

Appendix E

Public Opinion Polling



CONNECT COBB
Northwest Transit Corridor Alternatives Analysis
December 2012



Cobb Alternatives Analysis and Comprehensive Plan Survey Results

October 2011

Prepared for



Cobb County...Expect the Best!

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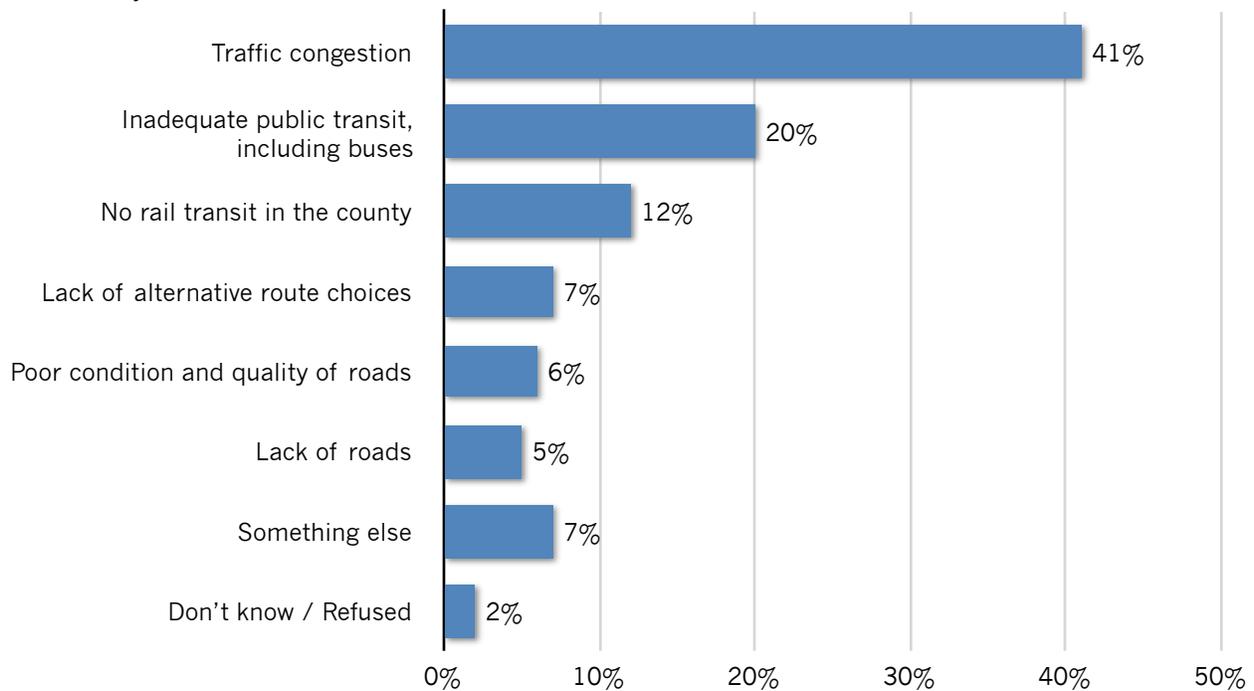
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Alternatives Analysis

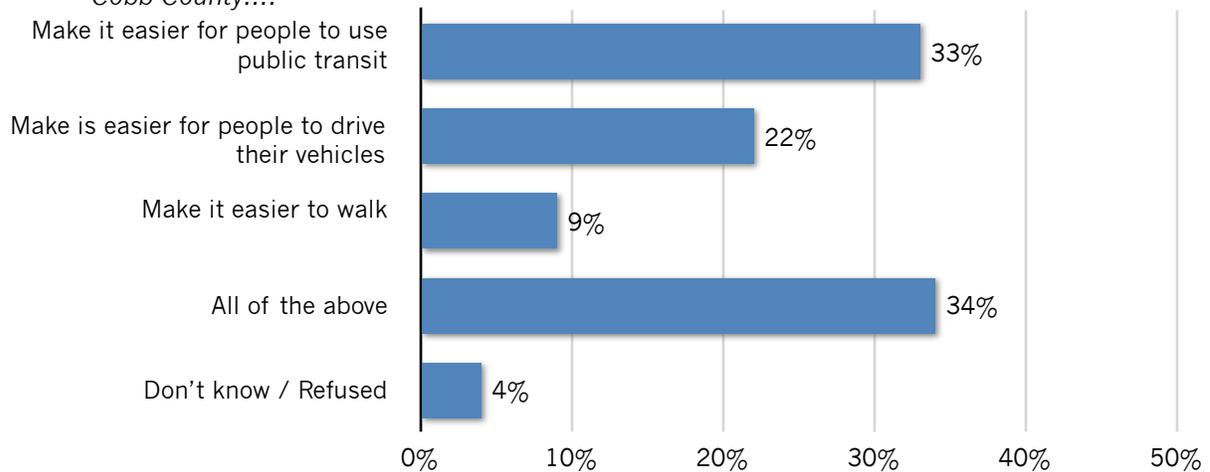
We started broadly by asking Cobb County voters what they believe will be the most significant transportation issues facing the county in 25 years. (Figure 1) Voters believe traffic congestion will be most significant, by a wide margin. Coming in second — and only half as significant as traffic congestion — is the issue of inadequate public transit options, including buses. No other issue was mentioned by even 15% of the respondents, and all items dealing specifically with roads were mentioned by less than 10%.

Figure 1. What do you feel will be the single most significant transportation issue facing Cobb County 25 years from now?



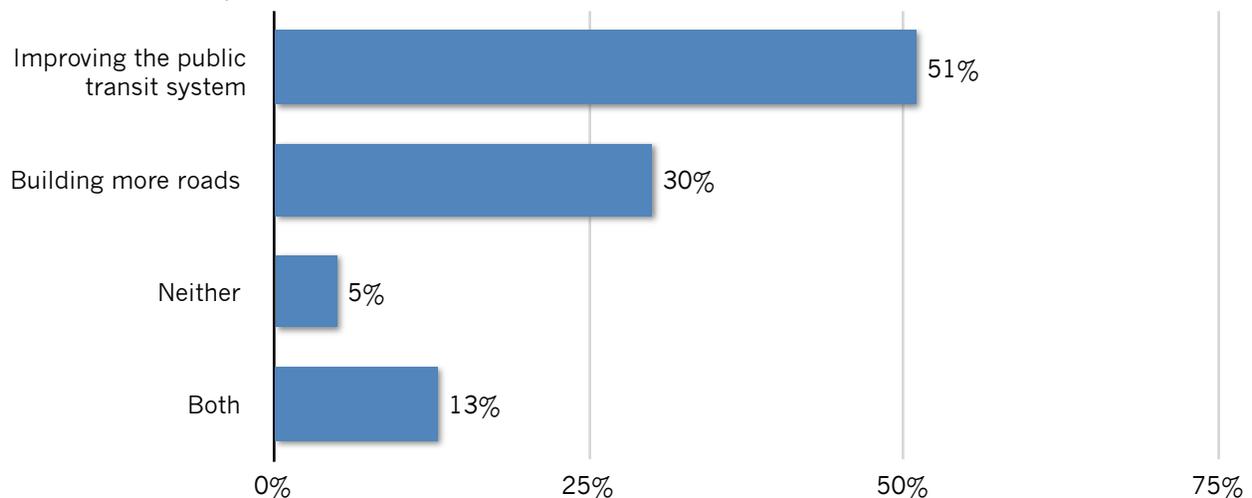
When asked what they would like the county government to do to make it easier to get to local destinations, one-third of respondents (33%) indicated that Cobb County should make it easier for people to use public transportation. (Figure 2) About one-quarter (22%) indicated the county should make it easier to drive their vehicles, and only 9% said the county should make it easier to walk to destinations. The greatest number of respondents (34%), though, indicated that Cobb County should work on improving all three — public transportation, driving, and walking.

Figure 2. Now I am going to read you three alternative directions to address Cobb County's transportation problems. To make it easier for residents to get to local destinations, should Cobb County...?



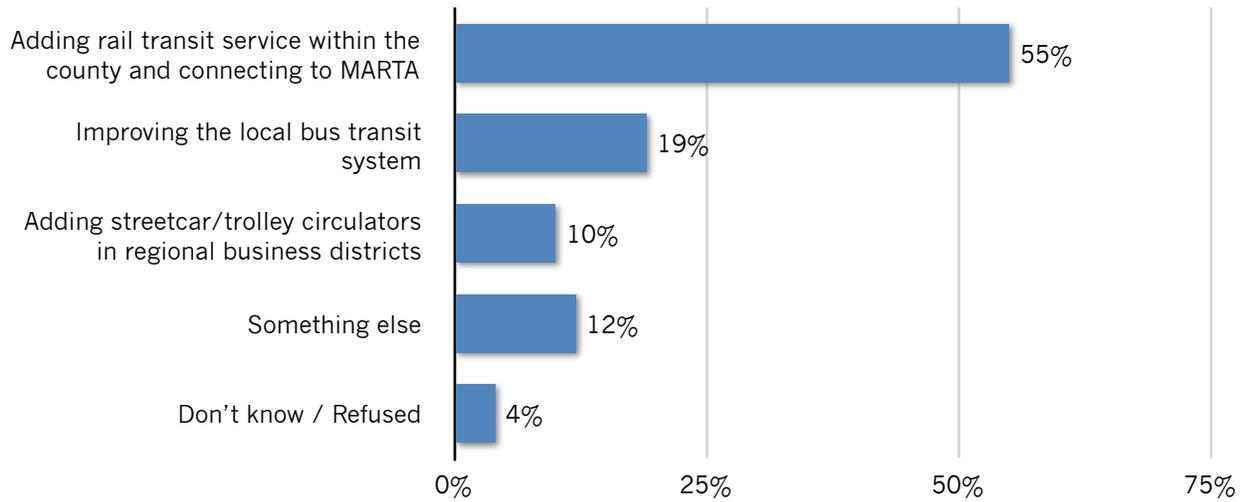
We next asked respondents directly about their preference between two specific possible strategies for improving transportation in the area: building more roadways and improving the public transit system. (Figure 3) A majority of voters (51%) considers improving the public transit system to be the more important of the two, while 30% believe building more roads to be the greater priority. Thirteen percent of respondents find them to be of equal importance, and only 5% don't consider either to be a priority.

Figure 3. County officials often have to decide priorities based on limited resources. If you had to choose, which is more important to you — building more roadways, or improving the public transit system?



Now, thinking only about improving the public transit system, we asked respondents what Cobb County should do to improve it. (Figure 4) By far the most preferred strategy is to add rail transit service within the county, and have it connect to MARTA (55%). Combined, the other tested strategies — improving the local bus transit system and adding streetcar/trolley circulators in regional business districts — received barely half the amount of support as adding rail transit.

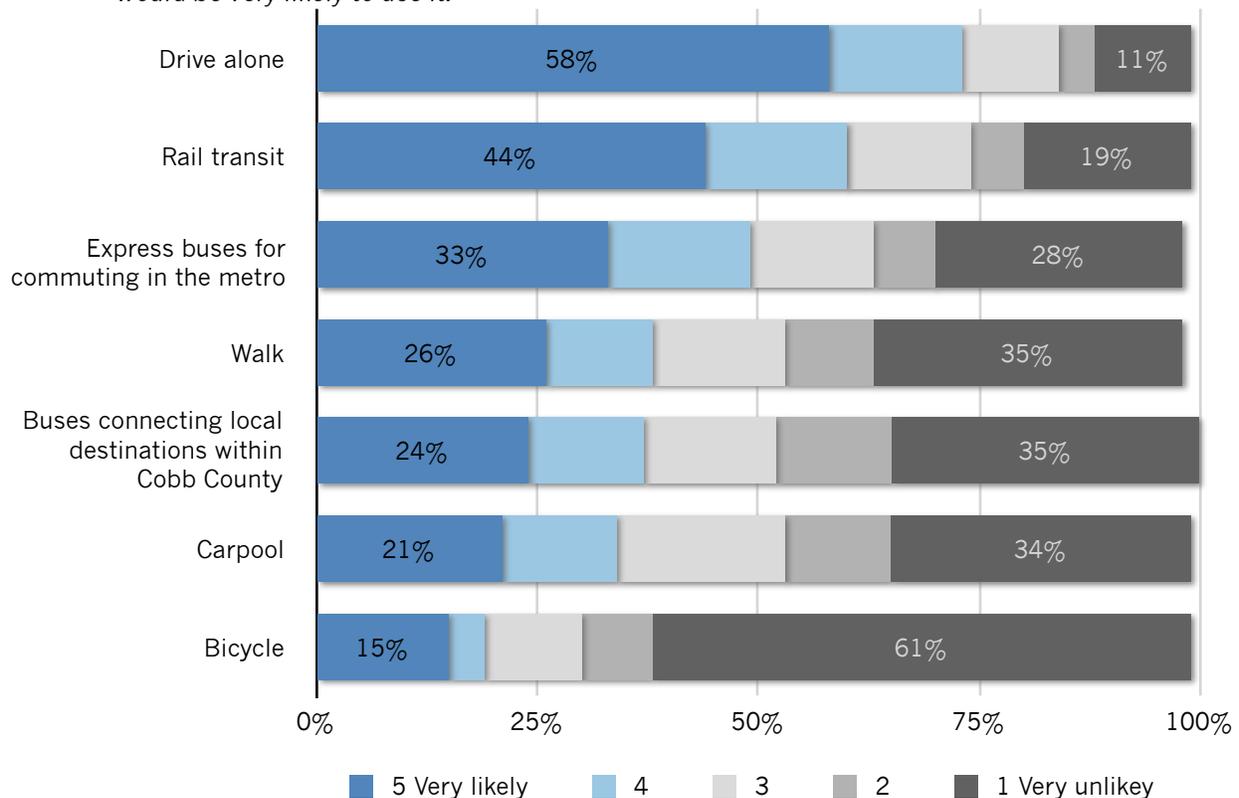
Figure 4. Suppose the county was considering improving the public transit system. Would you prefer to improve the system through:



Comprehensive Plan

The first set of Comprehensive Plan questions also covered transportation issues. Cobb County voters are more likely to drive alone than to take any other form of transportation when it is convenient. (Figure 5) A majority of respondents indicate they would, in fact, be *very* likely to drive to a destination if it was convenient, and this is the only option that received an average score over 4 (4.07). Following behind driving alone, with an average score of 3.60, is rail transit. No other options had a majority of respondents giving a score of 4 or 5, and the only other option to average above a 3 is express buses (3.19). Voters are particularly unlikely to ride bicycles to destinations (average score=2.03).

Figure 5. On a scale of one to five, how likely would you be to use the following means of travel if they were convenient? A one means you would be very unlikely to use it, and a five means that you would be very likely to use it.



The next bloc of questions asked about a myriad of issues facing local government, most of them not directly related to transportation. The most important are presented in Figure 6 below. Each of these issues is considered very important by at least half of the respondents, and, as it turns out, two of the top three issues deal with transportation: decreasing traffic congestion and improving commute times.

Figure 6. Now I'm going to list several issues facing local government and I'd like you to tell me, on a scale of one to five, how important each one is to you. A one means that the issue is not important to you, and a five means the issue is very important.

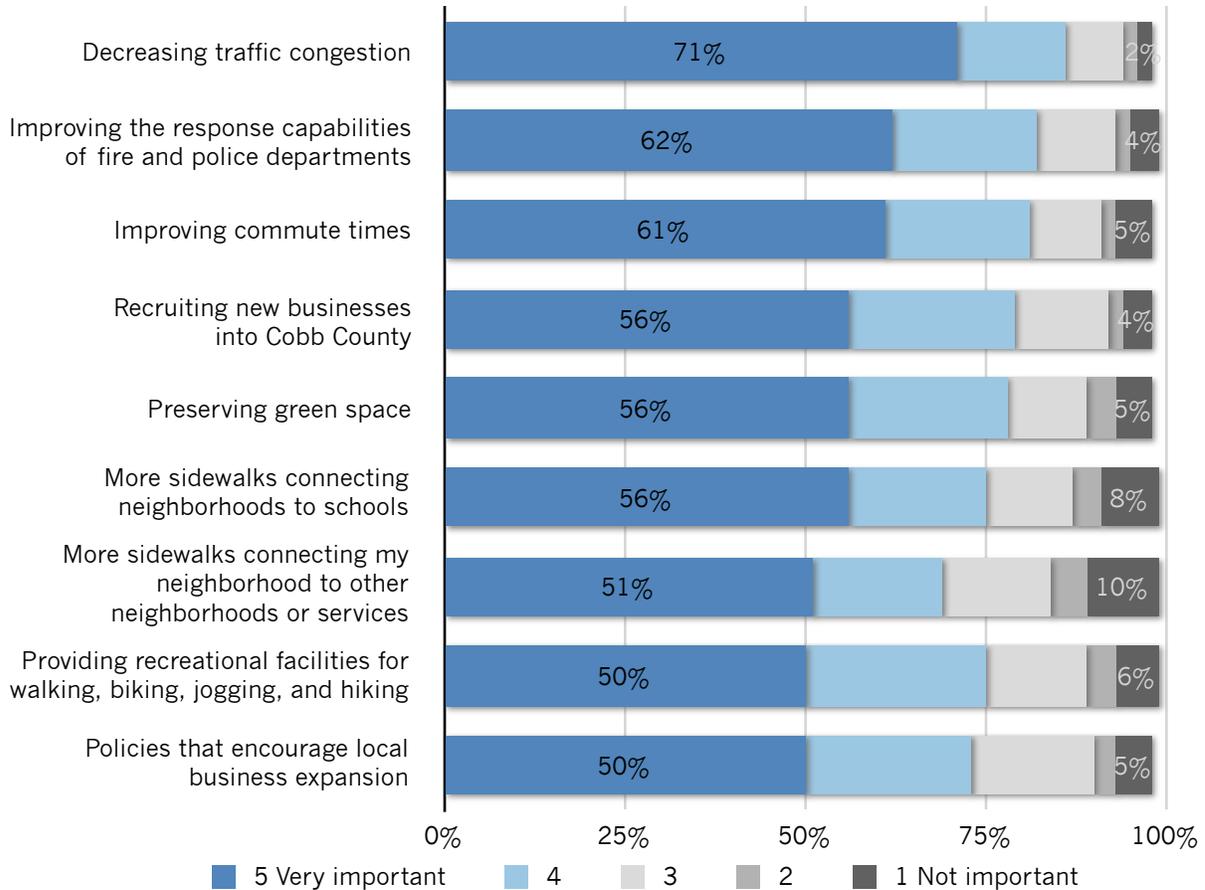
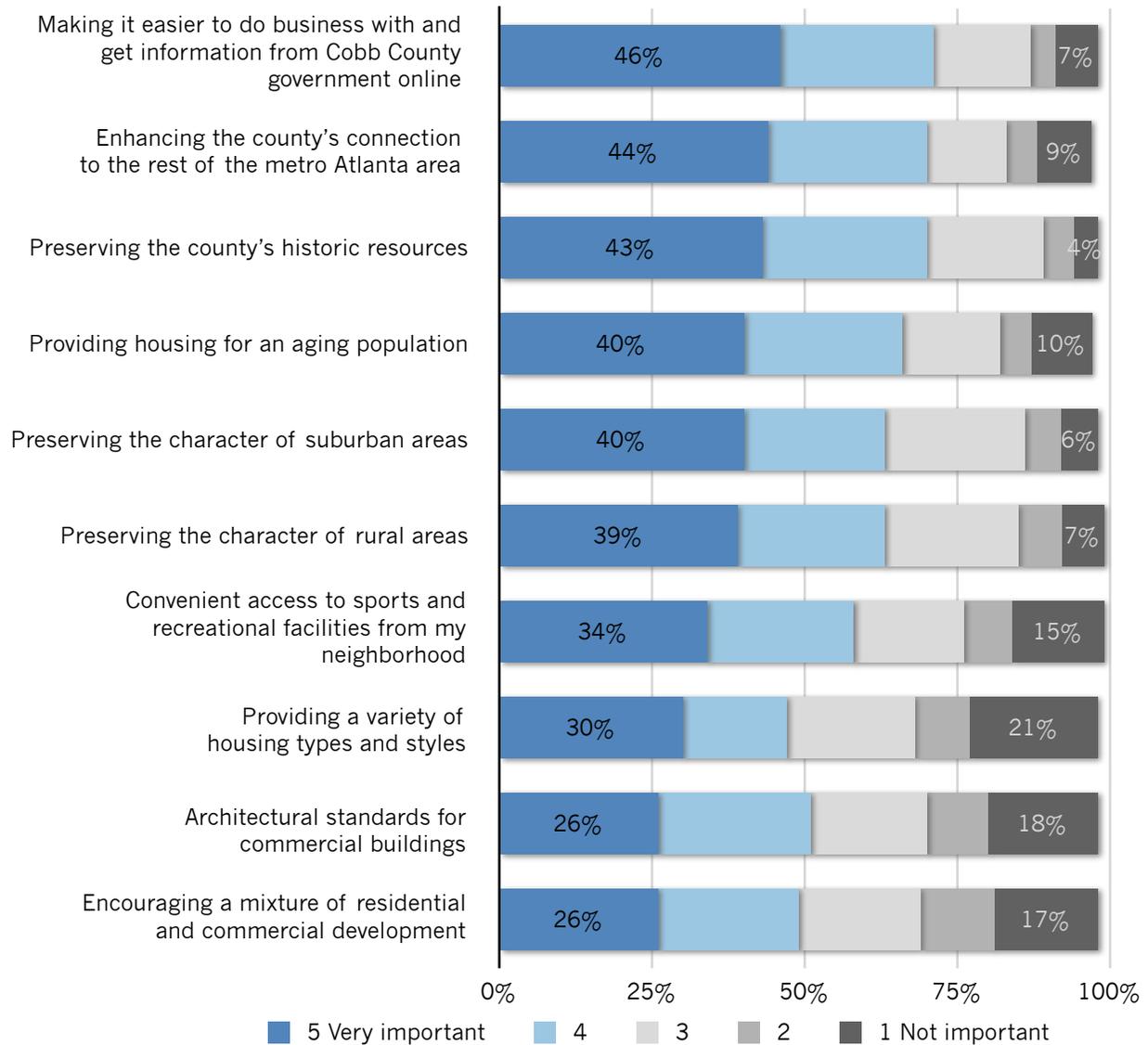


Figure 7 displays the the rest of the issues, which are slightly less important than the above issues, though a majority of respondents still rated all but two of them either a 4 or a 5 in importance. Looking in particular at voters' preference for the character of the county, preserving the character of rural areas received an average score of 3.82, quite similar to preserving the character of suburban areas (3.88) and enhancing the county's connection to the rest of metro Atlanta (3.94).

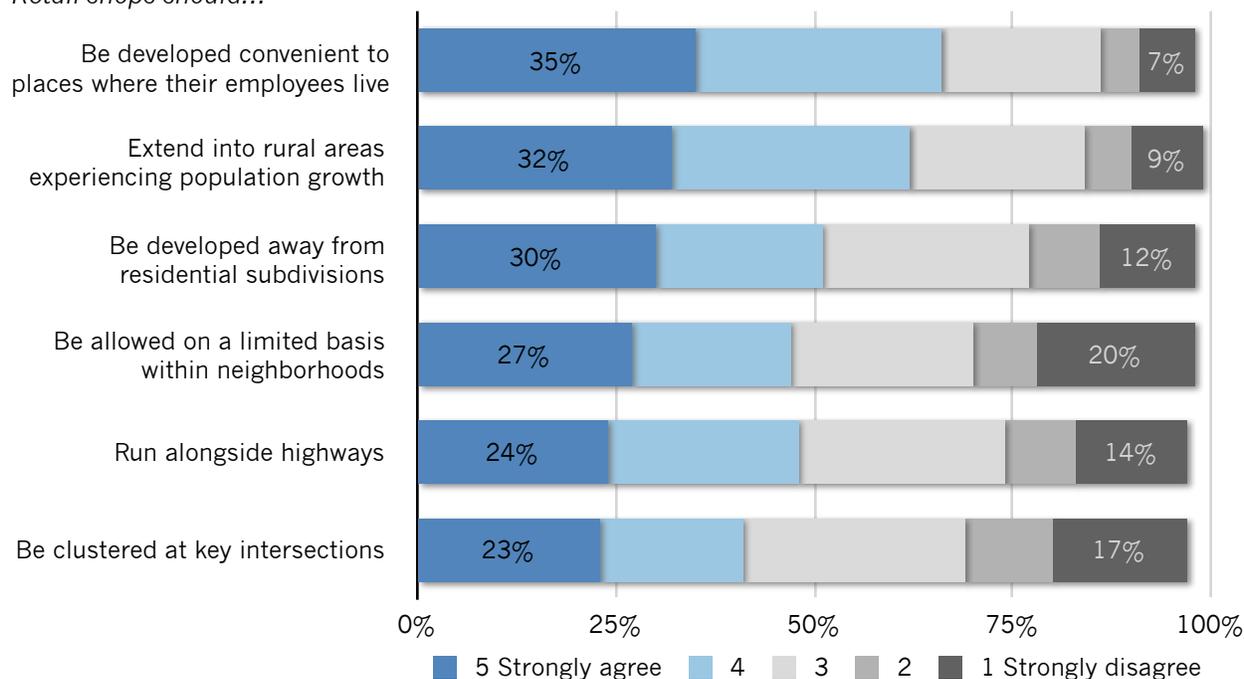
Figure 7. Now I'm going to list several issues facing local government and I'd like you to tell me, on a scale of one to five, how important each one is to you. A one means that the issue is not important to you, and a five means the issue is very important. (Figure 6 continued)



We next asked voters about their preferred location for retail shops. (Figure 8) Respondents are most interested in developing retail shops in locations that are convenient to where their employees live, and extending them into rural areas that are experiencing population growth. One item that stands out is allowing retail shops on limited basis into neighborhoods; one out of every five voters strongly disagrees with this implementation strategy. Otherwise, little separates the different items — there is a 0.65 difference in average score of the most agreed upon item and the least.

Figure 8. Now I'm going to read you a few statements, and I'd like you to tell me how much you agree or disagree with each one, on a scale of one to five. A one means you strongly disagree, and a five means you strongly agree.

Retail shops should...

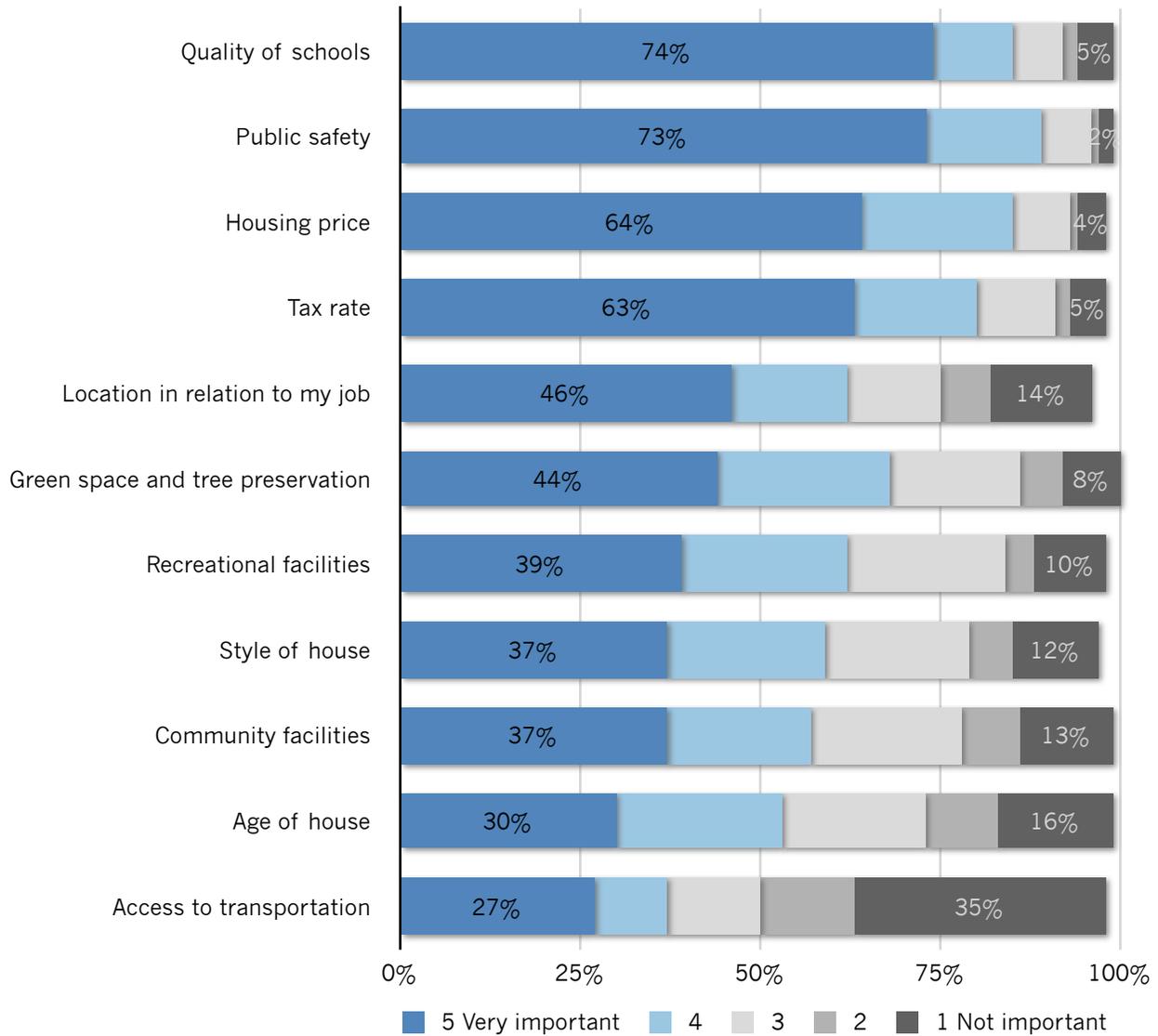


Finally, we asked Cobb County voters about what factors went into their decision to choose their neighborhood. (Figure 9) The two most important factors are the quality of schools and public safety, with nearly three-quarters of voters indicating those were very important considerations. Housing price and tax rate follow close behind.

One noticeable finding is that access to transportation rates last among the tested items — by a long-shot. Thirty-five percent of respondents said that this was not an important factor in choosing their neighborhood. This seems to fly in the face of the findings above that many residents have a strong desire for expanded public transportation in their area. There are two likely reasons. Access to transportation could simply be lower on residents' list of priorities, and they are willing to sacrifice it when they can find all of their other priorities in their chosen neighborhood. Or, since the question asks specifically about how they chose their neighborhood *in Cobb County*, it presumes that they had *already* chosen Cobb County as the county in which they would like to live. And, because the county does not have an extensive public transportation system (at least when it comes to rail), access to transportation *could not* be a consideration when choosing their neighborhood

there. It is clear from the results of the earlier questions, though, that there is now a great deal of desire for more public transportation options.

Figure 9. In choosing your neighborhood in Cobb County as a place to live, how important were each of the following to you on a scale of one to five. A one means it was not important, and a five means it was very important.



Summary

- ❖ When thinking about future transportation issues in Cobb County, voters are most concerned about traffic congestion. The second most significant issue is inadequate public transit, including buses.
- ❖ Respondents want to be able to get to local destinations more easily by any means they choose, including driving alone and walking, but they are particularly interested in making it easier to use public transit.
- ❖ If the county chooses to improve the public transit system, voters' preferred method is to add rail transit service within the county and connecting to MARTA.
- ❖ Respondents are most likely to drive alone when it is convenient, and rail transit was the second most popular method.
- ❖ There are many issues that are quite important to voters in Cobb County. Two of the top three deal with transportation: decreasing traffic congestion and improving commute times. Some of the other most important issues are improving the response capabilities of fire and police departments, recruiting new businesses into the county, preserving green space, and more sidewalks.
- ❖ Voters are most likely to prefer retail shops be developed in areas that are convenient to where their employees live and extend into rural areas that are experiencing population growth.
- ❖ The most important factors in choosing a neighborhood in Cobb County are quality of schools, public safety, housing price, and tax rate.

Methodology

In October 2011, The Schapiro Group (TSG) conducted a scientific telephone survey of 733 Cobb County voters to explore their opinions on transportation options and other issues affecting their community. The overall results were then weighted and are demographically representative of the county. The margin of sampling error for the countywide results is $\pm 3.6\%$.

Demographics

Figure 10. About how many total miles do you drive daily on your commute to and from work?

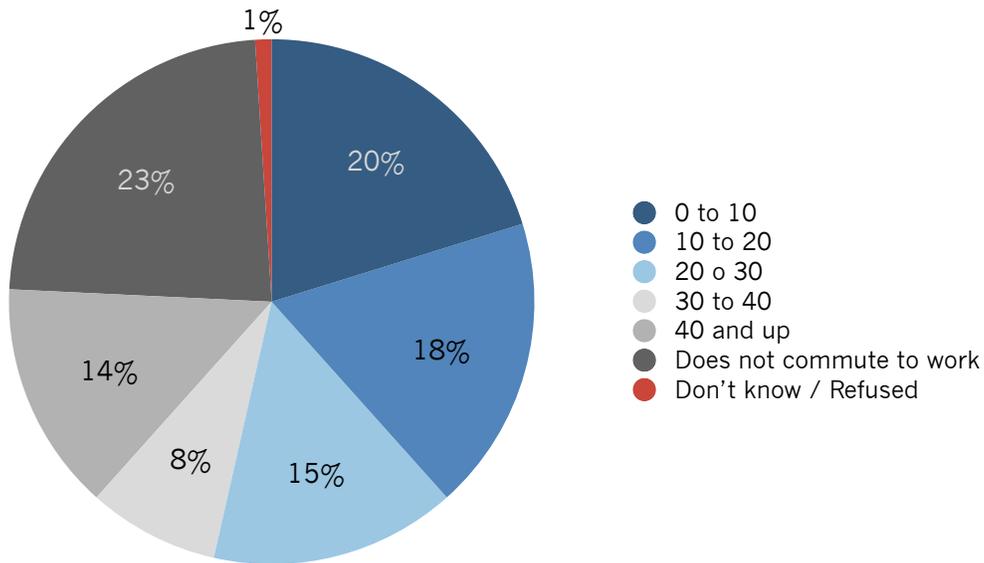


Figure 11. If commutes to work: How often do you drive on I-75 or US-41 as part of your commute?

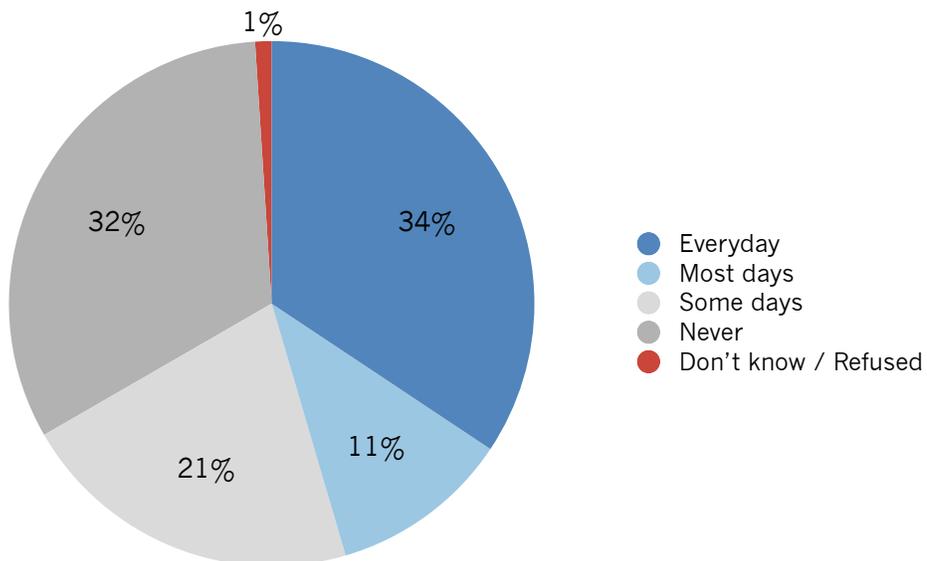


Figure 12: Political Party

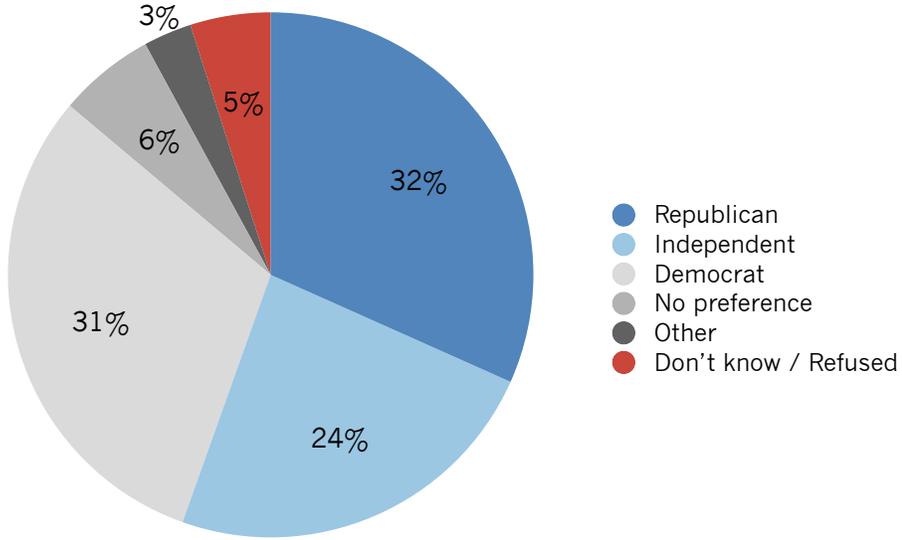


Figure 13: Age

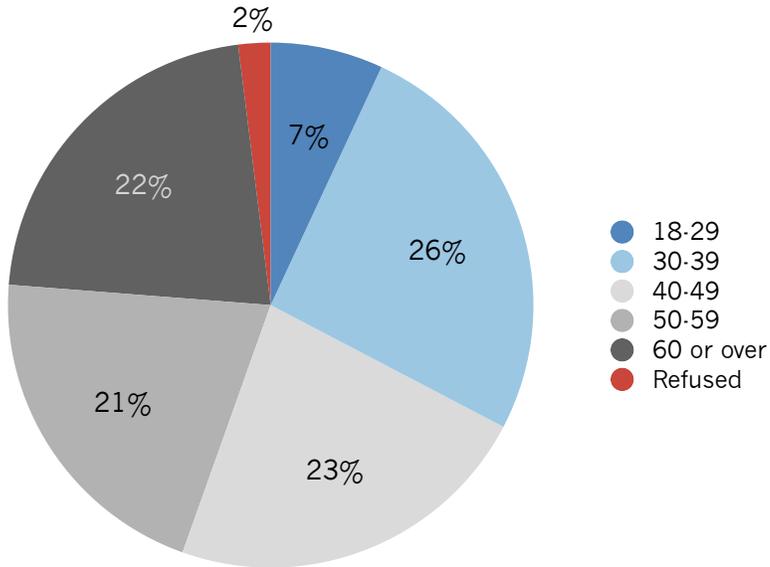
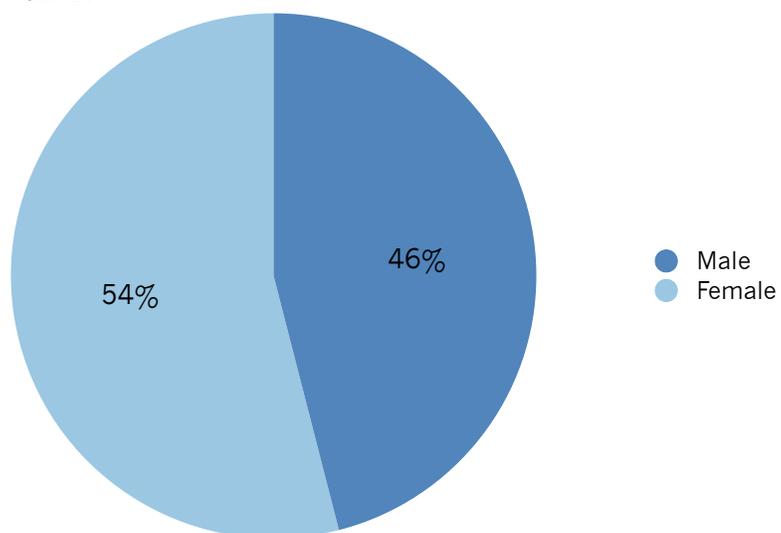


Figure 14: Gender





Cobb Alternatives Analysis Survey Results

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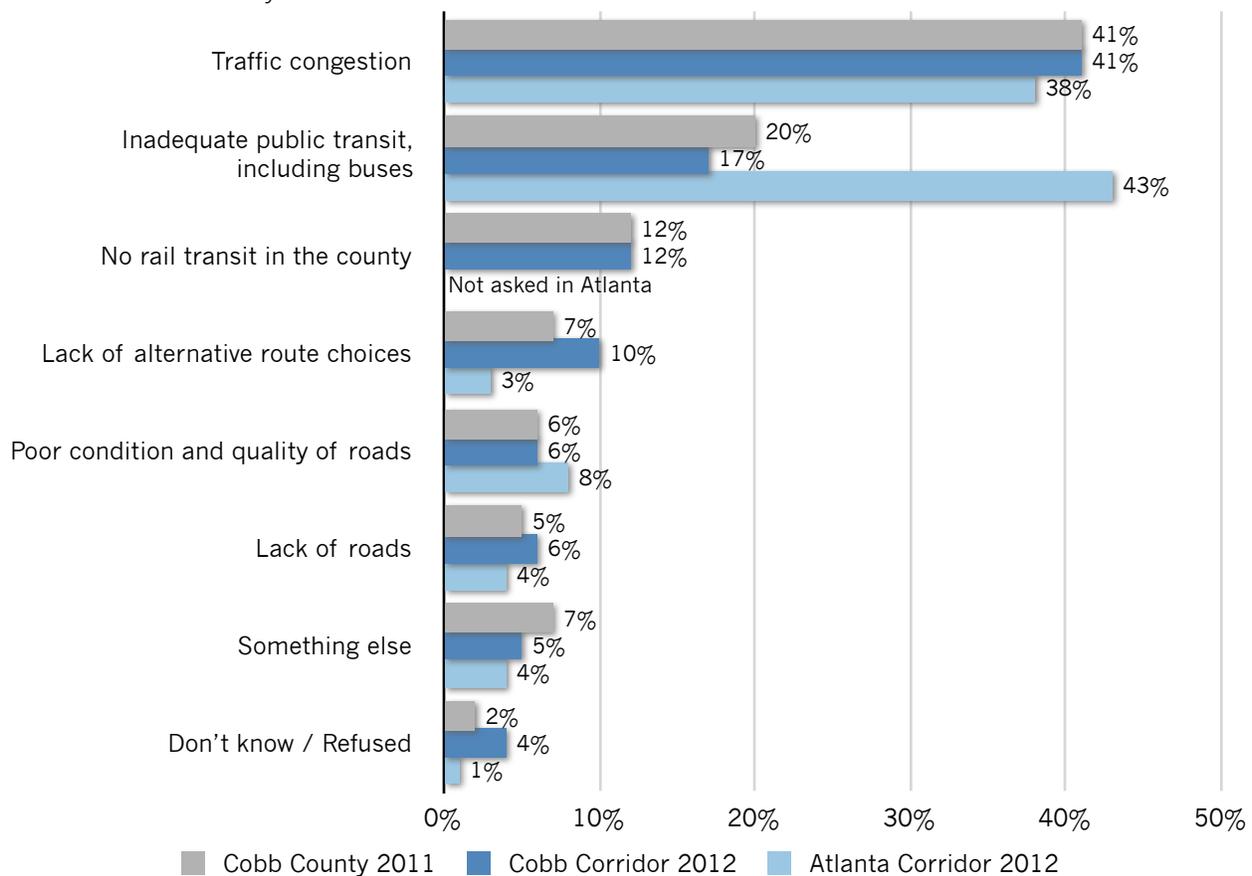
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Alternatives Analysis

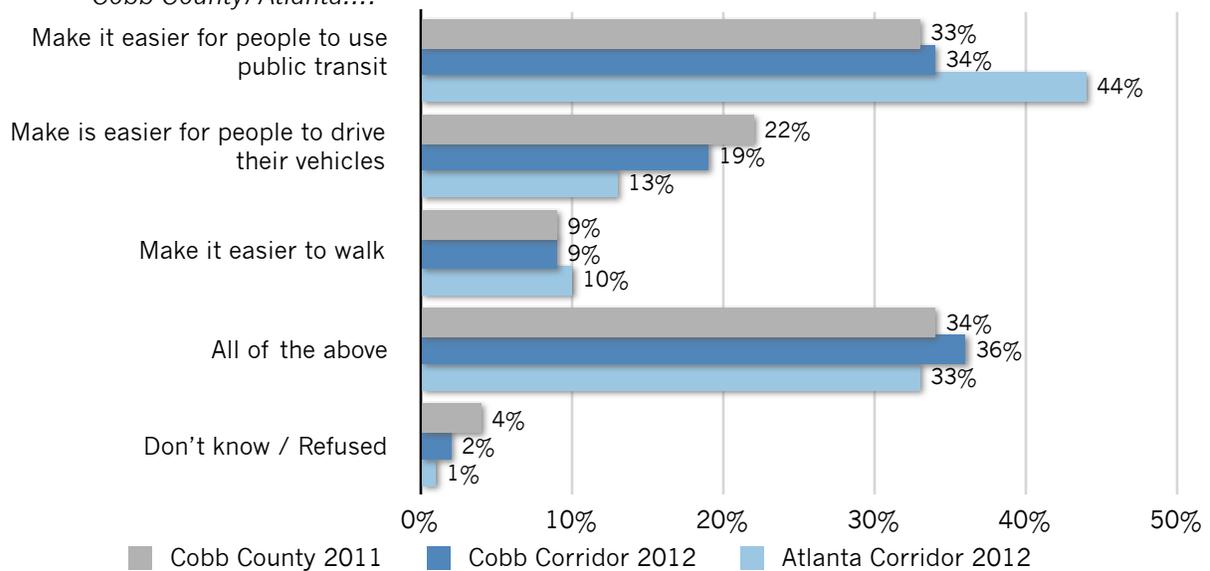
The first several questions are identical to those asked of voters in Cobb County in 2011. At that time, Cobb County residents were most concerned about the traffic congestion the county might face in 25 years, followed then by public transit issues. Voters in 2012 along the Cobb Corridor are quite similar in their concerns. (Figure 1) Voters along the Atlanta Corridor are also quite concerned about traffic congestion, and they are much more concerned about the inadequate public transit in the area relative to voters along the Cobb portion of the corridor.

Figure 1. What do you feel will be the single most significant transportation issue facing Cobb County/ Atlanta 25 years from now?



Cobb Corridor voters in 2012 also feel largely the same way as Cobb County voters in 2011 did about the best ways to address the area’s transportation problems. (Figure 2) About one-third believes that the local government should make it easier for residents to get to destinations via public transit. About one-in-five believes it should be easier to drive to local destinations, and one-in-ten thinks it should be easier to walk. A plurality along the Cobb Corridor, though, believes it should be easier to get to destinations via all three modes. Voters along the Atlanta section of the corridor feel more strongly about making it easier to travel on public transportation, and they are somewhat less interested in making driving easier for vehicles.

Figure 2. Now I am going to read you three alternative directions to address Cobb County's/Atlanta's transportation problems. To make it easier for residents to get to local destinations, should Cobb County/Atlanta...?



When asking respondents to choose between two types of transportation priorities—improving public transit and building more roads—the story is once again the same as a year ago. (Figure 3) Residents living along the Cobb Corridor feel the same today as residents of the entire county did: half of respondents feel that the emphasis should be on improving public transit. In Atlanta, an even greater percentage (about two-thirds) prioritizes improving public transit over building roads.

Next we looked specifically at what improvements residents would like to see in the public transit system. (Figure 4) A majority of Cobb Corridor residents this year is interested in adding rail within the county and connecting to MARTA, similar to the response of Cobb County residents in 2011. This year, though, residents along the corridor are somewhat more interested in both improving the local bus transit system as well as adding streetcar/trolley circulators in the county. Atlanta residents were offered a few different options based on the transportation options already in place there. Those residents are, by far, most interested in expanding MARTA rail service, followed then by increasing the frequency of trains and buses and expanding MARTA bus stops.

Figure 3. County/City officials often have to decide priorities based on limited resources. If you had to choose, which is more important to you — building more roadways, or improving the public transit system?

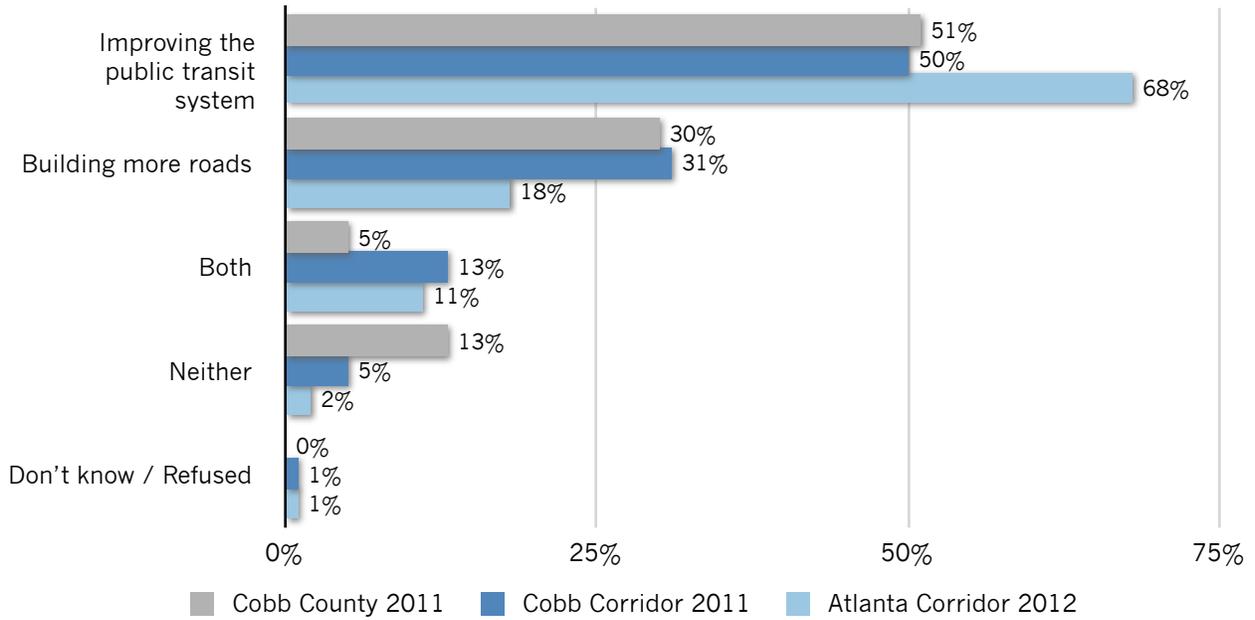
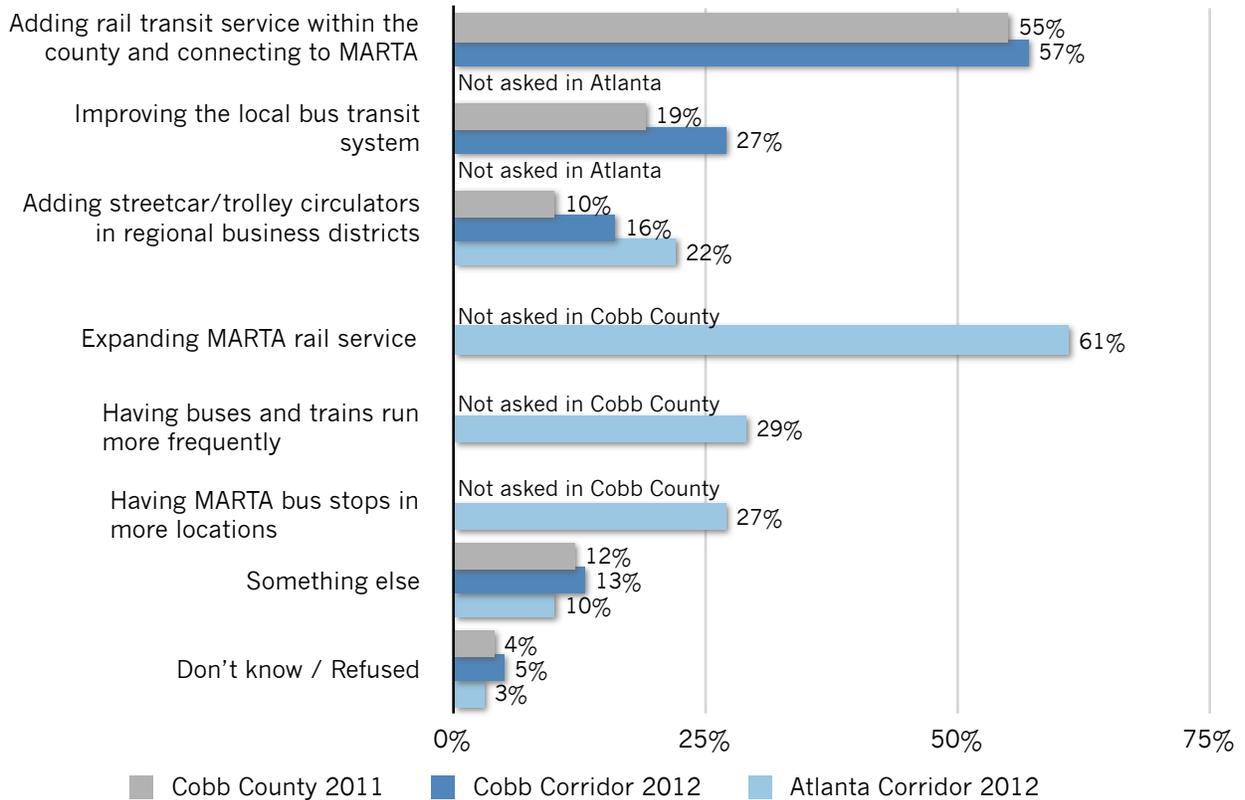


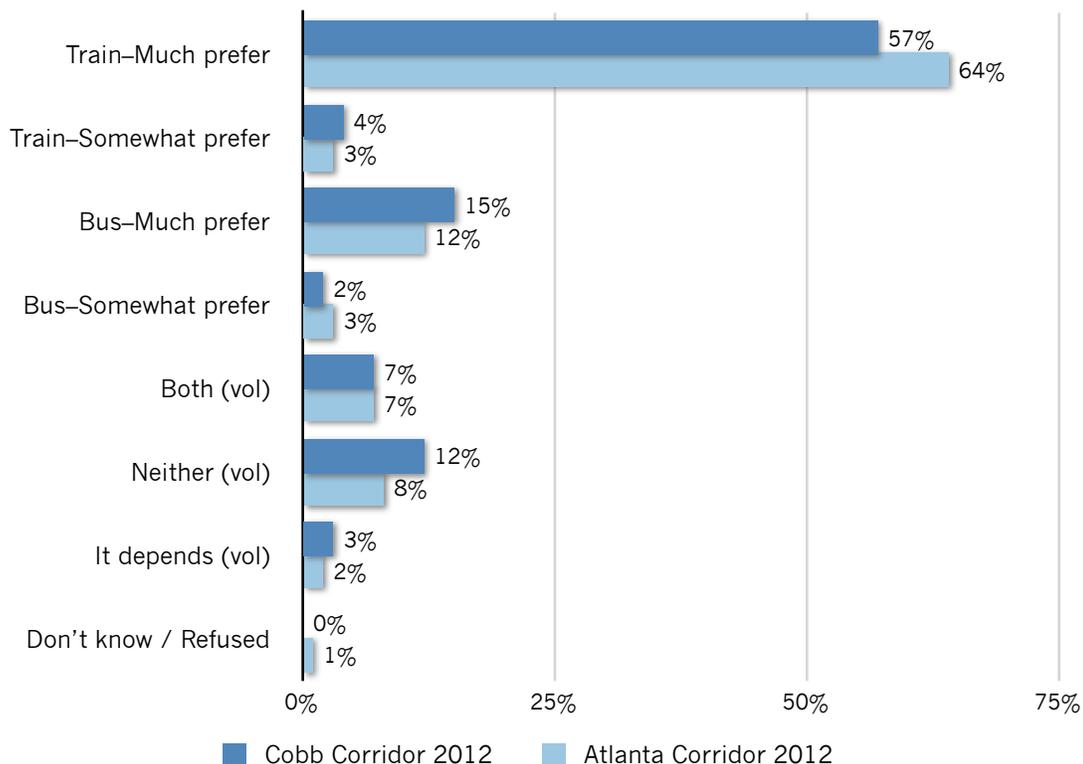
Figure 4. Suppose the county/city was considering improving the public transit system. Would you prefer to improve the system through:



Preferred Alternative

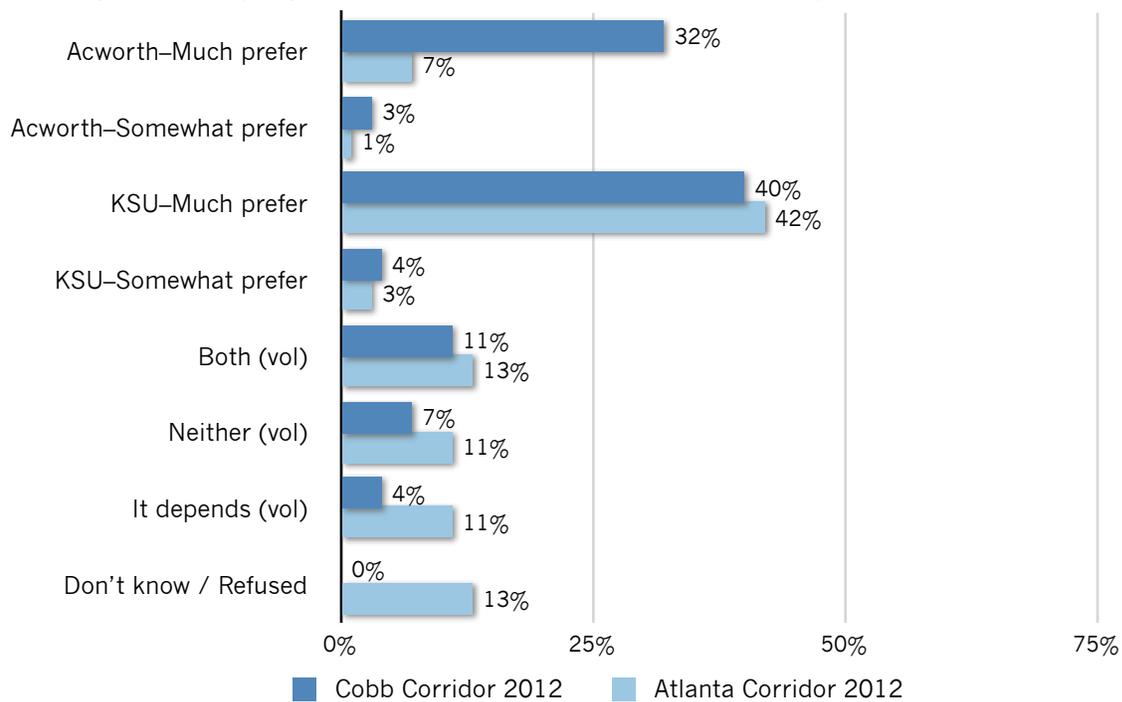
This section of questions was not asked in 2011 and focuses on drilling down into the specific characteristics of potential transportation alternatives. The first question asks about the mode of transportation. (Figure 5) Residents in both the Cobb and Atlanta portions of the corridor strongly favor train over bus transit by about four-to-one. The results from both portions of the corridor are fairly similar, though Atlantans hold an even stronger preference for trains than Cobb County residents.

Figure 5. Local officials are considering several possible ways to improve transportation back and forth between Cobb County and the Arts Center MARTA station in the City of Atlanta. One way is adding a new form of public transportation. One option would be adding light rail transit, which means laying down tracks for passenger trains that could run along highways and on streets between Cobb County and the Arts Center MARTA station in Midtown Atlanta. Another possible option would be bus rapid transit, which means adding lanes to highways that can be used by passenger buses between Cobb County and the Arts Center MARTA station in Midtown Atlanta. If cost was not a factor, which would you prefer to see in place: light rail transit, or bus transit?



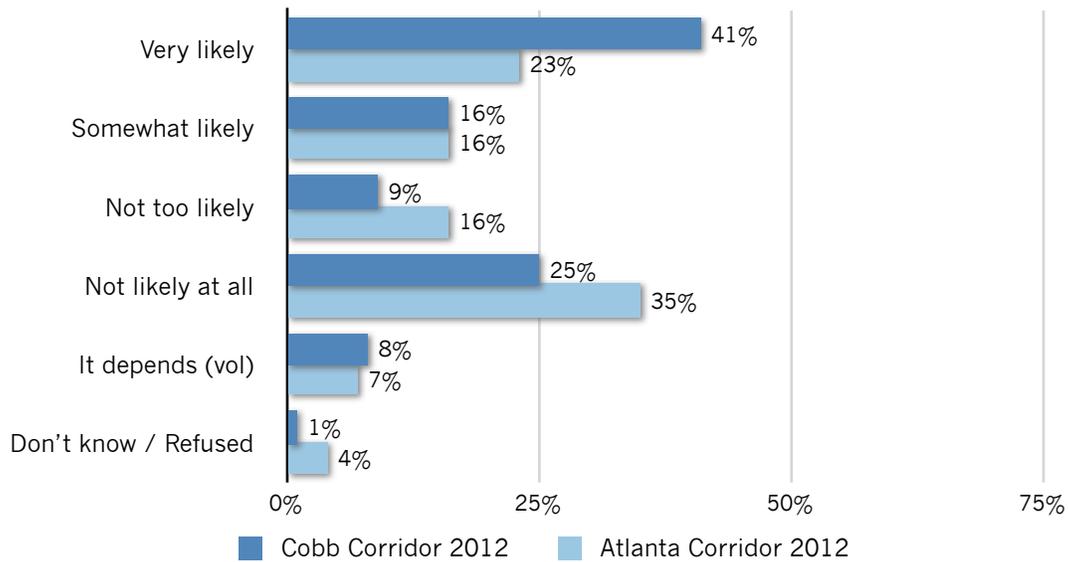
The next question asked about public transit destinations, regardless of mode. (Figure 6) Residents of Cobb County are split over what the northern end point of the route should be. More than one-third prefers the route to go all the way up to Acworth, while close to one-half would rather it stop at Kennesaw State University. Eleven percent of Cobb residents along the corridor would like it to have stops at both. Atlantans feel differently. They are almost six times as likely to prefer KSU to Acworth.

Figure 6. There are a couple of different possible end points in Cobb County for a new public transportation system. The south end in Midtown Atlanta would be the Arts Center MARTA station, but the two options for the northern end in Cobb County would be either in Acworth on SR 92 near Cowan Road, or at Kennesaw State University. If cost was not a factor, which end point would you prefer: Acworth, or Kennesaw State University?



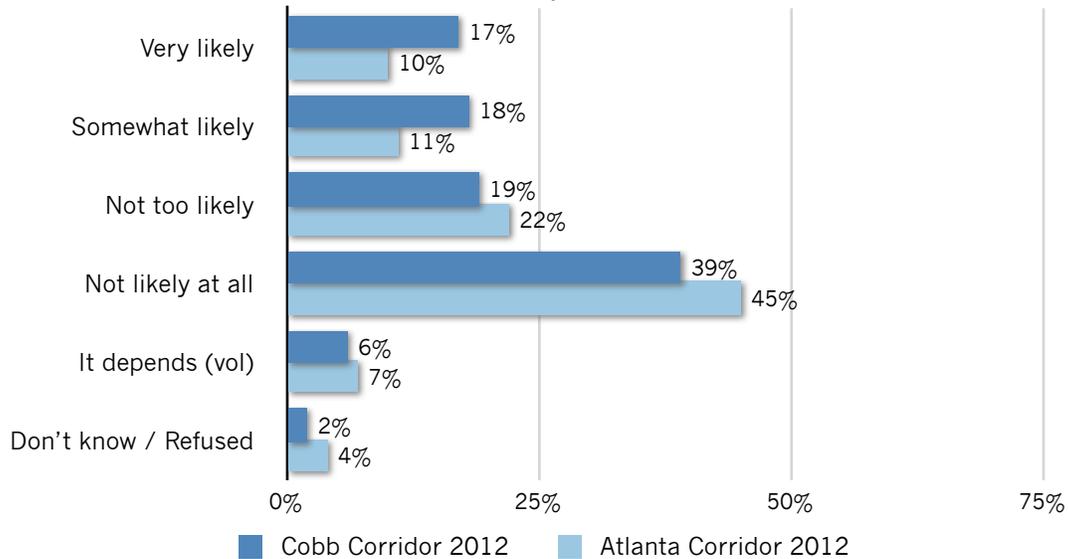
After determining which modes and end points residents prefer, we measured how many would actually ride public transit along the corridor. We first ask how likely area residents would be to ride light rail. (Figure 7) A firm majority of Cobb residents indicates that they would be likely to ride a light passenger rail train between Cobb County and Atlanta, and only 25% say they would not be likely to ride it at all. In Atlanta, on the other hand, a majority says they would not be too likely to ride such a train.

Figure 7. How likely would you be to ride a light rail passenger train between Cobb County and the Arts Center MARTA station in Midtown Atlanta?



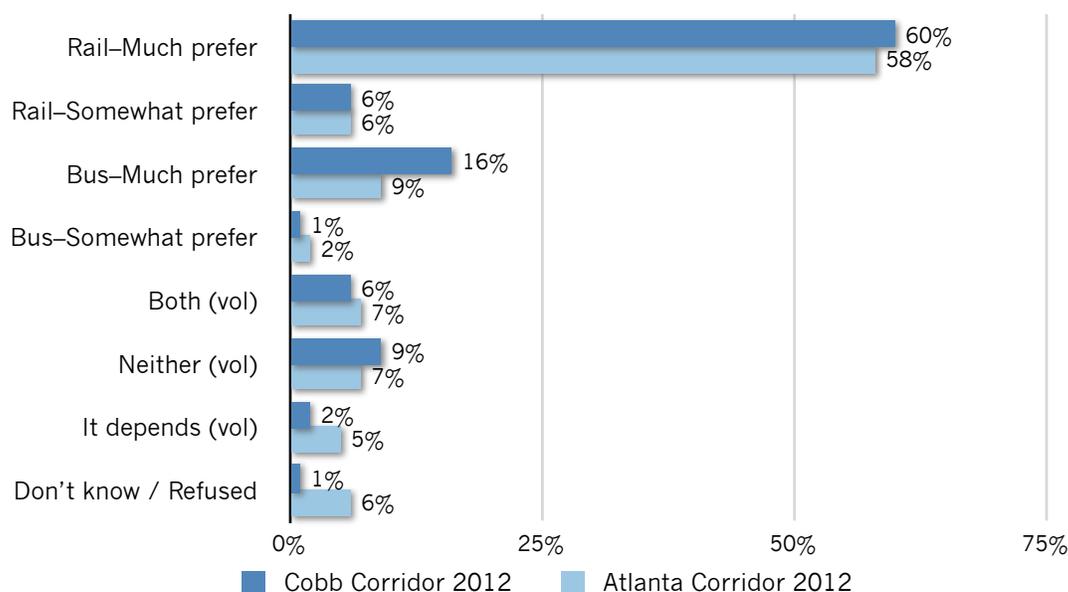
The picture is quite different for bus transit along the corridor. (Figure 8) Majorities of both Cobb and Atlanta residents say they would not be too likely to ride buses.

Figure 8. How likely would you be to ride a bus with a dedicated lane between the Arts Center MARTA station in Midtown Atlanta and Cobb County?



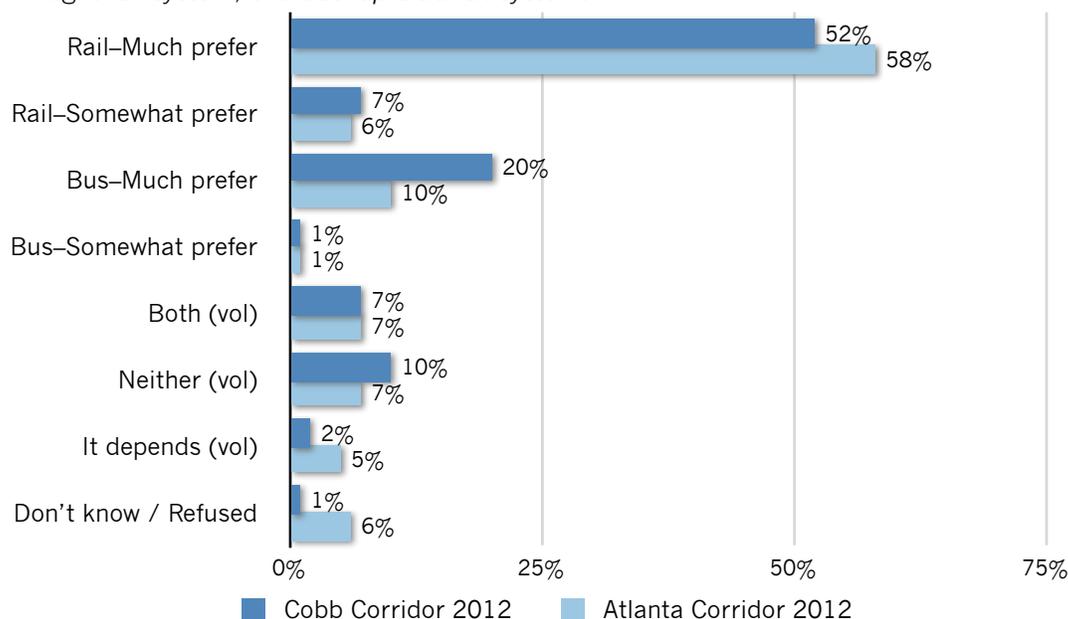
The next couple of questions asked residents about their preferences for mode of travel along two different potential routes along the corridor. The first possible route runs from Midtown Atlanta through Cobb County entirely along I-75. (Figure 9) Residents on both sections of the corridor much prefer the rail option for this route.

Figure 9. Suppose a new public transportation system was going to be developed between Kennesaw or Acworth in Cobb County and Midtown Atlanta. The route would run entirely along I-75. Would you prefer it to be a light rail system, or a bus rapid transit system?



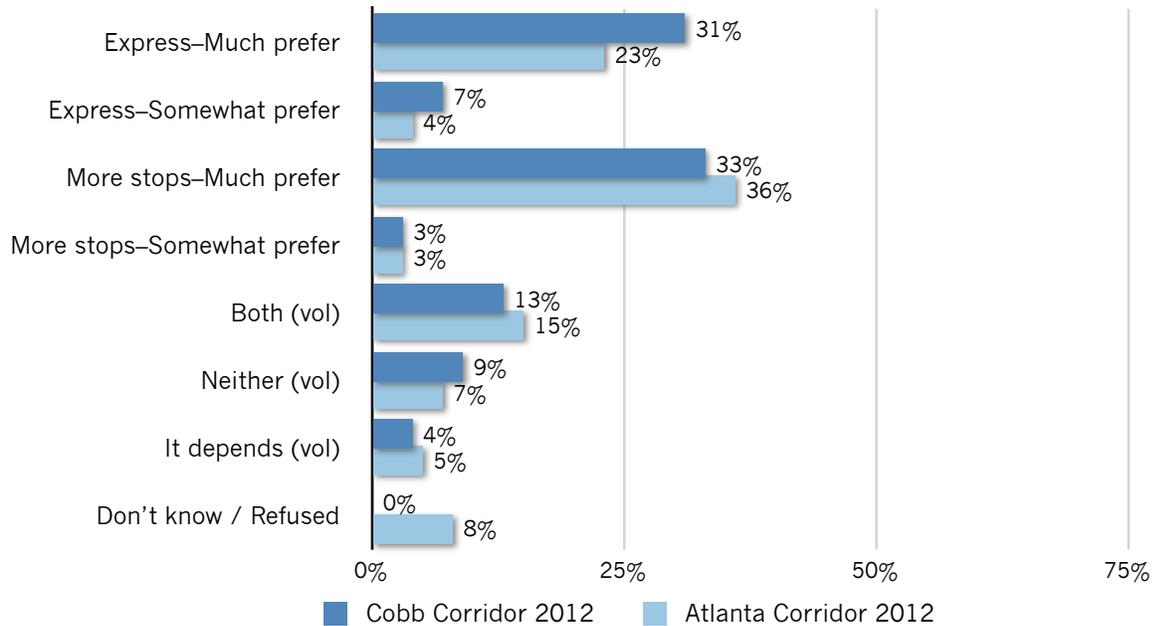
The other possible route is along I-75 in Atlanta, and then along US-41 in Cobb County. (Figure 10) Once again, rail is the much preferred alternative, though Cobb Corridor residents show slightly greater support for buses for this route. It should also be noted that about 10% of respondents consistently say that they prefer *neither* of the options, whether we are asking about mode or route.

Figure 10. Suppose a new public transportation system was going to be developed between Kennesaw or Acworth in Cobb County and Midtown Atlanta. The route would run along US 41 in Cobb County to the Cumberland district, and then along I-75 in Atlanta. Would you prefer it to be a light rail system, or a bus rapid transit system?



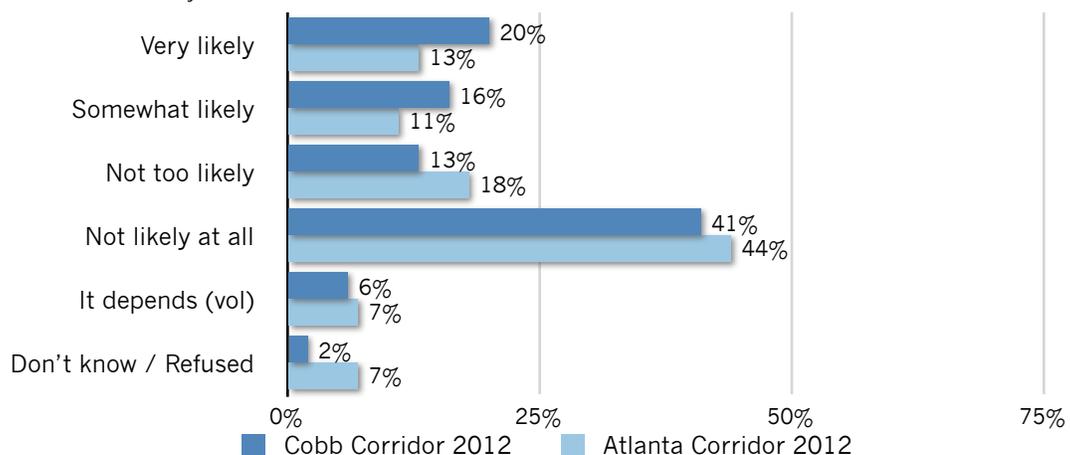
Thinking about the number of stops along any type of transit route, residents along the corridor are fairly divided as to whether they prefer an express service or one with more stops, and about one-in-seven people said they would like to see both in place. (Figure 11)

Figure 11. Would you prefer a public transit system between Kennesaw or Acworth in Cobb County and Midtown Atlanta that had just a few stops along the way and served as an express system, or one that had a greater number of stops that would allow more convenient access to neighborhoods, shopping centers, and employment centers?



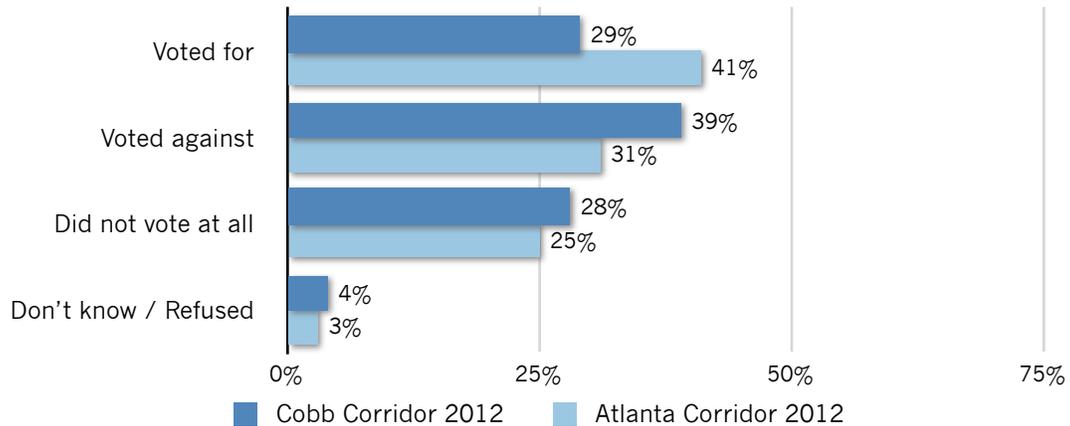
One other transportation alternative is an express bus service. (Figure 12) Close to half of both Cobb and Atlanta corridor residents indicate that they would not be at all likely to ride such a service. This is similar to the number of people who would not be at all likely to ride bus rapid transit.

Figure 12. An express bus system is a bus service, like GRTA that operates during morning and evening rush periods, mainly to take commuters to and from work. It does not have its own lane on the highway. How likely would you be to ride an express bus between Kennesaw or Acworth in Cobb County and the Arts Center MARTA station in Midtown Atlanta?



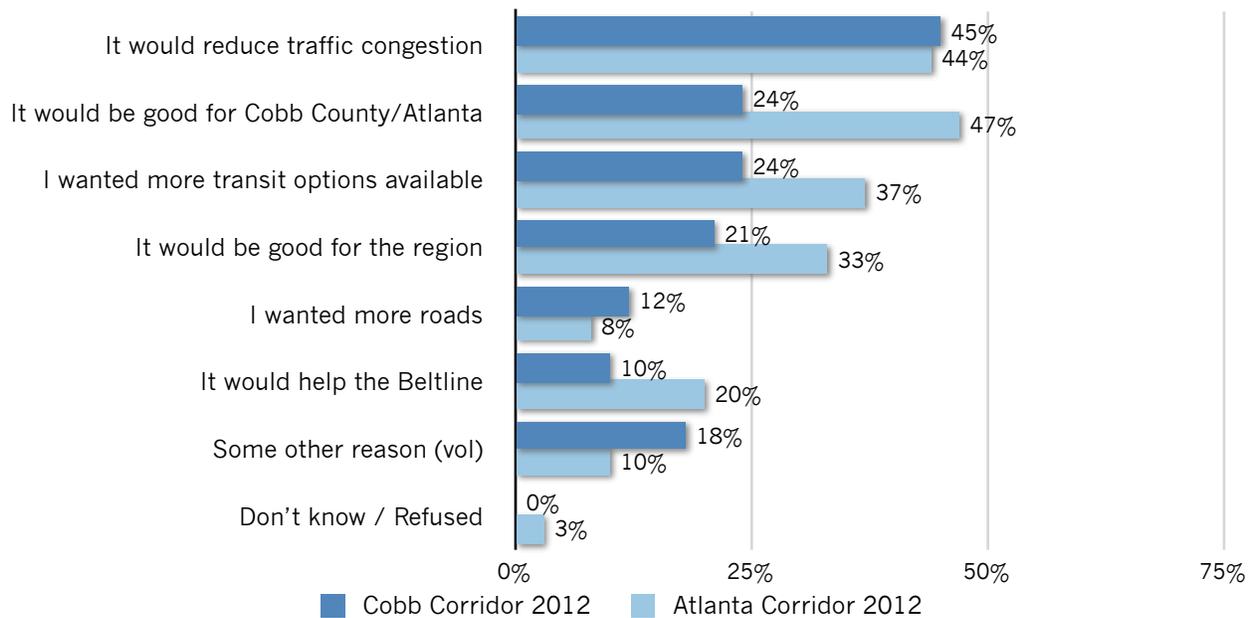
Finally, we asked voters about the recent regional transportation initiative. (Figure 13) In Cobb County, about 10% more respondents voted against it than for it, while the opposite was true for Atlanta.

Figure 13. Thinking back to the election on July 31, did you vote for or against the regional transportation initiative on the ballot? If you did not vote at all in that election, just say so.



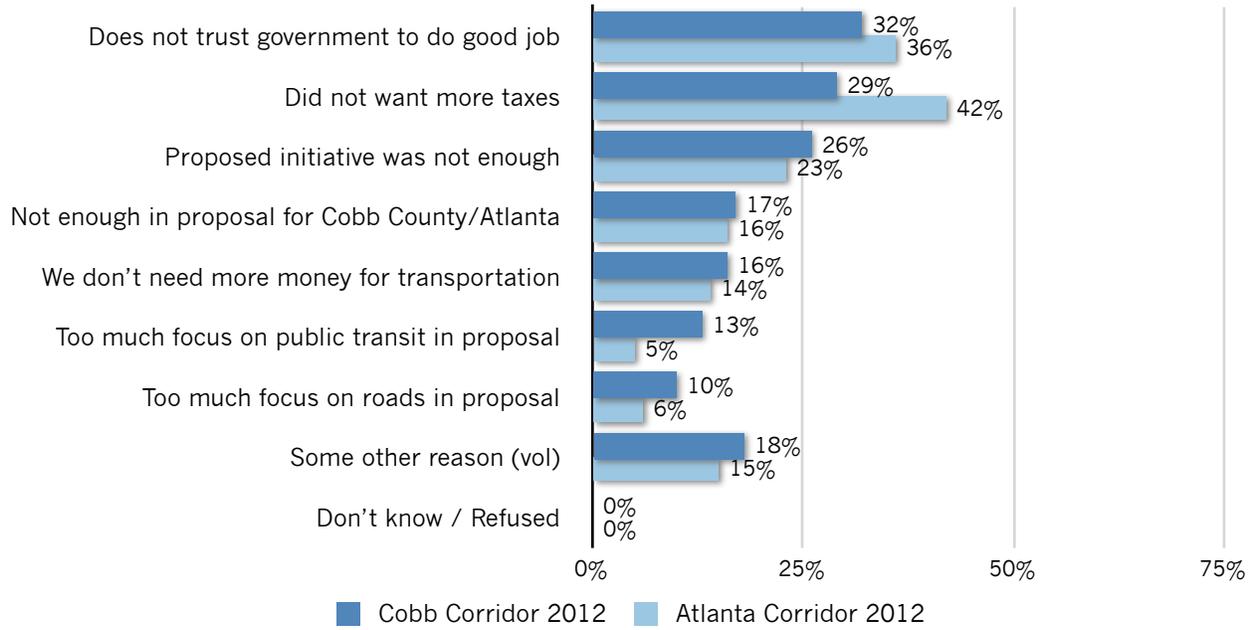
Cobb Corridor residents supported the initiative mainly for one reason: it would reduce traffic congestion. (Figure 14) Atlanta corridor residents voted for it for a number of reasons: it would reduce traffic congestion, it would be good for the city, they wanted more transportation options, and it would be good for the region.

Figure 14. [If FOR] What is the main reason you voted FOR the transportation initiative? (do not read responses) (select all that apply)



Those who voted against the initiative had a variety of reasons for doing so. (Figure 15) The top three in both Cobb County and Atlanta were that they did not trust the government to do a good job, they did not want more taxes, and they did not believe the proposal would do enough.

Figure 15. [If AGAINST] What is the main reason you voted AGAINST the transportation initiative? (do not read responses) (select all that apply)



Summary

- ❖ When thinking about future transportation issues, all voters are very concerned about traffic congestion. Voters in Atlanta are also quite worried about inadequate public transit.
- ❖ Respondents want to be able to get to local destinations more easily by any means they choose, including driving alone and walking, but they are particularly interested in making it easier to use public transit.
- ❖ If the county chooses to improve the public transit system, Cobb voters' preferred method is to add rail transit service within the county and connecting to MARTA at the Arts Center station. Atlanta voters are also highly interested in expanding MARTA rail services.
- ❖ Looking specifically at possible public transit alternatives, voters in both Cobb County and Atlanta are *much* more interested in rail transit than buses.
- ❖ Voters along the Cobb Corridor are somewhat divided as to whether they would rather have the northern end point of a new transit system be in Acworth or at Kennesaw State University. Atlanta voters prefer the line to end at Kennesaw State University.
- ❖ There is quite a disparity between Cobb County and Atlanta residents when it comes to actually riding a new public transportation option in the corridor.
 - Most Cobb County voters say that they would be likely to ride a new light rail passenger train between Cobb County and Midtown Atlanta.
 - Most Atlanta voters, despite their interest in expanded rail service, say that they are unlikely to ride such a train. This could indicate their desire to expand MARTA into other parts of the city, just not necessarily Cobb County.
 - Residents of both segments of the corridor express tepid interest in riding bus rapid transit or an express bus system.
- ❖ If a bus rapid transit system is developed, Cobb and Atlanta voters alike are divided as to whether they would rather have an express system or one with more stops to provide greater access to neighborhoods, shopping centers, and employment centers.
- ❖ Cobb residents were less likely to have voted for the transportation initiative, but voters in both jurisdictions expressed similar reasons for their vote choice.
 - The top reasons for supporting the proposal were that it would reduce traffic congestion, it would be good for the county/city, it would provide more transit options, and it would be good for the region.
 - The top reasons for opposing the initiative were that they did not trust the government to do a good job and they did not want more taxes.

Methodology

From August 23-30, 2012, The Schapiro Group (TSG) conducted a scientific telephone survey of 800 Cobb County and City of Atlanta voters (400 of each) who live along the Northwest Corridor of I-75 and US 41 to explore their opinions on transportation options affecting their community. This report contains the results for both portions of the corridor, and each question in the survey was addressed specifically to that portion (e.g., for a question that has the text “county/city,” Cobb County residents were only read “county” while Atlanta residents were only read “city”). The overall results were then weighted and are demographically representative of the populations sampled. The margin of sampling error for each set of results is $\pm 4.9\%$.

Demographics

Figure 16. About how many total miles do you drive daily on your commute to and from work?

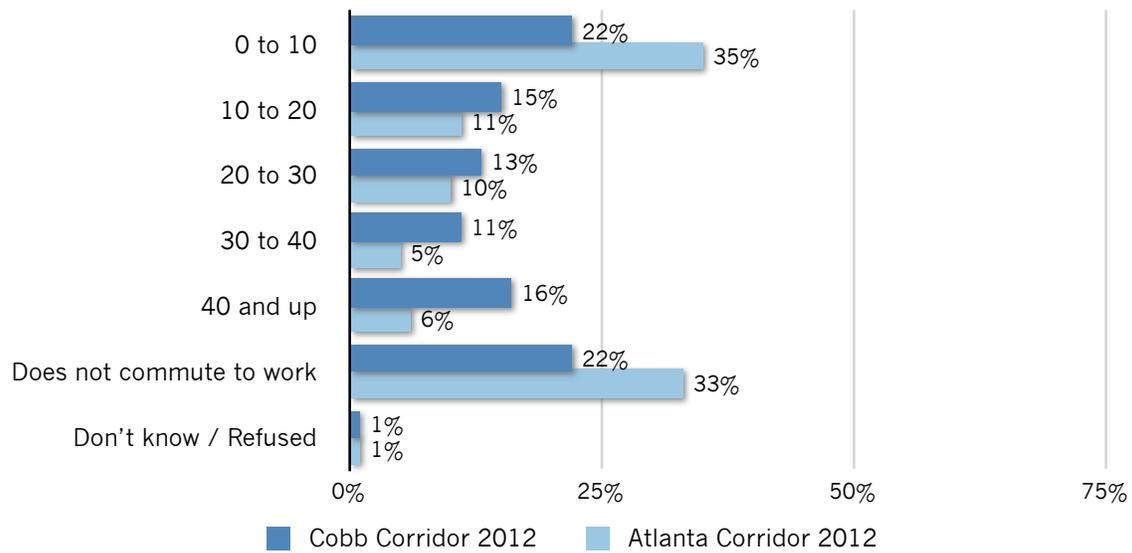


Figure 17. How often do you drive on I-75 or US-41 as part of your commute to work?

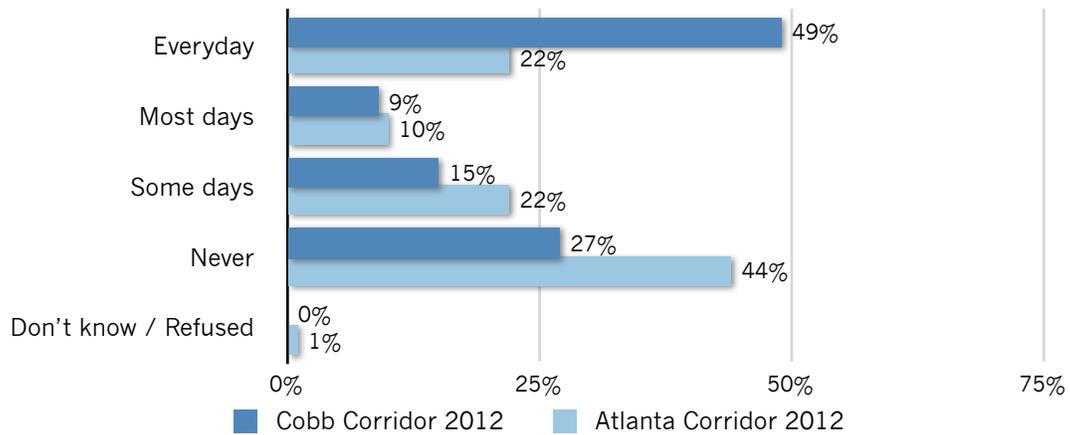


Figure 18. Do you commute to Cobb County/Atlanta?

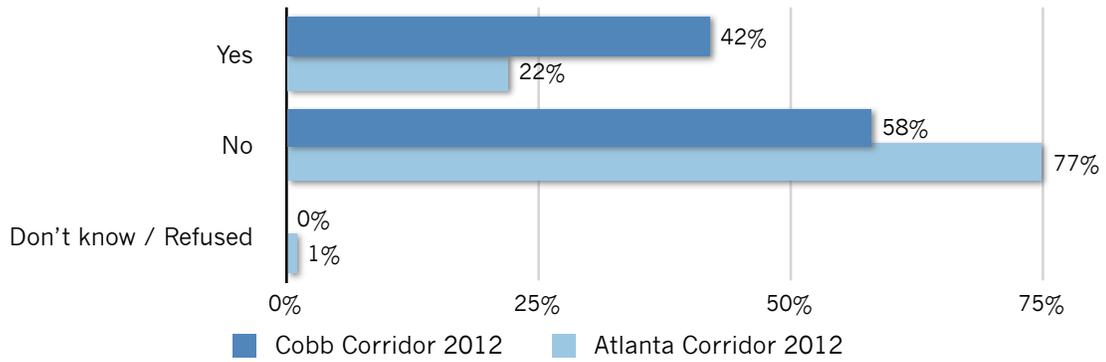


Figure 19. Political party

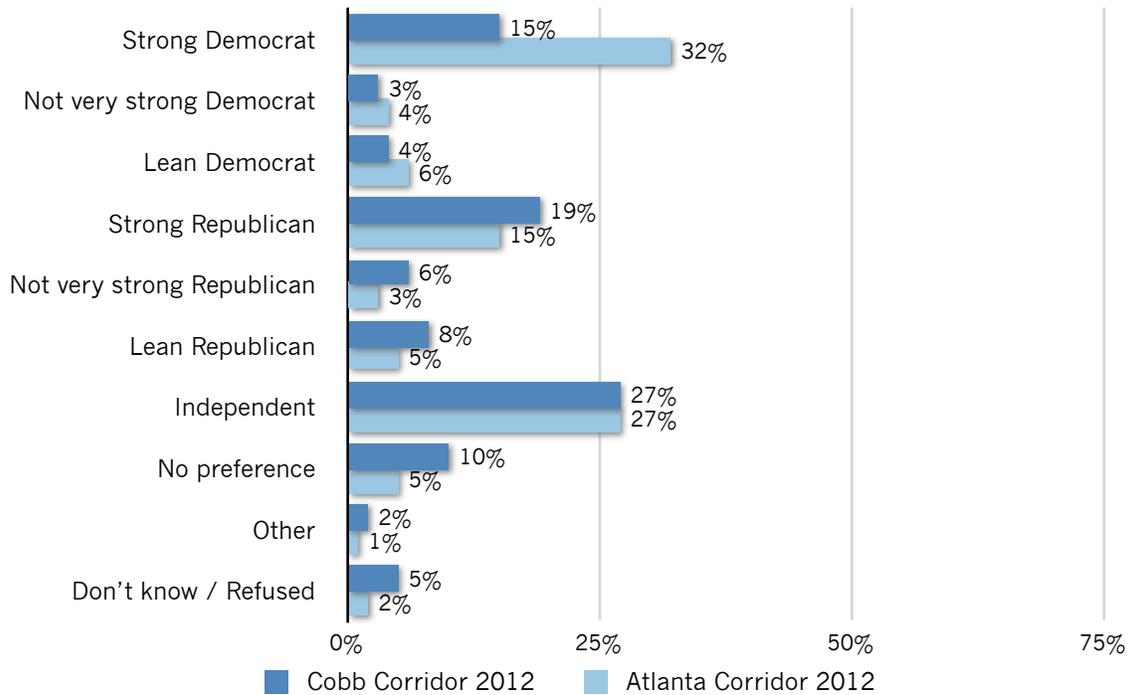


Figure 20. Age

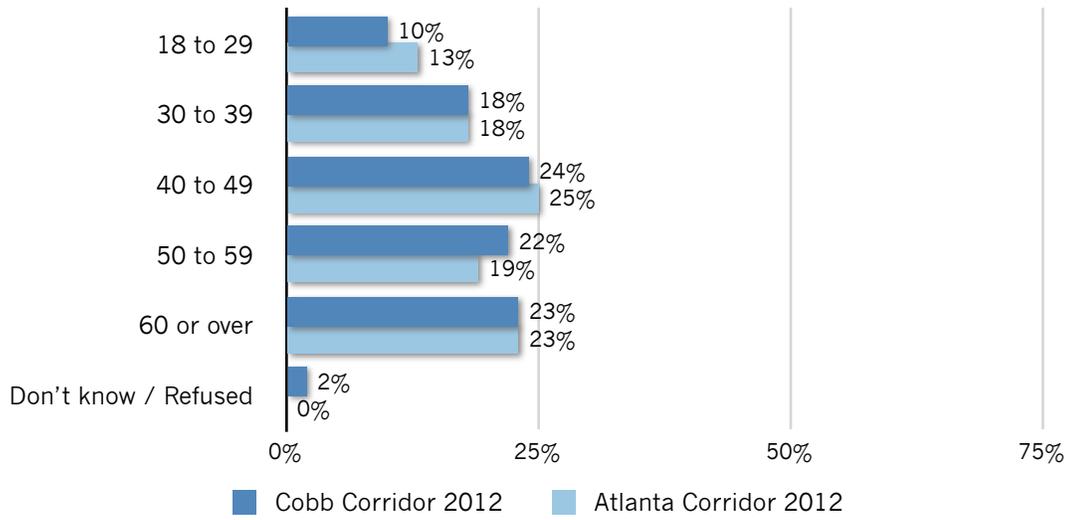


Figure 21. Gender

