



Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plan

for the Rockford Region



Final Report
August 27, 2021

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This document has been prepared by the Region 1 Planning Council in collaboration with its member agencies, partnership organizations, and local stakeholders.

This report was prepared in cooperation with the following:

U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration
Federal Transit Administration
Illinois Department of Transportation

The contents, views, policies, and conclusions expressed in this report are not necessarily those of the above agencies.



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Introduction

Background and Purpose

Region 1 Planning Council (RPC), in its role as a Metropolitan Planning Organization, is responsible for planning and addressing the transportation needs of the Rockford Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA), including public transportation. The MPA consists of the urbanized portions of Winnebago and Boone Counties as well as northeastern Ogle County, as shown in **Figure 1-1**. Public transportation can transform the lives of residents and workers within communities by spurring economic development, promoting sustainable lifestyles, and providing a higher quality of life.¹ However, current service gaps in the network of transportation providers and human service agencies exist in the region due to constrained resources and limitations in fixed-route, paratransit, and demand-response services. With limited funding available to local municipalities and statewide funding shortfalls in Illinois, finding areas of coordination and partnership can reduce the impact of those gaps by bringing together the strengths and resources of multiple agencies and partners.

The Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan (HSTP) addresses these service challenges by identifying the needs and gaps in public transportation services, particularly services for seniors, individuals with disabilities, individuals with low incomes, and other transit-dependent populations in the Rockford MPA. The HSTP serves as a guide for the expenditure of regionally allocated Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funds, such as the New Freedom Program and the Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program (Section 5310).²

This plan will also further strengthen coordination among transportation providers within the region and enhance the opportunity for mobility among residents, specifically seniors and individuals with disabilities. It is intended to support local agencies, transportation providers, and planners in their efforts to improve the overall quality of the region's transportation services.

Federal Requirements and Programs

The HSTP fulfills the federal requirements of Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, the most recent federal transportation legislation act, signed into law by President Obama in 2015. The FAST Act authorizes \$305 billion to fund the following types of projects: highway improvements, highway and motor vehicle safety, public transportation, motor carrier safety, hazardous materials safety, rail, research, technology,

and statistics.³ It continues the previous federal focus on safety; keeps intact the established structure of various highway-related programs the MPO manages; continues efforts to streamline project delivery; and, for the first time, provides a dedicated source of federal dollars for freight projects. While the FAST Act was set to expire September 30, 2020, Congress passed a continuing resolution which included a one-year extension of the FAST Act on September 22, 2020.⁴

Federal regulations require the creation and maintenance of Coordinated Human Service Transportation Plans, but do not provide a schedule by which to accomplish updates for areas designated as meeting air quality attainment. Region 1 Planning Council, along with Federal partners, agreed that updates of the Coordinated Plan should occur on the same schedule as the update of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), which occurs every five years. On July 31, 2020, the MPO Policy Committee adopted the most recent version of the region's MTP, the 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan for the Rockford Region. With the recent of adoption of the MTP, the MPO began developing the update to the HSTP. This is the third iteration of the region's HSTP since 2008.

The FTA requires that the Coordinated Plan contain, at minimum, each of the following elements:⁵

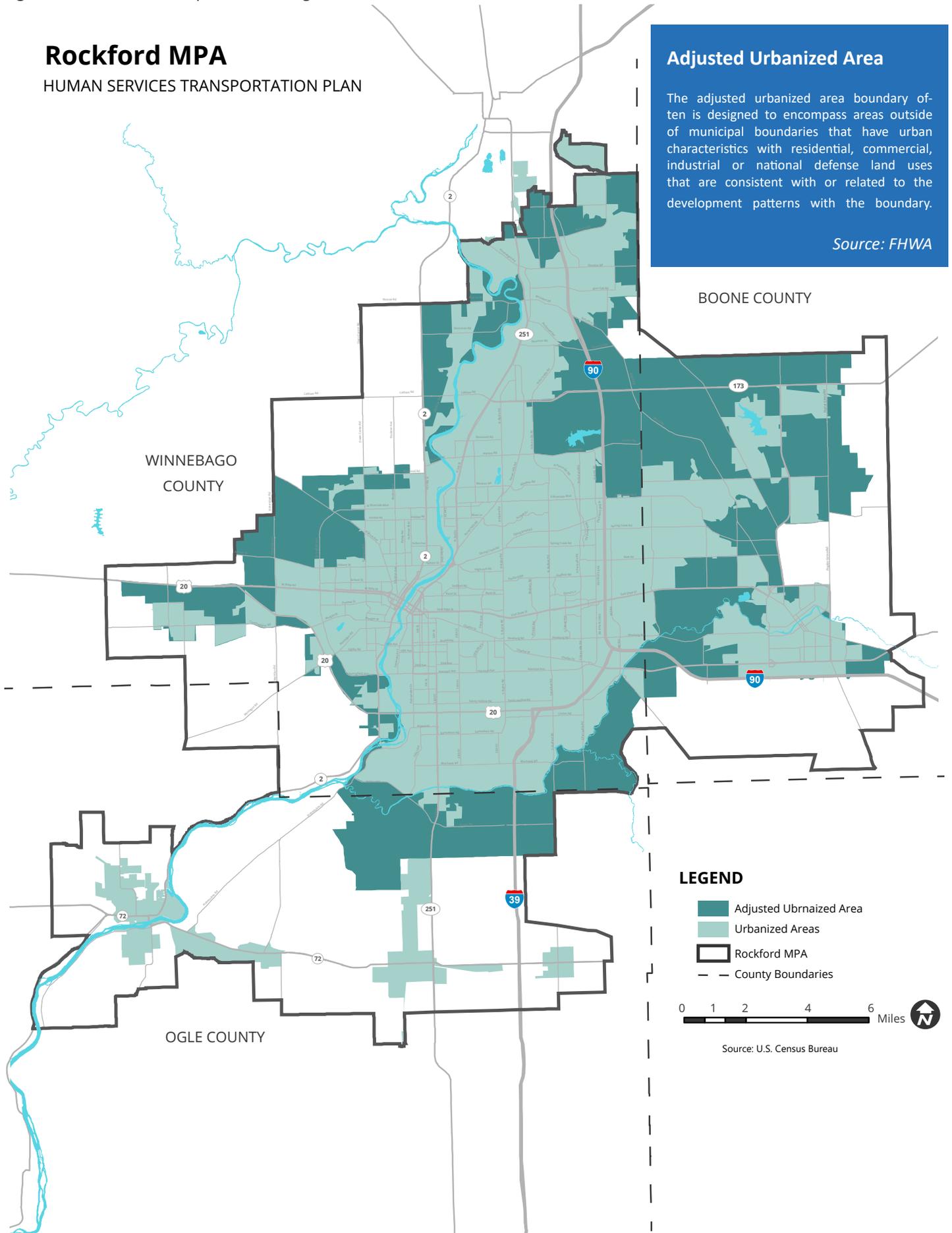
- An assessment of available services that identifies current transportation providers (public, private, and nonprofit);
- An assessment of transportation needs for individuals with disabilities and seniors;
- Strategies, activities, and/or projects to address the identified gaps between current services and needs, as well as opportunities to achieve efficiencies in service delivery; and
- Priorities for implementation based on resources (from multiple program sources), time, and feasibility for implementing specific strategies and/or activities identified.

Additionally, the plan must be developed and adopted with representation from seniors; individuals with disabilities; representatives of public, private, nonprofit transportation and human services providers; and other members of the public. Furthermore, recipients of FTA Section 5310 Program funding must certify that projects were selected from the HSTP development process and must refer to the HSTP in the program of projects.

Figure 1-1. Rockford Metropolitan Planning Area

Rockford MPA

HUMAN SERVICES TRANSPORTATION PLAN



Changes to Funding Structures

Federal transportation laws and funding programs have been updated over the years to account for changing transportation needs. The current governing legislation, FAST Act, and its predecessor Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21), directly affects how federal funding may be used for transportation projects, especially when addressing transit needs. The most notable changes to human services and public transportation funding programs are detailed below.

Urbanized Area Formula Grants & Job Access and Reverse Commute

While the Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) program was repealed under MAP-21, the types of projects previously funded under JARC are still eligible for funding under the Urbanized Area Formula Grants (Section 5307) program of the FAST Act.⁶ Eligible projects under Section 5307 include: those that “finance planning, capital, and operating costs that support the development and maintenance of transportation services designed to transport welfare recipients and eligible low-income individuals to and from jobs and activities related to their employment, including transportation projects that facilitate the provision of public transportation services from urbanized areas and rural areas to suburban employment locations”.

The Section 5307 guidance and application instructions specifies that the “development of transportation services” is defined as new projects not in service prior to October 1, 2012. New projects may include the expansion or extension of an existing service, as long as the new service is designed to support the target population consistent with the definition above. Maintenance projects are projects that continue funding services that have previously been funded by the JARC program.

Enhanced Mobility of Seniors & Individuals with Disabilities & New Freedom Programs

With the passage of MAP-21, and continued by the FAST Act, the Enhanced Mobility of Seniors & Individuals with Disabilities (Section 5310) funds provide formula funding to states and designated recipients, of urbanized areas with populations of 200,000 or more, to improve the mobility of seniors and individuals with disabilities. Eligible uses of these funds include operating and capital expenses for transportation services that address the needs of seniors and individuals with disabilities. At least 55 percent of the apportioned funds available for this program must be used for projects planned, designed, and implemented to meet the special needs of seniors and individuals with disabilities when public transportation is insufficient, inappropriate (or unavailable), or typically carried out by non-profit agencies.⁷ While 55 percent of the allocation is the minimum amount that must go toward rolling stock, recipients may use more or all of the Section 5310 allocation for these purposes. The remaining

funds may be used for public transportation projects that improve access to fixed-route service and decrease reliance by individuals with disabilities on complimentary paratransit; or alternatives to public transportation that assist seniors and individuals with disabilities. Projects using remaining funds are considered New Freedom projects which must be derived from an HSTP. The expanded eligibility provisions are a result of consolidation of the New Freedom Program, which was repealed by MAP-21, into the Section 5310 program.

The changes to the Section 5310 program also refocused the local process of sub-allocating Section 5310 funds. In previous years, it was possible for an agency within the Rockford Urbanized Area to apply to both the statewide and local programs in an attempt to fulfill public transportation needs. Pursuant to MAP-21, it has been determined by IDOT that agencies in the Rockford urbanized area and in other Transportation Management Areas (TMAs) are no longer eligible to apply for statewide Section 5310 dollars and may only apply for regionally allocated funds.⁸

In response to this change, Rockford Mass Transit District (RMTD) and the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) are the co-designated recipients for Section 5310 funding allocated to the Rockford urbanized area. In coordination with RMTD, the MPO has created a process to help determine the best use of the Section 5310 funds allocated to the region. Further information on the Section 5310 selection process is provided in **Appendix A**. Regionally, there has been an identified need to use Section 5310 funds for the replacement of paratransit rolling stock.

Pilot Projects

Since the initial adoption of the HSTP, the Section 5310 Program has undergone changes and merged with other mobility programs to create the current program. In addition to changes previously mentioned, the FAST Act also included the development of new initiatives aimed at enhancing coordinated transportation planning efforts. These initiatives include the creation of funding pilot programs that are meant to supplement the Section 5310 program and goals identified in HSTPs. Funding pilot programs launched recently include Mobility for All, Human Services Coordinated Research (HSCR), and Innovative Coordinated Access and Mobility (ICAM)⁹. Additionally, the Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility (CCAM) published a program inventory which identifies 130 federal programs that can provide funding for human services transportation. To supplement this effort, in the Fall of 2019, CCAM created a strategic plan that aimed to improve interagency collaboration and offer better access to federal transportation programs.

Connection to Regional Planning

Regional transportation planning projects funded by Federal programs, such as Section 5310, must align with other regional transportation plans, including the 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and the annual Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The 2050 MTP provides the framework for development, maintenance, and operation of the region's transportation system over the next 20 to 30 years, addresses all modes of transportation, and stresses the integration and connectivity of the current and future transportation system. The TIP is a short-range plan that lists transportation improvement projects programmed within the Rockford MPA for the next four fiscal years.

Improving transportation for seniors and persons with disabilities, as well as the overall transportation network of the region, is a priority identified in a number of plans, by regional agencies and organizations, and by the public at large. The HSTP includes suggestions, planning activities, goals, and proposed initiatives from a number of partners. Previous planning efforts and agencies that informed the planning process for this document were:

- 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan for the Rockford Region (2020);
- RMTD's Comprehensive Mobility Analysis (2021);
- Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan for the Rockford Metropolitan Area (2017);
- Human service agencies, including but not limited to, Lifescape Community Services, and the Barbara Olson Center for Hope;
- Public transit agencies, such as Rockford Mass Transit District; and
- National best practices for Coordinated Human Service Transportation Plans.

- Supporting implementation elements of the MPO Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan and the MPO Coordinated Public Transit- Human Services Transportation Plan.
- Providing input on benchmarks and reviewing associated data to monitor and document the implementation of the MPO Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan and the MPO Coordinated Public Transit- Human Services Transportation Plan.
- Reviewing and making recommendations on priorities for funding and implementation of alternative transportation programs and capital projects.
- Serving as a forum for information exchange regarding alternative transportation policy, practice, and design consideration.
- Serving as liaisons, connecting key community members, community groups and organizations and encouraging participation in implementation and promotion of education, encouragement, and evaluation programs related to alternative transportation.

The ATC is comprised of no more than 20 standing members from local governments, public transportation agencies, non-profit organizations, and local advocacy groups. Formally known as the MPO Mobility Subcommittee, the ATC expanded upon the original scope of the subcommittee by incorporating the links between public transportation and active transportation, such as biking and walking.

The ATC has three standing working groups, the Transportation Alternative Program Working Group, the Access Advisory Working Group, and the Mobility Working Group. The Mobility Working Group provides advice and insight on the evaluation and recommendation of the FTA Section 5310 Program projects (RMTD & IDOT are co-designated recipients of funds apportioned to the urbanized area), as well as evaluate and recommend Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) and New Freedom eligible projects.

The MPO Alternative Transportation Committee

The MPO Alternative Transportation Committee (ATC) served as the outlet for coordinated participation throughout this update, providing recommendations and input on the development of the plan. The ATC acts as an advisory committee to the MPO Technical and Policy Committees on active and public transportation policy, planning, and implementation activities, and related transportation planning initiatives. The following is a list of planning initiatives and objectives the ATC is charged with:

- Supporting the development and maintenance of the MPO Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan and the MPO Coordinated Public Transit- Human Services Transportation Plan.

Organization of the Report

The Coordinated Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan has been organized into five sections, including this introduction.

Part 1. Introduction: The first section of the plan sets the stage for the remainder of the document by providing the purpose and intent behind the HSTP. It describes changes to the federal funding programs and touches on the plan's relationship to regional planning.

Part 2. Existing Services: The second section of this plan includes an overview of existing transportation services available within the Rockford MPA. This inventory includes public transportation providers, human service transportation providers, intercity bus services, and other private forms of transportation.

Part 3. Transportation Needs Assessment: The transportation needs assessment includes an overview of regional demographics, transportation service coverage, regional destinations, and roadways infrastructure suitability within the Rockford MPA. Additionally, it gives background on the outreach material that was used to identify gaps and needs in the region's transportation services.

Part 4: Identified Needs and Gaps: The fourth section of this plan lays out and expands upon the gaps and needs in transportation services within the Rockford MPA.

Part 5: Looking Forward: The fifth and final section of the plan includes an overview of goals and strategies developed to address the human service transportation gaps and needs that exist with the Rockford MPA.

Existing Services

Public Transportation Services

The Rockford Mass Transit District (RMTD)

Rockford Mass Transit District (RMTD) is dedicated to providing safe, efficient, affordable, dependable, and accessible transportation to the residents of Rockford and the surrounding area. For nearly 50 years, RMTD has provided federally-subsidized and coordinated, fixed-route transit services for the Rockford Urbanized Area. A three-person board appointed by the City of Rockford oversees RMTD and is empowered through the Downstate Transportation Act of 1971. RMTD is funded through a combination of Federal, State, and local subsidies or contractual payments.

RMTD provides fixed-route and complimentary origin-destination paratransit services within Rockford, Loves Park, Machesney Park, and Belvidere, and subcontracts Boone County Council on Aging (BCCA) to provide demand-response services in the urbanized portions of Boone County. Additionally, service to and around CherryVale Mall, in the Village of Cherry Valley, is provided during regular operating periods for an additional zone fare.

Table 2-1. RMTD Statistics

RMTD STATS	
Service Area	150 Sq. Miles
Service Population	287,300
Number of Fixed Routes	19
Fixed Route Bus Fleet	41
Buses in Peak Service	24
Paratransit Fleet	33



Fixed-Route Service

RMTD operates 19 daily fixed-routes (Monday–Saturday), six weeknight routes, and five Sunday routes. Most of RMTD’s fixed route services are provided on a hub-and-spoke radial operation pattern originating from RMTD’s Downtown Transfer Center in Rockford. General service hours include service to all municipalities during weekdays, service to Rockford, Loves Park, and Machesney Park on Saturdays, and only select areas in Rockford on Sundays. Services are not provided on Saturday and Sunday nights.

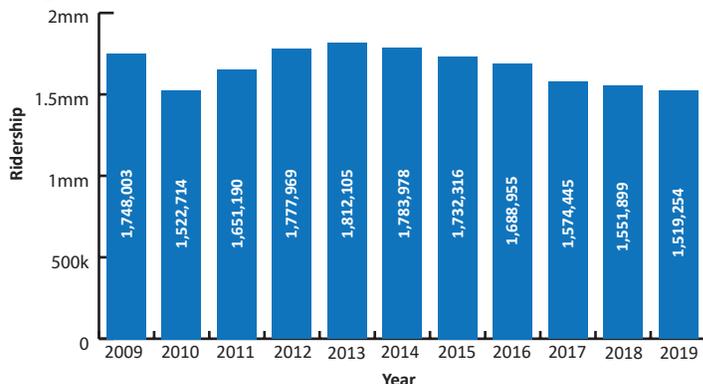
Out of RMTD’s 19 routes, the majority of all fixed routes operate at 60-minute intervals. Exceptions include School Street and East State routes which run every 30 minutes and Huffman and Kilburn routes which run every 90 minutes. RMTD also operates a trolley bus route in downtown Rockford during the months of May through September to accommodate access to popular public events.

All RMTD buses are wheelchair accessible, as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Efforts to aid persons with disabilities, and the general public, in how to read transit schedules and use the transit system are conducted on a regular basis. Demand-response service is provided in accordance with ADA guidelines in the RMTD service area.

Table 2-2. RMTD Hours of Operation

HOURS OF OPERATION	
Monday - Friday	5:15 AM - 6:15 PM
Saturdays	8:00 AM - 6:15 PM
Sundays	9:15 AM - 11:15 PM
Night Service	6:15 PM - 9:15 PM

Figure 2-1: RMTD Fixed-Route Ridership



Demand-Response/Paratransit Service

In addition to fixed-route transit services, RMTD provides complimentary origin-destination paratransit service at a minimum of three-quarters of a mile from their fixed route system in accordance with all aspects of the American’s with Disabilities Act. Where applicable, this service is also extended to the incorporated limits of Rockford, Loves Park, and Machesney Park. Service is provided daily in Rockford and six days a week in Loves Park and Machesney Park. Hours of operation for demand-response/ paratransit service are the same as those of fixed route service. Although weeknight fixed-route service is only available in Rockford, complimentary paratransit service is extended to 10:00pm for Loves Park and Machesney Park. Further information about this service can be found at RMTD’s website, www.rmtd.org.

RMTD maintains multiple service agreements with adjacent public transit agencies for demand-response services. Through an IGA with Boone County, RMTD subcontracts BCCA to provide demand-response service to the urbanized portions of the county. Similarly, an intergovernmental agreement (IGA) exists with Stateline Mass Transit District (SMTD) for RMTD to operate demand-response service throughout Rockton and Roscoe townships which lay adjacent to the northern portion of RMTD’s service area.

Figure 2-2. RMTD Demand- Response Ridership

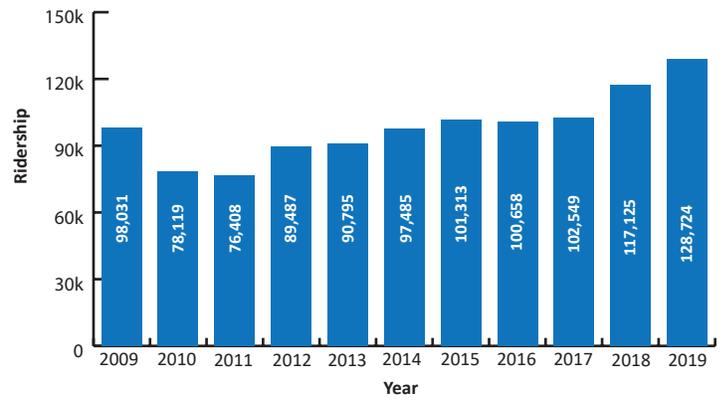
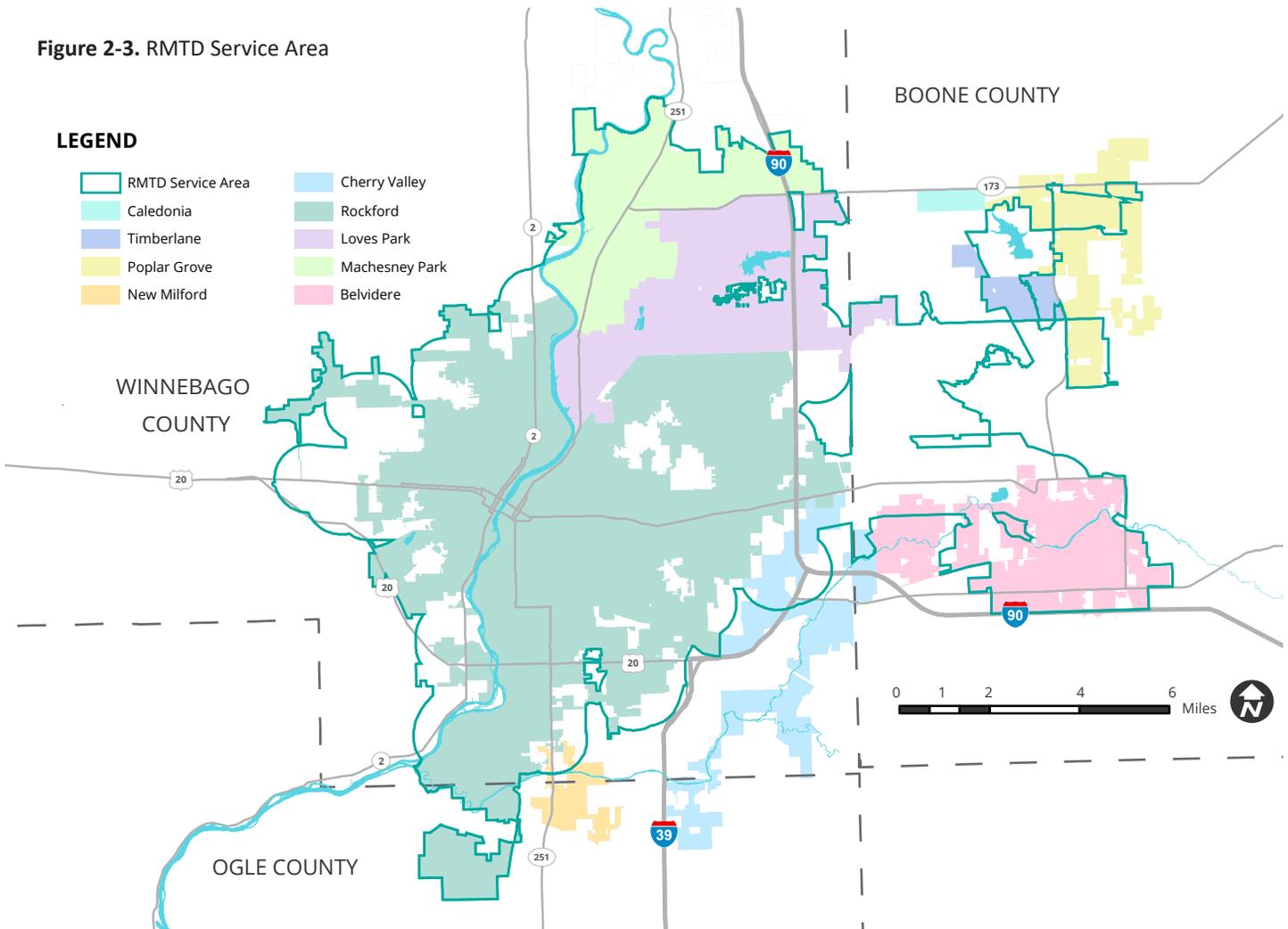


Table 2-3. RMTD Cash Fare

FARE TYPE	COST
Adult Single Ride	\$1.50
Student	\$.75
Children Under 5	Free
Person with a Disability	\$.75
Benefit Access Program	Free
Seniors (Ages 65+)	Free

Figure 2-3. RMTD Service Area



Belvidere/Boone Demand-Response Service

Boone County Public Transportation (BCPT), operated by the Boone County Council on Aging (BCCA), offers demand-response public transportation to all residents of Boone County and provides approximately 30,000 rides annually. BCCA also provides origin-destination on Paratransit services within three-quarters of a mile of RMTD fixed routes. In addition, BCCA provides connection service to RMTD bus service Monday through Friday to accommodate individuals who need to address business within the City of Rockford. Transfers between RMTD and BCPT are available at any RMTD bus stop in Boone County as long as the ride is scheduled with BCCA, however interjurisdictional transfer fees do apply.

Because over half of residents within Boone County live within an urban-designated area, RMTD contracts with BCCA for urban transportation. This change in designation impacts the disbursement of funds and can limit services provided since vehicles purchased with rural funds are required to operate in rural areas while those purchased with urban funds must serve urban areas. It is important to BCCA that the process for developing and operating urban and rural transportation in Boone County involves all governmental agencies, including the county, city and townships.

Lee-Ogle Transportation System (LOTS)

The Lee-Ogle Transportation System (LOTS) offers demand-response public transportation service to the general public and transit-dependent individuals within Lee and Ogle Counties. Rides can be scheduled to community resources including medical facilities, educational facilities, grocery outlets, employment, and senior centers. However, LOTS does not provide service on observed holidays or in the event of weather-induced unsafe driving conditions.

At least three times a month LOTS provides service to Rockford for persons who either need to attend medical appointments or who would like to go shopping. The cost for these rides are \$0.35/mile. Fares for older adults, persons with disabilities and veterans is capped at \$5.00 per ride, one way. Rides for medical appointments are Medicaid eligible however, certain restrictions may apply.

Table 2-4. BCCA Service Information

Service Area	Boone County (Provides transport to surrounding areas)
Hours of Operation	M-F: 8:00AM- 4:30PM
Service Type	Demand-Reponse
Level of Service	Door to Door
Scheduling	24 Hours in advance
Fare Structure (One-Way)	12 to 60 years old: \$2.00 Children under 12: \$1:00 Adults over 60: Donations Accepted

Stateline Mass Transit District

Stateline Mass Transit District (SMTD) contracts with RMTD to provide demand-response service to all patrons residing in Rockton, Roscoe, South Beloit, and unincorporated areas of Rockton Township. SMTD riders have access to both the RMTD fixed-route and paratransit services through a transfer point located at the Machesney Park Target, located along IL-173. SMTD also provides transfers to Beloit Transit System across the Wisconsin state line, as long as the trip begins or ends within SMTD’s service area. Additionally, SMTD also provides service for pre-approved medical facilities outside of the service area. In fiscal year (FY) 2017, SMTD provided nearly 24,000 rides.

Table 2-5. LOTS Service Information

Service Area	Ogle County
Hours of Operation	M-F: 6:00AM- 6:00PM
Service Type	Demand Response
Level of Service	Curb to Curb
Scheduling	In town: 24 hours in advance Out of town: 48 hours in advance
Fare Structure (One-Way)	In town: \$1:00 Out of town: \$0.35 per mile

Table 2-6. SMTD Service Information

Service Area	Roscoe, Rockton, South Beloit
Hours of Operation	M-F: 5:15AM- 10:00PM Sat: 6:00AM - 6:00PM Sun: 8:15AM - 4:30PM
Service Type	Demand-Reponse
Level of Service	Door to Door
Scheduling	24 Hours in advance
Fare Structure (One-Way)	Adult (17 - 64 yrs): \$3.00 Senior (65 and older): \$1:50 Disabled: \$1.50 Youth (7-16 yrs): \$1.50 Child (under 7 yrs): Free Personal Care Attendant: Free

Rockford Public School District #205

The Rockford Public Schools (RPS) District #205’s Department of Transportation provides transportation services for more than 18,000 students. As required by Illinois law, service is provided to students who reside outside of a one-and-a-half-mile radius of the school they attend. Students that fall within a one-and-a-half-mile radius of their school may have to rely on transportation provided through other means such as public transit, parents, etc.

Exceptions to the one-and-a-half-mile radius limit are made for students with special needs. These students participate through an Individual Education Plan (IEP). For these students, transportation is provided by Sunrise, a transportation provider contracted through the RPS Department of Transportation.

Human or Social Service Transportation

Human service agencies may offer transportation services to residents whose transportation needs are not accommodated by or met by public and private transportation services.

Individuals enrolled in social and human service programs throughout the region often utilize transportation services related to that program. Agencies and organizations tend to supply their clientele transportation to community events and development activities but these services are generally not open to the public.

Barbara Olson Center of Hope

The Barbara Olson Center of Hope is a human service organization that has served Rockford since 1948. While the organization initially provided educational services to children with special needs, the Barbara Olson Center of Hope presently provides skill development as well as employment and vocational opportunities for teens and adults with developmental disabilities. Participants are involved in workshops, contribute to the community through a volunteer center, take part in educational courses, or work through a variety of employment opportunities offered.

As a part of their mission, Barbara Olsen offers transportation services to their clientele for off-site programming and outings. Clients are transported from Rockford, Loves Park, and the Machesney Park area. On average, the center provides around 6,370 rides annually. Provision of transportation service is currently reliant upon federal and state grants. The Barbara Olson Center of Hope utilizes six small buses, seven 15-passenger vans, and three mini-vans to provide transportation services for clients.

Lifescope Community Services, Inc.

Lifescope Community Services is a human service organization that works to promote independent living and enhance the quality of life for seniors by providing nutritious meals and healthy living support. The organization offers numerous services for elderly individuals including home-delivered meals through Meals on Wheels and Mobile Meals, a retired and senior volunteer program, senior dining, case management services, and adult protective services. Additionally, Lifescope offers demand-response transportation to various medical, recreation, religious, shopping, and dining sites within Rockford, Loves Park, Machesney Park, and Cherry Valley. On average, they provide 5,000 rides annually. The center currently operates four small buses and two minivans but anticipates the need to replace a vehicle every year for the next three years. Out of their vehicle fleet, four vehicles were supplied by IDOT through Section 5310 funding.

Wesley Willows

Wesley Willows is a continuing care retirement community on Rockford’s northwest side that works to provide programming, services, and amenities to seniors. Transportation services for residents include transportation to medical appointments, grocery centers, and other activities that support daily life. Wesley Willows transportation for medical services is available by reservation Monday through Friday from 7:30AM to 3:00PM. Additional on-campus transportation is available Monday through Friday from 8:30AM to 6:00PM with flexible hours to meet the needs of residents and provide personalized care. Additional hours are added as needed to meet demand.

Table 2-7. Barbara Olson Service Information

Service Area	Rockford, Loves Park, Machesney Park
Hours of Operation	M-F: 8:00AM- 3:30PM
Service Type	Program Transportation
Level of Service	Door to Door
Scheduling	24 Hours in advance
Fare Structure (One-Way)	N/A

Table 2-8. Lifescope Service Information

Service Area	Rockford, Loves Park, Machesney Park, Cherry Valley
Hours of Operation	M-F: 8:30 AM - 2:30 PM
Service Type	Program Transportation
Level of Service	Door to Door
Scheduling	As far in advance as possible.
Fare Structure (One-Way)	Free - donations accepted

Regional Accessibility and Mobility Project (RAMP)

The Regional Accessibility and Mobility Project (RAMP) is a non-profit Center for Independent Living (CIL). RAMP provides services to individuals that are located in several counties, which include Boone, DeKalb, Stephenson, and Winnebago counties, and has offices that are located in Belvidere, DeKalb, Freeport, and Rockford, Illinois.

The goal of RAMP is to increase the ability of people with disabilities to become productive, contributing, and self-directing members of society. The organization also provides educational services to businesses, service providers and public entities on disability issues and helps them to comply with the technical requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act and disability-related laws. While RAMP does not supply transportation services directly through their organization, they provide services that support the success of transportation including accessibility assessments. This service determines the level of accessibility to a facility, such as a school or business, and provides suggestions for individuals with disabilities on how to increase their accessibility.

The Workforce Connection

The Workforce Connection is a partnership of 20 state and federally funded employment training programs and educational entities serving individuals and businesses in the region. This entity is the front door to the publicly-funded workforce development system and is committed to providing a workforce that meets the needs of the local business community. The Workforce Connection provides a workforce development system for individuals to find employment or educational training opportunities in Boone, Stephenson, and Winnebago Counties. The system is made up of partnerships with regional stakeholders, training providers, educational entities, state and federal departments, board members and chief elected officials. While no transportation services are directly provided by the program, the system's One-Stop Career Centers provide information about the various transportation services and communicate regularly with the transit providers in their service areas.

Fish-Abled Foundation

The Fish-Abled Foundation is a non-profit organization dedicated in improving the lives of people with disabilities in the Rockford community. Fish-Abled aims to improve the quality of life for persons with disabilities by organizing events and offering opportunities to take part in life enrichment activities such as fishing outings, and baseball games. Transportation services to outings are provided to members of the organization.

Milestone, Inc.

Milestone, Inc. is a not-for-profit organization that provides services to adults and children with developmental disabilities. Services include vocational and life skills training, employment opportunities, social services for families, and various activities through their Downtown Community Services Center and their community center. Milestone provides residential facilities and transportation for its clients to places throughout the community such as day training centers.

Shelter Care Ministries

Shelter Care Ministries is an organization that provides services to homeless individuals and individuals with mental illnesses. The organization provides services such as emergency and transitional housing and a soup kitchen. Services for those with mental illnesses are provided through the Jubilee Center. The center provides services five days a week that promote a safe environment for individuals with mental illnesses. Shelter Care Ministries provides transportation services for individuals who utilize their programs for activities and special events. Additionally, the organization provides some transportation assistance through RMTD bus tickets or passes.

Bridgeway

Bridgeway is a not-for-profit corporation that provides vocational training and services to persons with disabilities. A main goal of Bridgeway is to create opportunities for persons with disabilities so they can enjoy the same full range of life experiences that others enjoy. The organization assists individuals who participate in programs for the building and retention of skills that will assist them in working within the Bridgeway environment and other work environments. The organization serves more than 200 individuals. Transportation is provided to Bridgeway through RMTD fixed-route and paratransit service.



Private Transportation Services

Intercity Private Bus Service

Three private intercity coach bus services operate four distinct routes in the region. RMTD hosts the Van Galder/Coach U.S.A's Chicago Union Station service, Burlington Trailways, and Greyhound at their East Side Transfer Center, while Van Galder/Coach U.S.A's O'Hare service operates out of its own facility in Rockford. Van Galder/Coach U.S.A operates 13 daily round trips between Rockford and Chicago Union Station, with 11 of the trips connecting to Chicago Midway International Airport and north to South Beloit, Janesville, and Madison, WI. Van Galder/Coach U.S.A also operates 18 daily round trips between Rockford and Chicago O'Hare International Airport. Additionally, Burlington Trailways operates one daily round trip along I-90 and US-20 between Iowa and Chicago and Greyhound operates one daily round trip from Chicago to Rockford. Greyhound also provides trips to all major cities along I-39 and I-74 to Danville, IL through FTA Intercity Service program (Section 5311(f)). Pricing for tickets for these services varies according to destination and type of transport. Pricing for a one-way trip to Chicago averages approximately \$22 to \$25.

Taxi Services

Taxi services offer transportation services to and from specific destinations for compensation. This fee is assessed using a taximeter and is based on the mileage and distance of the trip. While pre-arranged transportation isn't provided, drivers are dispatched to locations on an as-needed basis.

Transportation Network Companies

Transportation Network Companies (TNC) provide a technological platform to request on-demand transportation services. Unlike taxi's, TNC's use smartphone applications to connect drivers to riders, providing a more convenient experience. App-based ride-hailing allows drivers to pick up riders with much greater frequency because of the ability to match customers with routes efficiently. Users are able to schedule rides knowing the upfront cost of the trip, utilize mobile payment, and track the progress of their ride. Uber and Lyft are two examples of ridesharing companies that offer 24-hour service to the residents and visitors of Rockford.

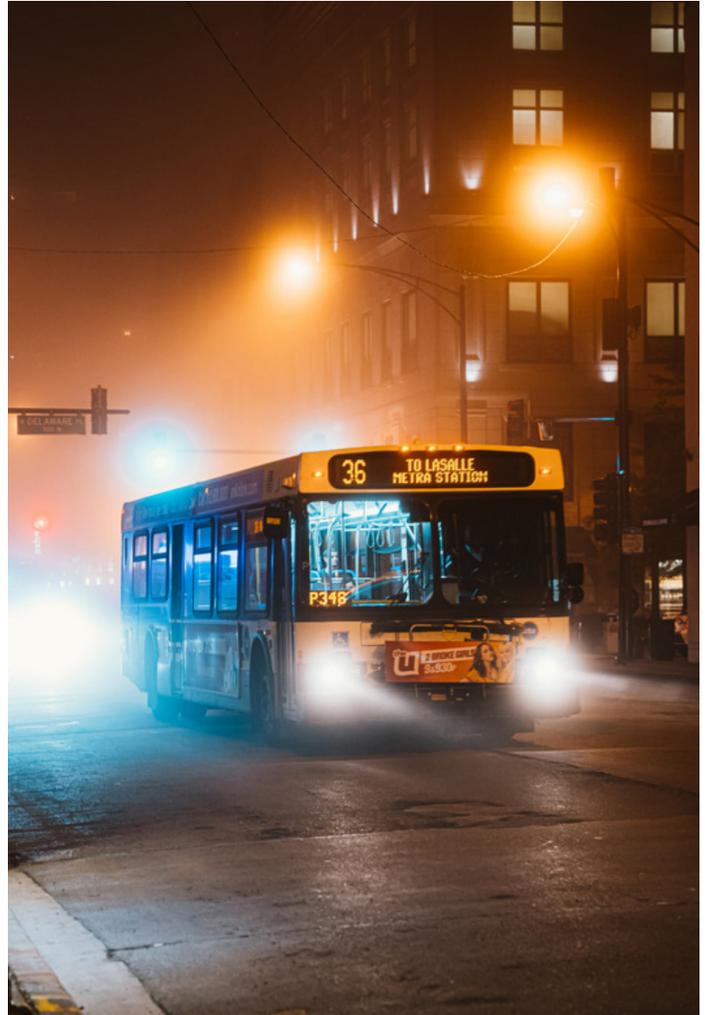


Table 2-9. Taxi Services in the Rockford Region

TAXI SERVICES			
Agency	Service Area	Phone	Hours of Operation
Honey Bee's Transportation	Rockford and Beloit	815-494-4204	24/7
Spee-Dee Transportation	Rockford and surrounding area	815-963-3322	24/7
Checker Cab	Rockford	815-961-8888	24/7
Jacks Taxi	Rockford, Loves Park, Machensy Park, Cherry Valley, Belvidere. Freeport. Roscoe, Rockfton, South Beloit	779-771-0243	24/7
City Cab	Rockford	815-977-7552	24/7
Seabreeze Non-Emergency Medical Transport	Winnebago and Boone County	815-708-7807	7:00AM - 7:00PM

Transportation Needs Assessment

A transportation needs assessment offers the opportunity to understand how population characteristics and the built environment impact and inform transportation services in the region. Identification of transportation needs and gaps helps municipalities, transportation agencies, and human services organizations find ways to improve the overall quality of the region’s transportation services. Providers and organizations can strategically work together to create a transportation network that prioritizes its service users. Needs for transportation services in Rockford metropolitan planning area (MPA) were identified through review of regional demographics, transportation service reach, common service destinations, infrastructure, and engagement materials.

Regional Demographics and Travel Patterns

Demographic and population data is key to understanding the transportation needs of transit dependent populations in the region. Seniors, individuals with disabilities, individuals with low incomes, and zero-vehicle households have been identified as target population groups. Many individuals within these groups experience circumstances that may prevent them from having access to personal vehicles, making transit one of their only viable modes of transportation.

When discussing the demographics of the region, there are a number of boundaries that can be used to define it. In previous iterations of the HSTP, Rockford Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) and county-level data has been used. Because data cannot be collected at the MPA level from nationally comparable datasets, such as the U.S. Census’s American Community Survey (ACS), and urban-area population data leaves out rural residents within the MPA, demographic population data for this update is derived from county-level data of all three counties, and in some instances, census block groups within the MPA boundary. Although the limits of Ogle County expand beyond the study area, understanding the demographics of Ogle County as a whole is helpful in moving forward with regional transportation planning.

Total Population

Population density is an important consideration for transportation services because of its direct and indirect relationship to efficient route planning. Density tends to influence travel patterns and what services are offered in particular area. In general, transit tends to be more accessible in areas of high population density.

According to 2018 ACS 5-year estimates, approximately 328,716 people reside within the MPA. The total population of the three-county area is 391,108. When comparing 2018 data to the 2015 ACS 5-year estimates, there has been an overall decline in population of the three counties, with Winnebago County seeing the largest overall decline in residents. This could be a result of the outward migration of residents, a trend seen across the state.

Table 3-1: Total Population

TOTAL POPULATION		
County	2015	2018
Boone	53,851	53,606
Ogle	52,397	51,328
Winnebago	290,439	286,174
Rockford MPA	344,290	328,716

Table 3-2: Municipal Populations within the Rockford MPA, 2018

MUNICIPALITIES	POPULATION
Rockford	147,881
Belvidere	25,319
Loves Park	24,043
Machesney Park	22,906
Roscoe	10,575
Poplar Grove	5,154
Byron	3,608
Winnebago	3,425
Cherry Valley	2,895
Davis Junction	2,508
Timberlane	1,044
New Milford	682
Monroe Center	402
Caledonia	221

Seniors

Seniors are the fastest-growing age group in the region. These individuals tend to be at a higher risk for health-related issues which can increase their reliance on public or human service transportation to medical facilities. In order to support the growth within this population group, their transportation-related needs must be considered in order to accommodate the projected increased demand for services.

According to 2018 ACS 5-year estimates, there are 52,878 seniors aged 65 and older residing in the MPA, comprising 16.1 percent of the total population. The total senior population of the three counties is 64,486 or 16.5 percent. Between 2015 and 2018, the change in senior population was most notable in Winnebago County.

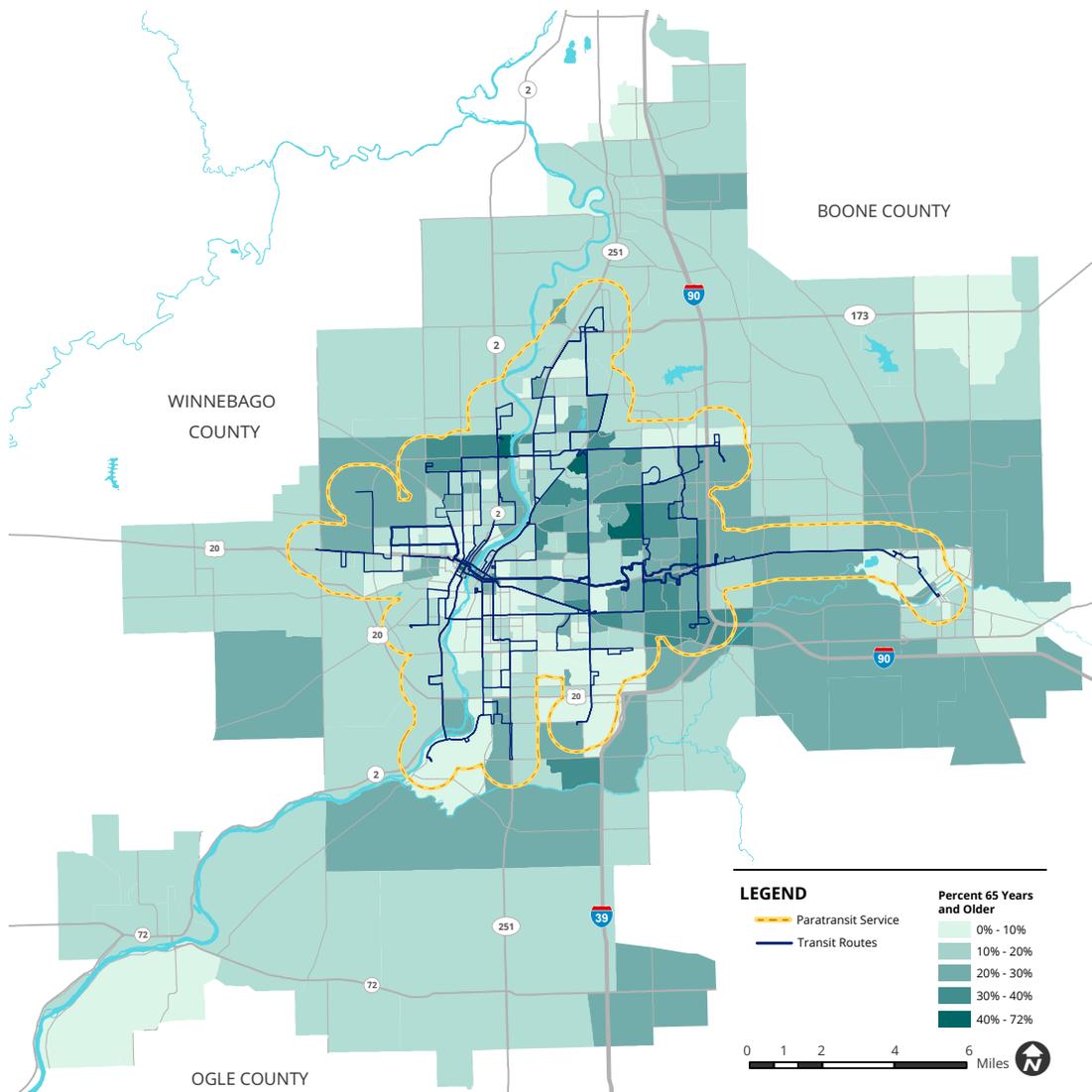
Figure 3-1 displays the total senior population within the MPA at the census block group level. Areas with darker shading symbolize a higher concentration of those 65 years and older.

Within the region, most seniors are located on the northern and eastern portions of Rockford where public transportation service is less frequent and routes do not cover as much land mass. Seniors who do live near bus routes may have limited ability to travel short distances to access service. Additionally, senior populations tend to be concentrated on the fringes of urban centers and in rural areas, which are typically more auto-dependent and less transit-oriented. While paratransit services are available to elderly individuals, these services tend to drop off on weekends and weeknights, increasing reliance on personal vehicles and RMTD's fixed-route system.

Table 3-3. Senior Population by County, 2018

Senior Population		
County	Seniors 65 and Older	Percent
Boone	7,928	14.8%
Ogle	9,132	17.8%
Winnebago	47,426	16.6%
Total	64,486	16.5%

Figure 3-1: Senior Population by Block Group



Individuals with a Disability

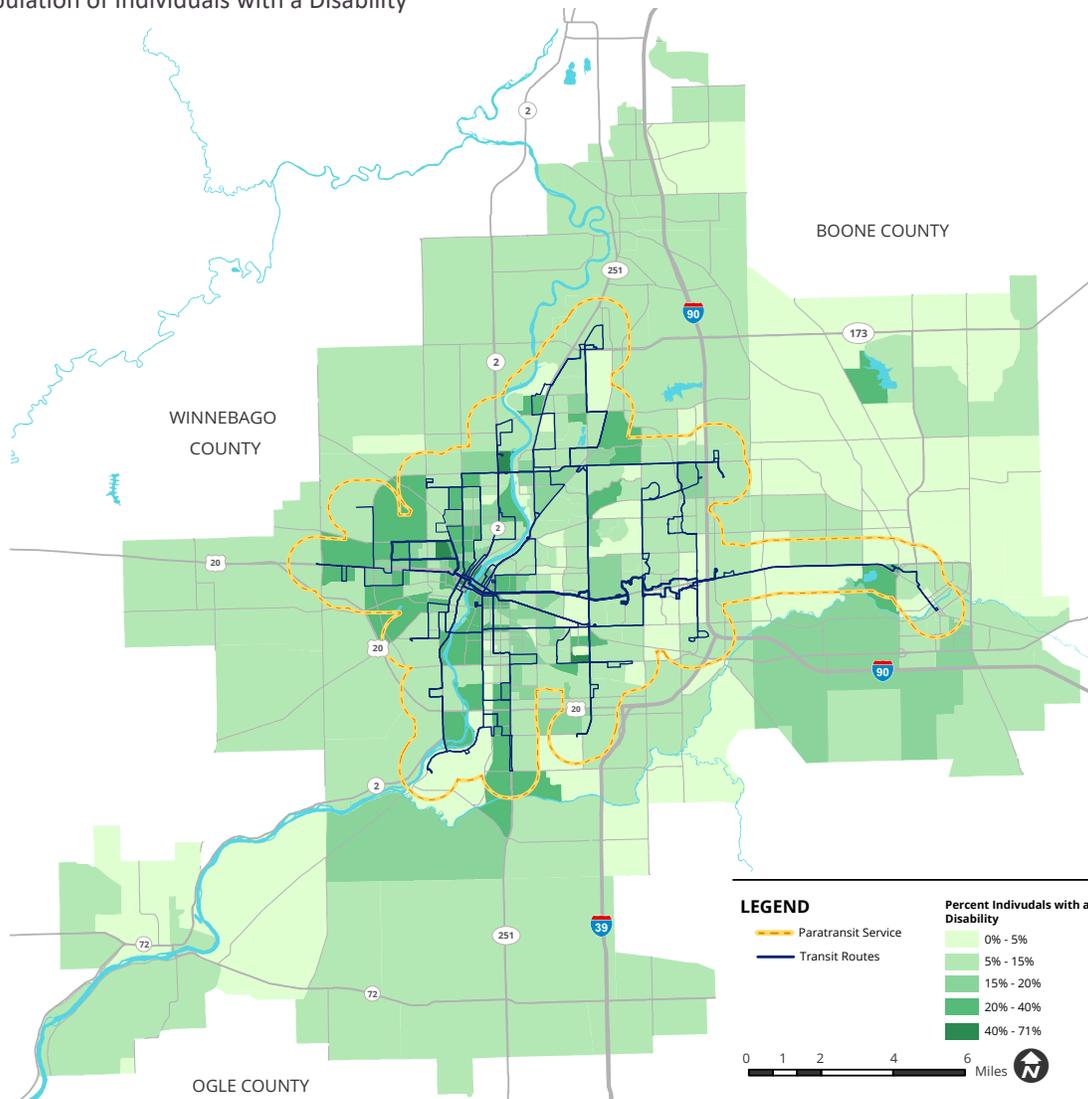
Although individuals with a disability may have a wide range of needs and abilities, many experience mobility challenges in some form. Provision of adequate transportation service supports their ability to continue to live independently.

According to 2018 ACS 5-year estimates, the total population of individuals with disabilities within the three counties is 51,770. Between 2015 and 2018, the increase in population of individuals with a disability was most notable in Boone County.

Figure 3-2 displays the population of individuals with a disability within the MPA at the census block group level. Disability data was based on the population 20 to 64 years old for whom poverty status is determined.

Most individuals with disabilities are concentrated in Rockford's downtown, western, and southern portions. These areas tend to have greater access to transit service, but may lack infrastructure needed for those living with a disability to access services, such as curb ramps or level sidewalks. In order to ensure accessibility, transportation services for individuals with disabilities must be able to support mobility devices and aids.

Figure 3-2. Population of Individuals with a Disability



Additionally, because not all disabilities are physical or always evident, going beyond ADA requirements can ensure assistance is there to complete a trip. Those with developmental or intellectual disabilities, such as autism, may require clarity and simplicity in trip-planning, fare payment, and other policies whereas those with mental health conditions may be best accommodated by changes in facility design or customer service. As increases in mental health conditions rise across the global population, focusing on ways to provide clear transit information, improve rider and transportation staff interactions (i.e. bus drivers), and cultivate a comfortable travel experience can begin to address the multitude of barriers that may deter an individual from using transit services.

Table 3-4: Population of Individuals with a Disability by County

Persons with a Disability Population				
County	2015	Percent	2018	Percent
Boone	5,202	9.7%	6,055	11.4%
Ogle	6,194	11.9%	6,180	12.2%
Winnebago	37,954	13.2%	39,535	14%
Total	49,350		51,770	

Low-Income Individuals

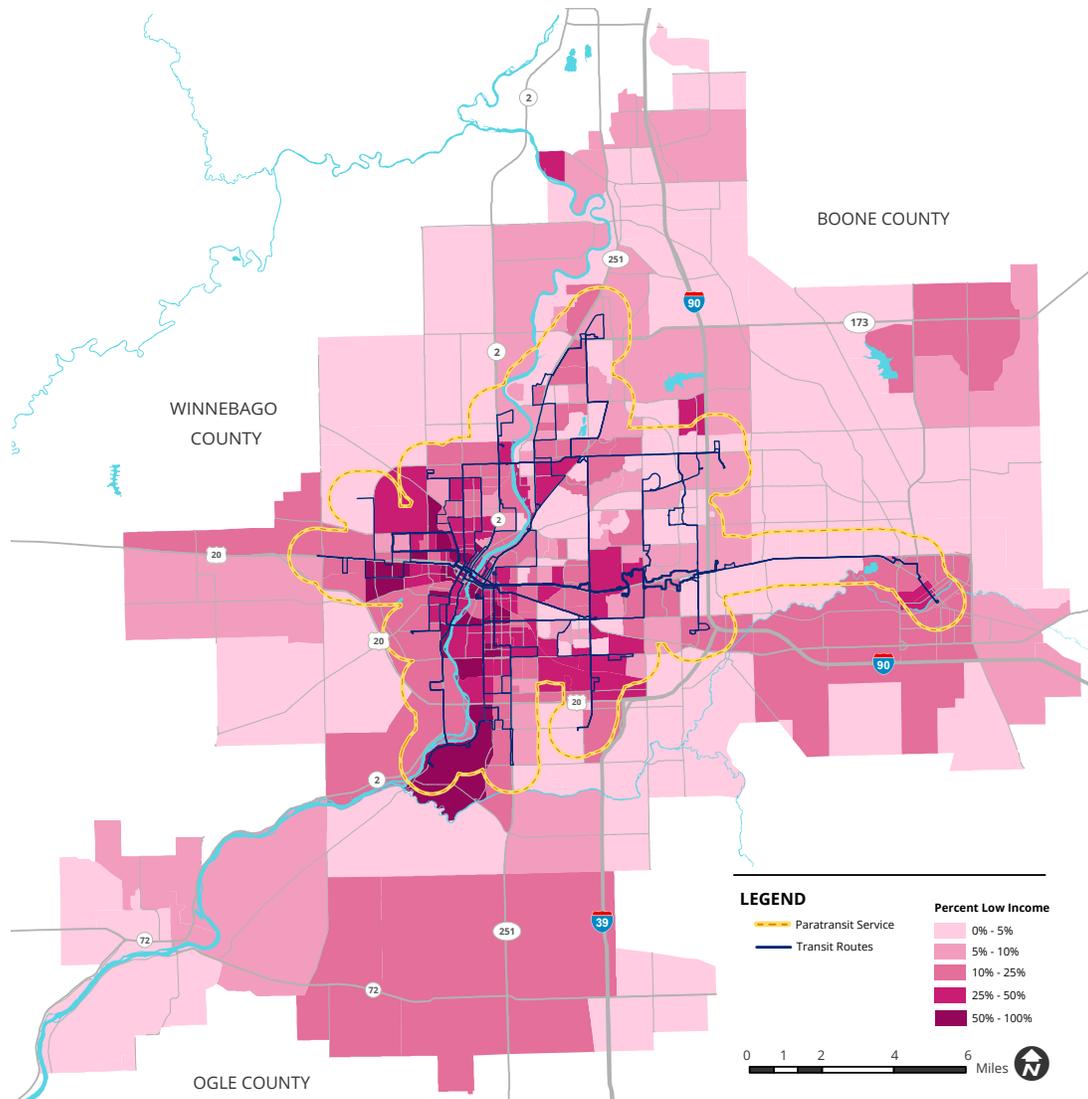
Maintaining or owning a personal vehicle may be a financial burden for individuals with lower incomes, increasing their reliance on public transportation services. Lower-income individuals tend to utilize public transit at higher rates than other parts of the population, meaning that gaps in transit service can disproportionately harm them. Within the MPA, there are higher rates of lower income individuals than other population groups. Addressing their transit needs can assist in reducing economic inequalities and advancing social equity. **Figure 3-3** displays the population of individuals living below poverty in the MPA at the census block group level.

The highest concentrations of low-income individuals are in the southern and western portions of Rockford’s Urbanized Area as well as in downtown Belvidere. Despite the fact that lower-income individuals in southern and west Rockford tend to be better served by RMTD’s fixed route service, that transit service can fall short on connecting people to job opportunities located in the northeastern portions of the region.

Table 3-5: Population of Low Income Individuals by County

Low Income Population				
County	2015	Percent	2018	Percent
Boone	5,841	10.9%	5,843	11%
Ogle	5,477	10.6%	4,998	9.9%
Winnebago	47,851	16.8%	43,932	15.6%

Figure 3-3. Population of Low-Income Individuals



Zero-Vehicle Households

While some households in well-served and walkable areas may choose not to own a personal vehicle, a majority of zero-vehicle households are concentrated in areas with higher numbers of low-income individuals. Automobile ownership is not feasible for many of these households which can lead to an increased reliance on access to public transportation.

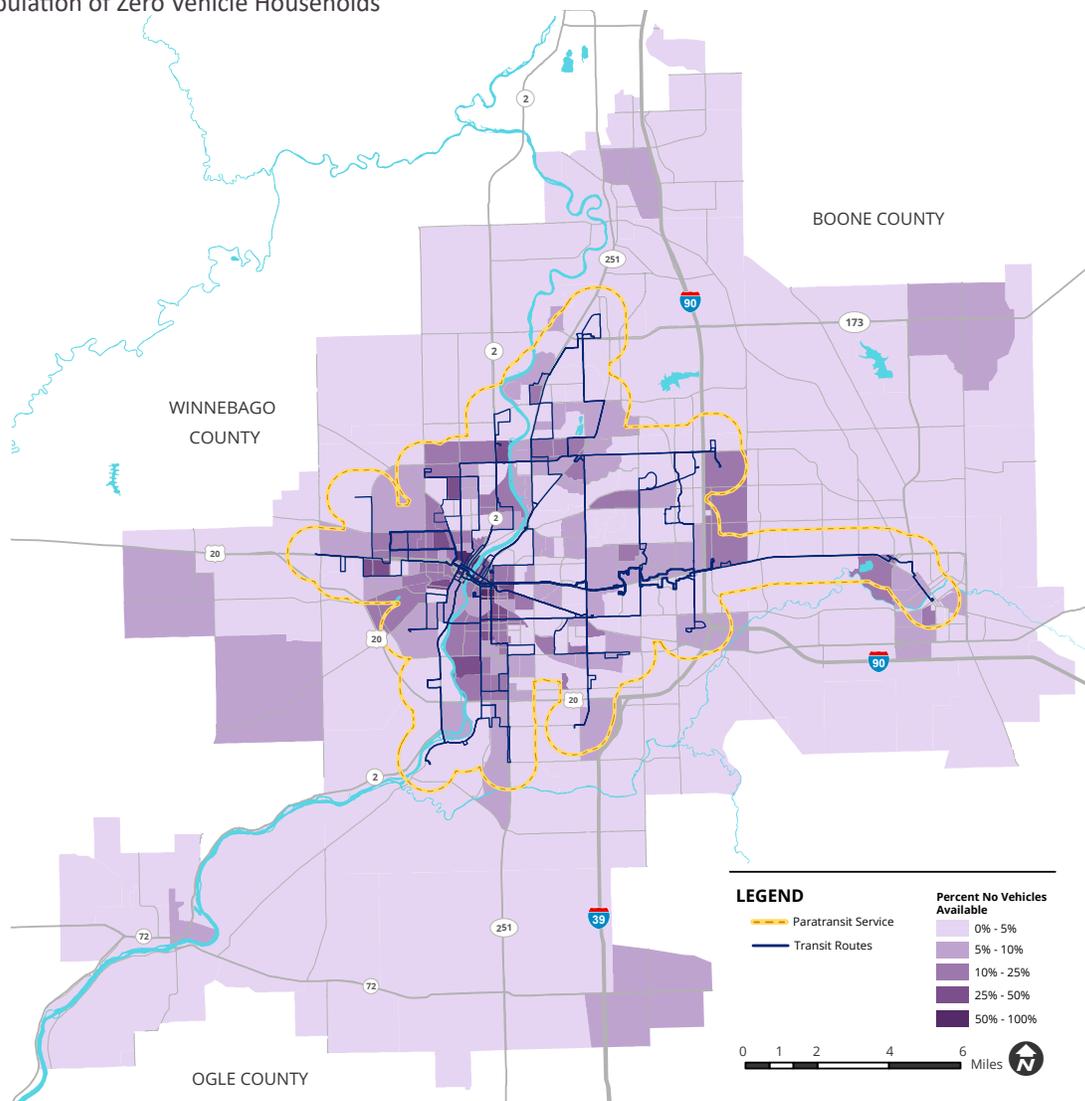
According to the 2018 ACS 5-year estimates, the total number of zero-vehicle households within the MPA was 10,401 or 8.1 percent. In the three-county region, the number of zero-vehicle households was 11,559 with the highest number of zero-vehicle households within Winnebago County. **Figure 3-4** displays the percent of zero vehicle households within MPA at the census block group level.

As mentioned, census block groups with the highest percentage of zero-vehicle households are located in Winnebago County, specifically in Rockford’s downtown district. Similar to those with lower incomes, zero-vehicle households in this area are better served by RMTD’s fixed route service than those in more rural areas, but a lack of connectivity to other destinations can leave these households at a disadvantage.

Table 3-6. Population of Zero Vehicle Households by County

Zero Vehicle Households				
County	2015	Percent	2018	Percent
Boone	752	4.1%	758	4%
Ogle	963	4.6%	1003	4.8%
Winnebago	9,265	8.1%	9,798	8.5%

Figure 3-4. Population of Zero Vehicle Households



Transit Dependency

Analyzing public transportation needs begins with recognizing which segments of the population are most dependent on alternative transportation services and where highest concentrations of these groups are located. Establishing the location of transit-dependent populations supports efforts to understand the demographic layout of the current population and identify potential gaps in transit services.

Levels of transportation need were based on the identified target populations, including:

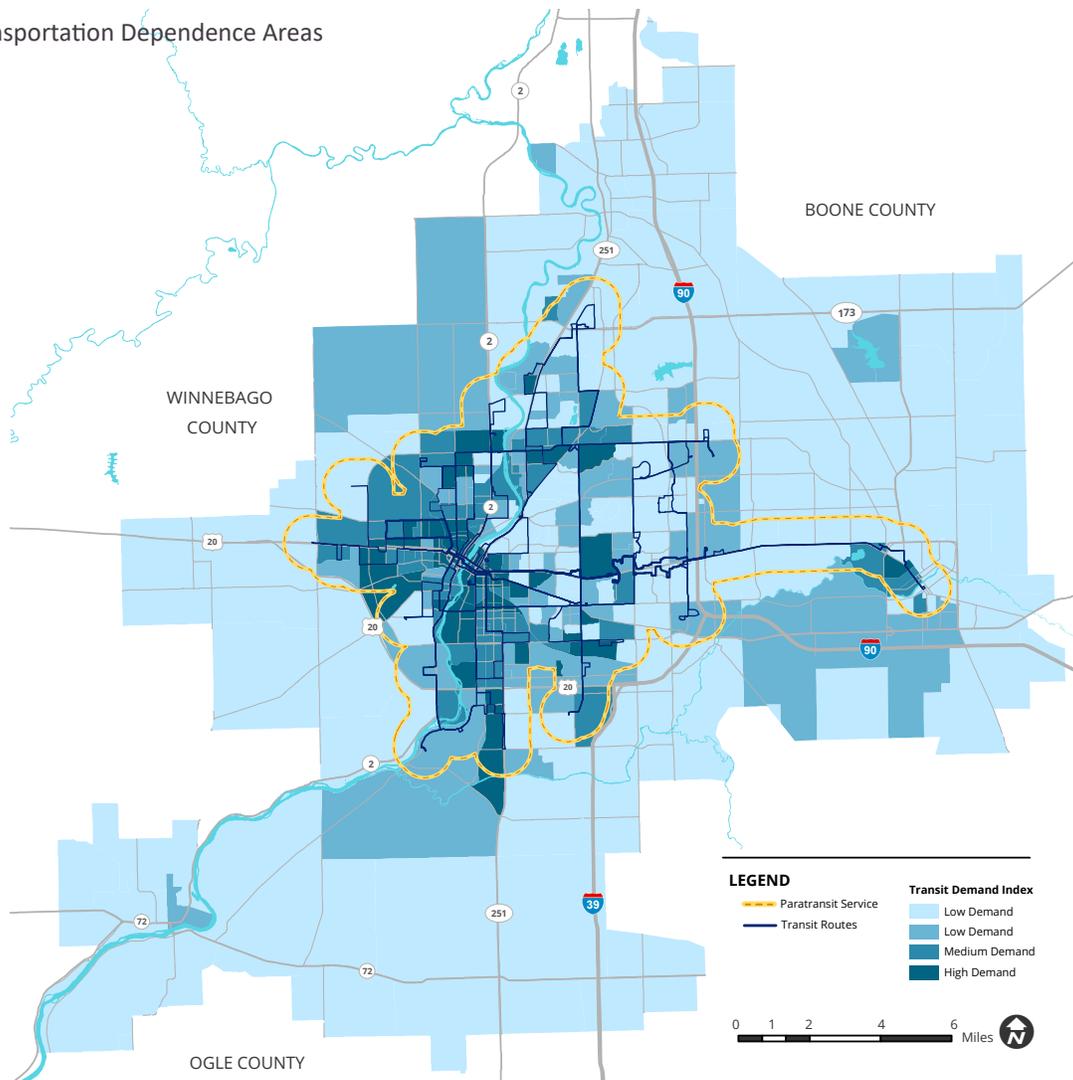
- Number of individuals 65 years and older;
- Number of individuals with a disability;
- Number of low-income individuals; and
- Number of zero-vehicle households.

Thresholds created for each targeted population is based on the regional average of each targeted population and applied to all census block groups within the planning area. The thresholds identify areas with higher-than-average concentrations of the targeted population group. In other words, if a census block group had a higher-than-average percentage of residents with a disability, it would have exceeded the disability threshold.

Once thresholds were established for each targeted population group, each census block group was assigned a number based on how many thresholds it met or exceeded. For instance, census block groups wherein the number of individuals 65 years or older was greater than or equal to the regional average would automatically receive a score of one. If a census block group was greater than or equal to the regional average in both the number of individuals 65 years or old and the number of low-income individuals, it received a score of two. If a census block group did not meet any of the thresholds or only one of the thresholds, it was considered low need. If a census block group met two thresholds, it was considered medium need and if a census block group met or exceeded three thresholds, it was considered high need.

Figure 3-5 displays the areas of public transportation need in the region based on the methodology mentioned above. Census block groups with the highest transportation needs are heavily concentrated in the downtown portions of Rockford and Belvidere. There is also high public transportation need along the edges of Rockford, such as the Village of New Milford, that are currently underserved by public transportation.

Figure 3-4. Transportation Dependence Areas



Transit Service Reach

Proximity to transit is one of the main determinants in how individuals are able to access public transit services. The provision of complementary paratransit service is required to be available within ¼-mile of a fixed route for those who are unable to access the general transit system. With this in mind, the proximity to transit services has a great impact on transit-dependent populations, specifically seniors and individuals with disabilities.

In addition to the effort of providing transit to those who are unable to access the fixed-route transit system, demand-response services are in place to provide transit service to those in peri-urban or rural areas.

Figure 3-6 displays the paratransit and demand-response service reach within the MPA in an effort to identify any spatial gaps in service. As illustrated, Winnebago County is the only county within Northern Illinois where rural areas are not currently served by transit. Furthermore, it should be noted that areas with designated services may not offer service all days of the week. On weeknights and weekends, Lee–Ogle Transportation Service (LOTS) and Boone County Public Transportation (BCPT) do not operate, making personal automobile and private transportation services the only transportation options during these time periods. RMTD paratransit and demand-response service is still offered on weekends, however Machesney Park and Loves Park do not have paratransit service available on Sundays.

While individuals 65 years and older, as well as individuals with a disability, have higher chances of qualifying for paratransit service, those without access to a personal vehicle and those living below poverty depend more heavily on fixed route service for mobility during times in which demand-response services are unavailable. Fixed route transit services also tend to have more service times compared to paratransit and demand-response. Because of this, the service reach of a fixed route system is a great determinant of accessibility in regards to transit-dependent populations.

Figure 3-7 displays the transit reach of RMTD’s fixed route system during the times with the most services available and least amount of services available (i.e. weekdays and Sundays). Reach was determined by a half-mile buffer surrounding each transit route, which is the approximate distance most people are willing to walk to a transit stop.

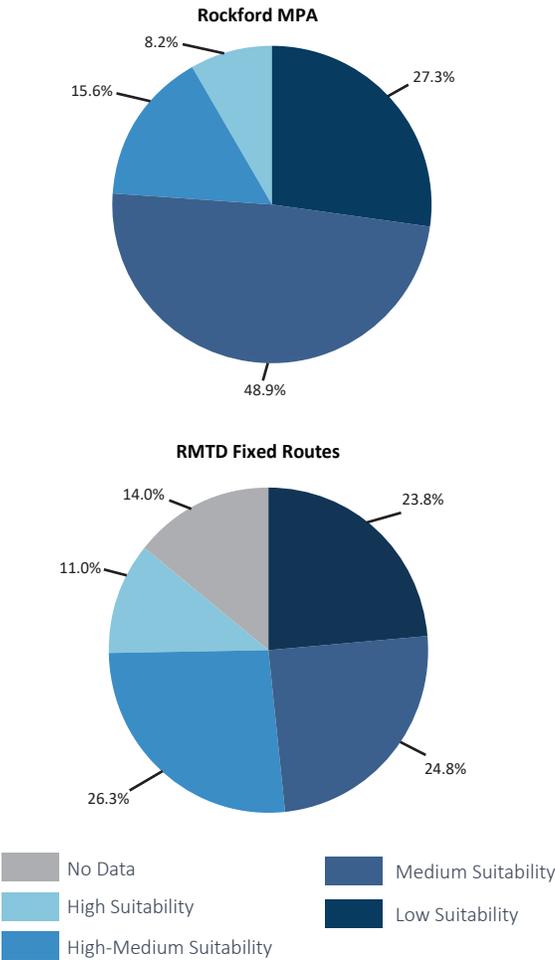


Pedestrian Suitability

While proximity to transit service is a key determinant of use and access, transportation infrastructure plays a predominant role toward supporting safe and frequent transit mobility. As part of the MPO’s 2017 update to the Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, a pedestrian suitability index was developed to determine the pedestrian suitability of regional roadways. A composite score was established based on how well each major roadway (i.e. roads with a federal functional classification of collector or above) met certain roadway and pedestrian space characteristics. These characteristics included roadway speed limit, traffic volume, the number of vehicle lanes, truck route status, presence of sidewalks, width of sidewalks, sidewalk buffer, and midblock crossings. Higher scores indicate an environment more suitable for pedestrian travel.

As illustrated in **Figure 3-8**, most roadways outside of the urban core tend to be less suitable for pedestrian travel, aligning with the features of urban sprawl. Main corridors of commercial development, where residents access essential goods and services, are located along non-suitable roadways where access to transit is most needed. **Figure 3-9**, shows that less than half of roadways along RMTD fixed-routes are of high or medium suitability which can present challenges for those looking to access fixed-route transportation services.

Figure 3-9. Pedestrian Suitability Roadway Comparison

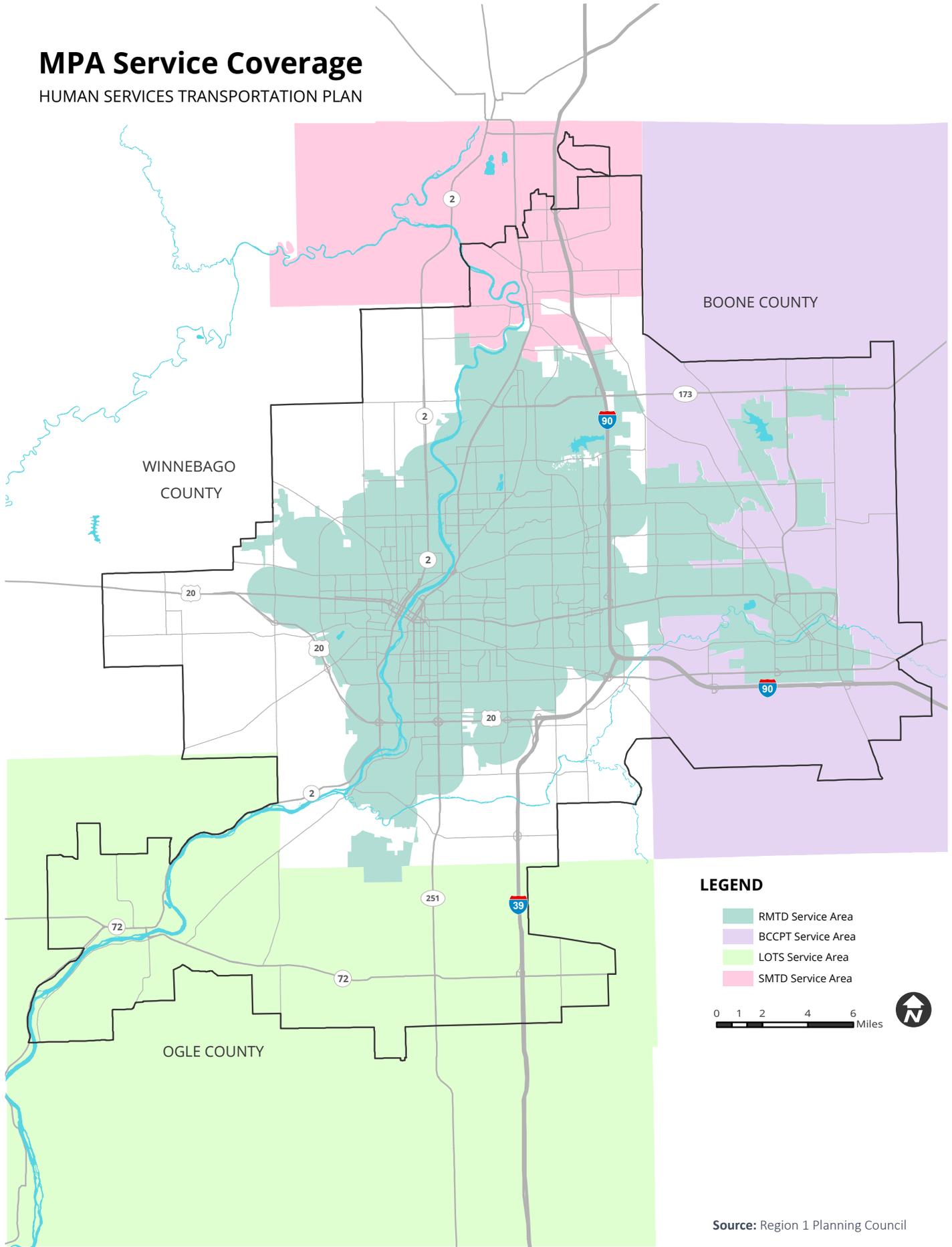


Source: Region 1 Planning Council

Figure 3-6. MPA Service Coverage

MPA Service Coverage

HUMAN SERVICES TRANSPORTATION PLAN



Source: Region 1 Planning Council

Figure 3-7. RMTD Fixed-Route Service Coverage

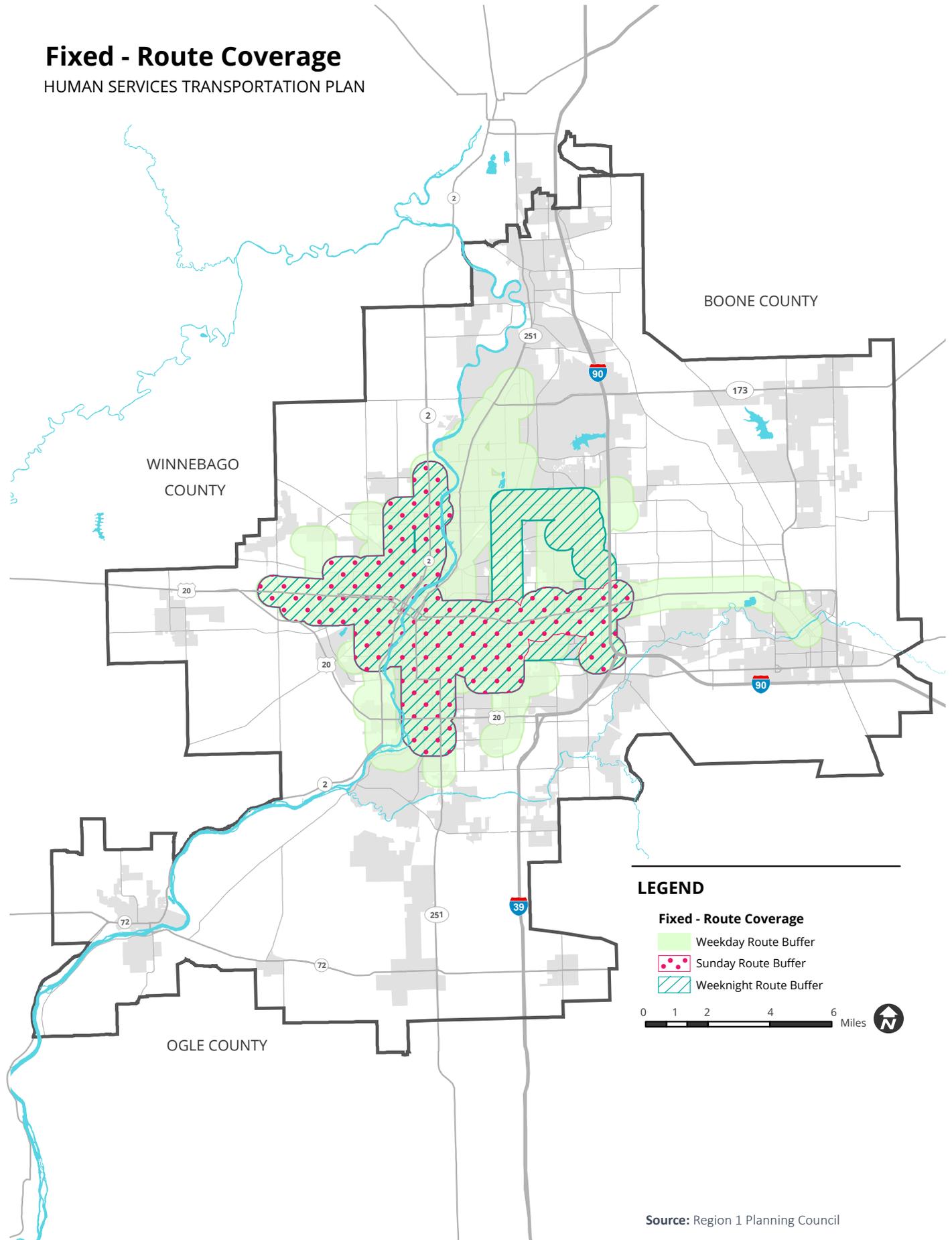
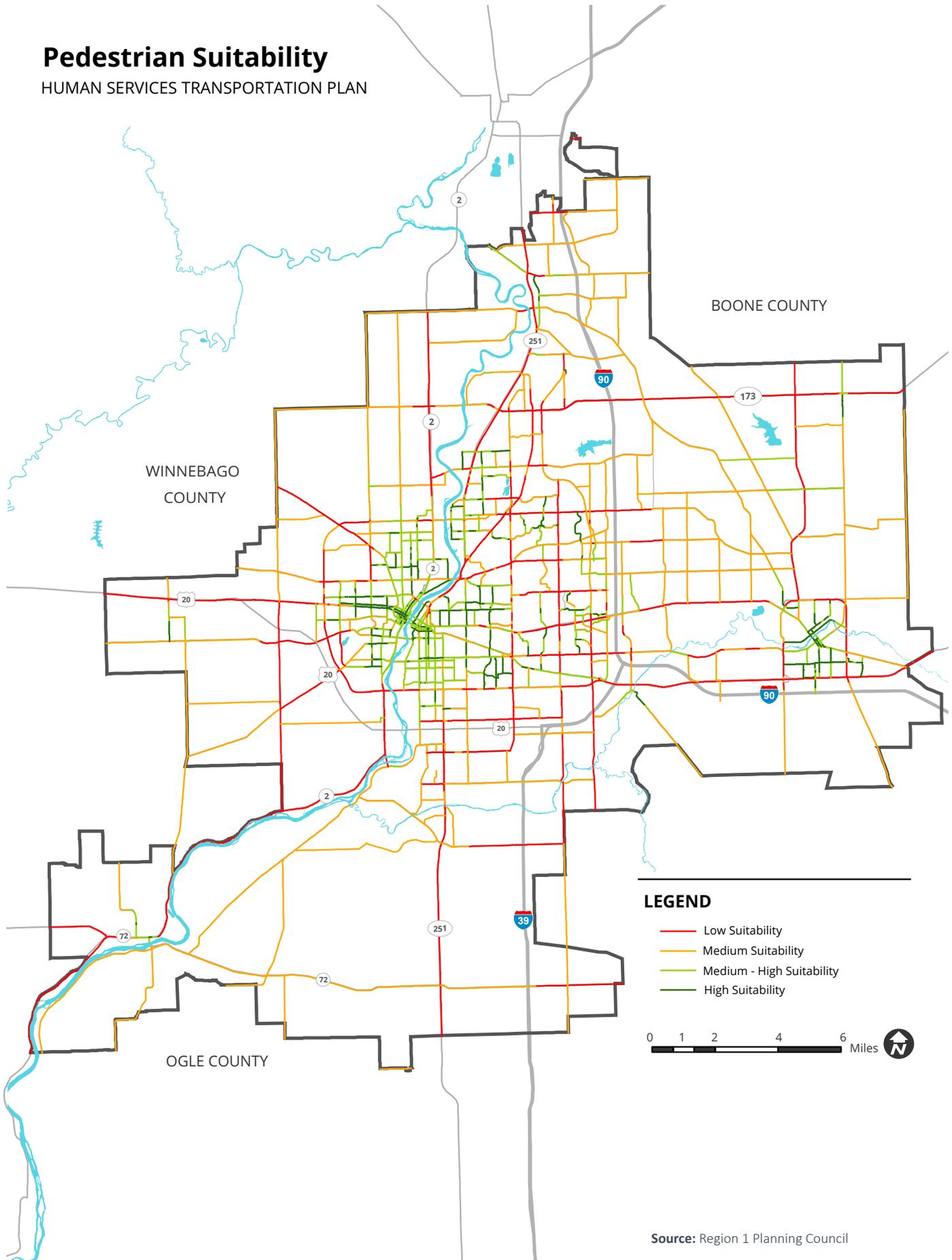


Figure 3-8. Pedestrian Suitability Index

Pedestrian Suitability

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Source: Region 1 Planning Council

Regional Destinations

Public transportation is essential in urban areas as it provides vital linkages between places of residence, employment, and goods and services. For those without access to personal vehicles, public transportation can offer the only available opportunity to carry out important daily activities. It is necessary that public transportation services get users where they need to go safely and reliably.

Since people may travel to a variety of destinations for different reasons, it is not possible to list every type of trip or destination. Thus, the regional destinations identified in this plan are those related to the social determinants of health and frequented by individuals with special transportation needs. These include medical facilities, grocery stores, shopping centers, major employer locations, and community services. **Figure 3-10** displays regional destinations within the Rockford MPA.

Employment

Employment is a key factor when assessing transportation service needs as many individuals utilize transit to reach their place of employment. While the number of job opportunities in a region is important, the distribution of employment locations can inform transit providers of areas where convenient and efficient transit is most needed. Due to its status as the urban core in the region, Rockford maintains the highest percent of individuals who make their commute to work by public transportation. The region needs to ensure that high employment density destinations are adequately served by transit that continuously supports both job seekers and workers.

While the largest employers in the MSA aren't concentrated in a specific area, those located in Boone County fall outside of a half mile radius of any transit route. It should be noted that employment concentrations may not be fully representative of the region since some employers have multiple facilities distributed throughout the area. For instance, while the one of the largest employers in the MSA is Rockford Public Schools, employees are dispersed throughout various schools and administrative facilities. **Table 3-7** lists the major employers within the Rockford MSA.

To better understand the spatial relationships between locations of largest employers and areas with the highest transit dependent populations, largest employers were geographically overlaid on the layer of transit dependence. As shown on **Figure 3-11**, the majority of largest employers are located in or near areas with higher transit-dependent populations. As mentioned previously, the largest employers in Boone County are not served by fixed route services.

Medical

Transportation to and from medical appointments is a frequent need for seniors and those living with a disability. However, adequate access to these destinations is a growing need for all populations as mental health services increase in demand. A significant amount of trips taken by rural transit riders or offered by human transportation providers are medical-related, which are often located in urbanized areas. While some outpatient facilities are located in smaller municipalities, hospitals and specialized treatment centers are typically located within the Rockford urbanized area. Since the need for medical care can occur sporadically, transportation accessibility to these facilities is pertinent to healthy living. **Figure 3-12** displays the major medical facilities within the Rockford MPA, including hospitals, nursing homes, mental health and outpatient facilities, etc.

Grocery and Retail

Although the western and downtown areas of Rockford see the most consistent fixed route service throughout the week, there is a distinct disparity in the number of retail and grocery stores in those parts of the City. **Figure 3-13** shows that while these areas see less access to a variety of supermarkets, they have higher concentrations of transit-dependent populations. Furthermore, a large concentration of shopping centers and grocery stores are located along the East State Street corridor in the Rockford. Considering most grocery stores are located in Rockford's north and east areas, efficient and reliable service to these portions of the city should be a priority.

Table 3-7. Top Places Where Residents Work, 2018

EMPLOYER	INDUSTRY
Rockford Public Schools	Education
Mercyhealth	Healthcare
Fiat Chrysler Automobiles	Automotive
SwedishAmerican Health System	Healthcare
UPS	Parcel Sorting Hub
OSF Healthcare	Healthcare
Collins Aerospace	Aerospace Manufacturing
Woodward	Aerospace Manufacturing
PCI - Packaging Coordinators Inc	Pharmaceutical Packaging
City of Rockford	Government
Winnebago County	Government
Harlem Consolidated Schools	Education
Lowe's	Distribution Center, Retail
Belvidere Community Unit Schools	Education
Mondelez International	Chewing Gum
Magna	Automotive Parts Manufacturing
General Mills/Green Giant	Cereal/Snack Bars
Taylor Company	Ice Cream Machines
Syncreon	Automotive Supplier
Alorica	Telemarketing

Data Sources: Illinois Department of Employment Security

Figure 3-10. Regional Destinations in the Rockford MPA

Regional Destinations

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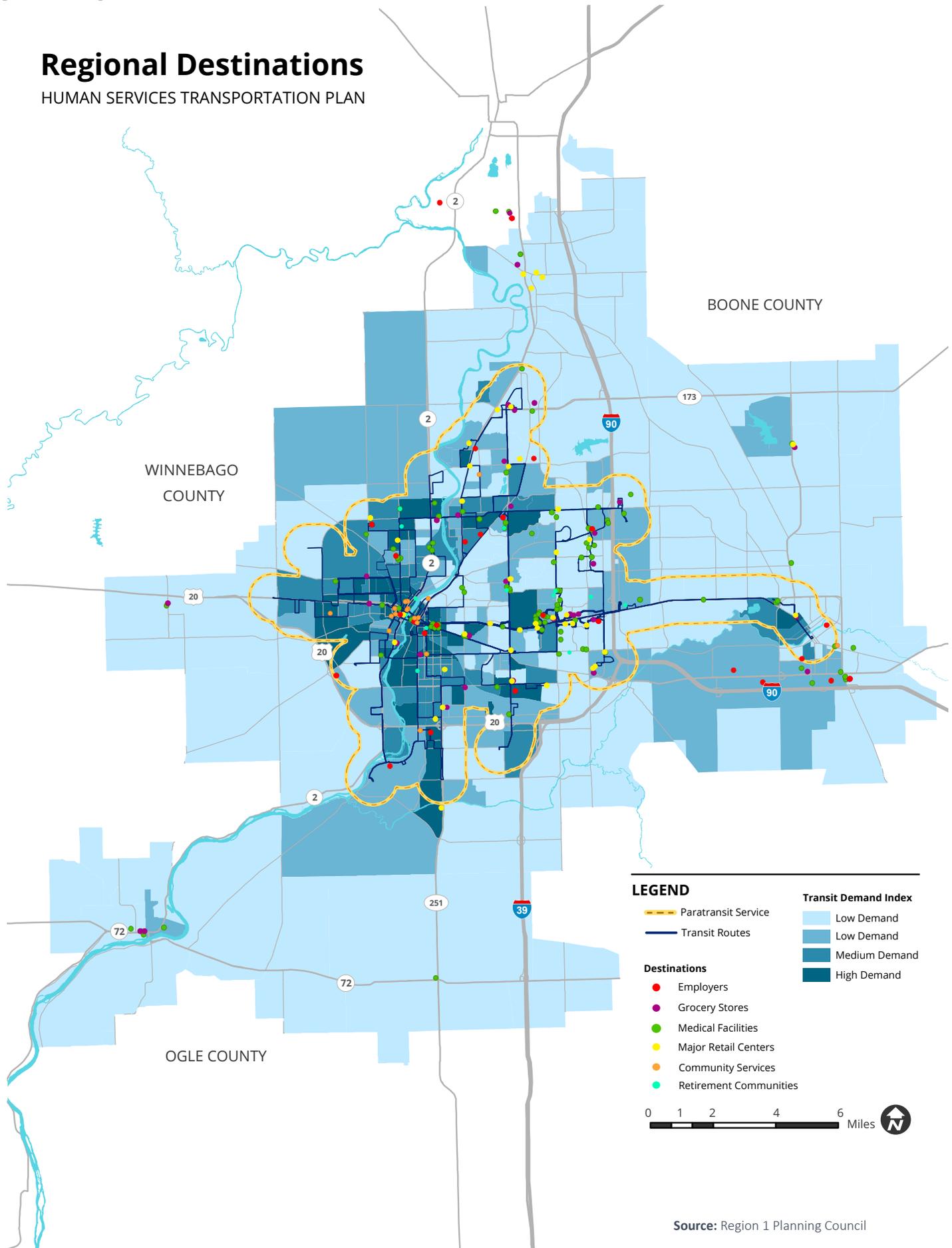
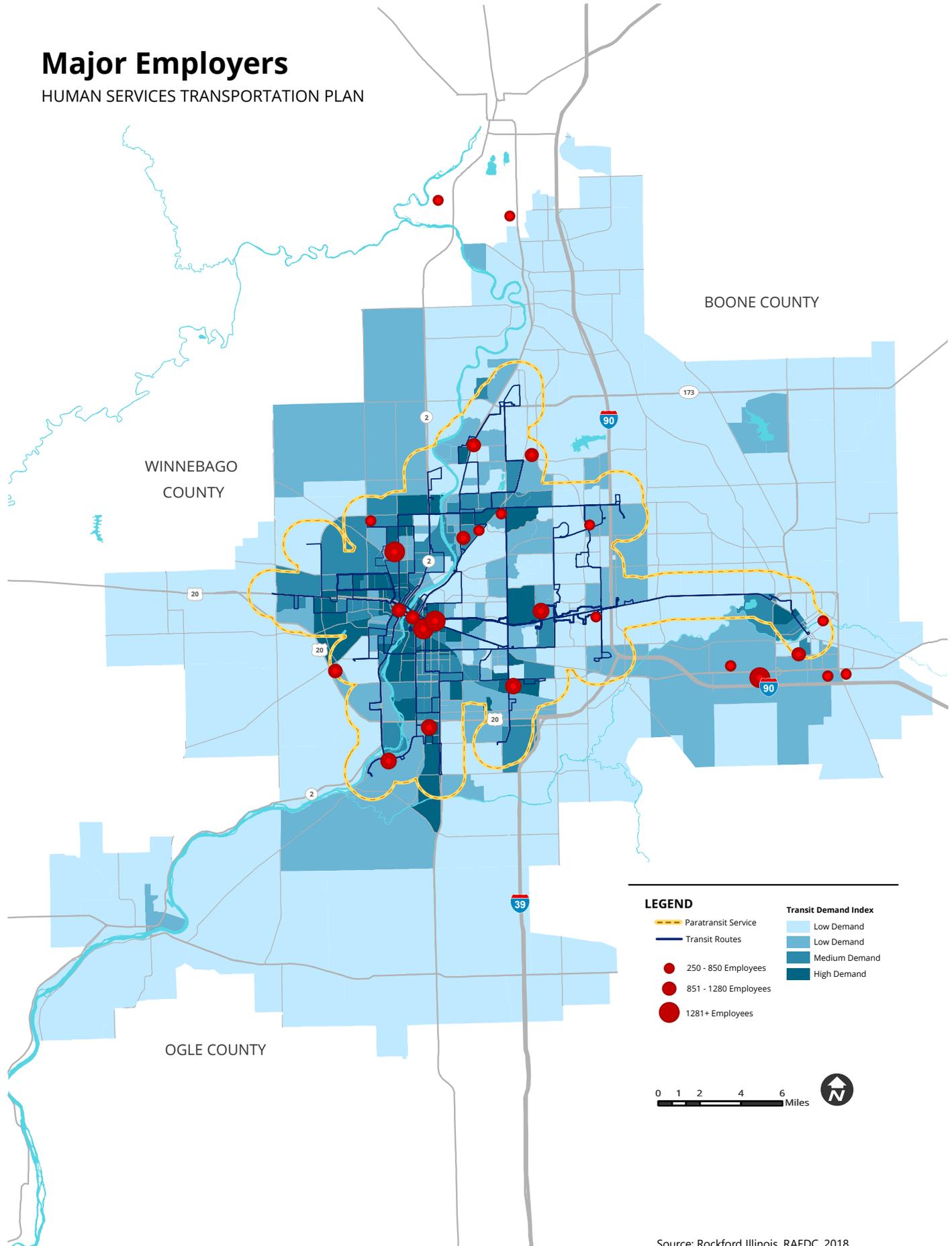


Figure 3-11. Top Employers in the Rockford MPA

Major Employers

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LEGEND

- Paratransit Service
 - Transit Routes
 - 250 - 850 Employees
 - 851 - 1280 Employees
 - 1281+ Employees
- | Transit Demand Index | |
|----------------------|---------------|
| | Low Demand |
| | Low Demand |
| | Medium Demand |
| | High Demand |



Source: Rockford Illinois, RAEDC, 2018

Figure 3-12. Medical Facilities in the Rockford MPA

Medical Facilities

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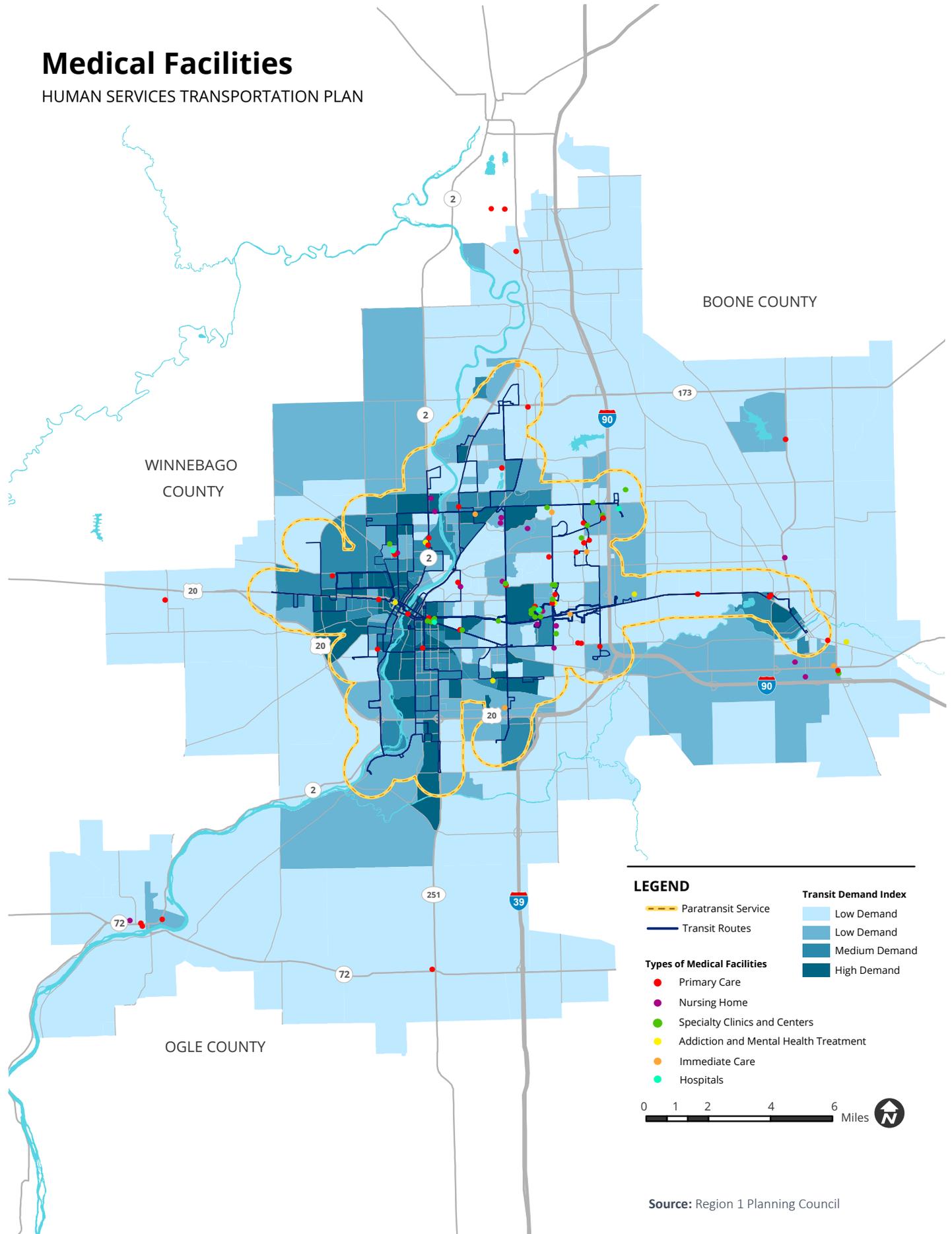
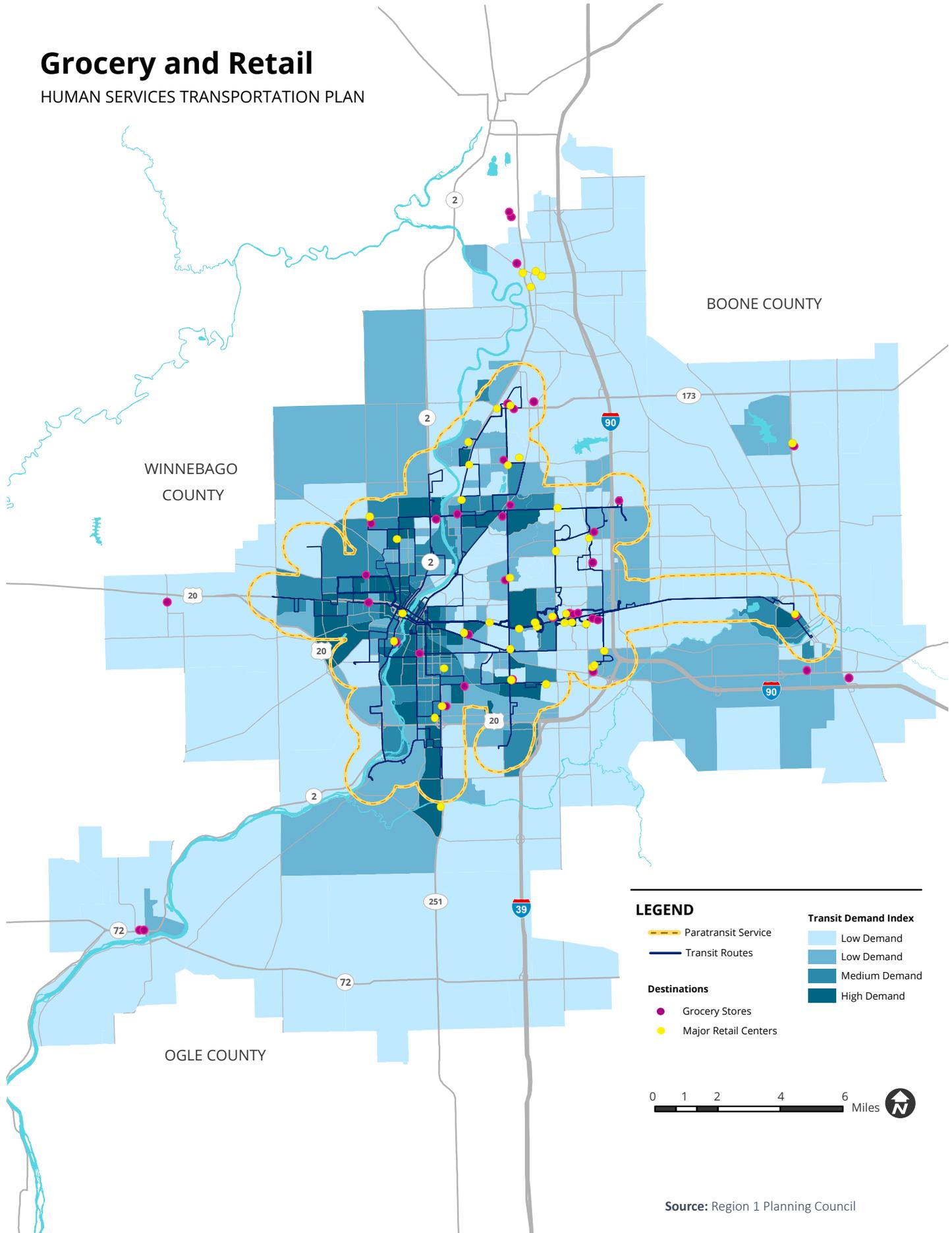


Figure 3-13. Grocery and Retail Locations in the Rockford MPA

Grocery and Retail

HUMAN SERVICES TRANSPORTATION PLAN



Outreach

To improve transportation services within the region, it is vital to incorporate the input and knowledge of those who both use and provide transit services. Surveys can be informative outreach tools to gain specific knowledge on transit use and perception directly from the community. Because feedback largely comes from those familiar with local transit systems, agencies who collect this information are better equipped to make informed system improvements that meet the needs of the community.

A transit user survey was not specifically created and distributed in the development of this HSTP. Instead, feedback was drawn from surveys administered to the general public and riders of public transit as part of RMTD's Comprehensive Mobility Analysis. Two separate but similar surveys were collected in late 2018 and early 2019 related to that project. Each survey was available online and in paper format in both English and Spanish. Paper versions were available at RMTD's transfer centers, the Boone County Health Department, and other interested human services agencies and organizations.

The Rider Survey collected 235 responses. As a part of this process, surveys were also conducted with passengers riding on RMTD's fixed route services and by soliciting surveys while stationed at RMTD's Downtown Transfer Center. The General Survey resulted in 407 responses total, including 349 fully completed surveys and 58 partially completed surveys.

In addition to the two surveys, two community forums and three rider forums were offered to gather additional feedback. These public forums were advertised regionally, however attendance was low at the forums, with fewer than 10 individuals participating. The rider forums had stronger participation, with a total of 30 riders attending.

Meetings were held separately with bus operators and stakeholders to gather their input as well. Stakeholder meetings were held with multiple government partners, human service agencies, local interest groups, and major employers within the region to capture feedback from many of RMTD's day-to-day business partners. Information from 26 stakeholder organizations was gathered using a prepared Stakeholder Questionnaire. Feedback from these operators and stakeholders was essential to understand the available services and systems both inside and outside of RMTD's direct control, discover avenues for collaboration and potential improvement, and prepare for planned regional infrastructure and service improvements.

Additionally, a Capital Needs Survey was distributed during the development of the HSTP to human service transportation providers in an effort to gather general transportation inventory information and seek input on gaps in service.

Please note, while this data is useful to determine the views and needs of the transit-dependent population, the results of these surveys cannot be fully generalized to the transit-interested public and the bodies that offer and coordinate public transportation in the region due to distribution methodology and survey sample size. Additionally, all information from the public and rider surveys

was gathered before changes forced by the global COVID-19 pandemic were implemented.

General and Rider Surveys

The general survey provided insight on transportation service perceptions, use, and preferences within the region. While 57 percent of respondents to the general transit survey said they use many of the public transportation services available in the Rockford Region, 54 percent of respondents do not use any form of public transportation. Numerous respondents noted that long travel times, infrequent bus arrivals, and a preference to drive are all contributing factors that inhibit more frequent use of public transportation (**Figure 3-14**). 63 percent of respondents who use any form of public transportation, use RMTD's fixed route service, and of those who utilize RMTD's fixed route service, nearly half responded that they ride the bus "almost every day". Other services utilized include RMTD Paratransit, Stateline Mass Transit, Boone County Public Transit, and social service shuttles. The public transportation services in the Rockford Region received an overall rating of three out of five, but many respondents would like improved access to destinations and bus stops, expanded service coverage, and additional service hours. Specifically, respondents would like more services to recreational, shopping, medical, and grocery destinations, in addition to employment centers and nearby cities.

The rider survey indicates that public transportation is a necessity for those without access to personal vehicles. Close to 70 percent of respondents were without a valid driver's license and relied on public transportation services to access destinations throughout the region. Nearly half (46 percent) of rider survey respondents use the bus to commute to work. While RMTD service currently operates during traditional work hours, a majority of respondents noted weekend nights as the time when RMTD service is needed but not available. If RMTD's services were not available, 35 percent of respondents said that they would have walked to make their current trip (**Figure 3-15**). Furthermore, an outstanding number of respondents cited they walk to and from bus stops to reach their destination. This places an emphasis on the importance of having safe and adequate pedestrian amenities that connect to public transportation services.

Full reports on the rider and general transit surveys can be found on RPC's [webpage](#).



Figure 3-14. Transportation Barriers

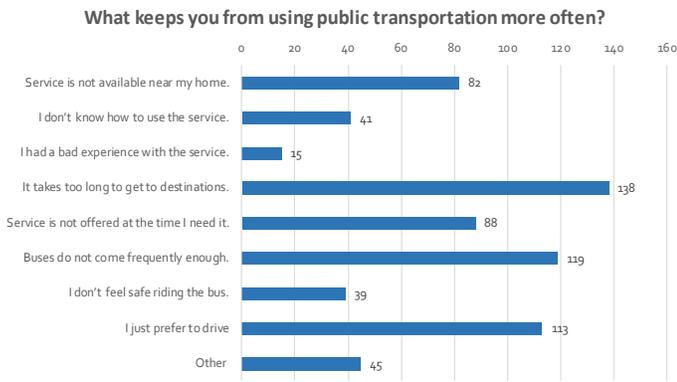
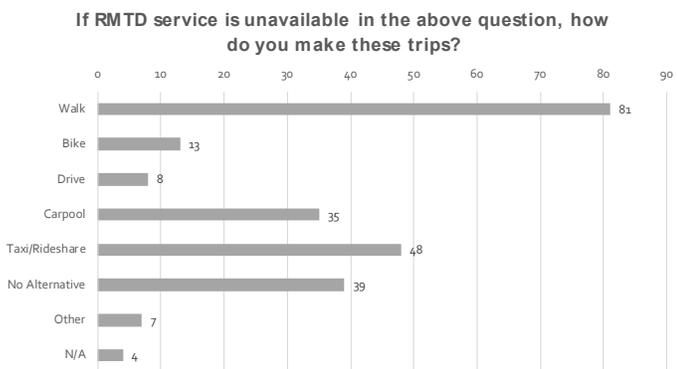


Figure 3-15. Transportation Alternatives



Top Three Transit Priorities

Respondents of both surveys were asked what RMTD's top three priorities should be.

Rider Survey:

1. Add night service on weekends (47%)
2. Have weekday buses come more often (45%)
3. Enhance existing Sunday service (37%)

General Transit Survey:

1. Add or improve bus routes in underserved locations (49%)
2. Have weekday buses come more often (34%)
3. Add night service on weekends (29%)

While surveys conducted during the Comprehensive Mobility Analysis did not specifically ask about paratransit service, the general survey gave insight on perceptions of paratransit services in the region. Respondents noted that they'd like to see expansion of the paratransit service area, improved wait times for paratransit, and identified the need for an online paratransit scheduling tool. One respondent felt the whole service be revamped suggesting that more adequate data be gathered on paratransit and on-demand services in future initiatives.

Table 3-8. FY 2019 Percent of Paratransit Trips by Trip Type

TRIP TYPE	# OF TRIPS	% OF TRIPS
Medical	84,870	40.1
Work	74,776	35.3
Shopping	9,796	4.6
Personal	25,842	12.2
Dining	1,436	0.7
Education	3,368	1.6
Non-Disclosed	684	0.3
Social	8,516	4.0
Total	211,634	-

Data Source: RMTD FY 2019 Paratransit Trips

Capital Needs Survey

As a part of the HSTP update process, a capital needs survey was sent to transportation and human service providers who offer paratransit service. The following agencies participated in the transportation provider survey: Barbara Olsen Center of Hope, Boone County Council of Aging, and Lifescape Community Services. A total of 26 questions were asked to gain agency-specific information on clientele base, vehicle inventory, service constraints, and potential coordination efforts.

The capital needs survey outlined constraints agencies in the region face regarding their ability to provide service, such as funding, passenger demand, scheduling, vehicle maintenance and replacement, and service area reach. While providers listed funding as one of the biggest constraints facing transportation services, many were cognizant of how services could be enhanced to better fit the needs of their organization and clientele base. Investment in technology, such as scheduling and routing software, more vehicle and driver availability, shared information, and continued educational opportunities were all identified as ways to improve transportation service. While the majority of organizations surveyed are interested in improving their transportation service through coordination with other organizations, the potential risk of exposure to clientele poses a concern. With COVID-19 impacting communities across the country, respondents cited COVID-19's impact has led to additional cleaning procedures, lower ridership, reduced service hours, and decreased funding.

Paratransit

Identified Transportation Needs and Gaps

In coordination with the Metropolitan Planning Organization's (MPO) Alternative Transportation Committee (ATC), a list of needs and gaps in existing transportation services was created. The gaps have been divided into five overarching categories: financial, service, education, infrastructure, and coordination. Many of the gaps identified in the previous Human Service Transportation Plan (HSTP) are still applicable to the region. However, additional gaps have also been identified and included. The following section brings attention to particular gaps and needs in the region, which informed the development of goals and strategies.

Financial

Financial gaps are related to financial resources and the cost of transportation services, both for the providers and for the users.

Provider Funding Needs

The lack of sufficient funding for transportation services is a major barrier to fulfilling transportation needs for the region. In many respects, this gap itself impacts a number of the other gaps. For example, if additional funding was readily available, more services could be implemented and rolling stock purchased. Many times, when transportation agencies are met with budget constraints, due to lack of funding, a reduction in the quality and availability of services occurs. Because many agencies depend on funding to support operations and maintenance, the ability to maintain vehicles and rider retention may suffer.

Although agencies within the area recognize the value of transportation service provision, funding continues to be a challenge faced by providers as it directly affects the effectiveness of the transportation system. In accordance with the capital needs survey, funding is consistently ranked as a top constraint to providing service. Improving the quality of service provided by the transit system as a whole is too great to continue to rely on limited-time funding from state and federal sources without sustainable funding planning in place at the regional and local levels. This will require additional commitments and funding considerations from local agencies for transit-related projects. Health and human services organizations will also need to continue to identify grants, private funding, and develop private-public partnerships to support and sustain services. COVID-19's impact on agencies' efforts to support and sustain service has shown the importance of increasing transit agencies budgets. Going forward, transit will need additional emergency relief and federal legislation will need to accommodate accordingly.

User Affordability

The cost of transportation services can be unaffordable for some riders, especially seniors, individuals with disabilities, and those living in poverty. When funding shortages occur at the agency level, user costs often increase as a result in order to ensure continuous service. While the results of the mobility analysis rider and general surveys indicated that the cost of service was not a commonly prohibitive factor in regular transit use, transportation providers and other agencies should remain cognizant of the demographic makeup of the region and how it impacts ridership. According to the rider survey, slightly over half of those who utilize RMTD's fixed route service made under \$15,000 a year, making affordability an important consideration.

Service

The following gaps are related to services that do not meet the needs of the region for one reason or another. Service gaps can be related to unserved or underserved areas in the region, arrival times and headways, travel time from one destination to another, and service times.

Long Headways

Consistent and frequent services are pertinent to both rider retention and the reliability of the transit system overall. When headways are long, potential users can become frustrated and less willing to use the transit system, as it may not meet their schedule needs. The time it takes to get from one destination to another using public transit is also an important factor for users as they may need to reach medical appointments or other destinations at a particular time. In the general survey, respondents consistently cited "buses don't come frequently enough" as a reason for not using public transportation more often.

Headway

The time it takes between one bus leaving a stop and the next one arriving.

Source: FHWA

Long Travel Times

Due to the sprawling nature of the Rockford MPA, traveling throughout the region using the transit system can be an inconvenient and lengthy process. For instance, with most commercial activity occurring along the eastern corridors, travelers located west of the Rock River may see particularly long travel times. In the general survey, many potential riders identified long travel times as a deterrent to using RMTD's fixed route system. Evidently, the extra time it takes can cause residents to avoid public transit altogether.

Commuters and jobseekers, including those using workforce development and human services, have often seen transportation as a barrier to their employment and training opportunities, reporting that long commute times often conflict with inflexible work schedules. Additionally, there is a spatial gap between populations of lower income and major employment centers. While the fixed-route system does provide some service to major employment centers, long travel times can make frequent use of public transit for commuting purposes difficult. Another trend impacting public transit travel times has been the relocation of some health facilities and services to the east side of Winnebago County, including the construction of the SwedishAmerican Regional Cancer Center and Mercy Health System's Riverside Campus. Residents who need to access those centers from the west side of the river, whether for employment or medical care, may experience long commute times.

Unserved/Underserved Areas

While the fixed-route transit system is designed to provide access to as many locations as possible in the Rockford Urbanized Area, there are areas in the greater region that are either underserved or have no direct system access. These spatial gaps are evident in rural areas of Winnebago and Boone County as well as certain portions of Rockford's urbanized area. These gaps become more prominent when new development occurs or companies move into the region causing an increase in need and demand for service. Furthermore, some locations within RMTD's transit service area could benefit from additional service which may not be currently met by existing services. For instance, while Boone County currently contracts with RMTD to provide service, the City of Belvidere was recently awarded a new Rock Valley College facility that may necessitate improved service to this area.

Some factors that contribute to unserved or underserved areas are new housing developments and employment centers that are constructed without consideration for the existing transit system. Many times, creating new routes or updating existing ones to serve these areas can be expensive or, in the case of rerouting, a disruptive process. This issue is discussed again in the Coordination Gap section.

For transit-dependent populations, these spatial gaps are major barriers to mobility as alternative transportation options may not be available. Those looking to attend recreational, educational, or professional development programming or access public services in an underserved area can be particularly affected by limited transportation options. The lack of reliable transportation options

for children looking to attend school or participate in after/before school programming presents a barrier to low-income and zero-vehicle households.

Service Coverage to External Areas

One of the Rockford Region's most notable features is its proximity to other large cities and tourism hubs, however interregional travel is not easily accomplished via public transit. While there are private charter bus companies offering service to major destinations, such as Chicago and Madison, not all intercity bus stop locations are coordinated with public transit hubs, creating connection gaps in the transportation network. Other options to connect travelers to external areas, like passenger rail, are beginning to be explored but currently unavailable.

Limited Service Times (Weekends and Nights)

Traveling during evening hours and on weekends tends to be more difficult in comparison to weekdays. Service hours for most transportation services in the region fall within normal weekday business hours (5:00 AM and 6:00 PM). While RMTD is an exception, offering night and weekend service, service times and routes are limited. This makes it difficult for riders to reach their desired destinations at certain times. This is particularly cumbersome for late night workers, seniors, and persons with disabilities who may not have other transportation options available to them. Surveys show that adding night service on the weekends was one of the main services riders felt RMTD should prioritize. With many riders relying on RMTD's fixed-route system to get to work, extending service to accommodate different types of work schedules can support job retention, as limited service hours can disproportionately impact low-income workers that need to arrive to work in the early morning or late evening.

Education

Additionally, gaps exist related to the education and awareness of the transportation services available in the region. When services are available but are unknown to the public or users have incorrect information, their willingness to use public transportation services lessens.

Lack of Service Information

When people are unaware of what services exist, when services are available, how to access different types of services, or who qualifies for the service, they are less likely to use public transportation. Finding new and effective ways to communicate with users and potential users is an important goal for providers.

Even when information is available and the public is aware of it, information about transportation options can be complex and hard to navigate, making it difficult to understand and can prevent potential users from using public transportation. Others may not utilize services because they are uncertain how to navigate the public transit system correctly or concerned about schedules and transfers. More information on how to navigate the system could reduce confusion or concern amongst potential users.

Transit Use Perceptions

Members of the public may not feel comfortable using public transit due to perpetuated safety perceptions and negative stereotypes. Some of the concerns influencing a person's choice to utilize public transportation services include: safely crossing busy roads, being stranded in unfamiliar places, or inability to make a return trip because of limited service hours. Elderly or disabled persons are more likely to experience physical limitations than the average person when making connections to transit, which can be emphasized by negative perceptions. Additionally, those with medical conditions may feel it is too dangerous or uncomfortable to travel using public transportation due to long travel times or older transit vehicles.

The auto-centric culture in the United States, and particularly in the Midwest, contributes to the idea that public transportation is only for low-income individuals or those without access to personal vehicles. While public transportation may suit the needs of those populations, utilization of transit services by all people can promote sustainable lifestyles, spur economic development, and provide a higher quality of life. Identifying additional population groups that may be more interested in using public transportation, such as young professionals, is a way cities can change negative perceptions about transit. The more positive press public transit receives on the benefits it provides, regardless of socio-economic status, the more positive the overall perception will be.

Another way to change negative perceptions surrounding public transportation is through raising awareness of public transit's relationship to other modes of travel. The use of transportation services is supported by connections to active transportation options, such as bicycle lanes, shared use paths, and sidewalks. When effectively integrated, the presence and maintenance of infrastructure and support services for multi-modal connectivity will result in increased transit catchment areas and ridership.

Infrastructure

The following gaps are related to the state of facilities, capital equipment, and data.

Pedestrian Facilities

A lack of sidewalks presents a barrier to those looking to access public transit services safely and effectively. Particularly, those with mobility impairments often have difficulty reaching fixed-route stops and other destinations without adequate facilities and amenities. Transit service trips do not begin and end at a bus stop, first and last mile connections are made by walking or biking. First/last mile connections are important to integrate into transit-related infrastructure and planning projects. Currently, some corridors within the region lack the necessary pedestrian facilities and amenities to address mobility and transit route access needs. This is particularly evident along East State Street in Rockford, where access to retail stores and restaurants is hindered by large gaps in sidewalk coverage.

For users with physical limitations, particularly those needing personal mobility assistance devices such as walkers, wheelchairs or electric scooters, infrastructure gaps represent a navigation challenge. Even in places with some sidewalk infrastructure, improvements can significantly increase the accessibility to pedestrians and transit-users. A number of major corridors in the region have sidewalks only one side of the roadway, lack buffer zones, and play host to high vehicular speeds.

Another pedestrian accessibility issue within the region is a lack of designated crossing facilities and equipment at major intersections and near shopping centers. Equipment, such as countdown timers for pedestrians at intersections, audible countdown signals for the visually impaired, and paint for crosswalks, can increase the safety of transit users and pedestrians. Whether crossing a busy street to reach a bus stop or final destination, transit users can be discouraged when there is not a safe way to do so.

It should be noted that the maintenance of pedestrian facilities needs just as much of a consideration as their presence. Cracked and damaged sidewalks provide little assistance to users with mobility limitations while sidewalks covered in overgrown weeds, snow, or ice can be hazardous to users. Additionally, deteriorated paint along crosswalks and a lack of curb ramps hinder safe travel. Without continual maintenance of equipment and infrastructure, the usage and effectiveness of pedestrian-accommodating infrastructure is reduced. Since the region is consistently met with harsh winters that bring snow and ice, coordinating with municipalities on a seasonal basis can help ensure sidewalks are cleared and penalties are enforced.





Bus Stops

The expansion and improvement of the infrastructure available at bus stops to achieve a more accommodating and comfortable experience for system users was particularly noted in the surveys conducted. Some factors that make bus stops less accommodating include lack of shelters to block adverse weather and an absence of benches. Lack of benches or shelters at bus stops can make it increasingly difficult for seniors and those with disabilities to await bus arrivals.

ADA Compliance

Ensuring infrastructure and shelters to accommodate the mobility needs of individuals with disabilities should be a priority. While the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) applies to new construction or alterations, infrastructure that existed prior to the ADA's enactment should still be accessible. The costs associated with ensuring ADA compliance can, at times, hinder regional agencies' ability to implement adequate infrastructure throughout their service area. However, these accommodations should still be adequately addressed as needs arise.

Data and Technology

Knowing the needs of users, such as when and where service is needed, is critical to improving the transit system as a whole. Integrating technologies, such as automatic vehicle location services, automated counters, or mobile ticketing apps, can help alleviate prior concerns regarding the transit dwell times and improve overall system efficiency. Moreover, seeking opportunities for data sharing with Transportation Network Companies (TNCs) and local agencies can help transportation service providers identify areas where transit services can be improved. With ridesharing becoming a popular mode of transportation, looking at where a large number of pickups and drop offs are occurring can help inform changes to paratransit and fixed-route service throughout the region.

In summer of 2020, RMTD introduced Token Transit, a mobile fare app that allows riders a cashless way to purchase their bus passes. This new payment option offers a new level of convenience when utilizing RMTD's fixed route or paratransit services.

Coordination

Coordination gaps and needs reference opportunities for collaboration among transit providers, agencies, governmental entities, and interested organizations.

Service Coordination

Many agencies and partners in the region provide, manage, or impact transportation service delivery. However, these services do not always work collaborative due to restrictions in funding, insurance, resources, clientele-only service, and potential risks of exposure. Without a centralized source for information on providers, services, and funding opportunities, it can be hard for partners and agencies to understand what is provided in the region and how to achieve better coordination.

When possible, providers should coordinate services for easier connections. Since traveling between counties via demand-response service can be difficult, coordination among providers can alleviate this gap. Identifying what linkages can exist between agencies like LOTS and RMTD, as well as BCCA and SMTD can help connect users of all systems within the metropolitan area.

Additionally, finding ways to connect users to destinations without the need for multiple transfers and associated fees is key to ensuring users reach their destination in a timely and cost-effective way.

- **Scheduling:** Riders utilizing paratransit service must plan trips in advance, making it difficult for transit-dependent populations to reach necessary destinations on short notice. Those seeking medical care because of an urgent or unexpected injury, may particularly see this as a barrier.
- **Eligibility:** Transportation restrictions regarding who is eligible to use a service and the geographic bounds of a service can be a barrier to an efficient transportation system. Different agencies may have vehicles traveling in the same corridor at once, however may offer different services or eligibility restrictions that prevent coordination of rider services. As a result, riders must make multiple trip arrangements with different providers.

Mobility Management

Mobility management is an innovative approach for managing and delivering coordinated transportation services. While transportation planning traditionally focuses on aggregating demand along highly traveled routes of a transit system, mobility management focuses on diversifying travel options to reach a wide range of customers through trip planning support, travel training, and aggregation of transportation service information. Programs work to connect customers to the transportation service that is most responsive to their needs.

Source: FHWA

Asset Coordination

Ensuring vehicles are available and adequately equipped to handle various needs of passengers is essential to service efficiency and coordination. Community and human service organizations continue to express need for dedicated, versatile vehicles to support the growing needs of their programming. For example, issues of vehicle availability have been discussed with the Rockford Park District regarding transportation needs of their Therapeutic Recreation (TR) Department and Washington Park Community Center. Both entities provide vital services to the community, offering inclusive spaces for youth and adults to take part in recreational and educational programming, however passenger demand and a lack of transportation options is impacting the ability to ensure efficient access to programming.

Additionally, acquiring or maintaining a vehicle can be a difficult process for organizations looking to keep up with existing or growing demand. Entities who are not direct recipients of FTA funding may find it hard to obtain funding for vehicles or be met with lengthy procurement procedures. In instances where Section 5310 funding is secured, delivery time of a vehicle may be delayed by circumstances outside of an organization's control. Because acquisition, operations, and maintenance costs can be a constraint to providers, it could be cost effective for transit providers to jointly share resources, where possible.

With the agreements in place, it may be possible for transit providers to use the same software programs, drivers, maintenance facilities, and other such assets to reduce overhead costs. The specifics of each asset would need to be individually tailored to ensure legal, contractual, and insurance issues are properly handled, but could serve as a way of cost-savings and increased service provisions.

Planning Coordination

As discussed, coordination between human service providers, transit agencies, city governments, riders, and other partners is an important element that can save time and money and result in a transit network that is more efficient in transit service delivery. Coordination efforts need to take place at the beginning of a project and continue throughout the development process. New residential and commercial development is often planned outside of the urban core and fixed-transit system, which can result in spatial service gaps and lack of transit-supportive infrastructure. Regionally, recent growth has continued to occur along the urban fringe and in unincorporated areas of surrounding counties creating an environment that will continue to strain municipal resources, reinforce auto-dependence, and exacerbate challenges of access this plan calls attention to. Taking a mixed-use and transit-oriented approach to future development can work to address challenges brought about by current land development patterns; ultimately improving accessibility for those without personal vehicles whilst supporting healthier lifestyles, pollution reduction, and decreased sprawl.

Additionally, continued participation by transportation providers, municipal partners, riders, and the public in planning activities is critical. Initiating collaborations with other sectors outside

of transportation can help develop a policy environment which recognizes the interconnected role communities play in supporting transit. Moreover, it better positions interested parties to advocate for legislation that paints transit as a public utility. Coordination between transportation planning and other community organizations, such as the Rockford Park District, Transform Rockford, and The Workforce Connection, should be conducted to ensure all parties are connected to work already occurring.

Looking Forward

COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in unprecedented changes to the way Americans utilize and perceive transit. Public transit took its place as a critical service and was utilized by essential workers at medical centers and other key establishments, such as grocery stores and pharmacies. As people began to work from home, the number of work commuters decreased and agencies needed to redirect their services to accommodate the shift in demand. Service hours were reduced and transit focused on serving the needs of essential workers and transit-dependent populations. Transit agencies leveraged existing resources in unconventional ways and took on new programs and partnerships to provide essential food and medical supplies to those facing additional mobility difficulties. Locally, Rockford Mass Transit District (RMTD) temporarily eliminated fare collection, enhanced cleaning efforts, and dispatched additional buses during high-ridership periods in an effort to reduce contact and maintain proper social distancing. Other regional transportation providers took on additional cleaning procedures.

As the impact of COVID-19 continues, awareness and motivation surrounding public transit has shifted and agencies are re-examining how to meet the evolving needs of users while maximizing connectivity and mobility. Moving forward, agencies and providers can take the lessons learned during COVID-19 and reshape how transportation services operate in response to major events, as well as during day-to-day operations. As a collective, the region is better positioned to ensure policy and programming decisions serve the immediate needs of the communities. As the region plans for future transportation services, recognition of the role transit plays in a functioning and equitable society will ensure the gaps and needs of users are met.

Goals and Strategies

The following goals and strategies were developed in coordination with the Alternative Transportation Committee (ATC) and aim to address the needs and gaps identified in Section 3 of this document. Each strategy is accompanied by action items intended to guide outreach efforts, investments, and project planning. Because of the interconnectedness of transit planning, strategies under one goal may be applicable to other goals and address multiple gaps and needs identified in the plan. Unforeseen factors may arise, adjusting community needs and availability of resources. As such, the following strategies and action items are subject to change.

Figure 4-1. Strategy Categories



Service



Access



Coordination



Awareness



“People should be able to access the grocery store, friends and relatives, immediate care, entertainment, parades, fireworks, festivals, etc...even if these events are on a holiday or on a weekend after 5:00 PM”

GOAL 1

Maintain and enhance transportation service levels to meet the existing and growing needs of the region.

Strategy 1.1: Expand night and weekend transportation service in the region to accommodate work schedules, improve access to regional destinations, and contribute to a higher quality of life.

- Identify routes and priority corridors for expanded operating hours.

Strategy 1.2: Expand and enhance transit service to unserved or underserved areas within the region.

- Identify areas in the fixed-route network where service is infrequent or a service gap to essential community services and facilities exists.
- Coordinate with employers to provide additional transportation options for employees without access to personal vehicles.
- Explore and implement micro transit pilot programs offering first and last mile connections to fixed-route services.
- Further coordinate links between rural on-demand transit services with fixed-route services.
- Pursue agreements for provision of rural transportation services in unserved areas of Winnebago County.

Strategy 1.3: Support interregional connections to and from the Metropolitan Planning Area.

- Increase access to interregional jobs and services through coordinated, multi-modal commuter connections and coordinated transfers between both human service transportation providers and transit agencies.
- Promote existing intercity service providers and advocate for additional connections, infrastructure, and services.

Strategy 1.4: Increase the amount of service to commercial destinations, medical and mental health facilities, community services, and major employment centers to ensure access.

- Coordinate existing services to increase route connections to grocery stores, health facilities, and public services.
- Explore pilot programs and partnership opportunities to expand options for non-emergency medical trips.
- Connect fixed-route services to natural spaces and parks within the region.

Strategy 1.5: Improve frequency and reliability of current transportation services through practices reducing long travel times and headways.

- Collaborate with local jurisdictions to implement transit-oriented development or regulatory strategies at or near transit stops to improve bus on-time performance.
- Identify potential fixed-routes serving areas with high on-demand service requests to pilot service changes, such as increased frequency or route deviations.
- Refine route schedules to improve run times and minimize extended layovers at time points and transfer locations.

Strategy 1.6: Encourage investment and use of electric or alternative fuel vehicles to promote sustainability and generate maintenance and fuel savings for transportation providers.

- Continue to seek funding opportunities to replace conventional diesel-fuel vehicles with hybrid electric or all-electric vehicles.

Strategy 1.7: Seek out emerging mobility programs and partnerships to complement existing transportation services.

- Research micro-mobility solutions that may be applicable to the region.
- Facilitate relationship with Transportation Network Companies to develop a Transportation Network Company ride assistance program.



“Get technology involved so that people can be picked up faster and dropped off at their destination quicker. Especially during the winter months.”

GOAL 2

Improve safety, comfort, and accessibility of public and human transportation services.

Strategy 2.1: Ensure transportation options in the region are financially accessible to users, particularly those of low income, by providing user- friendly fare options.

- Pursue opportunities to offer rider subsidies and ride vouchers.
- Coordinate fare transfer policies among regional public transportation providers.
- Establish employer pre-tax deduction for transit fares for interested parties.

Strategy 2.2: Expand transportation options for children/teens to support school attendance, and participation in before/after school programming, and employment opportunities.

- Explore opportunities for partnerships between transportation providers and school districts to offer student bus passes.
- Integrate Safe Routes to Schools programming and policies to support safe active transport (i.e. walking and bicycling) to and from schools.

Strategy 2.3: Promote mixed-use and transit-oriented development to support the use of alternative modes of transportation, improve mobility for those without access to personal vehicles, and promote sustainability.

- Encourage and incentivize siting of affordable housing, employment centers, and health and human service facilities near existing fixed-route service.
- Encourage inclusion of transit providers in conversations related to new development site planning.
- Identify corridors where transit-oriented development could be further explored.
- Coordinate with local jurisdictions to include transit accessibility criteria in new site development plans.
- Work with municipalities to offer zoning ordinance relief to reduce parking requirements for qualifying developments.

Strategy 2.4: Address gaps in transit, bicyclist, and pedestrian infrastructure to enhance safety, maintain continuity, and promote comfortable ease of access.

- Seek federal and private funding opportunities to increase pedestrian and bicycle facilities near transit stops.
- Work with local jurisdictions to advocate for and participate in Complete Streets planning efforts.
- Maintain an inventory of sidewalk and crosswalk gaps along key bus corridors.
- Create an inventory of ADA accessible paths and bus shelters.
- Improve transit stop amenities at highly frequented destinations along routes.
- Establish an online resource that allows the public to identify, map, and comment on pedestrian, bicycle, and transit facilities.

Strategy 2.5: Gather operational and potential user data to inform prioritization of system improvements.

- Develop data sharing agreements between transit providers, municipalities, and Transportation Network Companies (TNC) to gain a better understanding of rider behavior and identify needs within the transportation network.
- Invest in and integrate Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) technologies that provide real-time information on services, routes, scheduling or improve transit affordability.
- Utilize software planning tools and administer surveys to gather origin-destination data and identify travel patterns and trends.



“Increased and improved transit services allow residents to access needed services, find and maintain employment and generally remain positively engaged in the community”

GOAL 3

Improve coordination and communication between transportation providers, non-profit organizations, and governmental agencies and seek efficiencies in service delivery.

Strategy 3.1: Collaborate with Park Districts and other community-based organizations to provide transportation services for district wide programming, events, and work opportunities.

- Pursue opportunities to offer rider subsidies and ride vouchers.
- Coordinate fare transfer policies among regional public transportation providers.
- Establish employer pre-tax deduction for transit fares for interested parties.

Strategy 3.2: Increase communication between the public, municipal partners, workforce development providers, and transportation providers during early phases of the planning process.

- Develop and maintain existing partnerships and committees to enable ongoing and transparent conversations between interested parties.

Strategy 3.3: Improve schedule coordination between urban, rural, and intercity transportation service providers to facilitate connections within the region.

- Coordinate with rural service providers operating in surrounding counties to increase connectivity to urban fixed-route and intercity services.

Strategy 3.4: Increase opportunities for transportation providers to coordinate ride transfers when needed to reduce duplication of services.

- Implement vehicle sharing policies and cost sharing agreements across agencies and organizations to optimize existing resources.
- Find new ways to improve utilization of rural vehicle layover time to support urban transportation service.
- Partner with local mobility providers for alternative service options during low-ridership periods.

Strategy 3.5: Create a streamlined process for providers, agencies, organizations, and other interested parties to leverage available funding to support alternative mobility in the region.

- Create a central resource for human service organizations to find grant and funding assistance opportunities.
- Work with local and state representatives to increase current funding, find new sources, and improve access to existing funding pools.



“Make [trans]it more accessible. An app that is readily available and easy to use for scheduling is great. I live right next to a stop and have often wondered if I should take it to work, but I am unsure of times and where the bus goes!”

GOAL 4

Increase awareness of public and human transportation services in the region to grow ridership.

Strategy 4.1: Improve available tools, internet-based or otherwise, to assist users in gathering information about transportation options.

- Create an online central hub of information on regional transportation services for trip planning support.
- Direct, plan, and implement mobility management strategies to direct potential riders to the correct resources.
- Launch mobile and web-based trip planning applications with real-time scheduling.

Strategy 4.2: Explore innovative ways to improve outreach efforts and increase public engagement in planning efforts.

- Offer public workshops, events, and activities focusing on the importance of transit and active transportation and hold training sessions on mobility-related topics.
- Explore utilization of participatory mapping or data collection to inform planning efforts.

Strategy 4.3: Improve marketing among human service and public transportation providers to promote fixed-route, paratransit and demand response services.

- Utilize technology to keep riders and the public updated on new routes, services, projects, and other mobility initiatives undertaken by providers within the region.

Table 4-1. Strategy Prioritization.

CATEGORY	STRATEGIES	PRIORITY		
		Low	Medium	High
Service	Expand night and weekend transportation service in the region to accommodate work schedules, improve access to regional destinations, and contribute to a higher quality of life.	X		X
	Expand and enhance transit service to unserved or underserved areas within the region.			X
	Support interregional connections to and from the Metropolitan Planning Area.		X	
	Increase the amount of service to grocery stores, medical facilities, and retail locations to ensure access.			X
	Improve frequency and reliability of current transportation services through practices reducing long travel times and headways.		X	
	Encourage investment and use of electric or alternative fuel vehicles to promote sustainability and generate maintenance and fuel savings for transportation providers.	X		
	Seek out emerging mobility programs and partnerships to complement existing transportations services.		X	
Access	Ensure transportation options in the region are financially accessible to users, particularly those of low income, by providing user friendly fare options.			X
	Expand transportation options for children/teens to support school attendance, participation in before/after school programming, and employment opportunities.		X	
	Promote mixed use and transit-oriented development to support the use of alternative modes of transportation, improve mobility for those without access to personal vehicles, and promote sustainability.		X	
	Address gaps in transit, bicyclist, and pedestrian infrastructure to enhance safety, maintain continuity, and promote comfortable ease of access.			X
	Gather operational and potential user data to inform prioritization of system improvements.		X	
Coordination	Collaborate with Park Districts and other community-based organizations to provide transportation services for district wide programming, events, and work opportunities.		X	
	Increase communication between municipal partners, workforce development providers, and transportation providers during early phases of the planning process.		X	
	Improve schedule coordination between urban, rural, and intercity transportation service providers to facilitate connections within the region.		X	
	Increase opportunities for transportation providers to coordinate ride transfers when needed to reduce duplication of services.		X	
	Create a streamlined process for providers, agencies, organizations, and other interested parties to leverage available funding to support alternative mobility in the region.		X	
Awareness	Improve available tools, internet-based or otherwise, to assist users in gathering information about transportation options.		X	
	Explore innovative ways to improve outreach efforts and increase public engagement in planning efforts.		X	
	Improve marketing among human service and public transportation providers to promote fixed-route,paratransit and demand response services.			X

References

Section 1: Introduction

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5 U.S. Department of Transportation, “Circular FTA C 9070.1G: Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program Guidance and Application Instructions.” July 07, 2014.

6 “Job Access and Reverse Commute Program (5316).” Federal Transit Administration. <https://www.transit.dot.gov/funding/grants/grant-programs/job-access-and-reverse-commute-program-5316>

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9 “CCAM Strategic Plan 2019-2022.” Federal Transit Administration. <https://www.transit.dot.gov/regulations-and-guidance/ccam/about/ccam-strategic-plan-2019-2022>

Appendix A: Section 5310 Process

Section 5310 Programming

The Rockford urbanized area annually receives an allocation of Section 5310 funds. Rockford Mass Transit District (RMTD) and Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) are the co-designated recipients of the allocated funds to the region. The Metropolitan Planning Organization, in coordination with RMTD as the subrecipient, awards these funds through a call for projects utilizing an application that aligns with the IDOT Consolidated Vehicle Procurement Program submission form.

The MPO utilizes an application based on IDOT’s Consolidated Procurement program (CVP) so information collected during the call for projects aligns the information required by IDOT in the latter stages of the process, and prepares applicants to apply for additional statewide funding if the program is opened up to agencies that fall within an urbanized boundary. Because RMTD and IDOT are co-designated recipients of funds in the region, using the IDOT form makes stages of the process simpler for smaller transit providers. When a transit provider other than a designated recipient in the region is awarded Section 5310 funds, IDOT acts as a purchasing agent and oversight for the capital that those funds acquire. The use of the IDOT’s CVP streamlines the application process and reduces duplication of information saving smaller providers and agencies time and effort.

As part of the programming process of Section 5310 funding, the MPO reviews each applicant’s submittal, received during the call for projects, to determine if the projects meet federal requirements. While the MPO does not formally score any of the applications for vehicles, the MPO’s Alternative Transportation Committee (ATC) screens applications for HSTP compliance. The ATC then provides a program recommendation to the MPO Technical Committee, which subsequently provides a recommendation to the Policy Committee. Once projects have been approved by the Policy Committee, the MPO transmits the applications and corresponding TIP amendment(s) to IDOT.

Table Appendix-1. Program of Projects for Current and Future 5310 Funding.

Programmed Projects	Agency	Total Project Cost	Section 5310 Funds	% of Project Funded with Section 5310	Status
Medium Duty Paratransit Buses (3 vehicles), Super-Medium Paratransit Buses (3 vehicles), Various Vehicle Upgrades Project # 7-19-1	Rockford Mass Transit District	\$549,792	\$549,792	100%	Programmed

A Rolling Stock and Needs Analysis Survey is distributed to providers and partners by RPC staff to allow the committee to assess the current needs of the region, particularly as it relates to existing rolling stock. The results of this Survey will be brought before the ATC and the Program of Projects will be updated accordingly. The Program of Projects, when updated, shall take into account the current and following year in order to sustain commitment towards planning for future needs.

Applications for the regional allocation of Section 5310 funds that coincide with the Program of Projects will be given preference during the ATC’s review over any application not on the ‘Program of Projects’. However, any applicant may make the case for their application’s need to the ATC. The ultimate determination of the recommendation of funding allocation is to be completed by majority vote of the ATC.

Program of Projects

Applications for Section 5310 funds within the Program of Projects will be given preference during the ATC’s review. In any year in which remaining funding exists after the programmed project’s unit costs have been considered, and it is determined the level of funding remaining is not capable of supporting an additional vehicle purchase, the remaining funding may be prioritized to provide for surveillance and other necessary equipment to the vehicles from the Program of Projects.

Amendments to the Program of Projects may be made by a majority vote of the ATC. The Program of Projects will be reviewed prior to the assessment of Section 5310 applications. During this review, the ATC will take appropriate action to bring the Program for Projects into alignment with current needs and realities. This will include the prioritization of next year’s Program of Projects.

Appendix B: Funding Sources

Metropolitan & Statewide Planning and Non-Metropolitan Transportation Planning (Sections 5303, 5304, 5305)

Provides funding and procedural requirements for multimodal transportation planning in metropolitan areas and states. Planning needs to be cooperative, continuous, and comprehensive (3-C), resulting in long-range plans and short-range programs reflecting transportation investment priorities. These funds are annually sub-allocated to Region 1 Planning Council (RPC) and other Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) throughout the state by the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) and are aimed primarily at planning needs related to public transit and paratransit.

Urbanized Area Formula Grant (Section 5307)

Under the Urbanized Area Formula Grant, the FTA allocates Section 5307 funds as subsidies to eligible public transit agencies to use for capital equipment (buses, equipment, structures, etc.), planning, job access and reverse commute projects, mobility management, and some limited operating expenses related to the federally required assistance transit agencies must provide to persons with disabilities. The minimum required local match for capital purposes is 20 percent.

Capital Investment Grants (Section 5309)

This discretionary grant program funds major transit capital investments, including heavy rail, commuter rail, light rail, streetcars, and bus rapid transit. Instead of an annual call for applications and selection of awardees by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), the law requires that projects seeking Capital Investment Grant funding complete a series of steps over several years to be eligible for funding. Under the Section 5309 program, New Starts, Core Capacity, Small Starts and other interrelated projects are eligible for funding.

Enhanced Mobility of Seniors & Individuals with Disabilities (Section 5310)

Section 5310 provides formula funding to states for the purpose of assisting private nonprofit groups in meeting the transportation needs of older adults and people with disabilities when the transportation service provided is unavailable, insufficient, or inappropriate to meeting these needs. Projects and programs previously under FTA's New Freedom program are eligible for Section 5310 funds. Rockford Mass Transit District (RMTD) and IDOT are the co-designated recipients for Section 5310 funding allocated to the Rockford Urbanized Area. While not directly allocated to the MPO, in coordination with RMTD, the MPO has created a process to help determine the best use of the Section 5310 funds received. The program requires a 20 percent local match for eligible capital costs and a 50 percent match for operating assistance.

Formula Grants for Rural Areas (Section 5311)

The Formula Grants for Rural Areas program provides capital, planning, and operating assistance to states to support public transportation in rural areas with populations of less than 50,000, where many residents often rely on public transit to reach their destinations. The program also provides funding for state and national training and technical assistance through the Rural Transportation Assistance Program.

Grants for Buses and Bus Facilities Formula Program (Section 5339)

The Grants for Buses and Bus Facilities Formula Program (49 U.S.C. 5339) provides funding to states and designated recipients to replace, rehabilitate, and purchase buses and related equipment and to construct bus related facilities including technological changes or innovations to modify low or no emission vehicles or facilities. A sub-program, the Low- or No-Emission Vehicle Program, provides competitive grants for bus and bus facility projects that support low and zero-emission vehicles. The program requires a 20 percent local match.

State/Downstate Operating Assistance Program (DOAP)

The Downstate Public Transportation Act, referred to as the Downstate Operating Assistance Program (DOAP), was established by the Illinois General Assembly to provide operating funds to assist in the development and operation of public transportation services statewide. Currently, DOAP pays up to 65 percent of eligible expenses and each eligible participant receives an annual appropriation from the general assembly. The program is administered by IDOT's Office of Intermodal Project Implementation (OIPI).

Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Grants Program

The Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity, or RAISE Discretionary Grant program, provides a opportunity to invest in road, rail, transit and port projects that promise to achieve national objectives. Previously known as the Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) and Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) Discretionary Grants, Congress has dedicated nearly \$8.9 billion for twelve rounds of National Infrastructure Investments to fund projects that have a significant local or regional impact.

Integrated Mobility Innovation (IMI)

The Integrated Mobility Innovation (IMI) Program funds projects that demonstrate innovative and effective practices, partnerships and technologies to enhance public transportation effectiveness, increase efficiency, expand quality, promote safety and improve the traveler experience.

Mobility on Demand (MOD) Sandbox Program

The MOD Sandbox Program provides funds to integrate MOD concepts and solutions – supported through local partnerships – into real-world settings that advance the transportation system. Through this program, the FTA seeks to support innovation that connects users with mobility options through a transportation user interface of which enable technical capabilities such as integrated payment systems. Transit agencies looking to integrate technology to support their services may find this program of interest.

Appendix C: Glossary of Terms

Abbreviations & Acronyms

A

ACS	US Census American Community Survey
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
ATC	Alternative Transportation Committee

B

BCCA	Boone County Council on Aging
BCPT	Boone County Public Transit

C

CCAM	Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility
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F

FAST Act	Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
FTA	Federal Transit Administration

H

HSTP	Human Service Transportation Plan
HSCR	Human Services Coordinated Research

I

IDOT	Illinois Department of Transportation
IGA	Intergovernmental Agreement
ICAM	Innovative Coordinated Access and Mobility
ITS	Intelligent Transportation System

J

JARC	Job Access and Reverse Commute Program
------	--

L

LOTS	Lee-Ogle Transportation System
LRTP	Long Range Transportation Plan

M

MAP-21	Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century
MPA	Metropolitan Planning Area
MPO	Metropolitan Planning Organization
MSA	Metropolitan Statistical Area
MTP	Metropolitan Transportation Plan

R

RAMP	Regional Accessibility and Mobility Project
RMAP	Rockford Metropolitan Agency for Planning
RMTD	Rockford Mass Transit District
RPC	Region 1 Planning Council
RPD	Rockford Park District
RPS	Rockford Public Schools

S

SAFETEA-LU	Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users
SMTD	Stateline Mass Transit District

T

TIP	Transportation Improvement Program
TOD	Transit-Oriented Development
TNC	Transportation Network Company
TR	Therapeutic Recreation

Glossary of Terms

A

Accessibility

The ease of reaching valued destinations, such as jobs, shops, schools, entertainment, and recreation.

Source: Federal Highway Administration

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

The legislation defining the responsibilities of and requirements for transportation providers to make transportation accessible to individuals with disabilities.

Source: Federal Highway Administration

Alternative Transportation

Any mode of personal transportation other than a single-occupant vehicle, including biking, walking, carpooling, and public transportation.

Source: MPO Alternative Transportation Committee Bylaws

Automated Counters

Equipment that counts passenger boardings/alightings but is not part of the farebox.

Source: American Public Transportation Association

B

Benefit Access Program

Benefits for seniors and persons with disabilities, such as a fee discount on license plates and free rides on fixed-route transits. Eligibility is determined by age, disability, residency and income.

Source: Illinois.gov

Bike Lane

A portion of roadway designated for preferential or exclusive use by bicyclists by pavement markings and, if used, signs.

Source: National Association of City Transportation Officials

C

Collector

A street that provides direct access to neighborhoods and arterials.

Source: Federal Highway Administration

Complete Streets

A transportation policy and design approach that requires streets to be planned, designed, and maintained to enable safe, convenient, and comfortable travel for all modes of travel. At the core of the complete streets philosophy is the idea that pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and public transportation users of all ages and abilities are able to safely move along and across a street.

Source: U.S. Department of Transportation

Corridor

A broad geographical band that follows a general directional flow connecting major sources of trips that may contain a number of streets, highways and transit route alignments

Source: American Public Transportation Association

D

Disability

Any condition that makes it more difficult for a person to do certain activities or interact with the world around them. This includes cognitive, developmental, intellectual, mental, physical, and sensory impairments.

Source: U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division

Demand-Response

Descriptive term for a service type, usually considered paratransit, in which a user can access transportation service that can be variably routed and timed to meet changing needs on an as-needed basis.

Source: Federal Highway Administration

Dwell Time

the time a vehicle such as a public transit bus or train spends at a scheduled stop without moving.

Source: Transportation Research Board

E

Electric Vehicle (EV)

A vehicle that has an electric motor instead of an internal combustion engine.

Source: U.S. Department of Energy

F

Fixed-Route

Term applied to transit service that is regularly scheduled and operates over a set route; usually refers to bus service.

Source: Federal Highway Administration

I

Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS)

The application of advanced technologies to improve the efficiency and safety of transportation systems.

Source: Federal Highway Administration

Intercity Bus

Regularly scheduled public service using an over-the-road bus that operates with limited stops between two urbanized areas or that connects rural areas to urbanized areas.

Source: Federal Transit Administration

Intermodal

The ability to connect, and the connections between, modes of transportation.

Source: Federal Highway Administration

J

Jurisdiction

The authority and obligation to administer, control, construct, maintain and operate a highway subject to the provisions of the Illinois Highway Code.

Source: Illinois Department of Transportation

L

Livability

A livable community provides more transportation choices that are safe, reliable, and economical; promotes equitable, affordable housing options; enhances economic competitiveness; supports and targets funding toward existing communities; and values communities and neighborhoods.

Source: Federal Highway Administration

M

Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA)

The geographic area in which the metropolitan transportation planning process required by 23 U.S.C. 134 and section 8 of the Federal Transit Act (49 U.S.C. app. 1607) must be carried out.

Source: Federal Highway Administration

Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)

A regional policy body, required in urbanized areas with populations over 50,000, and designated by local officials and the governor of the state to carry out the metropolitan transportation requirements of federal highway and transit legislation.

Source: Federal Highway Administration

Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)

The official intermodal transportation plan that is developed and adopted through the metropolitan transportation planning process for the metropolitan planning area.

Source: Federal Highway Administration

Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA)

The county or counties (or equivalent entities) associated with at least one urbanized area with a population of at least 50,000, plus adjacent counties having a high degree of social and economic integration with the core as measured through commuting ties.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Micromobility

Shared-use fleets or small, fully or partially human powered vehicles such as bikes, eBikes and e-scooters. These vehicles are generally rented through a mobile app or kiosk, are picked up and dropped off in the public right-of-way, and are meant for short point-to-point trips.

Source: National Association of City Transportation Officials

Mixed-Use Development

Pedestrian-friendly development that blends two or more residential, commercial, cultural, institutional, and/or industrial uses. Mixed use is one of the ten principles of Smart Growth, a planning strategy that seeks to foster community design and development that serves the economy, community, public health, and the environment.

Source: MRSC of Washington

Mobility

The ability to move or be moved from place to place.

Source: Federal Highway Administration

Mobility Management

A customer-centered approach to designing and delivering mobility services. It embraces a shared table of transportation providers, planners, and community stakeholders to collaborate, plan, implement and maintain transportation services. It includes local and regional solutions customized to fit community needs and visions, and involves innovation in transportation service, coordination and connectivity. Mobility management strives for easy information and referral to assist individuals in learning about and accessing community and regional transportation services.

Source: National Center for Mobility Management

Multimodal

The availability of transportation options using different modes within a system or corridor.

Source: Federal Highway Administration

P

Paratransit

A variety of smaller, often flexibly scheduled-and-routed transportation services using low-capacity vehicles, such as vans, to operate within normal urban transit corridors or rural areas. These services usually serve the needs of persons that standard mass-transit services would serve with difficulty, or not at all. Often, the patrons include the elderly and persons with disabilities.

Source: Federal Highway Administration

Pedestrian

A person travelling on foot as a mode of transport. This includes walking and running on roads or other paved surfaces of the transportation system, such as sidewalks and paths.

Source: Federal Highway Administration

Public Participation

The active and meaningful involvement of the public in the development of transportation plans and programs.

Source: Federal Highway Administration

Public Transportation

Public Transportation (also called transit, public transit, or mass transit) is transportation by a conveyance that provides regular and continuing general or special transportation to the public, but not including school buses, charter or sightseeing service.

Source: American Public Transportation Association

R

Reliability

The degree of certainty and predictability in travel times on the transportation system. Reliable transportation systems offer some assurance of attaining a given destination within a reasonable range of an expected time.

Source: Federal Highway Administration

Ridesharing

A formal or informal arrangement where commuters share a vehicle for trips from a common origin, destination, or both.

Source: Federal Highway Administration

Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA)

The geographic area in which the metropolitan transportation planning process required by 23 U.S.C. 134 and section 8 of the Federal Transit Act (49 U.S.C. app. 1607) must be carried out.

Source: Federal Highway Administration

S

Shared Use Path

A bikeway physically separated from motor vehicle traffic by an open space or barrier and either within the highway right-of-way or within an independent right-of-way.

Source: National Association of City Transportation Officials

Speeding

Driving in excess of the posted rate of travel permitted on a road, typically expressed in miles per hour.

Source: Federal Highway Administration

Sprawl

Urban form that connotatively depicts the movement of people from the central city to the suburbs. Concerns associated with sprawl include loss of farmland and open space due to low-density land development, increased public service costs, and environmental degradation as well as other concerns associated with transportation.

Source: Federal Highway Administration

Stakeholders

Individuals and organizations involved in or affected by the transportation planning process. Include federal/state/local officials, MPOs, transit operators, freight companies, shippers, and the general public.

Source: Federal Highway Administration

T

Transit Agency

Transit agency (also called transit system) is an entity (public or private) responsible for administering and managing transit activities and services. Transit agencies can directly operate transit service or contract out for all or part of the total transit service provided.

Source: American Public Transportation Association

Transit-Oriented Development

Development that includes a mix of commercial, residential, office and entertainment centered around or located near a transit station.

Source: Federal Transportation Administration

U

Urban Area

Collective term referring to urbanized areas and urban clusters.

Source: US Census Bureau

Urbanized Areas (UA)

An area consisting of a densely developed territory that contains a minimum residential population of at least 50,000 people.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Appendix D: Public Comment

The public comment and review period for draft Coordinated Public-Transit Human Services Transportation Plan for the Rockford Region was from June 14, 2021 through July 12, 2021. The draft was made available for review via the MPO's website (posted June 14, 2021), as well as the RPC offices.

Updates and Revisions

Since the release of the January 28, 2021 draft plan, technical and formatting corrections have been made to the text and maps of the document. Additionally, the following updates to the draft version have been made:

- Additional language was included in the Planning Coordination subsection (Part 4. Identified Needs and Gaps) on the sprawling development trend seen in the region.
- Table 3-2 was updated to reflect only municipalities within the Rockford MPA.
- Table 3-6 was updated to reflect the correct population number of zero-vehicle households.

Comments Received

During the length of the comment period for the Electric Vehicle Readiness Plan, two written responses were received via email. Copies of the written comments are included on the following pages.

Alexandra Rosander

From: Daniel Ropp
Sent: Thursday, June 17, 2021 12:01 PM
To: Alexandra Rosander
Subject: Feedback on draft Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plan for the Rockford Region

Hello Alexandra,

In response to the solicitation of comments from the public on the draft Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plan for the Rockford Region please note the following regarding the list of municipalities on Table 3-2 (“Municipal Populations within the Rockford MPA, 2018”) of p. 18/55 of the document:

- Stillman Valley should be included in the list since it lies within the boundaries of the Rockford MSA.
- Capron, Durand, and Pecatonica should be omitted as they do not lie within the Rockford MSA.
- The first occurrence of New Milford should be removed as this village is listed twice.

Thank you,

Daniel Ropp

Alexandra Rosander

From: Michael Smith
Sent: Sunday, July 11, 2021 1:32 PM
To: Alexandra Rosander
Subject: Comments - Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plan

Hello Alex,

I have some comments regarding the Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plan that I wanted to share, below. Excellent, compelling report! Really appreciate the map displays.

Page 6, hours of operation night service should end at 5:15 AM right?

Page 12, first paragraph should say identification of transportation needs and gaps *helps*, plural

Page 30 - Education. Perhaps this section could be expanded upon to include items from Strategy 4.1, which includes web-based tools to help with trip planning. Get There Oregon and GoDCGo are excellent examples worth sharing. Both of these serve dual audiences - commuters, and employers - and the latter could be marketed as an employer recruitment/retention strategy. FWIW - I believe Get There is powered by Ride Amigos and GoDCGo works with Foursquare ITP, both great companies worth getting in touch with.

<https://getthereoregon.org>

<https://godcgo.com>

Page 32 - TNC Data Sharing. Uber and Lyft have been reluctant to share user data with public agencies. At the least, it may be worth noting that Strategy 2.5 may be challenging given TNC's reluctance. Or perhaps share a case study where successful data-sharing has occurred?

Page 38 - 'Strategy 4.3' is missing a 'g'.

Strategy 1.7, 'Facilitate Relationship with TNCs': "Ride Assistance" is vague and could use more detail. For example, some MPOs offer a "Guaranteed Ride Home" program for employers/commuters which gives free vouchers to people who are stranded (e.g. if they worked late and missed the bus). It should be noted that using TNCs as part of a trip chain to extend service reach is very cost-intensive for riders, and would take heavy subsidies to make work.

It seems like a number of Strategies fall within the discipline of Transportation Demand Management (TDM), which uses behavioral science techniques to offer commute alternatives. All the strategies in Goal 4 are strategies that many MPOs have under their TDM purview. Despite our region not needing to mitigate congestion air quality, we should be considering TDM strategies that improve access in general and workforce transportation in particular.

Lastly and perhaps most importantly: The proliferation of urban sprawl on the region's fringe exacerbates the challenges noted in the draft plan. The maps illustrate the spatial mismatch between low/no vehicle access or transit dependency with needed opportunities and services. Furthermore, urban sprawl left unchecked will undermine the goals and strategies outlined near the end. I hope the final plan can be more explicit on how our current land development patterns will only compound the challenges that are so clearly illustrated. I've seen

this language in other plans the organization has created, and hope the language remains clear and consistent across plans.

Thank you,
Michael

Appendix E: Resolution of Adoption



COLLABORATIVE PLANNING FOR NORTHERN ILLINOIS

REGION 1 PLANNING COUNCIL MPO POLICY COMMITTEE

MPO RESOLUTION 2021-17

- RE: ADOPTION OF THE RMAP COORDINATED PUBLIC TRANSIT-HUMAN SERVICES TRANSPORTATION PLAN**
- WHEREAS** the Federal Highway Act of 1962, as amended, and the Urban Mass Transportation Act of 1964, as amended, provide for an urban transportation planning process; and
- WHEREAS** the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act currently authorizes funding to improve our nation’s transportation system for highways, highway safety, public transit, alternative non-motorized forms of transportation, and freight; and
- WHEREAS** the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act and its predecessors, require a Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) as well as a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP); and
- WHEREAS** the Region 1 Planning Council is the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Rockford Urban and Metropolitan Area, and the MPO Policy Committee has the specific responsibility to direct and administer the continuing urban transportation planning process; and
- WHEREAS** the FAST Act requires a “locally developed, coordinated transportation plan that identifies the transportation needs of individuals with disabilities, older adults, and people with low incomes, provides strategies for meeting those local needs and prioritizes transportation services for funding and implementation”; and
- WHEREAS** a Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan (HSTP) is required to utilize Federal Transit Administration Section 5310, (Elderly Individuals and Individuals with Disabilities / New Freedom eligible projects); and
- WHEREAS** FTA encourages public transit systems in all areas to continue to participate in the coordinated public transit–human service transportation planning process in order to identify and develop job access and reverse commute projects for funding under Section 5307; and
- WHEREAS** a Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan, which assesses the transit needs and gaps for transit dependent populations, has been prepared by the MPO in the interest of promoting, developing and maintaining, safe, efficient and viable transportation options for individuals with disabilities, individuals with low income and elderly individuals within the Rockford Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA); and
- WHEREAS** in response to the above, MPO has developed a document entitled, “Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan”; and
- WHEREAS** the public comment and review period for draft HSTP was from June 14, 2021 until July 12, 2021 and made available for review via the MPO website (posted June 14, 2021) as well as through contacting the MPO offices.
- WHEREAS** the MPO Technical Committee has recommended approval of the “Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan” (dated August 27, 2021); and

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www.r1planning.org



WHEREAS “Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan” (dated August 27, 2021) and MPO Resolution 2021-17) supersedes the “Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan” (July 20th, 2017 version) and RMAP Resolution 2017-6.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT
the MPO Policy Committee adopts the August 27, 2021 version of Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED
that the MPO staff is instructed to distribute the of Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan (dated August 27, 2021) in accordance with the MPO Public Participation Process.



Dated this 27th day of August 2021.

Karl Johnson, MPO Chair
Boone County Board Chairman
Boone County

Joseph V. Chiarelli, MPO Vice-Chair
Winnebago County Chairman
Winnebago County

Clinton Morris
Mayor
City of Belvidere

Steve Johnson
Mayor
Village of Machesney Park

Tom McNamara
Mayor
City of Rockford

Greg Jury
Mayor
City of Loves Park

Pastor Herbert Johnson, Board Chair
Rockford Mass Transit District

Masood Ahmad
Deputy Director
Illinois Department of Transportation, Region 2



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