



User Overview Technical Memo

Mobility 4 All Plan

Regional Transit Authority of Southeast Michigan

April 2025



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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
CHSTP	Coordinated Public Human Services Transportation Plan
M4A	Mobility for All Plan, the Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan for the Region
NEMT	Non-Emergency Medical Transportation
RTA	Regional Transit Authority of Southeastern Michigan
TNC	Transportation Network Company, such as Uber or Lyft

1. Introduction

The Regional Transit Authority of Southeast Michigan (RTA) is updating its Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan (CHSTP), calling it the Mobility 4 All (M4A) Plan. The M4A Plan focuses on how well existing public transit and human service transportation options match the needs of the region's residents, particularly the Plan's target populations of older adults, people with disabilities, and individuals with limited incomes.¹ This technical memorandum, the third in a series, explores the travel patterns across the RTA Region of Macomb, Oakland, Washtenaw, and Wayne Counties, with a particular focus on how and why seniors persons with disabilities and/or limited income² travel across the region. Using data collected specifically for the M4A Plan, this memorandum also explores the people who use transit services and how ridership has changed in the last few years, since 2019 through 2024. Finally, gaps in services and offerings are documented, providing potential prospective areas of focus for the full M4A Plan.

1.1 RTA Regional Transit Community Survey

In addition to updating the M4A Plan, RTA is also conducting a broader Regional Transit Community Survey of the RTA Region. Rather than capture the travel patterns and needs of only populations who depend upon human service agencies, this survey is meant to portray characteristics of the general population. The Regional Transit Community Survey project is being conducted concurrently to the M4A Plan update, so the results from the survey are not included in this memo. This memo utilizes publicly available data on travel patterns and the Rider Questionnaire conducted as part of the M4A Plan update, which is detailed in Section 3.

2. Travel Patterns

Examining travel patterns is key to gaining insight into people's travel behavior. The information presented in this section is pulled from Replica,³ which models trip activity data, and represents travel patterns within the four counties of the RTA Region for both a typical weekday and a typical weekend in the Spring of 2024. Data was filtered to include trips of all modes⁴ both originating and terminating in one of the four counties, and to exclude trips with the following coded trip purposes: "home", "lodging", "stage", and "region departure." The trip purpose filter allows for a focus on the reasons people travel beyond returning to their home or lodging, as the assumption is people will eventually always travel home. Additionally, the filter leaves out trips made by those passing through the region or traveling to or

¹ The M4A plan uses the Environmental Justice Screening and Mapping Tool (EJ Screen)'s definition of low income, which "...[is defined as a household whose income is less than or equal to twice the poverty level... \$29,950 is the poverty threshold defined by the U.S. Census Bureau for 2022." Environmental Justice (EJ) refers to the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people, regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, in the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. It is essential for the M4A Plan to ensure that transportation barriers faced by marginalized communities are identified and addressed, promoting equitable access to transportation services.

² **Replica, the data source for this portion of the analysis, does not offer the ability to filter trip taker demographics by people with disabilities, therefore trip purpose and mode share were not assessed for this population subgroup.**

³ Replica bases estimates on a composite of data sources, including but not limited to road traffic, mobile location and financial transaction data.

⁴ Replica does not currently provide data specific to demand response public transportation; the "public transit" mode captures those trips that use sub-modes such as buses, light rail, and subway.

from a port-of-exit. Thus, the data spotlights all travel conducted exclusively within the RTA region and for any purposes except returning to home, passing through, or departing the region.

The following sections present travel patterns across the RTA Region, with a particular focus on Trip Purpose and Mode Share. Table 1 and Table 2 define the terms used in the graphics throughout this memorandum.

Table 1. Replica Trip Purpose Definitions

Trip Purpose Type	Definition
Shop	Trips to stores and other commercial centers (e.g. gas stations, pharmacies, etc.)
Work	Trips where the destination is the person's workplace
Eat	Trips to restaurants
Social	Trips for social activities to someone else's home
School	Trips to schools such as community colleges and universities
Errands/ Maintenance	Trips to locations for the purpose of conducting errands (e.g. banks, hospitals/ medical/ dental/ nursing care facilities, religious organizations, etc.)
Recreation	Trips to recreational destinations (e.g. parks, swimming pools, gyms, museums, etc.)
Commercial	Trips by medium and heavy trucks for deliveries and other commercial purposes
Other	Trips not included in any of the above categories

Source: Replica 2024 Methodology Summary

Table 2. Replica Mode Share Definitions

Mode Share Type	Definition
Personal vehicle	Trips made by drivers or passengers in private automobiles, including rental cars
Active Transportation	Trips made by people walking or biking, not including scooter trips
Commercial	Trips made by medium (14,000 – 26,000 lbs.) and heavy (>26,000 lbs.) trucks
Other	Trips made in which the mode was not detected
Fixed Route Public Transit	Trips that primarily use public transit (i.e. buses, light rail, ferries, and subways), not including paratransit or private shuttle trips
On-Demand Auto	Trips made by passengers in a Taxi or using a TNC such as Uber or Lyft

Source: Replica 2024 Methodology Summary

2.1 Origin and Destination Trips by County

A significant majority (on average 85%) of all trips on both weekdays and weekends within the RTA Region are ones that both begin and end within a single county, also referred to as local trips. Wayne County has the greatest proportion of local trips with 35% of all trips taken in the RTA Region on both weekdays and weekends originating and terminating within Wayne County. Oakland County claims the second highest proportion of local trips, with 26% of all weekday and weekend trips in the RTA Region beginning and terminating within Oakland County. Trips originating and terminating in Macomb County represent on average 16% on weekdays and 17% on weekends of all trips taken within the RTA Region. Meanwhile 8% of all trips originate and terminate in Washtenaw County on all days of the week.

Among trips that cross county boundaries within the RTA region (on average 15%), ones that go between Oakland County and Wayne County are the most common (averaging 6% across all days of the week) followed by ones between Oakland County and Macomb County (4% on both weekdays and weekends). The least common regional trips are ones that occur between Macomb County and Washtenaw County (0.1% of all trips taken in the RTA Region on both weekdays and weekends). Figure 1 provides an overview of these travel flows in the RTA region. The figure represents the travel flows on weekdays. The only difference in weekend travel flows is that 17% of all trips are local within Macomb County.

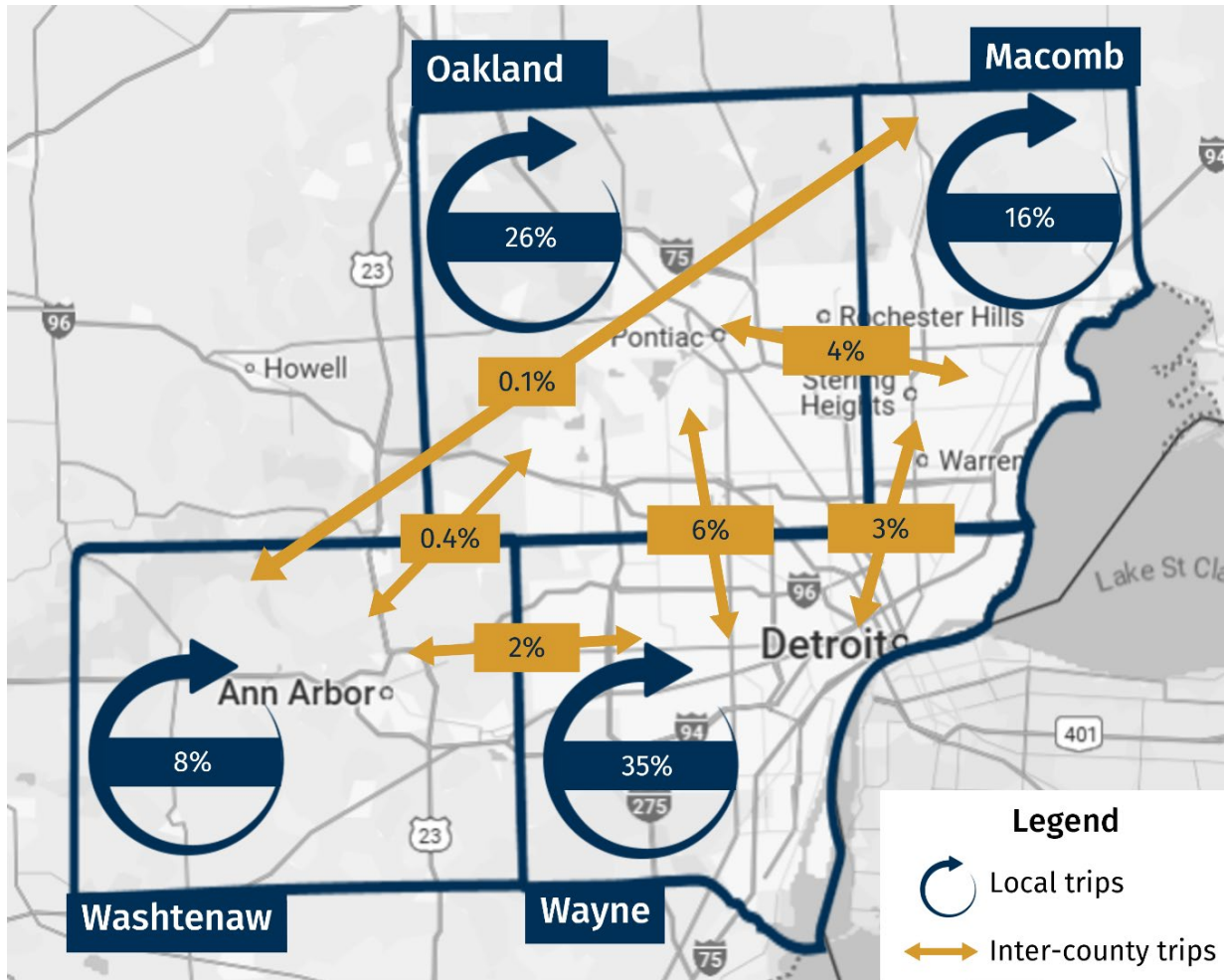


Figure 1. Percentage of Weekday Local and Inter-County Trips in the RTA Region by County

Source: Replica Spring 2024 weekday dataset.

2.2 Trip Purpose Across All Travel Modes

The overall reason for travel in the RTA Region differs between weekday and weekend trips (Figure 2 and Figure 3). The most common trip purpose on weekdays is shopping, followed by trips to work, both of which combined make up just under half of all trips. Shopping trips are also the most common on weekends, although these trips make up a greater proportion of all weekend trips (over a third). Eating and social trips are the second and third most common weekend trips, and together represent another third of all weekend trips, as well as a quarter of weekday trips.

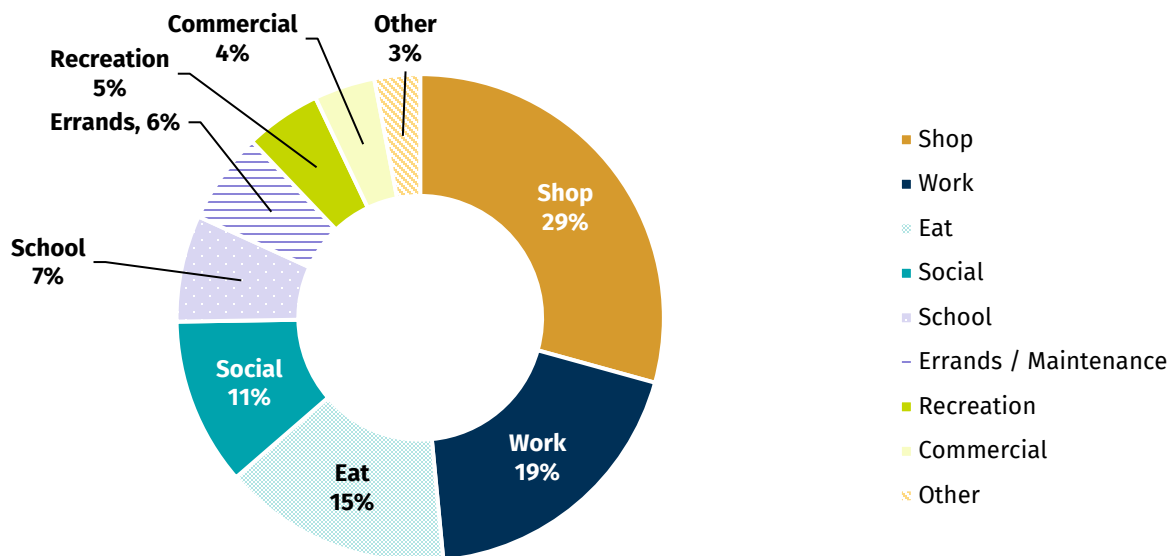


Figure 2. RTA Regional Travel - Weekday Trip Purpose

Source: Replica Spring 2024 weekday dataset.

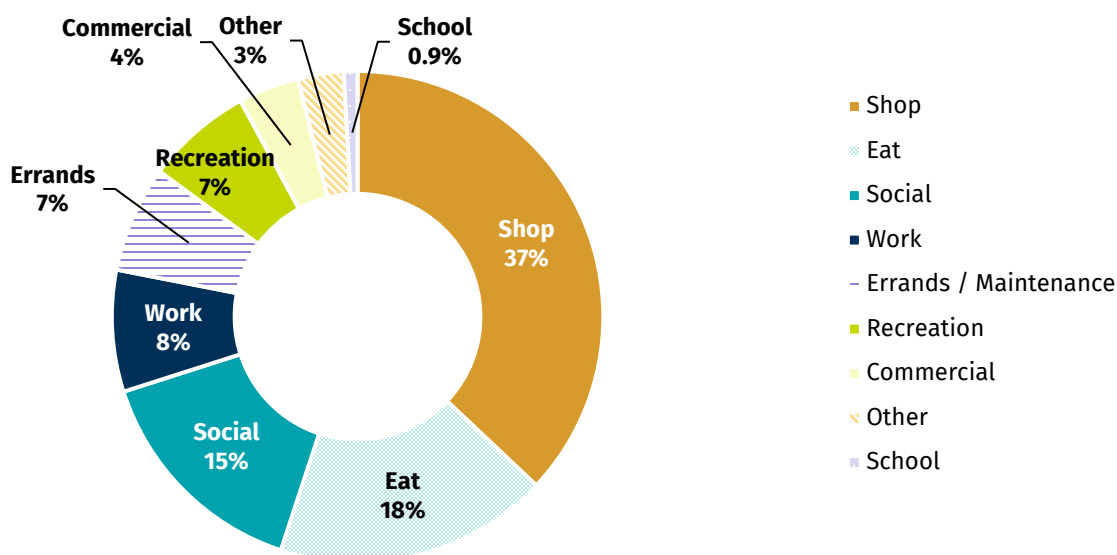


Figure 3. RTA Regional Travel - Weekend Trip Purpose

Source: Replica Spring 2024 weekend dataset.

2.2.1 Trip Purpose for Older Adults

For older adults traveling in the RTA Region,⁵ the most common trip purposes on both weekdays and weekends are shopping and eating trips. Trips to work are the third most common trips on weekdays,

⁵ Older adults, one of the target populations for the M4A Plan, is defined as people over the age of 60.

while the third most common trip purpose on weekends is social. Medical-related trips (i.e. medical appointments, hospital trips, trips to nursing care facilities, etc.) fall under the errands/ maintenance trip purpose category. The errands/maintenance trips across all travel modes for older adults represent on average about 7% across all days of the week, the same for recreational trips (Figure 4 and Figure 5).

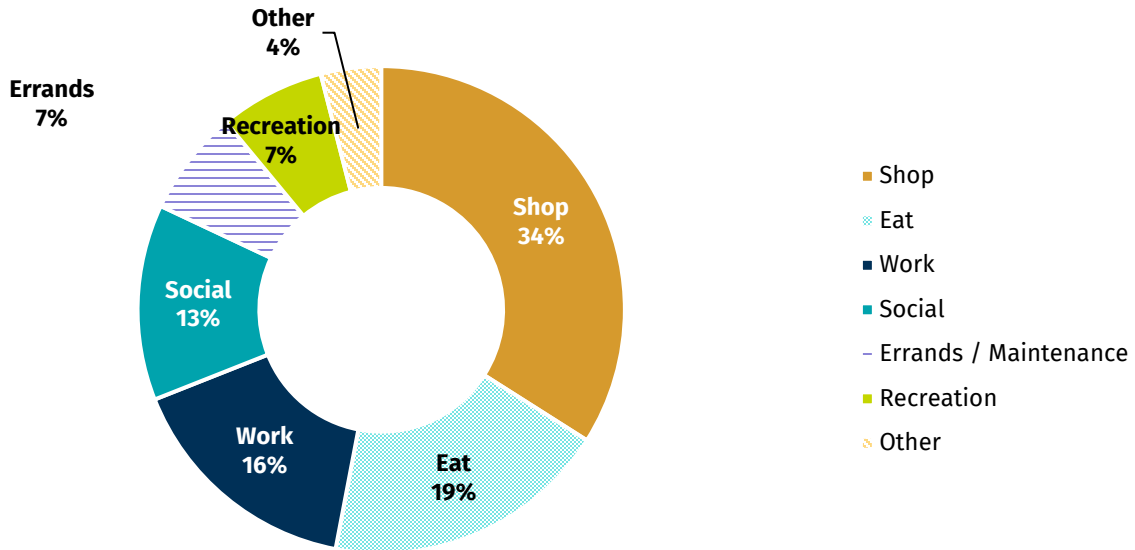


Figure 4. RTA Regional Travel Trip Purpose for Older Adults - Weekdays

Source: Replica Spring 2024 weekday dataset.

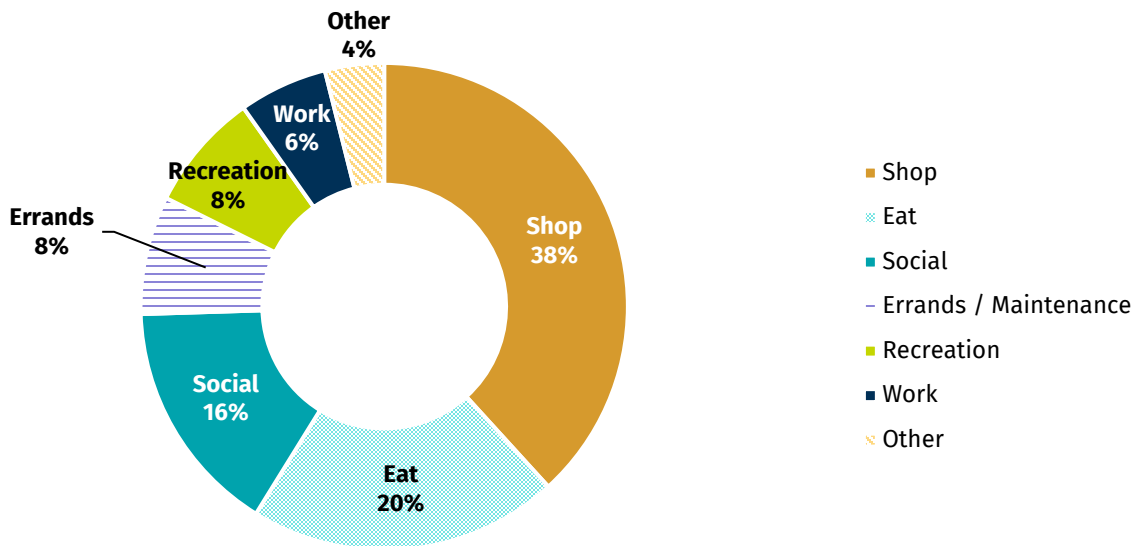


Figure 5. RTA Regional Travel Trip Purpose for Older Adults - Weekends

Source: Replica Spring 2024 weekend dataset.

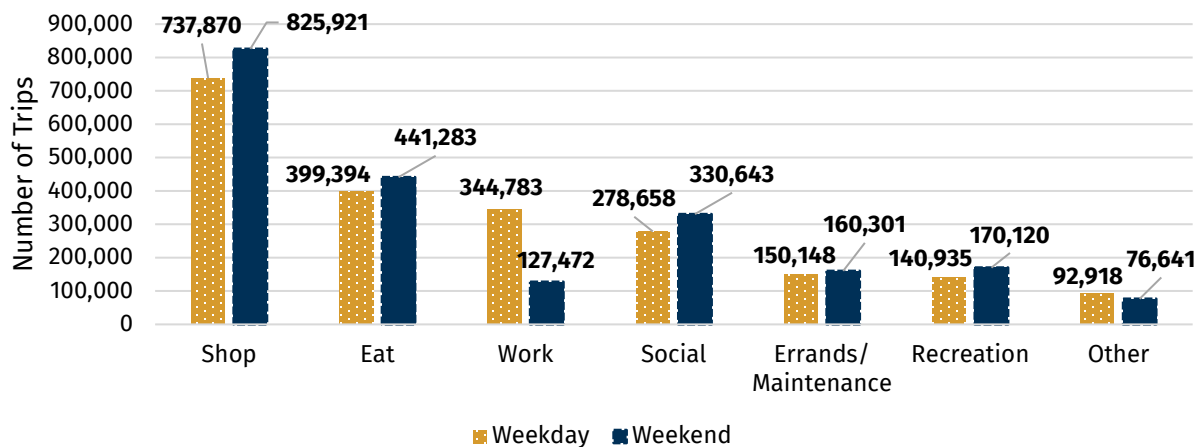
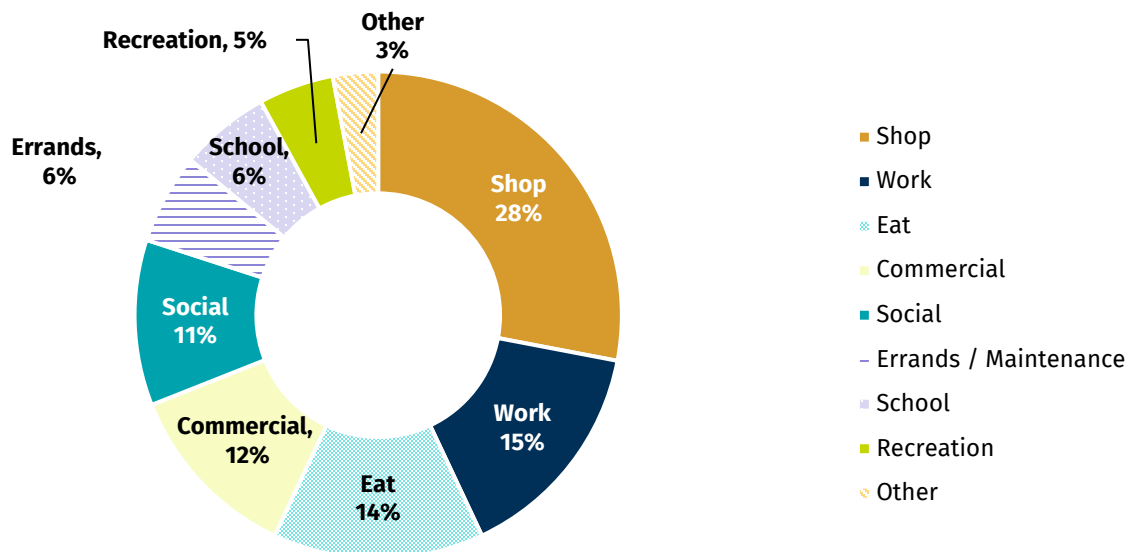


Figure 6. Estimated Number of Trips by Trip Purpose for Older Adults – Weekdays vs. Weekends

Source: Replica Spring 2024 weekday and weekend datasets.

2.2.2 Trip Purpose for Individuals with Limited Income

For individuals with limited income traveling in the RTA region,⁶ the most common trip purpose across all travel modes on both weekdays and weekends is shopping. Trips to work are the second most common on weekdays, followed by eating trips, while the second most common trip purpose on weekends is eating, followed by social. Commercial trips, which encompass delivery and other commercial truck trips, are significantly more common among this population subgroup compared to the overall population and the older adults subgroup (Figure 7 and Figure 8). It is possible that this is driven by employment, as trip takers driving the medium- to heavy-duty commercial vehicles would largely be from the trucking industry.



⁶ Individuals with limited income, one of the target populations for the M4A Plan, is defined as someone whose household income is less than or equal to \$59,900.

Figure 7. RTA Regional Travel Trip Purpose for Individuals with Limited Income - Weekdays

Source: Replica Spring 2024 weekday dataset.

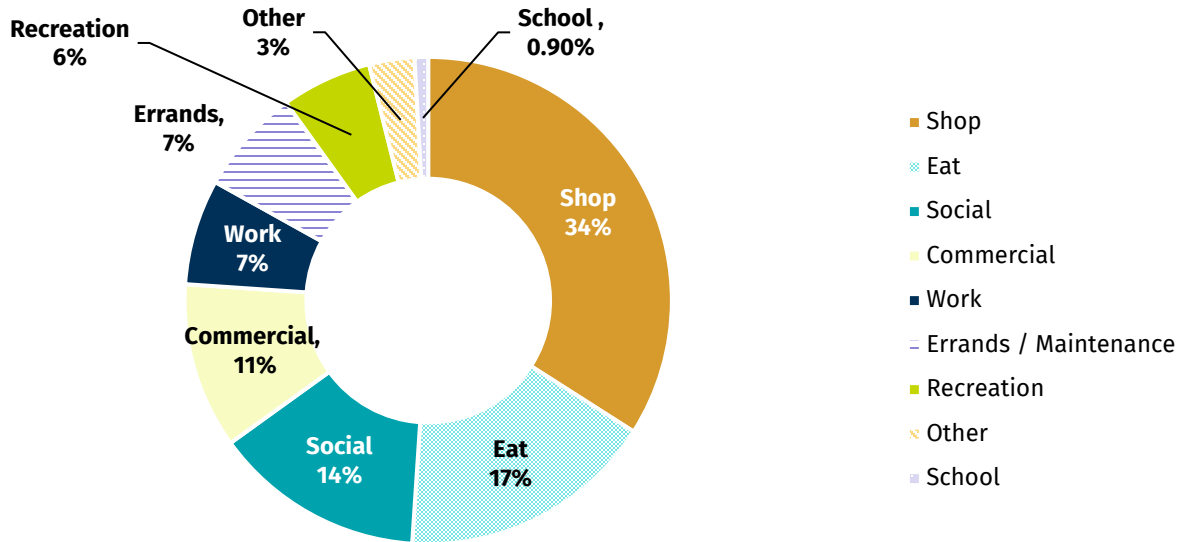


Figure 8. RTA Regional Travel Trip Purpose for Individuals with Limited Income - Weekends

Source: Replica Spring 2024 weekend dataset.

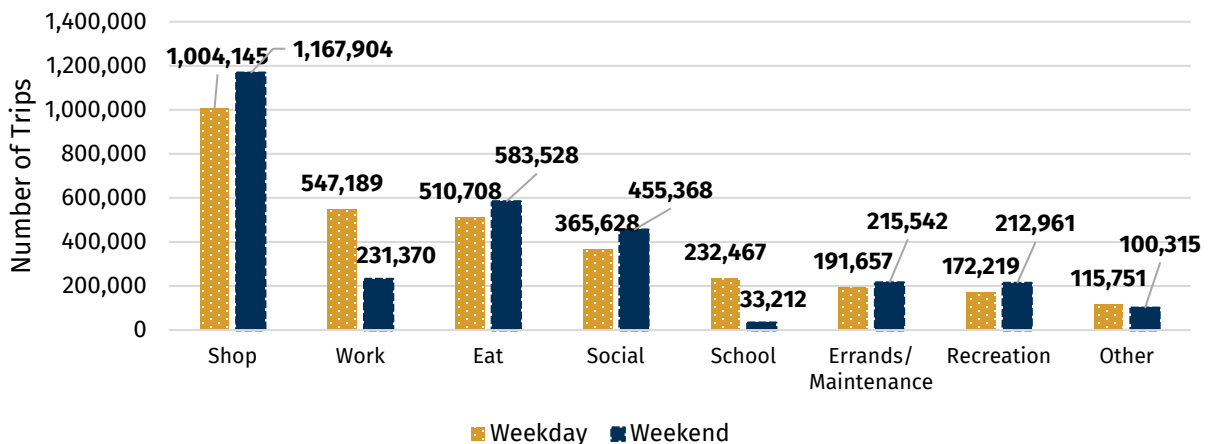


Figure 9. Estimated Number of Trips by Trip Purpose for Individuals with Limited Income – Weekdays vs. Weekends

Source: Replica Spring 2024 weekday and weekend datasets.

2.3 Mode Share

To better understand the distribution of travel methods used in the RTA Region, the mode shares⁷ for the general population, specific populations, and purposes for travel across the various modes are examined in the section below. The overall mode split for travel in the RTA Region⁸ across all populations remains consistent between weekday and weekend trips (Figure 10 and Figure 11). Travel via personal vehicle is the most common mode, representing over 81% of trips on both weekdays and weekends. The second most common mode, representing about 12% of trips on weekdays and weekends is active transportation, which includes walking and biking, as defined by Replica.

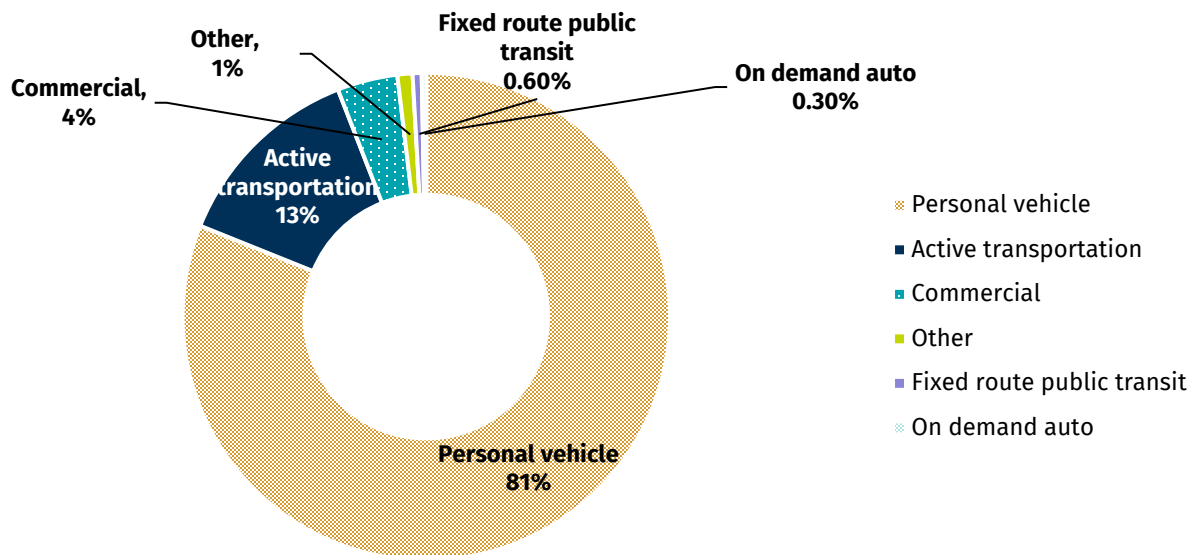


Figure 10. RTA Regional Travel - Weekday Trip Mode Split

Source: Replica Spring 2024 weekday dataset.

⁷ Replica does not offer the ability to filter data by demand response public transit trips, therefore the mode split assessment excludes demand response trips.

⁸ For consistency with the previous section, a trip purpose filter was applied to the mode split analysis to exclude the following trip purposes: “home”, “lodging”, “stage”, and “regional departure”

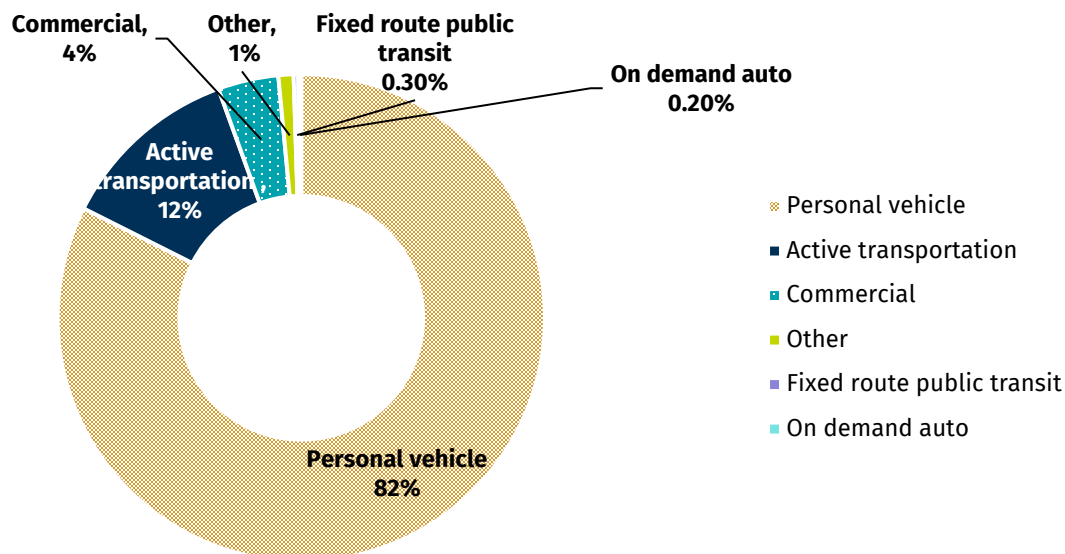


Figure 11. RTA Regional Travel - Weekend Trip Mode Split

Source: Replica Spring 2024 weekend dataset.

2.3.1 Mode Share for Older Adults and People with Limited Income

The popularity of different modes of travel for older adults and people with limited income are detailed below. Personal vehicles are the most common mode of travel for older adults traveling in the RTA region, making up about 5% more of the mode split than the total population for both weekday and weekend travel. Active transportation is the second most common travel mode among older adults for all days of the week, with a comparable frequency to the overall population (about 12%). Commercial trips do not figure into the mode split for older adults, which could be due to a lack of older adults holding jobs in delivery or commercial transportation (Figure 12 and Figure 13).

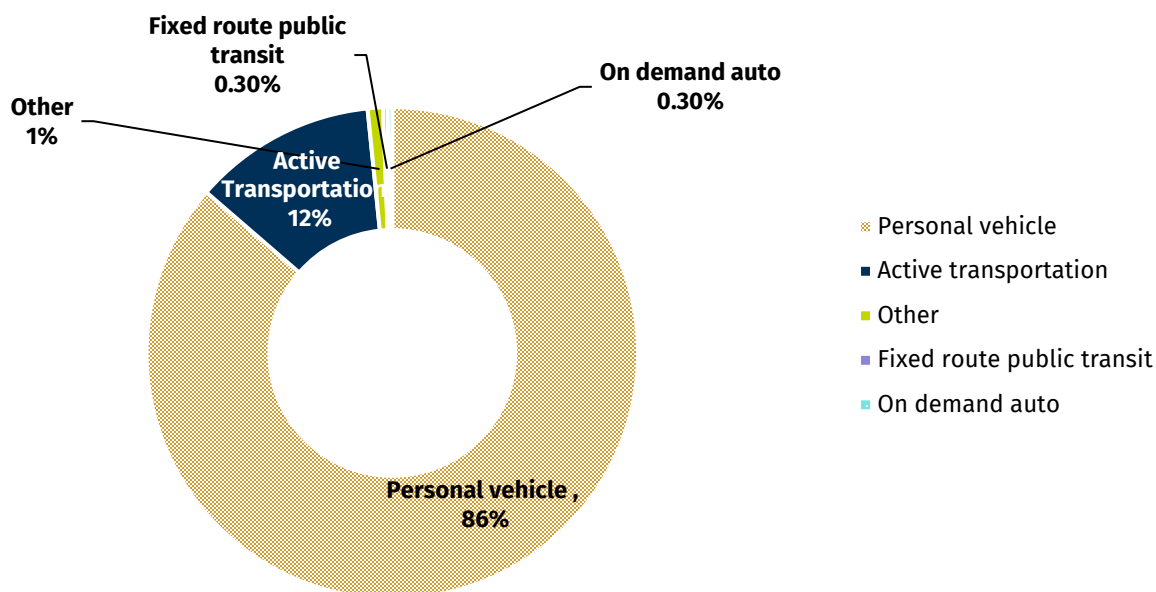


Figure 12. RTA Regional Travel Mode Split for Older Adults - Weekdays

Source: Replica Spring 2024 weekday dataset.

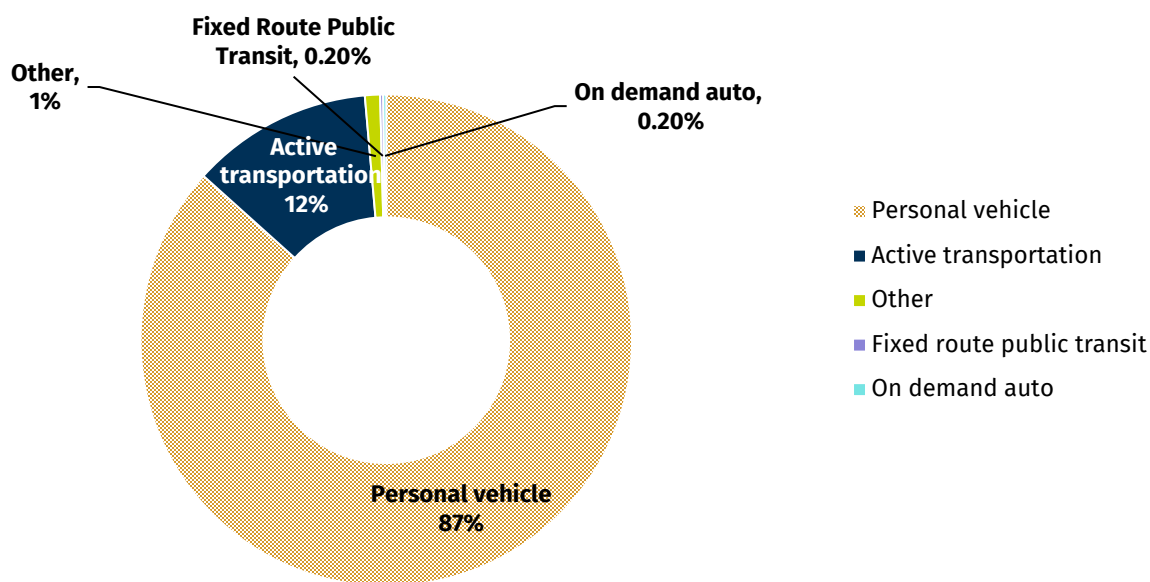


Figure 13. RTA Regional Travel Mode Split for Older Adults - Weekends

Source: Replica Spring 2024 weekend dataset.

Personal vehicles are the most common mode of travel for individuals with limited income traveling in the RTA Region. However, the proportion of personal vehicle usage is comparably lower for this population compared to both older adults and the overall population, making up less than three quarters of trips (72% on weekdays and 73% on weekends). Active transportation remains the second most common travel mode for all days of the week, with a slightly higher frequency compared to older

adults and the overall population (at about 14%). Commercial vehicle travel is significantly more common among this population subgroup compared to the overall population and the older adult subgroup, and the proportion remains consistent (around 11%) across all days of the week (Figure 14 and Figure 15).

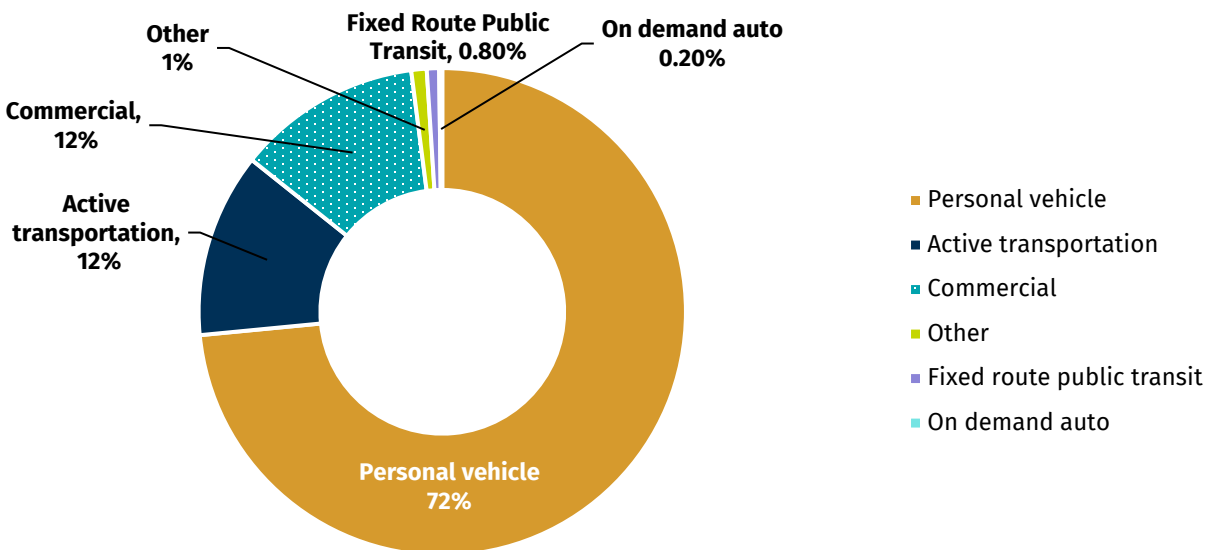


Figure 14. RTA Regional Travel Mode Split for Individuals with Limited Income - Weekdays

Source: Replica Spring 2024 weekday dataset.

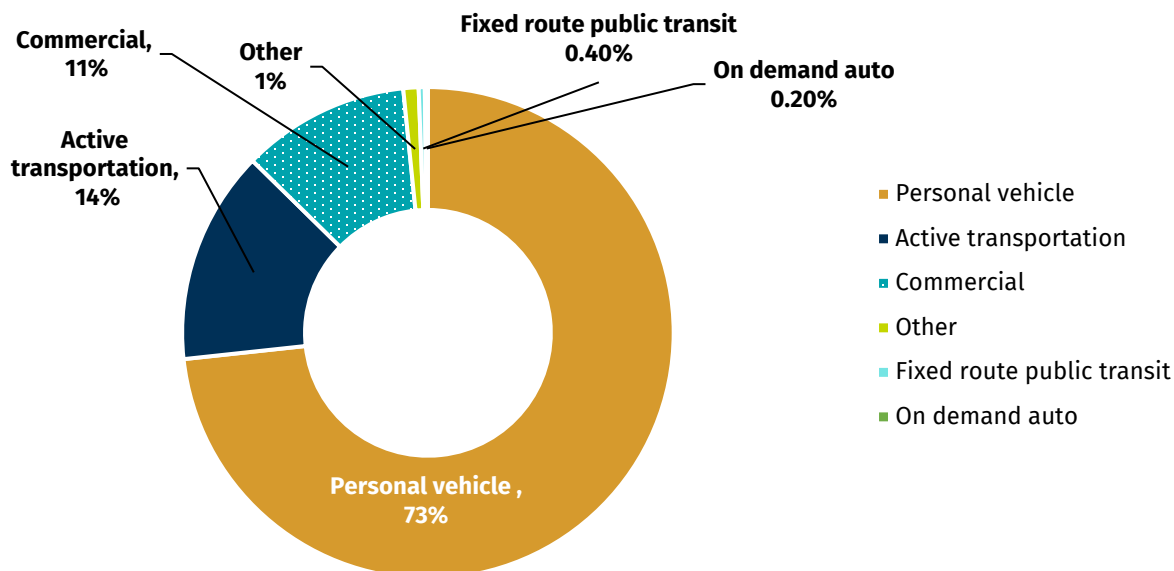


Figure 15. RTA Regional Travel Mode Split for Individuals with Limited Income - Weekends

Source: Replica Spring 2024 weekend dataset.

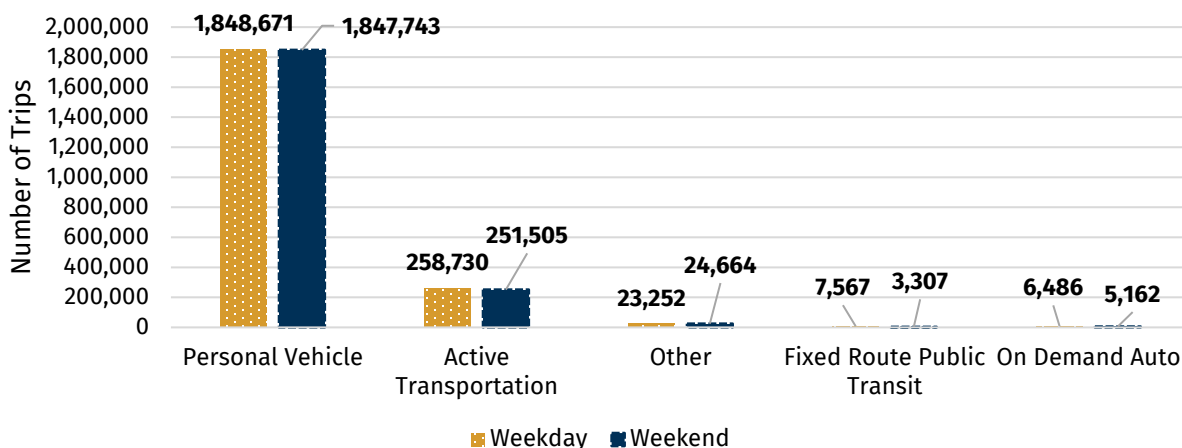


Figure 16. RTA Regional Travel Mode Split for Older Adults – Weekdays vs. Weekends

Source: Replica Spring 2024 weekday and weekend datasets.

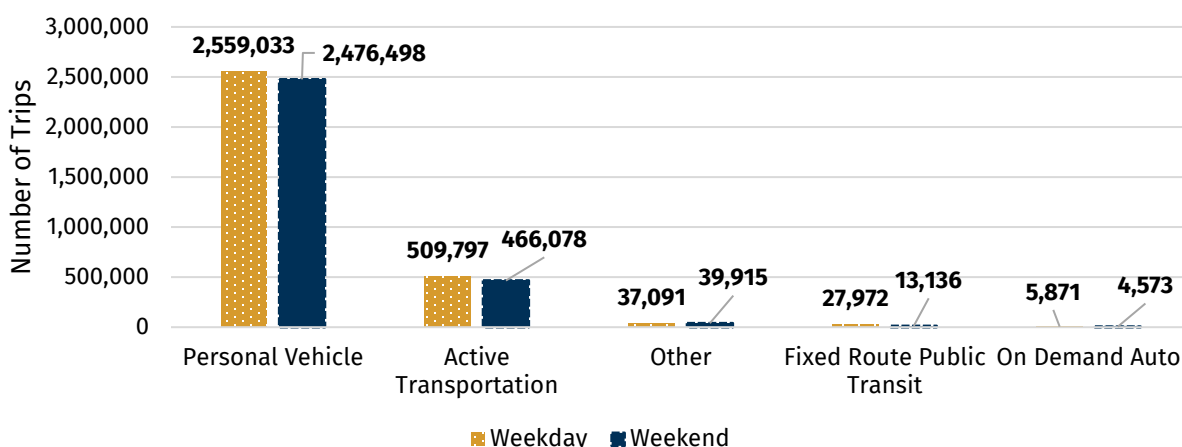


Figure 17. RTA Regional Travel Mode Split for Individuals with Limited Income – Weekdays vs. Weekends

Source: Replica Spring 2024 weekday and weekend datasets.

2.3.2 Trip Purpose by Mode Split

In considering destinations across types of travel, trip purposes were gathered for travel in personal vehicles, active transportation, fixed route public transit, and on-demand auto modes.⁹ For trips completed via personal vehicle, which is the most common mode of transportation in the RTA region, shopping trips and trips to work combined account for over 50% of personal vehicle trips on weekdays. On weekends, shopping and eating trips account for over 56% of personal vehicle trips. Trips to work and school are significantly reduced (by 18%) on weekends compared to weekdays from a combined 29% down to 11%, while social trips, recreation trips, and errands/maintenance trips are more common (up

⁹ For consistency with the previous sections, a trip purpose filter was applied to the trip purpose by mode split analysis to exclude the following trip purposes: “home”, “lodging”, “stage”, and “regional departure”

about 8%) on weekends than on weekdays, ranging from 30% to 22% all together (Figure 18 and Figure 19).

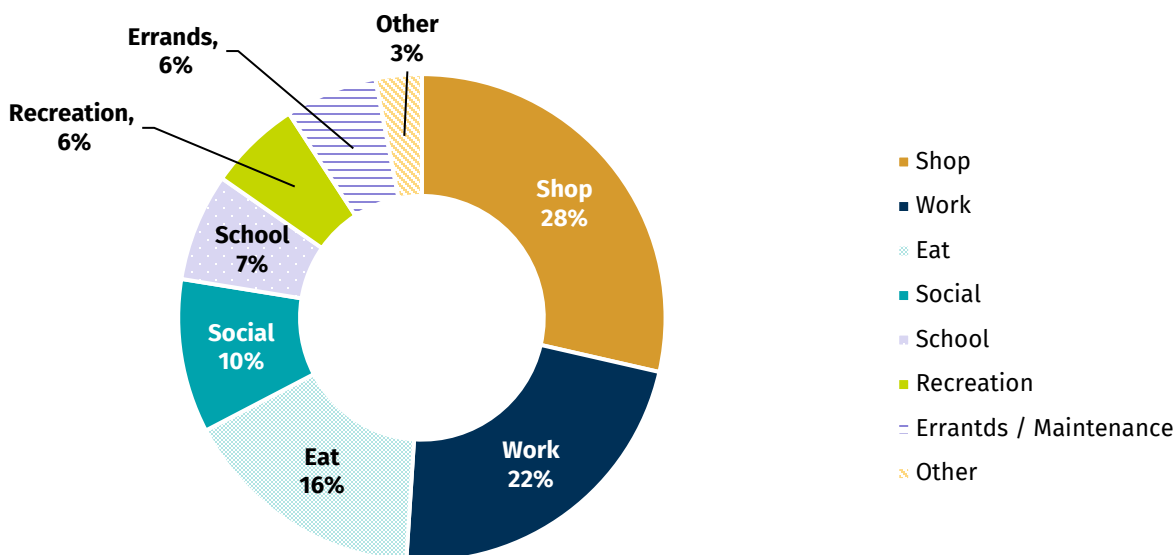


Figure 18. Trip Purpose for Trip Takers Using Personal Vehicles - Weekday

Source: Replica Spring 2024 weekday dataset.

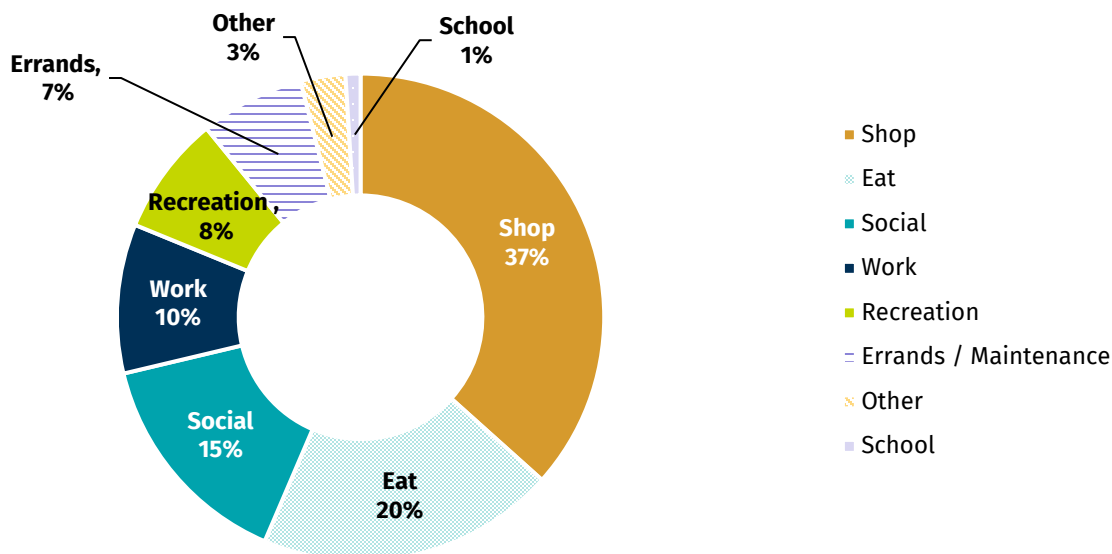


Figure 19. Trip Purpose for Trip Takers Using Personal Vehicles - Weekend

Source: Replica Spring 2024 weekend dataset.

For active transportation trips, shopping and social trips are most common (59% collectively on weekdays and 68% collectively on weekends), followed by eating trips and errands/maintenance trips (around 19% jointly for all days of the week). Weekday trips to school taken via active transportation occur at a similar rate to those taken via personal vehicles (8% and 7% respectively). Active

transportation trips both to work and school are reduced (roughly 10% decreasing from 14% down to 4%) on weekends compared to weekdays (Figure 20 and Figure 21).

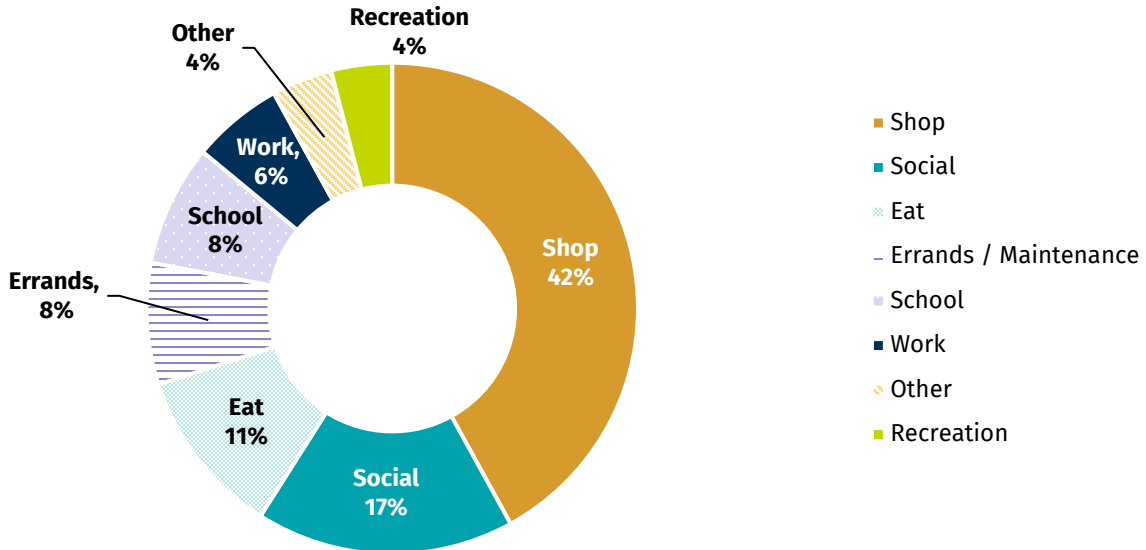


Figure 20. Trip Purpose for Active Transportation Users - Weekday

Source: Replica Spring 2024 weekend dataset.

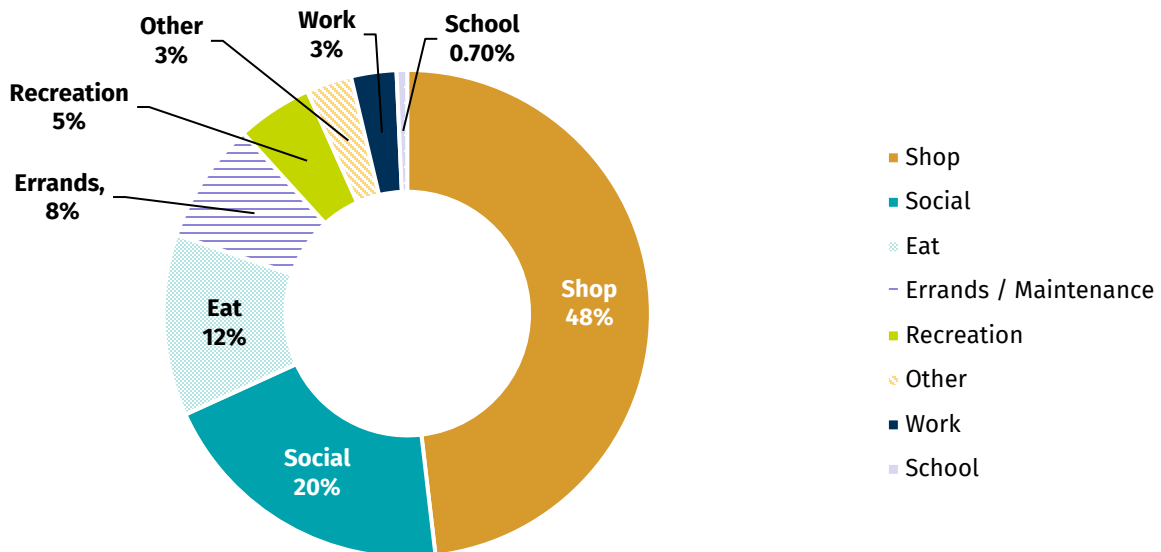


Figure 21. Trip Purpose for Active Transportation Users - Weekend

Source: Replica Spring 2024 weekday dataset.

The most common trip purpose for fixed route public transit trips¹⁰ is traveling to work, on both weekdays (49%) and weekends (47%). Shopping and eating trips are the second and third most common public transit trip purposes across all days of the week, with 3% more weekend trips (increasing to 33% up from weekdays at 30%) attributable to these trip purposes (Figure 22 and Figure 23).

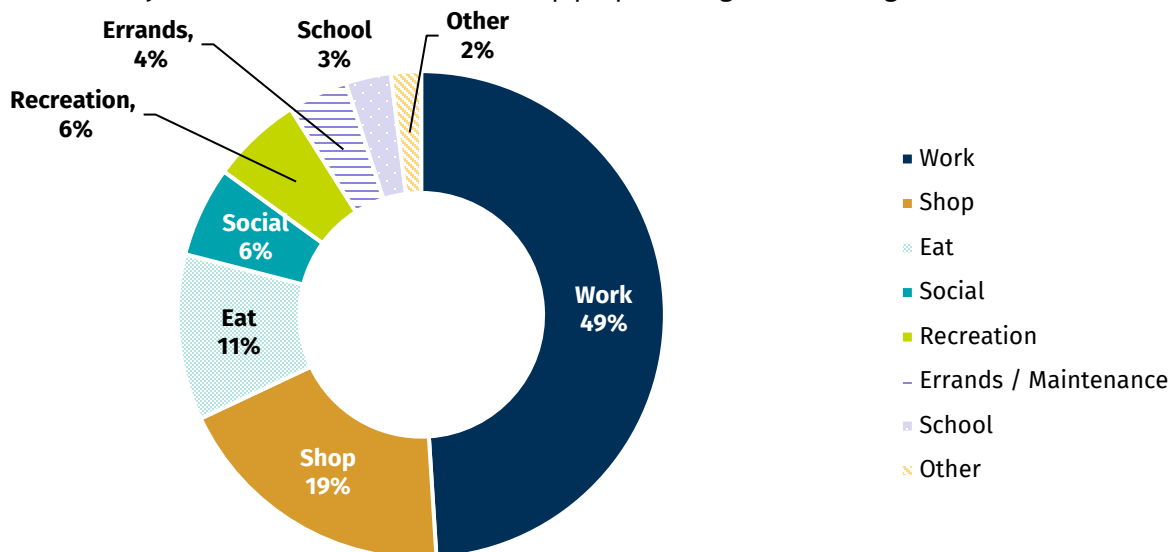


Figure 22. Trip Purpose for Fixed Route Public Transit Users - Weekday

Source: Replica Spring 2024 weekday dataset.

¹⁰ Fixed route only due to Replica not offering data on demand response public transit specifically.

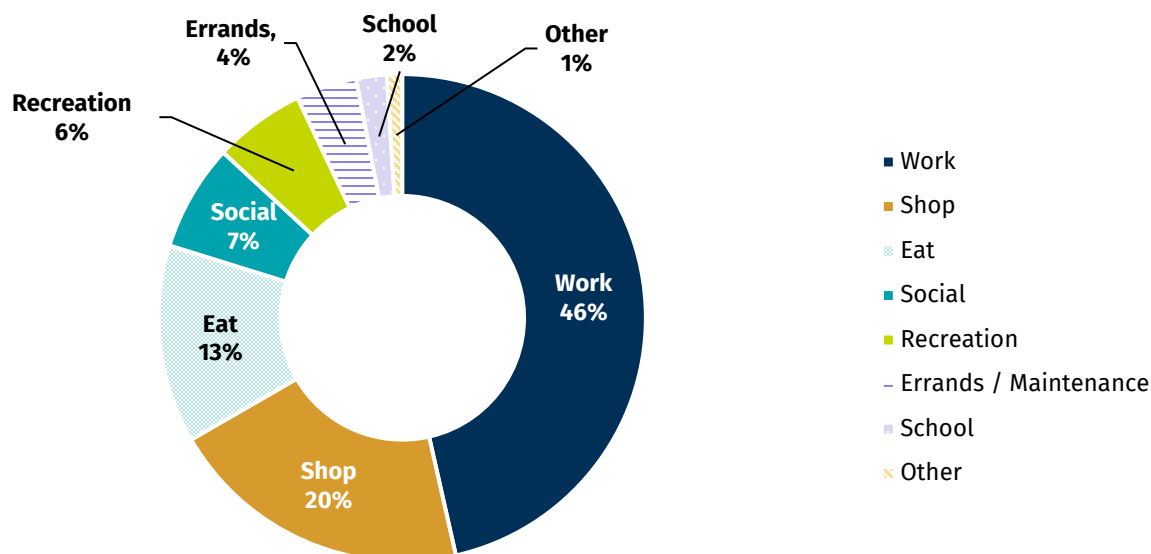


Figure 23. Trip Purpose for Fixed Route Public Transit Users - Weekend

Source: Replica Spring 2024 weekend dataset.

For on-demand auto trips,¹¹ shopping and eating trips are most common (48% collectively on weekdays and 55% collectively on weekends), followed by social trips. On weekends, trips taken for social purposes via on-demand auto increase compared to weekdays (over 3% increase) and recreation purposes (over 2% increase). Conversely, on-demand auto trips to work and trips for errands/maintenance purposes decrease on weekends — by almost 9% and 2% respectively (Figure 24 and Figure 25).

¹¹ On-demand auto refers to trips made by passengers in a taxi or using a Transportation Network Company (TNC) such as Uber or Lyft.

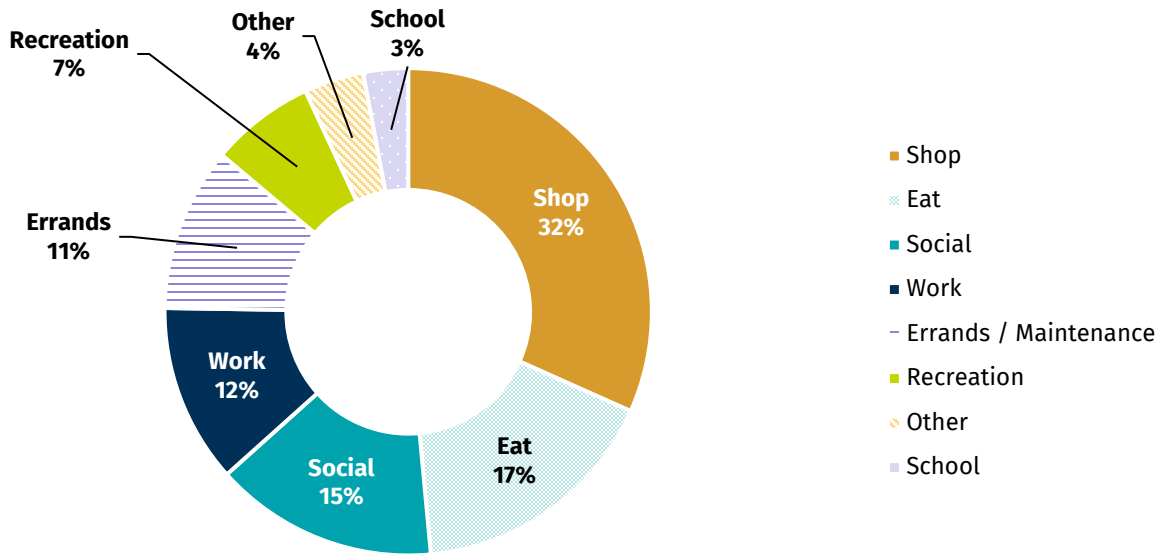


Figure 24. Trip Purpose for On-Demand Auto Users - Weekday

Source: Replica Spring 2024 weekday dataset.

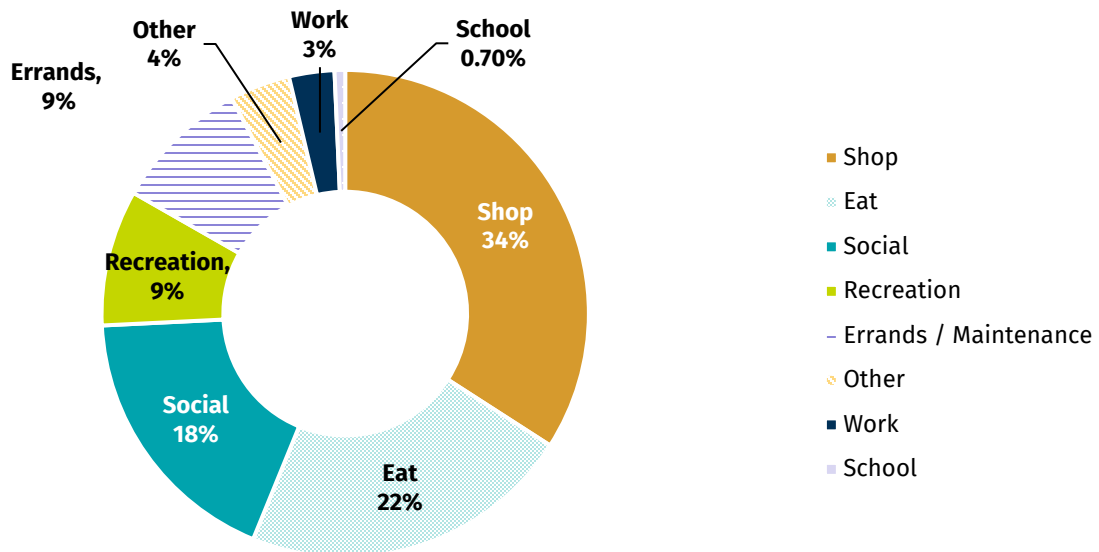


Figure 25. Trip Purpose for On-Demand Auto Users - Weekend

Source: Replica Spring 2024 weekend dataset.

3. Ridership

Several transportation service providers operate public transportation services in the RTA Region (see the Existing Conditions Technical Memorandum for more information). Because of this, and because results were not yet available for the concurrent RTA Regional Transit Community Survey with responses

reviewed and analyzed in March through May 2025, data specifically collected for the M4A Plan was used to evaluate demographics of people that indicated they use public transit. The data was collected from the M4A Rider Questionnaire, a survey open to the public from August 2024 to January 2025. The Questionnaire was primarily advertised to the M4A target populations (older adults, people with disabilities, and individuals with limited incomes). The Questionnaire asked respondents questions about their use of public transit (if any) and personal demographics. The Questionnaire was offered in English, Spanish, and Arabic on both paper and online formats, with an option to call or email for assistance completing the questionnaire. 651 total responses were collected, of which 250 (or 38%) indicated that the respondent currently uses some form of public transit (fixed route bus or rail services, ADA paratransit services, specialized demand response services, and/or agency transportation).

The following section and Questionnaire results are meant to provide insight into profiles of public transit users that were reached during M4A engagement efforts. They are not meant to be representative of all public transit users in the RTA Region.

3.1 Racial Demographics

A varied range of individuals call the RTA Region their home (Figure 26). The region's population is predominantly White (62%). Individuals identifying as Black or African American (23%), Asian American (6%), or Hispanic or Latino (5%) make up the majority of the remaining population, followed by those who identify with a combination of two or more races (4%) or as some other race alone (0.4%). Combined, the American Indian and Alaskan Native and Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander populations represent less than 1% of the service area population.

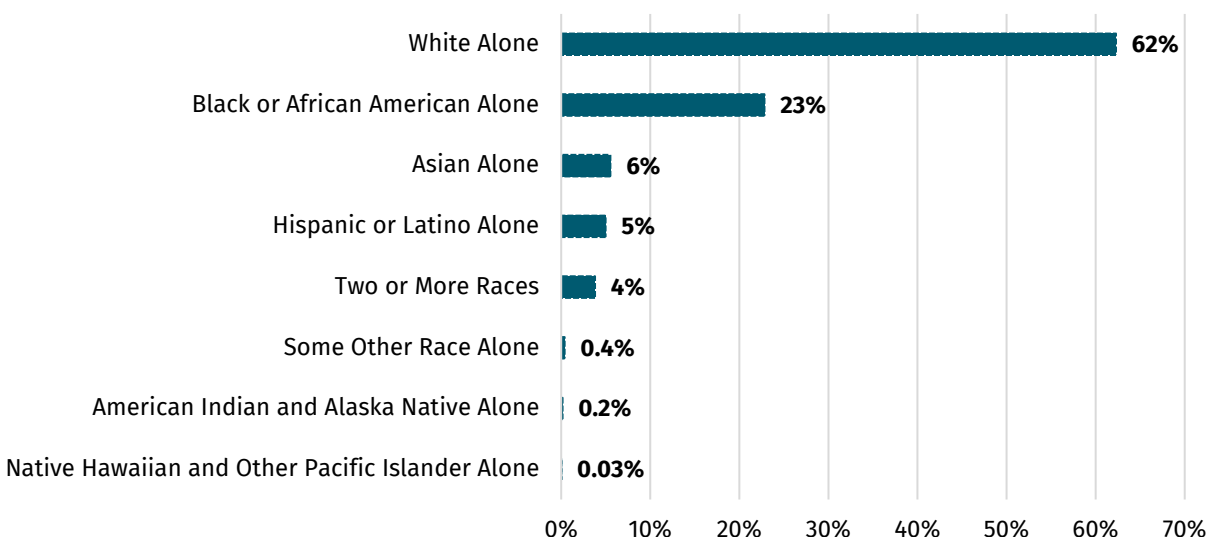


Figure 26. Racial and Ethnic Composition of the RTA Region

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates. Table DP05: ACA Demographic and Housing Estimates.

3.2 Rider Profiles

Rider profiles were assessed based on the M4A Rider Questionnaire, with data filtered to respondents who reported that they use the available public transit services. To facilitate the comparison of rider-specific demographics to the regional population demographics analyzed in the Existing Conditions

Technical Memorandum, the survey-based rider profile data looks at rider race, age, income, and disability or impairment status.

The greatest proportion of public transit users are white or Caucasian (46%), followed by Black or African American (32%). The least prevalent race attributable to public transit riders is Middle Eastern or North African (Figure 27).

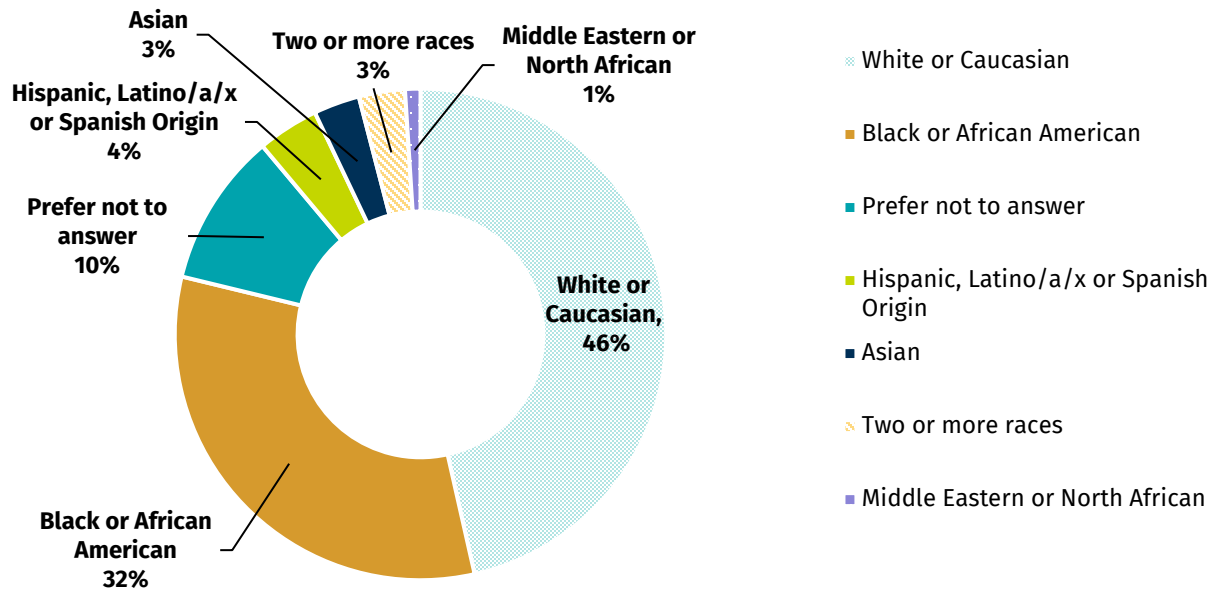


Figure 27. Percentage of Public Transit Users by Race

Source: M4A Rider Questionnaire. 2024.

Public transit users are close to being evenly split between older adults over 65 years old and all younger age groups. Older adults represent approximately 5% more of the public transit ridership than younger individuals¹² (Figure 28).

¹² Individual public transit users for the 60-to-65-year age group could not be singled out within the dataset.

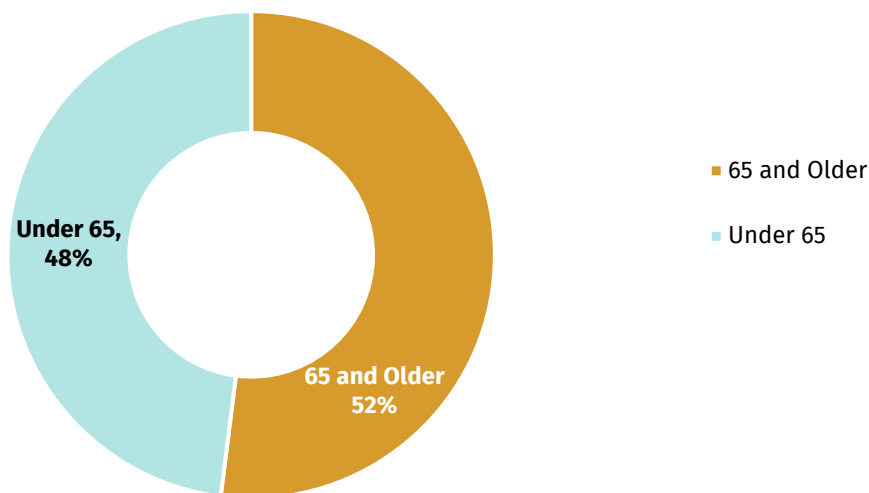


Figure 28. Percentage of Public Transit Users by Age

Source: M4A Rider Questionnaire. 2024.

Most public transit users (nearly 55%) self-identify as having a household income of under \$60,000, with approximately 20% reporting a household income that is greater than \$60,000 (Figure 29). Over 25% of M4A Rider Questionnaire respondents opted to not indicate their household income. However, regardless of the realized ratio within this respondent group, it can be reasonably assumed that individuals with limited income under \$60,000 would persist as the more prevalent ridership group.

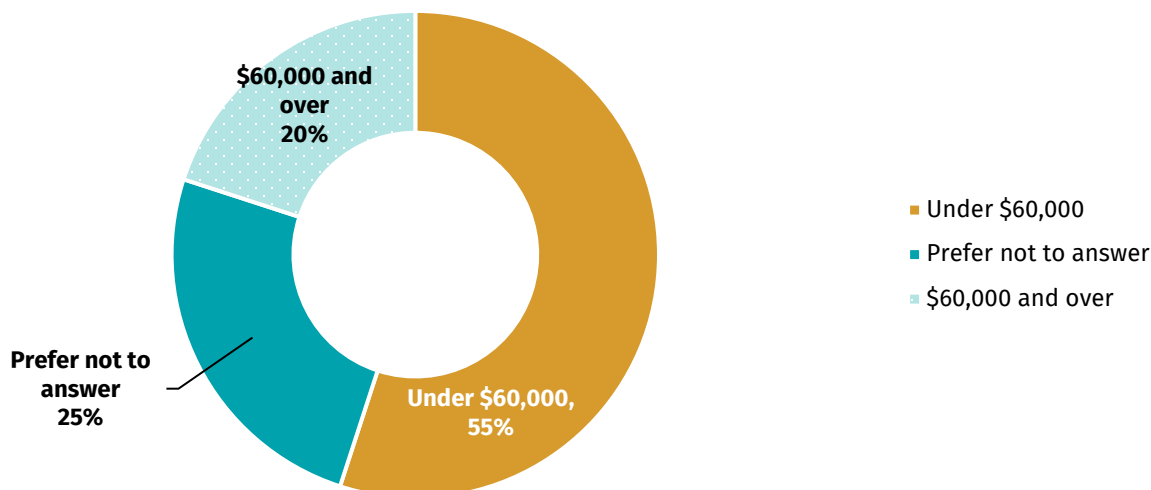


Figure 29. Percentage of Public Transit Users by Household Income

Source: M4A Rider Questionnaire. 2024.

Over half of all public transit user survey respondents indicated having a disability or impairment, and 4% opted not to indicate their disability or impairment status. The remaining 45% self-identified as not having a disability or impairment (Figure 30).

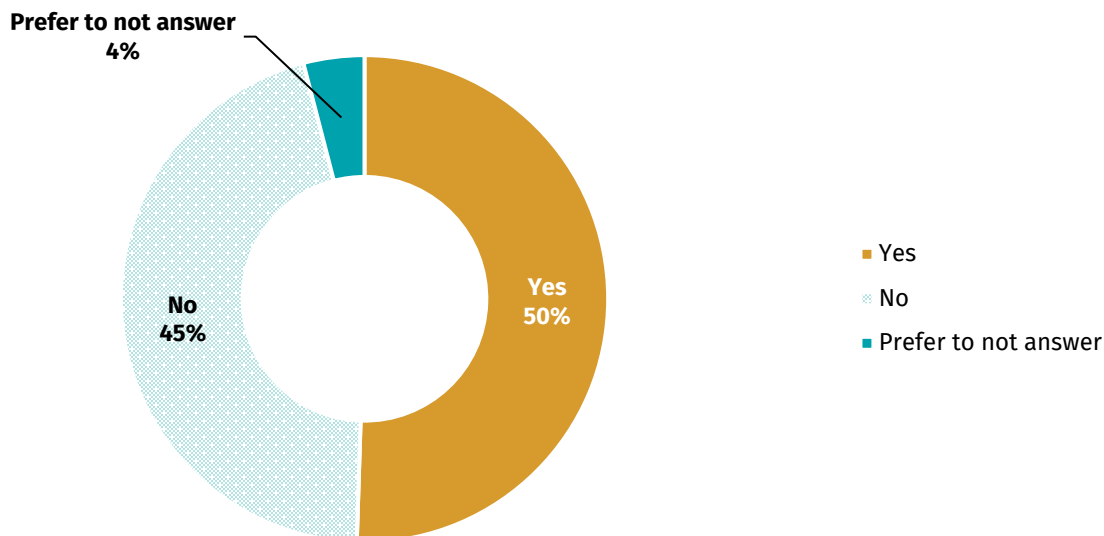


Figure 30. Public Transit User by Disability/Impairment Status

Source: M4A Rider Questionnaire. 2024.

3.3 Change in Ridership Since 2019

To evaluate possible ridership shifts for the M4A target populations over the last few years, data was gathered from AgeWays (legally known as Area Agency on Aging 1-B) on their contracted RTA myride2 service. Myride2 is administered by AgeWays as a one-stop resource for help finding transportation sources to travel in the RTA Region. The service is open to the public, with a specific focus on benefitting older adults and persons with disabilities. Mobility managers help riders (or potential riders) coordinate the necessary services for the extent of their full intended trip in Southeast Michigan.

Since the RTA Region has multiple transportation options available for the M4A target populations (see Existing Conditions Technical Memorandum for more information), and RTA's myride2 program, run through AgeWays, serves as a central database for navigating those options, data was collected from AgeWays on the number and types of requests received. Myride2 requests do not capture all rides taken on public transit across the region, but the data collected from AgeWays can serve as a way to examine how the reasons someone called in for transportation assistance and the type of location they need help traveling to may have changed over the past few years. Number of requests, unique callers, the purpose for calling, and the reason for transportation were examined and compared from 2019 and 2024. Comparing data from 2024 to 2019 can provide some visibility into the reasons someone may be calling for transportation assistance, and the reason for their transportation.

From 2019 to 2024, the number of requests to myride2 increased by 26% (from 4,807 to 6,055), with a 9% increase in the number of unique callers (4,150 to 4,523). Myride2 offers callers several different services including travel training, general mobility information, and driving information, but by far the most popular purposes for calls in both years examined were "seeking a ride", which remained at over 50% of

calls and “general transportation information” (which remained at around 45% of calls), as seen in Figure 31.

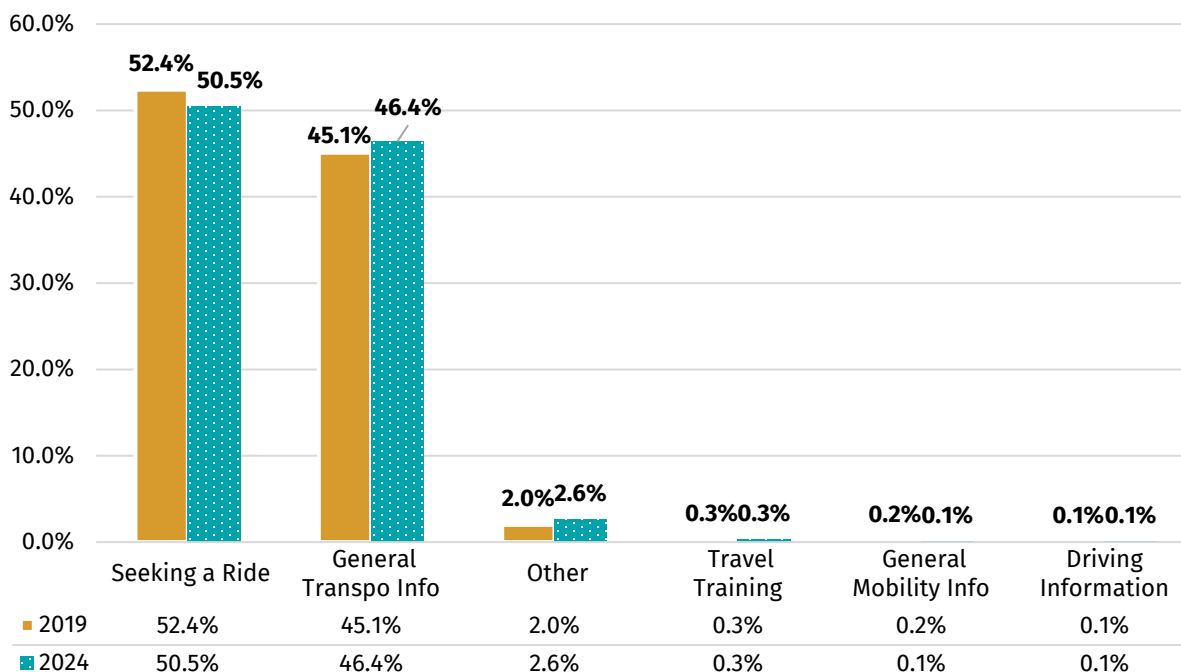


Figure 31. Purpose of Myride2 Calls in 2019 and 2024

Source: AgeWays. Executive Summary Data Report. 2024

Amongst myride2 callers seeking transportation assistance, the popularity of the various reasons for needing transportation remained consistent from 2019 to 2024. As seen in Figure 32, the proportion of most popular to least popular reasons for calling remained approximately the same from 2019 to 2024. “Medical” maintained being the most popular reason for transportation by far, with “shop/errand” a distant second, followed by “social/recreational.” The largest change from 2019 to 2024 is that the percentage of total calls that were for medical trips dropped by 3%, and the reason for transportation calls related to employment increased by 2%.ⁱ

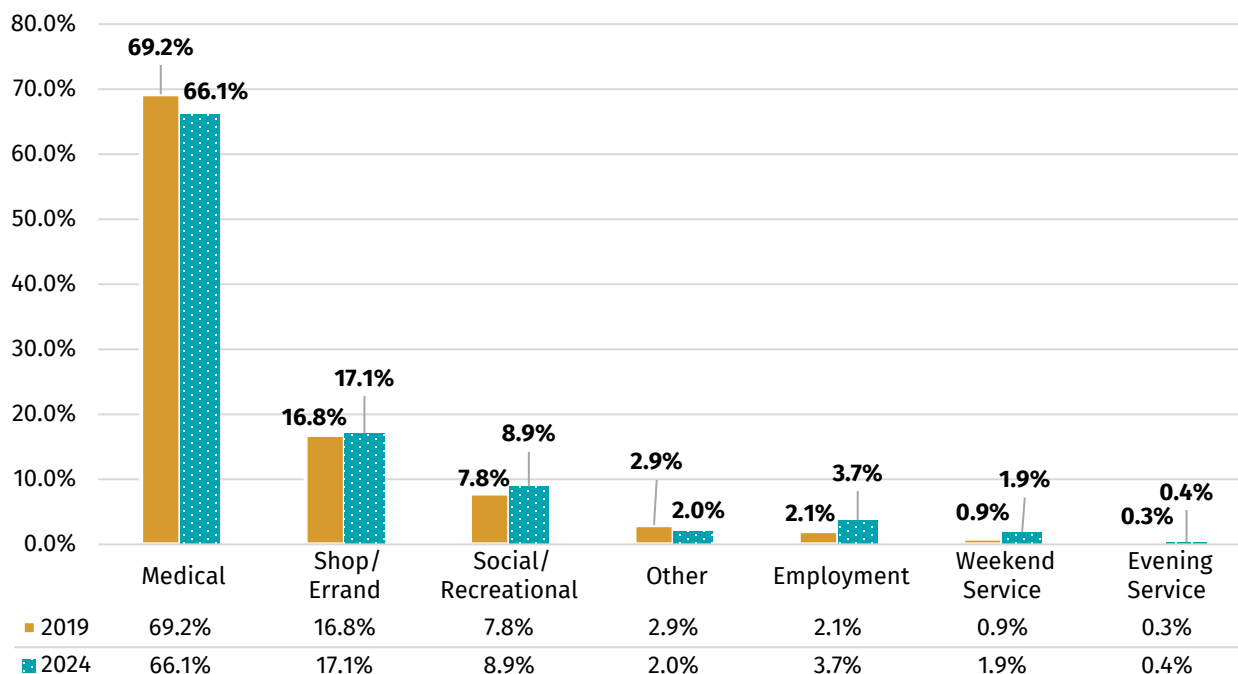


Figure 32. Reason for Transportation of Myride2 Calls in 2019 and 2024

Source: AgeWays. Executive Summary Data report. 2024

4. Key Findings and Gaps

4.1 High Concentrations of Local Trips

The Replica data indicates that travel patterns within and across the RTA Region vary but are predominantly concentrated within each county. The key trends identified indicate that the vast majority (85%) of all trips within the region, regardless of mode or population, are local trips, or those that both begin and end within a single county. This could be motivated by either land use patterns or access to transportation. The RTA Region is characterized by a dense urban center in the City of Detroit, with well-developed suburbs surrounding the city, as well as the neighboring city of Ann Arbor. These areas, where there are a higher concentration of critical destinations or employment centers, are likely to be more self-sufficient, with residents able to meet their travel needs for work, shopping, or recreation locally. These areas, particularly the urban centers, are also more likely to support additional transportation options beyond a single occupancy vehicle, such as a denser transit network or more walkable neighborhoods. Access to these options can encourage shorter, more locally driven trip choices.

Alternatively, the trend in local trips could be influenced by limited regional connectivity options that discourages longer trips. There may be less regional integration in terms of transportation infrastructure, economic opportunities, or social connections, reducing the need for people to travel longer distances between counties or across the region. This would align with findings identified in the M4A Existing Conditions analysis, where it can be observed that, while transportation options in the RTA Region are numerous, there are limited options for traveling across (or through) geographic areas without requiring transfers.

4.2 Variation in Trip Purpose by Types

The reason for travel varies based on both population type and day type. For older adult populations in the RTA Region, Replica data indicates that the most common trip purposes are for shopping and going out to eat (making up over 50% of all trips). Older adults shop for groceries, household goods, and personal items as part of maintaining their independence and daily living. Dining out serves as both a social activity and a convenience, especially as a person ages and cooking becomes more physically demanding. Medical trips for older adults account for approximately 7% of trips across all modes of transportation, as healthcare needs for this population are typically higher than younger individuals. Regular doctor visits, physical therapy, pharmacy runs, and specialist appointments become essential parts of their routines.

For individuals living on a limited income in the RTA Region, the data indicates that the most common trip purpose is also shopping (accounting for over a third of all trips). These trips may be driven by the need to purchase basic necessities, like groceries, clothing, or household supplies. The second most popular purpose for travel differs between weekdays and weekends, with travel prioritized next for work on weekdays (15%) and for eating out on weekends (17%). For individuals with limited income, work is a vital reason to leave the home, as earning a livelihood is essential for meeting basic needs. People in low-income brackets are also more likely to have limited remote work options, taking jobs in industries that require a physical presence, such as the hospitality industry or manufacturing. Going out to eat offers a relatively affordable social activity, allowing for individuals to socialize without spending a significant amount of money on other recreational options.

4.3 Influence of Mode Options

Mode of travel also has an impact on the type of trips taken by residents in the RTA Region. Replica data indicates that the car is common in the “Motor City” and the surrounding region, as travel by personal vehicle is by far still the most popular way to travel. Approximately 50% of weekday trips by residents who use their personal vehicle are to travel to work or to go shopping. Weekend trips are predominantly shopping or socially motivated, with nearly a third of personal vehicle trips completed for shopping, eating, or other social activities.

Replica data also indicates that the majority of those in the RTA Region who choose to take active transportation modes, including walking or biking, are going shopping or participating in social activities. It is likely that these trips are for more local destinations, such as town centers for shopping destinations. Trips to visit friends or attend local events are often within walking or biking distance, especially in urban or suburban neighborhoods.

On both weekdays and weekends, the most common reason for travel by fixed route public transit users in the RTA region is for work (over 46%), followed by shopping (approximately 20%). Many riders are dependent on public transit or have limited access to a household vehicle and are using the transit system out of necessity to access employment and basic needs, like shopping for groceries or clothing. Commuting to work via transit is especially common in dense urban centers, where car ownership can be expensive or impractical, and where major employers are concentrated in business centers or districts that are easily accessible by transit. Additionally, many shopping districts, malls, and grocery stores are located along major transit routes, making them convenient destinations.

On-demand auto, or TNC-based trips, show a wider variety in trip types than other modes. Unlike fixed route transit, which follows set routes and schedules, TNCs provide demand-responsive point-to-point service, making them useful for a broad range of trip purposes beyond just work or shopping. Compared to personal vehicles, which require parking, gas, and maintenance, TNCs remove those constraints, making them attractive for one-time, infrequent, or specialized trips, such as for simple errands or maintenance. Still, the Replica data shows that shopping trips are the most common reason to use a

TNC, followed by trips to restaurants. Weekday trips also demonstrate a higher propensity for users to take a TNC to work.

4.4 Observed Differences in Rider Group Trends

In comparing the rider profiles, which were generated using the M4A Rider Questionnaire results, with the demographic data of the RTA Region collected from the US Census Bureau, there are certain differences in demographic patterns that are worth highlighting.¹³ For instance, the proportion of public transit riders identifying as Black or African American is nearly 10% greater than the proportion of RTA residents identifying as Black or African American, while the proportion of public transit riders identifying as white or Caucasian is over 15% lower than the proportion of RTA residents identifying as white or Caucasian. This would indicate that the RTA Region's Black or African American population may display a higher transit reliance compared to other demographic groups.

Older adults and people with disabilities utilize the resources provided by AgeWays for support with transportation related to medical needs (66% of total transportation calls in 2024). Yet, Replica indicates that the predominant trip reason for older adults, regardless of transportation mode, is to shop and to go out to eat. This distinction may mean that older adults and people with a disability who use transportation services offered by public or private providers in the region rely on these services more heavily for medical needs. Many of the public and private non-profit providers in the myride2 provider database offer non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT) services to seniors, disabled people, and lower-income individuals. Other modes of travel may satisfy these population groups' other transportation needs.

Endnotes

ⁱ AgeWays. 2024. *Executive Summary Data report*. Generated by LaVonna Howard, Mobility Project Manager at AgeWays.

¹³ As previously described, the M4A Rider Questionnaire is not meant to represent all public transit users in the RTA region but rather are meant to provide insight into the users of public transportation from the M4A target populations.