



Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Program Final Summary Report



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Executive Summary

From March 23 to May 20, 2016, The City of Calgary conducted engagement on the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Program. To meet engagement goals and objectives, information was primarily shared and feedback received online through the Engage portal (<http://engage.calgary.ca/BRT>). People were able to participate online by providing comments and asking questions, completing feedback forms and taking quick polls. As alternate participation options, people were also invited to share their thoughts or ask questions by submitting a video via email or direct upload or by calling 311 to provide feedback or ask questions over the phone.

The City of Calgary hired Ipsos Public Affairs in early March to do a random phone survey. The survey sought information on what Calgarians wanted to talk about related to the BRT Program, and how they wanted to receive their information. The engagement process outlined in this Final Summary Report was based on the results from this survey as well as topics, questions, and feedback the project team received from earlier engagement sessions.

During the four weeks the BRT Engage portal pages were active, they received 16,219 views from 7,258 unique visitors and 975 unique comments and questions were submitted.

The engagement process was promoted through social media, direct postcard mail drops, subscribed stakeholder email, in-community promotion, councillor updates and traditional media.

Comments received indicated that roughly the same number of participants were either strongly for or against the program. Of the 975 comments, 165 were generally against the program and 153 were generally for the program. The remaining 657 comments were neutral in tone and shared comments, suggestions and questions about the program.

Across the BRT Program engagement pages, we heard comments and concerns from participants about the process, including the program budget and about engagement and communications. There was a desire for more transparency and communication with the public and business owners.

We heard concerns about ridership, specifically that there is not enough ridership to justify BRT. Some participants expressed the desire for The City of Calgary to focus on the Southwest Calgary Ring Road first, or instead of, the BRT. Participants shared concerns and questions about the effect the BRT Program would have on the community. Specifically we heard comments about noise, visual, light, and environmental impacts.

Participants who were supportive of the project expressed a desire to speed up the process. Many expressed excitement for all projects under the program and shared a desire for it to be built right away. Those who expressed support for the program saw the engagement and communication efforts as sufficient.



We heard a number of specific suggestions, including the desire for High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes, wider lanes, recommendations on where to place new pedestrian overpasses and new park and rides, as well as the desire for additional stop locations.

A number of participants voiced the desire for the improvement of current and regular bus routes instead of the BRT Program. They asked for new regular bus routes, and increasing the current routes frequency and reliability. Participants shared frustration with the current system in getting them to the far south communities and expressed the desire for fewer transfers. Many shared the desire for maintaining current routes.

Some participants asked for improved pedestrian access to and from stations. They expressed a desire for good connections, quality sidewalks, safe crossings, pedestrian overpasses, better timed lights, and snow removal. A number liked the connection of different neighbourhoods and sectors, not just to downtown or the LRT. In the comments, a strong theme emerged for bike racks/storage at stations, racks on buses, as well as the importance of bike access to and from communities.

We heard a variety of comments and suggestions about what would make getting to and from BRT stations better. The most stated comment was the desire for future and current parking challenges to be addressed. No consensus emerged as to how, but better policing and monitoring of neighbouring communities as well as the creation of dedicated park and ride areas were among common suggestions.

Three design concepts that would inspire the look and feel of the BRT stations were presented, though each station will be adapted to suit the needs and limitations of a particular location. No clear preference emerged about these three options. Option two and three were tied in the quick poll and the second station design option received slightly more favourable comments in the written feedback.

In the feedback form, the majority of participants indicated shelter from the weather as a 'must have.' Closely tied for second were real-time travel information, well-lit stations and security features. Similarly, adequate protection from the weather, including wind, the cold and sun, was the most common response under the station features comments. This was followed by making the stations safe from crime and vandalism. A large number of participants also asked for bike storage at stations, with some asking for safe bike storage from both the elements and from thieves. Safety and security was shared by a number of participants as a concern, specifically crime at stations.

For a description of the project and the engagement approach, see pages [5-9](#). For a detailed breakdown of everything we heard, see pages [10-16](#) of this report. All BRT verbatim comments for the online engagement can be found at <http://engage.calgary.ca/BRT>.



Program Background

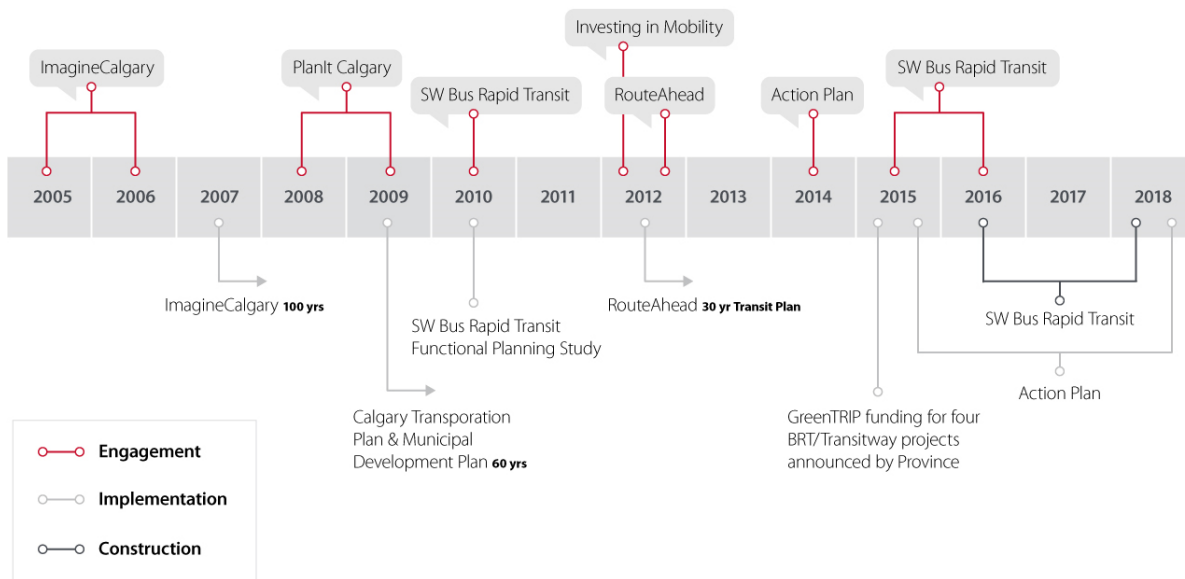
The City of Calgary currently operates five Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) routes: 300, 301, 302, 305 and 306. The new BRT Program is intended to complement the existing network of BRT and LRT routes, and to create connections to the future Green Line LRT. The four projects that make up the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Program are:

- North Crosstown BRT
- South Crosstown BRT
- 17 Avenue SE BRT
- Southwest BRT

BRT Program highlights:

- The four new projects part of the BRT Program were first identified as part of the Primary Transit Network in the Calgary Transportation Plan (CTP), which was approved by Council in 2009.
- Preliminary functional studies were completed on 17 Avenue SE BRT and Southwest BRT projects in 2010 and 2011 respectively.
- The projects were then included in RouteAhead (approved in 2013), and Investing in Mobility (approved in 2014).
- The projects received funding in September 2015 through the Province of Alberta’s GreenTRIP program, and preliminary design on all four projects began shortly thereafter.

The timeline below outlines key highlights, projects and programs that have lead to the development of the BRT Program.





Engagement Approach

The engagement approach was based on the following needs:

- To be responsive to the feedback received through past engagement processes.
- To be responsive to what Calgarians were interested in learning about, discussing and how they wanted to receive their information about the BRT Program and capital infrastructure projects in general.
- To address process needs and concerns.

In early March 2016, the City of Calgary hired Ipsos Public Affairs to conduct a random survey of Calgarians to better understand the needs of Calgarians specific to the BRT Program. Questions included what topics Calgarians were interested in learning about, what they wanted to discuss, and how they would prefer to receive their information. The engagement needed to be responsive to the information collected through the survey.

Concerns were raised about the engagement process, its accessibility, transparency and the opportunities for all who are interested to participate. There were additional concerns about safety and the ability to participate that emerged from the February 2016 open house held for the Southwest BRT Project. The engagement process needed to address these concerns.

Goals and Objectives

The following goals and objectives were identified for the engagement process to address and incorporate the needs identified above and to ensure the program engagement was in line with the best practices and the Engage Policy:

- 1. Opportunity for citizen engagement**
 - a. All who are impacted and interested can participate in a process that is safe, respectful and where all voices can be heard.
- 2. Opportunity for question and answers**
 - a. Citizens can access information and ask questions about the program.
 - b. Citizens can access information and ask questions about all four projects.
- 3. Project level input**
 - a. Stakeholders can participate at the project level to address unique factors and needs of each project.
- 4. Stakeholders are informed**
 - a. Stakeholders are informed and able to access information about the BRT Program, and all four projects.
 - b. A BRT Program engagement plan and strategy exists and is supported by a communication plan and strategy.
- 5. Stakeholders are aware how feedback was used**
 - a. Information about what was heard at the program and project level is shared with all who participated.



- b. Feedback gathered is used for the program and on all four projects.

Stakeholders

The engagement was open to all interested Calgarians. Throughout this document, the words citizen, stakeholder and participant are used interchangeably since the process was open to all who were interested and who wanted to provide feedback and ask questions.

Timeline

The engagement outlined in this document occurred between March 23 and May 20, 2016. Previous engagement strategies, plans and outcomes are covered in other documents. See the “How did we get here?” section at the bottom of the main BRT Program page on the Engage portal (engage.calgary.ca/BRT).

Inputs

To meet the goals and objectives, the engagement was consolidated into one online process on The City’s Engage portal (<http://engage.calgary.ca/BRT>). The online process was supported by 311, where citizens could provide feedback over the phone. On the Engage portal, participants were able to write comments, complete feedback forms, take quick polls, ask questions and submit online video with questions and comments. A new program page was created on calgary.ca and all project pages were updated on calgary.ca to support the BRT Program Engage portal pages.

The online process was developed based on the information received from the Ipsos survey and themes we heard from previous engagement sessions across all projects part of the BRT Program. Visit the main BRT Program page on the Engage portal for the full Ipsos survey results and all of the previous What we Heard reports.

The BRT Program pages on the Engage portal were used to:

- Inform/educate citizens about the BRT Program, share information about the program and solicit feedback.
- Gather feedback and provide a question and answer platform for all citizens, at their own convenience. Topics included:
 - BRT station features
 - BRT station design
 - Getting to and from BRT stations
 - Safety, crime and noise
 - Transit oriented development (TOD)
 - Routes and ridership
 - Budget
 - Anything else you’d like us to consider?



Technique Description

The techniques for the BRT Program engagement were chosen with the engagement goals and strategy in mind. Self-selected, discussion-based methods were chosen to meet the needs of the project as well as to create a transparent and open space for citizens to provide feedback.

Discussion-based methods create context for input collected. They contribute to transparency by encouraging dialogue between participants. Discussion-based methods for the BRT Program were: **BRT Program Engage portal pages.**

Self-selected participation methods reduced barriers to participation. They contribute to the inclusivity of the engagement process and provide broad reach and awareness of opportunities for input. They serve as the best opportunity for subject matter education. Self-selected participation methods were: **BRT Program Engage portal pages, Video submission, 311 submissions and project email.**

Implementation

Implementing the BRT Program engagement was a collaborative effort. Staff across different business units within The City helped coordinate various parts of the engagement. Activities undertaken included:

- Deployment of a multiple-channel integrated marketing and communications campaign to promote all opportunities to participate
- Development and launch of the Engage portal
- Planning, scheduling and monitoring the Engage portal

The table below shows a snapshot of activities undertaken in the implementation of the BRT Program engagement strategy.

Snapshot of BRT Program Engagement Implementation Activities	
Research	
March 2016 - Communicating on infrastructure Report	Ipsos Public Affairs conducted a telephone survey with a randomly selected sample of 1001 Calgarians aged 18 years and older between March 4 and March 7, 2016
Inclusive Engagement	
Online engagement – Engage portal	From March 23 – May 20, 2016, the Engage BRT Program pages had: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7,258 unique visitors • 975 unique comments • 16,219 views on all BRT Program portal pages with 9,304 views on the main page, 1,284 views on the Routes and Ridership page and 1,293 views on the Anything Else page



311 engagement	Two calls were received through 311 but no feedback was provided about the program
Video submission	No video submissions were received
Promotion and Marketing	
Social media	<p>Active from March 23 – April 4, 2016 All Calgarians Reach: 235,000+ impressions Clicks to web: 3,436</p> <p>Active from May 13 – May 19, 2016 Geo-targeted to BRT routes and communities Reach: 112,400+ impressions Clicks to web: 1,300</p>
Direct marketing	<p>Postcard mail drop to 110,000+ residences and businesses within 3 km of BRT routes.</p> <p>See appendix 1 for a detailed breakdown of the postal code areas.</p>
In-community promotion	Bold signs along all four BRT routes, for a total of 11 signs
Stakeholder email	<p>Email update to community associations, other organizations and institutions, and project subscribed email lists.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 129 subscribers on the 17 Avenue S.E. BRT • 120 subscribers on North Crosstown BRT • 18 subscribers on South Crosstown BRT • 337 subscribers on Southwest BRT
Councillor update	Memo, suggested web text, suggested tweets
Traditional media	News release and interviews on request
calgary.ca website traffic	<p>From March 23 – May 20, 2016:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The calgary.ca BRT Program page had 410 visits • The North Crosstown BRT page had 404 visits • The South Crosstown BRT page had 369 visits • The 17 AVE S.E. BRT page had 387 visits • The Southwest BRT page had 3,043 visits

Engagement Reach

- The Engage BRT Program Engage portal pages received 7,258 unique visitors to from March 23 – May 20, 2016
- In total, we received 975 unique comments and questions
- Majority of visits came from desktops (59%)
- Website entry (56%) and direct entry (39%) were the main ways users accessed the site



Of the 975 comments received, 165 were generally against the program and 153 were generally for the program. The remaining 657 comments were neutral in tone. The positive comment sentiment was based on how many participants said they were “for BRT, love it, can’t wait, etc.”. The negative was based on how many used words like “against, hated the idea, etc.” in their comments. All other comments were deemed neutral.

Engagement Results – “What we heard”

The following section outlines what we asked and what we heard from participants. For context and as reference, the questions we asked are shown first. These are grouped by the type of question asked.

The quick poll results are shown on page [11](#).

Overall themes we heard across the portal pages are summarized on page [12 and 13](#). This is because although we created specific topic pages on the portal, participants provided comments, questions, and feedback on all questions across all pages.

Finally, all of themes from specific portal sections – getting to and from stations, station design, station features (comments and feedback forms) – are summarized starting on page [13](#).

All BRT verbatim comments for the online engagement can be found at <http://engage.calgary.ca/BRT>.

What we asked

Feedback on	‘Quick poll’ questions about	Question and answers on
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Getting to and from stations • Station designs • Station features <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How important is it to have shelter from the weather? ○ How important is it to have heated shelters? ○ How important is it to have bright and well-lit stations? ○ How important is it to have security features? ○ How important is it to have ticket vending machines? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which station design they prefer • If they are finding the information they need • If they are satisfied with the opportunities for discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety, crime and noise • Transit oriented development (TOD) • Routes and ridership • Budget • Anything else

○ How important is it to have bike storage?		
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What we heard - Quick poll results

We asked Calgarians three quick poll questions on the Engage portal. The first poll asked about station design preference. We received 106 responses. The table shows an almost identical split between the three options with option one and two tied with 34%.

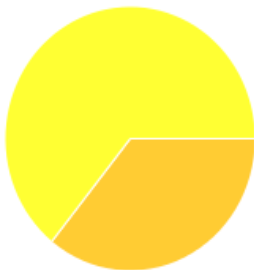
Which station design do you prefer?



Option 1	34%	■
Option 2	34%	■
Option 3	33%	■

We asked two quick polls about the information posted and whether or not participants were finding the information they needed. Of the 852 participants who took the poll about finding information, 64% said that they were not finding the information they needed. In April we presented an interim report on the polls. This question saw a 1% change (from 65%) from the midpoint report.

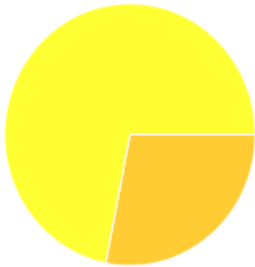
Are you finding the information you need?



Yes	36%	■
No	64%	■

Of the 916 participants who took the poll about opportunities for discussion, 72% said they were not satisfied. There was no change from the midpoint report.

Are you satisfied with the opportunities for discussion?



Yes	28%
No	72%

What we heard overall theme - Process feedback

From all of the comments we received across all BRT engagement pages, the top three themes we heard from participants were about the **project process**. They shared with us questions, comments and concerns about:

- Project budget/cost
- Desire for more transparency/communication with the public and business owners
- Concern the increase in congestion and decrease in traffic safety as a result of the project

Other process related themes we heard were:

- Concern about ridership numbers, specifically that there is not enough ridership to justify BRT
- Desire to focus on the SW Ring Road first/instead
- Concern about engagement process and confusion/difficulty with the website
- The desire for the process to speed up and for all projects to be built right away
- Support for the engagement and communication efforts, and the expression that they are/were sufficient

What we heard overall theme - Program feedback

From all of the comments we received across all portal pages, we heard a number of **specific suggestions** including the desire for:

- HOV lanes
- Wider lanes
- New pedestrian overpasses
- New park and rides
- Connections to other parts of town like Bridgeland and Applewood
- Maintaining current routes, e.g. bus route 56
- Additional stops in/at: Lakeview, North Glenmore Park, University Loop, west side of Fish Creek Park



Participants shared concerns and questions about the effect the BRT would have on the **community**. We heard comments about noise, visual, light, and environmental impacts.

We heard comments about the effects the BRT would have on **parking**. Some participants asked for designated parking, others asked for migration strategies and for enforcement of neighbourhood parking.

We heard conflicting ideas about how to **improve** current **services**. A number of participants voiced the desire to improve current and regular buses routes instead of the BRT Program. They asked for new regular bus routes, and increasing the current routes' frequency and reliability to reduce the number of transfers.

Conversely, we also heard strong support for the BRT Program for the same reasons. Participants expressed hope that the BRT Program would address some of the reliability and transfer concerns. Many who were supportive shared frustration with the current system and the desire for fewer transfers, particularly to get to the southern communities and the desire for better overall reliability in service.

Participants asked for improved **pedestrian access to and from stations**. They expressed a desire for: good connections, quality sidewalks, safe crossings, pedestrian overpasses, better timed lights, and snow removal. A number liked the connection of different neighbourhoods and sectors, not just to downtown or the LRT. Concerns regarding **safety and security**, specifically crime at stations, were shared by a number of participants.

Finally, participants shared the desire for **bike racks** and **storage at stations**, racks **on buses**, as well as the importance of **bike access to and from communities**.

What we heard - Getting to and from stations

We heard a variety of comments and suggestions about what would make getting to and from BRT stations better. The most common concerns and comments were around the desire for future and current **parking** implications to be addressed. No consensus emerged as to how, but **better policing and monitoring of neighbouring communities** as well as the **creation** of dedicated **park and ride areas** were common suggestions. Two specific suggestions were made for a park and ride at the Sunridge shopping centre and one for the conversion of unused park space at the terminus. Conversely, there were a number of other comments that were strongly against the creation of dedicated parking and some that called for reduced parking.

The next most common discussion point in the getting to and from stations thread was **pedestrian overpasses**, including a strong desire for the inclusion of pedestrian overpasses on the Southwest BRT project, specifically on 14th Street and 90th Avenue, and at Heritage Drive. Participants asked for better pedestrian and bike access on 14th Street as well as for stairs at pedestrian overpasses.

Other themes that emerged in the getting to and from stations discussion:

- Safer crossings
- Bike storage and racks on buses



- Bike access to and from communities
- Good pedestrian access
- Accessible stations
- Good community connections
- Lighting along sidewalks
- Better sidewalk clearing
- Development of feeder buses
- Good sidewalks
- Review of feeder buses
- Longer pedestrian lights
- Grade separated crossing at Glenmore Landing
- Adding/encourage Transit Oriented Development (TOD)
- Making the stations/program desirable to use without car access

What we heard - Station design

When it came to **station design**, no clear preference emerged in the comments among the three options. Participants did provide a number of suggestions about each of the designs. These are captured in the table below.

Station Design 1	Station Design 2	Station Design 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better exposure to light • Don't paint white because of vandalism • Need protection from sun • Use more than one design for areas • Use solar panels - free energy • Water runoff into road, not behind station • Too small, not enough room • Use "faux" wood • Protection from cold weather/snow • Wood is too "high maintenance" (erosion) • Glass will shatter from vandalism • Too expensive / fancy/ big • Wants partially enclosed area (weather) • More seating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patron-controlled heat source (i.e. button) • Too "high maintenance" (costs to maintain) • Too pricey / fancy / large • Glass shattering concerns (vandalism/weather) • Need more protection from weather/wind • Likes sloping for runoff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern over snow/rain accumulation • Include solar panels – free energy • Likes the light • Use material that can be pressure washed clean • More seating • Too fancy / pricey / large • Too small • Need more light (glass) • Too "high maintenance" (costs to maintain) • Likes no glass (vandals can't break) • Need more protection from weather/wind



Station Design 1	Station Design 2	Station Design 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too flat, snow/rain accumulation 		

What we heard - Station feature comments

Participants were asked to provide comments and to indicate preference about station features. Under the station features, **comments** about **adequate protection from the weather** including wind, the cold and sun was the most common response. This was followed by making the stations **safe** from crime and vandalism. A large number of participants also asked for **bike storage** at stations with some asking for safe bike storage from both the elements and from thieves.

Additional comments were about **cost concerns** and **transparency**, as well as general concerns regarding **noise** and **visuals of the station**, comments about the **amenities and station features**, and comments about **routes and trips**. These are outlined in the table below.

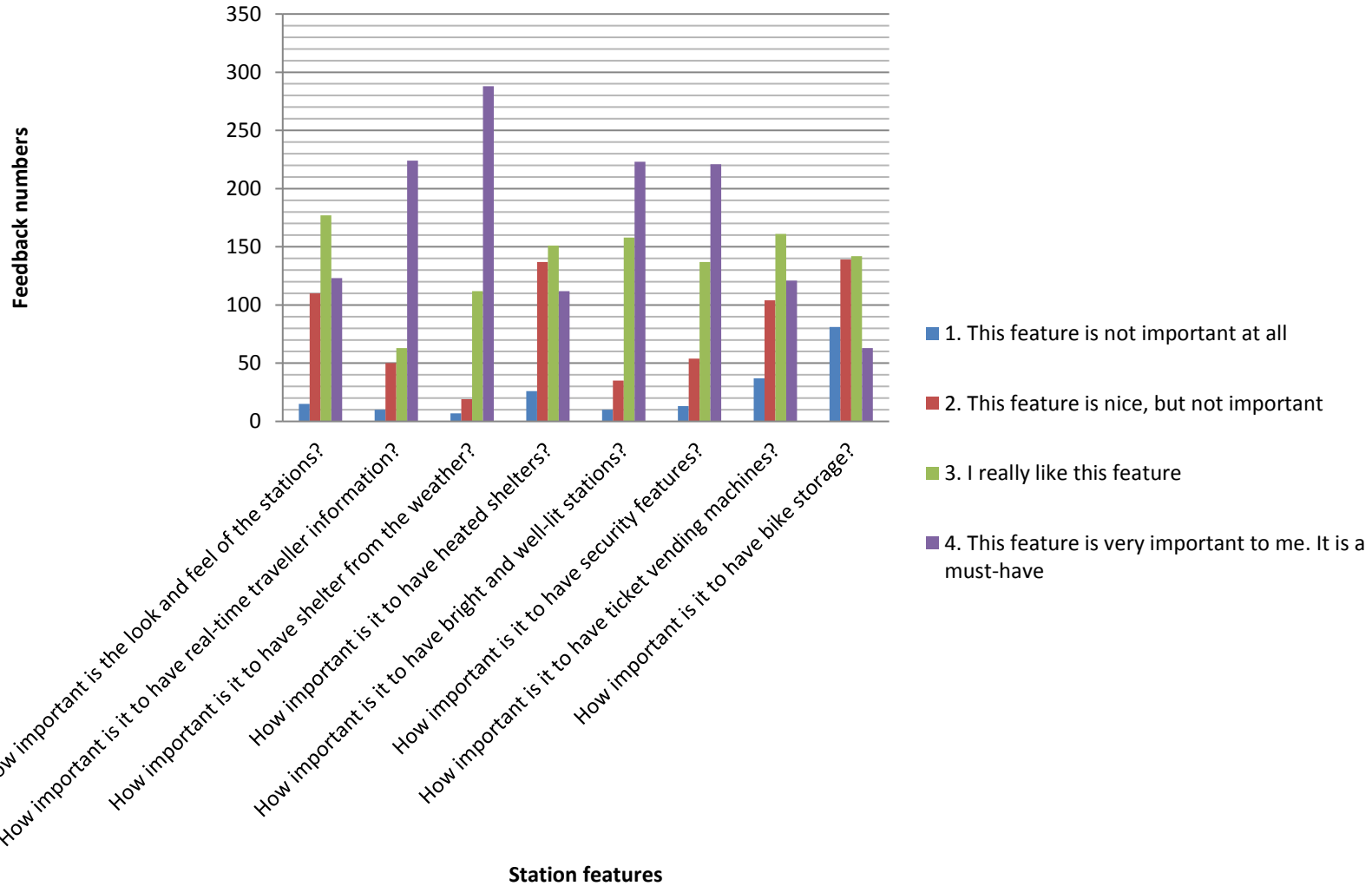
Amenities/station features	Route/trip information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Real-time bus updates • Solar panels • Lighting at stops that reduces glare for drivers • Bike repair stands • Washrooms • Water stations/fountains • Adequate seating • No electronic signs (use phone) • Better lighting • Wi-Fi at stations • Emergency phone at stations • Good pedestrian access and better community integrations • Use multiple designs (suitable to area) • Upkeep concerns for wood/glass • Allow electronic payments for bus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More places to pick up paper maps • Don't be purely electronic (low-income concerns) • Better app accuracy • Maps and connections across the city • Direct route to hospitals/universities • Higher frequency of busses • Longer lights • Connect routes to downtown • Important for the buses to be on time

What we heard - Station feature feedback forms

Participants were also asked to fill out a survey about station features. The table on page 16 is a representation of all of the station feedback received.

The station feature in the survey that the most participants indicated as '**must have**' was **shelter from the weather**. Closely **tied for second** were **real time travel information**, well lit **stations** and **security** features.

Station features feedback form results





Outcome

The project team is reviewing all of the information received and will present the feedback at the July Transit and Transportation Committee meeting.

Next Steps

The final report will be shared at the July Transit and Transportation Committee meeting. Next steps will be determined at the meeting.



Appendix 1 – Postal code drop details

The following table has all of the postal code letter drop areas. They are divided by project.

Postal code letter drops	
SW Transitway	T2V - LCD
	T3E - LCD
	T2J -LCD
	T2W - LCD
	T3E - LCD
	T2T - LCD
	T2S - LCD
	T3H - LCD
North Crosstown	T1Y – LCD
	T3J – LCD
	T2M – LCD
	T2N – LCD
	T2L – LCD
	T3A – LCD
South Crosstown	T3E – LCD
	T3C – LCD
	T2V – LCD
	T2H – LCD
	T2J – LCD
	T2C – LCD
	T2Z – LCD
17 Ave SE Transitway	T2A – LCD
	T2B – LCS