

WSDOT SR 3 Gorst Area Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study

Community Listening Session Summary

November 2024

Overview

In June 2024, WSDOT began a Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) study to look at portions of State Routes 3, 16, 166, and 304 in Gorst. The WSDOT study team will use the PEL study to define objectives for a federal investment and review options for resolving multimodal transportation and resiliency needs in the Gorst area. State Routes 3 and 16 are the only land-based state routes to the Kitsap Peninsula and experience heavy congestion. Additionally, each highway is important for matters of national security, and each is susceptible to liquefaction in the case of an earthquake and face potential issues related to sea level rise caused by climate change.

As part of the PEL study, WSDOT is engaging with tribal nations, local governments, transit and resource agencies, and vulnerable populations and overburdened communities in the study area early in the planning process. This early engagement will help WSDOT identify a purpose and need, analyze a range of multimodal alternatives, and examine the potential environmental impacts of those recommendations.

In October 2024, WSDOT and the consultant team (study team) conducted listening sessions with organizations and representatives of priority community audiences along the corridor.

The listening session goals were to:

- Educate participants on the PEL study process, including opportunities for engagement and how input will be used in decision making.
- Gather community input and perspective on how people travel in the proposed study area, challenges accessing travel or traveling in the area, and priorities for improvements.
- Identify groups and representatives interested in participating in the Community Advisory Group (CAG).

In addition, the sessions aimed to help identify community ideas and visions for the area, existing transportation burdens and challenges, and environmental categories of interest or concern. Interviews also helped inform engagement strategies and community locations for events.

Approach

Recruitment

The study team conducted a demographic analysis and reviewed existing transportation data to identify priority audiences to engage in listening sessions. Priority audiences include:

- Organizations and individuals who represent overburdened communities and vulnerable populations.
- · Local businesses in or near the study area.
- People who walk, bike, or roll in or near the study area.
- People interested in environmental protection in the study area.
- School districts in or near the study area.

The study team invited representatives of priority audiences through emails and phone calls. Listening sessions were conducted as group sessions organized by audience type. Community-based organizations (CBOs) received two meeting options at different times and dates in an effort to reduce barriers and increase participation.

The study team conducted six 90-minute listening sessions between October 22-25, 2024. The team talked with 29 participants across the six sessions.

- Session #1: School Districts October 22 from 12-1:30 p.m.
 - Bremerton School District
 - Central Kitsap School District
 - South Kitsap School District
- Session #2: CBOs October 22 from 4:30-6 p.m.
 - o Voices of Pacific Island Nations
- Session #3: Business chambers October 23 from 2-3:30 p.m.
 - Downtown Bremerton Association
 - Kitsap Economic Development Alliance
 - South Kitsap Chamber of Commerce
- Session #4: CBOs October 24 from 9-10:30 a.m.
 - Catholic Community Services of Western Washington Benedict House
 - Kitsap Community Resources
 - Housing Kitsap
- Session #5: Environmental advocacy groups October 24 from 3:30-5 p.m.
 - Kitsap County Department of Community Development Environmental Programs
 - Kitsap Environmental Coalition
 - Suguamish Tribe
 - West Sound Partners for Ecosystem Recovery
- Session #6: Active transportation October 25 from 9:30-11 a.m.
 - BicycleTeacher
 - City of Bremerton Complete Streets Committee
 - City of Port Orchard
 - Kitsap County Non-Motorized Advisory Committee
 - Kitsap County Public Health District
 - Kitsap County Public Works Department

- North Kitsap Trails Association
- o West Sound Cycling Club

Session format and engagement tools

The study team conducted sessions virtually using Zoom Meeting. Each session was staffed by a facilitator, a co-facilitator providing technical oversight, and a notetaker. All sessions followed the same format, starting with welcome and introductions, a presentation overview of the study, guided conversation, time for questions and answers, and closing and next steps. Most of the time spent in the session was organized to listen to attendees. Session participants were able to share their personal experiences of traveling the SR 3 and SR 16 corridor and engage in dialogue with other participants and the study team.

The study team will send a survey of the session questions to reach more community organizations and offer another opportunity to participate for organizations unable to attend a listening session.

Deepening conversation with Mentimeter

The team used the virtual engagement tool <u>Mentimeter</u> to support guided discussion in each session. The session was split into three topics: experience of travel in the study area, community context, and engagement preferences. Each topic included several Mentimeter questions and polls to engage participants in multiple ways and help deepen the conversations. See <u>Appendix A</u> for all Mentimeter data.

The study team collected input during the guided discussion on these topics:

Experience of travel in the corridor

- Where in the study area participants live or work.
- How participants describe their community's experience of travel through the corridor.
- Primary modes of travel through the study area.
- Top safety concerns in the corridor.
- Where in the study area people experience the most travel issues.
- Participants' visions for the future of the corridor.

Community context

- Barriers community members in the study area face in accessing information or transportation.
- Language access needs in the study area.
- Accessible community locations or events for the study team to share information.
- Interest in the study's Community Advisory Group (CAG).

Engagement preferences

- How participants want to be kept informed of the study.
- How community members prefer to receive updates.
- Information channels and sources that community members use to find information about things that matter to them.

Compensation

WSDOT is following the Office of Equity's <u>Community Compensation Guidelines</u> to compensate CBO participants. CBO participants will be compensated \$90 for their time and contributions.

Time	Compensation amount
Interviews lasting up to one hour	\$45 per participant
Interviews lasting between one and two hours	\$90 per participant

Key findings



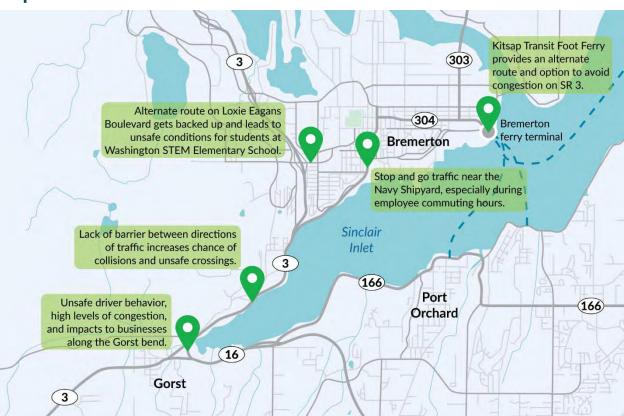
Participants were asked to share words that describe their experience of travel in the study area. This word cloud shows the words participants submitted. The bigger the word, the more times it was shared.

Themes across all sessions

Congestion on SR 3 through Gorst impacts peoples' daily lives. Community
members and users of the corridor make choices based on avoiding congestion and
unsafe driving behavior along the SR 3 and SR 16 corridor, including choosing where to
live, determining the best times to commute, and planning social and familial
commitments.

- Buses need to be considered as another mode of transportation in the study area.
 Participants named commuter buses for the Navy Shipyard and school buses servicing Tacoma, Bremerton, and Kitsap school districts.
- In addition to congestion, **unsafe driver behavior** makes the experience of travel through the corridor frustrating, dangerous, and unpredictable.
- Common visions for the area include wider lanes, fewer merge lanes, protected facilities for active transportation, revitalization of Gorst as a walkable community, safe access to transit, and opportunities for environmental restoration.
- Participants mentioned the importance of ongoing study coordination with Kitsap Transit and the Naval Shipyard.
- Participants encouraged WSDOT to consider offering language access in Samoan and Mam.
- Participants would like to see WSDOT incorporate environmental remediation as part
 of the eventual project in the area.

Experiences of travel



Participants were asked to identify locations in and near the study area where they experience travel challenges most frequently. This map captures common themes heard across all sessions.

Local schools experience everyday impacts from congestion

Participants in the school district session talked about ways their families and students are impacted by congestion and unsafe driving behavior along the corridor.

- School buses traveling from Kitsap Lake Elementary regularly get stuck in traffic that backs up into Bremerton. This often leads to parents waiting anxiously for their children to arrive home and children getting home late.
- Sports teams need to leave school early to avoid congestion.
- School districts have had to redeploy additional buses to get children home during high traffic congestion.
- Students who are foster children and live outside of the Gorst area have to travel through SR 3 traffic to get to school. The travel congestion negatively impacts their arrival time and adds to their long commute.
- Parents of West Hills STEM Elementary School students wait to pick up their children near Loxie Eagans, where many people use as a back road to avoid congestion on SR
 This byway increases congestion and makes it less safe for students walking home or waiting to be picked up.
- Staff traveling through the Gorst area are often impacted by congestion and unpredictable crashes and backups.

"It's challenging when buses are delayed because of traffic in the Gorst area. It not only affects school start times but disrupts the schedules of parents who rely on buses to get their kids to school on time." – School district listening session

Collisions along the corridor impact all users

Participants talked about the frequency of vehicle collisions along the SR 3 corridor. Many participants shared that a bad collision can impact traffic for the full day.

"It's hard to know whether we should start at 6 a.m. to get there by 9 a.m. or whether we can get there in 35 minutes." – Environment listening session

"This is a daily occurrence Monday through Friday. If there's an accident... The whole place becomes a parking lot, and nothing moves for hours. The daily traffic is a safety issue for the shipyard in an emergency. But when there's an accident, it just raises the whole thing up... because there isn't a way out." – Active Transportation listening session

"Of course, if the ferries fail and Gorst is blocked, how do you get to major medical facilities?... We've heard stories about Silverdale's facility, so you know, some lives could be at stake." -Environment listening session

Unsafe driver behavior is dangerous and frustrating

Participants talked about how traffic can make people impatient, angry, and subsequently aggressive. Some participants added that this can result in drivers who speed up to pass and then slam on their brakes in stop and go traffic. Participants shared that unsafe driver behavior is likely the cause of many of the collisions along this corridor.

"I ranked speed high on my list not due to the high speed of the cars, I chose it for the large speed differentials I see - some people going 40 miles per hour, some going 60." — Active Transportation listening session

"People come into the speed reduction zone going 70-75 miles per hour. It's a hazard."

– Active Transportation listening session

People's lives are determined by traffic in the area

Participants talked about how community members and users of the SR 3 corridor have to consider lifestyle choices based on avoiding congestion and unsafe driving behavior. Participants shared examples of how they base their commute time, where they live, and what social and familial commitments they are able to make based on traffic and congestion. The lack of reliability and consistency in travel times makes it difficult to plan a trip through the area.

"You have to plan your day according to getting in and out of traffic... and it can be unpredictable. If I want to make plans to have dinner with my parents, we have to decide to leave hours early and sit in traffic or decide to have dinner late." – Business chamber listening session

"It changes how and when I work, when I go into work, and when I leave work." – Business chamber listening session

"Housing Kitsap has properties in Port Orchard and those residents don't look for employment in Silverdale or Bremerton because of the consistent traffic challenges in the Gorst area." – CBO listening session

Kitsap Transit benefits travel in the area, but it could be more accessible

A few participants mentioned that the Bremerton Fast Ferry and Kitsap Transit foot ferry are great options for avoiding congestion on SR 3. Some participants said they would use the Kitsap Transit buses more frequently if the bus stops were more accessible and safer. Participants noted that Kitsap Transit bus routes and bus stops are limited and not a consistent and reliable mode of travel.

"When thinking of travel in the area, Kitsap Transit is a bright spot." – Business chamber listening session

"I've heard from the people we work with that there is not a lot of faith in the reliability of local transit. But people often choose to use transit because it's affordable, even if they have a personal vehicle." – CBO listening session

Walking in the Gorst area is so unsafe that people don't consider it a possibility

Many participants across all sessions ranked 'lack of sidewalks' low on their list of safety concerns for the corridor. They explained that walking in the Gorst area is too dangerous to imagine using sidewalks. Participants added that they don't believe the addition of sidewalks will make it safer or more accessible for people who walk or roll in the area.

"It's not a heavy foot traffic area. So not having sidewalks doesn't typically affect as much because it's really dangerous to walk through there... most people avoid walking through there." – CBO listening session

"Nobody travels the speed limit. It would be very unsafe, precarious to have to walk or ride a bike through that area, so it really blocks that opportunity for people."

— Environment listening session

Lack of space for emergencies

In addition to limited capacity to accommodate the heavy traffic through the area, participants mentioned the need for shoulder space along SR 3 in case of an emergency. There is currently no shoulder space for vehicles to pull over for car trouble, collisions, or other emergencies. This results in impacts to all users when stalled vehicles can't exit the roadway to make space for vehicles to pass.

Other modes of travel

A few participants mentioned additional travel modes to consider during the study:

- School bus
- Navy Shipyard commuter bus
- 'Dial a ride' service
- Paratransit service
- Coordinating with friends or family to carpool

Community context

Emerging needs for children and families

Participants in the school district listening session described the increase in Guatemalan families they serve. Many families use Mam, a spoken language that does not have a written format. Pacific Islander languages including Chamorro, Chuuk/Chuukese, Samoan, and Tagalog are also used in Bremerton. Additional takeaways include:

- About 60-65% of children in Kitsap and Bremerton school districts qualify for free or reduced lunch programs, which reflects the high rate of poverty in Bremerton.
- Many students frequently move between schools in the district, which can make it difficult for students to have the consistency they need to succeed.
- Many high school students lack access to transportation because they don't have a
 personal vehicle or a guardian to drive them.

"One of our students lives in Port Orchard and goes to school in Bremerton. She needs to get up at 4 a.m. to catch a bus that will get her to school on time." – CBO listening session

"Extreme commute delays affect my childcare, and late pickups result in fees for parents." – CBO listening session

"Specifically, the students we work with are Pacific Islanders, and while they communicate in English, their families often do not. It would be good to have resources in Samoan and Chamorro as well." – CBO listening session

"We are getting more and more immigrant families, and so there can be a language barrier...a lot of them speak Mam, which is not a written language. For those families, our students are learning Spanish as a second language and English as a third language." – School Districts listening session

The Navy Shipyard has significant influence on the area

Participants talked about the immense influence the Navy Shipyard has on traffic, employment, and families in the area.

- A school district representative noted that about 50% of students have ties to active-duty military. These students are often moving every three years in alignment with parents' service.
- There is a high population of military retirees in the area.
- The timing when employees arrive and leave the shipyard impacts the entire region.
 Many participants talked about avoiding these key commute times because of the high number of cars on the road.

"The shipyard is a big city. There's thousands of people that work there, commute there, and they have a significant impact on Kitsap County... they should be part of this conversation as well." – Business chamber listening session

Businesses experience impacts due to congestion

Participants in the business chamber listening session described that some local businesses experience loss in business because the SR 3 traffic backups impact access. Participants shared that the businesses located along the curve in Gorst require dangerous lane crossing and navigation to access the business.

Another participant shared that the businesses along Burwell Street experience access impacts due to increased traffic.

"Thinking about the left turns needed to get to those businesses along Gorst, it's probably a disincentive for people to visit them." – Environment listening sessions

Increased rates of homelessness in the region

Participants shared that a vulnerable population growing in the region is of people who are unhoused. Participants believe the connection is due to the rising cost of living and impacts older people who live on a fixed income. Participants said there is a lack of resources to support this vulnerable population.

"In this year alone, we've seen a 130% increase in people over 65. So our shelter is serving more of an elderly population...this population has healthcare issues, and they're not able to go back to work...living on Social Security, they make \$945 a month, and rooms for rent are \$800." – CBO listening session

Bremerton is considered a food desert

Participants talked about a need for food resources in the Bremerton community. The U.S. Department of Agriculture defines a food desert as a census tract where at least 20% of people earn below the poverty line and 33% of people live more than one mile away from a supermarket. The study team understands that the area's most economically disadvantaged residents tend to live further away from the area's supermarkets. This may result in people traveling south to Port Orchard or other areas in the region for a supermarket.

"[Traffic congestion] does limit people from working outside of Port Orchard... You know, people trying to get by... It's tough for residents because access to basic needs is stretched with commute time and congestion." – CBO listening session

Community Advisory Group

The project team shared details about the study's Community Advisory Group (CAG). The purpose of the CAG is to provide input and guidance on the SR 3 Gorst Area PEL Study, ensuring that community perspectives are considered in the planning process. The CAG will serve as a bridge between the Gorst area community and project team, fostering dialogue and collaboration. Objectives of the CAG are to:

- Gather diverse community input and feedback on transportation needs and priorities for the area.
- Facilitate communication and coordination between the project team and the community.
- Promote transparency and accountability in the planning process.
- Identify potential impacts and benefits of transportation alternatives on the community.
- Support outreach and engagement efforts to ensure broad community participation throughout the study.

Several participants expressed interest in applying for the CAG or forwarding the application to others in their organization or community.

Engagement preferences

Partners prefer regular email updates

Across sessions, participants expressed interest in staying informed about the project through email updates.

In-person events are essential

Across sessions, participants encouraged the study team to host and attend in-person events and community meetings to share information about the study.

Key sources of information in the community

Participants shared these key information channels used by the community:

Local newspapers:

- o Port Orchard Independent
- o Kitsap Sun
- o Kitsap Daily News
- Facebook pages:
 - o Kitsap County Sheriff's Office
 - Secret Bremerton
 - Street Smart Bremerton
 - Port Orchard
- Libraries to post printed materials and distribute information to their community subscribers list
- Community bulletin boards:
 - Housing Kitsap
 - o Kitsap Community Resources
 - o YMCA
 - WorkSource
 - Coffee Oasis

Engagement recommendations

Participants shared the following resources and recommendations to share information and engage with communities in person and electronically.

Audience	Suggested community locations and events	Suggested community partners	Notes on engagement
School districts	Mi Familia Swap Meet	 Olympic College Central Kitsap Community Council Mason County Transit Rotary and Kiwanis clubs Soroptimist International of Greater Bremerton Area 	 Consider Mam language Consider misinformation on social media Coordination with area and Navy Shipyard emergency medical services and local hospitals
CBOs	Ferry terminal (to reach youth) Goodwill and Salvation Army	Kitsap Strong Kitsap Community Resources	 Consider Samoan and Chamorro languages Consider a youth representative on the CAG Offer American Sign Language (ASL) services Coordinate accommodations for people without access to internet to attend CAG meetings (e.g., offer suggestions for locations where free Wi-Fi is available)
Business chambers	Monthly chamber luncheons Wig Wam Pub	Coffee Oasis	Offer to use chamber newsletters to share study information

Audience	Suggested community locations and events	Suggested community partners	Notes on engagement
	City Council meetings		
Environmental advocacy	 County office/social services offices Local libraries Local higher education institutions 	Kitsap County Community Development staff	Consider what local jurisdictions are working on Comprehensive Plans and how this project might impact city planning
Active transportation	 Farmers markets (April-October) Whaling Days Community festivals along the boardwalk Deep Draft Brewery 	Street Smart Bremerton (has an active Facebook group) Gorst Coalition	BicycleTeacher offered to take any interested project team members or community members on a ride through the study area

Next steps

The study team will host meetings with a Technical Advisory Group (TAG) and an Executive Advisory Group (EAG) in November 2024. These groups are comprised of resource agencies and elected leaders. The TAG will support data evaluation and contribute to the development and screening of alternatives. The EAG will provide insights on PEL study findings from a policy and governance perspective and represent potential concerns and considerations from their constituents. Recordings of the study's advisory group meetings are posted to the website regularly.

WSDOT is planning for broader community engagement in early 2025. This engagement will include an online open house, in-person events, and convening the first Community Advisory Group.

Stay in touch

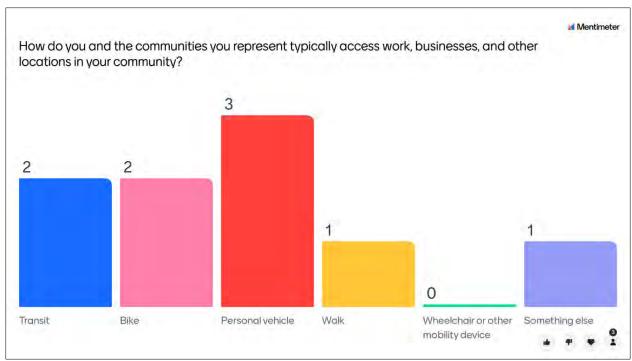
WSDOT will keep people informed throughout the study. Visit the <u>project website</u> to learn more and sign up for email updates.

Appendix A: Mentimeter results

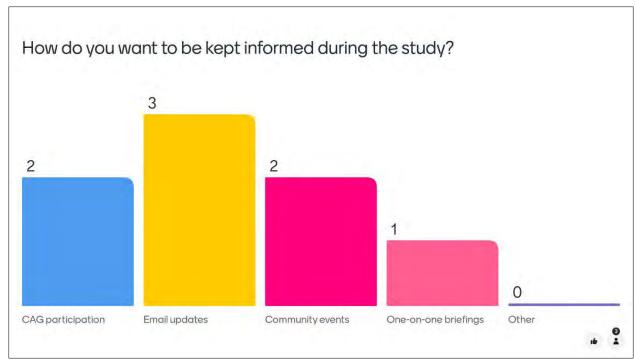
Listening session 1: School Districts

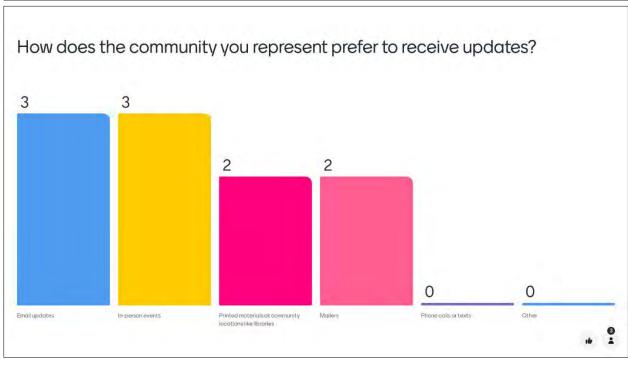


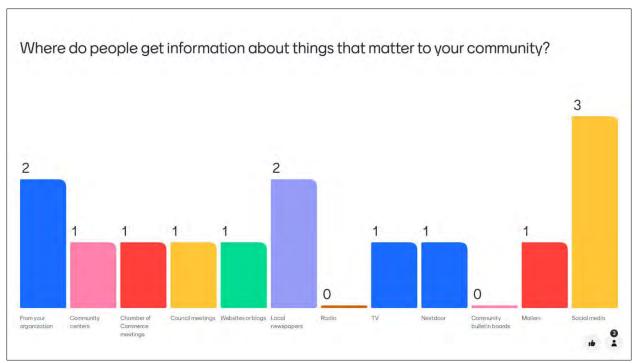


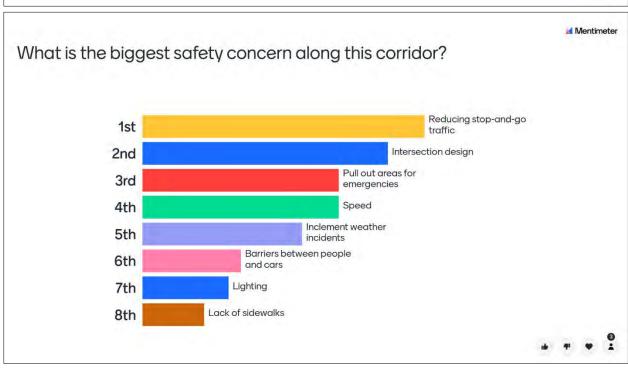


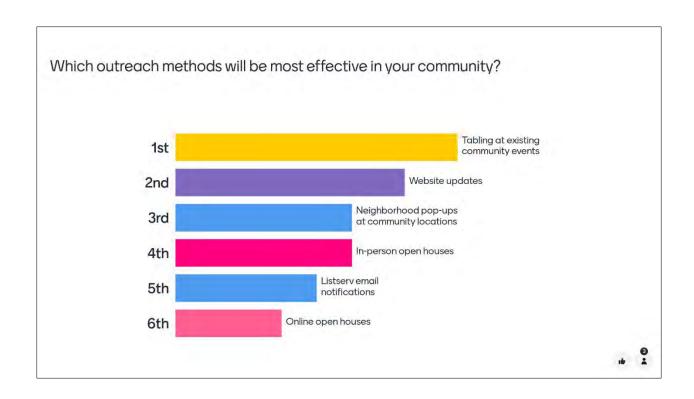




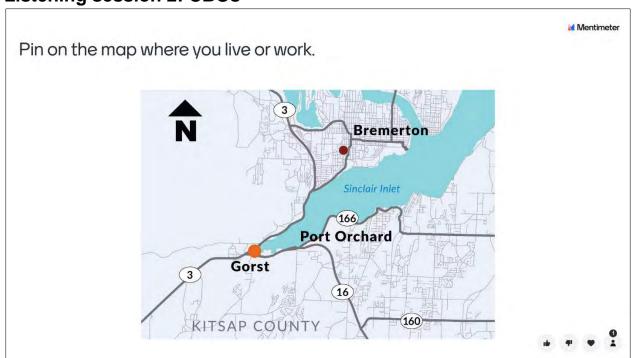


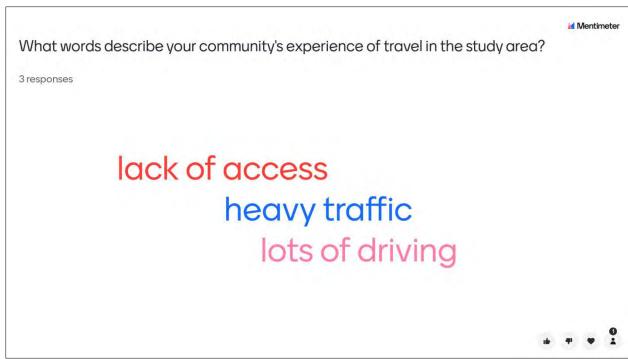


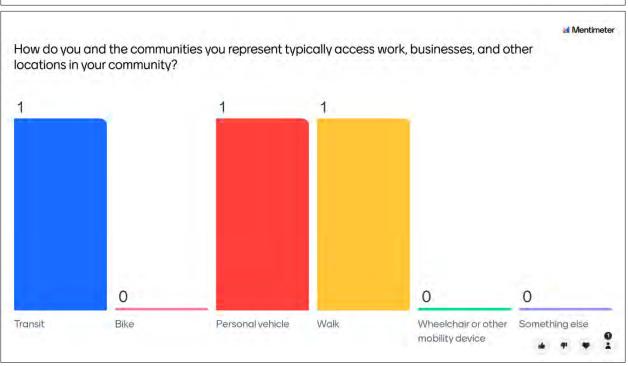


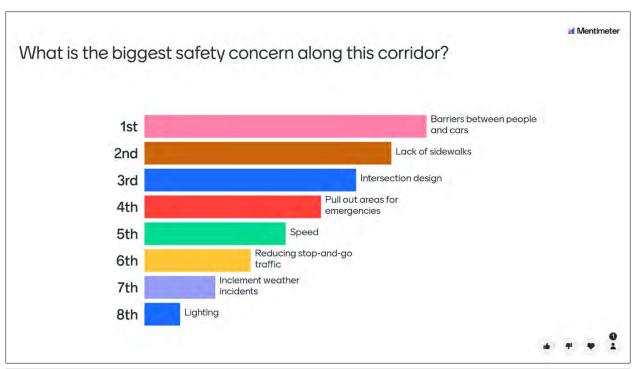


Listening session 2: CBOs

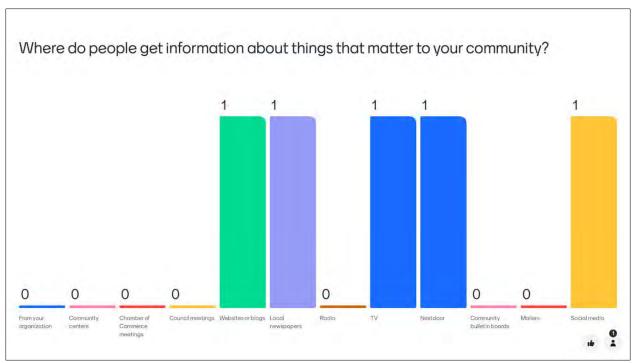


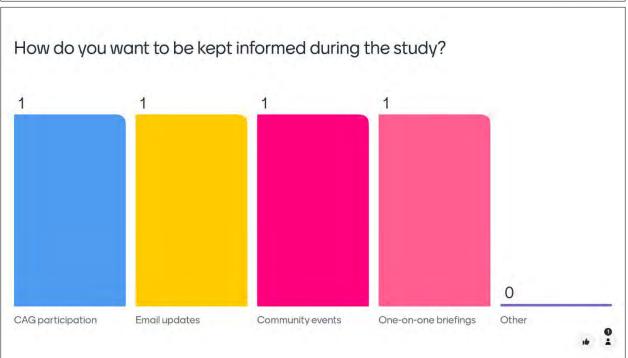






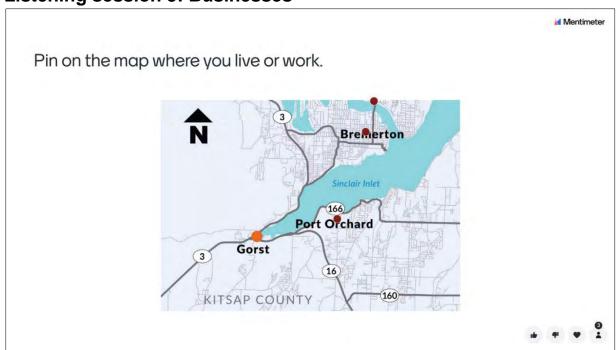


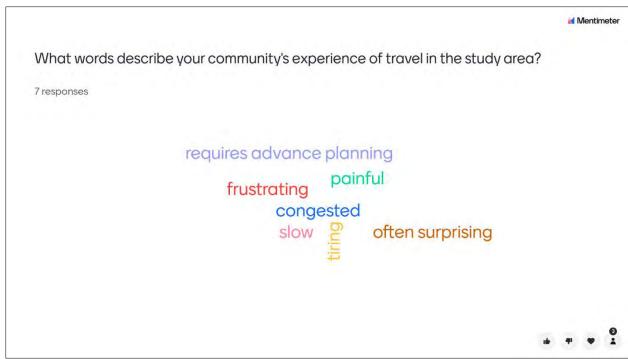


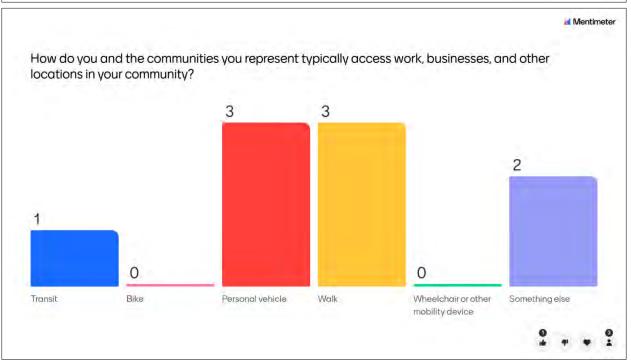


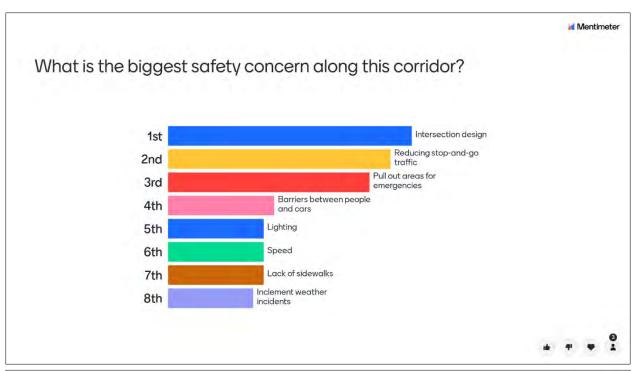


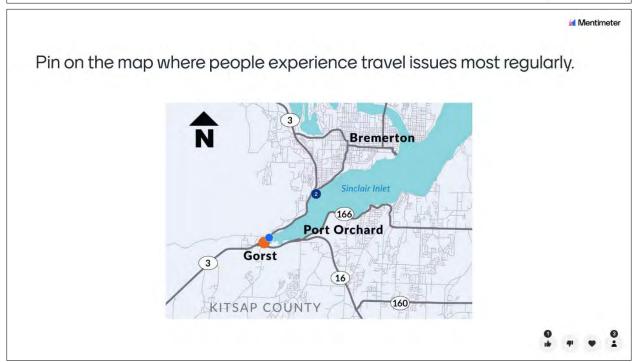
Listening session 3: Businesses



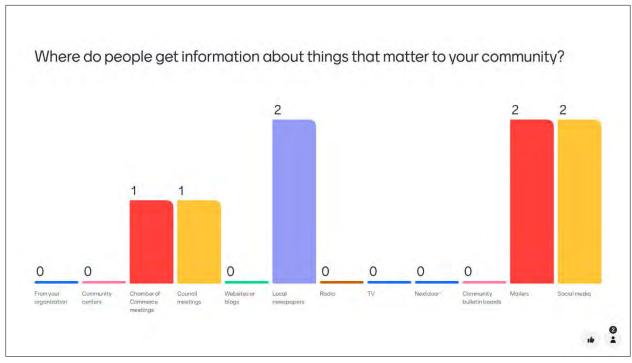


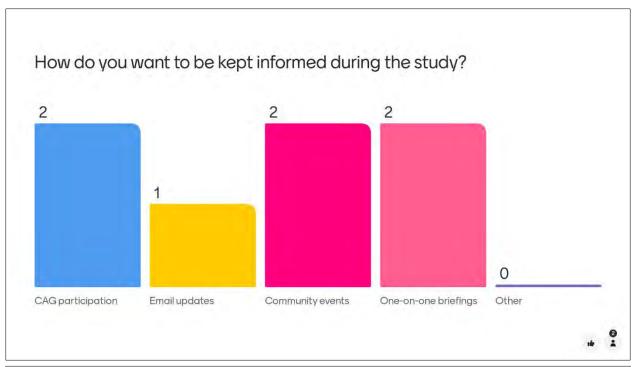


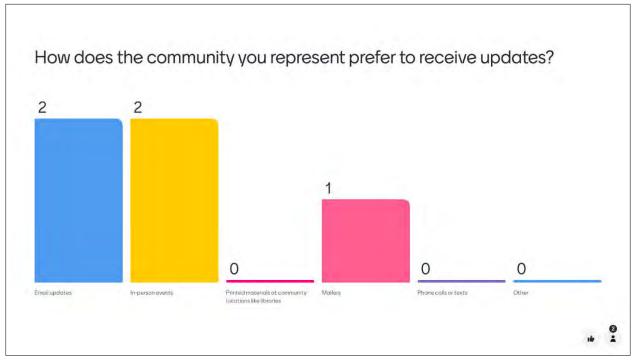




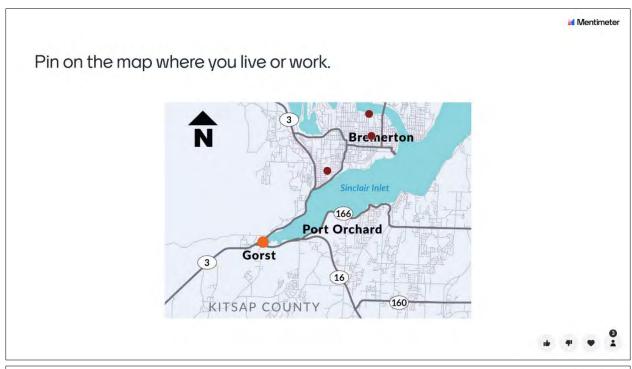
Mentimeter What do you envision for this corridor? Pipe Dream - Relocate the 76 A section of highway that is easy Environmental remediation, potential business relocation or station on the corner by the to navigate in both directions. ingress/egress assistance, Where congestion is cut in half exit to Belfair & widen the "straighter" driving around the and there is more space to safely lanes. bend, pedestrian and bike travel. options



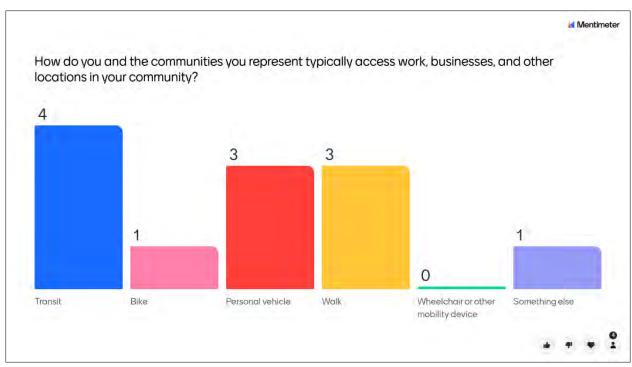


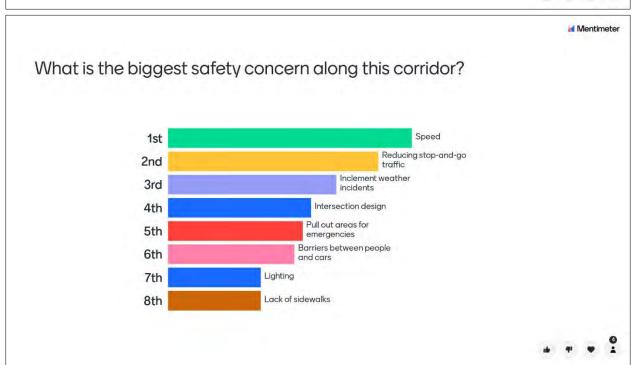


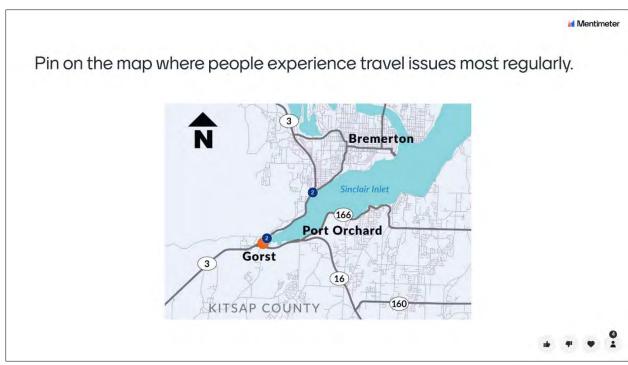
Listening session 4: CBOs

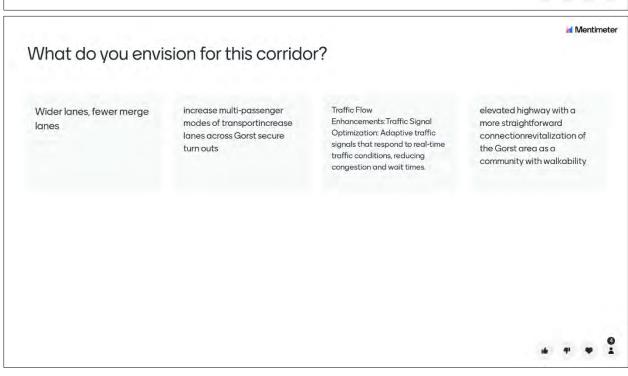


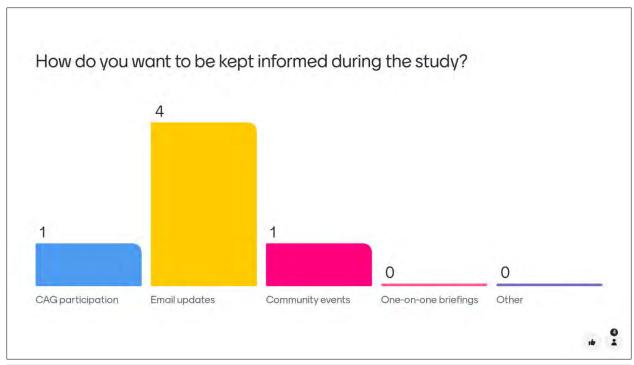


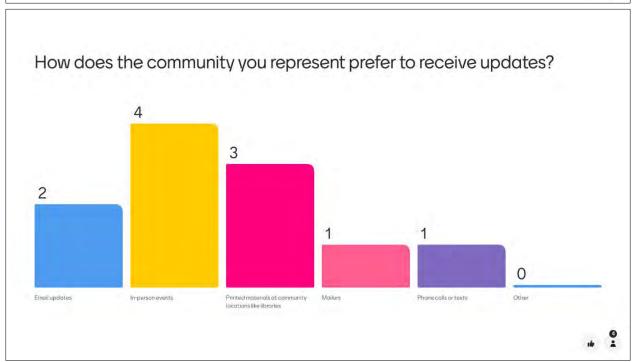


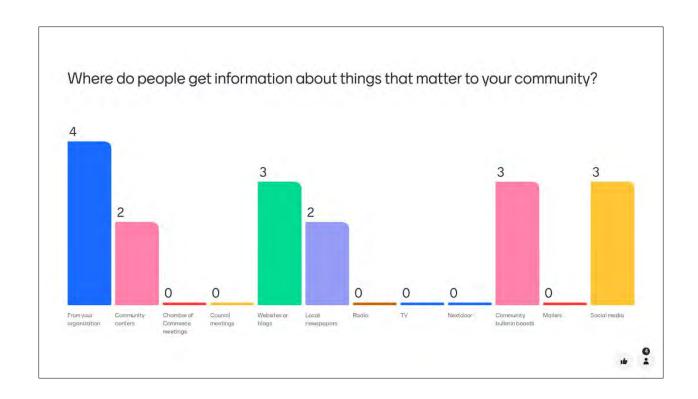




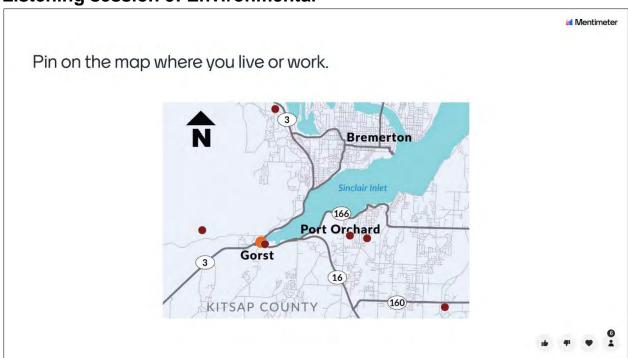


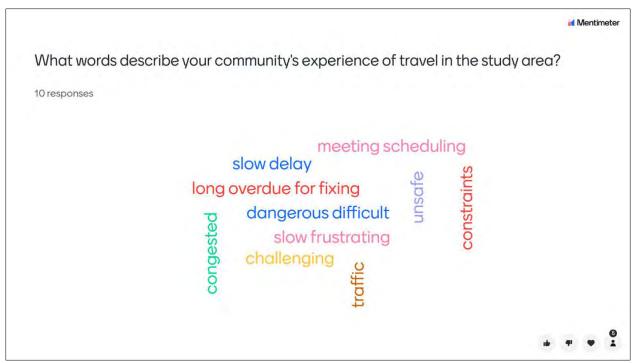


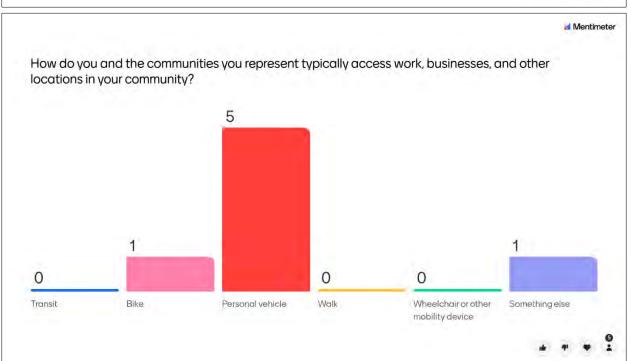


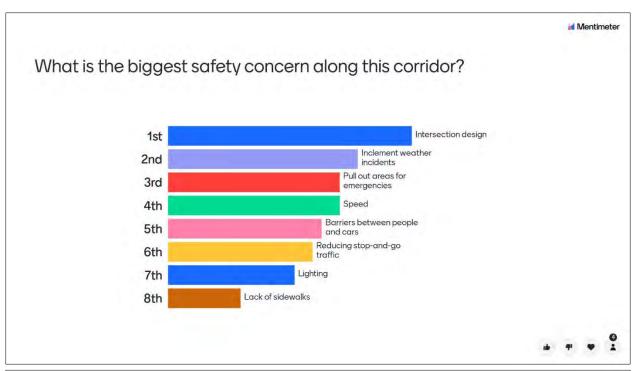


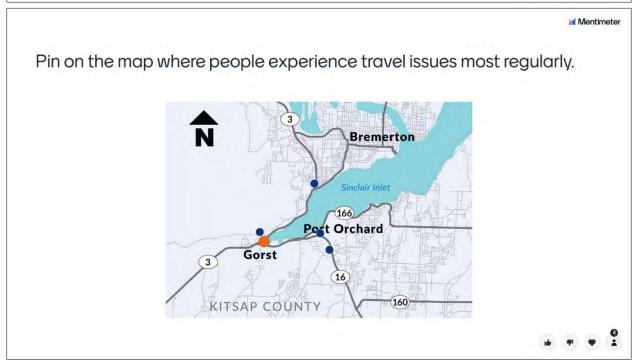
Listening session 5: Environmental



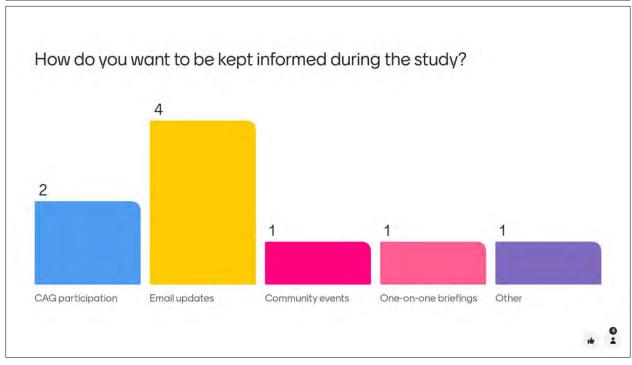


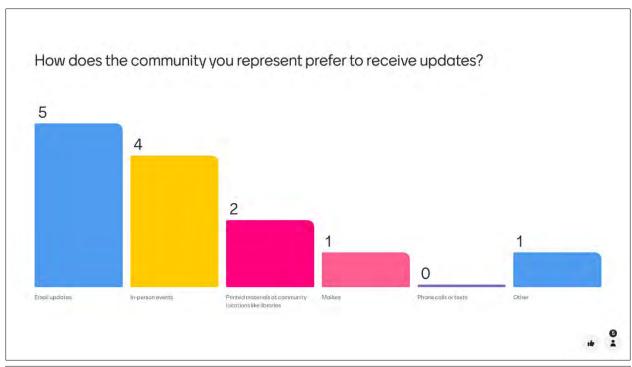


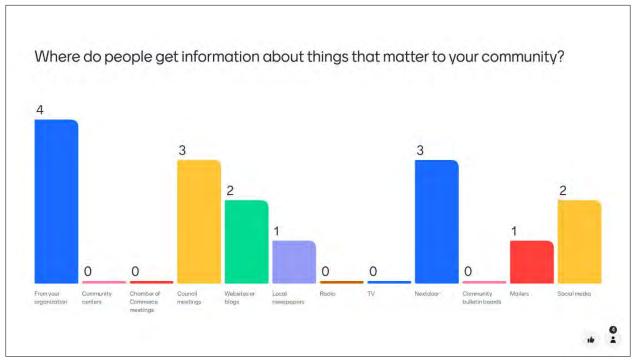




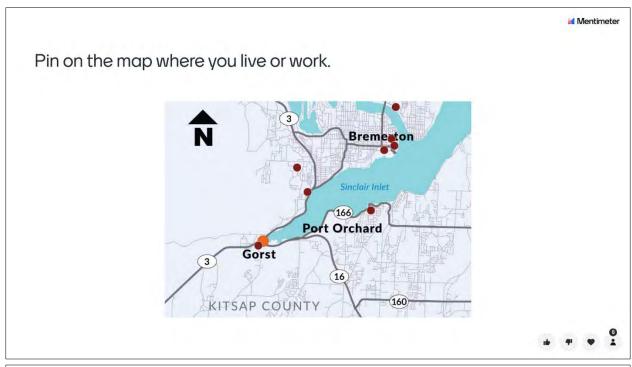
Mentimeter What do you envision for this corridor? Divided highway, bypass for Are all highways fixed after Some suggest a bridge but we A project that meets wsdot have 4 lanes. They just need to Belfair/Shelton, better looking, goals as well is protective of 60 years pass? Is this sooner be managed better. With take advantage of opportunities Tribal treaty resources or later than normal? stormwater controls to take tire for restoration, beautification, (natural and cultural). stormwater runoff treatment. waste away from Inlet Transit for affordable homes in Gorst. A better and safer design, that A safe access point for includes addressing; the Tribal fishers. environment due to climate change, the ability for safe nonmortorized travel, better public transit connections,, water quality improvements.



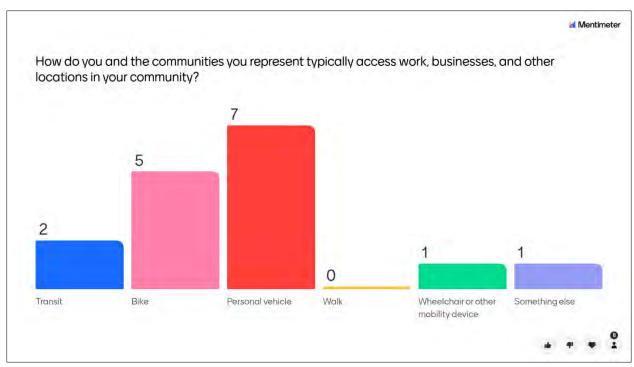


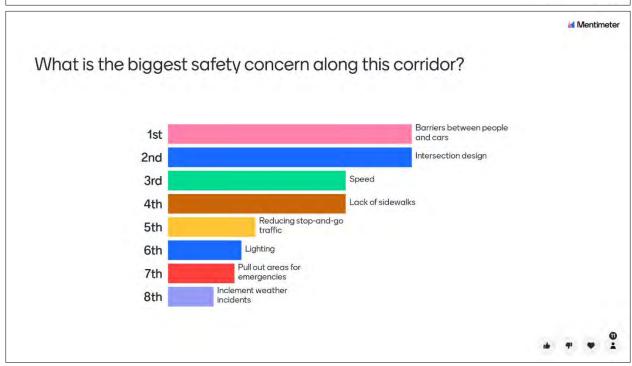


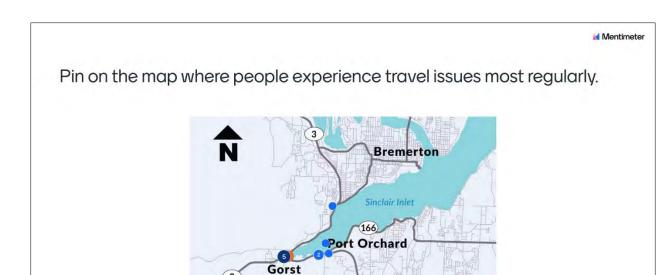
Listening session 6: Active Transportation













Mentimeter

What do you envision for this corridor?

Elevate the highway in Gorst, create active transportation linnks below the highway - or bridge over inlet.

Some way to bypass Gorst (either an elevated highway or a bridge across the sound) coupled with a viable alternative route in cases of road maintenance or natural disaster/emergency Separation of motor-vehicle through-traffic from local access and non-motorized.

KITSAP COUNT

A separated shared use path from from Otto Jarstad Park to KitSap lake would allow emergency services to access Bremerton from the airport. It would also give residents a safe place to walk, bike, or Expansion of a nonmotorized system growing off of our city's planned pathways. Connecting Port Orchard to Gorst to Bremerton

A separated non-motorized path from the shipyard to downtown Pt. Orchard that has a flat grade, is adjacent to the water, and has safe connections to other routes along the way.

Slow traffic through and entering Gorst. Provide bike/ped facilities that are separated from highway traffic.

Plan a separate way for bikes and pedestrians. Plan that we blow into adjacent shoulder to the road wider to make a 3 lane bike lanes (with a separate lane).



