PIMA COUNTY
DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Pima County Development Services Department

Planning Division

THE CHUCK HUCKELBERRY LOOP TRAIL
SURVEY REPORT

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This survey project was completed as a requirement of the Univeristy of Arizona Peace Corps Coverdell Fellows Assistantship.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary 3

Background & Purpose.....4

Methods.....5

Results.....6

Part 1. Who responded?.....6

1.1. Demographics

1.2. Other respondent characteristics

Part 2. User patterns.....11

2.1. Frequency of use, purpose and activities

2.2. Destinations accessed on The Loop

Part 3. Perceptions and preferences.....13

3.1. Safety

3.2. Destinations of importance

3.3. Ways to encourage Loop usage

Discussion.....22

Summary

Recommendations

Acknowledgements.....24

Appendix.....25

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose

To better understand barriers to accessing and using The Loop, patterns among Loop users, and ideas for improving The Loop user experience.

Methods

Online and in-person surveying of 1,338 people in the Tucson area.

Key Findings

- The majority of people use The Loop primarily for recreation
- The types of destinations that most people are interested in accessing on The Loop include bars, restaurants, and cafes, parks, and special events
- Respondents would be more likely to use The Loop if there were:
    - More connections to other parts of the city
    - Safer routes to walking or biking to The Loop
    - More destinations of interest along The Loop
- Traffic and speeding vehicles on Loop-adjacent roadways are the biggest safety concerns for users

Recommendations

- Create Loop pathways throughout the city of Tucson
- Improve safety of bike routes to The Loop
- Encourage bike-friendly development along The Loop
- Increase awareness and enforcement of Loop regulations and policies

BACKGROUND & PURPOSE

The Chuck Huckelberry Loop trail (The Loop) is a system of paved, separated, multiuse paths that encircles the City of Tucson and extends into Oro Valley and Marana. The Loop provides metropolitan Tucson with a safe space for physical activity, access to nature, and improved pedestrian and bicycle safety. Increases in The Loop usage have the potential to improve air quality through modal shifts in commuting modes, and to provide economic benefits to local businesses.

This report presents the findings of a survey that was distributed in January 2020 to gather community input on The Loop. This survey was designed to better understand barriers to accessing and using The Loop, patterns among users, and ideas for improving The Loop user experience. While anecdotal testimonies and first-hand experiences have been used to guide decisions regarding The Loop, this survey provides empirical data to guide those decisions. Key questions this survey sought to answer are displayed below.

Understand user patterns and preferences

- How often do people use The Loop?
- What is it primarily used for?

Identify barriers to Loop usage

- Safety concerns
- Accessibility to The Loop
- Ways to improve The Loop

Gather data for Loop advocacy efforts

- Quantifying support for The Loop
- Evidence for economic development

METHODS

The Loop Survey was developed within Pima County Development Services Department with input from multiple departments including Public Health, Communications, Flood Control, Environmental Quality, the City of Tucson Department of Transportation, Visit Tucson, and The University of Arizona.

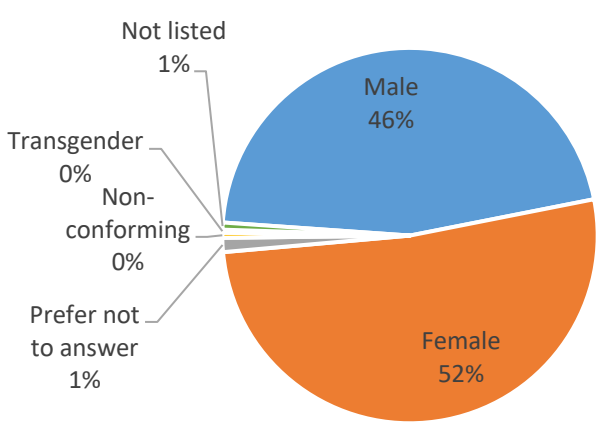
The survey was administered in-person by Development Services staff, and online via Survey Monkey from December 26th 2019 to January 31st, 2020. In-person surveys were conducted at three Pima County libraries, the Flowing Wells Community Center, two grocery stores, Tucson's 4th Ave Street Fair, A-Mountain Park, and on The University of Arizona campus. The online version of the survey was promoted through The Loop website and Facebook page, neighborhood association Facebook pages, the county newsletter, and on Public Health listservs.

Data from the paper surveys were entered into Excel and combined with the online responses from SurveyMonkey. Data analysis was conducted utilizing SAS statistical programming software.

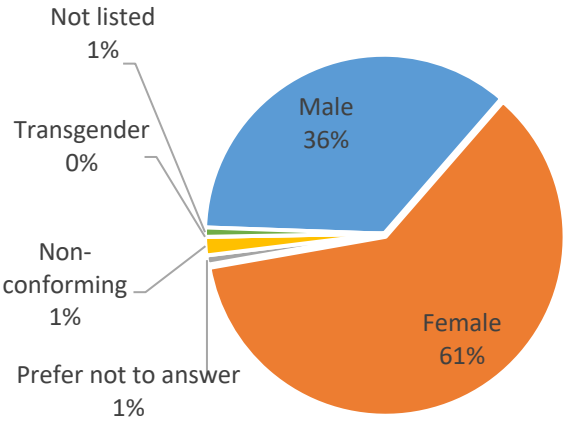
RESULTS:
Part 1. Who responded?

Demographics

A total of 1,338 responses were collected; 9.6% of respondents had never used The Loop before, while 90.4% of respondents reported being Loop users. Respondent demographics are stratified by Loop "Users" and "Non-Users" and are shown graphically on the following pages. Details may be found in Table 1 of the Appendix.



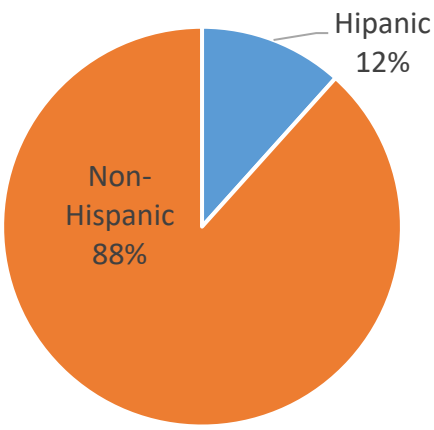
Gender



USERS

NON-USERS

Ethnicity



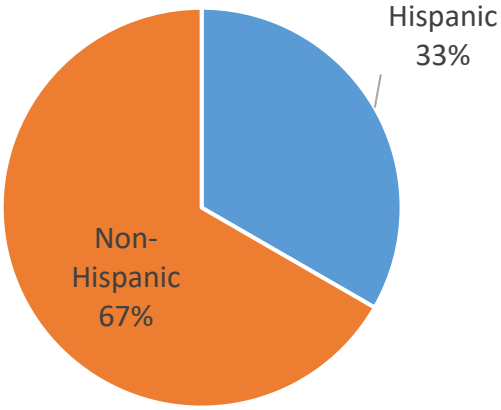


Figure 1.

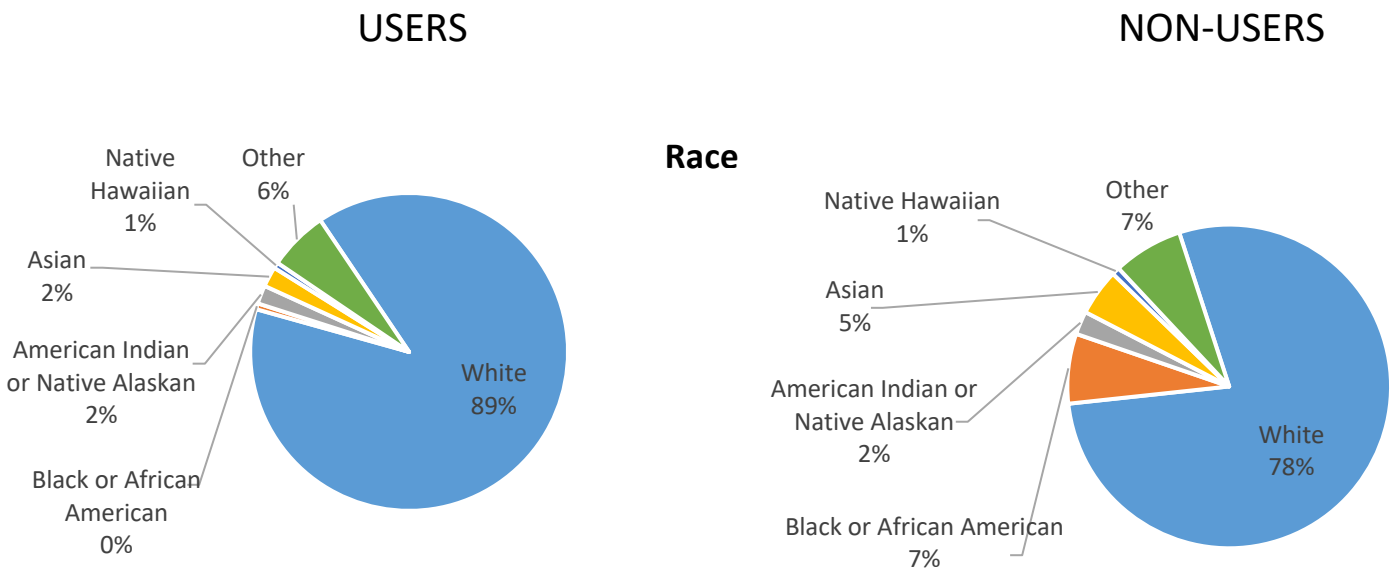


Figure 2.

In examining the demographics of users versus non-users, we found that those who reported never using The Loop were more likely to be female, non-white, and Hispanic.

With regards to age, the majority of respondents were between the ages of 51 to 70 years.

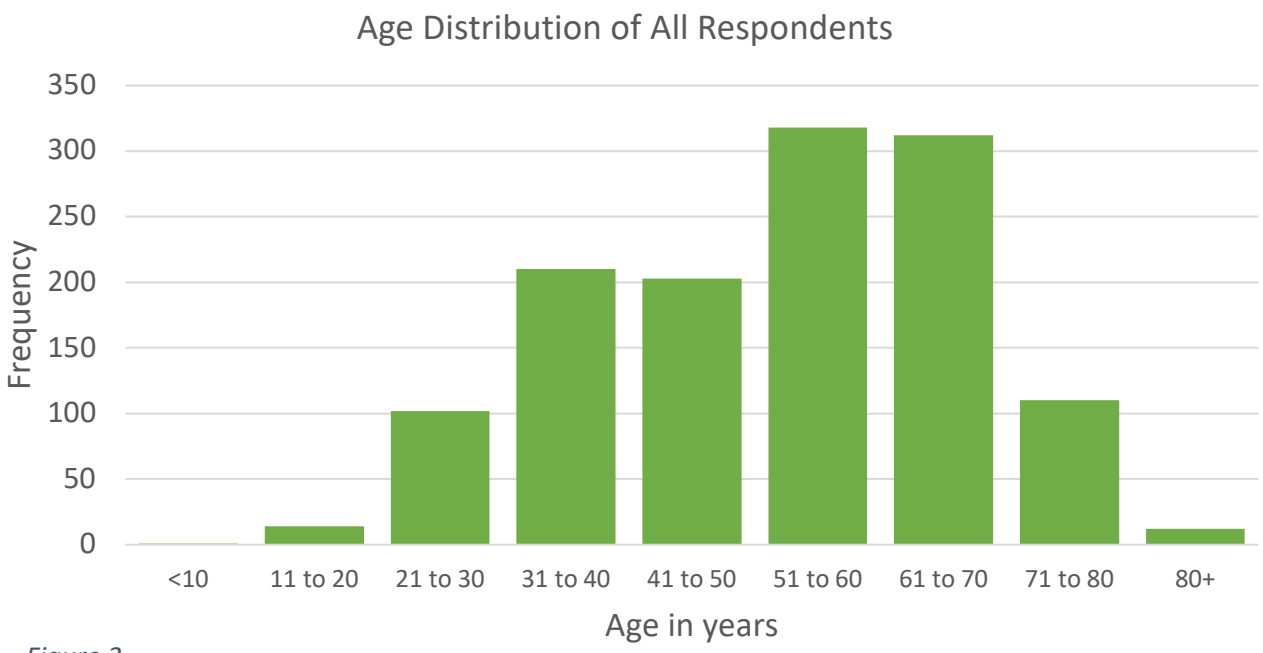


Figure 3.

Although over 1,300 people responded, a major limitation of this survey is that the demographics of respondents differ from the true demographics of Tucson. The results of this survey are therefore influenced more heavily by the older, white, non-Hispanic population. While steps were taken to increase diversity of respondents, such as surveying within the community at libraries, grocery stores, and gathering places, this limitation must be acknowledged, and the results of the survey should be interpreted with these demographics in mind.

Other Respondent Characteristics

Respondents were also asked to report their residential zip codes. The following map shows the percentage of respondents by Tucson zip codes. As illustrated, the majority of respondents reported being from within Tucson city limits with the following zip codes having the greatest number of respondents: 85719, 85716, 85712, 85745, and 85718. There were 122 respondents (9.1%) that were from outside the Tucson metropolitan area.

Residential Zip Codes of Survey Respondents

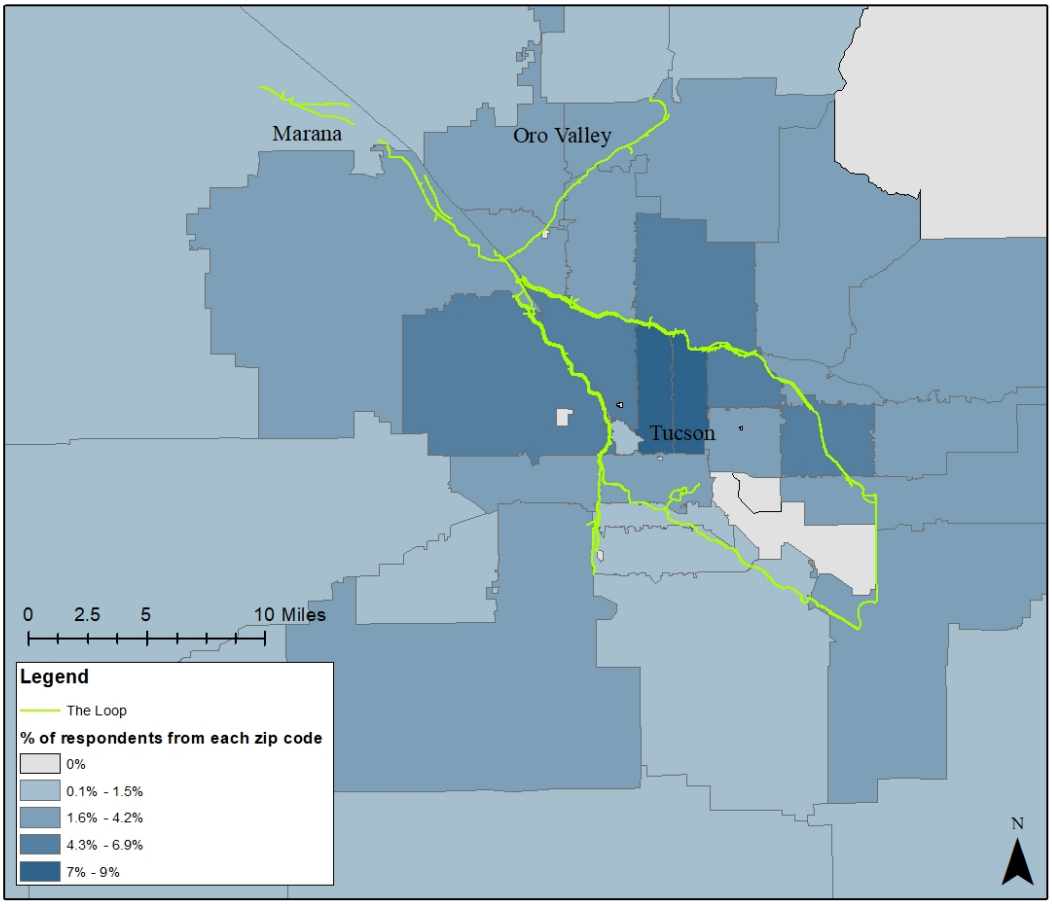
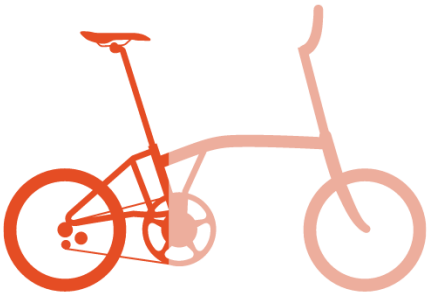


Figure 4.

Respondents were asked whether they had access to a bicycle (owning their own bike or being able to borrow one) and what their primary mode of transportation was (Table 2, Appendix). Major differences between bike access were noted between users (90% with access) and non-users (39% with access). Loop users were much more likely to report biking as their primary mode of transport (22%) than non-users (2%).

90% of Loop users have access to a bike...



...while only **39%** of non-users have access to a bike.

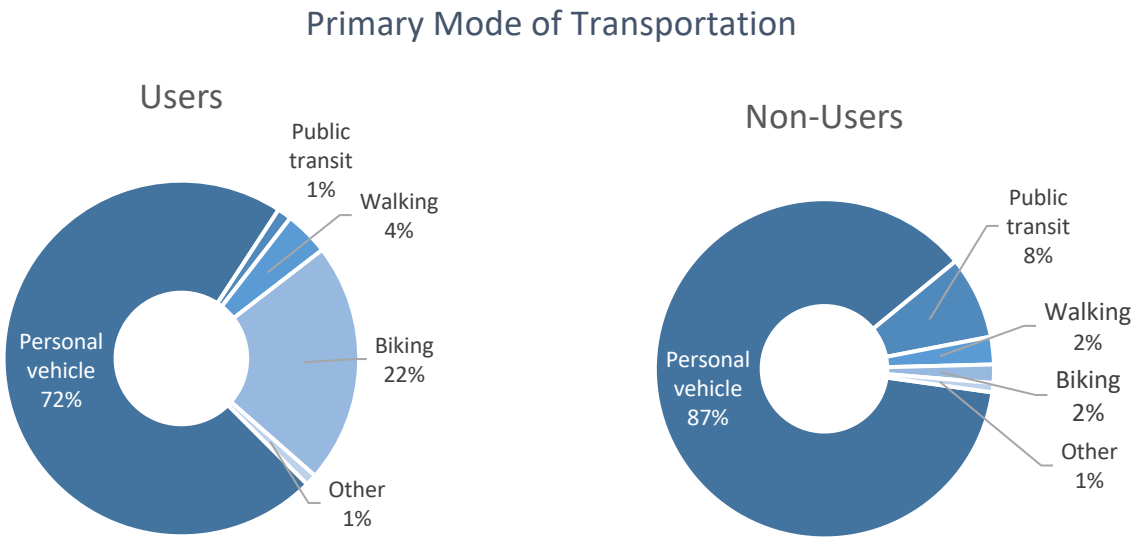


Figure 5.

Frequency of Use, Purpose & Activities

Most users (70.0%) reported using The Loop either a few times each month or a few times each week, with 14.1% of users utilizing The Loop daily or almost daily. An overwhelming majority of Loop users reported that their primary purpose for using The Loop was recreation, exercise, or fun (91.1%), while only 3.5% of users reported commuting as their primary purpose. Most users reported biking on the Loop as their primary activity (66.9%). Details may be found in Table 3 of the Appendix.

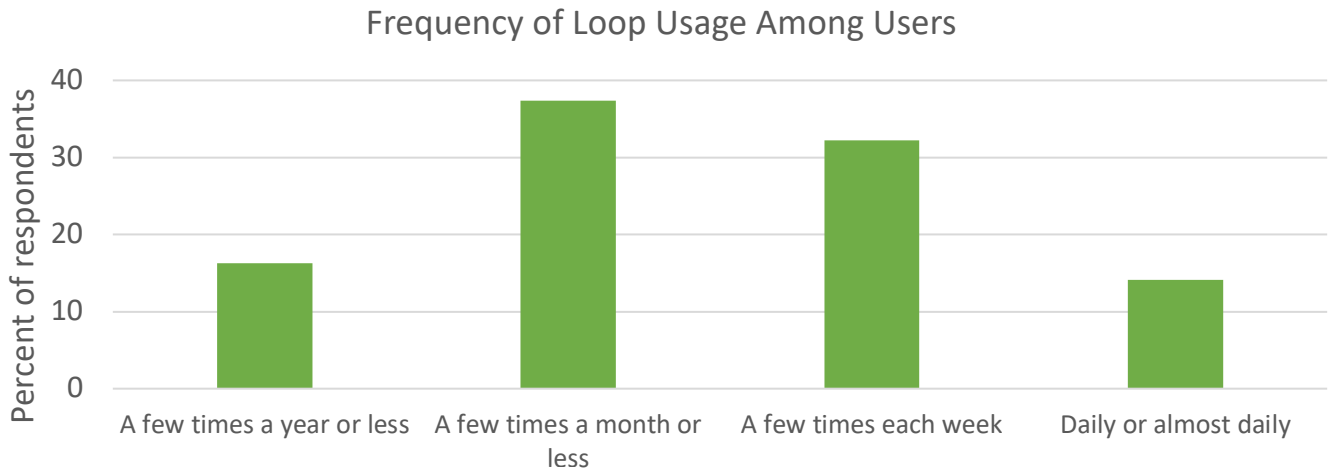


Figure 6.

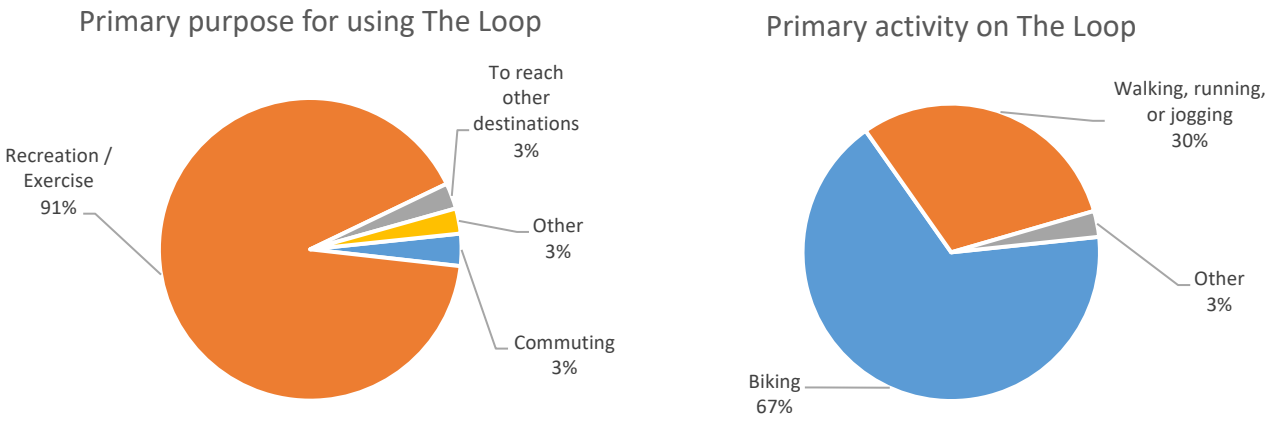


Figure 7.

Destinations Accessed on The Loop

Respondents were asked whether they had accessed certain destinations using The Loop (Figure 8). The types of destinations most commonly accessed included parks, restaurants/bars/cafes, special events, and grocery stores. These types of destinations are likely the most easily accessible for Loop users. This question also showed that 263 people had previously used The Loop to access their workplace, demonstrating that 22% of surveyed users could potentially use The Loop to commute regularly. As only 3.5% of users reported using The Loop primarily for their commute, these data highlight an important gap, and serve to emphasize the opportunity for increasing commuting traffic on The Loop. Developing The Loop as a commuting tool, marketing and promoting it to potential commuters, and expanding or creating programs and policies within local businesses to encourage commuting is recommended.

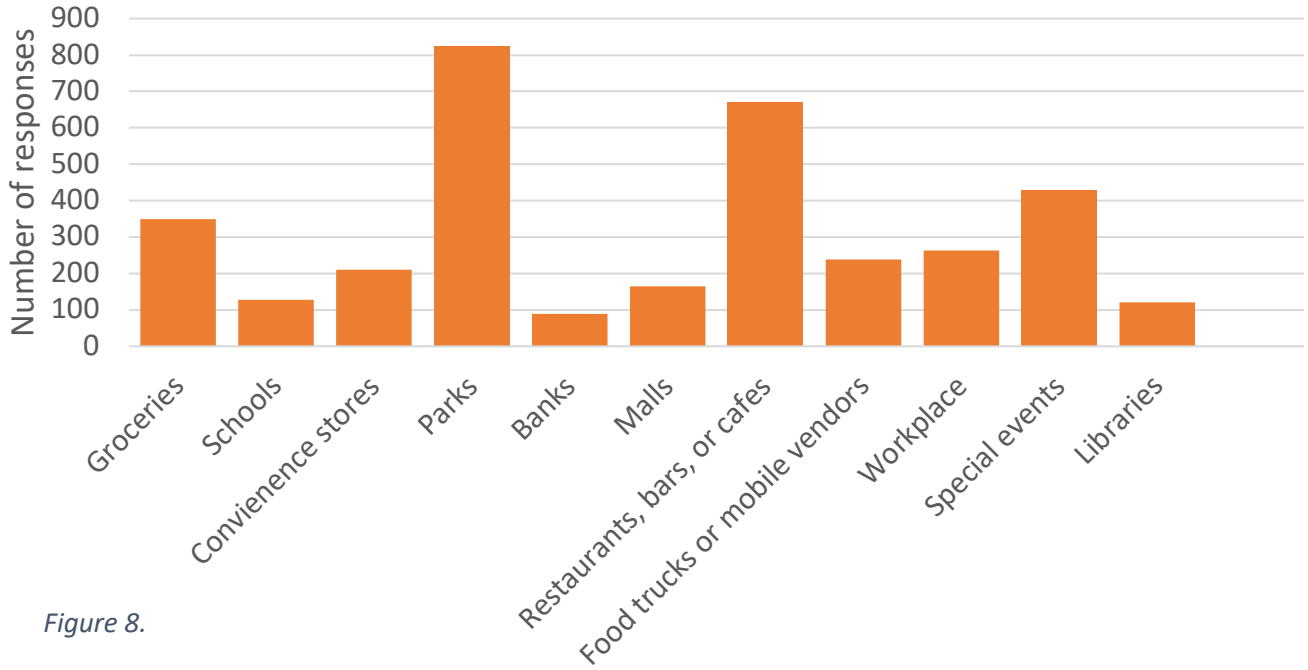


Figure 8.

Parks were the most common destination that people accessed using The Loop.

PART 3. PERCEPTIONS & PREFERENCES

Safety

The survey asked participants multiple questions regarding safety and accessibility to understand how perception of these factors may influence Loop usage. First, participants were asked whether they agreed that it was easy to access The Loop from their homes. As expected, those living closer to The Loop were more likely to report that accessing The Loop from their home was easy (95%). However, only 80% of people that lived 1-5 miles away agreed that it was easy to access. As 1-5 miles is a relatively short distance for bicyclists who represent the majority of users, and as bikers are typically willing to travel longer distances to access separated bike trails, this finding provides initial evidence of the need for improved access to The Loop.

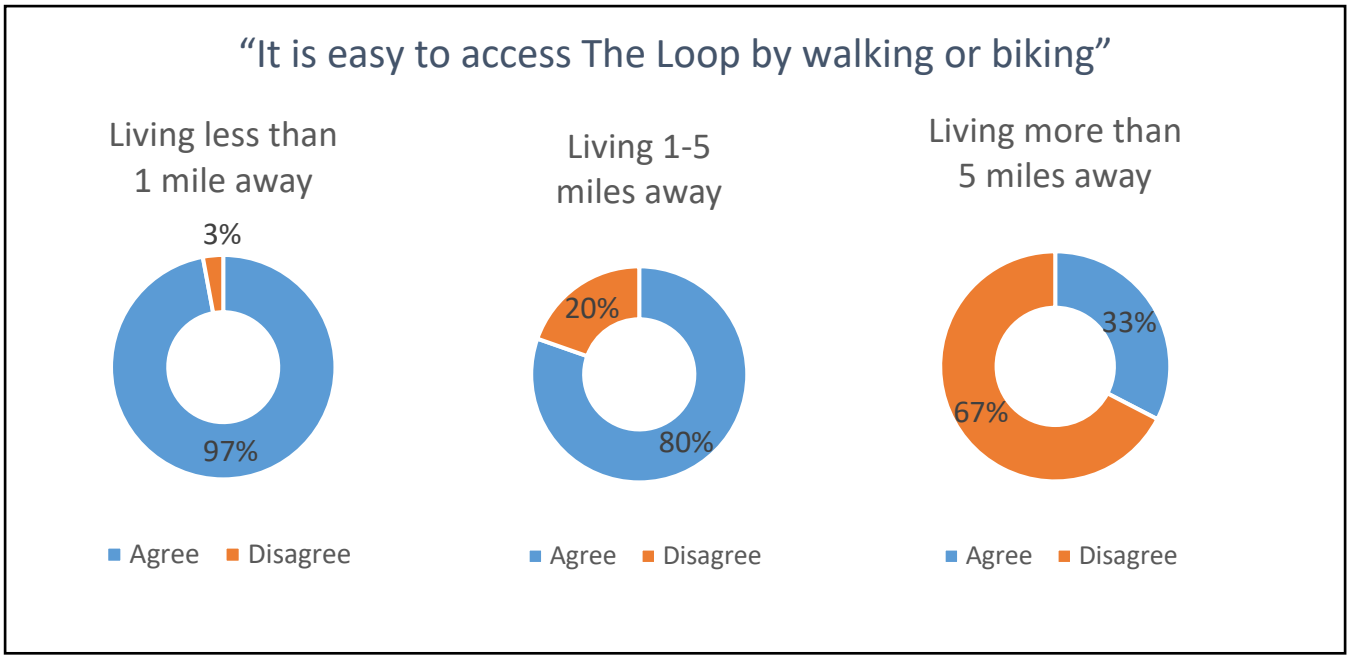


Figure 9.

The following map illustrates the percent of respondents in each zip code that reported having good access to The Loop. Interestingly, there are some zip codes, such as the Flowing Wells area, where the area is transected by large portions of The Loop, but where respondents do not report the highest level of access. This indicates that proximity is not the only factor affecting accessibility of The Loop, and a closer look into location-specific barriers is warranted.

Percent of Respondents Reporting Good Access to The Loop by Zip Code

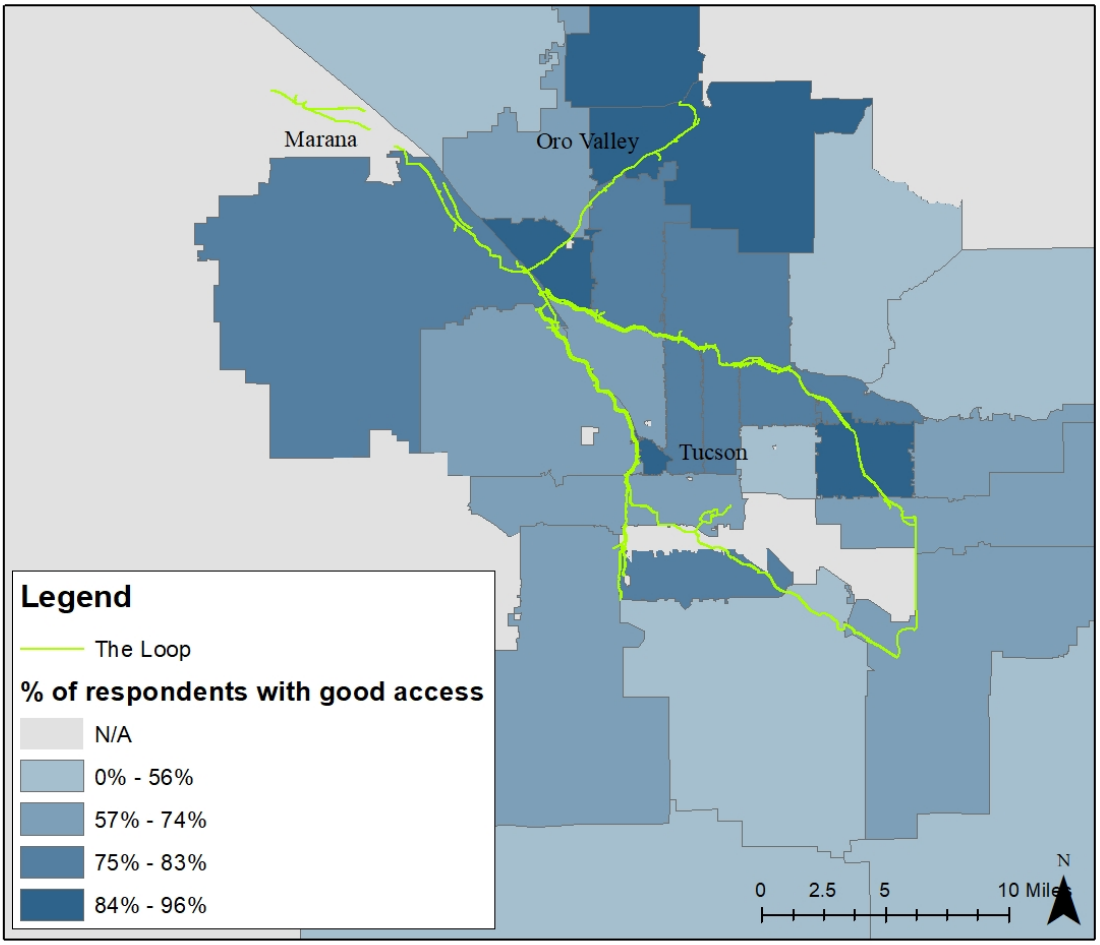


Figure 10.

Two other questions asked respondents whether they felt safe walking or biking to the Loop (see Figure 11, next page). For both activities, almost 30% of respondents reported that they "never feel safe," "rarely feel safe," or "only sometimes feel safe" walking or biking to The Loop. When broken down by male and female gender, we see that women are more likely to never, rarely, or only sometimes feel safe when biking to The Loop compared to men. However, this pattern differed when asking people about *walking* to The Loop.

As a person's perception of bike safety strongly influences their likelihood to bike in their community, and as these perceptions vary by gender, these findings are important for understanding that the effectiveness of strategies to increase Loop usage will vary by gender.

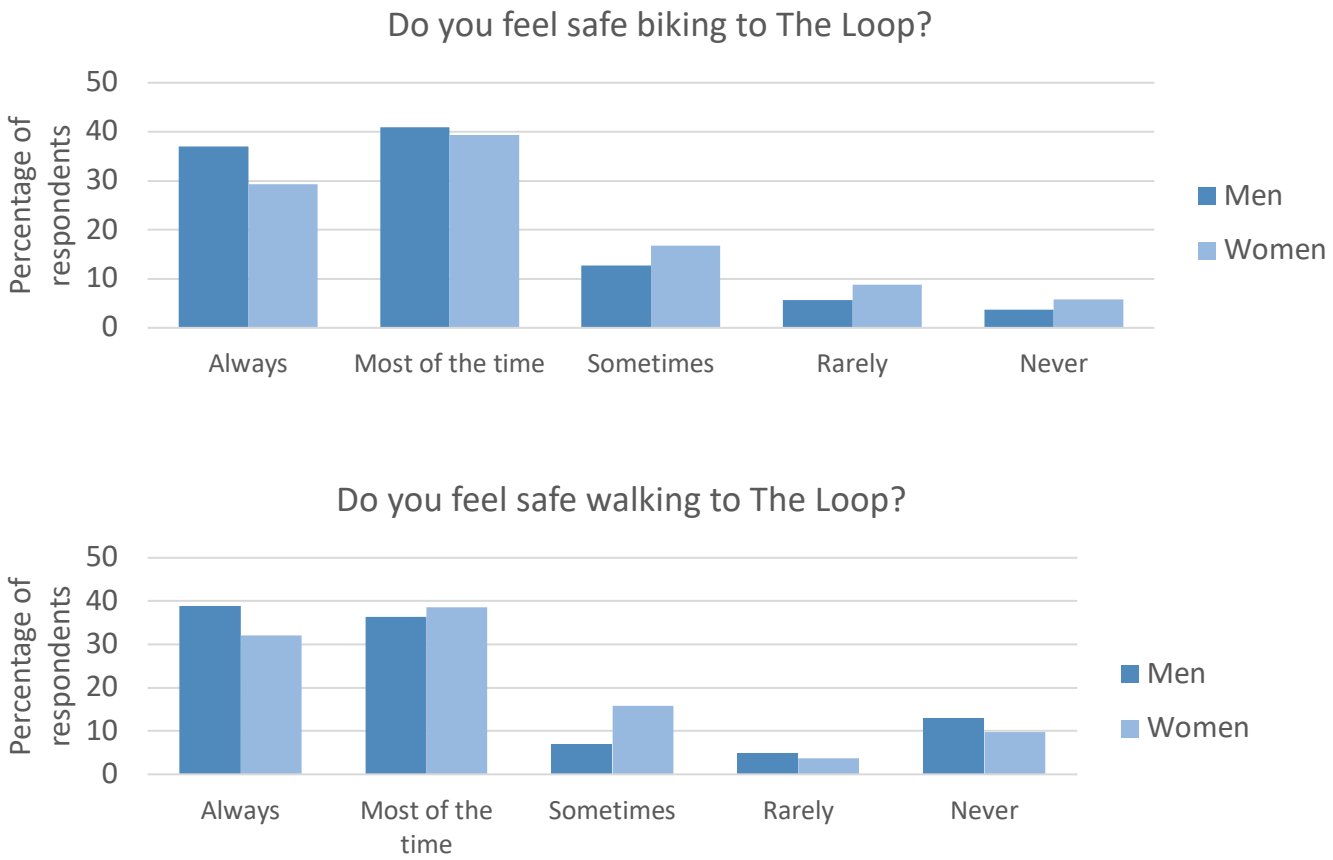


Figure 11.

To better understand the reasons that many people do not feel safe biking or walking to The Loop, respondents were asked to identify concerns they had. The top concern for bicyclists was traffic and speeding vehicles, while the top concern for walkers was crime. (Figures 12 & 13 below, Tables 5 & 6 in Appendix).

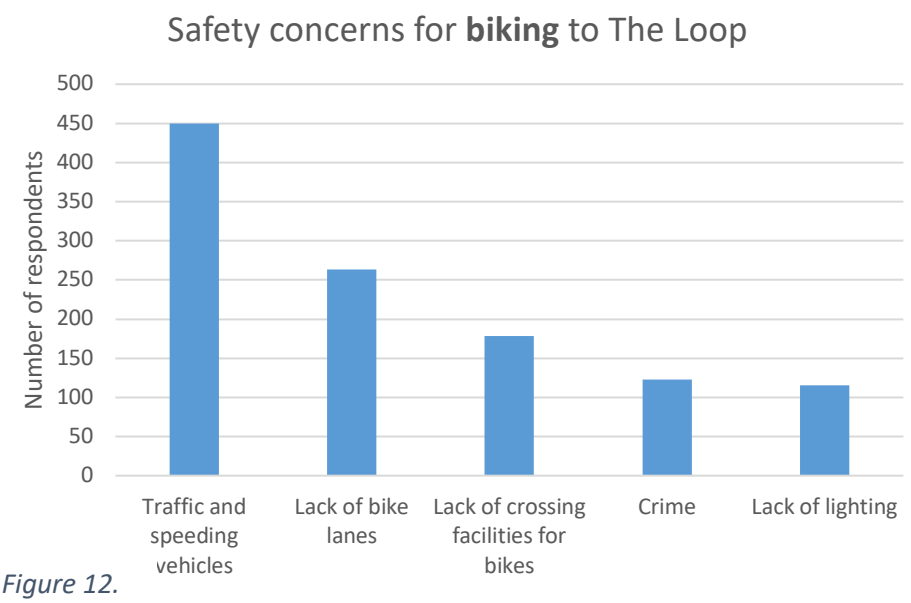


Figure 12.

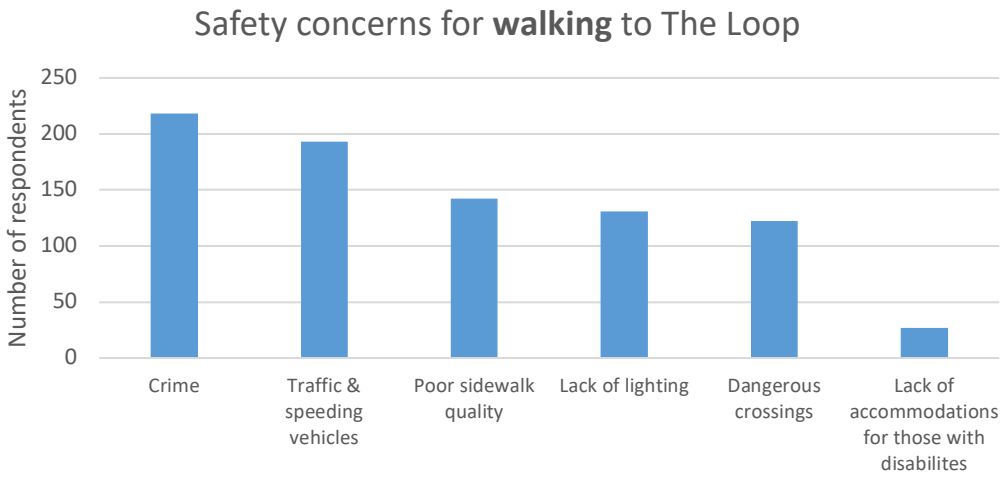


Figure 13.

Traffic & vehicle speed was the #1 safety concern for bikers & the #2 safety concern for walkers who accessed the Loop.

Additional concerns with biking and walking on and to The Loop were expressed via text entry. Four major themes were identified:

- Concerns with homeless population
- Conflicts between high-speed cyclists and other users
- Speeding and aggressive vehicles en route to The Loop
- Poor quality of bike lanes and roads getting to The Loop

For safety concerns *on* The Loop, many respondents cited issues regarding the homeless population in the washes with regards both to personal safety and with running into homeless persons in underpasses. In addition, there were many concerns over the speed of some bicyclists who do not obey guidelines and aggressively overtake other users.

For safety concerns limiting accessibility of The Loop, many respondents provided comments on drivers using excessive speeds and acting aggressively towards bikers. In addition, the poor quality of roads leading to The Loop and the lack of high-quality, debris-free bike lanes was commonly cited as a concern.

Destinations of importance

In addition to asking users about destinations that they had previously accessed (Table 4 in Appendix), respondents were also asked to indicate destinations that they thought were *most* important to be able to access. The destinations of greatest importance were parks, restaurants/bars/cafes, and special events. Many people also reported grocery stores and food trucks or mobile vendors as being important. When stratified by gender, results were similar, although many fewer women than men reported that access to their workplace and to convenience stores were important (Table 7).

For almost every destination (aside from parks and malls), the number of people reporting that a destination was important to access was higher than the number of people who had accessed that location. This difference represents an unmet desire for Loop users to be able to access these amenities while using The Loop.

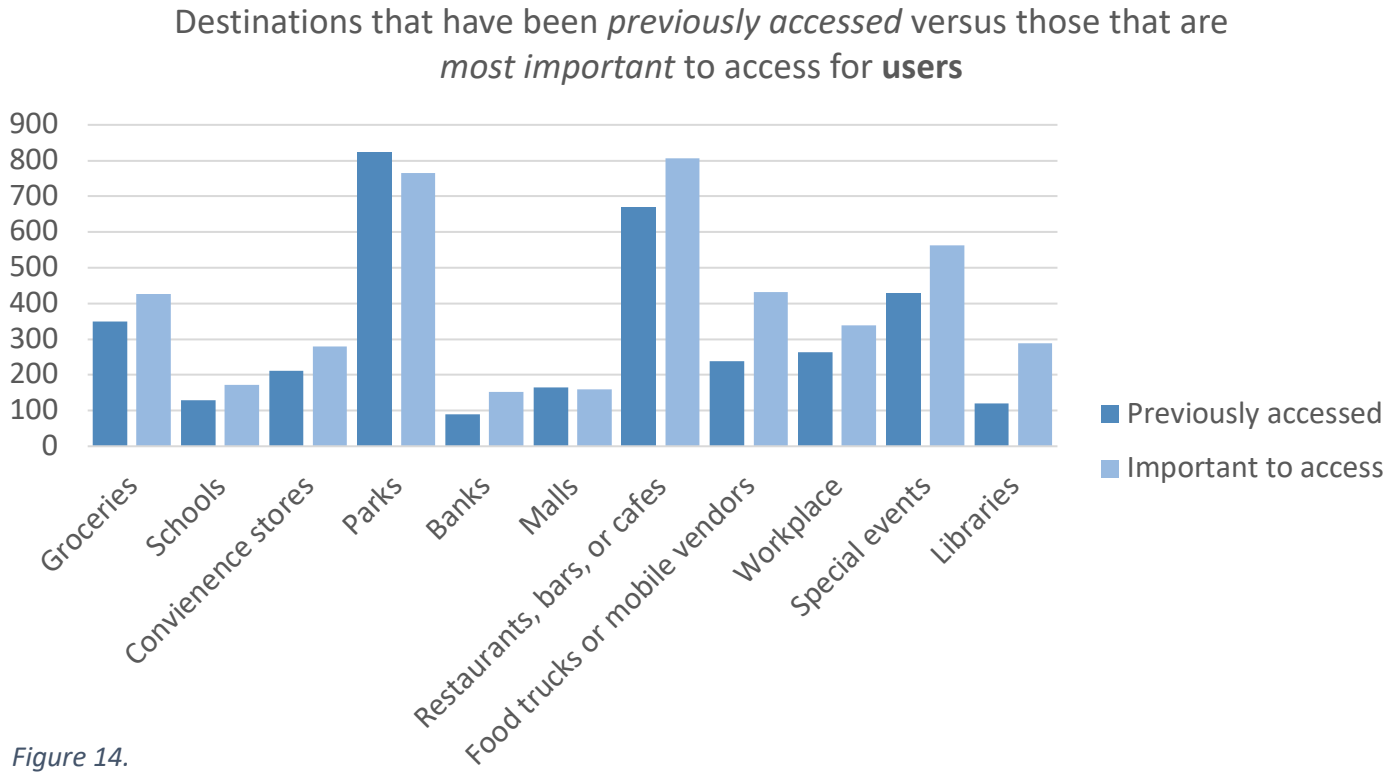


Figure 14.

People who had reported never using The Loop before (non-users) also reported destinations that were most important to them, and the top five destinations (restaurants/bars/cafes, parks, groceries, special events, and food trucks or mobile vendors) were the same destinations that Loop users found important (Table 8, Appendix).

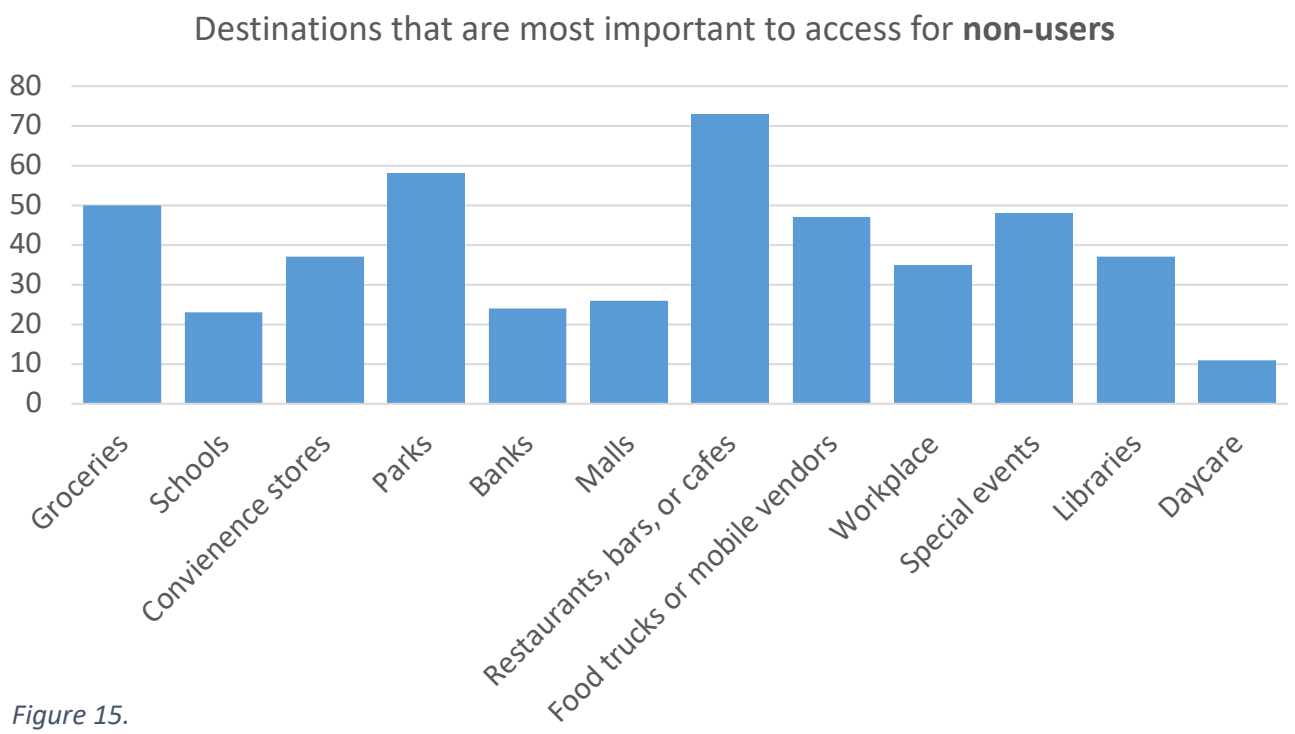
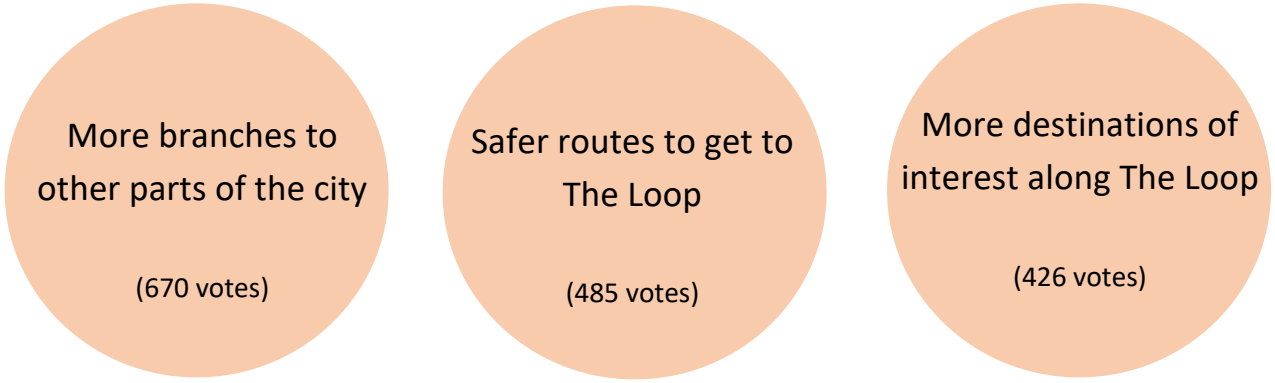


Figure 15.

Ways to Encourage Loop Usage

In order to identify areas of improvement, survey respondents were asked what would encourage them to use The Loop more from a list of options (Table 9 in Appendix). The top three responses were the same for both users and non-users.

What would encourage you to use The Loop more than you currently do?



The top two factors that would encourage more usage in both users and non-users are related to accessibility, not to characteristics of The Loop itself. These results are aligned with survey findings in regard to safety, when respondents reported concerns with traffic and speeding vehicles en route to The Loop and a lack of bike lanes for getting to The Loop (Tables 5 & 6. Appendix). Together, these findings indicate that the best approach to increase Loop usage would be to focus on increased access throughout the city.

Many respondents also provided written responses about what would encourage them to utilize The Loop more (shown below, Figure 16). For these entries, the top methods of encouraging use were reducing dangerous bicyclist speeds, allowing e-bikes, having more free time, and addressing the homeless population. Concerns with bike speeds and homelessness along the Loop echo the safety concerns that were reported in other questions. Interestingly, 22 people wrote in that e-bikes should

be permitted on The Loop, while 6 people wrote in that they should not be allowed. Many of the respondents advocating for e-bike usage were seniors, who expressed support of e-bikes due to physical limitations that would prevent them from riding a standard bike on The Loop. Some who opposed e-bikes expressed concerns over inappropriate speeds. A specific question on e-bikes was not included in this study, as there is ongoing policy discussion within The Loop Advisory Committee on this matter.

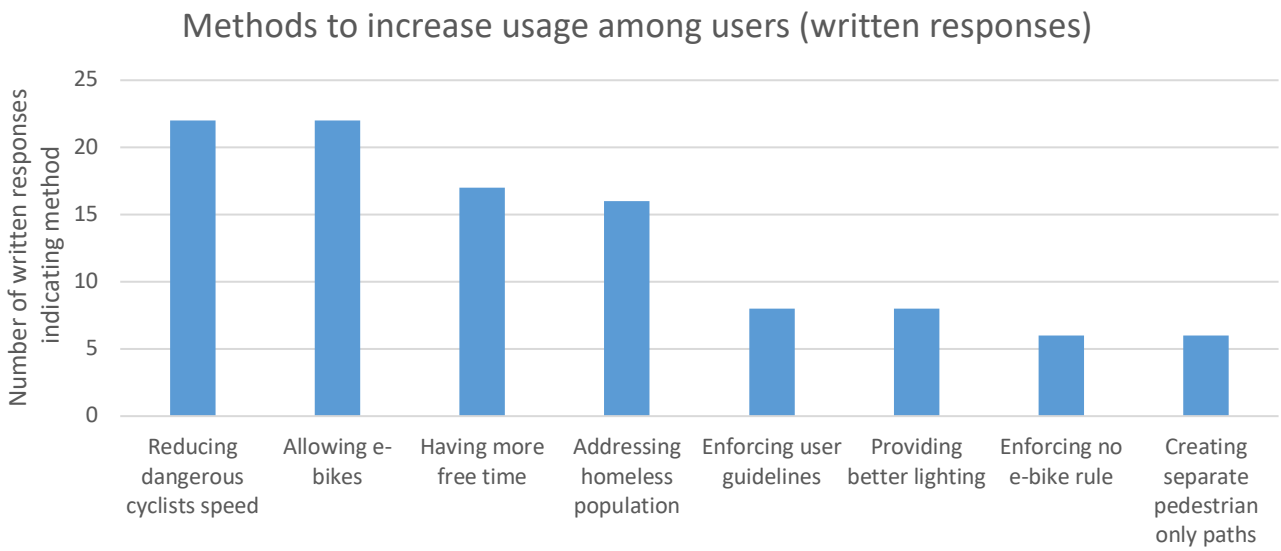


Figure 16.

When asking those who had never used The Loop before about their preferences, non-users selected the same top three factors that would encourage them to use The Loop (more branches throughout the city, safer routes to get to The Loop, and more destinations of interest). Non-users also reported that increased access to TuGo bike sharing stations would be beneficial (Table 10.) Some non-users also responded via text entry and the most commonly mentioned factors to "What would encourage you to use The Loop?" are shown below:

- Allowing e-bikes (4)
- Nothing would encourage me to use The Loop (4)
- Creating more awareness of The Loop (3)

As over 60% of non-users do not have access to a bike, providing bike share opportunities along The Loop could be an effective approach to increase usage. In addition, expanding Loop promotional activities and avenues for the public to access information on The Loop may be helpful.

DISCUSSION

Summary

This is the first survey to gather data on Tucson's shared use path, The Loop. The aim of this project was to better understand how our community is utilizing The Loop, ways to improve user experience, and any barriers to Loop usage. The majority of Loop users who responded to the survey were White, non-Hispanic persons aged 51-70 years old. Nine of ten people reported using The Loop primarily for recreation, with 70% utilizing it primarily for biking and 30% for walking.

In general, survey findings were positive and reflected great support for The Loop from the Tucson community. For example, high frequency of use was reported: almost half of respondents used The Loop a few times each week or more. In addition, many people wrote in that they were pleased with how The Loop is maintained, and regarded it as a beneficial resource for their personal health. Furthermore, people expressed great interest in using The Loop to reach destinations in their community.

The main concerns that emerged from this survey focused on the ability of users to access The Loop from county and city streets. Respondents expressed the greatest interest in having more branches of The Loop throughout the city, in addition to safer routes for getting to The Loop. Those who biked to The Loop, which represented the majority of users, reported traffic and speeding vehicles on surrounding roadways, a lack of bike lanes, and a lack of crossing facilities as their biggest safety concerns. In terms of improvements that could be made on The Loop itself, respondents expressed concerns with interactions between high-speed bicyclists and walkers, in addition to the high concentration of homelessness in the washes that The Loop follows.

This issue of accessibility was also apparent when asking respondents about their preferences in the types of destinations they can currently access versus those that they find important to access from The Loop. Respondents expressed interest in being able to access a greater number of restaurants, bars, cafes, parks, special events, grocery stores, and food trucks. Less emphasis was given to accessing daycares, banks, and schools.

Recommendations

The findings from this survey provide an opportunity to improve The Loop experience and increase usage of this valuable community resource. Our findings suggest that future investments should **prioritize the construction of Loop connections** throughout the city, such that the pathway appears like a wheel with spokes, rather than a bike tube. Building connections throughout the city would reduce the number of people that drive to The Loop and provide easier, safer access for those who don't have cars or feel uncomfortable riding on city roadways to access The Loop. Furthermore, building connections throughout the city would allow users to access a greater number of desired destinations, such as centrally located restaurants, bars, and cafes. As more connections are made, implementing simple color-coded wayfinding signage to differentiate these connections from the main circular loop is recommended.

We also advocate for **improving the safety of bicycle routes** that are commonly used to arrive at The Loop. This may involve the establishment of more bike boulevards, the reduction of speeds on key roadways near The Loop, the implementation of protected bike lanes, and the re-design of intersections to accommodate and protect bicyclists. While some very experienced riders feel comfortable navigating existing intersections without bike lanes or biking on high-speed roadways to access The Loop, other riders with less confidence or less ability should be accommodated for.

With regards to changes that can be made *on* The Loop, we recommend **increased awareness and enforcement of Loop regulations** with particular attention to speed. In addition, a greater safety presence and **coordination with city officials on their homelessness protocol** may be warranted to increase perceptions of safety with regard to the large unhoused population near The Loop.

Furthermore, we recommend **incentivizing and promoting Loop-friendly development** along the pathway system, such as restaurants, bars, cafes, special events, grocery stores, and food trucks, as a means to attract a wider range of users. Promoting nearby businesses with signage may also help ensure that The Loop is seen as an attractive destination to visit.

Acknowledgements

We thank everyone who was involved with or supported this project, including Mark Holden, Chris Poirier, Carla Blackwell, and the rest of the Pima County Development Services Department, Georgia Ehlers and The University of Arizona Peace Corps Coverdell Fellowship, Kate Harrison and Marcia Zamorano at the Pima County Communications Office, Vanessa Bechtol at Visit Tucson, The Loop Advisory Committee, the Pima County Attractions and Tourism office, and the Pima County Public Health Department.

APPENDIX

Table 1. Respondent characteristics

	Users		Non-users	
	Count	%*	Count	%*
Gender				
Male	527	(45.7)	43	(35.8)
Female	595	(51.7)	73	(60.8)
Transgender	3	(0.3)	0	(0.0)
Non-conforming	5	(0.4)	2	(1.7)
Prefer not to answer/not listed	21	(1.8)	2	(1.7)
Race				
White	1037	(88.8)	101	(78.3)
Black or African American	7	(0.6)	9	(7.0)
American Indian or Native Alaskan	22	(1.9)	3	(2.3)
Native Hawaiian	7	(0.6)	1	(0.8)
Asian	24	(2.1)	6	(4.7)
Other	71	(6.1)	9	(7.0)
Ethnicity				
Hispanic	132	(11.7)	39	(33.3)
Non-Hispanic	1001	(88.4)	78	(66.7)
Age				
0-20	13	(1.1)	2	(1.7)
21-30	84	(7.2)	18	(15.0)
31-40	195	(16.8)	15	(12.5)
41-50	186	(16.0)	17	(14.2)
51-60	286	(24.6)	32	(26.7)
61-70	284	(24.4)	28	(23.3)
71-80	102	(8.8)	8	(6.7)
80+	12	(1.0)	0	(0.0)

*Percentages based on respondents who answered each question. Question on race was not mutually exclusive.

Table 2. Primary mode of transport

	Users		Non-Users	
Mode	Count	%*	Count	%*
Personal vehicle	834	(71.2)	99	(86.8)
Public transit	15	(1.3)	9	(7.9)
Walking	47	(4.0)	3	(2.6)
Biking	255	(21.9)	2	(1.8)
Other	12	(1.0)	1	(0.9)

*Percentages based on those who answered the question.

Table 3. Purpose, activities, and frequency of Loop usage

Primary purpose for using Loop	Count	%*
Recreation, exercise, or fun	1084	(91.1)
To reach other destinations	33	(2.8)
To commute to work or school	41	(3.5)
Other	32	(2.7)
Primary activity		
Biking	795	(66.9)
Walking, running, or jogging	360	(30.3)
Rollerblading or riding a scooter	4	(0.3)
Riding a horse	5	(0.4)
Other	25	(2.1)
Frequency of use		
A couple times per year or less	192	(16.3)
A few times each month	441	(37.4)
A few times each week	380	(32.2)
Daily or almost daily	166	(14.1)

*Percentages based on those who answered the question.

Table 4. Destinations that have been previously accessed using The Loop by gender

Destination	Men (count)	Women (count)	Other gender identity or gender not reported (count)
Parks	382	404	37
Restaurants/bars/cafes	313	327	30
Special events	189	225	14
Workplace	152	95	46
Grocery stores	149	181	21
Convenience stores	124	76	11
Food trucks	106	123	9
Malls	80	77	7
Schools	65	59	4
Libraries	60	55	5
Banks	50	32	7

Table 5. Safety concerns for walking to The Loop

Safety issues	# of respondents concerned
Crime	218
Traffic & speeding vehicles	193
Poor sidewalk quality	142
Lack of lighting	131
Dangerous crossings	122
Lack of accommodations for those with disabilities	27

Table 6. Safety concerns for biking to The Loop

Safety issues	# of respondents concerned
Traffic & speeding vehicles	450
Lack of bike lanes	263
Lack of crossing facilities for bikes	178
Crime	123
Lack of lighting	115

Table 7. Destinations that are important for users to access using The Loop by gender

Destination	Men (count)	Women (count)	Other gender identity or gender not reported (count)
Restaurants/bars/cafes	351	423	33
Parks	340	389	36
Special events	235	307	21
Grocery stores	191	215	21
Food trucks	186	227	19
Workplace	175	148	16
Convenience stores	148	120	11
Libraries	119	157	12
Malls	80	72	7
Schools	79	82	11
Bank	75	71	7
Daycares	41	35	4

Table 8. Destinations that are important for *non-users* to access

Location	# responses
Restaurants/bars/cafes	73
Parks	58
Special events	48
Grocery stores	50
Food trucks	47
Workplace	35
Convenience stores	37
Libraries	37
Malls	26
Schools	23
Bank	24
Daycares	11

Table 9. Ways to increase Loop usage among users

Method	# responses
More branches leading to other parts of the city	670
Safer routes for getting to The Loop	485
More destinations of interest along The Loop	426
More facilities (restrooms, water fountains, bike repair)	405
Greater safety measures (i.e. lighting, law enforcement)	375
Better signage indicating nearby businesses and attractions	262
Better directional signage from roadways to The Loop	232
Better wayfinding signage on The Loop	192
Better maintenance (i.e. paving and sweeping)	164
More TuGo bike sharing stations	84

Table 10. Ways to encourage Loop usage among non-users

Method	# responses
More branches leading to other parts of the city	36
Safer routes for getting to The Loop	19
More destinations of interest along The Loop	16
TuGo bike sharing stations	9