



November 2024

“It’s My School! Over There!”

Assessing Mobility and Child Care Commute Experiences
in the District of Columbia





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The Low Income Investment Fund (LIIF) is a national nonprofit community development financial institution with \$900 million in assets under management. LIIF's mission is to mobilize capital and partners to achieve opportunity, equity and well-being for people and communities. Since 1984, LIIF has deployed more than \$3.2 billion to serve more than 2.4 million people in communities across the country from its five offices. An S&P-rated organization, LIIF innovates financial solutions that create more equitable outcomes for all by building affordable homes, quality educational opportunities from early childhood through higher education, health clinics, healthy food retail and community facilities.



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An intersection near the southern end of the Metropolitan Branch Trail

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Introduction: Destinations and Journeys

Every day, tens of thousands of parents and caregivers use roads, sidewalks, bicycle lanes, and public transit systems in the District of Columbia to navigate between home and their child care arrangements. Some make stops at parks or public restrooms along the way. Others sing songs or hand off snacks while they wait at bus stops or strap children into car seats. Many think of what comes next, knowing that a single delay at any point can affect their ability to pick up or drop off children at school or child care on time, arrive promptly to work, or complete errands.

For adults, commuting is often a time of boredom or an opportunity to tune out, but for young children moving from place to place presents opportunities to learn, engage, and connect with caregivers and other people they encounter along the way. The rapid brain development that children experience between birth and age five is uniquely influenced by the environments they spend time in, the opportunities they have for play and exploration, and the interactions they have with parents and other trusted adults.ⁱ Stopping to examine and discuss a patch of blooming flowers on the morning walk to child care or discussing which route to take on the bike ride home is more than just a one-off interaction. It is an important part of an evolving, interdependent relationship that makes children, adults, and communities healthier and more resilient.ⁱⁱ

This report is the third in a series on child care infrastructure and facilities intended to support the District's and the child care sector's ongoing recovery from the impacts of the pandemic. The Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) and Hurley and Associates commissioned the series with support from federal American Rescue Plan funds for child care to help various stakeholders understand the current supply and demand of child care in the District, project future supply and needs, explore how infrastructure and other challenges affect supply and quality of child care, and surface opportunities for continuing to expand and enhance supply and quality of child care to meet family and community needs.

Specifically, this study investigates the ways parents and children move between home and child care arrangements using results from a small series of people moving counts and parent transit diaries. It builds on findings from survey and site visit data presented in the second report in the series, *Child Care Infrastructure in the District of Columbia: A Review of Physical Environments for Young Children*, which largely focuses on the existing conditions of child development facilities in the District. In effect, this study connects the characteristics of common destinations of young children to the qualities of the journeys they take to get there.

Such analysis is particularly important in the context of a central finding of the second report: child care facilities rely on a variety of public and private spaces to serve children effectively, but they have almost no authority to improve the

public realm that surrounds them. Even the best resourced programs often cite challenges making improvements to things like sidewalk conditions, shared outdoor spaces, or car traffic, all of which affect daily experiences of children and families. Many facilities also face operating challenges that spawn from car-dominated planning and infrastructure, which may be beyond the purview of OSSE and other education and social service agencies but are still critical to the experiences of children, families, and caregivers.

This report provides new insights into the experiences young children and caregivers have as they move between common destinations, including the transportation modalities children and families use, the time required during commutes, and how features of the built environment affect travel experiences. In turn, opportunities are identified for enhancing coordination between sectors that govern transit and infrastructure and those focused on early care and education. When street grids, bicycle infrastructure, and transit systems are designed with young children and caregivers in mind, children arrive better prepared to child care, and child development facility leaders and staff can more easily and safely plan activities and opportunities for children to explore and connect with the communities they are located in.ⁱⁱⁱ

As such, the findings shared in this study have implications for leaders working both in child development and on issues of the built environment.

Executive Summary

When policymakers, city designers, and researchers think about the early childhood experience and the needs of children and families, experiences related to commuting, streetscapes, and movement between locations rarely receive significant attention.

This is a missed opportunity, however; adults and children spend large amounts of time each day moving between destinations. Depending on the design, cohesion, and connectedness of infrastructure, journeys children and families take can be engaging and educational, challenging and stressful, or a mix of both. The third and final report in this series examines the experiences of children and families moving to and from child care in the District of Columbia

using results of targeted people moving counts conducted near five child care facilities in the District and parent transit diaries collected from a sample of parents whose children attend those facilities. This novel approach, in combination with insights from the first two reports of this series, surface several key findings.

Key Findings

- In the locations where people moving counts occurred, 1 in 5 of all people observed were children or caregiving adults. Despite this, sidewalks and roads, bike infrastructure, and sidewalks observed were often not designed intentionally with the needs of young children and their caregivers in mind.
- Parents that participated in the targeted transit diary protocol who regularly walk or bike for child care pick up and drop off tended to have the most time-certain commutes and were more likely to report engagement, conversation, and opportunities for play with their children in transit than those that drove or rode public transit.
- Caregivers that completed transit diaries described the complexity of scheduling and coordinating pick up and drop off from child care, as well as the many responsibilities they face on a daily basis. Many reported regular ‘trip-chaining,’ the process of combining multiple stops and responsibilities into a single journey to complete a range of activities.
- Surveyed parents from programs serving more low-income children tended to describe longer, more hectic, and less stable commutes. Particularly for those whose journeys required multiple bus or train transfers, one delay often led to a change in their child’s mood or led them to incur additional expenses to hail a taxi or rideshare service to ensure timeliness.

Assessing User Experiences with People Moving Counts and Transit Diaries

Analysis in this report further informs results of child care supply and demand estimates, survey data, and site visit results from the first two reports in this series by centering the voices and experiences of parents with young children in the District.

Methodology and Sample

During the week of October 2-6, 2023, trained LIIF staff conducted a series of targeted people moving counts and engaged parents of children enrolled in licensed child development facilities through a daily transit diary protocol. A people moving count is a common tool in urban planning and design for assessing how busy and accessible public spaces are writ large and for specific target populations. It involves observing and recording raw numbers and behaviors of people moving through a location for a set amount of time. Two LIIF observers used an *Age and Mode* count tool originally developed by Gehl and the Bernard Van Leer Foundation for this analysis for three counts each weekday morning (15 total) of the study week. All counts were conducted during normal school and child care drop off hours (8:00 – 9:00 am).

Figure 1 includes a general location for each ten minute count, as well as the date and time, weather description, and average and maximum decibel (dB) levels for each primary count. Primary counts occurred directly outside five child development facilities that participated in the survey and site visit discussed in the second report of this series. Locations for the five primary counts were selected as a general reflection of the locations and types of child development facilities in the District. Two took place near facilities located along busy commercial corridors and three in more residential areas with varying levels of housing density. Combined survey and site visit interview data for each facility helped inform selection so that counts would occur in locations representing a mix of walkability and traffic, proximity to public transit, and neighborhood demographics. Following each primary count, two additional counts were conducted in randomly selected locations nearby, generally within a couple blocks of the facility.

During the same week of observations, LIIF administered a daily transit diary survey to parents and caregivers of children enrolled at each of the five sites where primary people moving counts occurred. Transit or travel diaries are widely used tools in planning and transportation research for gathering insight into the behaviors and perspectives of groups of people during typical commutes or trips. They involve the regular or daily written tracking of feelings, barriers, and experiences in journeys between two or more destinations, like home and work or school.

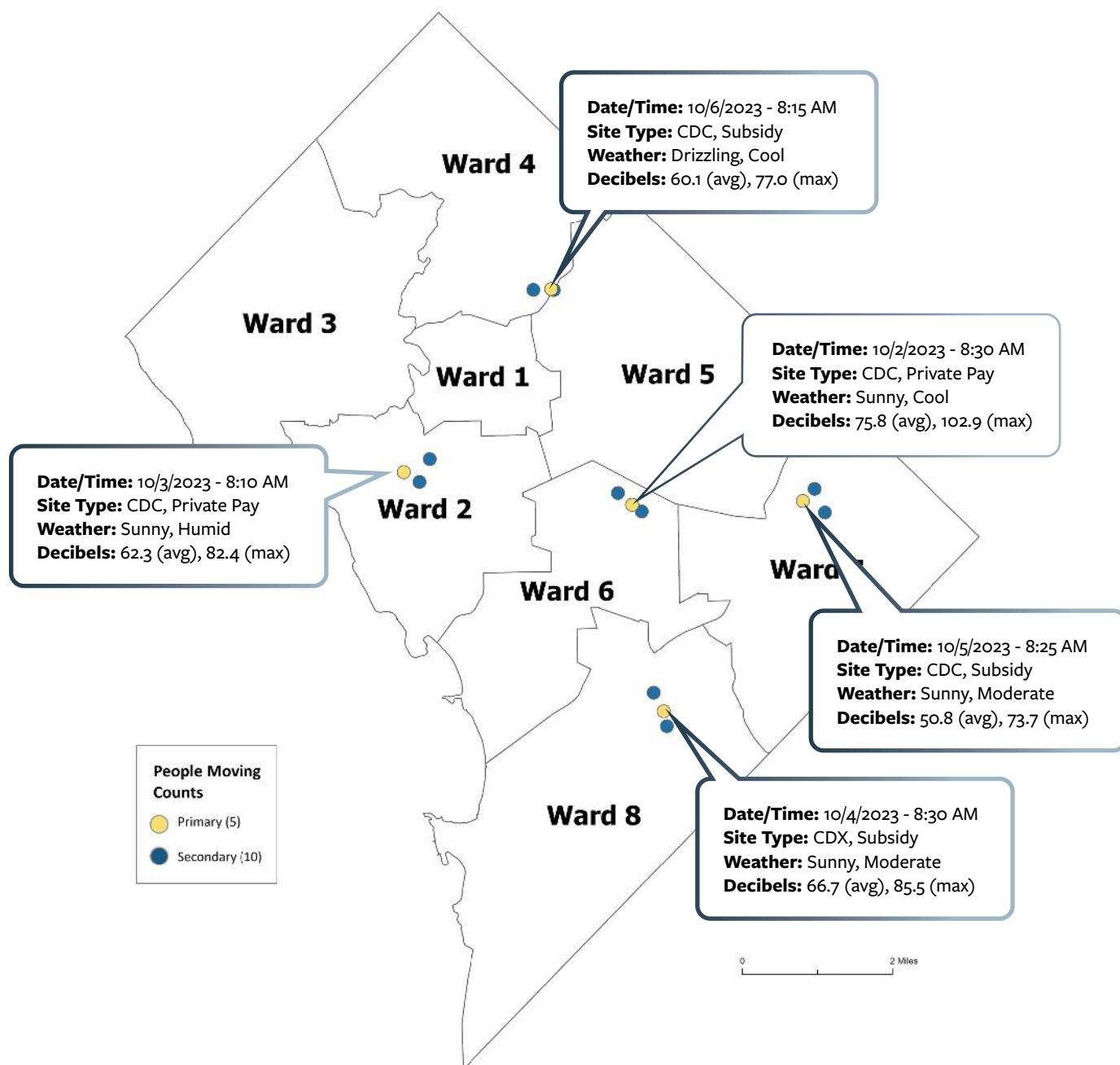
Assessing User Experiences with People Moving Counts and Transit Diaries (cont'd)

The survey tool used to gather transit diaries from parents had consistent prompts each day asking parents to report the mode of transportation they used to travel to and from child care and the approximate amount of time it took them to complete pick up and drop off. Each of the daily surveys also included two open-ended questions with space for parents to tell a short story each day about their commute using the following prompt:

“Tell us a little bit more about today’s [pick up / drop off]. Think of your answer like telling a very short story using some of the questions below.

- Where were you coming from and where did you go after [leaving your child at / picking your child up from] their child care program?
- Did anything slow you down or get in your way on your trip?
- Did you stop anywhere along the way?
- How did your child feel (happy, sad, tired, etc.) while you were on your way? What did you talk about? What did you see?”

Figure 1. Approximate Locations, People Moving Counts



In total, 21 parents completed the survey each day the week of October 2-6, 2023. Parents were recruited to participate by their child care facilities based on sample parameters provided to site supervisors in advance, requesting four total parents from each program: one that primarily walks for pick up and drop off, one that bikes, one that rides public transit (e.g., Metro train, bus, etc.), and one that drives. This component of the study therefore relied on a targeted convenience sample and should not be interpreted as representative of broader parent populations. All parents and caregivers who participated in each daily survey were offered a \$200 gift card at the end of the week as an incentive for their participation.

For each of the 174 total trip segments made by parents participating in the survey, Table 1 presents the percentages of reported time and mode of travel. The majority of all parent trips took between 10 and 30 minutes to complete. While there was great diversity in the modes of transportation used by parents for pick up and drop off, 30% of all trip segments were completed by driving, 28% by walking, 22% by public transit (e.g., Metro train or bus), 12% by bike, and 7% by some other mode. Nearly all of the other modes reported were ride sharing services such as Uber or Lyft.

With a very small, selected, time-limited sample for both the people moving counts and transit diary surveys, this

component of the series is not meant to be indicative or representative of the entirety of the District of Columbia or universal experiences. Rather, it provides a window into conditions in exact locations on specific days that can be used as a benchmark for future research and evaluation. It also surfaces opportunities for collaboration between agencies like OSSE, the Office of Planning (OP), Department of Transportation (DDOT), and others to bring the unique perspectives and voices of caregivers and young children into efforts to improve the public realm, transit systems, and other amenities in the District.

People Moving Counts

Each count categorized people moving into one of six categories: (1) Babies, (2) Toddlers, (3) Other children under age five, (4) Other children over age five, (5) Caregiving adults with children of all ages, and (6) All other adults. Figure 2 includes base results of all observations, depicting both the total number of people moving and the proportion in the six groups at each location. For example, of the 181 people moving during the Primary Count on Day 1, about 9% were caregiving adults, 3% were children over age five, 7% were children under age five, and 81% were other, non-caregiving adults.

The *all other adults* category represented a majority of people moving in all but three counts, but the proportion to which

Table 1. Percent of Trip Segments by Length and Mode*

	Drop Off	Pick Up	Total**
Segment Length	N=87	N=87	N=174
Less than 10 minutes	17%	20%	18%
Between 10 and 30 minutes	53%	55%	54%
Between 30 minutes and 1 hour	28%	21%	24%
More than 1 hour	2%	5%	3%
Segment Mode	N=87	N=87	N=174
Walked	29%	26%	28%
Biked	10%	14%	12%
Drove	29%	32%	30%
Took public transit	25%	20%	22%
Other	7%	8%	7%

*A segment is defined a single leg of a journey (i.e., one-way trip from home to child care for dropoff). A full round trip therefore consists of two segments.

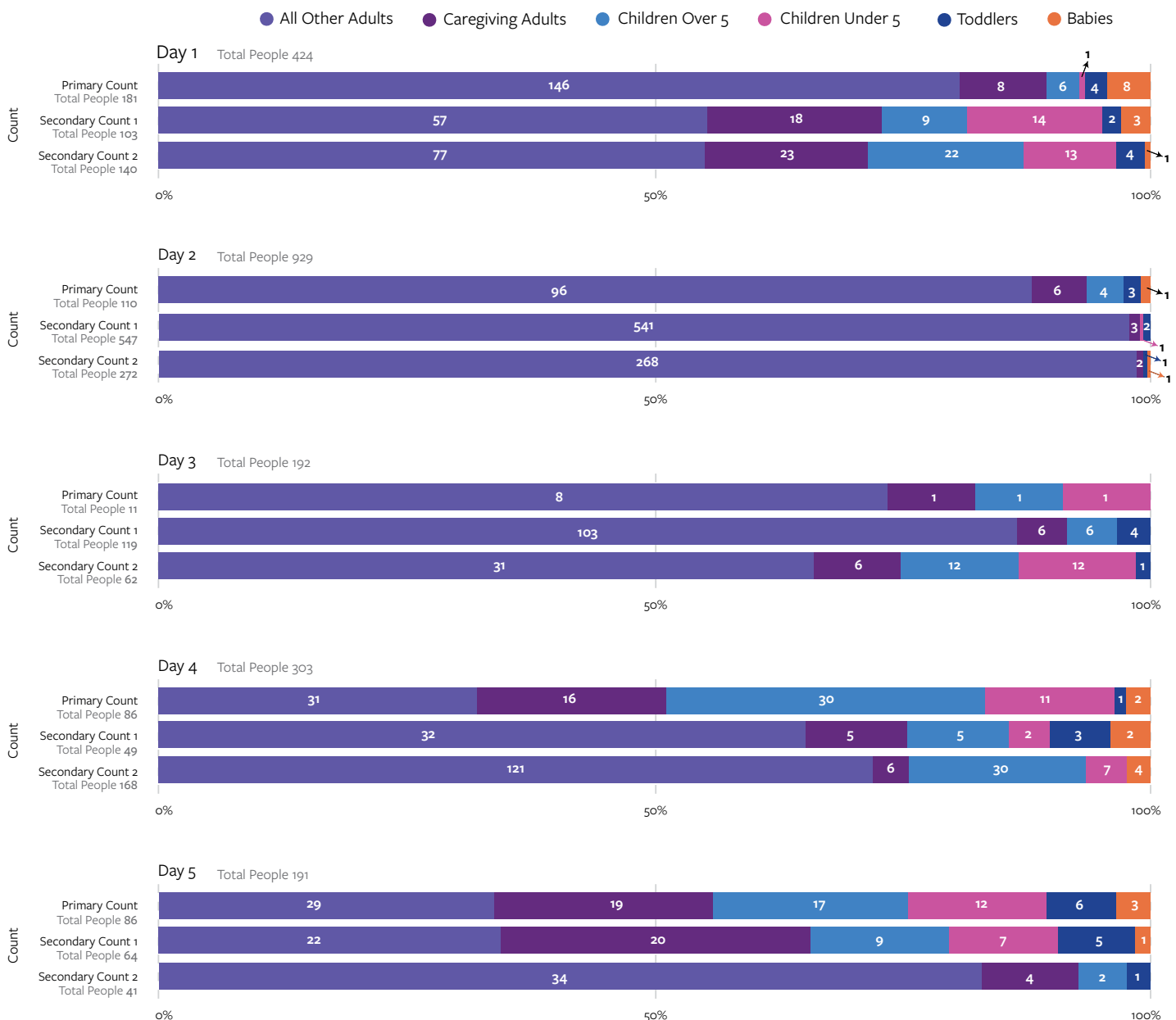
**18 segments were not completed because children were sick or did not go to child care that day for some other reason.

Assessing User Experiences with People Moving Counts and Transit Diaries (cont'd)

this group was represented varied dramatically by location. More than 900 people were counted moving across the three observations on Day 2, which occurred during rush hour in a highly trafficked commercial and business district of downtown DC. Even in the Primary Observation near the child care facility this day, few children and caregivers were observed. These groups represented less than 3% of the total people counted across all three sites on Day 2, markedly less than the proportion they made up across all five days of observations (22%). Primary counts on Days 4 and 5 showed

much different results, with children across all age groups and caregivers representing 70% and 66% of all people moving, respectively. The child development facilities in both of these observations were in residential but relatively dense neighborhoods in Wards 7 and 4 and were within walking distance of elementary schools. Although these counts represent just a small snapshot in time at each location and a very small geographic proportion of the District, they point toward differences in uses and design of public space that warrant further investigation and consideration.

Figure 2. People Moving Counts by Age, Individual Sites



Assessing User Experiences with People Moving Counts and Transit Diaries (cont'd)

Table 2 provides the raw number of people moving by age and mode across the full week of counts. The majority of people observed (83%) were walking independently. People on bikes accounted for 9% of those observed and people moving with support (e.g., being pushed in a stroller, wheelchair, or similar conveyance) or providing support (e.g., pushing a stroller or wheelchair) accounted for 8% of those counted. Although people in cars, buses, or trains were not counted, observers noted that these populations outnumbered pedestrians in certain locations. In many other

locations, however, including both commercial downtown districts and residential streets, people walked and cycled more or in equivalence with those in vehicles. Even in locations where numbers of pedestrians rivaled numbers of cars, cars were often the dominant presence. Cyclists, including some actively transporting very young children, often had to weave in and out of car traffic on roads without bike lanes or to avoid cars illegally parked in painted bike lanes. During multiple counts, caregivers pushing strollers or holding babies had to abruptly stop as they began to enter

Table 2. People Moving Counts by Mode, All Sites

Mode of movement	Ages Counted						Proportion of Total by Mode		
	Baby	Toddler	Child Under 5	Child Over 5	Care giving Adults	All Other Adults	Total People	Child or Caregiver	All Other Adults
Walking	0	7	35	144	67	1448	1701	15%	85%
Supported/ Supporting	26	26	31	5	71	4	163	98%	2%
Biking	0	4	15	4	13	139	175	21%	79%
Total	26	37	81	153	151	1591	2039	22%	78%



Assessing User Experiences with People Moving Counts and Transit Diaries (cont'd)

crosswalks to avoid cars accelerating through turns or racing through lights turning red.

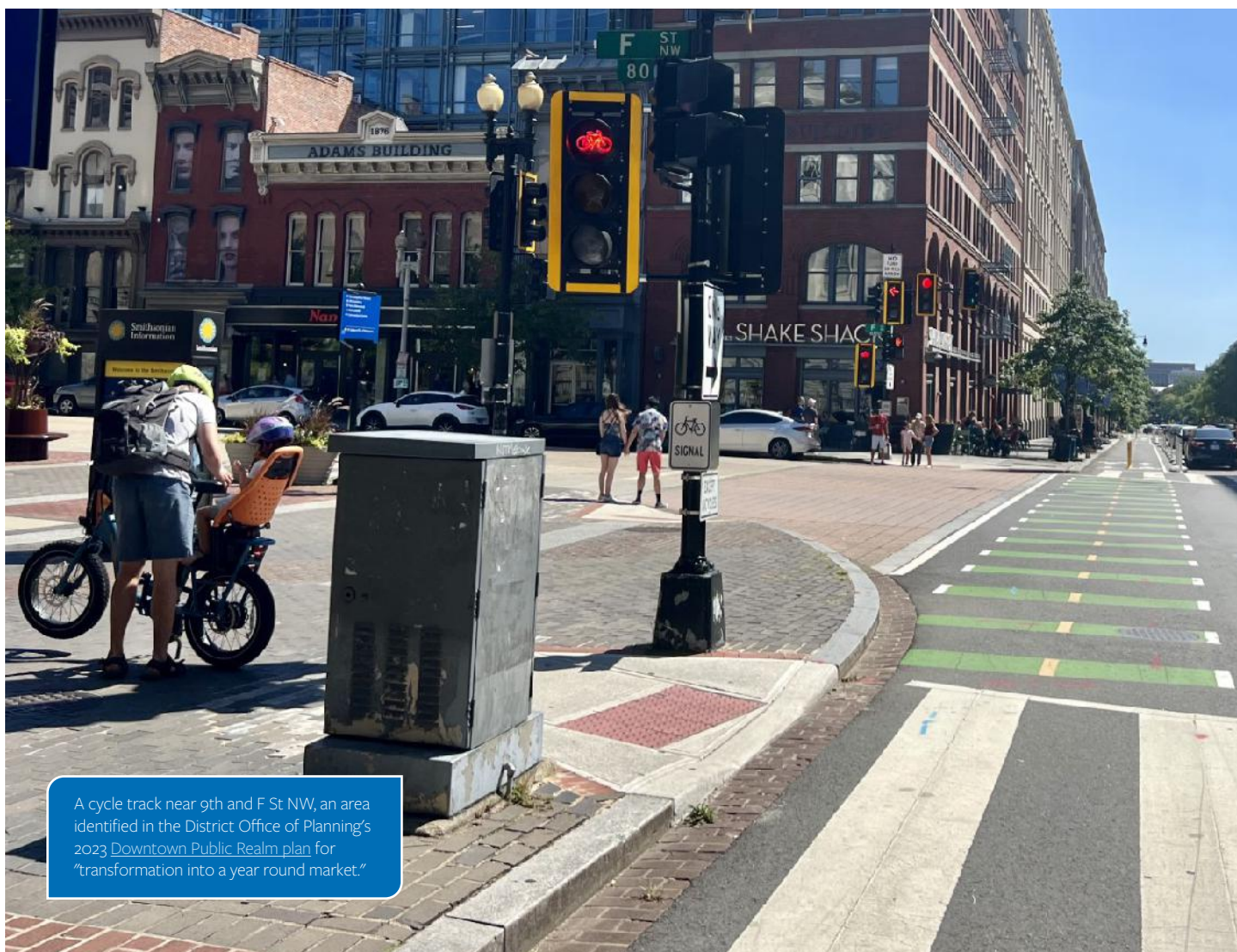
Table 2 also represents the percentage of people walking with or without support and biking or on bikes across all 15 counts. Children and caregivers made up more than 1 in 5 walkers and bikers across the totals of the week's counts.

Parent Transit Diaries

Results of the parent transit diary survey that LIIF administered with 21 parents of young children enrolled in child development facilities across the District add further context to findings from people moving counts.

Figure 3 includes quotes from diary entries, daily modes of transit, and total time five parents from the sample reported spending in commute each day for pick up and drop off. An extensive sample of quotes from daily diary entries is also included in Appendix A. Analysis of these data reveals unique experiences of parents across various modes of transit.

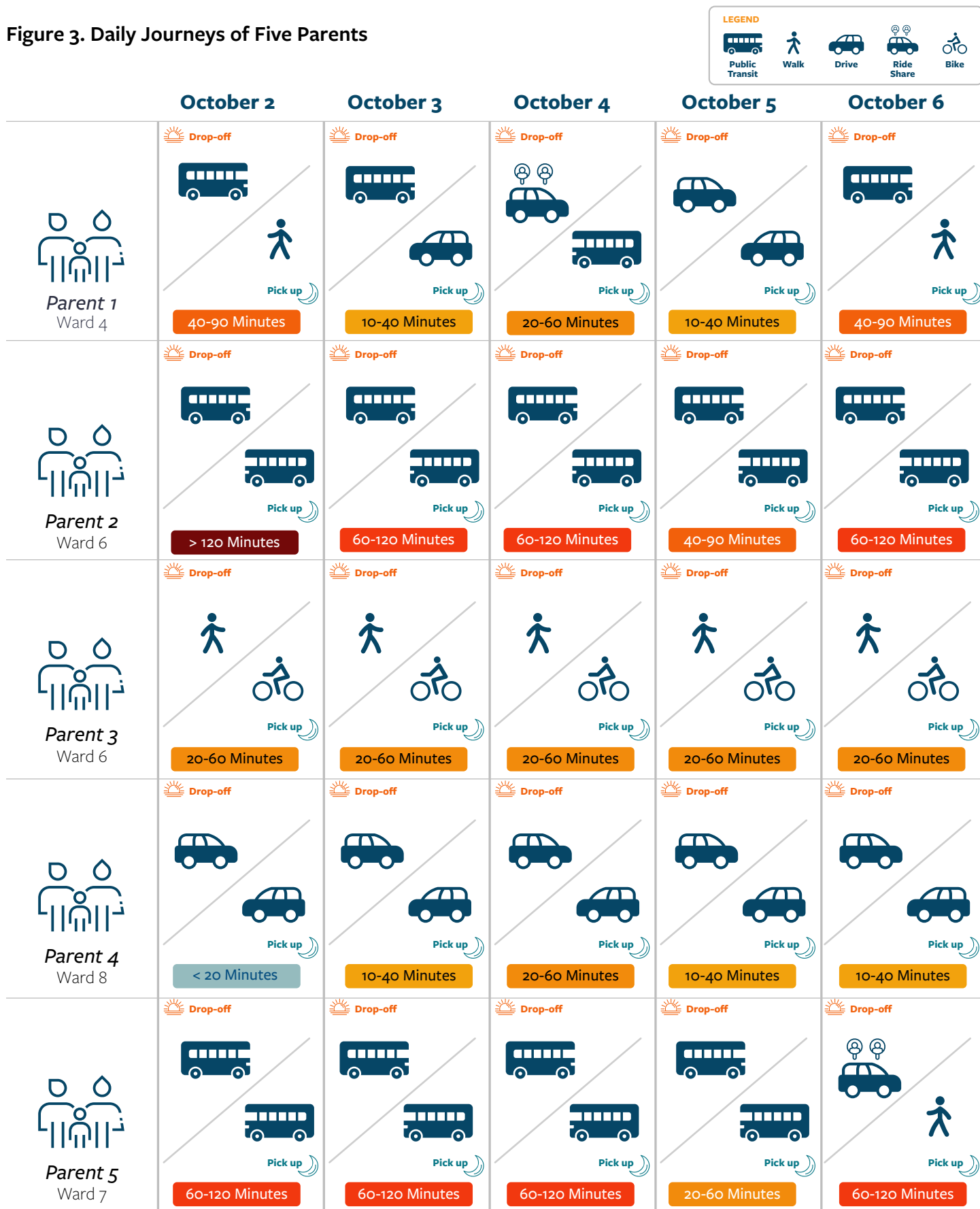
Parents and caregivers in the sample who walked or biked for pick up and drop off tended to convey strong engagement with their neighborhoods and surroundings. This was especially true for parents that walked, as they often shared stories about their children's emotions and interests during walks, even in instances where they expressed frustration or difficulty with hills, heat, and other obstacles. Walkers and bikers regularly mentioned local



A cycle track near 9th and F St NW, an area identified in the District Office of Planning's 2023 [Downtown Public Realm plan](#) for "transformation into a year round market."

Assessing User Experiences with People Moving Counts and Transit Diaries (cont'd)

Figure 3. Daily Journeys of Five Parents



Assessing User Experiences with People Moving Counts and Transit Diaries (cont'd)

“ Took bus to drop oldest at Elementary and then took bus to drop the 2yr old off at daycare. Had to walk a few blocks to the daycare when I missed the transfer bus. He was happy and we talked about buses and animal sounds. ”

- Parent 1, October 2 (drop-off)

“ Coming from work and going to the [neighborhood] rec center. We walked down [the street]. He was happy because we were having pizza for dinner. ”

- Parent 1, October 6 (pick-up)

“ I came from home, left my child at child care, and went to work. She was a little sad for it was too early for her to get up. We didn't talk much. She watched movies on my phone. ”

- Parent 2, October 6 (drop-off)

“ I came from work and picked up my child. Got on the bus and then train. She was happy...she likes to push the buttons on the pedestrian traffic light and stand on the escalator. ”

- Parent 2, October 4 (pick-up)

“ I took a city bikeshare from the station in front of my house and dropped it at the station across the street from the daycare. Then I picked up my daughter and put her in the stroller that we left at daycare this morning. We walked home but first stopped by a grocery store to grab some items. She sang some songs on the way. ”

- Parent 3, October 3 (pick-up)

“ Traffic was a little thick but baby was happy ”

- Parent 2, October 6 (drop-off)

“ Afternoon commute is always easy, traffic is not as heavy. [My child] snacked while I drove ”

- Parent 4, October 5 (pick-up)

“ I'm coming from Southeast Washington DC. [After dropoff] I went to see my case manager, and stopped at the corner store. My child felt happy. ”

- Parent 5, October 5 (drop-off)

Assessing User Experiences with People Moving Counts and Transit Diaries (cont'd)

landmarks that interested their children and described stops at parks, libraries, grocery stores, and other public amenities along their routes. These parents also tended to have more time-certain commutes, offering them greater flexibility to make use of public spaces their children enjoy. Stopping briefly at a park or library was easier for those who did not have to worry about transfer buses, parking, or rush hour car traffic.

Two caregivers describing the dropoff process on the morning of October 3 clearly conveyed benefits of active transit like walking and biking in their summaries of the day, noting connections to community, consistency and the power of routine, and opportunities for positive engagement between parent and child while in commute:

- **Walker, October 3:** *“We left the house with the stroller and talked about what we saw on the way, like squirrels, the moon, and trash trucks. She sang one of her favorite songs. When we got close to school she said, ‘It’s my*

school! Over there! I’m going to see Ms. [Name].’ And then we named all her friends at school. We talked about the playground they are building when we approached the front door. She climbed out of the stroller and we walked inside and she said goodbye and I gave her a hug.”

- **Biker, October 3** (translated from Spanish): *“We go by bicycle from home. He is happy because now we are looking for houses that have Halloween decorations. We stop to look at some and he tries to repeat the words for decorations I point out. We continue until we reach his daycare...where I drop him off in a good mood ready to start his day with his teachers.”*

Across all modes, parents and caregivers described the various emotions their children experience on a daily or moment-to-moment basis. Appeasing upset or tired children was a common theme across the sample, but responses to those experiences varied. Parents who drove or used public transportation often merely noted the fact that their children were grumpy during commute difficulties, or they described



insular activities happening between the child and a phone screen, a song on the radio or headphones, or toys in the car seat they sat in. For example, one parent describing a 90-minute bus ride early in the morning on October 4 said, *“I came from home... I left my child at child care and went to work. She was a little sad for it was too early for her to get up. We didn’t talk much. She watched movies on my phone.”*

Families that had the ability to stop and linger along their commutes described the ways in which other people and the environment they moved through actively supported their abilities to cheer up their children. According to another parent walking home with their child after a long day on October 2, *“My husband walked to pick her up with the stroller. She was in a sad mood when he arrived because she was expecting me instead. She was very cranky on the walk home and asked to go to the playground so they went and spent 45 minutes there and came home.”*

Aside from time and inconsistency, parents who typically commute via public transit have very distinct experiences from those with access to a private vehicle. Some transit riders expressed desires for play and softness in the District’s transit system. They identified the ways their children approach escalators or big bus depots, as well as how unique mobility challenges make commuting by train or bus difficult. One parent who alternates between commute by car, bike, and Metro train summed up challenges across modes succinctly:

“If I’m driving it’s the traffic. If I’m metroing it’s the smell in the elevator. If I’m biking it’s the hard work.”

Survey respondents described some of the ways surroundings can feel hostile or overwhelming to small children during travel by train or bus, in particular. However, they also raised ideas for incorporating play or comfort in transit boarding areas or physically on trains and buses that could improve user experiences for people of all ages and abilities. Parents with long, complex train or bus routes often noted children, *“pointing out everything they see”* or *“talking with other adults and children on the bus.”* These experiences point toward real opportunity and value in designing transit systems with young children in mind.

Like transit riders, themes from responses by parents that primarily travel by bike revealed clear areas for improvement in urban design and transportation planning with young children in mind. For example, one parent walks every day with their

child to child care before renting a bike from a Capital Bikeshare station to return home. Even though bikeshare stations are located immediately outside the child development facility and the parent’s home, biking with the child is never an option because cargo or child-sized bikes are not available for rent. Car traffic also poses serious threats to parents that bike with children, and cycling parents conveyed a detailed understanding of the city’s network of protected and unprotected bike lanes, often pleading for more separation from cars in bike lanes to ensure safety and comfort along their rides.

Even some parents that reported driving, taking transit, or walking for pick up and drop off expressed desire for more opportunities to bike with their children, recognizing how much time they might save if they could avoid rush hour traffic or more directly get to their destinations. Concerns about safety from cars and the physical effort of cycling with a young child were often the biggest inhibitors to regularly commuting by bike. Even among parents that could not bike with their children, a consistent theme came through survey responses of the burden parents face when their primary child care arrangements are far from home.

According to three parents:

- **Walker/biker:** *“The main challenges I face are getting there in time for breakfast in the morning sometimes if my daughter wakes up late. Also if it’s raining it’s a challenge for me as I either walk or ride a bike since husband uses our family car for work. If I could change anything it would be to live closer to the program.”*
- **Transit rider:** *“Our biggest challenges are inclement weather and buses being late or crowded. The daycare and my older son’s school are only about a mile apart, but our whole trip from home can take more than 90 minutes.”*
- **Driver:** *“I’m 30 mins from daycare. I drop her off between 7-7:30, then I sit in traffic for at least 30 more mins when my job is only 10-15 mins away.”*

Despite many thematic differences by modes of transit, diary entries revealed significant commonalities in child interests and opportunities for engagement and conversation with parents and caregivers during commutes. Figure 4 highlights the most common responses to a question on the third day of the survey about landmarks children often point out or talk about with their parents during travel. Large, fast-moving vehicles mostly designed by and for adults

Assessing User Experiences with People Moving Counts and Transit Diaries (cont'd)

dominated responses. Buses were mentioned by 9 parents, cars and trucks by 9, and trains by 5. Many responses also described very specific animals, trees and plants, people, and buildings that children routinely see and engage with.

Inequity of place appeared strongly in analysis of survey data, too, as highlighted by differences in responses between walking parents in Ward 2 and 8 on the same day's drop off:

- **Ward 2 parent:** *"She was very happy. Dad came with us too. We stopped at the park on the way. She was disappointed that it was not raining. We talked about going to ballet class and weekend plans."*
- **Ward 8 parent:** *"After I dropped them off I went home. Usually I would go to work. I didn't stop no where along the road. Both of my children was tired. We seen cars, we seen trees, and people in alleys smoking, drinking."*

Parents who responded from programs that serve more children and families who are low-income tended to describe longer, more hectic, and less stable commutes. Particularly for those whose journeys required multiple bus or train transfers, one delay could change their child's mood or make parents late for work, school, or job interviews. These parents more regularly mentioned children missing meals as they rushed out of their homes or having less time for their own responsibilities outside of caregiving. On days where schedules were particularly important, transit riding parents often discussed carpooling with a friend or family member or paying for a one-way rideshare (e.g., Uber or Lyft) to ensure they completed drop off or pick up on time.

The Importance of Trip Chaining in the Lives of Children and Caregivers

Transit diary participants regularly described the practicalities of trip chaining, a concept that the Institute for Transportation and Development Policy (ITDP) has identified as a key consideration for supporting young children and caregivers in cities, "because [they are] time constrained and juggle multiple responsibilities...Caregivers typically take more complex trips, where they combine multiple stops in one journey to complete a range of activities."^{vii, viii}

In other words, caregivers of young children often have more responsibilities than non-caregiving adults do, and they cannot move as quickly when they have a young child in tow. This means caregivers tend to pack in multiple stops along a single trip away from home – like dropping off their toddler at a child care facility before taking their third grader to school and then running several errands on the route to work or back home.

Multiple parents described complex scheduling of picking up and dropping off a very young child at a child care program and an older child at an elementary or middle school. According to one parent that typically rides the bus for this type of process: *"I picked up my younger son [from child care] after taking my other son home [from elementary school]. I was coming from my grandmother's house in Petworth. My brother let me borrow his car so pickup was quick."* Stories like this one reveal both the challenges and opportunities in planning for the needs and schedules of caregivers. Caregivers with busy schedules and multiple responsibilities are looking for the easiest and most convenient transit option, in many instances access to private vehicles.

But public officials and policymakers can encourage other forms of more convenient transit, particularly those like walking, cycling, or public transit that are more efficient and substantially reduce carbon footprints. Better planning around the services caregivers need most can help reduce the length and complexity of trip chaining by moving more to incentivize the co-location housing with critical services like child care, doctors' offices, etc. Particularly as the District rolls out a tax rebate program for e-bikes, too, big opportunities may arise for helping parents more directly move between destinations. Studying common destinations and routes could help transportation agencies better equip places caregivers and young children move through regularly with targeted traffic easements.

Implications for Future Research and Policymaking

Child development facilities operate within larger ecosystems and community contexts that affect the overall availability of child care, child care program operations, and the experiences of the children and families they serve. By elevating the distinct experiences of their primary users, the physical conditions of facility space and the broader built environment they operate from, especially in the context set in the second report of this series on the perspectives and realities of the individual businesses and organizations that provide child care, we can glean important insight into the specific strengths and challenges the District might work from to improve overall friendliness to young children and caregivers in the future.

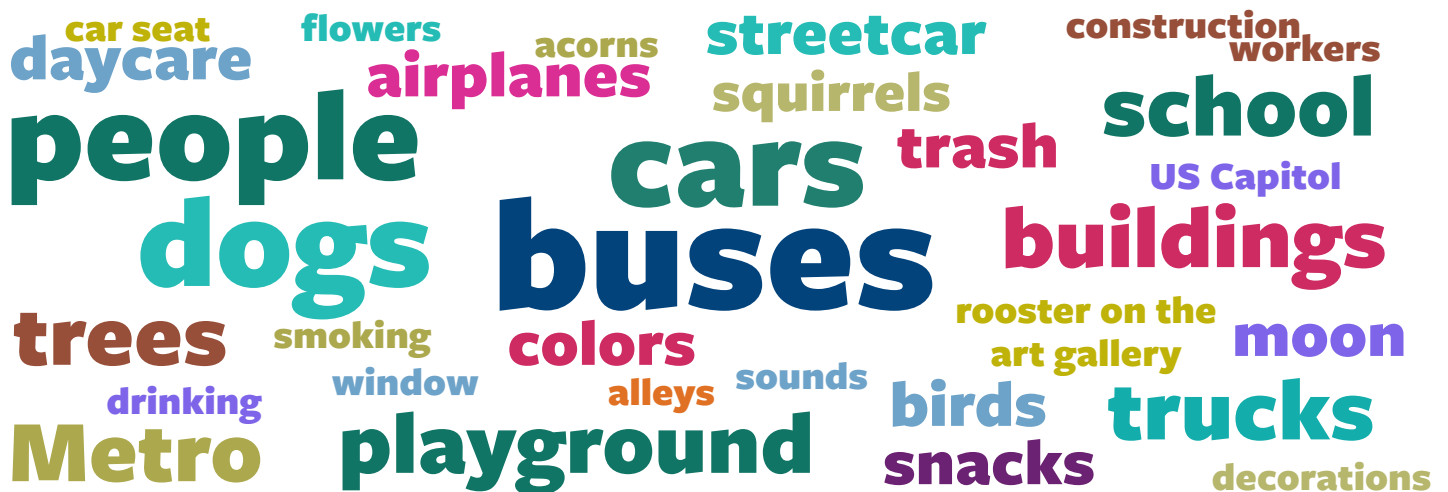
Results of people moving counts and parent transit diaries conducted for this study point toward new opportunities for collaboration between early learning systems, public agencies with responsibilities related to early care and education, and transit and planning agencies. For example,

a replication and further refinement of such methods might help an agency like DDOT or the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) pilot and study child-friendly upgrades at bus stops near child development facilities or temporarily test the ways targeted street closures might change the behaviors and experiences children and parents have on their trips to and from child care.

Such work has clear benefit for stakeholders focused on access to and quality of child development and education. The experiences that children have outside the classroom affect how they arrive at child care and have implications for the ability of child development facilities to effectively serve and support them.

Even further, paying attention to the ways young children, families, and child care providers navigate spaces that all residents of a city use can drive benefits and improve experiences for broad stakeholders of all ages and abilities.

Figure 6. Most Common Landmarks During Travel



Appendix A.

Sample Parent Transit Diary Entries



WALK

Ward 2 Program Parent, Oct. 2

- Dropoff: Went from home to school drop off. I rent a desk there too so went to my desk to work. We did not slow down or stop anywhere. She was happy. We saw a lot of airplanes and talked about buses going past.
- Pickup: Walked home. She was happy. Spoke about the stick and the seeds she collected. We stopped at the library to get some new books. She looked through them on the way home.

Ward 4 Program Parent, Oct. 2

- Dropoff: We left the house with the stroller and talked about what we saw on the way, like, squirrels, the moon, and trash trucks. She sang one of her favorite songs. When we got close to school she said, “school Is close, over there! I’m going to see [my teacher].” And then we named all her friends at school. We talked about the new playground they are building when we approached the front door. She climbed out of the stroller and we walked inside and she said goodbye and I gave her a hug.
- Pickup: My husband walked to pick her up with the stroller. She was in a sad mood when he arrived because she was expecting me instead. She was very cranky on the walk home and asked to go to the playground so they went and spent 45 minutes there and came home.

Ward 8 Program Parent, Oct. 3

- Dropoff: We was coming from home. After I dropped my kids off I went to run some errands, no nothing got in my way or slowed me down. My children was very tired and fussy. We seen children going to school, people walking and running.
- Pickup: I was coming from home going back home. The heat slowed me down, I was tired from walking and it was very hot... children was tired and fussy again.”

Ward 2 Program Parent, Oct. 2

- Dropoff: Came from Capitol Hill via E Capitol St to Penn Ave bike lane to the 20th St bike lane to M street bike lane to the parking garage [at the building]. We saw the US Capitol building and lots of trees.
- Pickup: Reverse commute - we were blocked by an event at the White House so had to go down to the Mall via an unprotected bike lane and via sidewalks that were crowded.

Ward 6 Program Parent, Oct. 5

- Dropoff: We go by bicycle from home, he felt happy, he likes the bicycle trip, on the ride he repeats songs and when he sees his school, he says happily “It’s my daycare”
- Pickup: Today we went to pick up his sister, they play in the playground and then we go home, he likes it and feels important to be able to pick up his sister.



BIKE

Ward 6 Program Parent, Oct. 5

- Dropoff: We were running about half an hour late this morning because my daughter wanted to eat breakfast at home. So by the time we finally left our house I jogged a bit while pushing her stroller to make sure we weren’t late to daycare. She was quite happy on the walk over. Once I dropped her and her stroller off at daycare I took a bikeshare bike and rode it back home.
- Pickup: I grabbed a bikeshare bike across the street from my house and rode that to my daughter’s daycare. Conveniently there’s a docking station right across the street from her daycare. I picked her and her stroller up and we walked home from there. She had a snack on the way home she pointed out all the different vehicles she saw on the walk back.

Ward 6 Program Parent, Oct. 6

- Dropoff: He is happy because now we are looking for houses that have Halloween decorations, so we stop at some and look, he tries to repeat the words and we continue until we reach his daycare, we always play a race to his classroom and he starts his classes happy
 - Pickup: Today his grandmother also went to pick him up and his grandfather is waiting for him at home, while the tour tries to tell about his day at daycare, he is happy, he likes going to daycare.
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Ward 6 Program Parent, Oct. 2

- Dropoff: Coming from [Metro Station] with train to [Metro Station], then take a bus to the school. She feels sleepy.
- Pickup: Pick her up, catch the bus, then the train from [Metro Station] to [Metro Station], then another bus [to go home.] She feels tired after a long ride. [We talked about] her day at school [and the] dogs, trains, and buses.

Ward 8 Program Parent, Oct. 2

- Dropoff: Home, I went to a job interview. My daughter slowed me down she wouldn't cooperate at first. I didn't stop anywhere along the way. We saw trees, cars, as well as people. She had an attitude at first. We talked about food and her favorite YouTube show.
- Pickup: I was coming from home. I went to a job interview after leaving the childcare center. She had an attitude at first she doesn't really like to be woken up early in the morning. We saw trees, cars people. We talked about her favorite show to watch on YouTube. We also talked about food. She slows me down most times in the morning because she's not a morning person.



PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ward 7 Program Parent, Oct. 2

- Dropoff: We leave [and] drop [my older son] off to my friend. I then bring [my two younger sons] to [child care]. [They] had a good transition, but [the baby] cries every morning, he do not like people. I came home [after dropoff] and cleaned the house. [Then] I went on an interview... Came back home, tried to get a nap but had to go get [the kids].
- Pickup: I pick [my older son] up first from [school], then I [took the bus] and get [my two younger sons] from [child care]. We go home, I cooked dinner, they ate.

Ward 4 Program Parent, Oct. 3

- Dropoff: Brought [him] to daycare via bus. Very smooth morning getting out of the house. [He] was happy and we sang a couple songs while waiting a few minutes for the bus.
- Pickup (drove): I picked [him up] after taking my other son home. I was coming from my grandmothers house [nearby]... My brother let me borrow his car so pickup was quick. Driving is much faster since I live about 1 mile from [the program].

Ward 4 Program Parent, Oct. 4

- Dropoff: Today was a great day we stopped at the store and grabbed a snack before [getting the bus to go to] school. The kids wanted to play but I told them they can't play near the streets before they get hurt.
- Pickup (rideshare): Got a ride from a family member. We stopped at the grocery store to grab a few items for dinner before going home.

Ward 8 Program Parent, Oct. 2

- Dropoff: I'm 30 mins from the daycare.. drop her off between 7-7:30.. then I sit in traffic for at least 30 more mins when my job is only 10-15 mins away.. she's always happy in the mornings.. we talked about her birthday coming up this month.
- Pickup: She gets picked up by me and her other siblings.. she's always excited to see them.. we talk about her day.

Ward 6 Program Parent, Oct. 4

- Dropoff: We left home a bit early today so there was less traffic. We drove to daycare. After drop off, I walked to get coffee then got back in the car and drove to work.
- Pickup: We had a close parking spot today so the walk to the car was short. There was some traffic on the way home. My kid was happy because he has a snack and a water bottle during the ride home.



DRIVE

Ward 6 Program Parent, Oct. 4

- Dropoff: We left house at the same time as our neighbors on both sides who were taking their kids to school.
- Pickup: There was a road closed by my office so it took longer to get to daycare, which made us later and meant we had to deal with more traffic on the way home. The whole trip took an hour. My child was excited to get in the car and go home. We listened to music from Coco during the ride, which kept him happy."

Appendix B. Endnotes

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- iv Harvard University Center on the Developing Child. (n.d.). *Ready4Routines*. Available here: <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/innovation-application/innovation-in-action/ready4routines/>
- v Institute for Transportation and Development Policy [ITDP]. (2022). *Access and Babies, Toddlers, and Their Caregivers*. Available here: https://www.itdp.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Access-for-All-Babies-and-Toddlers_December-2021-pages_final-3.pdf.
- vi Prelipcean, A. C. (2018). *Collecting Travel Diaries: Current State of the Art, Best Practices, and Future Research Directions*. Transportation and Research Procedia. Vol 32 (pp. 155-156). Available here: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2352146518301832>.
- vii ITDP. (2017). *Is Your City Really Made for You?* Available here: <https://www.itdp.org/2017/02/14/mag-city-made-for-you/>
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