



STATE LOOP 360

CSJ 5000-00-131

Travis County, Texas

**CONTEXT SENSITIVE SOLUTIONS
SURVEY SUMMARY**

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Loop 360 Context Sensitive Solutions Survey Summary

Introduction

TxDOT utilized an online engagement survey from November 13 to November 28, 2018 to gather public input on the aesthetic features and other Context Sensitive Solutions to be considered for incorporation into the design of Loop 360. The survey consisted of five screens. The first screen provided information about the program and about the Context Sensitive Solutions process. The next three screens prompted participants to respond to questions about the overall aesthetic theme of the corridor, potential design of walls and columns, possible landscaping treatments and other scenic and man-made features, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and additional destinations or points of interest along the corridor. Participants were also asked to respond to questions about the benefits and constraints of using Loop 360, their priorities for proposed improvements, and how frequently and for what purposes they utilize the roadway. The final screen asked participants to provide their zip code and to indicate how often they use Loop 360 and whether they use it for recreational purposes. Participants were given the opportunity to give additional feedback, and could also provide their email addresses if they wanted to sign up for program email updates.

Stakeholders were encouraged to take the survey on computers at the November 13 public workshop for the Loop 360 at Spicewood Springs Road project, or take the survey from any desired location during the 15-day public comment period for the workshop. E-blasts were sent to the corridor-wide distribution list on November 18 and 28 to announce and remind people to take the survey, and posts to the @Loop360Project and @TxDOTAustin Twitter feeds also served as reminders. A link to the online survey remained active on the Loop 360 Project website throughout the duration of the survey period.

Survey Participants

There were 562 visits to the survey, 378 (67.3%) of which were survey participants (i.e., provided feedback by completing at least one question). 184 (32.7%) visitors accessed the survey but did not answer any questions. Fourteen (2.5%) participants completed the survey at the public workshop. Figure 1 below shows the number of survey participants and visitors.

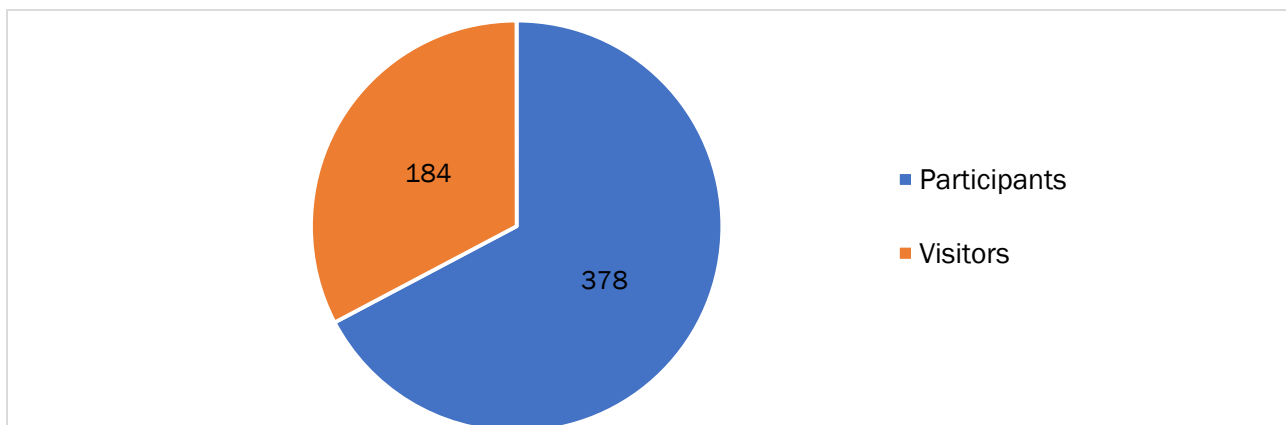


Figure 1. Summary of participants and visitors

Participants were asked to indicate how often they use the corridor. Approximately 2/3 of all survey participants indicate that they use Loop 360 regularly, with 44% reporting daily use and an additional 22% reporting that they use the corridor 5-6 days per week. Fewer people (10%) use the corridor 3-4 days per week, and some (16%) use it only once or twice per week. The remaining survey participants (8%) use Loop 360 once a month or less. These data suggest that most survey participants have a large stake in the improvements incorporated along Loop 360. Figure 2 below shows the number of people who use Loop 360 at various rates.

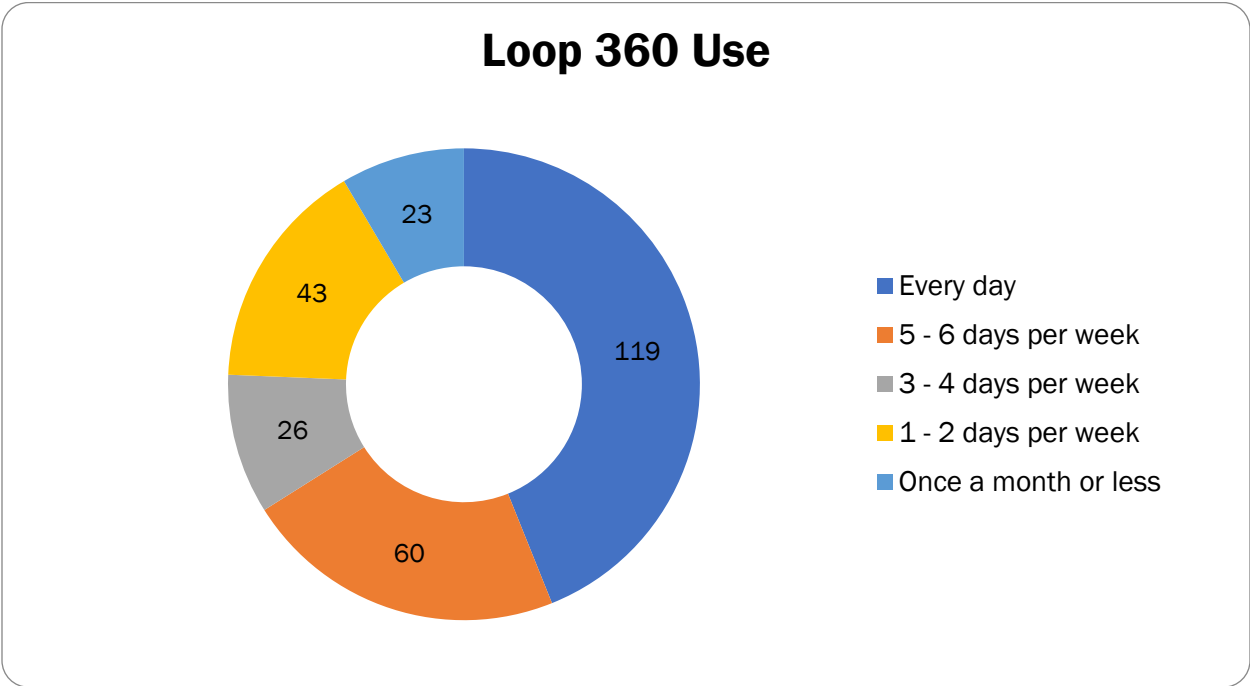


Figure 2. Summary of frequency of using Loop 360

People were also asked to share their home zip code. Results indicate that survey participants live on or around Loop 360, or reside in the surrounding area. All except one participant indicated that they live in Travis or an adjacent county. This suggests that people from the local community are interested in the design aspects of the Loop 360 improvements. See Figure 3 below for a map of the zip codes listed (numbers represent frequency of zip code). Note that the outlying location (near Llano) is not included below.

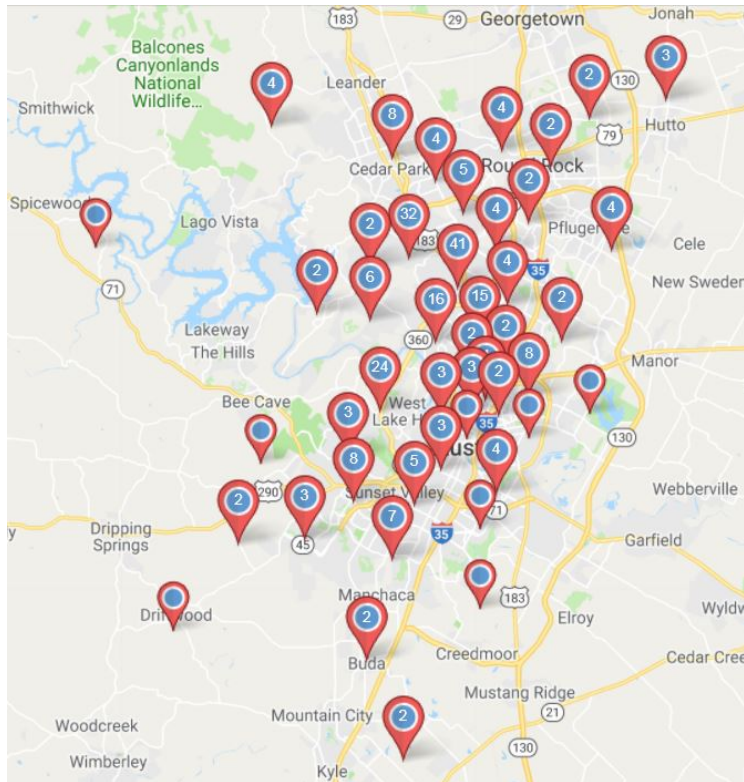


Figure 3. Summary of participants' home zip codes

Image Rating

After viewing the information at the beginning of the survey, participants were presented with a series of categories with corresponding features and asked to rate each feature on a scale of 1-5, with 5 representing a rating of most preferred and 1 representing least preferred. For the purposes of this report, ratings 1 and 2 were summed to indicate less preference or a lack of preference, ratings 4 and 5 were summed to indicate more preference, and rating 3 indicates a neutral opinion. Categories included overall theme, walls and columns, landscape, and bicycle and pedestrian access.

Participants were first asked to rate options for the overall theme of the corridor. Options included: modest (basic patterns with simplistic, two-tone coloring), hill country (stone walls with decorative emblems representative of the local area, such as a star), contemporary (sleek, clean lines, single-tone coloring and high contrast bridge rails), and blend (clean lines and basic patterns, with some decorative features).

Results suggested that people favored the hill country theme and did not favor the modest theme. Specifically, 53% of people indicated moderate or strong preference for the hill country theme, 26% of people indicated a lack of preference and 20% indicated a neutral rating. In contrast, only 16% of people preferred the modest theme, whereas 55% of people did not prefer that theme, and 29% were neutral.

Contemporary and blended themes received moderate ratings respective to other options in this category. 46% of participants indicated preference for a contemporary theme, 36% did not prefer this theme, and 18% were neutral. Almost twice as many (42%) participants preferred a blended theme compared to those who did not prefer it, but a large percentage (33%) indicated a neutral rating. Figure 4 below shows the ratings for each option in the overall theme category.

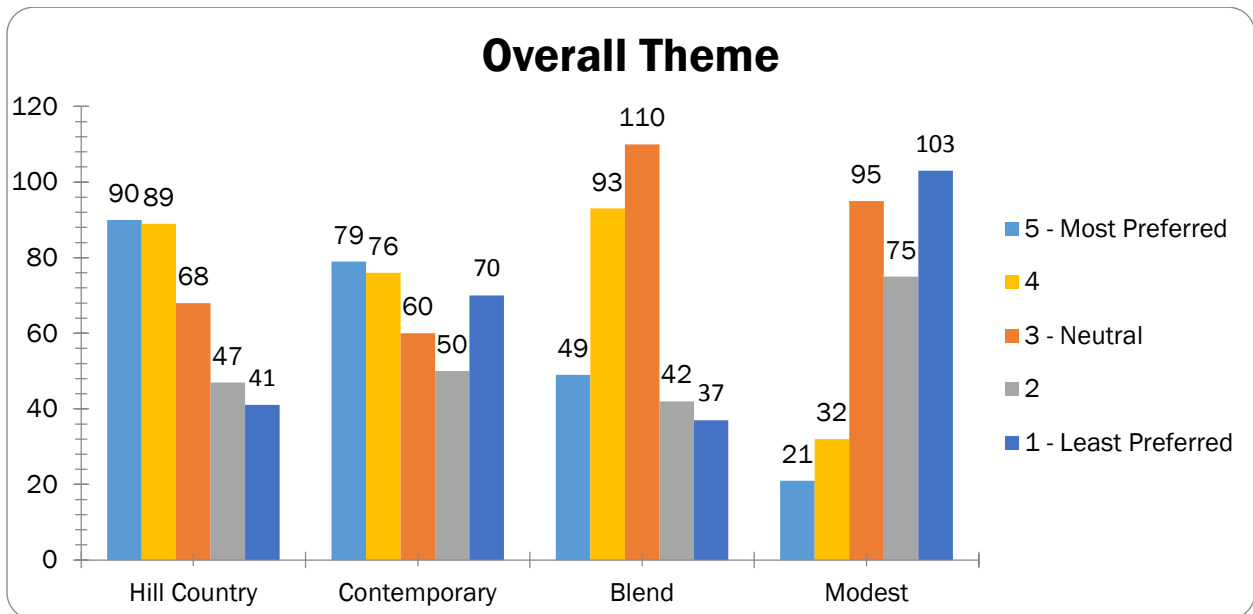


Figure 4. Ratings for overall themes

Next, participants were asked to rate options for walls and columns. Options included: bright (vibrant, high-contrast colors), muted (one- or two-tone colors), representative art (decorative artwork representative of the local area, such as cattle or bluebonnets), and decorative patterns (brick or stone work with varying textures).

Decorative patterns and representative art received the most support. Slightly over half (51%) of participants indicated a favorable opinion of decorative patterns. Only 23% expressed disapproval for the patterns, and 26% were neutral. Similarly, 51% of participants expressed a preference for including representative art, 27% expressed disapproval, and 22% were neutral.

Participants were largely neutral regarding a muted design, with 34% of participants indicating favor, 33% indicating disfavor, and 33% indicating a neutral opinion.

Participants expressed disapproval for the bright design. Only 29% of participants indicated favor for a bright design, whereas over half (53%) indicated dislike for that design. Eighteen (18) percent were neutral. Figure 5 below shows the ratings for each option for walls and columns.

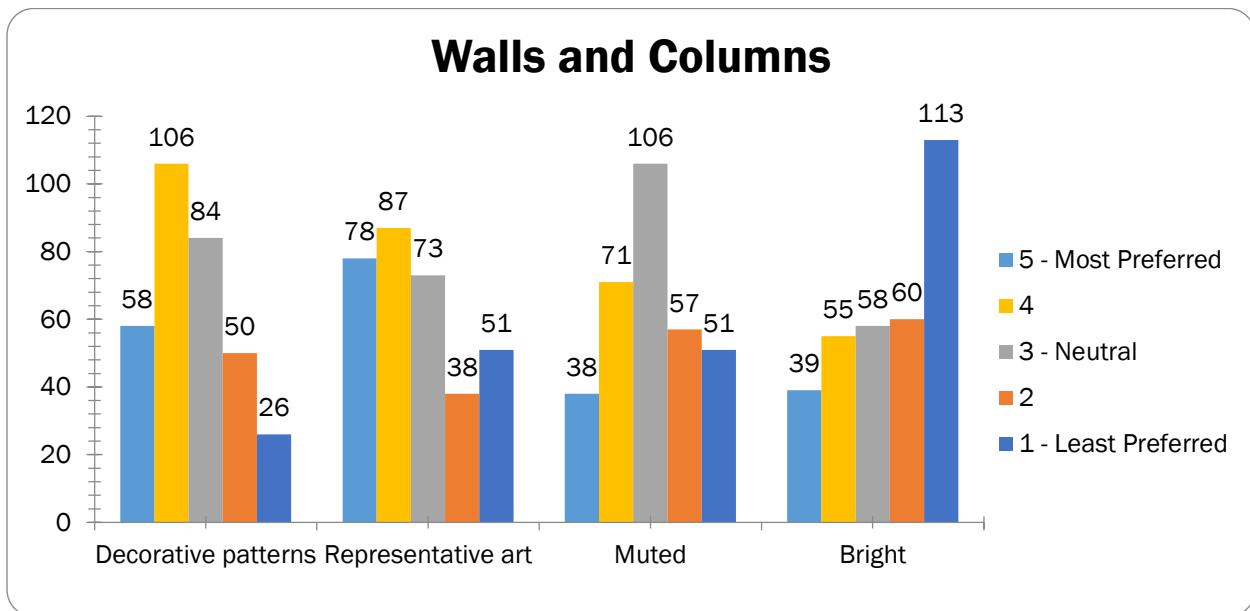


Figure 5. Ratings for walls and columns

Next, participants were asked to indicate preferences for elements of landscaping that might be added to certain points along the corridor. Landscaping elements included: native plants (those local to the area), some non-native plants (a mixture of local and non-local plants and trees), manicured (closely groomed bushes and trees), pavers and concrete (decorative concrete patterns without large plants), and ornamental gravel and rock (a mixture of large and small rocks, potentially incorporating some bushes or plants to fill spaces).

People indicated a relatively strong preference for incorporation of native plants. In particular, 66% of participants indicated favor for the plants, whereas only 18% indicated dislike. Fifteen (15) percent were neutral.

Landscaping options that included ornamental gravel and rock or some non-native plants received moderately positive ratings. Nearly half (45%) of participants expressed a preference for a landscape created from ornamental gravel and rocks, 31% expressed a lack of favor, and 24% were neutral. Similarly, 40% of participants indicated favor for incorporating some non-native plants, 35% of participants expressed a lack of favor for the option, and 26% indicated a neutral rating.

Neither a manicured option nor pavers and concrete garnered much support. Only about a quarter of all participants (26%) indicated a preference for a manicured landscape, whereas over half (51%) indicated a dislike for the option. Twenty-two (22) percent of participants indicated a neutral opinion. Similarly, only 24% of participants indicated support for a design

using pavers and concrete, 57% indicated disapproval, and 19% were neutral. Figure 6 below shows the ratings for each landscaping option.

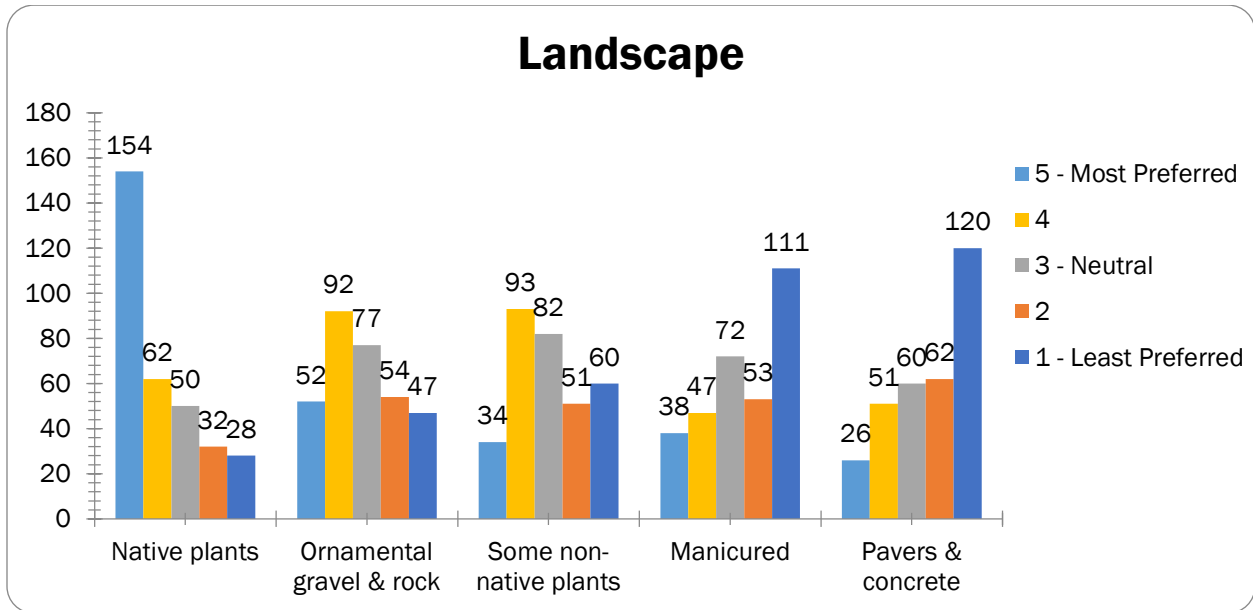


Figure 6. Ratings for landscape options

Finally, participants could provide input on bicycle and pedestrian access. Options included: bicycle lane/no sidewalk (bicyclists would use a dedicated lane striped separately from the roadway), a shared-use path with a narrow buffer (shared-use path would be divided from the roadway and buffered by narrow landscaping), and a shared-use path with a large buffer (shared-use path would be divided from the roadway and buffered by wider landscaping).

A shared-use path with a large buffer garnered the most support, with 75% of participants indicating favor for the option. Only 14% indicated a lack of approval and 11% were neutral.

A shared-use path with a narrow buffer generated fairly neutral ratings. Specifically, 40% of participants expressed approval for the option, 31% expressed a lack of support, and 29% indicated a neutral opinion.

Nearly half of the participants expressed a lack of overall approval for a bicycle lane with no sidewalk. Specifically, 32% percent of participants indicated favor for this option, 46% expressed disfavor, and 22% were neutral. Figure 7 below shows the ratings for bicycle and pedestrian access options.

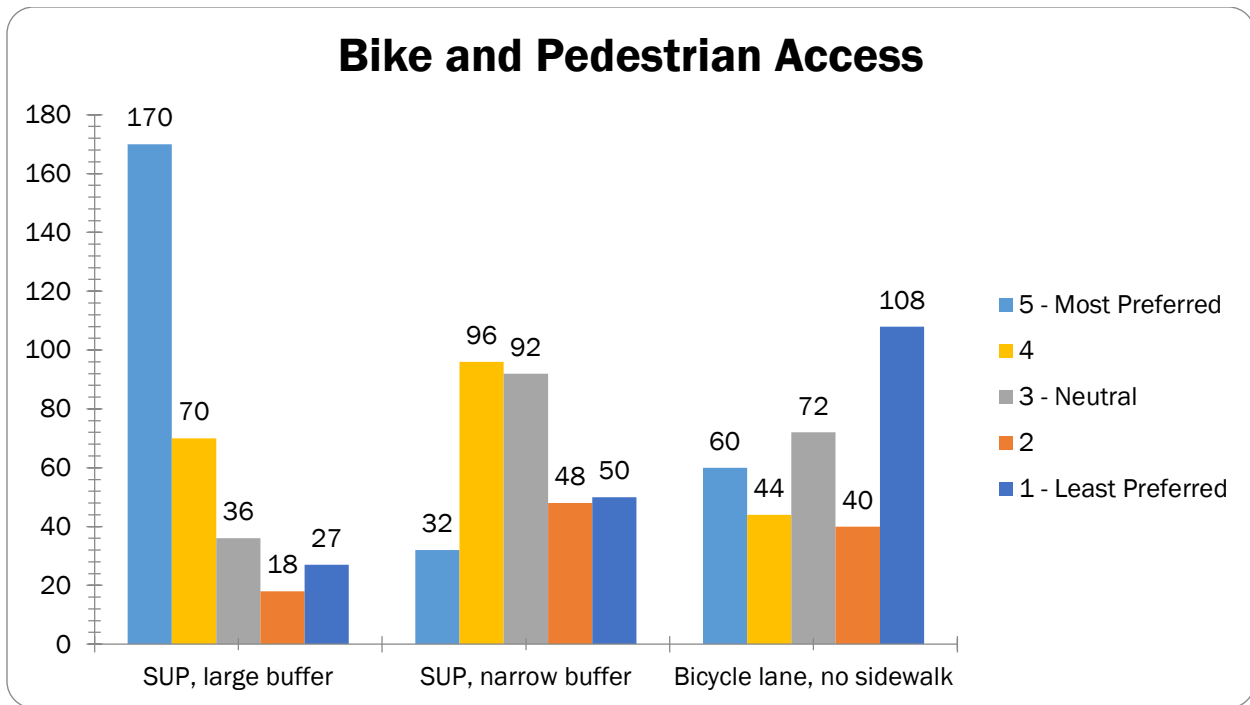


Figure 7. Ratings for bicycle and pedestrian access

Overall, participants seemed to prefer design elements that are representative of the local area. A hill country theme, decorative patterns or representative art, and native plants emerged as the highest rated options among the first three categories. Participants also indicated support for a shared-use path with a large buffer, potentially because people might perceive that option as increasing safety for bikers and pedestrians (see below section regarding safety concerns).

Preferences for the overall theme, walls/columns, landscape and bike/pedestrian access should not be incorporated in isolation but might be combined in various ways. For example, a hill country theme might be combined with representative art from the region. Additionally, options that were each ranked high in a particular category (e.g., representative art and decorative patterns) might be combined, so that those who use Loop 360 might experience a variety of design elements.

Feature Selection and Priorities

Survey participants were then asked to share their feedback regarding some general and specific features that could be incorporated into the Loop 360 design. First, they were asked to indicate what area features they would like to see added to walls and other structures. They could select as many elements as they desired from a list, which included multicultural, community, history, technology, capital city, Austin landmarks, live music, and regional

wildlife. They could also indicate that they preferred none of those options, or could write in a different response.

The top three features people preferred incorporating were regional wildlife, Austin landmarks and local history. The remaining features received some support. Fifty-two people did not desire any of these options. Only nine people listed additional options; these include features such as patterns, abstract art, murals, or highlighting the corridor’s natural features. Figure 8 below shows the number of responses for each category.

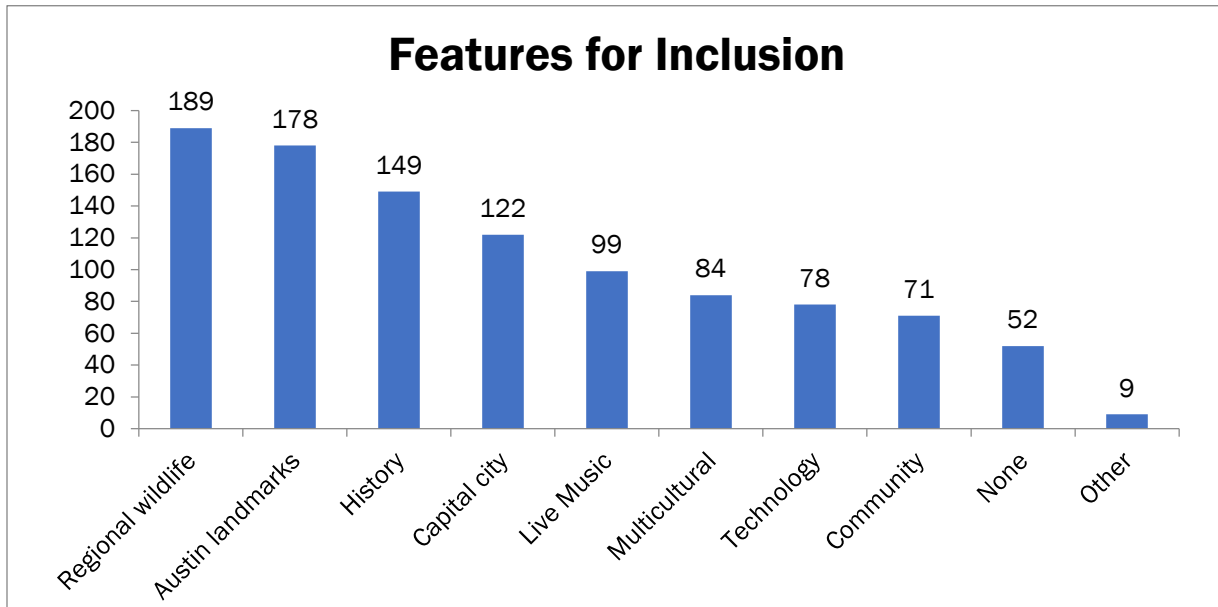


Figure 8. Features for inclusion in walls and other structures

Participants were asked what scenic or man-made features should be kept or obstructed from view along the corridor. People were allowed to write in any response they desired for these two questions. Features that people expressed desire in keeping included: Pennybacker Bridge, hills and hill country views, views of downtown and the Austin skyline, wildflowers, the limestone cliffs, Bull Creek and green spaces, trees and other natural plants, and water features.

Features that people wanted obstructed from view included substantial buildings and homes, commercial development including office and retail spaces and parking structures, infrastructure/utilities, and concrete walls.

People were also asked to indicate their top priorities for inclusion in the Loop 360 design. They were asked to choose three features from a list, including pedestrian and bicycle, access, lighting, landscaping, signage, intersection, “gateway” experience, trail heads or rest spots. They were also encouraged to write in another option.

The top three priorities identified were intersection improvements/features, access, and pedestrian and bicycle facilities. Landscaping and trail heads/rest spots, which can be considered scenic or recreational features, are also important. Sixty-six people indicated that they have some other priority; those included eliminating traffic signals along Loop 360, improving traffic flow and congestion, maintaining the natural habitat and landscaping and adding lanes to the corridor. See Figure 9 for a representation of priorities for Loop 360.

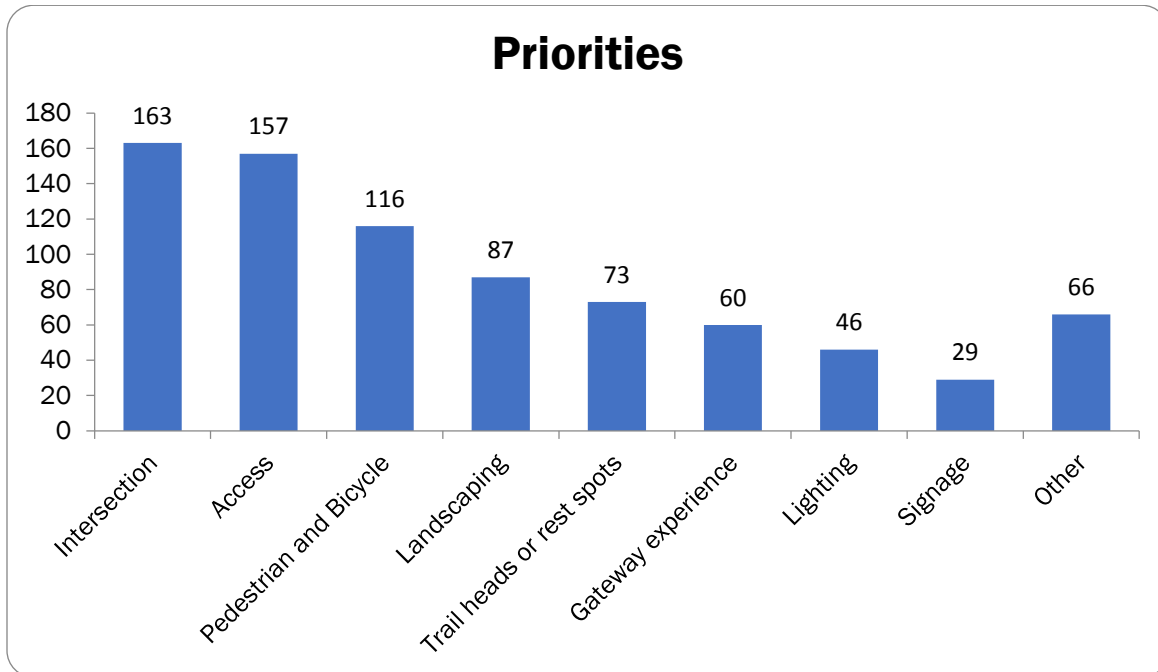


Figure 9. Priorities for Loop 360 design improvements

Experience Using Loop 360

Participants were asked to describe their experience traveling along Loop 360. In particular, they were invited to write in descriptions about what they like and dislike about traveling along the corridor.

People indicated that they liked aspects such as beautiful views, wildflowers and local greenery, the feeling of driving along a “country” road, bypassing downtown Austin, convenience, local access, natural surroundings and scenery, and a lack of lights at night.

Dislikes included aspects such as having to stop at traffic signals, traffic congestion, lack of pedestrian access, unsafe driving behaviors, and pollution. Most of the respondents to this question indicated either traffic congestion or traffic signals as an issue.

Survey participants were also asked to select from a list of benefits and constraints. Benefits included: scenic areas, connections, feels safe and not congested. As shown in Figure 10 below, most participants (258) noted that Loop 360 connects them to other roadways. An additional 163 indicated that the scenic areas along Loop 360 were

beneficial. Very few people indicated that the roadway feels safe (27) or is not congested (3). Twenty-five participants noted other benefits, such as bicycling, rolling hills, the dark skies at night, the access to nearby destinations and being able to bypass heavy traffic on alternate routes.

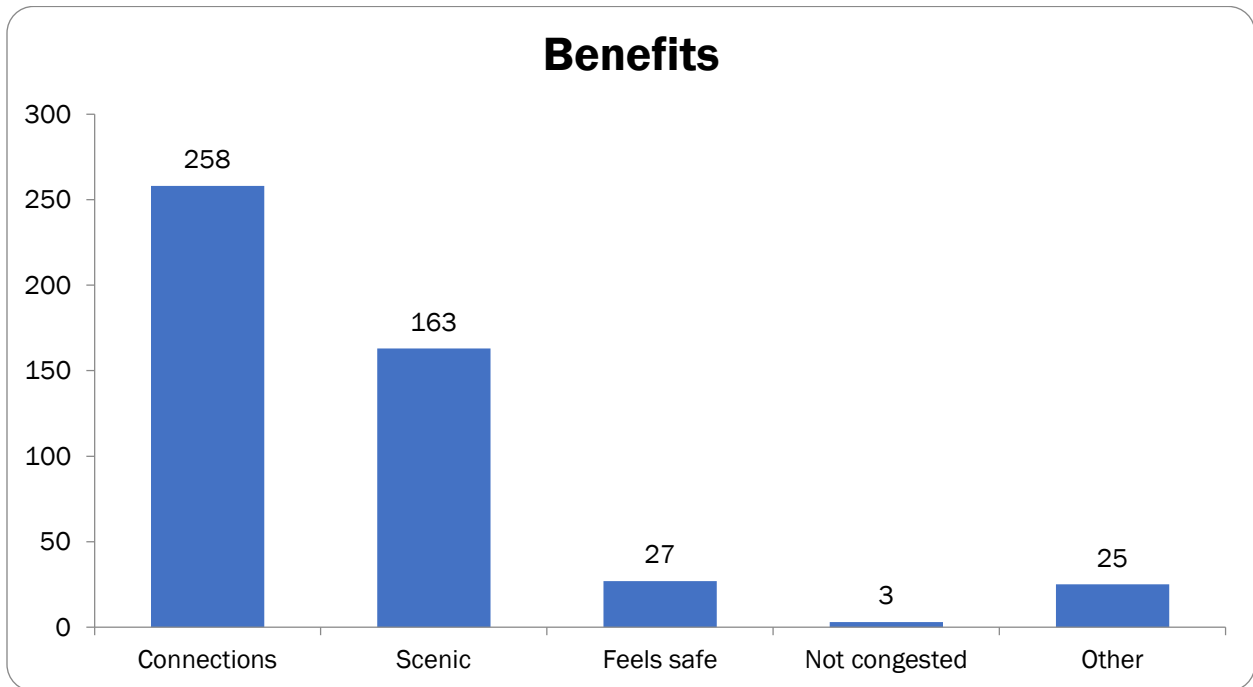


Figure 10. Benefits of using Loop 360

Constraints along Loop 360 included: too congested, feels unsafe and lack of proper lighting. As illustrated in Figure 11 below, most participants (253) noted that Loop 360 is heavily congested, suggesting that a primary concern is the traffic congestion along the corridor. An additional 68 indicated that the roadway feels unsafe to drive, bicycle or walk along. Only 19 participants indicated that poor lighting was an issue. Forty-five participants noted other constraints, such as traffic signals and their timing, traffic speed and noise. Several participants also noted a lack of ability to avoid driving the corridor, despite the evident constraints of doing so.

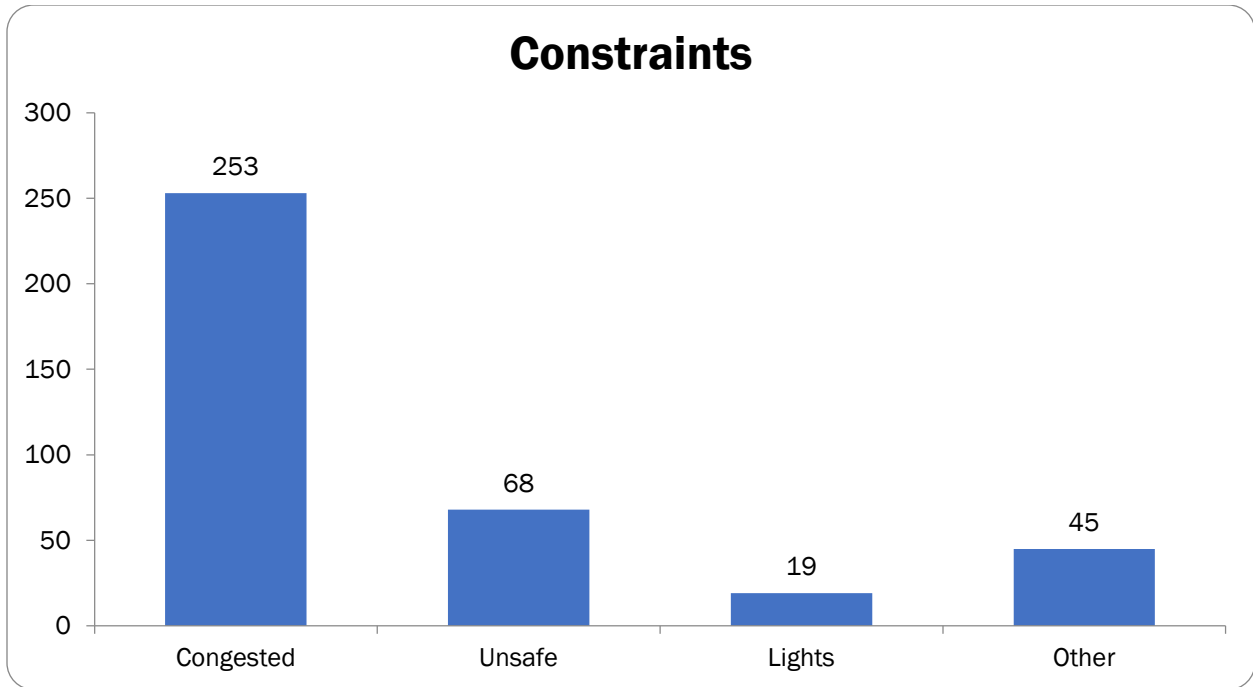


Figure 11. Constraints of using Loop 360

Map Markers

In addition to sharing their preferences for various design elements and aesthetic features to be included in the Loop 360 improvements and indicating the perceived positive and negative aspects of using the corridor, participants were also able to use an interactive map to drop markers identifying locations of interest along and near Loop 360.

Specifically, participants were asked to identify locations that fall into the following categories: safety concerns, destinations and features. They could also write in any other location they felt was relevant to their experience using the corridor. Each category included a drop-down list of options that participants could use to specify what type of location they were marking, and people could also provide additional comments to further clarify their responses. Figure 12 below shows the number of responses in each category, and the number of comments that people made. Note that the “other” category did not include drop-down options, and therefore the number of comments is nearly equal to the number of responses for that category.

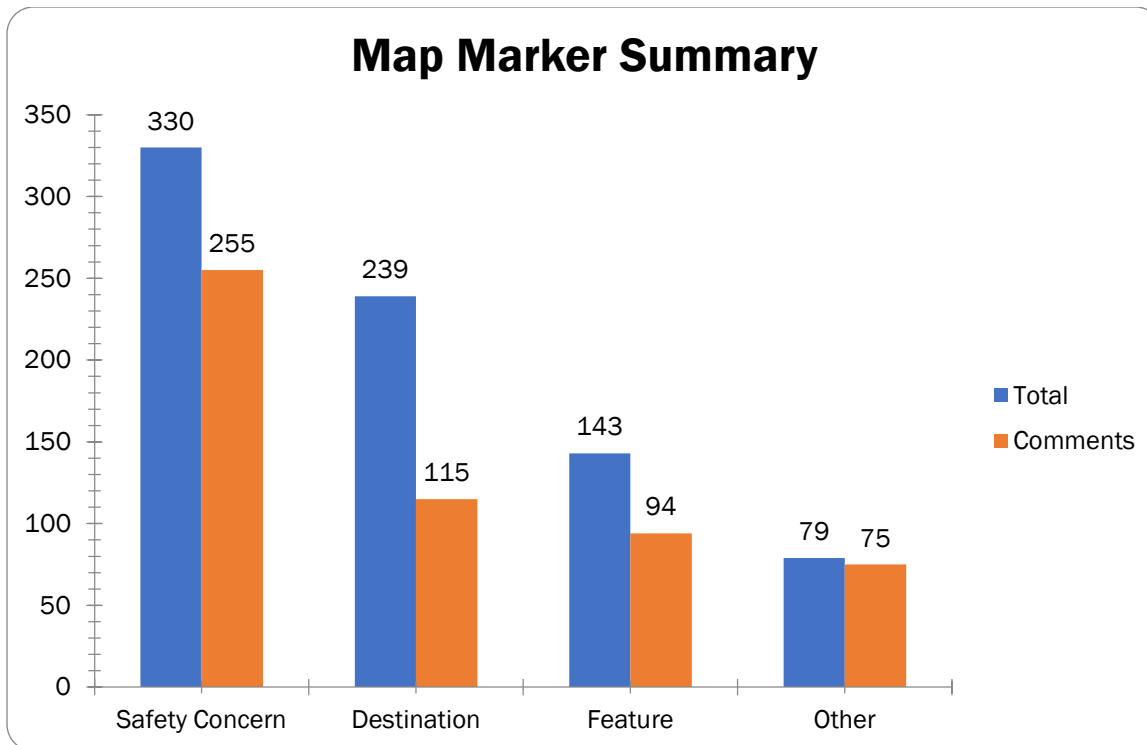


Figure 12. Number of responses and comments for map marker categories

Participants identified a total of 330 safety concerns along and near Loop 360. Of these, 42 locations were identified where traffic speed is a problem due to drivers failing to abide by traffic laws, perceived poorly timed light cycles, slow traffic due to congestion and cut-through traffic. An additional 35 locations represented safety concerns for bicyclists and pedestrians, including high speeds for vehicles, difficulty accessing adjacent or nearby streets and lack of bicycle/pedestrian signals. Lighting and pavement conditions do not seem to be a large issue, as poor lighting was identified in only five locations along the corridor, and pavement conditions were perceived to be poor in only one spot.

Fifty-seven (57) participants indicated that there was another safety concern. Those included issues such as traffic congestion, blind spots and sharp turns, difficulty accessing the mainlanes from cross streets, drivers utilizing the shoulder as an additional lane, lack of shared-use paths, unsafe U-turns and lack of parking for scenic overlooks, causing pedestrians to park along the right of way to take photographs. The remaining 190 participants did not indicate what type of safety concern they were pinpointing. See Figure 13 below for a representation of the safety concerns identified along Loop 360.

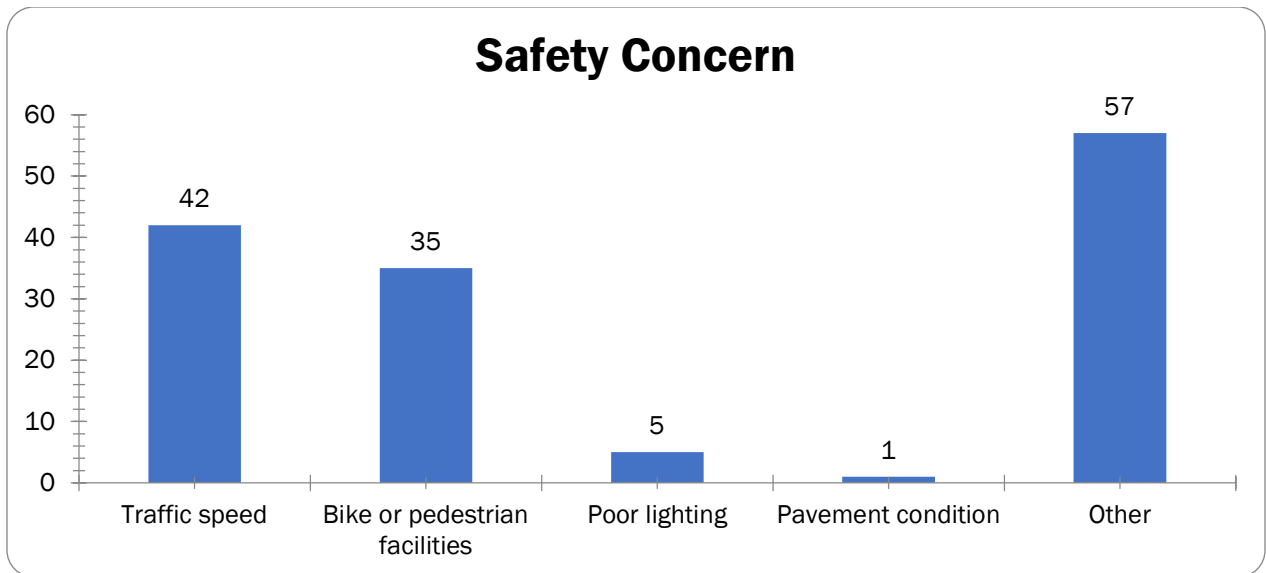


Figure 13. Safety concerns identified along Loop 360

People indicated a total of 239 destinations along Loop 360, which included 45 workplaces, including Indeed and the Apple campus, and 14 homes. They also noted 25 places for engaging in recreational activities, such as the Barton Creek greenbelt and the scenic overlooks, 10 shopping areas including grocery stores as well as shopping centers/shopping malls, seven locations for dining, and two places of worship.

Thirteen participants listed additional destinations, including area schools, gas stations, and connections to adjacent trails. The remaining 123 participants did not categorize the destination they were identifying. See Figure 14 below for the destinations along Loop 360.

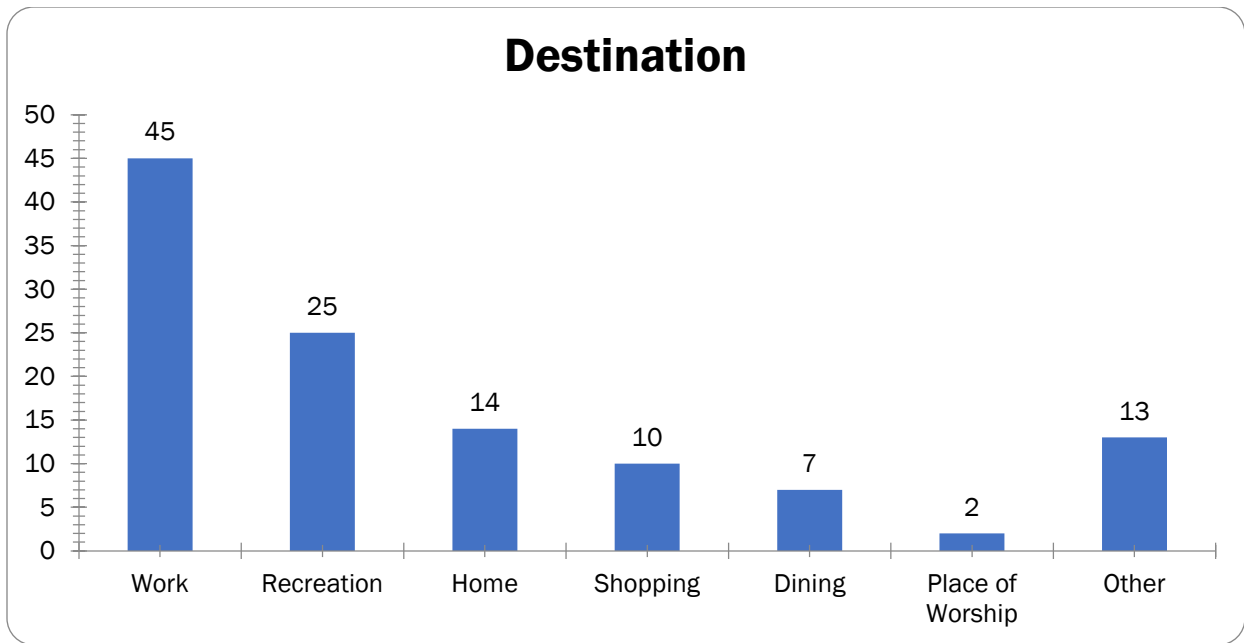


Figure 14. Destinations identified along Loop 360

People indicated a total of 143 features along Loop 360. The majority (48) of those were scenic vistas or scenic areas of the corridor, including limestone cliffs, scenic overlooks, water features and the Colorado River/Pennybacker Bridge area. Three geological features such as Wild Basin Wilderness Preserve and one area with special vegetation (Wild Basin) were also identified. Additionally, people noted 13 manmade structures, including local schools, churches and the Pennybacker Bridge.

Seven people indicated other features along Loop 360, including the Loop 360 boat ramp, golf course, and adjacent green spaces. The other 71 participants did not specify the feature they pinpointed. See Figure 15 below for the breakdown of features along Loop 360.

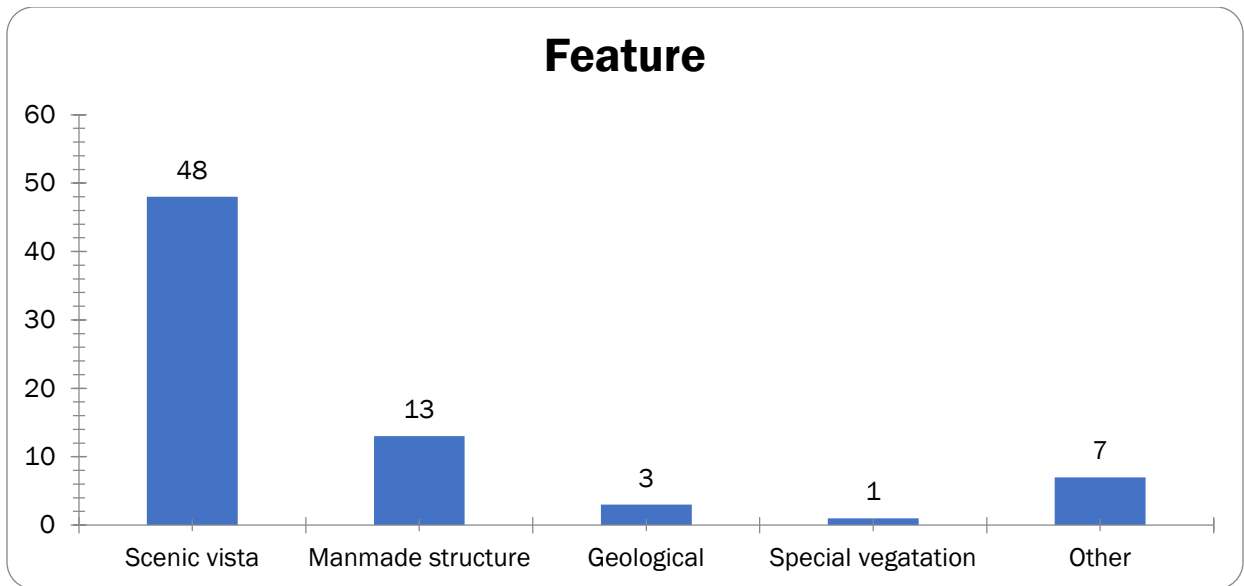


Figure 15. Features identified along Loop 360

As noted above, 79 participants pointed out another important location along the corridor that did not fall into the categories of safety concerns, destinations or features. Those locations include: school districts, electronic vehicle charging stations, area signage that might be removed, bicycle access, traffic congestion, additional traffic signals and intersections that might warrant removal, grade separation, coordination or other improvements, and additional scenic features.

Recreation on Loop 360

Participants were asked whether they use Loop 360 for recreational purposes. One hundred eleven (111) people responded to this question. Approximately 80% indicated that they did not use Loop 360 for recreation, and some participants explained that they avoided doing so due to factors such as traffic congestion and safety concerns.

The remaining 20% of participants noted that they do use Loop 360 for recreation. They cited uses including: bicycling, boating and other use of water features such as Bull Creek and the Colorado River, trails and hiking, access to the greenbelts, photography, and scenic driving and views. These responses, coupled with the identification of points of interest on the map, help shed light on the perceived value and functions of the Loop 360 corridor.

Additional Comments

Before closing the survey, people were given the opportunity to provide any additional comments or feedback not included in the preceding questions. One hundred eight (108) people added a final comment. Major themes included:

- Safety and mobility should be top concerns and should remain priorities for the Loop 360 program.
- It is important to maintain and enhance the natural beauty and scenic features of the corridor, including the Pennybacker Bridge. This also applies during the night time; maintaining “dark skies” is a priority.
- Prioritize and maintain bicycle and pedestrian access.
 - Prioritize enhancement of safety for cyclists and pedestrians.
 - Maintain and enhance existing shoulders to provide safe access to bicyclists.
- Consider improvements at Loop 360 at US 183, and at South MoPac. Also consider additional intersections not currently included in the Loop 360 program.
- Consider adding lanes to Loop 360.
- Improvements should account for, and aim to reduce, noise.
- Water quality is important, and potential impacts to adjacent water features should be carefully considered in all projects.
- Aim to complete improvements as quickly as possible.

The first two comments concerning safety/mobility and preserving the natural aspects of Loop 360 were noted multiple times. This feedback suggests that people want to see a safe, less congested roadway without losing the scenic features of the corridor.

Conclusion

As part of the Loop 360 Context Sensitive Solutions process, the project team will take information collected from the survey, combined with feedback received at future open houses, and incorporate it into projects currently in development as well as future Loop 360 projects. This includes addressing safety and mobility concerns noted in the map marker section. This feedback will also be used to develop a corridor wide aesthetics plan for Loop 360.