

TranPlanMT 2023

Public Involvement Survey



MONTANA
Department of Transportation

VOLUME 1
Survey Analysis
November 2023

State of Montana Department
of Transportation

Bureau of Business and Economic
Research University of Montana - Missoula

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of the 2023 TranPlanMT Public Involvement Survey is to examine Montanans' perceptions and opinions regarding:

1. Current conditions of the state's transportation system;
2. Possible actions that could improve the state's 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 1,261 responses to household questionnaires mailed between June 16 and Sept. 11, 2023.

2023 SNAPSHOT

Montanans were:

- Moderately satisfied with the state's overall transportation systems;
- Most satisfied with the physical condition of Montana's airports; and
- Least satisfied with the state's bicycle paths.

In terms of service availability, Montanans were:

- Most satisfied with the availability of air transportation to destinations outside of Montana; and
- Least satisfied with the availability of passenger rail service.

Regarding transportation system problems:

- Road pavement conditions are considered a problem by most respondents, followed by traffic congestion; and
- Adequate road signage; with
- Too many access points onto major roads considered a problem by the fewest respondents.

Montanans gave the highest priority to the following where improvements to the state's transportation system are needed:

- Road pavement conditions;
- Wildlife crossings and barriers;
- Keeping the public informed;
- Transportation safety.

Close to 70% of Montanans feel they receive \$260 - \$320 or more per year in value from the state transportation system. If overall funding for MDT were to decrease, survey respondents prioritized the following budget cuts:

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

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

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

Other findings include:

- Over 60% of respondents think a primary seat belt law in Montana would save lives.
- 80% of respondents think that speed limits in work zones are just right.
- Overall customer service results, in the B to C range, are consistent with 2021 survey results.
- Just under 20% of 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 2023 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:

- Current conditions of the state's transportation system;
- Possible actions that could improve the state's transportation system; and
- The quality of service the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) provides to its customers.

The survey is designed to help MDT policymakers 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 2023 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 the methods used and the questions asked to find opportunities for improvement. During the 2023 survey development, MDT identified additional data needs which resulted in the addition of two new survey questions:

1. About the frequency of service required to make passenger rail a viable transportation option, and;
2. Regarding the types of trips for which passenger rail service would be used.

The Respondents

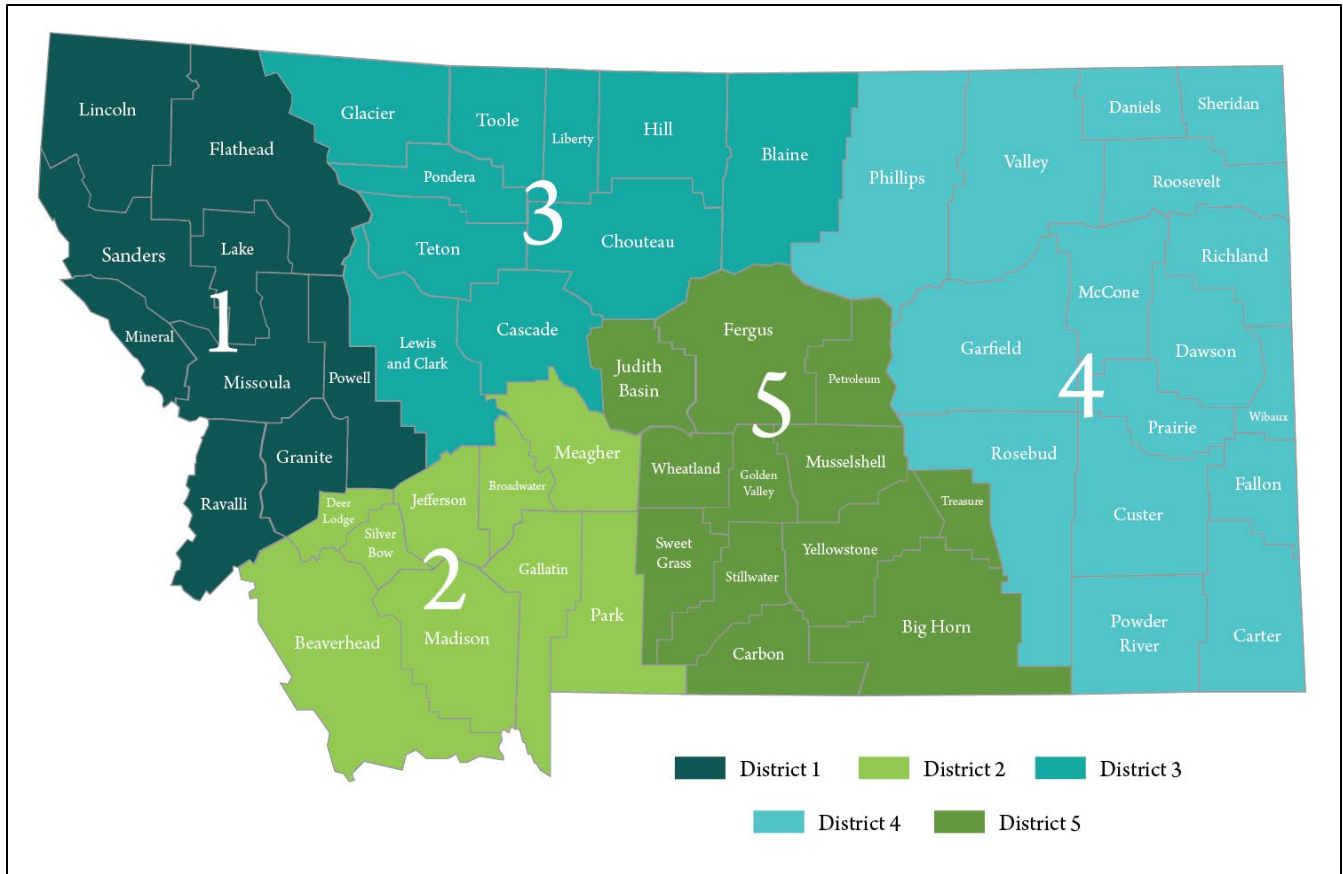
Table 1.1 describes survey respondents. Readers may note that the weighted response frequencies refer to the total Montana population 18 or older represented by survey responses. Referring to the total population represented by the survey results helps readers understand the meaning of the findings and makes it easier for readers to compare the weighted proportions of survey respondents to proportions reported by an outside “gold standard” estimate like the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey.

Table 1.1 2023 Survey Respondent Demographic Characteristics

Characteristic		Unweighted Responses		Weighted Responses	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	50%	635	412,814	49%
	Female	49%	620	415,787	49%
	Other	0%	6	16,562	2%
Age	18-34	5%	68	236,792	28%
	35-49	22%	279	192,460	23%
	50-64	34%	433	213,457	25%
	65+	38%	481	202,454	24%
Region	Missoula	21%	261	273,784	32%
	Butte	24%	301	175,156	21%
	Great Falls	18%	224	165,751	20%
	Glendive	19%	238	60,318	7%
	Billings	19%	237	170,154	20%
Race	White	94%	1183	737,204	87%
	American Indian	5%	64	65,377	8%
	Other	1%	14	42,582	5%
Household Income	< \$50,000	30%	373	349,898	41%
	\$50,000 - \$99,999	40%	510	272,142	32%
	\$100,000+	30%	378	223,123	26%
Educational Attainment	High school or less	16%	205	296,922	35%
	Some college or 2-year degree	37%	468	286,541	34%
	Bachelor’s degree or higher	47%	588	261,700	31%

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

Figure 1.1 MDT Districts



District	Unweighted Responses	Weighted Responses
District 1 – Missoula	261	273,784
District 2 – Butte	301	175,156
District 3 – Great Falls	224	165,751
District 4 – Glendive	238	60,318
District 5 – Billings	237	170,154

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 5.5, 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	5.5	5.3	5.7	1,248

“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 system 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 7.1, airports ranked the highest in terms of satisfaction.
- Interstate highways and rest areas with mean scores of 6.4 and 6.1, respectively, also ranked high in terms of satisfaction.
- Montanans reported the least satisfaction with bicycle paths (5.1).

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

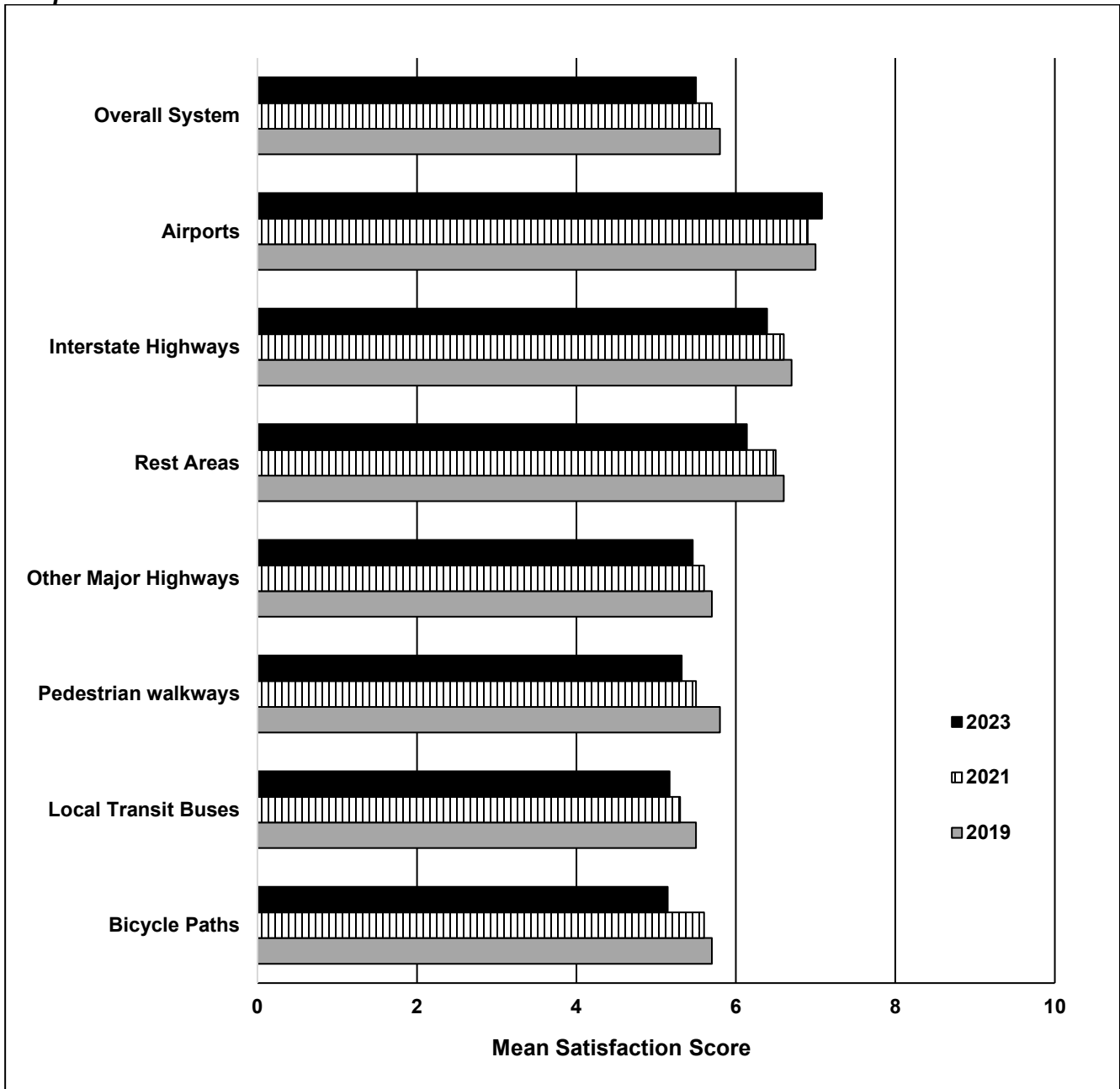
Table 2.2 Satisfaction with Physical Condition of Transportation System Components

Component	Mean	95% Confidence Interval		N
		Lower limit	Upper limit	
Airports	7.1	6.9	7.3	1,233
Interstate Highways	6.4	6.2	6.6	1,248
Rest Areas	6.1	5.9	6.4	1,250
Other Major Highways	5.5	5.2	5.7	1,250
Pedestrian Walkways	5.3	5.1	5.6	1,243
Local Transit Buses	5.2	4.9	5.4	901
Bicycle Paths	5.1	4.9	5.4	1,217

Trends

As shown in Figure 2.1 there was little change in the satisfaction levels between 2019 and 2023. In all three survey years, satisfaction with the physical condition of airports was rated the highest with all areas seeing improvement in mean satisfaction scores.

Figure 2.1 Trends in the Satisfaction of the Transportation System's Physical System Components

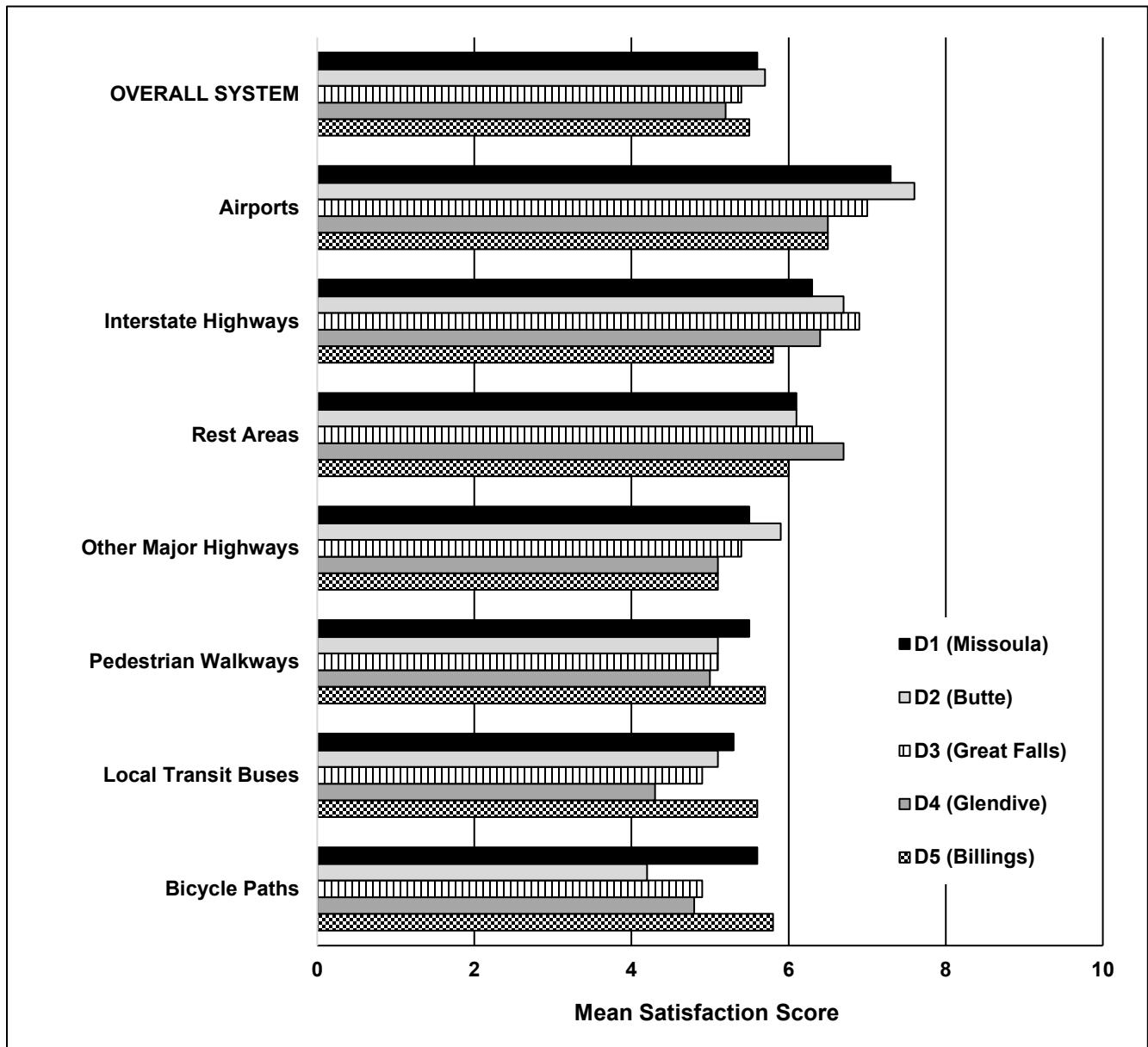


Districts

The means presented in Figure 2.2 compare rates of satisfaction across MDT's 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, pedestrian walkways and bicycle paths than Districts 2, 3 and 4.
- District 2 (Butte) was more satisfied with the condition of airports and other major highways than the other four Districts.
- District 3 (Great Falls) was most satisfied as a District with the condition of airports, interstate highways, and rest areas.
- District 4 (Glendive) was more satisfied with the physical condition of rest areas than the other Districts.
- District 5 (Billings) was more satisfied with bicycle paths, pedestrian walkways, and local transit than the other four Districts.

Figure 2.2 District Comparison of Satisfaction with the 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 presented in Table 2.3. As mentioned above, 0 represents “very unsatisfied” and 10 represents “very satisfied.”

- The availability of air transportation to destinations outside of Montana ranked the highest, with a mean satisfaction score of 5.7.
- The availability of freight rail services, air transportation within Montana, local bus or van services, and transit for the elderly or disabled reflected a neutral level of satisfaction, ranked at 5.0, 4.9, 4.9 and 4.6 respectively.
- The availability of inter-city bus services (3.9) and passenger rail service (3.2) ranked the lowest.

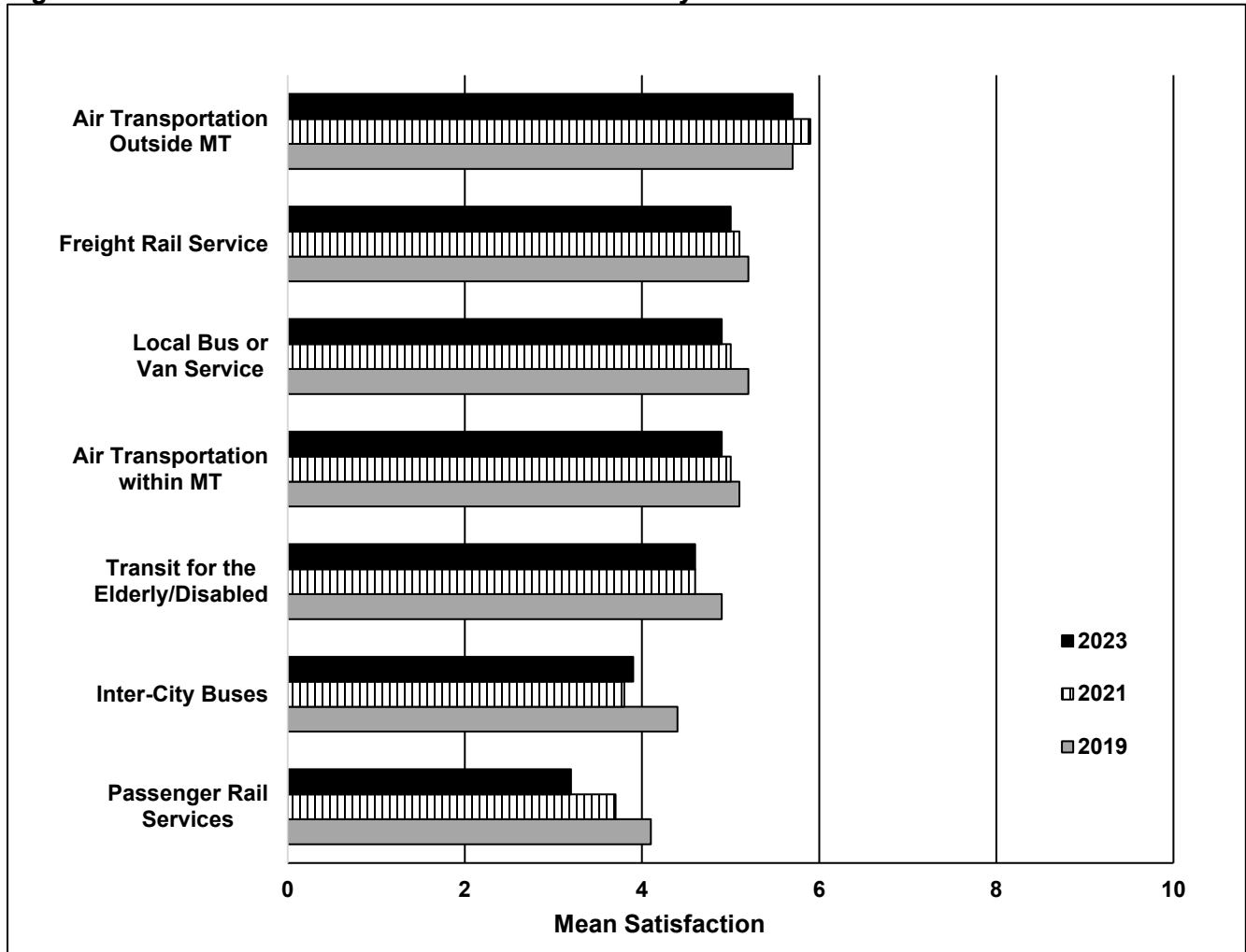
Table 2.3 Satisfaction with Availability of Services

Service	Mean	95% Confidence Interval		N
		Lower Limit	Upper Limit	
Air Transportation Outside Montana	5.7	5.4	5.9	1,145
Freight Rail Service	5.0	4.8	5.3	717
Air Transportation within Montana	4.9	4.7	5.2	1,006
Local Bus or Van Service	4.9	4.6	5.2	847
Transit for the Elderly or Disabled	4.6	4.3	5.0	808
Inter-city Buses	3.9	3.6	4.1	799
Passenger Rail Service	3.2	2.9	3.5	872

Trends

When satisfaction levels with the availability of services are compared over time, there was consistency between the three survey years for most services. A notable 2023 decline in satisfaction with the availability of services was evident when assessing passenger rail service.

Figure 2.3 Trends in Satisfaction with the Availability of Services

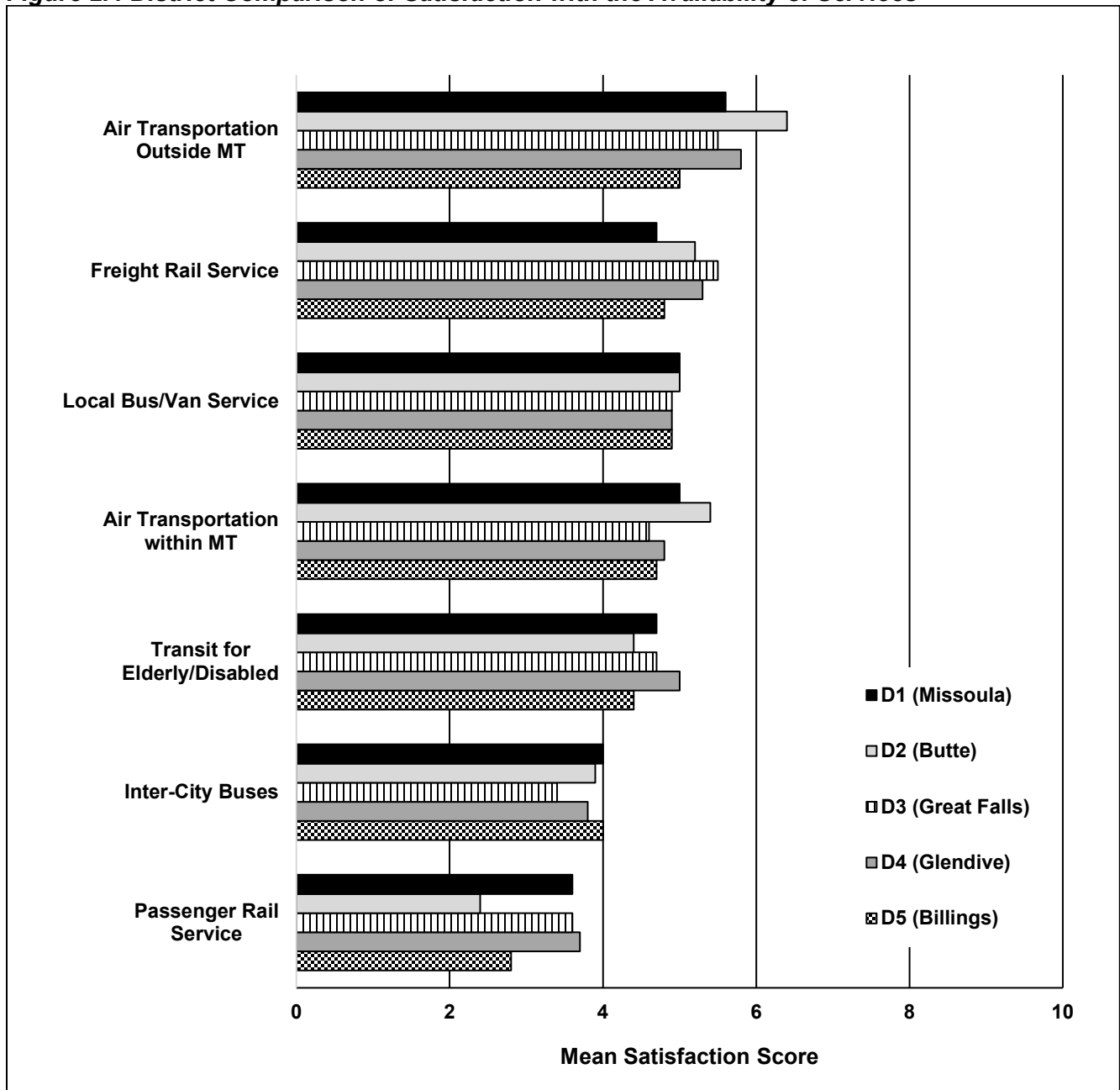


Districts

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

- District 1 (Missoula) and 2 (Butte) were most satisfied with air transportation within Montana compared to the other Districts.
- District 2 (Butte) was most satisfied with the availability of air transportation to destinations outside Montana.
- District 3 (Great Falls) was most satisfied with air transportation outside Montana and freight rail service.
- District 4 (Glendive) was more satisfied with transportation for the elderly or disabled than any other District.
- District 5 (Billings) was slightly less satisfied with the availability of most services compared to other Districts. One exception is that District 5 was tied with District 1 for being most satisfied with inter-city bus service.

Figure 2.4 District Comparison of Satisfaction with the 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’s transportation system on a scale from 1 to 4, where 1 represented *not a problem* and 4 represented a *serious problem*.

- None of the problems listed were rated as being more than a moderate problem.
- Road pavement conditions were rated as a serious problem by 22% of respondents and remains the highest ranked problem within the transportation system.
- 55% rated adequate road signage as *not a problem*.

Table 2.4 Montana Transportation System Problems

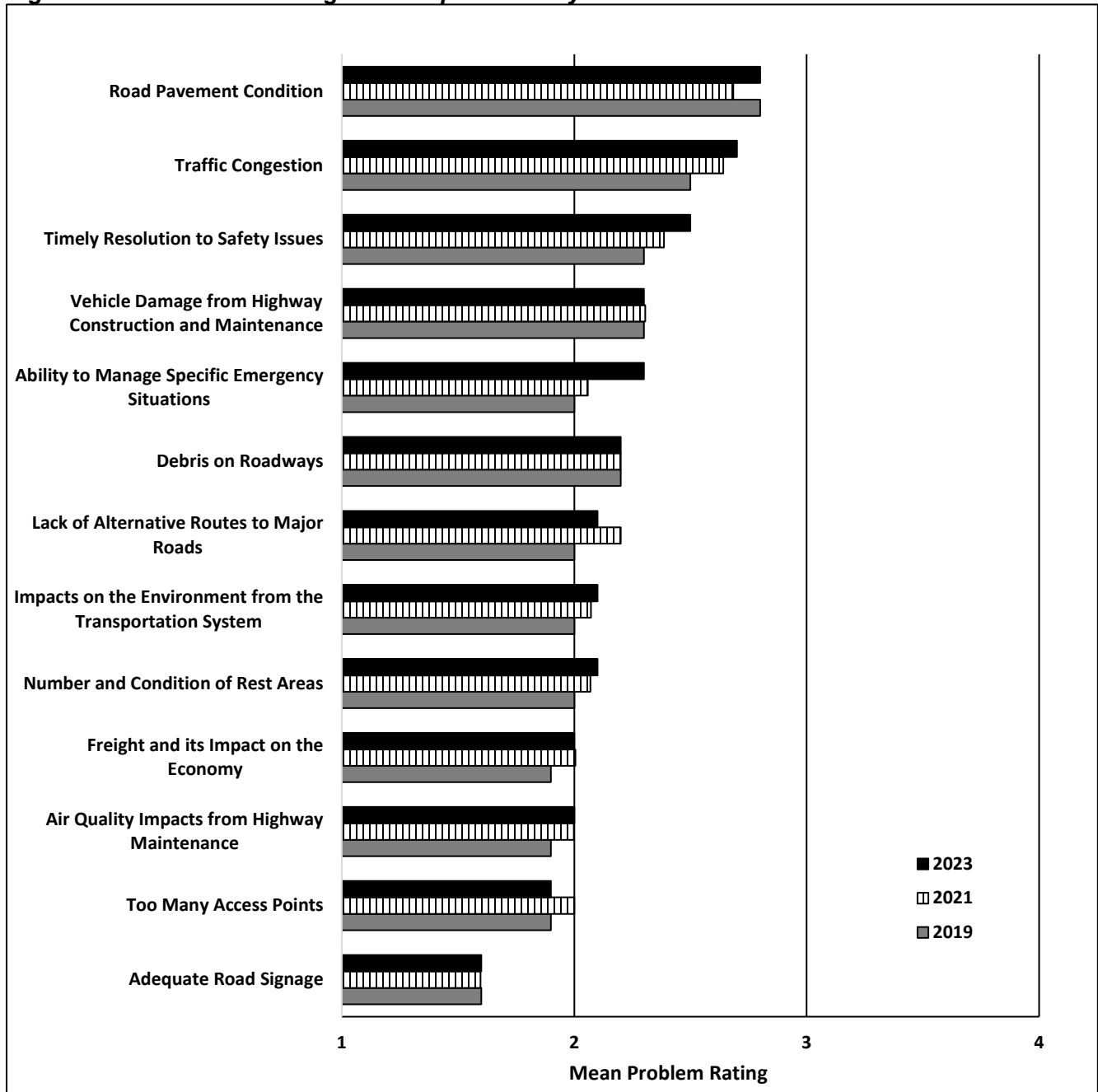
System	Serious Problem	Moderate Problem	Small Problem	Not a Problem	Don't Know	Mean	N
Road Pavement Conditions	22%	42%	28%	5%	3%	2.8	1,247
Traffic Congestion	18%	43%	25%	13%	2%	2.7	1,251
The Timely Resolution to Safety Issues	11%	27%	27%	11%	25%	2.5	1,234
Vehicle Damage from Highway Construction and Maintenance	11%	23%	39%	17%	10%	2.3	1,239
The Ability to Manage Specific Emergency Situations	9%	21%	24%	20%	26%	2.3	1,246
Debris on Roadway	10%	23%	41%	20%	5%	2.2	1,243
Impacts on the Environment from the Transportation System	10%	16%	26%	25%	23%	2.1	1,241
The Lack of Alternative Routes to Major Roads	8%	23%	33%	27%	8%	2.1	1,249
The Number and Condition of Rest Areas	10%	20%	27%	29%	14%	2.1	1,239
Air Quality Impacts from Highway Maintenance	6%	19%	38%	28%	8%	2.0	1,244
Freight and its Impact on the Economy	7%	13%	19%	25%	36%	2.0	1,244
Too Many Access Points onto Major Roads	5%	16%	33%	33%	13%	1.9	1,234
Adequate Road Signs	2%	11%	28%	55%	3%	1.6	1,243

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 2023, 2021, and 2019 results. Of some note is the small increases in the 2023 rating for several problem areas (e.g., road pavement condition, traffic congestion, timely resolution of safety issues, and management of emergency situations).

Figure 2.5 Trends in Ranking of Transportation System Problems

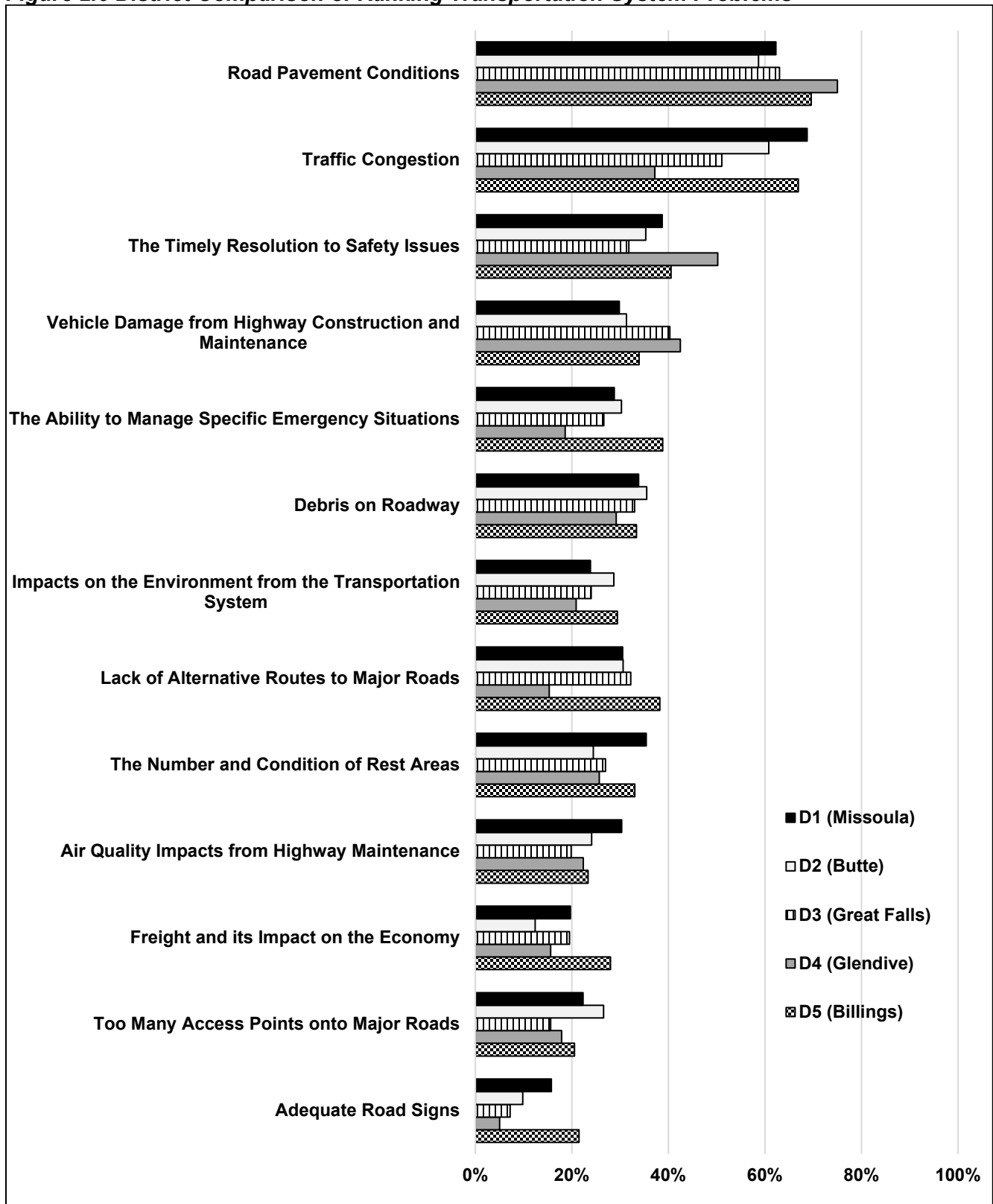


Districts

When compared across Montana Districts, there is variation in the ranking of transportation system problems (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 69% of respondents) and road pavement conditions (62%).
- In District 2 (Butte), the greatest problem was also thought to be traffic congestion (61%), again followed by road pavement conditions (59%).
- In District 3 (Great Falls), the greatest problem was thought to be road pavement condition (63%), followed by traffic congestion (51%).
- In District 4 (Glendive), the greatest problem was road pavement condition (75%), followed by the timely resolution of safety issues (50%).
- In District 5 (Billings), the greatest problem was road pavement conditions (70%), followed by traffic congestion (67%).

Figure 2.6 District Comparison of Ranking 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 taken 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

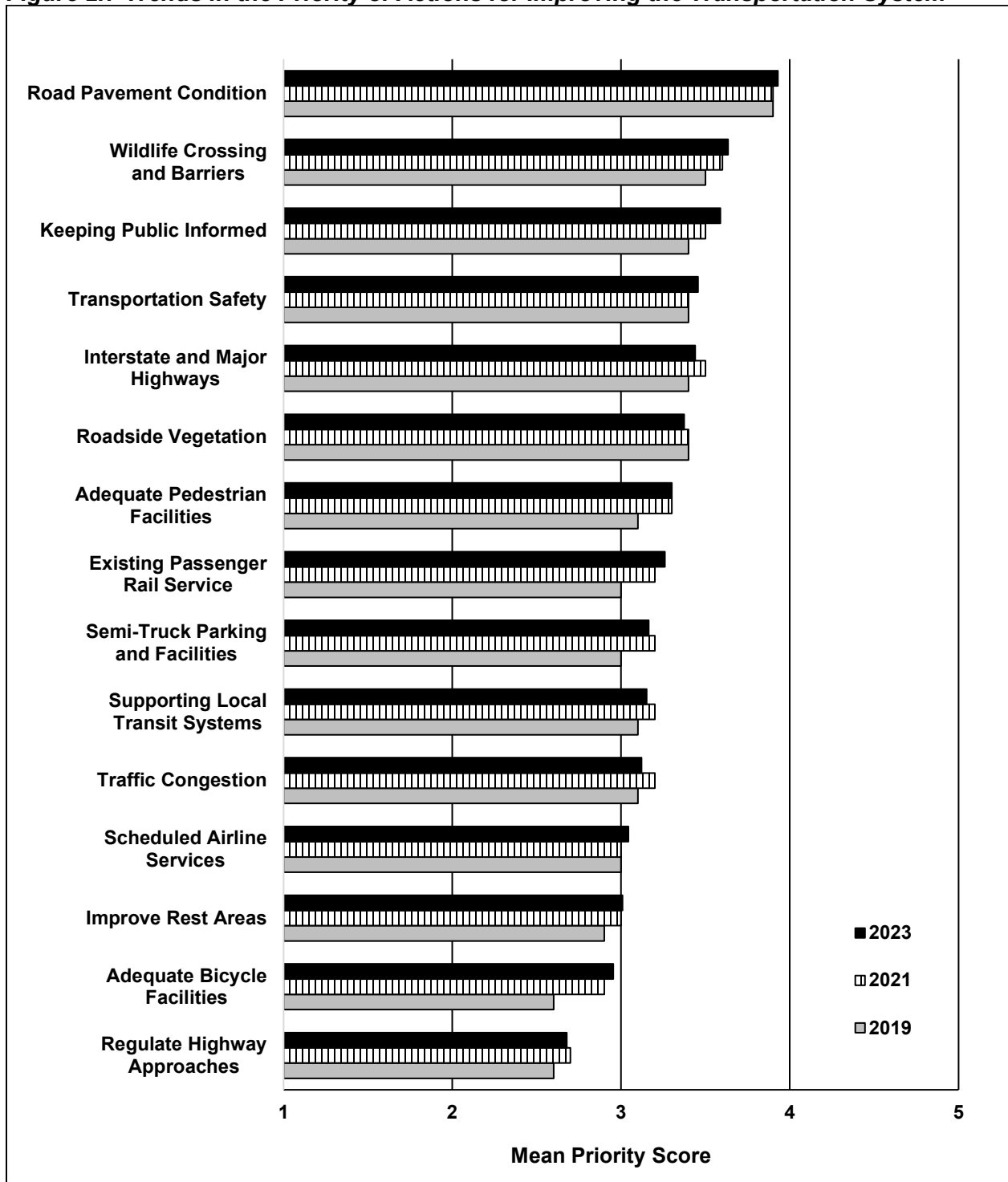
Action	Very High Priority	Somewhat High priority	Medium Priority	Somewhat Low priority	Very Low priority	Mean	N
Road Pavement Conditions	30%	41%	21%	6%	2%	3.9	1,228
Wildlife Crossings and Barriers	29%	26%	30%	9%	6%	3.6	1,233
Keeping the Public Informed	26%	29%	29%	11%	5%	3.6	1,231
Transportation Safety	23%	28%	28%	13%	8%	3.5	1,227
Interstates and Major Highways	16%	33%	32%	13%	4%	3.4	1,228
Roadside Vegetation	20%	27%	31%	14%	8%	3.4	1,241
Adequate Pedestrian Facilities	20%	24%	32%	18%	6%	3.3	1,234
Existing Passenger Rail Service	22%	19%	31%	19%	9%	3.3	1,235
Semi-Truck Parking and Facilities	14%	23%	35%	22%	7%	3.2	1,235
Supporting Local Transport systems	15%	22%	35%	17%	10%	3.2	1,235
Reducing Congestion by Increasing Highway System Capacity	13%	24%	34%	19%	10%	3.1	1,227
Scheduled Airline Service	14%	20%	34%	19%	13%	3.0	1,237
Improve Rest Areas	13%	19%	34%	23%	11%	3.0	1,234
Adequate Bicycle Facilities	15%	18%	29%	23%	15%	3.0	1,221
Regulate Highway Approaches	6%	13%	38%	28%	15%	2.7	1,229

Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Trends

Results of the 2023 survey were consistent with those from the 2021 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 keeping the public informed and transportation safety. The regulation of highway approaches received the lowest priority ranking in 2023. (Figure 2.7).

Figure 2.7 Trends in the Priority of Actions for Improving the Transportation System

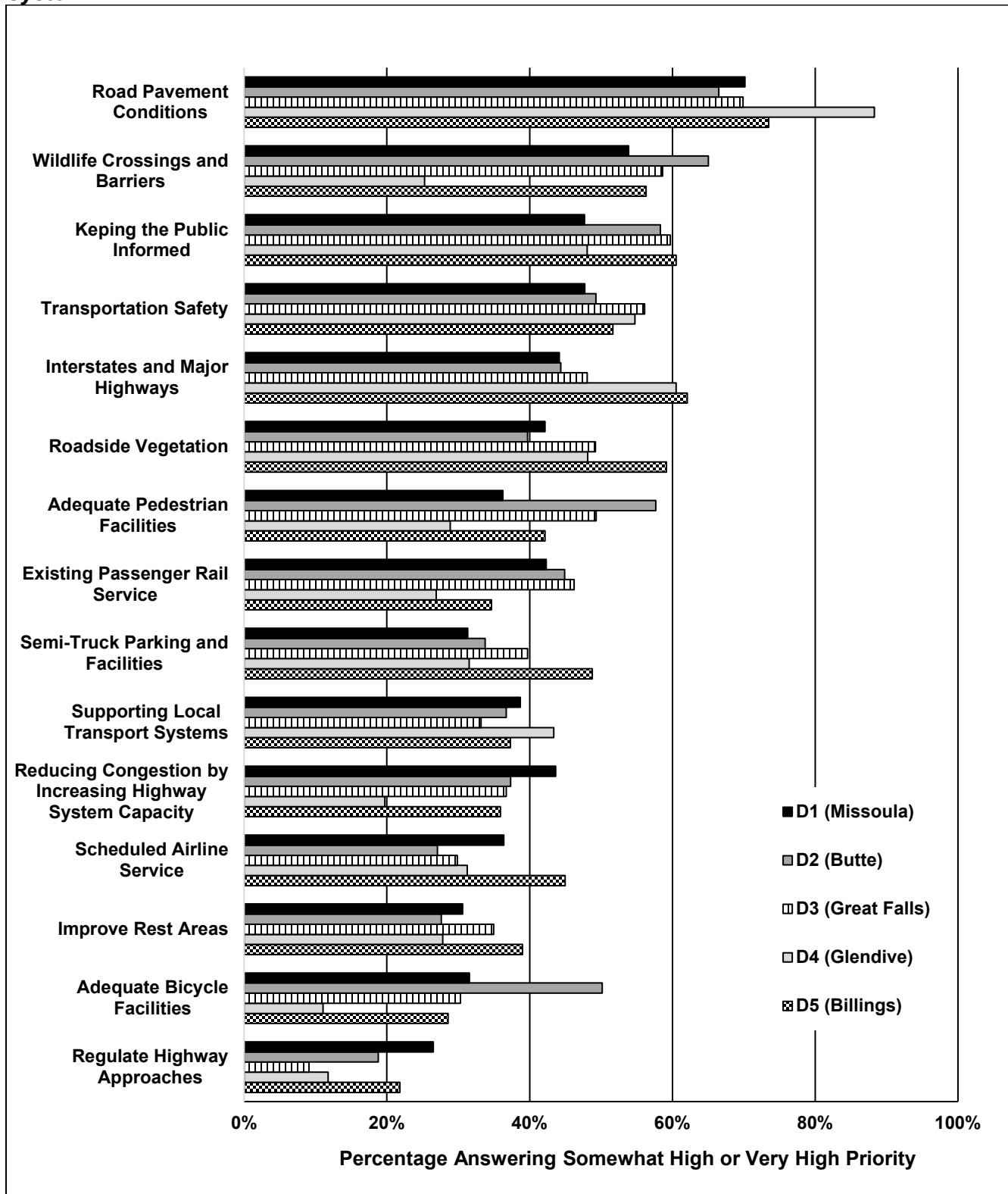


Districts

When compared across Montana transportation Districts, there is consensus on some items while others see greater divergence. For example, keeping the public informed received a relatively uniform priority score across the Districts compared to the greater variation between Districts for road pavement conditions, interstates and major highways, adequate pedestrian facilities, and scheduled airline service (Figure 2.8).

- Within District 1 (Missoula), the highest priority was given to maintaining road pavement conditions (70% ranked this item as *somewhat high priority* or *very high priority*), followed by wildlife crossings and barriers (54%).
- In District 2 (Butte), the highest priority was also given to maintaining road pavement conditions (66%), followed by wildlife crossings and barriers (65%), and keeping the public informed (58%).
- Respondents in District 3 (Great Falls) gave the highest priority to maintaining road pavement conditions (70%), followed by keeping the public informed (60%), wildlife crossings and barriers (59%), and transportation safety (56%).
- Within District 4 (Glendive), the highest priority was given to maintaining road pavement conditions (88%), followed by maintaining interstates and major highways (61%), and transportation safety (55%).
- Respondents in District 5 (Billings) also gave the highest priority to maintaining road pavement conditions (73%), followed by interstates and major highways (62%), and keeping the public informed (61%).

Figure 2.8 District Comparison of the Priority of Actions for Improving the Transportation System



CHAPTER 3: MDT SYSTEM FUNDING PRIORITIES

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

The average Montanan pays between \$260 and \$320 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, 69% of respondents indicated they receive a value equal to or greater than their annual taxes of \$260 - \$320.
- In District 2 (Butte), 26% of respondents indicated they get more in value from the transportation system than they pay in annual taxes.
- More respondents in District 4 (Glendive), than in any of the other Districts, feel they get less value than their annual taxes.

Table 3.1 Perceived Value from Montana’s Transportation System

District	More value	About \$260 - \$320	Less Value	N
Total Sample	19%	50%	31%	1,218
District 1: Missoula	18%	51%	31%	255
District 2: Butte	26%	50%	24%	289
District 3: Great Falls	20%	42%	38%	216
District 4: Glendive	14%	46%	40%	231
District 5: Billings	13%	57%	30%	227

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 (55%) think bicycle pathways should be funded at a lower level.
- 40% of respondents ranked maintenance as a priority for increased funding.

Table 3.2 Funding Priorities by Transportation System Component

Component	Fund at Lower Level	Fund at Same Level	Fund at Higher Level	N
Bicycle pathways	55%	28%	17%	1,227
Pedestrian Walkways	42%	38%	20%	1,223
Local Transit Buses	32%	52%	16%	1,212
Rest Areas	26%	60%	15%	1,222
Interstate Highways	10%	68%	22%	1,222
Other Major Highways	8%	62%	30%	1,214
Maintenance	5%	56%	40%	1,211

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

Survey respondents had the option to suggest additional areas where they prefer reduced funding in the event that MDT faces overall reductions. About 4% 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
Non-Transportation Related Items *	19
MDT Administration	12
Other Transportation Related Items **	10
Passenger or Freight Rail	4
Airports and Air Travel	2
Winter Sanding, Plowing, or De-icing	3
New Road Construction	2

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

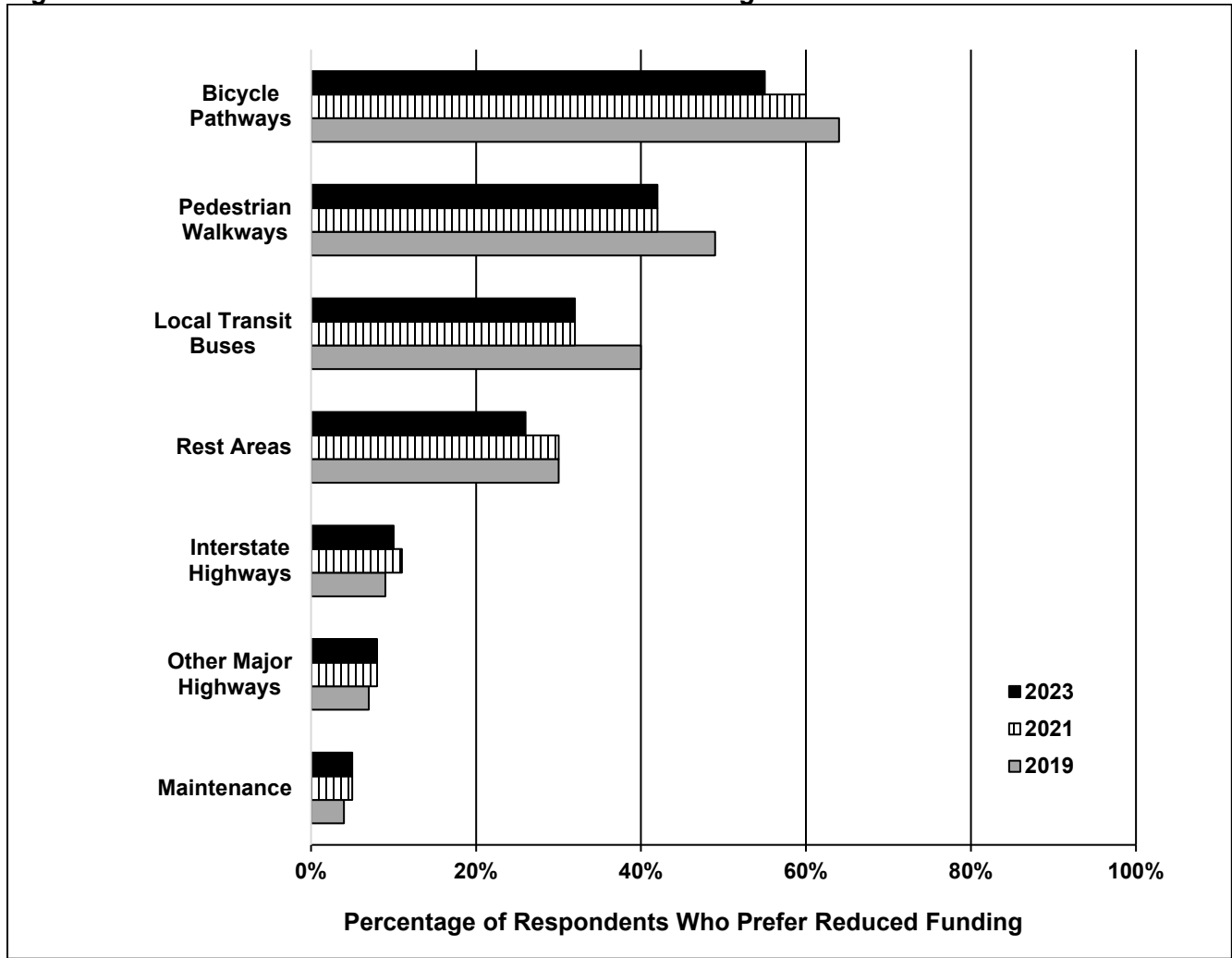
** Variety of transportation-related comments but unrelated to the question asked.

Trends

Since 2019, the relative order of preferences for areas in which to decrease funding has not changed. While 2023 survey respondents had opinions that were similar to those in 2021 and 2019, the proportion of Montanans who favor decreased funding (Figure 3.1) for bicycle pathways, pedestrian walkways, local transit buses, and rest areas, has slightly declined.

- Bicycle pathways were favored for decreased funding by the greatest percentage of respondents each year since 2019.
- Preference for reducing funding for pedestrian walkways remained the second ranked choice for decreased funding since 2019.
- Preference for reducing funding for local transit buses has remained the third ranked choice for decreased funding since 2019.
- Since 2019, decreasing funding for interstate highways, other major highways and maintenance has been favored by less than 12% of Montanans.

Figure 3.1 Trends in Preferred Areas for Reduced Funding

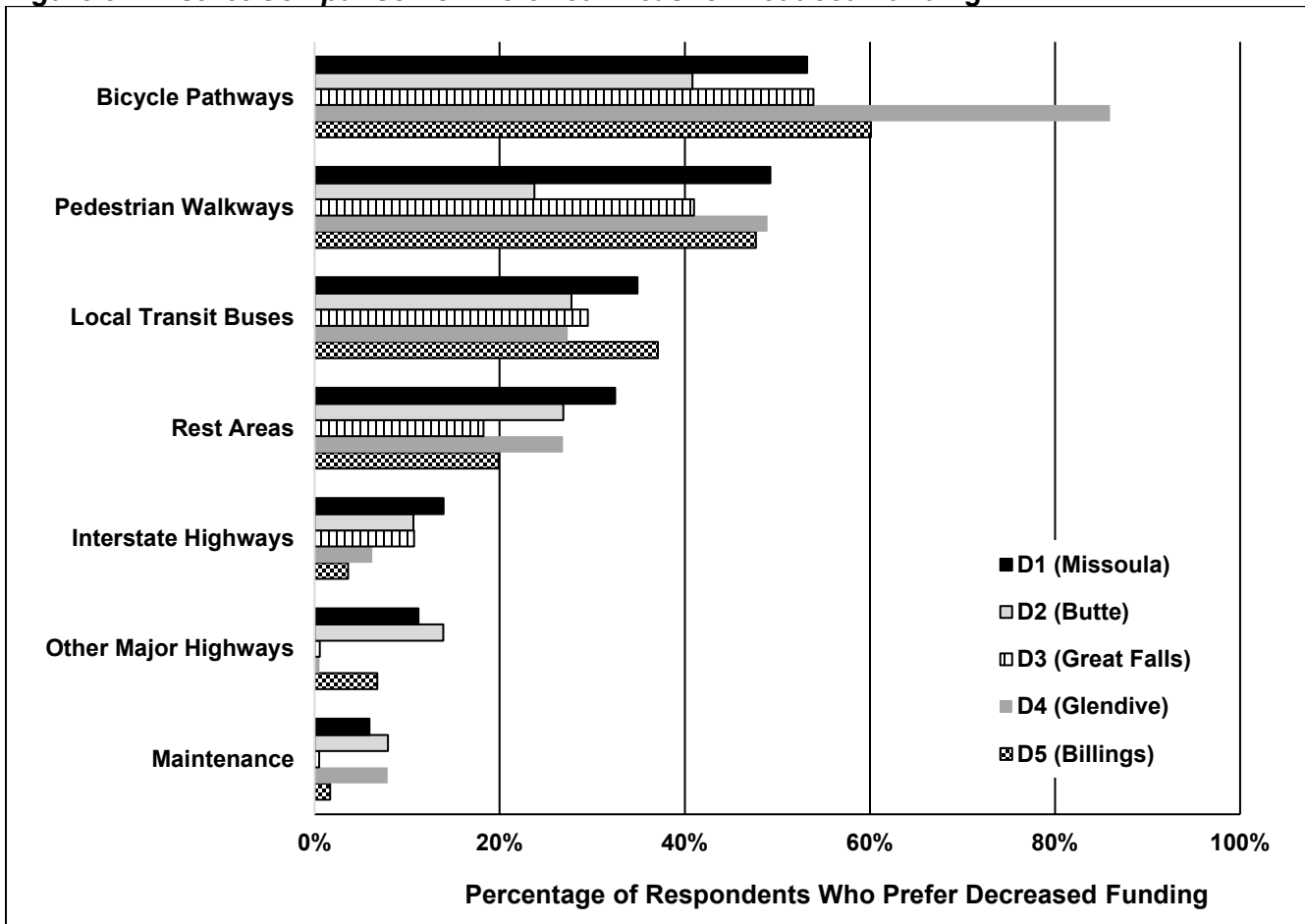


Districts

When comparing transportation Districts, the relative order of preference on where to decrease funding is largely consistent (Figure 3.2).

- District 1 (Missoula) had the highest 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 pedestrian walkways.
- District 3 (Great Falls) had the lowest percentage of respondents who favored decreased funding for maintenance.
- 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 favored funding decreases for local transit buses.

Figure 3.2 District Comparison of Preferred Areas for Reduced Funding



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 communication 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 45% and 47% respectively rating them as *very useful* or *extremely useful*.
- Radio and television, maps, pictures and graphics, special mailings, and computer simulated displays were also found to be *moderately useful*.
- A toll-free call-in number, 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 Communication Tools

Communication Tool	Extremely Useful	Very Useful	Moderately Useful	Slightly Useful	Not at All Useful	Mean	N
Variable Message Highway Signs	15%	30%	31%	16%	8%	3.3	1,210
Websites, Social Media, Apps for Mobile Devices	18%	29%	26%	13%	13%	3.3	1,214
Maps	12%	26%	32%	18%	12%	3.1	1,201
Pictures and Graphics	8%	23%	39%	17%	13%	3.0	1,199
Radio and Television	10%	21%	31%	23%	15%	2.9	1,212
Special Mailings	10%	19%	31%	23%	17%	2.8	1,212
Computer Simulated Displays	7%	19%	32%	21%	20%	2.7	1,190
Toll-free Call in Number	7%	14%	24%	23%	32%	2.4	1,205
Public Meetings in Local Communities	4%	10%	29%	33%	24%	2.4	1,197
Newspapers	4%	10%	26%	29%	30%	2.3	1,205

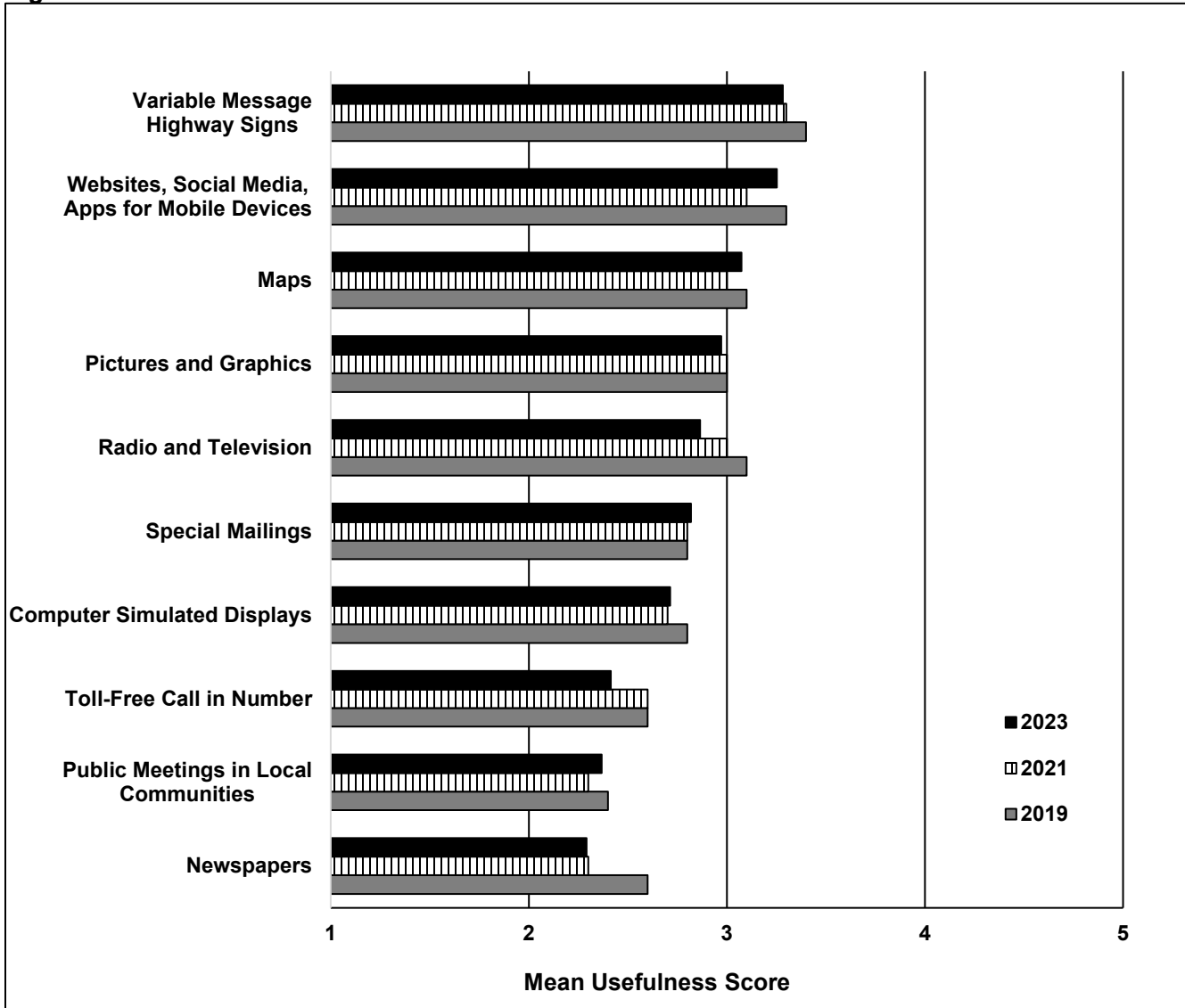
Note: Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Trends

The Public Involvement Survey 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 communication arsenal.
- Radio and television, while still considered useful, lost ground between 2019 and 2023.
- Newspapers continued to decline in usefulness in 2023. Compared to all other communication tools, newspapers saw the greatest decline between 2019 and 2023.

Figure 4.1 Trends in Usefulness of MDT's Communication Tools

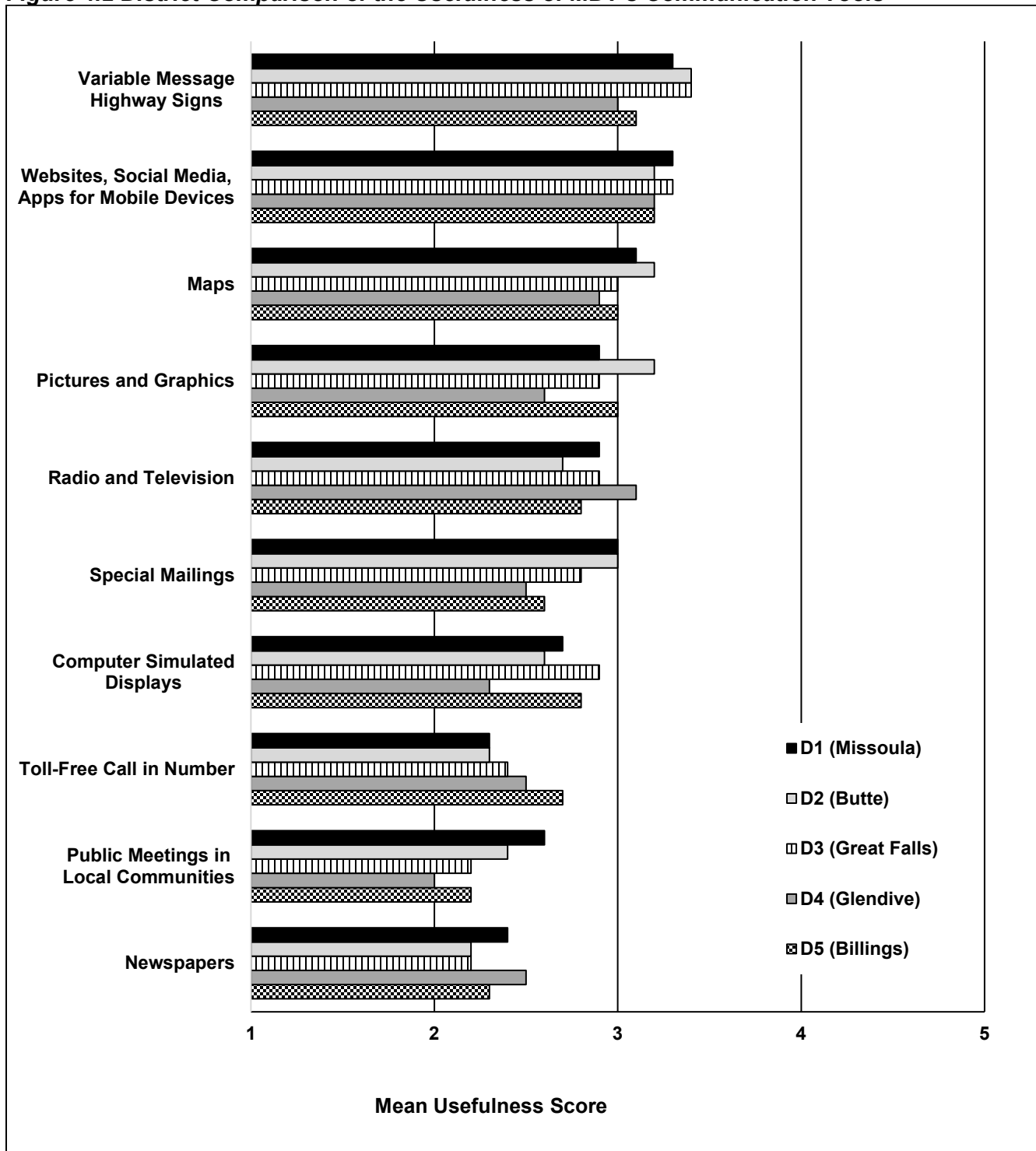


Districts

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 and District 3 (Great Falls) residents found websites and social media more useful than other Districts.
- District 2 (Butte) and 3 (Great Falls) residents found variable message highway signs more useful than other Districts.
- District 3 (Great Falls) and District 2 (Butte) residents saw newspapers as least useful.
- District 4 (Glendive) and District 5 (Billings) residents considered web-based applications most useful.

Figure 4.2 District Comparison of the Usefulness of MDT's Communication 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, 69% 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 2021 to 2023.

- When comparing Districts, at least half of all respondents (56% to 75%) felt they were informed about the same in recent years.
- District 3 (Great Falls) had the greatest percentage of respondents (24%) who indicated they felt less informed in recent years.

Table 4.2 Feeling Informed About MDT’s Business in Recent Years

District	More Informed	About the Same	Less Informed	N
Total sample	17%	69%	14%	1,229
District 1: Missoula	18%	73%	9%	254
District 2: Butte	17%	75%	8%	295
District 3: Great Falls	20%	56%	24%	217
District 4: Glendive	9%	69%	22%	234
District 5: Billings	17%	66%	16%	229

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

CHAPTER 5: OVERALL MDT CUSTOMER SERVICE AND PERFORMANCE

The 2023 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 mean grades for MDT’s performance and customer service in 2023 ranged from a B to C (Table 5.1).

- At least 50% of respondents graded the quality of service provided by MDT and public notification about local construction projects as an A or B.
- MDT’s quality of service received the highest percentage of A and B grades in 2023 (56%).

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	11%	45%	38%	5%	1%	N/A	2.6	1,218
MDT’s Sensitivity to the Environment	13%	36%	39%	9%	4%	N/A	2.5	1,180
Public Notification About Local Construction Projects	14%	36%	32%	11%	7%	N/A	2.4	1,225
Convenience of Travel Through Work Zones	14%	33%	37%	11%	5%	N/A	2.4	1,230
Highway Maintenance and Repair	9%	38%	34%	16%	3%	N/A	2.3	1,227
Responsiveness to Ideas and Concerns from the Public	6%	12%	24%	8%	3%	46%	2.2	1,223

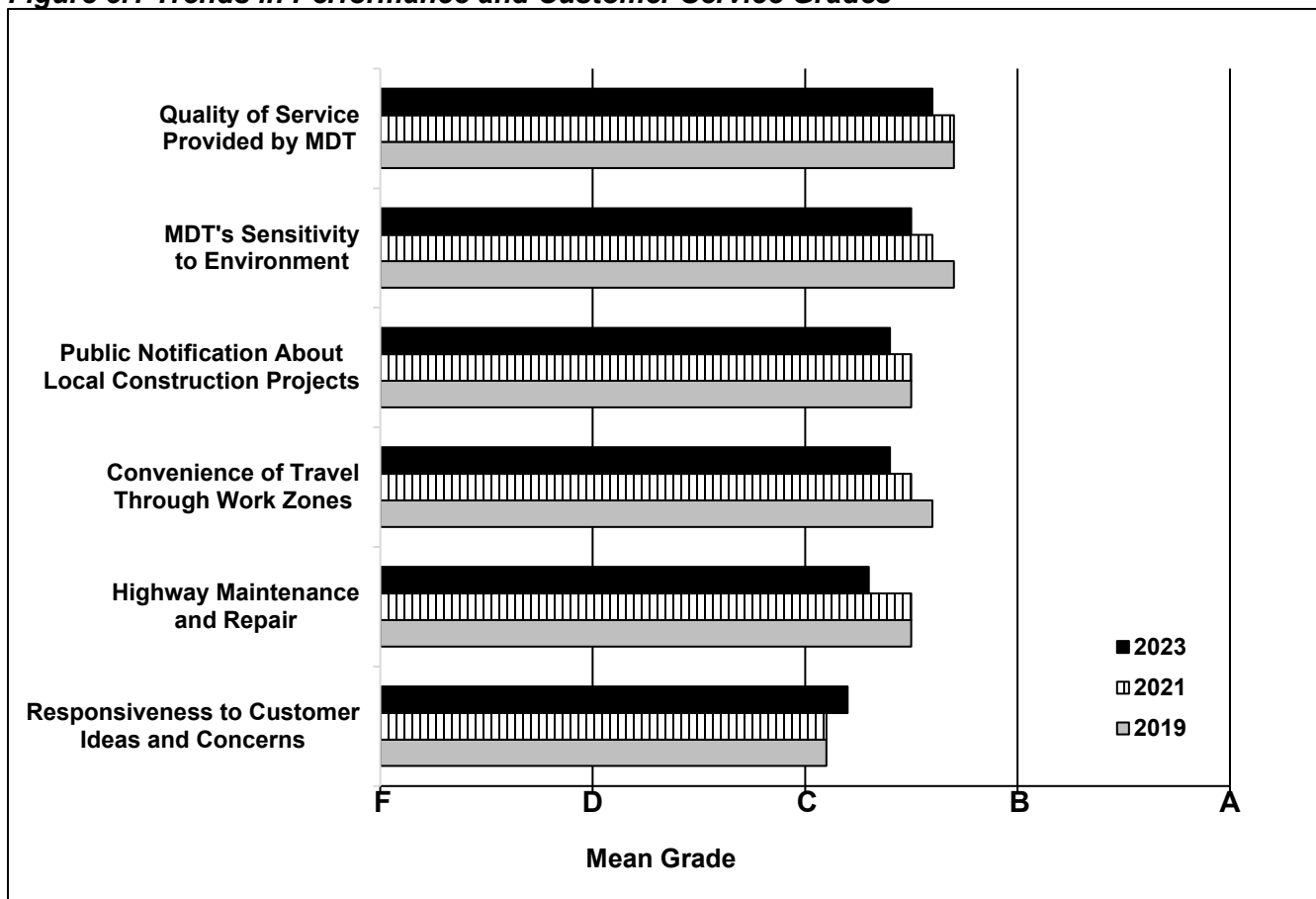
Note: Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Trends

When comparing the grades MDT received for its performance and customer service over time, there have been very few changes between 2019 and 2023. 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 the highest rated, with an overall grade of B-, from 2019 to 2023.
- MDT's sensitivity to the environment continues to be highly rated in 2023, also with a mean grade of B-.
- Convenience of travel through work zones, highway maintenance and repair, and public notification about local projects received a C+ grade.
- Responsiveness to public input continues to receive the lowest rating, C.

Figure 5.1 Trends in Performance and Customer Service Grades

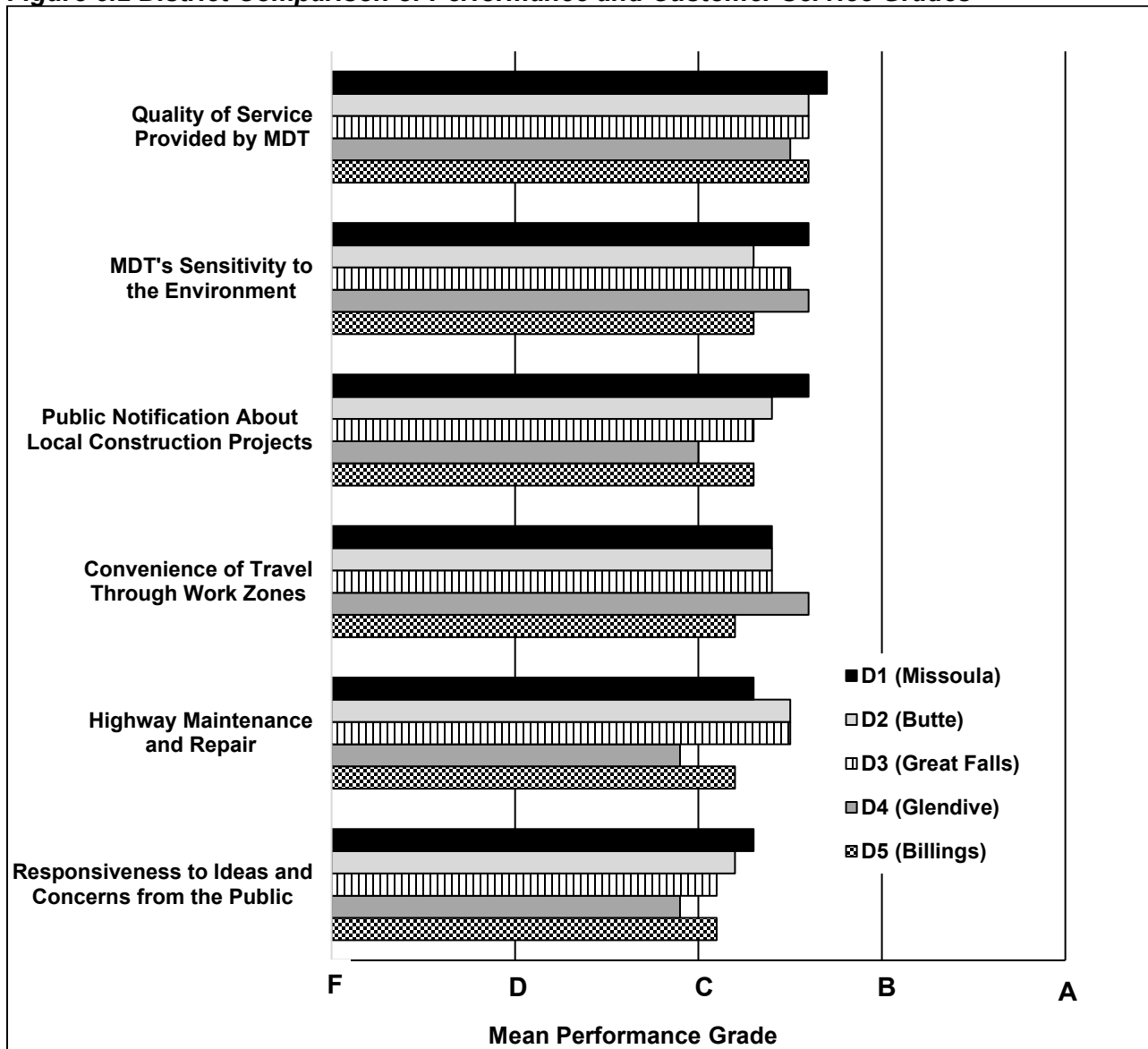


Districts

There are some differences between Districts in terms of grading 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) and District 3 (Great Falls) rated highway maintenance and repair highest among the Districts.
- District 3 (Great Falls) graded the quality of service provided by MDT the highest among the elements.
- District 4 (Glendive) gave sensitivity to the environment and convenience of travel through work zones its highest grades for performance.
- District 5 (Billings) graded the quality of service provided by MDT the highest among the elements.

Figure 5.2 District Comparison of Performance and Customer Service Grades



The 2021 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, in 2023, the majority of respondents (53%) said that communication is the most important element in delivering excellent customer service (Table 5.2). Accuracy was the next most often mentioned element.

Table 5.2 Most Important Element in Delivering Excellent Customer Service

District	Communication	Accuracy	Speed	Consistency	Other	N
Total Sample	53%	17%	9%	16%	5%	1,213
District 1: Missoula	51%	18%	9%	15%	7%	250
District 2: Butte	47%	19%	11%	18%	4%	293
District 3: Great Falls	54%	24%	9%	11%	3%	214
District 4: Glendive	52%	8%	3%	29%	7%	230
District 5: Billings	63%	10%	7%	16%	4%	226

Fewer District 2 (Butte) respondents answered communication (47%) when compared to other Districts. The dominant responses to the “Other” category were “All of the above” or combinations of two or three of the response choices. The 2023 responses remained consistent with those received in 2021.

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 thought it would (Table 6.1).

- District 4 (Glendive) had the largest percentage of respondents thinking a primary seat belt law would save lives (68%).
- District 1 (Missoula) had the largest percentage of respondents thinking a primary seat belt law would not save lives (39%).

Table 6.1 Opinions Regarding Outcome of a Primary Seat Belt Law

District	Law Would Save Lives	Law Would not Save Lives	N
Total Sample	63%	37%	1,231
District 1: Missoula	61%	39%	255
District 2: Butte	64%	36%	296
District 3: Great Falls	63%	37%	218
District 4: Glendive	68%	32%	232
District 5: Billings	62%	38%	230

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 (80%) considered speed limits in work zones on Montana roads to be just right (Table 6.2).

- District 3 (Great Falls) had the highest percentage of respondents who think work zone speed limits are too slow (21%).
- District 2 (Butte) 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%	80%	15%	1,213
District 1: Missoula	2%	83%	15%	257
District 2: Butte	9%	76%	15%	289
District 3: Great Falls	7%	72%	21%	211
District 4: Glendive	1%	96%	4%	231
District 5: Billings	9%	79%	13%	225

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

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

In 2023, 19% of all Montanans surveyed said they would consider purchasing an electric vehicle as their next vehicle (Table 6.3). Statistically, this represents approximately 155,000 Montanans. Eighty percent said they would not consider purchasing an EV as their next vehicle. Fewer than 1% of all Montanans, representing about 7,000 people, said they already own an EV. For the purposes of this study, EV refers to hybrid-electric, plug-in hybrid electric, and all-electric vehicles.

Table 6.3 Willingness to Purchase an Electric Vehicle

District	Yes	No	Already Own One	N
Total sample	19%	80%	1%	1,197
District 1: Missoula	22%	77%	1%	250
District 2: Butte	33%	66%	0%	287
District 3: Great Falls	11%	87%	2%	212
District 4: Glendive	15%	85%	0%	226
District 5: Billings	10%	90%	0%	222

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 EV.
- Residents of District 3 (Great Falls) and District 5 (Billings) were least likely to say they would consider purchasing an EV.

When MDT asked this question in 2021, 32% of adult Montanans surveyed said they would consider purchasing an EV as their next vehicle. Statistically this represented 254,000 Montanans. The 2023 decline in the number of Montanans expressing a willingness to purchase an EV is significant.

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

Among the respondents who said they wouldn’t consider purchasing an EV as their next vehicle, the most commonly cited reason was the cost of the vehicle or the maintenance cost. Table 6.4 presents rankings for reported reasons to not purchase an EV. Limited purchasing availability was cited by the fewest number of respondents.

Table 6.4 Reason for Not Purchasing an Electric Vehicle

Reason	Total Sample	District 1 Missoula	District 2 Butte	District 3 Great Falls	District 4 Glendive	District 5 Billings
	Rank	Rank	Rank	Rank	Rank	Rank
a. Not Enough Charging Stations	3	4	3	4	3	3
b. Limited Range Between Charging Stations	2	1	2	3	4	2
c. Time Required for Charging	4	4	4	3	2	4
d. Cost of Vehicle and/or Maintenance	1	2	1	1	1	1
e. Limited Purchasing Availability in Montana	5	5	5	5	5	5

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

Just over one-fifth of all respondents (21%) said they had an additional reason for not considering an EV. Those responses are described below.

Table 6.5 Additional Reasons for Not Purchasing an Electric Vehicle

Reason	% of Respondents
Weather Related Reliability	5%
Reliability or Practicality in General	3%
Environmental Concerns About Battery Manufacture and Disposal	2%
Work and Recreation Vehicle Capability	2%
Electric Grid Capacity Concern	2%
Environmental Concern Unspecified	1%
General Personal Preference	1%
Political Reason	1%
Battery Safety Issue	1%
Technology not Adequate Yet	1%
Personal Reasons, Such as Don't Drive	0%
Unclassifiable	0%
Not Taxed for Fuel	0%
Repair Facilities Limited	0%

The largest proportion of additional reasons for not purchasing an EV cited the lack of reliability caused by cold weather. The next most common response was a general statement about the reliability or practicality of EVs.

“THINKING NOW ABOUT PASSENGER RAIL SERVICE, WHAT FREQUENCY OF DAILY SERVICE IS NEEDED TO MAKE PASSENGER RAIL A VIABLE CHOICE OF TRANSPORTATION FOR YOU?”

Just over one-quarter of respondents (27%) said that twice daily service (each way) is the frequency they need to make passenger rail a viable choice for them (Table 6.6). Nearly 20% of respondents said once daily passenger rail service was required to make it viable for them and 12% of respondents said they need more than twice daily service to make it viable. Approximately 40% said they had no interest in passenger rail service.

Table 6.6 Frequency of Passenger Rail Service Required for Viability

District	Once Daily	Twice Daily	More Than Twice Daily	None – No Interest	N
Total Sample	19%	27%	12%	42%	1,204
District 1: Missoula	18%	30%	8%	44%	247
District 2: Butte	16%	24%	21%	38%	286
District 3: Great Falls	21%	27%	7%	44%	215
District 4: Glendive	39%	14%	13%	34%	232
District 5: Billings	14%	28%	15%	43%	224

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

- District 4 (Glendive) residents were most likely to express interest in passenger rail service (66%).
- District 4 (Glendive) residents (39%) said that once daily service was required to make service viable for them.
- District 1 (Missoula), District 2 (Butte), District 3 (Great Falls) and District 5 (Billings) respondents were most likely to say they require twice daily service to make passenger rail viable for them.

“WHAT TYPE OF TRIPS WOULD YOU USE PASSENGER RAIL FOR?”

About three-fourths (74%) of respondents said they would use passenger rail service for recreational or leisure trips while 36% said they would use passenger rail for commuting, errands or appointments (Table 6.7).

Table 6.7 Passenger Rail Trip Types

Type		All Respondents	MDT District					Unweighted Count
			1	2	3	4	5	
Every Day-Type Trips: Commuting, Errands, Appointments, & etc.	Yes	36%	27%	49%	30%	40%	38%	312
	No	64%	73%	51%	70%	60%	62%	769
Recreational or Leisure-Type Trips: Vacation, Football Games, visiting friends & family, etc.	Yes	74%	69%	78%	77%	88%	69%	883
	No	26%	31%	22%	23%	12%	31%	301

District 4 (Glendive) residents were most likely (88%) to say they would use passenger rail trips for recreational or leisure trips. District 2 (Butte) residents were most likely (49%) to say they would use passenger rail for commuting, errands, or appointments.

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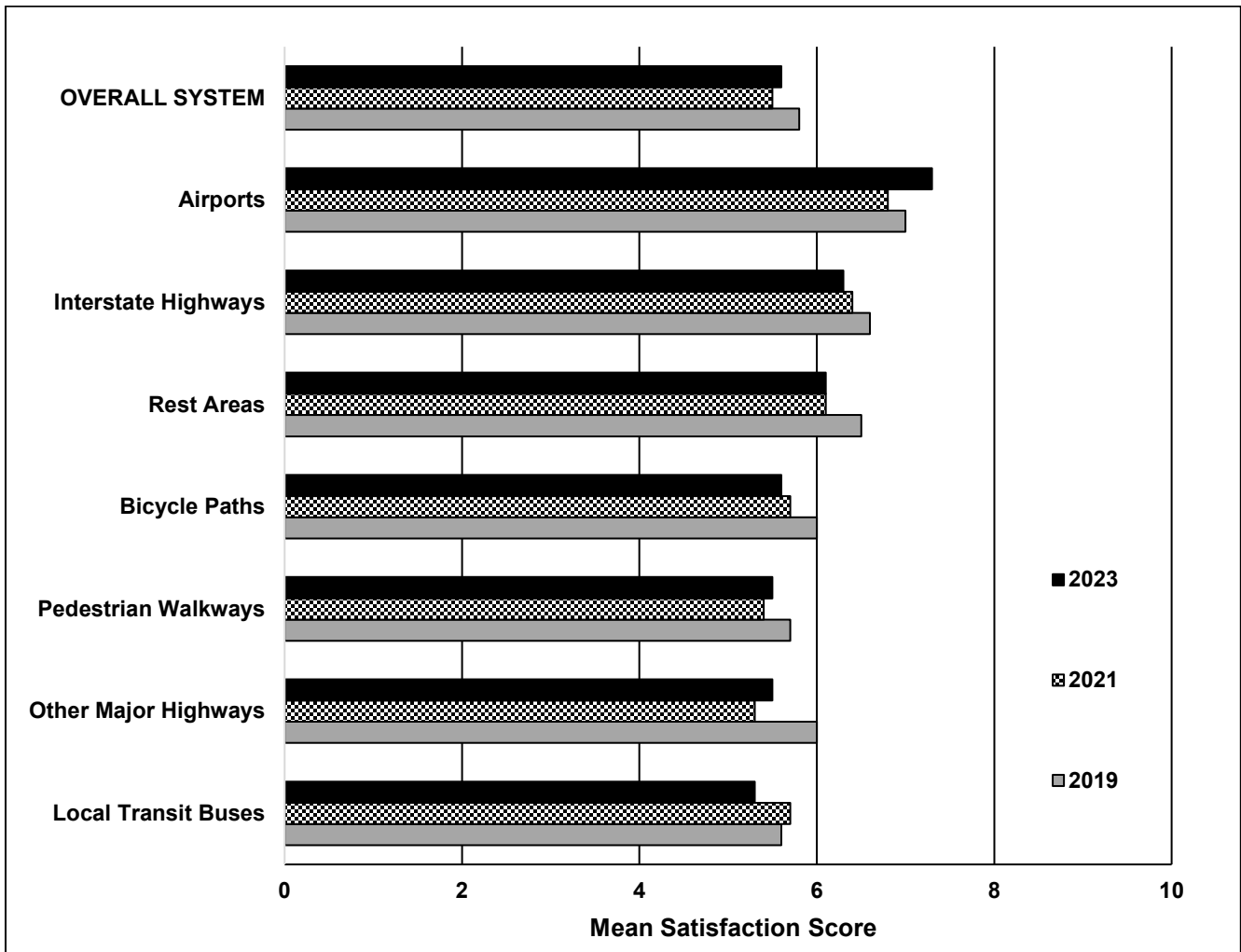
DISTRICT 1—MISSOULA

Satisfaction with Physical Condition of Transportation System

With a mean score of 5.5, residents of District 1 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 (7.3) followed by interstate highways (6.3), and rest areas (6.1).
- Respondents were the least satisfied with local transit buses (5.3), other major highways (5.5), and pedestrian walkways (5.5).
- The greatest differences between 2021 and 2023 were seen in the areas of satisfaction with the condition of airports, which experienced an increase in score, and local transit buses, which showed a decreased score.

Figure 7.1 District 1 Satisfaction with the Physical Condition of Transportation System Components

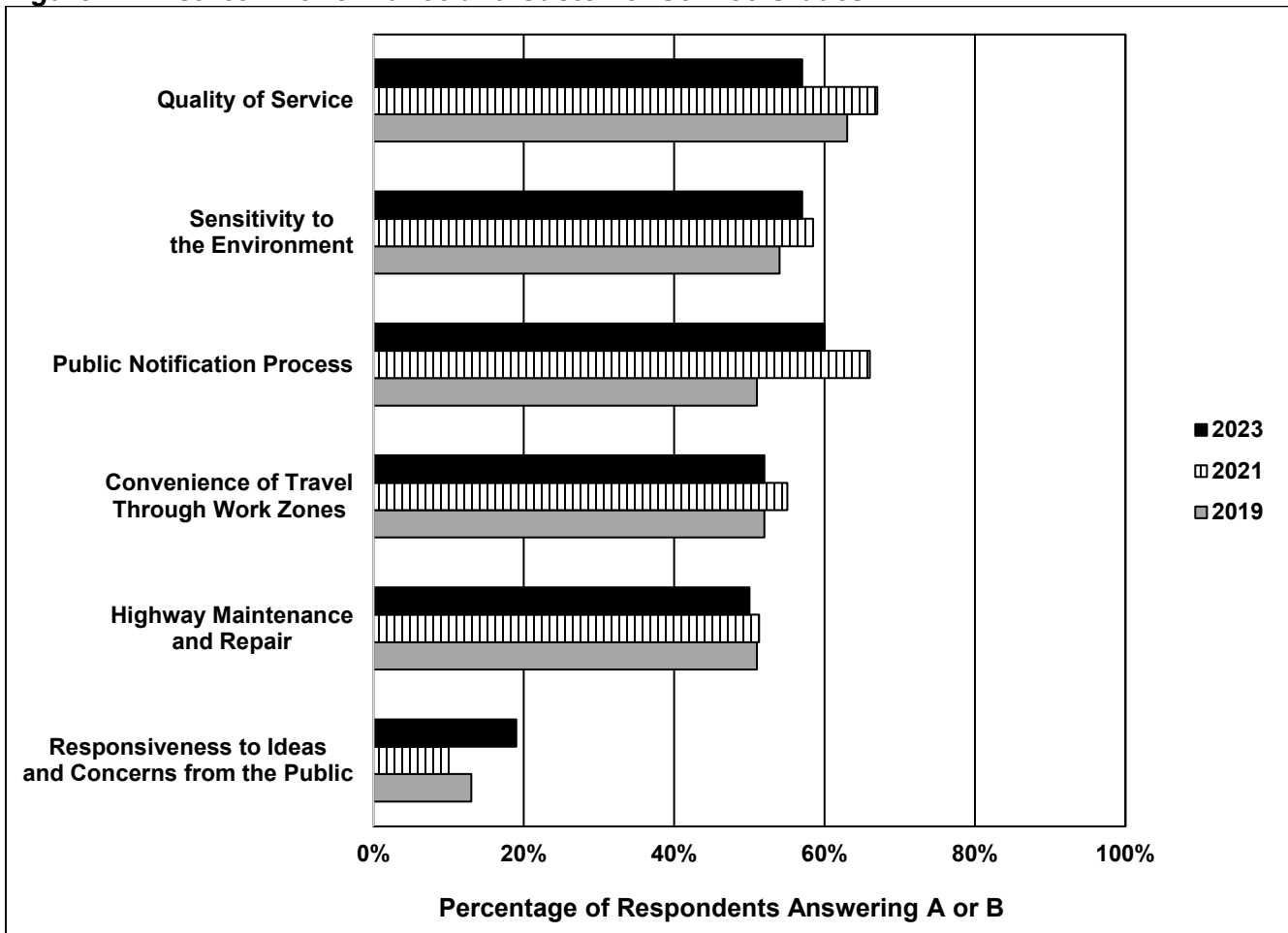


Grading Aspects of MDT's Functions

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

- 57% percent of respondents gave MDT the grade of A or B with respect to the quality of the service MDT provides.
- 19% gave MDT a grade of A or B with respect to MDT's responsiveness to the public's ideas and concerns.
- The greatest differences between 2021 and 2023 occurred in the areas of responsiveness to public input, which saw an improved grade, and quality of service, which saw a lower grade.

Figure 7.2 District 1 Performance and Customer Service Grades

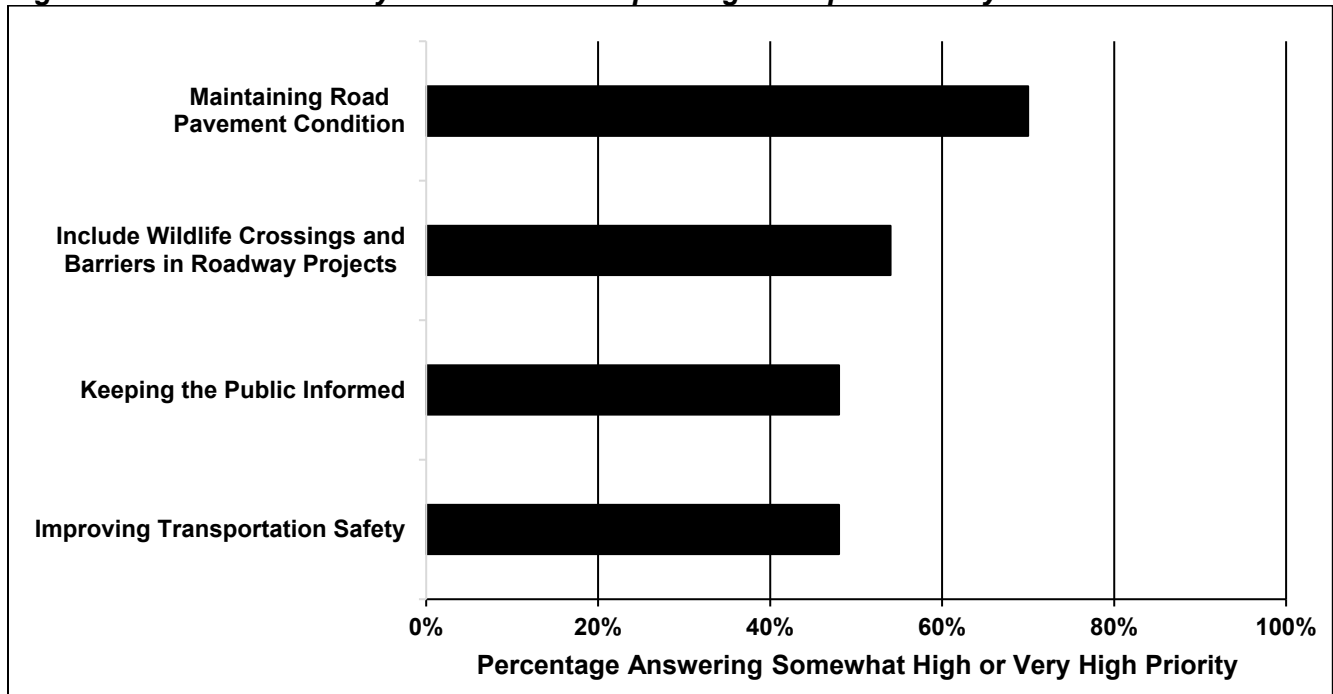


Priority of Actions for Improving Montana’s Transportation System

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

- Maintaining road pavement conditions received the highest priority rating with 70%, deeming it either a *somewhat high priority* or a *very high priority*.
- Including wildlife crossings and barriers in roadway projects ranked second (54%).
- Keeping the public informed and improving transportation safety were rated as a *somewhat high priority* or a *very high priority* by 48% of respondents.

Figure 7.3 District 1 Priority of Actions for Improving Transportation System

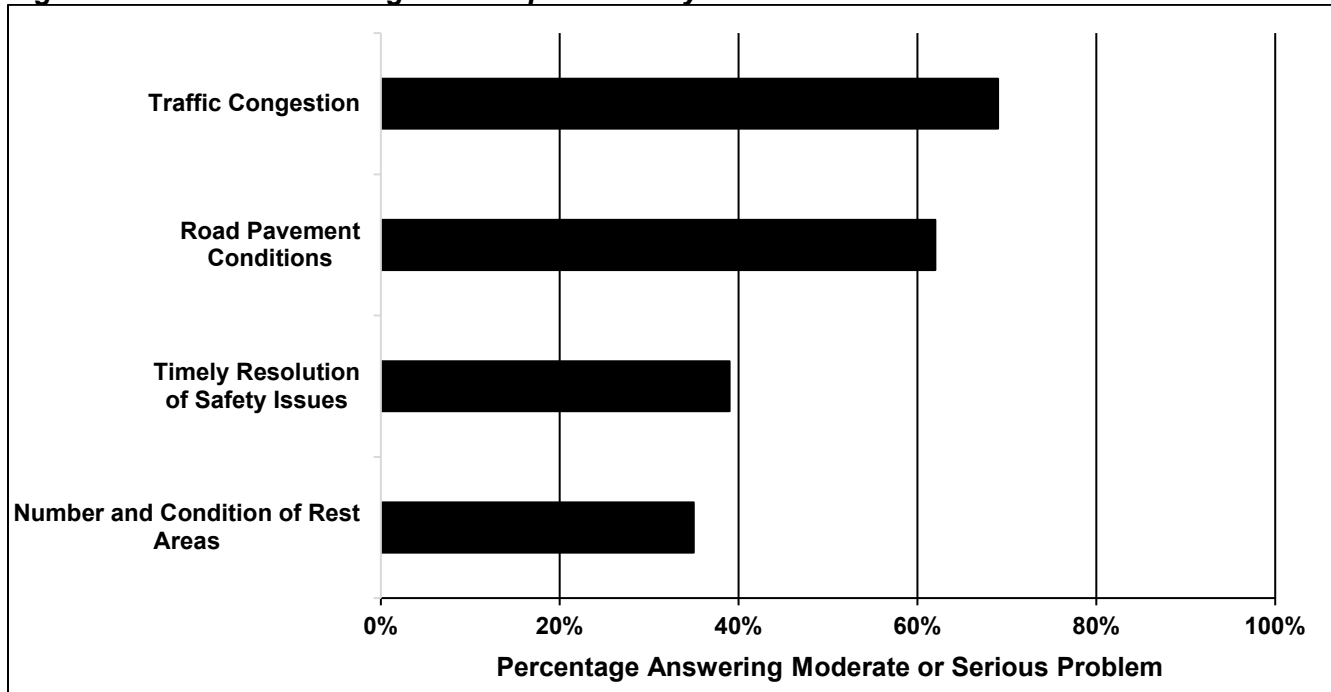


Ranking of Issues Seen as Problems with the Montana Transportation System

Survey respondents in District 1 also considered a list of issues that might 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 69%.
- Road pavement conditions (62%) came second, followed by timely resolution of safety issues (39%), and the number and condition of rest areas (35%).

Figure 7.4 District 1 Ranking of Transportation System Problems

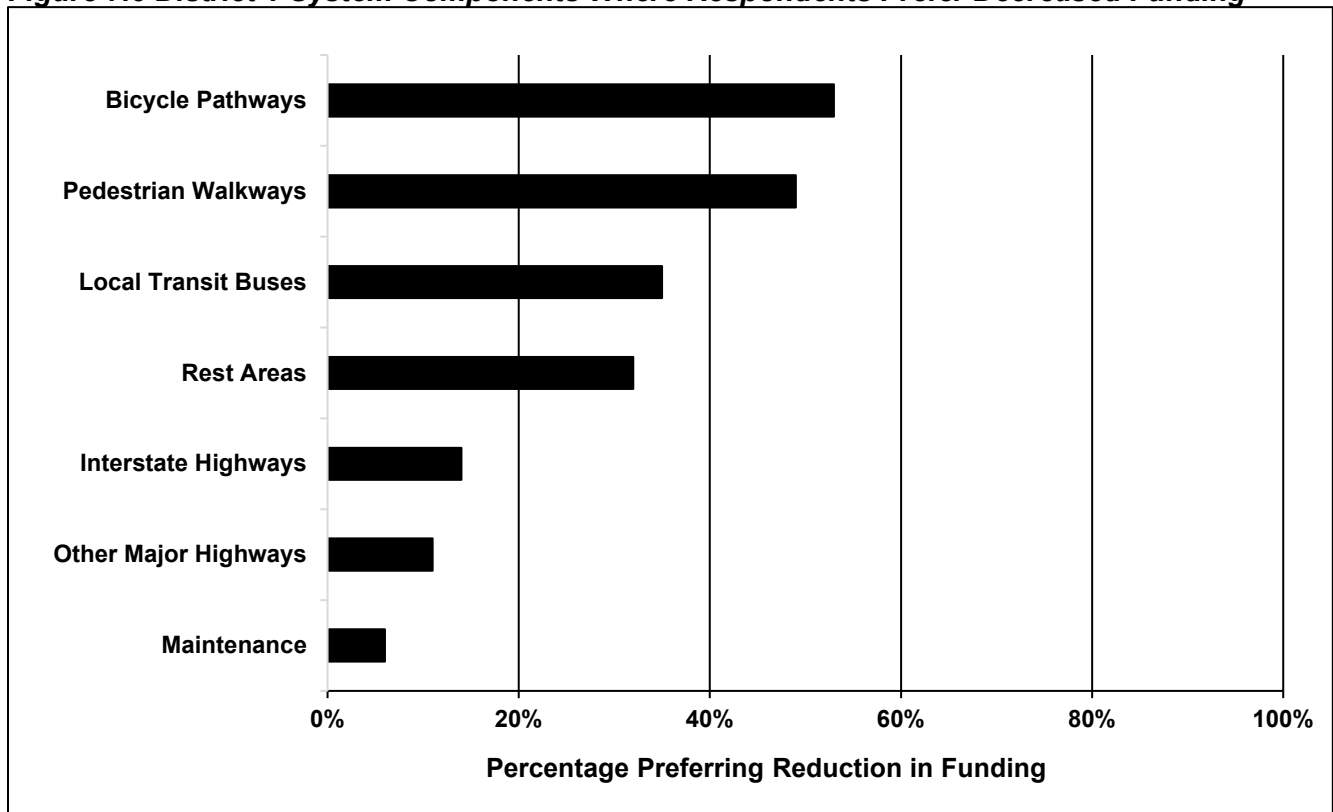


Areas Favored for Decreases in Funding

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

- The majority (53%) indicated they would prefer to see reduced funding for bicycle pathways.
- Transportation system maintenance was favored for reduced funding by only a small percentage (6%).

Figure 7.5 District 1 System Components Where Respondents Prefer Decreased Funding



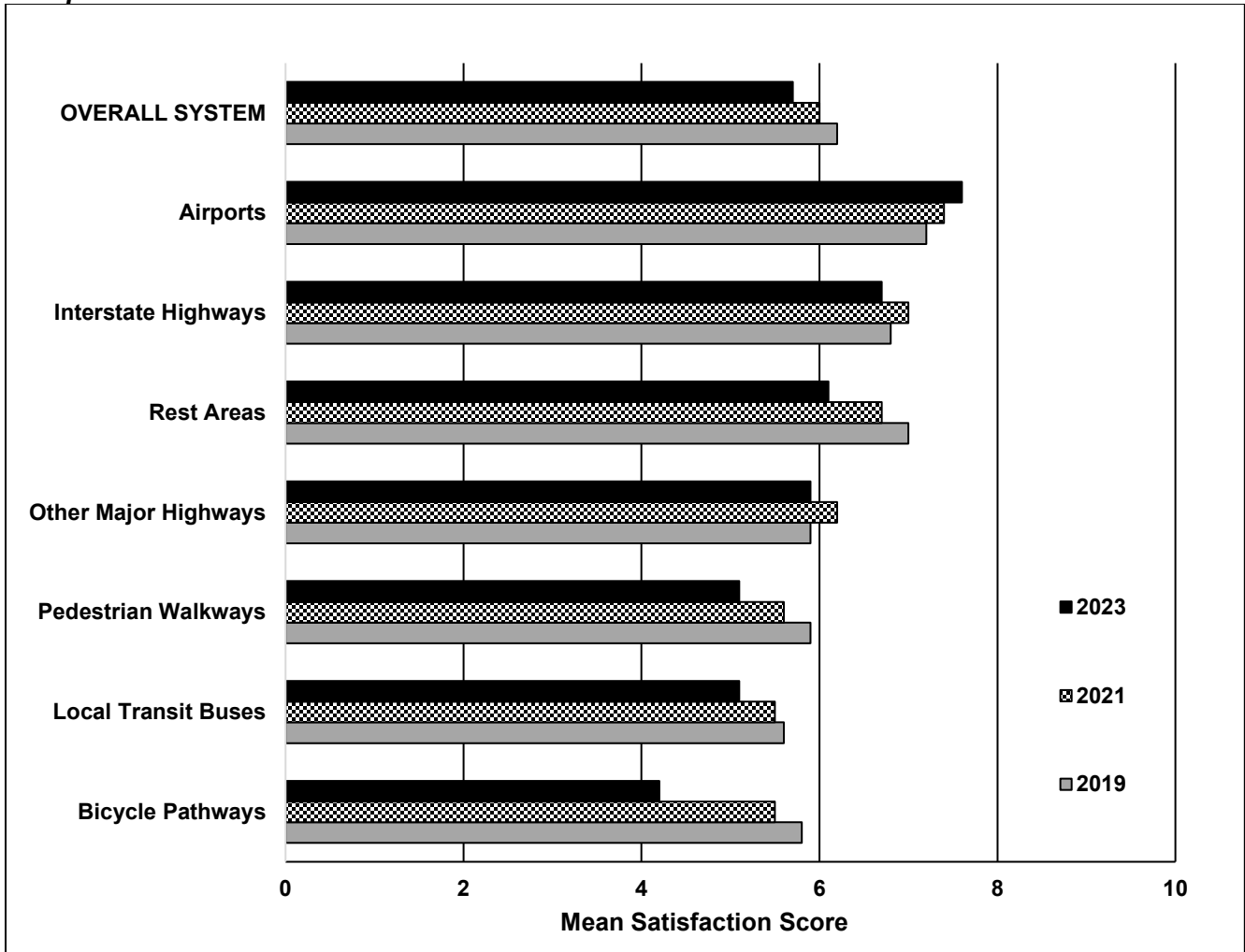
DISTRICT 2—BUTTE

Satisfaction with Physical Condition of Transportation System

With a mean score of 5.7, residents of District 2 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 (7.6), followed by interstate highways (6.7) and rest areas (6.1).
- Respondents were the least satisfied with the physical condition of local transit bus service (5.1), pedestrian walkways (5.1), and bicycle pathways (4.2).
- The largest changes in satisfaction scores between 2021 and 2023 were for bicycle pathways and rest areas, each of which showed declines.

Figure 7.6 District 2 Satisfaction with the Physical Condition of Transportation System Components

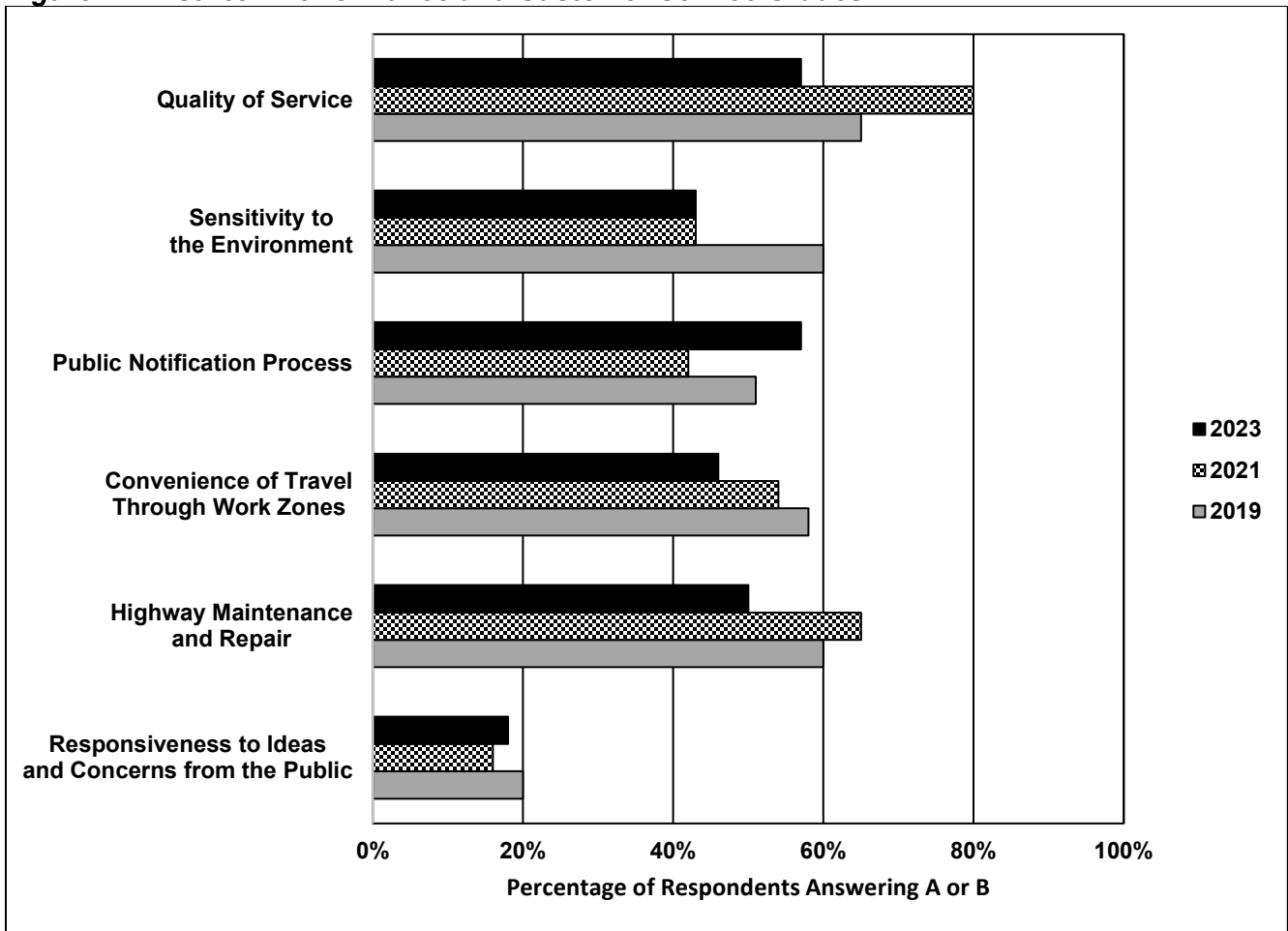


Grading Aspects of MDT's Functions

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

- 57% of respondents gave MDT the grade of A or B with respect to the quality of service MDT provides.
- 18% gave MDT a grade of A or B with respect to MDT's responsiveness to the public's ideas and concerns.
- The greatest differences between 2021 and 2023 occurred in the areas of quality of service and highway maintenance, which both saw a decrease in the percentage of As and Bs, and in the public notification process, which saw an improved grade.

Figure 7.7 District 2 Performance and Customer Service Grades

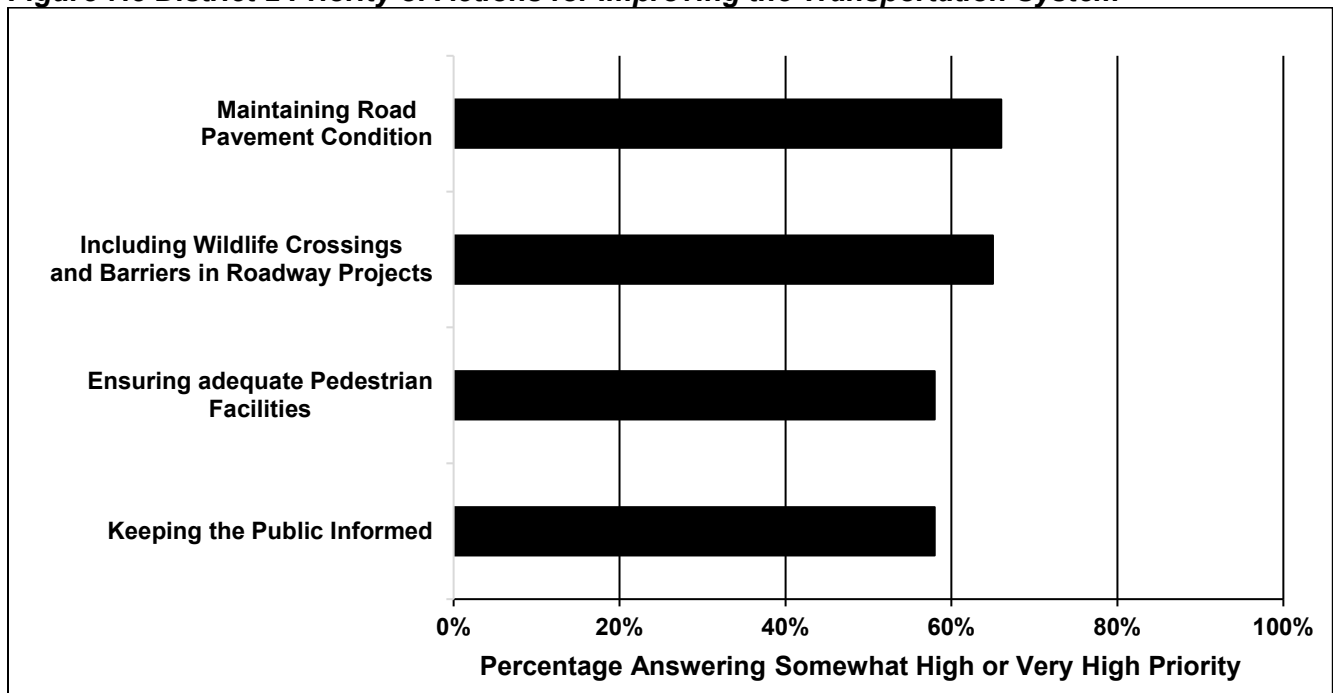


Priority of Actions to Improve Montana's Transportation System

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

- Maintaining road pavement conditions received the highest priority ranking with 66%, giving either a *somewhat high priority* or a *very high priority*.
- Including wildlife crossings and barriers in roadway projects was the next ranked priority at 65%.
- Ensuring adequate pedestrian facilities and keeping the public informed both ranked fourth at 58%.

Figure 7.8 District 2 Priority of Actions for Improving the Transportation System

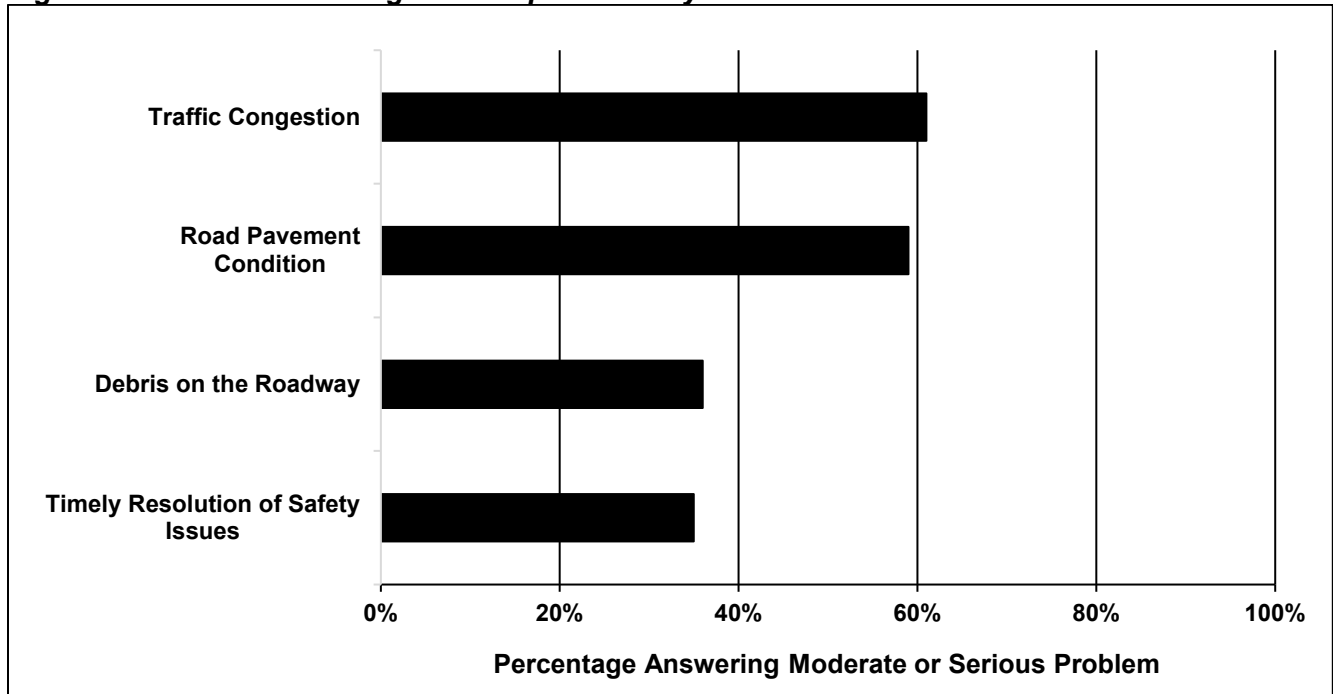


Ranking of Issues Seen as Problems with the Montana Transportation System

Survey respondents in District 2 also considered a list of issues that may be seen as problems within 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 61%.
- Road pavement condition was seen as a *moderate problem* or a *serious problem* by 59% of respondents.

Figure 7.9 District 2 Ranking of Transportation System Problems

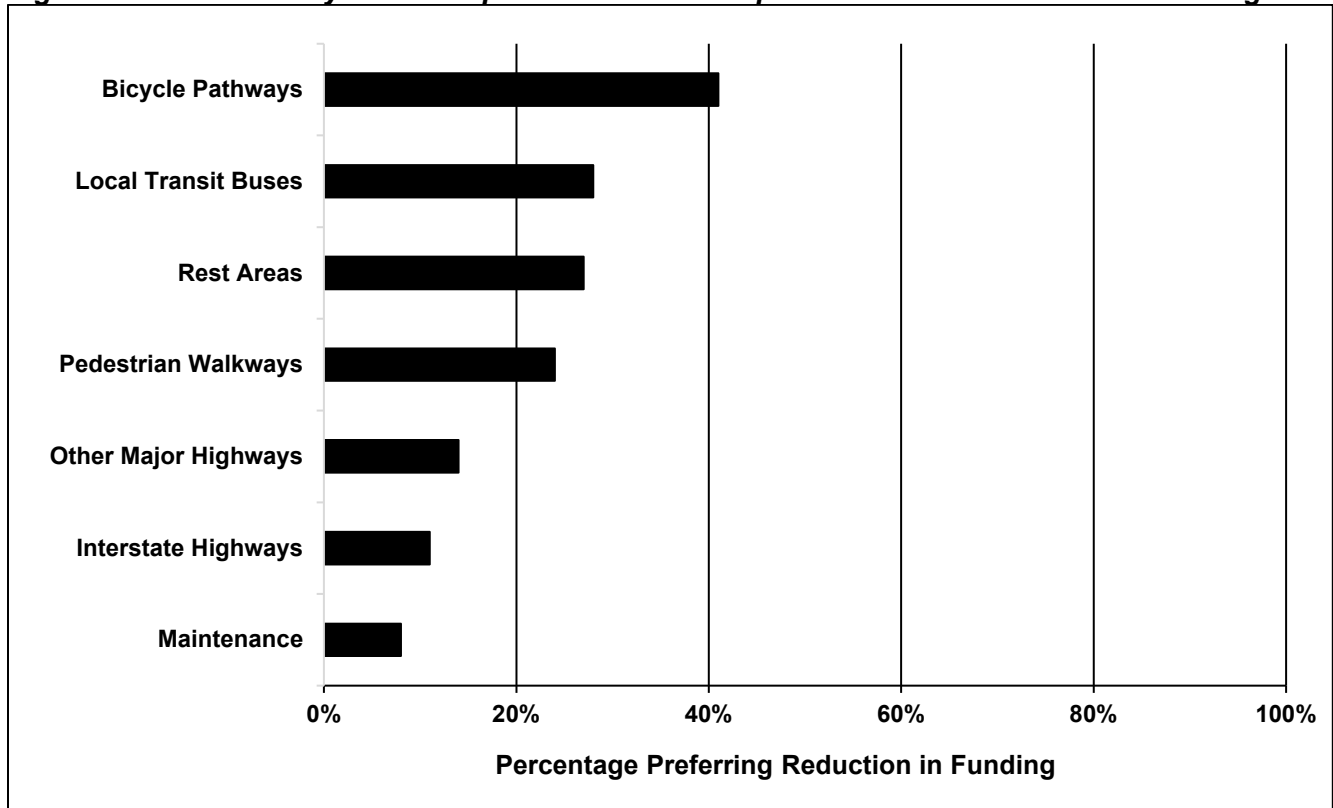


Areas Favored for Decreases in Funding

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

- For residents of District 2—Butte, 41% 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 (8%).

Figure 7.10 District 2 System Components Where Respondents Prefer Decreased Funding



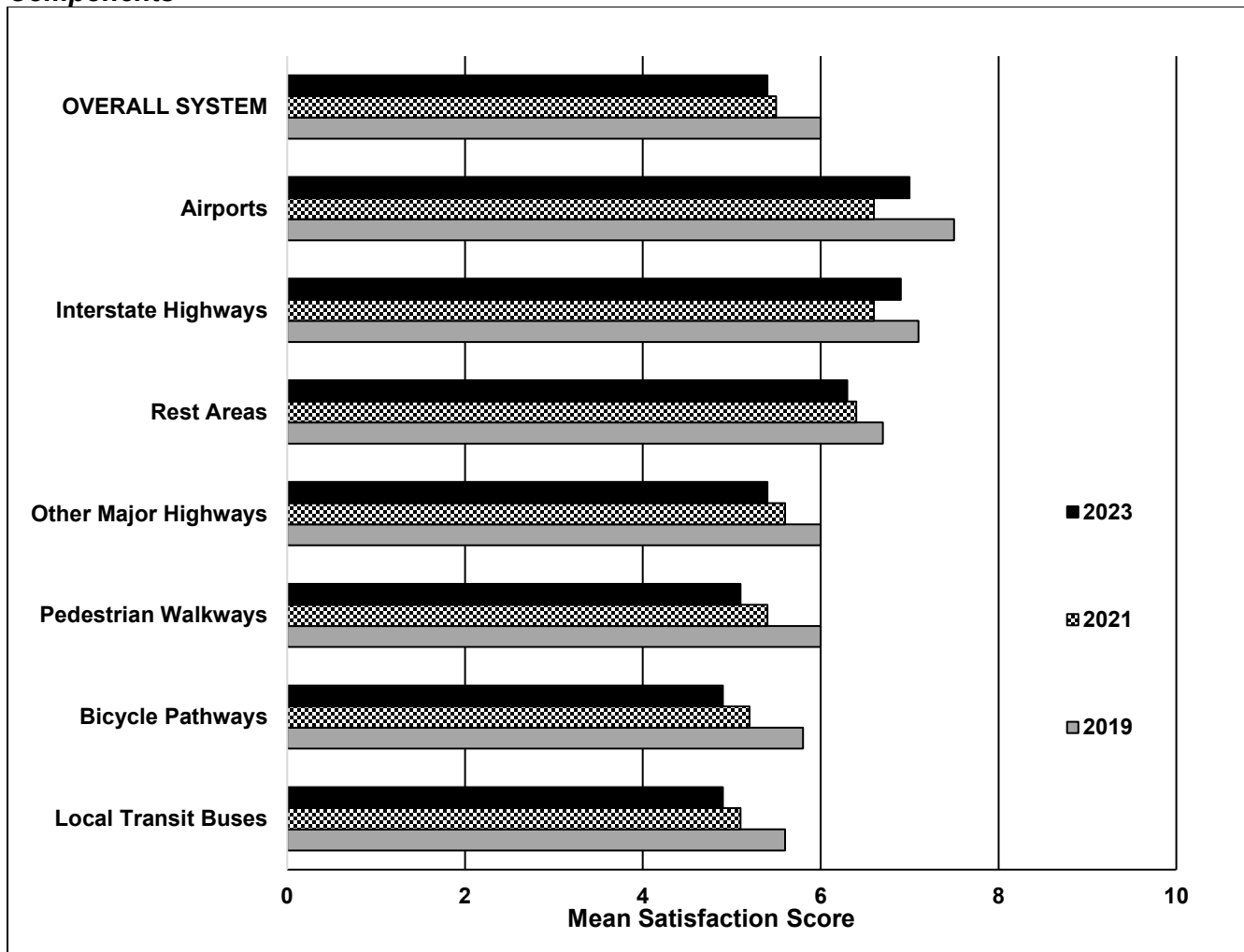
DISTRICT 3—GREAT FALLS

Satisfaction with Physical Condition of Transportation System

With a mean score of 5.4, residents of District 3 indicated that they were somewhat satisfied with the physical condition of the overall transportation system (Figure 7.11).

- Respondents were most satisfied with the physical condition of airports (mean score of 7.0), interstate highways (6.9), and rest areas (6.3).
- Respondents were the least satisfied with the physical condition of local transit buses (4.9) and bicycle pathways (4.9).
- Between 2021 and 2023, satisfaction scores for airports and interstate highways increased while the remainder decreased slightly.

Figure 7.11 District 3 Satisfaction with the Physical Condition of Transportation System Components

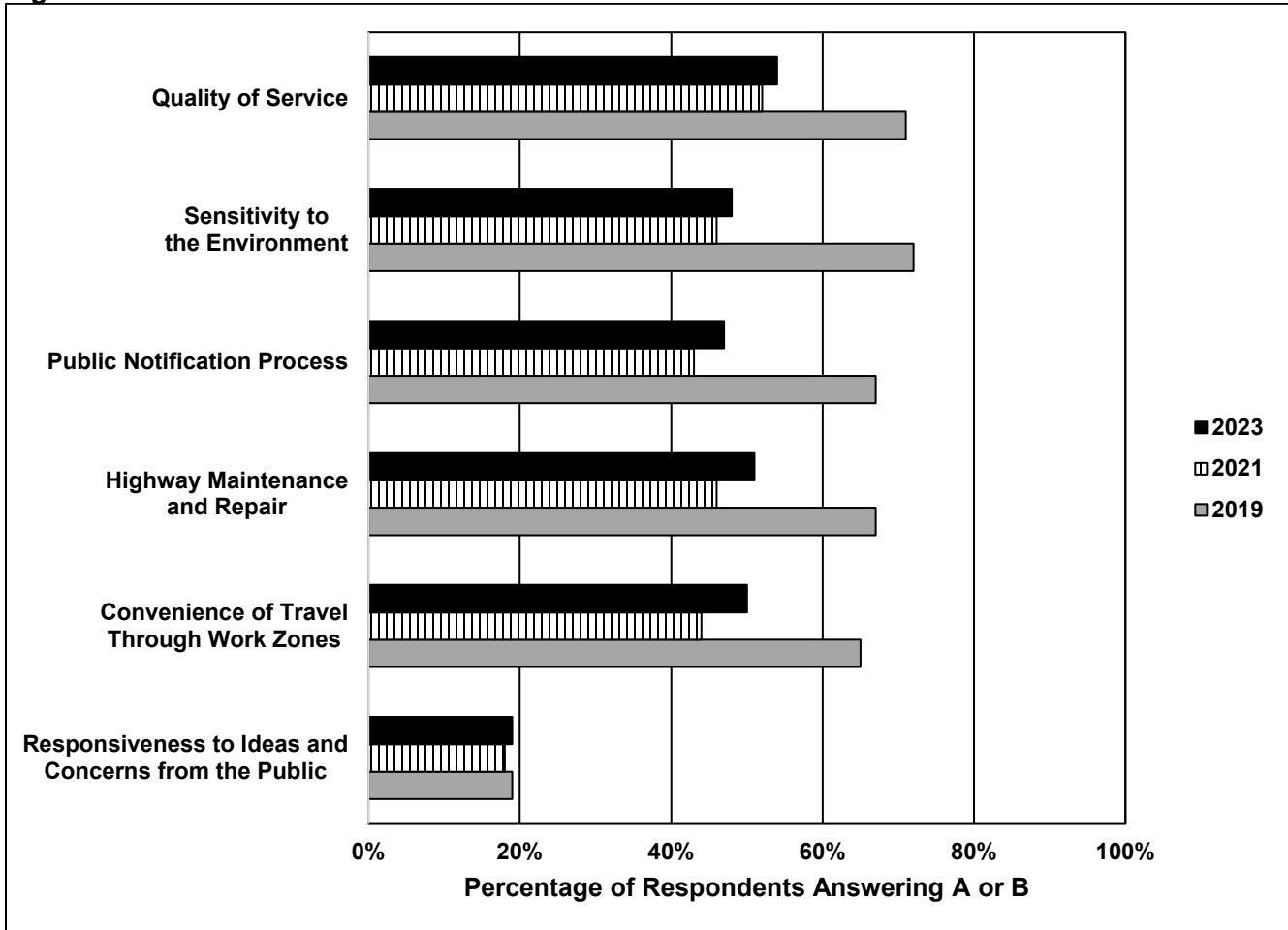


Grading Aspects of MDT's Functions

Respondents in District 3 graded MDT's performance in a number of transportation system areas (Figure 7.12).

- 54% of respondents gave MDT a grade of A or B with respect to MDT's quality of service.
- 19% gave MDT a grade of A or B with respect to MDT's responsiveness to the public's ideas and concerns.
- Between 2021 and 2023, grades increased in all areas.

Figure 7.12 District 3 Performance and Customer Service Grades

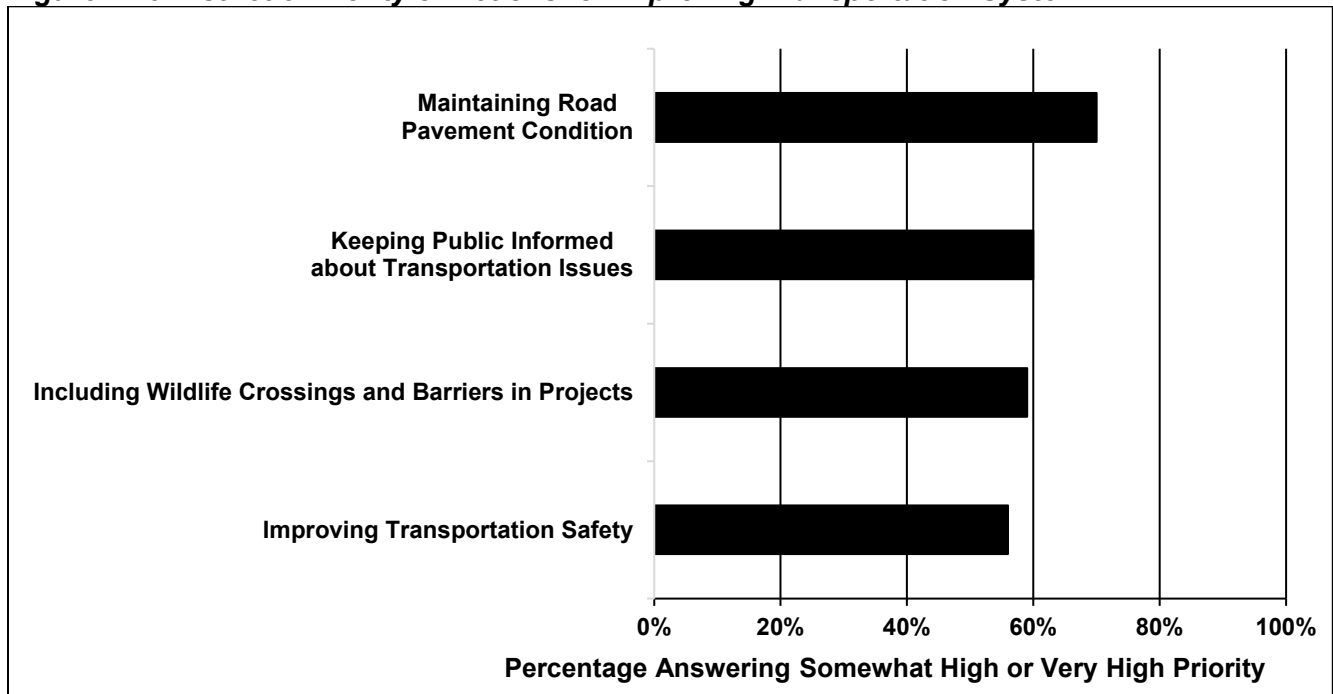


Priority of Actions to Improve Montana's Transportation System

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 7.13).

- Maintaining road pavement conditions received the highest priority ranking with 70% seeing it as a *somewhat high* priority or a *very high* priority.
- Keeping the public informed about transportation issues received the second-highest priority ranking at 60%.
- Including wildlife crossings and barriers in projects and improving transportation safety received ratings of 59% and 56%, respectively.

Figure 7.13 District 3 Priority of Actions for Improving Transportation System

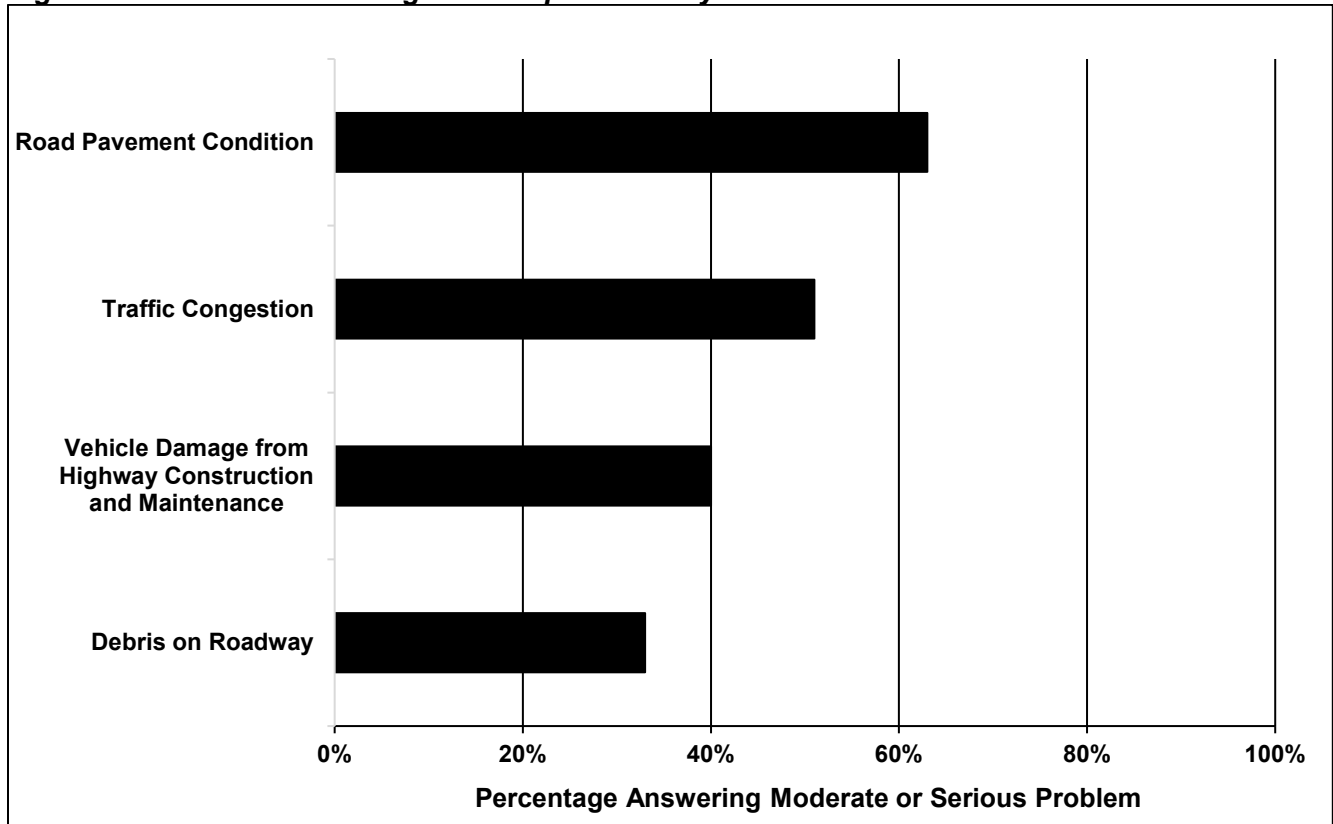


Ranking of Issues Seen as Problems with the Montana Transportation System

Survey respondents in District 3 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 respondents at 63%.
- Traffic congestion (51%), vehicle damage incurred from highway construction and maintenance (40%), and debris on the roadway (33%) rounded out the list.

Figure 7.14 District 3 Ranking of Transportation System Problems

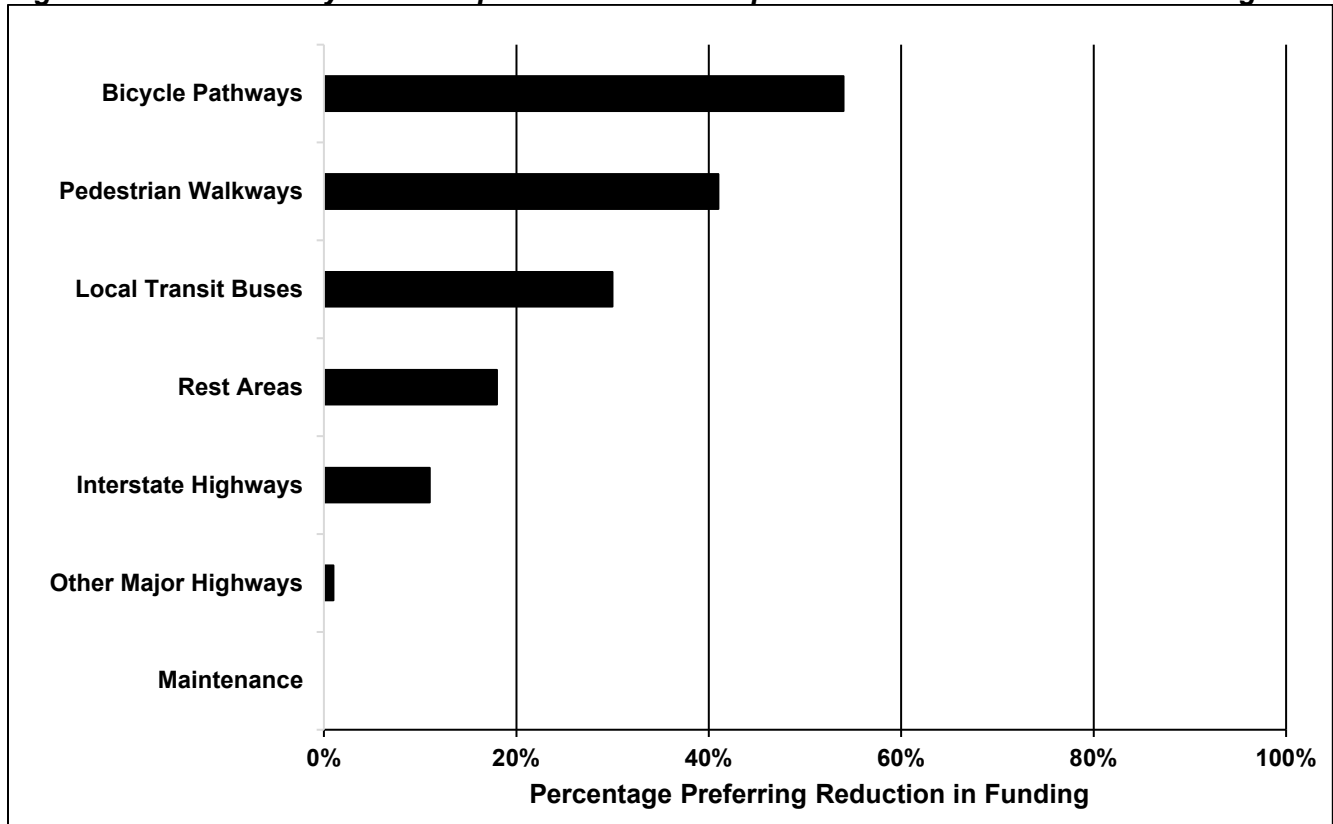


Areas Favored for Decreases in Funding

In the event of future decreases in the MDT budget, District 3 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, the majority (54%) indicated that they would prefer to see reduced funding for bicycle pathways.
- Other major highways were favored for reduced funding by only a small percentage (1%), followed by transportation system maintenance (0%).

Figure 7.15 District 3 System components Where Respondents Prefer Decreased Funding



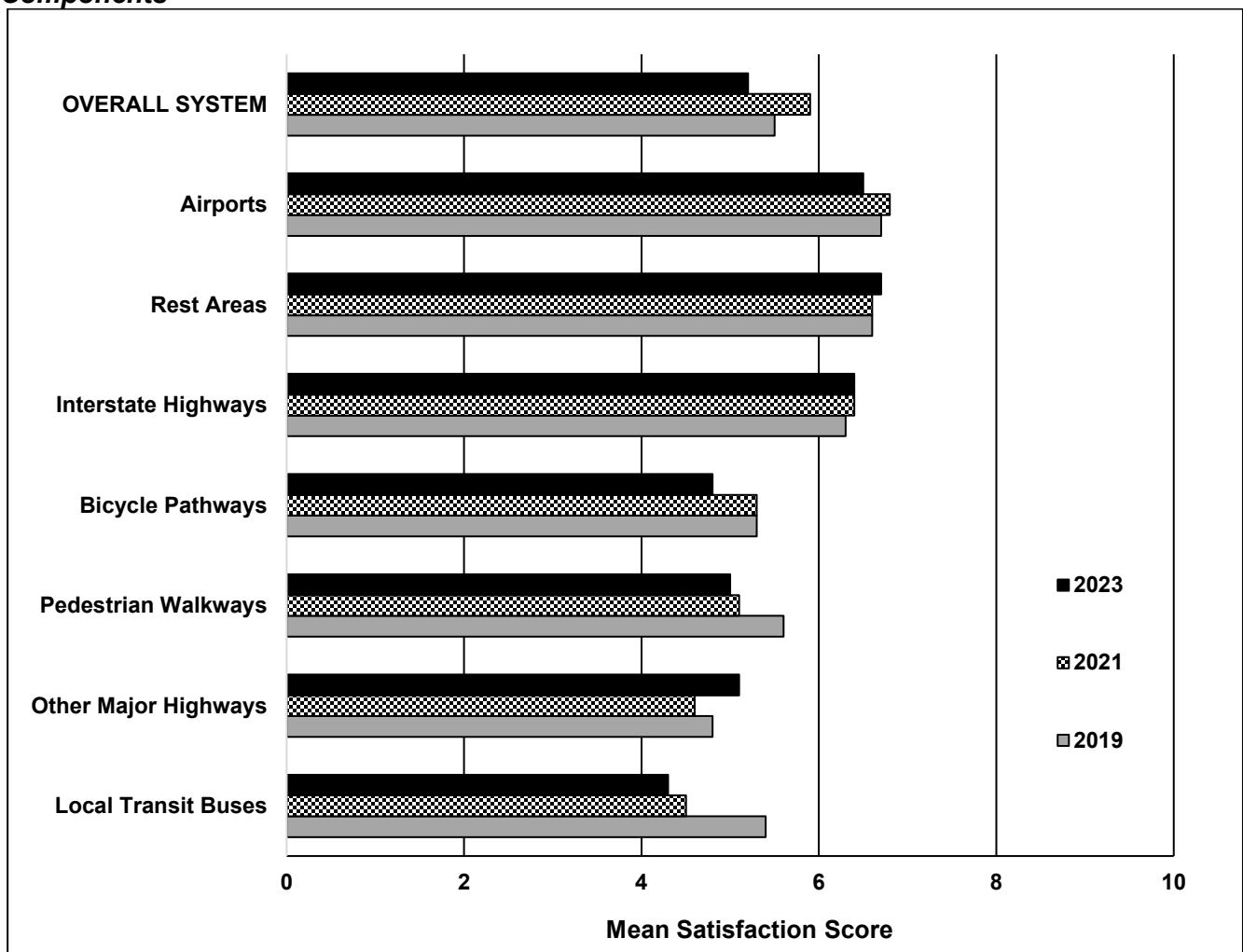
DISTRICT 4—GLENLIVE

Satisfaction with Physical Condition of Transportation System

With a mean score of 5.2, 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 rest areas (6.7), followed by the physical condition of airports (6.5), and interstate highways (6.4).
- Respondents were the least satisfied with the physical condition of local transit buses (4.3).
- A small improvement was seen in satisfaction with rest areas between 2021 and 2023.

Figure 7.16 District 4 Satisfaction with Physical Condition of Transportation System Components

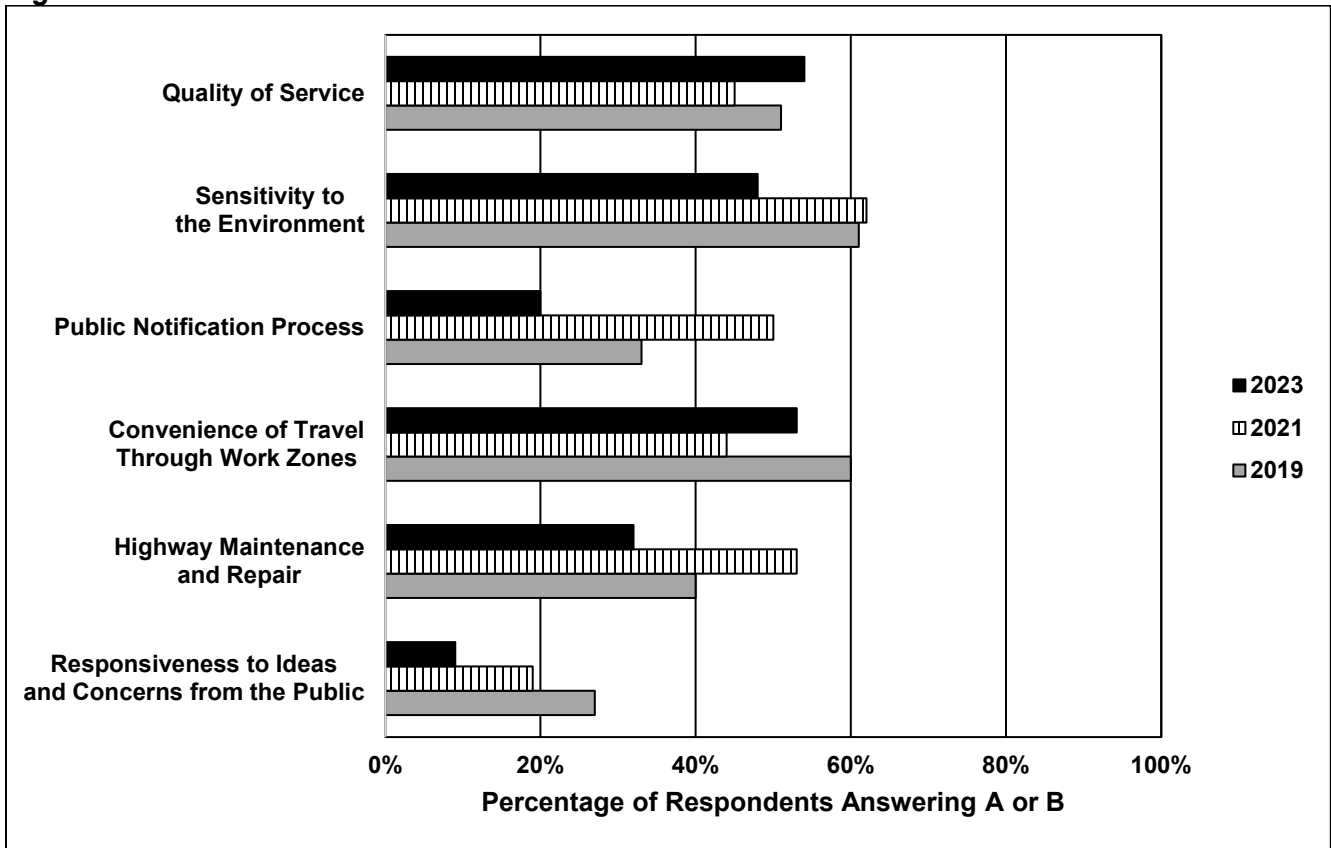


Grading Aspects of MDT's Functions

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

- 54% of respondents gave MDT a grade of A or B with respect to the quality of service provided.
- 9% gave MDT a grade of A or B with respect to MDT's responsiveness to the public's ideas and concerns.
- 2023 saw an increase in the percentage of respondents giving As or Bs to the convenience of travel through work zones.

Figure 7.17 District 4 Performance and Customer Service Grades

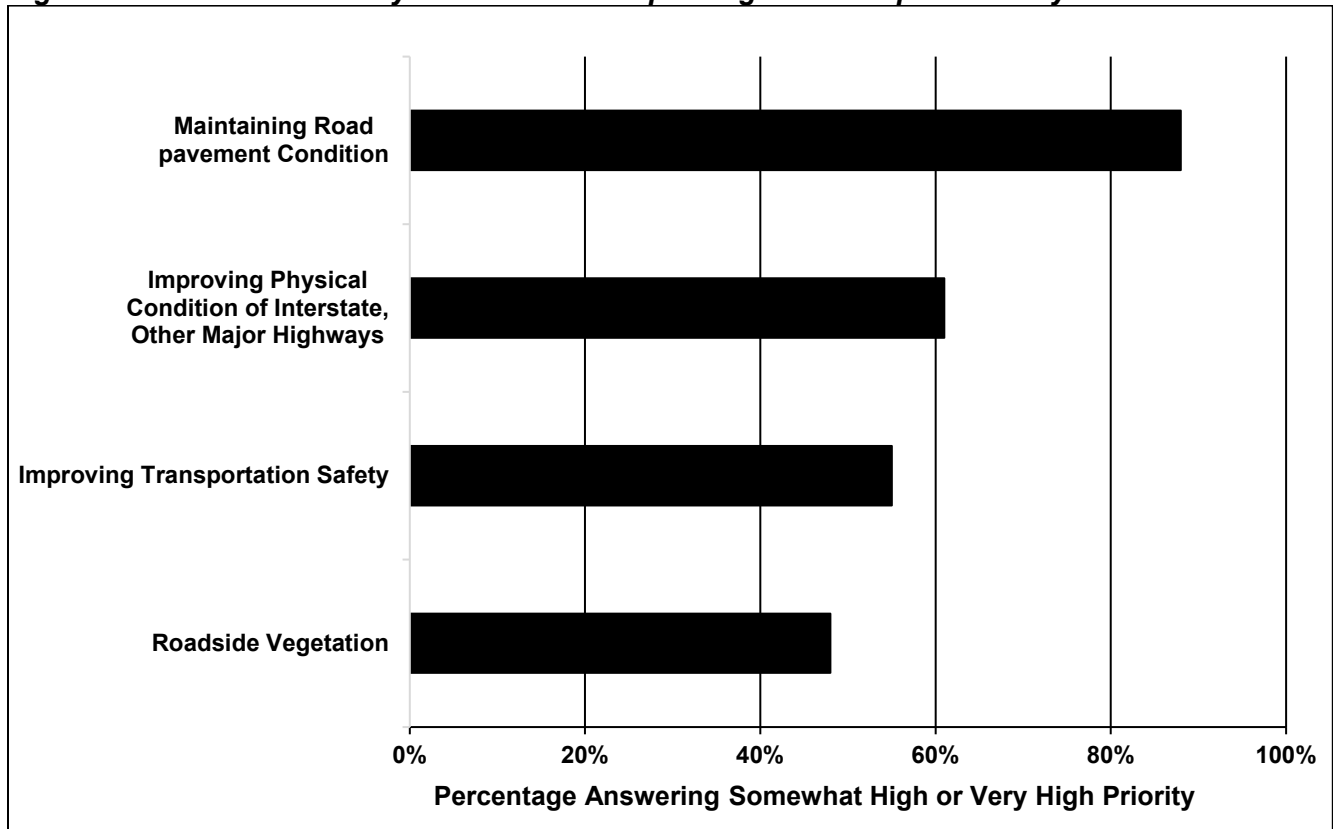


Priority of Actions to Improve Montana's Transportation System

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 88% giving it a *somewhat high priority* or *very high priority*.
- Improving the physical condition of interstates and major highways was the second ranked priority at 61% while improving transportation safety received 55%.
- Roadside vegetation rounded out the list with 48%.

Figure 7.18 District 4 Priority of Actions for Improving the Transportation System

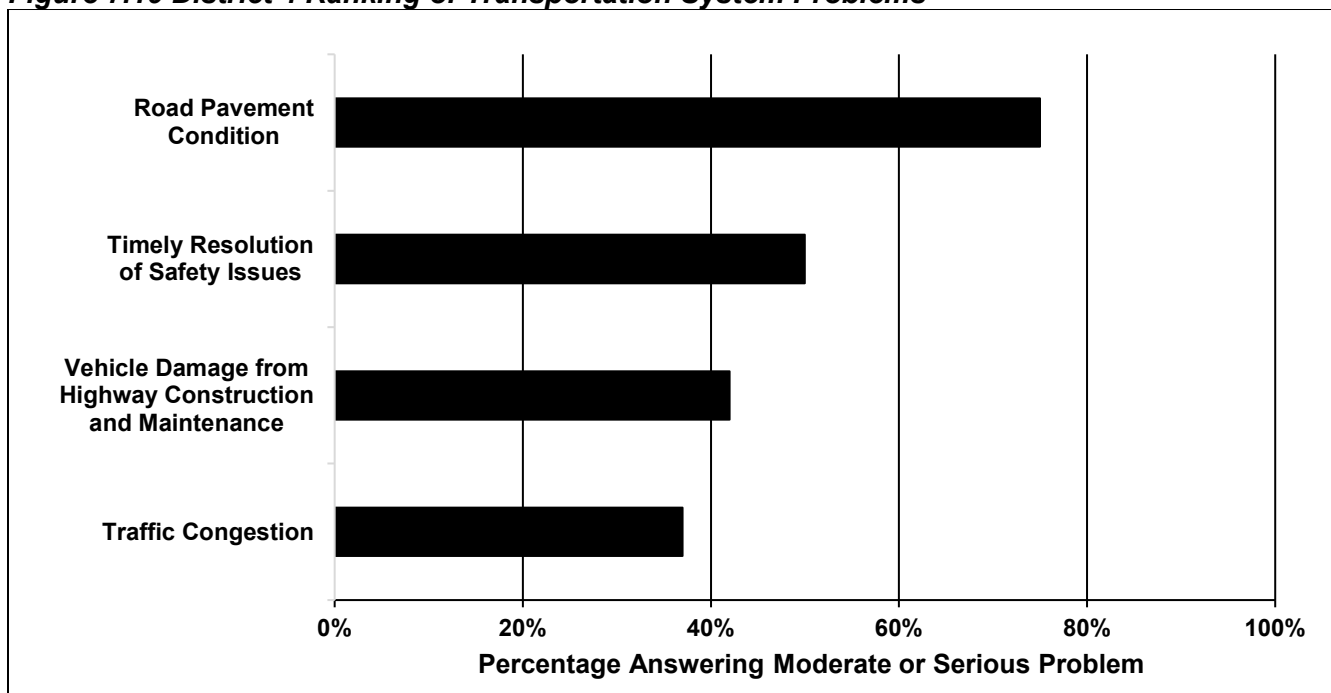


Ranking of Issues Seen as Problems with the Montana Transportation System

Survey respondents in District 4 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 75%.
- Timely resolution of safety issues was rated a *moderate problem* or *serious problem* by 50% of respondents.
- Vehicle damage from highway construction and maintenance was cited by 42% of District 4 respondents as either a *moderate* or *serious problem*.
- Traffic congestion (37%) rounded out the list.

Figure 7.19 District 4 Ranking of Transportation System Problems

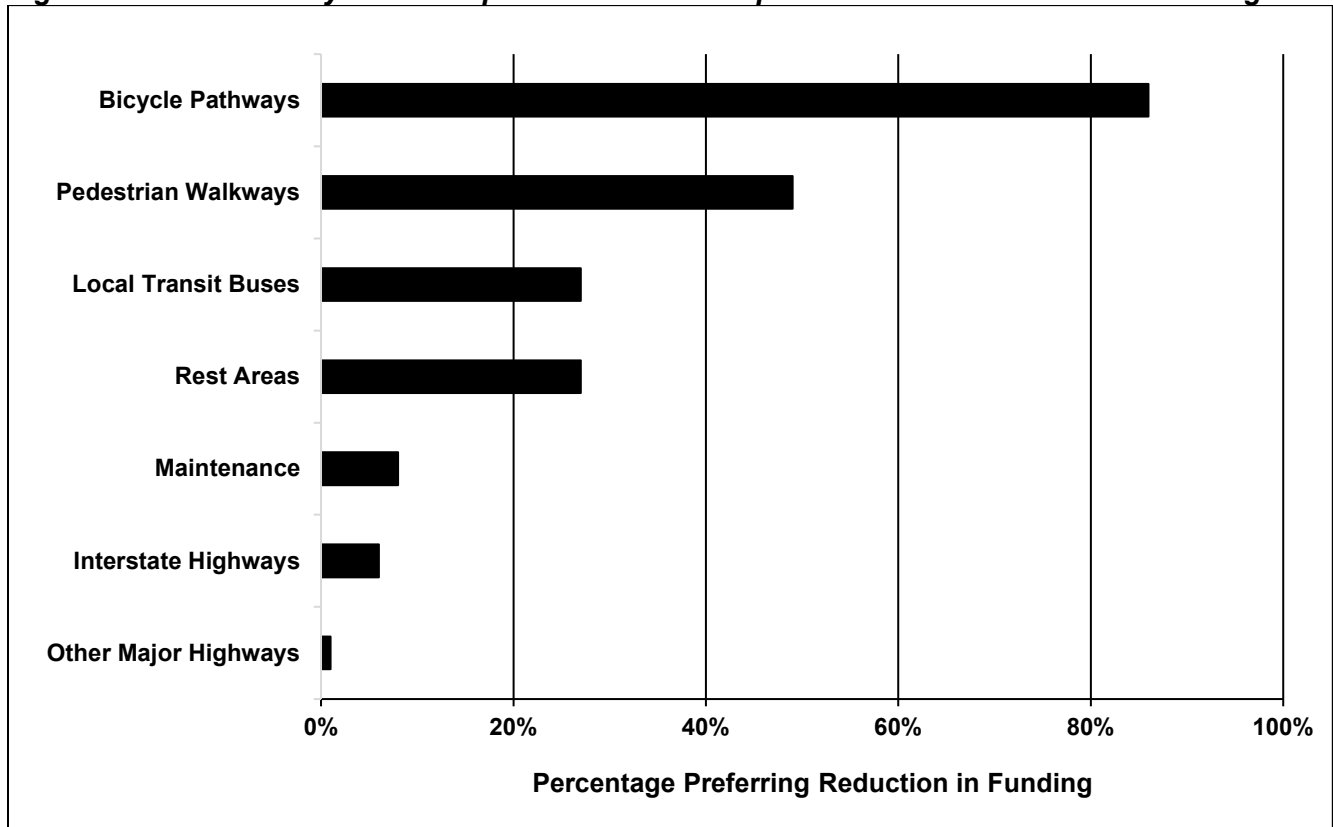


Areas Favored for Decreases in Funding

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

- The majority (86%) indicated that they would prefer to see reduced funding for bicycle pathways.
- Other major highways were favored for reduced funding by a very small percentage (1%).

Figure 7.20 District 4 System Components Where Respondents Prefer Decreased Funding



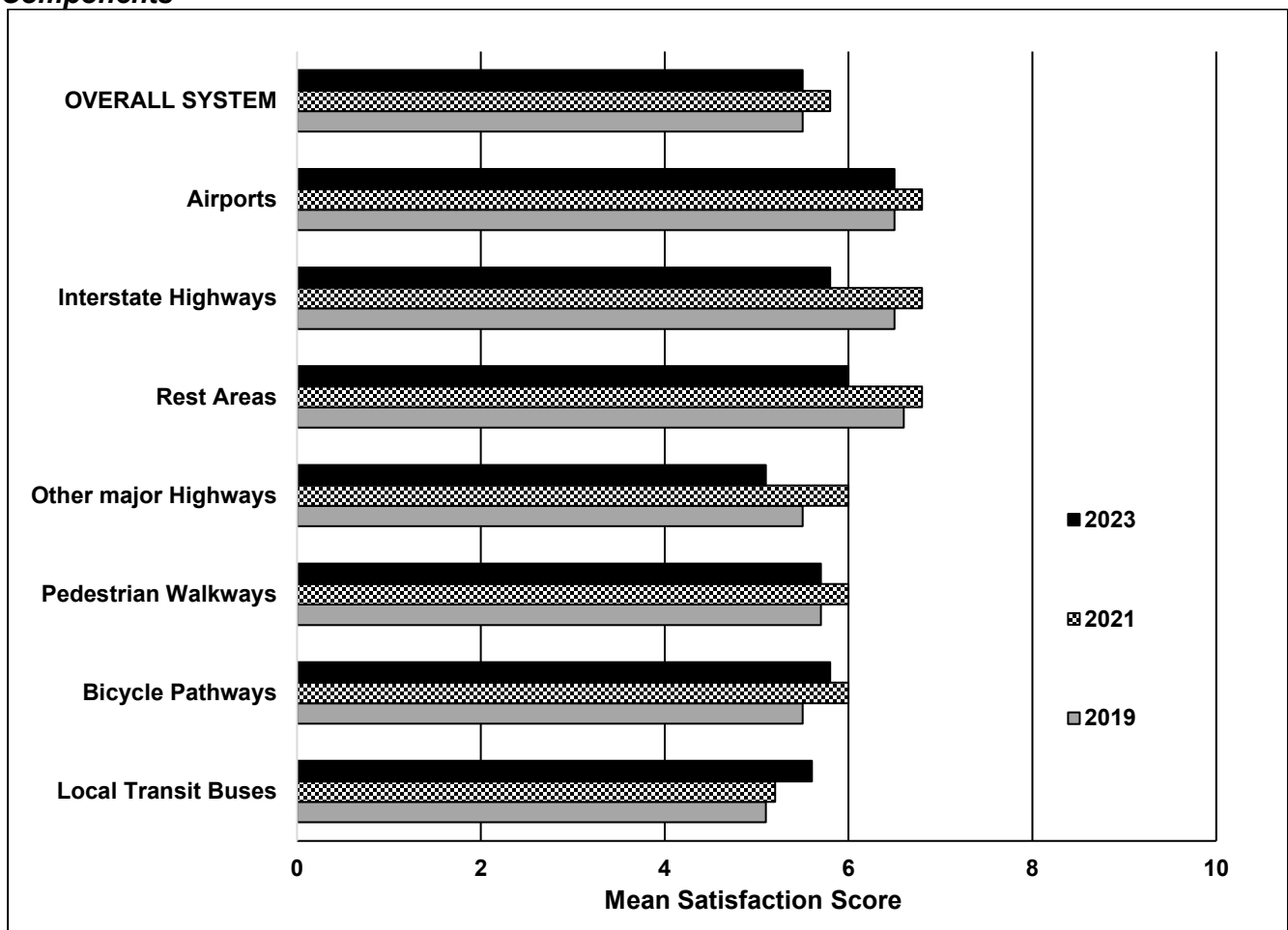
DISTRICT 5—BILLINGS

Satisfaction with Physical Condition of Transportation System

With a mean score of 5.5, residents of District 5 indicated that they were somewhat 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 6.5), interstate highways (5.8), and bicycle pathways (5.8).
- Respondents were the least satisfied with the physical condition of other major highways (5.1).
- An increase in the levels of satisfaction occurred for local transit buses between 2021 and 2023.

Figure 7.21 District 5 Satisfaction with the Physical Condition of Transportation System Components

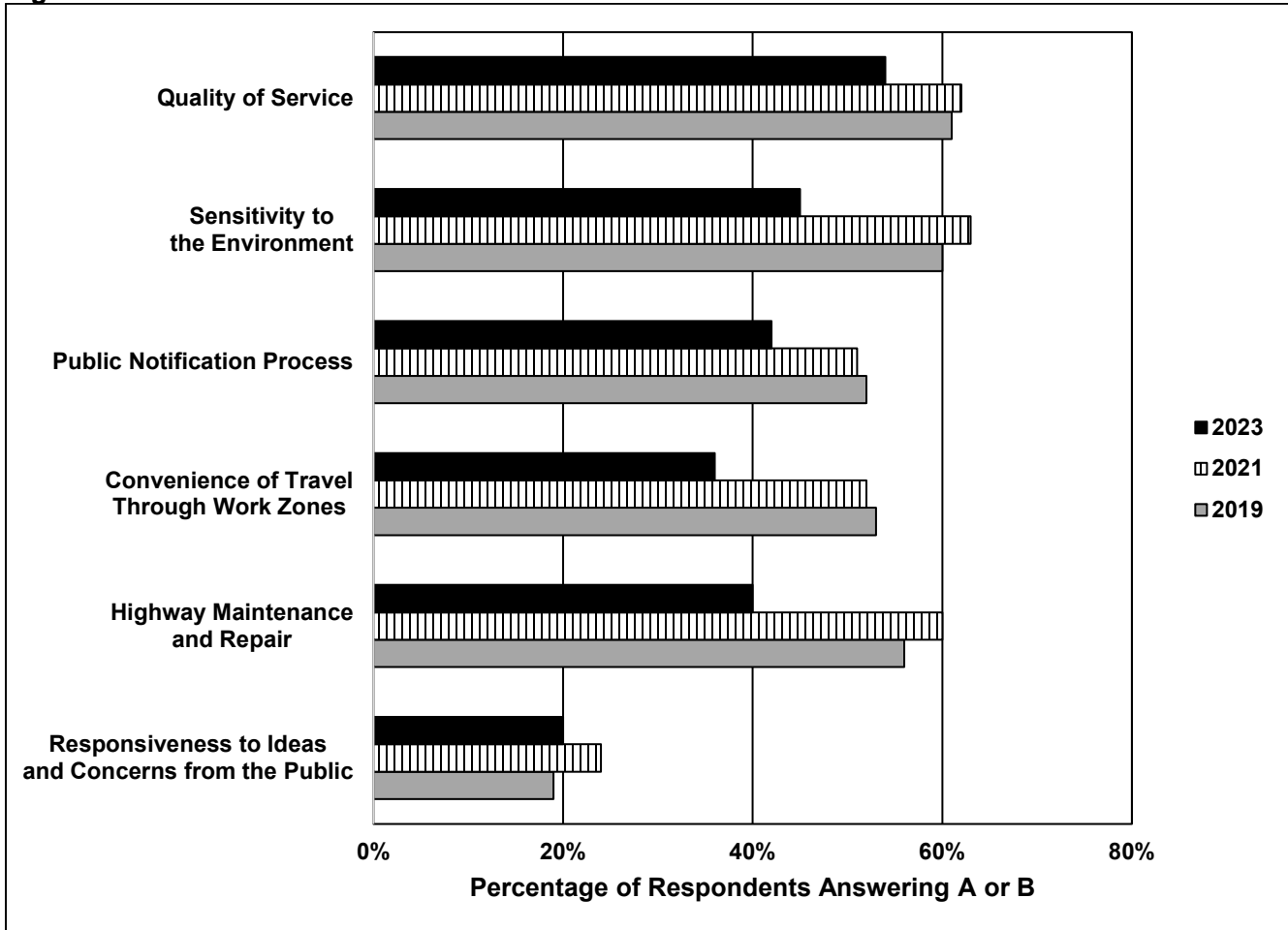


Grading Aspects of MDT's Functions

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

- 54% of respondents gave MDT a grade of A or B with respect to MDT's quality of service.
- 20% gave MDT a grade of A or B with respect to MDT's responsiveness to the public's ideas and concerns.
- The percentage of As and Bs given in 2023 dropped for all items when compared to 2021.

Figure 7.22 District 5 Performance and Customer Service Grades

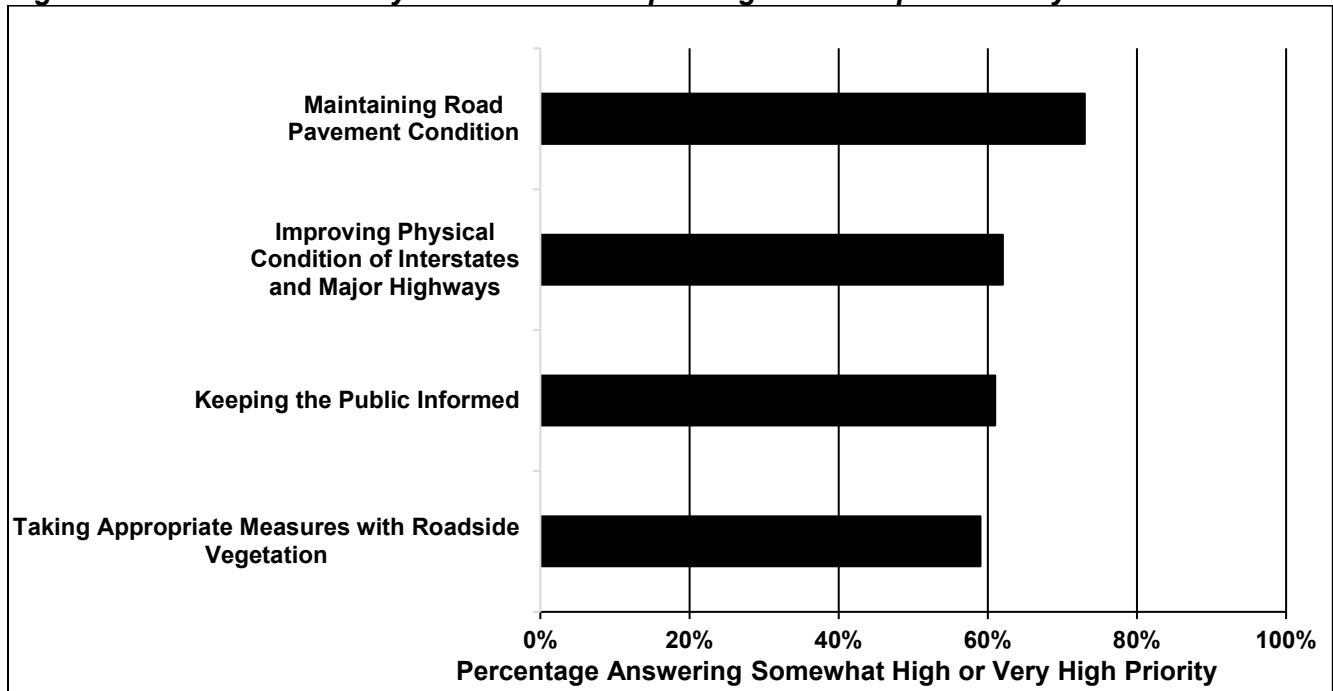


Priority of Actions to Improve Montana's Transportation System

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

- Maintaining road pavement conditions received the highest priority ranking with 73% giving it a *somewhat high priority* or *very high priority*.
- Improving the physical condition of interstates and major highways ranked second (62%), followed by keeping the public informed (61%).
- Roadside vegetation was fourth (59%).

Figure 7.23 District 3 Priority of Actions for Improving the Transportation System

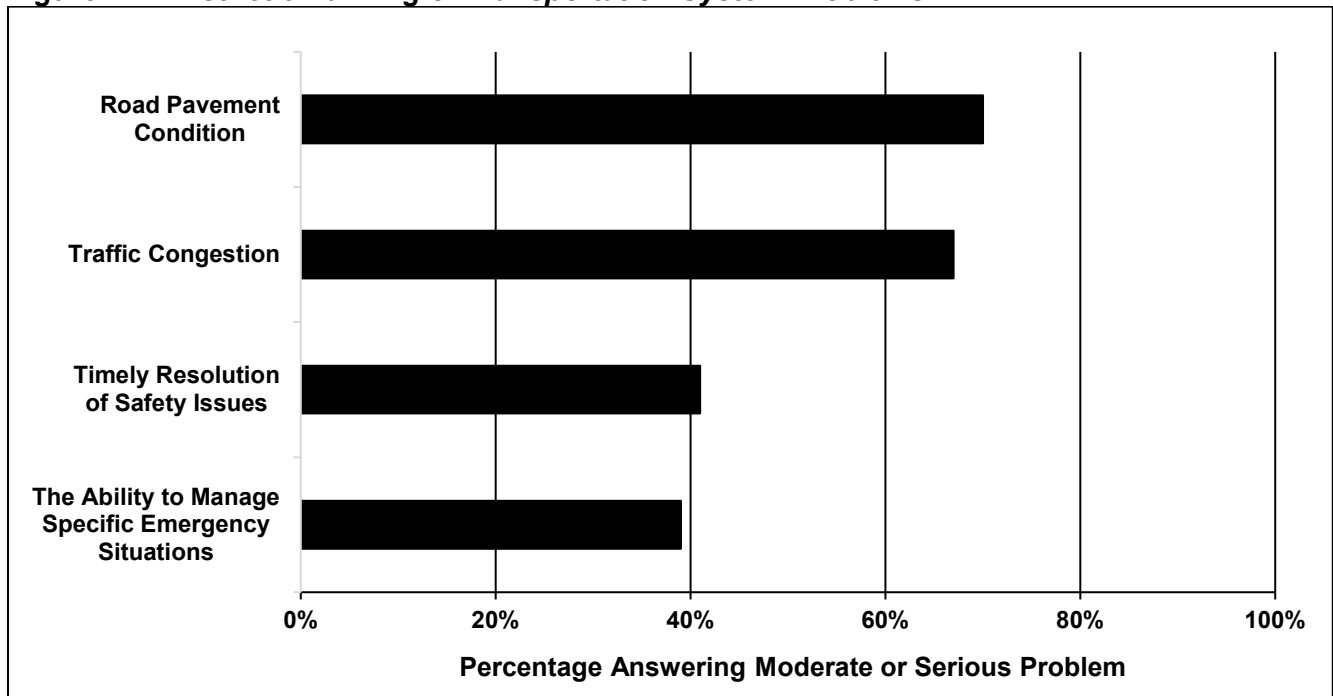


Ranking of Issues Seen as Problems with the Montana Transportation System

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

- Road pavement condition was considered to be either a *moderate problem* or a *serious problem* by the greatest percentage of District 5 respondents at 70%.
- Three additional items ranked high on the list of potential problems: traffic congestion (67%), timely resolution of safety issues (41%), and the ability to manage specific emergency situations (39%).

Figure 7.24 District 5 Ranking of Transportation System Problems

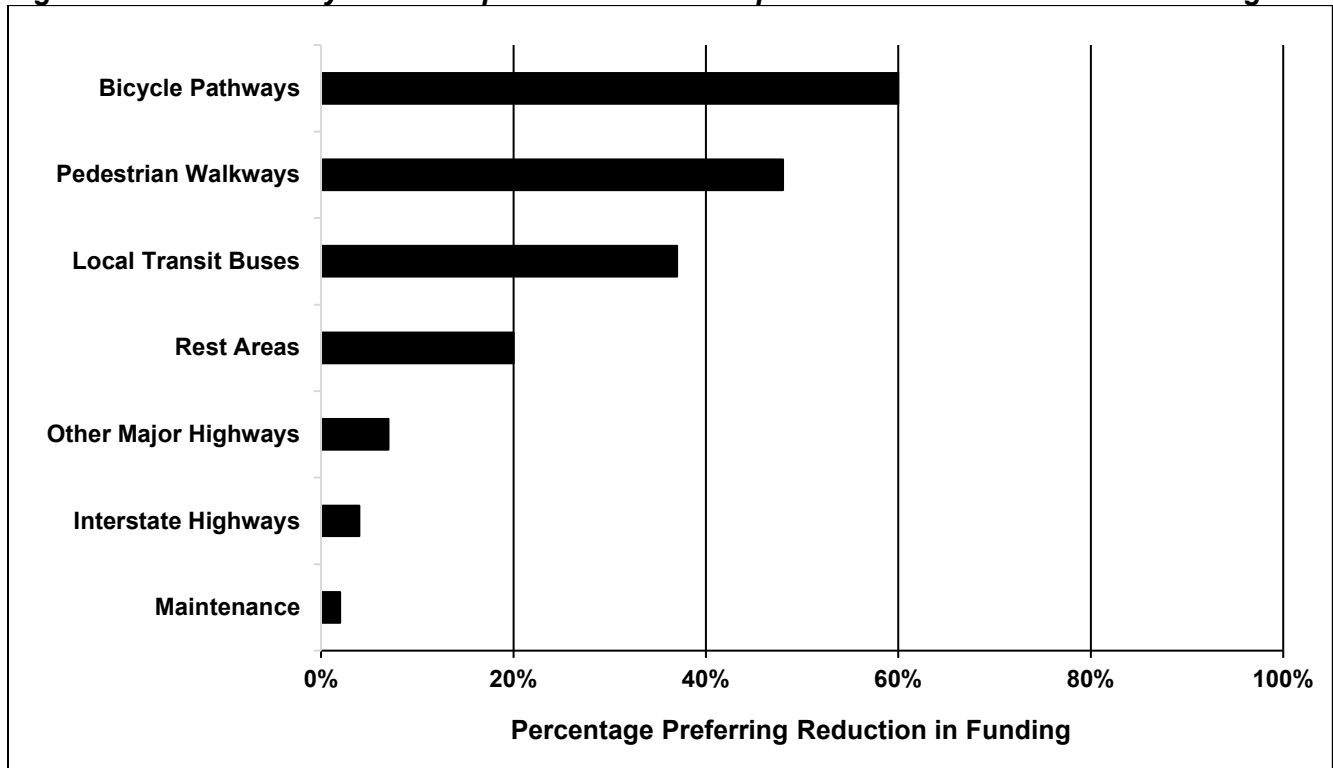


Areas Favored for Decreases in Funding

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).

- The majority (60%) indicated they would prefer to see reduced funding for bicycle pathways.
- Transportation system maintenance was favored for reduced funding by only a small percentage (2%).

Figure 7.25 District 5 System Components Where Respondents Prefer Decreased Funding



CHAPTER 8: SURVEY METHODS

Survey Administration

The MDT Public Involvement Survey was administered from June 16, 2023, through September 11, 2023. Contacting 3,748 eligible respondents resulted in 1,261 survey participants for a response rate of 34 percent.¹ 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. An 8.5" x 11" questionnaire packet mailed to non-respondents, 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, 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 five 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 +/- 5%.

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 selection². Survey weights for each MDT District and the state were calibrated to population totals obtained from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey 2017-2021 data³, which include sex, age, educational attainment and household income.

¹ 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 38%. Source: [https://www.aapor.org/Standards-Ethics/Standard-Definitions-\(1\).aspx](https://www.aapor.org/Standards-Ethics/Standard-Definitions-(1).aspx).

² Heeringa, West and Berglund (2017). *Applied Survey Data Analysis: Second Edition*. Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press.

³ Valliant and Dever (2018). *Survey Weights: A Step-by-step Guide to Calculation*. College Station, TX: Stata Press.

Data Set Preparation

Following collection and data entry, 100% 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 Census population estimates, were imputed, using the multiple imputation method⁴. 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).

⁴ Rubin, D. B. (1987). *Multiple Imputation for Nonresponse in Surveys*. New York, New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

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