



SLC *West* *East* CONNECTIONS

FOUNDATION REPORT

August 20, 2025

WHAT IS THE WE CONNECT STUDY?

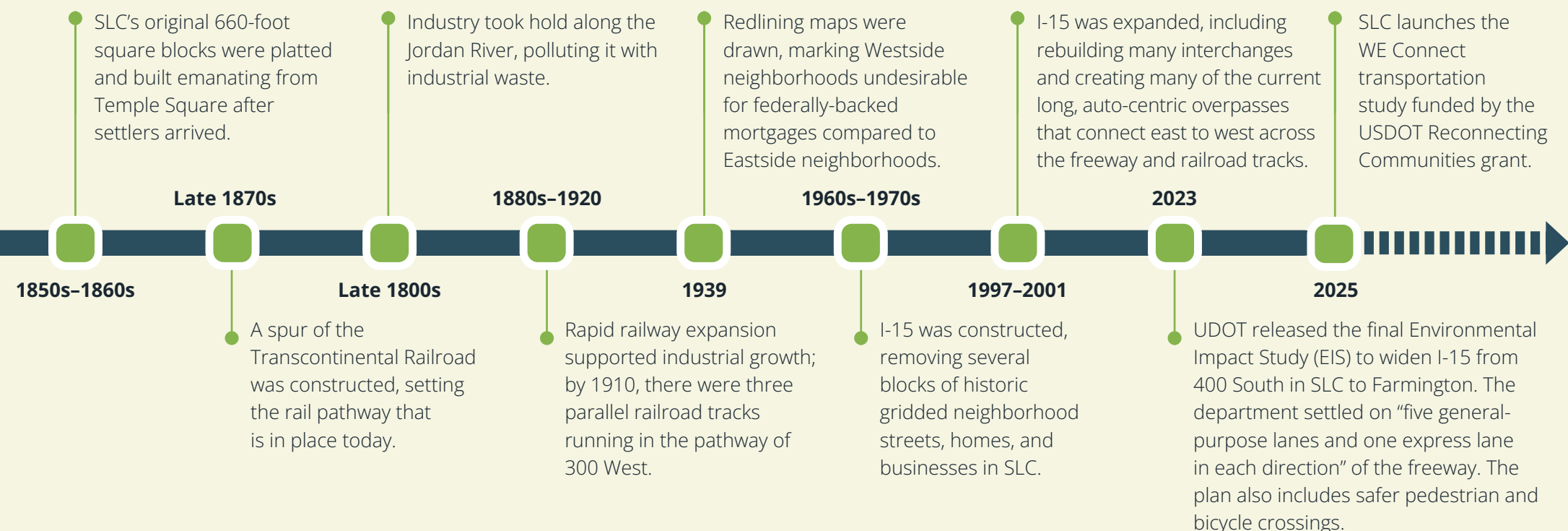
WE Connect (West-East Connections Study)

Salt Lake City (SLC) is physically divided by major regional transportation infrastructure including, Interstate 15 (I-15), the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR), and Utah Transit Authority's (UTA) FrontRunner commuter rail, creating barriers to west-east connectivity. These corridors inhibit access between Westside neighborhoods and eastern areas like downtown, affecting travel times, community cohesion, and public safety.

For many Westside residents, limited crossings and frequent delays caused by slowed or parked trains make daily travel difficult—especially for those walking or biking. While the divide stems from transportation infrastructure, its impacts go beyond mobility. It has led to unequal investment, uneven resource allocation, and shaped how neighborhoods view themselves and each other. The Westside community disproportionately bears these burdens.

The WE Connect Study, funded by the US Department of Transportation's (USDOT) [Reconnecting Communities Pilot Program](#), aims to work alongside the community to identify issues, co-create solutions, and prioritize improvements grounded by lived experiences to address the "divide".

HOW DID WE GET HERE?



THE FOUNDATION REPORT IS...

Because the Westside experiences many of the divide's most significant impacts, this Foundation Report provides a snapshot of key trends shaping Salt Lake City and its Westside. It is designed to help residents and community leaders better understand current conditions and identify opportunities to strengthen connections between the Westside and the rest of the city. While it doesn't cover every statistic or perspective, this document lays important groundwork as we work together to envision a more connected future.

WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED AND WHAT WE HAVE HEARD

Four key focus areas capture our initial findings and community input gathered throughout the study so far. These focus areas highlight major challenges and future opportunities, guiding an approach that balances community aspirations with identified needs. Together, they aim to strengthen neighborhoods, enhance health and safety, and expand access citywide.



WHO WE ARE

Demographics and Workforce



HOW WE MOVE

Transportation



OUR WELLBEING

Health and Safety



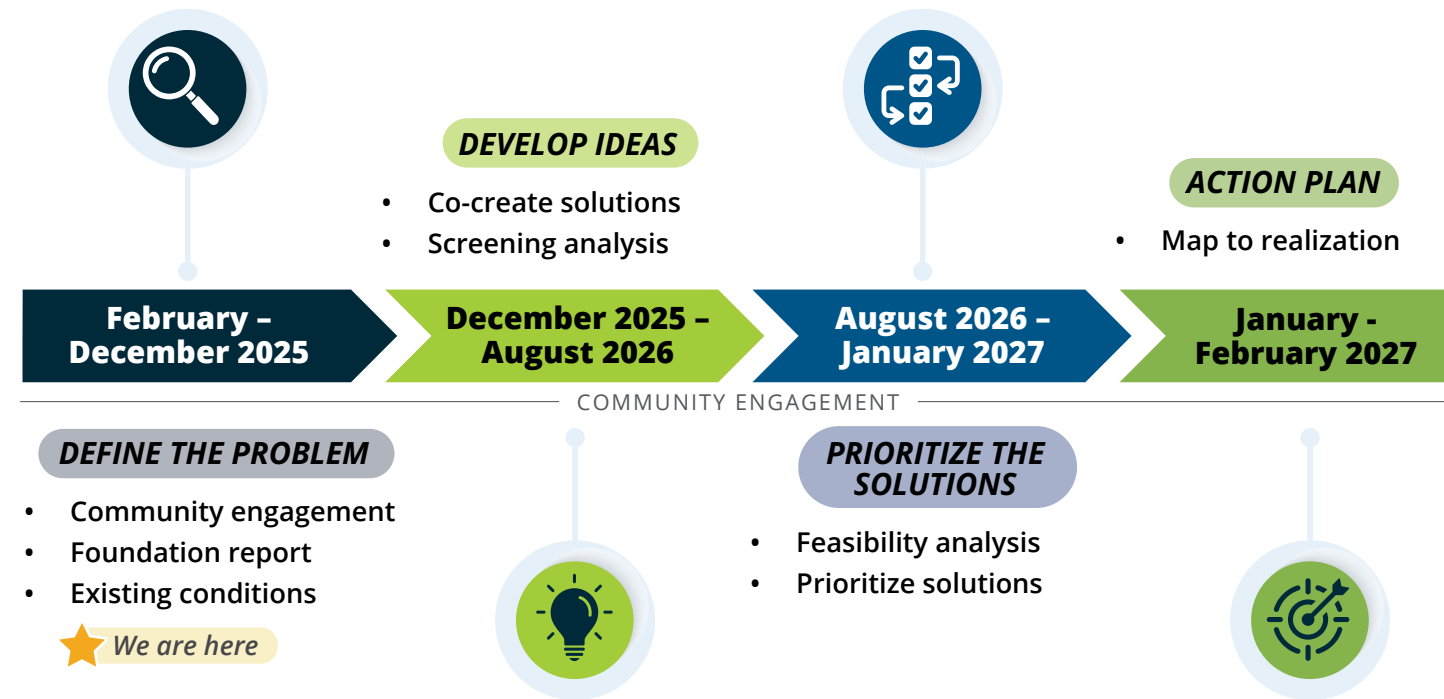
OUR COMMUNITY

Housing and Public Services



WE CONNECT STUDY TIMELINE

The communities adjacent to the divide are at the forefront of the WE Connect study. Community members will play a lead role in all phases of the two year study, as outlined below.



PREVIOUS STUDIES

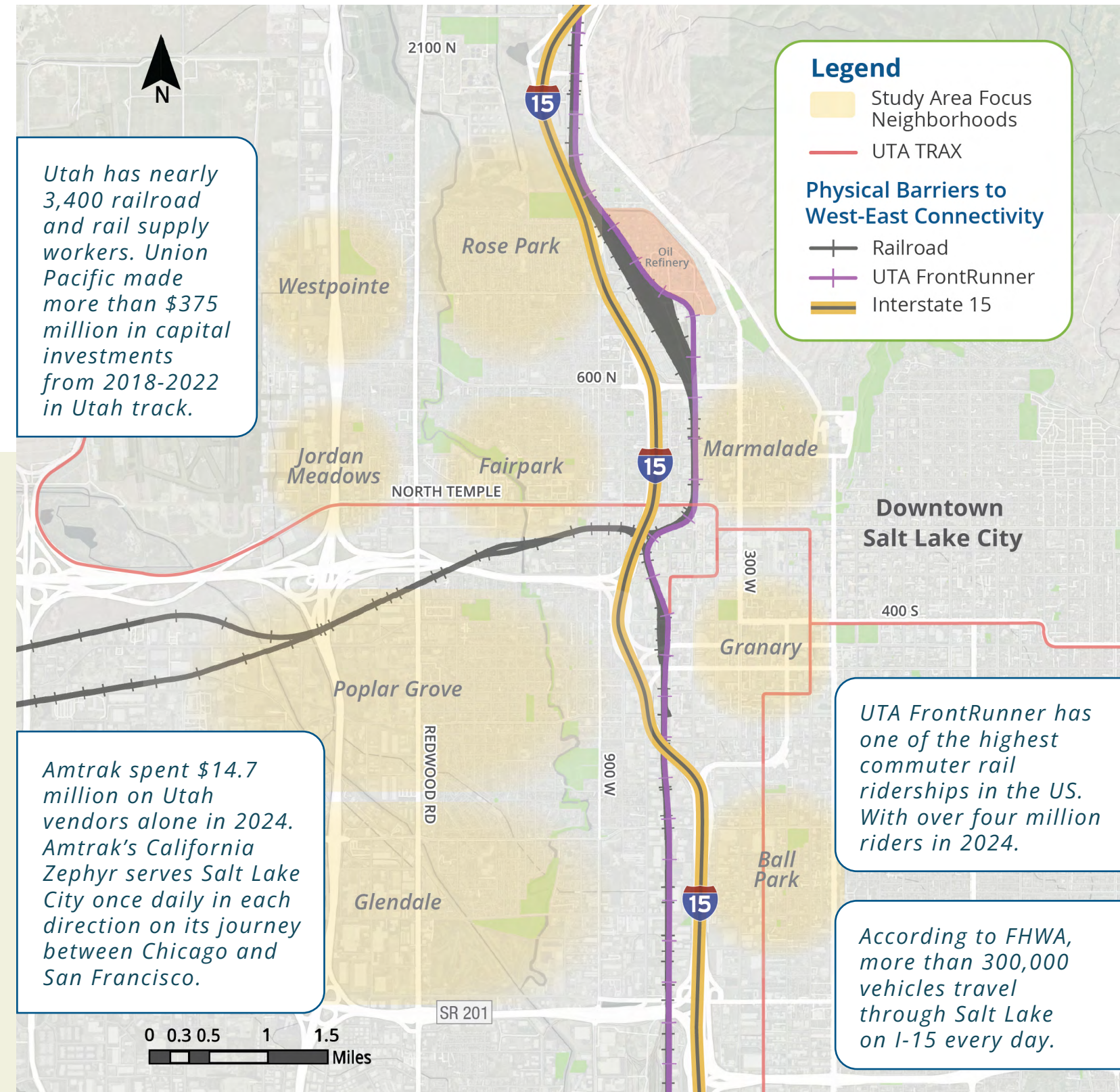
Many plans and studies have shaped SLC's transportation and land use decisions over the years. These documents provide context, identify community priorities, and highlight past and ongoing efforts to improve mobility, safety, and connectivity, serving as a foundation to inform our work. By referring to these resources, we can maintain consistency with past efforts, avoid duplication, and support a unified vision for the area. This report also uses available sources such as US Census, transportation, and financial data as cited throughout the document.

Multiple plans and studies inform this Foundation Report, including the following:

- » **2025** Rio Grande Plan Economic Impact Analysis
- » **2024** Rio Grande Plan Financing and Economic Development Strategies
- » **2023** Wasatch Front Regional Council (WFRC) Regional Transportation Plan
- » **2023** SLC Crossings Study Engagement Memo
- » **2023** Connect SLC Plan – Citywide Transportation Plan
- » **2023** Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT) I-15 Expansion EIS
- » **2023** Rio Grande Plan Screening Analysis
- » **2022** SLC Transportation Priority Projects – East-West Connections
- » **2022** Ballpark Station Area Plan
- » **2021** SLC Westside Transportation Equity Study
- » **2020** Folsom Trail Feasibility Study
- » **2018** 9 Line Trail Extension Study
- » **2017** Wasatch Front Central Corridor Study
- » **2017** Utah Freight Plan Summary
- » **2017** SLC Transit Master Plan
- » **2016** Downtown Community Master Plan
- » **2015** SLC Pedestrian & Bicycle Master Plan
- » **2014** Westside Master Plan
- » **2010** North Temple Boulevard Plan

LOOKING AT THE BARRIERS

The existing transportation barriers to and from the Westside, including I-15 and the rail lines, contribute to existing physical west-east divide, as seen below. This study focuses on the neighborhoods most affected by that division.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The SLC WE Connect Foundation Report is guided by the Salt Lake City Transportation Division.



A group of Westside residents will play a crucial role in shaping the development of this study as part of the Community Advisory Board (CAB). CAB members were selected through an open application process to represent the cultural and socioeconomic diversity of the Westside.

A variety of local stakeholders will provide further support and guidance including the following key participants:

Funding Partners

- » Utah Transit Authority (UTA)
- » Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT)
- » Salt Lake City Mayor and City Council
- » Salt Lake City Public Utilities (SLCPU)
- » Salt Lake City Community Reinvestment Agency (CRA)

Project Team

- » **Kimley-Horn** – prime consultant, project management
- » **Nelson\Nygaard** – transportation planning
- » **Perkins + Will** – urban design
- » **Alta Planning + Design** – active transportation
- » **David Evans and Associates, Inc.** – public involvement
- » **Township + Range** – public art coordination
- » **ECONorthwest** – economic analysis



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WHO WE ARE

DEMOGRAPHICS AND WORKFORCE

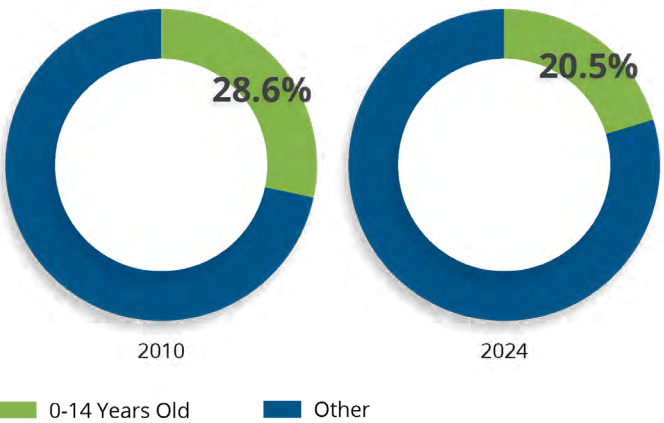


In recent years, the demographic and socio-economic landscape in Salt Lake City has undergone notable changes. Shifts in age distribution, racial diversity, educational attainment, and workforce dynamics paint an increasingly diverse and evolving picture of the community. Through data analysis and community feedback initiatives, we have gained insight into the unique challenges and opportunities faced by residents, guiding our efforts to address critical issues and foster continued growth and inclusivity.

Findings are focused on Salt Lake City’s Westside, comprised of six major neighborhoods: **Westpointe, Rose Park, Jordan Meadows, Fairpark, Poplar Grove, and Glendale**. These neighborhoods are home to a vibrant, evolving community characterized by a youthful and diverse population.

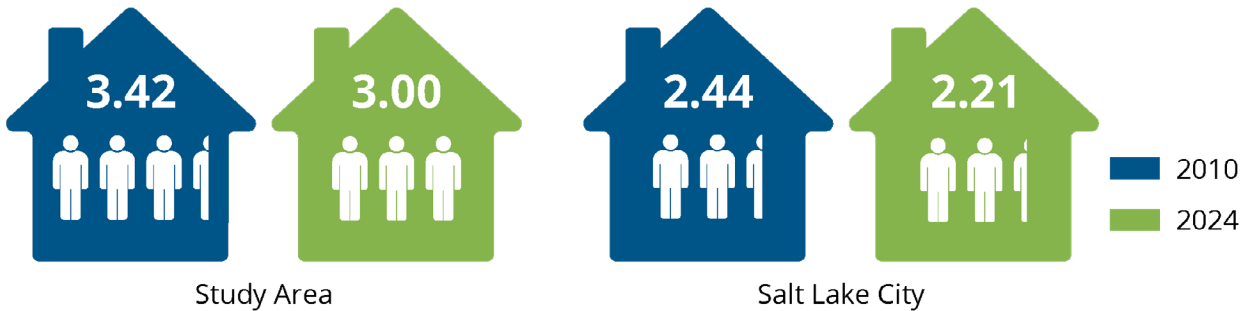
AGE

In 2010, children under the age of 15 made up the largest age group in the study area. Since then, this group has declined by nearly 30%. At the same time, the number of older adults has grown. The population aged 55 to 64 increased by 22%, and those aged 65 to 74 grew by more than 60%. Many middle-aged groups have also seen growth, suggesting that the Westside continues to be home to long-term residents and aging families.



HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION

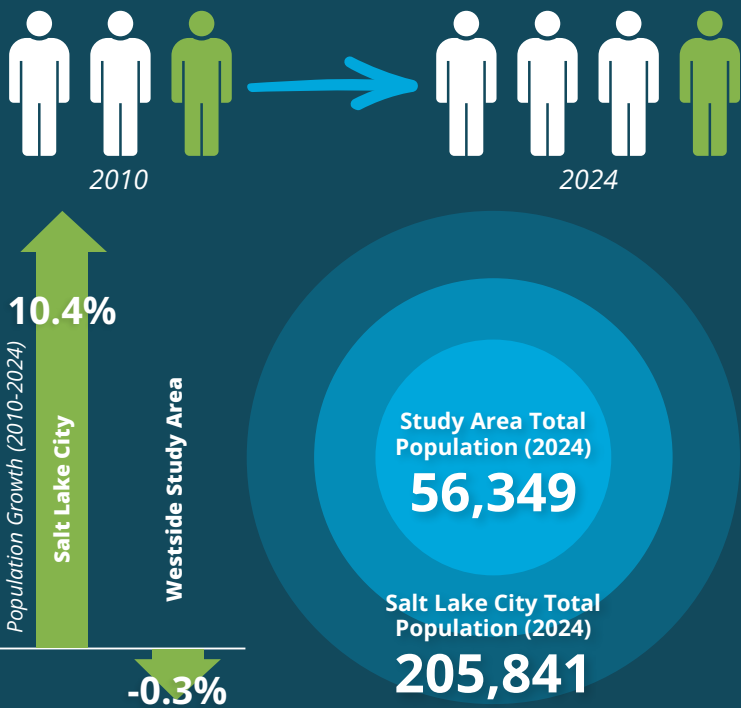
Although the average household size has declined slightly, the Westside households remain larger than the citywide norm, reflecting a strong presence of **family households and multi-generational living arrangements**. More than 30% of households in the Westside include children, compared to just under 20% citywide.



POPULATION

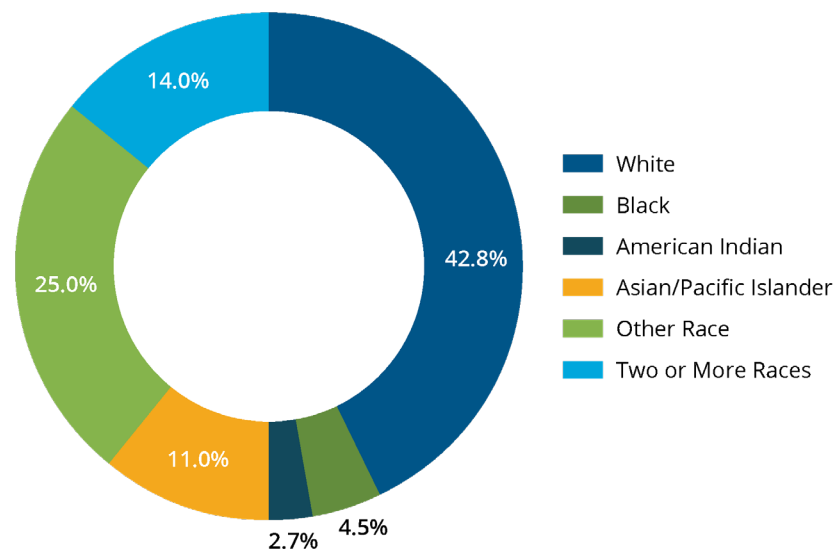
In 2010, nearly one in three Salt Lake City residents lived in the Westside.

Today, that number is closer to one in four. This shift doesn't necessarily reflect people leaving in large numbers, but rather that other areas of the city are growing faster.



RACIAL DIVERSITY

While residents identifying as White make up the largest racial group at 43%, the Westside also includes meaningful representation from individuals identifying as Other Race (25%), Two or More Races (14%), and Asian or Pacific Islander (11%).

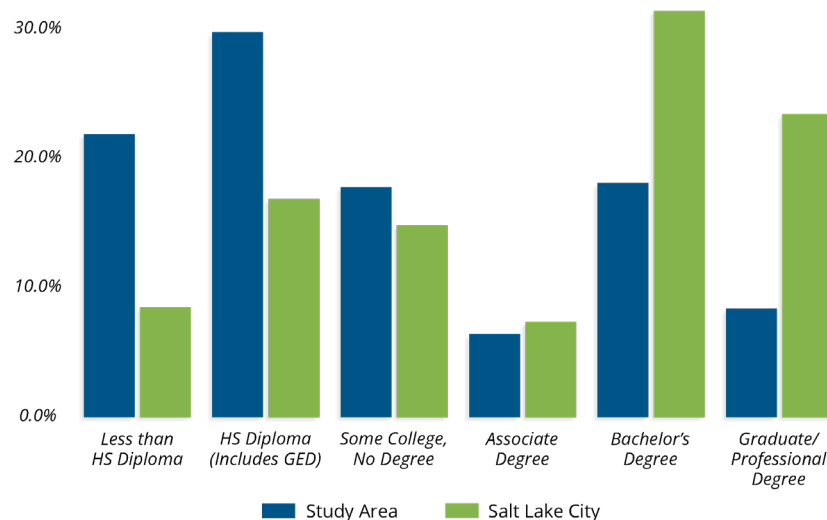


ETHNICITY

In Census data, whether a person identifies as Hispanic or Latino refers to ethnicity, regardless of their race. In Census data, individuals who identify as Hispanic or Latino may be of any race. Approximately **48% of the Westside identifies as Hispanic or Latino**, more than double the citywide share of 22%.

EDUCATION

Nearly half of the residents in the Westside have a high school diploma or some college education but have not completed a degree. Just under 18% of Westside residents have earned a bachelor's degree, and 8% hold a graduate or professional degree, lower than citywide averages. In Salt Lake City overall, more than 30% of adults have a bachelor's degree, and nearly 23% have a graduate degree.



Source: ESRI BAO

WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED AND HEARD

Community Survey #1, offered in both English and Spanish, requested optional demographic data from the over 1,050 respondents, providing insight into who is participating in the WE Connect Study. Many respondents reported they live within the Westside, most often being from Zip Codes 84104 (28%) and 84116 (27%). However, 75% of respondents identified as White or Caucasian, while only 11% identified as Hispanic or Latino, despite this group being 48% of the Westside neighborhood population. The project team is actively working with the CAB and stakeholders to better engage the Hispanic and Latino community.

WE Connect Community Kick-Off Event held in May 2025 at Edison Elementary School

The primary goal of this event was engaging Westside residents and exploring the impacts of the west-east divide in Salt Lake City. The event emphasized the importance of **community collaboration** to identify problems, **build trust** between the study team and community, and demonstrate the city's commitment to prioritizing **community-driven solutions**.

There were several activities aimed at gathering feedback about the lived experiences and perceptions of Westside residents. An 18-foot project area map station gathered input on key barriers influencing travel within and outside the study area. A smaller project area map station gathered comments about amenities and motivations for traveling beyond the Westside. Also, a graphic recorder gathered comments to understand how the west-east divide impacts people's daily lives.

Overall, respondents expressed how large and noticeable an impact the divide has on the community and neighborhoods on the Westside.

Some frequent buzzwords throughout the discussion were **community** and **divide**. Other quotes captured during the event by the graphic recorder were



Pictured: A graphic recorder at the community event gathered comments to understand how the west-east divide impacts people's daily lives.

"I have feelings of separation and isolation."
-Seth



"Fifteen years ago a woman backed out dating me because I live on the Westside."
-Mike



"I think it's more of an economic divide."
-Paul



26% of those living on the Westside report living with a disability.

11% of Westside residents speak English less than "very well"

12% of households in the Westside are living below the poverty level.

22% of those living in Salt Lake City report living with a disability.

9% of Salt Lake City residents speak English less than "very well"

13% of households in Salt Lake City are living below the poverty level.

Source: 2023 US Census and US Census American Community Survey and 2021 SLC Westside Transportation Equity Study

WORKFORCE AND INCOME

Employment patterns, wage distribution, and commuting trends in the study area help us to better understand the landscape of opportunity and where it can be strengthened to support long-term prosperity for Westside residents. Survey results were shared with the CAB for review and analysis. In their feedback, the CAB highlighted a recurring theme: **many respondents pointed to a lack of economic development on the Westside.**

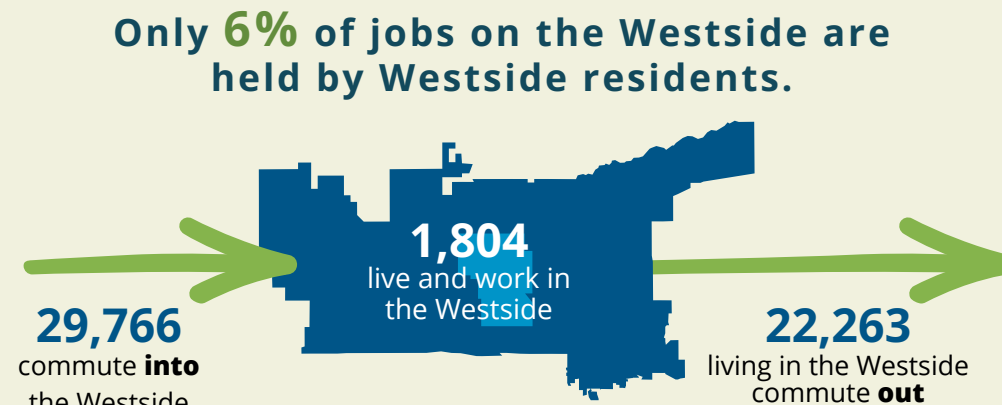
While most jobs earn more than \$40,000, the high share of lower-wage work underscores the need for career pathways, wage growth, and supportive services for workers in essential but often underpaid roles. This is important when compared with the county's living wage estimates, which show that even a single adult without children needs to earn over **\$50,000 per year to cover basic expenses**. For families, the gap is even more pronounced. A single parent with two children would need to earn over \$100,000 to meet a living wage.



Roughly one in three jobs in the Westside pays under \$40,000 annually.

INFLOW-OUTFLOW

The Westside draws its workforce from across the region. The majority of those workers live in West Valley City, West Jordan, and Taylorsville, followed by cities like Sandy, Millcreek, and South Jordan. Only a small share both live and work within the area: the vast majority commute in from other cities and communities.



1 in 3 Utahns live in Salt Lake County,



but the county supports nearly **1/2** of all jobs in the state



—making it the main economic engine of Utah.

- University of Utah, Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute, Mean Centers of Population and Employment in Utah's Economic Regions, June 2024

INDUSTRIES

Job density in the Westside is anchored by key public, industrial, and logistics employers. High-density locations include the Multi-Agency State Office Building, Utah Department of Health and Human Services, and Associated Food Stores' headquarters and warehouse. These employers reflect broader job growth trends in public administration, transportation and warehousing, and construction, all of which saw major gains between 2017 and 2022. Together, they help position the Westside as a regional hub for both government services and goods movement.

Between 2017 and 2022, the Westside added more than 3,500 jobs, reflecting overall job growth of nearly 13%.

LARGEST WESTSIDE INDUSTRIES



OPPORTUNITIES

| CATEGORY | OPPORTUNITY |
|--|---|
| Expand Access to Quality Jobs | Invest in job training programs that prepare residents for growing careers in logistics, construction, and public administration. |
| | Promote living-wage employment by prioritizing businesses and developments that commit to local hiring and wage standards. |
| | Leverage the presence of government employers to create job pipelines for study area residents. |
| Support Families and Educational Advancement | Build family-serving infrastructure, including childcare, parks, and school-based resources, that reflect the area's larger household sizes. |
| | Increase access to adult education and workforce credentials that help residents move into higher-paying careers. |
| Improve Regional Mobility | Strengthen public transit connections between the Westside and major employment centers across the region. |
| | Develop transportation solutions that reduce commute burdens and support both inbound workers and local residents traveling outward for jobs. |

CHALLENGES

| CATEGORY | CHALLENGES |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Economic Disconnection | Residents rely on employment outside the area, reinforcing a mismatch between housing, income, and job proximity. |
| | A large share of local jobs pay below \$40,000 annually, falling short of the income needed to support typical household living costs. |
| Barriers to Mobility and Advancement | Career advancement is constrained by limited access to workforce development programs and higher-wage job pipelines. |
| | Transportation options do not adequately support the area's commuting patterns, resulting in long travel distances and added financial strain for both residents and inbound workers |
| Stagnant Growth | The Westside has experienced little to no population growth in over a decade, signaling underinvestment and limited development. |
| | Job growth has been concentrated in a small number of sectors, limiting the diversity of employment opportunities available to residents. |

EXISTING STRENGTHS AND CULTURE

The Westside of Salt Lake City is more than a collection of neighborhoods—it's a vibrant, resilient community shaped by generations of cultural richness, mutual care, and grassroots action. From murals that celebrate identity to community gardens, block parties, and local businesses that serve as gathering places, the Westside's cultural and social fabric is one of its greatest strengths. Public art, creative expression, and strong neighborhood ties make the Westside not only a great place to live, but a place to belong. **These traits form the foundation for future investments and opportunity.**

ART AND ACTIVATION

Area residents and institutions have made significant progress in activating “lost” spaces created by the interstate crossings. Art and activation help soften these spaces with community amenities and placemaking to provide destinations, develop neighborhood pride, and create opportunities to showcase local artists.

“Pillars of the Community”

Art pieces on the pillars of the I-15 underpass at 300 N provide a canvas to engage local artists in the beautification of their communities. This mosaic tile work—created by nearly 20 local artists—depicts neighborhood figures like teachers, athletes, and Navajo Code Talkers. This public art project, supported by NeighborWorks, builds pride and connection by reflecting the identities and stories of the surrounding community.



“Daylight”

Created by Roots Art Kollektive, composed of three Mexican American artists Miguel Galaz, Alan Ochoa, and Luis Novoaall who are all former SLCC students, the Daylight mural brings vibrant energy to Salt Lake City's Folsom Trail. Stretching 275 feet, the mural celebrates themes of water and movement and supports broader efforts to “daylight” City Creek. Selected from over 30 proposals, the artwork is a powerful example of local creativity activating public space and reflecting community identity.



HOW WE MOVE

TRANSPORTATION

The historic development of Salt Lake City's transportation systems has led to an undeniable reality: it is easier and more reliable for people to travel north to south than it is to move east to west. This "divide" impacts people traveling by all modes, shapes daily decisions about how and when to travel, and is a challenge for many businesses. For people driving, this means limited access points to neighborhoods and frustrating waits for stopped or slow-moving freight trains. For people walking, cycling, or rolling, the impact is equally frustrating and can lead to dangerous behaviors including illegal crossings between train cars, bypassing gates to cross the tracks, or lengthy detours over railway viaducts, which have limited facilities for safety and comfort. For transit customers, the opportunities to access frequent transit are shaped by a limited set of grade-separated crossings, since UTA will not subject buses to at-grade rail crossings.

Put simply, the interstate and railways create **physical and psychological barriers** that limit access to jobs, services, and recreation for Westside residents.

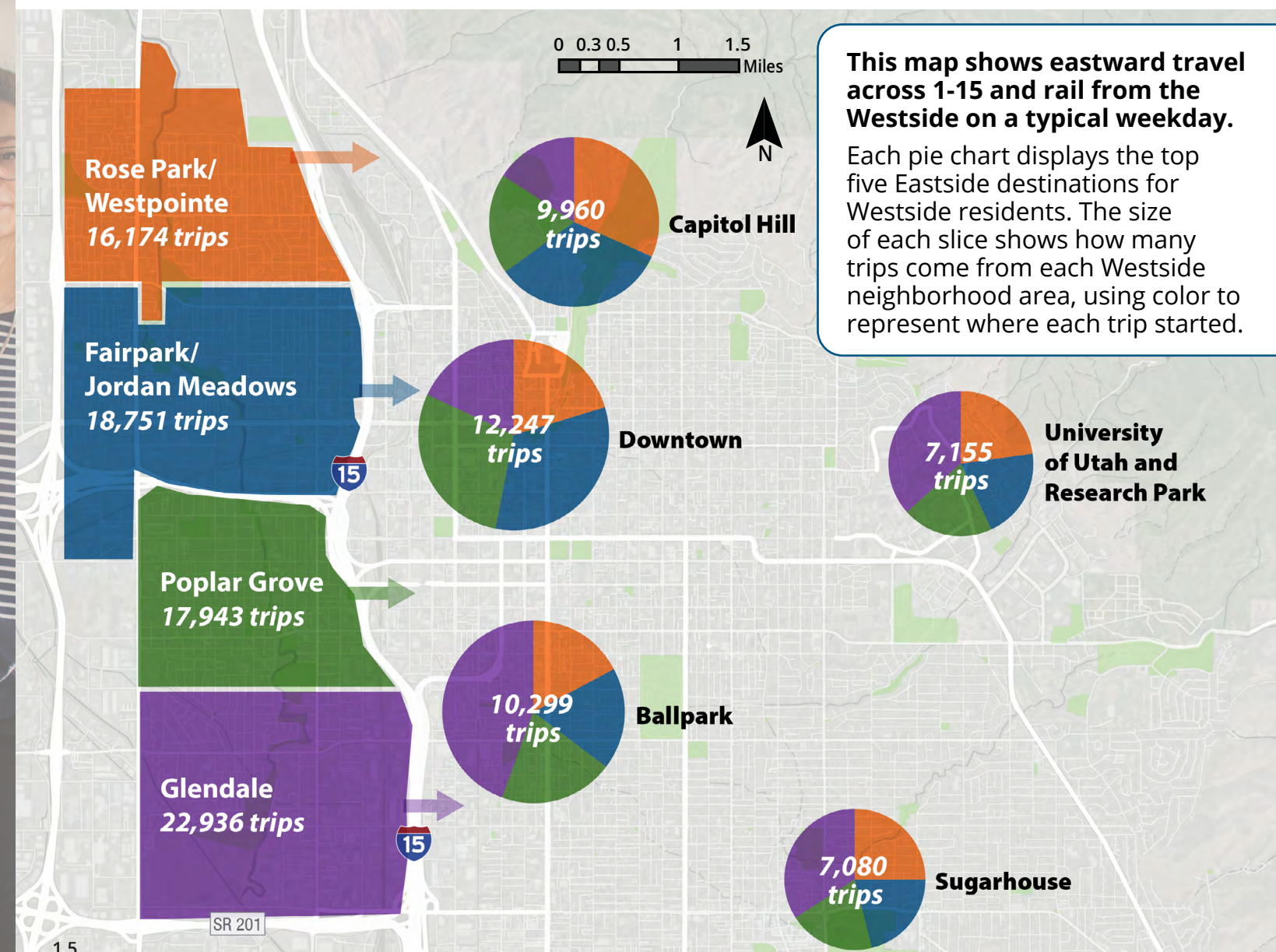
WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED

TRAVEL PATTERNS

Each day, **tens of thousands** of Westside residents make trips across the I-15 divide to reach destinations on the city's east side. Travel patterns from Westside neighborhoods show how many weekday trips are made from Westside neighborhoods to the east, and **outlines the top five east-side destinations for Westside residents**.

Of the Westside neighborhoods, Glendale sees the most trips to the east side, but Downtown, Ballpark, and Capitol Hill are all major destinations for Westside residents. Improving west-east walking, rolling, transit, and bike connections could lead to travel time improvements and a better overall travel experience for those making these trips.

TYPICAL WEEKDAY TRIPS TO THE EAST SIDE



PEOPLE DRIVING

Salt Lake City’s street network follows a standard compass grid with famously long, 660-foot blocks. While this layout typically supports easy navigation, I-15 and freight and passenger rail lines disrupt the grid and limit reliable west-east travel. These barriers improve regional vehicle and freight flow but create significant delays at at-grade rail crossings.

Video data from nine rail crossings in the study area shows how challenging crossing can be. **While some train-related vehicle delays are under 10 minutes, many stretch to 15 minutes or more—and in rare cases, long freight trains stopped on the tracks can cause hour-long waits and forced detours.** Cumulatively, most crossings see over two hours of total daily delay. People walking, biking, or rolling also face these impacts, with delays adding time and frustration to reaching their destination.

The table below summarizes daily delay frequency, average, and maximum wait times, and the number of vehicles rerouting due to long waits. Crossings at 300 N, 600 W, 1700 S, and 200 S experience the most frequent delays, while 600 W, 200 S, and 1700 S have the highest cumulative wait times. While Frontrunner-related gate closures average less than 60 seconds, most blockages are caused by freight trains, affecting all modes of travel.

DAILY RAILROAD CROSSING DELAYS & QUEUES

| CROSSING | AVERAGE DAILY NUMBER OF BLOCKAGES* | AVERAGE TOTAL DAILY BLOCKAGE TIME | MAX OBSERVED SINGLE BLOCKAGE TIME | MAX DAILY # OF VEHICLES THAT TURN AROUND/ REROUTE DUE TO BLOCKAGE |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| 300 N (east of 500 W) | 96 Blockages | 4h 53m 17s | 2h 57m 16s | 44 Reroutes |
| 600 W (south of S Temple) | 110 Blockages | 8h 22m 59s | 13h 59m 34s | 54 Reroutes |
| 800 W (south of S Temple) | 21 Blockages | 1h 37m 22s | 24m 24s | 3 Reroutes |
| 900 West (south of South Temple) | 28 Blockages | 1h 30m 33s | 12m 7s | 14 Reroutes |
| 1000 West (south of South Temple) | 29 Blockages | 2h 8m 14s | 35m 56s | No data |
| 200 S (west of 600 W) | 92 Blockages | 2h 38m 57s | 21m 42s | 13 Reroutes |
| 800 S (west of 600 W) | 77 Blockages | 2h 20m 31s | 23m 29s | 20 Reroutes |
| 900 S (west of 600 W) | 77 Blockages | 2h 20m 35s | 23m 55s | 6 Reroutes |
| 1700 S (east of 700 W) | 78 Blockages | 4h 49m 07s | 2h 36s | 73 Reroutes |

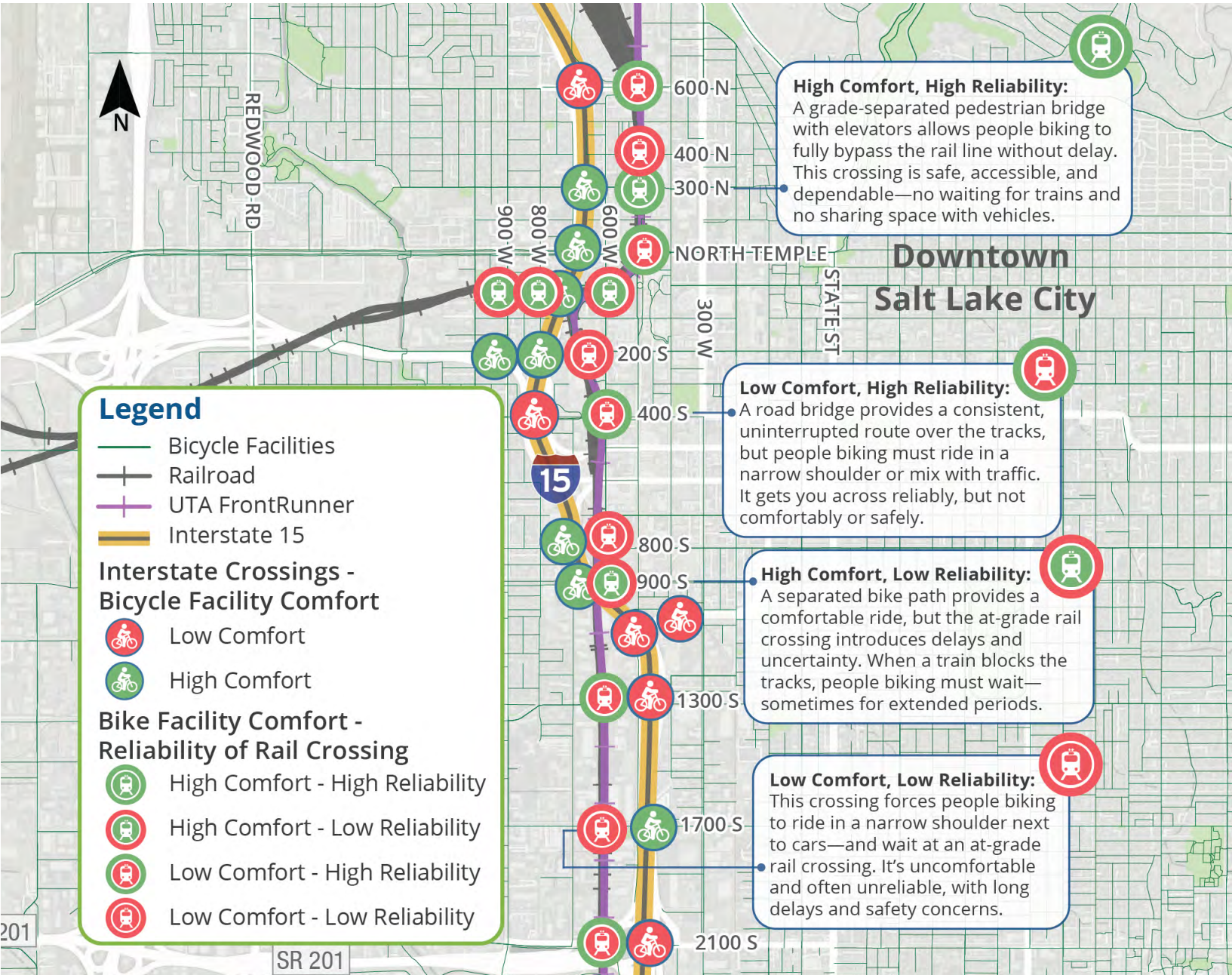
*Blockage refers to rail gates/barriers being lowered to stop people and vehicles from crossing rail tracks (“gate-down time”). Video closure analysis for each crossing was conducted over 3 consecutive days in May. All data is based on a 3 weekday collection.

PEOPLE RIDING BICYCLES

Bicycling is a cornerstone of a healthy, connected, and equitable Salt Lake City, especially in lower-income one or no-car households. **The benefits of active transportation are numerous and well documented, from cost savings and improved health and wellness to reduced carbon emissions and beyond.**

The map below highlights the existing bicycle facilities in the project area. High-comfort facilities, such as protected bike lanes and paved paths, are important to ensure bicycling is accessible to all ages and abilities. The 9-Line Trail and Folsom Trail provide high-quality trail connections across the railroad tracks and underneath the interstate. Lower-quality painted bike lanes are present on 300 N, North Temple, 200 S, 700 S, 800 S, and 1700 S.

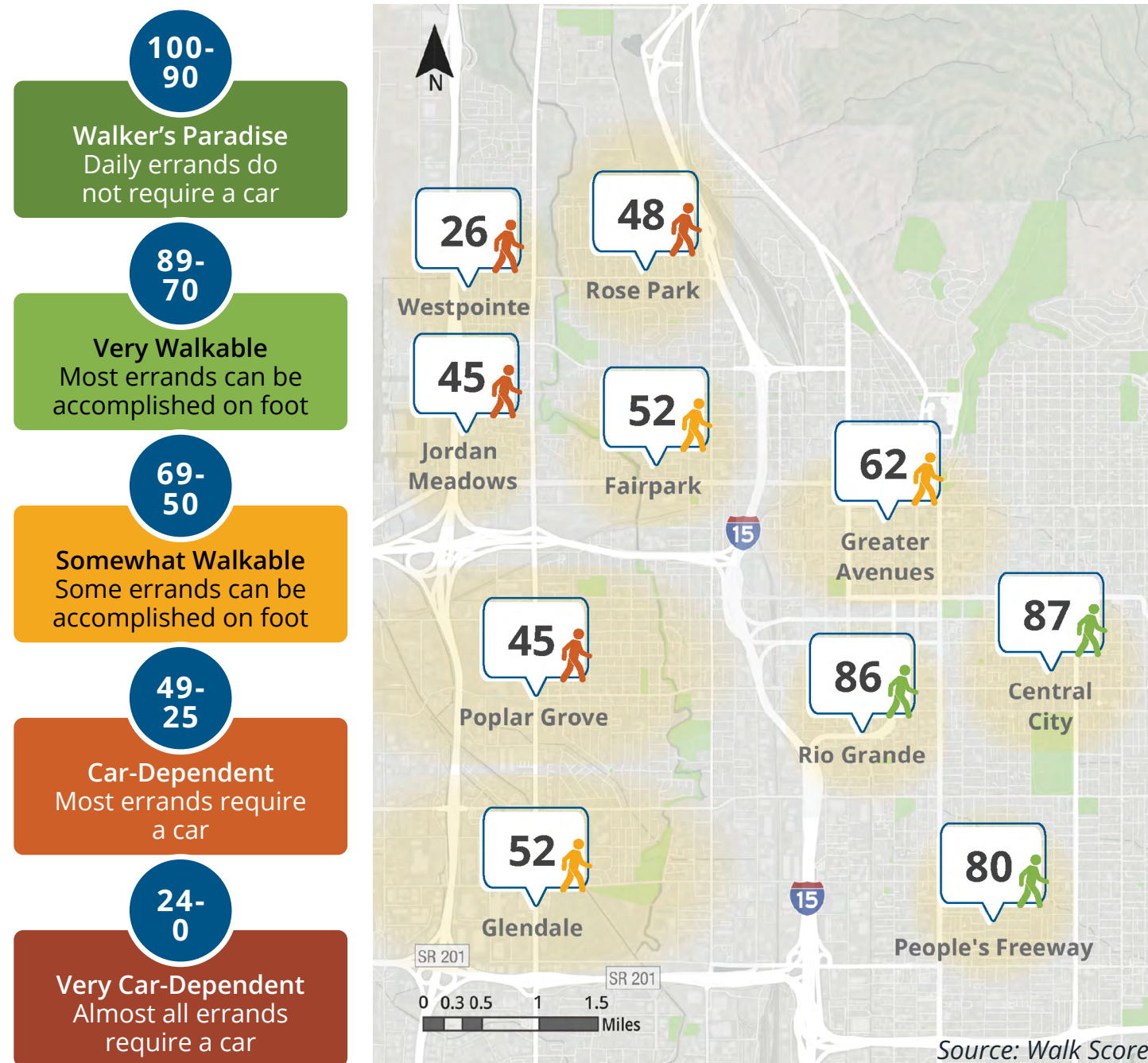
EXISTING BICYCLE FACILITIES, CROSSINGS, & GAPS



PEOPLE WALKING/ROLLING

Salt Lake City's Westside neighborhoods have some of the lowest Walk Score ratings in the City. The map below shows Walk Score by neighborhood, highlighting Westside communities in relation to Eastside communities across walking, biking, and transit access.

Trains blocking the path of people biking and walking can be more impactful than those driving, as lengthy detours are often not possible on foot. This is further exacerbated by missing or insufficient sidewalks on some of the viaducts over the railways and interstate, including those at 600 N, 400 S, and 2100 S. Uncomfortable and poorly lit interstate underpasses are also a concern. For residents with accessibility needs, long and steep viaducts, missing and insufficient sidewalks, and a lack of Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) features (like curb cuts), can make barriers impenetrable.



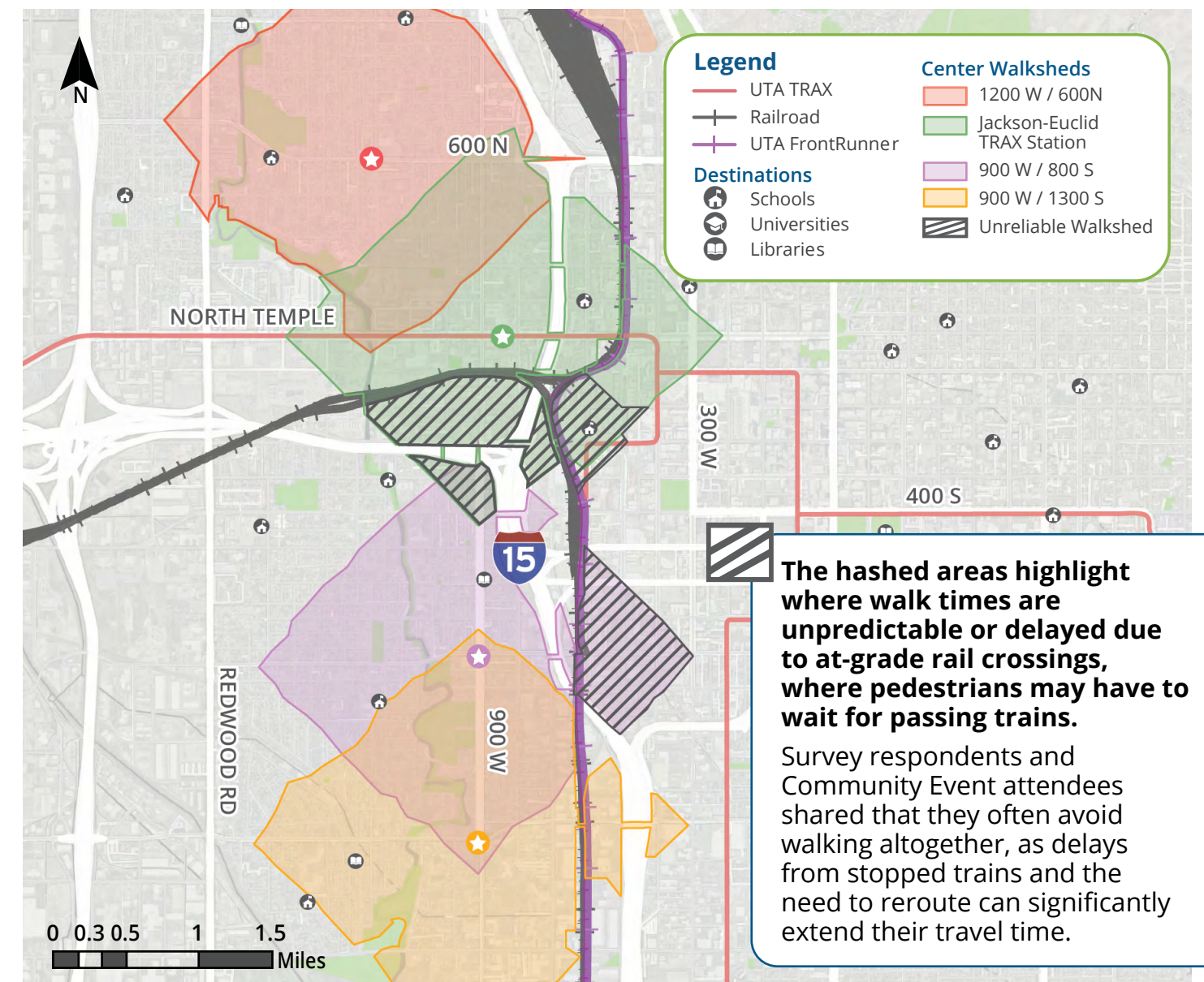
The map below shows how far someone can walk in about 20 minutes (roughly one mile) from four key areas on the Westside. These areas were selected because they are important community hubs with shops, services, or transit access:

- » 1200 W & 600 N
- » Jackson/Euclid TRAX Station on North Temple
- » 900 W & 800 S
- » 900 W & 1300 S

In a neighborhood with a well-connected sidewalk and street network, a 20-minute walk would create a diamond-shaped area, spreading evenly in all directions. However, on the Westside, this is not the case. I-15 and the rail lines create major barriers that cut off direct walking routes and limit how far people can actually go on foot within 20 minutes.

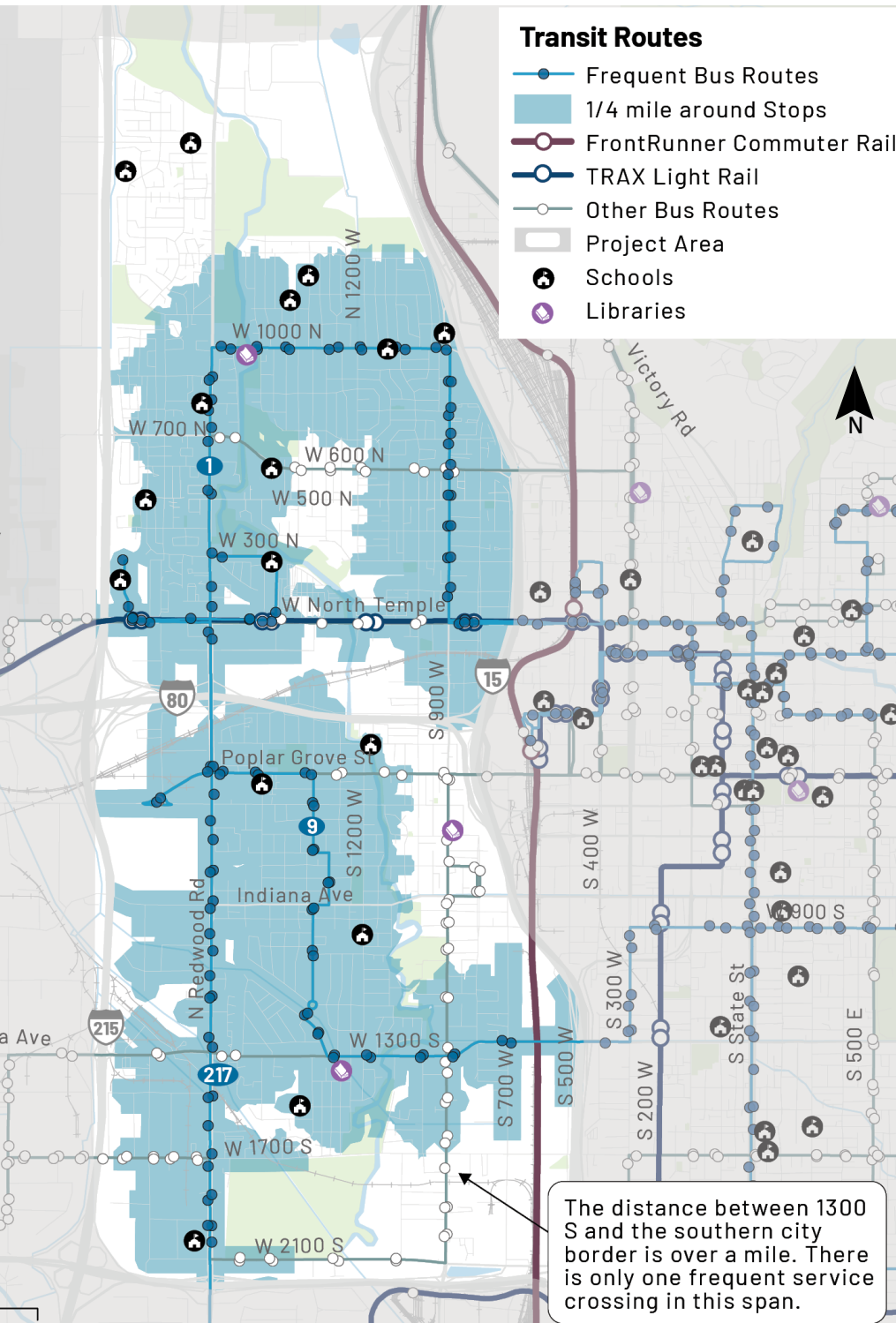
You'll notice that the walking areas (called "walksheds") shrink and become uneven when they hit these barriers. These limitations show how disconnected some neighborhoods are and emphasize the need for safer, more direct pedestrian routes on the Westside.

20-MINUTE WALKSHEDS FROM KEY CENTERS



PEOPLE USING TRANSIT

Public transit plays a vital role in shaping the accessibility and economic vitality of Salt Lake City, helping all residents have access to opportunity and the ability to thrive. Past planning efforts, like the *2020 Westside Transportation Equity Study*, highlight the Westside's unique transit concerns. Salt Lake City and UTA have taken the first steps to address these challenges by launching UTA On Demand service on the Westside and implementing new Westside routes as part of the Frequent Service Network.



ACCESS TO FREQUENT TRANSIT SERVICE

Since 2019, UTA has made significant improvements to transit service in Westside neighborhoods. Proactive planning efforts like UTA's 5-year service plan and Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) aim to continue increasing the span and frequency of transit service for Westside residents. **While Salt Lake City has a robust public transit system including TRAX and buses, the Westside still lacks some direct and frequent connections to major destinations on the Eastside.**

The frequency map shows how many residents have access to a 15-minute frequent service transit stop within a 1/4 mile, or 10-minute walk. While most of the Westside residents can walk to frequent transit with 1/4 mile, there are destinations to the north, south, and east in our project area that are not walkable.

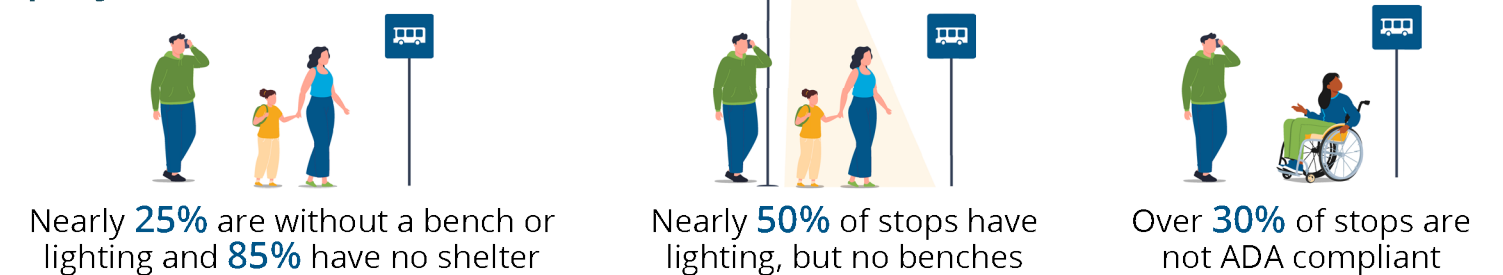
It is also important to note that transit frequency may fluctuate in the evenings and on weekends, which may reduce residents' ability to access frequent, reliable transit service.

TRANSIT STOP/STATION AMENITIES & ACCESSIBILITY

Transit amenities like benches and shelters and access elements like continuous sidewalks and ADA compliance significantly improve the quality of transit trips for riders, making transit easier and safer to get to, and more comfortable to ride.

While most transit stops in Westside neighborhoods do have lighting, many lack benches and shelters, particularly along important corridors like North Redwood Road. Most transit stops in Westside neighborhoods are accessible by sidewalk and are ADA compliant, but several stops, particularly along Redwood Road, are in need of ADA upgrades.

Of the 196 stops in the project area...

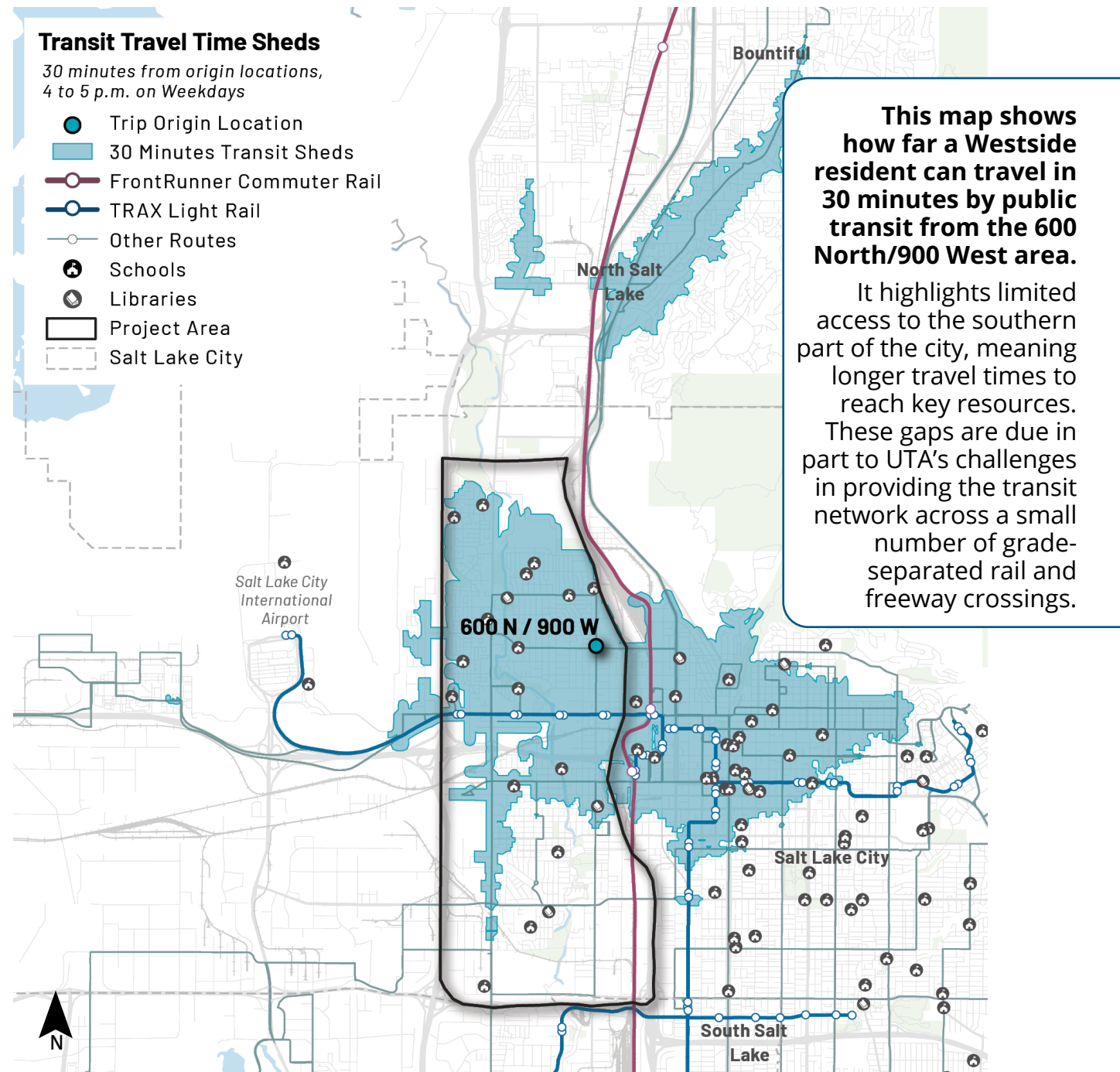


Along Redwood Road...



ACCESS TO OPPORTUNITY

A comprehensive and frequent public transit network means more choices to get around, and faster, more reliable trips. This makes it easier to access key destinations and services like schools, libraries, hospitals, and community centers.



Survey responses called for an expansion of public transportation on the Westside, with some comments expressing frustration with the Westside not being a part of the TRAX free fare zones.

WHAT WE HAVE HEARD

Comments gathered from the WE Connect Community Kick-Off Event and the first Community Survey, conducted in May and June of 2025, expressed frustration with delays caused by trains. There was a sense of frustration when having to reroute, due to increased commute time and a lack of alternative routes.

Many respondents noted transportation safety concerns. People who bicycle expressed feeling unsafe due to aggressive drivers, noting the cause of aggression coming from frustration from train delays and lack of awareness in confusing intersections. They also identified issues with the maintenance and conditions of existing bike lanes. People walking expressed safety and security concerns in crossing intersections and walking in underpasses. Traffic congestion was also commonly mentioned from pedestrian respondents, noting that the combination of traffic and trains create significant blockages at key crossings. Many comments also noted efforts to avoid crossing the divide in any way possible.

Some of the comments captured in the survey and at the community event include:



"We need more people focused transportation: Trolley, biking, walking, buses"
-Peter

"Cargo Trains stopped on the track during peak rush hour. Totally unpredictable!"
-Nathan



"The most frustrating thing for me is how unpredictable my commute is."
-Joe

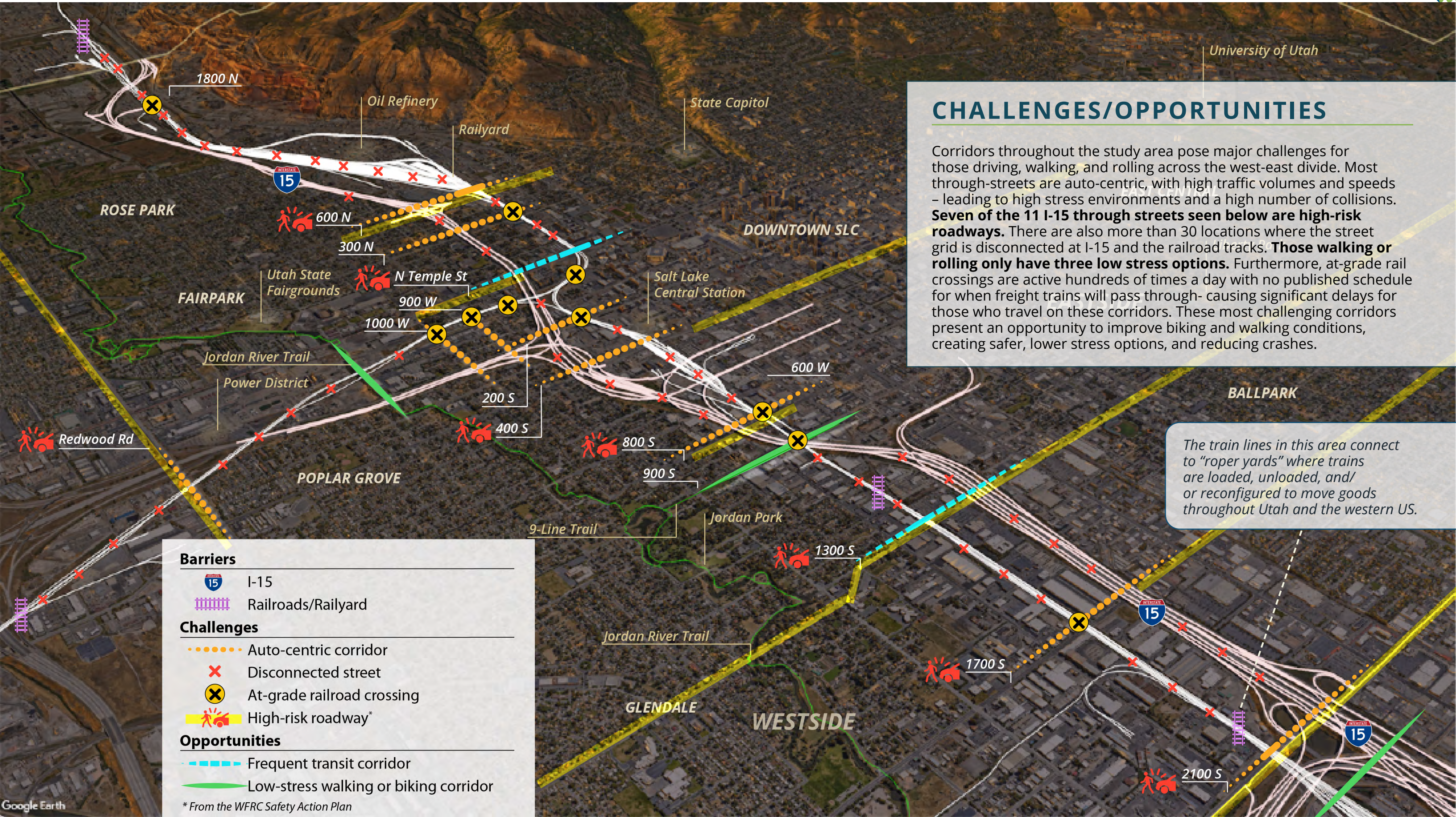


“

Wish I could bike, but I have to drive in case the street is blocked.

I have seen school children climbing under railcars ahead of oncoming trains, I have been late to meetings and events, I have gotten sunburned while waiting on my bike.

”



EXISTING EFFORTS AND INVESTMENTS

Salt Lake City has already begun making important strides to address the longstanding barriers that limit safe, comfortable travel between the Westside and the rest of the city. These projects not only improve daily mobility for residents but also serve as examples of how infrastructure can connect rather than separate.

WEST-EAST TRAIL CONNECTIONS

There are some great existing west-east trail connections that provide access through the railroad and interstate barriers. While these trail connections are periodically hindered by delays with at-grade rail crossings, they do provide high-comfort, safe, and separated facilities for users of all ages and abilities—serving both transportation and recreation purposes. Along with the north-south Jordan River Trail, the west-east Folsom Trail, 9 Line Trail, and Parleys Trail serve as the active transportation backbone of Salt Lake City and beyond.



300 N GRADE-SEPARATED CROSSING

The grade-separated pedestrian bridge over the railways at 300 N provides an excellent precedent for high-comfort, high-reliability connections through the west-east barriers. In addition to the overcrossing of the railways, a painted bike lane, an undercrossing of I-15, and relatively low traffic volumes on 300 N provide Salt Lake City's best example of west-east permeability, especially for students traveling to West High. While ADA accessibility can be a challenge with overcrossings, the bridge includes an elevator to get people with mobility challenges up and down off the bridge.



REAL-TIME CROSSING ALERT SIGNAGE

Real-time information boards have been added to 900 W and North Temple to inform drivers, cyclists, and pedestrians of upcoming traffic interruptions caused by train crossings. This technology has helped first responders, westside residents, and commuters make more informed decisions to avoid extended delays at train crossings. Recognizing the importance of conveying this information to all road users, a partnership between Salt Lake City and the Utah Inland Port Authority will expand the signage to five additional at-grade rail crossings: 300 N, 200 S, 800 S, 900 S, and 1700 S.



By addressing infrastructure gaps, investing in multimodal corridors, and prioritizing safety, Salt Lake City can begin stitching together its west and east communities.

COMMUNITY DRIVEN CONCEPTS

In addition to projects completed by Salt Lake City, community groups have championed ideas to address the west-east divide, most notably the [Rio Grande Plan \(RGP\)](#). The RGP proposes moving Union Pacific, FrontRunner, and Amtrak rail into an underground 'train box' beneath 500 West. This citizen-led effort has been catalytic in elevating the conversation and understanding all potential approaches through a community-driven lens.

OUR WELLBEING

HEALTH AND SAFETY

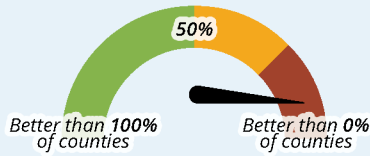

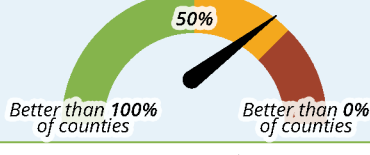
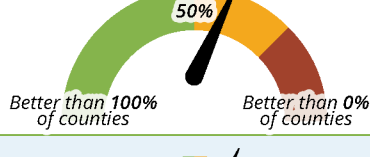
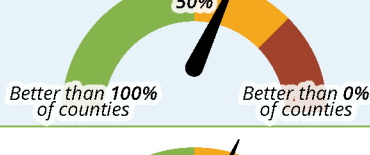
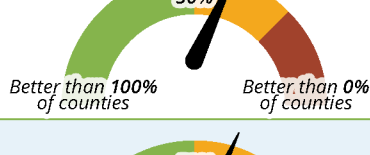
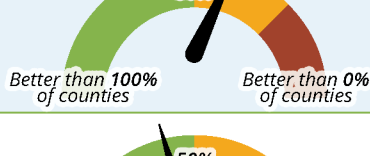

Health and safety are foundational to a community’s wellbeing. When wellbeing is strong, communities are better equipped to thrive. In Salt Lake City, residents’ health, safety, and access to essential services are closely tied to the built environment—how streets are designed, how neighborhoods are connected, and how decisions about land use and transportation are made.

The west-east divide plays a significant role in shaping cultural, racial, economic, and psychological outcomes for residents. Throughout multiple planning studies, a central theme raised by the community is the vision for a city where living west or east of the “divide” has no impact on one’s education, safety, daily routine, or economic opportunity. Understanding how factors like traffic safety, environmental health, and access to care differ across neighborhoods provides important context for improving community wellbeing citywide.

WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED AND HEARD

Salt Lake City’s Westside communities face disproportionate challenges when it comes to health and safety. Past studies document how historical infrastructure decisions, particularly the construction of I-15 and freight rail corridors, contributed to divisions in air quality, access to healthcare, and traffic safety outcomes across the city.

The following table uses data from [HealthySaltLake.org](https://www.healthysaltlake.org), based on their ‘Glendale’ and ‘Rose Park’ boundaries, which encompass all six Westside neighborhoods.

| PEOPLE LIVING ON THE WESTSIDE WITH INDICATOR | HEALTH INDICATORS (ADULTS) | COMPARISON TO THE AVERAGE OF ALL UTAH COUNTIES |
|--|---|---|
| 1 out of every 4 people | Self Reported General Health as less than “Good” |  |
| More than 1 out of every 10 people | Are Unable to Afford to See a Doctor |  |
| 3 out of every 25 people | Live with Diabetes |  |
| Over half of all people | Are Considered Overweight or Obese |  |
| Nearly 1 out of every 3 people | Have High Blood Pressure |  |
| 1 out of every 4 people | Self Reported 7+ Days of Poor Mental Health in the Past Month |  |
| 1 out of every 20 people | Live with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) |  |
| 2 out of every 25 people | Live with Asthma |  |

AIR QUALITY

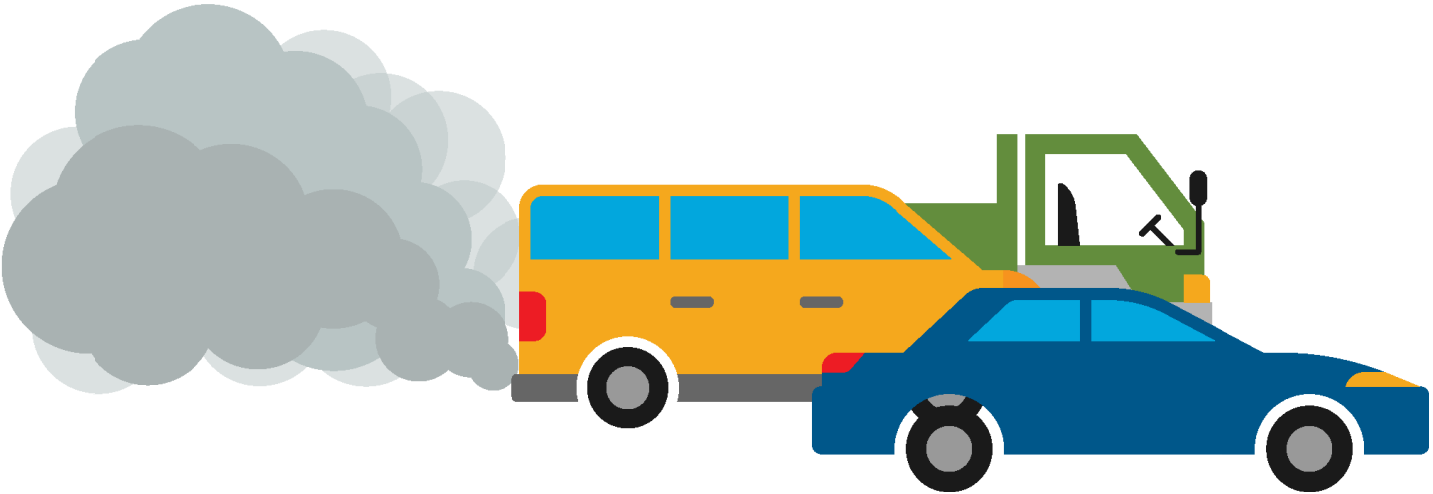
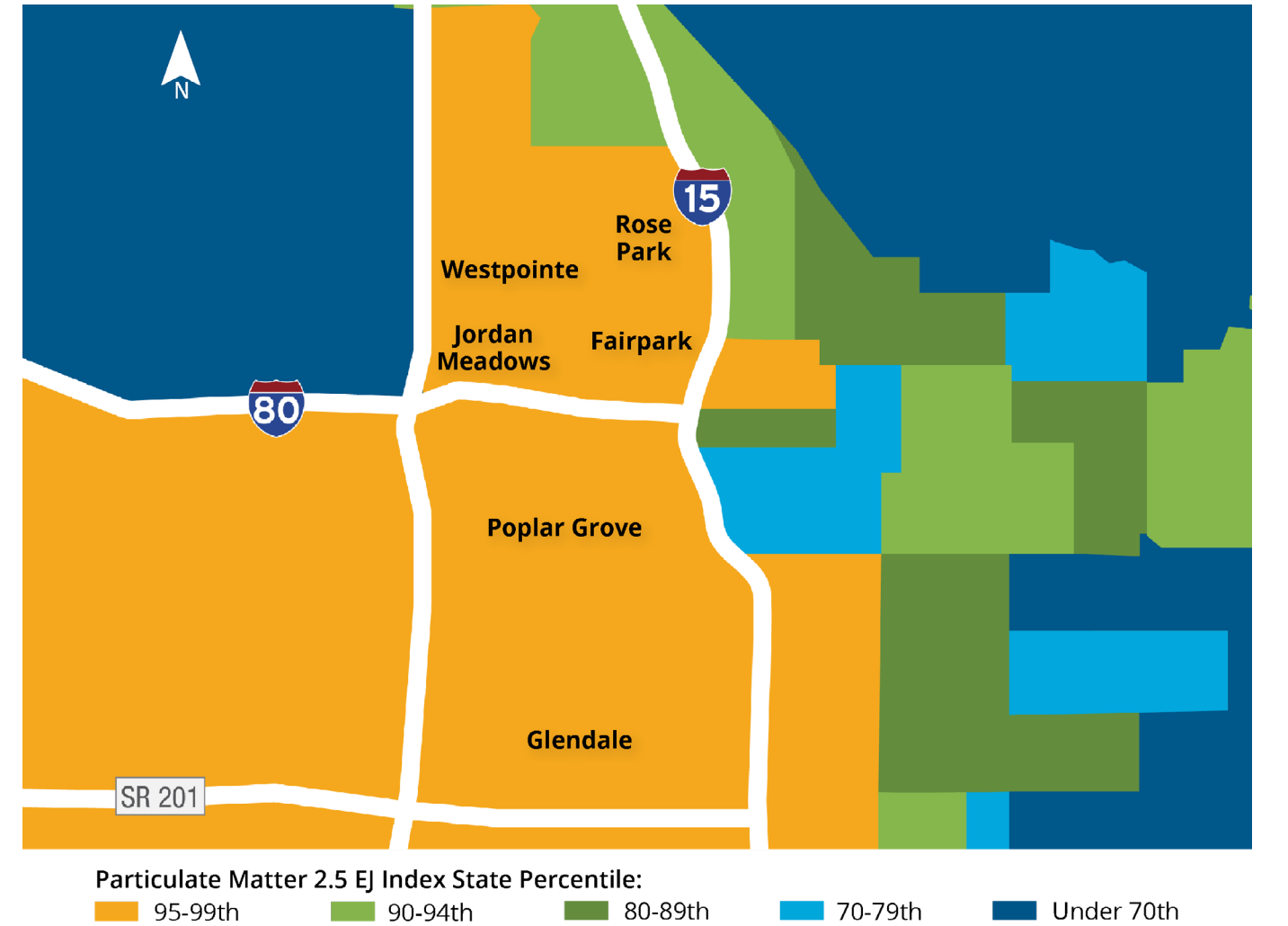
Residents have voiced concerns about pollution-related illness and have called for change. In the 2021 SLC Westside Transportation Equity Study, community members shared personal experiences with asthma and a lack of safe places to exercise.

Pollution exposure varies with wind, traffic, and time of day, but those living near I-15 and the rail corridor face persistent environmental stress. This is compounded by limited tree canopy, high heat exposure, and scarce access to quality open space.

The Westside Neighborhoods Environmental Justice and Air Quality Assessment found major disparities in air quality, health, and socioeconomic conditions in the six Westside neighborhoods. These areas experience some of the worst environmental impacts in the city—and in some cases, the state. Future development should be planned with care to avoid adding further burdens, with impacts evaluated, mitigated, and monitored over time.

This map shows annual exposure to fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}), which are tiny inhalable particles linked to serious health risks. Most Westside census tracts are in the 90th percentile or higher for PM_{2.5} exposure nationally. Salt Lake City currently does not meet federal PM_{2.5} air quality standards, highlighting the significant pollution burden on these communities.

POLLUTION EXPOSURE MAP



Numerous environmental health reports show elevated cardiovascular disease, lung cancer, and childhood asthma among people living near heavily traveled freeways and rail corridors. Diesel-powered trains and busy rail yards compound these risks, contributing particulate pollution that increases long-term exposure impacts. **A 2019 study showed that children living near a freeway experienced development delays two times the national average.** (Source: Environmental Research, Volume 174, July 2019. Prenatal and early life exposures to ambient air pollution and development.)

NOISE POLLUTION

Noise pollution continues to be an issue that disproportionately affects the Westside. This is something that was identified in previous studies and captured at the WE Connect Community Kick-Off Event and first Community Survey, conducted in May and June of 2025.



“**sound dampening!!!
Train horn is LOUD
and FREQUENT!**”

Long-term exposure to environmental noise has been linked to increased risks of heart disease, hypertension, sleep disturbances, stress, and impaired cognitive development in children. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), noise exposure above 55 dB can trigger adverse health effects, especially in areas with consistent nighttime noise.

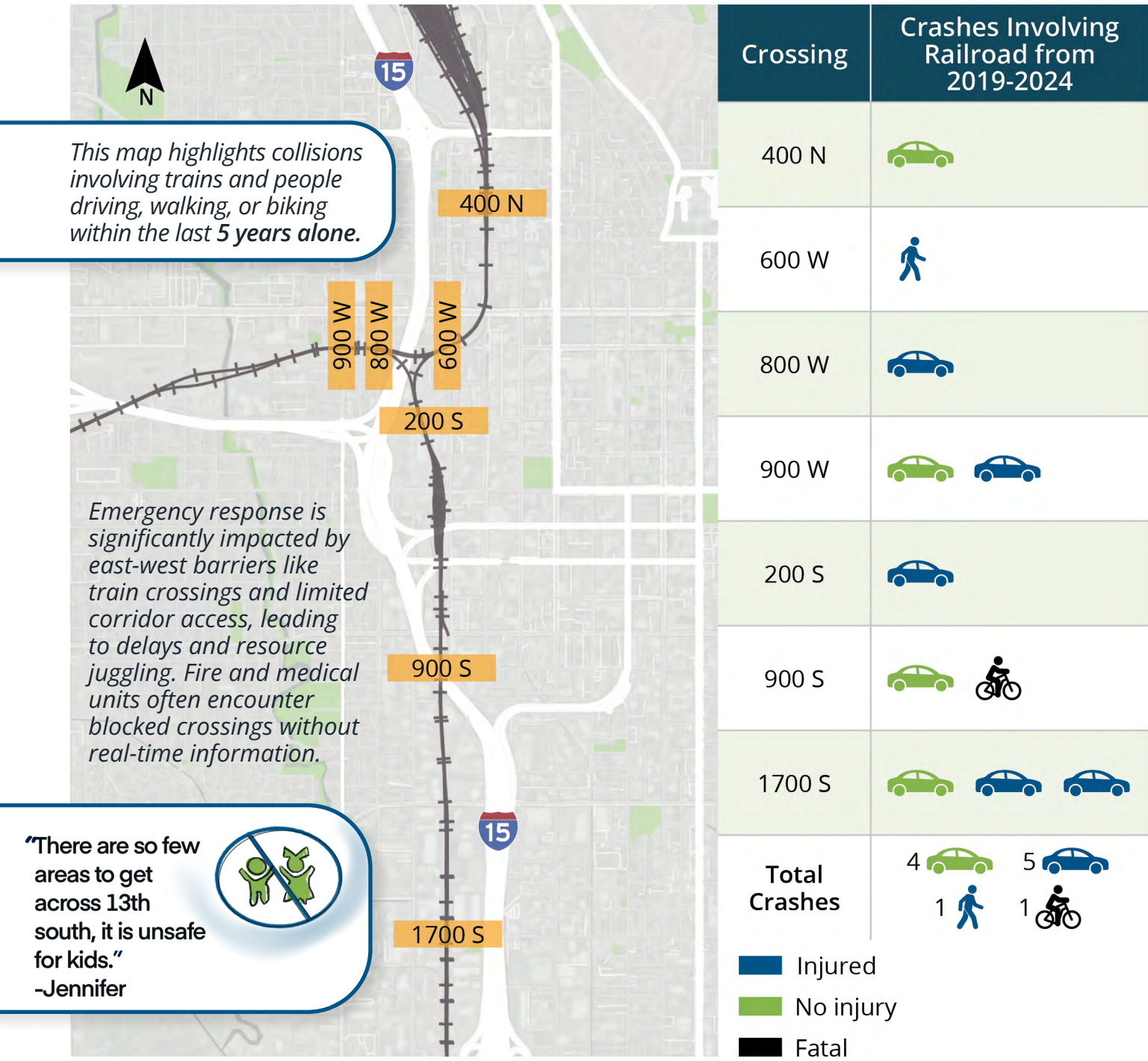
People living in areas with heavy transportation noise are 25% more likely to develop hypertension compared to those in quieter areas.

Source: World Health Organization, “Environmental Noise Guidelines for the European Region,” 2018

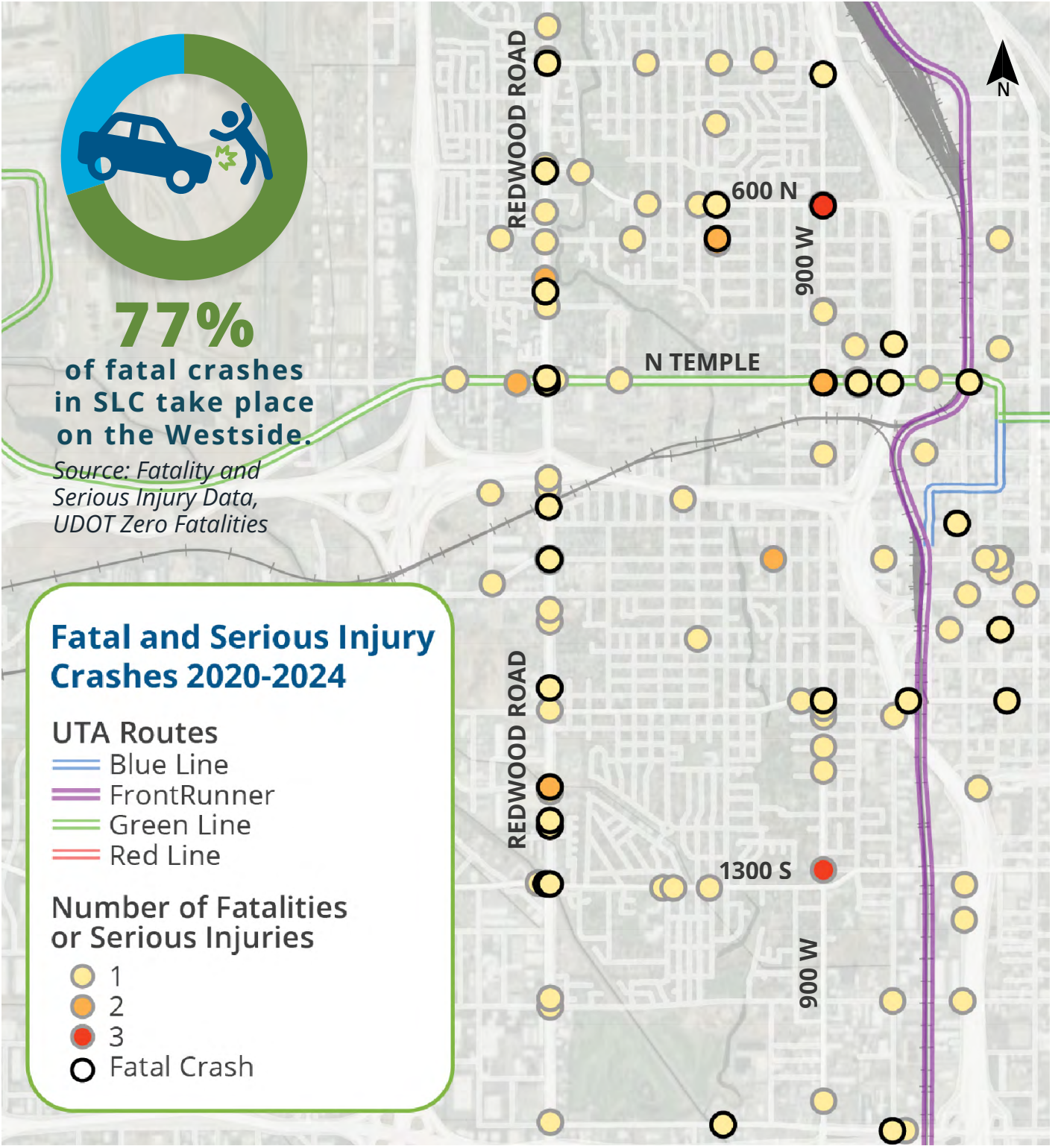
TRAFFIC SAFETY

Community members consistently express the need for safer, more welcoming crossings, especially along busy arterials and near rail corridors. Participants in this and previous studies have emphasized the importance of healthier environments and improved walking and biking conditions. The 2023 Crossings Study Engagement Memo highlights frequent concerns about discomfort and fear when crossing I-15 or freight rail lines, particularly among children and seniors.

Investing in better crossings and active transportation infrastructure isn't just about convenience; it's a critical step toward saving lives and creating healthier, more connected communities.



Crash data demonstrates that the Westside experiences a higher rate of serious and fatal crashes, particularly for pedestrians and bicyclists. The 2021 Westside Transportation Equity Study found that many collisions occur along major west-east arterials like North Temple, Redwood Road, 500 South, and 1300 South. Similarly, the 2023 Connect SLC Transportation Plan identifies a Vision Zero High Injury Network, revealing that **over 70% of serious crashes take place on just 10% of streets**—many of them in Westside neighborhoods.



COMMUNITY CONCERNS

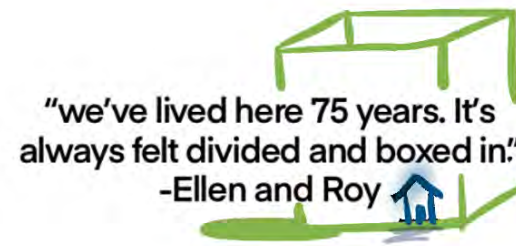


The train crossings create a physical barrier that separates us from the rest of the city. And I-15 creates pollution that directly impacts the quality of life on the Westside. These two major reasons can make it feel like we are on "the wrong side of the tracks."

(WE Connect Community Survey #1, Question 7)

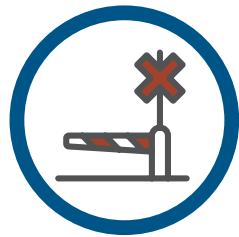
The WE Connect Community Kick-Off Event participants and Community Survey respondents reported overall that their well-being is negatively impacted by the west-east divide, including feelings of isolation and resource inequity and concerns for health and safety.

A major concern among respondents was the difficulty in accessing quality groceries. Many reported needing to travel across the city divide to reach better grocery stores and fresh produce on the east side. Health-related concerns were also common, including stress caused by delays in crossing, as well as exposure to air and noise pollution. Additionally, respondents noted the need to cross the divide to access a broader range of healthcare services along with safety concerns serving as a barrier to recreation and exercise amenities like the Jordan River Trail.



CHALLENGES/OPPORTUNITIES

Near-term improvements, **such as better lighting, crossing signals, and pedestrian refuge islands**, like those being implemented in [neighborhood byway](#) routes alongside longer-term strategies to reduce serious crashes and support active travel.



Opportunities to improve safety also include addressing rail-related crashes and exploring the use of quiet zones, grade separations, or advanced warning systems at crossings. Partnering with public health, law enforcement, and school organizations have amplified the impact of these efforts and strengthen the city's commitment to Vision Zero goals.

While these challenges are significant, Salt Lake City continues to face persistent gaps in infrastructure, environmental health, and access to services. Bridging these disparities requires ongoing coordination and sustained investment. The City also partners with the Salt Lake County Health Department, local schools, and community health organizations to align transportation infrastructure with broader wellbeing goals.

By continuing to support investments in safety, environmental health, and access to services, Salt Lake City is laying the groundwork for a more connected and thriving future for residents on both sides of the divide.

EXISTING EFFORTS AND INVESTMENTS

Salt Lake City and community organizations are actively addressing many of the health and safety issues described in this section through collaborative strategies and targeted investments. These efforts are showing results—**fatal and serious injury crashes have decreased on corridors where improvements have been implemented**. For example, by redesigning streets to calm traffic, installing Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon (PHB) Signals, and enhancing lighting and crossings, Salt Lake City has successfully reduced crash severity and improved safety outcomes. Continuing and expanding these proven strategies is essential to building a safer and more connected city.

Key ongoing efforts include:

- » [Neighborhood byways](#) on 600 N and 900 W
- » [Safe Routes to School programs](#)
- » Partnerships with Salt Lake County Health Department and the Salt Lake City Police Department's Pioneer Bike Squad
- » Community partnerships with schools, colleges, and universities to support safety and access
- » Ongoing crossing improvements along the Jordan River Trail and North Temple Corridor
- » PHB Signals along key corridors
- » The [Mayor's budget recommended](#) for Fiscal Year 2026 included \$2.3 million for Vision Zero safety improvements including to Redwood Road, 900 West, and 800 South, which have significantly higher crash rates than most other city streets
- » The [Westside Community Conexiones website](#) lists several other ongoing projects and investments



OUR COMMUNITY

HOUSING AND PUBLIC SERVICES

Housing and community infrastructure are deeply interconnected in shaping the day-to-day experience of Westside residents. The study area offers relatively more affordable housing than other parts of Salt Lake City, but it also faces challenges—slower housing growth, limited housing variety, and aging infrastructure—that constrain access to opportunity and long-term neighborhood stability.

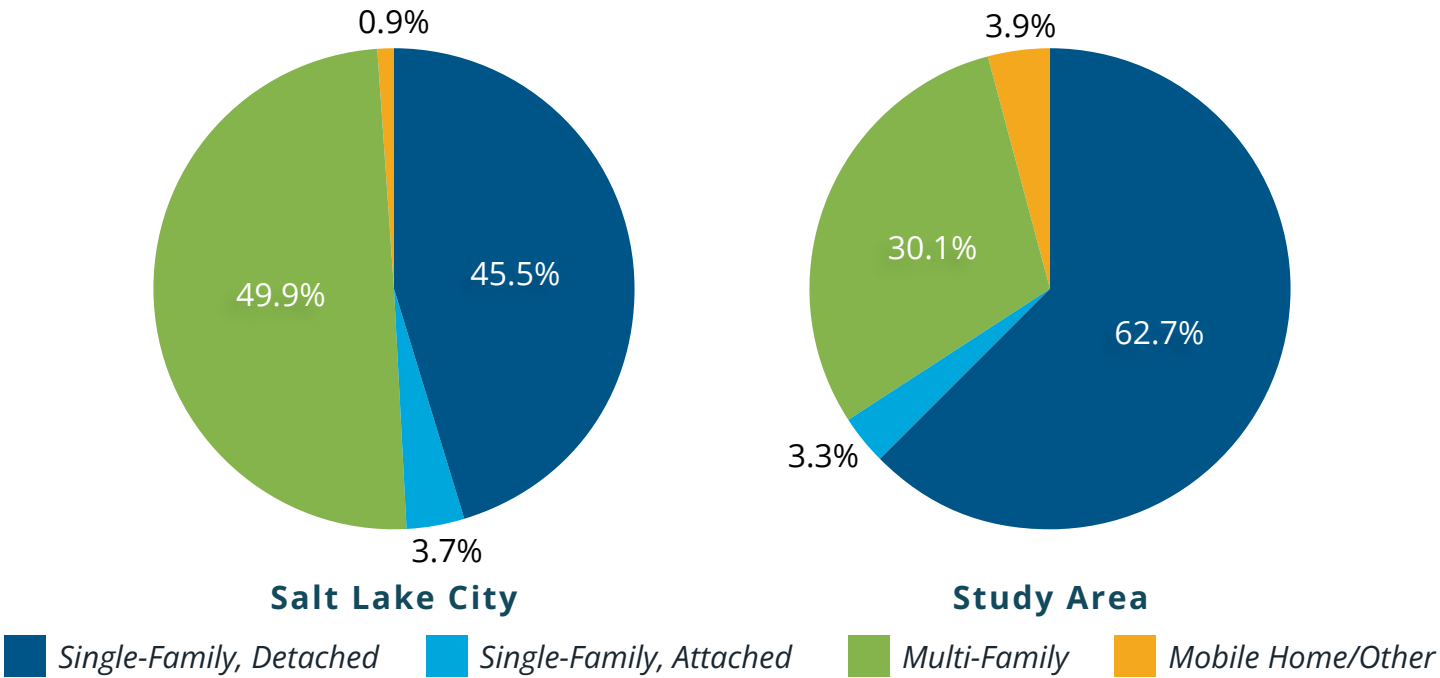
At the same time, the Westside is home to strong community assets, including parks, schools, and cultural spaces that anchor social connection. However, these assets are often disconnected and served by neglected or underfunded public spaces. Together, these conditions highlight the need for coordinated reinvestment in both housing and public infrastructure to ensure that westside neighborhoods remain inclusive, vibrant, and resilient.

WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED AND HEARD

HOUSING

The Westside offers relatively affordable homeownership opportunities compared to Salt Lake City overall, but has limited housing diversity that has not kept pace with citywide growth.

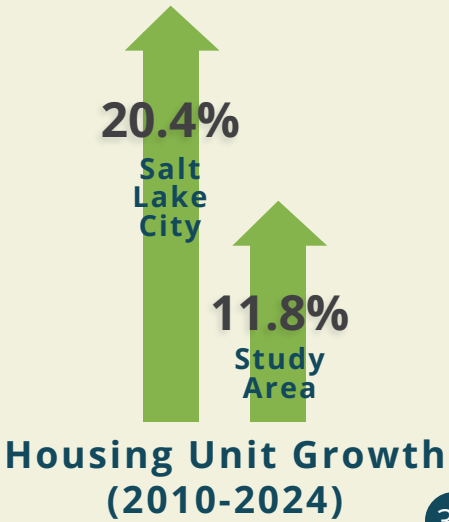
Comparison of Housing Types



The Westside is characterized by a predominance of single-family detached homes, which make up nearly 63% of all housing units, higher than the 45% citywide share. In contrast, multi-family housing represents just 30% of the study area’s housing stock, compared to 50% citywide. This difference highlights a more traditional, lower-density residential pattern on the Westside, with fewer attached or multifamily options available. The study area also includes a slightly higher share of mobile homes or alternative housing types, which may provide more affordable, though often limited, housing choices. *Source: American Community Survey (ACS) 2019 – 2023*

HOUSING UNIT GROWTH

Between 2010 and 2024, the number of housing units in the Westside grew by just under 12%, adding a little over 2,200 new units. Salt Lake City’s housing stock increased by more than 20% over the same period. As a result, the study area’s share of the city’s total housing has gradually declined from 21.4% in 2010 to 19.6% in 2024. **This trend suggests that while development is occurring, the area is contributing less to the city’s overall housing growth than in the past.** *Source: ESRI BAO*



STUDY AREA OCCUPANCY STATUS

In 2010 about 58% of homes were owner-occupied in the Westside. **By 2024, that share had decreased to 53.6%, while the share of renter-occupied homes rose to 46.4%.** This shift reflects a gradual trend towards increased rental housing in the area, which may be driven by affordability pressures, changing household needs, or limited new ownership opportunities. The vacancies remain steady low, indicating steady demand for housing and limited availability of unoccupied units. *Source: ESRI BAO*

| | 2010 | 2024 |
|-----------------|-------|-------|
| Owner-Occupied | 57.7% | 53.6% |
| Renter-Occupied | 42.3% | 46.4% |
| Vacant | 5.1% | 4.7% |

HOUSING AGE, RENT, AND VALUE

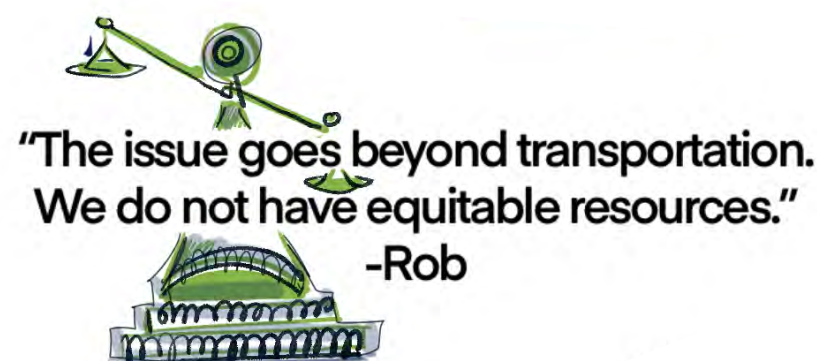
Homes in the Westside tend to be slightly newer than those across Salt Lake City. Despite having newer homes on average, the Westside remains more affordable by comparison. The median home value is \$418,000, 31% lower than the \$608,000 Citywide average. **However, homes in the study area are 39% above the national average.** Renters also face slightly lower costs of 7%, with a median rent of \$1,076, compared to \$1,163 across the City and \$1,348 nationally. *Source: ACS 2019 - 2023*

| | STUDY AREA | SALT LAKE CITY | UNITED STATES |
|-------------------|------------|----------------|---------------|
| Median Year Built | 1971 | 1962 | 1980 |
| Median Home Value | \$418,427 | \$608,116 | \$303,400 |
| Median Rent | \$1,076 | \$1,163 | \$1,348 |

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

Affordability remains a challenge across Salt Lake City, but the Westside shows a slightly more favorable profile. On average, households in the Westside spend 38.3% of their income on a mortgage, compared to 47.2% citywide. While both figures exceed the standard affordability benchmark of 30%, the Affordability Index score of 67 for the Westside, compared to 55 for the city overall, indicates relatively less financial strain for homeowners in the Westside area. This relative affordability is closely linked to broader housing trends in the area. *Source: ESRI BAO*

| | % INCOME FOR MORTGAGE | AFFORDABILITY INDEX |
|----------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Study Area | 38.3% | 67 |
| Salt Lake City | 47.2% | 55 |



Housing on Salt Lake City's Westside is shifting, with more residents renting and homeownership affordability remaining as a central concern. These trends in occupancy, housing age, value, and cost help illustrate how the area is evolving and how it compares to the rest of the city.

PUBLIC SERVICES AND COMMUNITY ASSETS

While housing and housing affordability play a central role in shaping neighborhood stability, the quality of public services and access to community assets are equally critical to residents' daily lives and long-term opportunity.

During the WE Connect Kick-Off Event, we asked attendees about community needs and assets. By leaving comments on a large map of the Westside, attendees expressed a strong desire for improved public amenities and neighborhood services. Commonly requested needs include:



» **Green Space & Recreation:** More parks, open fields, walking trails, and larger or more accessible soccer fields. Swings and playgrounds for children were also mentioned.



» **Tree Canopy & Beautification:** Many requested more trees citywide, particularly along North Temple, to improve shade and aesthetics.



» **Public Art & Cultural Amenities:** Calls for more public art and new spaces like museums or children's museums to enrich neighborhood identity.



» **Dining & Local Business Support:**

Strong interest in more restaurants, bars, cafés, and neighborhood centers like 9th & 9th. Residents noted the loss of long-standing local businesses on North Temple and requested tools (loans/grants) to support westside entrepreneurs.



» **Mixed-Use & Affordable Development:** Requests for intentional development that includes affordable housing, mixed-use development, and neighborhood-scale retail, particularly around Rio Grande and North Temple.



» **Education:** Repeated requests for a new Westside high school to address educational equity.



» **Infrastructure Improvements:** Suggestions included burying power lines, adding more roundabouts, and increasing mixed zoning to encourage walkable, vibrant neighborhoods.



Community member interacts with large map at WE Connect Kick-Off Event

"these neighborhoods are a food desert. This Smith's lacks quality fresh produce. How can we get local, affordable, healthier foods?" (Amenities map, Open House Meeting #1).

"We NEED a west side high school!" (Amenities map, Open House Meeting #1).

"More soccer fields!" (Amenities map, Open House Meeting #1)

COMMUNITY SERVICES AND ASSETS

“

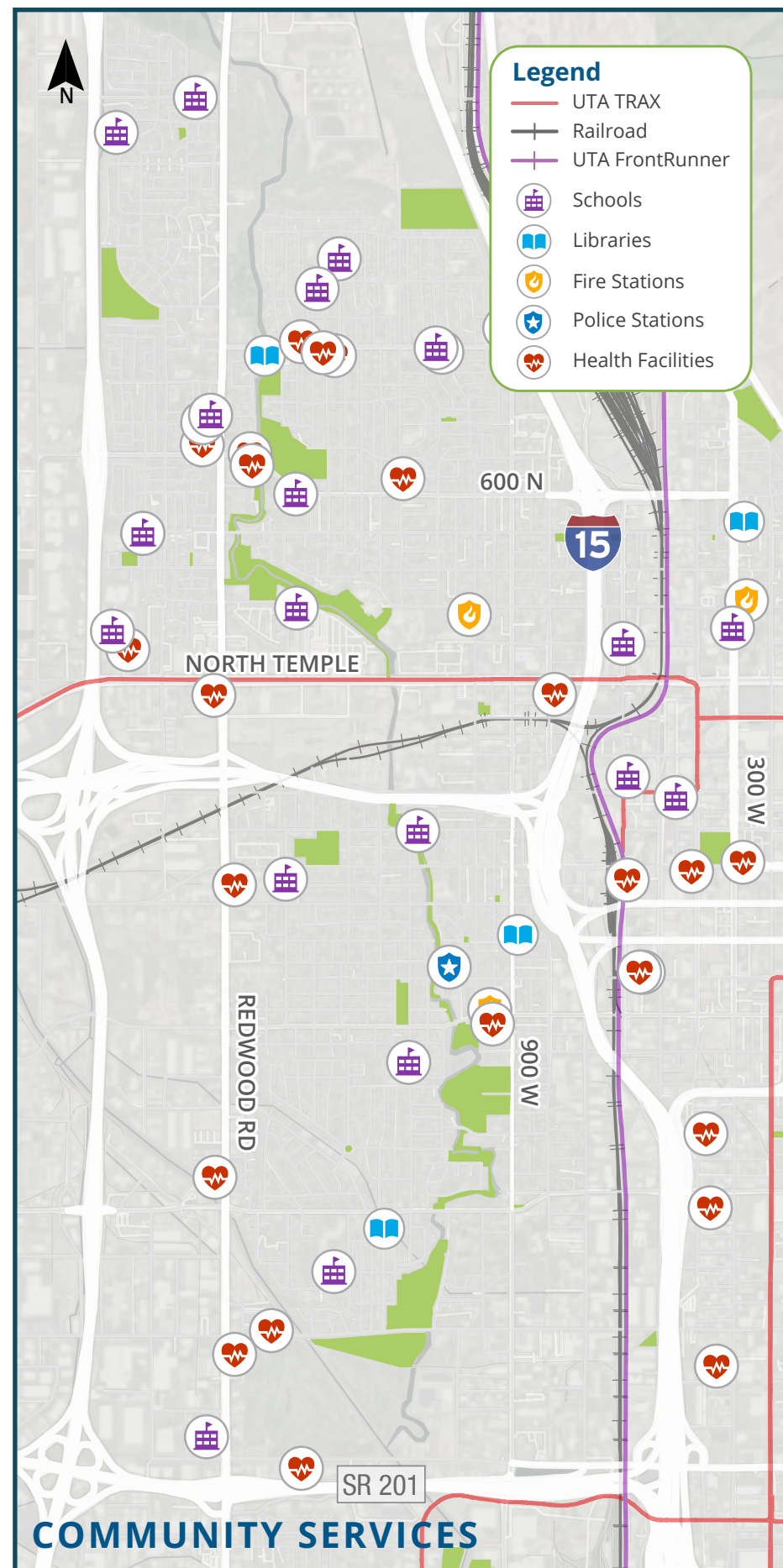
I can easily access some goods and services, but want to be able to easily access multiple areas of the city.

(WE Connect Community Survey #1)

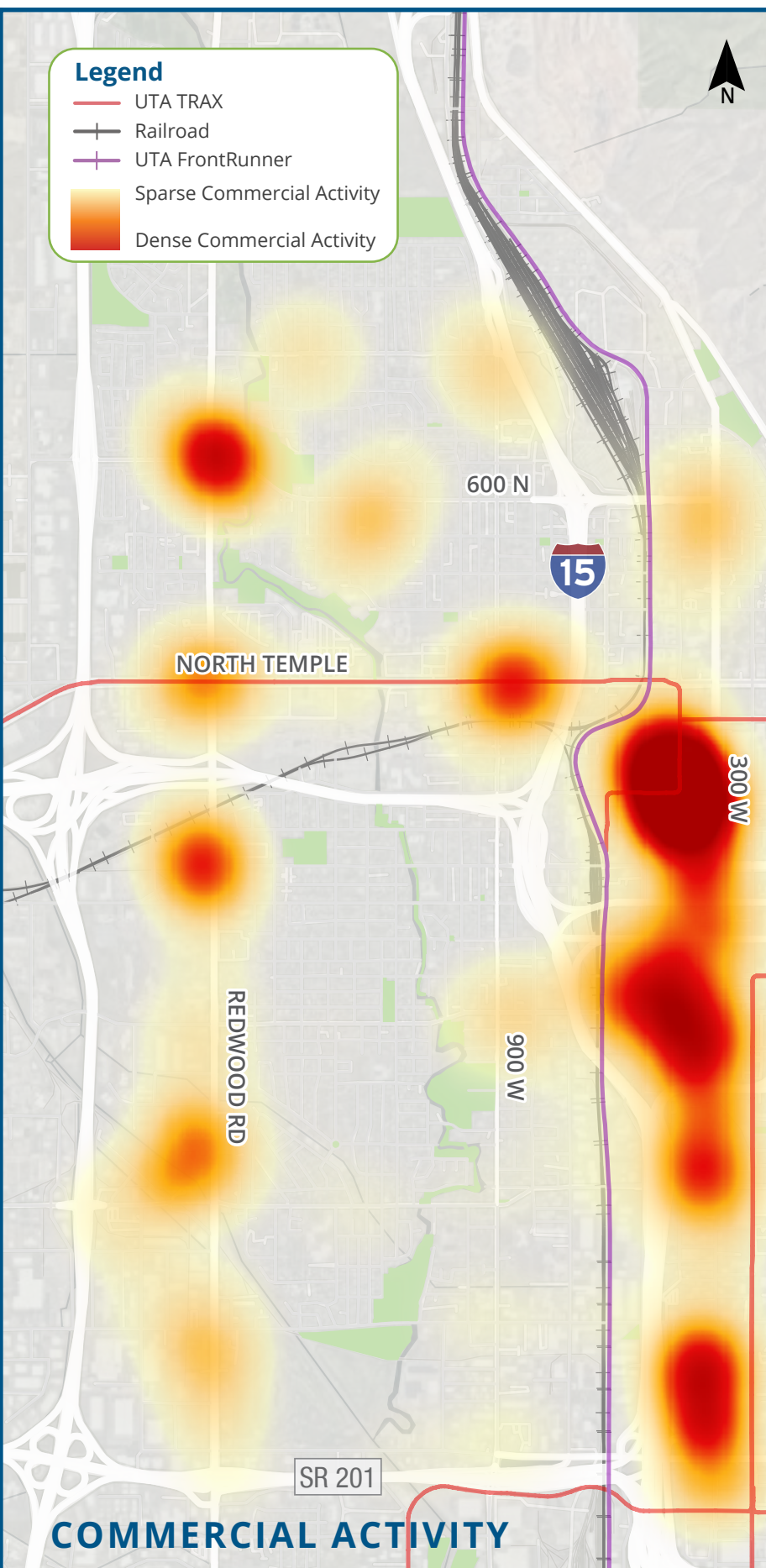
Although the Westside includes clusters of valued community assets, such as parks, community centers, and cultural facilities, participants in the WE Connect Community Kick-Off Event and respondents to the Community Survey expressed a **broader sense of neglect, inequity, and the need for expanded amenities.** Many respondents specifically noted a desire for more parks and trees, highlighting the need for increased greenspace throughout the area.

Mapping these assets reveals several identifiable groupings of community spaces. The *Westside Equity Study* noted that these clusters could be better connected using two of the area's strongest existing resources: the Jordan River Parkway and the 9-Line Trail. According to the Salt Lake County Health Department, enhancing and linking these spaces has the potential to significantly improve social determinants of health for Westside communities.

37% of survey respondents shared that they cannot easily access goods and services they need in their neighborhood



COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY



62% of survey respondents said social activities or recreation were primary reasons for crossing the west-east divide.

While the Westside has a strong foundation of community infrastructure, mapping commercial activity reveals a critical gap: **limited economic investment.** This concern was echoed by participants at the Community Event and in the Community Survey. Many noted a lack of local economic development and business opportunities. Respondents expressed strong interest in more restaurants, mixed-use zoning, and support for local businesses.

Commercial activity is significantly more concentrated on Salt Lake City's Eastside. The densest clusters of retail, dining, and other services located east of I-15 shows an imbalance in access to everyday amenities and opportunities for local small businesses to flourish to the west. This disparity underscores the importance of creating more economic and mobility opportunities on the Westside.

“

Would love to see resources to encourage westsiders to open businesses on the west side (loans, grants).

OPPORTUNITIES

| CATEGORY | OPPORTUNITY |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Affordability | Median home values and rents are lower than City averages, providing more attainable options for moderate-income households. |
| | Households spend a smaller share of income on mortgage costs, making ownership more feasible compared to other parts of the city. |
| Pathways to Stability | The Westside has a mix of renters and owners, which supports long-term neighborhood stability. |
| | A stable tenure mix reduces rapid turnover and supports stronger community and neighborhood ties over time. |
| | Lower-cost ownership options create opportunities for wealth-building, particularly for first-time homebuyers. |
| Civic Pride and Place Identity | Revitalizing public infrastructure—like plazas, gathering spaces, and signage—can restore neighborhood character and foster belonging. |
| | Supporting local stewardship and cultural programming in public spaces helps reinforce pride in place and community resilience. |

CHALLENGES

| CATEGORY | CHALLENGES |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Persistent Cost Burden | Even with lower-than-average housing costs, many households still exceed the recommended thresholds for affordability, particularly renters. |
| | Rising living expenses paired with stagnant incomes continue to put financial strain on many residents. |
| | Households earning below the area’s median income are disproportionately impacted, with fewer affordable options that meet their needs. |
| Limited Housing Growth and Choice | Housing unit growth in the study area has lagged behind citywide trends, potentially limiting availability and driving up demand. |
| | The housing stock is dominated by single-family homes, offering limited options for smaller households, older adults, or those seeking more flexible or affordable formats. |
| | Limited availability of multi-family and accessory units constrains options for aging residents who wish to downsize but remain in the neighborhood. |
| Underinvested Infrastructure | Much of the housing is now over 50 years old and will require ongoing reinvestment to remain livable and efficient. |
| | Neglected streetscapes and lacking investment to maintain public and private spaces diminish neighborhood identity and discourage public life. |

EXISTING EFFORTS AND INVESTMENTS

Love Your Block Grants

Salt Lake City’s Love Your Block mini-grant program is helping the Westside neighborhoods create meaningful public services through small, resident-led projects. With up to \$2,000 in funding, neighbors have transformed vacant lots, improved parks, installed placemaking signage, and made community gardens more accessible. **Since 2022, 39 projects have been completed**—each a testament to what’s possible when residents are given the tools to shape their own public spaces.

The 9 Line Bike Park

The 9 Line Bike Park is a standout example of how cities can transform underutilized land—like the space beneath I-15—into vibrant, inclusive public infrastructure. What was once an overlooked corridor now serves as a dynamic recreational asset, offering beginner to expert jump lines and a pump track that welcomes riders of all skill levels. This project demonstrates the potential of reimagining overlooked urban spaces to improve connectivity, promote active transportation, and enhance quality of life. Through thoughtful design and community stewardship, the 9 Line turns concrete underpass into **a community hub that’s active, safe, and fun.**



The 9 Line Bike Park, underneath the I-15 overcrossing, transforms formally neglected space into a popular community destination with a pump track, jump lines, shade, benches, and drinking fountain.

Increasing Investments in the Westside

During her Fiscal Year 2026 budget speech, Mayor Erin Mendenhall stated, “We will do better for our Westside, which, as I’ve said for years, has historically faced systemic underinvestment from the City.” Her proposed budget includes \$2.7 million in dedicated westside investments, focusing on improvements to parks and green spaces, enhanced street lighting, and safety upgrades. This funding also supports repairs to the Rose Park Lane Trail and continues the City’s commitment to UTA On-Demand services.

Despite historical underinvestment, Westside residents have mobilized to enhance their neighborhoods, and the City has begun to respond. These efforts, both grassroots and institutional, point to the area’s untapped potential.

