XtraMile Survey Results

Overview

XtraMile

XtraMile is an on-demand transit service operated by 9 Town Transit as a pilot, which began in May 2019 and is slated to operate through November 2, 2019. The service uses 9 Town Transit vehicles with unique XtraMile branding. Passengers are offered door-to-door service within an established pilot area covering Old Saybrook, Westbrook and the village of Centerbrook in Essex. Pick up requests can be made through the “Microtransit” mobile application, operated by TransLoc, or by calling the 9 Town dispatch center. Passenger pick-up and drop-off locations are then programmed into on-board navigational software for the vehicle driver. Typical passenger wait times are 10 to 15 minutes. Service is available on weekdays from 6 AM to 8 PM and Saturdays from 7:30 AM to 6 PM. There is no Sunday service. XtraMile also accepts walk-on riders at Old Saybrook Station who must tell the driver where they wish to be dropped off. If made permanent beyond November 2019, the service geography may be expanded and a fare will likely be introduced.

Survey Methodology

As part of the Lower Connecticut River Valley Transit Study, an online survey was administered in August and September 2019. 9 Town Transit emailed the survey link to 82 XtraMile riders who had booked reservations through the mobile app. The project consulting team also made phone calls to interview riders who had made phone based reservations.

Passengers shared information about their most recent XtraMile trip, usage of other transit services, their motivations for riding XtraMile, their priorities for improving the XtraMile pilot, and their satisfaction with XtraMile’s service and features.

A total of 24 surveys were collected, and the findings from these surveys are summarized below. With a total of 92 individually identified riders (82 app users and ten who have accessed XtraMile via the phone-based dispatch center), the sample size represents a response rate of about 26 percent.

Due to the relatively small population of riders using this new pilot service and thus, relatively small sample size, these results should be interpreted with some degree of caution. It should also be noted that multiple answers could be provided to certain questions, meaning the results displayed below do not always add up to 100%.

Rider Characteristics

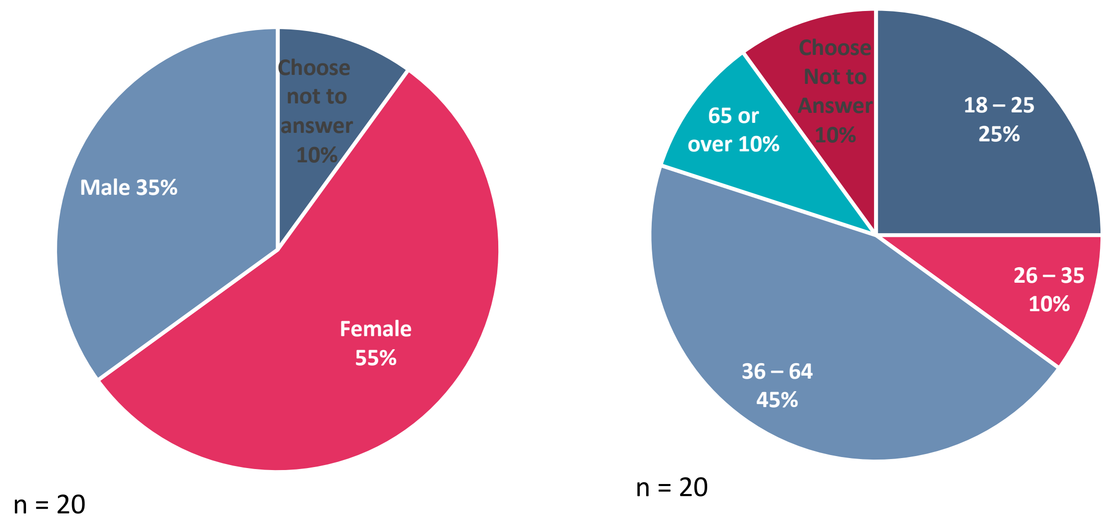
Gender

XtraMile survey respondents are more likely to be female (55%) than male (35%). These results differ from the broader 9 Town Customer Survey (conducted in May 2019) which found more male riders (58%) than female (42%). Ten percent chose not to respond.

Age

The largest cohort of XtraMile riders (45%) are between the ages of 36 and 64 (a range of 24 years). However, one quarter (25%) fall into a much smaller eight-year cohort ranging between the ages of 18 and 25. An additional ten percent are 65 years or older (10%), with ten percent also falling between 26 and 35 years (10%). The broader 9 Town Customer Survey in May 2019 reported more than twice as many over age 65 (23%) and fewer between the ages of 18 to 25 (17%). XtraMile may be particularly valuable to young adults, who are less likely to own personal vehicles and perhaps more likely to be willing to try a new, non-traditional service model.

Figure 1: Gender and Age



Employment Status

One-fifth (20%) of XtraMile riders are employed full-time, while another fifth are employed part-time. More than one third (35%) are not in the workforce or are retired. The broader 9 Town Customer Survey (May 2019) reported more employed riders (23% full time and 24% part-time), about the same percentage not in the workforce, and fewer students. This may be partially influenced by the summertime season when those surveyed used XtraMile.

Income

The income classes used in this survey question reflect the statewide income distribution of transit riders previously found by CDOT in its State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). Half of the XtraMile riders surveyed (50%) reported living in households with incomes less than $39,010. Twenty percent (20%) reported household incomes of less than $16,910, which is below the federal poverty level for two-person households. Riders living in households with annual incomes greater than $43,431 made up fifteen (15%) of surveyed XtraMile users.

Due to the small sample size and the fact that thirty-five percent (35%) did not provide income information, it is difficult to draw firm conclusions, but it is clear that most XtraMile riders fall below the Connecticut median household income of $93,870.[1] This conclusion is similar to what was reported in the broader 9 Town Customer Survey which found that about half of all 9 Town riders (49%) made less than $49,999.

Figure 2: Employment Status

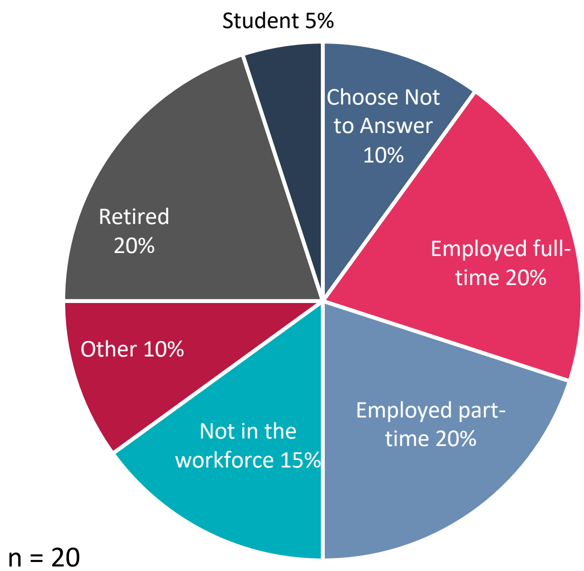
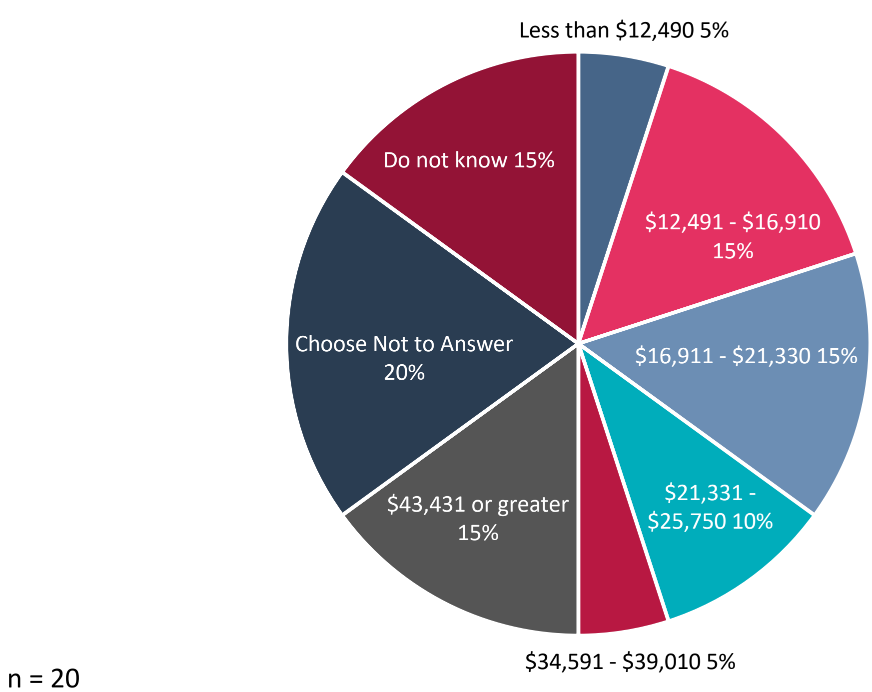


Figure 3: Income

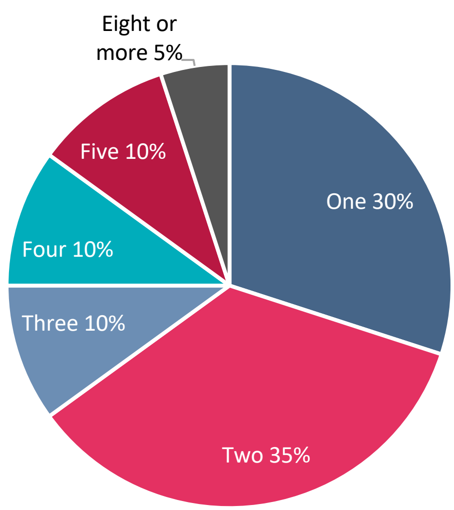


[1] US Census American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate (2013-2017)

Household Size

Thirty percent of XtraMile riders reported living alone. Nearly two thirds (65%) of respondents reported living in households with between two and five people, while one respondent (5%) reported living in a household with eight or more people.

Figure 4 Household Size



n = 20

Race/Ethnicity

All 16 respondents who indicated their race identified as White. In a separate question, one respondent out of 20 total respondents (5%) identified their ethnicity as Hispanic or Latino. The broader 9 Town Customer Survey also had a majority of riders (74%) identify as White.

Language Spoken at Home

Nineteen out of 20 respondents (95% of the sample) reported that they spoke English at home, while one respondent (5%) reported that German was their primary language. Ninety percent of respondents reported that they spoke English "very well."

Transit Use

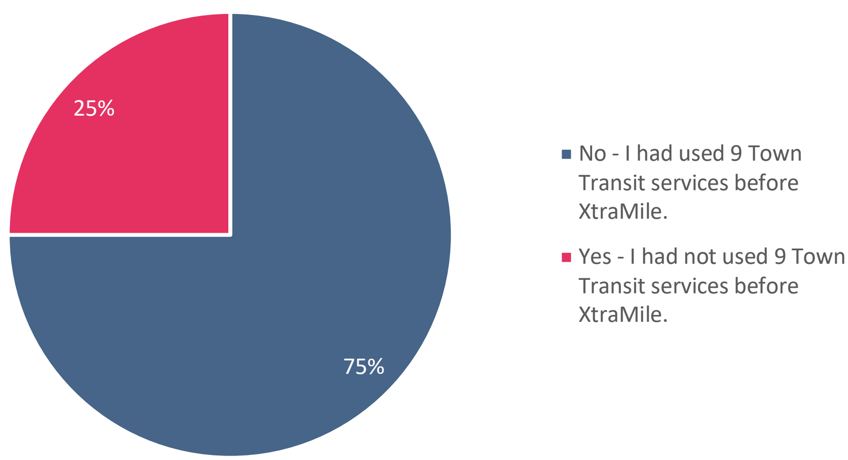
Reasons for Using XtraMile

One quarter of respondents reported that they had not used 9 Town Transit services before the XtraMile pilot. These six respondents were asked what appealed to them about XtraMile. Two respondents said that the "fare-free nature of the service during the pilot period" most appealed to them. One respondent noted that regular transit service "doesn't take me where I want to go," while others listed temporary disabilities that prevented them from driving as their primary motivations.

Riders reported they were mostly likely to have heard about XtraMile from printed signage, posters, or flyers (27%), followed by the 9 Town Transit website (24%), word of mouth (18%), social media (12%), seeing the

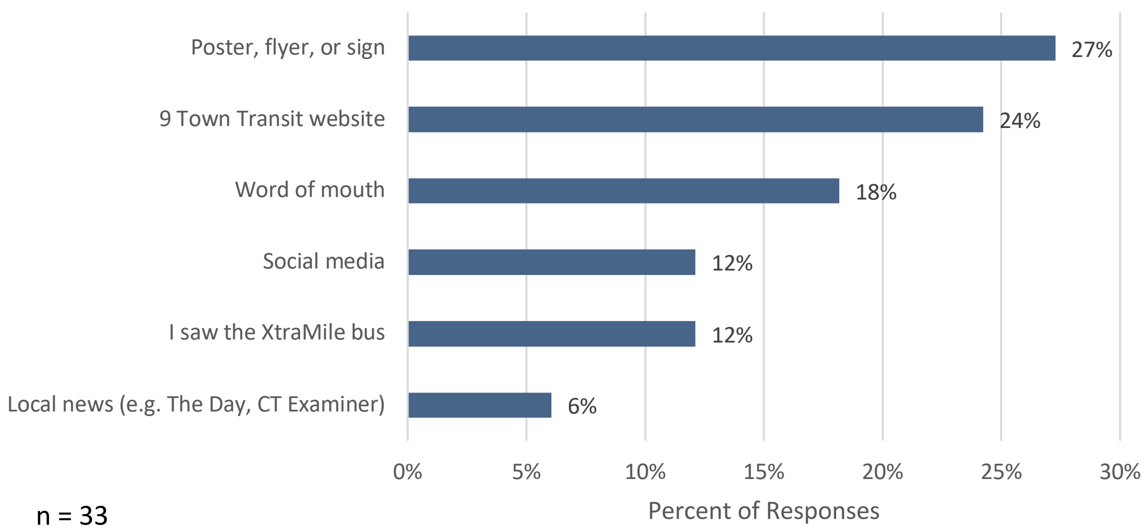
XtraMile vehicles on the go (12%), and local news media (6%). Respondents were able to choose more than one source, thus answers total more than 100%.

Figure 5 Are you a new rider of 9 Town Transit?



n = 24

Figure 6 How did you hear about XtraMile?

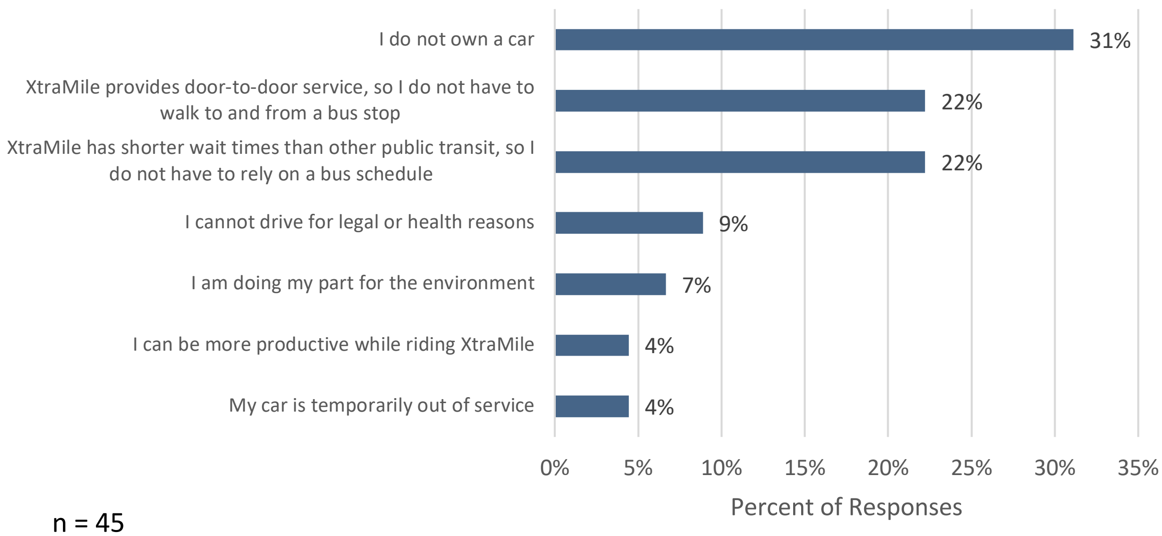


n = 33

Reasons for Using Transit

Nearly one third of respondents (31%) reported using XtraMile because they do not own a vehicle, compared to 57% of the broader set of 9 Town riders who were surveyed in May. Another 44 percent of respondents use XtraMile because of the service's unique features and benefits – 22 percent because it offers door-to-door service, and 22 percent because it offers shorter wait times than other public transit, such as 9 Town Transit's local bus or Dial-a-Ride services. Nine percent of respondents reported they cannot drive due to legal or medical reasons, such as a temporary injury or disability; this is significantly less than the 28% of general 9 Town riders who cited this reason in May. Seven percent ride XtraMile to reduce their impact on the environment. Four percent of respondents ride XtraMile to be more productive, while another four percent do so because their car is temporarily out of service. These findings suggest that fewer XtraMile passengers are transit-dependent, but are incentivized to ride by the unique aspects of the service (whether the on-demand nature or the free fare). This indicates that XtraMile may be more likely to attract “choice” riders (those who have access to personal vehicles) than other 9 Town services.

Figure 7: Reasons for Using Transit

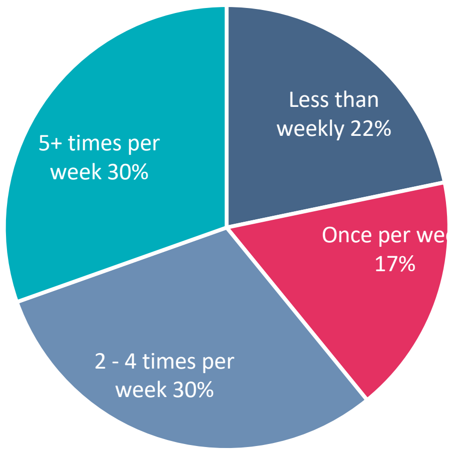


n = 45

Frequency of Transit Use

About 78 percent of XtraMile riders surveyed reported that they regularly use the service at least weekly. About 60 percent of respondents reported that they ride XtraMile at least twice weekly, suggesting that many of its riders were depending on the service to get around during the pilot program.

Figure 8: Frequency of Transit Use

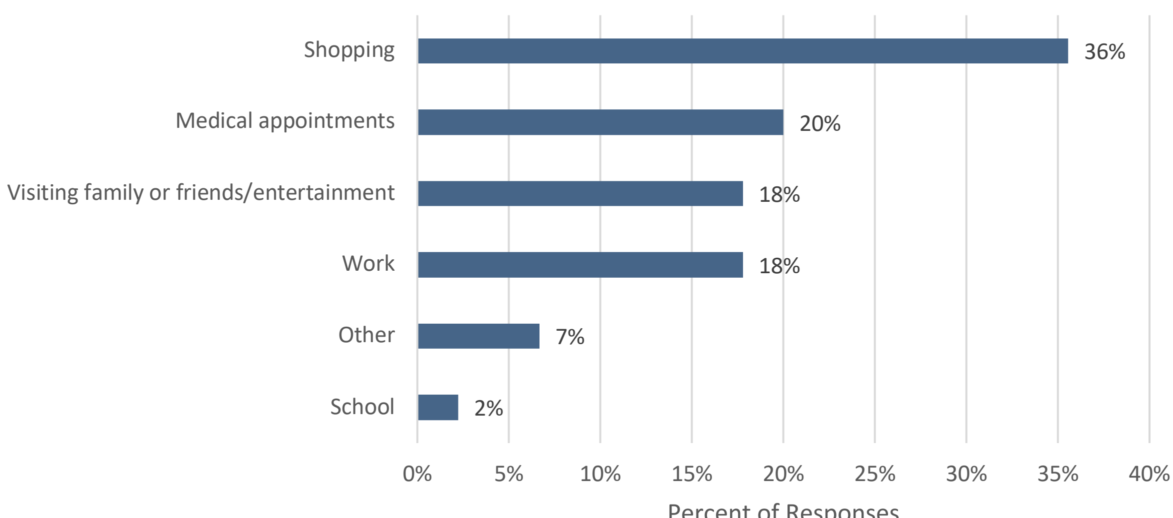


n = 23

Trip Purposes

Respondents reported using transit for a variety of purposes. More than one third of XtraMile riders (36%) reported that they regularly use the service to go shopping. One in five (20%) use XtraMile to get to medical appointments, while the same share use XtraMile to get to work (18%) or school (2%). In addition, 18 percent use XtraMile for leisure or to visit family/friends. These findings show that for most riders, XtraMile is not a commuter-oriented service, but rather a more general-purpose transit option to used to complete discretionary trips. This contrasts with the broader population of 9 Town riders who reported that 58% use 9 Town to access jobs

Figure 9: Purposes of Transit Trips

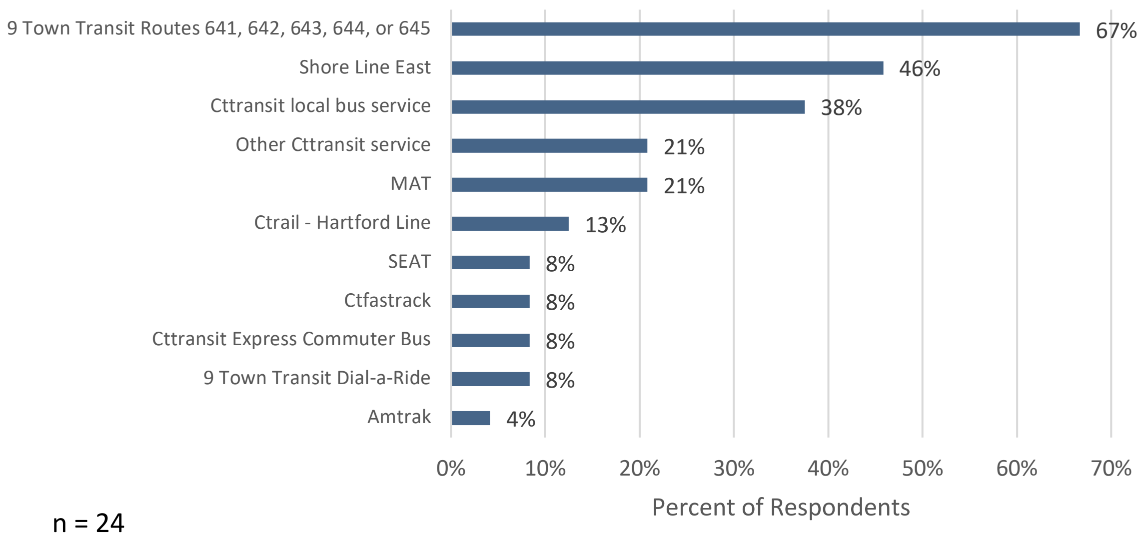


n = 45

Use of Other Services

Riders were also asked about their use of other transit services in the region apart from XtraMile. About two thirds (67%) of respondents reported that they use 9 Town Transit's fixed-route services. This finding indicates that most XtraMile riders use XtraMile as a complement to, not as a replacement for, 9 Town's local bus routes. Nearly half (46%) of respondents use Shore Line East's (SLE's) commuter rail service. This is significantly higher than the 29% of general riders who indicated in May 2019 that they use SLE, suggesting there may be travel demand for first/last-mile connections to other SLE stations in the 9 Town area. Other popular services that XtraMile riders indicated they regularly ride included CT*transit* local bus services (38% of respondents), suggesting that many may have transferred to XtraMile from CTtransit Commuter Express Bus Route 921 that serves Old Saybrook Station. XtraMile riders also indicated they regularly ride MAT (21%), SEAT (8%), and CT*fastrack* (8%).

Figure 10: Use of Other Transit Services

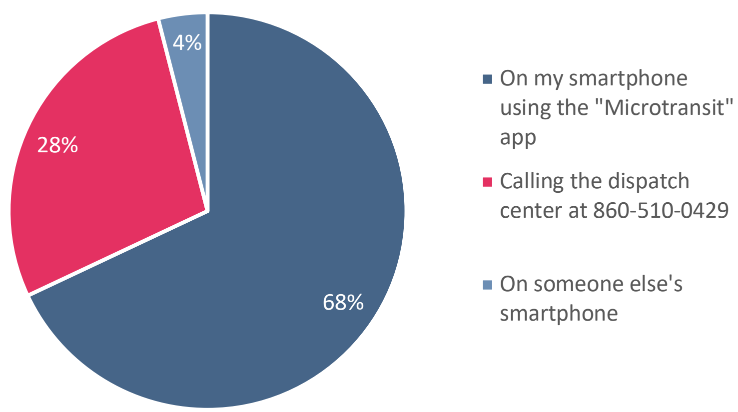


n = 24

Means of Accessing XtraMile

A majority of XtraMile riders (68%) access XtraMile from their smartphones, using the "Microtransit" app developed by TransLoc. There is no fare for the service during the pilot period, which ends in November 2019. A minority of riders (28%) use a phone-based dispatch service to access XtraMile without a smartphone. One respondent (4%) indicated that they accessed XtraMile from the smartphone of their caregiver.

Figure 11 Means of Accessing XtraMile

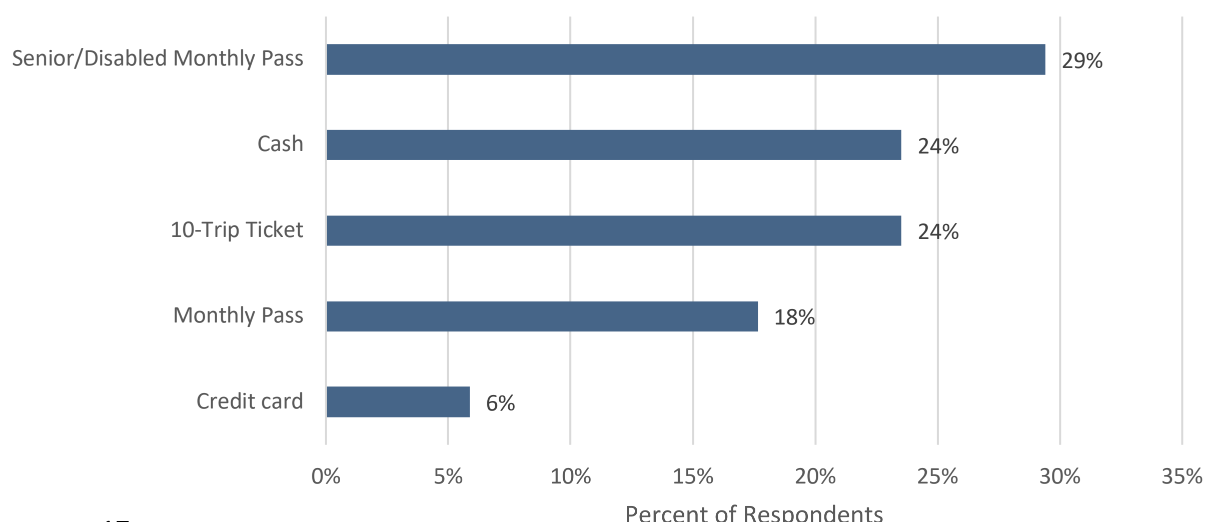


Fare Payment

While using 9 Town Transit service, XtraMile riders were most likely to report paying their fare with a Senior/Disabled Monthly Pass (29%). 24 percent of riders used cash to pay their fares, while another 24 percent used 10-Trip Ticket booklets, 18 percent used Monthly Passes, and six percent used credit cards (available for Dial-a-Ride trips only).

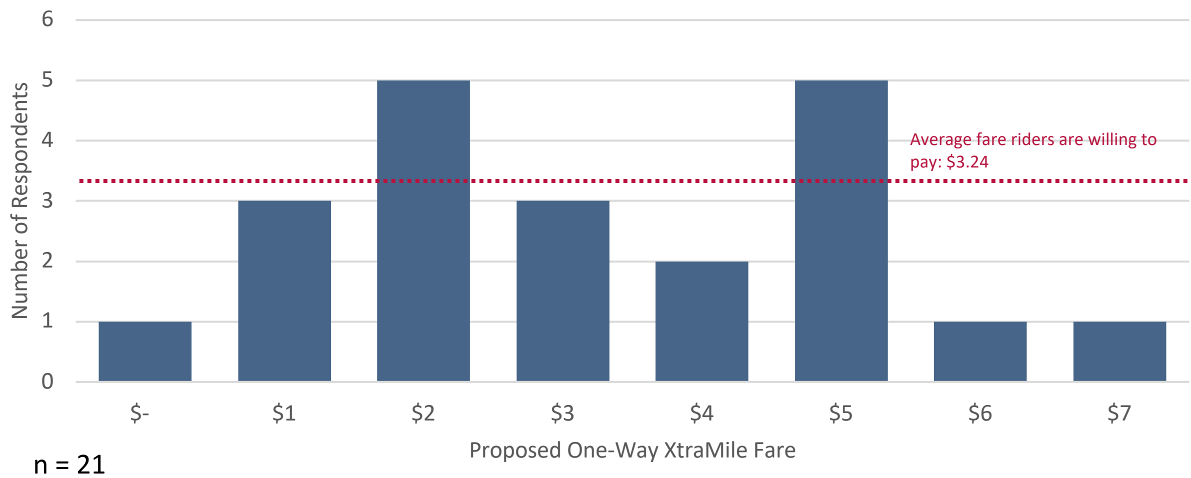
Most respondents indicated that they would be willing to pay a fare for the XtraMile service. The weighted average, one-way fare riders are willing to pay is about $3.24, while the median fare they are willing to pay is $3.00.

Figure 12: Fare Payment Methods on 9 Town Transit



n = 17

Figure 13 Willingness to Pay One-Way XtraMile Fares

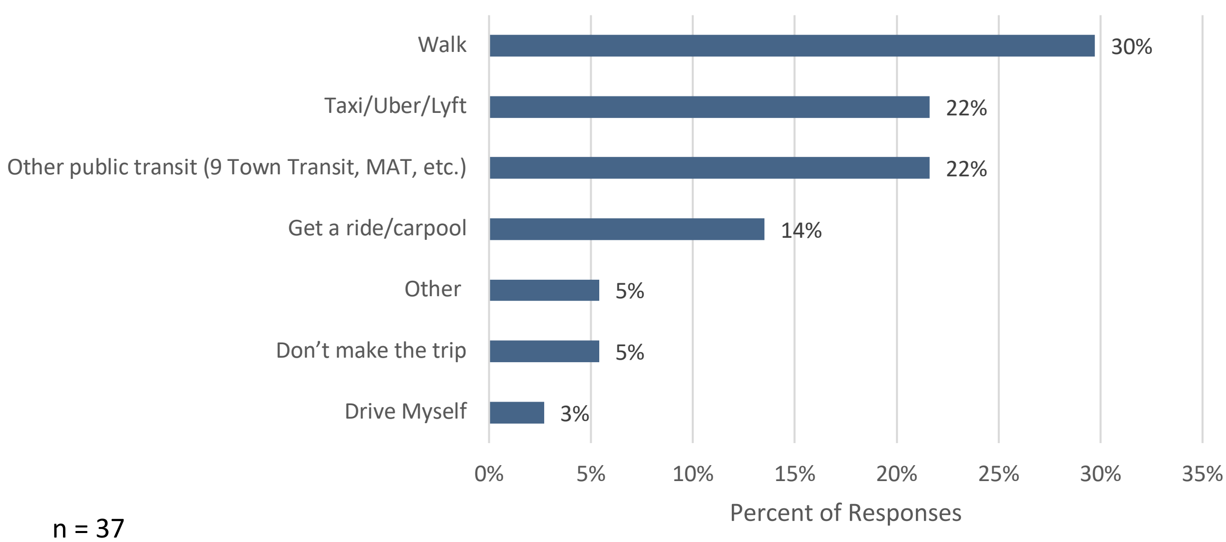


n = 21

Alternative Modes

If XtraMile were unavailable, about 30 percent of riders would walk to their destination. Another 22 percent would take a taxi, Uber, or Lyft, while another 22 percent would take other public transit services like 9 Town Transit or MAT. Fourteen percent would carpool, while five percent would avoid making the trip entirely, and three percent would drive alone. This contrasts somewhat with the broader set of 9 Town customers who reported that 55 percent would walk to their destination, and 44 percent would carpool or get a ride. The numbers who reported they would choose a taxi, Uber or Lyft as their alternative mode were similar in both surveys.

Figure 14: Alternative Modes for Completing Trip if Transit Unavailable

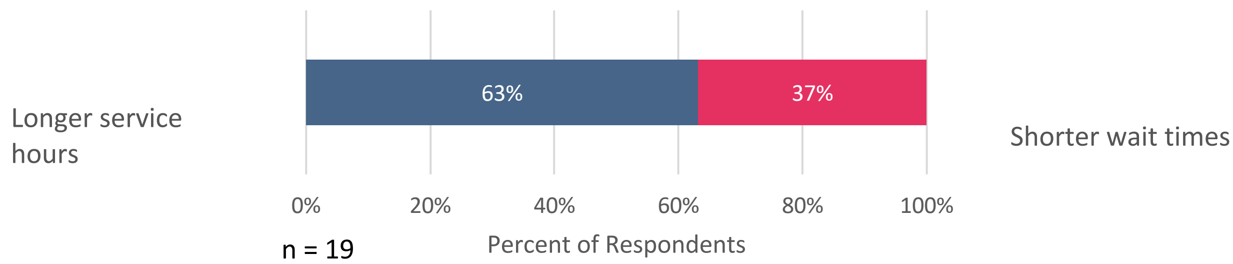


n = 37

Priorities

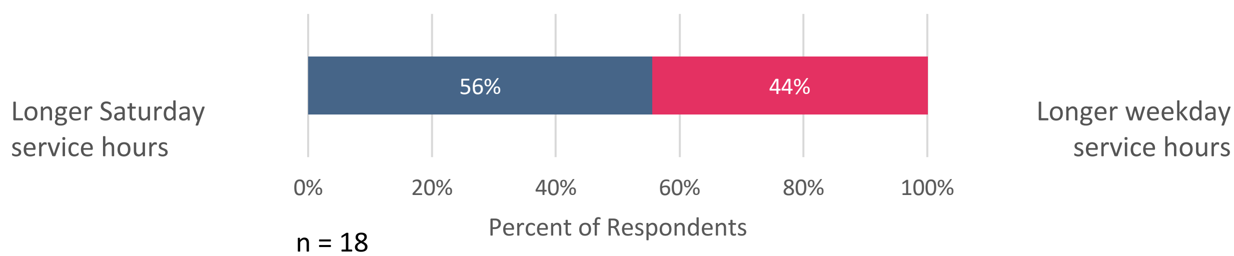
More frequent bus service vs. Longer service hours

XtraMile riders prefer a longer span of service (63%) compared to shorter wait times, typically between 10 and 15 minutes, during the current span of service (37%).



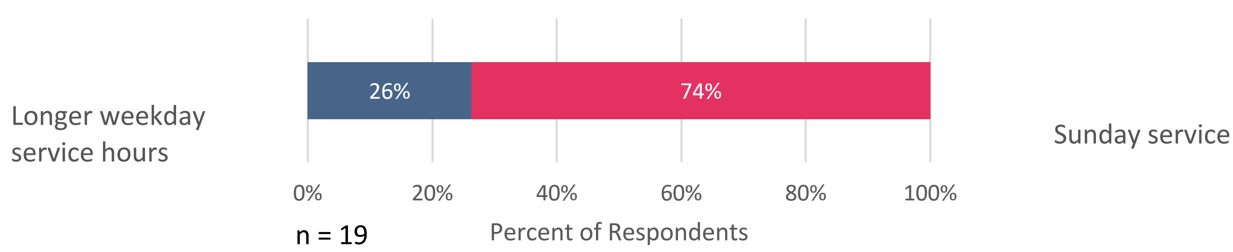
Longer Weekday Service vs. Longer Saturday Service

XtraMile riders prefer longer Saturday span of service (56%) over a longer weekday span of service (44%). Saturday service is currently from 7:30 AM to 6 PM, while weekday service is from 6 AM to 8 PM.



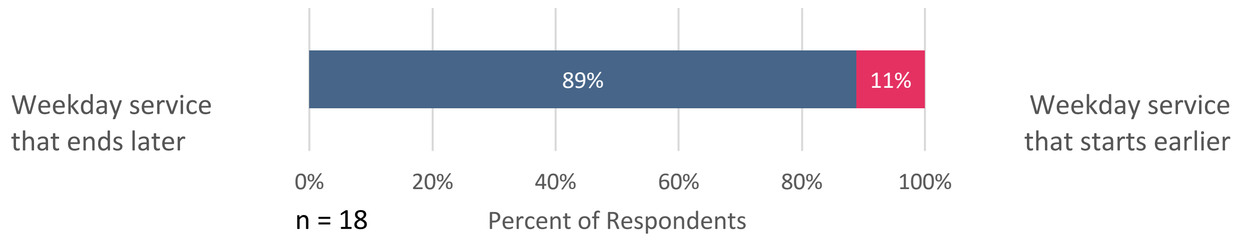
More Weekday Service vs. Sunday Service

9 Town Transit service does not operate on Sundays. When asked to prioritize either more weekday service or the introduction of Sunday service, nearly three-quarters of respondents (74 percent) preferred adding Sunday service.



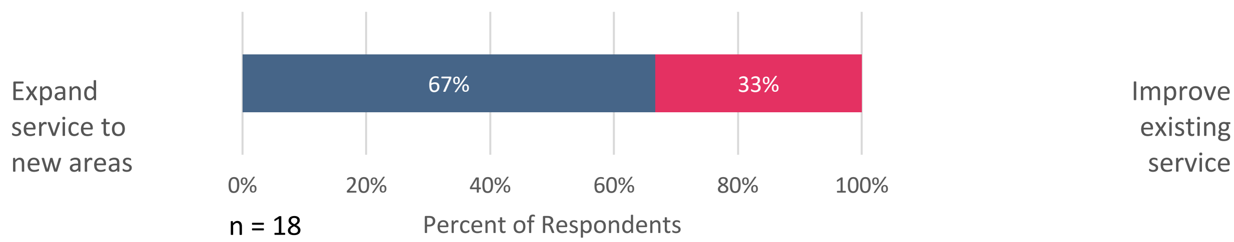
Weekday service that starts earlier vs. Weekday service that ends later

The vast majority of XtraMile riders (89%) prefer extending weekday service later into the evening than beginning weekday service earlier in the morning (11%).



Coverage vs. Frequency

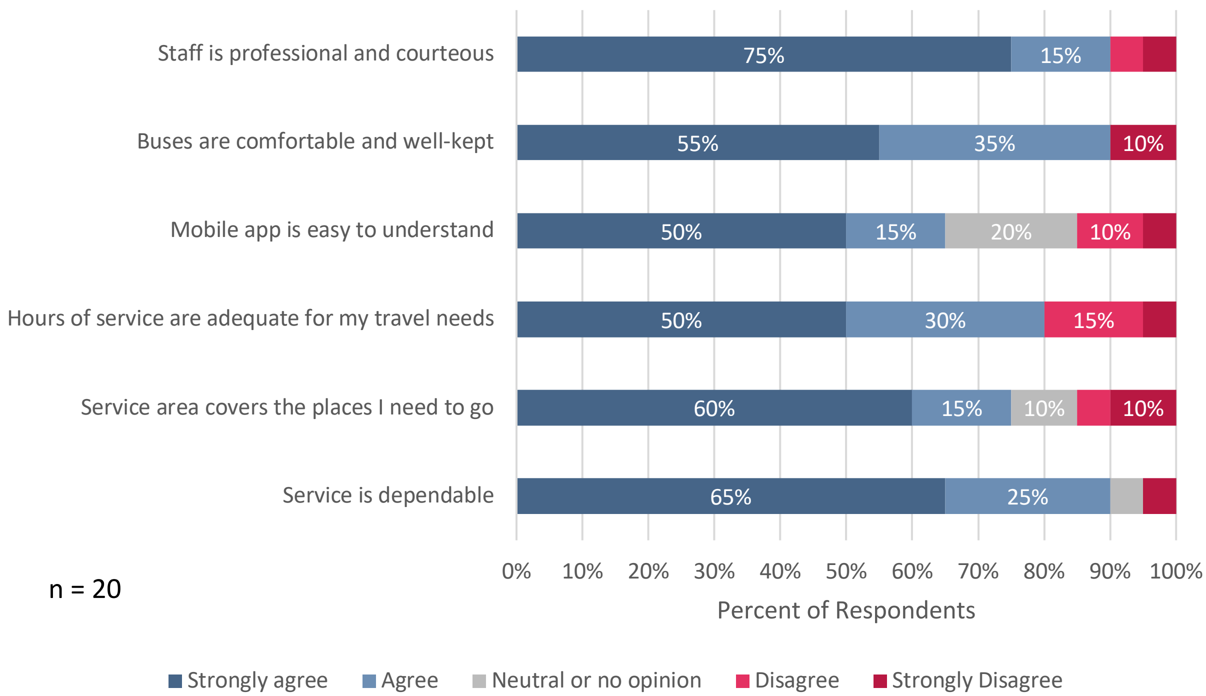
XtraMile riders prefer expanding XtraMile to new areas of the Lower Connecticut River Valley - beyond its current service area of Old Saybrook, Centerbrook Village in Essex, and Westbrook - by a significant margin (67%) over adding extra vehicles in the current service area to reduce wait times (33%).



Satisfaction

Survey respondents were asked a series of questions regarding their perception of XtraMile service features. Overall, XtraMile riders are very satisfied with the pilot's service. At least 80 percent of riders indicated that they agree or strongly agree with most elements: service is dependable (90%), hours of service are adequate for my travel needs (80%), buses are comfortable and well-kept (90%), and staff is professional and courteous (90%). A total of 65 percent of riders indicated that they agree or strongly agree that the mobile app is easy to understand, while 75 percent agree or strongly agree that the service area covers the places they need to go.

Figure 15: Satisfaction with 9 Town Transit Service and Features



Key Findings

Rider Characteristics

- XtraMile shares similar rider demographics to 9 Town Transit's fixed-route services, but with a greater percentage of younger riders between the ages of 18 and 25.
- Like other 9 Town services, XtraMile riders are primarily people with low household incomes, with half (50%) of those surveyed reporting annual household incomes of below $39,010. These riders earn well below the state's median household income of about $93,000 and may meet thresholds to qualify for some means-based public assistance programs.
- A similar share of XtraMile riders work part-time or full-time (40%), compared to 47% of 9 Town's fixed-route riders. Likewise, a plurality of XtraMile riders (45%) are between the ages of 36 and 64, compared to 42% of 9 Town's fixed-route riders.
- XtraMile riders are more likely to be female (55%), compared to 9 Town's fixed-route riders (42%).

Transit Use

- One quarter of XtraMile riders (25%) reported that they had not used 9 Town Transit services before the XtraMile pilot. This indicates that on-demand services like XtraMile may be effective in attracting new types of riders to the 9 Town Transit system.
- Like the majority of 9 Town Transit riders, many XtraMile riders surveyed do not have access to a car or do not drive. However, the share of XtraMile riders who ride because they do not own cars, at 31 percent, is notably lower than the broader group of general 9 Town fixed-route riders, 57 percent. Although those

surveyed indicated that they use XtraMile for a variety of reasons, it does show that XtraMile is more likely to attract "choice" riders (those who have access to personal vehicles) than other 9 Town services.

- XtraMile riders are much more likely to complete discretionary trips than work-related trips on the service, with just 18 percent of riders indicating their trip purpose as going to work and 2 percent indicating going to school. More than one third of riders, 36 percent, use XtraMile to go shopping. This is markedly different from 9 Town Transit's fixed-route riders, for whom work is the predominant trip purpose at 58 percent of trips, compared to 45 percent for shopping. This difference in common trip purposes between XtraMile and 9 Town's fixed-route riders may reflect the relative novelty of XtraMile, as a new, free pilot service, as many riders may not be comfortable commuting on a service that may be cancelled in the near future.
- About two thirds (67%) of respondents reported that they use 9 Town Transit's fixed-route services. This finding indicates that most XtraMile riders use XtraMile as a complement to, not as a replacement for, 9 Town's local bus routes.
- Nearly half (46%) of respondents use Shore Line East's commuter rail service, suggesting there may be travel demand for first/last-mile connections to other Shore Line East rail stations.
- Most respondents indicated that they would be willing to pay a fare for the XtraMile service. The average, one-way fare riders are willing to pay is about $3.00.
- XtraMile is unlikely to displace drive-alone trips, with just three percent of riders reporting they would have driven alone to complete their trip if XtraMile were unavailable. Riders are far more likely to substitute XtraMile for walking (30 percent), taxi/Uber/Lyft (22 percent), or other 9 Town Transit services (22 percent).

Priorities

- XtraMile riders prefer a longer span of service (63%) compared to shorter wait times during the current span of service (37%). This is not unexpected, given the relatively short 10-15 minute wait periods for XtraMile rides.
- When asked to prioritize either more weekday service or the introduction of Sunday service, nearly three-quarters of respondents (74 percent) preferred adding Sunday service.
- XtraMile riders prefer expanding XtraMile to new areas of the Lower Connecticut River Valley - beyond its current service area of Old Saybrook, Centerbrook Village in Essex, and Westbrook - by a significant margin (67%) over adding extra vehicles in the current service area to reduce wait times (33%).
- Overall, XtraMile riders are very satisfied with the pilot's service. At least 80 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that service is dependable (90%), hours of service are adequate for their travel needs (80%), buses are comfortable and well-kept (90%), and the staff is professional and courteous (90%).