



# Transportation and Employment among Michigan Works! Customers



Findings of a survey on transportation access, barriers, and priorities

May 2015



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## Key Findings

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Transportation presents substantial challenges for participants in job training and assistance programs according to a survey of current and recent Michigan Works! customers conducted by Emma White Research for the Region 9 Prosperity Initiative<sup>1</sup>. Highlights of the findings include the following:

- **Many face transportation limitations.** For example, 21% of current and former workforce customers do not have access to a car or other vehicle. And among those who do have vehicle access, a majority (56%) say they have needed repairs they could not afford within the last two years.
- **This presents problems for employment.** Overall, one in five customers (21%) reports losing a job because of transportation problems in the last two years, while 39% say they have missed work and a third (33%) have not applied for a job because they could not arrange transportation. Nearly half (48%) say transportation has been a problem for them in finding and keeping a job. Today, those who have access to a vehicle are more likely to be employed – even when controlling for other factors.
- **Most say public transportation expansion – and programs for assistance with car repair – would help people like them.** Although few currently rely on public transit to get to work, large majorities say that adding weekend and evening service and new bus routes would make a “big difference” in helping individuals like them get to work. In addition, they are very enthusiastic about expanding programs to help pay for car repairs, and widely supportive of programs to support carpooling and encouraging businesses to locate close to housing and bus routes.

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<sup>1</sup>From May 6 through 10, 2015, Emma White Research LLC conducted a telephone survey of 400 adults who participated in the Workforce Investment Act, Trade, PATH or AEP programs at a Michigan Works! center in Hillsdale, Jackson, Lenawee, Livingston, Monroe or Washtenaw Counties within the previous twelve months. The data have been weighted by county and program to match the overall population of the programs within that time. The margin of sampling error for a study of this size is +/- 4.7 percentage points at the 95% confidence level, though other sources of error may contribute to total error. A companion memo reports the findings of qualitative interviews with business leaders.

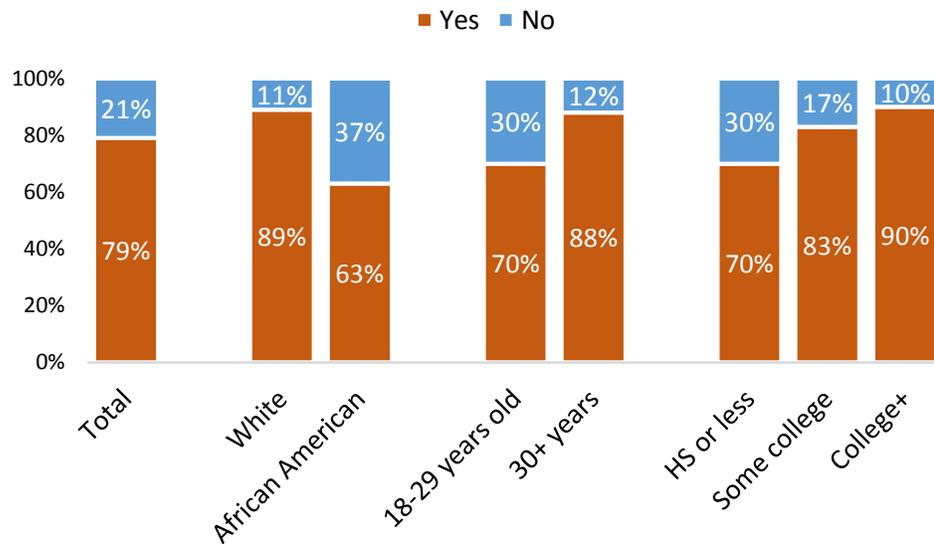
**Barriers  
to  
getting  
around**

A majority of workforce customers have experienced some gaps in their transportation access, whether lacking access to a vehicle or being unable to afford necessary car repairs.

**21%** of Michigan Works! customers do not have access to a car or other vehicle

Although approximately one in five overall does not have a vehicle they can use when they need it, this problem is more acute among some subpopulations. Among African-American customers, 37% lack vehicle access. Three in ten of those under 30 (30%) and those with a high school education or less (30%) also lack access, as shown in the illustration below.

**Do you have access to a vehicle such as a car, truck, or van that you can use when you need it?**

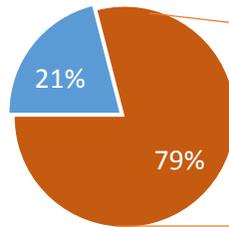


Customers in more urban Washtenaw County (31%) and Jackson County (24%) are more likely to be without vehicle access, but even in rural Hillsdale and Lenawee Counties, a substantial portion (15%) do not have cars, along with a similar number in Monroe (12%). In Livingston fewer (3%) experience this problem.

**56%** of those who do have vehicle access have needed repairs they could not afford within the past two years.

This leaves only a small portion of all Michigan Works! customers who both have a vehicle and have been able to afford the repairs they needed for the last two years.

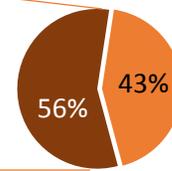
**Do you have access to a vehicle such as a car, truck, or van that you can use when you need it?**



■ No ■ Yes

**At any point in the last two years, has the vehicle needed repairs that you could not afford to pay for?**

*Among those with vehicle access, N=316*



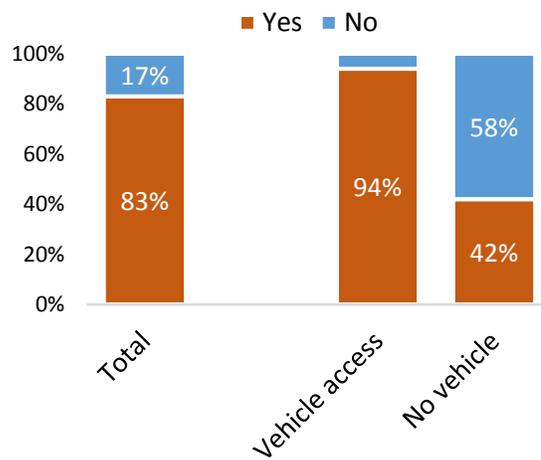
■ Yes ■ No

Among those with vehicles, women (62%), those with children under 18 (64%) and those in PATH-AEP programs (65%) are more likely to have had problems paying for vehicle repair.

**58%** of those with no vehicle access also lack a current drivers' license

Overall, 17% of Michigan Works! customers do not have a current drivers' license. As shown on the next page, this proportion is dramatically higher (58%) among those without access to a vehicle, but even among those with vehicle access, a small portion, 6%, does not have a current license and are in a position of either not driving or driving illegally.

**Do you have a current drivers' license?**

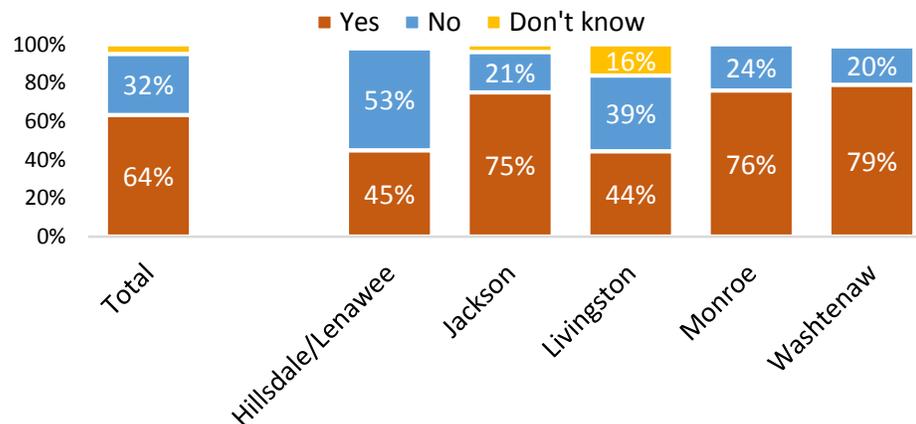


In addition, 32% overall lack car insurance. Among those without access to a vehicle, this rises to 90%, but even among those who do have access to a vehicle, 16% do not have insurance and again, are either relying on other forms of transportation or driving illegally.

**32%** report that public transportation is not available where they live

As shown in the chart below, most of those living in Washtenaw, Jackson, and Monroe Counties say public transportation is available where they live, while fewer say the same in Livingston, Lenawee and Hillsdale. Among those who do not have access to a vehicle, one in five (21%) does not have public transportation access and thus is reliant on others for transportation or limited to walking.

**Are buses, or any other form of public transportation, available where you live?**



**Working and getting to work**

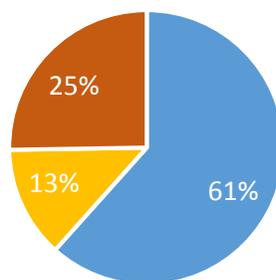
A majority of current and recent Michigan Works! customers (58%) report that they currently have a job or are working for pay, though this drops for those with no vehicle access. Those who are employed generally drive themselves to work and have relatively short commutes.

Just **46%** of those without vehicle access are employed, compared to 61% of those with vehicles

A logistic regression model finds that having access to a vehicle predicts higher likelihood of employment even when controlling for factors such as age, race, and education. Other transportation problems are associated with lower rates of employment as well. Among those with a vehicle, those who have faced repairs they could not afford within the last two years are less likely to have a job now (55%) than those who have not had such a problem (69%).

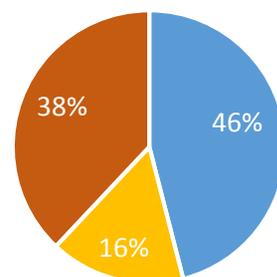
**Do you currently have a job, are you looking for work, or are you doing something else?**

*Among those with vehicle access, n=316*



- Employed
- In school/other
- Looking for work

*Among those without vehicle access, n=84*

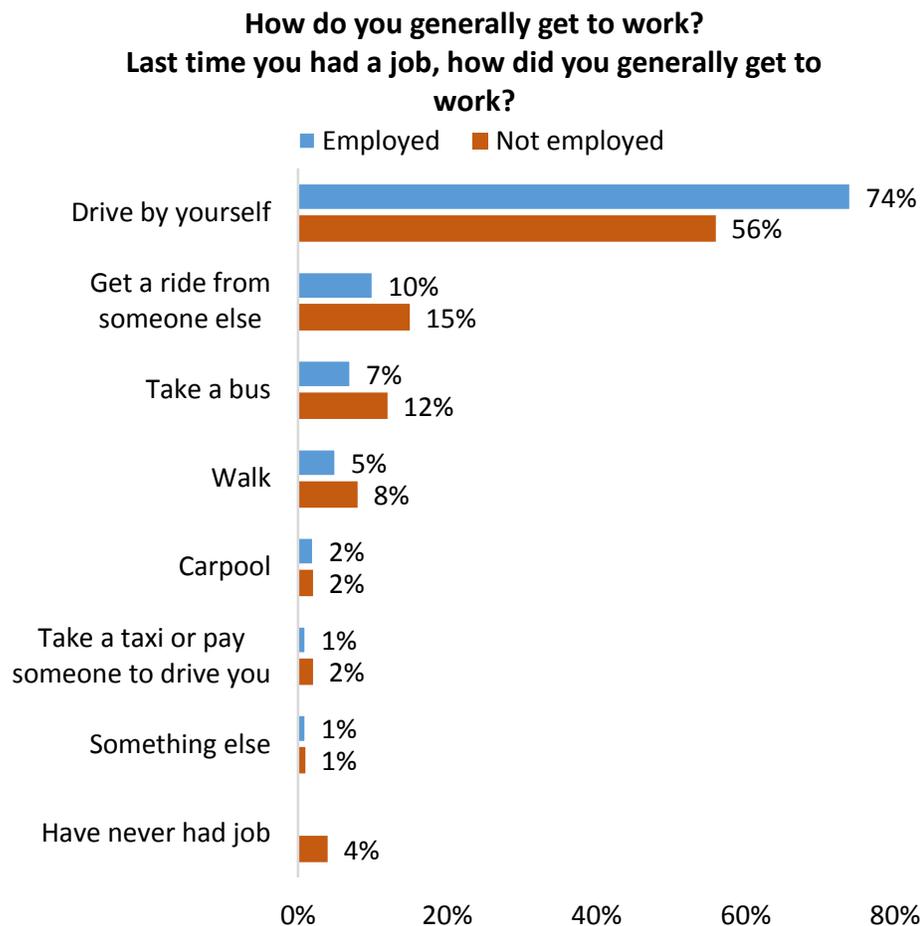


- Employed
- In school/other
- Looking for work

WIA customers are also a little more likely to be employed (64%) than are PATH-AEP customers (52%), and Livingston residents (69%) are more likely to be employed, but otherwise there are few substantive differences in employment rates

**Those who are not employed are more likely to have relied on others and public transportation when they were last working.**

How workforce customers describe getting to work reflects the fact that those without employment are less likely to have a vehicle. The great majority of those who are currently employed drive themselves to work (74%), while smaller numbers do other things, primarily get a ride from someone else (10%), or take a bus (7%). Among those who do not currently have a job, however, fewer say they last drove themselves to work last time they had a job (56%), while more relied on rides (15%), buses (12%), walking (8%), or something else.



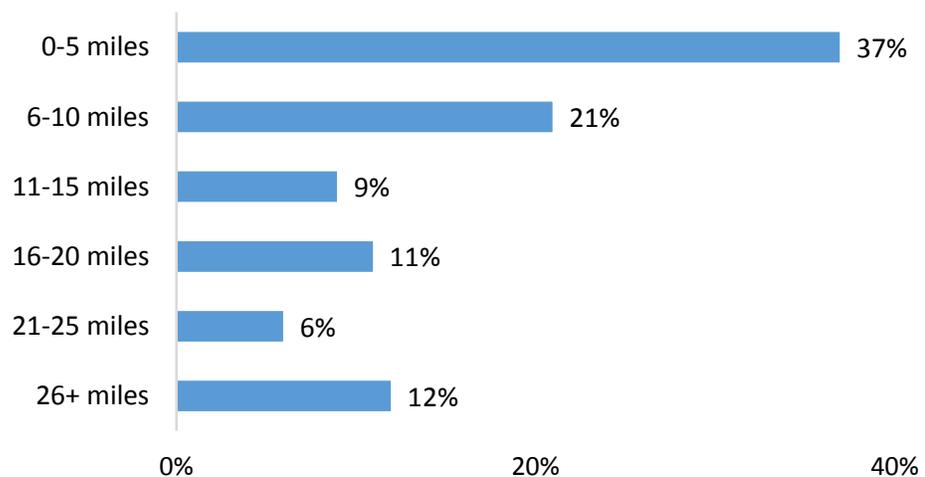
In Washtenaw and Jackson Counties, smaller majorities of those currently working drive themselves, and more rely on other forms of

transportation. Additionally, younger customers, African Americans, and those with lower levels of education are less likely to drive themselves and more likely to rely on public transportation or others to drive them.

For those working, the average commute distance is a little less than **14** miles

Almost four in ten (37%) of those who have a job say they work within five miles of their home, but many commute longer distances, including 12% who report that they commute at least 26 miles to work.

**About how far, in miles, is your job from where you live?**  
among those who have a job, n=231



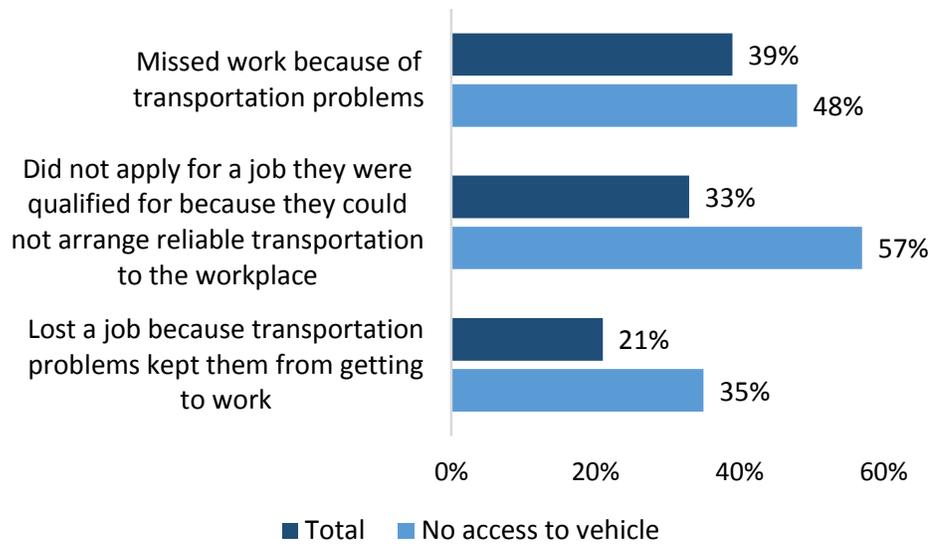
Reported commute times are consistent with these distances. Nearly half (46%) say it takes them less than fifteen minutes to get to work. Another 29% say it takes them at least fifteen but less than thirty minutes, 18% say it takes thirty to sixty minutes and only 5% say it takes them more than an hour.

**Problems Getting to Work**

**39%** of workforce customers have missed work in the last two years because of transportation problems

In addition, a third (33%) reports they chose not to apply for a job because they could not arrange reliable transportation, and a full one in five (21%) says they lost a job because of transportation problems, as shown below. As shown in the chart below, among those who do not have a vehicle, 48% have missed work, and 57% have not applied for jobs they were qualified for because of transportation problems.

In the last two years, percent of Michigan Works! customers who reports that they...



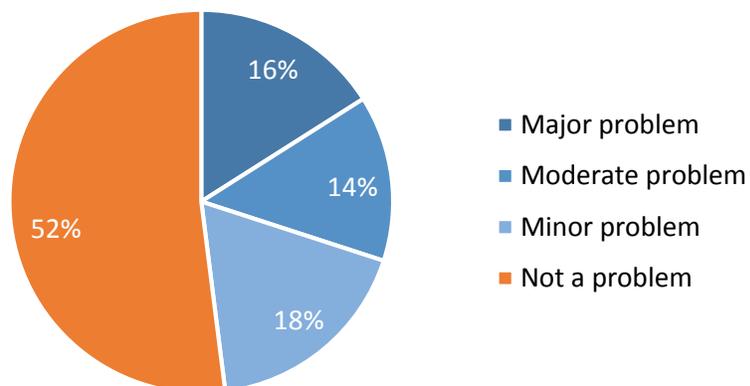
These problems are also more prevalent among those who have been unable to afford car repairs, those with children under 18, those with lower levels of education, African Americans, women, customers under 30, and those who have participated in PATH or AEP programs, and are more common in Washtenaw, Jackson and Monroe than Livingston Hillsdale and Lenawee.

# 48% say transportation problems have made it harder for them to get or keep a job

Among the nearly half of all workforce customers who say transportation has been a problem for them in getting or keeping a job, approximately equal numbers say issues with transportation have been a major problem (16%), a moderate problem (14%), or a minor problem (18%). Among some groups, however, a majority identifies transportation as having been a roadblock to employment. These groups include:

- Those without access to a vehicle (72%) or who have been unable to afford repairs (55%);
- African Americans (65%)
- Washtenaw County residents (60%);
- Participants in PATH or AEP programs (59%);
- Younger women (57%);
- Parents of children under 18 (55%); and
- Those who are currently unemployed (54%).

**Would you say that issues with transportation have been a major problem for you in getting and keeping a job, a moderate problem, a minor problem, or not a problem?**



**37%** of those with children at home say getting kids to school has made it harder for them to get or keep a job

Those who have children under 18 who live with them full or part-time (63% of all workforce customers) were asked whether within the last two years, “transportation problems for getting your children to school or daycare” have made it harder for them to get or keep a job. Overall, 37% say this has been the case, though among mothers it is higher (40%) than among fathers (22%).

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## Appeal of policies to improve access

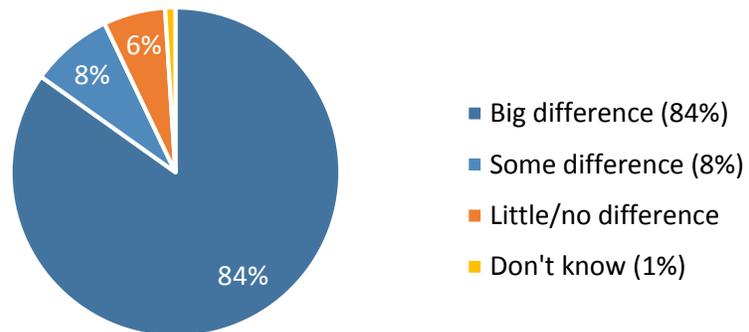
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Michigan Works! customers are enthusiastic about a number of potential ways of improving transportation access for workers like themselves.

**84%** say programs to help workers afford car repairs would make a “big difference” for people like them

In addition, 8% say it would make “some difference.” In each county across the region, and among all demographic groups, this type of program is viewed as more helpful than any other transportation policy explored in the survey.

### Expanding programs to help pay for car repairs when workers cannot afford it would make a:

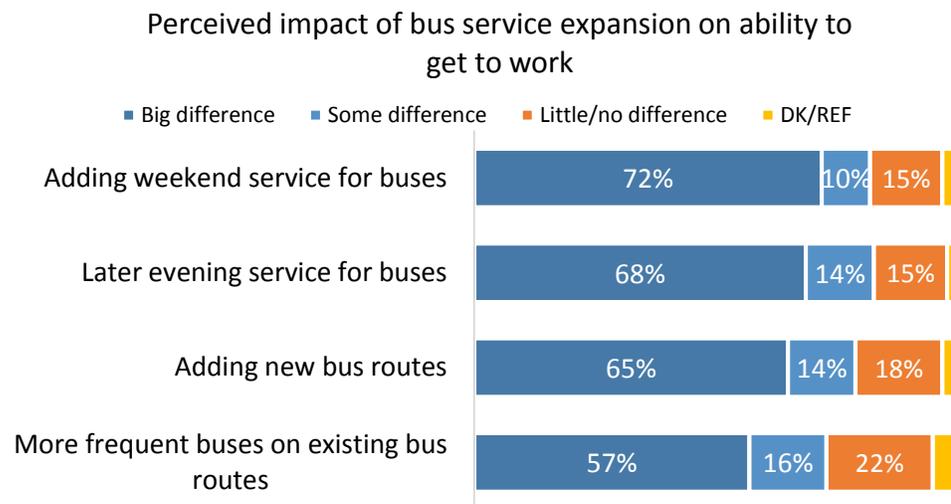


Here are some ideas that some people have given for ways to improve transportation in the region. Please tell me whether you think each of them would make a big difference, some difference, a little difference or no difference in helping people like you get to work. (RANDOMIZE)

## Majorities also say additional bus service would benefit people like them

Although fewer than one in ten currently take a bus to work, more investment in bus service is seen as likely to help individuals in similar circumstance get to work, as shown in the figure on the next page.

Adding *new* service (weekends, later evenings, new routes) is viewed as more helpful than increasing frequency on existing routes. It is possible that one reason so few take a bus to work is that the times or routes are not adequate for their needs. In any case, for each proposed service expansion seven in ten or more say that each would make a “big” or “some difference” in helping people like them get to work.



Here are some ideas that some people have given for ways to improve transportation in the region. Please tell me whether you think each of them would make a big difference, some difference, a little difference or no difference in helping people like you get to work. (RANDOMIZE)

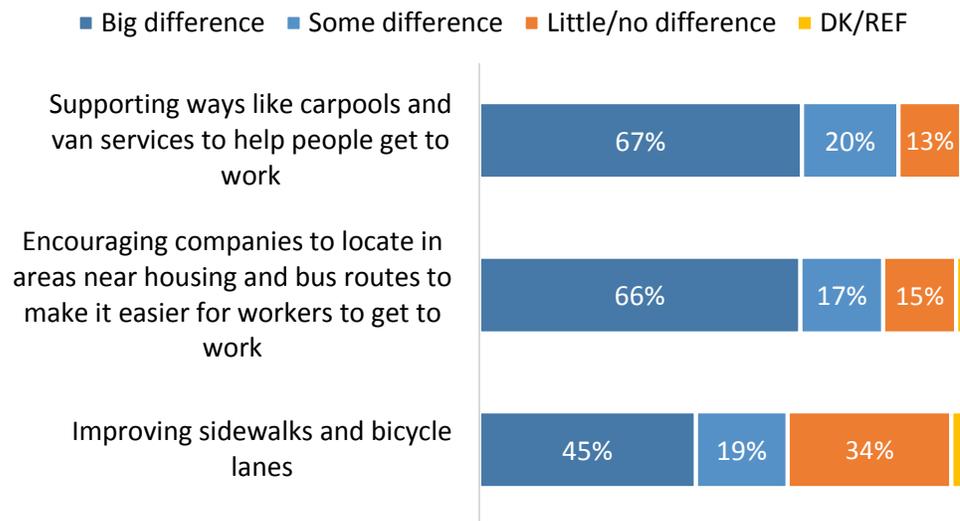
Improved bus service is particularly appealing in urban counties (Jackson, Monroe, and Washtenaw), where perceived access to public transportation is better, but even in Hillsdale and Lenawee Counties, 66% say adding weekend service would make a big difference, along with 55% who say the same for later evening schedules, 59% for new bus routes, and 44% for adding service on existing routes. In Livingston, around four in ten say these would make a big difference for them. Additionally, expanded bus service holds more appeal for:

- Those without access to a vehicle;
- Those who are not employed;
- Those with children under 18;
- Women;
- African Americans; and
- Those under 30.

## Majorities say van pools, location decisions, and sidewalks and bike lanes would make at least “some difference”

Two-thirds (67%) say carpools and van services would make a “big difference” and 20% say it would make some; and encouraging companies to locate near housing and bus routes produced similar results (66% “big,” 17% “some”). Although fewer than half overall (45%) say that improved sidewalks and bike lanes would make a “big difference” for people like them, over six in ten say it would make at least some difference. Additionally, the proportion saying sidewalks and bike lanes would make a big difference rises to a majority among those with no driver’s license, African Americans, those with a high school education or less, and women with kids under 18.

Perceived impact on ability to get to work



Here are some ideas that some people have given for ways to improve transportation in the region. Please tell me whether you think each of them would make a big difference, some difference, a little difference or no difference in helping people like you get to work. (RANDOMIZE)

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## Summary

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In total, the data show that problems with vehicle access, repairs, and public transportation cause employment issues for a substantial portion of Michigan Works! customers. Majorities say expanded bus service and assistance with car repair would make a significant difference in helping people like them get to work.