



**TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
AGENDA
CITY OF BILLINGS AND
YELLOWSTONE COUNTY, MONTANA**



SEPTEMBER 22, 2022 MEETING TIME: 10:30 a.m.
The Miller Building 1st Floor Conference Room
2825 3rd Avenue North
Billings, Montana 59101

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

Citizens are invited to:

- Review the Agenda Packet on the City's website at: <https://ci.billings.mt.us/117/Agendas-Minutes>
- View the meeting live online at Facebook: <https://tinyurl.com/yckr478k>

Public comment will be taken only during the Public Comment periods as indicated on the agenda and during the Public Hearings, if any are scheduled, under the Regular agenda. Comments may be sent to Board via email before 10:00 AM on the meeting date. All emails received prior to this time will be read into the record for the public hearing. Comments may be submitted by:

- Mail: City/County Planning Division, 2825 3rd Ave N 4th Floor, Billings, MT 59101
 - Email: deinest@billingsmt.gov
- Call in during the Public Comment periods as indicated on the agenda:
 - Citizens may call in during specific Public Comment periods at **406.237.6165**.
All callers will be placed in a queued system and are asked to remain on hold and be patient. Calls will be taken in the order in which they are received. Callers will be limited to 3 minutes of testimony as is customary. Future delivery methods may be explored as best practice is learned.

Please direct questions to Tammy Deines, Planning Clerk at deinest@billingsmt.gov or 406247-8610. Thank you!

1. **Call to Order: Scott Walker, Transportation Coordinator**
 - a. **Comments on items not on the agenda and requests to add items to future agendas.**
 - b. **Comments on items non-public and public hearing agenda items.**
3. **Motion. Approval of the minutes of July 28, 2022**
4. **Old Business**
5. **New Business**
 - a. **Motion: Recommendation. City of Billings MET Transit -- 5-Year Transit Development Plan.** Rusty Logan, MET Transit Manager. SRF Consulting, presenting.
6. **Other Business**
 - a. **Update. Discussion. MET Transit.** Rusty Logan, MET Transit Manager
7. **Future Agenda Items**
8. **Adjournment**

Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC)

3.

Meeting Date: 09/22/2022

Subject

Motion. Approval of the minutes of July 28, 2022

Attachments

2022_07_28_TAC_DRAFTMIN.pdf



Billings Technical Advisory Committee
1:30 PM
DRAFT Meeting Minutes—July 28, 2022

1. Call the meeting to order:

Transportation Coordinator Scott Walker called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. in the Miller Building 1st Floor Conference Room, 2825 3rd Ave North

Committee Members			
Scott Walker, Transportation Coord., Chairman, T.A.C.	x	Wyeth Friday, Director, Planning and Community Services	x
Tim Miller, Director YC Public Works Dept.	x	Mike Black, Civil Engineer, YC Public Works Dept.	x
Debi Meling, Public Works Director, City of Billings Engineering	x	Mac Fogelsong, City Engineer, City PW Engineering,	x
Rusty Logan, MET Transit Manger,	x	Clark Snyder, Environmental Health RiverStone Health	-
Katie Potts, Urban Planning Section, MDT	x	Carol Strizich, Supervisor Urban Planning Section, MDT	
Ken Winnegar, Urban Planning Section, MDT	x	Carolyn Miller, FHWA	x
Kurtis Schnieber, MDT	x	Ryan Hammon, FHWA	x
Zach Kirkemo, MDT		Alan Woodmansey, FHWA	

Others Participating

Lora Mattox, Transportation Planner, Gene Kaufman, Statewide Urban Planning for Alan Woodmansey, Matt Strizich, FHWA

2. Minutes of May 17, 2021

Motion

Mike Black made a motion and it was seconded by Tim Miller to approve the minutes of May 17, 2021 as submitted. The motion carried with a unanimous voice vote.

3. Old Business: There is no Old Business.

4. New Business

4a. Draft Billings Urban Area Unified Planning Work Program, (UPWP), Federal Fiscal Year 2023. Scott Walker, Transportation Coordinator, Rusty Logan, MET Transit Manager, presenting.

Transportation Coordinator Scott Walker opened the agenda item with a brief introduction and followed with a presentation. He explained this document is the staff budget. Staff is asking TAC to forward a recommendation to the City and County governing bodies and PCC.

Introduction

- Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) must be established in communities over 50,000 in population to do transportation planning and be eligible for federal transportation planning funds.
- The Work Program for the MPO is required to be revised and adopted annually by the Policy Coordination Committee (PCC) whose members are four – The Mayor or his designee, the Chair of the County Commission, the Planning Board Chair and the local MDT District Administrator.

The Work Program is reviewed and recommended for approval by the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), Planning Board, County Commission, City Council, Montana Department of Transportation (MDT)

Work Elements

- There are 12 work elements in the MPO Work Program and the staff activity that is reimbursed to the MPO must be defined in those elements
- Reimbursement of funds occurs quarterly
- Each element has a different percentage rate for reimbursement

Funding Sources The degree of participation by each funding agency is based on the pro-rations which have been determined for each line item. Each agency contributes their share of the total charges made against each line item according to the approved pro-rations. Funding sources and amounts contained in the UPWP are as follows:

Planning Department Fees (City of Billings)	\$300,000
Planning Department Fees (Yellowstone County)	\$160,000
Yellowstone County (Mill)	\$525,000
Federal Funds (PL)	<u>\$2,007,135</u>
TOTAL	\$2,992,135

SUMMARY:

- **The UPWP is updated annually and is current between October 1, 2022 through September 30, 2023.**
- **All Work Elements in the UPWP must be related to Transportation and/or Transportation Planning.**
- **2022 Priorities:** Complete the North Bypass Corridor Study, Complete the Transportation Safety Plan, Complete Safe Routes to School Study Phase I, Safe Routes to School Study Phase II, Begin the Update to our Long Range Transportation Plan, County Growth Policy Update
- **2023 Priorities** Complete the North Bypass Corridor Study. Complete the Transportation Safety Plan, Complete Safe Routes to School Study Phase I, Safe Routes to School Study Phase II, Begin the Update to our Long Range Transportation Plan, County Growth Policy Update

Transit Section – Rusty Logan, MET Transit Manager

- The Transit section of the UPWP is also structured into separate elements with specific activities and functions outlined within each element
- As with PL funds, reimbursement of funds occurs quarterly; amounts will differ for each quarter based upon the activities undertaken and eligible hours spent per element.
- Federal funding is provided via FTA Section 5303 for multimodal transportation planning in metropolitan areas. Funds are apportioned via a formula including factors such as urbanized area population. Local match is provided through local transportation mills, transit fares, advertising revenue, and other applicable sources.

Transit Funding Overview

2023 Funding Detail

WORK ELEMENT	FUNDING SOURCES FY 2021			STAFF HOURS
	LOCAL	FTA	EST. COST	
44.21.01 Administration	\$15,171	\$60,684	\$75,855	670.00
44.24.01 Future Service	\$16,390	\$65,562	\$81,952	975.00
44.24.02 Current Service	\$22,927	\$91,706	\$114,633	1485.00
44.25.01 TLP	\$1,616	\$6,465	\$8,081	102.83
44.26.15 ADA Service	\$10,519	\$42,078	\$52,597	775.00
TOTAL	\$66,623	\$266,495	\$333,118	4007.80

2022 to 2023 Funding Comparison

WORK ELEMENT	FY 2021	FY 2022
44.21.01 Administration	\$28,443	\$75,855
44.24.01 Future Service	\$84,827	\$81,952
44.24.02 Current Service	\$61,581	\$114,633
44.25.01 TLP	\$8,499	\$8,081
44.26.15 ADA Service	\$57,955	\$52,597
Planning Software	\$15,000	Included in Future/Current Svc
TOTAL	\$256,005	\$333,118

Transit 2022 Priorities: Required Plan Updates (PTASP, DBE, TAM Title VI, PPP), Developed/implemented personnel changes to support PTASP, Outreach, and Planning, Finalized Transit Development Plan including significant recommendations for service changes and overhaul, Analyzed and recommended internalizing bus and bench advertising program, Analyzed and recommended implementation of updated AVL system.

Transit 2023 Priorities:

Public Transit Agency Safety Plan – significantly increased focus on training and safety assurance; training course and lot

Transit Development Plan – development of more in-depth process to foster communication between City departments in the overall planning landscape as well as guide transit related routing decisions in regards to development and community feedback/demand. Hope to create a more holistic approach to transit design as well as provide an increased level of input regarding overall city development.

Master Marketing Plan – assessing new means of marketing, further integration with online and social media, explore outside of traditional avenues, increase community engagement

Fixed-route overhaul and designated stop assessment; new vehicles to support this – pushing for high enough frequency during peaks that customers will not need to check the schedule

Continue service expansion; started exploratory assessments of Lockwood area and it's cost effectiveness, need further evaluation of existing infrastructure and ability to actually operate a vehicle in that area

Continue Developing Partnerships – Alliance, State of Montana, Montana State University

- Support implementation of Transit Development Plan system overhaul
- Ongoing capital/equipment planning
- Develop a Bus Stop Master plan to support transition to designated stops.
- Continue to analyze and recommend development of interlocal agreements to support expanded service.
- Fare comparison and analysis.
- Continue developing partnerships with area providers.

Review Schedule

TAC	July 28nd
Planning Board	August 23rd
County Commission	August 23rd
City Council	August 22nd
PCC	August 30th
MDT, FHWA, FTA	September 30th

Discussion:

Director Wyeth Friday commented that he feels the presented priority list is good. He mentioned the public interest in the “Safe Routes to School” study and potential for the neighborhood planning efforts as these areas have experienced extensive development. Staff is pursuing additional grant funding for these projects.

Motion:

Tim Miller made a motion and Mike Black seconded the motion to forward a recommendation of approval of the Billings Urban Area Work Program, (UPWP), and Federal Fiscal Year 2023 as presented by staff. The motion carried with a unanimous voice vote.

6. Other Business

5b. Update. Discussion. MET Transit, Rusty Logan, MET Transit, Logan, MET Transit Manager

Rusty Logan, MET Transit, announced that the final public meeting for the City of Billings MET Transit-5 Year Transit Development Plan will be held at the Billings Library on August 18, 2022. This plan will be brought forward to TAC and the City and County governing bodies for consideration of approval and recommendation to PCC.

ADJOURNMENT: 10:58 AM

DRAFT-TO BE APPROVED BY A MOTION DURING THE NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING—Tamara L. Deines, Planning Clerk

Date: 09/22/2022
Title: City of Billings MET Transit - 5 Year Development Plan
Presented by: Scott Walker
Department: Planning & Community Services
Presentation: Yes

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends Transportation Advisory Committee, (TAC) forward a recommendation of approval of the City of Billings MET Transit-5 Year Transit Development Plan to the City/County Planning Board MPO, the City and County Governing bodies, and the Policy Coordinating Committee, (PCC).

BACKGROUND (Consistency with Adopted Plans and Policies, if applicable)

MET Transit is presenting the Billings MET Transit-5-Year Transit Development Plan for TAC review and recommendation to the Billings Metropolitan Planning Organization, (MPO), for Planning Board review, City Council, the Board of County Commissioners, and the Billings Policy Coordinating Committee (PCC).

The City of Billings MET Transit Division identified the need to conduct a Transit Development Plan update to assess the current state of the transit system and develop recommended strategies for improvement. The most recent Transit Development Plan undertaken by the Division was finalized in 2015. With Billings experiencing significant growth in recent years and considering the recent passage of increased transit funding at the Federal level, having an approved and feasible plan in place is essential for MET continuing to provide effective transit services in the Billings area. This plan has been developed by MET Transit in conjunction with SRF Consulting and takes into consideration public comment received via survey and three public meetings. SRF Consulting will present during the meeting.

STAKEHOLDERS

Not Applicable.

ALTERNATIVES

Not Applicable

FISCAL EFFECTS

Not Applicable.

SUMMARY

Not Applicable.

Attachments

FINAL_BillingsTDP_20220908.pdf
Billings_TDP_Appendix.pdf



TRANSIT DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2022

CITY OF BILLINGS MET TRANSIT



September 2022

TRANSIT DEVELOPMENT PLAN BILLINGS, MONTANA

September 2022



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INTRODUCTION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Billings MET

Billings MET Transit (MET) is the local designated recipient for Federal Transit Administration (FTA) 5307 operating funds to provide public transit service. As a department of the City of Billings, MET offers fixed route bus service and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) complementary paratransit covering approximately 43.52 square miles almost exclusively within city limits. MET has been providing public transportation since 1973 and currently provides both fixed route (The MET) and paratransit services¹ (MET Plus). Paratransit service was originally established in 1977 by Special Transportation, Inc, which was assumed by the City of Billings MET in 1997.

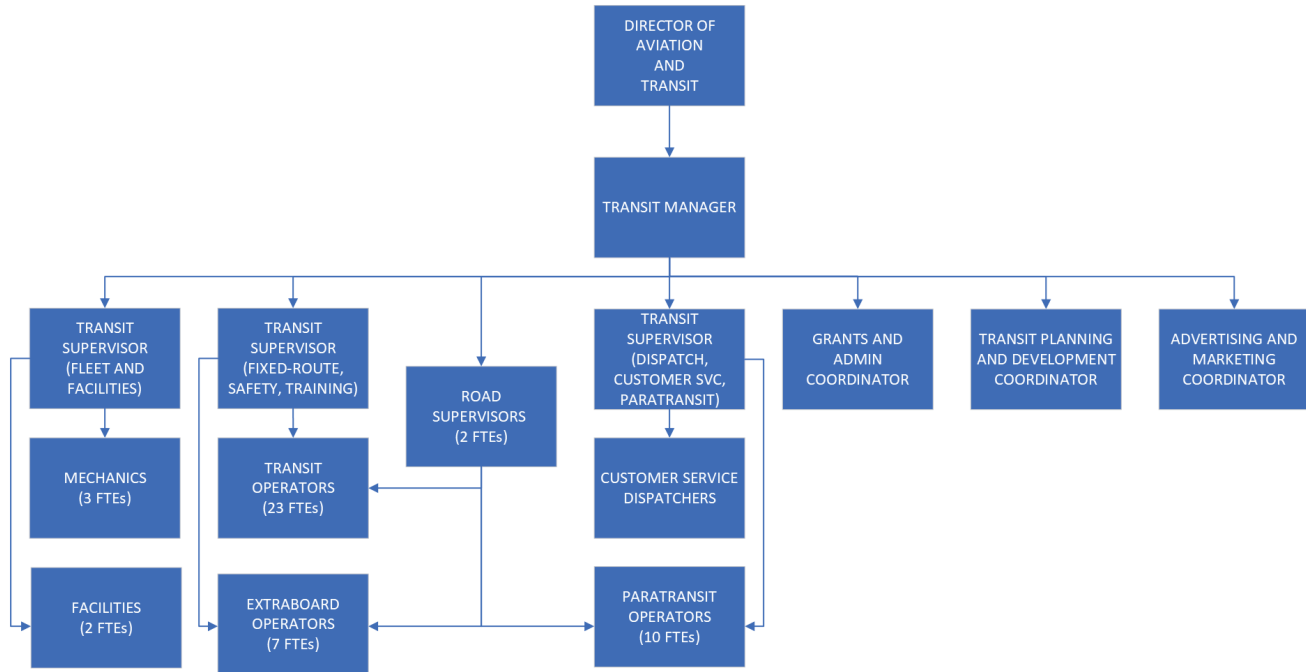
In 2019, MET provided more than 400,000 passenger trips and MET Plus approximately 46,000 trips, using a fleet of 25 buses and 15 paratransit vehicles. Many of the fixed routes are focused on providing service to students as well as daily peak commuters. Annual fixed-route ridership in 2019 was 427,913; due to the COVID-19 health crisis, ridership fell to 373,146 in 2020 and 284,306 in 2021.

Organization

Currently, MET staff and operations are a division within the Billings Aviation and Transit Department. The head of the transit division is the Transit Division Manager. All roles and organizational structure within the Division are listed in the organization chart in Figure 1. Billings MET Organizational Structure below.

¹ Fixed Route is defined as service provided on a designated route on a regular schedule. Paratransit service is on-demand, door-to-door service provided for qualifying individuals within a defined service area.

Figure 1. Billings MET Organizational Structure



MET recently implemented structural changes within the organization. The first change was replacing a vacant supervisor position with two positions to create Road Supervisors; current Transit Supervisors have little time to be on the road for direct supervision of operators. The second was to hire a planner for the division. The road supervisors and planner positions were added in Summer 2022.

MET has recently focused its recruitment efforts on individuals without commercial driver’s licenses and who have experience in healthcare, customer service, and other human centric jobs; this has resulted in improved recruitment for vacant operator positions. MET is currently in the process of constructing a dedicated training lot and is fulfilling the requirements of the new FMCSA Entry Level Driver training regulations.

Project Purpose and Scope

In 2016, MET addressed findings of its previous Transit Development Plan (TDP) through elimination of redundant fixed-route services and expansion of all day service on various routes. However, these re-alignments did not have the immediate intended effect of growth in ridership and overall improvement of convenience of the system. The 2022 TDP provides strategic guidance for a sustainable transit system to serve the community. The overall desired outcome for the TDP is to provide a public transit system that offers travel options to residents, employees, and visitors who cannot or choose not to drive. Other outcomes for the TDP are to:

- Improve the efficiency of the existing service
- Assess opportunities to serve areas where requests for service have been received through other public involvement programs
- Meet needs expected from future regional growth
- Develop operating and capital cost estimates to serve future growth areas

The project scope includes the following:

- Identification of travel needs and gaps between needs and the service provided
- Service evaluation, including performance indicator evaluation and comparison with peer agencies
- Development of recommended fixed-route service plans
- Community engagement
- Exploration of additional service concepts to address current and/or anticipated future gaps

Project Team

The TDP project team was led by the Transit Manager at Billings MET. Staff from SRF Consulting provided technical expertise and content creation. A Study Review Committee (SRC) met periodically over the course of the project to provide input and oversight.

Recommendations

Overview

The core goal of the transit development plan (TDP) is to assess current service, determine whether adjustments are warranted, and identify service improvement opportunities that fill gaps and address any issues with current service. Improvements to service may include right-sizing how often routes run (frequency), hours of service each day, the service area and/or the range of services provided across the city. As needs and conditions vary across the city, solutions provided as recommendations include a mix of the ideas mentioned above.

Passage of the [Bipartisan Infrastructure Law \(BIL\)](#) has created opportunities for MET to implement added service as federal funding in the law reflects an average of a 30 percent increase over FAST Act levels. An increase of 30 percent in federal operating funds, that will be matched with local funding, opens to MET the potential to develop scenarios that would:

BIL Provides More Federal Funding

The law, covering the period from 2022 through 2026, includes an average of

30%

more transit funding

- Add service reflective of about three new or expanded routes. These could include expanding the area of the community covered with transit, adding to the number of routes in the current service area decreasing the walk distance for customers, or extending service to surrounding communities where it makes sense.
- Convert two to three routes from 60-minute frequency to 30-minute.
- Add up to two hours of service each weekday.
- Adding service on Sunday.
- Providing new service types such as microtransit that is a demand response type service supporting same day trips.

The TDP also provides an opportunity to address the cost-effectiveness of services provided. A key area MET has identified to review is the flag stop type of service provided. In this service, customers can “flag down” a bus anywhere along a route that is considered safe to either get on or off. This type of operation, while providing customers a choice as to where to get on or off, adds to their travel time once on a bus as it typically results in more stops (adding dwell time) on each run relative to service with pre-set or designated stops. Under a designated stops format, bus stop signs identify where customers can get on and off. Signs would be located about three blocks apart, which still allows for a short walk to/from a stop. The benefits of fixed stops are two-fold: First, MET can better plan and stay on schedule as they have a much better understanding of where they need to stop along each route and second, the system would be easier to understand for new and existing riders.

Fixed-Route Redesign

As a first step, this plan proposes to redesign the existing fixed-route network through a combination of:

- Relocating segments of selected routes to reduce redundancy.
- Removing/relocating unproductive segments on a number of routes and reapplying the service to other corridors expected to increase use. Productivity was measured as the number of people boarding at stops along a segment over a year.
- Taking parts of multiple routes and combining them to develop a new route anticipated to better serve areas of the community.
- Eliminating the downtown circulation parts of Route 1 MET-Link and replacing transit supportive areas served by MET-Link with other fixed-route service to retain connectivity.

The goal of the route redesign is to provide a better rider experience across the service area without requiring more funding. The redesigned network would achieve this by revising parts of the current route network so that buses spend more time on corridors with high demand, by reducing or eliminating loops, and by providing improved connectivity between transit oriented land uses. Redesign route changes include adding service in areas that need more coverage, while reducing coverage in areas that are currently over-served (reflected in a lower number of boardings at stops along route segments).

The changes are shown in Figure 2 as a system-wide overview and in

Figure 3 through Figure 12 on a route level. The most important elements and benefits are summarized in Table 4.

Figure 2. Recommended Redesign MET Transit Network

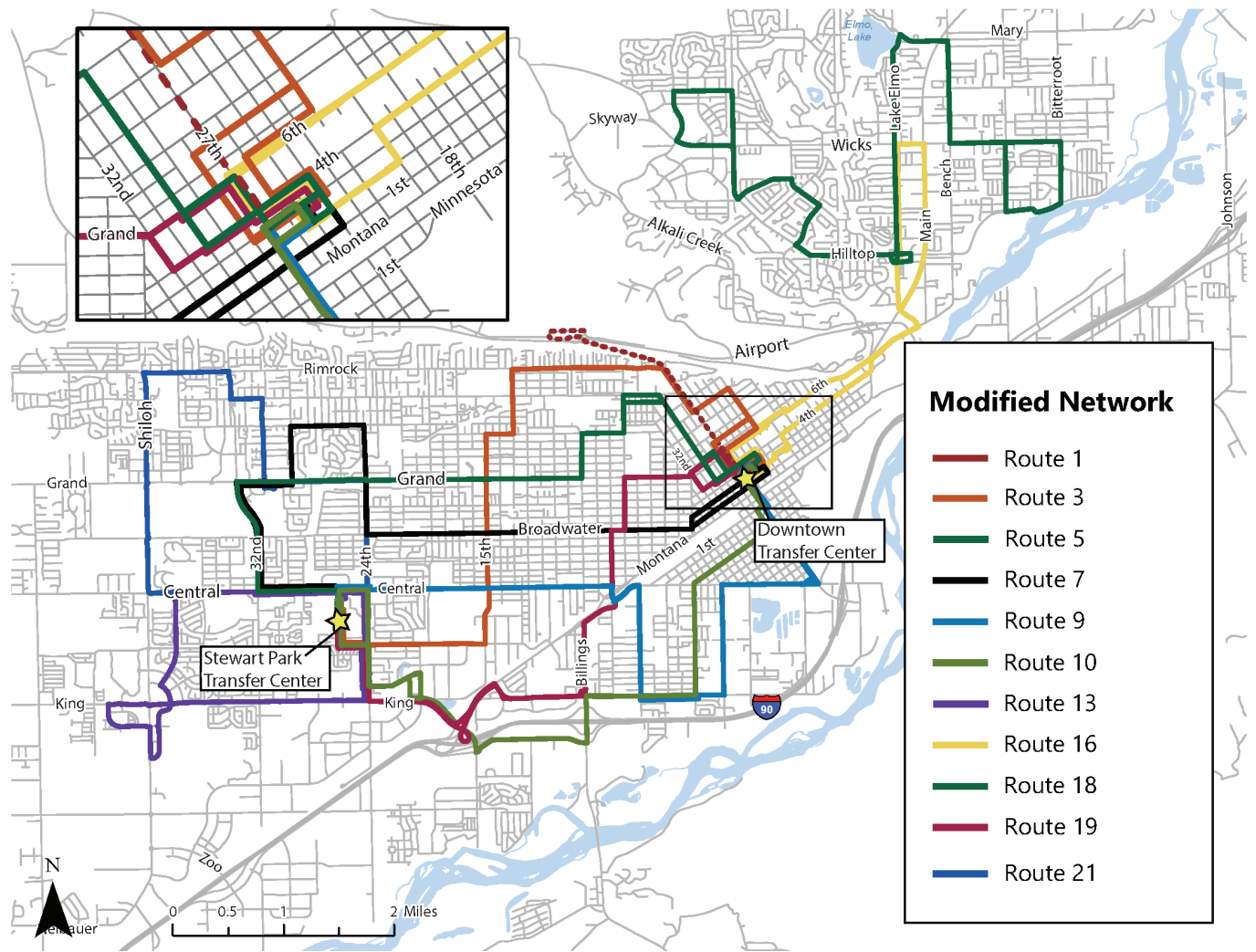


Table 1. Summary of Recommended Redesign Route Changes

Route(s)	Changes
Airport	Becomes Airport Route operated as part of extra drivers added to fill break gaps in schedule. The actual service schedule will be determined as the Redesign is refined through route assignments. The route will not operate as a circulator through downtown Billings.
3	The new Route 3 would be almost identical to the existing route with small routing changes through downtown to provide coverage.
5 A/B	Becomes singular, bidirectional Route 5 to improve legibility. Route 5 would no longer run in Shiloh Rd corridor, but travel on Zimmerman Trail and 32 St W. Access to/from downtown would be through the medical corridor on N 30 th Street.
7	Route 7 (Broadwater) would follow mostly the same route. It would not travel as far west as Shiloh Rd and provide some service north of Broadwater Ave on Colton Blvd and Grand Ave. to access Will James Middle School.
9	The new Route 9 (Central) would cover the same area as the old route with bidirectional service, with the exception of some rerouting in the South Central neighborhood to provide adequate coverage.
10	The new route 10 (Southside) would cover generally the same area as the current Route 10 but it would serve part of the South Central neighborhood where Route 19 currently covers. West of Laurel Road, the new Southside would take a more direct route to Stewart Park Transfer Center.
13	The new Route 13 (Westend) is a simplified and shorter version of the existing route. It would travel in a clockwise loop starting from Stewart Park Transfer Center and serve Shiloh’s Crossing and other retail locations West of S Shiloh Rd.
14	Route 14 (Alkali) would suspend service. Most of the service area would be replaced by other modified routes.
15	Route 15 (Hilltop) would suspend service. Most of the service area would be replaced by other modified routes.
16	The new Route 16 would be one of two routes serving Billings Heights. The new route would be much shorter than routes currently traveling between downtown and the Heights. Proposed Route 16 provides the opportunity for fast and frequent (every 30 minutes) trips from The Heights to downtown Billings, and connections to the rest of the city.
17	Route 17 (Bench) would suspend service. Most of the service area would be replaced by other modified routes.
18	Route 18 (Heights) would change to a bidirectional “circulator” that travels across Billings Heights without returning to downtown Billings. Access to other routes in the network would be provided through the higher frequency Route 16.
19	Route 19 (The Loop) would change significantly. The new route would provide more service south and southwest of downtown. It would also expand west and end at Stewart Park Transfer Center.
24	Route 24 (Poly) would suspend service. The new system would continue to provide service to the high activity destinations of Route 24.

Route by Route Changes

[Airport \(1 MET-Link Replacement\)](#)

The MET-Link (Route 1) in its current configuration provides three primary functions:

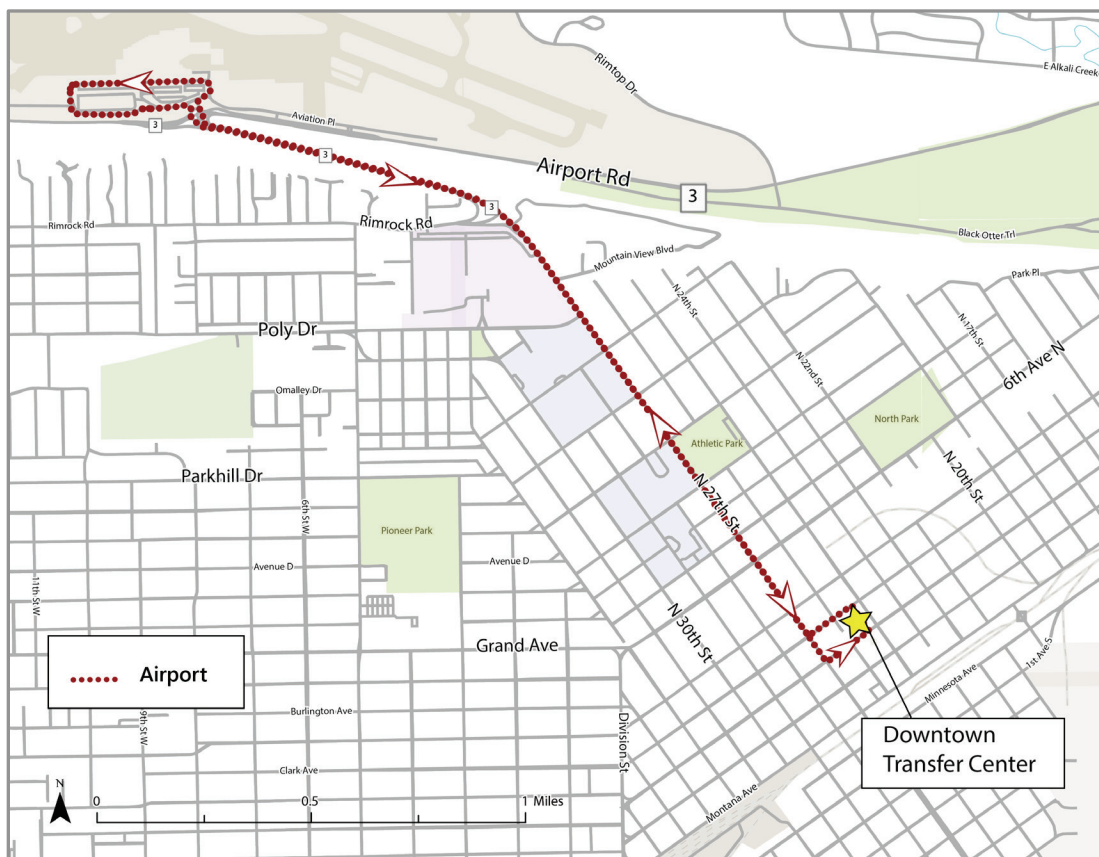
- Connects the medical corridor, including St Vincent Hospital with the downtown transit center that provides connectivity to the remainder of the city.
- Provides a downtown circulator.
- Provides a service connection to Billings Logan International Airport.

The area of downtown circulator coverage is relatively easily/conveniently walkable. Thus, as part of the Redesign, the cost associated with this function was scrutinized relative to the benefit provided. The result was a recommendation to eliminate the circulator function provided through the MET-Link (Route 1), while retaining the airport service element. The other two functions (medical corridor connectivity and access to the airport) are retained in the Redesign through:

- Routing the Grand (Route 5) along N 30th Street to serve the medical corridor from the west side.
- Operating the Crosstown (Route 3) in the N 27th street corridor to provide walkable service to the medical corridor from the east.

In the base Redesign network, both the Grand (Route 5) and the Crosstown (Route 3) would run on a 30-minute schedule from/to the downtown transit center. The proposed changes as part of the Redesign would provide more opportunities for connectivity to the Stewart Park Transit Center, while retaining convenient service to/from downtown. Service to the airport would be retained as part of the “Extras” trips whose primary function is to fill in schedule gaps resulting from scheduled, required driver breaks. The route for the “Extras” trips is displayed in Figure 3. Using Extras drivers, there would be time to both the fill in the schedule gaps and retain service to the airport.

Figure 3. Airport Route (MET-Link Replacements)



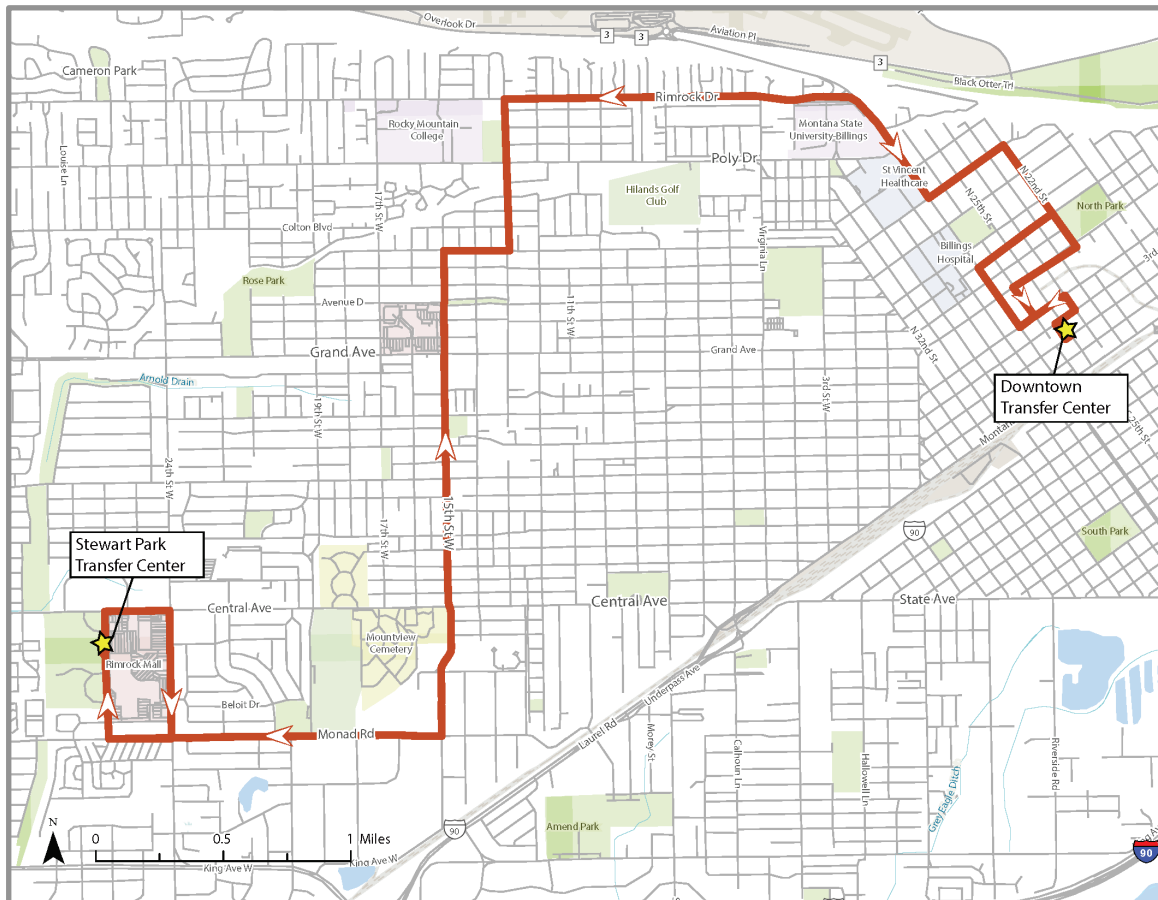
Crosstown (Route 3)

In the Redesign, the general service area of the Crosstown (Route 3) is retained; however, there are several locational adjustments to the routing, including:

- Travel in/out of downtown on N 27th Street from N 30th Street (Note: Grand Route is changed to replace the N 27th Street service area)
- Rimrock Drive rather than Poly Drive from N 27th to Rocky Mountain College (Note: Grand Route is changed to provide some Poly Drive service)

The more significant change/improvement provided through the Redesign concept is that frequency of service for the Crosstown (Route 3) doubles to 30 minutes from the current 60-minute service.

Figure 4. Redesign Network Crosstown (Route 3)

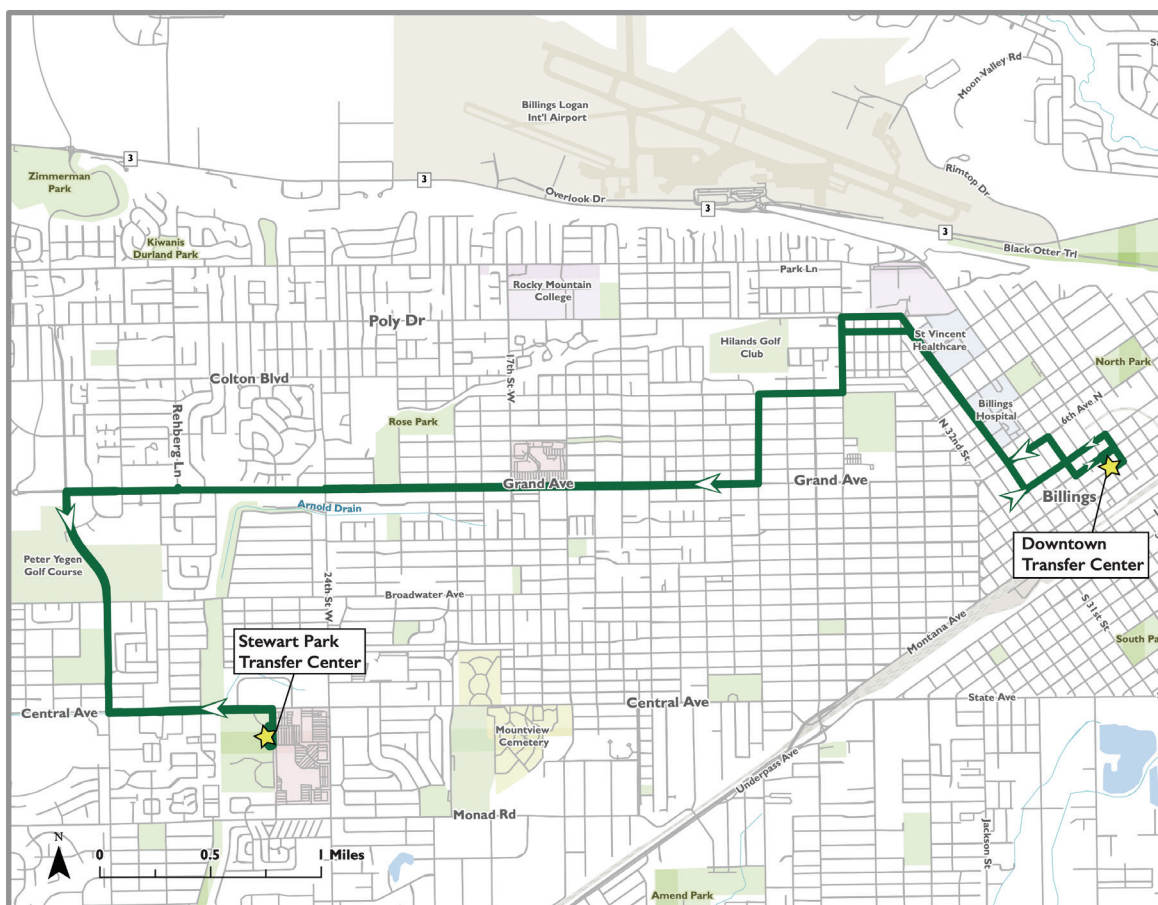


Grand (Route 5)

Primary revisions to the Grand Routes (A and B) result in removing the loop operations on the west end, truncating the western reach of the route from Shiloh Road to 32nd Street W and adjusting the route to serve the medical corridor outside downtown. Routing changes establish a completely bidirectional path that would continue to be operated with two buses running opposite time schedules from Stewart Park and the downtown transit center. Critical to the route is retaining a 30-minute service frequency.

Changes made to the route in/out of downtown ensure walkable access to medical uses along N 30th Street, including Billings Hospital and St. Vincent Healthcare. Modifying the route to include the medical corridor also provides a logical connection to the Pleasant View Apartments area, which is a higher density residential area that does not have very direct service with the current network.

Figure 5. Redesign Network Grand (Route 5 A/B)



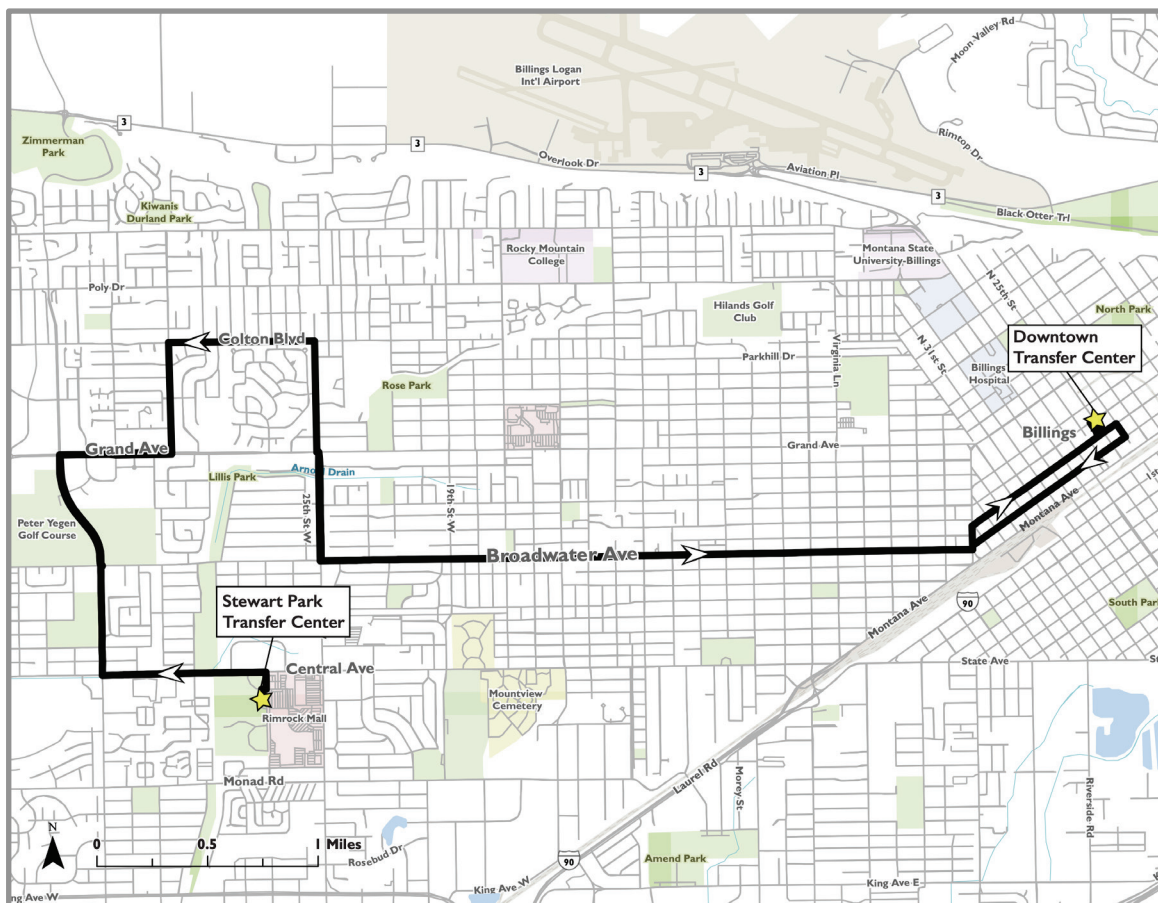
Broadwater (Route 7)

Modifications to Broadwater (Route 7) proposed as part of the Redesign network support the following:

- Reallocation of relatively unproductive service on Shiloh Road to 32nd Street W. The drainageway running along the west side of Shiloh Road interferes with the ability to provide a west side walkway as there is on the east. The arterial nature of the roadway creates a barrier to the convenient street crossing needed to support boardings and alightings in this area. These conditions along with how far uses are set back from Shiloh Road on the west side result in poor productivity. Thus, relocating the service to another path (32nd Street) has the potential to improve use and productivity of the route.
- A final key element of the route change is to provide convenient all-day access to Will James Middle School via the 24th Street-Colton Boulevard-Rehberg Lane segment. Through all-day access, the need to operate a separate school tripper in the morning and afternoon is eliminated. The need for a deviation to provide a closer morning drop-off and afternoon pick-up can be determined as the more detailed route analysis is completed. The key is the deviation would be a minor service relative to continuing the school tripper service.

Service frequency on Broadway (Route 7) would be consistent with today at 60 minutes.

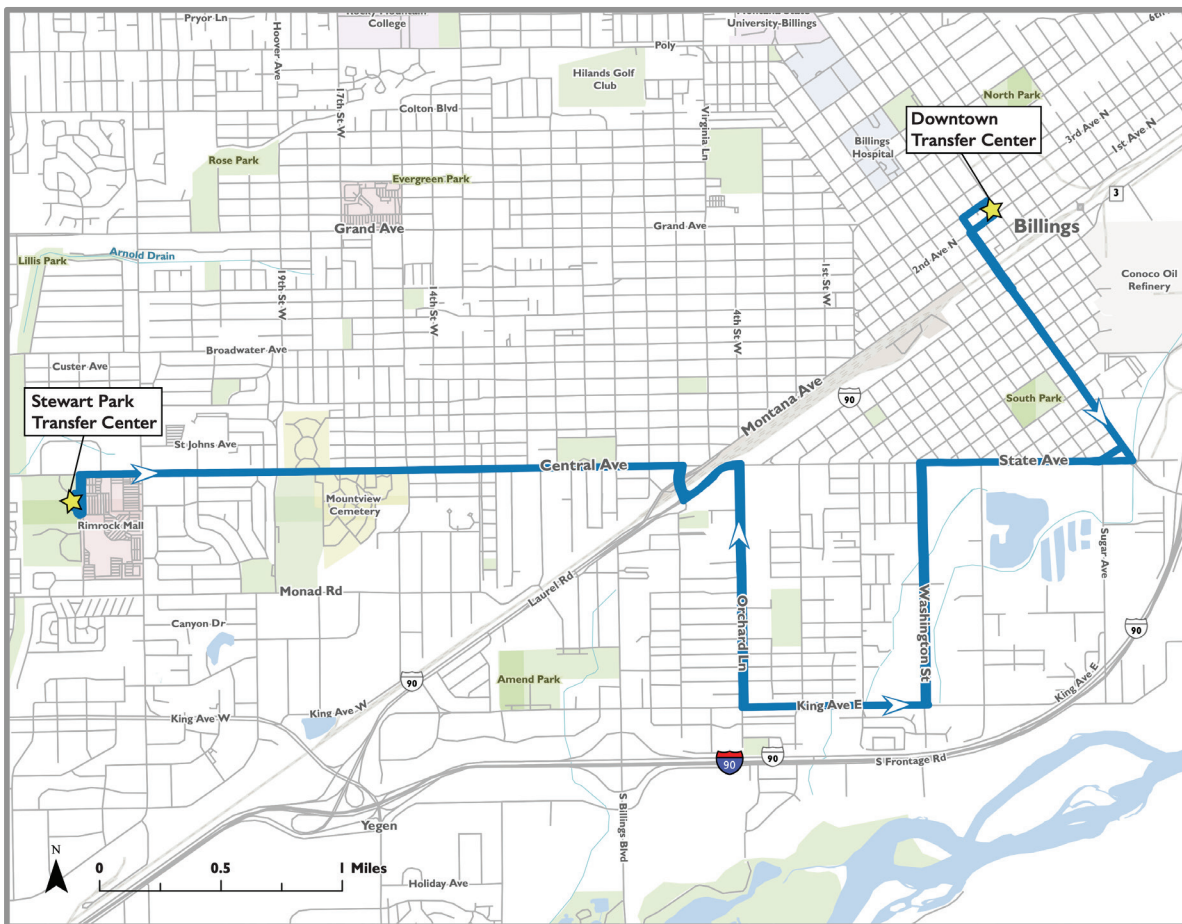
Figure 6. Redesign Network Broadwater (Route 7)



Central (Route 9)

Changes to the Central Route (Route 9) proposed in the Redesign represent a hybrid of the current Central Route and the Southside Route. From the downtown transit center to the Fraser Tower area near S 27th Street/State Avenue, the Redesign concept reflects the current Southside Route path. From S 27th Street/State Avenue, the route generally follows the current Central Route, with the exception of running on Washington Street rather than Hallowell Lane as it does today. The Southside Redesign fills the gap created by shifting the Central Route to Washington Street. The current 60-minute frequency would be retained in the Redesign.

Figure 7. Redesign Network Central (Route 9)

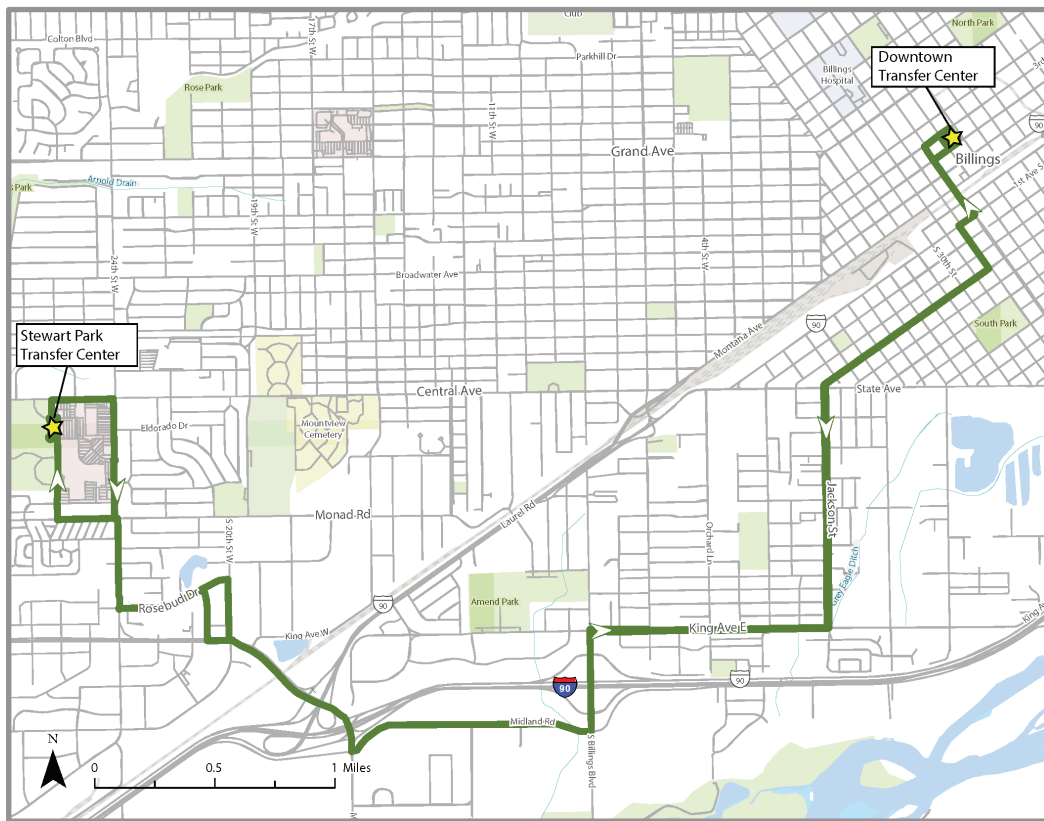


Southside (Route 10)

Changes to the Southside Route (Route 10) proposed in the Redesign connect some areas that today are served by the Central Route and the Southside Route, while also introducing service along King Avenue E and Midland Road north and south of I-90, respectively. The Redesign concept provides a direct connection from areas around Ponderosa Elementary School to retail areas at King Avenue W/S 24th Street, which connects complementary uses that do not have direct service today. In addition to providing the south side residential-to-retail connection, the route also provides a second connection to the Stewart Park Transfer Center and other routes in the Westend.

In the Redesign, it is proposed to provide 30-minute frequency service on the Southside Route (Route 10), an improvement over the 60-minute service today. Figure 8 displays the proposed path for the Southside (Route 10).

Figure 8. Redesign Network Southside (Route 10)

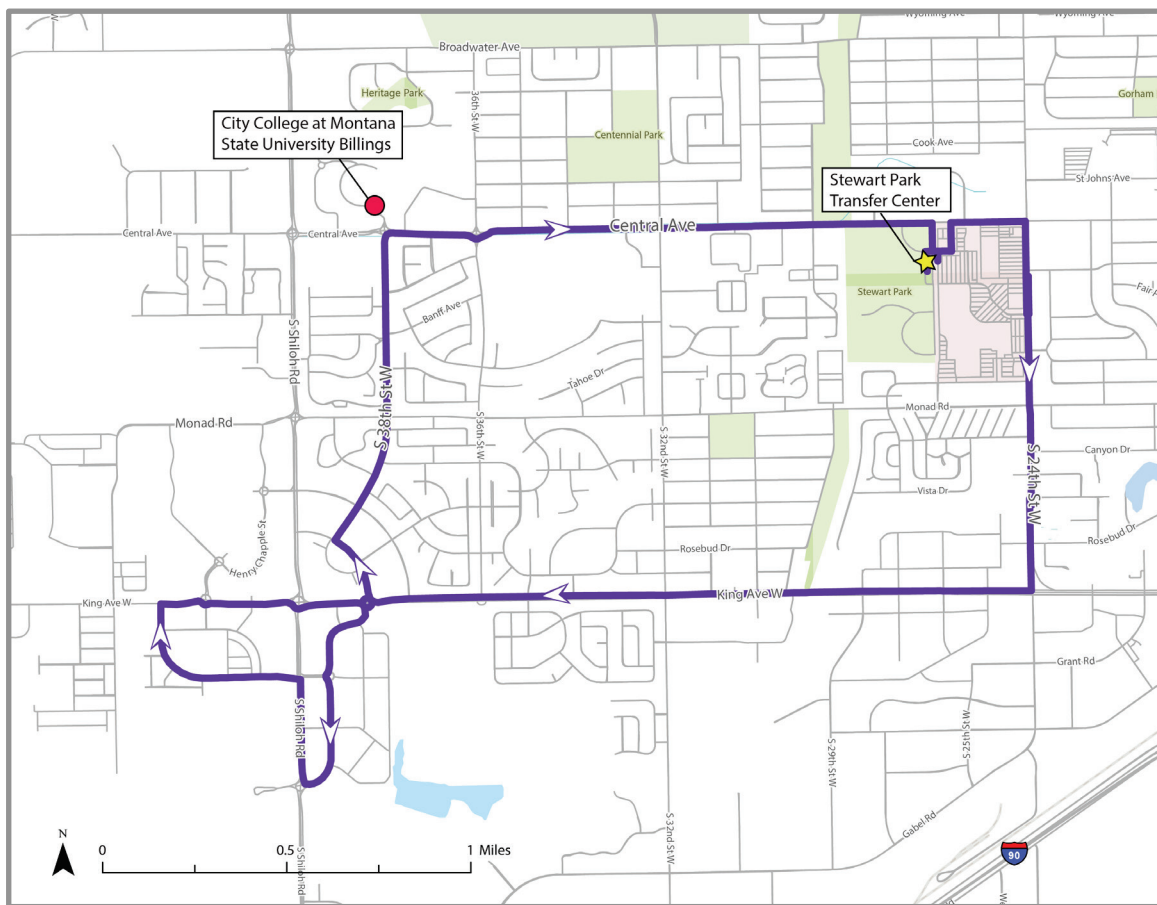


Westend (Route 13)

The Redesign Westend (Route 13) is a shorter version of the existing route; it eliminates the Shiloh Road-Pierce Parkway-32nd Street W loop. The loop portion of the route has typically carried few riders, which could be due to the loop routing that is not very convenient, low density development along this portion of the route and the more auto-oriented uses along the path. Retained in the Redesign is service on King Avenue W to provide connectivity between growing residential areas west of Shiloh Road and retail uses along King Avenue W. Additionally, the redesign maintains service to the City College at Montana State University Billings, as indicated on the map in Figure 9.

While the Westend (Route 13) Redesign provides a loop, which is generally less convenient for customers, 30-minute service frequency provides some offsetting benefit to travelers.

Figure 9. Redesign Network Westend (Route 13)



Billings Heights Routes

The five current routes that cover the Heights have been consolidated to two routes providing all-day service along key corridors. The service concept is made up of two components:

- **Heights Rapid Service (Route 16):** The Rapid (Route 16) provides higher frequency connector service between the downtown transit center and the center of Billing Height retail areas at Main Street/Wicks Lane. Northbound the route would use Main Street to get from downtown Billings, while on the southbound return, travel would occur along Lake Elmo Road. Running along Lake Elmo Road provides direct access to pockets of apartments and manufactured houses. The two-lane section along Lake Elmo Road with sidewalk on either side and bike lanes provides a higher-level multimodal corridor complementary to transit service relative to Main Street, while retaining a continuous corridor south of Wick Lane.

The Redesign Heights Rapid traverses approximately 5.5 miles in the round trip from downtown to Wicks Lane. Thus, a 30-minute route can be provided with one driver/bus.

- **Heights Circulator (Route 18):** The Circulator (Route 18) represents a crosstown route that does not go through a transit center while it stays within Billings Heights. The route provides service within Billings Heights with convenient access and connections between Billings Heights residential and commercial and school areas.

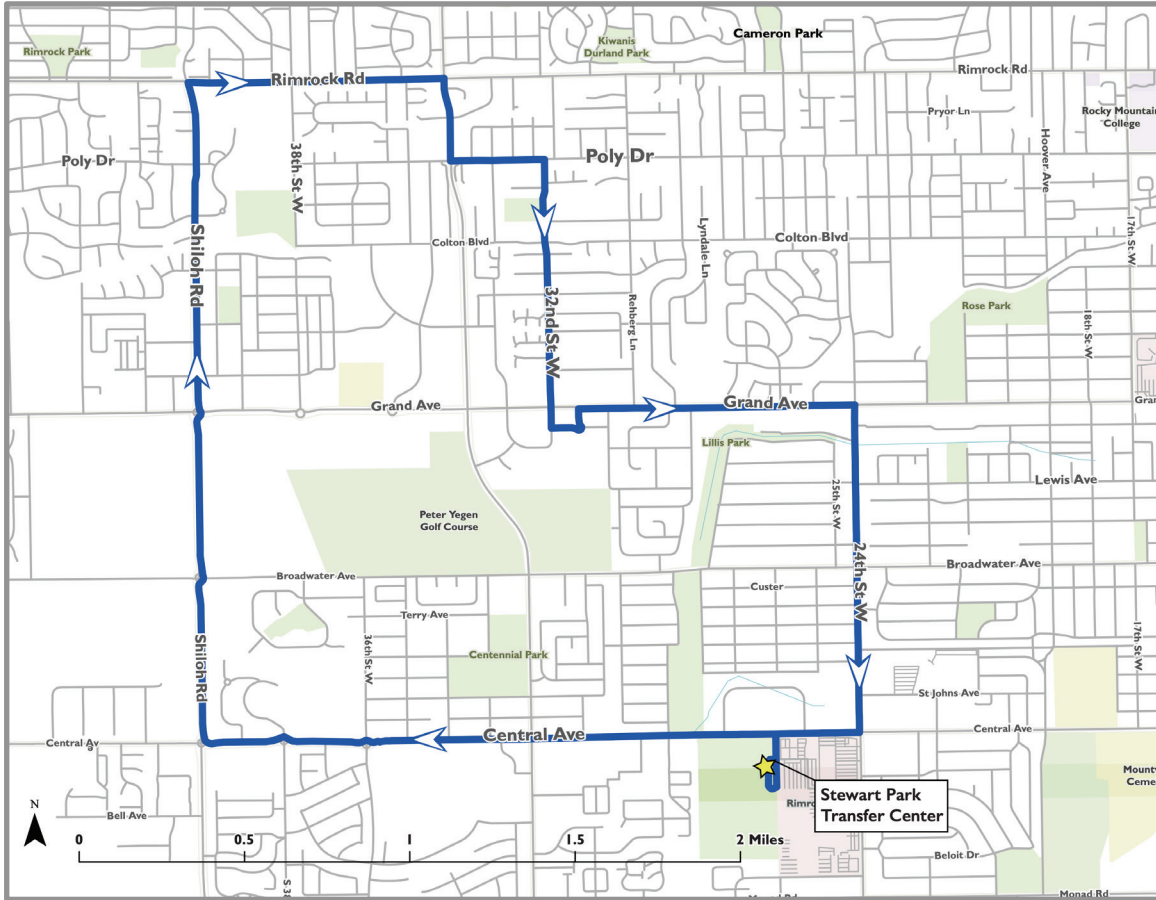
The route is proposed to operate on a 60-minute frequency in off-peak periods and on a 30 minute frequency in the morning and afternoon school peaks to replace school trippers.

The combination of the Heights Rapid (Route 16) and the Circulator (Route 18) provides transfer opportunities along Lake Elmo Road to facilitate transfers to/from the Circulator (Route 18) and other routes in the network through the Heights Rapid (Route 16) that travels to the downtown transit center.

Figure 11. Redesign Network Height Rapid (Route 16)

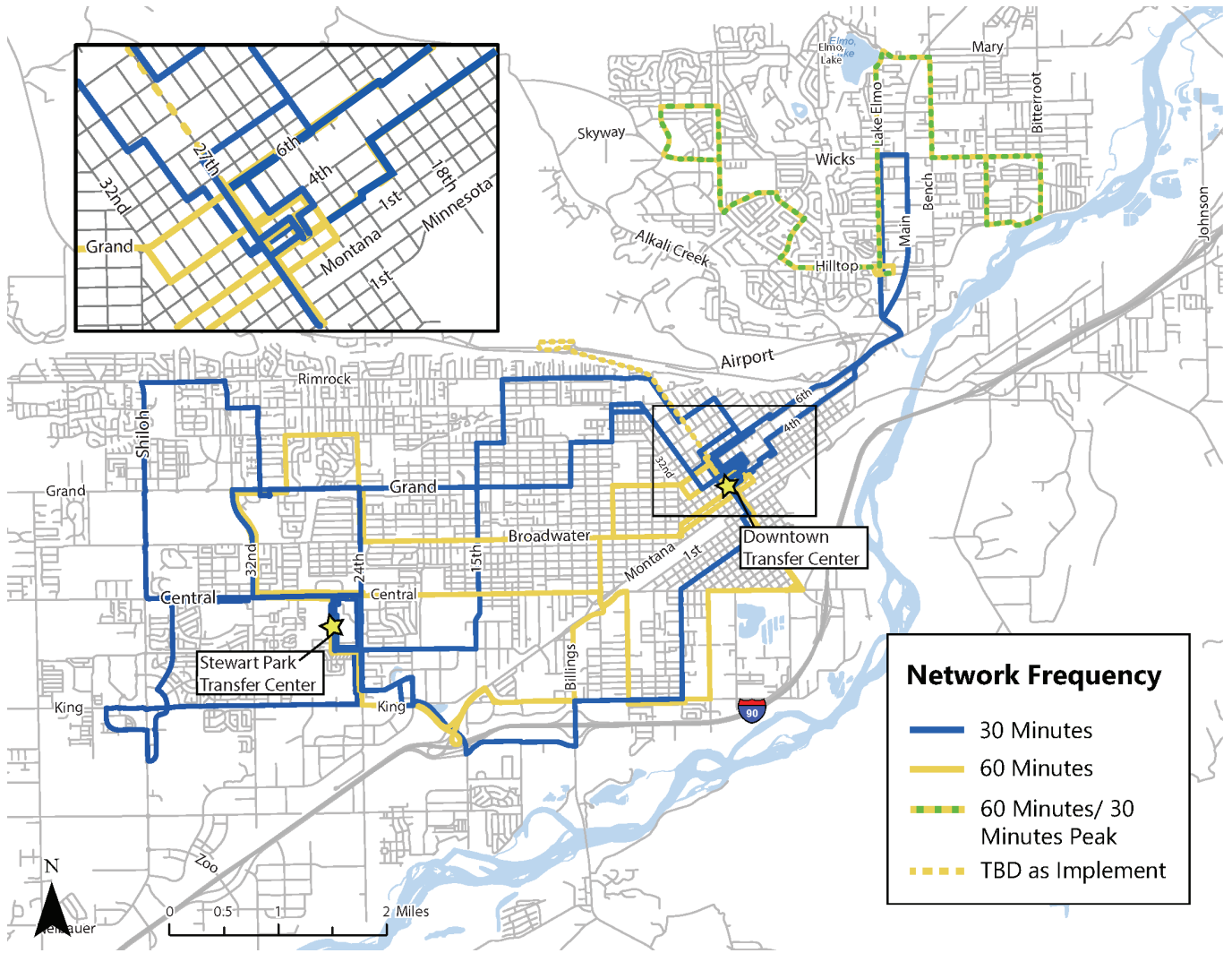


Figure 13. Northwest Circulator Route Path



The expanded federal and local funding would also be used to increase frequency on Crosstown (Route 3) and Southside (Route 10) from 60 minutes to 30 minutes. Grand (Route 5) would continue to provide service every 30 minutes, but as one route rather than a pair that run every 60 minutes. A map with proposed service frequency is shown in Figure 14.

Figure 14. Proposed Service Frequency for Modified MET Network



Filling Driver Break Schedule Gaps

The current schedule includes two 15-minute driver breaks in the morning, two driver breaks in the afternoon and an hour break over lunch. The impact on the schedule is that the departure time from either of the transit centers shifts ahead by either 15 minutes for the breaks or 25 minutes for lunch. Shifting the schedule creates confusion for customers as they need to understand when the schedule on each route shifts and by how much as there is some variability over the range of routes.

MET is proposing to address the driver break schedule issues through assigning extra drivers whose role will be to rotate through the route schedule filling in for regular route drivers as they complete the breaks included in their labor agreement. MET has accounted for the extra drivers in their budgeted full-time employee headcount. Thus, implementing this improvement will not require additional resources and will be implemented following completion of the TDP. The result will be a consistent schedule for each route throughout the service day.

Figure 15. Example schedule for hourly route

Departure Schedule from Downtown

Current	Redesign
6:20 AM	6:20 AM
7:20 AM	7:20 AM
8:35 AM	8:20 AM
9:35 AM	9:20 AM
10:50 AM	10:20 AM
11:50 AM	11:20 AM
1:15 PM	12:20 PM
2:30 PM	1:20 PM
3:35 PM	2:20 PM
4:50 PM	3:20 PM
5:50 PM	4:20 PM
	5:20 PM
	6:20 PM

Schedule Differences

Fill in Current Breaks
 (Adds 2 Trips/Day/Per Route)
 (Minor Budget Impact)

Scheduled Fleet Replacement

Purchase of replacements for fixed route, paratransit and other service vehicles that have met their useful life is an important MET priority. Through replacement of 17 fixed route vehicles in 2021, MET was able to upgrade their fleet, but there are another eight vehicles (22 percent of the fixed route fleet) that will shortly reach or have reached their useful life. Additionally, as paratransit vehicles generally have a useful life of seven years a continuous annual replacement program is needed to keep the fleet of 15 in a state of good repair.

Table 2 highlights the current fleet summary, the anticipated year of replacement and assumptions regarding current replacement cost and annual inflation (escalation) factored into the fleet replacement assessment. While MET was able to replace a substantial number of vehicles in one year, the preference would be to plan on replacing the fleet over several years to better manage the process and the expense of adding new vehicles. Thus, a program based on the following assumptions was established:

- The fixed route buses received in 2021 would be replaced over a three-year period beginning at the first year they are eligible to be replaced. Six vehicles would be replaced per year.
- The eight older fixed route vehicles in the fleet would be replaced when they reach their useful life of 12 years.
- Three paratransit vehicles would be included in the annual budget for replacement every year.

Table 2 documents the replacement schedule and budget requirements for a continual program of replacing fleet vehicles, including non-revenue service vehicles.

Table 2. Vehicle arrangement assumptions

Vehicle ID	FTA Useful Life (Years)	Eligible Replacement Year	Replacement Cost	
			Current Yr.	Annual Escalation Rate
Fixed Route				
1826	12	2033	\$420,000	3.00%
1827	12	2033	\$420,000	3.00%
1828	12	2033	\$420,000	3.00%
1829	12	2033	\$420,000	3.00%
1830	12	2033	\$420,000	3.00%
1831	12	2033	\$420,000	3.00%
1832	12	2033	\$420,000	3.00%
1833	12	2033	\$420,000	3.00%
1834	12	2033	\$420,000	3.00%
1835	12	2033	\$420,000	3.00%
1836	12	2033	\$420,000	3.00%
1837	12	2033	\$420,000	3.00%
1838	12	2033	\$420,000	3.00%

Vehicle ID	FTA Useful Life (Years)	Eligible Replacement Year	Replacement Cost	
			Current Yr.	Annual Escalation Rate
1839	12	2033	\$420,000	3.00%
1840	12	2033	\$420,000	3.00%
1841	12	2033	\$420,000	3.00%
1842	12	2033	\$420,000	3.00%
1818	12	2021	\$420,000	3.00%
1819	12	2021	\$420,000	3.00%
1820	7	2023	\$420,000	3.00%
1821	7	2023	\$420,000	3.00%
1822	7	2023	\$420,000	3.00%
1823	7	2023	\$420,000	3.00%
1824	7	2023	\$420,000	3.00%
1825	7	2023	\$420,000	3.00%
Paratransit				
1878	7	2027	\$90,000	3.00%
1886	7	2018	\$90,000	3.00%
1879	7	2027	\$90,000	3.00%
1888	7	2021	\$90,000	3.00%
1889	7	2022	\$90,000	3.00%
1890	7	2022	\$90,000	3.00%
1891	7	2022	\$90,000	3.00%
1892	7	2024	\$90,000	3.00%
1893	7	2024	\$90,000	3.00%
1872	7	2025	\$90,000	3.00%
1873	7	2025	\$90,000	3.00%
1874	7	2025	\$90,000	3.00%
1875	7	2025	\$90,000	3.00%
1876	7	2025	\$90,000	3.00%
1877	7	2026	\$90,000	3.00%
Support Vehicle				
1			\$45,000	3.00%
2			\$45,000	3.00%
3			\$45,000	3.00%

Table 3. Fleet Replacement Timing and Cost

Replacement Year	FIXED ROUTE BUSES			PARATRANSIT			SUPPORT VEHICLES			ANNUAL TOTAL		
	Replacement Cost (YOE)	Cost Share (Replaces 3 Per Year at UL)		Replacement Cost (YOE)	Cost Share (Replace 3 per Year)		Replacement Cost (YOE)	Cost Share (5 Year Placement)		Revenue and Non-Revenue		
		Local (15%)	Federal (85%)		Total	Local (15%)		Federal (85%)	Total	Local	Federal	Local
2022				\$270,000	\$40,500	\$229,500	\$270,000				\$40,500	\$229,500
2023	\$1,835,781	\$275,400	\$1,560,400	\$278,100		None Eligible	\$286,500				\$43,000	\$243,500
2024				\$286,443	\$43,000	\$243,500	\$286,500				\$263,400	\$1,492,400
2025	\$1,460,685	\$219,100	\$1,241,600	\$295,036	\$44,300	\$250,800	\$295,100				\$54,900	\$295,400
2026				\$303,887	\$45,600	\$258,300	\$303,900	\$9,300	\$37,100	\$46,400	\$56,500	\$304,300
2027				\$313,004	\$47,000	\$266,100	\$313,100	\$9,500	\$38,200	\$47,700	\$58,200	\$313,300
2028				\$322,394	\$48,400	\$274,000	\$322,400	\$9,800	\$39,300	\$49,100	\$49,800	\$282,300
2029				\$332,066	\$49,800	\$282,300	\$332,100				\$51,300	\$290,700
2030				\$342,028	\$51,300	\$290,700	\$342,000				\$64,500	\$346,400
2031				\$352,289	\$52,800	\$299,400	\$352,200	\$11,700	\$47,000	\$58,700	\$66,500	\$356,800
2032				\$362,857	\$54,400	\$308,400	\$362,800	\$12,100	\$48,400	\$60,500	\$623,700	\$3,513,100
2033	\$3,700,705	\$555,100	\$3,145,600	\$373,743	\$56,100	\$317,700	\$373,800	\$12,500	\$49,800	\$62,300	\$629,500	\$3,567,200
2034	\$3,811,726	\$571,800	\$3,240,000	\$384,955	\$57,700	\$327,200	\$384,900				\$648,400	\$3,674,200
2035	\$3,926,078	\$588,900	\$3,337,200	\$396,504	\$59,500	\$337,000	\$396,500					
Analysis Period Totals	\$14,734,976	\$2,210,300	\$12,524,800	\$4,613,308	\$650,400	\$3,684,900	\$4,335,300	\$324,745	\$259,800	\$324,700	\$2,650,200	\$14,909,100

BACKGROUND

Transit System Overview

Fixed-Route Service

Billings MET operates 19 regular fixed routes and one school tripper from 5:50 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. weekdays and operates seven variations of the weekday fixed routes from about 8:10 a.m. to about 5:45 p.m. on Saturdays. Most routes operate at one-hour service frequency in a "pulse" setup with buses simultaneously arriving to and departing from the two MET Transit Transfer Center locations. Each route is described below and illustrated in Figure 16.

Table 4. Description of Current MET Transit Service

1	Route 1 – MET-Link serves Downtown Billings and Billings-Logan International Airport. The route travels counter-clockwise around downtown and out and back to the airport along 27 th Street. It operates Monday through Friday with 25 trips per day
3	Route 3 - Crosstown provides service from the Downtown Transfer Center to Stewart Park Transfer Center. Destinations served along the route include the Billings Clinic, Rocky Mountain College, West Park Plaza, and Rimrock Mall. It operates Monday through Friday with 13 trips per day and Saturdays with eight trips per day.
5 A/B	Routes 5A/B - Grand is a primarily east-west route that runs along Grand Avenue and provides service from the Downtown Transfer Center to Stewart Park Transfer Center. The route also serves destinations west of Stewart Park along Shiloh Road including City College. The west end of the route is also a loop along Grand Ave, Shiloh Rd, Central Ave, and 27 th St W. Route 5A operates along the loop counterclockwise and 5B operates clockwise. 5A/B operates Monday through Friday with 26 trips per day and Saturdays with eight trips per day.
7	Route 7 - Broadwater is a primarily east-west route that runs along Broadwater Ave and provides service from the Downtown Transfer Center to Stewart Park Transfer Center. The western end of the route runs north-south along Shiloh Road and east-west along Monad Road. It operates Monday through Friday with 13 trips per day and Saturdays with four trips per day.
9	Route 9 - Central is a primarily east-west route that runs along Central Avenue and provides service from the Downtown Transfer Center to Stewart Park Transfer Center. At the eastern end, route 9 provides service southwest of downtown in the South Central neighborhood to destinations including the Boys and Girls Club of Billings. It operates Monday through Friday with 13 trips per day and Saturdays with four trips per day.

10

Route 10 - **Southside** is a primarily east-west route that runs along State Avenue and Laurel Road. It provides service from the Downtown Transfer Center to Stewart Park Transfer Center. At the eastern end, south of downtown it serves destinations including Riverstone Health, the DMV, and Fraser Tower. On the western end, between 20th St W and Stewart Park, it serves various retail destinations. It operates Monday through Friday with 13 trips per day.

13

Route 13 – **Westend**, as the name implies, provides service around the west end of Billings. The route includes a loop serving Shiloh Crossing, ZooMontana and the V.A. Clinic. It also has bidirectional service along King Avenue W from 36th St W across I-90 to Songbird Drive. At 24th St W, Route 13 loops north to serve Rimrock Mall on Central Avenue. It operates Monday through Friday with 13 trips per day and Saturdays with eight trips per day.

14

Route 14 – **Alkali** provides service from the Downtown Transfer Center to Skyview High School in The Heights, traveling through neighborhoods west of Main Street in The Heights. Alkali operates only weekday mornings, making three trips per day.

15

Route 15 – **Hilltop** provides service along the same route as Alkali. It operates only weekday *evenings*. It makes four trips per day.

16

Route 16 – **Main** provides service from the Downtown Transfer Center to The Heights. In The Heights, Main travels north on Main Street, out and back on Wicks Lane to Skyview High School, then loops clockwise east of Lake Elmo Road. It operates Monday through Friday with seven trips per day.

17

Route 17 – **Bench** provides service along the same route as Main, but in the opposite direction in The Heights (counterclockwise east of Lake Elmo Road, out and back on Wicks Lane to Skyview High School, and south on Main Street). It operates Monday through Friday with six trips per day.

18

Route 18 – **Heights** provides service from the Downtown Transfer Center to The Heights. In The Heights, the route serves neighborhoods east and west of Main Street. Destinations served include Bitterroot Elementary and Elite Dental northeast of Main and Heights Family Practice and Castle Rock west of Main. The route operates Monday through Friday with seven trips per day and Saturdays with eight trips per day.

19

Route 19 – **The Loop** provides service southwest of downtown in the South Central neighborhood. Contrary to what the name implies, the route is mostly bidirectional from downtown to the intersection of King Avenue E and Calhoun Lane. It then travels clockwise

primarily on Midland Road, Laurel Road, and Southgate Drive. It operates Monday through Friday with 13 trips per day and Saturdays with eight trips per day.

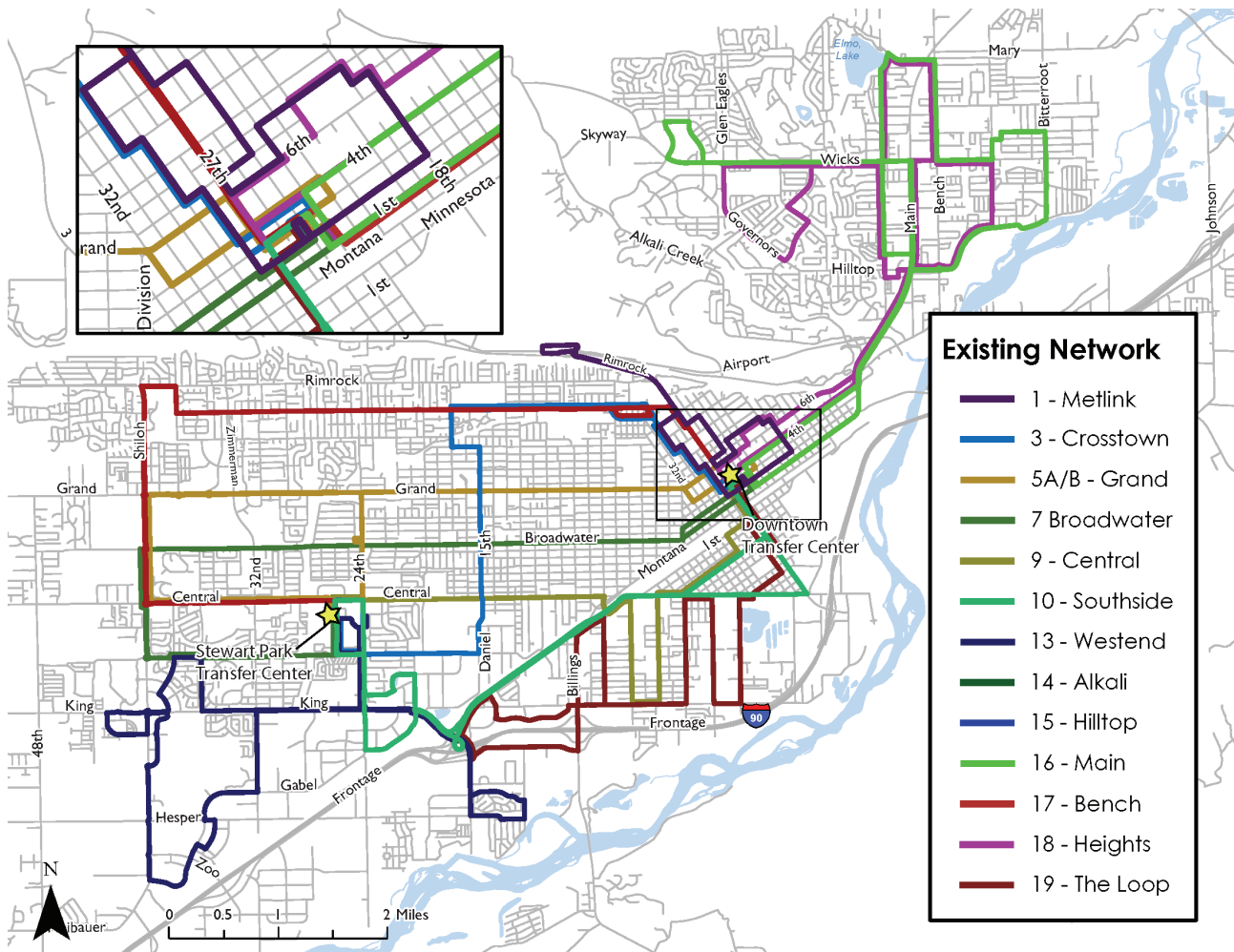
24

Route - 24 – **Poly** is a primarily east-west route that runs along Poly Drive and provides service from the Downtown Transfer Center to Stewart Park Transfer Center. It travels north-south on N 27th Street to get to Poly Drive. At the western end, the route runs north-south along Shiloh Road and east-west along Central Avenue. It operates Monday through Friday with 10 trips per day.

T3

Route T3 – **Will James** is a school tripper route that runs between Stewart Transfer Center and Will James Middle School. It has two runs a day on weekdays to serve students in the morning and afternoon.

Figure 16. Current MET Transit Network



Fares

Riders can pay cash for single-ride fares and request free transfer slips on all Billings MET buses. Single-ride fares and multi-trip passes can be purchased in person at the MET office, over the phone, or online through the UMO website or UMO Mobility Mobile App. Passengers may opt to use their smartphone to pay transit fares or may use a TouchPass/UMO smartcard obtained from MET.

All passengers age six or older must either pay the appropriate fare, or use a ride pass or transfer. Citizens who are age 62 and above or who have a disability or who are a student may qualify to ride by paying a discounted fare. A full breakdown of MET fare structure is located below in Table 5.

Table 5. Fare Structure

MET Transit One-Way Fares		Unlimited Ride Monthly Passes	
Description	Fees	Description	Fees
Adults (age 19-61 yrs)	\$2.00	Adult 31-Day pass (19-61 yrs)	\$28.00
Youth (6-18 years)	\$1.50	Youth (age 6-18 yrs) and Student 31-Day pass	\$21.00
Senior Citizens (age 62 and up) and Disabled Citizens	\$1.00	Senior Citizens (age 62 and up) and Disabled Citizens	\$12.00
Pre-School (under 6 yrs)	Free	Single day pass	\$4.00/day
Transfers	Free	10-ride ticket	\$18.00

Source: MET

Fleet

MET directly owns and operates a fleet of 25 buses to provide service on its 19 fixed routes. Seventeen of MET's fixed-route fleet are recently purchased new 32-foot buses to replace the aging fleet using federal grants and other sources. MET's fleet also includes 15 body-on-chassis small buses to provide service on 10 paratransit demand-response routes. Of the 15 paratransit vehicles, 5 vehicles exceed the identified usable life standard of 7 years or 100,000 miles².

Facilities

MET has three facility locations including two transfer centers as well as the main operations/administration facility which houses fleet maintenance and storage and administrative offices.

Downtown Transfer Center

All fixed routes except for Westend depart from and return to the Downtown Transfer Center at 220 N 25th Street. The structure, displayed in Figure 17, was constructed in 2016 and includes 15 bus parking spaces, sheltered waiting areas with benches, maps, and route information.

² FY22/23 Billings Area Transportation Coordination Plan Update

Figure 17. MET Transit Downtown Transfer Center



Source: MET Transit

Stewart Park Transfer Center

The Stewart Park Transfer Center is located on Stewart Park Road between Central Avenue and Monad Road. It consists of a large bus parking area with unsheltered and sheltered seating for riders transferring between buses (shown in Figure 18). There is also a small building that serves as a driver break area.

Figure 18. MET Transit Stewart Park Transfer Center



METroplex

Located at 1705 Monad Rd, METroplex is the main operations facility and consists of a large building hosting administrative offices, bus storage and fueling bays, fleet maintenance bays, and general inventory storage. MET's bus wash bays are located in a smaller building that is part of METroplex.

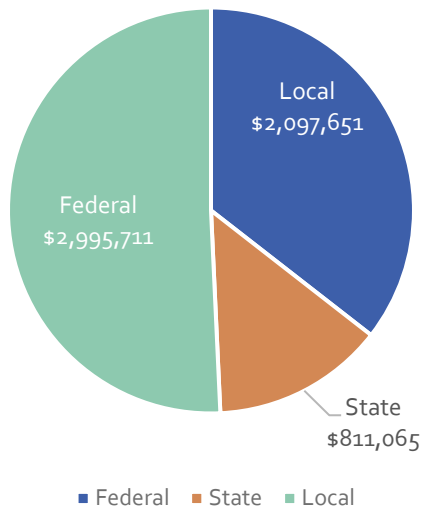
Figure 19. METroplex



Funding

MET operates using several funding sources including FTA grants, Montana Department of Transportation grants generally passed through from FTA funding sources, local mills, advertising, and fare revenues. The annual operating expense budget is approximately \$5.9 million. MET is set up as an "enterprise" fund, meaning MET does not receive funding from the City of Billings general fund; similarly, other City departments and operations do not have access to the transit division funds as the operating mills and revenue are designated specifically for transit use only. In 2021, federal funding composed about ten percent of MET's operating and capital expenditures. The remainder included 83 percent local funding – including fare revenue, advertising revenue, and allocations from the city's general fund – with less than one percent in state contributions (Figure 20). Table 5 and Figure 21 document funding by source over the 2017 to 2021 period.

Figure 20. MET Funding sources (2019)



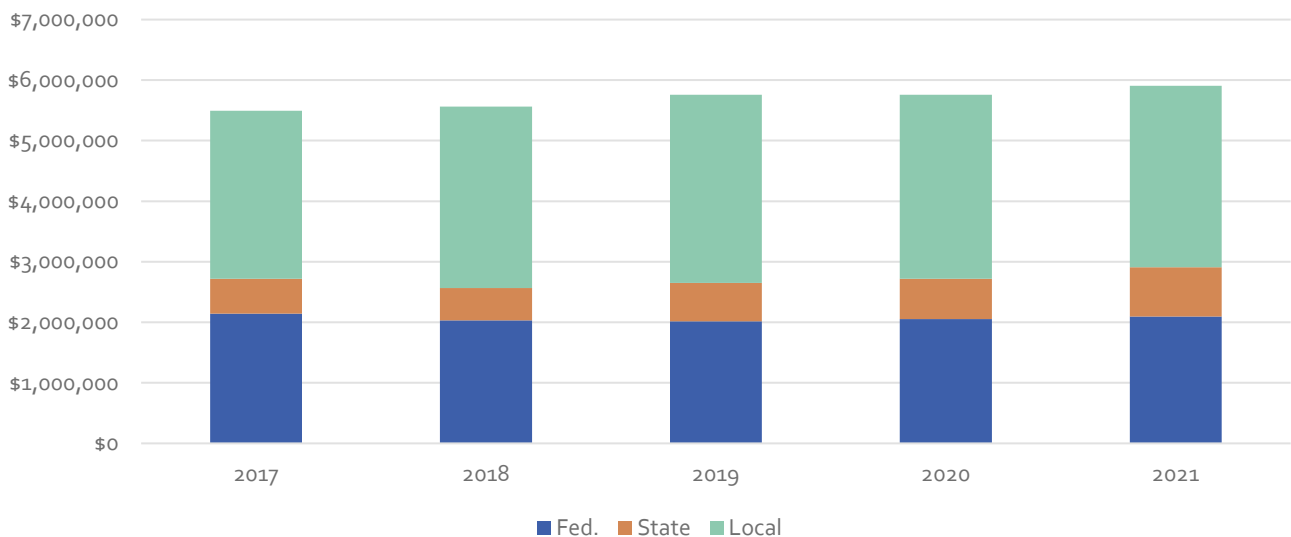
Source: City of Billings

Table 6. MET Transit Funding Sources

Source	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Fed.	\$2,141,999.86	\$2,034,677.24	\$2,018,914.38	\$2,051,593.43	\$2,097,651.42
State	\$579,782.80	\$531,843.96	\$631,195.09	\$665,999.75	\$811,065.06
Local	\$2,772,795.15	\$2,998,455.57	\$3,108,704.04	\$3,038,579.71	\$2,995,711.04
Total (rounded)	\$5,496,594.81	\$5,566,994.77	\$5,760,832.51	\$5,758,192.89	\$5,906,448.52

Source: City of Billings

Figure 21. MET Funding Sources, 2017-2021



Source: City of Billings

Non-MET Services in Region

Apart from MET, there are additional agencies that provide transportation services to distinct groups in the Billings area. They are identified in the Billings Area Transportation Coordination Plan and include, but are not limited to:

- The **Adult Resource Alliance of Yellowstone County** provides a comprehensive range of services which promote the overall well-being of the county's seniors. They provide a limited transportation program to help non-driving adults aged 60 and above travel to and from appointments, social events, and shopping.
- Anaconda-based **A.W.A.R.E (Anaconda Work and Residential Enterprises)** provides transportation services throughout the region to their clients who reside at their group homes. Clients are transported on a daily basis to and from their respective residential settings for a number of reasons which include but are not limited to work, school, after school activities, medical visits, community events, and family visits. Many of the individuals participating in the A.W.A.R.E program utilize MET Special Transit.
- **Big Sky Senior Services** provides comprehensive support services to help seniors and adults with developmental disabilities. These services include personal care, nursing services, safety from senior abuse, transportation to medical appointments and staying connected to the community.
- **COR Enterprises, Inc.** provides vocational rehabilitation and developmental services for persons with disabilities in Yellowstone County and Billings area. COR provides rides for their clients primarily Monday through Saturday. The agency does provide rides on Sundays for special events and services needed by their clients. Most rides are provided between the hours of 7:00 am and 4:30 pm; however, a number of rides are also provided during evening hours depending on the client need.

Many more agencies were identified in the Coordination Plan. A full list of agencies can be found in the Appendix.

Policy Guidance

Transit service in the Billings area is informed by preceding policies and plans created by the City of Billings, Yellowstone County, and unincorporated communities within the County. Table 7 summarized key policies from complementary documents.

Table 7. Previous Plans and Policies

Policy Document	Description	Themes & Connection to Transit
<p>2018 Billings Urban Area Long-Range Transportation Plan</p>	<p>Framework to guide the development and implementation of multimodal transportation system projects for the Billings urban area.</p>	<p>Goal 5: Public Transit and Transportation – Create a transportation system that supports the practical and efficient use of transit</p> <p>Nine percent of public comments referenced transit. Themes include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • better frequency • longer service spans • new service to Laurel, Briarwood, and schools • more stops and shelters • better schedule coordination for transfers • better schedule advertisement • right-sized buses • sustainable fuel sources for buses <p>One key need identified was to implement designated stops by 2025. Other needs, e.g. automatic vehicle location, have been fulfilled since 2018.</p> <p>The LRTP identified a need for MET and the MPO to work together to find funding sources so the service can expand.</p>
<p>2016 Billings Growth Policy Statement and Guidelines</p>	<p>Non-regulatory statement of public values and priorities for future growth within and adjacent to the City of Billings.</p>	<p>Guidelines state that public transit and commercial air service are critical to ensure access to and around the city. They also state a desire for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affordable public transit • Development oriented to transit routes • Construction of interconnected sidewalks and trails • Infill development

Policy Document	Description	Themes & Connection to Transit
Lockwood Growth Policy	<p>Non-regulatory document meant to inform consideration of land use applications and infrastructure investment proposals in the unincorporated community of Lockwood. Required by Montana state law. Includes a preferred land use map.</p>	<p>Sets an intention to evolve with a Main Street-style town center. Provides context for proposals to extend transit service to Lockwood by identifying predominant land uses and safe/unsafe roads for pedestrians. Identifies challenges such as large lot development, dispersed commercial/industrial uses, and lack of sewer infrastructure.</p>
MET Transit Public Participation Plan (2019)	<p>Developed to ensure that all members of the public, including minorities and Limited English Proficient (LEP) populations, have meaningful opportunities to participate in the decision-making process for the transit system.</p>	<p>In addition to basic goals and principles of public participation, the plan defines major services changes (affect 25 percent or more of the system’s revenue hours or revenue miles) and defines minimum public involvement opportunities for major service changes and fare increases. Sets intention to survey customers every two years beginning in 2019. Describes media and methods for MET to communicate with the public and for members of the public to be involved in decision-making.</p>
Billings Area Public Transportation Coordination Plan FY 22/23	<p>Provides an overview of the structure and practices of the Billings Area Public Transportation Coordination Group and Technical Advisory Committee along with a summary of current and anticipated coordination efforts in the Billings area, including prioritized projects for the fiscal year 2023 funding cycle. The group is open to all entities that provide health care, human services, senior services, private transportation, and/or public transportation.</p>	<p>The plan contains lists of the providers that currently coordinate with MET Transit and additional stakeholders who might in future.</p> <p>It also identifies a need to replace paratransit vans, possibly with smaller vehicles than the current bus chassis.</p>
Community Wide Transit Survey	<p>Approximately 600 people responded to a transit survey in 2019. It included questions on transit use, preferences/priorities, and demographics.</p>	<p>Establishes baseline for comparison with 2022 community survey.</p>
2015 Route and Schedule Analysis	<p>The most recent report on transit routes prior to the current study. Analyzes system performance, boarding and alighting, onboard survey results, and transit demand. Explores service scenarios.</p>	<p>Provides context for current study, including recurring themes in survey responses and known issues.</p>

Market and Needs

Analyzing trends and patterns in Billings is a critical task in assessing the community's transportation needs. The following section uses socioeconomic data to develop a baseline understanding of community demographics. Cumulatively, this information is used to:

- Identify locations that can potentially generate the highest levels of transit use
- Identify areas to which transit services should be expanded or introduced
- Inform what type of transit service is best suited for an area

Transit-Supportive Areas

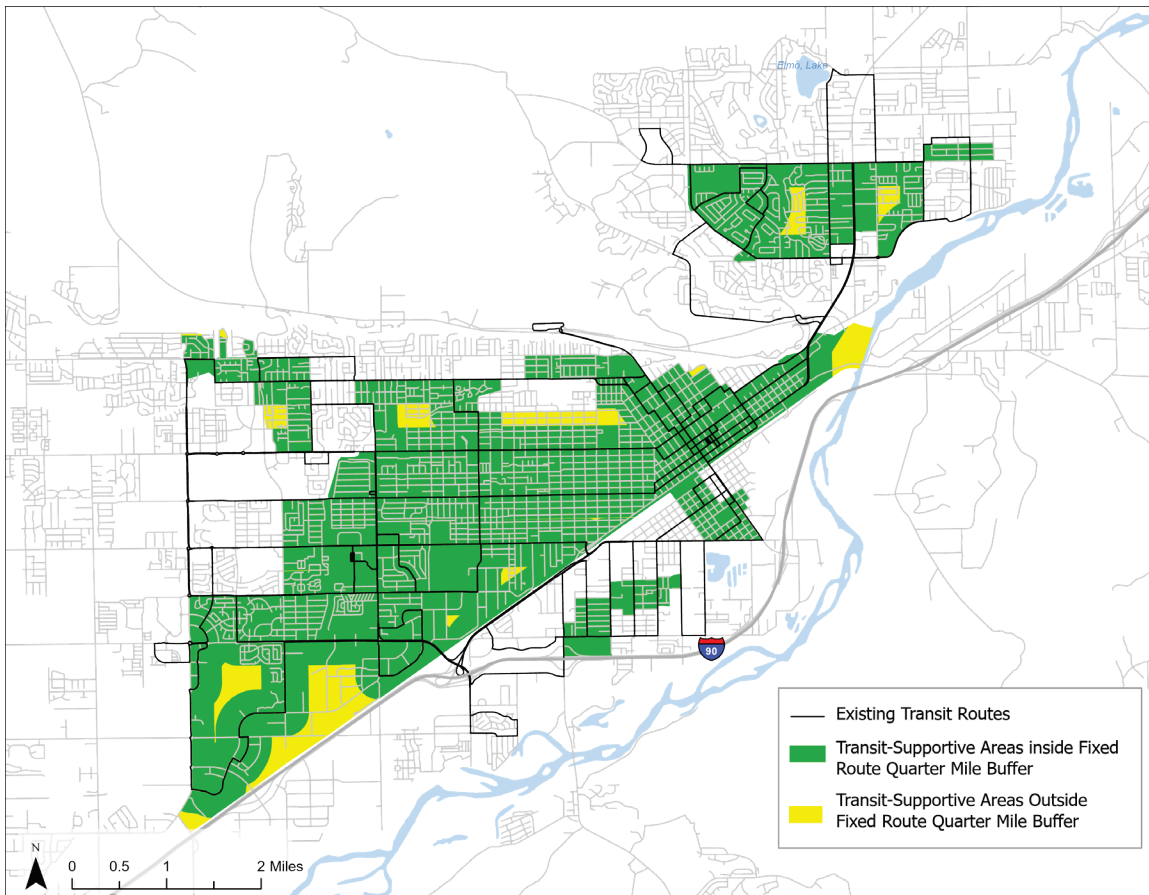
Several factors are often correlated with and suggest the need for public transit service. Among the most important are job locations, density of job locations, and density of housing.

Figure 22 identifies census blocks that are transit-supportive (Transit-Supportive Areas, or TSAs) on the basis of their housing density, their job density, or both. For this purpose, a TSA is defined as having residential density of at least three households per acre or employment density of at least four jobs per acre. This service planning rule of thumb assumes low service frequency (approximately 60 minutes) and partial farebox recovery.³

Comparison of TSAs to the MET network shows that most of the TSAs within Billings city limits are served by transit. However, there are exceptions throughout the city, either at the edge of the bus system or in neighborhoods located between widely spaced bus routes. There are also long segments of the existing network that serve low-density areas. One of the goals of the TDP is to rebalance service allocation so that higher-density neighborhoods can be served, enhancing ridership opportunities.

³For more detailed discussion, see TCRP Report 165, *Transit Capacity and Quality of Service Manual*, Third Edition, pp. 3-19 to 3-20.

Figure 22. Transit Supportive Areas



Demographics

Two of the top demographic factors correlated with transit demand are income and vehicle ownership. People with lower incomes are more likely to ride public transit, as are those whose households do not have access to a vehicle.

The age of residents can also be a predictor of transit use. Children and older adults may benefit from access to transit, and it is typical for young adults of student age to use transit at a higher rate than other groups.

Additionally, it is critical to consider racial equity in the allocation of transit service. Looking at the spatial distribution of race, ethnicity, and English proficiency in relationship to existing transit routes can identify potential equity gaps in service. Figure 23 through Figure 29 show density maps of the demographic

groups in Billings overlaid with the existing MET network. Versions of these maps overlaid with the redesign can be found in the Appendix.

Figure 23 shows the percentage of households in each block group that reported possessing no functioning vehicles in the 2015-2019 American Community Survey. In several block groups, more than 25 percent of households are zero-vehicle. Although many of these block groups are concentrated in the urban core and therefore well-served by transit, two are located partially or entirely outside the quarter-mile walkshed of existing bus service. One notable gap is bounded by Virginia Lane, Avenue D, 10th Street West, and Parkhill Drive north of Grand Avenue. Service to this location would be improved by the final plan recommendations.

Figure 23. Low-Income Population by Block Group

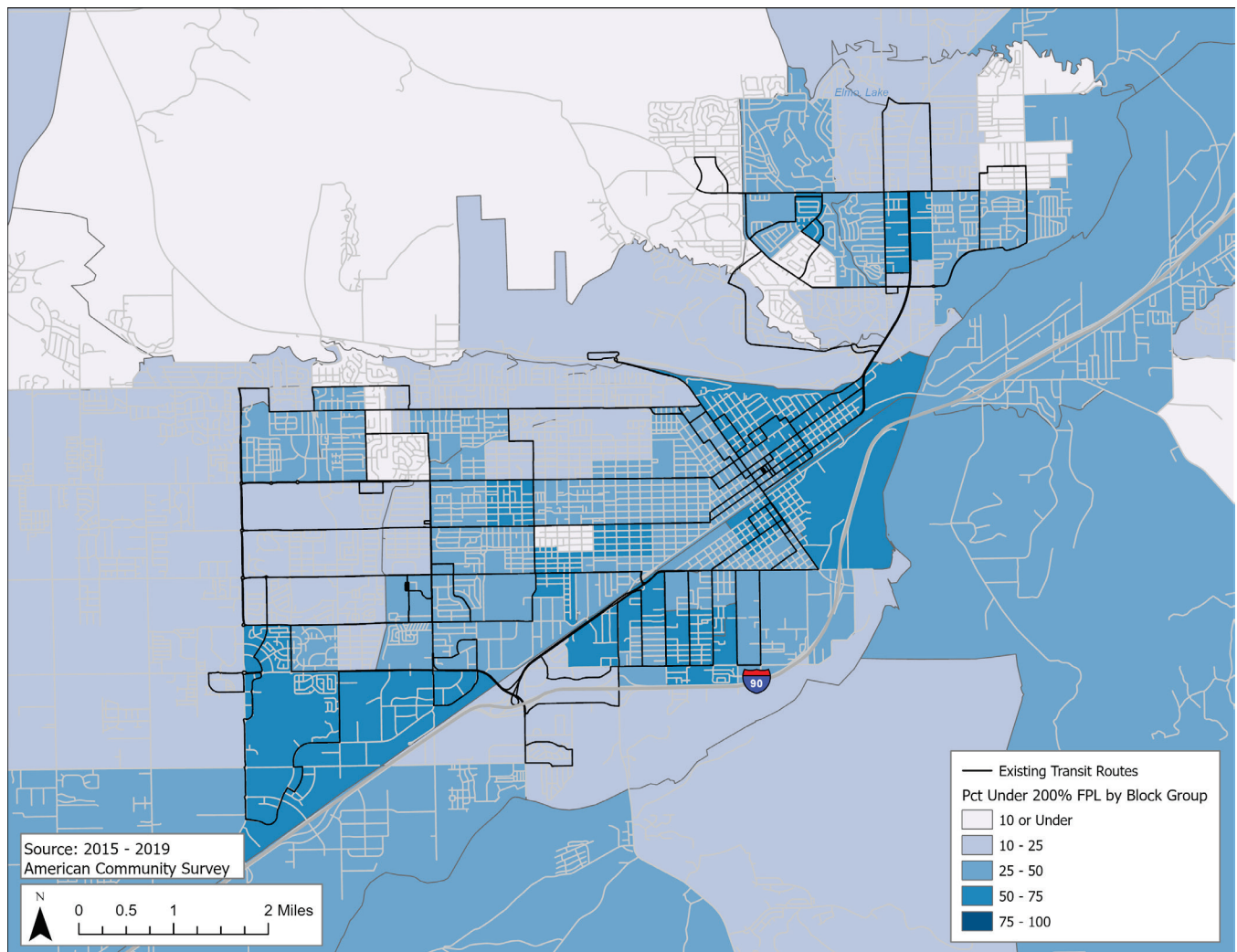


Figure 24. Zero-Vehicle Households by Block Group

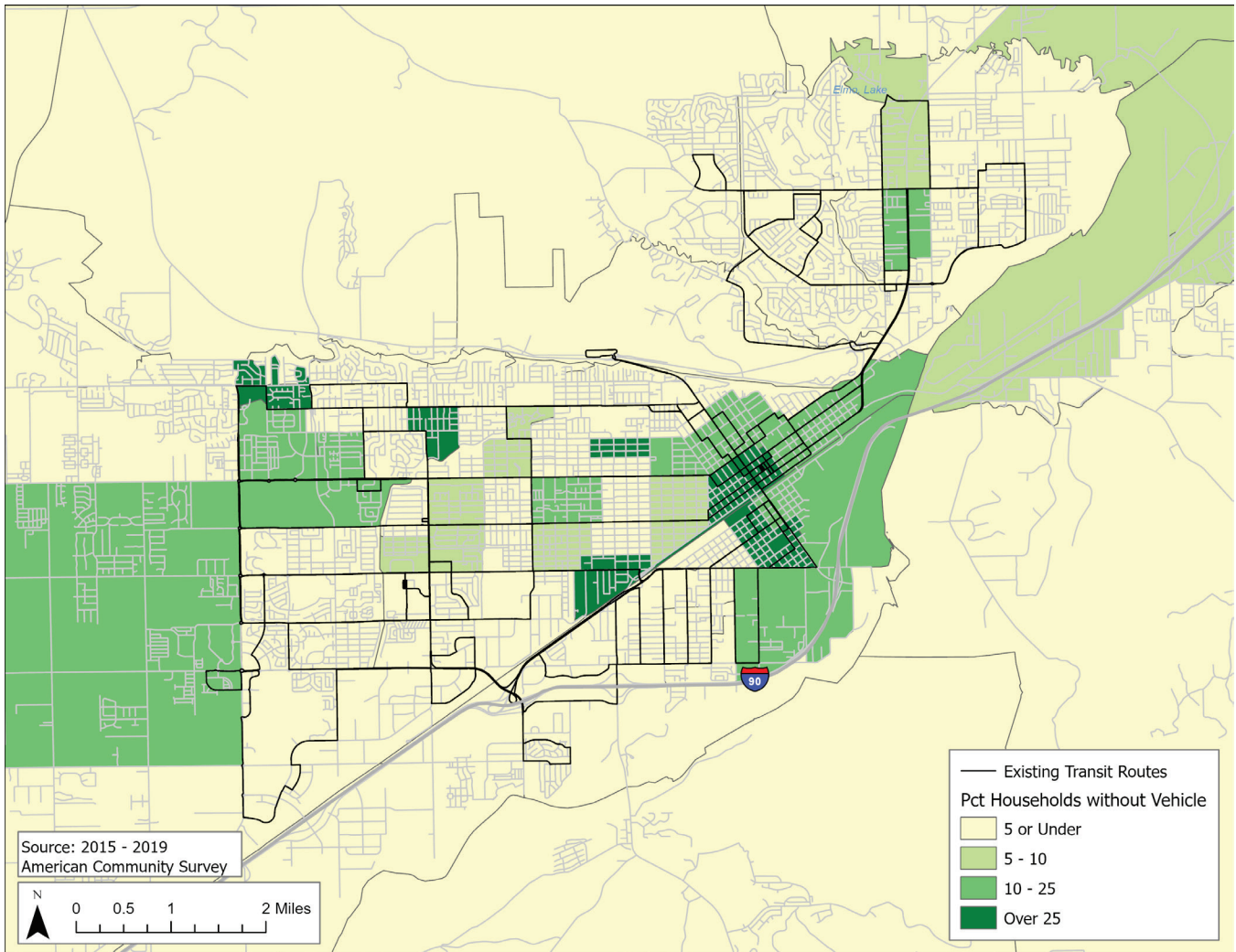
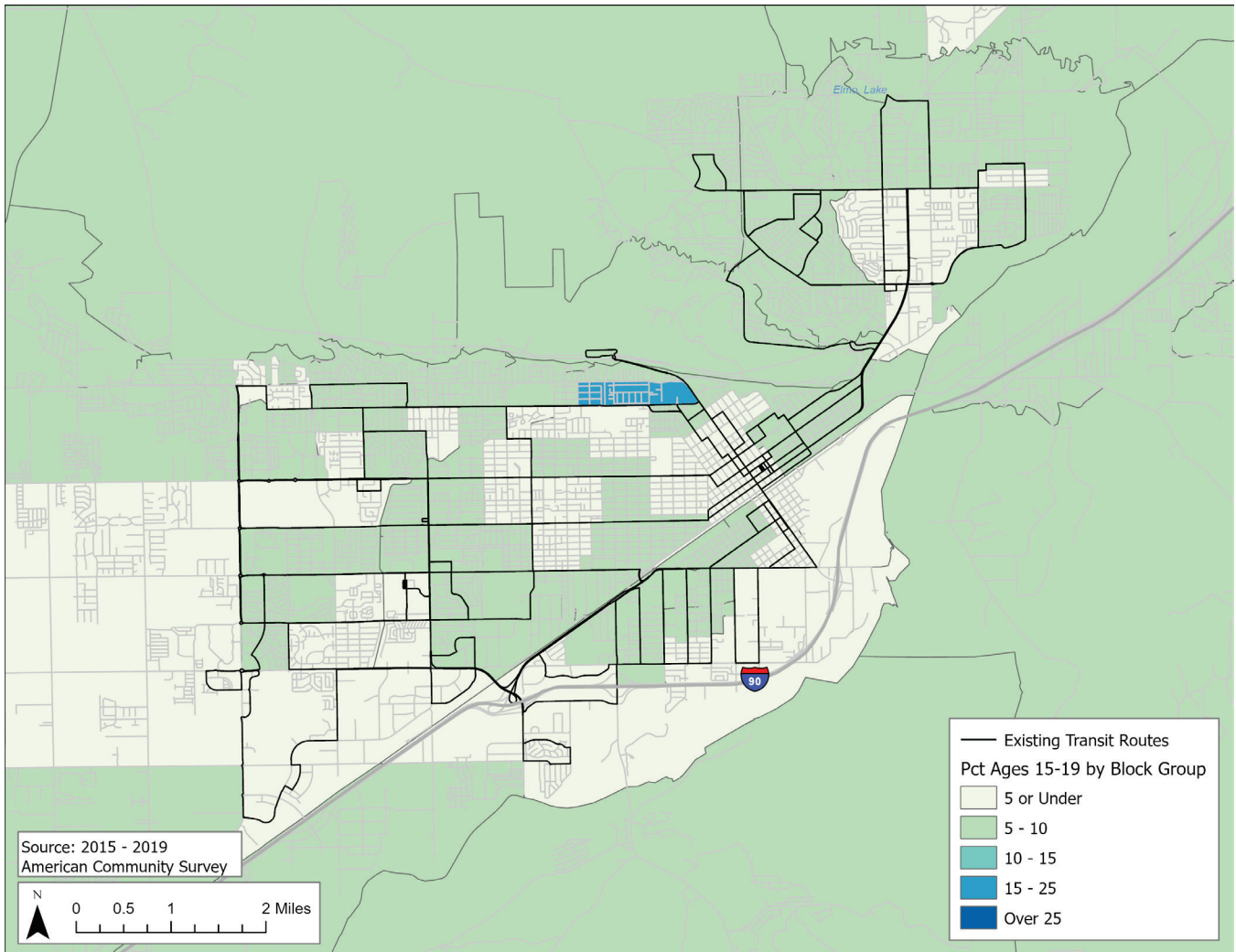


Figure 25 shows each block group's population of children and youth between the ages of 15 and 19. At 10 percent or fewer in almost every block group, the map suggests that children in this age range are evenly distributed throughout the city and surrounding areas. The one exception is the block group containing the Montana State University campus, which likely houses a large number of 17-to-19-year-olds.

Figure 25. Population Ages 15-19 by Block Group



The distribution of adults 65 or older (Figure 26) is less even, with block groups in the city ranging from under 10 percent to more than 25 percent. The map does not suggest that older adults are disproportionately served or unserved by MET. That said, there is some overlap between underserved block groups with high zero-vehicle household counts and underserved block groups with somewhat high older adult populations, which indicates that there are concentrated pockets of non-driving seniors who rely on alternatives to fixed-route bus service.

Figure 26. Population Ages 65+ by Block Group

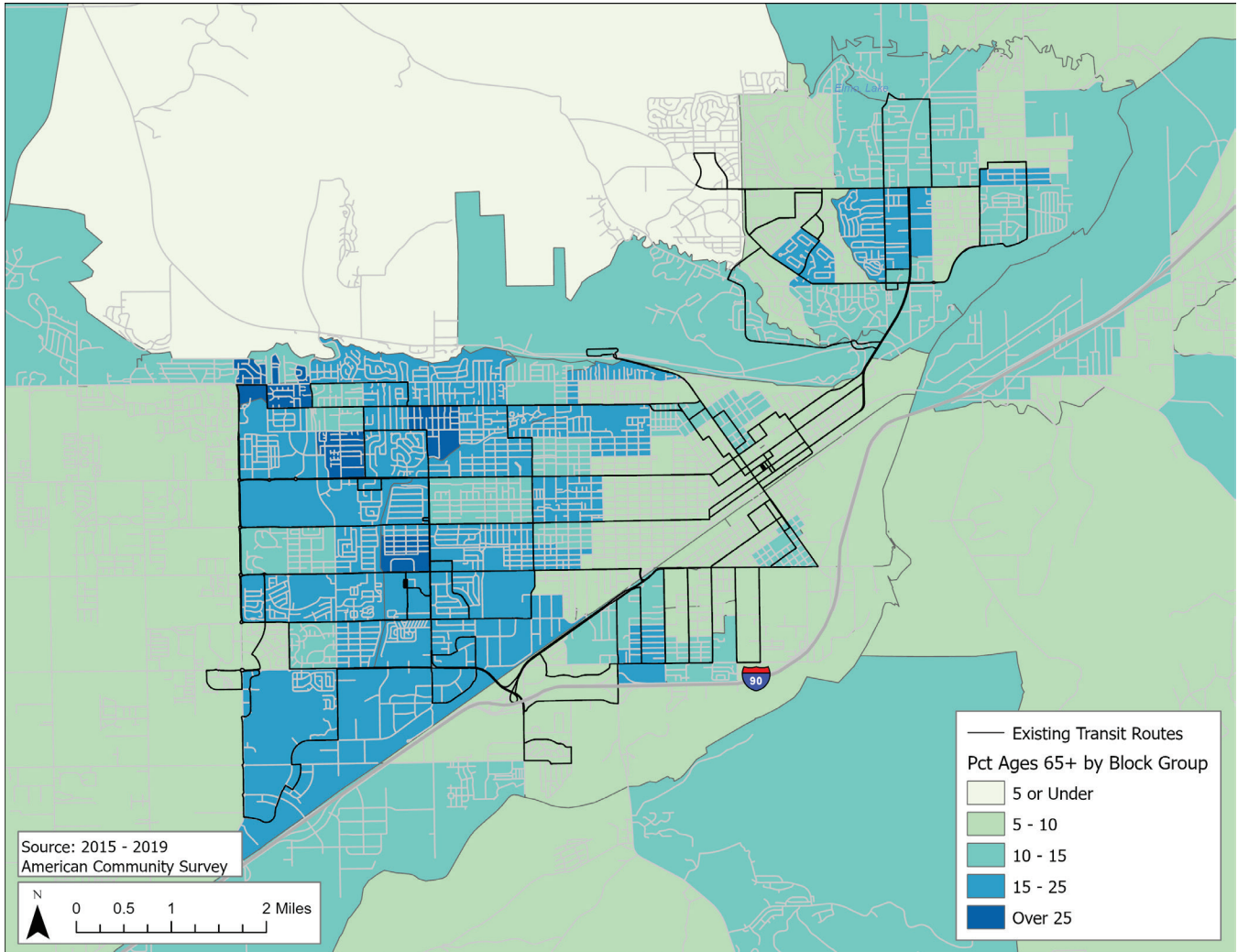


Figure 27 shows the percentage of each block group's residents who are people of color, here defined as those who self-identified in the 2015-2019 American Community Survey as a race other than White Alone. It therefore includes all racial minorities and mixed-race residents. There is a clear concentration of people of color in the city center, although percentages of 10 or greater are also seen throughout the Billings area. Overall, there are fewer service gaps in neighborhoods with higher percentages of people of color.

Figure 27. Population of Color by Block Group

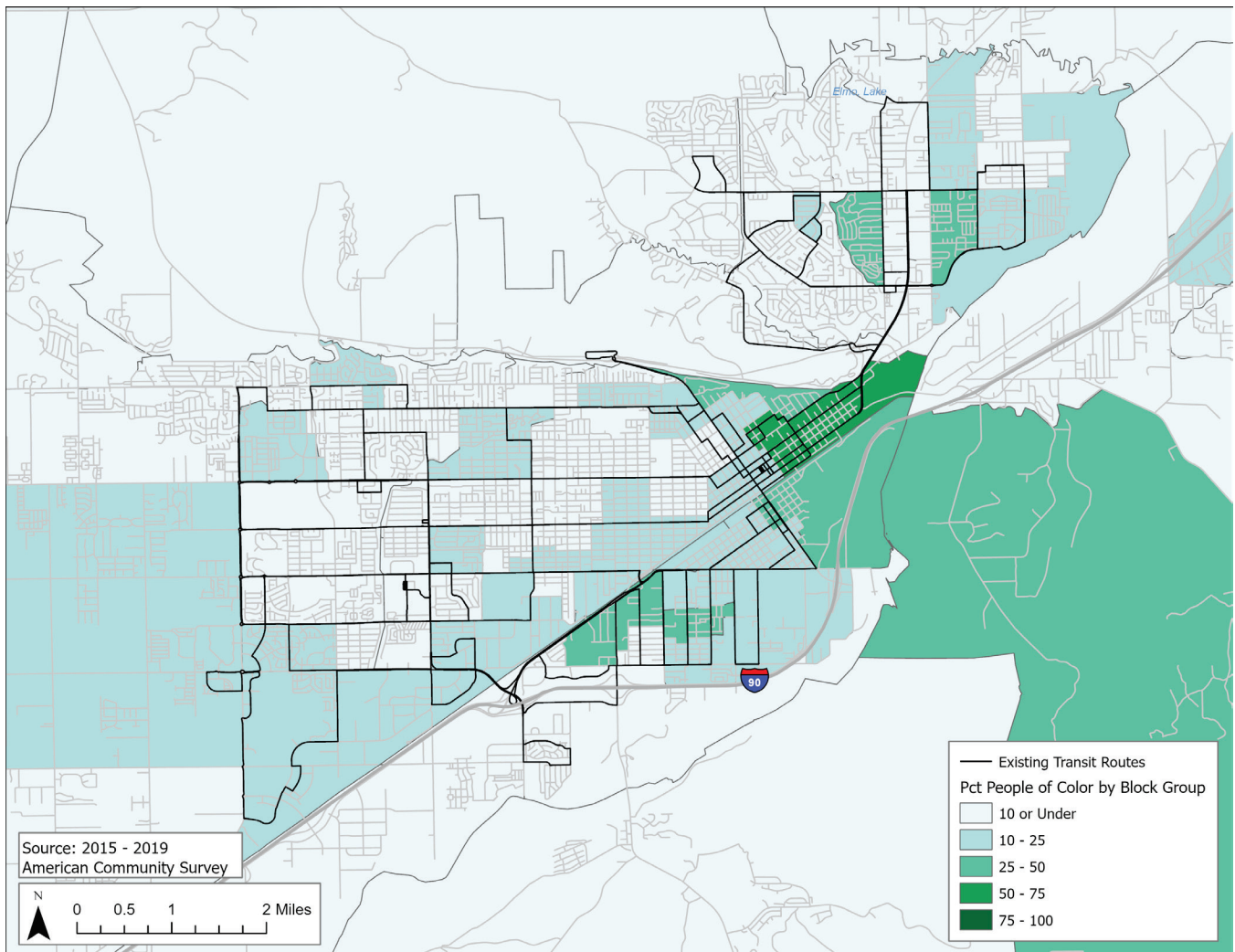


Figure 28 shows the percentage of each block group with Hispanic or Latino origin, according to the 2015-2019 American Community Survey. It includes those who consider themselves both white and Latino. Lockwood has one of the highest Latino populations.

Figure 28. Hispanic/Latino Population by Block Group

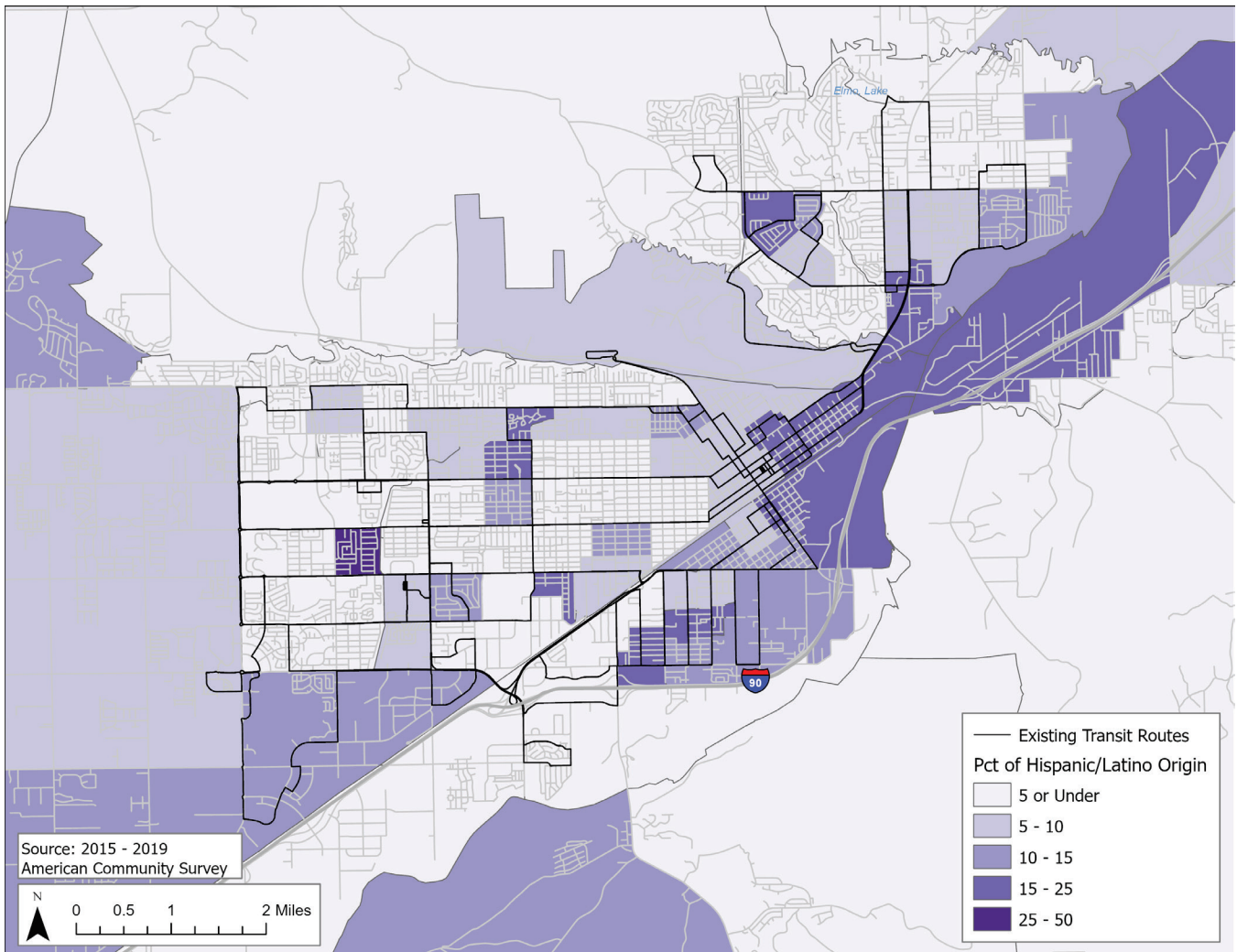
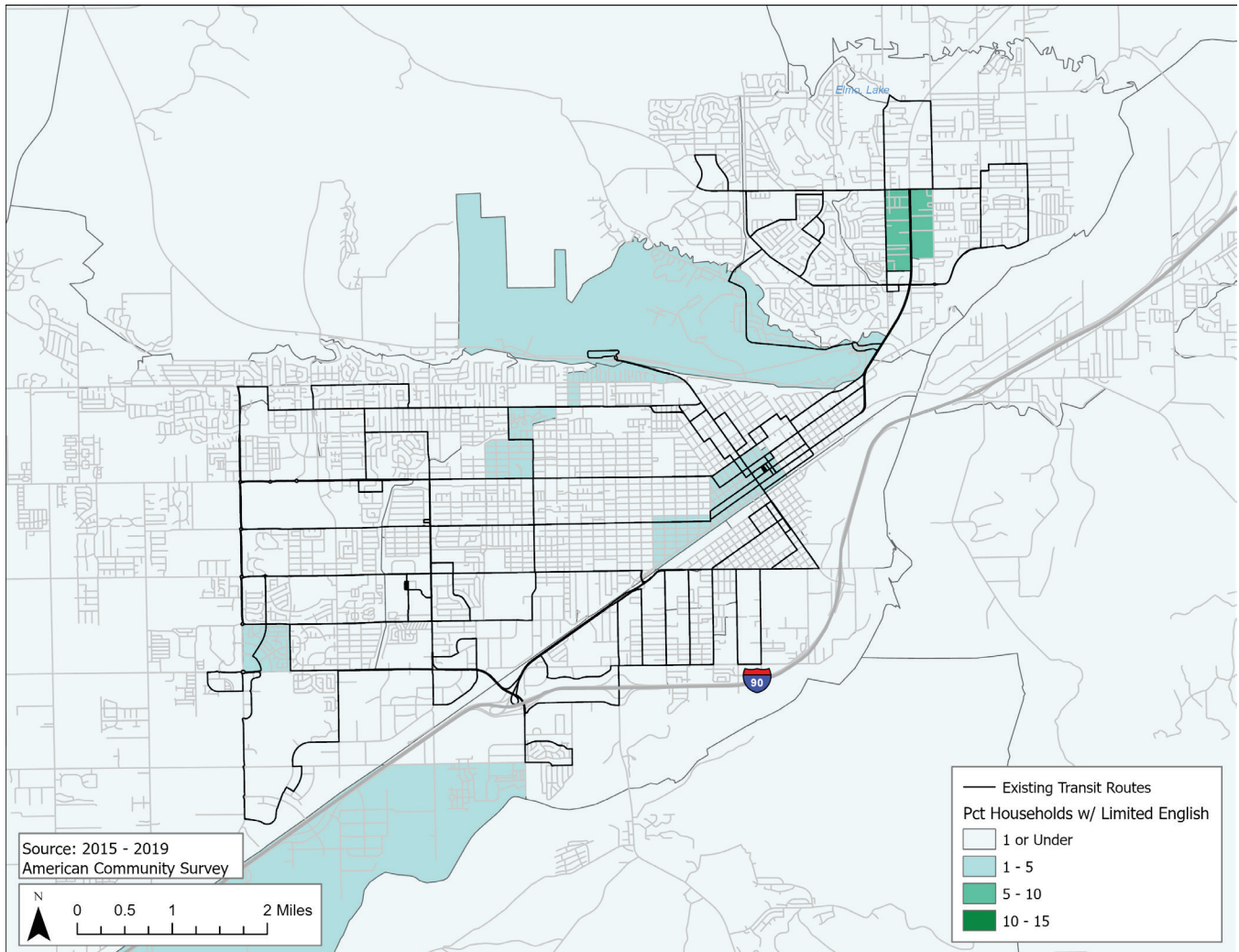


Figure 29 shows the percentage of households with limited English proficiency (LEP). Overall, there is a low number of LEP households and they are fairly evenly distributed through the metro area. One notable exception is in the Heights, where one block group is an estimated 11.8 percent LEP.

Figure 29. Limited English Proficiency by Block Group



Existing Service Review

The following section summarizes existing fixed-route performance at the route level.

One way to assess the performance of a fixed route is to look at the overall usage of the route over the course of a year. Figure 30. Average 2021 Weekday Boardings by Route Figure 30 shows the average number of boardings per day in each month of 2021 for each of the weekday routes (excluding trippers). At a glance, it demonstrates that the system saw its highest use levels September to December – a schedule that suggests schools make a large contribution to ridership. Routes 14 through 18 particularly stand out as routes whose population swelled with school schedules and contracted during the summer.⁴ Throughout the year, the system saw its highest overall ridership on 5A and 5B.

Figure 31 examines the Saturday routes in the same way. Taken altogether, the Saturday routes saw their highest use (more than total 350 boardings per day) in March, July, October, and November. This is not unexpected for Saturday service. The distribution of riders across routes remained roughly constant throughout the year. Route 5 again had the best performance in terms of total ridership, followed by Route 18.

However, looking only at total boardings does not paint a complete picture, as some routes run more trips per day than others. Figure 32 takes the weekday ridership data from July through December 2021 and compares it with the number of weekday service hours in that same six-month time frame.

In this analysis, Routes 14 and 16 outperform Route 5. Route 14 offered between 45 and 55 hours of service each month, but its ridership numbered in the hundreds (Table 8). The lowest ratio of boardings to service hours was found on Route 24, one of the better-performing routes in terms of overall numbers.

What this suggests is that certain routes have untapped potential. At the least, they are more productive than they might seem at first glance.

⁴ One important caveat in interpreting these data is that transit ridership has been in a gradual recovery from its abrupt, pandemic-related plunge in spring of 2020. The ridership numbers from autumn of 2021 are higher than the ridership numbers from autumn of 2020; thus, some of the apparent growth in ridership going into autumn might be due to rider recovery in addition to the return of students.

Figure 30. Average 2021 Weekday Boardings by Route

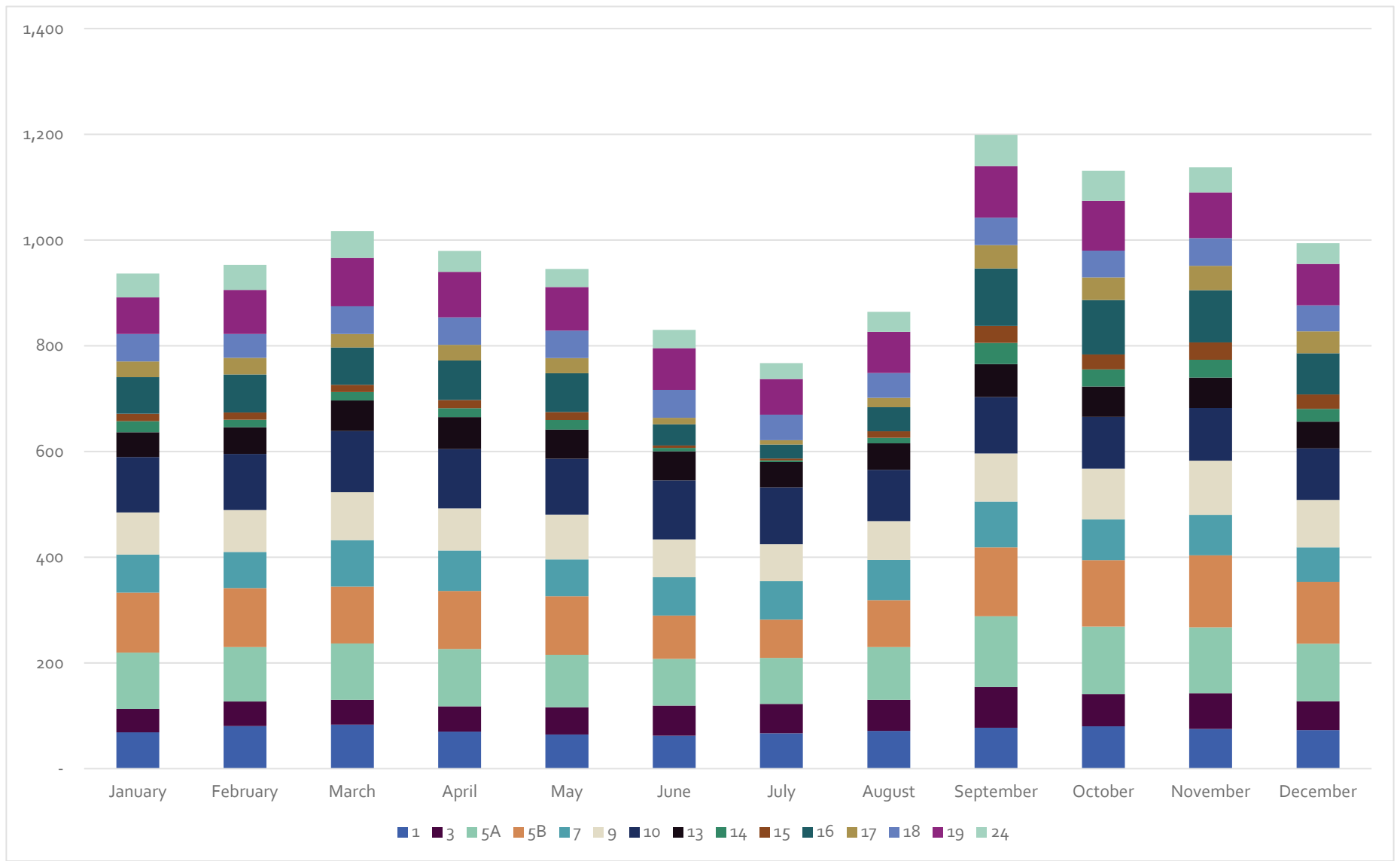


Figure 31. Average 2021 Saturday Boardings By Route

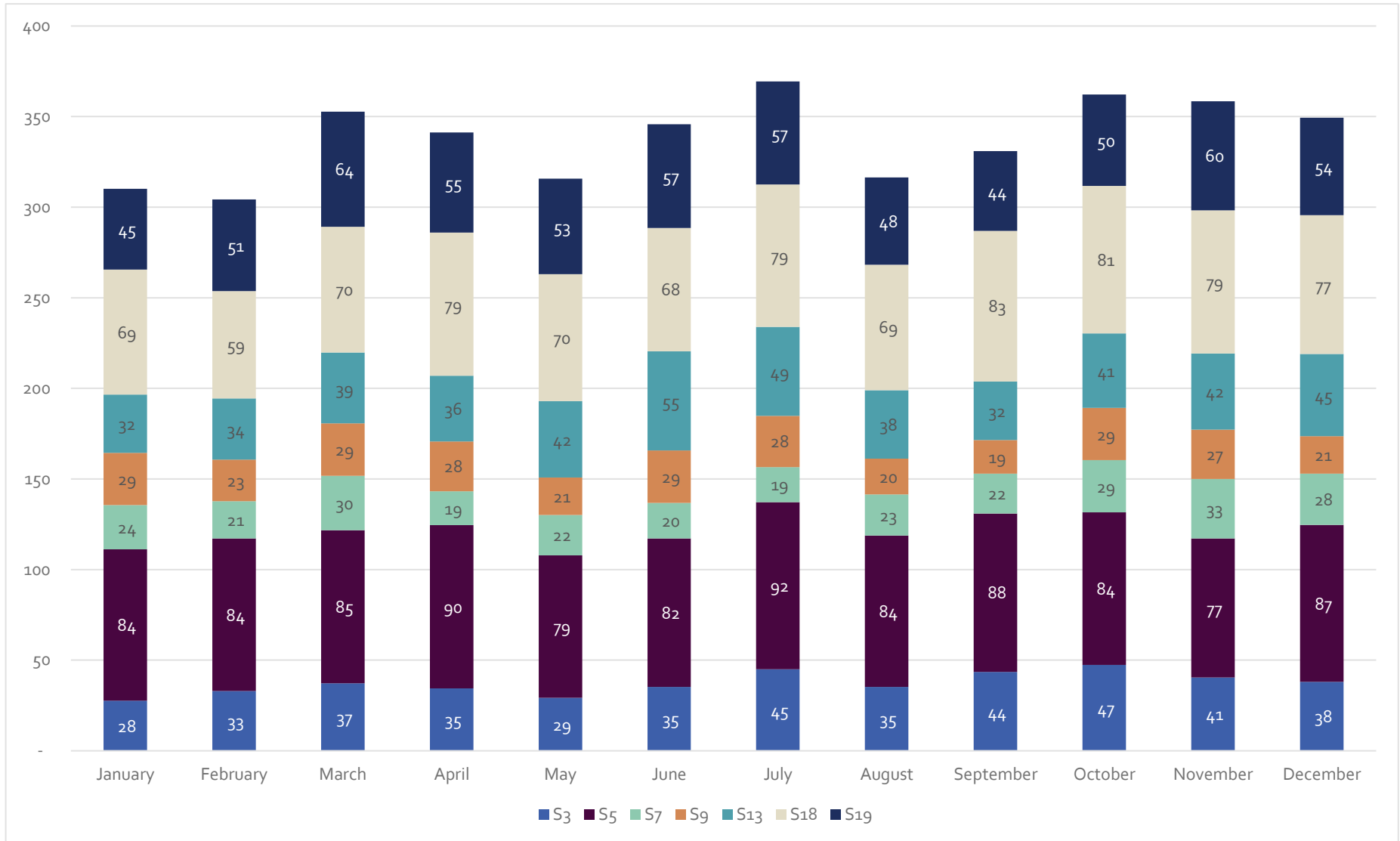


Figure 32. Boardings per Service Hour July-December 2021

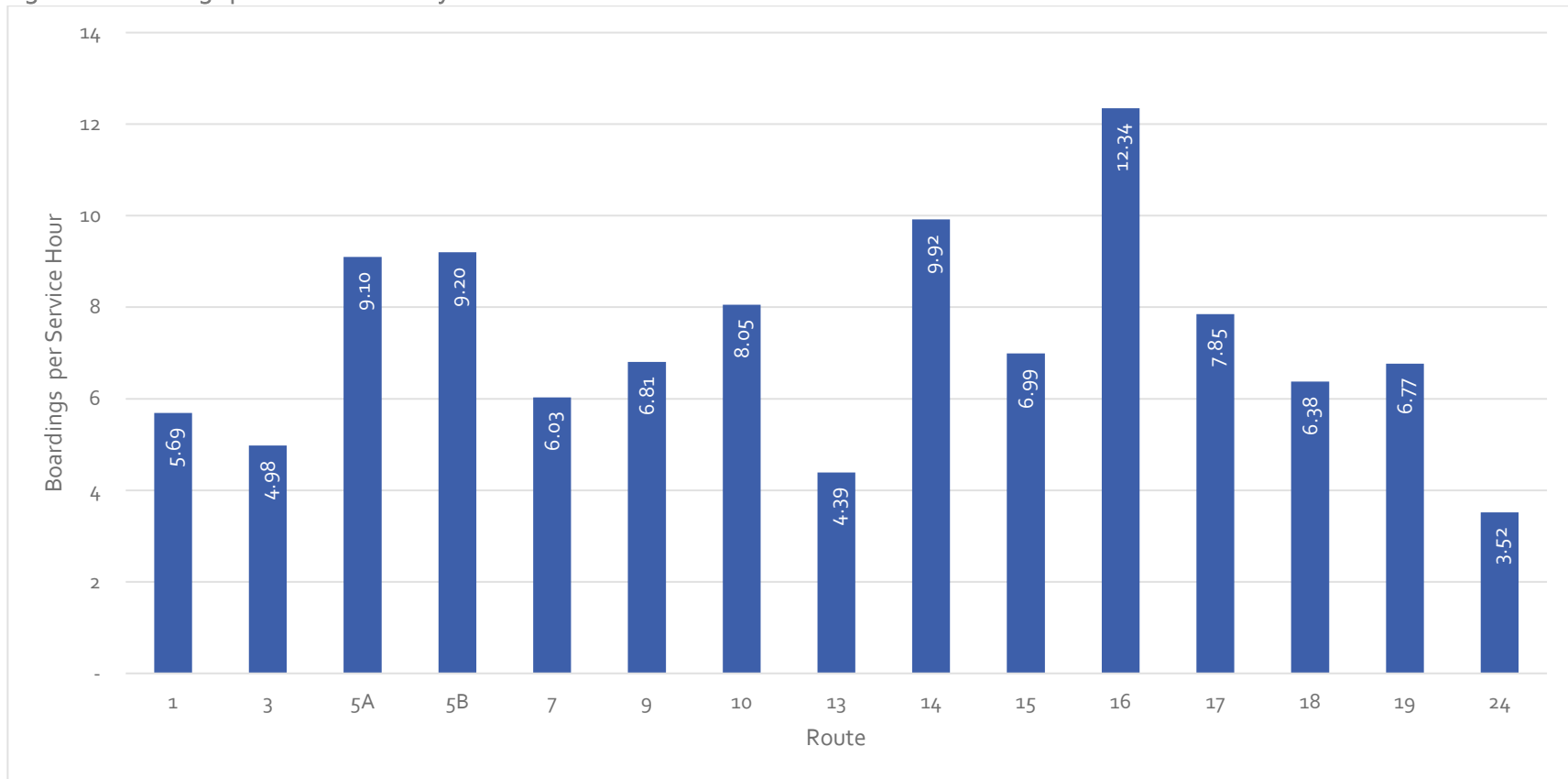


Table 8. Boardings and Service Hours by Month and Route, July-December 2021

Route		July		August		September		October		November		December	
Name	No.	Hours	Boardings	Hours	Boardings	Hours	Boardings	Hours	Boardings	Hours	Boardings	Hours	Boardings
MET Link	1	285	1468	285	1568	276	1621	272	1680	272	1580	297	1679
Crosstown	3	268	1230	268	1299	262	1622	264	1283	271	1416	294	1252
Grand 5A	5A	277	1909	273	2195	261	2811	264	2681	262	2621	281	2505
Grand 5B	5B	271	1597	269	1952	252	2735	252	2641	252	2853	277	2698
Broadwater	7	274	1603	270	1677	264	1818	268	1616	264	1616	289	1496
Central	9	285	1533	280	1607	262	1918	268	2021	270	2144	293	2063
Southside	10	270	2360	276	2143	264	2232	262	2056	267	2097	292	2246
Westend	13	265	1055	273	1094	257	1315	260	1202	263	1210	286	1161
Alkali	14	52	72	55	238	54	843	53	677	45	708	53	557
Hilltop	15	74	77	70	264	68	673	66	596	67	682	73	629
Main	16	137	587	133	1002	130	2281	131	2162	129	2077	142	1791
Bench	17	93	177	91	397	92	924	89	902	87	971	98	945
Heights	18	178	1067	174	1026	163	1093	161	1059	161	1103	179	1131
The Loop	19	271	1481	265	1719	255	2045	260	1984	264	1812	288	1810
Poly	24	286	660	286	834	259	1249	268	1194	270	1000	290	902

Peer Performance Analysis

The peer analysis examined the performance of the Billings MET fixed-route network relative to that of peer systems. Since there are no recognized industry standards for most measures of transit system performance, widespread practice is to compare the performance of a system to the average values of a peer group of systems. Data used in this report come from the FTA's National Transit Database (NTD), a repository of data about American public transit systems. NTD was used because its data are readily available and consistently reported.

The following peer analysis compares MET performance to a peer group of six other fixed-route bus systems (listed in Table 9). The selection of the peer groups for MET was based on a list of peer agencies generated using the Urban Integrated National Transit Database (iNTD). The tool considers operational, economic, and population data to rate transit agencies on their similarity to the agency of choice (MET Transit). Using this list, along with input from MET agency staff, and additional operational metrics from the NTD, a list of six peer agencies was generated. The analysis was conducted using performance measures listed in Table 10.

Table 9. 2019 Operating Statistics – Billings Peer Group

System Name	Location	Service Area Population	Service Area Population Density	Passenger Trips	Revenue Miles	Revenue Hours	Operating Expenses	Passenger Revenues
RoadRUNNER Transit	La Cruces	107,025	1,946	543,333	555,893	42,778	\$3,338,114	\$693,220
Amarillo City Transit	Amarillo, TX	190,695	2,577	266,361	646,784	49,636	\$3,825,032	\$108,566
Sioux City Transit System	Sioux City, IA	122,128	2,304	834,379	599,361	42,820	\$4,280,835	\$675,803
City of Pueblo Transit	Pueblo, CO	112,398	2,882	775,512	541,407	38,442	\$4,178,829	\$535,016
Metropolitan Transit Authority of Black Hawk County	Waterloo, IA	108,519	2,128	351,264	574,954	35,892	\$3,171,115	\$240,014
Concho Valley Transit District	San Angelo, TX	92,984	1,978	211,728	343,417	19,187	\$1,584,665	\$96,336
Missoula Urban Transit District ⁵	Missoula, MT	73,340	1,048	1,556,774	686,258	50,193	\$5,543,103	\$413,088
MET Transit	Billings, MT	110,323	2,507	424,671	606,184	41,735	\$3,893,242.00	\$369,856.00
Peer Average (Excluding Missoula)		-	2,332	486,750	552,571	38,641	3,467,405	\$388,402
MET as Percent of Average		-	96%	108%	87%	110%	108%	112%

⁵ While Missoula Urban Transit District was included in this table and considered as a peer, it is not included in the remainder of this analysis. Missoula has characteristics that make it a fundamental outlier in the peer group. It was considered for comparison and data were collected for it only because it is the closest comparable fixed route system to MET in the state.

Table 10. Metrics for evaluating peer systems

Performance Objective	Performance Measure
Cost Effectiveness	Operating Expenses Per Passenger Trip
Cost Efficiency	Operating Expenses Per Revenue Hour
Service Effectiveness	Passenger Trips Per Revenue Hour
Passenger Revenue Effectiveness	Average Fare Per Passenger Trip
	Operating Ratio (Passenger Revenues Per Operating Expenses)
	Subsidy Per Passenger Trip
Community Investment	Passenger Trips Per Capita
	Total Investment Per Capita
	Local Investment Per Capita

Performance Measures: Results

MET Transit Fixed-Route Five-Year Summary

Table 11 and Table 12 show SCTS operating statistics and performance measures, respectively, for 2015 through 2019. The average annual rate of change for the five-year period is calculated for each statistic and measure.

Table 11. MET Transit Operating Statistics over 5-Year Period

Operating Statistic	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Annual Rate of Change
Revenue Hours	38,850	38,794	39,814	41,735	41,735	1.8%
Passenger Trips	549,210	516,800	455,583	424,671	424,671	-6.1%
Operating Expenses	\$3,982,010	\$3,578,127	\$3,497,440	\$3,893,242	\$3,893,242	-0.3%
Passenger Revenue	\$160,051	\$306,906	\$360,464	\$369,856	\$369,856	28.0%

Source: National Transit Database

Table 12. MET Transit Performance Statistics over 5-Year Period

Performance Measure	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Annual Rate of Change
Operating Expense Per Passenger Trip	\$7.25	\$6.92	\$7.68	\$9.17	\$9.17	6%
Operating Expense Per Revenue Hour	\$102.50	\$92.23	\$87.84	\$93.91	\$93.28	-2%
Passenger Trips Per Revenue Hour	14.14	13.32	11.44	10.18	10.2	-8%
Average Fare Per Passenger Trip	\$0.29	\$0.59	\$0.79	\$0.87	\$0.87	37%
Operating Ratio	4%	9%	10%	9%	9%	31%
Subsidy Per Passenger Trip	\$6.96	\$6.33	\$6.89	\$8.30	\$8.30	5%

Source: National Transit Database

MET Transit Performance Relative to Peer Groups

This section summarizes the results of the single-year (2019) and multi-year (2015-2019) analyses of the performance measures. MET is compared to its peer group for each of the performance measures.

Cost Effectiveness

Cost effectiveness addresses transit use in relation to the level of resources expended. The primary measure for comparison in this category is **operating cost per passenger trip**. The lower the cost per passenger trip, the more cost effective the service.

MET is on the higher end of the peer group operating costs (Figure 33). The 2019 costs range from \$3.56 per trip (MUTD) to \$14.36 (ACT). The highest value is a bit of an outlier in the group and the second highest cost is \$9.17 per trip which is MET. Since MET's cost per trip is higher than most of the peer group, it is useful to see how they performed over a five-year period from 2015 to 2019. Figure 34 shows how MET's costs per trip have trended compared to the peer group's average. MET and the peer group both increased about the same amount over the time period, but at slightly different rates so MET's increase was slightly less than its peers and its cost held steady from 2018-2019. While the higher cost may appear to be cause for concern, it has improved over the years and it is trending closer to the peer average over time.

Figure 33. Operating Cost Per Passenger Trip, 2019

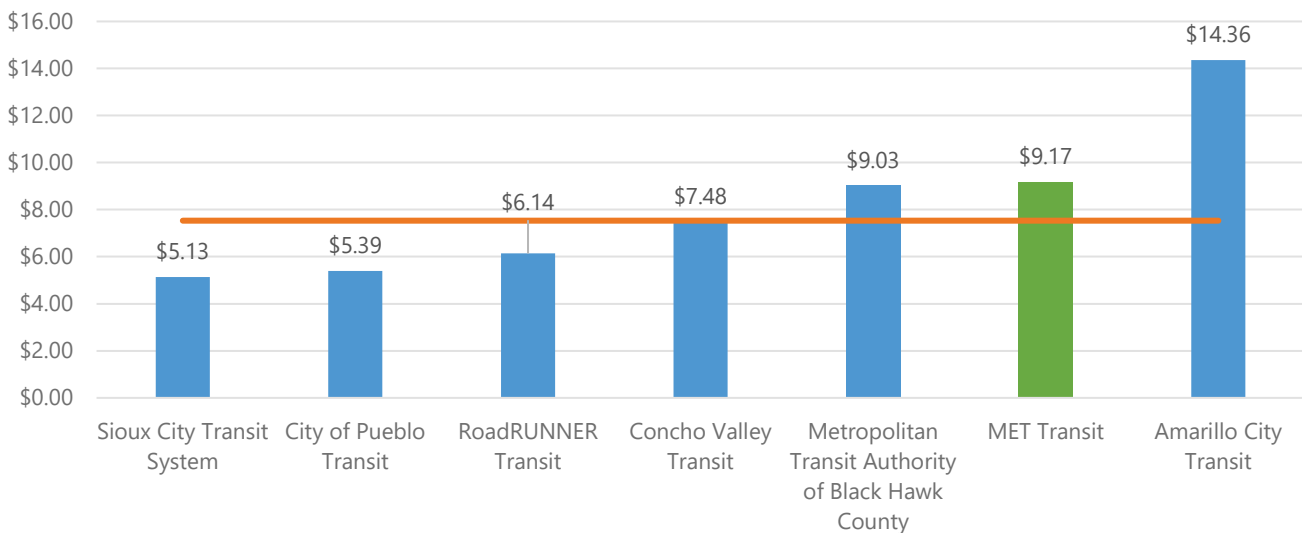
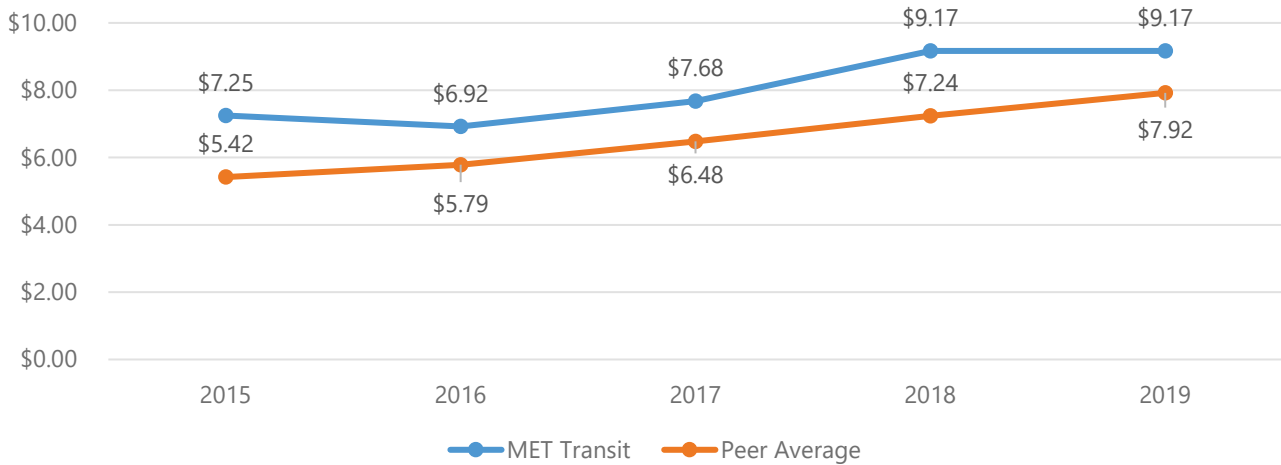


Figure 34. Operating Expenses Per Passenger Trip Compared to Peer Average, 2015-2019



Cost Efficiency

Cost efficiency examines the amount of service produced in relation to the amount of resources expended. **Operating cost per revenue hour** is often a primary measure of a service’s cost efficiency.

Figure 35 displays MET’s 2019 cost per revenue hour in comparison with peers. At \$93.28, it was about average among the peer agency group. MET’s average used to be higher than the peer group but MET costs had a downward trend and peers had an upward trend, ending up in almost the same spot for 2019. Overall, this trend (Figure 36) is positive and means that MET operating costs per hour are on par with its peers in the industry.

Figure 35. Operating Cost per Revenue Hour, 2019

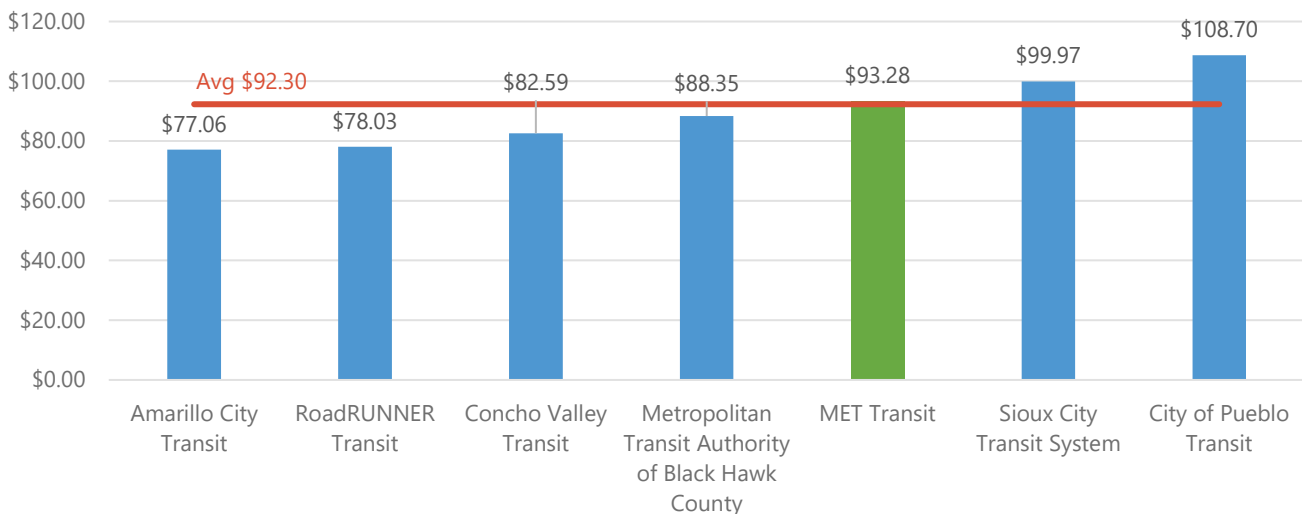
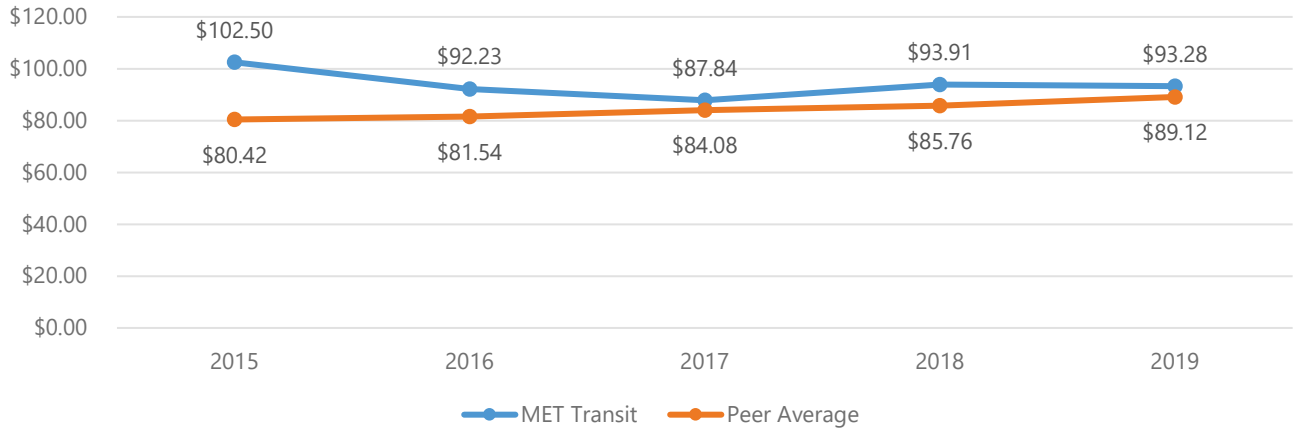


Figure 36. Operating Cost per Revenue Hour Compared to Peer Average, 2015-2019



Service Effectiveness

Service effectiveness is a measure of the consumption of public transportation service in relation to the amount of service available. **Passenger trips per revenue hour** is the measure used to assess service effectiveness.

As shown in Figure 37 MET is below the average for 2019, but if MUTD, an upper outlier, is removed, the average becomes 12 trips per hour which is very close to MET’s 10 trips per hour. Therefore, MET’s passenger trips per hour is average among its peers and not a measure to cause concern. Over the last five years MET and the peer agencies average trips per hour rates have dropped. Figure 38 documents that from 2016-2018 MET’s number dropped at a faster rate, but it stabilized by 2019.

Figure 37. Passenger Trips per Revenue Hour, 2019

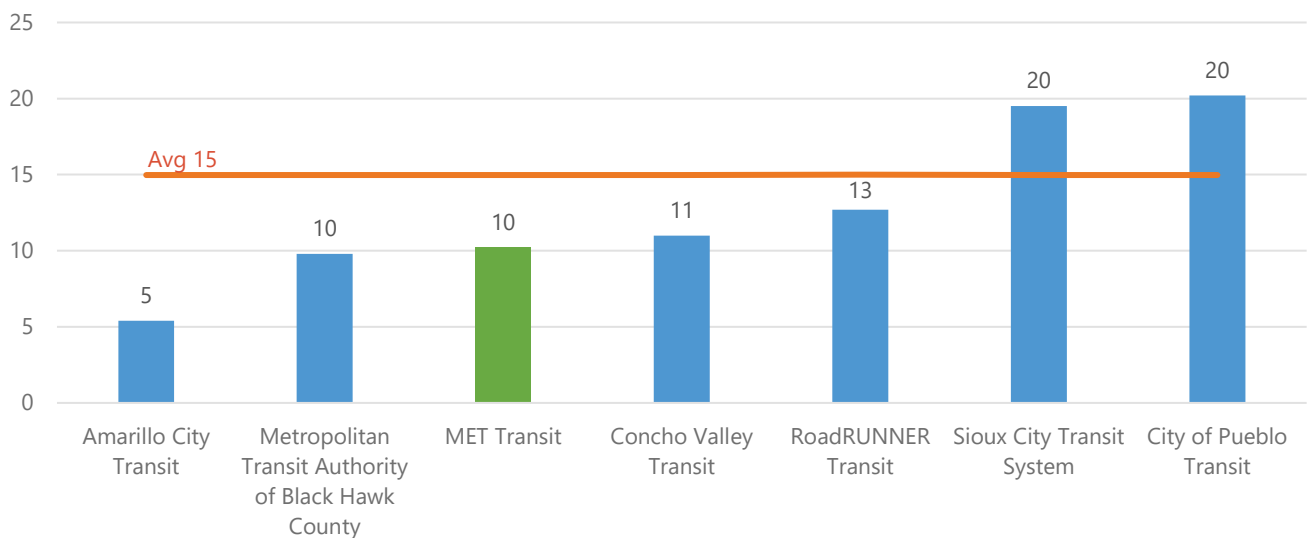
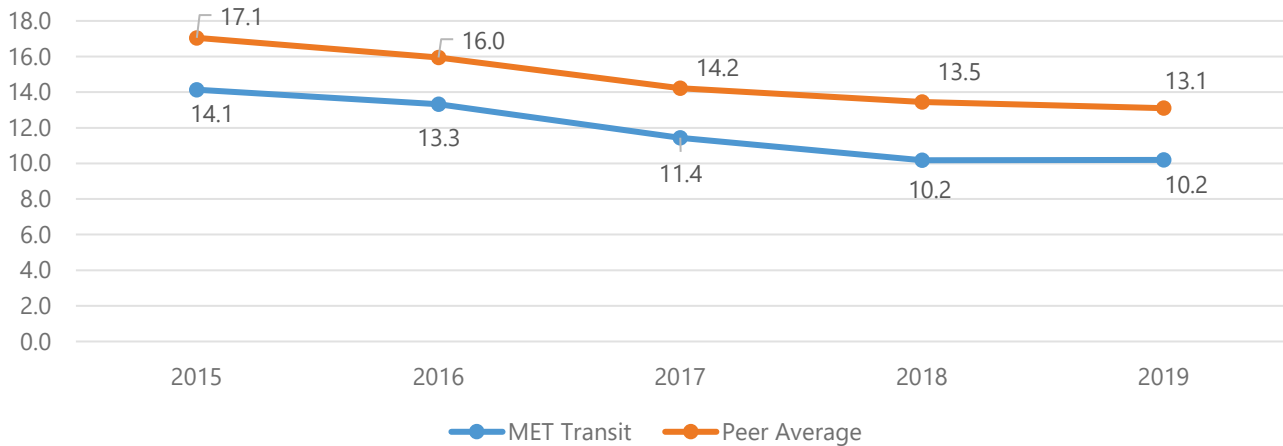


Figure 38. Passenger Trips per Revenue Hour Compared to Peer Average, 2015-2019



Passenger Revenue Effectiveness

Passenger revenue effectiveness is measured with three metrics in this analysis: passenger revenue per passenger trip, operating ratio, and net expense (subsidy) per passenger trip.

Passenger revenue per passenger trip, or average fare per passenger trip, measures the amount each passenger is paying to use the service. The higher the average fare, the more cost is being borne by the passenger.

When looking at average fare per passenger trip, as well as all other measures involving fares, MUTD was removed because they have been fare free since 2015. As shown in Figure 39, in 2019 fare per passenger trip for MET was close to the average fare among the peer agencies. However, only one peer agency had a higher fare; this was RoadRUNNER Transit, which had a very high fare that brought the average up. This means that MET's average fare may be a little high for its peer group.

From 2016 to 2019, both MET and the peer average fares rose from 2015-2017, but MET rose at a higher rate (Figure 40). After 2016, MET's average fare rose slightly and the peer average decreased slightly.

Figure 39. Average Fare per Passenger Trip, 2019

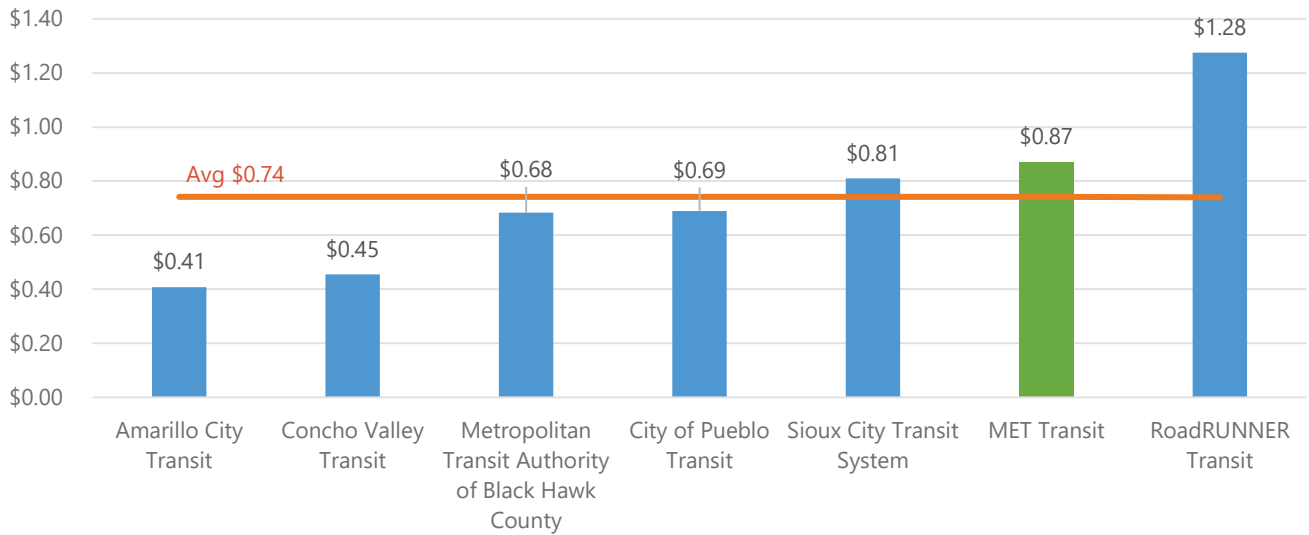
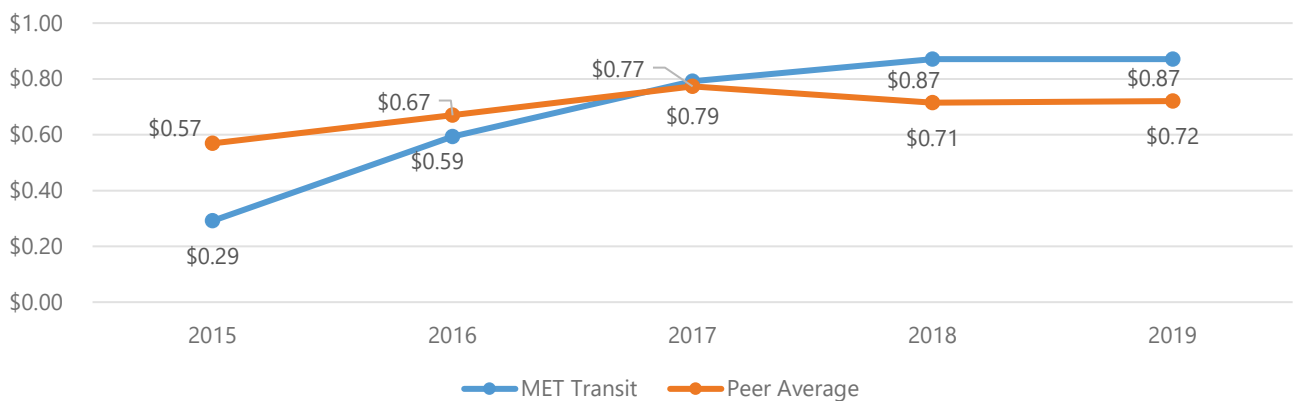


Figure 40. Average Fare per Passenger Trip Compared to Peer Average, 2015-2019



A system’s **operating ratio** is the **ratio of revenues to operating expenses and** measures the level of operating expenses that are recovered through passenger fare payment. This measure is also referred to as the **operating ratio or farebox recovery**. It is expressed as a percentage to represent what percent of operation expenses are recovered through fare revenue.

Among its peers, (excluding MUTD) MET’s operating ratio of 9% is just below the 11% average. Peer ratios for 2019 were evenly spread out from 3% to 21% with MET landing right in the middle, indicating fair performance in this measure for 2019.

From 2016-2019, the peer average operating ratio increased slightly from 2015-2016 and then decreased slowly to a lower ratio than 2015 by 2019. MET’s ratio was much lower than its peers in 2019, but it rose rapidly from 2015-2017, becoming closer to the peer group average. After 2017 it decreased slightly but remained just below the peer average.

Figure 41. Operating Ratio, 2019

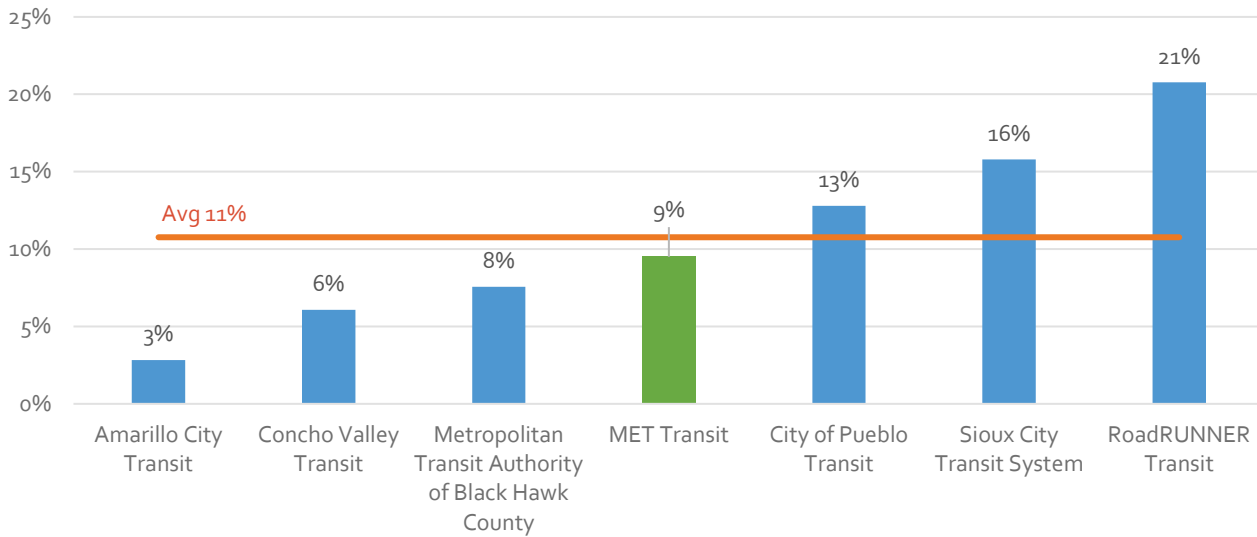
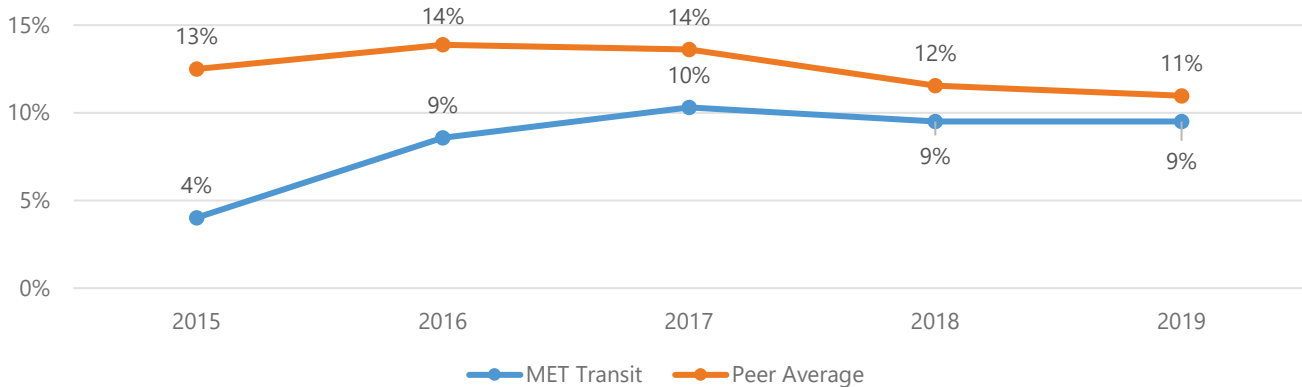


Figure 42. Operating Ratio Compared to Peer Average, 2015-2019



Net expense (subsidy) per passenger trip is used to measure the cost of each passenger trip that is paid for by public operating subsidy. Subsidy per passenger trip is calculated by subtracting passenger revenues from total operating expenses and dividing by total trips. The higher the operating subsidy, the more local, state, and federal resources are required to cover expenses.

The amount that MET subsidized for each transit trip in 2019 was just above the average in the peer agency group. The difference between MET’s subsidy per trip and the peer average is noteworthy and is a measure that the agency might seek to improve.

Over the past five years both MET’s and the peer group’s per trip subsidies have increased steadily. This means that while the increasing subsidy is not necessarily a positive marker, MET’s subsidy trends are lined up with its peers in the industry.

Figure 43. Subsidy per Passenger Trip, 2019

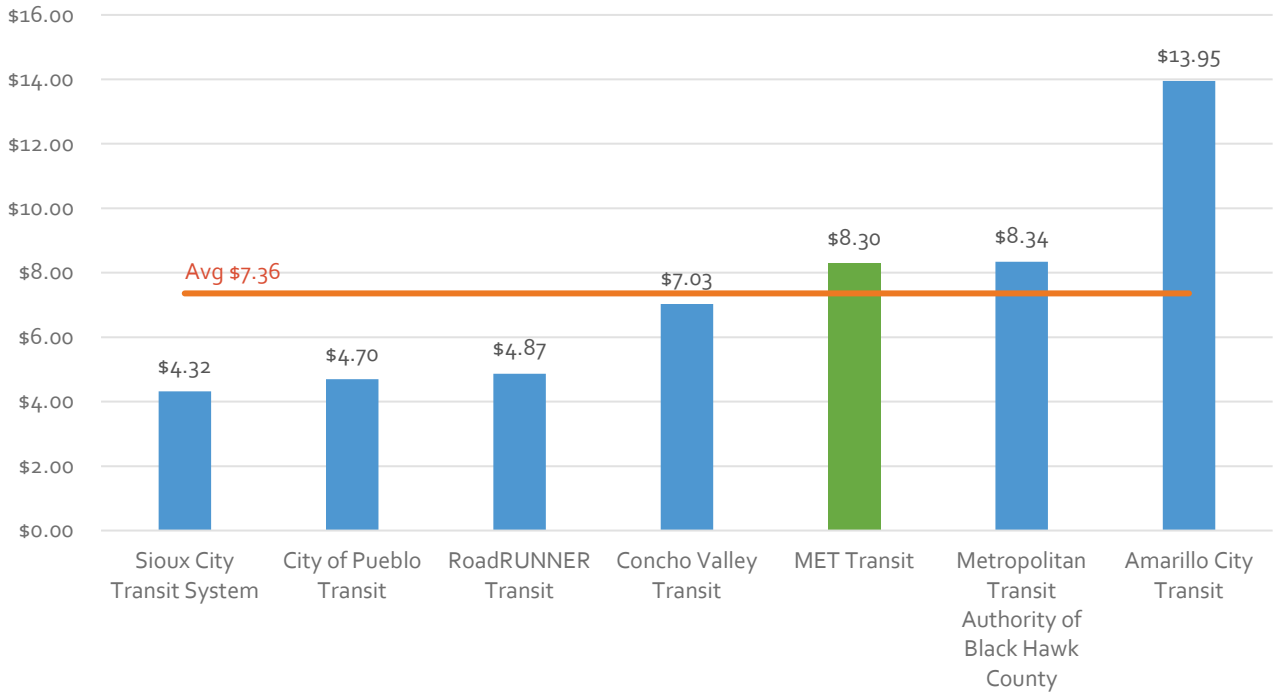
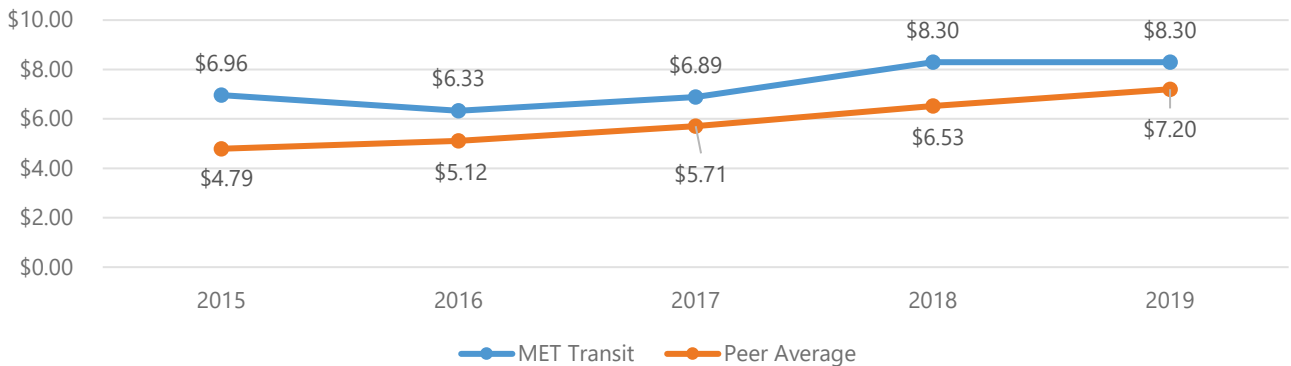


Figure 44. Subsidy per Passenger Trip Compared to Peer Average, 2015-2019



Community Investment

Two performance metrics use the total population of the transit service area to identify the degree to which the community is invested in public transit. This category includes market penetration, as measured by **passenger trips per capita**, but it also includes the degree of funding allocated to transit by decision-makers, as measured by **total investment per capita**.

MET falls just below the average for passenger trips per capita among most of the peer group. In this measure, Missoula was, again, an outlier among the peer group with a trip number three times higher than the next highest agency. Because of the difference, the average was calculated for all the agencies (orange lines) and all agencies except MUTD (grey lines) in Figure 45 and Figure 46.

Figure 46 shows the change over time for trips per capita, and the effect MUTD has on the peer average is even more visible. The orange line, which represents the peer average including MUTD increases then decreases slightly. The grey line (peer average without MUTD) and blue line (MET) follow very similar trends in trips per capita from 2015-2019 with MET just a little below the peer agency group.

Figure 45. Passenger Trips Per Capita, 2019

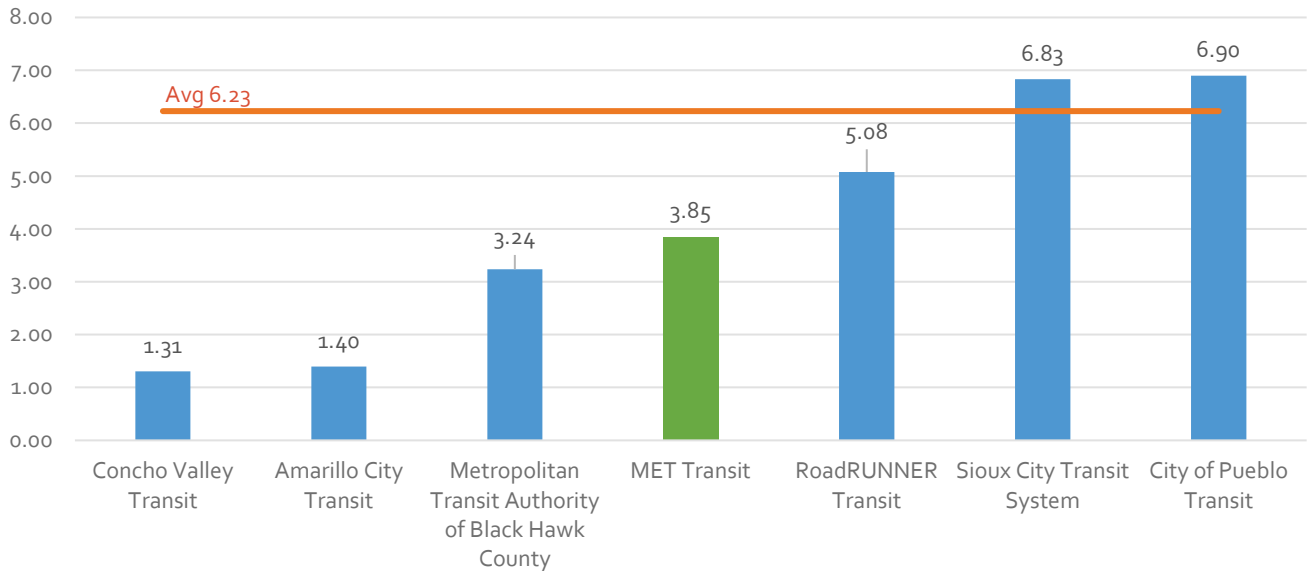
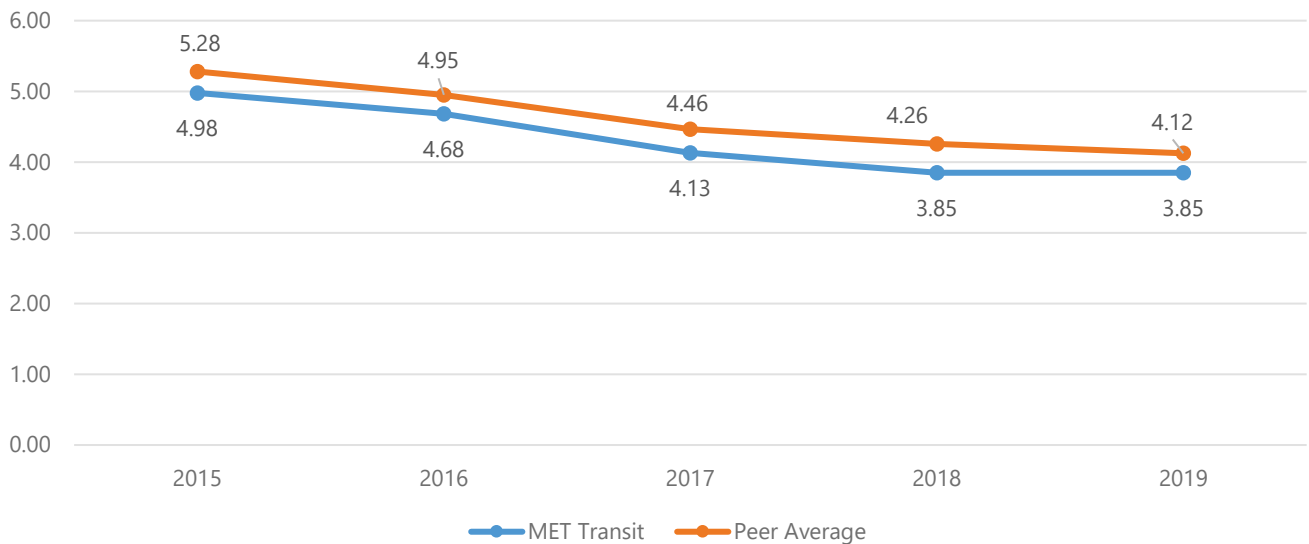


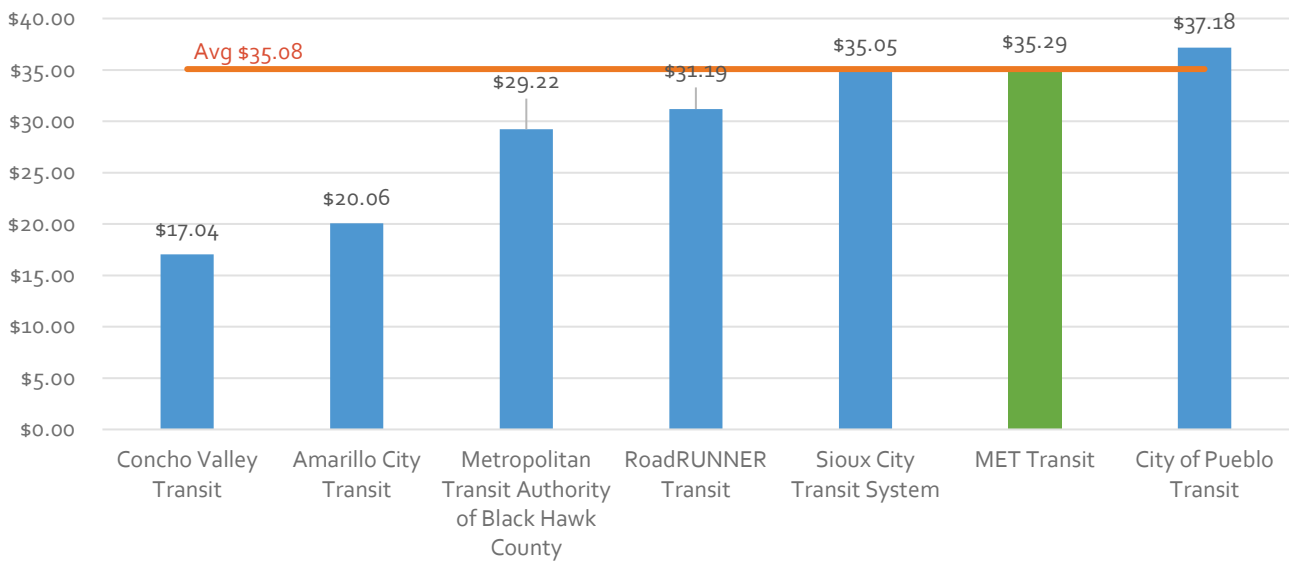
Figure 46. Passenger Trips Per Capita Compared to Peer Average, 2015-2019



The second measurement of community investment was investment per capita for fixed route service, which is the operating budget for fixed route divided by population. Once again, MUTD was an outlier with an investment level that was double the next highest agency. This makes sense because MUTD’s operating expenses were by far the highest reported and their service area population was by far the smallest. Therefore, for this measurement It is more useful to look at how MET performs among its peers excluding

MUTD. In this context, MET is among the higher end of the peer group, but not the highest, which is a positive marker when measuring investment in community

Figure 47. Investment per Capita, 2019



Summary

Running an analysis of effectiveness, efficiency, and community investment measures has allowed the consultant team to assess how MET performs relative to peer transit agencies. The key findings are summarized below:

- Overall MET's performance in the peer analysis was average in most measurements it fell in the middle of its peers and just above or below the average value
- For multiple measures including subsidy per passenger trip, operating ratio, fare per passenger trip, and operating cost per hour, MET has trended closer to the peer average over time.
 - Three of these measures (subsidy per passenger trip, operating ratio, fare per passenger trip) measure passenger revenue effectiveness. Though MET is trending towards the average in these three measures, it slightly underperforms in all three.

PUBLIC INPUT AND ALTERNATIVES SELECTION PROCESS

Public Engagement

Overview

Opportunities for interested stakeholders to provide input to the plan were available throughout the approximately nine months of the study. Outlined below in Table 13 is a timeline of surveys completed, events held in the community to present milestone information proposed for the plan and gather input and public meetings held.

Table 13. Public engagement schedule

Date	Description
March 2022	Community Transit Survey
March 16, 2022	Informal Discussions at Jobs Jamboree, Metra Park
April 6, 2022	Informal Discussions at Walkable Cities presentation, Babcock Theater
April 7, 2022	Informal Discussions at Chamber Breakfast, Metra Park
May 4, 2022	Informal Discussions at Billings Public Library
May 4-5, 2022	MET Driver Meetings
May 5, 2022	Public Information Meeting 1 – Public Library (Presentation Slides in Appendix)
May 31, 2022	Informal Discussions at Commuter Challenge Kickoff, Rose Park
June 27, 2022	Informal Discussions at Downtown Transit Center
June 28, 2022	Public Meeting #2 – Community and Senior Center (Open House Meeting – No Presentation)
August 11, 2022	Informal Discussions at Southside Gardener’s Market
August 17, 2022	Informal Discussions at Downtown and Stewart Park Transfer Centers
August 18, 2022	Public Meeting #3 – Public Library (Presentation Slides in Appendix)



Public Meeting #1 – Public Library



Public Meeting #3 – Public Library



May 2022 – Public Library Tabling

Community Survey

The community survey was designed to enable participation from as many users as possible. The survey collected information on the use of transit, the use and perception of transit, potential improvements, and demographic information, such as the number of vehicles in the household, income, age, race, and gender. The survey was conducted in both online and paper formats during Winter and Spring of 2022. The paper survey included a QR code link to the online version, which was also advertised on the project website and on social media. A copy of the paper survey is provided in the Appendix.

The community survey addressed transit use, future travel patterns, and overall interest and willingness to support additional transit services in the community. The survey revealed some important findings about the community's priorities and values regarding public transit:

- Most of respondents have had a direct or indirect experience with MET
- A minority use transit regularly
- Most respondents commute to, from, or within Billings
- Expanded service hours were revealed to be a top priority across every question set
- Weekday service hour expansion was a higher priority than Saturday service expansion
- Factors that are outside of MET's control were less likely to discourage or encourage transit use
- High gas prices were not a high factor for riding transit and preference for other modes was not ranked as a high deterrent
- Stop amenities, while viewed in a positive light, were not seen as important investments as increased service hours and frequency. This could either be due to the fact that MET currently uses a flag stop system or that the majority of respondents were not regular transit users and do not interact with the amenities and infrastructure provided by system as often.

Based on these consistent results, MET should first give strong consideration to recommendations that increase service hours and frequency. MET may also want to consider improvements to bus stop infrastructure and amenities as they were also considered priorities by the community survey. It may be useful for MET to target regular transit users when determining how to improve stop amenities and infrastructure in the future.

Public Meetings

Each study milestone included a public information meeting at which information about the plan update was presented, questions from meeting participants were addressed and informal discussion about transit in the Billings were held. The next sections summarize information from the meetings.

[Public Meeting #1 – Public Library](#)

Through this meeting the plan update was introduced, including:

- Content of the transit development plan

- Current background of MET relative to peer transit agencies
- Information provided through the community survey
- Plan update schedule

MET staff and the consultant presented the planning process and summarized the initial service planning through a presentation, which was followed by a questions and answer session. After the presentation, informal discussions were held to explain in more detail findings from the service reviews and address questions participants had about the MET system and/or the plan.

The meeting was broadcast through Facebook Live and recorded to provide interested people the opportunity to gather information at times more convenient.

Slides with presentation information are included in the Appendix.

Public Meeting #2 – Community and Senior Center

The focus of this open house meeting was the range of ideas MET and the consultant team were evaluating to improve current service and to support expansion. A series of informational boards were available for review with a member of the consultant team and/or MET staff. Ideas for improvement and/or expansion of the system included:

- Updating the current route network to:
 - Reduce overlap in the path routes travel – In some case overlap is good as routes can support each other, while in other cases, the overlap results in inefficiencies. Balancing the conditions was the focus of the initial service improvement analysis.
 - Provide more coverage of areas of the community where employment and/or residential development support transit.
 - Reduce or eliminate service breaks that exist, which result in run times changing over the course of the day. These breaks can be confusing to new users and inconvenient to all users.
 - Create more north-south service in the community.
- Opportunities being reviewed to expand service to take advantage of increased federal and local funding.
- Evaluation criteria being used to evaluate expansion opportunities.

Public Meeting #3 – Public Library

The purpose of this meeting was to present preliminary recommendations for improving and expanding service in Billings. Through the formal presentation updates to the network (identified as the Redesign Network) were presented, opportunities for expanding service associated with increased funding available, and ideas to make service more effective in the form of converting to designate transit stops (from the current flag stop system) were detailed. Following the presentation, there was an extended period of discussion with audience participants regarding the details of proposed service changes.

Similar to the other public meetings, MET and consultant staff were available for one-on-one discussion of current service and/or the proposed changes following the formal presentation.

Slides with presentation information are included in the Appendix.

Email Input

Interested stakeholders were able to send emails with comments or questions about current services and/or proposed changes to address needs and funding opportunities. Emails received throughout the study period are included in the Appendix.

Considered Alternatives

Service to Lockwood

Conversations locally over the years have included the potential for adding transit service between Billings and Lockwood. The proximity to Billings and Lockwood’s demographics establish the logic for the conversation. While there are both live and work opportunities in the community, there are few retail or service businesses to support live-work-recreate-shop opportunities. Thus, the level of daily travel between Lockwood and Billings is substantial. To support the statement, journey to work information from the US Census Bureau’s On the Map tool was reviewed for where Lockwood resident jobs were located. Figure 48 displays the results of the mapping. From analysis of the census data for 2019, approximately 2,200 of the 3,600 of the employed residents of Lockwood work in Billings and represent a key potential customer group to consider in assessing opportunities for extending transit. The second image of the figure displays, in more detail, where people living in Lockwood commute for work.

With confirmation there is some level of travel between Lockwood and Billings for a primary trip purpose for which people use transit, alternatives for supporting demand were developed. As the level people would choose to use transit is not known through surveys or past experience, a range of service alternatives were identified. For each, information regarding service parameters, potential ridership, and cost were developed. The results are displayed in Table 14

Figure 48. Lockwood – Number of Commuter Coming In/Leaving Town for Work (2019 Data)

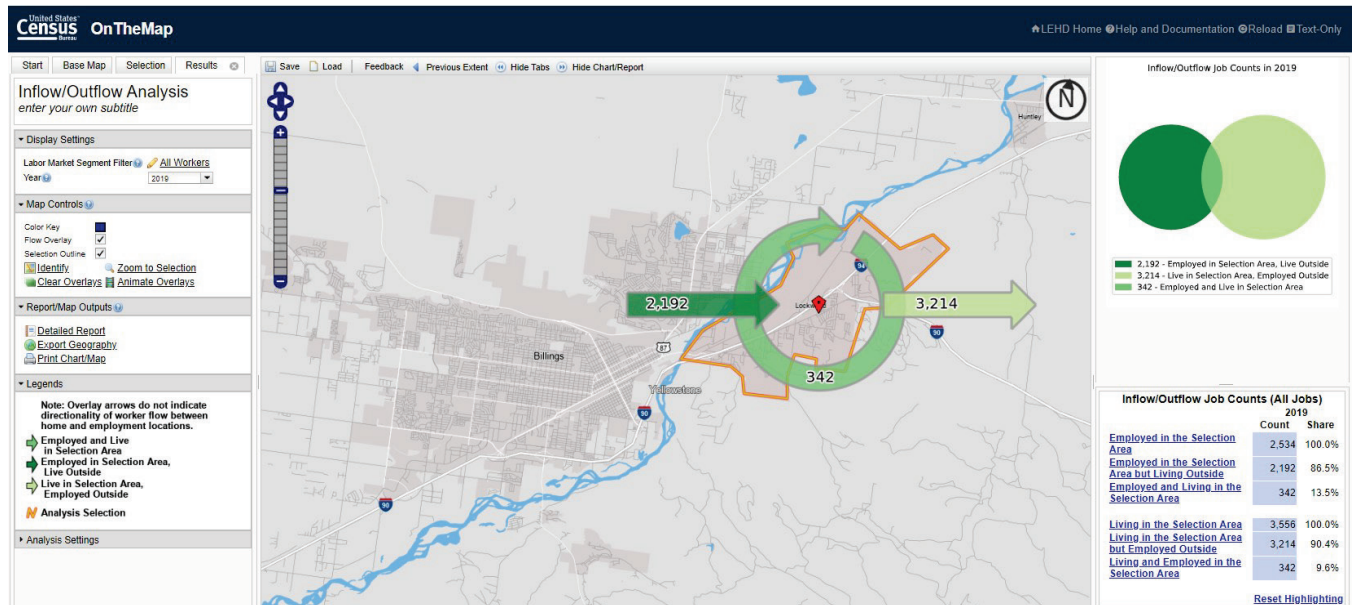


Figure 48 (Cont.) Detailed Commuting Patterns (Where People Living in Lockwood Work)

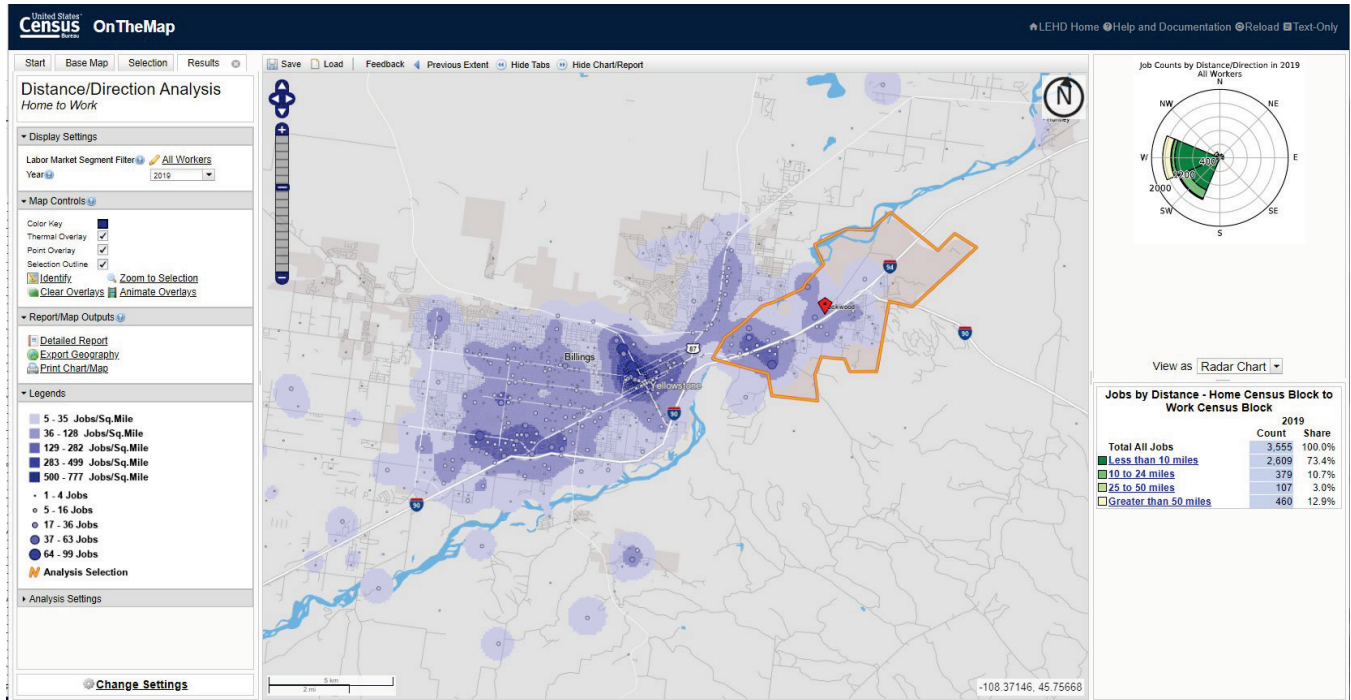


Table 14. Lockwood Service Alternatives Summary

Service Concept	Annual Hours	Cost Per Hour	Annual Ridership (Estimated)		Annual Operating Cost
			Low	High	
Fixed Route					
All Day (Monday through Saturday)	3,700	\$66.34	26,100		\$245,000
Weekday Peak Only (4 Hours/Weekday)	1,280	\$66.34	9,000		\$84,900
			Annual Capacity Range		
			Low	High	
Demand Response					
Full Time (Active 13 Hours/Day)	3,800	\$81.46	10,720	17,380	\$309,600
Active 3.4 Time (9.75 Hours/Day)	2,860	\$81.46	8,040	13,040	\$232,000
Active ½ Time ((6.5 Hours/Day)	1,900	\$81.46	5,360	8,690	\$154,800
Active ¼ Time (3..25 Hours/Day)	950	\$81.46	2,680	4,347	\$77,400
Flex Route					
Full Time (Active 13 Hours/Day)	3,800	\$81.46	12,200	19,970	\$309,600
Active 3.4 Time (9.75 Hours/Day)	2,860	\$81.46	9,150	14,980	\$232,000
Active ½ Time ((6.5 Hours/Day)	1,900	\$81.46	6,100	9,990	\$154,800
Active ¼ Time (3..25 Hours/Day)	950	\$81.46	3,050	4,990	\$77,400

Note: Fixed route hourly service cost reflects only the incremental labor cost, not the fully apportioned rate that includes administration and maintenance. Similarly, the demand response and flex hourly rates reflect incremental labor cost reflective of a paratransit starting point.



TRANSIT DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2022

Plan Appendix

CITY OF BILLINGS MET TRANSIT



September 2022

APPENDICIES

Billings Area Transportation Coordinating Agencies and Providers

Coordination Technical Advisory Committee Agencies

MET Transit: As MET Transit is the local designated recipient for Federal Transit Administration 5307 operating funds to provide public transit service, it serves as the lead agency in coordination efforts. MET has been providing public transportation since 1973 and currently provides both fixed-route and paratransit services. Paratransit is public transportation for individuals who are, due to a disability or other condition, unable to use the MET fixed-route service. Paratransit service was originally established in 1977 by Special Transportation, Inc, which was assumed by the City of Billings MET Transit in 1997 under the new designation of MET Special Transit; MET Transit has since renamed all operations under paratransit to METPLUS. Paratransit service meets the transportation needs of a broad spectrum of people who otherwise could not travel locally.

MET provides fixed-route and paratransit service from approximately 5:50 am to 6:50 pm, Monday through Friday and 8:10 am to 5:30 pm on Saturdays. MET serves any disability group, ambulatory and non-ambulatory, including seniors with disabling conditions. Provided rides include trips for employment, educational, medical, shopping and recreational. MET coordinates with many different agencies, as well as the general public, to provide transportation within the City Of Billings. The State of Montana Developmental Disabilities Division regularly coordinates with MET for client rides while area skilled nursing facilities and hospitals coordinate for transportation when they are unable to provide transportation. Montana Medicaid and Adult Resource Alliance of Yellowstone County both contract with MET to provide medically related transportation.

Billings Urbanized Area Metropolitan Planning Organization: The Billings Urbanized Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) oversees transportation planning for the Billings Urban Area. The urban area encompasses the City of Billings as well as a planning area extending approximately 4.5 miles outside the city limits. The MPO prepares a Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) each year that contains the discussion of projects to undertake during the upcoming program year, including transit specific projects. The UPWP is supplemented by a five-year Transportation Improvements Plan (TIP). The TIP is a fiscal planning program for federally assisted highway and transit improvements for the Billings Urban Area. Every four (4) years, the MPO prepares an Urban Area Transportation Plan that assesses the transportation needs and recommends actions to address those needs. As the MPO exists as a requirement for both Federal Highway and Federal Transit funding in the small urban area and is directly involved in all aspects of area transportation, MPO involvement in coordination efforts is essential for addressing and planning for existing and future transportation needs.

Adult Resource Alliance of Yellowstone County: The Adult Resource Alliance has been assisting seniors within Yellowstone County and their families and caregivers since 1975. The Alliance provides a comprehensive range of services which promote the overall well-being of healthier and more active seniors, while also supporting and assisting the senior population in remaining independent and living at home as long as possible. Services provided include, but are not limited to: the Meals on Wheels Program, meal sites to provide meal and social opportunities, assistance with Medicare, the Volunteer Program and limited transportation.

Riverstone Health: Riverstone Health was created in 2008 as a single identity that grew out of the Yellowstone City-County Health Department. The foundation of their work has been Health, Education, Leadership and Protection (HELP). In their medical and dental clinics they provide care to 20,000 patients each year. Through their Montana Family Medicine Residency they train doctors to help meet Montana's shortage of family medicine practice physicians and provide health services, such as WIC and Maternal Child Health, to help families and young children. They provide hospice services and focus efforts at preventing infectious diseases to make the whole community a safer and better place to live.

State of Montana DPHHS Developmental Disabilities Program (DDP): The Montana Developmental Disabilities Program's central office is in Helena with regional offices in Billings, Glasgow, Great Falls and Missoula. DDP contracts with private, non-profit corporations to provide services across the lifespan for individuals who have developmental disabilities and their families. The focus of the program is to tailor care to the individual and provide it in as natural environment as possible.

Coordination Group Agencies

Listed below are providers who regularly participate in the Coordination Group meetings and participate in the coordination of services.

A.W.A.R.E., Inc. (Anaconda Work and Residential Enterprises): AWARE is a private, non-profit corporation that was started in Anaconda, Montana in 1976. Since AWARE's start over 45 years ago, it has grown into an organization that has helped and continues to help thousands of people across Montana achieve their potential. AWARE is governed by a seven member Board and presently employs more than 800 people in multiple communities around the State. AWARE offers a variety of services in fully licensed and nationally accredited programs, geared towards improving lifestyles and opportunities for Montanans affected by disabilities or mental challenges. In Billings, AWARE operates 4 adult group homes, 2 adult DD autism group homes and 1 youth mental health group home. A second, youth mental health group home is scheduled to open in the near future. AWARE also operates a day service work program that provides a variety of work and day activities including janitorial services, sensitive document disposal and community employment. AWARE operates the Enterprise Learning Center in collaboration with Billings public schools that provides educational and vocational programs to autistic youths in the Billings area. AWARE also manages the "Growth Through Art" program which is located at AWARE's main office facility. Many of the individuals participating in this program utilize MET Special Transit.

AWARE provides transportation services to their clients who reside at their group homes. Clients are transported on a daily basis to and from their respective residential settings for a number of reasons which include but are not limited to; work, school, after school activities, medical visits, community events and family visits. Transportation services are provided for whatever need arises with service available seven days a week, 24 hours a day.

Big Sky Senior Services: Big Sky Senior Services provides comprehensive support services to help seniors and adults with developmental disabilities maintain independence and quality of life by helping them remain in the community. Such services include personal care, nursing services, safety from senior abuse, transportation to medical appointments and staying connected to the community.

Billings Clinic: Based in Billings, Billings Clinic is Montana's largest health care organization and serves a vast region covering much of Montana, northern Wyoming and the western Dakotas. Billings Clinic manages 11 Critical Access Hospitals and has other partnerships across the region.

Affiliated hospitals are located throughout Montana and Wyoming. Billings Clinic is a physician-led, integrated multi-specialty group practice with a 304-bed hospital and a Level II trauma center. It also operates a number of clinics providing a full range of medical services. Billings Clinic's vision is to be a national leader in providing the best clinical quality, patient safety, service and value.

COR Enterprises, Inc.: COR was originally known as the Billings Sheltered Workshop and has been in operation since 1971; they provide vocational rehabilitation and developmental services for persons with disabilities. COR Enterprises services include Organizational Employment, Community Employment and Community Support Services. Aside from the Yellowstone County and Billings area, this agency also provides services in Lewistown, Bozeman and two Native American Reservations in Eastern Montana.

COR Enterprises provides rides for their clients primarily Monday through Saturday. The agency does provide rides on Sundays for special events and services needed by their clients. Most rides are provided between the hours of 7:00 am and 4:30 pm; however a number of rides are also provided during evening hours depending on the client needs. Transportation is provided for a variety of services, including employment, medical, shopping and recreational purposes. COR Enterprises regularly coordinates with both the MET fixed-route buses and MET-PLUS; MET Transit currently provides fixed-route service to COR's primary facility in Billings on Lampman Drive. COR also coordinates and provide transportation for clients from other agencies such as the PD Waiver Program, Developmental Disabilities and the SDMI Program. COR Enterprises also has vehicles available through an individual agreement for other agencies as needed, including Eagle Mount, to use when COR is not using them.

Residential Support Services (RSS): RSS contracts with the State of Montana Developmental Disabilities Program and provides rehabilitation training in all life skills and supervision of the health and safety concerns of persons who have a developmental disability. RSS provides housing, meals, transportation and medical assistance for individuals who reside in 16 group homes and apartments in the Billings area. RSS has provided these services since 1974. RSS provides transportation for their clients, 7-days a week, 24-hours a day. Peak times usually occur from 6:00 am to 10:00 am and 2:00 pm to 8:00 pm, Monday through Friday and 10:00 am to 8:00 pm on weekends. Rides are provided for a variety of services, including employment, medical appointments, shopping and recreational activities. RSS coordinates transportation with other agencies whenever possible, including COR Enterprises, RSD Incorporated and Job Connection.

Resource, Support and Development, Inc. (RSD): is a private, non-profit Montana-based corporation that was established in 1974 to provide an array of community-based supports and services to adult citizens with disabilities. RSD currently provides service in Billings, Lewistown, Hardin, Red Lodge and Harlowton. Many of RSD services are funded via the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS).

RSD provides a variety of vocational options to adults with disabilities. These include working with a vocational specialist to obtain work in the community, working on a work crew, or in one of the work centers on a variety of business contracts. Consumers can also be involved in retirement activities in a day program hosted in the community or in their own home. Individuals may also receive training in areas based on their needs and desires.

Billings Training Industries (BTI) East and West, a part of RSD, serve many individuals with developmental disabilities in two work centers. Many work in the community on crews or at their own jobs. The Billings Activity Program offers retirement activity opportunities which include art, crafts and specialized programs that meet the needs of elderly people with developmental disabilities who do not want to work. All of these programs offer training that includes participation and inclusion in the community as well as a variety of volunteer work that gives the people served the opportunity to give back to the community and make friends.

St. Vincent Health Care: St. Vincent Healthcare delivers compassionate, quality care to the people of Montana, Wyoming and the western Dakotas. Serving the region for more than 120 years, St. Vincent Healthcare is located in Billings, Montana. In addition to 11 primary care clinics in and around the Billings area, St. Vincent Healthcare offers dozens of progressive specialty services and a 201-bed hospital. St. Vincent even has a special “hospital within a hospital” just for children, St. Vincent Children’s Healthcare. St. Vincent Healthcare has more than 1,700 associates and more than 500 physicians and advanced care professionals. St. Vincent is part of SCL Health, a nonprofit faith-based health system with 12 hospitals in Colorado and Montana. Together, St. Vincent Healthcare, St. James Healthcare in Butte, and Holy Rosary Healthcare in Miles City, represent SCL Health Montana.

United Way of Yellowstone County: United Way of Yellowstone County is the primary community-building organization in South Central Montana. They provide leadership to effectively mobilize people and financial and strategic resources to improve people's lives. They identify and address the community's priority needs and provide solutions that achieve measurable results and sustained community change.

Other Identified Area Agencies

MET Transit has identified the following local area agencies who occasionally participate or may be interested in participating; contact has been made via invites to the local coordination group.

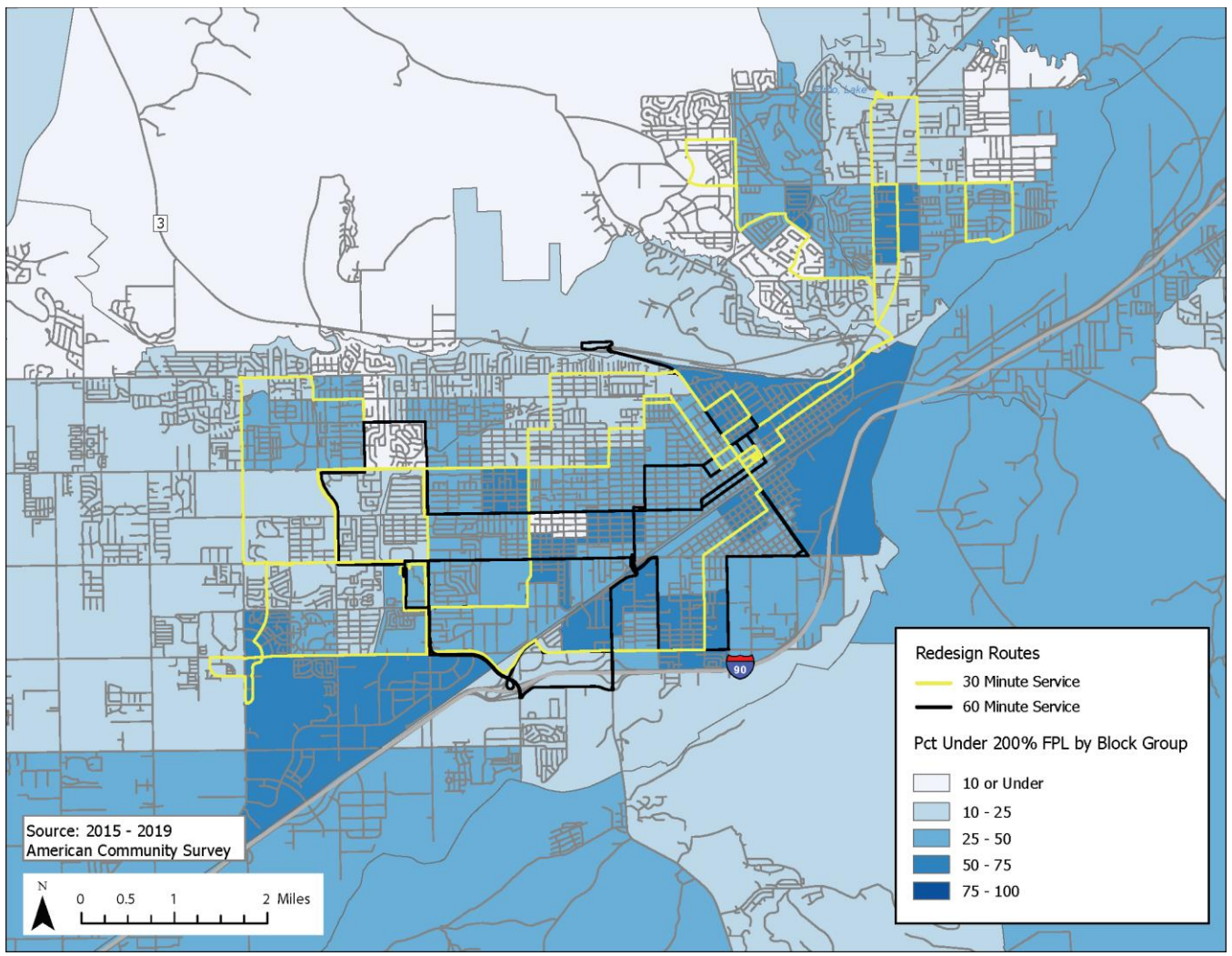
Advanced Care Hospital of Montana
Affinity
Aspen Grove
Aspen Meadows
Aspen View Retirement
Autumn Springs Assisted Living
Avanterra/Bellaterra

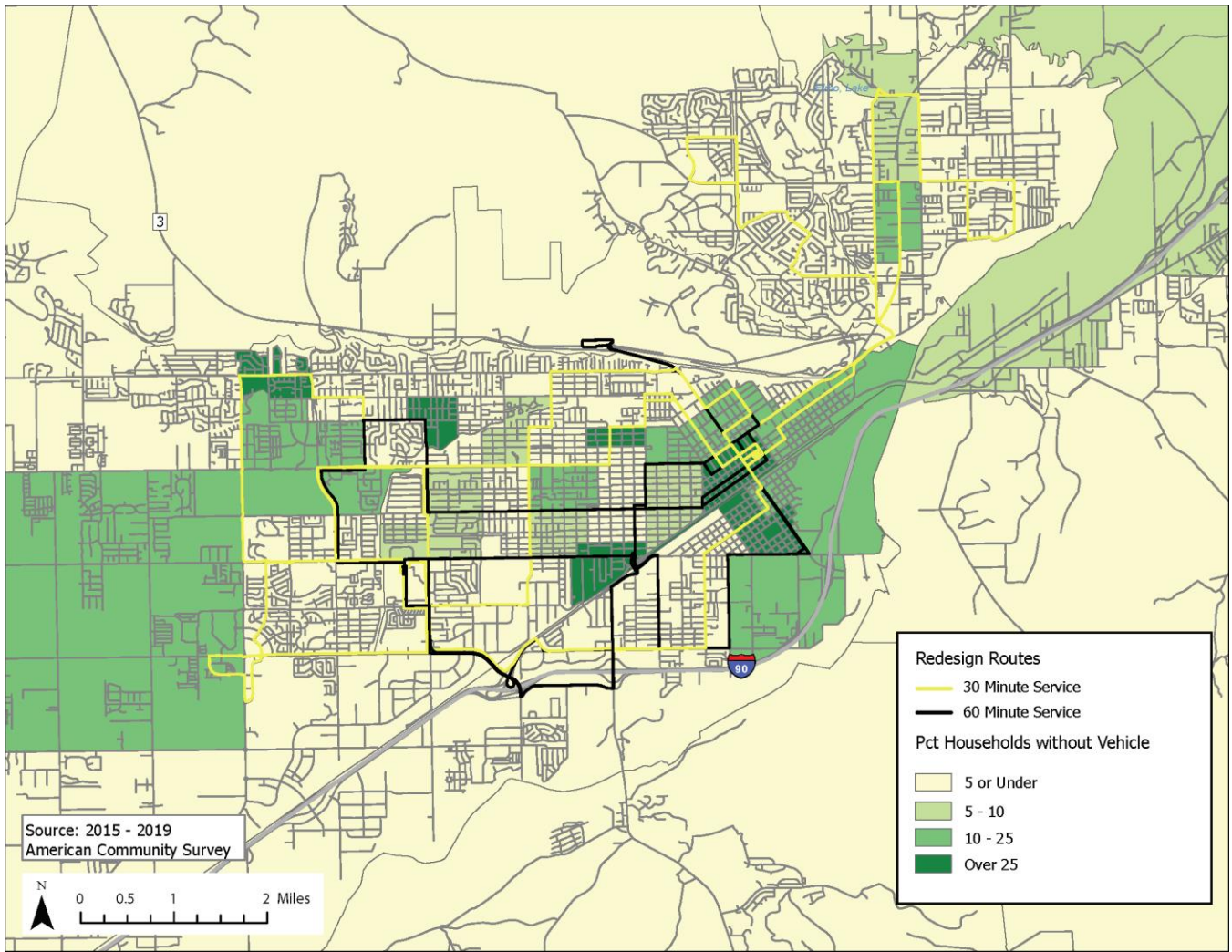
Morning Star Senior Living
MSU-Billings
Montana Center on Disabilities
Northern Rockies Oncology
Parkview
PLUK
Prairie Towers

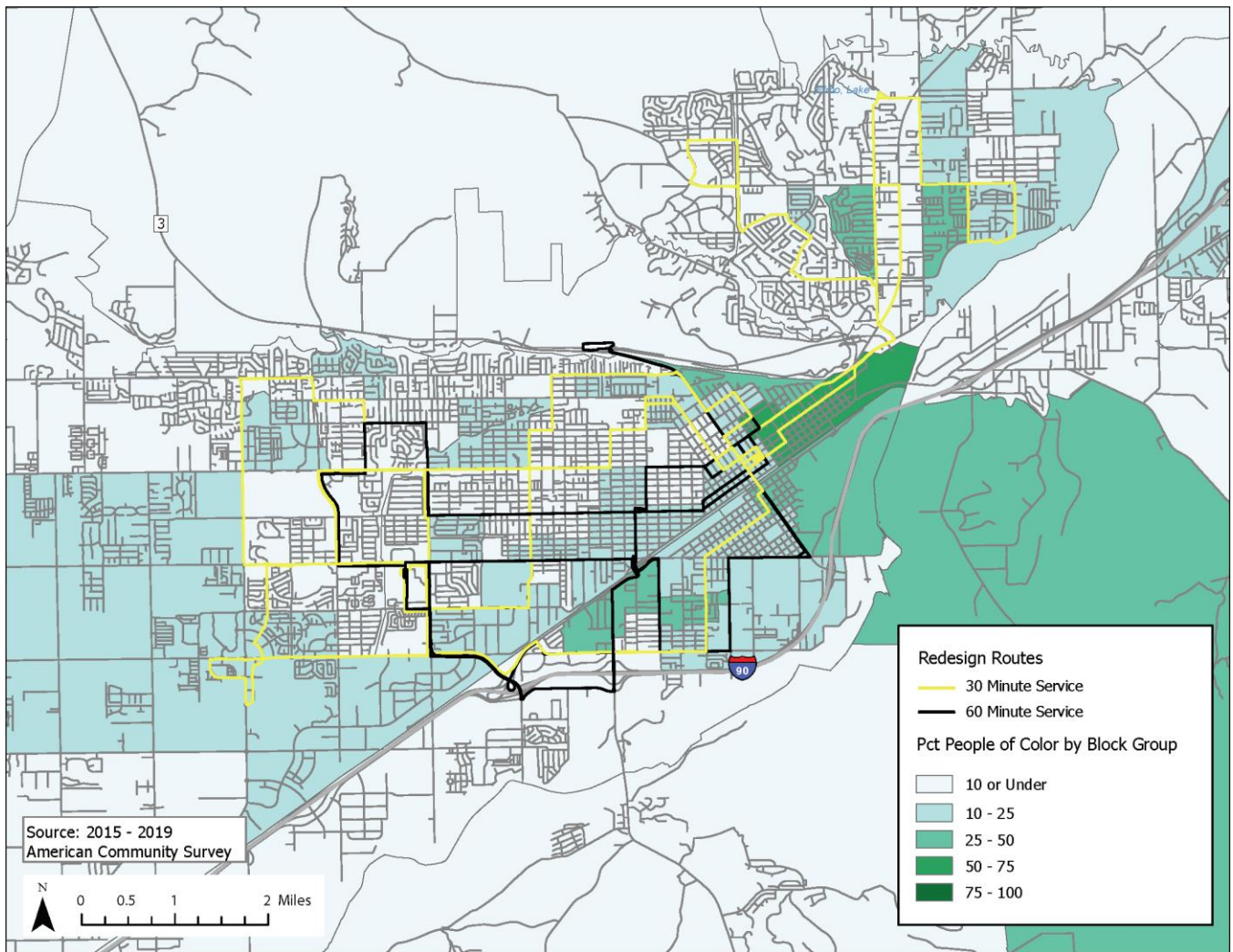
Beartooth Assisted Living
Billings Bible College
Billings School District
Billings Taxi
Billings Yellow Cab
Blind & Low Vision
Central Court Village
City Cab
Eagle Cliff Manor
Edgewood Vista
Fraser Tower
Golden Advantage Senior Services
Head Start, Inc.
Highgate Senior Living
Human Resources Development Council
Interim Health Care
Job Connection
Lasting Legacy
LIFTT
Magic City Terrace
Mental Health Center

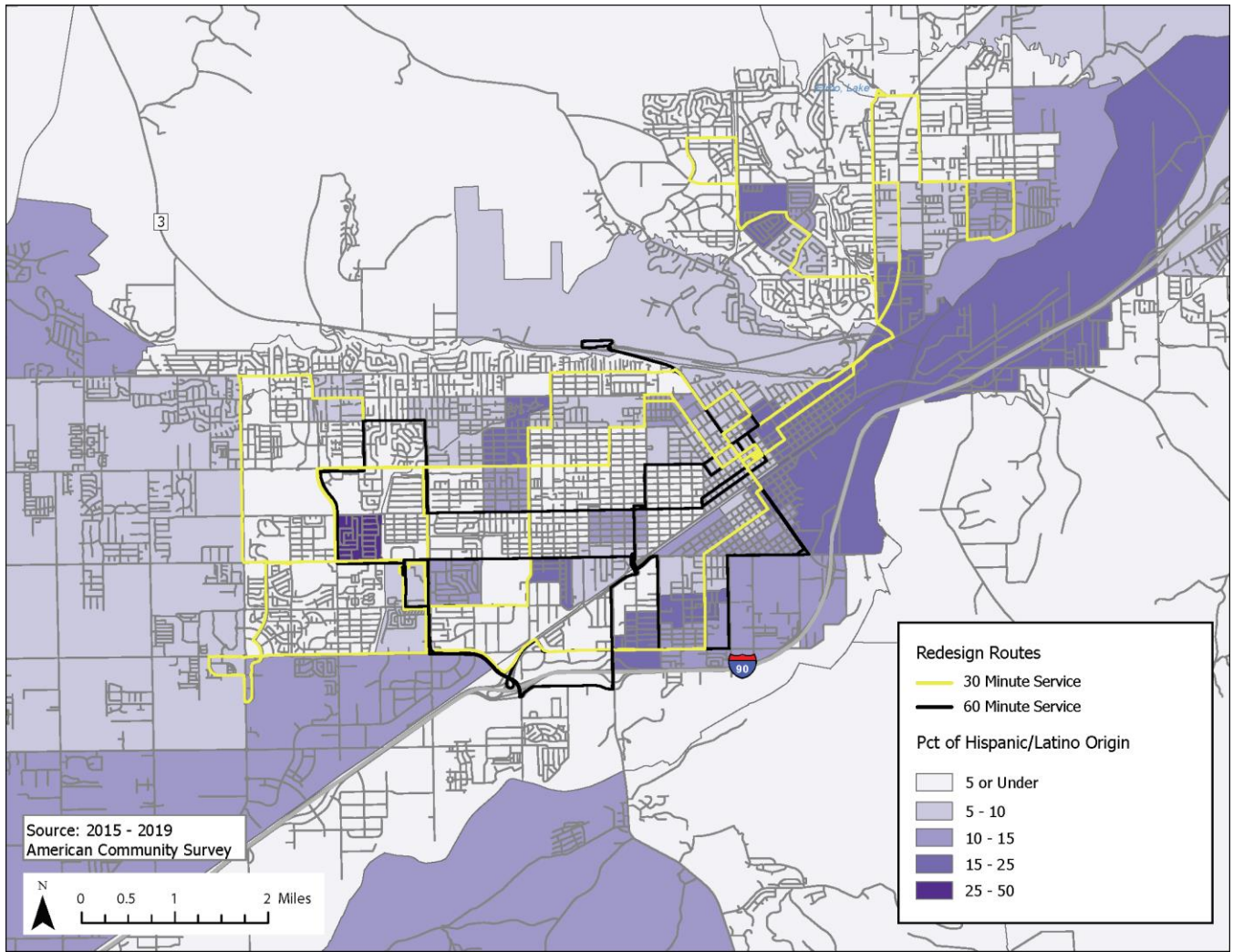
Rainbow House
Rocky Mountain College
Rocky Mountain Home Care
Rocky Mountain Hospice
S.T.E.P.
Sage Tower
St. John's Lutheran Ministries
Sweetwater Retirement
Synergy Home Care
Tender Nest
Total Transportation
Vintage Suites
Visiting Angels
Vocational Rehab
Volunteers of America
Westpark Retirement Village
Yellowstone County Human Services
Yellowstone Naturopathic Clinic
YMCA
YWCA

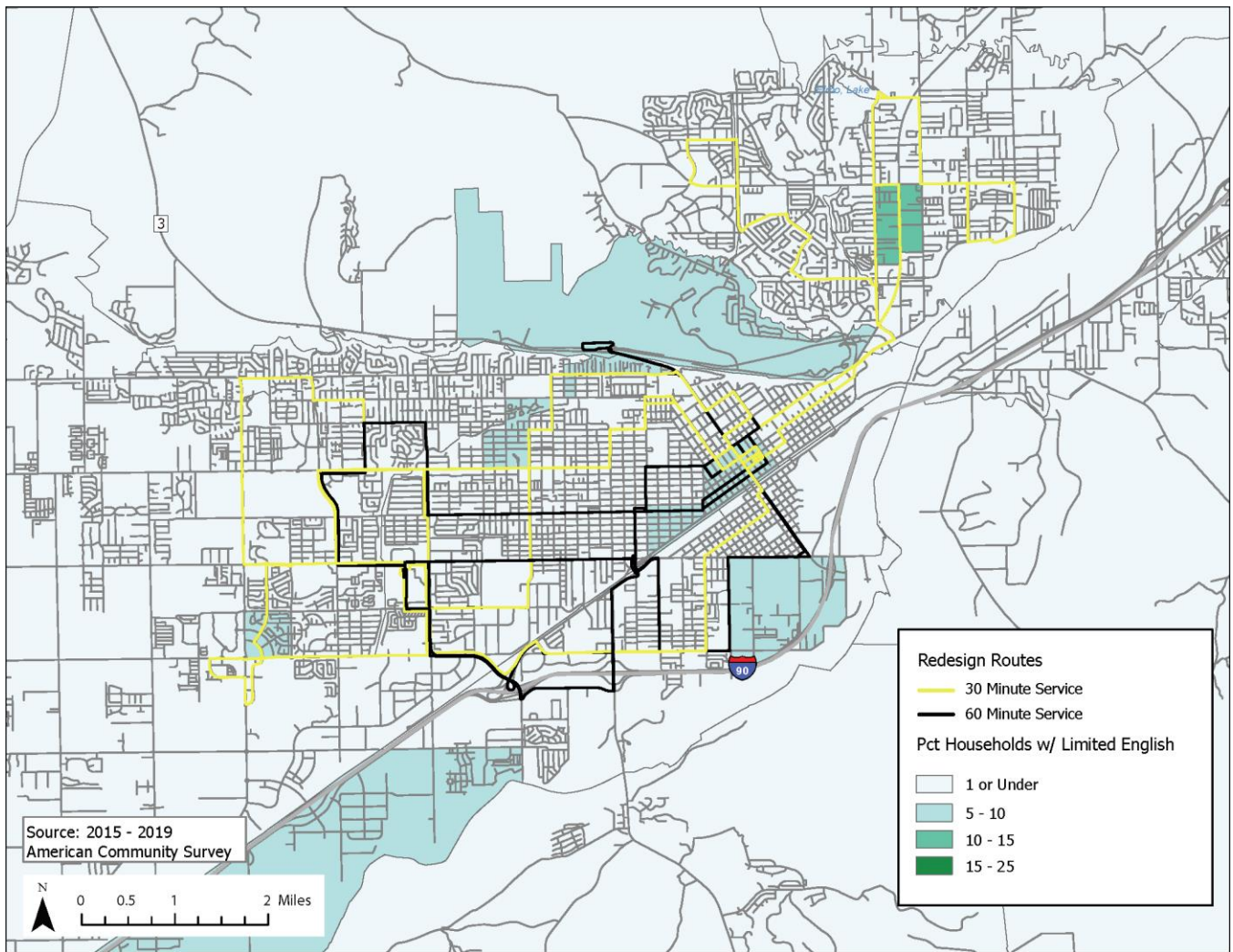
Redesign Network and Demographics











May 5th Public Presentation Slides



BILLINGS, MONTNA

TRANSIT DEVELOPMENT PLAN

PUBLIC MEETING 1

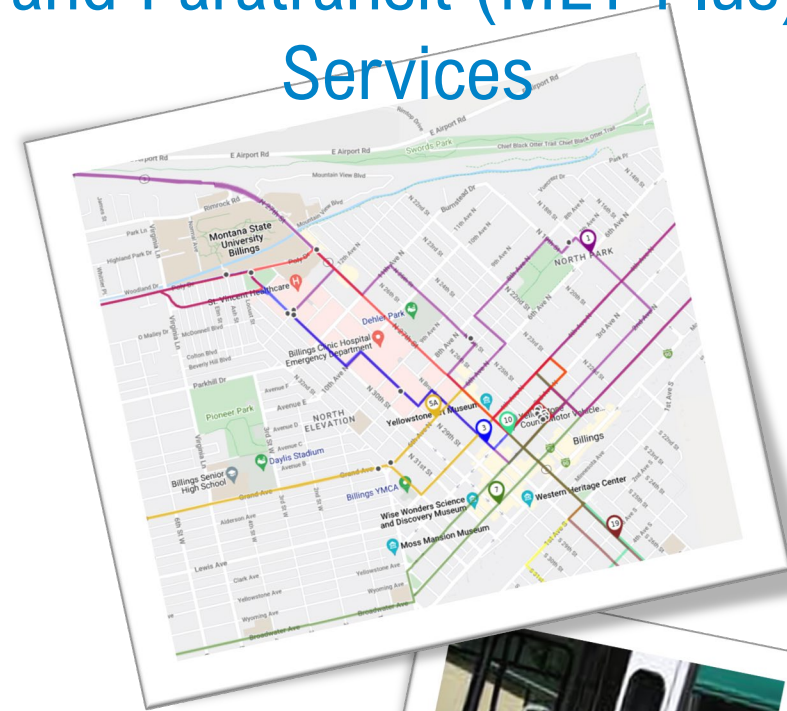
May 5, 2022



Agenda

- Welcome
- What the Plan Includes/Schedule
- How MET Compares to Peers
- Community Survey Findings
- Options for the Future
- Discussion/Wrap-up

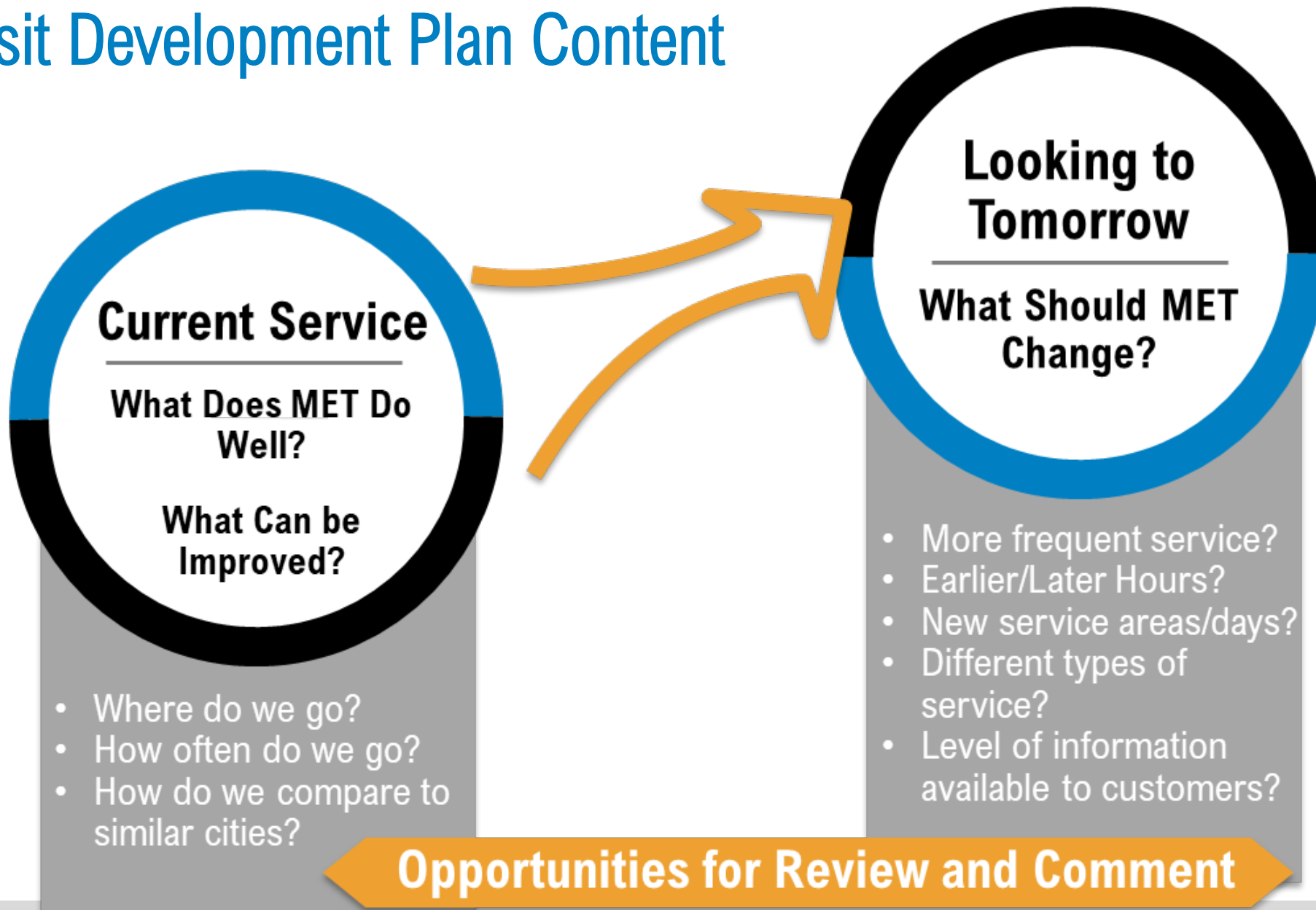
Plan Covers BOTH Fixed Route and Paratransit (MET-Plus) Services



Remote Participants:

Email Questions/Comments: btroe@srfconsulting.com
Call/Text with Questions/Comments: 402-350-7783

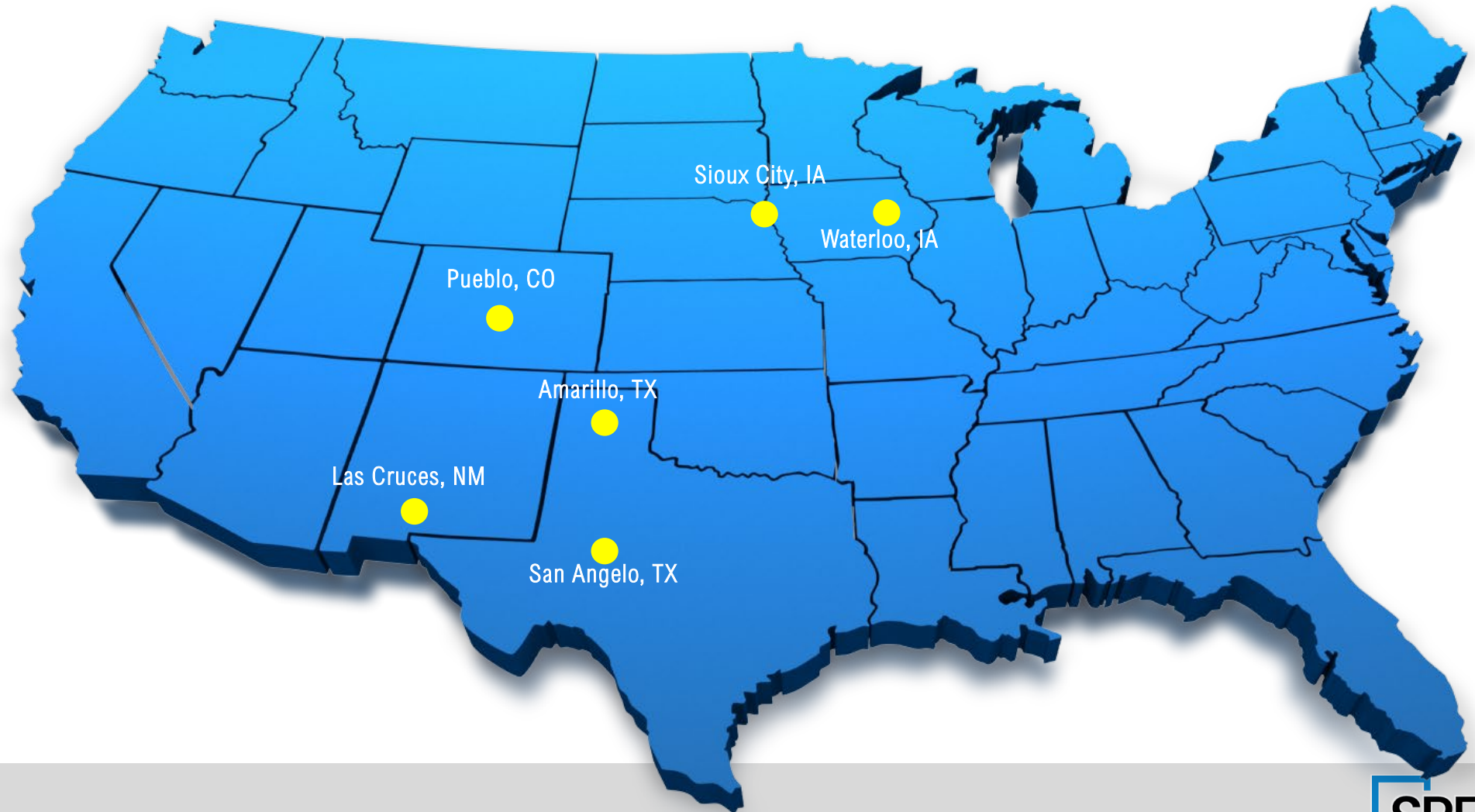
Transit Development Plan Content





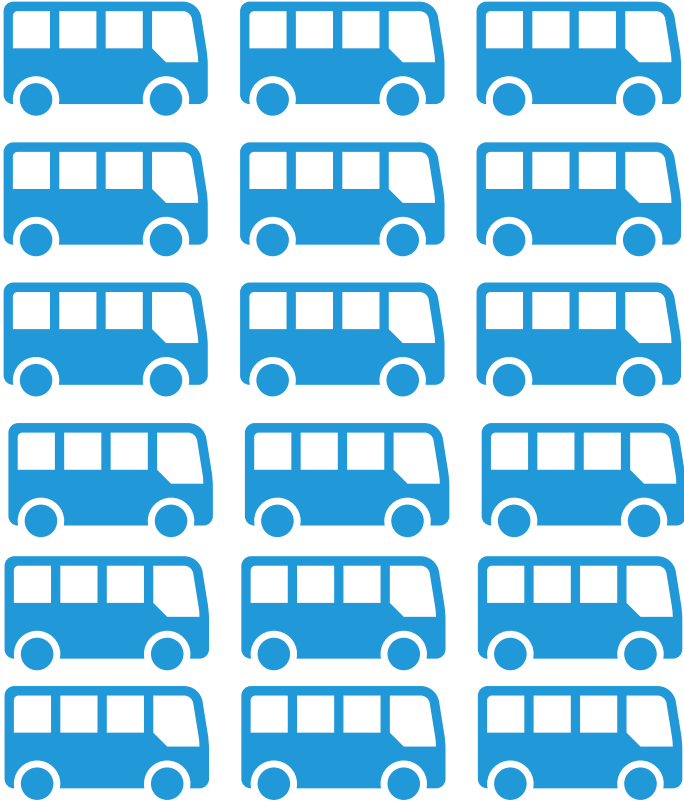
BILLINGS MET PEER ASSESSMENT

Selected Peers

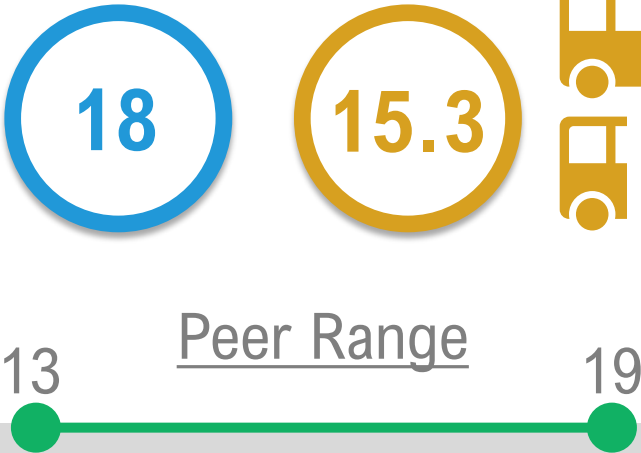


Buses Operating During Peak

Billings Transit

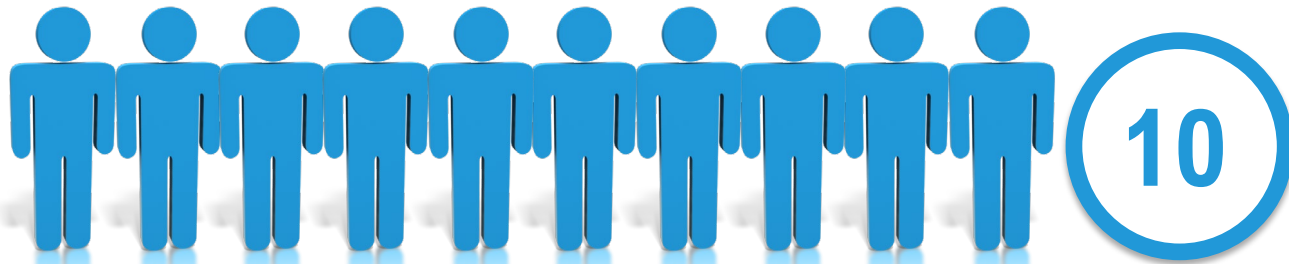


Peer Systems

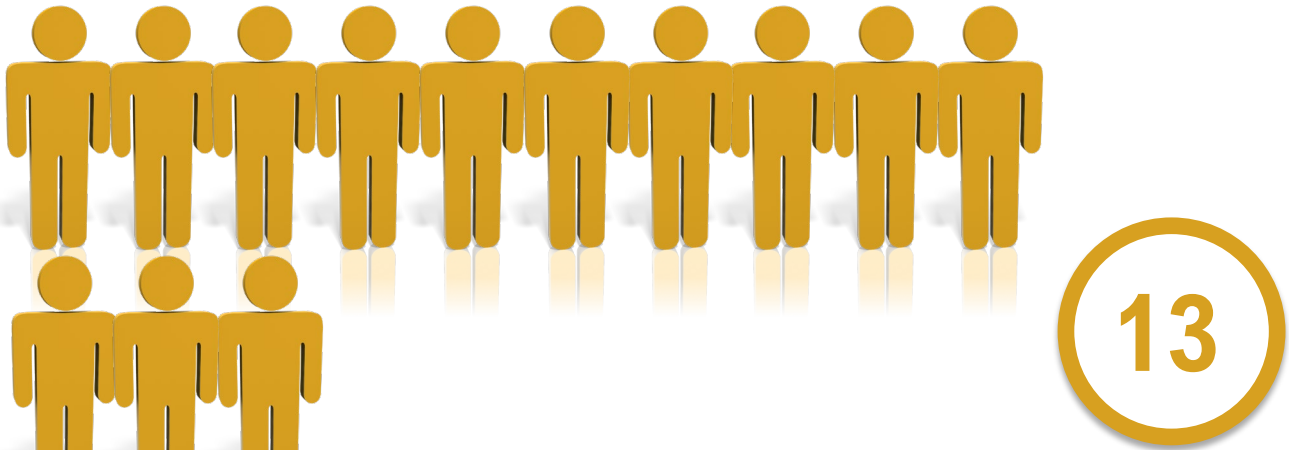


Riders Per Hour - Service Effectiveness

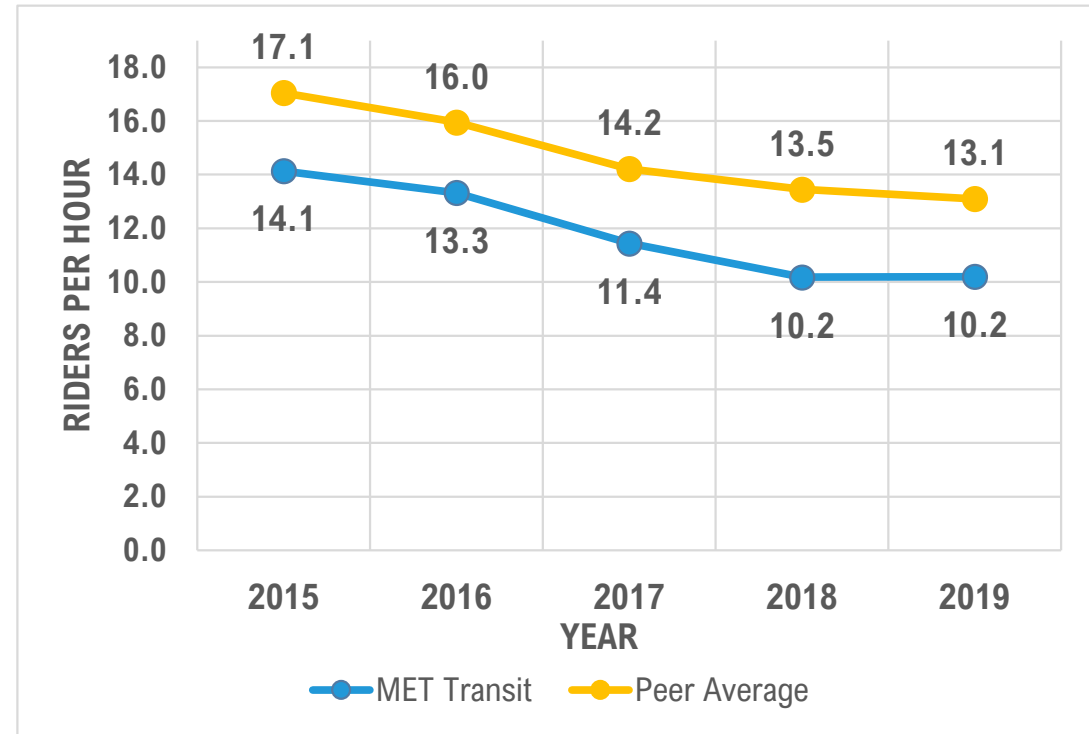
Billings Transit



Peer Systems



Billings Compared to Peer Average
2015-2019



Cost Per Hour for Service

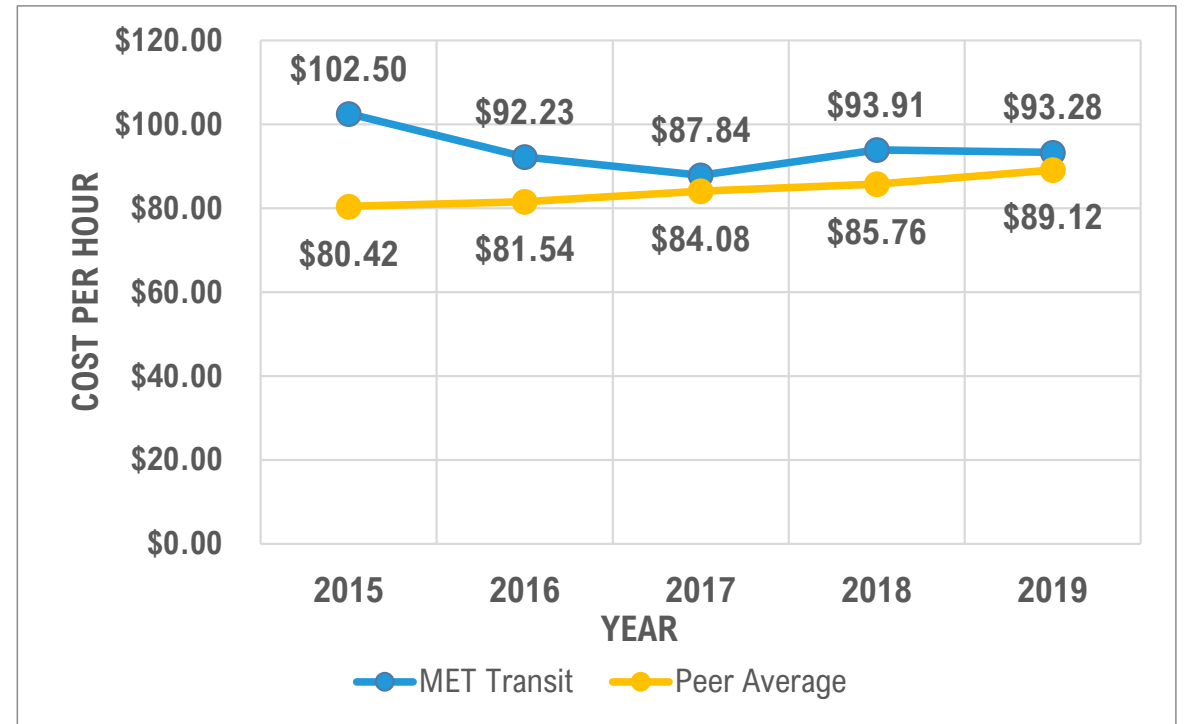
Billings Transit



Peer Systems

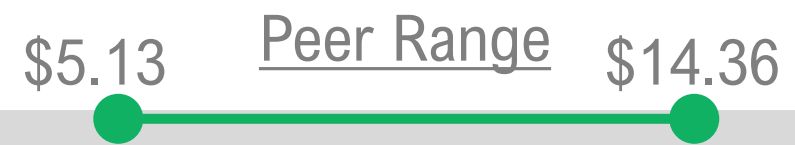
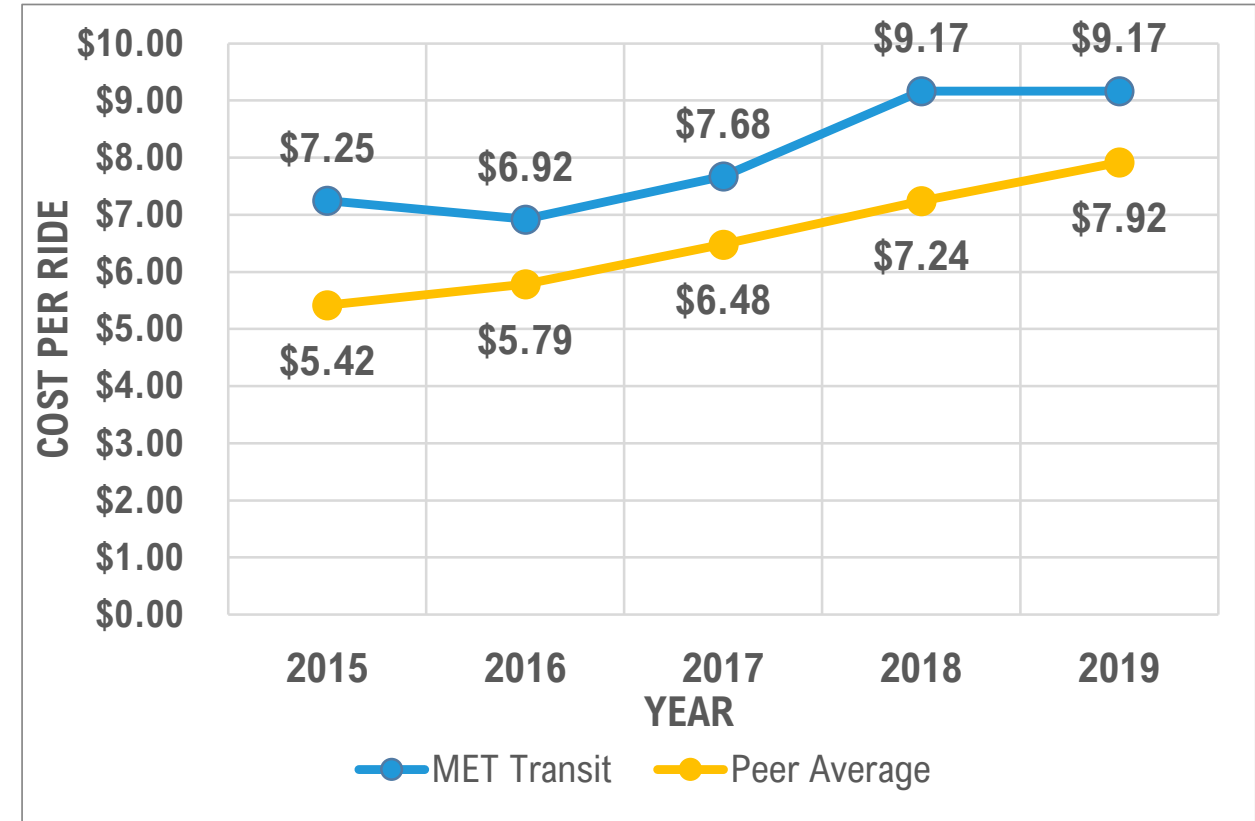
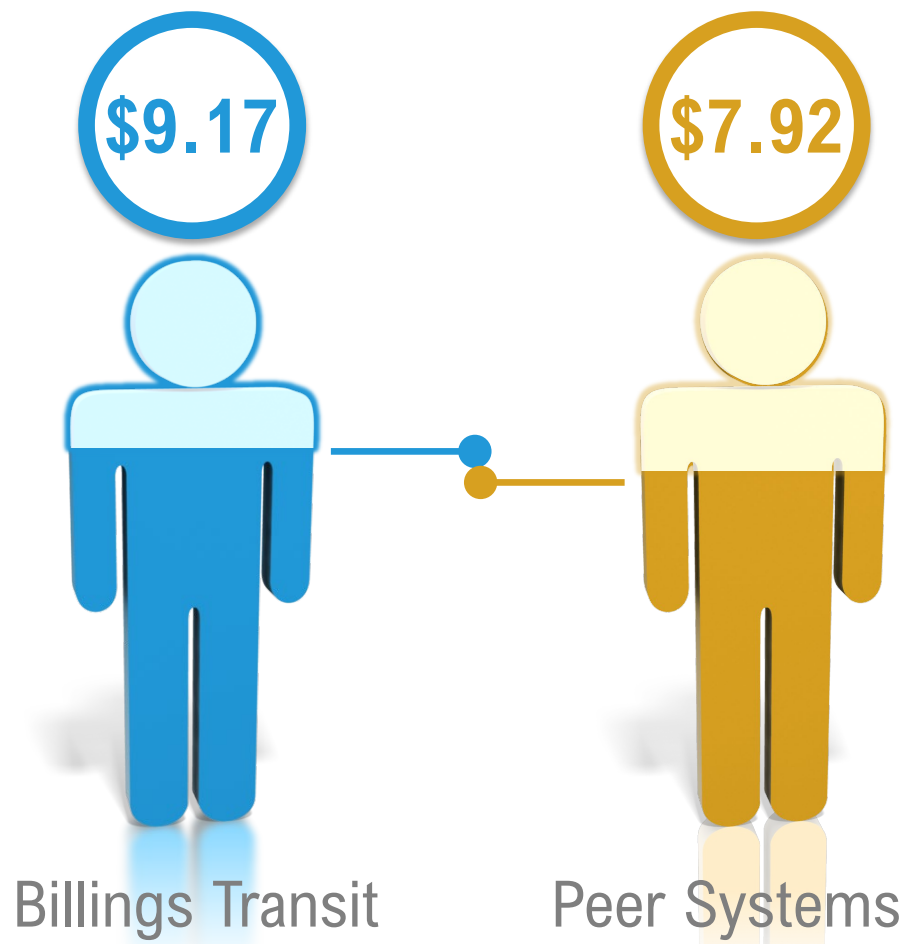


Billings Compared to Peer Average
2015-2019



Cost Per Rider – Cost Effectiveness

Billings Compared to Peer Average
2015-2019





COMMUNITY SURVEY FINDINGS

Community Engagement

- Community Survey:
 - Knowledge of Services
 - Transit Use
 - Do not use because?
 - Would You Ride If...?
 - Investment Priorities
- March 2022
- 512 Surveys!

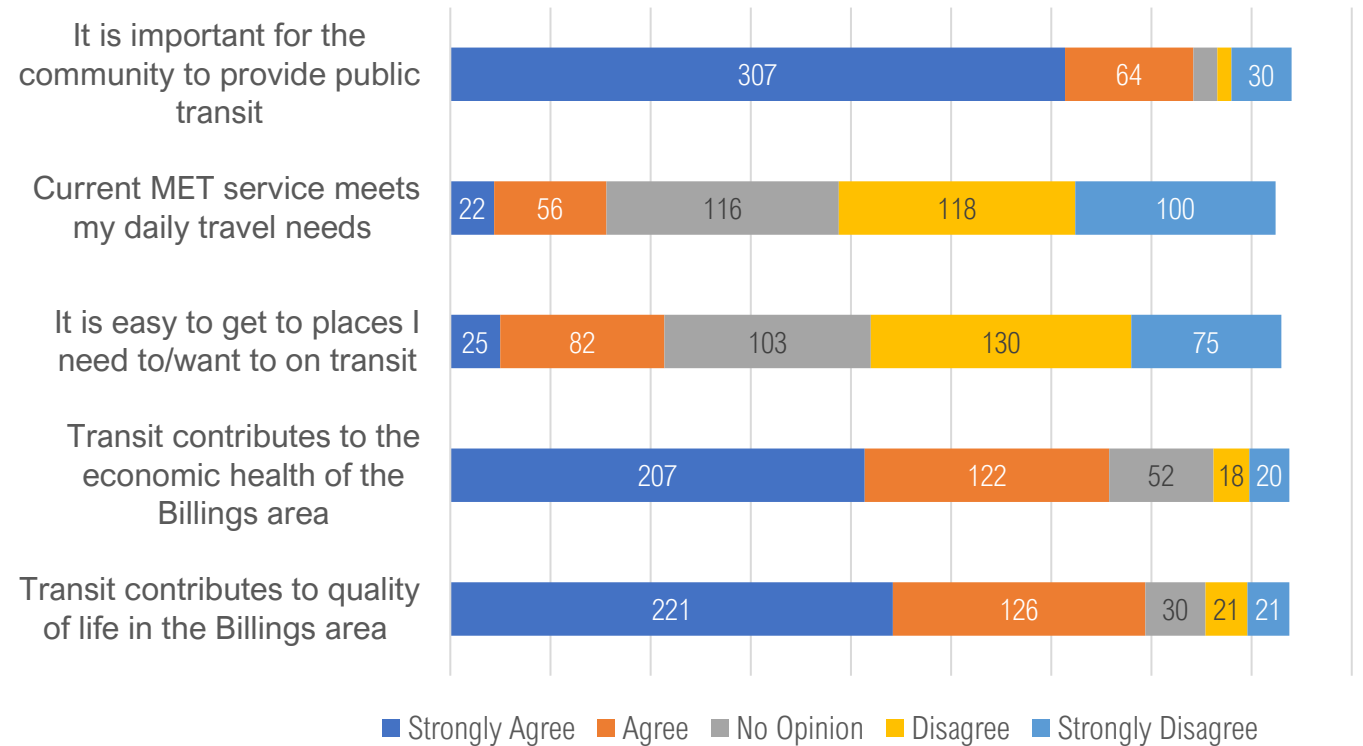


What Did We Hear from the Community?

Riders and Non-Riders

Sentiment about Service

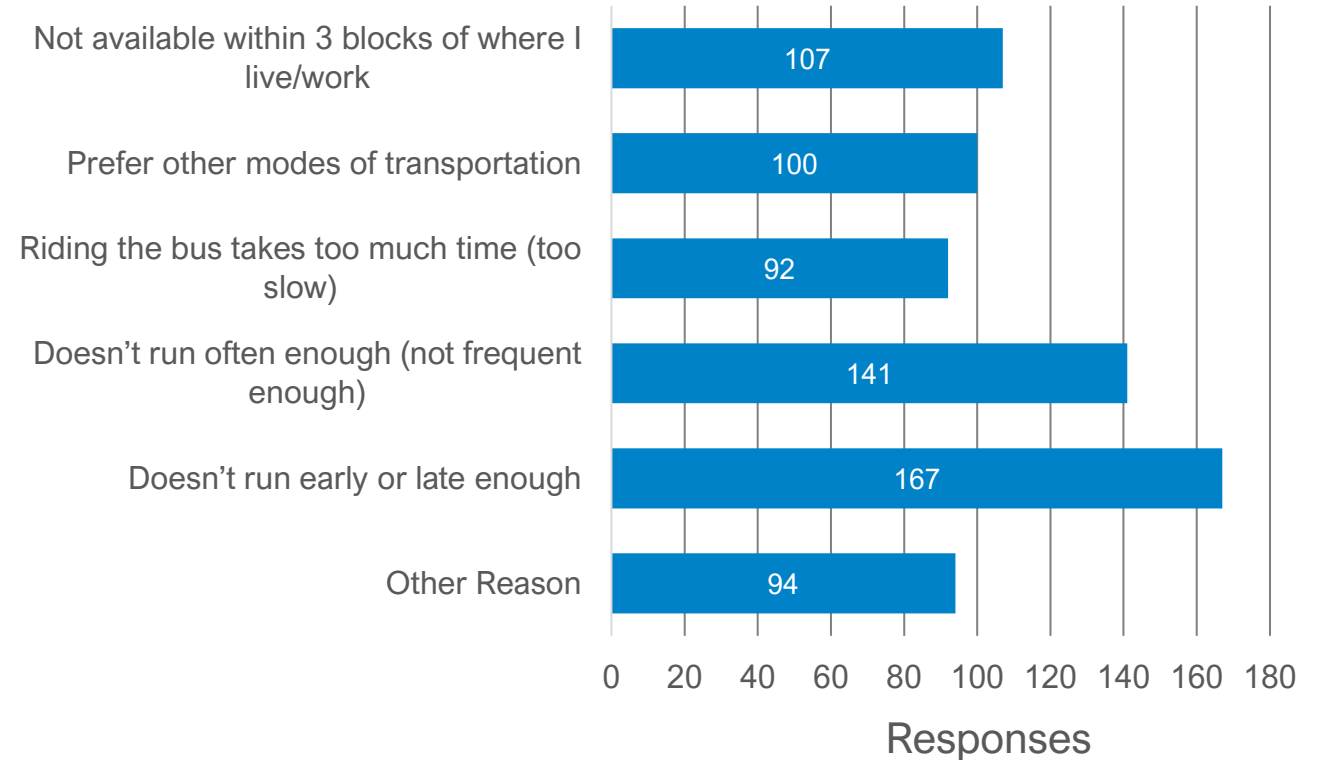
- Vast Majority See Value in MET Service:
 - 90%: Transit is Important – Agree/Strongly Agree
 - 85-87%: Transit Contributes to Billings Economic Health/Quality of Life – Agree/Strongly Agree
- Room of Improvement:
 - 15%: Transit Meets Needs – Agree/Strongly Agree
 - 15%: Transit Easily Gets Me Where I Want to Go – Agree/Strongly Agree



Reasons Not Using Transit

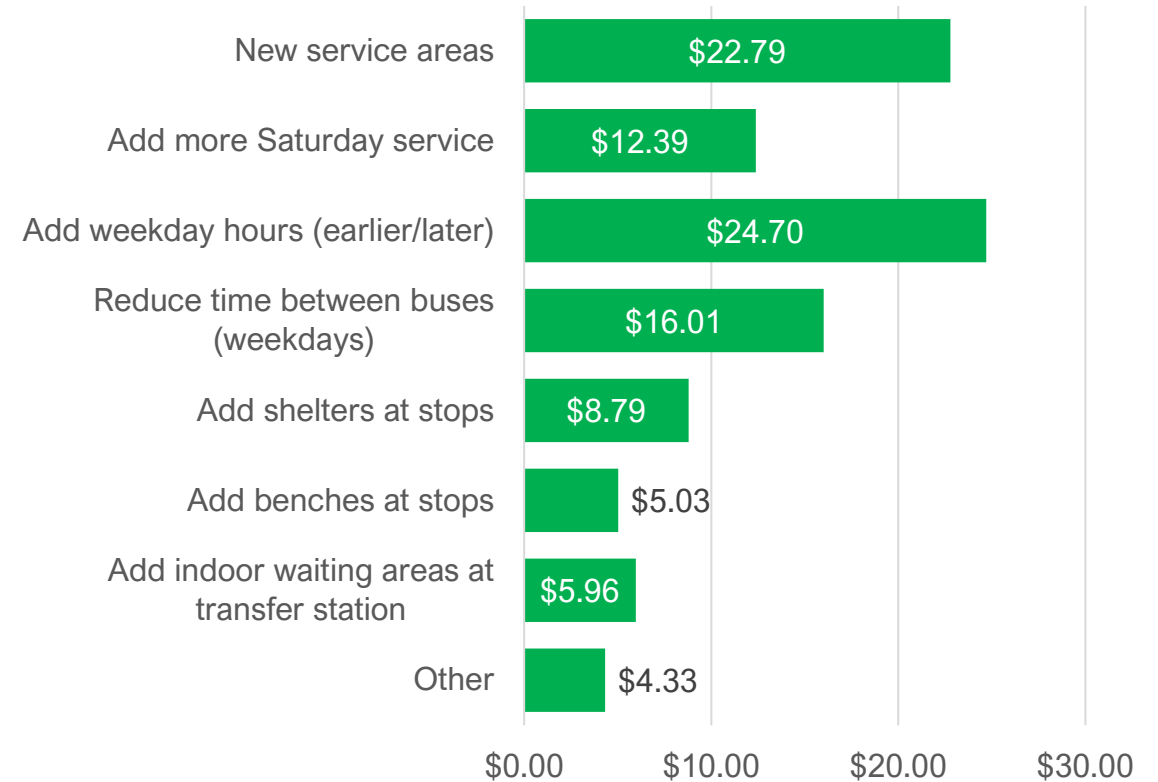
- Hours of Service Too Short
- Too Much Time Between Trips
- Convenience – Too Far to Walk

If you do not use public transit regularly, what are the reasons that discourage you from do so?



How You Would Spend Improvement Dollars?

- If Had \$100, How Would You Spend it On Transit?
- Allocation:
 - More Hours
 - Expand Service Area
 - More Frequent Trips
 - Add More Saturday Service

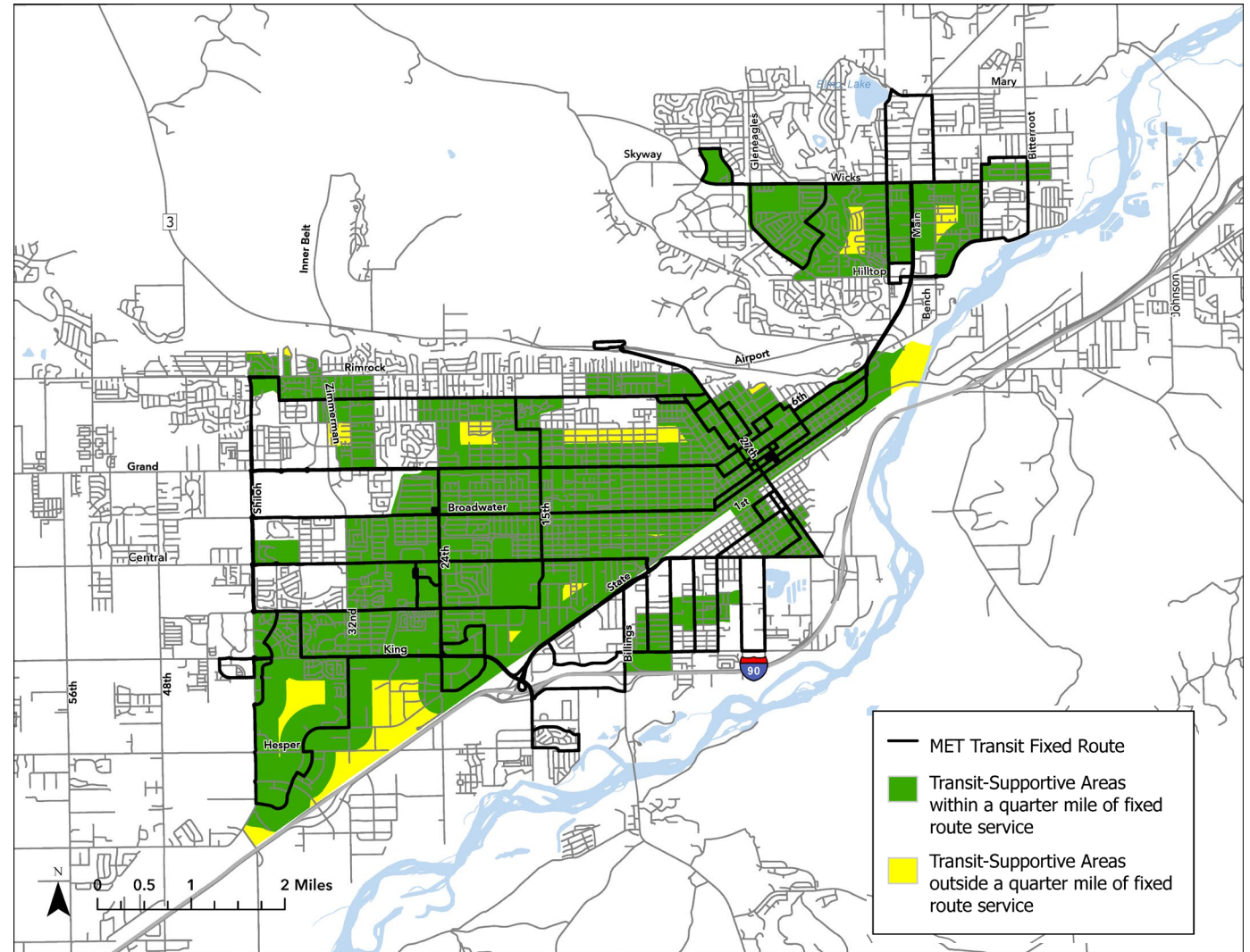




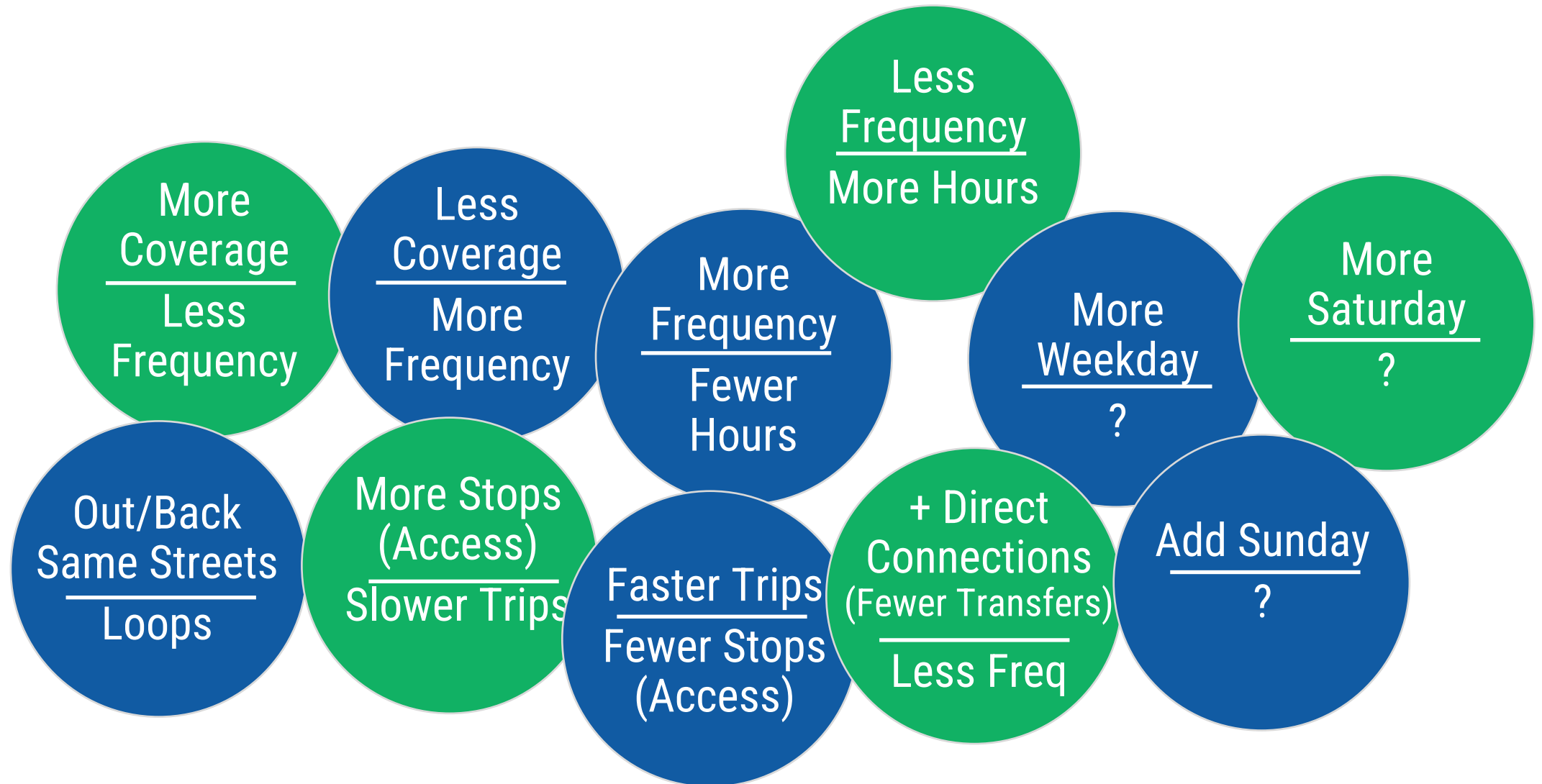
PLANNING FOR CHANGE

Identifying Need For Changes – Why Suggest Change?

- Route Performance** Current Route is Under-performing:
 - Service
 - Economic
 - Financial
- Segment Performance** Lower Riders Per Revenue Hour
- Fill Gaps** Identify Transit Supportive Areas without Service
- Redundancy** Are Competing Routes Reducing Performance?



Going Forward – Decisions on Change Involves Tradeoffs



How Would You Prioritize Transit Service Improvements?

Frequency

Shorter wait time between buses



Travel Time

Shorter trips/ More reliability



Add Weekday Hours

More hours in the morning/evening



Expand Saturday Service

More Comparable to Weekday



More Days

Add Sunday service



Coverage

Service to...
(Add Answer on Sticky Note)



New Options

On-demand in certain areas/at certain times of day
(e.g. like Taxi, Uber or Lyft)

Place DOTS



- Highest Priority



- 2nd



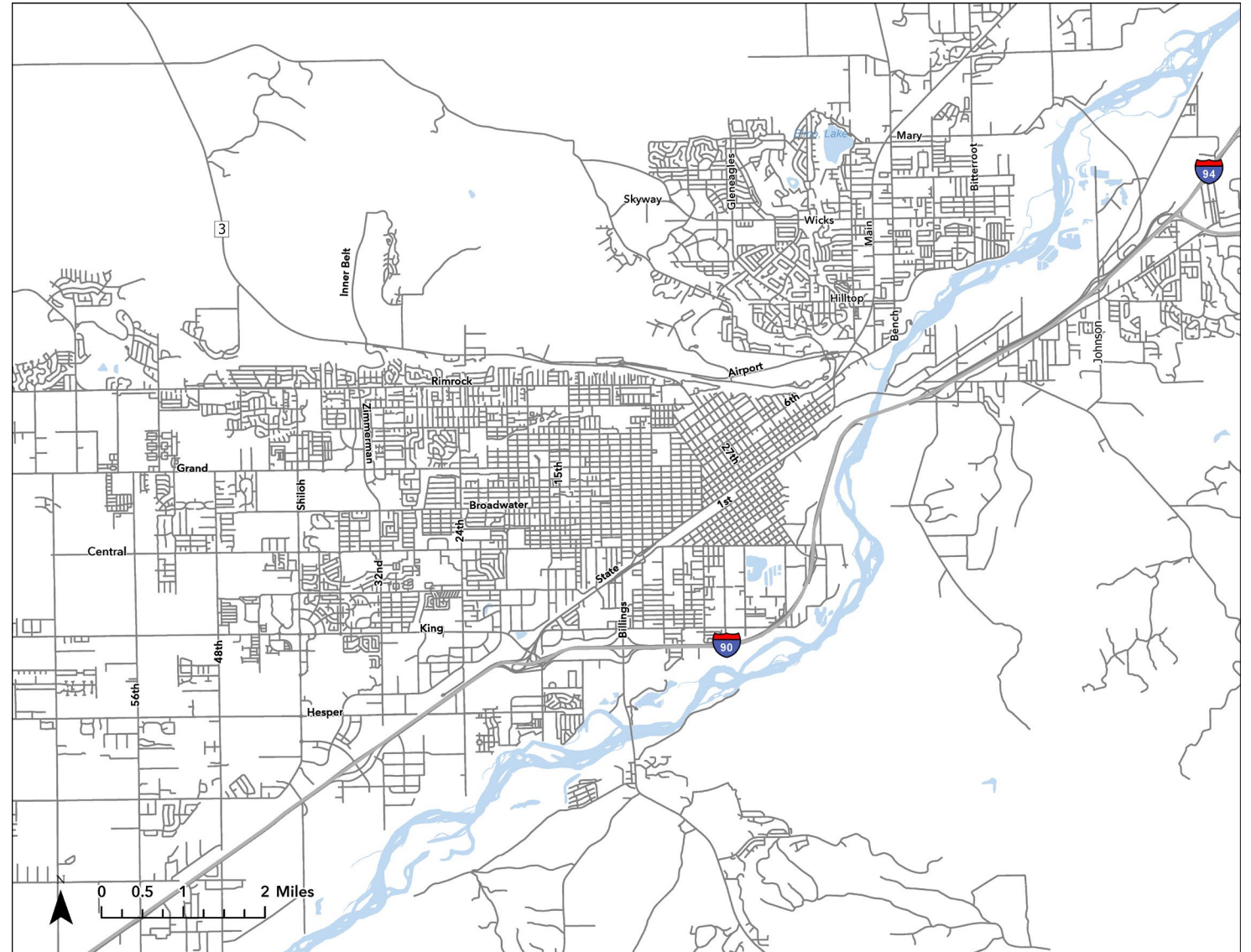
- 3rd



- 4th

Where to Expand?

- Where are Services You Need?
- Where is Housing that Would Support Service?
- Where is Employment that Would Support Service?



Transit Plan Schedule

DEC 2021 - FEB 2022

Initiation

- Kick-off
- Organize Steering Committee
- Assess Current Conditions

MAR – MAY 2022

New Ideas

- Community Survey
- Future Development
- Determine Change is Needed
- Service Ideas and Review:
 - Positives
 - Negatives
 - Cost

JUN – AUG 2022

Plans

- Package Ideas:
 - Provide service
 - Meet goals
 - Can afford

ON-GOING

Implementation

- Funding Package
- When Needed
- Documentation

Discussion/Wrap-up

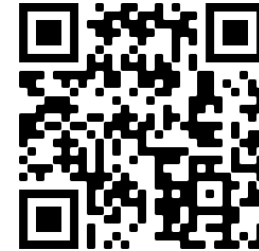
- Next Steps:
 - Reviewing Service Concepts
 - Evaluating Stop Locations
 - Reviewing Funding

Providing Comments

Option 1: Use the Comment Forms provided

Option 2: access the digital form

www.METTransit.com/Survey



Contacts

Rusty Logan, MET Transit Manager
406-657-8218
loganr@billingsmt.gov

Bill Troe, Project Manager
SRF Consulting
402-513-2158
btroe@SRFConsulting.com



TRANSIT DEVELOPMENT PLAN

PUBLIC MEETING 1



Remote Participants:

Email Questions/Comments: btroe@srfconsulting.com

Call/Text with Questions/Comments: 402-350-7783



August 18th Public Presentation Slides



BILLINGS, MONTANA

TRANSIT DEVELOPMENT PLAN

PUBLIC MEETING 2

August 18, 2022

Location/Time

August 18, 2022

Public Library

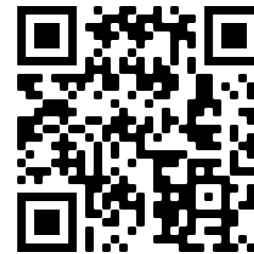
5:30 PM to 7:00 PM



What We Will Cover in Presentation

- Update Where We are in Study Process
- Draft Recommendations:
 - Route Redesign
 - Service Expansion
- Benefits of Improvements
- Next Steps:
 - Planning Process
 - Implementation of Recommendations

Provide Comments:
www.METTransit.com/Survey
Or Click the Code



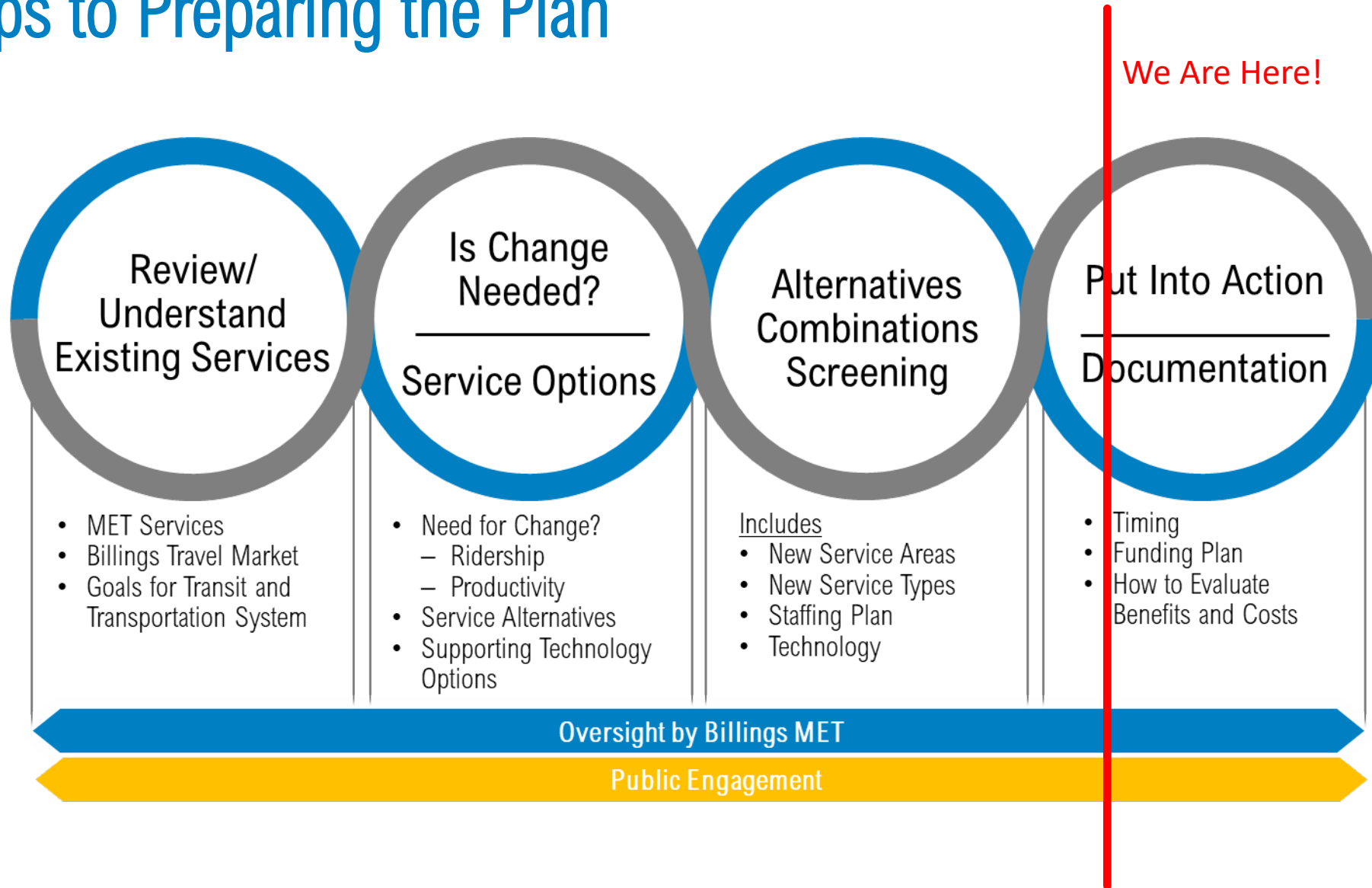
TRANSIT DEVELOPMENT
**PLAN
2022**

CITY OF BILLINGS MET TRANSIT



August 2022

Steps to Preparing the Plan



Anticipated Future Budget

+30%

Reflects Average Increment Over
Next 5 Years

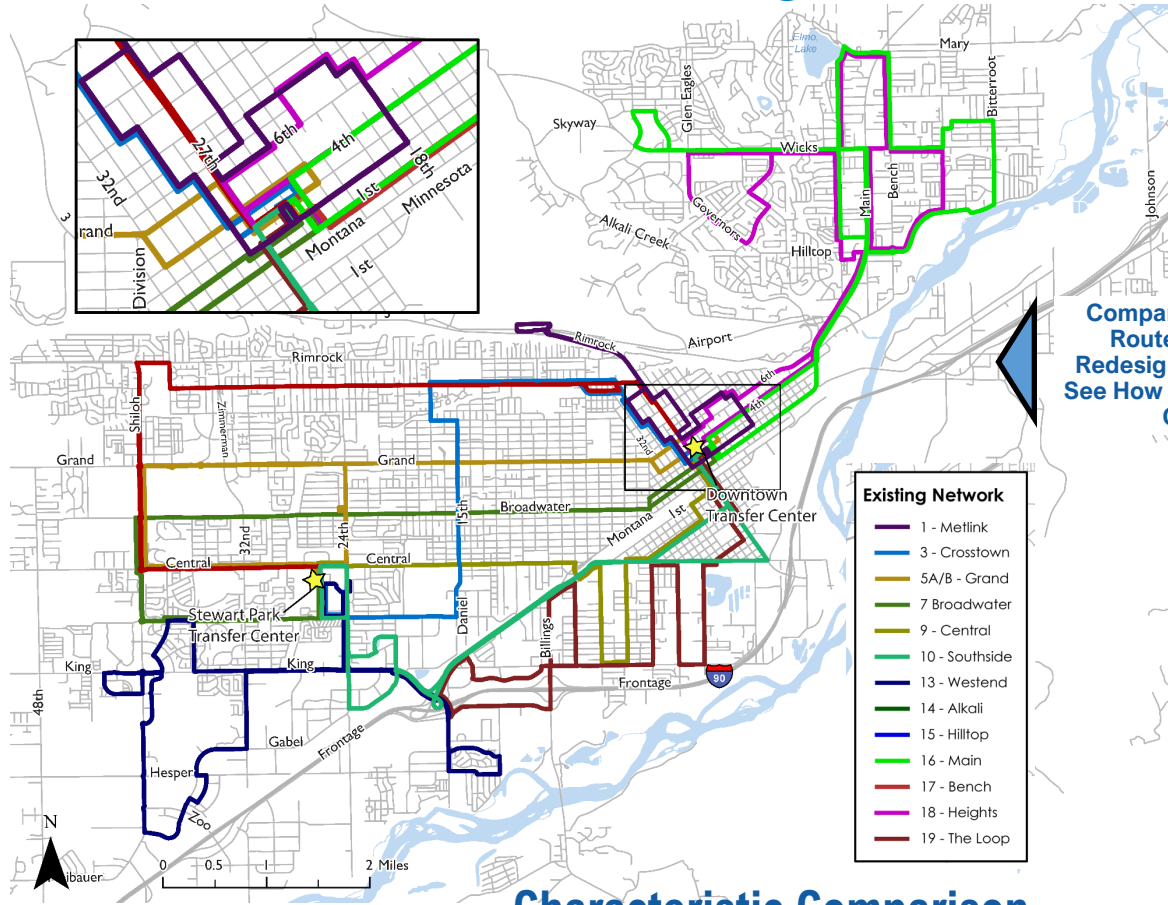
New Route: 10%

60 to 30 Minute Frequency: 10%

Add 1 Hour to Weekdays: 10%

Fixed Route Network Redesign

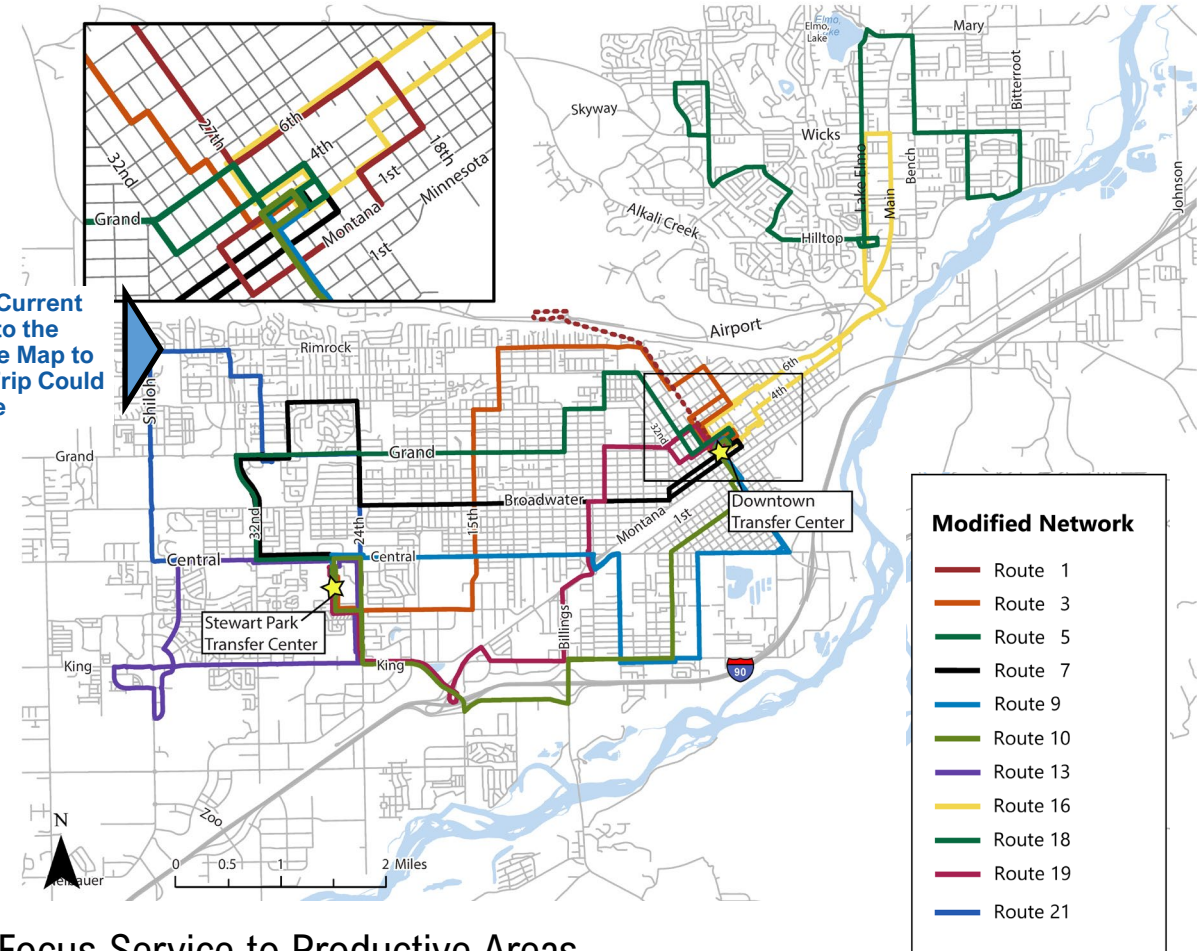
Current and Redesign Transit Networks



Characteristic Comparison

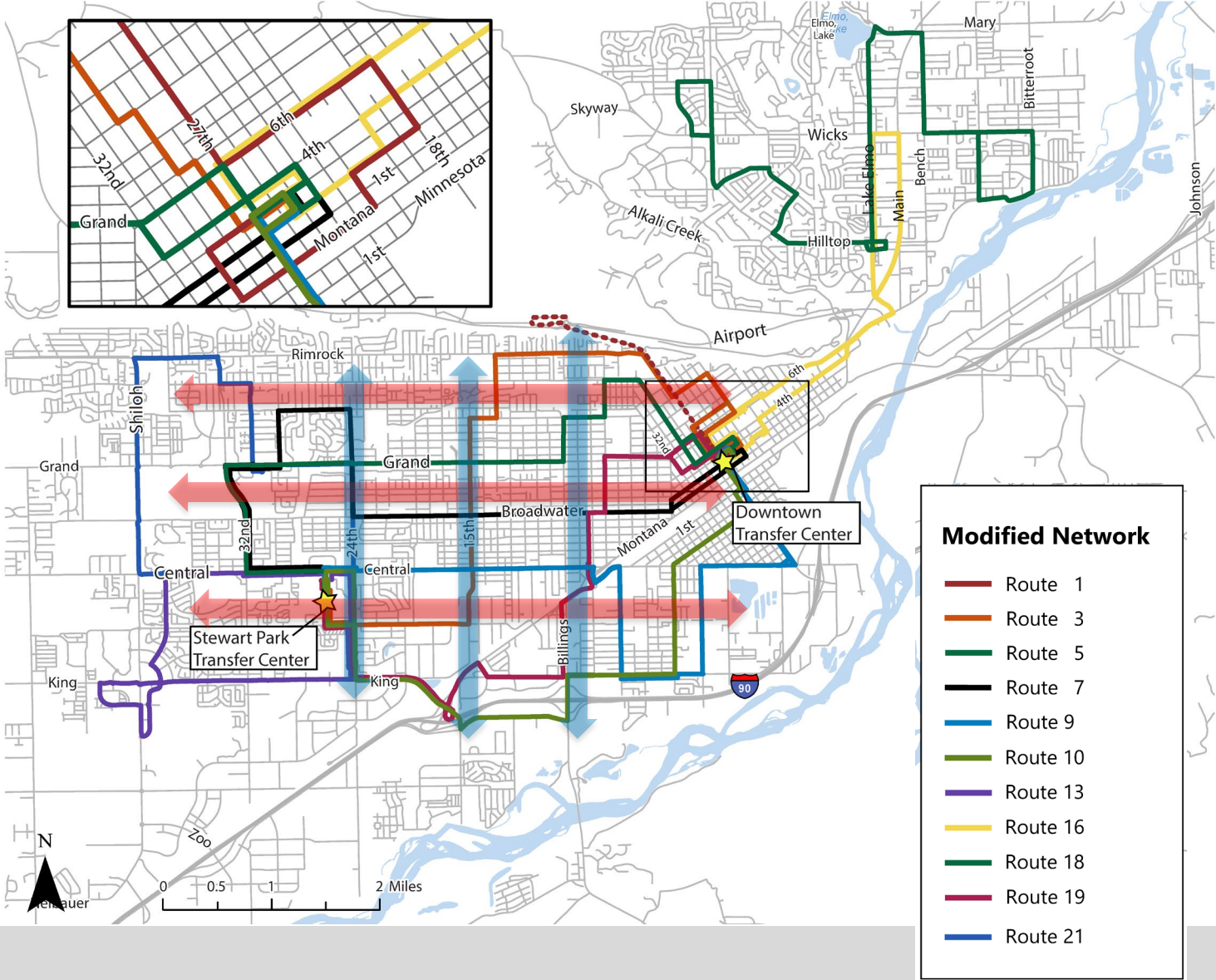
- Consistent Operating Budget
- Consistent Service Hours
- Focus Service on Transit Supportive Area

Compare the Current Route Map to the Redesign Route Map to See How Your Trip Could Change



- Focus Service to Productive Areas
- Reduces Walk Distance in Core
- Increase Convenience/Opportunity in Core

Redesign Transit Network – Hybrid Grid

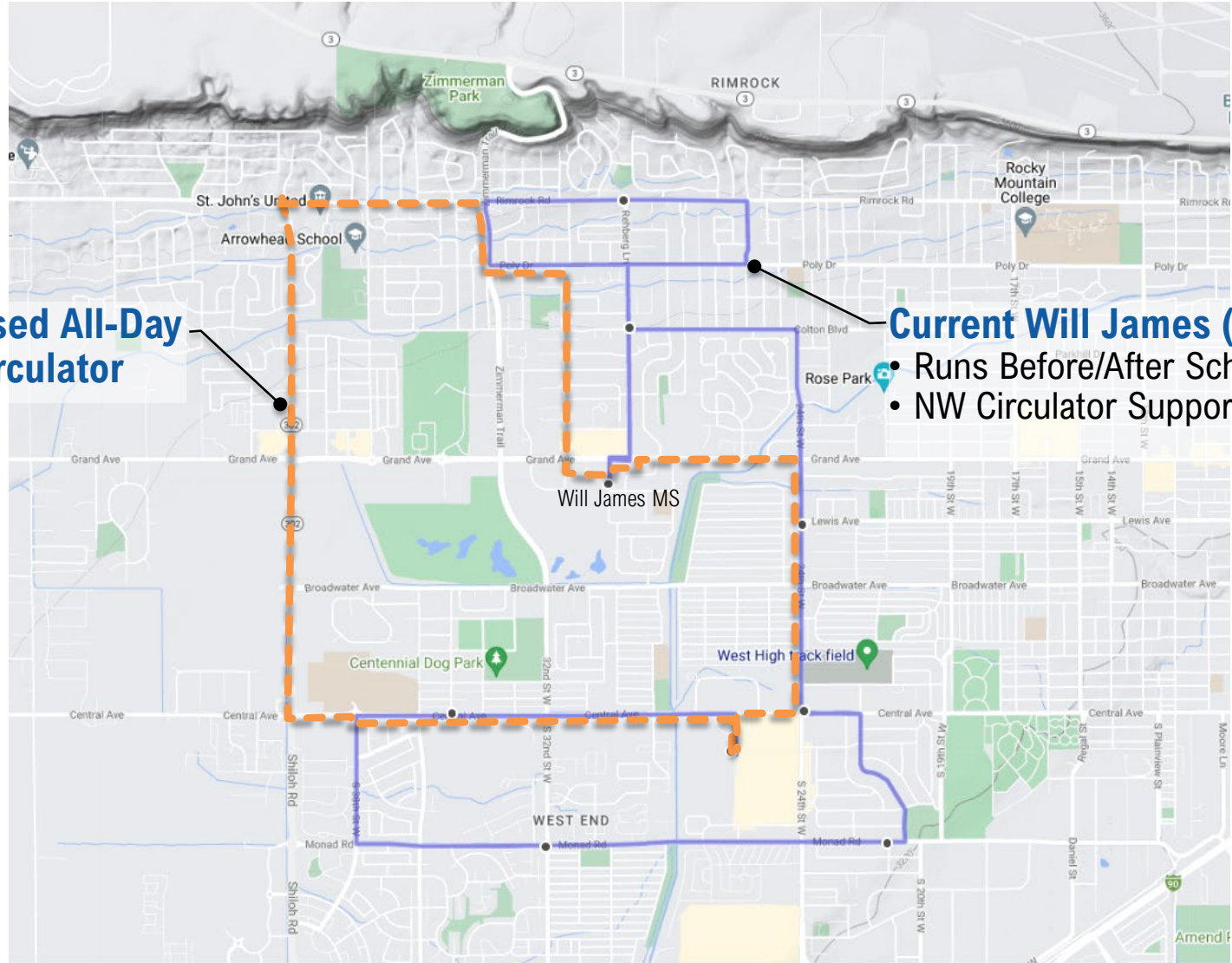


- Retains the East-West Continuity in Core
- Adds Increment of North-South Continuity

Will James – Northwest Circulator

- Reduce/Replace Tripper

Proposed All-Day NW Circulator



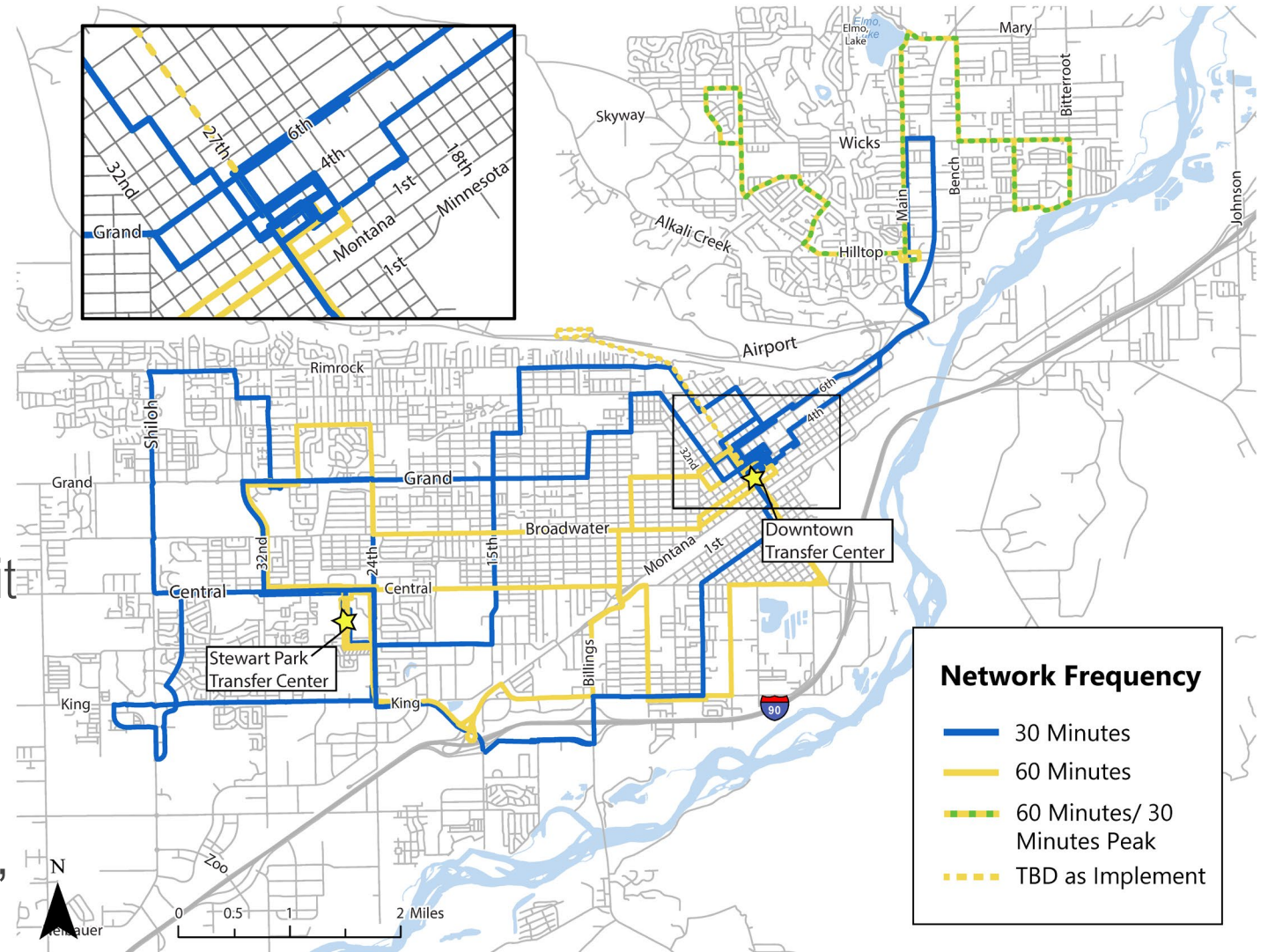
Current Will James (Tripper)

- Runs Before/After School Only
- NW Circulator Supports Service

Use of New Funding

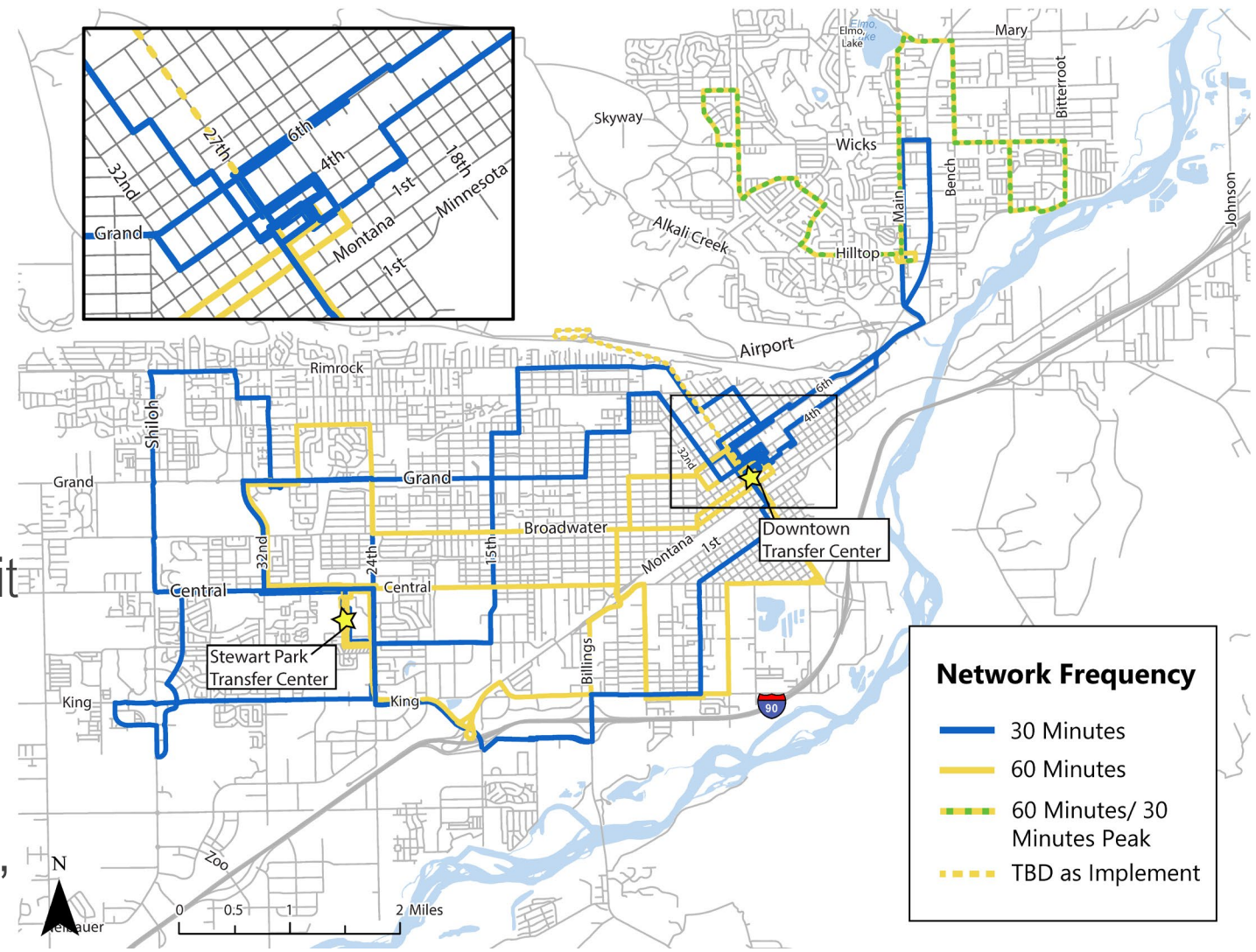
Service Expansion In Plan

- Transit Expansion is:
 - More Hours/Days
 - More Frequency
 - More Coverage of Metro
- Plan Key Components:
 - Serve Areas Supporting Transit
 - Add Frequency to City Core
 - Consistent All-Day Service:
 - Billing Heights
 - Modify Service on the “Fringe”



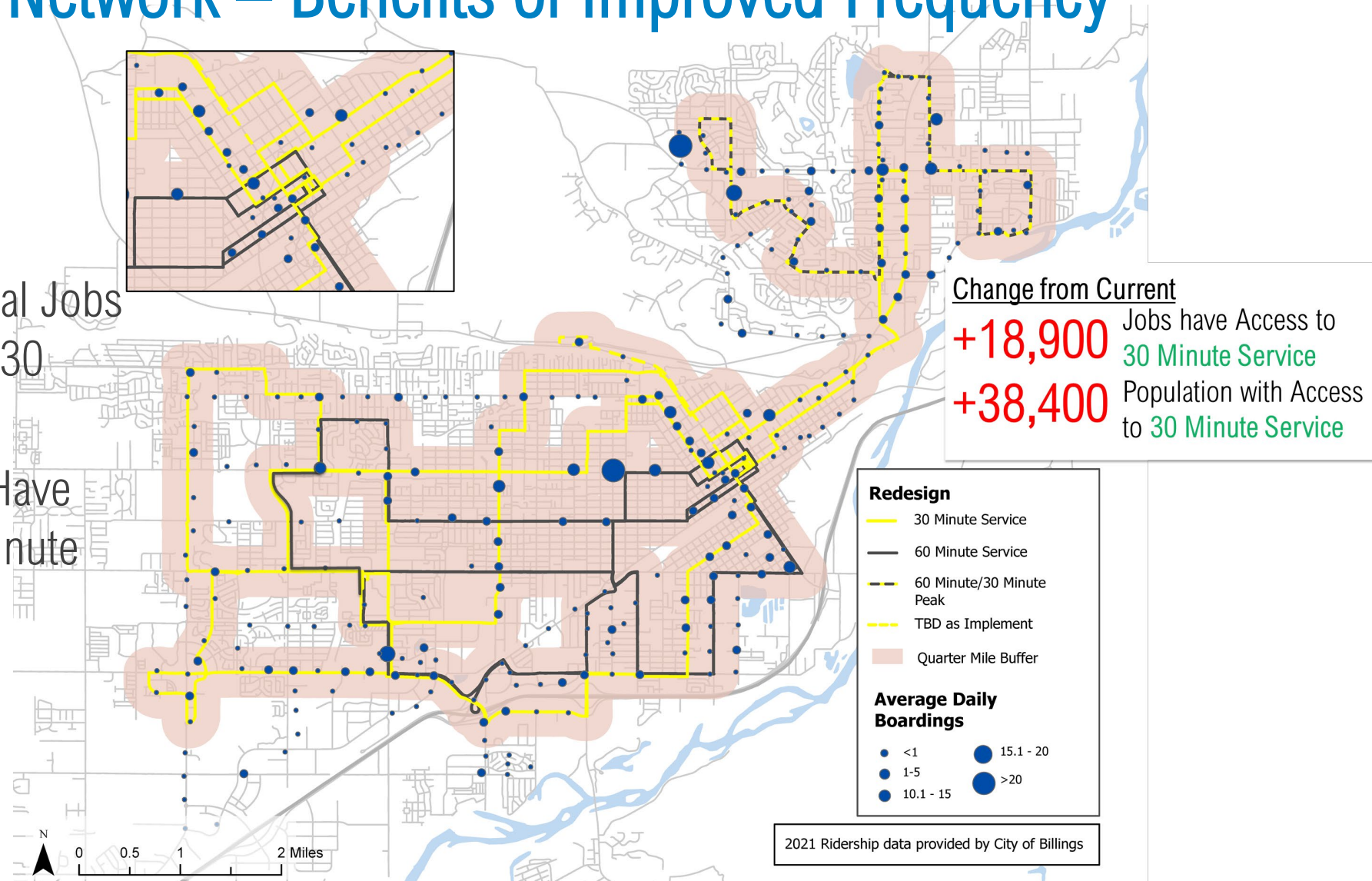
Service Expansion In Plan

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 - Add Frequency to City Core
 - Consistent All-Day Service:
 - Billing Heights
 - Modify Service on the “Fringe”



Redesign Transit Network – Benefits of Improved Frequency

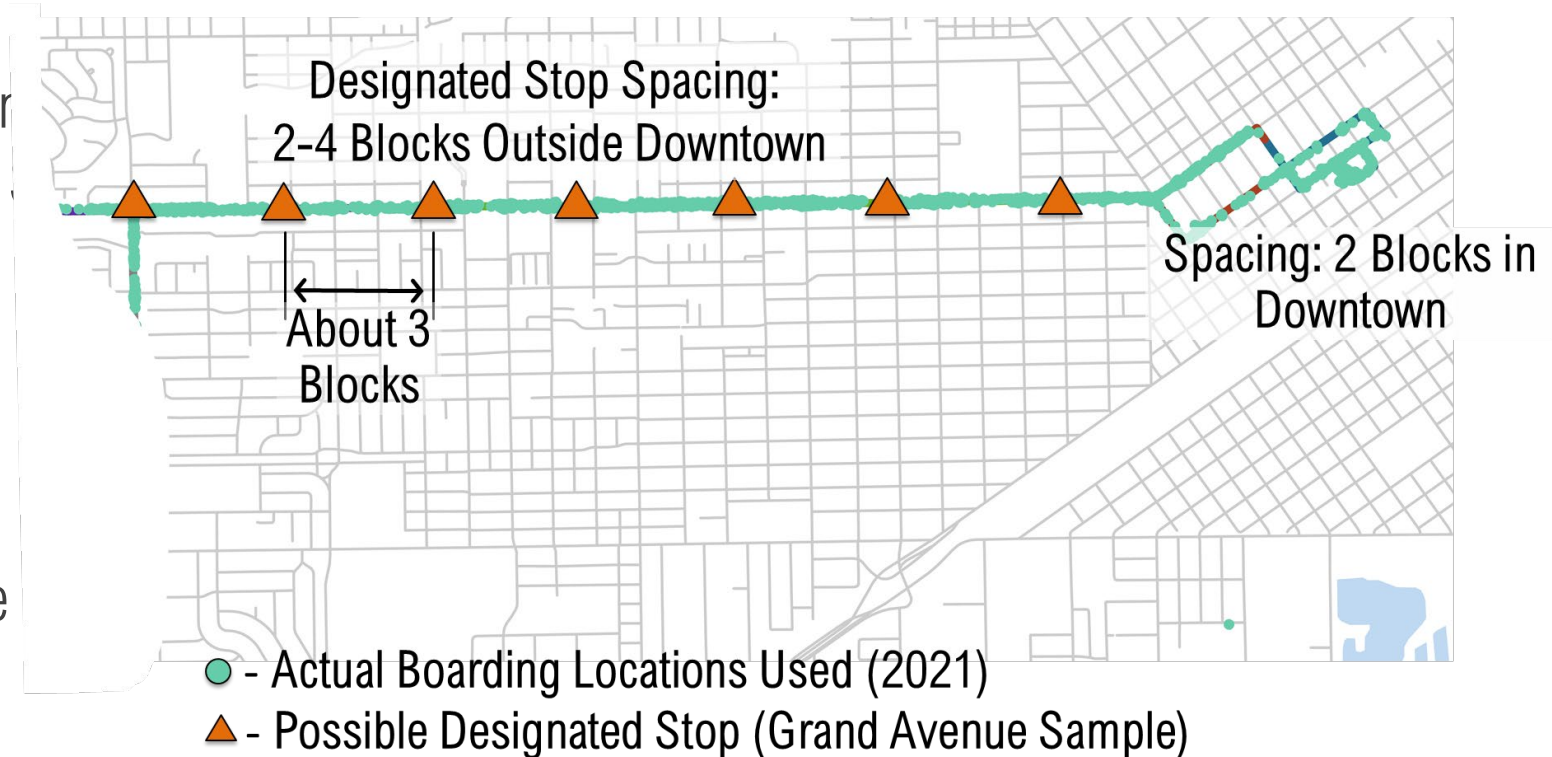
- Relative to the Current:
 - 18,900 Additional Jobs Have Access to 30 Minute Service
 - 38,400 People Have Access to 30 Minute Service



Designated Stops – Convenience/Safety Improvement

- Removes Confusion of “Safe” Stop Location
- Reduces Missed Pick-ups in Dark (Driver Cannot always see People Waiting)
- Easier for New Riders to Understand Where to Wait
- Supports Scheduling by Knowing Where all Possible Stops are Located
- Benefits Data Analysis

Flag Stop or Designated Stops?



Consistent Schedule

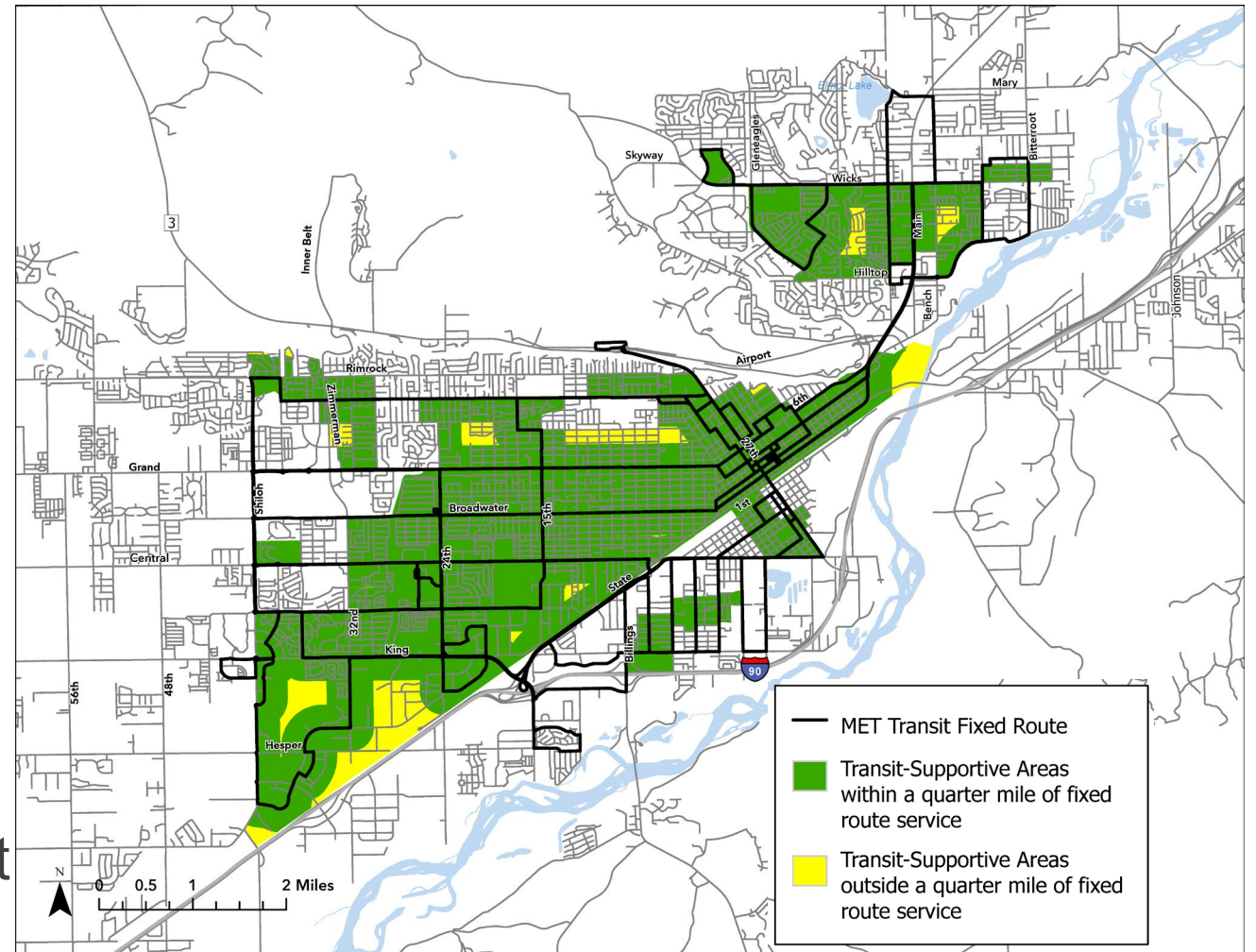
- Presently Morning/Lunch/Afternoon Breaks
- Currently – Change Run Times
- Plan:
 - Fill In Scheduled Breaks – More Drivers
 - Extend Service Day
 - Two more Runs Per Route Per Day
 - ALWAYS THE SAME TIME AT YOUR STOP!

Departure from Downtown

Current	Redesign
6:20 AM	6:20 AM
7:20 AM	7:20 AM
8:35 AM	8:20 AM
9:35 AM	9:20 AM
10:50 AM	10:20 AM
11:50 AM	11:20 AM
1:15 PM	12:20 PM
2:30 PM	1:20 PM
3:35 PM	2:20 PM
4:50 PM	3:20 PM
5:50 PM	4:20 PM
	5:20 PM
	6:20 PM

Limited Consideration for Service Area Expansion

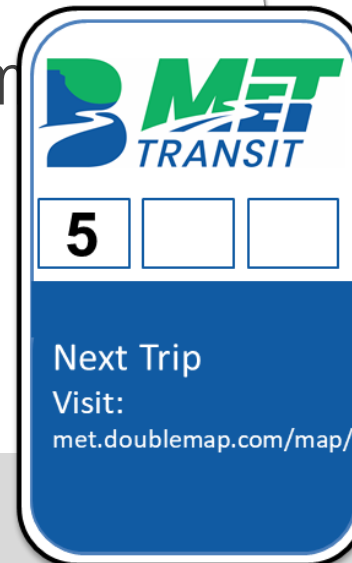
- Focus is On Transit Supportive Areas:
 - 3 Households Per Acre
 - 4 Employees Per Acre
- Current Service Area Covers Most TSA Areas
- Frequency Focus Areas – Considers Current Ridership
- Current Service Area Covers MOST of City Limits:
 - County Coordination/Funding?
- Reduced Service Areas – Current Ridership is Lower



Next Steps

Implementing the Redesign

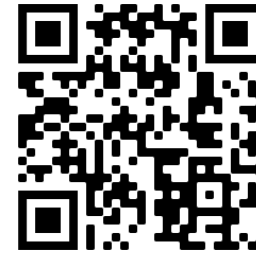
- Plan Approval Process
- Develop Detailed Route Time Schedule
 - Stops
 - Recovery at Transit Center
- Install/Relocate Signs/Benches/Shelters:
 - Estimated 600 Signs
- Expand Workforce/Prepare Driver Assignments
 - Estimate – 5 New Driver Positions



Discussion/Wrap-up

- Next Steps:
 - Collect Comments on DRAFT
 - Address Comments/Prepare FINAL

Provide Comments:
www.METTransit.com/Survey
Or Click the Code



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406-657-8218
loganr@billingsmt.gov

Bill Troe, Project Manager
SRF Consulting
402-513-2158
btroe@SRFConsulting.com

Public Survey

8. What other changes to the MET service would you like to see, if any? Please provide any additional comments here, including those specific to a certain bus route, area in the community, or policy.

<p>9. Which of the following do you identify with?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="radio"/> Student (university/community or technical college)<input type="radio"/> Faculty/staff (university/community or technical college)<input type="radio"/> Student (K-12)<input type="radio"/> Parent (K-12)<input type="radio"/> None of the above <p>10. Do you consider yourself to have a disability that limits your mobility?</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No</p> <p>11. Do you own a smart phone or other Internet-connected mobile device?</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No</p> <p>12. What is your age?</p> <p><input type="radio"/> 17 or under <input type="radio"/> 25 to 34 <input type="radio"/> 45 to 54 <input type="radio"/> 65 or over <input type="radio"/> 18 to 24 <input type="radio"/> 35 to 44 <input type="radio"/> 55 to 64</p>	<p>13. Do you live within Billings city limits?</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No</p> <p>14. Do you commute regularly <i>into</i> Billings?</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No</p> <p>15. How many working vehicles are available in your household?</p> <p><input type="radio"/> 0 <input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 or more</p> <p>16. What is the combined annual income for your household?</p> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"><tr><td><input type="radio"/> Less than \$15,000</td><td><input type="radio"/> \$60,000 to \$74,999</td></tr><tr><td><input type="radio"/> \$15,000 to \$29,999</td><td><input type="radio"/> \$75,000 to \$99,999</td></tr><tr><td><input type="radio"/> \$30,000 to \$44,999</td><td><input type="radio"/> \$100,000 or more</td></tr><tr><td><input type="radio"/> \$45,000 to \$59,999</td><td><input type="radio"/> Unknown/prefer not to answer</td></tr></table>	<input type="radio"/> Less than \$15,000	<input type="radio"/> \$60,000 to \$74,999	<input type="radio"/> \$15,000 to \$29,999	<input type="radio"/> \$75,000 to \$99,999	<input type="radio"/> \$30,000 to \$44,999	<input type="radio"/> \$100,000 or more	<input type="radio"/> \$45,000 to \$59,999	<input type="radio"/> Unknown/prefer not to answer
<input type="radio"/> Less than \$15,000	<input type="radio"/> \$60,000 to \$74,999								
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<input type="radio"/> \$45,000 to \$59,999	<input type="radio"/> Unknown/prefer not to answer								

Public Meeting Period Comments/Input

Bill Troe

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, June 27, 2022 11:15 PM
To: Bill Troe
Subject: MET Suggestions

Bill I wont be able to attend the meeting on Tuesday but had some suggestions. Ideally, for starters there would be a minimum of two extra trips added to the start of every day and two at the end. Three would better. This seems early but some people have to be at work at 6am so allowing them time to get there and then travel to work is important. Additionally I would then take the new schedule and apply it directly to Saturdays having a consistent 6 day a week schedule. Then I would take the current Saturday schedule and use it as a starting point for Sunday service. Lastly if that schedule is implemented I would make the last Sunday of every month a no service day to allow the hard working MET crew some down time.

If however cost is a concern you could modify routes for earlier and later riders to create a trunk line of sorts. Giving some access even if it wasnt a full schedule. This would involve the 2-3 runs before and the 2-3 runs after being limited to four buses. Leaving every 30 minutes would be a Broadwater bus and Grand bus. Each only traveling its inbound/outbound route and switching to the other when it got to the opposite transfer center. Also two heights buses that are most efficient would travel between the heights and downtown alternating routes in the same way. This trunk service would carry over to Saturday as well. Sunday would be a copy of the new Saturday service with the last Sunday of each month still being a no service day.

The two most important takeaways I think are that we really need some sort of Sunday service even if just minimal for now and we need at an absolute minimum 2-3 more routes in the evening during the week and Saturday but ideally 2-3 more in the morning too as I know lots of people need to be at work at 6am.

Thanks for your time.

[REDACTED]

Bill Troe

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, August 15, 2022 2:00 PM
To: Bill Troe
Subject: Public open house thurs aug 18 met transit

Dear Bill Troe, I am a resident of Yellowstone county and have used the met bus for many years. Is there any specialized transportation for those with disabilities who would like to attend the meeting? Going to the meeting as well as returning home. ? I was reading in the Yellowstone county newspaper that Billings met would provide transportation home with a phone reservation before Wednesday at 5:00 pm. I'm writing this as I most likely won't attend for many reasons.

I rely on public transportation in this city for daily living activities and have also used the service to get to my employment as well .

I have missed many job opportunities .Recently, past few years because my employer required later shifts and I was unable to work those evening hours without a way there , I had to leave my position as the pay also did not compensate for travel costs.

I am in favor of increasing hours !or also number of buses running. !Especially with school starting soon. Sometimes the bus gets too full and there is more room needed .

I also think if there are any changes that there needs to be another form of communication with riders as well as new riders besides social media. The WiFi doesn't even work well on the bus. when using mobile apps like DoubleMap.

I also have mild hearing loss so attending a large meeting might be difficult for me without a hard of hearing interpreter to clarify what is said . Are accommodations considered for deaf or hard of hearing people ?

Thanks again for letting me comment on this important issue.

[REDACTED] (Yellowstone county resident)Billings montana

--

lani roberts

Public Meeting Comment Sheet

June 2022

Please record your comments, questions and/or thoughts regarding the information discussed at the Billings Transit Development Plan public meeting or any other transit service comments you have. Please return your completed form to one of the consultant staff.

You may also send your comments in an email to btroe@srfconsulting.com

Please provide your name and email address in the space provided below.

[Redacted Name]

Name

Email Address

Comments, Ideas, & Concerns

1. Restrooms needed !!! (Amenity of civilized countries)
2. Met stop signage for riders to stand by for pickups.
3. Use bus pass card for electronic access to restrooms which would ensure paying bus riders have ^{secure} access to sanitary facilities. This would alleviate the problem of transient access, perhaps?
4. Sunday bus access if economically feasible.

> Continue on the back or attach additional sheets

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June 2022

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You may also send your comments in an email to btroe@srfconsulting.com

Please provide your name and email address in the space provided below.

[Redacted Name]

[Redacted Email Address]

Name

Email Address

Comments, Ideas, & Concerns

- 1) Bus lane
- 2) outside of town parking places to pick people up to take down town.
- 3) Really advertise that bus save money, no parking fee, save gas, own less cars less pollution
- 4) to have free bicycles anyone can use at bus transfer stations
Dream idea
- 5) wish to have snow plowed in a bus friendly way
- 6) try to have buses go where most people work or go to school.
- 7) would a Sunday bus work for church?

> Continue on the back or attach additional sheets

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June 2022

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Name

Email Address

Comments, Ideas, & Concerns

I really like the changes to the Southside Route. The timing & the shortening of the route ~~was~~ greatly increases my ability to use it.

I live at Laurel Rd & Marshall & need to get downtown and to Riverside & STATE.

Moving into the evening is very useful for workdays.

> Continue on the back or attach additional sheets

August 2022

Please record your comments, questions and/or thoughts regarding the information discussed at the Billings Transit Development Plan public meeting or any other transit service comments you have. Please return your completed form to one of the consultant staff.

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Please provide your name and email address in the space provided below.

Name

Email Address

Comments, Ideas, & Concerns

1) predictable time to
2) reasonable bus stop
3) identify places with many people
4) family service
many people and they do
not have cars

> Continue on the back or attach additional sheets

Advocacy for Family Service Bus Stop

3927 1st Ave South, Billings MT 59101

Hello all,

My name is Debbie. I'm the Warehouse Operations Assistant at Family Service here in Billings. Family Service is a non-profit that helps families, seniors, and individuals meet their basic needs here in Yellowstone County and surrounding counties. We, along with generous community partners help provide food at no cost, rent and utility assistance, funding for education to improve employment opportunities, and gently used household items and clothing at a fraction of the price. We also participate in special projects like Flood Relief, Back-To-School Backpacks, Holiday Meals, Birthday Books, and the Senior Commodity Supplementary Food Program and Fresh Food Box Deliveries.

Before I get into further details of why I'm here, I would just like to thank the Billings Public Library for hosting this event and for MET Transit's willingness to conduct this open forum.

So I've mentioned a lot about Family Service, what I haven't told you is, I'm here today to advocate for our clients, a bus stop at Family Service.

The closest, designated bus stop to our Client Choice Food Pantry and Thrift Store is State Ave and Jackson St. It's uncovered with no benches and a 7 min walk for those without physical limitations. There are railroad tracks to cross, no bike lanes or designated crosswalks, and 4 lanes of nonstop traffic to cross on 1st Ave South.

Now, imagine doing that walk again with an average of 50 lbs of groceries and household items in inclement weather.

Since the beginning of this year, we have made over 37,000 points of contact through our Client Choice Pantry and Financial Assistance Programs and 24,000 points of contact through our Thrift Store. Our clients have self-reported experiencing mental health concerns, intimate partner violence, substance dependence/ or abuse, disabilities, currently without a job or unable to work, are homeless and/or live in poverty. All of these can make private transportation difficult if not entirely inaccessible.

Having a bus stop at Family Service would allow us to reach those in need, and the need is growing. We are here to give anyone a "hand-up", and with the help of MET Transit, we can continue to feed, furnish, and fortify more of our community.

Thank you,

Debra Anderson

Warehouse Operations Assistant
(406)384-0060
danderson@famserv.com

Family Service
PO Box 1020, Billings, MT 59103
3927-3931 1st Ave South, Billings, MT 59101
(406)259-2269
www.billingsfamilyservice.org

