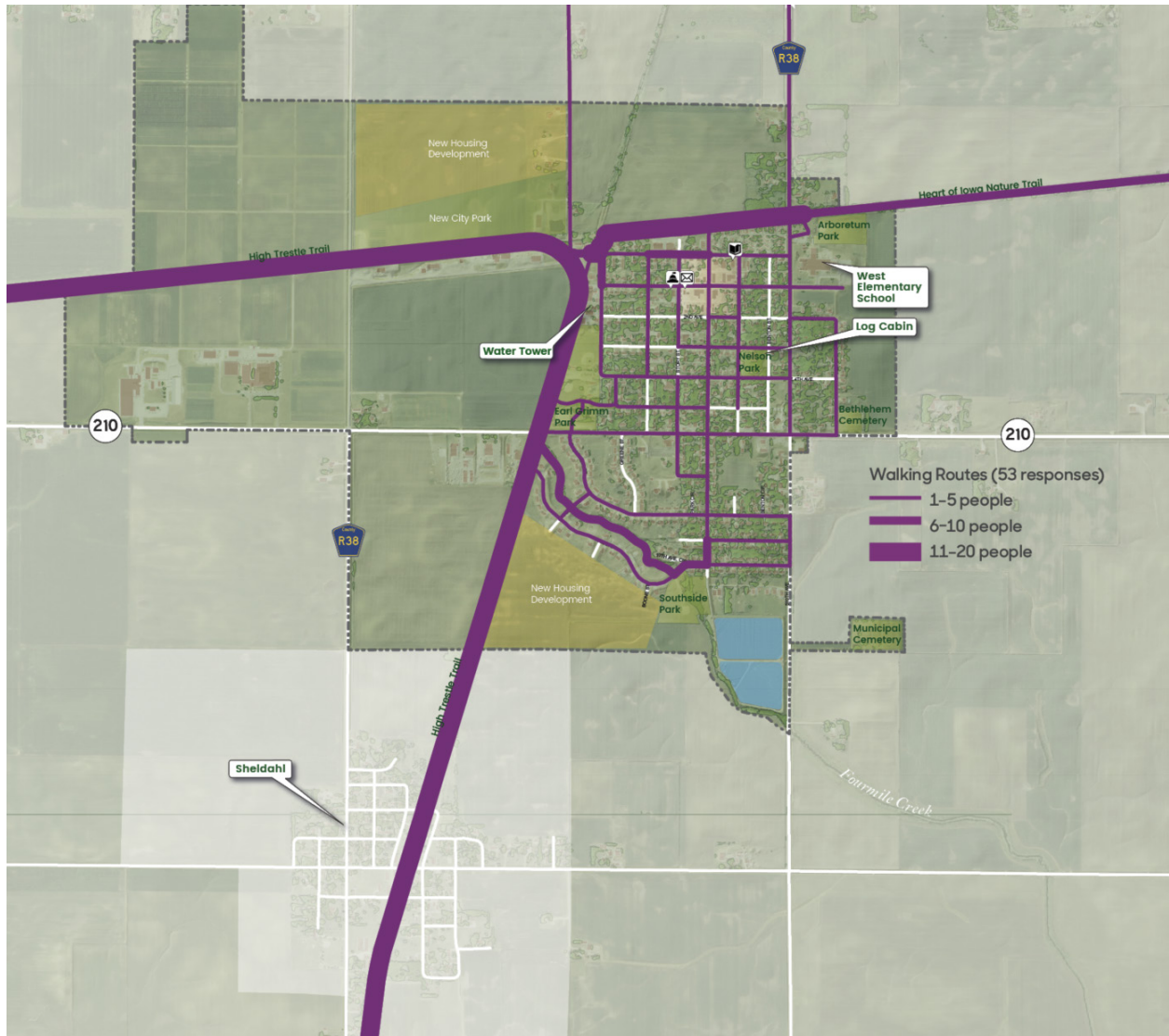
This map shows the commuting routes identified by 47 survey respondents. The frequency that the routes are used is depicted by their width, with most frequently used routes being the thickest. The primary east-west commuting corridor into and out of Slater is Highway 210 and County Road R38/510th Avenue is the major north-south route. The most heavily used corridors in town are Linn Street and 6th Avenue. Carroll Street brings people from the new development in the northwest part of town to the downtown area, while S Carroll and Marshall Streets connect those living in the development south of 6th Avenue/Highway 210. Main Street provides access to both the elementary school and downtown.

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 Slater participants, time to destination is the most important factor in determining commuting routes, with a mean value of 4.66. Avoiding weather-related issues such as snow and ice is also quite important (4.14), followed by avoiding vehicular traffic (3.59). Scenic views, seasonal beauty, and avoiding neighborhoods are not critical factors in determining commuting routes.

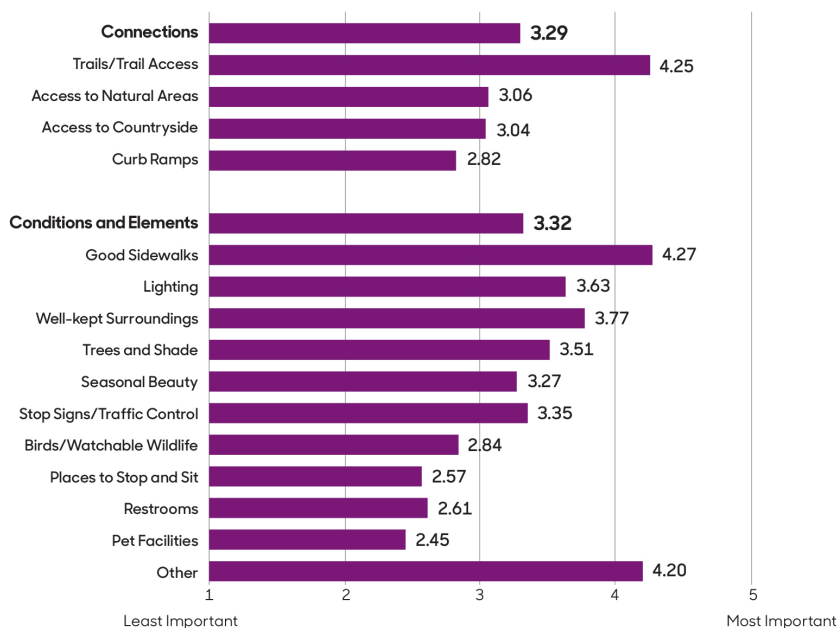


Map Source: Iowa Department of Natural Resources, "Natural Resources Geographic Information Systems Library," <http://www.igsb.uiowa.edu/nrgislib/>.

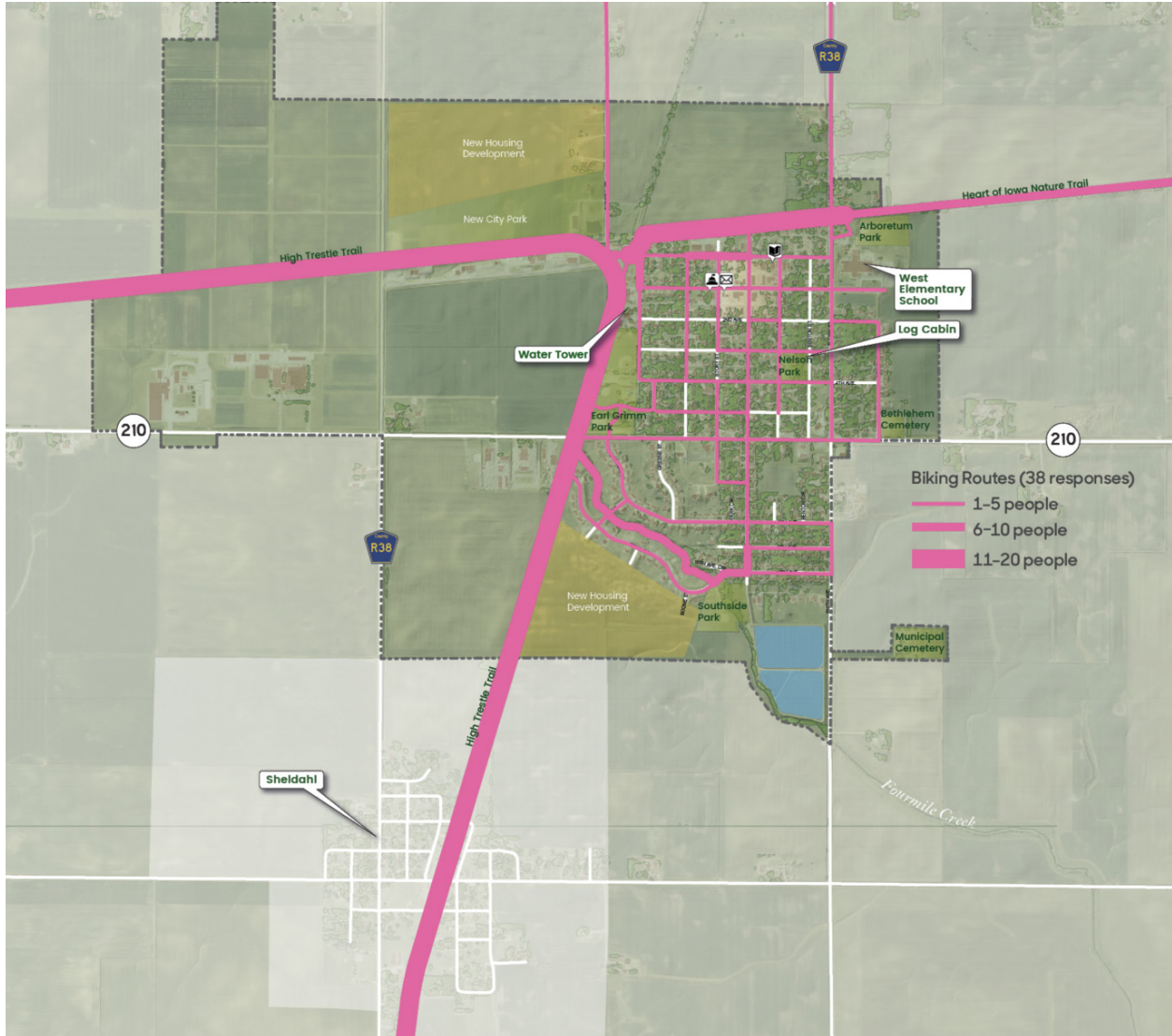
Where People Walk

This map shows the walking routes identified by 53 survey respondents. The frequency that the routes are used is depicted by their width, with most frequently used routes being the thickest. The High Trestle and Heart of Iowa Trails are the most popular walking venues among survey respondents. Sievers Trail is also commonly used for walking. People also walk along the city streets throughout town, especially along 1st Avenue in the downtown area. A few walkers take County Road R38 and Carroll Street north out of town.

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.” Slater participants consider conditions/elements slightly more important than connections, 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 4.25. Good sidewalks (4.27) are the most important condition/element to walkers, followed by other factors—including how well snow and ice or debris are cleared, the presence of pets, and absence of sidewalks (4.20). Other significant factors include well-kept surroundings (3.77), lighting (3.63), and trees and shade (3.51).

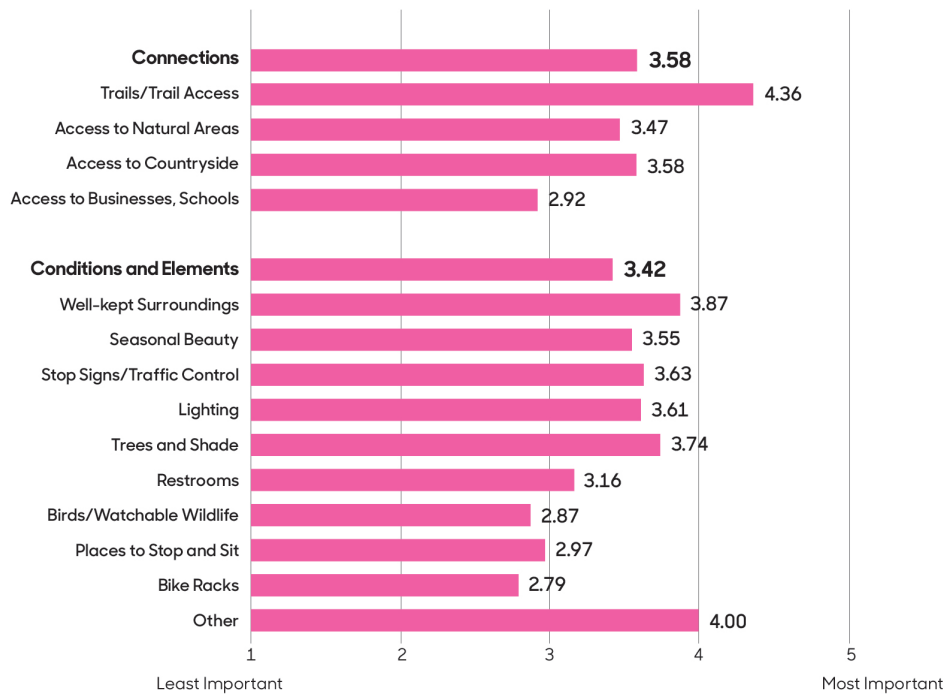


Map Source: Iowa Department of Natural Resources, "Natural Resources Geographic Information Systems Library," <http://www.igsb.uiowa.edu/nrgislib/>.

Where People Bike

This map shows the biking routes identified by 38 survey respondents. The frequency that the routes are used is depicted by their width, with most frequently used routes being the thickest. Like walkers, bikers most often use the High Trestle and Heart of Iowa Trails most frequently. Sievers Trail is also popular for cycling. Some people bike the city streets and use Carroll Street and County Road R38, which has designated bike lanes, to travel out of town.

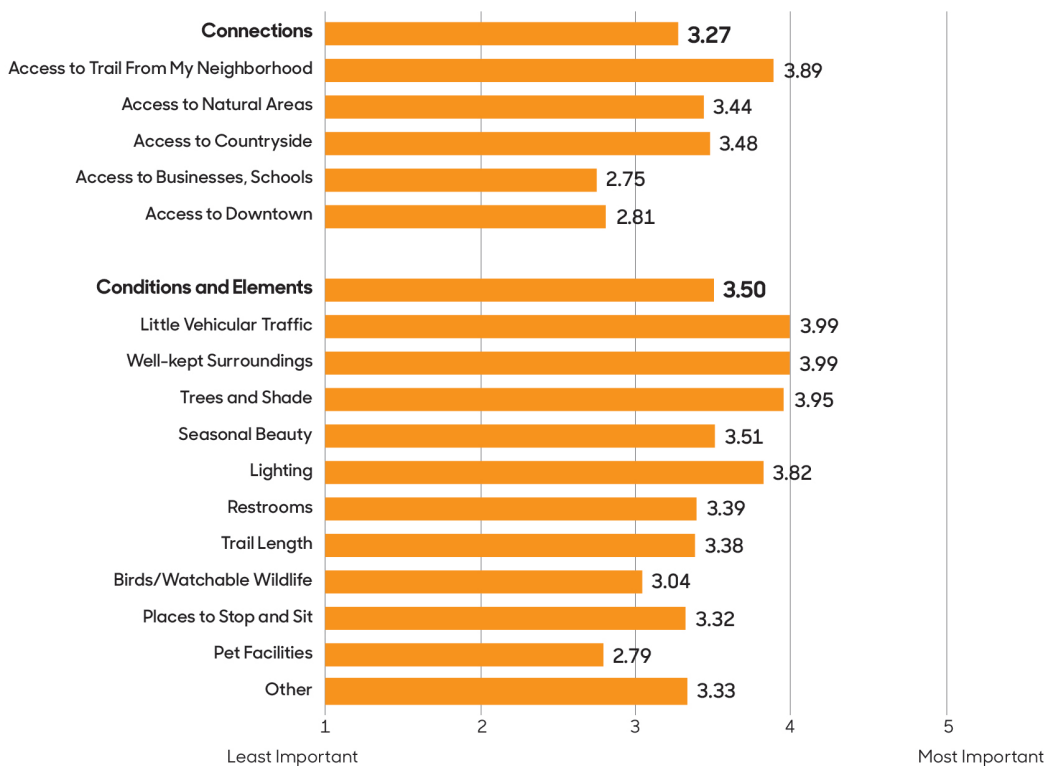
Why They Go That Way



On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the most important, survey participants ranked the characteristics and features that made their biking experience better. These features are categorized as either "connections" or "conditions and elements." Slater participants consider connections more important than conditions/elements, with mean values of 3.58 and 3.42, respectively. Access to trails is most important connection to survey respondents with a mean value of 4.36. In terms of conditions/elements, other factors such as friendly trail users are important (4.00) followed by well-kept surrounding (3.87) and trees and shade (3.74). Other significant factors include traffic control (3.63), lighting (3.61), and seasonal beauty (3.55).

Desired Trail Features

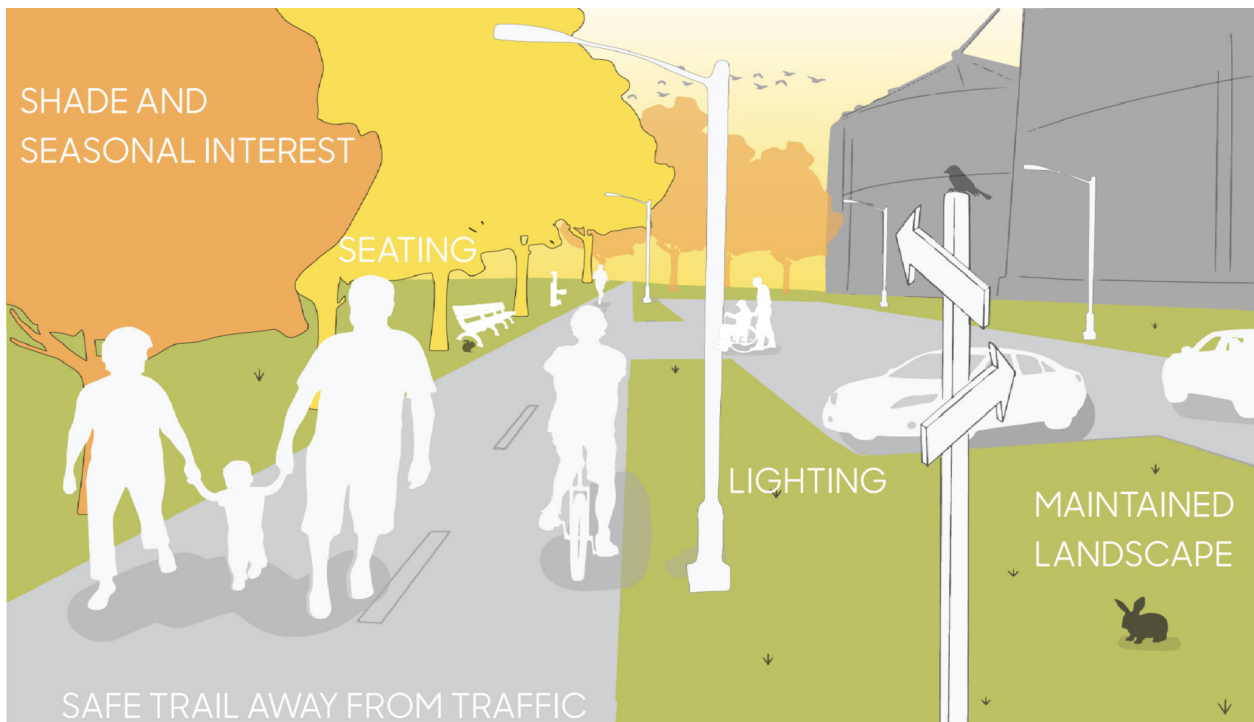
Trails are off-street paths that are paved or unpaved and can be used by pedestrians and cyclists. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the most important, survey participants ranked the characteristics and features that made their trail experience better. Like the bike route features, they are categorized as either "connections" or "conditions and elements." Conditions/elements are more important to Slater trail users than connections, with mean values of 3.50 and 3.27, respectively. Access to the trail from one's neighborhood is the most important connection among trail users, with a mean value of 3.89. In terms of conditions/elements, well-kept surroundings and little vehicular traffic (3.99 each) are most important, followed by trees and shade (3.95). Lighting (3.82), seasonal beauty (3.51), access to restrooms (3.39), and trail length (3.38) are also valued by trail users.





"Paved trails are really appreciated—[fewer] trip hazards. Maps along trails showing routes are also a plus [for people] not familiar with the area."

"I wish the counties that have the trail would jointly purchase a sidewalk street sweeper that could clean the trail and pick up debris. The same person could also mow."



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