

Austin Transportation Department

# Smart Trips: North Austin

Evaluation Report

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## Executive Summary

Smart Trips Austin was created to increase awareness of active transportation options, physical activity, and positive attitudes towards the use of active transportation. The Smart Trips personalized marketing approach coupled with the three major goals addressed both the health disparities in the majority Latino North Austin Community and the high rates of traffic congestion in the Austin metropolitan area by encouraging the displacement of inactive car trips to active bus, bicycling, and walking trips.

The program was part of the American Planning Associations Plan4Health grant, an \$110,000 grant that aimed “to improve access to physical activity and healthy food in North Central Austin through district food planning and active transportation encouragement” (Elizabeth Hartig, APA 2015). The Plan4Health initiative was a collaborative effort between the Austin Transportation Department and the Office of Sustainability, with the Office of Sustainability responsible for the healthy food access component of the grant program. Smart Trips Austin also benefited from the assistance and expertise of the Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority, Austin Public Health (then called Austin/Travis County Health and Human Services Department) and the Planning and Zoning Department.

Participants enrolled in the Smart Trips program by mailing back a completed paper toolkit order form, completing a survey and receiving a toolkit at an outreach event, or ordering their toolkit online. Over 27,000 households in the area received a postcard with an invitation to order transportation resources via an online toolkit order form. Another 5,000 households were mailed a survey and order form to fill out and return. Toolkits were delivered directly to participants’ doors and distributed at tabling events. A total 315 Transportation Options Toolkits were delivered between November 2015 and April 2016.

Smart Trips Austin educated target community members about the transportation options in their neighborhood while also increasing awareness of neighborhood destinations like medical facilities, schools, employment centers, and recreational areas. Local maps were created as tools to encourage community members to use an active transportation mode to travel to a destination near their home. Smart Trips materials highlighted rapid bus services, local bus services, rail services, bicycling routes, walking routes, vanpools, and ridesharing mobile apps. Brochures about bicycling and walking safety were also available to participants.

The Smart Trips Austin program also hosted twenty-five active transportation outreach events and partnered with over nineteen community organizations. Outreach events ranged from learn to ride bicycle workshops to transit adventures to tabling at schools events. Attendance success varied at outreach events.

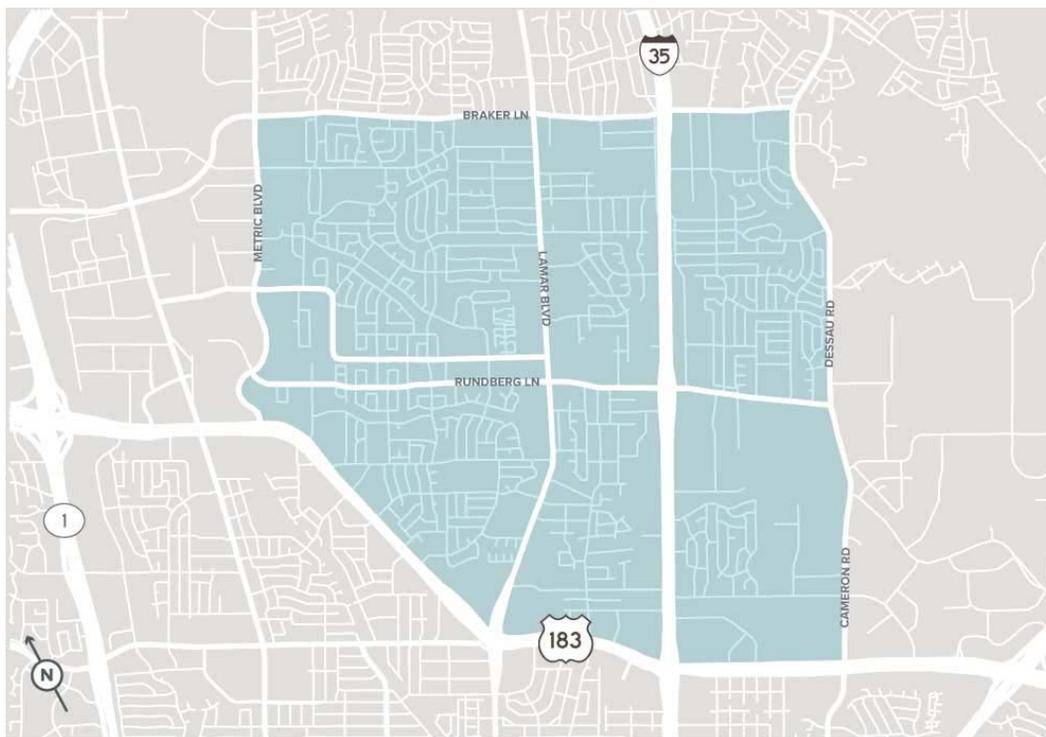
### **Key Findings:**

- The majority of Smart Trips participant’s reported that Smart Trips Austin improved their knowledge of local transportation options.
- Post-program survey participants also reported a 2% relative decrease in car trips and an 11% relative increase in active trips after the completion of the program.
- Overall active transportation mode share increased by 3% among participants.

The numerous lessons learned during the pilot will influence both future Smart Trips Austin programs and future City of Austin active transportation encouragement programs.

## Community

The North Austin community was defined by the geographic boundaries of Metric Boulevard to the west, Anderson Lane to the south, Dessau Road to the east, and Braker Lane to the north.



This area is home to 42,438 residents and 21,300 households. The population in the region is 67.7% Hispanic/Latino and overall 82.4% minority. This population is 30.3% below the age of 18, 61.5% are 16-84, and 10.8% is 65 and older. Housing is majority renter-occupied at 70.1%. Many people in this area are first generation U.S. residents and newly arrived immigrants.

According to the above 8-census tract region, 87% of trips are done by single-occupant vehicle while 6.6% are by public transportation. Less than 1% is by bike and 1.6% is by walking.

The area is predominantly low-income. 31.1% of the population is below 100% federal poverty level. 35.6% of the population over the age of 25 has no high school diploma, which is 2.7 times the rates of low educational attainment in Travis County.

The Hispanic/Latino population in North Austin was targeted due to the health disparities in that population in Travis County. Adult Obesity is higher among Mexican-Americans than non-Hispanic whites, which bestows higher chronic stress, reduced lifespan, and increased instances of diabetes, hypertension and certain cancers. A 2012 Austin/Travis County Community Health Assessment (CHA) found that physical inactivity rate for the Hispanic/Latino population in Travis County was more than double that of whites.

## Program Elements

### Toolkits

Over 5,000 households in the target area received order forms for customized Smart Trips Austin Toolkits and another 27,000 received a postcard inviting them to go online to order their toolkit. Participants could choose the resources included in their Smart Trips Austin branded tote bag. Materials available included both existing resources and custom-branded target neighborhood resources. All resources were intended to either promote awareness of a service or espouse best safety practices.

Existing resources included Capital Metro Systems maps and services brochures, League of American Cyclists Bicycling Quick Guides (a nationally distributed bicycling safety resource), and Safe Routes to School’s “Let’s Walk to School” children’s pedestrian safety coloring books, and the City of Austin Bike Map that highlights bicycling comfort levels citywide roads.

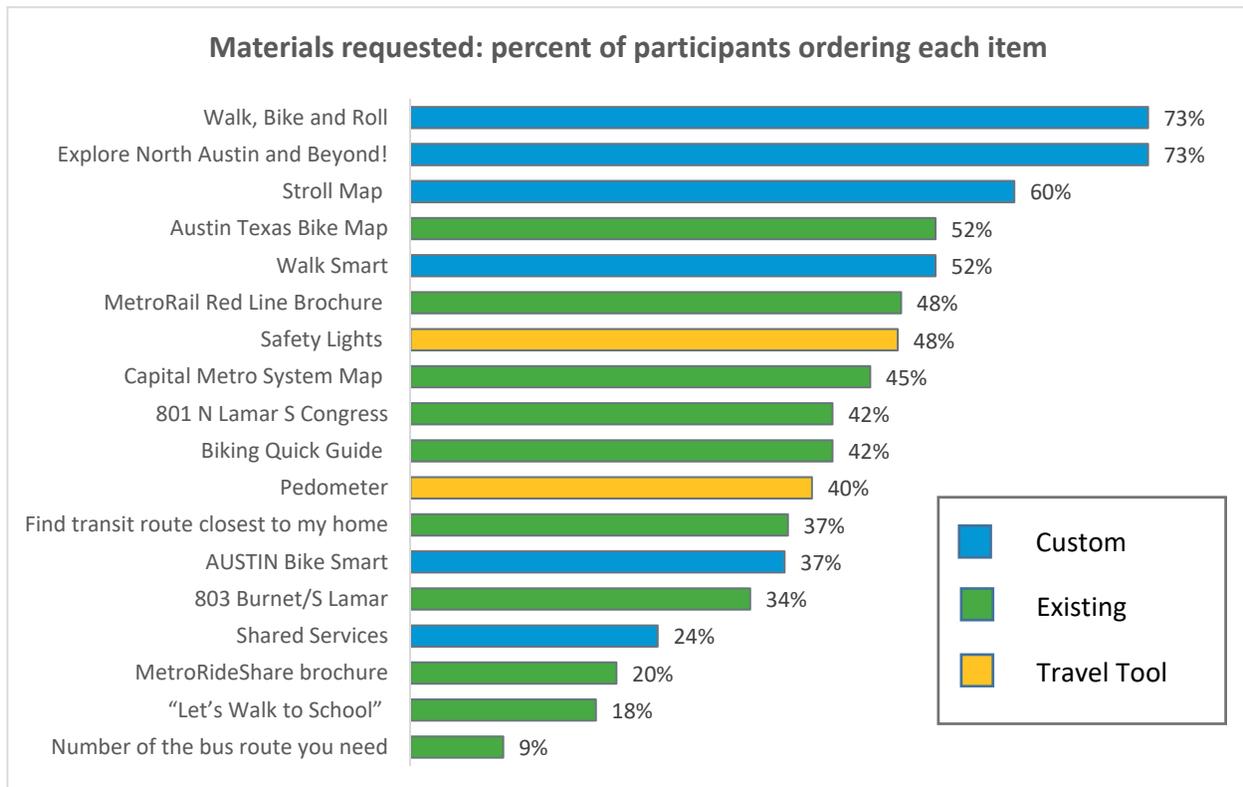
The Smart Trips Team also designed customized Walk, Bike and Roll and Explore North Austin & Beyond neighborhood maps. The bilingual Explore North Austin and Beyond map was a map that identified important destinations in North Austin, like grocery stores, schools, and community centers. The bilingual Walk, Bike & Roll map identified transit and bicycling facilities available in the North Austin community along with destinations of interest. A bilingual “Stroll Map” brochure was designed to highlight a walking route along quiet neighborhood streets that passed several points of interest, like the YMCA of North Austin, HEB (neighborhood grocery store), the Little Walnut Creek Public Library, and Quail Creek Park. Walk Smart and Bike Smart were low-literacy walking and bicycling resources developed to promote best walking and bicycling practices. These brochures were available in both English and Spanish. The Shared Services brochure outlined three carpool and rideshare apps and programs, the MetroRideShare vanpool program, the multi-modal route planning app Ridescout, and the carpool network app Carma; this brochure was also available in both English and Spanish.

Smart Trips Austin participants could request one of two travel tools; either a pedometer or a set of red and white safety lights, each branded with the Smart Trips Austin logo. The travel tools were intended to promote safety and walking in a fun and personalized way.

Toolkits that were distributed at outreach events contained all brochures. This was done to save time during the informal and often quick face-to-face interactions. While the toolkits lost their customization component with this practice, the inclusion of all materials simplified the quick interactions and ensured that outreach tables maintained an organized appearance.

The most popular of the toolkit items were the Walk, Bike and Roll maps, the Explore North Austin and Beyond neighborhood maps, and the Stroll Maps.

Table 1: Materials Available to Order in Toolkit



## Communications

The Smart Trips team strived to create a diverse communications strategy to reach the most possible community members in an economically and racially diverse community. Pre-program neighborhood meetings, paper mail notifications, and an online social media presence helped to reach different community within the target area.

### Pre-Program Meetings

The Smart Trips team met with dozens of community groups to better understand the North Austin area, especially as it relates to access to medical facilities, grocery stores and other daily destinations.

### Paper Mail Order Forms

Order forms and behavioral surveys were sent in the mail to every household in the target area. The envelope contained order forms and travel behavior surveys in both English and Spanish. A total of 164 order forms were returned completed. The return rate was less than less than 1%, far lower than the goal of 5%.

### Online Order Form

An online version of the order form and behavior survey was circulated on Facebook and NextDoor as well as via a postcard mailed to households within the priority community. This order form underwent several revisions; the original version was took participants an average of fifteen minutes to complete. Many people also started the order form and stopped completing the behavior survey due to its length. The long behavior survey was revised to eliminate this barrier to enrolling in the Smart Trips program. Several questions that were deemed redundant and less useful for program purposes were cut to allow for a shorter survey completion time. The NextDoor posts reached people outside the target area due to NextDoor's policy of displaying both member's neighborhood news and also news from nearby neighborhoods, so many of the people who ordered online were actually ineligible for a Smart Trips Toolkit because they lived outside of the priority community.

### Toolkit Delivery

Orders were fulfilled by Bike Austin, a community non-profit organization contracted with the City of Austin to provide toolkit distribution services. Order forms were scanned and emailed by City Staff to Bike Austin for fulfillment. Bike Austin used bus, bicycle and carpool to deliver the Toolkits.

### Social Media

Social Media updates were a mix of Smart Trips Austin program announcements, industry news, and local mobility and public event news. A total of twenty-eight Facebook posts were posted on the Smart Trips Austin Facebook page. The posts reached a total of 2,778 people. The page had 106 "Likes" by the end of the program. Twitter was used sparingly. Social media presence raised awareness of the program. The most successful posts were the Walk Audit Workshop announcement, National Walk to School day industry news, and the Ghisallo Navigation and Route Mapping Workshop announcement.

Table 1: Facebook Social Media Reach

| Date | Reach | Post Type            | Post Content                                     |
|------|-------|----------------------|--|
| 2/17 | 57    | Program Announcement | Smart Trips Announcement                         |
| 2/17 | 95    | Program Announcement | Smart Trips Announcement                         |
| 2/17 | 96    | Program Announcement | Smart Trips Announcement                         |
| 2/17 | 72    | Program Announcement | Smart Trips Announcement                         |
| 2/17 | 89    | Event Recap          | Ghisallo Bike Rodeo Pictures                     |
| 2/18 | 75    | Event Recap          | Ghisallo Cycling Initiative Program Pictures     |
| 2/18 | 63    | Program Announcement | Navigation and Route Mapping Clinic              |
| 2/19 | 31    | Program Announcement | Bike Austin City Cycling Announcement            |
| 2/24 | 159   | Program Announcement | Navigation and Route Mapping Clinic              |
| 2/25 | 18    | Program Announcement | Born Again Bodies Quail Creek Walk Announcement  |
| 2/25 | 267   | Program Announcement | Bike Austin Bike Mechanics Workshop Announcement |

|              |     |                      |   |
|--------------|-----|----------------------|---|
| 3/2          | 15  | Program Announcement | Follow us on Twitter  |
| 3/3          | 167 | Program Announcement | Ghisallo Bike Fix-a-thon Announcement                               |
| 3/7          | 35  | Program Announcement | Ghisallo Spring Break Bike Club announcement                        |
| 3/15         | 47  | Industry News        | Leimert Park Plaza  |
| 3/16         | 20  | Industry News        | AARP Livability Index   |
| 3/16         | 88  | Industry News        | University of Kansas Walking + Mental Health Study                  |
| 3/21         | 23  | Local News           | Reduced Fare ID Program   |
| 3/23         | 17  | Program Announcement | Transit Adventure Announcement                                      |
| 3/24         | 42  | Program Announcement | READ Spring Fest  |
| 3/24         | 23  | Industry News        | "Boston Makes a Game of Litter-Free Sidewalks"                      |
| 3/25         | 43  | Industry News        | "Transit Trends" by Ridescout                                       |
| 3/29         | 109 | Event Recap          | Ghisallo Cycling Initiative/Girl Forward Bike Start                 |
| 3/29         | 190 | Industry News        | "Raptor mom helps kids get excited for National Walk to School Day" |
| 3/30         | 15  | Local News           | Recycled Reads Fix-It Clinic  |
| 3/31         | 441 | Industry News        | "How to Carry Stuff With a Regular Bicycle"                         |
| 4/1          | 18  | Program Announcement | Transit Adventure to Bob Bullock                                    |
| 4/5          | 463 | Program Announcement | Walk Audit Workshop   |
| <b>Total</b> |     | <b>2778</b>          |   |

## Newsletters

Two paper newsletters were sent to the community and to Smart Trips Austin participants throughout the duration of the program. The first newsletter was sent to as an introduction to the upcoming Smart Trips toolkit order forms. This newsletter announced the pre-program transit adventure, previewed the transportation options toolkits, and contained local active transportation news. The second paper newsletter was intended to encourage participants to try transit, bicycling, walking, and transportation apps. This newsletter contained information about local rapid bus services, the Capital Metro Reduced Fare ID program, and Smart Trips event announcements.

## Postcard

A postcard reminding participants to go online to order their Smart Trips materials was sent in March to all households in the target area. Seventy-seven people ordered a Transportation Options Toolkit online after the postcard was received by the community. Several community members called the Smart Trips Hotline because they received the postcard in the mail, but did not have an internet connection at home to place their order.

## Events

Smart Trips Austin had a large programmatic/event focus. The goal of the Smart Trips events was to engage 50% of targeted households in an event, class or other program that provided additional skill and knowledge about active transportation choices. Attendance at events varied based on the type of event and the engagement with existing relationships with community organizations and pre-existing community relationships.

## Contractor Events

The City of Austin contracted three active living/active transportation non-profits to host the skill building classes and events. The non-profits were The Ghisallo Cycling Initiative, a youth and senior bicycle education organization, the Bike Austin Education Fund, the educational branch of a local bicycle advocacy organization, and Born Again Bodies, a community health and fitness organization.

| Date              | Contractor        | Event                       | Attendance |
|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|------------|
| 2/14/2016         | Ghisallo          | Bike Rodeo                  | 20         |
| 2/16/ - 3/24/2016 | Born Again Bodies | Weekly Walking Club         | Aprox. 4-6 |
| 2/17              | Ghisallo          | Bicycle Navigation Workshop | 15         |
| 2/20              | Bike Austin       | City Cycling Class          | 0          |

|                  |             |                         |    |
|------------------|-------------|-------------------------|----|
| 2/27             | Bike Austin | Bike Mechanics Workshop | 0  |
| 3/9, 23, 30/2016 | Ghisallo    | After School Bike Club  | 21 |
| 3/14 – 18/2016   | Ghisallo    | Youth Bike Club         | 15 |
| 3/19/2016        | Bike Austin | City Cycling Class      | 2  |
| 3/19/2016        | Ghisallo    | Bike Start              | 15 |
| 3/20/2016        | Bike Austin | City Cycling On-Bike    | 0  |
| 3/23/2016        | Bike Austin | Bike Mechanic Workshop  | 2  |
| 4/7/2016         | Bike Austin | Bike Rodeo              | 1  |

### Smart Trips Tabling Events

The Smart Trips Team attended many community and school fairs to raise awareness about the program, answer community members' questions about their transportation options, and distribute complete toolkits in exchange for community members completing the transportation behavior survey. These events were successful in engaging a large number of community members and distributing toolkits to people who may not have opened their original paper mail order form.

| Date       | Event   | Attendance |
|------------|---|------------|
| 11/19/2015 | CATCH Night, Graham Elementary                  | 20         |
| 11/23/2015 | Univision en Su Comunidad Community Health Fair | 30         |
| 12/5/2016  | Guerrero Thompson Elementary Winter Fest        | 500        |
| 12/5/2016  | Tree Planting at Barrington Elementary          | 100        |
| 1/13/2016  | Goodwill Excel Center                           | 50         |
| 2/20/2016  | Chinese New Year Celebration                    | 40         |
| 3/1/2016   | Goodwill Excel Center                           | 50         |
| 3/23/2016  | Lanier High School Family Fun Night             | 100        |
| 3/26/2016  | Rundberg Spring Festival                        | 20         |
| 4/7/2016   | Dobie Middle Health Fair                        | 15         |

### Walk Audit

The City of Austin partnered with Street Plans Collaborative, an active transportation planning and design firm, to host a Walk Audit with community members, local transportation professionals, and public safety officers. The Walk Audit was an observational tool to systematically evaluate the walkability, livability, and safety of particular streets. The day prior to the walk audit, the City of Austin and Street Plans hosted a volunteer leader training at the North Austin YMCA. The streets the Walk Audit evaluated were Mearns Meadow Blvd, Rutland Dr, and Stonebridge Drive. The walk traversed the area around the North Austin YMCA, a residential zone, and the streets around Quail Creek Park.

| Date     | Event                         | Attendance |
|----------|-------------------------------|------------|
| 4/5/2016 | Walk Audit Volunteer Training | 15         |
| 4/6/2016 | Walk Audit Workshop           | 25         |

### Transit Adventure

Transit adventures were a program intended to create a fun and relaxed atmosphere for community members to learn how to use the bus system with their neighbors. Three transit adventures were hosted, however only the first event was successfully executed. This was because the Smart Trips Team partnered with a neighborhood association to recruit participants. Follow up attempts to host Transit Adventures were less successful at recruiting an audience.

| Date       | Event                              | Attendance |
|------------|------------------------------------|------------|
| 12/12/2015 | Holiday Sing-A-Long at the Capitol | 12         |
| 3/26/2016  | Rundberg Spring Festival           | 0          |
| 4/6/2016   | Rundberg to Bob Bullock Museum     | 0          |

## Program Evaluation

Two methods were used in the evaluation of Smart Trips: North Austin program. All participants who ordered a toolkit were asked to complete a survey before their participation in the program. The pre-program survey included transportation behavior and attitudes questions as well as personal demographic questions. This survey was compared to a post-program survey that asked the Smart Trips participants the same behavior and attitude questions as the pre-survey. The post-survey also included questions to measure whether the program increased the participants' knowledge of their transportation options and their experience with the program.

The initial survey was included in both the paper mail order form that was sent to all households in the target area as well as the online version of the order form that circulated on social media platforms, NextDoor and via the mailed postcard. Potential participants were asked to complete the survey in exchange for receiving a toolkit at their home or at one of several outreach events hosted by the program. A link to the post-program survey was sent to all program participants who listed their email address. A paper version of the survey was mailed to all participants who provided their home address.

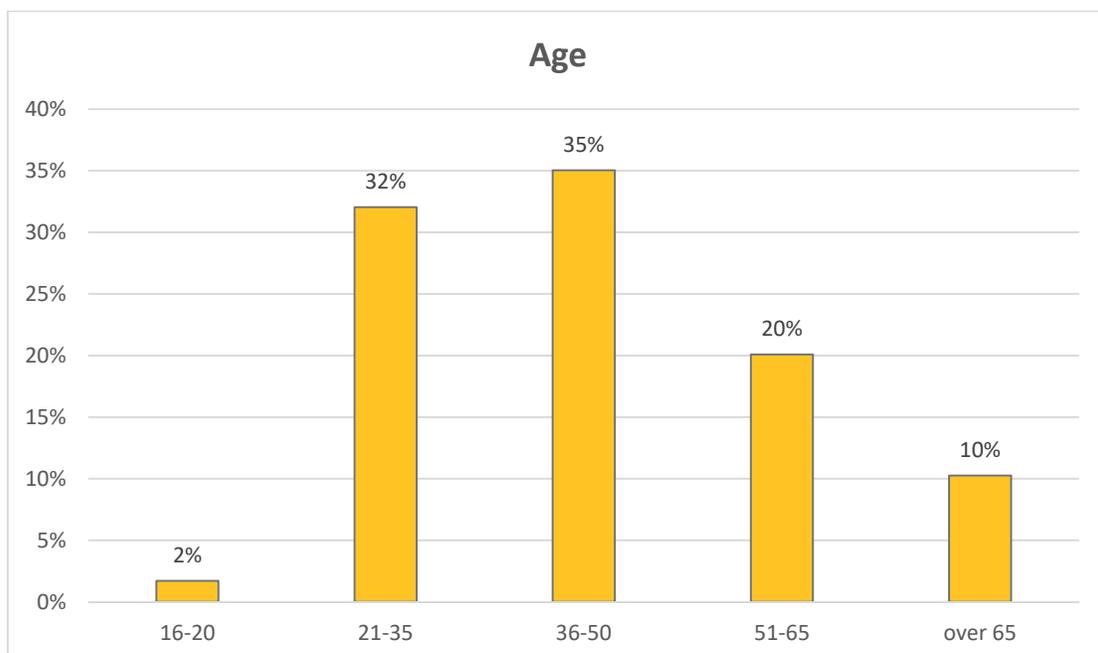
A total of 315 people completed the pre-program survey and 49 people completed the post-program survey. The pre and post program evaluation was done using a panel survey approach, where the same 49 people that filled out the post-survey were compared with their same travel behavior reported in the pre-program survey. In order to complete the following analysis, the populations are assumed to be comparable.

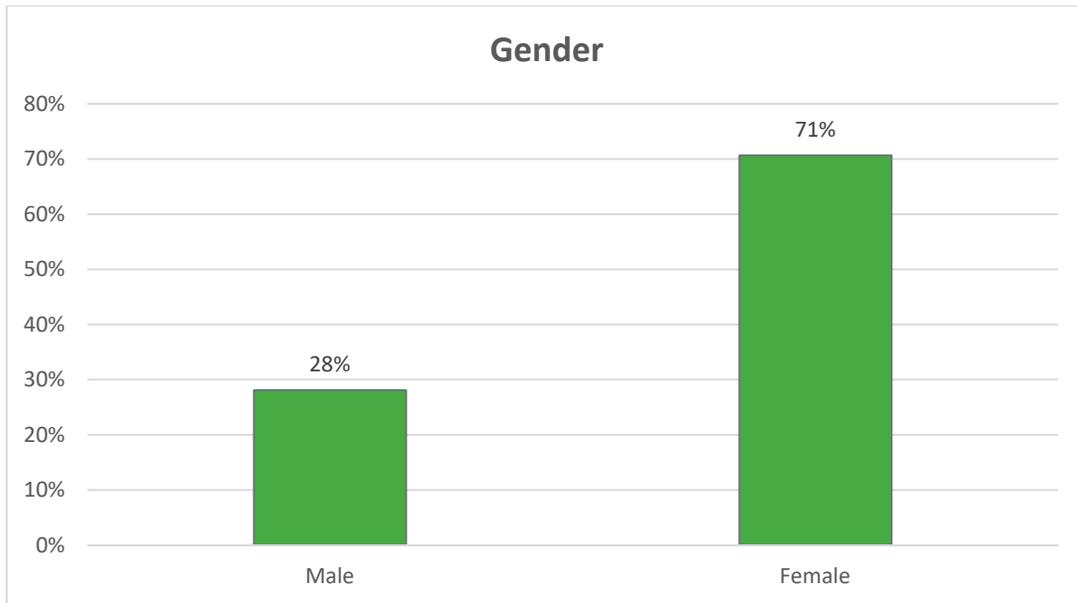
### Demographics

Program participants were asked to report the basic demographic information of age and gender. 2% of participants were below 18; these are likely participants who received a toolkit at the Lanier High School Health Night tabling event. Several of people who were under eighteen who attended this event expressed interest in bringing the information brochures, especially the Spanish language brochures, home for a parent or grandparent.

32% of the participants were 21-35, 35% were 36-50, and 20% were 51-65. About 10% of participants were over 65, which is comparable with the area demographics. The majority of program participants (67%) were in the 21-50 age bracket. The majority of program participants were women (71%) while only under a third were men (28%).

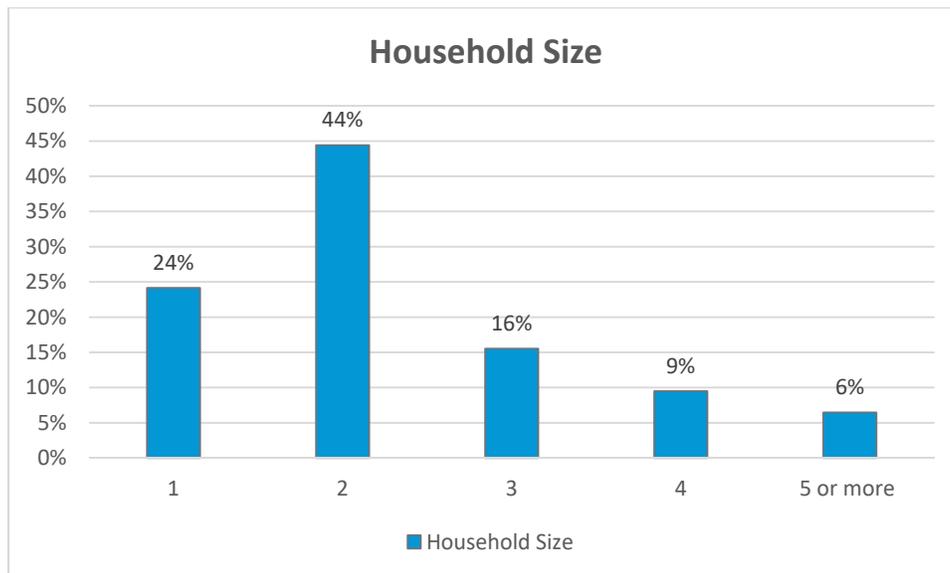
*Table 2 Self-Reported Ages of Smart Trips North Austin Participants*

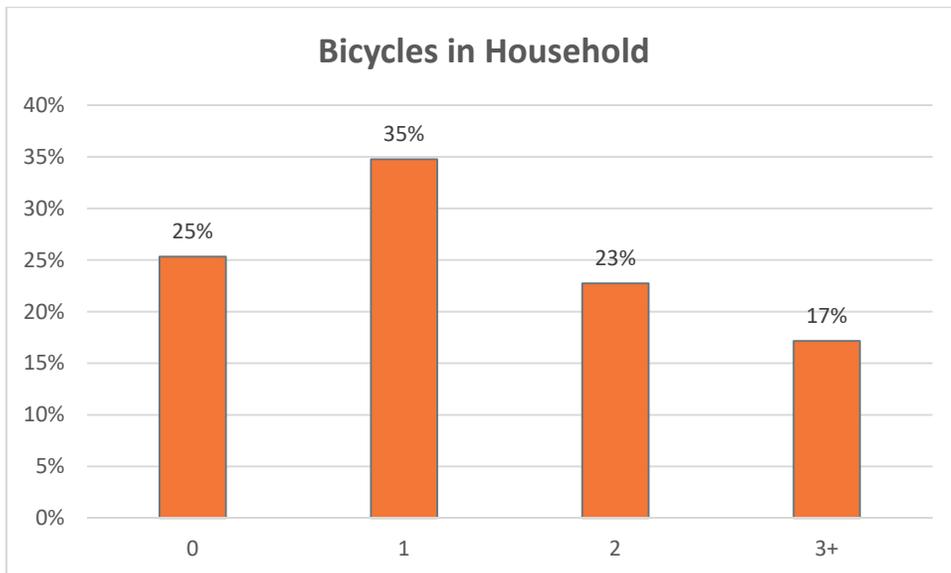
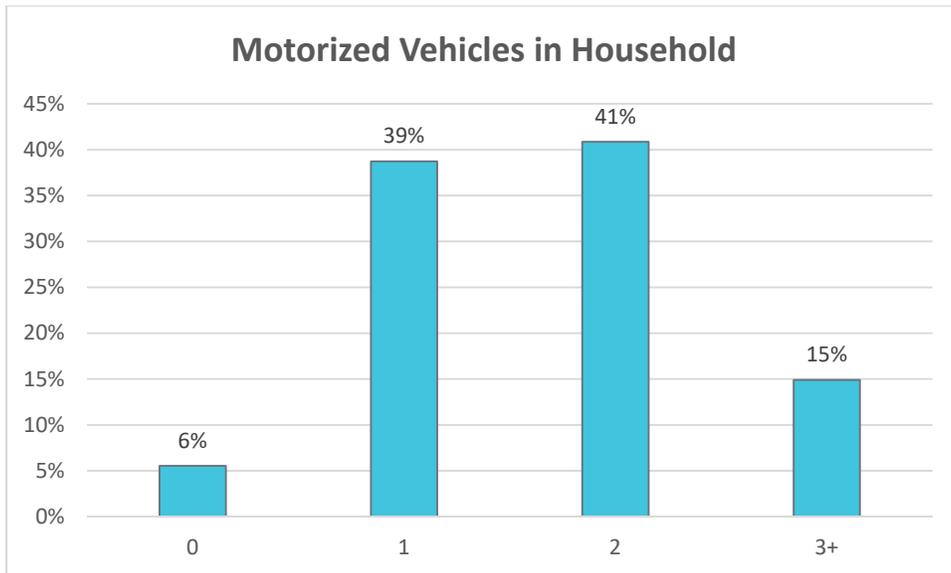




## Household

Participants were asked to report how many people, including themselves, live in their current household. 44% of participants lived in a two person household, 24% lived alone, and 31% lived with at least two other people. Participants were also asked how many motorized vehicles and bicycles were in their household. Very few (6%) of households did not have access to a motorized vehicle, whereas 25% of participants did not have access to a bicycle. Further information that would be useful to learn about participants in future programs would be how many of the bicycles are working at the time and whether the bicycle is their personal bicycle or their children's' bicycles; this information would determine how many people can use a bicycle at the time and gauge the need for bicycle mechanic clinics





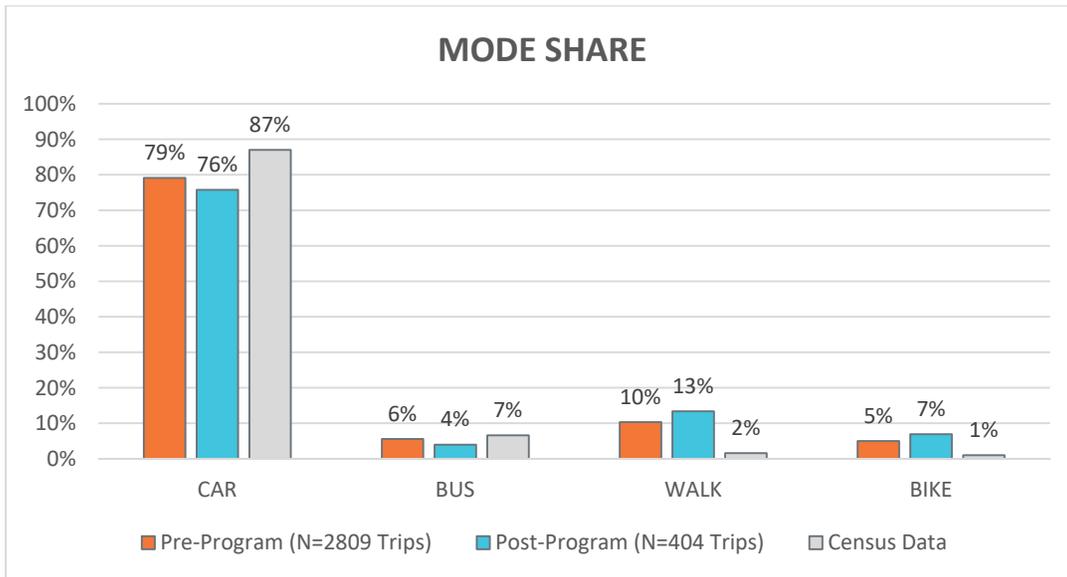
## Mode Share

### All trips

Participants were asked “In the past three days (do not include today), HOW MANY trips did you make using the travel types listed below”. Participants reported the number and type of one way trips they took to the categories work, school, errands (store, shopping, library, doctor, etc.), and other (social, recreational) in a grid format.

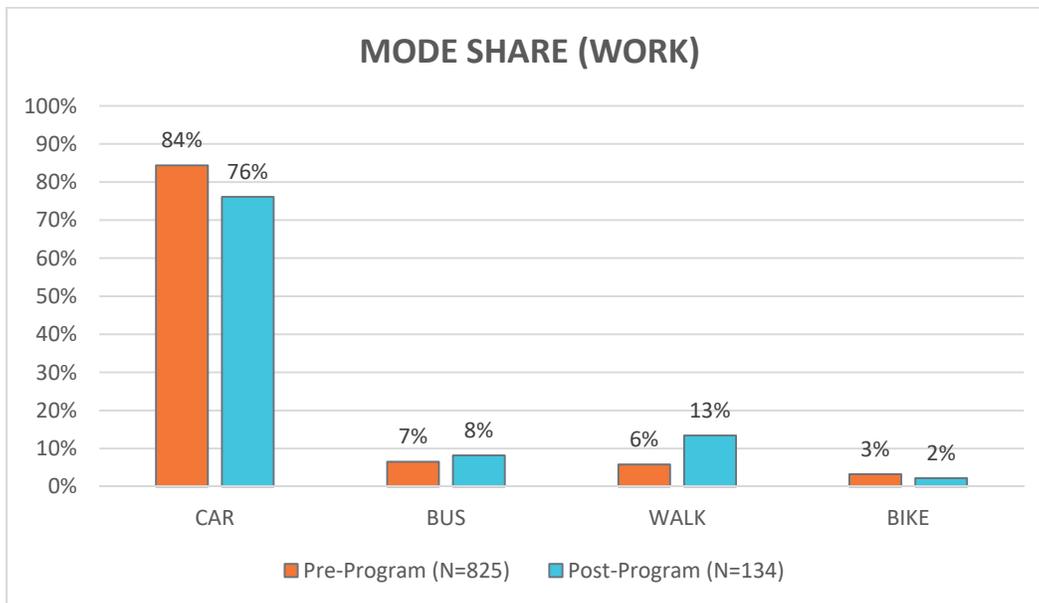
Mode share was determined by calculating the proportion of trips taken by each mode compared to all trips reported by all participants. Active mode share was calculated by combining the proportion of bus, walk, and bicycle trips compared to all trips taken.

When comparing the pre-program and post-program surveys, car mode share decreased by 3% whereas bicycling mode share increased by 2% and walking mode share increased by 3%. Transit mode share decreased by 4%. Several post-program participants reported that they learned there was no bus service near their home; the decrease in bus service may reflect the limited transit availability among post-program participants. The reported walking and bicycling trips before and after the program was significantly higher than the census data mode share for the target area. This supported the idea that a person who already walks and bikes to destinations may be more likely to enroll in active transportation encouragement program than someone exclusively drives a personal vehicle.

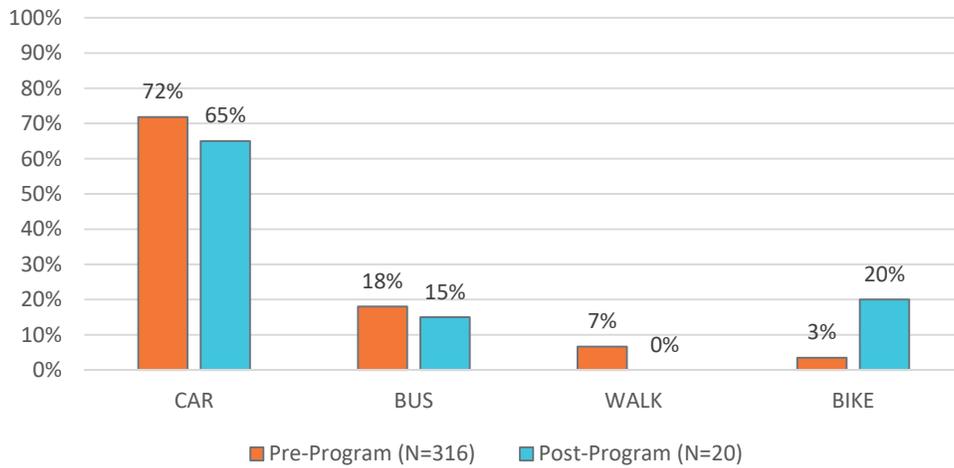


### Type of Trip

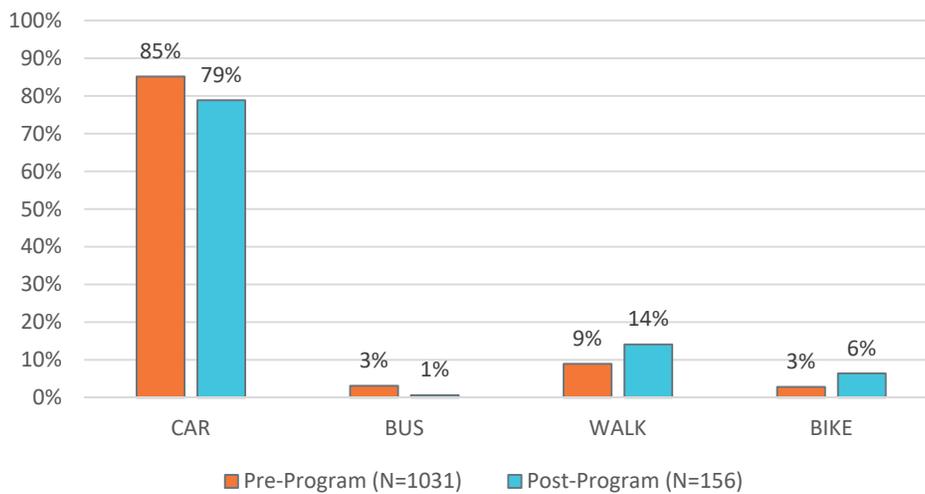
All types of trips except “Other” decreased in inactive mode share. The decrease in proportion of inactive mode share for work, school, and errands was between six percentage points and eight percentage points. The greatest increase in active mode share by mode and type of trips was bicycling to school; 3% of trips to school were taken by bicycle before the program and 20% of trips to school were taken by bicycle after the program. However, the post-program school trips sample size was small (20 trips), which likely influenced the results. Bicycling for errands also increased from 3% mode share in the pre-program survey to 6% mode share in the post-program survey. A significant increase in walking to work and to errands was also observed; the walking mode share changed from 6% to 13% to work and 9% to 14% for errands. A greater proportion of trips in the category “Other (social, recreational)” were taken by car after the duration of the program; 66% of pre-program program trips were taken to social and recreational destinations by car and 79% of post-program trips were taken by car to social and recreational destinations. The proportion of bus trips taken decreased by one to three percentage points in all categories except for trips to work, which increased by one percent.



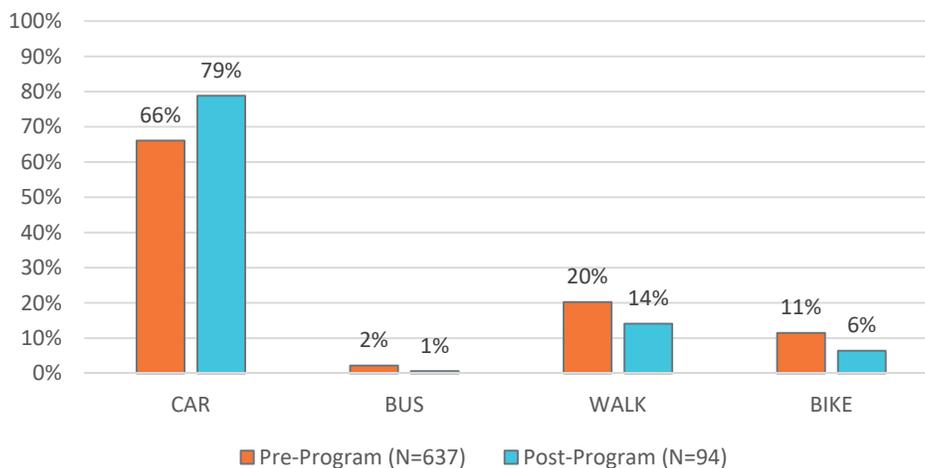
### MODE SHARE (SCHOOL)



### MODE SHARE (ERRANDS)



### MODE SHARE (OTHER)



## Average Relative Change

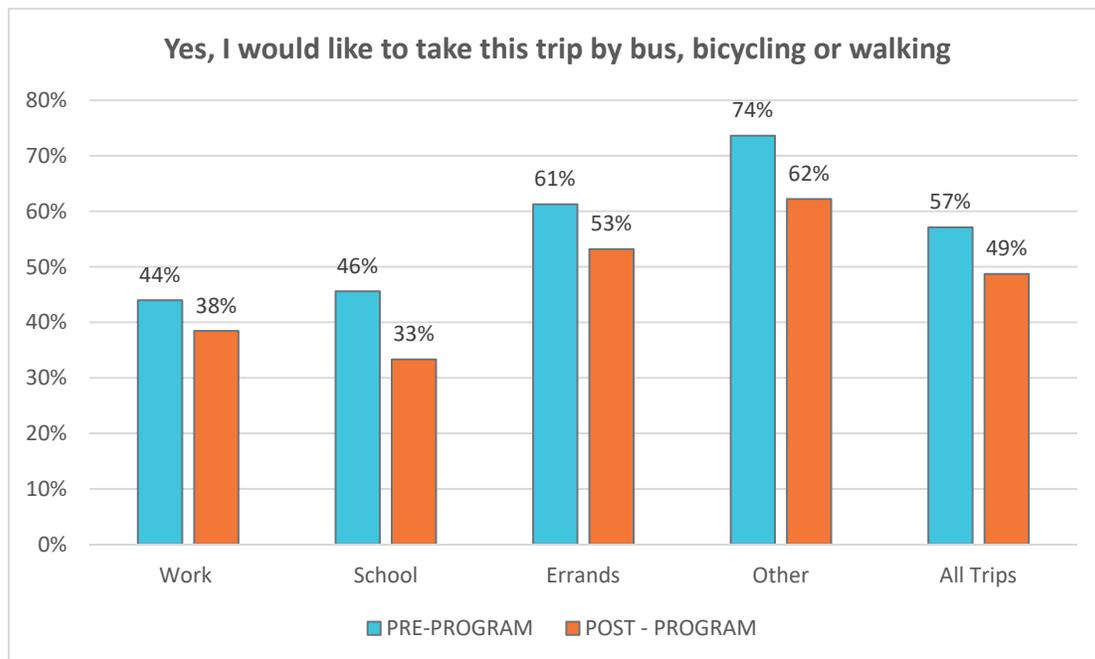
Post-program survey participants reported the number of trips they took in the three days prior to completion of the survey. The number of inactive trips (car) and the number of active trips (bus, bike, or walking) were compared with the participants' pre-program responses to calculate the relative increase or decrease in each type of trip. The average relative increase in active trips in the post-program survey participants was 11.8% and the average relative decrease in inactive trips was 2.2%. This indicates that participants in the program generally increased their trips by bus, walking, or bicycling and decreased their car trips.

## Attitudes towards Active Transportation Options

..Would you like to make these trips by bus, walking or bicycling?

Pre-Program and Post-Program participants were asked whether they would like to make a trip to work, school, errands, or other in the next few days by an active mode (bus, bicycling, or walking). Overall, the proportion of people who would like to take an active mode rather than an inactive mode decreased in post-survey respondents. This could be a result of trying an active mode as a result of the program, and finding it difficult in a limited infrastructure and service area. A useful metric to compare these results for future surveys is whether the participant would like to drive a personal vehicle to work, school, errands, or other to determine if the decrease in desire to take an active mode corresponds with a decrease in desire to drive. The proportion of people who would not like to take various trips by active modes decreased between 6-13% points, the lowest change observed in the proportion of people who want to take an active trip to work and the greatest change seen in the proportion who would like to take an active mode to school.

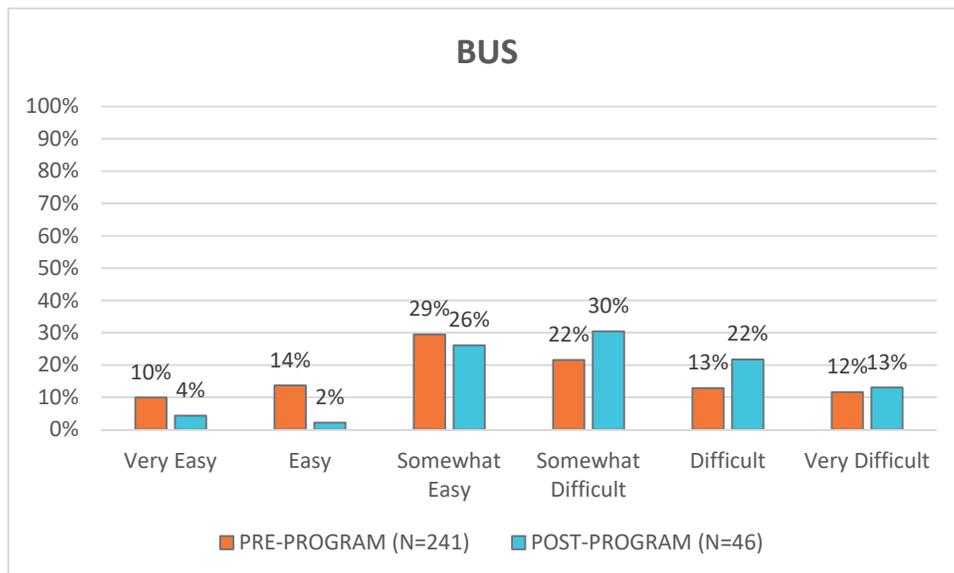
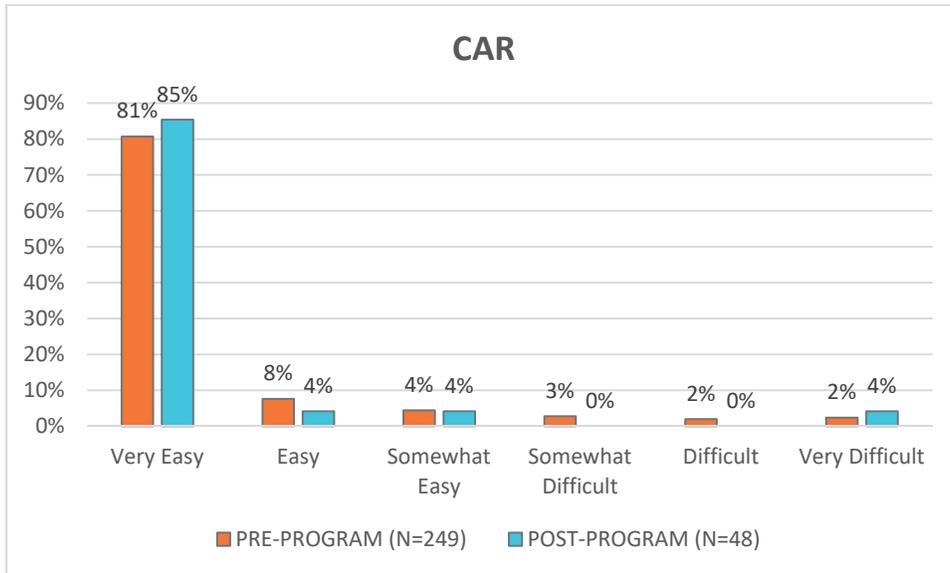
Post-program participant responses were compared to their individual pre-program responses to determine whether participants changed their responses from "No, I would not like to take this trip by bus, bicycling or walking" to "Yes, I would like to take this trip by bus, bicycling, or walking". 6% of responses changed from "No, I would not like to take this trip by bus, bicycling, or walking" in the pre-program survey to "Yes, I would like to take this trip by bus, bicycling, or walking" in the post-program survey.

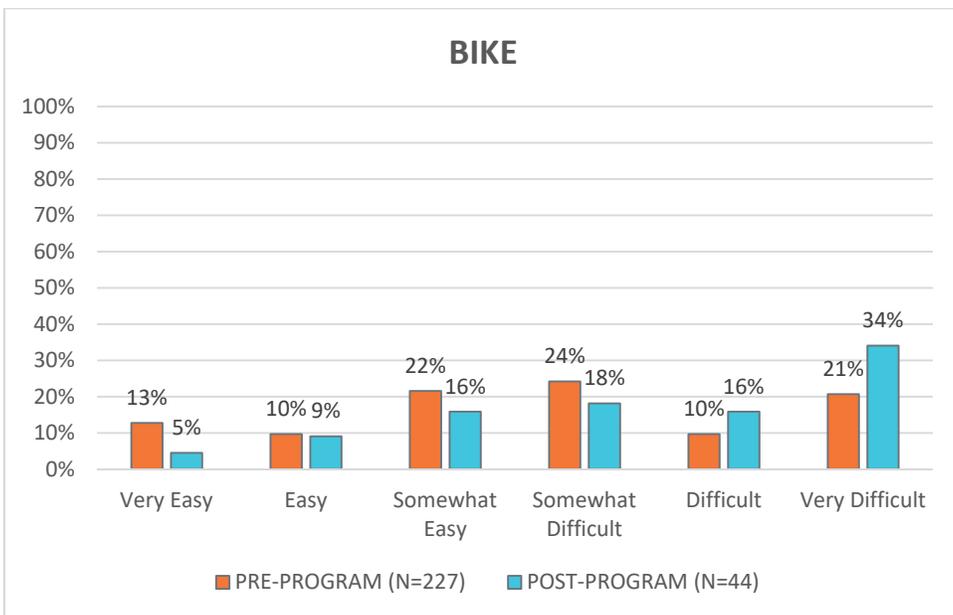
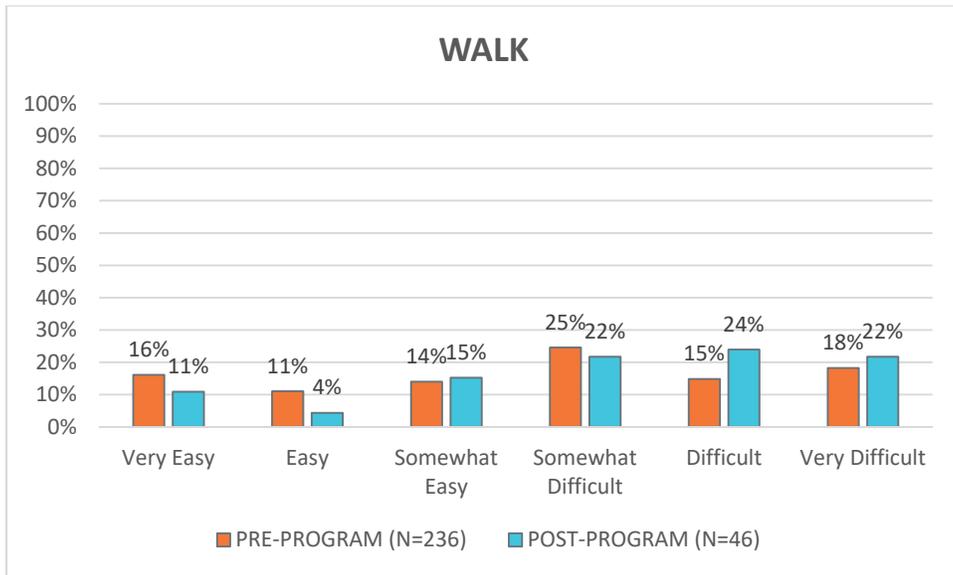


How easy would it be for you to use the following types of transportation for day-to-day non-work trips from your current home?

Participants were asked to rank the difficulty of using active and inactive modes for daily non-work trips. This question intended to measure if a lack of knowledge about options and facilities was a significant barrier in participants'

perceived ease of using these options. A greater proportion of post-program survey participants reported that using a car for day-to-day trips was “Very Easy”; 81% of pre-program participants ranked car trips as “Very Easy” whereas 85% of post-program participants ranked car trips as “Very Easy”. A greater proportion of participants ranked all active modes as being less easy after the program. This could be due to the participants using an active mode to get to their destinations in an area with limited services and infrastructure.





## Sustainability

The Smart Trips team strived to create sustainable change in the target area. Several non-profits expressed interest in learning more about transportation options so they could guide their clients, many of whom did not own cars, in traveling around Austin to increase their mobility. Many custom and pre-existing resources were not distributed to community members in the toolkit distribution process; the remaining resources were distributed to interested community non-profits.

A Smart Trips Austin transportation options system and safety training was presented to clients of Partnerships for Children, an organization that assists young adults who are transitioning out of the foster care system in the North Austin community. Each client was given a transportation options toolkit and the leaders of the organization were given community maps and safety brochures to assist future clients in learning how to navigate their neighborhood and safely walk and bike in Austin.

Several non-profits that are located in the North Austin community or work in the North Austin community were asked if Smart Trips Austin materials would be useful in serving their clients. Caritas, a local refugee and homelessness alleviation organization, also accepted maps, brochures, and travel tools. They were especially interested in the maps because they

relocate many of their clients to the North Austin community. Their social workers preferred the bilingual and visual materials because most of their clients spoke languages other than English. CommUnity Care, a healthcare provider, requested only the neighborhood maps. Their North Austin location was featured on the “Explore North Austin” custom Smart Trips map. The YMCA of North Austin accepted the remaining Walk Smart, Bike Smart, and Stroll Map materials. The North Austin YMCA is featured on the stroll map, so distributing these materials was relevant to the population that frequents the site. YMCA staff were excited to incorporate these brochures into their programming.

These community organizations and centers are valuable modes of delivering the Smart Trips information to populations that may not have been reached by the initial mail order form. Distributing the materials through these community trusted organizations will disseminate the active transportation encouragement information to a wider audience in the target community.

## Lessons Learned

### Outreach

A concurrent code enforcement program occurred at the same time as Smart Trips North Austin. This program cited many community members for various code violations. The code enforcement program may have decreased community trust in City of Austin mail pieces and may have impacted the low mail in order form participation rate.

### Recommendation

Increase coordination with all land use and transportation divisions with the City of Austin to ensure all programs can be delivered successfully.

### Mail Registration

The paper mail response rate was less than one percent. This rate was much less than the initial goal of enrolling over 5% of the community through paper mail order forms. Many envelopes were “Returned to Sender”, and therefore were not delivered to the intended recipient or household. Lower income communities are more likely to be highly mobile by moving more often. The high mobility of the community coupled with the returned mail policy meant that many household did not receive paper order forms. People who did receive the order form may not have opened it because the envelope resembled a bill rather than an announcement for a free transportation options program. The assembly of order form and behavior survey was also not intuitive as the Smart Trips logo was not visible when the envelope was opened and it was not apparent that Spanish materials were included.

### Recommendation 1

Ensure that the policy on the US Postal Service account does not “forward to current address” or “return to sender” if the name on the envelope does not match the current resident of the household. Order forms can also be distributed to willing apartment managers to be distributed on apartment doors to ensure that the most current residents are able to request toolkits

### Recommendation 2

Use a visually appealing envelope that communicates in both English and Spanish that the contents of the piece of mail are a helpful and free transportation options program.

### Online Registration

More people enrolled online than via paper mail order form. Posting the order link to the neighborhood announcement website NextDoor yielded a boost in participants, however some of the people who registered were out of the target area in nearby communities because the boundaries of Next Door neighborhoods were not exactly the same as the target community.

## Recommendation

Use online neighborhood association listservs, community organization listservs, and NextDoor to circulate the order form electronically. Limit the sharing of the order form link on NextDoor to one or two neighborhoods within the target area to limit the number of residents registering from outside the target area.

## General Program Recruitment

Program participation was far lower than anticipated. This was the case despite outreach to community based organizations, bilingual materials and a multitude of community-based programs.

## Recommendation

Consider further diversifying outreach methods to reach diverse communities, such as involving community organizations and their leaders in the planning process, empowering the people to participate effectively by meeting in “unconventional” places where the public feels comfortable getting together, and using minority or ethnic news media sources to raise awareness for programs.

## Pre-Program Survey

The pre-program survey was initially completed by few people, and often the answers were completed incorrectly. Many participants indicated checks instead of number of trips in the travel log portion of the pre-program survey. The travel log also asked participants to recall their trips over the last three days, trips which was difficult for participants to remember. Spanish speaking participants at outreach events found the Spanish language order form confusing. The initial survey was very long; many questions were not answered in the returned paper order forms and SurveyMonkey indicated that people spent an average of fifteen minutes completing the online version of the survey. The initial survey also asked about the travel behavior of other members of the household in different format than the rest of the survey; much of the data in that section of the survey was unusable since it couldn't be compared to the rest of the responses.

## Recommendation 1

Survey length can be a barrier to enrollment. Write the survey so that it is short, concise, and easy to understand for a population that may have limited language and literacy proficiency.

## Recommendation 2

Ensure that the “travel log” section of the survey is easy to read and intuitive. Only ask participants to record their trips taken the previous day rather than the previous three days.

## Recommendation 3

Only ask about the travel behavior and attitudes of the person taking the survey rather than everyone in their household. This ensures that the survey is short and easy to understand.

## Custom Materials

Many post-program survey participants indicated that they believed the neighborhood maps were especially useful. Non-profits who requested bulk orders of custom Smart Trips materials also specifically requested neighborhood maps that displayed the destinations and transportation services in the area. The Shared Service brochure became quickly out of date as the transportation apps rebranded and changed. No feedback was provided on the Stroll Maps and Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety materials.

## Recommendation 1

Simple neighborhood maps that clearly destinations of interest along with bicycle and transit facilities are especially useful. These materials should be developed with great care to serve the specific needs of the community.

## Recommendation 2

Information about Shared Services apps is more appropriate on a Smart Trips website than a paper brochure. Keeping the information online quickly changing information to be easily updated. Use a pre-existing shared services materials to inform people of the most services that may match their specific needs.

## Events

### Contracted Events

Contracted events ranged in attendance success due to different organizations different level of marketing and planning involvement in their programs. Being proactive with marketing events and connecting with pre-existing community relationships led to successful turnout.

#### *Recommendation 1*

Create a diverse marketing campaign with event contractors. Include marketing expectations in the events contracts. Build upon pre-existing relationships with community health and transportation centers to assist with marketing and attendance.

#### *Recommendation 2*

Provide all materials required for participants to participate in events at the event. This will provide the most opportunity for engagement with the surrounding community who may not have access to bicycles or may not have previously known about the event, but want to participate.

### Tabling Events

Tabling was a successful method to distribute toolkit to interested participants in the target area. The audience at pre-existing outreach events was open to learning more about transportation. Many participants reached were especially curious about bicycling and public transit route planning. Transit passes were sometimes distributed, but were not trackable and therefore lacked a metric to determine whether they were used after distribution. Tabling events at community events were good to promote the Smart Trips brand, but many of the attendees did not live in the target area and therefore the events were not successful in distributing toolkits. Toolkit distribution at tabling events was initially difficult to manage due to large amounts of supplies. The Smart Trips team decided to distribute toolkits with all materials included rather than letting participants choose what materials they wanted to simplify the process.

#### *Recommendation 1*

Tabling events at schools are a successful method to engage residents in the target community. Always include a fluent Spanish speaking person at the table to communicate with all potential participants.

#### *Recommendation 2*

Develop a protocol for toolkit fulfillment at tabling events. Instead of asking a participant to list all the materials they want, learn what mode they are interested in learning more about and include a pre-assembled "mode packet" in their toolkit. This could simplify the materials handling while allowing the participant to maintain ownership over their toolkit.

## Communications

Three paper newsletters were sent. No feedback was received by Smart Trips participants on the usefulness of the newsletters. Social media was successful at reaching a population of transportation enthusiasts and partner organization. The Smart Trips page only had about 90 likes during the duration of the program. A boost in orders occurred after the "reminder" postcard was sent to all households in the target area. Many people called the Smart Trips hotline after the distribution of this postcard to place an order over the phone because they did not have home internet.

#### *Recommendation 1*

Use newsletters as a tool for behavior change by identifying what barriers participants are experiencing in trying different transportation modes. Determining these barriers could be conducted during the initial pre-program survey. Include reminders, tips, and schedules in the newsletters that address widely reported barriers. Ask in the post-program survey how useful the participants found the newsletters to determine their efficacy in encouraging participants to try transportation options.

## Recommendation 2

Create a social media calendar to post frequent quality content to the Smart Trips social media page. Posting community relevant information will be helpful in recruiting community members to follow the page.

## Recommendation 3

Concise “reminder” postcards that community members do not need to open to determine the message of the mail piece are successful tools to spread awareness about the Smart Trips program.

## Recommendation 4

Develop procedures to take a Smart Trips Austin order over the phone. Consider mailing the order forms to these households again to capture the behavior survey evaluation element of the Smart Trips program.

## Sustainability

Non-profits were grateful for custom materials. Few neighborhood maps that focus on the North Austin community exist, so the non-profits believed it was helpful in allowing for North Austin residents to have access to an easy to read, visual representation of their neighborhood. No metric for distribution was established to ensure the non-profits were distributing the materials. Attendees to training classes were mostly interested in public transit planning. Other similar training initiatives exist in the Austin Independent School District.

## Recommendation 1

Ensure that a large amount of neighborhood maps are available at the completion of the program for non-profits to distribute to clients who may not have been reached during the Smart Trips program.

## Recommendation 2

Create a protocol for following up with non-profits and measuring the distribution of Smart Trips materials.

## Recommendation 3

Connect potential sustainability champions like the Austin Independent School District, Capital Metro, and Safe Routes to Schools to custom Smart Trips materials. Building upon the programs of other departments and organizations will successfully engage the most people and contain the most accurate information.

## Conclusion

The Smart Trips North Austin program helped over 300 community member learn more about their transportation options. The presence of the Smart Trips Team and the various educational events encouraged organizations and community members to try walking, bicycling, and public transit as modes of transportation.

Survey result indicated that participants used an active mode of transportation more for various trips. Trusted community organizations will be valuable in spreading information about safe, affordable, and sustainable transportation options to this diverse community.