OKLAHOMA Transportation

OKLAHOMA TRANSIT ASSOCIATION

OKLAHOMA PUBLIC TRANSIT POLICY PLAN

DECEMBER 2020

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1 Introduction

In 2019, in accordance with House Bill (HB) 1365, the Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT) established the Office of Mobility and Public Transit (OMPT) to improve the delivery and coordination of public transit services, ensuring that resources are aligned to meet mobility needs across Oklahoma. To aid in this effort, the Oklahoma Public Transit Policy Plan (OPTPP) was developed as a joint effort by ODOT and the Oklahoma Transit Association (OTA) and aims to:

- Establish standards and protocols for agencies involved in the delivery and funding of public transit services.
- Set the foundation for policies guiding transit investments statewide as well as establishing programs and strategies to enhance transit services.
- Support the development of policies that address the transit challenges of today while providing a strong and enduring vision for the future of Oklahoma.

Oklahoma has a full range of transit agencies, from large urban systems, to tribal systems, to rural door-to-door services. While existing funding has allowed certain systems to provide basic services, state and federal funding levels have not kept pace with changes in transit demand. The Plan is designed to identify the resources needed over a 20-year period. The Plan provides a set of strategies and policy recommendations to support OMPT in their charge to ensure a network of public transit systems receive adequate funding to ensure the mobility needs of all Oklahomans are met in a safe, affordable, reliable, consistent, and coordinated fashion.

Mission Statement

Ensure a coordinated statewide public transit network that meets the mobility needs of all Oklahomans in a safe, efficient, and economical manner.

House Bill 1365

Approved by Governor Kevin Stitt on April 25, 2019, HB 1365 states that the Plan shall: (1) be all-inclusive of the public transit systems in the state, (2) reflect the results of the 2018 Oklahoma Transit Needs Assessment, (3) include all stakeholder input, (4) provide for future collaboration and coordination of an effective network of public transit systems across the state, and (5) provide for future collaboration and coordination among all state agencies with an interest in public transit. The full HB 1365 text is available in Appendix A.

Plan Development Process

The development of this Plan involved significant data collection and analysis using a combination of qualitative and quantitative input. This data contributes to the analysis to understand and evaluate existing conditions, transit service performance, service needs, and transit funding. Data was collected and analyzed over a 13-month period through several project tasks, described in detail below.

Public and Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder engagement was a major component in developing the Plan. This effort included site visits with more than 30 transit agencies, stakeholder interviews, an online survey, regional stakeholder meetings, and regular meetings with the Stakeholder Advisory Group and Steering Committee.

Reviewing Previous Plans and Policies

The goal of reviewing previous plans and policies was to inventory and understand the broader context influencing transit service funding and development in the state of Oklahoma. The project team reviewed previously prepared plans, policies, and documents to understand the transit policies in place today.

Existing Conditions

The existing conditions analysis focused on collecting information and building data sets that describe and quantify how transit services are developed, managed, delivered, and funded in Oklahoma as well as the underlying market for transit service in the state. The project team compiled data sets using a combination of existing plans and publicly available data about transit agency performance and productivity. Input was also collected from transit agency leadership, members of the public, and other transit system stakeholders.

Peer Review and Best Practices Research

The project team identified peer states and collected examples of how these states have achieved success with their transit systems. The team reviewed the structure of various transit agencies as well as their methods for raising and distributing revenues. The best practices review was designed to help ODOT and stakeholders understand how processes have been executed in other states, which strategies and approaches have helped sustain momentum and innovation, and areas or key issues where other states have faced challenges.

Determining Transit Needs and Gaps

Using data collected during the existing conditions analysis, the goal of this task was to estimate transit service and capital needs. The analysis reflects needs associated with improving service levels over a 20-year period to keep pace with population growth, meet service levels consistent with peer systems outside Oklahoma, and ensure transit service provides for the mobility needs of all Oklahomans.

Additionally, this task involved estimating costs associated with new or updated transit resources that offer opportunities to make Oklahoma's transit systems more effective, efficient, and accessible.

Developing an Investment Schedule

Building on the work from the needs and gap analysis, the project team evaluated possible outcomes based on public transit investment at different levels in a near-term to long-term timeframe. Informed by the goals and strategies identified for the OPTPP, the investment schedule articulates potential public transit outcomes based on different levels of funding. Because these investments will require new sources of funding, consideration was given to leveraging existing funding while also exploring new sources of revenue to close the gap in needed services.

OPTPP Organization

The Plan summarizes the research, analysis, findings, and recommendations for public transit. It is organized into 10 chapters:

Chapter 2 (Public and Stakeholder Engagement) describes the public and stakeholder engagement process undertaken for the Plan and synthesizes key themes heard through the online survey, agency site visits, stakeholder interviews, and regional meetings.

Chapter 3 (Planning Trends) presents the findings from a comprehensive review of previous plans and policies affecting public transit in Oklahoma. This inventory includes state and agency needs and opportunities related to public transit, together with planned or proposed investments in the public transit network.

Chapter 4 (Existing Conditions) summarizes the background information collected and analyzed as part of the Plan, including an overview of existing transit services,

the underlying market for transit service in Oklahoma, transit funding, and trends affecting transit demand.

Chapter 5 (Best Practices and Peer Review) presents research conducted on specific peer states and national best practices that can serve as a resource for Oklahoma moving forward. The peer review focuses on transit programs in other states while the best practices section provides examples of how those states have approached certain policies, programs, and issues.

Chapter 6 (Goals and Strategies) introduces the 10 project goals that were developed through extensive stakeholder input. These goals reflect the values identified by stakeholders and are aligned with the analysis of modal needs and gaps in services. Each goal contains multiple strategies that will assist in achieving the Plan's goals.

Chapter 7 (Needs and Future Service) presents the quantitative transit needs analysis, including both the estimated need for transit service and the corresponding operating costs and capital investments. This chapter includes the findings and describes the methodology used to estimate these needs.

Chapter 8 (Strategic Investment Schedule) sets a schedule of progressive improvements and associated funding levels to meet future needs. This chapter describes the impacts of future funding and provides examples of potential transit improvements.

Chapter 9 (Investment Options and Considerations) addresses the funding gap in Oklahoma to meet future need, discusses how to better leverage existing funds, and identifies new sources of funding for operating, capital and transit resource management.

Chapter 10 (Implementation Priorities) presents recommendations developed as part of the Plan, an implementation framework, proposed performance measures, and next steps following plan adoption.

2 Public and Stakeholder Engagement

The OPTPP reflects extensive input collected through an online survey, stakeholder engagement, agency site visits, and regional meetings. These efforts were conducted between December 2019 and October 2020. Beginning in March, in-person meetings were shifted to virtual platforms due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The project team also sought input from a Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG) of more than 100 members and a Steering Committee at key points throughout the planning process. The Steering Committee consisted of representatives from urban and tribal transit providers, as well as leaders from ODOT and OTA. The project team held monthly meetings with the Steering Committee to discuss methodology and deliverables.

In August 2020, the SAG convened for a full-day workshop to craft 10 strategies that will help achieve the Plan's goals (discussed in Chapter 6). Approximately 20 participants attended in person and more than 30 joined online using the Zoom platform. All public and stakeholder engagement materials are included in Appendix B.

OUTREACH

MetroQuest Survey

The project team administered a survey from January 20 through March 4, 2020, to gather information on Oklahomans' transit needs and challenges. A total of 2,460 people took the survey, a much larger response than prior surveys conducted by ODOT. Respondents answered questions related to priorities for transit access, existing and desired transit use, preferred regional destinations, transit tradeoffs, and various socioeconomic characteristics.

The survey was hosted by MetroQuest and was translated in multiple languages. In addition to posting the survey on the project website (OKTransitPlan.Org), the project team relied heavily on transit agencies and the SAG to promote the survey.

Several themes emerged:

- Job access is a high priority for rural and urban respondents. Many respondents shared their experiences with using transit to travel to work and emphasized its importance for those who are looking for work (e.g., using transit to travel to interviews).
- Access to medical services was the second highest priority for all respondents, particularly for those living in rural areas.
- Transit is the only transportation option available for many respondents in rural

areas. Many more rural respondents would use transit if services were available near their homes.

- Urban respondents would use transit more often if services were expanded to their desired destinations.
- Thirty-eight percent of respondents in urban areas would use transit five to seven times a week if it were frequent and reliable.
- For some, personal vehicles are a financial burden.

Stakeholder Engagement

Representatives from transit agencies, human service organizations, and state agencies participated in stakeholder interviews and attended regional meetings which were held across the state.

The purpose of the stakeholder interviews and regional meetings, in regard to the development of the Plan, was to:

- Identify transit needs, including needs related to transit services.
- Identify structural needs, such as organization, management, and resources.
- Collect different perspectives on interests, needs, and expectations for transit in Oklahoma.
- Ensure as many groups and organizations as possible had an opportunity to provide feedback to maintain a broad range of perspectives.

At the onset of each meeting and interview, the project team encouraged stakeholders to speak freely and assured them that any comments or ideas expressed would be anonymous. Thus, the findings presented in the following sections are not attributable to an individual or organization. This chapter summarizes the transit needs and challenges identified by stakeholders across Oklahoma.

KEY FINDINGS

Findings are organized by the following topics:

- **Funding**
- **FTA Section 5310 Program**
- **Public Transit Coordination**
- **Succession Planning and Professional Development**
- **Driver Recruitment and Retention**
- **Service Improvements**
- **Technology**
- **Feedback for ODOT**

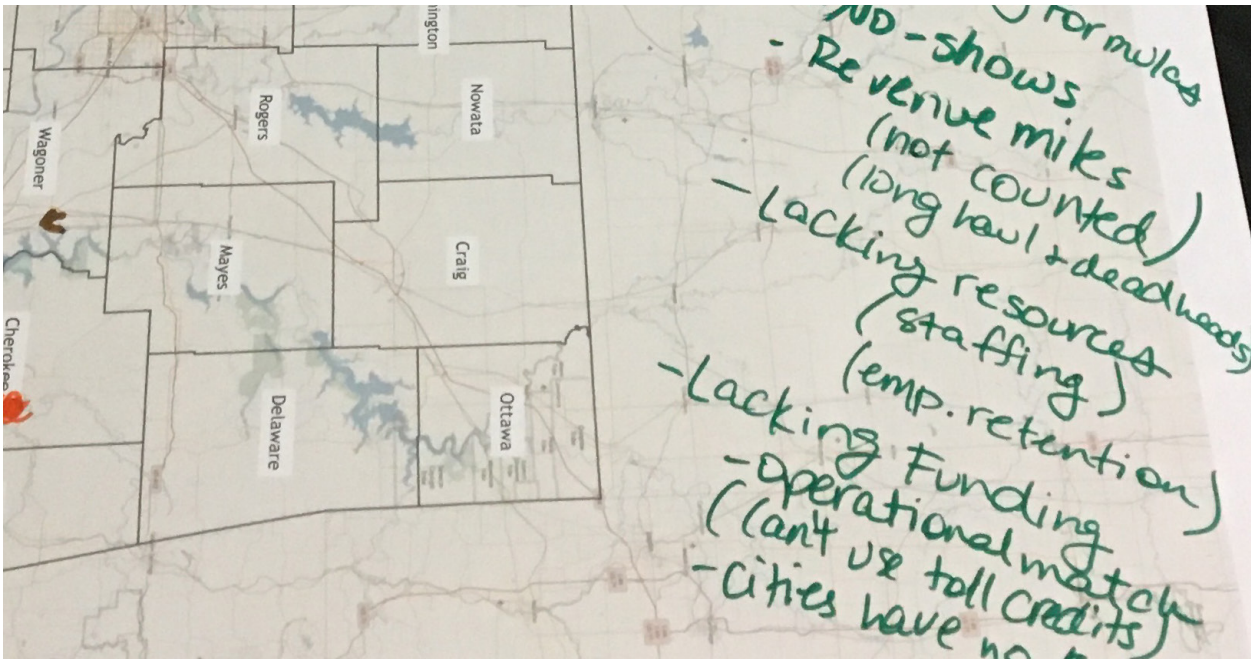
Funding

Nearly every stakeholder noted that the lack of funding is a perennial problem. Almost all stakeholders agreed that public transit systems across the state need more funding to be successful. Stakeholders felt additional funding is necessary to maintain existing service levels and support existing investments in capital resources, such as vehicles.

Though funding is an issue across the state, the specific needs vary between agencies. Some agencies need additional funds to purchase new vehicles as the vehicles age beyond their useful life, while others are looking for funding to hire and retain drivers and expand their service. In rural towns, some agencies with smaller service areas cannot reach the miles threshold needed to replace aging vehicles. On the contrary, rural agencies that serve large areas have vehicles that are driven over very long distances. The stakeholders from these agencies voiced their concern over the way their revenue miles are calculated, stating that funding sources do not cover the extremely long deadhead miles that accrue when beginning or ending a passenger trip.

Additionally, many stakeholders expressed difficulty in finding local funds to match federal funds. Most rural systems do not receive local financial support and are forced to use other grants and contracts as their local match. Most of these contracts are with LogistiCare to provide Medicaid travel. However, LogistiCare is starting to expand beyond contracting with transit agencies, and instead, with private transit providers who may or may not meet federal regulations. Stakeholders expressed concerns over losing LogistiCare contracts, since they otherwise do not have enough funds for a local match.

Lastly, transit agencies sometimes find themselves with funding that cannot be spent on their actual needs. Many grants are often tied to specific purposes.



FTA

FTA Section 5310 Program

The transition of the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) section 5310 program[1] from the Oklahoma Department of Human Services (DHS) to ODOT has been frustrating for some stakeholders who are not also 5307/5311 transit agencies. Some stakeholders expressed past frustrations with the 5310 program, stating that data tracking was too onerous and that they could not keep up with reporting requirements due to staff shortages.

Other agencies stated that the application process was too cumbersome. For some agencies, the inability or unwillingness to apply for funds has resulted in aging fleets in disrepair.

Given the distances many of these transit agencies are traveling, transportation services become extremely costly to provide. Some stakeholders stated that the flexibility to fund vehicle maintenance, fuel, and drivers would help lower costs.

1 FTA section 5310 declares as national policy that seniors (65 and older) and individuals with disabilities have the same right to access transportation as other persons. FTA section 5310 authorizes Federal Capital Assistance grants to meet the special needs of seniors and individuals with disabilities where public mass transportation is unavailable or insufficient. Beginning in 2020, the FTA section 5310 program in Oklahoma will fund mobility management and capital assistance. Prior to this, 5310 funds were only permitted for capital assistance. The FTA section 5310 program funds capital and "nontraditional" projects, some of which include travel training, volunteer driver programs, and mobility management.

Public Transit Coordination

Non-Emergency Medical Transportation

The need for transit trips to serve non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT) was a common theme among many stakeholders, especially in rural communities. Many medical facilities are located in urban areas, but many transit agencies lack resources to provide adequate services to these medical facilities. Providers who schedule trips into larger cities run the risk of using a vehicle that would otherwise be available for a full-day of local service. Many transit agencies contract service through LogistiCare. In most cases, contracts with LogistiCare are the only option rural transit agencies have for local match for federal funding. Agencies rely on NEMT service provision so they can continue receiving federal funds. While this structure works well for private contractors like LogistiCare, it does not favor the transit agencies, service coordination, the passengers, or Oklahomans as a whole.

Some stakeholders also expressed the need for better coordination between medical transportation services and Veterans Affairs' (VA) facilities. Traveling to these facilities can sometimes be further than 120 miles for a one-way trip. These rides are costly for the customer and the transit provider.

Service Area Coordination

Some stakeholders noted the existence of formal or informal partnerships that allow one provider to pick-up or drop-off passengers in another provider's service area. These partnerships seemed to be working well and they help transit agencies meet the needs of customers who may be traveling long distances. On the contrary, some transit agencies expressed that there are no incentives from ODOT to coordinate with other transit agencies across service areas.

Succession Planning and Professional Development

Many stakeholders expressed interest in improving succession planning and professional development. Many directors of smaller agencies are reaching retirement age, and some have been in the position since the beginning of the agency.

Stakeholders also voiced the need for more grant writers or technical assistance with grant writing. Grant writing requires time and training, and many agencies only have a few non-driver staff. Agencies tend to rely on municipal staff or whomever has time at that moment to write grants.

In addition to increased training and aid with grant writing, stakeholders would like to see more training opportunities and overall improved access to training. Since many trainings are held in-person, agencies can often only send one or two people, and they must drive long distances to attend the trainings. Stakeholders, especially those far from Oklahoma City or Tulsa, expressed an interest in more regional, in-person trainings and webinars on a broad range of topics, including software support.

Driver Recruitment and Retention

Many stakeholders noted that driver recruitment and retention is a major issue. Due to lack of funding, many agencies cannot afford to pay wages that are competitive to other jobs in the area. Once drivers are hired, many leave for a better-paying job soon after they have been trained. At some agencies, administrative staff fill in as drivers on days when there are not enough available drivers.

In rural areas, the potential driver hiring pool is extremely limited. Of those who apply to drive, many cannot pass drug and alcohol testing; some existing drivers also lose their jobs due to drug and alcohol testing. The legalization of cannabidiol (CBD) oil and medical marijuana has also conflicted with these drug tests in that even small traces of these drugs lead to failed tests. Agencies who pay their drivers above minimum wage tend to see much better driver recruitment and retention.

Service Improvements

All stakeholders expressed a desire for more service improvements to meet the needs of their clients or customers. Many stakeholders stated that transit services in Oklahoma do not currently align with residents' travel needs. This was noted repeatedly, especially among services receiving 5310 funds who expressed difficulty being able to transport clients to job opportunities. In general, transit access to employment was a major gap that many stakeholders identified, particularly expressing the need for more transit service to large employers and job centers.

Stakeholders noted the need for specific service improvements, such as more frequent service, longer service spans, and more weekend service. Some noted the desire for more off-peak service to serve second- and third-shift workers. Many stakeholders voiced the need for transit to serve trips between counties and in some cases, across state lines. They stated that existing bus services are not well-coordinated and traveling by transit across jurisdictional boundaries can be very difficult, expensive, or impossible.

Additionally, many stakeholders expressed the need for more vehicle types. Nearly all 5310 agencies interviewed stated the need for more vehicles, particularly wheelchair-accessible vehicles. They also expressed the need for rear-entry vehicles that allow two wheelchairs at a time. Some agencies also stated that more 12- to 15-seater vehicles would be helpful.

Particularly in urban areas, some stakeholders face the challenge of determining how to grow and manage service developments in a sustainable way. One stakeholder mentioned that when transit agencies improve services, riders respond favorably but also demand those improvements on additional routes.

Lastly, many stakeholders expressed the increasing need to consider transit's role in allowing older adults to "age in place." As many older adults return to areas with lower costs of living, transit will be an essential resource for those needing to travel without a personal vehicle.

Technology

Several stakeholders expressed a strong desire for more technology integrated into transit. Inconsistent use of technology for trip scheduling and dispatching was observed during agency site visits. Providers noted the need for integration among the many trip scheduling and dispatching tools.

Some systems use ODOT-sponsored software (TransitAssistant) or other third-party software, while others manually enter trips either on a computer or by hand. Several stakeholders noted that TransitAssistant could be improved by expanding capabilities to allow the tracking of vehicles on a live map. Others requested that TransitAssistant allow for easier communication between dispatchers and drivers (e.g., the ability to send messages). Some drivers have access to computer tablets with their schedules loaded, while others use smart phones for directions. Transit technology was cited as a potential strategy to help make transit easier to use, especially in places where service is less frequent. Examples include real-time bus information systems, mobile applications and payment options, and more interactive websites.

Many stakeholders suggested that investments be made in systems such as one-call/one-click systems as well as mobility management, either statewide or regionally, to help consolidate or coordinate services. The inability to easily understand where services operate, how much they cost, and when they operate was noted as a barrier for using transit.

Several stakeholders cited Oklahoma's infrastructure as a barrier to transit improvements, specifically noting the poor broadband network across the state. Many expressed that state infrastructure is not ready to support new technology improvements.

Feedback for ODOT

Stakeholders were asked what ODOT could do to help the transit agencies improve their services and programs.

Some stakeholders offered specific feedback for ODOT:

- Continue advocating for more federal and state funding.
- More flexibility with funding and reporting requirements.
- More grant writing support.
- More assistance for transit agencies with the Office of Management and Enterprise Services (OMES) procurement process.
- Clearer communication about funding opportunities and deadlines.
- More trainings across different topic areas (e.g., drug and alcohol training, grant writing, and procurement training).
- More regionally-based, in-person trainings and webinars, since traveling long distances can be burdensome.
- Streamline processes across different state agencies, when possible. Stakeholders expressed that there is redundancy between rules and inspections from ODOT, health agencies, and others, and the regulations are often inconsistent.

3 Planning Trends

OVERVIEW

The project team reviewed a diverse cross-section of documents that guide transit service funding and transit development in the state of Oklahoma. More than 40 documents were reviewed, including statewide plans and policies, long range transportation plans (LRTPs), and human service provider policies. This chapter summarizes the key findings gathered from those plans. The full review can be found in Appendix C and contains the following:

- A summary of the reviewed plans' goals and their relation to transit.
- Recognition of the constraints to transit access and implementation in the state of Oklahoma.
- A summary of transit-supportive strategies at the regional and state levels.
- Needs, gaps, and barriers related to transit access, service provision, and coordination.

PLANS AND POLICIES

The following is a list of all the documents that were reviewed and summarized.

State Plans

- ODOT Oklahoma Transit System Overview and Gap Analysis (2012)
- Oklahoma Developmental Disabilities Council State Plan (2016)
- Oklahoma United We Ride Council Strategic Action Plan (2017)
- Statewide Personal Mobility Needs for Oklahoma 2018-2028 (2017)
- State of Oklahoma 5310 Transportation Program State Management Plan (SMP) (2017)
- Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (2019)
- ODOT Transit Asset Management (TAM) Group Plan (2018)
- ODOT: 2015-2040 LRTP[1]

Regional Plans

- ACOG Central OK!go Commuter Corridors Study (2015)
- ACOG Encompass 2040 Plan Report: The Oklahoma City Area Regional Transportation Study (2016)
- Transportation Improvement Program for the OCARTS Transportation Management Area (2019)
- OCARTS Transportation Management Area Unified Planning Work Program (2019)
- COTPA LRTP (2001)
- COTPA Regional Fixed Guideway Study (2005)
- OKCAA: Alternatives Analysis for Greater Downtown Oklahoma City Area (2011)
- bikewalkokc (2018)
- GO Plan: The Tulsa Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan (2015)
- Indian Nations Council of Governments (INCOG) Regional Transit System Plan: Fast Forward (2011)

1 The 2020-2045 LRTP was not available during the plan review phase of the project.

- Tulsa Transit Technology Strategic Plan (2018)
- Tulsa Regional Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan (2015)
- INCOG Connected 2045: Regional Transportation Plan (2017)
- Tulsa Transportation Management Area Transportation Improvement Program (2019)
- FY 2020 Unified Planning Work Program for the Tulsa Transportation Management Area (2019)
- Lawton MPO 2035 LRTP (2013)
- Lawton MPO 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (2019)
- Lawton MPO FFY 2020-2023 Transportation Improvement Program (2019)
- Unified Planning Work Program for the Lawton Metropolitan Area Transportation Study (LMATS) Area (2019)
- Frontier MPO: 2040 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (2016)
- Frontier MPO: 2016-2020 Transportation Improvement Program (2016)
- Frontier MPO FY 2020 Unified Planning Work Program (2019)
- Craig County 2040 LRTP (2019)
- Mayes County 2040 Draft LRTP (2019)
- Northern Oklahoma Regional Transportation Planning Organization LRTPs (2015)
- Southwest Oklahoma Regional Transportation Planning Organization LRTPs (2015)
- Pottawatomie County LRTP (2015)
- Seminole County LRTP (2015)
- Hughes County Oklahoma LRTP (2016)
- Okfuskee County LRTP (2017)
- Pawnee County Oklahoma LRTP (2017)
- Lincoln County Oklahoma LRTP (2018)

Human Service Policies and Plans

- Oklahoma Health Care Authority (OHCA) Policies and Rules (2009)
- Oklahoma Works: Transportation Service White Paper (2018)
- OHCA Strategic Plan (2018)

KEY FINDINGS

Transit agencies in urban areas face challenges keeping pace with population growth.

Between 2010 and 2017, the population growth in the greater metropolitan areas of Oklahoma City, Tulsa, and Lawton outpaced the annual rate of Oklahoma's population growth during the same period. Urban areas are evaluating ways to invest sustainably in transit in a way that can support population growth.

Public transit does not adequately serve rural populations.

Low densities, large service areas, and extensive distances between activity centers complicate the delivery of public transit in rural areas of Oklahoma. Poor connectivity to regional systems makes it difficult for residents to get their basic needs met (e.g., medical care, education, shopping, and recreation). Opportunities exist to improve connections between interstate and intrastate passenger travel via improved intermodal connections.

Funding remains a key barrier for transit improvements in many areas throughout the state.

There is a limited amount of dedicated and/or qualifying funding in place to support the transit improvements needed to address the demands of a growing population experiencing demographic changes. Key federal funding sources are restrictive; they can only be applied to services for specific populations and for specific purposes. As a result, under-capacity vehicles from different transit agencies may travel the same route at the same time but are barred from picking up additional riders.

There is a desire to improve coordination of transportation services between transit and human service providers.

Due to limited availability of federal and state funding, it is in the best interest of transit and human service providers to adhere to the federal requirements and coordinate transit services to make the most efficient use of existing resources and to avoid duplicative efforts. The mandate of HB 1365 in support of FTA coordination requirements will ensure future collaboration and coordination among all state agencies with an interest in public transit, all transit agencies and systems, and all stakeholders with an interest in public transit.

These key findings highlight the opportunities and challenges facing transit service in Oklahoma. The information gleaned from these documents, along with findings from stakeholder interviews, agency site visits, the market analysis, State of the System, and Peer Review/Best Practices was used to inform the strategies and policies discussed in subsequent chapters that will guide the management, delivery, and funding of public transit in Oklahoma.

4 Existing Conditions

EXISTING TRANSIT SERVICES

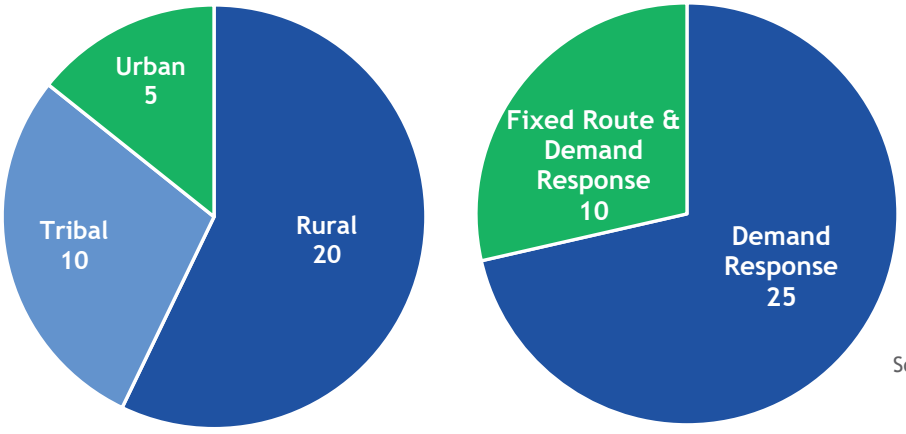
There are 37 recipients of federal transit funding in the state of Oklahoma, under either FTA section 5307 or 5311 (tribal funding is provided through FTA section 5311(c)). Thirty-five of these recipients are transit systems that operate a range of services across the state, broadly categorized into fixed-route or demand-response (Figure 4-1).[1]

More than 100 entities receive federal transit funds through ODOT to support additional community-based transportation services for older adults and persons with disabilities.

In general, transit systems in urban areas operate scheduled, fixed-route services, while rural areas are more likely to be served by demand-response services. Five urban systems operate fixed-route service but also provide some level of demand-response services. Also, as part of receiving federal funds for fixed-route services, these systems are required to provide demand-response paratransit services within their fixed-route service areas. Twenty rural systems provide demand-response services. Two tribal systems and three rural systems also provide limited fixed-route services, mostly oriented toward connecting people to employment sites. Twelve tribal entities receive federal transportation funds to support transit services. Ten of these tribal entities operate transit services as listed in Figure 4-2. Two additional tribal entities are federal funding recipients (Cherokee Nation and the Northeast Oklahoma Tribal Transit Consortium) and contract with transit agencies to provide service.

1 A small portion of the Fort Smith, AR, urbanized area (UZA) extends into Oklahoma, with transit service that operates into this portion of Oklahoma. As a result, the transit provider contributes part of its federal funds to the state of Oklahoma, which redistributes it to other small urban transit agencies in the state. This redistributed funding is reflected in the budgets of Oklahoma's transit agencies; thus, Fort Smith service is excluded from this analysis.

Figure 4-1 Number of Transit Service Providers in Oklahoma by Federal Funding Category and Type of Service



Source: U.S. Department of Transportation, FTA, National Transit Database (NTD)

About the Data

To conduct the analysis in this chapter, the project team used the most recent data available at the time of analysis. Data on transit service, including ridership and service performance, are based on 2018 data from the FTA's NTD. Population and demographic information are based on the U.S. Census American Community Survey, using 2013-2017 five-year estimates. Data on employment is based on Longitudinal Employment-Household Dynamics (LEHD) program data, administered through the U.S. Census Center for Economic Studies, from 2010 and 2017. Additional data sources were used for specific topics in this chapter, and analysis was based on the most recent data available from those sources.

Figure 4-2 Transit Providers by Federal Funding Classification and Type of Service

Service Provider	Service Type
Urban	
City of Norman	Fixed Route and Demand-response (Small)
Citylink of Edmond	Fixed Route and Demand-response (Small)
EMBARK	Fixed Route and Demand-response (Large)
Lawton Area Transit System (LATS)	Fixed Route and Demand-Response (Small)
Tulsa Transit	Fixed Route and Demand-Response (Large)
Tribal	
Cheyenne and Arapaho Transit Program	Fixed Route and Demand-Response (Large)
Chickasaw Nation Transportation Services	Demand-Response (Large)
Choctaw Nation Tribal Transit	Demand-Response (Large)
Citizen Potawatomi Nation Tribal Transit	Demand-Response (Small)
Comanche Nation Transit	Demand-Response (Large)
Kiowa Fastrans	Demand-Response (Small)
Muscogee (Creek) Nation Tribal Transit	Fixed Route and Demand-Response (Large)
Seminole Nation Transit	Demand-Response (Small)
United Keetoowah Band Transit	Demand-Response (Small)
White Eagle Transit	Demand-Response (Small)
Rural	
Beaver City Transit	Demand-Response (Small)
Call A Ride Public Transit	Demand-Response (Small)
Central Oklahoma Community Transit System (COTS)	Demand-Response (Small)
Cherokee Strip	Demand-Response (Large)
Cimarron Public Transit System	Demand-Response (Large)
Delta Public Transit	Demand-Response (Small)
Enid Public Transit	Demand-Response (Large)
First Capital Trolley	Fixed Route and Demand-Response (Large)
JAMM Transit	Demand-Response (Large)
KI BOIS Area Transit System (KATS)	Demand-Response (Large)

Service Provider	Service Type
Little Dixie Transit	Demand-Response (Large)
MAGB Transportation	Demand-Response (Large)
Muskogee County Public Transit Authority	Fixed Route and Demand-Response (Small)
OSU/Stillwater Community Transit System	Fixed Route and Demand-Response (Large)
Pelivan Transit	Demand-Response (Large)
Red River Public Transportation Service	Demand-Response (Large)
Southern Oklahoma Rural Transit System (SORTS)	Demand-Response (Large)
Southwest Transit	Demand-Response (Small)
The Ride (City of Guymon)	Demand-Response (Small)
Washita Valley Transit	Demand-Response (Small)

Source: FTA and ODOT

Transit service coverage areas, or the places where transit services travel, vary across the state. Most transit agencies' service areas are defined by jurisdictional boundaries, such as city or county lines. Other transit agencies may serve only a portion of a county or include multiple counties. There are several instances of overlapping service areas across the state, where service is provided by more than one transit system. For example, an area may be covered by both rural and tribal transit services. Maps of the service coverage areas for urban, rural, and tribal transit agencies are shown in Figure 4-3 through Figure 4-5.

Nearly all of Oklahoma's residents—99%—live within the coverage area of at least one public transit provider (Figure 4-6). However, while many areas appear to be covered by at least one transit service provider, the reality is that constrained resources limit the ability of transit operators to deliver service to everyone in these communities. As a result, many residents who live within a transit service coverage area may have only partial or no access to service compared to what is shown in Figure 4-4 and Figure 4-5.

About 27% of Oklahomans live within reasonable access of fixed-route service or have access to demand-response service. The remaining 73% are located in a service area for demand-response service only. In many areas where public transit is not available, many community, health, and faith-based organizations provide transportation for older adults and people with disabilities, providing mobility options for vulnerable populations and connecting them to medical and other services.

Figure 4-3 Urban Transit Service Designated Coverage Areas

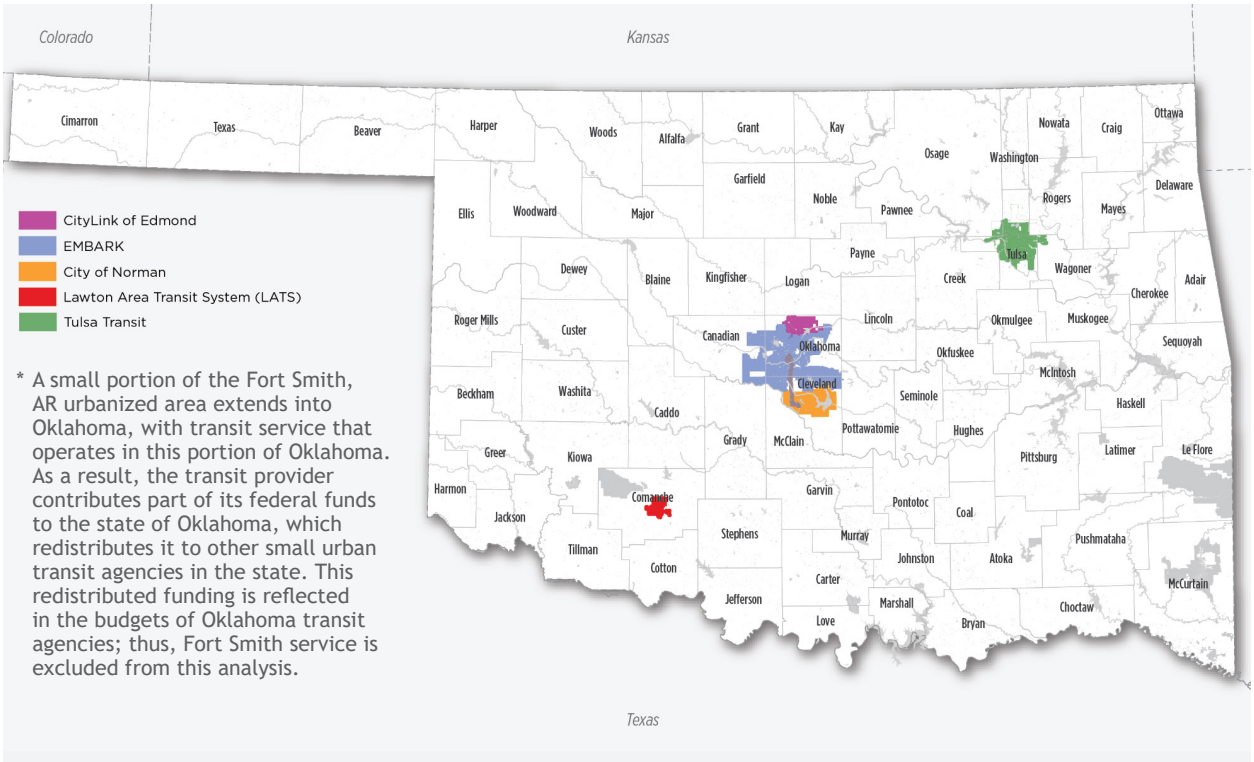


Figure 4-4 Rural Transit Service Coverage Areas

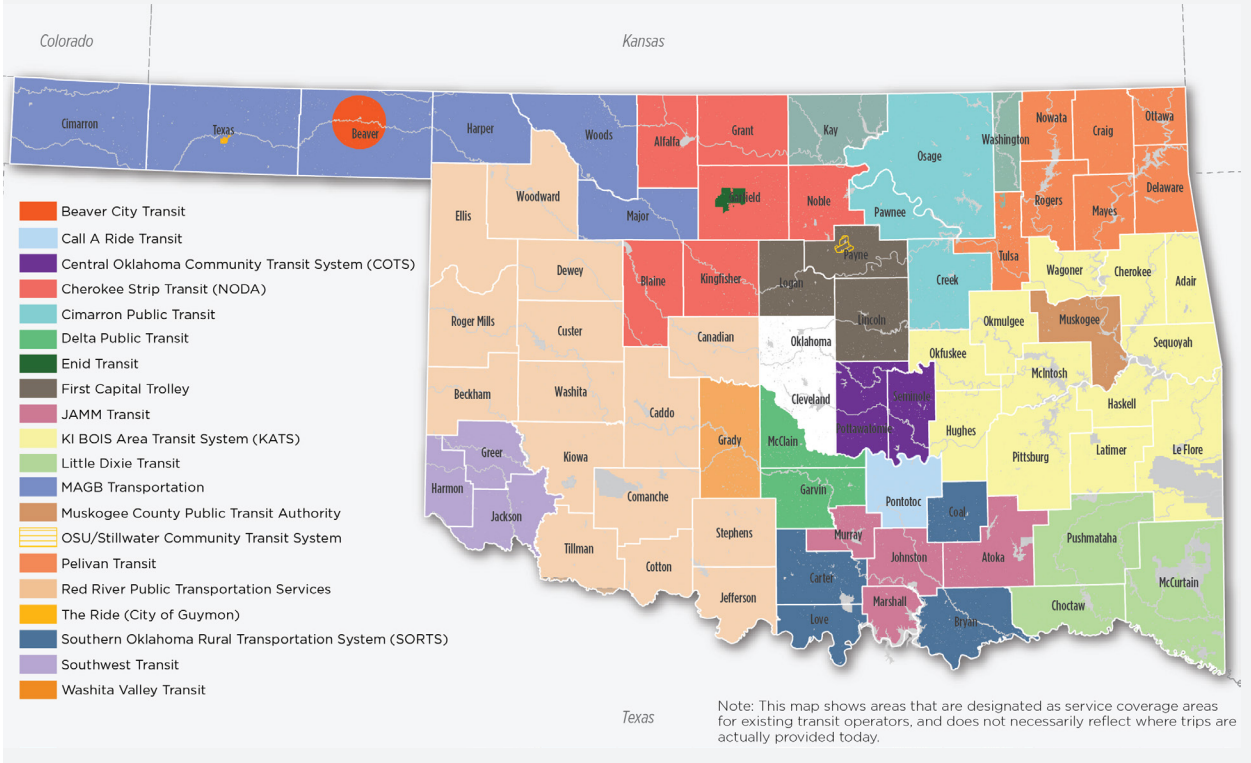


Figure 4-5 Tribal Transit Service Coverage Areas

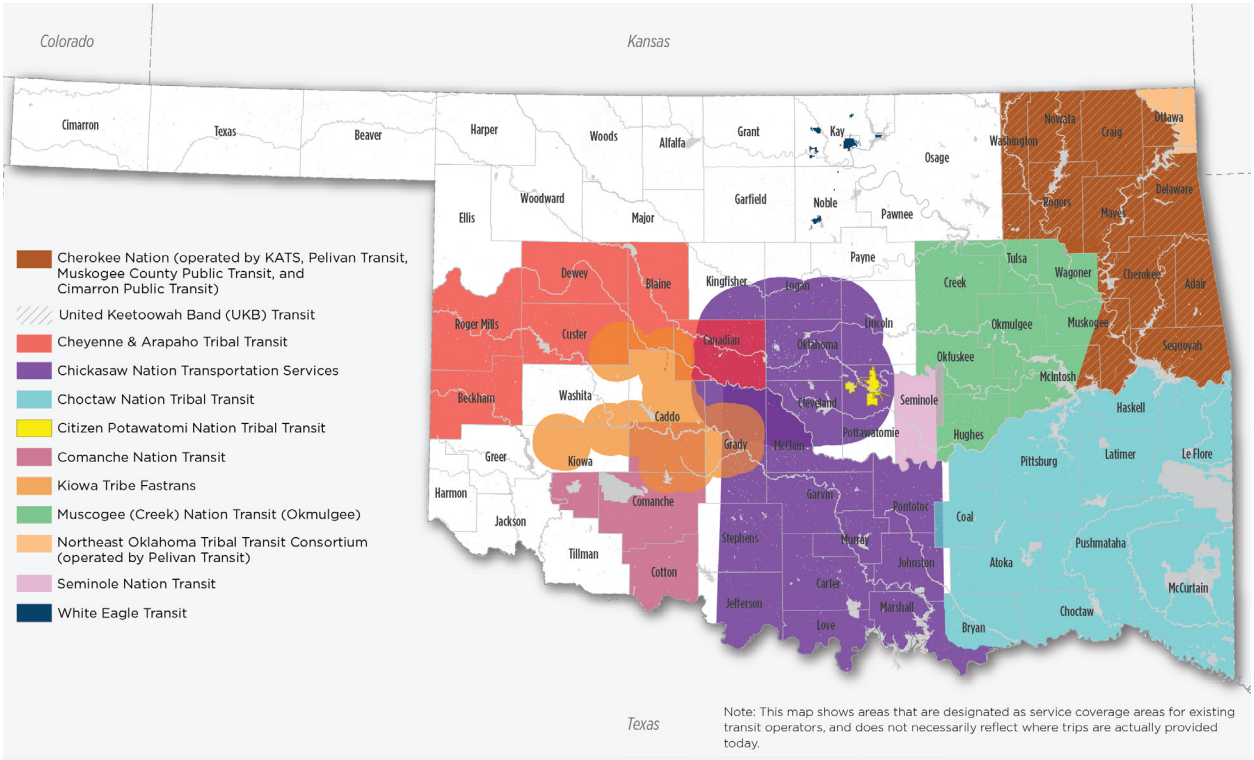
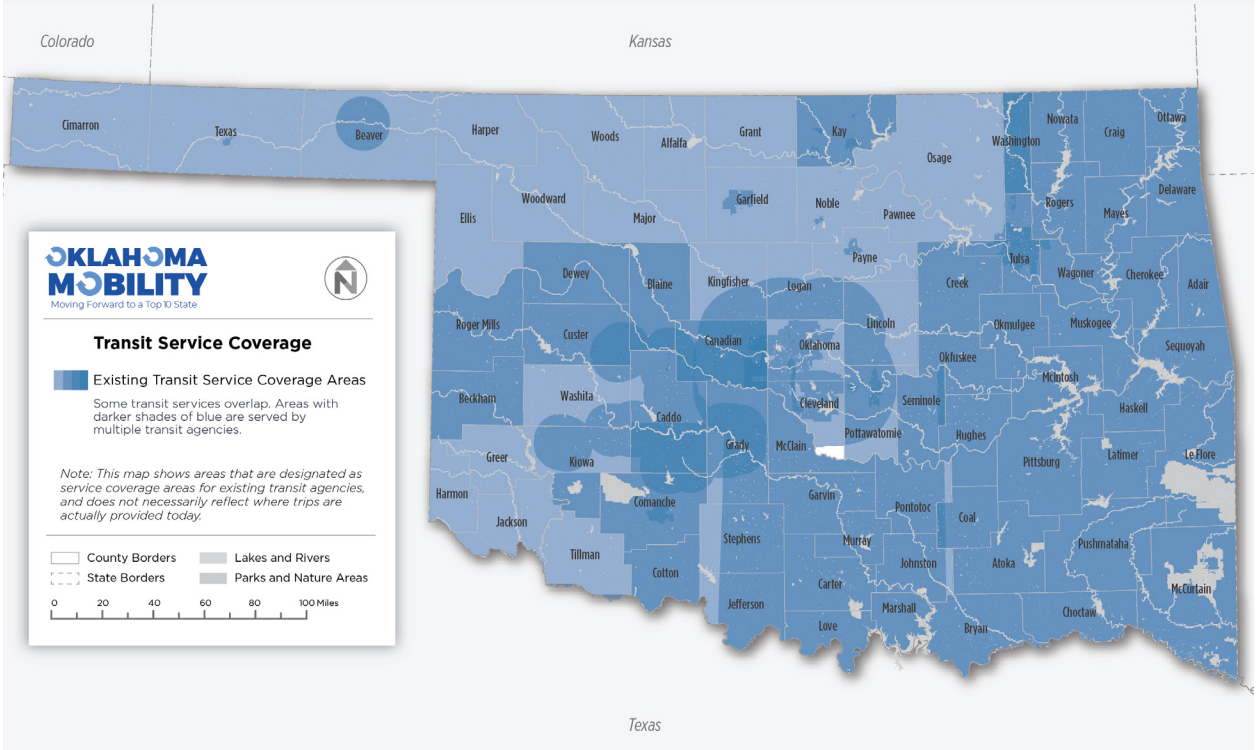


Figure 4-6 Transit Service Coverage Areas - All Programs

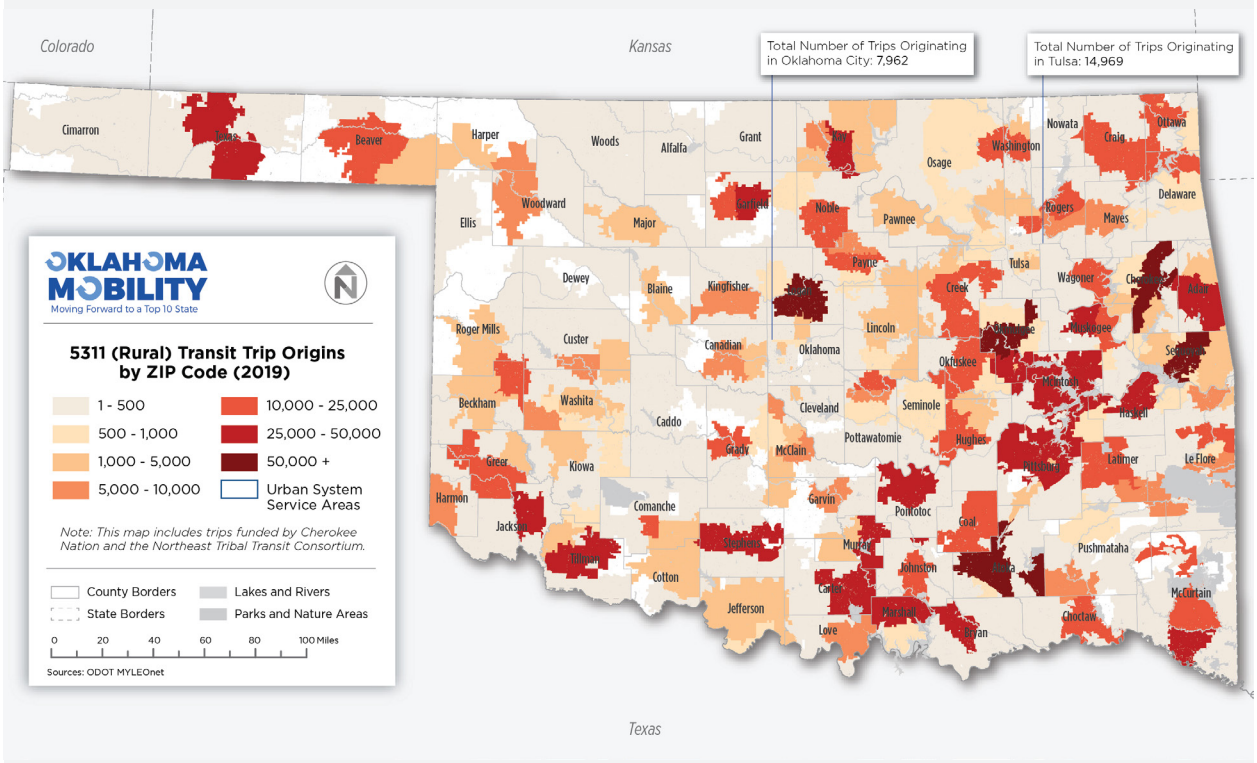


A Closer Look at Rural Service

The state of Oklahoma provides rural transit agencies with access to MYLEOnet, a proprietary software application designed to collect data from the state's FTA section 5311 transit services. Through MYLEOnet, Oklahoma's rural transit agencies report data including ridership, origin-destination data, and operating performance. A map of all trip origins on rural transit services (by ZIP Code) is shown in Figure 4-7. While nearly two million trips were provided in 2019, comparing Figure 4-7 to Figure 4-4 shows that service is not necessarily provided in all of the areas that are designated as service coverage areas. This is because many transit agencies are unable to adequately serve all of the communities within their coverage areas, often due to limited capacity and constrained funding. Areas with the most frequent number of trips are:

- Across east-central Oklahoma, particularly in Cherokee, Sequoyah, Adair, and Muskogee counties, as well as Okmulgee, McIntosh, Pittsburg, Muskogee, and Haskell counties
- Logan County just north of the Greater Oklahoma City Metropolitan Area
- Southern Oklahoma including Atoka, Carter, Marshall, northwest Bryan, and eastern Murray counties
- Stephens County
- Southern McCurtain County
- Northern Pontotoc County

Figure 4-7 Rural (5311) Transit Trip Origins by ZIP Code



- Parts of Tillman, Jackson, and Greer counties in the southwest
- Central Garfield County
- Central Kay County
- In the panhandle, focused in central Texas County as well as central Beaver County
- Craig, Ottawa, and northern Delaware counties in the northeast, and central Washington County

Riders utilize rural transit agencies for a wide variety of trip purposes (Figure 4-8). The largest share of trips—25%—are taken for medical purposes, while other trips are evenly distributed among getting to education, jobs, shopping, and recreation, as well as other opportunities.

Figure 4-8 Rural (5311) Transit Trips by Purpose

Trip Purpose	Number of Trips	Percentage of Trips
Medical	458,830	25%
Education	281,235	15%
Employment	269,393	15%
Shopping	264,521	14%
Recreation	231,082	13%
Other	325,660	18%

Source: MYLEOnet, ODOT

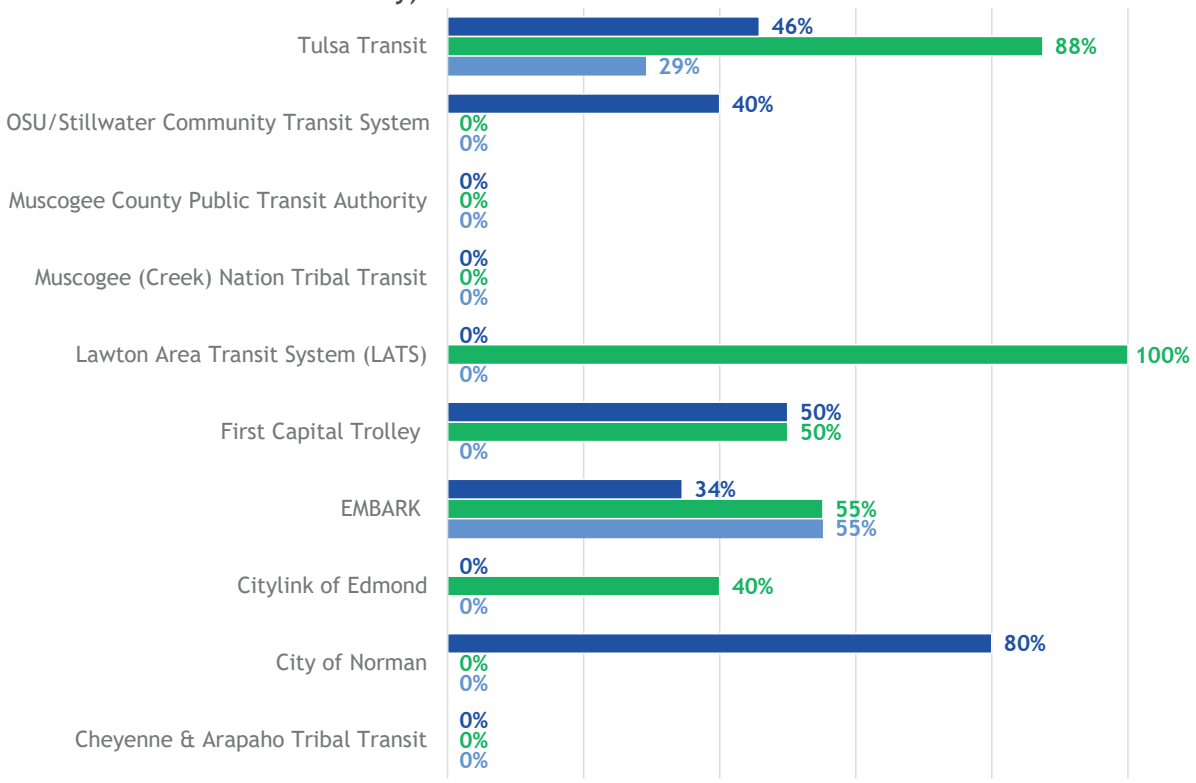
Fixed-Route Services

About 27% of Oklahoma's population lives within one-half mile of fixed-route transit service. However, living in a county or city that offers public transit service does not necessarily mean it is accessible to all residents, particularly if an individual wants to take a trip on a day when service is not operating (e.g., weekends) or at a time of the day when there is no service (e.g., evenings).

To examine transit availability in these time periods, this study calculated the portion of existing services available on weekday evenings (defined as after 7 p.m.) and on weekends (Saturdays and Sundays). This calculation was performed by counting the number of routes an agency has that offer service on weekday evenings and weekend days and expressing this as a percentage of the total number of routes.

The results (Figure 4-9) show that in general, much less service is available on weekday evenings, Saturdays, and Sundays compared to weekday daytime hours. Beyond traditional weekday periods, there is generally more service available on weekday evenings than on Saturdays, and more service on Saturdays than Sundays. Within these general findings, there are variations. Lawton Area Transit System (LATS) provides full coverage on Saturday and EMBARK offers slightly more than half their service (55% of all routes) on Saturday and Sunday. Only Tulsa Transit and EMBARK offer Sunday service. There is significant opportunity to expand the hours and days when service is available, which would make transit a more convenient, reliable transportation option and better serve a variety of trip purposes outside of traditional work hours.

Figure 4-9 Percentage of Routes Operating During Evenings, Saturdays, and Sundays (Fixed-Route Services Only)



Source: Nelson\Nygaard, information from individual transit agencies

Demand-Response Services

Unlike fixed-route service that typically operates on a regular schedule, users of demand-response services must contact the service provider to reserve a trip in advance. Many of these services are only available on weekdays, and generally operate during typical business hours only (i.e., 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.). Appendix D includes more detailed information on service areas and availability.

Intercity Bus Services

Most intercity bus service in the United States has been provided by private for-profit firms without any subsidy, federal or state. These services often provide the only publicly available scheduled services linking the towns and cities with the national network and connections to more distant points. This is true in Oklahoma as well. Oklahoma's intercity bus services benefit from the fact that there are a number of routes that pass through the state, so their viability is not completely dependent on the revenue generated at stops in Oklahoma.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, intercity bus service in Oklahoma was provided by five firms: Greyhound Lines, Jefferson Lines, Tornado Bus Company and new entrants, Flixbus and Vonlane. None of these services received any type of subsidy to operate these services, nor had they been contacted by ODOT as part of a consultation process under the FTA section 5311(f) program. Greyhound and Jefferson are part of the national intercity bus network of interlined services, so a ticket on one service may be used on the other, and they generally share stops and coordinate schedules. Flixbus and Vonlane each have their own ticketing and separate stops. There is no central source of intercity bus information (either nationally or in Oklahoma).

Intercity Passenger Rail Service

Amtrak's Heartland Flyer intercity train is a state-supported service that links Oklahoma City with Fort Worth, with intermediate stops in Norman, Pauls Valley, Ardmore, Purcell, and Gainesville (Texas). The service operates daily. However, one weekend per year a train operates through to Dallas for the University of Oklahoma-Texas football game. In addition, there is Amtrak Thruway bus service connecting Oklahoma City to Newton, Kansas, where passengers can connect to the Southwest Chief which operates between Kansas City and Los Angeles. The connecting bus service is operated under contract by Village Tours. In Fort Worth, passengers can connect to the three-day per week Chicago-San Antonio Texas Eagle service (with connecting cars to Los Angeles from San Antonio) and the Trinity Railway Express service between Fort Worth and Dallas.[2]

Fixed Guideway Systems

Fixed guideway refers to public transit that uses dedicated right-of-way such as rail tracks, catenaries, overhead wires, or bus-only lanes. In December 2018, the Oklahoma City Streetcar began service on the state's first fixed guideway streetcar service, providing two routes along 4.86 miles in and around downtown Oklahoma City. During 2019, the streetcar provided approximately 400,000 trips. Fares are $1 per trip and all EMBARK universal passes are accepted. Oklahoma River Cruises also provides seven miles of fixed guideway ferry service along the Oklahoma River. Fares are $12 for a day pass. The streetcar and ferry are part of EMBARK's family of services in Oklahoma City.

2 https://www.ok.gov/odot/documents/OK_StateRailPlan_Final_2018.pdf

SERVICE AND RIDERSHIP TRENDS

Oklahoma's transit agencies carried 10,470,020 passenger trips in 2018.[3] This represents a 9% decrease from 2014, when the state's transit agencies served just more than 10.5 million trips (Figure 4-10). This decline is similar to the national trend of declining transit ridership, which fell by nearly 8% between 2014 and 2018.[4]

About 25 of the state's 35 transit agencies experienced a decrease in ridership during this time, while 10 transit agencies saw a ridership increase. Total ridership among urban systems declined slightly during this time, while ridership on rural systems experienced a more significant decline. Ridership on tribal services increased slightly during this period.

As of 2018, most passenger trips in Oklahoma are carried by urban transit services, representing 7,655,793 passenger trips in 2018, or 73% of all passenger trips. Rural transit agencies carried 24% of all passenger trips in 2018, and tribal transit services carried about 3% of trips.

While many of the state's transit agencies experienced ridership declines, about 90% of the state's net loss in riders occurred among just six transit agencies: Tulsa Transit, OSU/ Stillwater Community Transit System, KI BOIS Area Transit System (KATS), Southern Oklahoma Rural Transit System (SORTS), Lawton Area Transit System (LATS), and Red River Public Transportation Service.

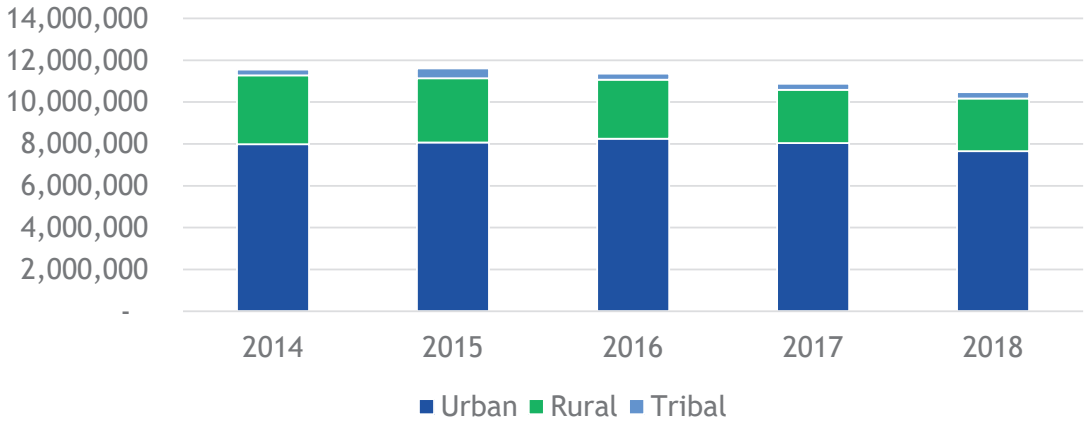
Transit agencies in Oklahoma operated nearly 1.7 million hours of service in 2018 (Figure 4-11). The largest share of transit service hours is operated by rural systems, which operated 57% of all service hours in 2018. Urban systems operate 35% of all transit service hours in the state, while tribal systems operate 8% of the state's hours of transit service. Since 2014, total hours of service decreased by about 3%. However, this decline is attributable to decreased hours of service among rural systems, which experienced an 8.7% decrease in service hours. Urban systems increased service hours by 2.5%, and tribal systems increased service hours by 24%.

Changes in service and performance are also notable between different types of services. Figure 4-12 shows that small and large transit agencies operating both fixed-route and demand-response service increased service hours and experienced increased ridership between 2014 and 2018, while agencies operating only demand-response service experienced declines in both service hours and ridership. The decline was particularly stark among smaller demand-response transit agencies, for whom overall service hours and ridership declined by more than 20%.

3 US Department of Transportation, FTA, National Transit Database (NTD)

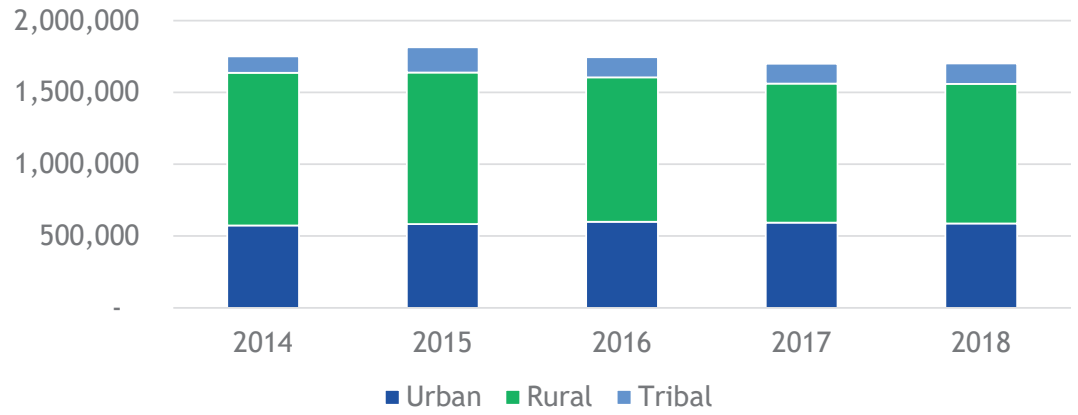
4 Ibid.

Figure 4-10 Annual Passenger Trips in Oklahoma, 2014 - 2018



Source: NTD

Figure 4-11 Annual Hours of Transit Service in Oklahoma, 2014 - 2018



Source: NTD

Figure 4-12 Service and Performance Trends: Averages by Type of Transit Service

	Agencies Operating Demand-Response Services ONLY		Agencies Operating Fixed-Route Services and Demand-Response	
	Small	Large	Small	Large
Annual Revenue Vehicle Hours per Capita (2018)	0.46	0.29	0.45	0.41
Change in Revenue Vehicle Hours (2014-2018)	-23.2%	-5.9%	10.8%	3.4%
Change in Ridership (2014-2018)	-29.9%	-3.0%	2.8%	4.4%
Passengers per Revenue Vehicle Hour	3.0	2.2	7.4	12.7
Operating Cost per Revenue Vehicle Hour	$38.10	$47.20	$49.80	$95.30
Operating Cost per Passenger	$13.00	$25.10	$10.70	$7.40

Source: NTD

TRANSIT FUNDING IN OKLAHOMA

Transit services in Oklahoma are funded through some combination of federal, local, and state funds, plus fares, contracts, and other resources, such as grants and other financial assistance. Within this general formula, however, there is a lot of variation in how individual transit agencies fund their systems. Transit service requires two types of investments: operational and capital.

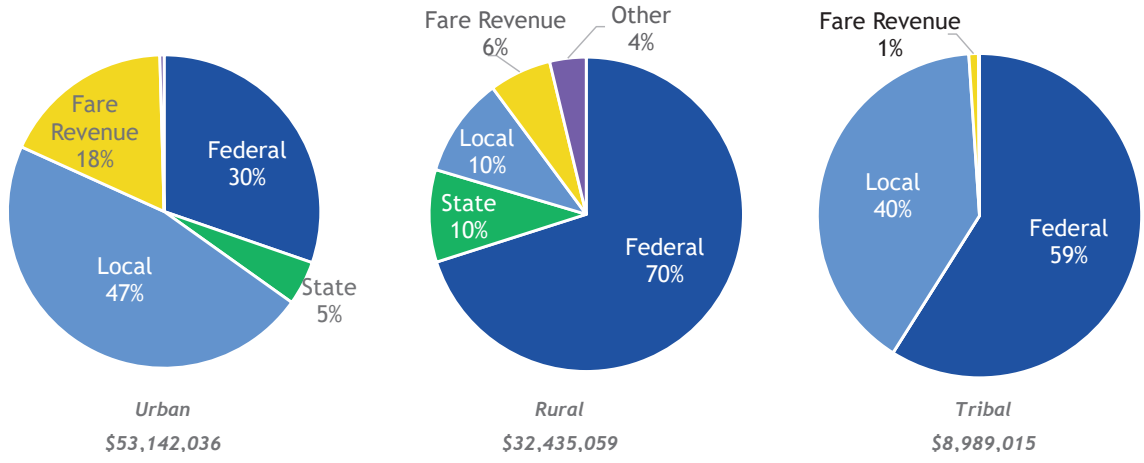
Operations funding includes driver wages and fuel (among other inputs) and reflects the actual service delivery. Federal funds can support up to 50% of operating costs depending on fleet size and service area population. Capital funding includes fleet purchases and other physical investments. Federal funds are used by both urban and rural transit agencies for capital expenses; these funds normally require a 20% match.

FTA formula funds can be used to cover a large portion of fleet and other infrastructure expenses, such as vehicle purchases, passenger infrastructure, and investments in technology. Some agencies use the revenue from contracted services, such as trips provided through LogistiCare, to meet federal match requirements for operations and fleet purchases. For some transit agencies, these contracts often serve as the only source of local match funds.

Statewide, transit providers in Oklahoma spend roughly $94.6 million annually to operate service.[5] About 34% of this operating funding is from local sources, such as local county and municipal funds, while 47% of funding is from the federal government. Another 6% of funding for transit comes from the state of Oklahoma. The remaining 13% comes from passenger fares and other sources. Figure 4-13 breaks this down further and provides the sources of operating funds by urban, rural, and tribal agencies. Rural and tribal programs rely on federal operating assistance twice as much as urban service providers.

5 This amount represents the total transit service operating costs as reported to NTD for fiscal year 2018, the most recent data available at the time of the study.

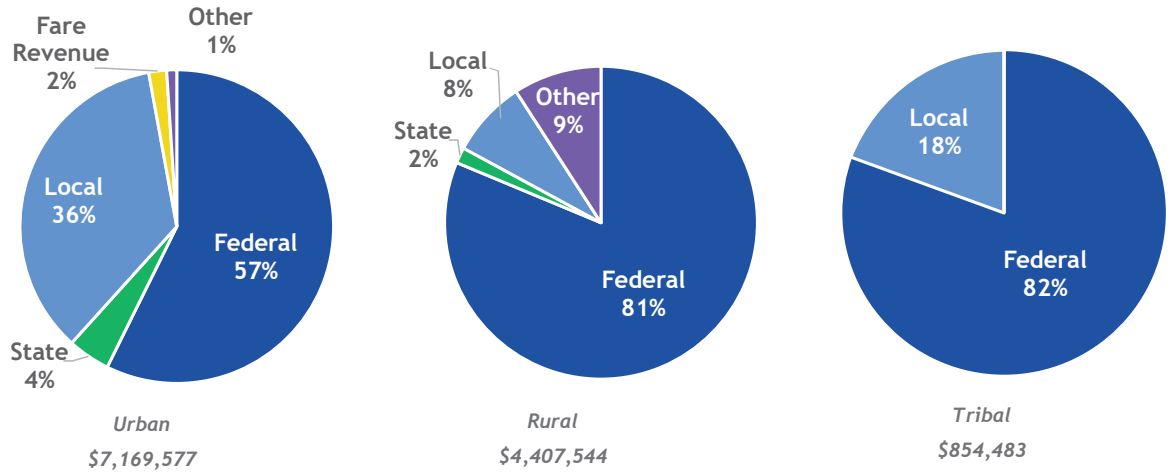
Figure 4-13 Sources of Operating Funds for Urban, Rural, and Tribal Transit Service Providers (2018)



Source: NTD

From 2014 to 2018, transit providers spent on average $12.4 million per year on capital expenditures. Approximately 67% of these capital funds are from the federal government, while 25% of funding is from local sources. Another 3% of capital funding for transit comes from the state of Oklahoma. The remaining 5% comes from passenger fares and other sources. Figure 4-14 breaks this down further and provides the sources of capital funds by urban, rural, and tribal agencies. Similar to operating assistance, rural and tribal service providers rely on federal assistance more heavily than urban service providers. Local funds comprise a much greater share of investment in capital funds for urban providers compared to rural and tribal providers.

Figure 4-14 Sources of Capital Funds for Urban, Rural, and Tribal Transit Service Providers (Annual Average 2014-2018)



Note: This figure excludes $97 million in capital funds between 2016-2018 for the EMBARK streetcar project.

Source: NTD

AVAILABILITY OF TECHNOLOGY

Technology plays an increasingly important role in helping transit agencies to run efficiently and for conveying information about services to current and potential riders. As part of this study, the availability of transit technologies by the various transit agencies was inventoried. Oklahoma's largest fixed-route systems are, for the most part, technology capable. In some cases, transit agencies without certain technologies are in the process of obtaining new technology, such as scheduling and dispatching software.

ODOT makes two propriety software available to rural transit agencies in the state: MYLEOnet and TransitAssistant. MYLEOnet, as mentioned previously, is an application designed for all elements of data collection for the state's 5311 transit services. TransitAssistant is available in both a desktop and mobile version. TransitAssistant Desktop is an application for scheduling, dispatching, and data collection by transit agencies. TransitAssistant Mobile is an Android application that can be used by operators to collect ridership data and by dispatchers to schedule trips and monitor rider trip activity. At least five transit agencies take advantage of TransitAssistant and use it in their operations, while other transit agencies have invested in more advanced technologies for a variety of purposes, including scheduling software, automatic vehicle location (AVL), GPS systems, and real-time arrival information for customers. Some agencies cited the cost of software as a barrier to acquiring technologies to enhance their operations.

HUMAN SERVICES TRANSPORTATION

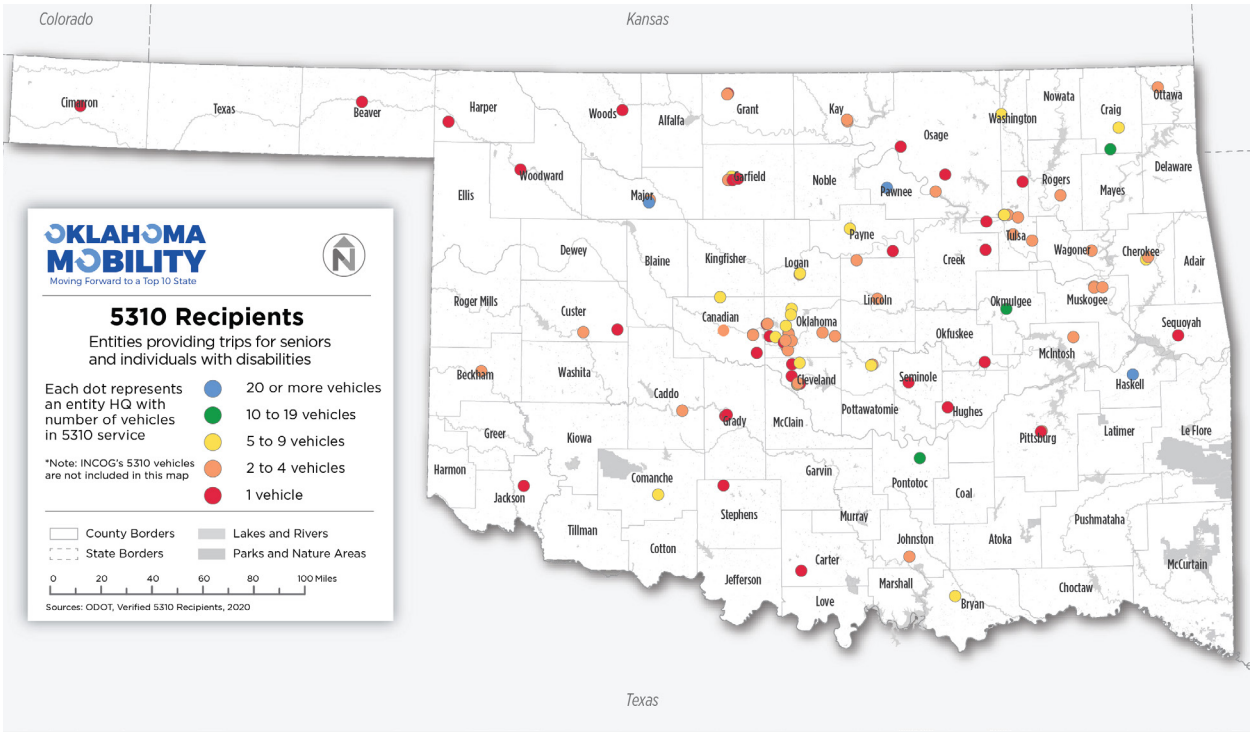
Public transit agencies across Oklahoma play a vital role in providing trips for older adults, disabled persons, and/or people with lower incomes. In recognition of the transportation needs of these individuals, the FTA provides additional resources through the FTA section 5310 program to states to support private, non-profit entities to expand resources where public transit options may be unavailable or unable to meet these needs.

ODOT distributes these funds for the purchase of vehicles for both non-profit and transit agencies to provide trips for older adults and individuals with disabilities. These funds were previously managed and distributed through DHS. Since July 2019, the program has been overseen by OMPT to better coordinate and align services across the state. There are approximately 100 program recipients (Figure 4-15), including 12 transit agencies who use these funds to supplement their fleet to provide additional services within their communities for these targeted populations. In 2020, 396 vehicles were identified as being in service through this program.[6]

Additionally, the OHCA administers the Medicaid program for the state and has oversight of NEMT services through the SoonerRide program. Since 1999, Oklahoma has used a statewide broker to operate its NEMT program, currently contracting with LogistiCare Solutions, LLC. To operate the statewide brokerage, LogistiCare contracts with a variety of transportation providers. In 2019, there were 932,264 trips taken through this program, or an average of 3,570 trips daily. The average trip length was 23 miles one way. Less than 1% of these trips were taken by fixed-route bus, but about 26%, or 240,483 trips, were provided by a combination of nine rural transit agencies and three organizations with vehicles purchased through the 5310 program. Based on data provided by LogistiCare, SoonerRide is predicting a 24% increase in members once Medicaid expansion is implemented.

6 INCOG funds vehicles that are not represented here and in Figure 4-15. Note that the map displays where vehicles are headquartered, not in operation. Operation may expand beyond headquarters.

Figure 4-15 5310 Funding Recipients in Oklahoma (Headquarter Address)



OFFICE OF MOBILITY AND PUBLIC TRANSIT

The creation of the OMPT at ODOT was mandated by HB 1365. HB 1365 charged OMPT with overseeing a network of public transit systems that receive adequate funding to ensure the mobility needs of all Oklahomans are met in a safe, affordable, reliable, consistent, and coordinated fashion. State law requires that oversight and management of all FTA programs, not administered by an FTA-recognized direct recipient, fall under the jurisdiction of OMPT, including the FTA section 5310 program which was transferred from DHS to OMPT by the bill.

As prescribed by the law, OMPT administers or is involved with the following federal programs:

- Section 5303, 5304, and 5305 Metropolitan and Statewide and Nonmetropolitan Transportation Planning
- Section 5307 UZA Formula Grants[7]
- Section 5310 Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program[8]
- Section 5311 Formula Grants for Rural Areas[9]
- Section 5329(e) State Safety Oversight (SSO)
- Section 5339 Grants for Buses and Bus Facilities Program[10]

OMPT relies on FTA and ODOT policy guidance in managing its transit funding programs as mandated by FTA. Guidance for the state's administration of the FTA section 5311, 5339, 5303, and 5304 programs is provided by the OMPT 2020 SMP. The FTA section 5310 program has a separate guidance document—the 2020 Section 5310 SMP. The SSO Program also has a separate revised January 31, 2020 Program Standard governance document.

In Oklahoma, FTA also provides funding directly to five transit programs in areas with more than a 50,000 people under the FTA section 5307 program for UZAs: Oklahoma City, Edmond, Norman, Lawton, and Tulsa. While these programs are direct recipients of funding from FTA, OMPT oversees the small urban program budgets and the state funding program for them as well as the programs managed by OMPT.[11]

ODOT, as the Governor's designee with regard to the administration of state-managed FTA programs, is charged with the responsibility of actively pursuing available funds under these programs for the development and maintenance of public transit services, and to disburse these funds to eligible local transit operators and planning organizations throughout the state of Oklahoma. The responsibility for the administration of these programs is vested in OMPT.

It is the responsibility of OMPT to:

- Distribute information concerning these programs.
- Provide technical assistance and training.
- Develop a fair and equitable competitive application process for FTA funds.
- Ensure public transit availability statewide.
- Review and monitor transportation program subrecipients who have received FTA and state program funds—including the expanded role of the SSO program.
- Submit an Annual Program of Projects to the FTA for approval.

7 The ODOT OMPT does not have oversight or management responsibilities for the FTA section 5307 direct recipients of FTA funding. It does have to file a letter with FTA designating the formula funding split for the FTA section 5307 subrecipients (between 50,000 and 200,000 population) and it is responsible for ensuring that they have a TAM plan and a Planning Technical Assistance Program (PTAP).

8 INCOG, the MPO for the Tulsa area, is the designated direct recipient of FTA section 5310 funds for that region, and it manages and oversees its own separate program including applications, coordination planning, grants and compliance. ODOT's OMPT performs those same functions for the rest of the state.

9 FTA section 5311(c) recipients (federally recognized tribes) are direct FTA recipients and do not pass through OMPT.

10 OMPT does not have oversight of urban and tribal systems for FTA section 5339 funds.

11 FTA also allocates a portion of the formula funding for the Fort Smith, Arkansas UZA to Oklahoma for the portion of the service area that is in Oklahoma. This funding is administered by OMPT.

THE MARKET FOR TRANSIT IN OKLAHOMA

As part of this Plan, the project team was tasked with evaluating the factors that influence transit need and demand, with the goal of developing strategies that improve mobility for all Oklahomans in every community. Transit is the backbone of vibrant urban communities and a lifeline in rural ones. By assessing the market for transit, this Plan aims to identify the places where people need access to healthcare, jobs, education, shopping, recreation, and other activities, as well as where transit impacts economic growth and is a viable alternative to driving

This analysis assumes that public transit investment is oriented around two primary goals:

1. **Strengthening the vitality of Oklahoma's economy** so as many people as possible have access to Oklahoma's commercial centers, employment centers, tourist destinations, and educational resources. This means employers have access to Oklahoma's talent pool, and Oklahomans have a reliable and affordable way to get to work. Access to commercial and employment centers is equally important for people living in urban and rural areas, although the systems will be different in each location. Equally important is the interconnection between the commercial and employment centers in the urban and rural communities.
2. **Supporting Oklahoma's most vulnerable individuals,** including older adults, people with disabilities, minorities, and people with low incomes, by providing mobility and access to services. Public transit is critical in helping people access basic services such as healthcare, human services, and education. Transit's role in this effort is equally important in both urban and rural areas, while service may look and operate differently in urban and rural environments.

Different Services for Different Contexts

There is no "one-size-fits-all" solution to address the variety of transit needs in Oklahoma. In every part of Oklahoma, there are residents who cannot reach jobs and basic services on their own. These needs may be local, regional, or they may stretch across the state. There is also a need to connect all Oklahomans to services designed to meet the needs of specific populations. These services may be provided by federal and state human service programs (e.g., Medicaid) and are typically available statewide, but trips are limited to and from specific appointments and activities. A truly accessible and connected public transit system would include transportation services available to any member of the public traveling for any purpose.

Assessing the Transit Market

To understand the market (or need) for transit in Oklahoma today, the project team considered a variety of factors, including demographics, development patterns, major activity centers, and travel flows. Together, these elements help to identify where there is need for transit and what kind of services are needed. They also provide insight into what types of service models may best fit different needs and service environments across the state. It is always difficult to quantify the need for public transit services; there are always exceptions to every rule and sometimes transit services succeed where one might not expect them to and fail where they should work. However, national experience suggests that the underlying market for transit is strongly related to six factors:

Population and Population Density: First and foremost, transit serves people, and understanding where people live is a key factor to knowing where service needs to go.

Employment and Employment Density: The location and density of jobs is also a strong indicator of transit demand. This includes not just metro centers, but also large employers outside of cities as well as schools and healthcare facilities.

Socioeconomic Characteristics: Different people have a different likelihood to use transit, with differences tied to socioeconomic characteristics. For example, households with many cars are much less likely to use transit than those with one or none.

Development Patterns: Development and land use patterns have a significant impact on the types of transit service models that are most likely to offer effective service in different types of communities, including large urban, small urban, and rural settings.

Important Activity Centers and Resources: Large employers, hospitals, universities, and other major destinations can generate transit ridership. Transit users traveling to these places may be from nearby or from farther away across the region, meaning different types of service can provide connections to these places.

Travel Flows: For transit to be effective, it must take people from where they are to where they need or want to go. Travel flows show the trips that people make and indicate where transit can or should provide service.

TRANSIT NEEDS ACROSS OKLAHOMA

Demographic and socioeconomic characteristics, or an analysis of transit reliance, help identify the need for transit service. National research shows that many population groups have a higher propensity for transit use than the overall population. In other words, certain population groups are more likely to use or rely on transit relative to the general population. Socioeconomic characteristics that are related to transit propensity include:

Vehicle Ownership and Access

Households with limited or no access to a personal vehicle, either by choice or by necessity, are more likely to rely on transit. Residents may need transit as their primary form of transportation due to the high cost of vehicle ownership or may be unable to drive due to a disability. Residents in places with more robust transit services may choose to use transit because it is a convenient and cost-effective way to get where they need or want to go for at least some of their trips.

Income

Residents with lower incomes tend to use local transit to a greater extent because it is less expensive than owning and operating a personal vehicle, and many rely on transit as their primary mode of transportation.

Age

Older adults (age 65 and over) may no longer be comfortable driving or are no longer able to drive and may begin or continue to use transit to maintain their independence as they age. On the other hand, Millennials (age 25-34) generally have a higher interest in using many transportation options such as transit, walking, and biking, and less interest in driving.

Disability

Many residents with disabilities may be unable to drive or have difficulty driving and may be more likely to rely on transit and paratransit services to meet their transportation needs and maintain an independent lifestyle.

Race and Ethnicity

Minority residents generally have higher rates of transit use. Providing effective transit service to minority populations is particularly important to the FTA and is a requirement under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Transit Propensity Index

To better understand transit needs across the state, the project team developed a Transit Propensity Index, a single measure that estimates the extent to which a specific area (such as a census tract) may have a sizeable proportion of the population with characteristics related to transit usage.

The following five characteristics were combined into the Transit Propensity Index:

- Low-income residents, defined as households with income at or below 150% of the federal poverty level
- Persons with disabilities
- Older adults, 65 years or greater of age
- Minority residents
- Households with zero or one vehicles

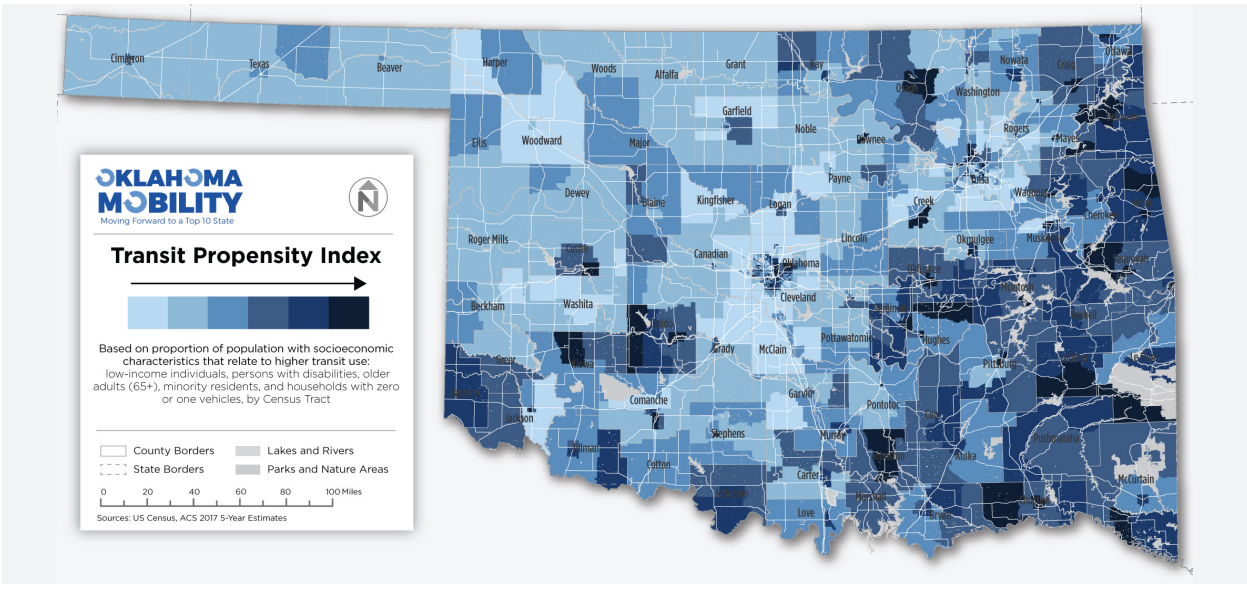
The Transit Propensity Index purposefully excludes population density as a factor and does not recommend the type or level of transit service that should be provided. Rather, it highlights places where there are high proportions of people more likely to rely on transit service, regardless of what type of transit may be appropriate to meeting those needs and how many people live there. The results of the transit propensity analysis are shown in Figure 4-16. Areas that stand out in the analysis include:

- Counties in the southeastern part of the state, such as Johnston, Choctaw, McCurtain, Latimer, Le Flore, Seminole, Okfuskee, Bryan, and McIntosh counties
- Counties in the southwestern part of the state, such as Harmon, Kiowa, Custer, Caddo, Tillman, and Jefferson counties
- Counties in the northeastern part of the state, such as Sequoyah, Adair, Delaware, Craig, and Osage counties
- The eastern and southern parts of Oklahoma City
- The northern parts of Tulsa
- Lawton
- Blaine County
- Central Custer County
- Texas County and central Cimarron County

Additional Transit Propensity Index maps for specific geographic areas can be found in Appendix D.

Key Finding: The needs for transit investments are growing. The need and demand for transit is changing, both in response to underlying demographic changes in Oklahoma's population and because of the regionalization, or concentration, of jobs and healthcare services outside of rural communities.

Figure 4-16 Transit Propensity Index



DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

Research shows that density and demographics are key factors in the type of transit service that will work well in a particular area. There are a wide variety of transit services, each one with different strengths and weaknesses, and each designed to serve different types of communities and riders. Transit propensity, as described in the previous section, is a major component of transit need and demand across Oklahoma. Density and development patterns are also critical to understanding the state's transit context and can influence the types of transit service that can most effectively serve different types of communities.

Demand-response service can generally work in any environment, and different models can provide service for the general public or to meet the needs of specific populations or types of trips.

Fixed-route service, however, generally requires some level of density to be effective. Typically at least 10-15 residents per acre or 5-10 employees per acre, or a combination thereof, is necessary to support fixed-route service that operates at least once an hour. Population and employment density are key indicators of an area's development patterns and provide insight into the types and level of service that may be appropriate for different contexts.

Population

As of 2017, 3,896,251 people called Oklahoma home.[12] About 62% of the state's population is focused in the major urban areas, particularly the Oklahoma City and Tulsa regions. The remaining 38% live in smaller communities or more rural areas across the state.

The highest concentration of population is in the Oklahoma City Metropolitan Area, with a continuous concentration of people in Oklahoma County, east Canadian County, northwest Cleveland County, and as far east as Shawnee. The Tulsa metro area also has a large population, with high concentrations of people focused across most of Tulsa County and in neighboring portions of Wagoner, Rogers, and Creek counties.

Additional municipalities with notably high concentrations of people include:

- Lawton/Fort Sill
- Stillwater
- Muskogee
- Enid
- Ponca City
- Bartlesville
- Tahlequah

Between 2010 and 2017, areas with the highest increases in population were the greater Oklahoma City and Tulsa regions, as well as the Lawton area. The Oklahoma City metro area grew significantly, growing by 8.0% between 2010 and 2017, while the Tulsa area grew by 4.3% and the Lawton area increased 4.0% (Figure 4-17). Notably, smaller areas within Oklahoma City and Tulsa experienced a mix of population growth and loss, with some core areas of each city increasing in population density while others declined during the same period. At the same time, the suburbs and surrounding communities outside these cities experienced significant increases in population, speaking to the expansion and urbanization of these metropolitan areas (Figure 4-18).

12 2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Key Finding: Oklahoma's population is growing at a similar rate to the country, but growth is concentrated in the urban areas. Since 2010, Oklahoma's population growth rate has mirrored the nation's overall growth rate, though the growth is heavily concentrated in the Oklahoma City and Tulsa metropolitan areas.

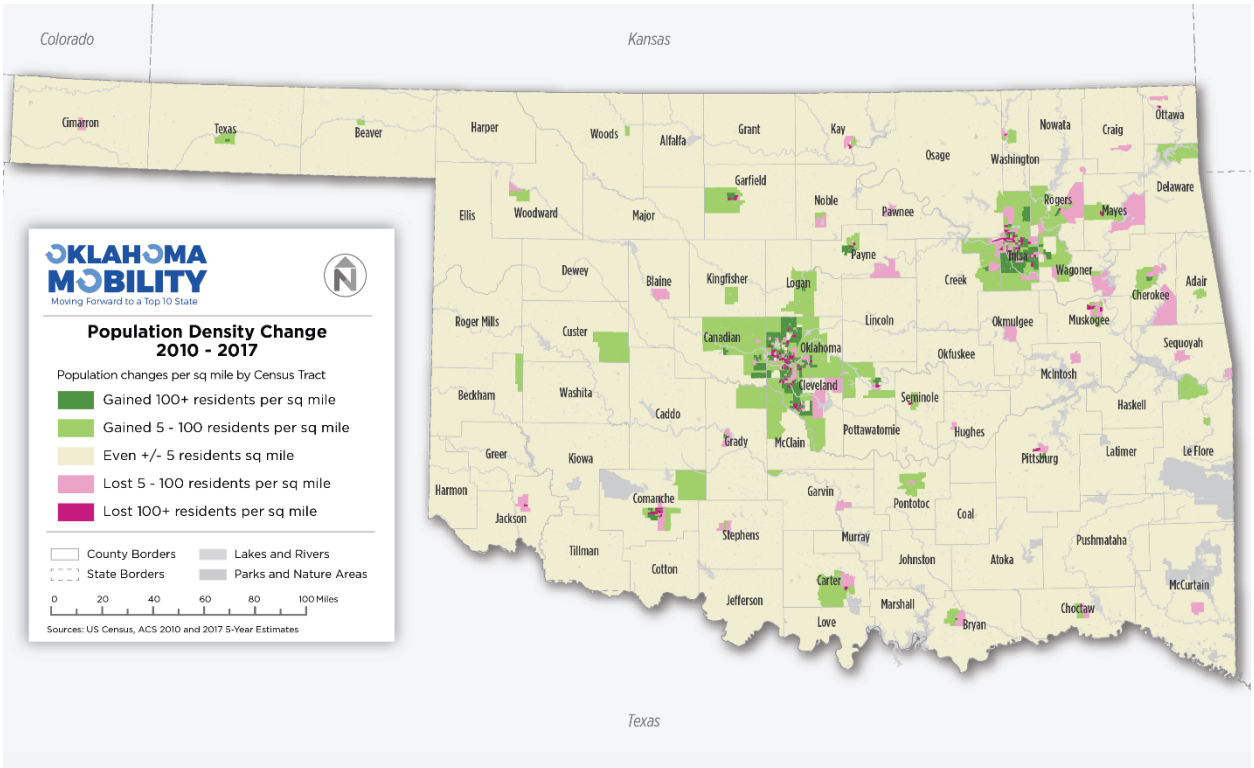
Figure 4-17 Population Growth in Major Metro Areas, 2010 to 2017

	State of Oklahoma	Oklahoma City-Norman MSA	Tulsa MSA	Lawton MSA	Enid MSA	Stillwater MSA	Non-Urban/ Rural
2010	3,751,351	1,252,987	937,478	124,098	60,580	77,350	1,487,493
2017	3,896,251	1,353,504	977,869	129,066	62,421	80,634	1,496,356
# Change	+144,900	+100,517	+40,391	+4,968	+1,841	+3,284	+8,863
% Change	3.9%	8.0%	4.3%	4.0%	3.0%	4.2%	0.6%

Source: 2010 Census Summary File, 2017 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Oklahoma City MSA, Tulsa MSA, Lawton MSA, and Enid MSA are all Metropolitan Statistical Areas as defined by the US Census. The City of Norman is considered part of the Oklahoma City MSA by the US Census. Stillwater MSA is a Micropolitan Statistical Area.

Figure 4-18 Change in Population, 2010 to 2017



Employment

The location and density of employment complements population as an indicator of where people need or want to go and the type of transit service that may be needed based on density and pattern of development. In addition to showing where people need to commute, employment density is also a simple way to represent other types of potential travel activity; for example, the destinations where restaurant and retail employees need to travel are also the same places where customers are traveling. The same is true for hospital employees and patients traveling to medical care. As job densities increase, so does the demand for transit service.

In 2017, there were 1,550,990 jobs across Oklahoma.[13] Notably, employment is generally more geographically concentrated than population. Employment is most highly focused in the state's urban areas: Oklahoma City and Tulsa and their immediate metro areas. High concentrations of employment are also found in Norman, Lawton, Enid, Stillwater, Woodward, Bartlesville, Tahlequah, Muskogee, Ardmore, Altus, Guymon, and Durant.

Between 2010 and 2017, employment in Oklahoma increased by 6.2%, less than half of the national rate during this same period (14.1%).[14] The Oklahoma City and Tulsa Metropolitan Statistical Areas both experienced significant increases, with jobs increasing by 8.8% and 8.1%, respectively (Figure 4-19). In these metropolitan areas, most places just outside the urban centers experienced increased job density, while changes within the core areas were more mixed. Among all of the state's metro areas, the largest increase occurred in the Stillwater region, where employment grew by 12.7%. The Lawton metro area experienced an overall employment increase of 3.9% but with a mix of increases and decreases across the area. Outside of the state's metropolitan areas, overall employment increased by just 0.3% (Figure 4-20).

Beyond the major metro areas, employment density also increased in:

- Western Mayes County, east of the Tulsa metro area
- Eastern parts of Love County
- Ardmore
- Northeast Beckham County/Elk City

Areas where employment density decreased include:

- Southern Cherokee County
- Northern Haskell County
- Central Le Flore County
- Altus
- Guymon
- Ponca City
- Miami

13 Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) program (U.S. Census, Center for Economic Studies)

14 Ibid.

Key Finding: Job growth is half the national growth rate, and is concentrated in the urban areas. Jobs are heavily concentrated in Oklahoma City and Tulsa, as well as in and around smaller urban areas such as Norman, Lawton, Stillwater, Enid, and Muskogee. Employment in the state has increased at less than half of the national rate, and this growth has also been largely concentrated in the Oklahoma City, Tulsa and Stillwater metropolitan areas.

Figure 4-19 Change in Employment, 2010 to 2017

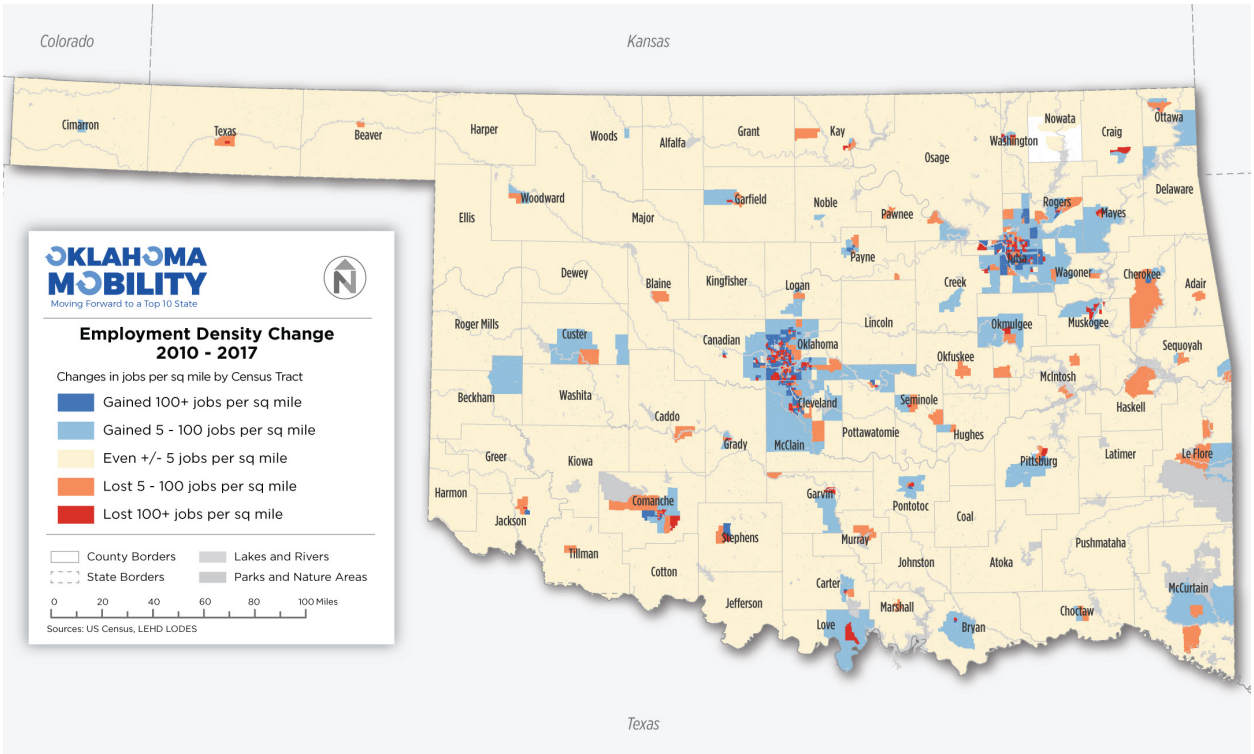


Figure 4-20 Employment Growth in Major Metro Areas, 2010 to 2017

	State of Oklahoma	Oklahoma City-Norman MSA	Tulsa MSA	Lawton MSA	Enid MSA	Stillwater MSA	Non-Urban/ Rural
2010	1,460,741	546,958	408,647	38,348	24,642	30,486	502,063
2017	1,550,990	595,050	441,628	39,835	25,080	34,354	503,451
# Change	+90,249	+48,092	+32,981	+1,487	+438	+3,868	+1,388
% Change	6.2%	8.8%	8.1%	3.9%	1.8%	12.7%	0.3%

Source: Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) Survey (US Census Bureau, Center for Economic Studies)

Oklahoma City MSA, Tulsa MSA, Lawton MSA, and Enid MSA are all Metropolitan Statistical Areas as defined by the U.S. Census. The City of Norman is considered part of the Oklahoma City MSA by the U.S. Census. Stillwater MSA is a Micropolitan Statistical Area.

Transit and Development Patterns

The project team linked density to transit demand by creating an index that combines population and employment density, and then broadly relating these densities to the most appropriate types of transit service. Generally, there is no minimum density requirement for demand-response service. Demand-response service can work in any environment and can be deployed in a variety of ways to provide service for the general public or to meet the needs of specific populations or types of trips, depending on need. Fixed-route service, however, does generally require some level of density to be effective.

When considering the population and job densities needed to support fixed-route bus service (Figure 4-21), the highest potential demand in Oklahoma is located in a few specific areas of the state. These include Oklahoma City and its surrounding cities such as Norman, Edmond, Shawnee, and Yukon, as well as the urban areas of Tulsa, Lawton, Enid, Stillwater, and Tahlequah. These communities have areas of contiguous job and population density that can support the hourly (or more frequent) service of traditional fixed-route transit. Beyond these areas, additional types of transit service should be considered to meet the needs of communities that is appropriate to the local and regional service environment while effectively meeting community needs. Different types of service models, such as demand-response service or regional connectors, can provide transit service that matches the needs and goals of Oklahoma's communities.

Key Finding: Both urban and rural communities have residents who rely on transit. The Transit Propensity Index, based on socioeconomic characteristics associated with a greater tendency to use public transit, shows that there are large populations that rely heavily on transit in the central portions of the Oklahoma City and Tulsa metropolitan areas, the Lawton-Fort Sill UZA, and the City of Muskogee. In the rural communities, there are fewer people overall; however, some groups with a higher propensity to use transit, including older adults, low-income residents, and people with disabilities, make up a higher percentage of the population in rural areas as compared to the state average.

Figure 4-21 Transit Service Hierarchy

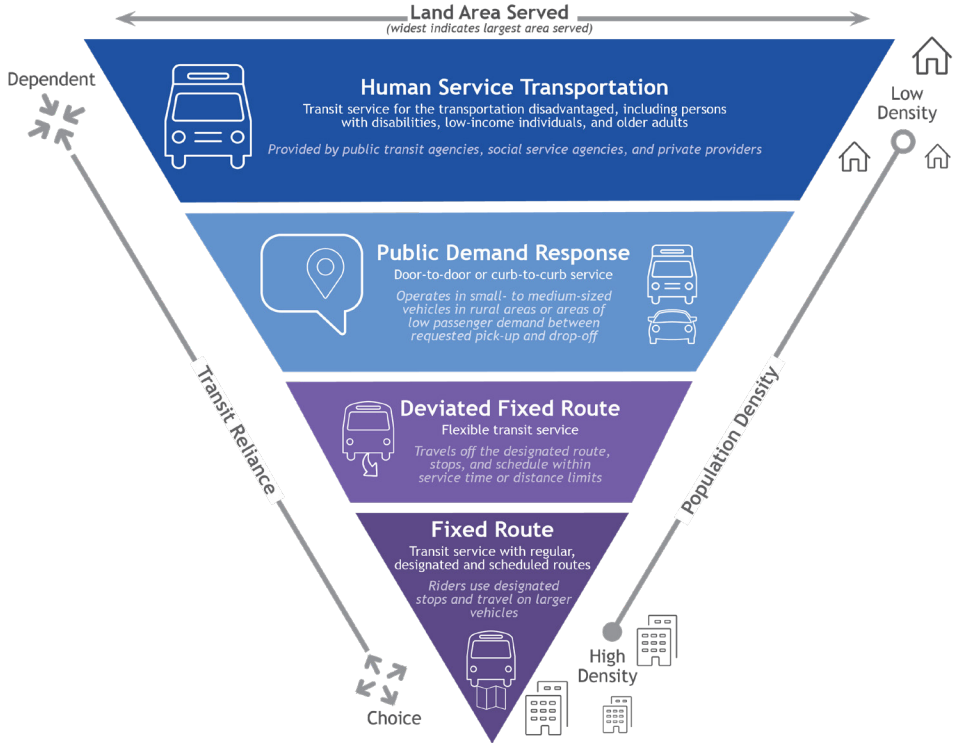


Figure 4-22 Hospitals in Oklahoma

ACCESS TO NEEDED SERVICES

Healthcare Facilities

Transportation is often cited as a major barrier to accessing healthcare services. Limited access to medical services can lead to missed medical appointments, poor health outcomes, and higher healthcare costs. Figure 4-22 shows the location of hospitals across Oklahoma. This map is not representative of all healthcare facilities across the state but illustrates a concentration of services in Oklahoma City and Tulsa. According to the Health Resources and Services Administration, Oklahoma has the following rural health care facilities:

- 40 Critical Access Hospitals
- 93 Rural Health Clinics
- 85 Federally Qualified Health Center sites located outside of UZAs
- 46 short-term hospitals located outside of UZAs

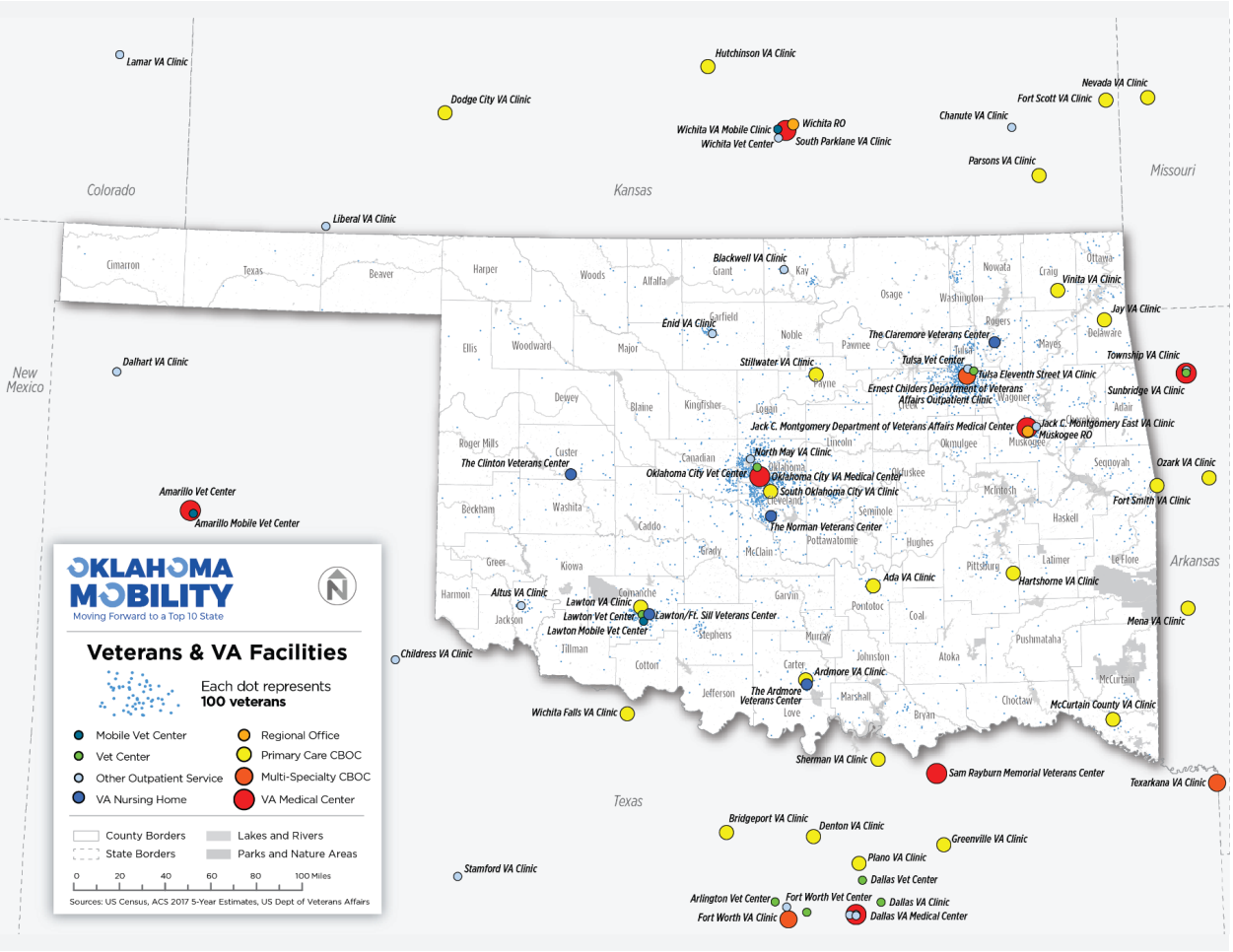
Access to medical services is also critical for Oklahomans enrolled in SoonerCare, the state's Medicaid program. As of March 2020, there were 785,366 residents enrolled in SoonerCare, and 67% of those enrolled are children.[15] In June 2020, voters approved a ballot measure expanding SoonerCare to childless adults earning up to 138% of the poverty level. SoonerRide provides well over a million rides annually to medical appointments.[16]

15 LogistiCare

16 OHCA

Key Finding: Healthcare services are becoming more difficult to access in rural areas. Historically, residents of rural and smaller urban areas had access to the services and facilities they needed within their community. More recent trends show, in response to shrinking populations and shifting demographics, many smaller urban and rural areas are experiencing a consolidation of their services and facilities, such as hospitals and healthcare services (as well as shopping areas and employment centers). Consequently, travel patterns increasingly require transit agencies to cross county lines and coordinate services with neighboring agencies.

Figure 4-23 Veterans and VA Facilities



Veteran Facilities

Oklahoma is home to 276,948 veterans, with most concentrated in the greater Oklahoma City, Tulsa, and Lawton metropolitan areas as well as in other smaller cities across the state.[17] The VA operates several types of facilities across Oklahoma to meet medical and other needs of veterans. Facilities range in scale from full-scale medical centers to nursing homes and mobile care centers and clinics across the state and in neighboring states, as shown in Figure 4-23.[18]

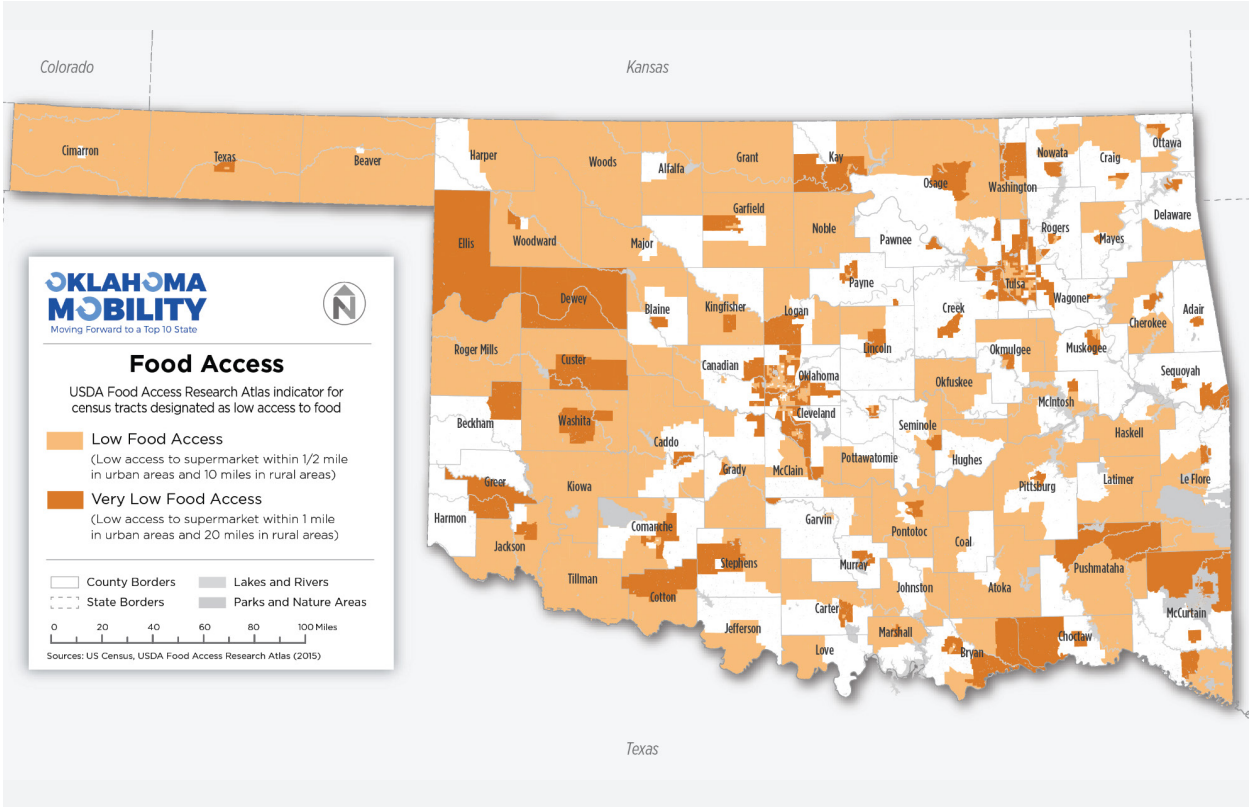
Food Access

Access to grocery stores and supermarkets with fresh food is crucial to the health and wellbeing of all Oklahoma residents. However, in areas with few or no grocery stores, accessing fresh food presents a challenge. Coupled with unreliable or non-existent transportation, this intensifies the burden and exacerbates the health and financial impacts on residents. Low-income households and those without cars are especially impacted by the inability to access the nearest grocery store.

17 2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

18 U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Figure 4-24 Food Access



The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) publishes the Food Access Research Atlas, which aims to quantify access to food by census tract.[19] Census tracts are designated "low access" if at least 500 people or at least 33% of the population is farther than the specified distance from the nearest supermarket, supercenter, or large grocery store.

Figure 4-24 shows the Food Access Research Atlas index by census tract in the state of Oklahoma. Tracts that have low food access (within ½ mile in urban areas and 10 miles in rural areas) are denoted in light orange, while tracts that are very low food access (within one mile in urban areas and 20 miles in rural areas) are in dark orange. Many areas across the state demonstrate low food access, with several pockets of very low access.

Notable areas of the state that lack adequate access to supermarkets include:

- Southeast Oklahoma, particularly in Pushmataha, McCurtain, Choctaw, Bryan, Atoka, and Latimer counties
- Comanche, Stephens, Cotton, Greer, Jackson, Tillman, and Kiowa counties in Southwestern Oklahoma
- Areas surrounding the greater Oklahoma City and Tulsa metro areas
- Most areas of western Oklahoma, with areas of very low access in Ellis, Dewey, Custer, Washita, and Beckham counties
- Western panhandle, particularly in central Texas County
- Northern Oklahoma, including Kay, Osage, and Washington counties

19 US Department of Agriculture Food Access Research Atlas, 2015

ACCESS TO JOBS

Major Employers

Large employers are in many communities across Oklahoma. The largest employers—those with 10,000 employees or more—are Tinker Air Force Base in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma State University in Stillwater, and the University of Oklahoma in Norman. Other very large employers (at least 5,000 employees) include the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center in Oklahoma City, the US FAA Mike Monroney Aeronautical Center also in Oklahoma City, and Altus Air Force Base in Altus. Many of the state's other large employers are concentrated in the greater Tulsa and Oklahoma City metro areas, and access to these jobs requires both strong local transit service and effective regional connections for commuters from surrounding communities and rural areas.

While many of the state's large employers are focused in urban areas, there are also large employers in more rural areas, serving as key job sites for many of the state's residents. These employers represent a variety of industries, but mostly include hospitals and major medical facilities, casinos/resorts, energy and natural resource enterprises, manufacturing, and food processing. In rural areas where there are few employment opportunities, many residents travel a significant distance to reach these jobs. Reliable and affordable long-distance transportation is critical in order to connect rural residents to job opportunities in both rural and urban areas.

For transit to be effective, it must take people from where they are to where they need and want to go.

Commuter Trips Between Counties

Commuter travel flows, which show where the largest numbers of people are traveling from to get to work, are one resource to determine where direct or relatively easy connections should be made. Using commuter data available through the U.S. Census, commuter travel flows were mapped for workers who commute to another county for work to better understand where coordinated or connected transit service may be most important for job access across the state.[20]

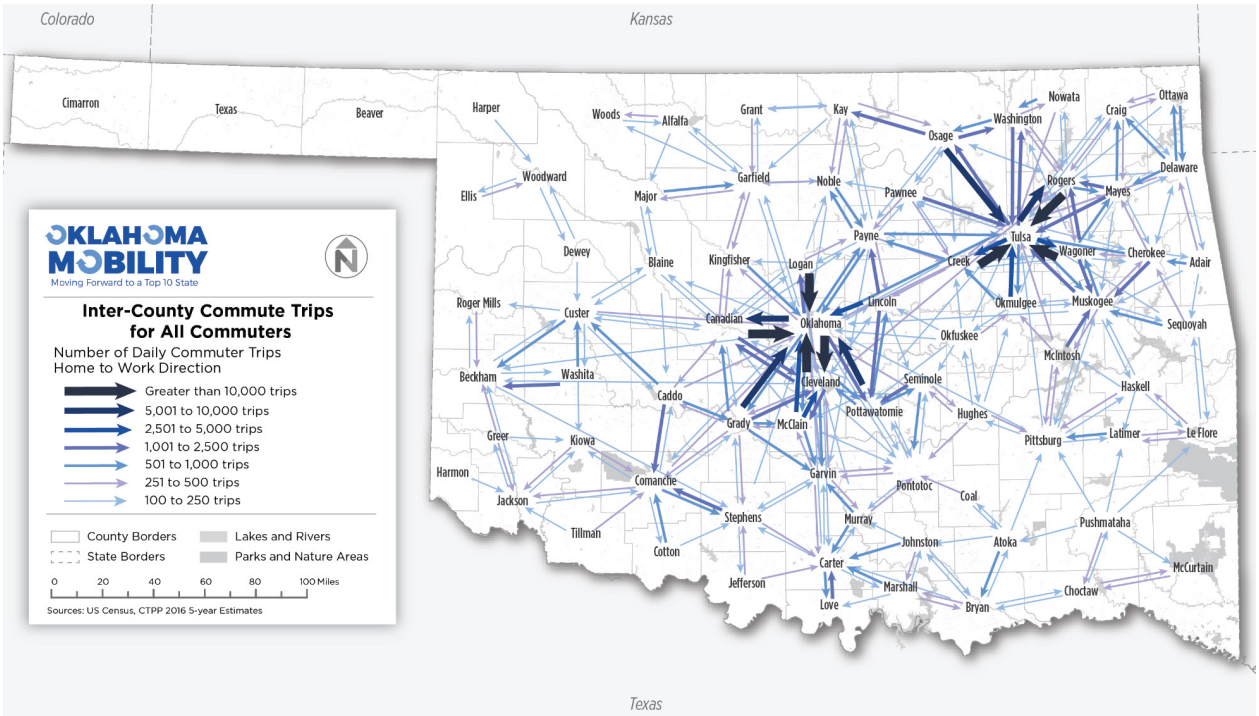
The largest volumes of home-to-work trips are into Oklahoma and Tulsa counties from their surrounding counties (Figure 4-25). Additional maps can be found in Appendix D. There are more than 10,000 daily commute trips into Oklahoma County from Logan, Canadian, and Cleveland counties, and more than 5,000 originating in Pottawatomie and Grady counties. There are also large commuting flows traveling out of Oklahoma County, with more than 10,000 commute trips going south to Cleveland County, and more than 5,000 going to Canadian County.

Tulsa County generates more than 10,000 commute trips each from Rogers, Wagoner, and Creek counties, and more than 5,000 trips from Osage County. A significant "reverse commute" flow also exists from Tulsa County to neighboring Rogers County.

20 Census Transportation Planning Products (CTPP) Program, 2016 5-Year Estimates

Key Finding: Different transit services are needed and appropriate for different environments. The cities of Oklahoma City, Edmond, Norman, Tulsa, Lawton, Shawnee, Enid, and Stillwater have areas of job and population density that can support traditional fixed-route transit service that runs at least once an hour, and many places can support 30-minute service or better. Demand-response services are a better fit for meeting local community transportation needs in the parts of the state outside of the larger urban areas. Demand-response services use smaller buses or vans and operate trips by appointment, compared to fixed-route service which operates on a fixed schedule. Technology investments can make these reservation-based systems more "on-demand," which would increase convenience and accessibility for riders.

Figure 4-25 Inter-County Trips from Home to Work - All Commuters



Other notable commute flows are as follows:

- Trips to Muskogee County from surrounding counties, especially Cherokee, Wagoner, and McIntosh counties, as well as from Muskogee County to Tulsa County
- To Comanche County from Stephens County and Caddo County
- To Pottawatomie County from Oklahoma, Seminole, and Lincoln counties
- Between Washington County and surrounding Tulsa, Osage, and Nowata counties
- To Kay County from Osage County
- To Beckham County from Washita County

Commuters with Low Incomes

Most trips by low-income commuters are heavily concentrated in Oklahoma County and Tulsa County relative to overall commuter travel flows. The largest travel flows are between Oklahoma County and Cleveland County, with commute trips in both directions, as well as travel between Oklahoma and Canadian counties, indicating a relatively significant market for "reverse commute" trips by residents with lower incomes. Many commuter trips to Oklahoma County also originate in Logan, Lincoln, and Pottawatomie counties.

Commutes in both directions are also found between Tulsa County and Rogers, Wagoner, and Creek counties. Many commuters also travel into Tulsa County from Osage and Okmulgee counties.

Key Finding: Employment opportunities are getting farther away from rural areas. The largest volumes of commuter trips by far are into Oklahoma County and Tulsa County from their surrounding counties, respectively. When looking at just low-income commuters, there are significant flows in both directions between Oklahoma County and Cleveland and Canadian counties, indicating that there is a relatively significant market for "reverse commute" trips by residents with lower incomes.

Commuters Traveling 45 Minutes or Longer

Similar to overall commute patterns, many longer commutes into Oklahoma County originate from neighboring counties, including Cleveland, Canadian, Logan, and Pottawatomie counties. However, longer-distance commutes to Oklahoma County also can be seen from Grady County and Garfield County.

The largest number of long commutes into Tulsa County originate in Rogers County, but several also begin in the surrounding counties of Wagoner, Osage, Creek, Okmulgee, and Wagoner. Commuters also travel a farther distance from McIntosh and Muskogee counties.

Early Morning and Late-Night Commuters

While most jobs are still based on traditional 9-to-5 hours, a growing number of people work non-traditional hours. For example, many food service, manufacturing, health care, and retail jobs have start times that are much earlier, and later second-shift and third-shift jobs are increasingly common.

Several travel flows emerge showing commuters who depart early for work, between 5 a.m. and 7 a.m., which also include those who must travel long distances. These workers are departing their homes often well before transit service begins for the day. Among commuters who leave for work between 5 a.m. and 7 a.m., the heaviest travel flows are from Cleveland County and Canadian County into Oklahoma County. Significant travel flows to Oklahoma County also originate in Logan County and Pottawatomie County, as well as from Oklahoma County south to Cleveland County. Early-morning commuters to Tulsa County mostly travel from neighboring Rogers, Wagoner, and Creek counties, with relatively significant travel flows from Osage and Okmulgee counties as well.

In addition to early morning commuters, there are also many commuters who depart late for work, beginning their commute between 4 p.m. and 12 a.m. to reach second- or third-shift jobs. An observed majority of these commute trips are concentrated around Oklahoma and Tulsa counties, with employees commuting inbound from counties that share a border with Oklahoma and Tulsa counties. The largest flow pattern observed is from Cleveland County to Oklahoma County, with additional inbound commuter flows from Canadian County to the west and Logan County to the north. Another notable commuter path also exists from Oklahoma County south to Cleveland County. Major late-night commuter flows also travel to Tulsa County from surrounding Rogers, Wagoner, and Creek counties, as well as modest commuter travel from Osage County.

EXISTING CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The analysis of existing services in Oklahoma shows several unmet needs for transit services statewide. While 99% of all Oklahomans reside within transit service areas, actual service is not provided to all of those areas; many residents who live within a transit service coverage area may have only partial or no access to service compared to what is shown on the map. This speaks to a gap between the need for transit across the state and the limited capacity of transit agencies to meet that need given constrained resources.

Interviews with transit agencies and other stakeholders (as discussed in Chapter 2), along with a market analysis of underlying demand and need for transit in Oklahoma, highlight opportunities where transit can boost the economy and the overall quality of life for all Oklahomans. The type of transit service needed varies across the state. In Oklahoma City and Tulsa, the two largest urban areas, frequent fixed-route services are in high demand. Demand also extends to communities within the Oklahoma City metropolitan area such as Norman, Edmond, Shawnee, and Yukon, as well the urban areas of Lawton, Enid, Stillwater, and Tahlequah. These communities have areas of continuous job and population density that can support the hourly traditional fixed-route transit service. Most of Oklahoma is rural and may be served best with demand-response transit that operates door-to-door. Regional commuter services need to connect rural residents with economic opportunity.

In order to improve both urban and rural public transit, transit agencies need support locally and at a state level. In many instances, they must work together to meet existing needs and expand services in a way that targets the priorities of Oklahomans. The following sections outline the current gaps and potential improvements in transit service and highlight the opportunities created by improved connectivity statewide.

Current Gaps and Potential Improvements

Funding Needs

All transit agencies in Oklahoma have significant unmet operational and capital funding needs, preventing them from improving and expanding service for their riders. Furthermore, uncertain funding sources do not necessarily guarantee adequate funds for the future.

One major issue is the instability of local funding to match federal grants. This often causes transit agencies to miss out on receiving grants that are readily available

due to the inability to come up with adequate local match. This situation has only intensified because of COVID-19, which has significantly impacted local economies, while presenting Oklahoma's transit riders and operators with unprecedented challenges.

To meet the local match, agencies often must piece together funds from other grants and contracts, such as money received from rides contracted by LogistiCare, a Medicaid transportation provider. These contracted rides are likely to decrease in the next few years, due to LogistiCare shifting to private companies to provide rides even though private contractors in Oklahoma have struggled to meet federal requirements related to NEMT services.

For transit agencies that do receive funding from local governments, the amount of funding can depend on how much city officials support transit. A change in city councils or town financial management can drastically change how much funding the transit provider gets, which impacts the amount of local match funds available. Finding a stable mechanism for dedicated local and state funding with a clear structure can help transit agencies across the state better leverage federal dollars.

Transit agencies identified the following capital and operation gaps due to lack of funding:

- Inability to find or retain drivers due to low wages and part-time status without benefits.
- Inability to meet all rides requested due to lack of overall capacity.
- Vehicles that are too old and/or have too many miles on them.
- Vehicles that need repair and cannot fully deliver services (e.g., broken wheelchair lift).
- Difficulty of providing long distance trips, since deadhead miles (the travel required to begin or end a passenger trip) do not receive funding but still use driver time and wear down vehicles.

In addition to increasing funding at both the local and state levels to address these gaps, state and federal agencies should reduce the large volume of burdensome regulations on transit agencies and their funding that prevent them from fully offering their services and programs. As an example, some grants are restricted to only vehicle purchases, but a transit provider may need those funds more for buying parts or investing in technology. Lastly, there is potential to increase the overall pool of funding through better coordination with other agencies, such as ones that oversee economic development and health. Public-private partnerships can also get more private entities to invest in transit, such as employers looking to increase access to their facilities for potential workers.

Service Improvements and Expansion

Transit in various areas of Oklahoma is limited. Given additional funding and resources, transit agencies can expand service and make it more reliable, affordable, and convenient. This funding can be used to increase capacity by hiring and retaining more drivers, purchasing and maintaining vehicles, and other operational changes.

Currently, many transit agencies operate only on weekdays, some on Saturdays, and very few on Sundays. Service hours are generally from the early morning to late afternoon. By operating only during the day on weekdays, people who work shifts outside of the typical workday cannot use transit to get to or from their jobs. On the flip side, people who rely on transit who are searching for a job cannot seek one outside of the typical workday. In both rural and urban areas, expanding service hours and days could connect more people to economic opportunities. It can also make accessing grocery stores, schools, medical facilities, and social activities more convenient and reliable.

Some demand-response transit agencies require advanced reservations of 24 hours or more for a ride, while others operate

on-demand. Agencies noted that they sometimes turn away riders due to lack of capacity. For people to be fully able to rely on transit, services should be simple to schedule and use, and people should not have to worry about being turned away. Implementing policies to allow for on-demand trips and to guarantee all request trips can be accommodated would make transit more usable, especially for those who depend on these services.

To best serve the people who rely the most on transit and to make transit competitive with driving, services must be affordable. Long distance trips, which usually charge by the mile, can be prohibitively expensive. While some individuals may be eligible for free transportation services through Medicaid, many trips are not covered. Lowering fares can allow more people to access transit. Providers can also put in place monthly passes or other frequent rider discounts to encourage people to take more trips on transit for a smaller fare.

Improving the infrastructure adjacent to transit can also help increase the safety and comfort of transit itself. For fixed-route services, first mile/last mile considerations—such as building infrastructure for accessible sidewalks, safe biking, and well-lit bus stops—are crucial to getting more riders onto buses. Even for demand-response services, better walking conditions encourages people to make more short trips without a car or to make a reservation for demand-response service.

Education and Marketing of Transit Services

Public transit is sometimes viewed as a last resort, rather than a mode that is competitive with driving. In addition to improving transit service so that it becomes a viable first-choice mode, ODOT, OTA, and transit agencies can improve the education and marketing of public transit in order to change its image and demonstrate how transit benefits everyone.

Education and marketing efforts can focus on the following:

- Increasing awareness of the types of services available.
- Educating people on how to use transit.
- Communicating the social and economic benefits of transit.
- Providing professional development and training to support transit agency staff.

A coordinated and funded statewide public outreach effort can help spread this messaging across the whole state. Tactics in

the marketing plan can be creative too, such as creating videos geared toward attracting current non-riders onto transit. These tactics should be paired with making sure that transit information is easy to access as well.

In addition to marketing efforts to reduce public stigma and gain riders, educating key partners of public transit, such as other state agencies and elected officials, can help spread beneficial information. It can also help these partners consider incorporating transit services into their own strategies to improve public health, economic development, and quality of life in general.

Investment in Technology

Over the last decade, there have been great advances in transportation-related technology that promise to make public transit more convenient and reliable. Investing in some of this technology statewide can help transit agencies better provide service and help Oklahomans better access this service.

Technology can help improve trip batching and dispatching for transit agencies, which is currently done manually by many demand-response agencies. Trip information can be sent directly to drivers, making on-demand rides easier to provide. In order for rural agencies to be able to access this technology however, wireless internet and broadband infrastructure must also be made more robust to avoid lost connections. For potential riders, technology can help make fare payment easier and allow for the convenience of online trip requests, as well as make information about how to ride transit and service alerts more widely accessible and easy to find.

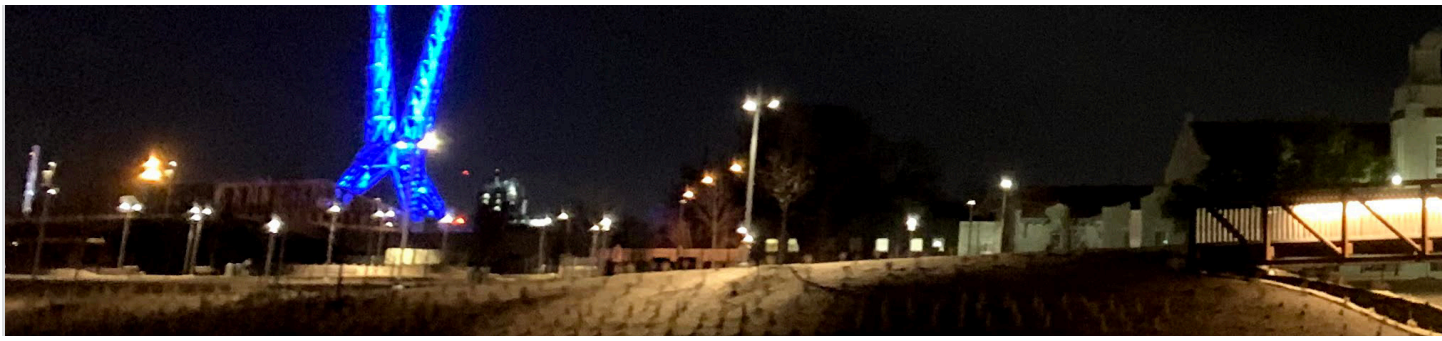
One potential goal of investing in technology is the creation of a coordinated statewide platform between all transit agencies through a user-friendly app. Through an app, riders could plan, book, and pay for any trip on any transit agency statewide, and transit agencies could receive this information and immediately provide the service.

Statewide Coordination and Connectivity

To fill gaps in transit service and ensure high-quality transportation across the state, it would be beneficial for ODOT and OTA to play a role in coordinating between transit agencies and other public and private entities. Statewide coordination can help boost the impact of other transit improvements discussed in this report.

Based on the way funding and resource allocation are structured, transit agencies often must compete for rides where service areas overlap. For people who want to travel regionally between different service areas, transit services are often lacking and transit agencies do not often coordinate with each other to pass off rides. The state can create a structure to better facilitate coordination and encourage collaboration among transit agencies to fulfill regional trips. ODOT and OTA can also work toward creating a centralized statewide mobility management system. These types of systems can provide for regional Mobility Managers and a statewide call center, as well as a single trip information and scheduling portal (one-call/ one-click) that people can access to use any transit service in the state. This portal can be made more robust with a universal fare payment system so that riders can transfer between agencies in a more convenient manner.

In addition to coordinating between agencies, the state can coordinate with private transportation entities like Amtrak and Greyhound and enter public-private partnerships to expand the reach of transit around the state. While several transit agencies offer longer-distance regional trips, none are part of the national intercity bus network and there is no statewide intercity bus information or plan that would allow users to travel from one region or city to another, or to points outside the state. There is little marketing and no branding of intercity feeders by ODOT or transit agencies. One operator, Delta Transit, is a Greyhound agent and advertises that it



provides feeder service to its Greyhound stop.

The state can play a major role in providing trainings for transit agencies. OMPT is responsible for the administration of both local and federal transit funding programs. Their responsibility to the network of transit agencies, and their funding includes training around program requirements such as drug and alcohol programs; civil rights; and maintenance and TAM Plans. Beyond compliance, agencies face many common issues, from local funding challenges and use of technology. OTA offers a forum for agencies to gather and discuss ideas. Agencies would benefit from more focused ODOT-funded opportunities to share best practices and exchange ideas. For agencies in areas far from Oklahoma City, supplementing statewide in-person training with regional in-person meetings, as well as webinars, can make them more accessible to both management staff and drivers across the state. Providing training on professional development and succession planning can also help ensure staff retention and the longevity of these transit agencies.

Opportunities Created by Improving Transit

Economic Development

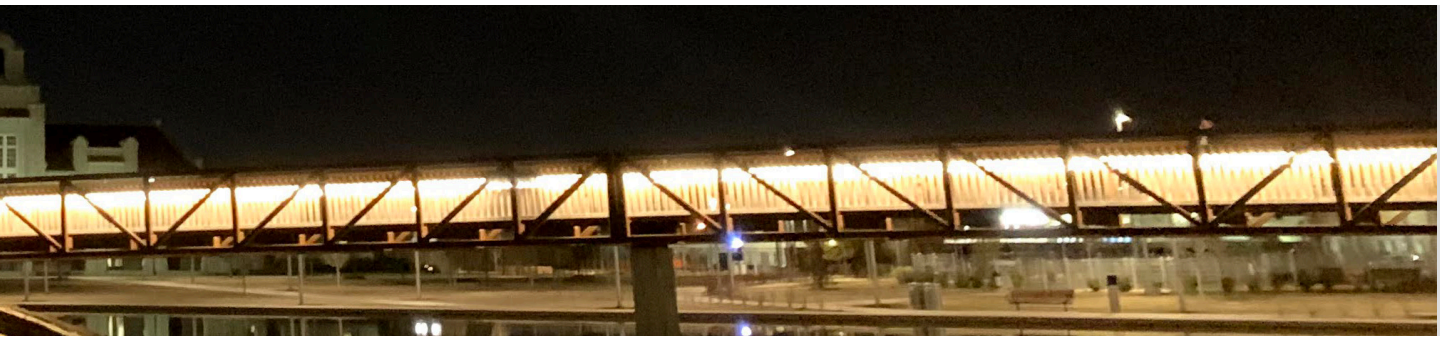
Transit agencies play a critical role in connecting people to their existing jobs as well as connecting them to new employment opportunities. This expands economic opportunity for Oklahoma's residents, and helps ensure that employers can fill positions from a large market of potential employees.

There are efforts at the state and local levels to make Oklahoma competitive with other states, which includes attracting new jobs to the state. When a major employer picks a location to open an office or facility, transportation for workers is an important consideration since employers want to ensure that they can hire workers who can get to their site. Large companies are giving increased consideration to the presence of public transit when they evaluate cities to relocate or expand, such as Amazon's requirement that transit served the site of their "HQ2" secondary headquarters. Making transit more robust presents an opportunity to make areas all over the state more attractive to prospective employers.

People must often travel farther than the town boundaries they reside in to access economic opportunities. Transit services that connect people to jobs regionally are currently lacking since many transit agencies that span the county or multiple counties are stretched thin with other trip purposes, such as medical appointments. Fare structures that charge by the mile also make these long-distance trips expensive and often cost prohibitive for riders, especially for fares that are not subsidized. Better coordination between agencies and more funding all around can help transit agencies expand their regional job access.

Quality of Life and Healthcare

The availability and quality of public transit in Oklahoma directly impacts people's quality of life and access to health services, especially for vulnerable communities. For residents without a car (or with one vehicle),low-income residents, residents



with disabilities, or older adults, access to transit is especially crucial for living independently.

Oklahoma has an aging population: between 2010 and 2017, the population 65 years of age or older increased by 13%, more than triple the growth rate of the general population (3.9%).[21] Many stakeholders have identified the ability of older adults (65+) to age in place as a high priority, so there are opportunities to expand collaborative efforts between transit agencies and health agencies for initiatives that improve livable communities. Some transit agencies currently partner with nursing homes and assisted living centers to provide group trips to other local facilities.

Many transit agencies require advanced reservations of 24 hours or more for transit rides, which is a barrier to spontaneous travel. These spontaneous trips can improve the quality of life while aging in place and can include a trip to visit friends, a last-minute medical appointment, or a trip to the grocery store or restaurant. Updating policies to allow on-demand transit trips, and potentially adding capacity to the transit system, would enhance overall wellbeing.

A major proportion of transit trips in Oklahoma, especially in rural areas, is to medical services and there is a need for reliable and affordable access to medical appointments. Though many transit agencies do connect people to local hospitals and clinics, most medical specialists are in Oklahoma City and Tulsa. Veterans' health facilities are also often farther than the typical health clinic, which introduces another gap in transit services. Increased transit services that serve longer-distance regional trips, plus better coordination between transit, health, and veteran agencies, can help better connect people to these crucial services.

Mobility for All

When communities fully invest in transit, it can meet the needs of those who rely on it most while also attracting riders who want to use a convenient and compelling transit service. Both urban and rural communities have populations who rely on transit, which can include older adults, veterans, people with disabilities, people without cars, and students. Improving transit allows these populations to access quality healthcare and specialists, employment opportunities, veteran services, supermarkets, and other centers of activity. Connecting Oklahomans to their destinations in a safe, accessible, and affordable way also allows elderly residents to age in place and sustains communities of all ages and abilities in both urban and rural areas.

At the same time, improving transit also gives Oklahomans more transportation choices, offering a compelling alternative to driving that can attract riders with other options. Providing convenient, reliable, and safe public transit that is competitive with other travel modes can reduce car dependency, increase transit ridership, and ensure that all Oklahomans can travel where they need or want to go.

21 2010 U.S. Census Summary File, 2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates


drive
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5 Best Practices and Peer Review

Research was conducted on specific peer states and national best practices that could serve as resources moving forward. The peer review assists in the assessment of how Oklahoma's transit program compares with those in similar states, while the best practices provide additional examples on how other states have approached certain policies, programs, and issues that can be explored by Oklahoma.

This chapter presents the results of this research and includes the following components:

- **Peer state considerations -** Describes the process for selecting five states that served as peers for the review.
- **Peer state review -** Highlights key aspects from the review, and provides an overall summary of how each administers transit funding, for the following states: Arizona, Iowa, Kansas, Ohio, and Oregon.
- **National best practices -** Provides specific examples beyond the five peer states, particularly on themes identified by the Steering Committee and through local stakeholder interviews.

The project team's knowledge of national best practices served as the initial foundation for the research, with additional information obtained through:

- Interviews with staff from the five peer states.
- SMPs and other resources posted on the peer state websites.
- Best practices and other information available through national technical assistance centers.

PEER STATE CONSIDERATIONS AND SELECTION

Consideration for the selection of states to serve as peer reviews began with those that compare to Oklahoma's population and density. Figure 5-1 provides this comparison to the states with similar demographics, along with the number of transit systems that operate in the state, and federal and state transit funding amounts.

Figure 5-1 Potential Peer States Based on Population and Density

			Number of Transit Systems[2]								
State	Population	Density[1]	Total	Urban	Small Urban	Rural	Tribal[3]	FY 2018 Section 5307 Funding	FY 2018 Section 5311 Funding	Total State Transit Funding	FTA Tribal Transit Funding[4]
Connecticut	3,565,287	735.9	22	15	2	4	1	$102,161,487	$3,119,678	$632,110,145	$ 335,068
Kentucky	4,467,673	112.4	32	5	4	23	0	$26,209,174	$17,771,944	$1,702,686	$ -
Louisiana	4,648,794	106.7	49	4	8	37	0	$36,868,627	$12,131,395	$4,955,000	$ -
Missouri	6,137,428	89.3	37	6	6	24	1	$49,656,528	$18,683,157	$2,074,625	$ -
Minnesota	5,639,632	70.8	49	6	7	30	6	$65,084,051	$16,465,890	$448,811,000	$2,017,562
Arizona	7,278,717	64.1	51	6	4	30	11	$79,601,984	$12,511,753	$11,725,113	$2,519,522
Mississippi	2,976,149	63.4	23	0	3	19	1	$8,570,711	$14,930,104	$1,600,000	$715,733
Arkansas	3,017,804	58	17	3	5	9	0	$13,455,423	$12,897,605	$3,532,228	$ -
Oklahoma	**3,956,971**	**57.6**	**37**	**2**	**3**	**20**	**12**	**$18,723,775**	**$15,613,998**	**$5,750,000**	**$7,612,429**
Iowa	3,155,070	56.5	35	12	7	16	0	$21,235,750	$12,970,543	$15,842,891	$ -
Colorado	5,758,736	55.5	43	3	3	36	1	$79,999,233	$11,954,931	$25,000,000	$130,621
Oregon	4,217,737	43.9	59	4	7	43	5	$59,136,389	$12,870,592	$32,033,345	$770,998
Utah	3,205,958	39	9	1	2	5	1	$51,083,855	$6,662,790	$ -	$136,545
Kansas	2,913,314	35.6	157	2	4	150	1	$17,947,938	$11,736,556	$11,000,000	$117,751
New Mexico	2,096,829	17.3	36	2	4	21	9	$24,709,449	$10,925,909	$5,700,000	$655,083

Source: American Association of State and Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO) Survey of State Funding for Public Transportation.

[1] Information calculated using information from https://statesymbolsusa.org/symbol-official-item/national-us/uncategorized/states-size

[2] Information found in AASHTO Survey of State Funding for Public Transportation.

[3] Number of Tribal entities receiving funding under the FTA section 5311(c) Tribal Transit formula funding program for 2019.

[4] FY 2018 formula funding apportionment under the FTA section 5311(c) Tribal Transit program.

States Selected for Peer Review

A typology of state roles regarding implementation of rural, regional, intercity, and small urban transit services would likely include three general classifications:

- **"Top-down":** States that have done state-level analyses and implemented policy changes, funding formulas, or initiatives to direct or mandate local program implementation to address transit needs identified at the state level regarding transit service levels, types, and coverage. Often these policy initiatives are linked to state funding and may be enabled or directed by state legislation. The state may even be an operator of transit services, either directly or through contracts. In these programs, the initiative comes from the state transit program to a large extent, and local participation may be required.
- **"Bottom-Up":** States that have identified a need for transit service improvement or development, and are providing encouragement and support for local efforts, for example by providing technical assistance, support for inputs (training, shared or common technology, joint procurement), funding for feasibility studies or planning, funding for transition costs, or incentive funding for implementation of particular types of services, organizational changes, etc. The initiative is seen to be local, but the state's role is based on a policy vision and provision of enhanced support to the local implementation. Local participation is largely voluntary.
- **"Permissive/compliance-oriented":** State transit programs that have not identified any particular vision or policy regarding the need or benefit of transit services, and the primary focus is on offering federal transit funds to eligible applicants through the federal program structure and ensuring compliance with state and federal requirements rather than defining transit needs and addressing them in any specific way. The outcome of the program is up to the subrecipients.

For the most part, no state fits any one of the three models completely. A state may be permissive with one program, and prescriptive with another. Also, it should be noted that all states must conduct oversight to ensure federal program compliance, so all three models do get involved in compliance. The differences are the degree to which the state program goes beyond that role. There are examples of states that have combinations of approaches, such as Kansas which has legislatively mandated rural regional transit organizations but is incentivizing rural regional services as one potential strategy that may be implemented by regional organizations. Often the intercity program is the first place where a direct state role in designing services and contracting for them takes place.

The shift from a "permissive/compliance-oriented" program to one of the other two types is often linked to a change in the political environment—transit needs are recognized in the political sphere, the legislature contemplates more funding, but there is a need to identify and agree on what the funding should do, how much is needed—leading to a statewide study of some sort. The change in roles then follows as the result adds state funding to the overall program, with some sort of legislatively defined purpose, eligibility, allocation, and performance standards. Often the study and the funding program are two sides of the same coin—more transit funding is not possible unless there is an agreed upon plan for its distribution and usage.

Based on a review of population, population density, number of transit systems, FTA funding, Arizona, Iowa, Kansas, Ohio, and Oregon were identified for the peer review. In terms of the typology of state programs, Oregon and Ohio are similar to the top-down model, while Arizona, Kansas and Iowa are more similar to mixed models. The location of a state in a particular FTA Region was not considered as a factor and based on the demographics and numbers of transit systems none of the selected states were from FTA Region 6.

While a variety of information was obtained through the peer reviews, the overall focus was on these areas:

- Governance and funding:
  - Policy-making structures (boards, commissions, advisory groups)
  - State funding programs
  - Funding allocations
  - Planning process
  - Reporting and performance assessment
  - Compliance and oversight
  - Training and technical assistance
- Capital needs:
  - Monitoring and responding to the capital needs of local transit agencies
  - TAM plans
  - Statewide procurement procedures
  - Management of state and federal funding to address capital needs
  - Regionalization of operating facilities, or other actions designed to maintain the state's transit assets
- Mobility management and coordination:
  - Statewide mobility management programs
  - Local/regional Mobility Managers
  - Coordination strategies as basis for funding
  - One-call/one-click information centers and other efforts to improve access to information on mobility options
  - Regional coordination strategies
  - State agency level coordination councils
  - Implementation of federal coordinated planning processes and other state efforts to enhance and support improved coordination of human service and public transit

- Support for intercity bus and regional services:
  - State utilization of FTA section 5311(f) to maintain connections between rural areas and urban centers
  - Intercity bus consultation and planning process
  - Use of in-kind match to support intercity bus services
  - Development of state-branding of intercity and regional services
  - Efforts for enhanced connectivity of intercity and regional services with other travel modes
  - Use of state match for intercity and regional services
- Technology:
  - States that have developed models of technology support for transit operators
  - Funding to support technology improvements and upgrades
  - Statewide technology procurements
  - Use of GTFS data and user information systems
- Tribal transit:
  - Involvement and coordination with transit services provided by tribal entities
  - Relationship with FTA Tribal Transit programs

PEER STATE REVIEW KEY TAKEAWAYS

This section presents summary results from the peer reviews, calling out key aspects of each state's program. Complete documentation of the programs in these states is provided in Appendix E. These reviews provided the opportunity to obtain information on state-level legislation and policy decisions that impact the administration of federal and state funding programs.

Arizona Department of Transportation

Arizona tribal transit: ADOT has a strong working relationship with its tribal communities with the state emphasizing the needs of tribal communities through funding, technical assistance, and respect for the tribal sovereignty. The tribal communities in Arizona are direct recipients for FTA Tribal Transit grant funds, however many of these communities compete for 5311 and 5310 funding. To assist these communities, the Multimodal Planning Division (MPD) has two Tribal Liaisons both of which are members of tribes within Arizona. These liaisons assist tribes with starting, sustaining, and improving transit services in their communities as well as navigating the applicable state and federal regulations and guidelines attached to transit funding. This has resulted in significant success in improving mobility for tribal communities across Arizona.

Mobility management: In addition to the regional coordinated planning efforts, ADOT works with state COGs and MPOs in administering mobility management functions. There are 10 Mobility Managers in the state (nine funded by ADOT and one funded by the city of Phoenix).The Arizona approach to mobility management is innovative, customer-driven, and focused on managing and delivering coordinated transportation services. Helping customers includes assistance to older adults, people with disabilities and individuals with low incomes to gain mobility and get to where they need to go. The 10 Mobility Managers in the state work closely with the COGs, MPOs and ADOT to facilitate these efforts tailored to each individual region in the state.

Support for intercity service: ADOT awards 15% of its 5311 formula funds to intercity service per FTA guidelines. As a result, the state has eight feeder services run primarily by rural operators that connect to the national network of intercity services (primarily Greyhound services along I-40 and I-10).

Regional model for planning and support: ADOT relies heavily on COGs and MPOs for planning, technical assistance, and transit support. As entities governed by local elected officials, each COG employs full-time planning staff to prepare and implement a comprehensive transportation work program. COGs perform a variety of transportation services for their constituent partners, which may include local tribes. These services consist of providing technical assistance and training to support communities and transit agencies in applying for state and federal transportation grants, conducting data collection and projections, developing a TIP, implementing human services transportation and public transit planning and coordination, and providing a forum for public input and review. Overall, the COGs serve as an intermediary between local and regional stakeholders and state and federal transportation agencies.

Iowa Department of Transportation - Public Transit Bureau

Legislated coordination of publicly-funded passenger transportation services: The state of Iowa has long emphasized the need for coordination of publicly-funded passenger transportation services to maximize the transportation benefits that can be achieved with limited resources. State law requires all agencies providing or purchasing publicly-funded passenger transportation services to coordinate such services and funding through urban or regional transit systems designated by local officials in accordance with Chapter 324A of the Code of Iowa. Chapter 324A divided the state's 99 counties into 16 multi-county public transit regions, and provided that a single agency should be designated by the counties within each region to be responsible for the provision of all transit services in the region not performed by an urban transit system. Each designated transit system is thus responsible for coordination of all publicly funded passenger transportation, thereby making all transit systems eligible for funding under FTA section 5310.

Consolidated transit funding application: Iowa's Consolidated Transit Funding Application serves as the single multi-part application for funding by subrecipient transit systems under Iowa's statewide FTA section 5310, FTA section 5311, FTA section 5339, and Congestion Mitigation/Air Quality Program (CMAQ) grants. Iowa's Consolidated Transit Funding Application is used by all transit agencies to apply for State Transit Assistance (STA) program funding. Funds for public transit projects are allocated among Iowa's regional and small urban transit systems through a performance-based formula, which uses the statistics from the last fiscal year. The Iowa DOT Public Transit Bureau determines which type of funds each transit system receives, based on the nature of the projects programmed. FTA section 5310 funds are targeted to systems that purchase services from sub-providers, and the FTA section 5311 funds are targeted first to systems that provide their services directly.

Iowa Transportation Coordination Council: In 1976 the Iowa Legislature adopted the first-in-the-nation coordination law, with a compliance review process added to the legislation in 1984. Subsequently the Iowa Transportation Coordination Council (ITCC) was created in 1992, with original members including the Iowa Department of Transportation, the Iowa Department of Human Services, and the Iowa Department of Elder Affairs. The ITCC mission is to provide statewide leadership on transportation coordination to improve the mobility of Iowans. The ITCC was later expanded, and now includes membership from statewide organizations, state departments, and federal groups. The ITCC's membership now consists of many state level agencies and non-profit groups all with an interest in coordination of transportation in Iowa.

Chaired by the Public Transit Bureau, the ITCC meets bi-monthly and discusses such issues as mobility management, accessibility of transportation in Iowa, STA Special Project Proposal applications pertaining to coordination, and the encouragement of state and local agencies' involvement in the passenger transportation planning process.

Kansas Department of Transportation - Office of Public Transportation

Kansas Coordinated District Council: The State Legislature established 10 Coordinated Transit Districts (CTD), which serve as the administrative structure across the state for the purpose of providing financial and administrative assistance to transportation systems. To receive state and/or federal transit funds, recipients are required to become a part of a CTD. The Kansas Coordinated Transit District Council (KCTDC) is an advisory group to the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) Division of Planning and is comprised of a representative of all 10 CTDs. This group helps KDOT review all applicable grant applications as well as assisting in regional coordination and mobility management functions.

State funding support: Kansas has a state transit funding program (Access Innovation Collaboration Program) designed to give recipients more flexibility and innovative approaches than may be possible with FTA grant programs only. The goal is to broaden the range of possible projects with state funding. The program includes bus replacement, rehab, and purchase; bus related equipment; bus facilities; pilot programs; and limited operations. Eligible applicants include local governments, transit agencies, tribal nations, and non-profit agencies. The state allows flexibility in the use of FTA section 5310 funds that is compliant with FTA regulations and guidelines but more expansive than what is currently administered in Oklahoma. This includes up to $10,000 for operations for systems with up to 10 vehicles and $20,000 for systems with more than 10 vehicles. KDOT has a group insurance pool available to all subrecipients if desired which helps lower the cost of insurance through economies of scale.

Mobility management: Kansas is implementing a new statewide mobility management system which has a Mobility Manager in each CTD. Each CTD must agree to support a Mobility Manager, and an agency in that CTD must offer to be the Mobility Manager's host agency before KDOT will consider placement. Funding for the first year of a CTD Mobility Manager is covered at 100% (KDOT covers the local match for the first year). Thereafter, the Mobility Manager is responsible for ensuring that there are enough local funds to match for year two, and every year thereafter. KDOT plans for a board of directors to be created and comprised of those member jurisdictions that financially back the Mobility Manager for their region. This board will be responsible for developing the position description, scope of work, budget (which must be approved by KDOT annually), and ongoing guidance for the Mobility Manager.

Ohio Department of Transportation - Office of Transit

Supporting local, regional and statewide mobility management: The purpose of the Ohio Mobility Management Program is to increase access to mobility for Ohioans by increasing understanding and awareness of transportation needs, coordination of transportation options to meet needs, and building sustainable and healthy communities by integrating transportation into planning and programs. The program supports 28 local and regional Mobility Managers, primarily funded through the FTA section 5310 program. Mobility managers are housed within different agencies that have taken the lead on coordination efforts, and are a mix of transit systems, planning agencies, and human service providers. The program is overseen by a Statewide Mobility Coordinator position located in the Office of Transit that was created in 2017. This position conducts quarterly in-person meetings with local and regional Mobility Managers, provides resources to enhance and support improved coordination of human service and public transit, and facilitates a Mobility Manager training program.

Implementing the Ohio Transit Partnership Program (OTP2): Ohio Department of Transportation instituted this program to provide state funds to rural and urban transit systems, beginning in FY 2020. The purpose of OTP2 is to facilitate the most efficient and effective use of state funds in the provision of public transit services, while meeting transit system needs, improving economic conditions, and providing a quality-of-life environment for the state of Ohio. OTP2 is a discretionary program, with projects selected on a competitive basis between two tiers. One focuses on preservation and maintaining a sound transit network in Ohio, and the other is focused on innovation in the areas of regionalization, coordination, technology, service expansion, workforce initiatives, and healthcare initiatives.

Support for intercity and regional services: Ohio has long used the FTA section 5311(f) program to support the provision of connected intercity bus service linking rural Ohio with the national intercity bus network. The state provides its FTA section 5311(f) funding as a grant to a private non-profit organization, the Hocking-Athens-Perry Community Action Program (HAPCAP), that manages the FTA section 5311(f) program for the state. HAPCAP has led the development of a statewide brand for the FTA section 5311(f) services, GoBus. There is a GoBus website, https://ridegobus.com/, a staffed information/service assistance desk, and a GoBus ticketing system. The buses of both contracted carriers are fully wrapped with the GoBus branding.

Maximizing the use of FTA section 5311 program funding: To maximize use of the FTA section 5311 program for operations, the Office of Transit funds vehicle replacement and expansion vehicles eligible for that program through the FTA section 5339 program. The selection process for funding is focused on preservation rather than expansion, with the program goal and the desire to ensure that a state of good repair (SGR) is maintained for fleets and capital assets. Funding is awarded to ensure statewide distribution.

Oregon Department of Transportation – Rail and Public Transit Division

Transit Program Organization: The Oregon program staff believes that their organizational structure has improved their relationship with operators across the state, stakeholders, and policymakers (including the legislature). Aspects of the transit program include:

- Placing the primary communication and technical support role on Regional Transit Coordinators (RTCs), one for each region. These staff members are residents in their region.
- Concentrating policy, planning, oversight, and administration staff at headquarters.
- Integration with other elements of Oregon Department of Transportation, through the location of the RTCs in region, and the participation with other offices at headquarters.

Public Transit Advisory Council (PTAC): The PTAC was created by the Oregon Transportation Commission to be advisory to them and to the division staff. The council:

- Has representation from both large and small transit agencies.
- Has representation from other key state agencies, including Oregon Health Authority.
- Operates with the dual role of providing policy direction on current needs and funding.
- Provides strategic direction and tactical guidance to Oregon's public transit program, documenting progress toward that vision.
- Focuses on implementing the *Oregon State Public Transportation Plan*.

FTA section 5310: Key role of FTA section 5310 programs as part of an integrated public transit program include:

- Allowable use of funds for other than vehicle capital.
- Most FTA section 5310 funding used for purchase of service from public transit or consolidated providers.
- Major support for Mobility Management.
- Vehicle capital largely from other programs.
- Transit planning integration through Coordinated Plans and Transit Development Plans (TDPs).

Regional and intercity transit network: State role in identifying and creating a statewide transit network to address regional and intercity connectivity needs through the Transit Network Program.

- Use of part of the FTA section 5311(f) funding for state-directed and branded contracted services to fill gaps in the unsubsidized intercity bus and Amtrak network.
- Use of part of the FTA section 5311(f) funding for discretionary projects developed by local public and private non-transit agencies—state project selection based on unmet needs analysis.
- Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund (STIF) funding for additional regional services addressing identified needs not eligible for FTA section 5311(f).
- Tools for analysis of unmet needs developed and maintained by state—Transit Network Explorer Tool (TNExT).

Transit planning: A combination of funding support, technical assistance, and requirements to encourage local transit plans as a basis for funding and service implementation/expansion include:

- Statewide transit plan to involve the public and determine the vision.
- Support for local plans—TDPs, Coordination Plans.

Oregon Department of Transportation - Rail and Public Transit Division

Continued

- Integration of planning into programs—Use of TDPs and local coordination plans as a requirement for proposed service expansion in the STIF program.
- Requirement for STIF plan to obtain state funds for expansion—focus on legislative policy goals including mobility for low-income households.
- State support for planning tools-TDP Manual and training, TNExT access analysis tool, GTFS data created and maintained for every system, statewide Remix license.
- Public support to meet needs demonstrated to legislators through planning process.

BEST PRACTICES

Beyond the five states that served as primary peers, best practices and examples from other states that could serve as appropriate resources were also identified and are detailed in this section. These practices were consistent with major themes identified through the stakeholder interviews and involve: FTA section 5310 program administration and oversight; coordination and overlapping service areas; NEMT; lack of funding for new vehicles; training and technical assistance; technology; need for expanded transportation services; and creative funding.

Similar to the state peer reviews, the best practices highlight specific examples where policy decisions were made that impact the administration of federal and state funding programs, along with specific actions at the state level that support local transit agencies and encourage improved mobility.

FTA Section 5310 Program Administration and Oversight

Stakeholders at the local and regional levels reported issues when the 5310 program was administered by DHS. The transition of the FTA section 5310 program to the OMPT provides a potential opportunity to revisit the oversight of this program, following best practices from other states.

Washington State Department of Transportation

Consolidated Grant Program

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) Public Transportation Division administers federal and state public and specialized transportation grant programs. WSDOT instituted its Consolidated Grant Program approach in 2005 to reduce the grant application burden on both local applicants and state staff.

FTA section 5310 program funds are allocated through the Consolidated Grant Program, that overall includes these five sources:

1. FTA section 5310 Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities
2. FTA section 5311 Formula Grants for Rural Areas
3. Section 5339(a) Grants for Buses and Bus Facilities Formula Program
4. Paratransit/Special Needs Grant Program
5. Rural Mobility Grant Program

To be eligible for funding through the Consolidated Grant Program, a project must be included in a regional Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan.

Although FTA only requires this for FTA section 5310, WSDOT extends this requirement to all funding programs included in the Consolidated Grant Program. Regional Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plans are prepared and updated by the seventeen Regional Public Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPOs) designated across the state.

Following WSDOT's internal screening review and any revisions submitted by applicants, the revised, eligible applications are evaluated and ranked/scored for merit by an external review panel. WSDOT convenes an external review panel with expertise in such areas as rural transit, tribal transit, special needs transportation, asset management, funding, and planning to review and rank each project application.

In addition to (and prior to) the external review panel evaluation, each RTPO evaluates the applications for projects that would serve their region and are included in their Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan. Applications for projects that are not included in a Coordination Plan are disqualified from further consideration.

The panel scoring is combined with the RTPO grading for each application to determine a final score. WSDOT then ranks all project applications across the state. By this stage of the process, WSDOT knows how much money will be available in the state funded programs and thus how big the pots of money are to be distributed. WSDOT staff then go through the prioritized list and assign each project to the appropriate grant funding based on applicant, project type and the eligibility parameters for each grant source.

More information on WSDOT's administration of FTA section 5310 and other federal and state funding programs, along with additional details on the Consolidated Grant program, is available at: https://www.wsdot.wa.gov/transit/grants/home.

Maryland Department of Transportation / Maryland Transit Administration

FTA section 5310 Program Manual

The Maryland Department of Transportation Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) is the direct recipient of FTA Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program (FTA section 5310) funds, and through the Office of Local Transit Support (OLTS) administers this program along with other federal and state transit funding.

The OLTS developed a FTA section 5310 program Manual that provides comprehensive guidance on federal and state rules and regulations related to the program. This manual is geared for those subrecipients of FTA section 5310 funds in Maryland who do not also receive other FTA funding through MTA. In most cases these subrecipients are affiliated with human service programs rather than public transit programs, and therefore are not as knowledgeable of federal requirements as are transit agencies.

The OLTS has a strong partnership with the Transportation Association of Maryland (TAM), the state's transit association. Through this partnership TAM hosts a page on their website that provides specific resources, including the FTA section 5310 program manual. This manual, along with program applications and others guides, is available at: www.taminc.org/office-of-local-transit-support.

Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation

FTA section 5310 Program Compliance

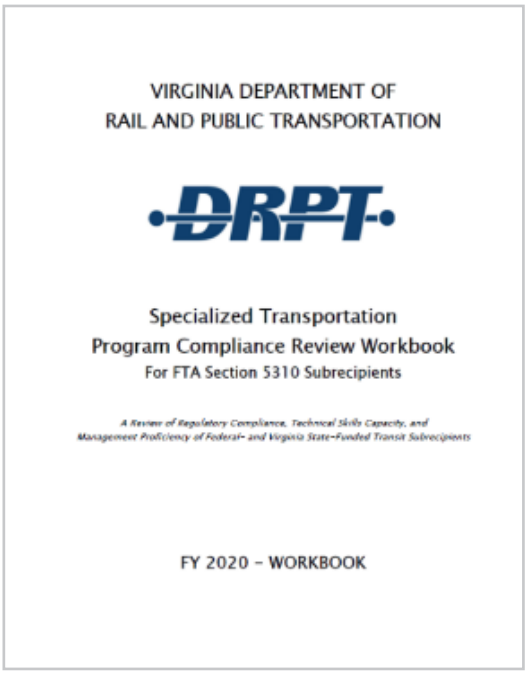
One of the federal programs administered by the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) is the FTA section 5310 program. As part of the oversight of the program DRPT conducts periodic oversight reviews of each organization that receives FTA section 5310 funding. The compliance review process provides DRPT with the opportunity to ensure that:

- Grantees that serve as subrecipients of the FTA section 5310 program funded programs are managing these programs in accordance with the grant application, grant agreement and all applicable laws and regulations using sound management practices.
- Subrecipients have the legal, financial and technical capacity to carry out the intended use of these federal and/or state funds.

The DRPT compliance review process begins by:

- Contacting the subrecipient by phone to scheduling the compliance review, approximately six weeks prior to an on-site visit.
- Following up with an e-mail that confirms the site visit date, explains the purpose of the on-site visit, outlines the day's agenda and provides instructions on how to download the Compliance Review Workbook that needs to be completed in advance of the site visit.

FTA section 5310 program subrecipients Grantees are asked to complete their portion of the Compliance Review Workbook and return it two weeks before the on-site review. They are also asked to send additional information (e.g., copies of written procedures) and other materials requested in the workbook, and then e-mail in advance of the site visit and have other information/material available for review during the on-site visit.



Desk reviews are then conducted using the documentation that a subrecipient has provided. This offers a snapshot of their technical capacity and helps to identify specific items that need to be addressed while conducting the scheduled on-site visit.

The purpose of the site visit is to verify data from the desk review, to obtain information not available during the desk review or provided in advance, and to sample grantee records. For section 5310 subrecipients this portion of the compliance review typically requires half a day, though some program may take a full day.

The goal is to have all grantees fully in compliance with FTA requirements. During the site visits the review team works with subrecipients to bring them into compliance, as some issues could be corrected on the spot. If the subrecipient needs additional corrective actions, these are outlined in the draft compliance report with specific timeframes for corrective actions.

COORDINATION AND MOBILITY MANAGEMENT

Local stakeholders expressed the need for improved coordination between transit agencies and to reduce duplication when present, and the Oklahoma legislature has noted the direction for mobility management efforts funded by FTA section 5310 dollars. States across the country have implemented a variety of practices to support improved coordination at the local, regional, and statewide levels through mobility management and other coordination activities.

Nebraska Department of Transportation

Statewide Mobility Management

Nebraska Public Transit is a program administered by the Nebraska Department of Transportation (NDOT). NDOT's Local Assistance Division is responsible for coordinating public transit activities in Nebraska's 93 counties and provides technical assistance as requested. NDOT receives money from FTA and state transportation funds to fulfill requirements set forth by legislation that designates the department as the principal state agency responsible for coordinating public transit activities in the state.

In 2015, NDOT initiated a Statewide Mobility Management Project, with the goal of improving travel options for residents and visitors of the state. Through Phase 1, a report was produced that identified regional centers across the state that were transportation destinations for medical services, shopping, and employment. During this phase market needs were also analyzed, and concepts were developed to fill gaps in service. In Phase 2, the state was organized into six regions based on the regional centers identified in Phase 1. Statewide and Regional Coordinating Committees were established to identify additional gaps and needs. Focusing in each region, coordination strategies were developed based on leveraging existing service to improve access, creating system efficiencies to reduce redundant service and expanding transportation access to areas without service.

In 2019, a Statewide Mobility Manager position was put in place to lead and assist with mobility management projects across the state. This position reviews strategies from each region, updates as appropriate, and plans for implementation that works for each region.

The statewide mobility management program is a component of the partnership project between NDOT and the University of Nebraska that was developed to assist with improving and promoting public transit across Nebraska. More information on Nebraska's Statewide Mobility Management Program can be found at: https://nebraskatransit.com/index.php/mobility-management/.

Michigan

Mobility Management and Coordination

In Michigan there are a variety of efforts to improve the coordination of transportation services. These include:

- Implementing local and regional Mobility Managers who support efforts to coordinate services and expand mobility. The Michigan DOT Office of Passenger Transportation annual application process provides funding to support mobility management projects through FTA sections 5310 and 5311 programs.
- Creating a Michigan Mobility Managers Google Group, whose stated purpose is to provide education and support to expand mobility options for their communities. This group meets quarterly through conference calls to share information and to discuss training and other opportunities.
- Conducting a statewide transit study that resulted in 10 regional coordinated mobility plans that served as the basis for regional coordination efforts and met the FTA coordinated planning requirements for the FTA section 5310 program.
- Creating the Michigan Transportation Connection (MTC) through the Michigan Public Transportation Association. MTC is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization transportation brokerage, delivering NEMT and other specialized transportation services in some parts of the state. The transportation networking companies (TNC) model utilizes existing taxpayer funded infrastructure, such as the United Way's 2-1-1 Call Centers; Public Transit Mobility Managers; and Area Agencies on Aging Call Centers to serve as Mobility Management Call Centers. More information is available at: https://www.mitransit.org/index.html.

NON-EMERGENCY MEDICAL TRANSPORTATION

Through the stakeholder interview process local transit systems noted the increased competition for LogistiCare NEMT trips. NEMT services help support many FTA section 5310 and FTA section 5311 subrecipients in the state, and the competition is leading to more NEMT being contracted to transportation providers who are operating services at a less expensive rate—but who do not meet FTA and other safety requirements. This situation highlights concerns that arise when FTA section 5310/5311 subrecipients rely on these funds as their only source of local match.

Although each state manages NEMT services differently, changes to the administration of NEMT services usually take place at the state agency level and sometimes as a result of legislation at the state level or significant coordination between different state agencies, practices from other states can be considered.

Arkansas Department of Human Services

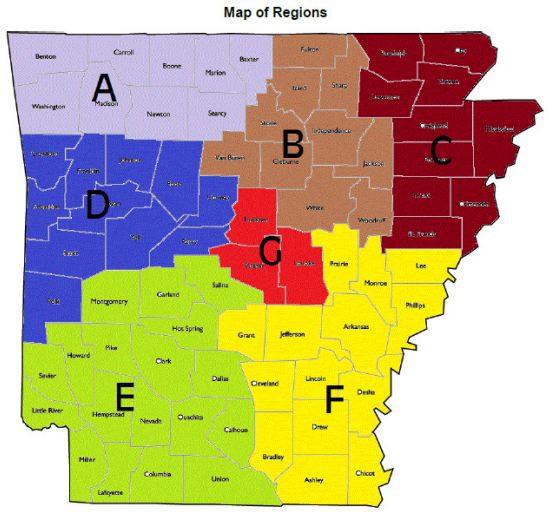
NEMT Services Program

Transit systems in Arkansas can compete for NEMT contracts and help to ensure there is an appropriate focus on safety and driver training.

The Arkansas Department of Human Services (DHS) administers NEMT services for the state. DHS issues an Invitation for Bid (IFB) to obtain pricing and a contract for these services, that would be provided through a single transportation broker for each pre-established NEMT region (pictured to the right).

Contract terms for the most recent IFB are for one year, and upon mutual agreement by the selected provider and DHS the contract may be renewed on a year-to-year basis, for up to six additional one-year terms.

The IFB states that the highest emphasis will be placed on safety of passengers. To this end the IFB requires transit agencies to have at least five years of experience in operating NEMT services and ensure that all their drivers are in an appropriate United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) drug and alcohol testing program, or a non-USDOT drug and alcohol testing program which mirrors the USDOT requirements. The



IFB also includes a variety of requirements for prescribed criminal and background checks, defensive driving, and CPR and other training, all ones that public transit operators meet and exceed.

With support from the Arkansas Transit Association (ATA), several rural public transit systems have been successful with their bids and operate NEMT services. Specifically, ATA has provided technical assistance with the writing and submission of the extensive proposal that is required in response to the IFB.

Vermont Public Transportation Association

Brokering Medicaid NEMT

The 10 transit agencies in Vermont had, for many years, been operating the Medicaid NEMT program in Vermont through the Department of Vermont Health Access (DVHA). These transit agencies managed the entire program: they accepted trip requests, approved trips and passenger eligibility, and provided trips, typically using an array of transit agencies. Volunteer drivers were often used to provide the Medicaid trips, and transit agencies and other providers were also used.

DVHA decided to change its model to a capitated brokerage. This new model required a broker to do the intake and eligibility functions that the transit agencies were already doing. Based on experiences in neighboring states, the transit agencies felt that the capitated model was not conducive to the use of public transit. Moreover, without Medicaid NEMT, the transit agencies would lose critical funding that would impact their services, much of which was access to health care.

The transit agencies, through the Vermont Public Transportation Association formed a consortium to submit a proposal to manage and operate the Medicaid NEMT brokerage. Their proposal was successful. The service has been in operation for three years.

ADMINISTRATION OF CAPITAL FUNDING

Local stakeholders expressed concerns with relying on vehicles beyond their useful life, and the lack of resources to acquire new ones. In addition to the peer states, other examples of effective TAM plans, procurement procedures, and management of state and federal funding to address these capital needs, can be considered.

Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation

TransAM

TransAM is the system the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) uses to track the asset inventories of the transit agencies across the commonwealth. The asset data is currently used to determine when replacement assets should be funded, as well as to forecast SGR needs of the transit agencies.

Subrecipients are responsible for updating the inventories when vehicles are received or sold, facilities are built or rehabbed. Beginning in FY 2020, DRPT is allocating capital funds by a scoring mechanism, and the prioritization of replacement assets is based on the data in TransAM. The TransAM requirements and process involve:

- **Assets:** Subrecipients must update all assets by February 1 and August 1 of each year. This process includes removing old assets and adding newly received assets to the inventory, as well as, updating condition codes and mileage.
- **Rolling stock:** The TransAM inventory includes all revenue vehicles that are purchased with state-controlled funding sources. Subrecipients need to include any vehicles that are being used to fulfill programmatic goals and that they intend to seek state funding to replace at the end of its useful life. Midlife overhauls are also tracked in TransAM.
- **Equipment:** Although the federal TAM Plan only requires inclusion of items or groups of items valued more than $50,000, DRPT requires that all service vehicles be entered into TransAM and updated as needed. Likewise, although the TAM Plan only requires including pieces of equipment that are more than $50,000 in value, any large individual assets (lifts, washes, etc.) must be entered in TransAM so the application to replace an asset can be evaluated as SGR need.
- **Facilities:** All transportation, transit or transfer centers, park-and-ride facilities, and transit malls if they have an enclosed structure (building) for passengers for items such as ticketing, information, restrooms, concessions, and telephones must be entered into TransAM.

Additional details on DRPT's TransAM system are available at: http://www.drpt.virginia.gov/media/2602/trans-am-entry-requirements-final-1.pdf

TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Local and regional stakeholders noted the need for assistance from the state level (i.e., ODOT or OTA) for a variety of topics, either through training opportunities or other resources.

Arkansas Department of Transportation

Rural Technical Assistance Program Administration by Arkansas Transit Association

The Arkansas Transit Association (ATA) administers RTAP for the state through a grant agreement with the Arkansas Department of Transportation (ARDOT). All RTAP funds received by Arkansas are passed to ATA through this agreement. The ATA Board of Directors serves in the advisory capacity for the RTAP funding.

RTAP funds support a full-time trainer employed by the association, and ATA notes that their award-winning training program is widely known as one of the most effective and innovative in the country. ATA provides public transit, paratransit, and community human services agencies with a wide range of passenger transportation trainings.

ATA's Training Program specializes in passenger transportation safety, and a variety of low-cost courses are conveniently offered to ATA members. Courses are adapted to each agency's specific needs, and ATA states that great care is taken to deliver updated and relevant material. A course listing is available at https://www.arkansastransit.com/training/course-descriptions/.

ATA's offices are in the Arkansas Public Transit Safety and Resource Center in North Little Rock. Built in 2002 with federal and state funding assistance, this training facility hosts trainings as well as a variety of meetings, workshops, and seminars.

ATA also co-sponsors an annual Public Transportation Conference in conjunction with ARDOT and FTA. In addition, ATA administers three Drug and Alcohol Testing Program Consortiums for employee testing and helps with policy development, training, and legal compliance. Other association benefits include a Workers' Compensation Self-Insured Trust Fund, and free traffic violation reports for public and non-profit members.

According to the latest national survey of RTAP programs conducted by the National Rural Technical Assistance Program (NRTAP), in 2020 53 percent of the states provided their RTAP programs in-house, with 27 percent completely outsourcing their program, and 20 percent using a combination model with some elements outsourced. Of the 21 states that outsource some or all their program management, six use their state transit associations, three use universities, and eleven use one or more private contractors.

California Association for Coordinated Transportation (CALACT)

CALACT is a statewide, non-profit organization that represents the interests of small, rural, and specialized transit agencies in California. CALACT is the largest state transit association in the United States, with over 300 members that include operators of small and large systems, planning and government agencies, social service agencies, and suppliers.

CALACT is under contract to the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) to implement RTAP in California. Through RTAP, CALACT provides technical and training materials produced by the National RTAP and supplements their program with California-specific technical assistance, management workshops, peer networking and scholarship assistance.

CALACT is a co-sponsor of the Transit and Paratransit Management Certificate Program, in partnership with the University of the Pacific Westgate Center for Leadership and Management Development. This certificate program is geared to the management and future managers of rural, small, and medium-sized transit agencies, human service organizations, or private operators.

More information on the training and technical assistance provided by CALACT is available at: https://www.calact.org

Illinois Rural Transit Assistance Center

The Rural Transit Assistance Center (RTAC) is a program of the Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs, housed at Western Illinois University. RTAC was created in 1990 and operates under an inter-agency agreement with the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT). The RTAC mission is to promote the safe and effective delivery of public transit in rural areas and more efficiently use public and private resources.

RTAC fulfills its mission through providing the Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP) for the state of Illinois. RTAC also serves as the clearinghouse for the Illinois Coordinating Committee on Transportation, created by legislation to encourage the coordination of public and private transportation services, with priority given toward services directed toward those populations who are currently not served or are underserved by existing public transit.

More information on the RTAC is available at: http://www.iira.org/rtac/.

North Carolina

Driver Training Standards

In addition to recommending to subrecipients that their staff be trained, a state may adopt a policy that requires subrecipients to ensure that their staff have taken training courses and are maintaining their expertise through continuing training. In 2011, the Public Transportation Division of the North Carolina DOT established a requirement for "Minimum Training Standards for Community and Human Service Transportation Vehicle Operators". The following types of training are required annually and upon hire:

- Defensive driving (certified program or equivalent)
- Americans with Disabilities Act—training to 'proficiency' (expert performance)
  - Sensitivity training
  - Passenger assistance
  - Wheelchair handling
  - Wheelchair securement (passenger and mobility aid)
  - Wheelchair lift inspection
  - Wheelchair lift operation (normal and emergency)
- Bloodborne pathogens—OSHA Standard
- Emergency procedures
  - Communication and notification procedures
  - Accident/incident reporting procedures
  - Passenger handling procedures
  - Vehicle and facility evacuation procedures
  - Driver and passenger security training
  - Emergency evacuation procedures and training
  - Emergency equipment usage
    - First aid
    - Bloodborne pathogens kit
    - Emergency triangles
    - Fire extinguishers

This list is prescriptive but is not intended to limit training beyond these topics. Subrecipients are required to keep records of training received by staff in their personnel files, and samples of training records are reviewed as part of the subrecipient compliance monitoring process.

As a result of these training requirements, the state's NEMT program agreed to accept the public transit program's subrecipients as meeting the NEMT training requirements, facilitating their ability to provide client trips under that program.

A state program that requires certain kinds of training also needs to develop and maintain the provision of appropriate training courses and materials to allow the standards to be met, which may necessitate the development of training and technical assistance staff as part of the state program.

South Carolina Department of Transportation

Transit Subrecipient Portal

The South Carolina DOT Office of Public Transit is responsible for the administration and oversight of federal and state programs that support public transit in South Carolina. RTAP noted that the state program and local operators have gone through three state management program reviews with a clean bill of health and no findings.

As part of the training and technical assistance provided to local transit systems, the Office of Public Transit provides a Transit Subrecipient Portal on their website that provides a variety of resources, forms, and sample documents. The list includes resources that support:

- Development and submission of funding applications
- Compliance with federal requirements
- Development of TAM Plans

The South Carolina DOT Office of Public Transit – Transit Subrecipient Portal is available at: https://www.scdot.org/inside/inside-PublicTransit.aspx#portal

NEED FOR EXPANDED REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

Local stakeholders noted the need for expanded regional mobility options. This FTA section provides best practices on how other states are supporting these types of service expansions.

Colorado Department of Transportation

Bustang Interregional Express Bus Service

Created in 2009 via state legislation, the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) Division of Transit and Rail is responsible for planning, developing, operating, and integrating transit and rail into the statewide transportation system. The responsibilities of the division include administering and expending state and federal funds for transit projects including facilities, equipment, services, and provision of grants to transit operators.

In response to the loss of intercity bus services and the recommendations from a commuter bus study, CDOT implemented interregional express bus service, connecting major populations, employment centers and local transit entities along the I-25 and I-70 corridors under the Bustang brand. This service is operated under contract for CDOT and has been well received, with ridership exceeding forecasts. Nine routes are now in place connecting communities throughout Colorado.

The planning process for the Bustang service focused on the previous intercity and rural regional network and resulted in more detailed route and service proposals. This included potential timetables (allowing consideration of potential connections, the possibility of in-kind match, and assessment of potential duplication of unsubsidized service), a strategy for shifting intercity program routes to competitively bid contracts, and extending the statewide branding concept to rural regional services and the intercity network, with a goal of implementing a connected statewide network. Funding includes the FTA section 5311(f) allocation with Greyhound in-kind match for maintaining the intercity network, and a combination of shifting of resources and limited state operating funds to initiate rural regional services. There is more state funding available for capital, and CDOT purchased buses to be used for intercity and rural regional services that allowed for lower operating costs, improved services, and common branding under the Bustang name.

Implementation of the Bustang service responded to rural regional needs identified through both regional and state level planning. It was the result of ongoing involvement in the planning process across levels, with local transit agencies and planners participating in the development of state proposals for new service, and state support and involvement in local service planning. To a much greater extent than most states, there is direct state involvement in the design and implementation of regional services and in the vision for a statewide network that includes rural intercity bus routes and rural regional services.

More information on CDOT's Bustang program is available at: https://ridebustang.com/.

Minnesota Department of Transportation

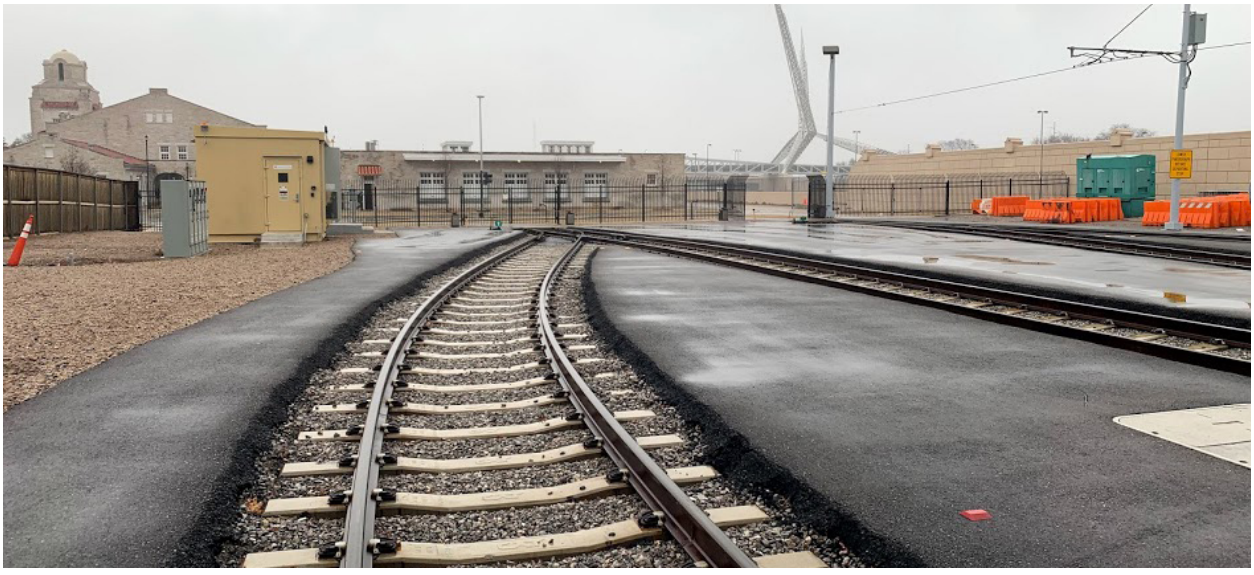
Transit for Our Future Initiative - Funding for Regional Projects

The Office of Transit developed the statewide Transit for Our Future Initiative to encourage and assist established transit agencies to develop and implement local solutions to improve efficiency and service. The initiative developed a framework for this effort that includes three levels of joint action that could be implemented by two or more transit systems to achieve these objectives. These are described by MnDOT as the three C's: Coordination, Cooperation and Consolidation.

- **Coordination:** A formal relationship between multiple systems, each of which maintains a separate identity and authority, including vehicle operation. Coordination may focus to a large extent on information sharing. Examples might include joint support for a mobility coordinator, travel trainer or joint grant preparation.
- **Cooperation:** Involves more joint decision-making and activity between multiple agencies under formal interagency agreements, managing resources of a distinct organization or service. Examples might include a joint Mobility Manager, joint purchasing, and sharing of resources such as technology or facilities.
- **Consolidation/partnering/merging:** Combining all operational authority and control in a single combined agency that provides service based on agreements between the agencies. The basic example is combining multiple systems into a single system with its own policy board, branding, and services.

The MnDOT initiative demonstrates that state transit programs can support the creation of regional transit organizations and services without top-down mandates by offering:

- Technical assistance
- Funding for restructuring/feasibility studies
- Studies/plans to help identify needs for regional services
- Templates for organizational structures, agreements, and contracts
- Funding for transition costs, including re-branding, marketing, changes to hardware and software, and human resources costs
- Funding for operations of new regional services (until they can be included in ongoing grants to the consolidated system)



TECHNOLOGY

Through the local interviews the need for improved technology was a theme. The accepted best practice by many states is to allow transit systems to procure their own technology with support from the state DOT. An Arizona DOT representative indicated that there are too many differences and variations in the system's needs for the state to attempt to conduct a procurement that would satisfy the operators. Transit systems in many cases are simply conducting their own analysis and procurement with state technical and funding support.

Like the peer states, most state DOTs provide a variety of support in the acquisition of technology. This may include seeking and administering federal funding that can support technology improvements such as federal funds through the U.S. DOT Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Transportation Discretionary Grants program (formerly the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery grant program known as TIGER). As discussed in the Ohio peer review, federal funds may be acquired for use with technology improvements such as new communications, scheduling, and dispatching software for rural transit operators.

States can also pursue and facilitate efforts to support local transit agencies with technology improvements through state level education opportunities. For instance the recently launched National Center for Applied Transit Technology (N-CATT), a technical assistance center funded through a cooperative agreement between CTAA and FTA, is partnering with state DOTs in Maine, Minnesota, Mississippi, and New Mexico to host State Technology Summits for small urban, rural, and tribal transit operators in those states. Each State Summit will provide an organized forum for attendees to discuss achievable goals for their systems and learn about promising practices, collaboration strategies and potential solutions. Participants will develop specific, measurable plans to accomplish their technology goals.

Nebraska Department of Transportation

Nebraska Transit Technology

Nebraska is one state currently in the process of a statewide technology project. In early 2020 the Nebraska Department of Transportation (NDOT) created a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to prequalify several vendors who could provide local transit with scheduling/dispatching software. NDOT requested qualifications for two software packages: a basic software package more useful for smaller agencies, and for a more advanced package. An evaluation team scored each vendor based on the proposals, demonstrations, and cost proposals. Rather than selecting one vendor for each option, NDOT curated preapproved lists for basic and for advanced software for agencies to choose from when selecting a vendor. The primary baseline requirement was that data would be able to be shared between systems and with the state.

NDOT recently completed the evaluation, and subsequently released a software vendor list with vendors that met basic requirements of the RFQ—and are now pre-approved to contract with transit agencies in Nebraska. Vendors were invited to the Nebraska Transit Technology Fair which included transit managers, drivers, and dispatchers, giving them the opportunity to participate in demonstrations and ask questions.

This process followed a previous one through which the state procured a single technology solution, and then any local transit agency who wanted the software could purchase it through that contract. Only four transit systems did so, therefore through the updated process NDOT wanted to provide local agencies with more choices and options.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6 Goals and Strategies

GOALS

For transit agencies and stakeholders striving to achieve mobility for all Oklahomans, it is important to look at goals specifically designed to attain success in statewide mobility. Goals are a critical component to any policy plan, providing an overall context for what the policies are trying to accomplish and how to develop performance metrics to demonstrate progress toward achieving the stated goals. The 10 goals, combined with the mission statement, are designed to make Oklahoma a Top Ten state in public transit.

Ten Goals FOR MAKING OKLAHOMA A TOP TEN STATE

1. Mobility
Enhance public transit for all Oklahomans in every county

6. Communication, Collaboration, and Coordination
Meet statewide mobility needs through stakeholder involvement

2. Economic Development
Ensure public transit for employment, shopping, and tourism

7. Strategic Funding
Increase funding for public transit

3. Outreach and Education
Establish user training and provider education programs

8. Technology Advancement
Utilize technology to improve public transit

4. Livability
Improve quality of life through public transit

9. Safety and Security
Promote safe and secure transit services

5. Environmental Health
Encourage healthy living through public transit

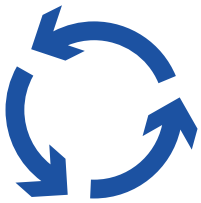
10. Equity
Ensure equitable distribution of public transit services statewide

STRATEGIES AND OBJECTIVES

Strategies provide the mechanisms to accomplish the Plan's goals and mission statement. Strategies are derived from multiple sources such as stakeholder input, previous plans, and the gaps and needs analysis, and address policies, services, infrastructure, and funding. Action-oriented objectives for each strategy were developed to implement the strategy to accomplish the Plan's goals.

The 10 strategies are:

- Mobility Management
- Sustainability and Environmental Stewardship
- Public Transit Service Enhancements
- Transit Safety Needs
- Transit Agency Marketing, Education, and Information
- Transit Technology Infrastructure
- Transit Planning Support
- Sources of Funding
- Regional Commuter Needs
- Human Service and Public Transportation Coordination



GOAL ADDRESSED:

Mobility

Mobility Management

As a practice, mobility management involves the creation of partnerships with transportation and transit agencies, usually in a regional setting, to enhance travel options and increase mobility and access for all individuals. This strategy aims to enhance public transit and mobility services for all Oklahomans and in every county by:

- Establishing a statewide mobility management program with a statewide coordinator and regionally-based Mobility Managers.
- Directing regional Mobility Managers to assist transit systems and riders.
- Creating a single source of scheduling information and a coordination platform.

GOAL ADDRESSED:

Environmental Health

Sustainability and Environmental Stewardship

There are many health and environmental benefits from enhanced transit. This strategy aims to increase physical activity levels, reduce air pollution, and provide education about the benefits of transit by:

- Supporting grant opportunities for alternative fuels and the development of alternative fuels and/or electric vehicle infrastructure.
- Identifying opportunities to educate the public and transit agencies on how they can contribute to environmental health through training, and special programs.
- Coordinating active transportation modes, including encouraging public transit operators to accommodate bicycles on their vehicles.

GOALS ADDRESSED:

Mobility | Economic Development | Livability

Public Transit Service Enhancements

Public transit services can be enhanced through several objectives that increase the operating hours of transit, service frequencies, and service areas. Additional programs include improving access and outreach to key existing or potential transit markets. Objectives that support this strategy include:

- Expanding hours and frequency of public transit services to support employment and other mobility needs through increased span of service, weekend service, and frequency.
- Expanding access to shopping, restaurants, and other social/ recreational destinations.
- Enhancing service for medical trips.
- Increasing on-demand services.
- Enhancing access to services for individuals with disabilities.
- Improving transit access to allow quality aging in place.
- Developing programs with employers to increase employee transit use.
- Identifying partnership opportunities with non-traditional transit agencies.
- Assisting transit systems as necessary to strategically enhance service with new funding.
- Expanding access to educational destinations and opportunities.

GOAL ADDRESSED:

Safety and Security

Transit Safety Needs

Ensuring transit works for everyone requires promoting safety and the transit rider experience. Maintaining the fleet's SGR, effectively managing emergency responses, and preventing crashes are important elements in meeting transit safety needs. Additional education programs and technology applications foster a culture of safety and cleanliness. Objectives that support this strategy include:

- Ensuring the statewide transit fleet meets SGR.
- Integrating and connecting transit communications with incident management response systems.
- Incorporating transit agencies and personnel into emergency response recovery planning and training activities to support resiliency during and after natural disasters and other emergencies.
- Deploying technologies to reduce transit vehicle crashes with pedestrians, bicyclists, and other vehicles.
- Installing camera and safety device systems on all public transit vehicles.
- Creating a statewide education standard for transit safety and cleanliness.

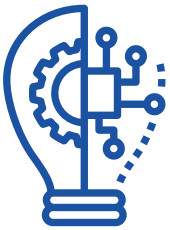
GOAL ADDRESSED:

Outreach and Education

Transit Agency Marketing, Education, and Information

Becoming a Top Ten state requires building a broad and deep coalition of partnerships, particularly around education and marketing campaigns. It is critical that information is accessible by all individuals. Objectives that support this strategy include:

- Establishing partnerships to create statewide/regional public transit marketing campaigns.
- Creating partnerships to implement training and education programs for all transit agencies statewide/regionally.
- Ensuring public transit information is accessible by all individuals.
- Developing statewide/regional travel training program.



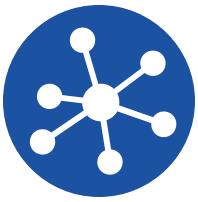
GOAL ADDRESSED:

Technology

Transit Technology Infrastructure

Technology can unlock improved coordination and new efficiencies when implemented in a thoughtful manner. Knowledge-sharing across transit agencies, investment in broadband infrastructure, and creating a coordinated platform interface will improve agencies' abilities to deliver enhanced transit services. Objectives that support this strategy include:

- Sharing staff and technology to enable access to technology and resources.
- Developing partnerships to increase statewide broadband service access.
- Supporting transit agency investment in scheduling and dispatch software.
- Creating coordinated platform interface (app) for a single source of scheduling information.



GOAL ADDRESSED:

Equity

Transit Planning Support

Integrated transportation and comprehensive plans, along with effective analysis tools, can be leveraged to enhance mobility to underserved areas and transportation disadvantaged populations. Support and guidance for local agencies will ensure that local transit system plans are consistent with the OPTPP. Objectives that support this strategy include:

- Developing local public transit system plans consistent with the OPTPP.
- Integrating transportation, economic development, housing and land use strategies in comprehensive plans, coordinated service plans, and ODOT's LRTP.
- Using analytical tools to evaluate implications of funding policies, programs, and projects on underserved areas and transportation disadvantaged populations.
- Providing support and guidance for transit agencies to develop public transit plans.

GOAL ADDRESSED:

Strategic Funding

Sources of Funding

Achieving the Plan's 10 goals relies on securing reliable funding sources. Developing diverse and flexible sources of funds requires new partnerships and programmatic funding sources. Objectives that support this strategy include:

- Allowing program and funding flexibility to enhance transit service.
- Establishing partnerships that provide additional funding streams.
- Providing stable funding sources for operating expenses and capital needs.
- Providing stable funding sources for local match.
- Identifying NEMT strategies at a state level to improve service, quality, efficiency, and coordination.
- Identifying programmatic funding sources that may potentially be flexed for public transit operations and capital (i.e. CMAQ, STBG, Toll Credits, etc.).

GOALS ADDRESSED:

Mobility

Economic Development

Regional Commuter Needs

Meeting Oklahoma's regional travel needs will require a connected network of transit operators to create regional plans and coordinated efforts. Objectives that support this strategy include:

- Creating a statewide connected network of intercity carriers and transit feeders.
- Addressing work trips and mobility needs to/from rural and small urban areas.
- Supporting regional planning efforts to enhance light rail and regional bus services.
- Working with transit agencies to provide the most cost-effective intercity service.
- Identifying "Imagine That" tourism/ seasonal routes.

GOALS ADDRESSED:

Mobility

Communication, Collaboration, and Coordination

Livability

Human Service and Public Transportation Coordination

Coordination can ensure transit services are providing increased access to healthcare, food, and other daily needs, to improve the quality of life for Oklahomans. Human services and NEMT providers should work to provide access for all. Objectives that support this strategy include:

- Maximizing NEMT trip coordination for efficient NEMT transportation.
- Coordinating with healthcare providers to better schedule appointments in conjunction with medical needs and transit availability.
- Working with food assistance programs to provide coordinated transportation to food resources.
- Ensuring an effective network of public transit systems across the state through collaboration and coordination of all state agencies with an interest in public transit, all transit agencies and systems, and all stakeholders with an interest in public transit.
- Evaluating coordinated planning region boundaries to align with service patterns.


TULSA ARTS DISTRICT

7 Needs and Future Service

Existing levels of investment in Oklahoma's public transit system are insufficient to meet the current service needs. Studies and stakeholder input reveal that current public transit service in Oklahoma meets about 50% of the overall mobility needs of Oklahomans. The amount of unmet need is expected to increase significantly as demographics in the state change over the next 20 years, leading to even greater gaps in meeting mobility needs.

In addition to insufficient funding for operations, there is also inadequate funding for capital causing the fleet to be in a state of disrepair. More than one-third of the vehicles statewide are in service past their useful life, putting the safety of the public transit system at risk. Associated maintenance facilities and passenger amenities are also deficient and underfunded to meet current and future demand.

To provide public transit service that meets today's need and prepares for an increase of that service, transit systems must have the necessary technology, staff, agency development and marketing support needed for growth. These elements are currently lacking and are inadequate to meet future needs.

TRANSIT NEEDS ASSESSMENT

A transit needs assessment was conducted to identify gaps in Oklahoma's transit systems. Understanding current and future passenger needs, and the funding required to meet those needs, is a fundamental part of developing a public transit system that meets mobility for all. Needs were determined by looking at Oklahoma's existing transit services, demographics, and the service levels of transit systems' performance in other states.

The analysis consisted of three primary steps:

1. Determining the Baseline Need

Baseline needs were determined by calculating trips per capita using existing transit ridership in Oklahoma with consideration of the underlying population. Future needs are determined by using existing population projections for Oklahoma counties and assumes a corresponding ridership growth consistent with levels today.

2. Calculating the Benchmark Unmet Need

Performance benchmarks were set using peer systems from outside Oklahoma. Criteria for choosing peers included comparable service area populations, similar rural and urban demographics and geographies, and regional proximity. Peers that were chosen also exhibited superior performance regarding trips per capita, but at a level still comparable and achievable by Oklahoma providers. The unmet benchmark need is the difference between trip rates achieved by peer agencies and the average trip rate for each grouping of transit agencies in Oklahoma.

Unmet benchmark needs were calculated by:

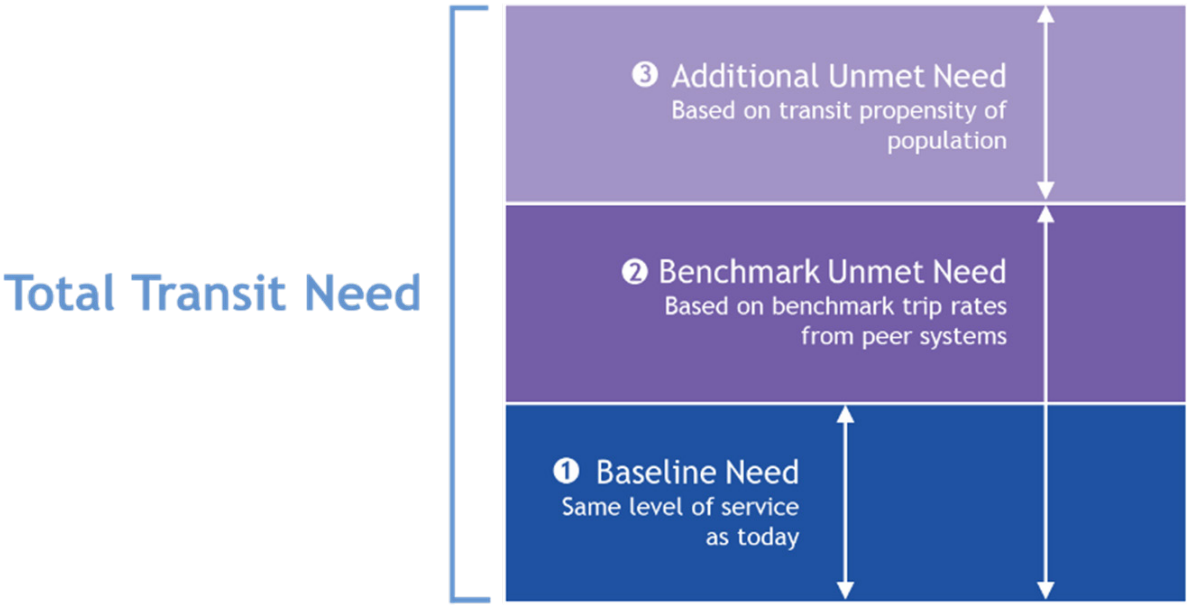
- Categorizing Oklahoma transit systems into seven different types based on system size, service area, and service type.
- Identifying peer systems from other states for each of the seven categories.
- Calculating the Oklahoma average trip rate (transit trips per capita) for each category.
- Calculating the peer average trip rate for each category.
- Calculating the benchmark trip rate for each category.

3. Determining the Additional Unmet Need

Trip rates were further adjusted to reflect cases where communities have a more transit-reliant population. This adjustment assumes an increased need based on income level, age, disability, minority status, and household vehicle access.

Figure 7-1 illustrates the components of determining transit need.

Figure 7-1 Components of Transit Need



Categorizing Oklahoma and Peer Transit Systems

Oklahoma is a geographically large state with a variety of communities including large cities, university towns, small cities, rural communities, and tribal lands. Given the inherent differences between systems, transit agencies were categorized into seven groups. These groups are characterized by the type of service operated and the similarities of their service areas. Figure 7-2 show the seven groups and the corresponding peer systems from other states.

Figure 7-2 Oklahoma Providers and Peer Systems

	Trips per Capita
Oklahoma Large Metro Providers	
Oklahoma Large Metro Provider Average	*5.13*
EMBARK	4.64
Tulsa Transit	5.63
Peer Systems	
Benchmark Trips per Capita (Peer Average)	*6.47*
Toledo, Ohio	6.82
Colorado Springs, Colorado	6.35
Omaha, Nebraska	6.26

Oklahoma Small Metro Providers	
Oklahoma Small Metro Provider Average	*3.02*
Lawton Area Transit System (LATS)	3.83
City of Norman	2.92
Citylink of Edmond	2.32
Peer Systems	
Benchmark Trips per Capita (Peer Average)	*5.26*
Davenport, IA	6.25
Greenville, NC	4.85
Wichita Falls, TX	4.67

Oklahoma University-Based Providers	
Oklahoma University-Based Provider Average	*13.04*
OSU/Stillwater Community Transit System	13.04
Peer Systems	
Benchmark Trips per Capita (Peer Average)	*19.03*
Flagstaff, AZ	34.36
Lawrence, KS	12.84
Durham, NH	9.88

	Trips per Capita
Oklahoma Large Rural Providers	
Oklahoma Large Rural Provider Average	*0.93*
JAMM Transit	2.57
Southwest Transit	1.99
Little Dixie Transit	1.67
KI BOIS Area Transit System (KATS)	1.56
Southern Oklahoma Rural Transit System (SORTS)	0.94
First Capital Trolley	0.80
Cimarron Public Transit System	0.54
Delta Public Transit	0.51
MAGB Transportation	0.43
Red River Public Transportation Service	0.41
Cherokee Strip	0.33
Central Oklahoma Transit System (COTS)	0.22
Pelivan Transit	0.18
Peer Systems	
Benchmark Trips per Capita (Peer Average)	2.24
MIDAS Council of Governments (IA)	2.07
North Iowa Area Council of Governments	2.90
Rural Transit Enterprises Coordinated, Inc. (KY)	1.76

Oklahoma Small Rural Providers	
Oklahoma Small Rural Provider Average	*1.71*
Beaver City Transit	4.61
The Ride (City of Guymon)	2.36
Muskogee County Public Transit Authority	1.30
Enid Transit	1.06
Call A Ride Public Transit	0.69
Washita Valley Transit	0.27
Peer Systems	
Benchmark Trips per Capita (Peer Average)	*2.99*
Harney County (Oregon)	5.36

Source: NTD 2018

Figure 7-2 Oklahoma Providers and Peer Systems *(continued)*

Oklahoma Large Tribal Providers	Trips per Capita
Oklahoma Large Tribal Provider Average	*0.65*
Choctaw Nation Tribal Transit	0.87
Comanche Nation Transit	1.37
Muscogee (Creek) Nation Tribal Transit	0.61
Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribal Transit	0.58
Chickasaw Nation Transportation Services	0.35
United Keetoowah Band Transit	0.07
Peer Systems	
Benchmark Trips per Capita (Peer Average)	1.15
Hopi Senom Transit (Arizona)	2.54
Navajo Nation (Arizona)	0.74
Ute Tribe Public Transit (Utah)	0.18

Oklahoma Small Tribal Providers	Trips per Capita
Oklahoma Small Tribal Provider Average	*3.20*
Seminole Nation Transit	4.23
Citizen Potawatomi Nation Tribal Transit	5.24
White Eagle Transit	1.59
Kiowa Fastrans	0.74
Peer Systems	
Benchmark Trips per Capita (Peer Average)	3.40
Stillaguamish Tribe of Indians (Washington)	4.98
Shaa'srk'a Transit (Laguna Pueblo, New Mexico)	2.25
Elko Band Council (Nevada)	2.97

Source: NTD 2018

Two tribal entities (Cherokee Nation and the Northeast Oklahoma Tribal Transit Consortium) contract with transit agencies to provide service. The transit trips per capita for Cherokee Nation is 0.86 and for Northeast Tribal Transit Consortium is 2.25.

Summary

Across all system groups, Oklahoma transit agencies are providing less trips per capita compared to their peer systems. While service costs can vary greatly between systems and regions, the data in Figure 7-3 illustrates that a higher level of investment is necessary to achieve service that meets mobility needs.

Figure 7-3 Summary of Oklahoma Benchmark Group and Peer Systems Average

Oklahoma Transit System Group	Trips per Capita		Investment per Capita	
	Oklahoma Group Average	Peer Benchmark Average	Oklahoma Group Average	Peer Benchmark Average
Large Metro	5.13	6.48	$37.92	$56.94
Small Metro	3.02	5.26	$18.21	$39.70
University	13.04	19.03	$75.10	$66.64
Large/Multi-County Rural	0.93	2.24	$14.51	$25.05
Small/Single County Rural	1.25	2.99	$13.54	$39.38
Large/Multi-County Tribal	0.65	1.15	$21.90	$25.02
Small/Single County Tribal	3.20	3.40	$51.81	$91.04

Source: NTD 2018, City of Norman FY20

Note: The higher investment level in the University category in Oklahoma is a result of a significant investment in CNG and building facilities by the University.

OPERATING NEEDS

This analysis shows that the investment in transit service operations in Oklahoma is lacking by $126.7 million annually. The increased investment is needed to meet transit service needs in all 77 Oklahoma counties. The investment would increase service levels in communities where people rely on public transit, as well as in communities with sufficient densities to attract more riders. Approximately 9.6 million transit trips were taken in 2018, but the analysis shows the actual trip demand was 17.7 million (Figure 7-4).

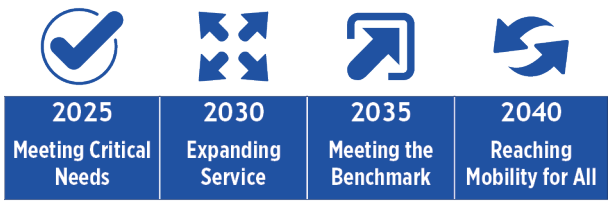
Meeting existing transit needs in Oklahoma will require more than doubling the existing investment in transit services. Given the size of this additional investment and the complexities of increasing service levels rapidly, the Plan sets milestones to increase services and investments over time (Figure 7-5).

Figure 7-4 Current Estimated Unmet Service Operating Need

	Current	Current Total Unmet Need
Total Passenger Demand *(millions of trips)*	9.6	17.7
Annual Operating Cost *(millions)*	$90.5	$217.2

Source: NTD 2018. Oklahoma ridership does not include EMBARK streetcar or ferry services and has been adjusted to reflect city of Norman service changes.

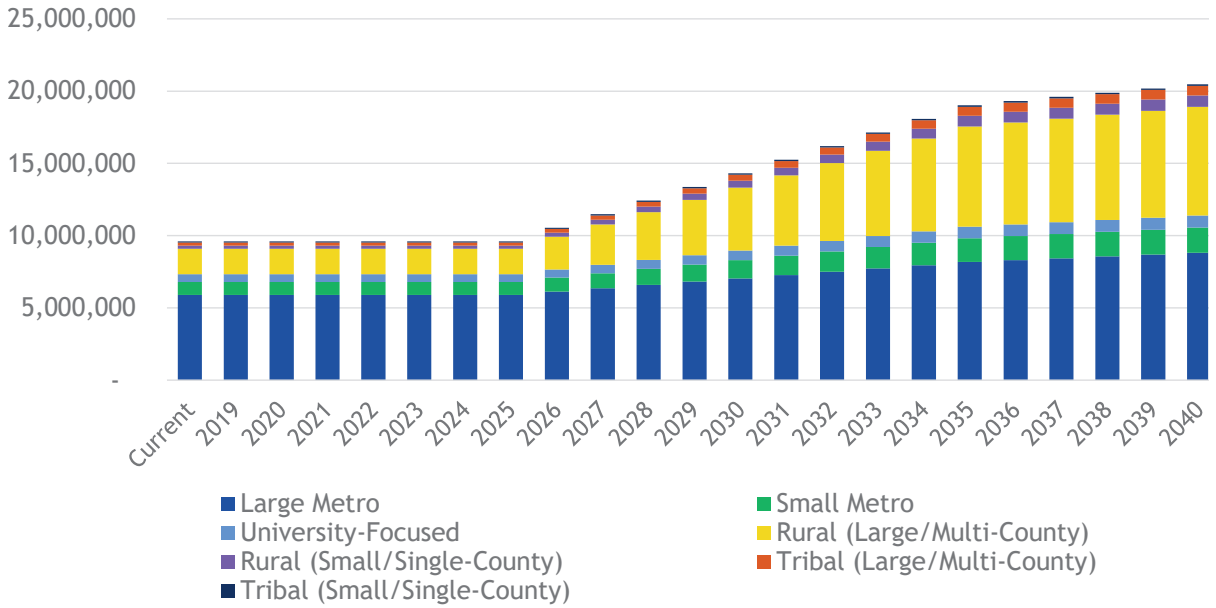
Figure 7-5 Program Milestones



This graduated approach to increasing transit investment will focus on meeting critical needs while building capacity to improve coordination and delivery of transit services (see Figure 7-6). Expanding local service as well as new regional connections will provide Oklahoma transit systems with the tools necessary to replicate the productivity of peer state systems. Meeting these milestones will increase transit trips to 20.5 million annually by 2040.

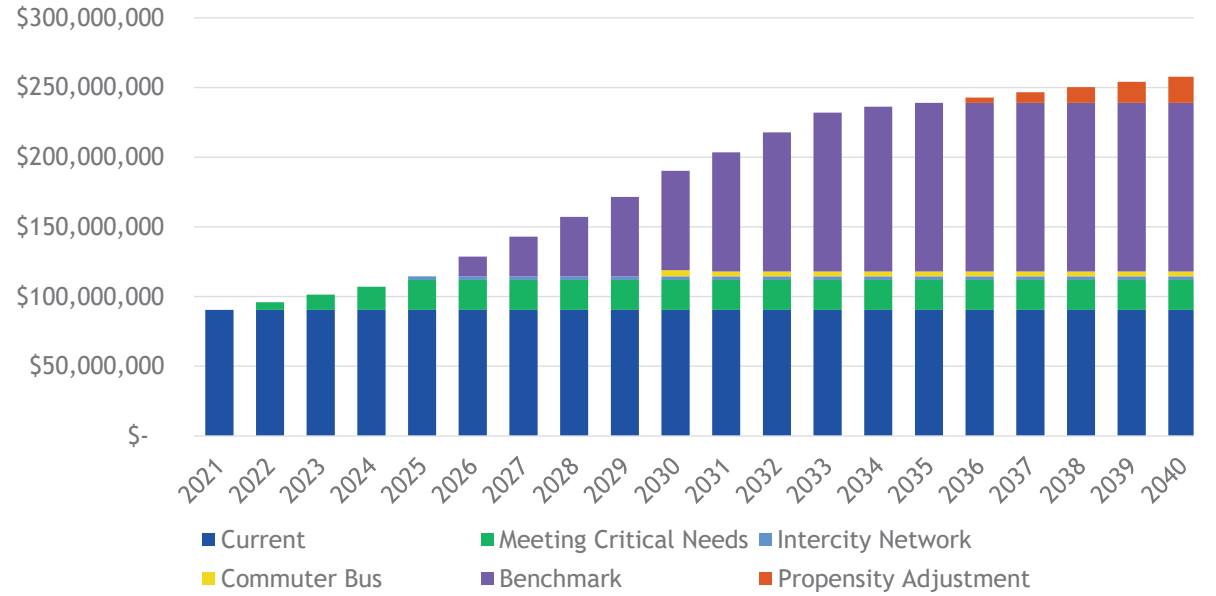
Increasing passenger trips through 2040 requires an operating investment of $257.8 million, an increase of $167.3 million from 2021 (see Figure 7-7). This investment would come from a variety of sources at the federal, state, and local level.

Figure 7-6 Estimated Annual Transit Trips in Oklahoma (2021-2040)



Source: Expansion needs based on needs identified by NDSU study and Service Needs Model, using NTD 2018 data. Norman trips are adjusted based on 2019 reported ridership. Does not include ferry or vanpool trips. Streetcar trips are also not included as service began December 2018.

Figure 7-7 Estimated Annual Operating Costs in Oklahoma (2021-2040)



All costs in 2020 dollars. Source: Expansion costs based on average cost per passenger trip for each Oklahoma Transit System Benchmark Group and estimated costs for intercity and commuter bus services. Does not include ferry, vanpool, or streetcar costs.

CAPITAL NEEDS

Consistent with the transit needs assessment, the capital analysis focuses on investments for the 20-year period between 2021 through 2040. Investment needs were determined based on transit agency type, using the same seven Oklahoma transit system groups. The analysis inventories Oklahoma's capital needs and estimates the cost to both maintain the existing statewide transit fleet and support expansion to meet the increased levels of service in line with the transit service needs assessment.[1]

Capital needs were categorized by three types of investments:[2]

- **State of Good Repair:** Updates and replacements required to ensure the statewide fleet is able to operate at a full level of performance.
- **Vehicle Expansion:** Additional vehicles needed to meet future operating milestones.
- **Facilities Expansion:** Additional maintenance and passenger facilities and capacity needed to meet future operating milestones.

State of Good Repair

A capital asset is in SGR if it is in a condition sufficient for the asset to operate at a full level of performance. The FTA determines the "useful life" of a vehicle according to its age (number of years in service) and miles. Useful life varies by vehicle type.

There are currently 1,408 vehicles in Oklahoma's transit systems, including traditional transit buses, "cutaway" buses, and mini or transit vans. Oklahoma's rural transit agency vehicles account for 68% of the statewide fleet, most of which are cutaway buses and vans. In contrast, the state's two large urban systems have approximately 200 vehicles and account for 14% of the statewide fleet.

1 Transit agencies that operate service on fixed guideway facilities, such as the Oklahoma City Streetcar and the Oklahoma River Cruises, also need capital equipment to operate and maintain those systems. This Plan did not anticipate nor develop capital costs associated with fixed guideway services in Oklahoma City as replacement of those vehicles fall outside the 20-year period of the Plan.

2 Costs are based on the typical cost per vehicle type as identified by ODOT in the state's TAM Group Plan. Costs for accompanying maintenance and passenger facilities are based on FTA required TAM Plans as well as other available capital and long-range planning documents.

Approximately 34% of Oklahoma's transit vehicles are currently at or past their useful life (see Figure 7-8). Because of the backlog created by underfunding capital investment, Oklahoma needs to invest $40.9 million in 2021 to replace old and aging vehicles and achieve SGR in order to maintain safety of the state's transit fleet. The investment of $40.9 million does not assume any growth in the fleet.

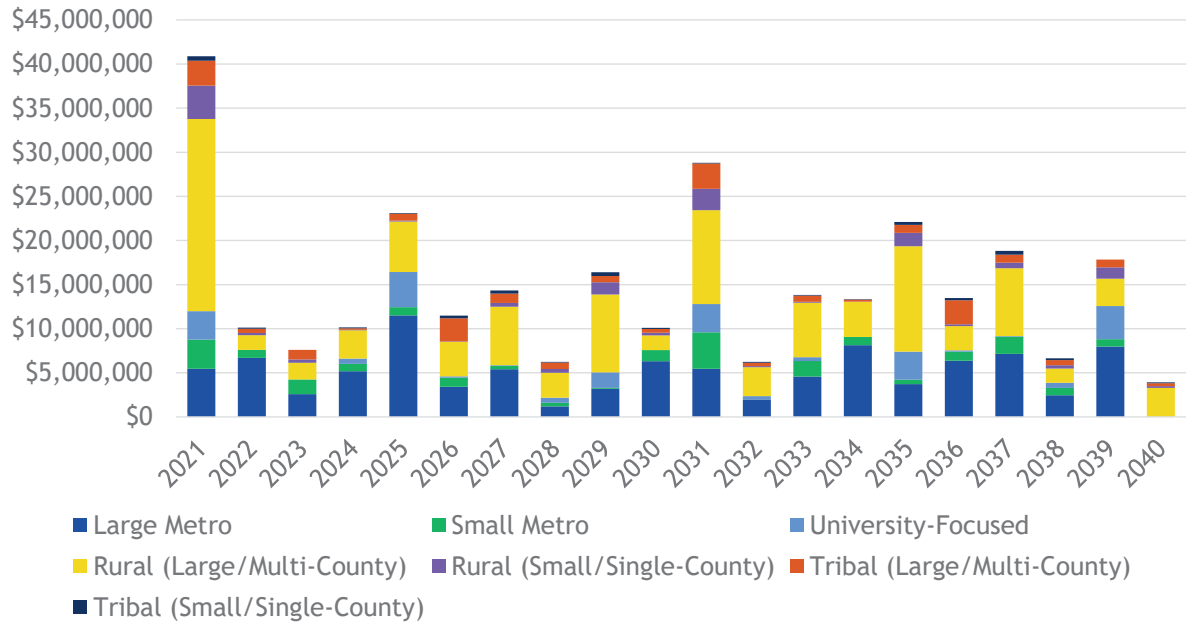
In addition to 2021 needs, between 2022 and 2040 transit agencies will need to replace 2,831 vehicles to maintain SGR. Some vehicles, particularly the lighter duty vehicles, have a shorter useful life and will need to be replaced twice or more through 2040 (see Figure 7-9). During the entire 20-year period, Oklahoma's transit agencies will need to spend $295 million replacing vehicles to maintain SGR. One-third of the replacement cost is needed for EMBARK and Tulsa alone.

Figure 7-8 State of Good Repair in 2021

Group	Current Fleet	Fleet At or Past Useful Life (in 2021)	Cost to Achieve State of Good Repair in 2021
Large Metro	198	45	$5,451,000
Small Metro	62	24	$3,301,000
University-Focused	38	9	$3,243,000
Large Rural	872	290	$21,768,000
Small Rural	89	41	$3,779,000
Large Tribal	119	57	$2,837,000
Small Tribal	30	10	$509,000
Total	1,408	476	$40,888,000

Source: TAM Plans (2018-2019), supplemented with Agency data and NTD 2018 Revenue Vehicle Inventory. *Does not include rail vehicles. EMBARK has 7 streetcar vehicles, which are not expected to be replaced before 2040.

Figure 7-9 Estimated Annual Capital Costs for Fleet State of Good Repair (2021-2040)



All costs in 2020 dollars.

Source: TAM Plans (2018-2019), supplemented with Agency data and NTD 2018 Revenue Vehicle Inventory. *Does not include rail vehicles. EMBARK has 7 streetcar vehicles, which are not expected to be replaced before 2040.

Vehicle Expansion

In addition to maintaining SGR, expanding transit service to fulfill all unmet needs requires statewide fleet expansion. To meet the goal of mobility for all, Oklahoma transit agencies will need to provide an additional 11 million passenger trips per year by 2040, which will require 3,271 more vehicles. Figure 7-10 shows the vehicles needed to meet the projected trips by the 2030, 2035, and 2040 milestones. The cost of the vehicle expansion is $222.9 million over the 20-year period.

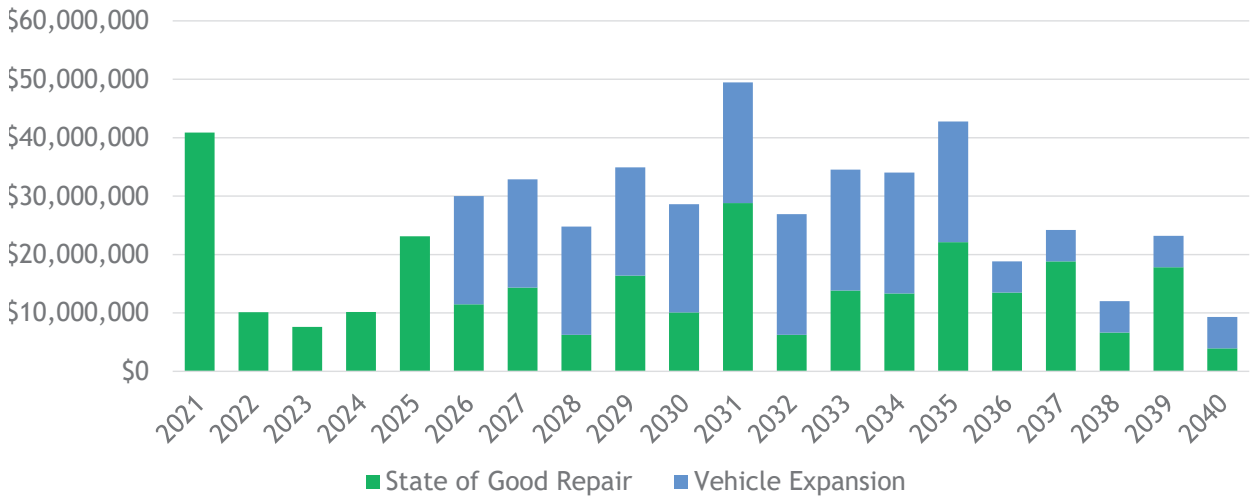
The combined annual investment to both maintain the existing fleet at SGR and purchase additional vehicles to provide for increased service is shown in Figure 7-11. This investment would come from a variety of sources at the federal, state, and local level.

Figure 7-10 Vehicle Expansion Needs

Group	Current Fleet	Vehicles Needed by 2030	Vehicles Needed by 2035	Vehicles Needed by 2040
Large Metro	198	215	250	269
Small Metro	62	80	103	111
University-Focused	38	43	52	54
Large Rural	872	2,051	3,272	3,547
Small Rural	89	183	282	300
Large Tribal	119	223	333	365
Small Tribal	30	31	33	34
Total	**1,408**	**2,826**	**4,325**	**4,680**

Source: Expansion need based on service increases identified in Needs Assessment Model and assessment of current vehicle loads and system performance.

Figure 7-11 Estimated Annual Total Fleet Capital Costs (2021-2040)



All costs in 2020 dollars. Source: ODOT, transit agencies, and TAM Plans (2018-2019), supplemented with NTD 2018 Revenue Vehicle Inventory. Expansion needs based on Service Needs Model.

*Does not include rail vehicles. EMBARK has 7 streetcar vehicles, which are not expected to be replaced before 2040.

Transit Maintenance Facilities

According to the 2018 Transit Needs Assessment, transit maintenance facilities in Oklahoma are inadequate to service the current fleet. As the statewide fleet increases, the need for expanded maintenance facilities multiplies. Building transit maintenance facilities for rural and tribal transit systems that do not currently have access to facilities is a critical capital need as the fleet increases. Expansion of current, as well as additional facilities, will be required in the out-years for larger systems.

Passenger Amenities

Providing safe and comfortable places for transit riders to wait is an important part of fixed-route transit systems. They are typically required only for fixed-route services since passengers using demand-response services typically do not wait for vehicles outside and rarely transfer between routes. For purposes of this analysis, passenger facilities are assumed to include additional investment to upgrade 25% of bus stops statewide by 2030 and 50% of bus stops statewide by 2040.

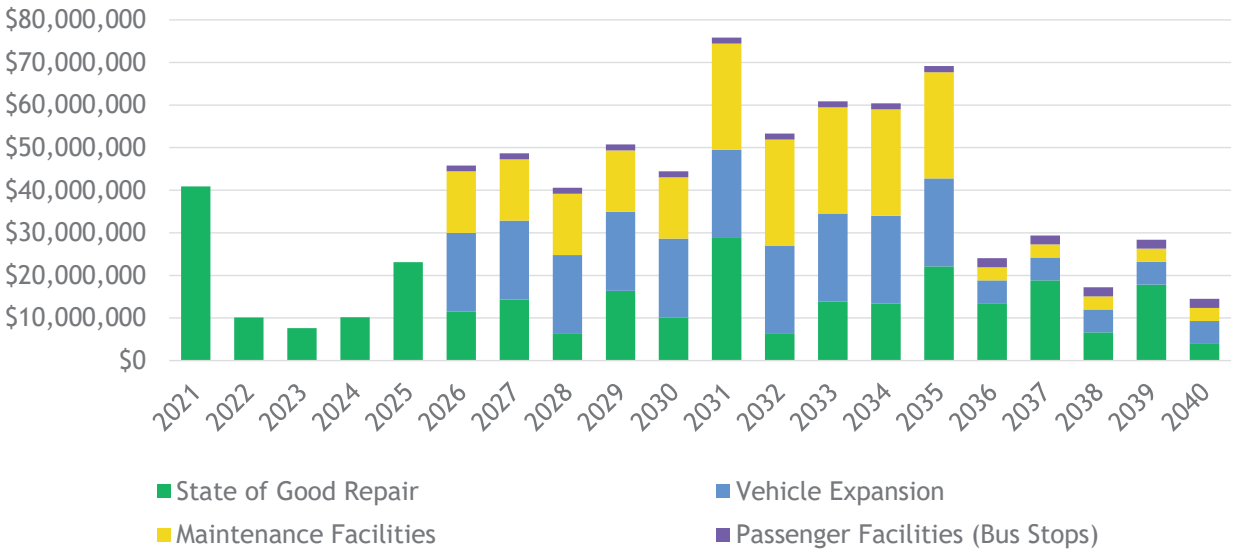
Total Capital Investment

Combining both the capital needs to maintain Oklahoma's existing transit fleet and the capital investment required to grow the system in line with identified transit service needs requires a $755.1 million investment over the 20-year period. This investment includes $295.5 million to maintain SGR for the existing fleet, plus $222.9 million for vehicle expansion and $236.8 million for maintenance and passenger facilities (Figure 7-12). This investment would come from a variety of sources at the federal, state, and local level.

TRANSIT RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

In order for transit systems to be able to implement the increased service to meet mobility for all Oklahomans, there is a corresponding need for new service types, local planning, new technology, staff development, and public education. Without an investment in the management elements shown in Figure 7-13, milestones for service expansion cannot be met.

Figure 7-12 Estimated Total Annual Capital Investment (2021-2040)



All costs in 2020 dollars. Source: ODOT, transit agencies, TAM Plans (2018-2019), supplemented with NTD 2018 Revenue Vehicle Inventory. Expansion needs based on Service Needs Model*Does not include rail vehicles. EMBARK has 7 streetcar vehicles, which are not expected to be replaced before 2040.

Figure 7-13 Transit Resource Management Costs

Management Elements	Costs for 2021	Annual Costs for 2022-2040
Single Source Program	$3,000,000	$500,000
Mobility Management Program	$560,000	$560,000
Training and Education	$550,000	$550,000
Public Education	$1,000,000	$1,000,000
Transit Planning Support	$3,500,000	$350,000
Technology for Transit Providers	$5,000,000	$600,000
Total	**$13,610,000**	**$3,560,000**

All costs in 2020 dollars. Source: Estimated based on input from Project Team review of best practices.

KEY FINDINGS

Oklahoma is currently providing millions of transit trips annually, even with an aging fleet, little to no technology, limited training, and no coordinated mobility management. The transit service needs assessment sets the stage to meet current and future demand for transit in Oklahoma.

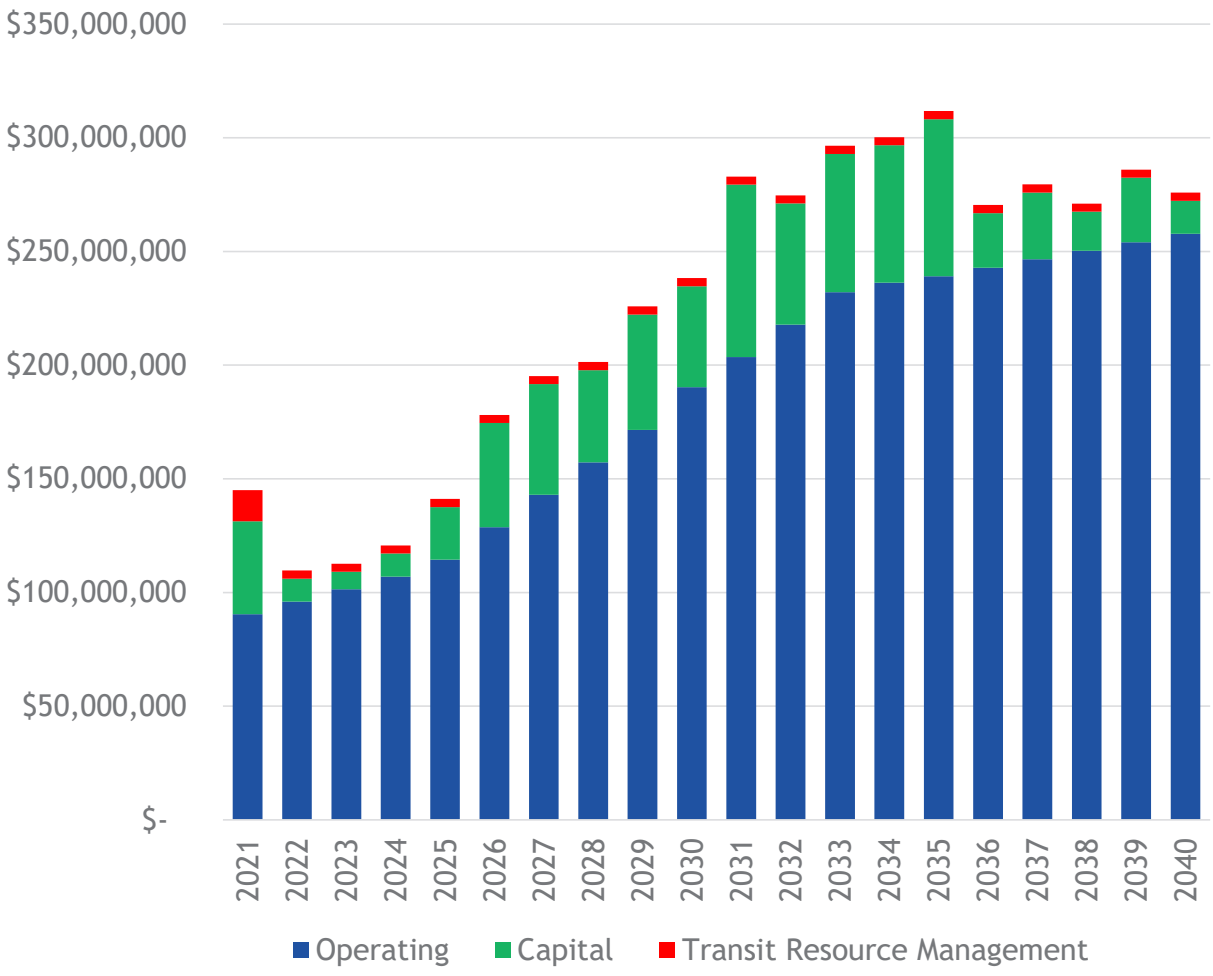
While service levels cannot be increased immediately, the Strategic Investment Schedule in Chapter 8 will allow for transit agencies, in coordination with the state, to plan thoughtfully for future expansion and meet the goal of mobility for all Oklahomans as a Top Ten state in transit.


TO
40

8 Strategic Investment

The Strategic Investment Schedule provides for enhanced transit services, capital investments, and resources needed to achieve the Plan's vision, goals, and strategies. Figure 8-1 reflects the scheduled investments through 2040. It assumes a continued mix of funding from the federal, state, and local levels, and will require an incremental increase in funding over time.

Figure 8-1 Strategic Investment Schedule



Source: TAM Plans (2018-2019), supplemented with NTD 2018 Revenue Vehicle Inventory. Expansion needs based on Service Needs Model and Identified Additional Needed Resources.

*Does not include rail vehicles. EMBARK has seven streetcar vehicles, which are not expected to be replaced before 2040. All values in 2020 dollars.

As a result of this Strategic Investment Schedule, transit systems in Oklahoma will meet the mobility needs of all Oklahomans in a coordinated, economical, and safe manner. Figure 8-2 summarizes the expected outcomes based on the investment schedule through 2040.

Figure 8-2 Strategic Investment Outcomes

	2025 Meeting Critical Needs	2030 Expanding Service	2035 Meeting the Benchmark	2040 Reaching Mobility for All
Expected Incremental Outcome	Meet critical service needs Bring fleet to SGR	Increase service to begin addressing service gaps	Increase service to meet benchmark	Increase service to meet all needs based on transit propensity and population growth
Operating	Fill crucial service gaps	Expand coverage and levels of service	Provide service consistent with peer states	Meet all service needs
Capital	Fleet replacement to ensure SGR Technology procurement to improve service	Maintain SGR Fleet expansion Maintenance facility expansion Passenger facility enhancement	Maintain SGR Fleet expansion Maintenance facility expansion Passenger facility enhancement	Maintain SGR Fleet expansion Maintenance facility expansion Passenger facility enhancement
Resource Management	Public education Transit system training & education Mobility Management Single-source platform Local transit planning support	Public education Transit system training & education Mobility Management Local transit planning support	Public education Transit system training & education Mobility Management Local transit planning support	Public education Transit system training & education Mobility Management Local transit planning support

The following pages detail the incremental improvements to public transit in Oklahoma over a 20-year period, with milestones to be accomplished every five years. The investment schedule of each five-year timeframe is designed to build upon one another and meet the strategies developed in Chapter 6.

2025: Meeting Critical Needs

Investment during the five-year period (2021-2025) is focused on meeting the critical needs of Oklahoma's transit systems. These include filling crucial service gaps, bringing the fleet into SGR, and developing a resource management toolbox to assist in the future development of transit in Oklahoma.

Mobility Management

A statewide mobility management program will be established with a statewide coordinator and regionally-based Mobility Managers. The program will provide for the better coordination of transit services among and between agencies, reduce duplicative services, and maximize the transit resources available to meet service needs. Managers will work together to assist riders in understanding their mobility options and ensure an approach that begins and ends with the needs of the rider. Mobility management is the foundation in meeting the mobility needs of all Oklahomans and will continue and expand throughout the 20-year period.

Public Transit Service Enhancements

The crucial service gaps that exist today in Oklahoma's transit service will be addressed. Approximately 64% of medical trips, 46% of employment trips, 54% of education/job training trips, and 46% of social/recreational trips are currently not being met. This causes an increase in the cost of medical care and reduces economic activity in the state. The immediate service enhancements will address critical medical, employment, and economical needs of users and provide for service expansion moving forward.

Transit Safety Needs

The current fleet will be brought into SGR, which increases safety, reduces cost, and allows current service levels to be maintained. Transit agencies will integrate safety measures, deploy technologies, and implement standards that foster a culture of safety and cleanliness. Once the fleet is in SGR, it will be maintained with continued safety improvements throughout the 20-year period.

Transit Agency Marketing, Education and Information

Partnerships will be created to develop public educational campaigns on a regional and statewide basis to inform the public on transit options and availability. Statewide and regional educational programs will also be developed to ensure transit agencies, administrators, and drivers are trained to provide the best and safest transit service possible. Educational campaigns and programs will continue throughout the 20-year period.

Transit Technology Infrastructure

Transit agencies statewide will implement advanced technology that modernizes scheduling and planning and provides for a seamless trip from the user side. A single source of scheduling information and a statewide scheduling platform, coupled with public-facing technology enhancements, will improve access to and coordination of public transit services. Technology use by public transit agencies will continue to be enhanced throughout the 20-year period.

Transit Planning Support

Transit planning assistance and funding will ensure local transit systems develop five-year implementation plans to direct service enhancements and expansion. The plans will make certain that the Strategic Investment Schedule is properly implemented and results in the expected outcomes. The local planning process will continue throughout the 20-year period, with required updates and modifications at the beginning of each five-year period.

Human Service and Public Transportation Coordination

Coordination of transit services will provide increased access to healthcare, food, and other daily needs, to improve the quality of life for Oklahomans. The statewide NEMT program will ensure individual transportation needs are met, all safety standards and federal requirements are adhered to, and the role of public transit systems in providing NEMT services is respected.

Sources of Funding

In this five-year period, policymakers, transit professionals, and other transit stakeholders should consider the long-term funding options to develop diverse and flexible secure sources of funding to provide for the full implementation of the Strategic Investment Schedule.

2030: Expanding Service

Investment during the five-year period (2026-2030) is focused on beginning to fill the transit service gaps that exist in Oklahoma when compared to peer states.

Public Transit Service Enhancements

Substantial service expansion will begin. Urban transit agencies will improve service by including longer service hours, more frequent service on existing routes, and new routes in underserved areas. Demand-response service will be available in more areas across the state, along with limited fixed-route service within and between communities. Transit agencies will operate more on-demand service with shorter response times for riders in rural areas. Most rural residents will have access to demand-response or on-demand public transit. In some cases, fixed-route service could replace demand-response service to provide connections to activity centers in rural areas. New services will focus on serving commuter trips, while other services will run throughout the day.

The fleet will expand as required to accommodate the service increase for both urban and rural service. New and expanded maintenance facilities will be required statewide to maintain vehicles. In some cases, existing facilities will be expanded; in other cases, new facilities will be built at transit agency sites, and regional maintenance facilities will be built to share maintenance resources. Other capital investments will include enhancing and expanding passenger facilities at bus stops to provide a safe, more comfortable, and convenient customer experience.

Regional Commuter Needs

Connections between transit agencies and private intercity carriers will be implemented. The state's public transit services will link to each other and to intercity carriers, and a central source of intercity bus information will be created. Enhanced connections will include timed transfers between different systems and services. Additional transfer points between services and resource-sharing among systems and carriers will deliver needed regional connections that are not currently provided.

2035: Meeting the Benchmark

Investment during the five-year period (2030-2035) is focused on filling all of the transit service gaps that exist across the state. Increasing access to transit will allow Oklahoma transit agencies to provide a level of service comparable to peer states.

Public Transit Service Enhancements

Urban systems will invest in transit priority measures to reduce travel time along busy corridors. Investments in mobility hubs, bike access, new technology, and safety improvements will provide a more comfortable and seamless experience for riders. Additional improvements will include more service on weekends, early and late-night service, and increased mid-day frequencies. Extending some services to the geographic extent of a metropolitan area will allow for more seamless connections to and from adjacent rural areas.

More daily travel needs will be met by rural and tribal transit agencies. Days and hours of on-demand service will be expanded. Agencies operating on-demand and demand-response service will purchase additional vehicles and hire more drivers to shorten rider response times. Transit agencies that provide fixed-route service in non-urban areas will increase the days and times of their operations.

Full fleet modernization will be complete. This level of investment will ensure that vehicles are replaced at the end of their useful life and new vehicles are added to provide more passenger trips. Maintenance facilities and passenger amenities will meet expanded fleet and service levels.

Regional Commuter Needs

Transit agencies will operate additional regional service that is coordinated with neighboring systems, allowing new services to provide viable travel options for commuters throughout the state. Regional services will close gaps for rural residents to travel to destinations for jobs, services, or other needs. Adding these links will serve the growing share of older adults who are aging in place that need intercity connections to reach healthcare services. “Imagine That” routes will be in service to meet tourism, recreational, and social transit needs.

Sustainability and Environmental Stewardship

Coordination and integration of active transportation modes will be in place. Improved infrastructure will allow alternative fuel sources to be used by transit agencies. Sustainable vehicles will make up a substantial portion of the statewide fleet.

2040: Reaching Mobility for All

Investment during the five-year period (2035-2040) is focused on meeting the mobility needs of all Oklahomans by enhancing service to address propensity need and population growth, making Oklahoma a Top Ten state in transit.

Urban, rural, and tribal transit agencies will have the adequate level of resources to ensure a network of public transit systems that meet all mobility needs. All operation and capital needs and gaps have been filled, and the statewide fleet has been expanded and upgraded.

Maintenance facilities and passenger amenities meet the needs of increased service areas and access to transit. Advanced technology options ensure safety and provide ease of scheduling and a seamless trip for the passenger. Planning support, education, and marketing is ongoing for all transit agencies and users.

As a result:

- All mobility needs will be met for all Oklahomans in a safe, affordable, reliable, consistent, and coordinated fashion.
- Trips that riders want or need to take on public transit will be served.
- Mobility needs are met because of multimodal connections.
- Transit services will be effectively coordinated throughout the state.
- Integrated information about public transit services will be easily available in a single-source location.

CONCLUSION

The Needs Assessment in Chapter 7 identified gaps in transit agencies' ability to meet public transit needs across the state. While these unmet needs cannot be addressed overnight, the Strategic Investment Schedule provides a tiered funding plan that meets milestones throughout the 20-year period. The outcomes provide a snapshot of how public transit will look with increased levels of investment from a variety of secure funding sources. The schedule depicts incremental expansion and enhancement of current transit services in tandem with new capital and programs. This Schedule is a guide for the state and local transit agencies as they make investment decisions.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9 Investment Options and Considerations

The Strategic Investment Schedule identifies the incremental funding needed through 2040. This funding is projected to allow transit systems to meet the mobility needs of all Oklahomans and to make Oklahoma a Top Ten state in transit. To provide for the incremental investment, new sources of funding for transit will need to be secured, existing sources of funding will need to be assessed, and funding flexibility options should be explored. This new level of strategic investment will require a combination of federal, state, and local funding.

THE FUNDING GAP

Nearly $103 million[1] is spent annually in Oklahoma on transit. This total includes all operating and capital expenditures for urban, rural, and tribal systems in the state. Figure 9-1 shows the required total funding needed to meet the strategic investment through 2040.[2] The year-by-year difference between the current expenditure and the total funding need represents the funding gap.

Figure 9-1 Annual Funding Gap

Year	Total Costs	Total Current Costs	Funding Gap
2021	$144,985,115	$102,918,507	$42,066,607
2022	$109,664,306	$102,918,507	$6,745,798
2023	$112,660,766	$102,918,507	$9,742,259
2024	$120,705,014	$102,918,507	$17,786,507
2025	$141,157,176	$102,918,507	$38,238,669
2026	$178,120,810	$102,918,507	$75,202,303
2027	$195,210,217	$102,918,507	$92,291,709
2028	$201,389,613	$102,918,507	$98,471,105
2029	$225,807,324	$102,918,507	$122,888,816
2030	$238,259,589	$102,918,507	$135,341,081
2031	$282,940,787	$102,918,507	$180,022,279
2032	$274,653,143	$102,918,507	$171,734,635
2033	$296,494,215	$102,918,507	$193,575,708
2034	$300,256,882	$102,918,507	$197,338,375
2035	$311,771,818	$102,918,507	$208,853,311
2036	$270,410,743	$102,918,507	$167,492,236
2037	$279,513,128	$102,918,507	$176,594,621
2038	$271,079,358	$102,918,507	$168,160,850
2039	$286,025,762	$102,918,507	$183,107,255
2040	$275,866,797	$102,918,507	$172,948,289
Total:	**$4,516,972,563**	**$2,058,370,148**	**$2,458,602,414**

1 This amount has been adjusted to remove streetcar, vanpool program, and ferry expenditures; and to reflect changes in the city of Norman resulting from the separation of the university services from the city system.
2 All figures are in current dollars, and they have not been adjusted to reflect inflation.

SOURCES OF TRANSIT FUNDING

Public transit in Oklahoma is currently funded with a combination of federal, state, and local funds, along with revenue from fares, contracts, and other sources. The percentage contributed by each of these sources varies by system type.

Federal funds cover 70% of the operating costs for rural services, compared to 30% for urban services, while state funds contribute less than 6% of the overall operating costs. Local dollars account for nearly 47% of urban operating costs, while rural systems only receive approximately 10%. Funding for transit in rural areas reflects the limited resources available in those communities. Alternatively, tribal systems are primarily funded through a combination of federal and local investments with limited fare contributions and no state funding.

Figure 9-2 shows the breakdown of operating funds for urban, rural, and tribal systems.

For capital the reliance on federal funding is even more significant, contributing more than 67% of the total statewide investment compared to only 3% from state funding. Urban systems receive 35% of their capital investment from local sources, while rural is limited to only 8%. The 9% share of rural investment from other sources signifies the importance of alternative funding sources, such as NEMT contracts, advertising, and employer-sponsored shuttles. Similarly, tribal systems' capital costs are funded through a combination of federal and local investments with neither fare contributions nor state funding. Figure 9-3 presents the sources of average annual capital funds from 2014 to 2018.

Figure 9-2 Sources of Operating Funding for Public Transit in Oklahoma

	Federal	State	Local	Fare	Other
Urban	30.3%	4.6%	46.9%	17.8%	0.4%
Rural	70.1%	9.5%	10.3%	6.4%	3.8%
Tribal	58.9%	--	39.9%	0.9%	0.1%
Total	**46.7%**	**5.8%**	**33.7%**	**12.3%**	**1.5%**

Source: 2018 NTD

Figure 9-3 Sources of Capital Funding for Public Transit in Oklahoma, 2014-2018 Five-Year Average

	Federal	State	Local	Fare	Other
Urban	57.3%	4.4%	35.4%	1.8%	1.0%
Rural	81.3%	1.6%	8.0%	--	9.1%
Tribal	81.7%	--	18.4%	--	--
Total	**67.4%**	**3.0%**	**24.5%**	**1.1%**	**3.8%**

Source: 2014-2018 NTD, adjusted to remove streetcar capital funding

Federal Funds

Most FTA programs are formula-based and require a match. Those funding amounts are unlikely to change except through annual federal appropriations growth or through legislative reauthorization. There are also annual competitive grants, known as discretionary grants, which provide additional sources of funding. In most cases, these grants also require a match. FTA regularly releases additional competitive funding grants through pilot projects and other program opportunities, which also generally require a match.

Figure 9-4 states the FTA formula funding programs, the amounts allocated to Oklahoma, the match requirements, and how the funding is distributed.

USDOT also offers other discretionary competitive grant programs, such as the Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Transportation Grants Program, that allows project sponsors at the state and local levels to obtain funding for multimodal, multi-jurisdictional projects that are more difficult to support through traditional DOT programs.

Figure 9-4 Oklahoma's Federal Transit Funding FY 2018

Program	Amount	Match Requirement	For	Recipient	Subrecipients
Section 5303/5304/5305(d)					
5303/5304/5305(d)	$659,389	20%	Planning	ODOT	MPOs
5305(e)	$172,169	20%	Planning	ODOT	Non-metropolitan planning
Section 5307					
Oklahoma City	$8,675,811	**Capital** - 20% (15% for ADA or CAA vehicles)[a] **Operating** - 50% of Net Deficit	Capital or Operating[b]	EMBARK	N/A
Tulsa	$6,776,061		Capital or Operating[b]	Tulsa Transit	N/A
Fort Smith	$33,507		Capital or Operating	Fort Smith Transit	N/A
Lawton	$1,519,816		Capital or Operating	Lawton Area Transit System	N/A
Norman	$1,718,580		Capital or Operating	City of Norman	N/A
Section 5310					
Tulsa (INCOG)	$600,959	**Capital** - 20% (15% for ADA or CAA vehicles) **Mobility Management**-20% **Operating**-50%	Capital, Operating,[c] Mobility Management	INCOG	Applicants in the Tulsa UZA
Greater than 200,000 population	$771,977			ODOT[d]	Applicants in UZAs greater than 200,000 population
50,000 to 200,000 population	$313,554			ODOT	Applicants in UZAs between 50,000 and 200,000 population
Under 50,000 population	$1,307,449			ODOT	Applicants in Non-UZAs (under 50,000 population)
Section 5311					
5311/5340	$15,613,998	**Capital** - 20% (15% for ADA or CAA vehicles) **Operating** - 50% of Net Deficit	Capital or Operating	ODOT	Applicants in Non-UZAs (under 50,000 population)
5311(b)(3) -RTAP	$239,036	No Local Match	Technical Assistance and Training	ODOT	N/A
5311(c) Tribal	$7,612,429	No Local Match	Capital or Operating	Tribes	N/A
Section 5339(b) Bus and Bus Facilities Discretionary Program					
Oklahoma City	$1,052,107	**Capital** - 20% (15% for ADA or CAA vehicles)[e]	Capital	EMBARK	N/A
Tulsa	$873,706		Capital	Tulsa Transit	N/A
State Allocation	$431,867		Capital	Applicants in UZAs between 50,000 and 200,000	N/A
State Allocation	$3,500,000		Capital	ODOT	Applicants in Non-UZAs (under 50,000 population)
Section 5339(b) Bus and Bus Facilities Discretionary Program					
Facilities Capital	$407,596	**Capital** – 20%[e]	Capital	ODOT	Statewide[f]
Bus Capital	$3,874,200	**Capital** - 20% (15% for ADA or CAA vehicles)[e]	Capital	ODOT	Statewide[g]
Section 5339(c) Low or No Emissions Bus Discretionary Program					
Bus Capital	$1,318,600	15% - Buses 10% - Equipment and Facilities	Capital	Cherokee Nation	N/A
Total	$57,494,811				

a Note that for all programs (section 5307, 5311, 5310 and 5339) the required capital match of 20% is reduced to 15% for vehicles acquired for purposes of complying with or maintaining compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) or the Clean Air Act (CAA). This includes any revenue vehicle meeting the accessibility requirements of CFR 49 Part 38.

b While section 5307 funding for large urban systems (those in areas over 200,000) cannot generally be used for operating assistance, there is a Special Rule under section 5307(a)(2)(b) that allows the use of a calculated percentage of the allocation for operating assistance if the system has less than 100 buses. In Oklahoma, both Oklahoma City and Tulsa are considered large urban systems, but because both systems have less than 100 buses they can and do use section 5307 funding for operating assistance. If their fleets grew beyond 100 buses, they would be limited to use of section 5307 funding for capital only.

c ODOT does not currently allow the use of section 5310 funding for operations.

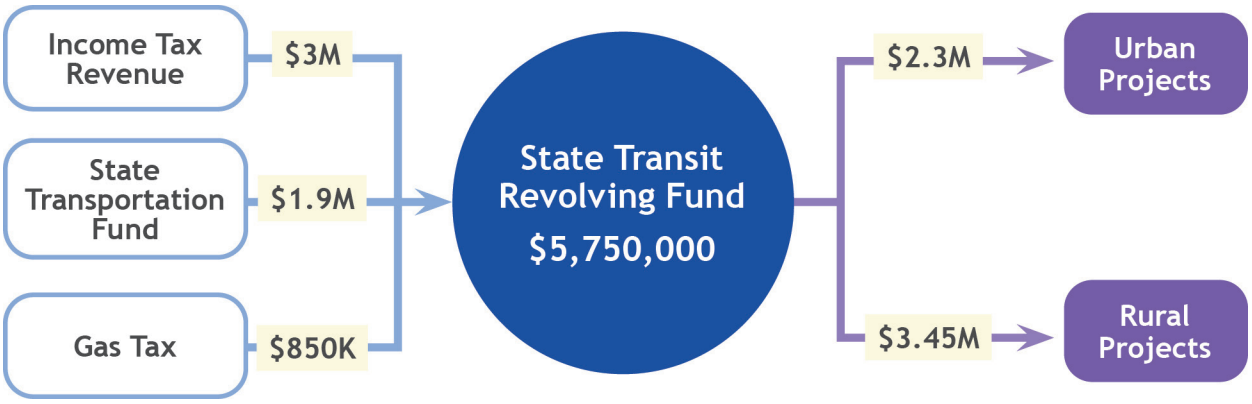
d In 2018 and prior years, section 5310 funding (except for INCOG) was provided to the HDS. As of July 2019 these funds are overseen by ODOT.

e The local share may be lower for certain ADA, CAA and bicycle related projects.

f Subrecipients include: First Capital Trolley: $287,596;Red River Transportation Service: $120,000.

g Subrecipients include: Cimarron Public Transit System: $335,209; Cherokee Strip Transit: $356,085; Delta Public Transit: $118,510; Enid Public Transit: $259,535; First Capital Trolley: $474,660; JAMM Transit: $352,931; KI BOIS Area Transit System: $1,084,226; MAGB: $118,510; Pelivan Transit: $172,670; Southern Oklahoma Transportation Services: $416,860; Southwest Transit: $145,540; Washita Valley Transit: $39,464.

Figure 9-5 Sources and Uses of the Revolving Fund



State Funding: Oklahoma Public Transit Revolving Fund

State funding for public transit was established under Section 4031 et. seq. of Title 69 of the Oklahoma Statutes which created a revolving fund for ODOT for the purpose of establishing, expanding, improving, and maintaining rural and urban public transit services. Monies through the Public Transit Revolving Fund may be used for local share or matching funds for the purpose of securing federal capital or operating grants. Eligible recipients include entities receiving federal grants under sections 5307 and 5311, and other public transit programs. Eligible recipients must expend a minimum of 50% of the state funds for services for the elderly and disabled persons.[3]

The Revolving Fund provides $5.75 million per year for transit. **It has remained flat since 2007 and represents a per capita reduction in state transit spending of 2.1% since FY 2013.** Figure 9-5 shows the breakdown of urban and rural projects based on the funds that make up the Revolving Fund.

3 The Transit Revolving Fund statutes also include a provision for ODOT to retain 5% of the total in the fund to fund new programs in areas not already served.

Local Funding

Local funding is imperative to supplement state dollars to secure federal funding to carry out transit services for both urban and rural providers. Rural transit agencies have limited to no access to local funding sources and minimal opportunities to create such funding sources.

A primary funding source is Medicaid, provided for trips contracted through the statewide OHCA brokerage operated under contract by LogistiCare. The overall amount of funding provided to public transit systems by the brokerage is not known, but the 2017 OHCA RFP for the brokerage stated that the general level of annual funding for Medicaid transportation in the state was approximately $30,500,000.[4] This amount is provided to the broker on a capitated rate basis of a set amount per member, per month. The amount spent by the broker to provide transportation is less than if those dollars were provided directly to public transit systems. The cost savings of Medicaid transportation managed by in-state transit systems could be used as increased local match.

4 This amount predates the recent Medicaid expansion, which is expected to increase statewide membership 24%.

FUNDING OPTIONS

Revenue sources to fill the annual funding gap presented in the Strategic Investment Schedule can come from a variety of sources, but mostly from the federal, state or local level. Under current law, federal formula funds will only increase as a result of increased federal appropriations or only after service is significantly expanded in Oklahoma. Competitive federal grant funding is generally the more likely source of increased federal funds, an amount that is small, difficult to project, and cannot be counted on from year-to-year.

The proposed reauthorization of the federal transportation funding programs includes language that would continue to provide federal funding at 100%, as in the CARES Act. The dollars required to meet match requirements will be difficult to come by as the economy recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic. This would allow limited state and local dollars to better leverage the total investment.

A major option for increased funding of Oklahoma's transit system is from state sources. The options available are to provide a higher level of funding, take a role in the financing of transit, leverage its state and federal resources by flexing current dollars, or some combination of these options.

The options available depend on the type of need being addressed. The Investment Schedule developed for Oklahoma identifies funding gaps in three areas: operating, capital, and transit program resources. The distinction between operating and capital is important because expanding operating will require ongoing, continual funding provided by an increase in general revenue funding, a continuing flex of other federal transit funding, or a new tax source that is dedicated for public transit. For capital funding, while any of the three options presented are possible, there are also options for financing such as funding from bond issues and SIBs. The financing options assist in meeting immediate needs while spreading out the costs as the loans or bonds are repaid, but the revenue must ultimately be provided.

State Funding for Public Transit

Many states invest significant dollars into public transit. Collectively, states currently provide more funding for transit than the federal government. According to the FY 2018 Survey of State Funding for Public Transportation produced by AASHTO, states provided $19.2 billion for public transit compared to total federal funding of $12.9 billion.

The revenue potential of these different sources varies considerably, and in many cases, states use multiple sources to address transit funding needs. The wide variety of state funding sources, and the fact that they are developed based on each state's legal and fiscal environment, makes it difficult to identify a single model of funding that is appropriate for Oklahoma.[5]

The AASHTO report found that 24 states relied on a single source for transit funding, while the remaining use a combination of sources. Fifteen states use general fund allocations, 14 use state transportation funds, 10 use gas tax revenues, nine use bond proceeds, seven use vehicle licensing/registration/titling fees, five use general sales tax revenues, three use trust fund income, three use interest income, one used vehicle sales tax and one used lottery revenues only.

Per capita spending by the states also varies. The AASHTO report shows that spending ranges from $803.77 per capita in the District of Columbia to no state funds in four states. Oklahoma, at $1.49 per capita, ranks 32nd in state spending.

Many states have prohibitions on using gas or motor vehicle taxes for anything but highways, requiring creation of dedicated transit taxes. Conversely, Oklahoma has the ability to use the revenues from gasoline or diesel tax or the motor vehicle tax for purposes other than highways. A small portion of the gas tax is provided to the Transit Revolving Fund currently, and gas taxes generally fund ODOT's state transportation fund which also provides a portion of the Transit Revolving Fund.

The projected operating costs over the next 20 years will require dedicated funding sources. An approach that uses a broad-based dedicated tax for transit can be seen in the recently passed Oregon payroll tax to support the Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund (STIF). The tax is statewide and has the ability to raise significant amounts with a minimal individual impact. It is one-tenth of one percent on payrolls, and prior to the impact of the pandemic, it was estimated to produce

5 The exact amounts that would be raised from different sources in Oklahoma would need to be calculated by the Oklahoma Tax Commission in response to legislative requests.

States use a wide variety of sources for public transit funding, including:

- General sales taxes
- Payroll taxes
- Bond proceeds
- Vehicle sales tax
- Trust funds
- Gas taxes
- Diesel sales tax
- Interest income
- Lottery or casino tax funds
- General fund allocations
- Vehicle registration, license, or titling fees
- Vehicle code fines
- Custom license plate revenue
- Combined state transportation fund
- Cigarette and other "sin" taxes
- Rental car taxes
- Hotel occupancy taxes
- Recording fees/ document stamps
- Corporate franchise tax
- Other specialized funding sources

$115 million per year for transit expansion. Oregon also uses a variety of other sources for its state transit funding, including general funds, cigarette taxes, the fees from the ID cards provided by the Department of Motor Vehicles, gas taxes on fuel for non-highway use, and fees on custom license plates.

A dedicated utility tax is another broad-based option. Oklahoma currently exempts residential utilities from the 4.5% state sales tax. As gas tax revenues decrease due to vehicles utilizing alternative fuel sources, ending this exemption could benefit transportation infrastructure in Oklahoma, with a portion of the revenue dedicated to transit funding.

In other states, specialized taxes raise large amounts of dollars for transit. Pennsylvania combines the proceeds from lottery revenue with general sales tax revenue, bond proceeds, vehicle registration fees, vehicle code fines, Turnpike revenue, vehicle lease/tax fees, and funds from the Public Transportation Trust Fund reserves to fund transit. Specifically, lottery funds provide a total of $83 million for the Shared Ride Program for Senior Citizens.

Flexibility in Federal Funding

FTA offers several flexible funding programs to fund transit related activities. Flexible funds are certain legislatively specified funds that may be used either for transit or highway purposes. The idea of flexible funds is that a local area can choose to use certain federal surface transportation funds based on local planning priorities, not on a restrictive definition of program eligibility. The flexing of federal funds does not increase the overall amount of federal transportation funding that a state receives.

Use of FHWA STBG and Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) Funding for Urban and Rural Transit

STBG provides flexible funding that may be used by states and localities for projects to preserve and improve the conditions and performance on any federal-aid highway, bridge and tunnel projects on any public road, pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, and transit capital projects, including intercity bus terminals.

CMAQ has the objective of improving the nation's air quality and managing traffic congestion. CMAQ projects and programs are often innovative solutions to common mobility problems and are driven by CAA mandates to attain national ambient air quality standards. Eligible activities under CMAQ include transit system capital expansion and improvements that are projected to realize an increase in ridership; travel demand management strategies and shared ride services; pedestrian and bicycle facilities; and promotional activities that encourage bicycle commuting.

If a flexing strategy is adopted as an ongoing commitment, it can provide funding for operating and capital purposes. Once flexed, the funds take on the requirements and conditions of the transit program to which funding is applied, as match requirements remain for the flexed funds. Two examples of

states that combine flexed funds with state funding programs are Vermont and Oregon.

In 2019, Vermont flexed $19,698,161 of STBG and CMAQ funds to transit programs for a combination of capital, maintenance, administration, and operating purposes. Of that amount, $13,741,800 was used for statewide rural funding and $4,689,820 was used for the Burlington urban area.

In 2019, Oregon flexed $44 million dollars in FHWA funding to transit, in addition to the funds provided under the formula programs for rural, urban, and specialized transit. The flexed funds came from the CMAQ and STBG programs, including MPO-directed STBG block grant allocations.

State Assistance for Financing Transit Projects

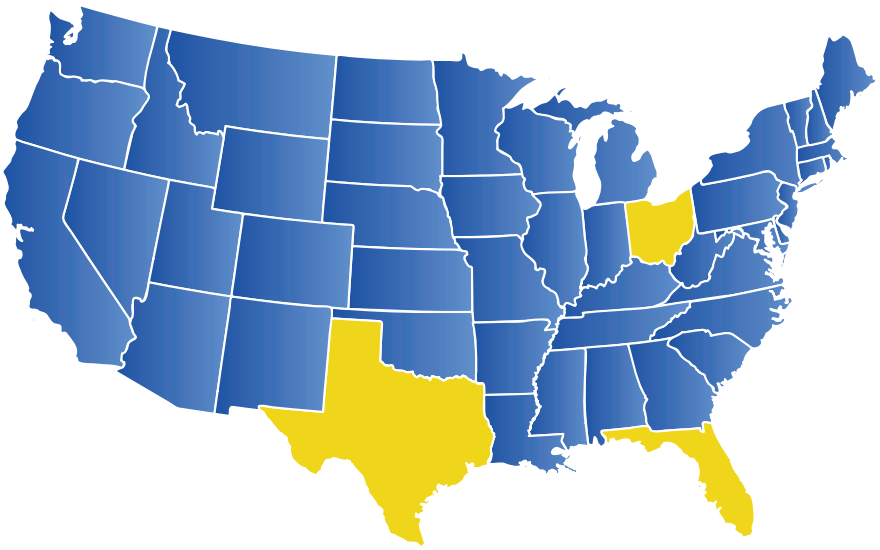
For capital projects, states can provide mechanisms that reduce or eliminate match or provide for spreading the costs of capital investment over a longer period of time. These financing options require repayment by the borrowing entity (state or local).

State Bonding

Bonds are a standard way for governments to borrow money, allowing larger projects or programs to be financed for larger amounts than can be funded with limited annual budgets.[6] Bonds issued by states (and local governments) typically have lower interest rates because of the reduced risk of the public entity. The most common type of public bond is the General Obligation (GO) bond, which is backed by the full faith and credit of the issuing entity and may be supported by local option taxes. States and localities often operate under specific caps and debt ceilings that limit the amount of GO debt allowed, and that may limit potential usage.[7] Other types of bonds include revenue bonds, which are backed by the revenue stream produced by the investment, though these are not generally used for transit projects.

Bonds are typically used to fund transit capital projects with a longer life, such as facilities or long-life vehicles. The AASHTO report found that, in 2018, nine states used bond proceeds as some portion of their state funding for public transit. A 2015 National

6 Transportation for America, *Thinking Outside the Farebox: Creative Approaches to Financing Transit Projects*, pp. 20-22.
7 National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine, Transportation Research Board, *Local and Regional Funding Mechanisms for Public Transportation*, 2009. Pp.33-34.



Conference of State Legislatures study found that 19 states provided specific authority for states to issue bonds for transit projects.[8]

In Oklahoma, the Oklahoma Capital Improvement Authority (OCIA) is authorized to issue bonds, notes, or other obligations to finance construction of buildings or other facilities for the state of Oklahoma, its departments and agencies. Bonds are typically used for any capital investment assets owned by the state. Powers and duties of OCIA are established in its enabling statutes, Title 73, Oklahoma Statutes, Sections 151 et. seq., as amended. OCIA provides financing for highway infrastructure for continued economic development in the state. OCIA has not issued bonds for transit projects, as ODOT does not own or operate any transit facilities or services. Legislative action would be needed to utilize state bonding for public transit projects, as the governing statutes address specifically state buildings and highway projects.

State Infrastructure Banks

SIBs are revolving infrastructure investment funds for surface transportation that are established and administered by states under federal authorizing legislation. An SIB, much like a private bank, can offer a range of loans and credit assistance enhancement products to public and private sponsors of Title 23 highway construction projects, Title 49 transit capital projects, and Title 49 railroad projects. States use federal and state dollars to fund SIBs, with the maximum federal share of 80%, except where the sliding match scale of the highway accounts apply. Federal guidance does allow SIB use for transit projects. A state may capitalize on an SIB under UZA Formula Grants, Capital Investment Grants, and Formula Grants for Other UZAs.

Under the federal authorizing statute, an SIB can make loans and provide other forms of credit assistance, including:

- Credit enhancement
- Serving as a capital reserve for bond or debt financing
- Subsidizing interest rates
- Insuring or guaranteeing letters of credit
- Finance or purchase agreements for transit projects
- Bond or debt financing instrument security
- Other forms of assistance approved by the Secretary of Transportation

A state or any other 5307, 5309 or 5311 recipients may capitalize an SIB by depositing up to 10% of the funds made available to the state or other recipients

8 National Conference of State Legislatures, *On Track-How States Fund and Support Public Transportation*, Washington, D.C., 2015, p 24.

for capital projects. Current statute allows for a rural projects fund. There is also a requirement that use of capital funds attributed to an UZA with population more than 200,000 requires approval of the MPO.

It should be noted that a number of states with SIBs have added legislation to allow their DOTs to sell bonds to provide funding for projects financed through the SIB, allowing for the DOT to use its bonding ability to support projects that are local in nature, with the repayment guaranteed through the bank's loan requirements.

The National Highway System Designation Act of 1995 allowed states to create Pilot Programs for establishing SIBs. Oklahoma was one of the original 10 Pilot Project states included in the federal legislation, although chose not to establish an SIB at that time. In 1996, Oklahoma Statutes Chapter 69, Sections 403, 403.1, 404, 405 and 412 authorized the creation of an SIB, but it has not been implemented nor funded. For Oklahoma to use its SIB for transit projects, Section 403.1 "Definitions" would need be modified to allow funding to be used for public transit projects.

Thirty-nine states have established SIBs. Of the 39, 33 have completed some type of financial assistance, 21 states have established transit accounts, and eight have completed transit-oriented loans.[9] Texas, Ohio and Florida have authorized the use of SIBs for transit projects.

Texas SIB

Texas was chosen as one of the original 10 pilot projects. Accordingly, the state legislature authorized the TxDOT to administer the SIB program in 1997.[10] It allows borrowers to access capital funds at or below market interest rates. Currently, in an effort to assist localities in dealing with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, it has lowered the interest rate to 0% for the first three years for project loans.

Transit projects eligible for this program's funding include planning, preliminary, economic, and environmental studies, right-of-way acquisition, surveying, property appraisals, utility relocation, engineering

9 FTA, State Infrastructure Banks, https://www.transit.dot.gov/funding/funding-finance-resources/state-infrastructure-banks/state-infrastructure-banks-sibs, accessed on 9/24/2020.
10 Title 43, Chapter 1, Part 6, Subchapters A through E of the Texas Administrative Code; Texas Department of Transportation https://www.txdot.gov/government/programs/sib/general-information.html

and design, construction, and inspections. Although 8% of the program's borrowers have been Regional Mobility Authorities for use on transit projects, the majority of loans are made to local municipalities for highway projects.

Ohio SIB and Bond Program

The Ohio DOT maintains an SIB direct loan and bond financing program for the purpose of developing transportation facilities throughout Ohio.[11] The program is used as a method of funding highway, rail, transit, intermodal, and other transportation facilities and projects which produce revenue to pay off the debt while contributing to the state's transportation goals. The establishment of a bond program in which communities pledge project revenues as their guarantee for bonds sold by the state for transportation projects (including transit) is unique to Ohio.

The Ohio SIB was capitalized with a $40 million authorization of state general revenue funds from the Ohio State Legislature, $10 million in state motor fuel tax funds, and $87 million in Federal Title 23 Highway Funds. SIB loan amounts can be from $15,000 to $35 million (at 3% interest), while the bond fund range is $2 million to $20 million. The FY 2019 portfolio of the SIB includes 20 loans totaling $20.5 million and two bond issuances for $20.5 million. Since the inception of the program, the Ohio SIB has issued 247 loans and 12 bonds totaling $755.9 million.

Florida State Infrastructure Bank

The Florida SIB is similar to others as it is a revolving loan and credit enhancement program, but it consists of two separate accounts: a federal-funded account and a state-funded account. The SIB can provide loans and other assistance to public or private entities carrying out or proposing to carry out projects eligible for assistance under federal and state law.

The federally-funded account is capitalized by federal money matched with state money, while the state account uses strictly state funds. Projects must be included in the adopted comprehensive plans of the applicable MPO and must conform to all federal and state laws.

11 Ohio Revised Code, Chapter 5531; Ohio Department of Transportation, website: https://www.transportation.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/odot/programs/program-resource-guide/state-infrastructure-bank, October 16,2019.

Florida statutes authorize the state's creation of a SIB, and sales of revenue bonds to provide funding for projects accepted by the SIB.[12] The program has a minimum project size such that it has financed $2 million for the purchase of trolleys, $8.9 million for buses, and $76.67 million for transit facilities.

Toll Credits for Match

The Transportation Development Credit Program allows states to use "toll credits" as local match for transportation projects. The program takes advantage of a financing tool approved by the FHWA that allows states to use federal obligation authority without the requirement of providing matching dollars—instead matching the federal funds with credits earned when the state, a toll authority or a private entity funds a capital transportation investment with toll revenues earned on existing toll facilities. The value of the toll credits is net of the revenues needed for debt service, returns to investors or the operation and maintenance of toll facilities. The idea is that the use of the credits in lieu of cash match will allow the state or local funds that would have been needed for match to be used instead for projects. The credits do not represent new funding but instead are options for financing transit that may make capital investment more feasible.

Texas uses toll credits to provide matching funds for some of its transit funding, which allows the available state funding for transit to stretch further because it does not have to be used for match. Under the Texas program, 75% of credits[13] are allocated to the MPO in the region where they were earned, and 25% are allocated on a competitive statewide basis by TxDOT. There is a specific allocation for public transit projects, which is equal to the lesser of 15,000,000 credits or 50% of the credits available for award by the state transportation commission annually.

12 Section 339.55 and Section 215.617

13 The Texas program guidance specifically refers to "credits" rather than "dollars," even though one credit is worth one dollar in match. This is to avoid creating the impression that the credits have dollar value that can be used to pay for program activities or projects—they do not—their only value is that they can be counted to meet local match requirements, potentially freeing actual local dollars to pay for programs or projects.

Local Funding Options

There are many funding options for public transit at the local and regional levels. Local jurisdictions in Oklahoma already take advantage of several funding options, including fares and other transit revenues, general fund revenues, sales tax increments, and GO bond funding to support local transit investments. Additional funding options that are being used in other states would take either state enabling legislation or changes in local policy.

Oklahoma permits ad valorem taxes (property taxes) for counties and cities, with specific amounts and requirements for specific uses. Only counties may use property taxes for the general fund. City government tax levies are limited, with only certain taxes being permitted. Public transit is not among the uses for which either a county or a city may establish an ad valorem tax, but state legislation could add public transit as a permitted ad valorem tax. Ad valorem property taxes dedicated to support transit are found in other states, such as Michigan, where transit system millages must be renewed periodically by the voters.

City governments in Oklahoma have used the ability to levy specific dedicated sales taxes supported by local voters to fund public transit capital needs as part of GO bond issues, usually with transit as one component of a bond issue addressing a variety of community needs.

Some of the specific taxes used in other states for public transit are not available in Oklahoma. Local motor vehicle taxes are not currently permitted by statute, and there is already a state established tax collected on rental cars. State laws could be amended to permit local auto license fees, as well as creating additional taxes on rental cars.

KEY FINDINGS

There is a considerable gap between current funding for public transit in Oklahoma and the amount needed to become a Top Ten state in transit and achieve mobility for all Oklahomans. While current funding includes federal, state, local, and user revenues, federal funds are the largest funding source for both operating and capital, followed by local sources. Most federal programs are formula-based, with some funds going directly to local recipients and others provided to the state for allocation and oversight. Most federal funding programs require local match, and that local match is becoming more difficult to acquire.[14]

Potential funding and financing options have been presented, many of which will require either changes to state law or administrative policy. The most appropriate options for Oklahoma will depend on how those options align with the state's overall budget and policy priorities, particularly its transportation programs. The goal of selecting sources of funding for public transit is not to replace existing transportation finance options, but to enhance the transportation environment for all Oklahomans.

14 During the COVID-19 pandemic, significant changes were made to local match requirements.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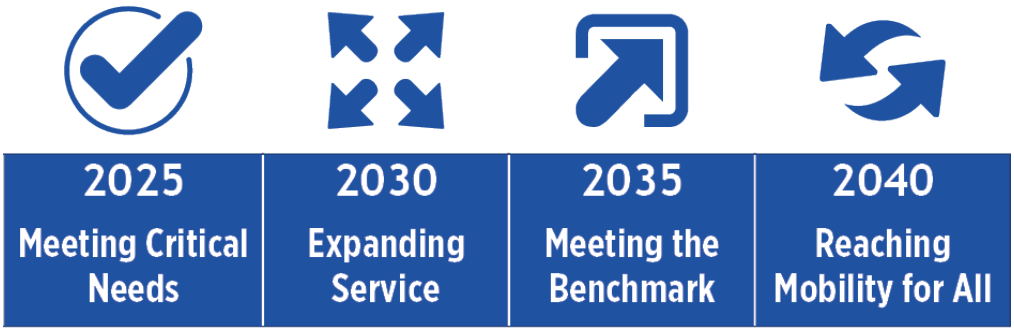
10 Implementation Priorities

INTRODUCTION

Federal, state, and local support are necessary to "ensure a coordinated public transit network that meets the mobility needs of all Oklahomans in a safe, efficient, and economical manner." This mission statement is directly derived from the charge that HB 1365 created, ensuring inclusivity of all public transit systems and stakeholders. Public policies and administrative code must align with statewide transit priorities, in order to begin addressing the project goals and strategies set forth in this plan and to ultimately become a Top Ten state in transit.

Support for the statewide plan can take shape in many forms. Federal dollars can be maximized if the flexibility on the requirements of local match are continued past FFY 2021. A state dedicated funding source for public transit would take the pressure off of local systems from relying heavily on federal programs with strict requirements. Local systems should develop strategic transit plans that outline future investments to be consistent with the goals of this Plan.



Five-year incremental milestones were created to ensure investments are coordinated and transit improvements are continued throughout the 20-year period. Tracking progress through these milestones will allow the state to ensure a network of public transit systems that receive adequate funding to ensure the mobility needs of all Oklahomans are met in a safe, affordable, reliable, consistent, and coordinated fashion.

PLAN AND POLICY ALIGNMENT

Successful transit planning starts with making transit a priority.

For the goals and strategies of this Plan to be met, all state agencies with an interest in public transit need to ensure their programs are in alignment with this statewide plan. Alignment of state transit policies allows for coordination and efficient use of human resources, capital investment, and operating dollars.

In addition to state policy alignment, strategic transit planning at the local level is critical to ensuring success at a statewide level. Transit providers should work with their local governments to include transit in city and county strategic plans, and work to develop local (or agency-based) transit development plans consistent with the OPTPP. The development of transit plans assists in the strategic allocation of funding for future transit projects, while working to achieve the strategies in this Plan.

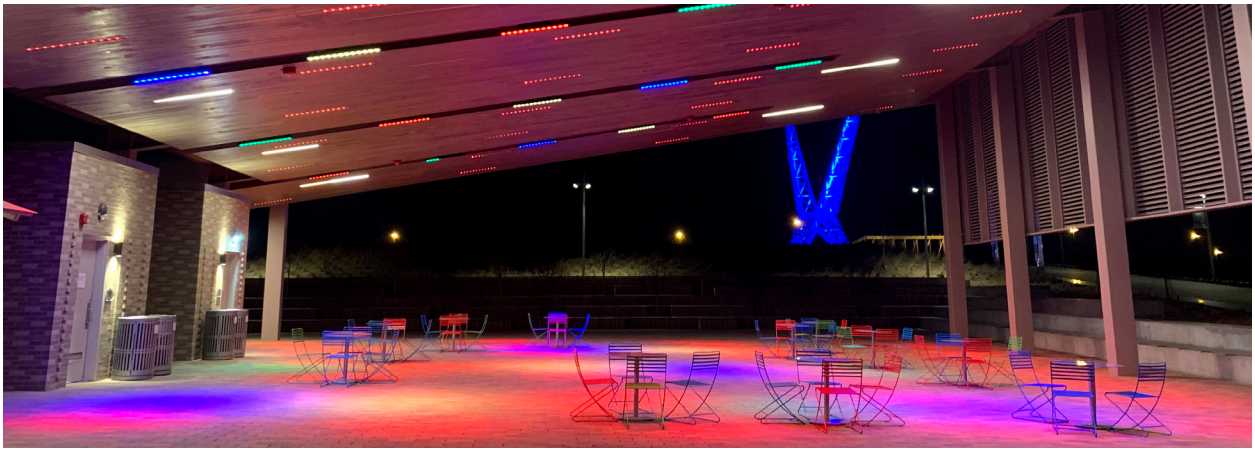
Training and Staff Support

Training is an essential component for local agencies to administer transit services. Both ODOT and OTA should offer training through statewide and regional in-person sessions as well as virtual webinars. Administrative staff should receive training to ensure core competencies are met in the implementation of transit programs statewide. Training opportunities should provide guidance on grant and program opportunities, drug and alcohol training, civil rights and equity, transit-oriented development, succession planning, and various other topics as needed. Driver safety training is critical to the delivery of service, be it in the form of passenger assistance training, cleaning protocols (both during and post-COVID), or safety operations.

In order to meet the milestones laid out in this Plan, additional planning and management resources will be necessary, internal to ODOT, OTA, and statewide. Regionally-based mobility management efforts are essential to providing mobility for all. While these resources do not necessarily need to be housed within the OMPT, consideration should be given to how best to support the overall statewide efforts.

FUNDING PROGRAM ALIGNMENT

Multiple options to fund the Strategic Investment Schedule over the course of the next 20 years are outlined in this Plan. Public policies, administrative codes, and funding programs should be in alignment with the focus of this Plan. Allowing for flexibility among funding programs is needed to ensure state and local agencies can maximize how funding is used for transit. In addition, federal and state requirements need to allow for more flexible funding options for transit agencies to provide mobility for all.



PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Performance measurement is a means by which state agencies and local transit systems can track progress toward the achievement of goals and strategies. A 2011 study of the use of performance measures for transit program planning, management and oversight found that approximately two-thirds of states use some type of performance measures as part of their program management.[1] Additionally, the Government Performance and Accountability Act of 1993 requires federally funded programs to establish and track performance measures. Program managers and state agencies should measure performance to assess the benefits and outcomes of investment in public programs, managerial efficiency, and administrative accountability to determine the effectiveness of the transit services provided throughout the state.

For the purposes of Plan implementation, it is important for ODOT and stakeholders to consider the establishment of a series of performance measures. To ensure consistency and meet the mission of this Plan, measures should be implemented at state and local levels.

1 National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine 2011. State DOT Public Transportation Performance Measures: State of the Practice and Future Needs. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.https://doi.org/10.17226/14584

Vermont

The Vermont Agency of Transportation conducts an annual Public Transit Route Performance Review monitoring the performance of all routes and services operated by the state's transit agencies. This review is required by the state legislature. This process helps to ensure that public investment in transit is well spent by comparing performance at the route and service level. If efforts to improve performance are not successful, resources are moved to other projects that offer a higher level of performance.

Maryland

In Maryland, performance standards for local transit service are applied as part of the grant application process, with funding for continuation of different types of services evaluated against the appropriate standards. Services that need improvement are also a focus of the five-year transportation development plans, which review service quality as part of the evaluation process.

Florida

The Florida DOT Office of Transit publishes an annual Florida Transit Information and Performance Handbook that documents the state's fixed-route transit agencies' performance, including outputs and productivity. It includes measure of output, service level, and cost-effectiveness, allowing assessment of system improvements over time.

CONCLUSION

There is a considerable gap between the current level of transit funding in Oklahoma and the amount needed to achieve mobility for all. This Plan is designed to be incremental and should be a guide for strategic transit investments and policy recommendations over the next 20 years.

Transit is currently funded with federal, state, and local dollars and system revenues. The current level of state funding is relatively low compared to other states. There are options available for increased funding, most of which are at the state level and would require legislation to enact. Many states use a combination of sources to fund transit services, and it is likely that would be the case in Oklahoma as well.

Public transit can impact Oklahoma's statewide economy at a much greater scale than it is currently and can serve as a strong component of an economic recovery post-COVID-19. According to Oklahoma State University, public transit currently impacts the state's economy at $815 million annually.[2] With this Plan's projected doubling of transit service by 2040, the economic impact would grow to more than $1.6 billion per year.

To achieve these outcomes, it is critical for Oklahoma to develop policies and programs that work to implement the strategies laid out in this Plan, along with strategic investments to implement those strategies. Mobility needs in Oklahoma continue to grow. Time is of the essence for implementation of this Plan in order to achieve the goal of mobility for all Oklahomans.

2 Oklahoma State University, Spears School of Business Study, 2018

Glossary

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Accessibility: The extent to which facilities, including transit vehicles, are barrier-free and can be used by people who have disabilities, including users of wheelchairs and other mobility devices.

Activity Center: An area where there is a concentration of commercial and other land uses.

ADA Complementary Paratransit Service: Demand-responsive service operated by public entities in order to accommodate persons who cannot ride fixed-route services due to a disability. Public entities operating fixed-route services are required to provide complementary paratransit services meeting a set of service characteristics specified under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Alignment: The horizontal and vertical ground plan of a roadway, railroad, transit route or other facility.

Allocation: An administrative distribution of funds, for example, federal funds among the states; used for funds that do not have legislatively mandated distribution formula.

Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA): Passed by the Congress in 1990, this act mandates equal opportunities for persons with disabilities in the areas of employment, transportation, communications and public accommodations. Under this Act, most transportation providers are obliged to purchase lift-equipped vehicles for their fixed-route services and must assure system-wide accessibility of their demand-responsive services to persons with disabilities. Public transit providers also must supplement their fixed-route services with paratransit services for those persons unable to use fixed-route service because of their disability.

Amtrak: A quasi-public corporation created by the federal Rail Passenger Service Act of 1970 to improve and develop intercity passenger rail service throughout the United States.

Branch: One of multiple route segments served by a single route.

Bus: A rubber-tired road vehicle designed to carry a substantial number of passengers (i.e., 10 or more), commonly operated on streets and highways for public transportation service.

Bus Shelter: A building or other structure constructed at a transit stop. A transit shelter provides protection from the weather and may provide seating or schedule information or both for the convenience of waiting passengers.

Bus Stop: An area where passengers wait for, board, alight, and transfer between transit units (vehicles or trains). It is usually indicated by distinctive signs and by curb or pavement markings and may provide service information, shelter, seating, or any combination of these. Stops are often designated by the mode offering service, for example, bus stop, car stop.

Capital Costs: Refers to the costs of long-term assets of a public transit system such as property, buildings and vehicles.

Capital Improvement Program: The list of capital projects for a five to seven-year programming period.

Commuter Rail: Local and regional passenger train service between a central

city, its suburbs and/or another central city, operating primarily during commutes hours. Designed to transport passengers from their residences to their job sites. Differs from rail rapid transit in that the passenger cars generally are heavier, the average trip lengths are usually longer, and the operations are carried out over tracks that are part of the railroad system.

Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ): CMAQ funds are administered by the Federal Transit Administration with the objective of improving the Nation's air quality and managing traffic congestion. CMAQ projects and programs are often innovative solutions to common mobility problems and are driven by Clean Air Act mandates to attain national ambient air quality standards. Eligible activities under CMAQ include transit system capital expansion and improvements that are projected to realize an increase in ridership; travel demand management strategies and shared ride services; pedestrian and bicycle facilities and promotional activities that encourage bicycle commuting.

Coordinated Transportation Plan: Federal law requires that projects selected for assistance under three programs—Elderly Individuals and Individuals with Disabilities (Section 5310), Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC), and New Freedom—be derived from a coordinated transportation plan. Plans must be developed through a process that includes representatives of public, private, and nonprofit transportation and human services providers and participation by the public.

Cost-Effectiveness: Cost effectiveness is the cost per passenger trip. More precisely, it is the amount of money a transit agency spends to provide its service (either as a system or a particular mode of travel, such as bus or rail) divided by the total number of passenger trips. This only accounts for what it costs to provide the service and does not deduct fare revenues from the cost of providing the service.

Cost Efficiency: Cost efficiency of transit measures the economy by which transit operators deliver service; ability to provide service outputs within constraints of service inputs; and the ability to provide service outputs (i.e. vehicle hours, miles, etc.) as a function of the service inputs (i.e. labor, capital, etc.). These measures include operating expense per vehicle revenue mile of service and operating expense per vehicle revenue hour.

Curb-to-Curb Service: A common designation for transit services in which the vehicle picks up and discharges passengers at the curb or driveway in front of their home or destination. In curb-to-curb service the driver does not assist the passenger along walks or steps to the door of the home or other destination, in contrast to door-to-door service, in which passengers may be provided with an escort from the door of their origin to the door of their destination.

Cutaway Vehicle: A cutaway transit vehicle consists of a bus-body attached to a small- or medium-sized truck chassis. Cut-away buses are typically smaller than standard buses and are used for lower ridership routes or dial-a-ride or paratransit services.

Deadhead: Term to describe of a transit vehicle while not generating fare revenue or without passengers aboard, often to and from a garage, or from one route to another.

Demand-Response Service: A type of transit service where individual passengers can request transportation from a specific location to another specific location at a certain time. Transit vehicles providing demand-response service often do not follow a fixed route, but travel throughout the community transporting passengers according to their specific requests. These services usually, but not always, require advance reservations.

Density: Density refers to the number of people or the number of employees per square mile.

Disabled Individual: Any person who by reason of illness, injury, age, congenital

malfunction, or other permanent or temporary incapacity or disability is unable, without special facilities, to use local transit facilities and services as effectively as persons who are not so affected.

Discretionary: Subject to the discretion of legislators or an administrator. The federal Section 5309 New Starts Program is an example of a discretionary program.

Door-to-Door Service: A form of paratransit service that includes passenger assistance between the vehicle and the door of his or her home or other destination. Door-to-door service provides a higher level of assistance than curb-to-curb service, yet not as much as "door-through-door" service, in which the driver actually provides assistance within the origin or destination.

Express Service: Service that has fewer stops and a higher operating speed than regular service. Often used an alternative term for limited-stop service; when agencies provide both types of service, the express service tends to have much longer sections of non-stop running.

Fare: Payment in the form of coins, bills, tickets and tokens collected for transit rides.

Farebox Revenue: A public transportation term for the monies or tickets collected as payments for rides. Farebox revenue may include cash, tickets, tokens, transfers, and pass receipts. Farebox revenues rarely cover even half of a transit system's operating expenses.

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA): The FHWA is an agency within the U.S. Department of Transportation. The FHWA provides stewardship over the construction, maintenance, and preservation of the Nation's highways, bridges, and tunnels and conducts research and provides technical assistance to state and local agencies in an effort to improve safety, mobility, and livability.

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Flexible Funds: FWHA Flexible Funds (or flex funds) fund transit related activities. Flex funds are certain legislatively specified funds that may be used either for transit or highway purposes. The idea of flex funds is that a local area can choose to use certain Federal surface transportation funds based on local planning priorities, not on a restrictive definition of program eligibility. Flexible funds include Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Surface Transportation Program (STP) funds and Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ) and FTA Urban Formula Funds.

Federal Transit Administration (FTA): A component of the U.S. Department of Transportation that regulates and helps fund public transportation. FTA provides financial assistance for capital and operating costs and also sponsors research, training, technical assistance and demonstration programs.

Fiscal Year (FY): A yearly accounting period designated by the calendar year in which it ends (e.g. FY 2000). The fiscal year for the federal government runs from October 1 to September 30.

Fixed Cost: An indirect cost that remains relatively constant irrespective of the level of operational activity.

Fixed-Route Service: Transit services in which vehicles run on regular, pre-designated, pre-scheduled routes, with no deviation. Typically, fixed-route service is characterized by printed schedules or timetables, designated bus stops where passengers board and alight and the use of larger transit vehicles.

Frequency of Service: The number of transit units (vehicles or trains) on a given route or line, moving in the same direction, that pass a given point within a specified interval of time, usually 1 hour; also known as headway.

General Public: Refers to residents, employees, and visitors in the community.

Human Services Transportation: Transportation related to the provision of human or social services, including transportation for the elderly, people with

disabilities, and low-income individuals when the transportation is provided by an arrangement other than public service available to all. Examples may include dial-a-ride (responding to individual door-to-door transportation requests), the use of bus tokens and/or transit passes for fixed route scheduled services, accessing taxi vouchers and/or mileage reimbursement to volunteers or program participants.

Intercity Bus Service: Provides long distance service between cities, often as part of a large network of intercity bus operators (e.g., Greyhound, Trailways). Both express and local bus service may be provided.

Interline: Transfer of transit vehicles or trains between routes during a day to improve staff or vehicle assignment efficiency.

Intermodal: The ability to connect, and make connections between, modes of transportation.

Jobs Access and Reverse Commute Program (JARC): A federal funding program for work-related transportation for low-income individuals, authorized in the TEA-21 transportation funding act. The purpose of this grant program is to develop transportation services designed to transport welfare recipients and low-income individuals to and from jobs and to develop transportation services for residents of urban centers and rural and suburban areas to suburban employment opportunities. Emphasis is placed on projects that use mass transportation services.

Layover: Layover time serves two major functions: recovery time for the schedule to ensure on-time departure for the next trip and, in some systems, operator rest or break time between trips. Layover time is often determined by labor agreement, requiring "off-duty" time after a certain amount of driving time.

Local Match: For many Federal, State, and other grants, "local match" is required, meaning funding (public or private) that is generated in local places and/or by local agencies that is used to "match" other funds, per the grant requirements.

Local Service: Transit service that involves frequent stops and consequent low average speeds, the purpose of which is to deliver and pick up transit passengers close to their destinations or origins.

Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD): The Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) program is part of the Center for Economic Studies at the U.S. Census Bureau. The LEHD program produces new, cost effective, public-use information combining federal, state, and Census Bureau data on employers and employees under the Local Employment Dynamics (LED) Partnership.

Medicaid: A healthcare program for low-income and other medically needy persons, jointly funded by state and federal governments. The Medicaid program pays for transportation to non-emergency medical appointments if the recipient has no other means to travel to the appointment.

Medicare: Medicare is a national social insurance program administered by the U.S. federal government since 1966. Medicare provides health insurance for Americans aged 65 and older who have worked and paid into the system. It also provides health insurance to younger people with disabilities.

Metropolitan Planning Organization: The organizational entity designated by law with lead responsibility for developing transportation plans and programs for urbanized areas of 50,000 or more in population. MPOs set coordination standards and manage processes for selecting projects to be funded through federal transportation programs.

Metropolitan Statistical Area: A Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) is a geographic region with a relatively high population density. MSAs are defined by the Office of Management and used by the Census Bureau and other federal government agencies for statistical purposes.

Mobility Management Program: Mobility management is a strategic approach to service coordination and customer service that allows transit service operators to collaborate, create partnerships, and expand the range of viable transit options in communities.

Mode: A transport category characterized by specific right-of-way, technological and operational features. A particular form of travel, for example, walking, traveling by automobile, traveling by bus, traveling by train.

Mode Split: The proportion of total person trips that uses each of various specified modes of transportation.

New Freedom Program: A new program under the SAFETEA-LU federal transportation funding act, New Freedom is intended to provide capital and operating funding for service and facility improvements that go beyond those required by the ADA in addressing transportation needs of persons with disabilities.

Operating: Maintaining the ongoing functions of an agency or service. "Operating expenses" include wages, benefits, supplies, and services. "Operating assistance" is used to pay for the costs of providing public transit service.

Operating Assistance: Funding that helps support the day-to-day costs of operating or providing services; in transportation settings, this category often includes driver salaries and operating staff expense, as well as fuel, and other routine, ongoing costs of having and operating a transportation service.

Operating Costs: Non-capital costs associated with operating and maintaining a transit system, including labor, fuel, administration, and maintenance.

Operating Expenditure per Capita: Operating expenditure per capita refers to the amount of transit operating dollars spent per person in a city, region, or state. This metric is often used to compare funding levels across different regions or locales.

Paratransit: Types of passenger transportation that are more flexible than conventional fixed-route transit and as such are able to meet a variety of more specialized transportation needs. Paratransit includes demand-response transportation services, shared-ride taxis, carpooling and vanpooling, jitney services and other service models. This term is most often used to refer to wheelchair accessible, demand-response van service.

Passenger: A person who rides a transportation vehicle, excluding the driver.

Passenger Miles: The total number of passengers carried by a transit system for a unit of time multiplied by the number of miles (kilometers) they travel. The ratio of passenger miles (kilometers) and seat or place miles (kilometers) provides a measure of efficiency.

Peak/Off-Peak: "Peak" refers to the period of time when the maximum amount of travel occurs—usually also the time when the demand for transportation is the highest. The morning and evening peaks occur when the majority of commuters are traveling to and from school or work. "Off-peak" refers to the time outside peak travel periods.

Propensity/Transit Propensity: Transit propensity is a concept that measures the likelihood of using public transit. Indicators of transit propensity typically include low-income households, minority status, households with zero cars, and age.

Revenue Mile: Miles operated by vehicles available for passenger service.

Revenue Service: Transit service excluding deadheading or layovers or any service scheduled for passenger trips. Also known as service hours.

Reverse Commute: A commute in the direction opposite to the main flow of traffic, for example, from the central city to a suburb during the morning peak. Increasingly common with growth in suburban employment. Valuable to operator as

provides additional passengers and revenue at little or no marginal cost.

Ridership: The number of rides taken by people using a public transportation system in a given time period.

Ridesharing: A form of transportation, other than public transit, in which more than one person shares in the use of the vehicle, such as a bus, van, or automobile, to make a trip.

Rolling Stock: The vehicles used by transit agencies to operate service, such as buses, vans, cars, railcars, locomotives, trolley cars and buses, and ferry boats, as well as vehicles used for support services.

Route: A specified path taken by a transit vehicle usually designated by a number or a name, along which passengers are picked up or discharged.

Route Deviation: A type of transit service that operates as conventional fixed route bus service along a fixed alignment or path with scheduled time, points at each terminal point, and key intermediate locations. Route deviation service is different from conventional fixed route bus service in that the bus may deviate from the route alignment to service destinations within a prescribed distance of the route. Following an off-route deviation, the bus must return to the point on the route it left.

Scheduling: The planning of vehicle arrivals and departures and the operators for these vehicles to meet consumer demand along specified routes.

Service Area: A geographic area which is provided with transit services. Service area is now defined consistent with ADA requirements.

Service Span: The span of hours over which service is operated, e.g., 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. or 24 hr (owl). Service span often varies by weekday, Saturday, or Sunday.

Shuttle Service: Fixed-route service that connects a small number of fixed stops and operates at a high frequency, over a repetitive route.

Surface Transportation Program (STP): The Surface Transportation Program is the largest potential source of flexible funds from the Federal Highway Administration. It can be used for a broad array of highway purposes and flexibly used for major transit purposes. A few examples include buying buses, rail vehicles, or constructing fixed guideway systems like light rail or heavy rail.

Total Miles: The total miles include revenue, deadhead, and yard (maintenance and servicing) miles.

Transfer: A passenger's change from one transit unit (vehicle or train) or mode to another transit unit or mode.

Transit Center: A transit stop or station at the meeting point of several routes or lines or of different modes of transportation. It is located on or off the street and is designed to handle the movement of transit units (vehicles or trains) and the boarding, alighting, and transferring of passengers between routes or lines (in which case it is also known as a transfer center).

Transit Dependent: Those having to rely on transit services instead of the private automobile to meet one's travel needs; also known as a captive rider.

Transit Reliant: Someone is transit reliant when they have no other option for transportation.

Transit Riders per Capita: The number of people who ride transit compared to the total population in a city, region, or state.

Trip: A one-way movement of a person or vehicle between two points. Many transit statistics are based on "unlinked passenger trips," which refer to individual one-way trips made by individual riders in individual vehicles. A person who leaves home on one vehicle, transfers to a second vehicle to arrive at a destination, leaves the destination on a third vehicle and has to transfer to yet another vehicle to complete the journey home has made four unlinked passenger trips.

Unlinked Trip: The boarding of one transit vehicle in revenue service; also known as an unlinked passenger trip, or any segment of a linked trip.

Useful Life: The expected lifetime of property, such as vehicles, or the acceptable period of use in service when properly and regularly maintained. Useful life is used interchangeably with "service life."

Vanpool: A prearranged ridesharing service in which a number of people travel together on a regular basis in a van. Vanpools may be publicly operated, employer operated, individually owned or leased.

Variable Cost: A cost that varies in relation to the level of operational activity.

Vehicle Hour: Vehicle hours include revenue hours plus the time it takes a vehicle to travel from the garage to the end of the line.

Vehicle Miles: The number of miles traveled by a vehicle, usually calculated by mode.

Vehicle Revenue Hour: The measure of scheduled hours of service available to passengers for transport on the routes, equivalent to one transit vehicle traveling in one hour in revenue service, excluding deadhead hours but including recovery/ layover time.

Vehicle Revenue Mile: Miles operated by vehicles available for passenger service.

Wheelchair Lift: A device used to raise and lower a platform in a transit vehicle for accessibility by individuals using wheelchairs.

OKLAHOMA Transportation

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