



Iowa's Living Roadways

**community
visioning**

designing livable communities, 2023

West Burlington, Iowa





"West Burlington has nice walking areas. There are sidewalks that could be installed yet or improved—especially for kids to walk to and from school."



"[I feel safe walking] during the day, [but] lighting at night isn't very good."

"The most important aspects, to me, for improving transportation and the community are to make the community more walkable and to do so in the most environmentally conscious way possible."



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 West Burlington residents. Surveys were mailed to 400 randomly selected residents living in West Burlington 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 338. A total of 105 people returned surveys, for a response rate of 31.1%. (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.

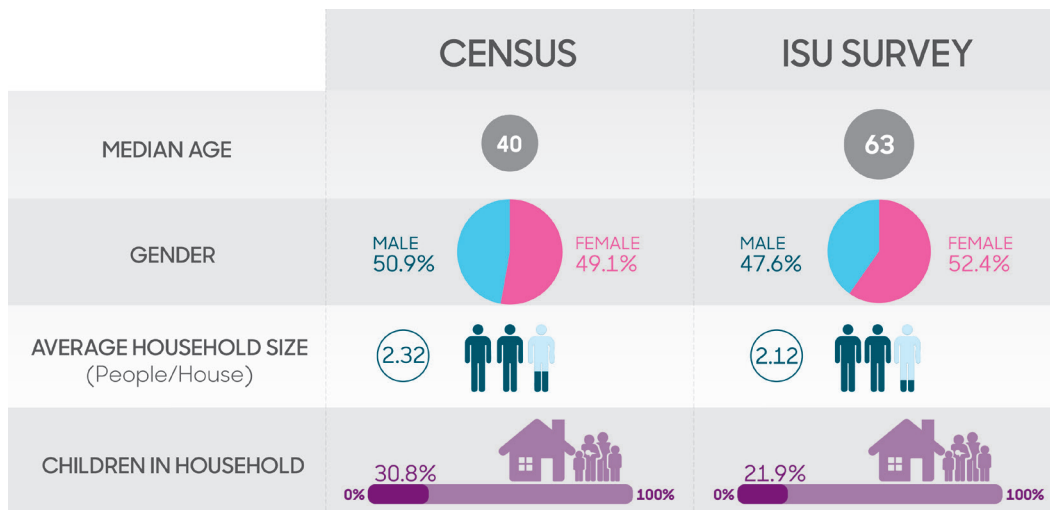
What Did We Find Out?

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 West Burlington. 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?

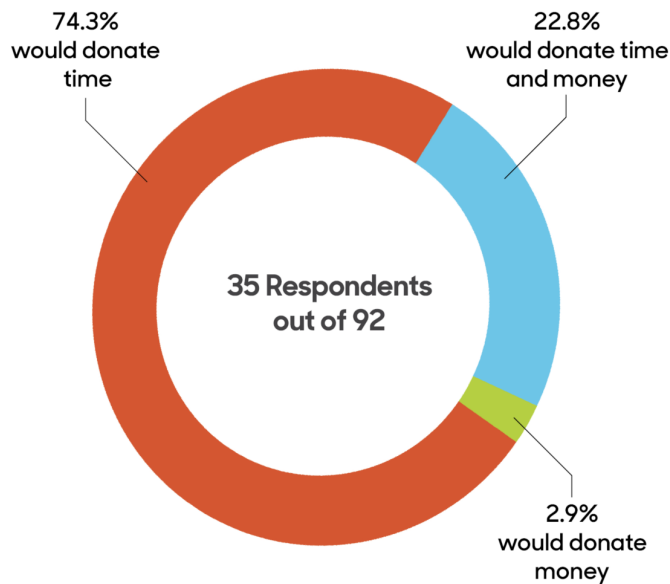
The demographics of the respondents are somewhat different from those obtained from the 2021 American Community Survey (ACS). For example, the survey respondents median age of 63 is significantly older than the ACS estimated average age for West Burlington residents of 40. In terms of gender, the percentages of male and female survey respondents are similar to ACS estimates. Average household size among survey respondents and the percentage of households with children are somewhat lower than the ACS estimate.



Source: US Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey.

ARE PEOPLE WILLING TO HELP?

38% said YES!



Willingness to implement change

Most survey participants who answered “Yes” this question are willing to contribute their time to community improvements (74.3%), while 22.8% would help financially and contribute their time. Nearly 3% of respondents indicated that they would be willing to contribute financially.

Compared to other small towns in Iowa, West Burlington residents are somewhat less 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 The percentage of West Burlington residents is 5% lower than this average.

How Do You Get People to Help?

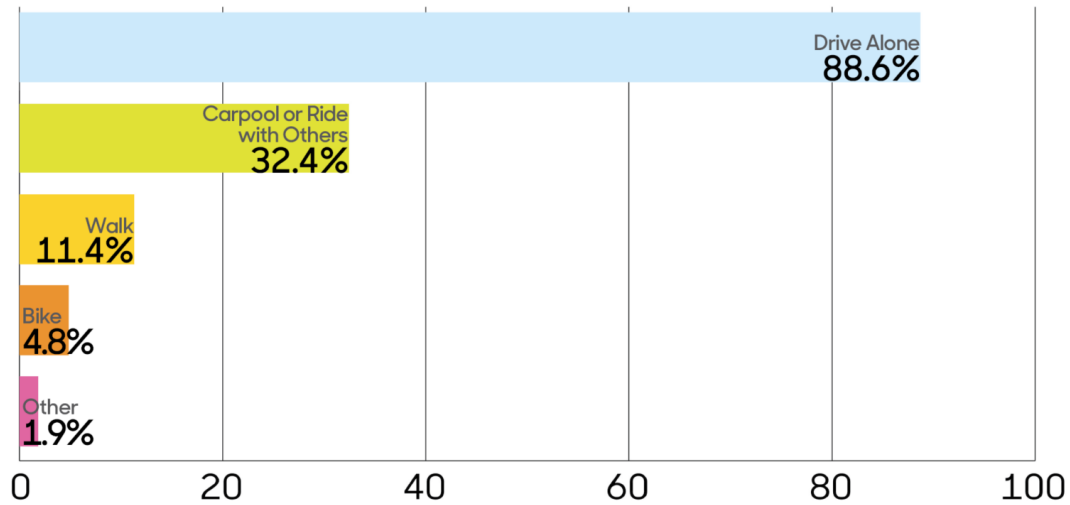
In 2014, the most common reason residents in small-town Iowa said they didn’t become involved in community projects is that no one asked them (34%). Twenty-eight percent on average said that they don’t have time, which is significantly lower than the 2004 average of 59%. Sixteen percent indicated that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

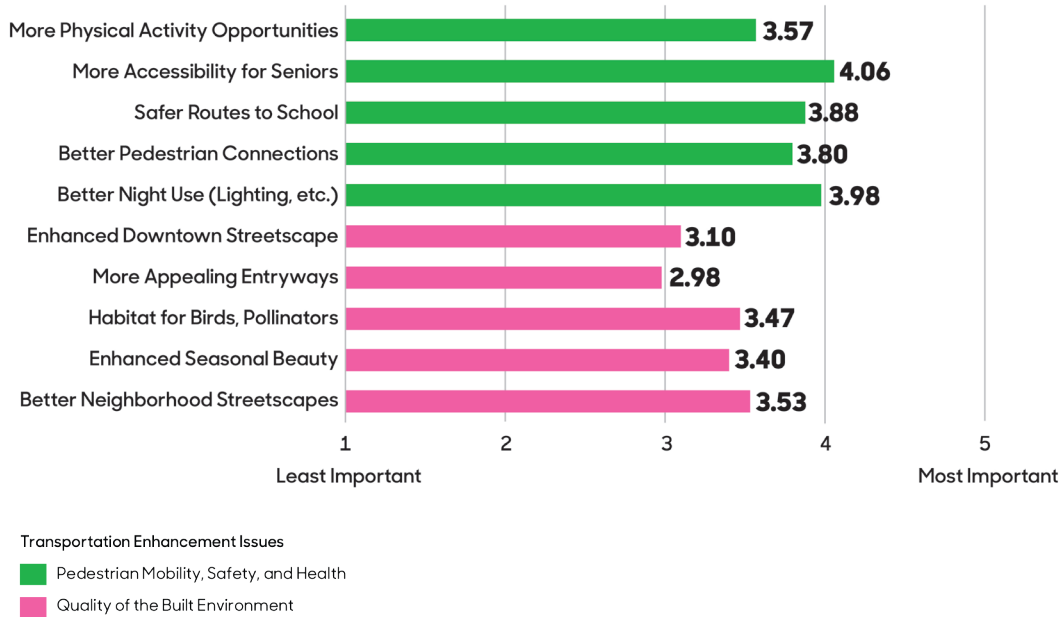
Most survey respondents drive to important destinations such as the convenience store, the post office, school, and church (88.6%). More than 32% carpool or ride with someone else. Some people indicated that they walk (11.4%) and/or bike (4.8%), but the primary mode of transportation in West Burlington 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%.



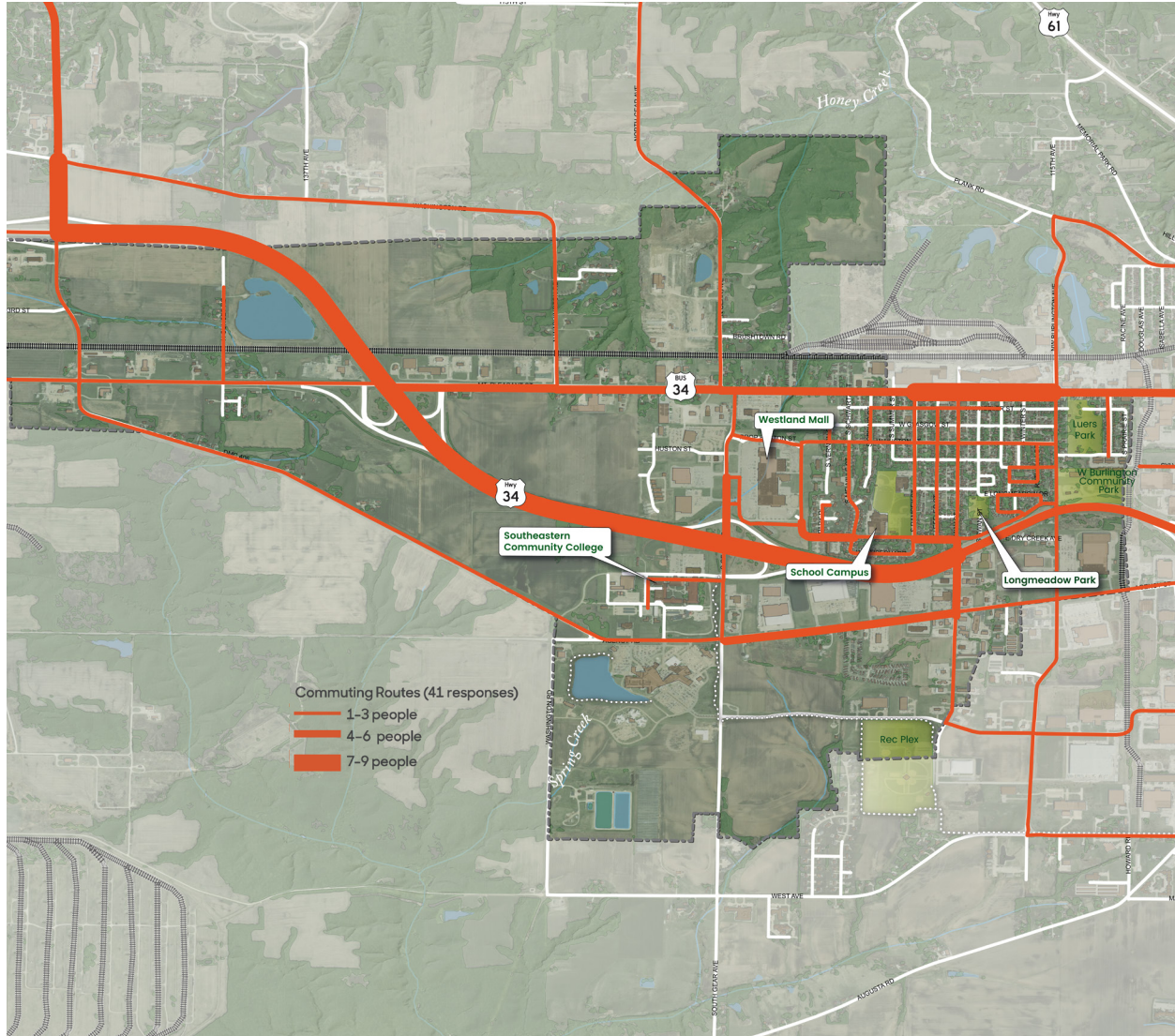
WHAT TYPES OF ENHANCEMENTS ARE IMPORTANT?

Mobility, Safety, and Health!



Importance of transportation enhancement by type (90 responses)

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the most important, participants in West Burlington ranked improving accessibility for seniors as most important, with a mean value of 4.06. Other types of transportation enhancements that address pedestrian mobility, health, and safety are also considered important, such as providing better lighting for night use (3.98), creating safer routes to school (3.88), and making better pedestrian connections (3.80). In terms of quality of the built environment, survey respondents consider improving neighborhood streetscapes as most important (3.53), followed by creating habitat for birds and pollinators (3.47), and enhancing seasonal beauty (3.40). These findings are consistent with the views expressed by focus-group participants during the Transportation Assets and Barriers workshop held in February 2023.



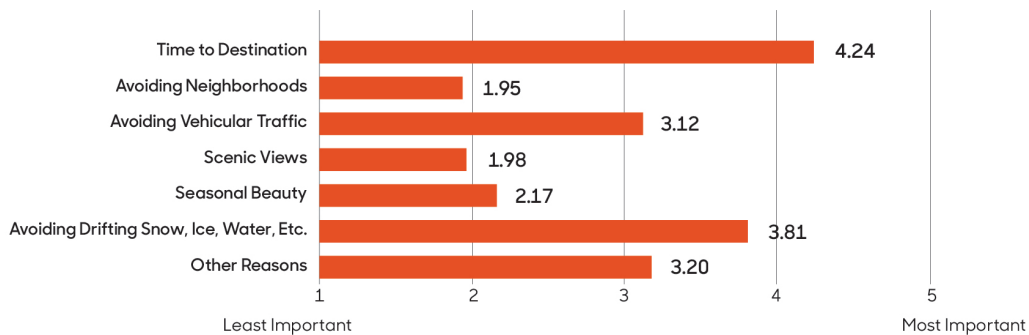
Map Source: Iowa Department of Natural Resources, "Natural Resources Geographic Information Systems Library," <http://www.igsb.uiowa.edu/nrgislib/>.

How People Get To Work

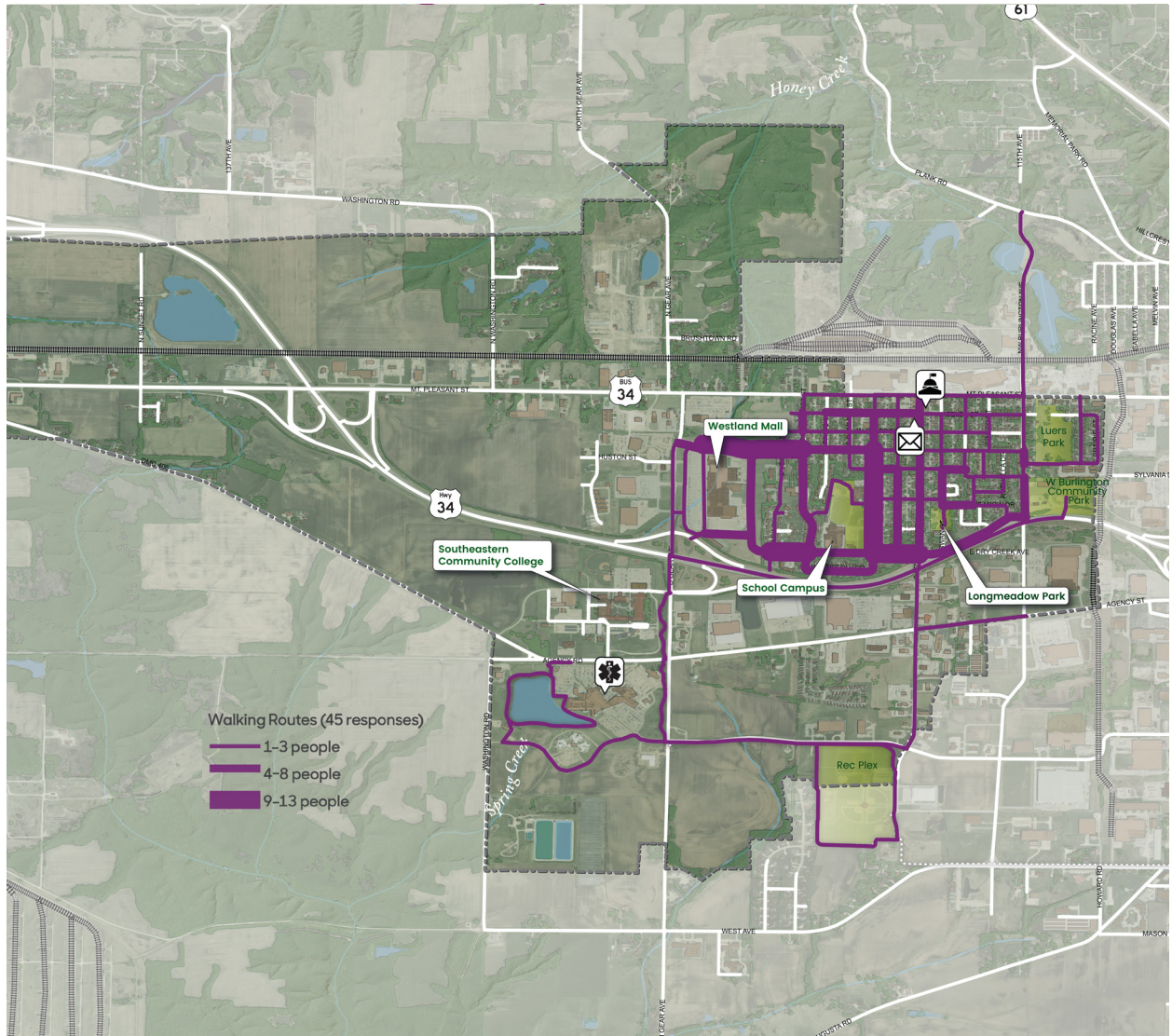
This map shows the commuting routes identified by 41 survey respondents. The frequency that the routes are used is depicted by their width, with most frequently used routes being the thickest. The primary commuting corridor into and out of West Burlington is Highway 34. Other east-west routes identified by respondents include W Mt. Pleasant Street, especially through the downtown area, and W Agency Road. West Burlington Avenue, N Gear Avenue, and Washington Road are the north-south routes commuters take.

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 West Burlington participants, time to destination is the most important factor in determining commuting routes, with a mean value of 4.24. Avoiding weather-related issues such as snow and ice is also significant (3.81). Scenic views, seasonal beauty, and avoiding neighborhoods are not critical factors in determining commuting routes.

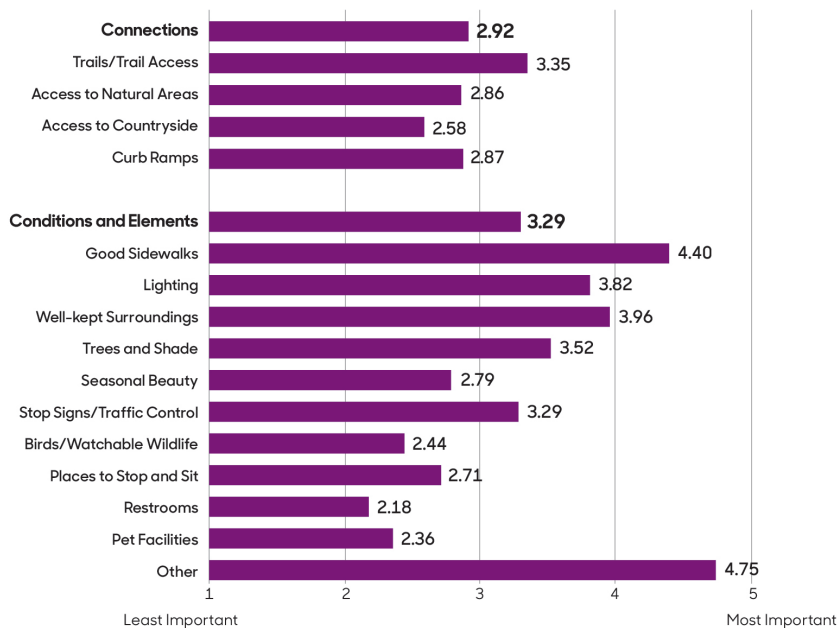


Map Source: Iowa Department of Natural Resources, "Natural Resources Geographic Information Systems Library," <http://www.igsb.uiowa.edu/nrgislib/>.

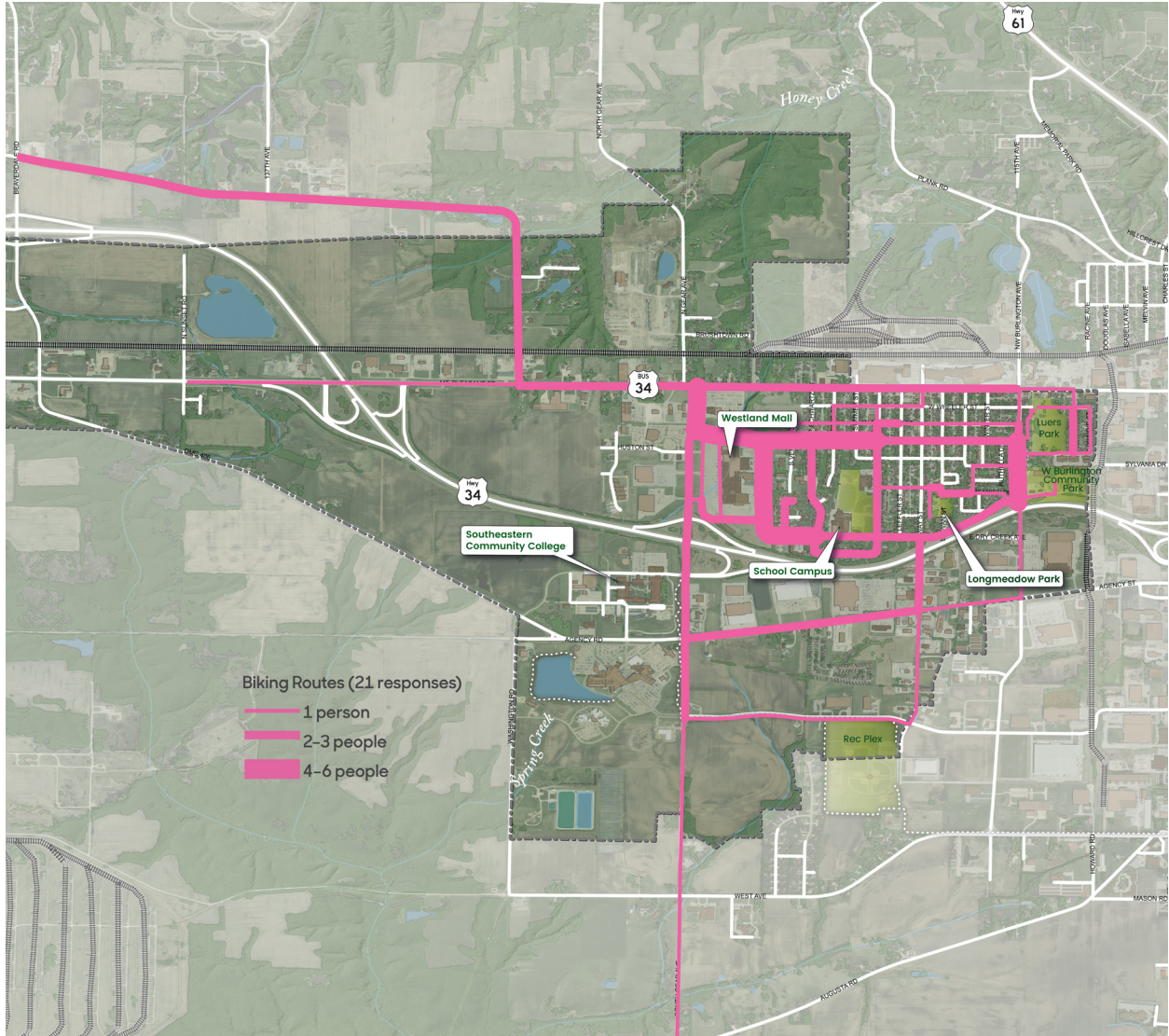
Where People Walk

This map shows the walking routes identified by 45 survey respondents. The frequency that the routes are used is depicted by their width, with most frequently used routes being the thickest. The most heavily traveled routes among walkers are Ramsey Street, particularly the blocks adjacent to the schools; Huston W from Melville Avenue west to the mall; and sections of Van Weiss Boulevard. Other popular routes include portions of Wheeler Street, Leffler Avenue, Kimberly Drive, and parts of West Burlington Avenue. Some people walk the trail along S Gear Avenue and Division Street and loop around the Rec Plex, and some walkers enjoy the path around the lake on the hospital campus.

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." West Burlington participants consider conditions/elements as more important than connections, with mean values of 3.29 and 2.92, respectively. In terms of connections, access to trails is most important with a mean value of 3.35. Other factors—namely safety, low noise, wider sidewalks, and snow removal in winter—are the most important conditions/elements, with a mean value of 4.75, followed by good sidewalks (4.40), well-kept surroundings (3.96), and lighting (3.82).

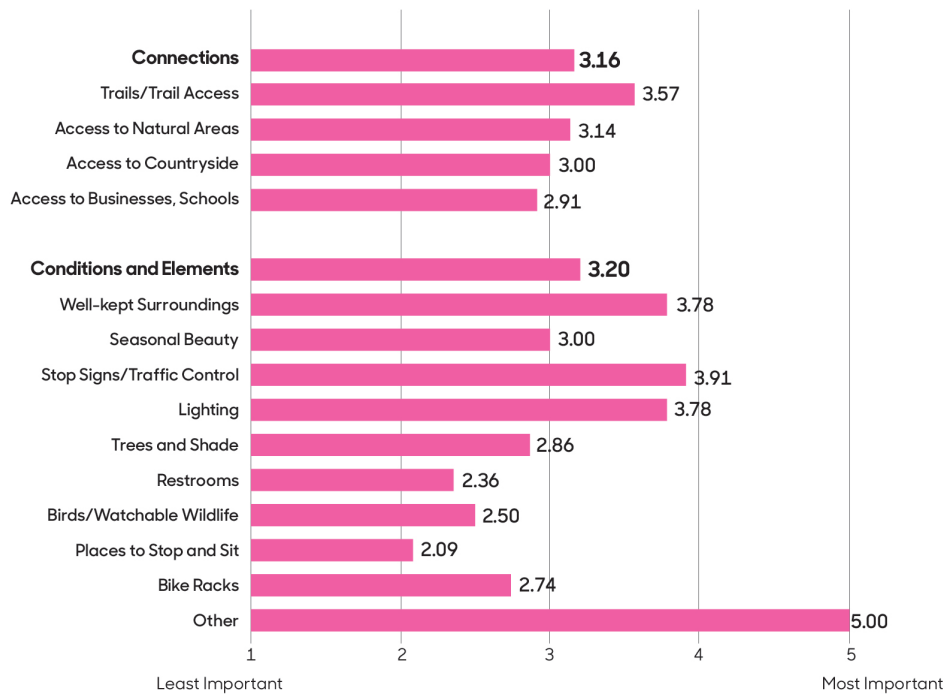


Map Source: Iowa Department of Natural Resources, "Natural Resources Geographic Information Systems Library," <http://www.igsb.uiowa.edu/nrgislib/>.

Where People Bike

This map shows the biking routes identified by 21 survey respondents. The frequency that the routes are used is depicted by their width, with most frequently used routes being the thickest. Similar to walkers, cyclists most often ride on Huston Street from Ramsay Street to the mall, Autumn Lane, W Van Weiss Boulevard, and West Burlington Avenue. People also bike on S Gear Avenue, Agency Road, Division Street, and Broadway Street. Some bikers take advantage of the bike lane on W Mt. Pleasant Street and some ride out of town on Washington Road.

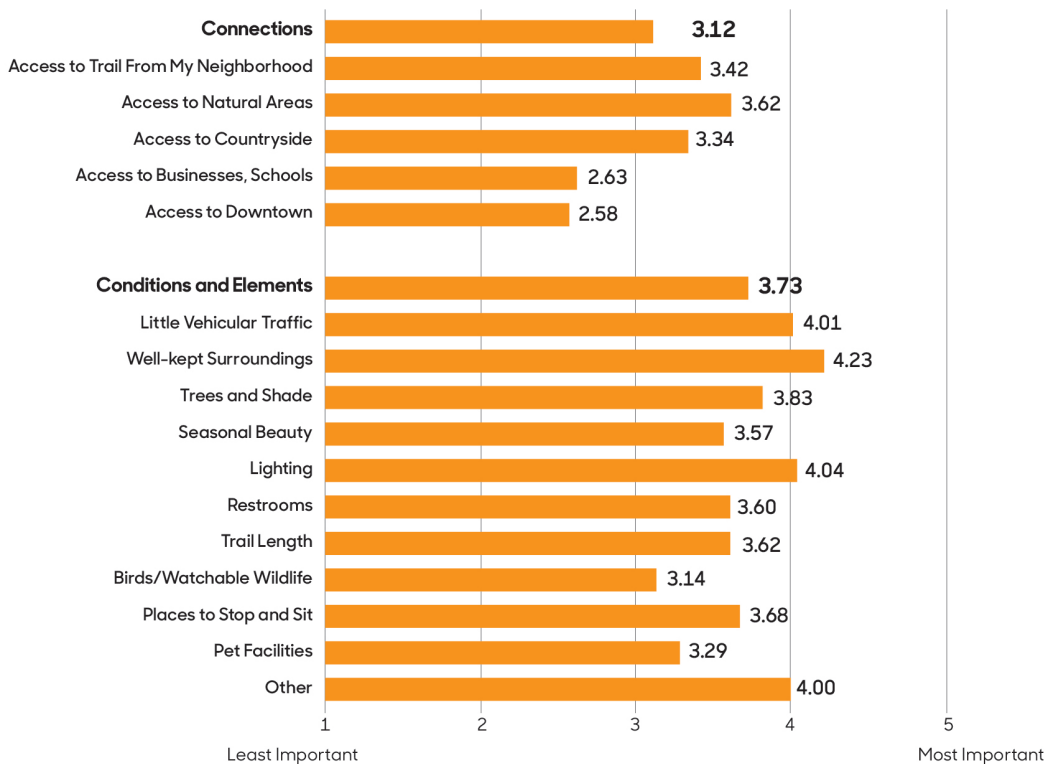
Why They Go That Way



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." West Burlington participants consider conditions/elements somewhat more important than connections, with mean values of 3.20 and 3.16, respectively. Access to trails is most important connection to survey respondents with a mean value of 3.57. In terms of conditions/elements, other factors, which were not identified by respondents, are most significant, with a mean value of 5.00, followed by stop signs/traffic control (3.91), and well-kept surroundings and lighting (both at 3.78).

Desired Trail Features

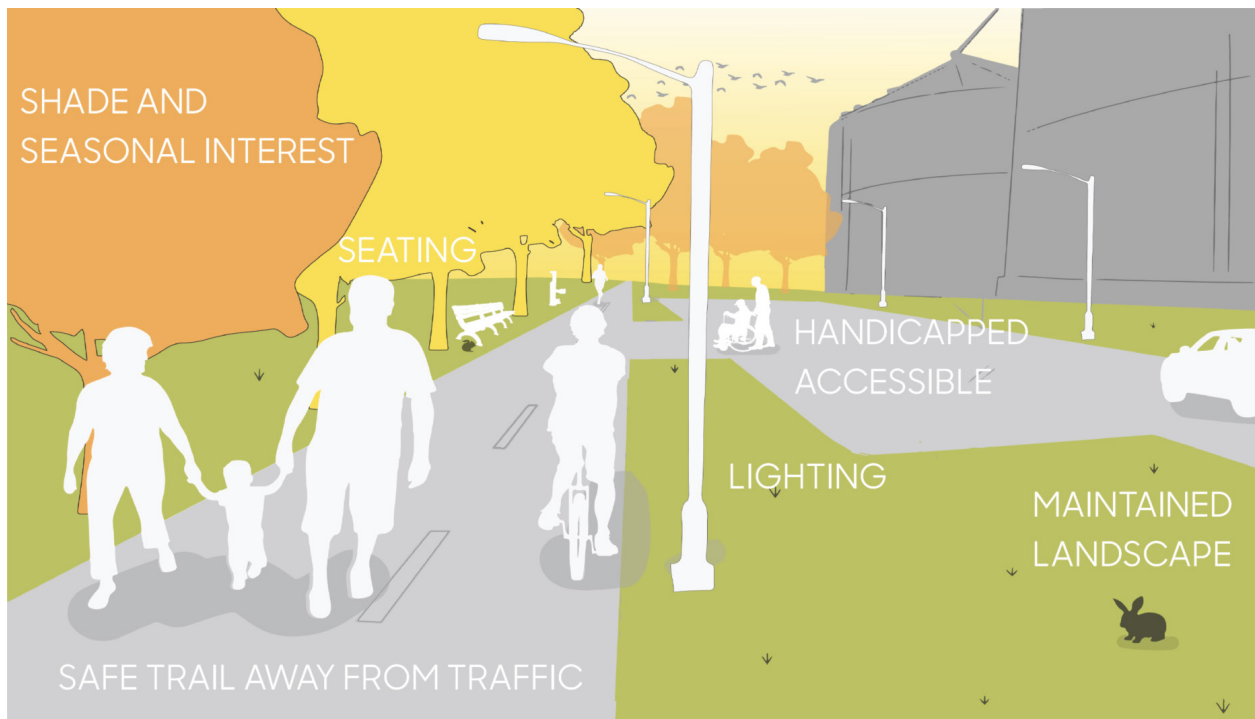
Trails are off-street paths that are paved or unpaved and can be used by pedestrians and cyclists. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the most important, survey participants ranked the characteristics and features that made their trail experience better. Like the bike route features, they are categorized as either "connections" or "conditions and elements." Conditions/elements are more important to West Burlington trail users than connections, with mean values of 3.73 and 3.12, respectively. Access to natural areas is the most important connection among trail users, with a mean value of 3.62. In terms of conditions/elements, well-kept surroundings are most important, with a mean value of 4.23, followed by lighting (4.04), and little vehicular traffic (4.01). Other factors such as handicapped accessibility, consistent availability of restrooms, and safety are desirable conditions, with a mean value of 4.00. Also of significance to trail users are trees and shade (3.83) places to stop and sit (3.68), trail length (3.62), and restrooms (3.60).





"I think a long and accessible trailway (like the Rock Island Trail in and around Peoria, IL) would enhance travel, activity, and increase visitors to the area."

"It would be wonderful if you connected the trail routes from the hospital, SCC, [and the] Rec Plex and made a 'loop' around West Burlington to exercise—walking, running, biking, etc."



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