

2023 YMPO Regional Coordination Plan



Technical Memorandum 2 Transportation Needs & Gaps in Service

March 2, 2023

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Prepared for

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PURPOSE OF THE REGIONAL COORDINATION PLAN

The Regional Coordination Plan (RCP) reviews the public, non-profit, and for-profit transportation providers operating throughout Yuma County, and then determines the opportunities for improved cooperation and coordination among these entities. Increased coordination among existing transit providers helps to eliminate redundancy between services, ensures the efficient use of limited funds, and supports the design of more effective transportation programs moving forward. The RCP ultimately presents coordination goals and strategies that will enhance regional mobility and address the unmet transit needs of local residents, specifically those of senior adults, people with disabilities, and people with low incomes.

THE YUMA METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

Metropolitan Planning Organizations are required by federal law in all urban areas with at least 50,000 residents and are intended to ensure the effective use of federal transportation funds through the implementation of both short-term and long-range transportation planning projects. The Yuma Metropolitan Planning Organization (YMPO) is responsible for transportation planning in the greater Yuma, Arizona, Metropolitan Area, as designated by the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT). The YMPO is comprised of the following jurisdictions: the County of Yuma, the Cities of Yuma, San Luis, and Somerton, the Town of Wellton, the Cocopah Indian Tribe, and ADOT. As the YMPO's boundaries extend into California, the Quechan Indian Tribe, and the Town of Winterhaven, California, are also included as ex-officio members.

The mission of the YMPO is to coordinate regional transportation and land use planning efforts which enhance the region's multimodal transportation network and increase the quality of life for residents. The YMPO engages the community with ongoing planning studies in order to determine which transportation solutions will best meet the needs of residents given available resources. The YMPO produces reports which recognize the differing needs of residents living in more urbanized areas versus those living in more rural areas of the county, as well as the differing demands of the various business types operating in Yuma County. In addition to the RCP, other programs managed by the YMPO include the Transportation Improvement Program and the Regional Mobility Management Program.

STUDY APPROACH

This Technical Memorandum is the second in a series of three that will ultimately be compiled to make the YMPO Regional Coordinated Plan (RCP). Tech Memo 1 presented information about existing conditions in Yuma County, including a demographic analysis, a review of existing planning documents, and an inventory of existing transportation service. Tech Memo 2 includes a summary of community and stakeholder outreach and input. An assessment of transportation potential service needs and gaps as well as duplicative services will also be provided. Tech Memo 3, the final Memo, will then provide an analysis of potential coordination strategies and preliminary recommendations for consideration.

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STAKEHOLDER AND PUBLIC OUTREACH

INTRODUCTION

During the months of December and January, LSC Transportation Consultants conducted two stakeholders' meetings, two public workshops, and one online community survey. During these engagement opportunities, Tech Memo 1 findings were summarized and presented via PowerPoint. Each presentation also featured questions for discussion and opportunity for feedback. The following section describes the input received through each type of engagement activity.

STAKEHOLDER AND PUBLIC OUTREACH WORKSHOPS

Regional Mobility Committee and Technical Advisory Committee

Both the YMPO Regional Mobility Committee (RMC) and YMPO Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meetings were held during the week of January 9th via teleconference. As discussed in Tech Memo 1, the RMC and TAC are made up of local transportation providers and government agency representatives. After findings from Tech Memo 1 were presented, a series of questions were asked to create discussion around transportation and transit services within Yuma County. These questions included the following:

- Are there any other current transit/mobility needs that we should include?
- Are there currently any duplications in service that you know of?
- What do you think the major barriers to transit and transportation are in Yuma County?

While the unanimous input received at each of these meetings was positive, the following potential challenges and transportation barriers were identified:

- ➔ Services can be limiting for people who don't meet the requirements.
- ➔ Lack of continuity in information.
- ➔ Limitations to service are not always known by public.
- ➔ Students do not have many options in getting to and from school in rural areas of the county.

While discussing the previous 2017 plan's goals and objectives, it was agreed that taxi vouchers were likely not an effective use of time and effort moving forward. The RMC also agreed that they would like to be more inclusive of local tribal leaders and government representatives particularly from Somerton, which had been identified as an area of Yuma County with a high concentration of transit dependent people.

General Public

Two public workshops were conducted during the week of January 30th. There were two in-person meetings held, one at the San Luis Library branch in the early afternoon and another at the Yuma Main Library in the later afternoon. Participants were also given the opportunity to attend the Yuma Main Library workshop via Zoom. During the workshop, the overall project goals and objectives were presented, demographic data was discussed, and questions were asked of attendees. During the open discussion portion of the meeting, the following issues were raised for consideration moving forward:

- The region needs to continue to make sure all information is translated to Spanish at a minimum. Language translation may need to consider the Filipino community as their population in the region grows.
- Students need more options and education regarding transportation in the region.
- More effort needs to be made in coordinating and planning transportation for social, recreational, and non-medical trips for residents.
- 1st and last mile transportation for residents using YCAT.
- Increase public awareness of existing services.
- Provide connections between Phoenix Airport and Yuma County.
- Improve NEMT reliability.

ONLINE COMMUNITY SURVEY

An online community survey was made available to the greater-Yuma population from January 19 through February 6, 2023. The community survey was designed to collect data regarding how people currently use and perceive both public and specialized transportation services in the Yuma-area, as well as to determine if there were any trends in the unmet transit needs of the survey respondents.

The community survey was advertised first by emailing various stakeholders the surveys as well as flyers to advertise the survey in both English and Spanish. These flyers had QR codes for people to scan to take the survey online. These stakeholders were then asked to distribute the survey to their own networks and to post the flyers wherever possible. All of the survey materials were then emailed to the stakeholders a second time during the survey effort.

The survey was entirely online through Survey Monkey and available in both English and Spanish, with a simple introduction and 16 questions in multiple choice, short-answer, or comment format. Only 24 people participated in community survey, all responding in English, despite having multiple weeks to participate. Tables and figures presenting the online community survey results are included in Appendix A. Below is a brief summary of the results:

- All of the respondents were between the ages of 31 to 75 years old. 92 percent had at least one working vehicle available to their home, and 29 percent had three or more vehicles available.

- While only 25 percent of the survey respondents reported to using specialized transportation services, 62 percent said that they have a friend or family member who relies on these services. The respondents ranked the importance of having specialized transportation services available for the local community a 5 out of 5, or “important.”
- 21 percent of the respondents said that they occasionally need a ride within Yuma County but do not have one available. When asked if sometimes they couldn’t get a ride to destinations outside of Yuma County, this number jumped to 46 percent.
- The most common destination the respondents said that they had been unable to get a ride to was medical appointments (32 percent), followed by shopping (23 percent) and work (18 percent). The respondents indicated a greater need for transportation assistance on weekdays compared to weekends. The most popular times of day the respondents need transportation services were 6:00 AM to 8:00 AM and 8:00 AM to 12:00 PM.
- The top reasons preventing the respondents from utilizing public transit, taxis/Uber/Lyfts, or other specialized transportation services were the bus schedules/frequencies (41 percent), the bus stops being too far away (32 percent), and how difficult it is to find information on these services (27 percent).
- The survey respondents were relatively aware of the public transit services available in Yuma County: 95 percent of the respondents either had used or heard of YCAT, but only 37 percent had used/heard of YCAT On-Call.
- The specialized transportation services most used or heard of by the survey respondents were the Saguaro Foundation (63 percent), the City of San Luis Senior Services Department (31 percent), and the Western Area Council of Governments (WACOG) (31 percent). These results indicate that there is generally less awareness of the specialized transportation services available in Yuma County compared to the public transit services.
- In the additional comments, some respondents expressed the importance of maintaining specialized transportation services for the local disabled and senior adult populations. Two individuals discussed how there needs to be more, and clearer, information made available on Yuma County’s specialized transportation services to spread awareness and help make it easier for people to take advantage of these programs.

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POTENTIAL NEEDS, GAPS, AND DUPLICATIVE SERVICES

INTRODUCTION

Estimating the needs for specialized transportation requires multiple approaches. To determine the potential transportation needs and gaps for the YMPO community, recent demographic data from both the 2019-2023 American Community Survey and 2020 Decennial Census was first analyzed and discussed in Tech Memo 1. To further supplement this information, a provider questionnaire was distributed and community stakeholder workshops were held. Lastly, an online community survey and two in-person, one being an online hybrid, workshops were held to gather additional public input. The following sections describe the needs and gaps in service identified during the planning process. Later, these needs and gaps will inform the strategy recommendations that will be put forth in Tech Memo 3.

TRANSPORTATION BARRIERS AND NEEDS

The major barriers identified during the research, stakeholder questionnaires, and public outreach related to eligibility, scheduling, geography, and informational understanding.

The following potential transportation needs were identified during the course of the Plan:

- Transportation can be limiting for people who either don't meet or don't know that they meet the eligibility requirements for services.
- There is a lack of transportation services for non-medical appointments.
- Many people simply don't know what services are available or how to learn more information.
- Students do not have many options in getting to and from school in rural areas of the county.

GAPS IN SERVICE

Gaps in service are typically identified under three categories:

- Geographic gaps are those areas which do not have service available, either for residents or to reach key destinations.
- Temporal gaps are defined as days or times when service is not available.
- Eligibility gaps exist when individuals are not eligible for transportation services because they do not meet the criteria of the agencies providing transportation.

The plan process identified the following gaps in service:

- There are very few transportation services within the City of Somerton.
- There is a lack of regional services with connections to Phoenix or Tucson.
- The absence of two transportation service providers (NAZCARE, Inc. and SAAVI) which have recently ended their service in Yuma County. This may result in a gap of services to those who are impacted by mental and/or substance abuse disorders (NAZCARE, Inc) or those who experience vision impairment (SAAVI).

- Often residents do not know the various transit programs within the region that may provide multiple options for their transit needs. This would include system routes, service areas, operating hours, and system access. Although stakeholder interviews revealed no overlap of services, a lack of information and coordination could result in a duplication of services.

DUPLICATIVE SERVICES

There were no major duplicative services identified during the study.

EVALUATION CRITERIA AND COORDINATION

EVALUATION CRITERIA AND COORDINATION

The YMPO provides initial review of applications for potential FTA projects. Major responsibilities include:

- Developing and maintaining each RCP.
- Reviewing 5310 applications submitted annually and prioritizing regional project funding recommendations based on the goals and recommendations defined by the RCP, as well as funding availability. Recommendations for goals and objectives for coordination strategies will be presented in Technical Memorandum #3.
- Providing technical assistance to applicants and subsequent grant sub recipients in each region in meeting federal and state grant requirements.
- Coordinating transportation activities in the region, within a mobility management framework. Applicants are to work directly with YMPO staff on Section 5310 application requirements.

After YMPO review, the prioritized project recommendations will be forwarded to ADOT for its review of overall program compliance and budget impact, prior to the Department's statewide grant submittal to the FTA. In addition, the YMPO is responsible for managing the Regional Mobility Committee, which, in turn, oversees and provides input towards the RCP and prioritized projects to be funded in each region.

Proposed projects must aim to improve the mobility for seniors and individuals with disabilities by removing barriers to transportation service and expanding transportation mobility. These projects or programs may include any of the following examples:

- buses and vans
- wheelchair lifts, ramps, and securement devices
- transit-related information technology systems, including scheduling/routing/one-call systems
- mobility management programs
- acquisition of transportation services under a contract, lease, or other arrangement
- Nontraditional Section 5310 project examples include:
 - travel training
 - volunteer driver programs
 - building an accessible path to a bus stop, including curb-cuts, sidewalks, accessible pedestrian signals or other accessible features
 - improving signage, or way-finding technology
 - incremental cost of providing same day service or door-to-door service
 - purchasing vehicles to support new accessible taxi, rides sharing and/or vanpooling programs
 - mobility management programs

Lastly, the federal share of eligible capital costs may not exceed 80 percent, and 50 percent for operating assistance. The 10 percent that is eligible to fund program administrative costs including administration, planning, and technical assistance may be funded at 100 percent federal share.

In the YMPO region, service providers actively participate in a Regional Mobility Committee (RMC). 5310 funding will only be distributed to projects that are listed in the RCP and which meet the above criteria. The RCP is then recommended by the RMC and approved by the Technical Advisory Committee. The RCP is then adopted by the YMPO Executive Board of Directors.

DETAILED ONLINE COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

Residents of the greater-Yuma area were invited to complete an online community survey as part of the planning process for the Yuma Metropolitan Planning Organization (YMPO) Regional Coordination Plan (RCP) from January 19 through February 6, 2023. The survey was advertised around the community, by emailing the survey materials and flyers to key stakeholders and members of the community. Ads were also placed in the Yuma Sun and Bajo El Sol.

The survey was entirely online, with a simple introduction and 16 questions in multiple choice, short-answer, or comment format. There was an English and Spanish version of the survey available, but everyone answered the survey in English. In all, 24 people participated in the survey. Most respondents did not answer every question, therefore the number of answers per question varies. While this is not a very large sample size, the survey results can still provide meaningful insights into the transit needs and perceptions of community members at large. This appendix contains tables and figures that present the results of the online community survey effort. The results are also briefly summarized in the main text of the RCP.

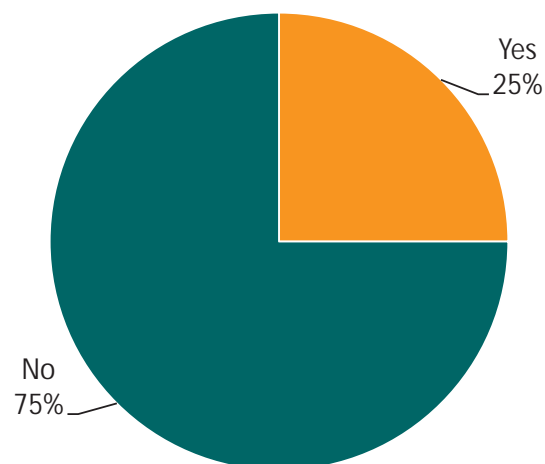
Table A-1: Ages of Survey Respondents

Age	# of Participants	% of Participants
18 Years or Younger	0	0%
19 - 30 Years	0	0%
31 - 45 Years	9	38%
46 - 60 Years	9	38%
61 - 75 Years	6	25%
76 Years or Older	0	0%
Total Responses	24	100%

Table A-2: Number of Working Vehicles Available to Survey Respondents

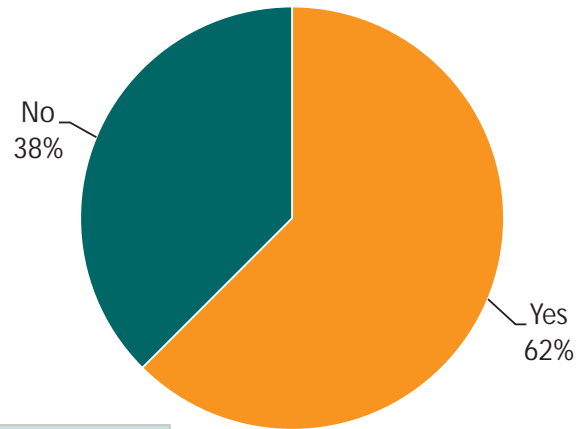
# of Vehicles	# of Participants	% of Participants
None	2	8%
1	6	25%
2	9	38%
3 or More	7	29%
Total Responses	24	100%

Figure A-1: Do Respondents Use Specialized Transportation Services?



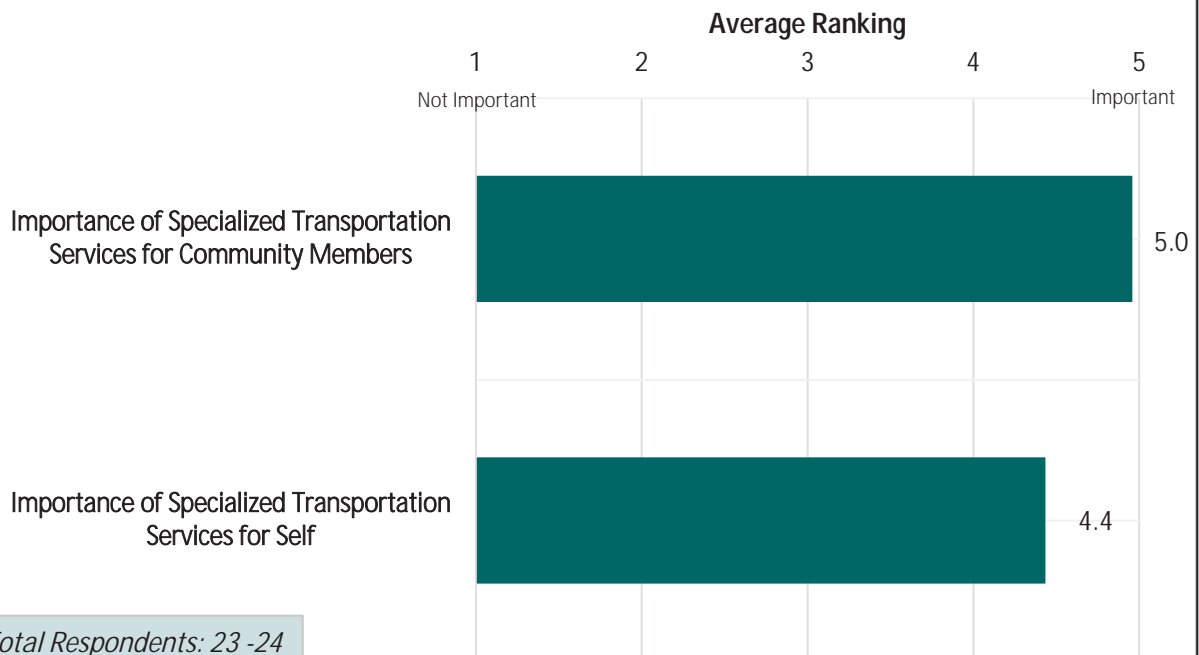
Total Respondents: 24

Figure A-2: Do Respondents have Friends or Family who Use Transit/Specialized Transportation Services?



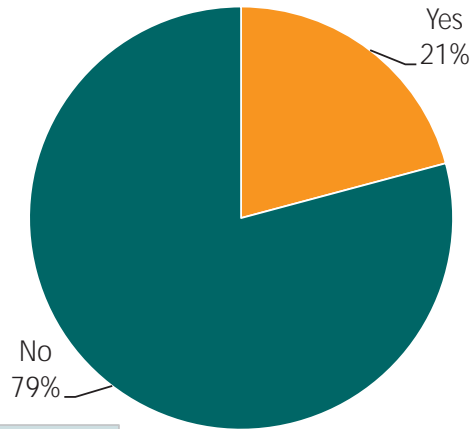
Total Respondents: 24

Figure A-3: Respondents Opinions on Availability of Specialized Transportation Services



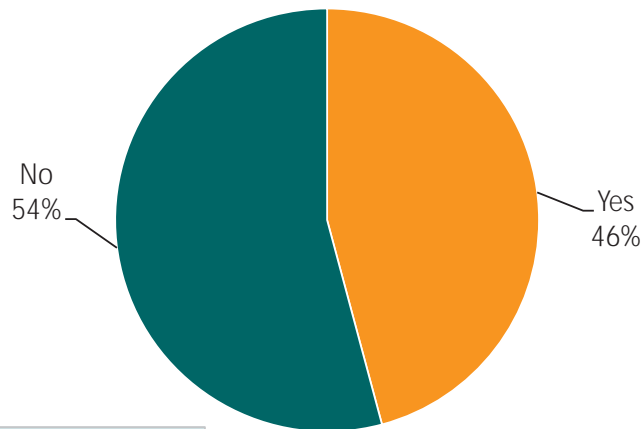
Total Respondents: 23 -24

Figure A-4: Do Respondents Ever Need a Ride Within Yuma County and Not Have One?



Total Respondents: 24

Figure A-5: Do Respondents Ever Need a Ride Outside Yuma County and Not Have One?



Total Respondents: 24

Table A-3: Destinations Respondents were Unable to Get a Ride To

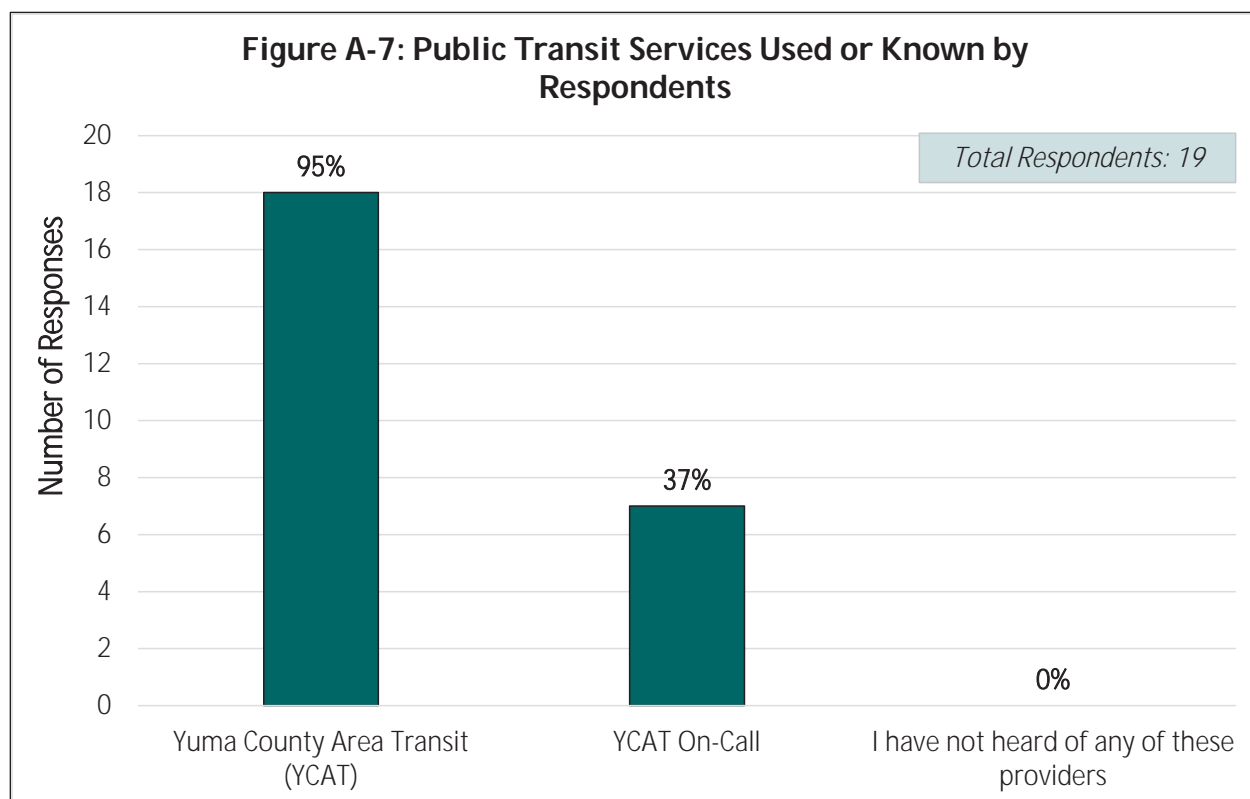
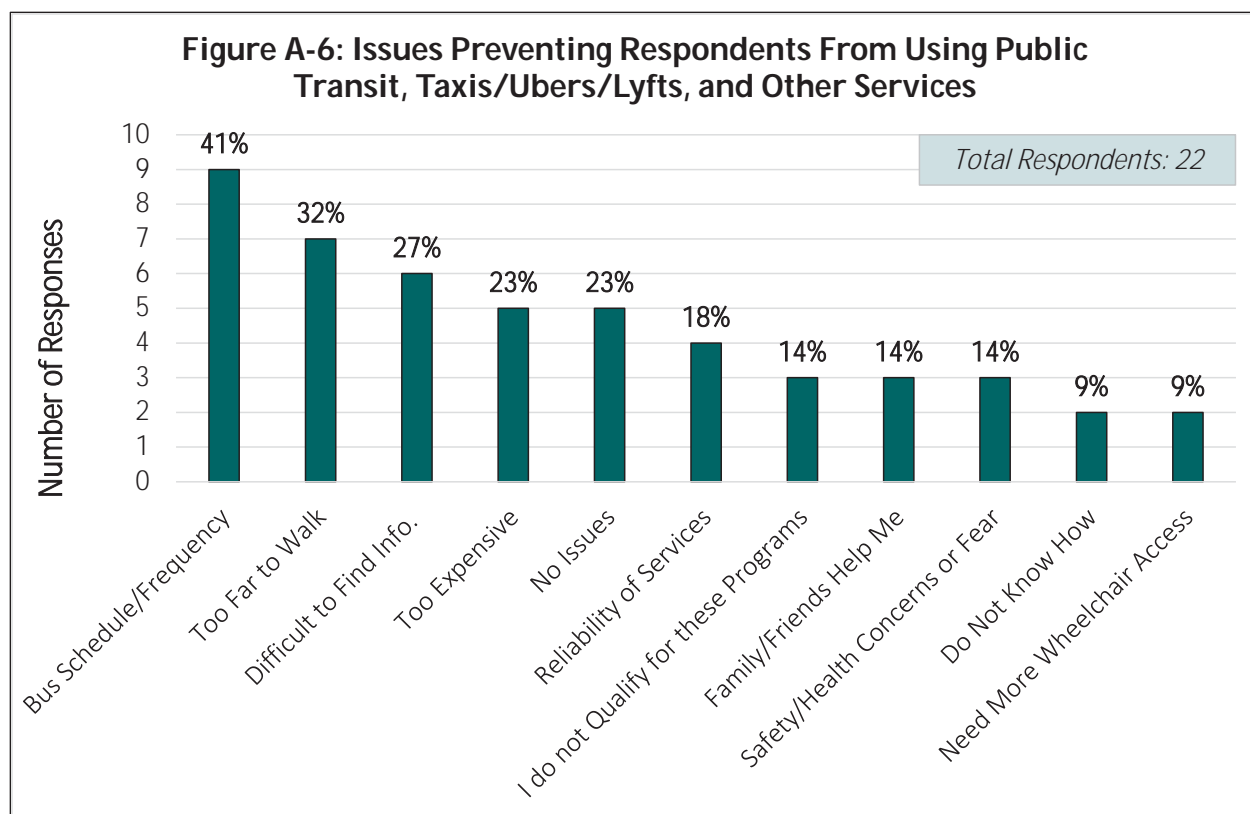
Destination	# of Participants	% of Participants
Medical Appointment	7	32%
Shopping	5	23%
Work	4	18%
School/Educational Training	2	9%
Phoenix/Phoenix Airport	2	9%
Family	1	5%
Late Night Events	1	5%
Total Responses	22	100%

Table A-4: Days of Week Respondents Need Transportation

Day	# of Participants	% of Participants
Monday	5	71%
Tuesday	6	86%
Wednesday	5	71%
Thursday	7	100%
Friday	6	86%
Saturday	2	29%
Sunday	1	14%
Total Responses	7	100%

Table A-5: Times of Day Respondents Need Transportation

Time	# of Participants	% of Participants
Midnight - 6:00 AM	0	0%
6:00 AM - 8:00 AM	6	86%
8:00 AM - 12:00 PM	6	86%
12:00 PM - 4:00 PM	5	71%
4:00 PM - 6:00 PM	3	43%
6:00 PM - 9:00 PM	4	57%
9:00 PM - Midnight	1	14%
Total Responses	7	100%



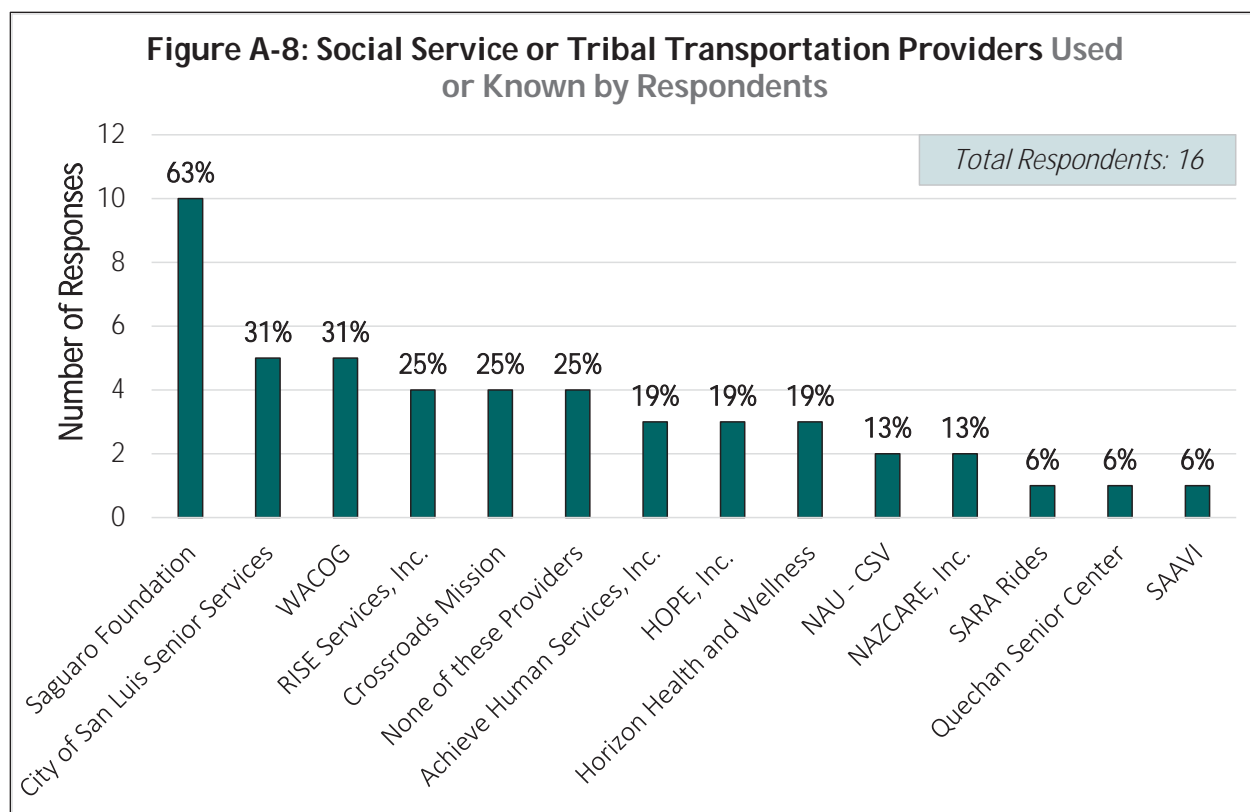


Table A-6: Additional Comments	
Topic	Comments
Disabled	Transportation services very important to the disable.
Information	I know of such services; however, not sure informed the affected community is.
Information	We need a single number people can call for questions on transportation availability and schedules.
Phoenix	My sister is mentally disabled. She required a Healthcare professional from the day programs to ride with her on transportation. Also she often has appointments in Phoenix. It would be great if there was a service that would offer to take her and my mother to and from these appointments.
Seniors	Yuma has a growing segment of seniors that do not qualify for government sponsored transportation services - we need an affordable option for these clients
YCAT	Need more two-way routes. Circulator routes result in long trip times making using transit not worth it.

Source: Yuma RCP Online Community Survey