

TranPlanMT 2021

Public Involvement Survey



MONTANA
Department of Transportation

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Survey Analysis
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State of Montana Department
of Transportation

Bureau of Business and Economic Research
University of Montana—Missoula

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of the 2021 TranPlanMT Public Involvement Survey is to examine Montanans' perceptions and opinions regarding:

1. The current condition of the state transportation system;
2. Possible actions that could improve the state transportation system; and
3. The quality of service the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) provides to its customers.

The survey was conducted by the Bureau of Business and Economic Research (BBER) at the University of Montana—Missoula, and resulted in 1,160 responses to household questionnaires sent out between June 1 and August 27, 2021.

2021 SNAPSHOT

In 2021, Montanans were:

- Moderately satisfied with the state's overall transportation systems;
- The most satisfied with the physical condition of Montana's airports; and
- The least satisfied with the state's local transit bus services.

In term of service availability:

- The most satisfied with availability of air transportation to destinations outside Montana; and
- The least satisfied with the availability of passenger rail service.

Regarding transportation system problems:

- Road pavement conditions are considered a problem by the most respondents, followed by traffic congestion; and
- Adequate road signage and air quality impacts from road maintenance are considered problems by the fewest respondents.

Montanans prioritize the following the highest for their potential to improve the state's transportation system:

- Road pavement conditions;
- Wildlife crossings and barriers; and
- Keeping the public informed and interstate and major highways.

Close to three-fourths of Montanans feel they receive about \$200-\$260 or more per year in value from the state transportation system. If overall funding for MDT were to decrease, survey respondents prioritize the following for budget cuts:

- Bicycle pathways;
- Pedestrian walkways;
- Local transit buses; and
- Rest areas.

Among the communications tools used by MDT, the following were deemed the most useful:

- Variable message highway signs;
- Websites, social media, mobile apps; and
- Radio and television.

Additionally:

- Two-thirds of respondents think a primary seat belt law in Montana would save lives; and
- Eighty-six percent of respondents think that speed limits in work zones are either too high or just right.
- Overall customer service and performance grades were the same as in 2019, in the B to C range, and
- One-third of adult Montanans said they would be willing to consider purchasing an electric vehicle as their next vehicle purchase.

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

METHODS SUMMARY

The 2021 TranPlanMT Public Involvement Survey is a household survey that has been conducted biennially since 1997. Its purpose is to examine Montanans' perceptions and opinions regarding:

1. The current condition of the state transportation system;
2. Possible actions that could improve the state transportation system; and
3. The quality of service Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) provides to its customers.

The survey is designed to help MDT policy-makers and planners examine the efficiency, capacity and flexibility of Montana's transportation system to meet current needs and future demands.

The mail-administered survey is one of several MDT public involvement processes. Based on a representative sample of Montana residents, MDT staff can assess public opinion and, thanks to availability over time, monitor trends.

This report constitutes Volume 1 of the 2021 TranPlanMT Public Involvement Survey report. It contains the complete survey analysis to all questions on the survey questionnaire. Volume 2 contains tabulated responses to all survey questions, broken out by respondent characteristics.

Survey Improvements

For each round of the TranPlanMT surveys MDT carefully reviews methods used and questions asked to find opportunities for improvement. In the 2021 iteration of the TranPlanMT surveys MDT identified new information needs that resulted in adding four new questions to the survey. MDT's new information needs included:

1. data about the willingness of Montanans to purchase electric vehicles,
2. data regarding the most important elements of customer service.

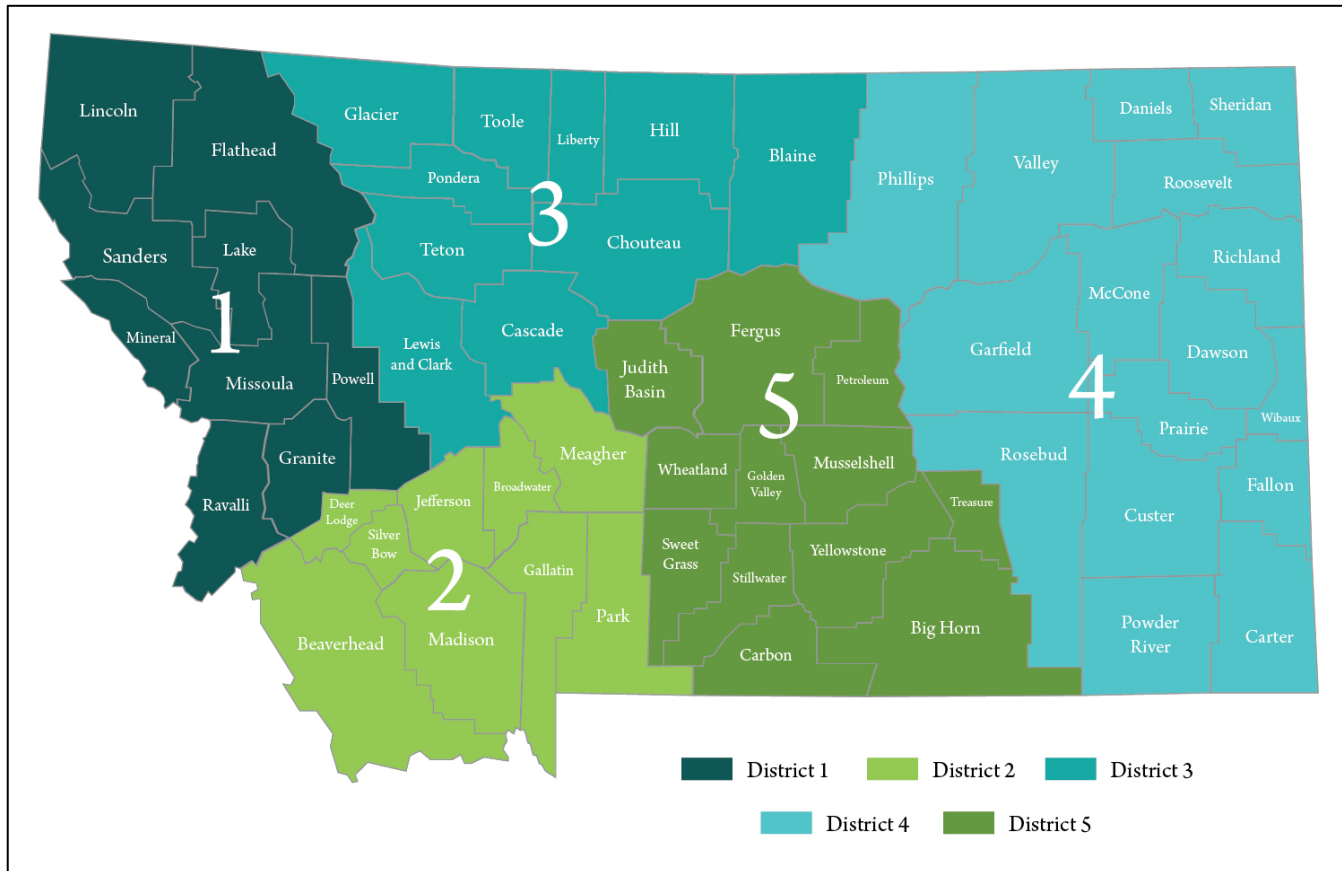
The Respondents

Table 1.1, below, describes the survey respondents. Readers may note that in 2021 the weighted response frequencies published below refer to the total Montana age 18+ population represented by the survey responses. This does not represent a change in weighting methods. Instead, referring to the total population represented by the survey results helps readers understand the meaning of the findings and makes it easier for readers to compare the weighted proportions of survey respondents to proportions reported by an outside “gold standard” like the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey.

Table 1.1 2021 Survey respondent demographic characteristics

Characteristic	Unweighted Responses		Weighted Responses		
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	
Sex	Male	579	50%	411,053	50%
	Female	581	50%	411,210	50%
Age	18-34	96	8%	232,372	28%
	35-49	197	17%	183,308	23%
	50-64	337	29%	215,872	26%
	65+	530	46%	190,711	23%
Region	Missoula	219	19%	267,618	32%
	Butte	252	21%	165,805	20%
	Great Falls	231	20%	161,764	20%
	Glendive	217	19%	60,217	8%
	Billings	241	21%	166,859	20%
Race	White	1,050	90%	731,136	89%
	American Indian	90	8%	63,373	8%
	Other	20	2%	27,754	3%
Household income	< \$50,000	414	36%	376,596	46%
	\$50,000 - \$99,999	471	41%	261,480	32%
	\$100,000+	275	23%	184,187	22%
Educational attainment	High school or less	223	19%	302,538	37%
	Some college or 2-year degree	432	37%	279,309	34%
	Bachelor’s degree or higher	505	44%	240,416	29%

Figure 1.1 MDT's transportation regions



DISTRICT	UNWEIGHTED RESPONSES	WEIGHTED RESPONSES
District 1—Missoula	219	267,618
District 2—Butte	252	165,805
District 3—Great Falls	231	161,764
District 4—Glendive	217	60,217
District 5—Billings	241	166,859

CHAPTER 2 ATTITUDES ABOUT MONTANA'S TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

"HOW WOULD YOU RATE YOUR SATISFACTION WITH THE OVERALL TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM IN MONTANA?"

Montana's transportation system was ranked on a scale from 0 to 10, with 0 representing *very unsatisfied* and 10 representing *very satisfied*. The psychological midpoint of the 0-10 scale is 5. The distance of the mean score above or below 5 is a measure of the strength of satisfaction or dissatisfaction. When asked about satisfaction with the overall transportation system, the mean response was 5.7, indicating moderate satisfaction (Table 2.1).

Table 2.1 Level of satisfaction with the overall transportation system in Montana

	Mean	95% confidence interval		N
		Lower limit	Upper limit	
Overall transportation system	5.7	5.5	5.9	1,137

“HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE PHYSICAL CONDITION OF THE FOLLOWING ITEMS IN MONTANA?”

Each component of Montana’s transportation system was rated using the same 0-10 scale. Table 2.2 shows the mean for each component with an upper and lower bound. Differences in satisfaction between components are statistically significant when confidence levels do not overlap.

- With a mean score of 6.9, airports ranked the highest in terms of satisfaction.
- Interstate highways and rest areas with mean scores of 6.6 and 6.5, respectively, also ranked high in terms of satisfaction.
- Montanans reported the least satisfaction with local transit buses (5.3).

All items have mean satisfaction scores above 5, indicating the majority of Montanans are satisfied with the physical condition of transportation system components.

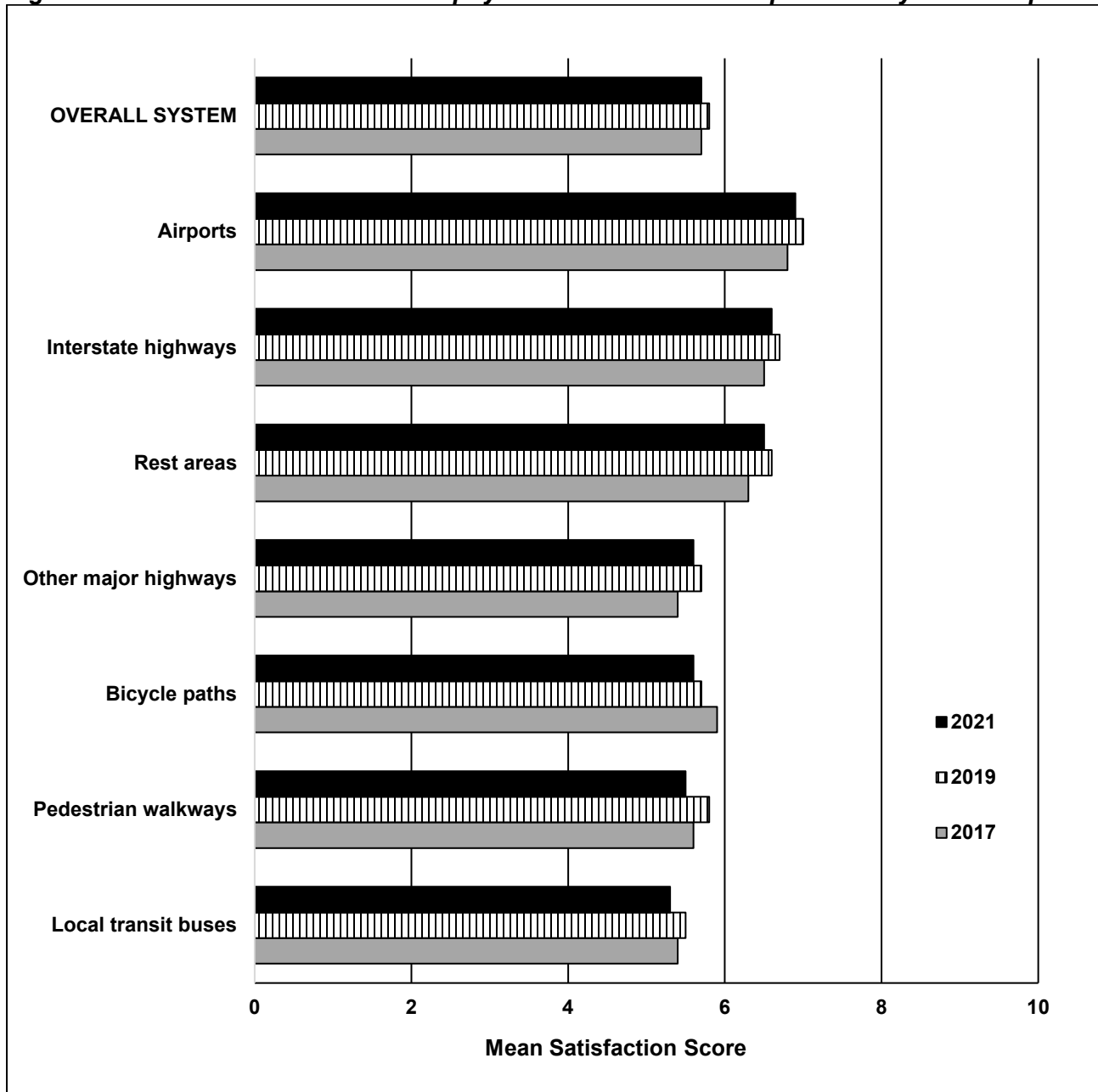
Table 2.2 Satisfaction with physical condition of transportation system components

	95% CONFIDENCE INTERVAL			N
	Mean	Lower limit	Upper limit	
Airports	6.9	6.7	7.1	1,126
Interstate highways	6.6	6.4	6.8	1,150
Rest areas	6.5	6.3	6.7	1,143
Other major highways	5.6	5.4	5.8	1,147
Bicycle paths	5.6	5.4	5.8	1,121
Pedestrian walkways	5.5	5.3	5.8	1,130
Local transit buses	5.3	5.1	5.6	1,123

Trends

As shown in Figure 2.1 there was little change between 2019 and 2021. In all three survey years, the satisfaction with the physical condition of airports was rated the highest. Satisfaction with the physical condition of local transit buses was rated lowest in 2021.

Figure 2.1 Trends in satisfaction with physical condition of transportation system components

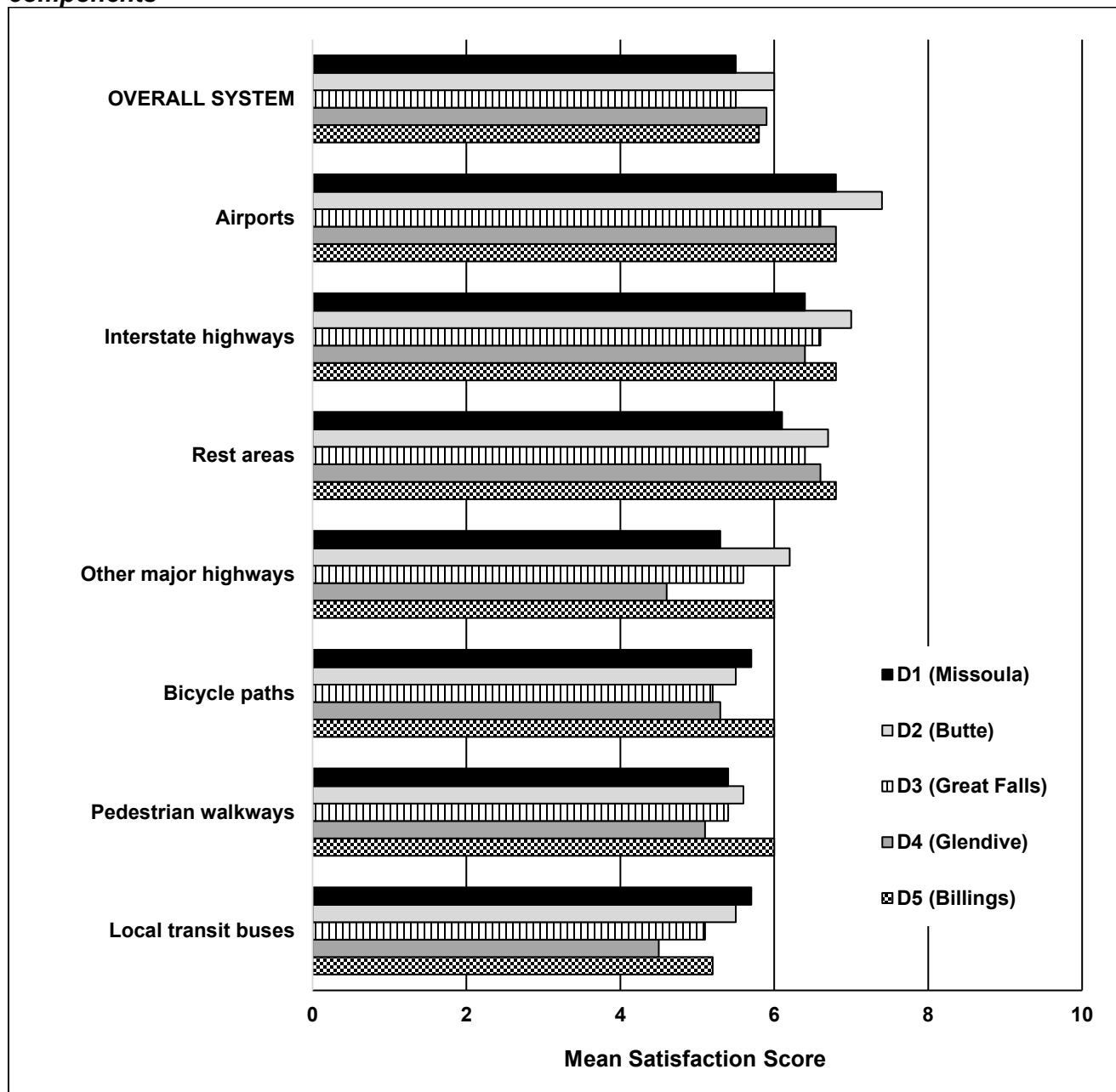


Districts

The means presented in Figure 2.2 compare satisfaction across MDT transportation districts. Generally, there is relative consensus in ranking between the districts regarding specific aspects of the physical condition of the transportation system.

- District 1 (Missoula) was more satisfied with local transit buses than the other four districts.
- District 2 (Butte) was more satisfied with the condition of airports, interstate highways and other major highways than the other four districts.
- District 3 (Great Falls) was most satisfied as a district with airports and interstate highways.
- District 4 (Glendive) was more satisfied with the physical condition of the overall system than the majority of the other districts.
- District 5 (Billings) was more satisfied with bicycle paths and pedestrian walkways than the other four districts.

Figure 2.2 District comparison of satisfaction with physical condition of transportation system components



“HOW WOULD YOU RATE YOUR SATISFACTION WITH THE AVAILABILITY OF SERVICE FOR THE FOLLOWING ITEMS?”

Respondents were asked to use the same 0-10 scale to rank their satisfaction with the availability of several transportation system service components. As mentioned above, 0 represents “very unsatisfied” and 10 represents “very satisfied” (Table 2.3).

- Satisfaction with the availability of air transportation to destinations outside of Montana ranked the highest, with a mean of 5.9.
- Satisfaction with the availability of freight rail services, local bus or van services and air transportation within Montana reflected a neutral level of satisfaction, ranked at 5.1, 5.0 and 5.0 respectively.
- Satisfaction with the availability of transit for the elderly or disabled (4.6), inter-city bus services (3.8), and passenger rail service (3.7) all ranked below 5, indicating varying levels of dissatisfaction.

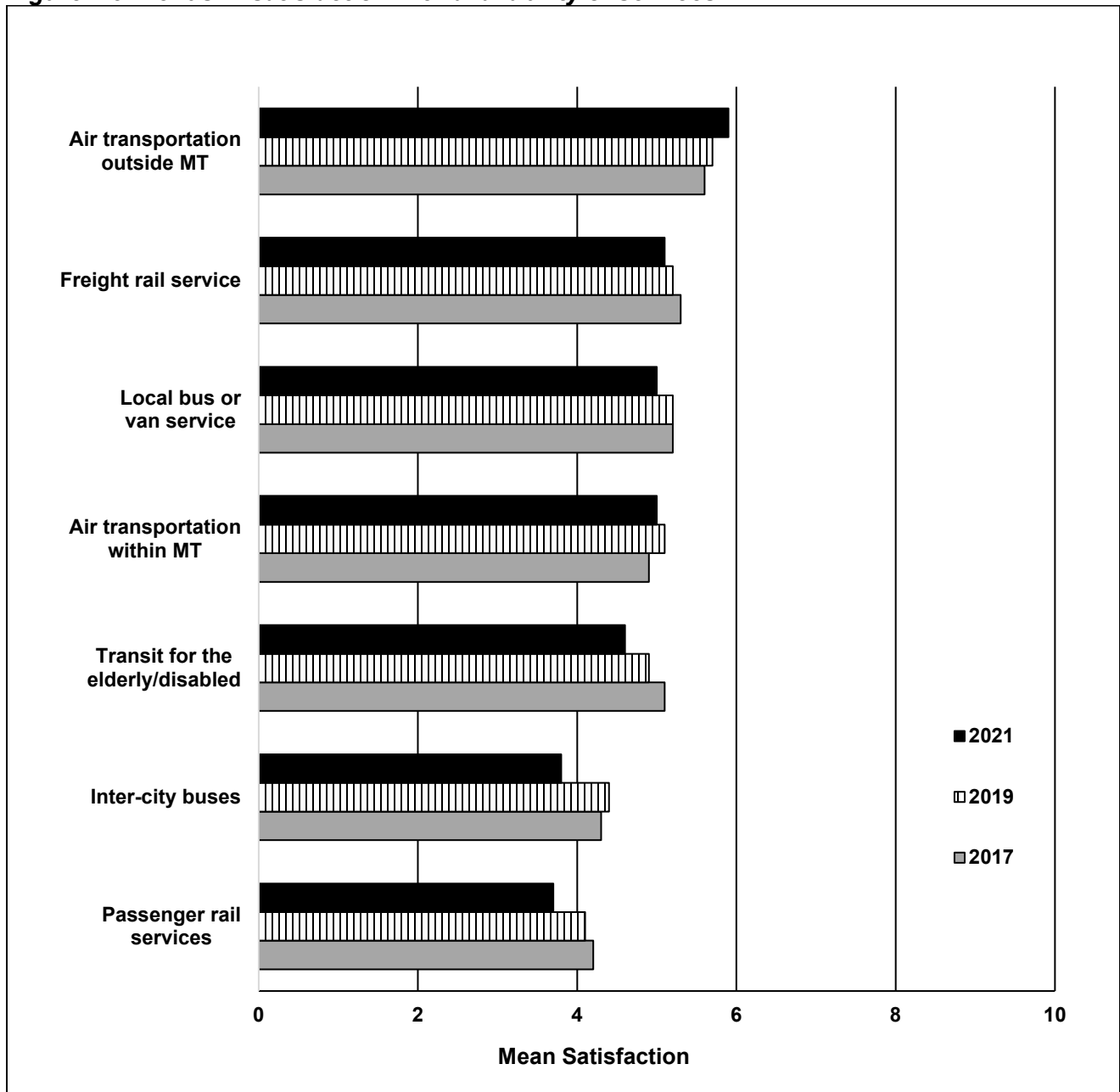
Table 2.3 Satisfaction with availability of services

	Mean	95% confidence interval		N
		Lower limit	Upper limit	
Air transportation outside Montana	5.9	5.7	6.2	1,031
Freight rail service	5.1	4.8	5.4	643
Local bus or van service	5.0	4.7	5.3	771
Air transportation within Montana	5.0	4.8	5.3	915
Transit for the elderly or disabled	4.6	4.3	4.9	758
Inter-city buses	3.8	3.6	4.1	745
Passenger rail service	3.7	3.4	4.0	819

Trends

When satisfaction levels with the availability of services are compared over time, there was consistency between the three survey years compared here when examining air transportation outside Montana, freight rail service and air transportation within Montana. Notable 2021 declines in satisfaction with the availability of services were evident when assessing local bus or van service, transit for the elderly or disabled, inter-city buses and passenger rail service (Figure 2.3).

Figure 2.3 Trends in satisfaction with availability of services

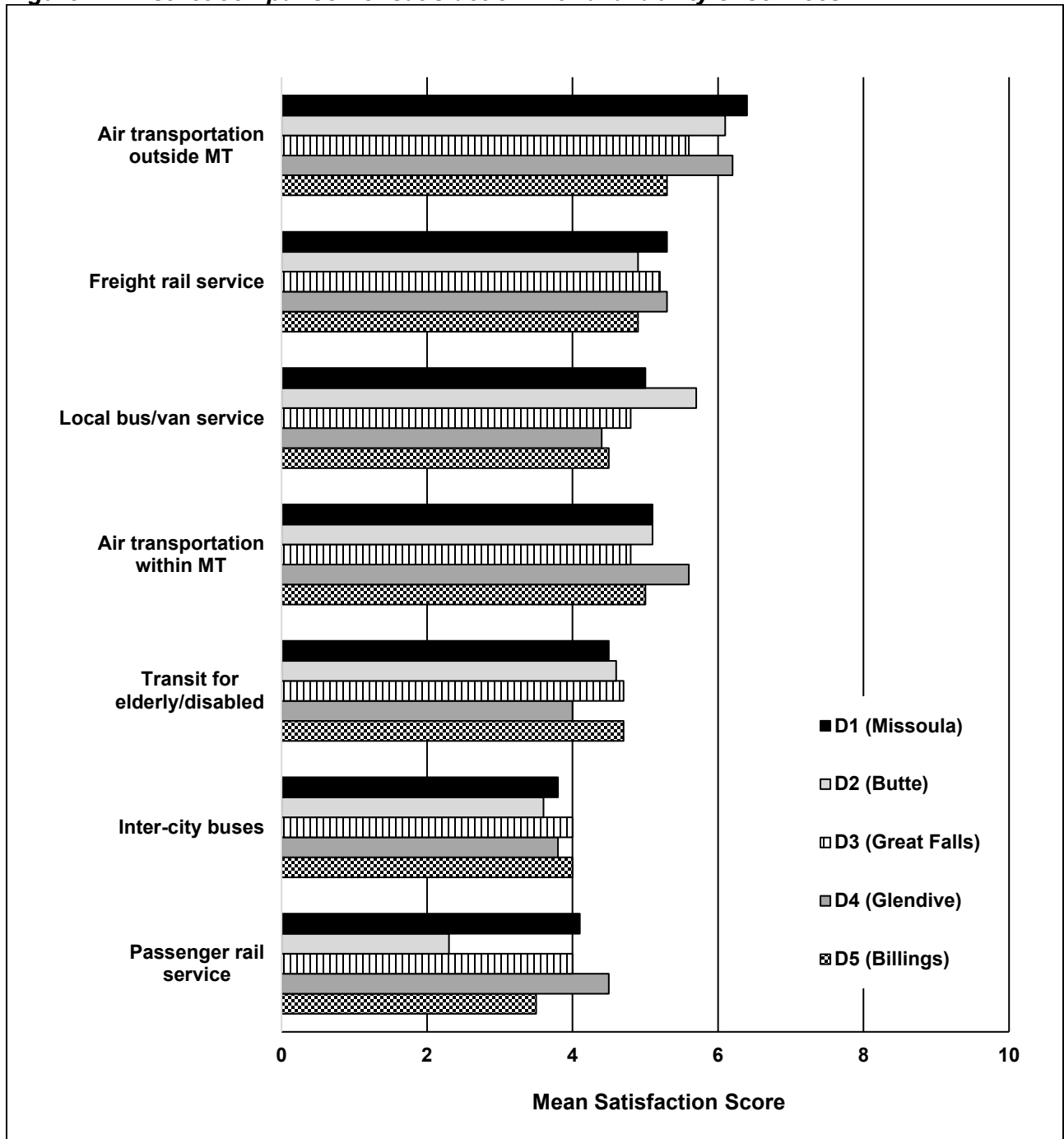


Districts

Figure 2.4 shows the mean levels of satisfaction with the availability of the same seven transportation services.

- District 1 (Missoula) was more satisfied with the availability of air transportation to destinations outside Montana than any of the other districts.
- District 2 (Butte) was most satisfied with the availability of air transportation to destinations outside Montana.
- District 3 (Great Falls) was least satisfied with inter-city buses and passenger rail service. However, this district was more satisfied than any other district with transit for the elderly and disabled.
- District 4 (Glendive) was more satisfied with air transportation within Montana than any other district.
- District 5 (Billings) was less satisfied with the availability of nearly all services, compared to other districts.

Figure 2.4 District comparison of satisfaction with availability of services



“HOW MUCH OF A PROBLEM IN MONTANA, IF AT ALL, ARE THE FOLLOWING?”

Montanans rated possible problems with aspects of the state transportation system on a scale from 1 to 4, where 1 represented *not a problem* and 4 represented a *serious problem* (Table 2.4).

- Overall, none of the problems listed were rated as being more than a moderate problem.
- Road pavement conditions were rated as a serious problem by 19 percent of respondents, and remains the highest ranked problem within the transportation system.
- Fifty-five percent rated adequate road signage as *not a problem*.
- At least one-third of respondents did not know if freight and economic vitality, or the ability to manage specific emergency situations constituted a problem.

Table 2.4 Montana transportation system problems

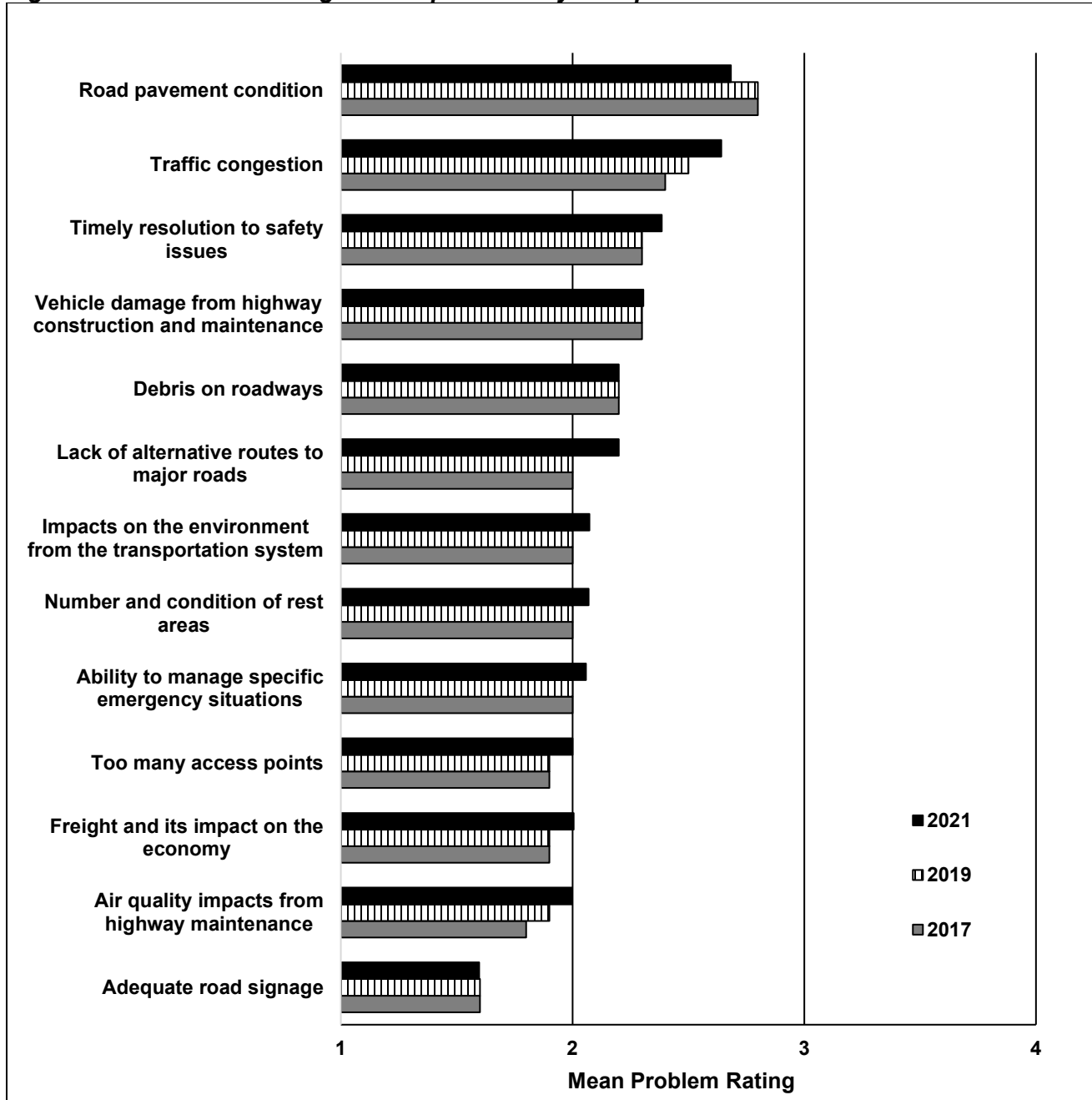
	Serious problem	Moderate problem	Small problem	Not a problem	Don't know	Mean	N
Road pavement condition	19%	38%	31%	9%	3%	2.7	1,142
Traffic congestion	17%	42%	28%	12%	2%	2.6	1,143
Timely resolution to safety issues	12%	24%	22%	18%	24%	2.4	1,130
Vehicle damage from highway construction and maintenance	9%	29%	35%	19%	8%	2.3	1,147
Debris on roadways	7%	26%	44%	18%	5%	2.2	1,146
Lack of alternative routes to major roads	7%	26%	33%	26%	8%	2.2	1,139
Impacts on the environment from the transportation system	10%	19%	22%	31%	18%	2.1	1,144
Number and condition of rest areas	9%	19%	25%	32%	15%	2.1	1,143
Ability to manage specific emergency situations	4%	19%	21%	23%	33%	2.1	1,140
Too many access points	7%	20%	30%	32%	11%	2.0	1,133
Freight and its impact on the economy	5%	15%	20%	24%	36%	2.0	1,139
Air quality impacts from highway maintenance	5%	20%	34%	30%	11%	2.0	1,143
Adequate road signage	3%	10%	29%	55%	3%	1.6	1,140

Note: Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Trends

When ranking the degree to which transportation system components constitute a problem, there is consistency between 2021, 2019 and 2017 results. Of some note is the small decline in the 2021 road pavement condition problem rating and the steady, three-year climb in the traffic congestion problem rating (Figure 2.5).

Figure 2.5 Trends in ranking of transportation system problems

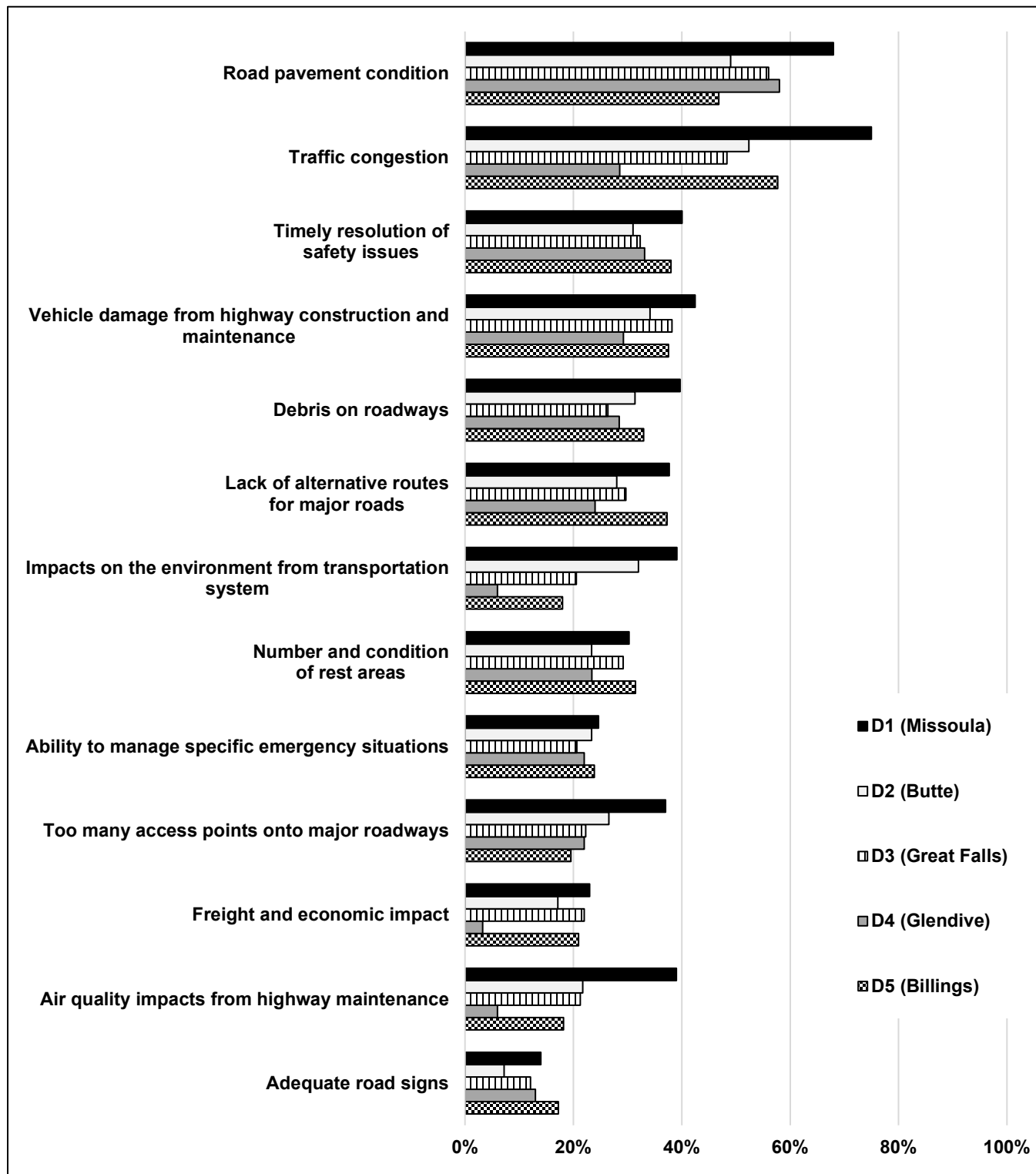


Districts

When compared across Montana transportation districts, there is variation in the problem ranking of various system components (Figure 2.6). However, road pavement condition and traffic congestion were the greatest problems across the districts with the exception of traffic congestion in District 4.

- In District 1 (Missoula), the greatest problems were thought to be traffic congestion (rated as a *moderate problem* or *serious problem* by 75% of respondents), followed by road pavement conditions (68%).
- In District 2 (Butte), the greatest problem was also thought to be traffic congestion (52%), followed by road pavement conditions (49%).
- In District 3 (Great Falls), the greatest problem was thought to be road pavement conditions as well (55%), followed by traffic congestion (48%).
- In District 4 (Glendive), the greatest problem as also road pavement condition (58%), followed by the timely resolution of safety issues (33%).
- In District 5 (Billings) as well, the greatest problem was traffic congestion (58%), followed by road pavement conditions (47%).

Figure 2.6 District comparison of ranking of transportation system problems



“WHAT PRIORITY SHOULD MDT ASSIGN THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS?”

Respondents were asked to use a scale from 1 to 5 to prioritize 15 possible actions that could be undertaken to improve Montana’s transportation system. A value of 1 represented *very low priority*, while a value of 5 represented *very high priority*. As indicated in Table 2.4, previously, most transportation system issues are considered small problems; however, Montanans assign a medium priority or a somewhat high priority to addressing these problems (Table 2.5).

Table 2.5 Prioritization of actions for improving the Montana transportation system

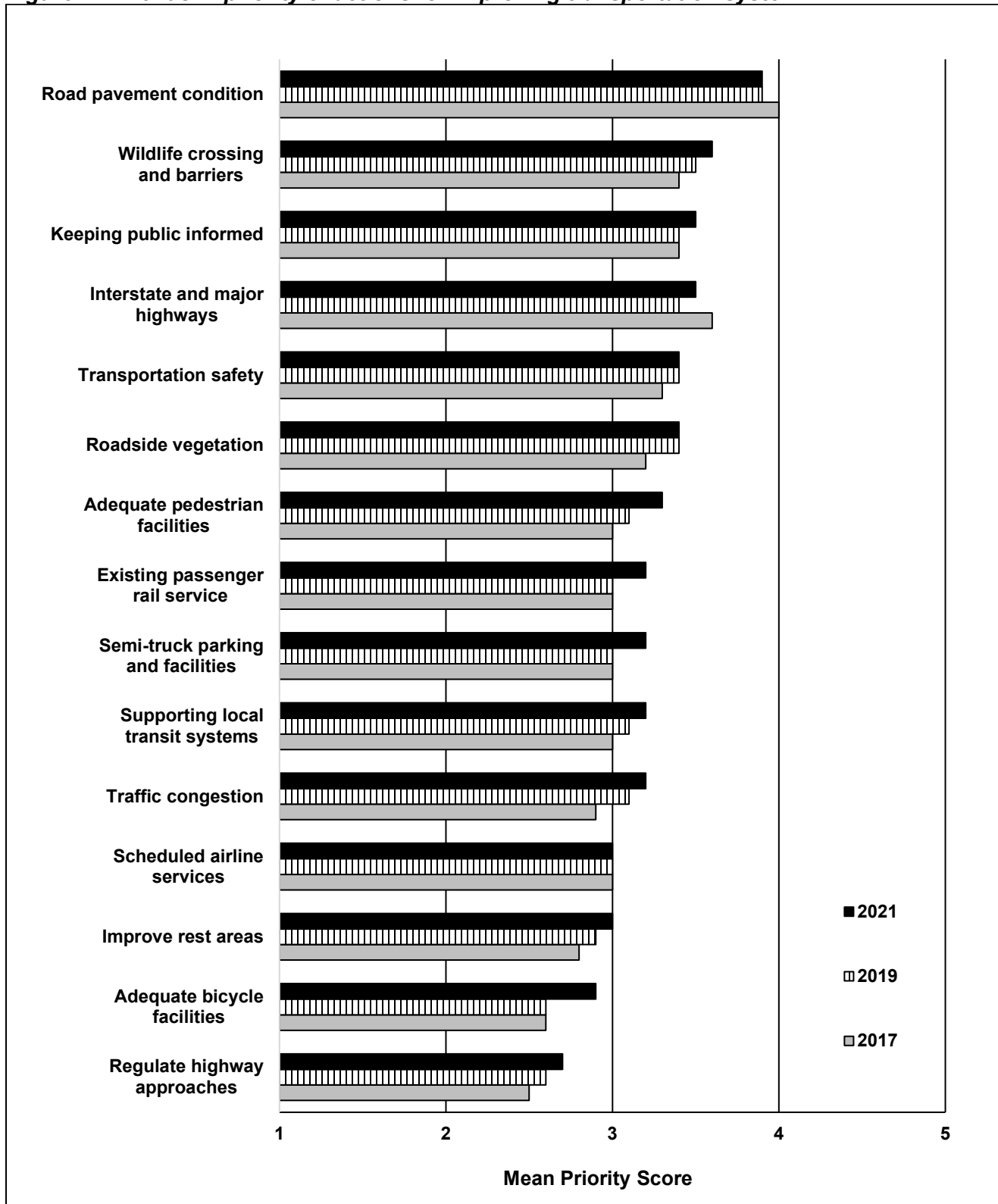
	Very high priority	Somewhat high priority	Medium priority	Somewhat low priority	Very low priority	Mean	N
Road pavement condition	29%	40%	25%	5%	1%	3.9	1,116
Wildlife crossing and barriers	31%	28%	24%	13%	6%	3.6	1,121
Keeping the public informed	20%	31%	34%	11%	4%	3.5	1,123
Interstate and major highways	17%	32%	37%	12%	3%	3.5	1,122
Transportation safety	21%	27%	32%	13%	7%	3.4	1,120
Roadside vegetation	18%	30%	32%	14%	6%	3.4	1,126
Adequate pedestrian facilities	20%	27%	27%	19%	8%	3.3	1,126
Existing passenger rail service	23%	21%	24%	20%	12%	3.2	1,126
Semi-truck parking and facilities	15%	24%	37%	19%	6%	3.2	1,121
Supporting local transit systems	15%	25%	34%	16%	9%	3.2	1,122
Traffic congestion	16%	25%	32%	16%	11%	3.2	1,116
Scheduled airline services	16%	19%	31%	20%	15%	3.0	1,112
Improve rest areas	10%	21%	36%	23%	10%	3.0	1,123
Adequate bicycle facilities	11%	18%	27%	23%	21%	2.9	1,124
Regulate highway approaches	5%	18%	36%	25%	18%	2.7	1,124

Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Trends

Results for the 2021 survey were again consistent with those resulting from the 2019 survey. As was the case in previous years, road pavement conditions received the highest priority ranking of all the items listed, followed by wildlife crossings and barriers and then keeping the public informed and interstates and major highways. Adequate bicycle facilities and the regulation of highway approaches saw the lowest priority ranking. A number of other items received slightly higher priority rankings in 2021 compared to 2019. A few of these included wildlife crossings and barriers, keeping the public informed, interstate and major highways, pedestrian facilities and existing passenger rail. None of these changes were statistically significant (Figure 2.7).

Figure 2.7 Trends in priority of actions for improving transportation system

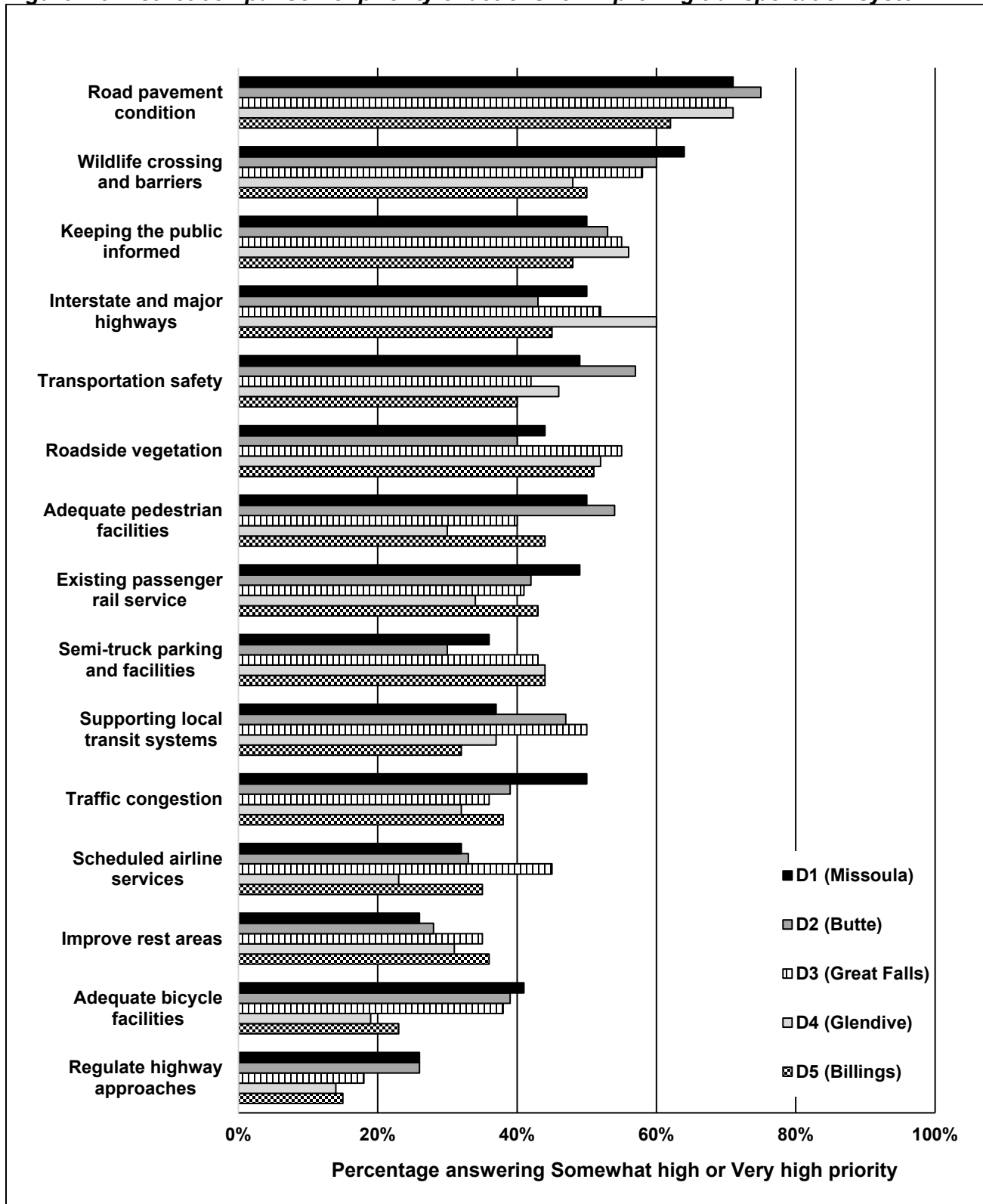


Districts

When compared across Montana transportation districts, there is consensus on some items, whereas other items see greater divergence. For example, keeping the public informed received a relatively uniform priority score across districts, compared to adequate pedestrian facilities and scheduled airline service, where the variation between districts was greater (Figure 2.8).

- Within District 1 (Missoula), the highest priority was given to maintaining road pavement conditions (71% ranked this item as *somewhat high priority* or *very high priority*), followed by wildlife crossings and barriers (64%).
- In District 2 (Butte), the highest priority was also given to maintaining road pavement conditions (75%), followed by wildlife crossings and barriers (60%) and transportation safety (57%).
- Respondents in District 3 (Great Falls) gave the highest priority to maintaining road pavement conditions (70%) as well, followed by wildlife crossings and barriers (58%), and then by keeping the public informed (55%) and taking appropriate measures with roadside vegetation (55%).
- Within District 4 (Glendive), the highest priority was also given to maintaining road pavement conditions (71%), followed by maintaining interstates and major highways (60%), and keeping the public informed (56%).
- Respondents in District 5 (Billings) also gave the highest priority to maintaining road pavement conditions (62%), followed by taking appropriate measures with roadside vegetation (51%) and wildlife crossings and barriers (50%).

Figure 2.8 District comparison of priority of actions for improving transportation system



CHAPTER 3 MDT SYSTEM FUNDING PRIORITIES

“WHAT VALUE DO YOU PERCEIVE GETTING FROM MONTANA’S TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM?”

The average Montanan pays between \$200 and \$260 per year in state and federal fuel taxes to support transportation infrastructure in the state. Survey respondents were asked if they felt they received greater or lesser value per year from the Montana transportation system (Table 3.1).

- Overall, about three-fourths of respondents indicated they receive about \$200-\$260 or more in value per year.
- In District 2 (Butte), 79 percent of respondents indicated they get about \$200-\$260 or more in value from the transportation system.
- More respondents in District 4 (Glendive) than in any of the other districts feel they get less value than \$200-\$260 per year.

Table 3.1 Perceived value from Montana’s transportation system

	More value	About \$200-\$260	Less value	N
Total sample	20%	56%	24%	1,106
District 1: Missoula	23%	53%	24%	209
District 2: Butte	23%	56%	21%	244
District 3: Great Falls	17%	54%	29%	219
District 4: Glendive	14%	47%	39%	206
District 5: Billings	15%	67%	18%	228

Note: Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.

“WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM ITEMS, IF ANY, SHOULD BE FUNDED AT A LOWER LEVEL?”

Respondents were also asked which aspects of the Montana transportation system, if any, they would like to see funded at a lower level if overall funding for MDT were to decrease (Table 3.2).

- With the exception of bicycle pathways and pedestrian walkways, the majority of respondents think the listed items should be funded at the same level as it is currently.
- The greatest percentage of respondents (60%) think bicycle pathways should be funded at a lower level.
- Some respondents ranked certain items to receive greater funding than current levels, with maintenance receiving the greatest percentage of such rankings.

Table 3.2 Funding priorities by transportation system component

	Fund at lower level	Fund at same level	Fund at higher level	N
Bicycle pathways	60%	26%	14%	1,105
Pedestrian walkways	42%	41%	17%	1,095
Local transit buses	32%	50%	17%	1,089
Rest areas	30%	60%	11%	1,092
Interstate highways	11%	70%	19%	1,098
Other major highways	8%	70%	22%	1,083
Maintenance	5%	60%	35%	1,087

Note: Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Survey respondents had the option to suggest additional areas where they prefer lower funding in the event that MDT faces overall reduced funding. About 5% of respondents suggested areas for reduced funding. The suggestions were not necessarily related to the Montana transportation system (Table 3.3).

Table 3.3 Other areas suggested for reduced funding

Suggested area for reduced funding	Unweighted number of responses
Other transportation-related items **	26
Non-transportation related items *	21
Suggested alternative transportation funding sources	11
Bicycle or pedestrian facilities	8
Do not decrease funding	7
MDT administration	5
Freight or passenger rail	5
Rest areas	2
Road surface sanding or de-icing chemicals	2
Road surface maintenance	1

* Variety of comments not related to MDT or its efforts.

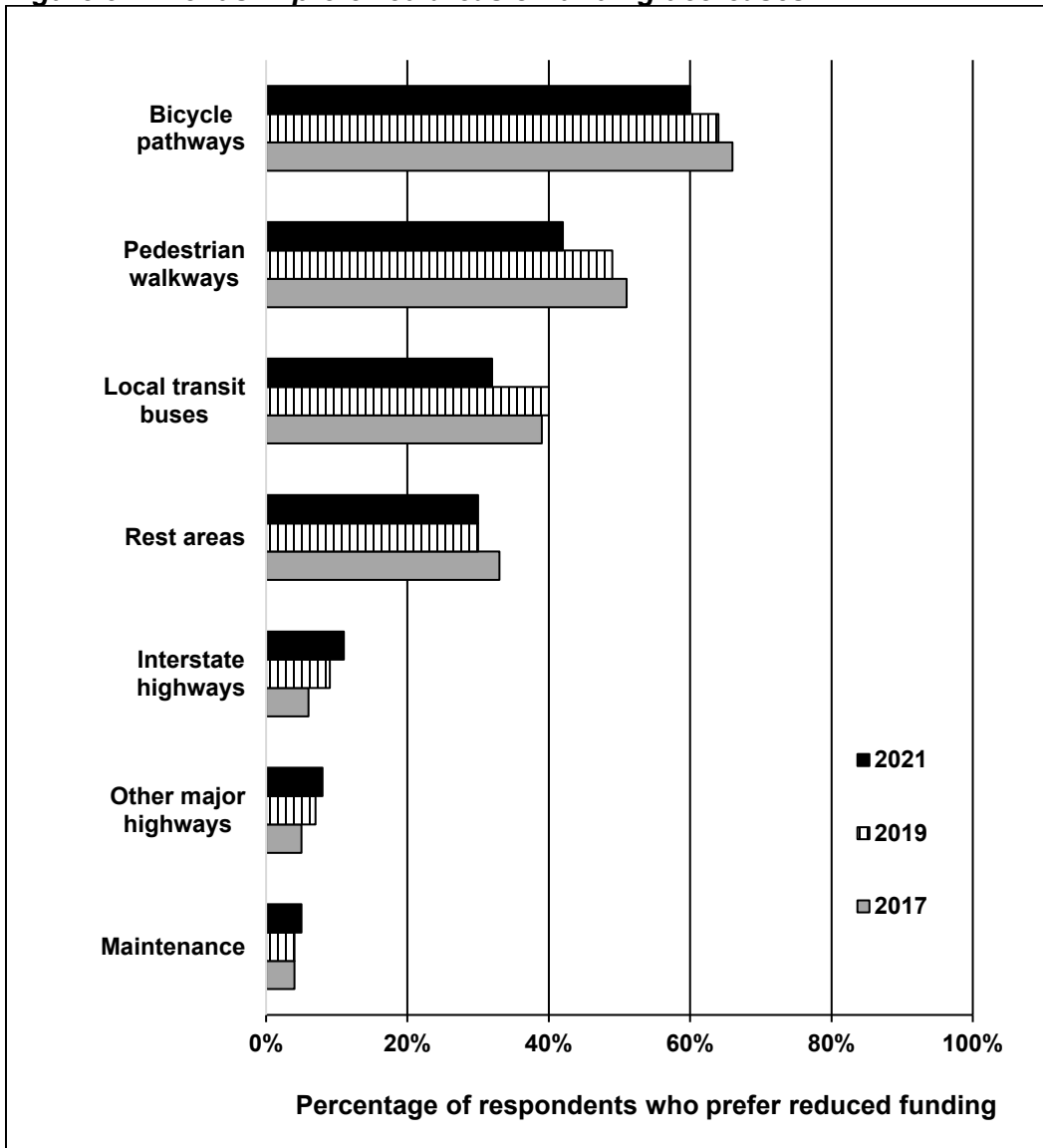
** Variety of transportation-related comments but unrelated to the question asked.

Trends

Since 2017, the relative order of preference for the various areas in which to decrease funding has not changed. While 2021 survey respondents had opinions that were similar to those in 2019 and 2017, in four budget items the proportion of Montanans who favor decreasing funding has slightly declined since 2017 (Figure 3.1). Those budget items are bicycle pathways, pedestrian walkways, local transit buses and rest areas.

- Bicycle pathways were favored for decreased funding by the greatest percentage of respondents since 2017.
- Preference for reducing funding for pedestrian walkways remained the second ranked choice for decreased funding since 2017.
- Since 2017, decreasing funding for interstate highways, other major highways and maintenance has been favored by less than 15% of Montanans.

Figure 3.1 Trends in preferred areas of funding decreases

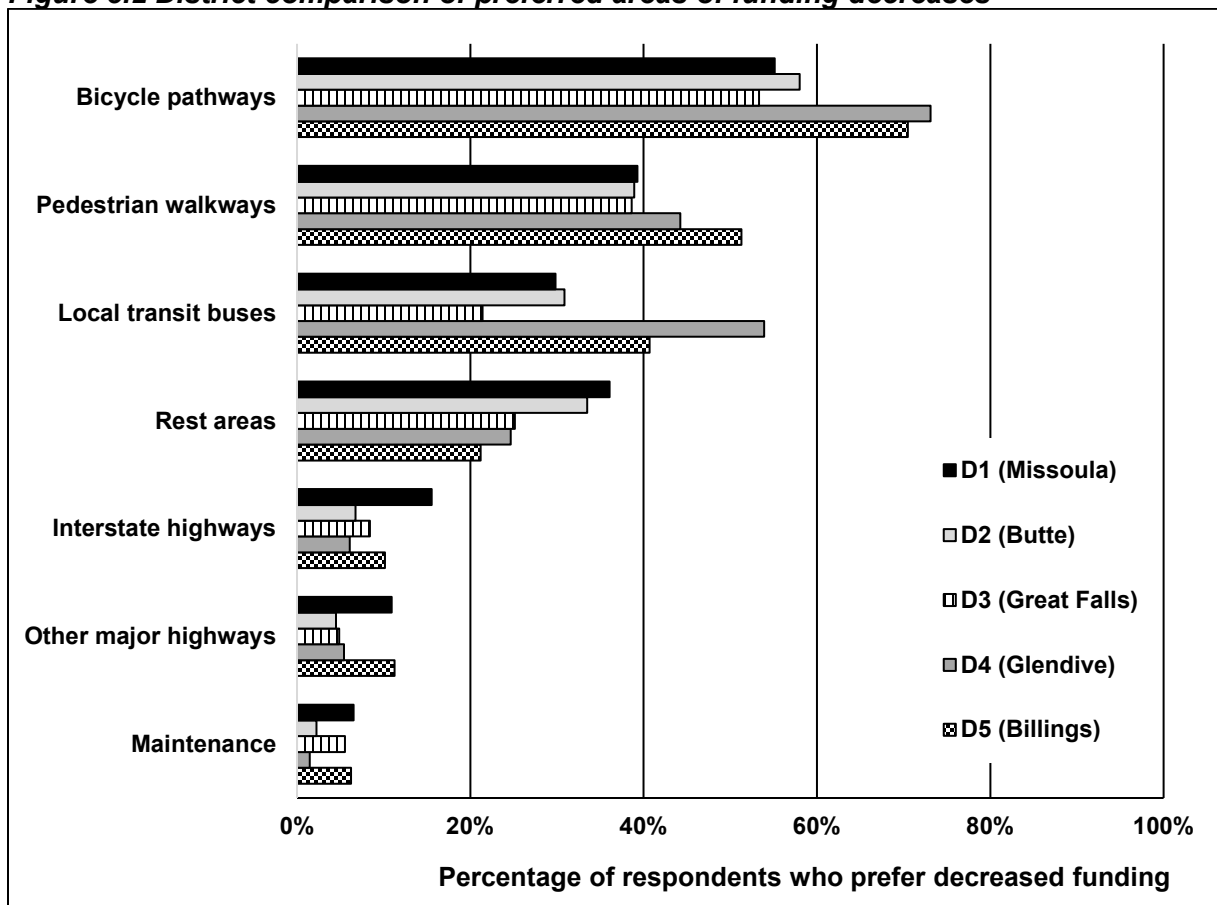


Districts

When comparing transportation districts, the relative order of preference for the various components to decrease funding is largely consistent across districts (Figure 3.2).

- District 1 (Missoula) had the greatest percentage of respondents who favored funding decreases for rest areas and interstate highways.
- District 2 (Butte) had the lowest percentage of respondents who favored funding decreases for other major highways.
- District 3 (Great Falls) had the lowest percentage of respondents who favored decreased funding for local transit buses.
- District 4 (Glendive) had the greatest percentage of respondents who favored funding decreases for bicycle pathways.
- District 5 (Billings) had the greatest percentage of respondents who wanted funding decreases for pedestrian walkways.

Figure 3.2 District comparison of preferred areas of funding decreases



CHAPTER 4 COMMUNICATION TOOLS

“HOW USEFUL ARE EACH OF THE FOLLOWING TOOLS TO HELP LEARN ABOUT MDT ACTIVITY IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES?”

Montana residents were asked to rate the usefulness of selected public communications tools used by MDT. Each tool was rated on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 represented *not at all useful* and 5 represented *extremely useful* (Table 4.1).

- Of the 10 tools listed, respondents ranked variable message highway signs and websites as the most useful, with 44 percent rating them as *very useful* or *extremely useful*.
- Radio and television, maps, and pictures and graphics were also found to be *moderately useful* or better.
- Local public meetings and newspapers were ranked the least useful with over half of respondents deeming them only *slightly useful* or *not at all useful*.

Table 4.1 Usefulness of MDT’s communications tools

	Extremely useful	Very useful	Moderately useful	Slightly useful	Not at all useful	Mean	N
Variable message highway signs	14%	30%	33%	14%	9%	3.3	1,095
Websites, social media, apps for mobile devices	14%	30%	27%	16%	14%	3.1	1,097
Radio and television	8%	31%	30%	19%	12%	3.0	1,099
Maps	10%	28%	29%	21%	13%	3.0	1,094
Pictures and graphics	8%	28%	34%	20%	10%	3.0	1,093
Special mailings	6%	24%	30%	24%	15%	2.8	1,097
Computer simulated displays	8%	20%	30%	25%	18%	2.7	1,079
Toll-free call in number	5%	18%	29%	26%	22%	2.6	1,092
Newspapers	3%	12%	29%	27%	29%	2.3	1,100
Public meetings in local communities	3%	11%	29%	30%	27%	2.3	1,087

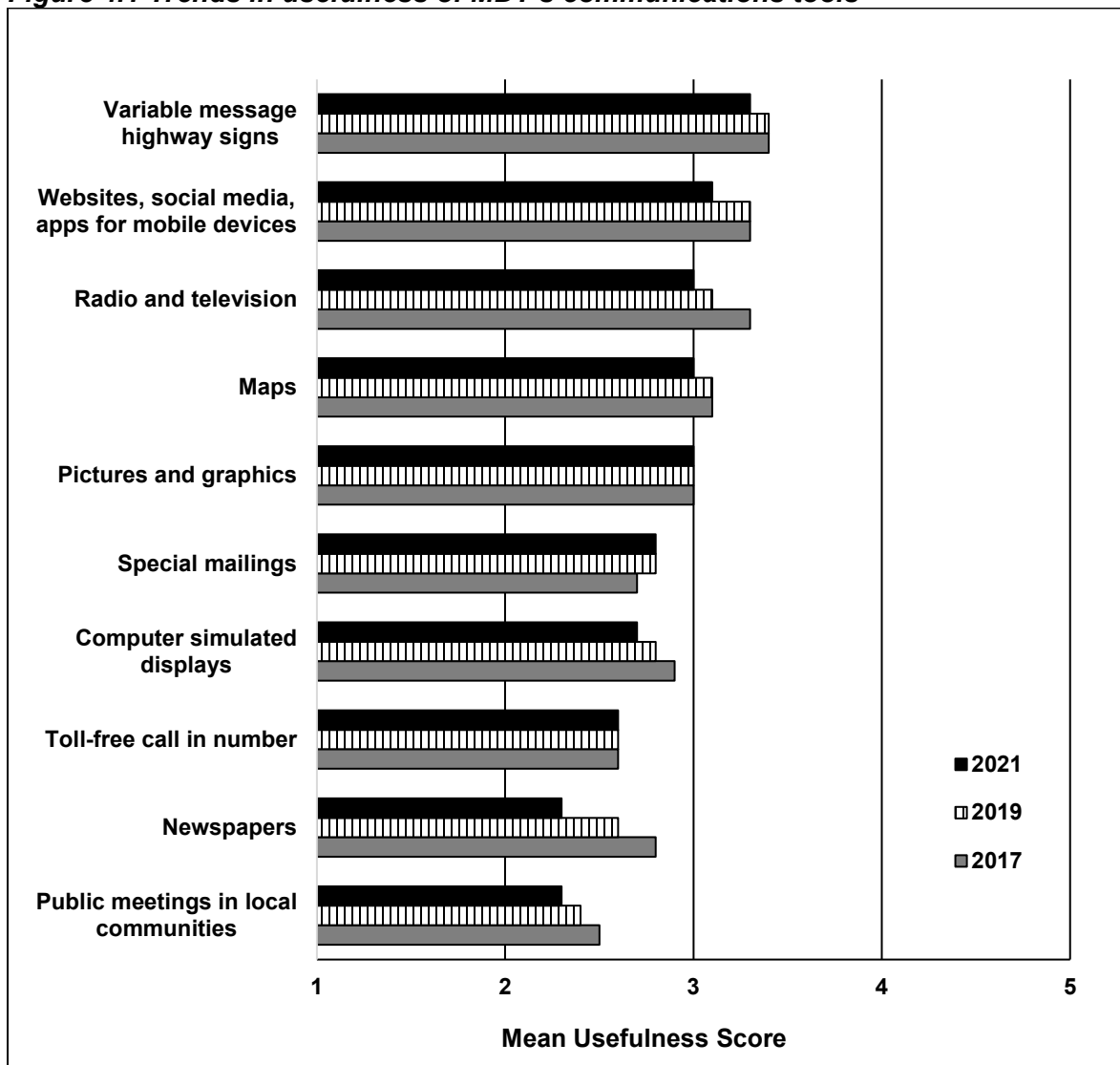
Note: Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Trends

The Public Involvement Survey has asked respondents to rate the usefulness of a variety of public communications tools since 2013 (Figure 4.1).

- Variable message highway signs remain the most useful tool in MDT’s communications arsenal.
- Radio and television, while still considered useful, lost ground between 2017 and 2021.
- Newspapers and public meetings continued to decline in usefulness in 2021. Compared to all other communication tools, newspapers saw the greatest decline between 2019 and 2021.

Figure 4.1 Trends in usefulness of MDT’s communications tools

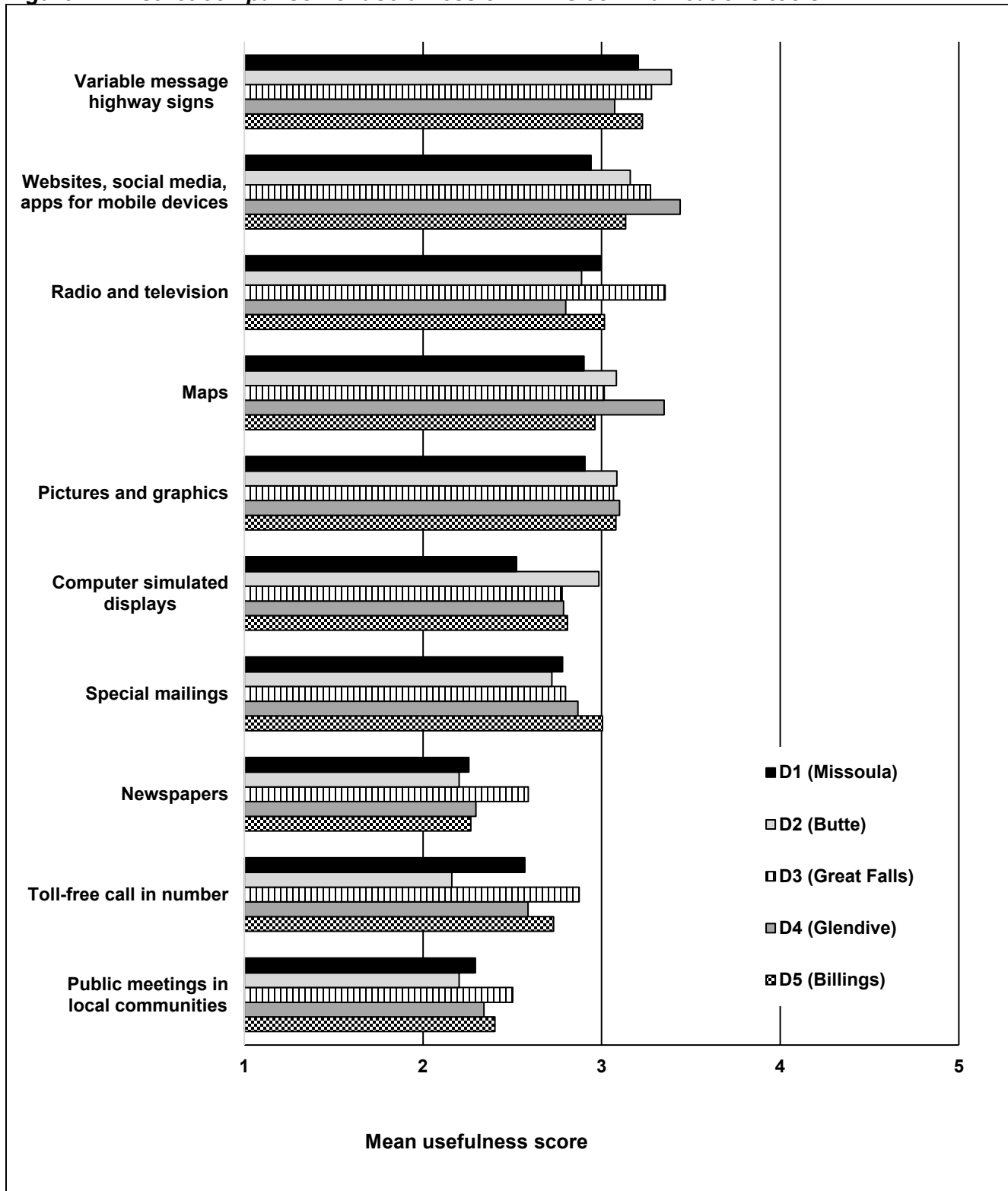


Districts

When compared across transportation districts, there is significant variation in how useful each communication tool is perceived to be (Figure 4.2).

- District 1 (Missoula) residents found pictures and graphics and computer simulated displays less useful than any of the other districts.
- District 2 (Butte) residents found variable message highway signs the more useful than other districts.
- District 3 (Great Falls) residents saw the greatest usefulness among the districts in radio and television.
- District 4 (Glendive) residents considered web-based applications most useful.
- District 5 (Billings) residents found variable message highway signs the most useful.

Figure 4.2 District comparison of usefulness of MDT's communications tools



“HAVE YOU FELT INFORMED ABOUT MDT’S BUSINESS IN RECENT YEARS?”

When asked whether they have felt informed about MDT business more, about the same, or less in recent years, more than two-thirds of respondents (70%) answered that they felt they were informed at about the same level (Table 4.2). There was no statistically relevant change in feeling informed from 2019 to 2021 (Figure 4.3).

- Districts 1 (Missoula) had the greatest percentage of respondents (21%) who indicated they felt more informed in recent years.
- District 4 (Glendive) had the greatest percentage of respondents (17%) who indicated they felt less informed in recent years.

Table 4.2 Feeling informed about MDT’s business in recent years

	More informed	About the same	Less informed	N
Total sample	17%	70%	13%	1,121
District 1: Missoula	21%	66%	13%	211
District 2: Butte	17%	74%	9%	249
District 3: Great Falls	14%	74%	12%	222
District 4: Glendive	18%	65%	17%	207
District 5: Billings	15%	71%	15%	232

Note: Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.

CHAPTER 5 OVERALL MDT CUSTOMER SERVICE AND PERFORMANCE

The 2021 TranPlanMT Public Involvement Survey includes a number of questions regarding overall MDT performance and responsiveness to public input. Respondents were asked to grade MDT on a scale from F (0) to A (4).

“WHAT GRADE WOULD YOU GIVE MDT ON THE QUALITY OF SERVICE IT PROVIDES IN EACH OF THE FOLLOWING AREAS?”

Overall, the grades that MDT received for their performance and customer service in 2021 ranged from a B- to a C (Table 5.1).

- With the exception of responsiveness to ideas and concerns from the public, all performance and customer service items received at least the grade of B by the largest percentage of respondents.
- Quality of service received the highest percentage of A and B grades in 2021 (64%).

Table 5.1 Overall performance and customer service grades

Component	A	B	C	D	F	Don't know	Mean	N
Quality of service provided by MDT	12%	52%	31%	4%	1%	0%	2.7	1,117
MDT's sensitivity to environment	15%	38%	36%	7%	3%	0%	2.6	1,082
Convenience of travel through work zones	14%	37%	34%	13%	2%	0%	2.5	1,128
Public notification about local construction projects	15%	36%	32%	13%	4%	0%	2.5	1,120
Highway maintenance and repair	11%	44%	31%	9%	5%	0%	2.5	1,121
Responsiveness to ideas and concerns from the public	3%	13%	24%	8%	2%	49%	2.1	1,121

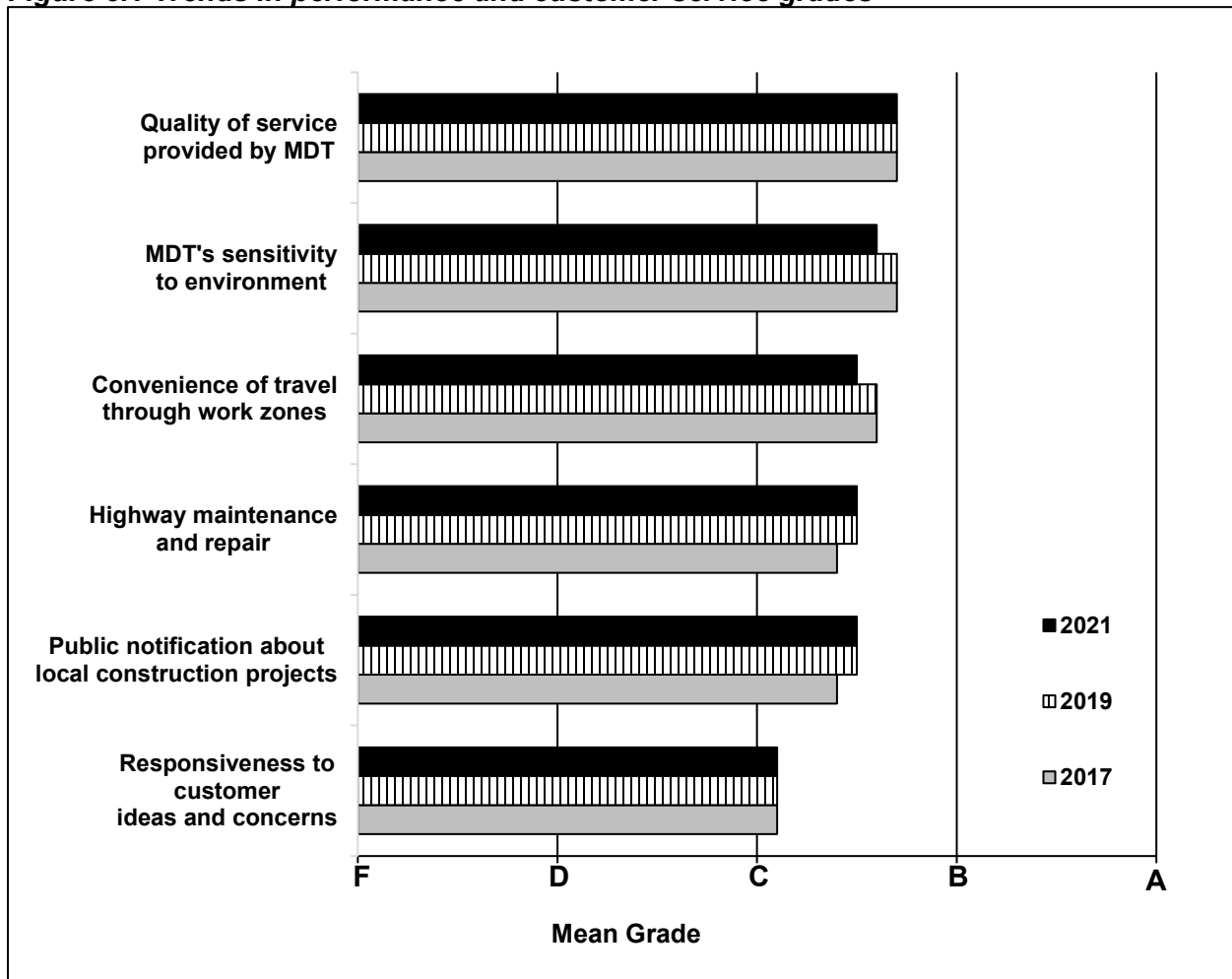
Note: Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Trends

When comparing the grades MDT has received for its performance and customer service over time, there have been very few changes between 2017 and 2021. Mean grades are consistently between C and B (Figure 5.1). None of the small changes displayed in Figure 5.1 are statistically significant.

- The quality of the overall service that MDT provides continues to be most highly rated, an overall grade of B- in 2019 and 2021.
- MDT’s sensitivity to the environment continues to be highly rated in 2021 as well, also with a mean grade of B-.
- Convenience of travel through work zones, along with highway maintenance and repair, and public notification about local projects each received a C+ grade.
- Responsiveness to public input continues to receive the lowest rating, a C.

Figure 5.1 Trends in performance and customer service grades

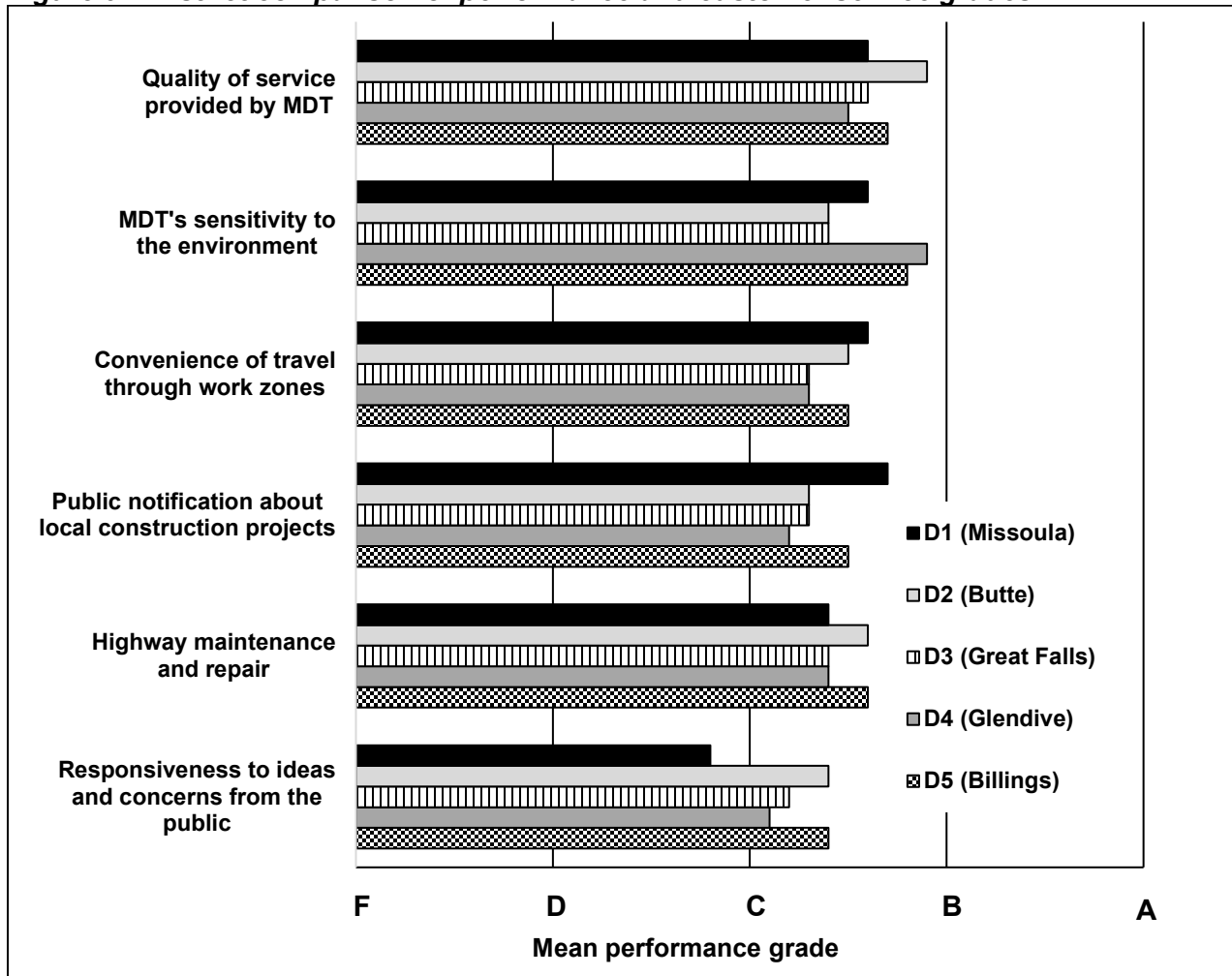


Districts

There are some differences between districts in terms of grading of MDT's performance and customer service (Figure 5.2).

- District 1 (Missoula) gave the highest mean grade for public notification about local construction projects among the districts.
- District 2 (Butte) rated the quality of service MDT provides highest among the districts.
- District 3 (Great Falls) graded quality of service provided by MDT the highest among the elements graded.
- District 4 (Glendive) gave its highest overall grade to MDT's sensitivity to the environment.
- District 5 (Billings) tied with District 2 (Butte) in giving the highest grade among the districts to MDT's responsiveness to ideas and concerns from the public.

Figure 5.2 District comparison of performance and customer service grades



The 2021 TranPlanMT Public Involvement Survey added a question about the most important elements in delivering customer service. Respondents were given a choice between five elements: communication, accuracy, speed, consistency or something else that they specified.

“IN YOUR OPINION, WHICH ELEMENT IS MOST IMPORTANT IN DELIVERING EXCELLENT CUSTOMER SERVICE?”

Overall, a majority of respondents (55%) said that communication is the most important element in delivering excellent customer service (Table 5.2). Consistency was the next most often mentioned element.

Table 5.2 Most important element in delivering excellent customer service

	Communication	Accuracy	Speed	Consistency	Other	N
Total sample	55%	13%	6%	20%	6%	1,088
District 1: Missoula	56%	12%	8%	17%	7%	203
District 2: Butte	47%	17%	7%	24%	5%	237
District 3: Great Falls	59%	4%	6%	22%	8%	217
District 4: Glendive	53%	11%	6%	29%	1%	206
District 5: Billings	60%	20%	2%	13%	5%	225

Fewer District 2 (Butte) respondents answered communication (47%) when compared to other districts.

The dominant response to the “Other” category was “All of the above.”

CHAPTER 6 OTHER ISSUES

“WOULD A PRIMARY SEAT BELT LAW SAVE LIVES?”

When asked if a primary seat belt law in Montana had the potential to save lives, approximately two-thirds of respondents indicated that they think it would (Table 6.1).

- District 3 (Great Falls) had the largest percentage of respondents thinking a primary seat belt law would save lives.
- District 4 (Glendive) had the largest percentage of respondents thinking a primary seat belt law would not save lives.

Table 6.1 Opinions regarding outcome of a primary seat belt law

	Law will save lives	Law will not save lives	N
Total sample	66%	34%	1,107
District 1: Missoula	69%	31%	211
District 2: Butte	60%	40%	238
District 3: Great Falls	73%	27%	219
District 4: Glendive	45%	55%	207
District 5: Billings	67%	33%	232

Note: Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.

“ARE SPEED LIMITS IN WORK ZONES TOO SLOW OR TOO FAST?”

Overall, a very large majority of survey respondents (81%) considered speed limits in work zones on Montana roads to be just right (Table 6.2).

- District 4 (Glendive) had the highest percentage of respondents who think work zone speed limits are too slow (23%).
- District 4 (Glendive) and District 5 (Billings) had the highest percentage of respondents who think work zone speed limits are too fast (9%).

Table 6.2 Opinions regarding speed limits in work zones

	Speed limit too fast	Speed limit just right	Speed limit too slow	N
Total sample	5%	81%	14%	1,106
District 1: Missoula	3%	85%	12%	204
District 2: Butte	2%	80%	18%	242
District 3: Great Falls	4%	80%	16%	221
District 4: Glendive	9%	67%	23%	210
District 5: Billings	9%	83%	7%	229

Note: Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.

“ALTERNATIVE FUEL AND ELECTRIC VEHICLES (E.V.’S) ARE AN EMERGING MODE OF TRANSPORTATION ACROSS THE COUNTRY. WOULD YOU CONSIDER PURCHASING AN E.V. AS YOUR NEXT VEHICLE?”

About one-third of all adult Montanans (32%) surveyed said they would consider purchasing an electric vehicle (E.V.) as their next vehicle (see Table 6.3). Statistically, this represents approximately 254,000 Montanans. Two-thirds of adult Montanans (67%) said they would not consider purchasing an E.V. as their next vehicle. Fewer than 1 percent of all adult Montanans, representing about 4,300 people, said they already own an E.V. For the purposes of this study E.V. refers to hybrid-electric, plug-in hybrid electric and all-electric vehicles.¹

Table 6.3 Willingness to purchase an E.V.

	Yes	No	Already own one	N
Total sample	32%	67%	0.55%	1,112
District 1: Missoula	38%	60%	1.30%	207
District 2: Butte	42%	57%	0.30%	247
District 3: Great Falls	27%	73%	0.34%	220
District 4: Glendive	20%	80%	0.01%	208
District 5: Billings	22%	78%	0.03%	230

Note: Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Residents of District 2 (Butte) and District 1 (Missoula) were most likely to say they would consider purchasing an E.V. Residents of District 4 (Glendive) and District 5 (Billings) were least likely to say they would consider purchasing an E.V.

¹ U.S. Department of Energy reports that as of May 2021 hybrid electric vehicles make up 60% of all E.Vs. in the U.S., plug-in hybrid electric vehicles make up 8% and all-electric vehicles make up 32%. U.S. DoE also reported Montana all-electric vehicle ownership at 940 vehicles as of June 2021. Assuming the ratio of E.V. type in Montana is similar to the U.S. ratio, then one can extrapolate total 2021 Montana ownership of E.Vs. at about 3,000. This extrapolated estimate is well within the 95% confidence interval of the survey derived estimate (4,300) reported above. Sources: U.S. Department of Energy <https://tedb.ornl.gov/data/> and <https://afdc.energy.gov/data/>

“WHY WOULD YOU CONSIDER PURCHASING AN ALTERNATIVE FUEL OR ELECTRIC VEHICLE?”

Among the respondents who said they would consider purchasing an E.V. as their next vehicle, the most commonly chosen reason for purchase was that the vehicle is better for the environment. Table 6.3 presents rankings for reported possible reasons to purchase an E.V. Safety or security features were cited least frequently as a reason to purchase an E.V.

Table 6.4 Reasons for purchasing an E.V. (ranked)

	Total Sample Rank	District 1 Missoula Rank	District 2 Butte Rank	District 3 Great Falls Rank	District 4 Glendive Rank	District 5 Billings Rank
a. More energy efficient	2	2	2	1	2	2
b. Better for the environment	1	1	1	2	1	3
c. Federal tax credits for purchase	3	3	3	3	4	1
d. Preparing for future of vehicle manufacturing	4	4	4	4	3	4
e. Safety and/or security features	5	5	5	5	5	5

Ranks for reasons to purchase an E.V. were relatively consistent across MDT Districts. Energy efficiency was the most frequently cited reason by District 3 (Great Falls) residents and federal tax credits were most frequently mentioned by District 5 (Billings) residents.

Most “Other” responses to this question fell into three categories: 1) reducing harm to the environment, 2) saving fuel costs and 3) reduced operating costs in general.

“WHY WOULDN’T YOU CONSIDER PURCHASING AN ALTERNATIVE FUEL OR ELECTRIC VEHICLE?”

Among the respondents who said they wouldn’t consider purchasing an E.V. as their next vehicle, the most commonly cited reason was limited range between charging stations. Table 6.4 presents rankings for reported reasons to not purchase an E.V. Limited purchasing availability was cited by the fewest number of respondents.

Table 6.5 Reasons for not purchasing an E.V. (ranked)

	Total Sample Rank	District 1 Missoula Rank	District 2 Butte Rank	District 3 Great Falls Rank	District 4 Glendive Rank	District 5 Billings Rank
a. Not enough charging stations	4	4	4	3	2	4
b. Limited range between charging stations	1	1	1	2	3	2
c. Time required for charging	3	3	2	4	4	3
d. Cost of vehicle and/or maintenance	2	2	3	1	1	1
e. Limited purchasing availability in Montana	5	5	5	5	5	5

There was some difference in opinions cited by residents of the various MDT districts. While limited range was mentioned most frequently by residents of District 1 (Missoula) and District 2 (Butte), the cost of the vehicle was most frequently mentioned by residents of District 3 (Great Falls), District 4 (Glendive) and District 5 (Billings). Limited purchasing availability in Montana was the least cited reason for not purchasing an E.V. by all five MDT districts.

“Other” responses mentioned problems with batteries (performance in cold, environmental issues, overseas production, danger), lower E.V. horsepower or hauling capacity, skepticism that E.Vs. will actually save energy, the risk of relying on the electric grid and the desire to support Montana’s fossil fuel producers.

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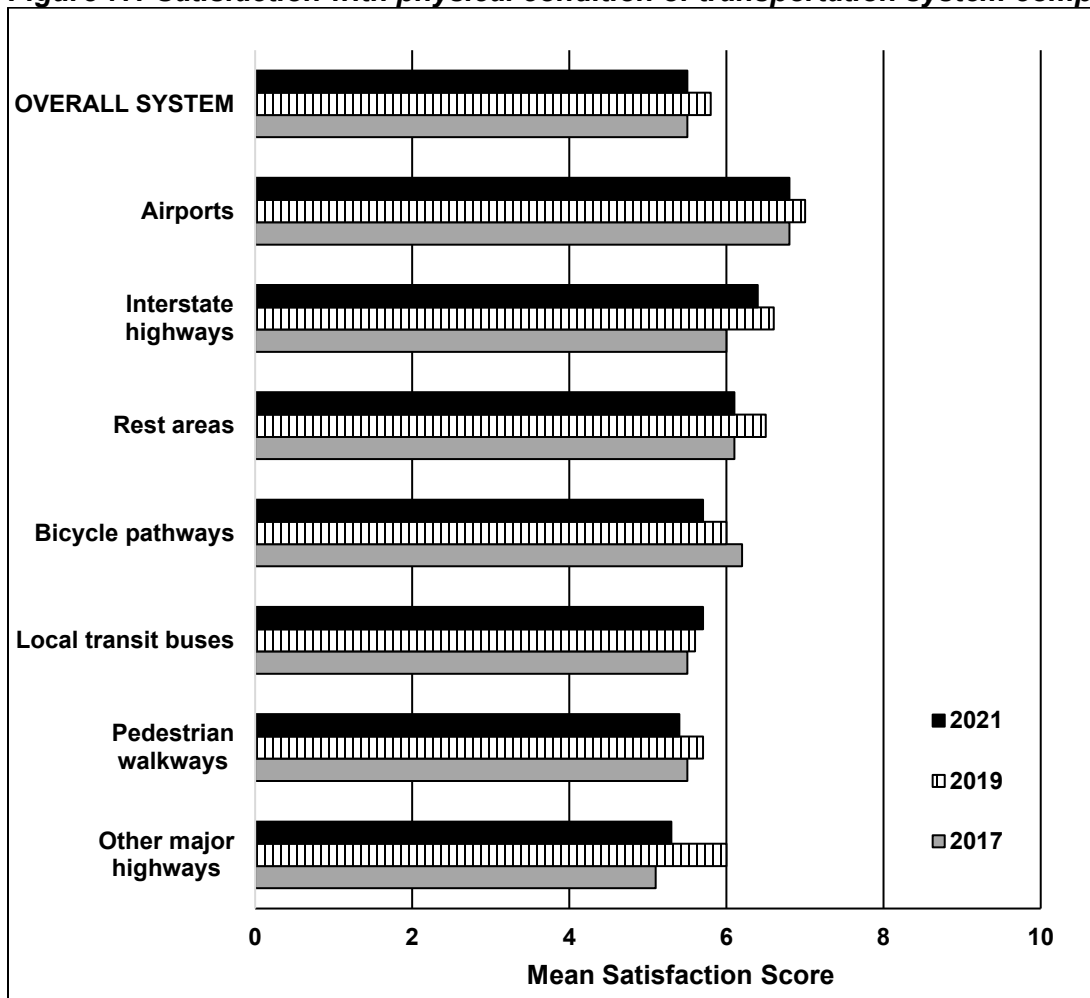
DISTRICT 1—MISSOULA

Satisfaction with Physical Condition of Transportation System (District 1)

With a mean score of 5.5, residents of District 1—Missoula indicated that they were somewhat satisfied with the physical condition of the overall transportation system (Figure 7.1).

- Respondents were the most satisfied with the physical condition of airports (6.8), followed by interstate highways (6.4) and rest areas (6.1).
- Respondents were the least satisfied with the physical condition of pedestrian walkways (5.4) and other major highways (5.3).
- The greatest differences between 2019 and 2021 were seen in the areas of satisfaction with the condition of major highways and rest areas, both of which experienced decreased scores.

Figure 7.1 Satisfaction with physical condition of transportation system components (District 1)

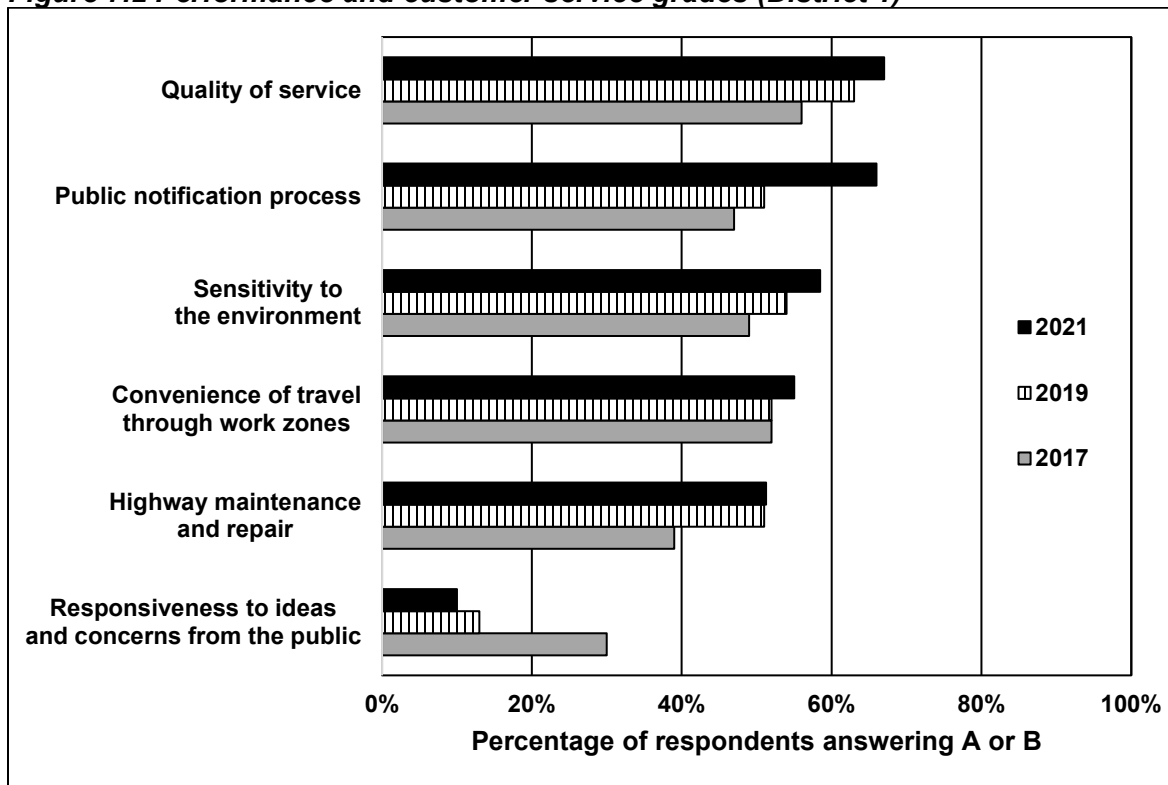


Grading Aspects of MDT’s Functions (District 1)

Respondents in District 1—Missoula graded MDT’s performance in a number of transportation system areas (Figure 7.2).

- Sixty-seven percent of respondents gave MDT the grade of A or B with respect to the quality of the service the Department provides.
- Ten percent gave MDT the grade of A or B with respect to the Department’s responsiveness to the public’s ideas and concerns.
- The greatest difference between 2019 and 2021 occurred in the areas of public notification and responsiveness to public input, both of which saw improved grades.

Figure 7.2 Performance and customer service grades (District 1)

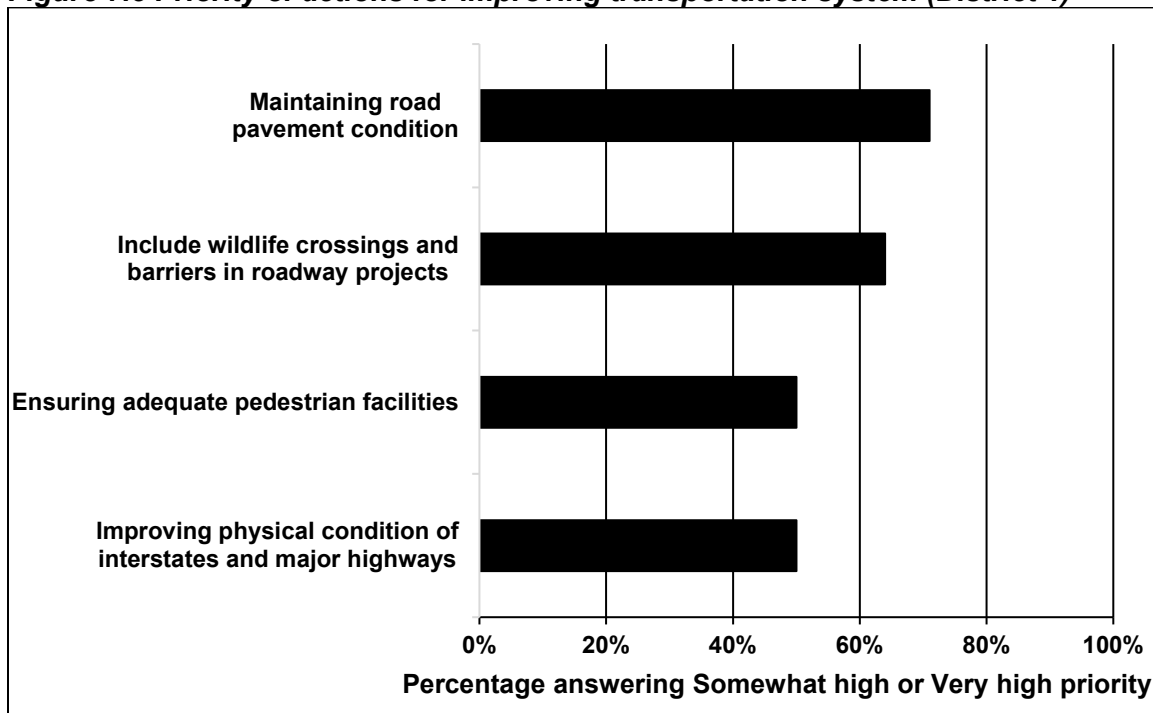


Priority of Actions for Improving Montana’s Transportation System (District 1)

From a list of possible actions that can be undertaken to improve the transportation system in the state, respondents in District 1—Missoula ranked the following four the highest (Figure 7.3).

- Maintaining road pavement conditions received the highest priority rating, with 71 percent deeming it either a *somewhat high priority* or a *very high priority*.
- Including wildlife crossings and barriers in roadway projects ranked second (64%).
- Improving the physical condition of interstates and other major highways and ensuring adequate pedestrian facilities were rated as a *somewhat high priority* or a *very high priority* by 50 percent of respondents.

Figure 7.3 Priority of actions for improving transportation system (District 1)

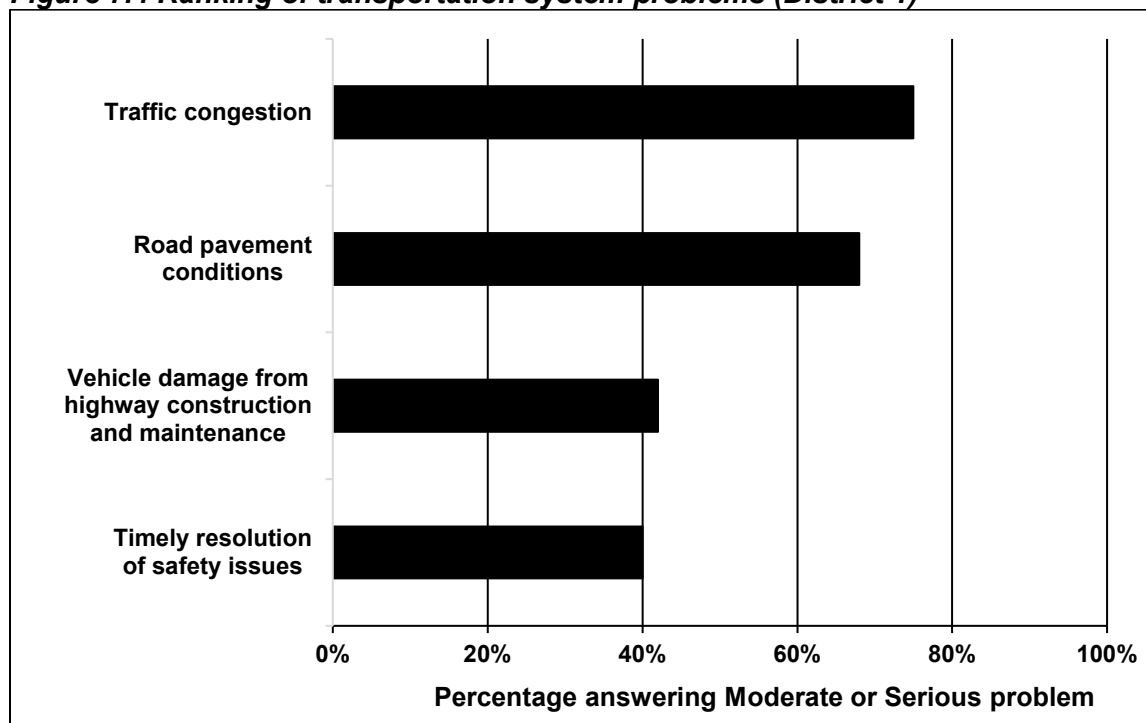


Ranking of Issues Seen as Problems with the Montana Transportation System (District 1)

Survey respondents in District 1—Missoula also considered a list of issues that may be seen as problems with the state’s transportation system (Figure 7.4).

- Traffic congestion was considered to be either a *moderate problem* or a *serious problem* by the greatest percentage of District 1 respondents, at 75 percent.
- Road pavement conditions (68%) rounded out the list along with vehicle damage incurred from highway construction and maintenance (42%), and timely resolution of safety issues (40%).

Figure 7.4 Ranking of transportation system problems (District 1)

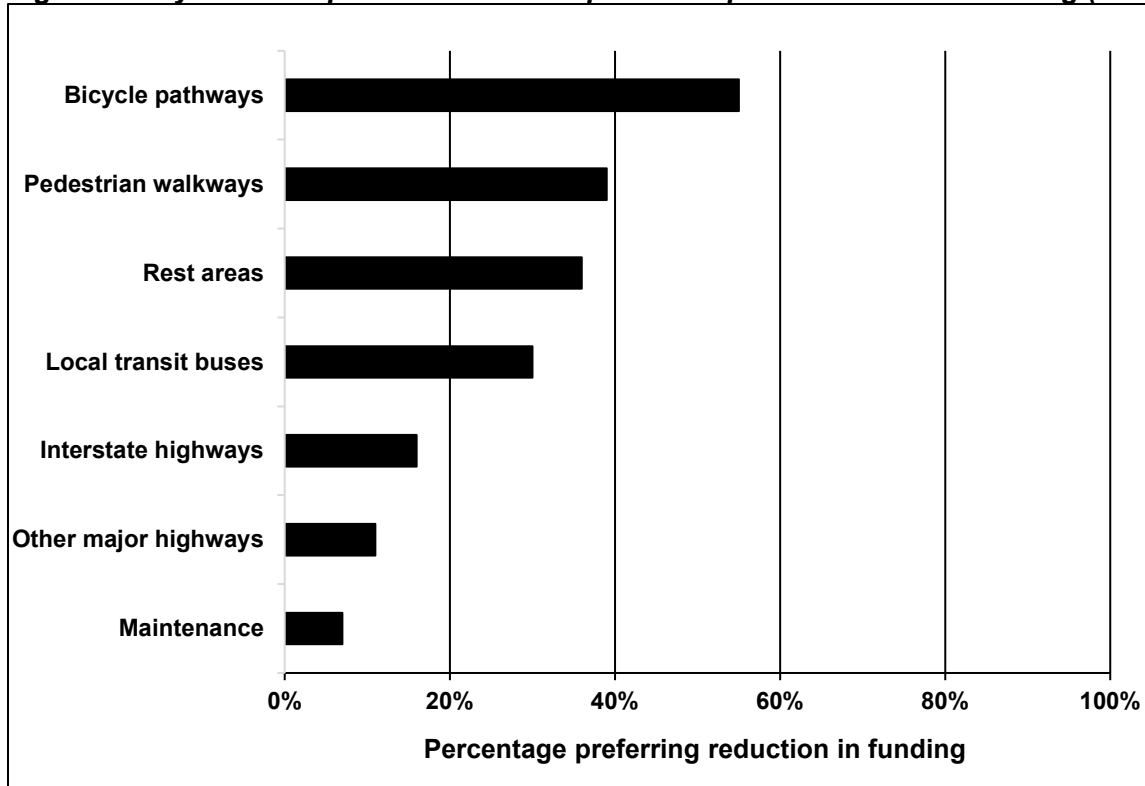


Areas Favored for Decreases in Funding (District 1)

In the event of future decreases in the MDT budget, District 1—Missoula survey respondents indicated the areas within the Montana transportation system where they preferred funding to be reduced (Figure 7.5).

- For residents of District 1—Missoula, the majority (55%) indicated they would prefer to see reduced funding for bicycle pathways.
- Transportation system maintenance was favored for receiving reduced funding by only a small percentage (7%).

Figure 7.5 System components where respondents prefer decreased funding (District 1)



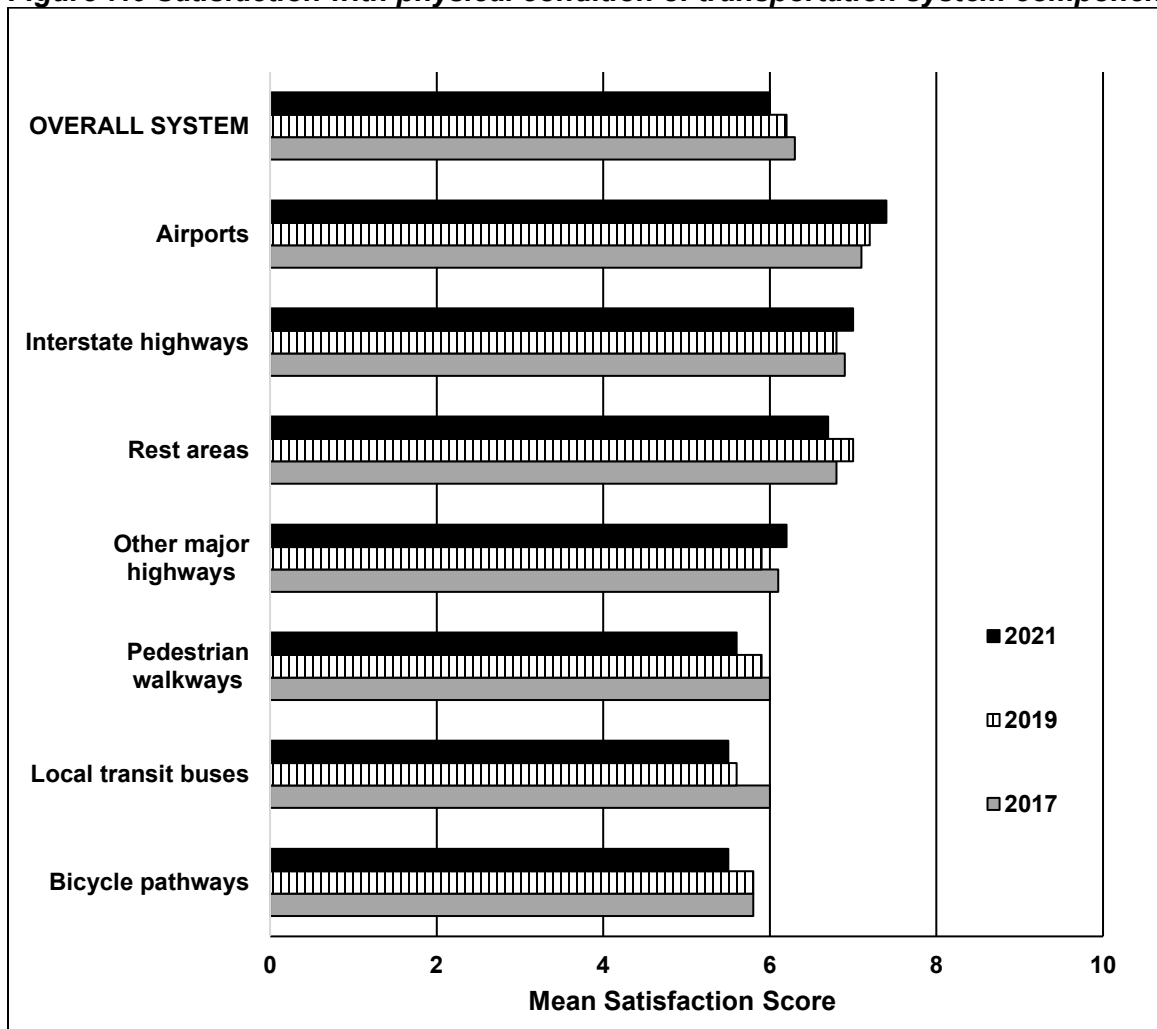
DISTRICT 2—BUTTE

Satisfaction with Physical Condition of Transportation System (District 2)

With a mean score of 6.0, residents of District 2—Butte indicated that they were somewhat satisfied with the physical condition of the overall transportation system (Figure 7.6)

- Respondents were the most satisfied with the physical condition of airports (7.4), followed by interstate highways (7.0) and rest areas (6.7).
- Respondents were the least satisfied with the physical condition of local transit bus service (5.5) and bicycle pathways (5.5).
- The largest changes in satisfaction scores between 2019 and 2021 were in bicycle pathways and rest areas, each of which showed small declines.

Figure 7.6 Satisfaction with physical condition of transportation system components (District 2)

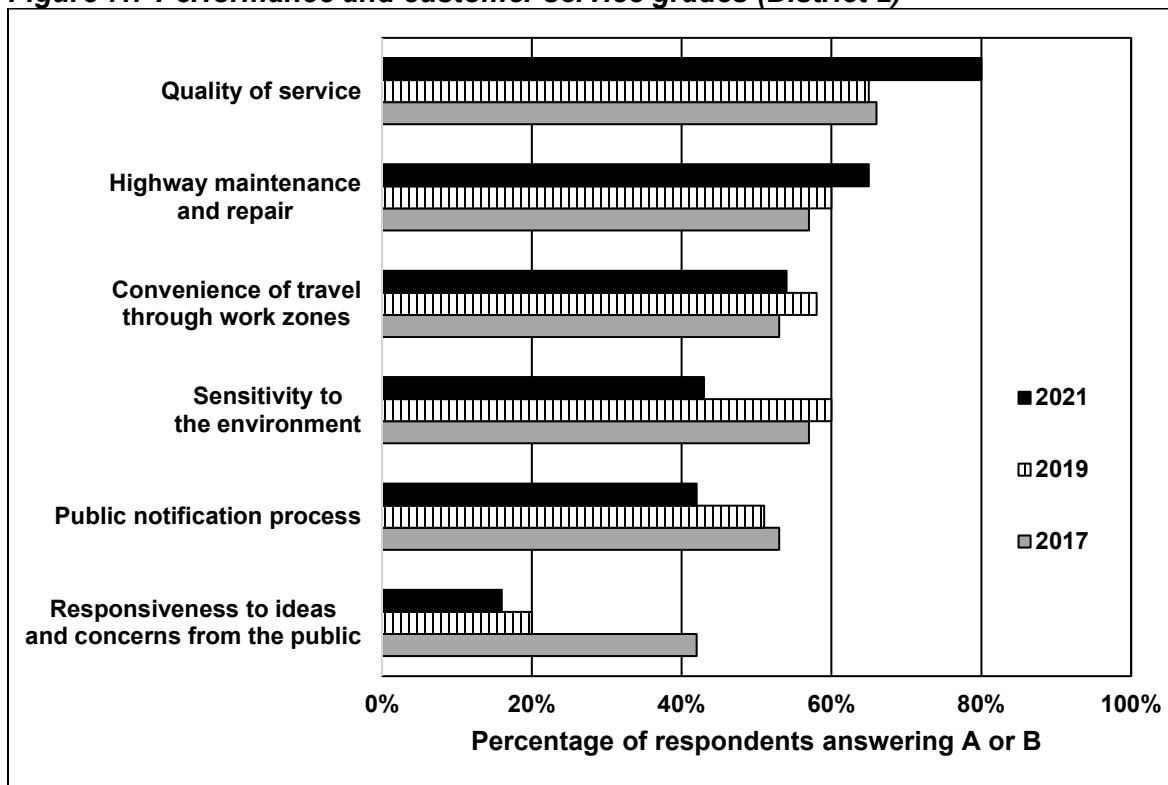


Grading Aspects of MDT’s Functions (District 2)

Respondents in District 2—Butte graded MDT’s performance in a number of transportation system areas (Figure 7.7).

- Eighty percent of respondents gave MDT the grade of A or B with respect to the quality of the service the Department provides.
- Sixteen percent gave MDT the grade of A or B with respect to the Department’s responsiveness to the public’s ideas and concerns.
- The greatest differences between 2019 and 2021 occurred in the areas of quality of service, which saw an increase in the percentage of As and Bs, and in sensitivity to the environment, which saw a decline.

Figure 7.7 Performance and customer service grades (District 2)

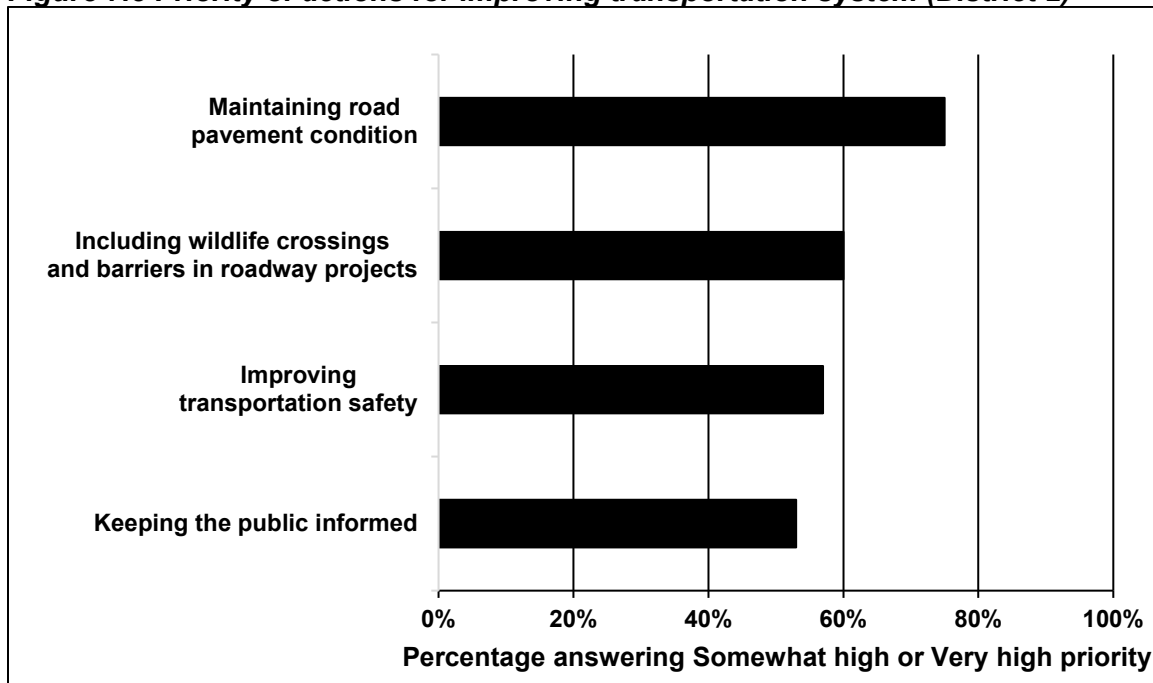


Priority of Actions to Improve Montana’s Transportation System (District 2)

From a list of possible actions that can be undertaken to improve the transportation system in the state, respondents in District 2—Butte ranked the following four the highest (Figure 7.8).

- Maintaining road pavement conditions received the highest priority ranking with 75 percent giving either a *somewhat high priority* or a *very high priority*.
- Including wildlife crossings and barriers in roadway projects, and improving transportation safety both ranked close together, at 60 percent and 57 percent, respectively.
- Keeping the public informed ranked fourth, at 53 percent.

Figure 7.8 Priority of actions for improving transportation system (District 2)

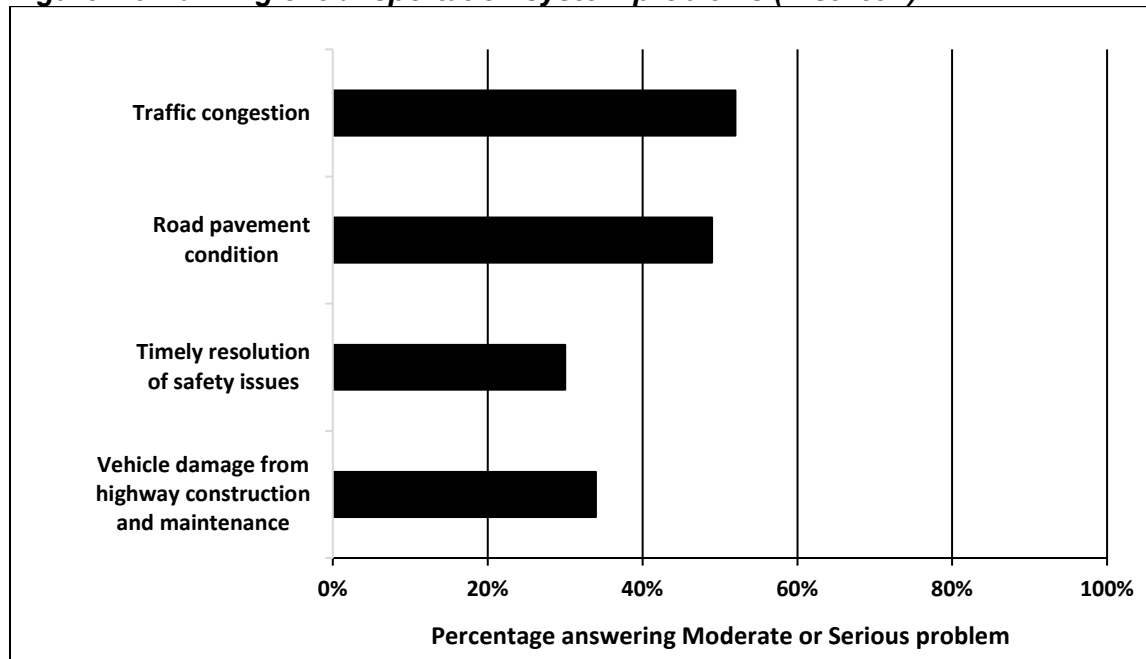


Ranking of Issues Seen as Problems with the Montana Transportation System (District 2)

Survey respondents in District 2—Butte also considered a list of issues that may be seen as problems with the state’s transportation system (Figure 7.9).

- Traffic congestion was considered to be either a *moderate problem* or a *serious problem* by the greatest percentage of District 2 respondents, at 52 percent.
- Road pavement condition was seen as a *moderate problem* or a *serious problem* by 49 percent of respondents.

Figure 7.9 Ranking of transportation system problems (District 2)

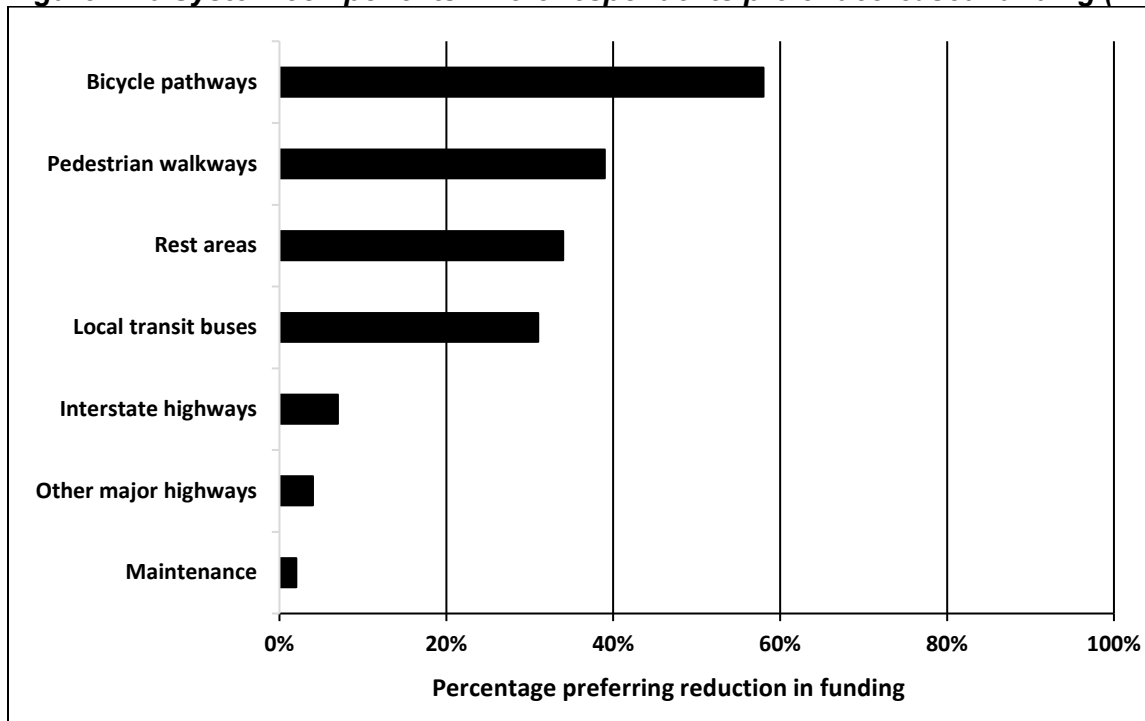


Areas Favored for Decreases in Funding (District 2)

In the event of future decreases in the MDT budget, District 2—Butte survey respondents indicated the areas within the Montana transportation system where they preferred funding to be reduced (Figure 7.10).

- For residents of District 2—Butte, the majority (58%) indicated that they would prefer to see reduced funding for bicycle pathways.
- Transportation system maintenance was favored for receiving reduced funding by only a small percentage (2%).

Figure 7.10 System components where respondents prefer decreased funding (District 2)



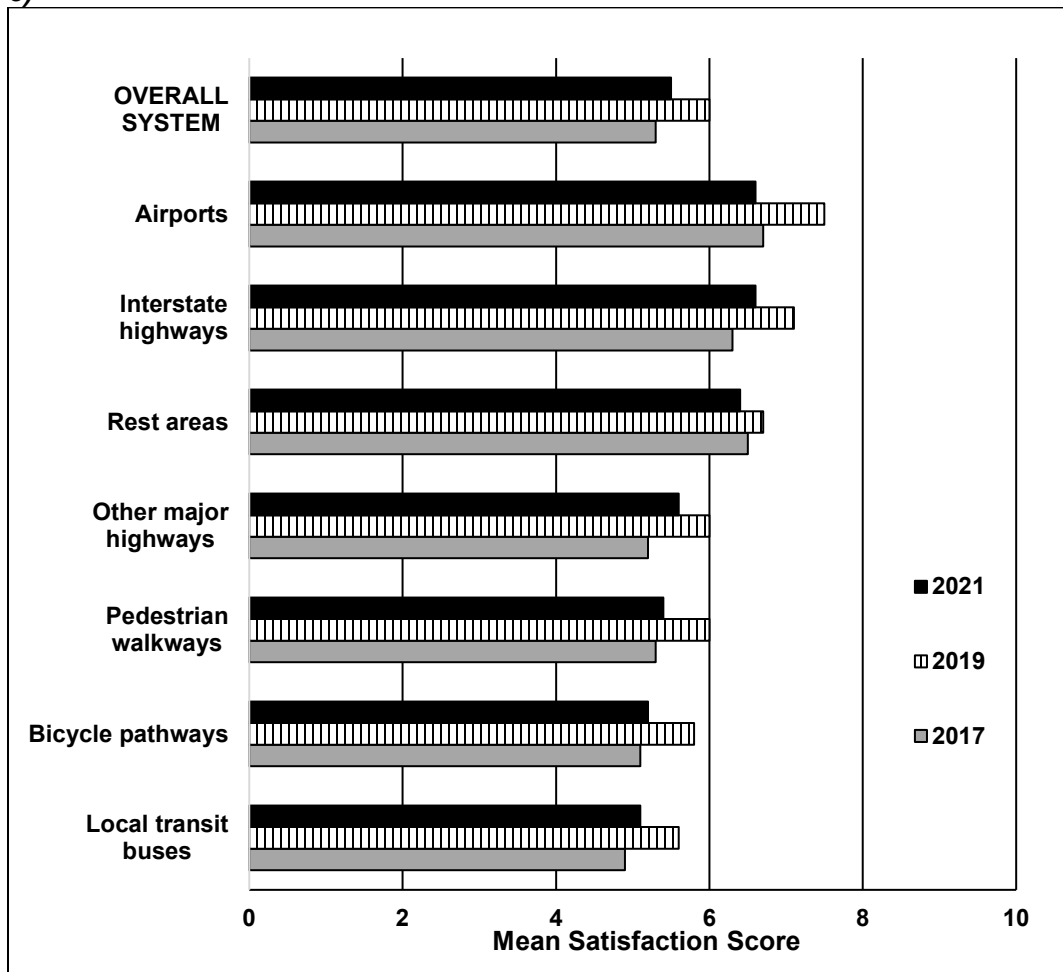
DISTRICT 3—GREAT FALLS

Satisfaction with Physical Condition of Transportation System (District 3)

With a mean score of 5.5, residents of District 3—Great Falls indicated that they were somewhat satisfied with the physical condition of the overall transportation system (Figure 7.11).

- Respondents were the most satisfied with the physical condition of airports (mean score of 6.6) and interstate highways (6.6) followed by rest areas (6.4).
- Respondents were the least satisfied with the physical condition of local transit buses (5.1) and bicycle pathways (5.2).
- Between 2019 and 2021, satisfaction scores for all surveyed components declined, but remained higher than or equal to 2017 scores.

Figure 7.11 Satisfaction with physical condition of transportation system components (District 3)

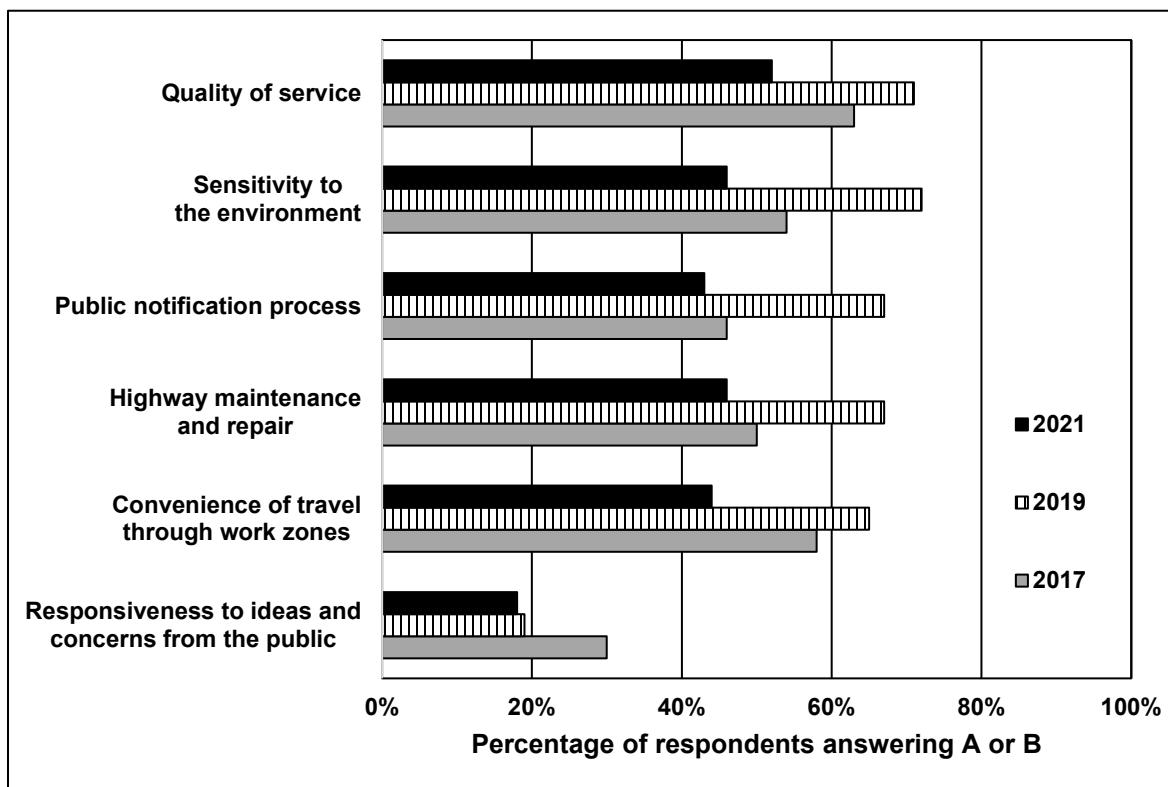


Grading Aspects of MDT’s Functions (District 3)

Respondents in District 3—Great Falls graded MDT’s performance in a number of transportation system areas (Figure 7.12).

- Fifty-two percent of respondents gave MDT the grade of A or B with respect to the Department’s quality of service.
- Eighteen percent gave MDT the grade of A or B with respect to the Department’s responsiveness to the public’s ideas and concerns.
- Between 2019 and 2021, grades dropped in all areas except responsiveness to ideas and concerns from the public.

Figure 7.12 Performance and customer service grades (District 3)

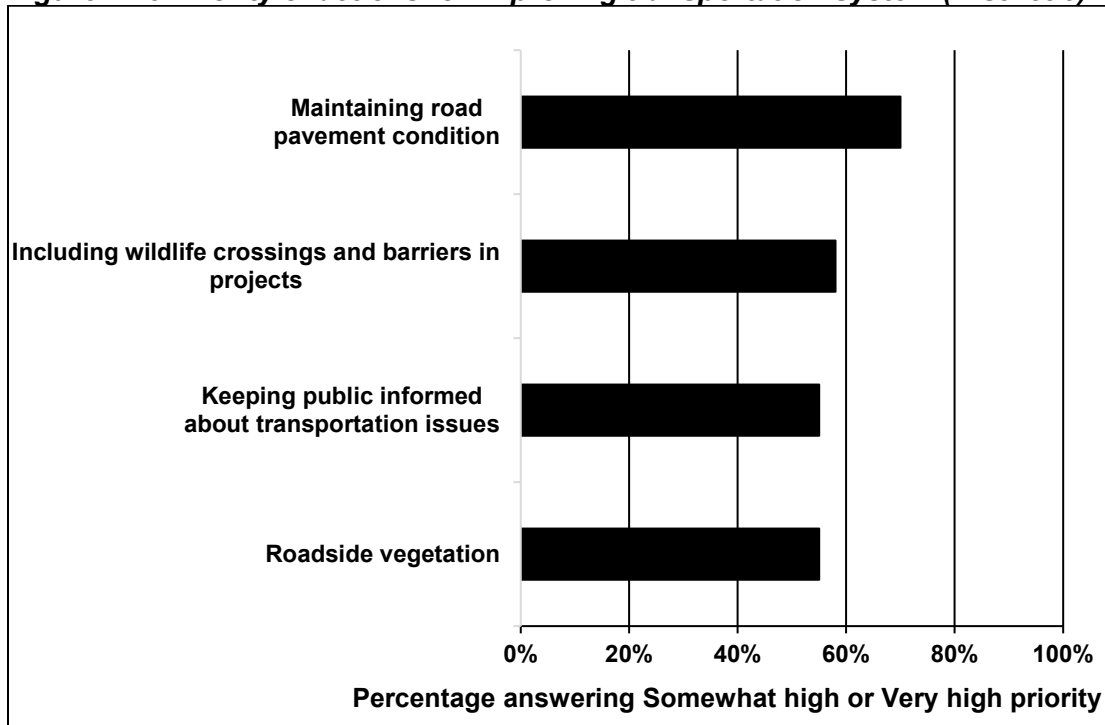


Priority of Actions to Improve Montana’s Transportation System (District 3)

From a list of possible actions that can be undertaken to improve the transportation system in the state, respondents in District 3—Great Falls ranked the following four the highest (Figure 7.12).

- Maintaining road pavement conditions received the highest priority ranking with 70 percent seeing it as a *somewhat high* priority or a *very high* priority.
- Including wildlife crossings and barriers in projects received the second-highest priority rating, at 58 percent.
- Keeping the public informed about transportation issues and managing roadside vegetation each received 55 percent.

Figure 7.13 Priority of actions for improving transportation system (District 3)

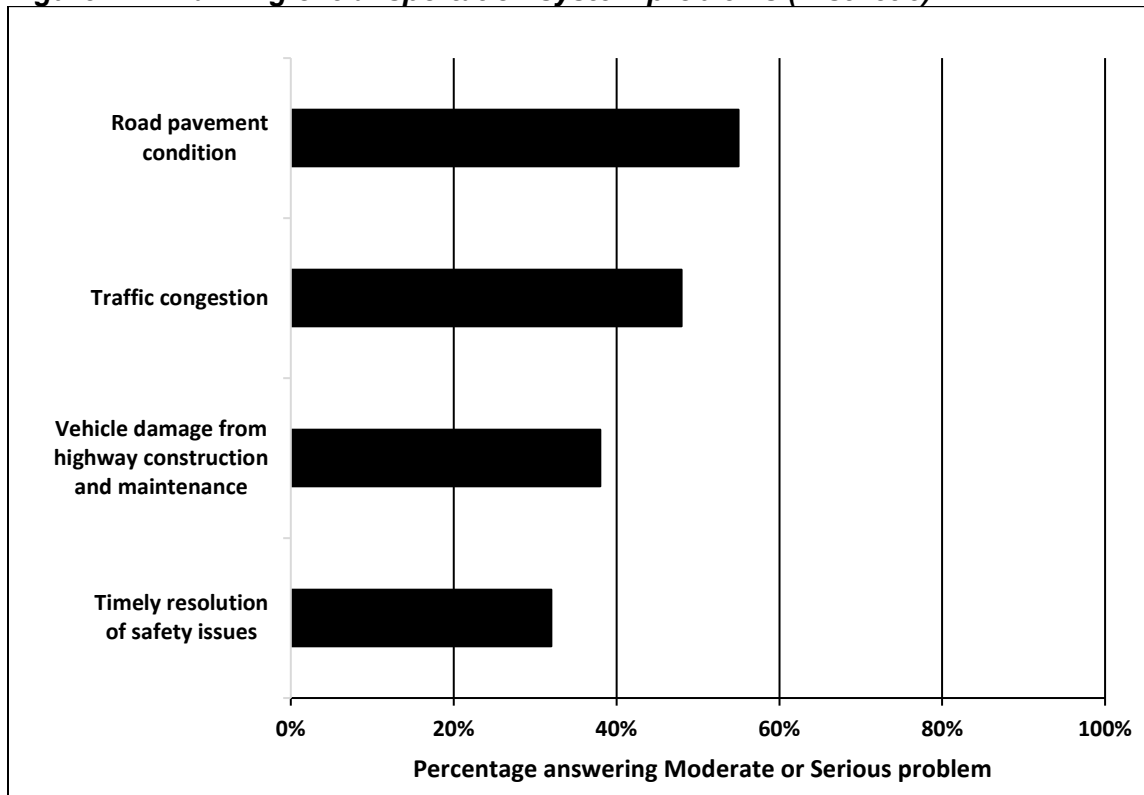


Ranking of Issues Seen as Problems with the Montana Transportation System (District 3)

Survey respondents in District 3—Great Falls also considered a list of issues that may be seen as problems with the state’s transportation system (Figure 7.14).

- Road pavement condition was considered to be either a *moderate problem* or a *serious problem* by the greatest percentage of District 3—Great Falls respondents, at 55 percent.
- Traffic congestion (48%), vehicle damage incurred from highway construction and maintenance (38%) and the timely resolution of safety issues (32%) rounded out the list.

Figure 7.14 Ranking of transportation system problems (District 3)

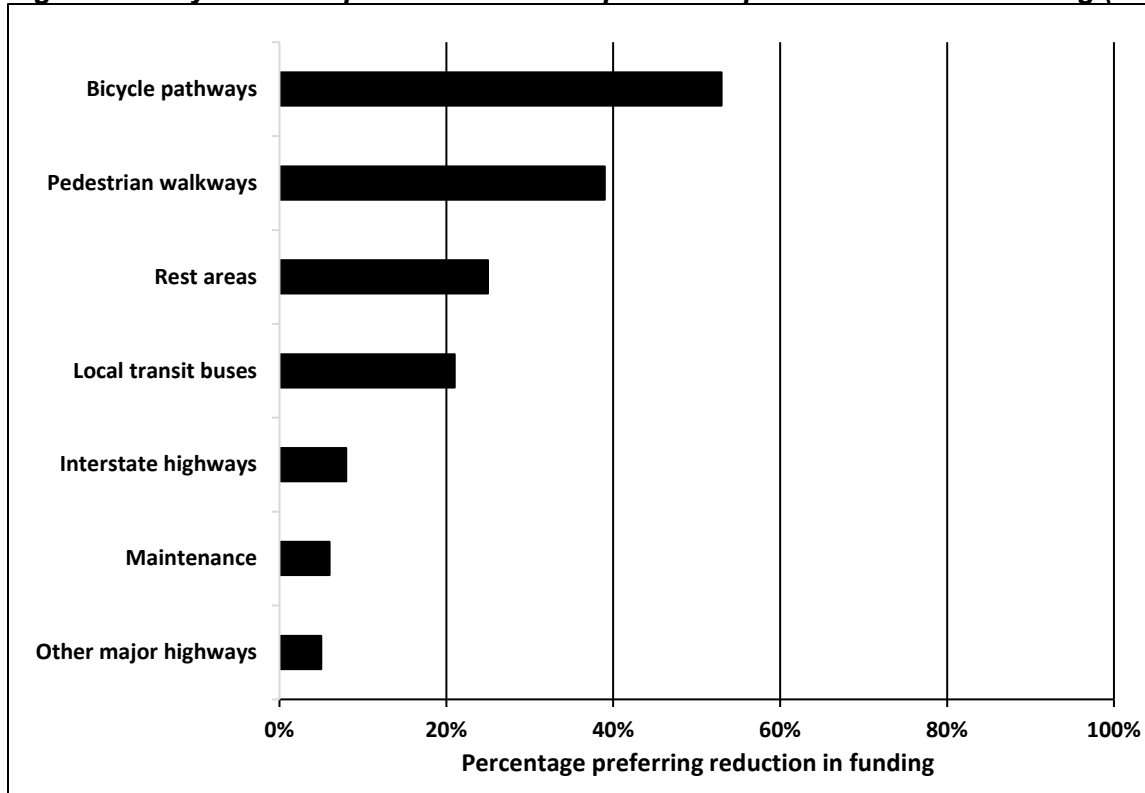


Areas Favored for Decreases in Funding (District 3)

In the event of future decreases in the MDT budget, District 3—Great Falls survey respondents indicated the areas within the Montana transportation system where they preferred funding to be reduced (Figure 7.15).

- For residents of District 3—Great Falls, the majority (53%) indicated that they would prefer to see reduced funding for bicycle pathways.
- Other major highways were favored for receiving reduced funding by only a small percentage (5%), followed by transportation system maintenance (6%).

Figure 7.15 System components where respondents prefer decreased funding (District 3)



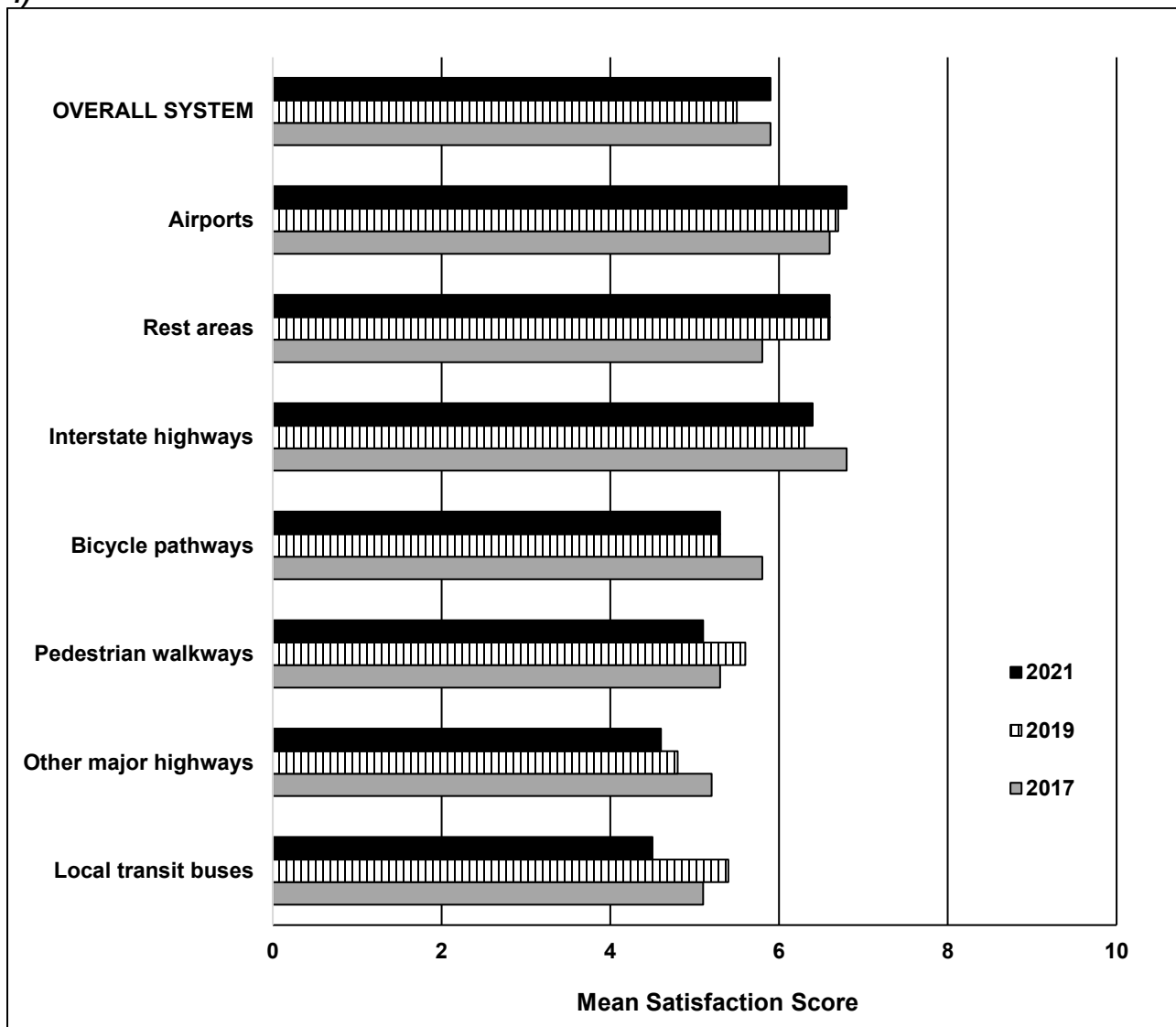
DISTRICT 4—GLENLIVE

Satisfaction with Physical Condition of Transportation System (District 4)

With a mean score of 5.9, residents of District 4—Glendive indicated that they were somewhat satisfied with the physical condition of the overall transportation system (Figure 7.16)

- Respondents were the most satisfied with the physical condition of airports (6.8), followed by rest areas (6.6) and interstate highways (6.4).
- Respondents were the least satisfied with the physical condition of local transit buses (4.5).
- A small but steady decline in scores since 2017 has been given to the physical condition of other major highways.

Figure 7.16 Satisfaction with physical condition of transportation system components (District 4)

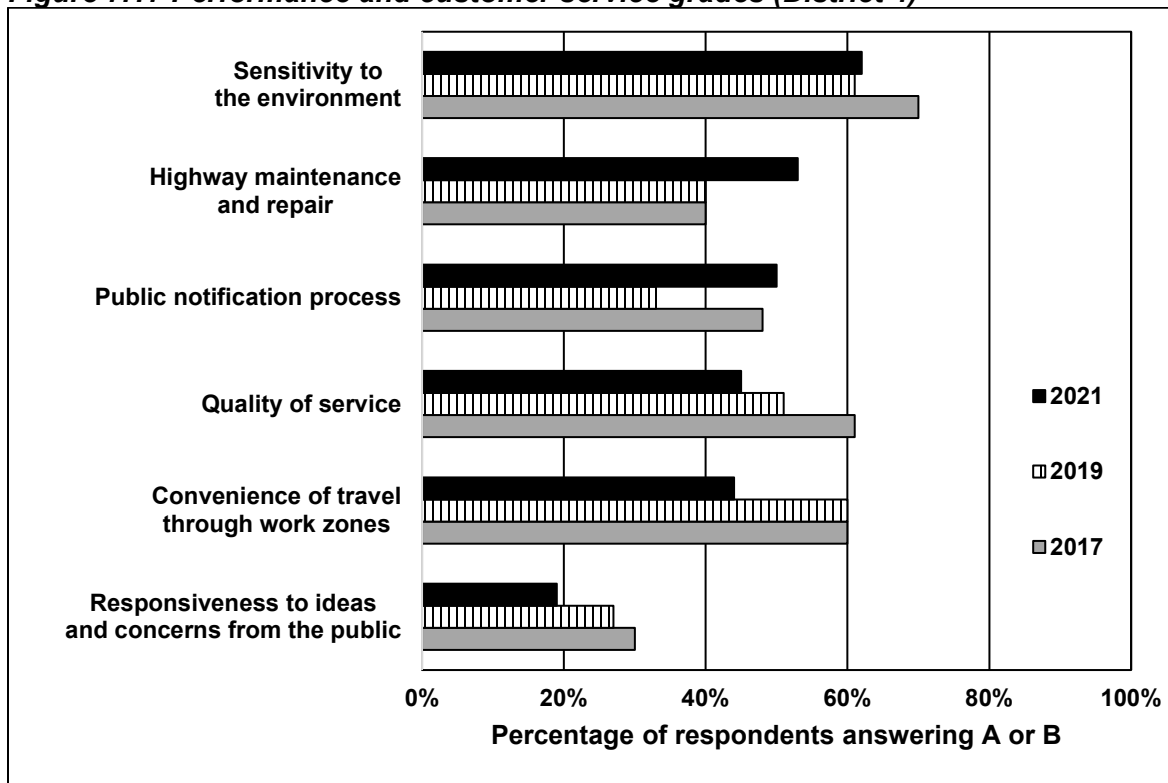


Grading Aspects of MDT’s Functions (District 4)

Respondents in District 4—Glendive graded MDT’s performance in a number of transportation system areas (Figure 7.17).

- Sixty-two percent of respondents gave MDT the grade of A or B with respect to sensitivity to the environment.
- Nineteen percent gave MDT the grade of A or B with respect to the Department’s responsiveness to the public’s ideas and concerns.
- 2021 saw a significant increase in the percentage of respondents giving As or Bs to highway maintenance and repair. Overall quality of service grades exhibited a steady decline since 2017.

Figure 7.17 Performance and customer service grades (District 4)

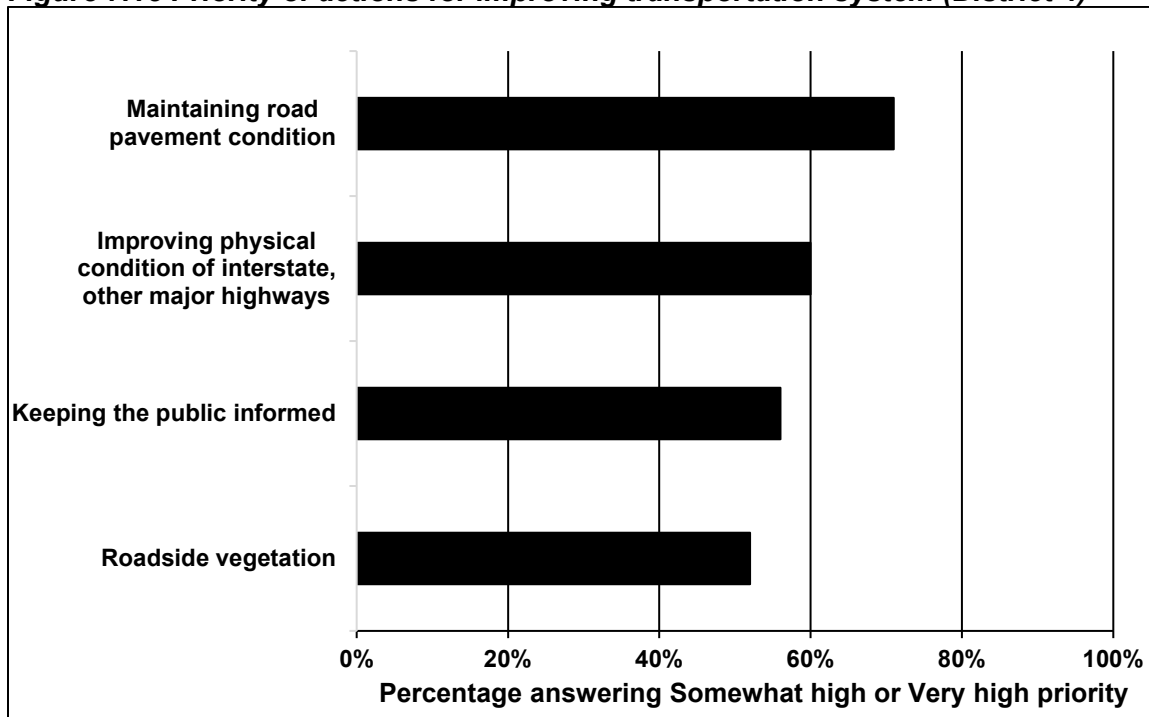


Priority of Actions to Improve Montana’s Transportation System (District 4)

From a list of possible actions that can be undertaken to improve the transportation system in the state, respondents in District 4—Glendive ranked the following four the highest (Figure 7.18).

- Maintaining road pavement conditions received the highest priority ranking with 71 percent giving it a *somewhat high priority* or *very high priority*.
- Improving the physical condition of interstates and major highways received the 2nd ranked priority at 60 percent and keeping the public informed received 56 percent.
- Roadside vegetation rounded out the list with 52 percent.

Figure 7.18 Priority of actions for improving transportation system (District 4)

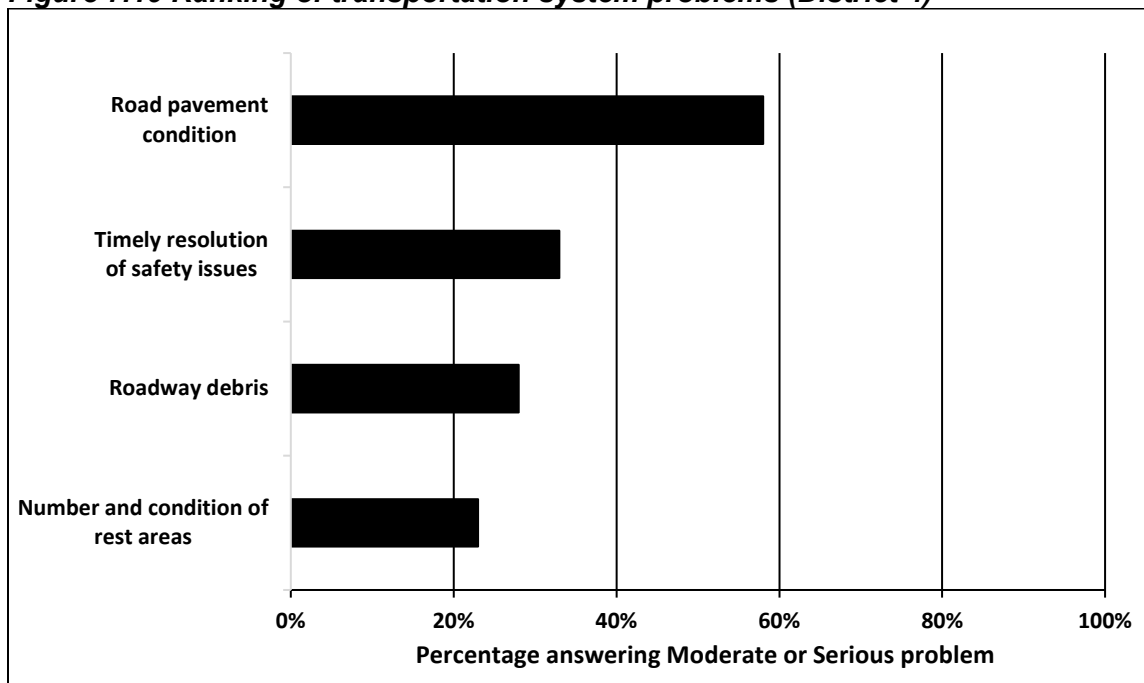


Ranking of Issues Seen as Problems with the Montana Transportation System (District 4)

Survey respondents in District 4—Glendive also considered a list of issues that may be seen as problems with the state’s transportation system (Figure 7.19).

- Road pavement condition was considered either a *moderate problem* or a *serious problem* by the greatest percentage of District 4 respondents, at 58 percent.
- Timely resolution of safety issues was rated a moderate or serious problem by 33 percent of respondents.
- Roadway debris was cited by 28 percent of District 4 respondents as either a moderate or serious problem.
- Number and condition of rest areas (23%) rounded out the list.

Figure 7.19 Ranking of transportation system problems (District 4)

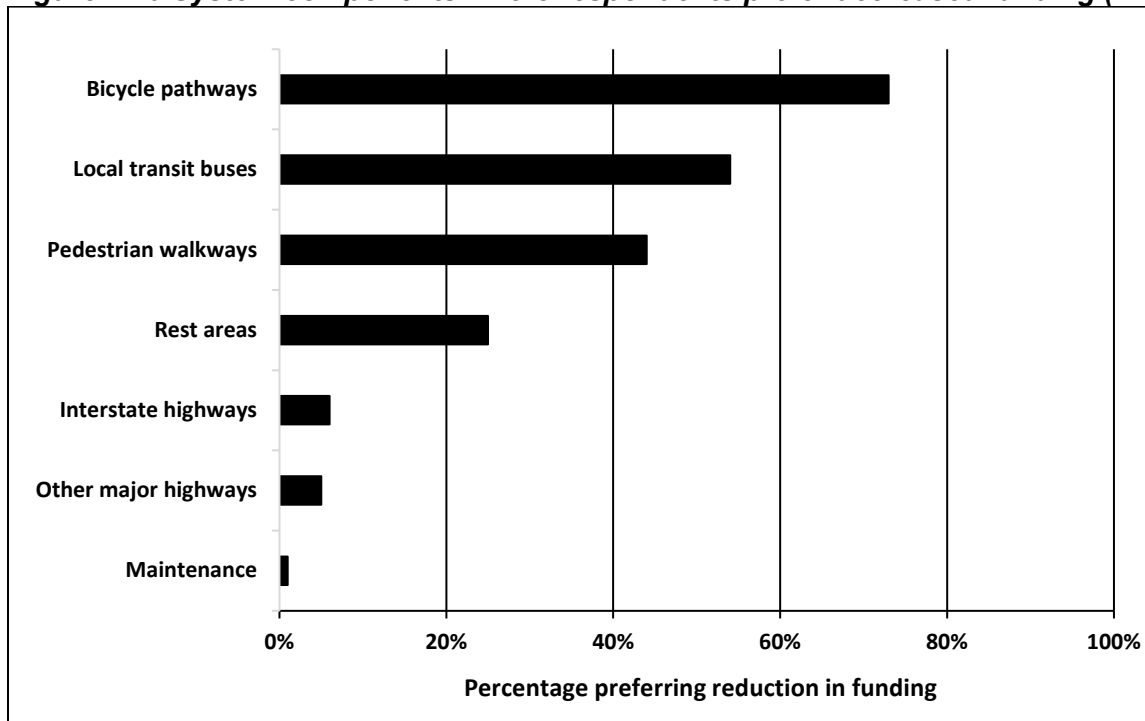


Areas Favored for Decreases in Funding (District 4)

In the event of future decreases in the MDT budget, District 4—Glendive survey respondents indicated the areas within the Montana transportation system where they preferred funding to be reduced (Figure 7.20).

- For residents of District 4—Glendive, the majority (73%) indicated that they would prefer to see reduced funding for bicycle pathways.
- Transportation system maintenance was favored for receiving reduced funding by only a very small percentage (1%).

Figure 7.20 System components where respondents prefer decreased funding (District 4)



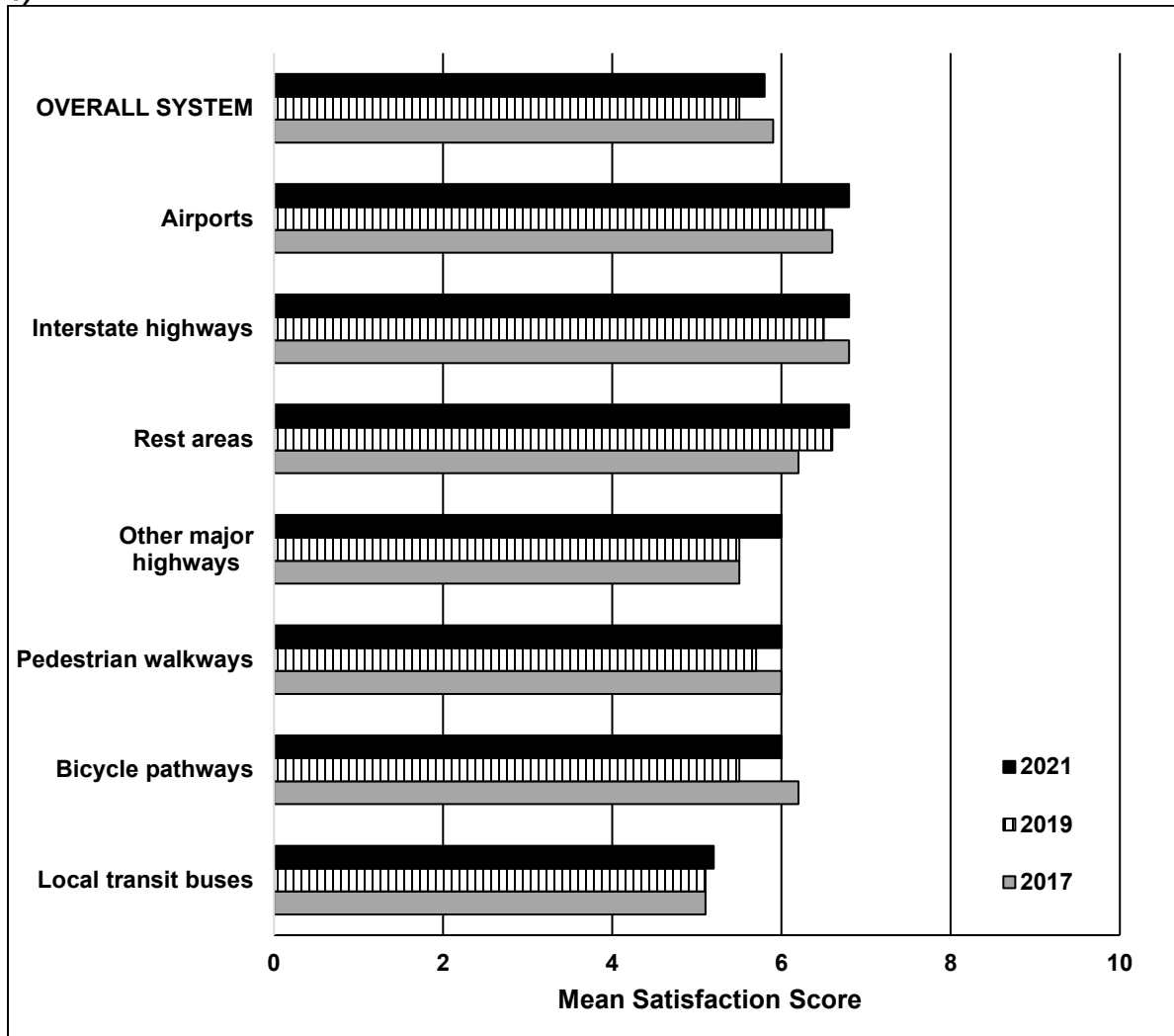
DISTRICT 5—BILLINGS

Satisfaction with Physical Condition of Transportation System (District 5)

With a mean score of 5.8, residents of District 5—Billings indicated that they were satisfied with the physical condition of the overall transportation system (Figure 7.21)

- Respondents were the most satisfied with the physical condition of airports (mean score of 6.8), interstate highways (6.8) and rest areas (6.8).
- Respondents were the least satisfied with the physical condition of local transit buses (5.2).
- Small increases in levels of satisfaction occurred in all areas between 2019 and 2021.

Figure 7.21 Satisfaction with physical condition of transportation system components (District 5)

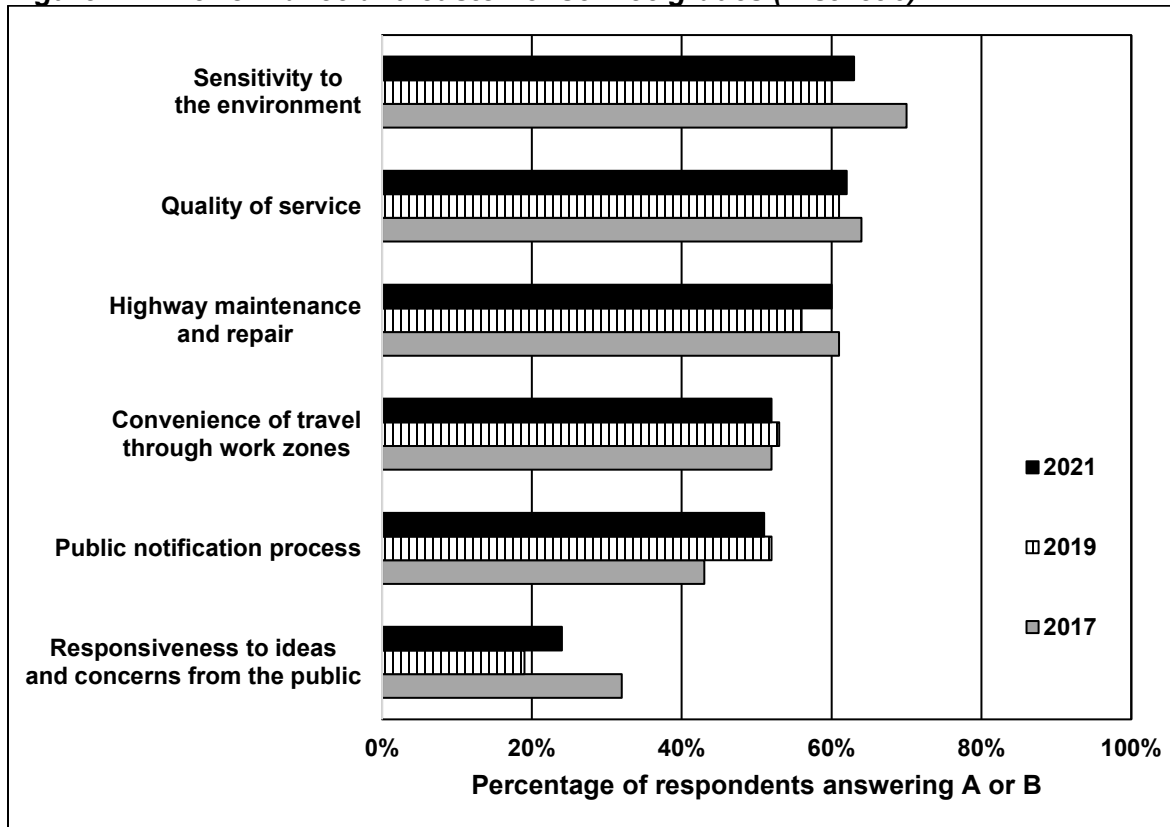


Grading Aspects of MDT’s Functions (District 5)

Respondents in District 5—Billings graded MDT’s performance in a number of transportation system areas (Figure 7.22).

- Sixty-three percent of respondents gave MDT the grade of A or B with respect to the Department’s sensitivity to the environment and 62 percent did so for MDT’s quality of service.
- Twenty-four percent gave MDT the grade of A or B with respect to the Department’s responsiveness to the public’s ideas and concerns.
- The major change between 2019 and 2021 was a large improvement in responsiveness to public input.

Figure 7.22 Performance and customer service grades (District 5)

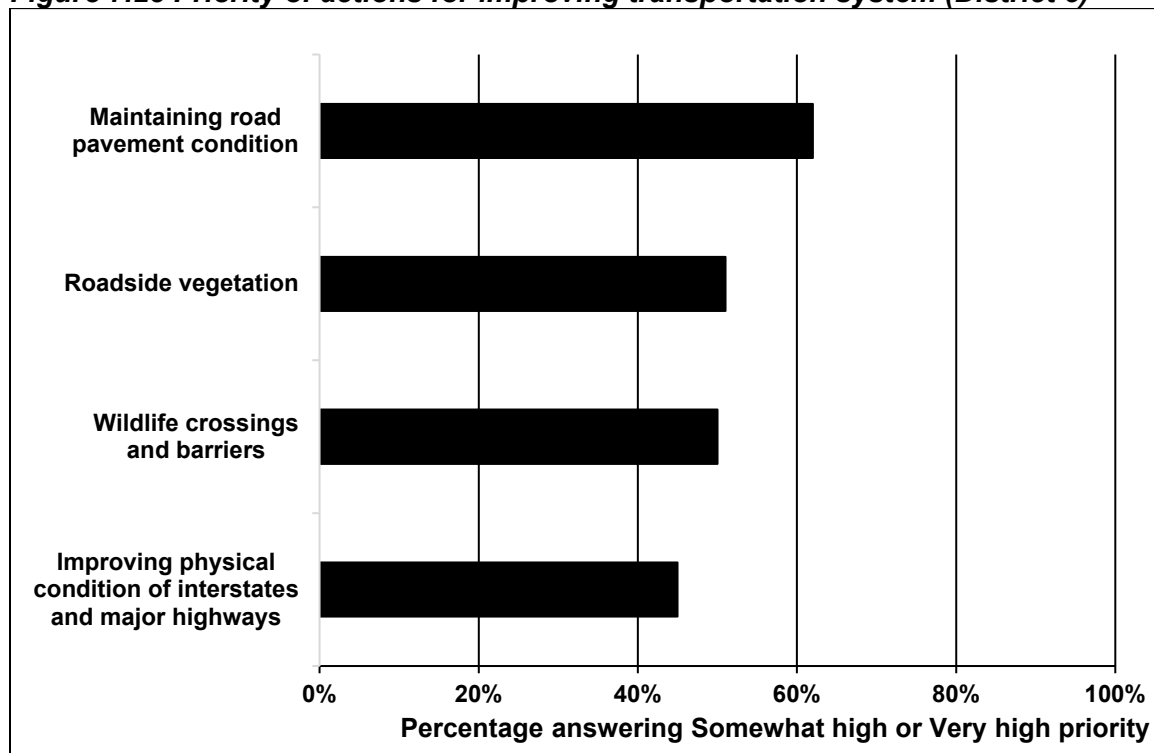


Priority of Actions to Improve Montana’s Transportation System (District 5)

From a list of possible actions that can be undertaken to improve the transportation system in the state, respondents in District 5—Billings ranked the following four the highest (Figure 7.23).

- Maintaining road pavement conditions received the highest priority ranking with 62 percent giving it a *somewhat high priority* or *very high priority*.
- Roadside vegetation ranked second (51%) followed by wildlife crossings and barriers (50%).
- Improving the physical condition of interstates and major highways was fourth (45%).

Figure 7.23 Priority of actions for improving transportation system (District 5)

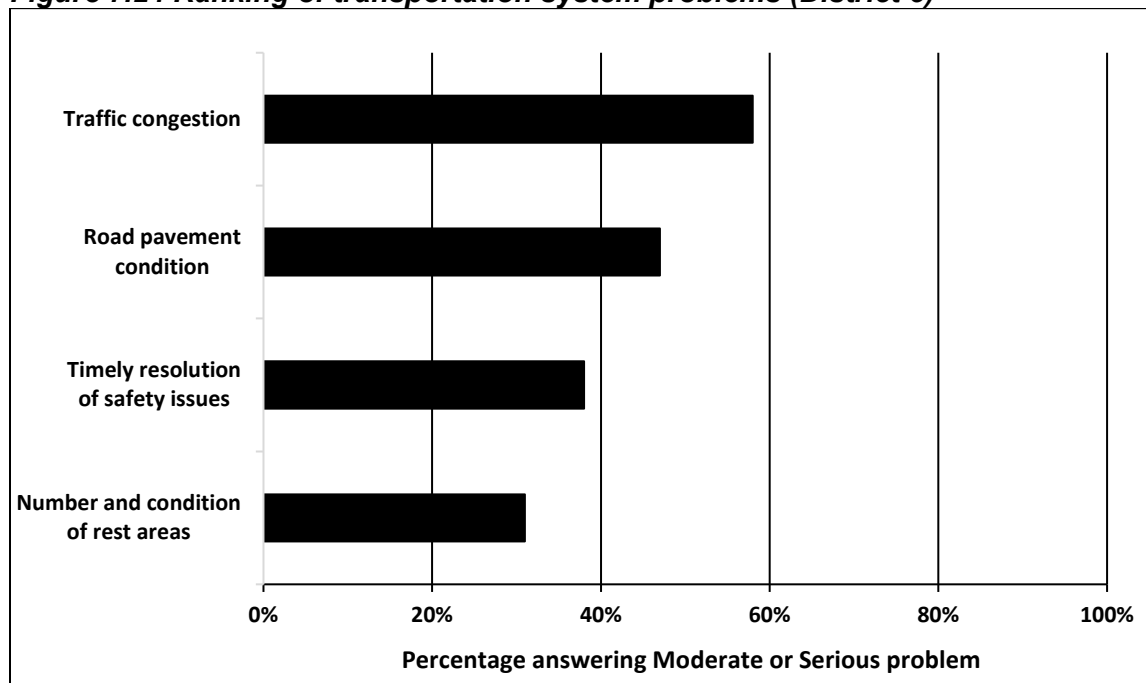


Ranking of Issues Seen as Problems with the Montana Transportation System (District 5)

Survey respondents in District 5—Billings also considered a list of issues that may be seen as problems with the state’s transportation system (Figure 7.24).

- Traffic congestion was considered to be either a *moderate problem* or a *serious problem* by the greatest percentage of District 5 respondents, at 58 percent.
- Three additional items ranked high on the list of potential problems: road pavement condition (47%), timely resolution of safety issues (38%), and number and condition of rest areas (31%).

Figure 7.24 Ranking of transportation system problems (District 5)

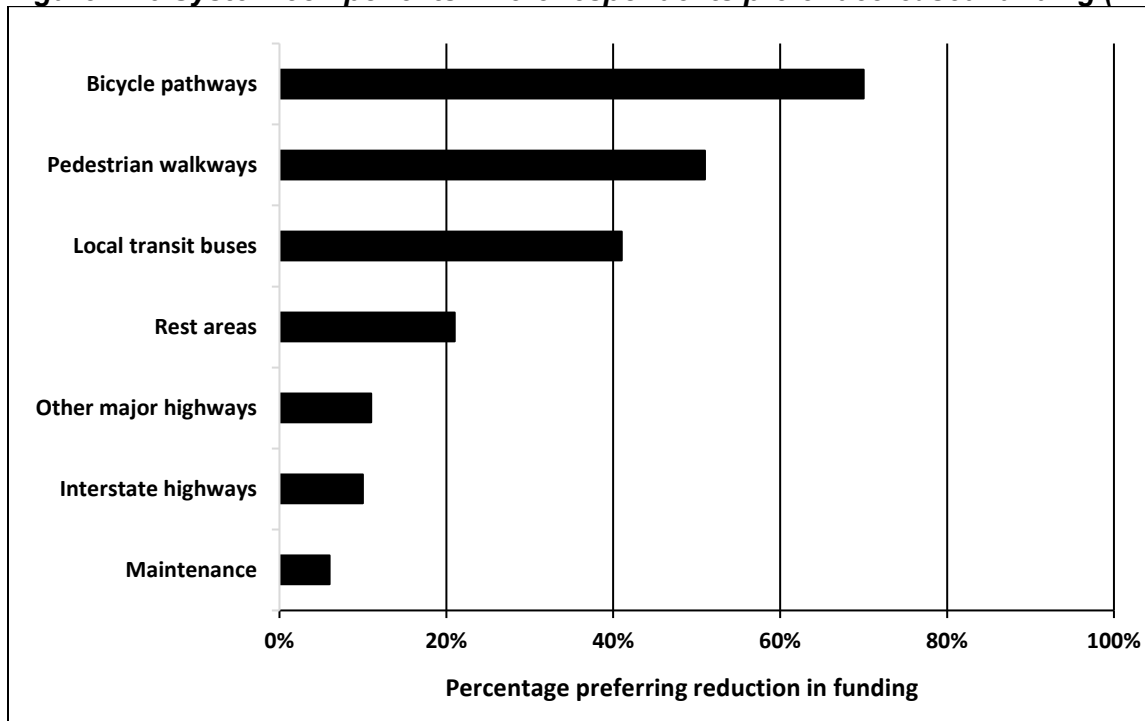


Areas Favored for Decreases in Funding (District 5)

In the event of future decreases in the MDT budget, District 5 survey respondents indicated the areas within the Montana transportation system where they preferred funding to be reduced (Figure 7.25).

- For residents of District 5—Billings, the majority (70%) indicated that they would prefer to see reduced funding for bicycle pathways.
- Transportation system maintenance was favored for receiving reduced funding by only a small percentage (6%).

Figure 7.25 System components where respondents prefer decreased funding (District 5)



CHAPTER 8 SURVEY METHODS

Survey Administration

The MDT Public Involvement Survey was administered from June 1, 2021 through September 20, 2021. Contacting 3,473 eligible respondents resulted in 1,160 survey participants, for a response rate of 33.4 percent.² This response rate is typical for a rigorously conducted, address-sampled mail survey (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2014).

The survey was administered by mail with responses collected either via the Internet or via a hardcopy questionnaire. Sampled potential respondents received up to four mail contacts during the survey administration period:

1. An introductory letter inviting participation via an Internet link provided.
2. A follow-up letter thanking respondents and reminding non-respondents that they could participate via the Internet link provided.
3. A 8.5" x 11" questionnaire packet mailed to non-respondents only, inviting them to participate via an Internet link provided or by completing a hardcopy questionnaire and returning it in the stamped envelope provided.
4. A second 8.5" x 11" questionnaire packet mailed to non-respondents only, again inviting participation via an Internet link provided or by completing a hardcopy questionnaire and returning it in the stamped envelope provided.

Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire was authored by MDT, with BBER formatting the hardcopy questionnaire. In addition, BBER programmed and tested the Internet version of the questionnaire using software provided by Qualtrics, Inc. MDT was the final approval authority for the questionnaire.

Sampling

The study population consisted of adults ages 18 and older who lived in an occupied dwelling listed in the U.S. Postal Service Delivery Sequence File. BBER sampled 4,000 potential respondents, 800 from each of MDT's 5 districts. Sampling was conducted using an addressed-based, random sample of residences purchased from Dynata, Inc. The sample was stratified by MDT district and by census tracts with the highest proportions of American Indian residents. Within households, random sampling was conducted using the next birthday method. This survey yielded an overall sampling error rate of +/- 4.7 percent.

² This response rate is calculated using American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) formula RR1 which is AAPOR's most conservative formula. Using AAPOR's formula RR3, which makes a very reasonable estimate of how many sampled cases from which BBER received no response were actually ineligible, the response rate was 41.8%. Source: [https://www.aapor.org/Standards-Ethics/Standard-Definitions-\(1\).aspx](https://www.aapor.org/Standards-Ethics/Standard-Definitions-(1).aspx).

Weighting

The data presented in this report are weighted to produce estimates representative of the adult Montana population and adults in each MDT district. Survey weights are required to bridge the sample to the actual population as potential respondents in each sample strata had different probabilities of selection³. Survey weights were calibrated to population totals obtained from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey 2015-2019 data⁴. Those population totals include sex, age, educational attainment, household income and MDT district.

Data Set Preparation

Following collection and data entry, 100 percent of mailed questionnaires were verified for data entry accuracy. Appropriate data labels were added as well as composite variables and flags to facilitate analysis. Missing values for the weighting variables, necessary for calibration to the 2015-2019 ACS 5-year estimates, were imputed using the multiple imputation method⁵. Data were processed using three statistical software packages: IBM SPSS Statistics Version 28 (2021), SAS Version 9.4 (2018), and Statistics Canada's G-EST Version 2.03 (2019).

³ Heeringa, West and Berglund (2017). *Applied Survey Data Analysis: Second Edition*. Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press.

⁴ Valliant and Dever (2018). *Survey Weights: A Step-by-step Guide to Calculation*. College Station, TX: Stata Press.

⁵ Rubin, D. B. (1987). *Multiple Imputation for Nonresponse in Surveys*. New York, New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

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