

Impact Evaluation of Community Nonprofit Partner Program - South
Bend's Mayors Challenge
Final Report

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Executive Summary

The City of South Bend launched the Community Nonprofit Partner Program (CNPP) in October 2021. The program provides free transportation benefits in the form of bus passes and rideshare rides to individuals working with 13 nonprofit social services providers in South Bend. The Lucy Family Institute for Data & Society at the University of Notre Dame partnered with the City to do an impact evaluation of the program to study the program's impact on participants and the broader community.

Through a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches, this report presents the findings of the evaluation which are summarized below.

1. The CNPP program is serving an especially vulnerable population
2. The program helps alleviate stress related to transportation
3. The program improves access to critical services such as healthcare, education, and food

1 Background

Lack of reliable transportation is a primary barrier to employment for 1 of 3 low-income workers in South Bend (enFocus (2016)). The City of South Bend (City) has been working to reduce this barrier by providing reliable transportation options to its residents. In 2018, the City was awarded a three-year, \$1 million grant from Bloomberg Philanthropies to develop a transportation-as-a-benefit program to address this issue. The City decided to explore a model that, instead of substituting the regular mode of transportation, helps when the regular mode becomes unavailable - an “insurance” for situations when your regular mode of transportation breaks down (e.g. when a shared household car is unavailable at the required time, or to reach workplace outside of bus operating hours.). The program was not intended or designed to solve chronic transportation problems.

1.1 Work-travel subsidy program

The City has implemented different versions of the program at different points in time starting 2019. These involved giving discounted rideshare rides and free bus passes to program enrollees at select local employers. While there are cases of an employer providing public transport passes to employees, the Lyft/Uber rides subsidy is a novelty; as is the objective to solve short periods of transportation problems through a transportation-as-a-benefit model. A distinguishing characteristic of the program is that this is trying to solve a problem using existing transportation options in the market (rather than new public investment). Few findings from the previous impact evaluation of these versions were (i) women were more likely to enroll and use in the program, (ii) the program helps reduce stress related to transportation, and (iii) the program results in savings for the enrollees in form of reduced transportation costs.

1.2 Commuters Trust Community Nonprofit Partner Program

Armed with learnings from the previous versions of the program, the City launched the Commuters Trust Community Nonprofit Partner Program (CNPP) in October 2021. The program provides free transportation benefits in the form of bus passes and rideshare rides to workers working with 13 social service providers in South Bend. These organizations provide a variety of housing, education, job training, healthcare, and other essential services aimed at alleviating poverty or disability. The program is being jointly funded by the City and nonprofit partners, and is expected to continue through 2022.

The CNPP program complements the work-travel subsidy program and reduces dependence on non-profits. The CNPP program targets a population much different from those in the work-travel subsidy program. These programs also differ in their intended use. While in the CNPP program, the ride locations are unrestricted. In the work-travel subsidy program, the rides are intended to be used to travel to work. Taken together, both programs complement each other by targeting different populations and intended use. Additionally, the CNPP program complements the services of non-profit partners helping them focus on other issues.

The Lucy Family Institute for Data & Society at the University of Notre Dame partnered with the City to do an impact evaluation of the CNPP program to study the program’s impact on participants and the broader community. The presents the findings of the evaluation. The focus of the evaluation is to study the program’s impact on multiple outcomes including users’ transportation security, stress related to transportation, and access to critical services such as healthcare, education, and food. The evaluation was performed using a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches.

1.3 Report Structure

We first study the demographics of enrollees and their transportation situation, followed by program usage and effect of transportation security of enrolees. The data for this analysis was collected using baseline, weekly and monthly surveys. We then present the findings from the telephonic interviews conducted with program enrolees. We conclude the report by giving recommendations about how the program may be continued in the future.

2 Program enrollment

Table 1 shows that a total of 298 individuals belonging to 13 non-profit organizations in the City of South Bend (City) have enrolled in the program as of August 2022.¹

Table 1: Total enrollments in the program

Name of participating organization	Total enrollments	Total seats
La Casa de Amistad	53	35
Center for the Homeless	49	25
Hope Ministries	45	25
REAL Services	43	30
Catholic Charities	22	20
South Bend Heritage Foundation	21	25
YWCA North Central Indiana	20	25
St. Margaret's House	11	10
RiverBend Cancer Services	10	10
United Religious Community	10	15
Center for Positive Change	8	10
United Health Services	5	24
Green Bridge Growers	1	6
	298	260

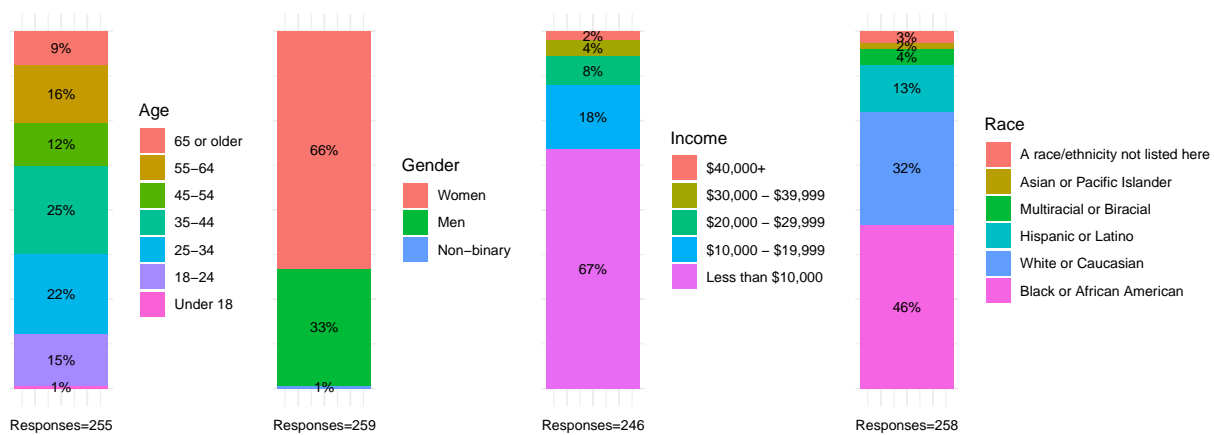


Figure 1: Demographics of Enrolees

Figure 1 shows the demographic characteristics of program enrolees. All age groups are represented in the enrolees. 66% of enrolees are women, higher than their population share in the city (53%). 67% of enrolees have a household income of less than 10,000. Black or African American enrolees are 46% of enrolees - higher than the population share in the city (25%).²

We study the transportation situation of the enrolees by calculating their Transportation Security Index (TSI), an index that has a value of 0-6 with the following interpretation. 0: transportation secure, 1-2: minimally insecure, 3-4: moderately insecure, 5-6: severely insecure. Figure 2 shows the transportation situation of those enrolled in the program. Among the respondents, 88% are either severely or moderately insecure, and only 12% are minimally insecure or transportation secure.

¹A participant is counted as enrolled if the person receives a bus pass or Uber rides for at least one month from November 2021 to the most recent data available. The number of active enrolees each month is shown in Figure 10.

²<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/southbendcityindiana>

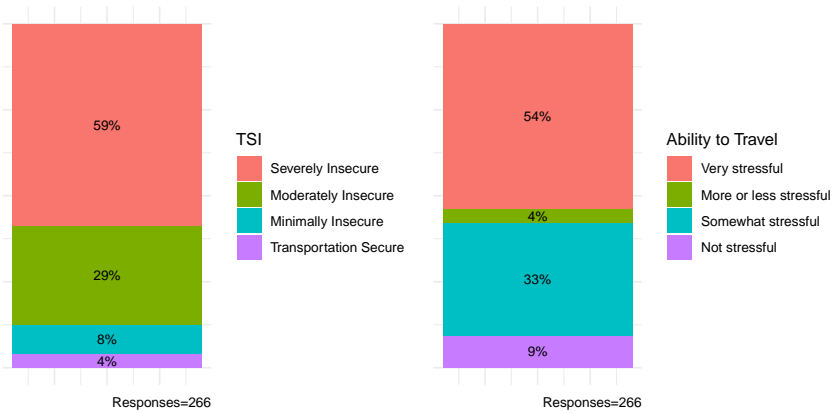


Figure 2: Transportation Situation of Enrolees

Additional evidence on the transportation situation of the enrolees is obtained by asking them about stress related to their ability to travel. Around 54% indicated that their ability to travel has been very stressful, and an additional 37% indicated that their ability to travel has been more or less stressful or somewhat stressful. Only 9% indicated that their ability to travel has not been stressful. Thus most of the enrolees are transportation insecure and their ability to travel is stressful which suggests that the program is targeting the correct audience.

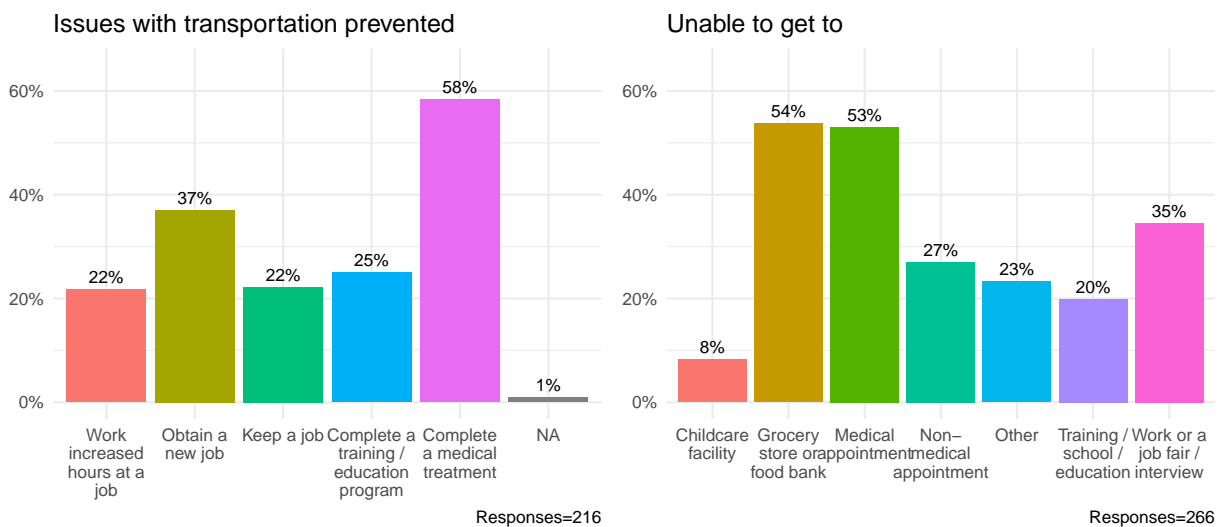


Figure 3: Difficulty in accessing places and services

Figure 3 shows the places and services that enrolees had difficulty accessing due to transportation constraints. A majority of enrolees (58%) reported that transportation issues prevented them from completing medical treatment. A significant proportion of enrolees also reported that they were unable to get to the grocery store or food bank (54%), medical appointment (53%), or work / job fair (35%).

3 Program usage

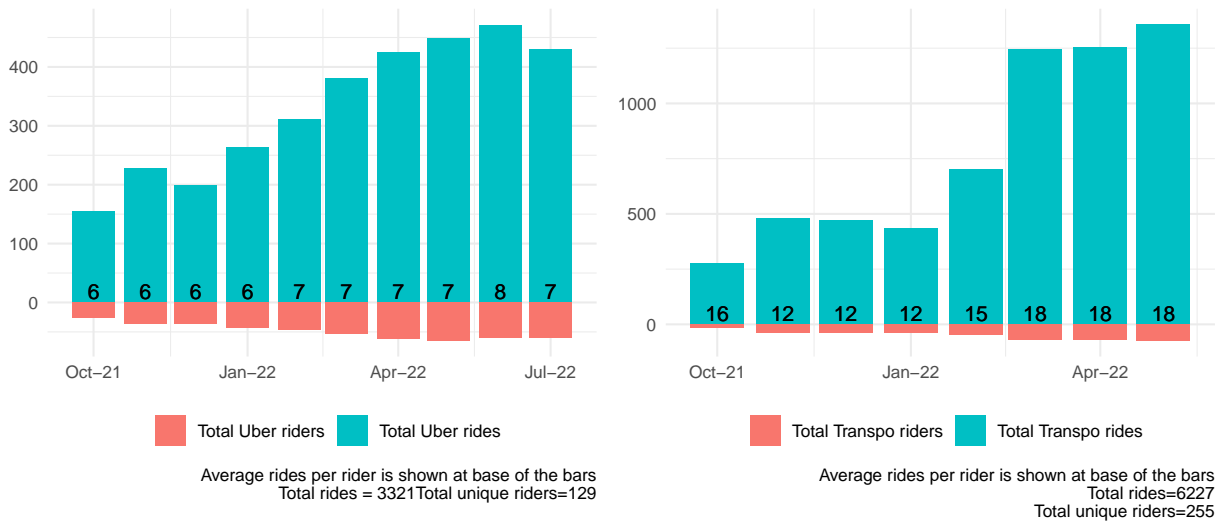


Figure 4: Rides and riders by month

Figure 4 shows the number of rides and users for uber and bus services. The program usage (the number of Uber and bus rides) has been increasing which is likely driven by higher enrollments in later months. The average number of rides per user is about 6-8 (shown at the base of the bars). Although there are fewer bus users (Figure 10), more bus rides are being used than Uber. This is consistent with observations from Goodwill in the previous evaluation. The average rides per user is also higher at around 18 for the most recent 3 months (shown at the base of the bars).

4 Survey Analysis

4.1 Weekly Survey

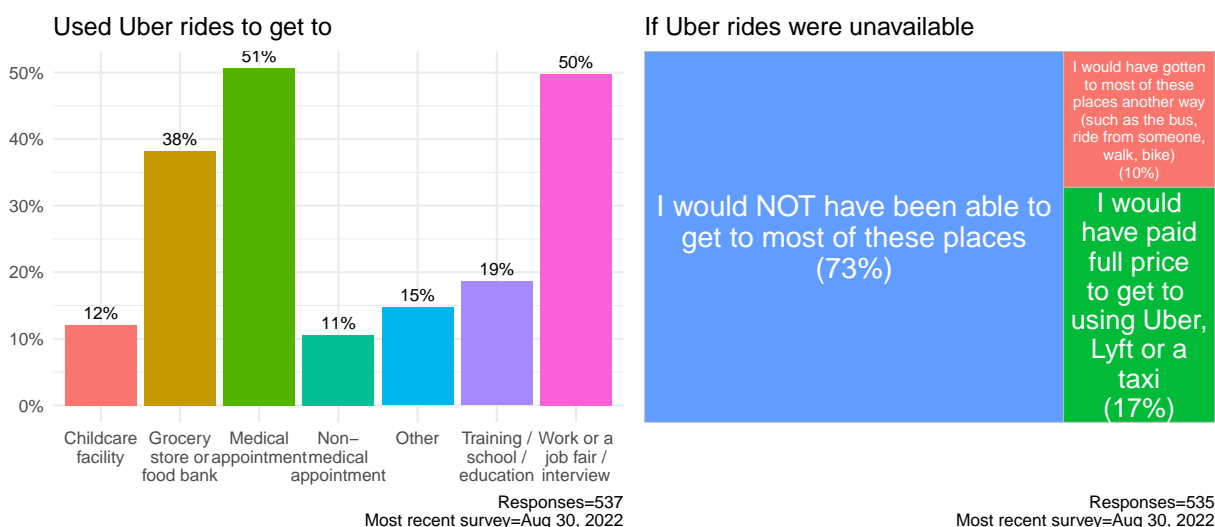


Figure 5: How were they used and what would have happened if they were unavailable?

A survey is given to all those who have used at least one Uber ride in the past week asking about the places visited using the rides and what would have happened in absence of the rides. We are interested in knowing the places the rides were used to reach and the counterfactual scenario (when rides were not available) which may be used to estimate the cost savings for the enrollees.

Figure 5 shows that a large majority of users used the rides to get to a medical appointment (51%), and grocery store or food bank (38%), and work or a job fair/interview (50%). This is consistent with the responses in the baseline survey responses (Figure 3) where these places and services are the same that enrollees had difficulty accessing due to transportation constraints. So the rides seem to be relaxing these constraints. This should also allay concerns about rides being used for non-essential purposes.

4.2 Monthly Survey

A monthly survey is given to all Uber and bus pass users asking them questions to calculate the transportation security index which indicates how easy it is for people to move around as needed.

Figure 6 shows how TSI scores vary across time for up to 6 months after enrolling in the program. The TSI score decreases, or respondents report feeling more transportation secure after enrolling in the program.³

³Although we have 266 respondents to the baseline survey, very few among these have responded to the monthly surveys. To track responses of the same set of enrollees, we restrict that only those who have a baseline survey response and at least 3 monthly responses within the next 6 months are included in this sample. There are only 19 who satisfy this criterion. 11 shows how the TSI scores vary across time for all respondents. The trends are similar.

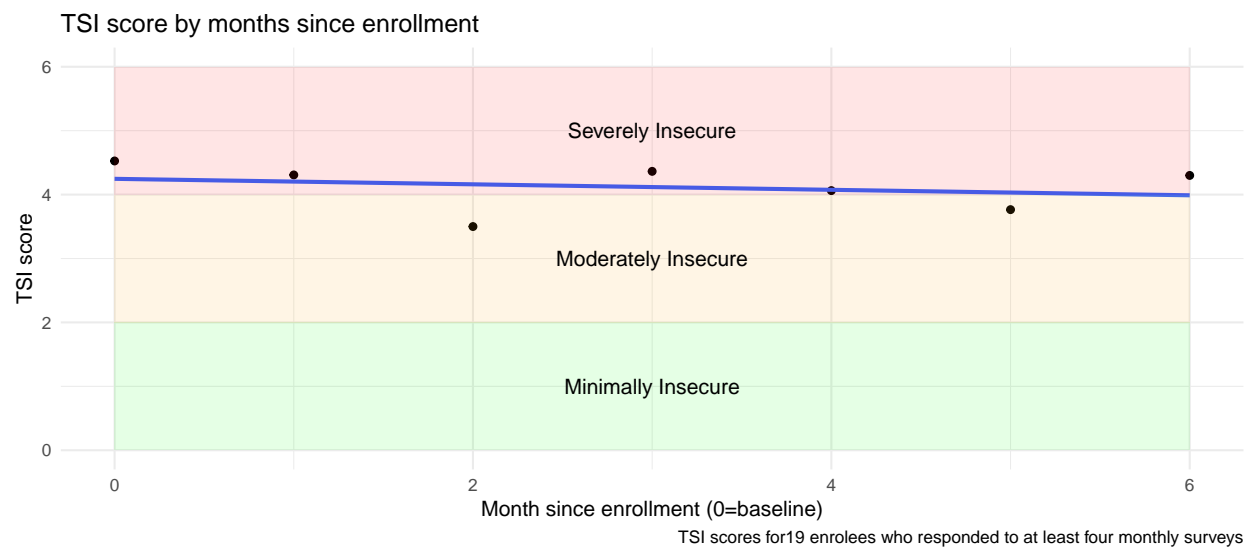


Figure 6: TSI scores across time

5 Qualitative Analysis

To better understand the program users, situations in which the rides are being used, and program impacts, in-depth interviews were conducted with 17 program participants in May and July 2022.⁴ Figure 7 shows the demographic characteristics of interviewees which look quite similar to those of all enrollees (Figure 1) except that Black or African American enrollees are overrepresented.

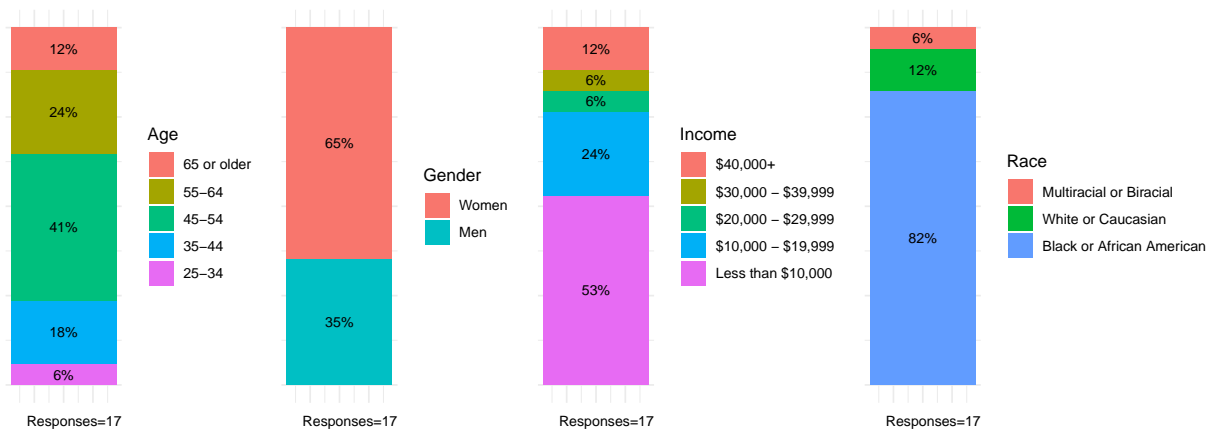


Figure 7: Demographics of Interviewees

Few takeaways from the interviews

1. The CNPP program is serving an especially vulnerable population

The CNPP program users are those utilizing the services of City non-profits which is a very vulnerable population. This is made clear by looking at the income distribution of enrollees (Figure 1) where 85% of the enrollees have an annual income of less than \$10,000 per year. During the interviews, we understood that a majority of respondents have no source of income because they do not have a job and looking for one or are dependent on social security or disability insurance. A number of them have health issues that prevent them from getting regular employment. Not surprisingly, many do not have stable housing and live at non-profit locations. Others who have housing are utilizing non-profit services such as rental and utility assistance.

“My dad helped me this last time to go to uh, what is it called? Sam’s Club and buy the bigger packages of things so that I won’t have to go to the store, you know, and and spend on toilet papers and stuff so he helped me out like that and then that way I have more money money for transportation.”

“If you have a choice between getting groceries, are getting toiletries and you know catching the bus you’re like Oh my goodness. I have walked like 4 four blocks to go and get some toiletries and bring them back to my house [to avoid paying for the bus].”

“When I can’t afford it [transportation], I might, you know, skip out a couple of days stay at home or even go to the closest places that I can ride my bike.”

2. This population has limited means of transportation

Almost no one has a car, a majority do not even have a driver’s license. Given their financial vulnerability, getting a car is the least of their priorities. Pubic transport usage is also restricted sometimes due to health issues. For example, one respondent mentioned that he has to carry an oxygen tank with him. Another respondent mentioned that she

⁴11 from REAL services and 6 from Hope Ministries.

suffers from Schizophrenia and is not very comfortable traveling on the bus. For one mom, traveling with her child is difficult on the bus. Consequently, getting a ride from friends and family members is often the only option in addition to walking.

“I had to walk many times you know, without having any money to pay for it [transportation]. I had to walk to location.”

“[Before the bus pass] I was paying people to take me back and forth and then sometimes they would come and sometimes they wouldn’t, and sometimes they’ll take your money and do what they wanna do with it. I was tired of giving people my money.”

3. The current mode of transport is expensive, and stressful

Rides from friends and family members typically involve payments which could be a significant financial burden in addition to the emotional stress of asking for rides.

“The last time I got a ride from a friend we went to a Housing Authority we went to voc rehab, and to the food stamp office and to Walmart. She charges me like \$25 when I need her to help me go some places or more depending on how many places I got to go. It gets pretty pricey. I pay big time [to the friend who gives rides] and the thing is it is kind of a hardship. Because I get Social Security disability. I don’t work because of disabilities. And you know, paying that kind of money out of my check has been kind of stressful. Has been stressful for real.”

4. Their travel needs are irregular but there are few commonalities

Since this population is often without regular employment, many do not need transportation every day. The transportation needs are one-off rides. Consistent with the weekly survey responses (Figure 3), the two most common needs are attending doctor’s appointments and grocery stores.

5. Higher bus pass usage is because of familiarity with the bus system

Most of the interview respondents are very comfortable, and almost prefer using the bus over rideshare. Mostly because they have experience traveling by bus. Some also expressed unfamiliarity with smartphones as a constraint for using rideshare and digital bus pass. Also, a bus with longer travel times works well for occasional visits to grocery stores and doctors visits.

6. The program saves money, reduces stress, makes users feel independent, get a job, complete education

Not having to ask someone for rides and pay them saves money as well as reduced stress. Another channel for stress reduction is a decrease in worrying about how to get to places since the program guarantees a bus or rideshare. Having a bus pass also makes them feel independent as they do not have to rely on friends or non-profits for rides. For some interviewees, the program acts as a direct cost subsidy without affecting their usual mode of travel. These interviewees were using the bus before the program, and the program saves them money that they were spending on bus tickets. A few participants also reported being able to search for jobs using the program and felt confident about keeping the job knowing that they have the bus pass. One participant uses the bus pass to get to classes to get a GED certificate which is likely to have long-run effects.

“Many times prior to the program it would be hard to get food. Because they have pantries where you can get food and prior to the program, it would be hard to go because you may need a person to give you a ride. And then you know, not having a bus pass, you can’t carry it. You can’t catch the bus. But since the program I was able to. Get food, make it to the places where they give food and I’m able to get on the bus with the food so the program has really been very helpful to it.”

7. The program has spillover effects on broader community impacts

A common theme across interviews was that having access to the program had spillover effects on the broader community. For example, many participants said that they can meet friends and family members more often with the program. For some, since they no longer have to get rides from family members or non-profits, that frees up some of their time.

8. The program may not solve all the problems, but it does go a long way

The program does not solve all the transportation issues for the participants. For example, The limited Uber rides are insufficient for one participant who works at night shift to get to work. One participant mentioned that she knows someone who takes the last bus available to get to work, even when it means reaching the workplace a couple of hours in advance.

9. The city and nonprofits have done a tremendous job of distributing the bus pass

All interview respondents said it was very straightforward to get the bus pass and renew it when needed. Also, very positive about solving minor problems to get the pass if they arise.

“[Lynn] She’s a sweetheart. I like her a lot. She’s very, very nice to me and has a very, very good demeanor. She won’t escalate a problem but deescalates if anything and then makes me feel better about what I’m doing and you know what I’m saying. Not really taking anybody side and she’s doing what she can to straighten things off of me and I appreciate her a lot.”

6 Conclusion and recommendations

The program may not solve all the problems, but it does go a long way...

Minor issues

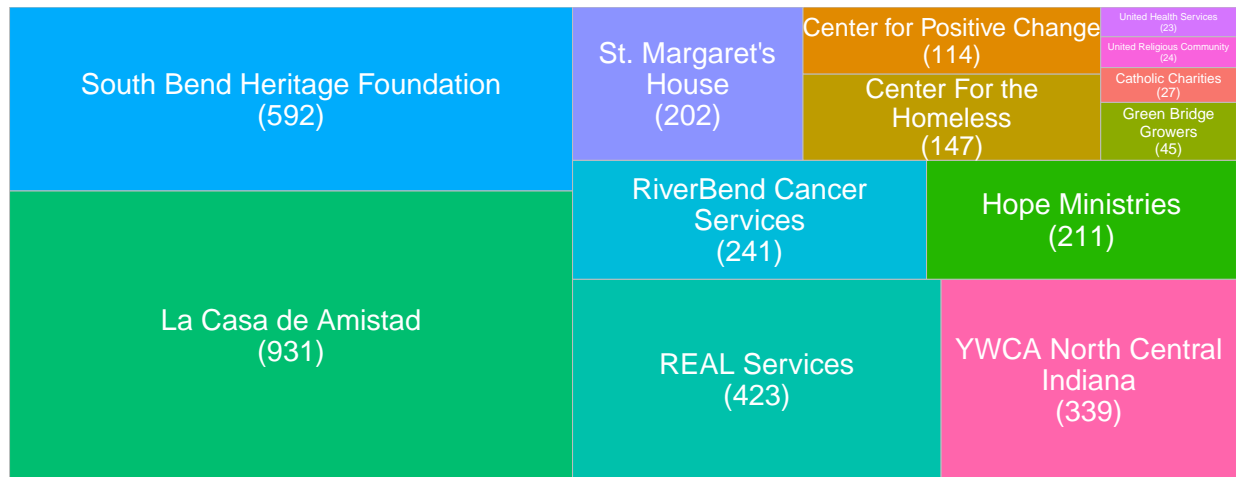
1. One person mentioned that Uber vouchers are difficult to use because he has to first use the payment method as a checking account. Then switch to voucher once the ride is dispatched. Though this experience was not shared by all users.
2. One person said he missed the voucher thinking that the text message was related to the survey. Any way to avoid this? Maybe send vouchers from a different number and a survey from another number?
3. How to use Uber app/voucher training: Some participants mentioned that they would like to try out using the Uber app but were unsure how to learn to do so. The city can create a training video to show how to use the app and monthly voucher.
4. The city can study if they want to distribute a limited number of weekly or daily passes: Given the intermittent travel requirements, some may need the bus only for a few days of the week. For them, a daily/ weekly pass may suffice. This can reduce the bus pass expense.

7 References

enFocus. 2016. "Barriers to Employment. Report." South Bend, IN: St. Joseph County Chamber of Commerce.

8 Appendix

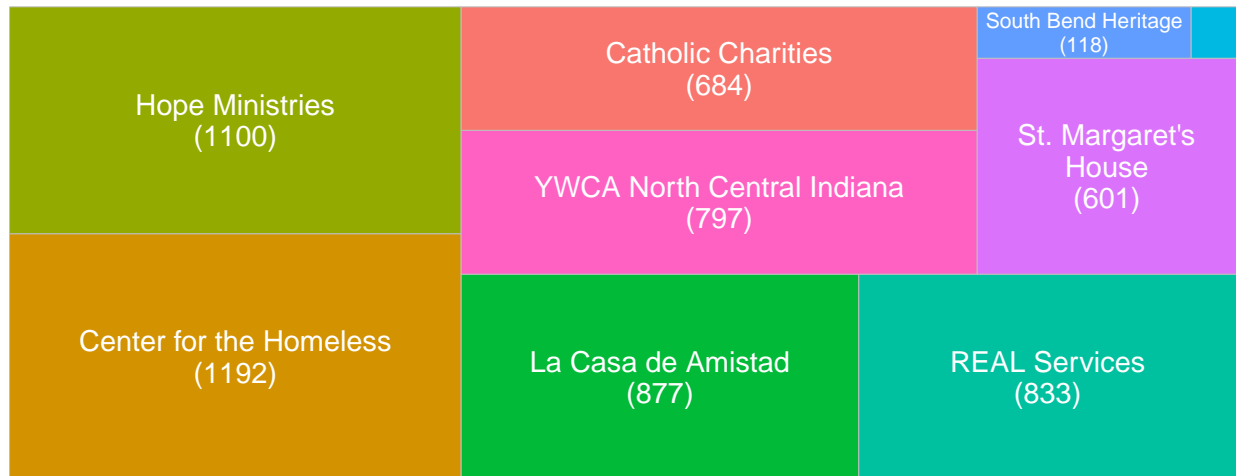
Total Uber Rides by Organization



Total rides from Oct-2022 through July-2022 = 3321

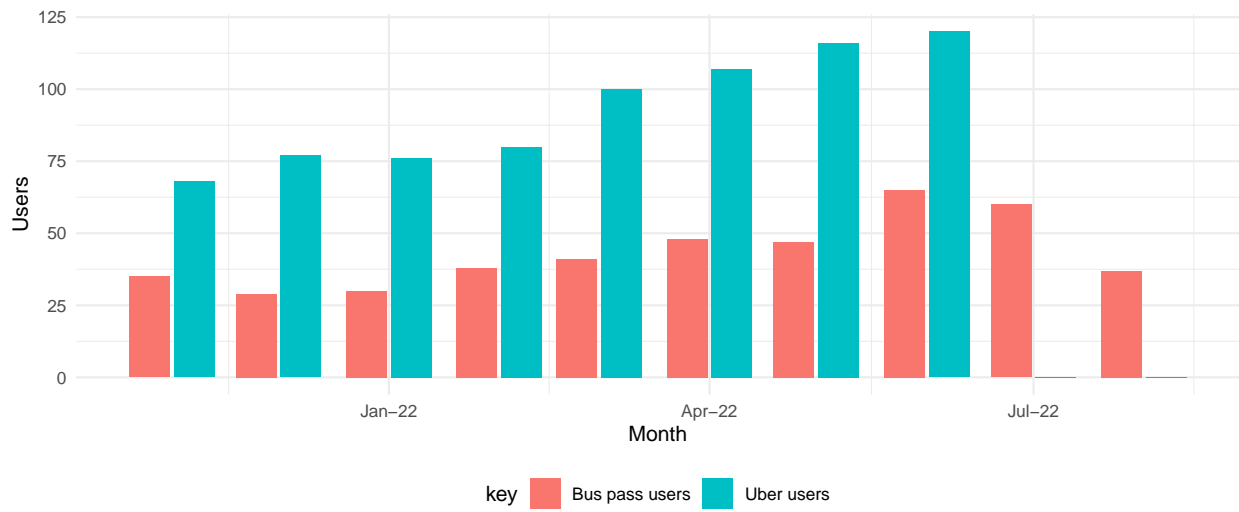
Figure 8: Uber rides by Organization

Total Transpo rides by Organization



Total rides from Oct-2022 through May-2022 = 6227

Figure 9: Uber rides by Organization



Responses=298

Figure 10: Active enrollees each month

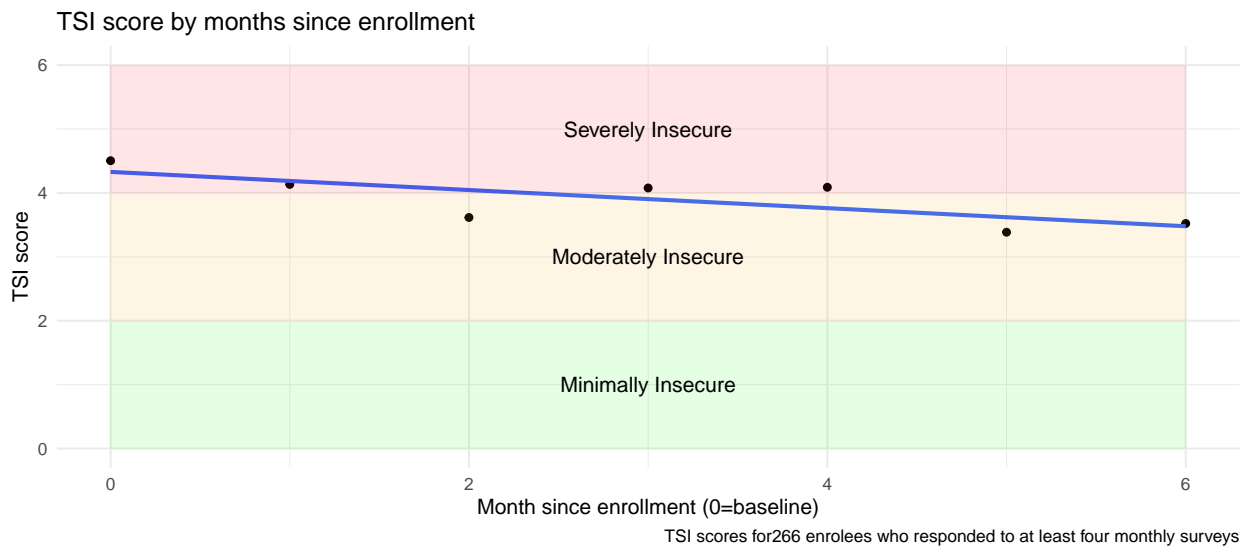


Figure 11: TSI across time for all respondents