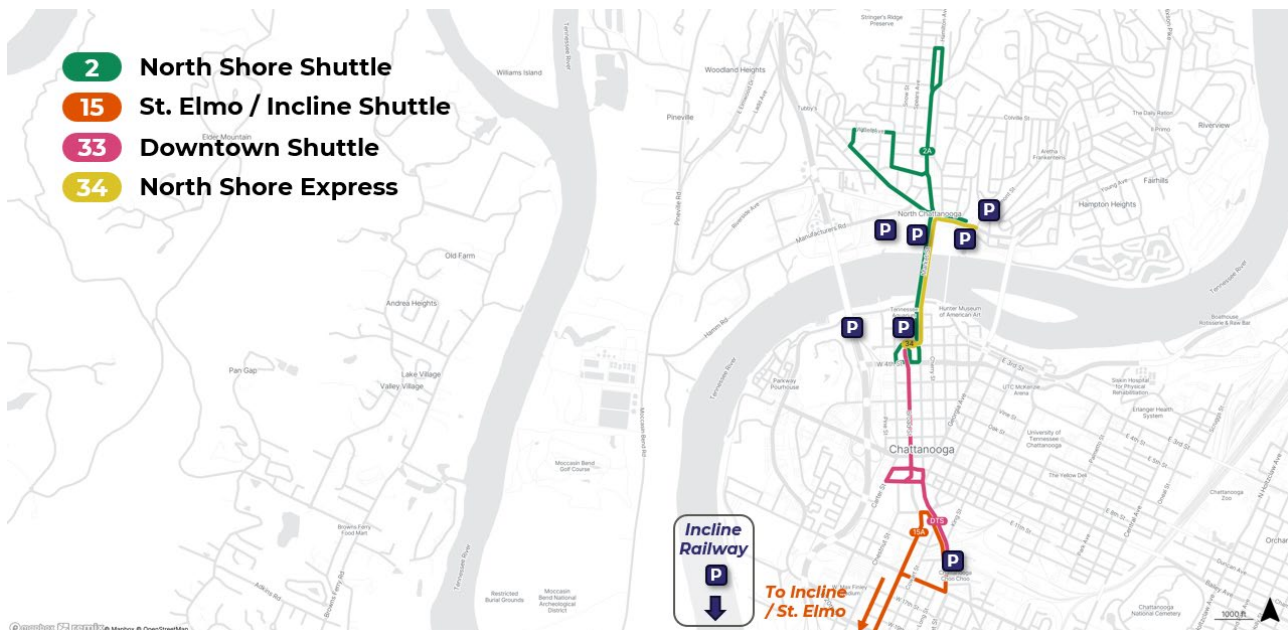


Introduction

Plan Chattanooga established a framework for CARTA's long-term transit vision, which includes multimodal connections, transportation hubs, high-demand corridors, frequent networks, and new routes and services. Transitioning from the current network to this future vision requires incremental yet intentional steps. One key step is the creation of a Transit Improvement Program (TIP), a comprehensive initiative of projects aimed at enhancing CARTA, encompassing functional plans and policies, short-term service improvements, and long-term strategic upgrades.



Among the short-term improvements is the enhancement of the existing free shuttle service, allowing people to park at a CARTA facility and conveniently access downtown destinations. Real-time tracking will show when the next shuttle arrives, helping users connect from the parking facilities to dining, shopping, attractions, and more. As displayed in the map below, the current downtown shuttle network includes Route 2 North Shore Shuttle, Route 15 St. Elmo/Incline Shuttle, Route 33 Downtown Shuttle, and Route 34 North Shore Express. City owned and operated parking facilities are shown as well.



Objectives And Methodology

To initiate community input on how to improve the shuttle service, stakeholder meetings were organized to raise awareness of the TIP study and goals, gather valuable information, and enlist assistance in engaging a broader set of stakeholders. Feedback was sought regarding impressions and experiences with the downtown shuttle, as well as ideas for reimagining the shuttle service to better accommodate those who live, work, play, and shop downtown.

Four one-hour roundtable discussions with stakeholders were conducted on the following dates:

- November 7th, 10-11 AM (9 attendees)
- November 12th, 10-11 AM (8 attendees)
- November 12th, 5-6 PM (9 attendees)
- November 13th, 10-11 AM (11 attendees)

During the roundtables, three main discussion topics were addressed. First, stakeholders were asked about their usage and experiences with the shuttle. Second, stakeholders discussed whether the shuttle currently serves their business or community needs. Third, ideas were solicited on how the shuttle service could be enhanced to better support their business, community, or industry. Following the roundtable discussion, an interactive session allowed attendees to identify on a map where they believed new stops should be added or suggest additional routes to areas requiring service.

Participants represented a diverse group of organizations, including:

- CARTA
- CHA Design Studio
- Chamber of Commerce
- Chattanooga Tourism Co.
- City of Chattanooga
- DeFoor Hospitality Group
- DoubleTree Hotel
- Downtown Chattanooga Alliance
- Chattanooga Design Studio
- Finley Stadium
- Mellow Mushroom
- River City Company
- Shuttle drivers
- SVN Second-Story
- TN Aquarium
- UTC
- Vision Hospitality Group

Results

Feedback highlighted several areas for improvement and suggestions for the downtown shuttle service, as summarized below:

Service reliability and legibility

- Stops were seen as **too frequent** and sometimes **random**, with a preference for Market and Chestnut Streets over Broad Street due to hotel locations on Chestnut Street and higher activity and mobility on Market Street.
- **Reliability** and **timing** were recurring concerns, as attendees noted that walking often feels faster and the shuttle is not ideal when in a hurry.
- **Predictability** and **route clarity** remain issues, especially with mid-route loops that skip Chestnut Street and limited service to the westside and riverfront.

Economic development, business partnerships, and parking strategy

- Due to the number and nature of special events and conventions downtown, circulator routes that could run on an **‘as needed’** basis for events such as festivals and iron man competitions, Lookouts baseball games, conventions and similar events was discussed as well as the idea of a **restaurant circulator** route for peak dining periods.
- Stakeholders emphasized the shuttle’s potential to boost local business engagement and visitor experience, suggesting **incentives for parking** in CARTA garages and partnerships with businesses for perks like free or reduced price items with proof of parking.



- Economic inclusion and parking strategies were highlighted as key principles, with concepts like a Chattanooga Parking Club and **better branding** of city owned garages using the blue “P.” as part of a distinct logo and brand.
- **Integration** with the UTC shuttle route and downtown routes were identified as a need.

Branding, wayfinding, and information

- **Branding** and **wayfinding** were considered critical, with ideas such as color-coded routes for simplicity, kiosks at hotels and businesses, and improved signage to enhance awareness.
- Technology enhancements like a live app for **real-time route information**, printed maps for residents, and **kiosks** in hotel lobbies were proposed to improve convenience and safety.

Perception, education, and customer experience

- Participants stressed the importance of **perception** and **education**, noting that stigma around public transit in the South and competition from rideshare services affect ridership.
- Suggestions included **hospitality training** for drivers, monthly programming, and providing drivers with daily “what’s going on” sheets to strengthen their role as **ambassadors**.

Appeal, amenities, and service expansion

- Ideas to make the shuttle more appealing ranged from coining phrases to introducing **bike racks** and connecting **residential hubs** such as South Main or neighborhoods around UTC.
- Attendees also envisioned **expanding service** to areas like Amnicola and the arts district, and even using the shuttle for nightlife activities such as bar hopping.

During the stakeholder mapping exercise, participants identified possible sites for new shuttle stops, shared suggestions and concerns, and proposed alternative routes indicated on the next map. Many wanted additional routes to serve schools, businesses, and other important destinations, with ideas like extending service to Market and Chestnut Streets beyond Broad Street. Feedback focused on safety at downtown stops, reducing unnecessary stops, and improving current locations and coverage. Specific map comments are listed below, each marked by its corresponding letter.

- A. Make Route 33 a loop rather than out and back – Market and Chestnut
- B. Path to schools
- C. Potential Mobility Hub
- D. To service Stadium and Westside
- E. To businesses and events
- F. Possibly eliminate legs with red dots – not needed
- G. Visitor concerns about homeless
- H. Bluff View Spur
- I. Riverfront Loop
- J. Dogleg route is odd
- K. Need kiosk focus group
- L. Breezeway needs upgrades and improvements
- M. Future development
- N. Westin/Westside
- O. The Bend
- P. Route down Market
- Q. UTC Transportation
- R. Food City
- S. Future Southside redevelopment
- T. New route – Main Street
- U. Amnicola expansion – boathouse
- V. Airport connection to downtown
- W. Development – add route
- X. Bike lanes on Broad – access and visibility at stops
- Y. Safety concern at Patton Parkway
- Z. This loop is hard to navigate. Consider running down to State line and looping in a left direction

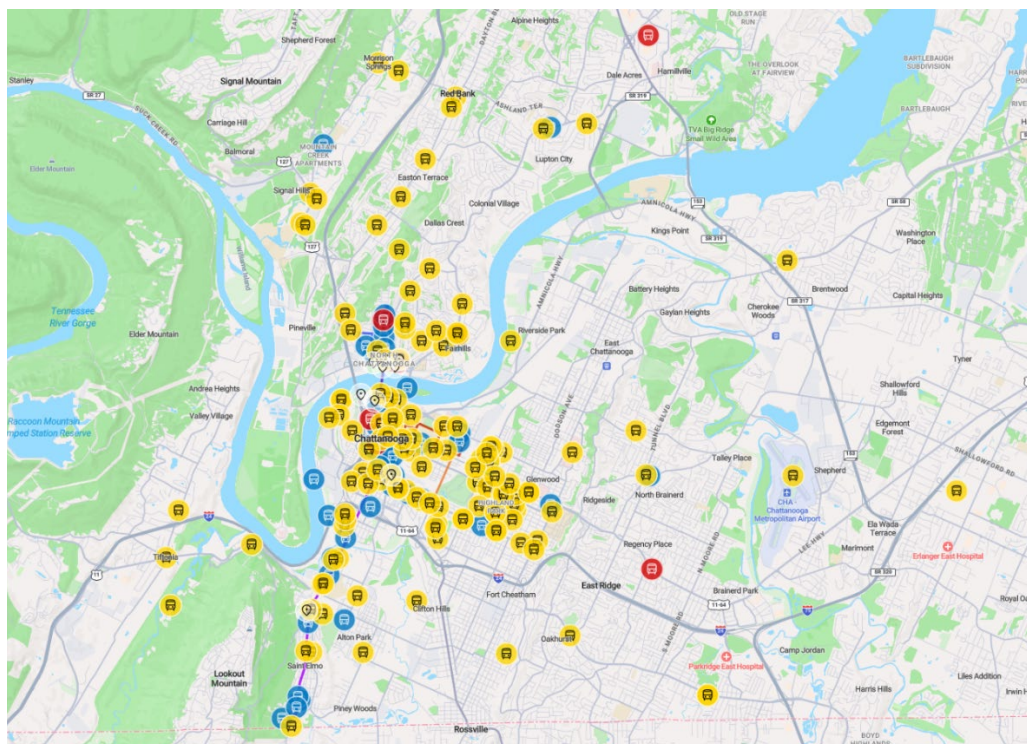


Survey Results

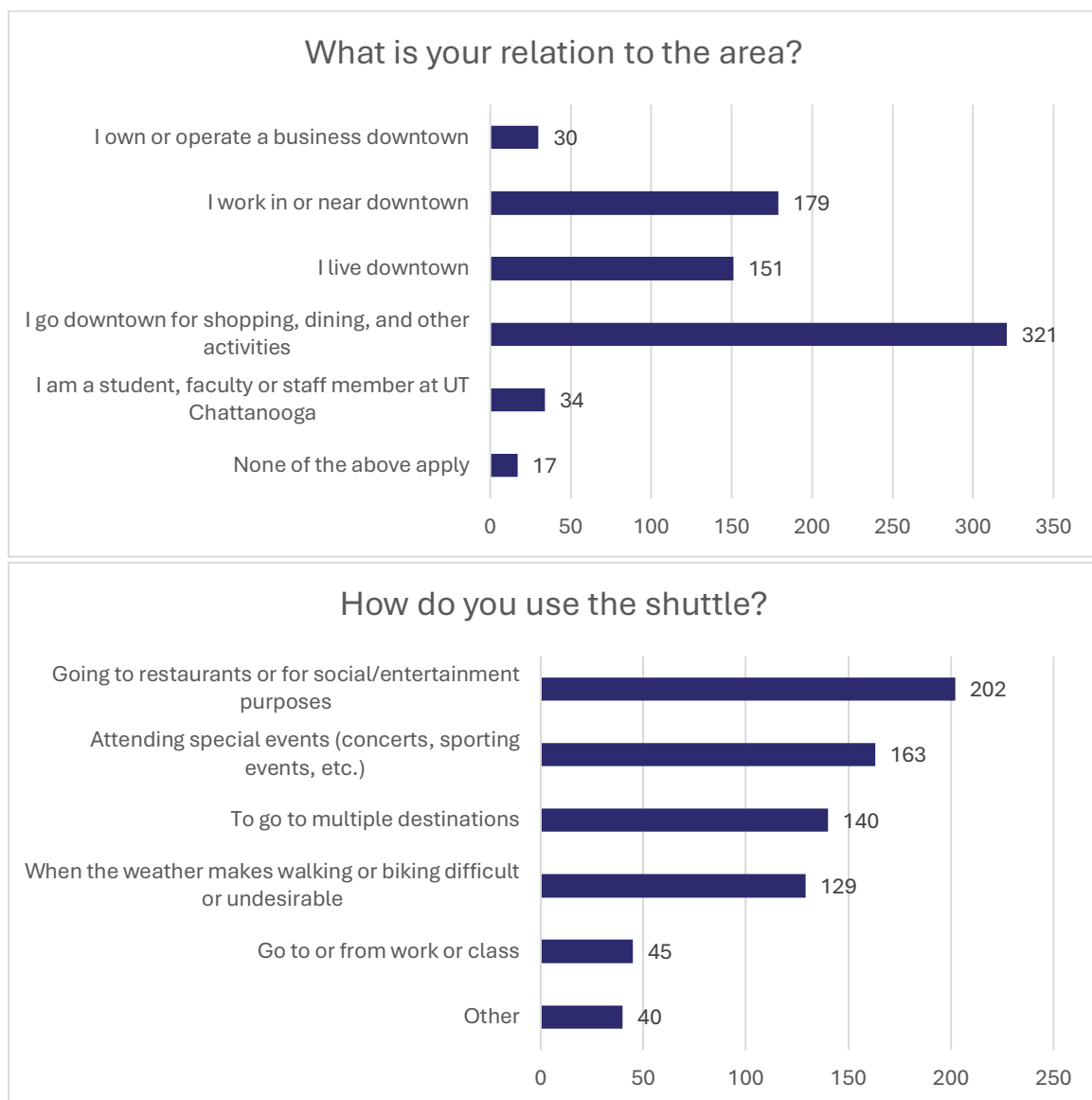
Online engagement included an interactive map and a survey to expand on the inputs from the stakeholder roundtables and to gain feedback from the larger community. For the interactive map, participants could drop a pin and add a comment in the categories of improved shuttle stop (red icon), new shuttle stop (yellow icon), or other improvements (blue icon). There were 193 comments placed on the map, which is shown below. A majority of the responses were for new shuttle stops.

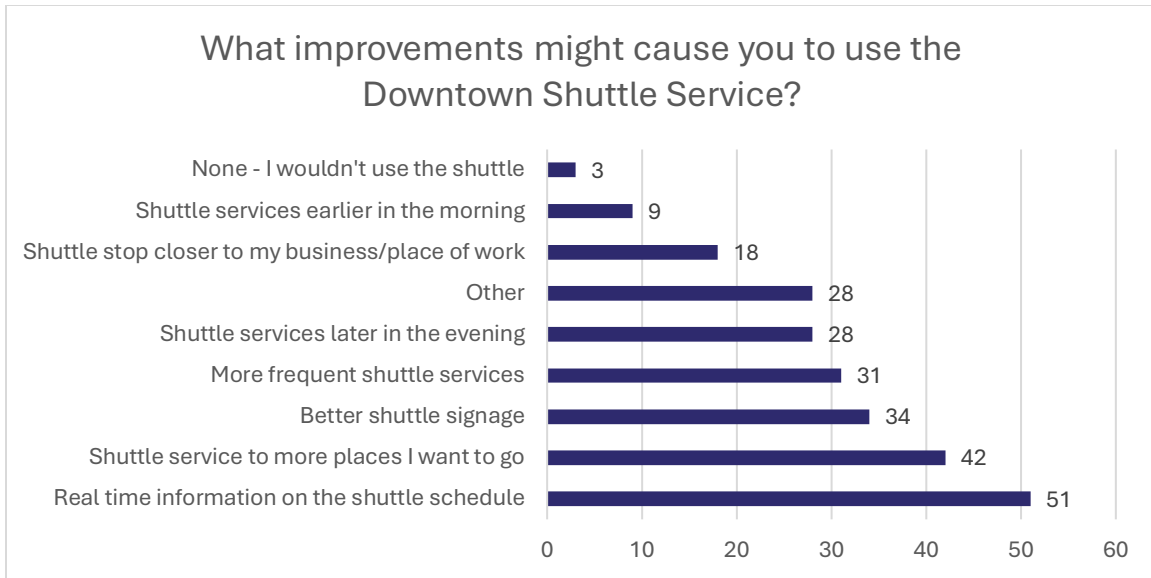
- Residents overwhelmingly requested new or expanded shuttle routes, especially along Main Street, Northshore, Highland Park, and areas with growing residential or commercial activity.
- Many comments emphasize the need to remove inefficient loops, improve direct connections to major destinations (the Zoo, Convention Center, Finley Stadium, hospitals), and add service to underserved neighborhoods.
- A frequent theme is the desire for later operating hours, better pedestrian access, clearer stop signage, and more reliable or frequent service.

Overall, the comments on the map reflect strong community support for a more connected, intuitive, and accessible shuttle system that better matches where people live, work, and spend time.

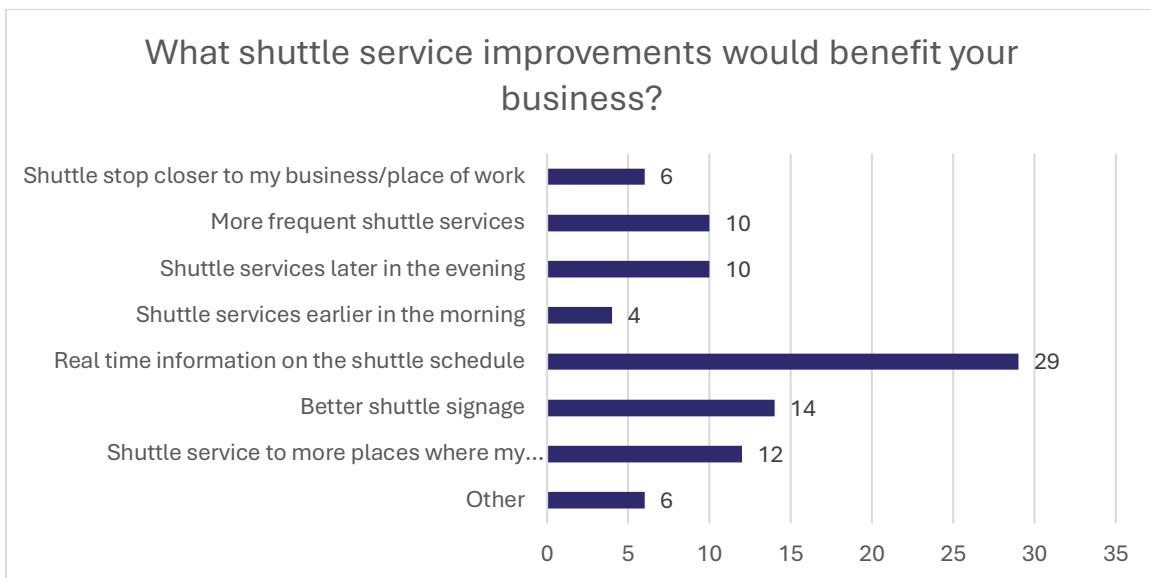


The online survey received 429 responses and included questions about shuttle usage, desired improvements, awareness of parking options, and feedback from business owners. Respondents were first asked to describe their relationship to the downtown area. The largest groups reported going downtown for shopping, dining, and other activities, followed by those who work or live downtown. While more than 75% of respondents have used the shuttle, over half indicated they use it less than once per month. The most common purposes for using the shuttle were dining and entertainment, attending special events, and traveling between multiple destinations. The top improvements requested were real-time schedule updates, service to more destinations, and later evening hours.

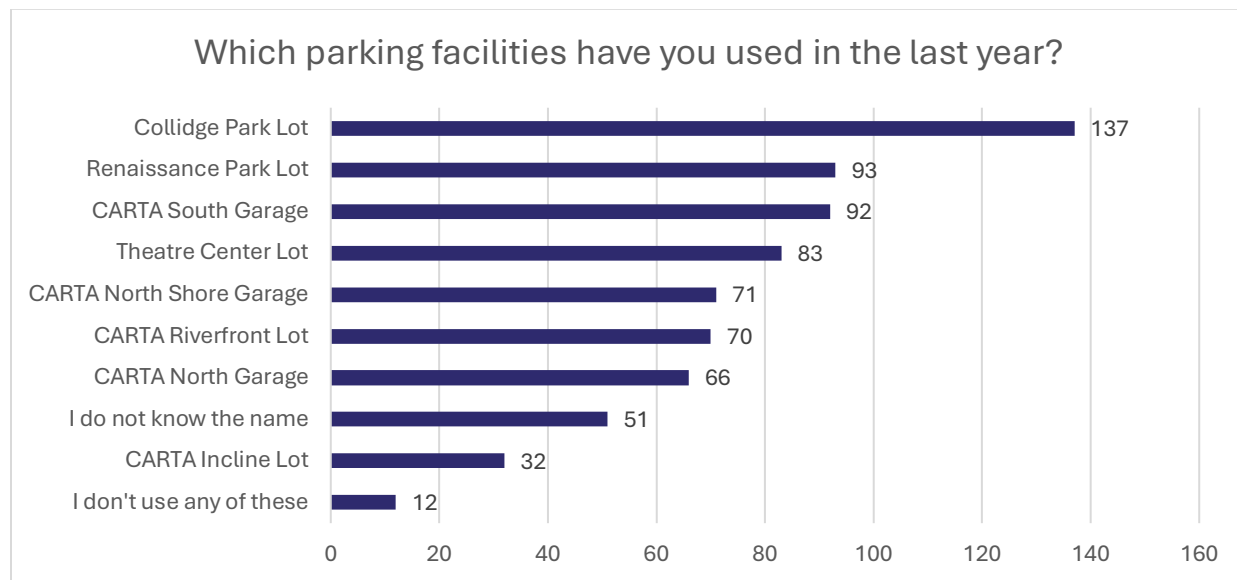




Among respondents who own businesses, the largest share represented professional office or service industries. Nearly half reported having 1–10 employees, while about a quarter had more than 50. Business owners identified real-time shuttle information, better shuttle signage, and expanded service to customer and employee destinations as the most valuable improvements. Around half estimated that few or none of their employees or customers use the shuttle regularly. Owners emphasized the importance of reliability, accessible informational materials, and route efficiency to support their operations. Their personal preferences mirrored these priorities, particularly the need for real-time updates and clearer signage.



About 60% of overall respondents have used downtown parking garages, most frequently the Coolidge Park Lot, Renaissance Park Lot, and CARTA South Garage. Nearly 70% reported using these facilities 0–5 times per month. A majority were unaware that the first hour of parking is free. More than 80% said they would be more likely to park and ride the shuttle if the second and third hours were also free at the CARTA Park North and Park South garages.



The survey concluded with an open comments section. These responses showed that people value the shuttle service but want improvements in route coverage, frequency, and clarity of information. Many requested expanded routes, especially along Main Street, Highland Park, UTC, St. Elmo, and stronger Northshore connections, along with later operating hours and more reliable wait times. Comments frequently mentioned the need for better signage, real-time updates, clearer maps, cleaner vehicles, and safer, better-lit stops and garages. Parking cost and confusion were also common concerns, and many expressed interests in more affordable or free park-and-ride options. While several challenges were noted, many commenters shared positive experiences and appreciation for shuttle drivers and the availability of free service.