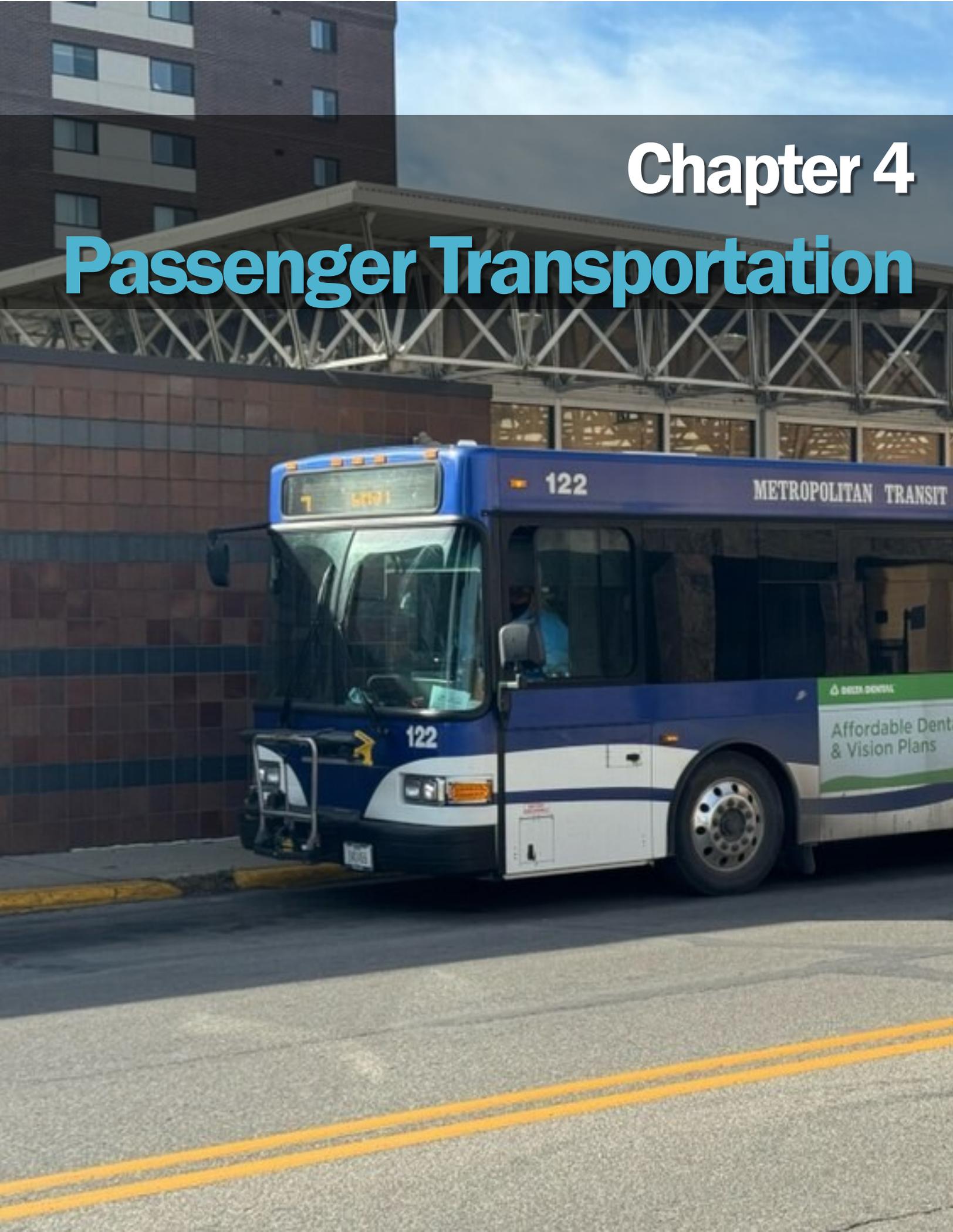


Chapter 4

Passenger Transportation



Chapter 4 – Passenger Transportation



Passenger Transportation Background

Public transit and passenger transportation play a crucial role within the transportation system by presenting individuals with travel alternatives that do not hinge on possessing personal vehicles. Multiple factors influence an individual's decision to utilize public transit or passenger transportation. Some rely on these services due to necessity, such as lacking a driver's license, lacking access to a vehicle, or facing physical disabilities that hinder their ability to drive. Others opt for alternative transportation methods as a deliberate lifestyle choice, driven by affordability, convenience, environmental concerns associated with solo car commuting, or limited driving experience. Moreover, the American Public Transportation Association approximates that an investment of \$1 billion in public transportation initiatives stimulates the creation of around 50,000 jobs and generates \$2.7 billion in economic activity.

Across Iowa, an intricate web of transportation systems spans urban, small urban, and rural areas, facilitating comprehensive coverage throughout the state. In the Iowa Northland Region, public transit service is provided by OnBoard Public Transit, which is operated under the umbrella of INRCOG. The service covers the six-county region outside of the Waterloo/Cedar Falls metropolitan area, where service is provided by the Metropolitan Transit Authority (MET Transit).

Airline travel options to the region are facilitated by the Waterloo Regional Airport (ALO). As of 2025, American Airlines operates two daily flights to and from O'Hare International Airport in Chicago, providing convenient connections to a vast array of domestic and international destinations. This translates to direct and connecting flights to more than thirty prominent cities across the United States.

REGIONAL STATS

23

OnBoard Public Transit Vehicles¹

\$2.00

Fare Per Mile¹

36,781

Onboard Public Transit Ridership 2024¹

2 Daily Flights

Waterloo (ALO) – Chicago (ORD)²

12,885

Air passenger enplanement per year²

58 years

Since passenger rail service was available (Land O' Corn)

Sources :

¹Onboard Public Transit

²FAA, CY 2023
Enplanements at Airports,
Waterloo Regional Airport



Passenger rail has gained interest in recent years as a viable alternative to passenger vehicle commutes for several reasons. Reduced congestion, enhanced connectivity, safer alternatives to automotive transportation, environmental sustainability, promotion of tourism and recreation, and economic growth each contribute to a growing sense of amenability for passenger rail service. According to the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), **trains are 20-30% more energy efficient than cars and emit 70% less carbon dioxide per**

passenger mile than airplanes. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and FRA have consistently reported that passenger rail travel has a significantly lower fatality rate per vehicle mile traveled (VMT) compared to automotive travel. In general, **fatalities in automotive crashes are several times higher than those in rail crashes per VMT.**

State Transit and Passenger Transportation Plans

Iowa Public Transit 2050 Long Range Plan

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

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

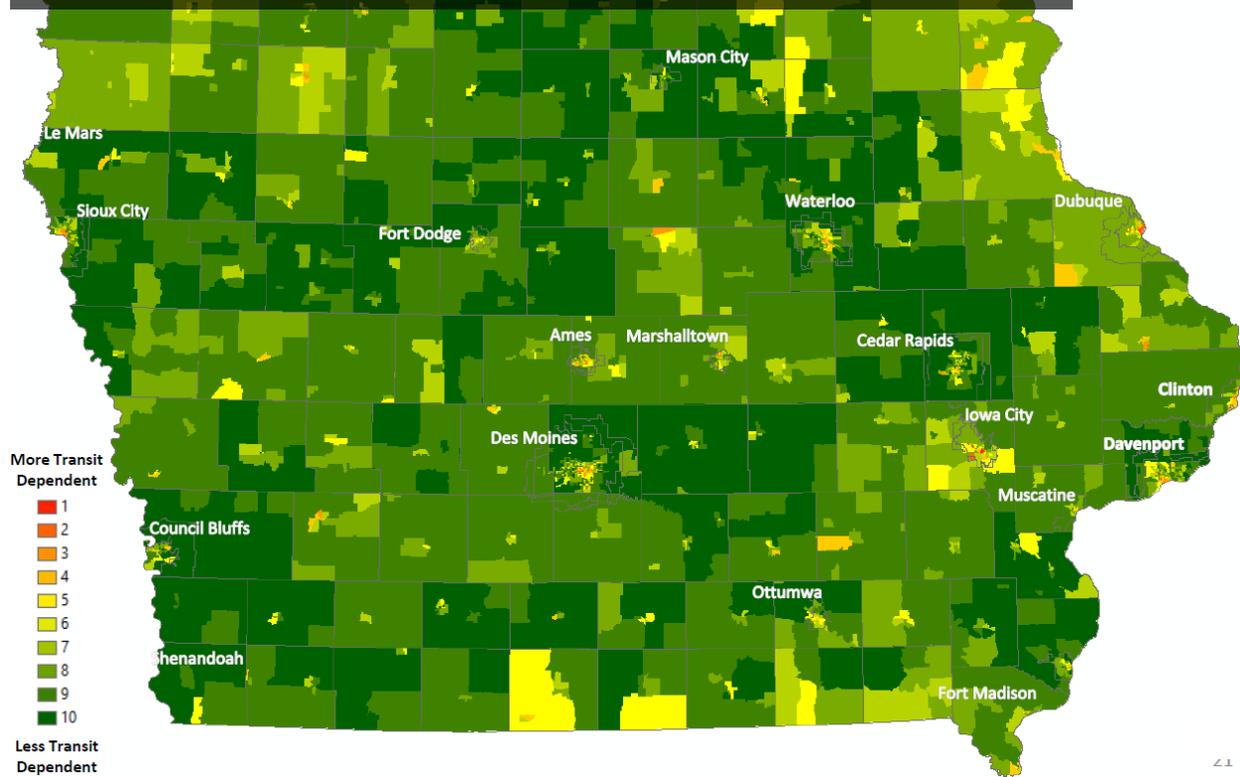


Included within the Plan is a Transit Dependency Analysis, aimed at anticipating and projecting the locations of focal points where the demand for, and reliance on, transit is most pronounced in Iowa. The analysis incorporates external factors contributing to transit dependency, encompassing aspects such as gas prices, median household income, households without vehicles, linguistic diversity, racial composition, college enrollment rates, and population density.

After collecting data for the various factors, it was processed using GIS. Each block group was assigned a score from one to ten for each of the seven distinct external factors employed in the analysis. Subsequently, these individual layers were combined to create an overarching composite layer, pinpointing the regions with the highest transit dependency as influenced by these seven factors. To determine the significance of each factor, input from Iowa's transit agencies was used to assign appropriate weights.

Composite transit dependency weighted by all transit agency results

Source: Iowa DOT, Iowa Public Transit 2050 Long Range Plan



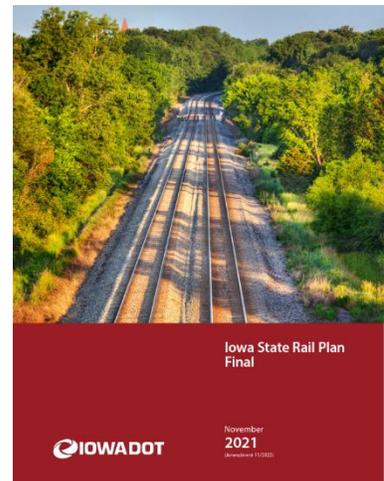
41

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

Iowa State Rail Plan 2021

This document is intended to guide the Iowa DOT in its activities of promoting access to rail transportation, helping to improve the freight railroad transportation system, expanding passenger rail service, and promoting improved safety both on the rail system and where the rail system interacts with people and other transportation modes. The State Rail Plan describes the state's existing rail network and rail-related economic and socioeconomic impacts. The document provides an overview of existing passenger rail service and outlines proposed passenger rail improvements and investments. Of particular interest is the intercity passenger rail initiative between Chicago and Omaha, which was identified as one of several routes of the Midwest Regional Rail System. The Plan also identifies new potential passenger services reaching all regions of the state, including a conceptual route from Dubuque to Sioux City with station stops in Waterloo and Fort Dodge. This potential route remains to be studied.

<https://iowadot.gov/iowainmotion/modal-plans/rail-transportation-plan>





Midwest Regional Rail System

Source: Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission



Existing and Potential Future Passenger Rail Routes in Iowa

Source: Iowa DOT, Iowa State Rail Plan 2021

Transit Asset Management Plan

Transit Asset Management (TAM) Plans are comprehensive and strategic frameworks implemented by transit agencies to efficiently manage their transportation assets. These plans are vital for ensuring the long-term sustainability and optimal performance of transit systems. TAM plans involve the systematic inventory, assessment, and maintenance of various assets, such as buses and support facilities. By establishing data-driven processes and performance targets, TAM plans help transit agencies prioritize investments, allocate resources, and make informed decisions to extend the useful life of assets while minimizing operational disruptions. The goal is to enhance safety, reliability, and the overall quality of public transportation services for the benefit of passengers and the communities they serve.

Every transit agency is federally required to develop a TAM plan if it owns, operates, or manages capital assets used to provide public transportation and receives federal financial assistance under 49 USC Chapter 53 as a recipient or subrecipient. The Iowa DOT is the sponsor for the TAM Group Plan for 23 transit systems in Iowa, including OnBoard Public Transit. The most recent Plan was adopted in September 2022.

<https://iowadot.gov/transit/Transit-Asset-Management>

Passenger Transportation Plan

RTA staff coordinate the development of a Passenger Transportation Plan (PTP). The plan coordinates efforts among passenger transportation providers and human service agencies serving the INRCOG six-county region. The plan also recommends projects to improve passenger transportation. The purpose is to enhance transportation access throughout the community, minimize duplication of services, and facilitate the most appropriate, cost-effective transportation possible with available resources.

The PTP is a joint document between the RTA and the Black Hawk County MPO. A full update of the document is completed every five years. The most recent PTP update, currently ongoing, covers the fiscal years 2026-2030. The overall goal identified in this Plan is to **ensure that the public has access to safe, dependable, convenient, and efficient transit systems, placing special emphasis on providing transit service for those who are most dependent upon transit.**

To achieve this goal, PTP includes the following objectives:

1. Promote and improve the image of the public transit system.
2. Build awareness of the existing public transit system.
3. Enhance the efficiency of the public transit system.
4. Improve accessibility and availability of public transit.
5. Coordinate transportation planning services with other community organizations & the workforce.
6. Improve fleet conditions and reliability.
7. Improve service to all user groups.

The PTP includes a series of projects and initiatives recommended throughout the plan's duration in section 4 of the document. Some key projects outlined in PTP are detailed in Table 4.1.



Table 4.1: Key Projects Identified in the FY 2026-2030 PTP

Project or Initiative	Description	Objectives Addressed	Timeline /Status
How to Ride Signage	Provide Signage across strategic and existing locations with a QR code with translations on how to ride MET Transit, fostering accessibility and a user-friendly bus riding experience.	1, 2, 7	Ongoing
Driver Workforce Development	Support recruitment, training, and retention of transit staff. Launch CDL training programs, retention incentives, and cross-training for flexible staffing. Interview other agencies to learn from their experiences.	1, 3	2026-2030
Micromobility Integration Feasibility Study	Fill first/last mile gaps by assessing potential for micromobility partnerships and funding mechanisms. Determine/identify areas where such a service would be most impactful/utilized.	3,4,7	2026-2029
Free Ride “Try Transit Out!” Event	Promote ridership and system awareness through an educational free ride campaign for various populations to promote awareness of the services.	1,2	2026-2030
Continued Performance Monitoring & KPIs	Implement KPIs (e.g., on-time performance, cost/trip, ridership by route) to monitor and improve operations	3	Ongoing
Consider Additional Seasonal Routes to Points of Interest	Determine/identify areas where seasonal destinations may exist. Explore whether an on-demand, shuttle service, or fixed route may be a necessary service.	2, 5	2026-2030
Emergency Operations Planning	Develop a disaster resilience and emergency operations plan for MET and Onboard Public Transit systems.	3, 4	2026-2030
Partner with Local Agencies and Organizations to Create Art and Designs to Place on Buses and Facilities	Hold an annual event to “Design” the next bus wrap for transit systems. Winning design gets an allotment of passes to use as they choose.	1, 2,5	2026-2030

As a result of this collaboration, INRCOG and MET Transit solicited consultant proposals in the spring of 2023 for a Comprehensive Transit Study for the Metropolitan Transit Authority of Black Hawk County to identify opportunities to improve the system. Included in the study is a review of the previous route restructuring (undertaken before the COVID-19 pandemic), characterization of the service area, user and travel analysis, inventory of service productivity, determination of current service adequacy, and a fleet and facilities assessment. The study included several opportunities for gathering public input, a crucial element in achieving the goal of further improving the services to the community and the overall functionality and efficiency of the system. Further details of the study visit

<https://bhcmpo.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/january-2024-pm-banner.pdf>.

RESTRUCTURED ROUTES – IMPROVE THE SYSTEM

- GRAY Areas – Current Service Area:
 - Route
 - ¼ Mile Walk
- Colored Lines – Restructured Plan Routes

Key Comparisons
What Happens When Implement Restructured Concept

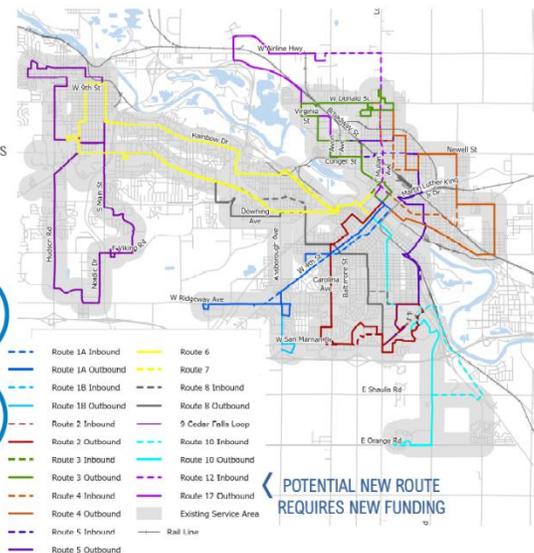


Table 4.2 provides an overview of transit projects incorporated into the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for FY 2026–2029. While the table identifies multiple vehicles slated for replacement, MET Transit may not replace all listed vehicles at this time, as actual replacements will depend on vehicle condition, funding availability, and service needs. In addition to vehicle replacement, the program includes funding for operations and maintenance, administration and planning, preventative maintenance, and mobility coordinator support costs.

Table 4.2: MET Transit Projects, FY 2026-2029

Funding Programs	Years	Funding Total	Description	FA Funding	Local Funding
5339	2029	\$171,338	Light Duty Bus (176" wb)	\$145,638	\$25,700
5339	2027	\$170,525	Light Duty Bus (176" wb)	\$144,925	\$25,600
5339	2027	\$170,525	Light Duty Bus (176" wb)	\$144,925	\$25,600
5339	2027	\$171,337	Light Duty Bus (176" wb)	\$145,637	\$25,700
5339	2027	\$171,338	Light Duty Bus (176" wb)	\$145,638	\$25,700
5339	2027	\$265,612	Medium Duty Bus (to 28 ft.)	\$225,770	\$39,842
5339	2028	\$265,612	Medium Duty Bus (to 28 ft.)	\$225,770	\$39,842
5339	2027	\$265,612	Medium Duty Bus (to 28 ft.)	\$225,770	\$39,842
5339	2027	\$265,612	Medium Duty Bus (to 28 ft.)	\$225,770	\$39,842
5339	2027	\$660,795	Heavy Duty Bus (30-34 ft.)	\$561,676	\$99,119
5339	2027	\$660,795	Heavy Duty Bus (30-34 ft.)	\$561,676	\$99,119
5339	2027	\$671,453	Heavy Duty Bus (35-39 ft.)	\$570,735	\$100,718
5339	2027	\$671,453	Heavy Duty Bus (35-39 ft.)	\$570,735	\$100,718
5339	2027	\$179,574	Light Duty Bus (176" wb)	\$152,638	\$26,936
5307	2026-2029	\$18,800,000	General Operations/Maintenance/Administration/Planning	\$9,400,000	\$9,400,000
5339	2026	\$170,525	Light Duty Bus (176" wb)	\$144,925	\$25,600
5339	2026	\$170,525	Light Duty Bus (176" wb)	\$144,925	\$25,600
5339	2026	\$170,525	Light Duty Bus (176" wb)	\$144,925	\$25,600
5339	2026	\$648,600	Heavy Duty Bus (30-34 ft.)	\$551,310	\$97,290
5339	2026	\$648,600	Heavy Duty Bus (30-34 ft.)	\$551,310	\$97,290
5339	2029	\$170,525	Light Duty Bus (176" wb)	\$144,925	\$25,600
5303	2026-2029	\$384,000	Planning	\$384,000	
5310	2026-2029	\$542,887	Preventative Maintenance and Mobility Coordinator Support	\$434,309	\$108,578
STA	2026-2029	\$1,499,000	State Transit Operating		
5339	2028	\$660,795	Heavy Duty Bus (30-34 ft.)	\$561,676	\$99,119
5339	2027	\$660,795	Heavy Duty Bus (35-39 ft.)	\$561,676	\$99,119
5339	2029	\$171,338	Light Duty Bus (176" wb)	\$145,638	\$25,700
5339	2029	\$171,338	Light Duty Bus (176" wb)	\$145,638	\$25,700
5339	2029	\$171,338	Light Duty Bus (176" wb)	\$145,638	\$25,700
5339	2028	\$171,338	Light Duty Bus (176" wb)	\$145,638	\$25,700

Transit Advisory Committee

The transit planning process and development of PTP are coordinated through the Transit Advisory Committee (TAC). The TAC consists of human service organizations, representatives of local government, transit users, and transportation providers. These entities work cooperatively to identify current transit and passenger transportation needs, challenges, opportunities, and coordination possibilities in the region.

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

- Providing a service to the growing population of older adults.
- Vanpools
- Educating new populations on bus service, particularly those with limited English proficiency
- Marketing and education on existing services
- Joint mobility coordinator and marketing position for OnBoard Public Transit and MET Transit

TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (TAC)

What is TAC?

TAC is a community board for passenger transportation planning issues in Black Hawk, Bremer, Buchanan, Butler, Chickasaw, and Grundy Counties.

TAC consists of various government representatives, transit providers, human service organizations, and overall advocates for transit service. Together, we identify transportation challenges, solutions, and opportunities in our six-county region!

Meetings held twice annually. Join us!

 **INRCOG**
Iowa Northland Regional
Council of Governments

The graphic features a white background with green and blue circular accents. It includes icons of a bus and a car. The text is centered and uses a mix of bold and italicized fonts.

Transit Service

OnBoard Public Transit offers open-to-the-public, accessible transit services to the public, seniors, individuals with disabilities, and low-income individuals as a primary means of transportation in the region's rural areas. OnBoard Public Transit is also responsible for coordinating transportation in the region. OnBoard operates Monday through Friday from 6:30 AM to 6:00 PM. As a common rule, the service provided is from curb to curb; door-to-door service may be provided upon request. OnBoard offers a response service for the six-county region outside of the Waterloo/Cedar Falls metropolitan area served by MET Transit.

OnBoard Public Transit operates 13 light/medium-duty gasoline buses, 2 minivans, and 8 transit vans. The agency does not operate diesel buses because of their limited availability, the challenges in servicing them, and the difficulty in refueling in certain rural areas. Table 4.3 details the current vehicle fleet.



Table 4.3: OnBoard Public Transit Vehicle Inventory as of September 2024

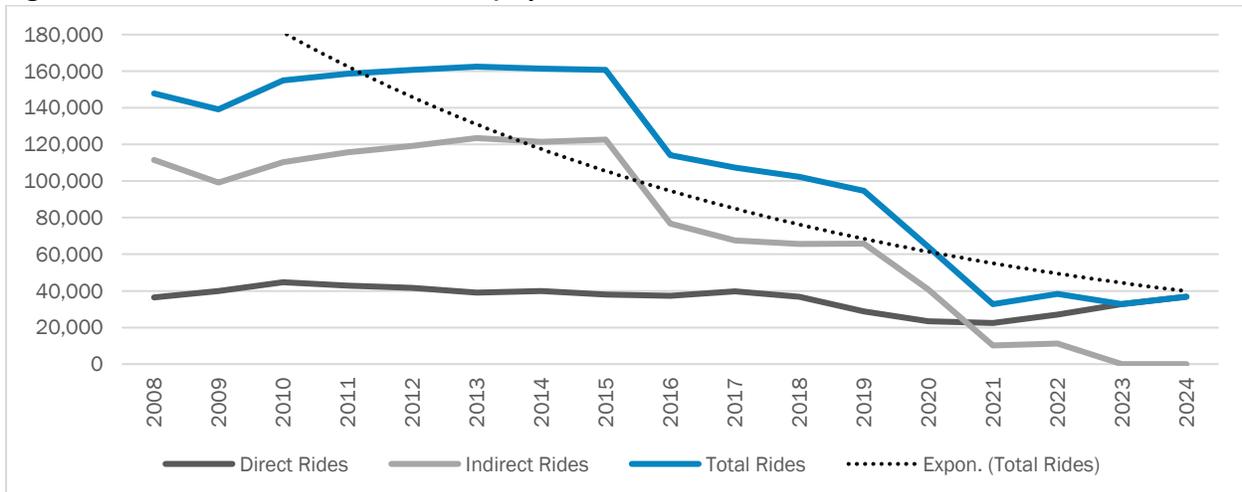
Bus ID	Description	Seats	Lock Downs	Year Acquired	Purchase Price	Condition	Mileage	Over ULB
V061	2006 Ford E-350 CV	9	2	2020	\$15,700	Fair	84,610	
1001	2011 Ford Eldorado	18	4	2012	\$56,757	Poor	205,989	Y
1201	2012 Ford Eldorado	18	4	2012	\$56,757	Poor	180,550	Y
1402	2015 Ford Eldorado	18	4	2015	\$74,385	Fair	198,325	Y
1401	2015 Ford Eldorado	18	4	2015	\$74,385	Fair	198,304	Y
1702	2017 Dodge Minivan	6	2	2017	\$42,800	Good	69,050	Y
1701	2017 Dodge Minivan	6	2	2017	\$42,800	Good	70,855	Y
1601	2017 Ford Glaval	18	4	2017	\$83,713	Fair	146,215	Y
1801	2018 Ford Aerotech	18	4	2018	\$76,251	Good	130,931	Y
1802	2018 Ford Aerotech	18	4	2018	\$76,251	Good	127,041	Y
1901	2019 Ford Aerotech	18	4	2019	\$75,787	Excellent	76,557	
V206	2020 Ford Transit	8	3	2021	\$72,601	Excellent	53,592	
V205	2020 Ford Transit	8	3	2021	\$72,601	Excellent	72,964	
V203	2020 Ford Transit	8	3	2021	\$70,591	Excellent	56,102	
V204	2020 Ford Transit	8	3	2021	\$70,591	Excellent	68,122	
V201	2020 Ford Transit	8	3	2020	\$70,456	Excellent	55,446	
V202	2020 Ford Transit	8	3	2020	\$70,456	Excellent	64,671	
2101	2021 Ford Glaval	18	5	2021	\$94,142	Excellent	60,640	
2102	2021 Ford Glaval	18	5	2021	\$94,142	Excellent	44,307	
2105	2021 Ford Glaval	18	5	2021	\$94,142	Excellent	54,524	
2103	2021 Ford Glaval	18	5	2021	\$94,142	Excellent	47,913	
2104	2021 Ford Glaval	18	5	2021	\$94,142	Excellent	47,946	
V231	2023 Ford Transit	6	3	2024	\$99,691	Excellent	221	

ULB = Useful Life Benchmark

Transit Ridership

Figure 4.1 illustrates the total number of rides provided by OnBoard Public Transit from state fiscal years 2010 to 2024. Ridership peaked in 2013 and has steadily declined since. Like other transit services nationwide, OnBoard saw a drop in ridership following the COVID-19 pandemic. However, direct services have statistically rebounded to pre-pandemic levels. In contrast, the agency no longer has contracts subsidizing indirect rides and revenue miles.

Figure 4.1: OnBoard Public Transit Ridership by Year, SFY 2010-2024



Transit Ridership Forecasts

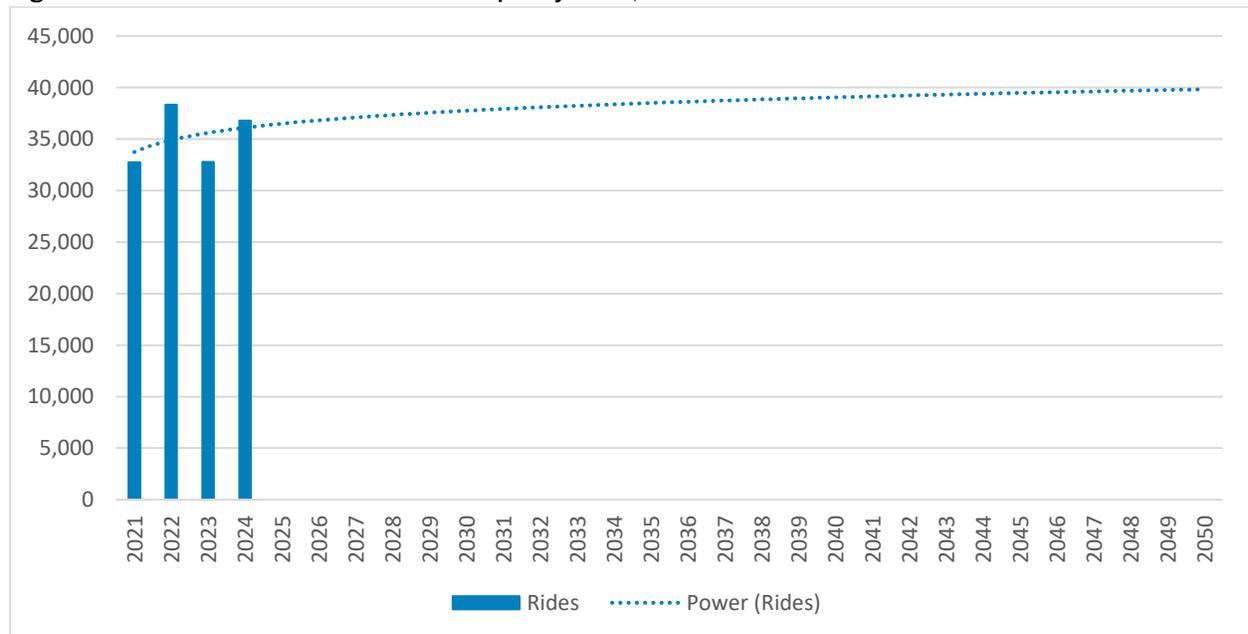
Predicting future rural transit ridership is a challenging task due to the numerous uncertainties and variables that can influence demand. Factors such as population shifts, economic conditions, and changes in employment patterns all play a significant role in determining ridership levels. Additionally, the availability and accessibility of alternative transportation options, shifts in public policy, and the impact of emerging technologies, such as ride-sharing services and autonomous vehicles, further complicate predictions. External factors like fuel prices, environmental concerns, and potential changes in funding or subsidies for public transit can also have significant effects. These complexities make it difficult to accurately forecast ridership trends in rural areas, requiring ongoing analysis and adaptability in planning.

Using a power trendline for predicting transit ridership offers a range of valuable advantages in forecasting accuracy and insight. Unlike linear models, power trendlines can effectively capture non-linear trends inherent in transit ridership data, accommodating growth or decay patterns. Moreover, power trendlines can adeptly identify periods of rapid growth followed by saturation, mirroring real-world scenarios in transit systems.

Figure 4.2 provides a power trendline projection on annual ridership data from the state fiscal years 2021 to 2024. The most recent years have been utilized for forecasting rides due to their relevance in reflecting current trends and conditions. This period captures the post-pandemic recovery phase, offering insights into the new ridership patterns and the effectiveness of service adjustments made during and after the pandemic. This approach ensures that the forecast is more aligned with the present realities and future scenarios.

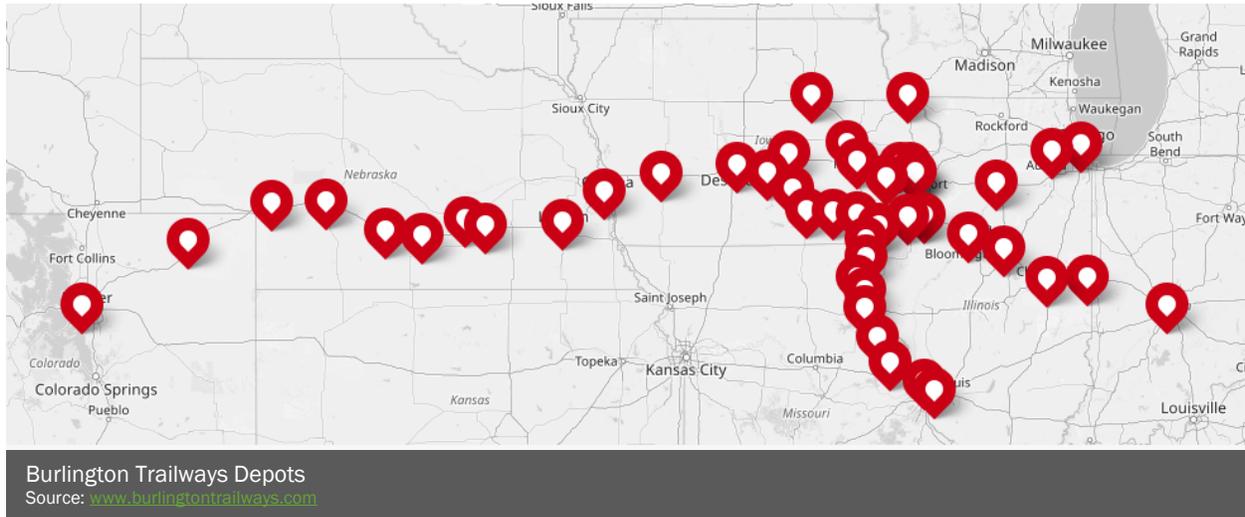
Relying solely on a power or linear trendline can be limiting, as transit ridership is influenced by various dynamic factors. More sophisticated forecasting methods, such as autoregressive integrated moving average models, can capture seasonality and cyclic patterns in ridership data. Additionally, conducting frequent surveys and engaging in the community to understand their changing needs and preferences can provide valuable insights for predicting future ridership.

Figure 4.2: OnBoard Public Transit Ridership Projection, Power Trendline



Intercity Transit

Burlington Trailways provides intercity bus service throughout Iowa and the Midwest with routes extending as far as Indianapolis, St. Louis, and Denver. Burlington Trailways offers intercity bus service throughout Iowa and the Midwest, with routes extending to Indianapolis, St. Louis, and Denver. Burlington Trailways operates one private intercity bus route with a stop at Central Transfer in Waterloo. The Schedule 1492 bus departs Waterloo daily at 1:30 p.m. to Cedar Rapids, Iowa City, Davenport, and Chicago.



Passenger Rail

The Iowa Northland Region possesses a rich heritage of passenger rail connectivity. Over numerous decades, the region proudly hosted one of the most expansive interurban rail networks within the state. During the early 1900s, a train journey spanning from Sumner to Waverly, traversing Black Hawk County, and extending onward to Cedar Rapids and Iowa City was entirely feasible. Additionally, passenger rail travel was possible from Waterloo to Chicago, facilitated by the esteemed Land O' Corn service.

Apart from the interurban lines, the city of Waterloo boasted an expansive array of streetcar lines. Among these were electric interurban lines that linked Waterloo with Cedar Falls, Waverly, and Cedar Rapids. Within the boundaries of Waterloo itself, a multitude of streetcar routes existed, namely Sans Souci, Litchfield, Galloway, Cottage, Highland, Linden, West Ninth Line, and Prospect. One remarkable



advantage of Waterloo's streetcar system was its "Loop," which provided direct access to more than 20 industrial sites. However, by the year 1940, the streetcar service within Waterloo underwent a complete phase-out, being replaced by buses. During the 1950s, the interurban lines also succumbed to closure.

Since 1967, passenger rail services have been absent from the region, following the discontinuation of the Land O' Corn by Illinois Central. This passenger railway, which initially commenced operations in 1941, owed its existence to John W. Rath, a significant figure in both the Rath Packing Company and the Illinois Central's board of directors. Originally, the Land O' Corn completed its Waterloo-Chicago journey in 5.5 hours. By the mid-1960s, the travel time had extended to 6.5 hours. The train departed from Waterloo in the morning and returned in the evening, serving as a vital transportation link to the greater Chicago area. The Hawkeye served as a counterpart to the west, providing services from Waterloo to Sioux City.

Presently, Iowa's passenger rail services are provided by Amtrak through two prominent routes: the California Zephyr journey from Chicago to Oakland, and the Chief Southwestern route from Chicago to Los Angeles. Throughout their respective journeys, these trains make several stops at various cities along the Way. Both services primarily cater to southern Iowa, with stops at Fort Madison, Burlington, Mount Pleasant, Ottumwa, Osceola, Creston, and Omaha.

The revival of passenger rail in Iowa and the reconnection of the region to Chicago through passenger rail are of utmost significance for multiple reasons. Firstly, the revitalization of passenger rail would enrich transportation choices. Rail travel offers an effective and eco-friendly alternative to driving or flying, enabling passengers to reach their destinations quickly and comfortably while reducing congestion and lowering carbon emissions. Furthermore, passenger rail has demonstrated its potential to drive economic development in other states that have embraced this mode of transportation. It invigorates local economies by generating job opportunities, attracting businesses, and fostering tourism. Moreover, investing in passenger rail demonstrates dedication to sustainability and environmental responsibility. Rail travel proves significantly more energy efficient than automobiles or airplanes, resulting in lower greenhouse gas emissions per passenger mile.

WATERLOO, CEDAR FALLS & NORTHERN RY. 1159

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 G. E. HISS, General Attorney, * T. E. RUST, Chief Engineer, *
 J. B. KNOWLES, Secretary and Auditor, * S. J. FAIRBANKS, Engineer of Construction and Maintenance, *
 R. W. HANSEN, Traffic Manager, * W. G. LAMB, Master Mechanic, *
 T. D. FERGUSON, General Agent, * * * *
 W. C. WELSH, Assistant Traffic Manager, * * * *

WATERLOO, LA PORTE CITY, VINTON, CEDAR RAPIDS.				WATERLOO AND WAVERLY.			
February, 1940.	Bus	Rail	Bus	Bus	Bus	Bus	March, 1939.
	No. 4	No. 18	No. 22	No. 37	No. 39	No. 36	No. 38
Madison, Ia. lve.	7:48	8:00 A M	10:30 A M	11:10 P M	4:15 P M	7:00 P M	10:00 P M
Waterloo	7:48	8:00 A M	10:30 A M	11:10 P M	4:15 P M	7:00 P M	10:00 P M
Washburn	7:48	8:00 A M	10:30 A M	11:10 P M	4:15 P M	7:00 P M	10:00 P M
Gilbertville	7:48	8:00 A M	10:30 A M	11:10 P M	4:15 P M	7:00 P M	10:00 P M
La Porte City	7:48	8:00 A M	10:30 A M	11:10 P M	4:15 P M	7:00 P M	10:00 P M
Vinton	7:48	8:00 A M	10:30 A M	11:10 P M	4:15 P M	7:00 P M	10:00 P M
Cedar Rapids, arr.	68:57	9:45 A M	11:55 A M	3:10 P M	6:05 P M	8:45 P M	11:50 P M

STATIONS.

STATIONS.	Bus	Rail	Bus	Bus	Bus	Bus
	No. 1	No. 15	No. 19	No. 15	No. 19	No. 15
Cedar Rapids, lve.	0	7:25 A M	10:30 A M	1:25 P M	4:15 P M	6:40 P M
Shaver	0	7:25 A M	10:30 A M	1:25 P M	4:15 P M	6:40 P M
Robins	0	7:25 A M	10:30 A M	1:25 P M	4:15 P M	6:40 P M
Center Point	0	7:25 A M	10:30 A M	1:25 P M	4:15 P M	6:40 P M
Urbana	0	7:25 A M	10:30 A M	1:25 P M	4:15 P M	6:40 P M
Cherry	0	7:25 A M	10:30 A M	1:25 P M	4:15 P M	6:40 P M
Brandon	0	7:25 A M	10:30 A M	1:25 P M	4:15 P M	6:40 P M
La Porte City	0	7:25 A M	10:30 A M	1:25 P M	4:15 P M	6:40 P M
Gilbertville	0	7:25 A M	10:30 A M	1:25 P M	4:15 P M	6:40 P M
Washburn	0	7:25 A M	10:30 A M	1:25 P M	4:15 P M	6:40 P M
Waterloo	0	7:25 A M	10:30 A M	1:25 P M	4:15 P M	6:40 P M
Madison	0	7:25 A M	10:30 A M	1:25 P M	4:15 P M	6:40 P M

WATERLOO AND CEDAR FALLS.

	March, 1939.
Waterloo	6:35 A M 7:45 A M 9:05 A M 5:15 P M 6:25 P M
Cedar Falls	6:00 A M 7:10 A M 8:30 A M 4:45 P M 5:55 P M
Normal	6:00 A M 7:10 A M 8:30 A M 4:45 P M 5:55 P M

Motor coach service every thirty minutes between Waterloo and Cedar Falls both directions.

*This company owns and operates the only freight rail railway in the city of Waterloo and vicinity, reaching all the important manufacturing plants and connecting with all trunk lines; has many fine factory sites and offers special advantages to parties desiring to locate.



Illinois Central Land O' Corn departing from Chicago to Waterloo, 1967
 Photo by Paul Ehenbach

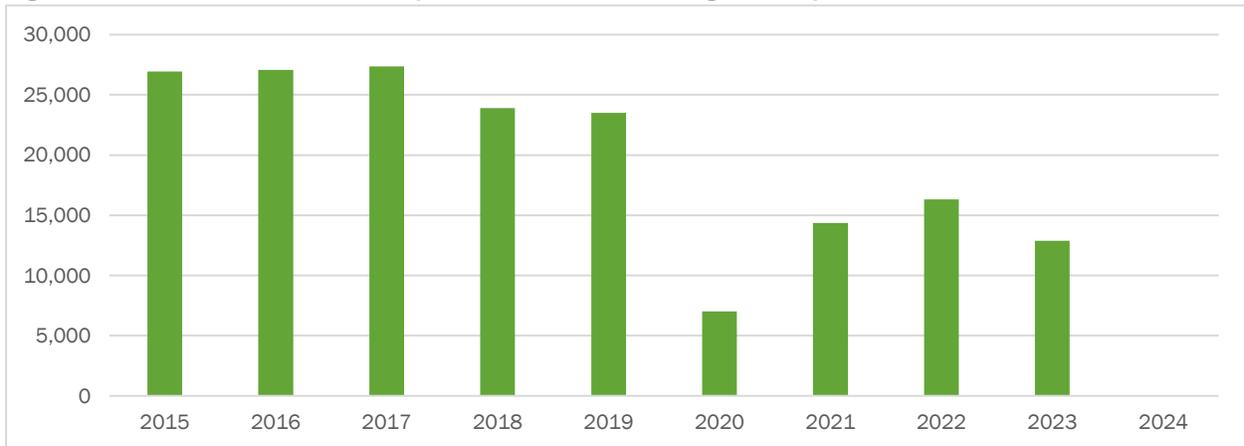
Commercial Air

The Waterloo Regional Airport (ALO) is located on Airport Boulevard immediately off U.S. 218 in the northwest corner of Waterloo. Transit service is not currently available to and from the airport. The facility is owned and operated by the City of Waterloo and overseen by a seven-member Airport Board appointed by the Mayor of Waterloo. The airport is classified as a non-hub primary commercial service airport, offering general aviation and commercial service.



ALO is served by American Airlines with two daily flights to and from Chicago. In 2024, American Airlines signed a two-year contract extension to continue providing twice-daily flights through the federal Essential Air Service program. American Airlines, which has been the sole carrier for the Waterloo Regional Airport since 2012, provides flights on 50-seat regional jets operated through the regional brand American Eagle. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Waterloo Regional Airport was averaging 24,000 annual enplanements. Although air travel showed recovery from 2020 to 2022, enplanements have not yet reached pre-pandemic levels (Figure 4.3). Between 2020 and 2023, annual enplanements averaged around 12,600, reflecting a 50 percent decline compared to the average of the previous four years.

Figure 4.3: Calendar Year Annual Enplanements, Waterloo Regional Airport



Source: Federal Aviation Administration, Passenger Boarding for U.S. Airports



Current and Ongoing Projects & Initiatives

Technology

All vehicles in OnBoard Public Transit's fleet are equipped with video surveillance systems. Buses are fitted with multiple cameras, covering key areas such as the driver, the lift and entrance doors, the bus interior from the rear, and the road. These cameras have enhanced safety and security for both drivers and passengers. Additionally, the agency utilizes video recordings for incident investigations, risk management, and training for drivers and management.

In 2024, OnBoard Public Transit invested in TripMaster by CTS Software, an advanced dispatching and scheduling software, and equipped its fleet with tablets featuring cellular communication capabilities. This upgrade aimed to improve the efficiency of scheduling and dispatch operations, streamline real-time communication between drivers and dispatchers, and enhance overall logistical coordination. The new system allows for more accurate route planning, quicker response times to schedule changes, and better management of passenger information, ultimately leading to improved service reliability and customer satisfaction. This technology also enables real-time tracking of vehicles, providing the agency with valuable data for performance analysis and continuous service improvement.



Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission

The Iowa Northland Regional Transportation Authority supports efforts to plan for and establish a more robust network of infrastructure conducive to passenger rail transportation across Iowa. Growing support across the Midwest has shown promise, and the consensus is that the State of Iowa should have equal representation at the planning table. It is for this reason that in 2023, the RTA and the Black Hawk County MPO drafted Letters of Support encouraging congressional leaders to reestablish involvement in the Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission (MIPRC). This regional interstate compact focuses on promoting and advocating for passenger rail service in the Midwest region. Established in 2000, MIPRC plays a crucial role in coordinating efforts among member states and fostering regional cooperation to enhance connectivity and mobility through passenger rail services. It is for these reasons that **the RTA is strongly urging Iowa Legislators to support legislation for Iowa's rejoining the MIPRC.** www.miprc.org



Ridesharing and Vanpooling

The emergence of Uber and Lyft services has introduced a transformative shift in the transportation landscape. These innovative platforms have swiftly gained prominence nationally as convenient alternatives to traditional modes of transit. By leveraging smartphone technology and digital interfaces, ridesharing services can offer residents an unprecedented level of flexibility and accessibility in commuting.



Despite their convenience, ridesharing services have certain downsides that warrant consideration.

One notable drawback is limited availability in smaller urban and rural areas. This can result in longer waiting times or even the unavailability of rides when needed. Additionally, the reliance on ridesharing services may contribute to increased traffic congestion and competition for road space, particularly in urban areas.

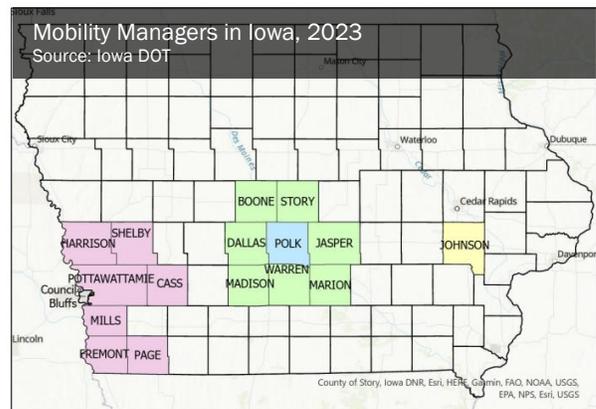


Vanpooling, exemplified by programs like Commute with Enterprise, offers a compelling solution to the challenges of commuting and limited transit availability by fostering a shared and efficient transportation arrangement. Commuters come together in a single van, typically organized and managed by a service provider like Enterprise, to collectively travel to and from work. Vanpooling offers participants cost savings compared to driving alone. Moreover, these programs often provide a valuable alternative for individuals who lack access to traditional public transportation

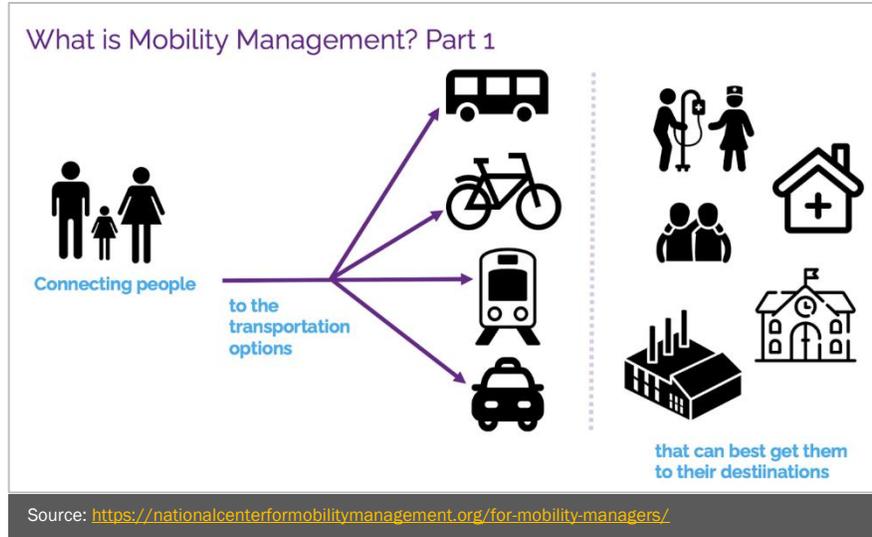
options or face long commutes. Commute with Enterprise currently has operations established in Cedar Rapids, Des Moines, and the SIMPCO region in Sioux City. Both OnBoard Public Transit and MET Transit have demonstrated a keen interest in establishing a vanpool program and continue investigating potential options and the viability of such an initiative.

Mobility Management

Mobility management has been a planning emphasis both nationally and in Iowa for well over a decade. The role of a Mobility Manager (or Mobility Coordinator) offers a multitude of benefits that contribute to the efficient functioning and enhanced utilization of public transportation systems. A mobility manager serves as a pivotal link between various transportation agencies, local governments, and the community, working to develop comprehensive mobility solutions. This role fosters the integration of different modes of transportation, such as public transit, ridesharing, cycling, and walking, to create a seamless and sustainable mobility network. The mobility manager's emphasis on inclusivity ensures that transportation solutions cater to the diverse needs of the community, including individuals with disabilities and underserved populations.



Presently, there is an absence of a designated mobility manager within the entire six-county region. Collaborative discussions have taken place between MET Transit and OnBoard Public Transit regarding the shared recruitment of a mobility manager, a recognized necessity. The Iowa DOT has established a Statewide Mobility Manager who undertakes the crucial role of educating public transit agencies, planning entities, and other statewide organizations about the inherent advantages linked to effective mobility management practices.



Vehicle Replacement

Over the past five years, the condition of OnBoard Public Transit's fleet has seen notable improvement. As of 2025, only 39 percent of the fleet's vehicles are beyond the federal Useful Life Benchmark (ULB), representing a 21 percent reduction since 2020. This progress reflects ongoing efforts to modernize the fleet and maintain higher safety and operational standards. However, despite these improvements, the fleet's long-term outlook remains uncertain due to limited funding for vehicle replacements. **Without sustained financial support, OnBoard may face challenges in continuing to replace aging vehicles at the necessary rate**, potentially resulting in an older fleet in the coming years. This could impact service reliability, maintenance costs, and overall operational efficiency as vehicles age beyond their ULB.

Since 2018, OnBoard has utilized Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) funds through the RTA to purchase two replacement vehicles. Additional STBG funds are programmed for FY 2028 to support another vehicle replacement. In 2018, OnBoard acquired two new minivans, funded with local dollars, to replace older buses that had surpassed their federal Useful Life Benchmark (ULB). These minivans have been used primarily for economic services catering to trips with three or fewer passengers. Subsequently, the agency expanded its fleet with eight new transit vans, further diversifying its vehicle options and enhancing operational flexibility. OnBoard remains committed to exploring a range of funding sources to support future vehicle replacements and fleet upgrades.



Vehicle Storage Site

OnBoard has been using Exceptional Persons, Inc.'s facilities in Waterloo for affordable vehicle storage. However, in 2020, EPI discontinued its transportation services due to changes in funding and, consequently, no longer required its vehicle storage facility. This shift left OnBoard with the challenge of finding a new, cost-effective, and suitable storage solution for its vehicles. OnBoard has since reached an agreement with the City of Waterloo to use vacant lots adjacent to MET Transit's office at 1515 Black Hawk Street in Waterloo for vehicle storage.

Driver Recruitment and Retention

Finding and retaining qualified drivers remains a significant challenge for OnBoard Public Transit. Many potential drivers are attracted to private agencies or school districts, which offer higher salaries and more predictable schedules compared to public transit providers. OnBoard has struggled with recruitment and ensuring new drivers pass all required tests and obtain necessary licensing, resulting in difficulties maintaining a fully staffed team. The geographically dispersed service area adds to the challenge, as drivers may need to commute long distances to reach their buses, or buses might need to be parked at drivers' residences. To address staffing gaps, OnBoard introduced utility driver positions intended to cover regular drivers. However, these positions have frequently gone unfilled, exacerbating the strain on the system and limiting its ability to meet current demand. The shortage of drivers also hampers the potential for expanding service within the region.

Onboard Planned Projects

Table 4.4 provides an overview of transit projects that have been incorporated into the RTA Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for FY 2026-2029. While the table demonstrates multiple vehicles slated for replacement, OnBoard Public Transit may not replace all the vehicles listed at this time. The Iowa DOT uses the Public Transit Management System to prioritize statewide vehicle replacements, which are determined by factors like age and mileage. Buses are selected for replacement based on the statewide ranking and funding available. Iowa has over 1,700 vehicles statewide, all competing for the same limited amount of dollars. As a result, only a few vehicle replacements are anticipated annually, at most. The amount of federal aid shown below for capital expenses is not guaranteed.

Table 4.4: OnBoard Transit Projects, FY 2026-2029

ID	Expense Type	Sponsor	Description	Fiscal Year	Total Cost	Federal Aid	Local Funding
11018	STBG	INRCOG	Capital	2029	\$140,000	\$112,000	\$28,000
11938	5339	INRCOG	Light Duty Bus (176" wb)	2026	\$170,500	\$144,925	\$25,575
11939	5339	INRCOG	Light Duty Bus (176" wb)	2026	\$170,500	\$144,925	\$25,575
1377	5311, STA	INRCOG	General Operations/Maintenance/Administration	2026-2029	\$6,701,044	\$1,401,840	\$3,800,000
3500	5304	INRCOG	RPA Transportation Planning	2026 - 2029	\$170,072	\$135,768	\$34,304

5311 = Nonurbanized Area Formula Assistance Program

5339 = Bus and Bus Facilities Program

STBG = Surface Transportation Block Grant Program

2024 Public Input Survey

As part of the Passenger Transportation Plan (PTP) requirements, public input was gathered through a Passenger Transportation Survey conducted in December 2024 and February 2025. The online survey, created using SurveyMonkey, included 8 questions and allowed for written comments. The survey conducted by INRCOG, the Passenger Transportation Survey 2024, was designed to identify existing transportation challenges and opportunities within Black Hawk, Bremer, Buchanan, Butler, Chickasaw, and Grundy Counties. The survey, aimed at engaging local organizations and agencies, was administered to about 21 organizations and agencies to gather critical information on the primary destinations of clients, transportation modes used by clients and employees, and other factors affecting mobility in the region. The insights provided will support the development of INRCOG's Passenger Transportation Plan, aimed at enhancing transportation services and addressing the growing needs of these communities.

Transit Advisory Committee (TAC)

The TAC continues to meet at least twice a year to discuss passenger transportation and human service agency coordination. Between July 1, 2024, and June 30, 2025, several meetings were held at the INRCOG Center with the option to join virtually. During the March 6, 2025, meeting, participants reviewed the findings from the Passenger Transportation Survey, which assessed local transportation needs and challenges. The meeting also included discussions on proposed action steps with identified goals, objectives, priorities, and strategies for the PTP to address the survey results, with a focus on improving passenger transportation services and enhancing mobility in the area. Table 4.3 contains a list of TAC participants who attended meetings over the past year.

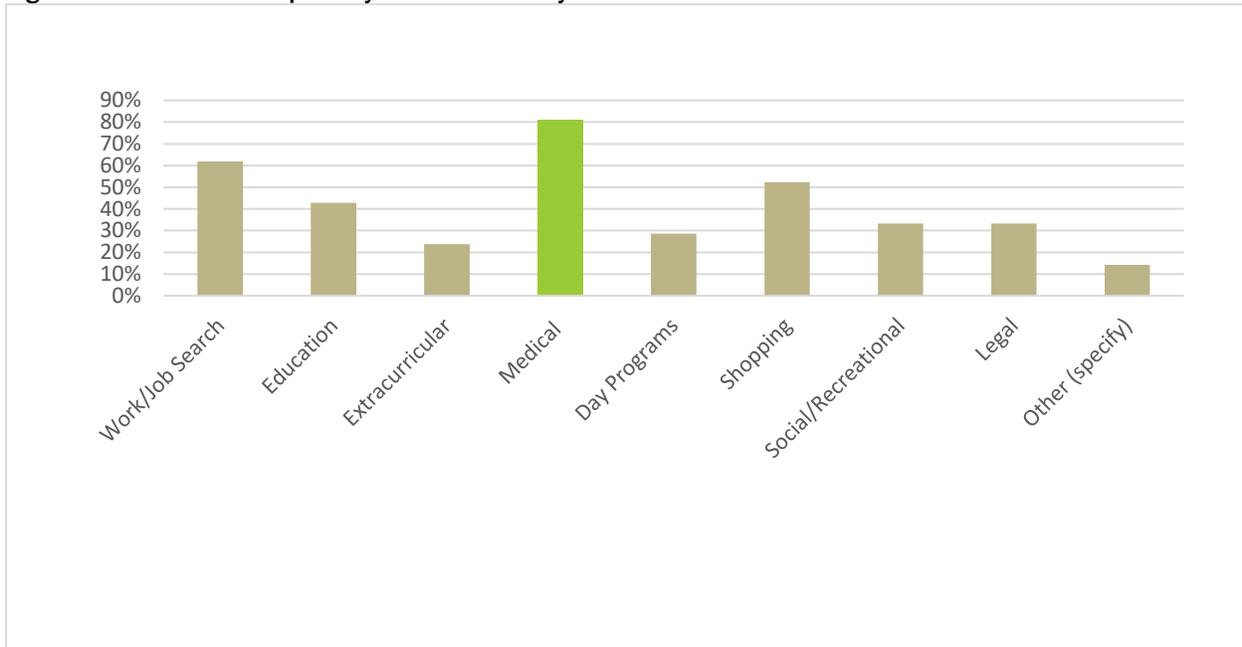
Table 4.5: TAC Participants – July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025

Name	Organization
Lori Glover	Black Hawk County Emergency Management
Bethany Fratzke	Black Hawk County Health Department
Lisa Sesterhenn	Black Hawk County Health Department
Alecia Allen	Black Hawk County Health Department
Jan Heidemann	Bremer County of the East Central Region (ECR)
Sheila Baird	Cedar Valley United Way
Kyle Clabby-Kane	Iowa Works
Debra Hodges Harmon	Iowa Works
Todd Rickert	Grundy County Social Services
Susan Backes	House of Hope
David Sturch	MET Transit
Phillip Golden	MET Transit
Mindy Benson	BHC EMA
Aaron Reinke	BHC Public Health
Lon Kammeyer	MET Transit Board
Greg Zars	Northeast Iowa Area Agency on Aging (NEI3A)
Megan McKenzie	McElroy Trust
Erin Tink	Waterloo Community Foundation
Cathy Showalter	Otto Schoitz Foundation
Terrance Hollingsworth	Empower Me/Project Health
Shannon Bass	NEIA Food Bank
DeAnne Kobliska	Mayor of Evansdale
Emily Hanson	BHC Gaming Association
Trista Hill	Tri-County HeadStart
Aric Schroeder	City of Waterloo
George Phillips	Cedar Valley Boys & Girls Club
Norman Coley Jr.	Hawkeye Community College
Karen Siler	Iowa Works of the Cedar Valley
Kyle Durant	INRCOG
Oghogho Oriakhi	INRCOG
Nick Fratzke	INRCOG/RTC



While overall participation in the survey was found to be lackluster, participation in the Transit Advisory Committee has shown significant improvement compared to previous years. By happenstance, Black Hawk County Public Health’s development of a County Health Improvement Plan also coincided with the development of the 2026-2030 Passenger Transportation Plan. INRCOG staff have gained valuable insights from Public Health’s efforts to collect data. These collaborative efforts have helped fill in many of the gaps in our survey efforts and have proven to be a productive measure in assisting the direction of the 2026-2030 PTP update.

Figure 4.4: What are the primary destinations of your clients?



Participants were asked about the primary mode of transportation for employees and clients. 31.58% of the respondents used personal vehicles, 26.32% Public transit, 21.05% agency-provided transportation, 11% ridesharing, 5.26% Active transportation (biking and walking), and 5% non-subsidized transportation services. Among the agencies, when asked what county their typical clients live in, over 80% of the respondents answered Black Hawk (the most populous county in the region), 29% Bremer, 24% Grundy, and 14% in Butler and Chickasaw counties. When asked what the main challenges clients face regarding transportation, 85% noted a lack of reliable transportation, and 76% stated gaps in the transportation service area. These results mirror those from the 2013 public input survey conducted for the MPO, as well as the 2012 public input survey conducted to gather input for the RTA’s 2040 Long-Range Transportation Plan.

When conducting the recent survey, participants were asked to identify the primary modes of transportation used by employees and clients. The results highlighted a diverse range of transportation options, with 31% of respondents indicating that personal vehicles were the primary mode of transport. Public transit followed closely behind at 26%, while 21% of respondents relied on agency-provided transportation. Ridesharing services accounted for 11%, and 5% of respondents used active transportation (such as biking and walking), while another 5% utilized non-subsidized transportation services. These responses reflect the transportation habits and preferences of individuals who are served by various agencies within the Iowa Northland Region, which encompasses Black Hawk, Bremer, Buchanan, Butler, Chickasaw, and Grundy Counties.

Among the agencies that participated in the survey, a significant number (over 80%) indicated that their typical clients live in Black Hawk County, the most populous county in the region. Bremer County was the next most common location for clients, with 29% of respondents reporting that their clients typically reside there.

Grundy County followed with 24%, while 14% of respondents indicated that their clients were from other counties within the Iowa Northland Region. This geographic distribution is important for understanding where transportation services are most needed and how transportation networks should be adjusted to meet the demand in these areas.

The survey also examined the level of support for increased collaboration among agencies in the region. An overwhelming 75% of respondents strongly advocated enhanced collaboration across agencies. This response underscores a desire for a more coordinated and unified approach to addressing transportation needs, suggesting that greater cooperation could lead to more efficient use of resources, better service delivery, and improved access for clients. These findings align with results from the 2013 public input survey conducted for the MPO, as well as the 2012 public input survey used to gather feedback for the 2040 Long-Range Transportation Plan for the RTA.

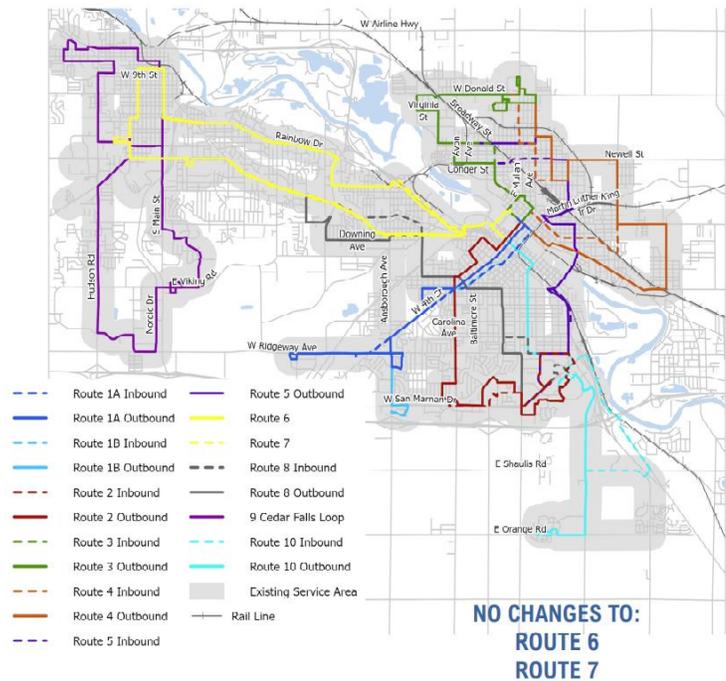


Figure 4.5: What is the primary mode of transportation for you and/or your clients?

