

MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH
Transportation Advisory Board (TAB)
AGENDA

Edna DeVries, Mayor

Terri Lyons
Randy Durham - Chair
Pat Daniels
Jennifer Busch
Charles van Ravensway
Joshua Cross – Vice Chair
Kristina Whitman

Alex Strawn – Staff Support



Michael Brown, Borough Manager

PLANNING & LAND USE DEPARTMENT
Alex Strawn, Planning & Land Use Director
Maija DiSalvo, Planning Services Manager
Jason Ortiz, Development Services Manager
Fred Wagner, Platting Officer

Location:
MSB DSJ BLDG.
Room 119
350 E. Dahlia Ave. Palmer, AK

November 15th, 2024
REGULAR MEETING
10:00 a.m.

Ways to participate in Transportation Advisory Board meetings:

IN-PERSON: You will have 3 minutes to state your oral comment.

REMOTE PARTICIPATION VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS:

Join on your computer:

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

Meeting ID: 236 469 835 297

Passcode: h2WHPM

Dial in by phone:

[1\(907\)-290-7880](tel:19072907880)

Phone ID: 413 458 933#

- I. CALL TO ORDER
- II. ROLL CALL – DETERMINATION OF QUORUM
- III. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE
- IV. APPROVAL OF AGENDA
- V. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION (*three minutes per person for items not scheduled for public hearing*)
- VI. STAFF/AGENCY REPORTS & PRESENTATIONS
- VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- Transit update
- Comprehensive Safety Action Plan

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

IX. MEMBER COMMENTS

X. NEXT MEETING DATE

XI. ADJOURNMENT

PACKET ATTACHMENTS:

Transit FAQ's

Comprehensive Safety Action Plan Presentation



Mat-Su Borough Transit Continuity

Common Questions – Transit

The following questions and answers, organized by topic, are in response to the question:

What questions would you want to know answers to while considering funding match for transit?

Funding

What is the bottom line for the Borough's part? What would the mill rate increase be?

\$1.5 million to maintain the current level of service. The amount is based on an estimated \$3 million operations budget for Valley Transit in FY2024. \$1.5 million could be generated by a mill rate increase of about 0.114 which would result in approximately \$40 per year per single family home in property taxes.

Sources: [2024 Valley Transit program information.pdf](#) and [20230509 Assembly Adopts FY24 Budget.pdf](#)

What are you going to do with my money? How are their services being used?

Source: [2024 Valley Transit program information.pdf](#)

Commuter service:

- Six large buses (54 seat capacity).
- 14 round trips Monday through Friday and four round trips on Saturdays.
- 9,086 rides on commuter service in the first quarter of fiscal year 2024.
- Costs \$1.59 million per year, 53% of the total budget.

Demand response:

- Six small buses (20 to 26 seat capacity) and three SUVs and minivans (4 to 5 seat capacity). All have wheelchair lifts.
- Many origins and many destinations in nine zones, Houston, Big Lake, Meadow Lakes, Knik Goose Bay, Fairview, Port MacKenzie, Wasilla, Palmer, and Butte.
- 6,184 rides on demand response in the first quarter of fiscal year 2024.
- Costs \$1.41 million per year, 47% of the total budget.

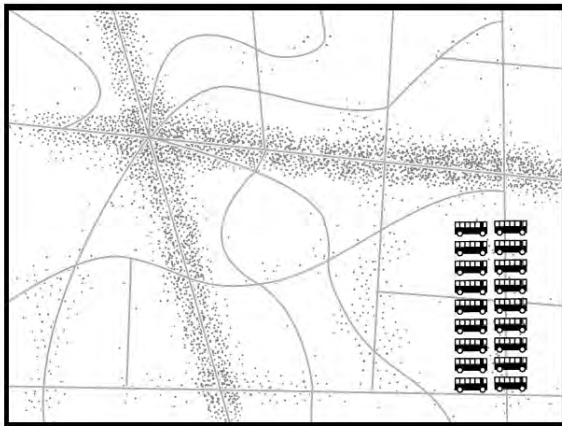
How do we know we won't be funding empty buses? The last and first bus are usually the lowest ridership but, if you take away those trips it reduces the people that rely on the second to last because they do not want to depend on the last trip out.

Source: [2024 Valley Transit program information.pdf](#)

Full buses are not the only objective. Coverage is also a goal. "Ridership and coverage goals come into direct conflict with one another. If a transit agency wants to do more of one, it must (within a fixed budget) do less of the other, due to fundamental geometry and geography." Source: [2016 Anchorage Talks Transit Final Report.pdf](#)



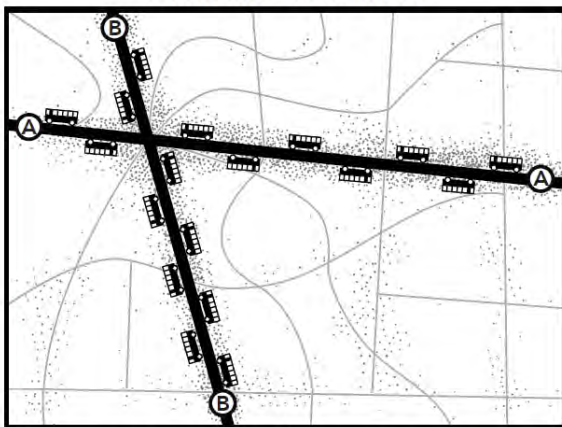
Mat-Su Borough Transit Continuity



Imagine you are the transit planner for this fictional town. The dots scattered around the map are people and jobs; the streets shown are ones on which transit can be operated. The buses are the resources the town has to run transit.

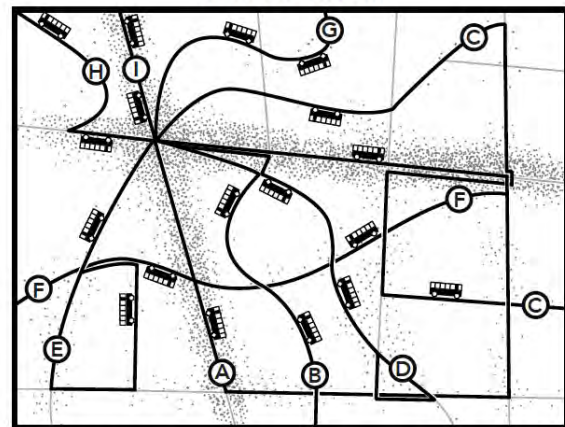
Before you can plan transit routes, you must first decide what you want transit to do.

Ridership Goal
"Think like a business"



This transit network is designed to generate high ridership as efficiently as possible. The transit agency has thought like a business, investing its resources only into the best transit markets.

Coverage Goal
"Access for all"



This network is designed to provide some access to the transit system for all people. The transit agency has divided its resources among many routes throughout the town, none very frequent.

Source: [2016 Anchorage Talks Transit Final Report.pdf](#)

What is the business plan? Management of the funding and program, etc. Transit is not the same as a business. It does not operate in the black and depends on federal and local funding to operate, much like roads, bridges, and airports. Fares cover only a small part of the operational cost. Source: [2022 2021 Valley Transit Auditor's Report.pdf](#)

Management of the funding and grant program would be a combination of responsibilities for the Borough and the transit service provider. The Borough would apply for federal funding and seek a contractor to provide transit services. It would be the service provider's responsibility to manage day-to-day activities and file required reports to the Federal Transit Administration. Source: [2023 DOT&PF MSB Transit Continuity Plan.pdf](#)



Mat-Su Borough Transit Continuity

Can transit providers still apply for the rural coverage services directly? Does that make the urban part of the operating cost lower than the \$3 million? There does not seem to be a way to split urban and rural funding in this way.

Source: [Meeting with DOT&PF representatives](#)

What role does Anchorage have in the commuter services? It appears that cost sharing with Anchorage is unlikely. Valley Transit focuses on getting local residents to where they want to go, including commuting to Anchorage and back.

Source: [Meeting with DOT&PF representatives](#)

Can the federal transit funding be used for commuter rail? Yes, however only a small amount of railroad tracks run through the designated urban area, making the percentage of their allocation minimal.

Source: [Meeting with DOT&PF representatives](#)

Does the Mat-Su Health Foundation have interest in continuing their match? The Mat-Su Health Foundation did continue their match an additional year to support the funding transition and continuity of transit. They have not expressed interest in making additional changes to their original agreement which provided transit funding since 2017, with the expectation that once the Borough became an urbanized area, the responsibility of providing local match would transfer to the local government.

What is the outcome if we don't fund it? Valley Transit would likely suffer a funding crisis and would not be able to provide transit service, leading to a domino effect on direct and indirect benefits. 29 people would lose their jobs. The Valley would no longer bring \$1.5 million dollars of federal funding per year into the economy. Indirect service providers would lose a client. People who use transit would have a reduction in quality of life and an increase in transportation expenses.

Source: [2023 DOT&PF MSB Transit Continuity Plan.pdf](#)

Story: "My mom cannot walk, nor stand, and we rely on public transit to move to and from her medical appointments. Without the wheelchair-accessible public transit, she would not be able to attend her appointments and her healthcare/quality of life would greatly diminish."

Source: [20241105 Mat-Su Borough Public Transit Ridership Survey_results.pdf](#)

Story: "I'm able to drive here and do out of necessity, but lack of transit would decrease foot traffic downtown which would impact my job."

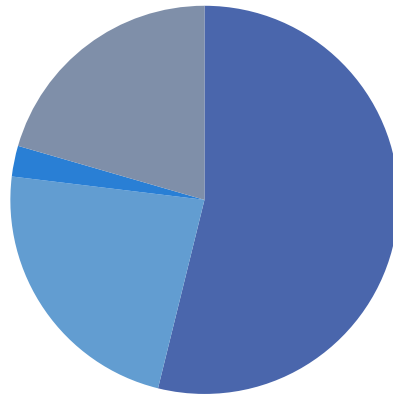
Source: [20241105 Mat-Su Borough Public Transit Ridership Survey_results.pdf](#)



Mat-Su Borough Transit Continuity

How would a decrease or loss in transit services impact you?

Answered: 39, Skipped: 3



■ Strongly impact ■ Some impact ■ Little impact ■ No impact

Source: [20241105 Mat-Su Borough Public Transit Ridership Survey_results.pdf](#)

Benefits

What are the benefits?

- Supporting the mobility of residents in the urban area through the continuation of public transportation. [Source: 2023 DOT&PF MSB Transit Continuity Plan.pdf](#)
- Increasing job and education opportunities for residents.
- Bringing federal funding into the Alaskan economy. [Source: 2023 DOT&PF MSB Transit Continuity Plan.pdf](#)
- Providing 62,000 average annual rides (2019). [Source: 2022 Economic Value of Public Transit in Alaska.pdf](#)
- Directly employing 29 people at Valley Transit. [Source: 2022 Economic Value of Public Transit in Alaska.pdf](#)
- Economics. [Source: 20240610 Urban Transit 101 Presentation_Wasilla.pdf](#)
 - **Direct:** Transit agencies employ workers, pay wages, and invest in equipment and supplies.
 - **Indirect:** Transit agencies purchase goods and services from Alaskan companies which in turn employ and pay workers.
 - **Induced:** Transit agency and supplier employees spend their income, generating additional activity within the Alaska economy.

Story: "I work for ConocoPhillips and public transit has enabled me to commute to Anchorage without all the hassle, stress and frustration of driving my private vehicle. It helps to keep extra cars off the road to mitigate traffic and lessens the wear and tear on the road system."

Source: [20241105 Mat-Su Borough Public Transit Ridership Survey_results.pdf](#)



Mat-Su Borough Transit Continuity

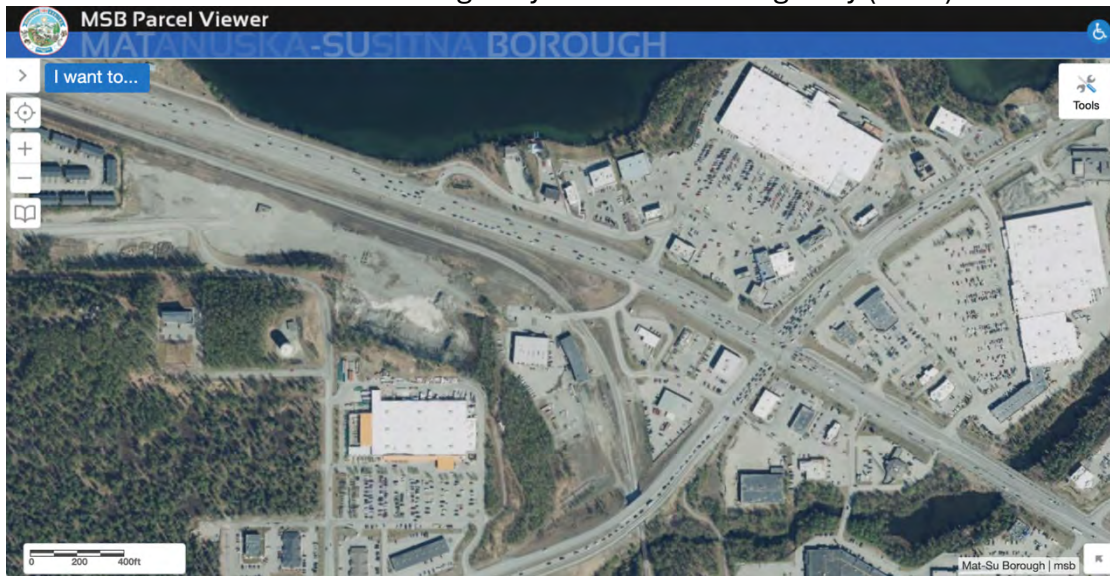
Story: "I have worked seasonally at an office in anchorage since I was 15 and because of that have been able to afford college and many of my own living expenses. This would not be possible without public transit as it allowed me to be able to drive when I wasn't capable and couldn't afford to do so."

Source: [20241105 Mat-Su Borough Public Transit Ridership Survey_results.pdf](#)

How much traffic are we taking off the Glenn Highway? There were 9,086 commuter rides in FY24 Q1, 36,344 estimated for the full year. Dividing by 262 working weekdays is 139 vehicles off the road per weekday (less than 1% of the traffic on the Glenn Highway).

Source: [2024 Valley Transit program information.pdf](#)

Intersection of Palmer-Wasilla Highway and the Parks Highway (2011).



Same image, minus 100 cars on the Parks Highway.





Mat-Su Borough Transit Continuity

What are other benefits that are not otherwise provided for such as VA trips, etc?

Source: 2023 DOT&PF MSB Transit Continuity Plan.pdf

- Lifeline for residents who lack other means of transportation to access medical appointments, reach job opportunities, and acquire groceries.
- Removing transit would disproportionately affect people in zero-car households, lower-income families, or are younger, older, or not-white.
- Free fares on Fridays for seniors and youth on the commuter bus and reduced fares every day on demand response. Source: <https://www.valleytransitak.org/>
- ConocoPhillips pays for employees to ride free.
- Veterans Affairs pay for veterans to ride free.
- UAA pays for students and staff to ride free.

Can transit help us with road safety problems? Riding the bus is safer than driving a personal vehicle.

Source: 2022 Economic Value of Public Transit in Alaska.pdf

Can transit help us with road congestion problems? Yes, transit can reduce congestion because of the relative space taken up by types of vehicles, however it is difficult to quantify and requires high frequency service in a densely populated area.

Source: 2016 Anchorage Talks Transit Final Report.pdf

The image below shows space needed for cars, bikes, and buses.





Mat-Su Borough Transit Continuity

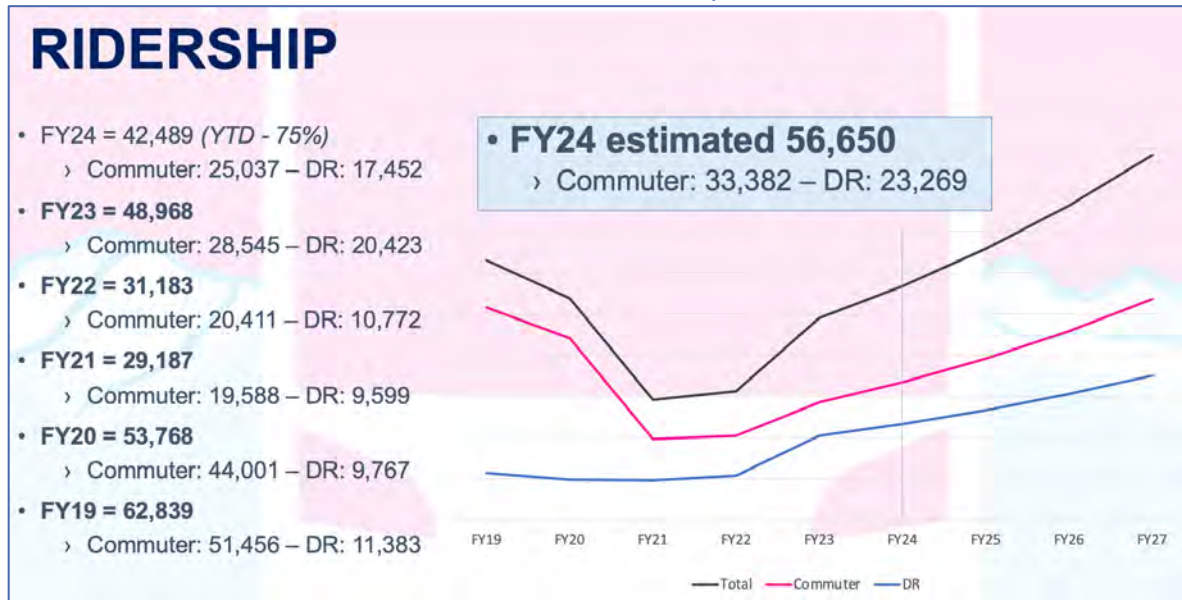
Operations

What is the commuter/demand response operating expenses split? 53% commuter and 47% demand response.

Source: 2024 Valley Transit program information.pdf

What are transit trends?

Source: 20240610 Urban Transit 101 Presentation_Wasilla.pdf



What is the socio-economic spread of users?

Source: 2022 Economic Value of Public Transit in Alaska.pdf

24 Percent

Of AK transit trips by young people under age 16

34 Percent

Of AK transit trips by people who are 60+ years of age

Table 2: Demographics of Alaska transit commuters compared to total Alaskan commuters

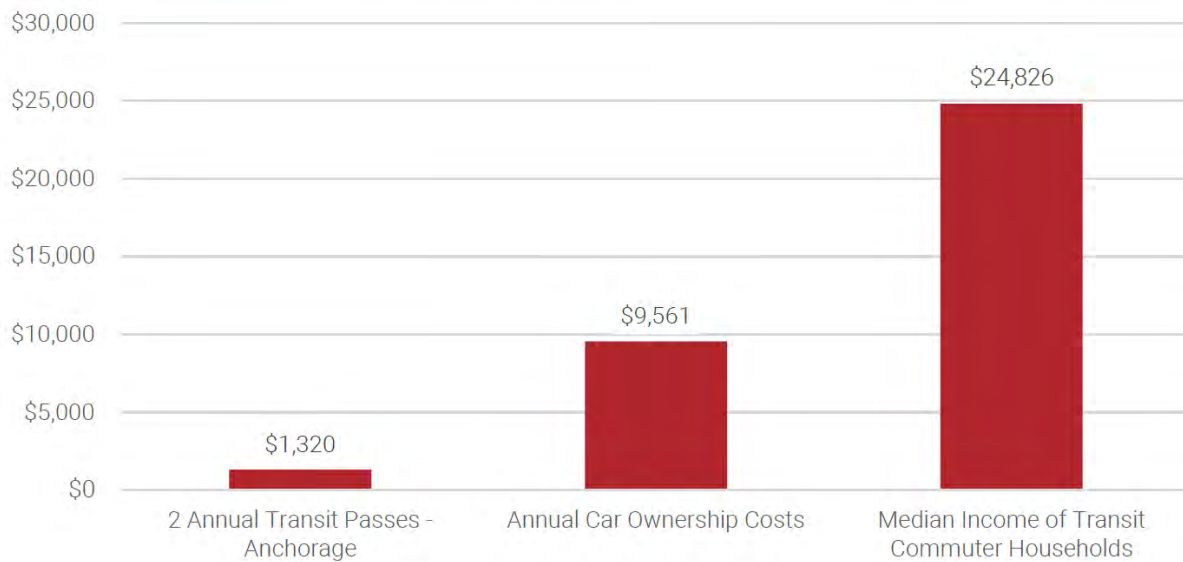
Demographic	Transit Commuters	Total Commuters
Zero Household Cars Available (%)	27.8%	5.4%
Non-White Racial/Ethnic Composition (%)	52.3%	33.8%
Median Income (2019 \$)	\$24,826	\$44,025

Source: American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables, 2015 – 2019. S0802: Means of Transportation to Work by Selected Characteristics. US Census.



Mat-Su Borough Transit Continuity

Figure 14: Comparison of Car Ownership and Transit Affordability to Median Household Income of Transit Commuters



Source: [Annual Cost of Car Ownership from AAA \(2020\)](#). [Anchorage Full Cost Annual Transit Passes are \\$660 each](#), with an assumed two commuters per household. Median Income of AK Transit Commuters from ACS 2015 – 2019.

Is transit possible in the car-centric valley? Yes, transit is active in the valley.

Story: “There’s a lot of work to do before it’s more appealing than driving. Someday I expect my eyesight will be too bad for driving, and it would be nice when that day comes to not be trapped.”

Source: [20241105 Mat-Su Borough Public Transit Ridership Survey_results.pdf](#)

How do we make it convenient enough for people to actually use it?

Source: [2016 Anchorage Talks Transit Final Report.pdf](#)

“Transit propensity” is an estimate of the likelihood that a given area will generate high transit ridership. The factors combined into this single measure relate to land use, demographics and development. They are:

- Residential and employment density.
- Levels of household income and of car ownership.
- Retail, service, and entertainment uses.
- Community, recreation, and educational uses.

How is transit advertised? Marketing includes push ads on social media, the website, ride guides at post offices, libraries, gas stations, etc. Valley Transit participates in trunk or treat, parades, fairs, rotary, community council meetings, and others.

Source: [20241030emBusch\(Valley Transit\).pdf](#)



Mat-Su Borough Transit Continuity

Is Valley Transit adequate? There is a need for additional demand response services, but Valley Transit does not currently have the resources to do so. In addition, the majority of the demand response buses need replacement.

Sources: [2023 DOT&PF MSB Transit Continuity Plan.pdf](#) and [2024 Valley Transit program information.pdf](#)

Story: Commuter buses used to come to Big Lake and they don't any more. The smaller buses serve Big Lake and Point MacKenzie, but there is need for the commuter buses to Anchorage.

Source: [20241104 Transit interview results.pdf](#)

Story: "I have previously enjoyed using public transit, bicycles & walking while temporarily living out-of-state. Unfortunately, I have not found the public transit, bicycling & walking in the Mat-Su to be practical or safe. I cannot figure out how to live in the Mat-Su without driving a car every day. Unfortunately, this is becoming increasingly stressful, hazardous, and expensive. I am seriously considering moving away to a place that is not as car dependent."

Source: [20241105 Mat-Su Borough Public Transit Ridership Survey_results.pdf](#)

Options

Are there alternative methods of funding? There do not appear to be other options of funding sources.

Alternative methods investigated:

- Cost sharing with cities. Rejected because residents already pay into the tax base.
- Cost sharing with Anchorage. Rejected because transit helps Valley residents access opportunities and bring back resources.
- Mat-Su Health Foundation. Rejected because they already continued their match an additional year to support the funding transition and continuity of transit. They have not expressed interest in continuing the match.

What options are available?

\$1.5 million → maintain current level of service.

Fund less → lower level of service, domino effect, possibly no service.

Fund more → higher level of service, domino effect increasing benefits.

Have you done an assessment to see what people want? The Mat-Su Borough Planning Department did a ridership survey and asked about the impacts of transit on people's lives. Overall people who ride the bus appreciate and depend on it for a variety of reasons. People who don't ride the bus see the level of service as too limited or not worth it.

Source: [20241105 Mat-Su Borough Public Transit Ridership Survey_results.pdf](#)



Mat-Su Borough Transit Continuity

Story: “I also see a need for local bus services throughout the core area & between Palmer -Wasilla. If we had public transportation that had set routes/times - I believe more people would utilize the service to get to school, medical appointments & routine daily needs (groceries, etc.).”

Source: [20241105 Mat-Su Borough Public Transit Ridership Survey_results.pdf](#)

Story: “Waste of taxpayer money.”

Source: [20241105 Mat-Su Borough Public Transit Ridership Survey_results.pdf](#)

What are the impacts to level of service with an increase or decrease of \$500,000?

Increasing the amount spent could update the demand response fleet and/or increase the ridership or coverage depending on how it was allocated. Decreasing the amount of funding would likely result in cuts to demand response service, according to Valley Transit. Both increasing and decreasing funding amounts have a domino effect on level of service.

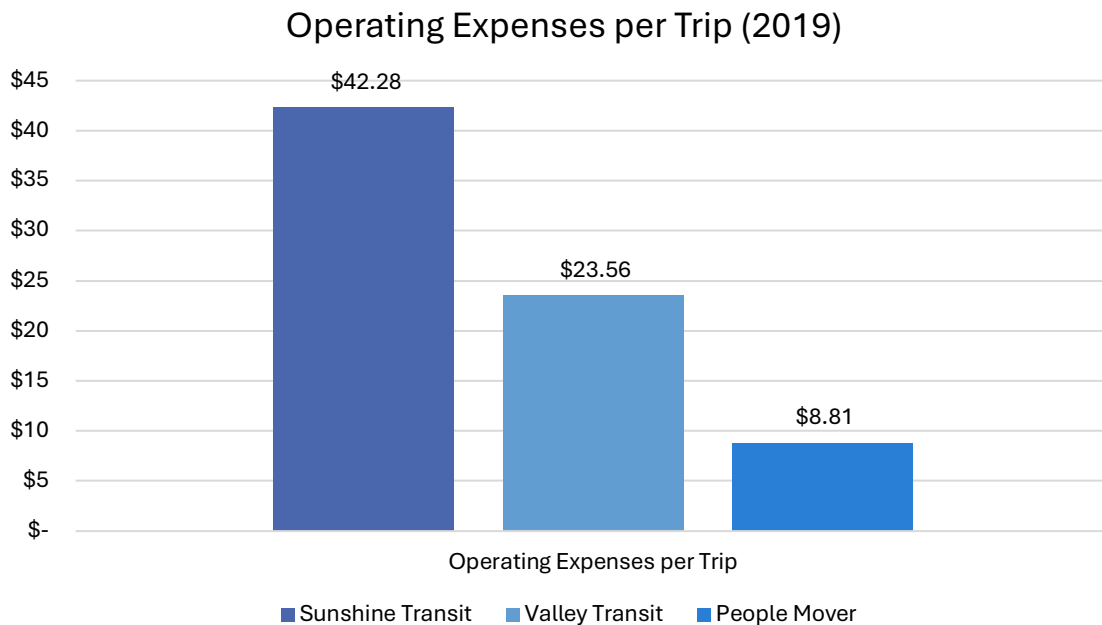
Source: [2024 Valley Transit program information.pdf](#)

In 2019, the Valley Transit operating budget was \$1,437,136 and provided 61,001 trips, equivalent to \$23.56 in operating expenses per trip. \$500,000 represented 21,222 trips.

Sources: [2019 Annual Agency Profiles](#)

Operating expenditures per trip provide an indicator of financial productivity, capturing how much it costs to serve a given number of trips.

For local comparison:



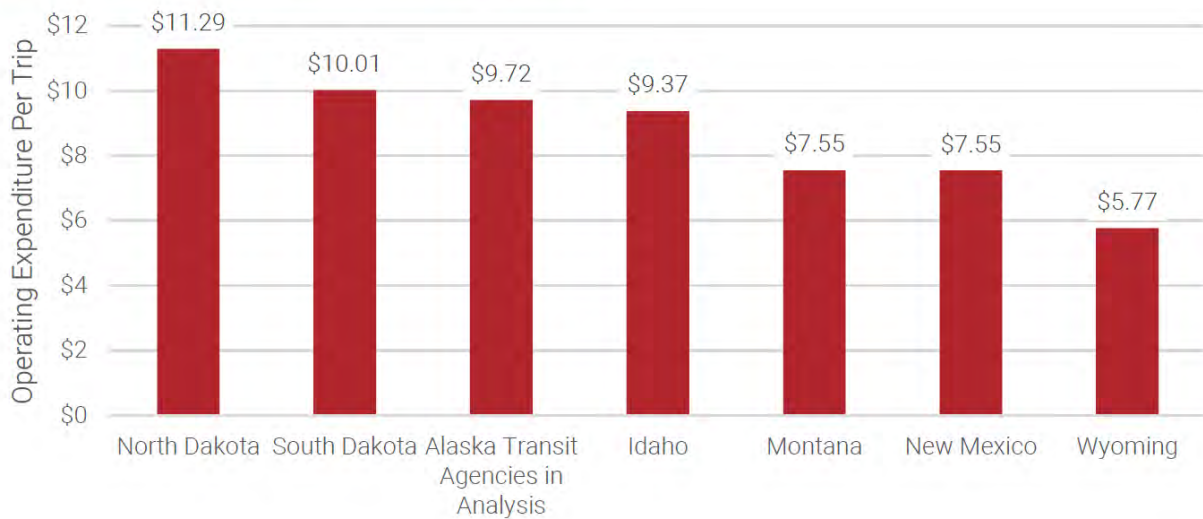
Sources: [2019 Annual Agency Profiles](#)



Mat-Su Borough Transit Continuity

For national comparison:

Figure 11. Operating Expenditures per Trip, 2019

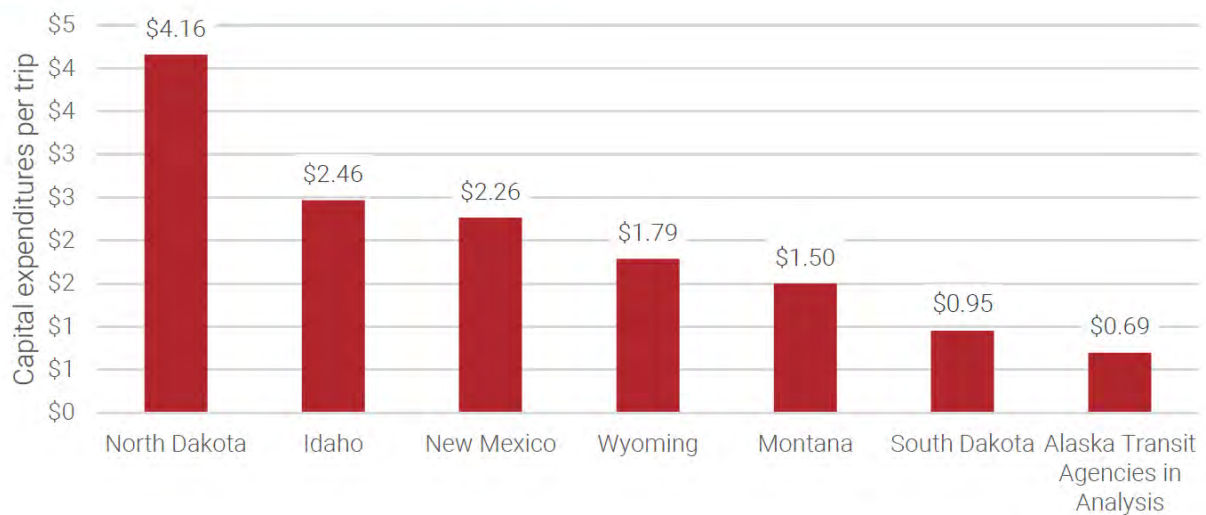


Source: National Transit Database 2019. Excludes rail service.

Source: [2022 Economic Value of Public Transit in Alaska.pdf](#)

Alaska transit may be underinvested in capital projects and transit agencies could struggle to keep up with demands to maintain their systems and fleets in a state of good repair.

Figure 12. Capital Expenditures per Trip, 2019



Source: National Transit Database 2019. Excludes rail service.

Source: [2022 Economic Value of Public Transit in Alaska.pdf](#)



Mat-Su Borough Transit Continuity

What about operating more smaller vehicles more often? In the case of Valley Transit, the smaller busses have exceeded their service life and are often at capacity. They would need to be replaced before considering increasing frequency.

Source: [2024 Valley Transit program information.pdf](#)

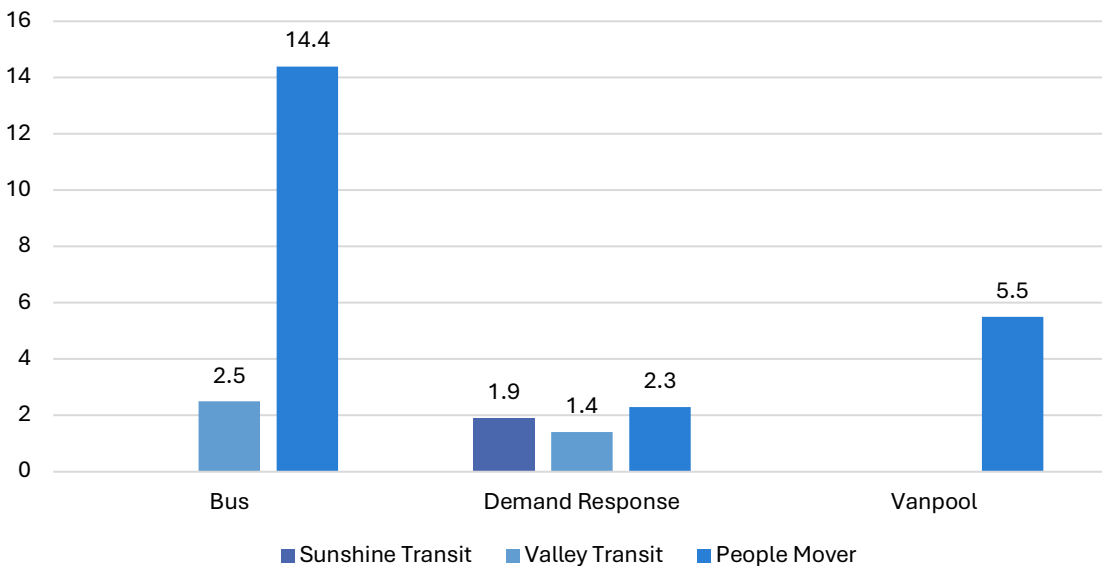
Are there other options for transit in low urban population areas? Most places use bus systems like us. Other transportation options are Uber, Lyft, and taxis. Riding Valley Transit instead of other services saved Borough residents an estimated \$1.5 million/year (2019).

Source: [2022 Economic Value of Public Transit in Alaska.pdf](#)

What is the estimated ridership per dollar for more frequent service? “Productivity is measured as boardings per service hour. Productivity is strictly a measure of achievement towards a ridership goal. Services that are designed for coverage goals will likely have low productivity. This does not mean that these services are failing or that the transit agency should cut them. It just means that their funding is not being spent to maximize ridership. More frequent services tend to have higher productivity (ridership per service hour), even though providing high frequency requires spending more service hours. This happens because frequent service is the most useful and convenient service for riders; thus, transit agencies typically target this most expensive service towards their strongest markets.”

Source: [2016 Anchorage Talks Transit Final Report.pdf](#)

Rides per Revenue Hour



Sources: [2023 Annual Agency Profiles](#)



Safety Starts at Our Core

Comprehensive Safety Action Plan



Jamie Taylor, P.E.
Project Manager, Mat-Su Borough
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Joni Wilm
Project Manager, Michael Baker
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Introductions



Michael Baker

I N T E R N A T I O N A L



FEHR & PEERS

- Joni Wilm
- Sarah Schacher
- Karin McGillivray
- Caitlin Frye
- Alex Hutcheson
- Jennifer Gross
- Malia Walters

- Van Le
- Beth McKibben

- Nicole Waldheim
- Taylor Whitaker



Photo credit: Joni Wilm

What we heard from the MSB Community

Mat-Su Borough - SS4A Comprehensive Safety Action Plan - 2024

Survey Results

912 Responses

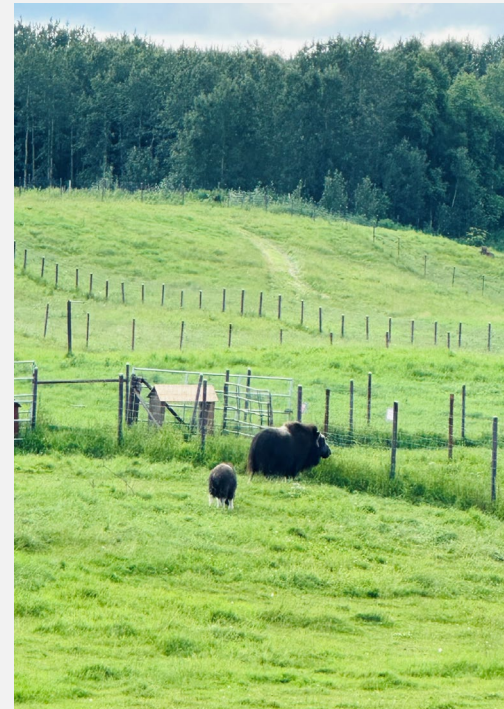


Survey Distribution



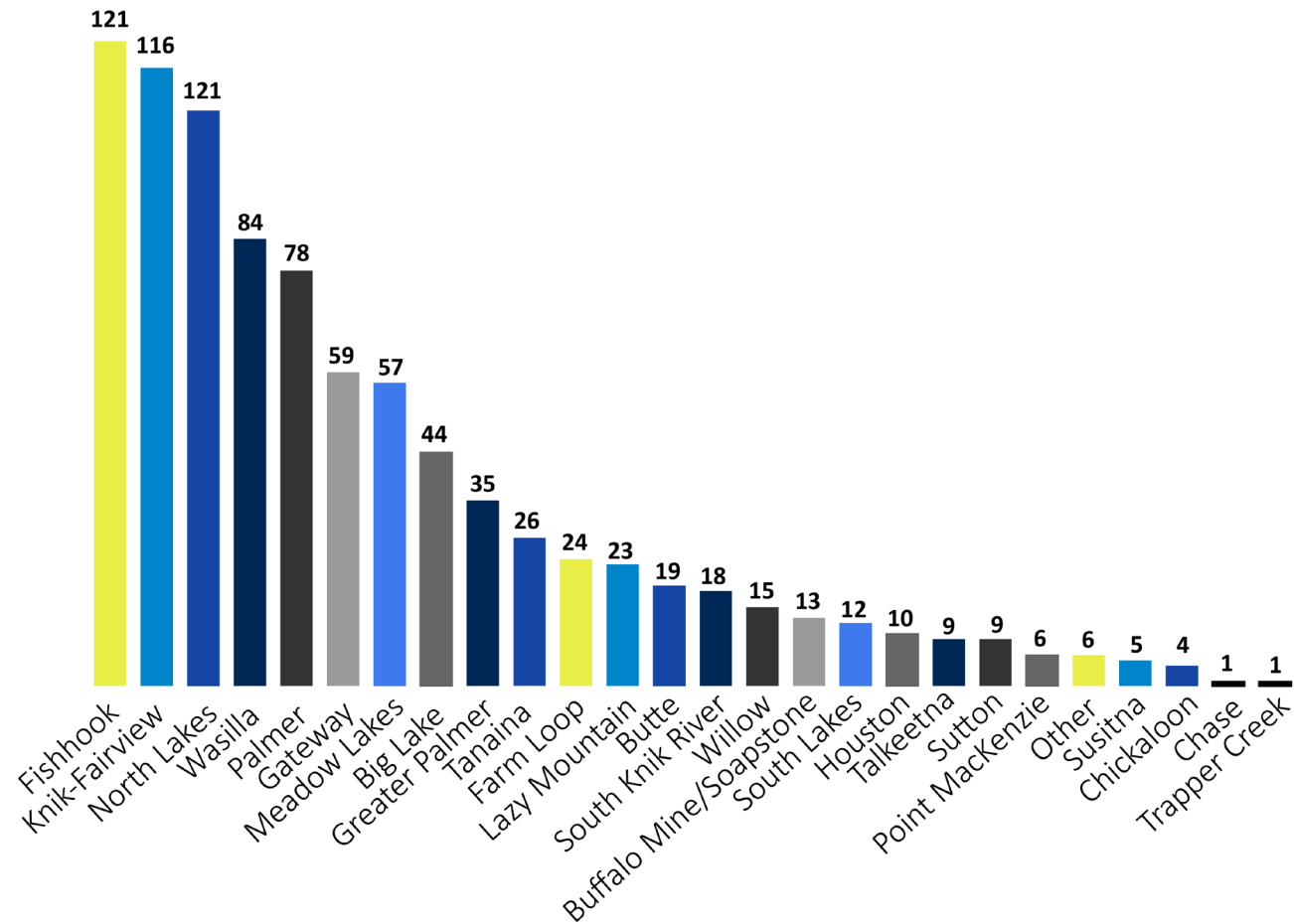
June 26 – September 13, 2024

- Online on the project website
- Paid promotion on the MSB Facebook
- Shared with 13 MSB Facebook groups
- Hard copy distribution in Palmer, Wasilla, and Houston





Residential Location



What would make residents more likely to walk & bike?

1. Off-street multi-use pathways
2. Safe, conveniently located sidewalks
3. All seasonal maintenance of facilities
4. Better lighting and better visibility at intersections
5. Reduced congestion and vehicle speeds



What are the biggest challenges to roadway safety?



1. Inadequate maintenance (roads, sidewalks, pathways)
2. Limited separated places to walk and bike
3. Unsafe driving behaviors (speeding, distracted driving, impairment)
4. Lack of crosswalks, sidewalks
5. Inadequate lighting



**What are
your
biggest
safety
concerns?**

- **Road Design Issues**
- **Congestion**
- **Bogard and Engstrom**
- **Enforcement**
- **Unsafe facilities for biking and walking**

Big Picture Crash Trends (2018-2022)

4,802
TOTAL CRASHES



57 FATAL



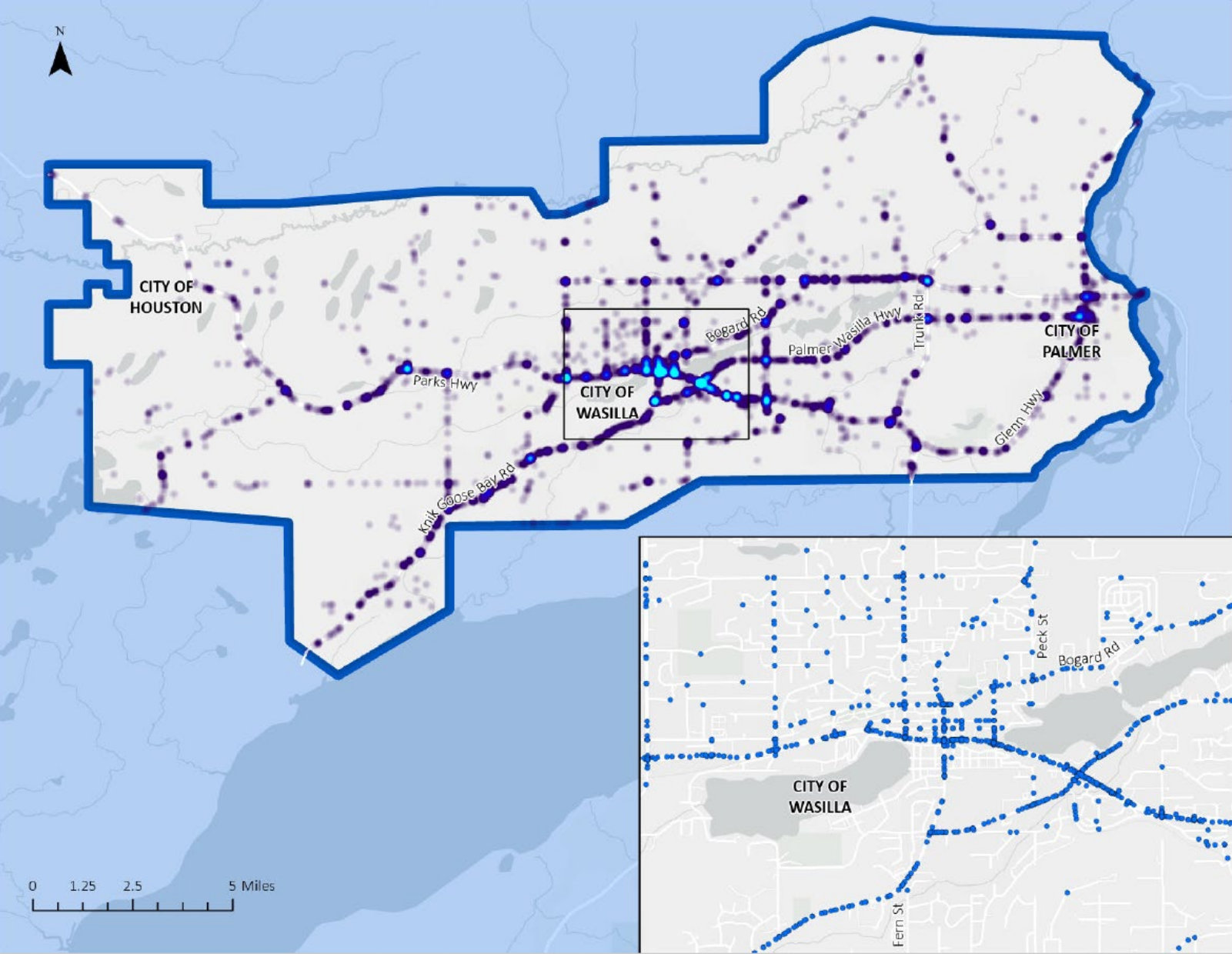
159 SERIOUS INJURY



22 BICYCLE

30 PEDESTRIAN

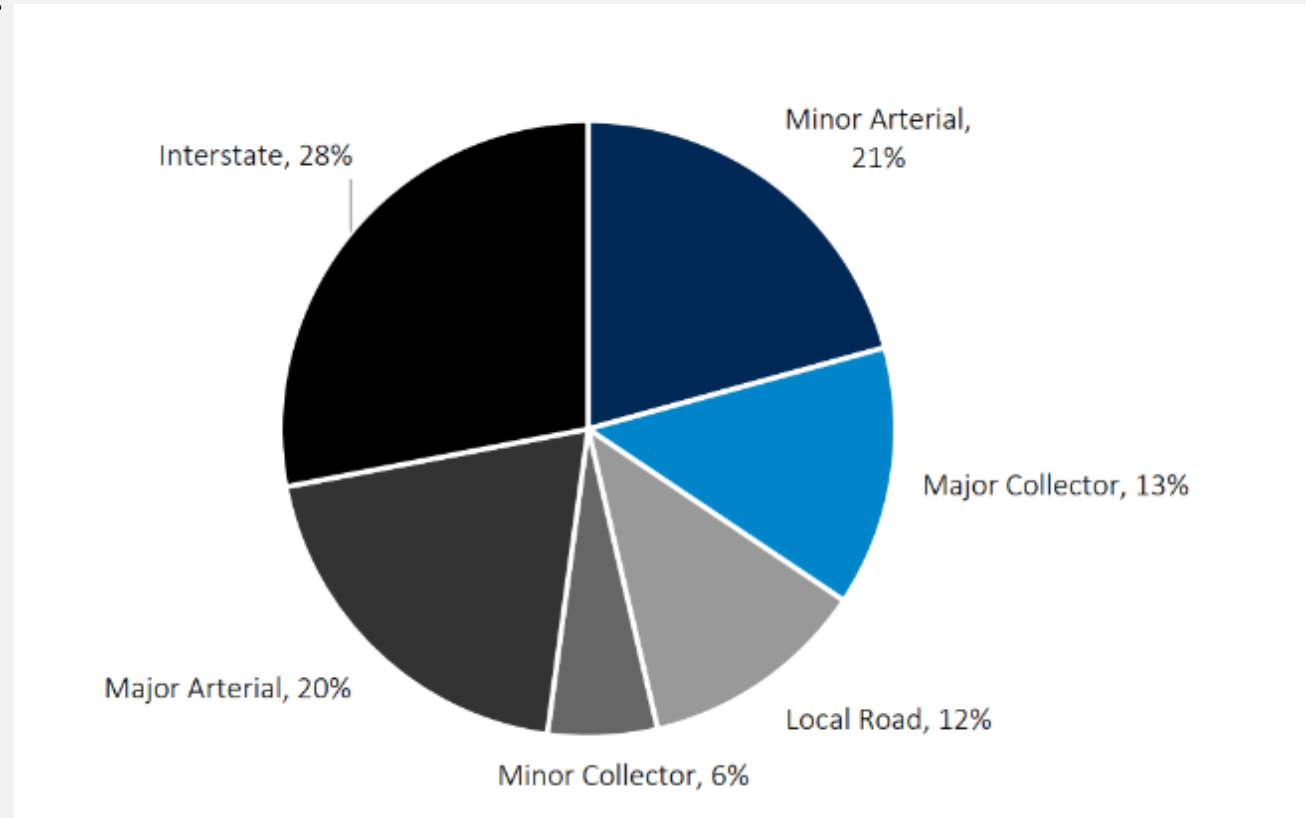
82 MOTORCYCLES



Big Picture Crash Trends



- The most crashes happen on interstates, but more crashes happen on **major and minor arterials** combined.
 - Serious crashes follow same trend
- Drugs or alcohol were involved in **24% of serious crashes**.
- 75% of all crashes and 66% of serious crashes are **intersection related**.
- First harmful events are vehicle-to-vehicle (79% all, 65% serious).
 - Second most common for all crashes is hitting live animal (6.5%)
 - Second most common for serious crashes is rollover (6%)



Crash Trends by Mode



- **Bicycle/pedestrian**

- 22 total bike crashes, 6 serious including 1 fatal
- 30 total ped crashes, 9 serious including 5 fatal
- **86%** of all involved some form of injury, even if minor

- **Motorcycle**

- 82 total, **39%** were serious crashes
- 12% of all crashes and of serious crashes involved alcohol

- **ATV**

- 9 total crashes; 1 serious (fatal)
- 6 with vehicles
- 5 minor injuries

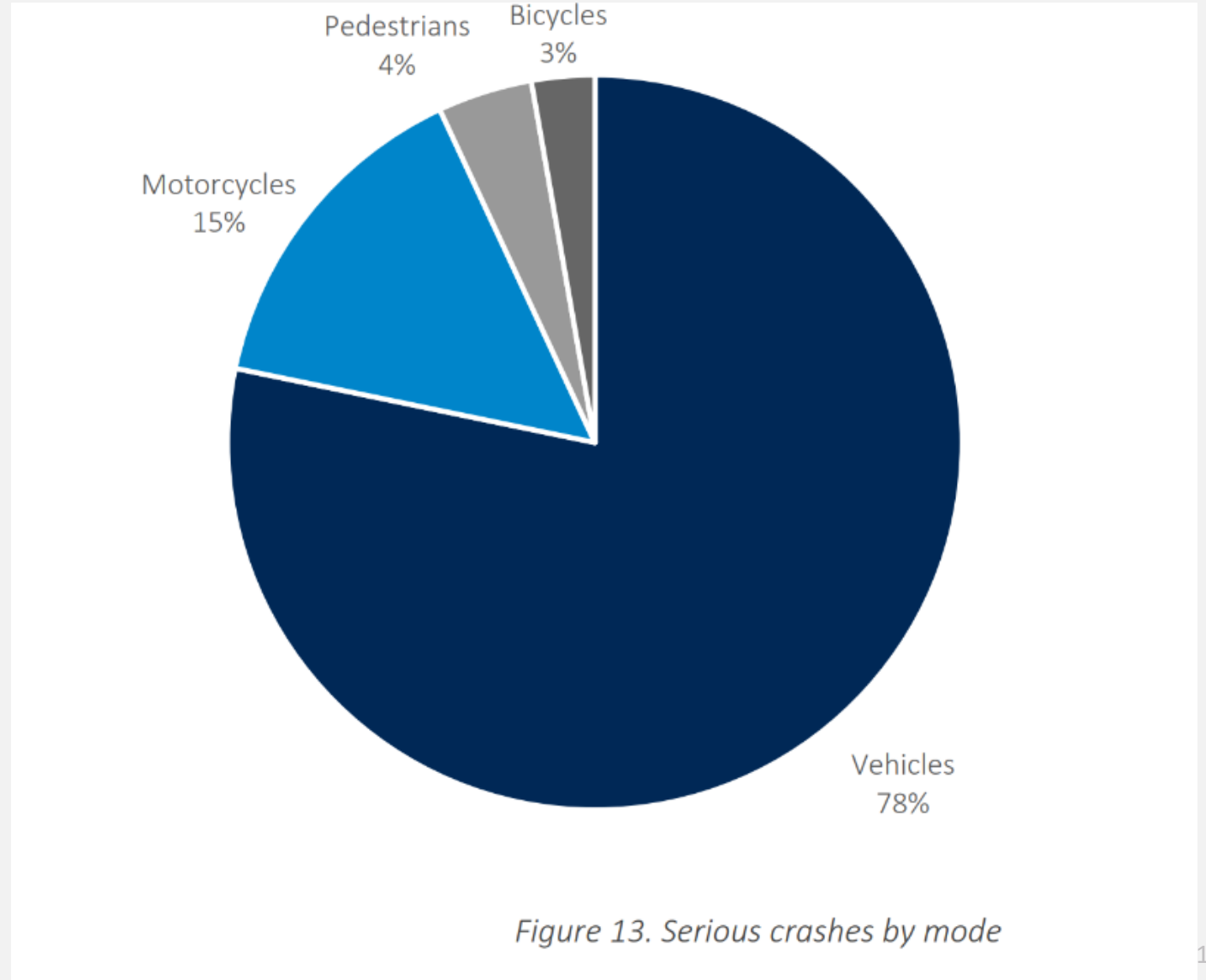
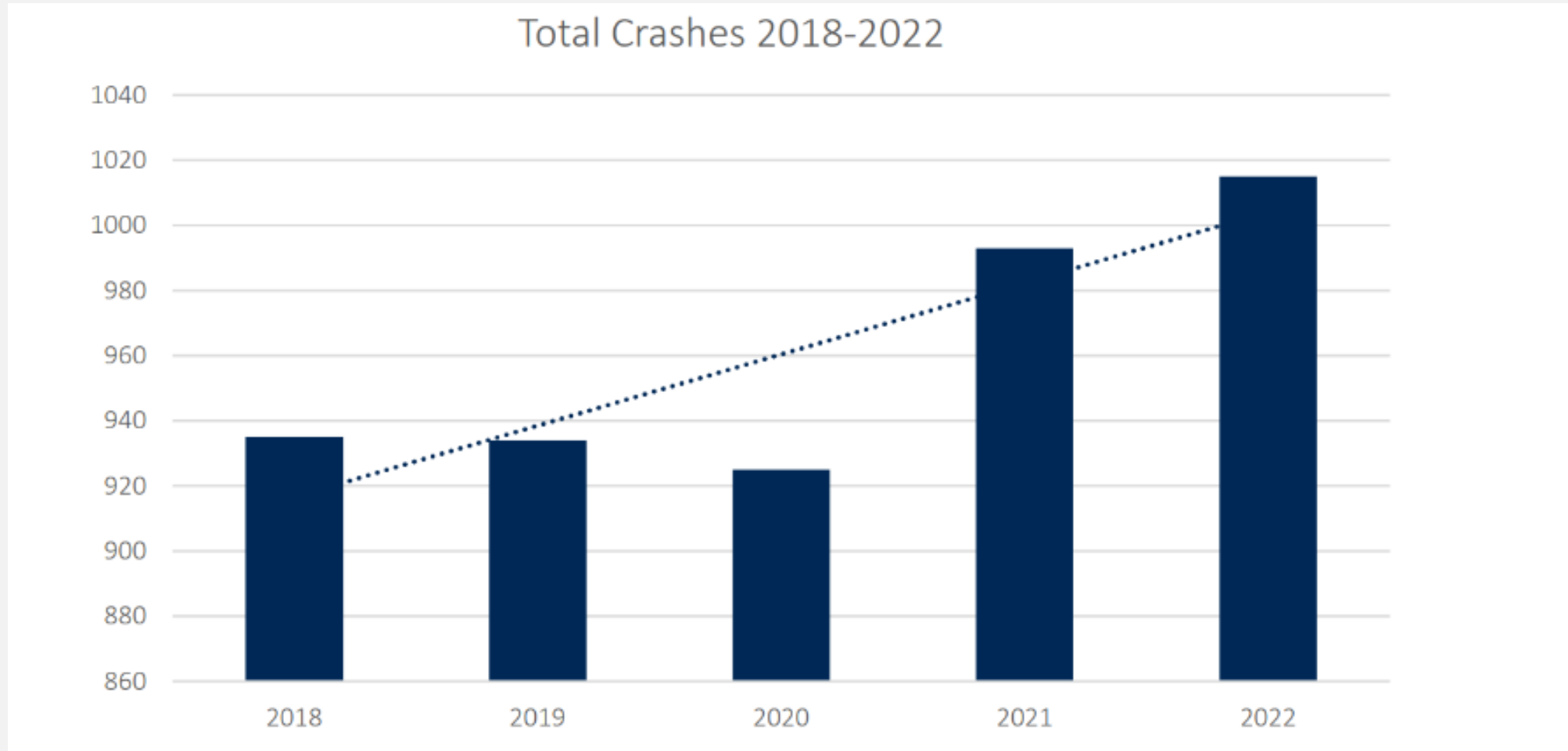


Figure 13. Serious crashes by mode

Crash Trends By Year



More crash details in the online crash data dashboard and online public workshop #2.

- Deeper analysis of serious injury and fatality crashes
- Crash trends by age/gender
- Driver action at time of serious crashes
- Crash trends by month
- Crash trends by lighting conditions

Explore the crash data dashboard

ss4a.matsugov.us



Safe Streets for All

Home About Participate Documents



Mat-Su Borough Safety Plan | Existing Conditions Analysis

Instructions

Find Address

Year

Year is: - All -

Apply Cancel

Injury Type

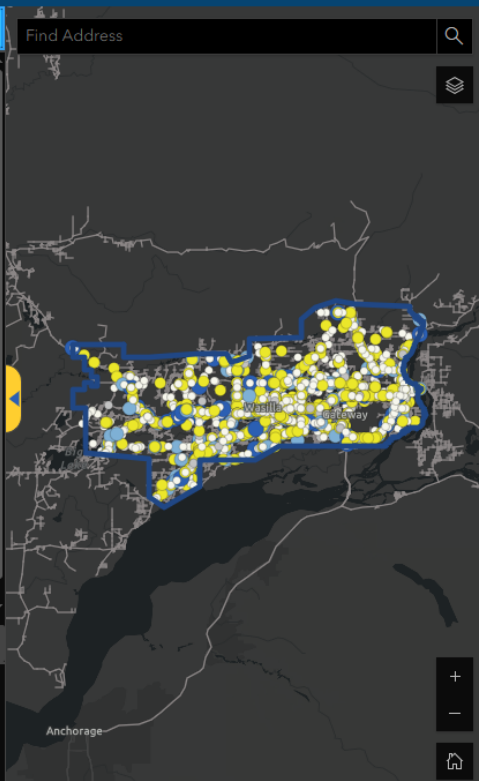
Injury Type is: - All -

Apply Cancel

Mode

Mode is: - All -

Apply Cancel

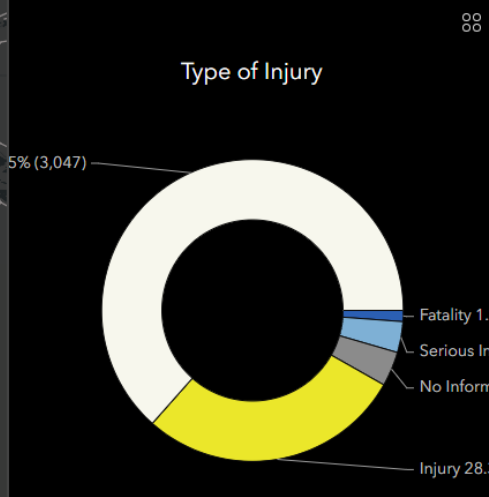


57 Crashes with a fatality

159 Crashes with a serious injury

*To view items in more detail click the upper right corner of the feature, or drag the panes to expand to desired size.

Injury Type Crashes by Year Crash Type Li >



The information in this document is compiled for highway safety planning purposes. Federal law prohibits its discovery or admissibility in litigation against state, tribal, or local government that involves a location or locations mentioned in the crash data. 23 U.S. Code § 407; and 23 U.S. Code § 148(h)

- Injury Type
- Crash Type
- Crashes by year
- Equity analysis



Attend the online virtual workshop

ss4a.matsugov.us



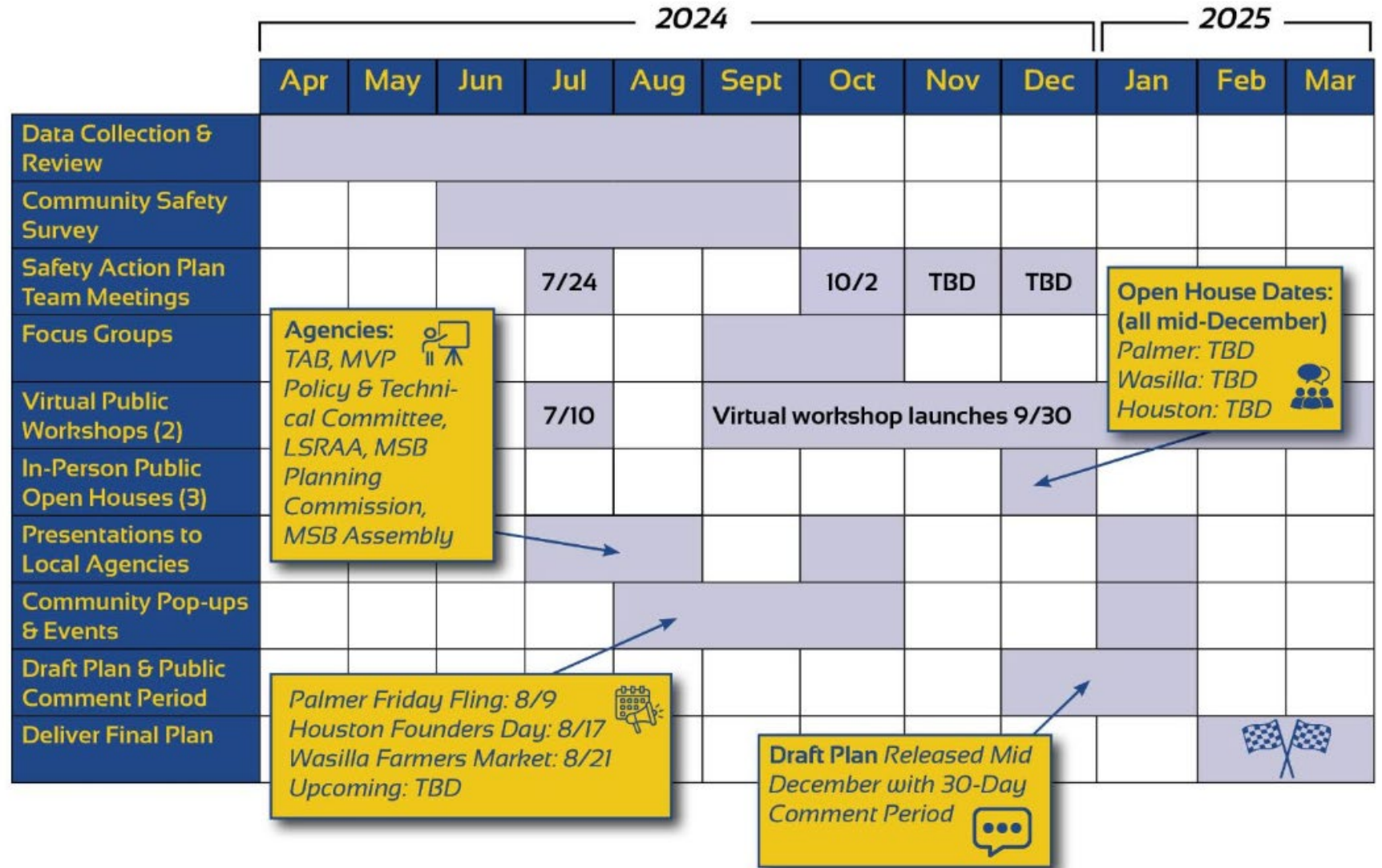
Explore crash & safety data on Mat-Su Borough's urban roads

This virtual workshop is part of the development of the Mat-Su Borough Comprehensive Safety Action Plan

- Explore the data
- Safe Streets for All
- Crash Locations
- Travel Modes
- Causes
- Solutions



What's next and ways to participate



Thank you!

Joni Wilm

Email address:

joni.wilm@mbakerintl.com

Website:

ss4a.matsugov.us



*Parks Highway between Meadow Lakes and Houston
Photo credit: John Olsen*