

Chapter 4

Transit



Chapter 4 – Transit

Public transit plays an important role in the transportation system by providing an option for people to travel without an automobile. There are several reasons a person may use public transit. Some people use transit out of necessity due to not having a driver’s license, lack of access to an automobile, or a disability that prevents them from driving. Others use transit as a lifestyle choice because it may be less expensive, convenient, or they lack driving experience.

Iowa has a network of urban, small urban, and rural transportation systems that provide transit service throughout the state. In the RTA, public transit service is provided by the Iowa Northland Regional Transit Commission (RTC) which is housed under the umbrella of INRCOG. The service covers the six-county region outside of the Waterloo/Cedar Falls metropolitan area where public transit is provided by the Metropolitan Transit Authority (MET).

State Transit Plan

In 2020, the Iowa DOT adopted the *Iowa Public Transit 2050 Long Range Plan*. While the Iowa DOT has conducted specific planning efforts – Iowa Statewide Passenger Transportation Funding Study, Iowa Park and Ride System Plan – this Plan looks at the public transit system from a broader point of view. The Plan seeks to coordinate planning, programming, and technical assistance statewide to support transit operations at the local level. The goal is to provide specific strategies and improvements that can be implemented and revisited over time.



This Plan serves as a guide to assist the Iowa DOT in making informed public transit decisions for the state. The strategies and action items within the plan serve as the starting points for the implementation phase of the planning process. The transit plan will also be updated every five years to stay current with trends, forecasts, and factors that influence decision-making.

www.iowadot.gov/iowainmotion/Modal-Plans/Public-Transit-Plan

Transit Planning

Transit planning has long been a function of the RTA and INRCOG. RTC’s Director of Transit is a member of the RTA Technical Committee. Additionally, RTC projects and services are included in the RTA Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). RTC, INRCOG, and MET Transit have a history of coordination. MET Transit provides service to Waterloo and Cedar Falls. Between RTC and MET Transit, the entirety of the six-county region has access to public transit service.

In 2005, the federal transportation bill, SAFETEA-LU, mandated a joint planning process between human service agencies and passenger transportation agencies. This process is intended to improve coordination between these agencies and result in better passenger transportation options for the public. This process is now reflected in the Passenger Transportation Plan (PTP).

The PTP is a joint document between the RTA and its metropolitan counterpart the Black Hawk County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). The PTP includes the following information:

- An inventory of existing passenger transportation services in the region
- Information about service, management, fleet, and facility needs
- Potential investment strategies for meeting those needs
- Funding opportunities

A full update of the document is completed every five years. The most recent PTP update was adopted in 2020 for fiscal years 2021 to 2025.

www.inrcog.org/pdf/PTP_FY_2021-2025_final.pdf

Transit Asset Management Plan

Every transit agency is federally required to develop a transit asset management (TAM) plan if it owns, operates, or manages capital assets used to provide public transportation and receives federal financial assistance under 49 USC Chapter 53 as a recipient or subrecipient. TAM plans establish a strategic and systematic process of operating, maintaining, and improving the regional transit capital assets through their entire life cycle. The Iowa DOT is the TAM group plan sponsor for 23 public transit systems in Iowa, including the RTC. The TAM group plan was adopted by the Iowa DOT in September 2018.

The Iowa DOT Public Transit Bureau, through the planning process of the TAM group plan, aims to periodically assess the current condition of capital assets for each group participant, determine the condition and performance of its assets, identify unacceptable risks, and provide guidance and technical assistance to group participants to decide how to best balance and prioritize reasonably anticipated funds towards improving asset condition. The Public Transit Bureau is also responsible for setting annual performance targets on behalf of group plan participants and submitting them to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the National Transit Database.

Transit Advisory Committee (TAC)

The transit planning process and development of the PTP is coordinated through the Transit Advisory Committee. The TAC consists of human service organizations, representatives of local government, transit users, and transportation providers. These entities work cooperatively to recognize current transit shortfalls and identify the potential for new services and coordination possibilities in the region. Since 2006, the TAC has met at least twice a year to discuss passenger transportation and human service agency coordination.

Some needs identified by the TAC over the past several years include the following:

- Providing service to the growing population of older adults
- Installation and maintenance of bus shelters in the metropolitan area
- Educating new populations on bus service, particularly those with limited English proficiency
- Marketing existing services
- Increasing outreach with partnering groups, agencies, and companies



Public Input

Transit Advisory Committee (TAC)

The TAC continues to meet at least twice a year to discuss passenger transportation and human service agency coordination. Between August 1, 2019 and April 30, 2020, four TAC meetings were held. Three of these meetings were focused on the development of the FY 2021-2025 Passenger Transportation Plan. The primary focus of the November 2019 meeting was to review a draft survey for the PTP and finalize the survey questions and methodology. At the January 2020 meeting, the TAC discussed the survey results and identified the goal, objectives, and priorities and strategies for the PTP.

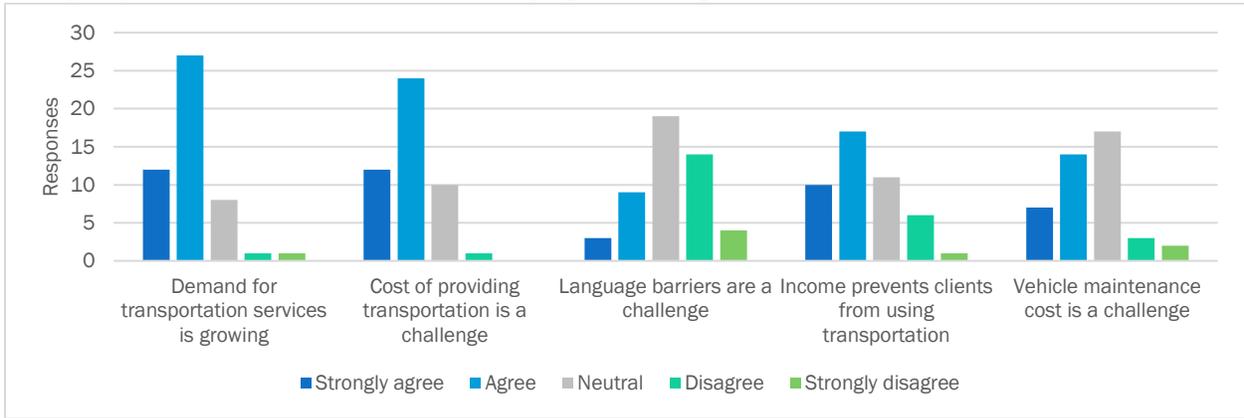
Passenger Transportation Survey

Public input was obtained through a Passenger Transportation Survey that was conducted as part of the development of the FY 2021-2025 Passenger Transportation Plan. The purpose of the survey was to help identify existing transportation services, transportation needs, and opportunities for coordinated services in the Iowa Northland Region, including the Waterloo/Cedar Falls metropolitan area. Survey responses were also utilized to help identify passenger transportation investment priorities and strategies for the next five years.

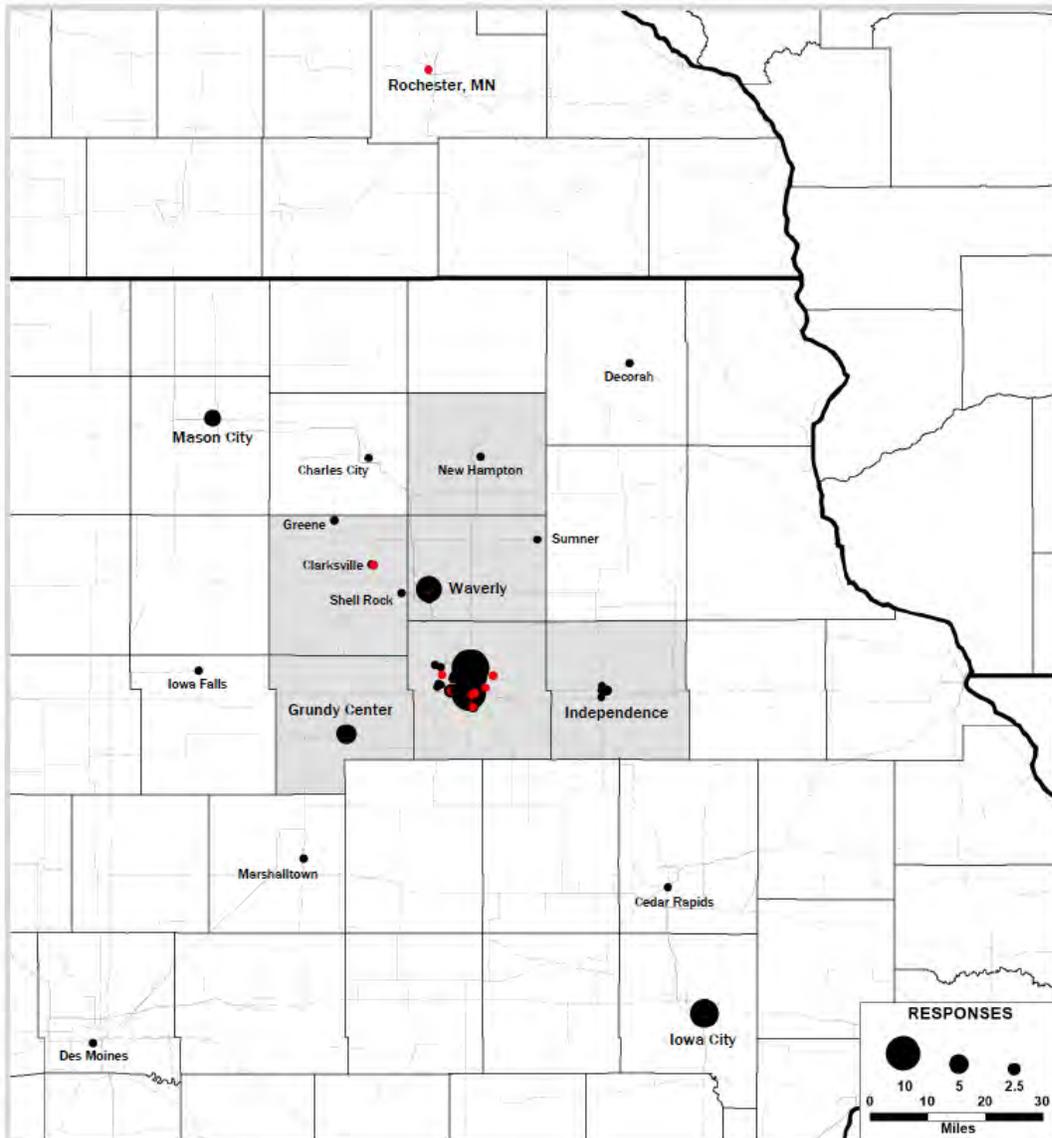
The online survey was distributed to passenger transportation providers and human service agencies in December 2019. The survey consisted of 12 questions as well as several opportunities for written comments. Agencies were also provided the opportunity to complete the survey manually. Agencies were notified of the survey through mailings and email. A total of 50 responses were received. Common needs and coordination issues identified include the following:

- Transportation services are provided most often Monday through Friday from 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
- Clients want to use transportation services, but currently cannot, during the weekends, mostly from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
- Waverly and Grundy Center are the top two destination cities outside of the Black Hawk County metropolitan area.
- The top seven most frequently traveled to destinations are all hospitals/mental health facilities; #3 is the University Hospitals and Clinics in Iowa City.
- The top two destinations clients would like to travel to, but currently cannot, are the University Hospitals in Iowa City, and Pathways Behavioral Services in Waterloo.
- The Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota was identified as both a current destination and a desired destination.
- 81 percent of respondents agree that the demand for transportation services is growing at their agency.
- 78 percent of respondents agree that the cost of providing transportation services is becoming increasingly challenging.
- 61 percent of respondents agree that their clients' income prevents them from using local transportation services as much as they would like.
- 49 percent of respondents agree that the cost of maintaining their vehicles is becoming increasingly challenging.
- 25 percent of respondents agreed that language barriers are a challenge for many of their clients.
- Limited transportation service availability weekday nights and on the weekends has a negative impact on clients.

Survey respondent's indication on whether they agree or disagree with each statement below:



Destinations Clients Travel To and Would Like to Travel To



2012 Public Input Survey

The 2012 public input survey was conducted to gather input for the 2040 LRTP. A total of 194 responses were received. When asked about the quality of public transit outside of the Waterloo and Cedar Falls metropolitan area, 65 percent of respondents said it was “very poor” or “poor”, and about 18 percent responded “good” or “excellent”. During the previous year, 94 percent of respondents had never used an RTC bus, and 95 percent of respondents had never used a city-to-city bus. When asked their awareness level of RTC, 31 percent of respondents said they do not know what RTC is, and 63 percent responded they are aware of what RTC is but have not utilized the service.

When asked how important expanding passenger transportation service in the region is, nearly 60 percent of respondents said “very important” or “moderately important” while only 11 percent responded “not important”. Among eight different project types overall, “improving public transportation” had the second highest average score, behind only “improving roadway conditions”.

The survey provided opportunities for written comments. Some passenger transportation-related comments include the following:

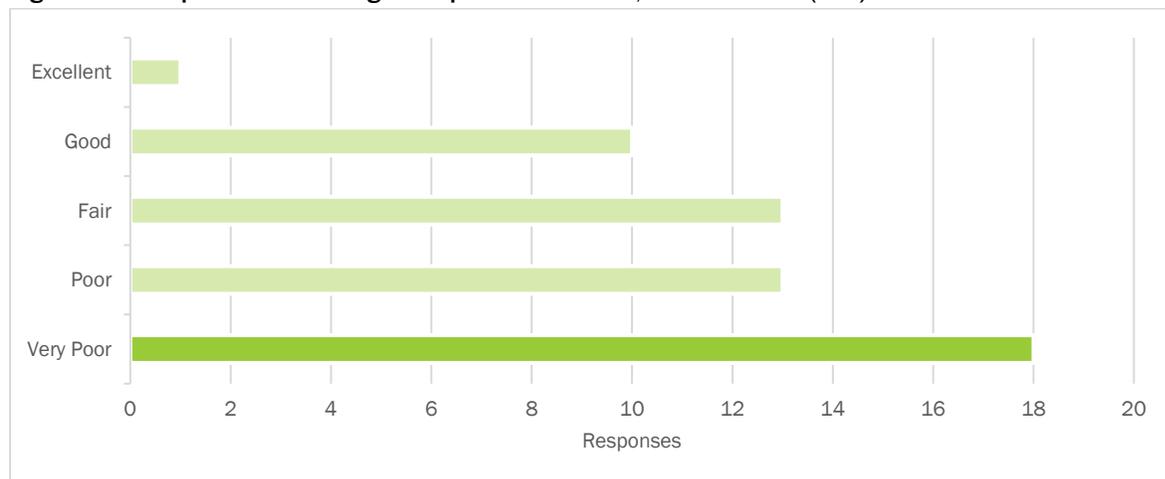
- Need for more in-town (outside of metropolitan area) transit
- Need for easily accessible and affordable transportation from small cities to and from Waterloo, especially hospitals and medical facilities
- Need for additional marketing of RTC
- Improved transportation for medically needy residents, people with disabilities, the elderly, and low-income families
- Need for expanded service hours, especially weekday evenings for second shift
- Simplified electronic schedule of public transportation options posted on a centralized website

2020 Public Input Survey

In September 2020, RTA staff conducted a public input survey to gain input from across the Iowa Northland Region. Surveys were mailed to 1,000 randomly generated households in the region, and 118 were returned.

Respondents were asked how they would rate the infrastructure for five transportation modes. Figure 4.1 shows the total number of responses per rating for public transit. 53 respondents selected “Neutral/No Opinion”.

Figure 4.1: Responses for Rating Transportation Modes, Public Transit (Bus)



Transit Service

The Iowa Northland Region is served by both public and private transportation providers which includes the Regional Transit Commission (RTC), private taxi operators, and intercity bus carriers. Transportation services are also provided by human service agencies throughout the region. The following section provides a summary of services provided by RTC. To see a full list of transportation providers in the region, reference pages 21-35 of the *FY 2021-2025 Passenger Transportation Plan*.

RTC provides open-to-the-public, accessible transit services to the public, seniors, disabled, and low-income persons as a primary means of transportation in the rural areas of the region. RTC is also responsible for coordinating transportation in the region. In addition to providing direct service, RTC subcontracts with Chickasaw County Council on Aging to provide open-to-the-public transit service to regional residents on behalf of RTC.

RTC operates Monday through Friday from 6:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. As a common rule, the service provided is from curb-to-curb; door-to-door service may be provided, if requested. RTC offers demand response service for the entire six county region outside of the Waterloo/Cedar Falls metropolitan area.

RTC operates 19 light duty gasoline buses. RTC switched from diesel to gasoline vehicles over a decade ago due to several issues with diesel vehicles including limited availability, difficulty servicing them, and not always being able to refuel in certain areas of the region. RTC also owns and operates two mini vans and one conversion van. Table 4.1 outlines the fleet of vehicles for RTC.

Table 4.1: RTC Vehicle Inventory as of December 2019

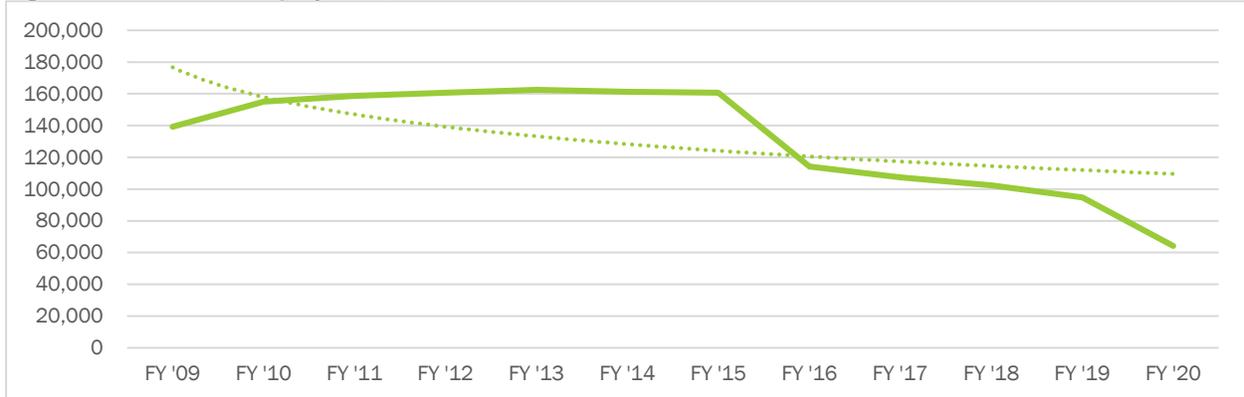
Bus ID	Description	Seats	Lock downs	Date acquired	Purchase price	Condition	Mileage 11/20/19	Over ULB
0901	2009 Ford Eldorado	18	4	7/25/2009	\$56,772	Fair	166,978	Y
0902	2009 Ford Eldorado	18	4	7/25/2009	\$56,772	Fair	176,466	Y
0903	2009 Ford Eldorado	18	4	7/7/2009	\$56,772	Poor	145,905	Y
0904	2009 Ford Eldorado	18	4	8/6/2009	\$56,502	Fair	179,026	Y
0905	2009 Ford Eldorado	18	4	8/31/2009	\$56,502	Fair	176,791	Y
0906	2009 Ford Eldorado	18	4	8/17/2009	\$56,502	Fair	178,962	Y
0907	2009 Ford Eldorado	18	4	8/19/2009	\$56,502	Fair	185,053	Y
0909	2009 Ford Eldorado	18	4	8/7/2009	\$56,502	Good	134,165	Y
0910	2009 Ford Eldorado	18	4	8/10/2009	\$56,502	Fair	171,554	Y
0911	2009 Ford Eldorado	18	4	8/25/2009	\$56,502	Good	137,039	Y
0912	2009 Ford Eldorado	18	4	8/24/2009	\$56,502	Fair	175,363	Y
1001	2011 Ford Eldorado	18	4	10/13/2010	\$56,757	Fair	161,999	Y
1201	2012 Ford Eldorado	18	4	8/1/2012	\$56,757	Good	119,398	Y
1401	2015 Ford Eldorado	18	4	2/24/2015	\$74,385	Very Good	114,828	
1402	2015 Ford Eldorado	18	4	2/24/2015	\$74,385	Very Good	115,586	
1601	2017 Ford Glaval	18	4	4/18/2017	\$83,713	Excellent	68,494	
1701	2017 Dodge Minivan	6	2	9/21/2017	\$42,800	Excellent	29,842	
1702	2017 Dodge Minivan	6	2	9/21/2017	\$42,800	Excellent	28,772	
1801	2018 Ford Aerotech	18	4	3/7/2018	\$76,251	Excellent	32,998	
1802	2018 Ford Aerotech	18	4	3/7/2018	\$76,251	Excellent	28,580	
1901	2019 Ford Aerotech	18	4	12/31/2018	\$75,787	Excellent	16,233	
V061	2006 Ford E-350 CV	9	2	11/8/2019	\$15,700	Excellent	73,907	

ULB = Useful Life Benchmark

Transit Ridership

Figure 4.2 shows the total number of rides provided by RTC by year from FY 2009 to FY 2020. Ridership gradually increased from 2009 to 2013. Ridership peaked in 2013 and has since declined each subsequent year. Between fiscal years 2014 and 2019, ridership has decreased by 41.3 percent from 161,338 rides to 94,650 rides. The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic to transit ridership are readily apparent. From FY 2019 to FY 2020, ridership decreased by 32 percent.

Figure 4.2: RTC Ridership by Year, FY 2009-2020

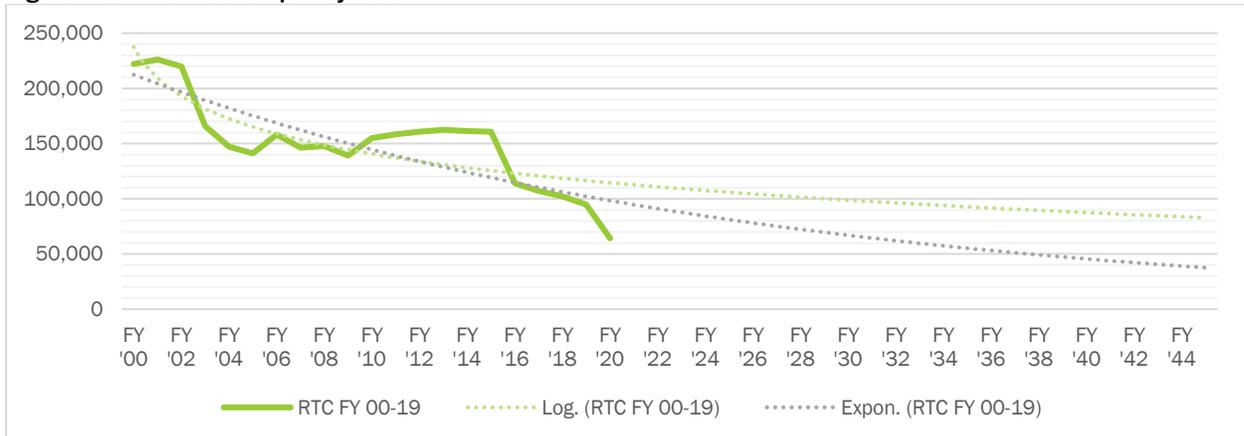


Transit Ridership Forecasts

Forecasting transit ridership is challenging. Variations in economic conditions, demographic trends, pandemics, and alternate modes of transportation (e.g. ridesharing) could all have some impact on future ridership. For example, the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a substantial decrease in ridership for FY 2020. The reality and perception of safety in public transit vehicles may have a lasting impact on ridership. From May to July 2020, RTC provided 962 rides; during the same timeframe in 2019, RTC provided over 24,000 rides.

To forecast ridership for RTC, a logarithmic trendline and exponential trendline are used to provide a range of projections. Ridership could level out as the baby boomer generation ages and relies more on passenger transportation services. According to the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey Five-year Estimates in 2017, an estimated 26.2 percent of the region's population – outside of Black Hawk County – was between the ages of 50 and 70 years old. This is up from 24.5 percent according to the same survey in 2010. Conversely, ridership could decline if contracts are lost.

Figure 4.3: RTC Ridership Projection



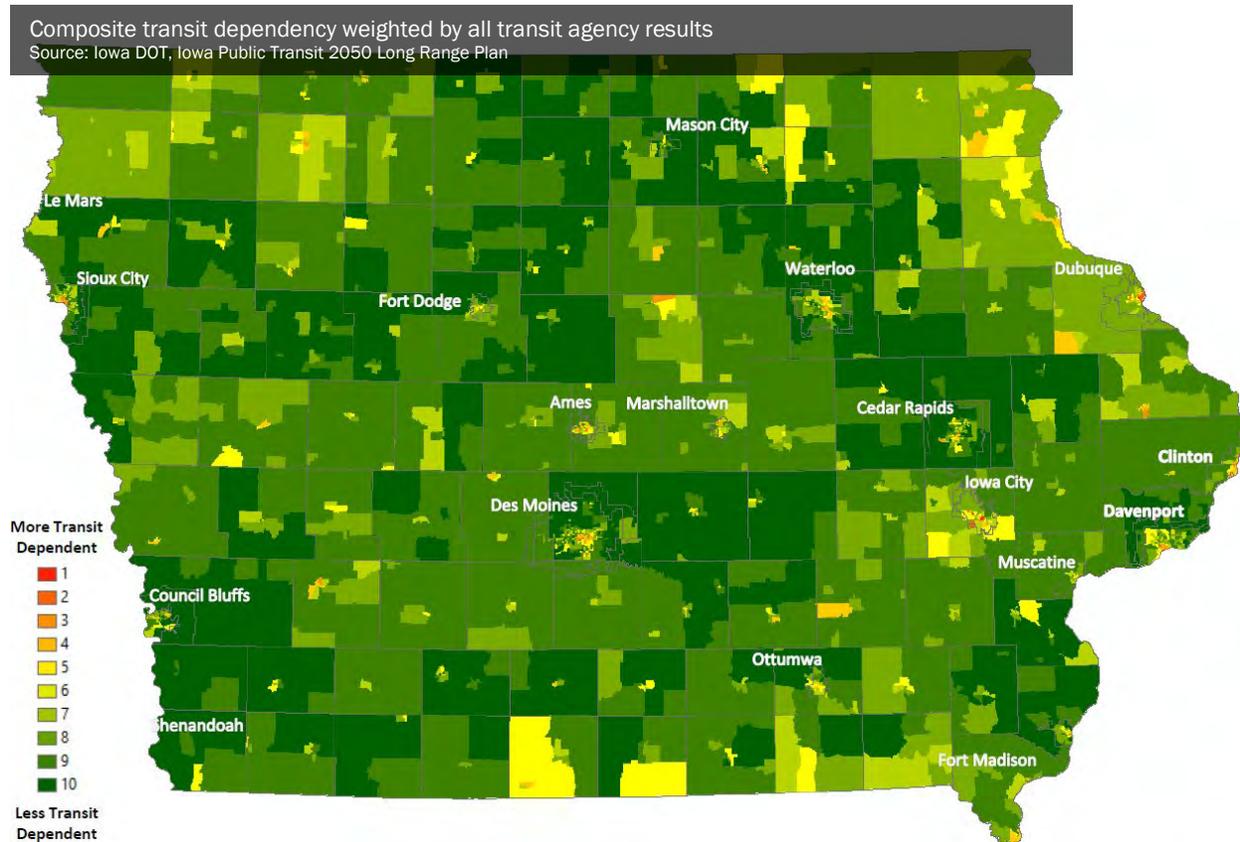
Planning Concerns

There are a wide variety of planning issues for the RTA and RTC to consider. Several areas of concern are described below:

Transit Demand

The Iowa DOT completed a Transit Dependency Analysis as part of the *Iowa Public Transit 2050 Long Range Plan*. The analysis attempted to forecast or predict the locations of “hot spots” where transit need or dependency was highest in Iowa. Transit dependency external factors used in the analysis include gas prices, median household income, carless households, language, race, college enrolled, and population density.

Once data for the factors was gathered, it was rendered in GIS. A layer, with a one through ten score for each block group, was generated corresponding to each of the seven individual external factors used in the analysis. All the individual layers were then compiled to generate an overall composite layer that identified the most transit dependent areas based on these seven factors. The factors were weighted using input from Iowa transit agencies.



The value of performing this analysis is realizing the complex relationship between multiple factors and how they contribute to transit dependency. Whether urban or rural, transit agencies can review these results and see where there are populations that may be more likely to be dependent on transit systems for transportation. This allows for focused discussion on how to address those potential needs.

An Iowa Transportation Funding Study completed in 2009 included an estimate for intercity transit demand. In the region, 10,000 person-trips were estimated between Independence and Waterloo, and an estimated 7,400 between Waverly and Waterloo. Waverly and Independence remain RTC's largest service areas, and expanded service in these communities is considered a need. A consistent issue when additional buses are added to an area of existing service is that existing ridership is spread out among the buses rather than attracting new riders.

While the entire region could likely benefit from increased service, areas RTC staff have identified for potential expansion include western Butler County and Chickasaw County. Issues with both existing service and potential service expansion include timing, as many facilities do not allow clients to be dropped off early or stay late, and duplication of service as private organizations or individuals may already be providing some services. Other opportunities RTC continues to explore are providing rides to Iowa City and Cedar Rapids for medical appointments and providing rides to work for larger employers in the region.

RTC has worked to respond to public input and needs for expanded service. RTC began a new route based within Grundy County as a direct result of meeting with hospital staff. RTC has also been in contact with larger businesses in rural areas of the region to potentially provide vanpool service for employees living in the metropolitan area. With a couple of large businesses due to come online in the coming years, this appears to be a great potential for increased passenger transportation service.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, RTC was closed to the public for three months. While transit service could not be provided as usual, RTC found ways to provide services to help local non-profit agencies. For the Northeast Iowa Area Agency on Aging, RTC drivers delivered frozen meals for the weekend to home-bound senior citizens. RTC delivered numerous boxes of food from the Northeast Iowa Food Bank to local schools for distribution to their students.



Ridesharing and Car Sharing

Overall, transit ridership is down nationwide, but the use of ridesharing services has dramatically increased over the past few years. The services Uber and Lyft are both available in the metropolitan area only. Use of these services is likely to continue growing over time as awareness of their availability increases. To some extent, ridesharing services compete with transit services. However, they can also complement transit service in certain situations.

In addition to ridesharing, car sharing services are currently available in many larger metropolitan areas and may eventually be deployed in Black Hawk County as well. Car sharing is a short-term rental service, usually charged by the hour. There are multiple car sharing services, some of which rely on a designated fleet of cars, while others rely on individuals' private vehicles. These services may also compete with public transit services. However, they may also allow a greater share of the population to adopt a car-free lifestyle, thereby increasing the total number of unique riders using public transit.

Driver Recruitment and Retention

Finding and retaining qualified drivers continues to be a challenge for RTC. Many eligible drivers may seek employment with private agencies or school districts instead because they can offer higher salaries and more regular schedules than public transit providers.



One of the major management challenges for RTC is hiring and maintaining drivers. RTC has faced problems with recruitment and new drivers passing all necessary tests and licensing, leading to difficulties staying fully staffed. A hurdle for driver recruitment is that the service area is spread out geographically, requiring drivers to commute a substantial distance to get to the bus, or buses needing to be parked at the driver's residence. RTC added utility driver positions with the aim of using these drivers to fill in for other drivers and/or provide expanded service. However, these positions have often been vacant, putting a strain on the system's ability to meet current demand. The lack of drivers is also a limiting factor for expanding service in the region.

Vehicle Replacement

The condition of RTC's fleet is in relatively poor condition, with 60 percent of its vehicles over the federal Useful Life Benchmark. Many of RTC's buses purchased as part of the stimulus package enacted in 2009 are now well-aged and will require replacement in the coming years. Another stimulus would provide short-term relief for transit agencies. However, only a long-term funding solution will provide transit agencies long-term assurance that they will have enough vehicles to continue operating at their current level.

In FY 2017, the RTA funded the first bus replacement for the RTC using STBG funds. In the FY 2021-2024 TIP, the RTA funded a second bus replacement in FY 2022. Some funds from the Iowa Clean Air Attainment Program (ICAAP) are also allocated for bus replacements. However, these funding sources will not likely be enough to offset the reduction in funding that occurred when new federal transportation bills were enacted.

In 2018, RTC purchased two new minivans to replace existing buses beyond their federal Useful Life Benchmark. The minivans were purchased using local funds rather than federal or state dollars. The vehicles have been a great addition to RTC's fleet, primarily providing economical services for trips with three or fewer passengers. The minivans are equipped with two wheelchair securement locations and a manual ramp, making them ADA accessible. For future bus replacements, RTC may consider purchasing additional minivans as a cost-effective option.



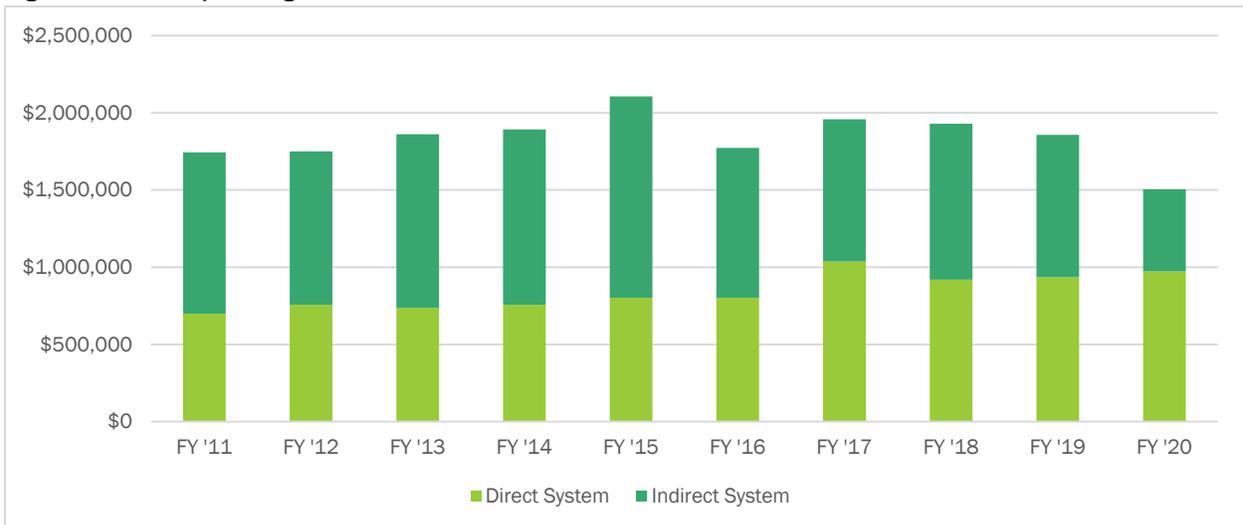
RTC ADA-accessible Van

Increasing Costs

Operating costs have been rising at a steady rate due largely to the rising cost of maintenance and fuel. For RTC, operating costs in FY 2011 totaled \$1.74 million; in FY 2015, operating costs increased to an all-time high of \$2.10 million. The substantial drop in operating costs in FY 2016 is likely reflective of gas prices which reached a ten-year low. The drop in FY 2020 is directly attributable to the COVID-19 pandemic; RTC was closed to the public for three months, and ridership has remained low since reopening.

RTC staff have considered various options to help cover increasing operating costs. Recently, RTC increased its rates to help cover increased costs. RTC will likely replace buses beyond their federal Useful Life Benchmark with smaller, more efficient minivans.

Figure 4.4: RTC Operating Costs



Source: RTC

Regulations

While state and federal funding are critical to the operation of public transit, the regulations that accompany the funding can make coordination and improving service challenging at times. Rules involving items such as drug and alcohol testing, statistical reporting, and insurance requirements are some of the examples of regulations that have deterred potential coordination partners.

Another issue that has historically impacted public transit in the region is charter regulations. Charter regulations limit service options for persons and organizations wishing to utilize a charter for any type of purpose, such as a field trip or a wedding party. Oftentimes customers are unable to obtain these services at all. Achieving a balance between the intent of regulations and their real-world implications is an ongoing challenge for state and federal governments and public transit providers.

Medicaid Brokerage

Recent changes in Iowa's Medicaid insurance programs continue to affect transit service within the region. Medicaid brokerage is now run by managed care organizations (MCOs). RTC continues to work on addressing the challenges involved with the implementation of this new system. RTC hired additional staff to assist with the modernization process. The process initially had a negative impact on the number of rides provided. A particular planning concern for RTC is physically disabled persons being transported by other transit providers in vehicles without wheelchair lifts.

Technology

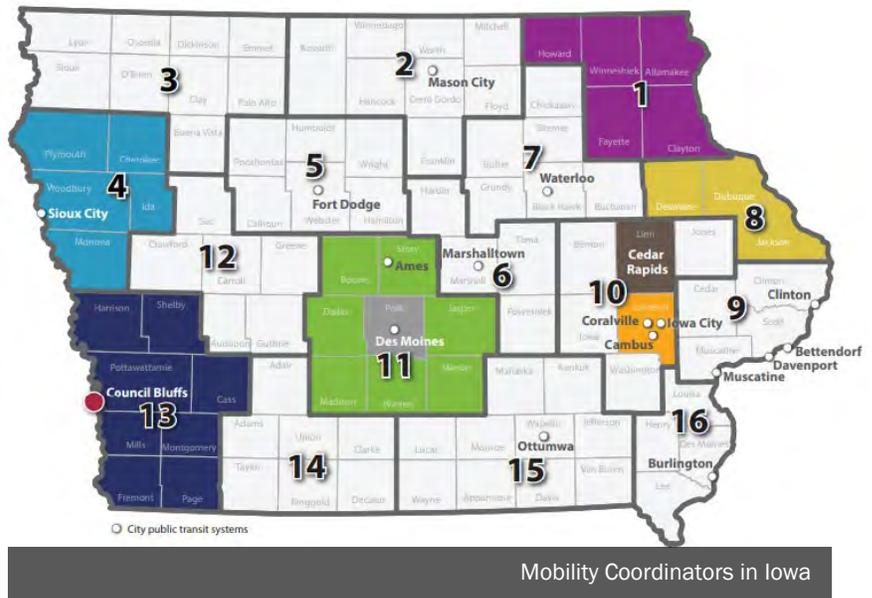
RTC's fleet of vehicles have all been updated to include video surveillance systems. Buses feature a four-camera system focused on the driver, lift and entrance door, interior of the bus from the back, and the road. The cameras have increased safety and security for the drivers and passengers. RTC has also used video recordings for incident investigation and risk management as well as driver and management training. RTC is purchasing scheduling software in 2021 to improve efficiency in scheduling and dispatch, driver communication, and overall logistics.



Coordination of Services and Marketing

Given constrained transit budgets, cost and time efficiency are always important considerations. Coordination efforts are undertaken by RTC, MET Transit, and various agencies in the six-county region. Joint contracts between these organizations have helped to improve the efficiency of the regional transit system.

Mobility management has been a planning emphasis over the past ten years both nationally and in Iowa. Mobility managers, or mobility coordinators, assist individuals in navigating from their origin to their destination, regardless of the number of modes of transportation required. Referrals are made to public and private transportation providers alike. Mobility coordinators can provide travel training, showing persons how to ride the bus if they have never had that experience. Mobility coordinators also meet with human service agencies, businesses, and other organizations to inform them of the public transit services available. Currently, there is not a mobility coordinator located in the region. RTC and MET Transit have discussed jointly hiring a mobility coordinator and marketing person, and this remains an identified need. The Iowa DOT has a Statewide Mobility Coordinator who educates public transit agencies, planning organizations, and other statewide organizations about the benefits of mobility management. Both RTC and MET Transit plan to continue to work closely with the Statewide Mobility Coordinator to coordinate transit services in the region.



Projects and Initiatives

Table 4.2 identifies projects and initiatives recommended by the TAC for the FY 2021-2025 Passenger Transportation Plan. The table includes projects for the Iowa Northland Region, including the Waterloo/Cedar Falls metropolitan area. Section 5310-funded projects must specifically be included in the Passenger Transportation Plan. All other projects and initiatives identified are encouraged but are not required by the Iowa DOT.

The primary focus of RTC is to maintain existing service levels, and then expand to meet additional needs of the region when possible. Given current federal, state, and local funding levels, it is difficult to predict future projects that are certain to be implemented. RTC does plan to replace vehicles in the coming years as federal and state funding is available. Financial projections for operating and capital and a demonstration of fiscal constraint for transit are detailed in Chapter 9.

Table 4.3 shows RTC projects included in the RTA Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for FY 2021-2024. This includes general operations, bus purchases, and planning. While many RTC buses are programmed for replacement during the next couple years, funding will likely only provide for a few bus replacements at most each year.

Table 4.2: Projects and Initiatives for the FY 2021-2025

Project or Initiative	Objectives Addressed	Description	Responsible Parties
Preventative Maintenance – Section 5310 Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve accessibility and availability of public transit 	Funding will be used by MET Transit to provide handicap-accessible ramps, vehicle inspections, and to maintain accessibility features for vehicles	MET Transit
Hold a free ride event – Try Transit Out!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote and improve the image of the public transit system Build awareness of the existing public transportation system through education and marketing 	This educational event will help promote and encourage usage of MET Transit. The event could be aligned with the implementation of the route restructuring project.	MET Transit
Joint Mobility Coordinator and Marketing position for MET Transit and RTC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build awareness of the existing public transportation system through education and marketing Promote and improve the image of the public transit system Coordinate transportation planning and services with other community organizations and workforce development 	This position will assist individuals in navigating from their origin to their destination, regardless of the mode of transportation. Tasks can include travel training; meeting with human service agencies, businesses, and other organizations to inform them of available services; and educating the public on available transportation services.	MET Transit, RTC
Transit audits for the metropolitan area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build awareness of the existing public transportation system through education and marketing Promote and improve the image of the public transit system 	Transit audits take people through the entire transit experience (reading a transit map, ticket purchasing, boarding, riding the bus, using the pedestrian network, etc.). This initiative will help obtain insight from a range of citizens and elected officials.	INRCOG, TAC, MET Transit
Ambassador Program (train the trainer)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build awareness of the existing public transportation system through education and marketing 	This initiative will involve training senior citizens, non-English speaking persons, and other populations on how to use MET Transit. In turn, those individuals will have the knowledge and expertise to train others.	MET Transit, INRCOG, TAC
Develop a marketing strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build awareness of the existing public transportation system through education and marketing 	Marketing RTC’s services has long been identified as a need for the region. Advertising methods could include email, social media, workforce outreach, community services, and conventional media. External marketing experts should be considered.	RTC
Develop a marketing plan/strategy of existing services for the TAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build awareness of the existing public transportation system through education and marketing 	This project involves creating a pamphlet of existing services that can be used by TAC members to create awareness of services and promote usage of public transit.	INRCOG, TAC, MET Transit, RTC
Create a “Day in the Life” video of challenges for persons using public transit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build awareness of the existing public transportation system through education and marketing 	Persons using public transit daily – especially those with a physical disability – are faced with challenges that often go unnoticed (i.e. snow piles on curb ramp and bus stop). This video will help to educate elected officials, city planners, and city engineers, and the public of the daily challenges faced.	INRCOG, TAC, MET Transit, RTC

Project or Initiative	Objectives Addressed	Description	Responsible Parties
Increase outreach with partnering groups, agencies, and companies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate transportation planning and services with other community organizations and workforce development • Build awareness of the existing public transportation system through education and marketing 	Increase the frequency and quantity of outreach to groups, agencies, and companies. This may help identify opportunities for coordination of services and new services while promoting and marketing existing services and how to best utilize them.	RTC, TAC
MET Transit route restructuring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance the efficiency of the public transit system 	Using transit planning software, INRCOG staff and MET Transit are redesigning the fixed-route bus network in Waterloo and Cedar Falls. The project will identify efficiencies in service and develop schedules that are faster, more reliable, and easier to understand	MET Transit, INRCOG, Cedar Falls, Waterloo
Extend weekday service hours and weekend hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve accessibility and availability of public transit • Improve service to all user groups 	MET Transit's fixed route and paratransit hours of operation are 5:45 a.m. to 6:35 p.m. M-F, and 7:15 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Saturday. Extending service hours will help serve the needs of all user groups	MET Transit, Cedar Falls, Waterloo
Vanpools to businesses and medical facilities in the region and outside of the region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve accessibility and availability of public transit 	This would be a vanpool program to businesses and/or medical facilities within and outside of the Iowa Northland Region. For example, a vanpool to/from the University Hospitals and Clinics in Iowa City.	RTC
Implement a winter maintenance program for bus stops in the metropolitan area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve accessibility and availability of public transit 	Using public transit in the winter is more challenging. Limited and/or inconsistent maintenance of sidewalks and bus stops severely limits accessibility to public transit.	MET Transit, City of Waterloo, City of Cedar Falls, private property owners
Improve accommodations at bus stops in the metropolitan area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve accessibility and availability of public transit • Improve service to all user groups 	Many bus stops in Waterloo and Cedar Falls need to be improved either through the addition of complete bus shelters, or bus pads with connections to the existing sidewalk network.	MET Transit, City of Waterloo, City of Cedar Falls
Add commuter service to the Airline Highway Industrial Area in Waterloo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve accessibility and availability of public transit 	This project was identified as a need in the 2018 Airline Highway Transportation Survey. A new fixed route could serve employees during 1 st and 2 nd shift start and end times.	MET Transit, private businesses
Passenger Transportation Survey for businesses in the region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate transportation planning and services with other community organizations and workforce development 	A survey will be sent to businesses in the region to identify opportunities for coordinated services and/or new services.	RTC, INRCOG

Project or Initiative	Objectives Addressed	Description	Responsible Parties
Replace vehicles when they reach their federal Useful Life Benchmark (ULB)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve fleet conditions and reliability 	As of 2019, 35 percent and 60 percent of MET Transit and RTC's fleets were over their ULB, respectively. Older vehicles result in higher operating and maintenance costs, reduced reliability, and compromised safety. Both MET Transit and RTC will continue to replace their vehicles as federal, state, and local funding becomes available.	MET Transit, RTC
Conduct a follow-up Special Outreach Survey for non-English speaking and homeless residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve service to all user groups 	In 2015, a survey was conducted in the metropolitan area to identify transportation needs and challenges faced by these populations. A follow-up survey will be conducted to identify new challenges and to identify opportunities for coordinated services.	INRCOG

Table 4.3: FY 2021-2024 Transportation Improvement Program for RTC

Funding Source	Expense Type	Unit #	Description	Fiscal Year	Total Cost (\$)	Federal Aid (\$)
5311	Operations	--	General Ops, Maint, Admin, Planning	2021	1,176,124	320,253
5311	Planning	--	RPA Transportation Planning	2021	39,000	31,200
5339	Replacement	0906	Light Duty Bus (176" WB)	2021	97,500	82,875
5339	Replacement	0907	Light Duty Bus (176" WB)	2021	97,500	82,875
5339	Replacement	0909	Light Duty Bus (176" WB)	2021	97,500	82,875
5339	Replacement	0911	Light Duty Bus (176" WB)	2021	97,500	82,875
5339	Replacement	0912	Light Duty Bus (176" WB)	2021	97,500	82,875
5307	Replacement	1201	Light Duty Bus (176" WB)	2021	97,500	82,875
5311	Operations	--	General Ops, Maint, Admin, Planning	2022	1,278,191	394,867
5311	Planning	--	RPA Transportation Planning	2022	39,000	31,200
5339	Replacement	1001	Light Duty Bus (176" WB)	2022	99,450	84,532
5339	Replacement	1402	Light Duty Bus (176" WB)	2022	99,450	84,532
STBG	Replacement	1401	Light Duty Bus (176" WB)	2022	85,000	68,000
5311	Operations	--	General Ops, Maint, Admin, Planning	2023	1,315,601	414,610
5311	Planning	--	RPA Transportation Planning	2023	39,000	31,200
5339	Replacement	1601	Light Duty Bus (176" WB)	2023	99,450	84,533
5339	Replacement	1801	Light Duty Bus (176" WB)	2023	99,450	84,533
5339	Replacement	1802	Light Duty Bus (176" WB)	2023	99,450	84,533
5307	Replacement	V061	Super Duty Van	2023	67,000	56,950
5311	Operations	--	General Ops, Maint, Admin, Planning	2024	1,315,601	414,610
5311	Planning	--	RPA Transportation Planning	2024	39,000	31,200
5307	Replacement	1901	Light Duty Bus (176" WB)	2024	99,450	84,533
5307	Replacement	1701	Super Duty Van	2024	62,000	52,700
5307	Replacement	1702	Super Duty Van	2024	62,000	52,700

Programmed State Transit Assistance (STA): \$328,531 in FY21, \$345,438 in FY22, and \$352,347 in FY23 and FY24

5307 = Urbanized Area Formula Grants Program
5311 = Nonurbanized Area Formula Assistance Program
5339 = Bus and Bus Facilities Program
STBG = Surface Transportation Block Grant Program