

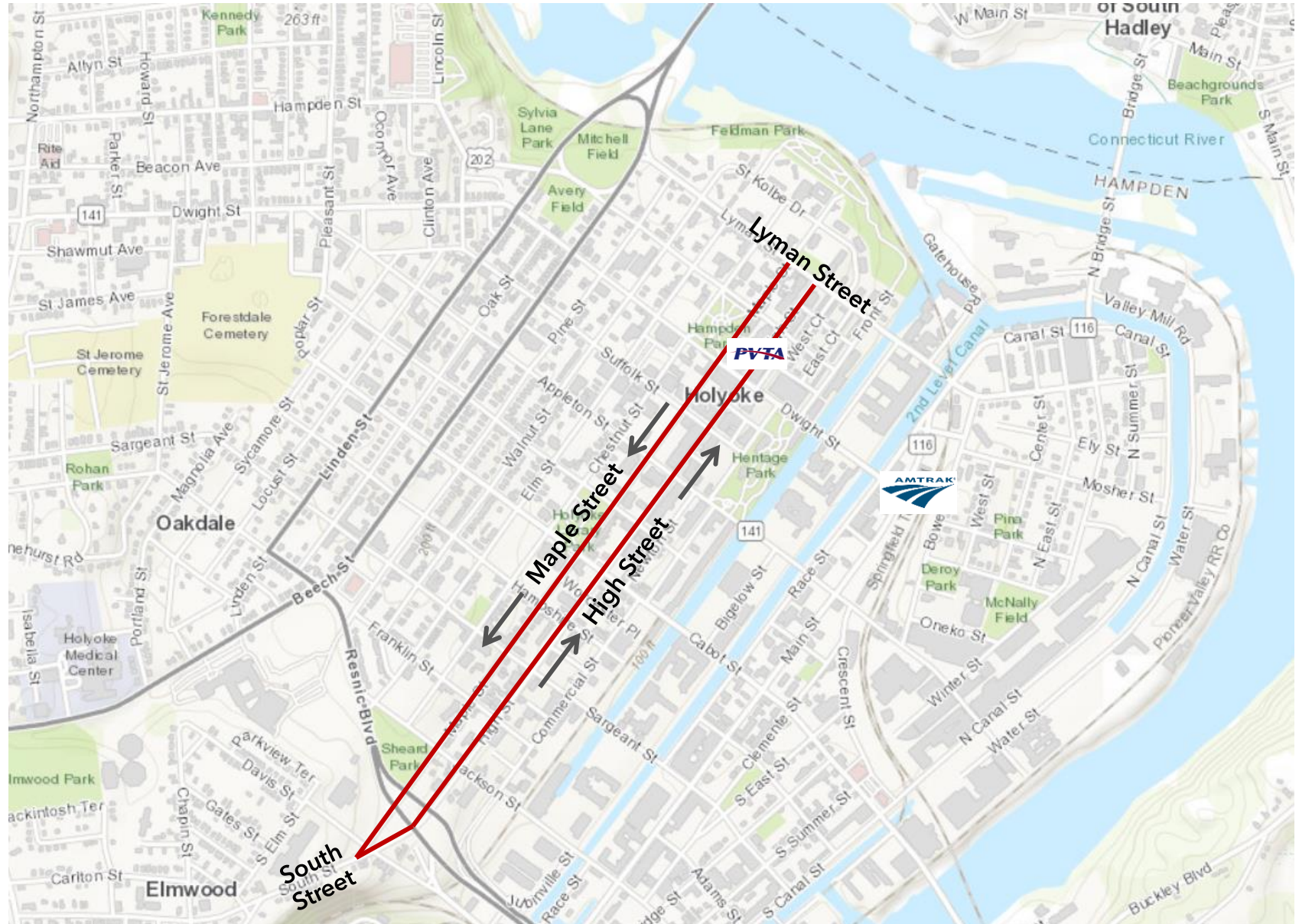
High Street / Maple Street Improvements

Holyoke, MA

MassDOT Project #613320

Community Survey Responses

April 2024



COMMUNITY SURVEY RESPONSES

April 2024

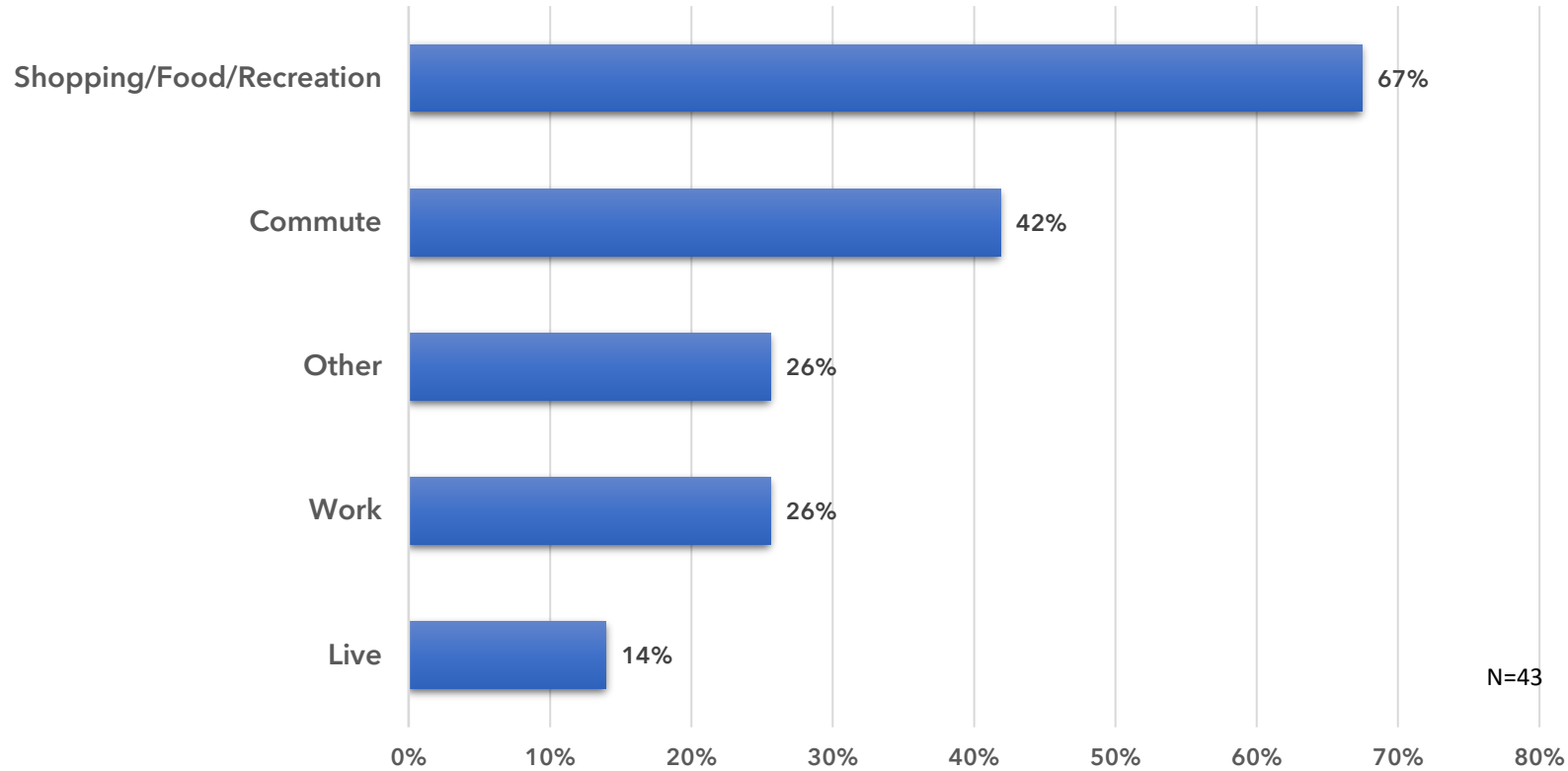
INTRODUCTION

A community survey was administered to gauge community concerns as part of public outreach for the High Street / Maple Street Improvements project. The survey was deployed in concert with public information meetings held in February and March 2024. An in-person meeting was held at the Holyoke Library on February 28, 2024, and a virtual public meeting was held on March 6, 2024. The survey was 'open' through March 31, 2024. Surveys were provided in English and Spanish. Paper copies were available at the in-person meeting and links to the survey were provided as a part of the community meeting presentation slides, boards and in the MassDOT event listing.

A total of 46 surveys were returned; 42 in English and 4 in Spanish. Most respondents (67%) visit High and Maple Street for shopping, dining, etc. Twenty-six percent (26%) of respondents work in the area and 14% live in the area. All respondents (100%) drive in the area and 65% walk in the area. Some key takeaways:

- **Speeding** (72%) and **pedestrian safety** (67%) are the top concerns of survey respondents. Other top concerns include traffic safety (51%), lack of bicycle accommodations (47%), accessibility issues (44%), and on-street parking availability (40%).
- Correspondingly, respondents identified **traffic calming** (79%), and **pedestrian accessibility** (77%) as the top priorities for street improvements. Bicycle accommodations (49%), on-street parking (44%), and transit improvements (40%) were also priorities for respondents.
- With respect to on-street parking, two-thirds of respondents (66%) noted that it is **hard to park in the business area of High and Maple Streets** (generally Cabot to Dwight or Lyman – in the vicinity of City Hall and Holyoke Health). People do not feel safe using the municipal garage and parking lots. The City parking study noted highest utilization of parking spaces and lots in the High Street area between Dwight and Lyman Street.
- Double parking for loading on High and Maple Street was identified as a cause of congestion.
- **There is broad support for a multi-modal, traffic calmed street design.** It is hoped that the new street design will improve vibrancy downtown.
- Introducing **two-way traffic** was mentioned by some respondents as a way to slow traffic, reduce 'cut-through' traffic and provide more direct access to businesses. Other respondents expressed support for **narrower streets with expanded sidewalks and bike lanes**.
- Crime, homelessness, trash, vacant buildings and lots were noted as problems in the area.

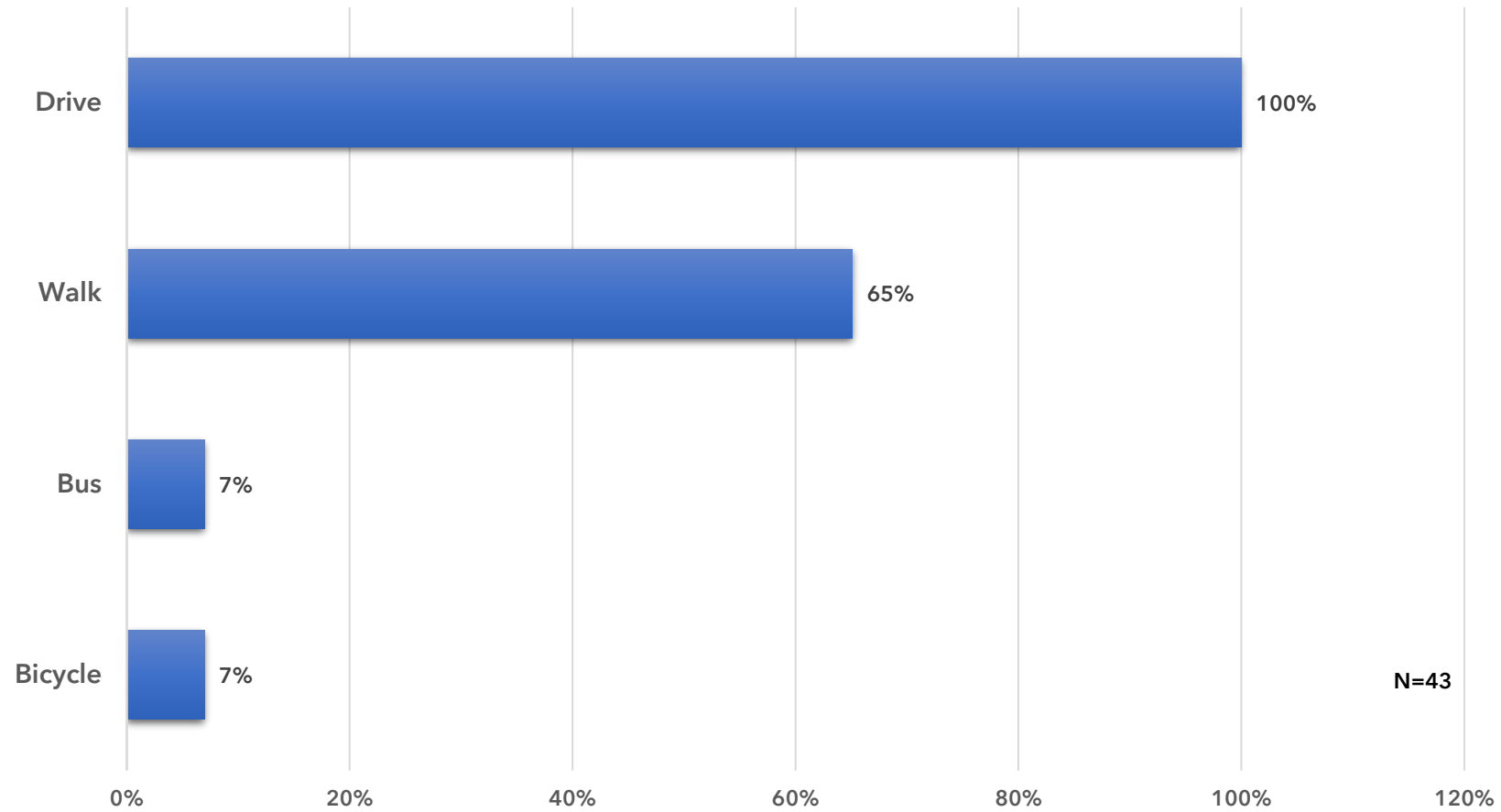
My interest in Maple and High Streets (check all that apply)



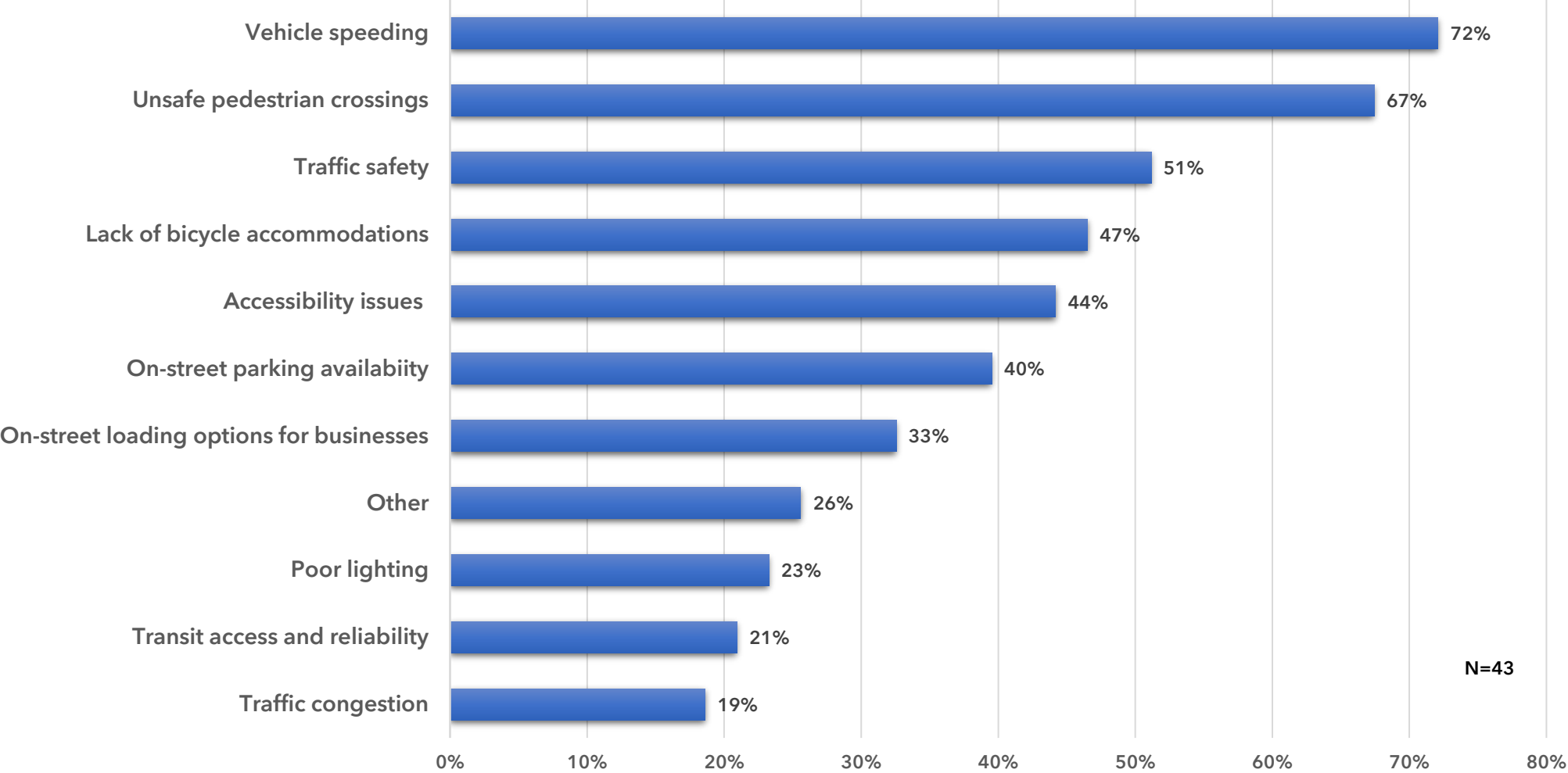
OTHER

- Looking to purchase home in Holyoke
- I live more like 8-9 blocks between High and Maple
- My work is not on High/Maple, but it takes me to High/Maple often for work-related tasks
- I live in HOLYOKE and would like to see something positive happen on High St., Maple Street and Pine Street, as all we have now is crime. Also would like to see Chestnut Street cleaned up as well. The entire downtown area needs a major overhaul
- My aunt was the injured lady this February. Very sad and painful.

How do you travel on Maple and High Streets?



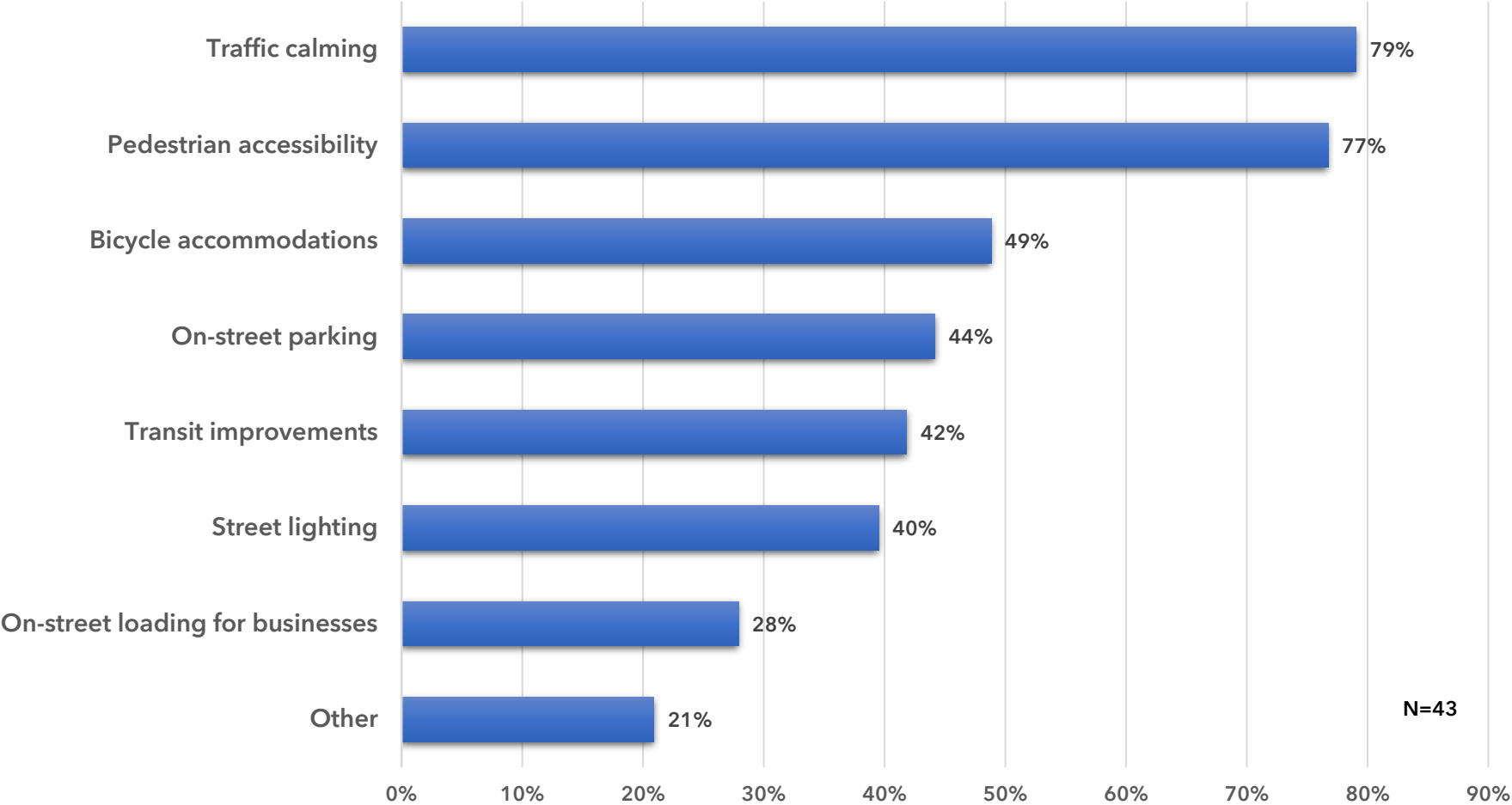
What is most concerning to you about the current design of Maple and High Streets?



- OTHER
- Commuters using H&M as driving to work routes.
 - Empty/blighted buildings.
 - No social gathering space; lacks attraction for economic/retail/housing development (needs green spaces); should return to two-way traffic pattern to reinforce downtown as destination point and not just a pass thru.
 - I regularly see people going the wrong way down the one-way streets, also people driving under the influence, police never enforcing and people know they can drive erratically without consequences.
 - Trash and vacant buildings.
 - The streets should be made two way. It is hard to navigate to business especially if you don't know exactly where they are.
 - Vehicles that double park.
 - Crime.

N=43

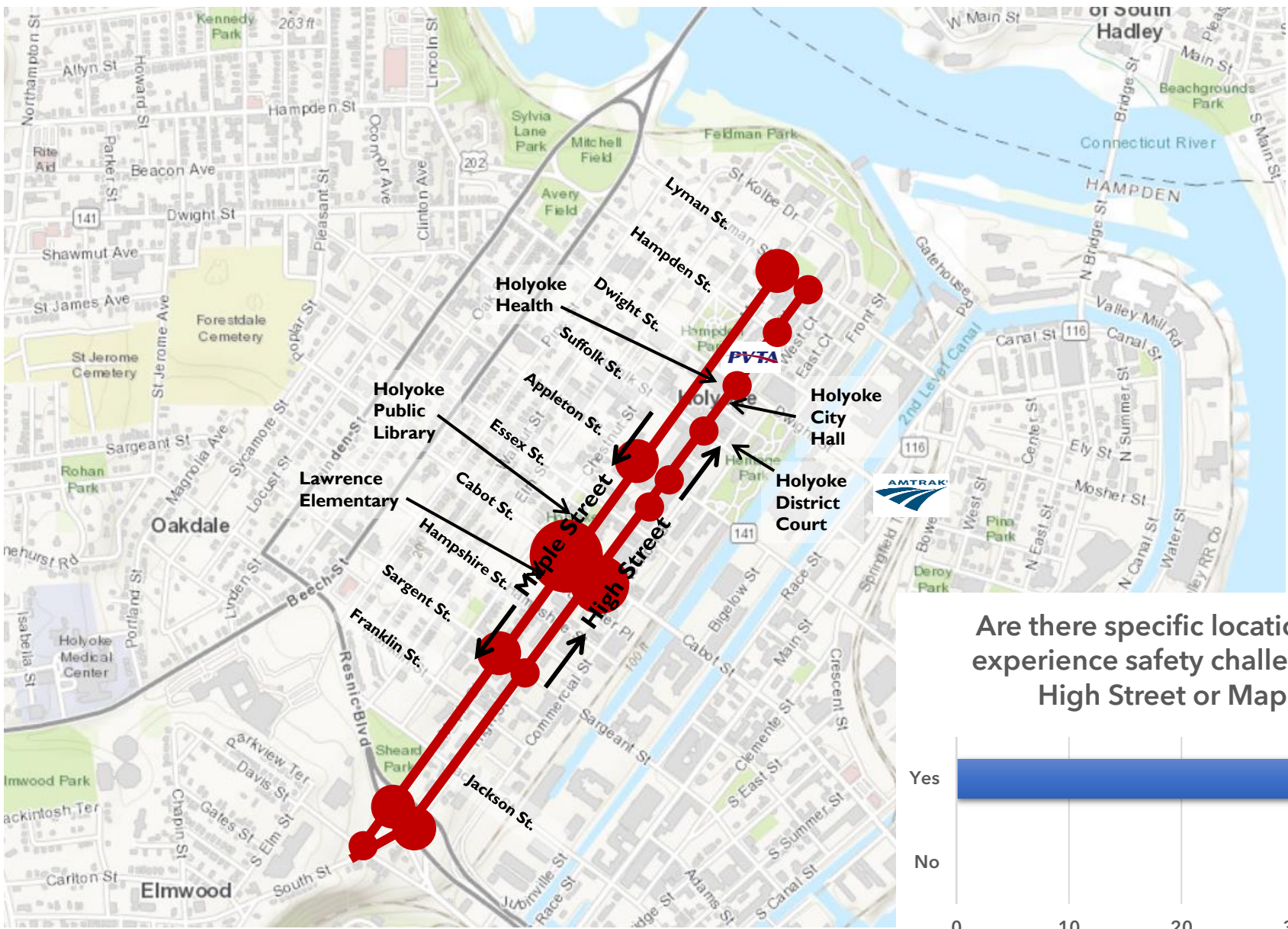
What type of improvements are a priority for you?



- OTHER
- Loitering
 - Discouraging commuter traffic
 - All of the above and other street/sidewalk features that promote downtown as a destination for dining, shopping, arts, residential, more street lighting
 - We need more parking in the area, maybe use some of the empty lots around. Also a shelter to avoid all the homeless in the area. And more police patrolling so people feel safe

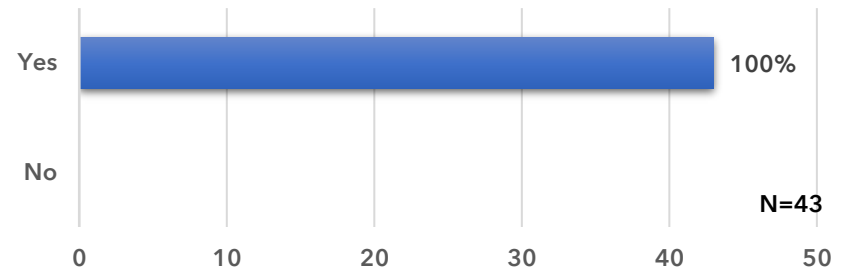
Are there specific locations where you experience safety challenges on either High Street or Maple Street (difficulty crossing the street, challenging locations to drive, etc.)?

- 4 Maple - All
- 4 Cabot - All
- 5 Maple and Cabot
- 4 High and Cabot
- 2 Maple and Lyman
- Maple and Appleton
- Maple and Sargent
- Maple and High in I-291 Area
- 1 High and Appleton St.
- High and Dwight St.
- High and Lyman St.
- High and Hampden
- High and Suffolk
- High and Sargent
- Maple by the Skating Rink



- Issues:
- Pedestrian Accommodations (13)
 - Speeding (7)
 - Sight Distance (4)
 - Parking (4)
 - Traffic Lights (3)
 - Bike Accommodations (1)

Are there specific locations where you experience safety challenges on either High Street or Maple Street?



Are there specific locations where you experience challenges with parking?

High Street:

Cabot to Lyman

- City Hall
- Businesses near City Hall
- High and Suffolk (2)

Maple Street:

Cabot to Dwight

- Residential areas
- Holyoke Health
- Maple and Cabot

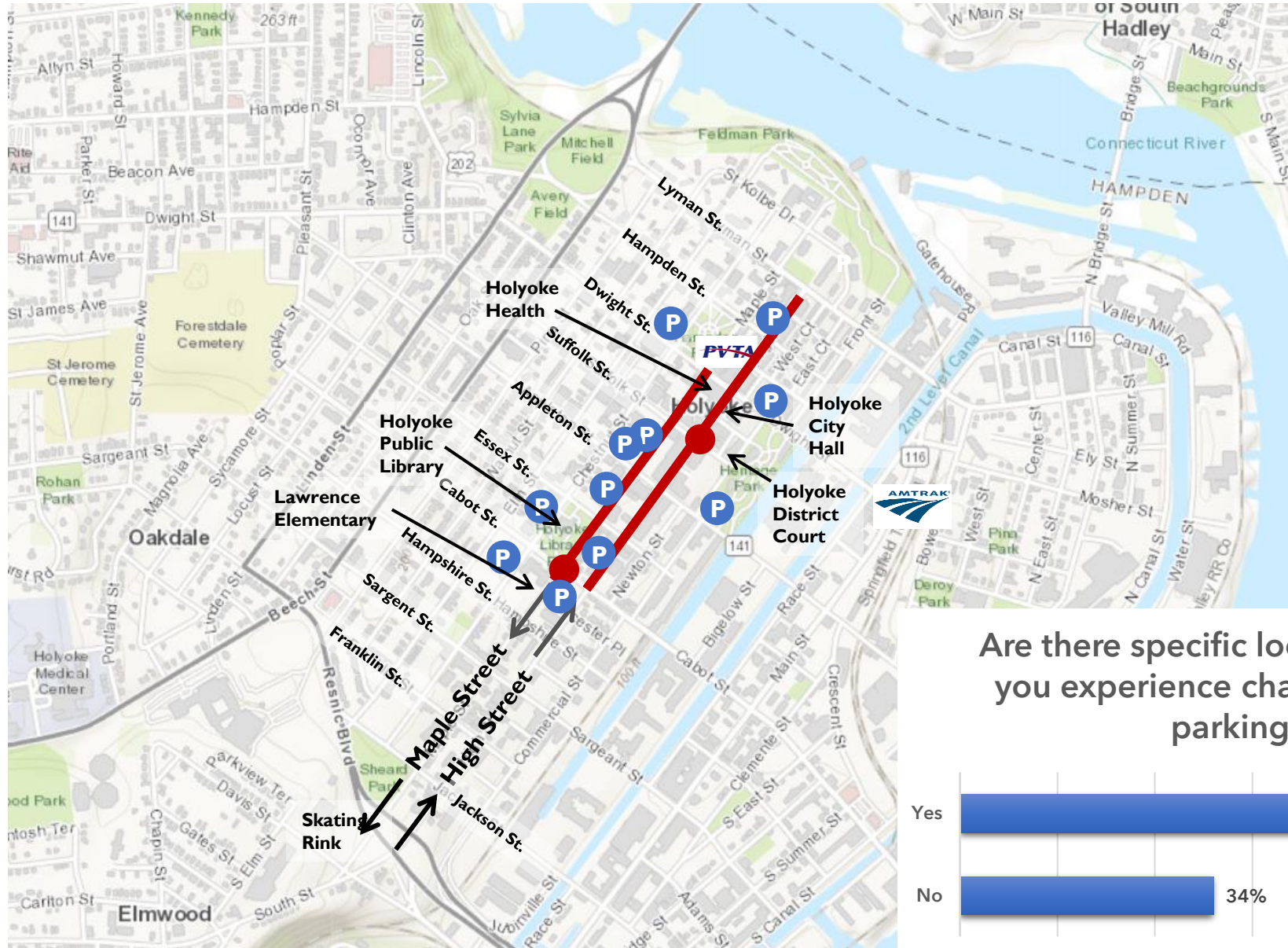
Public Lots and Garages: P

The municipal lot behind Brennan's

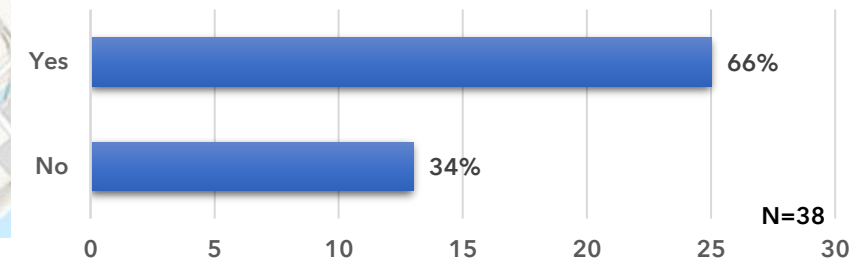
The city parking garages on High St., Chestnut St., and Maple St.

The garage on Dwight doesn't always feel safe

The garage isn't convenient



Are there specific locations where you experience challenges with parking?



Are there specific locations where you experience challenges with traffic congestion?

High Street:

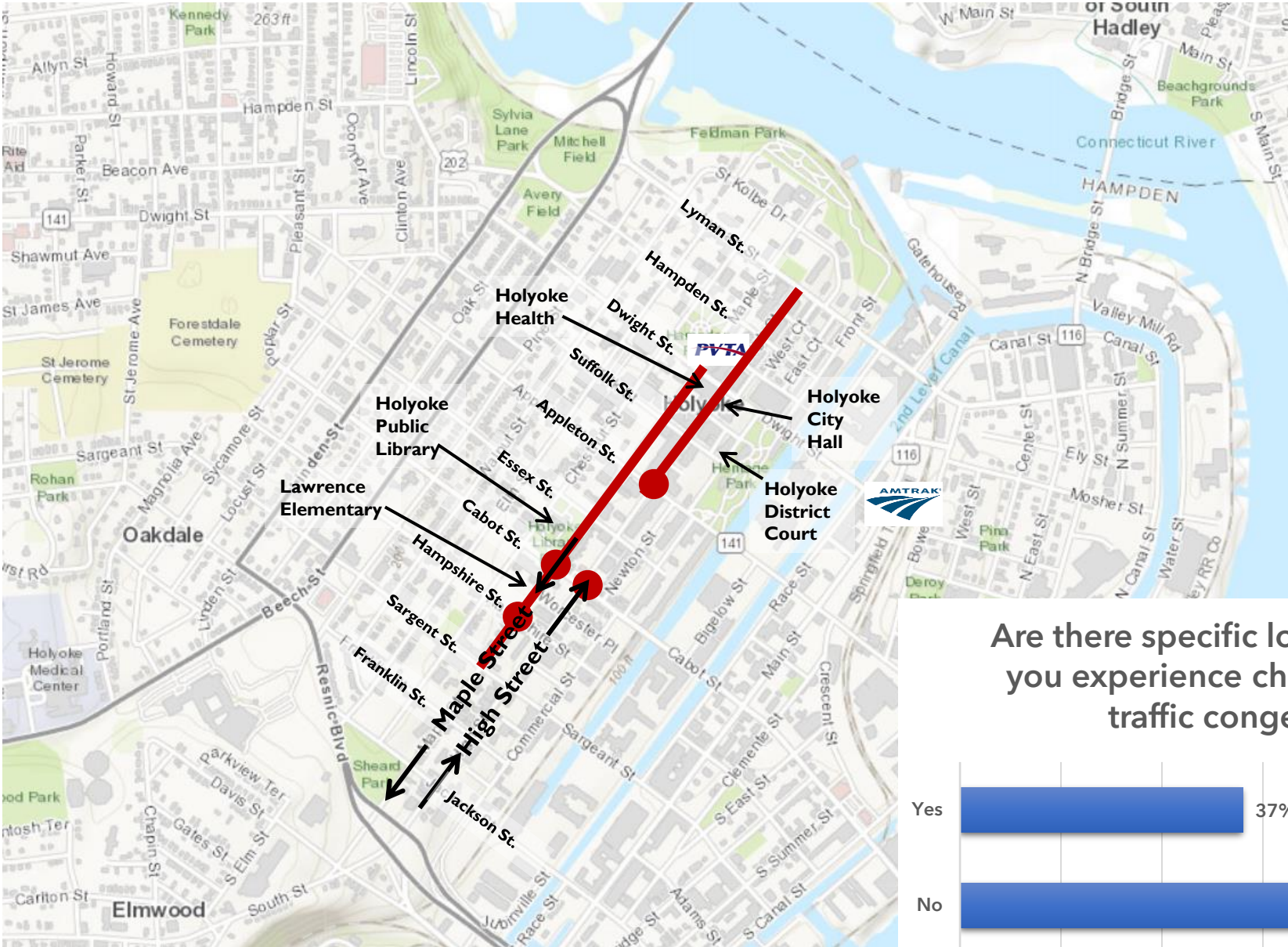
- The most common comment was High Street when there is double parking due to loading (5).
- Appleton to Lyman
- I 391 area was noted

Maple Street:

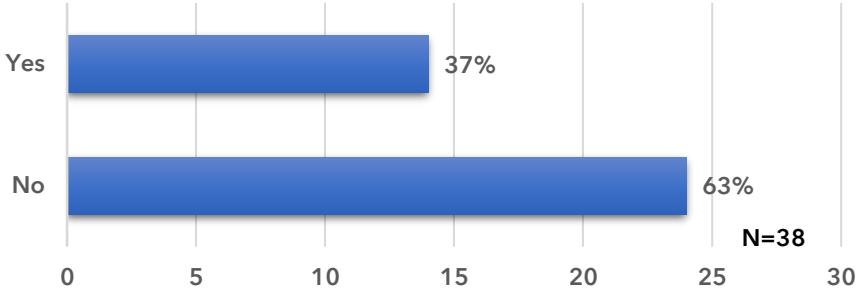
- Maple when there is double parking due to loading.
- Dwight to Sargent

Intersections:

- High Street and Appleton
- High and Maple at Cabot St
- Maple and Hampshire



Are there specific locations where you experience challenges with traffic congestion?



Are there other comments you would like to share?

General Support

- I'm absolutely thrilled that our Mayor and DOT has a vision to improve High and Maple Street

Multimodal Design / Traffic Calming / Bike Lanes / Accessibility

- I'm glad the city is looking ahead to create more welcoming streets that allow for multiple ways of transit: walk, bike and bus, not just cars! We all want a more vibrant downtown and we're moving in the right direction. Thank you!
- Final design needs to support downtown activities and not just reflect High and Maple Streets as roads to get somewhere else.
- I think speed bumps on High St. and Maple St. will be a great addition to this project.
- Need more traffic calming measures.
- It is critical that dedicated bike lanes be included in this project.
- I would prefer to maximize the pedestrian space and incorporate bicycle lanes into raised sidewalks rather than dedicated bicycle lanes. I would also prefer continuous sidewalks at crossings and intersections further maximizing the pedestrian zone. This would also create a strong visual break for motorists on the road through the change of paving material.
- We need to reduce speeding and make these streets safer for cyclists. I love the idea of a bike lane separated from traffic and parking.
- Please don't squeeze these streets to one lane in areas by adding bike lanes. They are rarely safe...and too often just a way to get federal dollars for the project, like adding roundabouts where none are needed.
- Dedicated bike lanes would be very welcomed.
- I could easily take the bus to downtown, or ride my bike there, but the infrastructure for biking doesn't feel sufficient (both safe lanes and lack of bike racks), and the bus does not run often enough, so I always end up driving.
- The most important:
 - Dedicated bike lane behind lane of parked cars or other barrier
 - Reduce to one traffic lane to make drivers slow down.
- Slow traffic down, don't sync traffic signals. If the one you are at is turning green the next one should be turning red.
- Accessibility is also a big priority.
- Any idea as to improving accessibility to people in wheelchairs and blins?
- Safety for everyone.

Are there other comments you would like to share?

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Pedestrian Safety

- Four way walk signals in the downtown area with no turn on red to give the pedestrians the safest right of way to cross the street.
- While I responded I didn't have any specific areas where I had trouble crossing high and maple, crossing anywhere there is a nightmare between speeding and distracted or apathetic drivers.
- All over the city people park way too close to the intersection illegally day after day. There is no enforcement, and it causes accidents because you can't see if anyone is coming. There should be bump outs to prevent people from parking right up on the intersection. It isn't as much of an issue on High and Main but Essex is a bit of a hold your breath and pedal to metal situation when it seems clear because it's sometimes impossible to see without getting halfway into the street. A few tickets and it would stop, but we have no enforcement. Actually, painting crosswalks to be visible downtown and people would start to think about pedestrians. But it's been years since they were visible. Meanwhile the DPW is going to paint shamrocks that are visible. What message does that send? You are throwing money at high and main for business reasons, not to actually make the area safer for pedestrians unless you fix the above.

Traffic Flow / Intersections

- Traffic signal progression should be reestablished.
- No roundabouts! They might work on paper, but they do not work in real life settings - especially if you intend to put a crosswalk or bicycle crossing through them.
- If this amount of planning and reconstruction is going to happen, I think seriously considering making both streets two -ways instead of one-ways will vastly improve speeding, way finding, visibility of stores (speeding) downtown.
- The other day I wanted to go to Paper city Fabrics and the public library. I had to zig zag all over downtown and use my GPS to make sure I didn't get stuck on a one way for too long even though I'm pretty familiar with downtown. All the one-way streets in the area make it difficult to navigate and aren't welcoming to visitors. Having people who are confused and frustrated is a safety issue. The streets should be made 2 way with sharrows painted. While I have experienced people racing down high street, I have actually had really good experiences biking around Holyoke (though I haven't been down high street much) in terms of giving bikers space and being respectful.

Enforcement

- Enforcing traffic rules and laws
- Traffic enforcement

Are there other comments you would like to share?

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Construction Phasing

- Would love a construction approach that minimizes disruption to businesses, maybe construction that does half the road at 1 time.

Loading

- Improve traffic flow, more loading and unloading space for vehicles and trucks. People double park even when there is a space available.
- When trucks are double parked for loading/unloading, it forces drivers to switch lanes, sometimes unsafely.

Timeline

- Project shouldn't take 13 years. How many more people need to die especially those who are abiding by the traffic laws and pedestrian laws? Law abiding citizens are dying. Enough is enough!

Downtown Vibrancy

- Help Holyoke turn downtown Holyoke into a mixed use affordable residential, small supportive retail and commercial environment.

Homelessness, Graffiti, Trash, etc.

- Despite its potential, Holyoke is often overlooked during the warmer months due to its pervasive homeless population. These individuals not only create a sense of unease for the community, but also leave behind litter and negatively impact the local economy. In order to address this pressing issue, it is imperative that we establish a shelter, increased police presence on the streets, and enact stricter laws to discourage street living. This must be our top priority before we can focus on any other improvements. Additionally, graffiti scattered throughout the city tarnishes its appearance. Instead of solely punishing business owners, our efforts should be directed towards apprehending those responsible for property damage and educating the youth to prevent such actions. Incorporating more art and murals in these areas may also help to uplift and revitalize the community.
- Besides traffic safety, the sense of safety of the environment matters. Trash, dog poop, vacant buildings, etc. all take away from it.
- Perhaps, someday the city will clean up the crime and drug infestation in the inner-city streets- That might bring businesses back and with the businesses would come customers.
- My opinion is that there is too much crime and drugs in HOLYOKE - clean up the guns and the drugs, and we might experience a new growth in Holyoke.
- This city is in the crossroads of I 91 and I 90 we have the Holyoke Gas Electric we have the dam, and we have the canals. I am amazed at how this City languishes in crime drugs and poverty. And to my dismay, this has been going on for decades- it's not a new thing it's an old story line - when is somebody going to do something about it? Thanks.