

# STAR Community Feedback Opportunity

Fall 2023

## Project Background

STAR (Specialized Transportation for Arlington Residents) is a shared-ride service for people whose disabilities prevent them from riding other bus and rail services. STAR provides a comparable level of public transportation to that provided by ART, Metrobus and Metrorail and complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

### About this engagement

We want to hear your thoughts on STAR's current service and learn what matters most to you. Your feedback will inform Arlington Transit's evaluation of current STAR service and rider policies.

## Public Engagement

In August 2023, the County project team launched a feedback form for current STAR customers. Customers could complete the feedback form online or by calling the STAR Customer Call Center.

The project team received 100 responses to the online feedback form, 59 responses from the STAR Customer Call Center, and 53 open-ended comments. The opportunity was available for six weeks.

### Additional outreach activities

- Late August: English/Spanish postcards mailed to registered STAR users.
- September: Included in email to Transportation listserves and email sent to all registered STAR users.
- September 12: Presentation to the Transit Accessibility Subcommittee and Transit Advisory Committee.
- September 19: Presentation to and feedback sought from the Disability Advisory Committee.
- September 28: Presentation to and feedback sought from the Transportation Commission.
- Week of September 18: STAR drivers distribute postcards.
- September 27: Reminder email sent to all registered STAR users.
- October 4: Deadline extension of feedback e-mail sent to STAR users and transportation listserves.

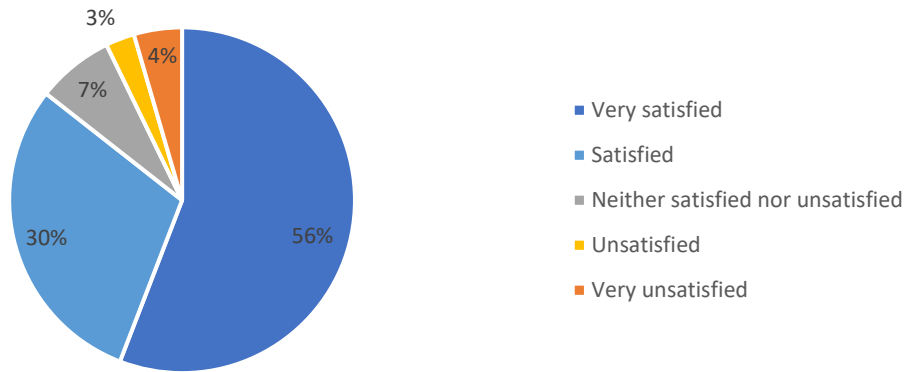
## What We Heard: Engagement Summary

Generally, user response indicated support and satisfaction with Arlington Transit's STAR service.



**86% of rider respondents indicated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with STAR service.**

## Overall, how would you rate your level of satisfaction with STAR service?



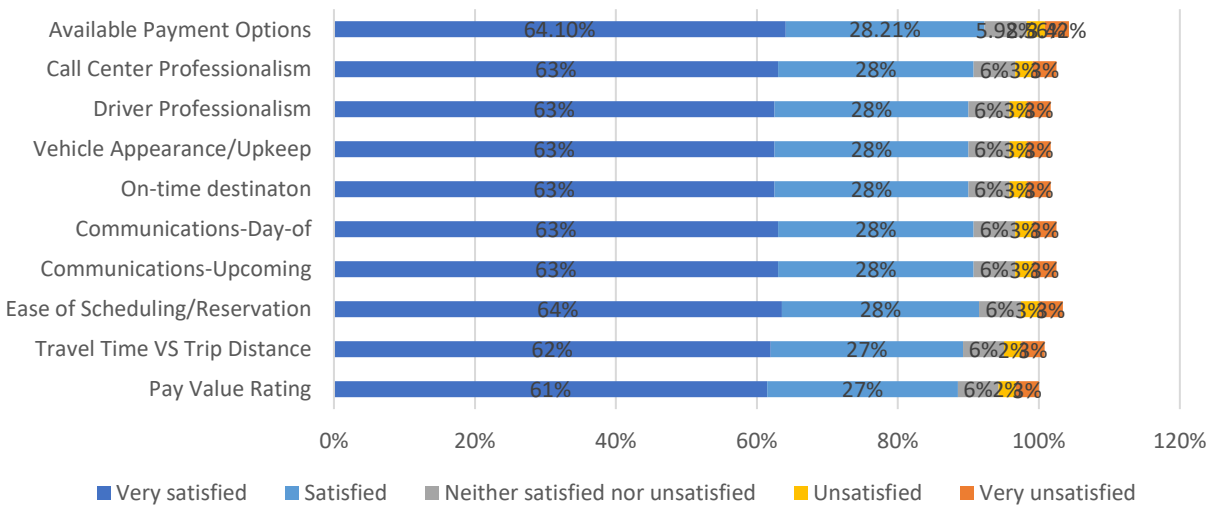
### Star Service Areas

Satisfaction was highest with the courteous and professional behavior of call center staff, the value of STAR for what you pay, and the travel time relative to trip distance.

All service areas rated highly for satisfaction, with over 80% of rider respondents indicating they are satisfied or very satisfied. Within these high ratings, service areas with the potential to improve include the cleanliness and maintenance of STAR vehicles, payment methods available, on-time destination arrival, and day-of trip communication.

## How would you rate your level of satisfaction with the following parts of STAR service?

Some total values exceed 100% due to rounding



## Star Service Areas – Individual Graphs

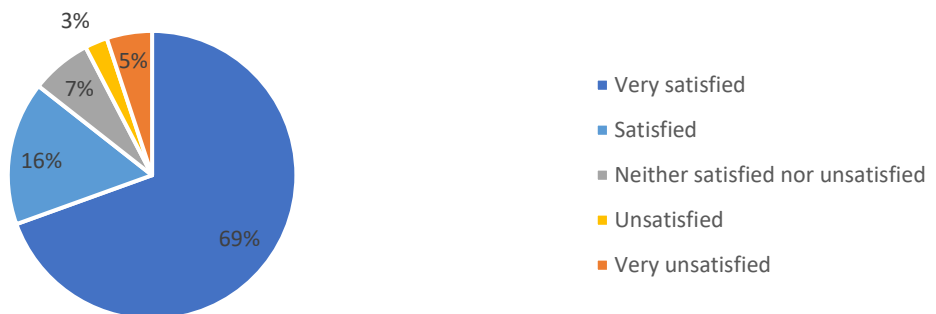
How satisfied are you with the value of STAR for what you pay?



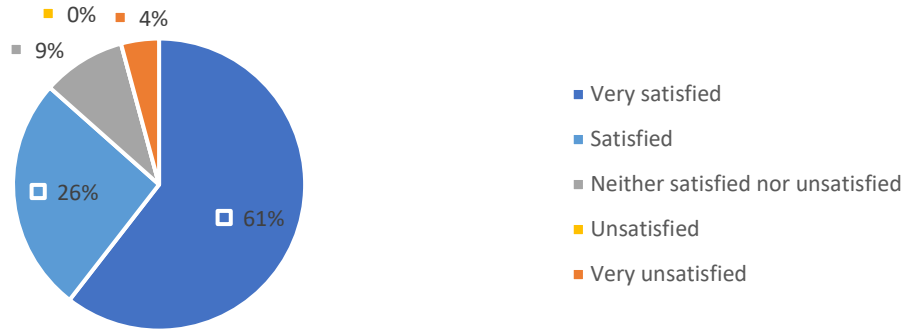
How satisfied are you with travel time relative to trip distance?



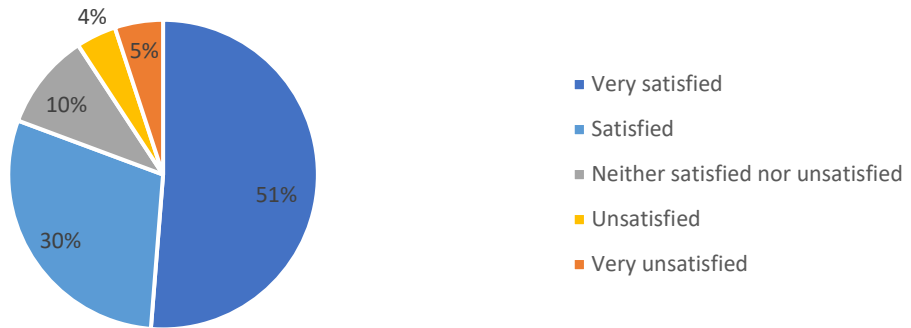
How satisfied are you with the scheduling process/reservation service?



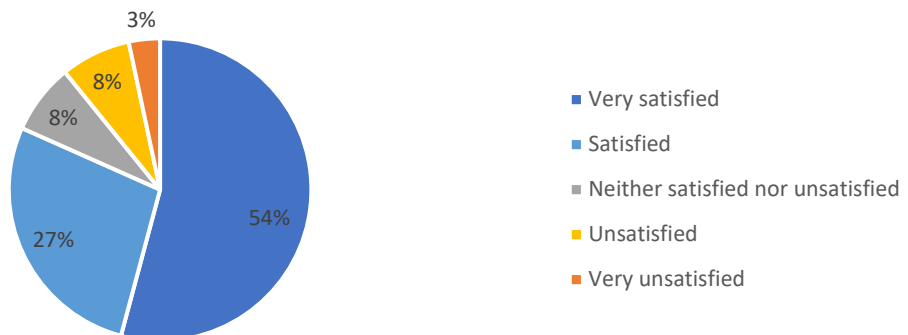
### How satisfied are you with communication about upcoming trips



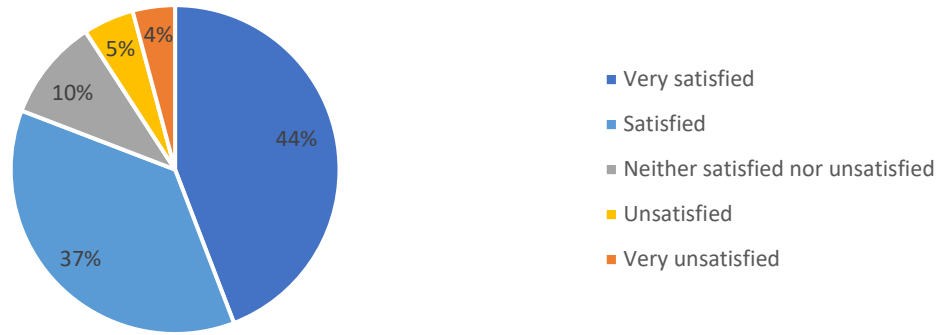
### How satisfied are you with communication about your trip on the day it is provided?



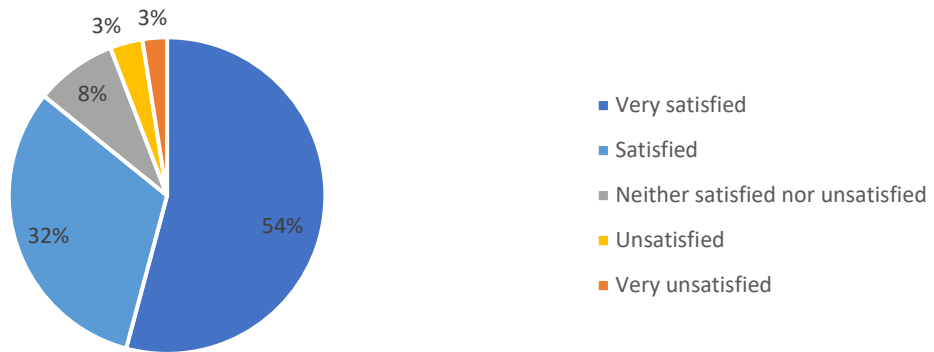
### How satisfied are you with the ability of STAR to get you to your destination on-time?



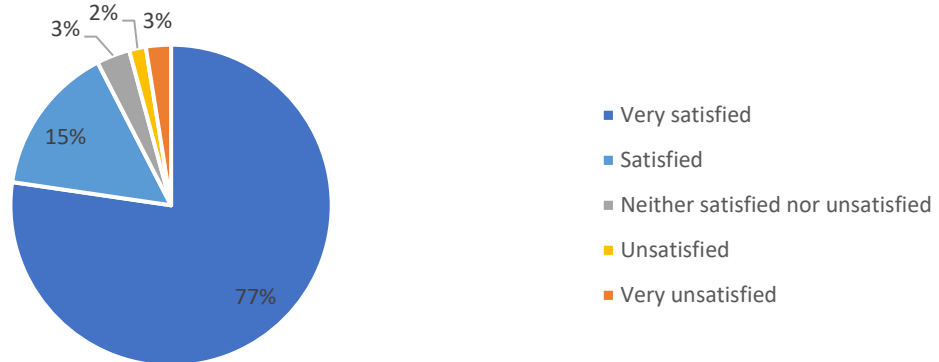
How satisfied are you with STAR vehicles (clean and well-maintained)



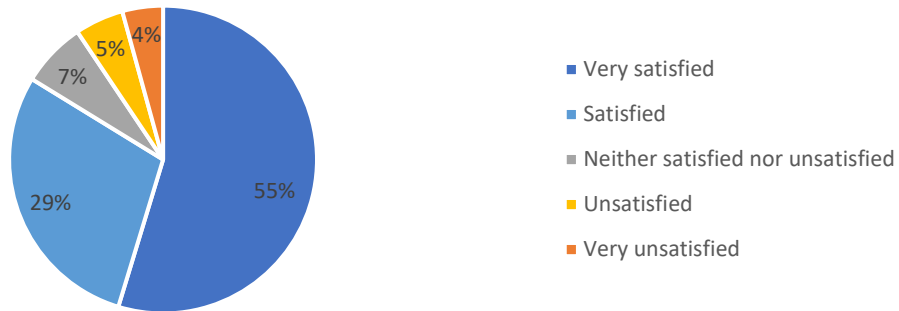
How satisfied are you with STAR drivers (courteous and professional behavior, safe and careful operation of vehicle)?



How satisfied are you with call center staff (courteous and professional behavior)?



## How satisfied are you with the payment methods available?



### Rider Priorities

Respondents were asked to indicate their top three priorities for STAR service from a list. The list included fare price, total trip time, convenience of scheduling appointments, on-time pick -up, on-time arrival at your destination and ability to schedule unplanned or last-minute trips.

Overall, the top three priorities for star service are:

1. Fare price (1.64)
2. On-time pick up (1.88)
3. Convenience of scheduling appointments (1.94)
4. Total trip time (2.16)
5. Ability to schedule unplanned or last-minute trips (2.19)
6. On-time arrival (2.22)

The number in parenthesis is the weighted average, where 1 is the top priority.

### Open-Ended Feedback Summary

Of the 159 number of respondents, 53 opted to provide additional open-ended feedback comments. These comments are summarized into major themes and listed in order of most frequently heard. Example comments are included after in italics. Some comments have been edited to remove personally identifying information, such as names, ages, destinations, and specific disabilities. Edited comments use “...” and [brackets] to indicate where personally identifying information was removed.

#### *Praise*

- General STAR Staff and Service: Most comments included compliments to STAR staff and services.
  - *“STAR staff are phenomenal. They are responsive, helpful, professional, reliable, supportive, focused on customer satisfaction and so easy to work with, especially when there are questions or issues.”*

- *"Thank you for the exceptional, excellent, outstanding service you provide..."*
  - *"Star has been a life saver for us."*
  - *"I love using STAR service and rely on them very much."*
  - *"...I am not exaggerating when I say I could not do my job without STAR."*
- **Call Center Staff:** There were also many comments specifically praising the call center staff.
    - *"The team that makes reservations is fabulous!"*
    - *"I deeply appreciate the helpfulness of the reservations staff."*
    - *"I can not speak more highly of the call center for trip changes, cancellations and reminders. Staff is incredibly knowledgeable, prompt, efficient and kind."*

## Challenges

- **Timeliness:** Of the respondents that commented, several of them indicated that they had experienced issues with late pickup and long wait times.
  - *"Too many trips that don't arrive on time, especially those that don't arrive 45 minutes after pickup time due to inability of selected provider to find a driver."*
  - *"[I] stopped using STAR due to a lack of drivers as we were waiting 10 - 15 minutes past the pickup time for a driver to get assigned, and then another 10 - 15 minutes for the driver to arrive, which means that STAR is no longer a viable option."*
- **No Ride Given:** There were also a couple of instances where riders were not able to get a ride due to factors such as no vehicle being available and discriminating against riders with service animals by not allowing them to ride.
  - *"...trip was assigned, but no vehicle was available."*
- **Scheduling:** Some riders were frustrated with issues related to the call center and not being able to schedule rides online.
  - *"Not able to get an accurate estimated vehicle arrival time within the window (call center staff won't help until the end of the window)."*
  - *"It would be convenient if we could schedule rides online as in the past."*
- **Payment:** A few STAR customers expressed frustration about the fare price of STAR, and many expressed that the payment system is not as accessible as it could be.
  - *"Payment should be the same amount as if you were to ride the bus/rail; \$2"*
  - *"I really would like to pay for my coupons with a credit card and NOT have to go to a commuter store to buy coupons!"*
  - *"I would use STAR a whole lot more often if I could buy the tickets online or if STAR had something similar to Metro Access EZ Pay. It's difficult for me to get to the commuter store."*
- **Vehicle & Driver:** Many complained that some vehicle conditions were not optimal, such as the vehicle had a bad odor or was not clean. Additionally, some reported that a few drivers were unhelpful or did not seem to know how to know how to properly assist a passenger in a wheelchair.

- *"At times the cab has an odor (bad) to it."*
- *"I have had to show the driver the proper way to put the seatbelt on me since I [use a mobility device]."*

### Suggestions

- **Scheduling:** Customers stated that being able to schedule same-day rides, schedule rides later in the day (past call center hours), and schedule rides online would improve their ride experience.
  - *"I would like to have the option to schedule same day rides"*
  - *"I would prefer to be able to schedule rides the same day or last minute--or at least book up until later in the evening--rather than having to set up rides during call center hours."*
  - *"It would be convenient if we could schedule rides online as in the past."*
- **Payment:** Many comments included how STAR's payment system could be improved, including being able to pay without having to buy vouchers in-person, and possibly being able to pay using a cashless system.
  - *"I would like to have the option to pay with a credit card."*
  - *"I also would like to see STAR implement a cashless payment system where we can pay via an app."*
  - *"Getting to the commuter store is difficult and getting cash in exact change is difficult for me, and I figure I can't be the only one."*

### Next Steps

The project team is looking for opportunities to incorporate what we heard during public engagement into updated policy recommendations. We will be continuing development throughout fall 2023 with draft policies anticipated in winter 2023/24.

The next public engagement checkpoint for this project is expected to occur early winter 2023/4.

### More Information

Project Page: [www.arlingtontransit.com/star/](http://www.arlingtontransit.com/star/)

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