



Vermont Clean Communities Transportation Needs Assessment Report

Community-Driven Transportation Plans for the Northeast

Phase I Outreach Summary

The Vermont Clean Communities (VTCC) team conducted two listening sessions - one with the Association of Africans Living in Vermont (AALV) on July 15th, 2024, with 17 participants, and the second with the Janet S. Munt Family Room, a parent-child center in Burlington, VT on November 6th, 2024, with 10 participants. Following our initial engagement with AALV, we also organized a ride-and-drive event for twenty attendees to provide hands-on experience with alternative fuel vehicles (AFVs) on September 24th, 2024.

In addition to these events, we conducted surveys at several locations in the Champlain Valley (Map 1 and Map 2) to gather broader community input. These included:

- The University of Vermont (UVM) Employee Wellness Fair on August 20th, 2024.
- The Rally Cat Cupboard, an on-campus food shelf serving students, staff, and faculty on September 19th, and September 23rd, 2024.
- The Ethan Allen Homestead, during an Energy Clinic hosted by Burlington Electric Department on August 1st, 2024.
- Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity (CVOEO)
 - Feeding Champlain Valley in Burlington on January 29th.
 - Feeding Champlain Valley in Burlington on March 5th, 2025.
 - Northwest Family Foods in St. Albans on February 28th, 2025.
 - Middlebury Food Shelf in Middlebury on March 11th, 2025.

Through these combined efforts, we engaged approximately 237 community members through surveys, 27 through listening sessions, and 20 at a Ride-and-Drive event, collecting valuable insights on transportation needs, barriers, and opportunities. The survey results and listening sessions will help inform us of the next steps in our project. The results of these efforts are highlighted in the “High Priority Action Items” section below and backed up with responses from our surveys.

During listening sessions VTCC worked with our stakeholders and partner organizations to ensure all community voices were heard and participants were able to share their transportation concerns.

High Priority Action Items

Several key priorities emerged from community feedback. These action items highlight the most pressing transportation needs, support the transition to electrified transportation systems and offer long-term scalable community solutions:

1. Improved Transit Efficiency with a Pathway towards Electrification

Community members consistently expressed the need for a more reliable and efficient public transportation system. This action item combines community-identified needs for improved transit service and funding stability with a forward-looking approach to alternative fuel vehicles:

- Draw from successful models in small cities with universities to identify effective strategies for improving public transit and including alternative-fuels.
- Explore opportunities for public-private partnerships that could support long-term transit planning, service expansion, and vehicle transitions.
- Identify potential funding sources for future implementation, including those that support clean fleet investments, workforce development, and planning activities.
- Address workforce development needs, including drivers and vehicle technicians, to support a future transition to alternative fuel vehicles.
- Begin to assess opportunities for community mobility enhancements, such as bike-to-transit connections, e-bike access or enhancing car sharing that could complement electrified transit.

2. Education about Alternative Fuel Vehicles (AFVs) and Consumer Support Hub

There is a clear need for more education and engagement around AFVs, including their affordability, incentives, and overall cost savings over time. Many individuals, especially those who recently arrived in Vermont, expressed uncertainty about AFV pricing, charging infrastructure, and maintenance costs. This action item draws from insights gathered during the Ride and Drive event and aims to reduce informational and financial barriers through clear and targeted planning with support from Vermont Clean Communities in collaboration with local and state partners.

- Outline a pathway to AFV ownership that addresses topics such as upfront and lifetime costs, new vs. used AFV options, charging basics, and available incentives.
- Identify educational materials needed to support community understanding, such as AFV 101 graphics, fact sheets, and FAQs, with attention to providing materials in multilingual formats.
- Identify strategies to make Ride and Drive events more welcoming and accessible, with a focus on clear communication and ease of participation.

- Identify outreach needs that may affect AFV awareness, such as housing type, language access, and access to information.

3. Workforce Development for AFV and Transit Transition

Support training and certification pathways for maintenance technicians and transit drivers.

- Assess and address CDL driver shortages identified during stakeholder engagement and conversations with providers like Green Mountain Transit (GMT).
- Coordinate with technical colleges, secondary education and training centers, community organizations, and transportation agencies.
- Integrate AFV topics into driver's education and fleet training programs.

Survey Results

We conducted two surveys to gather community input on transportation and mobility needs. The first survey was conducted at the UVM Employee Wellness Fair, Rally Cat Cupboard, and the Energy Clinic hosted by Burlington Electric Department. This survey asked comprehensive questions about transportation habits, barriers, and potential solutions. For survey questions and results, see Appendix 1. The second survey was a condensed version of the first and was distributed to participants at the Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity (CVOEO) event to ensure ease of participation. For survey questions and results, see Appendix 2. The summary of the results from both surveys is outlined below.

Demographics:

Most respondents are from Burlington, VT.

- Gender: 45% male, 50% female, 4% other, and 1% preferred not to respond.
- Race/Ethnicity: 56% White, 20% Asian, 14% Black or Native American, 1% Alaskan Native, 7% other, and 4% preferred not to respond.

Current Transportation Options (multiple choices allowed):

- 81% Walking
- 78% Public transit
- 51% Biking
- 51% Personal gas car
- 20% E-biking
- 5% Electric car

What transportation options respondents use most:

- 88% Public transit
- 84% Walking
- 54% Gas car
- 53% Biking
- 35% Carshare
- 33% E-biking
- 14% Electric car

Where respondents most often need to travel:

- 82% Grocery stores
- 69% Schools
- 64% Work
- 50% Shops/restaurants
- 46% Recreational/social sites
- 25% Healthcare facilities

What respondents access charitable food:

- 52% use a food pantry
- 21% use a food shelf
- 9% use a food bank
- 5% use a community kitchen
- 2% receive meals from a meal site
- 2% receive meals from a faith-based organization

How can food access be made more convenient:

- 45% Food pickup at a central location
- 42% Locations near public transit
- 32% Ability to pre-order food
- 27% Reliable transportation
- 25% Culturally relevant food options
- 25% Locations near existing grocery stores
- 18% Expanded hours for charitable food locations

Transportation Costs & Influence:

- 56% said transportation is not a significant cost for their family, while 44% said it is.
- When asked how transportation costs and access influence their decisions:
 - 65 respondents said they were strongly influenced, 31 said they were slightly influenced, and 12 said they were not influenced.

- Regarding workplace decisions: 65 said strongly influenced, 32 said slightly influenced, and 11 said not influenced.
- Regarding travel destinations: 72 said strongly influenced, 28 said slightly influenced, and 8 said not influenced.

Preferred Transportation Improvements:

When asked what changes they would like to see in transportation options:

- 67% want faster options
- 50% want safer options
- 47% want cheaper options
- 40% want alternatives that do not require a personal vehicle
- 30% want more electric options
- 54% Better sidewalks
- 47% More frequent bus service
- 46% Safer crosswalks
- 41% Better street lighting
- 38% More bike lanes
- 34% Better sidewalk snow removal
- 32% More parking
- 28% Access to a personal bike
- 22% Access to a gas car
- 22% Free or reduced-cost bus pass
- 21% Access to an electric car
- 21% Better bike lane snow removal
- 15% Slower car traffic
- 12% Access to a carshare system
- 12% Having a valid driver's license
- 8% A connection for a vanpool or shared ride
- 4% Other

Barriers to AFV Adoption:

- 75% said AFVs are too expensive
- 34% cited a lack of charging options
- 26% were concerned about battery safety
- 14% did not know how to use an AFV

How Respondents Get Transportation Information:

- 61% Use public transit apps
- 50% Use public transit websites

- 39% Rely on friends and family

Key Takeaways from Community Engagement

Most of the survey responses we collected indicate that respondents are highly transit dependent, making investment in public transportation our highest priority action item. While interest in AFVs was present, most community members reported limited knowledge about AFVs and concerns about cost, charging access, and maintenance. Over 50% of respondents indicated that they use a bike and 33% use an e-bike to access goods and services. For those who bike, an entry to electrification could begin with an e-bike. This would include sharing information about utility and state rebates, when applicable, charging information, bike safety and security.

Supporting and strengthening the public transportation system requires a multifaceted approach, including investing in cleaner technologies such as renewable diesel, and alternative fuel buses. Additionally, expanding workforce development is essential, including training more technicians to maintain these vehicles, recruiting and training drivers for the buses, and ensuring adequate customer service staff to support operations. Securing sustainable funding sources is also critical to maintaining and expanding transit services. Overall, prioritizing domestically supported fuels and reinforcing the public transportation system will create a more resilient and sustainable transportation network for the Champlain Valley.

Another priority is to expand education about AFs to a broader community. This could include working with drivers' education programs to offer information and instruction on alternative fuel vehicles and working with driving schools to secure funding to purchase AFVs for learner instruction.

Through this process, our team found that the listening sessions were a far more effective method of gathering meaningful information than surveys. The listening sessions allowed us to better manage crowd size, engage in deeper conversations that provided richer insights, and get a better understanding of transportation needs. In contrast, the surveys often resulted in a chaotic "feeding frenzy" once word spread that we were administering them and providing gift cards. Many participants lacked phones or phone plans capable of completing the survey, while others needed significant assistance due to limited computer skills, literacy challenges, or cognitive impairments related to substance use disorders. Staff frequently had to guide participants through the survey step by step, diverting attention from broader engagement. Additionally, we had to dedicate one staff member solely to activating gift cards, as the process proved too confusing for many participants to navigate independently. The lack of access to technology meant staff had to loan out work computers or rely on their personal cell phones to accommodate the long lines of people

waiting to take the survey or activate their gift cards. These challenges underscored the importance of in-person engagement strategies that are accessible, controlled, and allow for more meaningful dialogue.

Solutions Identified

The outreach conducted during Phase I revealed several clear areas where planning efforts can support Vermont's long-term transportation electrification goals.

Securing Funding for GMT:

One of the most pressing concerns from our outreach was the potential for further cuts to GMT bus service. While securing additional funding is outside of our direct control, it is essential to advocate for sustainable transit funding at the state and local levels to maintain and expand services. Long-term planning should also include strategies for aligning transit improvements with electrification goals, including identifying funding mechanisms that support fleet acquisition, facility upgrades, workforce training, charging infrastructure, and route expansion.

Transit App Improvements:

Community members shared concerns about transit reliability and the usability of rider information tools. Collaborating with GMT to identify improvements to its transit app may be a future opportunity to support clearer communication around service reliability, an important factor in building trust and ridership as electrified systems evolve. Areas to explore include:

- Multi-language support to improve accessibility.
- More accurate communication around delays, detours, and real-time arrival updates.
- Clear notifications if a bus has already passed a stop.

Bus Signage & Shelter Improvements:

Riders expressed the need for clearer and more accessible bus stop information. These concerns connect directly to ridership experience and perceptions of transit quality - both of which are important in supporting a mode shift that benefits transportation electrification. Potential improvements include:

- Better signage inside buses that display road names and upcoming stops.
- Improved bus shelters with adequate seating and weather protection.

Affordable & Accessible Fare Options:

While fare policy is not directly addressed in this planning phase, community feedback pointed to the importance of designing systems that are simple, well-communicated free or reduced-fare pass which would improve transit accessibility for those in need. As

Vermont prepares for a transition to alternative fuel transit fleets, fare access and communication strategies must be considered part of the system's readiness. Ensuring that fare information is available in multiple languages and using infographics would make the system more welcoming for all users.

Education & Outreach on Alternative Fuel Vehicles (AFVs):

Participants showed interest in learning more about AFVs, especially following our Ride and Drive event. However, many shared concerns about cost, access to charging, and overall awareness. There is a need for continued outreach and education around AFVs, particularly regarding:

- How AFVs work and the total cost of ownership.
- Current and future AFV incentives, recognizing that funding for these programs is determined at the utility, and state and federal levels.
- Addressing challenges for residents of multi-dwelling unit housing who may not have access to home charging.
- Expanding ride-and-drive events to provide hands-on experience and increase awareness, while making these events more welcoming for all community members.

Workforce Capacity Needs:

Stakeholders and community partners raised concerns about shortages in the transit workforce, particularly among CDL-licensed drivers. As Vermont looks ahead to electrifying public transportation and expanding mobility options, workforce development will be a critical area of planning. This includes identifying training pathways for drivers, AFV maintenance technicians, and planners to support the long-term transition to cleaner, more efficient transportation systems.

Acknowledgment and Disclaimer

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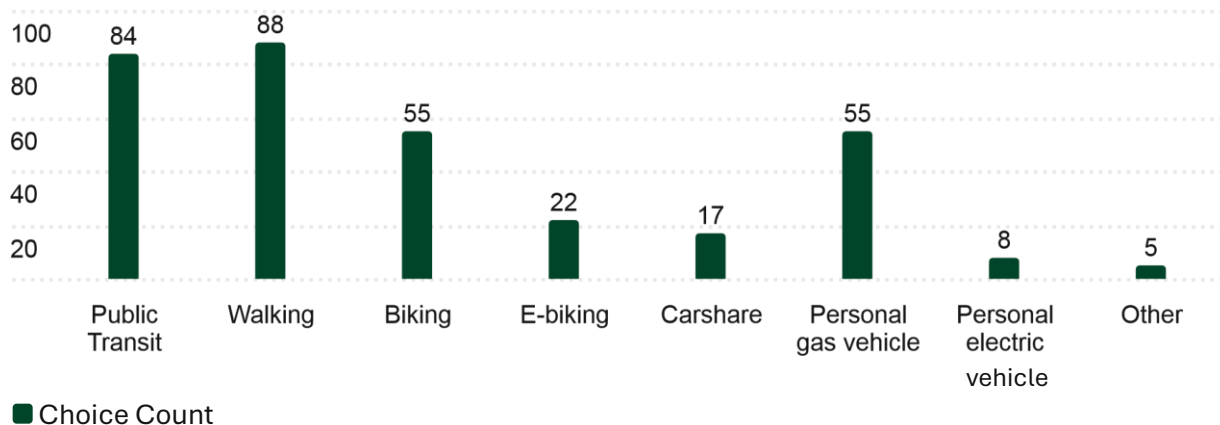
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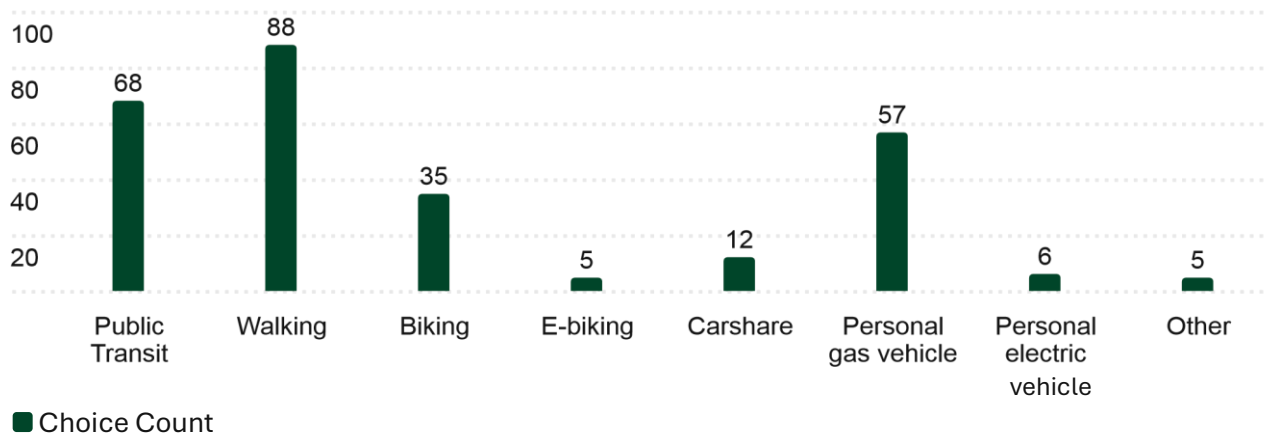
Appendix 1 – Community-Driven Transportation Survey Questions and Results

UVM Employee Wellness Fair, Rally Cat Cupboard, and the Energy Clinic hosted by Burlington Electric Department

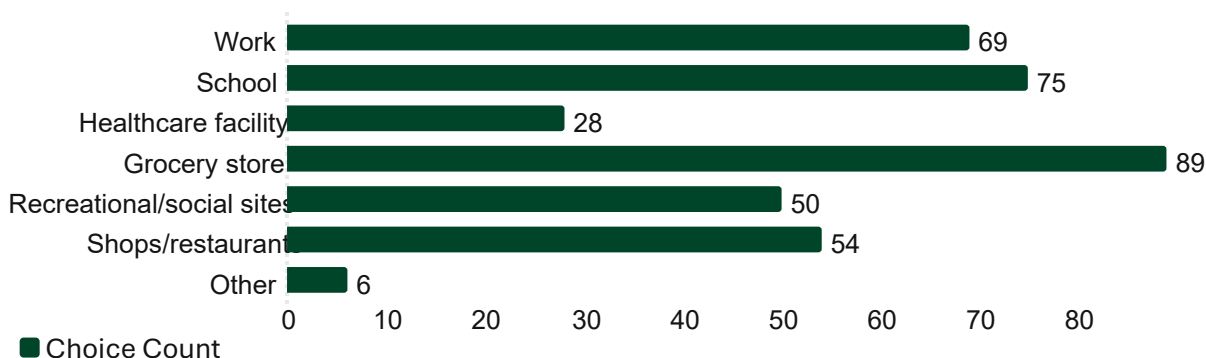
Which transportation options are easily available to you from your residence? (Select all that apply)



What transportation options do you use? (Select all that apply)



Which places do you most often need to leave your home to get to? (Select all that apply)

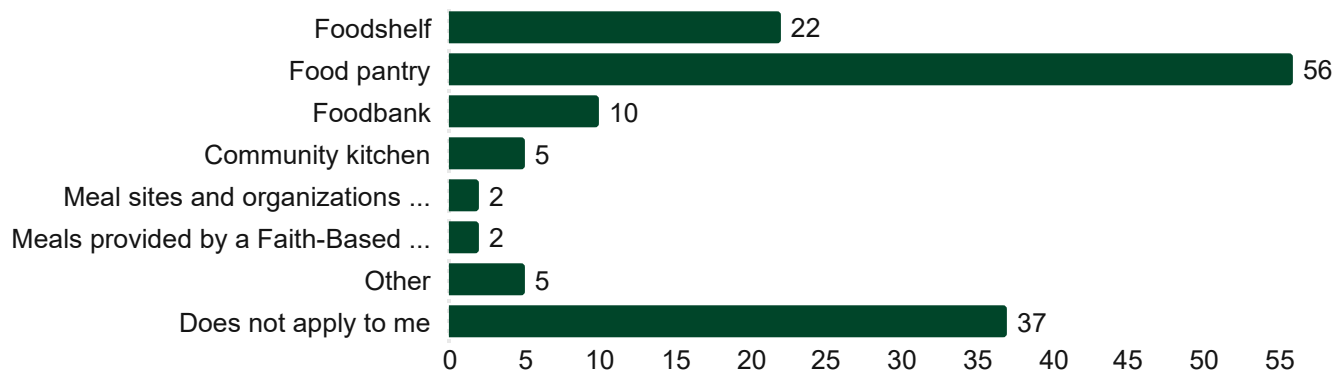


Has the availability of transportation ever impacted your ability to access food? If yes, please explain.



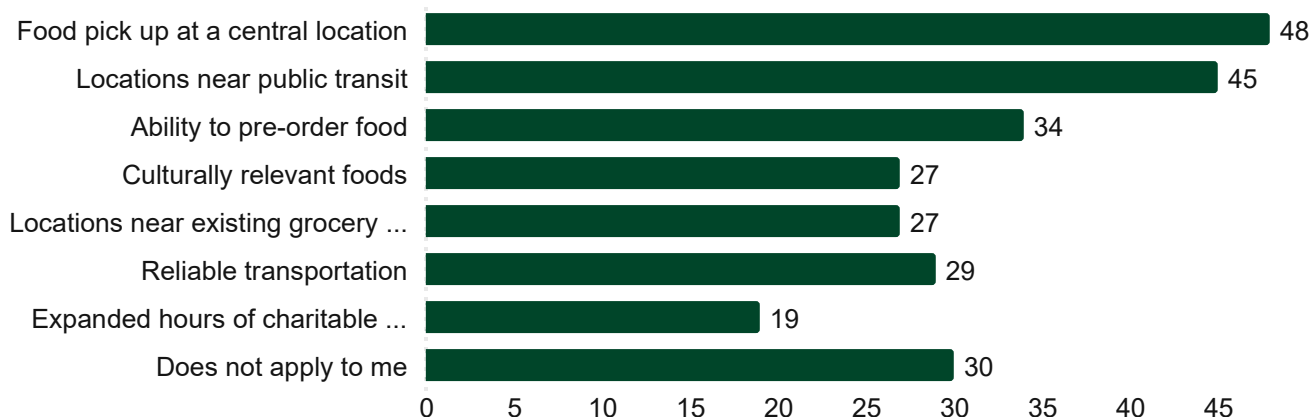
■ Choice Count

Do you access charitable food? (Select all that apply)



■ Choice Count

How can accessing charitable food be more convenient? (Select all that apply)



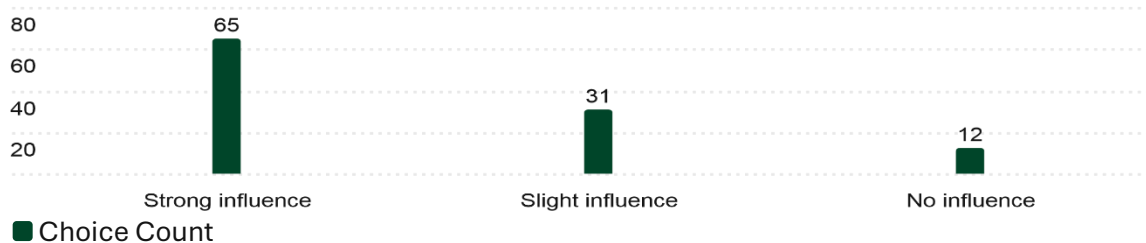
■ Choice Count

Is transportation a significant cost to your family?

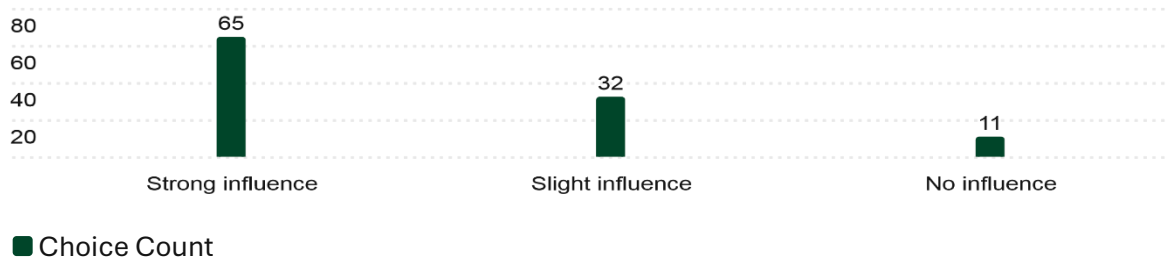


■ Choice Count

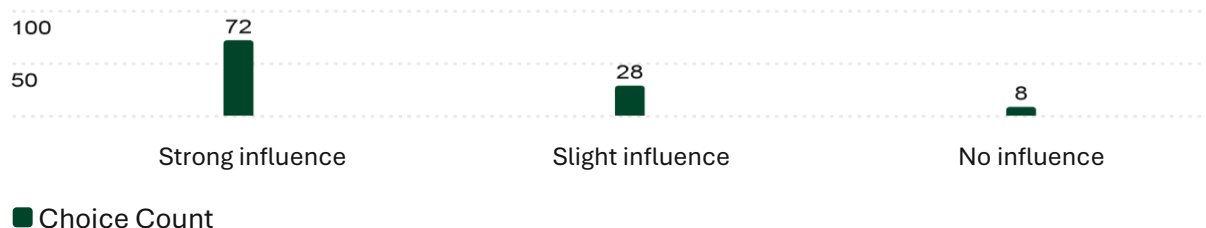
How much does transportation influence your decision on where to live?



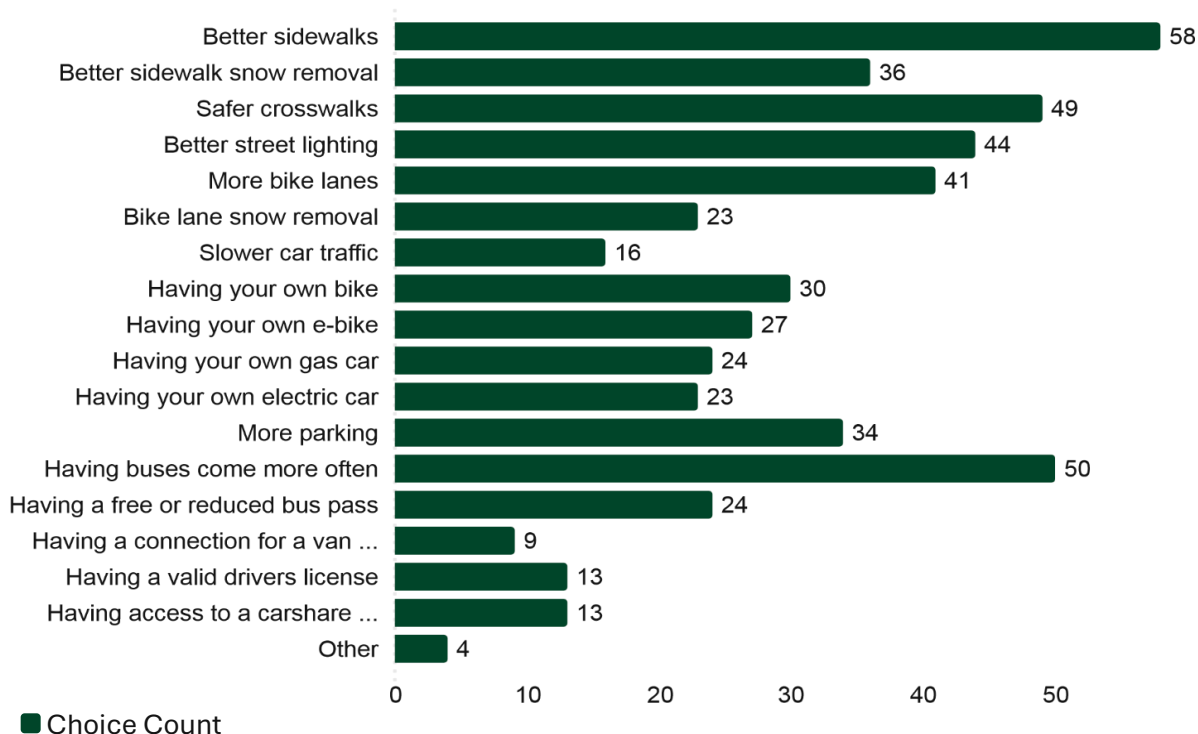
How much does transportation influence your decision on where to work?



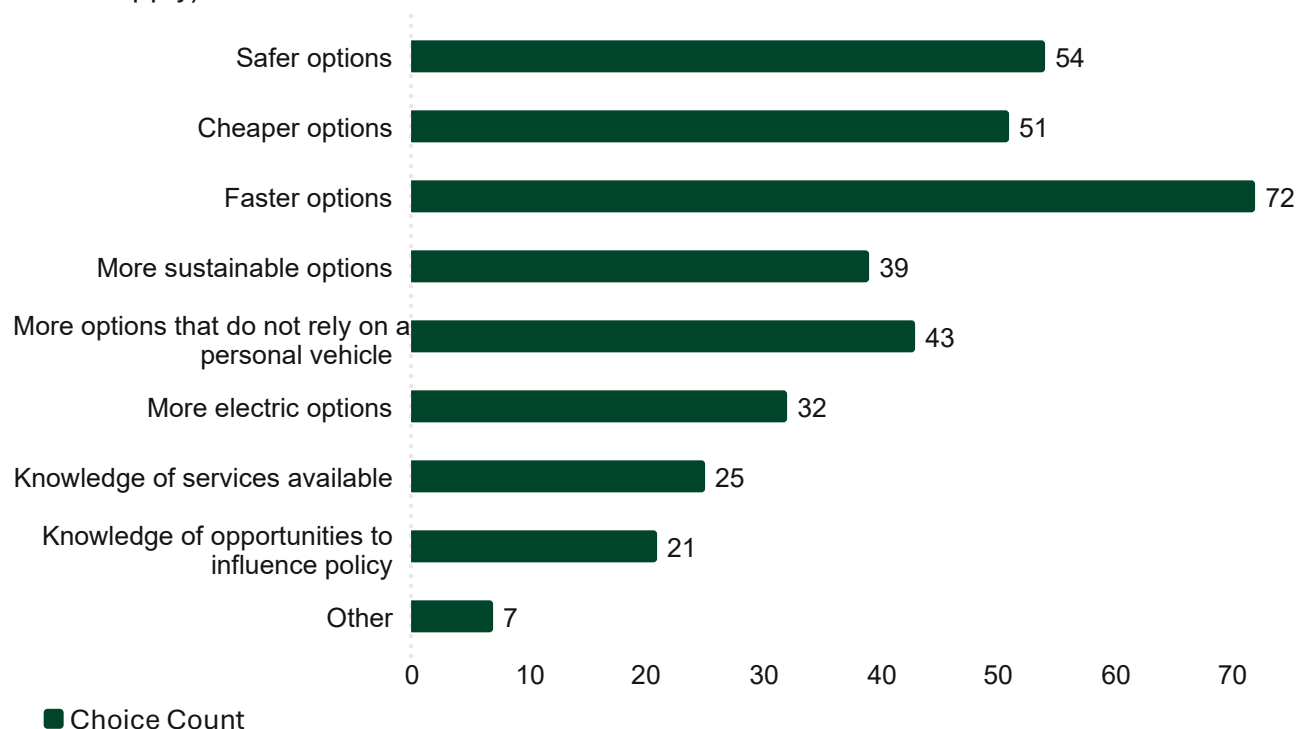
How much does transportation influence your decision on where you go?



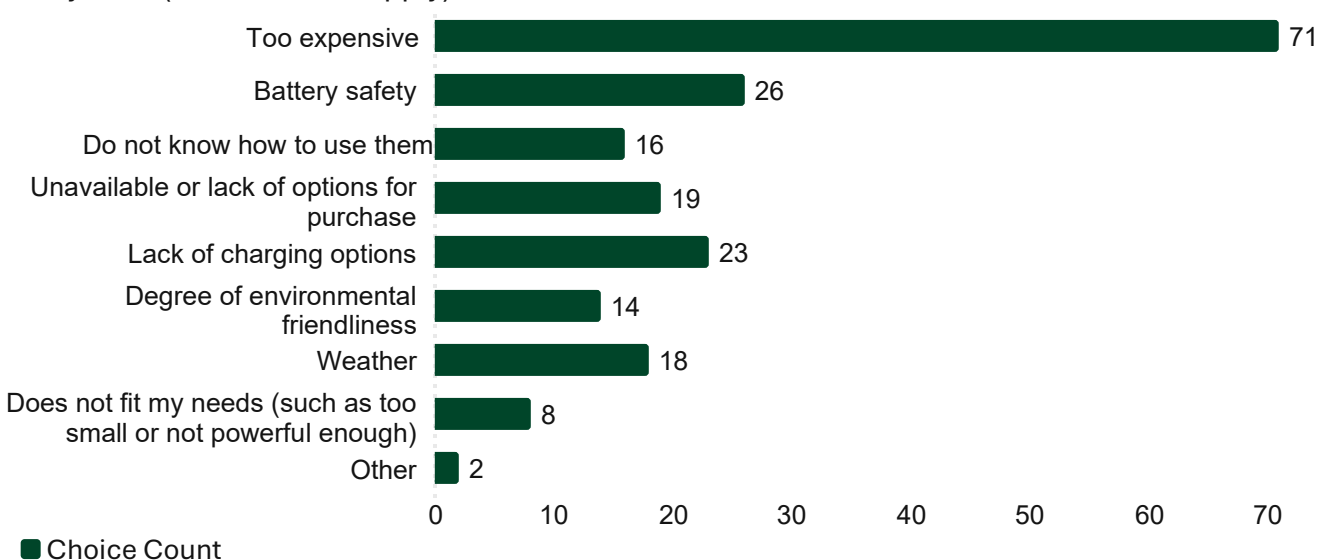
What transportation options would be most helpful? (Select all that apply)



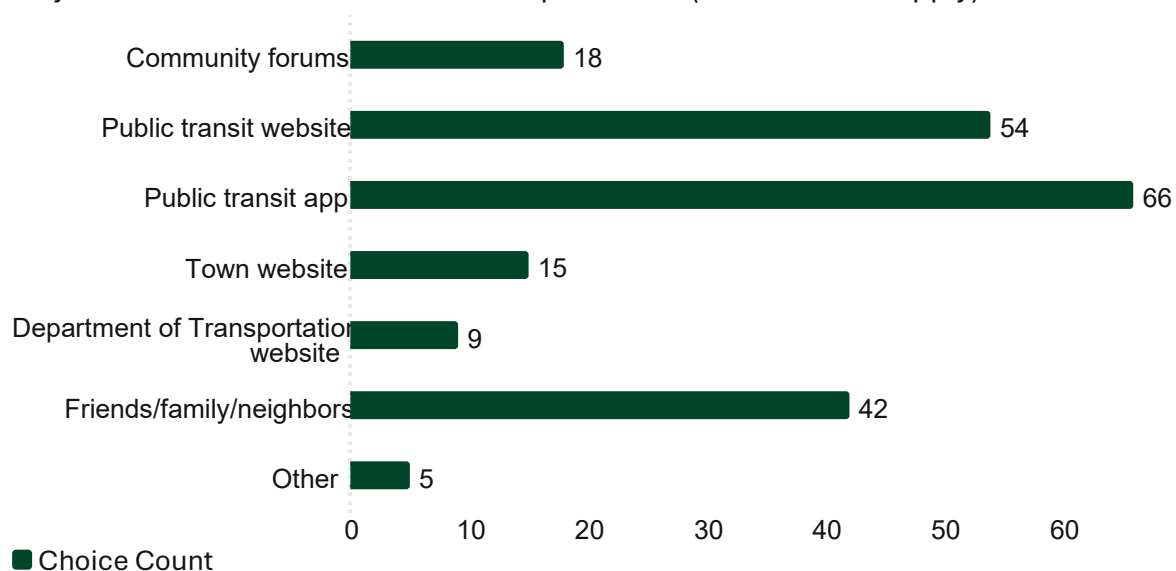
If you could change anything about your transportation options, what would it be? (Select all that apply)



What are your barriers or concerns related to electric vehicles such as electric buses, cars, or bicycles? (Select all that apply)



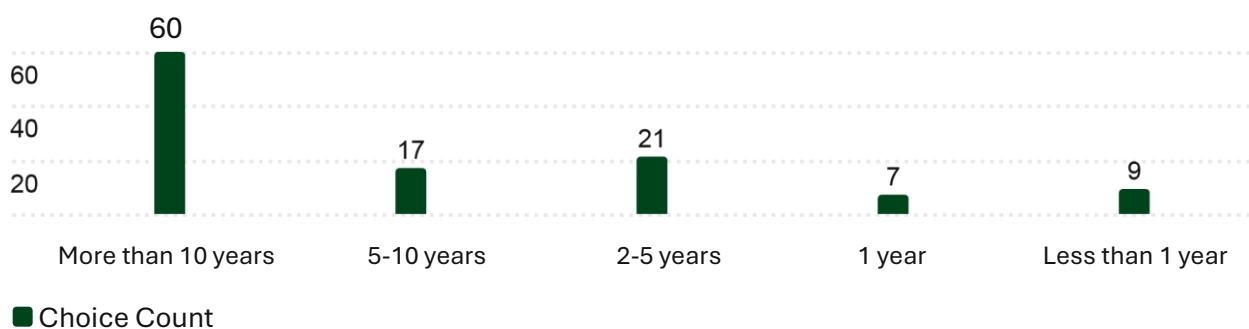
What do you use to find information on transportation? (Select all that apply)



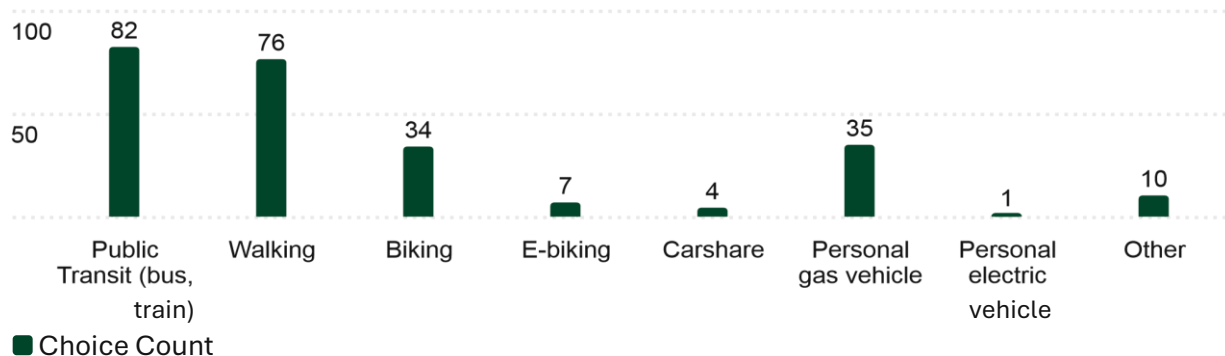
Appendix 2 - Community-Driven Transportation Survey Questions and Results Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity (CVOEO)

- Feeding Champlain Valley in Burlington on January 29th, and March 5th, 2025
- Northwest Family Foods in St. Albans on February 28th, 2025
- Middlebury Food Shelf in Middlebury on March 11th, 2025

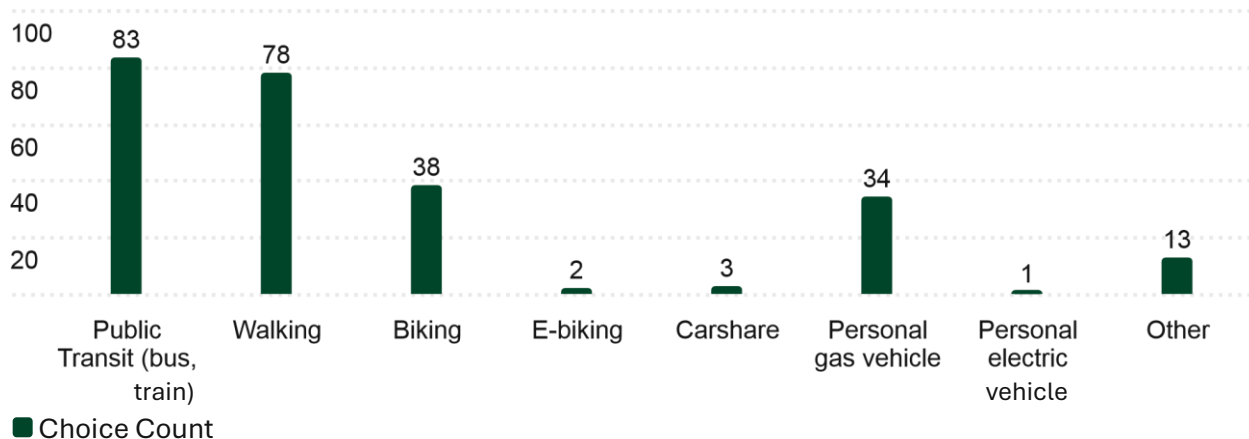
How long have you lived in your current town?



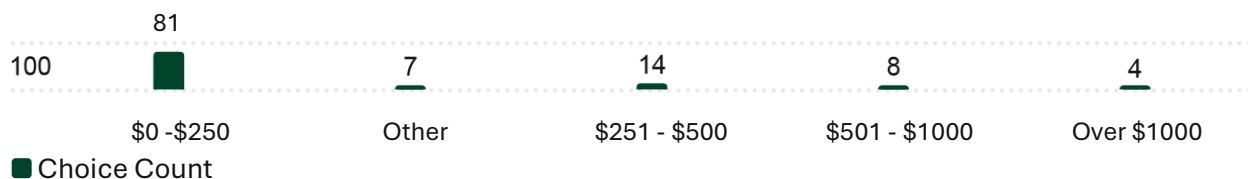
Which transportation options are easily accessible to you from your residence? (Select all that apply)



What transportation options do you use? (Select all that apply)



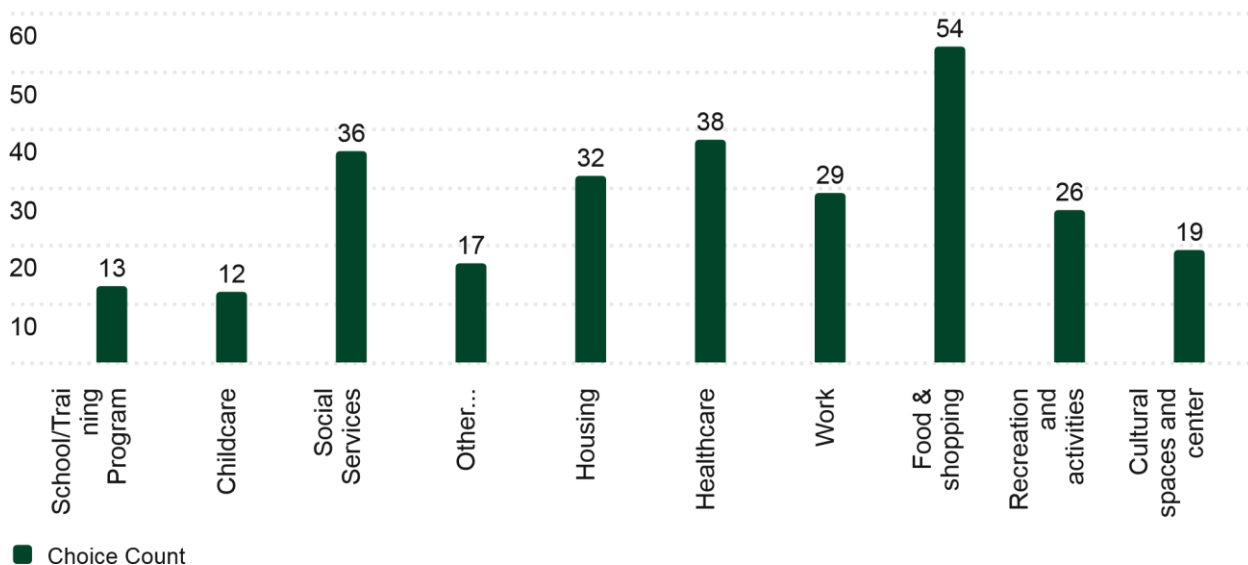
What are your monthly household transportation expenses? (Please include bus fare, car insurance, car payment, gas, bike share or membership, carshare membership etc.)



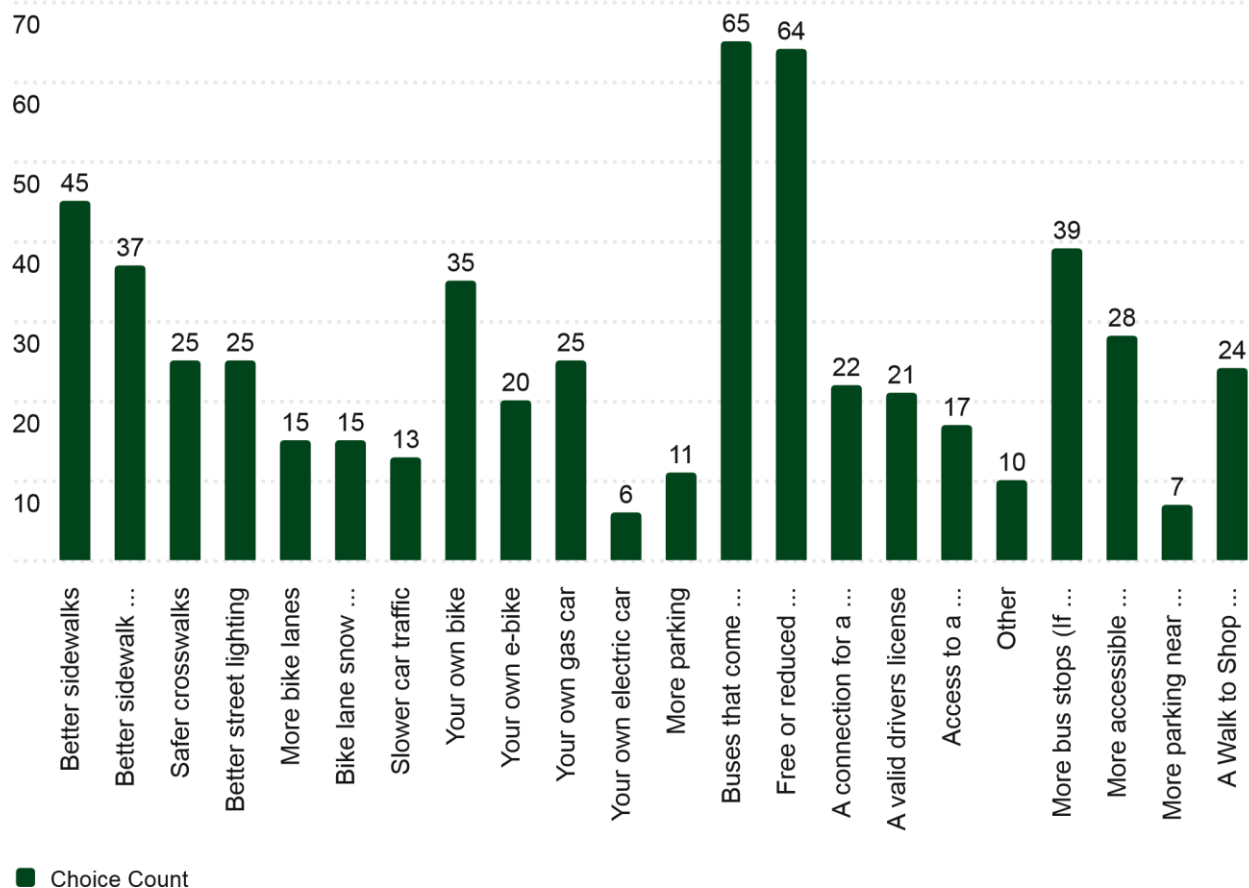
Has the availability of transportation ever impacted your ability to access food? If yes, please explain.



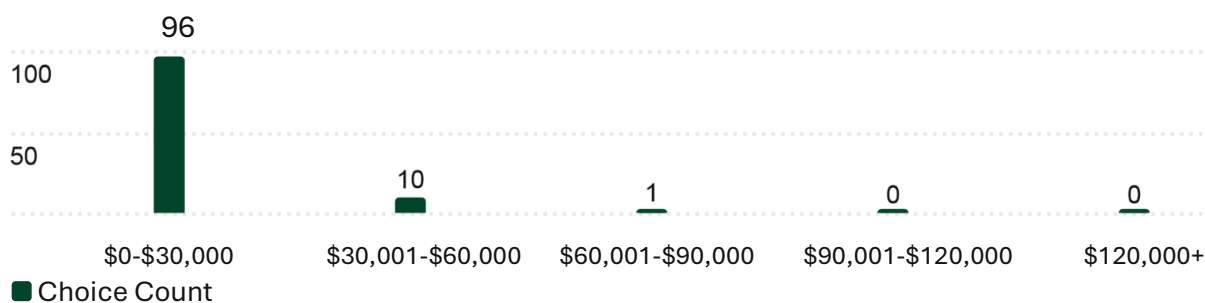
What are services and locations in the community that you have difficulty accessing because of transportation? (Select all that apply)



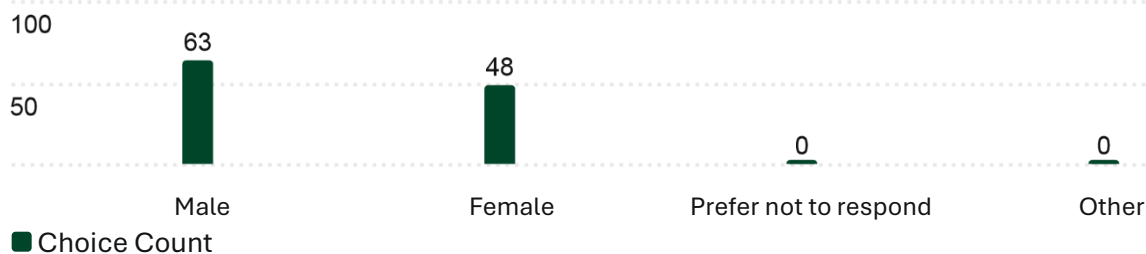
Which transportation options would be most helpful to you? (Select all that apply)



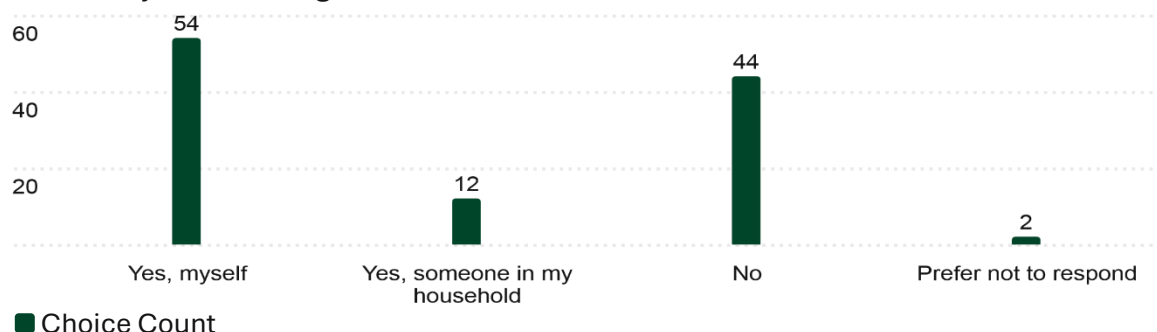
What is your total household income?



What is your gender?



Do you or anyone in your household have a medical condition or disability that makes it difficult for you/them to get around?



Burlington Day 1 (January 29th, 2025)

Overview: We conducted a survey of Chittenden County residents to understand how they access transportation and food. We successfully collected 50 responses. To thank participants for their time, we provided prepaid Visa gift cards after they completed the survey, distributing a total of 50 cards.

Income Distribution: 94% of respondents reported a total household income between \$0 and \$30,000 annually.

Current Transportation Access: Respondents shared that 80% use public transportation, 76% walk, and 36% bike to get around.

Key Findings: A key priority area that emerged from the survey was concern about the bus system. Many participants shared their frustrations with long wait times and the fact that buses only travel in one direction, making some commutes take hours. These insights highlight the need for improvements in the local transit system to better serve residents.

Transportation Expenses: We had 76% of respondents report spending an average of \$0 to \$250 per month on transportation.

Challenges Accessing Essential Services: When asked if transportation affects their ability to access food, 66% said yes. The main reasons cited included buses not running, lack of gas for a personal vehicle, difficulty carrying groceries due to weight, and medical limitations.

Respondents also identified specific services they struggled to access because of transportation challenges. Accessing food was the most common concern at 57%, followed by healthcare at 34%, social services at 32%, and housing at 30%.

Preferred Transportation Improvements: When asked which transportation options would be most helpful, 66% of respondents said a free or reduced bus pass, 57% wanted buses to run more frequently, and 39% requested more bus stops. Additionally, 18% said having their own car would be the most beneficial transportation option.

Conclusion: This survey responses reinforced the critical role of public transportation in Chittenden County and the challenges residents face in accessing food, healthcare, and other essential services. Responses suggest that improved bus frequency, additional stops, and reduced-cost transit passes would significantly benefit residents. Addressing these transportation issues will improve access to essential resources and enhance the overall well-being of the community.

St. Albans (February 28th, 2025)

Overview: We conducted the same survey at Northwest Family Foods in St. Albans, Vermont in Franklin County. A total of 25 individuals participated in the survey, providing insight into their household income, transportation challenges, and preferred improvements to local transportation options.

Income Distribution: Of the 25 respondents, 20 reported total family income between \$0 and \$30,000. 4 respondents indicated income between \$30,000 and \$60,000, while one respondent reported income between \$60,000 and \$90,000.

Current transportation options: The majority of respondents indicated they primarily rely on walking, public transit, or a personal gas vehicle for transportation. The survey also included an “Other” option, where several respondents mentioned using a transit service called [Champlain Islanders Developing Essential Resources](#) (C.I.D.E.R.). C.I.D.E.R. is an organization that contracts with regional public transit provider GMT to offer door-to-door transportation for seniors and people with disabilities. They operate their own fleet, and riders can schedule pickups with volunteer drivers. C.I.D.E.R. receives funding from VTRANS, Medicaid, the United Way of Northeast Vermont, donations, and fundraising efforts. This service was frequently mentioned as a crucial resource, especially since GMT does not extend to Alburgh, Vermont. Several survey participants reported traveling from Alburgh to access services at CVOEO (see Map 3).

Monthly Transportation Expenses: 13 respondents reported spending between \$0 and \$250 on transportation. 6 respondents reported spending between \$251 and \$500. 2 respondents reported spending over \$100, and another 2 respondents reported spending between \$501 and \$1,000.

Challenges in Accessing Essential Services: Participants identified several key destinations they struggle to reach due to transportation barriers.

- 12 respondents reported difficulty accessing healthcare.
- 6 respondents struggled to reach housing-related services.
- 12 respondents found it challenging to get to food and shopping locations.
- 8 respondents mentioned having difficulty reaching recreational and other activities.

Preferred Transportation Improvements: When asked what transportation options would be most helpful, twelve respondents indicated a need for a more frequent bus service. Eight respondents suggested adding more bus stops, while seven respondents identified free or reduced-cost bus passes as a priority. Eight respondents expressed interest in a walk-to-shop trolley, and seven respondents said having access to a personal gas vehicle would be beneficial.

Conclusion: The survey results highlight significant transportation challenges for low-income residents in St. Albans and surrounding areas, particularly those who must travel from Alburgh. Many participants rely on walking, public transit, or volunteer-run services like C.I.D.E.R. to meet their transportation needs. The survey responses indicate a strong demand for expanded bus services, more bus stops, and affordable transit options. Addressing these transportation gaps would enhance access to essential services such as healthcare, food, housing, and recreational activities, ultimately improving quality of life for community members.

Burlington Day 2 (March 5th, 2025)

Overview: We conducted the same survey at Feeding Champlain Valley in Burlington, Vermont. A total of 39 individuals participated in the survey, providing insight into their household income, transportation challenges, and preferred improvements to local transit options.

Income Distribution: The majority of participants (36) reported a household income of \$30,000 or less, while three respondents fell within the \$30,001 to \$60,000 range. This data highlights the financial constraints many respondents face, which directly impact their transportation options and affordability.

Current Transportation Options: Public transit was the most used mode of transportation, with 35 respondents relying on it. Walking was also a significant mode of travel, with 31 individuals reporting it as part of their routine. 16 respondents used biking, while only 4 people reported using a personal gas-powered vehicle.

Monthly Transportation Expenses: Most respondents (33) reported spending between \$0 and \$250 per month on transportation, with only three individuals indicating costs between \$251 and \$500. No respondents reported spending more than \$500 on transportation.

Challenges in Accessing Essential Services: The survey shows that transportation barriers impact access to essential services. 19 individuals reported difficulties accessing food due to transportation limitations, while 20 did not experience this challenge. When asked about other services they struggled to reach, 14 respondents cited food and shopping, 12 had issues accessing housing, and 10 faced barriers in getting to healthcare services. Additionally, 14 respondents reported difficulty reaching social services, 13 struggled to get to work, and five mentioned challenges in accessing childcare.

Preferred Transportation Improvements: When asked about potential improvements, 26 respondents indicated the need for free or reduced bus passes. 25 respondents expressed a need for a more frequent bus service. Other preferred solutions included increased bike accessibility (15 respondents), more accessible bus stops (9), and a carshare system (8). 9 respondents also mentioned a need for gas-powered cars, while 2 expressed interest in alternative fuel vehicles. Additionally, 5 individuals saw e-bikes as a viable solution, and 6 respondents suggested a walk-to-shop trolley to improve mobility options.

Conclusion: The survey results highlight the community's reliance on public transit and active transportation methods, coupled with significant financial constraints that limit mobility. Key concerns include difficulty accessing essential services like food, housing, healthcare, and employment due to transportation challenges. The most requested improvements are free or reduced-cost bus passes, increased bus frequency, and better accessibility.

Middlebury (March 11th, 2025)

Overview: On Tuesday, March 11th, we conducted a survey of 10 Addison Country residents who visited the food shelf to understand how they access transportation and food. To thank participants for their time, we provided a total of 10 prepaid Visa gift cards after they completed the survey. This is a small sample size.

Income Distribution: 6 participants reported a household income of \$30,000 or less. 3 reported household income in the \$30,001 to \$60,000 range, and 1 reported over \$90,000. Most are living within limited budgets that impact their transportation options and affordability.

Current Transportation Options: Walking was a significant mode of travel, with 7 individuals reporting it as part of their transportation options. 6 respondents report using a personal gas vehicle – either theirs or one they borrowed. 4 respondents use public transit regularly, and biking was used by 4 respondents.

Monthly Transportation Expenses: Most respondents (7) reported spending between \$0 and \$250 per month on transportation, with 2 individuals indicating costs between \$251 and \$500. 1 respondent reported spending more than \$500 on transportation.

Challenges in Accessing Essential Services: The survey shows that transportation barriers impact access to essential services. 6 individuals reported difficulties accessing food due to transportation limitations and 5 mentioned challenges in accessing recreation and activities. When asked about other services they struggled to reach, 3 struggled to get to work or school, and 2 had issues accessing housing,

Preferred Transportation Improvements: When asked about potential improvements, 6 respondents expressed a need for a more frequent bus service. Other preferred solutions included better sidewalks (4), and a carshare or vanpool system (4). 3 respondents mentioned a need for a gas-powered car, while 2 expressed interest in alternative fuel vehicles. Additionally, 3 individuals saw e-bikes as a viable transportation option, and 2 respondents suggested a walk-to-shop trolley to carry goods more easily.

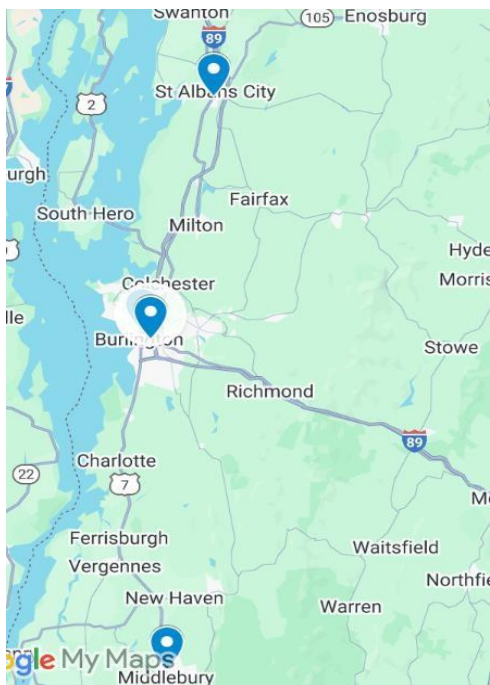
Conclusion: The survey results highlight the community's reliance on shared rides and public transit coupled with financial constraints that limit mobility. Key concerns include difficulty accessing essential services like food, housing, healthcare, and employment due to transportation challenges. In this rural area, the most requested improvements are for more frequent bus service and car sharing systems.

Appendix 3 – Maps

Map 1. Champlain Valley



Map 2. Champlain Valley Survey Locations



Map 3. Distance from Alburgh to St. Albans

