

MEMORANDUM

To: Mike Davis

From: Thomas Wittmann

Date: September 9, 2015

Subject: Draft Public Outreach Summary Memo

The primary goal of the StarTran Transit Development Plan (TDP) is to improve transit service in Lincoln. Convenient and cost-effective transit service requires an appropriate balance of coverage, frequency, and service span. Effective public outreach is necessary for determining the effectiveness of existing transit services as well as evaluating future improvements to serve the needs of Lincoln residents. This memo summarizes public outreach activities conducted for the Transit Development Plan (TDP), which includes meetings with the TDP Advisory Committee, operator interviews, April 2015 open houses, Build Your Transit System survey, upcoming September 2015 open houses, and the StarTran Preliminary Service Options online survey.

KEY THEMES

An integral part of the TDP process is conducting a diverse public involvement effort that allows for a variety of methods for the public to share ideas and identify opportunities for improvement. Key themes from public outreach are as follows:

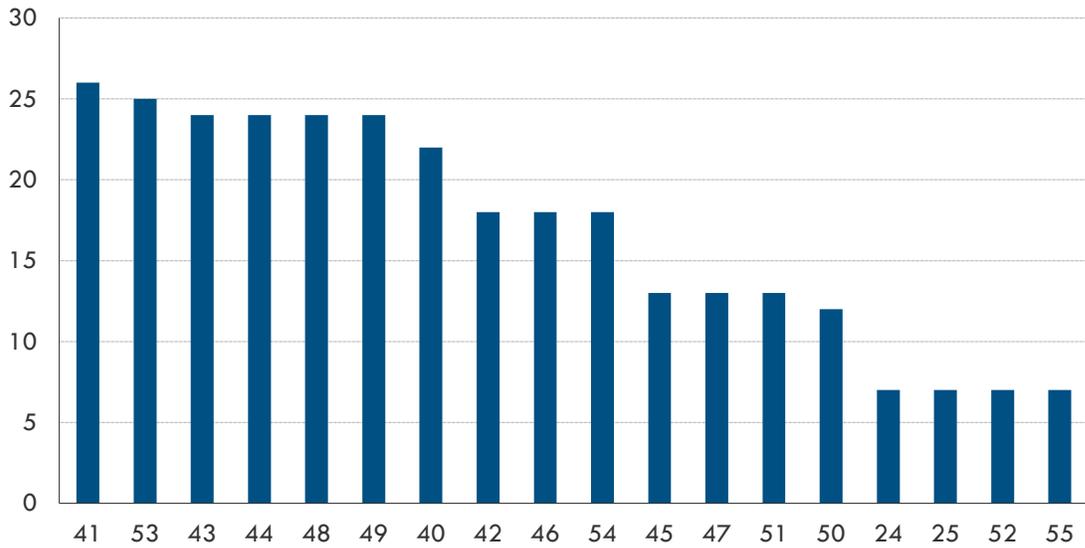
- Straightening and streamlining routes would improve travel time and system performance.
- A crosstown north-south route would be a good option for riders to eliminate the need to transfer Downtown.
- According to the on-board survey, existing riders rank places served, service frequency, and bus stop amenities lowest in terms of customer satisfaction.
- Later service on weekdays, Sunday service, and more frequent service are desired improvements to the system.
- Express service would be beneficial on several corridors, including O Street.
- Marketing and improved information about routes and arrival times would benefit riders.
- Removing excess service to institutions during off hours (e.g., Southeast Community College service on Saturday) can provide cost savings and potentially allow for reinvestment in increased frequency on more productive routes during peak times.
- Improvements to bus facilities for safety and access during the winter would benefit riders.

ON-BOARD SURVEY

In October and November of 2013, StarTran conducted an on-board survey for all fixed-route service (including both weekday and Saturday service). In total, 565 complete surveys were collected. Key findings of the analysis are as follows:

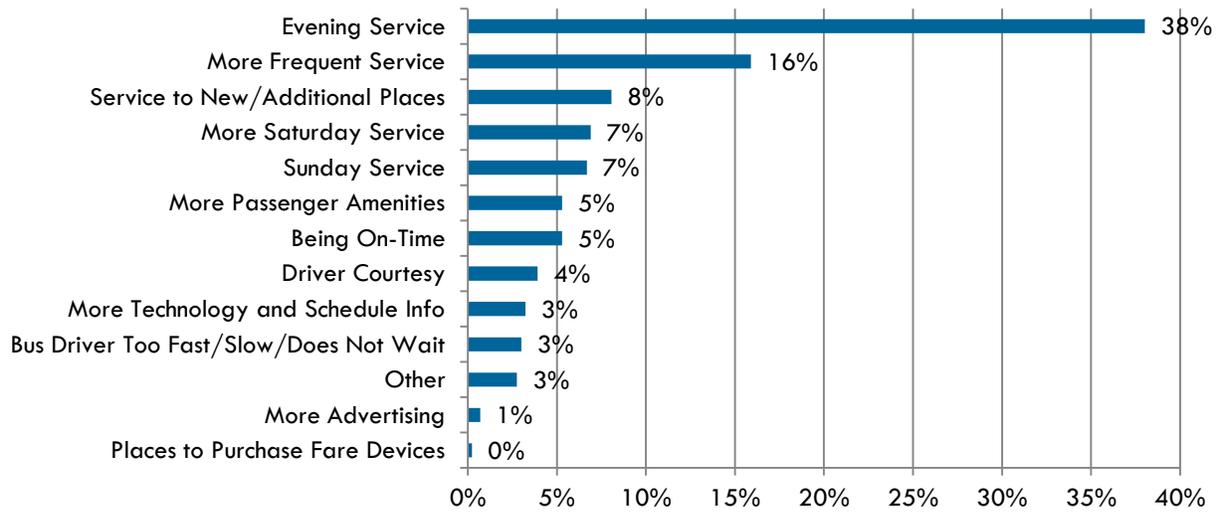
- Many current riders may be considered transit dependent—approximately half of respondents do not have access to a vehicle at home and would not be able to make their trip without bus service.
- More than one-third of riders are 45 to 64 years old, with 18-to-29 year olds representing 28% of riders.
- Many riders have a low annual income. Nearly half of existing riders have a household annual income of less than \$20,000, and only 15% reported annual incomes of \$45,000 or higher.
- Most riders identified as Caucasian, with the next-highest group identifying as African American.
- Nearly 40% of riders have been using StarTran for five or more years. Approximately one-fifth of riders have been riding a year or less, which is consistent with typical mid-size city operations throughout the nation.
- Many respondents ride frequently, with nearly half of riders using the bus to take 10 or more one-way trips per week. Improving frequency and span of service would be beneficial for these riders to increase the level of convenience in completing their trips.
- Nearly half of respondents were traveling to work on their trip, followed by school, errands, and shopping. Later evening service on weekdays would be especially beneficial for passengers making work trips.
- Despite the fact that StarTran does not currently have a timed transfer in Downtown, approximately one-third of trips involved a transfer (approximately 11% of these transfers involved interlined routes). Figure 1 shows total transfer activity by route. The routes seeing most transfer activity were (from highest to lowest) 41, 53, 43, 44, 48, 49, and 40.
- Riders were asked to rate various service characteristics, with the higher number indicating a higher level of satisfaction. The highest-ranked characteristics were driver courtesy, overall safety, and schedule information. The worst ranked were places served, service frequency, and bus stop amenities (lowest).
- Riders were also given the option to provide open-ended responses to suggest service improvements. The most frequent response by far was for evening service (38%), followed by improved frequency (16%). Open-ended rider responses are shown in Figure 2.

Figure 1 Transfer Activity by Route



Source: StarTran

Figure 2 Suggested StarTran Improvements



Source: StarTran

STARTRAN TDP ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The TDP Advisory Committee includes StarTran Advisory Board members and other individuals representing a range of community interests. The TDP Advisory Committee convened on April 28, 2015, with 20 members in attendance to discuss existing conditions findings as well as to provide input to help inform future steps in the TDP process. TDP Advisory Committee members discussed several topics, including unmet needs in the transit system, peer systems, funding, and project goals.

Unmet Needs Identified by Advisory Committee

- Many locations in Lincoln lack residential access to both work and shopping. There are some examples in the current operating environment where it is actually faster to walk two miles to reach Gateway Mall rather than taking the bus and transferring in Downtown.
- The current hours of service are too limited. Later service in the evening would especially benefit many existing riders. Improved Saturday service as well as implementing Sunday service would also be good improvements.
- Currently, there is no transit service south of Pine Lake. Development has been occurring on the fringes of the city, including south of where existing service ends. As businesses move further out in the city, residents without other transportation options are left behind. Since development in Lincoln is expanding outward, the existing transit system will be unable to meet the needs of the community in the future. At the same time, most of the post-World War II suburbs are not very dense, and providing productive transit service is a challenge.
- The potential for implementing crosstown routes should be looked at as part of the TDP process. There are many instances when it is inconvenient for passengers to travel out-of-direction to transfer in Downtown. However, crosstown routes have been attempted in the past, and overall these were not very productive.
- For service to be successful, travel times on transit routes need to be competitive with automobiles.
- Many transit riders traveling to SouthPointe are either University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) or Downtown employees.
- Implementation of a formal transit center in Downtown Lincoln would be a beneficial improvement for many riders. However, placement of a potential future transit center is important. It must be centrally located in Downtown to provide the most benefit for riders.
- StarTran is analyzing the current flag bus stop policy as part of the TDP, including what could be gained or lost by doing away with this policy. However, making walks longer could be a problem for some passengers, especially in winter. At the same time, improved passenger information and amenities that could result from formalizing bus stops could be useful for many passengers.

Funding

- More funding for StarTran is going to be necessary to meet the needs in the community. Budget is an important factor to be considered.
- There is work to be done in terms of changing attitudes in the community regarding StarTran. The agency provides a necessary service and is not a “black hole for money.” At the same time, to be successful in business, it is not possible to be a “jack of all trades and master of none.” In the same way, StarTran’s primary focus needs to be on what it does well.
- Having more information about how peer cities fund their transit systems could be useful for informing the TDP process.

Mission Statement, Goals, and Objectives

- TDP Advisory Committee members viewed a preliminary list of overarching concepts for goals for StarTran. A mission statement, goals, and objectives should consider not just the here and now, but look into the future.
- A possible concept for a mission statement is that StarTran “provides a good alternative source of transportation for the City of Lincoln.” Additional concepts include the fact that StarTran is efficient, environmentally-responsible, and affordable. A statement about economics should also be considered for inclusion in the mission statement.
- Safety should be assumed as a concept and does not need to be specifically called out in the goals and objectives or mission statement. There does not seem to be a perception in the community that StarTran is unsafe.
- Overall, the public needs to understand and buy into the final mission statement, goals, and objectives for the agency.

Additional Comments

- Community goals should be part of the considerations for the TDP. It will be important to determine whether it is more important to try to grow the system and increase ridership or maintain coverage to as much of the population as possible. If the goals are to increase ridership, what naturally follows is to serve fewer areas, but serve them very well. Being able to do more with the same amount of resources could have positive implications for the future. If ridership can grow, then there might be more community support for expanding the transit system in the future and adding more service—benefiting the entire community.
- New and future technology should be considered, especially regarding how it affects the planning process. Any technologies that are implemented, such as smartcards, should be reliable for passengers.
- The City of Lincoln and UNL are considering implementing a bikeshare system. This is important since bicycles are often used as a first-mile/last-mile connection to transit services. Any changes to the transit network would have to connect with this system. Other transit providers and modes should be accounted for to help Lincoln create multimodal options for residents.
- The Planning Commission’s upcoming transportation plan will reference recommendations developed as part of the TDP.
- There is agreement that StarTran has to change and evolve. However, the exact steps for accomplishing this are not entirely clear currently.
- The millennial generation has different travel habits and desires compared to other population groups and will influence system ridership potential and growth.

OPERATOR INTERVIEWS

Informal interview sessions were conducted with StarTran bus operators to capture feedback regarding operational challenges/issues, customer requests, scheduling, and service levels. Bus operators also provided comments on fares, bus stops, excess service, and route design. Interviews were held in operator break rooms and were initiated with open-ended questions regarding issues and opportunities related to fixed-route bus service. Both one-on-one and group conversations produced a series of invaluable comments and suggestions, and several comments were echoed by multiple operators.

Route design comments illustrate the fact that the current system forces customers to transfer Downtown, and some routes take a lot of time. Suggestions to mitigate these issues included straightening routes,

moving routes to major streets and off of residential streets, and adding more strategic transfer locations. Operators also noted where major destinations for customers are located, including the Walmart on N 27th Street, Arnold Heights, O Street, and the Veterans Administration hospital.

Operators also noted where additional service is needed. Route 44 needs additional buses, especially during peak periods. The top request from customers is longer hours of service during the evenings and to provide Sunday service. Other operational challenges include the fact that the location of timepoints are generally not layover-friendly, more accessible bathroom locations are needed, and that operators need more recovery time. Operators noted that there is excess service to Lancaster Correctional Center (Route 46), and that it should only be served when it is open. Additionally, Southeast Community College does not need service on Saturday.

Operator feedback is paraphrased and categorized into topic areas below.

Route Design

- Current systems forces customers to transfer Downtown
- Transfers are feasible in Downtown only; more transfer locations are needed
- Vets Hospital deviation takes a lot of time
- Vets Route needs to be straightened out
- SouthPointe is being used as an informal park-and-ride (“hide-and-ride”)
- Lake Street (5-block segment of Route 53) is congested
- Straighten the Route 42 by getting off residential streets
- Stay on major streets, not neighborhood streets
- Route 44 needs to go into Gateway Mall but takes a long time doing so
- Two routes are going to Gateway Mall outbound, but only one serves it inbound
- Route 41 customers get off and walk rather than riding through the afternoon extension to Lincoln Life Benefit
- Lincoln Life no longer has as many employees and may not need service
- Route 49 operates along a neighborhood street
- Route 42 needs to be taken off residential streets
- Route 42 needs to be extended to 84th/Holdridge
- Route 40 is too long
- Star Shuttle was realigned away from where the passengers are

Major Destinations

- Current major destinations are Walmart North, Arnold Heights, O Street, Vets Hospital
- High transit demand areas are north of South Street and south of Downtown
- Section 8 housing south of 56th/Pine Lake
- 17th/16th Hospital is where low income customers go for medical care

Service Requests/Demand

- North Walmart needs service until 10 p.m.
- Service needs to be extended to Yankee Hill between 27th & 40th
- Service needs to be extended to new Walmart and Super Target on Yankee Hill

- Super Target on Yankee Hill needs service
- Route 42 should be extended to 84th/Holdridge
- Route 55 used to directly serve City Mission; ridership has dropped since route change
- There is currently no service to the airport

Excess Service

- Southeast Community College does not need service on Saturday
- Lancaster Correctional Center all does not need all-day service
- Lancaster Correctional Center (Route 46) should only be served when it is open
- Lancaster Correctional Center (Route 46) does not need all-day Saturday service

Scheduling/On-Time Performance (OTP)

- Route 46 has excess time on schedule in Arnold Heights
- Route 44 O Street and Route 54 Vets have the worst OTP
- Route 44 is never on time along O Street, even on Saturdays
- Route 54 Vets is impossible to keep on time
- Route 46 has OTP issues on Saturday
- Five-minute hold for transferring buses Downtown has negative impacts on OTP
- Five-minute holds create OTP issues Downtown
- Buses used to circulate Downtown; now there are only 2 stops, which impacts transfers
- Route 49 Salt Valley has too much time between some timepoints
- Interlining makes things difficult
- Arnold Heights & Arapaho should arrive Downtown 10 minutes later (:20/:50)
- Route 41 Havelock schedule was recently changed and is now unrealistic

Service Levels

- Route 44 needs more buses
- Lincoln HS needs booster service
- Route 44 needs more buses, especially during peak
- Top request is longer hours
- Increased ridership on Route 52/Gaslight
- Havelock Route has high ridership at beginning of month (welfare checks)
- O Street should be more frequent
- Route 51 West A should run during peak only due to low ridership during other times
- Saturday ridership is low
- Sunday service is needed
- Increased evening service is needed before Sunday service

Bus Stops

- Route 40 stops every block; needs better spacing
- Flag stops should be eliminated

- More bus stop signs are needed
- Flag stop policy slows down service; buses should stop every 3 blocks
- Designated bus stops are needed
- Bus stop is needed between O Street and Holdridge on 48th.

Operational Challenges

- Few routes have restrooms
- No restroom at Gold's; operators must use Embassy or YMCA
- Designated restrooms are not convenient
- Timepoints are generally not layover friendly
- Short layover at Gold's
- Operators need more recovery time
- 27th & Van Dorn needs a protected left turn signal; it takes multiple cycles to get through
- O Street signals should be actuated instead of pre-timed
- St. Paul (Route 49) is not traffic controlled
- Arnold Heights NE 48th is being widened for 5 miles and this will affect OTP
- Stay out of Walmart North due to pedestrian/traffic conflicts

Fares

- Consider reducing fare during off peak
- \$8 low-income monthly pass needs better enforcement
- Many customer do not swipe on interlines
- Consider offering a day pass
- Check where passes are sold now
- Consider offering reduced midday fare
- Take School Tripper 17th/Lake – Catholic School and other school

Other

- 17th & Washington outbound stop is always busy (reverse commute)
- Better advertising is needed
- Recommended outreach locations: Gold's, State Office Building, Gateway, SCC, North Walmart, New Walmart
- Ridership counts are undercounting as they are not including interline numbers

APRIL 2015 OPEN HOUSES

The public's involvement in the TDP process is integral to its success. StarTran held open houses on April 29 and 30, with 29 and 27 people in attendance, respectively. Comments were collected from attendees, including the following:

- Riders need real-time information via Google apps, an online trip planner, and better marketing for the StarTran system.
- Riders need service later in the evenings and service on Sundays.

- StarTran should gather more consistent community input.
- Routes should be more efficient so trips do not take as long, and perhaps add a cross-town route.
- Safety concerns include the bus stop facilities, and snow piles blocking the path to board the bus in the winter.
- Need more transfer points outside of Downtown, potentially on Vine Street, O Street or near Pershing Center.
- StarTran should remember the blind and those with disabilities when planning changes.
- Express service is needed on O Street.

Additional activities at the April open houses included laptops to take the “Build Your Transit System” survey, which is described below. Existing and potential customers provided feedback on future transit investments and 17 strategies that focused on bus service, bus stops, buses, and facilities.

BUILD YOUR TRANSIT SYSTEM SURVEY

An online survey was conducted to collect information from StarTran riders and non-riders in Lincoln. The survey consisted of a “Build Your Transit System” tool that presented 17 strategies that could be used to improve the StarTran system. The tool cited the benefits of each in the areas of ridership, speed and availability, access, passenger experience, and environment. The tool also presented relative costs for each strategy, and survey respondents were given a budget of 25 dollar signs to work with—respondents were instructed to select the strategies most important to them while staying within the budget. A total of 304 people took the survey.

Figure 3 ranks the preferences for transit service improvements by percentage of responses. The top five responses reflect a demand for improved service span, coverage, and frequency. More than three-quarters of respondents chose “Provide later services on weekdays” as a service improvement category, and 62% chose “Provide later services on Saturday.” Adding crosstown service, providing more frequent service on weekdays, and adding Sunday service were each chosen by approximately half or more of respondents. Additionally, lighting (47%) and information at stops (45%), which are both relatively low-cost improvements, were also highly ranked in terms of transit service improvements.

A screenshot of the Build Your Transit System tool and the survey questions are included in Figure 4.

Figure 3 Build Your Own Transit System Results - Preferred Service Improvements to StarTran

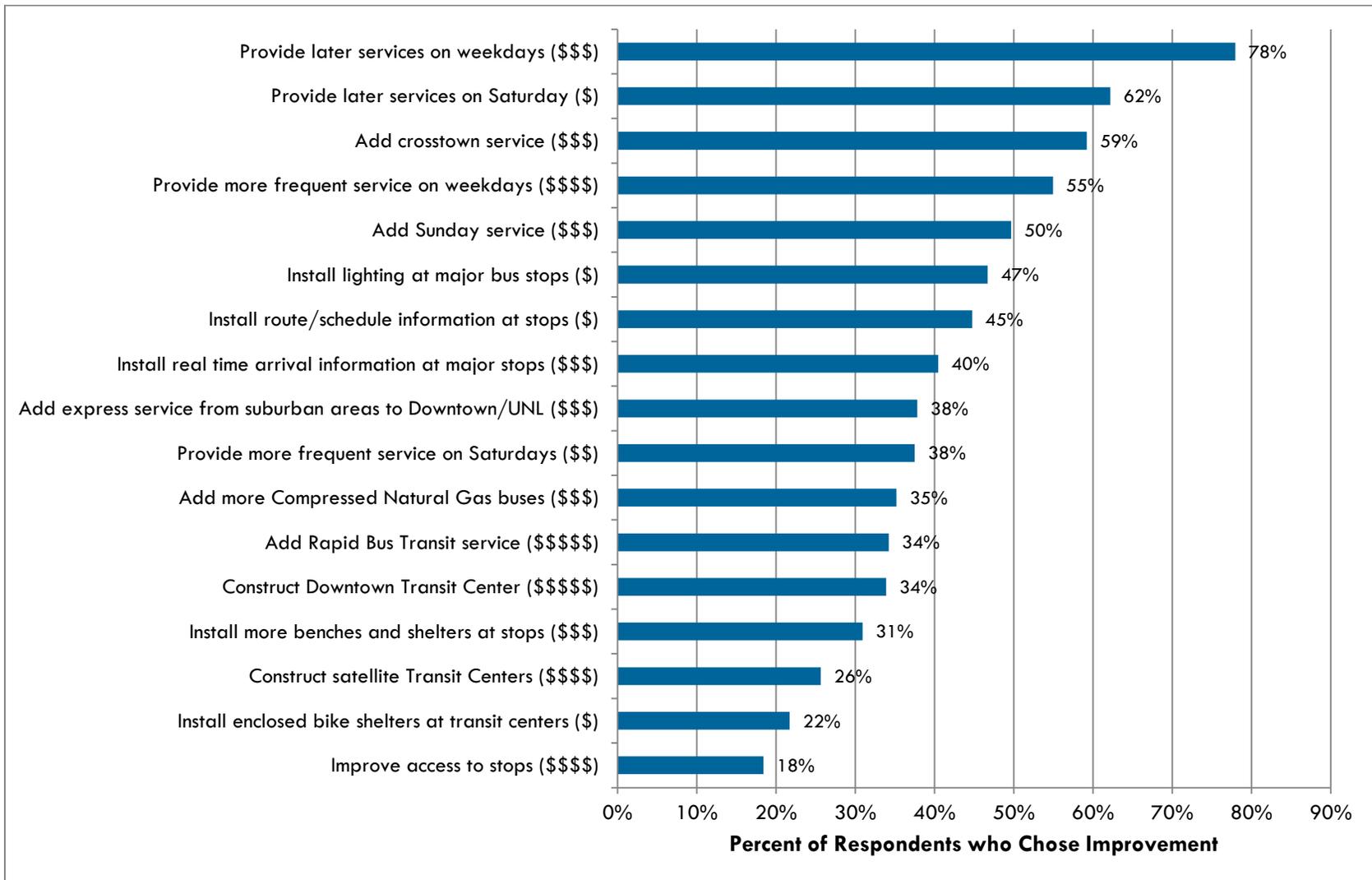


Figure 4 Build Your Transit System Tool Screenshot



StarTran Build Your System

How would you improve StarTran?

StarTran is a good system, but we want to make it even better. Have you ever wanted new bus routes or more bus shelters? This survey is your chance to tell us! Your feedback will help us improve StarTran service.

Instructions

We'd love to have buses running every five minutes, serving every part of Lincoln. Unfortunately we don't have an infinite amount of money to spend. What would you do if you only had a certain amount of money to use for improvements?

1. Move your mouse over each of the titles and pictures to read the descriptions.
2. Select the strategies that you would like to see implemented and stay within the \$25 budget.
3. When you've selected all the strategies you like, click the blue "Proceed to Next Page" button

Community Benefits

[Reset All Choices](#)

Strategies		Ridership	Speed & Reliability	Access	Passenger Experience	Environment	Cost
Bus Service							
1	Provide more frequent service on weekdays	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$\$\$\$				
2	Provide more frequent service on Saturdays	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$\$				
3	Provide later services on weekdays	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$\$\$				
4	Provide later services on Saturday	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$				
5	Add Sunday service	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$\$\$				
6	Add crosstown service	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$\$\$				
7	Add Rapid Bus Transit service	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$\$\$\$\$				
8	Add express service from suburban areas to Downtown/UNL	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$\$\$				

YOUR OVERALL BENEFITS

Ridership

Speed & Reliability

Access

Passenger Experience

Environment

YOUR TOTAL COSTS

Maximum is 25

[Proceed to Next Page](#)

Draft Vision Statement Memo
StarTran

Strategies		Community Benefits					Cost
		Ridership	Speed & Reliability	Access	Passenger Experience	Environment	
Bus Stops							
9	 Install more benches and shelters at stops	████████	████████	████████	████████	████████	\$\$\$
10	 Install route/schedule information at stops	████████	████████	████████	████████	████████	\$
11	 Install enclosed bike shelters at transit centers	████████	████████	████████	████████	████████	\$
12	 Improve access to stops	████████	████████	████████	████████	████████	\$\$\$\$
13	 Install lighting at major bus stops	████████	████████	████████	████████	████████	\$
14	 Install real time arrival information at major stops	████████	████████	████████	████████	████████	\$\$\$

YOUR OVERALL BENEFITS

Ridership

Speed & Reliability

Access

Passenger Experience

Environment

YOUR TOTAL COSTS

Maximum is 25

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Strategies		Community Benefits					Cost
		Ridership	Speed & Reliability	Access	Passenger Experience	Environment	
Buses and Facilities							
15	 Add more Compressed Natural Gas buses	████████	████████	████████	████████	████████	\$\$\$
16	 Construct Downtown Transit Center	████████	████████	████████	████████	████████	\$\$\$\$\$
17	 Construct satellite Transit Centers	████████	████████	████████	████████	████████	\$\$\$\$

CURRENT AND UPCOMING OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

Prior to developing any recommendations, existing ridership, on-time performance, travel patterns, and demographic data were analyzed. Public meetings in April 2015 and the Build Your Transit System survey indicated that later service, more frequent service, and more direct service are some of the improvements desired most by riders and non-riders. Three different priorities were developed that reflect the public's desires for service enhancements.

These initial recommendations are intended to offer options for improving service within the existing budget. The three scenarios are as follows:

- **Minimal Change Scenario** – This scenario seeks to maintain existing coverage while streamlining and straightening routes where possible.
- **Crosstown Scenario** – This scenario creates a north-south crosstown route to the east of Downtown, and also includes a longer span of service on weekdays.
- **Span of Service Scenario** – This scenario presents limited frequency improvements on select corridors and includes a longer span of service on weekdays and Saturdays.

To gather opinions from the public, StarTran is conducting an online survey to allow customers to provide feedback on service scenarios as well as holding two public meetings in September 2015.

StarTran Preliminary Service Options Online Survey

The purpose of the StarTran Preliminary Service Options survey is to collect feedback from existing and potential riders about the preliminary scenarios described above. The survey provides an overview for each scenario that includes a scenario summary, pros and cons, a table of routes with span of service and frequency, and a map showing the proposed routes, eliminated segments, and major destinations. The survey also asks what participants think overall about each of the scenarios and allows participants to state reasons, comments, and ideas as well as commenting about a specific route. Participants are also asked to choose which scenario best reflects what the StarTran system should look like in the future, assuming no increases in funding. The survey is currently live, and 69 responses have been collected as of September 8, 2015.

September 2015 Open Houses

StarTran will host two open houses in September 2015 with the primary goal of allowing the public to view and provide input on the recommendations and scenarios. At each open house, a formal presentation will be given as well as providing opportunity for attendees to discuss specific comments about preliminary service scenarios.