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SUBJECT: **Engagement Milestone #1 Summary**

PROJECT NAME: Corvallis to Albany Shared Use Path: NE Merloy Avenue to NW Rainwater Lane

1. Introduction

This memorandum summarizes input collected during the first phase of community engagement for the project, conducted from October through early December 2025. Engagement activities included a virtual open house, in-person tabling events, a project website, informational videos, and direct mailers sent to residents along the project corridor. Unique QR codes on the project flyer, direct mailer, and video enabled the project team to track websites visits generated by each source.

A high-level summary of engagement activities is provided below, followed by key findings. The memorandum also includes more detailed information on survey respondent demographics and responses, as well as open-ended survey comments and specific project suggestions identified by participants.

2. Engagement Methods

The following section summarizes the engagement efforts conducted as part of the first outreach phase.

2.1. Project Website

The Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) project website¹ served as the central point of outreach and included links to the online open house.

¹ <https://www.oregon.gov/odot/projects/pages/project-details.aspx?project=23493>



2.2. Direct Mailer

The week of September 29, 2025, a postcard mailer was sent to approximately **776 addresses** within the study area, targeting residences and businesses within close proximity to the U.S. 20 corridor. The direct mailer shared general project information and invited corridor-area residents to participate in the online and in-person engagement events via QR code. The postcard QR code generated 56 visits to the project website. The front side of the mailer is shown in Figure 1.

2.3. Project Video

A project video was developed for this engagement phase to share general project information and showcase community voices on the path (Figure 2). The project video included community testimonials from representatives from the business and farming community, commuters, an elected official, families, and Oregon State University (OSU).

The video was published to YouTube by ODOT Region 2 and has received over 330 views since being published. The video included a QR code which generated 7 visits to the project website.

2.4. Online Open House

An interactive Online Open House (OOH) was developed using ArcGIS StoryMaps. The OOH was available from October 16, 2025, to December 2, 2025, and consisted of a project overview, an interactive virtual tour of the project area summarizing opportunities and issues, an interactive survey, and an interactive comment map (see Wikimap below). A screenshot of the virtual tour is shown in Figure 3.

During this period the OOH attracted **1,178 unique views**, averaging 25 visits per day.

2.5. Wikimap

As noted above, the OOH included an embedded Wikimap – an interactive platform for collecting community feedback in an easy-to-use map.

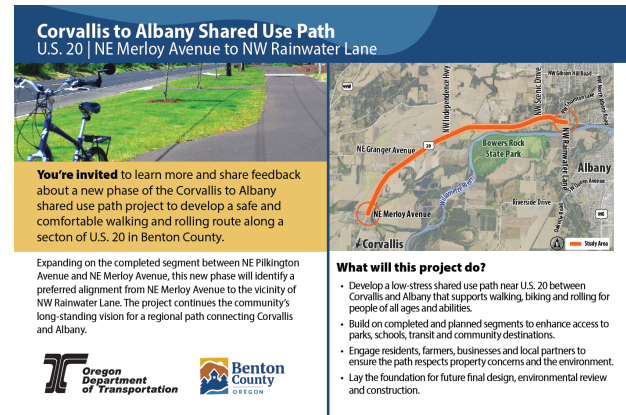


Figure 1. Direct Mailer

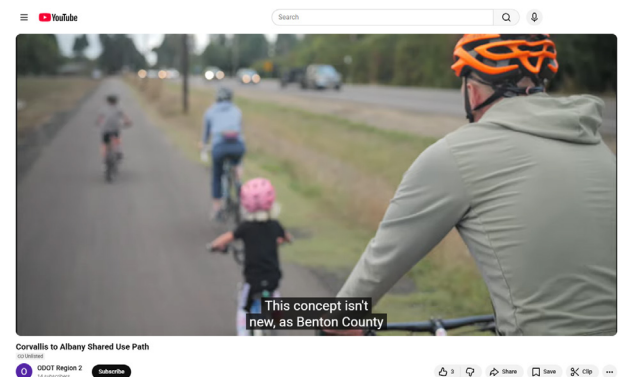


Figure 2. Screenshot from Project Video

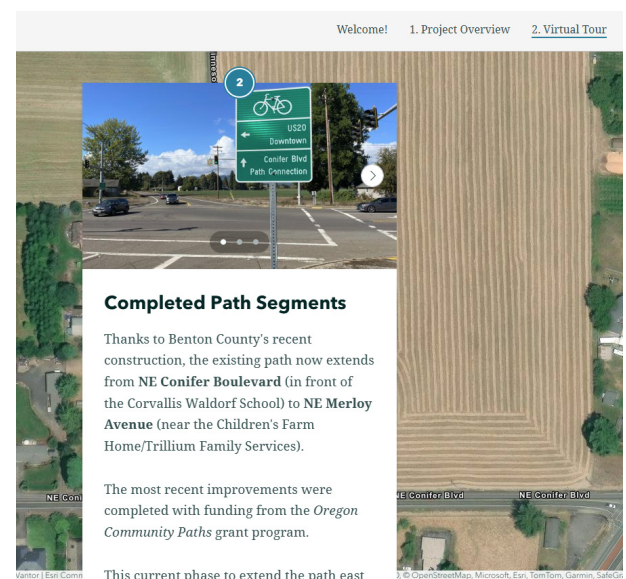


Figure 3. Online Open House Screenshot

Participants provided input by marking the map with pins to designate point-specific feedback (i.e. related to safety, walking, bicycling, or a general comment) or by drawing lines on the map to indicate “Routes I’d Like to Walk” or “Routes I’d Like to Bike.” The Wikimap was available during the same window as the OOH between October 16, 2025, and December 2, 2025.

Participants left a total of **77 features** on the map as shown in Figure 4 below.

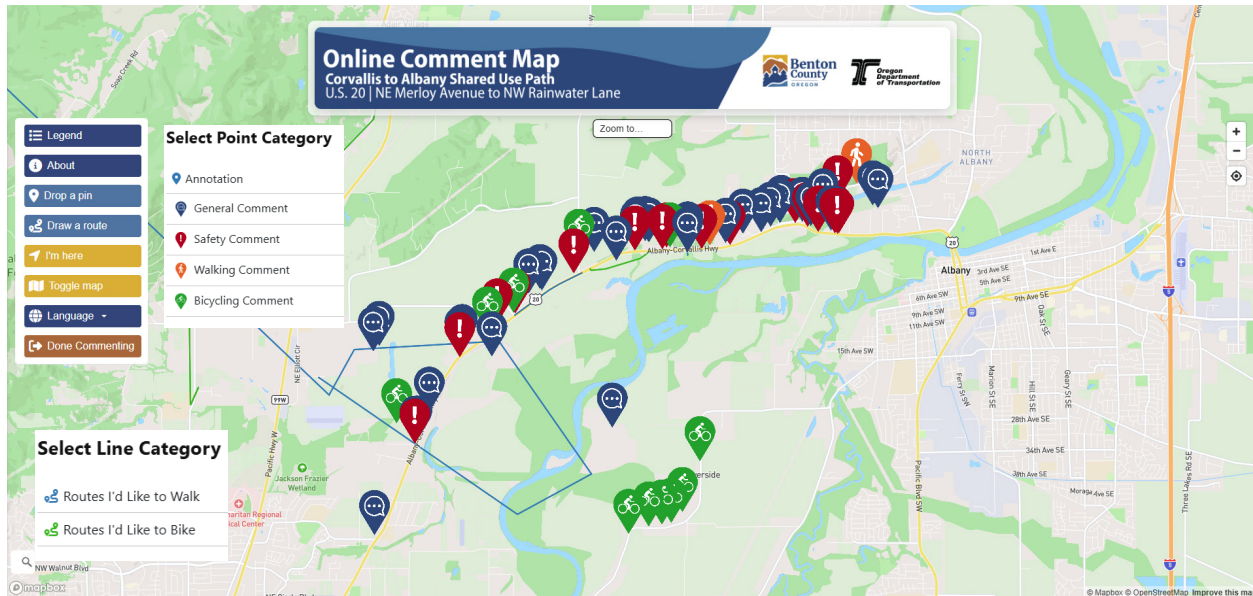


Figure 4. Wikimap Results

2.6. In-Person Tabling

The project team tabled at the Corvallis and Albany Farmers’ Markets on Saturday, October 18, 2025. Materials included printed project flyers, large display posters with project information, and a large-format map of the study area. Participants were encouraged to share their insights, thoughts, and concerns regarding the future path along U.S. 20 to inform subsequent development of path alternatives. At the Albany market, the project also shared a booth with the Benton County Transportation Safety Action Plan to demonstrate the relationship between the two projects. Participation highlights include:

- Over 100 attendees were engaged between the two locations
- 24 paper surveys filled out
- 14 completed online surveys
- 207 online open house visits
- 14 new email sign-ups
- 104 project video plays on YouTube
- 255 visits to the project website generated from the QR code on the project flyer

2.7. Survey and Comment Form

Structured feedback for the project was collected using a survey that was developed for use in-person and online. The survey was focused on gathering community feedback on core needs and priorities relevant to the future path along U.S. 20, with a focus toward identifying potential issues or constraints that would inform the selection of path alternatives, crossing locations, and design considerations. A digital version of the survey was published to the OOH and paper versions were provided at the in-person tabling events. A total of **99 surveys** were completed between the online and in-person channels.

Open-ended comments were also collected using a paper and digital comment form to capture any additional feedback not represented in the survey or map questions.

2.8. Engagement Survey Responses

Figure 5 through Figure 9 chart the responses collected from the project survey.²

Figure 5 asked respondents where they lived or worked to gauge how representative the survey findings are. Most respondents live or work in Greater Corvallis and North Albany. Notably, the lowest response rate was for those who live or work along U.S. 20 within the study area.

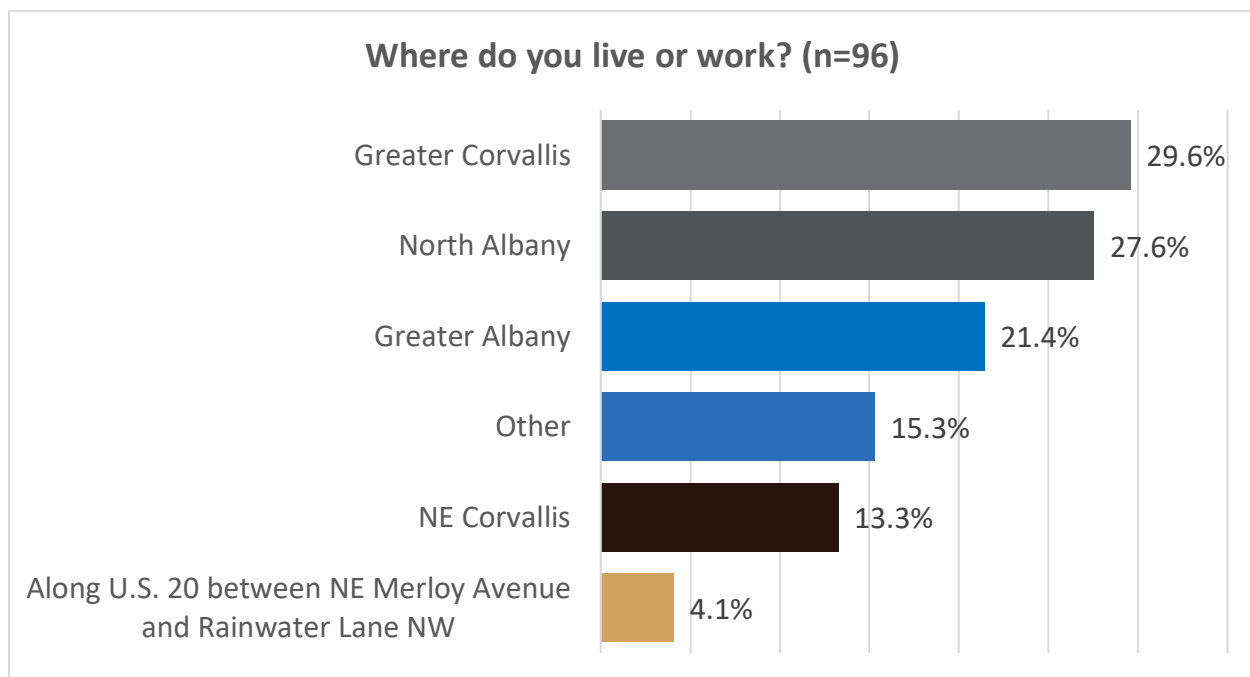


Figure 5. Survey Respondent Home or Work Location (n=96)

Figure 6 shows that the majority of respondents (~68%) would like to bike along the future path between Corvallis and Albany. This question also provides evidence for a substantial demand for personal mobility options such as electric bikes and scooters, while ADA users represented the smallest share of respondents.

² The survey results are inclusive of responses collected online and in-person.

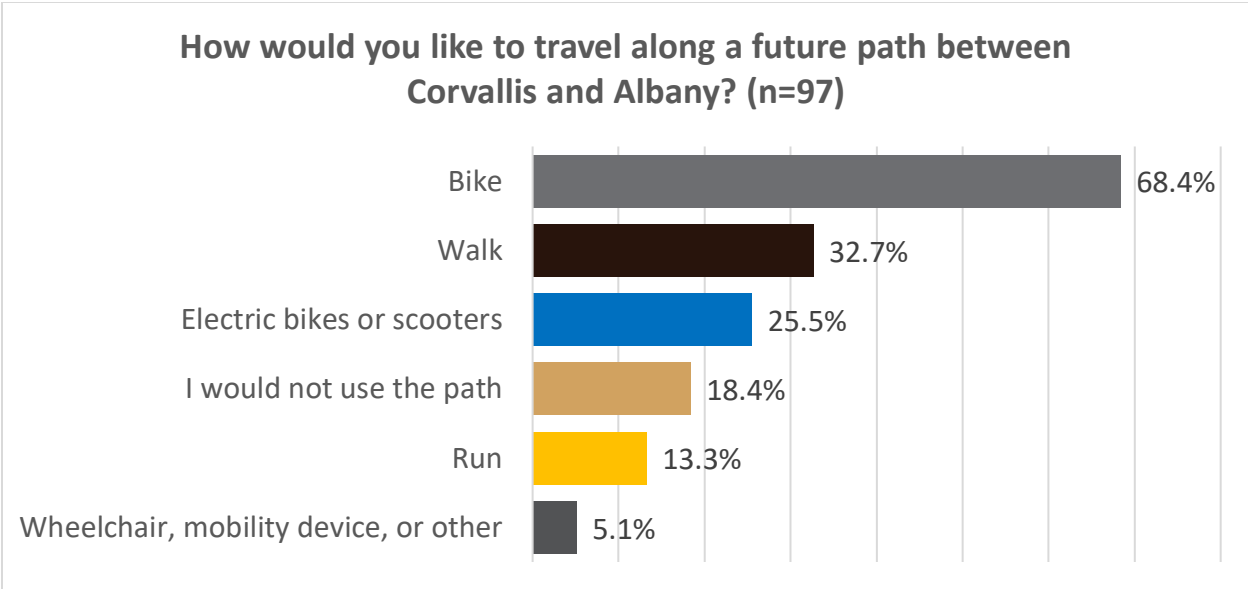


Figure 6. Future Travel Modes Desired by Survey Respondents (n=97)

Figure 7: Although the Corvallis to Albany Shared Use Path is primarily a transportation facility, most respondents (~76%) indicated that recreation and exercise were the types of trips they were most interested in. Nature and sightseeing also represented a significant share (~54%), while about a quarter of respondents expressed an interest in more utilitarian trips like errands, shopping, or visiting friends/family.

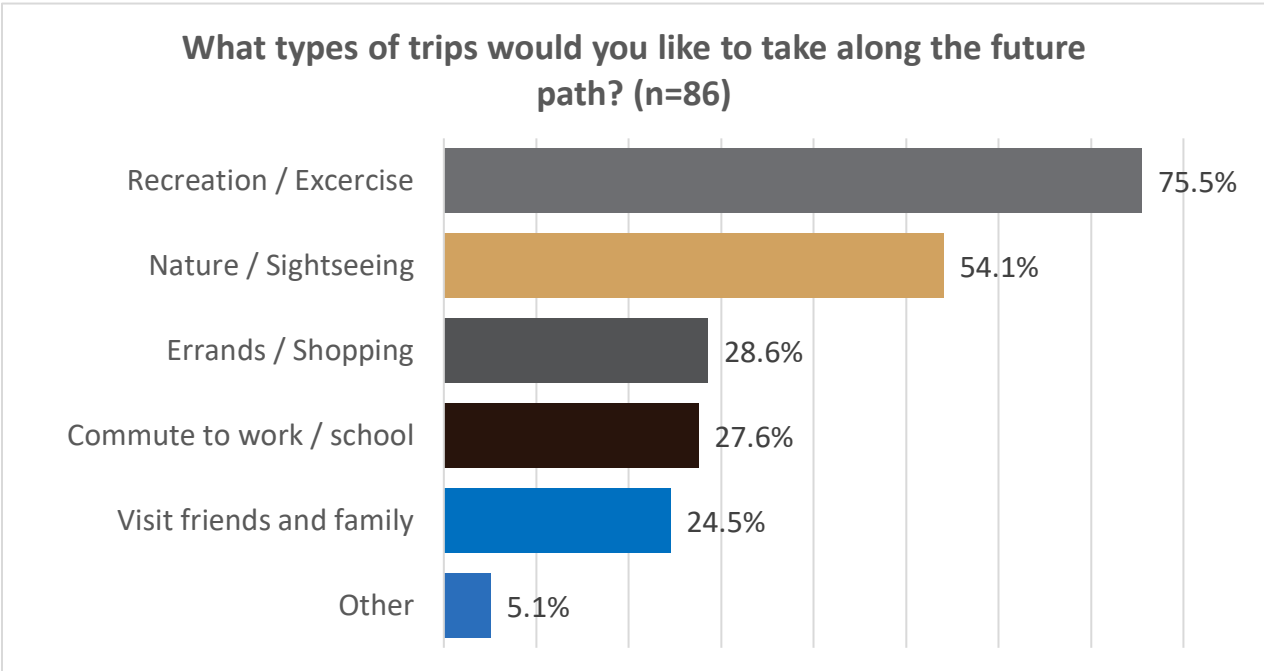


Figure 7. Trip Types Desired by Survey Respondents (n=86)

Figure 8: The top concern (~74%) regarding a future path was related to traffic safety, the risk of accidents, and potential conflicts between cars, pedestrians, and bicycles. Maintenance of a future path is also a major concern (~53%) including considerations about path upkeep, trash, and

concerns about vandalism. The overall quality of the chosen multimodal facilities was also a significant concern (~46%), including considerations for the overall safety and comfort of the path for people walking, bicycling, and rolling.

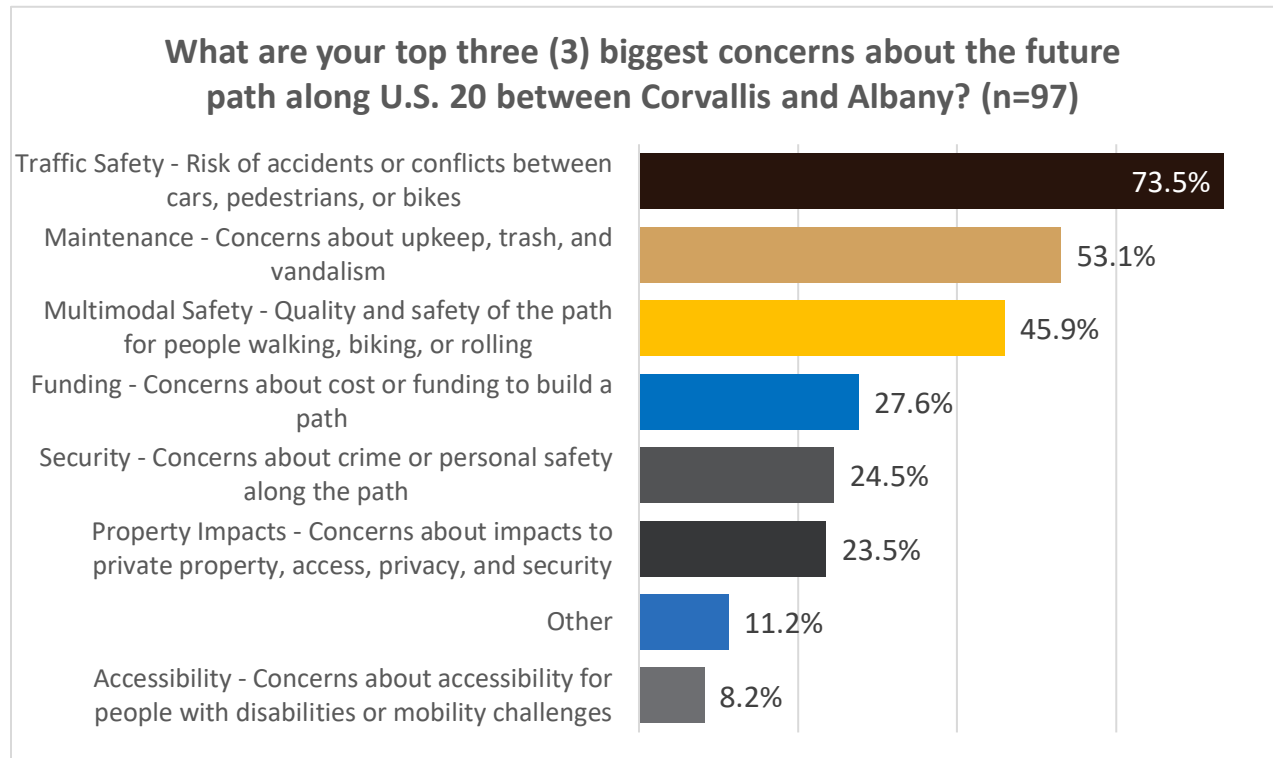


Figure 8. Concerns Identified by Survey Respondents (n=97)

Figure 9: Overall, most respondents (~73%) expressed support for the path.

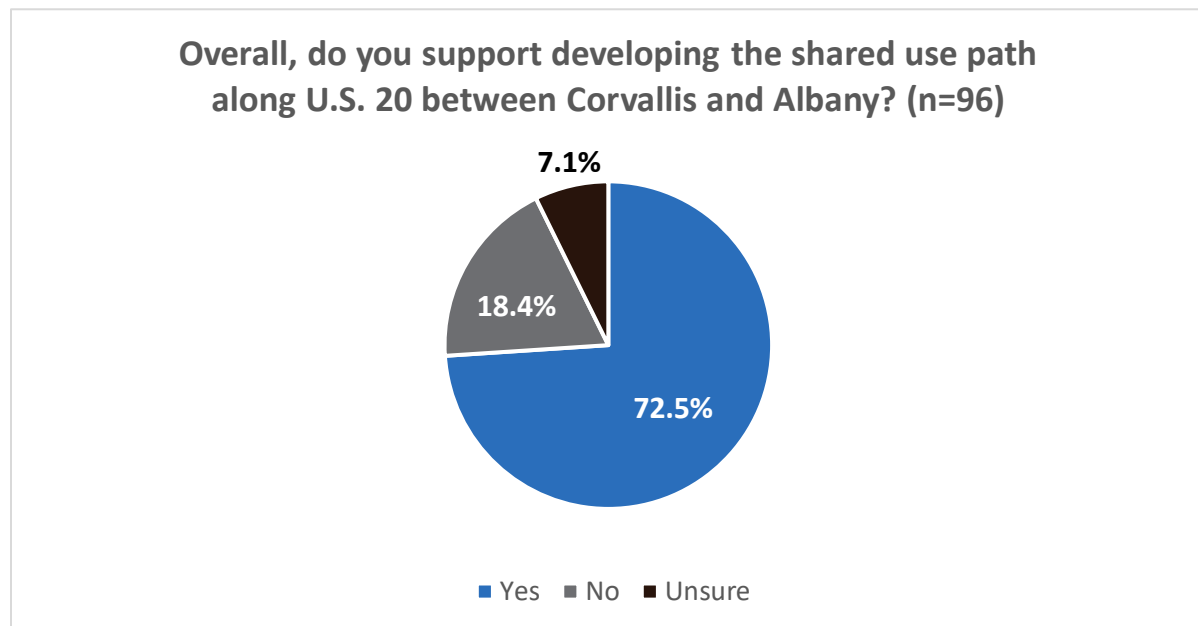


Figure 9. General Support for the Path by Survey Respondents (n=96)

2.8.1. Demographic Summary

Figure 10 below summarizes the optional demographic questions that were asked at the end of the topical survey. The purpose of collecting demographic information was to better understand how representative the responses are of the overall population that lives, works, and travels along the corridor. This information will also help Benton County and ODOT be more effective in their outreach moving forward. Figure 10 through Figure 13 summarize the responses.

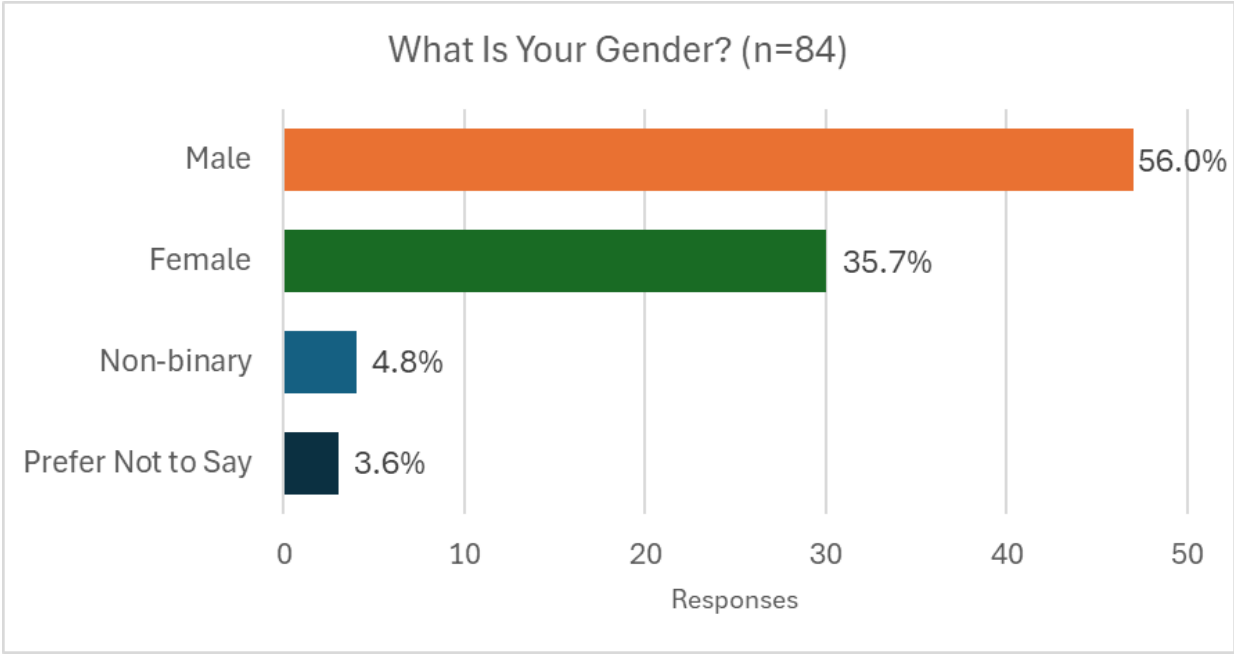


Figure 10. Gender of Survey Respondents (n=84)

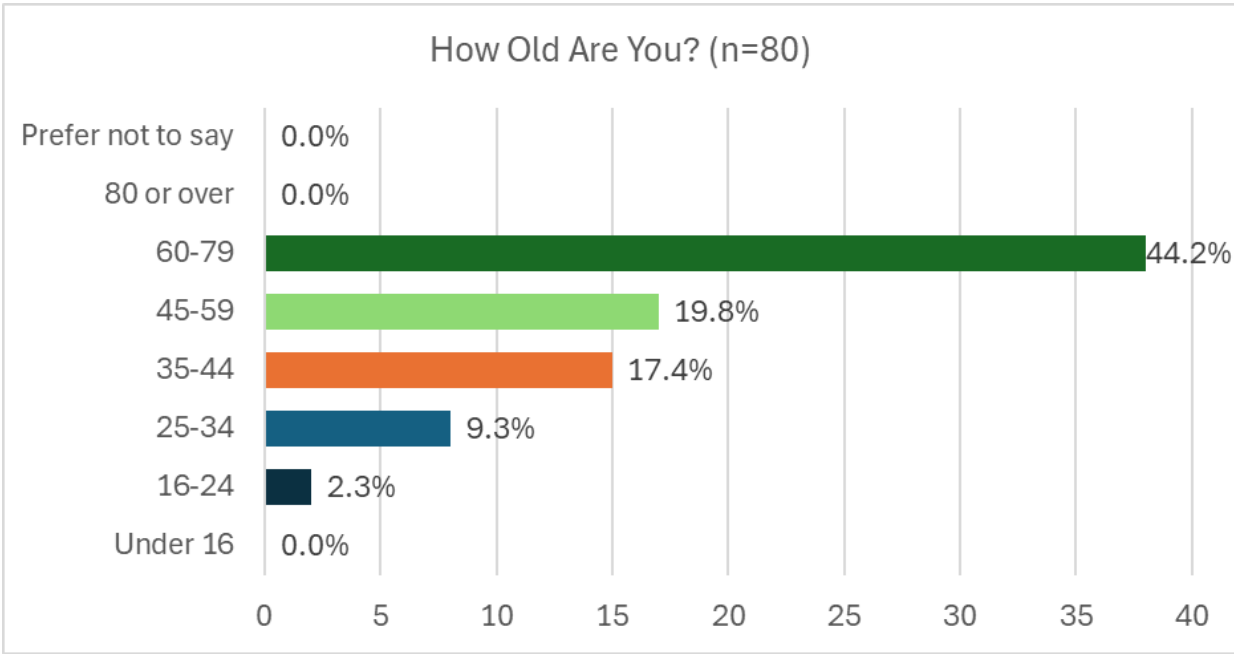


Figure 11. Age of Survey Respondents (n=80)

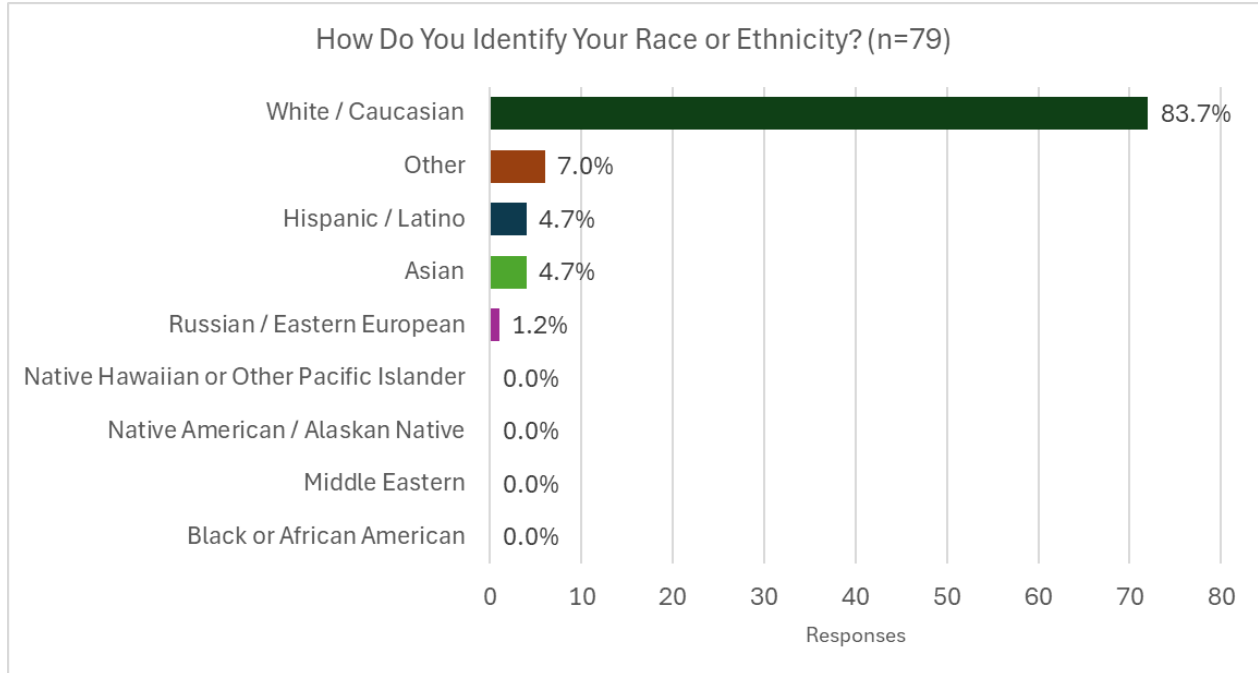


Figure 12. Race/Ethnicity of Survey Respondents (n=79)

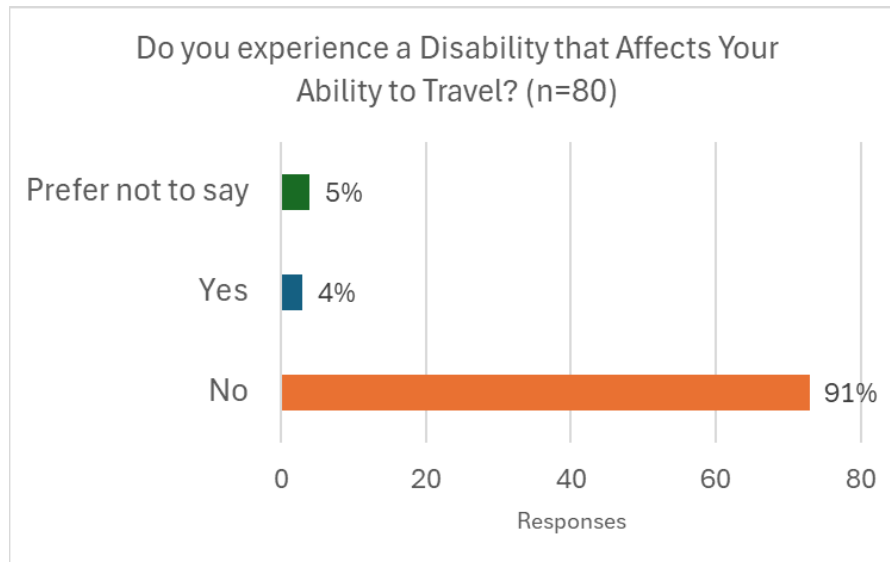


Figure 13. Survey Respondents that Identify as Having a Disability (n=80)

2.9. Wikimapping Responses

Figure 14 below summarizes the types of comments collected through the Wikimap. While most responses (~47%) were coded as “General Comments”, virtually all of these comments relate to corridor safety, property impacts, environmental impacts, or considerations for walking or bicycling.

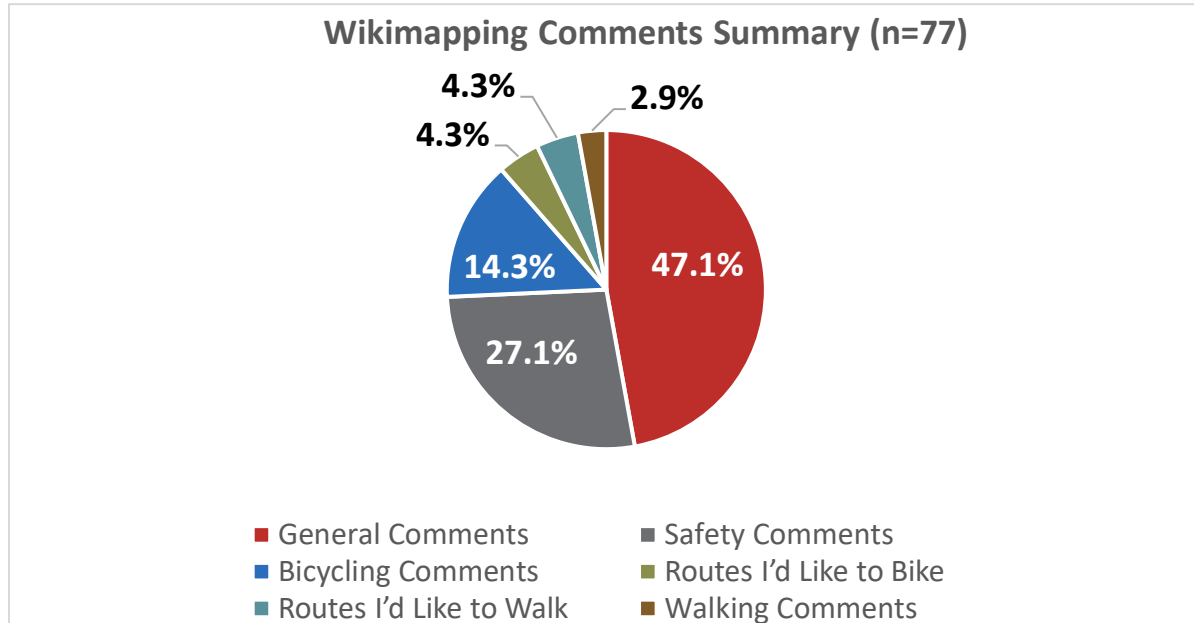


Figure 14. Summary of Wikimapping Comment Type (n=77)

The following sections break down the topical findings from the Wikimap.

2.9.1. Safety Comments

Figure 15 displays the distribution of safety coded comments. Respondents consistently identified Highway 20 as unsafe for pedestrians and cyclists, with concerns concentrated at several specific locations rather than the corridor as a whole. The most significant issues relate to narrow bridges, high-speed curves, complex merge areas, and the lack of safe crossings.



Figure 15. Wikimapping Safety Comments

Key safety findings include:

- The narrow bridge(s) on Hwy 20 emerge as the single most critical safety concern. Multiple respondents describe these locations as extremely stressful and dangerous due to very narrow shoulders, guardrails that provide no escape space, curved approaches, and close-passing vehicles. These bridge segments are cited as the primary reason some people avoid biking the corridor entirely, with repeated calls for a fully separated crossing or alignment that bypasses the bridge.
- The area around Granger Road / Hyslop Road, the railroad tracks, and nearby highway merge lanes is also repeatedly identified as chaotic and unsafe. Respondents note that while recent changes may improve vehicle operations, they have increased stress and risk for people walking and biking.
- Several comments focus on the segment east of Hyak Park to Rainwater Drive, describing it as especially dangerous due to high vehicle speeds, curves, limited sight distance, frequent fog, and a history of vehicles leaving the roadway and pedestrian fatalities. Many suggest shifting the path north of Hwy 20 along the railway before this segment to avoid exposure to traffic.
- Additional concerns were raised near Scenic Drive involving curves, slopes, clusters of driveways, higher highway speeds, and poor visibility. Some respondents suggest traffic calming here, while others argue the area is fundamentally unsuitable for active transportation alongside the highway.

Finally, respondents repeatedly note that the segment from Rainwater Lane to downtown Albany remains a major unresolved bottleneck. They argue that without a safe connection through this area, the project does not truly connect North Albany and Corvallis and overstates its benefits.

2.9.2. Walking Comments

While there were relatively few pins coded for walking specifically, a significant portion of the general comments emphasized the need for safe, accessible crossings, continuous sidewalks or shared-use paths, and separation from high-speed traffic, particularly for children, families, and people who cannot or choose not to drive. Concerns are highly location-specific, with repeated focus on a small number of problem areas.

Key walking findings include:

- The west end near Merloy Road is frequently mentioned. Residents report difficulty crossing Highway 20 on foot, especially with children and at night, to access the existing shared-use path. There is strong support for a marked, signalized, or grade-separated pedestrian crossing in this area, rather than relying on unsignalized crossings or push-button crossings that stop high-speed traffic.
- Several commenters highlight the railroad crossing as a challenge for walking, citing difficulty navigating it safely and comfortably. Ensuring ADA-compliant surfaces, sightlines, and crossings is seen as critical if pedestrians are expected to use this route.
- The segment east of Hyak Park toward Rainwater Lane is repeatedly identified as unsafe for walking due to high vehicle speeds, curves, fog, and limited visibility. Commenters suggest that pedestrians should be removed from the highway edge entirely in this area, with strong interest in alignments north of Hwy 20 along the rail corridor or near the river, where greater separation, quieter conditions, and ADA-friendly grades may be achievable.
- Thornton Lake Drive emerges as an important pedestrian connection, particularly for nearby neighborhoods. Multiple comments note the lack of sidewalks, narrow roadway, speeding vehicles, and children walking in the roadway. A continuous sidewalk or multi-use path here is viewed as essential for pedestrian safety and access to the broader network, including transit stops and North Albany neighborhoods.
- Several busy intersections—particularly near Merloy Road, Hyak Park, and Thornton Lake Drive—are identified as difficult and unsafe for pedestrians. Commenters suggest traffic signals, roundabouts designed for safe pedestrian crossings, or grade-separated crossings, especially where park access, school-related activity, or higher pedestrian volumes are expected.

Finally, many commenters note that the project does not provide a safe pedestrian connection into downtown Albany, limiting its usefulness for people walking. The segment from Rainwater Lane into downtown Albany is repeatedly described as a missing link with narrow roads, high speeds, and no ADA-compliant facilities, undermining claims of full community connectivity.

2.10. Biking Comments

Figure 16 below summarizes the biking coded comments collected through the Wikimap. A total of 13 bicycle-specific comments were collected. As with the pedestrian feedback, most participant feedback on bicycling were embedded within the “General Comments.”



Figure 16. Wikimapping Biking Comments

Bicyclists consistently describe Highway 20 as uncomfortable and unsafe, primarily due to high vehicle speeds, narrow shoulders, limited separation from traffic, and difficult crossings.

At the west end near Merloy Road, riders report challenges accessing the existing shared path, especially with children, and strongly support a protected crossing to connect south and north segments without relying on push-button signals that stop high-speed traffic.

The Independence Highway area is cited as uncomfortable, with shoulders too narrow and improvements ending abruptly south of the junction. Riders stress the importance of fully separated paths rather than just shoulders, noting that the existing Merloy–Conifer segment is a good example of a safe design.

Several segments emerge as candidates for alternative alignments:

- Rail corridors or river-adjacent routes to avoid traffic, noise, and fumes.
- Thornton Lake Drive, particularly West Thornton, if roadway width and surface conditions are improved.
- A north-side alignment along Highway 20 to reduce crossings and exposure to traffic.
- The section east of Hyak Park toward Albany is highlighted as especially stressful due to wide lanes, high speeds, curves, and fog. Commenters suggest a separate crossing between Independence Highway and Hyak Park, potentially using an existing creek or rail corridor, to avoid dangerous segments.

Connectivity gaps are a major concern. The proposed path does not currently connect to downtown Albany, and feeder connections from Conifer, Thornton Lake, North Albany, and Riverside Drive

would improve usage. Riverside Drive and the Highway 34 path are recognized as popular alternatives but are unsafe and insufficient substitutes.

Overall, bicyclists express strong support for a traffic-separated multi-use path along Highway 20, emphasizing safety, minimal highway exposure, safe crossings, and meaningful connections to schools, neighborhoods, and downtown Albany.

3. Engagement Findings

The project team identified the following summary findings through this phase of engagement.

- **Most survey respondents support the path.** However, some concerns remain. Concerns include project cost, purported future lack of use, potential for crime and people camping along the path, and maintaining an agrarian character.
- **Access from North Albany into downtown is a common concern.** While this particular project does not address access from the overall shared use path into downtown Albany, it was routinely brought up in the comments as needing to be addressed. A separate project exists to develop the connection from Rainwater Lane into Albany.
- **Strong overall support for the path exists,** though concerns remain about cost, potential low use, crime or camping along the path, and maintaining the agrarian character of surrounding land.
- **Highway 20 is widely cited as unsafe for both bicyclists and pedestrians** due to high speeds, narrow lanes, limited shoulders, and difficult crossings.
- **Crossing Highway 20 is a major safety concern,** particularly at Merloy Road, Independence Highway, and near Hyak Park; users emphasize signalized crossings, roundabouts, or fully separated bridges.
- **Merloy Road (west end) is a key access point,** especially for families and children; users request protected crossings to safely connect south and north segments of the path.
- **East of Hyak Park toward Albany is a high-stress section** due to curves, fog, and traffic; a separate crossing here or a rail/creek-adjacent alignment is suggested.
- **Independence Highway area is uncomfortable for cyclists;** shoulders are narrow, and roadway improvements are limited and inconsistent.
- **Alternative alignments along rail corridors or the river are favored** to improve safety, reduce highway exposure, provide a scenic experience, and minimize conflicts with traffic.
- **Thornton Lake Drive, particularly West Thornton,** is identified as a potential complementary route for bicyclists if widened and resurfaced.
- **North-side alignment along Highway 20 is recommended** to reduce high-speed crossings and improve safety for all users.
- **Connectivity gaps to downtown Albany remain significant;** users emphasize the need for feeder connections from Conifer, Thornton Lake, North Albany, and Riverside Drive to improve usage and community integration.

- **Riverside Drive is frequently cited as a current alternative**, but is unsafe for many users due to narrow shoulders, chip-sealed surfaces, and traffic interactions; it is not a substitute for a separated Highway 20 path.
- **Separation from vehicle traffic is critical for safety and comfort**, particularly for families, children, and less confident cyclists.
- **Recreational experience is valued**: users suggest scenic routes, tree coverage, wildlife viewing, and adjacency to the river to attract a broader range of users beyond commuters.
- **Path benefits include connectivity to schools and local destinations**, including Peavy, Santiam Christian HS, Mountain View, Crescent Valley High School, Garland Nursery, and potential OSU access.
- **Long-standing demand and community support exist** for a safe multi-use path connecting Corvallis and Albany; safety, separation, crossings, connectivity, and recreational appeal are the highest priorities.