

Appendix B | Comment Report from Pop-Ups, Open House, and Online Survey

1 How We Processed Engagement Comments

The project team compiled notes from conversations at pop-up events, the Open House, including comments from the Share Your Vision activity, and the open-ended survey question (Q24: Is there anything else you'd like to share about your experience using Nicollet Mall or the possible transit options?).

For each of the 947 comments, we read the comment, assessed the sentiment about moving transit to another corridor downtown, tagged any mention of specific corridor Options, and finally tagged for up to three common themes. Themes were developed on an ongoing basis throughout the comment processing, with new themes added as needed to capture emerging trends among the engagement comments.

Having the ability to tag multiple themes for each comment allowed the project team to capture more nuanced feedback without the risk of lowering counts of higher-level themes. If more than three themes were present, the reader made a judgement as to which three themes best would represent the commenter's intent. The "score" for each theme is a direct count of the number of comments that were tagged with that theme, within the parameters of this three-theme tagging system.



Including Pop-Up notes, Open House notes, Open House activities, and Survey open ended questions



Reading the comments



Tagging

Sentiments (positive/negative)
Preference for Options
Theme tags (up to 3)



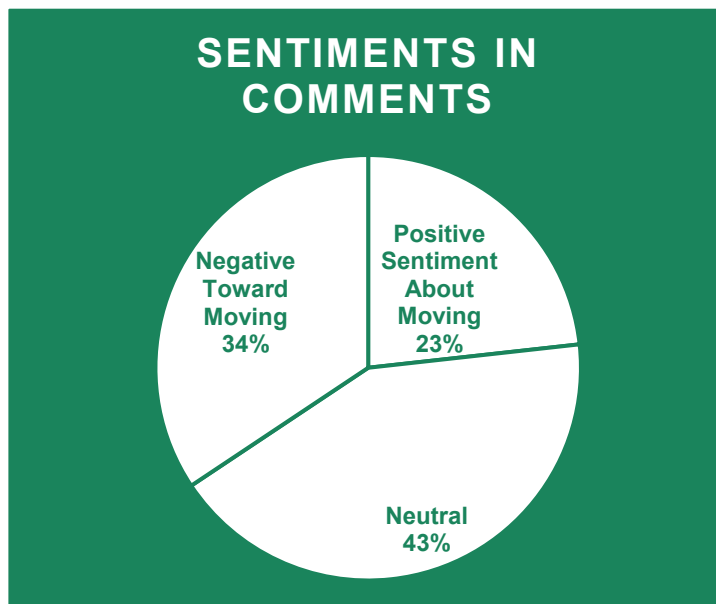
Adding themes as they emerge based on common wording and themes

2 Results

2.1 Sentiments

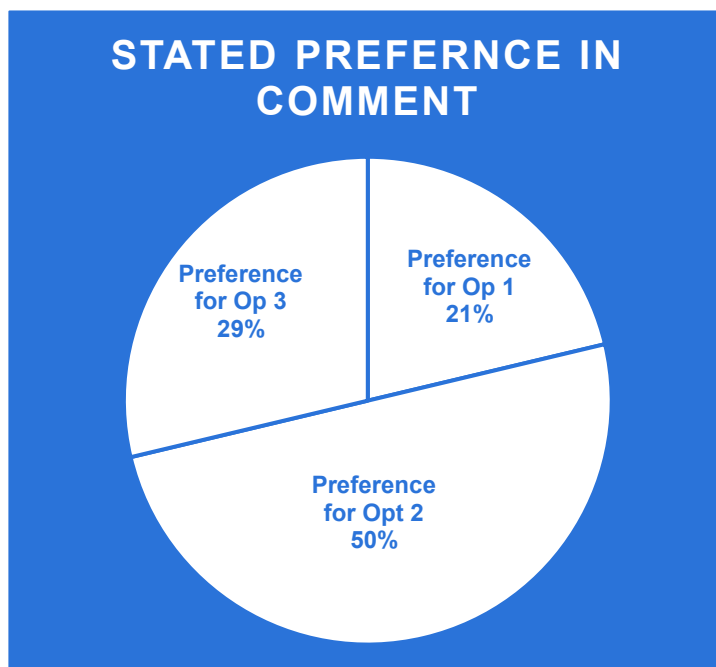
Each comment was tagged for positive sentiments about moving transit off Nicollet Mall and negative sentiments toward the move to better understand public opinion at the beginning of the project, prior to full discussion of the tradeoffs between different solutions.

Neutral comments either did not express an opinion on moving transit, or were comments about the experience today on Nicollet Mall or future of Nicollet Mall that didn't make a clear distinction about whether transit is present or not. Examples of common themes within neutral comments were overall downtown safety concerns and overall desire for more retail options on Nicollet Mall.



2.2 Preference for Options

The next set of tags used helped the project capture preferences that might emerge among those who were not certain enough to select one option over the other this early in the project. On the survey question about selecting a preferred option for moving transit, many respondents selected "I don't know/I'm unsure" or "No change – keep transit and Nicollet Mall as is," but these tags made sure that if those more skeptical participants shared an interest in one option over the others, that that was captured too. These sentiments could be understood as both those "reluctant supporters" of each option, as well as people who enthusiastically used the open response to articulate further rationale for their support of the option they selected.



Note: See Appendix A Online Survey Results, Question 23 on page 145 for the "Which option do you like best?" full results. This question in the survey presents a more complete picture of public preferences from a higher sample size of audience, while this comment tag is meant to supplement our understanding.

2.3 Themes

This list of themes is ranked in order of most common, with the highest number of comments tagged, down to less common, with fewer comments tagged. A total of 947 comments were tagged by theme and the score directly relates to how many comments included each theme. Due to themes being added throughout the comment processing and the cap of 3 themes per comment, these can't be understood as exact counts of how many times each theme comes up in comments, but they demonstrate a relative frequency compared to the other themes in the data set. Here are the top 20 most common themes from the engagement comments:

	Theme	Score
1	Distance to destinations is far, especially if you are elderly, a caretaker or a person with disabilities.	97
2	Overall support for pedestrianization and Nicollet Mall being only for walking, biking and events.	96
3	I like it how it is.	83
4	Bus riders are essential to keeping Nicollet vibrant and active all day. Concern that Nicollet Mall will be empty without them, which could affect safety.	54
5	My issue with Nicollet is people doing bad things.	50
6	There are no places to go on these other corridors. Nicollet has Target, library, bank, medical.	47
7	Nicollet design - need more ground floor retail	46
8	Transit speed improvements on Nicollet like transit signal priority and using light timing downtown would be a better solution.	44
9	Overall support for moving busses off Nicollet and improving speed of service	40
10	Improve safety downtown	34
11	Not confident the busses will actually go faster on other corridors or provide other advantages	32
12	Who is this really for? Tourists? Downtown workers? Or transit riders and all of Minneapolis?	32
13	Improve safety on transit	31
14	Nicollet design - need more seating	27
15	Changing the routes would cause confusion.	26
16	I feel safer on Nicollet than on other streets because of the eyes on the street.	24
17	Moving busses off Nicollet could improve bicycle access on Nicollet and/or 3 rd .	23
18	Separating routes between Hennepin and Marq2 or 3rd would be too spread out for transfers.	23
19	Transit service improvements - reliable, fast, frequent	23
20	We should just address homelessness and mental health and substance abuse.	23

Note: In the Phase 1 Engagement Summary, themes 8 and 9 were combined so that all of the top 10 themes could be displayed on one page. For the discussion in this Appendix, they are represented individually as identified in the analysis.

2.3.1 Discussion of Top 10 Themes

For each of the top 10 themes, this section shares some analysis and quotes to illustrate the theme in more depth.

Theme #1: Distance to destinations is far, especially if you are elderly, a caretaker or a person with disabilities.

- **Analysis:** The distance is not just inconvenient, it affects access to essential services, especially for people who live in food deserts or areas without access to medical services.

- “It would make it harder to get to Nicollet especially for people like me who have a hard time walking, a hard time with mobility. The places we go are on Nicollet. I’m going to Walgreens, Target, and the light rail, so no I don’t think it would be a good idea to move it. There’s no where to go to on those other streets.”
- “We catch the bus here – don’t change it. We are nurses at the clinic on Nicollet and lots of other people work on Nicollet too who ride the bus. Our patients also rely on easy access to the services at our clinic and many of them have mobility issues that would make it hard to go further. They’re not able to walk an extra block.”
- “A lot of people living in food deserts shop at target, Walgreens and Dollar General on the way home from work. It would be more difficult for them if you move everything to the other options. People like to dine outside in the summer, the rest of us have to work and shop every day.”

Theme #2: Overall support for pedestrianization and street being only for walking, biking and events.

- **Analysis:** People resonate with the vision for a vibrant downtown and using car-free, pedestrian oriented, activated, well-designed streets to accomplish that.
- These supportive sentiments are general in nature – contrasted with the in-depth narratives in other themes.
- In documenting the motivation for support of moving transit of Nicollet, we split out “support for pedestrianization” and “support for moving busses” to track the motivating benefits that people cited for supporting the move. It’s clear from this theme rising to the top, the support is most grounded in enthusiasm for a car free street downtown and support for efforts to revitalize, not as strongly from dissatisfaction with slow transit service on Nicollet or the transit benefit. Comments that support the proposed pedestrianization based on desire for transit improvements are captured in Theme #8 (comments that mention both could receive both tags).
 - “I believe Nicollet Ave should be totally pedestrian/bike friendly with no motorized traffic (except for emergency vehicles.) Less concrete and much more green space.”
 - “Buses absolutely need to be removed from Nicollet in order to bring vibrancy back to that street.”
 - “Get buses off Nicollet Mall to make it more pedestrian-friendly as other major cities have done.”

Theme #3: I like it how it is.

- **Analysis:** People think Nicollet works as a downtown transit corridor and want it to stay as it is. There is convenience and familiarity that people value about the current transit operational environment.
- This sentiment is comparable to the “overall support” for pedestrianization, but notable because it was prominent despite being in the context of a survey focused on changes to Nicollet Mall and transit. It points to people needing more data & context to understand the potential benefits and whether it justifies the tradeoffs, in their experience.

- “Like how it is now – it’s convenient. You can’t control how fast the bus comes, I’m not really sure it’d be faster on these other streets with the traffic and everything.”
- “Nicollet is designed for transit and bikes. Keep the lines on Nicollet.”

Theme #4: Bus riders are essential to keeping Nicollet vibrant and active all day. Concern that Nicollet Mall will be empty without them, it will affect safety.

- **Analysis:** People noted a contrast between the project goal of increased vibrancy with the removal of thousands of people from the mall. Especially noting weekend and wintertime impacts on “eyes on the street” and how safe they would feel on a potentially quieter Nicollet Mall. Comments expressed concern that if bus riders leave, the space will be filled by negative activity.
 - “With no storefront places to visit, it would soon become a desert and a place where people avoid. It will probably take years to encourage business and or restaurants to once again build or occupy space on the Mall. Moving the bus(s) now seems very premature. I think the shops need to be built FIRST so that people can come, not the other way around. Right now, the visitors or people that travel up and down the Mall only do so in my opinion because they get off the Mall bus or train there.”
 - “On weekends no one is here without the bus. Bus keeps Nicollet busy. Without it, Nicollet would get dangerous after 5pm after office workers leave and on the weekends.”
 - “Moving transit off nicollet is going to make nicollet feel much more desolate and abandoned, not make it better.”

Theme #5: My issue with Nicollet is people doing bad things.

- **Analysis:** The top issue people would like addressed is anti-social behaviors on Nicollet Mall and in downtown spaces such as drug use, intoxication, urination, and unpredictable behaviors. This topped all other transit speed related comments and other design comments for future improvements of Nicollet Mall.
 - “I work security and I see what people do. The biggest issues we hear about is that there’s no restrooms and no seating downtown but in the evenings you see the drug use, the liquor bottles all around where these seats are. I think there should be a return to the idea of downtown as a business district and transit on Nicollet supports that. I’ve been here 11 years – we need to focus on the business crowd like before the pandemic and if the busses go away and they just put out a bunch more chairs, that just creates more issues, more bad behavior.”
 - “It’s a good effort, but how would that not just increase the actual issues of no one being down here and all this bad stuff being here?”

Theme #6: There are no places to go on these other corridors. Nicollet has Target, Library, bank, medical.

- **Analysis:** A concern stated about Marquette, 2nd and 3rd Avenue is that useful services and retail destinations are not located there and moving transit there would be moving transit to a lower foot traffic corridor. Specific useful destinations were called out like Target, Walgreens, the library, Dollar General, multiple medical & clinic locations, the Twins Stadium, Orchestra Hall.

- “As I wrote before, moving traffic off Nicollet Mall is very inconvenient for me, and I totally would not feel safe. Especially in winter when it's cold, walking can be more dangerous, & buses are often late, this would make every trip take longer. I don't drive & so have no choice but to do a fair amount of shopping downtown or go to the downtown library. If I had to take a bus on 2nd or 3rd, I might decide not to get physical books at all from the library as it would be so onerous to go there. I would not go to Target or Candyland or other shops or restaurants, as it wouldn't be worth the extra time & concern about my safety. I would go to doctors downtown, but I have no choice; they are my doctors. In short, as a non-driver who lives in the city of Minneapolis, I have no choice but to take public transportation. This would make my life a lot more inconvenient & limit my movement. I'm a senior, but still working, & extra walking, taking a lot more time for walking from bus stops further from my stops & just makes doing anything seem more challenging than they are worth.”
- “For all of the transit options, I'd like to see significant streetscape improvements and an effort to make Marquette, 2nd, and any other streets carrying transit users more lively and vibrant. Nicollet Mall is still a beautiful street and a nice place to wait on. The same cannot necessarily be said for the other streets.”
- “This survey made me mad because it forced me to rank what I wanted from Nicollet at the front but I'm not in any of the options. I use Nicollet to transfer, get groceries, and get prescriptions, and maybe go to the eye doc and bank once and awhile. I don't work downtown and it pisses me off you're going to make so many of my errands suck more because you want to throw street parties for a bunch of \$150K+ office workers from Minnetonka that I can never go to because I'm actually working. “

Theme #7: Nicollet design - need more ground floor retail

- **Analysis:** In reference to what a vibrant Nicollet Mall would look like, people consistently want to see the return of even more retail and ground floor storefront uses. This was an overarching desire among people who wanted and did not want busses to move off Nicollet. It is a core theme to what people think would make the biggest impact on improving downtown.
 - “Nicollet Mall provides people no reason to visit currently- not enough shops, restaurants, green space. And one off festivals won't do the trick or create a sustainable economy/model for downtown life. Moving the buses off will not do anything to change this- keep the buses on Nicollet- dedicating space to buses makes them quick and reliable which is the most important factor as to whether they get used. Focus on developing the area with small businesses and housing and people will gladly mill about in the area.”
 - “I am there every day. Nicollet Mall is so, so sterile and concrete. In a city with so many inviting places, Nicollet makes you want to be somewhere else. Getting transit somewhere else would be a great start. We need to make it beautiful and safe, and businesses will come. Landscaping/plants need to be a priority. We should also incentivize businesses being street level rather than skyway. Improving Nicollet is the fastest way to change the feel of downtown.”
 - “Stop locking up the seating on Nicollet Mall and stop letting cops park on the sidewalks. Skyways and lack of retail are biggest barriers to Nicollet being successful, not bus traffic. Southern part of the Mall is much more lively, which is easily explained by ground level retail

destinations. Mall won't be lively until Washington Ave thru 7th have ground level destinations. Long-term goal should be to get rid of the skyways."

Theme #8: Speed improvements on Nicollet like transit signal priority and using light timing downtown would be a better solution.

- **Analysis:** People felt limited in the realm of options presented to address the stated goals of the project, vibrancy of Nicollet and speed of transit service. Desire to see more strategies implemented on Nicollet or to address issues without discarding our main transit amenity space. Some of these strategies have been tried on Nicollet Mall to improve transit and in Phase 2 the project can provide more context on these efforts and how they led to the focus of this project.
 - "What about transit signal priority? Not currently on Nicollet. We should try more on Nicollet before moving the busses."
 - "Far-side bus stops and making it so the buses get signal priority would speed up buses on Nicollet. Having a bus stop right next to a Target is great, I don't know why we would change that."

Theme #9: Overall support for moving busses off Nicollet and improving speed of service.

- **Analysis:** Speed makes a big impact on the satisfaction of bus riders with service and the opportunity to improve overall trip time by moving transit to another corridor was well received. There is an opportunity for the project to share more data in Phase 2 about trip time comparisons between the transit options.
 - "I think Nicollet Mall is a pretty terrible experience as a transit rider right now. It's just so, so slow. We need to be prioritizing speed, especially if we want to grow ridership. We can't just pretend people don't have places to be. That said, any alternative must include full pedestrianization of Nicollet Mall and a viable, faster option for transit riders. I do like all options, but need assurance that any alternative will actually prioritize the speed of transit."
 - "Bus service on Nicollet Mall is often slow. I'd like to see an emphasis on speed in whichever alternative is chosen, making crosstown trips easier and faster for buses."
 - "I also think sharing why you think this will increase service speeds is important--I am really frustrated by how slow the busses move on Nicollet but don't really see how this fixes things. I just think that people are slow boarding and getting off downtown."

Theme #10: Improve safety downtown

- **Analysis:** Multiple top 20 themes were safety-related, with the broadest one – improving safety downtown - making it in the top 10. While safety is very subjective and some comments contain conflicting views of what would make them feel safer, more people said Nicollet felt safer to them today than other comparable streets because of the presence of more people and "eyes on the street."
 - "I have visited Nicollet Mall with the buses present, and also at times that the buses were detoured away and am sure that I always felt safer and more welcome with the buses present, mainly due to the bus drivers' "EYES on THE STREET". Please be very careful to not be elitist and isolated when making planning assumptions, because an erroneous decision will make downtown much less attractive and welcoming, even less safe."

- ““feeling” safe doesn't matter to me as much as actually being safe. improving safety overall by increasing services to vulnerable populations is more important than promoting a feeling of safety on transit.”
- “Feeling safe downtown isn't just about whether I think someone is going to rob me. It's also about whether how the space and transit are structured allow me to do things like access stops and transfer buses without getting hurt getting around or aggravating my disabilities to the point where I'm out of commission for days afterward.”

3 Full theme list

Rank	Top Comments	Count of Comments Tagged
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19	Transit service improvements - reliable, fast, frequent	23

20	We should just address homelessness and mental health and substance abuse.	23
21	Nicollet design - more restrooms	20
22	Nicollet design - more shade and greening	19
23	Nicollet design - like having food trucks and sidewalk cafes	19
24	Transit station improvements - better cleanliness, more seating, lighting and heat	19
25	Consider moving more of the routes or all of the routes to Hennepin.	18
26	Important to keep strong connection to light rail	17
27	Don't like police or private security parked on the sidewalks	17
28	Street design recommendations - address traffic on cross streets, shorter crossing distances, less high speed through traffic priority	14
29	I'm concerned about the pedestrian mall concept without bus riders because there's not enough to do on Nicollet and other pedestrian malls have failed	15
30	Would moving more routes to Hennepin negatively impact performance of those routes?	13
31	Separate bikes and pedestrians if Nicollet is pedestrianized	12
32	Nicollet design - like events	12
33	If air quality and noise are the main issue, the solution could be changing to electric busses	12
34	Didn't we just rebuild this? It's a waste of taxpayer money	12
35	Want more police presence on Nicollet, several people specifying foot patrol.	12
36	Detours off Nicollet are difficult for transit riders	11
37	There should still be a free shuttle or micromobility or streetcar that operates on Nicollet even if local bus routes move, for access to destinations and or for visitors.	11
38	Nicollet needs more housing, neighborhood amenities and residential population to thrive like other parts of downtown.	11
39	Winter maintenance is crucial to transit access and could be negatively impacted by moving corridors, and from Nicollet you can access the skyway more easily in winter	8
40	Option 1 would lead to confusion around one-way operations.	7
41	Nicollet design - more programming like live music, open streets style events	7
42	If transit is moved, it should be moved to another car free street.	7
43	Improve safety on Hennepin	5
44	Don't emphasize getting office workers back because it won't win them over.	5
45	Nicollet design - bring back farmers market and pop up retail	4
46	Traffic from the ramps on Marquette could inhibit transit operations at peak times	4
47	Narrow the street section on Option 3	3

48	If busses are moved away from the few remaining shops on Nicollet, I'll probably just shop in my neighborhood or in the suburbs instead and stop coming downtown. 3
49	There's an issue today with too many cars still using Nicollet and/or I'm concerned that without busses more cars would get on Nicollet if more bollards or other design features didn't prevent them. 2