

METROPOLITAN BRANCH TRAIL

BLAIR RD TO PINEY BRANCH RD NW

VIRTUAL PUBLIC MEETING SUMMARY REPORT





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PROJECT INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

The Metropolitan Branch Trail (MBT) is an eight (8) mile trail in the Washington DC metropolitan area. The MBT is an essential transportation route providing connections to homes, work and play as well as access to seven (7) Metro stations. Current plans include connections to the area's trail network such as the Capital Crescent Trail, Anacostia Trails System, and integration into the East Coast Greenway. When complete, this trail will deliver connectivity to Washington DC and Maryland providing a healthy form of transportation for all.

Once constructed The Blair Rd to Piney Branch Rd portion of the trail will complete the Metropolitan Branch Trail in its entirety.

On December 7, 2021, the project team presented alternatives during a virtual workshop. During the workshop the team was able to collect segment- by segment feedback in virtual break out rooms. The team obtained 281 responses to the post- workshop online survey that was available to the community for 30 days after the workshop (January 7, 2022). The team analyzed design concepts, and considered measures like safety, traffic parking and feasibility. On June 7, 2022, the Project Team hosted a Virtual Public Meeting to present design alternatives.

VIRTUAL PUBLIC MEETING FORMAT

To prevent the spread of COVID-19 The MBT Design team presented a virtual public meeting via CISCO WEBEX and Facebook Live.

[View Presentation →](#)

Agenda

- CISCO Webex Review
- Project Team Introduction
- Overview of scope and Schedule
- Recommended alignments, including environmental consideration
- Van Buren Street recommended alignments
- Questions & Comments



The presentation was made available on the metbranchtrail.com website and the project team accepted comments until July 1, 2022.

OUTREACH STRATEGY

GRASS ROOTS

Tina Boyd and Associate's (TB&A) is the private public outreach firm contracted to provide additional outreach to DDOT's community engagement specialists for this project. TB&A designed and distributed approximately 300 information cards/door knockers and 150 meeting notices to ANC Commissioners, residents, businesses, recreation centers, schools, etc. in and around the project area. Information cards and door knockers were distributed interchangeably based on whether the stakeholders were residential (door knockers) or commercial (information cards). Multiple cards were delivered or posted at local community gathering spaces/ meetings for distribution to the community.

Public meeting notification signs were placed at the following locations:

- ➔ 6901 4th Street NW
- ➔ 400 block of Aspen St NW
- ➔ 6601 Blair Rd NW
- ➔ 7000 Cedar St NW
- ➔ 7051 Spring PL NW

The team conducted community engagement that included informing stakeholders of the upcoming public meeting, providing project related information. In addition to the door-to-door distribution, the team distributed the public meeting notifications electronically. Emails were sent to the electronic database. Notifications were also sent via Next Door. Multiple cards were delivered or posted at local community gathering spaces/ meetings for distribution to the community.



VIRTUAL PUBLIC MEETING

Meeting: MBT (Blair Rd to Piney Branch) Virtual Public Meeting

Date: June 7, 2022

Time: 6:30 PM

Location: CISCO WEBEX/ Facebook Live

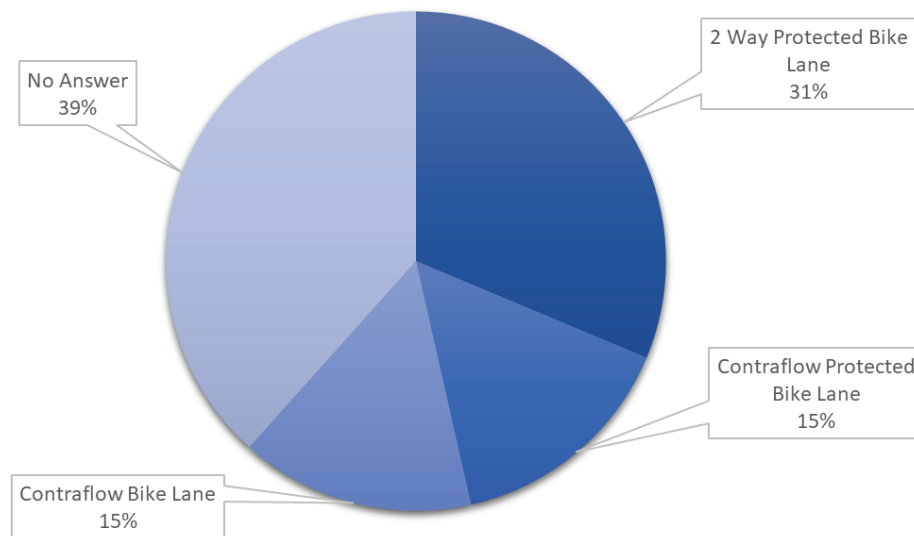
[View Public Meeting →](#)

Attendees: Fifty (50) stakeholders were in attendance. Including local ANC Commissioners, WABA members, district government employees, residents, local cyclist, and the project team.

POLL

Towards the end of the meeting all Web EX attendees had the opportunity take a live poll. The results can be viewed in the pie graph below.

Which alternative do you prefer for Van Buren Street, NW?



COMMENTS AND REPORTING

All questions received during the meeting were read aloud and responded to verbally. The community had the opportunity to provide feedback during the meeting via Facebook live, and CISCO WEBEX. The project team accepted comments via email and Nextdoor until June 30, 2022.

PLATFORM	COMMUNITY QUESTIONS/COMMENTS
FACEBOOK	<p>C. Hughes :</p> <p>How do you mitigate loss of street trees?</p> <p>Can you use permeable pavers instead of asphalt on social trails and areas that are not currently paved?</p> <p>Will you be able to replace trees taken at a 1:1 ratio or better and can you ensure that the replacements will occur in the neighborhoods as trees taken?</p> <p>Plans should disclose total number of trees to be taken, species and diameter. DC lost 10percent of its tree canopy between 2004 and 2018...all intentional takings should be matched with replacement of better to account for failure of new trees Can you please discuss what the timeframe is and alternative for Oglethorpe?</p> <p>M. Carabello:</p> <p>Are the paths on 343 Cedar and curvilinear path wide enough to be wheelchair accessible?</p> <p>C. Hughes:</p> <p>Maybe half and half then? It's a shame everything gets paved as the default. In the shared use segment (neighborhood streetway), why are any trees impacted? Is it purely for locating signage?</p> <p>For the segment with 5 percent grade and stairway on NPS property, how is one expected to navigate the staircase with a bike?</p> <p>M. Carabello:</p> <p>I don't see the poll</p> <p>C. Hughes:</p> <p>"B" seems safest, and the community wants it</p>

FACEBOOK

C. Hughes:

No, we cannot see the results

M. Carabello:

The poll never came up for me, but I prefer A. The protected bike lane

C. Hughes:

The neighborhood preferences should be prioritized as it impacts the most often

M. Carabello:

The MBT impacts the whole city not just the immediate neighborhood. It's a city-wide trail.

C. Hughes:

My point was about frequency of impact

One could select the residents' preference and then require that any alternative be required to provide greater demonstrated benefits it is to supplant residents' preference.

I passed 2 scooters tethered to a fire hydrant the other day.... And I am pro scooter!

M. Carabello:

There aren't a lot of bicycles because there isn't good infrastructure. This is like saying that you shouldn't build a bridge because there is no one swimming across the river.

Go on protected portions of the MBT and you will see tons of bicyclists of all ages and bodies. When people feel safe, they will use it.

Bikes are not safe to be on the sidewalk. They need space on the road.

C Hughes:

There seems to be a lack of consistency or at least transparency for a few of the neighborhoods as to when you choose to run bikes in the street and when you decide to create a protected lane. Please show the data (volumes of cars, available ROW, etc.) so people can see this data-driven and not simply the result of polls or special interest input

Your approach to trees is to do the least amount required. Would prefer you to more than is required.

Please include transcript of Facebook chat as well.

Q&A

G Baker:

Is the Fort Totten to Avendale segment no longer planned as a part of the MBT?

Michael:

How is the curvilinear path?

Will it be wide enough to comfortably fit wheelchairs around curves?
Similar question to before. How does the 343 cedar street path (also the curvilinear path). Are they wheelchair accessible?

Phil S.:

Strictly speaking, this isn't a question but more of a suggestion. Have you considered removing the last 15- 20 ish feet of pavement at the end of Chestnut Street (segment 2) and turning it into greenspace? It's in DDOT's right of way (so no property impacts) and removing all of the pavement past the connection to the trail so there's intuitive visual hinting, and it would make the project net-zero (or even net negative!) with respect to change of impervious surfaces.

Ric:

Last meeting, we heard that there would be no loss of parking on 4th St when making it one way. What happened? There is not much traffic on 4th. Why not leave as it is and paint a bicycle decal?

E.Yeates:

(This is Evan Yeats) Is there any chance of duplicating this treatment, especially if it is the neighborhood bikeway treatment, on the bloc of Van Buren from 4th Street to 5th street since it is similarly configured? Or at least signages legalize the contraflow movement for bicyclists as existed on 8th Street.

G. Hennigan:

How will the Wittier multi-use trail connect across Blair?

H. Duncan :

Are the protected bike lanes" protected" with green paint or are they actually protect by concrete bollards?

K. Adams:

Please feel free to ignore this if you answered prior to the poll, my audio cut out. I am interested with how the path will connect from Whittier and/or Van Buren across Blair.

H. Duncan:

Will any of the remaining parking include protected bike hangars for bicyclists or will it only be barking of cars?

Q&A

G. Baker:

Will there be MBT signage installed along this segment?

Michael:

For the portion with the shared and multi-use pathway, will there be any paint indicating where the bikes are supposed to go? If so, where will they be directed?

E. Yeates:

What is the plan community engagement on this plan?

H. Duncan:

Do any of the intersections include raised crosswalks?

Michael:

Thanks for answering my previous question about Whittier Street, I understand road sharing signage, but how will the bikes know that they can ride on the multiuse pathway? Will it just be a sign?

Ric:

Not sure what led to the conclusion that parking occupancy on 4th was "lower," We experience full occupancy most of the time. Taking away parking will force those who live there to try to park on other streets, and parking is said to be taken away for both 4th and Whittier next to the park. As for the concern about pedestrians, there are sidewalks on both sides of 4th street which fully accommodate. Making a bike path in the street is not something that would cause folks to start waling in the street

G. Baker

On what basis could CSX require the district to add a canopy in DC's existing right of way?

Evan Yeats:

Just to respond: Chestnut Street impacts that the Metro property is currently for sale and could be developed into a property if not acquired by DDOT for this project. That would obviously have a significantly larger impact. If this neighbor has concerns, I urge them to contact me directly at 4b01@anc.anc.gov and I'd be happy to talk with them!

Ric:

Is it possible to level off the speed bumps?

NEXTDOOR

L. Lyons:

Hi. Just read the message to join the Metro Branch Trail meeting. I am unable to log in but wanted to add a few comments to the discussion. I hope that you would-be kind enough to forward to the committee members for consideration. First, the bike lanes on Piney Branch Rd are awful in design. Two lanes are allocated for cars going both ways and the lane closest to the curb lane are designated for bikes. Piney Branch Road handles a lot of traffic and is historically not made for the rush hour flow that it now carries every day during the weekday. In certain areas especially around Blair Rd Cedar Street and Butternut Street are narrow street in parts and do not permit any car to pass around another car that may be turning or are disabled. This is especially true for emergency vehicles that become blocked in traffic because there is no way to pass around any car or permit a car to get into the permanent barriers separating the bike lanes of the street. Some consideration must be given for this poor design flow.

Second, the large bike section at the intersection corners on Piney Branch Rd and butternut are too large. Turning vehicles have issues in making safe turns at corners and potentially enter oncoming traffic lanes. Thank you for forwarding my comments

G. Blount:

I listened to part of the meeting by phon. I think it's a bad idea to take away one lane of north bound Blair Road and add pedestrians, cyclists and cars to the remaining lane. There was head collision at Blair and Aspen in 2019 when a driver crossed the median. If there is another head on collision at Blair and Aspen, with the proposed shared bike lane pedestrians and bicyclists will be at risk. On Saturday I was at the intersection of Blair and Piney Branch Road going North. I was stopped at the red light. I saw a car on the other side of the intersection drive from south bound lane into the north bound lane, drive past four cars and take on to piney branch road towards Takoma Elementary. The current congestion on Blair Rd is already inducing drivers to make bad or dangerous decisions. The closure of Blair Rd and 5th street has made lines of traffic longer. I believe Blair Rd should not be altered in the way that has been planned
Thanks

L. Lyons:

I agree with you. I have seen many accidents at this intersection. I always wait a few seconds or more at the light before proceeding on Aspen crossing Blair Rd because of cars and bicyclist speeding thru the intersection in an effort to catch the light. I am also concerned about the one-way street. This forces buses to proceed on Butternut St to Blair Rd and make a very hard left turn to proceed on the Takoma Metro station. I have seen buses block the entire intersection north and south bound because of backed up stopped cars during rush hour. This is not safe and again impedes the flow of traffic.

PLATFORM	COMMUNITY QUESTIONS/COMMENTS
NEXTDOOR	<p>G. Blount:</p> <p>On a different topic I think DDOT should consider putting rocker strips or a bump at Blair and Eastern Avenue intersection. Most people don't stop at that intersection. Drivers tend to stop at the Blair Geranium intersection but sometimes run that stop sign too. As a longtime resident of the area, this is desperately needed</p>

PLATFORM	COMMUNITY QUESTIONS/COMMENTS
POST MEETING (EMAIL)	<p>Church:</p> <p>Met Branch Planning Team,</p> <p>Great work. I'm enjoying the extension to Fort Totten. I bike daily on DC streets and trails.</p> <p>One strong suggestion on Segment 6 of the recently released options. Absolutely prefer to go with the Van Buren alternative over the Whittier Street alternative.</p> <p>Van Buren crossing at Blair has a red light and pedestrian crossing signal. Whittier Street does not and is dangerous as heck, just check out the broken car pieces often visible at the intersection. Van Buren is much safer for pedestrians and bikers.</p> <p>Van Buren crossing is the natural crossing for bikers coming south out of Maryland on Sandy Spring Road, which is the suggested route shown on the Capital Bikeshare map attached below. Also note the Capital Bikeshare kiosk is pretty much at the corner of Van Buren and 3rd Street NW.</p> <p>Of the Van Buren alternatives, I recommend the contraflow protected bike lane, which you have identified as the "community's preference based on survey data."</p> <p>Give the people what they want: the Van Buren alternative with contraflow protected bike lane. It's the alternative that leads right into the heart of the park activities (baseball, basketball, spray park, etc), complements Capital Bikeshare kiosk and recommended bike route, and because of the red light crossing at Blair is the safest alternative, which is most important and in keeping with Vision Zero DC.</p>

**POST MEETING
(EMAIL)****Jeff S:**

Hi Michael and Samer,

Thank you for tonight's presentation on the Blair Rd. to Piney Branch portion of the Metropolitan Branch Trail. I'm excited for the planned installation of pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure in each segment.

I am writing to advocate for maximum safety improvements for the portions of the proposed trail that will touch Blair Rd. In my experience, cars race north- and southbound on Blair Rd. through the Van Buren St. intersection (even, at times, through red lights). Hopefully, reducing vehicular travel to one northbound lane will help decrease speeds. I think that a safe transition from Blair Rd. to Van Buren and Whittier will be critical for pedestrian and cyclists' use and enjoyment of the trail. Mitigating measures at the Van Buren intersection may involve increased signage, increased time for crossing of Blair Rd., speed cameras, red light cameras, the protected two-way bike lane on Van Buren (which, I believe was a proposed alternative), or other interventions.

This stretch of Blair Rd. is in dire need of safety improvements--and I think the construction of the Metropolitan Branch Trail provides a great opportunity to make some of those improvements.

Thanks, again.

Kate A:

Hi there,

Thanks very much for the meeting tonight. I live at 4th & Aspen and use the trail to bike to work every day. Very excited to have it reach right to my corner, and enthusiastically support the build out as a protected bike lane. I understand the parking concerns but nonetheless think having safe and protected lanes for bikers is a bigger priority. Thanks again! You all rock.

Joe C:

To whom it may concern,

I would like to provide feedback on the proposal for the Metropolitan Branch Trail: Blair Road to Piney Branch Road Design:

Overall I am very pleased to see that this project is moving along, and I am eager to see it implemented. I am an avid cyclist, and I cannot wait to have better access to the MBT!

However, I am very concerned about the proposal for Segment 6. Specifically, the Whittier street alignment proposal. I live at the corner of Blair and Whittier, and as a cyclist, I would never take this route, even with the proposed changes. The natural, and much safer alternative is to follow the Van Buren street alignment.

**POST MEETING
(EMAIL)**

There are many benefits to the Van Buren street alignment that are very clear to us residents. There is a light at Van Buren & Blair, and the intersection of 3rd and Van Buren is much calmer and easier to navigate than 3rd and Whittier. Van Buren street is already one way, low traffic, and provides access to the park, the sports fields, Coolidge HS, and the Aquatic Center. Whittier is a cut through street where cars race on and off Blair road and across 3rd street. The intersections of Whittier and 3rd and Blair are extremely dangerous, and confusing to motorists. They do not have signals, unlike Van Buren and Blair or Aspen and Blair. Accidents occur weekly. I have the security camera footage to prove it.

Additionally, a bike path along Whittier would dramatically change the feel of Whittier street. I feel that this impact to residents is being completely ignored. There is already heavy foot and bike traffic along Van Buren Street, and a bike path would fit in nicely. Along Whittier, foot traffic is light, and consists mostly of residents walking their dogs and young children to and from the park. A bike path would disrupt this relatively peaceful street. As a cyclist myself, I think it is a bad idea for the community to place the bike path on Whittier, especially with such a clearly better alternative on Van Buren Street.

Finally, I feel that the burden imposed on my property is disproportionate in the Whittier street proposal. I am one of the MBT's biggest supporters, but in this proposal, my property, and my property alone will be affected. I live on the corner of 3RD and Whittier and Blair Roads at 6625 3RD St. This proposal would force me to move my fence, decreasing the size of my yard which I meticulously maintain and improve. DDOT is proposing to remove part of my driveway and many of my plants including a cherry tree. My grape vines, which I have nurtured since I first bought the property, would be killed. When I have mentioned these concerns, I've essentially been strong-armed and threatened that DDOT could take more of my yard if they wanted. I am a DC property owner, taxpayer, federal government employee, and I am active in my community. I don't find this acceptable, and I will work tirelessly to make sure my concerns are addressed.

Additionally, the constant stream of commuter bike and foot traffic along my property will dramatically impact my privacy. I would be forced to install a tall fence around my property, which I cannot afford. Additionally, I've been told an audible crosswalk would be added to the corner of Blair and 3RD. I have lived next to audible crosswalks, and I find them intolerable. The noise is incessant. This may seem like a very minor concern, but how would you, whoever is reading this, feel if the city were to install a beeping crosswalk outside your bedroom window, that you have to wake up to and go to bed to every single day?!

If the community finds that the Whittier street proposal is somehow preferable to the Van Buren street proposal, I would like DDOT to make appropriate accommodations to alleviate all of these impacts to my property.

Thank you for your careful consideration!

**POST MEETING
(EMAIL)****Flona K:**

Good afternoon,
I am writing about the Metropolitan Branch Trail Blair Road to Piney Branch Road design.

I am excited about the MBT in my neighborhood, and I love biking. I have a few concerns, however, about the Segment 6 Whittier street alignment proposal. I highly encourage the MBT Committee to pursue the safer alternative of the Van Buren street alignment instead of the Whittier Street alignment.

There is a stoplight at Van Buren & Blair while there is no stoplight at Whittier Street creating a very dangerous intersection for additional bike traffic. The intersection is much calmer and easier to navigate than 3rd and Whittier. Van Buren street is already one-way, low traffic. Van Buren provides convenient access to the park, the sports fields, Coolidge HS, and the Aquatic Center, all common destinations for community members. Cars race on and off Blair road and across 3rd street at Whittier creating a dangerous intersection where many accidents occur. There are no signals on Whittier, unlike Van Buren and Blair or Aspen and Blair.

There is already heavy foot and bike traffic along Van Buren Street, and a bike path would fit in nicely. Along Whittier, foot traffic is light, and consists mostly of residents walking their dogs and young children to and from the park. A bike path would disrupt this relatively peaceful street. Van Buren Street is clearly the superior option.

I am very concerned about the effect on my property of the Whittier proposal, too.

I live on the corner of 3rd Street, Whittier Street and Blair Road at 6625 3rd St. The Whittier Street proposal would force me to move my fence, decreasing the size of my yard. Trees, plants and bushes that I work hard to maintain would have to be removed and destroyed. I am concerned about my privacy with the constant stream of commuter bike and foot traffic along my property. I would be forced to install a tall fence around my property, at my own expense, which is extremely costly.

An audible crosswalk would be added to the corner of Blair and 3rd, too, which is extremely obnoxious.

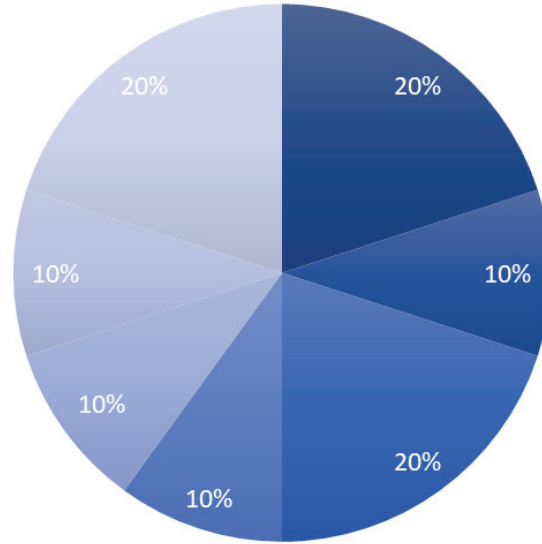
I strongly urge DDOT to pursue the Van Buren Street alignment option. I would also like DDOT to make appropriate accommodations to alleviate the impacts to my property if in the worst case, DDOT decides to opt for the Whittier Street alignment. For example: moving the path to the north side of Whittier Street or extending the path into the street or shrinking the tree box instead of extending the bike path into our yard.

Thank you for your careful consideration.

TITLE VI

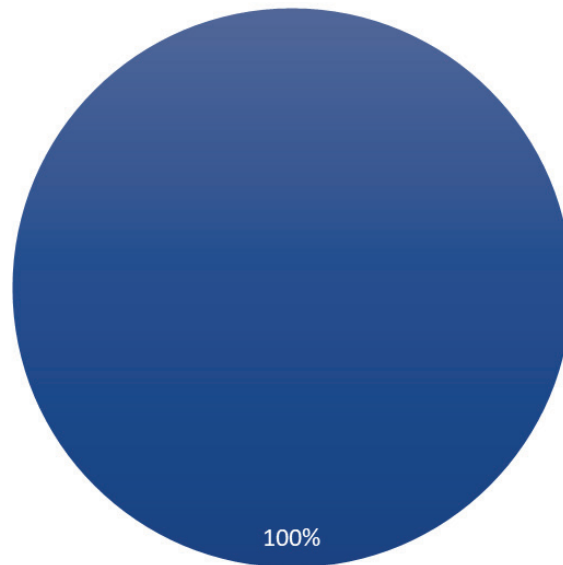
Towards the end of the meeting all Web EX attendees had the opportunity take a live poll. The results can be viewed in the pie graph below.

MEETING COMMUNICATION



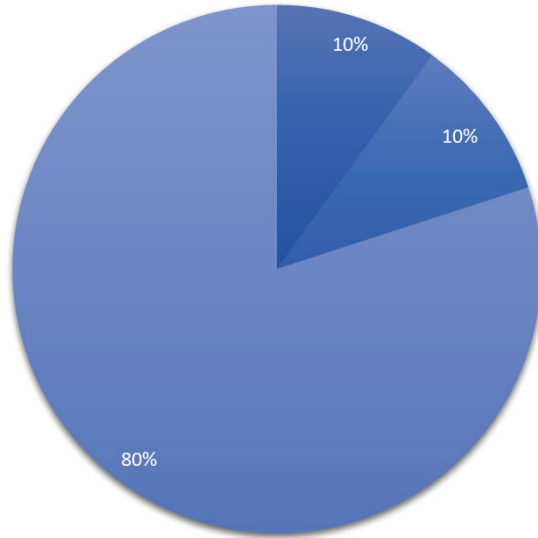
- DDOT Website (2)
- Flyer (1)
- Facebook (0)
- Project Website (2)
- Blog (0)
- Listserv (1)
- Postcard (0)
- ANC (1)
- Email (1)
- Twitter (2)

LANGUAGE



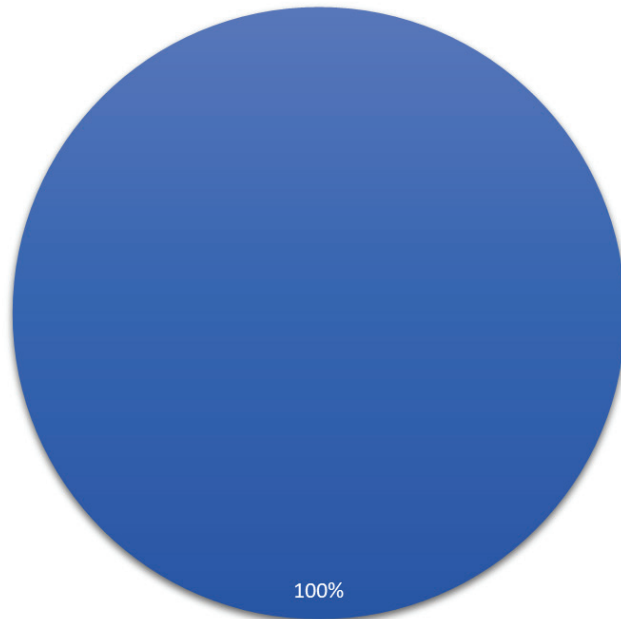
- English (26)
- Chinese (0)
- Other (0)
- Amharic (0)
- French (0)
- Vietnamese (0)
- Spanish (0)
- Korean (0)

RACE/ETHNICITY



■ American Indian/Alaskan Native (0) ■ African-American (1) ■ Asian/Pacific Islander (0)
■ Caucasian (8) ■ Hispanic (0) ■ Other (0)

CONVIENENT MEETING ACCESSIBILITY



■ Yes (12) ■ No (0)