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GENESSEE STREET 180-DAY COMPLETE STREETS TRIAL SURVEY REPORT

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Introduction

In October 2022, the City of Utica initiated a 90-day trial period to evaluate the feasibility of permanently implementing a Complete Streets application on Genesee Street in downtown Utica. The initial trial period ran from October 25, 2022, to January 23, 2023, and was extended for an additional 90-day period from January 24, 2023, to April 22, 2023.

Throughout the duration of the Complete Street trial on Genesee Street, the city sought public feedback on the traffic changes put into effect. An online survey was made available to the public in order to collect input and results were shared periodically with the Department of Urban & Economic Development, the Department of Engineering, and the Common Council.

Survey respondents were asked to test and provide feedback on the changes to Genesee Street from Court and Hopper Streets to Oriskany Street/State Route 5S. Changes to Genesee Street's traffic pattern included a reduction in vehicle travel lanes from four to three incorporating a center delivery and turning lane and the addition of two bike/safety lanes on each side of the road.

The impetus for the trial was a resolution passed by the Common Council and the opportunity to repaint Genesee Street following a recent paving project. However, a Complete Streets application on Genesee Street has been talked about for over a decade.

The Complete Streets trial on Genesee Street sought to establish a safer and more accessible street for all modes of transportation and users of all ages and abilities. The trial aimed to accommodate and adapt to a downtown neighborhood that continues to experience unprecedented growth in residents, economic development, and tourism, especially with the success of the Adirondack Bank Center at the Memorial Auditorium, the arrival of the Utica University Nexus Center, and the construction of the new Wynn Hospital.

Survey Process

Launched on October 25, 2022, the City of Utica provided an online survey available to the public for the collection of input regarding the Complete Streets trial conducted along Genesee Street in downtown Utica from Court and Hopper Streets to Oriskany Street/State Route 5S.

The public was able to access the online survey primarily through the city's website (www.cityofutica.com) or by a direct link provided in the city's press release. The city's online public survey, hosted on SurveyMonkey, was also shared several times throughout the duration of the trial period via the city's and Mayor's various social media accounts. Additionally, local media outlets, blogs, Councilmembers, and interested residents shared the public survey link frequently.

The online public survey consisted of ten (10) questions of which nine (9) were multiple choice and one (1) was an optional open-ended comment field. The questions asked for general information about the respondent (age, location), how they experienced the trial (by car, bike, on foot, etc.), and the perceived impact the trial changes had on their overall experience of safety and convenience. Questions asked of survey respondents were as follows:

1. What is your age?
2. Do you live in Utica?
3. How did you experience the 90-day redesign on Genesee Street? (Check all that apply.)
4. As a pedestrian or transit rider, how comfortable did you feel?
5. As a bicyclist, how safe did your experience feel?
6. As a motorist, did these changes impact your driving?
7. If permanent, would these changes encourage you to use an alternative form of transportation (walk, bike, public transit, etc.)?
8. As a nearby resident, business owner, or employee, do you feel these changes on Genesee Street improve the neighborhood?
9. Would you like to see these changes to Genesee Street and other streets in the City?
10. Do you have any other comments, questions, or concerns?

Throughout the duration of the 180-day trial period, the survey received 1,095 total responses with a 100% completion rate and an average time spent on the survey of 1 minute and 53 seconds. Of the 1,095 respondents, 612 (56%) left a comment and 483 (44%) skipped Question 10.

Survey Limitations

The survey conducted by the city to evaluate public response to the traffic pattern change on Genesee Street had certain limitations. Firstly, the survey was primarily conducted online, which could have excluded people without readily available internet access. This could have been especially problematic for disadvantaged communities who may have limited internet access, resulting in the potential exclusion of their perspectives. As a result, the survey may not have accurately represented the viewpoints of the communities that were most affected by the traffic pattern change.

Secondly, the survey was open to the full public, and there were no restrictions on who could respond to it. This may have resulted in a diverse range of respondents with varying levels of familiarity with the area, which may have affected the quality of the responses. Additionally, the survey did not use randomization, which could have led to a biased sample of respondents.

Thirdly, the survey did not have any controls in place to ensure that all the respondents had experienced the complete streets trial before submitting feedback. This means that some respondents may have provided feedback based on assumptions or incomplete information, which may have impacted the accuracy of the survey results.

Overall, while the survey was useful in gathering public opinion on the traffic pattern change, it is important to consider its limitations when interpreting the results. The survey may not represent the opinions of all residents, and the results should be analyzed with caution.

Findings

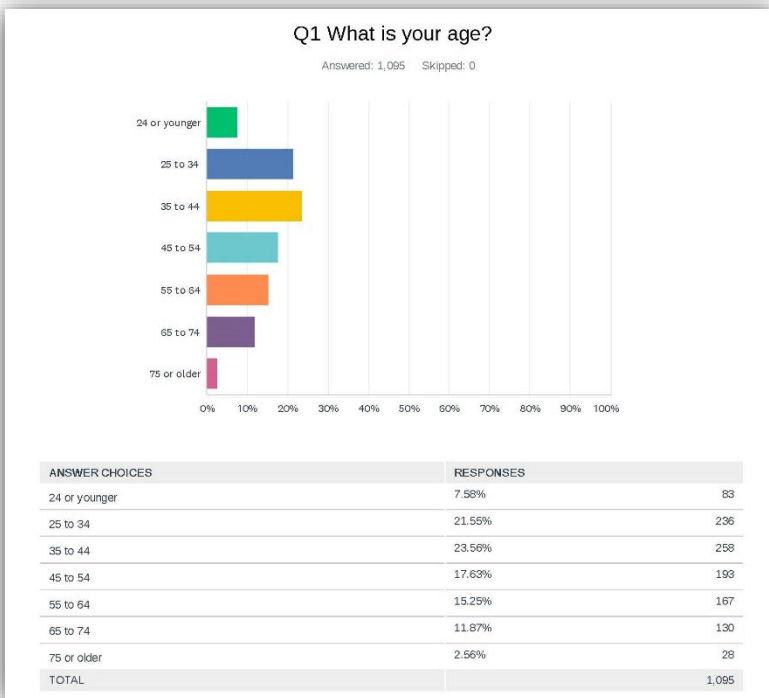
The following section will comprehensively analyze the results of the online public survey for the Genesee Street 180-day Complete Streets trial. This analysis will be conducted with a brief overview of the full results followed by an in-depth review of several areas of focus, including the age of the respondent, the respondent's mode of transportation, whether the respondent is a Utica resident or not, the time of the survey response collection, and feedback provided through the optional open-ended comment section.

Each sub-section of the findings, excluding the open-ended responses, will compare the survey results for different groups of respondents to identify and investigate any significant differences or similarities. The section will conclude with an overview of all the findings from the online public survey.

Overall, the analysis aims to provide a clear and detailed understanding of the opinions and perspectives of the survey respondents regarding the Genesee Street 180-day Complete Streets trial.

Full Results

A total of 1,095 responses were collected from October 25, 2022, to April 19, 2023.



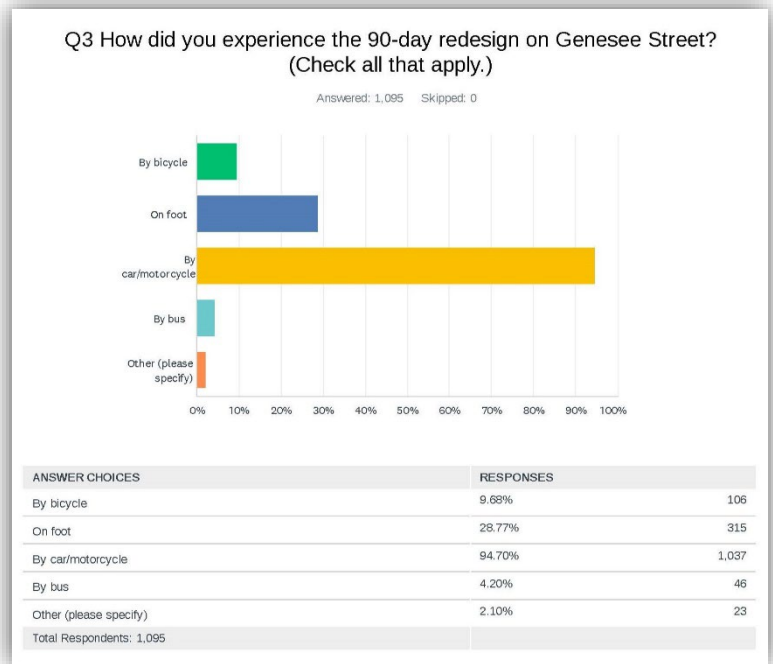
Age: Of all responses, 2.56% (28) were 75 years old or older, 11.87% (130) were between the ages of 65 and 74, 15.25% (167) were between the ages of 55 and 64, 17.63% (193) were between the ages of 45 and 54, 23.56% (258) were between the ages of 35 and 44, 21.55% (236) were between the ages of 25 and 34, and 7.58% (83) were 24 years old or younger.

Residency: A majority of respondents were Utica residents (71.14%) or 779 of 1,095.

Experience: By far most respondents experienced the trial as a driver using a motor vehicle, accounting for nearly 95% of most survey takers' experience.

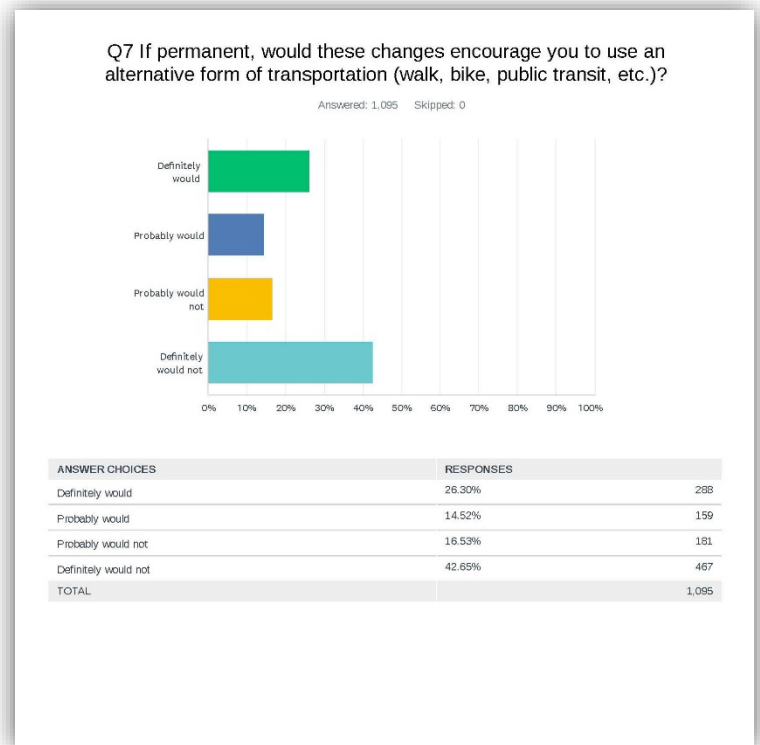
The second most frequent experience was on foot with approximately 29% of respondents having experienced the trial as a pedestrian.

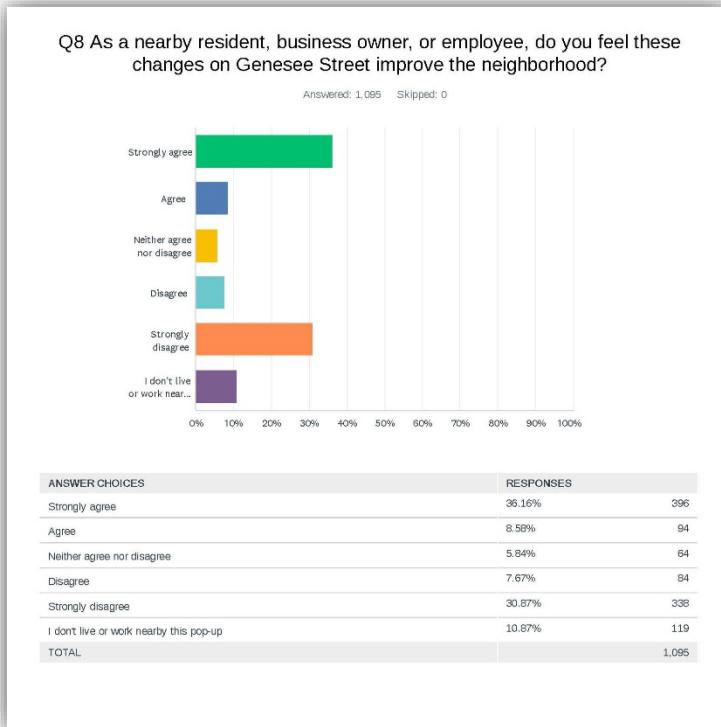
Respondents that experienced the Genesee Street traffic changes by bicycle was just shy of 10% (106) and those by bus made up 4%



Encouraging Alternative Forms of Transportation: The survey aimed to determine if the traffic pattern changes would encourage users to consider alternative forms of transportation, such as cycling or public transit, if the changes were to become permanent (e.g., if drivers would consider riding a bike to work). This question was included because Complete Streets applications aim to promote more active forms of transportation by creating safer spaces for biking and walking, which can have positive impacts on public health.

Respondents seemed intrigued by the changes to Genesee Street with slightly over 40% stating they “Probably would” or “Definitely would” consider using an alternative form of transportation if these traffic changes were made permanent. 16.53% stated they “Probably would not” and 42.65% stated they “Definitely would not”.





Neighborhood Improvement: The survey sought to know if nearby residents, business owners, and employees felt the traffic changes improved the neighborhood along Genesee Street where they live, work, and play.

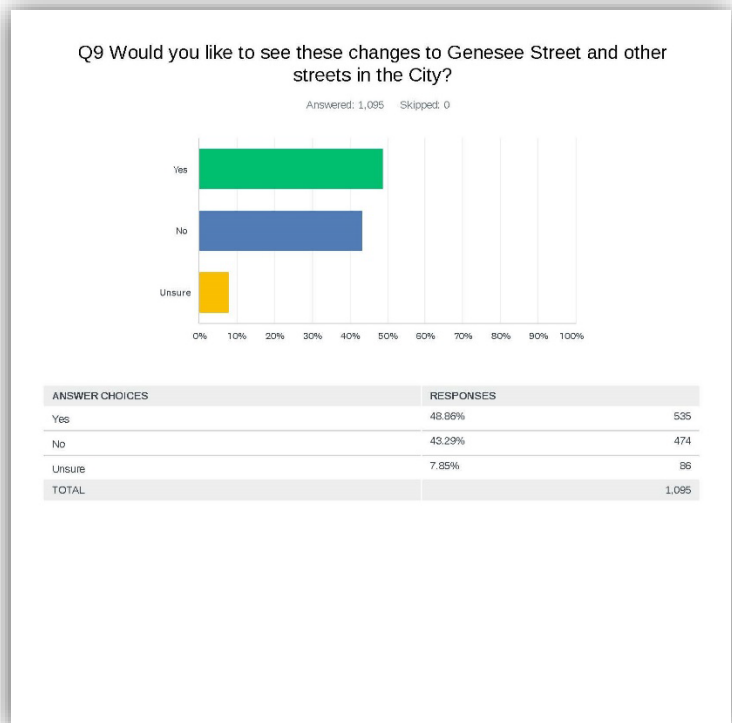
The results were close but leaned towards a feeling that the traffic changes did improve the neighborhood. Combined 44.74% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed while 38.58% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

The remaining respondents either didn't agree or disagree (5.84%) or didn't live or work near the trial (10.87%).

See Changes Implemented: Finally, all respondents were asked if they would like to see the changes made not only to Genesee Street but to other streets in the city of Utica.

Again, the results were close. The difference between "Yes" and "No" responses was 5.57% (or 61 responses), however, a plurality of respondents stated they would like to see these changes to Genesee Street and other streets in the city.

A total of 86 (or 7.85%) of respondents were unsure if they would like to see these changes to Genesee Street and other streets in the city.



Age

This section will illustrate and compare the responses from three age groups: 65 years old and up, 35 to 64 years old, and 34 years old and younger.

65 Years Old and Up: A total of 158 respondents were 65 years old or older. Mirroring the full results, approximately 71% (113) live in Utica and roughly 95% (150) experienced the trial changes via a motor vehicle. 15.19% (24) experienced the trial on foot, and 3.80% (6) the trial by bus and bicycle, respectively.

If made permanent, 29.11% (46) of this group stated they “Probably would” or “Definitely would” use an alternative form of transportation, 20.89% (33) they “Probably would not”, and a majority, 50% (79) said they “Definitely would not”. 129 out of 158 stated they were a nearby resident, business owner, or employee, and of those, 31.56% (50) stated they strongly agreed that the changes on Genesee Street improve the neighborhood with another 9.49% (15) stating they agreed. 5.7% (9) neither agreed nor disagreed and a combined 34.81% (55) disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Of this group 46.2% (73) replied yes to seeing these changes on Genesee Street and other streets in the city, 44.94% (71) replied no, and 8.86% (14) were unsure.

35 to 64 Years Old: A total of 618 respondents were between the ages of 35 and 64 years old – by far the largest sub-group. Slightly less than the full results, 68.28% (422) live in Utica. Almost 96% (592) experienced the trial changes via a motor vehicle, however, 26.38% (163) also experienced the trial on foot, 8.74% (54) by bicycle, and 3.56% (22) took public transit.

If made permanent, 24.60% (152) of this group stated they “Definitely would” use an alternative form of transportation, 13.75% (85) stated they “Probably would”, 16.18% (100) stated they “Probably would not”, and 45.47% (281) said they “Definitely would not”. 556 out of 618 of this group stated they were a nearby resident, business owner, or employee. Of those nearby, 32.20% (199) stated they strongly agreed that the changes on Genesee Street improve the neighborhood with another 7.28% (45) stating they agreed. 6.15% (38) neither agreed nor disagreed, 10.19% (63) stated they disagreed, and 34.14% (211) stated they strongly disagreed.

Of this group 42.07% (260) replied yes to seeing these changes on Genesee Street and other streets in the city, 48.87% (302) replied no, and 9.06% (14) were unsure.

34 Years Old and Younger: A total of 319 respondents were 34 years old or younger. This group exceeds the full results with over 76.49% (244) living in Utica. This group also drove slightly less with 92.48% (295) experiencing the trial changes via a motor vehicle. 40.13% (128) experienced the trial on foot, 14.42% (46) by bicycle, and 5.64% (18) by bus.

If made permanent, 33.54% (107) of this group stated they “Definitely would” use an alternative form of transportation, 17.87% (57) stated they “Probably would”, 15.05% (48) stated they “Probably would not”, and 33.54% (107) said they “Definitely would not”. 291 out of 319 respondents stated they were a nearby resident, business owner, or employee with 46.08% (147) stating they strongly agreed that the changes on Genesee Street improve the neighborhood. 10.66% (34) stated they agreed it would improve the neighborhood. 5.33% (17) neither agreed nor disagreed and a combined 29.15% (93) disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Of this group, a strong majority 63.32% (202) replied yes to seeing these changes on Genesee Street and other streets in the city while only 31.66% (101) replied no with 5.02% (16) unsure.

Comparison:

- All three groups demonstrated a high tendency to experience the trial by car/motorcycle but that trend decreased slightly among respondents 34 years old or younger.
- The youngest group was comparatively the most likely to experience the trial by other means (e.g. on foot or by bicycle).
- The percentage of respondents that stated they would be encouraged to use an alternative form of transportation increased dramatically as the age groups skewed younger:
 - 65 Years Old and Up: 29.11%
 - 35 to 64 Years Old: 38.35%
 - 34 Years Old or Younger: 51.41%
- A plurality of those that live, work, or play nearby the trial changes ages 65 and up believed that the improvements to Genesee Street improve the neighborhood (41.05%) while the vast majority of those 34 years old or younger (56.74%) thought so as well.
- The 35 to 64-year-old age group leaned more against the changes with 44.33% of those residing or working nearby stating they don’t think the changes improve the neighborhood and 48.87% saying they wouldn’t like to see the changes made on Genesee Street or other city streets.

Mode of Transportation

This section will represent and compare the responses from drivers and those who used alternative modes of transportation (i.e., pedestrians, cyclists, or public transit riders).

Motor Vehicles: 1,037 out of 1,095 respondents to the survey experienced the trial by motor vehicle. The following table shows how respondents felt about whether the traffic changes to Genesee Street impacted their driving.

The results were evenly split with 42.81% (444) stating the changes impacted their driving “A lot” or “A great deal” and 43.88% (455) stating their driving was only impacted “A little” or “Not at all”. 12.54% (130) individuals stated it impacted them “A moderate amount”.

Q6. As a motorist, did these changes impact your driving?		
Answer Choices	Responses	
A great deal	27.48%	285
A lot	15.33%	159
A moderate amount	12.54%	130
A little	24.98%	259
Not at all	18.90%	196
I did not drive	0.77%	8
	Answered	1037
	Skipped	0

Of this sub-group, 61.43% (637) stated they “Probably would not” or “Definitely would not” change their behavior in regard to the use of alternative forms of transportation with 38.58% (400) stating it “Probably would” or “Definitely would”. However, 48.49% (450) of this group that lives or works near the trial believe the changes improve the neighborhood, while 44.83% (416) disagree or strongly disagree. Finally, 46.96% (487) of this group would like to see the changes to Genesee Street and other streets in the city with 45.23% stating they wouldn’t and 7.81% (81) unsure.

Alternative Modes of

Transportation: Just over 30% (343/1,095) of the survey respondents experienced the Genesee Street trial by an alternative mode of transportation. Of this sub-group, 91.84% (315) experienced the trial on foot, 30.90% (106) by bike, and 13.41% (46) by bus.

Q4. As a pedestrian or transit rider, how comfortable did you feel?		
Answer Choices	Responses	
Very comfortable	61.52%	211
Somewhat Comfortable	14.29%	49
Neutral	7.58%	26
Uncomfortable	5.25%	18
Very uncomfortable	9.04%	31
I did not walk	2.33%	8
	Answered	343
	Skipped	0

Looking specifically at pedestrians and transit riders, this group overwhelmingly felt the changes to Genesee Street were comfortable (75.81% or 260). Similarly, for those that used a bike, 74.60% (94) felt safe.

Q5. As a bicyclist, how safe did your experience feel?		
Answer Choices	Responses	
Very safe	19.24%	66
Somewhat safe	8.16%	28
Neutral	2.92%	10
Somewhat unsafe	2.33%	8
Very unsafe	4.08%	14
I did not use a bike	63.27%	217
	Answered	343
	Skipped	0

Of this sub-group, 65.01% (223) stated they “Definitely would” or “Probably would” be encouraged to use alternative forms of transportation if the changes were permanent. For those in this group that live or work nearby, 69.38% (238) believe the changes improve the neighborhood, while 17.79% (66) disagree or strongly disagree. Finally, 74.34% (255) of this group would like to see the changes to Genesee Street and other streets in the city with 19.24% (66) stating they wouldn’t and 6.41% (22) unsure.

It should be noted that even within this alternative mode of transportation sub-group that 86.88% (298) also experienced the trial by motor vehicle.

Comparison:

- The vast majority of both groups were drivers, however, those that experienced the trial changes by an alternative form of transportation had a much stronger feeling that the changes to Genesee Street would encourage further use of alternative transit, improve the neighborhood around Genesee Street, and should be implemented on other streets in the city.
- While a majority (55.35%) of drivers felt the traffic changes impacted their driving anywhere between a “moderate amount” to “a great deal”, the trade-off of that impact allowed for pedestrians, bike riders, and public transit users to feel exceptionally comfortable and safe.

Resident/Non-Resident

This section will portray and compare the responses from Utica residents and Non-Utica residents.

Utica Residents: Utica residents made up approximately 71% of the total survey responses with 779 out of 1,095 submissions.

Q7. If permanent, would these changes encourage you to use an alternative form of transportation (walk, bike, public transit, etc.)?		
Answer Choices	Responses	
Definitely would	27.09%	211
Probably would	14.89%	116
Probably would not	15.66%	122
Definitely would not	42.36%	330
	Answered	779
	Skipped	0
Q8. As a nearby resident, business owner, or employee, do you feel these changes on Genesee Street improve the neighborhood?		
Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly agree	40.56%	316
Agree	7.70%	60
Neither agree nor disagree	4.88%	38
Disagree	7.32%	57
Strongly disagree	30.81%	240
I don't live or work nearby this pop-up	8.73%	68
	Answered	779
	Skipped	0
Q9. Would you like to see these changes to Genesee Street and other streets in the City?		
Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	50.32%	392
No	42.62%	332
Unsure	7.06%	55
	Answered	779
	Skipped	0

Looking at submissions from Uticans, a combined 41.98% (316) stated the changes would encourage them to use alternative forms of transportation while a combined 58.02% (452) stated it wouldn't encourage them.

For those in this group that live or work nearby, 52.88% (376) felt the changes improved the neighborhood and 41.78% (297) didn't with 5.34% (38) undecided.

Uticans, by a nearly 8-point majority, stated they would like to see these changes to Genesee Street and other streets in the city.

Non-Utica Residents: Non-Utica residents made up approximately 29% of the total survey responses with 316 out of 1,095 submissions.

Reviewing the submissions of non-Utica respondents, a combined 37.98% (120) stated the changes would encourage them to use alternative forms of transportation while a combined 62.02% (196) stated it wouldn't encourage them.

For those in this group that work nearby, 43.02% (114) felt the changes improved the neighborhood and 47.17% (125) didn't with 9.81% (26) undecided.

However, non-Uticans were almost evenly split between those that stated they would like to see these changes to Genesee Street and other streets in the city and those that wouldn't, with the difference being one vote.

Q7. If permanent, would these changes encourage you to use an alternative form of transportation (walk, bike, public transit, etc.)?		
Answer Choices	Responses	
Definitely would	24.37%	77
Probably would	13.61%	43
Probably would not	18.67%	59
Definitely would not	43.35%	137
	Answered	316
	Skipped	0
Q8. As a nearby resident, business owner, or employee, do you feel these changes on Genesee Street improve the neighborhood?		
Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly agree	25.32%	80
Agree	10.76%	34
Neither agree nor disagree	8.23%	26
Disagree	8.54%	27
Strongly disagree	31.01%	98
I don't live or work nearby this pop-up	16.14%	51
	Answered	316
	Skipped	0
Q9. Would you like to see these changes to Genesee Street and other streets in the City?		
Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	45.25%	143
No	44.94%	142
Unsure	9.81%	31
	Answered	316
	Skipped	0

Comparison:

- A majority of Uticans (58.02%) and non-Uticans (62.02%) indicated that the changes to Genesee Street would likely not encourage them to use alternative forms of transportation.
- Uticans that live/work near the trial felt the changes to Genesee Street improved the neighborhood more than non-Uticans that work nearby by almost 10 points (9.86%).
- While non-Uticans were nearly split on whether or not they would like to see these changes to Genesee Street, a majority of Utican stated affirmatively that they would like to see these changes made.

Time of Survey Response

This section will examine when responses were received throughout the duration of the first and second 90-day Complete Streets trials on Genesee Street.

First 24 Hours: Within the first 24 hours of launching the public survey on October 25, 2022, the city received 153 total responses. That accounts for nearly 14% of the total survey result. As this survey was intended to gather public input based on user's experience of the traffic changes on Genesee Street, it is important to note that so many survey responses were submitted within hours of the new traffic pattern taking effect. This brings into question whether submissions were based on lived experience or in-the-moment reactions to the street modifications.

Q9. Would you like to see these changes to Genesee Street and other streets in the City?		
Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	22.22%	34
No	71.24%	109
Unsure	6.54%	10
	Answered	153
	Skipped	0

Respondents in the first 24 hours felt strongly (71.24%) that they would not like to see these changes to Genesee Street or other streets in Utica.

First Week: Within the first week, 482 out of the total 1,095 (44%) survey responses were received with similar results showing a continued strong reaction to the trial changes on Genesee Street.

Q9. Would you like to see these changes to Genesee Street and other streets in the City?		
Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	26.56%	128
No	65.56%	316
Unsure	7.88%	38
	Answered	482
	Skipped	0

First Month: During the remainder of the first month, the survey saw less activity, yet an additional 224 responses (or approximately 20% of total responses) were recorded.

Q9. Would you like to see these changes to Genesee Street and other streets in the City?		
Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	34.84%	246
No	56.66%	400
Unsure	8.50%	60
	Answered	706
	Skipped	0

Second and Third Month: Over the course of the second and third months until the conclusion of 1st 90-day trial period on January 23, 2023, another 362 responses were received (33% of total responses).

Q9. Would you like to see these changes to Genesee Street and other streets in the City?		
Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	75.14%	272
No	18.23%	66
Unsure	6.63%	24
	Answered	362
	Skipped	0

2nd Trial Period: Responses for the entirety of the 2nd 90-day trial period included an additional 27 responses (or 2% of the total survey result).

Comparison:

- Members of the public that took the online survey within the first month, but especially in the first week or first 24 hours were significantly more likely to look unfavorably on the trial
- 71.24% of survey takers in the first 24 hours responded “No” to Question 9
- Responses received for the remainder of both trial periods proved to look more favorably on the trial with 75.14% (272/364 total responses) in favor of seeing the changes on Genesee Street and other city streets.

Feedback

This section will examine the optional open-ended responses received as a part of Question 10 of the public survey with the purpose of identifying common ideas and areas of concern.

Of the 1,095 total survey respondents, 612 (56%) utilized Question 10 to leave additional comments, questions, and concerns. In reviewing all of the comments submitted in the public survey, we've compiled a bulleted list of the top five (5) common ideas or areas of concern brought forth by the respondents' input.

1. **Merging when headed south on Genesee Street towards Bleecker Street:** Perhaps the single most identified issue among survey respondents was the traffic merge drivers had to navigate as they headed south on Genesee Street over Oriskany Street/5S. Many commented that the time and distance to merge into a single lane prior to the intersection of Bleecker and Genesee Streets was too short.
2. **Poor traffic light timing:** Many comments were made in regard to the timing of the traffic lights along Genesee Street in the trial area. A common issue for users was feeling as though the traffic lights were not timed well with each other (synchronized) or that the traffic light intervals were too long or too short at certain intersections. Both the Bleecker Street and Columbia Street intersections were identified as difficult to navigate through with the traffic light timing. Many stated the lights caused backups along Genesee Street, causing obstructed intersections and crosswalks.
3. **Traffic backed up:** As stated above, many felt traffic was backed up on Genesee Street, especially during morning and afternoon peak times. The intersections around Oriskany Street/5S and Bleecker Street as well as the entrance onto Genesee Street from Devereux Street were identified as problem areas.
4. **Lack of signage or clear markers:** Many survey respondents felt the trial area lacked sufficient signage or traffic markers to demarcate the new traffic pattern along Genesee Street. This issue was exacerbated as the temporary road paint faded throughout the Winter and into Spring.
5. **Providing protected bike lanes:** Many respondents appreciated the city's move towards implementing a Complete Street application on Genesee Street, however, they hoped that the traffic changes made during the trial wouldn't be the final changes applied to the street and encouraged the city to look at providing protected bike lanes along Genesee Street.

Conclusion

The Complete Streets trial on Genesee Street aimed to create a safer and more accessible street for all users, regardless of age or ability. This approach was especially important given the significant growth of the downtown neighborhood, with a rise in residents, economic development, and tourism. Notably, the success of the Adirondack Bank Center at the Memorial Auditorium, the Utica University Nexus Center, and the construction of the new Wynn Hospital have all contributed to this growth. By accommodating and adapting to these changes, the Complete Streets trial aimed to establish a transportation network that could meet the needs of all users and support continued growth and development in the area.

Overall, the survey results indicated that while there were some issues identified in the public comments regarding the change to the traffic pattern and traffic lights on Genesee Street, the public had a positive attitude towards the use of Complete Streets' approaches downtown. Specifically, those who experienced the trial by any means of transportation had a favorable opinion of the changes to the street, and this sentiment was particularly strong among those who walked, biked, or took public transit.

In general, implementing Complete Streets is the correct approach for Genesee Street if the intention is to accommodate all users, including pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists, creating a safer and more efficient transportation network. With the increasing focus on sustainability and walkability in urban design, Complete Streets aligns with the city's vision of becoming a more livable community. Furthermore, by providing infrastructure that supports alternative modes of transportation, the plan promotes healthy lifestyles and reduces carbon emissions, contributing to a healthier environment. Overall, Complete Streets presents a forward-thinking, holistic approach to downtown's continued growth that can help make Utica a more vibrant and accessible city for all.