

Tabor to Platte Rail to Trail Feasibility Study

Public Involvement Report

First Phase

February through April 2025

July 1, 2025

Key Findings and Strategies for Engaging the Public



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ON THE COVER: An open house was held in Lake Andes on Thursday, March 6, 2025.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this public involvement report is to summarize the approach to, and results of, engaging the public for the Tabor to Platte Rail to Trail Feasibility Study (Study). The approach to public involvement was reviewed by a Study Advisory Team (SAT) consisting of members listed on the following page. Public input resulted in key findings that will be used to support the Study's recommendations and implementation scenarios, as shown in Figure A.1.

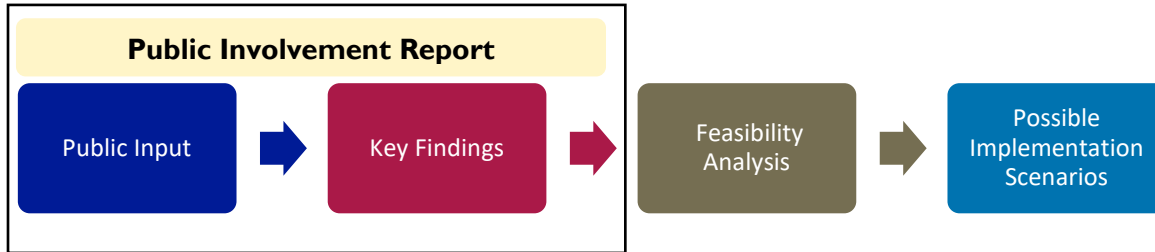


Figure A.1. The Study process begins with public input that informs key findings. These will then lead to the Study's feasibility analysis and possible implementation scenarios.

There were 871 participant interactions that resulted in recorded input:

- 12 attendees at a kickoff Study Advisory Team meeting (Strategy 1)
- 143 attendees at seven open houses (Strategy 2)
- 660 general surveys (Strategy 3)
- 22 town maps (Strategy 4)
- 34 agricultural landowner/tenant surveys (Strategy 5)

KEY FINDINGS

- 1) **The top reasons people are opposed to a trail are for loss of privacy, poor use of public funds, crime, and impacts to farming.** Survey respondents reported their top reasons for opposing a trail were about a loss of privacy and other rights for adjacent landowners, a poor use of public taxpayer funds, and concerns about possible crime (Figures A.19 and A.29). Impacts to farming, particularly due to the frequency of cattle pastures on both sides of the rail corridor, was another top reason for opposition (Figure A.19 and Strategy E results).
- 2) **The top reasons people support a trail are for safety, outdoor access, health, and economic development.** Survey respondents reported their top reasons for supporting a trail were about giving people a safe place to bike or walk, increasing recreational and outdoor access opportunities along a state-owned corridor, and providing a place to get exercise and improve health (Figure A.18). Increased economic development and tourism was another top reason for support (Figures A.18 and A.28).
- 3) **Property owners adjacent to the rail corridor who live in the country are overwhelmingly opposed to the possibility of a trail.** Of the 98 respondents who reported to live adjacent to the possible trail and expressed their position, 84% were very opposed or somewhat opposed, while 13% were very supportive or somewhat supportive (Figure A.9). Overall survey respondents who live in the country were also more likely to express opposition. 78% of those who live in the country said they were very opposed to the trail. Conversely, those who live in town were more likely to be supportive of a trail (Figure A.11).
- 4) **Local residents are split in their support about the possibility of a trail.** Of the 296 respondents who reported their zip code the same as a zip code containing the study corridor, 48% were very supportive or somewhat supportive of a trail, while 44% were very opposed or somewhat opposed (Figure A.14). Support is highest in the Platte and Tabor zip codes, while it is lowest in Dante and Lake Andes zip codes (Figure A.15).

- 5) **There is overall support for the possibility of a trail.** 68% of respondents to the general survey were very supportive or somewhat supportive of a trail, while 27% were very opposed or somewhat opposed (Figure A.7). However, a significant portion of respondents were not from the local area. 14% were from outside of South Dakota (Figure A.12), while 40% of South Dakota respondents were from a zip code that does not encompass the railroad corridor (Figure A.13).

STRATEGIES FOR ENGAGING COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Engagement strategies were created to be convenient and offered in a variety of locations and formats. This included a Study Advisory Team of stakeholders (Strategy 1), open houses in communities along the railroad corridor (Strategy 2), general surveys in online and paper formats (Strategy 3), town maps (Strategy 4), and agricultural landowner/tenant surveys (Strategy 5).

Strategy 1: Study Advisory Team

A Study Advisory Team (SAT) has been formed to guide the study through completion. The SAT is comprised of representative parties of the SDDOT, the City of Platte, the City of Tyndall, Bon Homme County, Charles Mix County, Goose Lake Township, Lone Tree Township, the Friends of Tabor to Platte Rail to Trail LLC, the Yankton Sioux Tribe, the SD Railroad Board, and the FHWA. Members of the SAT are:

Representative (A = Attended)	Organization or Interest Group
Chad Babcock (A)	South Dakota Department of Transportation – Environmental Office
Katrina Burckhard	South Dakota Department of Transportation – Project Development
Evelyn Dalldorf	South Dakota Department of Transportation – Road Design
Lance DeMers (A)	Federal Highway Administration – South Dakota Division
Jack Dokken (A)	South Dakota Department of Transportation – Air, Rail, & Transit
Mike Elsberry	City of Tyndall
Robert Flying Hawk	Yankton Sioux Tribe
Jason Gant (A)	Charles Mix County
Steve Gramm (A)	South Dakota Department of Transportation – Project Development
Logan Gran (A)	South Dakota Department of Transportation – Project Development
Roger Huizinga (A)	Friends of the Tabor to Platte Rail to Trail
John Keyes	South Dakota Department of Transportation – Right of Way
David Kotab (A)	Lone Tree Township
Larry Lucas (A)	Friends of the Tabor to Platte Rail to Trail
Keith Porter (A)	Goose Lake Township
Greg Rothschadl	South Dakota Department of Transportation – Yankton Area
Steve Scharnweber	South Dakota Railroad Board
Ed Van Gerpen (A)	Bon Homme County
Ken VanZee (A – Shauna Meyerink)	City of Platte

(A) Indicates attendance at the study kickoff meeting

The first strategy for receiving input was at the study's kickoff meeting with the SAT, which took place on Tuesday, August 27, 2024, at the Charles Mix County Courthouse. The kickoff meeting gave the SAT members with varying interests the opportunity to share their input on the trail issues.

The following topics were discussed at the kickoff meeting, many of which informed the content of the open houses (Strategy 2), general surveys (Strategy 3), town maps (Strategy 4), and agricultural landowner/tenant surveys (Strategy 5):

- Local preferences for hunting and equestrian use along a trail
- How the rail corridor would be assessed (e.g., drones, private property access)
- The purpose of a 500' buffer for environmental assessment on a 100' wide railroad right-of-way
- How private property may be affected during trail construction

- The age and condition of the bridges
- ADA accessibility requirements for trails
- Local funding requirements for federally funded trails
- The railbanked status of segments of the corridor
- Possible trail sponsor arrangements
- The meaning of rail corridor abandonment
- The nature of the legal actions currently in process around the railbanked portion of the rail corridor
- The status of the Platte end of the rail corridor
- Alignment evaluation within towns
- How rail-to-trail feasibility will be determined
- Past efforts of the Friends group in trail planning
- The State Railroad Board is the determining authority to approve a trail (i.e., they decide yes or no). The Governor has to concur on everything the Railroad Board says. The feasibility study will give the Railroad Board the information they need to make that decision.
- Liability responsibilities for bicycling along roads and trails
- The development of alignment options through towns before public review
- Bridge replacements versus alternative alignments, and the general need to avoid alignment alternatives between towns (except for the end of the line near Platte)
- The health and economic benefits of a trail
- The private property owner concerns of a trail
- Current political positions on the trail
- Trail maintenance costs and responsibilities
- Possible future rail use of the corridor
- Benefits of trail use and maintenance for future rail use
- Drainage issues along rail-to-trail corridors
- Access to electronic parcel data
- The timing of public engagement
- Information on bridge construction needs and economic development benefits for the public during an early round of engagement
- Map options for public engagement

Strategy 2: Open Houses

Open houses were held in seven municipalities along the railroad corridor, with 143 attendees recorded on the sign-in sheets (Appendix A):

Town	Location	Date/Time	# of Attendees
Tabor	Tabor Community Center (138 N Lidice St.)	Tuesday, March 4, 2025, 10:30 a.m. to 12 (noon)	17
Tyndall	Tyndall City Auditorium (1609 Laurel St.)	Tuesday, March 4, 2025, 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.	11
Dante	Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish Hall (416 Haines St.)	Wednesday, March 5, 2025, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.	20
Wagner	Wagner School Cafeteria (101 Walnut Ave. SW)	Wednesday, March 5, 2025, 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.	26
Lake Andes	Lake Andes Community Center (207 Main St.)	Thursday, March 6, 2025, 10:30 a.m. to 12 (noon)	15

Geddes	Geddes Multi-Purpose Center (409 Michigan Ave.)	Thursday, March 6, 2025, 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.	19
Platte (Figure A.3)	Platte Community Building (301 Main St.)	Thursday, March 6, 2025, 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.	35
Total			143

An open house was scheduled for Avon on the evening of Tuesday, March 4, 2025, but was cancelled due to inclement weather. In addition, the project team met with the Finance Officer of the Town of Ravinia on Wednesday, March 5, 2025.

Open houses were advertised on the [project website](#), a press release, the Friends of the Tabor to Platte Rail to Trail Facebook page, and [meeting notices](#) (Appendix B) in the following publications:

- Avon Clarion
- Charles Mix County News
- Dakota Action Rocket
- Lake Andes Wave
- Platte Enterprise
- Scotland Journal
- Tyndall Tribune & Register
- Wagner Announcer
- Wagner Post

Social media post language was also sent to the Finance Officers of Tabor, Tyndall, Avon, Wagner, Lake Andes, Geddes, and Platte.

Open house attendees were given Study information on [display boards](#) (Appendix C) that answered the following questions:

1. What is the history of the railroad corridor?
2. What is railbanking?
3. Why is a trail feasibility study being completed?

4. How could a trail be funded?
5. How is a trail constructed within a railroad corridor? (Figure A.2)
6. Who would maintain a trail?
7. What does the law say about landowner protection against liability lawsuits?
8. Where are there other rural, agricultural Midwest trails built within railroad corridors?



Figure A.2. An example of a display board available at the open houses (Appendix C)..

Attendees were encouraged to give feedback on general surveys (Strategy C), town maps (Strategy D), and agricultural landowner/tenant surveys (Strategy E), the results of which are described in subsequent sections. While no presentation was given at the open houses, a presentation was made available on the project website (Appendix D). Members of the project team were also available for discussions with the public. Topics raised by attendees in these discussions included:

Tabor

- Buried electric utilities under the railroad and associated power line easements
- Preference to keep wooded areas around the rail corridor
- Idea of pairing a trail project with an internet broadband project
- Rail car activity stopped after the 2019 flood when the Snatch Creek bridge was damaged

Tyndall

- Ideas for connecting routes to the rail corridor throughout Tyndall
- Interest in relocating the old train depot back to the rail corridor
- Lack of weed control along the rail corridor
- Rail activity between Tabor and Tyndall, including opening/closing livestock gates

Dante

- Confusion about the current owner/s of the elevator
- Temporary easements from landowners for trail construction
- Current pesticide use
- Enforcement of possible crime along a trail, including trespassing, ATV use, drugs, arson
- Lack of users for a trail
- Waste of funds with other road and bridge priorities, preference for private funding

- Fees for use, and concern those wouldn't cover maintenance costs
- Changes in rail corridor/road intersection grading since rail became inactive

Wagner

- Positive experiences on the Mickelson Trail
- Negative experience on Cowboy Trail due to poor maintenance
- Safety around livestock
- Damaged section of the existing trail in Lake Andes
- Desire to have a trail to provide a safe place for kids to bike
- Health, economic development, and tourism benefits
- Positive memories of the construction of the Lake Andes trail for kids walking to school
- Alternative routes along roads if rail corridor isn't feasible
- Place for children to bike and walk
- Treaties and agreements with the Yankton Sioux Tribe
- Livestock fencing
- Enforcement
- Naming rights of a trail

Ravinia

- Maintenance
- Enforcement

Lake Andes

- Concerns from the Farmers Coop elevator board
- Concerns about using township or county roads as alternate routes
- Possible trespassing and littering by trail users
- Connection of the trail from Tabor to Yankton
- Confusion about whether the trail would stay on the rail corridor or go around Lake Andes
- Concern about livestock being spooked by snowmobiles
- Enforcement of illegal ATV use on a trail
- Past idea in the 1990's that the State of South Dakota would revert the corridor to landowners

Geddes

- Concern about alternate routes around the Wagner elevator being along routes used heavily by farm equipment
- Gun range next to rail corridor
- Example cattle underpass image looks too small/short
- Crime concerns of arson, sign damage, powerline vandalism
- Lack of enforcement officers in the area
- Charles Mix County application for a trail along County Road 49 south of Platte

Platte

- Confusion about liability and trespassing laws
- Lake Andes convenience store that might be located in the rail corridor
- Concern about policing ATVs
- Liability of trail users riding on gravel township roads
- Concern about paving gravel roads at trail crossings creating potholes
- Vacation of 277 Street by Platte Township
- Past related lawsuit: Meyerink vs. Northwestern Public Service



Figure A.3. The open house in Platte.

Strategy 3: General Surveys

Surveys for the general public asked questions about support, opposition, trail surface, Farmers Coop conflicts, livestock crossings, and demographics. An online survey link was posted on the [project website](#) and emailed to stakeholders. Paper surveys (Figure A.4) and [handouts](#) with links to the project website were made available at open houses and left at public locations such as libraries and City Halls. The online and paper survey questions were identical so that results could be merged. The raw results are available in Appendix E and F.

TABOR TO PLATTE RAIL TO TRAIL FEASIBILITY
STUDY SURVEY

3. Tell us about the **reasons you are opposed** to the idea of a trail. (Check all that apply)


- ☐ Could be a dangerous place for people to walk/run/bike/snowmobile
- ☐ Interferes with farming
- ☐ Is a poor use of public/private funds
- ☐ Might decrease property values
- ☐ Might increase crime by inviting outsiders
- ☐ Might increase liability risk for adjacent landowners
- ☐ Results in a loss of privacy for adjacent landowners
- ☐ State-owned corridor should revert to adjacent landowners
- ☐ Other:

4. What type of trail surface would you prefer? (Choose one)


☐ Asphalt:

☐ Concrete:


☐ Crushed Rock:



Rail trail in Lake Andes



Yankton Sioux Tribe trail in Lake Andes



Cowboy Trail in Ewing, NE
Credit: Google

☐ I don't have a preference


 SNYDER TOOLE
& ASSOCIATES
DESIGN

Figure A.4. The paper survey made available at each open house.

SURVEY METHOD

Respondents were encouraged to fill out the survey either online or on paper. 660 surveys were received. 88% (581) of surveys were received online and 12% (79) were received in a paper format (Figure A.5).

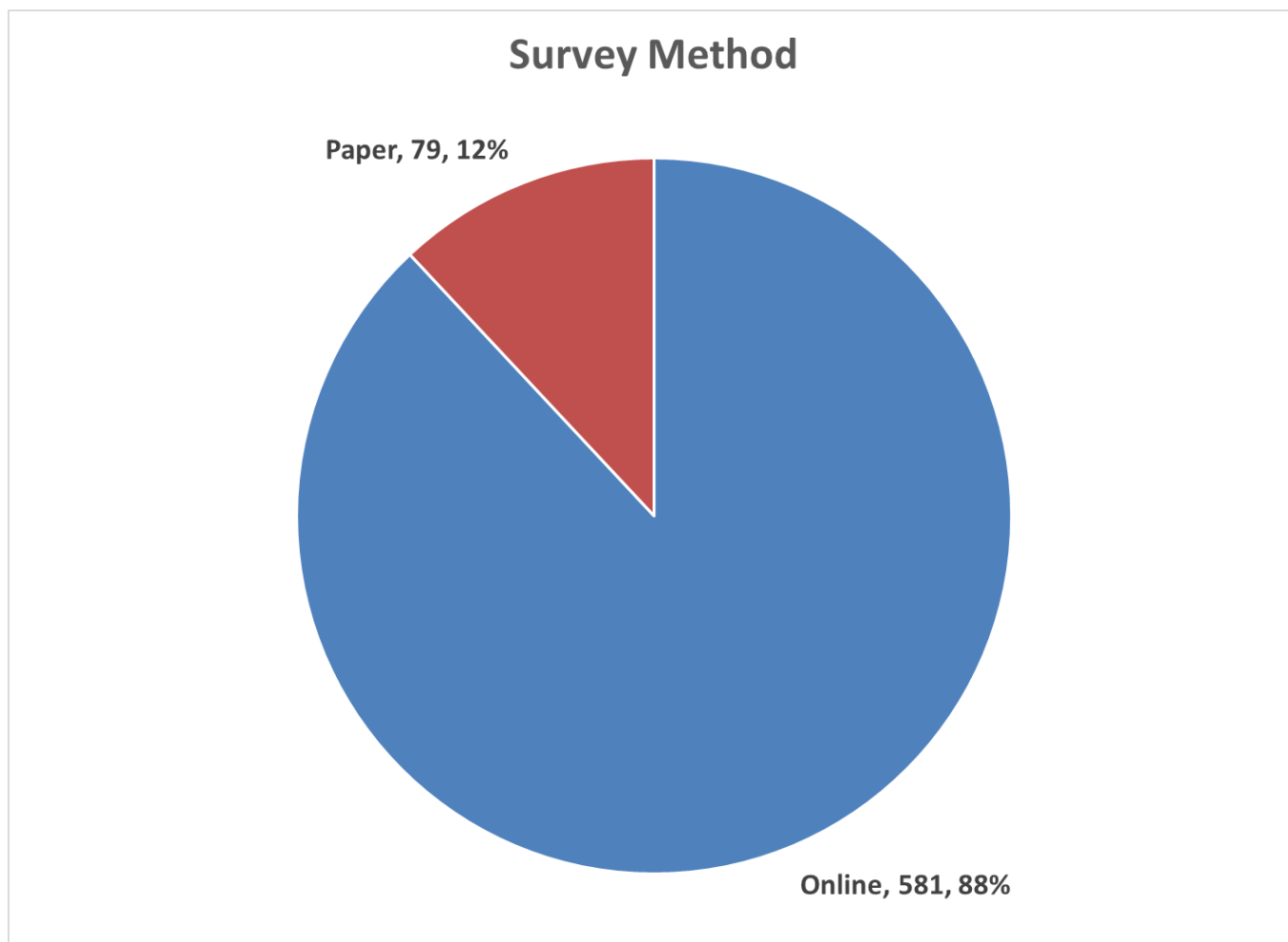


Figure A.5. The method by which respondents filled out the survey.

ONLINE SURVEY DATE

The online survey was open between February 11th and the end of April. 357 (61%) online surveys were received in February, 219 (38%) were received in March, and 5 (1%) were received in April (Figure A.6).

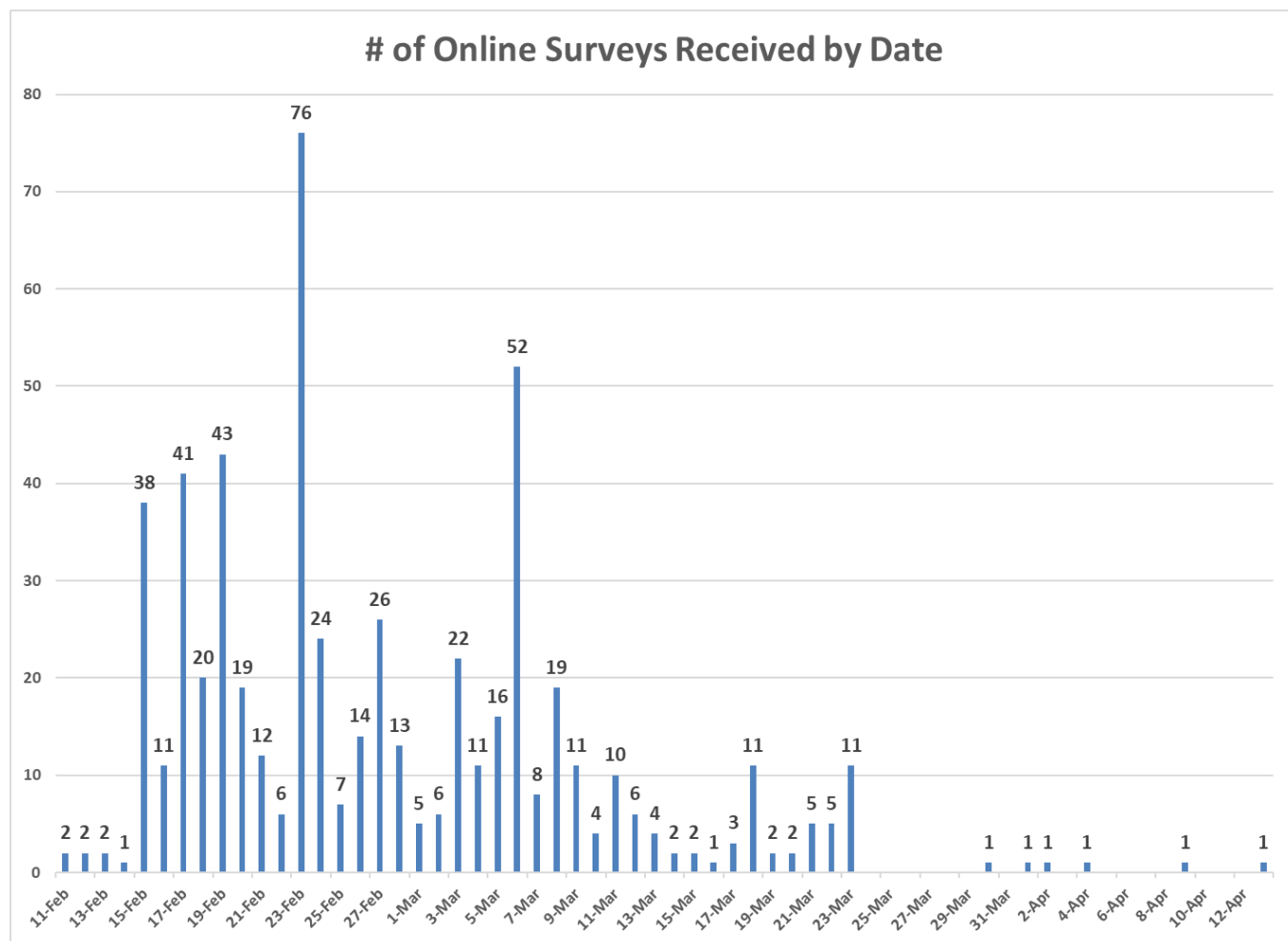


Figure A.6. The dates on which online surveys were submitted.

LEVEL OF SUPPORT OR OPPOSITION

650 respondents answered the following question about their support or opposition to the trail:

On a scale of 1 through 5, tell us about your current level of support or opposition to the idea of a trail on the railroad corridor between Tabor and Platte. (choose one)

- 412 (63%) answered 5 = I am very supportive of the trail
- 159 (24%) answered 1 = I am very opposed to the trail
- 33 (5%) answered 4 = I am somewhat supportive of the trail
- 29 (5%) answered 3 = I am neutral or undecided about the trail
- 17 (3%) answered 2 = I am somewhat opposed to the trail

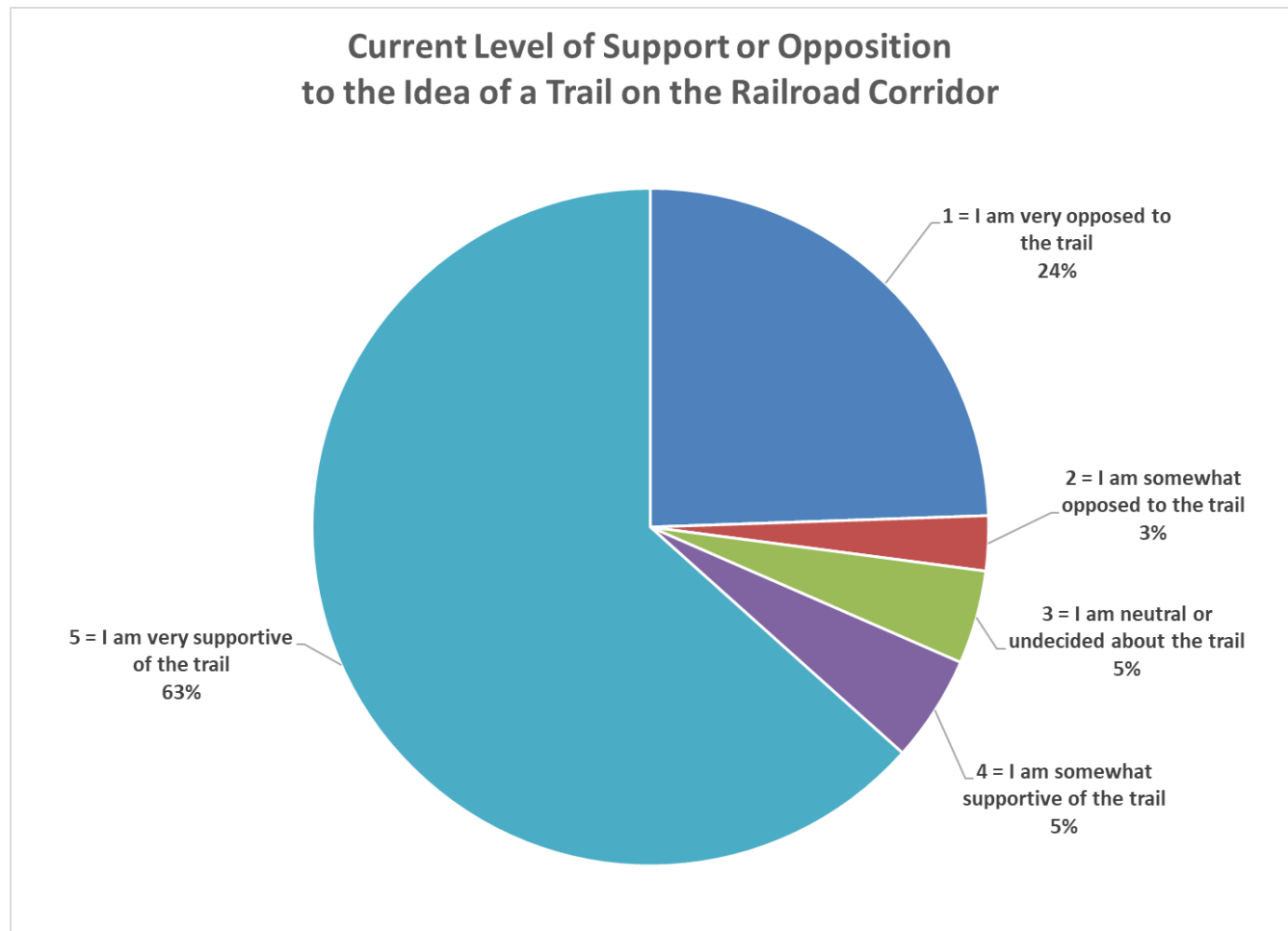


Figure A.7. The current level of support or opposition to the idea of a trail.

PROPERTY OWNERSHIP

Respondents were asked if they owned property immediately adjacent to the railroad corridor. Out of the 638 people who answered this question, 539 (84%) answered they did not own property. 99 (16%) answered they did own property (Figure A.8).

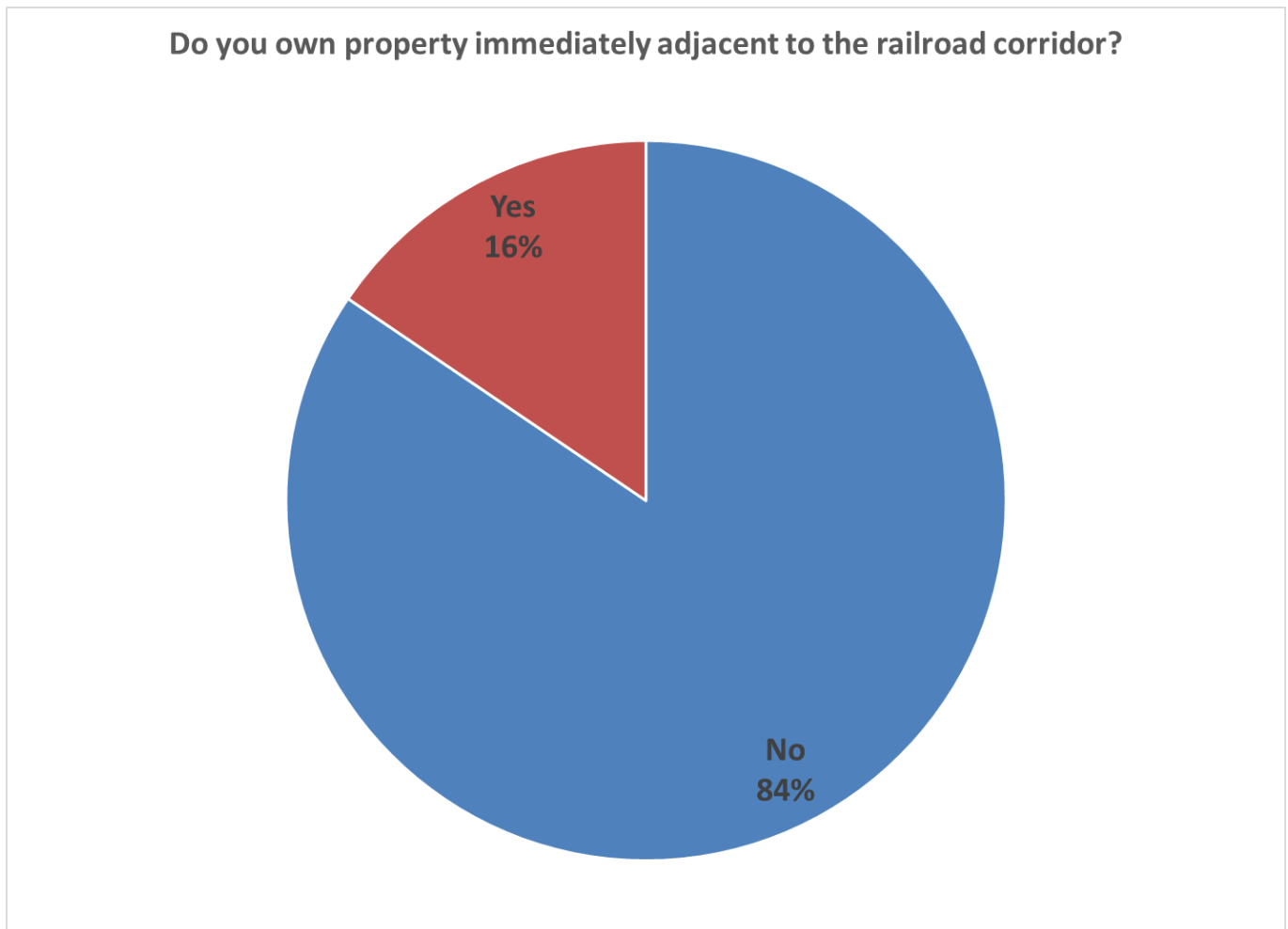


Figure A.8. Property ownership along the railroad corridor.

PROPERTY OWNER LEVEL OF SUPPORT OR OPPOSITION

98 respondents who own property along the railroad corridor answered the following question about their support or opposition to the trail:

On a scale of 1 through 5, tell us about your current level of support or opposition to the idea of a trail on the railroad corridor between Tabor and Platte. (choose one)

- 80 (82%) answered 1 = I am very opposed to the trail
- 10 (10%) answered 5 = I am very supportive of the trail
- 3 (3%) answered 4 = I am somewhat supportive of the trail
- 3 (3%) answered 3 = I am neutral or undecided about the trail
- 2 (2%) answered 2 = I am somewhat opposed to the trail

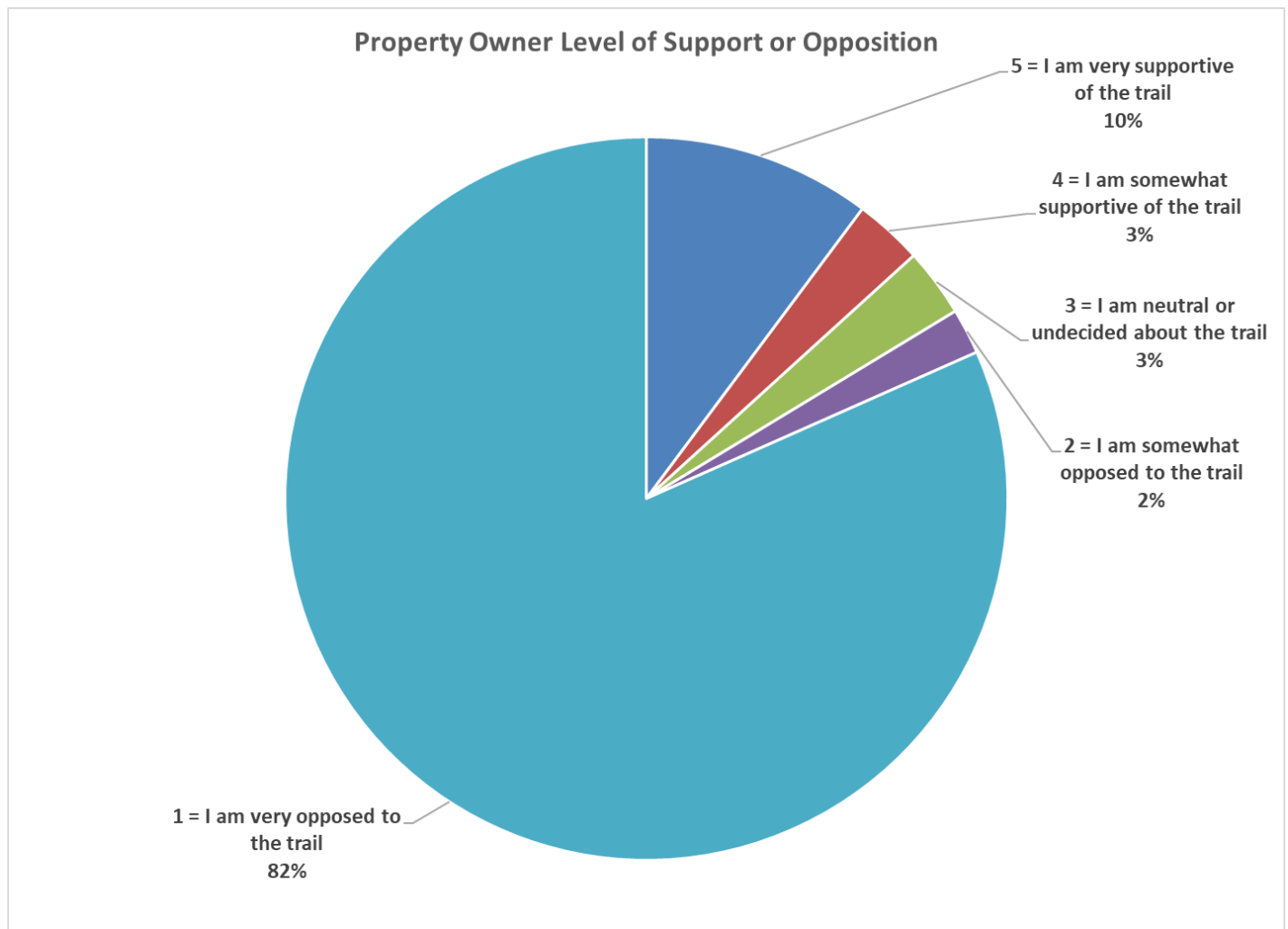


Figure A.9. Property owners' current level of support or opposition to the idea of a trail.

TOWN OR COUNTRY

Respondents were asked if they live in town or the country. Out of the 631 people who answered this question, 322 (51%) answered they live in town. 309 (49%) answered they live in the country (Figure A.10).

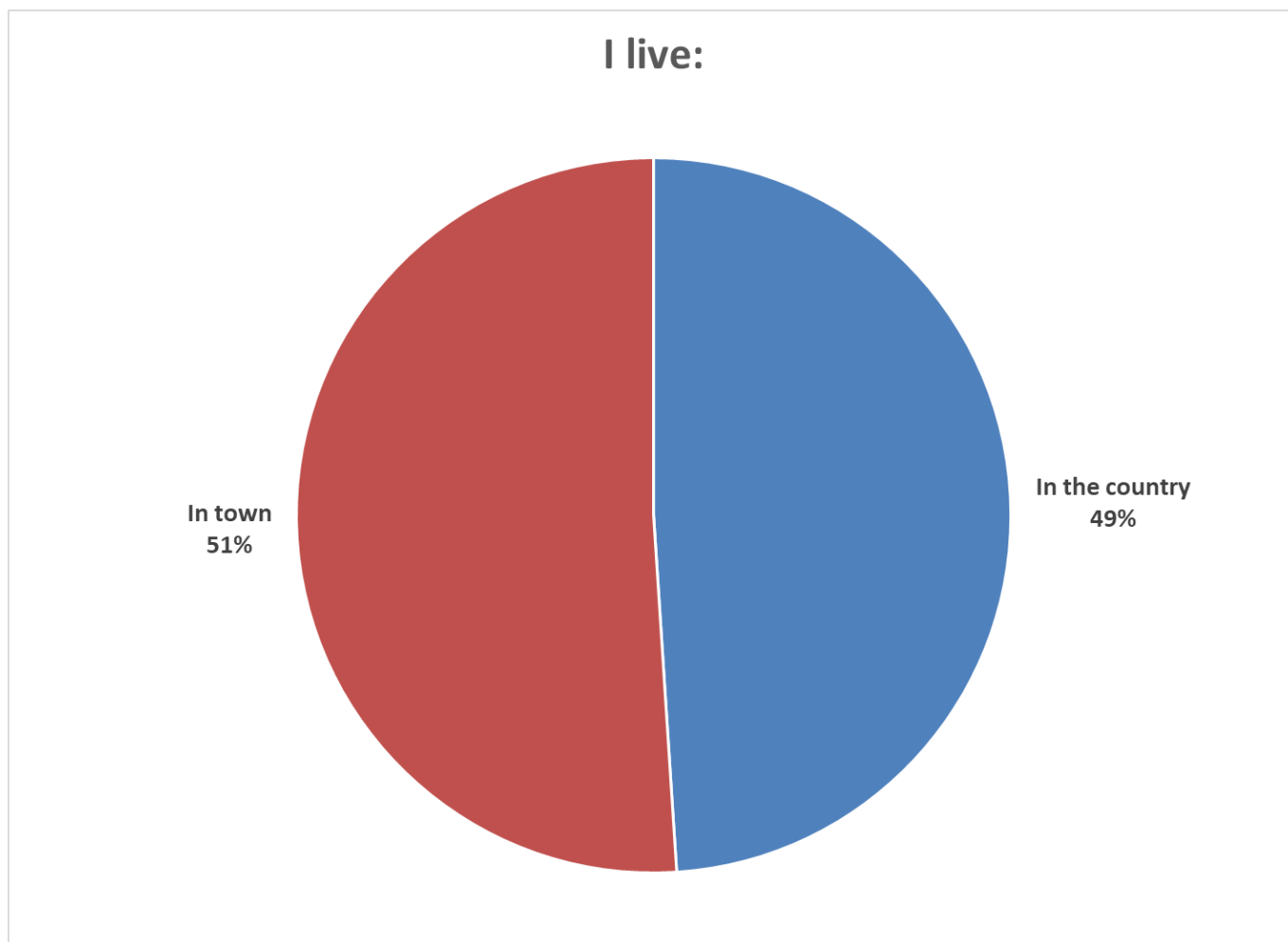


Figure A.10. Where respondents live.

TOWN OR COUNTRY LEVEL OF SUPPORT OR OPPOSITION

Respondents who were opposed to the idea of a trail were more likely to live in the country, while those who were supportive were more likely to live in town (Figure A.11):

- Out of 151 respondents who answered 1 = I am very opposed to the trail, 118 (78%) live in the country.
- Out of 398 respondents who answered 5 = I am very supportive of the trail, 246 (62%) live in town.

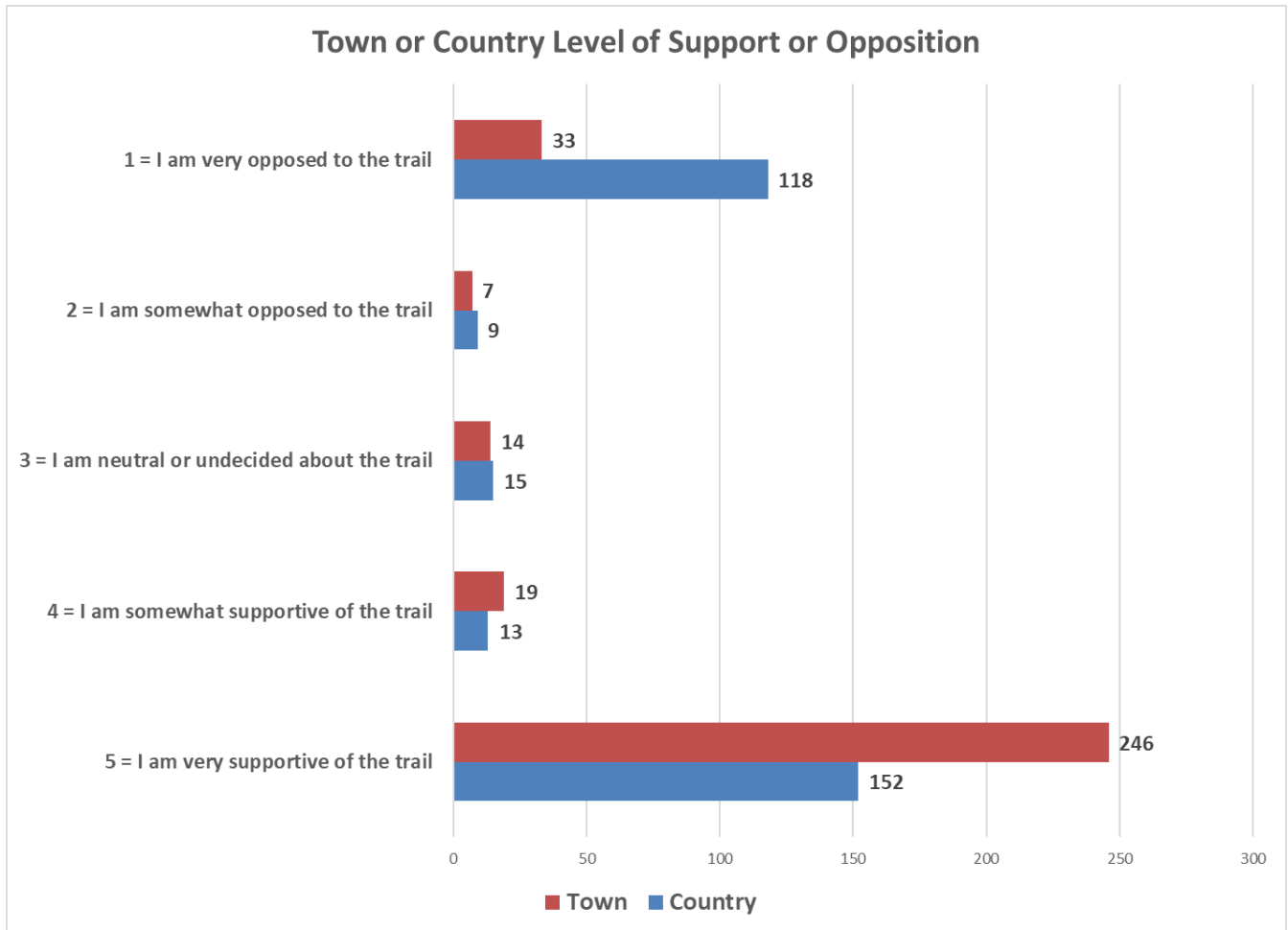


Figure A.11. Current level of support or opposition to the idea of a trail, by town or country.

ZIP CODE

601 respondents shared their zip code. 518 (86%) were from South Dakota, followed by:

- 35 (6%) from Iowa
- 14 (2%) from Nebraska
- 6 (1%) from Minnesota
- 4 (1%) from Colorado

Surveys from the other 15 states combined accounted for 4% of the total. Surveys from each of the remaining states individually made up less than 1% of all respondents (Figure A.12).

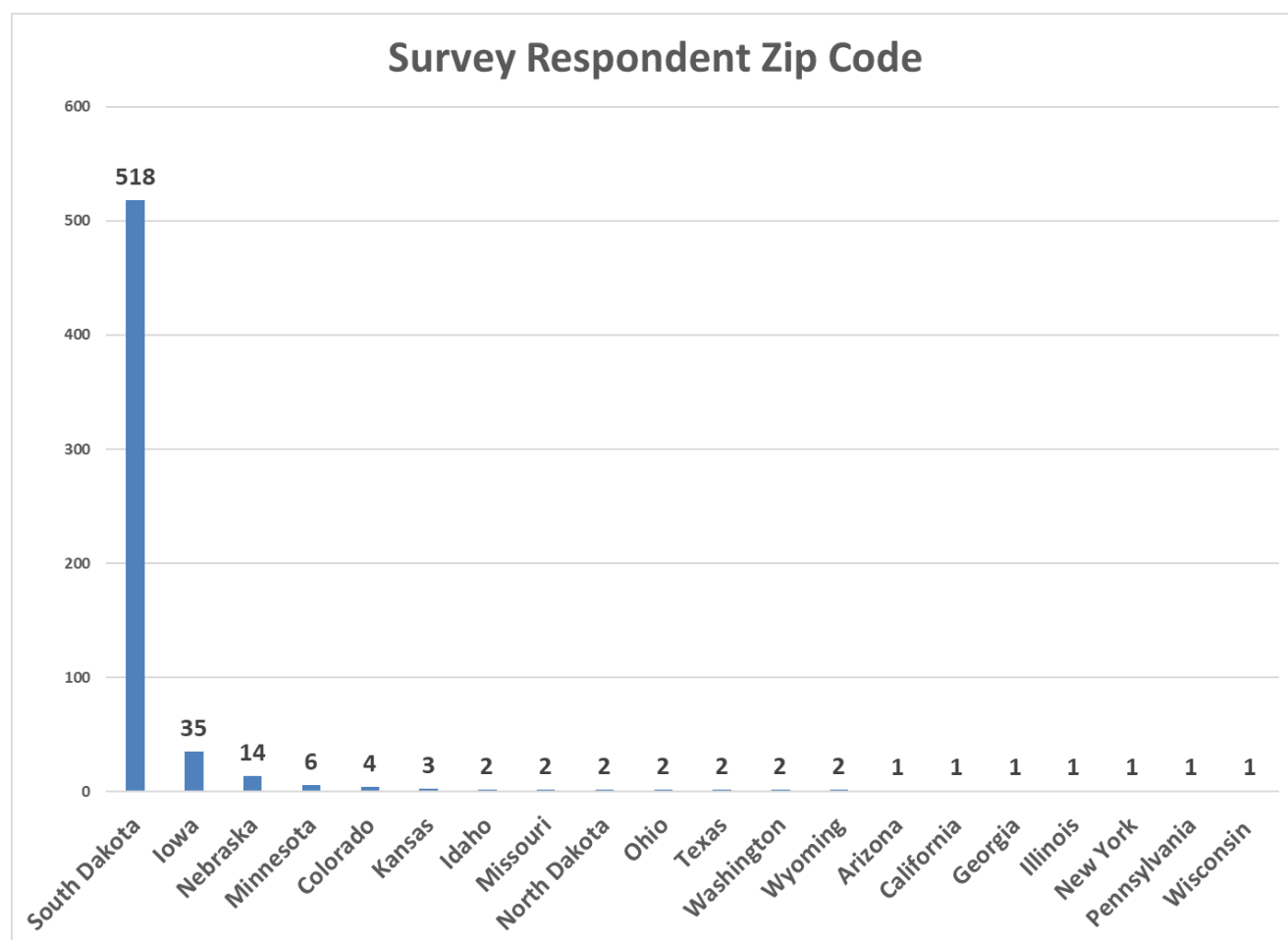


Figure A.12. Zip code of survey respondents by state.

Of the 518 survey respondents from South Dakota, 97 (19%) were from Platte, followed by:

- 50 (10%) from Wagner
- 34 (7%) from Sioux Falls
- 32 (6%) from Geddes
- 30 (6%) from Tyndall
- 29 (6%) from Dante
- 26 (5%) from Tabor
- 24 (5%) from Avon
- 24 (5%) from Lake Andes
- 24 (5%) from Yankton
- 20 (4%) from Mitchell
- 15 (3%) from Rapid City
- 9 (2%) from Vermillion
- 9 (2%) from Pickstown
- 8 (2%) from Pierre

Surveys from the other South Dakota zip codes represented 17% of the South Dakota total. Each remaining individual South Dakota zip code made up 1% or less of the South Dakota total (Figure A.13).

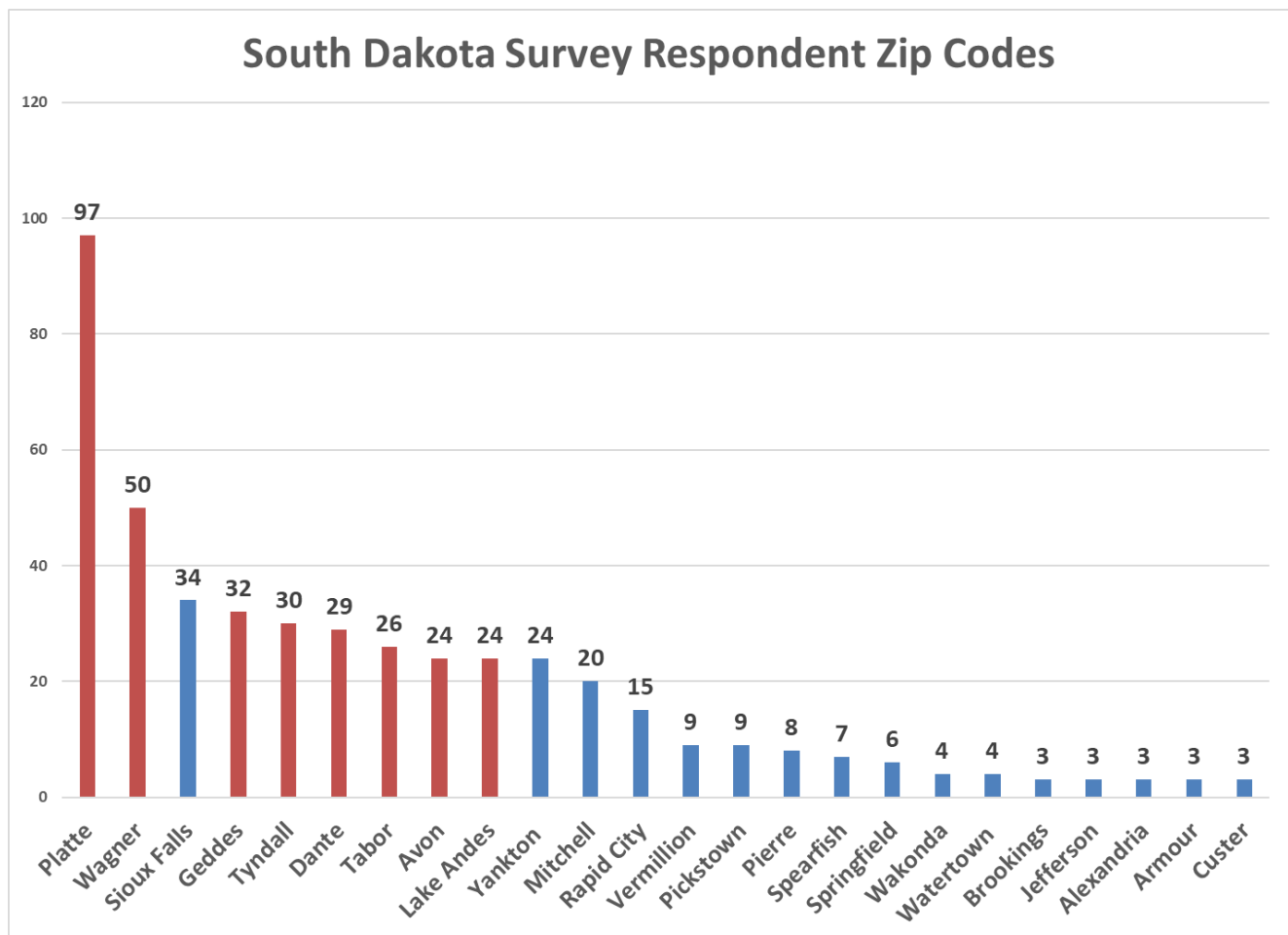


Figure A.13. Zip code of South Dakota survey respondents. Zip codes with one or two respondents are not shown in the chart. Bars highlighted in red are zip codes where the rail corridor is located.

LOCAL LEVEL OF SUPPORT OR OPPOSITION

Out of the respondents with a local zip code (i.e., Avon, Dante, Geddes, Lake Andes, Platte, Tabor, Tyndall, Wagner) who expressed their level or support or opposition to the trail, 128 (43%) were very supportive of the trail (Figure A.14). This was followed by:

- 119 (40%) who were very opposed to the trail
- 24 (8%) who were neutral or undecided about the trail
- 14 (5%) who were somewhat supportive of the trail
- 11 (4%) who were somewhat opposed to the trail

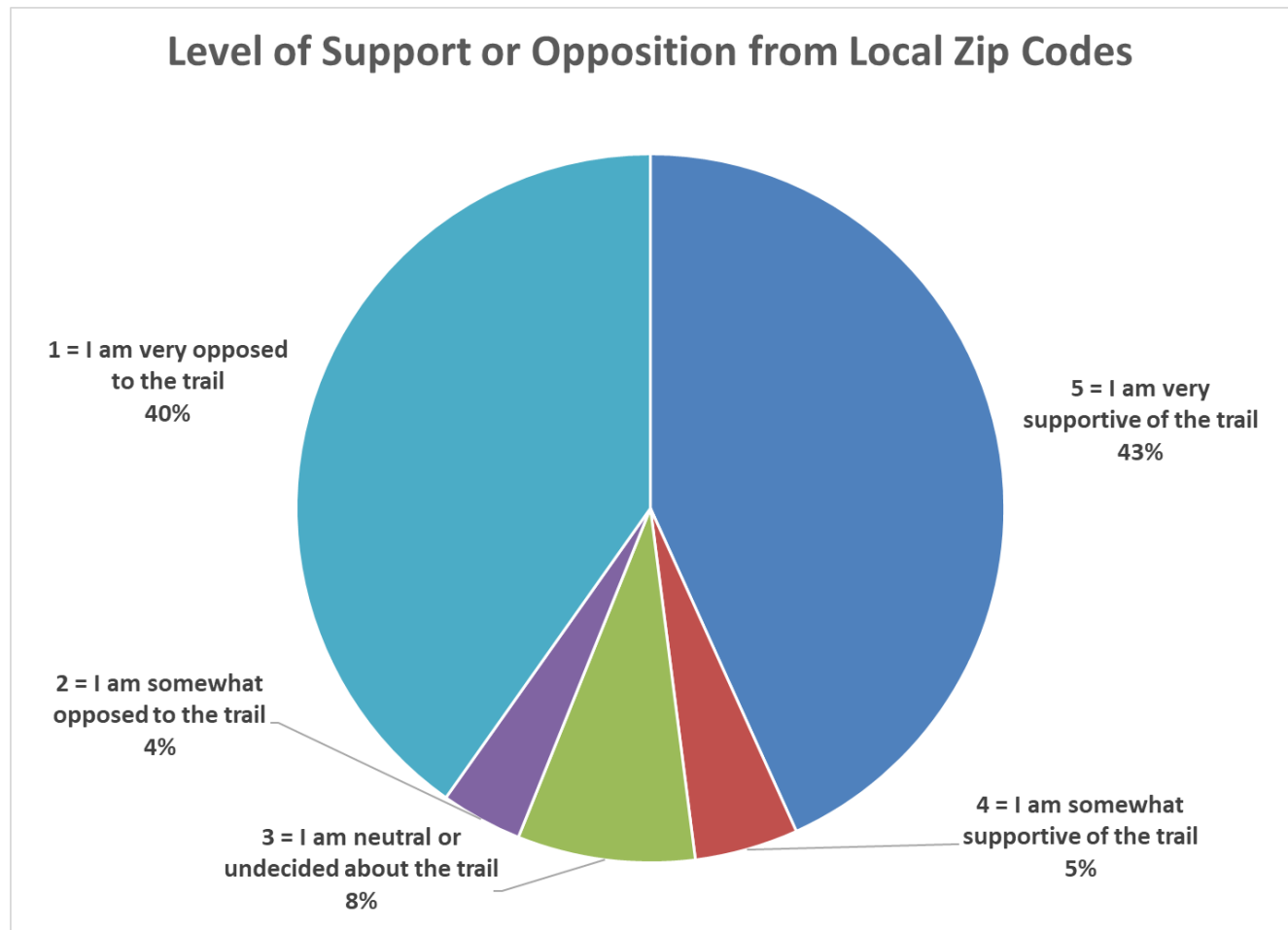


Figure A.14. Current level of support or opposition to the idea of a trail by respondents with a local zip code.

LEVEL OF SUPPORT OR OPPOSITION BY LOCAL ZIP CODE

Support for the idea of a trail was highest by survey respondents in Tabor and Platte, while opposition was highest in Dante and Lake Andes (Figure A.15):

Local town	5 = I am very supportive of the trail	4 = I am somewhat supportive of the trail	3 = I am neutral or undecided about the trail	2 = I am somewhat opposed to the trail	1 = I am very opposed to the trail	Total
Platte	63 (70%)	7 (8%)	5 (6%)	2 (2%)	13 (14%)	90 (100%)
Geddes	8 (26%)	2 (6%)	4 (13%)	1 (3%)	16 (52%)	31 (100%)
Lake Andes	5 (22%)	0 (0%)	1 (4%)	2 (9%)	15 (65%)	23 (100%)
Wagner	14 (29%)	2 (4%)	6 (12%)	4 (8%)	23 (47%)	49 (100%)
Dante	1 (4%)	1 (4%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	26 (93%)	28 (100%)
Avon	7 (30%)	1 (4%)	3 (13%)	0 (0%)	12 (52%)	23 (100%)
Tyndall	12 (44%)	0 (0%)	3 (11%)	1 (4%)	11 (41%)	27 (100%)
Tabor	18 (72%)	1 (4%)	2 (8%)	1 (4%)	3 (12%)	25 (100%)
Total	128	14	24	11	119	296

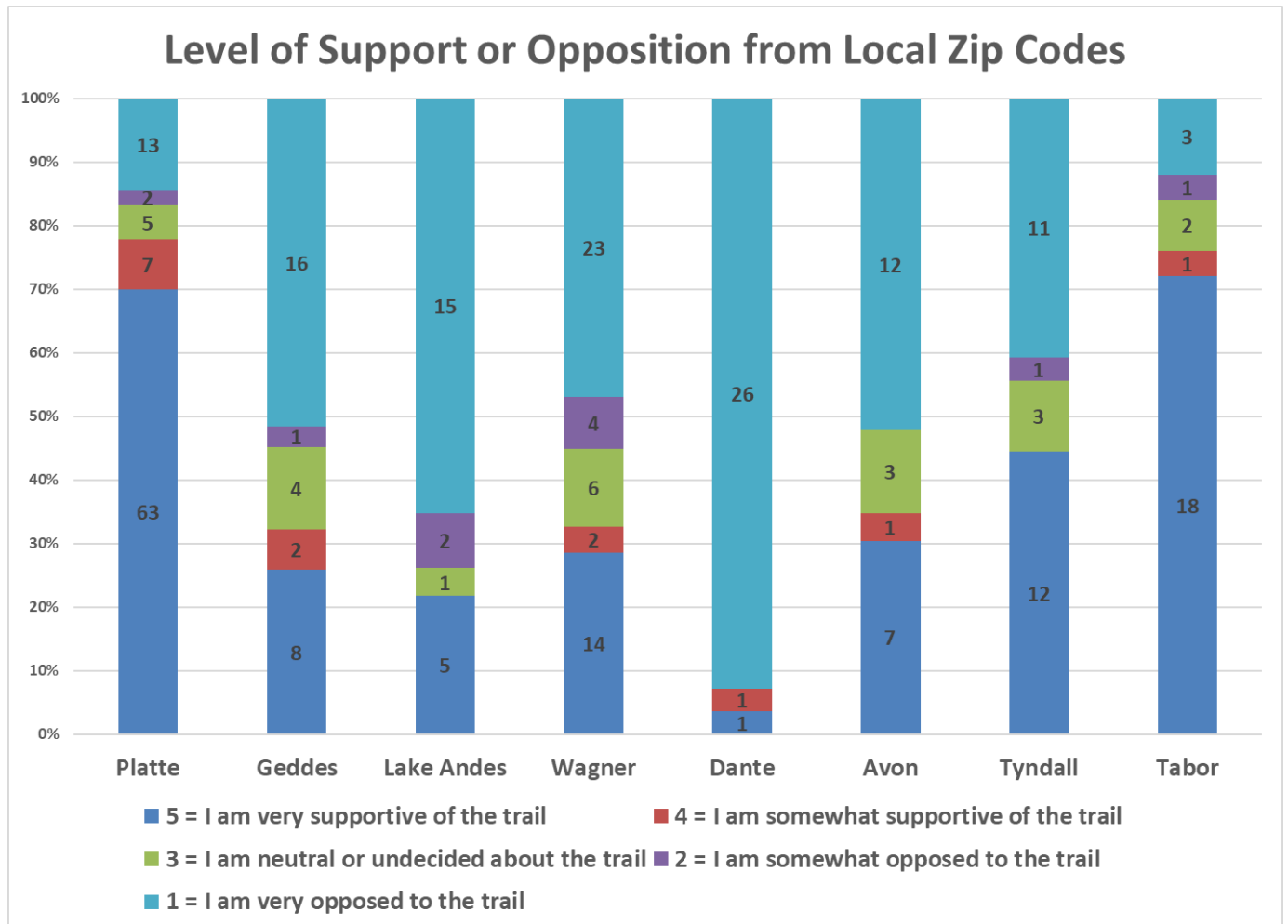


Figure A.15. Current level of support or opposition to the idea of a trail by respondents with a local zip code.

SURVEY PARTICIPATION COMPARED TO ZIP CODE POPULATION

Participation in the survey compared to the population of each zip code shows that participation was highest in Dante – 57329 and lowest in Lake Andes – 57356 (Figure A.16). Zip code boundaries around the railroad corridor are shown in Figure A.17.

Local Zip Code	City or Town Population (2020 Census)	Zip Code Population (2020 Census)	Number of Respondents to the Support/Opposition Survey Question	Percent of Respondents Compared to the Zip Code Population
57369 - Platte	1,296	2,685	90	3%
57342 - Geddes	156	490	31	6%
57356 - Lake Andes	710	2,074	23	1%
57380 - Wagner	1,490	3,062	49	2%
57329 - Dante	75	233	28	12%
57315 - Avon	586	1,012	23	2%
57066 - Tyndall	1,057	1,428	27	2%
57063 - Tabor	407	1,059	25	2%
Total	5,777	12,043	296	2%

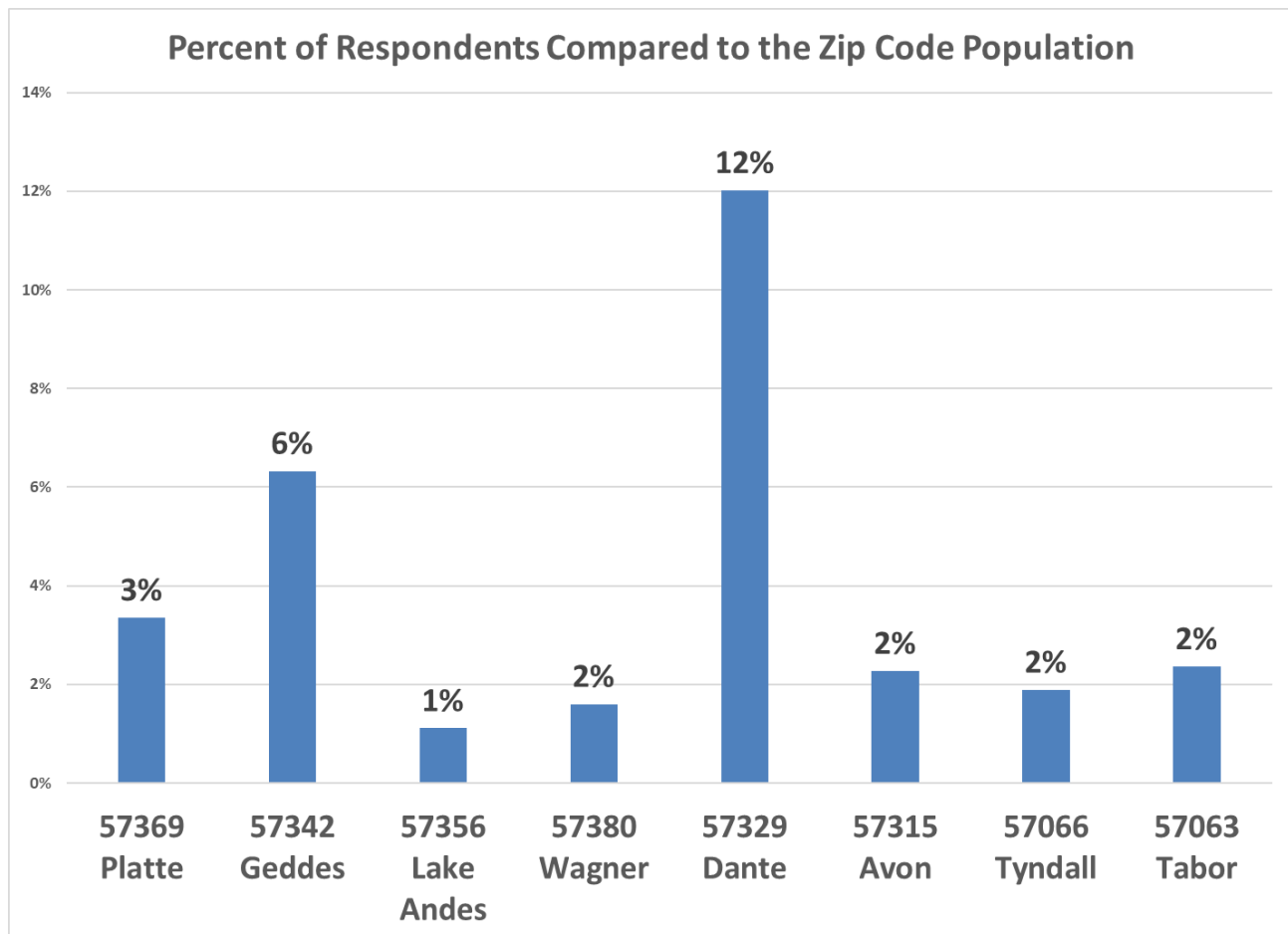


Figure A.16. Percentage of respondents who answered the support/opposition survey question compared to the zip code population.

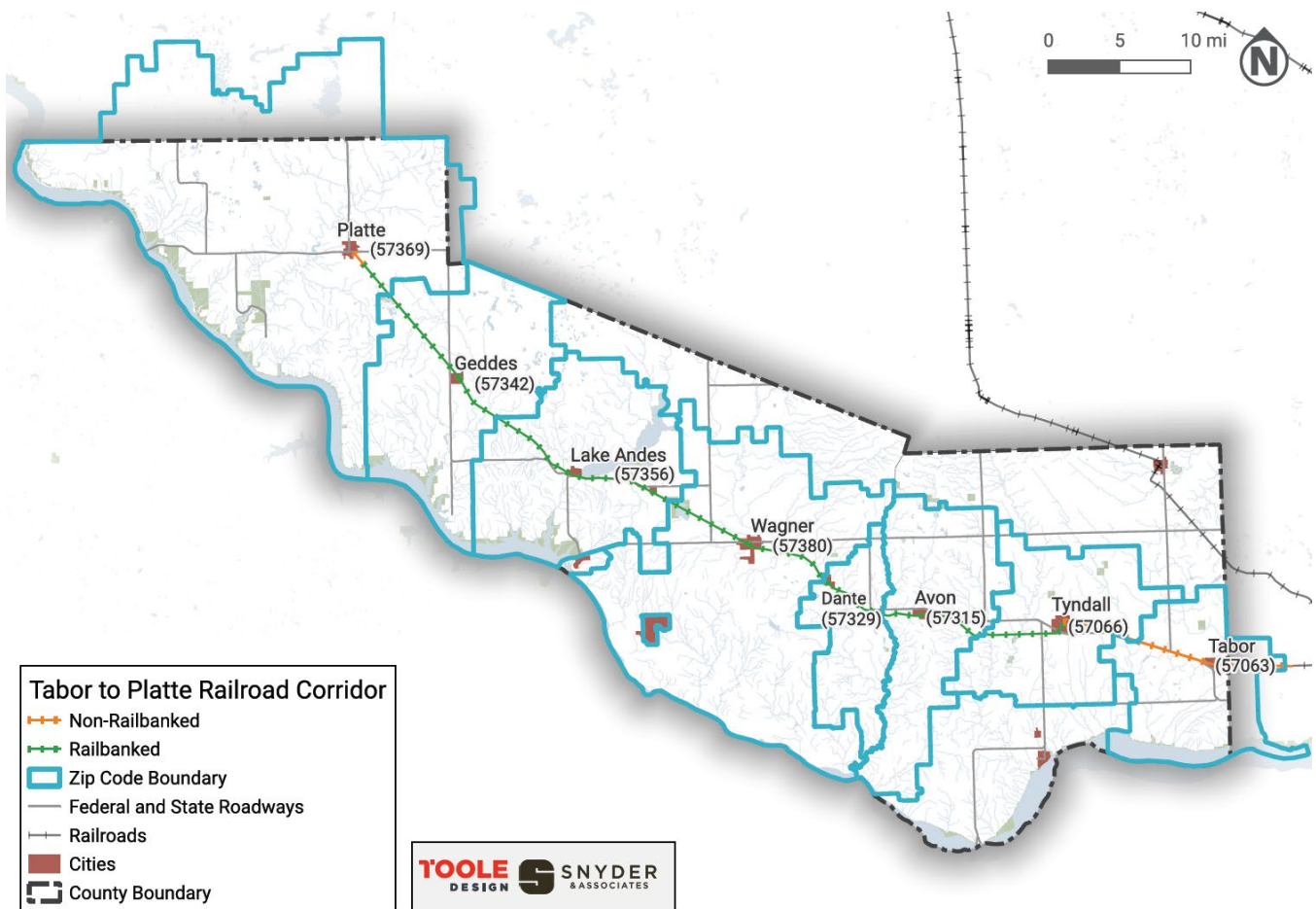


Figure A.17. Zip code boundaries overlapping with the railroad corridor.

REASONS TO SUPPORT THE IDEA OF A TRAIL

Survey respondents were asked to share the reasons they are supportive of the idea of a trail. Respondents were given a list of answers and were allowed to check all answers that applied. They were also given the opportunity to submit their own “other” answer. Out of 660 respondents, the following reasons were selected (Figure A.18):

- 403 (61%) Is a safe place for people to walk/run/bike/snowmobile
- 395 (60%) Improves an unused state-owned corridor to active recreational use
- 391 (59%) Gives nearby residents a place to get outdoors
- 388 (59%) Provides a place for exercise/better health/dog walking
- 326 (49%) Might attract economic development/tourists
- 311 (47%) Is a good use of public/private funds
- 139 (21%) Might increase property values
- 96 (15%) Might reduce crime on the rail corridor by increasing visibility
- 30 (5%) Other

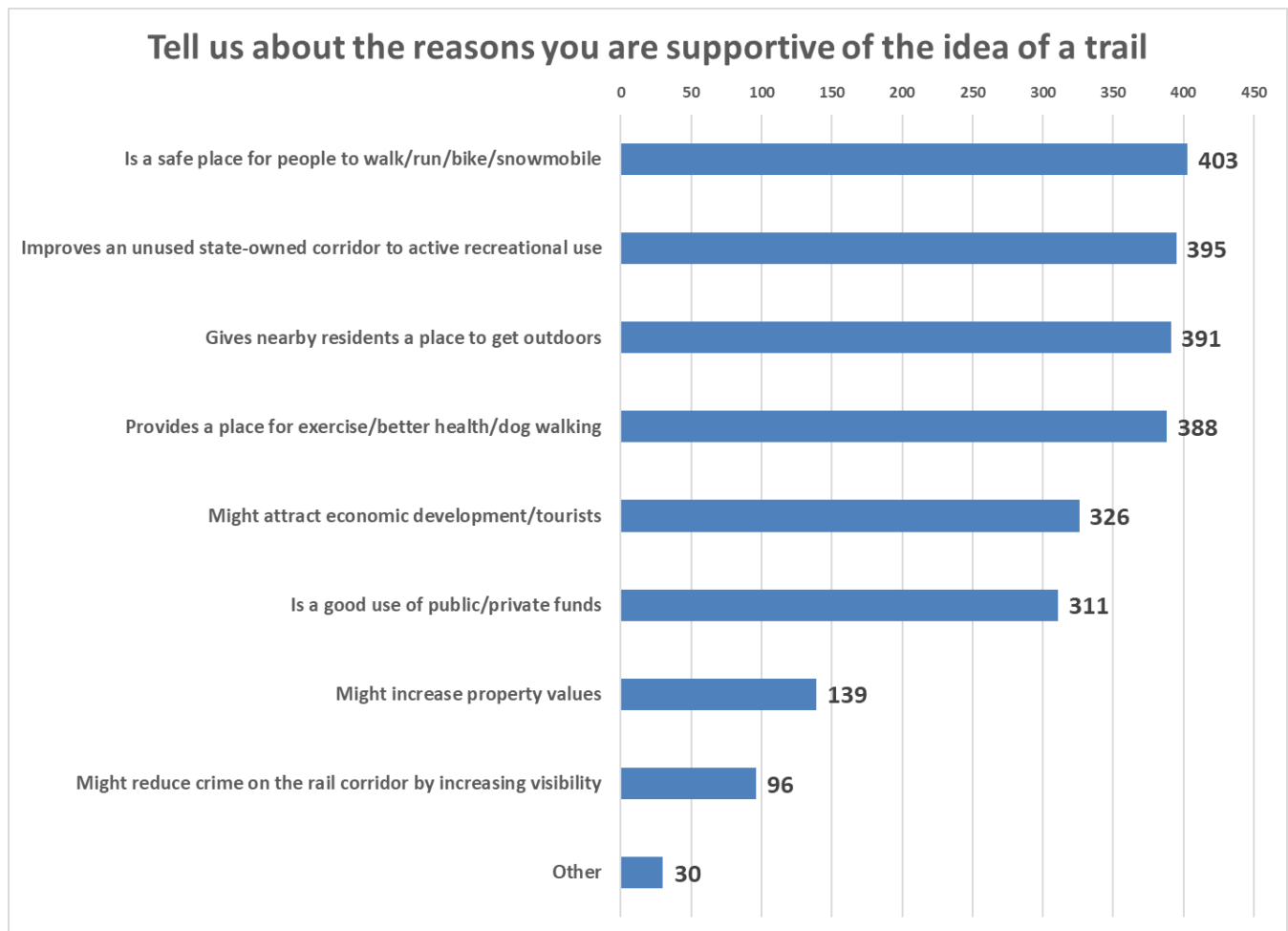


Figure A.18. Reasons why survey respondents were supportive of the idea of a trail.

REASONS TO OPPOSE THE IDEA OF A TRAIL

Survey respondents were asked to share the reasons they are opposed to the idea of a trail. Respondents were given a list of answers and were allowed to check all answers that applied. They were also given the opportunity to submit their own “other” answer. Out of 660 respondents, the following reasons were selected (Figure A.19):

- 211 (32%) Results in a loss of privacy for adjacent landowners
- 153 (23%) Is a poor use of public/private funds
- 153 (23%) Might increase crime by inviting outsiders
- 151 (23%) Interferes with farming
- 135 (20%) Could be a dangerous place for people to walk/run/bike/snowmobile
- 134 (20%) State-owned corridor should revert to adjacent landowners
- 99 (15%) Might decrease property values
- 34 (5%) Other

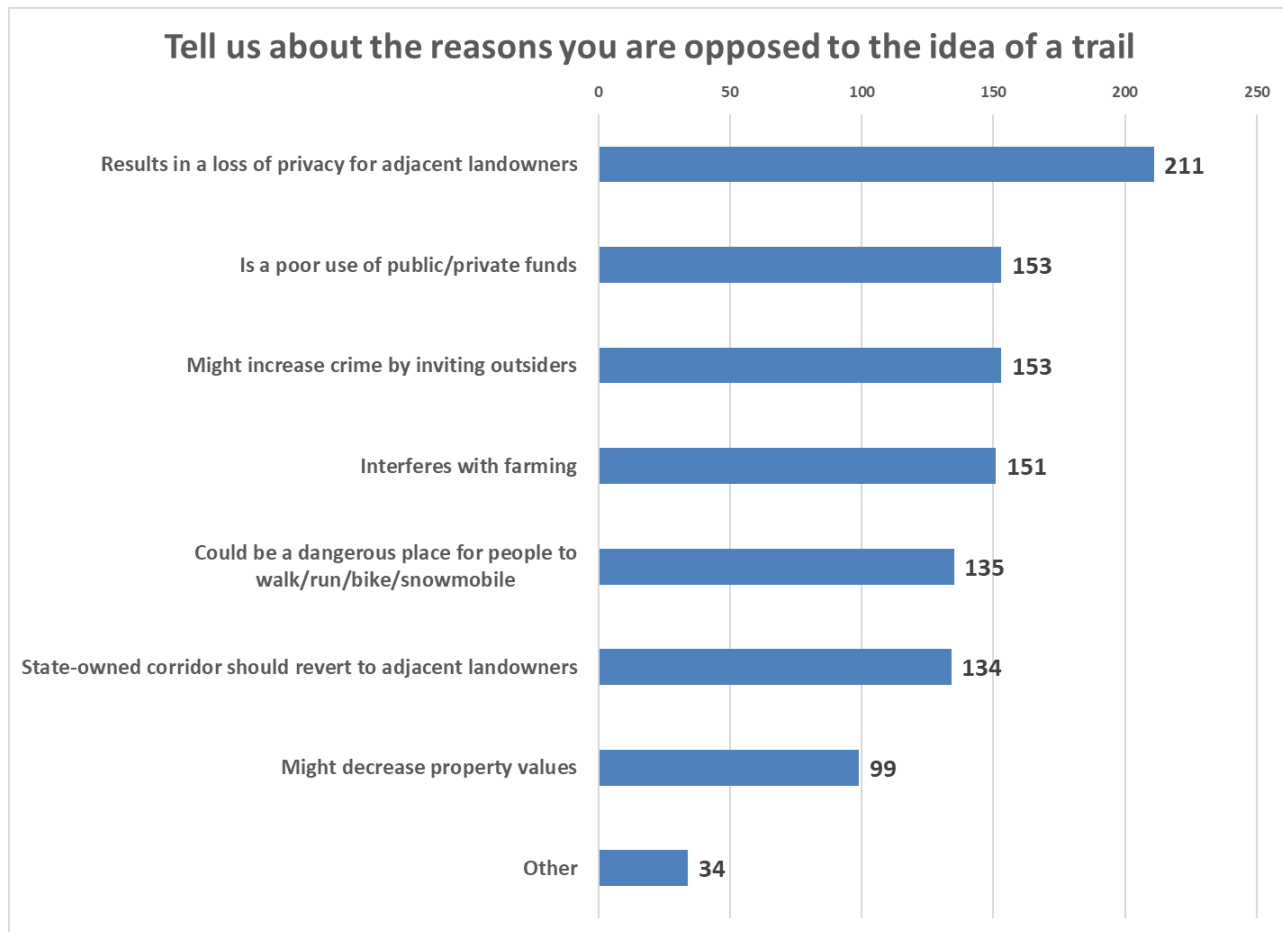


Figure A.19. Reasons why survey respondents were opposed to the idea of a trail.

TRAIL SURFACE TYPE

Respondents were asked the following question and shown the following images about their preferred trail surface type.

What type of trail surface would you prefer? (choose one)

☐ Asphalt:



Rail trail in Lake Andes

☐ Concrete:



Yankton Sioux Tribe trail in Lake Andes

☐ Crushed Rock:



Cowboy Trail in Ewing, NE
Credit: Google

☐ I don't have a preference

Out of 660 survey respondents, the following answers were selected (Figure A.20):

- 203 (31%) Crushed rock
- 141 (21%) I don't have a preference
- 120 (18%) Asphalt
- 98 (15%) Concrete
- 98 (15%) Did not provide an answer

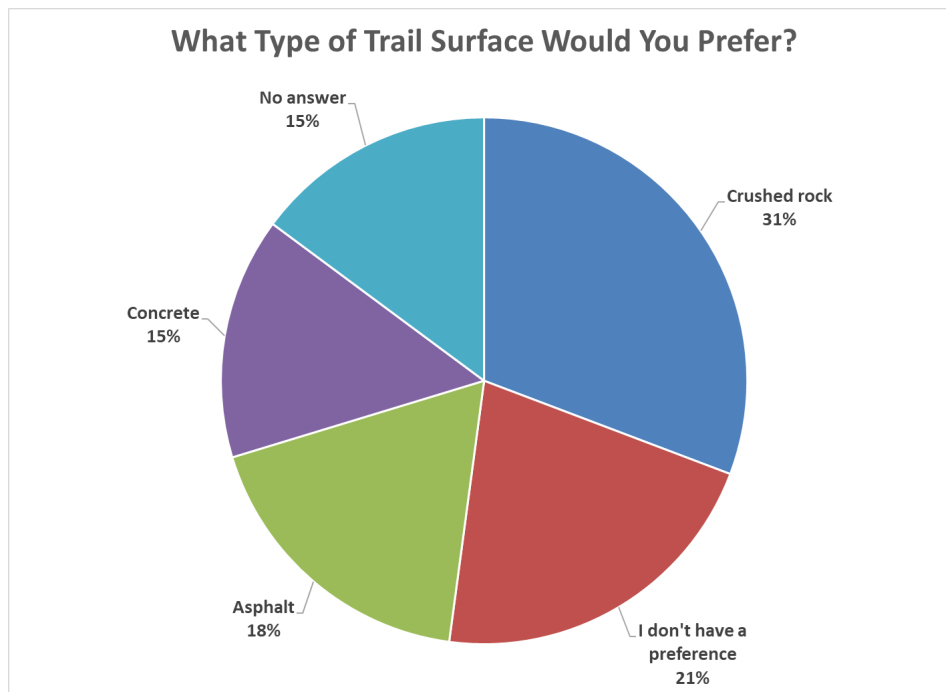


Figure A.20. Preference regarding trail surface type.

FARMERS COOP DETOURS

Respondents were asked the following question about detours around Farmers Coops and then were shown five possible solutions on the following page.

In Avon, Lake Andes, Tyndall, and Wagner, the Farmers Coop utilizes the railroad corridor, resulting in possible conflicts between large trucks and trail users. Rate your level of comfort with each of the following solutions.

Out of 660 respondents, the following were very comfortable or comfortable with the following detour solutions (Figure A.21):

- 419 (63%) A trail around the elevator
- 349 (53%) A trail along a lower speed, lower traffic street
- 276 (42%) A trail along a higher speed, higher traffic street
- 227 (34%) A lower speed, lower traffic street
- 126 (19%) A higher speed, higher traffic road

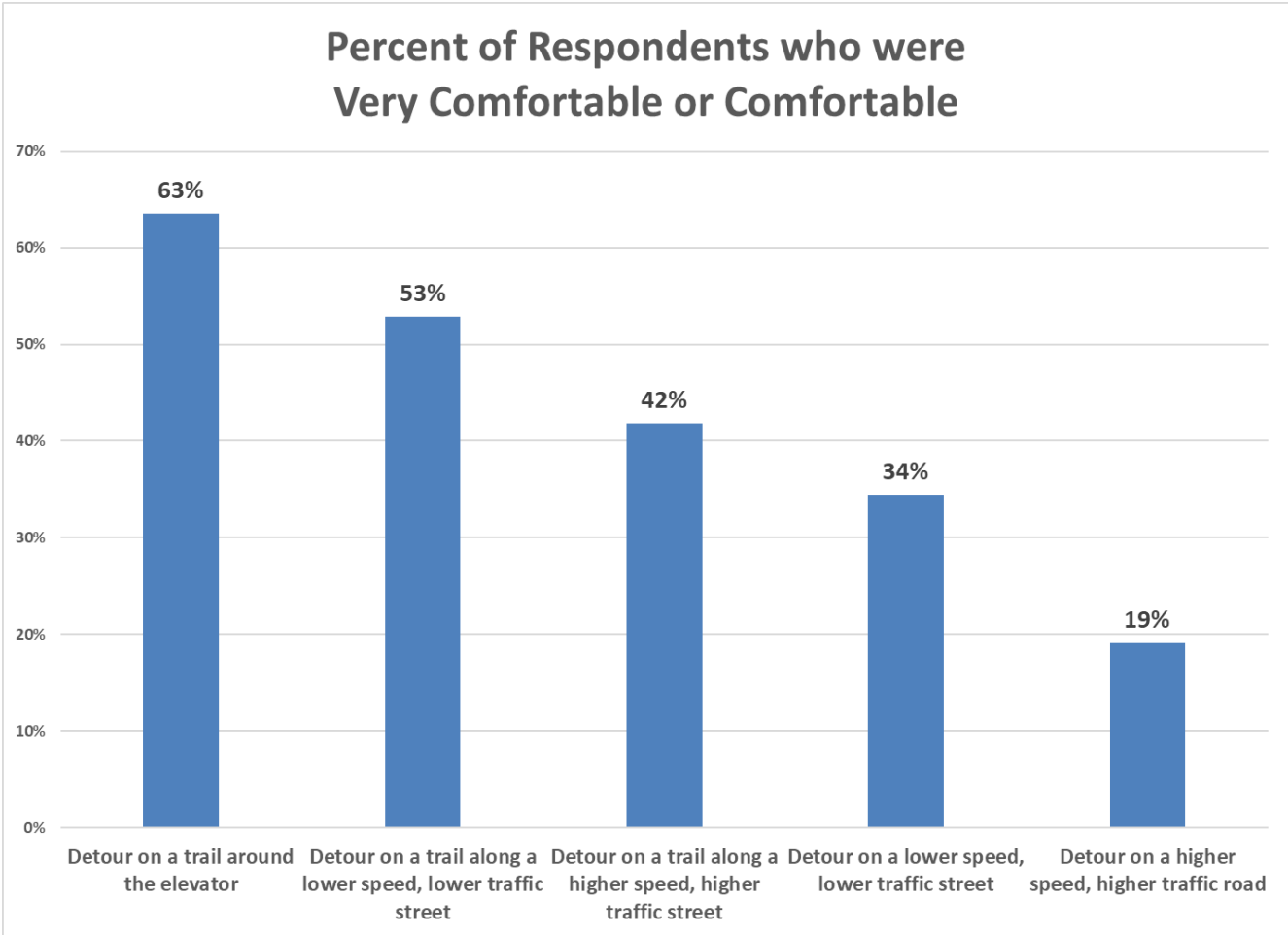


Figure A.21. Comfort level with detour solutions around elevators.

63% Very Comfortable or Comfortable

Detour on a trail around the elevator: Trail users have a trail around the area used by the Farmers Coop



Raccoon River Valley Trail detour in Minburn, IA.
Credit: Google

53% Very Comfortable or Comfortable

Detour on a trail along a lower speed, lower traffic street: Trail users have a trail on the side of the street



Katy Trail detour in Sedalia, MO.
Credit: Google

42% Very Comfortable or Comfortable

Detour on a trail along a higher speed, higher traffic street: Trail users have a trail on the side of the street



Raccoon River Valley Trail detour in Perry, IA.
Credit: Google

34% Very Comfortable or Comfortable

Detour on a lower speed, lower traffic street: Trail users travel in the street with motorists, assisted by Trail Route signs



Sakatah Singing Hills State Trail detour in Waterville, MN.
Credit: Google

19% Very Comfortable or Comfortable

Detour on a higher speed, higher traffic road: Trail users travel in the road with motorists, assisted by Bike Route signs



Wabash Trace Nature Trail detour in Shenandoah, IA.
Credit: Google

LANDOWNER IMPROVEMENTS

Survey respondents were asked to share the types of improvements that landowners with property immediately adjacent to the trail should have. Respondents were given a list of answers and were allowed to check all answers that applied. They were also given the opportunity to submit their own “other” answer. Out of 660 respondents, the following reasons were selected (Figure A.22):

- 380 (58%) Farm equipment crossings of the trail
- 365 (55%) Livestock fencing along both sides of the trail
- 181 (53%) Livestock crossings of the trail
- 350 (52%) No trespassing signs
- 343 (46%) Changes to South Dakota law bolstering liability protections
- 302 (27%) Vegetative privacy screening
- 23 (3%) Other

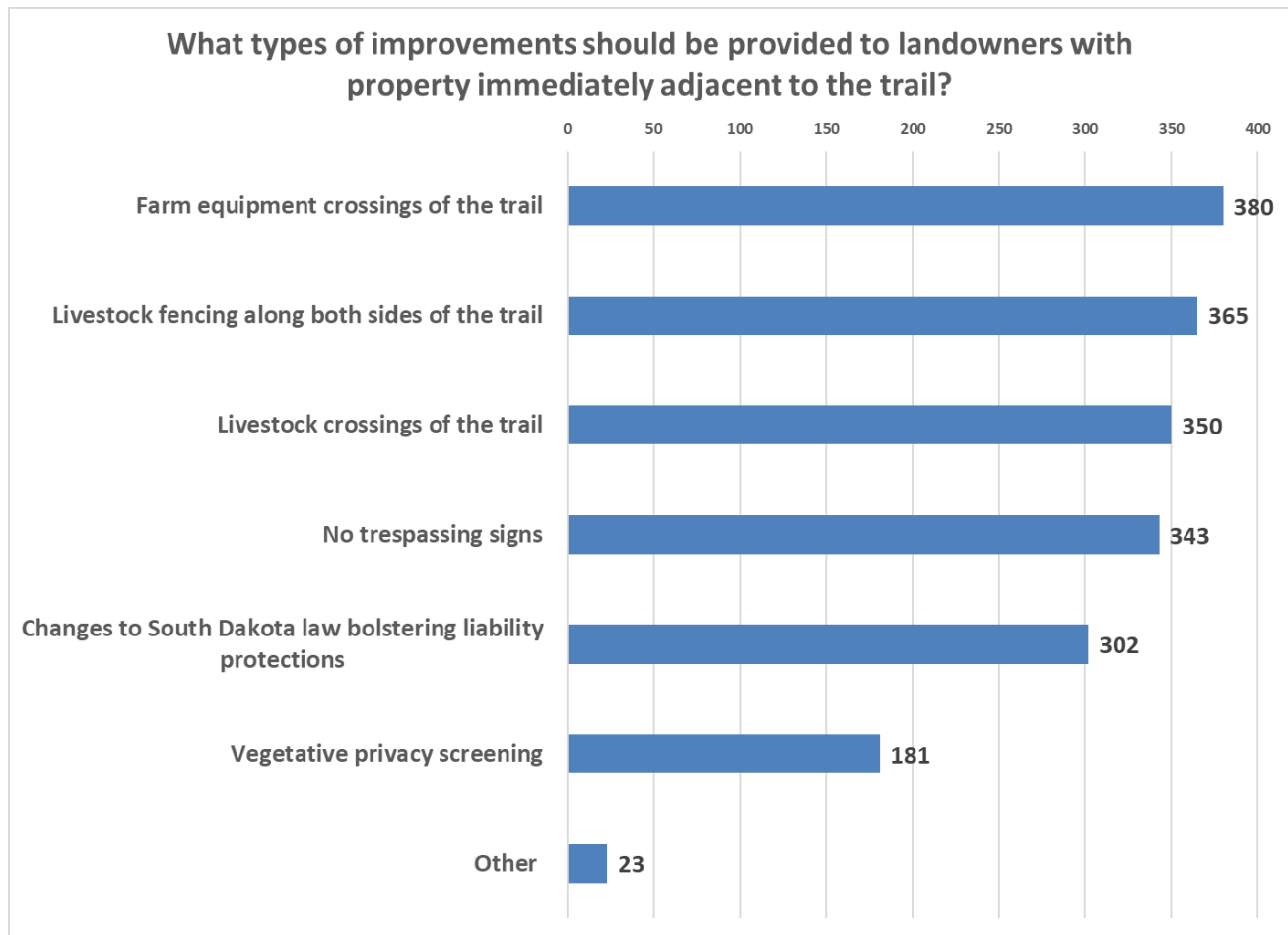


Figure A.22. The improvements survey respondents thought landowners should have.

LIVESTOCK CROSSINGS

Respondents were asked the following question about livestock crossings and then were shown four possible solutions on the following page.

What type of livestock crossings would you prefer? (Choose one)

Out of 660 respondents, the following preferences were chosen (Figure A.23):

- 177 (27%) Cattle guards
- 123 (19%) Trail user operated gates
- 120 (18%) I don't have a preference
- 98 (15%) Cattle pass
- 92 (14%) No answer
- 50 (8%) Farmer operated gates

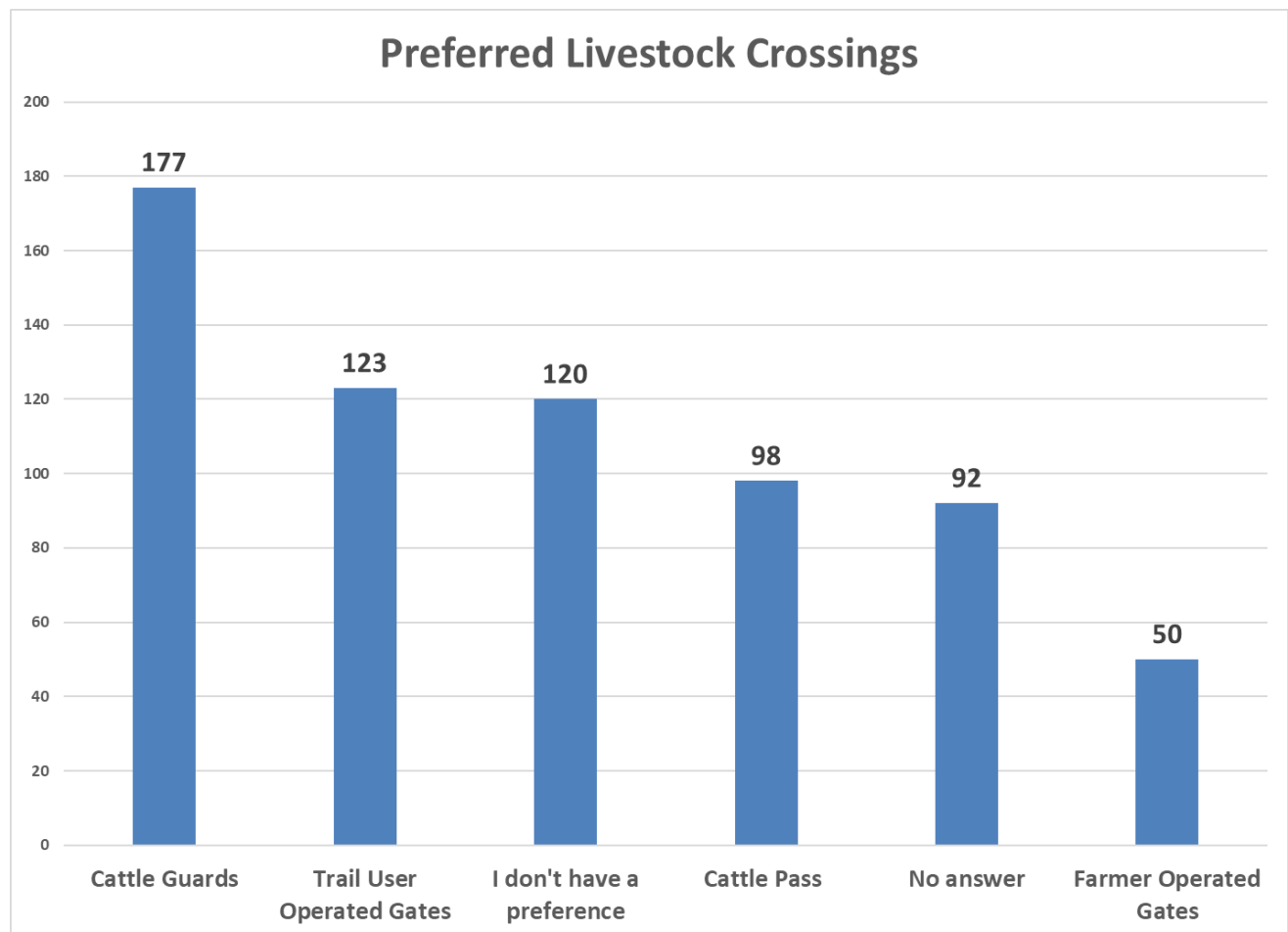


Figure A.23. Comfort level with detour solutions around elevators.

27% Preferred

Cattle guards: Metal grid across the trail. Livestock and trail users share the trail.



A cattle guard next to a narrow width cattle gate on the Apache Railroad Trail in Arizona.

Credit: DesertLavender.com

15% Preferred

Cattle Pass: A culvert underneath the trail that allows livestock to pass freely. Livestock and trail users do not mix.



19% Preferred

Trail user operated gates: Narrow width (5') spring-loaded cattle gates opened by trail users. Gates are self-closing with livestock and trail users sharing the trail.



Self-closing gate (left) on the Chessie Nature Trail in Lexington, VA.

Credit: LexingtonVirginia.com

8% Preferred

Farmer operated gates: Standard cattle gates manually opened, closed, and locked by farmers. The trail is closed until livestock has been moved from one side of the trail to the other.



Livestock crossing on the Rock Island State Park Trail in Missouri.

Credit: Missouri State Parks

HORSEBACK RIDING AND SNOWMOBILING

Respondents were asked if horseback riding or snowmobiling should be allowed along a trail if it's developed. Overall, respondents were evenly split about horseback riding (Figure A.24) and leaned slightly against snowmobiling Figure A.25).

	Horseback Riding?	Snowmobiling?
No	246 (37%)	282 (43%)
Yes	237 (36%)	244 (37%)
I don't know	146 (22%)	103 (16%)
No answer	31 (5%)	31 (5%)
Total	660 (100%)	660 (100%)

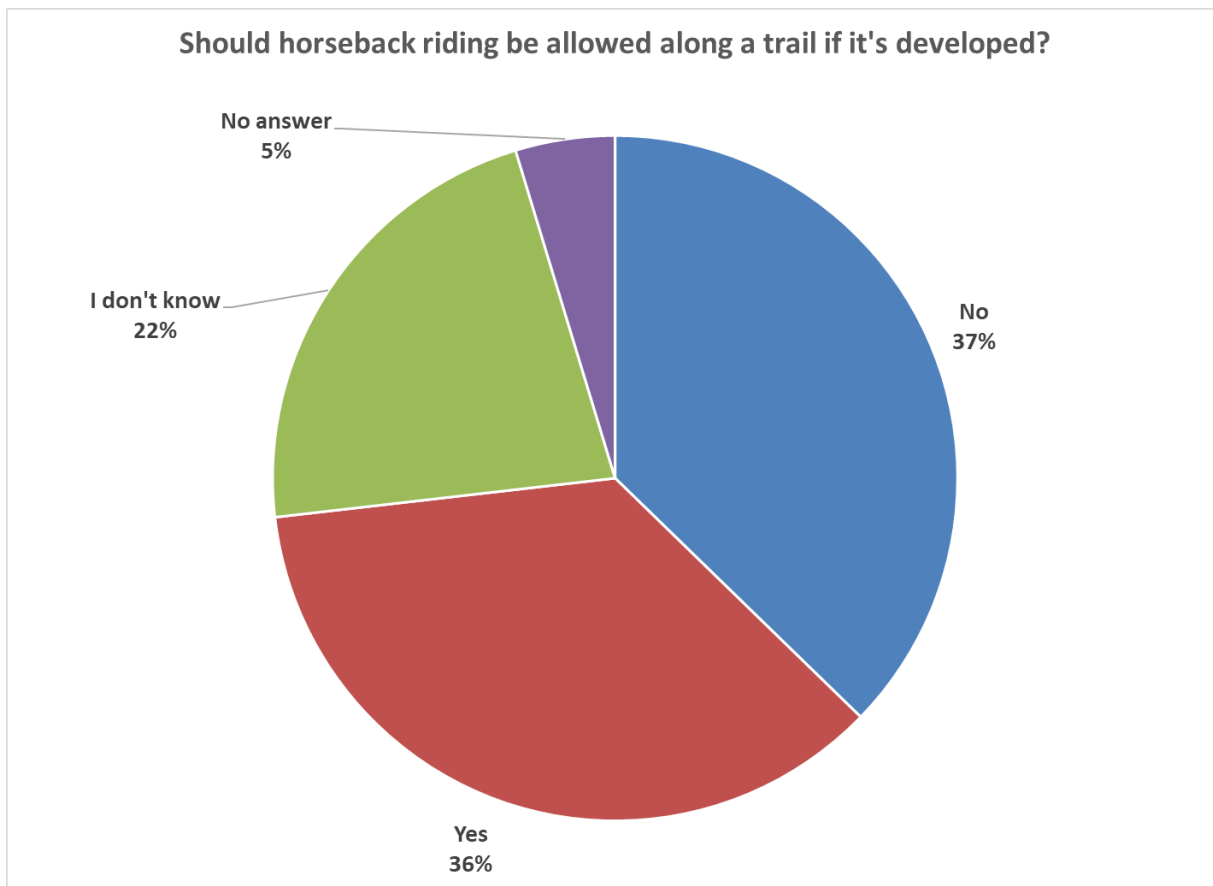


Figure A.24. Respondents' views on the possibility of horseback riding.

Should snowmobiling be allowed along a trail if it's developed?

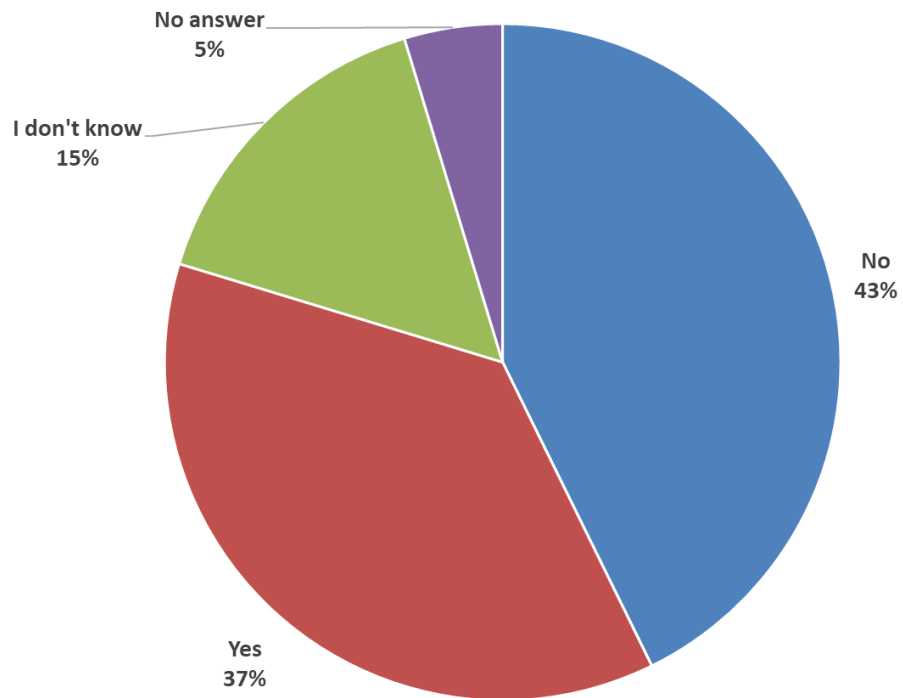


Figure A.25. Respondents' views on the possibility of snowmobiling.

TRAIL USE AND FREQUENCY

Respondents were asked if they would use a trail along the railroad corridor if it were developed, and were allowed to choose yes, no, or I don't know. As shown in Figure A.26, out of 660 respondents:

- 443 (67%) replied “Yes”
- 151 (23%) replied “No”
- 49 (7%) replied “I don't know”
- 17 (3%) did not answer

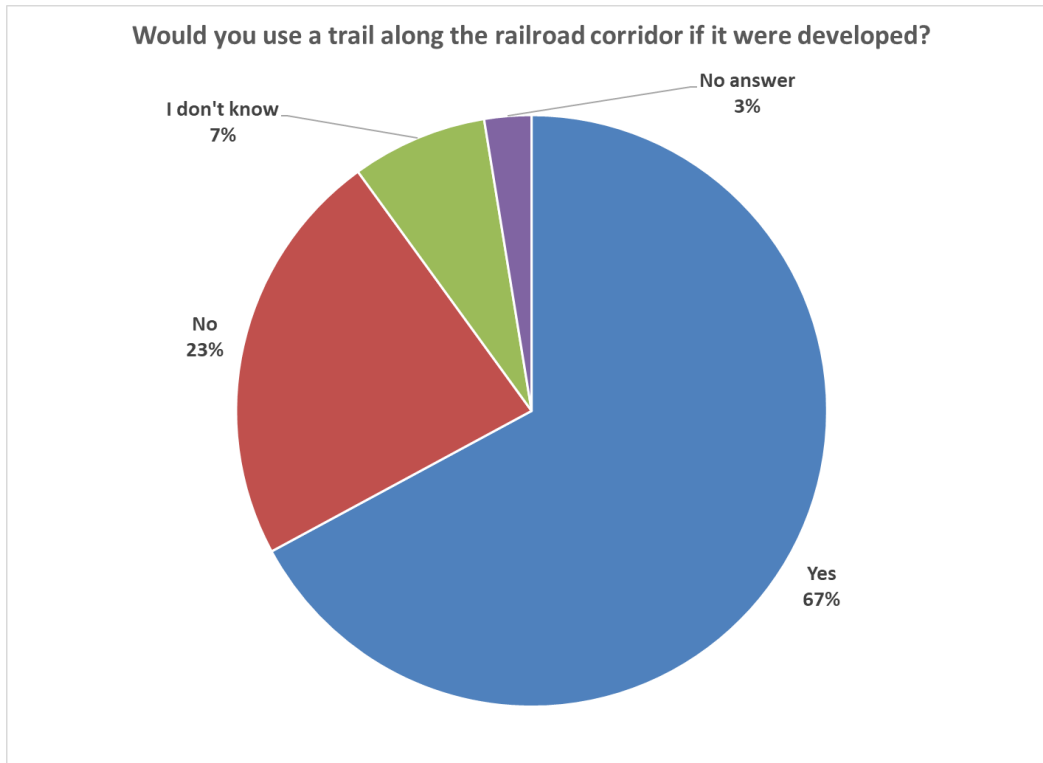


Figure A.26. Respondents' answers about if they would use a trail.

495 respondents responded to the following question:

If you would use a trail, how often would you use it?

As shown in Figure A.27, they were allowed to choose yearly, monthly, weekly, or daily. They gave the following responses:

- 161 (33%) replied “Yearly”
- 157 (32%) replied “Monthly”
- 142 (29%) replied “Weekly”
- 35 (7%) replied “Daily”

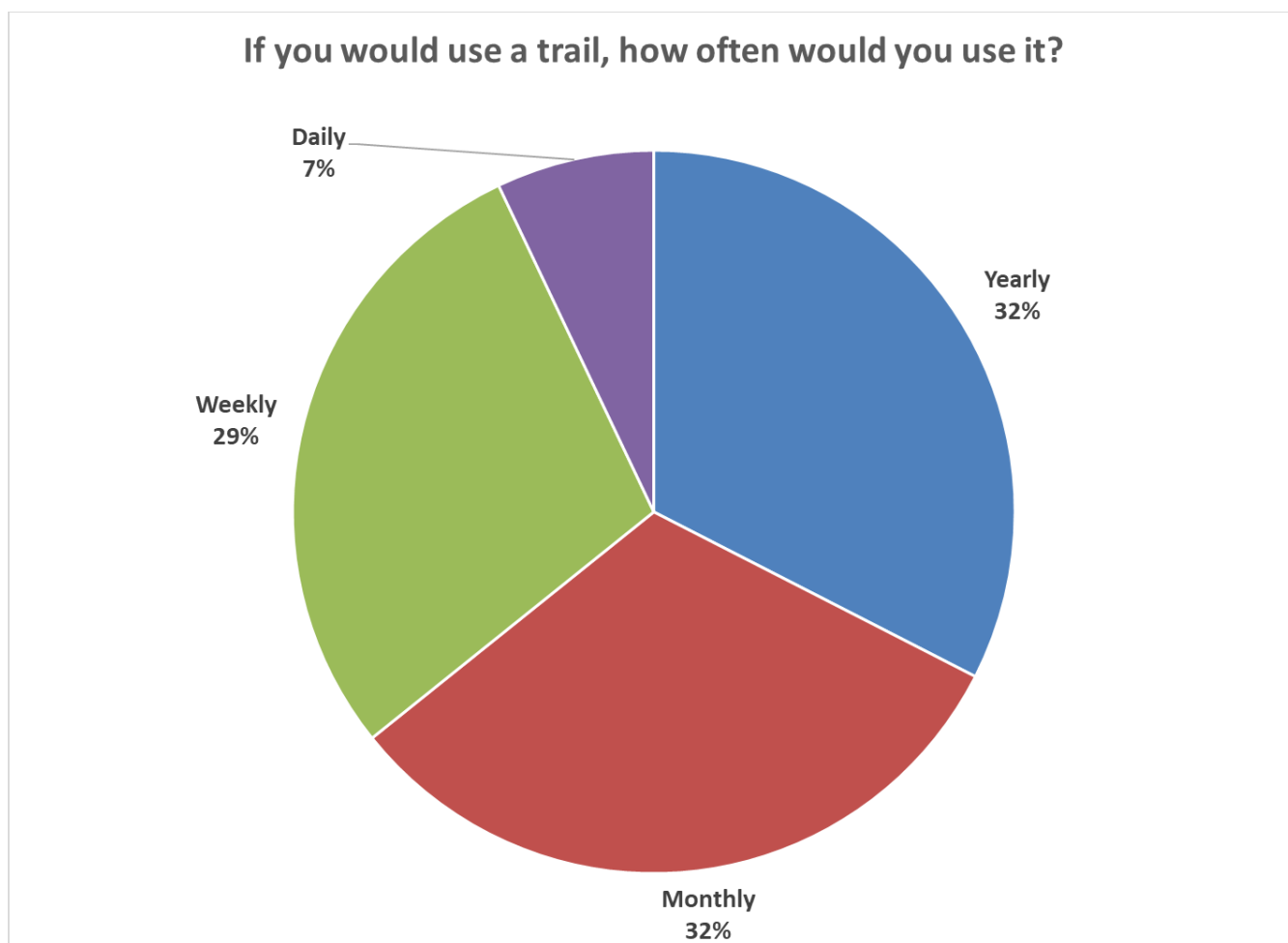


Figure A.27. Respondents' answers about how often they would use a trail.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

302 respondents submitted additional comments to be considered. The question prompt was the following:

If there is anything else you would like to share with the project team, tell us here.

Overall, 178 (59%) additional comments were supportive of a possible trail, 117 (39%) were opposed, and 7 (2%) were neutral.

Each comment was assigned general topics corresponding to their content. Each comment was categorized into one or two topics, resulting in 359 topics.

168 comments covering 200 topics were supportive, with the top eight topics including (Figure A.28):

1. 38 (19%) Will improve economic development
2. 25 (13%) Will improve tourism
3. 24 (12%) Positive comparison to the Mickelson Trail
4. 23 (12%) Past good experiences with trails
5. 22 (11%) Will be a safe place to bicycle or walk
6. 18 (9%) Will get used
7. 10 (5%) Will improve health
8. 8 (4%) Concerned about possible horses on trail

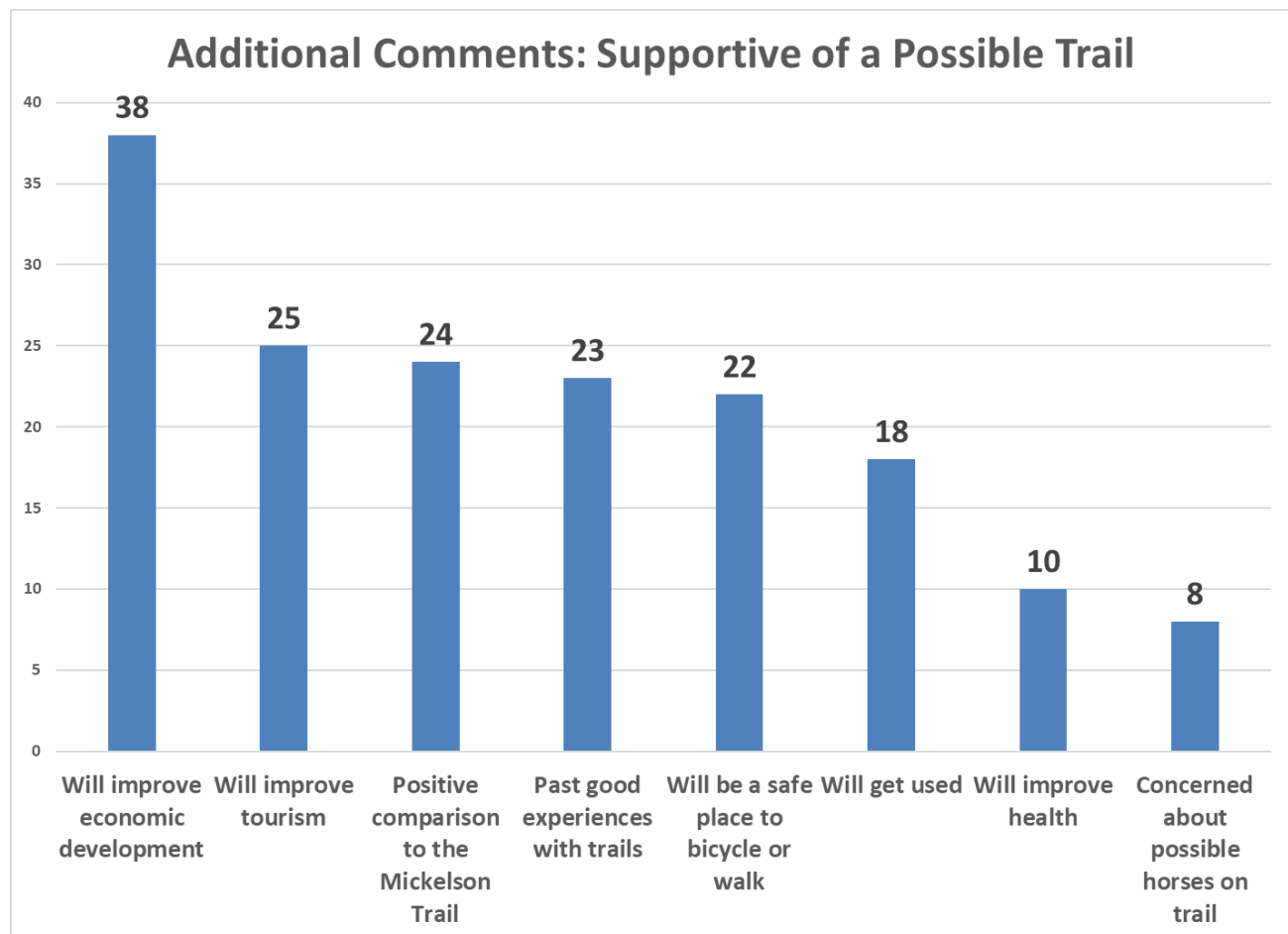


Figure A.28. Additional supportive comments by topic.

140 comments covering 159 topics were opposed to a possible trail, with the top eight topics including (Figure A.29):

1. 50 (31%) A poor use of taxpayer dollars
2. 22 (14%) Concerned about landowner rights
3. 16 (10%) Concerned about crime
4. 14 (9%) A trail won't get used
5. 13 (8%) There are more important priorities
6. 11 (7%) Rail corridor should revert to adjacent landowners
7. 8 (5%) Concerned about maintenance
8. 6 (4%) Law enforcement will be needed

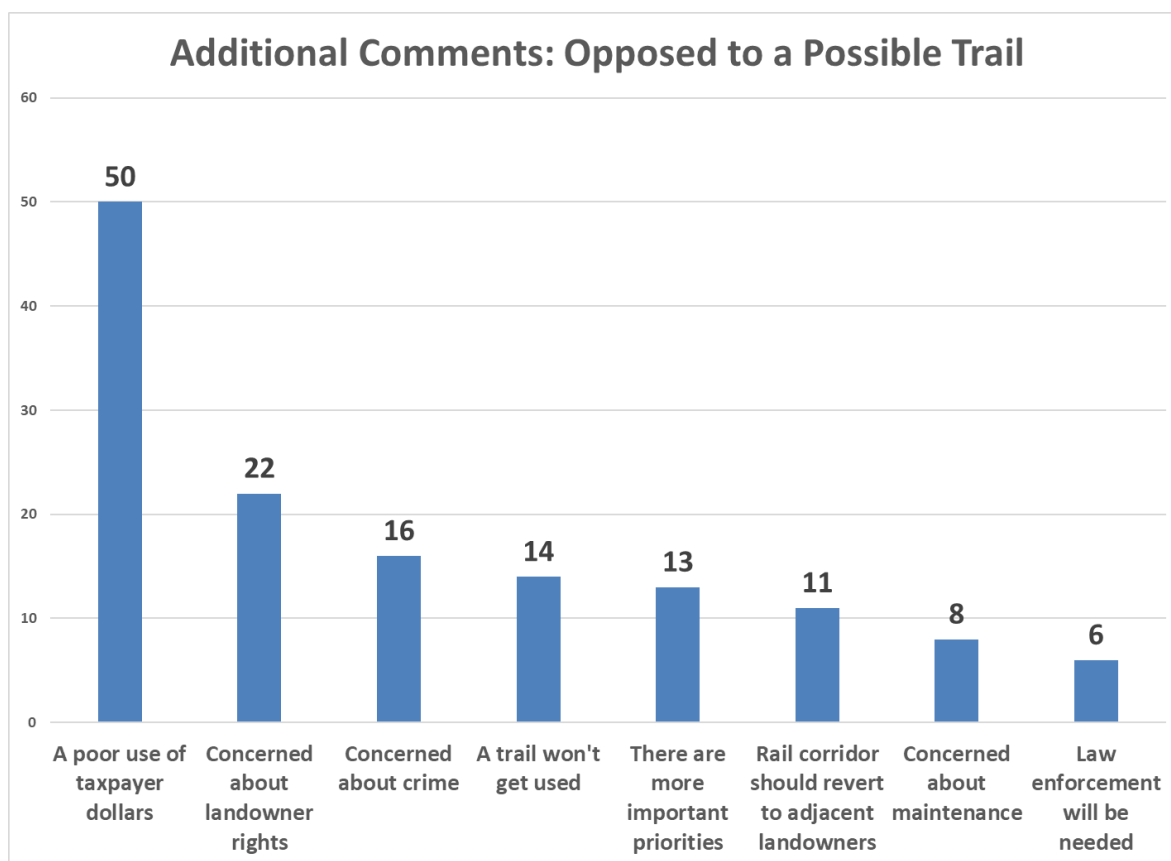


Figure A.29. Additional oppositional comments by topic.

Strategy 4: Town Maps

Maps were prepared for each town along the route to illustrate possible parking/trailhead locations and routes that would connect trailheads to the rail corridor. Four of the towns (Tyndall, Avon, Wagner, Lake Andes) included alternative route ideas around Farmers Coop elevators and one town (Platte) included alternative route ideas around a segment not owned by the South Dakota Railroad Board. 22 maps were received. The highest number came from Platte, with most people preferring Alternative B: Main Street/277 Street (Figure A.30).

Town	Number of Maps Received
Tabor	3
Tyndall	2
Avon	1
Dante	0
Wagner	2
Ravinia	1
Lake Andes	3
Geddes	2
Platte	8
Total	22

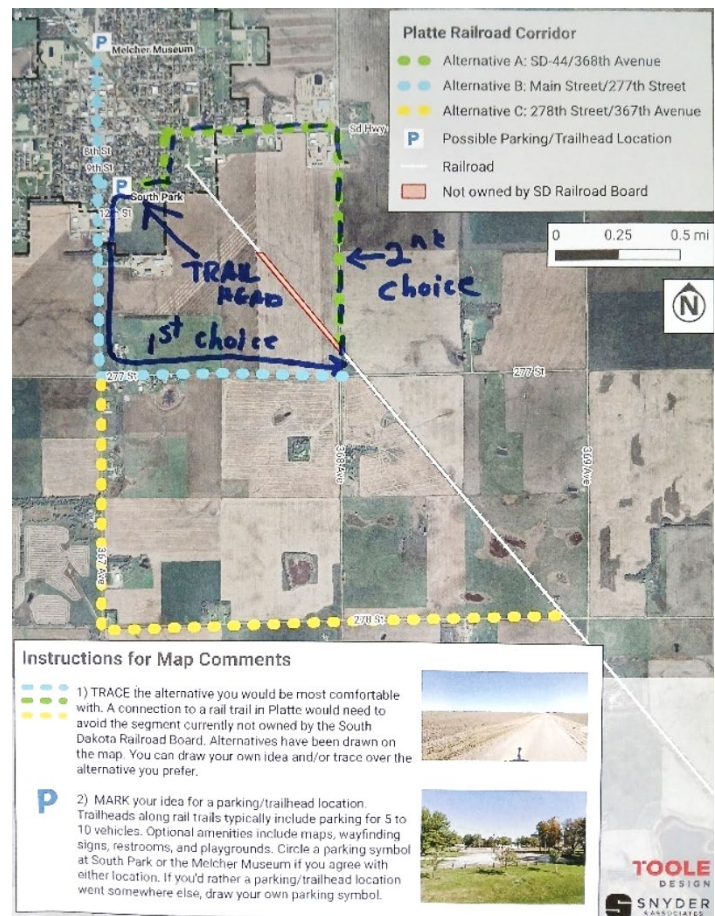


Figure A.30. An example of a town map completed by an open house attendee.

Strategy 5: Agricultural Landowner/Tenant Surveys

Surveys were created for agricultural landowners/tenants along the corridor. An online version was posted on the [project website](#) and linked on [handouts](#) distributed at the open houses. The paper version of these surveys was associated with maps. Eight maps were made available at open houses, illustrating the parcels adjoining the rail corridor between towns:

1. Tabor to Tyndall
2. Tyndall to Avon
3. Avon to Dante (Figure A.31)
4. Dante to Wagner
5. Wagner to Ravinia
6. Ravinia to Lake Andes
7. Lake Andes to Geddes
8. Geddes to Platte

Respondents were invited to circle their property on the map and answer several questions. The raw results are located in Appendix F. A summary of the results included:

- Survey forms were received from 34 respondents. 21 were completed on paper, 11 were completed online, and two respondents submitted paper and online versions.
- 17 indicated having a crop production operation.
- 21 indicated having a livestock operation.

- 8 indicated having another type of land use. These included:
 - Convenience store
 - Family cemetery
 - Hay
 - Hunting
 - Hunting + private cemetery
 - Power of attorney for rental crop and livestock
 - Ranchette
 - Sweat lodge
- 19 answered a question about how many machinery driveway crossings would be needed along the rail corridor to connect their property. The average number needed was three.
- 22 answered that they pasture livestock on both sides of the rail corridor.
 - Most pasture seasonally during the growing season, but a few pasture year-round
 - Most livestock cross freely throughout the rail corridor, but some use a specific crossing/s
- 15 indicated they foresee a need for a future rail trail project to build livestock fencing on both sides of the corridor. Of those, 14 answered they would need livestock crossings, with an average of five crossings preferred.
- Additional comments were received about the need to protect private cemeteries, rail bridge condition, maintenance, pest/weed control, emergency responder access, drainage, property devaluation, access to water for livestock, hunting rights, and the need for privacy screening.

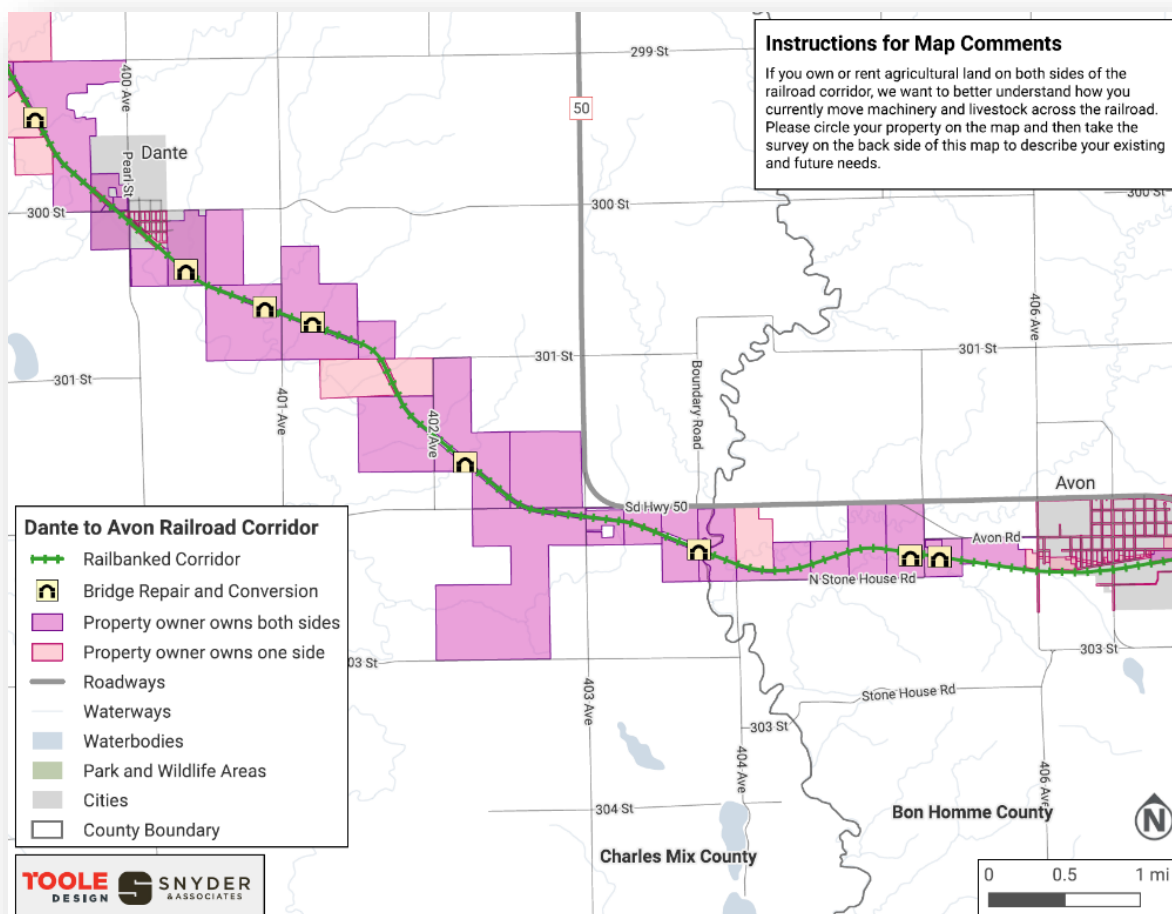


Figure A.31. The map for the Avon to Dante segment.