



Helping the Public Navigate Construction Work Zones: Public input & feedback

Featuring results from
2013 public opinion/construction surveys

April 2014 – Statewide Work Zone Safety Committee

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We all have a stake in **A**  **B**

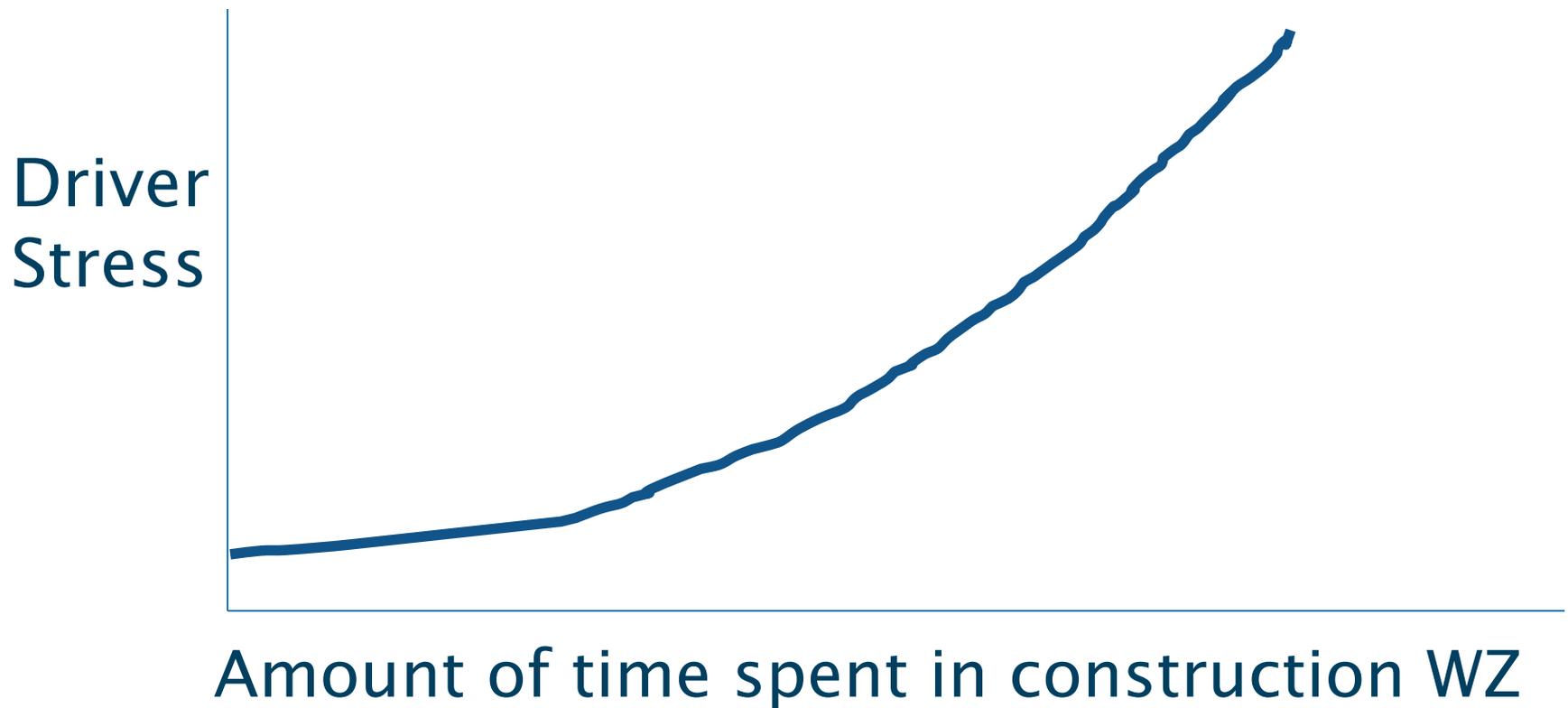


About the surveys

- ▶ Respondents were travelers who signed up for MnDOT's construction email updates (through Constant Contacts)
- ▶ I-94 St. Cloud/Clearwater and I-35 Elko/Eagan.
- ▶ Not demographically representative of all Minnesotans. Experience and opinions likely reflect population segments, and to some extent, travelers in general.
- ▶ Surveys were web-based, each fielded approx. two weeks.



Construction delays and congestion increase drivers' stress



Was I-35 as bad as anticipated?

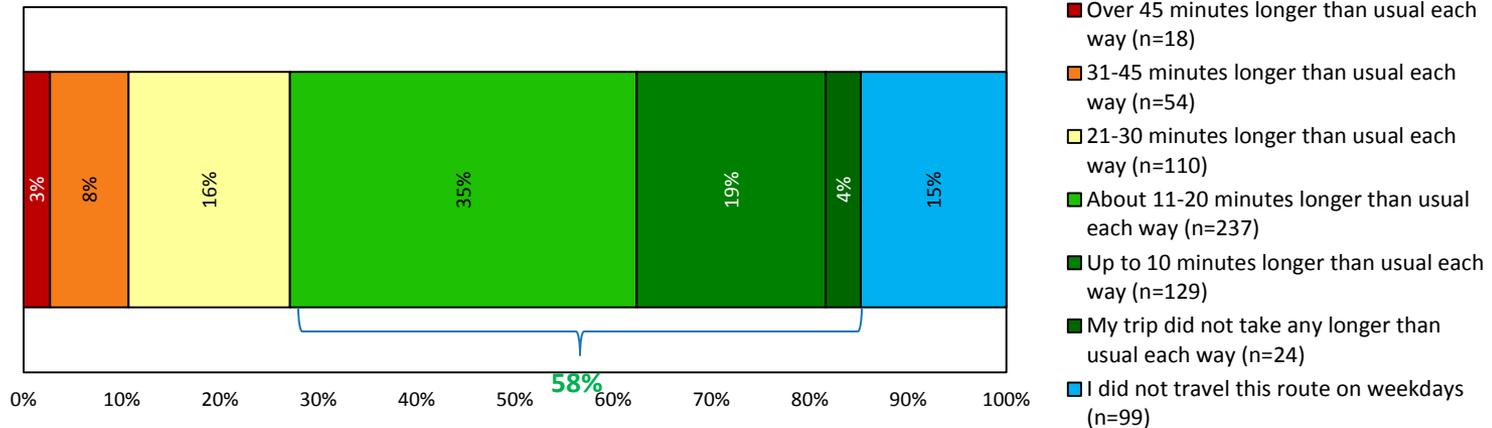
Pre-construction, respondents surveyed (February) *anticipated* a high stress level

- Perceived that traffic levels already high (2/3 rated traffic levels “7” or higher)
- Didn’t see how it would be workable
- Suggested significant mitigation, such as:
 - Turning the median into a temporary lane (“It’s just grass.”)
 - Opening up MnPASS lane to all drivers at no cost

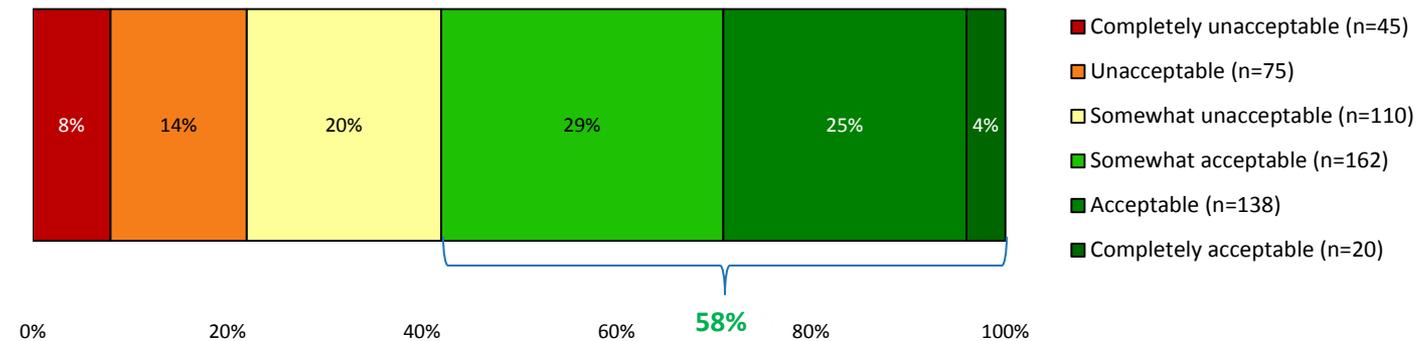


What actually happened?

Typically, how much longer did your trips on weekdays (Monday–Friday) take each way, because of the I-35/I-35E construction? (n=671)



How acceptable or unacceptable was this delay? N=550





Frustrations..

Life in Minnesota:

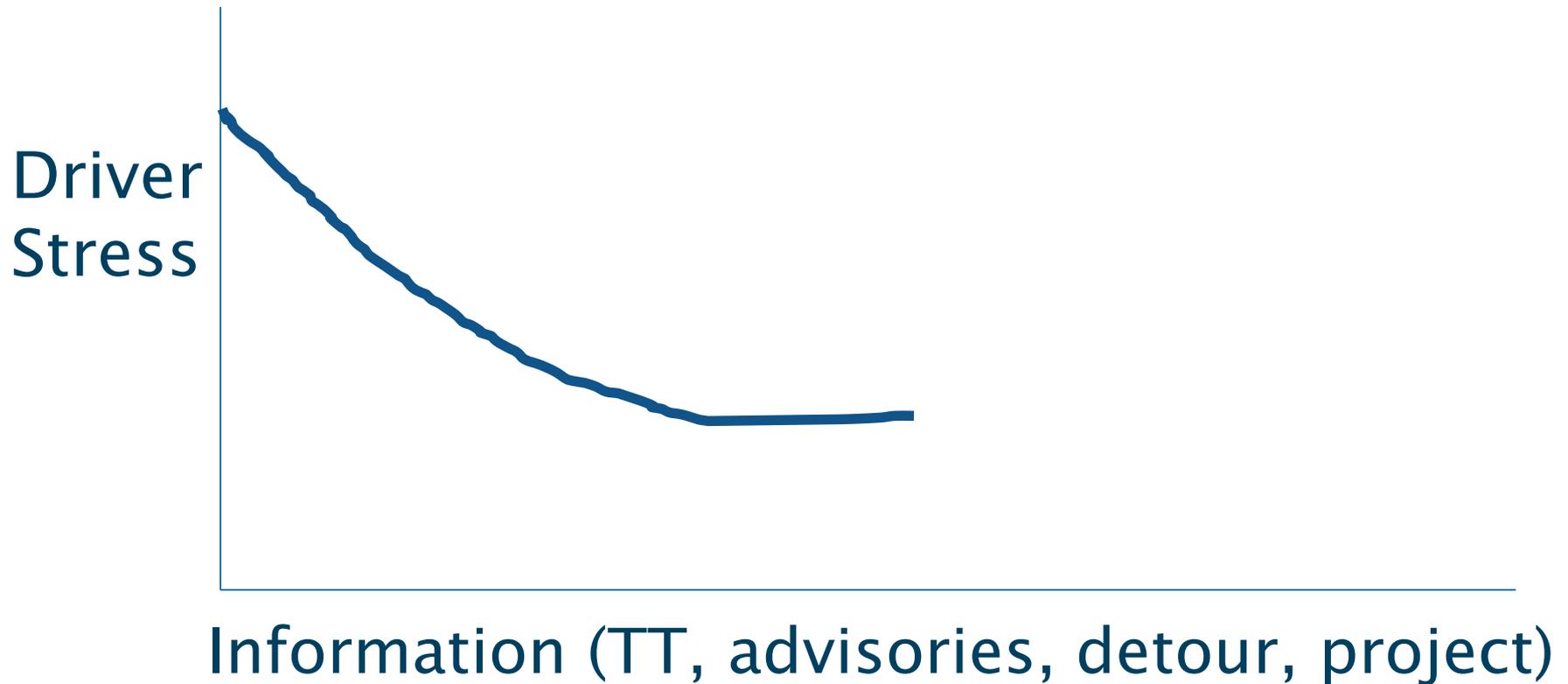
- Strong majority (70%) encountered construction on the detours or alternate routes that they took at least “sometimes”
- Non-compliance with Zipper Merge and HOV

Potential improvements:

- **More** signage leading through detours
- Signage placed far enough for alternate route decision-making
- More detailed closure, delays, and alt. route information in CC emails and on project websites
- Accuracy is key (roadway signage and website)



Information, particularly information that allows for choice, reduces drivers' stress



Why?

- ▶ Perceive that more information enhances roadway safety
- ▶ Allows them to choose alternative routes
- ▶ Lets them call ahead to business or other appointments if they will be late.

“I often used the ‘Time to I-35W split’ to gauge the traffic when driving N on CR 2 in Elko. If it said ‘12 minutes,’ that was normal and I stayed on 35. If it had 17 or more, I knew that there was traffic and took the exit to the frontage road. It took the guesswork out of it = less stress. Thanks!”

“Useful information I can see without taking my eyes off of the road.”

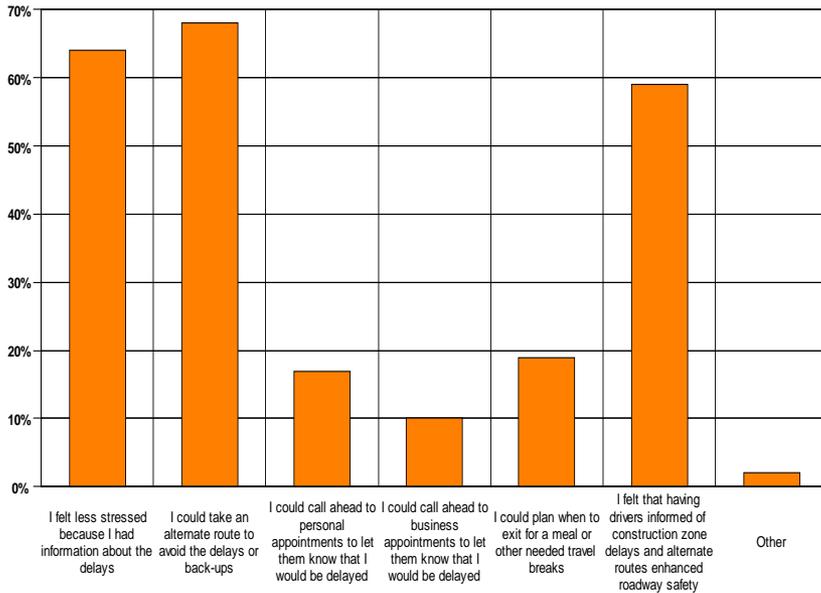


How was the travel time info helpful to you, if at all?

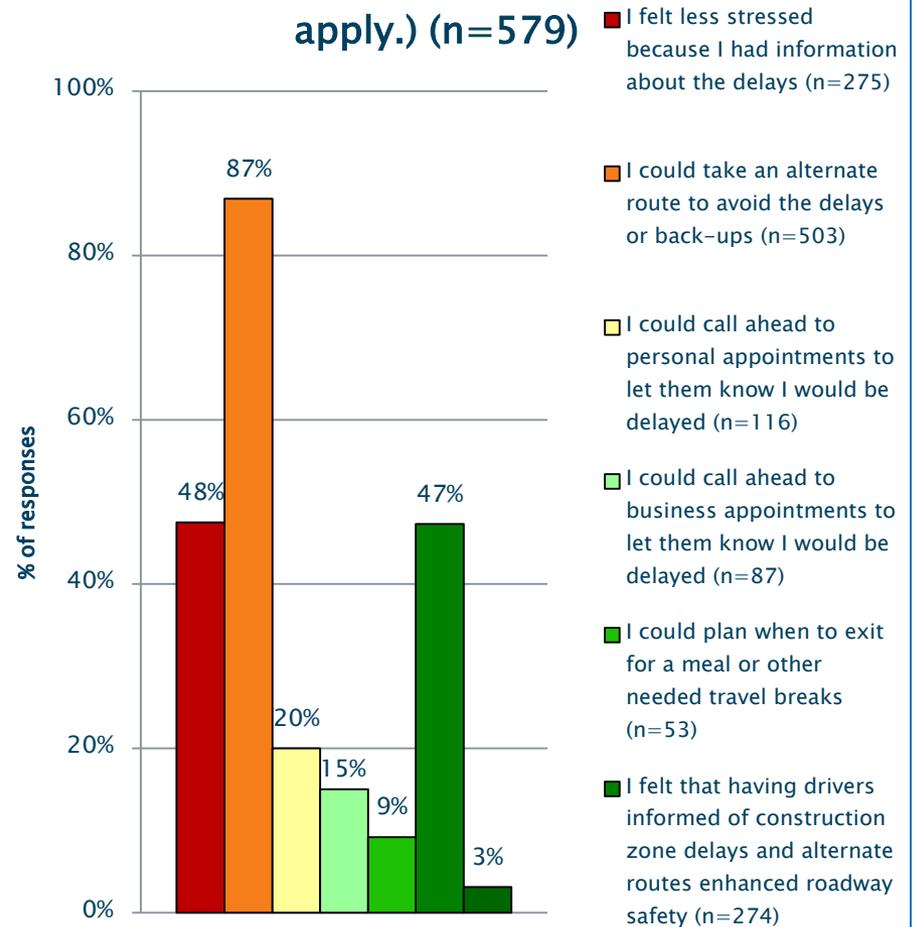
I-35 Survey

I-94 Survey

How was the travel time information helpful to you, if at all? (n=258)
 Note: Respondents could select multiple responses (percent total does not equal 100%).



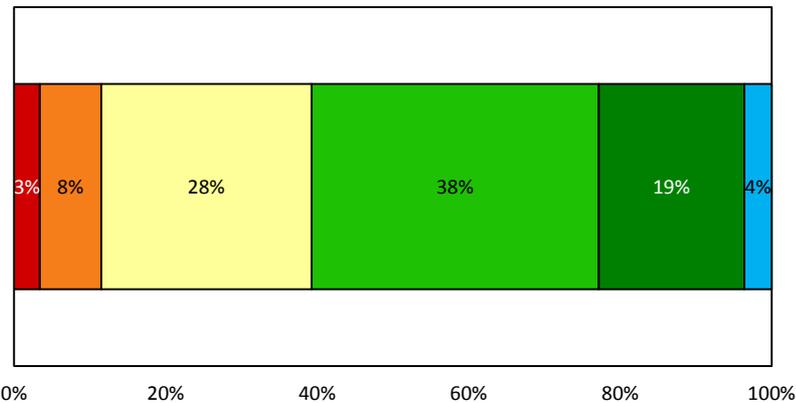
How was the travel time information helpful to you, if at all? (Check all that apply.) (n=579)



Advisories and TT signage → changing routes

I-35 Post-Construction Survey

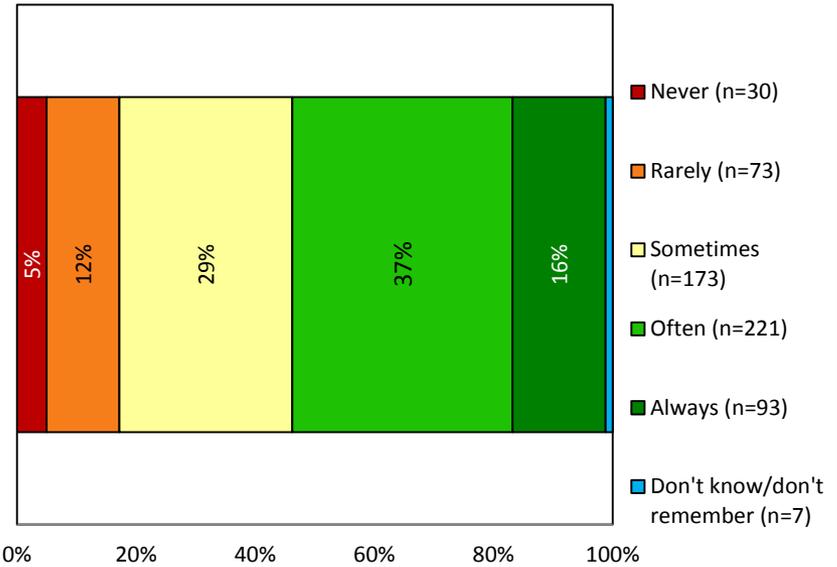
How frequently did you change your travel route when you saw signs that displayed *travel advisories*, such as "Stopped Traffic Ahead"? (n=670)



- Never (n=23)
- Rarely (n=54)
- Sometimes (186)
- Often (n=254)
- Always (n=129)
- Don't know/don't remember (n=24)

85% changed route at least sometimes

How frequently did you choose an alternative route to your destination based on the *travel times* displayed on roadway signs? (n=597)



- Never (n=30)
- Rarely (n=73)
- Sometimes (n=173)
- Often (n=221)
- Always (n=93)
- Don't know/don't remember (n=7)

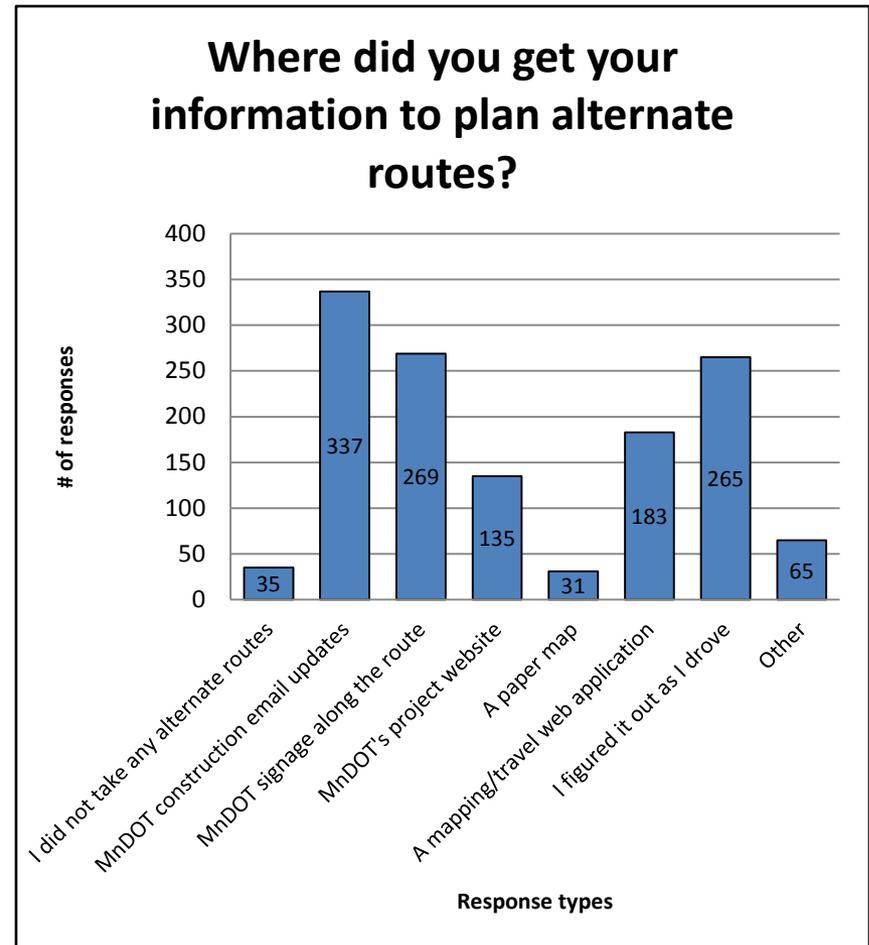
82% chose alt. route at least sometimes



Roadway signage important information source for alt. routes

Most respondents got their information to plan alternate routes either from *MnDOT construction email updates* (n=337), from *MnDOT signage along the route* (n=269) or they *figured it out as they drove* (n=265)

Other common sources of information included *mapping/travel web applications* (n=183) and *MnDOT's project website* (n=135)

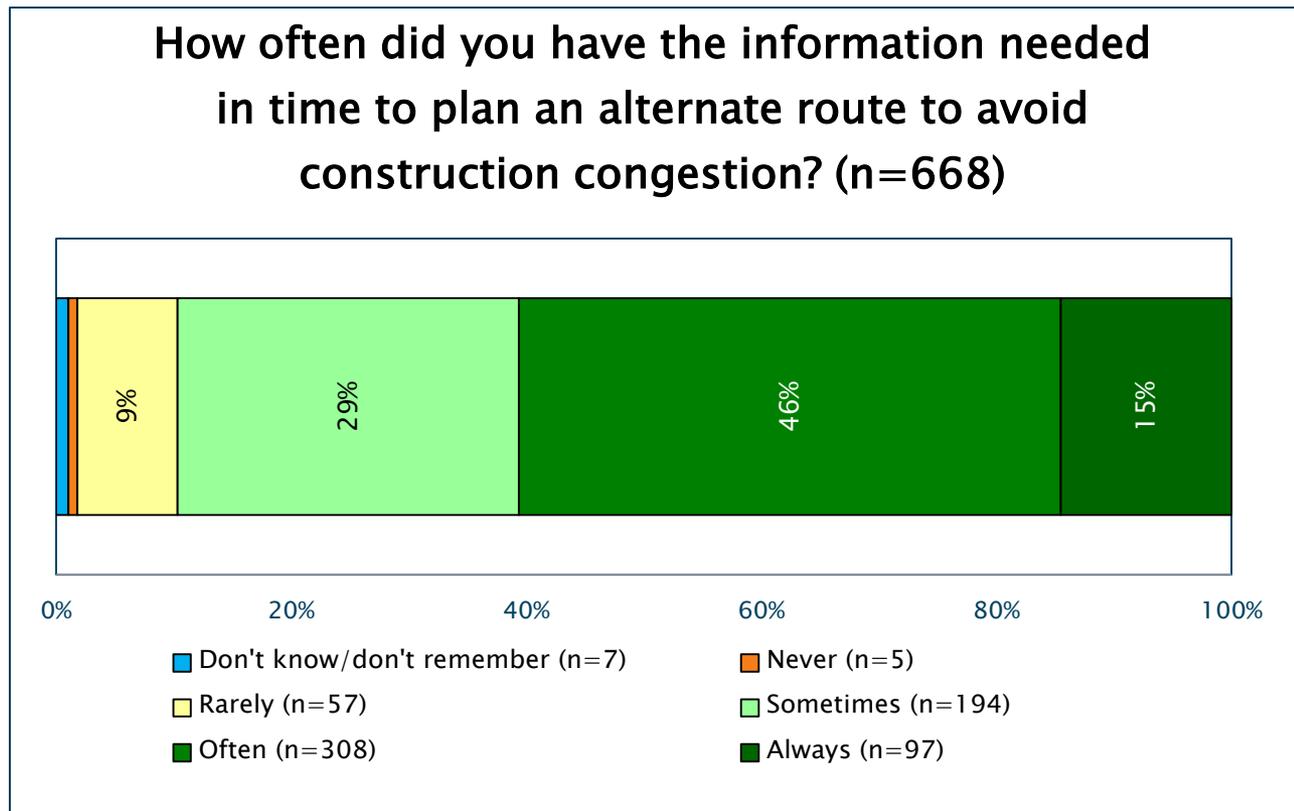


I-35 Post-Construction Survey



Alternative route planning

- Over half of respondents (61%) said they always or often had the information they needed in time to plan an alternate route.

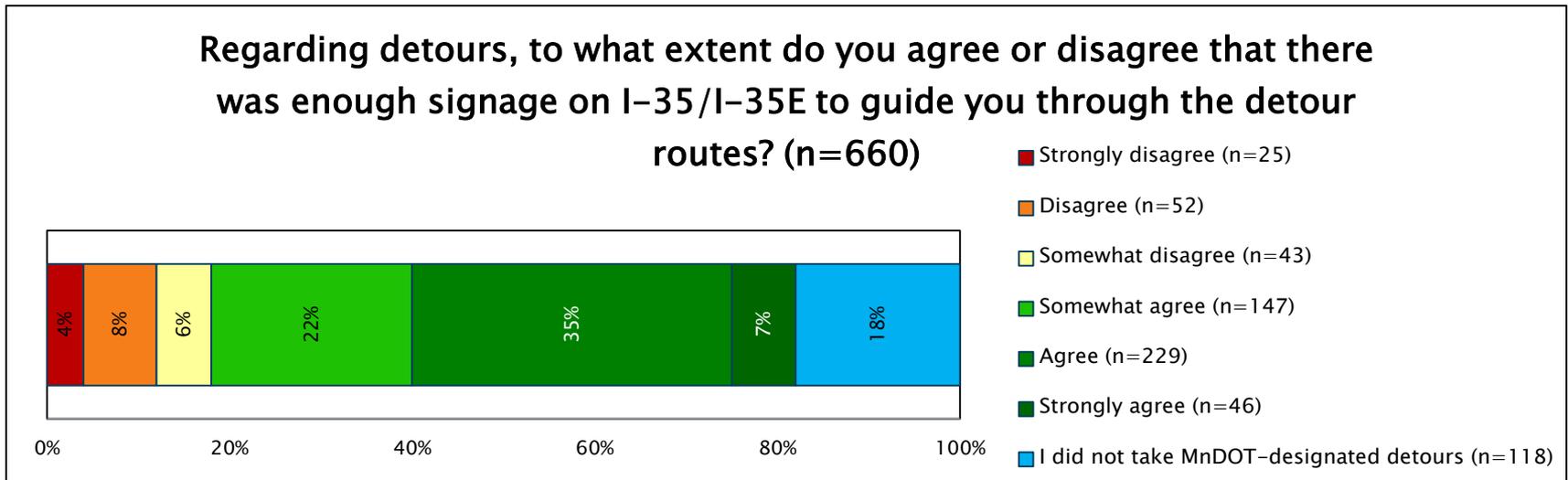


I-35 Post-Construction Survey



Provide more detour info/signage

A sizable minority indicated that there may not be enough signage in the construction zone to guide them through the detour routes.



In addition, 88% said it would be helpful to have information about the *length* of the detour, (the number of miles).

I-35 Post-Construction Survey

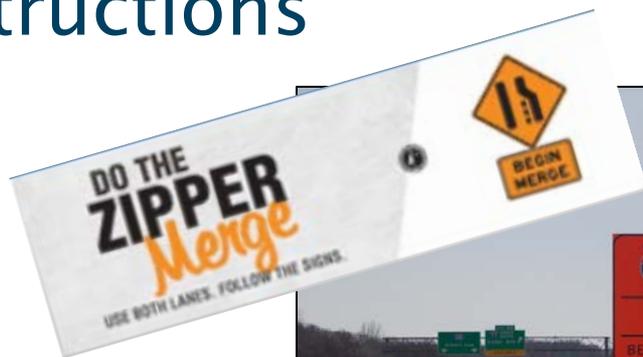


Roadway signage messages

All on the higher end of the usefulness scale:

- “Stopped traffic ahead” (84%)
- Travel time information (64%)
- Potential delays *posted in advance* (69%)
- Zipper Merge instructions (57%)

135 survey
5,6 on 6-pt. scale



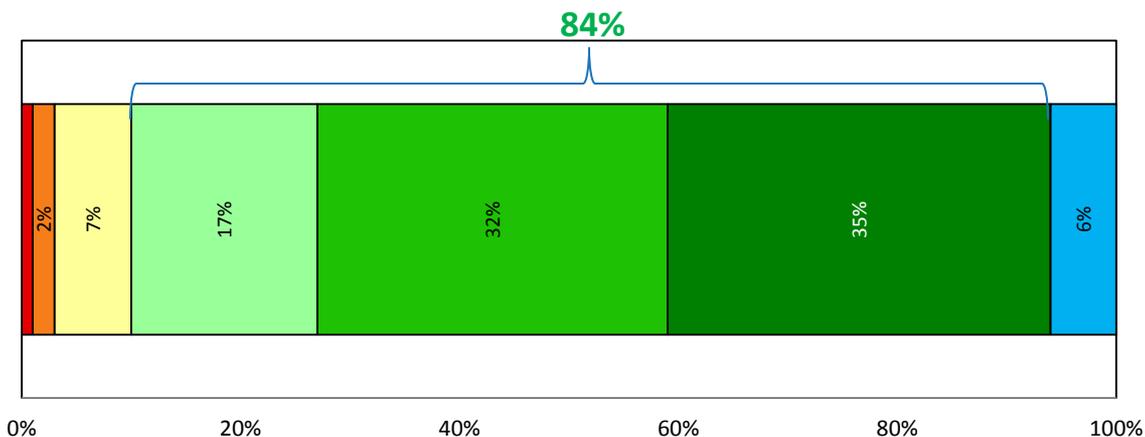
- Safety messages – not so much. (35%)



Impact of larger signage



For this project, MnDOT used a different approach to inform the public. We posted additional and larger roadway signage, earlier in the project, to explain the upcoming delays and impacts. On a scale of 1–6, how helpful was this information to you? (n=672)



- 1 - Not helpful at all (n=9)
- 2 (n=16)
- 3 (n=44)
- 4 (n=115)
- 5 (n=217)
- 6 - Extremely helpful (n=235)
- I didn't notice that the signage in this construction zone was different from any other construction zone (n=36)

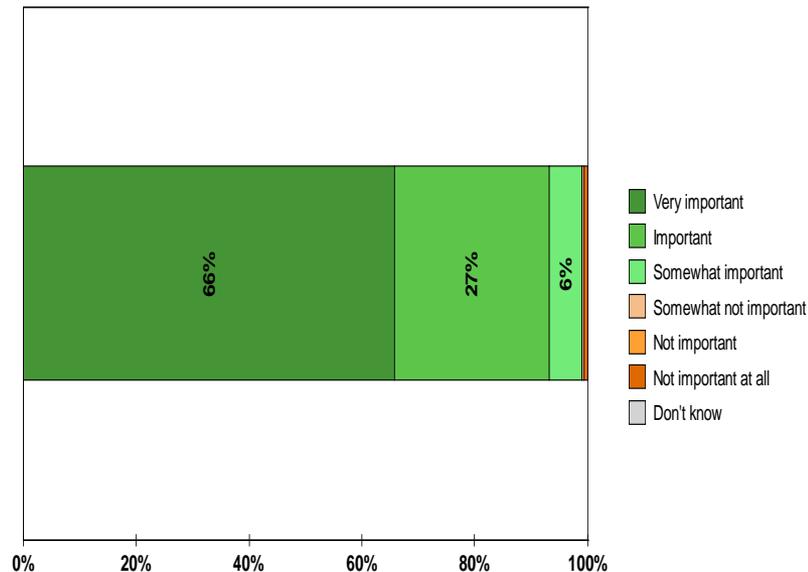


93%: Important to include TT info in construction work zones

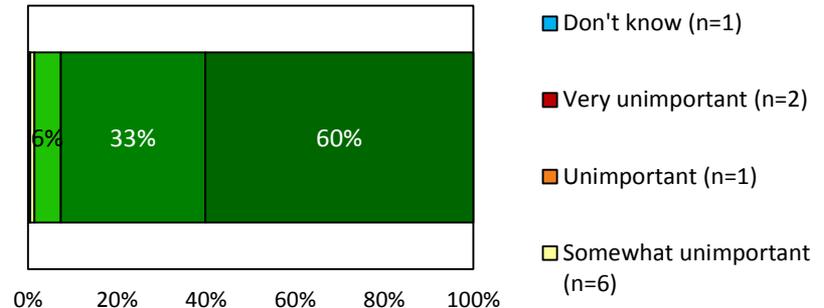
I-94 Survey (2013)

I-35 Survey (2013)

As MnDOT makes resource decisions, how important do you think it is to include travel time and alternate route information signage in construction work zones? (n=278)



As MnDOT makes resource decisions, how important do you think it is to include travel time and alternate route information signage in construction work zones? (n=676)



Website/email construction updates

Email updates greatly appreciated

Suggestions..

- ▶ Website URL on signage
- ▶ Progress bar on project website with milestone dates
- ▶ Specific lane closures with times of day
- ▶ Alternate route suggestions

38% used 511 to check traffic conditions

Lane closures

I-35

- Currently

Both directions of I-35 between the I-35/35W/35E Split



Opportunities for easier travels

- Approx. 20 percent telecommuted, and over a quarter worked a flexible work schedule, at least sometimes to avoid congestion.
- As possible.. coordinate with county and city construction projects, so that travelers do not take alternate routes into additional construction, are boxed in, or become lost.
- *More information, well in advance.*
(Wednesdays before for email updates;
signage four weeks in advance, if possible)

