CONTRA COSTA
transportation
authority

511 CONTRA COSTA



FOUR-YEAR REPORT

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May 5, 2025

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Overview

The Contra Costa Transportation Authority (CCTA) has issued 2,162 [1] e-bike rebates since October 2020 to residents of Contra Costa County. The rebate program has two goals:

1) To incentivize county residents to purchase an e-bike for use as transportation for local trips, and
2) To create an unofficial team of local "E-bike Ambassadors" who will promote the mode of e-biking in their communities.

The program was created to promote a transportation experience ***unlike traditional biking*** that appeals to a much larger segment of the population, namely auto drivers of all ages and fitness levels. The program was designed to build public awareness about e-bikes and their potential for everyday use as a clean, convenient, and inexpensive mode of personal transportation.

Rebates are issued in two amounts: **$150 Standard** and **$300 Low-income**. Low-income refers to households that earn 400% or less of the Federal Poverty Level. In comparison to other e-bike rebate programs which provide larger rebates, 511CC's smaller amount enables the program to reach more participants per dollar spent.

Background & Eligibility

Since 2020, bikeshare programs have been sporadically available in a few of Contra Costa's 19 cities. Many residents of suburban Contra Costa do not regularly use transit for short, local trips; vehicle transport is instead the most common and typically the most convenient mode.

511 Contra Costa (511CC), CCTA's public-facing TDM program, runs the e-bike rebate program with funding from the local half-cent sales tax known as Measure J.

All Class 1, 2, and 3 e-bikes qualify for rebates, as do new e-bike conversion kits. E-bikes must be new and can be purchased from any retailer. The sales receipt must show the purchase date, the bike's make/model, its price, and sales tax paid. Applicants also provide verification of county residence, age (18+), a photo of the e-bike's serial number to prove possession, and, if applying for a $300 Low-income rebate, proof of income eligibility. Program materials are available in English and Spanish.

Charge Up Contra Costa - $500 Rebates

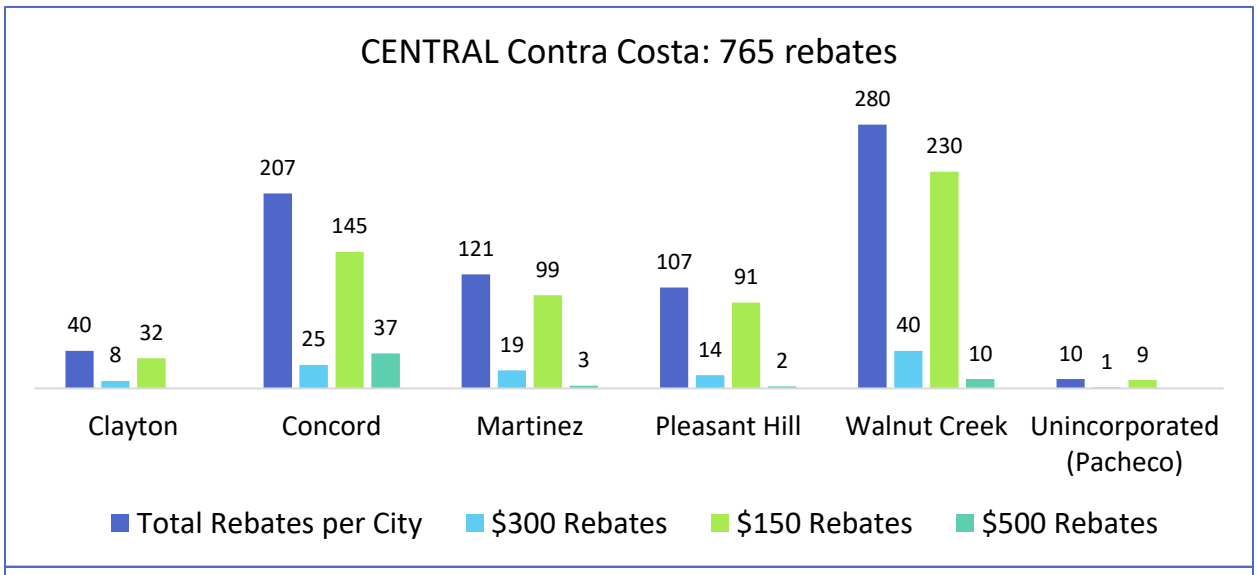
In February 2022, the CCTA opened a second, limited e-bike rebate program called **Charge Up Contra Costa**, with funding from the California Energy Commission. Charge

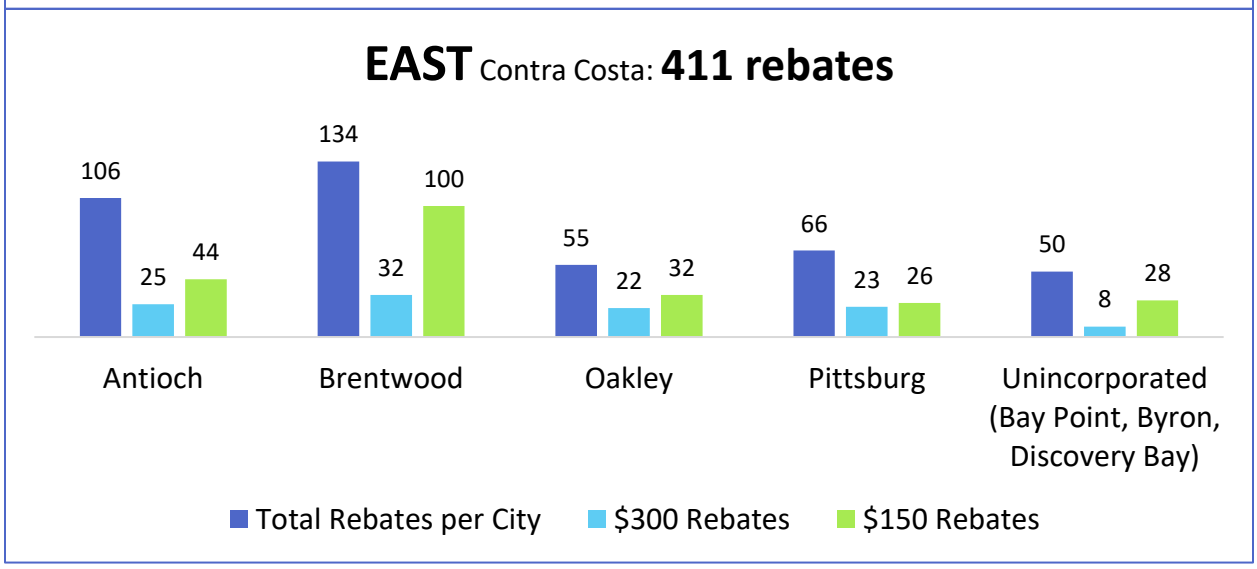
[1] As of May 5, 2025

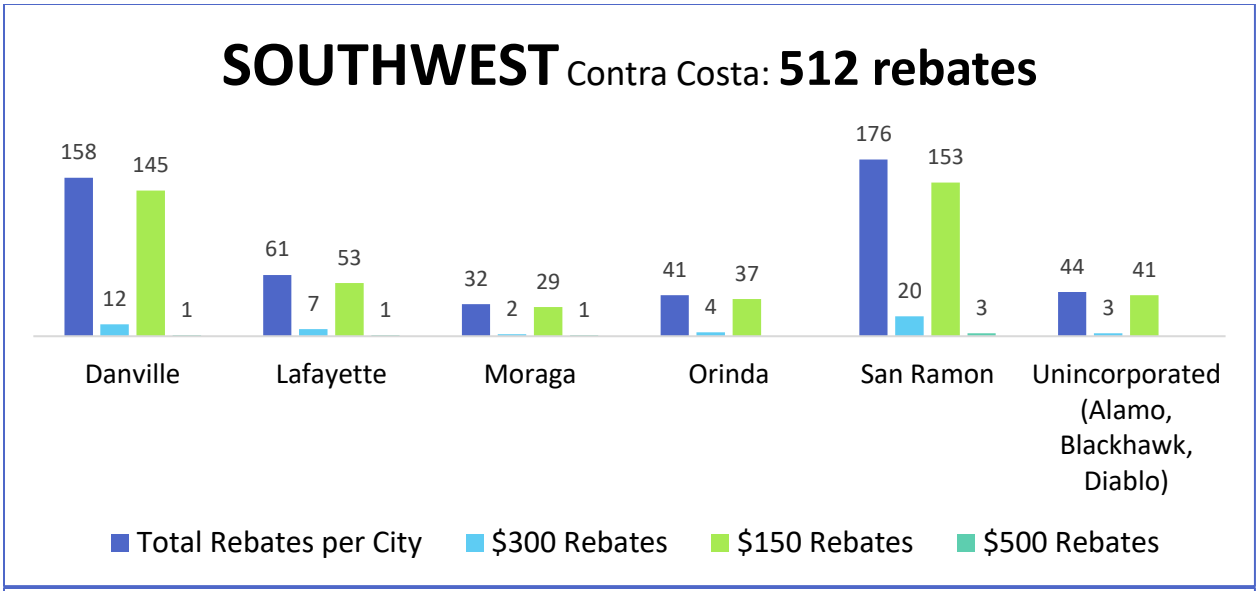
Up provided $500 rebates and was limited to people with qualifying low household incomes **and** who lived in the highest Equity Priority Communities of the county: Antioch, Bay Point, Concord's Monument Corridor, Pittsburg, Richmond, and San Pablo. (Just before funding was exhausted, these rebates became available to all Contra Costa residents with qualifying low incomes, regardless of home town.) The Charge Up rebate program was managed by the same staff managing the 511CC program, so all applicants were directed to the most beneficial rebate program for which they were eligible. Funding was exhausted in May 2024 with a total of 205 Charge Up rebates issued.

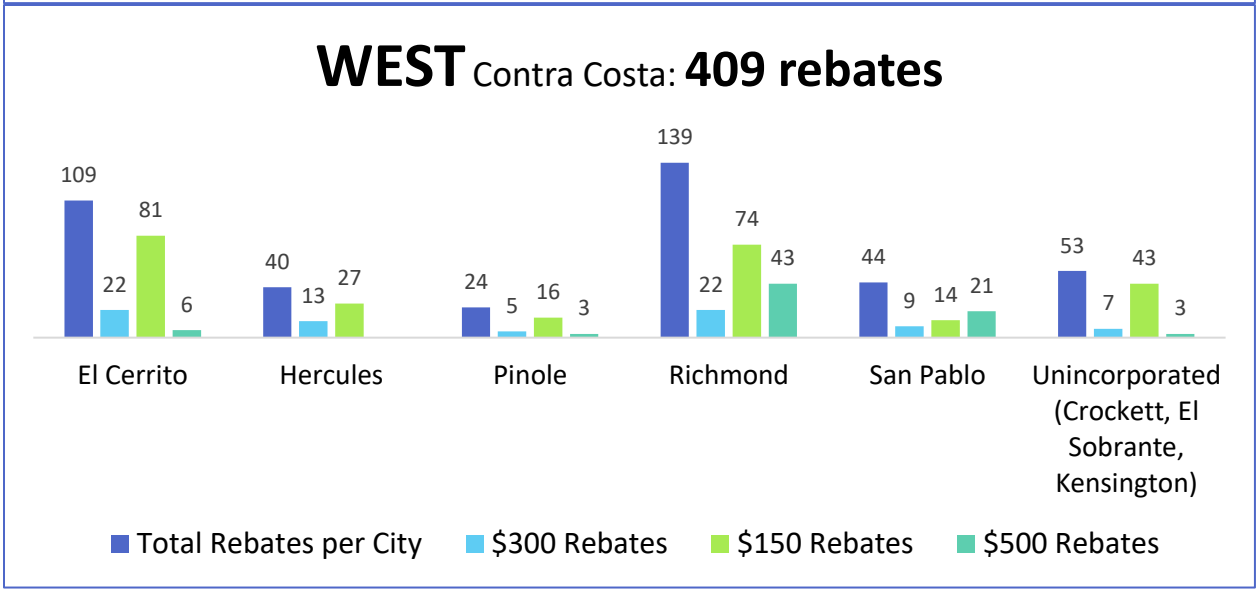
Rebate Distribution by City

Contra Costa County has 19 cities and numerous unincorporated communities. Below is a breakdown of rebates ($150, $300, and $500) issued by city, as of March 17, 2025, within the county's four subregions:







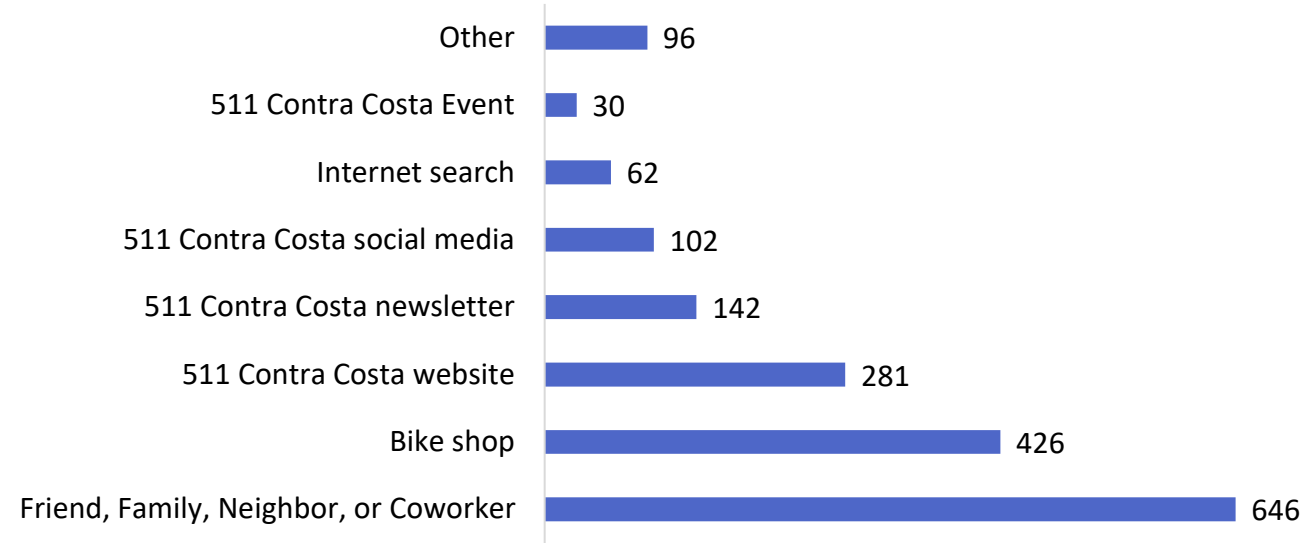


Promotions & Advertising





How did you hear about the Rebate Program?



As indicated in their applications, 32% of participants said they heard about the program directly from 511 Contra Costa via the website, newsletter, social media, or from staff running various 511 Contra Costa community events.

Special notes:

511CC's October 2023 newsletter article about the e-bike rebate program generated an unusually high number of unique clicks in the week after distribution: 1,375 total clicks from 1,011 unique individuals. As many as 264 people clicked more than once.

An article by KRON4 News in May 2024 generated a high number of applications as well.

"Bike shop" is a large source of program advertising (24%), and several specific shops were named including Aventon, Rad Power Bikes, REI, Sports Basement, and Trek.

The largest share of program promotion (36%) comes from word-of-mouth advertising between friends, family, neighbors, and coworkers. One of the original goals of this program was to create unofficial "E-Bike Ambassadors" throughout the county who would receive a rebate and then promote the mode to others.

BAY AREA

How Contra Costa County residents can get cash for buying an e-bike

by: Hamza Fahmy
Posted: May 22, 2024 / 06:51 PM PDT
Updated: May 22, 2024 / 07:06 PM PDT



Riese & Muller ebikes, including the Delite, Load, and Packster 40. (Genna Martin, seattlepi.com) (Photo by GENNA MARTIN/San Francisco Chronicle via Getty Images)

SHARE

(KRON) — With growing concerns about our economy, our personal well-being, and the environment, more and more individuals are choosing to ride bicycles instead of driving cars.

Despite e-bikes often being the more expensive option, Contra Costa County provides financial incentives for electrification by providing $150- $300 in cash rebates on any e-bike purchased within the last six months. Aside from having proof of purchase, the only other requirement is to be a Contra Costa resident over the age of 18.

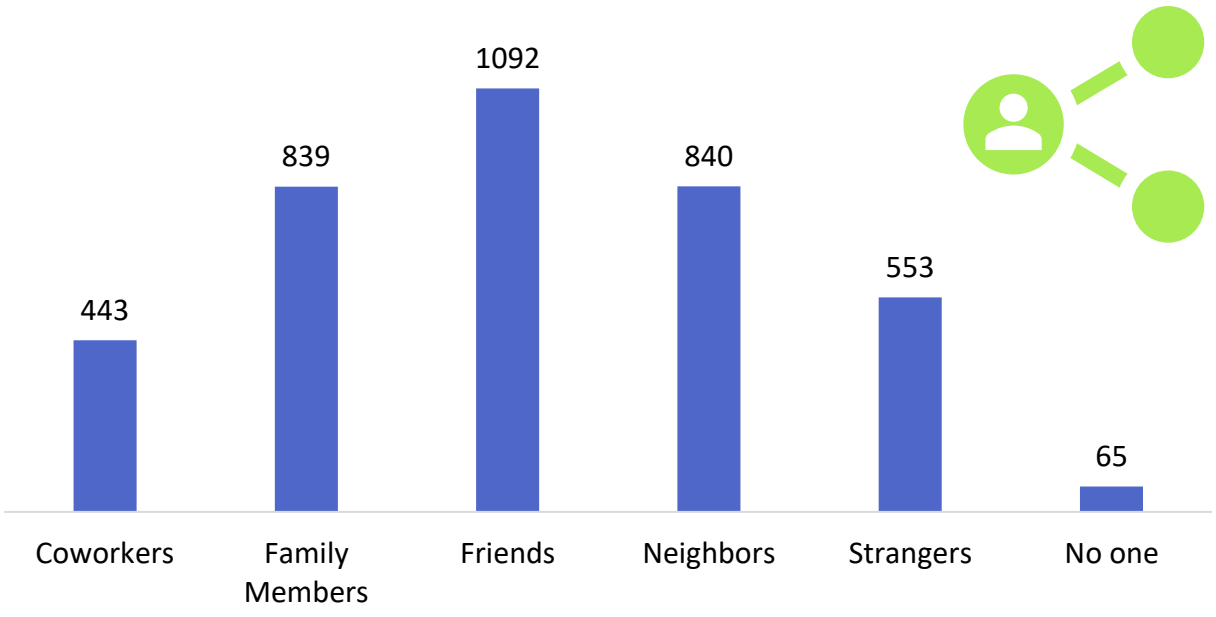
Rebate program organizers, 511 Contra Costa, said the rebate program has "no catch! We want you to show and tell the world that e-bikes are the way to go. Go ahead and brag about how far you've ridden and how many places you can reach without your car."

PEARL iZUMi
GET IN GEAR SALE
25% OFF
SITEWIDE
+ UP TO 80% OFF CLEARANCE



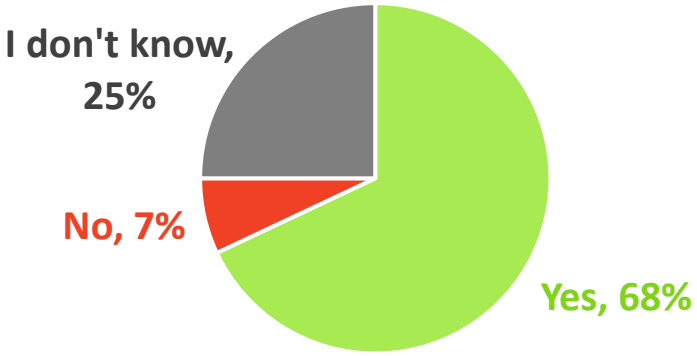
Have any of the following people asked you about your e-bike?

(Check all that apply)



Have you influenced anyone you know to buy an e-bike?

Results from the 12-month survey:



Issuing cash rebates for an inherently fun and rewarding product has created an unofficial marketing team of hundreds of "E-bike Ambassadors" who provide free advertising and reach more people in their communities than 511CC can reach alone. Personal testimony and free test rides between friends, neighbors, and coworkers are more influential than institutional advertising.

By issuing rebates to more people in smaller dollar amounts, the program's influence is likely leading to greater mode adoption in Contra Costa County.

"Love my e-bike and also bought my wife one and talked our friends into getting them too."

There are at least 2 families who are now also considering purchasing an e-bike for school drop-offs/pick-ups.



Follow Up Surveys: 80% Response Rate

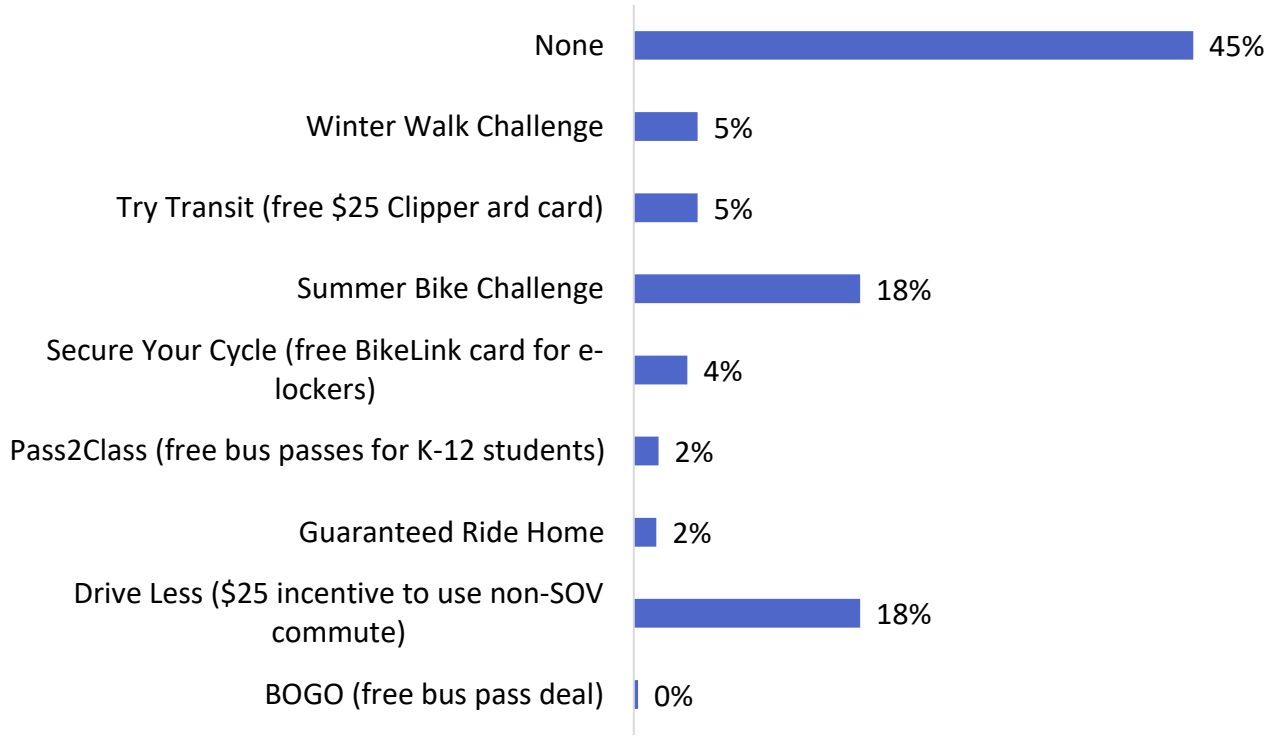


Participants receive links via email to complete follow up surveys at two months and 12 months from their rebate approval date, administered on a rolling basis. Surveys assess riding habits, usage of other types of transportation, attitudes about e-biking, bike parking, and barriers to e-biking. Optional demographic data is also collected.

The two-month survey response rate[2] is consistently at or above 80%, and the 12-month survey response rate is 43%. Surveys are fairly long, taking about five minutes to complete, so the high response rates indicate program engagement and enthusiasm about e-biking remain high.

Customer satisfaction with the 511 Contra Costa brand is another likely contributor to the higher-than-average response rate. All communication with participants is conducted through personal email rather than customer relationship management software or chatbot. Overlapping participation in other well-liked 511CC programs, such as the Summer Bike Challenge, Winter Walk Challenge, and Pass2Class demonstrates brand affinity and customer loyalty; 55% of applicants have participated in another 511 Contra Costa program:

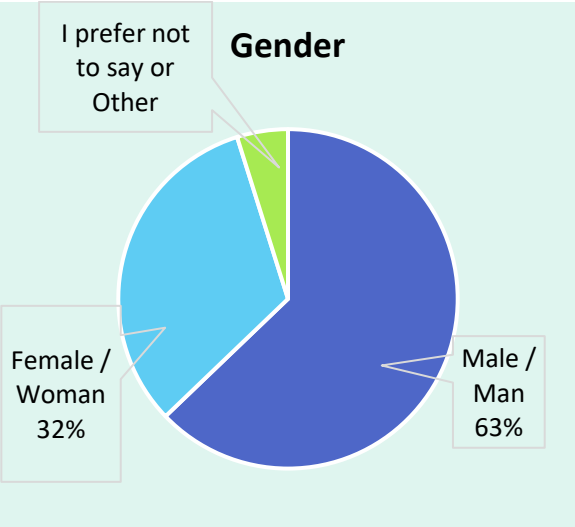
Since receiving your rebate, have you or your family participated in any of these 511 Contra Costa programs?

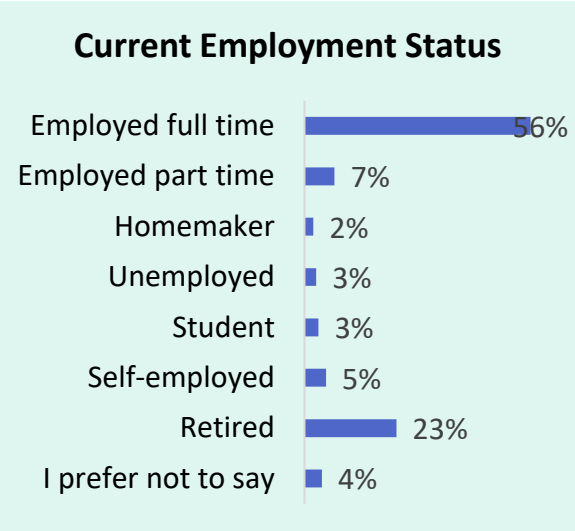


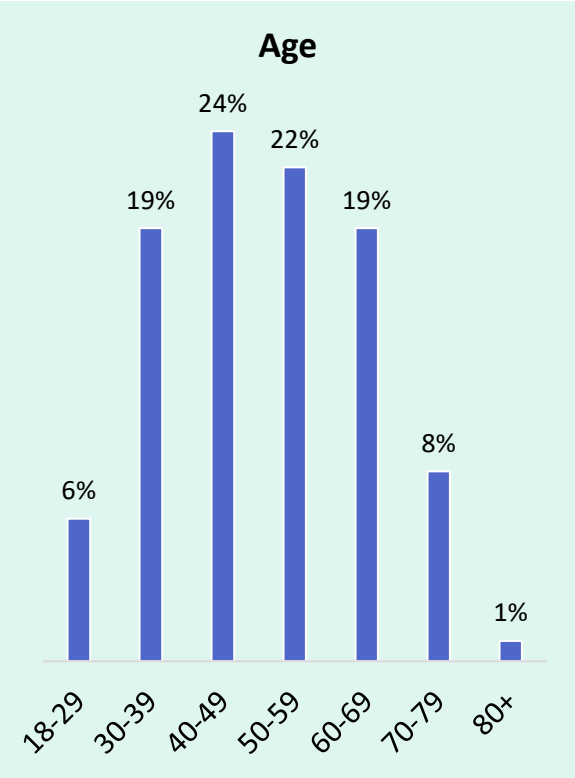
[2] The average response rate for online surveys is 10-30%, and a response rate of 50% or higher is generally considered an excellent result.

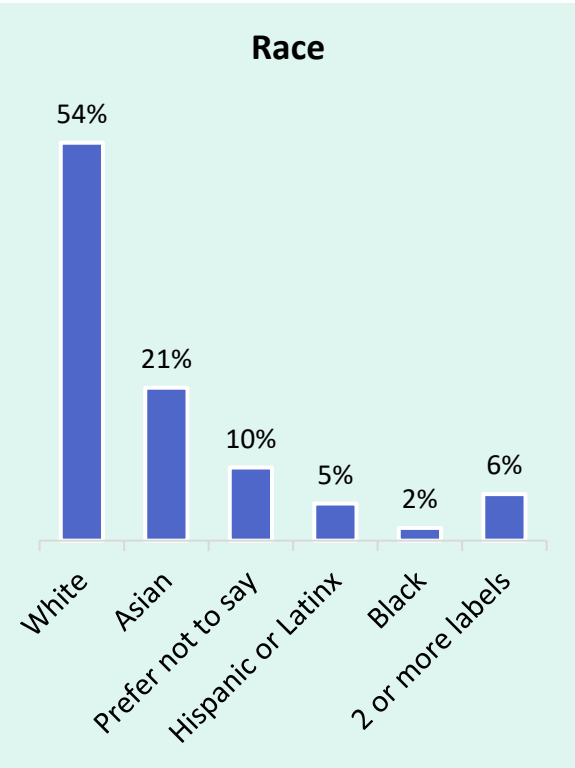
Key Data

Demographics of Rebate Participants





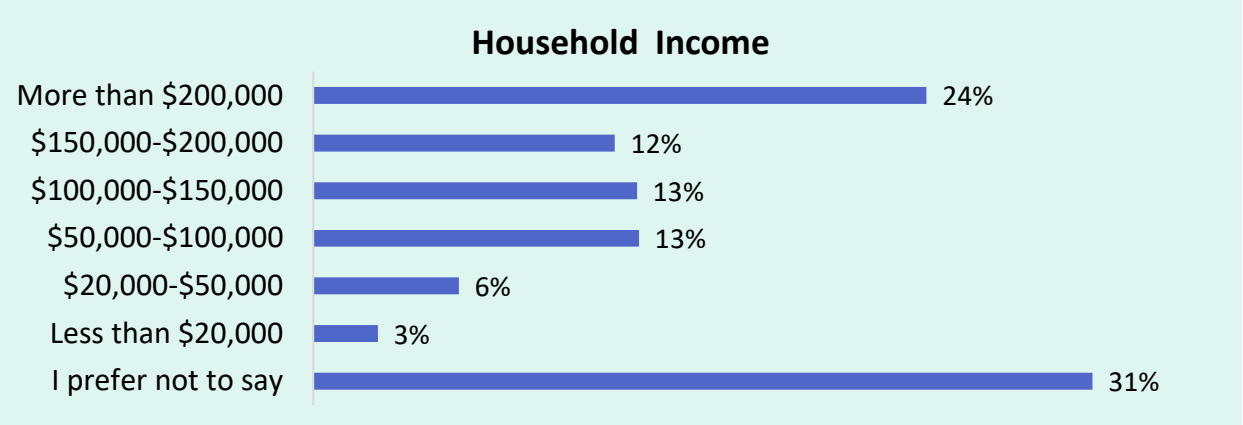


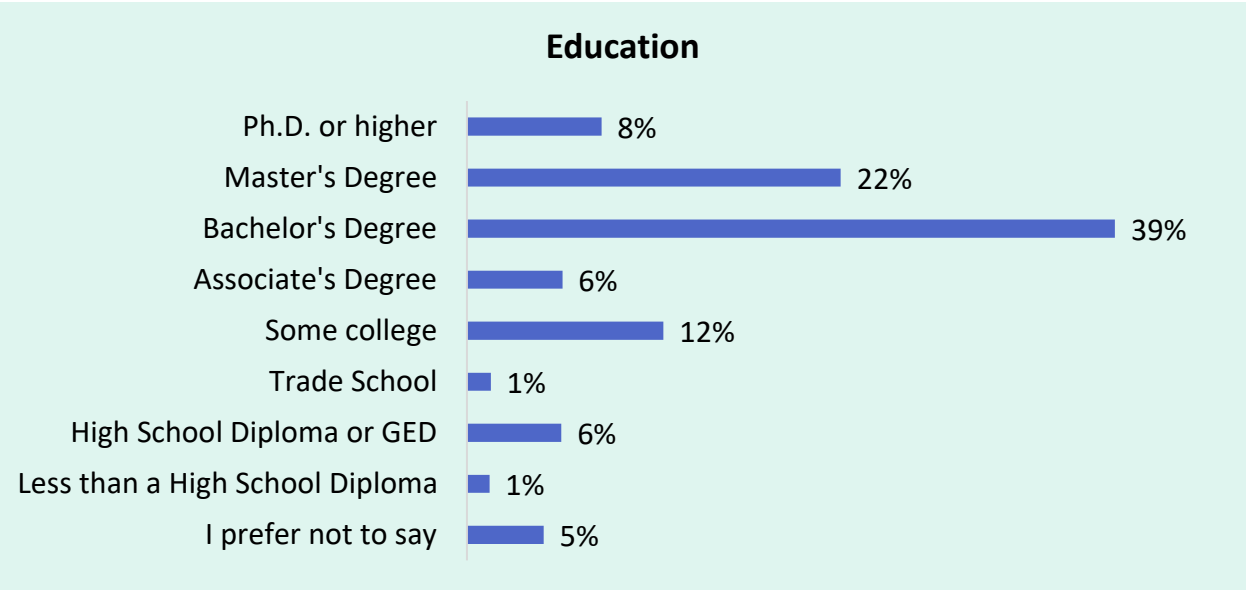


Car Ownership



93% of rebate participants own or have regular access to a motor vehicle.





Cost of E-bikes

$1,737: Average base price

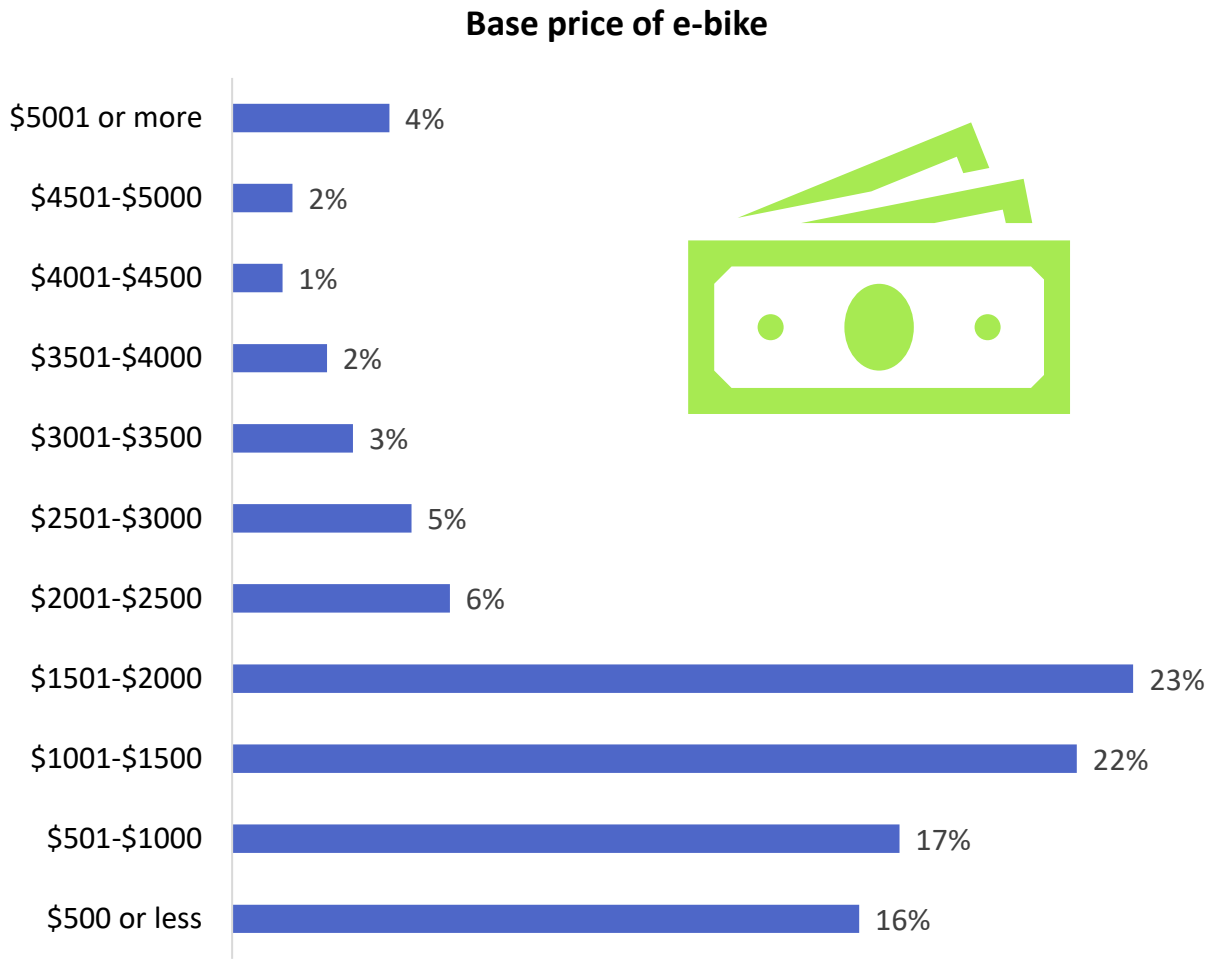
$1,450: Median base price

$1,850: Average base price for an e-bike in the **511CC $150 Standard** program

$1,179: Average base price for an e-bike in the **$300-$500 Low-income**

16% of e-bikes cost $500 or less. The Jetson Bolt Pro, which sold at Costco in the $330-$400 range, was a very popular purchase during the first two years of the 511 Contra Costa Rebate Program.

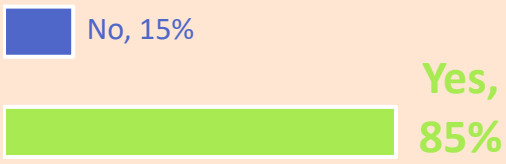
Usage data indicates that frequency of trips is nearly identical between all bike cost groups, indicating that cost minimums are not necessary to influence trip reduction outcomes. Less expensive e-bikes appear to be sufficient for trips ten miles or less, which is the average length of most automobile trips.



Potential for E-Bikes to Replace Vehicle Trips

Since buying your e-bike, have you ever used it for a trip *that you previously would have taken by car?*



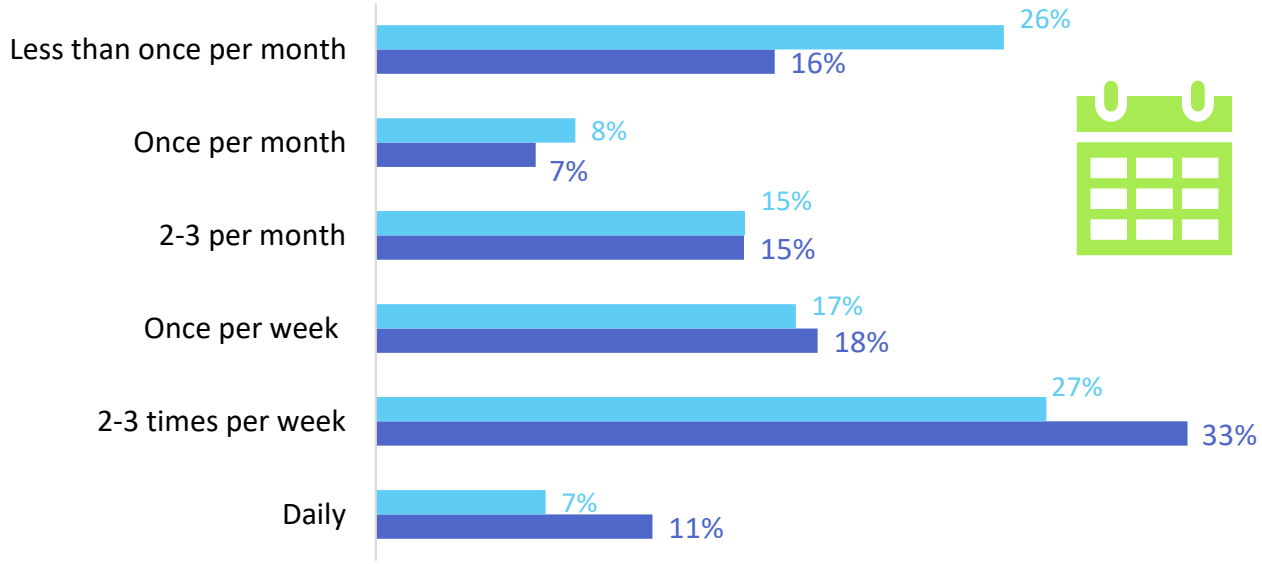


In Contra Costa County[3] the default mode is driving. However, survey data shows that e-bikes are frequently replacing vehicle trips.

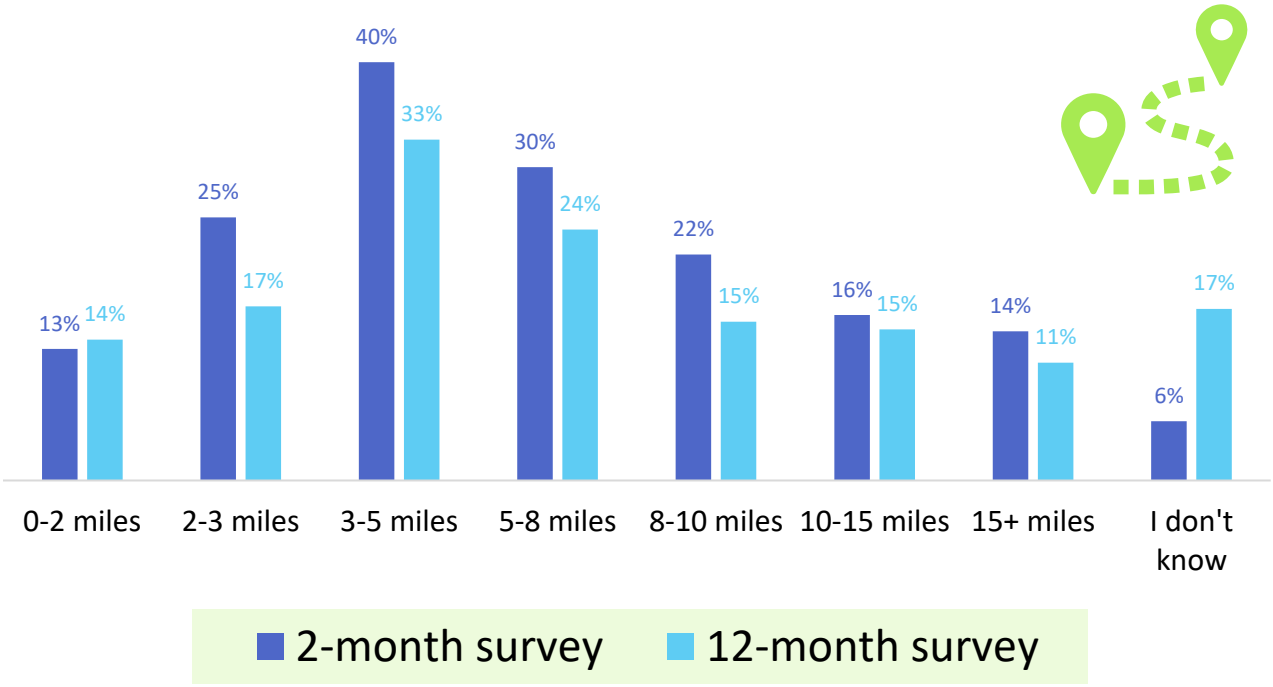
[3] https://datausa.io/profile/geo/contra-costa-county-ca#economy

One year after receiving a rebate, 51% of participants report using their e-bikes to replace vehicle trips once or more per week, with an average round trip distance of 6.2 miles:

How frequently do you use your ebike in place of driving a car?



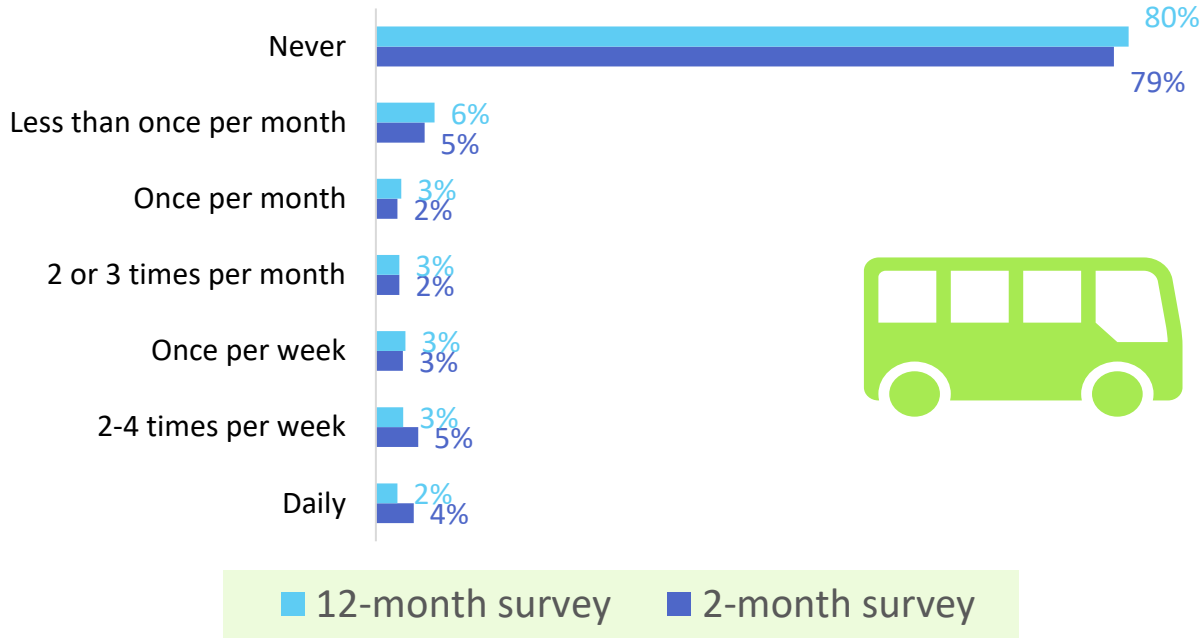
Average distance when replacing a car trip



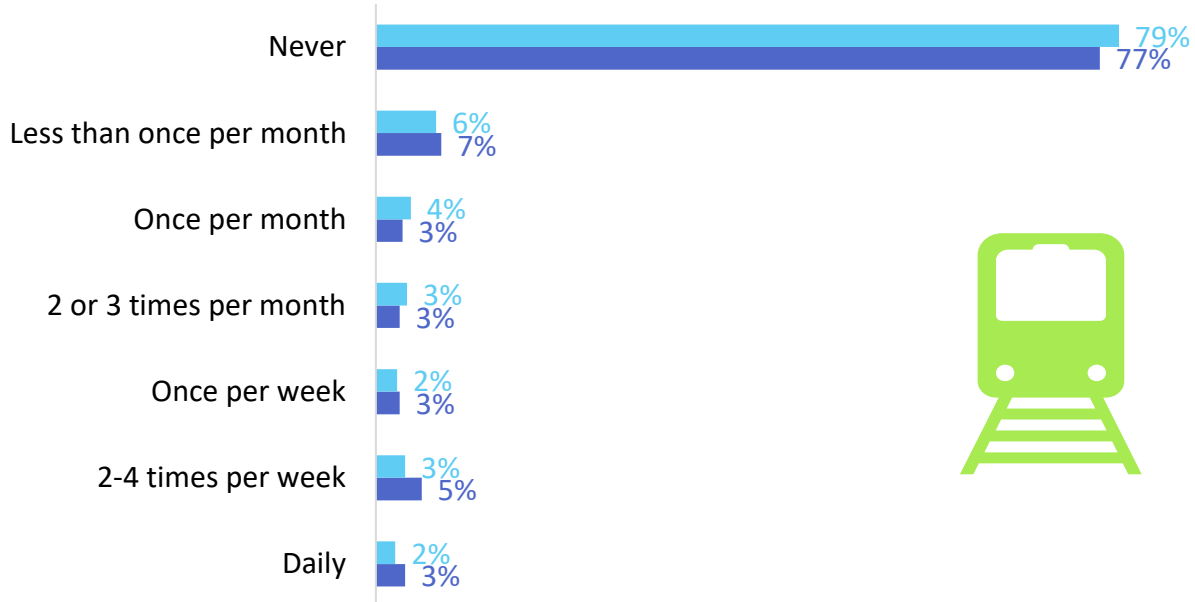
E-Bikes vs. Transit

E-bike ownership does not appear to have significant impact on transit usage. In contrast to vehicle trip replacement, 80% of rebate participants report **"never"** using their e-bikes to replace transit trips (bus or BART). After a year of receiveing a rebate, only 8% report using their e-bikes to replace bus rides and 7% use their e-bikes to replace BART trips once or more per week.

How frequently do you ride your e-bike in place of any bus?



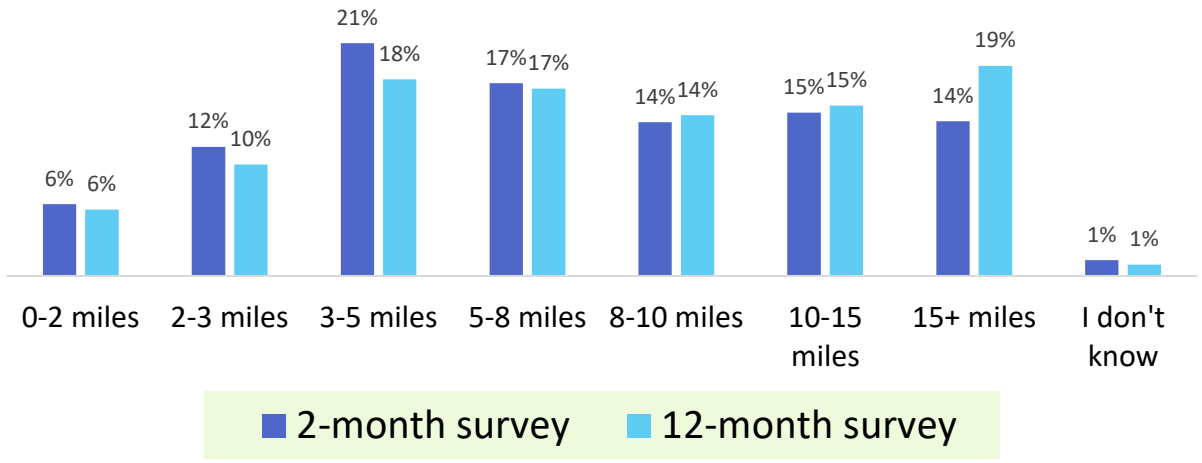
How frequently do you ride your e-bike in place of BART?



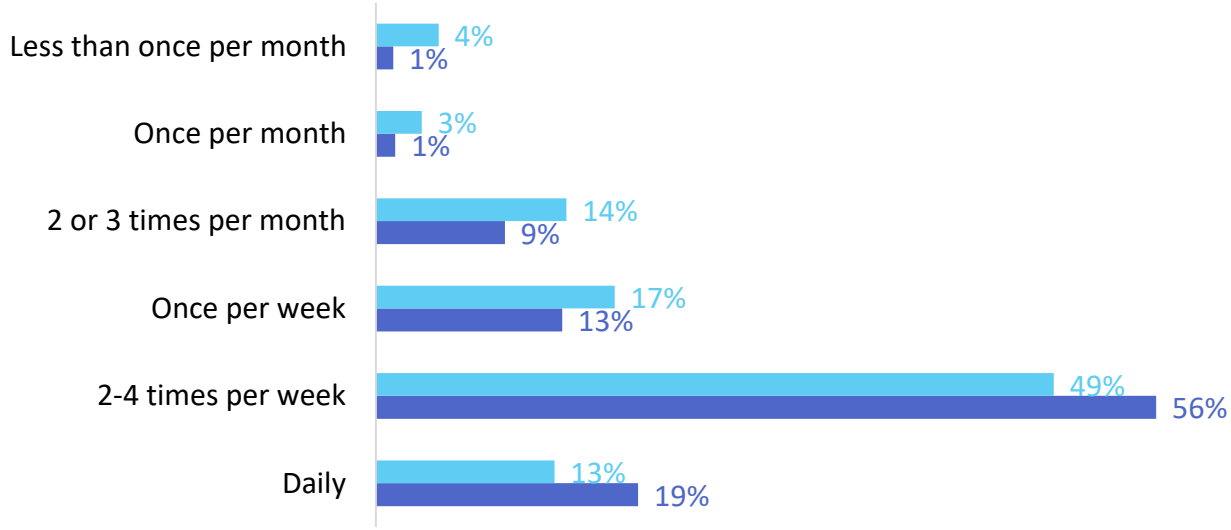
Ride Frequency & Trip Length

An e-bike offers people many of the benefits of driving: **speed, ease of use, personal transport, and direct access to desired destinations -** without the physical limitations of using a traditional bike. This makes e-biking a realistic mode-switch option for those who cannot or will not use transit or a traditional bicycle. E-bikes are a promising development in the TDM playbook, and in suburban regions like Contra Costa County, where shared micromobility is not readily available, incentivizing personal e-bike ownership makes sense.

About how many miles (round trip) is your average e-bike ride?



Assuming pleasant weather and healthy air quality, about how often do you typically ride your e-bike?

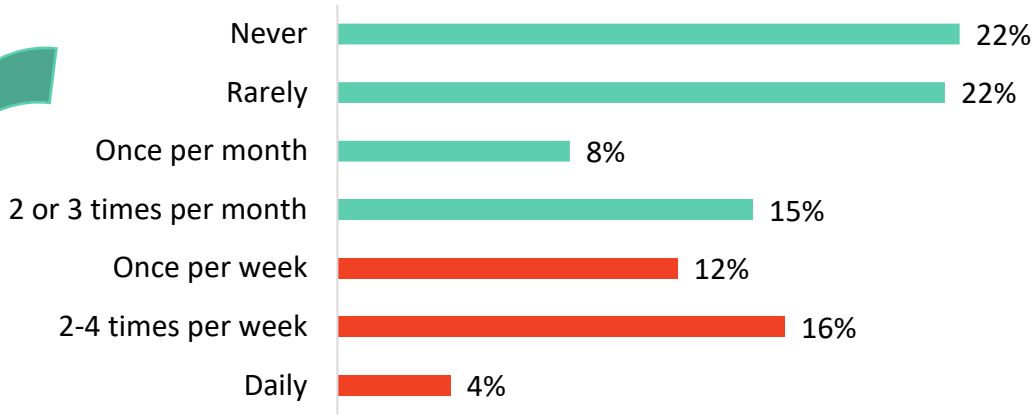


One year after receiving a rebate, 79% of participants are still biking at least once per week (for any purpose), with the majority biking several times a week.

E-Biking by "Non-Bikers"

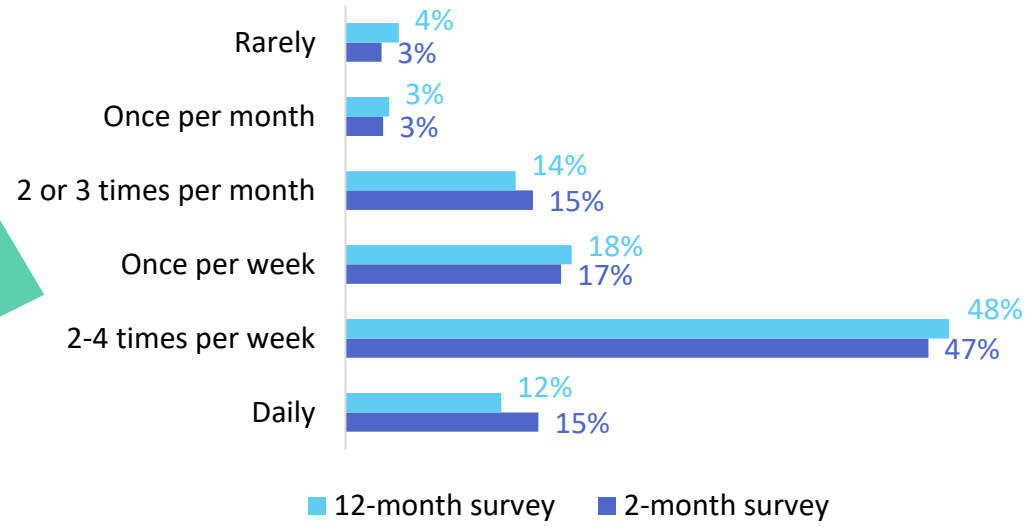
Prior to owning an e-bike, 67% of participants rarely rode a traditional, non-electric bike:

Before owning an e-bike, how often did you ride a regular, non-electric bike?



"Non-bikers" (those who biked once a month or less often before owning an e-bike) are now riding e-bikes on a regular basis:

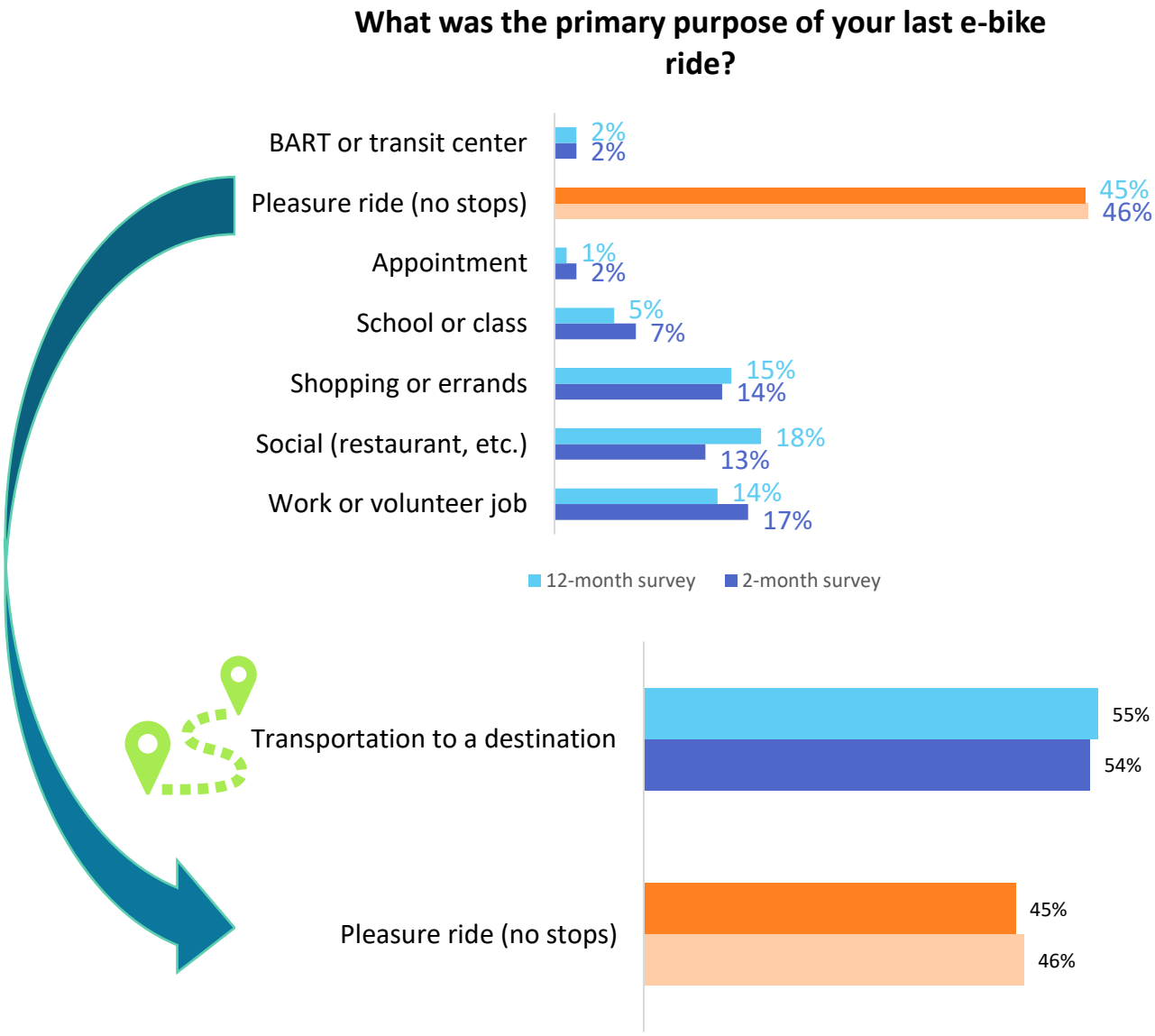
Of the 67% of people who *did not regularly ride a bike before owning an e-bike:* How often do you ride your e-bike?



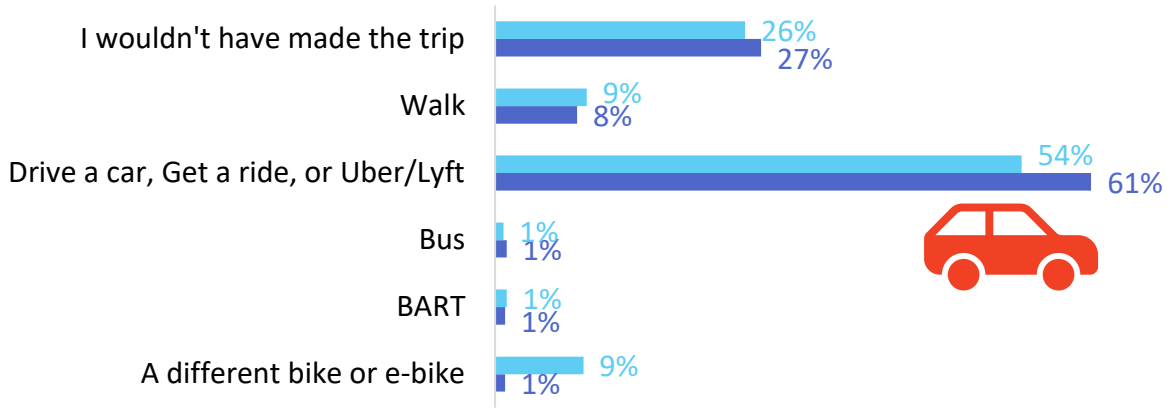
Survey data shows that people are using their e-bikes for far more than just recreation and exercise. Respondents indicate they are e-biking as a means of transportation to various daily destinations including shopping, errands, appointments, restaurants, visiting friends - as well as getting to work, volunteer jobs, school, classes, and BART.

> "Would Not be riding at all without this bike."

More than half of all e-bike rides serve as transportation to various destinations:



Had your e-bike been unavailable for this trip, how would you have traveled?



Data shows the average round trip length for purposeful, destination bound e-bike trips (i.e., to work, school, appointments, BART, etc.; and *excluding* data about "exercise only" trips) is 6.2 miles.

Even if the initial purpose of e-biking for some people is solely for exercise or pleasure, **the potential to reduce long-term VMT should not be discounted.** A person in the habit of biking will be more likely to try bike commuting than someone who does not regularly use a bike at all.

"I'm hopeful the e-bike will allow me to fulfill my goal of commuting to BART by bicycle and not car."

"Two of us share the ebike, and we have ended up using it more than we thought we would. We're even contemplating a non-cargo ebike because when one person commutes with the bike, the other person has to take the car for chores and shopping."

While the Bay Area Air District (BAAD) has historically been focused on reducing traditional commute-hour vehicle trips, the pandemic-induced remote and flexible work trends should force practitioners to consider midday, non-work, and local trips as prime targets for VMT and GHG reduction goals. Any incentive that gets people to regularly use a clean mode is worth support and funding.

E-Biking for Climate Change

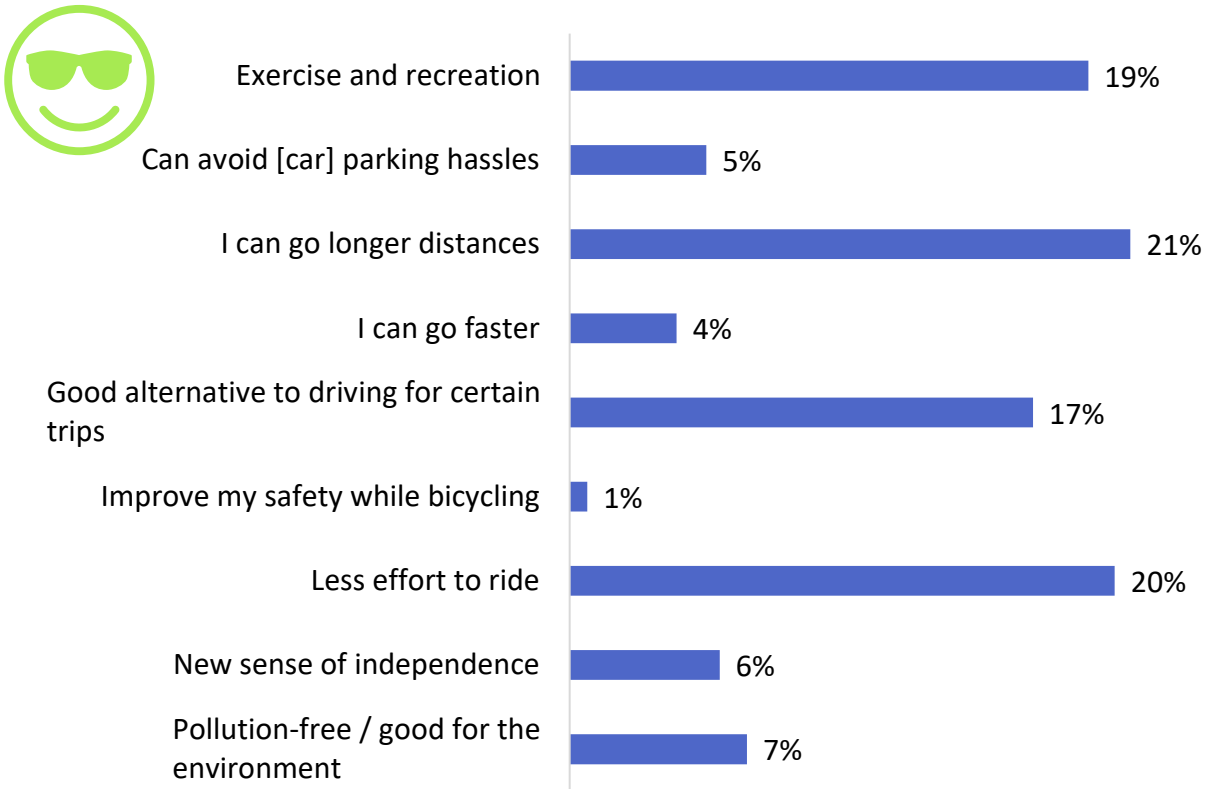
To meet SB 32's goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 40% below 1990 levels by 2030, consumers need more "easy" transportation choices as well as more incentives to make changes.

Personal mobility and car ownership have long defined American culture, and many suburban motorists seem unwilling to shift individual car trips to other modes since they may not perceive a direct, immediate personal benefit from doing so.

Promoting e-bikes offers an easier mode shift choice, because e-bikes provide **additional *personal* benefits**, beyond climate change reduction and air quality improvements.

"Owning and riding an e-bike is fun, and it's a great motivator for enjoying the outdoors and getting exercise in a fun way without involving the car. Also, the fact that Contra Costa gives a rebate to people who purchase an e-bike makes me proud of living in this progressive-minded county."

What are the top benefits of owning an e-bike? (Select up to 3)



The combined factors of personal mobility, accompanied by feelings of happiness, empowerment, and independence while riding - with the *additional* non-transportation utility value of e-bikes for recreation and exercise - appear to provide enough weight to tip the scale in favor of lasting mode change. Plus, while the switch from internal combustion to electric vehicles is inevitably on the horizon for most drivers, the comparatively low cost of e-bikes makes transitioning to electric more affordable, in the near term.

The California Air Resources Board recognizes the benefits of e-bike rebate programs and, along with numerous other states, now offers a statewide program. E-Bike incentives could also help the Bay Area meet climate change and air quality goals.



The societal benefits to public health and mental wellbeing are not being explored in this report, but providing increased access to e-bikes through rebate programs will contribute to Plan Bay Area 2050's goals[4] of making the Bay Area "affordable, connected, diverse, healthy, and vibrant for all."

"Life changing innovation. And thank you for making it more affordable for me during a difficult year. It's had a positive impact on me physically as well as mentally during Covid."

"Thank you. I would need to call my daughter before this program."
-Disabled Participant

"As a low-income person, I most likely wouldn't have made the purchase w/o the rebate."

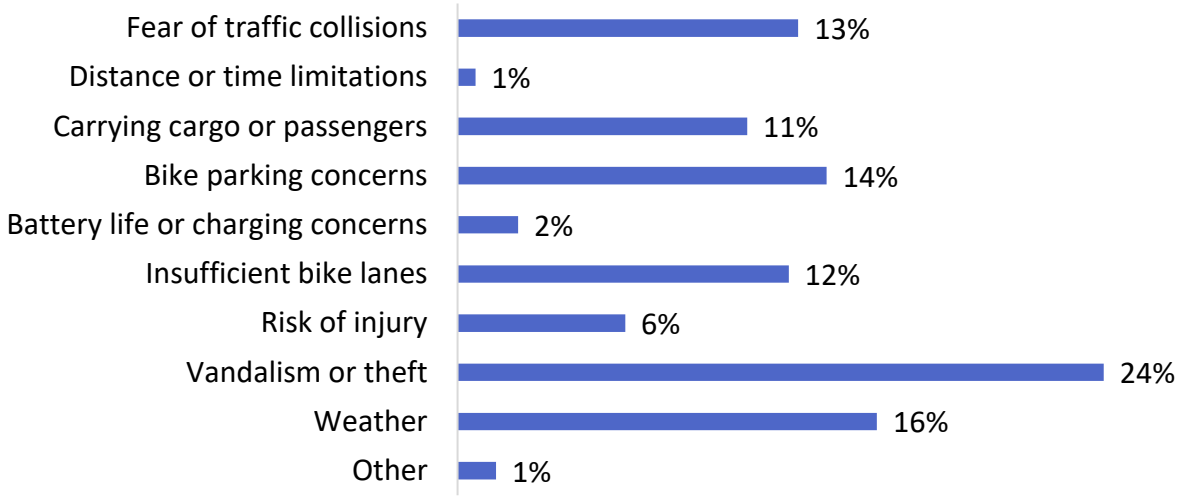
Barriers

Survey data shows that people are worried about their e-bikes getting stolen and have concerns about bike parking. Participants indicated they would like to ride to retail centers, grocery stores, downtown areas, BART, medical offices, and worksites, but are very uncomfortable locking their e-bikes in standard bike racks.

"Fear of traffic collisions" and "insufficient bike lanes" reflect a desire for improved cycling infrastructure often cited as barriers by traditional cyclists.

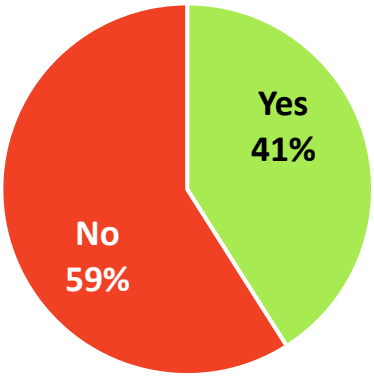
[4] planbayarea.org/about/plan-bay-area-2050-vision

What barriers prevent you from using your e-bike for more of your daily trips?



Survey questions about different types of bike parking facilities show that people feel more confident using e-lockers or racks with built-in locking mechanisms, such as the Bikeep[5] stands located at certain BART stations. Photos of example bike parking options were included with the following survey questions:

Have you ever locked your e-bike to a standard bike rack (or pole, etc.) and left it there, out of your sight for an hour or more? *Results from 12-month survey:*





[5] bikeep.com/smart-commercial-bike-rack/

On a scale of 1 to 5, how likely are you to leave your e-bike at a standard bike rack, using your own bike lock, and leaving it out of your sight for an hour or more?

Results from 12-month survey:



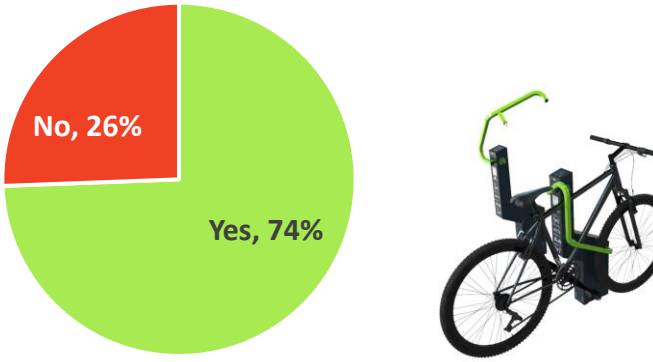
How likely would you be to park your e-bike in a "high security" bike stand that features a built-in, locking steel arm bar, and leave it out of your sight for an hour or more? (It locks and opens with a smart phone app or Clipper card.)

Results from 12-month survey:



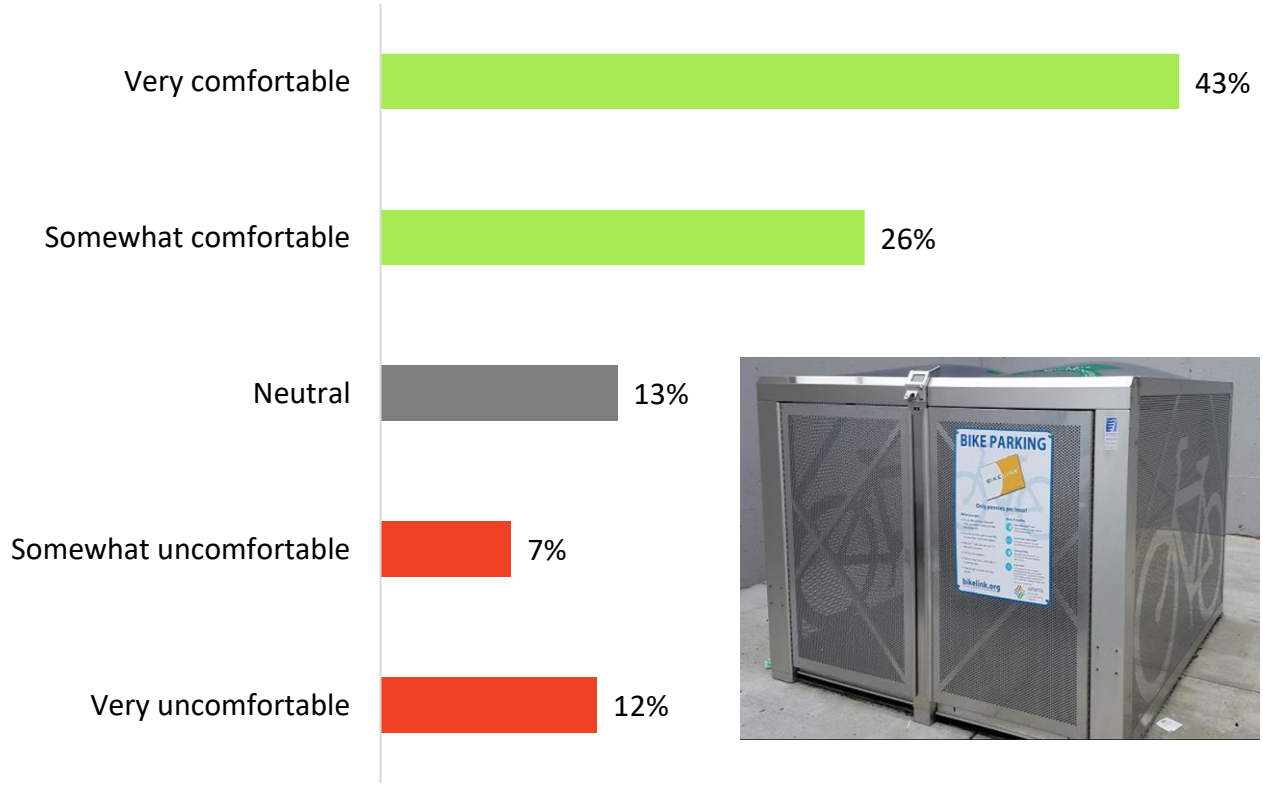
Would you ride your e-bike more often to run errands, get to work or appointments, etc. if those destinations had "high security bike stands," as described above?

Results from 12-month survey:





In your community, how comfortable do you feel about parking your e-bike inside an electronic bike locker?



Survey respondents are asked if there are specific locations where they would like to see new bike racks, to enable more e-biking. All responses, taken verbatim, are sorted by home city and can be viewed at this link.

"The rebate made the E-bike price seem reasonable. Let's get some bike lockers at Home Depot so I can ride to work a couple of days a week."

"Would love to ride to the store etc., if I could be sure my bike would be there when I returned."

"Most shopping centers have very little bike parking."

Complete street improvements and the prioritization of building separated and protected bikeways will contribute to e-bike (and traditional bike) adoption and more frequent usage.

"I'd like to bike to the grocery store, but the bike lanes on that route are unprotected, and cars go 45+mph along the narrow/busy streets, so I choose to drive instead."

Participant Comments

Is there anything else you'd like us to know about your e-bike experience?

In response to the open-ended question above, 814 responses have been recorded. Participants overwhelmingly expressed gratitude for the rebate program, great affection for their e-bikes, and provided many testimonials about the positive "life-changing" effects of owning an e-bike. Participants also indicated strong desires for safer bikeways and improved biking infrastructure on roadways. They repeatedly expressed the need for secure bike parking facilities and wished they could ride to more places if they felt safe leaving their e-bikes.



All responses, taken verbatim, can be viewed at this link.