

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

Submitted to:

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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 United Way of St. Joseph County, and is expected to continue through 2022. United Way of St. Joseph County also helped screening the non-profit organizations to be part of the program.

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 focusing on 13 social service providers located in South Bend, Indiana. 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 explain the program design and delivery. We then look at the program enrollments and the options selected by enrollees. We then study the demographics of program enrollees and their transportation situation. The main question that drives the analysis is: Who enrolls in the program and what are the transportation needs of the enrollees? In the next section, we study the program usage by looking at the number of rides taken and places the rides were used to get to. We also study the effect of transportation security index of enrollees, six months after enrolling in the program. Next, we discuss the findings from the qualitative analysis based on the personal interviews. We conclude the report by giving recommendations about how the program may be continued in the future.

2 Program design and delivery

The program enrollees can choose between two benefit packages:

1. 4 free Uber rides per month + unlimited monthly Transpo bus pass (digital or physical card), and
2. 10 free Uber rides per month

The City provides bus passes to the non-profit organizations. Interested individuals can get them from the non-profit organizations they are associated with. To get access to Uber rides, individuals have to fill an online form after which the discount code for Uber app is delivered to their phone. Individuals can chose to enroll in any month and can chose to stay enrolled for any number of months.

3 Program enrollment and the options selected by enrollees

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 There are more enrollees selecting the bus pass + 4 Uber rides option compared to 10 Uber rides option.² There is some difference across organizations in terms of option selected. Organizations with five highest enrollments generally prefer bus while the rest prefer Uber.

Table 1: Total enrollments in the program

Name of participating organization	Total enrollments	Option 1 (Bus pass + 4 Uber rides)	Option 2 (10 Uber rides)	Total seats (per month)
La Casa de Amistad	53	25	28	35
Center for the Homeless	49	37	12	25
Hope Ministries	45	33	12	25
REAL Services	43	29	14	30
Catholic Charities	22	21	1	20
South Bend Heritage Foundation	21	3	18	25
YWCA North Central Indiana	20	5	15	25
St. Margaret's House	11	4	7	10
RiverBend Cancer Services	10	1	9	10
United Religious Community	10	1	9	15
Center for Positive Change	8	0	8	10
United Health Services	5	0	5	24
Green Bridge Growers	1	0	1	6
Total	298	159	139	260

4 Demographics of program enrollees

Figure 1 shows the demographic characteristics of program enrollees collected using a baseline survey given to all enrollees. All age groups are represented in the enrollees. 66% of enrollees are women, higher than their population share in the city (53%). 67% of enrollees have a annual household income of less than \$10,000.³ Black or African American enrollees are 46% of enrollees - higher than the population share in the city (25%).⁴

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 enrollees each month is shown in Figure 10.

²If individuals change their option across months, we consider the option that was most commonly selected.

³We did not ask about the employment status of enrollees in the baseline survey. We did ask for this information during the telephonic interviews where 65% of the respondents indicated that they are not employed (Figure 7). This also consistent with the fact that a majority of enrollees have annual household income of less than \$10,000.

⁴<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/southbendcityindiana>

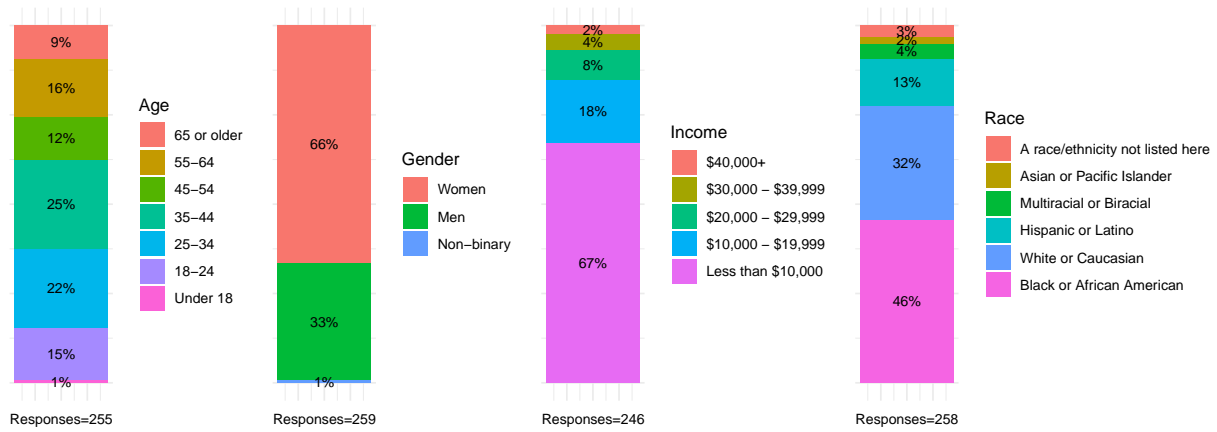


Figure 1: Demographics of Enrollees

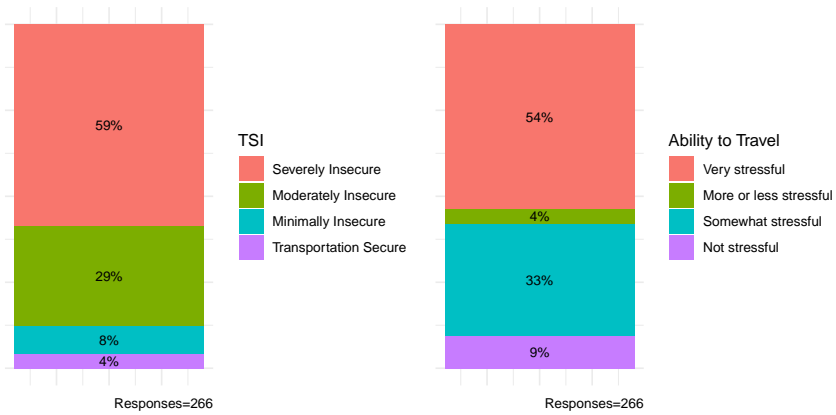


Figure 2: Transportation Situation of Enrollees

We determine the transportation situation of the enrollees 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 (Gould-Werth, Griffin, and Murphy (2018)). Figure 2 shows the transportation situation of those enrolled in the program as reported in the baseline survey. Among the respondents, 88% are either severely or moderately insecure, and only 12% are minimally insecure or transportation secure.⁵

Additional evidence on the transportation situation of the enrollees is obtained by asking them about stress related to their ability to travel in the baseline survey. 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 enrollees are transportation insecure and their ability to travel is stressful which suggests that the program is targeting the correct audience.

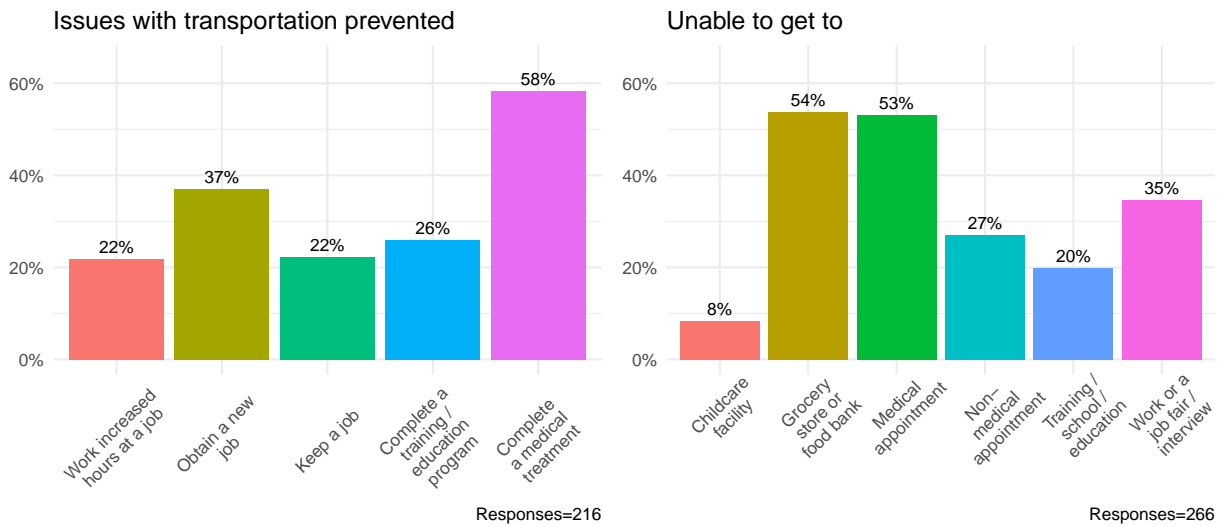


Figure 3: Difficulty in accessing places and services

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

⁵Previous research has found that non-White population experience the greatest transportation insecurity (Murphy et al. 2022). In Figure 12, we show that TSI scores for enrollees do not vary much by race. This is likely because of the self-selection nature of the program, where those who are insecure enroll in the program.

5 Program usage

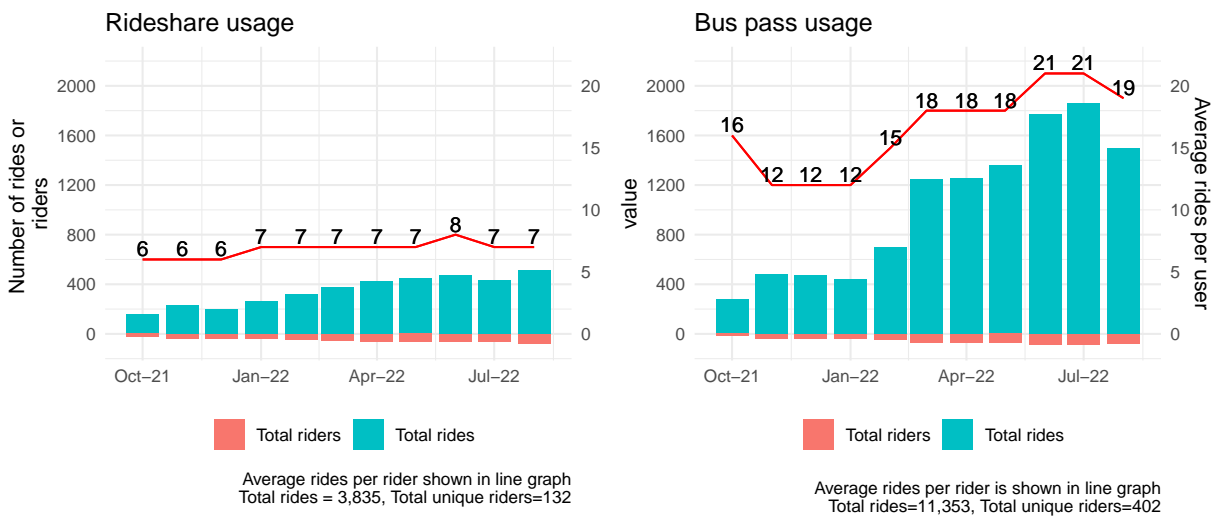


Figure 4: Rides and riders by month

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. Similar finding was reported in the evaluation of the work-travel subsidy program (Swapnil Motghare and Danice Guzmán 2021). The average number of bus rides per user is also higher (shown in the line graph).

6 Survey Analysis

6.1 Weekly Survey

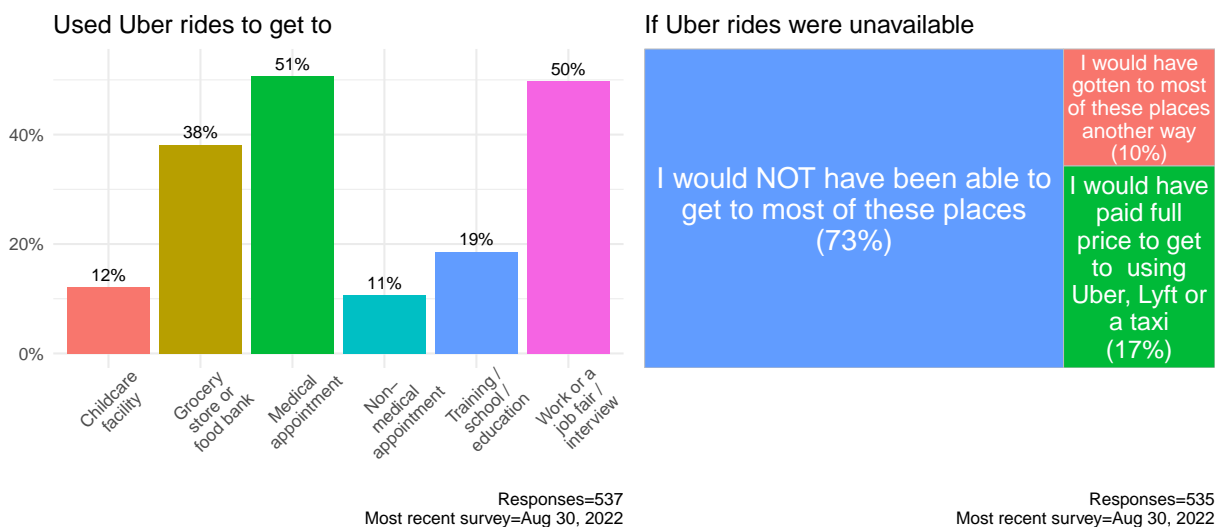


Figure 5: How were they used and what would have happened if they were unavailable?

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%), work or a job fair/interview (50%), and grocery store or food bank (38%). This is consistent with the responses from the baseline survey (Figure 3). 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.

Figure 5 shows that 73% respondents indicated that in absence of Uber rides, they would have been unable to get to places they needed to go. Thus, the program enabled individuals to go to places they wouldn't have gotten to otherwise. Also, that the program works as a compliment to existing modes without crowding out existing modes of transport.

6.2 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.

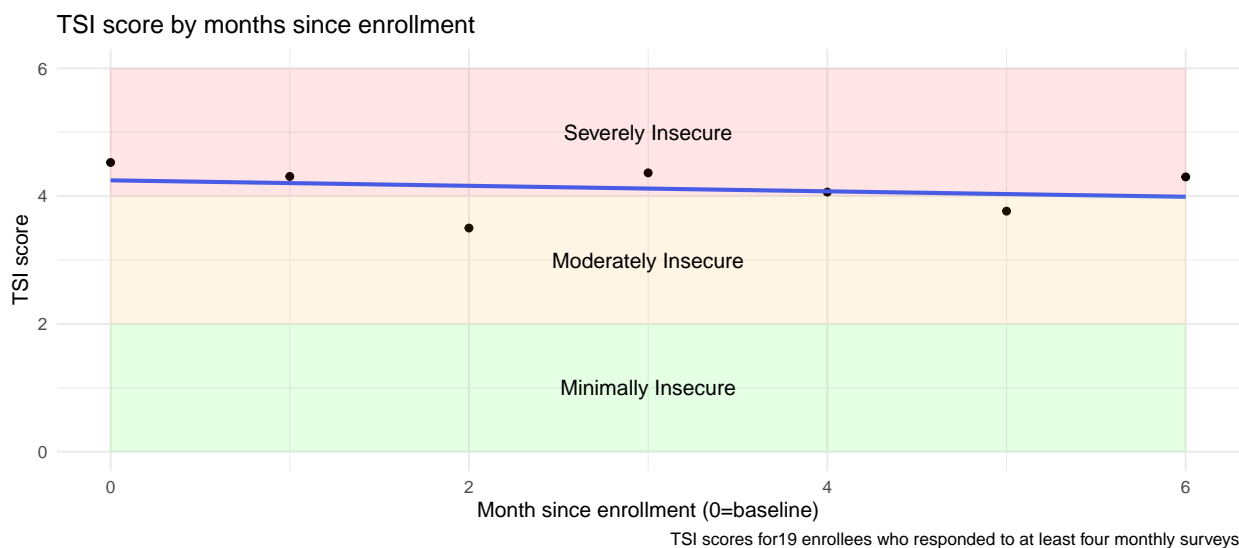


Figure 6: TSI scores across time

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.⁶

⁶Although 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.

7 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 2022.⁷ 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.

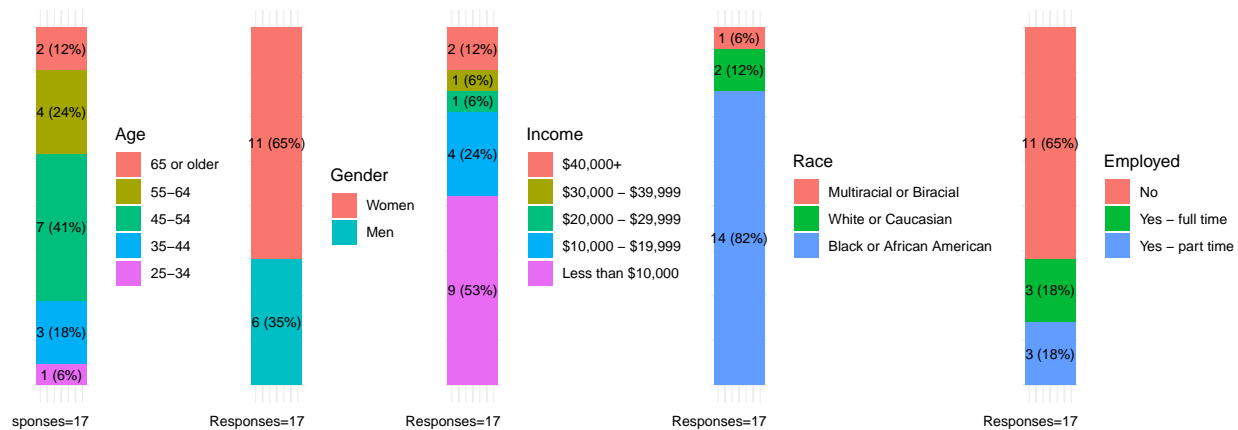


Figure 7: Demographics of Interviewees

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. Public 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

⁷ 11 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 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.”

8 Conclusion and recommendations

1. The program has enabled individuals to access places inaccessible in program's access

Figure 5 shows that 73% respondents indicated that in absence of Uber rides, they would have been unable to get to places they needed to go. Thus, the program enabled individuals to go to places they wouldn't have gotten to otherwise. Also, that the program works as a compliment to existing modes without crowding out existing modes of transport.

2. 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.”

3. 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.

4. The CNPP program complements the work-travel subsidy program

The CNPP program and the work-travel subsidy program differs in terms of their target population and intended use of the rides.

Those enrolled in the work-travel subsidy program are workers who have regular employment and the rides are intended to be used to travel to and from work. While those enrolled in the CNPP program are individuals working with social services providers and the rides are not restricted by location. Taken together, both programs complement each other by targeting different populations and intended use. Additionally, the CNPP program reduces the burden of providing transportation for the nonprofits themselves, helping them focus on other issues.

8.1 Recommendations

1. 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.

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. This is only applicable to rides scheduled in advance.⁸

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.⁹
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.

⁸The process has been laid out here: <https://www.commutertrust.com/uberscheduling>

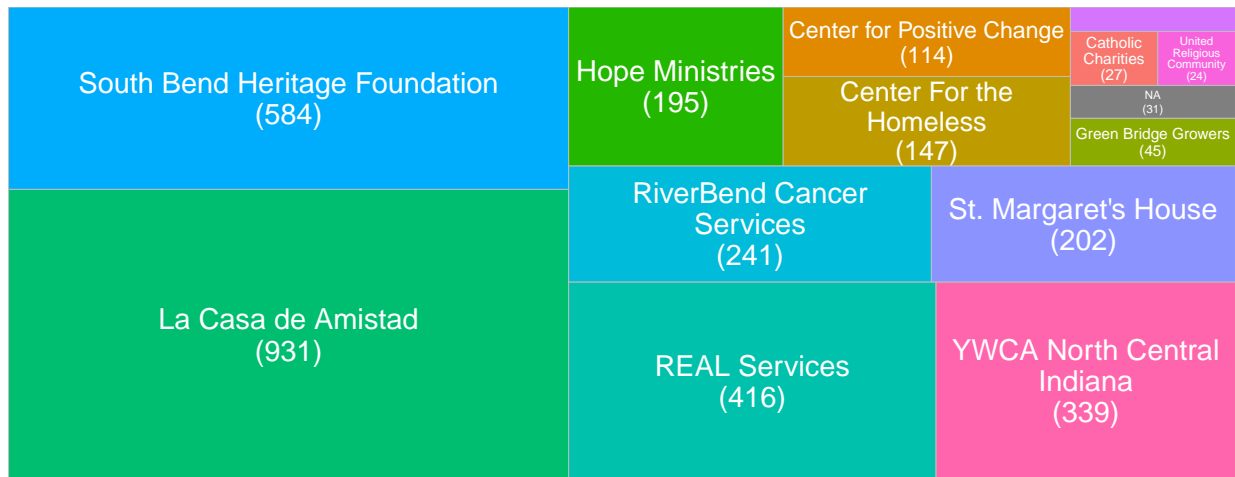
⁹Similar to the video here: <https://www.commutertrust.com/uee>

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10 Appendix

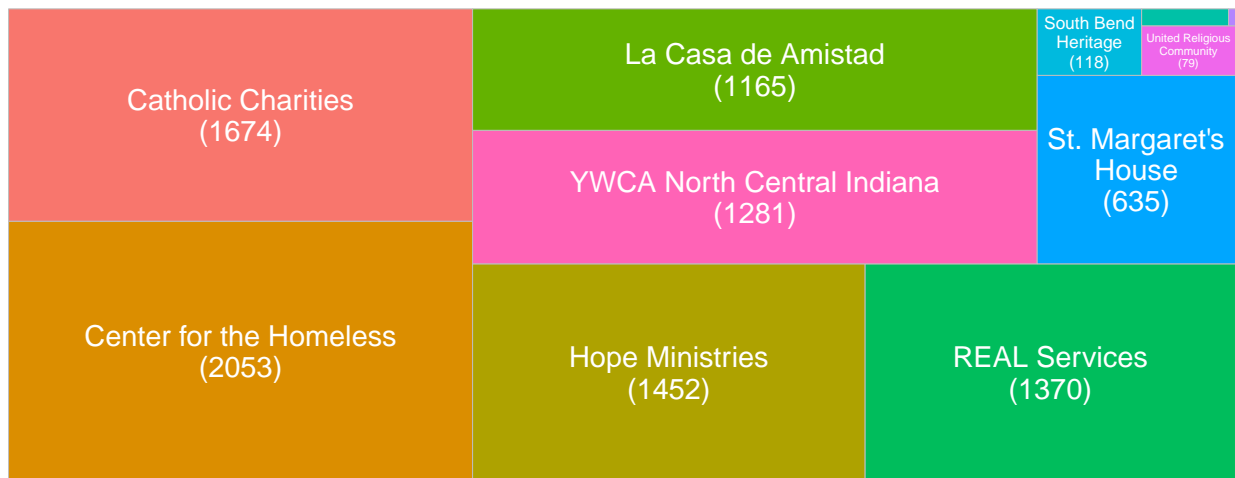
Total Uber Rides by Organization



Total rides from Oct-2022 through July-2022 = 3835

Figure 8: Uber rides by Organization

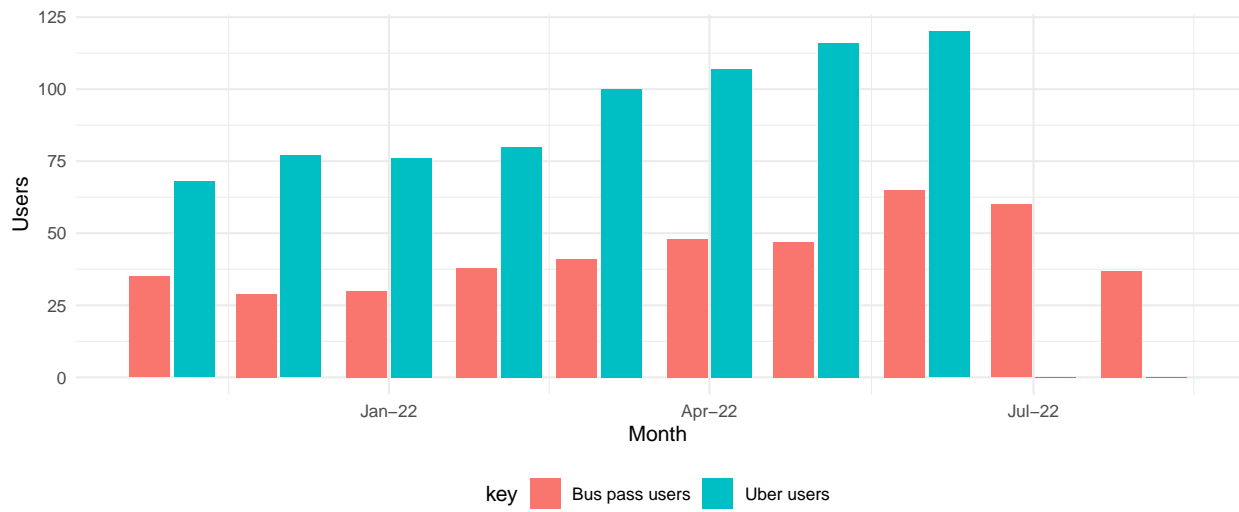
Total Transpo rides by Organization



Total rides from Oct-2022 through May-2022 = 11353

Figure 9: Uber rides by Organization

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## `.groups` argument.
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Responses=298

Figure 10: Active enrollees each month

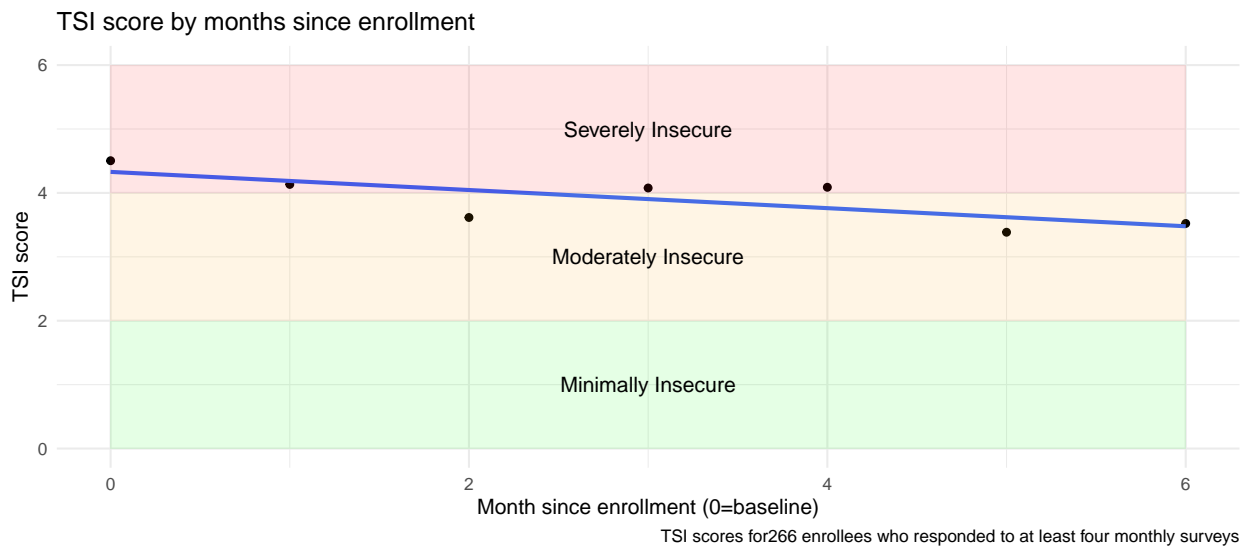


Figure 11: TSI across time for all respondents

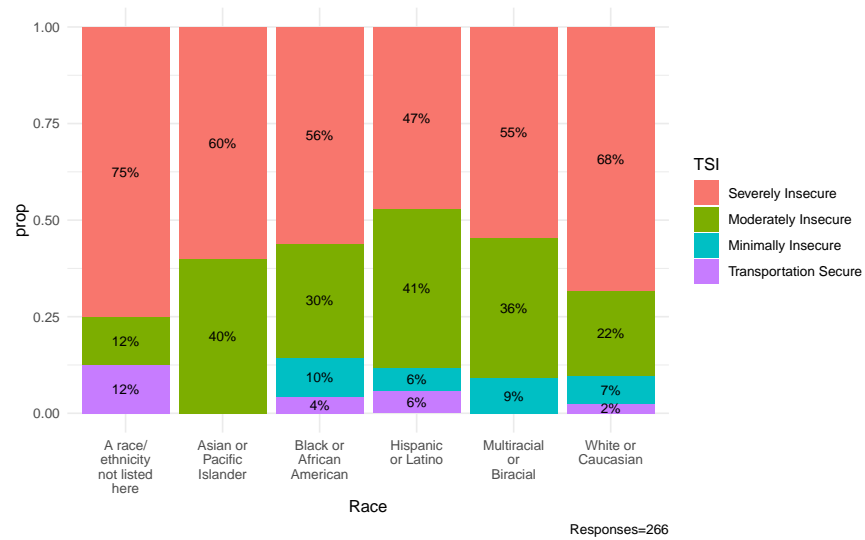


Figure 12: Transportation Situation of Enrollees