



# Just Movement Listening Sessions and Survey Findings

In the summer and Fall of 2020, Front and Centered conducted a series of listening sessions and surveys with member organizations across the state to develop our coalition's proposals on a host of transportation issues related to climate and environmental justice. Transportation makes up 40% of Washington GHG pollution and is a core contributor to the disproportionate impacts of pollution in Washington State, the most overburdened communities being disproportionately communities of color. These impacts literally take years off our lives. The listening sessions were conducted over Zoom and ranged from 90 minutes to over two hours. Translation for Spanish and Pashto were provided in some of the sessions. An online survey was sent to the Front and Centered membership including the organizations that participated in the listening sessions.

## Engagement

- ✓ 10 Listening sessions with member organizations: Afghan Health Initiative, Beacon Hill Neighborhood Council, Entre Hermanos, Nuestra Casa, Pacific Islander Health Board, Shiloh Baptist Church, Tacoma Good Samaritans, The Noble Foundation, Washington Coalition of African Community Leaders, Yakima APIC Chapter
- ✓ Over 200 participants
- ✓ 89 survey responses

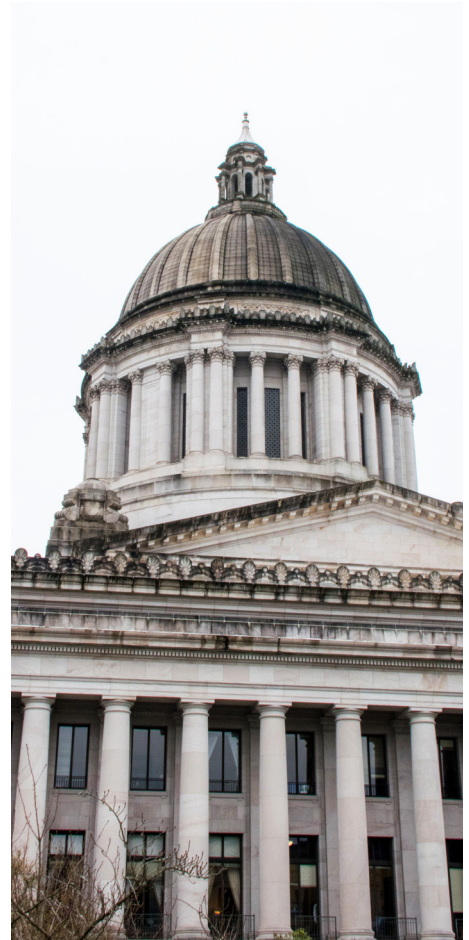


Photo: Joe A. Kunzler, Avgeek Joe Productions

## Key findings

**Air pollution and climate change** topped the list of concerns about transportation. Participants called out **improving air quality and health, and increasing the quantity and quality of public transit** as priorities for action.

In the survey and the listening sessions, a few consistent themes emerged; chief among these, a **strong concern about the effects of new policies or fees on lower income people**. Efforts targeting polluters for action like the clean fuels standard, or raising dollars from industry such as a carbon fee draw much more support than direct user fees such as the road use charge.

Interestingly, when asked what could make these fees acceptable, the most popular answer was ensuring that the funds are invested in ways that **create equity and opportunity** — rather than making sure wealthier people pay more, or penalizing polluters. People care about the fairness of the tax; but they are even **more interested in the results**.

Another emergent theme was using cultural capital and incentives — particularly when led by communities of color — to drive behavior change. Whether it be EVs, transit or walking participants said **the cool factor of green transportation needs to increase**. And they might know how to do it.

## Strong support for walk, bike, transit and EVs

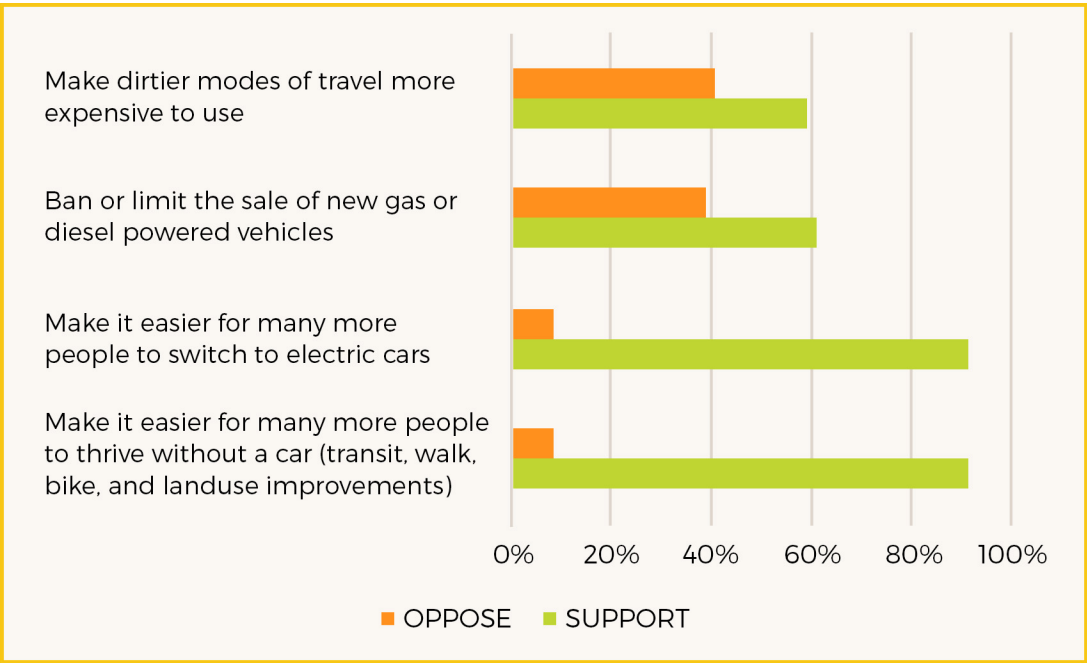
Respondents overwhelmingly supported efforts to reduce auto-dependence by **investing in walking, biking, and transit**. By similar margins, they supported efforts to ease the **switch to electric vehicles**. Actions to ban or limit gas or diesel vehicles or making these more expensive to use also received majority support — though a sizable group, about 40%, were opposed.

*“I’ve always been frustrated at this issue; I live at least 15 minutes from my school driving. I feel like as a senior in high school I should be able to walk to school on a sidewalk. I have to walk on the road with just a guardrail. It’s scary. I don’t want to get hit by a car on my way to school. This is the reality for other POC.”*

- Amanda (18), Cowlitz County



Question: “In the US, we create much more pollution in transportation compared to other countries. Would you support or oppose these strategies to reduce pollution?”





# Communities of color want to shape the future of green mobility

A common theme emerged in many listening sessions: How to make alternatives cooler and more financially attractive? Many participants were interested in incentives and marketing campaigns to change driving behavior. Participants also suggested that businesses and corporations need to do their part.

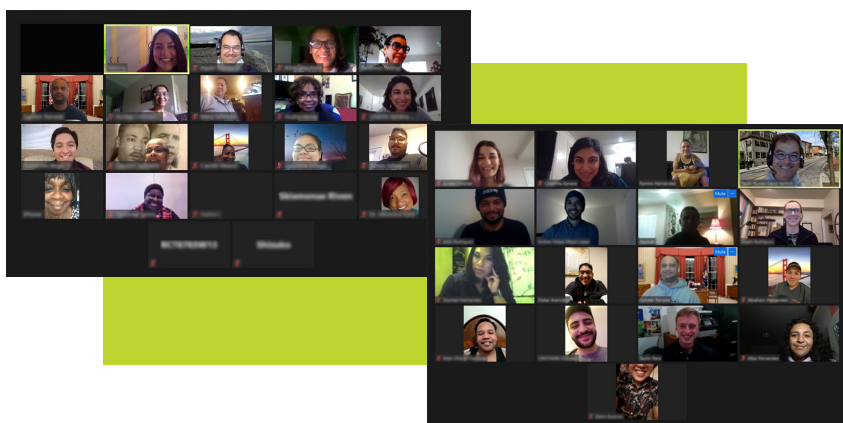
*“If I were to pay these taxes, I want to know how it will be used. How do we make not driving cool? Cars are lifestyle and style choices — how do we make walking and transit cooler and more trendy. How do we change lifestyles?”*

- Hafaroldy, Beacon Hill-Seattle

*“They could add the pollution (score) to the annual health checks at stores/ restaurants. For example, restaurants could have to report on how much air pollution they are producing and it would be part of their health score. This could apply to all companies. It could calculate how many cars come for drive-thru restaurants and measure pollution in specific areas. Give companies a pollution and climate score.”*

- Merkur, Vancouver WA

The listening sessions also made clear that communities of color want to engage in proactive ways to shape the future of transportation. One conversation, in particular, shed light on the ‘superpowers’ that communities of color could bring to the adoption of EVs given the right investments and the appropriate messages and messengers:

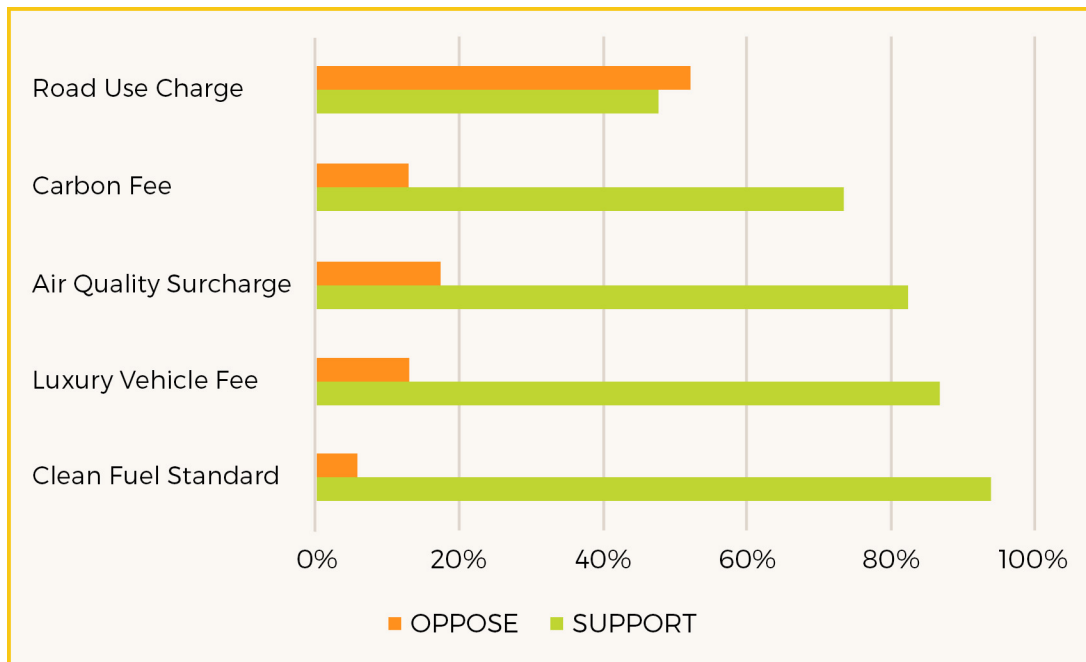


*“Throughout history as it pertains to transportation the thing that put most of these companies and cars over the top are black and brown people. We make it American. We should put funds in marketing the education of electric cars — for example that they are safer than gas powered cars. If we can make it cool, we make it part of the culture. For example, Nikes are not the cheapest shoes but because of the culture statement everyone has a \$100 pair of shoes. We are already part of the revolution.”*

- Henry, Seattle

## Strategies to curb pollution and generate clean investments are very popular –with one exception

Participants expressed high levels of concern about the Road Use Charge, primarily due to the perception that these charges would unfairly affect lower income people who depend on their cars for work. Many worried that poorer people forced to drive further because of rising home prices could become significantly burdened by a per-mile charge. Some feared the privacy intrusion of the location tracking required for a distance based fee. Discussions that paying taxes at the gas pumps which charge everyone the same regardless of their income level could be replaced with a more progressive road use charge did not get much traction — or at least may require more time and concrete examples than were available during the listening sessions.



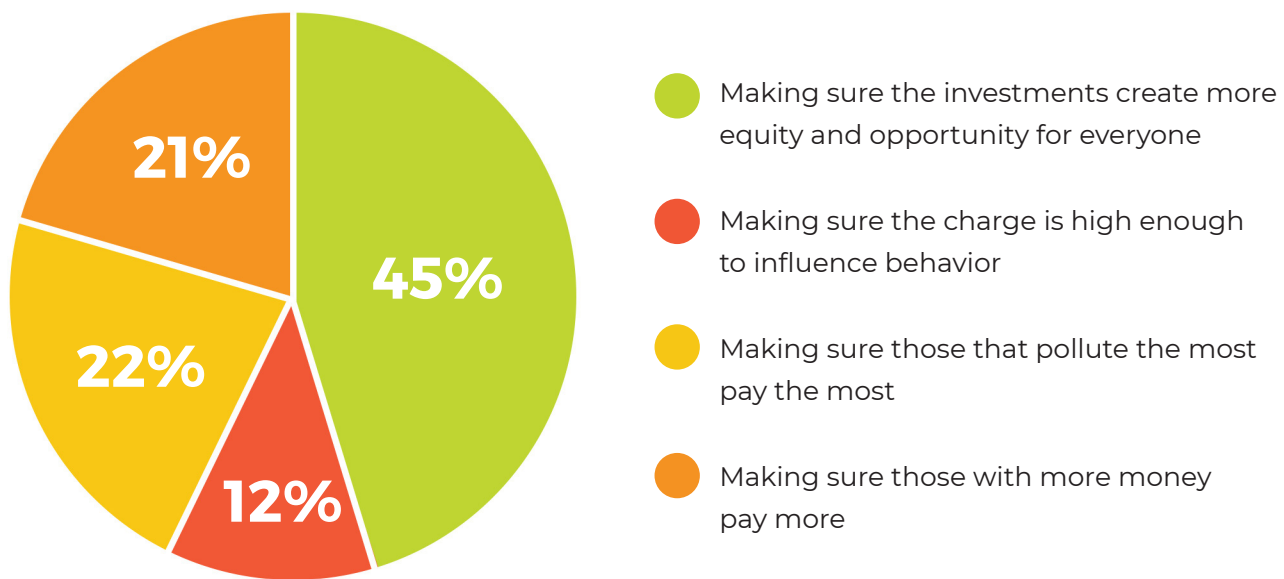
*“I strongly support a clean fuel standard especially for companies that are heavily polluting neighborhoods. I think about the Ozarko plant in the Tacoma flats. It is so much bigger than just a tax — it is about accountability and what we are going to do about generations down the line.”*

- Taniesha, Tacoma

## One way to address equity: Focus on the investments

Focusing on how the money is spent may be the key for many participants. When asked what if anything would make these fees more acceptable, a plurality (45%) chose investments that create more equity and opportunity. Surprisingly, this was much higher than charging more for higher earners, or penalizing polluters demonstrating communities of color support for the core idea of paying taxes for collective wellbeing.

Question: "To the extent that you have concerns about these fees, what would make them more acceptable to you?"



## Transit: more all-day service and discounted fares

Survey respondents strongly agree that transit fares should be discounted for those with low income rather than free or equal for everyone. In terms of service, the survey showed participants prefer more all-day, weekend and evening service rather than 'office commute' hours with greater service in the peaks.

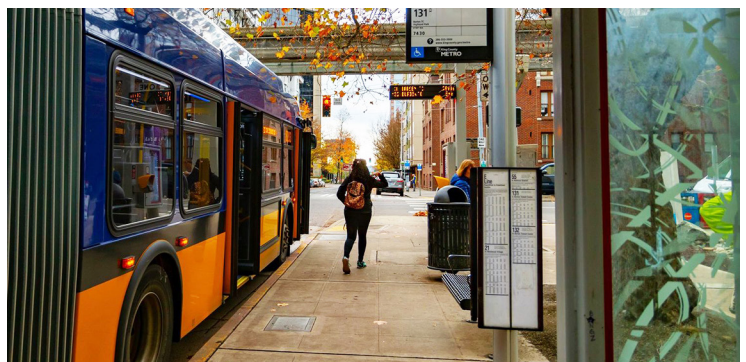
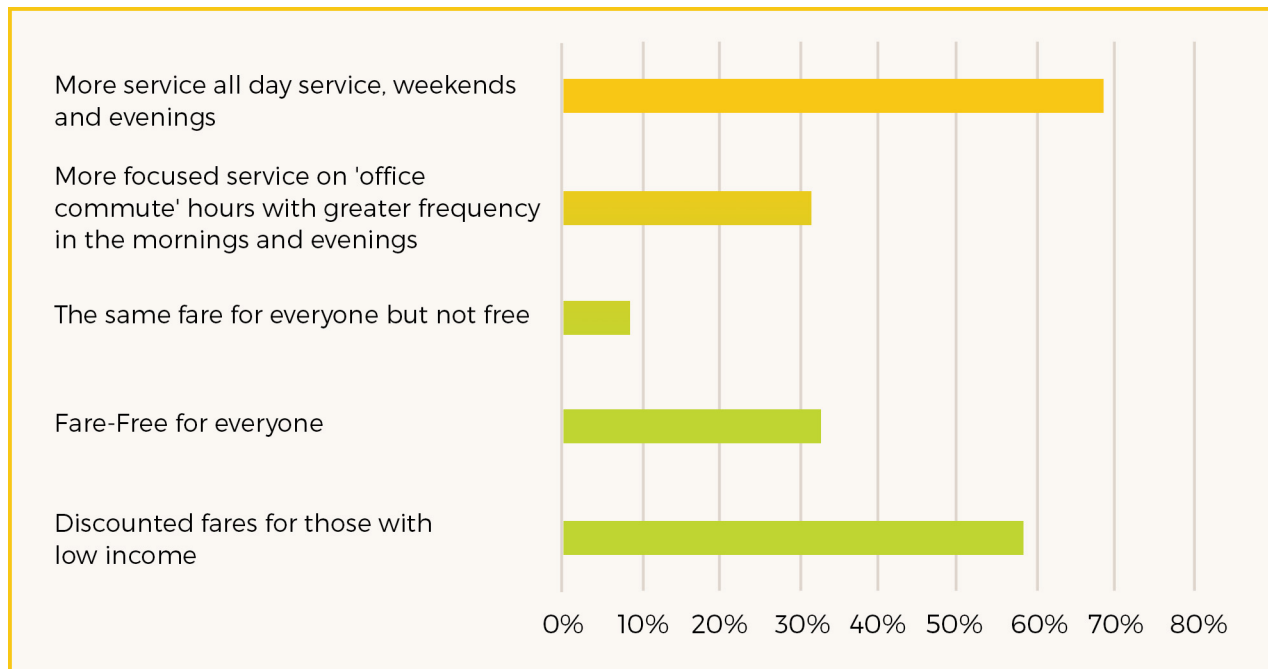
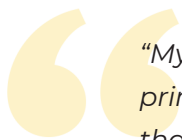


Photo: Joe A. Kunzler, Avgeek Joe Productions



The lack of adequate transit frequency, or high-quality shelters or even benches at stops came up at many listening sessions, particularly those outside the Seattle area.



*“My concern is that we are asking too much from people who are poor and are not primary polluters to overcome these issues. That is where the fight is. I’m thinking that the big polluters are those that are not providing efficient transportation. For instance, the Amazon fulfillment center in Kent. Why can’t they provide efficient buses for people not to drive there?”*

*Of course, the earth is already polluted and we have to do something. But punishing the poor to fix the problem caused by the billionaires is not fair. I like what Bellingham is doing for better air and what Portland is doing for free transit.”*

*- BretLina, SeaTac/Tukwila*

## Electric Vehicles: Lots more information is needed

Many of the listening session participants and survey respondents expressed concerns about electric vehicles. When asked to imagine they were shopping for an electric car, survey participants named worries common to all drivers considering an EV e.g. price, where to charge, and by far the biggest concern: battery range.

By contrast, the listening session brought up lively discussions on EVs issues specific to communities of color. For example, a participant in the Coalition of African Leaders session related a story of why she always chose to drive the conventional fleet car at work, even though EVs were available:

“By nature we immigrants are a bit distrustful. When I was a state employee I had a class on how to drive the fleet EV. The instructor said, ‘If there is a car accident you can’t just get out like normal — the Jaws of Life won’t work’ — and that scared me. So from that point on I took the Ford. The bare education about what this really means never gets explained.”

- Martha

## Next steps

Throughout 2020, Front and Centered joined forces with other advocates in the Climate Alliance for Jobs and Clean Energy to develop Clean & Just policy proposals for more equitable and sustainable transportation for all people who live and work in Washington State.

Many of the participants in our listening session and survey said they were interested in advocating for greener and more just transportation in their communities. Front and Centered will reach out to all the survey and listening session participants to invite them as we work to create policies that advance these goals in the 2021 legislative session.

