

Refugee Populations, Equity and Transportation in Vermont

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- The issue: equity and access to transportation for marginalized or so-called 'at risk' communities
- Project designed as a needs survey and assessment of transportation options and preferences amongst recently resettled refugees in Vermont
- Funded by the Transportation Research Center at the University of Vermont with a grant from the US Department of Transportation

Table 1: Refugee Arrivals in Vermont by Country of Origin



Country of Origin	Arrival Dates	Population
Bosnia	1994-2004	1705
Vietnam	1989-2002; 2005	1069
Mezkhethian Turk	2005-2008	163
Azerbaijan	2003-2006	34
Sudan	1998; 2001-2009	137
Kosovo	1999	58
Congo	2000-2009	192
Iraq	1994-1995; 2008-2010	153
Somalia	2003-2010	588
Rwanda	2005	12
Burundi	2004-2009	117
Togo	2001-2009	26
Burma	2008-2010	173
Bhutan	2008-2010	464
Other	1989-2010	586
TOTALS	1989-2010	5477



Source: Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program

Project Objectives

- To understand how refugee communities, their advocates, and service providers evaluate the current state of transportation in Vermont in relation to their specific needs
- To identify specific modes of transportation that refugees have access to, which they favour, and what options they may prefer for the future
- To understand where refugees are located in relation to existing transportation infrastructure
- To examine the distance between refugee homes and key destinations
- To examine what role refugees and their advocates see themselves as having in terms of opportunities for input and decision-making in regional and local transportation planning

Data Collection and Methodology

- Participatory, community-based and action-oriented
- Working with service providers as well as refugee community organizations
- Key informant and semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and two qualitative surveys

Survey Results

- Focus on seven key areas/issues
 - Travel needs
 - Modes of transportation
 - Impact on work
 - Children/childcare
 - Driver's training
 - Healthcare
 - Underserved locations

Service Providers

- 20% report transportation assistance as a key function
 - Provide rides for clients to and from appointments, work, and shopping
 - Help to learn bus schedules and the public transit system
 - Assist with obtaining taxi vouchers for medical appointments
 - Teach clients how to drive



Refugee Respondents

- 48.8% in a household with more than 4 persons
- 71.7% of respondent households have children
- 56% of respondents male
- 61.7% households with income under \$15,000 (23% unemployed)
- 35% with basic or learning English skills



Travel Needs and Times

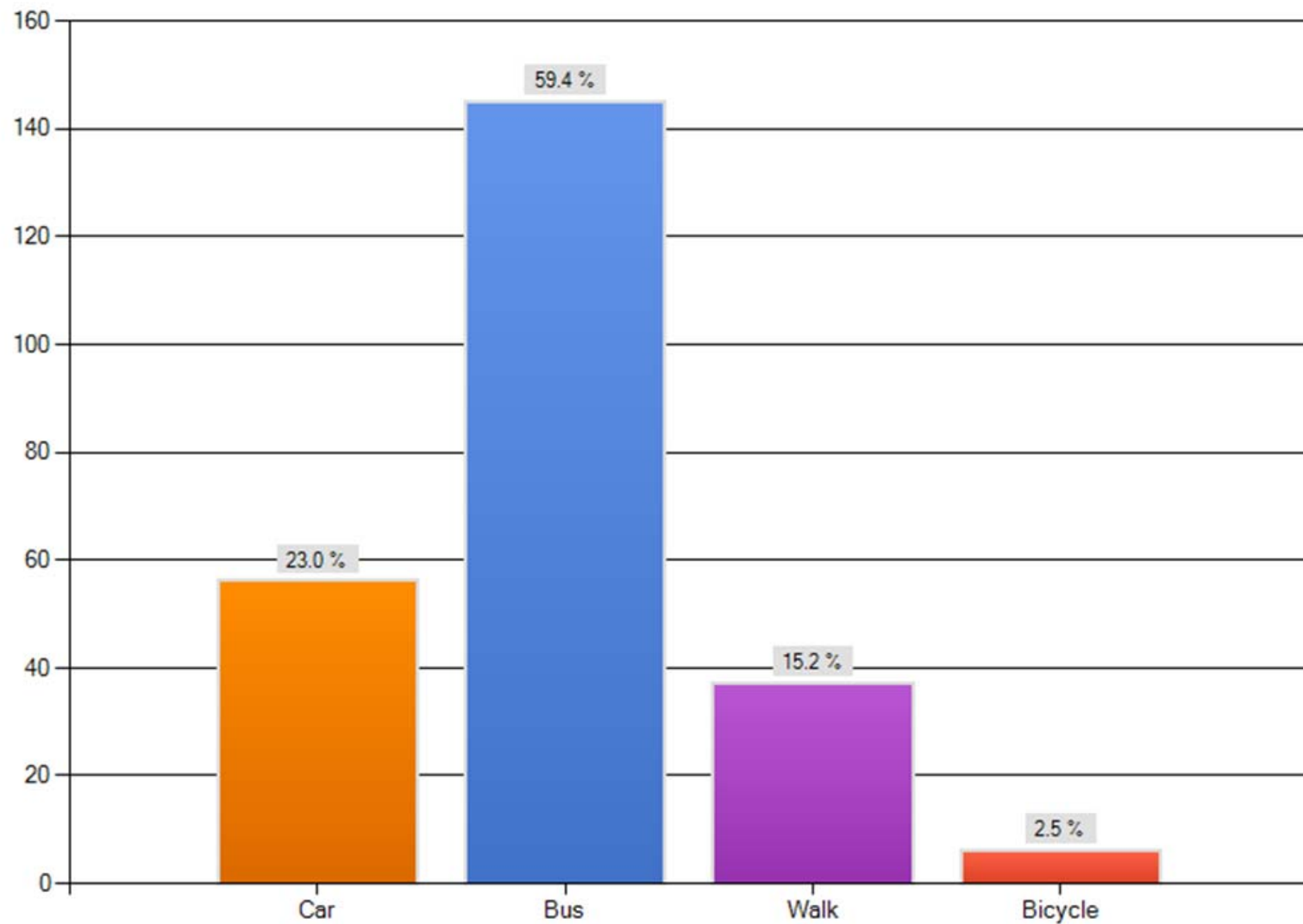
Table 2: Travel Needs of Refugees as Estimated by Service Providers

	Medical	Shopping	Work/School	Social
<5 minutes	0%	0%	0%	7.1%
5-15 minutes	25.9%	11.1%	25.0%	42.9%
15-30 minutes	51.9%	55.6%	35.7%	35.7%
>30 minutes	22.2%	33.3%	39.3%	14.3%

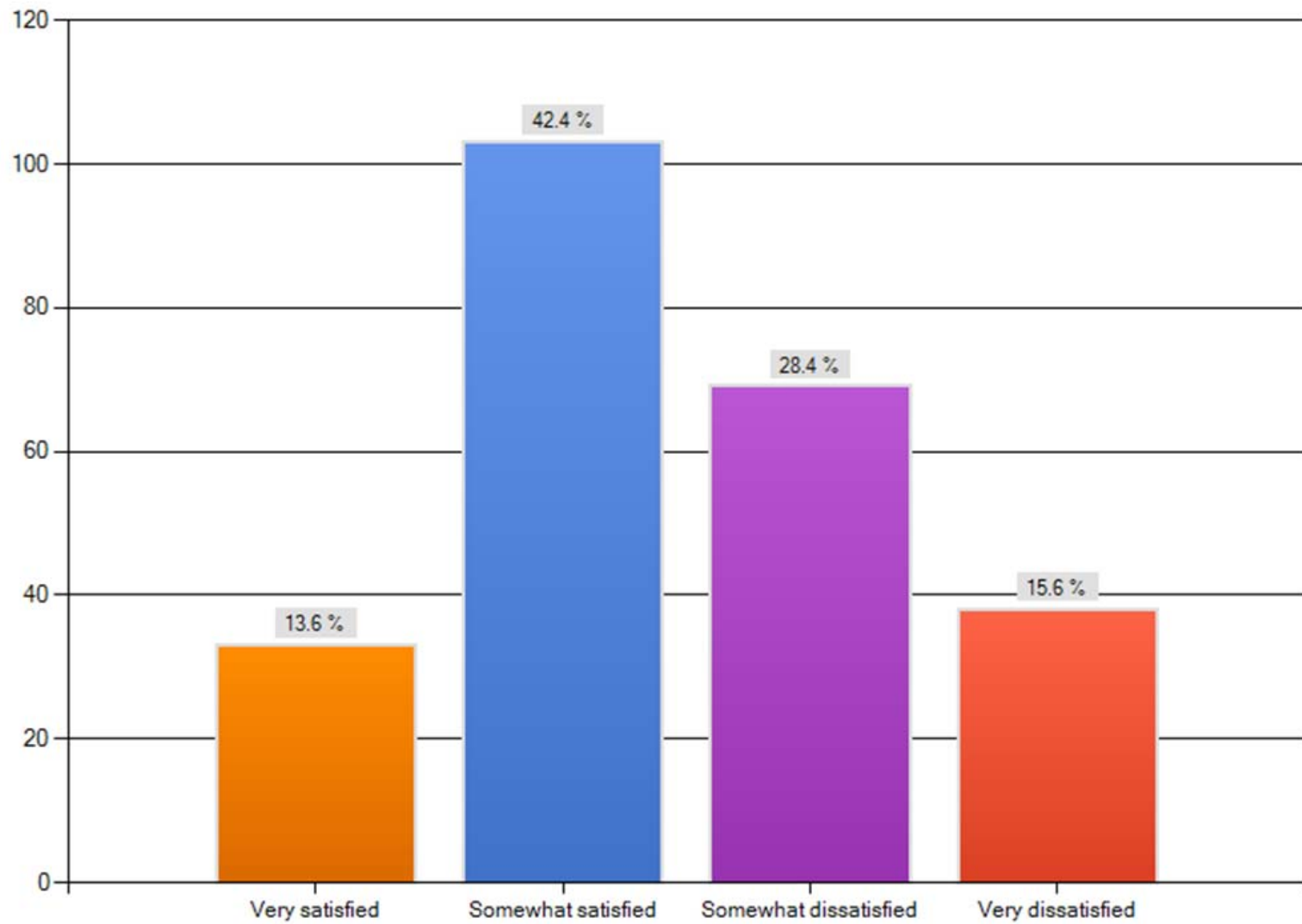
Table 3: Travel Needs of Refugee Respondents

	Medical	Shopping	Work/School	Social
<5 minutes	1.6%	2.3%	1.2%	12.6%
5-15 minutes	23.0%	29.7%	21.6%	25.2%
15-30 minutes	45.9%	39.8%	44.4%	29.1%
>30 minutes	29.6%	28.1%	32.8%	33.1%

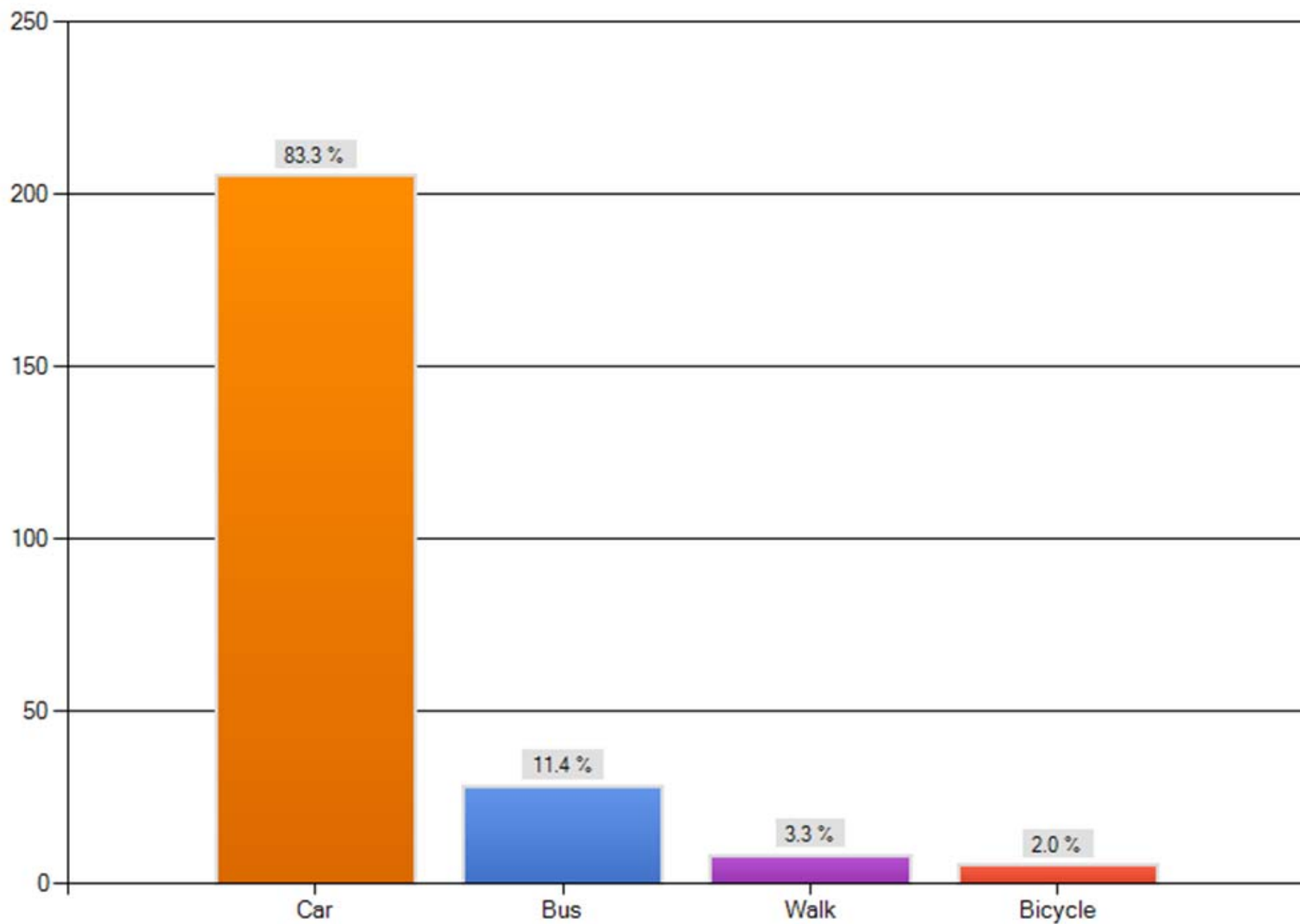
Which of the following forms of transportation do you use most often?



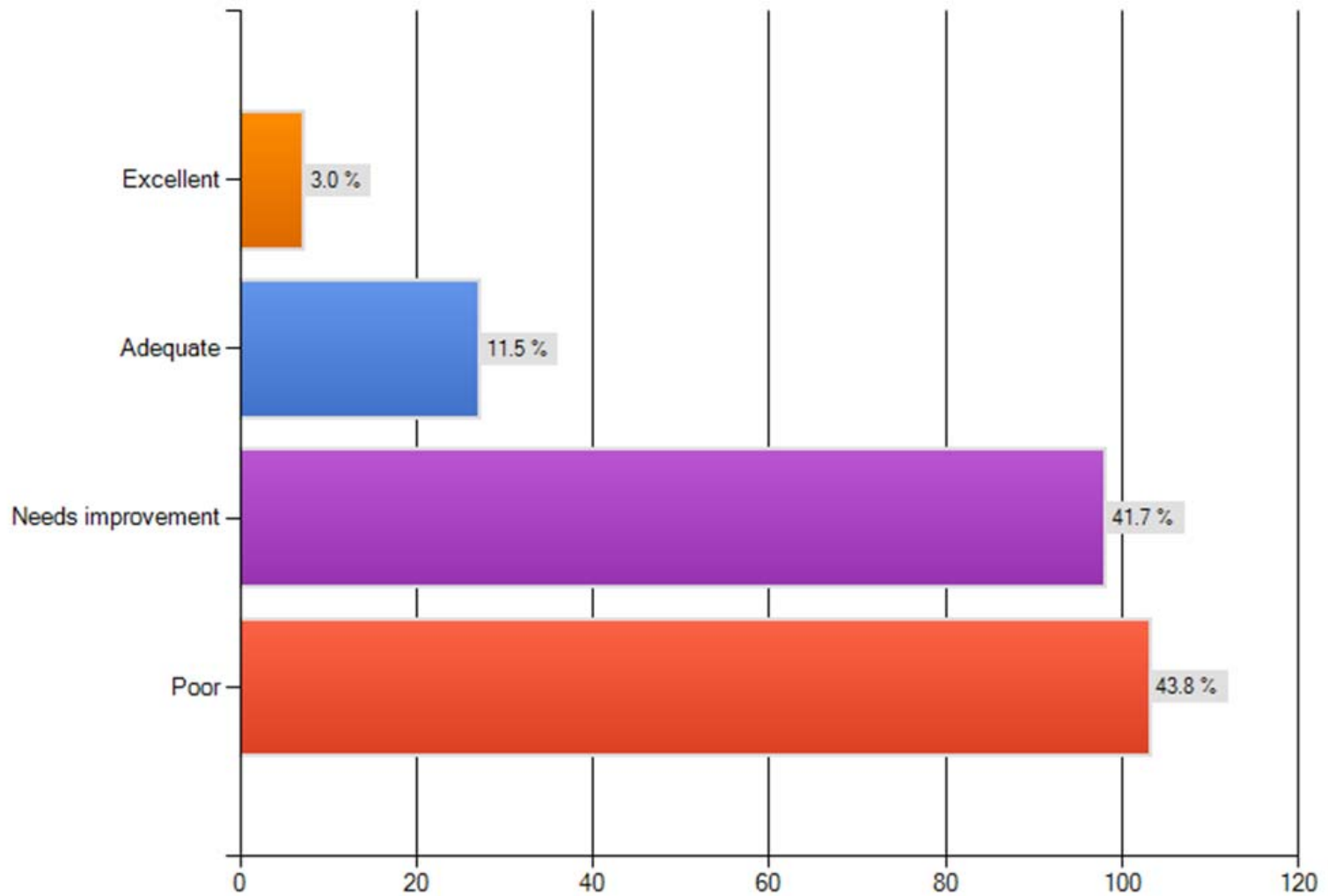
How satisfied are you with public transit in Vermont?



If given the choice, what would be your most preferred mode of travel?



How would you evaluate the current night-time and weekend service on local bus routes?



Modes of Travel

- Common complaints regarding public transit:
 - No direct service
 - Service not frequent enough
 - No bus stop near destination

Modes of Travel

- *Weekends are times I and others have time to go places. Unfortunately weekend bus lines are very limited and don't come often. This not only makes it difficult to plan things outside home but also when to do them. Specifically, the Sunday services are even more limited because there is only one bus that runs to other places outside Burlington and within Burlington. This bus takes hours to come to my stop near my home and to place of destination. Extending weekend services would be such a big help!*



Refugee

Impact on Work

- *The current economic situation makes it difficult for refugees to find employment opportunities close to home (in the Burlington and Winooski areas) so they are forced to look elsewhere (including Essex Junction, Shelburne, Charlotte, Williston, etc). Some are able to pass the Driver's License test and get a car in order to work late shifts and carpool. Most clients, however, spend hours per day commuting on 1 or more bus, walking or riding a bicycle (or a combination). If the bus routes reached further, operated more frequently and on the weekends, newly arrived refugees would have a greater likelihood of becoming economically self-sufficient.*

– Service Provider

- *Transportation is a serious barrier to refugees looking for work. The bus schedule usually does not accommodate second shift and third shift workers. Even first shift workers cannot get their destination via bus on Sundays.*

– Service Provider

Impact on Work

- *Bus doesn't go to Shelburne Farms where I work. Takes me 70 minutes. I take the bus to the museum and then walk or bike or hitchhike. It is good with the people because there is no discrimination of colour and race but it is a big problem of language for communication*

– Refugee

- *Looking for work difficult when bus stops not near places of employment. Most of our families when they come here, they find themselves going through some stages. When they come here they can use the bus for some time. After 3 months they start to withdraw from using it. They see this as cultural; see themselves as being different. They end up asking for someone to help them with their chores.*

– Refugee

Children/Childcare

- *I feel that there is a large need for transportation of young children to their childcare settings for refugee populations who do not own a car or may only own one car. It is very challenging for parents to take a bus to drop their child off at preschool and then wait to take another bus to work or school. Many children are being denied access to an early education because of transportation challenges. More SSTA services would be very helpful to this population and would also increase later school success for refugee children.*

– Service Provider

Driver Training

- *Not an expert in driving so not comfortable going a long distance, don't drive out of town. Need to learn the places before I can go anywhere. Gas and insurance costs are very high for cars. It should be easier with the bus but not providing bus tickets makes it harder when we first arrive. Unless you have a good volunteer who will help you learn the bus system when you first come it is very difficult. It should be easier with the bus. I use my car for getting to work because of my shift. Before I had a car I had to walk there. Now I walk mostly if I don't have to get to work. The biggest problem with the bus is the delays, stopping on the way takes too long to get to where I have to go. My friends and family are in Winooski and I go there by car as well. It takes half an hour to get to the doctor by car. I work at Twincrafts.*

– Refugee

Healthcare

- *There are increasing numbers of health-related appointments for resettled refugees at orthopedics, cardiologists, Maitri and other health care providers on Tilley Drive in South Burlington. Of utmost concern is lack of bus to Maitri, the often-preferred pre-natal care clinic for African-Americans, who already have high-risk of dropping out of care in VT.*

– Service Provider

- *I have to walk in the cold with my disabled daughter*

– Refugee



Underserved Locations

- 50% of respondents list Winooski/Colchester as most underserved
- Medical facilities at Tilley Drive
- Towns outside of Burlington but within Chittenden County
- Williston, Shelburne, Jericho, Essex, Montpelier, Richmond, Hinesburg, Milton





- *My feeling on transportation, it is still good if you live in Burlington, once out the city it is a big problem to get transportation. That is I mean the state or the city must develop that system to give opportunity to poor people to travel on to go to their job.*

– Refugee

Key Findings

- Loss of employment opportunities because of an inability to reach a specific location (especially those outside of Burlington)
- Loss of employment opportunities because of an inability to reach locations at a specific time (especially weekends, evenings and overnight)
- Reduced access to after-school and enriched educational options for children
- Inability to reach medical care and appointments
- The unreliability of public transit leads to even greater feelings of precariousness and instability for individuals already struggling to adjust to new and unfamiliar circumstances
- Dependence on the goodwill and charity of others (including service providers) to provide transportation (and a lack of self-sufficiency as a result)
- Desire for driver's education and training is restricted due to language barriers

Recommendations

- Improve communication
- Improve access to driver training and education for refugees
- Provide an expanded bus pass system
- Arrange special stops with the CCTA
- Work with employers to provide shuttles