



2017/2018 Regional Travel Survey In-Depth Analysis
Transit Riders: Commute versus All-Purpose Socio-Demographic Characteristics
Revised 12/22/2021

In the Fall of 2019, TPB staff began releasing the preliminary results of the 2017/2018 Regional Travel Survey (RTS). The RTS is a once-a-decade household travel survey which collected detailed information about households and their daily travel obtained from a travel diary. TPB staff asked regional stakeholders to offer questions that the RTS might help inform. This piece is part of a series of responses to thought-provoking questions offered by our stakeholders.

QUESTION

Do commuters who use transit differ in socio-demographic characteristics from all-purpose transit riders?

INTRODUCTION

The RTS collected travel behavior information which can shed light on transit market share through the demographic lens of transit riders who use transit for commuting to work (commute) or use transit for all trip purposes (all-purpose). This question also has important equity implications, as commute transit riders are more likely to have a private vehicle available and/or have travel options other than transit, while all-purpose transit riders are more likely to rely on transit to perform all types of daily trips. To evaluate this question, we selected two groups of transit riders: (1) those who commute on transit but do not use transit for all trips and (2) those who use transit for all travel purposes. Then we summarized demographic characteristics including age, gender, and income level. We also considered the following household characteristics of these two groups of transit riders: home ownership, vehicle availability, and presence of children in the household.

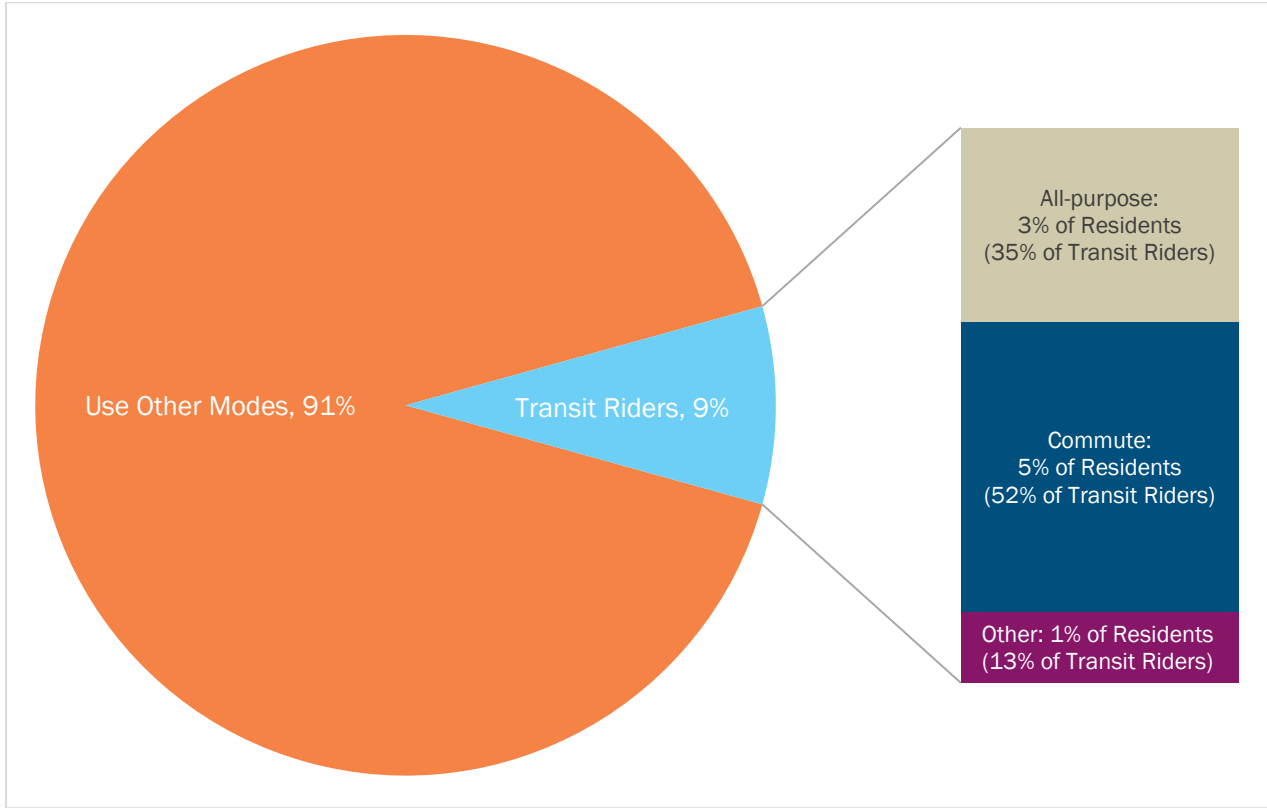
APPROACH

For this question, we compared the socio-demographic characteristics of commute and all-purpose transit riders in the TPB Planning Region, including age, gender, household income, home ownership, vehicle availability, and presence of children. Transit riders are defined as any person who travels by rail (commuter rail, subway, or light rail) or bus (express commuter bus, local bus, or paratransit). All-purpose transit riders take transit for all trips: to go to work, to do errands, or conduct other activities. Commute transit riders are defined as persons whose daily trips include a transit trip that originates or ends at work or a work-related activity but do not exclusively use transit for all trips.

Detailed breakdowns of each part of this question are shown in the tables and charts below, with key takeaways for each. Highlighting is used in certain tables for emphasis. In advance of preparing these responses, the tabulations were reviewed for accuracy and robustness. To create these tables for the TPB Planning Region, the survey results were expanded using weights that considered the probability of selection of individual households as well as adjustments for household size, workplace location, and Metrorail ridership.

ANALYSIS AND KEY FINDINGS

A. Share of the region’s residents who use transit for (1) all trip purposes (All-purpose), (2) to commute but do not exclusively use transit for all other trips (Commute), and (3) for other trip purposes but do not exclusively use transit for all other trips (Other).

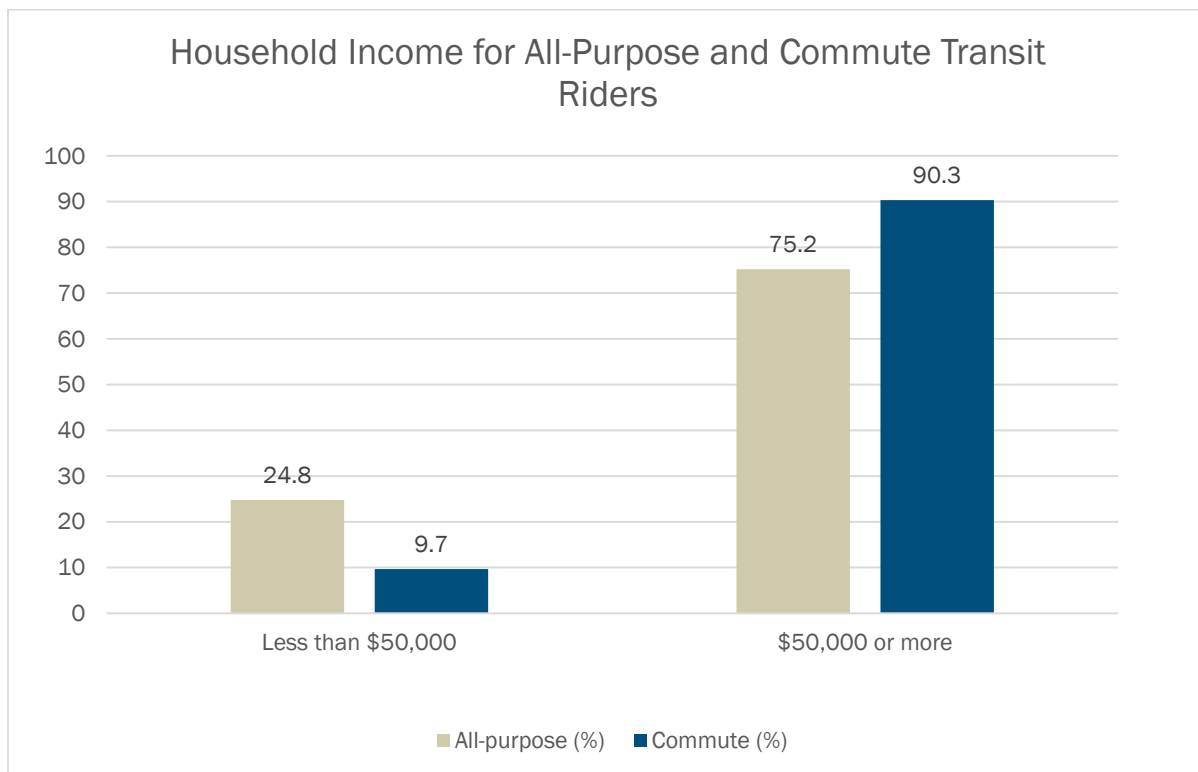


B. Socio-demographic characteristics of commute transit riders versus all-purpose transit riders.

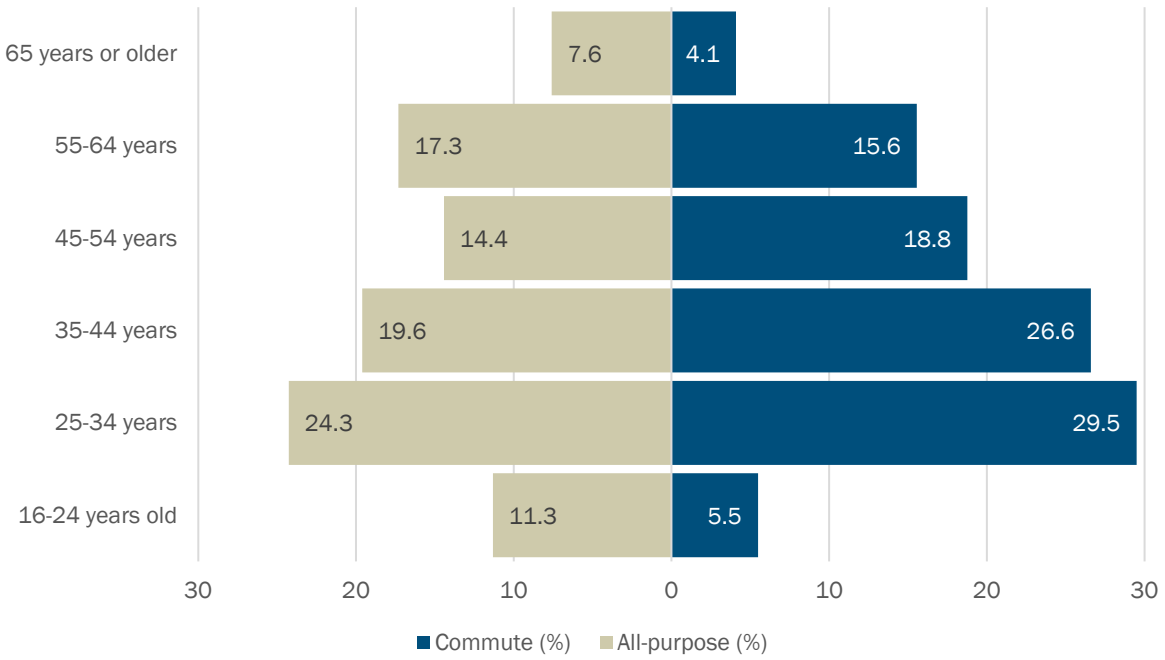
	All-purpose (%)	Commute (%)
Under 16 years old	5.5	-
16-24 years old	11.3	5.5
25-34 years	24.3	29.5
35-44 years	19.6	26.6
45-54 years	14.4	18.8
55-64 years	17.3	15.6
65 years or older	7.6	4.1

	All-purpose (%)	Commute (%)
Female	48.6	50.5
Male	51.4	49.5
Household Income, less than \$50,000	24.8	9.7
Household Income, \$50,000 or more	75.2	90.3
Own/Buying (paying mortgage)	47.7	59.1
Rent	50.6	39.4
0 (no vehicles)	31.4	18.5
1 vehicle	37.0	42.9
2 vehicles	24.1	29.5
3 or more vehicles	7.5	9.2
No children	60.9	68.3
One or more children	39.1	31.7

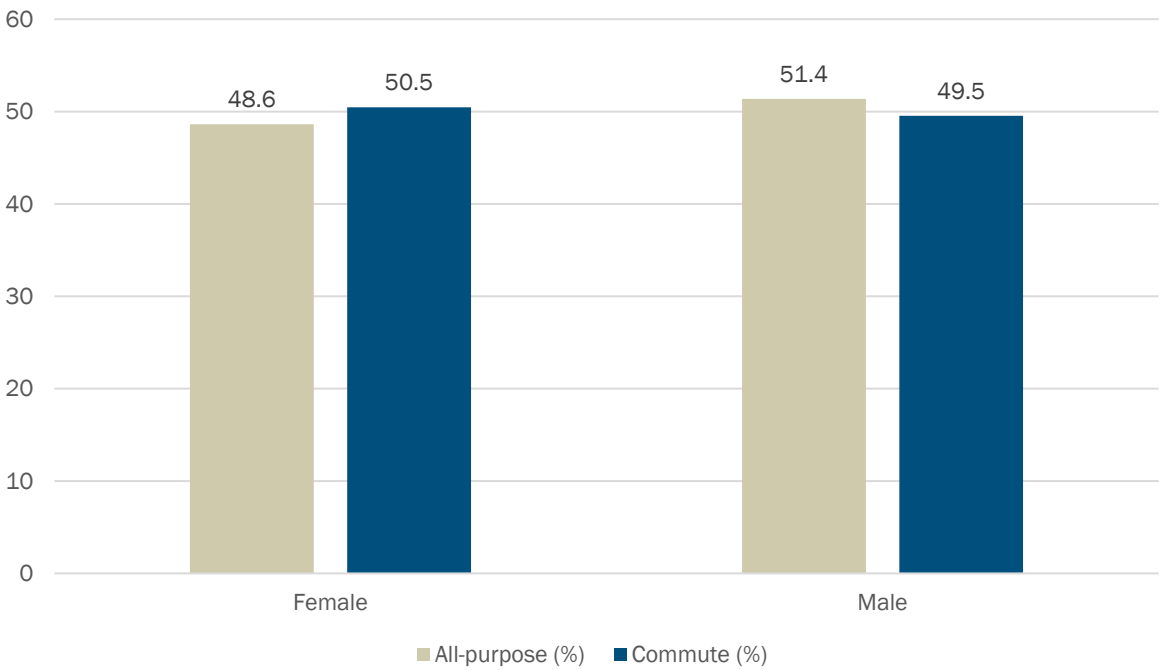
Note: Own/Buying (paying mortgage) and rent do not sum to 100 because housing for some respondents was provided by job or military, provided by family, relative, or friend without payment of rent, or some other arrangement.



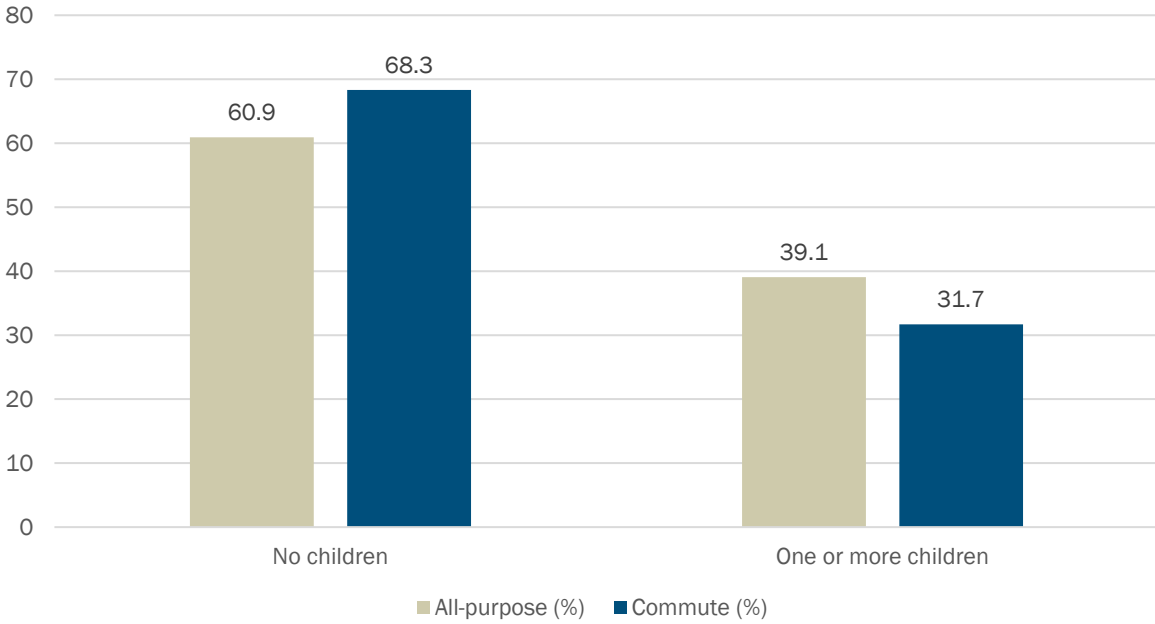
Age Group for All-Purpose and Commute Transit Riders



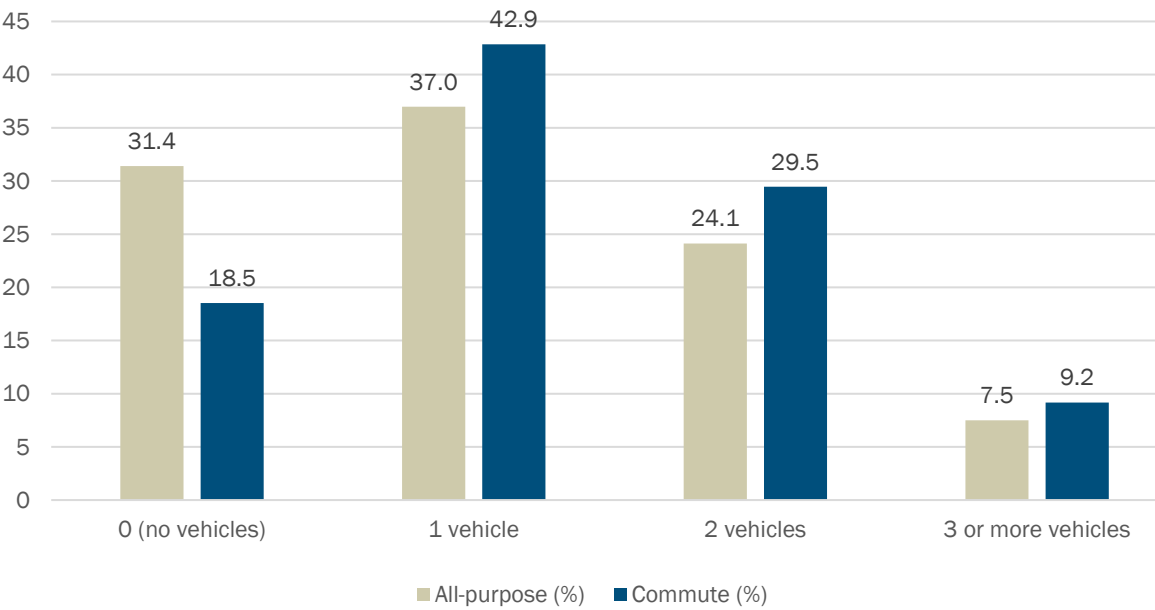
Gender for All-Purpose and Commute Transit Riders

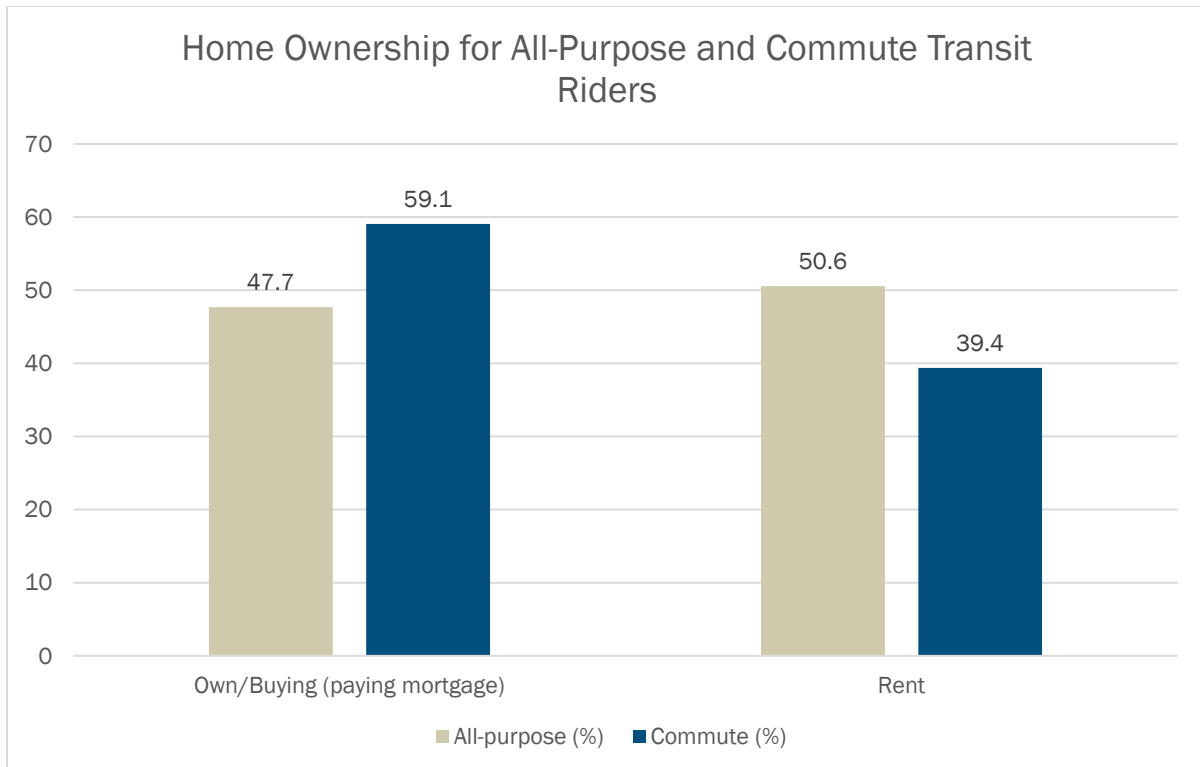


Presence of Children for All-Purpose and Commute Transit Riders



Vehicle Availability for All-Purpose and Commute Transit Riders





Note: Own/Buying (paying mortgage) and rent do not sum to 100 because for some respondents, housing was provided by job or military, provided by family, relative, or friend without payment of rent, or some other arrangement.

Key findings for socio-demographic characteristics of commute transit riders versus all-purpose transit riders:

All-Purpose and Commute Transit-Riders:

- Among the 9 percent of the region's population ride transit, slightly over a third ride rely on transit for all trip purposes, slightly over half ride transit to commute, and the rest ride transit for other trip purposes.

Household Income:

- Higher share of commute riders from households earning \$50,000 or more
- Higher share of all-purpose riders from households earning less than \$50,000

Age:

- Higher share of commute riders are prime working age (25-34 years, 35-44 years, and 45-54 years)
- Higher share of all-purpose riders are teens/young adults (16-24 years old) and older adults (55-64 years old, and 65 years or older)

Gender:

- Slightly higher share of commute transit riders are women
- Slightly higher share of all-purpose transit riders are men

Presence of Children:

- Much higher share of transit riders (both all-purpose and commute) who do not have children
- Higher share of commute transit riders than all-purpose riders who do not have children
- Slightly higher share of all-purpose transit riders than commute riders who have children

Vehicle Available:

- Much higher share of all-purpose transit riders do not have a vehicle
- Higher share of commute transit riders have at least one vehicle

Home Ownership:

- Higher share of all-purpose transit riders are renters
- Higher share of commute transit riders are homeowners (paying mortgage)

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Based on these key findings, there is a higher share of commute transit riders than all-purpose transit riders in the TPB Planning Region. However, the share of all-purpose transit riders with household income less than \$50,000 is twice the rate found for commute transit riders. This suggests that lower income households are more dependent on transit services to conduct their daily activities. We also found that a higher proportion of commute transit riders are between 25 and 54 years old, which corresponds with prime working age. Among those who use transit for all trips, we observed a higher share of teens/young adults (16-24 years old) and older adults (especially 65 years or older). However, the survey results did not show a significant difference by gender for all-purpose and commute transit riders.

In terms of other household characteristics, we found persons who use transit for all trips are more likely to live in households with no vehicles available and to rent their homes. Finally, transit usage was higher (for both all-purpose and commute trips) for households without children.

These findings have significant equity implications and reaffirm previous research that lower-income groups are more reliant on transit for access to jobs and other destination opportunities. It also underscores the importance of providing adequate transit services to young persons and older adults who are most dependent on transit and are most impacted by fare increases. Households without a vehicle are more likely to use transit to conduct a variety of activities. Therefore, ensuring equitable transit access to all socio-demographic groups is of critical importance to promoting transportation equity in the region.