

Executive Summary

Public transit is essential to a big city like Gatineau, addressing numerous social and environmental concerns. That being said, the urban sprawl that has marked the region over the past decades presents a major challenge when it comes to offering efficient and quality service. Limited resources mean that public transit cannot be everything, everywhere, at all times. We need to find the best compromise among sometimes contradictory objectives. Moreover, the changing needs occasioned by the pandemic provided an opportunity to rethink public transit services.

This was the context in which the STO decided to assess the future of its system and its complementarity with active transportation. In order to identify and take into account the community's priorities when it comes to transportation, the STO launched a public consultation. That consultation, conducted through an online questionnaire, ran from May 24 to July 3, 2022, with 442 residents responding.

The first theme directly addressed the difficult choices the STO faces in terms of allocating its resources. Is it more important to maximize ridership or coverage? Is it more important to offer high frequency and faster service or reduce walking distances? Is it more important to offer direct routes or aim for efficient transfers? Naturally, it would not be all of one or the other. It is all a matter of compromise.

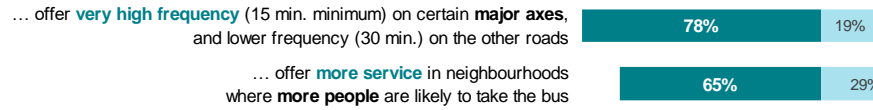
For all of these issues of degrees as determined by the answers presented in Figure 1, we can see that respondents prioritize frequency of service:

- 78% would prefer to have the major axes better served than the other roads;
- 76% would prefer to have higher frequency and faster service even if it means walking farther;
- 65% would prefer higher frequency rather than a greater service span;
- 65% believe that the STO should offer more services in neighbourhoods where more people are likely to take the bus;
- 60% are prepared to transfer in exchange for higher frequency (greater frequency, the display of bus movements in real time, and the presence of bus shelters and benches are seen as the most important elements when it comes to facilitating transfers);
- 55% would prefer higher frequency throughout the day, not only during peak periods.

In terms of priority sectors, the opinions are less clear-cut, but 47% would like to see stronger links between neighbourhoods, even if it means less service to the downtowns.

Figure 1 – Summary of answers to questions 1-3, 5-7 and 9

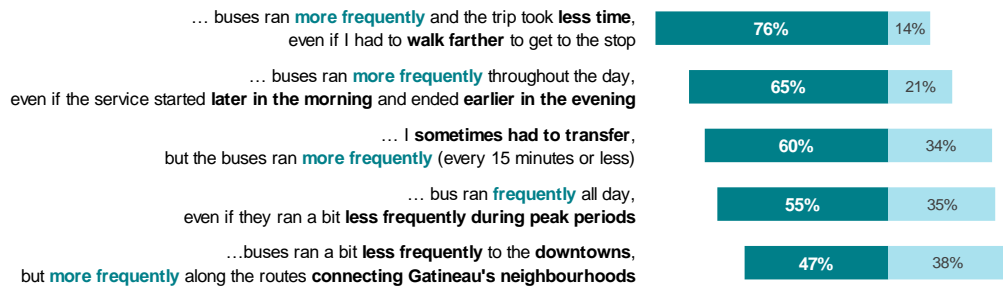
I think the STO should ...



... offer the **same level of service** on the major axes as on the other roads

... offer the **same level of service** in all neighbourhoods

Personally, I would use public transit more if ...



... buses ran **less frequently** and the trip took **more time**, as long as I had to **walk less** to get to the stop

... buses ran **less frequently** throughout the day, as long as the service started **earlier in the morning** and ended **earlier in the evening**

... I could take **only one bus** for my whole trip, even if it meant that it would run **less frequently** (every 30 minutes or more)

... buses ran **more frequently during peak periods**, even if they ran **less frequently** during the day, evenings and weekends

... buses ran **more frequently to the downtowns**, even if there were **fewer** of them along the routes **connecting Gatineau's neighbourhoods**

The second part addressed the issue of combining transportation modes.

In terms of walking, respondents indicated the main improvements needed to facilitate getting to public transit on foot:

- More sidewalks (51%);
- Better snow clearing (49%);
- More pathways or shortcuts for pedestrians through neighbourhoods (47%);
- More crosswalks / safety enhancements at intersections (46%).

We then asked about bike/bus combination. Whereas 19% of residents currently combine bicycles and public transit, either by parking their bicycle at a station or a stop, or by using the bike racks on buses, 71% indicated that they would be interested in combining riding their bike and using public transportation.

According to the survey respondents, the conditions that would foster the best bike/bus combination are as follows:

- If the main stations and stops had secured bike racks (36%);
- If there were bike paths (or safer bike paths) on the way to station or stop (27%);
- If they knew which stations or stops had bike racks (21%);
- If all buses had bus racks (21%).

Finally, the third theme pertained to bike sharing.

We asked respondents to state their intentions regarding the sharing of mechanical or electric bikes, whether in combination with public transit or to get from point A to point B. For all uses combined, 57% indicated they might use a mechanical bike, and 63% that they would use the electric bikes.

On average, respondents would be willing to spend \$3.55 for a 30-minute rental, and \$37 for a monthly membership.