

Regional POCD 2018 Update

DRAFT Survey Results

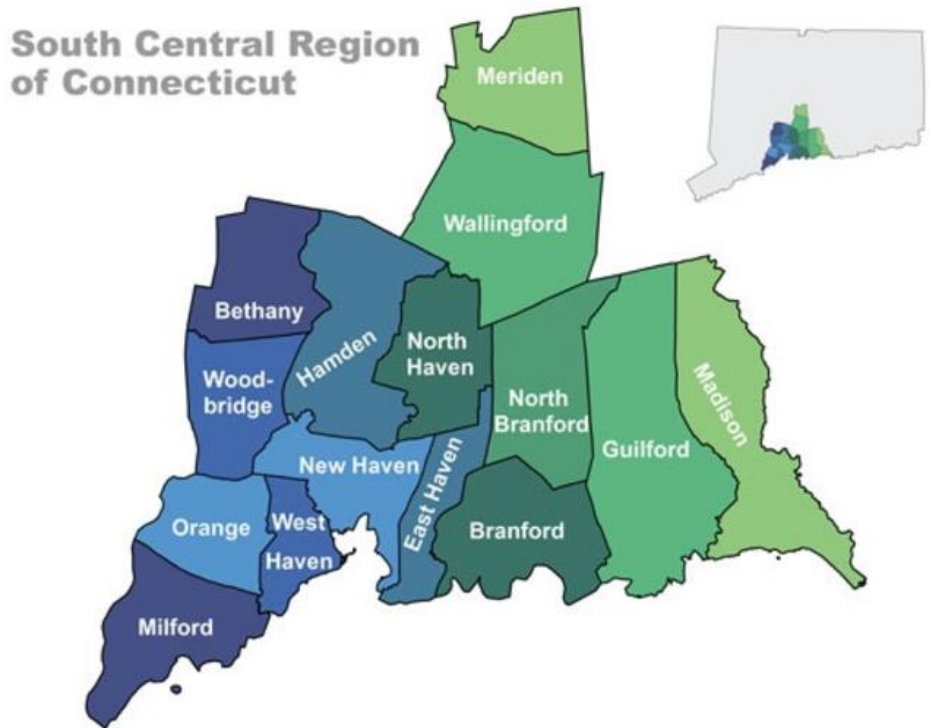
August 2017



Introduction

The South Central Regional Council of Governments (SCRCOG) distributed two surveys, one for the general public and one for municipal officials, to help inform the update of the region's Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD). The regional POCD is a policy guidance document that identifies priority areas for growth and conservation. The two surveys asked questions intended to identify issues important to the region, and to develop a vision for its future.

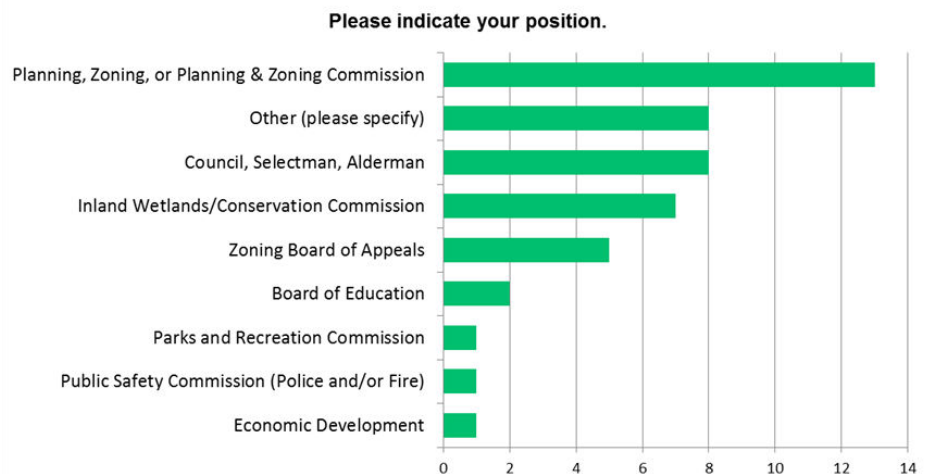
The surveys were open from April to August 7th 2017 with links to the surveys distributed through social media, individual town websites, the SCRCOG website, focus groups, and other avenues.



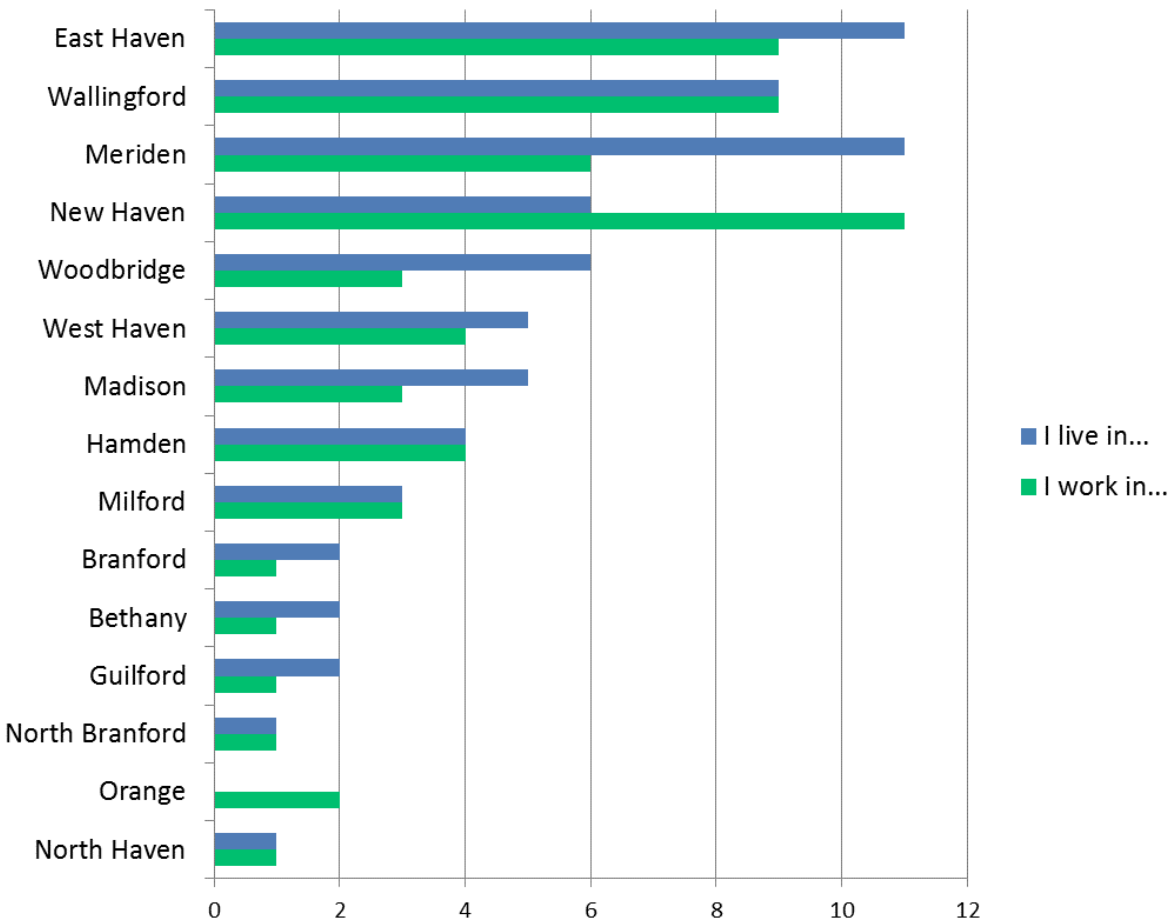
Municipal Survey Results

The municipal survey collected 91 responses from elected or appointed officials and municipal staff, including 13 respondents who identified as Planning, Zoning, or Planning & Zoning Commissioners, and 8 Councilmen, Selectmen, or Aldermen.

The most-represented communities in the municipal survey were East Haven (11 residents and 9 employees), Wallingford (9 residents and 9 employees) Meriden (11 residents and 6 employees), and New Haven (6 residents and 11 employees). At least one employee or official from every community took the municipal survey.



Please indicate your relationship to the region... (Municipal Survey)



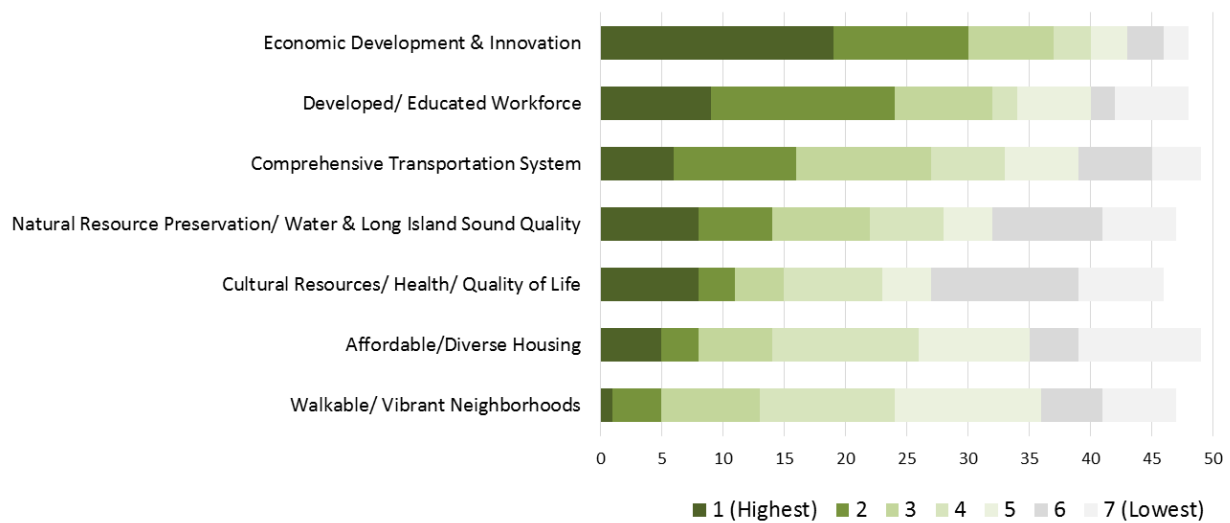
Respondents to the municipal survey were asked to characterize each of the communities within the SCRCOG region by whether the community was a job center, retail/shopping destination, cultural/entertainment center, diverse neighborhoods and housing center, outdoor recreation, transit accessible, or rural. Overall:

- As the region’s largest urban center, New Haven was characterized as the dominant Job Center, Cultural/Entertainment Center, having the most Diverse Neighborhoods and Housing Center, and being the most Transit Accessible.
- Respondents identified Hamden, Milford, Orange, North Haven, and New Haven as the region’s Retail/Shopping Destinations.
- Madison, Guilford, Branford, Milford, and New Haven were identified as the region’s best Outdoor Recreation.
- Respondents characterized Woodbridge and Bethany as the most Rural.

Respondents to the municipal survey were also asked to rank a number of issues in terms of what is the highest priority for the region to address. Economic development and innovation was the top-rated choice, followed by developing an educated workforce.

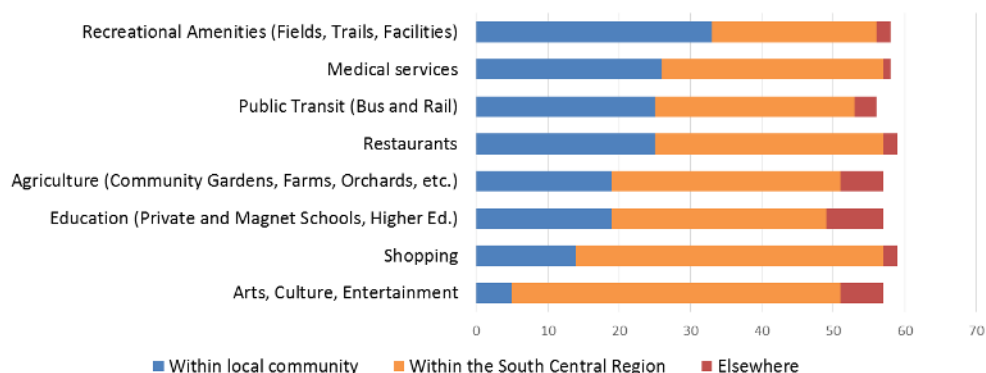
1. Economic Development & Innovation
2. Developed/Educated Workforce
3. Comprehensive Transportation System
4. Natural Resource Preservation/ Water & Long Island Sound Quality
5. Cultural Resources/ Health/ Quality of Life
6. Affordable/Diverse Housing
7. Walkable/ Vibrant Neighborhoods

Please rank the following issues in terms of highest priority for the region to address



Respondents largely feel that if residents can't access an amenity within their local community, that amenities are available within the South Central Region. Recreational amenities were the most likely to be found within a local community, and arts, culture, entertainment were most likely to be found elsewhere within the region. Respondents felt that education was the amenity that residents would most likely have to seek elsewhere.

Where do you think residents in the community you represent most frequently access the following? (Select all that apply)



Concern for economic development and transportation also rose to the top in responses to the question “What one thing would enhance quality of life for most residents of the community you represent, regardless of cost?” At the same time, open spaces, natural resources and Long Island Sound were ranked highly as features of the region that respondents were most concerned about losing or degrading.

What one thing would enhance quality of life for most residents of the community you represent, regardless of cost?		What one place, feature, or aspect of the region are you most concerned about losing or being degraded?	
Categories	# of Responses	Categories	# of Responses
Economic development	14	Open spaces	10
Downtown revitalization	11	Transportation options	6
Improved transportation	11	Education	3
Affordable housing	6	Long Island Sound	3
Lower taxes	2	Natural resources	3
Increased education funding	2	Achitectural character	2
Entertainment	1	Downtown	2
More Businesses	1	Historic character	2
Improve natural resources	1	Local employment	2
Preserve existing housing	1	Coastline	1
Sidewalks	1	Economic development	1
Upgrade parks	1	Farmland	1
Workforce training	1	Infrastructure	1
		Library	1
		Losing residents	1
		Residential character	1
		Restaurants	1
		Rural character	1
		Tax base	1

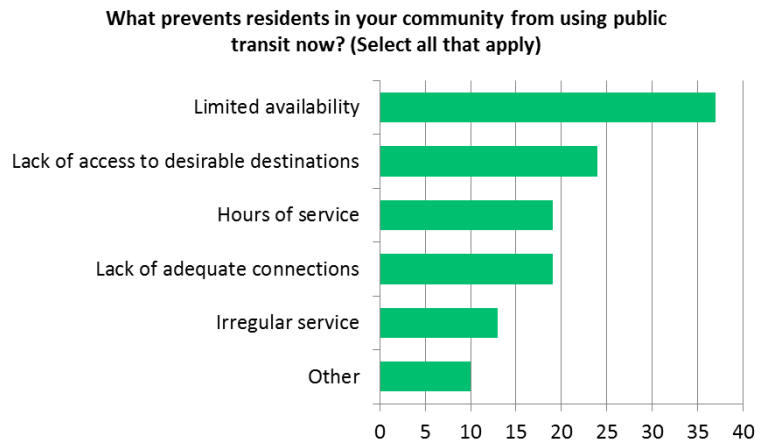
Transportation

An overwhelming majority of respondents (96%) indicated that most of the residents in their community drive alone to work. Limited availability of public transit was cited most often as the reason residents in their communities did not use public transit more often.

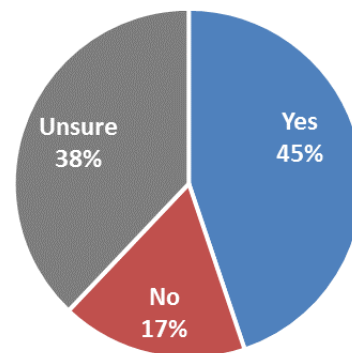
When asked about Transit Oriented Development (TOD), about 45% of respondents said that their community has identified an opportunity and desire for TOD, while 38% were “Unsure” and 17% said that their community had not identified an opportunity or expressed a desire for TOD.

Respondents indicated that their communities supported TOD because they believe that TOD will make areas around transit more vibrant, that such development will attract young professionals, expand housing choices, lower commute times, and allow seniors to be less auto-dependent. The two most-cited reasons that communities do not support TOD include a lack of transit hubs (whether rail or bus), and a lack of adequate infrastructure such as sidewalks.

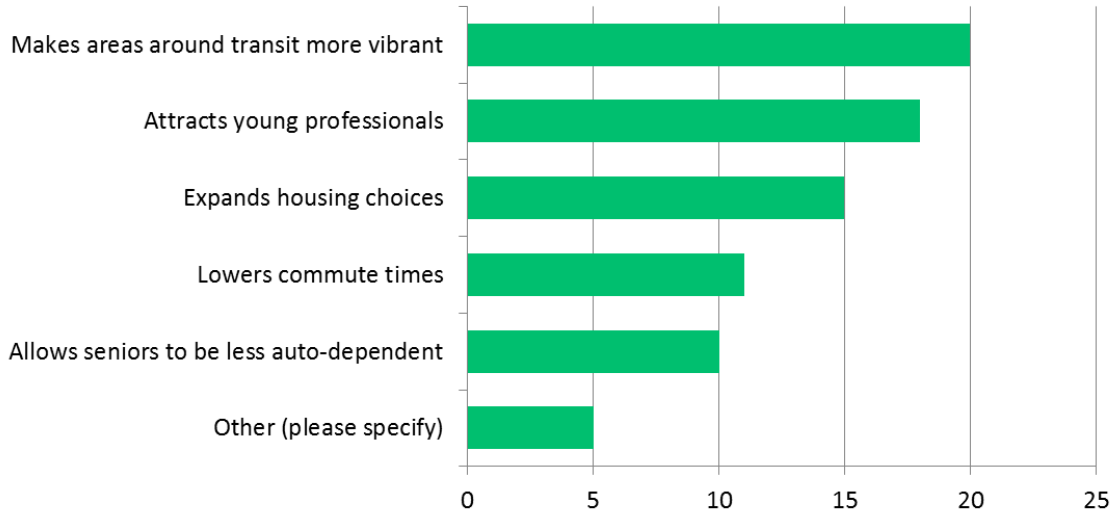
Municipal survey respondents ranked existing town/city/village centers and train station areas as where the region should prioritize future mixed-use development. Redevelopment sites were considered to be the lowest priority areas for TOD. Almost 35% of respondents felt that infrastructure projects would be the best strategy for supporting TOD or mixed-use projects in their community.



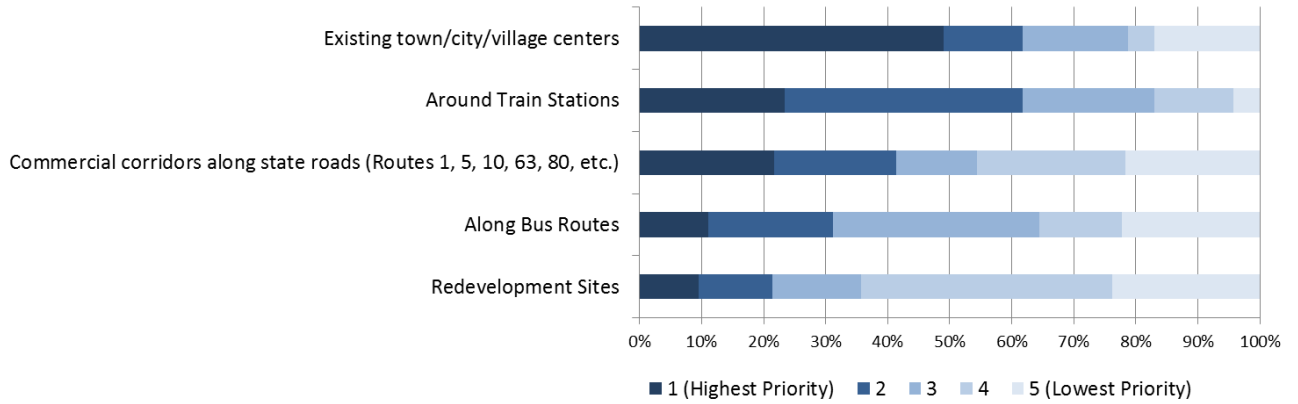
Has your community identified an opportunity and desire for Transit Oriented Development (TOD)?



What are some of the reasons your community supports this type of development? (select as many as apply)



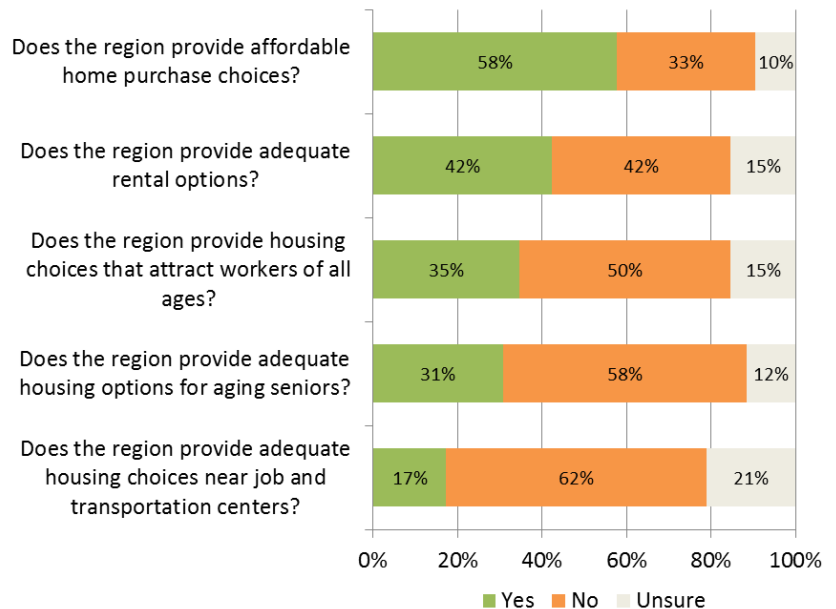
Rank where the region should prioritize mixed-use development.



Housing

Municipal officials were also asked about the availability of affordable and/or elderly housing options in their communities. Median single-family home prices vary across the region from a low of \$148,500 to a high of \$400,000. Rental rates also vary significantly. 58% of respondents felt that the region provides affordable home purchase choices. Respondents were split (42% to 42%) on whether or not the region provides adequate rental options. Few respondents (17%) felt that the region provides adequate housing choices near job and transportation centers.

Providing additional affordable housing is a state-wide goal.



When asked what strategies their communities have used to increase affordable housing supply, the most commonly-cited strategy was to allow mixed-use developments with affordable residential units above commercial, followed by allowing conventional multi-family housing and adopting Incentive Housing Zone regulations.

Similarly, when asked specifically about strategies to allow older residents to age in place, the top three strategies respondents indicated their communities have undertaken were: allowing Planned Development Districts (age-restricted or not), allowing mixed-use developments with affordable and/or accessible units, and increasing the affordable housing supply in general. Six respondents said that their communities had not used any strategies to enable residents to age in place.

Which REGIONAL park, recreation area, or trail do you think is most enjoyed by your community?

Park	# of Responses
Hammonasset State Park	17
Sleeping Giant	15
West Rock State Park	5
Hubbard Park	3
Long Wharf Park	3
East Haven Beach	2
East Rock State Park	2
Farmington Canal Trail	2
None	2
Blue-Blazed Trails	1
Lamentation Mountain State Park	1
Lighthouse Park	1
Mattabessett trail and parks	1
New England Trail	1
Quinnipiac River Waterway	1
West River Waterway	1

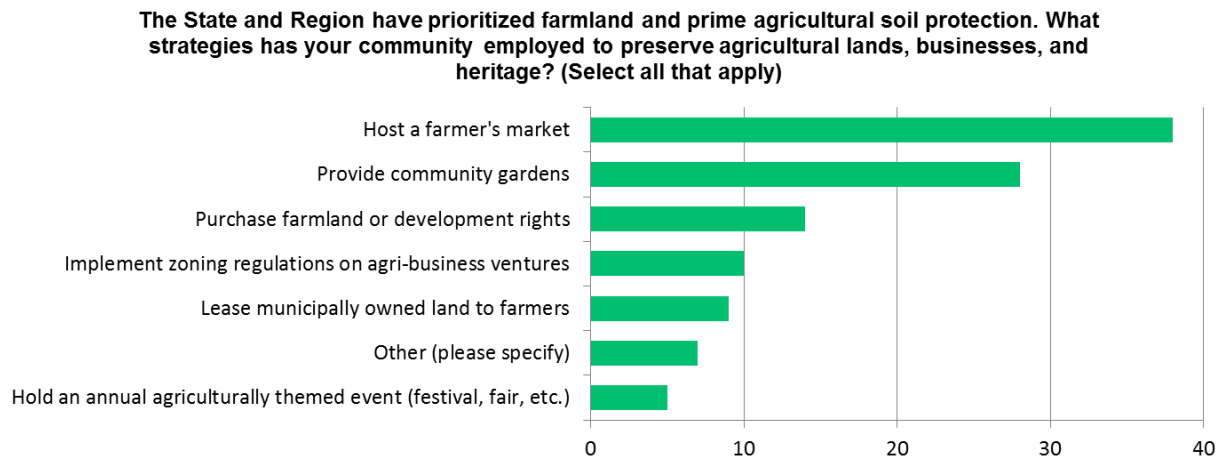
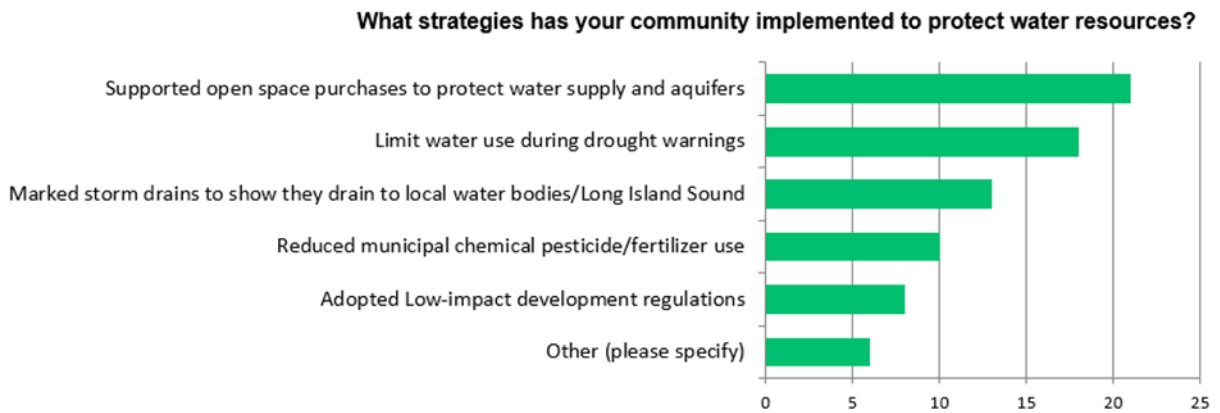
Parks, Agriculture, and Water Resources

The South Central Region has many large parks, recreation areas, and trails that serve the wider region. Hammonasset State Park and Sleeping Giant were considered to be the most enjoyed by residents. Other popular parks respondents listed included West Rock State Park, Hubbard Park, and Long Wharf Park.

The State and South Central Region has prioritized protecting farmland and prime agricultural soil. Respondents said that their communities have hosted farmer's markets (79% of

respondents) provided community gardens (58%), and purchased farmland or development rights (29%) to protect these resources.

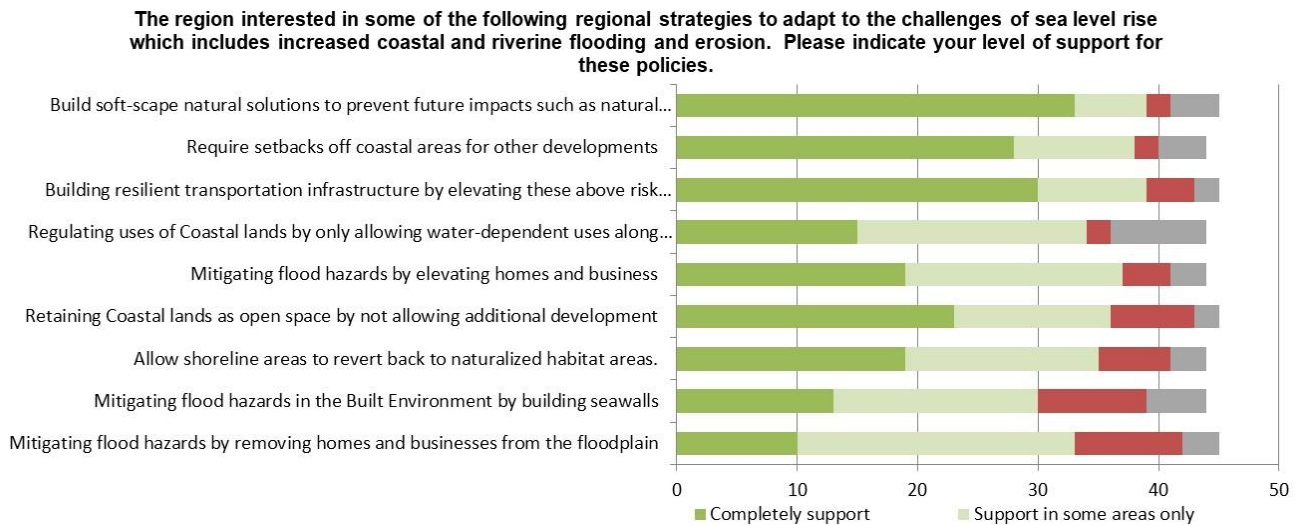
Some communities are also using strategies to protect water resources, including supporting open space purchases to protect water supplies and aquifers (46% of respondents), limiting water use during drought warnings (39%), and marking storm drains to show that they drain to local water bodies or Long Island Sound (28%).



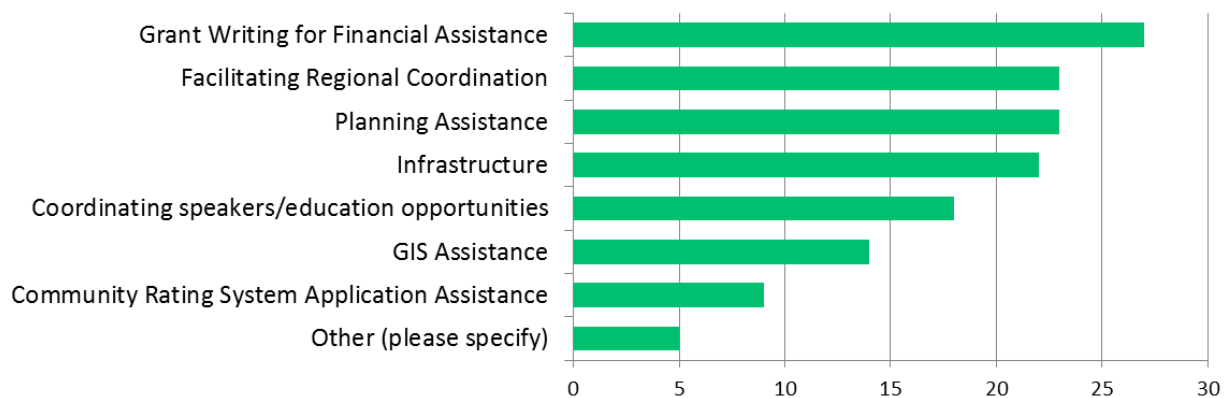
Sea Level Rise

Respondents were asked about their level of support for a number of strategies aimed at adapting to the challenges of sea level rise. There was general wide-spread support (either “completely support” or “support in some areas only”) for building soft-scape natural solutions such as natural berms, requiring setbacks off coastal areas for development, and elevating transportation infrastructure in risk areas. The strategy to mitigate flood hazards by removing homes and businesses from the floodplain received the least overall support, although 51% supported the strategy in some areas only.

Respondents understand the value that the SCRCOG team provides to the region. When asked “What are other areas in which SCRCOG can provide further assistance?” over half of respondents said that grant writing for financial assistance would be useful. Respondents also thought that facilitation of regional coordination, planning assistance, and infrastructure assistance would be useful.



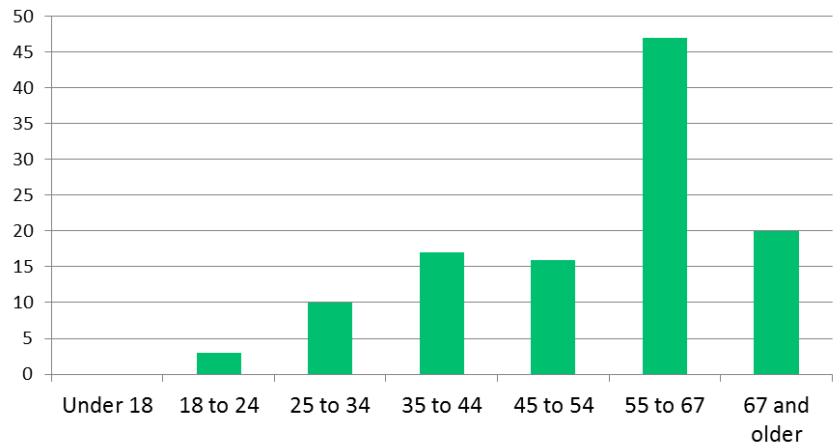
The South Central Region Council of Governments (SCRCOG) has recently led the effort for coastal resilience and multi-hazard mitigation planning for the region. What are other areas in which SCRCOG can provide further assistance?



Public Survey Results

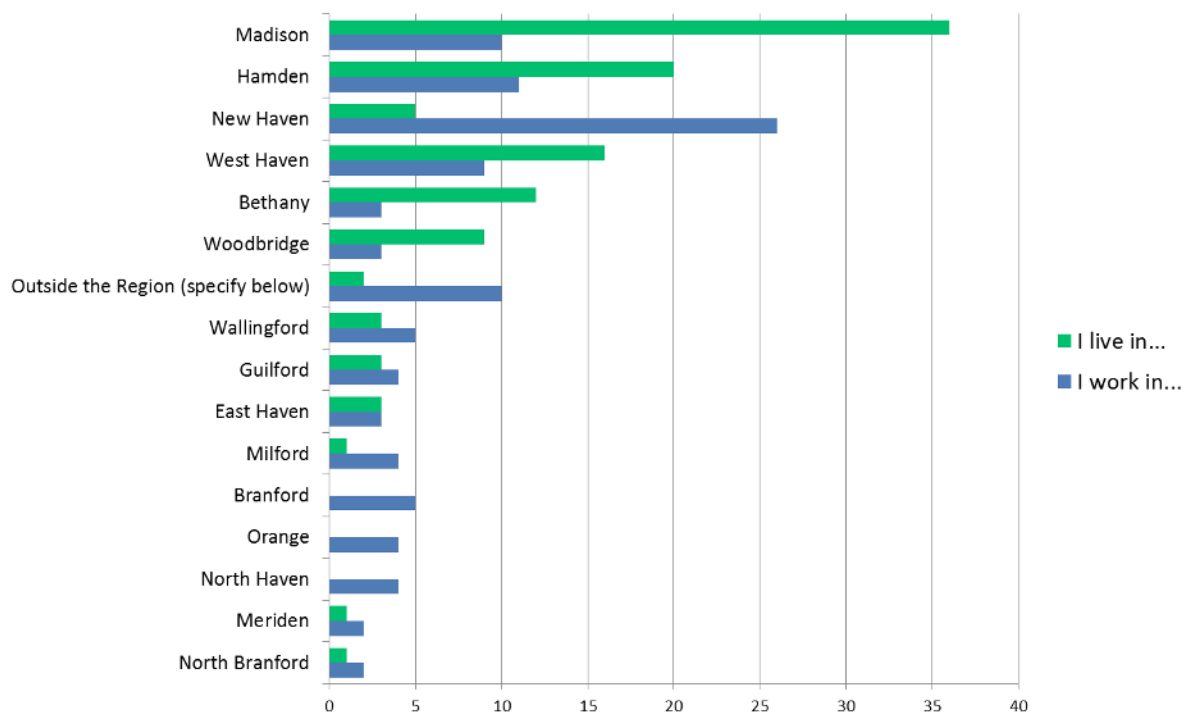
The public survey collected 156 responses. While the links to take the public survey were widely distributed, respondents are self-selected and results should not be considered to be a statistically representative reflection of the views of the more than 500,000 residents in the SCRCOG area. For example, the median age for New Haven County is 39.8 (according to 2015 American Community Survey estimates), but only 27% of respondents were under the age of 45, with about 60% over the age of 55. Nevertheless, results provide some valuable input on concerns for the region.

What is your age?



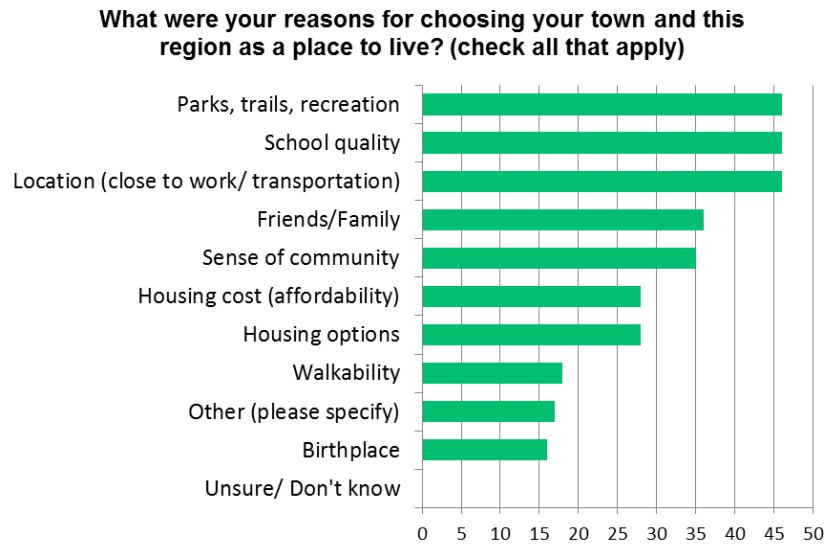
Geographically, the largest group represented was Madison residents, followed by people who work in New Haven, Hamden residents, and West Haven residents. No residents from Orange, North Haven, or Branford took the public survey, although people who work in those communities did take the survey.

Please indicate where you live and work within in the Region (Public Survey).

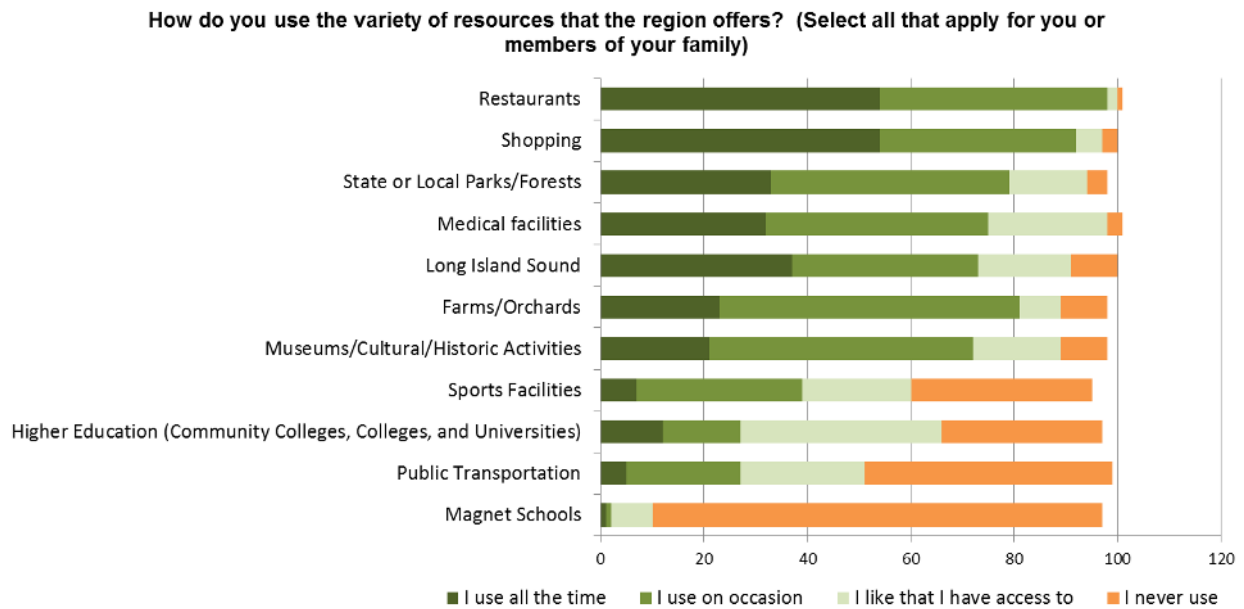


Amenities and Resources

The top three reasons that respondents chose their town and the South Central Region to live were: parks, trails, and recreation; school quality; and location (close to work/transportation). Only 14% (16 respondents) said that they lived in the region because they were born there.

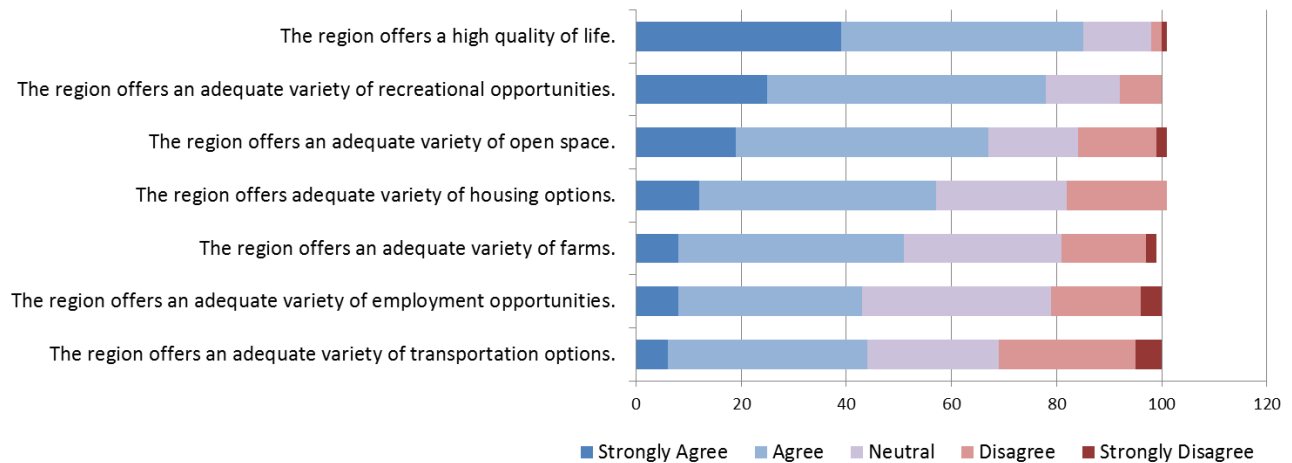


Respondents were asked how often they use the resources that the region offers, ranging from “I use all the time” to “I never use”. The resources that were used most often included restaurants, shopping, state or local parks/forests, medical facilities, and Long Island Sound. The resources that respondents used the least were higher education (community colleges, colleges, and universities), public transportation, and magnet schools. The older age of the respondents (mostly over age 55, and possibly without school-aged children still in the home or attending college locally) likely impacts these results.



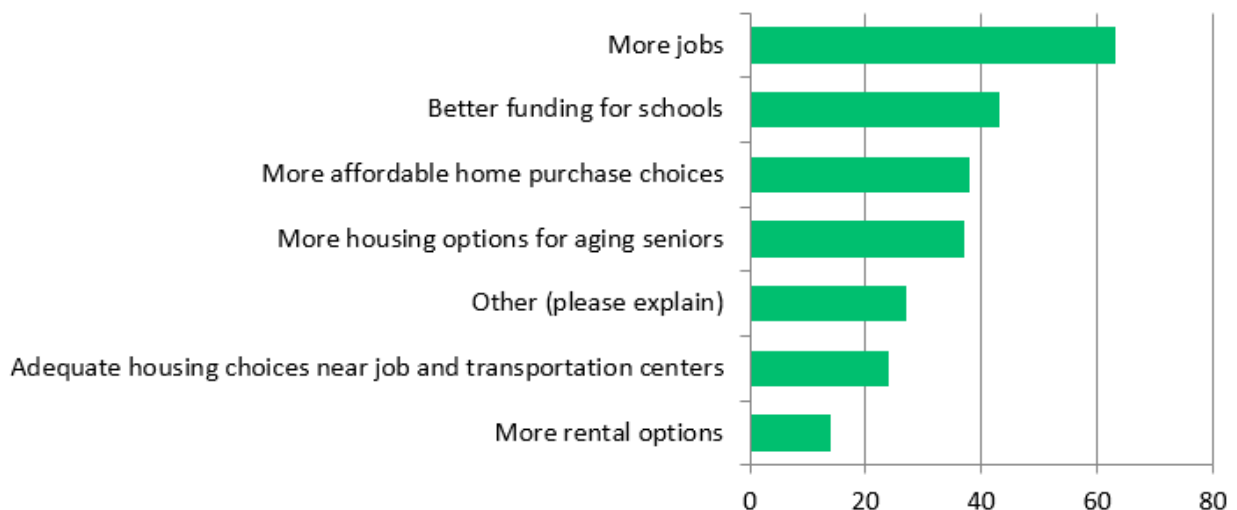
Respondents were also asked to rate how strongly they agree or disagree with statements about the quality of life in the South Central Region. Respondents most strongly agreed that the region offers a high quality of life and offers an adequate variety of recreational opportunities and open space. Respondents had the least agreement about the region having an adequate variety of employment opportunities and transportation options, which corresponds with the results of the municipal survey which indicated these areas as priorities for improvement.

Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements about the South Central Region.



When asked for their top three things they would like to see in the region, most respondents chose “more jobs”, followed by better funding for schools, and more affordable home purchase choices.

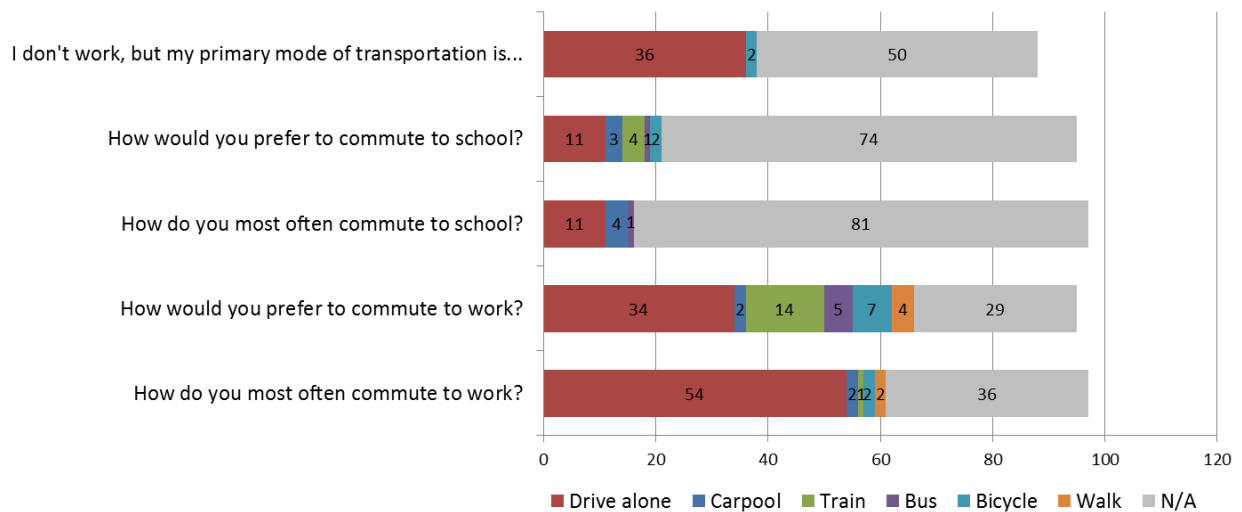
What are the top 3 things you would like to see in the region? (Choose 3)



Transportation

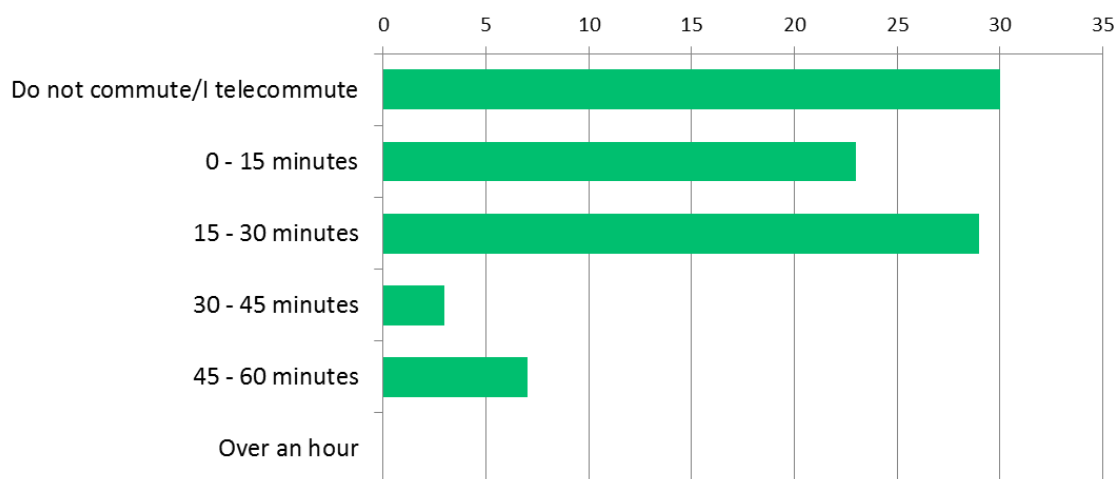
Respondents were asked about their normal modes of transportation compared to their ideal modes of transportation. When asked “How do you most often commute to school?” vs. “How would you prefer to commute to school?” slightly more respondents indicated that they would prefer to take the train or walk than currently do. There was a larger discrepancy among those who commute for work: only 1 respondent currently takes the train, but 14 indicated that they would prefer to take the train. The differences between actual and preferred modes were more modest for bus, bicycle, or walk.

Please answer the following questions about your travel choices.

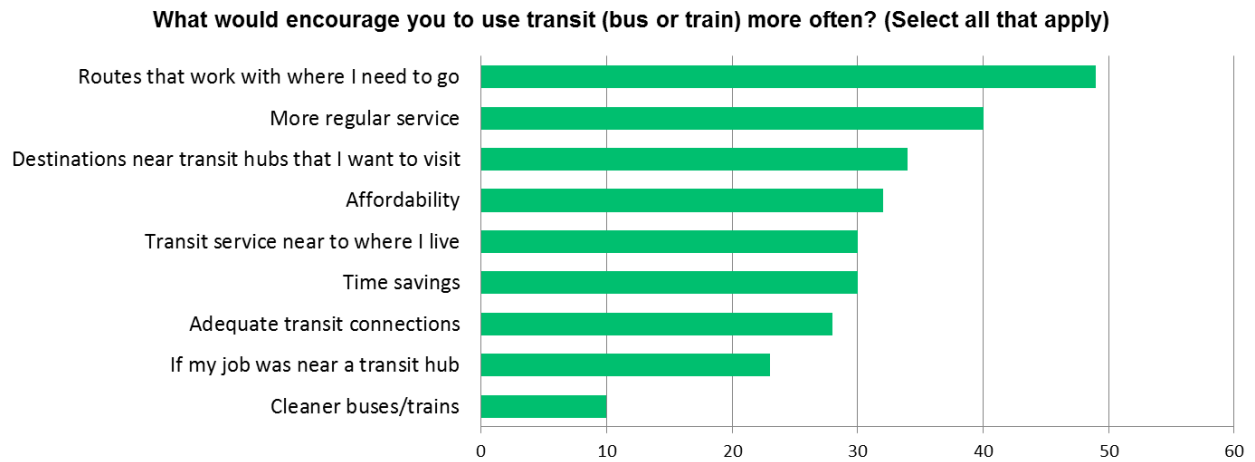


Roughly a third of the respondents (30 out of 92) do not commute at all. A quarter of respondents have short commutes of 0 to 15 minutes, and another 32% of respondents have commutes of 15 to 30 minutes, suggesting that these residents largely work within the region. 10 respondents had commutes between 30 and 60 minutes, and no respondents had commutes over an hour.

How long is your commute to work/school?



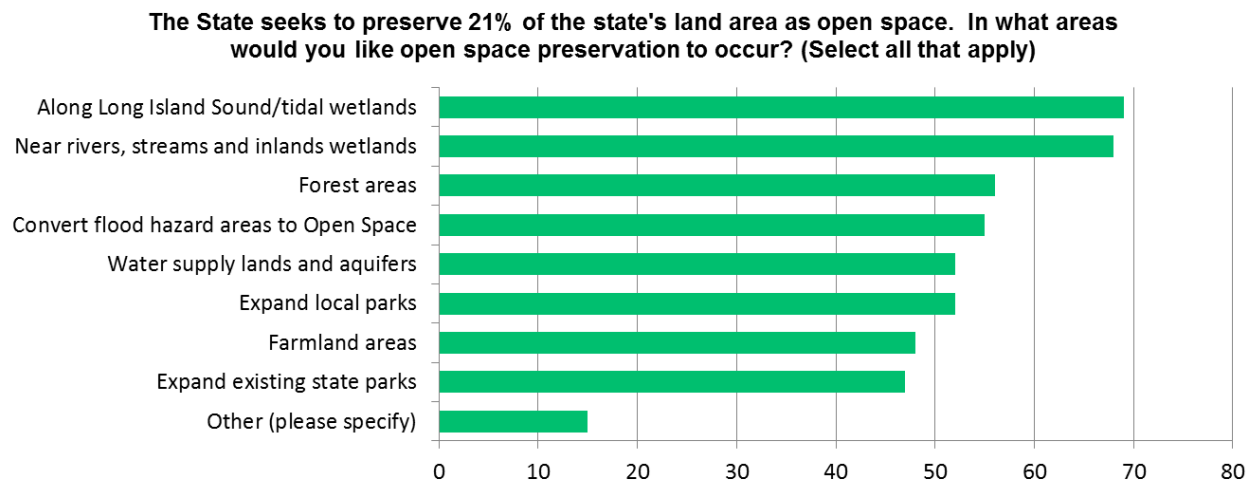
The top two strategies that would encourage respondents to use transit (bus or train) more often are “routes that work with where I need to go” and “more regular service”.



Respondents indicated broad support for TOD, and identified TOD as appealing mostly as an area for shopping and entertainment (84%), an area to visit (77%), an area in which to work or go to school (70%), and an area in which to live (63%).

Open Space

The public survey asked several questions about open space. Respondents would generally like open space preservation to occur along waterways: Long Island Sound/tidal wetlands; and near rivers, streams and inland wetlands. This emphasis on more open spaces near waterways may be due in part to a widespread feeling that there are not enough public access areas (such as docks, launches, beaches, and fishing piers) in the region. Comments for the access question cited a lack of parking and a lack of free public access (as opposed to private beaches or those that require a permit) as barriers to access.



Do you feel that there are enough public Coastal Access areas (docks, launches, beaches, fishing piers) in our region?

