

3. Outreach and Public Participation

Public engagement is an essential component of creating an LRTP that reflects the community’s values. Community involvement helps to validate that the planning process is comprehensive and that the outcomes reflect the diverse ideas about how to improve the transportation system.

The project team developed and documented a public engagement strategy early in the planning process. The LRTP Public Engagement Plan was guided by and consistent with the adopted Lincoln MPO [Public Participation Plan](#), with special notes regarding COVID-19. The Lincoln MPO committed to abiding by all local and state Directed Health Measures in place for the duration of the project. This decision would impact the proposed methods of content delivery and input gathering.

To accommodate social distancing at meetings, modified approaches and the use of virtual meetings were anticipated and accomplished. During the planning period, most individuals involved with the project, as well as most community members, did participate through remote working environments. Virtual meeting resources became essential to everyday activities and

civic processes. **Appendix B** summarizes public engagement materials and input. The planning process proceeded and was successful because of the willingness of public participants to shift their participation to these essential online resources.

Public Engagement Process

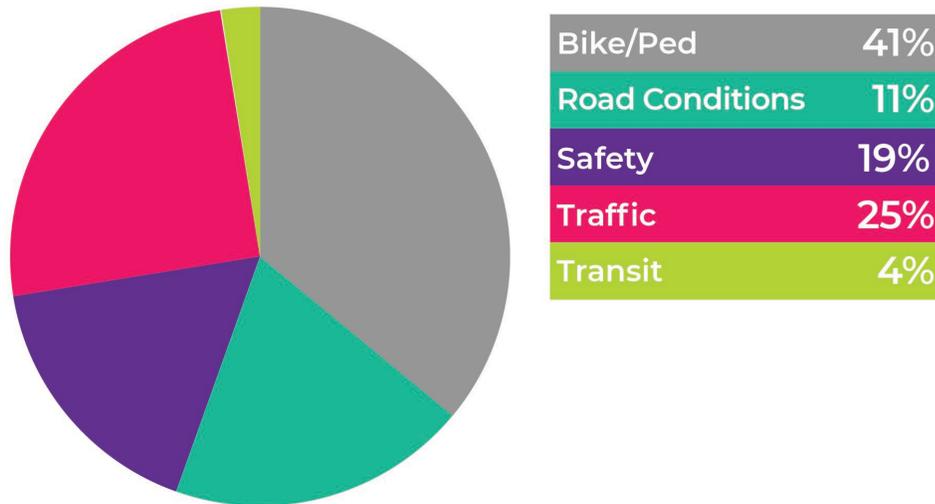
The public engagement process for the 2050 LRTP included three phases of community outreach. As the planning process progressed, community members were invited to share input focused on themes relevant to each phase referenced on **Figure 3.1**.

Phase 1: Needs

Completed between September and October 2020, Phase 1 Public Outreach focused on listening to community members discuss their transportation values, the transportation issues they encounter, and relevant trends that will influence future transportation decisions. The project website was launched with information about how the planning process leads to important outcomes. Initially, the project team requested input about general transportation topics and locations to address through a comment wall and pin map. **Figure 3.2** shows the type and proportion of comments that were provided.

Figure 3.1 Phases of LRTP Public Engagement Strategy

	 We needed to know ...	 How we found out ...	 How input was used ...
 <p>Phase 1 Outreach is focused on listening to the community. Our project team would like to understand the community values, experienced issues and relevant trends.</p>	<p>Values Issues Trends</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Virtual Meeting #1 - Focus Groups - Stakeholder Presentations - Website Survey Tools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inform Goals - Inform Network Consideration - Inform Land Use Scenarios
 <p>Phase 2 Outreach is focused on balancing tradeoffs. Our project team will educate and engage the public in the tradeoff decision-making process to gain consensus.</p>	<p>Tradeoffs Strategies Priorities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stakeholder Scenario Planning - Virtual Meeting #2 - Focus Groups - Website Survey Tools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Scenario Implementation Plan - Strategy and Funding Preferences - Project/Programming Prioritization
 <p>Phase 3 Outreach will wrap up by confirming with community members that the plan reflects what we heard from the community.</p>	<p>Outcome Validation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Draft LRTP On-line Comments - Public Meeting (In-Person) - Virtual Meeting #3 - County Board - City Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Summary of public comments in LRTP

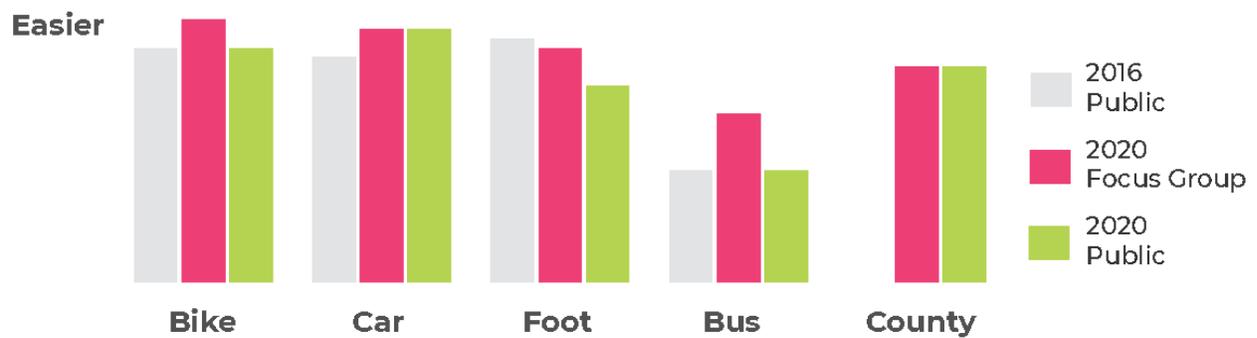
Figure 3.2 Distribution of Comments by Transportation Topic

A virtual presentation with audio file and closed captions was recorded and shared online with supplemental information that community members could review. The virtual presentation provided helpful background to the transportation planning processes and the transportation needs within the region. The presentation also directed viewers to the public survey about the proposed goals, perceptions of transportation modes, and transportation challenges that the Lincoln MPO must address through this plan.

Community members were directed to the website content and survey through social media postings, Facebook advertising, a press release, bilingual fact sheet, e-blast to 569 recipients (47% open rate) and encouragement from the Community Committee and focus group participants. Multiple presentations were also made to community stakeholder groups interested in the transportation planning process. Each presentation ended with a demonstration of the public survey and a request to help get more surveys completed. The Phase 1 Public Survey was completed by 236 community members and was made available in English and Spanish.

Public input was generally favorable toward the draft goals when asked to rate them and to rank them in order of priority. The public ranked Maintenance of the highest importance, with Mobility and System Reliability second. Focus groups also ranked these two highest but in the reverse order. The average rating support for the goals described in **Chapter 2** was 4.03 out of a possible 5, which represented the community “very well.”

Public input was also provided about the relative ease of transportation by mode. The same evaluation was completed with the 2016 public surveys when the 2040 LRTP was developed and again with this LRTP Update process as shown on **Figure 3.3**. This evaluation offers a relative means to assess the changes in perceptions over time as shown on the figure. Travel by car is perceived to be the easiest mode of transportation, while travel by bus continues to lag other modes. Many participants indicated that they did not travel in the County enough to adequately answer the question about ease of travel outside the City. The perception of all modes, except for pedestrians, was that travel is as easy or easier than it was in 2016.

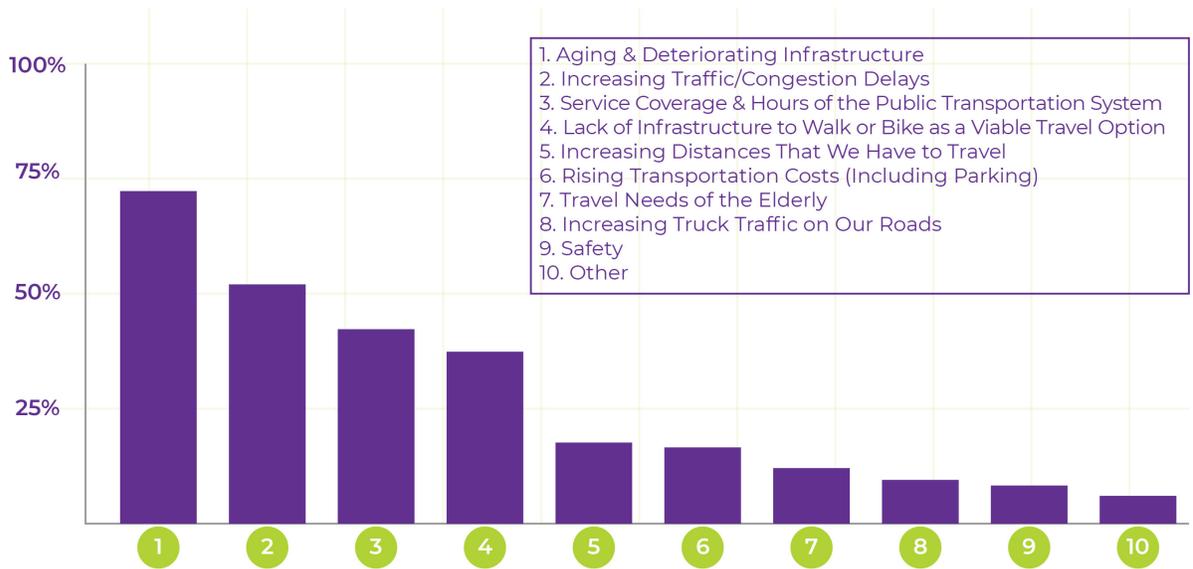
Figure 3.3 Perception of Ease of Travel by Mode 2016 and 2020

The Phase 1 Public Survey also gave community members the opportunity to share their top three most pressing transportation challenges that the LRTP can work to address (**Figure 3.4**). Aging and deteriorating infrastructure was included in the responses of almost 75 percent of survey responses. Increasing traffic/congestion delays was included approximately 50 percent of the time. These responses were consistent with focus group responses, but service coverage and hours of operation for the public transportation system (third most frequently selected) were much more common than with focus group participants.

Phase 2: Priorities

Completed between March and April 2021, Phase 2 Public Outreach focused on balancing the tradeoffs that exist when there are more projects to complete than funding available. Similar to the diverse views toward the LRTP goals, community members also have diverse views about how funds should be allocated to different project needs. The project team used support for the goals and funding and project information to raise awareness about how transportation funds are distributed. Public input helped the planning team build consensus for a decision-making process that would lead to a fiscally constrained plan of projects through 2050.

Figure 3.4 Public Input about the Most Pressing Transportation Challenges



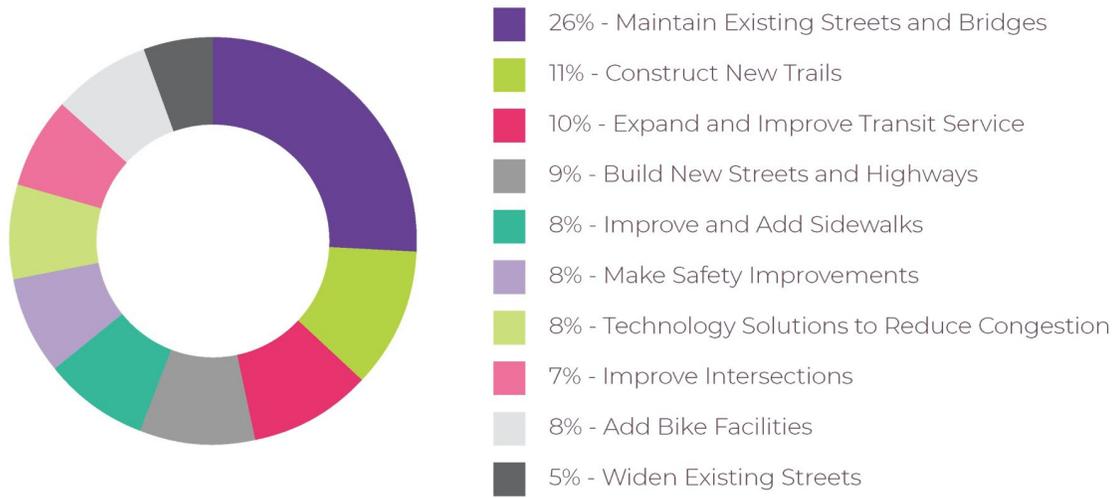
The project website was refreshed for Phase 2 Outreach with current information about the process required to organize the list of transportation projects. A second virtual presentation with audio file and closed captions was recorded to summarize the process of creating project lists, how projects are evaluated through a data-driven process, anticipated revenue and planning level cost estimates. The presentation also demonstrated how to complete the Phase 2 Public Survey, which was made available in English and Spanish.

The website contained English and Spanish public information packets to download with figures and tables of the City of Lincoln Roadway Projects, Lancaster County

Roadway Projects, and Trail Projects. The Phase 2 Public Survey asked how community members would distribute limited transportation funds (**Figure 3.5**).

Respondents also selected their five most important projects from each of the three categories (City Roadway, County Roadway, and Trails) and shared why those projects were important to them. Community members were again directed to the website content and survey through social media postings, a press release, e-blast to 4,516 recipients (35% open rate), and encouragement from the Community Committee and focus group participants. The Phase 2 Public Survey was completed by 203 community members.

Figure 3.5 Public Survey and Focus Group Distribution of Transportation Funding

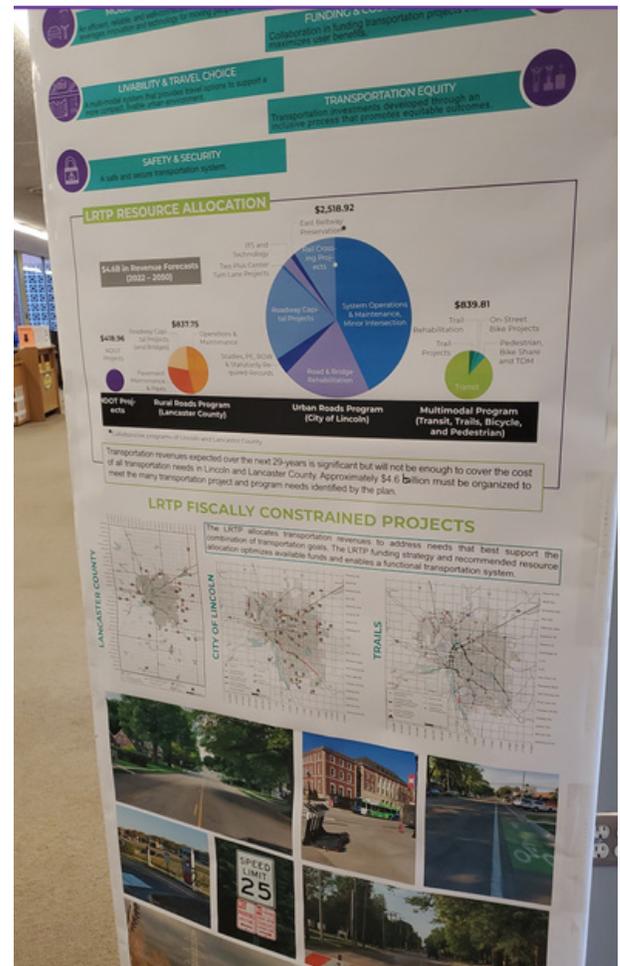


Phase 3: Validation

The third and final phase of public input included three open house events and a virtual public meeting which were all coordinated with PlanForward public outreach. The draft Comprehensive Plan and L RTP documents were completed and hosted on a shared virtual meeting website for community members to review and confirm that the proposed plans reflect what was heard from the community. Lincoln L RTP website content was also updated and included a forwarding link to the virtual meeting website. The meeting dates, location and times were advertised in the Lincoln Journal Star and on the City of Lincoln Government social media. Kiosk information was shared at five libraries within the City.

The virtual public meeting was viewed 1,260 times. The three in-person open house events were attended by 34 community members who viewed, discussed with planning staff, and provided written comments about the draft plans. The community conversation that occurred on social media generated approximately 210 Facebook and Twitter comments. All comments and responses as

well as Agency review comments are summarized in **Appendix B** for reference.



Social Media Community Conversation

- Continue to prioritize maintenance operations.
- Continue to prioritize efficient north-south and east-west corridors.
- Continue to prioritize efficient north-south and east-west corridors.
- Continue to prioritize planning for the East Beltway.
- Spend sales tax funding wisely and according to designed purpose.

Open House and Virtual Meeting Comments

- Maintaining the transportation system while trying to find additional funding to do more projects was encouraged.
- More advance work on major arterials in new developments was recommended to minimize disruption once development occurs.
- A roundabout was encouraged to be considered at NW 1st and Fletcher Road.
- The Lincoln on the Move sales tax funding was positively recognized and the idea of continuing it or expanding it beyond 2025 was suggested.
- A comment suggested the next major southern east-west trail ling should be along Saltillo Road when it is upgraded from two lanes.
- A suggestion was made by a commenter for the City to pave or change maintenance practice of unpaved roads inside the City limits.
- A suggestion was made to find more funding to implement more projects, especially alternative mode projects.
- A comment was made about the lack of 4-lane continuity north-south should be resolved along 27th Street.

- A concern was raised about emergency response times for fire and ambulance vehicles during congested traffic conditions.
- A concern about East O Street was raised.
- A concern about StarTran operating days and hours was provided.
- A recommendation was made to raise the priority of the South 68th Street Projects between Norris school campus and the City of Hickman.
- A grouping of concerned comments was made about projects in northwest Lincoln, their justification, and the potential to encourage leapfrog residential development.
- A comment was made to continue increasing mode-choice options such as bike, bus and autonomous electric shuttle.
- The Transportation Element of the draft Comprehensive Plan received public comments with various recommendations.

Virtual Meeting Survey Questions

The public was asked to:

- Rate how well the Vision, Goals and Policies reflect the transportation needs and outlook of the community, and
- Rate how well the funding strategy reflect input provided by the community.

Both questions received too few responses (four and seven respectively) to make any specific conclusions. No responses indicated that enough transportation funding was available. Funding is a concern and some perceive that additional funding is required, not just recommended.

Public Engagement Stakeholders

Community Committee

The PlanForward Community Committee supplemented direct input received from the public. Presentations and discussions were coordinated with the Community Committee approximately every other month. Their participation recognizes and upholds the important link between the Comprehensive Plan and transportation planning. The Community Committee was asked to represent the general public's interests. All content included with the LRTP was presented and discussed with the Community Committee, and their input is reflected in the plan recommendations. Presentations were made to the Community Committee on the following dates:

- March 26, 2020
- April 30, 2020
- August 27, 2020
- December 10, 2020
- April 29, 2021
- May 20, 2021
- August 26, 2021

Focus Groups

Invitations were sent to 138 community members to participate in one of 10 focus groups organized for September 2020 to reflect the diversity of community interests, disciplines, and needs. Participants were encouraged to consider the needs of the groups they represented when answering questions about the transportation goals, challenges, and opportunities. Through interactive presentation and survey resources, the 10 focus group sessions generated thoughtful discussion and keen insight that reflected a diversity of thoughts and values within the community. The

following list represents those who participated in the focus groups:

- Development community
- Bicycle/pedestrian groups
- Freight interests
- Neighborhood associations
- Downtown interests
- Transit/human services
- Institutions (medical and academic)
- Business community
- Healthy living & environmental
- Multicultural and diversity

Focus group participants were from homogenous groups, reflecting participants with similar interests. Though differences among individuals are inherent, the way the focus groups rated goals helps to understand influence and driving initiatives found within the community. **Figure 3.6** is useful to share how these rankings differ and how the average of all focus group responses cannot fully reflect all the diverse views and interests of those impacted by the LRTP. Focus group participants also offered substantial input used to develop the Policies and Action Steps described in **Chapter 8**.

Focus group participants were invited to a second set of meetings in March 2021. Participants signed up for one of six time slots to allow individuals from different interest group areas to be comingled for these discussions. A summary of Phase 1 public input prompted discussion about the different community perspectives. The LRTP project identification and evaluation was also shared with specific attention to how priority projects identified through the public survey would be integrated into project scoring. The focus groups then discussed potential action steps proposed to support the LRTP goals and transportation policies being developed for PlanForward. Discussion was helpful to clarify action steps described in **Chapter 8**.

Figure 3.6 Goals Ranked by Focus Groups and the Public

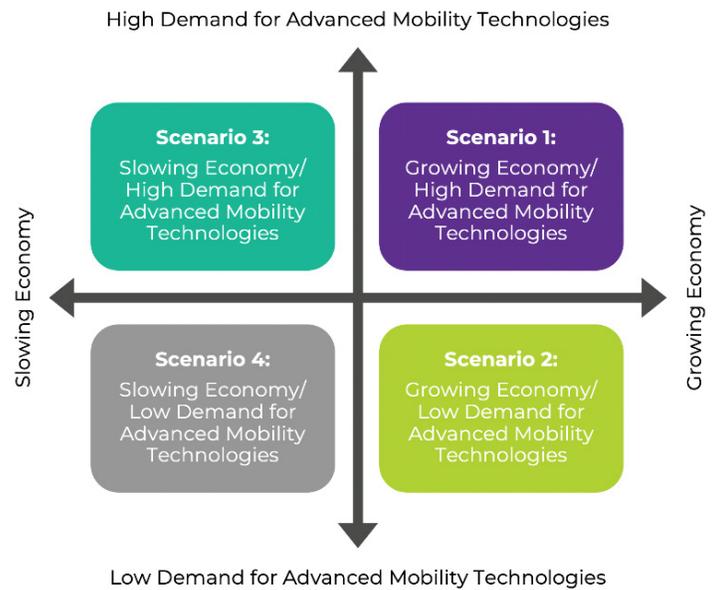


Scenario Planning

A scenario planning workshop was facilitated for 25 planning team members and a selection of individuals from the Community Committee and focus groups. This workshop was designed to gain input about the potential impact of, and certainty associated with, mobility as a service, transportation electrification, driverless cars, demographic shifts, policy implications, mode choices, land use, work from home, delivery economy, and funding and the economy. A summary of the workshop is included as **Appendix B, Attachment B-4**.

Participants considered a planning horizon of 2050 and a range of potential futures based on (1) health of the economy and (2) demand for advanced mobility technologies, including connected, automated, shared and electric forms of moving goods and people. This exercise resulted in the four future scenarios shown on **Figure 3.7**. Common themes identified during breakout discussions were documented to support the eight goals and a variety of action steps included in **Chapter 8**.

Figure 3.7 Four Future Workshop Scenarios for 2050



After a discussion about the range of influential forces that may impact transportation and mobility in Lincoln and Lancaster County, participants were distributed to breakout rooms to discuss

opportunities and implications of the scenario they were tasked to consider. The input was used to compare against LRTP goals. After discussing the input from each scenario, participants were sent back to breakout rooms to discuss strategies and policies to address the opportunities and implications they identified. The strategies and policies were used to inform the action steps in **Chapter 8**.

Key Themes of Public Input

Substantial input was provided by community members who invested their time to learn about the planning process and to answer questions that would help the Lincoln MPO establish priorities, policies, and ultimately investment strategies for transportation. The key themes listed below highlight some continued and some new themes relevant to the 2050 LRTP Update:

- **Technology** is a continued theme that generates both excitement and some concern. Intelligent transportation that supports vehicle-to-vehicle and vehicle-to-system communication is developing rapidly and will modify travel demands. Technology should improve travel efficiency. Technology advances must also improve safety for all users, not just cars, and should be trialed for implementation where feasible.
 - **Growth** is a continued theme and opportunities to capitalize on more infill along existing corridors while still meeting the needs of edge growth are recognized. To meet the needs of all residents, a variety of affordable housing options throughout the
- community must be supported by safe and accessible transportation options, not just personal vehicles.
- **Maintenance** of existing roads and bridges is a consistent theme shared by the public comment, the Community Committee, the focus groups, and scenario planning. Ongoing maintenance and completing deferred maintenance will continue to remain a top priority for the public. Communication about maintenance projects will need to be emphasized with the community.
- **Environmental** awareness is an integral part of transportation planning, but its emergence as a new key theme of public input stems from the recent work to establish the Lincoln Climate Action Plan. Development of that plan engaged a broad group of stakeholders who catalyzed strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Many strategies, such as electrification of fleets and reduction of single occupancy vehicle trips by providing active transportation and transit options, reflect the focus needed for transportation investments.
- **Equity** is a desired focus for guiding transportation planning. A national discussion about equitable transportation has begun to shape local conversations. All LRTP goals should strive to achieve equitable outcomes and support a thriving community. Access to a supportive transit system and safe Complete Streets (see below) is specifically important for underserved and overburdened community members, which aligns with the new Transportation Equity Goal.

- **Funding** is a continued theme necessary to construct and maintain the multimodal transportation system. Public input about funding continues to encourage investments necessary to improve existing roadway conditions and be more proactive with maintenance. Infrastructure that supports edge growth is becoming more expensive and should be coordinated efficiently. This includes a future East Beltway. Funding alternatives to the gas tax will soon be more necessary for the community, and options should be communicated.
- **Complete Streets** is an emerging theme that is encouraged to expand and support more active transportation, specifically the on-street bicycle network and trail system. Most community members desire a street system that supports the mobility needs of all people and neighborhoods. Other community members highlight the challenge of identifying funding to support these improvements without eroding roadway construction and maintenance funding.
- **Travel Patterns** experienced a significant change during the COVID-19 pandemic. Work and education from home requirements created once in lifetime changes to trips for work, shopping, and services. Explosive growth in delivery on-demand and freight delivery also introduced new variables for travel demand. These changes were not perceived to be permanent, but some aspects are anticipated to continue. Planning for future travel demands should reflect these shifting behaviors.

