

# COVID-19 FOOD NEEDS IN TRAVIS COUNTY 2-1-1 CALL ANALYSIS SUMMARY REPORT

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2020

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# INTRODUCTION AND FINDINGS

## Introduction

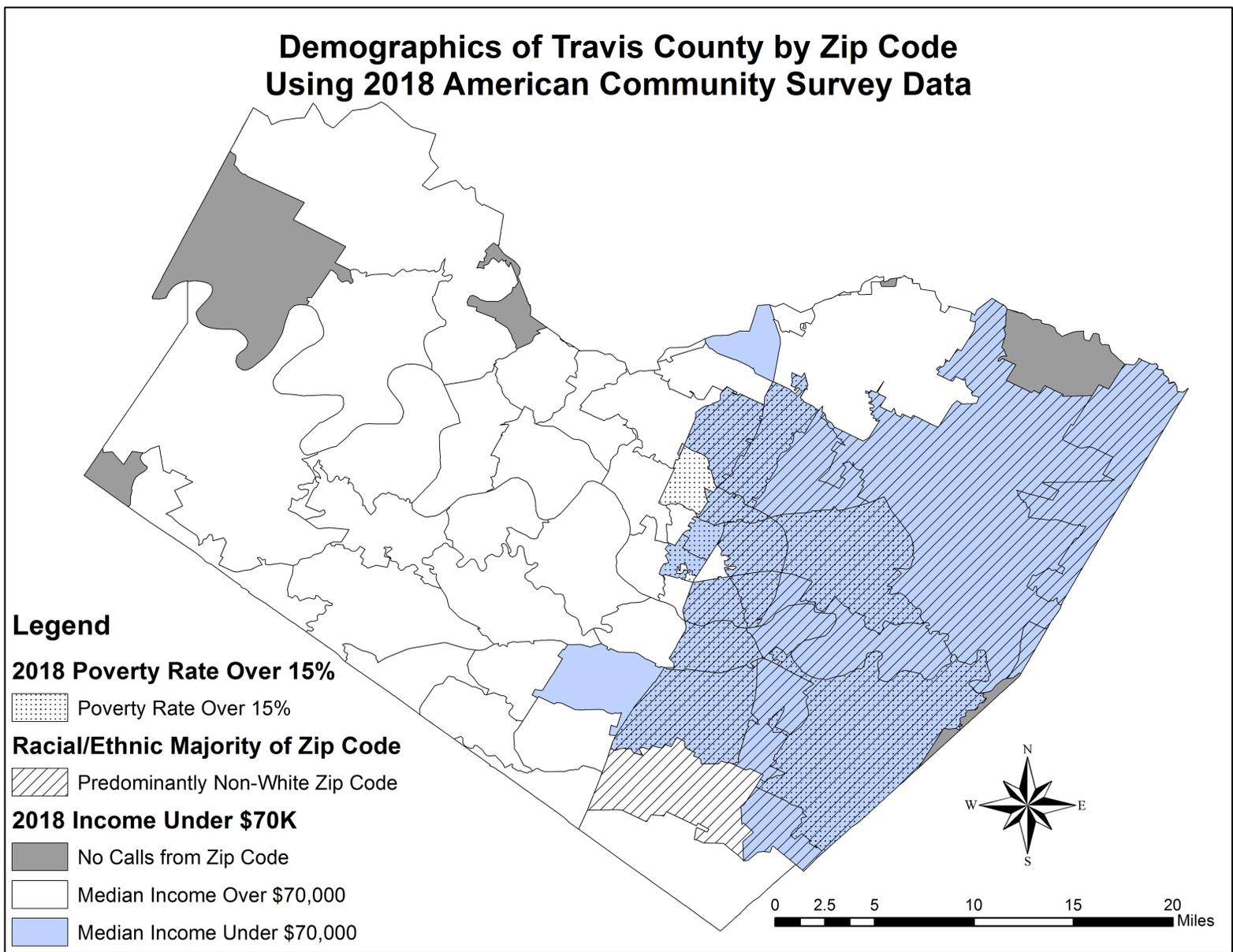
In early April 2020, the City of Austin Office of Sustainability reached out to Dell Medical School and UTHealth School of Public Health in Austin for assistance in identifying areas where there are unmet food needs in Austin pertaining to COVID-19. The team from the UTHealth School of Public Health analyzed 2-1-1 call data from January-August 2019 and January-August 2020 and performed geospatial analyses with 2-1-1 call data and access to food need assets to identify areas with unmet food needs related to COVID-19 in Travis County that was presented in previous reports. This work expands on those reports and discusses September 2020 data and analyzes October 2020 data. Through these analyses we were able to gain greater understanding of food needs among 2-1-1 callers from Travis County as well as identify areas with high volume and percentage of food need calls with limited access to food assets.

## Demographics of Callers

According to the 2019 2-1-1 Trends Report from the United Way for Greater Austin, a typical caller to 2-1-1 are single mothers who are having issues with economic and food insecurity factors. The findings of from our 2020 analysis validated these findings, in that callers to 2-1-1 are most commonly women, primarily speak English or Spanish, and have called 2-1-1 previously (but there was an increase in first time users in April 2020). There is higher call volume to 2-1-1 in the Eastern Crescent of Travis County. Many of the zip codes that make up the Eastern Crescent of Travis County have higher poverty rates, have a lower median income, and are predominantly racial/ethnic minority, according to 2018 American Community Survey data as shown in **Figure 1**.

# FINDINGS

Figure 1: Demographics of Travis County by Zip Code Using 2018 American Community Survey Data



# FINDINGS

## Summary of September 2-1-1 Call and Connect ATX.org Data

Due to maintenance and disruptions to the 2-1-1 line by Texas Health and Human Service Commission (HHSC), September 2-1-1 data was not representative to total call volume from Travis County, and thus not included in this report. However, while the raw numbers are not exact, the proportion of food need related calls in September 2020 (over 34%) from Travis County were higher than the proportion of food need calls in September 2019 (23%), demonstrating that there are still greater reported food needs to 2-1-1 in Travis County in 2020 than in 2019 due to COVID-19. Additionally, while there was some website maintenance to ConnectATX.org, over a third of all page visits were regarding food-related topics (i.e., SNAP, food pantries, curbside meals, food delivery, etc.).

## Overall and Food Need 2-1-1 Call Trends

In order to contextualize the seasonality and trends of 2-1-1 call data, we compared January-August, and October 2019 call data to January-August, and October 2020 call data. Typically call volume is high in January, then fluctuates to peak in July and reduces slightly through October, as evident in the 2019 data. However, the following occurred in October 2020:

- Increased overall call volume in October 2020 than in 2019 (6588 vs. 6349 calls).
- Overall call volume increased from August (6014) to October (6588) 2020.
- There was over 1.79 times the food need call volume in October 2020 than in 2019 (2751 vs. 1541 calls), which was driven by large SNAP transfer call volume to HHSC.
- Food need call volume in October was the highest we have seen since May 2020.
- The majority of calls to 2-1-1 in October 2020 were regarding food, housing, and health/mental health issues, which is consistent from March-August 2020.
- ConnectATX.org had 1715 total page visits in October 2020, and over a third of all page visits were regarding food need topics (i.e., SNAP, food pantries, etc.)

# FINDINGS

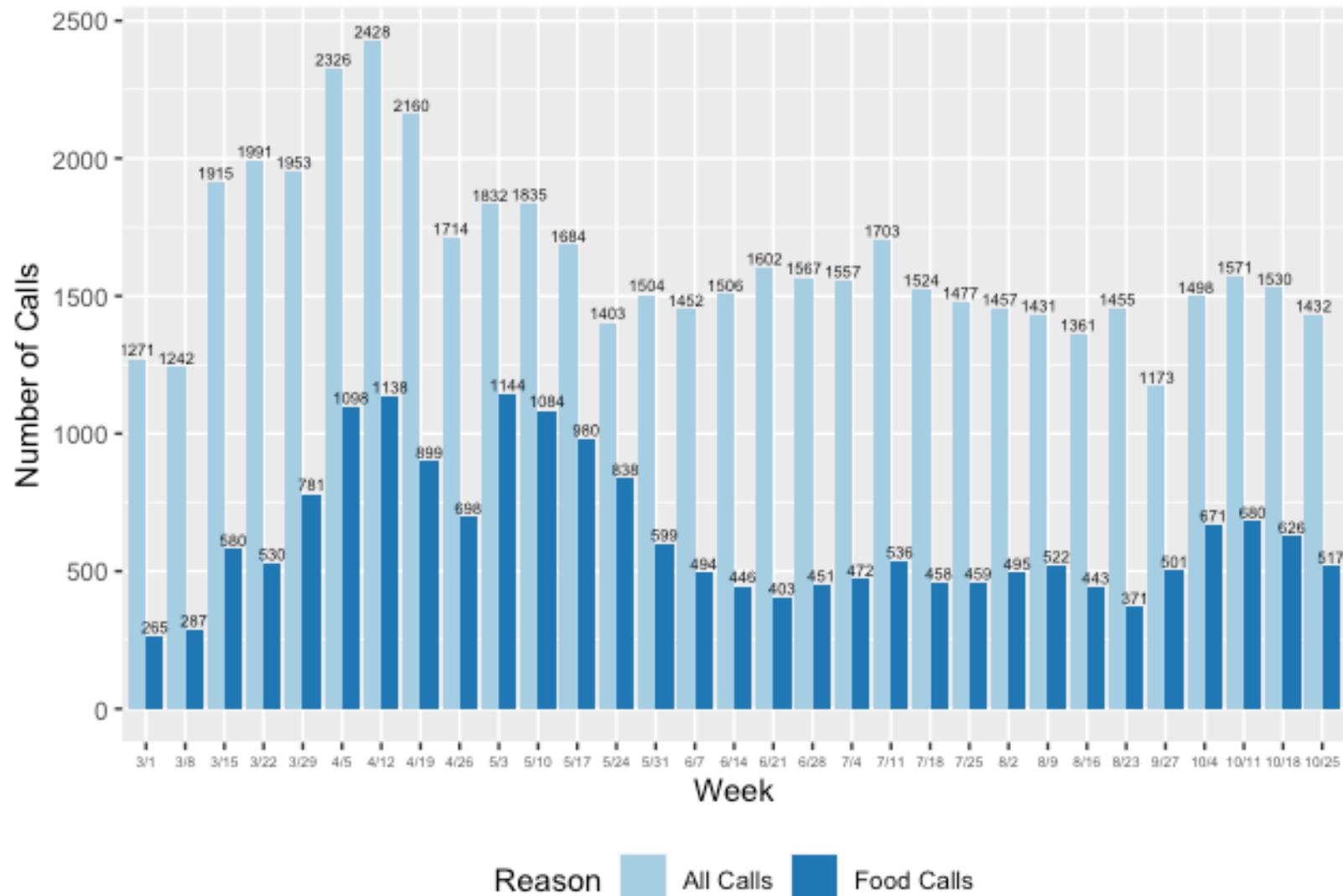
## Overall and Food Need 2-1-1 Call Trends Continued

When analyzing by week as seen in **Figure 2** of note:

- For a detailed discussion of the call trends for March-August 2020, please see the previously developed reports.
- Overall call volume increased during the first three weeks of October and declined slightly during the last two weeks in October 2020
- Additionally, overall call volume weekly numbers in October were similar to what was observed in July and August 2020.
- Food need call volume also increased during the first two weeks of October and was higher during the third week of October and declined slightly during the last two weeks of October.
- October had the highest weekly food need call volume we have seen since late May 2020.
- Overall and food need call volume in October 2020 was higher than what was observed in early March 2020, signifying that overall and food need call volume has been consistently been higher than pre-pandemic levels.
- Additional analysis of November 2020 data could help shed light on how food needs are being experienced by Travis County residents during the continued COVID-19 pandemic.

# FINDINGS

Figure 2: Overall and Food Need 2-1-1 Calls in Travis County from March-August 2020 by Week



# FINDINGS

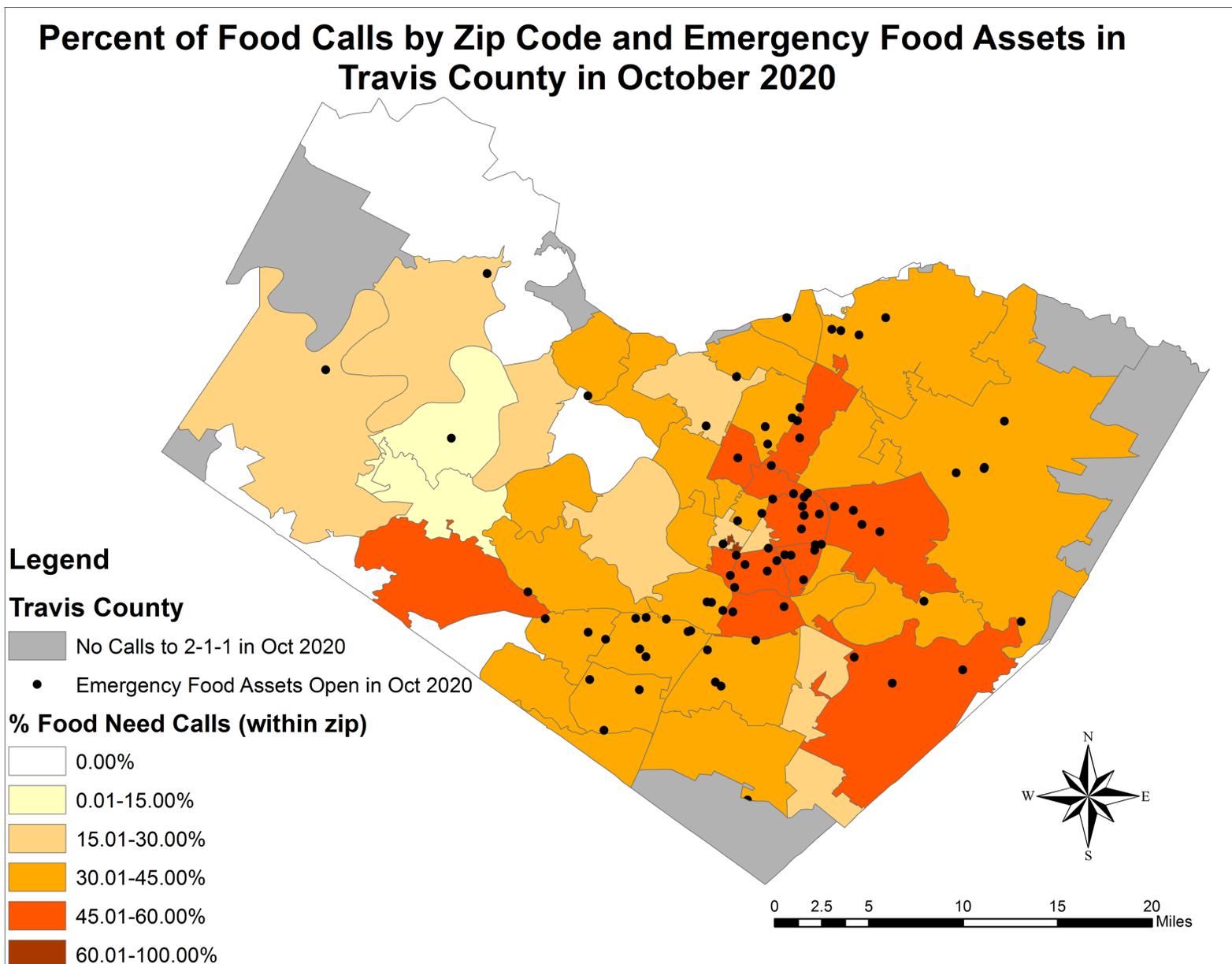
## Spatial Examination of Food Need 2-1-1 Calls – October 2020

Spatial analysis of the 2-1-1 overall and food call data for Travis County required translating the 2-1-1 call data from October 2020 to be mapped by zip code and including locations of COVID-19 food assets that were listed on ConnectATX.org that were located in Travis County and open during the respective month. With this analysis there were several key trends:

- The majority of callers to 2-1-1 (overall and for food needs) were from zip codes located in the Eastern Crescent of Travis County.
- Areas with the highest proportion of their calls regarding food needs in October and locations of COVID-19 food assets are shown in **Figure 3**.
- There were more zip codes from Travis County that had residents who called 2-1-1 in October than in August 2020
- There was an increase in the number of zip codes that had over 30% of the calls to 2-1-1 were regarding food needs in from August (54.10%) to October (68.33%), however this was still a lower percentage than May 2020 (78.57%).
- There are pockets throughout Travis County that do not have COVID-19 food assets located within the zip code. These pockets located within the Eastern Crescent are particularly alarming given the high call volume to 2-1-1 and the historically underserved communities in these areas.
- This large increase in the number of zip codes that had over 30% of the calls to 2-1-1 regarding food needs demonstrates that food needs are still a consistent issue for Travis County residents during the COVID-19 pandemic.

# FINDINGS

Figure 3: Percent of Food Need Calls to 2-1-1 by Zip Code and COVID-19 Food Needs Assets in Travis County in October 2020



# CONCLUSION

## Conclusion and Recommendations

Given our analysis, zip codes with potential unmet food needs have been identified. Consistent with previous reports, there are a couple of key zip codes of interest as areas with unmet food needs, specifically: 78754 and potentially 78757. Zip code 78754 is located in the Eastern Crescent and had one of the top 20 highest overall and food need call volume to 2-1-1 from March through August and October 2020, and there are COVID-19 food assets only located in neighboring and not within the zip code as of October 2020. Also, while there is one emergency food asset that was open in the 78757 zip code, due to their high food need call volume, and the increase in the proportion of food need calls in October 2020, future analysis and work should be conducted to determine if this region needs additional emergency food resources in order to meet unmet food needs. Additionally, due to the increase in the proportion of food need calls, zip codes that consistently have high proportion of food need calls and high food call volume should be closely monitored in future analyses.

While there are other zip codes with a high proportion of food needs calls within zip code outside of the Eastern Crescent of Travis County, these areas have a small total call volume, thus future analysis should be conducted to further examine these trends. Furthermore, the greatest call volume of food needs calls to 2-1-1 exists in other zip codes in the Eastern Crescent that do have food needs assets located within the zip code. These resources should not be shifted or removed given the high need in these areas. Continued analysis of 2-1-1 call data for November 2020 can help further identify call trends and areas with unmet food needs and can help elucidate whether these findings for October 2020 demonstrate the continuing and sustained need of food needs during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**For Additional Questions, Please Contact Kathryn Janda at  
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