



# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROGRESS REPORT

April-December 2015

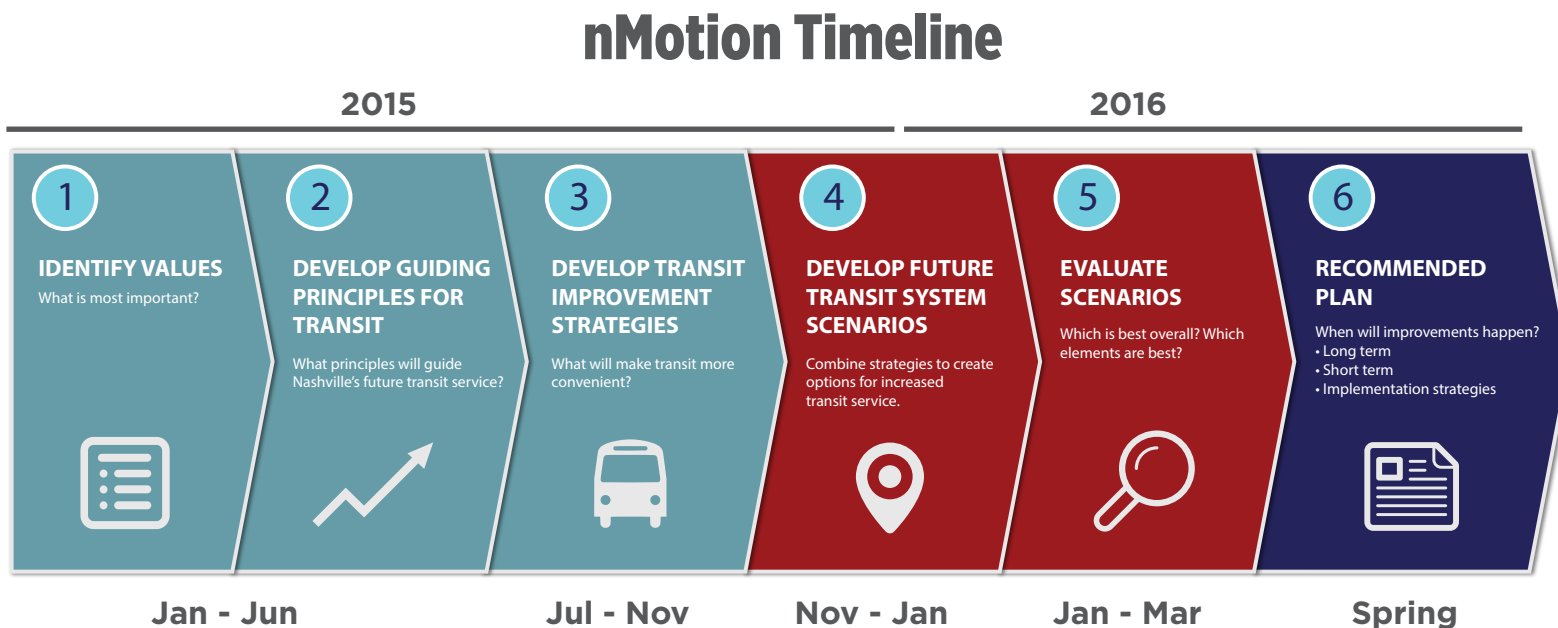
# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROGRESS REPORT

## Introduction

The Nashville Metropolitan Transit Authority and the Regional Transportation Authority of Middle Tennessee (Nashville MTA/RTA) have spent the past nine months engaged in a regionwide public discussion of the best strategies to improve regional mobility, with several more months of public engagement still to come.

This study process, nMotion, has been developed with the understanding that input from as many Nashville-area residents as possible will help Nashville MTA/RTA develop the best mass transit system possible. To that end, nMotion has established channels of communication with the public to explore the values and transit needs of this population, create guiding principles for future decision-making and evaluate state-of-the-art transit strategies now being deployed around the world to determine what is best for Middle Tennessee.

**FIGURE 1 | STRATEGIC PLAN SCHEDULE**



# Public Engagement Findings

nMotion began in April 2015 with a variety of community outreach activities that asked people to identify the values they want to see embodied in their transit system. Nashville MTA/RTA received more than 3,500 responses to two surveys that were distributed to identify values.

PHOTOS 1 & 2 | PARTICIPANTS RESPOND TO SURVEYS IN PUBLIC MEETINGS

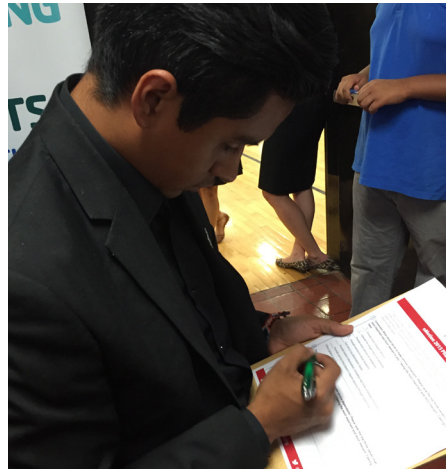


FIGURE 2 | MOST COMMON VALUES



Values	Number of Responses	Percent of Total
<b>Convenient</b>	1,134	19.8%
<b>Dependable</b>	986	17.2%
<b>Frequent</b>	669	11.7%
<b>Safe</b>	605	10.6%
<b>Available</b>	358	6.3%
<b>Efficient</b>	338	5.9%
<b>Affordable</b>	317	5.5%
<b>Cost Effective</b>	257	4.5%
<b>Accessible</b>	216	3.8%

TABLE 1 | PUBLIC INPUT RE: MOST COMMON VALUES

In summary, Middle Tennesseans want a transit system that is:

**Convenient:** Middle Tennessee's transit system will be most successful if it provides frequent service to more locations.

**Dependable:** On-time service is one of the most important values, especially from those who regularly ride transit.

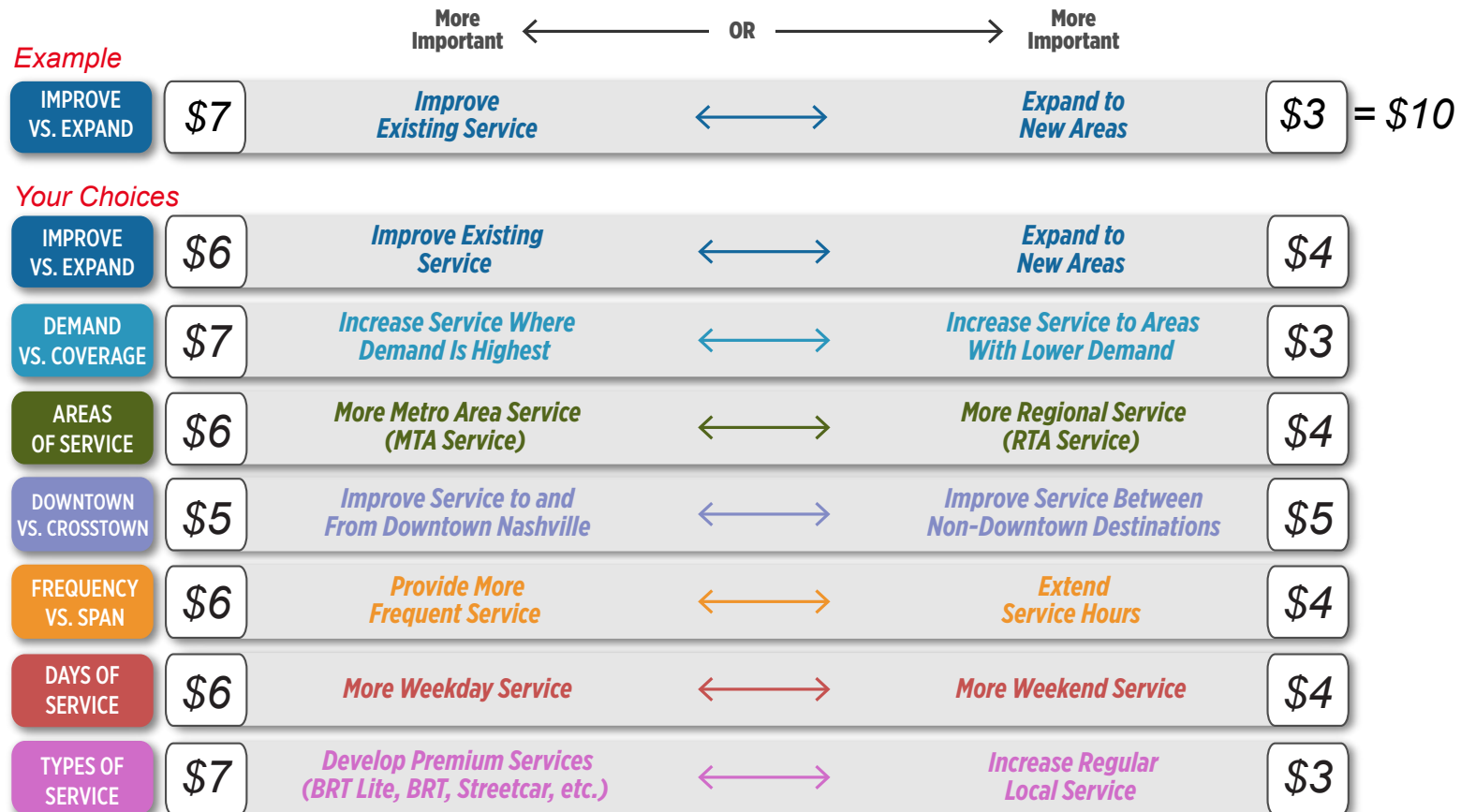
**Frequent:** Most people said that service needs to be more frequent, and people hope for transit service every 15 minutes.

**Safe:** The biggest safety concern about transit expressed by many residents is being able to get to the bus stop safely, not the experience on the bus. People want to be able to walk to and from bus stops and need well-lit sidewalks, crosswalks and visible signals to make it easier to access stops.

# Trade-off Survey

Most transit decisions involve a trade-off, i.e., choosing between two relatively desirable alternatives. In the third phase of nMotion outreach, MTA/RTA asked the public to weigh in on several trade-offs, and more than 1,500 Middle Tennesseans offered their opinions. There was an overwhelming agreement between frequent transit riders and non-transit riders that higher funding for the development of premium services should be prioritized over increased regular service. Overall, the most common suggestions were around implementing park-and-rides, free transfers, and real-time bus-arrival information.

**FIGURE 3 | TRADE-OFF SURVEY RESULTS**



NELSON\NYGAARD CONSULTING ASSOCIATES



# Public Dialogue

At public events and through online and on-paper surveys, the public comments about transit have shaped the direction of the strategic planning process. Nashville MTA/RTA has logged more than 2,000 comments from Middle Tennesseans about the kind of transit system they want. Following are specific examples of the comments received:

## Improve Existing Service

Fast – that is my main priority.

I'd appreciate later hours for service, and more frequent service.

Consolidation of stops is necessary. I am ok with walking a little bit to the stop rather than having to stop more and increasing my travel time.

Public transit into and out of Nashville is unlikely to work unless there is also some way to move people around WITHIN Nashville once they arrive.

I think we need to offer more late night and even overnight service.

It is IMPERATIVE that a viable option for getting around downtown complements whatever regional services we develop! Why would someone take a BRT into town if they cannot get around once they have arrived?

Our current commuter system often leaves riders stranded, with extremely limited frequency.

"Frequent service" to me, would mean not having to carry around a bus schedule OR trying to time my day around a schedule.

## Expand Service to New Areas

We need more services to surrounding counties.

A local and regional light rail service. Not a slow moving train Music City Star. The ability to travel from county to county without driving.

## Improve Access to Transit

Something needs to be done to ensure the safety of pedestrians walking to and from places like bus stops.

Concern: How do I get from my home to the transit system? Is there a place to park my car?

Improving pedestrian infrastructure around stops should be priority one.

More substantial bus stops in neighborhoods might also improve the transit experience. There are some in East Nashville that are just the crumbled edge of the road, amidst weeds, trash, and overhanging shrubs. Not even a sidewalk. I believe this contributes to a general impression that the bus is a second class alternative.

Comprehensive approach, with accessibility to a variety of transportation options, including sidewalks.

Perhaps MTA could develop a system of circulator minibuses at transit terminuses that could get folks closer to their homes or park-and-rides.

The Greater Nashville Metropolitan area needs park and ride centers/nodes.

# Public Dialogue

## Make Service Easier To Use

“ One thing I think we need are free transfers with the purchase of a single ride. Many other cities work that way.

I think website and app information are critical to the success of MTA & RTA. I think these should be the front line of information.

To keep up with society and attract a broader slice of the population you will need to get to a payment by phone technology.

I want to use mobile technology so I can track the bus I am going to take.

Branding needs to be catchy; must appeal to all sectors, should address convenience, on-time performance, cost and ease of payment, cleanliness, safety, Wi-Fi and other conveniences.”

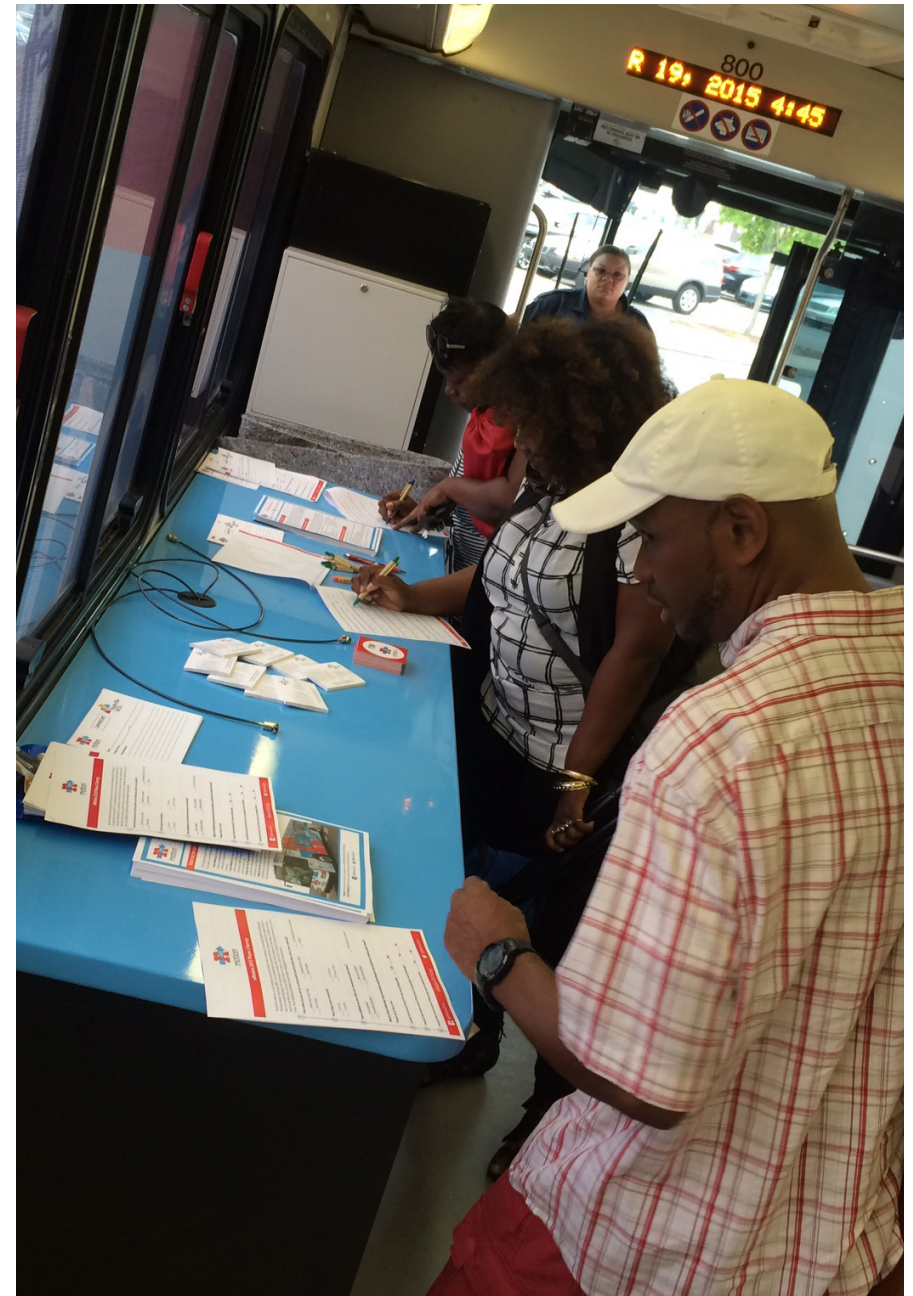
## Develop Premium Services

“ I'd also like to see light rail extend out to more affordable places to live since I'm getting priced out of Davidson County.

Even though it is an expensive transit option, I believe that light rail is the best solution for commuting from Nashville to our suburbs.

Unless they have a dedicated lane what's the point? They can only go as fast as the other traffic.

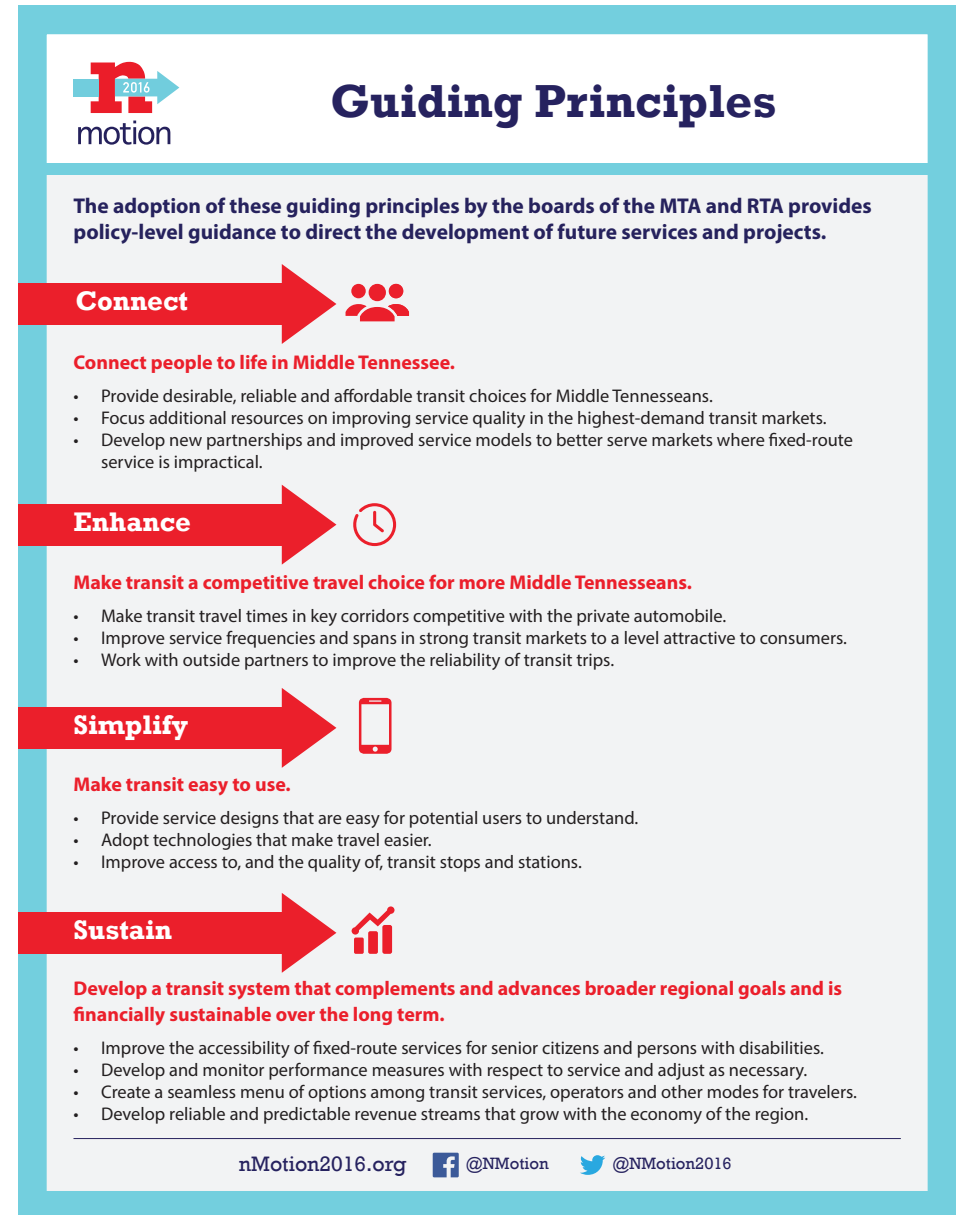
I am a big fan of the BRT. In general, I wish the Nashville MTA had service that reached farther into neighboring communities. BRT rather than express buses could accomplish this beautifully.”



# Guiding Principles

Nashville MTA/RTA has incorporated all of this feedback into four guiding principles that will shape the development of future services. Guiding principles are high-level statements that define the project vision and reflect community values. After reviewing comments from thousands of respondents, the following principles were proposed to guide the development of system improvement strategies that were presented in the next phase of public engagement.

FIGURE 4 | GUIDING PRINCIPLES



# Transit Strategies

As the discussion of actual transit strategies has become more specific, the public input has become more insightful and engaged.

During the next phase of nMotion, over a three-month period – August to October 2015 – MTA/RTA offered 25 different transit strategies for public consideration.

Each strategy under consideration was explored in a brief “white paper” that was posted to nMotion2016.org during the summer and fall of 2015. A Discussion Forum was presented for each strategy, and individuals were encouraged to offer input on these strategies. To date, more than 500 comments have been posted on this forum. The Discussion Forum generated a significant amount of healthy conversation and dialogue about some of the most pressing transit issues. Premium services such as light rail, commuter rail, streetcar and BRT have received significant commentary. Certain tactics like using dedicated lanes for transit remain polarizing subjects, and the comments received have been split in favor and against.

## Some common themes in what Nashville MTA/RTA has heard throughout the nMotion process include desire for:

- More frequent service running for longer hours and on the weekends;
- Streamlined transit circulation in downtown Nashville, better connections outside of downtown; and
- Better station and stop facilities and amenities, and improved access for pedestrians and cyclists.

Within Davidson County, the most common comment centered around safe access to transit for pedestrians. The most common comment from Middle Tennesseans outside Davidson County is that residents would consider leaving their cars at home only if transit travel times were more competitive with drive times. Across the region, Nashville MTA/RTA heard from residents about their concerns over the cost of projects and the funding needed to support mass transit.

Strategy Paper	Comments Received
<b>Commuter rail</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>Light rail</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>More frequent service for longer hours</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Freeway bus rapid transit</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Fare payment and collection technologies</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Access to transit</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Branding and marketing</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Stop consolidation</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>First- and last-mile connections</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Streetcar</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Rapid bus</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Better downtown transit service</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Transit-oriented development</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Better information</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Route simplification</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Bus rapid transit</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Bus service to airports</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Frequent transit networks</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Service to new areas</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Better facilities and amenities</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Transit priority</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Family of services</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Complete streets</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Express bus</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Outlying transit hubs</b>	<b>4</b>

TABLE 2 | DISCUSSION FORUM ENGAGEMENT

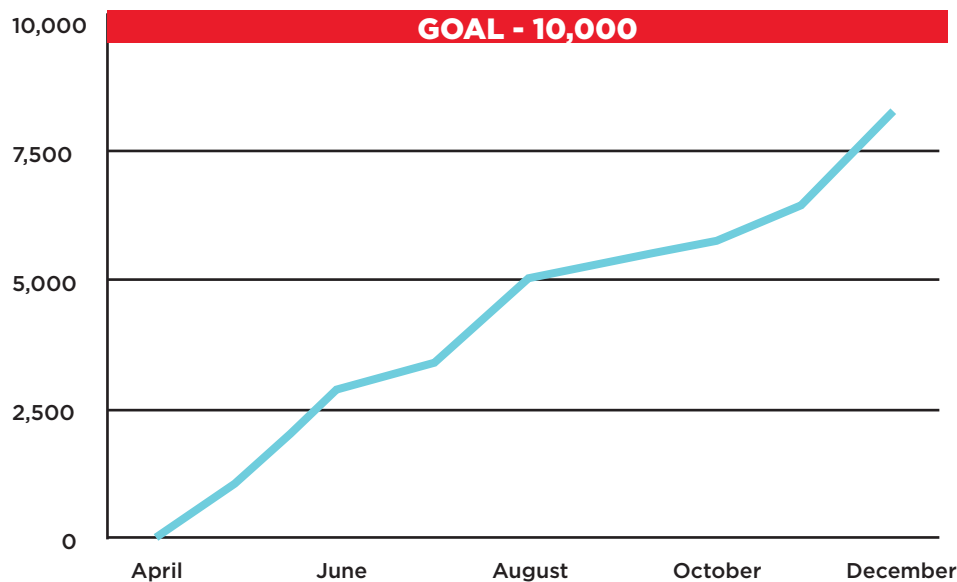


# Public Engagement Activities

At the beginning of the 1-year planning process in April, 2015, Nashville MTA/RTA set a goal of 10,000 engagements\*.

**Between April and December 2015, the nMotion team had more than 8,500 engagements with Nashville-area residents who wanted to make their opinions known about plans for transit in Middle Tennessee. We expect to exceed our goal when the planning process ends in the spring.**

**FIGURE 5 | COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENTS\* TO DATE**



\*An engagement is a submitted survey or a comment received via nMotion2016.org, comment cards, Facebook, Twitter or Nextdoor, or on various media websites. Some individuals have engaged with nMotion more than once during the process.

**FIGURE 6 | NMOTION PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT HIGHLIGHTS**



## Engagement activities included:

- **Community Meetings:** Hosted and conducted more than a dozen large community meetings in Nashville and surrounding counties to share information about the strategic planning process and solicit feedback about the kind of transit system the community would like to see.
  - Four meetings in Davidson County with 500 attendees
  - Nine meetings (one in each county surrounding Davidson County) with business and community leaders, attracting more than 600 attendees
- **Focus Groups:** Held eight focus groups among Hispanic/Latino, African-American, low-income and senior populations.
- **Listening Sessions With MTA/RTA Employees:** Held a series of listening sessions to hear directly from MTA drivers and other employees.
- **Website:** Built a robust digital dialogue at nMotion2016.org, where the values, guiding principles and transit strategies are shared in detail, with public comments on each aspect of the project. This platform has become home to the most in-depth public discussion about transit ever conducted in the region, with more people joining each week.
  - 17,050 unique visits to project website, to date
  - More than 500 comments received
- **Surveys:** Surveyed residents using Web-based and in-person survey tools.
  - More than 6,200 surveys collected to date
- **Transit Talks:** A member of the MTA/RTA staff visited more than 50 organizations to present “Transit Talks,” speaking to a total of more than 1,000 people, to share updates and gain input from members of the groups.
- **Events:** Sent a team of staff members and an nMotion-branded bus to more than a dozen large community events and outdoor festivals during the spring, summer and fall.
- **Current Riders:** Advertised directly to riders with advertisements on buses and conducted surveys at Music City Central and on buses.
- **Email Campaign:** Developed a database of email recipients – totaling more than 5,000 – who receive regular updates on the strategic planning process and provide valuable feedback.
- **Social Media:** Built social media followings on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, and shared updates with those audiences.
  - Facebook (2,055 likes)
  - Twitter (472 followers)
  - YouTube (406 views)
- **Nextdoor:** Used the neighborhood networking tool Nextdoor to share information with more than 40,000 participants across the community.
  - More than 100 comments received



**PHOTO 3 | MIDDLE TENNESSEANS SURVEYED AT MUSIC CITY CENTRAL STATION**



**PHOTO 4 | PARTICIPANT RESPONDS TO SURVEY IN A NORTH NASHVILLE PUBLIC MEETING**

# Ensuring diverse participation

Surveys included optional questions about demographic information including ZIP code, age and ethnic identification. While not every participant in any one of the engagement activities completed a survey and not every survey respondent completed these optional demographic questions, from those who did, MTA/RTA was able to assess where gaps in outreach exist and devised plans to address those gaps. Of more than 6,200 survey responses received, 79 percent of responses had an answer to at least one of these demographic questions.

**TABLE 3 | ETHNIC IDENTIFICATION OF SURVEY RESPONSES**

Ethnic Identification	Total Responses	Percent of Total Responses
<b>American Indian</b>	44	<1%
<b>Asian</b>	64	1.3%
<b>Black/African-American</b>	581	11.8%
<b>Hispanic/Latino</b>	202	4.1%
<b>White</b>	3,852	78.2%
<b>Prefer not to say</b>	182	3.7%
<b>Other</b>	3	<1%
<b>TOTAL</b>	4,928	100.0%

**TABLE 4 | AGE OF SURVEY RESPONSES**

Age	Total Responses	Percent of Total Responses
<b>17 or younger</b>	26	<1%
<b>18-24</b>	176	5.7%
<b>25-34</b>	771	25.1%
<b>35-44</b>	623	20.3%
<b>45-54</b>	569	18.5%
<b>55-64</b>	541	17.6%
<b>65 or older</b>	273	8.9%
<b>Prefer not to say</b>	93	3.0%
<b>TOTAL</b>	3,072	100.0%

Eighteen percent of survey responses came from respondents who identified as American Indian, Asian, Black/African-American or Hispanic/Latino; 31.6 percent of survey respondents are 34 or younger, 56.4 percent are between the ages of 35 and 64, and 8.9 percent are 65 or over (see tables 3 and 4). MTA/RTA retained three consultants who specialize in engaging “hard to reach groups.” Those consultants have led efforts to address gaps in outreach throughout the nMotion process. In order to address the discrepancies between the survey responses received and the demographics of the region, MTA/RTA worked with these consultants to host a series of focus groups in the fall of 2015.



# What We Heard From Focus Groups:

MTA/RTA conducted eight focus groups from October through December 2015, in order to hear more from specific populations – African-Americans, Hispanic/Latinos, low-income and senior populations. The themes identified across all focus groups were consistent with what was heard from the general public. Focus group participants expressed a desire for more frequent and simpler service, better information, free transfers, and extended hours, particularly on nights and weekends, as well as extended hours of service relating to special events.

The strategic planning process will continue through the spring of 2016. Nashville MTA/RTA encourages all residents of Middle Tennessee to participate and make their voices heard through one of the outreach channels mentioned above. Results are continuously monitored, and efforts such as focus groups will continue in order to address any gaps identified in outreach activities.





# Ensuring regional participation

To date, 77 percent of survey respondents reside in Davidson County (see figures 7 and 8). To connect with people throughout the region, MTA/RTA partnered with Cumberland Region Tomorrow and the Transit Alliance of Middle Tennessee. As part of this regional partnership, in the fall of 2015, MTA/RTA hosted nine large-scale public meetings, one in each of the counties surrounding Davidson County, in order to hear from residents across the region.

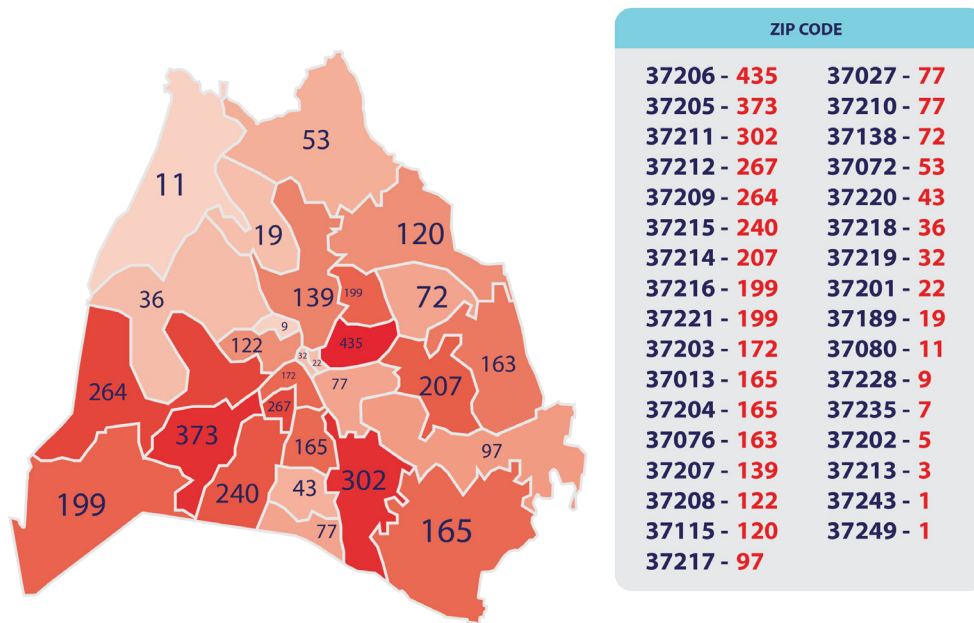


FIGURE 7 | PARTICIPATION IN DAVIDSON COUNTY BY ZIP CODE

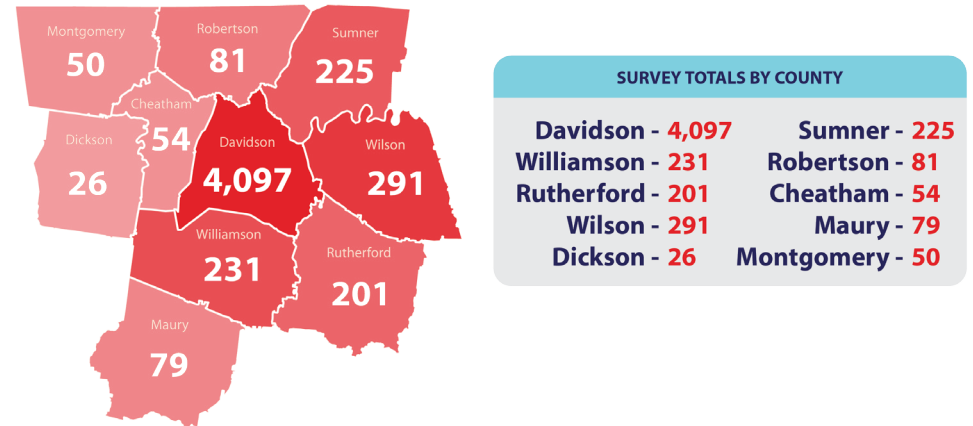


FIGURE 8 | PARTICIPATION IN MIDDLE TENNESSEE REGION BY COUNTY

# Next Steps

nMotion will continue seeking input from as many Nashville-area residents as possible to help Nashville MTA/RTA develop the best mass transit system possible. In February 2016, Nashville MTA/RTA will present three future transit system scenarios, tailored by levels of investment. These three potential visions for the region's future transit system are being built based on an evaluation of the input received to date. Nashville MTA/RTA will host public meetings and online discussion forums and will launch a Web-based tool to collect input from people across the region about these three scenarios.

Ultimately it is up to the people of Middle Tennessee to decide what level of investment in public transit we want to make as a region. Varying levels of investment will deliver varying improvements and results. Through imagining three future transit systems with three different levels of investment, Nashville MTA/RTA hopes people will be able to understand the advantages and disadvantages of investing more – or investing less – in public transit and share their opinions. Part of determining which scenario is best for Nashville and Middle Tennessee will involve an evaluation based largely on the Guiding Principles and input from the public.

Based on public feedback, these scenarios will be used to develop a regional transit plan, with short- and long-term recommendations. The final Strategic Plan, to be completed in spring 2016, will outline the actions and funding needed to provide a transit system that reflects the stated desires of the people of this region.

**FIGURE 9 | STRATEGIC PLAN SCHEDULE**

## nMotion Timeline

