

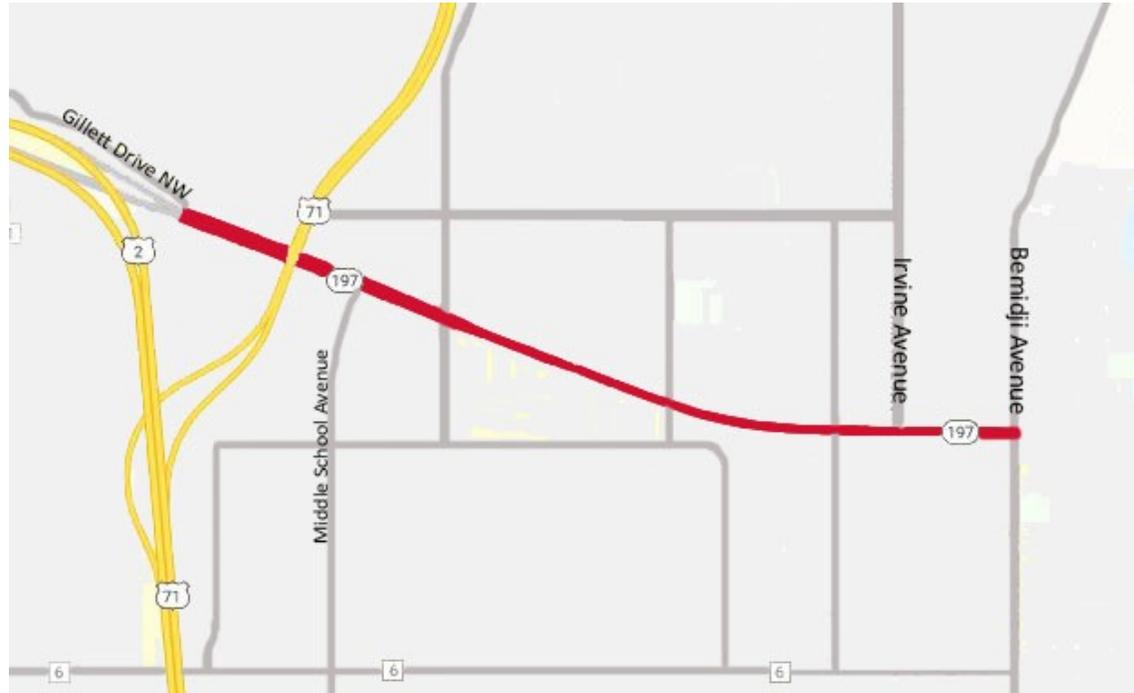


Paul Bunyan Drive Pre-Construction Survey

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Paul Bunyan Drive Project Overview



MnDOT is currently planning a project to improve safety on **Paul Bunyan Drive** (Hwy 197) from Bemidji Avenue to Gillett Drive, to take place within the next 5-8 years.

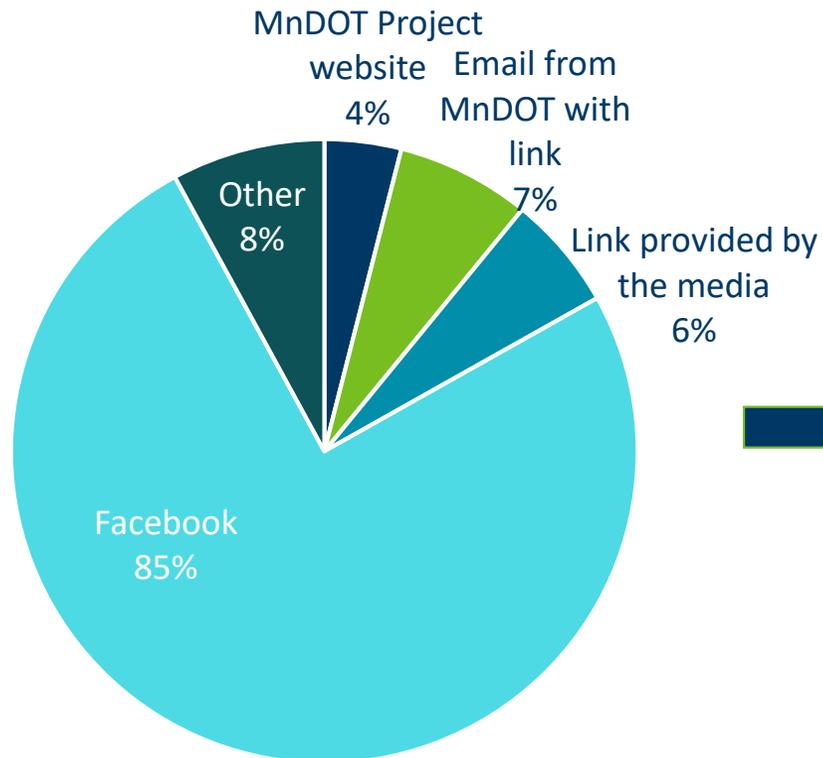
- This corridor serves over 10,000n vehicles daily and has a higher than expected crash rate
- MnDOT reached out to local residents to identify existing issues and gain insight into current transportation challenges
- Every respondent identified as having traveled on the Paul Bunyan Drive corridor, as shown above

Highlights

- An online survey was conducted with n=375 respondents.
 - Roughly $\frac{3}{4}$ of respondents live in the Bemidji, MN area.
 - 51% have lived in the area for 20 years or more.
 - 34% travel along Highway 197 on a daily basis.
 - 84% of respondents travel on this stretch both on weekends and weekdays.
 - 2/3 of respondents view 'some businesses' in this area as being difficult to access.
 - Just over half of respondents consider the look and feel of this area to be 'neutral.'
 - Over one in four find it 'unsightly.'
- Citing issues of safety, pedestrian use of this **Paul Bunyan Drive** stretch is currently low.
 - 15% of respondents currently walk.
 - 14% of respondents currently bike.
- If facilities improved, both types of usage would increase.
 - 49% would consider walking.
 - 47% would consider biking.
- 'Visiting the MnDOT website' is the strongest performer amongst the various methods of receiving information from MnDOT.
 - 100% of respondents selected the site as a preferred way to receive updates.

DETAILED FINDINGS

The online survey was completed mostly by respondents sourced from Facebook.

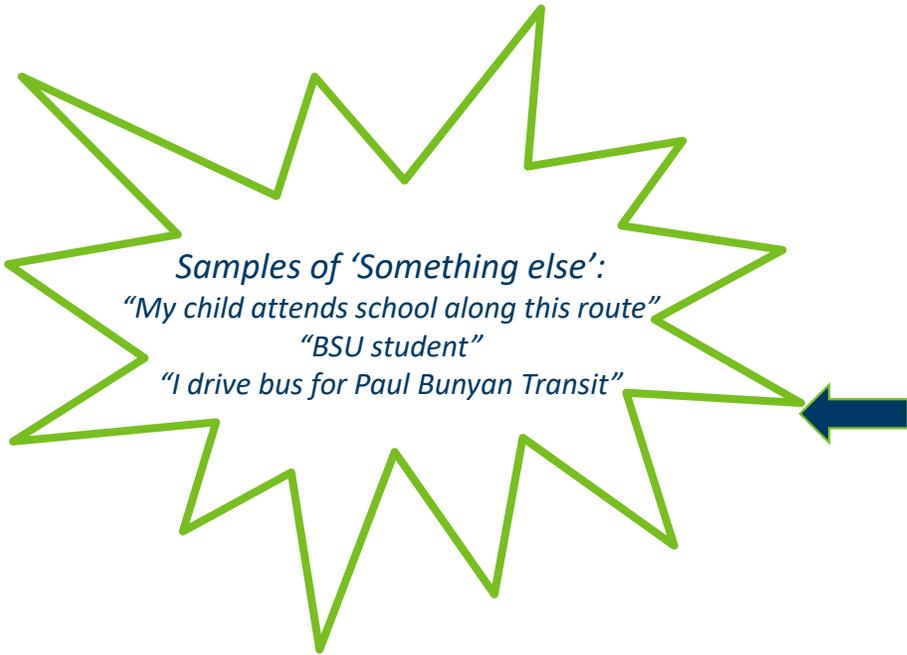


Samples of 'Other'

- *"Handout from open house meeting"*
- *"Staff email from work- our business is on the road in question"*
- *"Parent of Trek North student. Received email from the school"*
- *"Relayed to officers (myself included) by Police Chief"*
- *"My workplace sent the survey out"*

- The make-up of the sample for any given post-evaluation project will differ depending on the engagement efforts, access to lists and the response from social media. The sample mix needs to be considered upfront and evaluated as it can influence results. Some parameters and guidelines should eventually be set for sampling and analysis plans. These evaluations are not designed to be compared across projects per se as each project is unique and often has a sample composition, so the bases will not always be comparable.

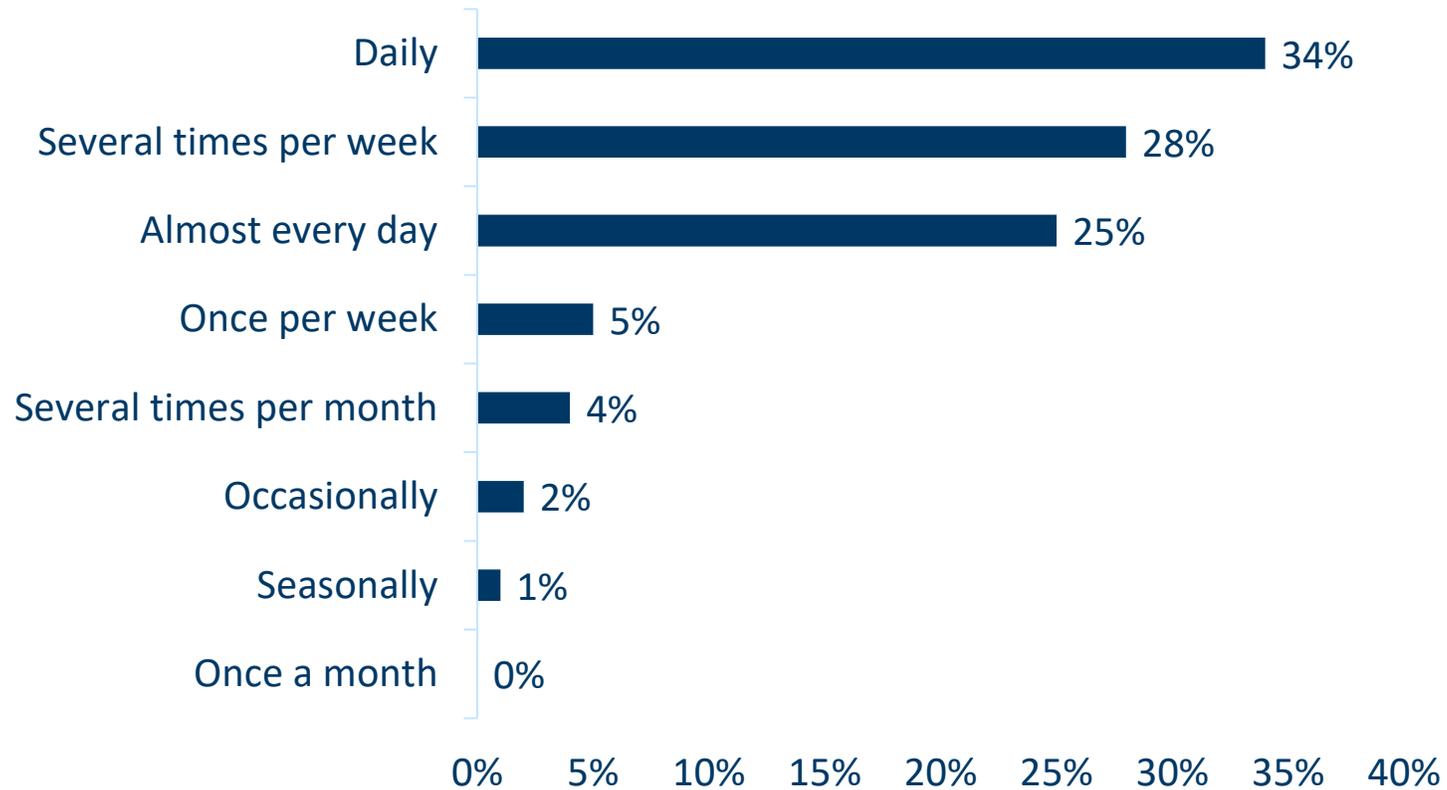
Just under three quarters of respondents live in the Bemidji area, while 80% use Paul Bunyan Drive for retail.



Relationship to Highway 197:	TOTAL (n=375)
I use the corridor for retail/shopping	80%
I live in the Bemidji area	73%
I work in the Bemidji area	50%
I commute along the corridor	39%
I work along the corridor	16%
I live along the corridor	4%
I live seasonally in the Bemidji area	2%
Something else	6%

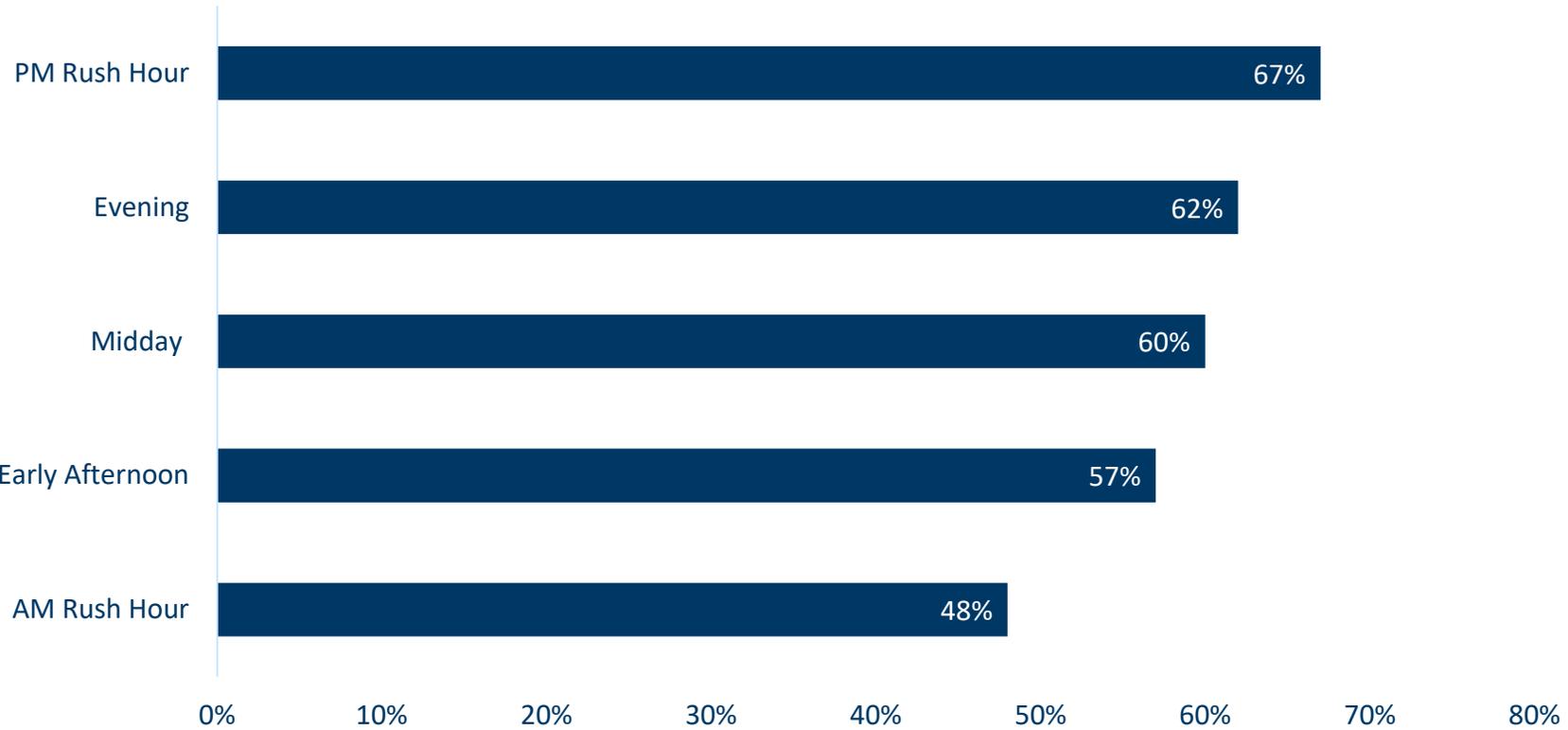
The vast majority of respondents travel along the corridor more than once a week; over 1/3 travel Highway 197 every day.

Approximately how often do you travel along Highway 197?



Evening, both during PM rush hour and afterward, is the most popular time for drivers to travel upon this stretch of Paul Bunyan Drive.

Times of Day This Stretch is Typically Used



Three quarters of travelers identify at least 'some businesses' as being difficult to access along this corridor. These respondents referenced specific locations on 197 that they find troublesome.

Ease of Access to Businesses Along Corridor

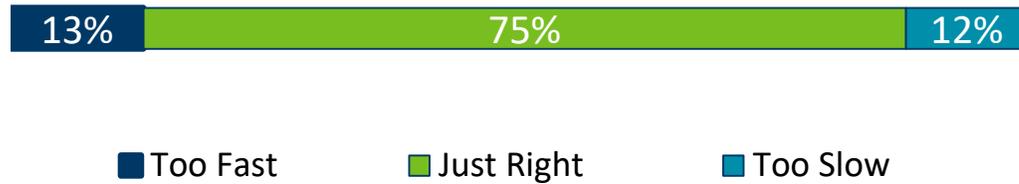


Particularly Difficult to Access Locations

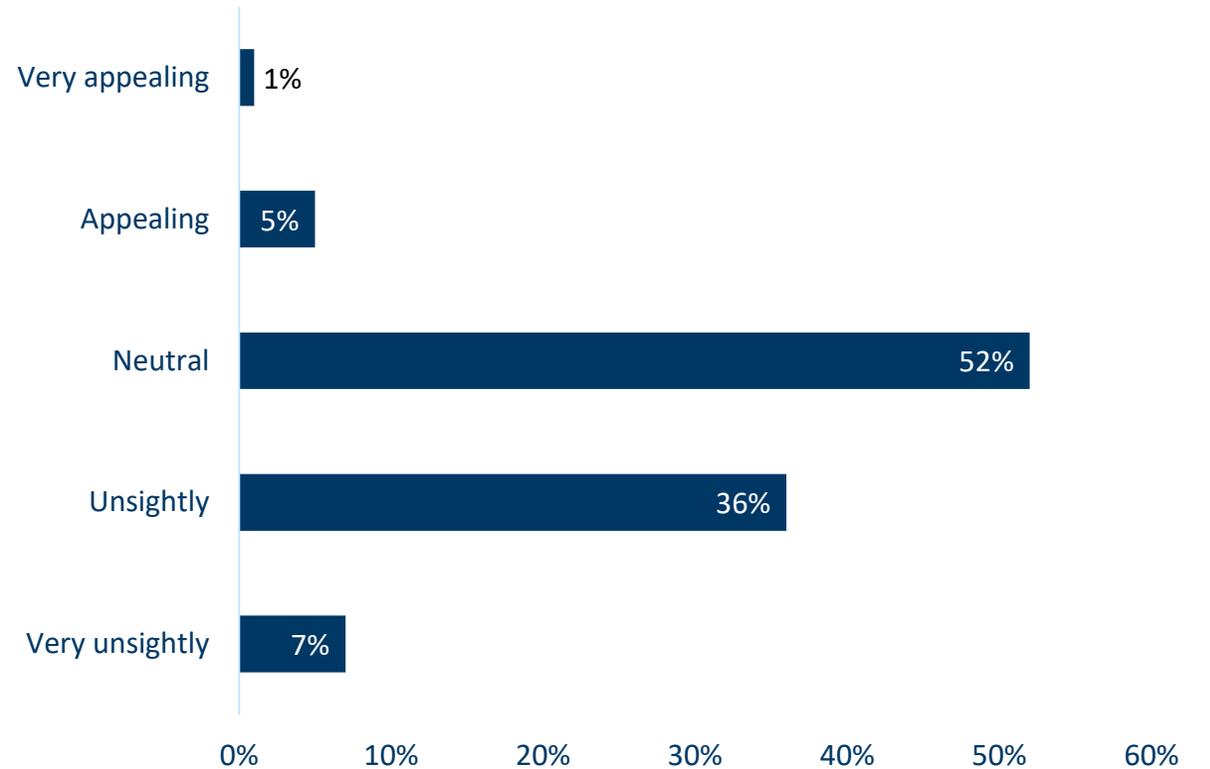
- *“Starbucks, No designated left turn lane. The Target/Walmart intersection”*
- *“Trying to cross 197 without a light”*
- *“All - visibility is poor, making it difficult to enter businesses & re-enter traffic”*
- *“It can be hard to get back onto the corridor when leaving Pine Ridge Ave NW. Traffic does not stop”*
- *“Left turns are difficult/scary during busy traffic times”*
- *“Hard to make left turns to head west in several areas. I generally drive a few blocks on back street”*

Though travelers largely agree that traffic speeds are 'Just Right,' opinions of the corridor's current aesthetics are less positive.

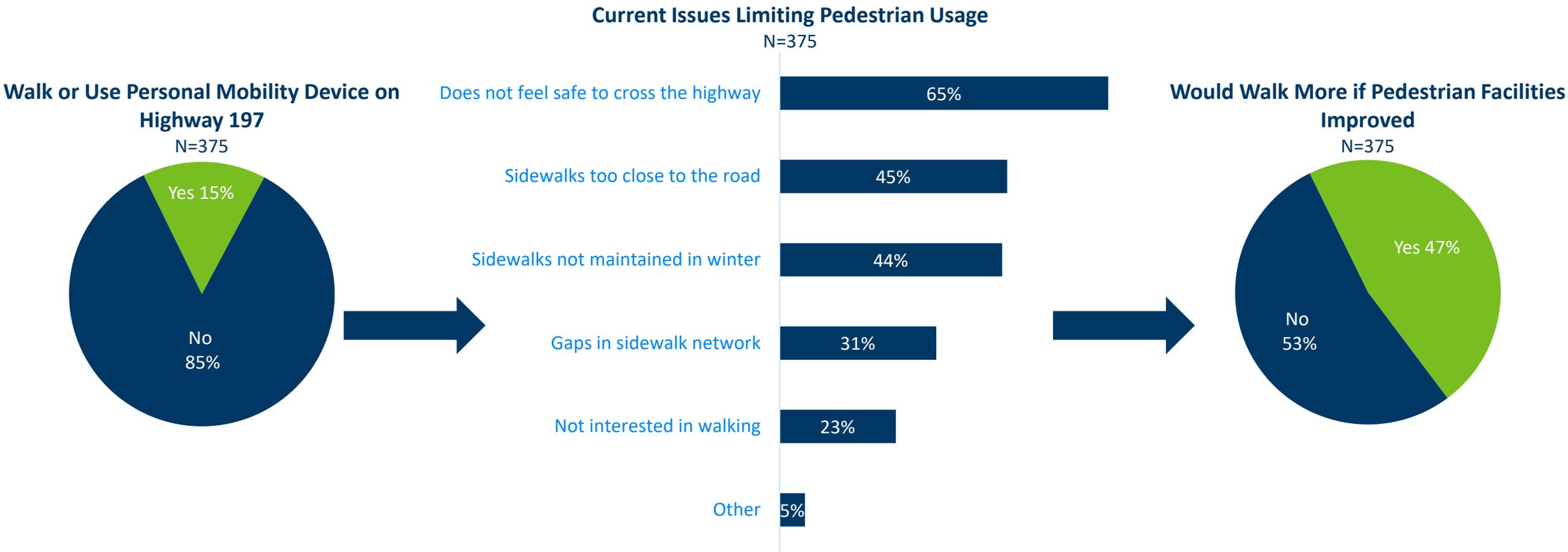
Attitudes Regarding Current Speeds of Traffic



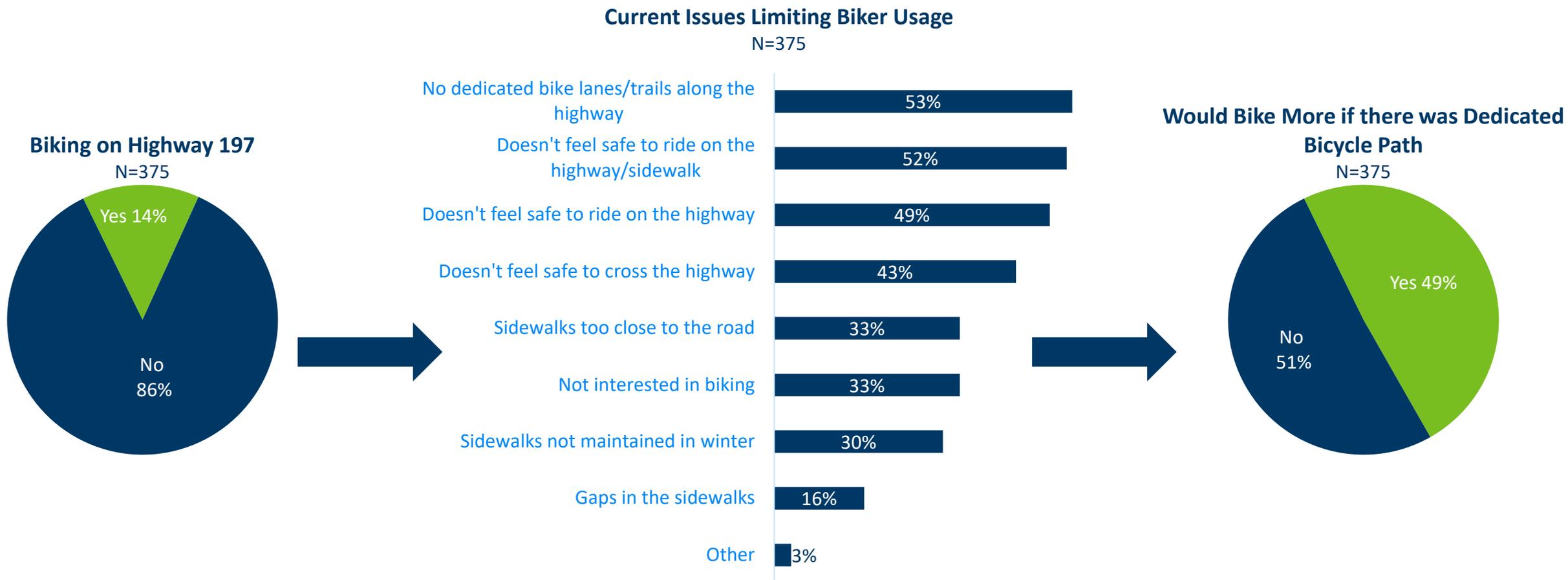
Ratings of Corridor's Current Look and Feel



Citing issues such as safety and lack of maintenance, the majority of citizens do not currently walk on this stretch of road. However, close to half would reconsider if improvements were made.

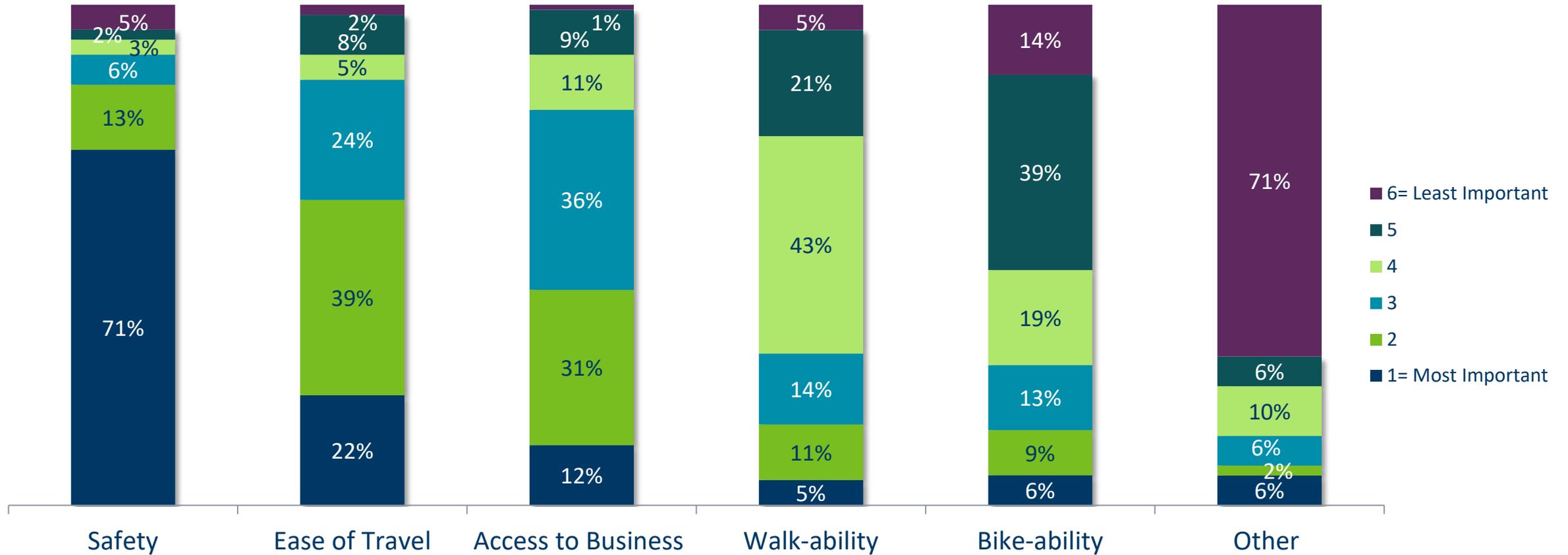


Similar to walking, few respondents currently bike on Highway 197. The main barrier is the lack of bike lanes; constructing a dedicated bicycle path interests almost half of travelers.



With almost $\frac{3}{4}$ of travelers citing it as their most important transportation issue along the corridor, safety is the community's biggest concern.

Importance Ranking, Possible Transportation Issues



Access to businesses is the most repeated refrain when travelers detail the merits of this stretch of Paul Bunyan Drive.

Substantive Comments

Detailing what respondents like most about this stretch

- Generally traffic moves well through here. There seem to be sufficient controlled intersections to allow for access.
- The ability to shop and eat easily all in one area. The mix of shops is wonderful, the big box and the specialized.
- It is nicely lit at night. There are four lanes plus a wide middle turn lane. I prefer to ride my recumbent trike with traffic and cannot on this stretch. The sidewalks are too narrow to bike on with pedestrians.
- This stretch of Paul Bunyan Drive gives access to a lot of different businesses in the area.
- It is the main artery through town to access most needed businesses.
- Access to Paul Bunyan kindergarten center and airport.
- Signage is good. Visible.
- It keeps chains and national businesses out of the downtown area, and it's easy to direct tourists to here for their needs.
- Some sections of this corridor have updated sidewalks and some greenery from the businesses.
- Wide lanes; easy to travel, especially in winter.

Concerns of safety and critiques of aesthetics are commonly referenced areas of improvement for the corridor. Calls for enhanced sidewalks and dedicated bike lanes are also frequent notes.

Substantive Comments

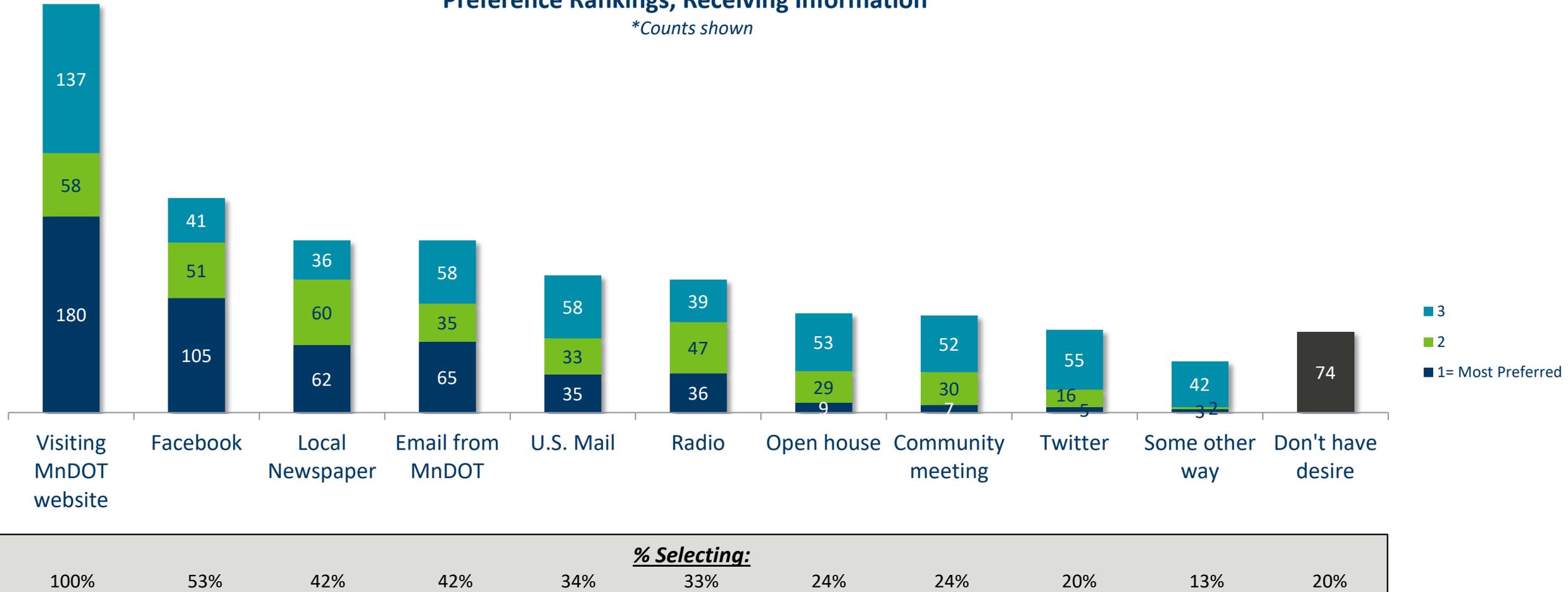
Detailing what respondents would like to change about this stretch

- The road needs to be made safer for pedestrians and bikers. Children walk from the local school, Trek North, along this stretch of road.
- The most concern is for the children that got to school in that area. Many walk/bike to and from school. Sidewalks ARE NOT maintained in the winter.
- It can be very difficult to make left turns at certain times of the day due to traffic. It is also difficult to see oncoming traffic in the left turn lane in front of Verizon.
- I think we could make it much more beautiful and northern Minnesota-esque, have more native plants and pollinators, trees, etc. I also think we could reduce the heavy commercial look and bumper-to-bumper feel.
- Make it easier and safer to go in and out of businesses. You always feel like you usually wait an extended amount of time to go in and out of business driveways or have to jet out into traffic.
- If Bemidji had more accessible public transportation this stretch might not be nearly as busy, which would help with the traffic issues. Also making a bicycle lane would help immensely.
- The sidewalks need to be further away from the road. People are forced to walk far too close to quickly moving vehicles, exceptionally worrisome in icy conditions.
- Commuting can take too much time before and after work.
- The left turn lanes are difficult, especially when a large oncoming vehicle is also turning left - it can be difficult to see around them.

‘Visiting the MnDOT website’ is the strongest performing method of receiving information: the site both tops the list in count of #1 rankings and was also selected by 100% of respondents as a preferred route of communication.

Preference Rankings, Receiving Information*

*Counts shown



Thank you again!

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Questionnaire

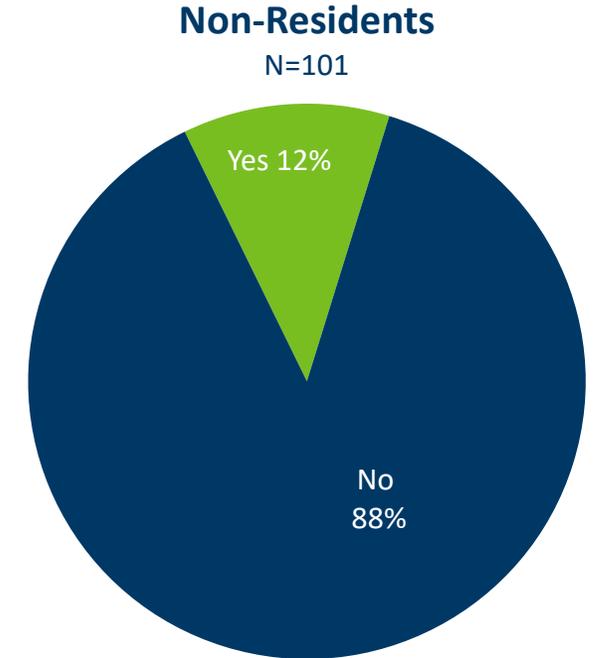
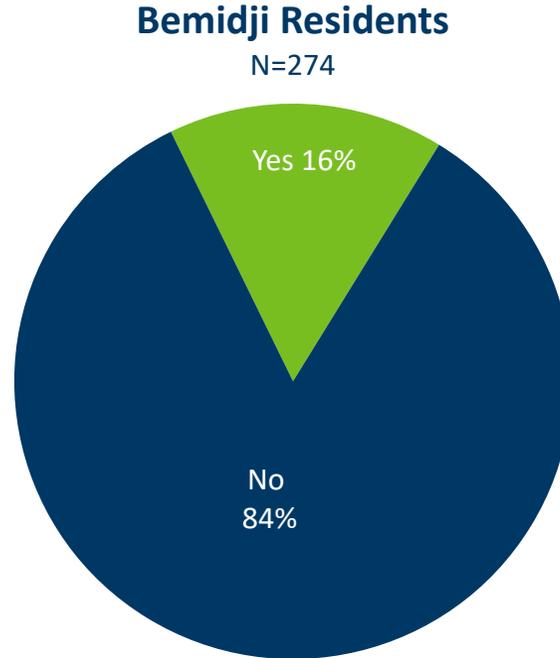
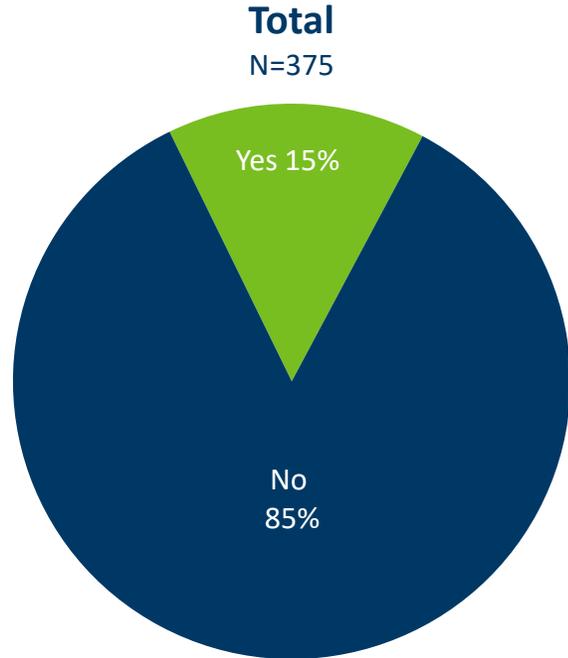


Open Ends

Appendix

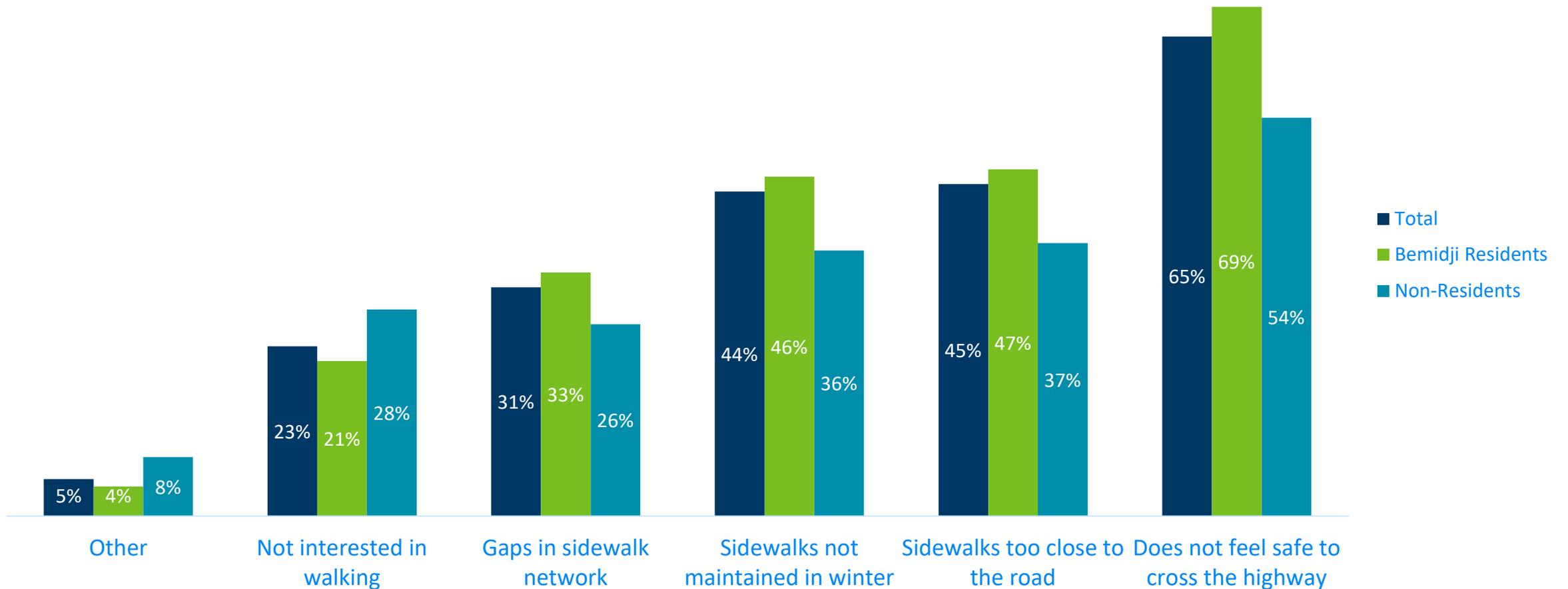
Bemidji citizens are slightly more likely to walk on this stretch than non-residents, though pedestrian traffic is not heavy for any population.

Walk or Use Personal Mobility Device on Highway 197



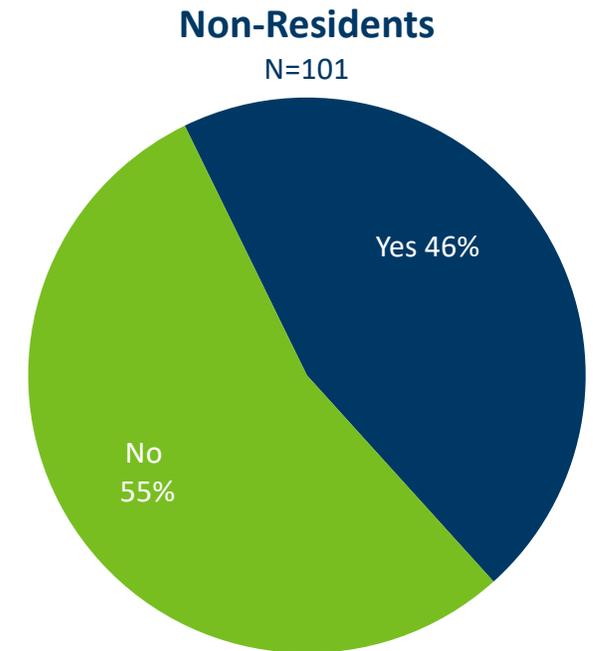
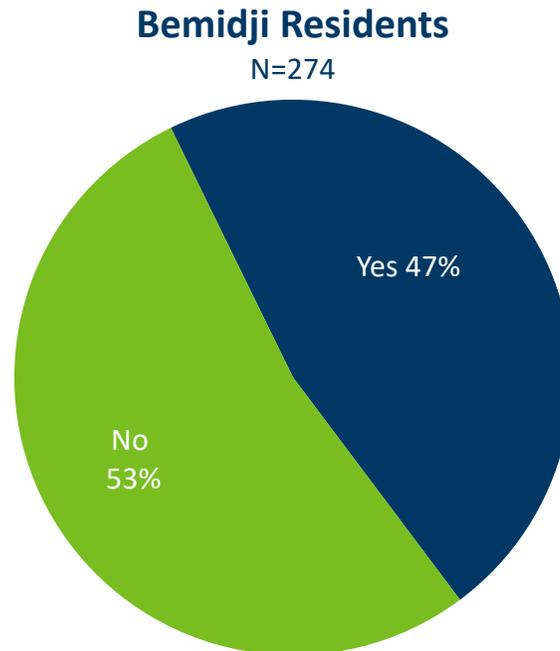
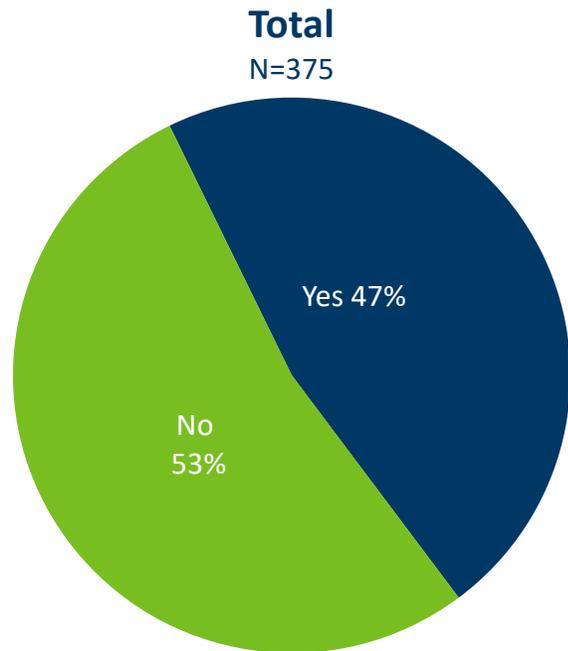
Across the board, people's reticence to cross the highway is a leading barrier for pedestrian use of this Paul Bunyan Drive corridor.

Current Issues Limiting Pedestrian Usage



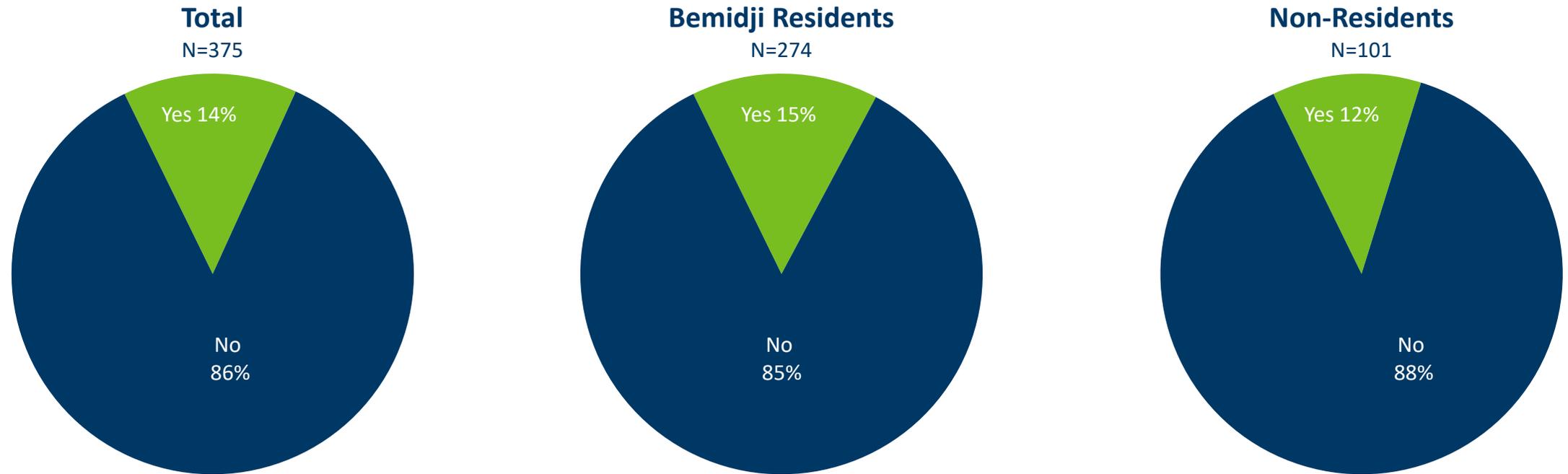
Overall, there is definite increased interest for walking if pedestrian facilities were to be improved.

Would Walk More if Pedestrian Facilities Improved



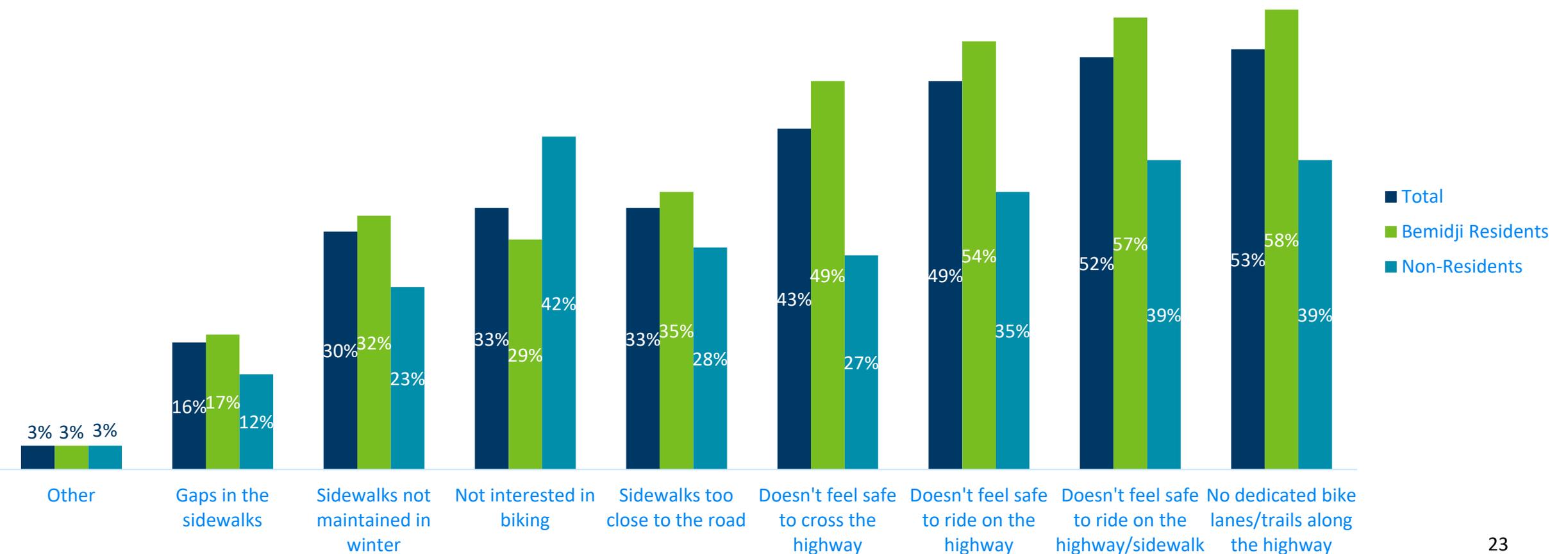
Similar to walking, Bemidji residents are only slightly more likely to bike on this stretch than others.

Biking on Highway 197



Non-residents are less interested in biking Paul Bunyan Drive than Bemidji citizens; lack of dedicated lanes and not feeling safe keep bike use low generally.

Current Issues Limiting Biker Usage



The majority of Bemidji residents are interested in biking more frequently if a dedicated lane was introduced; other populations have an increased though less pronounced enthusiasm.

Would Bike More if there was Dedicated Bicycle Path

