MATTAPAN FOOD AND FITNESS COALITION

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Summary of Findings from Additional Survey Data, Fall 2023

The following summary extends the report submitted to MFFC by the participants of Professor Negrón's spring 2023 course at UMass Boston. The summary includes the extended survey results (83 total respondents who were residents of Mattapan) which continued the use of the previous survey after that point.

Preferences for Getting Around

Preferred Modes for Getting Around Mattapan						
	Always	Very Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	No Answer
Bicycle	9	9	8	11	36	10
Car	20	25	18	7	6	7
Public Transportation	17	20	18	12	7	9
Walking	21	25	28	3	6	0

Preferred Modes for traveling to and from points outside of Mattapan						
	Always	Very Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	No Answer
Bicycle	9	7	16	9	36	6
Car	27	27	17	4	1	7
Public Transportation	22	22	16	14	7	2
Walking	15	17	22	8	17	4

Demographic Breakdown

Gender	
Total Men	27

Total Women	52
Non-Binary/ Transgender/ Non-Conforming	1

Other	0
Prefer not to Answer or No answer	3

No Answer	4

Status	
I am an immigrant	17
I am a child of immigrants	13
Neither immigrant nor child of immigrants	45
Prefer not to answer, or No answer	8

Age	
18 - 29	13
30 - 49	37
50 - 70	23
70 - 100	6

Ethnicity/ Race	
Mixed	9
Black (e.g. African American, African, Afro-Caribbean)	55
East Asian (e.g. Chinese, Japanese)	0
Hispanic/ Latina/o/x	4
Multi - ethnic/ Multi - racial	3
Native American/ Indigenous	3
South Asian (e.g. Indian, Bangladeshi)	1
Southeast Asian (e.g. Cambodian, Vietnamese)	0
White	8
Other	0
Prefer not to answer	0

Summary of Barriers to Biking

Top Barriers to biking (based in total of those responding either Yes or Sometimes to this barrier):

1. I feel the traffic in the area is too dense
2. I am afraid that a car will hit me
3. I feel there are too few separated bike lanes
4. I don't think the roads are good for biking
5. I don’t want to ride in bad weather
6. I don't feel safe biking

Barriers mentioned but seemed to relatively have the least effects (based in total of those responding either Yes or Sometimes to this barrier):

1. I am unable to ride a bike due to an injury or disability
2. I don't know how to bike
3. I have children to transport
4. I am not fit enough to bike
5. I am not interested in biking
6. I don’t want to be exposed to air pollution

Barriers where respondents were mostly likely to respond that it doesn't describe them (based in total of those responding either Yes or Sometimes to this barrier):

1. I am unable to ride a bike due to an injury or disability
2. I don't know how to bike
3. I am not fit enough to bike
4. I have children to transport
5. I am not interested in biking
6. I am afraid that my bicycle will be stolen

Discussion: Responses Indicating Why People Don't Like Biking

People who don't like biking attributed this to some of the same barriers referenced on the survey. This implies that for some people, not liking biking may be related to other external conditions apart from personal preferences or interests. For several respondents, they referred **to safety issues again**, including the risks associated with car traffic and observations about **cars not obeying rules or staying out of bike lanes.** So issues were raised about the idea that **bike lanes may be co-opted by vehicles, including mopeds.** A question then raised is if the existence of a bike lane has complicated consequences, because it possibly creates both solutions (as far as the opportunity for biking) as well as challenges.

One challenge is that the existence of a bike lane creates additional road rules which can then be another way that motor vehicles violate the rules, since they already are thought to be doing so in other ways. The addition of bike lanes then doesn't address the existing culture of motor vehicle operators and their expectations about how they can use the roads and driving skills. **A related issue is that bike lanes are not enough to reduce the risks to bikers, even though the lanes are intended to increase safety.** ***If bike lanes mean that more biking happens, this creates a period of adjustment where motor vehicles and bikes have to learn to share the road in new ways, and the risks are likely more serious for the bikers than the cars.*** This is important as well in the context of the perceptions that there are already too many vehicles on the roads. ***It is not clear then that a rise in bikers would follow with a reduction in cars; if bikes are just added and existing car traffic continues in the same amount, this increases congestion.***

A possible interpretation of this data, then, **is that bike lanes, by themselves, might be part of a wider effort to change the use of roads that needs to be spelled out further and understood better.** The other factors of driving culture in Mattapan (and Boston), the sharing of roadways that are already used by multiple types of vehicles, and the various personal barriers, concerns, and abilities available to individuals who are potential bikers. **One of the comments mentions the possibility of a school program around safety and another mentions parent involvement,** so issues of ***engaging community and providing education*** also seem relevant and linked to promoting the use of bikes. The data also shows that

Reflection: Perspectives on Expected Changes with the Addition of Bike Lanes

Additional responses to explain the surveys provide some key issues related to the tradeoffs of bike lanes. Respondents commented on what they thought would change with increased bike lanes, reflecting similar comments on the earlier report about what would become better or worse.

Positive changes: Respondents mentioned that there would be fewer cars and more bikers, implying a re-balancing of the proportion between the two. They also referred to the increased safety because car traffic would now be forced to go more slowly. Environmental benefits were also mentioned, along with the idea that bike lanes make the neighborhood more connected (perhaps to other Boston neighborhoods, too) and represent another kind of connected green space that spans the city. Respondents also mentioned the possible increase in community feel; biking makes individuals more visible compared to cars.

Negative changes/challenges: Respondents also discussed how bike lanes might contribute to new challenges or reinforce existing ones. They talked about the overall **increase in traffic as a possibility,** which contradicts the idea suggested above that bike lanes will decrease cars. Depending upon how bike lanes are introduced, **there might be an adjustment period, where cars are not yet reduced but bikes are increasing.** In this case, there could be a period where there is even **higher traffic and congestion**, and it is not clear if, or how quickly, car traffic would decrease. There was also a perception that **traffic will get worse if bike lanes are largely unused;** this could create more car congestion and incentives to drive into bike lanes to go around slow car traffic. Some respondents also referenced the possible challenges to wider social issues. **More bike lanes might serve some residents but overshadow others.** ***This might disproportionately benefit White individuals and change the identity of Mattapan if it is seen as bike-friendly, this might reinforce gentrification and moving in by people who want to bike more (the implication is that such new residents may be less likely to be People of Color)***. One respondent also mentioned the challenges that come with having to rethink the overall traffic infrastructure, beyond the painted lines on the roads. For example, **there may be more need for distinct bike-lane traffic signaling.**

Reflection: Additional Discussion on Updated Findings

One of the possible interpretations of the survey data and qualitative responses is that there is a need to balance short- and long-term needs. Bike lanes, instituted without a more fully-formed design for neighborhood change can create some benefits, but it is not clear that these outweigh the short-term risks. Because of the ***nature of car traffic in Mattapan now, it is not clear that motor vehicle drivers would automatically adapt to new lanes, so crashes to drivers, bikers, and pedestrians might increase in the period following bike lanes.*** In terms of interest in biking, since this seems to be linked to the safety issues in many ways, it appears that these are still the primary issues to be addressed, but it leaves open the possibility that once that happens, other barriers to biking could start to be reduced, since concerns about access to bikes or ability to bike were mentioned less often than safety. Although safety was mentioned, respondents did not comment on the safe practices of bikers themselves (such as use of bike helmets or how bikers, as well as drivers, follow or fail to follow the rules of the road). Multiple modes of transportation were mentioned at some point (cars, mopeds, buses, pedestrians/runners), ***but electric bikes and motorized stand-up scooters*** were not mentioned, also bringing into question their role, since they can access both roadway bike lanes and pedestrian sidewalks.

In terms of some of the individual statistics and comparisons between earlier surveys and more recent ones, a few changes were observed. The age range of respondents was wider than previously (18-82 now compared to 24-62 previously). The average age was 44 now compared to 42 previously. Respondents reporting their race identity as Black increased to 66% (from 42% previously), and white respondents decreased to 10% (compared to 31% previously). About 70% of respondents reported as non-immigrant or child of immigrants, and the rest reported as immigrants or did not give an answer.

More men now considered biking unsafe (52% now compared to 40% previously), but fewer women had this concern (64% now compared to 73% previously). People of Color who named the concern about needing to shower after biking increased from 50% to 63%. The number of people who considered biking unsafe remains unchanged between the periods (69%). The people who said that they never bike and were People of Color decreased to 41% of respondents (compared

to 77% previously), implying that more People of Color than before likely have some experience with biking. Even so, out of all respondents, 48% said that they do not have a bike, compared to only 42% previously, but 31% said that they always, often or sometimes use a bike to get around within Mattapan. Possible additional directions to explore might be how people access bikes if they use this mode of transportation but do not own a bike, and if bike-sharing or other borrowing is happening. Some other findings may also be worth exploring in comparison to each other. For example, 69% of all respondents said that biking is unsafe in Mattapan, while 64% thought that biking was too much effort. It would be interesting to understand relationships between some of the factors, such as whether the perception of effort is linked to the perception of safety.