

APPENDIX F – PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

INITIAL CUSTER PI REPORT

CORRIDOR CONCEPTS FROM PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE

Custer Avenue Improvements: *Initial Public Involvement Report and Findings*



Developed for: Dwane Kailey, Dustin Rouse, Doug Wilmot, Rich Hibl, RJ Snyder

CC: Lori Ryan, Kris Christensen

Date: December 28, 2018

Contact Person: Sarah Knobel | 406-241-0364 | sarah@bigskypublicrelations.com

Overview: Big Sky Public Relations collected public comment on the Custer Avenue Improvements at open houses, on social media advertisements and via hotline calls. In-person activities were as follows.

- 10/2/18 Meeting with Cathy Burwell, CEO Helena Chamber
- 10/2/18 Meeting with Brett Zanto, Principal Capital High School
- 10/2/18 On-site Project Review with RJ Snyder
- 10/3/18 Meeting with Mayor Collins and Interim City Manager Taylor
- 10/3/18 Meeting with David Knopeke, City Streets Superintendent
- 10/3/18 Meeting with Kevin Tenney, Lewis and Clark County Fairgrounds Manager
- 10/3/18 Open House (Custer Landowners) at Four Georgians Elementary School
- 11/14/18 Meeting with Doug Haberman, Bike Walk Montana
- 11/14/18 Meeting with Reese Martin, Lewis & Clark County Disaster and Emergency Services
- 11/14/18 Meeting with Sharon Haugen, Community Development Director
- 11/14/18 Meeting with Elroy Golemon, Capital Transit
- 11/14/18 Meeting with Tyler Ream, Superintendent of Helena Public Schools
- 11/14/18 Open House (General Public), Capital High School
- 2/12/18 Scheduled: Meet with American Legion Executive Board

Themes: Topic or concerns flagged repeatedly in meetings, public comment, polling data and focus group results have been included in the list below.

- Villard intersection expressed as *current and urgent concern* for many
- Timing of signals is perceived as part of the current problem and part of the solution
- Some support for mix of roundabouts and signals
- Neighborhood residents have concerns about traffic flowing through during construction
- Bike/pedestrian facilities are highly desired; however, there is quite a bit of disagreement over landscaping (some people want trees, some feel they are a hazard)
- Timeline to arrive at the construction phase is a hurdle for many commenters; residents expressed distrust in the process and disappointment in the amount of time it has taken to develop a plan
 - City/County mentioned as key players

Analysis: Overall, the public acknowledges the need for improvements to Custer Avenue. Across public comment, focus group results and polling data, the majority of respondents agree that Custer Avenue is congested and in need of improvements. In a poll performed by Moore Information, 88% of respondents said that Custer Avenue is congested and could benefit from at least some improvements.

In comments, focus group results and polling data, the public indicates that additional lanes would relieve congestion. Additionally, there is consensus that sidewalks and other non-motorized facilities should be a priority in the design. Aesthetics were of interest, both to those proposing landscaping, lighting and beautification as well as encouraging a light hand when it came to trees and other perceived visual impediments to motorists.

The involvement of the City of Helena and Lewis and Clark County is critical due to the perceptions that growth could have been/could be better managed surrounding Custer Avenue. Based on feedback from Helena's Community Development Director, it is clear that the issues are nuanced. Strong collaboration with the City of Helena and Lewis and Clark County will be necessary for consistent and useful messaging on the project. There is also a perception that MDT and the City/County do not cooperate with each other, to the detriment of residents.

Signal timing and intersection management were common concerns; many respondents expressed a concern that poor signal timing was causing some congestion on Custer Avenue. In many instances, intersections were called out as an area of concern. While nearly every intersection along Custer Avenue was indicated to be problematic, the Custer/Villard intersection was frequently mentioned to be an immediate and pressing safety hazard. *Please note the volume of safety concerns that were received regarding Villard and Custer; residents made it clear that this is an area that they feel must be remedied in the short term.*

Finally, several businesses and neighborhood residents are concerned with access to their homes and/or an influx of traffic during construction. Individual stakeholder relations will continue to be of paramount importance until and into the construction phase of the project.

Short-Term Communications Planning

Consistent information about the project should be rolled out to the engaged public over the coming months. Short-term milestones for messaging may include:

- Q1 Communication: Traffic Study results
- Q2 Communication: Results of Poll and Focus Group studies
- Q3 Communication: Invitation to attend upcoming local events to submit comment/learn more
 - Last Chance Stampede: Lewis and Clark County Fair (July 2019)
 - Select Out to Lunch occasions (Thursdays, June-August 2019)
- Q3 Communication: Survey results (dependent on survey schedule)
- Q4 Communication: TBD

Opportunities

Throughout the process of soliciting comment, the public has repeatedly raised concerns about City of Helena and Lewis and Clark County planning, development and overall growth strategy in the areas around Custer Avenue. Often, these questions fall outside of the scope of work that MDT will perform on Custer Avenue and have been directed to City/County partners.

Because of these concerns, Big Sky PR will make efforts to increase consistency in messaging between MDT and City/County representatives.

Sustaining public interest will require consistent communication; it will be essential to continue building a clear calendar for public outreach throughout the coming months and years. Big Sky PR recommends a long-range look ahead to build out a dynamic calendar of meaningful milestones to share with the public.

Appendices

Appendix A: Public Comment

All public comment collected by Big Sky Public Relations to date are attached in Appendix A.

Appendix B: Polling Data

Poll conducted by Moore Information in Appendix B.

Appendix C: Focus Group Results

Results of a focus group conducted by Christina Ragsdale Communications attached in Appendix C.

Appendix A: All Public Comment

Outlet	Date	From	Address	City	State	Zip	Phone	Email	Send Updates?	Notes
Comment Form	11/14/18	Anonymous								A mix of roundabouts and lights would be great
Comment Form	11/14/18	Anonymous								Right now make Villard at Custer no left turn on Custer please
Comment Form	11/14/18	Anonymous								The roundabout would impact my Meineke car Care business. It would remove my only 1 lane to get to the back of my building for oil change business. Also it would be like taking coffee drive - thru business and take the only lane available away. As well as "NO" place to deal with now removal at all - front or back - roundabout "OUT"
Comment Form	11/14/18	Anonymous								Perfer traffic lights to roundabout, please no trees along the road, they are a traffic hazzard
Comment Form	11/14/18	Anonymous								Provide a pullout/parking area with interpretive sign along the Charles Van Hook Wetland Area
Comment Form	11/14/18	Anonymous								Minimize the loss of wetlands when building the road
Comment Form	11/14/18	Anonymous								Ensure that there is enough room for storage of the plowed snow not to impede use during all season. Winter use of separate bike/ped facilities is especially important for non-motorized transportation
Comment Form	11/14/18	Anonymous								Provide pedestrian and shared use bike/ped/equestrian path that will extend/run along both sides of custer from the baseball fields/fairgrounds all the way to the east at I-15.
Comment Form	11/14/18	Anonymous								Also insure connectivty for the sidewalks and shared use paths with facilities feeding onto Custer
Comment Form	11/14/18	Anonymous								Flashing warning lights for ped/shared use xings are nice
Comment Form	11/14/18	Anonymous								Prefer the roundabouts all the way through. They keep speeds lower and they keep traffic flowing as needed
Comment Form	11/14/18	Anonymous								Strongly suggest roundabout concept. Need shared use trail with appropriate lighting. Once the shared use trail is built maintain it to keep away potholes and roots from growing under it making the trail unusable. Planing greenery will make the road pleasing to eyesight. While roundabouts take more space the increase in safety outweighs the cost and loss of homes, businesses, change to golf course
Comment Form	11/14/18	Dave Campana						d2campana@yahoo.com		I think it is an absolute must to keep a middle turn lane
Comment Form	11/14/18	Dave Maslowski								A turn signal should be put in on Village and Custer to take care of the large amount of traffic that now exist on McHugh Lane and Custer as soon as possible. Also restrict more businesses from building on Custer when it is expanding so rapidly.
Comment Form	11/14/18	Ray Spriff								I would like to see the lights timed better between MT ave and Costco, you can't make it past Sanders without hitting red. People have recognized this and it is a drag race to make it through that light.
Comment Form	11/14/18	Brad Sangray	4298 St John I.E.	Hena	MT		59635	intoelk@gmail.com		More trees along custer, walking paths, next to fairgrounds. Is there a "rule" that says cares take precedence over green space and humans? And maybe waiting a few minutes is not that big of a deal. Vary with work time starts
Comment Form	11/14/18	Anonymous								*Chair City of Helena, Non-motorized Transportation Advisory Council. Please extend and upgrade the current "shared use" path along Custer Ave further east. Please plan ahead for the second "Custer Ave East" project so that the current shared use path connects East of Montana Ave. The City of Helena has to many bike paths and lanes to nowhere. They stop and start at inconvonient locations with no regard for connectivity.
Comment Form	11/14/18	Wilber Rehmann						willbur@wt.net	YES	Where is the Rocky Mountain Dev Council on their development of the 9.6 acre parcel west of henderson & South of Brady? (The 85 units of low income housing).
Comment Form	11/14/18	Ted Polette	352 Willowbr	Helena	MT		59602	polettx4@aol.com		(1) It is essential to maintain a separate walking/biking path along the corridor, as currently exists on the south side of Custer. This is important for both commuter safety and the safety of school children to/from the elementary school. (2) I feel there is a sustantial room for improvement in the management of current and future traffic signals. I believe upgraded software and coordination could darastically cut down in congestion along custer and in other areas, even with the existing configuration. (3) Minimize the night lighting to reduce the impact on neighboring residential areas. (4) Start planning now for future growth areas and right-of-way acquisition, such as along Sierra Road. This project would have been substantially lower cost if right-of-way had been acquired 10+ years ago.
Comment Form	11/14/18	Dan Norris	3103 Vigilant	Helena	MT		59602	toxicresearch@gmail.com		Strongly prefer the roundabout option. Safer if go with that suggested signage "yeild to traffic on left" - have seen this in other places and it seems to help those who aren't familiar with the concept. Shared use trail is must have. Both for kids and adults. Lots of bikes want / do use this route.
Comment Form	11/14/18	Anonymous								I like the roundabout design on Custer (vs all the lights) but consider leaving Renton / Custer intersection a light (rather than a roundabout) due to the arrival of traffic in 3 of the 4 directions today. Roudabout @ Henderson/Custer is a wide idea (in both designs).
Comment Form	11/14/18	Monte Edgeland	3052 Old Bro	Helena	MT		59601	mdegeland@charter.net		Design should be ped/bike - friendly, Design should be ADA, ramps where they don't exist now, DO not make intersetion so wide - 10' travel lanes should be adequate
Comment Form	11/14/18	Anonymous								Trees along whole length, Yes light on Villard
Comment Form	11/14/18	Anonymous								Right now no left on Villard - at all traffic back up on Villard is horrible
Comment Form	11/14/18	Anonymous								Trees are a traffic distraction and obstruct the view, don't like the ones on Lyndale & Euclid. Don't make the same mistake No traffic Light at Villard - Slows down traffic - go to McHugh to turn left onto Custer at lighth there. Roundabout will slow traffic down - traffic to heavy on Custer already
Comment Form	11/14/18	Anonymous								A larger plan for Helena should include railroad underpasses at Benton and N Montana, because some travelers use Custer just so they can access Henderson. Henderson is one of the only Railroad underpasses. Also - thank you so much your time and effort to inform us. I live in this neighborhood.
Comment Form	11/14/18	Beth Murphy	104 Elmwood	Helena	MT			bgelles@hotmail.com		Henderson is one of the only roads that has a railroad underpass. Some travelers use Custer just to get to Henderson.
Post-it Note	11/14/18	Anonymous								Yes for roundabouts all the way. Why not have turning lanes the entire way. It was mentioned something like 20,000 traveling Custer at Montana and down to 8,000 by Green Meadow. Has consideration been given to added traffic now that people can travel down Custer which they avoid today because of Congestion?
Comment Form	11/14/18	Neil Kochler	409 Alfalfa Road							Protected Left turn at Benton, Pedestrians crossing Custer @ Benton
Giant Post-it Not	11/14/18	Anonymous								Speed limit along the corridor. Preference is one consistent speed limit. Consideration of grade-separated non-motorized crossings, safety of school children. Offers options for drop off areas.
Giant Post-it Not	11/14/18	Anonymous								Cars cutting through trailer park at very excessive speeds
Giant Post-it Not	11/14/18	Anonymous								Water with in corridor - American Leage
Giant Post-it Not	11/14/18	Anonymous								American Legion parking lot take?
Giant Post-it Not	11/14/18	Anonymous								Extra traffic from henderson, brady and custer to go to lyndale hwy 12
Giant Post-it Not	11/14/18	Anonymous								More thought to pedestrian and bicyclists needs. Custer Ave (East of Mt Ave) bicycle lanes are too narrow
Giant Post-it Not	11/14/18	Anonymous								Bike path off road on Green Meadow from Lincoln Road to Custer, need for Safety

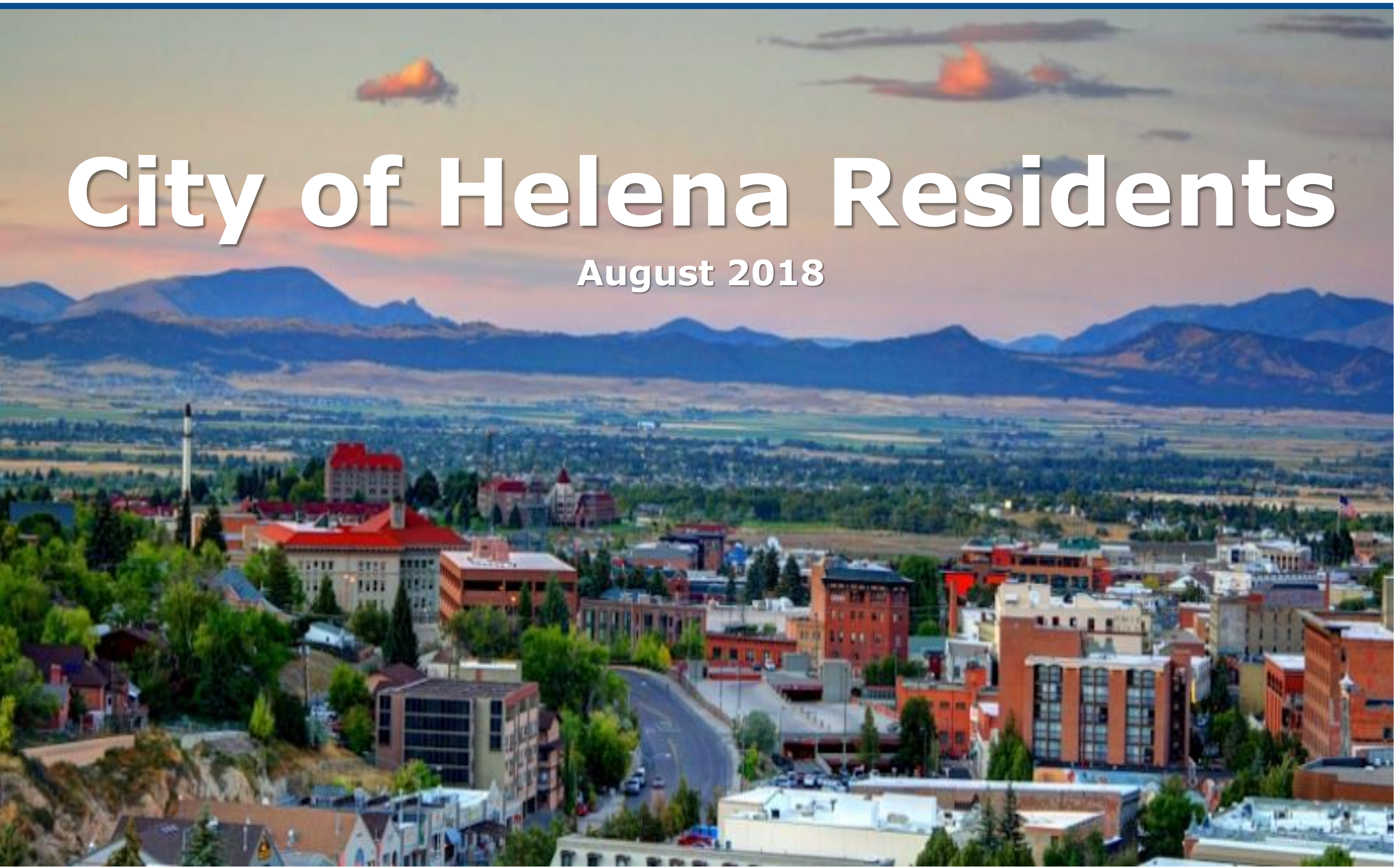
Outlet	Date	From	Address	City	State	Zip	Phone	Email	Send Updates?	Notes
Giant Post-it Not	11/14/18	Anonymous								Intersection of Henderson + Euclid, near better body fitness, can it be made into a turn lane to reduce congestion? Creates increased traffic on Brady
Roll Map	11/14/18	Anonymous								[Light at Custer Ave and Valley / Green Meadow] Do this now!
Roll Map	11/14/18	Anonymous								Roundabouts - Winter Maintenance concern
Roll Map	11/14/18	Anonymous								[N Montana and Custer Ave] - Dual SB light?
Roll Map	11/14/18	Anonymous								Intirm fixes - Traffic light at Villard and Custer
Roll Map	11/14/18	Anonymous								Crosswalks at Schools? How will they be addressed? Signals?
Roll Map	11/14/18	Anonymous								[N Montana and Custer Ave] - 2 straight lanes is necessary, long right turn staging lane
Roll Map	11/14/18	Anonymous								roundabout would reduce emissions
Roll Map	11/14/18	Anonymous								Four Georgians Elementary school drop off lane
Roll Map	11/14/18	Anonymous								Noise mitigation at Custer and Green Meadow Drive
Roll Map	11/14/18	Anonymous								Mix-n-match between roundabouts and signals
Roll Map	11/14/18	Anonymous								[Henderson and Custer] - Protect wetland habitat, extend to Joslyn
Roll Map	11/14/18	Anonymous								Current Issue - Stoplights are inconsistent
Roll Map	11/14/18	Anonymous								[Benton and Custer] - What about lighting, North side headed south needs protected left turn lane, noise, improve coordination with smart lights,
Roll Map	11/14/18	Anonymous								Maintain multi-use path
Roll Map	11/14/18	Anonymous								[Villard and Custer] - Light!
Roll Map	11/14/18	Anonymous								Four Georgians Elementary School kid pick up queues
Roll Map	11/14/18	Anonymous								[Custer and McHugh] - Development, no East/West routes available
Roll Map	11/14/18	Anonymous								People liked the roundabout option - anectdoatal observation
Roll Map	11/14/18	Anonymous								[Montana and Custer] - Dual LT's, back-up into intersection
Sign-in	11/14/18	Jay Scott						jayscott16@icloud.com	YES	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Stan Brelin					4064446135	sbrelin@mt.gov		
Sign-in	11/14/18	Brent Everson					4064613769	brent.everson31@gmail.com	YES	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Boots Me					4064428087			
Sign-in	11/14/18	Joe Spieker					4064312127	ssinc10981@qwestoffice.net	YES	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Mel and Suzanne McFetrey					4064497397	zanyzanni@yahoo.com	Email	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Roger Knapstad					4064613473			
Sign-in	11/14/18	Dick Boettener					4054225129			
Sign-in	11/14/18	Linda and Cliff Roesman					4064426767	croessner43@hotmail.com	Email	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Ted and Ronna Polette					4064496059	polettex4@aol.com	Email	
Sign-in	11/14/18	LeeAnn Hoffman					4064422988	lulubell406@yahoo.com		
Sign-in	11/14/18	Christine Pattern					4064592923	cepatten1@gmail.com	Email	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Brad Sangray					4062216798	intoelk@gmail.com	YES	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Kevin M Kopp					4064221772			
Sign-in	11/14/18	Mike Wall					4064395400	mwall@powertownsend.com	YES	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Jim Hyatt					4064435975	hoogalu@bresnan.net	YES	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Mike McDonnell					4064478482	mmcconnell@helenamt.gov	Email	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Dawn Therriault					4064398616	dawnt120@gmail.com	YES	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Bill Bradford					4064392019	bradford100@bresnan.net	YES	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Gary Gilmore					4064656544	gilmore@mt.net	YES	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Jay Ramlo					4064429377	jramlo@charter.net	YES	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Michael Hien					4064425000	mhien701@gmail.com	YES	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Kim Ballard					4064429589	ballard_kim@msn.com	Email	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Bill Wells					4064316368	bwells406@gmail.com		Just want light on Vilard and Custer
Sign-in	11/14/18	Dave Maslowski					7014712627	dave_maslowski@hotmail.com	Email	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Kathleen					4064422176		NO	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Dan Norris					4062024187	toxicresearch@gmail.com	YES	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Barney Milligan					4065801219	bandmilligan@gmail.com	YES	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Dawn Strattan					4064570860	dstratton@charter.net	NO	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Bill White					4064547065	whitewi@bresnan.net	YES	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Lynne Grosfield					4064314553	lgrosfield47@gmail.com	YES	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Paul and Vicki Kent					4064492624	vakent@aol.com	YES	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Gil and Jodi Schellenger					4064592351	jag70799@gmail.com	YES	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Rich and Chris Snyder					4064437009	c.snyder@bresnan.net	YES	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Sue Jackson					4064434486	suejacksonmt@gmail.com	YES	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Thresea Meek					4064599212	mtarcher1@aol.com	YES	
Sign-in	11/14/18	John Craig					4064425189	jlcraig@bresnan.net	YES	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Rich and Lynnette Curtis					4064492046	ljpcrr@gmail.com	Email	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Pat Stockburger					4064619387	anniebguns4@gmail.com	email	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Geni Laden					4063910563	geniladen47@gmail.com	Email	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Betty Clark					4063901985	bettyclark4@yahoo.com		
Sign-in	11/14/18	Jerry McGee					4064435420	jmcege@bresnan.net	YES	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Jon Moe					4064394284	moejon47@bresnan.net	YES	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Cathy Kendall					4064421564	cathykendall@live.com	YES	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Dick Meeker					4064425683			
Sign-in	11/14/18	Steve Larson					4064317665	ngu11@bresnan.net	YES	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Phil Colbert					4064420648			
Sign-in	11/14/18	Neil Koehler					4064436636	nktttkoehler@gmail.com	YES	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Leon Schneider					4064421815		YES	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Lucy Morell-Gengler					4064478459	lgengler@helenamt.gov	Email	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Maggie Mulcare					4064436447	themulcares@bresnan.net	email	

Outlet	Date	From	Address	City	State	Zip	Phone	Email	Send Updates?	Notes
Sign-in	11/14/18	Sandy Bradford					4064436447	SandyB@bresnan.net	Email	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Dawn Zahr					4064378103	dawnzehr13@gmail.com	Email	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Mike Tooley					4064397554	tooley1356@hotmail.com	Email	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Caro and Steve Knecht					4064315438	csknecht_1@bresnan.net	Email	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Mente Dean Egeland					4064224350	mdegeland@charter.net	Email	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Clint and Mona Erb					4064395015	clintebetterbody@montana.com	YES	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Charlie McCarthy					4064583972	charlymac@bresnan.net	YES	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Carolyn Gorshe					4064312264	csleepingjiant@bresnan.net	YES	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Robert Rasmussen					4064431097	robertsrasmussen@yahoo.com	Email	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Mark Barry					4064311307	mtbare@bresnan.net	NO	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Gary and Judy Dunn					4064314486	gidunn020@gmail.com	YES	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Jan and Dave Campana						d2campana@yahoo.com	Email	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Bob and Susan Schlack					4064433152		NO	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Ed and Sharon Tregidga					4064498642	estregidga@q.com	Email	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Dillon Ewars					4064653921	ewals.dillon@gmail.com	YES	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Buline Kneherud					4064490618	knatt3helena@aol.com	YES	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Wuille Garman					4064437221	ugarman67@hotmail.com	Email	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Emily Clesn						saddiejeanie@yahoo.com	Email	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Kathy Harris						kathy.harris@kjieng.com	Email	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Jeff Patten					4064496947	jeff.patten@dot.gov	NO	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Laura Erikson					4064314674	lauralerikson@gmail.com	YES	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Todd Tillingier					4065945356	tntmoriv@gmail.com	YES	
Sign-in	11/14/18	PJ McHugh					4064420013	mhomepark@aol.com	YES	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Marie Straw							NO	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Nikki Andersen					6109699377	liandersen@live.com	YES	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Kent Barnes					4064436051	kent_barnes@msn.com	Email	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Jeff Key					4064422473	jeff_carriek@yahoo.com	NO	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Shanon Hanger					4064478445	shugen@helenamt.gov	YES	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Henry and Nancy Begler					4064433634	beglers@bresnan.net	NO	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Dwight Bernard					4064429020		No	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Tina Morrison					4064101345	tinalncr@custeravenuecounseling.com	YES	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Bob Thuossell					4064437165		NO	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Pam Craven					4064222226			
Sign-in	11/14/18	Laurence Siroky					4064317475	lsiroky@aol.com	YES	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Ryan Leland					4064478433	rieland@helenamt.gov		
Sign-in	11/14/18	Patrick and Beth Murphy						hgelles@hotmail.com	YES	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Art and Bonnie Howell					4064428438	abhowell@centurylink.net	Email	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Ken Varns					4065584665	kemethvarns@gmail.com	YES	
Sign-in	11/14/18	heather Snyder					4064904200	heather@endurancelearning.com		
Sign-in	11/14/18	John Almus						mt_almus5@hotmail.com	YES	
Sign-in	11/14/18	Shirly Thomas					4062275953		NO	
Facebook	11/27/18	Michael Rapley								One dollar spent on environmental issues, for this area in questions, is one tax dollar wasted. That boat sailed, for this area in question, over 100 years ago.
Facebook	11/27/18	Richie Stern								Airport Road is a mess also but what do I know
Facebook	11/27/18	Mike Dorr								This is the worst down I've ever lived for road maintenance not to mention the highest taxes
Facebook	11/27/18	Bridger Bukantis								Please plan for bicyclist usage!
Facebook	12/1/18	Joff Onx								Sorry Robert Peccia and Associates, but you are smoking crack. Already far too many lights on Custer CAUSING the build-ups. Mis-timed and anti-traffic. Let traffic flow. You probably designed the previous so you could sort of redesign this, so you can redesign again. If Custer doesn't four lane to the fairgrounds, someone is smoking crack and we are wasting tax payer dollars
Facebook	12/1/18	Chuck Price								A center turn lane??? What a joke!!! Notice in their little simulation how traffic STILL backs up and how little the center turn lane is being used. I will give them an A for simulating that correctly.
Facebook	12/2/18	Tim Brenden								In needs to be a four lane with a turning lane. Maybe this should have been done before we built 9 zillion apartments on McHugh and Green Meadow.
Facebook	12/2/18	Joe Hula						drhula1@gmail.com		Love how in the 2027 one it even shows people running red lights and cutting off a semi truck but really if they don't push a 4 lane all the way to henderson this is just a waste of money. Call to hotline - simulations don't seem to make the situation better. With the sheer number of vehicles. Starting at 2pm to 6pm, traffic is backed up from Henderson to Montana. Four lane, light on Villard and Custer Avenue. Stuck at Villard and Custer for 30 minutes behind someone attempting to take a left.
Email	12/12/18	Tim						tarhunt@mt.net		I think it's VERY important for Custer Ave to have LEFT HAND TURN ARROWS. It's a bugger trying to turn left from Benton or Sanders or any other street that gives you the option to go left on Custer. I have no idea how to contact anybody to voice opinions about this, but hopefully SOMEONE will make sure left turn signals are install BEFORE WINCO opens.



City of Helena Residents

August 2018



Methodology

Sample

400 live interviews among a representative sample of adults age 18 and older residing in the city of Helena, Montana.

Method

Landline and cell phone interviews conducted August 28-31, 2018.

Sampling Error

Plus or minus 5% at the 95% confidence level.

Demography

Zip Code	
• 59601	46%
• 59602	38%
• 59634	6%
• 59635	10%

Gender	
• Men	49%
• Women	51%

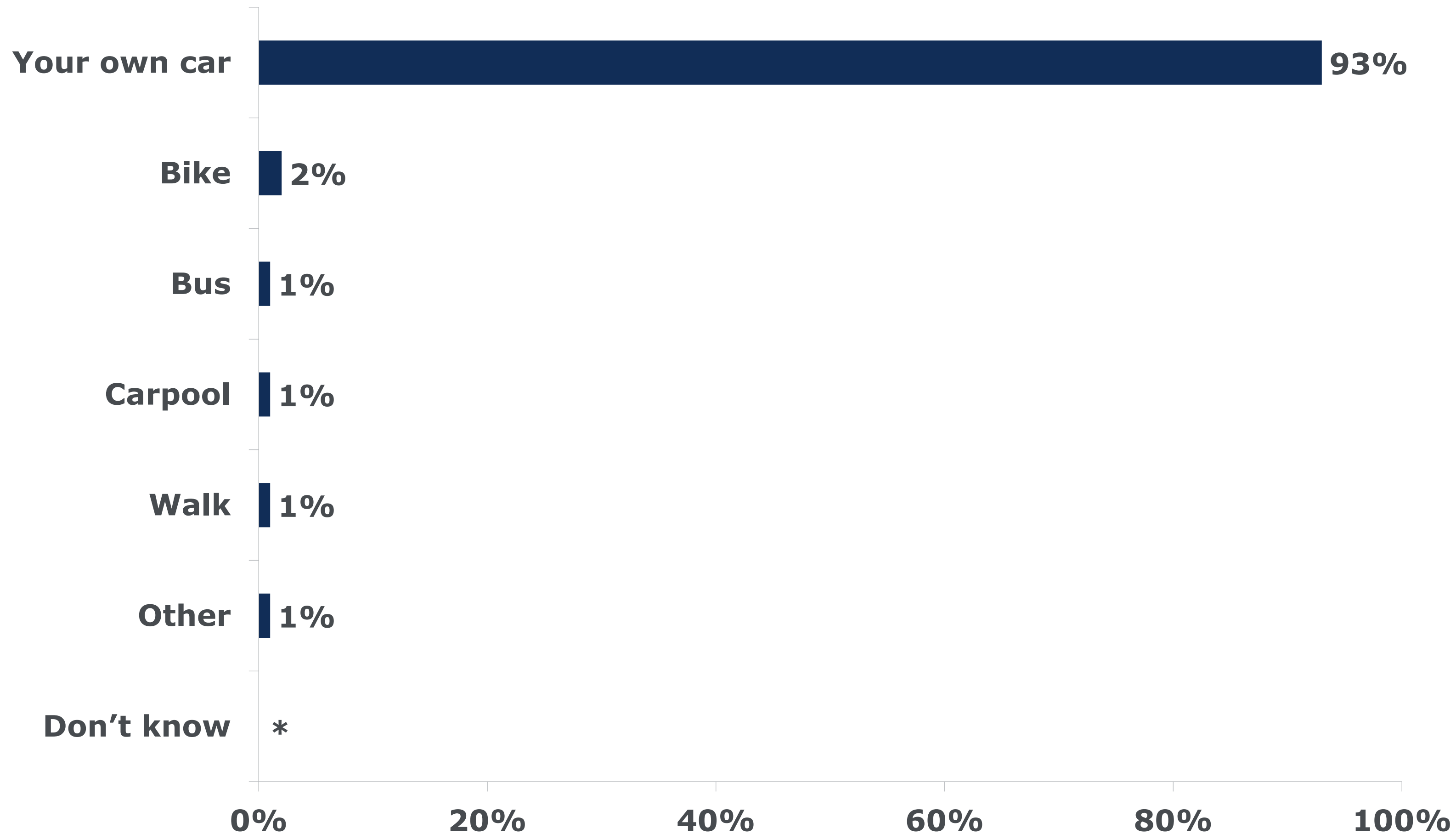
Age	
• 18-34	26%
• 35-54	33%
• 55-64	20%
• 65+	20%

Type of Employment	
• Private sector	33%
• Non-profit	8%
• Govt. employee	20%
• Not emp./retired	35%

Method of Transportation	
• Own car	93%
• Bike	2%
• Bus	1%
• Carpool	1%
• Walk	1%

Resident Mode of Transportation

“When traveling in the City of Helena, what mode of transportation do you use most often?” (Q14)

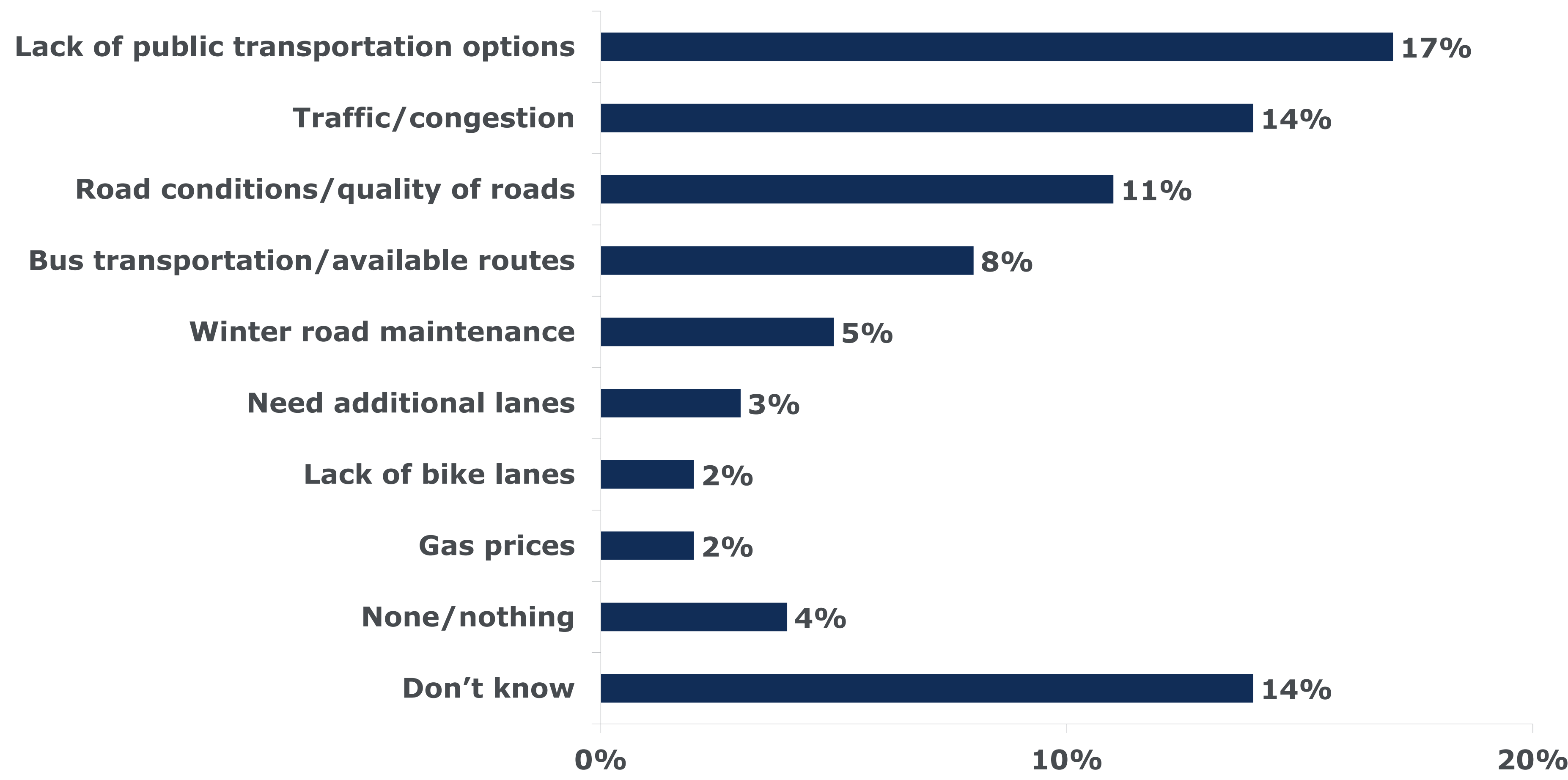


Majorities of residents in all key subgroups use their own car to get around Helena.

*Less than one-half of one percent.

Most Important Transportation-Related Issue in Helena

“What, in your opinion, is the most important transportation-related issue facing people in the City of Helena today?”
(Q1)



Most Important Issue: Key Subgroups (1)

	All residents	Zip Code				Gender		Age			
		59601	59602	59634 (N=25)	59635 (N=39)	Men	Women	18-34	35-54	55-64	65+
Lack of public transportation options	17%	18%	18%	14%	12%	11%	24%	24%	13%	16%	17%
Traffic/congestion	14%	13%	13%	23%	14%	13%	14%	5%	15%	17%	20%
Road conditions/quality of roads (N=43)	11%	11%	13%	5%	4%	12%	9%	17%	9%	11%	7%
Bus transportation/available routes (N=32)	8%	8%	7%	3%	11%	5%	11%	4%	8%	5%	13%

Women place more importance on public transportation options, while seniors regard traffic and congestion as the most important issue.

Most Important Issue: Key Subgroups (2)

	All residents	Employment				How Often Do You Travel on Custer Ave?	
		Pvt. sect. emp.	Non-profit emp. (N=31)	Govt. emp.	Not emp./retired	Once a wk./more	Less often
Lack of public transportation options	17%	16%	29%	21%	15%	18%	14%
Traffic/congestion	14%	10%	10%	9%	21%	14%	14%
Road conditions/quality of roads (N=43)	11%	14%	4%	11%	10%	11%	8%
Bus transportation/available routes (N=32)	8%	5%	--	10%	11%	7%	15%

Unemployed/retired residents place more importance on traffic and congestion.

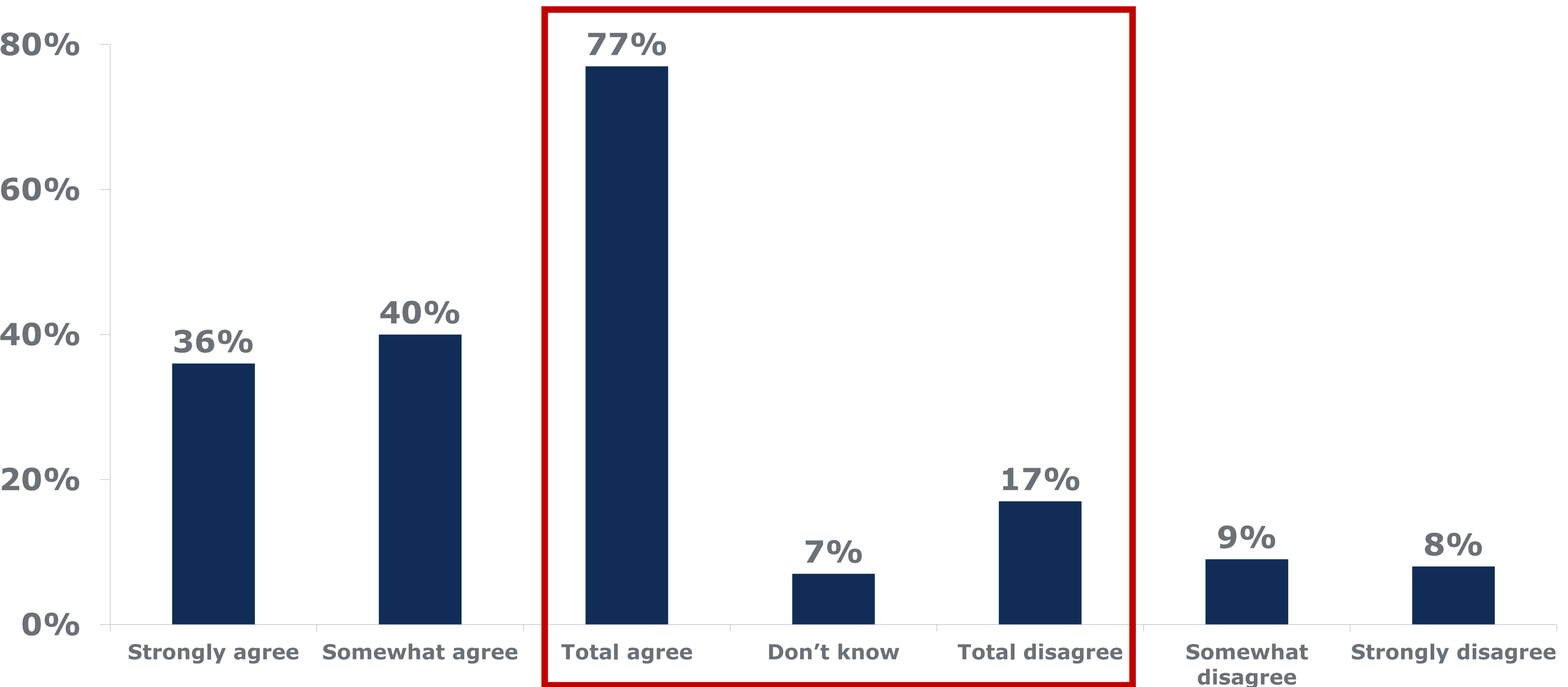


Perceptions of MDT in Helena

MDT Trust Rating

“Please tell me if you agree or disagree with the following statement:

I trust the Montana Department of Transportation to make decisions to provide efficient, safe transportation systems for Helena.” (Q2)



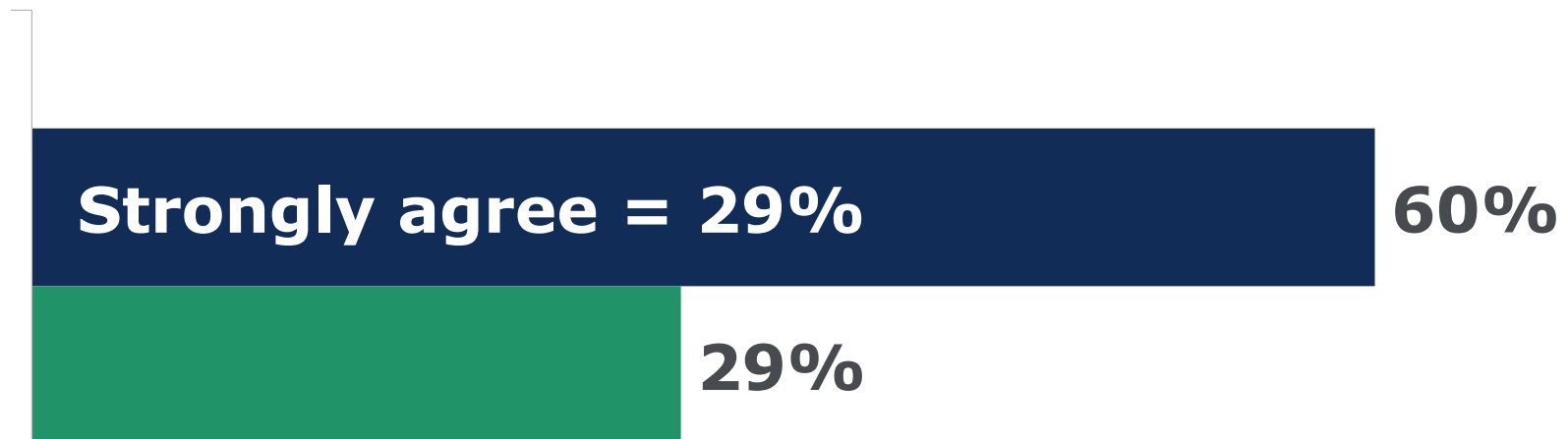
MDT Trust Rating: Key Subgroups

	Agree	Don't know	Disagree	Net agree
All residents	77%	7%	17%	+60%
Zip code				
59601	72%	9%	19%	+53%
59602	81%	5%	14%	+67%
59634 (N=25)	71%	3%	27%	+44%
59635 (N=39)	84%	5%	11%	+73%
Gender				
Men	78%	6%	16%	+62%
Women	75%	7%	17%	+58%
Age				
18-34	85%	4%	12%	+73%
35-54	76%	6%	18%	+58%
55-64	72%	8%	20%	+52%
65+	72%	10%	18%	+54%
Employment				
Private sector employee	78%	5%	17%	+61%
Non-profit (N=31)	70%	9%	22%	+48%
Government employee	77%	7%	16%	+61%
Not employed/retired	75%	8%	17%	+58%
How often do you travel on Custer Avenue?				
Once a week or more	77%	6%	18%	+59%
Less often	76%	12%	12%	+64%

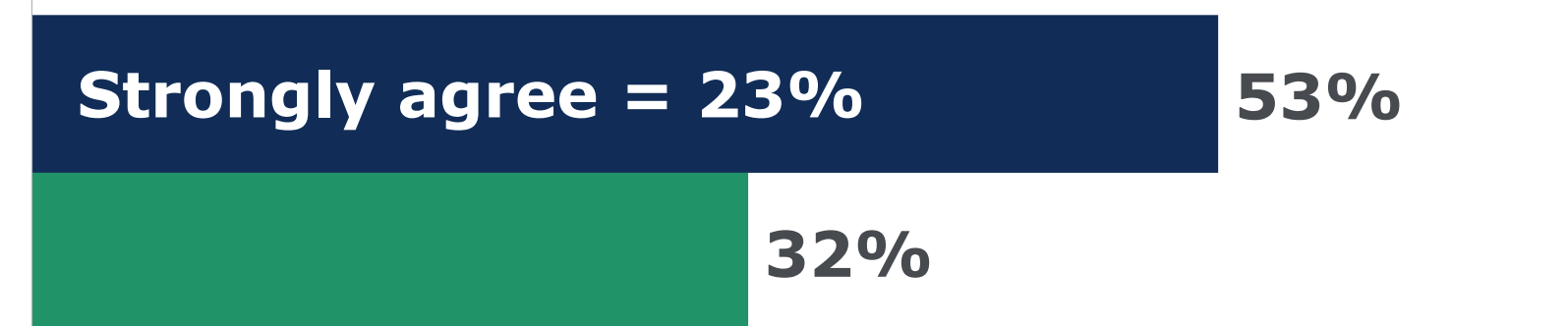
Perceptions of MDT in Helena

“Now I’m going to read you some statements about the Montana Department of Transportation and its involvement with projects in the City of Helena. Please tell me if you agree or disagree with each.”

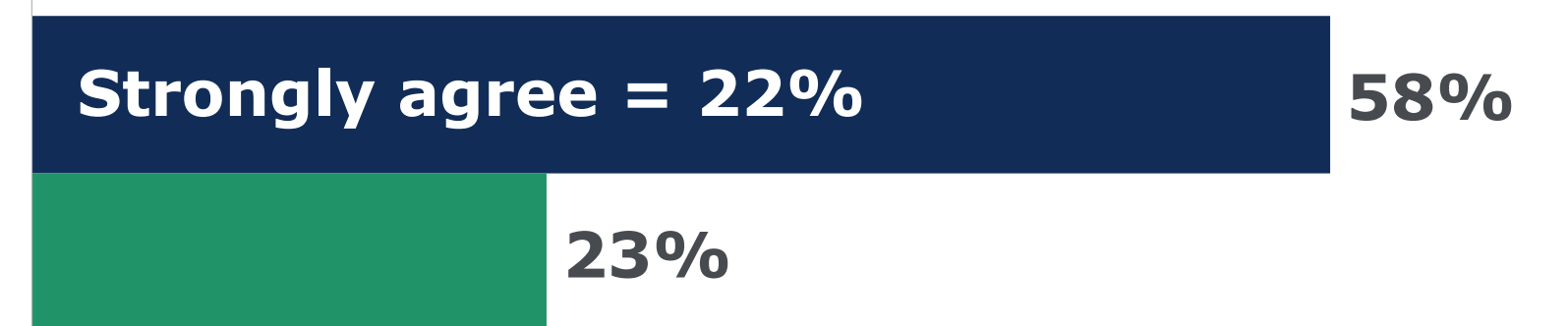
The Montana Department of Transportation does a good job of informing me about where to find answers to questions or concerns about potential Montana Department of Transportation projects (Q5)



The Montana Department of Transportation does a good job of gathering public input on potential projects prior to the development of construction plans and processes (Q3)



The Montana Department of Transportation is responsive to ideas and concerns from the public prior to the development of construction plans and processes (Q4)



0% 20% 40% 60% 80%

■ Agree
■ Disagree

Perceptions of MDT in Helena: Key Subgroups (1)

	All residents	Zip Code				Gender	
		59601	59602	59634 (N=25)	59635 (N=39)	Men	Women
% Strongly agree							
The Montana Department of Transportation does a good job of informing me about where to find answers to questions or concerns about potential Montana Department of Transportation projects (Q5)	29%	29%	34%	18%	21%	34%	25%
The Montana Department of Transportation does a good job of gathering public input on potential projects prior to the development of construction plans and processes (Q3)	23%	24%	25%	6%	22%	26%	20%
The Montana Department of Transportation is responsive to ideas and concerns from the public prior to the development of construction plans and processes (Q4)	22%	21%	22%	12%	29%	26%	17%

Perceptions of MDT in Helena: Key Subgroups (2)

% Strongly agree	All residents	Age			
		18-34	35-54	55-64	65+
The Montana Department of Transportation does a good job of informing me about where to find answers to questions or concerns about potential Montana Department of Transportation projects (Q5)	29%	28%	27%	39%	26%
The Montana Department of Transportation does a good job of gathering public input on potential projects prior to the development of construction plans and processes (Q3)	23%	18%	25%	25%	23%
The Montana Department of Transportation is responsive to ideas and concerns from the public prior to the development of construction plans and processes (Q4)	22%	22%	18%	28%	22%

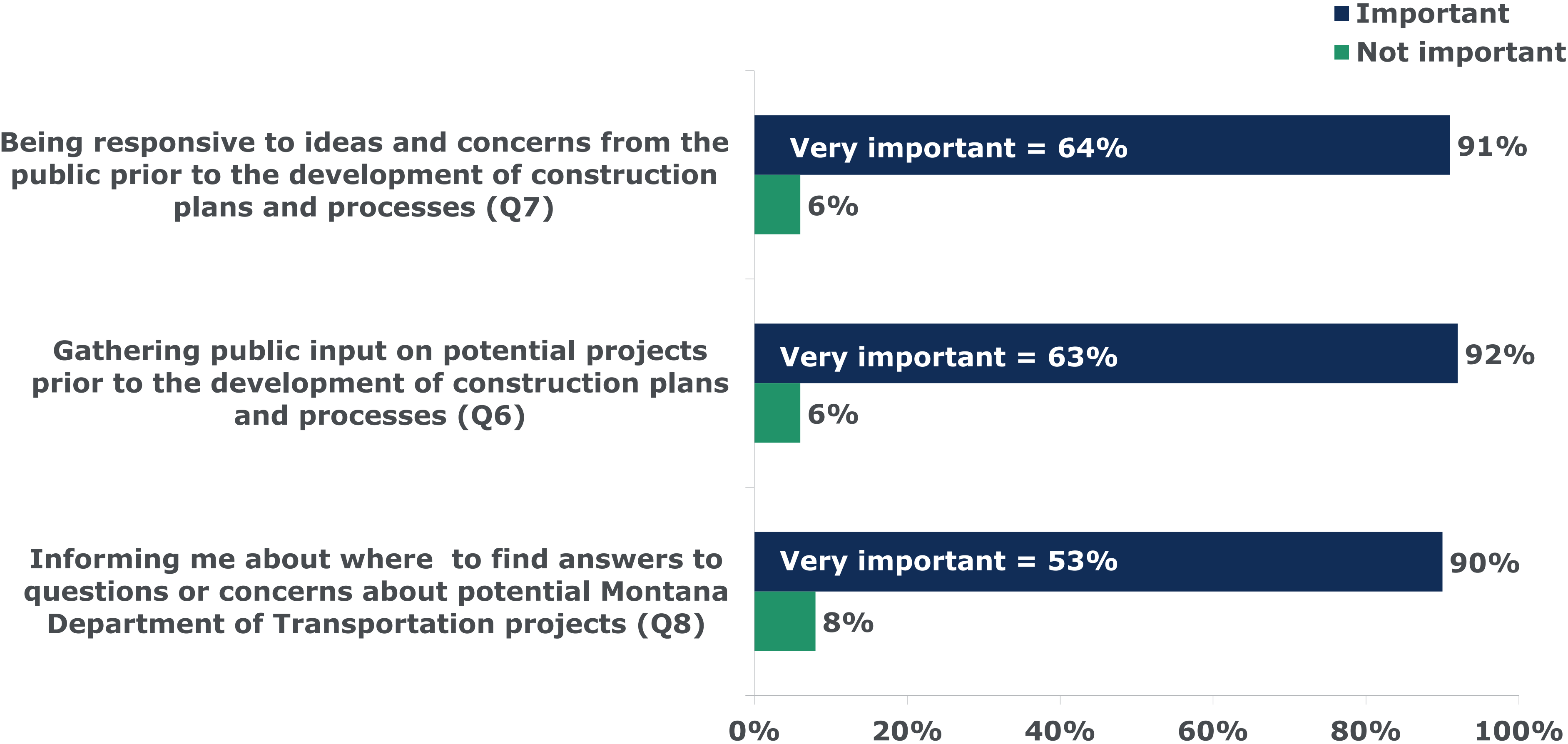
Residents age 55-64 are the most likely to agree that MDT does a good job at informing them about where to find information about potential projects.

Perceptions of MDT in Helena: Key Subgroups (3)

		Employment				How Often Do You Travel on Custer Ave?	
		Pvt. sect. emp.	Non-profit emp. (N=31)	Govt. emp.	Not emp./retired	Once a wk./more	Less often
% Strongly agree	All residents						
The Montana Department of Transportation does a good job of informing me about where to find answers to questions or concerns about potential Montana Department of Transportation projects (Q5)	29%	27%	17%	36%	31%	30%	24%
The Montana Department of Transportation does a good job of gathering public input on potential projects prior to the development of construction plans and processes (Q3)	23%	20%	8%	29%	24%	23%	21%
The Montana Department of Transportation is responsive to ideas and concerns from the public prior to the development of construction plans and processes (Q4)	22%	20%	8%	24%	25%	21%	21%

Importance of MDT Attributes in Helena

“Now please tell me how important it is to you that the Montana Department of Transportation does each of the following, is it very important, fairly important, not very important or not important at all?”



Importance of MDT Attributes: Key Subgroups (1)

% Very important	All residents	Zip Code				Gender	
		59601	59602	59634 (N=25)	59635 (N=39)	Men	Women
Being responsive to ideas and concerns from the public prior to the development of construction plans and processes (Q7)	64%	62%	68%	54%	62%	61%	66%
Gathering public input on potential projects prior to the development of construction plans and processes (Q6)	63%	62%	67%	49%	61%	67%	58%
Informing me about where to find answers to questions or concerns about potential Montana Department of Transportation projects (Q8)	53%	56%	51%	38%	52%	55%	51%

Importance of MDT Attributes: Key Subgroups (2)

% Very important	All residents	Age			
		18-34	35-54	55-64	65+
Being responsive to ideas and concerns from the public prior to the development of construction plans and processes (Q7)	64%	64%	62%	65%	63%
Gathering public input on potential projects prior to the development of construction plans and processes (Q6)	63%	69%	57%	67%	59%
Informing me about where to find answers to questions or concerns about potential Montana Department of Transportation projects (Q8)	53%	53%	53%	60%	45%

Importance of MDT Attributes: Key Subgroups (3)

		Employment				How Often Do You Travel on Custer Ave?	
		Pvt. sect. emp.	Non-profit emp. (N=31)	Govt. emp.	Not emp./retired	Once a wk./more	Less often
% Very important	All residents						
Being responsive to ideas and concerns from the public prior to the development of construction plans and processes (Q7)	64%	62%	64%	68%	63%	64%	62%
Gathering public input on potential projects prior to the development of construction plans and processes (Q6)	63%	64%	38%	71%	60%	63%	56%
Informing me about where to find answers to questions or concerns about potential Montana Department of Transportation projects (Q8)	53%	55%	48%	57%	51%	54%	42%

Transportation Issues: *Agreement vs. Importance*

	Strongly agree	Very important	Net deficit (agreement- importance)
Being responsive to ideas and concerns from the public prior to the development of construction plans and processes (Q4/7)	22%	64%	-42%
Gathering public input on potential projects prior to the development of construction plans and processes (Q3/6)	23%	63%	-40%
Informing me about where to find answers to questions or concerns about potential Montana Department of Transportation projects (Q5/8)	29%	53%	-24%

Being responsive to the public’s ideas and concerns is currently the biggest area of opportunity for MDT, closely followed by gathering public input prior to development of construction plans and processes.

Agreement vs. Importance: Key Subgroups (1)

% Net deficit (agreement-importance)*	All residents	Zip Code				Gender	
		59601	59602	59634 (N=25)	59635 (N=39)	Men	Women
Being responsive to ideas and concerns from the public prior to the development of construction plans and processes (Q4/7)	-42%	-41%	-46%	-42%	-33%	-35%	-49%
Gathering public input on potential projects prior to the development of construction plans and processes (Q3/6)	-40%	-38%	-42%	-43%	-39%	-41%	-38%
Informing me about where to find answers to questions or concerns about potential Montana Department of Transportation projects (Q5/8)	-24%	-27%	-17%	-20%	-31%	-21%	-26%

*Deficits calculated using “strongly agree” and “very important.”

Agreement vs. Importance: Key Subgroups (2)

% Net deficit (agreement-importance)*	All residents	Age			
		18-34	35-54	55-64	65+
Being responsive to ideas and concerns from the public prior to the development of construction plans and processes (Q4/7)	-42%	-42%	-44%	-37%	-41%
Gathering public input on potential projects prior to the development of construction plans and processes (Q3/6)	-40%	-51%	-32%	-42%	-36%
Informing me about where to find answers to questions or concerns about potential Montana Department of Transportation projects (Q5/8)	-24%	-25%	-26%	-21%	-19%

*Deficits calculated using “strongly agree” and “very important.”

Agreement vs. Importance: Key Subgroups (3)

		Employment				How Often Do You Travel on Custer Ave?	
		Pvt. sect. emp.	Non-profit emp. (N=31)	Govt. emp.	Not emp./retired	Once a wk./more	Less often
% Net deficit (agreement-importance)*	All residents						
Being responsive to ideas and concerns from the public prior to the development of construction plans and processes (Q4/7)	-42%	-42%	-56%	-44%	-38%	-43%	-41%
Gathering public input on potential projects prior to the development of construction plans and processes (Q3/6)	-40%	-44%	-30%	-42%	-36%	-40%	-35%
Informing me about where to find answers to questions or concerns about potential Montana Department of Transportation projects (Q5/8)	-24%	-28%	-31%	-21%	-20%	-24%	-18%

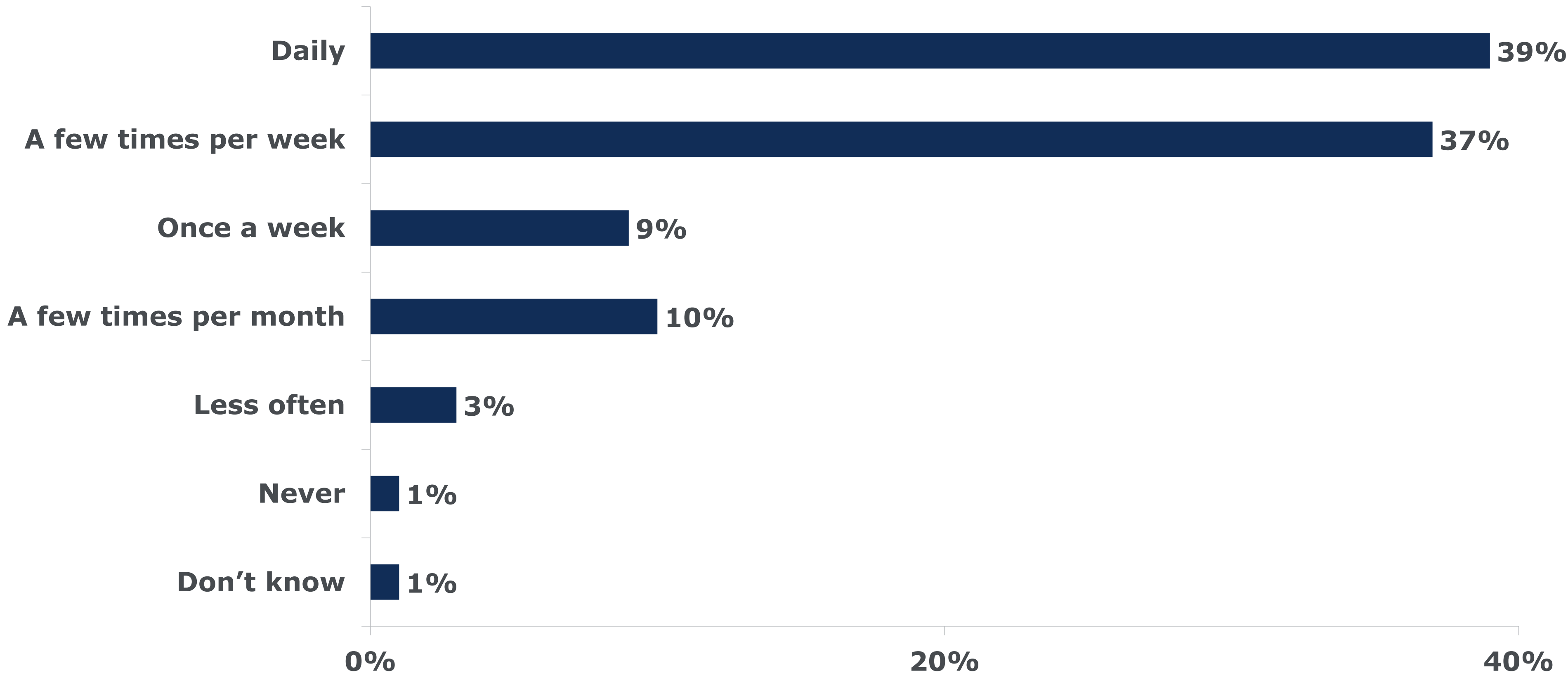
*Deficits calculated using “strongly agree” and “very important.”



Custer Avenue

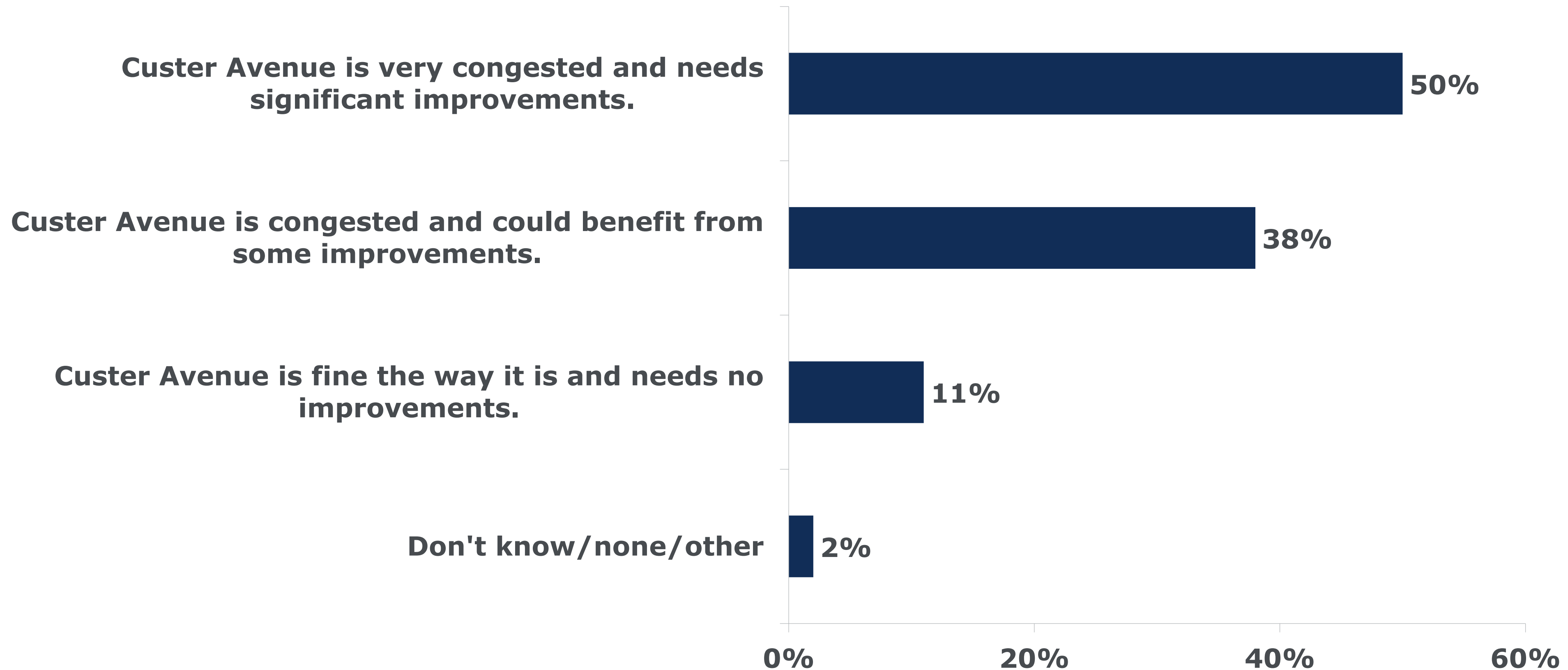
How Often Do You Travel on Custer Avenue?

“Now I want to talk about Custer Avenue, which as you may know, runs East to West in the City of Helena. How often do you travel on Custer Avenue?” (Q10)



Opinion of Custer Avenue

“Which one of the following statements comes closest to your point of view regarding Custer Avenue, even if none are your exact view?” (Q11)



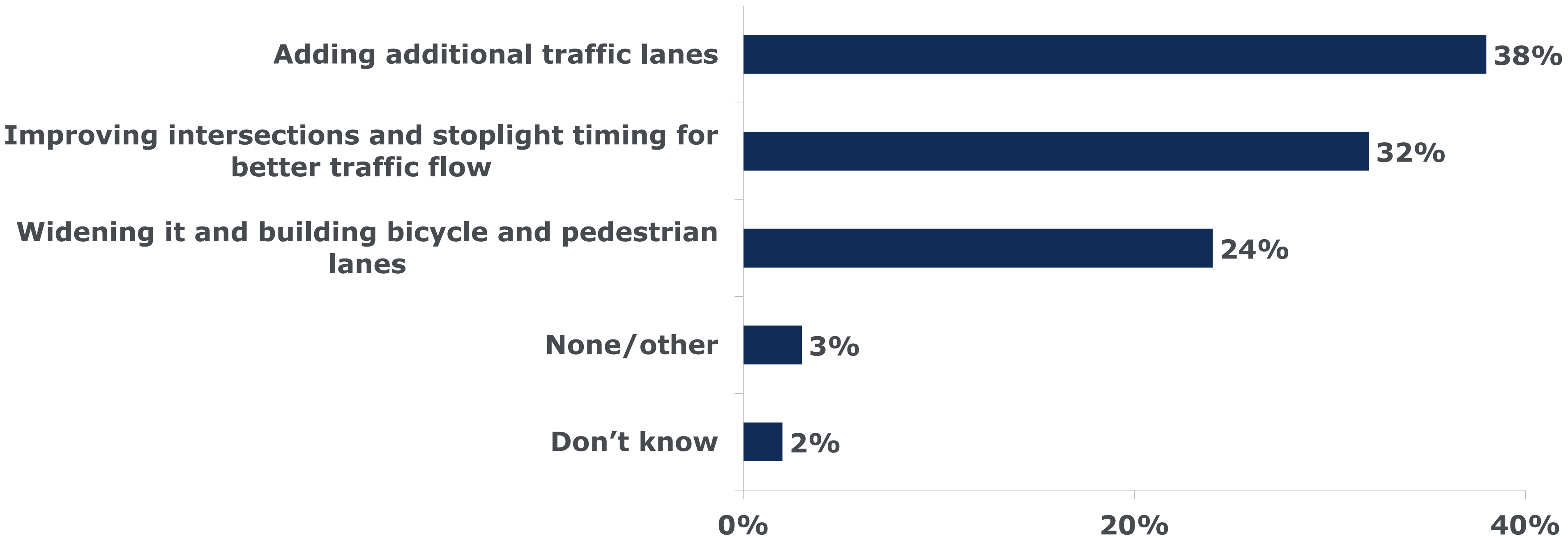
Opinion of Custer Avenue: Key Subgroups

	Custer Avenue is very congested and needs significant improvements	Custer Avenue is congested and could benefit from some improvements	Custer Avenue is fine the way it is and needs no improvements
All residents	50%	38%	11%
Zip code			
59601	38%	42%	18%
59602	59%	34%	6%
59634 (N=25)	78%	22%	--
59635 (N=39)	50%	44%	5%
Gender			
Men	53%	34%	12%
Women	46%	42%	9%
Age			
18-34	44%	45%	12%
35-54	56%	33%	11%
55-64	51%	40%	6%
65+	45%	37%	14%
Employment			
Private sector employee	54%	36%	10%
Non-profit (N=31)	38%	59%	4%
Government employee	52%	39%	8%
Not employed/retired	47%	35%	14%
How often do you travel on Custer Avenue?			
Once a week or more	51%	37%	10%
Less often	39%	43%	15%

Those who travel more often on Custer Avenue are more likely to agree that it is very congested and needs significant improvements.

Top Priority for Reducing Custer Ave. Traffic Congestion

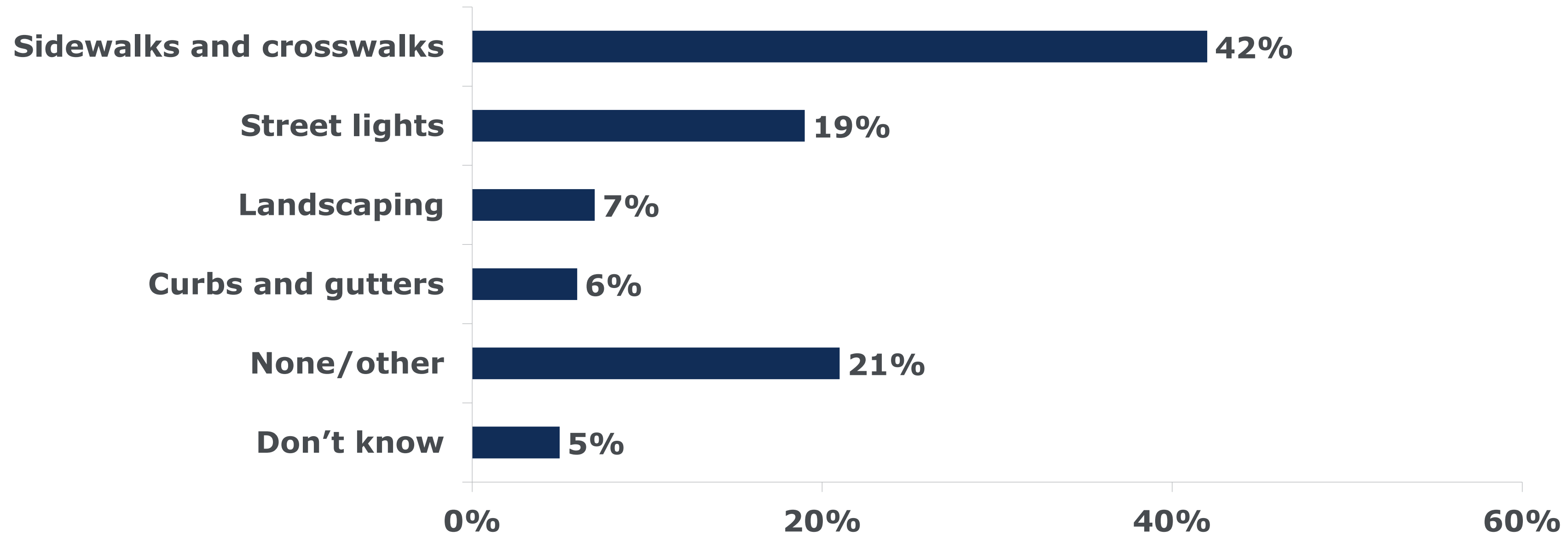
IF Q11=RESPONSE 2 OR 3 (CONGESTED/VERY CONGESTED): "Which one of the following would be your top priority in terms of reducing congestion on Custer Avenue?" (Q11.1, N=350)



	All residents	Custer Avenue is congested and could benefit from some improvements	Custer Avenue is very congested and needs significant improvements
Adding additional traffic lanes	38%	31%	43%
Improving intersections and stoplight timing for better traffic flow	32%	41%	25%
Widening it and building bicycle and pedestrian lanes	24%	22%	26%

Non-Traffic Related Custer Ave. Improvements

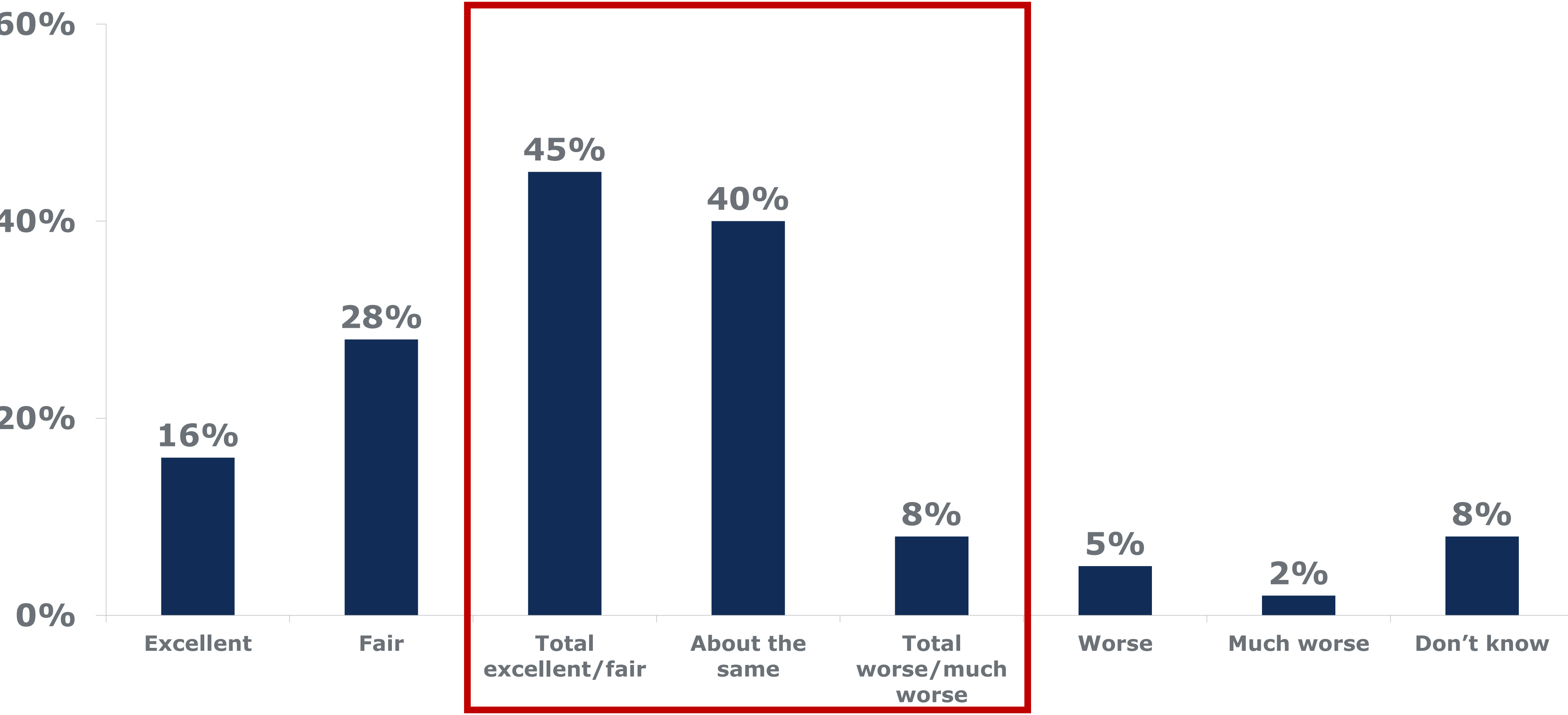
“Besides reducing traffic congestion, what other sort of improvement would you like to see made along Custer Avenue?” (Q12)



	All residents	Custer Avenue is fine the way it is and needs no improvements	Custer Avenue is congested and could benefit from some improvements	Custer Avenue is very congested and needs significant improvements
Sidewalks and crosswalks	42%	46%	51%	34%
Street lights	19%	9%	14%	26%
Landscaping	7%	10%	9%	4%
Curbs and gutters	6%	5%	5%	8%
Don't know/none/other	26%	31%	21%	28%

Rating MDT Public Information Efforts

“How well do you think the Montana Department of Transportation does in communicating with the public compared to other governmental organizations?” (Q9)

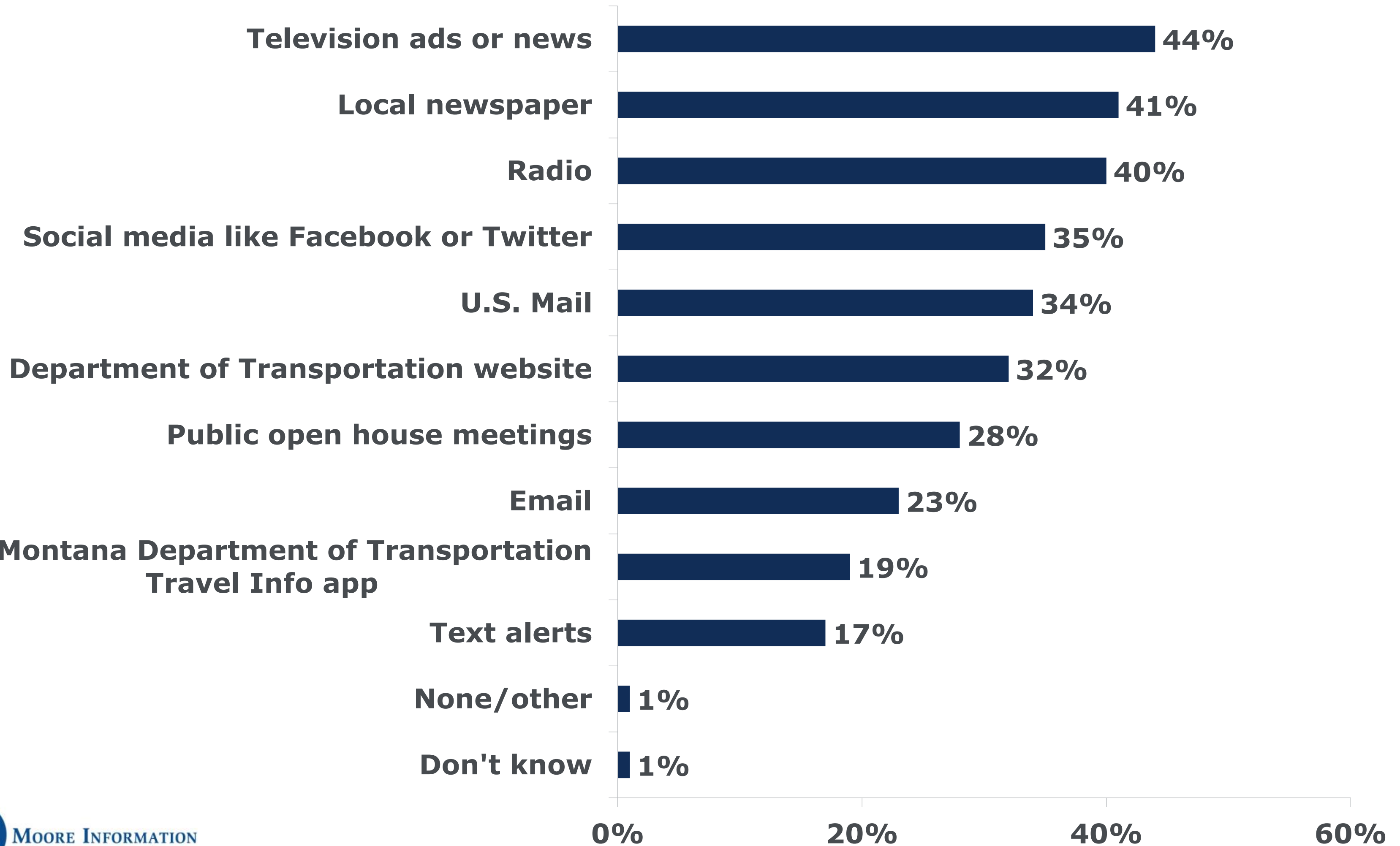


MDT Public Information Efforts: Key Subgroups

	Excellent/fair	About the same	Worse/much worse	Net excellent/fair
All residents	45%	40%	8%	+37%
Zip code				
59601	42%	42%	10%	+32%
59602	49%	37%	5%	+44%
59634 (N=25)	38%	37%	13%	+25%
59635 (N=39)	44%	44%	2%	+42%
Gender				
Men	47%	39%	9%	+38%
Women	42%	40%	6%	+36%
Age				
18-34	40%	40%	13%	+27%
35-54	45%	40%	6%	+39%
55-64	54%	35%	5%	+49%
65+	40%	45%	5%	+35%
Employment				
Private sector employee	45%	38%	7%	+38%
Non-profit (N=31)	37%	50%	13%	+24%
Government employee	47%	34%	8%	+39%
Not employed/retired	49%	38%	5%	+44%
How often do you travel on Custer Avenue?				
Once a week or more	44%	40%	8%	+36%
Less often	49%	37%	5%	+44%

Preferred Method of Communication

“Which one of the following methods of communication would you most prefer the Montana Department of Transportation use to contact you regarding the Custer Avenue project?” (Q13, MULTIPLE RESPONSES ALLOWED)





www.moore-info.com

www.facebook.com/mooreinformation

Erik Iverson

erik@moore-info.com

Missoula, MT

406.544.8310

Bob Moore

bobm@moore-info.com

Portland, OR

503.221.3100

Hans Kaiser

hansk@moore-info.com

Washington, D.C.

410.216.9856

Christina Ragsdale Communications

Strategic Public Relations & Marketing Communications

FOCUS GROUP REPORT

Custer Avenue Study - Helena – September 2018

BACKGROUND & PURPOSE

The Montana Department of Transportation is engaged a process to make improvements to critical roadways and bridge crossings throughout the state of Montana. The purpose of these focus groups was to conduct qualitative interviews with three stakeholder groups and determine their perceptions of potential projects and preferred methods of engagement and communication channels and messengers for the Custer Avenue Study in Helena, Montana.

METHODOLOGY & SAMPLE

Three focus groups were organized for this project to elicit broad responses to gauge awareness and opinions of traffic concerns and potential solutions at the intersection and moving forward with the Custer Avenue Study. The three groups were composed of Residents, Commuters and Businesses in the immediate area. The groups also probed perceptions about the process, effective ways for MDT to engage the community and key preferred communication channels and messengers. Big Sky Public Relations recruited the participants for these three groups.

Efforts were made to maximize diversity within the three groups. Each focus group session lasted one hour and both were held September 13, 2018 at Carroll College in Helena.

INSTRUMENT

As with most focus group research, the questions are broad and open-ended to allow for a variety of viewpoints and unexpected findings. Questions focused on pre-existing opinions about traffic issues in the study area; discussion of possible improvements/solutions; cost and safety factors, and preferred channels and messengers for communication and engagement efforts. The Resident and Commuter groups were asked the same set of questions. The Business group was asked all the same questions with the addition of two questions specifically addressing the needs/concerns of business.

Questions followed an introduction and ground rules (e.g. no “wrong” answers; everyone’s opinion is important – this is not a debate/discussion, everyone will have a chance to offer their thoughts, etc.).

RESIDENTS & COMMUTERS (TWO SEPARATE GROUPS)

Part 1 – Current Awareness & Opinions about Traffic on Custer Avenue & MDT, Safety Values

- 1) When you think of this stretch of Custer Avenue, what is the one biggest traffic concern that comes to mind? Are your concerns more related to drivers, cyclists, pedestrians, school-children, seniors or all?
- 2) What are your current impressions of the Montana Department of Transportation? Has your impression been shaped by anything specific? If so, what?
- 3) MDT is considering improvements to this thoroughfare. What do you think would improve it, and why?
- 4) How would you prioritize your concerns in making this decision, e.g. safety, cost, other?

Part 2 – Participation, Outreach & Information Needs & Preferences

- 1) How would you like to participate in this process as it proceeds? What opportunities would you like for input and at what stages? (online, email, mail, “charrettes”, public workshops, other?) In other words: What will get your attention? What kinds of activities would you attend?
- 2) What do you most want to know as the project proceeds? What kind of information do you feel is most important to equip you to provide informed input to MDT?
- 3) How do you get most of your news and information? (Don’t prompt, but if necessary offer: print newspaper/social media/local officials/neighbors & word-of-mouth/TV/Radio/Online, signage/low power radio, etc.)
- 4) As the planning process progresses, how frequently would you expect MDT to provide updates in order for you to feel well-informed? (Don’t prompt but options - monthly, quarterly, yearly)
- 5) Who are your most credible messengers for this kind of information? Whom do you trust?

Thank you for participating tonight! Your thoughts will help MDT make better decisions for your community!

BUSINESSES ALONG/ADJACENT TO CUSTER AVENUE

Same set of questions as above, but adding (in Part 1, question 2):

- 1) What changes/improvements do you think would be helpful to your employees and/or customers?
- 2) As a business on this corridor, describe any potential challenges you anticipate could come with improvements. What about benefits to businesses that could come with improvements?

RESPONSES FROM EACH GROUP

“RESIDENTS” Group

This group consisted of three men and four women ranging in age from 32 to 66.

PART ONE

Question #1 (Biggest traffic concern)

- CONGESTION (consensus)
- Difficult to enter Custer from businesses, schools, side streets (consensus)
- Certain times – especially during school hours – they avoid Custer entirely
- Safety is a major concern. Not comfortable with child riding bike on Custer
- Rear-end accidents
- Bike vs car accidents
- Path doesn't protect cyclists enough from traffic
- Cyclist appreciates dedicated path, but it could be improved
- All prefer a dedicated bike path that is improved and wider

Question #2 (Impressions of MDT)

- The City blames MDT for construction-related traffic issues. There seems to be a disconnect between the two
- Communication between City and MDT needs improvement
- Favorable opinion of MDT
- Focus on long term planning
- Poor planning – should have been four-lane earlier
- City should have input, be proactive
- Concerns about how traffic from new businesses underway will be accommodated
- New residential developments north of Custer will compound issues
- City needs to pay more attention to affects of increased development on current infrastructure

Question #3 (Ideas & Preferences for solutions)

- Widen to five lanes
- Improve traffic light coordination w/smart lights
- Not sure if center turn lane is necessary for entire length
- Concerned about kids crossing, kids don't have enough time to cross
- Right turn drivers don't watch for pedestrians, turn on red
- Change traffic light times during school crossing times to allow more time
- Need significantly longer pedestrian crossing times
- All traffic should stop for pedestrians
- Need better enforcement, officer on-site could help during peaks

- Sync lights
- Pedestrian bridge or tunnel
- Dangerous high school and elementary school in small area
- Like the curb at Euclid/Last Chance Gulch intersection
- Concerns about bad driver behavior

Question #4 (Prioritizing safety, cost, other?)

- Safety is #1 – especially children’s safety
- Congestion is more of an issue than speeding
- If pedestrians are separated, not opposed to higher speeds, but not safe currently
- Flashing signs could also be helpful
- Smart lights can help control speed
- Blinking speed limit signs

PART TWO

Question #1 (How would you like to participate in this process going forward?)

- Small group, in person meetings w/MDT staff. Two-way communication is helpful
- Prefer online/email communications and a website
- City planners should be involved
- Want the City and County to be involved, informed
- Want data available at meetings, e.g. current and future residents and traffic numbers
- Want MDT to be aware of City developments and on the same page
- Consider mailed surveys to gather more public opinions

Question #2 (What do you consider critical information? How do you think MDT makes decisions at key points?)

- Email updates; not too frequent, that direct to website
- More notifications
- Mailings, door-hangers
- Signs on Custer

Question #3 (How do you get most of your news & Information?)

- Newspaper online
- Word of mouth, co-workers
- Some TV news
- Newspaper, a little
- Social media, Facebook for some
- Business, school newsletter

- Costco, Super 1, Lowe's and Home Depot can share information
- HOAs

Question #4 (Frequency of updates, etc.)

- During planning; quarterly
- Closer to construction; monthly communication
- Once construction begins; more frequent and when changes happen
- A minimum of two weeks notice for anything

Question #5 (Who are your most credible messengers for this kind of information?)

- MDT staff, Project Manager
- Honest communication is important
- Neighbors

OTHER COMMENTS:

- Plan ahead and work closely with schools
- Noise is a big issue
- Lighting closer to residential areas could disturb residents. This should be considered

“COMMUTERS” Group

This group consisted of three men and five women ranging in age from 24 to 58.

PART ONE

Question #1 (Biggest traffic concern)

- Participants mentioned that they avoid Custer whenever possible due to congestion
- Very difficult to turn left onto Custer from Villard
- Due to congestion it's difficult to enter Custer, even when turning right
- Huge problem of people cutting through neighborhoods
- It's dangerous – frequent accidents
- It's a nightmare when kids cross
- Turn signals are good for cars, not for pedestrians
- Lots of cutting through gravel pit to avoid Custer
- Need a thoroughfare from McHugh to Cooney
- Businesses and apartments are putting up fences/gates because of traffic crossing through
- Already bad, additional building will make things worse

- Custer is too narrow
- More sidewalks, bike paths and safer pedestrian options are needed
- Sometimes lights are timed well, but back-up is an issue and needs improvement
- No more lights like Sanders & Washington – right turn immediately trips it
- Consider a traffic light at Fairgrounds
- Improve afternoon timing at McHugh
- Some intersections back up all the way to the freeway

Question #2 (Impressions of MDT)

- Engineering staff is good, but hands seem to be tied on how quickly they can work and what they can do
- It takes a LONG time to get designs and construction done
- Custer has been revised at least two times, as recently as five years ago and it's still not fixed
- Not getting far enough ahead of growth
- Don't like roundabouts
- Some drivers go faster in roundabouts
- \$15 million for a roundabout?
- MDT should be more forward-thinking; use other projects as a model
- More long-term focus, act faster
- Do they coordinate/talk to City of Helena road department?

Question #3 (Ideas & Preferences for solutions)

- There is a critical need for alternate routes to Custer (strongly held by entire group)
- Need four lanes from Montana to Fairground; or five-lane (two lanes each way with center lane)
- Montana/Costco intersection is problematic
- Green Meadow to McHugh needs connection route
- If Barrey & Wolfe was a thru road, that would help since many people live there
- Improve pedestrian access across Custer – dangerous for kids walking or biking to school (strongly held by entire group)
- Consider alternate school pick-up arrangement
- Noise mitigation (natural or structure) is needed, but no trees in median
- Large trucks could mean more noise
- Concern about truck traffic and semis using Custer as a cut-through

Question #4 (Prioritizing safety, cost, other?)

- Consensus that Safety should be the #1 priority
- Increased capacity

- Montana to Fairgrounds has the worst congestions – prioritize
- McHugh intersection is a big bottleneck – (strong consensus on this)
- Villard is also a problem
- Take into account continued growth – think 20 years in the future (strong consensus)
- Law enforcement stopping or slowing traffic near school is a problem

PART TWO

Question #1 (How would you like to participate in this process going forward?)

- Early public comment periods BEFORE decisions are made
- Want to be sure MDT is reading emails from stakeholders
- Email no more often than once a month, or a few times a year
- Contact up to once a month OK when things are happening
- Want more updates closer to construction and before they reach 50 percent design
- Give warning when last chance for comments is near (consensus on this)
- Charettes would be helpful
- Meetings should be in the neighborhood – Four Georgians is a suggested site
- Make sure Four Georgian parents are aware of comment opportunities
- Two weeks is sufficient notice for meetings
- Web and Facebook is a useful tool (consensus on this)
- Like the idea of text updates
- Alternate routes should be established before construction (consensus on this)
- Completely shut down only a portion of Custer to speed up construction.

Question #2 (What do you consider critical information? How do you think MDT makes decisions at key points?)

- Traffic impacts
- All closures
- Provide text updates
- Estimated completion date
- Timeline including phases
- Consider safety of pedestrians, school during construction
- Sidewalks on the North side

Question #3 (How do you get most of your news & Information?)

- Text, social media, email
- Newspaper – over half read the paper either hard copy or online

- Cherry Creek radio
- KUFM
- 1-2 might use specialized radio updates

Question #4 (Frequency of updates, etc.)

- The earlier the better
- Varied frequency – more frequently closer to decisions

Question #5 (Who are your most credible messengers for this kind of information?)

- Project Manager
- School Principal
- Business Owners
- Neighborhood Council
- Breweries & Bulletin Boards
- MDT website
- Other channels for people who don't use Facebook
- Include information directing people to website
- Fliers
- Target the Sunhaven area
- Direct mail to specific neighborhoods

OTHER COMMENTS:

- One participant actually brought a page of written comments. They have been incorporated into the Report and the original supplied to Big Sky Public Relations.

“BUSINESS” Group

This group consisted of eight men and two women ranging in age from 41 to 67.

PART ONE

Question #1 (Biggest traffic concern)

- At 3:15 on school days there are major impacts with children trying to cross Custer. It is very unsafe.
- Between Montana and Villard there is no crosswalk.
- West out of Murdoch's is a concern
- Congestion and rear-end accidents are frequent
- The speed limit changes are problematic. Consistent speed limit would be better

Question #2 (Impressions of MDT)

- The Four Georgians participant remembered a “Mr. Snyder” from MDT (he thought was the Project Manager) attending a parent meeting some time back. This was appreciated because it got them out in front of the project with the public.

Question #3 (Ideas & Preferences for solutions)

- More lanes
- A middle turn lane
- Side feeder streets are backed-up. Needs solution.
- Possible additional turn lanes
- Direct traffic to intersections to improve access from side streets
- Fairground entrance/exits an issue. The Merge land yield/stop sign confusing
- Valley Drive/Cap High/Custer light doesn't change often enough. Another turn lane would help.
- Vet Practice needs help w/entrance & exit
- AAA – turning left from Villard to Custer is difficult. Drivers route through residential areas
- Drivers go through neighborhoods to avoid traffic
- FWP – entrance/exit issues

Question #4 (Prioritizing safety, cost, other?)

- Cost is a concern, but don't “under-develop”. This should be a 20-year solution
- High concern that a solution protect students and other pedestrians
- Safety is a priority, particularly because this area is very popular with pedestrians and cyclists

PART TWO

Question #1 (How would you like to participate in this process going forward?)

- MDT should clearly communicate purpose of meetings
- Multiple types of communication should be used (email updates, meetings, etc.)
- Prefer meetings to computer; more feedback
- Timeframe of project is important to know for planning
- Meeting notices should include project options, a way to email feedback if can't attend

Question #2 (What do you consider critical information? How do you think MDT makes decisions at key points?)

- How traffic will affect businesses during construction
- Want information on upcoming projects in the area (not only Custer)
- What are the property easements required for each option moving forward

- Church has concerns about their residence that is close to Custer (probably in easement)

Question #3 (How do you get most of your news & Information?)

- The entire group preferred email notifications with a link to a project website
- The entire group felt a project website would be very helpful
- Video animations of how traffic would flow in different options would be helpful
- All said they would be willing to share information with their customers/members at office/front desk/public notice areas

Question #4 (Frequency of updates, etc.)

- Whenever significant updates are needed (new options, timeline changes, etc.)
- Decision points
- Want study findings available and information on options
- Want 2-4 weeks of notice for meetings via website/Facebook/email, etc.
- Lukewarm on social media ads
- Radio & TV not particularly helpful

Question #5 (Who are your most credible messengers for this kind of information?)

- Prefer a consistent source of information – one person – Project Manager?
- Someone who can convey the message in an accessible way, easy to pass on to others

PART THREE (BUSINESS-SPECIFIC QUESTIONS)

Question #1 (What changes/improvements would be helpful to employees/customers?)

- Church & School – Trees and other noise and visual buffers and traffic calming elements would be helpful for both classrooms and playground
- Near Sunhaven the residents only have one access to Custer. Need other options
- Maintain good access for pedestrians
- Vet needs change in access related to large truck deliveries, horse trailers
- Need flexibility in times of day to accommodate large trucks
- Improve the streets that intersect with Custer at the same time
- Maintain walking neighborhood and pedestrian options. Many in the neighborhood don't have cars and walk to businesses

Question #2 (Challenges you anticipate with improvements? Benefits?)

- Increased business – traffic won't deter customers
- Have construction begin after 8 or 9 am after commute is over
- Avoid construction last week of July (Fair traffic). Suspend work for this time.

- Euclid to Middle; only East/West road – Alternate routes are important
- Signage will be required if entries are affected – especially for schools
- Future discussion should include specific signage needs

OTHER COMMENTS:

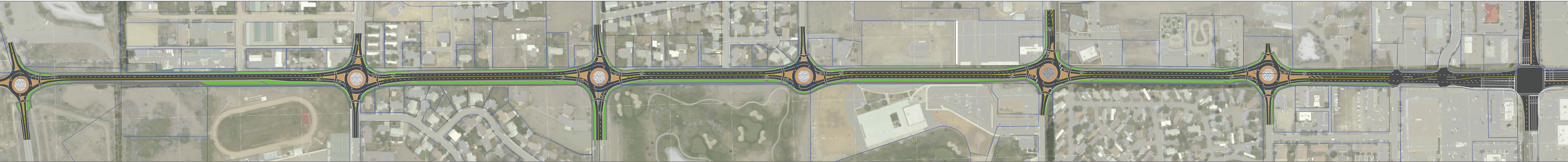
- Consider Euclid/Henderson improvements (4-lane to 2-lane bottleneck)
- Split project into two sections
- Do construction at night only or work 24 hours to complete in shorter time frame

OVERALL RESULTS & RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) None of the groups felt there was a workable detour unless construction was first done to create an alternate route. There was strong feeling that the work would likely be so disruptive that an alternate route would be needed for through traffic (not local) during construction on Custer.
- 2) Surprisingly, businesses did not express much concern about large trucks delivering during construction. They, and others (church, school, etc.) felt that significant changes would need to be made to entrances, exits, and buildings in order to widen the street. It's possible that there was not a lot of comment about this because there was no concept or alternative to react to.
- 3) There are major concerns about impacts related to widening the road and ensuring that there are safe facilities for pedestrians and cyclists. Also there are concerns about visual and noise buffers for schools and residents, both during construction and in the final project.

Christina Ragsdale Communications
crcommunications@sbcglobal.net
916.320.1177

Concept with Roundabouts*



Existing Conditions



Concept with Signals*



* For Conceptual Purposes Only