

Seattle Department of Transportation

Customer Service Survey Report

September 3, 2003

Prepared for:

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Seattle Department of Transportation

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Background and Objectives

The Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) is committed to providing the best possible services to customers and, like many agencies, is faced with limited budget and resources. As part of its efforts to enhance services in the current economic climate, the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) conducted a mailed survey of residents of Seattle. The survey was designed to assess satisfaction with and priorities for SDOT work and activities. The results of the survey will be used to improve procedures for delivering high quality service to customers, to incorporate customer opinions in decisions about allocating resources to SDOT activities, and to establish baseline measures that can be used to track changes in familiarity and satisfaction with SDOT over time.

The information objectives of the survey included the following:

- Assess familiarity and satisfaction with SDOT among residents of the City of Seattle;
- Determine customers' priorities for SDOT activities, including the importance of allocating resources to SDOT facilities and services such as main through streets, sidewalks, and street landscaping; and
- Examine the experiences and opinions of customers who contacted SDOT for information or assistance in the last year, including customers' reasons for contacting SDOT and opinions of the quality of customer service provided by SDOT.

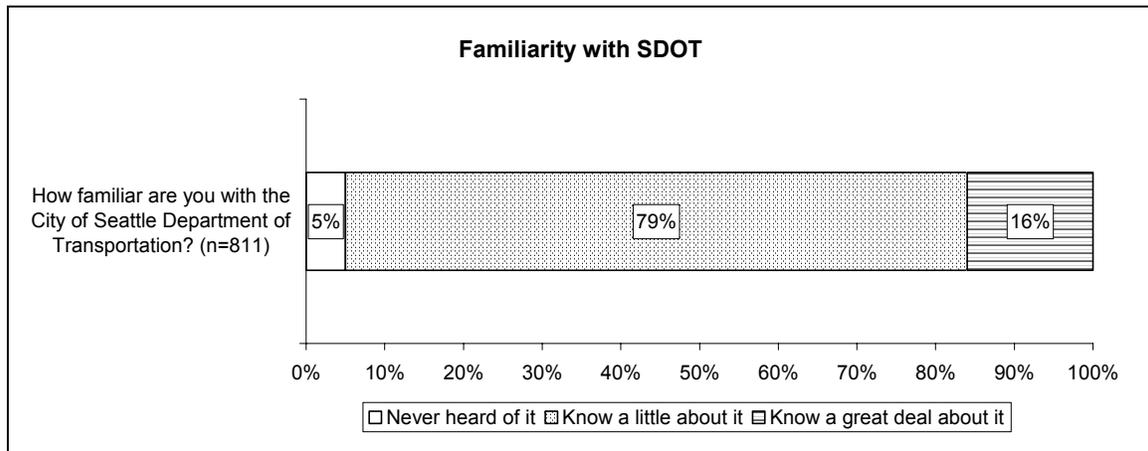
During the week of June 23, 2003, 6,000 written questionnaires were mailed to Seattle residents. By July 15, a total of 861 residents had mailed their completed questionnaires to SDOT. This report describes the survey responses of those 861 residents first, followed by conclusions and observations. The appendices include a copy of the questionnaire used in the survey and a description of the research methods. Tables detailing responses to every question in the survey are available separately from Susan Mueller (206-233-7893).

Results

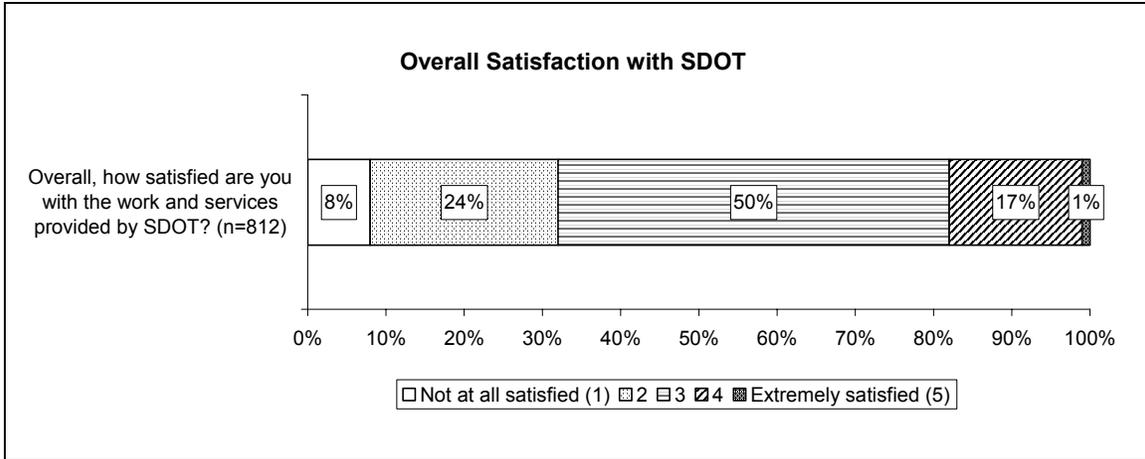
Customers' familiarity and satisfaction with SDOT and the services it provides are discussed first. Second, customers' priorities for SDOT are presented, including how important it is that SDOT allocate resources to different facilities and services. Third, ratings of satisfaction with SDOT work and services in 12 areas are compared to ratings of the importance of allocating resources to those 12 areas. Finally, customers' experience with and opinions of SDOT customer service are discussed.

Familiarity and Satisfaction with SDOT Services

First, customers were asked, "How familiar are you with the City of Seattle Department of Transportation?" About 8 in 10 customers said that they "know a little about it," 16 percent of the customers said that they "know a great deal about it," and 5 percent said that they "never heard of it." These results are shown in the next chart.

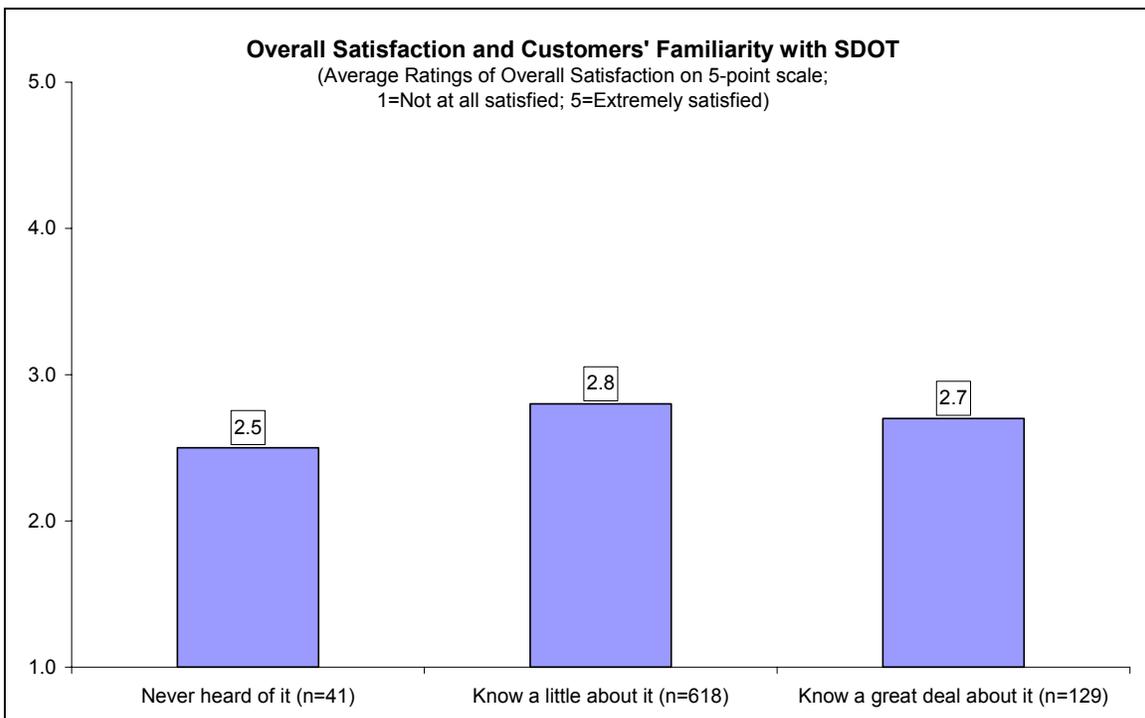


Next, customers were asked, "Overall, how satisfied are you with the work and services provided by Seattle Department of Transportation to build and maintain the City's transportation system, including streets, sidewalks, and bridges?" Customers were asked to answer the question by using a five-point scale, where 5 means "extremely satisfied" and 1 means "not at all satisfied." As the next chart shows, half of the customers rated their overall satisfaction a 3 on the five-point scale. More customers rated their satisfaction lower on the scale (32% rated satisfaction "1" or "2") than rated satisfaction higher on the scale (18% rated satisfaction "4" or "5").



Customers' average rating of overall satisfaction with the work and services provided by SDOT was 2.8.

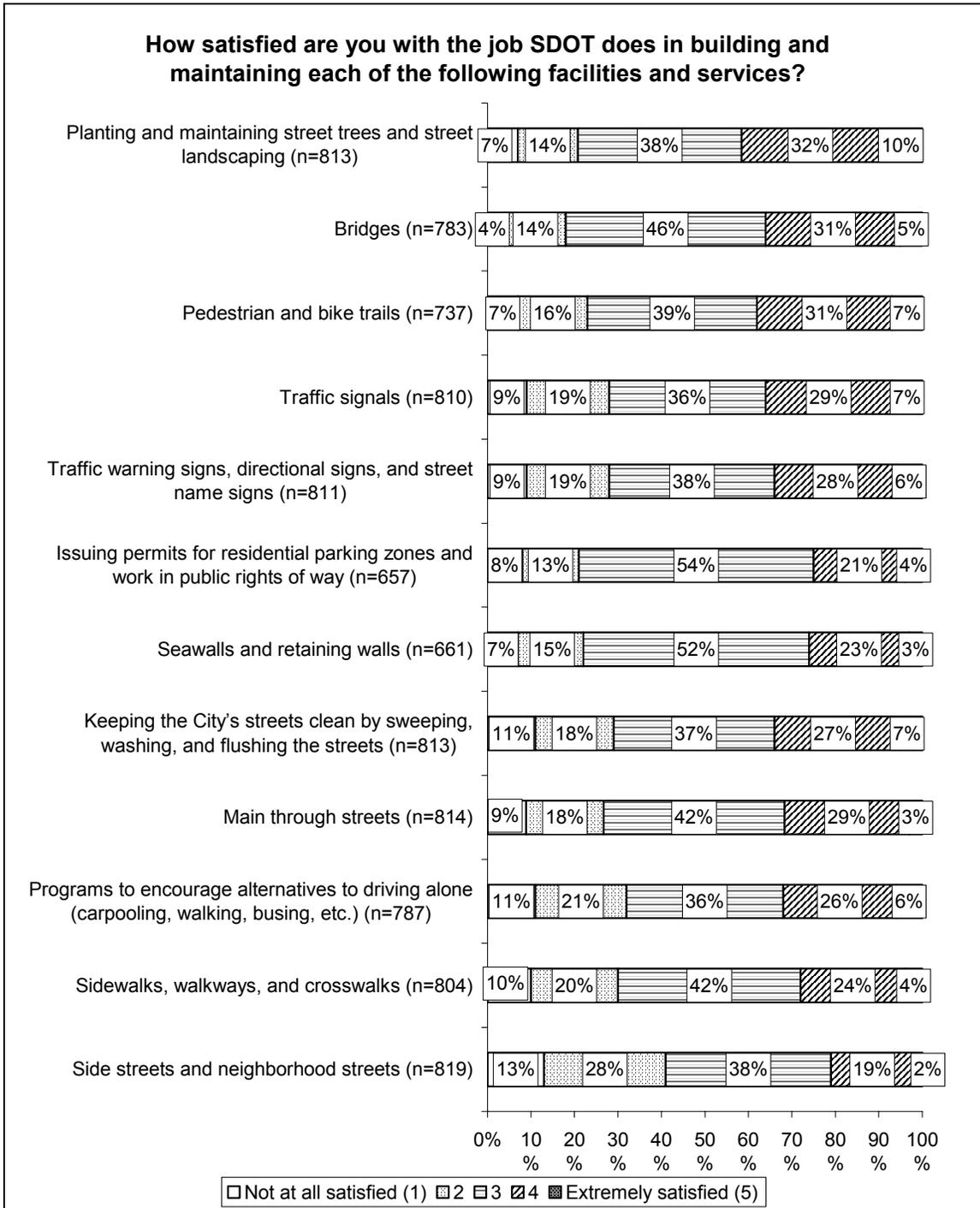
The next chart shows that customers who were more familiar with SDOT rated SDOT higher on average (2.7 or 2.8) than did customers who said they had "never heard of" SDOT. The differences shown in the following chart are statistically significant.¹

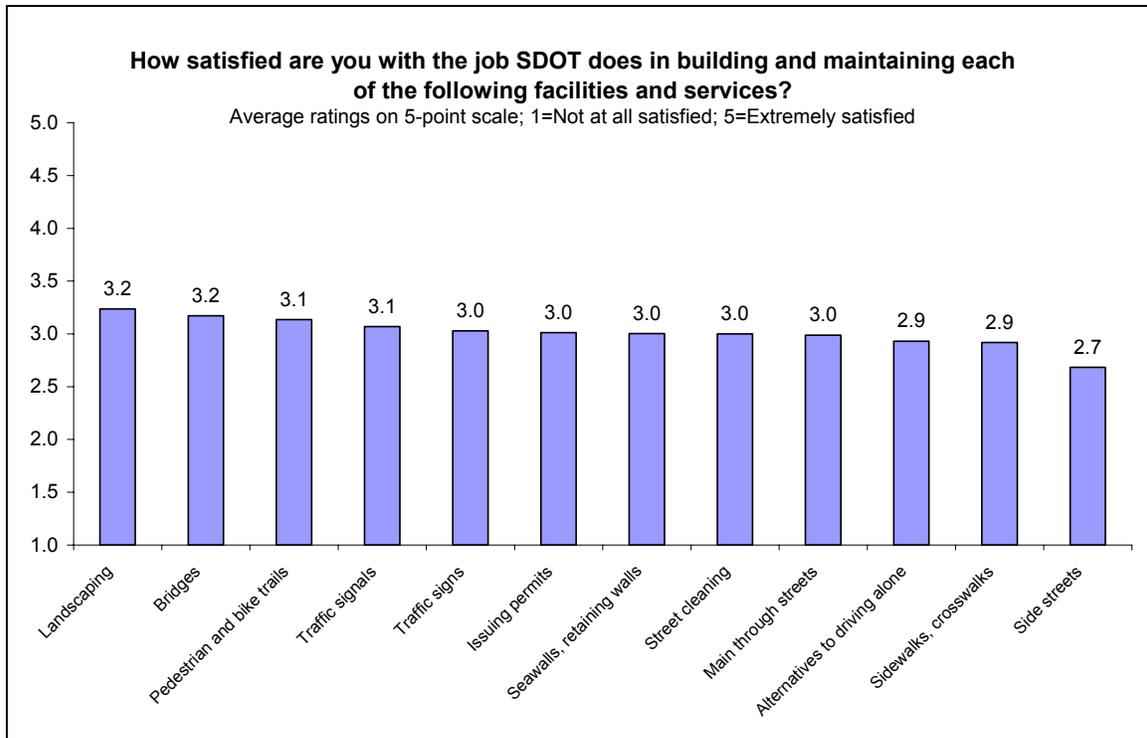


Customers were asked how satisfied they are with the job SDOT does of building and maintaining 12 specific facilities and services, shown in the next chart. Customers reported the highest level of satisfaction with the jobs SDOT does of "planting and

¹ The differences were tested using a One-way ANOVA, SPSS Version 11.5.0 for Windows (6 Sep 2002), (p<.05, 95% confidence interval).

maintaining street trees and landscaping” and “bridges.” The lowest rated facilities and services were “programs to encourage alternatives to driving alone,” “sidewalks, walkways, and crosswalks,” and “side streets and neighborhood streets.” The next two charts show the detailed responses to this question and the average ratings of satisfaction, respectively. Unless otherwise noted, percentages do not always total 100 in this and subsequent charts due to rounding.

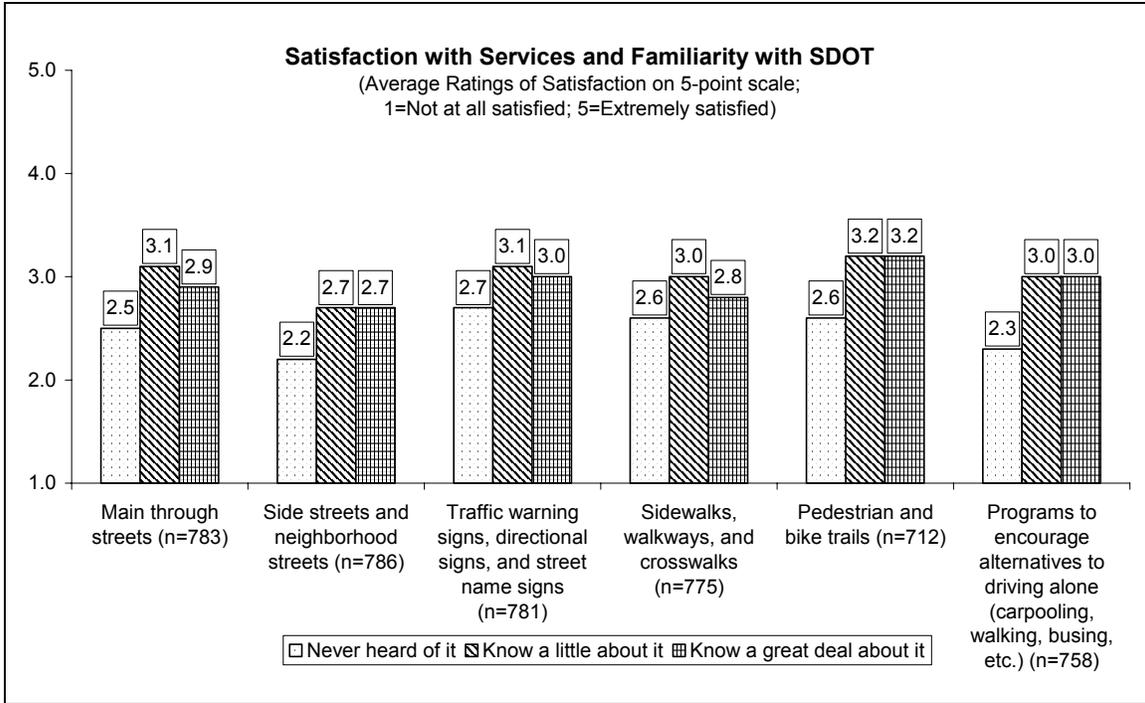




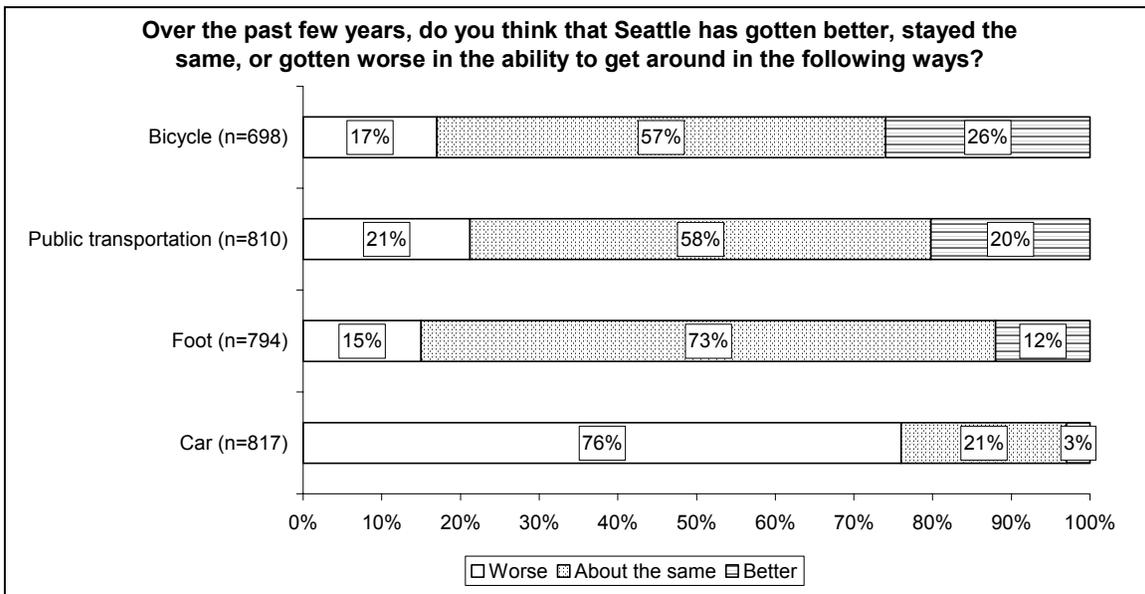
The differences among the ratings given by customers who knew a great deal about, were somewhat familiar, or had never heard of SDOT were statistically significant for the following six facilities and services:

- Main through streets;
- Side streets and neighborhood streets;
- Traffic warning signs, directional signs, and street name signs;
- Sidewalks, walkways, and crosswalks;
- Pedestrian and bike trails; and
- Programs to encourage alternatives to driving alone (carpooling, walking, busing, etc.).

As the following chart shows, customers who said they had never heard of SDOT gave lower average ratings to the job SDOT does than did other customers.



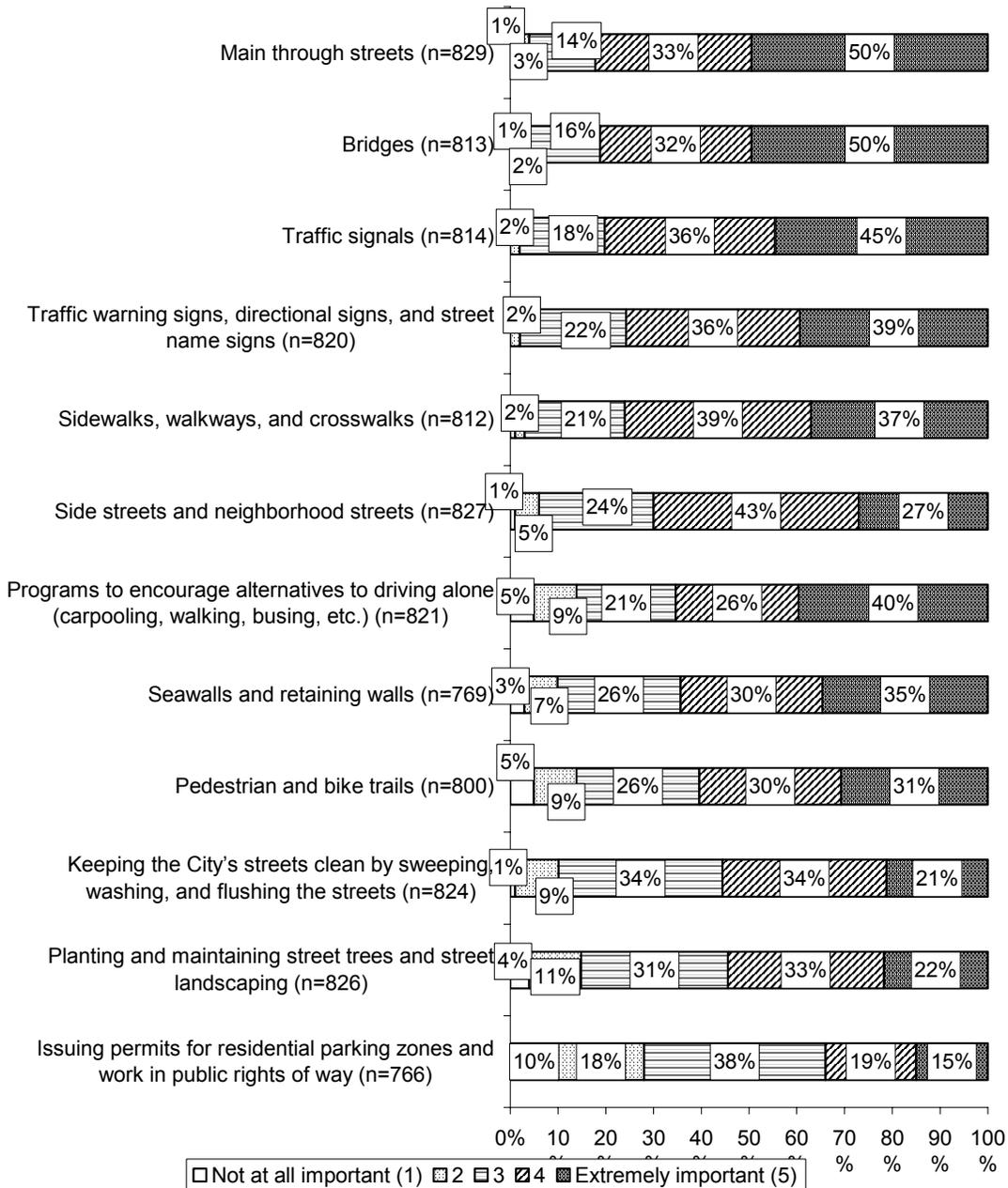
Customers were asked whether the ability to get around Seattle by bicycle, public transportation, foot, or car has become easier, more difficult, or stayed the same over the past few years. The majority of customers said that travel by bicycle, public transportation, and foot stayed “about the same.” The majority of customers said that travel by car became “worse.” These results are shown in the next chart.

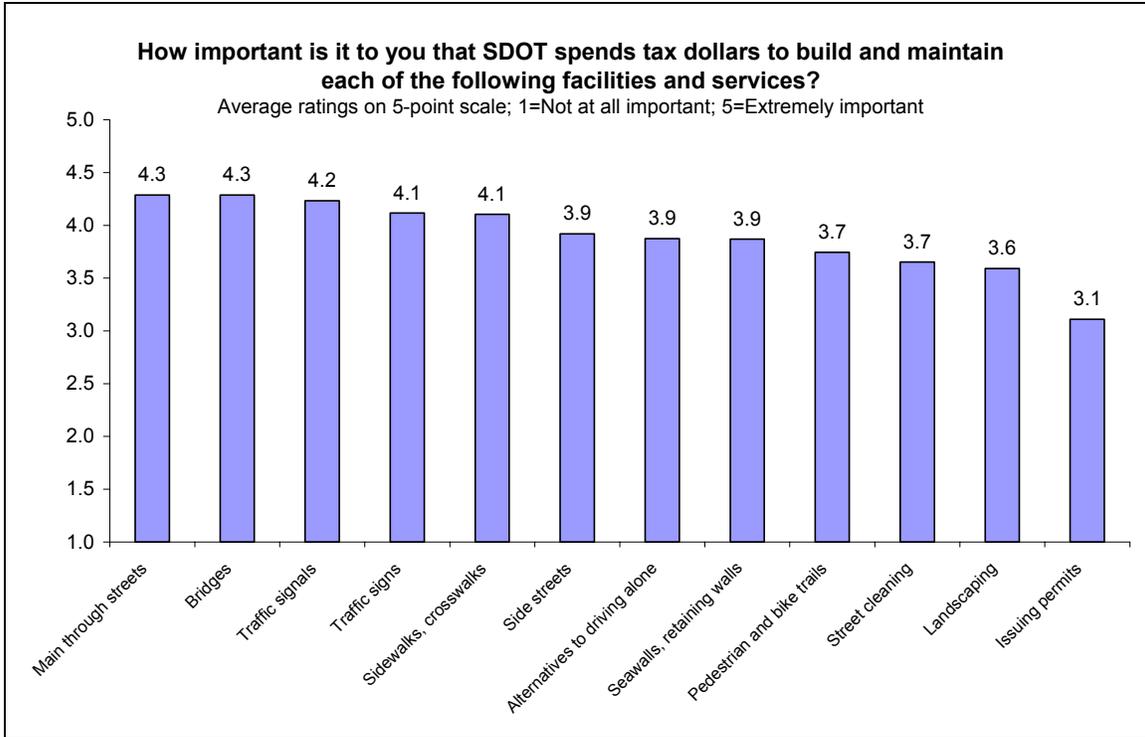


Customer Priorities for SDOT

Customers were asked several questions about their priorities for SDOT. First, customers were asked how important it is that SDOT spends tax dollars to build and maintain the facilities and services shown in the next chart. Using a five-point scale where 5 means “extremely important” and 1 means “not at all important, customers said that the most important facilities were “main through streets” and “bridges.” Street cleaning, landscaping, and issuing permits were rated lower in importance. The next two charts show customers detailed responses to this question and their average ratings of the importance of allocating resources to specific facilities and services, respectively.

How important is it to you that SDOT spends tax dollars to build and maintain each of the following facilities and services?

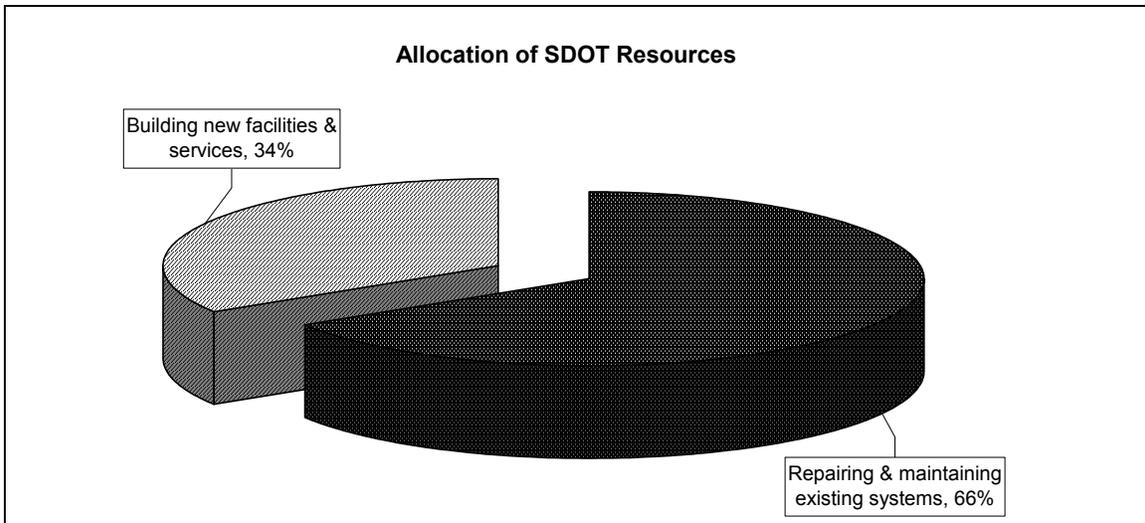




Customers also were asked the following question:

“What percent of its resources should the Seattle Department of Transportation spend on maintaining and repairing the existing transportation system, and what percent should the Department spend on building new facilities and services (such as bridges, bus lanes, signals, etc.)?”

As the next chart shows, customers said that, on average, about two thirds of SDOT resources should be allocated to repairing and maintaining existing systems. Customers also said that about one third of SDOT resources should be allocated to building new facilities and services.



Customers were asked one open-ended question, “In your opinion, what are the most important things that Seattle Department of Transportation should do during the next two years?” Customers offered a wide variety of suggestions for SDOT priorities. Most suggestions concerned repairing and maintaining existing systems, improving the flow of traffic, and increasing safety, including safety for pedestrians and bicycles. The most common responses to this question are summarized in the following table. Percentages total more than 100 in this table because some customers suggested more than one thing for SDOT to do in the next two years.

In addition to the more frequent suggestions shown in the following table, a few customers mentioned many different priorities for SDOT, some of which were outside SDOT responsibilities, such as “have more frequent bus service or more bus routes” (6%), “freeways” (6%), “enforce laws” (3%), and “ferries” (1%). Other suggestions were within SDOT authority, but were mentioned by small numbers of customers so they are not reflected in the following table. Examples of these additional suggestions are “stop installing or remove traffic circles” (2%), “install speed bumps, traffic circles to increase safety” (1%), and “increase pedestrian safety” (2%). Summaries of all comments as well as verbatim responses to this question are available separately.

In your opinion, what are the most important things that the Seattle Department of Transportation should do during the next two years?

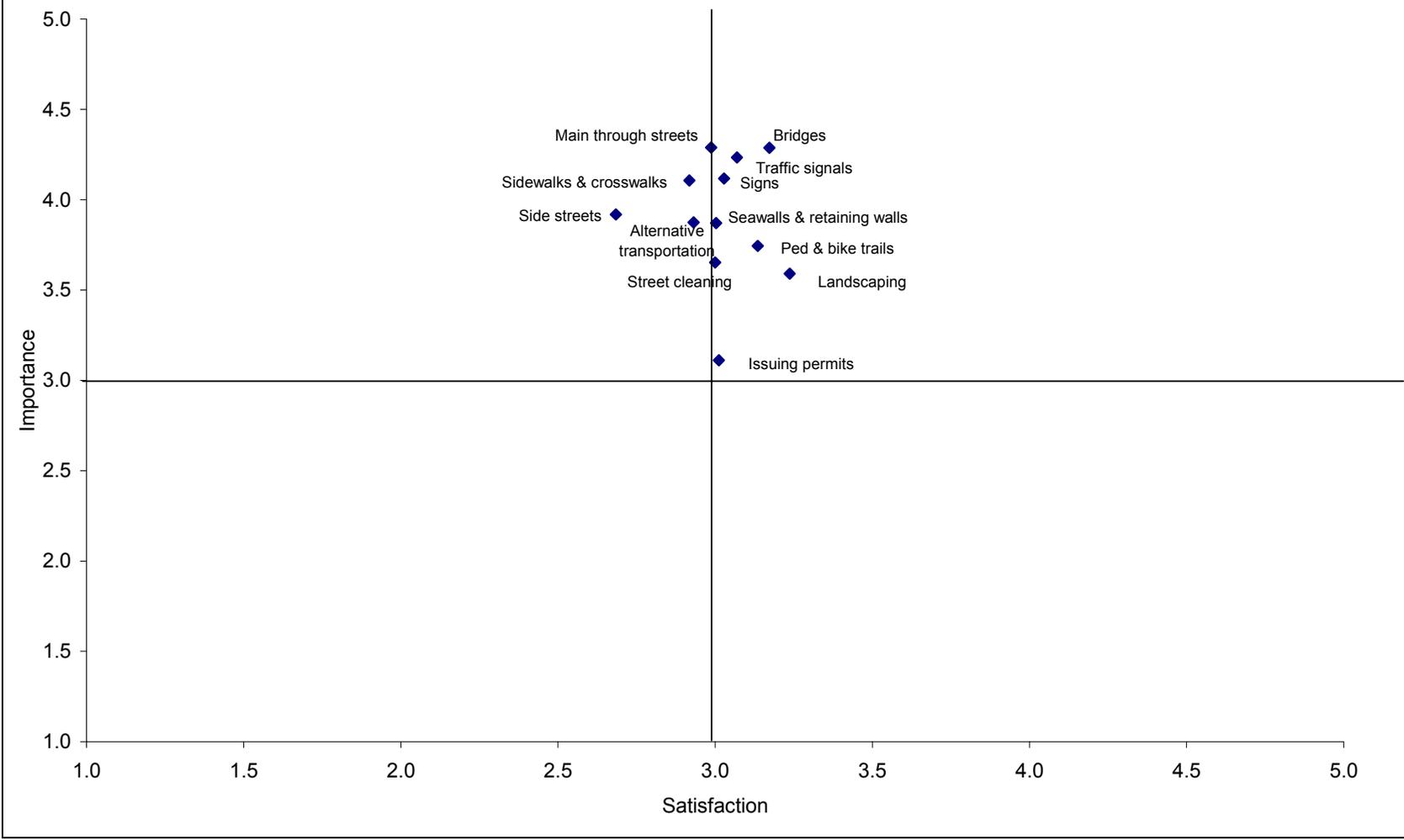
	<i>Base</i>	<i>684</i>
Repair, repave roads and potholes		22%
Maintain roads, infrastructure, systems		12%
Synchronize traffic lights		12%
More bike lanes, finish bike lanes, Burke-Gilman trail		11%
Create incentives for not using car, promote alternatives		10%
Resolve traffic congestion		8%
Build or improve sidewalks, pedestrian trails		8%
Improve signage, road markings		7%
<i>Alaskan Way Viaduct/Seawall</i>		
Replace or repair Alaskan Way Viaduct (general)		8%
Repair viaduct, don't put it underground		3%
Put viaduct underground		2%
Fix seawall		2%
<i>Mass transit, light rail, Sound Transit</i>		
Provide working mass transit, improved public transportation		5%
Build light rail		5%
Make public transportation more affordable, convenient		3%
Don't build light rail		2%
<i>Monorail</i>		
Build monorail		6%
Don't build monorail		2%

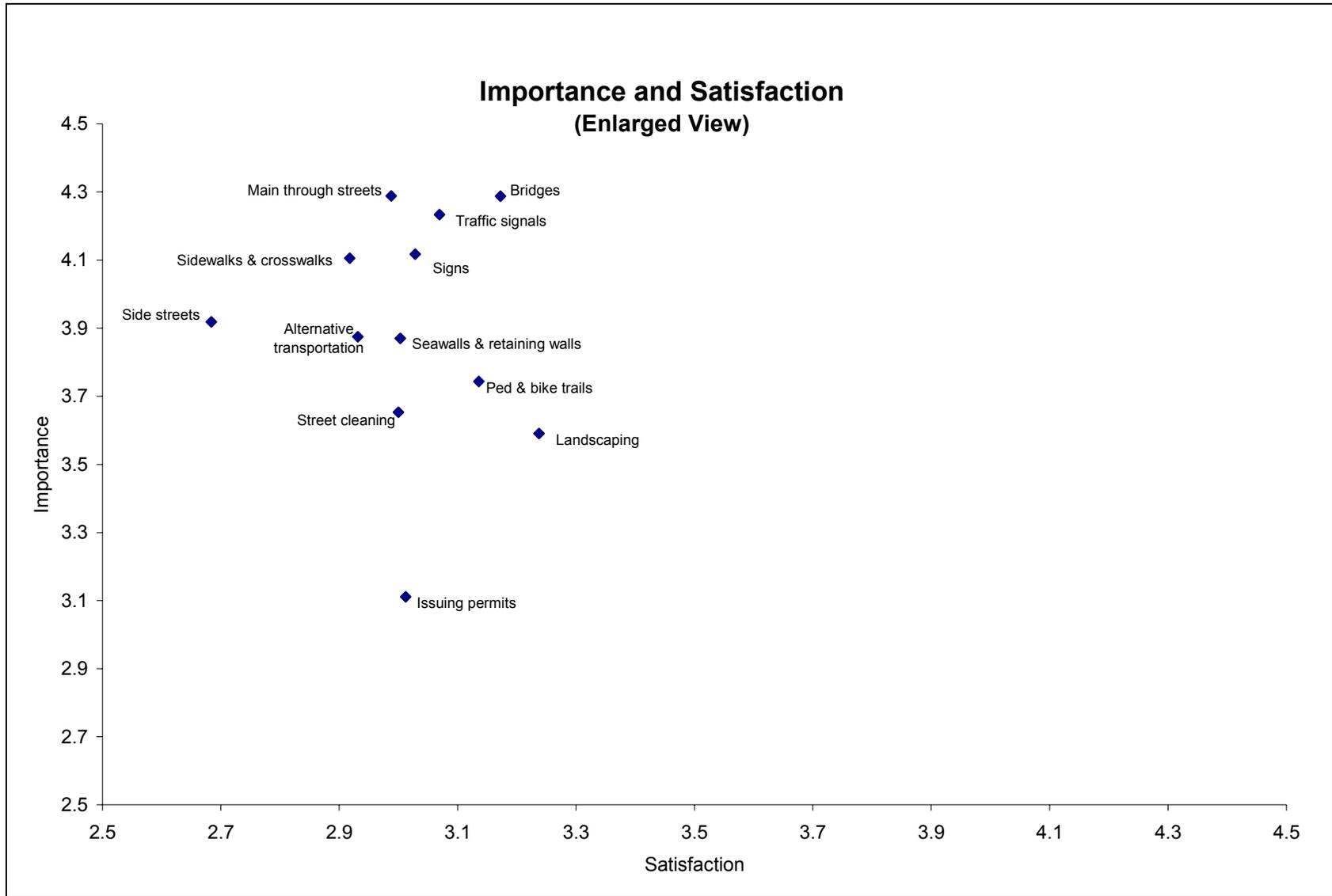
Importance of and Satisfaction with SDOT Work and Services

Customers rated their satisfaction with the work and services provided by SDOT and the importance that SDOT allocate resources to 12 facilities and services. As the discussions in the previous two sections indicated, average ratings of satisfaction ranged from 2.7 to 3.2, and average ratings of importance ranged from 3.1 to 4.3. Both satisfaction and importance were rated on five-point scales, where five is high. Thus, average ratings of satisfaction were typically lower than average ratings of importance.

The next chart (on page 12) graphs customers' ratings of importance and satisfaction with SDOT work and services. The subsequent chart (on page 13) is an enlarged view of the same information. These charts show that all areas were rated higher in importance than satisfaction except "issuing permits for residential parking zones and work in public rights of way."

Importance and Satisfaction



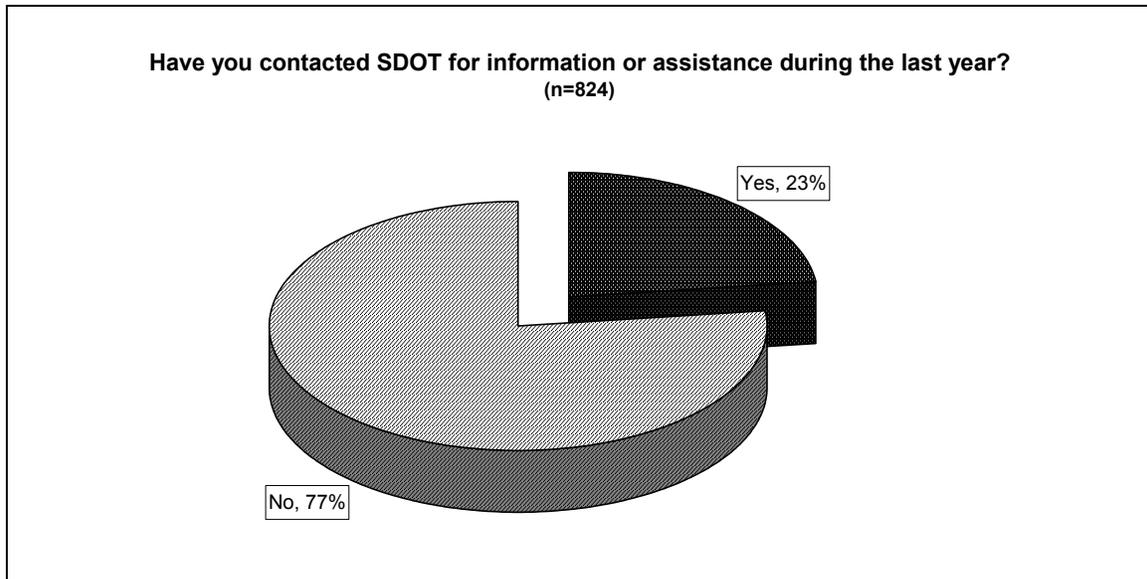


SDOT Customer Service

Customers were asked if they have contacted SDOT during the last year and, if so, to describe their experiences with and opinions of the service SDOT provided them.

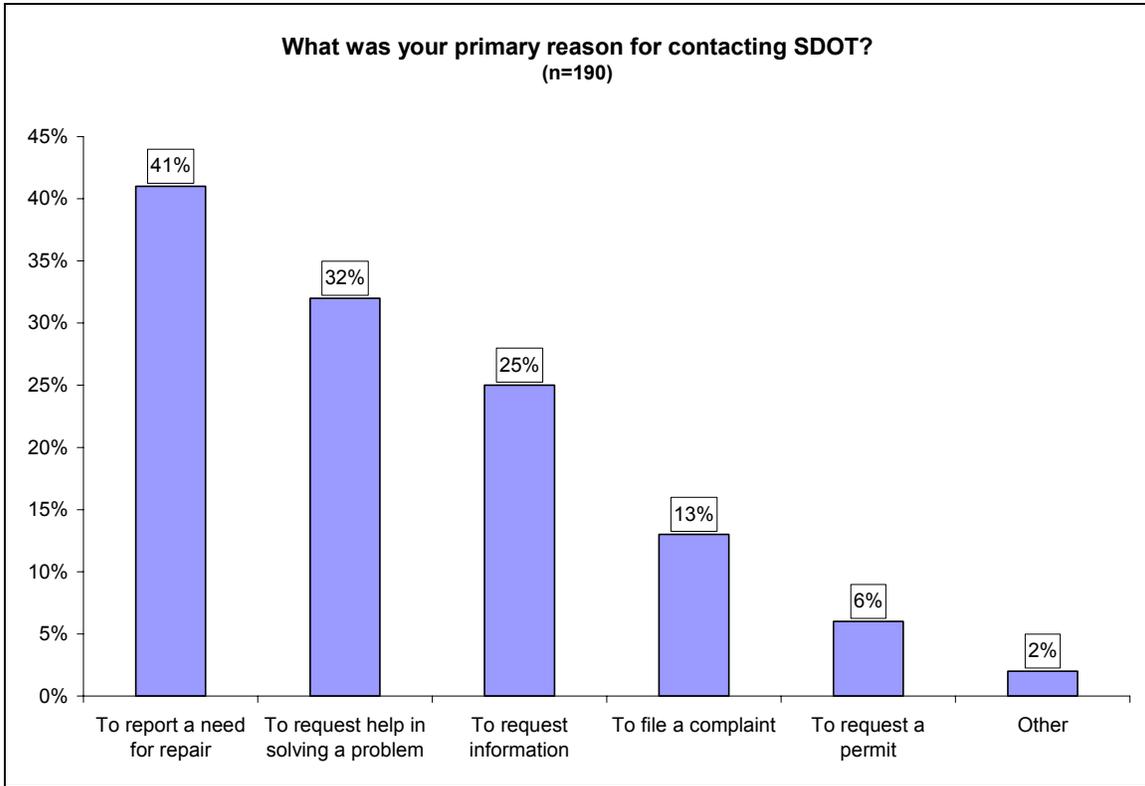
As the next chart shows, almost one fourth of the customers (191) said that they contacted SDOT during the last year.

Forty seven percent of the customers who said that they know a great deal about SDOT contacted it during the past year. Twenty percent of the customers who said that they know a little about SDOT contacted it during the past year. Ten percent of those who said they had never heard of SDOT contacted it during the past year. These differences between levels of familiarity with SDOT were statistically significant.²

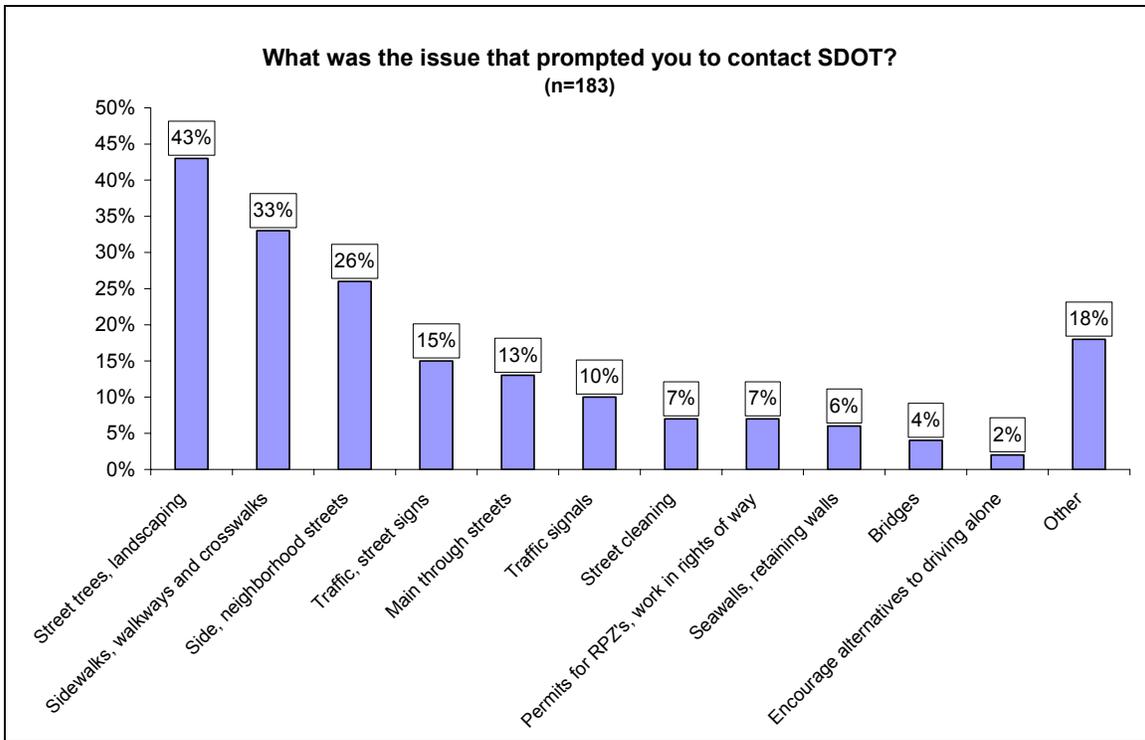


² Differences were tested using a Chi-square test, SPSS Version 11.5.0 for Windows (6 Sep 2002), (p<.05, 95% confidence interval).

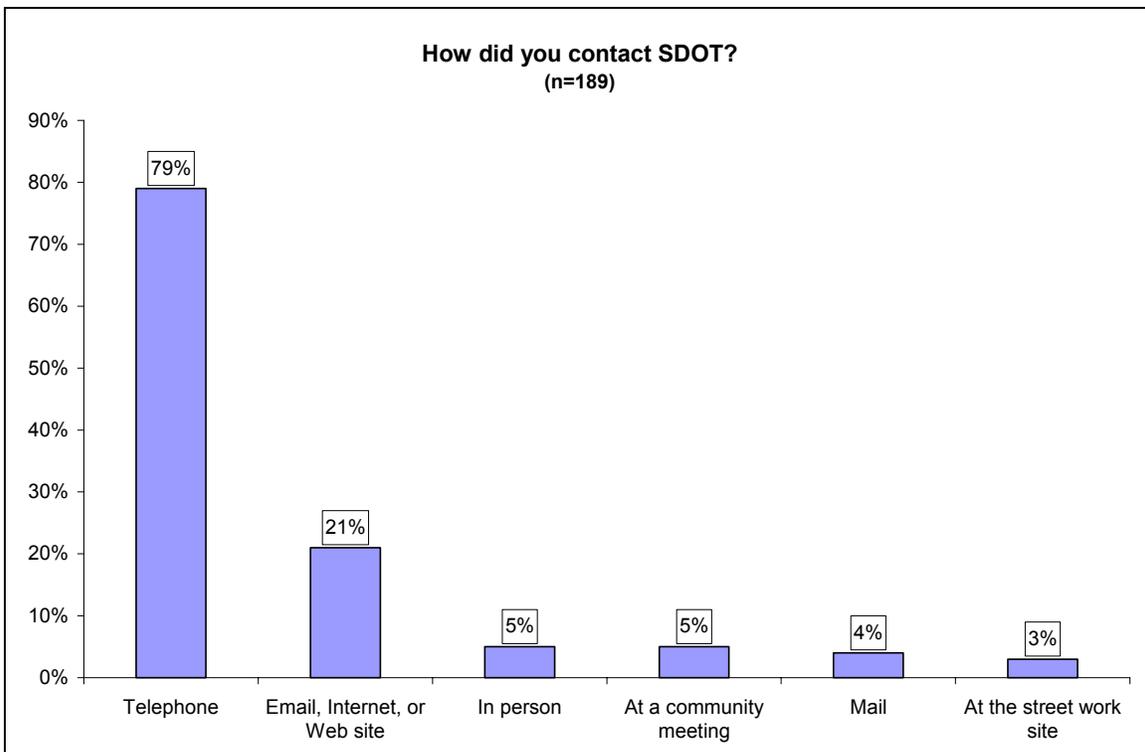
The most common reasons customers gave for contacting SDOT were to report a need for repair, request help in solving a problem, or request information. Reasons for contacting SDOT are shown in the next chart. Percentages total more than 100 in this chart since some customers gave more than one reason for contacting SDOT.



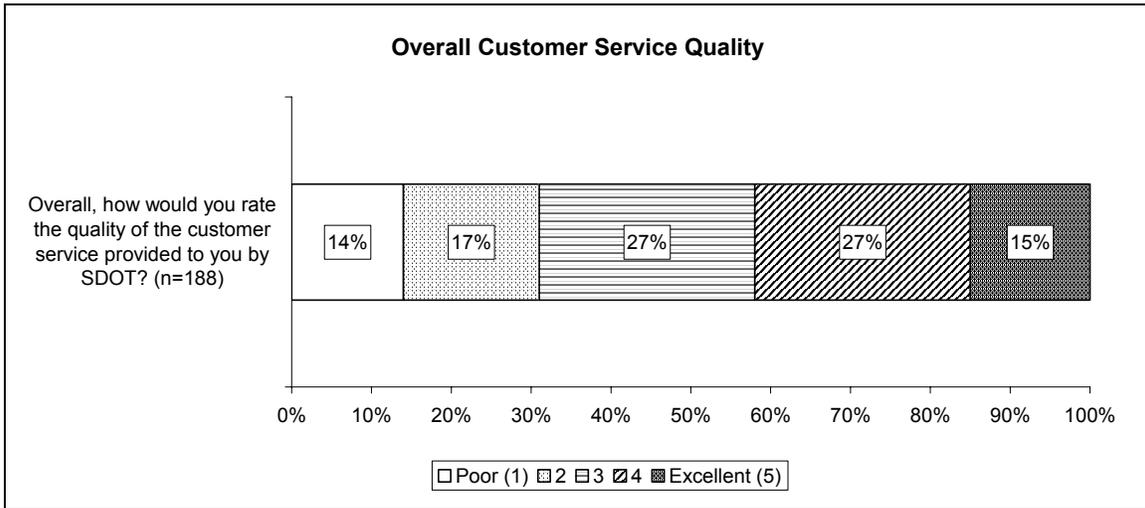
The next chart shows customers' responses to the question, "When you last contacted Seattle Department of Transportation, what was the issue that prompted you to contact the Department?" Customers most often said that the issue that prompted them to contact SDOT was "street trees or street landscaping," "sidewalks, walkways, and crosswalks," or "side streets and neighborhood streets." Percentages total more than 100 in this chart since some customers identified more than one issue that prompted them to contact SDOT.



Customers typically contacted SDOT by phone, as shown in the next chart.

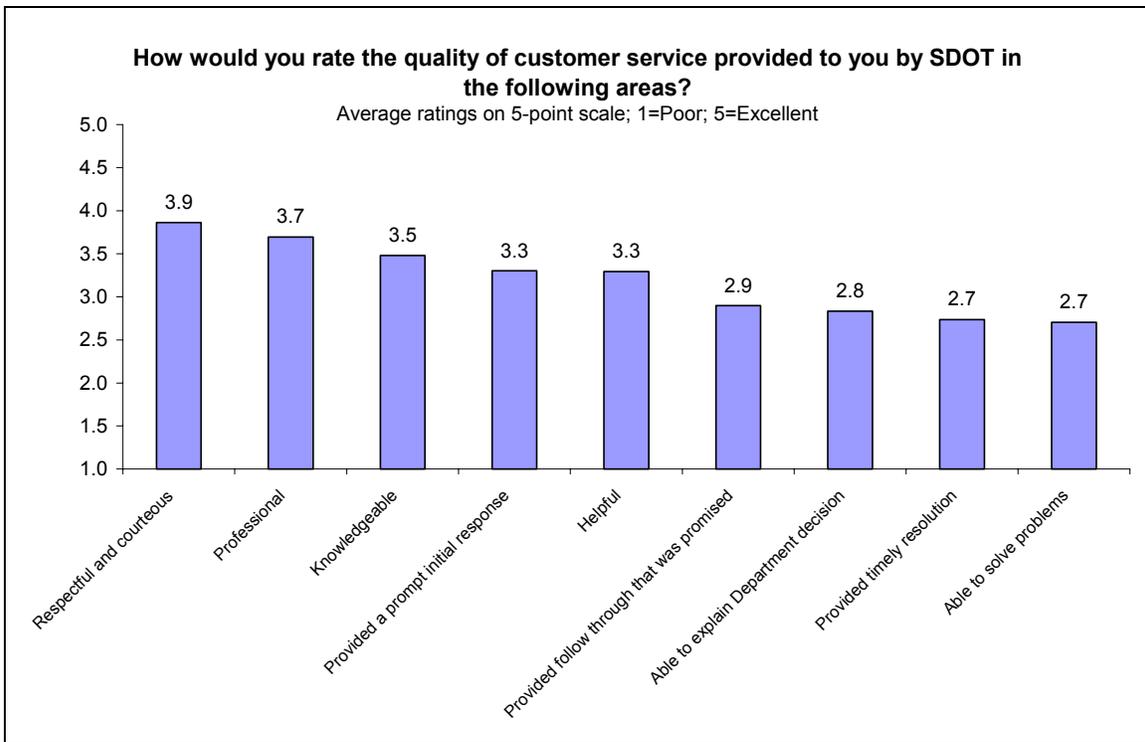
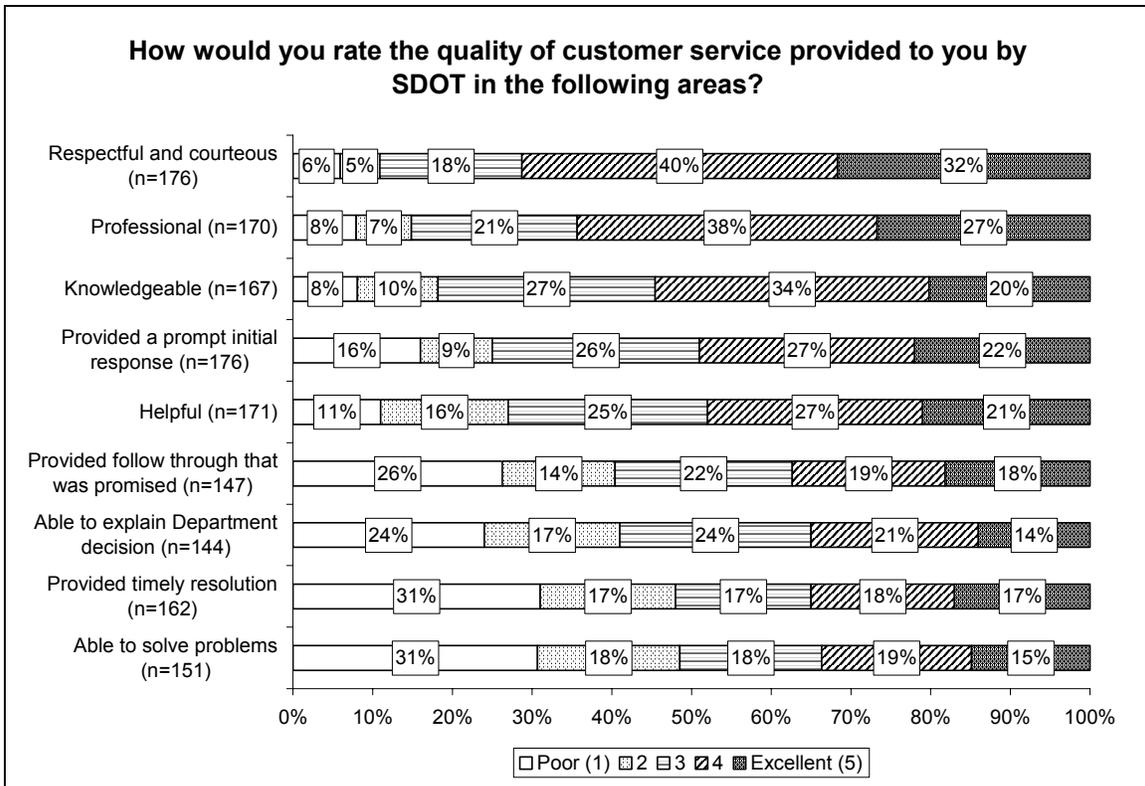


Customers who contacted SDOT during the last year were asked to rate the quality of customer service they received by using a five-point scale, where 5 means “excellent” and 1 means “poor.” Fifteen percent of the customers who contacted SDOT rated the overall quality of customer service a 5, or “excellent.” Another 27 percent of the customers rated service a 4 on the five-point scale where 5 means “excellent.” These results are shown in the next chart.



Customers’ average rating of the overall quality of customer service provided by SDOT was 3.1.

Customers also used the five-point scale where 5 means “excellent” and 1 means “poor” to rate SDOT in nine areas of customer service, which are shown in the next two charts. SDOT customer service was rated highest for being “respectful and courteous,” with 72 percent of the customers rating SDOT a 4 or 5 (excellent) in this area. SDOT also was rated 4 or 5 by over half of the customers for being “professional,” and “knowledgeable.” SDOT was given lower ratings for providing follow through, explaining Department decisions, providing timely resolution, and being able to solve problems.



Appendix A

Customer Questionnaire

SEATTLE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION CUSTOMER SERVICE SURVEY



As mayor, I've made strengthening basic city services a priority. One focus is transportation. This survey is being sent to you to ensure that the Seattle Department of Transportation is providing the best possible service to all customers. I encourage you to use this opportunity to tell us what you think. We're committed to improving mobility for people and freight in Seattle. Thank you. **Greg J. Nickels, Mayor**



Please return this questionnaire by July 7.
All responses will be confidential and anonymous and reported in aggregate form only.

1. How familiar are you with the City of Seattle Department of Transportation?

- Never heard of it Know a little about it Know a great deal about it

2. Overall, how satisfied are you with the work and services provided by Seattle Department of Transportation to build and maintain the City's transportation system, including streets, sidewalks, and bridges? Please circle the number that best reflects your opinion using a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means "Not at all satisfied" and 5 means "Extremely satisfied."

	Not at all satisfied				Extremely satisfied
	1	2	3	4	5
The work and services provided by Seattle Department of Transportation					

3. Over the past few years, do you think that Seattle has gotten better, stayed the same, or gotten worse in the ability to get around in the following ways:

	Worse		About the same		Better
Public transportation	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Car	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Foot	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Bicycle	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>

4. How satisfied are you with the job Seattle Department of Transportation does in building and maintaining each of the following facilities and services? Please circle the number that best reflects your opinion.

	Not at all satisfied				Extremely satisfied
	1	2	3	4	5
Main through streets	1	2	3	4	5
Side streets and neighborhood streets	1	2	3	4	5
Bridges	1	2	3	4	5
Seawalls and retaining walls	1	2	3	4	5
Traffic signals	1	2	3	4	5
Traffic warning signs, directional signs, and street name signs	1	2	3	4	5
Sidewalks, walkways, and crosswalks	1	2	3	4	5
Pedestrian and bike trails	1	2	3	4	5
Keeping the City's streets clean by sweeping, washing, and flushing the streets	1	2	3	4	5
Planting and maintaining street trees and street landscaping	1	2	3	4	5
Programs to encourage alternatives to driving alone (carpooling, walking, busing, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
Issuing permits for residential parking zones and work in public rights-of-way	1	2	3	4	5

5. How **important** is it to you that Seattle Department of Transportation spends tax dollars to build and maintain each of the following facilities and services? Please circle the number that best reflects your opinion using a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means "Not at all important" and 5 means "Extremely important."

	Not at all important				Extremely important
Main through streets	1	2	3	4	5
Side streets and neighborhood streets	1	2	3	4	5
Bridges	1	2	3	4	5
Seawalls and retaining walls	1	2	3	4	5
Traffic signals	1	2	3	4	5
Traffic warning signs, directional signs, and street name signs	1	2	3	4	5
Sidewalks, walkways, and crosswalks	1	2	3	4	5
Pedestrian and bike trails	1	2	3	4	5
Keeping the City's streets clean by sweeping, washing, and flushing the streets	1	2	3	4	5
Planting and maintaining street trees and street landscaping	1	2	3	4	5
Programs to encourage alternatives to driving alone (carpooling, walking, busing, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
Issuing permits for residential parking zones and work in public rights of way	1	2	3	4	5

6. What percent of its resources should the Seattle Department of Transportation spend on maintaining and repairing the existing transportation system, and what percent should the Department spend on building new facilities and services (such as bridges, bus lanes, signals, etc.)? Please write the percentages below. (The two numbers should add up to 100.)

_____ % for repairing and maintaining existing systems
 + _____ % for building new facilities and services
 100 % total

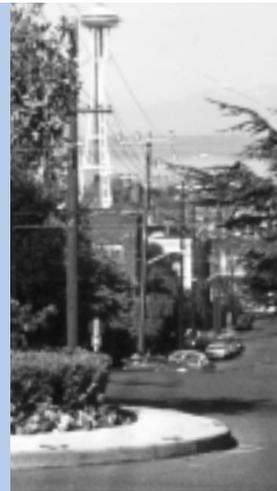
7. Have you contacted Seattle Department of Transportation for information or assistance during the last year?
 Yes ⇨ Please continue with Question 8 No ⇨ Please skip to Question 13

8. What was your **primary** reason for contacting Seattle Department of Transportation? Please check only one. (If you contacted Seattle Department of Transportation more than once, please describe the **last time** you contacted the Department.)

- To request information
- To request a permit
- To request help in solving a problem
- Other - please describe _____
- To report a need for repair
- To file a complaint

9. When you last contacted Seattle Department of Transportation, what was the issue that prompted you to contact the Department?

- Main through streets
- Bridges
- Traffic signals
- Traffic warning signs, directional signs, and street name signs
- Street cleaning
- Programs to encourage alternatives to driving alone
- Permits for residential parking zones or work in public rights-of-way
- Other - please describe _____
- Side streets and neighborhood streets
- Seawalls and retaining walls
- Sidewalks, walkways and crosswalks
- Pedestrian and bike trails
- Street trees or street landscaping



10. How did you contact the Seattle Department of Transportation?

- Telephone In person Email, internet, or website At a community meeting At the street work site
 Other - please describe _____

11. Overall, how would you rate the quality of the customer service provided to you by Seattle Department of Transportation?
Please circle the number that best reflects your opinion from 1 to 5, where 1 means "Poor" and 5 means "Excellent."

	Poor				Excellent
Overall quality of customer service	1	2	3	4	5

12. How would you rate the quality of the customer service provided to you by Seattle Department of Transportation in the following areas? Please circle the number that best reflects your opinion from 1 to 5, where 1 means "Poor" and 5 means "Excellent."

	Poor				Excellent
Provided a prompt initial response	1	2	3	4	5
Helpful	1	2	3	4	5
Respectful and courteous	1	2	3	4	5
Professional	1	2	3	4	5
Knowledgeable	1	2	3	4	5
Provided timely resolution	1	2	3	4	5
Provided follow through that was promised	1	2	3	4	5
Ability to solve problems	1	2	3	4	5
Ability to explain Department decision	1	2	3	4	5

13. The next two questions are for classification purposes only. Do you own or rent the home in which you live now?

- Own Rent Other

14. What is your home zip code? ___ ___ ___ ___ ___

15. Would you like someone from Seattle Department of Transportation to contact you to follow up on your questions or suggestions?

- Yes No

16. As part of our efforts to better serve you, Seattle Department of Transportation may conduct additional research.

May we contact you again? Yes No

17. If Yes to either question 15 or 16, please provide the following contact information:

Name _____

Street _____ Zip code ___ ___ ___ ___ ___

Daytime phone (___ ___ ___) ___ ___ ___ - ___ ___ ___ email address _____

18. In your opinion, what are the most important things that Seattle Department of Transportation should do during the next two years? Please include additional sheets as necessary and staple them to this questionnaire before mailing.

Thanks for your helpful input. Please fold this so it is addressed to Seattle Department of Transportation and return it by July 7. I would like to keep in touch. If you have any questions or comments, please email me at seattledot@seattle.gov or call me at 206-684-5000.

Grace Crunican, Director, Seattle Department of Transportation

Appendix B

Survey Methods

Survey Methods

During the week of June 23, 2003, questionnaires were mailed to 6,000 residents of the City of Seattle asking them to complete and return the questionnaires to SDOT by July 7, 2003. By July 15, 861 residents returned completed questionnaires through the U.S. mail. In addition, 40 people completed the survey on line, and 78 questionnaires were returned between July 16 and August 21, 2003, when this report was prepared. Thus, the overall response rate to the survey was 16 percent (979 of 6,000). However, this report is based on the responses of the 861 questionnaires returned by July 15, or 14 percent of the questionnaires mailed.

In order to ensure that all respondents were customers of SDOT and residents of Seattle, questionnaires were mailed to a random sample of Seattle residents who voted in three of the four elections in the last two years (primary and general elections, 2001 and 2002). The survey respondents represented communities throughout the city, as does the population of residents who voted in three of four elections in the last two years. Most respondents owned their own home. Respondents' home ownership and the area of Seattle in which they live are summarized in the following table. Totals do not add to 100 percent in this table because some residents did not answer the questions.

Respondents' Home Ownership and Area of Residence

<i>Base</i>	<i>861</i>
Home ownership	
Own	81%
Rent	16%
Other	1%
Area of Residence	
North of the Ship Canal	44%
Ship Canal south to South Charlestown Street (including downtown Seattle)	32%
South of South Charlestown Street, West Seattle, South Seattle	23%

The questionnaire used in the survey was designed to address customers' familiarity with SDOT, satisfaction with the work and services provided by SDOT, priorities for SDOT programs, and customers' experiences when contacting SDOT.

If the survey respondents comprised a random sample of all residents in Seattle, a sample size of 861 would be sufficient to ensure a maximum margin of error of ± 3.3 percent (95% confidence level, $p < .05$). The sample of residents to whom questionnaires were mailed was a random sample of voter/residents; however, the residents who participated in the survey may differ from those who did not. Thus, the margin of error may vary from ± 3.3 percent.