BUS LINE REDESIGN → BUS LINE REFRESH

Program-Wide Public Engagement Summary

Four phases of public and stakeholder engagement, 2023–2026 • Pittsburgh Regional Transit

Program Overview

Pittsburgh Regional Transit (PRT) launched the Bus Line Redesign in 2023 as a comprehensive, cost-neutral rethinking of Allegheny County's entire bus network — aimed at expanding geographic coverage, promoting equity, aligning with PRT service guidelines, and building more efficient routes and schedules. Public engagement was central to the effort from the start, designed around transparency and shared ownership so that riders, communities, and partners could shape the network rather than simply react to it.

After three rounds of engagement and more than 16,000 comments, PRT reoriented the project from a wholesale overhaul into a more targeted update — renaming it the Bus Line Refresh to reflect the shift in scope. The refreshed direction keeps the service that is working today, strengthens frequency and reliability on high-demand corridors, increases off-peak and weekend service, and improves cross-county connections. The resulting second draft network positioned roughly 99% of current riders for more frequent, reliable, and better-connected service.

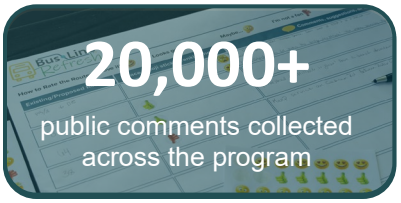
Engagement at a Glance

Across the full program, PRT gathered input through committees, public and community meetings, pop-up events, focus groups, surveys, an interactive project website, and direct outreach to elected officials, operators, and stakeholder organizations.

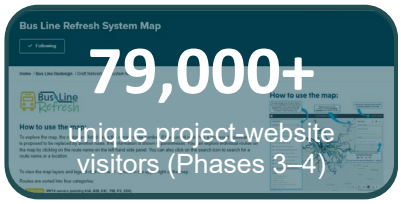












Digital tools extended that reach. In Phase 4, the Transit App preview — built into an app PRT riders already use daily — reached roughly 75,000 to 104,000 app users in-app and let them plan more than 2.2 million comparative trips to explore how their own travel would change under the proposal. These figures reflect how widely the draft was explored, not how many distinct riders participated or how much feedback was submitted; trip plans are planning actions rather than unique users, and feedback itself was captured through the route surveys.

*Figures are drawn from the four individual phase summaries; combined totals are approximate. *Documented event attendance reflects recorded sign-ins.*

The Four Phases

PHASE 1 ⇨	Fall 2023 ⇨	**Launched the project; gathered travel needs and first impressions.** Convened the Steering Committee, Elected Officials, and Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG); conducted an online survey (2,158 responses), two online public meetings, and 23 pop-ups. **A key takeaway…** *before any map was drawn, riders were already clear on the priorities — more connections between neighborhoods beyond Downtown, better use of the busways, and frequency over raw coverage — setting the direction for the entire redesign.*
PHASE 2 ⇨	Spring 2024 ⇨	**Confirmed Phase 1 findings; shared the State of the System and Market Study; introduced the network-development process.** Committee, elected, and SAG meetings; six regional transit-agency meetings; one public meeting; five focus groups (~110 participants). **A key takeaway…** *targeted focus groups with chambers, universities, and accessibility and equity organizations surfaced needs broad outreach misses, from employer hiring barriers to seniors' lost options, sharpening priorities before design began.*
PHASE 3 ⇨	Fall 2024 – Spring 2025 ⇨	**Collected feedback on Draft Network 1.0, the first draft network.** 82 events — 3 public meetings, 35 pop-ups, 19 community meetings, 32 stakeholder and elected meetings, 140+ info displays; ~16,000 comments; five core themes. **A key takeaway…** *demand ran high enough that PRT more than doubled its planned outreach to 82 events — and ~16,000 comments confirmed a first draft is the moment to test bold ideas and learn what to keep.*
PHASE 4 ⇨	Winter 2026 – May 2026 ⇨	**Gathered final input on the second draft network before adoption.** 71 events reaching 1,765+ people; operator and ATU sessions; the new Transit App trip preview; ~4,430 comments. **Engagement lessons learned…** *the targeted second draft drew majority support — many riders said it fixed the very issues they raised on the first draft.*

What Made the Engagement Work

Because each phase built on the last, a few cross-program lessons stand out — most visible in how PRT changed its own approach in response to what it learned:

- **Meet people where they are.** Online channels drew a higher-income, less diverse audience than PRT's ridership, so PRT leaned on in-person outreach in high-need communities — and pop-ups reached riders who would never have sought out the project on their own.
- **Lean on trusted messengers.** Events co-hosted with trusted local organizations reduced barriers and built trust in communities PRT might not have reached on its own.
- **Inform before you ask.** Layered materials — from plain-language explainers to route-level detail and trip-preview tools — let first-time riders and transit experts alike give informed input.

- **Give riders tools to see their own trip.** Find My Route let riders compare existing and proposed service from Phase 3 on, and the Phase 4 Transit App preview went further — showing exactly how their own trips would change before commenting.
- **Listen, then adjust.** Feedback reshaped the plan and the outreach alike: the wholesale Redesign became a targeted Refresh, the second draft fixed many first-draft concerns, and the team redirected pop-ups mid-campaign toward gaps in reach.
- **Treat the first draft as a hypothesis.** The first network floated bold concepts — new transfers, crosstown routes, microtransit — to gauge public acceptance; the second draft then rebalanced toward the service riders said works.
- **Build accessibility in by default.** ASL at PRT-hosted events, Spanish interpretation, translated materials, and a screen-reader-friendly website kept the process open to diverse audiences from the start.
- **Tap frontline and institutional expertise.** Operators, ATU leadership, focus groups, and stakeholder partners surfaced insights surveys would miss — and Customer Service training and a Technical Advisory Group readied staff to support the public.

An Equitable, Accessible Approach

Each phase prioritized reaching communities most reliant on transit and most affected by proposed changes. Using its Transit Need Index, PRT identified Priority Equity Communities — the county's top quartile for transit reliance — and concentrated in-person outreach there, meeting people at bus stops, community centers, and existing events rather than relying on online channels alone. American Sign Language interpretation was provided at PRT-hosted public meetings, Spanish interpretation and translated print materials were offered in communities with significant Spanish-speaking populations, and the project website supported language translation and screen-reader compatibility. As interest grew, PRT extended engagement periods and added events — in one phase more than doubling the planned scale of outreach in response to community demand.

What We Heard

Feedback was remarkably consistent across phases and geographies. Riders engaged on practical terms — how routes are drawn, what destinations they reach, and whether service is frequent, walkable, and dependable. Roughly half of all feedback on the second draft was positive, centered on keeping service that works, adding frequency, and opening new connections. Recurring themes included:



Connections & routing. Strong support for direct, crosstown, neighborhood-to-hub connections that don't force every trip through Downtown — paired with concern that added transfers could lengthen commutes.



Access to key destinations. Priorities centered on Downtown, Oakland, schools and universities, employment, hospitals, grocery stores, and the airport.



Discontinued & changed routes. The strongest source of concern — especially where a direct trip is lost or replacement service was seen as insufficient, and particularly for disadvantaged communities.



Frequency & reliability. Consistent demand for more frequent, dependable service, more 20- and 30-minute routes, and lifting busway stop restrictions to add capacity.



Service span. Broad, positive support for more evening, weekend, and early-morning service.



Accessibility & safety. Concern about walking distance and uphill access, missing sidewalks and safe crossings, shelters and lighting at stops, and the need for ADA-compliant stops and vehicles.

Communication. A clear desire for personal, plain-language information about exactly what is changing — including real-time updates and multilingual materials.

From Engagement to Adoption

As the planning phase closes, the focus shifts from shaping the network to formalizing it. The full body of feedback is being reviewed as PRT finalizes the network, focusing refinements on the corridors and route changes that drew the most concern — strengthening alternatives for discontinued routes, reducing unnecessary transfers, and improving stop access — without compromising the network's overall direction.

- **Public comment period.** A formal public comment period is anticipated to open in mid-August 2026, supported by updated route pages, a revised map, and online comment tools.
- **Public hearings.** Two public hearings anticipated in late summer and early fall 2026, with the comment period expected to remain open through the end of September.
- **Board action.** Board committee review and final action anticipated in October 2026, with formal adoption expected in the fall.
- **Implementation.** Following approval, service changes are expected to begin in 2027, supported by agency-wide preparation across scheduling, communications, service delivery, and training.



About This Summary

This document consolidates the four phase-level engagement reports: the Series 1 Summary (final, July 2024), the Series 2 Engagement Memo (final, 2024), the Phase 3 Engagement Summary (April 2025), and the Bus Line Refresh Phase 4 Community Engagement Summary (final, June 2026).

Combined program totals are approximate because some counts were tabulated differently across phases. For detailed methodology, attendee lists, and route-level findings, refer to the individual phase reports.