TOPEKA METRO

Reimagined!

INVESTING IN OUR FUTURE!

LONG RANGE TRANSIT PLAN

March 2019

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Participants in the Topeka Metro LRTP include the following:

Organization and Role	Designee
TOPEKA METRO BOARD OF DIRECTORS	
TMTA Board Chair	Jim Ogle
TMTA Board Member	Jim Daniel
TMTA Board Member	Elsie Eisenbarth
TMTA Board Member	Rodd Miller
TMTA Board Member	Beverly Hall
TMTA Board Member	Scott Tummons
TMTA Board Member	Dr. Alan Bearman
TOPEKA METRO STAFF	
TMTA General Manager	Susan Duffy
TMTA Chief Operating Officer	Denise Ensley
TMTA Director of Planning	Edwin Rothrock
TMTA Special Projects Engineer	Andy Fry

Organization and Role	Designee
STEERING COMMITTEE	
At-large Passenger Representative	Nancy Johnson
Bartlett & West	Brian Armstrong
City of Topeka Engineering	Brian Faust
City of Topeka Engineering	Linda Voss
City of Topeka Planning	Taylor Ricketts
City of Topeka Planning	Bill Fiander
City of Topeka Public Works	Dr. Jason Peek
City of Topeka Traffic Engineering	Vito Trizuto
City of Topeka Traffic Engineering	Kristina Ericksen
Forge Young Professionals	Angel Romero
Greater Topeka Partnership	Barbara Stapleton
Heartland Healthy Neighborhoods	Lissa Staley
Kansas Department of Transportation	Mike Spadafore
Kansas Department of Transportation	Cory Davis
Metropolitan Topeka Planning Organization	Carlton Scroggins
Shawnee County Planning	Barry Beagle
Topeka City Council	Mayor Michelle De La Isla
Topeka Community Resource Center	Mary Thomas
Topeka Fire Department	Chief Craig Duke
Topeka Housing Authority	Sophie George
Topeka Housing Authority	Arnold Downing
Topeka Independent Living Resource Center	Mike Oxford
Topeka Police Department	Chief Bill Cochran
Topeka Police Department	Lt. Jerry Monasmith
Topeka Public Schools	Larry Robbins
United Way of Greater Topeka	Jessica Lehnherr
Washburn University	Dr. Alan Bearman

Topeka Metro Reimagined

March 2019

Prepared by AECOM

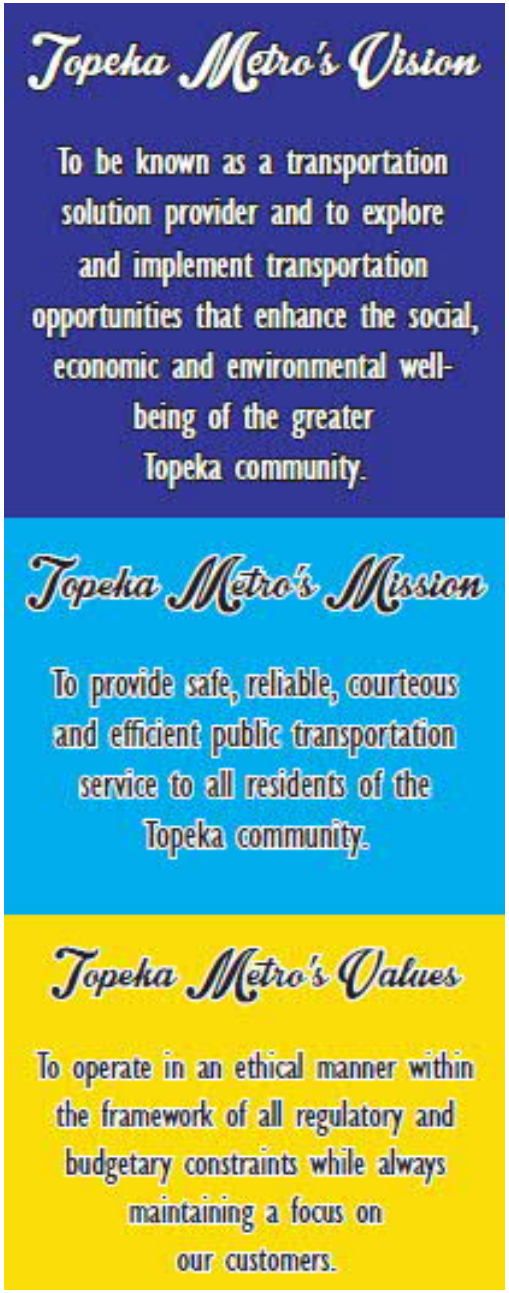
1 Introduction

Formed in 1973 by a vote of city residents (including a 1 mill property tax levy), to "plan, operate and maintain public transit services," Topeka Metropolitan Transit Authority (TMTA, or Topeka Metro) has grown over the past four decades into an award-winning leader in the transit industry. Once a small, privately owned bus service, Topeka Metro is recognized as a transportation solution provider, exploring and implementing transportation opportunities that enhance the social, economic and environmental well-being of the Topeka community.

In 2023, Topeka Metro will celebrate 50 years in operation and this milestone provides an opportunity to take stock of the current services, and more importantly, it is an opportunity to identify future mobility solutions that continue to enhance transit operations—for existing riders and to attract new riders.

In looking toward the 50th year, the Topeka Metro board and staff expressed interest in conducting a comprehensive assessment of the future-year transit needs of the community. As such, Topeka Metro has undertaken this Long Range Transit Plan (LRTP)—Topeka Metro Reimagined—to define a comprehensive vision supported by short-term, mid-term, and long-term strategies to enhance and grow the transit system over the next decade.

Topeka Metro Reimagined provides an opportunity to consider where Topeka Metro grows and expands service coverage, how Topeka Metro delivers services given new technologies on the horizon, and what Topeka Metro uses as the funding structure to maintain and expand services. As it was nearly 50 years ago, Topeka Metro is ready to address challenges that lie ahead to continue to provide Topeka residents this valuable mobility and community asset.



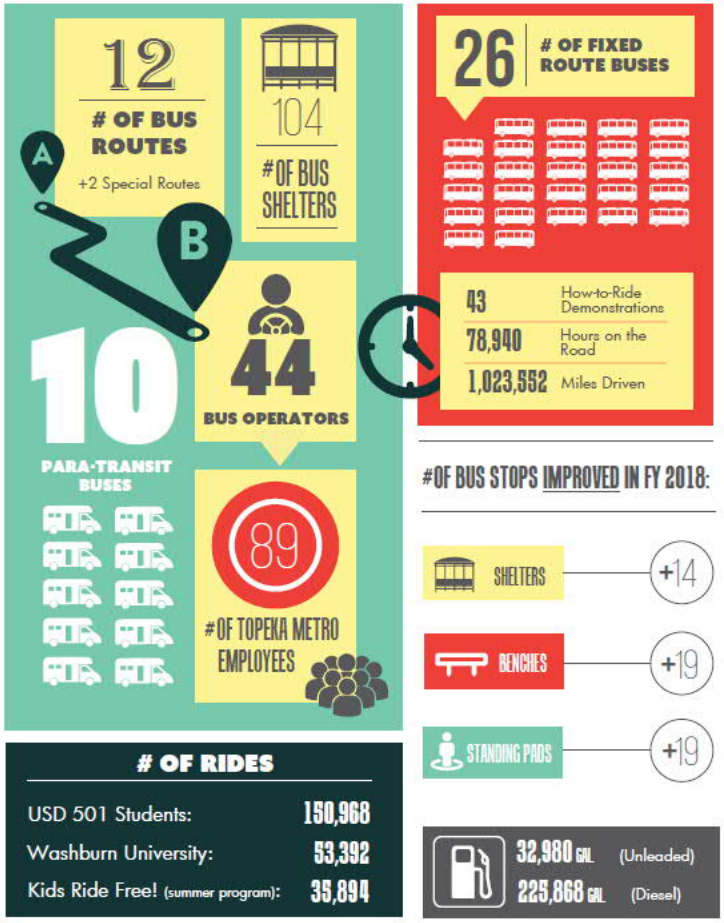
The Current System

Topeka Metro is overseen by a seven-member board of directors appointed by the mayor of Topeka and approved by the Topeka City Council. Topeka Metro's operational area covers the City of Topeka and a 90-mile radius from city limits, allowing the possibility of one day extending service to neighboring communities. Topeka Metro reached a record high of nearly 1.80 million rides in 2008, which coincided with nationwide high fuel costs.

As the Great Recession began in late 2008 and into 2009, two events impacted Topeka Metro that led to a steep drop in annual transit ridership. First, operational budget cuts resulted in significant service reductions, and second, unemployment levels grew because of the recession, resulting in fewer people riding transit to jobs. In 2011, Topeka Metro increased fares by 60% to help offset some of the funding issues–a move that devastated ridership. In recent years, Topeka Metro has rebounded to see steady ridership growth: it provided 1.28 million rides in 2018, including nearly 250,000 rides to area high school and Washburn University students. Topeka Metro has also been recognized for its success with several recent awards including:

- Kansas Public Transit Association – 2018 Transit of the Year award for:
  - Expanding routes and service hours
  - Magnifying the popular bikeshare program
  - Beginning the LRTP to guide the next 10 years of transit
  - Working toward 100% accessible bus stops
  - Collaborating with the local school district to get bus passes to every child in middle and high school
  - Offering free ride programming for special days/events
  - Collaborating with other agencies for last-mile and late-night service
  - A history of continuous participation in the MPO's transportation activities
- South West Transit Association 31st Annual SPOTLIGHT Awards for Transit Marketing Excellence. The campaign informed students and parents that Topeka Metro is a reliable transportation solution to get to school, helped the district cut down on truancy, and boosted student ridership by 40% versus the previous school year.

Topeka Metro Snapshot – FY 2018



Source: Topeka Metro.

A Look Forward: Reimagining the System

Why Plan?

Topeka Metro aims to provide transportation solutions to enhance the social, economic and environmental well-being of the greater Topeka community. To accomplish this vision, it is critical to understand why Topeka Metro has been successful in providing services, and it is equally important to identify and address future year challenges and opportunities–whether it be an issue that needs attention in six months, or planning for a potential long-term investment that might not be fully implemented until five to ten years from now.

Through regular public outreach, Topeka Metro frequently receives feedback from the public requesting various service improvements ranging from relatively minor requests, such as adding trash cans at a specific bus stop location, to more involved requests including proposed route modifications, or requests to add new service to growing or developing areas of the community. As an agency, Topeka Metro welcomes and values public feedback as it is ultimately the best way to understand the customer's and community's immediate and long-term needs.

As service is reimagined and planned toward a sustainable future, public engagement will continue to be at the center of Topeka Metro's planning efforts. In fact, public outreach has been the driving force behind this LRTP effort including three extensive public surveys that were used to drill down to understand what the public–both current transit riders and non-riders–desires in terms of future service enhancements.

2 Public Outreach

Topeka Metro is committed to being a transportation solution provider, and processing feedback from its customers and the community is a main component of this LRTP. Better understanding the needs of existing riders—and learning more about what would encourage non-riders to use transit—is crucial in identifying the mobility solutions that will make public transportation a more convenient and viable option for Topeka residents and workers.

Listening to the Community

In the spring of 2018, Topeka Metro engaged in an extensive public outreach effort to help understand mobility challenges and needs, define a long-term vision, identify priorities, and identify strategies to implement service enhancements to achieve the vision. This effort was driven by three surveys—a statistically valid phone survey of 900 participants, and two MetroQuest online surveys that engaged over 1,200 participants. The following highlights a few of the many outreach activities conducted during the LRTP process:

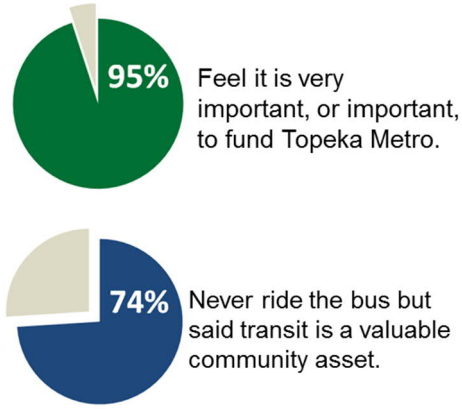
- **Statistically valid online phone survey (March)** 900 participants
- **MetroQuest Phase I (March – May)** 620 participants
- **MetroQuest Phase II (August – October)** 622 participants
- **Library open house (April)** 23 participants
- **Library open house (September)** 26 participants
- **Quincy Street Station events (May)** 47 participants
- **NOTO event (May)** 45 participants
- **NOTO Arts District (September)** 25 participants
- **Capitol Midweek Market (August)** 45 participants

Phone Survey

A statistically valid random phone survey of 900 Topeka residents, split into 100 surveys per city council district, was conducted in March 2018. This survey, reaching mostly non-riders, provided insight on how area residents view Topeka Metro services. The main takeaway from this survey is that respondents view the transit system positively and feel that public transportation is very important for the city regardless of how often the respondents use transit service.

Figure 1 provides a breakdown of the importance of funding Topeka Metro services (by frequent riders and non-riders). Support for Topeka Metro was extremely high with 95% of all respondents saying it is very important or important to adequately fund Topeka Metro services. This response was consistent across city council districts—with the lowest council district approval still reaching 89% approval for funding.

Figure 1: Importance of Adequately Funding Topeka Metro by User Type



Three out of four phone survey respondents never ride transit but still feel it is a valuable community asset. In total, nearly 95% of total survey respondents, consisting of mostly non-riders, indicated funding public transportation is either very important, or important, to Topeka area residents.

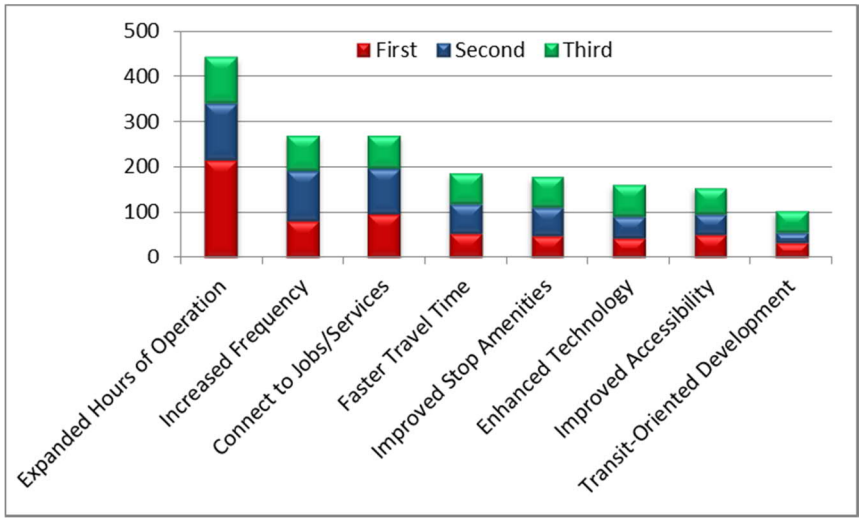
The phone survey further found that providing more frequent service was a priority for over half of all survey respondents. In terms of prioritizing service frequency improvements, if Topeka Metro focuses on the potential to grow ridership (i.e., occasional users and those who never used it but consider it necessary), the most important improvement could be adding earlier morning service. Meanwhile, adding night service (ending service later) appears to be a more important request for frequent, or transit-dependent, riders. Sunday service was also identified as important but was prioritized slightly lower compared to extending evening service.

When considering the geographic expansion of service coverage, or more specifically adding new routes, people say that bus stops being located close to home are somewhat more important than bus stops being located closer to work. This can be challenging to accommodate since residential development is generally less dense than employment-centered land uses, and thus more resource-intensive to serve by fixed-route transit. Finding new, and innovative, ways to link Topeka area residents to jobs, especially located beyond the current transit service area, is a future mobility need that must be addressed.

MetroQuest Survey #1

Topeka Metro conducted two MetroQuest online surveys as part of the LRTP process. The first survey (Spring 2018) recorded 620 survey participants with over 1,750 priorities ranked. Overall, 71% of survey respondents ranked expanded hours of operation as a high priority (expand hours of operation included a range of improvements such as adding earlier or later service, expanding existing Saturday operations, or adding new Sunday service). In total, approximately one out of three survey respondents identified expanded hours of operation as their top priority. Improving service frequency and connecting to jobs/services tied for second place—both were identified as top priorities by 43% of survey respondents. Figure 2 displays the number of survey respondents who ranked a priority as a first, second or third choice.

Figure 2: Top Priorities (number of times ranked)



Source: MetroQuest Survey (Spring 2018).

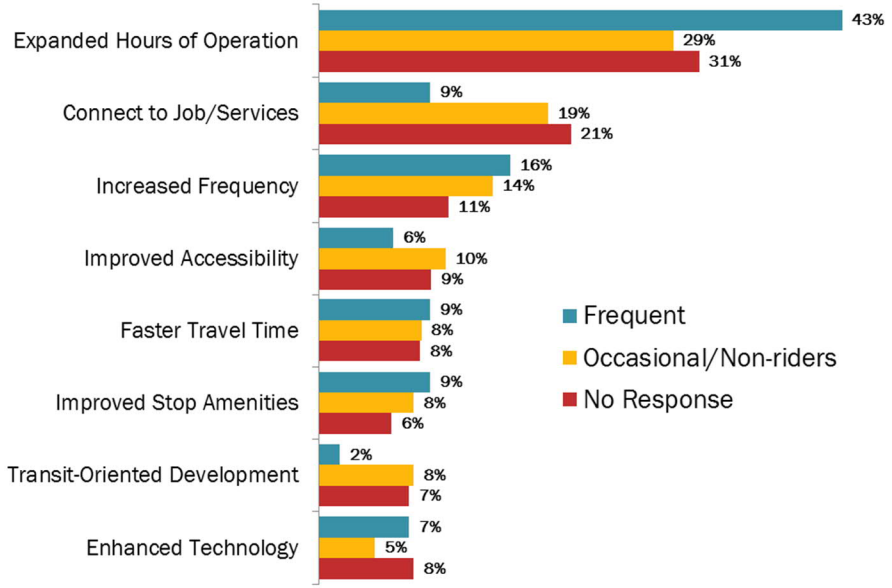
NOTE: Expanded Hours of Operation included adding weekday hours of service, expanding Saturday service, and adding Sunday service.

Transit service improvements are a priority among respondents: expanded hours of operation, increasing service frequency, and enhancing connections to jobs/services were the highest-ranked priorities among frequent and occasional/non-riders.

Figure 3 provides a further breakdown of the priority responses by frequent riders, occasional/non-riders, and survey respondents who did not answer the ridership question (no response). Survey results showed that 43% of frequent riders ranked expanded hours of operation as their top priority, compared to 29% of occasional/non-riders. After expanded hours of operation, there is a relatively large drop-off to the next category—emphasizing how important existing riders feel about the need to expand services. In the case of improving frequency, both frequent and occasional/non-riders have similar ratings (16% for frequent riders and 14% for occasional/non-riders). Connecting to jobs/services was rated more highly by occasional/non-riders at 19%

compared to frequent riders who rated this a top priority at 9%. This could be an indication that current transit service may not connect to some job opportunities within the city.

Figure 3: Top Priority by Rider Type



Source: MetroQuest Survey (Spring 2018)

Further analysis of the first MetroQuest survey results suggests that any expansions of service hours should focus primarily on extending weekday evening service (to end later), and adding Sunday service.

The first MetroQuest survey also included a mapping screen that allowed survey respondents the opportunity to identify transit-related issues. Nearly 1,000 markers were placed on the map and over 400 comments were provided. When given the opportunity to identify service enhancements, nearly 46% of survey respondents indicated they wanted to add a new bus route. Another 22% suggested extending an existing bus route. Table 1 provides a summary.

Table 1: Service Enhancements Marker Selections

	Count	Percentage
Add new bus route	67	45.9
Extend existing bus route	32	21.9
Other	20	13.7
Increase hours of operation	19	13.0
Increase frequency	8	5.5
	146	

Source: MetroQuest Survey (Spring 2018).

When asked to identify areas requiring additional transit service, survey respondents identified South Topeka (21%) and the Wanamaker corridor (20%) as the top choices. Table 2 provides a summary.

Table 2: Top Locations for Additional Transit Service

	Count	Percentage
South Topeka	131	21.5
Wanamaker Road	122	20.0
Downtown	102	16.7
North Topeka	86	14.1
East Topeka	74	12.2
Lawrence / Kansas City	61	10.0
Other SNCO Locations	33	5.5
	609	

Source: MetroQuest Survey (Spring 2018).

The majority of south Topeka is not currently served by transit and would require new service. By comparison, most of the other areas identified have existing bus service. When looking at these responses in more detail it was determined that respondents would like to see additional routes added within the existing service area. Specifically, respondents requested adding north-south routes, or a crosstown route, to provide direct service without having to transfer downtown.

MetroQuest Survey Comments

In addition to placing markers on a map to identify specific areas of concern, survey respondents were given the opportunity to provide open-ended responses. The following provides a sample of the nearly 1,000 comments received.

"Look at how individuals in wheelchairs, predominately motorized wheelchairs, would be able to safely access routes."

"There are too many areas outside of the current bus routes that cannot be reached unless you drive or have access to a driver. Areas such as beyond Wanamaker or further away from main North or East Topeka."

"There is no bus service in [outlying, or fringe] areas. I'm not sure how many would ride the bus to work, but asking persons in these outlying areas might be surprising."

"Plan specific locations for mobility hubs and Transit Oriented Development. City should adopt these into comp plan and begin process for overlays, parking requirements, etc."

"Better serve South Topeka plus more north-south routes in general without routing through Downtown."

MetroQuest
Engagement optimized

"Many people in North Topeka utilize bikes for travel, and they would probably prefer to have greater access to bike racks near bus stops."

"Include Sunday [bus service], not necessarily early morning hours, but late morning to early evening."

"I would like to see expanded services for Paratransit Lift bus users. Additional daily hours and weekend hours."

"Motorized wheelchairs have limited ability to access the majority of routes currently."

"More sidewalks need to link to the bus stop areas in North Topeka."

"When new development occurs, making these developments accessible by public transit should be considered."

"If you can't add a bus stop, then adding bike connections would make it easier to get to the closest bus stop..."

"More north-south routes that don't connect through Quincy Street Station."

MetroQuest Survey #2

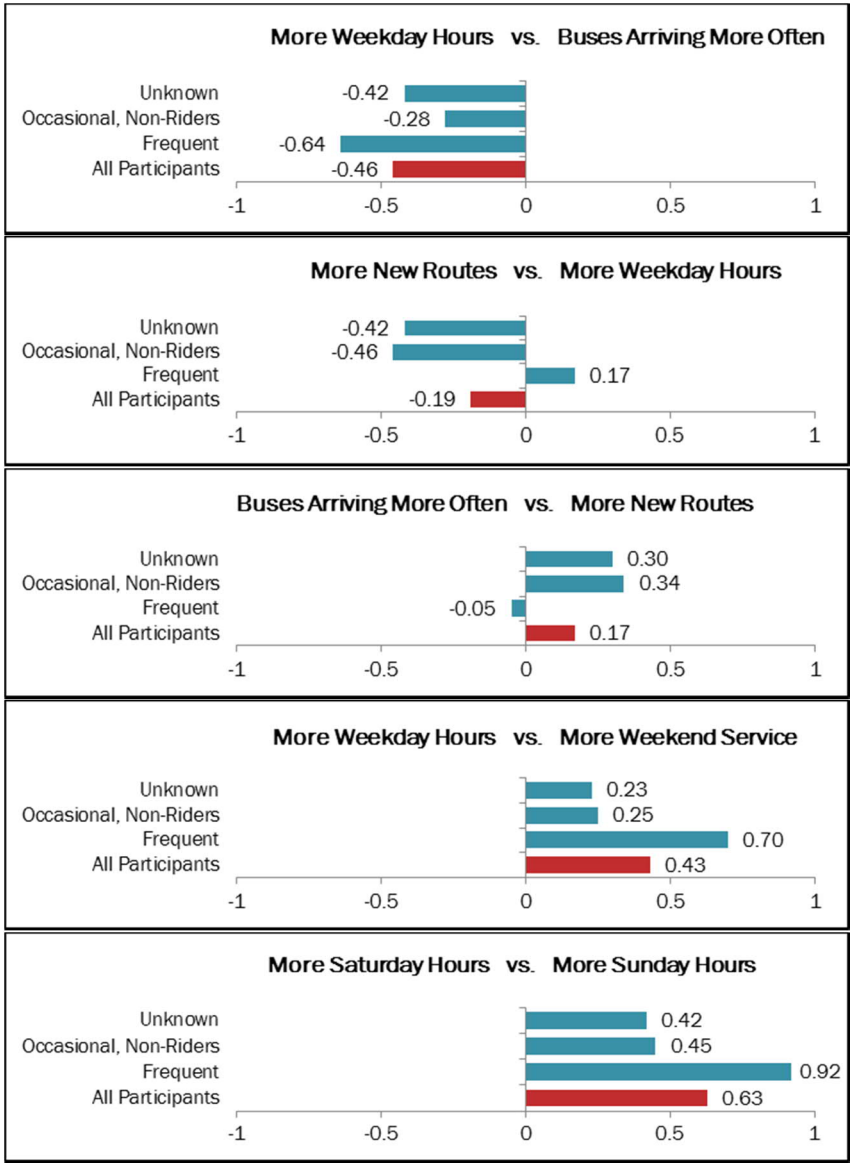
The second MetroQuest survey, conducted in Fall 2018, recorded 622 participants who provided input regarding tradeoffs among the different potential service improvements identified in the first MetroQuest survey. Participants also had the opportunity to allocate additional funding under a hypothetical scenario, and provided open-ended comments.

The survey tradeoff questions focused on identifying preferences between more weekday hours of service, increased frequency (buses arriving more often), and adding more (new) routes. There were also specific tradeoff questions related to weekend service (Saturday or Sunday service). Overall, there was strong support among survey participants to expand weekend service, and specifically to add Sunday service. When asked to select between adding weekday hours of service vs. weekend service, participants favored weekend service. When further asked to choose between expanding Saturday service vs. adding Sunday service, frequent riders felt the strongest about adding Sunday service by a four to one margin compared to expanding Saturday service.

Generally speaking, occasional/non-riders and those of unknown rider status had weaker preferences (i.e., were more neutral) than frequent riders in the tradeoffs. However, they showed greater consensus on the topic of adding new routes (Figure 4). Non-frequent riders had a stronger preference than frequent riders for adding new routes instead of more service (either in terms of service hours or service frequency). This might suggest they are not frequent riders at present because there are no bus routes available that would connect them to their desired destination. While frequent riders slightly favored later service or increasing frequency, a high number of frequent riders selected adding new routes. In fact over 100 frequent riders—nearly half—indicated that their preference was to add more routes.

Figure 4: Rider Type Tradeoff Preferences

(variance of average rank from neutral)



Source: MetroQuest Phase 2 Survey.

Survey respondents were also given the opportunity to state their preferences on how they would allocate additional funding for transit service enhancements.

The service improvement options included:

- Add Weekday Service Hours (0 hours to 6 hours)
- Add Saturday Hours (0 hours to 5 hours)
- Add Sunday Service (5 hours/half-day, or 10 hours/full-day)
- Buses arriving every 30 minutes (in increments of 2 routes)
- Add New Bus Routes (0 to 3 new routes)

The highest rating among the available choices was for adding new bus routes, which also received the second highest allocation of funding. In addition, more weekend service was more highly favored over longer weekday hours. The following summarizes the funding allocation responses by each category.

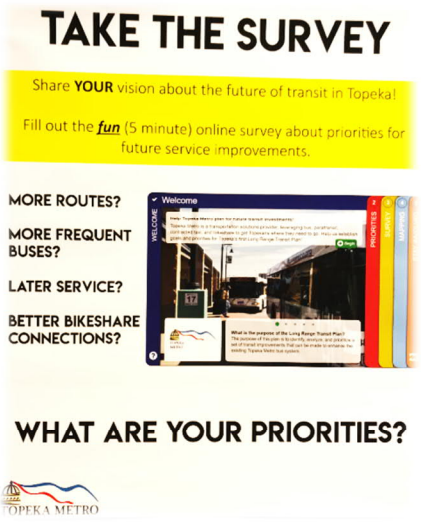
- ❖ When given the option to add new bus routes, survey participants indicated they would add an average of 1.75 new routes. The highest response for this particular category was 139 participants who indicated they would add three new routes.
- ❖ When given the options of adding a half-day of Sunday service vs. a full-day of Sunday service, the majority of respondents supported a half-day. However, there were 132 survey participants who supported a full-day of Sunday service.
- ❖ When given the option of adding weekday service hours, the average number of hours added was just over three.
- ❖ When given the option of adding Saturday hours of service, the average number of hours added was just over two.
- ❖ When given the option to increase the frequency of buses (arrive more often), participants would, on average, increase frequency on two routes. There were, however, a few participants (42) that would increase the frequency of buses across the entire system.

Taking into account the tradeoff results, along with the funding allocation preferences, the results suggest some larger themes to help guide the selection of preferred transit improvements. Perhaps the most surprising result was the fact that 57% of all survey respondents wanted to add new routes. In fact, 43% of all survey respondents wanted to add two or three new routes. While these findings don't necessarily mean that three new routes are needed within the Topeka Metro service area, it does reflect the importance placed on adding new routes to (1) serve areas within Topeka that are not currently being served, and (2) enhance operations within the current service area by providing more direct bus routes to reach desired destinations. When combined with other survey results from the MetroQuest Phase 1 survey, there is clearly a high demand among both frequent riders and occasional/non-riders for adding additional service as the top priority for Topeka Metro.

Open House Events

The first public open house (23 people signed-in) was held on April 10, 2018 to introduce the MetroQuest phase 1 survey. The open house included five interactive stations where attendees could talk about their transit priorities, strengths, and challenges regarding the current system. Consistent with the MetroQuest survey results, expanding hours of operation was identified as the top priority, but – unlike the survey – increasing frequency and connecting to jobs/services ranked lower among open house attendees.

The second open house (26 people signed-in) was held on September 18, 2018 to introduce the MetroQuest phase 2 survey. This open house included a station that displayed comments from the first survey, a station that summarized existing condition information focused on transit specific topics, and an interactive station that was used to demonstrate the MetroQuest budget slider screen. Attendees also had the opportunity to complete the MetroQuest survey at the open house.



3 Existing Conditions

Reviewing existing conditions in relationship to transit service, overall mobility, and projected growth can help identify potential existing or future year transportation challenges and/or needs. This analysis, when combined with the extensive public input regarding transit and mobility concerns, helps develop an action plan to address community needs, and aid in evaluating the success of future transit investments.

The following sections provide an overview of key topics such as land use and growth management, traffic impacts on transit, multimodal connections and regional commuting patterns.

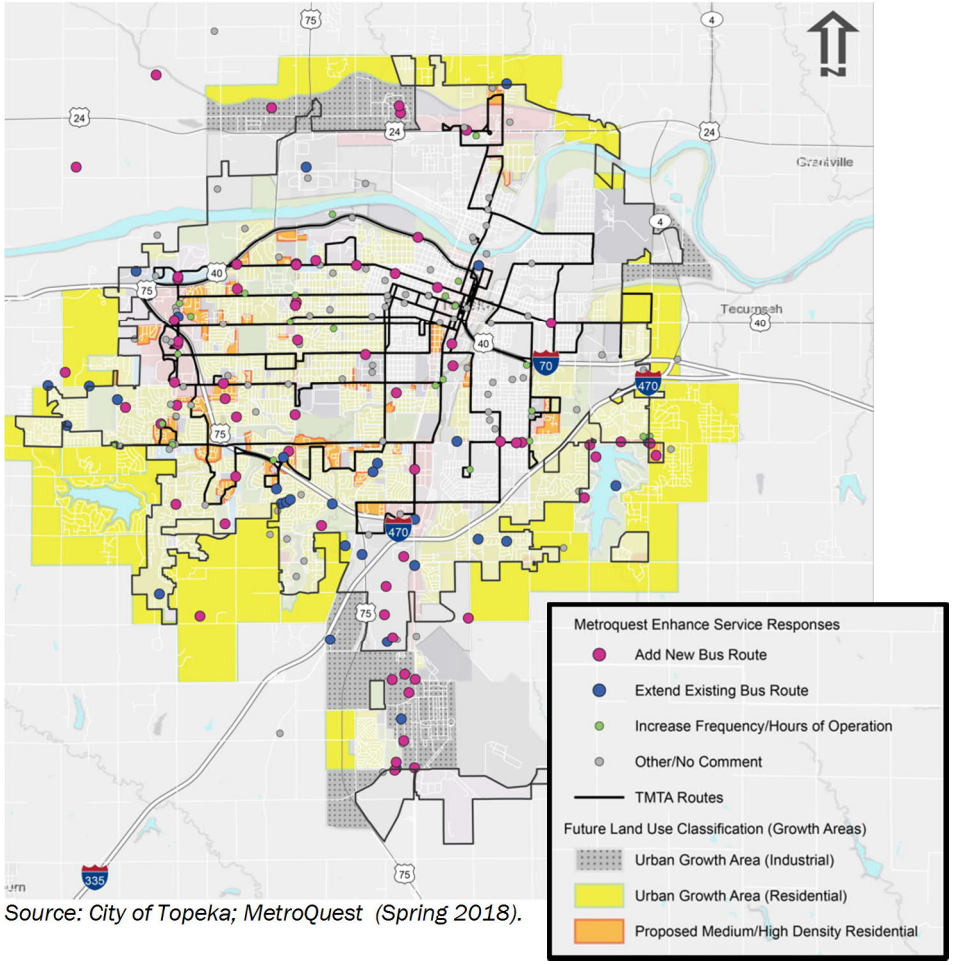
Land Use and Growth Management

In 2015, the City of Topeka approved the Topeka 2040 Land Use and Growth Management Plan (LUGMP), which recommends policies for the city, the Urban Growth Area, and Topeka's three-mile extraterritorial jurisdiction. A primary goal of the plan is to encourage compact, contiguous development in connected, mixed-use, walkable neighborhoods with a variety of transportation options.

LUGMP's guiding principles support transit as a strong, viable transportation option within Topeka, and support future connections to surrounding communities in the region.

Transit improvement opportunities identified by the public generally align with current transit service and land use as identified in the LUGMP. As shown in Figure 5, there is a correlation between growth areas on the fringe of urbanized areas of Topeka and survey respondents who identified the desire to add or extend bus routes. Most of the suggestions for new or extended bus routes in the urban growth area tend to focus on providing service to the industrial rather than residential areas (i.e., more concentrated and currently underserved potential commuting destinations rather than disperse origin locations).

Figure 5: Land Use and Topeka Metro Service
(combined with MetroQuest mapping)

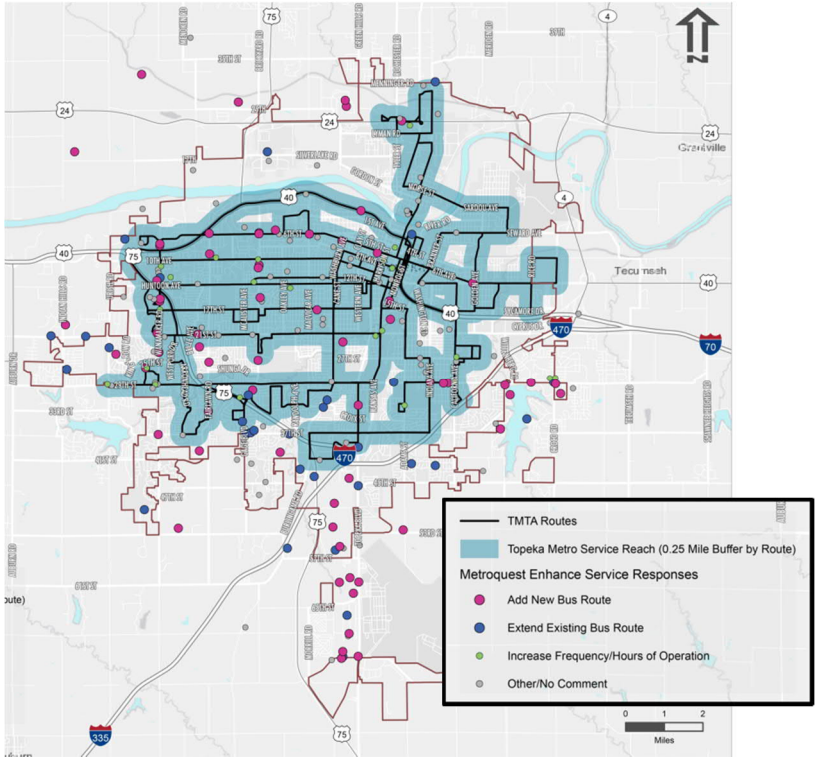


Source: City of Topeka; MetroQuest (Spring 2018).

Figure 6 represents the current service coverage area (¼-mile buffer, or 5-minute walking distance from a bus route). While Topeka Metro generally has widespread transit coverage throughout the urbanized

area, there are some noticeable areas where added transit service would enhance system operations.

Figure 6: Topeka Metro Service Coverage
(combined with MetroQuest mapping)



Source: City of Topeka; MetroQuest Survey (Spring 2018).

This is particularly the case in the following areas.

- **Residential Areas in West Topeka**: Survey respondents identified Gage Boulevard, along with nearby parallel corridors, as an opportunity to add a new bus route serving as a north-south connector between existing east-west routes. This was mentioned as an opportunity to eliminate the need for some downtown transfers—resulting in more direct, faster trips.
- **Commercial/Industrial Areas in South Topeka**: Survey respondents support adding bus routes to serve the southern fringe of the urbanized area. This is a rapidly developing employment center but lacks transit service. Furthermore, given the distance from the downtown, it would be difficult to serve this area with regular fixed-route transit service.
- **Corridor Improvements**: The Wanamaker Road corridor has been identified as an area that would benefit from additional, or more direct, service. Survey respondents also expressed a desire to explore adding a north-south transit connection on the west side of the urbanized area (further east of Wanamaker Road). Another potential area that could benefit from enhanced service is in north Topeka along the US 24 corridor.
- **East-West Connectivity**: Eastern portions of Topeka's urbanized area were identified as a potential location for transit expansion. Lake Shawnee and surrounding recreational areas may hold potential opportunity for seasonal transit service options. The MetroQuest survey also indicated support for a new route, or extension of an existing route, to enhance east-west connections.

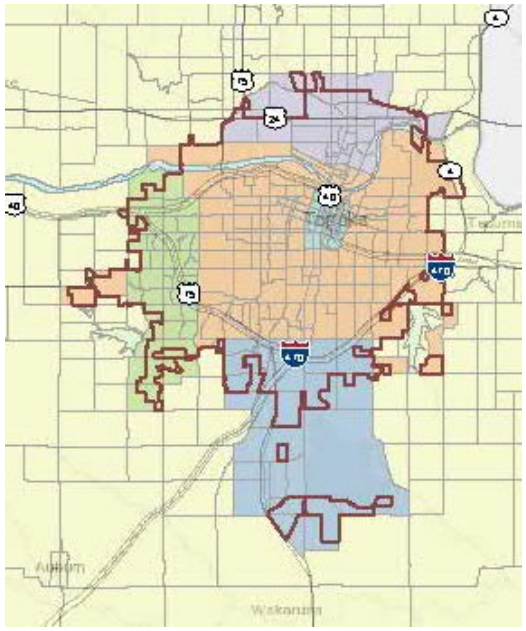
Future Growth Areas and Transit Service Coverage

Understanding current and future growth areas is important to identifying where residences and employment centers are currently well served, or poorly served. This in turn helps to prioritize areas where future transit service could be potentially extended, or new service introduced to expand mobility options.

Figure 7 shows the Topeka Metro transit service area, or potential service area, by planning area zone. Three areas that repeatedly have been identified through public outreach efforts as opportunities for expanded transit service are south Topeka, Wanamaker Road corridor and north Topeka. Some of the areas may currently have existing

service (such as the Wanamaker corridor) while others may have little service (such as south Topeka) but potential demand for transit.

Figure 7: Approximate Transit Service Area Zones



Source: AECOM.

Using the Metropolitan Topeka Planning Organization socioeconomic projections, used for the regional travel demand forecasting model, the 2015 and 2040 population and employment for each of the zones were identified. Table 3 summarizes the projected growth in the respective planning area zones. While population is projected to be fairly consistent across the urbanized area, north Topeka, south Topeka, and the Wanamaker corridor project a population growth of just under 1.0% compound annual growth rate (CAGR) from 2015 to 2040.

The zone with the highest projected growth for employment from 2015 to 2040 is the Wanamaker corridor with a 1.1% CAGR. South Topeka is projected to experience the next highest growth rate with a 0.9% CAGR. These growth projections reinforce the MetroQuest survey results where the public identified South Topeka and the Wanamaker corridor as opportunity areas to expand transit services.

Table 3: Population and Employment Projections (2015 - 2040)

	Population		Employment	
Subarea	2015	2040	2015	2040
City of Topeka *	89,653	95,527	40,387	44,063
Change		5,874		3,676
% Change		6.6%		9.1%
CAGR % Change		0.3%		0.3%
Wanamaker Corridor	22,586	28,338	19,404	25,387
Change		5,752		5,983
% Change		25.5%		30.8%
CAGR % Change		0.9%		1.1%
South Topeka	12,122	14,734	10,128	12,713
Change		2,612		2,585
% Change		21.5%		25.5%
CAGR % Change		0.8%		0.9%
North Topeka	7,505	8,917	8,606	9,595
Change		1,412		989
% Change		18.8%		11.5%
CAGR % Change		0.7%		0.4%
CBD	5,525	5,266	25,298	26,819
Change		-259		1,521
% Change		-4.7%		6.0%
CAGR % Change		-0.2%		0.2%
Outside Service Planning Area				
Shawnee County **	33,478	45,160	7,751	10,753
Change		11,682		3,002
% Change		34.9%		38.7%
CAGR % Change		1.2%		1.3%

SOURCE: Metropolitan Topeka Planning Organization, TDM socioeconomic data.
CAGR = Compound Annual Growth Rate
* Remaining areas within the approximate City limits of Topeka that are not included as part of the Wanamaker Corridor, South Topeka, North Topeka or CBD subareas.
** The remaining area of the County that falls outside the approximate City limits (or the five subareas listed in the table)

Table 4 summarizes the approximate population and employment (number of jobs) located within ¼-mile of transit service. This analysis is completed using the 2015 and 2040 population and employment totals.

Table 4: Population and Employment within Transit Service Area

	Population		Employment	
Subarea	2015	2040	2015	2040
City of Topeka *	89,653	95,527	40,387	44,063
Total within 1/4-Mile of Transit	70,761	73,580	35,052	37,602
% within 1/4-Mile of Transit	78.9%	77.0%	86.8%	85.3%
Wanamaker Corridor	22,586	28,338	19,404	25,387
Total within 1/4-Mile of Transit	16,257	19,617	17,383	20,824
% within 1/4-Mile of Transit	72.0%	69.2%	89.6%	82.0%
South Topeka	12,122	14,734	10,128	12,713
Total within 1/4-Mile of Transit	1,689	2,250	3,809	4,344
% within 1/4-Mile of Transit	13.9%	15.3%	37.6%	34.2%
North Topeka	7,505	8,917	8,606	9,595
Total within 1/4-Mile of Transit	3,538	4,217	4,098	4,477
% within 1/4-Mile of Transit	47.1%	47.3%	47.6%	46.7%
CBD	5,525	5,266	25,298	26,819
Total within 1/4-Mile of Transit	5,486	5,232	25,272	26,789
% within 1/4-Mile of Transit	99.3%	99.4%	99.9%	99.9%
Outside Service Planning Area				
Shawnee County **	33,478	45,160	7,751	10,753
Total within 1/4-Mile of Transit	816	983	140	207
% within 1/4-Mile of Transit	2.4%	2.2%	1.8%	1.9%

SOURCE: Metropolitan Topeka Planning Organization, TDM socioeconomic data.
* Remaining areas within the approximate City limits of Topeka that are not included as part of the Wanamaker Corridor, South Topeka, North Topeka or CBD subareas.
** The remaining area of the County that falls outside the approximate City limits (or the five subareas listed in the table)

In 2015, approximately 71% of Topeka residents and 82% of Topeka jobs were located within ¼-mile of transit service (based on the planning zones identified in Figure 7). In 2040, it is expected that the share of residents living near transit will decline slightly to 69%, and the share of jobs near transit will decline to 79% (assuming the same transit route coverage as today). This suggests land use policies that are more conducive to expanding residential and employment growth on the urban fringe areas are likely to continue. This further reinforces the importance of potentially adding or extending service, and exploring opportunities to implement better first- and last-mile connections.

When looking at specific planning areas, the South Topeka planning area has approximately 14% of residents, and approximately 37% of jobs, located within a ¼-mile of transit service. This area could see a very slight increase in residents living closer to transit by the year 2040, but the percentage of jobs accessible by transit will drop to 34%.

Traffic Impacts on Transit

The ability to provide safe and reliable public transit service is reliant on a comprehensive roadway network that is able to effectively accommodate transit operations. The Metropolitan Topeka Planning Organization (MTPO) Futures 2040 Long Range Regional Transportation Plan recognizes that a community's economy and quality of life are greatly impacted by its roadway network—as are public transit operations. Identifying opportunities to reduce vehicle congestion, improve traffic flow, and improve roadway safety can help facilitate the efficient operation of transit services, both now and in the future.

Traffic congestion and high crash locations can have a significant impact on transit operations, causing travel delays and hampering the ability to provide reliable, on-time service.

From 2015 to 2040, it is estimated that congestion will increase along several roadway segments in Topeka. For example, a significant increase in congestion is projected along Interstate 70 west of downtown Topeka, potentially having secondary traffic impacts on local area roads and potential transit operations as travelers use alternative routes.

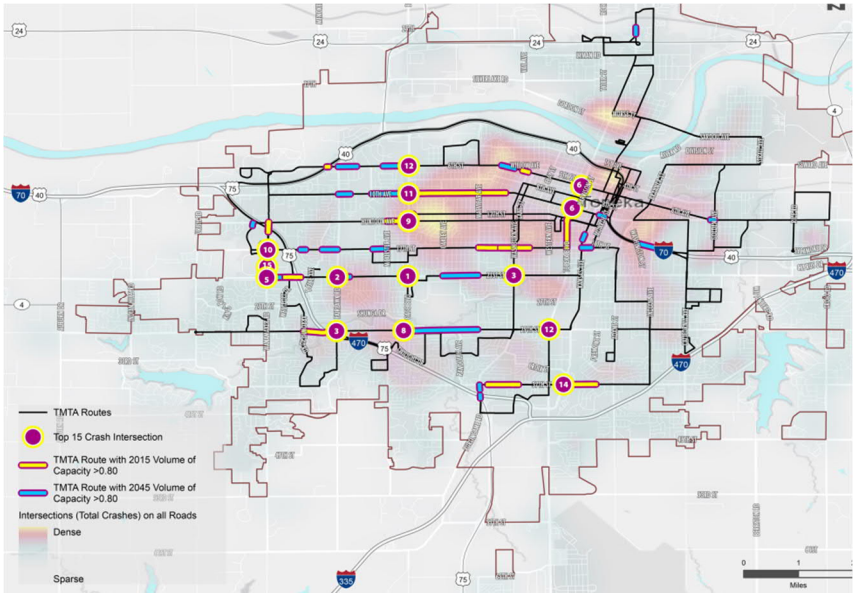
Figure 8 displays potential areas of traffic congestion along several existing transit routes. While this report does not project future transit delays, it does highlight potential impacts on transit operations (especially maintaining on-time travel times). For example, Routes 10 and 17 have the longest stretches of roadway segments with traffic volumes currently at or near capacity. Congestion along transit routes is projected to increase in the future as many of the roadways displaying congestion in 2015 add additional delay by 2040–which again could potentially negatively impact transit operations.

Road congestion generally occurs during the morning and evening peak travel periods–when bus ridership is also at its highest–and thus can adversely impact transit operations.

Not surprisingly, top crash locations are mostly concentrated within congested areas. Apart from the obvious public health issue, crashes have secondary impacts including traffic delays that adversely impact transit operations. Prioritizing intersection or corridor improvements at these locations not only addresses roadway safety concerns, but can enhance transit operations–both in terms of reduced travel delays and more importantly improved safety for individuals accessing nearby bus stops. Figure 8 shows that all of the top 15 intersection crash locations are on roadways where Topeka Metro currently operates.

The over-capacity/high crash rate intersections affecting transit routes are mostly located in neighborhoods west of central Topeka and at major commercial intersections near I-470 and the Wanamaker Road corridor. As provided in Table 5, primary crash locations are focused on the 21st Street corridor and Gage Boulevard (from 6th Street to 29th Street). Increasing congestion in developing parts of the city, mostly located on the fringe area, can potentially make it challenging to keep buses running on-time. In the case of Gage Boulevard, this is a corridor that has been suggested by some as a candidate for a north-south bus route.

Figure 8: Congestion (2015 & 2040) and High Crash Intersections



Source: City of Topeka (2015-2045).

Table 5: Top 15 Intersection Crash Locations (2015)

Rank	Location	Intersection AADT	Total Crashes
1	SW GAGE BLVD , SW 21ST ST	44,818	101
2	SW FAIRLAWN RD , SW 21ST ST	40,153	90
3	SW 29TH ST , SW FAIRLAWN RD	35,179	89
4	SW WASHBURN AVE , SW 21ST ST	41,140	89
5	SW WANAMAKER RD , SW 21ST ST	39,254	84
6	SW 10TH AVE , SW TOPEKA BLVD	37,095	82
7	SW 6TH AVE , SW TOPEKA BLVD	35,237	82
8	SW GAGE BLVD , SW 29TH ST	39,886	81
9	SW HUNTOON ST , SW GAGE BLVD	30,853	77
10	SW 17TH ST , SW WANAMAKER RD	29,545	76
11	SW 10TH AVE , SW GAGE BLVD	31,839	72
12	SW GAGE BLVD , SW 6TH AVE	27,977	71
13	SW 29TH ST , SW TOPEKA BLVD	40,747	71
14	SW 37TH ST , S KANSAS AVE	24,214	64
15	SW 19TH TER , SW WANAMAKER RD	26,763	63

Source: City of Topeka (2015).

Multimodal Connections

Providing connections between transit, pedestrian facilities, and bicycle facilities is critical to building a strong multimodal transportation system. Furthering this concept, the city adopted the Topeka Pedestrian Master Plan and Bikeways Master Plan to make Topeka a walk- and bike-friendly city for people of all ages and abilities. Locations that accommodate multiple modes are potential opportunity sites for creating mobility hubs—or areas that facilitate the safe and convenient transfer between travel modes. These locations could also be prioritized for supporting transit improvements—such as improved shelters, bicycle parking, or enhanced crosswalks, to name a few.

Following is an overview of pedestrian and bikeway facilities in the context of transit operations in Topeka. Reviewing these areas from the perspective of a multimodal network helps to identify barriers and potential opportunities for improvements.

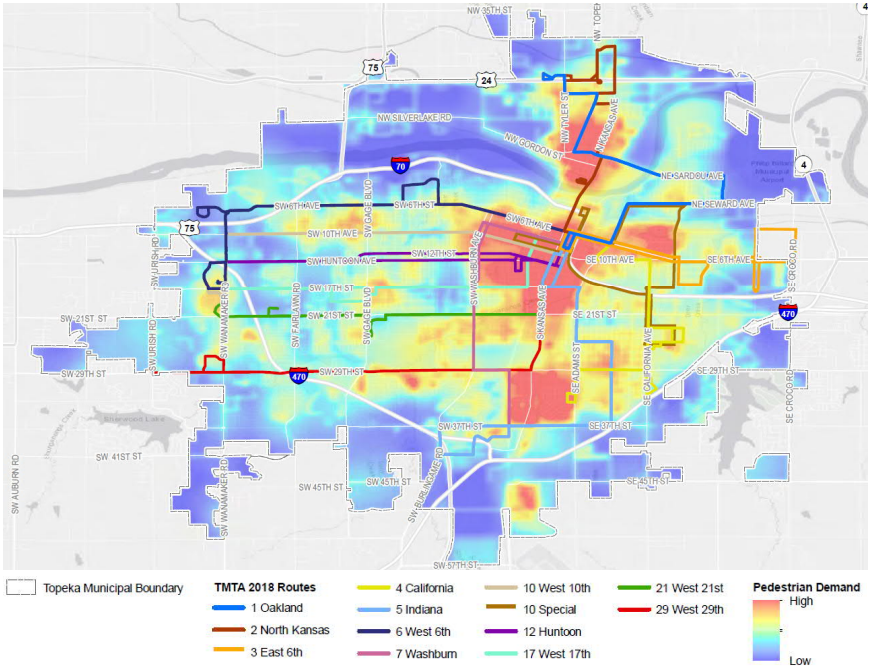
Pedestrian Connectivity

Walking is the preferred mode choice to connect to transit in Topeka. Existing transit users walking to the bus represent nearly three-quarters of trips for transit riders. Walkability in Topeka varies significantly based on local land use and development patterns. As development expanded from central Topeka outward, gaps began to appear in the pedestrian network. A 2015 sidewalk inventory of Topeka found 37% of streets in Topeka have sidewalks on both sides of the street, 22% have a sidewalk on one side, and 41% have no sidewalks at all.

Disconnected sidewalks negatively impact accessibility and can discourage potential Topeka Metro riders from using transit as well as transit-oriented development.

Figure 9 shows that pedestrian demand varies significantly from central Topeka to outlying areas. Demand within a mile of central Topeka is high, due to higher density, transit access and pedestrian-friendly infrastructure. There are also pockets of high pedestrian demand that exist outside central Topeka, but for the most part pedestrian demand generally decreases and auto dependency increases as you extend toward the fringe areas of the city.

Figure 9: Pedestrian Demand

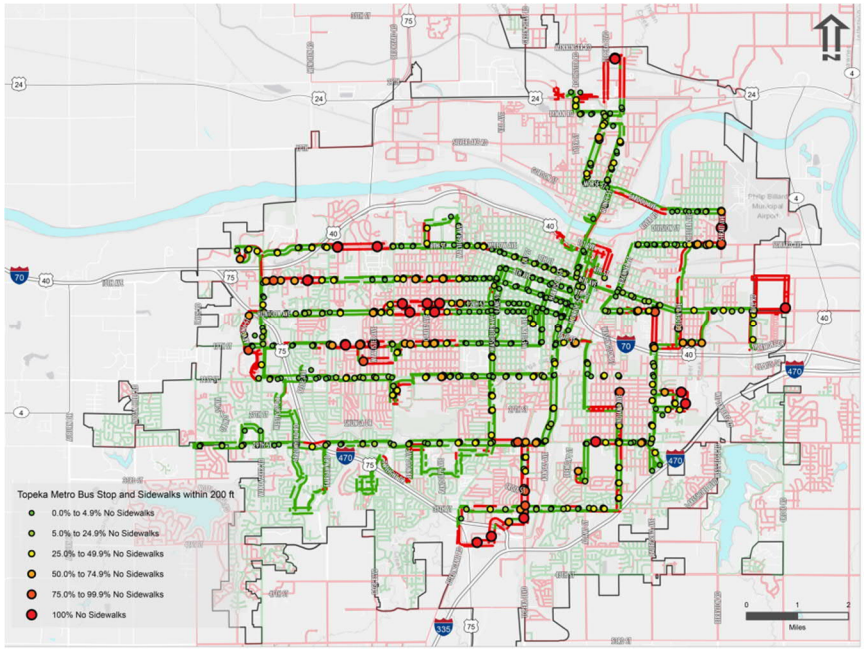


Source: City of Topeka.

Figure 10 provides an overview of Topeka Metro bus stops and the approximate percentage of sidewalks present near a stop (with the complete sidewalk network displayed in the background). Lack of sidewalks within 200 feet of a bus stop is represented by dots on a scale from green to red, with red dots representing large areas of missing sidewalk which could create barriers to access transit services. From an overall sidewalk network perspective, a significant gap in sidewalk connectivity exists along transit routes running east-west from central Topeka. From MacVicar Avenue to Wanamaker Road, sidewalks

commonly cover less than 50% of roadway frontage within 200 feet of a bus stop. Less than 50% sidewalk coverage also occurs at bus stops in southern Topeka.

Figure 10: Sidewalks and Bus Stops



Source: City of Topeka (2014). NOTE: Data is from 2014 and may not reflect recent sidewalk improvements. This graphic is intended to show a high level impact of sidewalk connectivity and as such specific locations should be reviewed for accuracy.

It is important to note that even if a bus stop is denoted by a green or yellow dot (indicating a sidewalk is present in the vicinity of a bus stop), it may still be located in a larger area of a disconnected sidewalk network. For example, 21st Street from Kansas Boulevard to West Ridge Mall (see Figure 11) is denoted as having a high percentage of sidewalks within 200 feet of bus stops. However, surrounding north-south roadways that connect to this transit corridor have no sidewalks and a narrow right-of-way, which is problematic from a pedestrian safety and accessibility standpoint.

Figure 11: Route 21 (21st Street & Randolph Avenue)

Source: Google Maps. **In this example, sidewalks are present along SW 21st at the bus stop location; however, there are no sidewalks that extend north and south from the bus stop making it challenging for transit riders to access areas beyond the primary transit corridor.**

It should be noted that Topeka Metro has been working toward a goal of having all bus stops 100% accessible by 2020. In addition, the City of Topeka is planning to upgrade some bus stop locations as part of planned roadway improvements over the next five years. Continued focus and coordination to fill in missing sidewalk segments will continue to enhance transit usage throughout the community.

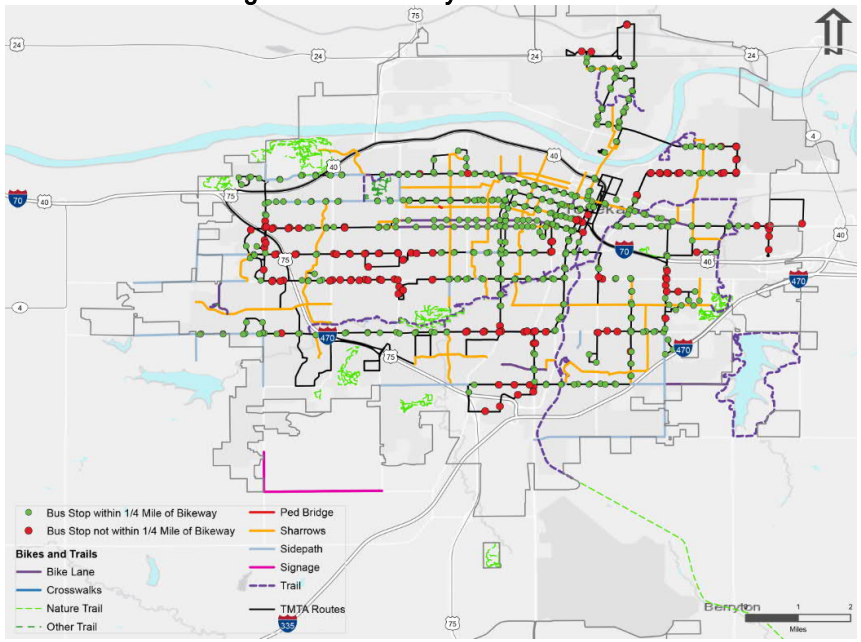
Bikeway Connectivity

Closely connected to the transit and pedestrian network are bikeway facilities. Topeka has made significant progress in establishing a vision for the region's bikeway network and the Topeka Bikeways Master Plan, adopted by the MTPO, has helped steer bicycle facility development in recent years.

Figure 12 provides an overview of existing bikeway facilities in the City of Topeka. Of the 592 total bus stops, 456 (77%) of the stops are located within ¼-mile of a bikeway facility. This represents a significant opportunity to potentially enhance connections between bike facilities and transit service—specifically enhancing first and last-mile connections.

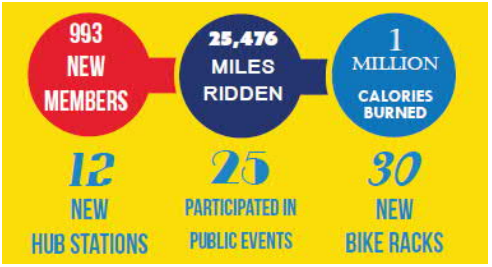
Bike facilities within Topeka's bikeway and trail network include bike lanes, sharrows (i.e., roads shared between cars and bikes, marked by arrows), sidepaths and trails. The network covers large portions of the urbanized area and commonly shares right-of-way with bike rack-equipped transit vehicles, offering increased mobility options.

Figure 12: Bikeway and Bus Network



Source: City of Topeka.

The existing bikeway network also now includes Topeka Metro Bikes (TMB), a bike share program operated by Topeka Metro that began in 2015 as the first bike sharing program in Kansas. In 2018, TMB riders made nearly 12,000 trips. The system plans to expand operations, which will increase the opportunities to link transit with bicycling. Furthering this idea, MetroQuest survey respondents indicated locations to add Topeka Metro Bikeshare stations and construct new bike lanes near bus stops. This feedback can help prioritize bikeway improvements at locations to increase the effectiveness of bicycle to bus connections.



The Topeka Metro Bikes bike sharing program added nearly 1,000 new members, 12 new hub stations and 30 new bike racks. In total, 25,500 miles were ridden in FY 2018. This program not only helps enhance connections to transit but also has significant health benefits for the community at large.

Service Coverage (Local and Regional)

Connecting Topeka residents to jobs and services is a primary function provided by Topeka Metro. As stated earlier, roughly 82% of jobs within the city are accessible by transit (within ¼-mile of a bus stop). Area residents also recognize the importance of connecting to jobs/services, as 43% of MetroQuest survey participants ranked this as one of the top three priorities for the agency.

For low-income workers, transit can connect them to work destinations that would otherwise be inaccessible due to high transportation costs. The large number of commuters entering and exiting Topeka on a daily basis points to the potential for regional transit.

Current transit coverage is focused on the City of Topeka, but there are a large number of commuters who travel into Topeka for work. In 2014, more than two-thirds (or about 15,000) of rural Shawnee County residents worked in Topeka, and over 31,000 commuters from adjacent counties entered Topeka for work. In contrast, there are almost 17,000 workers from Topeka and rural Shawnee County exiting the county for work. In addition, the I-70 Corridor Transit Feasibility Study conducted in 2014 by KDOT found the largest commuter travel movement along I-70 is Lawrence area residents traveling to work in downtown Topeka. The study further stated that the level of movement between the communities currently supports regularly scheduled commuter transit service.

4 Priorities

In order to identify future year transportation solutions, it is first necessary to understand the community's priorities. Priorities vary across people and organizations and this chapter summarizes the different priorities as voiced by the public through outreach efforts including phone and online surveys, in addition to the internally driven best-practices Topeka Metro applies to help ensure a sustainable long-term future. In order to address the mobility needs described in the previous chapters, projects and policies may be developed and–with enough financial support–implemented according to the priorities outlined in this chapter.

Topeka Metro Reimagined Priorities

Public Driven

1. Expanding Service Coverage (new routes)
2. Expanding Weekend Service (Sunday service)
- Expanding Weekday Service Hours
- Providing More Frequent/Faster Service

Agency Driven

- Promoting Transit-Supportive Policies
- Enhancing Customer-Facing Service Elements
- Enhancing County and Regional Mobility

Expanding Service Coverage (Adding New Routes)

The top priority coming out of the public outreach process was a desire to expand service coverage, or more specifically, a request to add new bus routes. A review of growth areas (both residential and employment) shows that they are primarily located on fringe areas of the City of Topeka, and there is support to extend existing routes, and/or add new routes to better serve these areas. Furthermore, the LRTP process has identified a desire for more direct transit service that could include a north-south route on the west side of town, a new route serving the industrial area in South Topeka, and a possible cross-town route connecting the east-west sides.

In reviewing survey data, riders and non-riders alike expressed their desire to have better access to employment centers and retail destinations that are currently either un- or under-served. When given the ability to identify where Topeka Metro should invest in improvements, over 80% of survey respondents wanted anywhere from one to three new routes.

Further analysis showed that while connecting to growing areas that may not currently be served is important, it is also important to add additional routes to eliminate the necessity of making transfers downtown. In this scenario, the new routes would overlap existing transit service to create additional transfer points at select bus stop locations. Both frequent riders and non-riders recognize the inconvenience of sometimes needing to transfer downtown in order to complete a trip and specifically note how these transfers dramatically increase travel times and discourage transit usage.

People living and working in Topeka value adding routes and providing more direct service, which should make this a top priority for Topeka Metro.

What the Data Tells Us

- Both frequent riders and non-riders support adding new routes, as indicated by phone and MetroQuest survey results.
- Non-riders want to improve transit connections to employment centers and other destinations along major commercial corridors. There are nearly 19,000 jobs in areas with limited or no service.
- In comparison with frequent transit riders, current non-riders have a stronger preference for adding new routes (selected over expanding service hours).

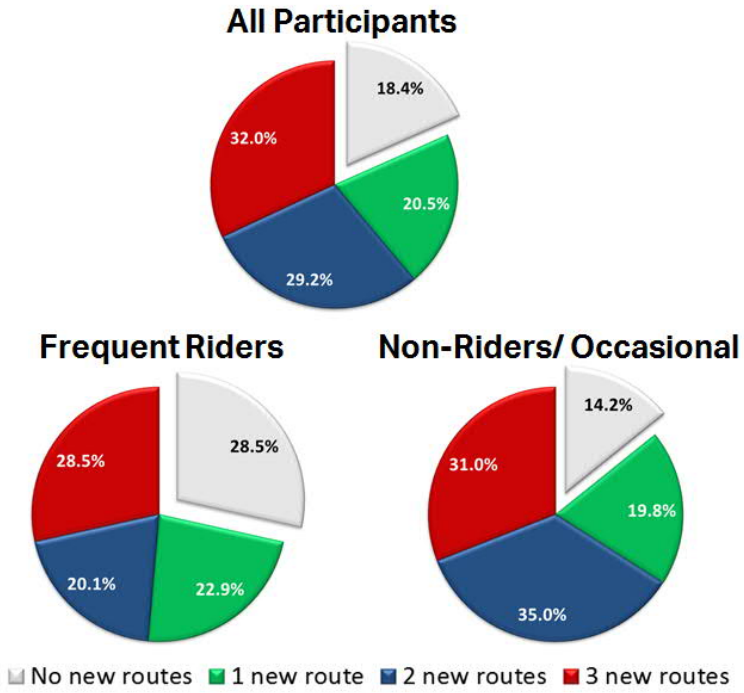
Purpose / Opportunity

Expand service coverage to fringe areas.

Increase access to job opportunities—ultimately connecting more people to jobs.

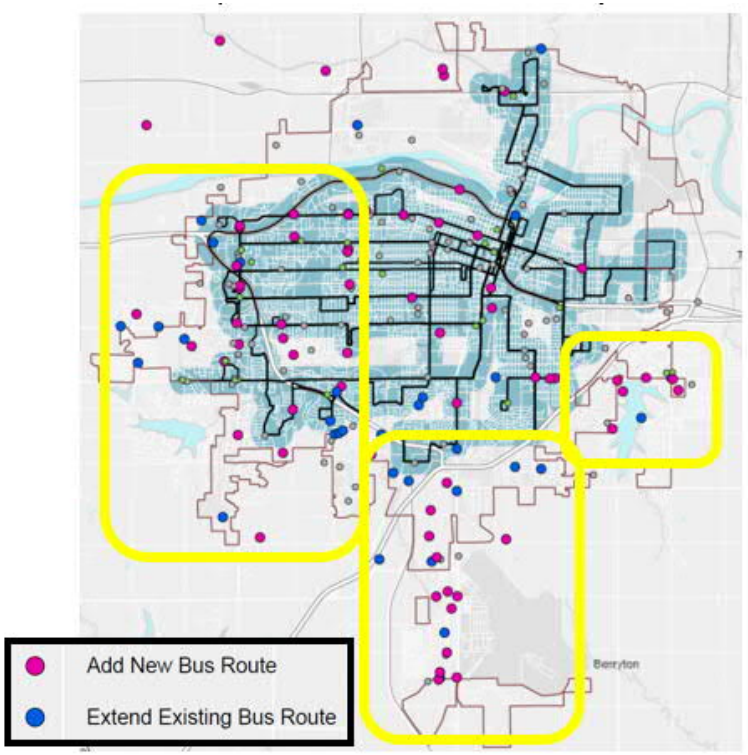
Provide more direct travel.

- ✓ Goal is to eliminate transfers and reduce travel times – make transit a more attractive travel option.
- ✓ North-south route(s) requested in the western part of the city would eliminate the need to travel downtown for all trips.
- ✓ Crosstown east-west route that eliminates the need for a downtown transfer is desired.



SOURCE: MetroQuest Phase 2 Survey; Budget Slider; Fall 2018
NOTE: Percentages may not equal 100.0% due to rounding.

When given a hypothetical funding scenario, approximately 82% of all survey respondents wanted to spend money to fund new transit routes. This percentage was slightly higher for non-riders/ occasional riders at 86%. Frequent riders also support adding new routes, with 72% wanting to at least one new route. Overall, approximately 30% of frequent riders and non-riders/occasional riders wanted to add three new transit routes.



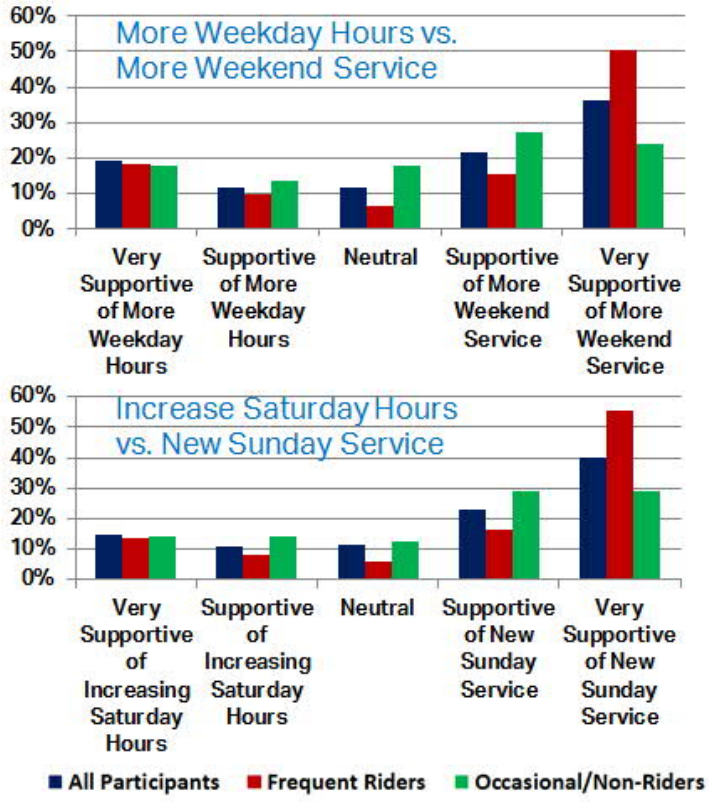
SOURCE: MetroQuest Phase 1 Survey; Spring 2018

The MetroQuest mapping exercise, along with open-ended comments, highlighted areas within the city that could potentially benefit from new or extended bus routes. These included the west part of the city where respondents indicated a desire for north-south routes, the southern portion of the City of Topeka to serve an expanding number of jobs, and to the east to support potential seasonal trips to recreational areas.

Expanding Weekend Service (Adding Sunday Service)

The second priority identified was expanding weekend service, and specifically adding Sunday service. Riders and non-riders alike favor improved weekend service over weekday service, with overwhelming support for Sunday service over expanded Saturday service. Several individuals indicate that a full day of Sunday service is critical to connect them to jobs with non-standard working hours (e.g., retail- or healthcare-related). For the same reason, increasing Saturday service hours to earlier in the morning and later in the evening was cited as an improvement that would help increase access to jobs.

Survey Tradeoff Results for Weekend Service



SOURCE: MetroQuest Phase 2 Survey; Fall 2018

What the Data Tells Us

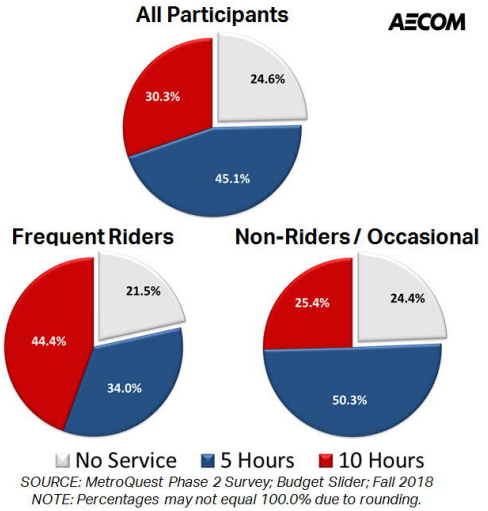
- Adding Sunday service was shown to be the highest priority among potential service hour expansions for frequent riders and non-riders alike.
- When asked to choose between increased weekend service hours or increased weekday hours, respondents support increased Saturday hours--especially current frequent transit riders.

Purpose / Opportunity

New Sunday service expands operations to seven days a week, providing more mobility options.

Enhance access to job opportunities.

- ✓ Sunday service is more than just "attending church" – non-standard work schedules would benefit from weekend service operations.
- ✓ Starting Saturday service earlier, and ending it later, provides access to more job opportunities.



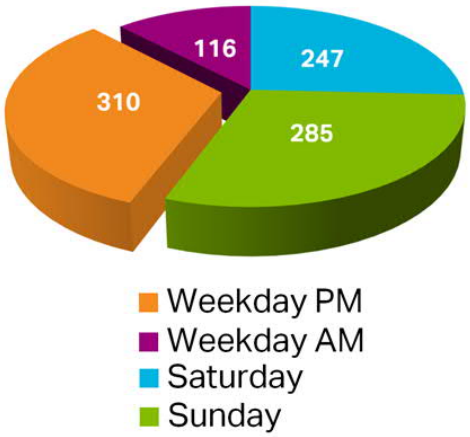
SOURCE: MetroQuest Phase 2 Survey; Budget Slider; Fall 2018
NOTE: Percentages may not equal 100.0% due to rounding.

Expanding Weekday Service Hours

While the existing weekday service hours serve many riders well, the LRTP process identified an opportunity to increase the hours to provide later service in the evening (some also expressed an interest in adding earlier morning hours). This improvement would increase people's transportation options and provide more flexibility in how they organize their days. For example, having transit options later in the evening provides people a safety net in case work runs late or they wish to make non-work related trips such as errands or attending evening social events.

Among existing riders, there appears to be a preference for more evening service as opposed to early morning service, though it is worth noting that the latter could also hold some potential to increase accessibility to jobs that have early morning shifts.

Number of Survey Respondents who identified Expanding Service Hours, across all times, as a top priority



SOURCE: MetroQuest Phase 1 Survey; Spring 2018

What the Data Tells Us

Looking at increased service hours as a whole, 34% of MetroQuest participants identified it as their top priority -- more than double the second-ranked priority.

MetroQuest survey respondents were more likely to support expanded weekday evening service than earlier weekday morning service. By comparison, 68% of phone survey respondents were more likely to support morning service as a higher priority. The difference is likely explained by the fact that the phone survey represents mostly non-riders.

Purpose / Opportunity

Expand evening service hours to increase mobility options.

- ✓ Later service provides a safety net in case work runs late.
- ✓ Provides flexibility to complete errands or attend evening social activities.

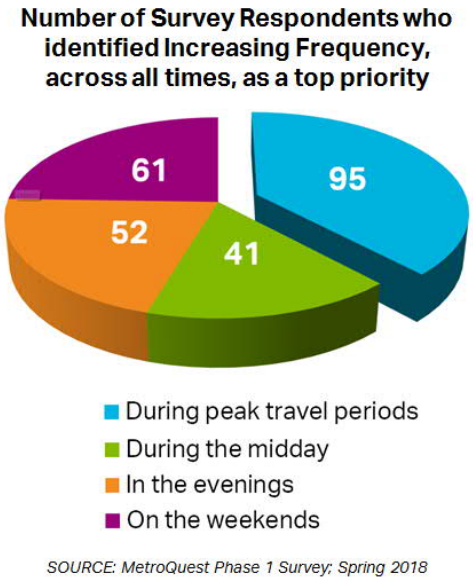
Expand morning service hours to increase access to job opportunities.

- ✓ Earlier start times increase access to a wider range of employment opportunities, including earlier morning shifts.

Providing More Frequent/Faster Service

Ensuring that buses run more often was identified as a second-tier priority during public outreach efforts, especially among current non-riders. Reducing headways—for example from one bus arriving every hour to one every 30 minutes—cuts down on waiting times and provides individuals with increased flexibility in completing their trip, as well as making transfers easier. Increasing frequency also has the potential to encourage people to use transit as they know that another bus will come along shortly, even if they miss their usual bus. The gains in flexibility and reliability can have a major impact on ridership.

When asked at what time of the day higher-frequency service should be implemented, the most common response was the peak travel periods. Aside from helping people to complete their daily commute more easily by running more buses during the typical morning and early evening rush, it would also help with congestion on local roadways if more people opted to ride the bus during rush hour.



SOURCE: MetroQuest Phase 1 Survey; Spring 2018

What the Data Tells Us

- 63% of phone survey respondents feel that infrequent service is an impediment to riding the bus. 64% of non-riders identified this as a high priority, suggesting they may be inclined to try transit with more frequent service.
- 43% of MetroQuest participants identified increased frequency as a top three priority, and 30% identified faster travel time in the top three.
- Survey respondents want buses to arrive more frequently during peak travel periods.

Purpose / Opportunity

Reduce headways, with buses arriving at stops more frequently.

- ✓ For example, buses arrive every 30 minutes rather than every hour.

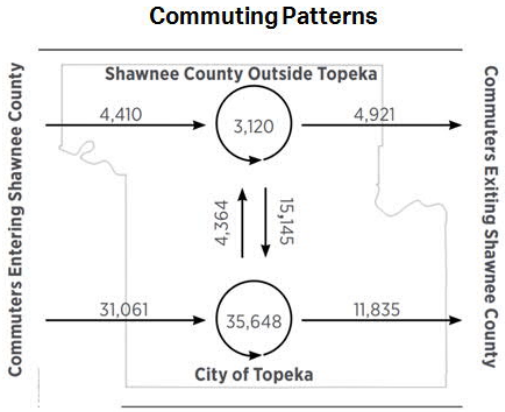
Reducing the wait time has several benefits:

- ✓ Shortens overall travel times.
- ✓ Provides flexibility for travelers who know their wait will not be “too long” if they miss a bus.
- ✓ Potentially attracts new riders.

Enhancing County and Regional Mobility

Topeka Metro has the uncommon ability to expand from an intracity to intercity transit provider. Tens of thousands of people flow in and out of the city for work each day, and currently there are no regional public transportation options available to help them make these trips. Topeka Metro continues to explore opportunities to expand mobility options both within Shawnee County (including ways to serve Medicaid trips) and beyond the county lines—up to a 90-mile radius. This could include markets like Kansas City, Lawrence, and Manhattan. Service outside the city is contingent upon funding partnerships with the adjacent governments.

Aside from growing transit's role in the regional transportation network, these intercity routes could help remove cars from the road, and reduce congestion and vehicle miles traveled in the metro area. It is also consistent with KDOT's long-term I-70 Corridor Transit Feasibility Study which found the current commuting patterns would support regional service between Topeka and Lawrence.



Source: Futures 2040 – Topeka Regional Transportation Plan,
Figure 3.5: Commuting Patterns for Primary Jobs between Topeka,
Rural Shawnee County, and External Counties.
Primary Data Source: 2014 Census Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics

What the Data Tells Us

Nearly 43,000 primary job commuters enter and exit the City of Topeka every day -- 72% entering and 28% leaving. Serving just over 2% of these trips would convert to 1,000 daily transit trips.

Survey results consistently show that providing more transit options to reach jobs (be it new routes to unserved employment clusters or expanded hours to accommodate non-standard work schedules) is what people value most.

Data also show that Topeka is the primary work destination for people living outside the City, but they currently lack transit options to reach this major job center.

Purpose / Opportunity

Expand mobility options within Shawnee County

- ✓ People travel into and out of Topeka on a daily basis, but are limited to traveling by car.
- ✓ Explore serving Medicaid trips.

Expand transit service beyond Shawnee County

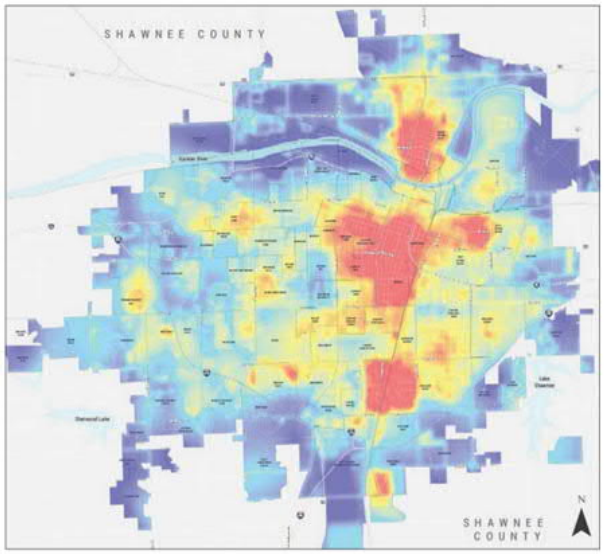
- ✓ Topeka Metro is positioned to operate within a 90-mile radius of the city boundary.
- ✓ Potential markets that could be served include Kansas City, Lawrence, and Manhattan.
- ✓ Consistent with KDOT long-term regional commuter service plans.

Promoting Transit-Supportive Policies

Successful transit depends on the implementation of transit-supportive land use and roadway-related capital improvement policies. Both the public and Topeka Metro know how important safe and convenient sidewalk and bike routes are for accessing transit. Similarly, proximity to higher-density residential or commercial land uses can be key to supporting transit use, so that riders don't have to walk long distances to reach their destination after they get off the bus

Ensuring that people feel secure and comfortable while walking to or from bus stops is a priority for the agency—one that is supported by the Topeka and Shawnee County Complete Streets Design Guidelines 2019. Ensuring agencies coordinate on potential multimodal connections, especially near Topeka Metro bus stops, can help bridge gaps in the sidewalk network and enhance overall transit operations throughout the city.

Pedestrian Demand Heat Map



SOURCE: Topeka Pedestrian Master Plan; adopted by City Council March 15, 2016.

What the Data Tells Us

- Survey respondents say that sidewalks and crosswalks are key to improving accessibility. Over 62% of the city's population and jobs are within 1/4-mile of a bus stop, indicating that it's typically not proximity that's the problem, but infrastructure and amenities.
- 72% of non-riders say they would not feel safe at bus stops. The most commonly desired amenities are sidewalks, shelters, benches, and lighting -- the basics of safety and comfort outdoors.
- Outreach efforts suggest a desire for bike-transit connections that would support both work-related and recreational bike trips.

Purpose / Opportunity

Provide safe and convenient first- and last-mile connections between modes

- ✓ Enhance the overall travel experience.
- ✓ Encourage increased ridership.

Advocate for Complete Streets implementation

- ✓ Accommodate pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders.
- ✓ Moving toward 100% accessible bus stops by 2020.

Promote strong land use and development policies to support transit services

Enhancing Customer Facing Service Elements

Transportation service technology and platforms are developing rapidly, and it will be important for Topeka Metro to take advantage of these opportunities. Topeka Metro recently received a grant that will allow Wi-Fi to be installed on buses and will support real-time tracking to see when buses will arrive at a bus stop. Additional improvements, such as mobile phone application platforms that allow transit agencies, transportation network companies (like Uber or Lyft), and other organizations to coordinate their transportation resources to help people get where they need to go, are being used in other cities and could one day help expand the mobility options for Topeka residents. For more dispersed workplace or school destinations, this could be a possible cost-sharing partnership aimed at boosting transit ridership.

Aside from providing enhanced service technologies to clients, Topeka Metro can also focus investment on delivering service more efficiently. The possibility of relocating the administration and maintenance facilities to a more optimal location can help to reduce operational costs. An investment in electric buses can cut fuel and maintenance costs and reduce the agency's environmental impact. Buses could be retrofitted to take advantage of new technology in electric-powered vehicles, and exploring this option is financially prudent.

Retrofitted electric bus

Real-time transit app on cell phone

What the Data Tells Us

- Demand for workforce and school transportation remains strong.
- Investing in electric buses reduces fuel and maintenance costs while having a positive impact on the environment.
- Modernizing the system addresses current rider needs and potentially attracts new riders.
- Relocating the administration and maintenance facility nearer to Quincy Street Station reduces operational costs and allows the currently occupied riverfront land at 201 N. Kansas to be redeveloped to a higher use (supporting ongoing redevelopment throughout the city).

Purpose / Opportunity

Expand partnerships

- ✓ Add additional on-demand workforce services to support economic development.
- ✓ Continue programs with USD 501 schools, Washburn University and coordinate with other institutions to increase bus use.

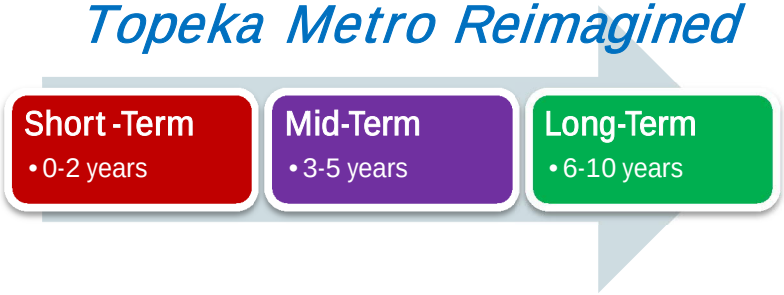
Modernization of service delivery

- ✓ Explore adding remanufactured and new electric buses to the fleet.
- ✓ Invest in improved user-facing technology such as real-time apps and Wi-Fi on buses to capture choice riders.

5 Reimagining Topeka Metro

Reimagining Topeka Metro means continuing to find new, innovative solutions in response to our current customers' needs, and identifying opportunities to attract new riders to grow our system. Overall ridership in recent years has been steady at a time when some agencies are experiencing declining ridership. New technology will soon allow riders to track buses and use Wi-Fi; however, the positive momentum surrounding new technology and service enhancements comes at a time of uncertainty in terms of funding, making it difficult to commit to specific projects until future revenue streams are identified. Regardless, this plan establishes an important vision for Topeka Metro to continue to grow over the next decade.

This section sets forth a high-level plan of action that is divided into short-term (the next 2 years, or approximately through the year 2020), mid-term (3 to 5 years), and long-term (over 5 years, or approximately up to 2030) transit system enhancements. The recommendations are the result of public input during open houses and other public meetings, LRTP Steering Committee meetings, and the input of planning staff and the Topeka Metro board of directors. Actions Topeka Metro takes to pursue the recommendations included in this long-range plan will be at the direction of the Board of Directors after a technical analysis of needs and capabilities and public input gathered during the process of developing an implementation plan.



Short-Term Recommendations

The LRTP process helped identify desired service enhancements, and Topeka Metro will strive to make these improvements a reality. The following summarizes the short-term improvements—some of which are currently funded through grants, others that are partially funded, and more involved service enhancements that will require additional revenues to implement.

Short-Term (0 to 2 years)

Implement top service enhancements: adding a new route and Sunday service.	Expand technology to improve efficiency, safety, and rider experience.	Identify preferred relocation site for the administration and maintenance facility.	Reach goal of 100% bus stop accessibility by the end of 2020.

Service Enhancements

The top improvements identified from public outreach were adding a new bus route (the top choice) and adding Sunday service. In order to move closer to implementation, it will be necessary to conduct further technical analysis and service planning of the proposed improvements. This will include identifying and evaluating a range of potential new routes, and preparing detailed cost estimates. It is expected that implementing a new route will necessitate the purchase of two new buses, and—consistent with Topeka Metro's focus on making technological improvements to modernize the system and increase efficiency—it is expected that these new buses would be electric-powered vehicles. Service planning to assess the potential improvements would likely take between six to nine months to evaluate potential routes, and ultimately identify a preferred route.

Regarding Sunday service, it should be noted that this is one of the more expensive service enhancement options and would likely require

a phased implementation approach. For example, demand response service could be introduced to provide limited service allowing additional time to evaluate the feasibility of a half or full day of service. The demand response service would also provide valuable data to help evaluate highly used origins and destinations that should be served by a potential fixed-route Sunday service.

Expanded Technology

Further implementation of expanded technology in the short-term is already planned for and funded. A long-awaited amenity for Topeka Metro passengers will be the installation of onboard Wi-Fi on buses, helping riders to spend their ride more enjoyably by surfing the web, completing work, or obtaining information about bus transfers, schedules, or destinations. Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) is a technology that will help the agency improve dispatching and bus tracking, and will supply the data for the new real-time bus location app and information signs at the Quincy Street Station and the Walmart West transfer center. Keeping riders informed of the arrival time of the next bus goes a long way to relieving anxiety and supporting more efficient trip-planning. Upgrading buses with security cameras transmitting live feed to the operations center will also help with another major passenger concern—that of safety. Lastly, as noted above, replacing the aging fleet with electric buses is a goal of the agency. In the short-term, Topeka Metro can begin to take steps to position the agency to apply for grants that will support the purchase of electric buses in the future, as the existing vehicles reach the end of their useful life in the mid-term (around 2023).

Administration and Maintenance Facility Site Assessment

The site of Topeka Metro's existing riverfront administration and maintenance facility has been identified as a potential redevelopment opportunity that would position the property for a higher and better use. To capitalize on the potential to both improve operational efficiency and contribute to the revitalization of downtown Topeka, this administration and maintenance facility can be relocated to another site. Topeka Metro is planning to complete a high-level site assessment in 2019 with MTPO funding that will evaluate three potential replacement sites. The site assessment could result in the identification of a preferred site for further detailed analysis, or could determine that additional locations might need to be identified and further evaluated. Additional information to help guide the overall Site Assessment Process is provided on the following page.

Accessible Bus Stops

A few years ago, Topeka Metro established a goal to have 100% accessible bus stops by 2020. While substantial progress has been made, state funding was not received this year, which has temporarily slowed progress toward reaching this goal. However, Topeka Metro is committed to finding alternative funding and implementation options, including working with the City of Topeka on upcoming street projects to leverage construction efforts and improve select bus stops when possible. Some of the potential corridors where bus stops could be improved in coordination with street improvement projects (likely to be some projects that would occur in the short-term and mid-term) include:

- 10th Avenue, Fairlawn to Wanamaker
- 12th Street, Gage to Kansas Avenue
- Huntoon Street, Gage to Harrison
- 17th Street, MacVicar to I-470
- 29th Street, Topeka to Burlingame
- Topeka Blvd, 29th to 37th

Aside from supporting ADA compliance, sidewalk improvements near bus stops improve public safety, which is a major priority for the community. Completing these improvements ultimately helps build a continuous, comprehensive sidewalk network that removes potential barriers to transit use and helps encourage ridership.

Site Assessment Process

Site Assessment

- Assess a number of potential sites (e.g., zoning, utilities, stormwater)
- Carry out high-level building programming based on existing facility, and future needs
- Develop a conceptual site and building plan (e.g., access, circulation, building facility layout)
- Conduct preliminary NEPA review (e.g., historical resources, wetlands, environmental justice)

NEPA Compliance to become "Build Ready"

- Using preferred location from Site Assessment, complete CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION checklist
- Areas of analysis include: air quality conformity, traffic impacts, noise and vibration, visual quality, saftey and security, environmental justice, among others

Seek Project Funding from FTA & Others

- Identify and prepare grant applications for relevant FTA grant funding sources
- Identify collaborative partners, including both public agencies and potential joint development partners for the vacated existing facility site

Sample Conceptual Site Plan for Bus Facility (University of Michigan)

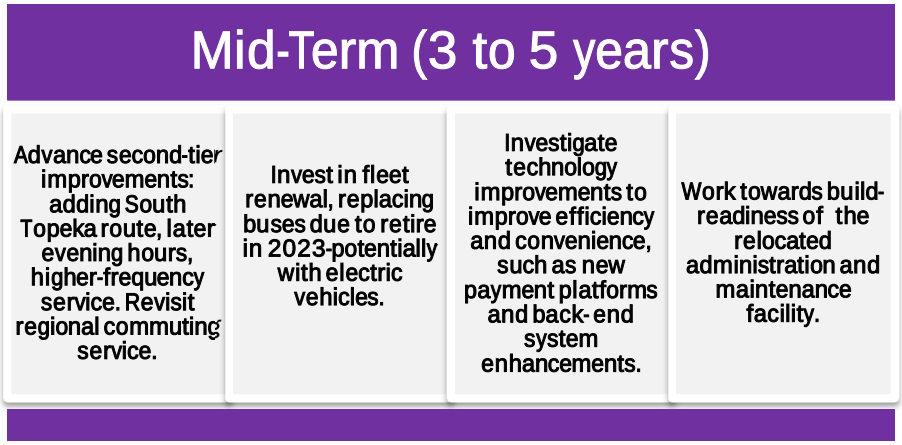
INFORMATION REQUIRED FOR PROBABLE CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION

(23 CFR Part 771.118)

a) DETAILED PROJECT DESCRIPTION
b) LOCATION (INCLUDING ADDRESS)
c) METROPOLITAN PLANNING AND AIR QUALITY CONFORMITY
d) LAND USE AND ZONING
e) TRAFFIC IMPACTS
f) CO HOT SPOTS
g) PM2.5 AND PM10 HOT SPOTS
h) HISTORIC RESOURCES
i) VISUAL QUALITY
j) NOISE
k) VIBRATION
l) ACQUISITIONS & RELOCATIONS REQUIRED
m) HAZARDOUS MATERIALS
n) SOCIAL IMPACTS AND COMMUNITY DISRUPTION
o) ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE
p) USE OF PUBLIC PARK LAND AND RECREATION AREAS
q) IMPACTS ON WETLANDS
r) FLOODPLAIN IMPACTS
s) IMPACTS ON WATER QUALITY, NAVIGABLE WATERWAYS, & COASTAL ZONES
t) IMPACTS ON ECOLOGICALLY-SENSITIVE AREAS AND ENDANGERED SPECIES
u) IMPACTS ON SAFETY AND SECURITY
v) IMPACTS CAUSED BY CONSTRUCTION

Mid-Term Recommendations

Over the mid-term, in approximately three to five years, it is likely for many of the improvements identified in the short-term to become a reality, pending funding availability. Assuming that the short-term projects are complete, Topeka Metro will move forward with advancing second-tier service improvements and additional enhancements. If the short-term projects are not completed, Topeka Metro will reprioritize projects based on the economic and operational feasibility.



Service Enhancements

Aside from the top-priority improvements (adding a new route and Sunday service, as discussed in the short-term), further service enhancements should be studied and prepared for possible implementation in the mid-term. Technical analysis and service planning will need to be undertaken to better understand the potential costs and benefits of additional service improvements. For example, surveys identified a potential new travel market in South Topeka, but the low-density industrial development pattern makes traditional fixed-route service challenging. There is good reason to explore the option of providing a commuter workforce route, potentially in partnership with local employers, rather than a standard fixed bus route. Other service enhancements include adding service later in the evening to accommodate shift schedules and non-work travel, as well as increasing service frequency, for example having buses arrive every half hour rather than every hour. While these would not be "new" services, they would still require additional resources in terms of personnel, equipment, and overhead, and thus should be studied carefully before any decision is made. Finally, the mid-term is a reasonable time frame to revisit the question of implementing regional commuting service with partners in Lawrence, Manhattan, and Kansas City.

Bus Replacement Investment

A major investment in the bus fleet needs to occur within the mid-term timeframe: 16 buses will reach the end of their useful life by 2023 and will need to be replaced. This will involve a major capital expense. It is recommended that Topeka Metro position itself to compete for federal grant funding to defray costs—particularly in pursuit of two or three of these vehicles being electric buses.

Continued Technology Investments

The sustained investment in updated technology should continue in the mid-term. With the completion of improvements such as AVL and real-time bus tracking and signs, attention can be turned to exploring alternative payment options for passengers. Digital or online payment options would be convenient for many riders, and especially useful when integrated in an app that also supports trip-planning services with live (real-time) updates. On the back end, improvements can be made to increase operational efficiency and dispatching systems to boost on-time performance and reliability.

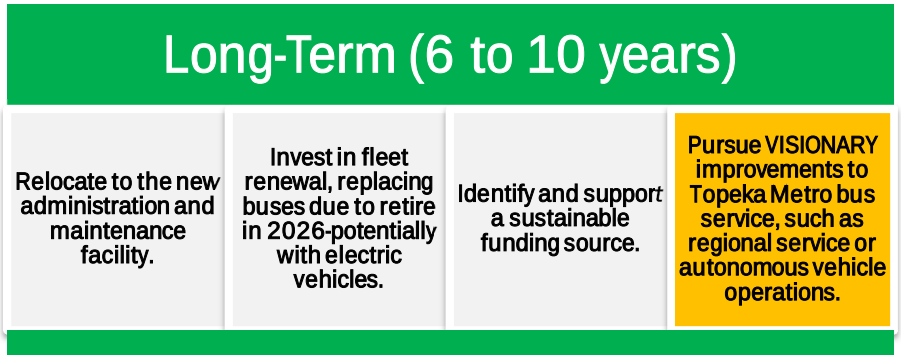
Build-Readiness for Administration and Maintenance Facility

Lastly, with the completion of the administration and maintenance facility site assessment in the short-term, more detailed analysis should continue in the mid-term to move toward build-readiness of the facility

relocation. This will likely include coordination with the City of Topeka and any other partners, including drafting Letters of Support. It will be important to properly position for and pursue funding or external grants for a major capital project like this facility relocation. Depending on the site selected, it may be necessary to acquire property, potentially including the assembly of multiple parcels, which can be time-consuming. With these steps complete, the project should be build-ready for potential construction in the long-term.

Long-Term Recommendations

In six to ten years, it will be possible to see the realization of currently planned projects like the administration and maintenance facility relocation, and at the same time seize the opportunity to explore and pursue visionary transit improvements, such as broadening the service area beyond the city limits, or introducing the first autonomous bus/vehicle operations. Identifying a sustainable funding source will be key to bringing long-term plans to fruition.



Relocate to New Administration and Maintenance Facility

With the mid-term steps completed, the relocation of the existing administration and maintenance facility should be ready for construction in the six- to ten-year time frame, freeing up the existing site for redevelopment. While the details of this construction phase are pending the outcome of the short- and mid-term planning activities, the project holds promise for both improved efficiency of Topeka Metro operations and the continued revitalization of Topeka's downtown.

Bus Replacement Investment

Bus fleet renewal must continue during this period, as 10 buses will reach the end of their useful life by 2026 and will need to be replaced. There continues to be an expectation that two or three of these buses will be electric buses, and that the agency will apply for any external funding available to defray costs.

Regional Commuting Service (Visionary)

This is also the time to dig deeper into the larger, visionary changes that the future could hold in store. A potential regional commuter market has been identified and may continue to grow over the coming years. Depending on the outcome of revisiting this topic in three to five years with representatives of Lawrence, Manhattan, and potentially Kansas City, this may be the suitable time to advance this transit service improvement to connect various regional centers that can currently only be linked by private vehicles. This type of project is only possible with regional coordination and the availability of state funding.

Emerging Vehicle Technology (Visionary)

As emerging technologies like connected and automated vehicles start making their way into everyday life, there will also be an opportunity to incorporate elements of this technology into transit service operations to better serve Topeka Metro riders. This could be in the form of automated buses in operation, automated maintenance processes, microtransit shuttles, or a number of alternatives that may emerge in the coming years. As these emerging technologies become a reality, they will be evaluated for the potential to make transit operations more efficient in the long-term future, thereby allowing Topeka Metro to deliver more transit service per dollar invested.

Service Planning Overview

Many considerations come into play when implementing new transit service. From the outset, it is important to define Topeka Metro's philosophy for service improvements. Where do the priorities lie: is it best to concentrate on coverage area or ridership? Frequency or additional service hours? Finding new markets or boosting existing ones? Some preferences have been answered through the LRTP outreach but additional planning is required.

Another important question is **how do we define success**? Generally, success is reaching the goals identified in the planning process—goals that reflect community values, the operating environment, and agency philosophy. Successfully achieving goals means hitting the performance measures that are tied to the goals.

Many planning guidance policies and regulations now require **performance-based planning**, in which performance measures for success are selected and tracked in order to know if the changes have been successful. This is considered a best practice in service planning.

In the case of transit, such metrics could include total ridership levels, farebox recovery ratios, or passengers per hour. Depending on the goals, it could also include metrics like service coverage rates, surveyed rider satisfaction levels, or cost per passenger. Defining the most suitable measures for the agency and the project is a key part of successful—and actionable—service planning.

We know that resources are limited and that implementing service improvements involves many considerations—typically resource-based, but not always. Service planning involves analysis related to the availability of operators and maintenance staff, fleet and capital needs, ADA and Title VI compliance, paratransit impacts, optimal service schedule and runcut, and marketing or promoting the new service. The outcome supports informed decision-making to achieve desired results.

Topeka Metro Improvements

Conducting this array of service planning analyses means that—in the case of Topeka Metro—it can take **three to six months** to implement added frequency or span of service, or **six months to one year** for adding new routes.

As an example, the considerations for adding a new route are summarized below.

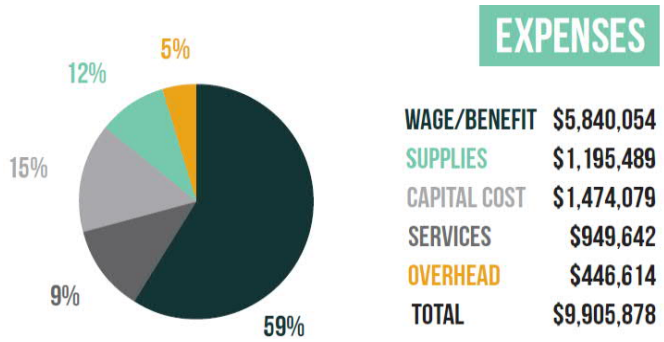
New Routes

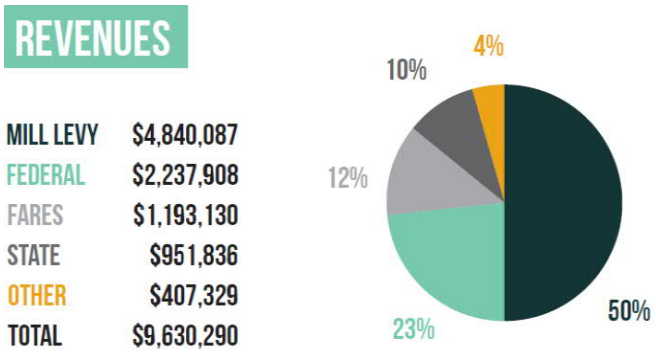
Selecting the new route	Develop schedules	Capital needs	O&M and capital costs
• Factors to consider: • Potential ridership, • Pedestrian access • Transit generators • Density	• Headways and spans of service • Runcut • Staffing needs (operators)	• Bus stops • Fleet needs	• Paratransit service costs • Additional labor cost estimates • Estimated cost to acquire or construct capital improvements

A timeline of activities for such a project might be six months to a year, and include the following tasks:

Funding

Like many transit agencies across the country, Topeka Metro faces the challenge of providing expanding services with a stagnant level of funding. Topeka Metro is fortunate to have recovered from the impacts of reducing service a decade ago but is again at a point where funding is being stretched to maintain the current service levels operating today. Expenses for fiscal year (FY) 2018 exceeded revenues by $275,000. Identifying a sustainable future funding source will be critical to the long-term viability even at current levels of service, without the strategic improvements outlined in this LRTP.





Source: Topeka Metro FY 2018 Annual Report

Expenses

Looking at historical spending data (see charts on next page), even setting aside the major capital outlay in 2014 (to replace ten 20-year-old buses, reducing operating costs), the combined annual operating and capital expenses have gradually risen from $8 million in FY 2010 to about $10 million in FY 2018. This equates to an annualized increase of about three percent–not including major outlays such as fleet renewal, which will require that many of the 26 buses currently in service will need to be replaced between 2023 and 2026 for a combined price of over $15 million. Meanwhile, the Capital Reserve account has been underfunded for three years to cover operating expenses and will require a review of expenses over the next few years to ensure adequate funding is available to purchase new vehicles.

Revenues

Current revenues fall just below $10 million, with half coming from the existing mill levy and a third from a combination of federal and state grants. Passenger fares make up 12% of revenue. Between 2010 and 2018, grant revenue has grown by an annualized three percent, while fare revenue has grown by two percent and mill levy revenue by one percent. By these measures, **fare and mill levy revenues are not keeping up with rising costs.**

Attempts to increase revenue have met with mixed success. Topeka Metro has been awarded an impressive $5.8 million in federal grants since 2013, while an attempt to raise fares in 2011 was met with reduced ridership and public backlash. Other efforts include initiatives to more cost-efficiently serve paratransit riders (e.g., contracting with taxis, implementing Freedom Pass), reduce overtime expenses, and improve route efficiencies. These savings have been reallocated to:

- Kids Ride Free! Summer service
- Topeka Metro Bikes
- New routes and hours (#7 Washburn N-S, Flex on-demand for SE Topeka, extended evening hours, Route #5 extension, etc.)
- Expansion of student pass program

These improvements have been important and much needed to better serve Topeka workers and residents, but a funding shortfall remains.

Funding Strategies

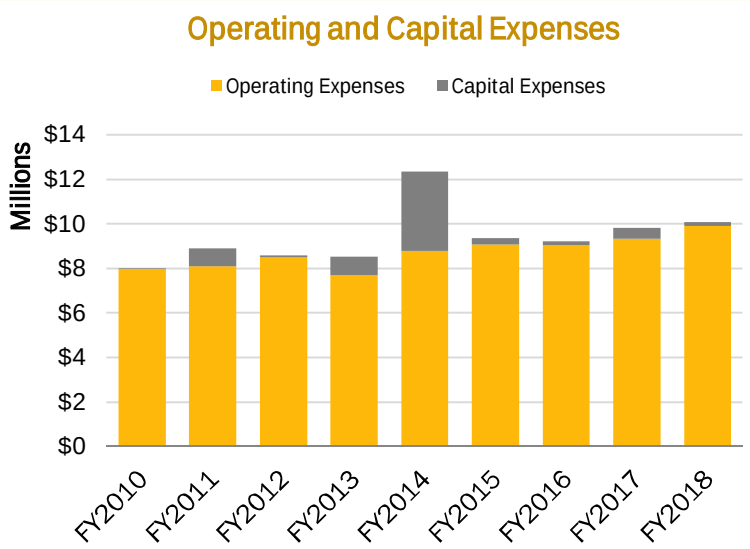
To implement the strategic improvements identified in this LRTP—and to maintain offering current levels of service in the future—additional funding sources will need to be identified and allocated.

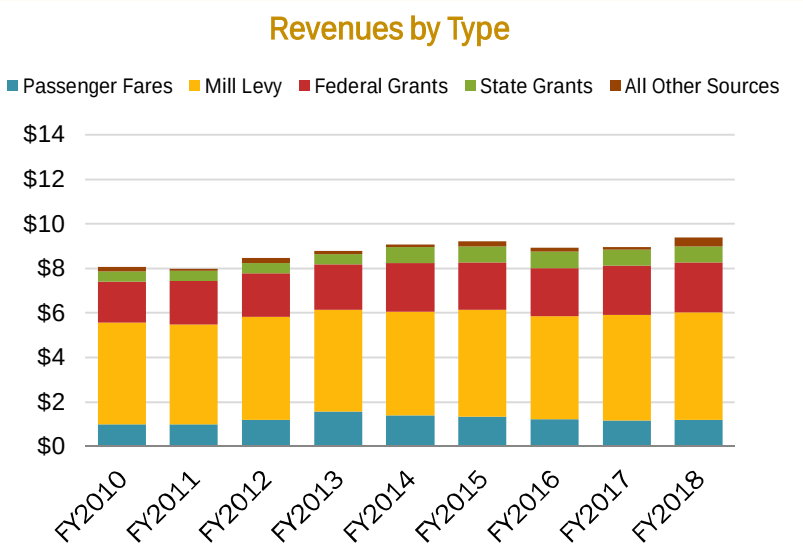
This boils down to two key questions: how to grow the pool of money Topeka Metro can draw from, and how to spend it most advantageously for Topeka residents and workers. Typically, to grow the pool of money a transit agency has available to support operations, incremental funding sources can include sales tax revenue, property tax revenue, support from partner agencies or businesses, and discretionary grant funding—or a mix thereof.

Grant funding, however, is unstable, highly competitive and difficult to rely on when making big decisions about transit service improvements. At the time this report was being prepared, there was much uncertainty around Congress reaching a budget agreement and potential transit funding cuts could significantly impact future transit investments.

Local tax revenues are generally more reliable. In the phone survey conducted in March 2018, respondents were asked to describe their level of support for different possible funding mechanisms. The source that garnered the highest level of support during the phone survey was a mill levy option, followed by a mixture of sales and property tax revenue dedicated to supporting Topeka Metro operations. As noted above, while the existing mill levy comprises half of agency revenue, it has lagged behind the growth in annual expenses.

In terms of where to allocate funds, the prioritized recommendations outlined above help to guide spending in the short-, mid-, and long-term by identifying potential projects of varying scale and investment (see also Service Improvement Costs). Detailed service planning activities will help to ensure that the best cost-benefit ratio is achieved.





Grant Funding

Aside from identifying funding sources, it is important to strategically match funding sources to projects. For a host of reasons, grant funding is often best applied to capital improvement projects—winning a grant is often directly tied to making a strong case for a specific transit improvement project. For Topeka Metro, such projects could include building new bus shelters or expanding/replacing the bus fleet. Coordinating with other agencies is also important for capital investment projects to share the cost, just as many share the benefits.

Existing federal funding programs are divided into two types: formula grants or discretionary grants. Over three-quarters ($9.6B) of FTA funding available is through **formula grants**, which are mandatory grants in which the amount of money distributed is calculated based on a formula. Topeka Metro receives $2.2 to $2.3 million annually through the Urbanized Area Formula (5307) grant.

Formula grants are different from **discretionary grants** in that discretionary grant programs require that agencies submit applications in a competitive review and selection process in order to be awarded discretionary funding. Though these figures change with Congressional budgets, current figures show that 22% of FTA funds, or $2.6 billion, are available as discretionary grants. In fiscal year 2018, Topeka Metro was awarded about $500,000 from the 5339 Bus and Bus Facilities Discretionary program to apply to technology improvements on buses (e.g., Wi-Fi, AVL, Automated Passenger Counters, etc.), real-time bus arrival signs, the Walmart West transfer center, and a bus wash.

When considering where to award discretionary grants, FTA decision-making is guided in part by specific **key departmental objectives:** supporting economic vitality, utilizing alternative funding sources and innovative financing models to attract non-Federal investment sources, promoting the state of good repair, using innovative approaches to improve safety and expedite project delivery, and holding recipients accountable for achieving specific, measurable outcomes.

Service Improvement Costs

In order to inform the discussion prior to decision-making related to the improvements recommended in this plan, preliminary analysis was carried out to gain rough estimates of potential project costs. These estimates are not final, but serve as a starting point to guide decisions on where to focus service planning efforts, should the necessary funding become available.

Estimated costs range upwards beginning at roughly $200,000 annually at the low end. The most expensive improvement, outside of increasing the entire system to 30-minute headways, is to add a full day of Sunday service. In total, the two short-term improvements prioritized in this LRTP have estimated cost ranges from the approximately $225,000 up to approximately $600,000 annually.

Add a New Route
- $225,000 annually + paratransit
- Vehicle for 1 additional route is currently available, but no operating funds to support it

Add Sunday Service
- $300,000 annually for shorter service hours, 10am-3pm
- $600,000 annually for Saturday-type service, 8am-6pm
- Estimates include paratransit service

Improve Frequency
- $350,000 annually for peak-period 30-minute headways
- $1.6 million for all-day 30-minute headways
- These estimates are for all routes. It may be best to use a tiered approach with higher-frequency "Core" routes

Extend Evening Hours
- $190,000 to extend service to 8pm
- $545,000 to extend service to 10pm
- Above estimates are for fixed route service

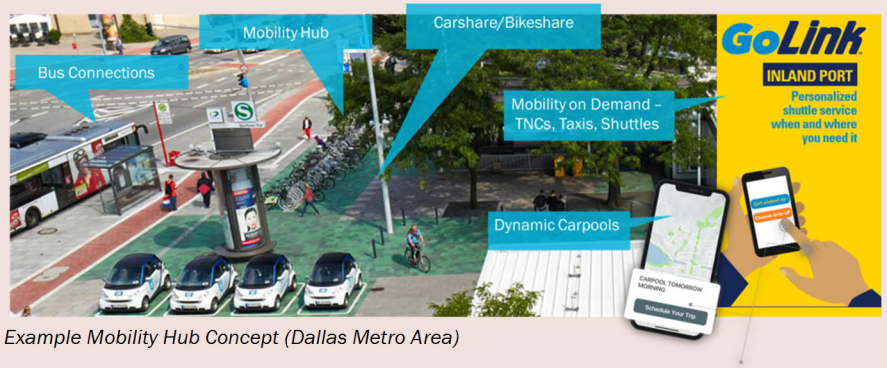
FTA's decision whether to award a discretionary grant for a given project is also driven by how the project scores in specific selection criteria metrics:

- **Demonstration of Need**
  - Age of asset being replaced
  - Need for expansion of service/capacity
- **Demonstration of Benefit**
  - Service reliability
  - Enhance access and mobility
- **Local/Regional Prioritization and Planning**
  - Inclusion of project in long-range plan or priorities
  - Letters of support from partner agencies
- **Local Financial Commitment**
  - Commitment of non-federal funding
  - Board resolution/letter of funding support
- **Project Implementation**
  - Reasonableness of project schedule
  - Progress to implementation (e.g., NEPA, design status)
- **Other considerations**
  - Geographic diversity
  - Diversity in the size of transit systems receiving funding
  - Applicant's receipt of other competitive awards

This LRTP plays a role in meeting several of the criteria above by documenting key project priorities, as well as discussing the needs that drive these priorities and the potential benefits. It is important to communicate these project priorities with partner agencies like MTPO, cities, counties, and KDOT to ensure that they are aware of and responsive to them. It will also be important to coordinate with partner agencies to prioritize submissions within the larger region. Other important steps to improve grant success are to undertake the project service planning activities to determine scoring in other criteria metrics, and otherwise advance the projects.

Emerging Technology

As emerging technologies develop at a rapid pace, it will be important to make space for them in plans for future infrastructure. For example, mobility hubs can incorporate automated shuttles to transport people to their final destination, charging ports for an electric car-share station, as well as pick-up and drop-off space for transportation network company (TNC) partners. With microtransit filling the role of distribution, transit agencies may be able to focus on line-haul service. And with fewer people accessing stations by car, parking lots and structures could be repurposed to a higher and better use, potentially making space for new trip generators or creating new revenue streams for the agency.



Example Mobility Hub Concept (Dallas Metro Area)

It remains to be seen what Mobility-on-Demand, Mobility-as-a-Service, or any of the other mobility frameworks of the future will be in practice. That doesn't mean that Topeka Metro should not pay attention or prepare for these long-term, or visionary investments. In the more immediate future, specific areas of interest for Topeka Metro include: electric-powered buses, real-time bus tracking, multimodal mobility hubs, smartphone apps with fare payment and information portals, and the incorporation of automated vehicles into future operations, and innovative paratransit service delivery, among others.

Local Funding

In comparison with (typically irregular) capital costs, operating and maintenance costs need a steady source of funding to make sure that drivers get paid, tanks get filled, and buses get maintained. These costs actually form the lion's share of agency expenses, though they get less attention than capital improvement projects. Data from fiscal year 2018 shows that 85% of costs are non-capital in nature.

Many of the priorities identified through LRTP public outreach activities include expanded service, which means additional increases in operating and maintenance costs—and in the need for additional revenue to cover these costs. Since tax revenues are under local control, this means that the improvements can be implemented sooner and with greater certainty with local government support.

A potential increase to the mill levy as a component of local funding is a lever on which most of the short-term improvements hinge. Regardless of whether this increase passes, most of the longer-term improvements will require a higher level of funding than the agency currently receives. A sustainable additional source of funding will be needed to implement future improvements, including a local financial commitment to compete for federal discretionary funding.

Coordination with Partner Agencies

A number of the priority improvements discussed here would benefit from strong coordination with local, regional, and state partners.

- **Local** partners—in particular the City of Topeka—are key to successful implementation of transit improvement projects.
  - The city is currently doing roadway improvements, providing the opportunity to upgrade bus stops and enhance pedestrian facilities such as sidewalks and crosswalks.
  - Upon completion of the AVL installation, Topeka Metro can coordinate with the city to pursue signal preemption to improve service efficiency and on-time performance.
  - Topeka-style transit-oriented development can become a reality with support from the city in implementing development policies (e.g., zoning, incentives, and parking requirements) that support transit use.
  - Public transportation is a great resource for educational institutions, which is why partnerships with area schools and universities should be a continued priority.
  - Coordinating with local for-profit partners, such as local employers, will be important for developing a proposed commuter workforce route to currently unserved areas such as the South Topeka area.
- **Regional** partners in Lawrence and Manhattan can provide valuable insight and support in exploring the potential for regional bus service. It is recommended that this project be revisited with these regional planning partners.
- **State** funding and support will be a vital component of the proposed regional commuter bus service. Inclusion of this project in KDOT plans is also important for raising awareness and garnering support.

6 Conclusion

In 2023, Topeka Metro will celebrate 50 years in operation. What began as a small, privately owned bus service, Topeka Metro is recognized as a transportation solution provider, exploring and implementing transportation opportunities that enhance the social, economic, and environmental well-being of the Topeka community.

In recent years, Topeka Metro has observed steady ridership growth while many transit agencies across the country have experienced declining ridership. In 2018, Topeka Metro provided 1.28 million rides including nearly 250,000 rides to area high school and Washburn University students. Topeka Metro services extend well beyond just another transportation option – Topeka Metro is a valuable community asset connecting Topeka residents to jobs, medical appointments, school, shopping, and other social activities. In some cases Topeka Metro is providing mobility and opportunity to some of Topeka's most vulnerable residents – some who do not have access to other transportation modes, are unable to afford other travel options, or are unable to maintain a job without access to public transportation.

Topeka Metro Reimagined has provided an opportunity to take stock of the current services, and more importantly to identify future mobility solutions that continue to enhance and expand transit operations. Perhaps the most important finding of this LRTP process is the overwhelming support for Topeka Metro. In a random survey of 900 Topeka residents, consisting of approximately 75% of individuals who never ride transit, nearly 95% of total survey respondents indicated funding public transportation is either very important, or important.

As it was nearly 50 years ago, Topeka Metro is ready to address challenges that lie ahead to continue to provide Topeka residents this valuable mobility and community asset. Topeka Metro Reimagined has defined a comprehensive vision supported by short-term, mid-term, and long-term strategies to enhance and grow the transit system over the next decade. It provides guidance on where Topeka Metro grows and expands service coverage, how Topeka Metro delivers services given new technologies on the horizon, and what Topeka Metro uses as the funding structure to maintain and expand services.

Topeka Metro is committed to providing safe, reliable, courteous and efficient public transportation service to residents of the Topeka community and Topeka Metro Reimagined will serve as the blueprint to guide important future service, technology, and funding decisions.