

Pine Harbour Ferry

Weekend trial Report

September 2022

Auckland Transport trialled weekend ferry services between Pine Harbour and Downtown from 19 March to 25 April 2022.



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Executive summary

From 19 March to 25 April 2022, Auckland Transport (AT) undertook a six-week trial of weekend ferry services between Pine Harbour and Downtown. Depending on the success of the trial, AT would investigate the introduction of a permanent weekend service.

The trial was important to not only gauge community interest in a weekend service, but also for AT and SeaLink to also test the operational viability of the proposed timetable.

The trial was successful and a permanent weekend ferry service for Pine Harbour will be introduced this summer.

Outcomes

Even considering the impacts of COVID-19 during the trial period and the added incentive of 50% fares during the last 4 weeks of the trial, patronage has shown that there is sufficient support for Pine Harbour ferry services on weekends.

As a result of the success of the trial, a permanent weekend service will be introduced as soon as possible over the summer period.

AT is now working with Sealink Pine Harbour Limited, the ferry operator, to design a customer friendly and sustainable timetable for weekend ferry sailings.

The next step to look at providing a connecting bus service at Pine Harbour when funding and resources allow.

About the trial

Funding was secured to undertake the trial in order to learn important lessons before a permanent service could be offered. This trial was possible due to the co-operation of Sealink Pine Harbour Limited, funding from Auckland Transport/Auckland Council, and Waka Kotahi.

The trial was held on 15 days over 6 weekends from 19 March to 25 April. It involved 170 ferry sailings between Pine Harbour and Downtown. Services ran on Saturdays and Sundays as well as the public holidays on Good Friday, Easter Monday and Anzac Day. It operated on these days: 19, 20, 26, 27 March and 2, 3, 9, 10, 15, 16, 17, 18, 23, 24, 25 April.

This time was chosen because it was over some holiday weekends, it caught the last of the warm weather before winter and was at the tail end of COVID lockdowns, although COVID concerns were still present.

At the time of the trial, the continued impacts of COVID-19 were impacting public confidence and patronage across the Auckland public transport network. Retail businesses across the city centre continued to be impacted by the impacts of COVID-19 which contributed to reducing the incentive to visit the city centre. This created lower than normal expectations for passenger numbers and targets of success were adjusted accordingly.

The trial was promoted by AT and heavily by the Franklin Local Board and Beachlands, Maraetai and Whitford groups.

Communication about the trial clearly stated that the purpose was to gauge the demand for a weekend service. It was understood that patronage could be higher for the trial than for a permanent service due to the desire of the local community to show support for it.

The total number of passenger trips taken during the trial was 5867.

	Normal weekdays	Weekend trial
Return trips per day	22 (24 on Fridays)	6
Average passenger journeys per day	339	262
Average customers per ferry	8	22

A successful trial would have expected to see equivalent patronage to similar ferry routes such as the Hobsonville Point & Beach Haven ferry on weekends.

	Pine Harbour weekend ferry	Hobsonville Point & Beach Haven weekend ferry
Number of days in trial period	15	15
Return trips per day	6	8 on Sat, 7 on Sun and public hols
Total number of passenger journeys over the trial period	5867	4248
Average passenger journeys per day	391	283
Average customers per return ferry	64	38

During the trial half price fares were introduced on 1 April 2022. The AT HOP Adult single trip fare reduced from \$10.44 to \$5.22.

Normal fare conditions applied:

- Normal HOP fares and concessions applied including SuperGold concessions and free child weekend fares on all trips.
- Pine Harbour monthly AT HOP pass could be used on the service for no additional cost.
- Cash tickets could be purchased from ticket machines at the terminal or on board the ferry.

Timetable for Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays during the trial:

Departs Pine Harbour	Departs Downtown Ferry Terminal in the city centre
09.50	10.30
11.40	12.20
14.20	15.00
16.20	17.00
18.00	18.40
20.30	21.10

AT HOP data (excludes those travelling on a paper ticket) showed 995 (36%) of customers were taking the Pine Harbour ferry for the first time during the trial period (352 on new HOP cards) and 706 (71%) of those were on the weekend service, so the weekend ferry service was a key driver of new patronage.

Outcomes Sought from the trial

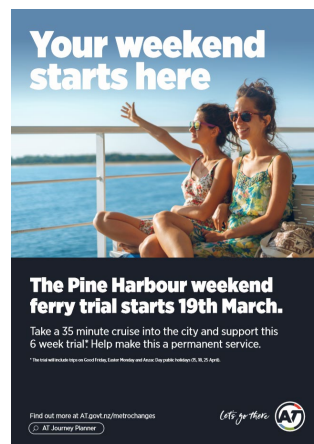
1. Enable customers to take this great chance to make a relaxing weekend trip and avoid traffic hassles both for local Beachlands residents and those located in the city.
2. Success will be based on several factors including
 - Patronage – both actual numbers and as a % of midweek totals
 - Ability to continue to run reliable weekday service
 - Customer satisfaction / feedback from customers
 - Operational impacts being kept to a minimum from other weekend marina traffic.

Promotion

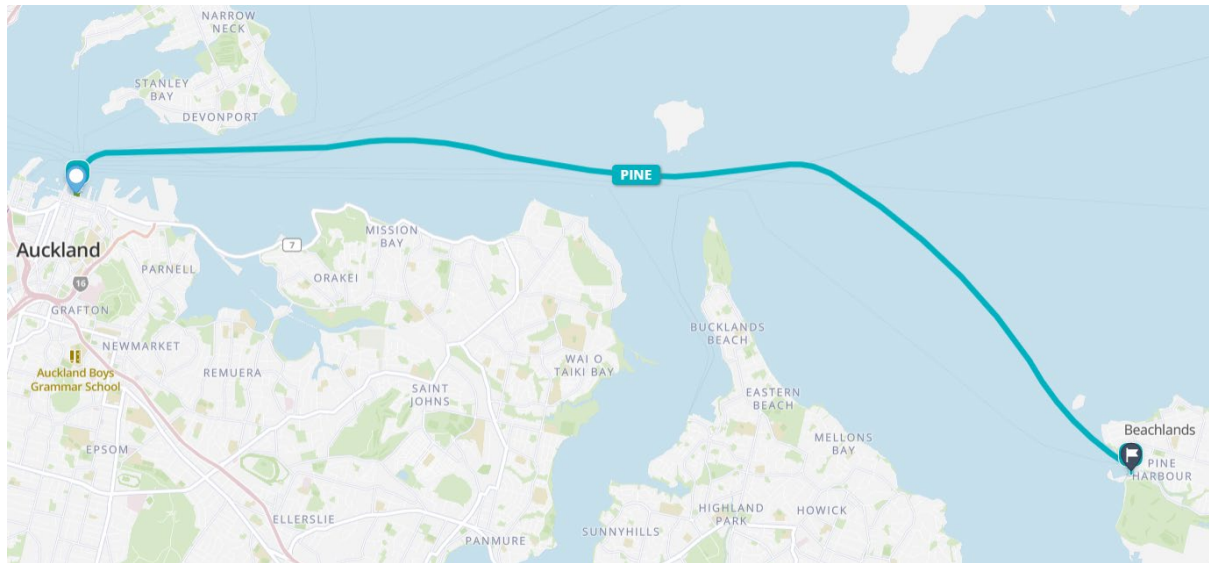
The trial was heavily promoted with great effectiveness by local board members and in local Facebook sites.

In addition, AT carried out the following:

- 6,000 flyers delivered to letterboxes in Beach Haven, Pine Harbour, Maraetai
- Posters on ferries and at ferry terminals
- AT, ferry operator communication channels
- Advertising in the Pohutakawa Coast Times (before and during the promotion. Dates TBC)
- Digital advertising targeting wider Whitford, Beach Haven, Pine Harbour, Maraetai area (estimated 200,000 impressions TBC)
- Organic social media promotion
- AT website.



Background



Why did we want to test the support and viability of weekend ferry services?

Pine Harbour serves the communities of Beachlands, Maraetai, Whitford and the surrounding rural district. There is a well-established and patronised weekday ferry service but no weekend services. A bus option to the Auckland city centre involves a connection from Botany and takes longer than the 35 minute ferry ride.

Requests from existing midweek commuters and the Franklin Local Board, along with the growing number of residents in the area, prompted Auckland Transport (AT) to test the demand for weekend ferry services between Pine Harbour and the city centre.

A weekend service would allow people from the Maraetai, Beachlands, and Pine Harbour areas the option to use public transport to visit the city centre (and beyond) - instead of driving to the city centre or taking an extended bus ride. They would be able to enjoy a faster, easier and more direct journey to the city centre by ferry. This will also allow Pine Harbour to become a destination for people wanting to visit the area from the greater Auckland area.

The ferry used in the trial was operated by SeaLink using vessels with a capacity for 99 seated passengers and a maximum of six bikes.

The decision-making process

When reviewing the success of the services the decision-making process includes many inputs. The information that was collected during trial is one component of the decision-making process. Feedback from the community is taken into consideration along with the available funding, practical constraints, relevant policies and other political and technical constraints. All inputs are considered by the project team and will be considered when making decisions.



Results of the trial

The trial was held on 15 days over 6 weekends involving 170 ferry sailings.

The ferry ran on Saturdays and Sundays as well as the public holidays on Good Friday, Easter Monday and Anzac day.

Fares were reduced by 50% on all but the first 2 weekends.

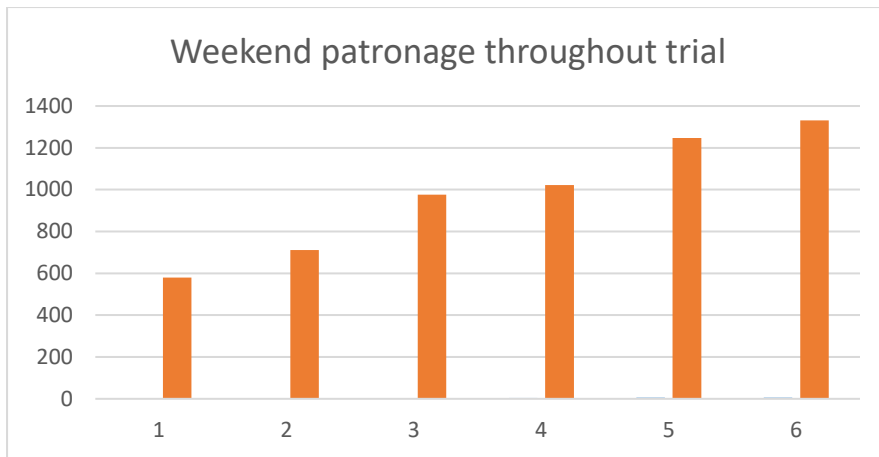
- **Total passenger trips = 5867**
- Pine Harbour to Downtown = 2921
- Downtown to Pine Harbour = 2946

The service proved to be so popular that some trips had to turn people away because there was no space available on the ferry.

Patronage

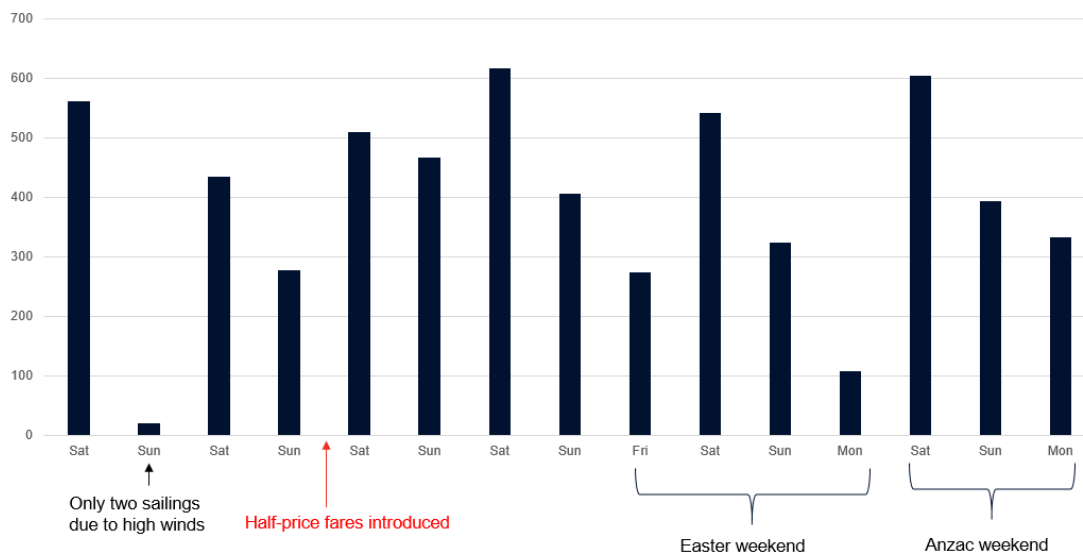
Patronage grew each week.

	passengers
Weekend 1	580
Weekend 2	711
Weekend 3	976
Weekend 4	1022
Weekend 5 (4 days)	1247
Weekend 6 (3 days)	1331



Daily patronage throughout trial

Sat	19/03/2022	560
Sun	20/03/2022	20
Sat	26/03/2022	434
Sun	27/03/2022	277
Sat	2/04/2022	509
Sun	3/04/2022	467
Sat	9/04/2022	617
Sun	10/04/2022	405
Fri	15/04/2022	274
Sat	16/04/2022	541
Sun	17/04/2022	324
Mon	18/04/2022	108
Sat	23/04/2022	604
Sun	24/04/2022	394
Mon	25/04/2022	333

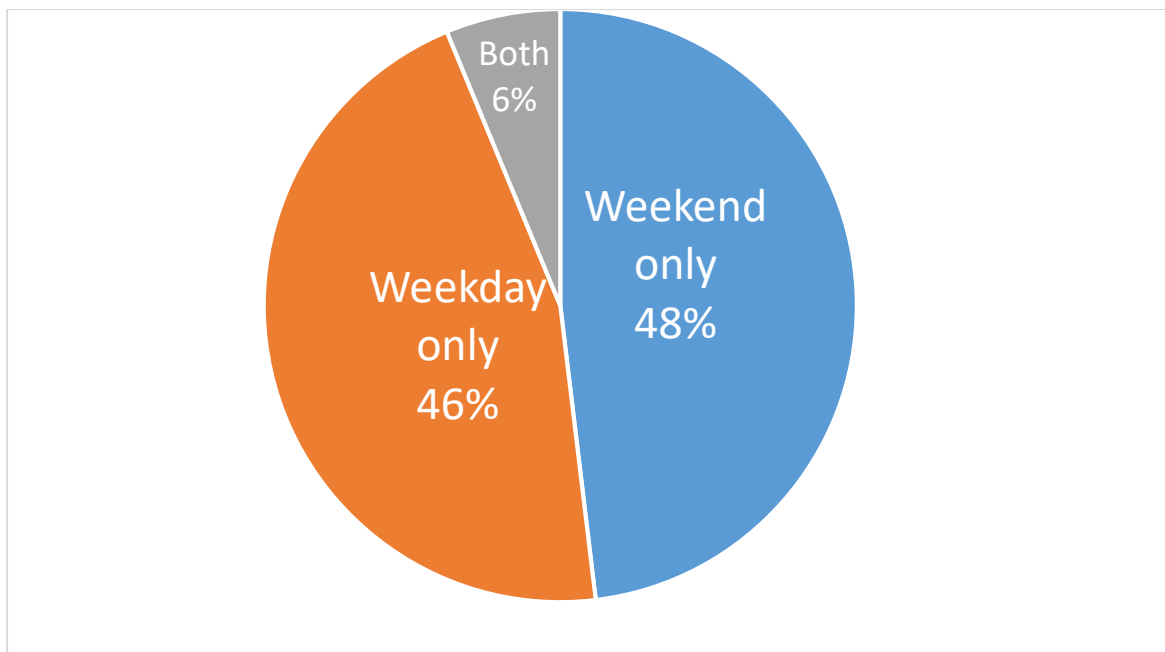


On the first Sunday of the trial all trips were cancelled except for the first one in each direction due to high winds and adverse weather conditions.

There were 25 more journeys taken to Pine Harbour than from Pine Harbour.

Daily trips – HOP card data (excludes paper ticket sales)

- 2,794 unique customers took the Pine Harbour ferry on weekdays and weekends between 19 March to 25 April 2022
- 1,743 unique customers used the new weekend ferry service.
- 995 (36%) of customers were taking the Pine Harbour ferry for the first time during the trial period (352 on new HOP cards)
- 706 (71%) of those were on the weekend service, so the weekend ferry service was a key driver of new patronage.
- 64% of weekend trips were on a Saturday.
- The Pine Harbour ferry service has 22 return trips (24 on Fridays) on weekdays compared to only 6 per day on the weekend trial.

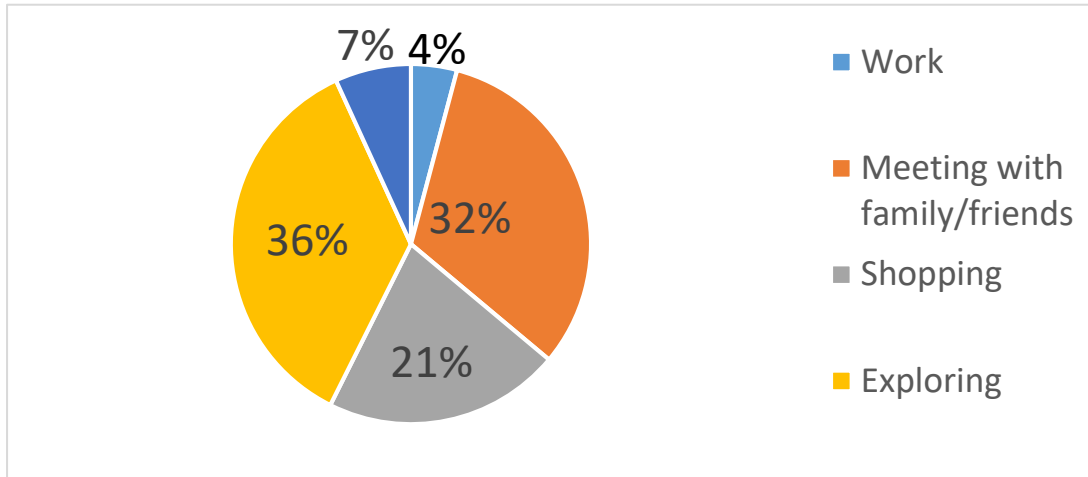


Survey

We undertook a survey of weekend ferry passengers during the trial. The survey ran from 15 April to 1 May 2022. The survey was intended to be answered by passengers on the ferry but the link was distributed to a wider audience which wasn't a bad thing but it meant that some of the questions "what is the purpose of your trip today", "Where are you heading on this trip" resulted in questions that generated general, rather than specific, answers.

Total responses: 416

What is the purpose of your trip today?



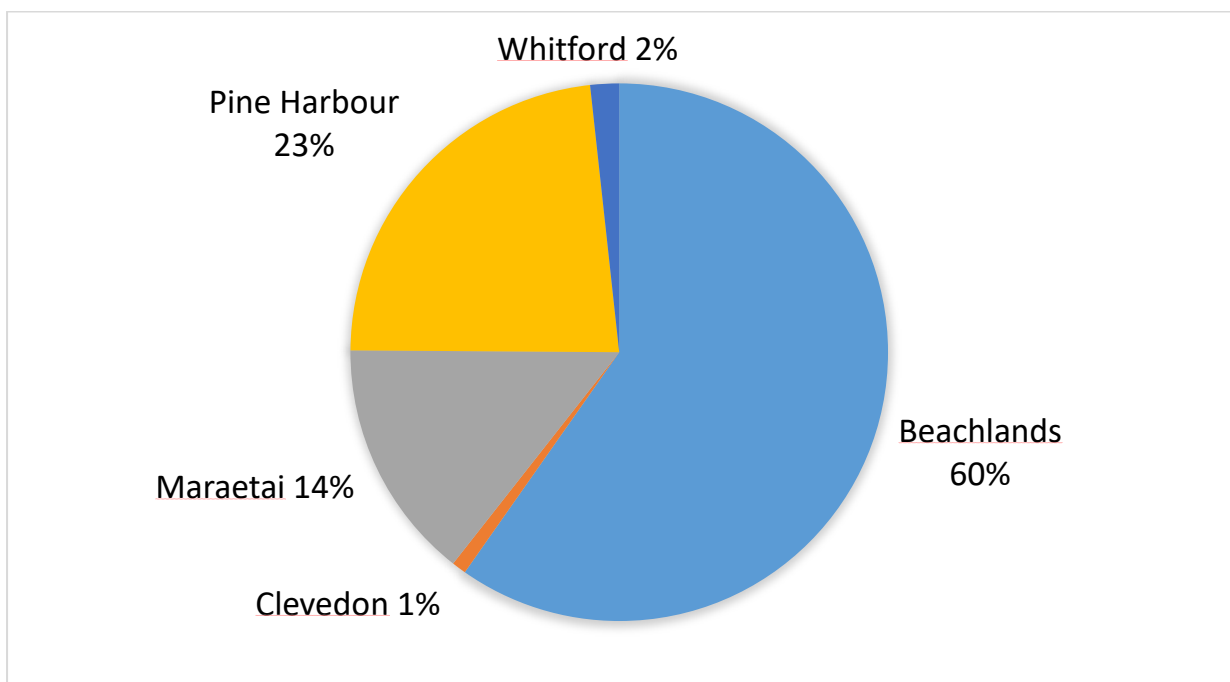
Some responses to "Other"

- "Swimming pool with kids"
- "Lunch, Waiheke, Devonport"
- "Game at Eden Park"
- "See a sporting event as well as some shopping and exploring beforehand"

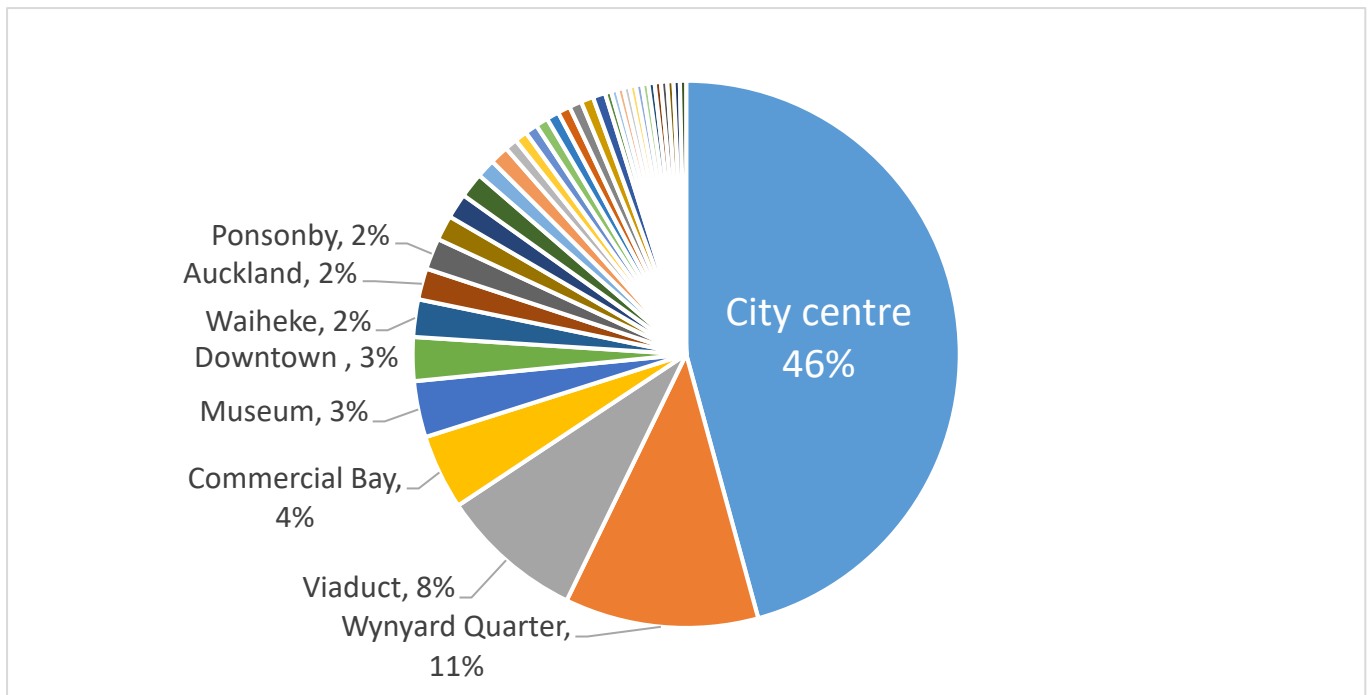
Are you taking a one-way or a return trip on the ferry today?

96% were return trips

Origins and destinations: Pine Harbour side

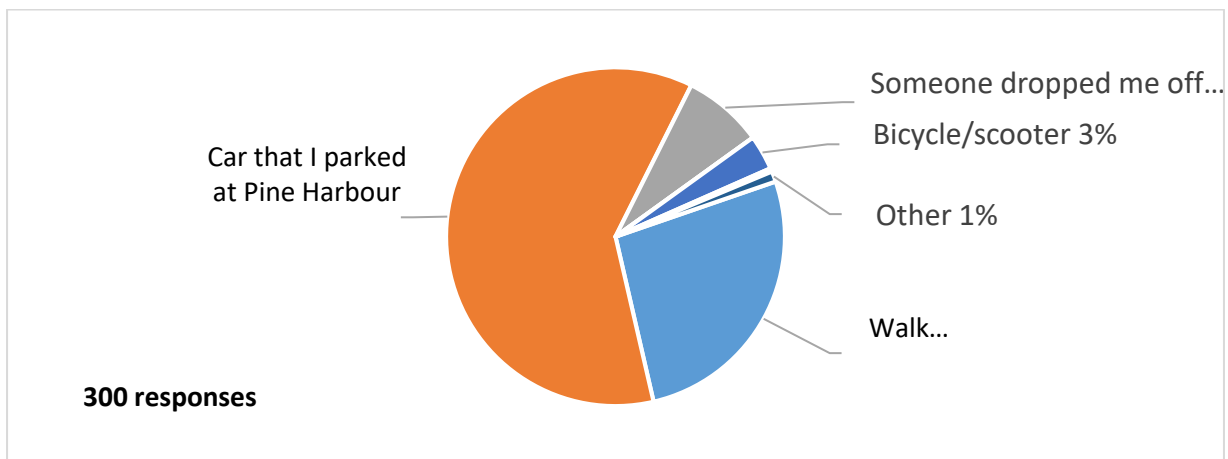


Origins and destinations: Downtown side

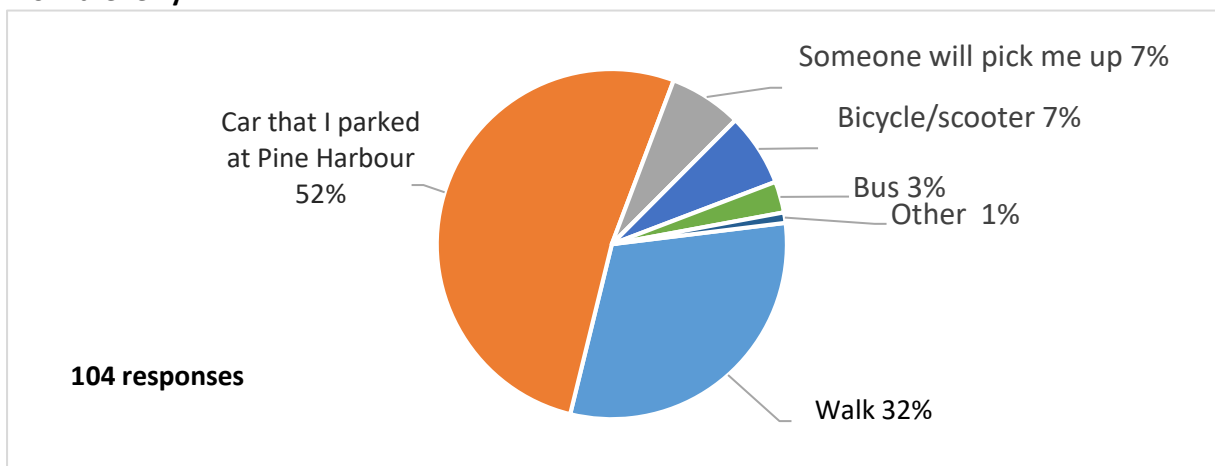


How people are getting to and from the ferry at Pine Harbour:

To the ferry:

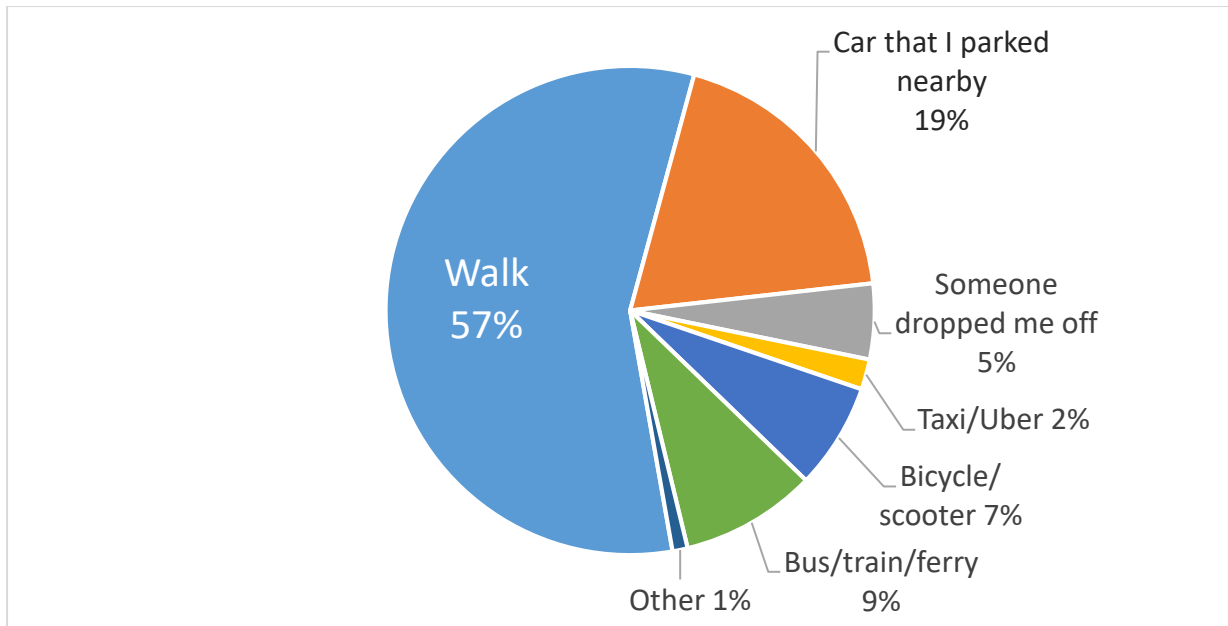


From the ferry:

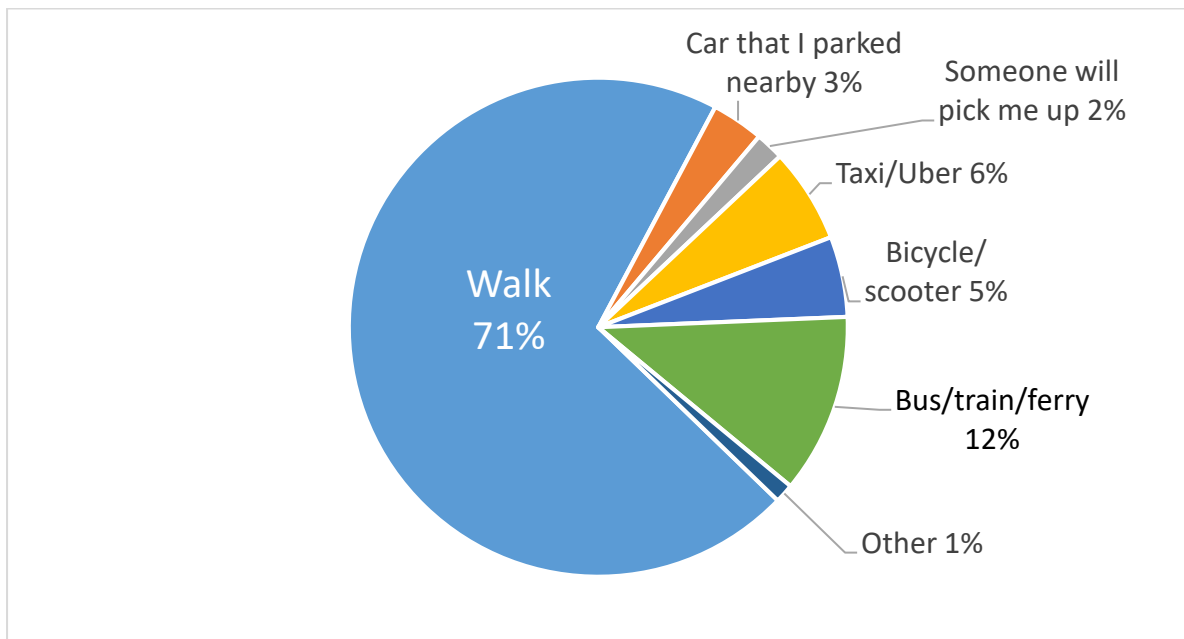


How people are getting to and from the ferry at Downtown:

To the ferry:



From the ferry:



Does the weekend ferry timetable meet your needs?

- Yes – 86%
- No – 14%

Why did you give the answer above?

“It provides me the opportunity to use the ferry from my town to the city on the weekends. The ability to use public transport on weekend is great.”

“For the most part it is perfect but late night ferry on Saturdays as well as Fridays would be handy to add!”

“It’s awesome!! So helpful and easy to get into town, lots of times available. Would use this a lot if it was permanent”

“Need some more options, particularly in the morning going to the city.”

“Might need more ferries in the afternoon to get back. Also would be nice to see a later ferry for Saturday night, like there is on Friday.”

“It is faster, cheaper and easier than ubers/driving. Suitable ferry times.”

Has the 50% fare reduction influenced your decision to ride on the ferry?

- No – 39%
- Partially – 31%
- Yes – 30%

Other comments

- *“It is perfect as I work weekend days in the city as well as go to town almost every weekend for drinks or dinner with friends. This ensure I have a safe way home and I will hopefully be able to continuously use this weekly if it should stay as a normal schedule”*
- *“Fantastic way to visit the city without traffic and parking problems. Very relaxing too. Keep it going!”*
- *“Would be great to have it available at the weekends all the time or even just seasonal say, November to Anzac day”*
- *“We love this easy access to the city”*