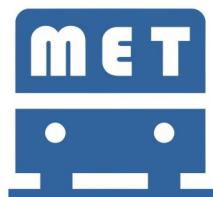


# Passenger Transportation Plan FY2026-2030

Iowa Northland Region



**INRCOG**  
Iowa Northland Regional  
Council of Governments



Adopted 13<sup>th</sup> November, 2025  
and  
18<sup>th</sup> December ,2025.

**RESOLUTION OF THE BLACK HAWK COUNTY METROPOLITAN AREA  
TRANSPORTATION POLICY BOARD**

**WHEREAS**, the Black Hawk County Metropolitan Area Transportation Policy Board has been designated as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Black Hawk County urbanized area; and

**WHEREAS**, the Policy Board, in cooperation with the state, is conducting a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive (3-C) transportation planning process pursuant to 23 CFR 450 (c); and

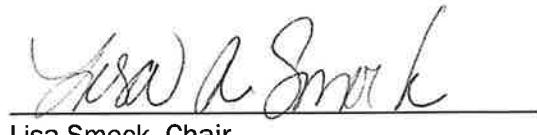
**WHEREAS**, the FY 2026-2030 Passenger Transportation Plan (PTP) is a product of this ongoing planning process; and

**WHEREAS**, the Policy Board has included the open participation of the general public in the development of the PTP in conformance with the Policy Board's approved Public Participation Plan; and

**WHEREAS**, the PTP was developed as a result of, and in accordance with, the passenger transportation planning process set forth by the Iowa Department of Transportation.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE RESOLVED** that the Black Hawk County Metropolitan Area Transportation Policy Board hereby approves the final FY 2026-2030 Passenger Transportation Plan.

Passed and adopted this 13<sup>th</sup> day of November 2025.



---

Lisa Smock, Chair

ATTEST:



---

Brian Schoon, INRCOG Executive Director

**RESOLUTION OF THE IOWA NORTHLAND REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY  
POLICY BOARD**

**WHEREAS**, the Iowa Northland Regional Transportation Authority Policy Board has been designated as the Regional Planning Affiliation for Black Hawk, Bremer, Buchanan, Butler, Chickasaw, and Grundy Counties; and

**WHEREAS**, the Policy Board, in cooperation with the state, is conducting a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive (3-C) transportation planning process pursuant to 23 CFR 450 (b); and

**WHEREAS** the FY 2026-2030 Passenger Transportation Plan (PTP) is a product of this ongoing planning process; and

**WHEREAS**, the Policy Board has included the open participation of the general public in the development of the PTP in conformance with the Policy Board's approved Public Participation Plan; and

**WHEREAS**, the PTP was developed as a result of, and in accordance with, the passenger transportation planning process set forth by the Iowa Department of Transportation.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Iowa Northland Regional Transportation Authority Policy Board hereby approves the final FY 2026-2030 Passenger Transportation Plan.

Passed and adopted this 18<sup>th</sup> day of December 2025.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Greg Barnett, Chair

ATTEST:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Brian Schoon, INRCOG Executive Director

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# Section 1 - Introduction and Process Discussion

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## Purpose

The Passenger Transportation Plan (PTP) process for Iowa's Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) and Regional Planning Affiliations (RPAs) is designed to promote joint, coordinated passenger transportation planning programs that further the development of the local and regional public transportation systems. The goals are to:

1. Improve transportation services to Iowans
2. Increase passenger transportation coordination
3. Create awareness of unmet needs
4. Develop new working partnerships
5. Assist decision-makers, advocates, and consumers in understanding the range of transportation options available
6. Develop justification for future passenger transportation investments
7. Save dollars and eliminate overlapping of services.

This PTP was developed for the Black Hawk County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and the Iowa Northland Regional Transportation Authority (RTA). The MPO includes the cities of Waterloo, Cedar Falls, Evansdale, Hudson, Elk Run Heights, Gilbertville, and Raymond, as well as parts of unincorporated Black Hawk County. The RTA includes Black Hawk, Bremer, Buchanan, Butler, Chickasaw, and Grundy Counties, excluding the MPO area. The MPO and RTA combined constitute the Iowa Northland Region.

The Passenger Transportation Plan (PTP) for the Iowa Northland Region aims to create a structured platform for coordinating transportation efforts among passenger service providers. The purpose is to bring together transportation providers and key human service agencies in the region, fostering a better understanding of available services and enhancing effectiveness and coordination among providers.

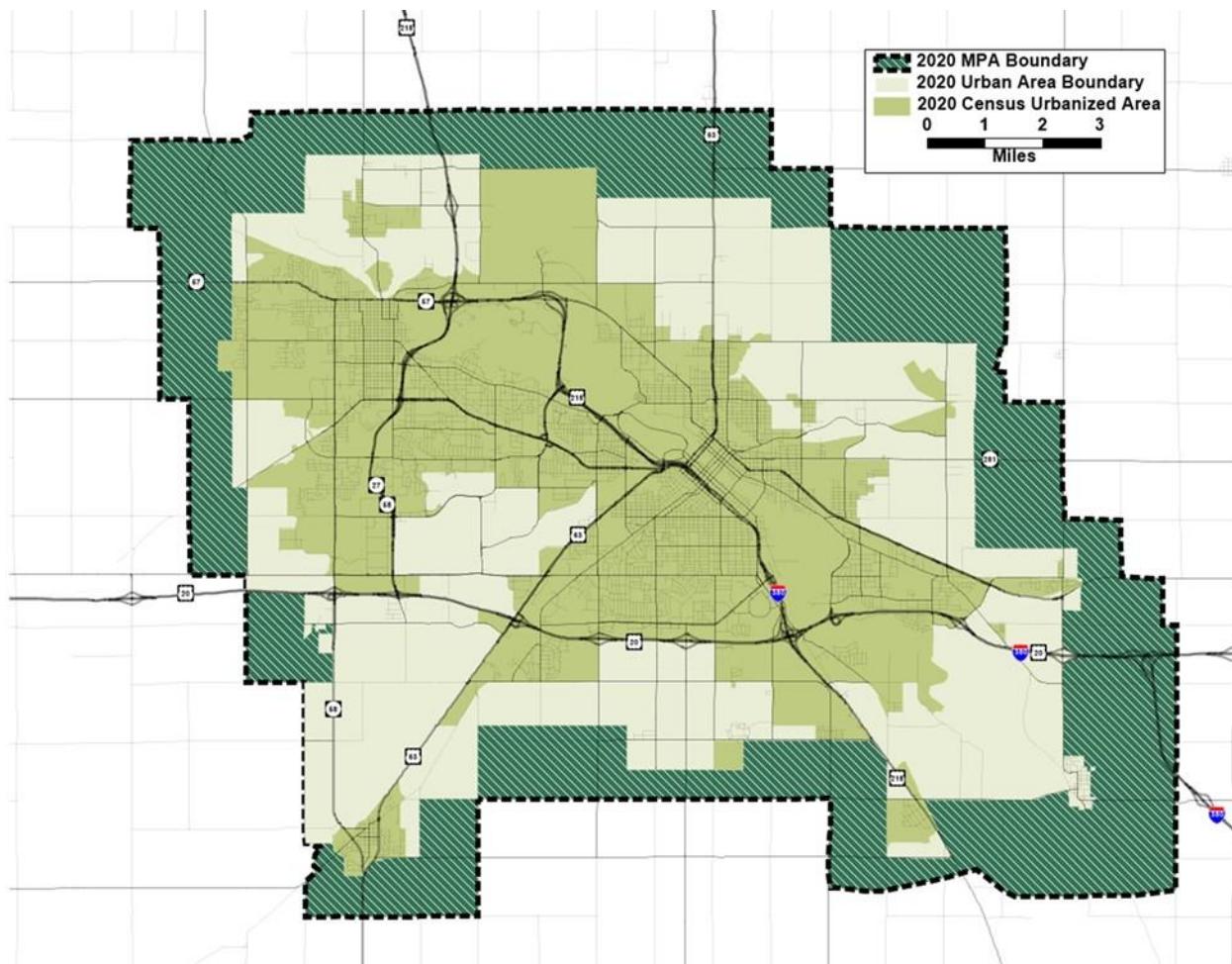
The PTP is organized into 5 sections. The first section introduces the plan and explains the steps taken to develop it. The second section provides a profile of the Iowa Northland Region, along with a list of existing passenger transportation services. The third section addresses coordination challenges in the region, including updates on past priorities and strategies. The 4<sup>th</sup> section outlines proposed transportation investment strategies for the next 5 years, focusing on key priorities that address identified needs and could lead to future projects. The final section offers an overview of funding opportunities and expectations.

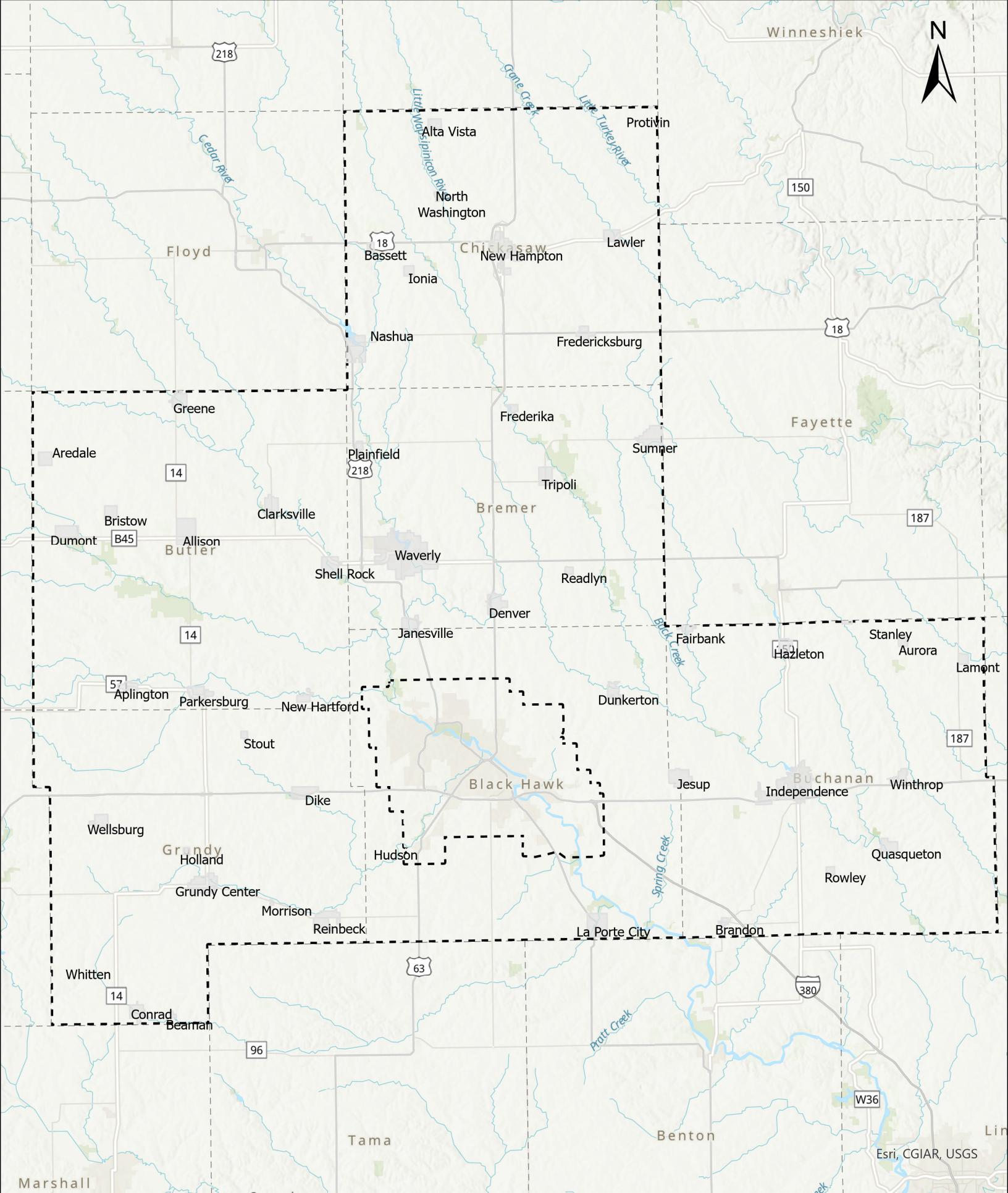
The Iowa Department of Transportation (DOT) has developed guidance for PTPs to incorporate federal regulations for coordinated planning with local decisions regarding passenger transportation. PTP provides a basis for efficient and effective passenger transportation resource allocations for operations, maintenance, and service development. The creation of this document is the result of joint efforts from local passenger transportation providers, policy makers, units of government, human service organizations, and the public. This document is intended to provide a better understanding of current and past passenger transportation services, as well as to serve as a mechanism to guide future transit decisions and investments.

## Planning Structure

The Iowa Northland Regional Council of Governments (INRCOG) serves as an umbrella organization for the Black Hawk County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), the Iowa Northland Regional Transportation Authority (RTA), and the Regional Transit Commission (Onboard Public Transit). The Metropolitan Transit Authority (MET Transit) is a voting member of the Black Hawk County MPO Policy Board. The role of metropolitan and regional planning agencies is to oversee transportation planning and programming to ensure that existing and future expenditures on transportation projects are based on a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive (3-C) transportation planning process. This document is a joint endeavor of the Black Hawk County MPO and the RTA. MET Transit and Onboard Public Transit are members of the Black Hawk County MPO and RTA, respectively, and each participates in the planning and programming process along with the cities and counties in each region. Map 1.1 shows the boundary for the Black Hawk County MPO, and Map 1.2 shows the Iowa Northland Region.

**Map 1.1: Black Hawk County MPO Planning Area**





# Map 1.2 Iowa Northland Region

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## Process for Plan Development

The Passenger Transportation Plan has been required by the Iowa DOT since 2007. Input regarding the development of the FY 2026-2030 PTP has been gathered in a variety of ways. Since 2006, a Transit Advisory Committee (TAC) has met at least twice a year to discuss passenger transportation and human service agency coordination. The TAC consists of human service organizations, representatives of local government, transit users, and transportation providers. These entities work cooperatively to recognize current transit shortfalls and identify the potential for new services and coordination possibilities in the region. The TAC serves as the main sounding board for passenger transportation planning issues in the region and has played an integral role in the development of the PTP.

In addition to TAC, MET Transit's Board holds monthly meetings, while Onboard Public Transit's Advisory Committee meets quarterly. Representatives from both transit providers consistently participate in these meetings to maintain effective collaboration across the network.

INRCOG staff were responsible for the development of the draft and final FY 2026-2030 PTP document. Staff involved in document development include Oghogho Oriakhi; Transportation Planner I, Kyle Durant; Transportation Planner II, Nick Fratzke; Director of Transportation, Hayley Weiglein; Administrative Assistant, and Sheri Alldredge; Director of Administrative Services. In the past year, staff have collaborated with TAC to create and administer a Passenger Transportation Survey. This survey, along with other public input initiatives, is used by the TAC to identify challenges and opportunities for the next 5 years. More details on the public input efforts can be found in the following section of this document.

## Public Input

### 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 monthly 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 PTP to address the survey results, with a focus on improving passenger transportation services and enhancing mobility in the area. Table 1.1 contains a list of TAC participants who attended meetings over the past year.



**Table 1.1: TAC Participants – July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025**

Name	Organization
Mindy Benson	Black Hawk County Emergency Management
Bethany Fratzke	Black Hawk County Health Department
Lisa Sesterhenn	Black Hawk County Health Department
Aaron Reinke	Black Hawk County Health Department
Rachael Mayer	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
Rosalyn Middleton	MET Transit Board
Phillip Golden	MET Transit
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
Hector Salamanca-Arroyo	Cedar Valley Boys & Girls Club
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/Onboard Public Transit



### Passenger Transportation Survey

As part of the requirement for completing PTP, the recent public input for this document was obtained through a Passenger Transportation Survey. The online survey was developed using Survey Monkey and distributed to passenger transportation providers and human service agencies in December 2024 and again in February 2025. The survey consisted of 8 questions as well as several opportunities for written comments. Agencies were also provided with the opportunity to complete the survey manually. Agencies were notified of the survey through email and were encouraged to distribute it to other agencies.

The survey questions, along with a summary of results, can be found in the Appendix.

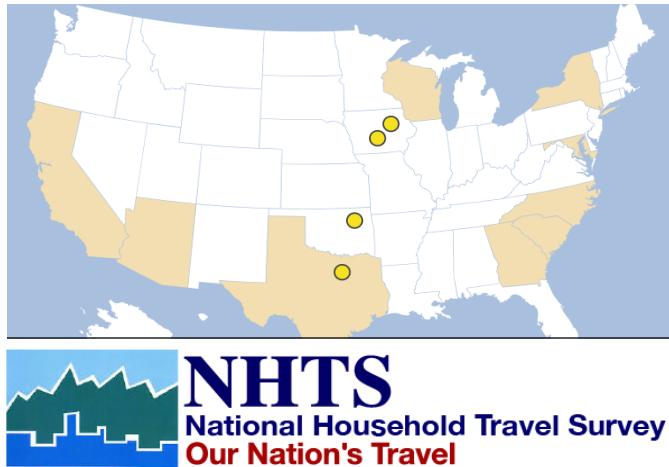
While overall participation in the survey was found to be lackluster, participation in the Transit Advisory Committee has shown significant improvement in previous years. By happenstance, Black Hawk County Public Health's development of a County Health Improvement Plan also coincided with the development 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.

#### National Household Travel Survey Add-on

The Black Hawk County MPO participated in the 2017 National Household Travel Survey (NHTS) Add-on. The NHTS is a periodic national survey used to assist transportation planners and policy makers who need comprehensive data on travel and transportation patterns in the United States. Data is collected on daily trips taken by households and individuals in those households over 24 hours. States and MPOs can participate in the Add-on Program to obtain additional samples of the household travel survey within their respective geographic boundaries. Add-on participants are also provided with the opportunity to add 6 questions unique to their needs. The survey produced responses from a total of 1,221 households consisting of 2,450 individuals, specifically from the Black Hawk County MPO. Results from the survey can be reviewed at a time, or multiple variables can be cross-tabulated to identify unique trends.



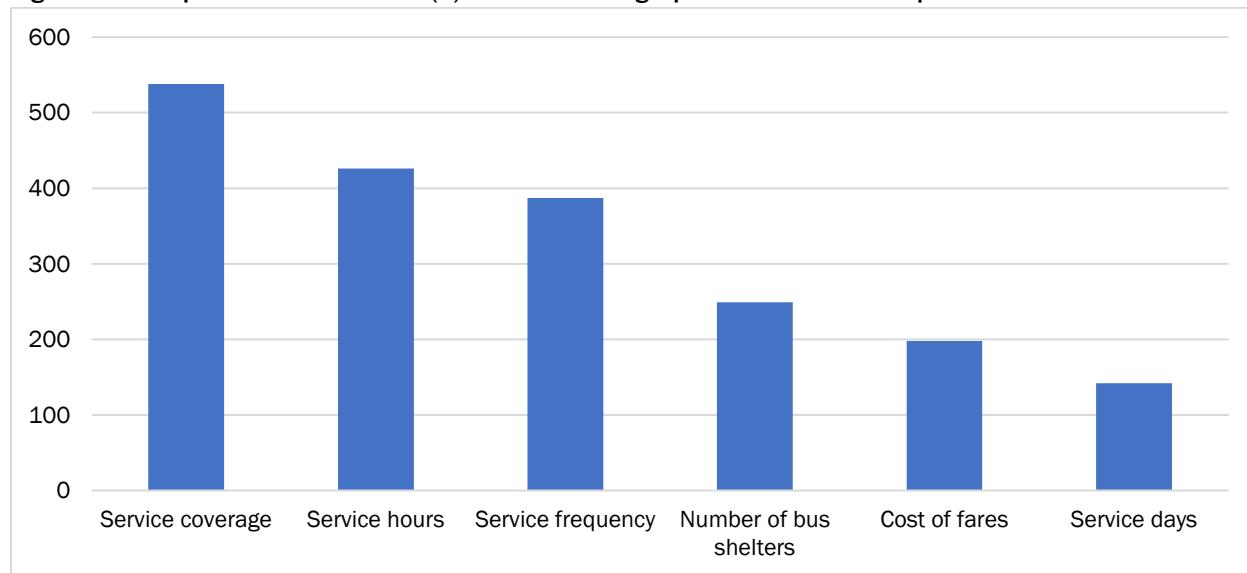
The 2017 NHTS survey provided valuable insights, and its responses remain much like those gathered in more recent public outreach efforts. Although the region did not participate in the 2022 survey, the findings align closely with the data from the 2017 survey. Several questions in the NHTS Add-on for the MPO area specifically focused on transit, with the following results reported at a 95% confidence interval and using 7-day weights for the MPO area.

- Between 2,963–5,761 persons in the MPO area have no household vehicles available.
- Between 2,240–4,238 persons have a medical condition that results in them giving up driving.
- Between 14.7–22.6 % of households have used a bus for travel at least a few times a year. This may include charter buses and buses in other metropolitan areas.

Respondents were also asked which 2 of the following options would best improve MET Transit service in the metropolitan area. Figure 1.1 shows the total number of unweighted responses to each improvement. A total of 1,940 responses were recorded among the 6 improvements, and an additional 572 respondents selected “none of the above”. While the 2017 National Household Travel Survey (NHTS) provided valuable insights, a new survey is currently underway as of March 2025. Scheduled to run from November 2024 to November 2025, this updated survey uses a scientifically selected sample of households. Participants will be invited to contribute to this comprehensive study, which aims to enhance the understanding of travel behavior across the United States.

While the data from the 2017 survey has surely changed in the past 8 years, there is value in the reflection that we can draw from the information. COVID recovery has proven a challenge to both MET Transit and the Onboard Public Transit; however, the 2017 survey gives us a baseline for “normalcy”. Many of the challenges identified in the 2017 NHTS still hold true or are resurfacing in the region. While the path to solutions may have changed, we must still look to develop a greater understanding of the implications that these findings elicit.

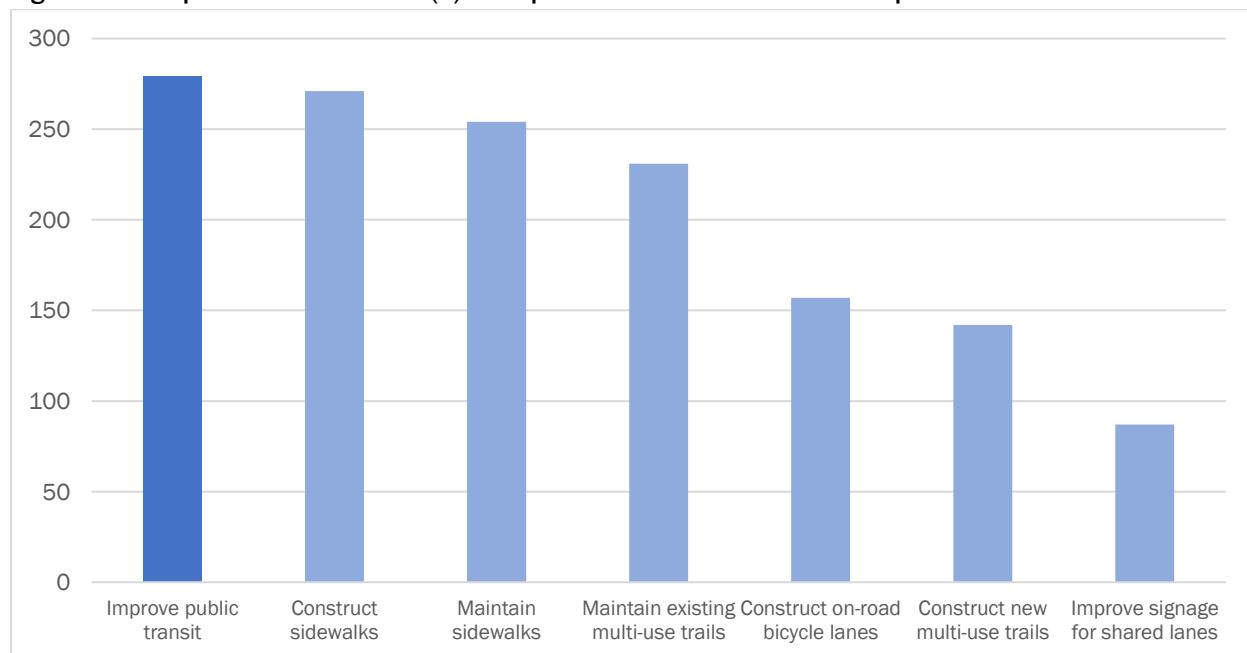
**Figure 1.1: Responses to Which One (1) of the Following Options Would Best Improve MET Transit Service**



Improving service coverage received the highest number of responses among the 6 options. However, expanding existing routes to cover more areas comes with several potential trade-offs, including increased cost to city governments, decreased frequency, increased travel times, and a reduction in overall ridership.

NHTS respondents in the MPO area were also asked which transportation investment is most important to them. Available responses were all related to pedestrian, bicycle, and transit improvements. Figure 1.2 shows the results of this question. The investment selected by the greatest number of respondents was “improve public transit” with 279 responses. A total of 1,421 responses were recorded among the 7 investments, and an additional 307 respondents selected “none of the above”.

**Figure 1.2: Responses to Which One (1) Transportation Investment is Most Important to You**



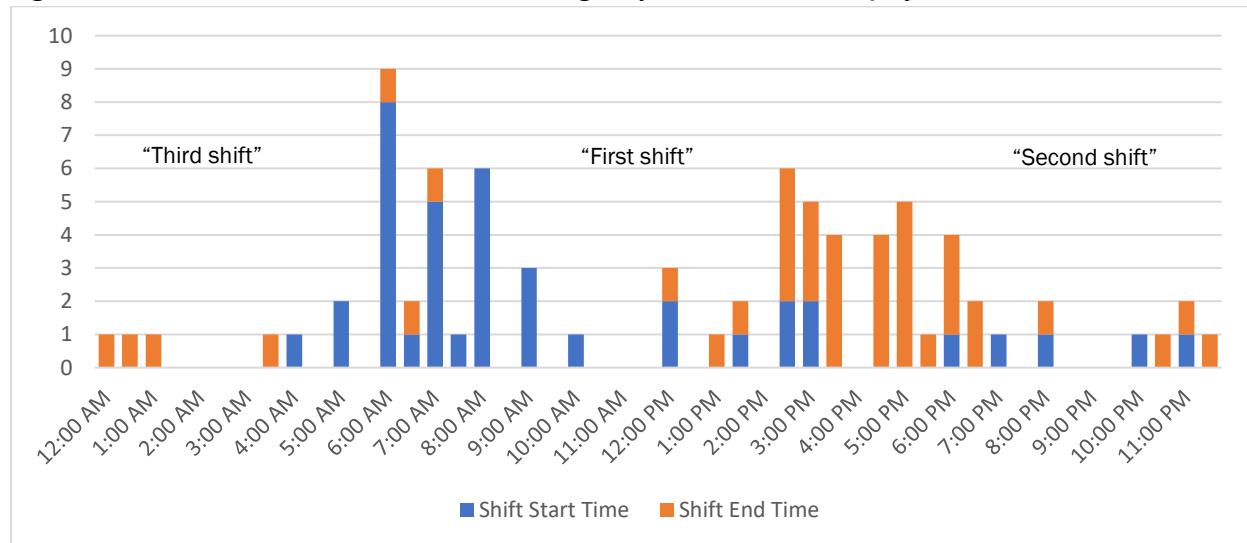
### Airline Highway Transportation Survey

In 2018, MET Transit partnered with INRCOG, Onboard Public Transit, and Grow Cedar Valley (formerly the Greater Cedar Valley Alliance and Chamber) to survey businesses in the Airline Highway Industrial Area in Waterloo. This was a follow-up to a survey conducted by Grow Cedar Valley in 2017, which found that public transit was ranked the lowest of all community services in the 6-county area surveyed.

A total of 14 businesses responded to this survey. 10 businesses said they “strongly agree” or “somewhat agree” that their business would benefit from improved public transit service. 2 businesses said they would “possibly” be willing to contribute funds to have a dedicated fixed-route bus service to their businesses. 3 businesses said they would “possibly” be interested in sponsoring a rideshare program for their employees.

Businesses were also asked to list the times when their employees arrive and depart from work. Most employees start their shift in the morning at the hours (i.e., 6:00, 7:00, 8:00, and 9:00 a.m.). Departure times are more evenly distributed between the hour and half-hour, and most employees depart work between 2:30 and 6:30 p.m. Figure 1.3 shows the shift start and end times for employees at businesses surveyed in the Airline Highway Industrial Area. This data can help with scheduling a potential new MET Transit fixed route to the Airline Highway area.

**Figure 1.3: Shift Start and End Times for Airline Highway Industrial Area Employees**



### Special Outreach Survey

A total of 187 non-English speaking and 20 homeless residents took part in the Special Outreach Survey conducted by INRCOG in the metropolitan area in 2015. The survey was intended to identify transportation needs and challenges faced by these unique populations. Half of all respondents were from either Myanmar or Thailand. There was also significant representation from Congo, Mexico, Guatemala, and Bosnia. Surveys were administered by staff members at Hawkeye Community College Metro Center, Operation Threshold, and Black Hawk-Grundy Mental Health Center. Most non-English speaking respondents have some measurable understanding of English, although there were inherent challenges involved with surveying this population. Accordingly, data from this survey is not statistically significant.

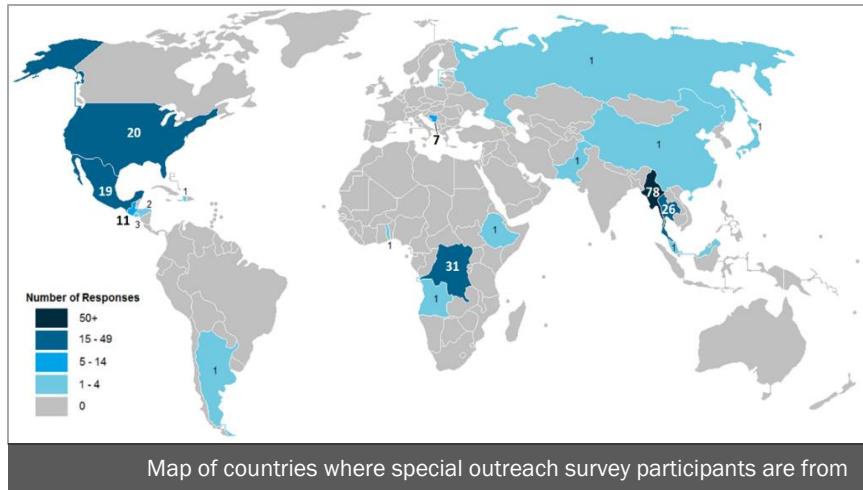
Approximately 35 % of survey respondents indicated they have missed work, school, or important appointments because of transportation. 27 % indicated they must get a ride with family or friends to get to medical appointments, and 26 % must get a ride to get to work or school.

Only 1 non-English speaking respondent indicated they usually ride the bus to work or school. The majority – 94 % –

of non-English speaking respondents indicated they have not ridden the bus in the past month, and 89 % indicated they do not understand how to ride the bus. However, 51 % of non-English speaking respondents said “Yes” or “Maybe” when asked if they would ride the bus if it were easier. These results demonstrate a significant demand for transit in the metropolitan area. Additional marketing and route restructuring may help make MET Transit service more understandable and intuitive for this population.

### MET Transit Study and Route Restructuring

INRCOG staff have worked with MET Transit on the redesign of the fixed-route bus network in Waterloo and Cedar Falls. The process, beginning in 2017, has involved INRCOG Transportation Planners' utilization of the transit planning software, Remix, to compare several route alternatives to identify efficiencies in service and develop schedules that are faster, more reliable, and easier to understand without increasing the overall cost of the services. Though these efforts did experience a significant setback with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the hiatus also created the opportunity for MET Transit and INRCOG to recognize ARPA funding as a mechanism to engage in a comprehensive analysis of the system. In November 2022, MET Transit published an RFQ (Request for Qualifications) to interested consultants for the completion of this comprehensive analysis. With the assistance of INRCOG staff, a steering and scoring committee was established, and proposals were received. Following several candidate interviews, SRF Consulting was awarded the contract. Driven by extensive community engagement and public outreach, the MET Transit Study collected feedback on ridership, the overall image of the system, efficiency, and availability of the service, and explored the potential for fare reduction or elimination. Furthermore, the study analyzed the proposed route restructuring, performance measures for continued evaluation, opportunities for expanded service, and a fleet and facility plan with alternatives to reduce carbon emissions and optimize the useful life of vehicle inventory as of September 2024. The route restructuring study has been completed and adopted. The new system introduces bi-directional travel, with several routes overlapping to facilitate easier transfers, in contrast to the previous system, where riders had to take the entire loop to

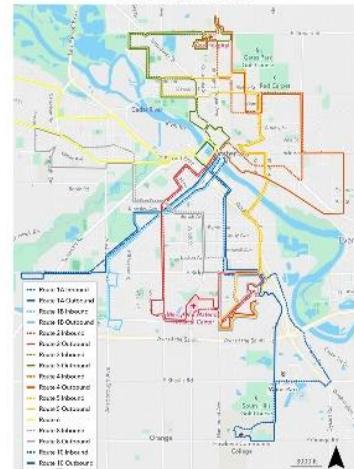


MET Transit launched restructured routes on Monday, September 23rd. **All users may ride fixed routes for free between September 23 – October 26** to explore the new routes and enhanced service.



For more information, visit <https://www.mettransit.org> or call 319-234-5714

#### MET Transit Restructured Routes & Free Rides Event



reach the central station for a transfer. MET Transit's routes now form a robust network of bidirectional transit corridors, providing coverage like the existing network while allowing riders to travel in both directions without the need to take an additional 30 or 60-minute loop. This restructuring enhances efficiency, reduces travel time, and expands coverage.

#### **Black Hawk County Metropolitan Area 2013 Survey**

To gather vital community input, the 2013 public input survey was conducted as part of the update to the 2040 Long-Range Transportation Plan for the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). A total of 348 responses were received, providing valuable insights into the public's perceptions of the region's transportation system. When asked about the condition of public transit, 30 % of respondents rated it as "good" or "excellent," while 26 % rated it as "poor" or "very poor." Interestingly, nearly 90 % of respondents reported that they had not used a MET Transit bus in the past year, yet over 50 % expressed that improving local bus service was "moderately important" or "very important." Among the 8 different project types included in the survey, "improving public transportation" received the second-highest average score, just behind "improving roadway conditions." This feedback highlighted a strong desire for enhanced bus services and served as a key factor in shaping future transportation planning for the region.

The outcome of the survey revealed that when asked which elements of the transit system should be improved, 40 % of respondents highlighted "hours/days of service," 39 % emphasized "service coverage," 33 % selected "frequency of service," and 29 % noted the "availability of service information." This was a multiple-choice question. These results align closely with the NHTS findings discussed earlier in this section. If the responses for service coverage and service days are combined with the NHTS data, the top 3 priorities remain the same in both surveys, listed in the same order.

#### **Iowa Northland Regional Transportation Authority 2012 Survey**

The 2012 public input survey was conducted to gather input for the 2040 Long-Range Transportation Plan for the RTA. A total of 194 responses were received. When asked about the quality of public transit outside of the Waterloo and Cedar Falls metropolitan area, 65 % of respondents said it was "very poor" or "poor", and about 18 % responded "good" or excellent. During the previous year, 94 % of respondents had never used an Onboard Public Transit bus, and 95 % of respondents had never used a city-to-city bus. When asked about their awareness level of Onboard Public Transit, 31 % of respondents said they do not know what Onboard Public Transit is, and 63 % responded that they are aware of what Onboard Public Transit is but have not used the service.

When asked how important expanding passenger transportation service in the region is, nearly 60 % of respondents said, "very important" or "moderately important," while only 11 % responded, "not important". Among 8 different project types overall, "improving public transportation" had the second-highest average score, behind only "improving roadway conditions". These results mirror those from the 2013 public input survey conducted for the MPO.

The survey provided opportunities for written comments. Some passenger transportation-related comments include the following:

- Need for more in-town (outside of metropolitan area) transit
- Need for easily accessible and affordable transportation from small cities to and from Waterloo, especially hospitals and medical facilities

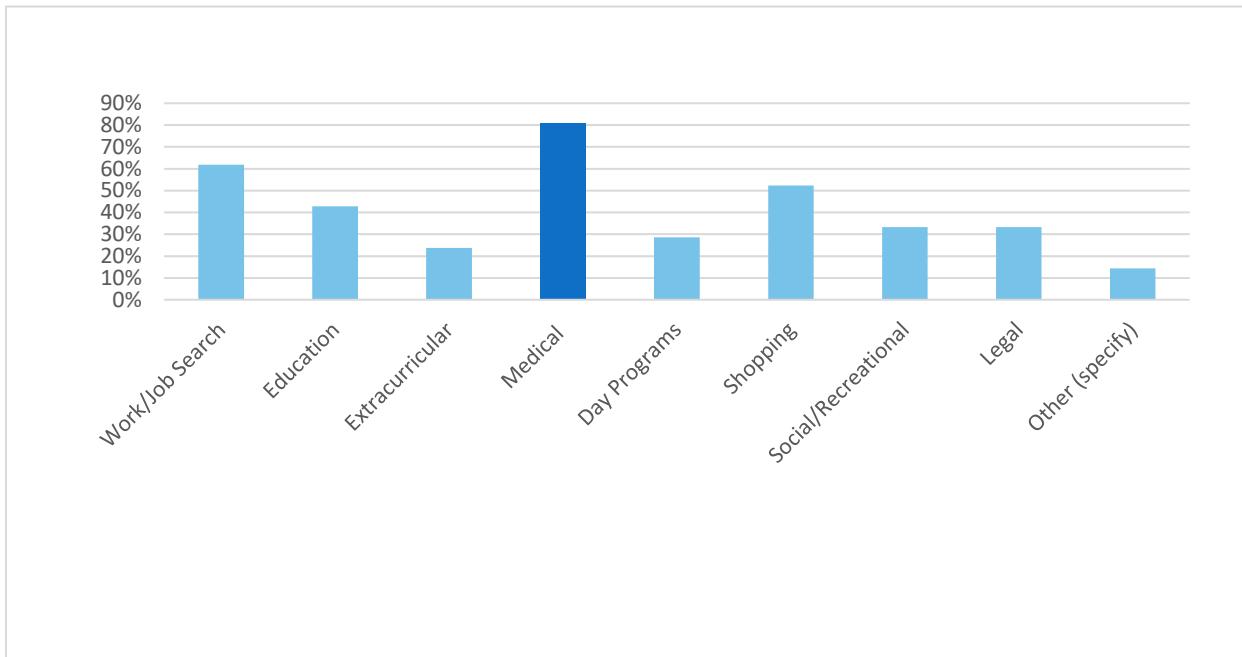
#### Need for additional marketing of Onboard Public Transit

- Improved transportation for medically needy residents, people with disabilities, the elderly, and low-income families
- Need for expanded service hours, especially weekday evenings, for the second shift

- Need for increased metro transit service frequency
- Simplified electronic schedule of public transportation options posted on a centralized website

The most recent 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 approximately 21 organizations and agencies through TAC to gather critical information on the primary destinations of clients, the 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, which aims to enhance transportation services and address the growing needs of these communities.

**Figure 1.4: What are the primary destinations of your clients?**



When asked for the primary mode of transportation for employees and clients, 31.58% of the respondents were personal vehicles, 26.32% Public transit, 21.05% agency-provided transportation, 11% ridesharing, 5.26% Active transportation (biking and walking), 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 about 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.

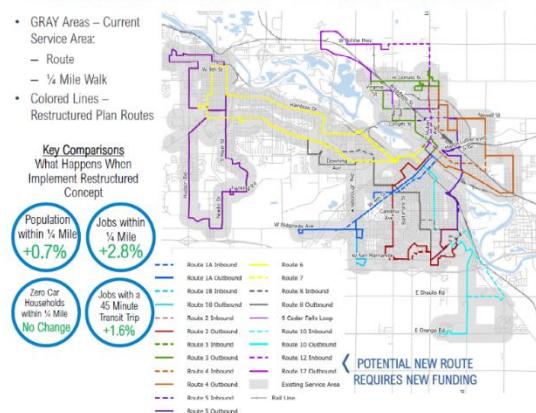
When conducting the recent survey, participants were asked to identify the primary modes of transportation used by employees and clients. The results highlighted a diverse range of transportation options, with 31% of respondents indicating that personal vehicles were the primary mode of transport. Public 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% used 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.

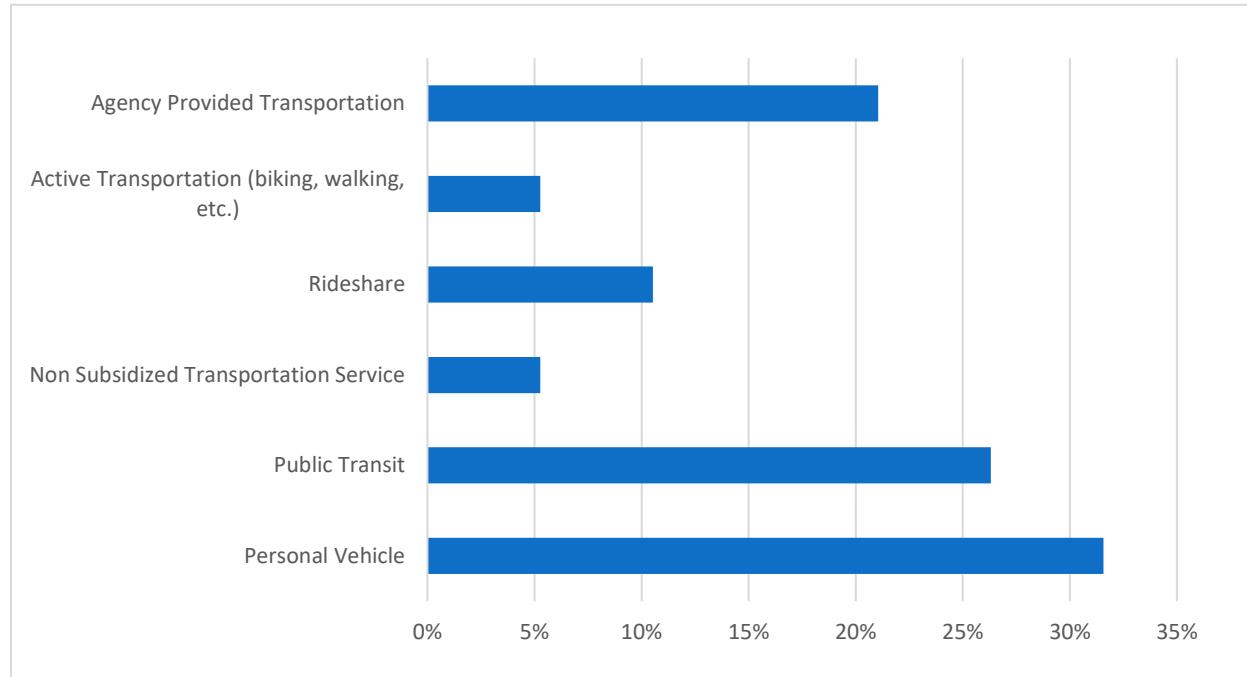
Among the agencies that participated in the survey, a significant number (over 80%) indicated that their typical clients live in Black Hawk County, the most populous county in the region. Bremer County was the next most common location for clients, with 29% of respondents reporting that their clients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

#### RESTRUCTURED ROUTES – IMPROVE THE SYSTEM



**Figure 1.5: What is the primary mode of transportation for you and/or your clients?**



## Public Involvement – Draft and Final Document

The public involvement process used for the development of the draft and final FY 2026-2030 Passenger Transportation Plan was guided by the Public Participation Plans (PPP) for the MPO and RTA. The PPP details the processes each organization will follow to involve the public in the transportation planning and programming process. Public involvement actions required include the following:

1. Draft PTP
  - a. The draft PTP will be prepared by INRCOG staff with input from the Transit Advisory Committee.
  - b. The draft document will be made available at the INRCOG Center, on the Black Hawk County MPO website, and upon request.
2. Public Comment Period
  - a. The draft PTP will be presented to the Policy Board and Technical Committee at a regularly scheduled meeting.
  - b. The public will have at least a 15-day comment period following completion of the draft PTP and presentation to the Policy Board and Technical Committee to submit comments via letter, email, phone, or in person.
  - c. Notices and agendas of meetings will be made available through local media sources, at the INRCOG Center, and on the Black Hawk County MPO website and Facebook page. Notices may also be sent to organizations serving traditionally underserved populations.
  - d. All meetings will be held in accessible facilities.
  - e. Any person with sight, reading, or language barriers can contact INRCOG (minimum 48 hours before the meeting) and arrangements will be made for accommodation.
3. Final PTP
  - a. The Policy Board will consider a summary of comments and responses and adopt the final PTP.
  - b. The Final PTP will be submitted to the Iowa DOT and FTA.
  - c. The final PTP will be made available on the Black Hawk County MPO website, at the INRCOG Center, and upon request.
4. Revisions
  - a. Revisions to PTP will be made as necessary.
  - b. Amendments will require a public hearing at a regularly scheduled Policy Board meeting. A notice of the public hearing will be published no more than 20 calendar days and no less than 4 calendar days before the date of the hearing.



The Black Hawk County website, <https://bhcmopo.org>, was used to share the draft PTP. Staff contact information was provided to any person who wished to comment on the draft document. Other information on the transportation planning process and additional transportation planning documents is available on the website. The final PTP will be posted online and will be available at the INRCOG office.



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## Transit Planning

### TAC Agendas & Minutes

2025	Agenda	Minutes
	<a href="#">January</a>	<a href="#">January</a>
	<a href="#">March</a>	<a href="#">March</a>
	<a href="#">April</a>	<a href="#">April</a>
	<a href="#">May</a>	<a href="#">May</a>
	<a href="#">June</a>	<a href="#">June</a>
	<a href="#">July</a>	<a href="#">July</a>
	<a href="#">August</a>	

2024	Agenda	Minutes
	<a href="#">January</a>	<a href="#">January</a>

2023	Agenda	Minutes
	<a href="#">March</a>	<a href="#">March</a>
	<a href="#">May</a>	<a href="#">May</a>

2022	Agenda	Minutes
	<a href="#">January</a>	<a href="#">January</a>
	<a href="#">June</a>	<a href="#">June</a>

2021	Agenda	Minutes
	<a href="#">February</a>	<a href="#">February</a>
	<a href="#">May</a>	<a href="#">May</a>

2020	Agenda	Minutes
	<a href="#">January</a>	<a href="#">January</a>

2019	Agenda	Minutes
	<a href="#">March</a>	<a href="#">March</a>
	<a href="#">September</a>	<a href="#">September</a>
	<a href="#">November</a>	<a href="#">November</a>

## Additional Resources

[Draft Passenger Transportation Plan \(PTP\) 2026-2030](#)

[Passenger Transportation Plan \(PTP\) 2021-2025](#)

[MET Transit Website](#)

[OnBoard Public Transit](#)

## Section 2 – Area Profile and Inventory

### Population

The Iowa Northland Regional Council of Governments (INRCOG) region comprises Black Hawk, Bremer, Buchanan, Butler, Chickasaw, and Grundy Counties. The INRCOG region covers 3,162 square miles or approximately 6 % of the state of Iowa. According to the 2020 U.S. Decennial Census Population totals, the region has a combined population of 215,341. Most of that population is concentrated in Waterloo and Cedar Falls. The next largest concentrations of population are in the Cities of Waverly and Independence. Table 2.1 shows the regional population totals as calculated by city and county.

**Table 2.1: INRCOG Region Population U.S. Decennial Census Totals by City and County, 2020**

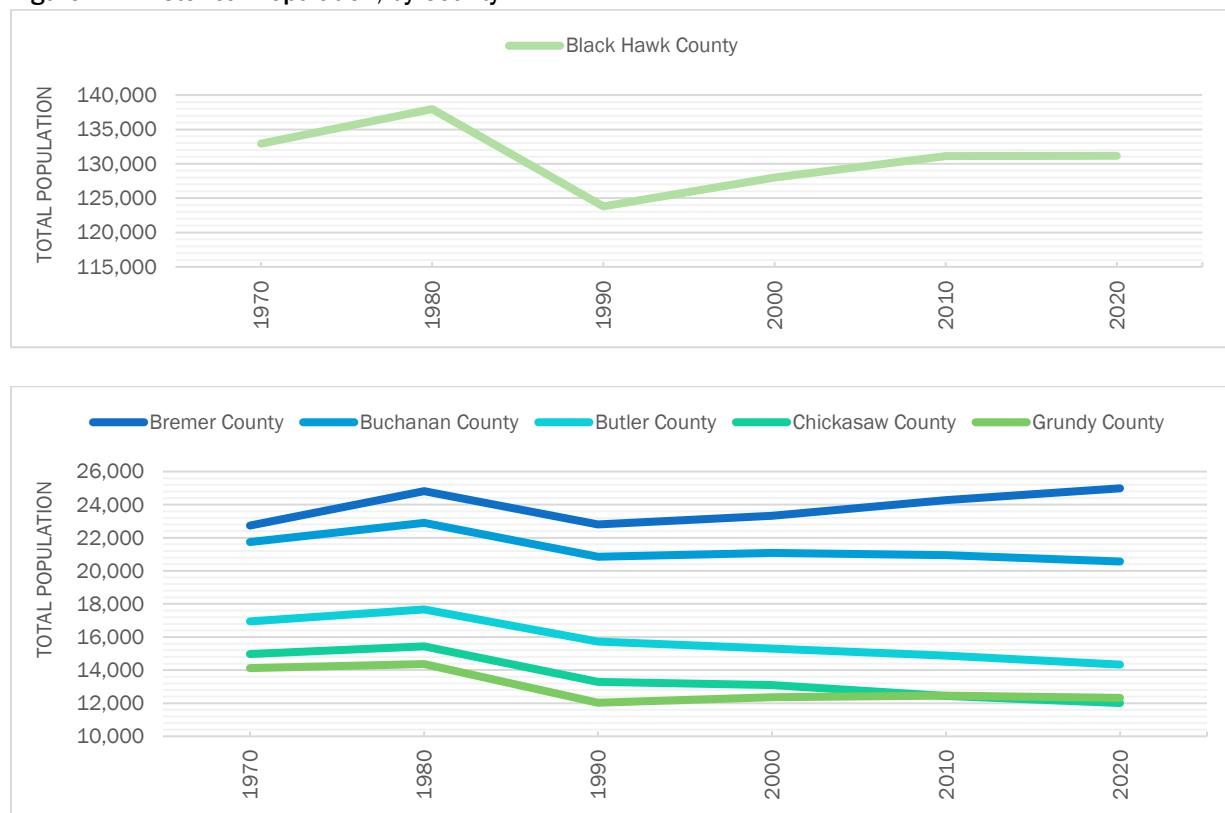
Black Hawk County		Bremer County		Buchanan County	
Cedar Falls	41,713	Denver	1,919	Aurora	169
Dunkerton	842	Frederika	204	Brandon	341
Elk Run Heights	1,069	Janesville	1,034	Fairbank	1,111
Evansdale	4,561	Plainfield	393	Hazleton	713
Gilbertville	794	Readlyn	845	Independence	6,064
Hudson	2,546	Sumner	2,030	Jesup	2,508
La Porte City	2,284	Tripoli	1,191	Lamont	429
Raymond	759	Waverly	10,394	Quasqueton	570
Waterloo	67,314	Unincorporated	6,978	Rowley	270
Unincorporated	9,262			Stanley	81
				Winthrop	823
				Unincorporated	7,486
County Total	131,144	County Total	24,988	County Total	20,565

Butler County		Chickasaw County		Grundy County	
Allison	966	Alta Vista	227	Beaman	161
Aplington	1,116	Bassett	45	Conrad	1,093
Aredale	62	Fredericksburg	987	Dike	1,304
Bristow	145	Ionia	226	Grundy Center	2,796
Clarksville	1,264	Lawler	406	Holland	269
Dumont	634	Nashua	1,551	Morrison	98
Greene	990	New Hampton	3,494	Reinbeck	1,662
New Hartford	570	North Washington	112	Stout	191
Parkersburg	2,015	Unincorporated	4,964	Wellsburg	720
Shell Rock	1,268			Unincorporated	4,035
Unincorporated	5,304				
County Total	14,334	County Total	12,012	County Total	12,329

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 Decennial Census Population

Over the past 50 years, the population of the region has fluctuated in size. Figure 2.1 shows historical population estimates for each County from 1970 to 2020 for the region. The area's population experienced a sharp decrease following the economic recession of the 1980s, which had a detrimental effect on agriculture and manufacturing in the region and other parts of the Midwest, where farming is a major part of the economy. The population of the region has been relatively slow to rebound, and in the case of all but Bremer County, has continued to decline and gone flat.

**Figure 2.1: Historical Population, by County**

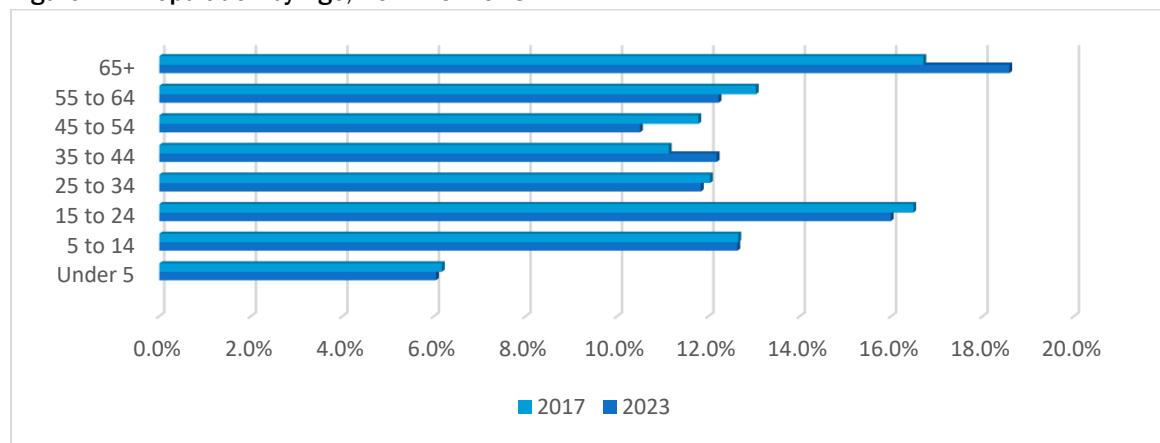


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census, 2020

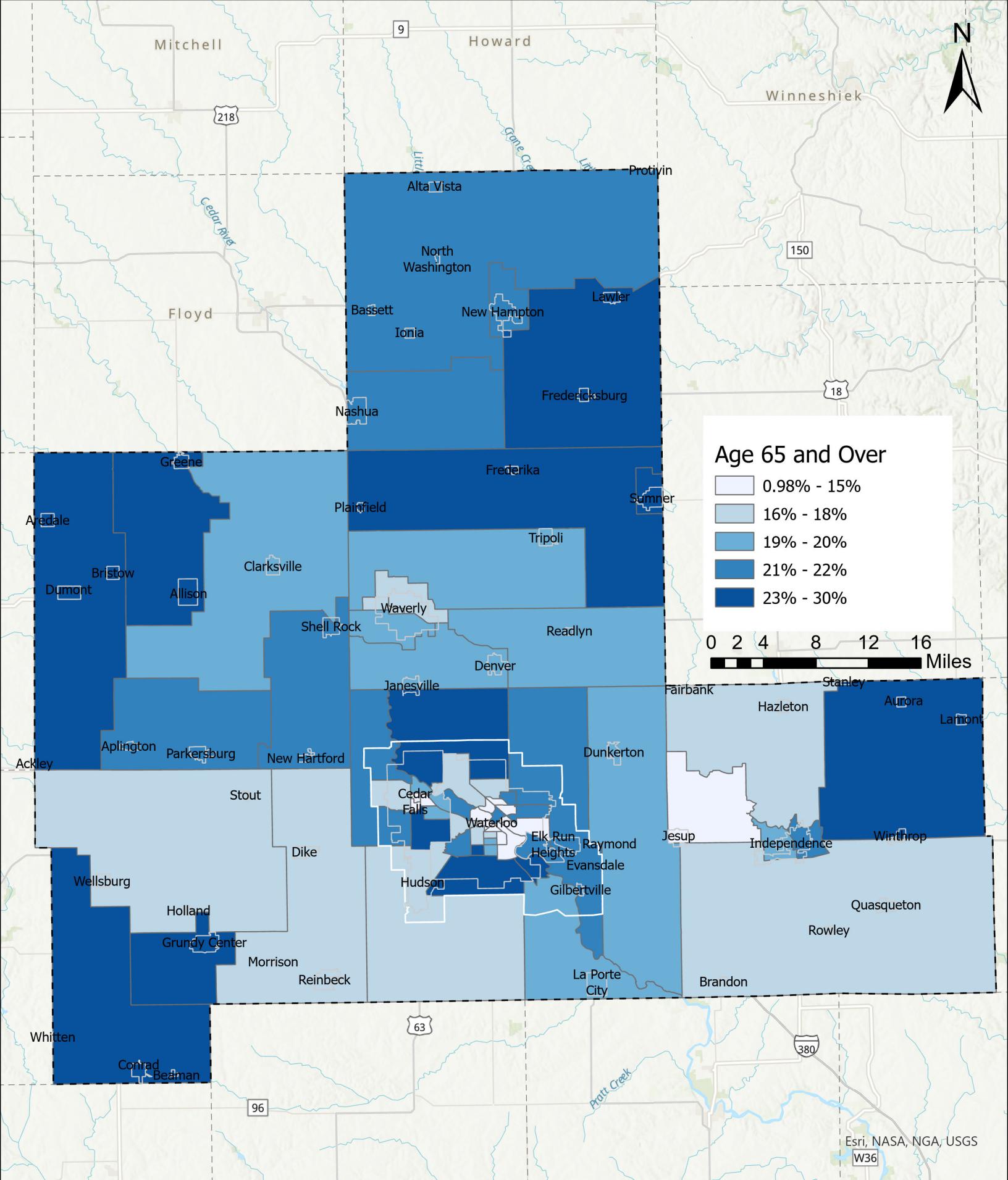
## Age

Figure 2.2 compares the region's population in 2017 and 2023, while Map 2.1 highlights the % of people aged 65 and older. Senior citizens and Gen Z currently represent the largest population segments. The 65+ age group saw a 2% increase, the largest rise among all groups, while Gen Z experienced a slight 0.5% decrease, likely due to migration for education, careers, and lifestyle preference. The median age remains between 25-44, but the 45-54 group saw the biggest decline, dropping by 1.3%. The growing senior population highlights a critical need for transportation planning, as the increase in senior drivers demands more accessible services and expanded paratransit for seniors with disabilities.

**Figure 2.2: Population by Age, 2017 vs. 2023**



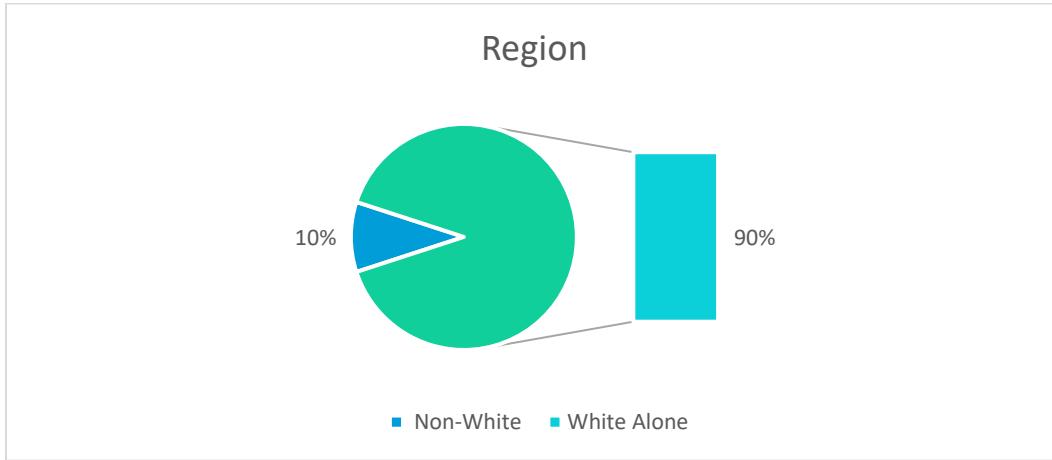
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-year Estimates



## Diversity

Notably, Figure 2.3 shows that 10% of the region's population is non-White, with 6% identifying as Black or African American, nearly 2% higher than the state average. Waterloo is the most diverse city, though other cities also have notable minority populations. The area continues to experience a newcomer population, contributing to its cultural diversity. These demographic shifts present both challenges and opportunities for public transportation planning, particularly in ensuring accessibility and effective communication for residents with limited English proficiency. Addressing language barriers and understanding diverse transportation needs will be crucial for inclusive transit policies. Map 2.2 illustrates the non-White population distribution by census block, while Map 2.3 highlights areas where residents have limited English proficiency, emphasizing the need for multilingual resources and outreach strategies.

**Figure 2.3: % of the Population Non-White**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census, 2020

A Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Analysis was conducted in 2025 as part of the Passengers Transportation Plan and is included in this document for MET and Onboard Public Transit Services (see Appendix III). The analysis outlines how MET and Onboard Public Transit services identify individuals who may need language assistance and ways to provide support through various means. Fig 2.4 The distribution of Limited English-speaking households by County shows that Black Hawk County has the highest impact or concentration of LEP individuals by households (2.2%), while Chickasaw and Butler follow next with about 0.9%, and Bremer, Grundy counties have lower concentrations (0.1%). Map 2.3 highlights areas with LEP populations, and the analysis offers a deeper understanding of the LEP community while identifying effective assistance methods.

**Figure 2.4: Limited English-Speaking Households by County**

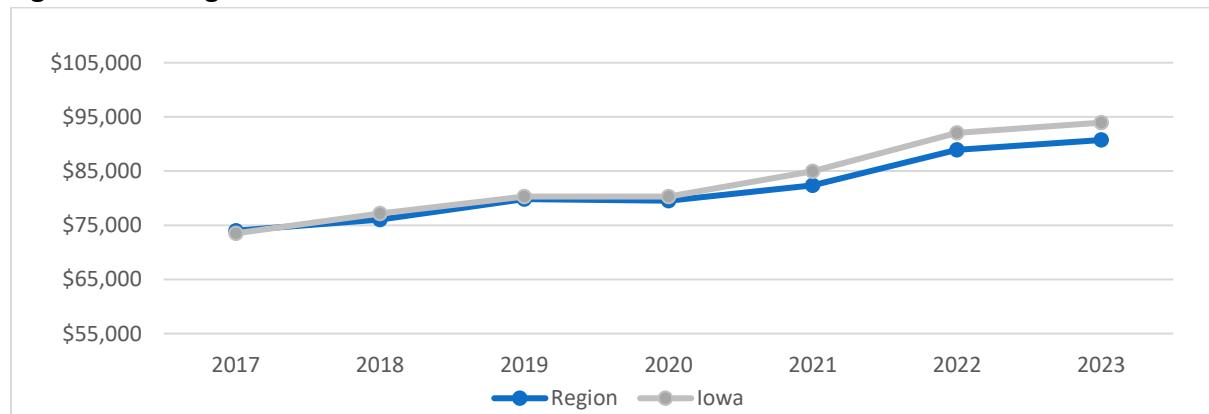
	Black Hawk	Bremer	Buchanan	Butler	Chickasaw	Grundy
All households	53,740	9,693	8,150	5,887	4,985	5,085
Limited English-speaking households	1,131	13	52	58	48	8
% of limited English-speaking households	2.1%	0.1%	0.6%	0.9%	0.9%	0.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates

## Household Income

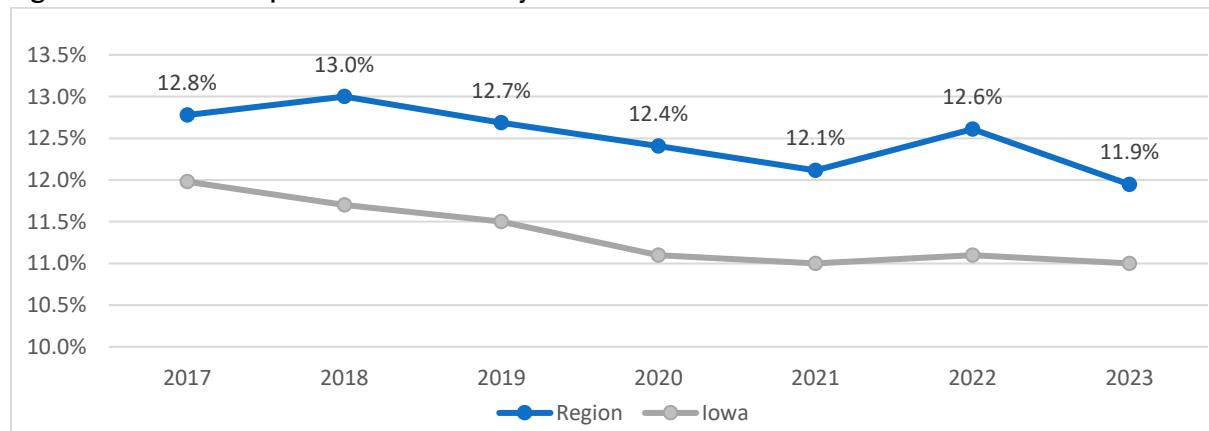
According to the FHWA Livability Initiative, transportation is the second largest expense for most households after housing. Households living in auto-dependent locations spend 25 % of their income on transportation costs. Affordable housing located closer to employment, shopping, restaurants, and other services can reduce household transportation costs to 9 % of household income. The COVID-19 pandemic and the current recession likely exacerbated these issues, as these households may have faced greater barriers in accessing both healthcare and economic opportunities. Figure 2.3 shows the average household income, and Figure 2.5 and Map 2.4 show the % of the population below the poverty level. Despite the state's median income experiencing a slight increase in 2023, however, with the cumulative inflation rate, the average income in the region has not increased sufficiently to match inflation, leading to a potential decrease in real income.

**Figure 2.5: Average Household Income**



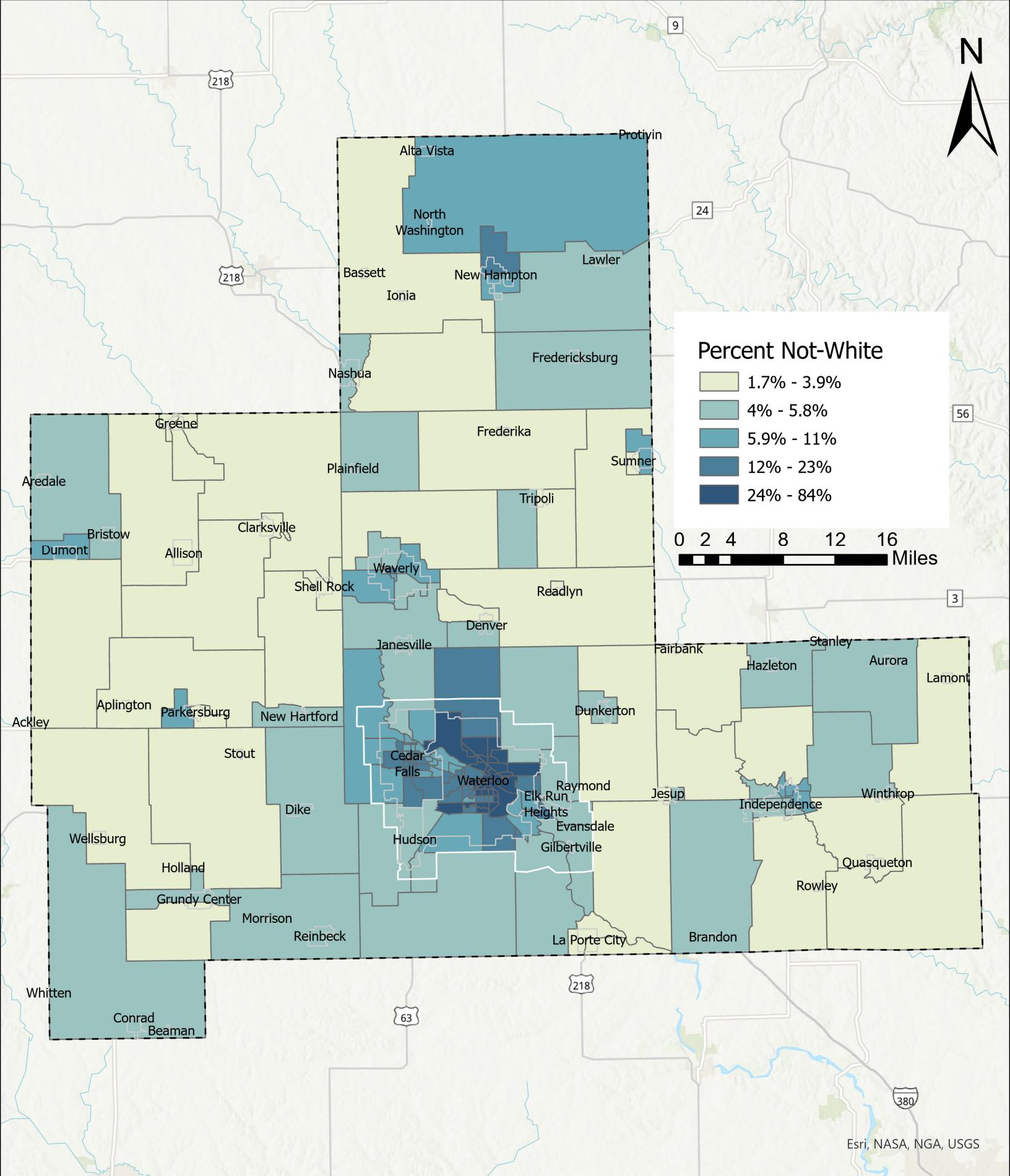
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census, 2023 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates

**Figure 2.6: % of the Population Below Poverty Level**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census, 2023 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates

Figure 2.6 shows the region's poverty level reached its peak in 2018, with approximately 13% of the population living below the poverty line, which was higher than the state average at the time. Since then, the poverty rate has generally been on the decline. However, in 2022, the region experienced a notable uptick in poverty, rising to about 12.6%. This increase can likely be attributed to the lingering economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to job losses, reduced income, and increased financial instability for many households. Despite this, the region saw a positive shift in 2023, with the poverty rate dropping to 11.9%, reflecting an improvement in economic conditions. The fluctuation indicates the complex challenges the region has gone through, particularly in the wake of the pandemic's long-term effects.



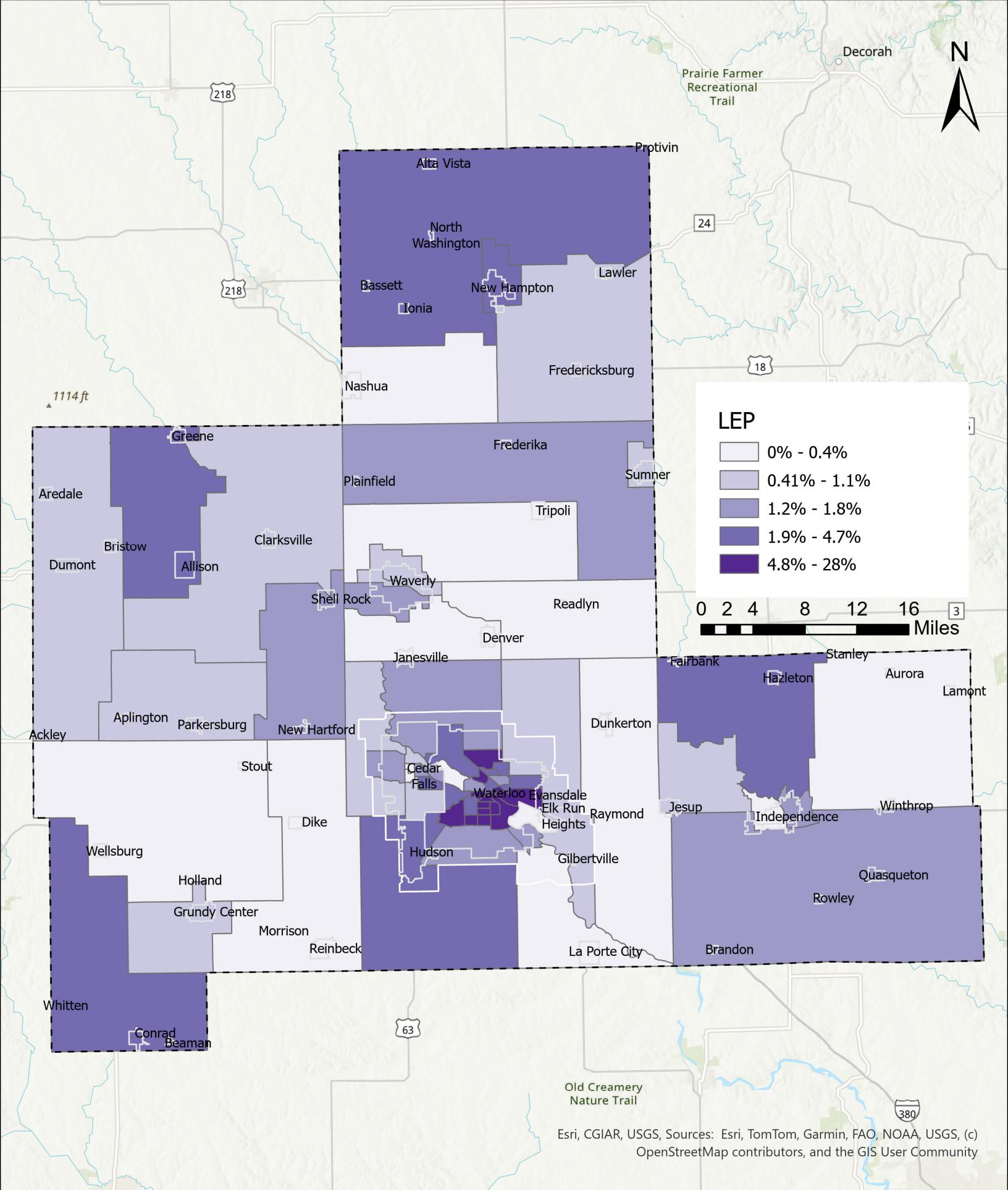
Map 2.2

## Percent Not-White Alone by Census Block Group

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Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census, 2020

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Map 2.3

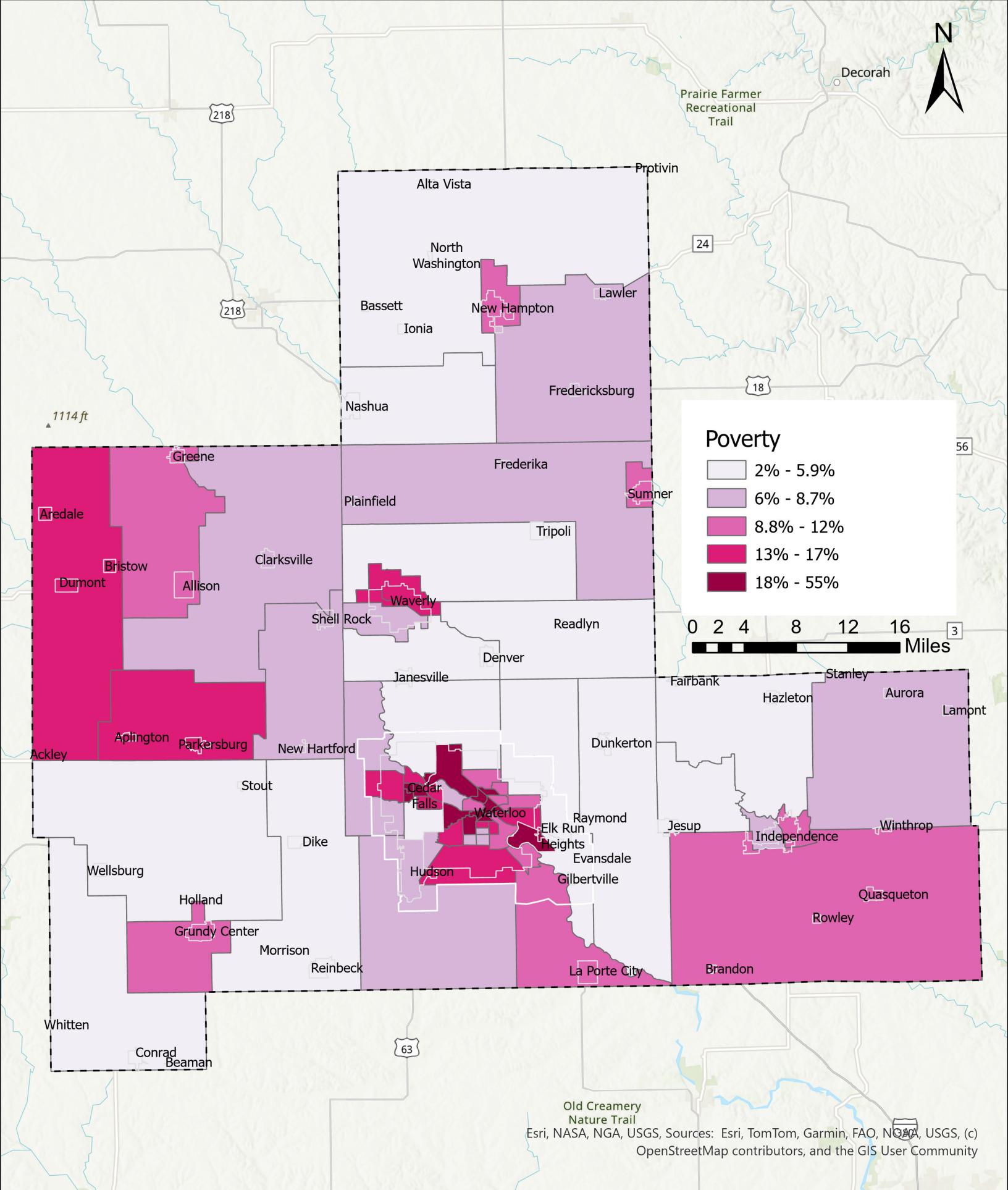
## Limited English Proficiency by Census Tract

This map does not constitute a survey, and INRCOG assumes no liability for the accuracy of the data presented herein, whether expressed or implied.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, (ACS) 5-Year Estimates, 2023

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Map 2.4

## Percent Below Poverty Level by Census Tract

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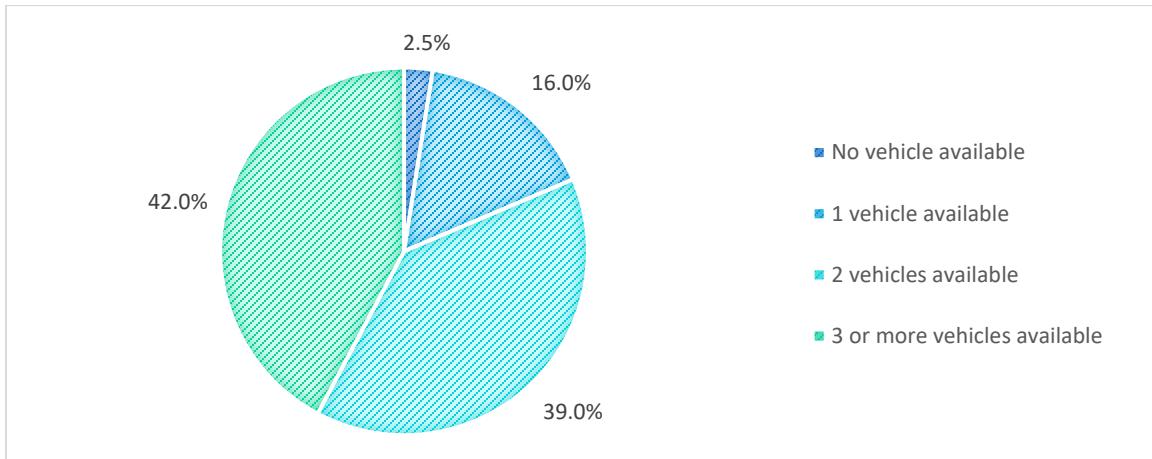
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## Vehicles per Household

Figure 2.7 shows the distribution of vehicles per household in the region. Notably, around 19% of households have either 1 or no available vehicle, suggesting a shift toward multi-vehicle ownership compared to previous studies, which reported 35% in 2017. 2-vehicle households remained stable at around 39%, while those with 3 or more vehicles increased to 42%. The changes reflect a regional trend towards higher vehicle availability and evolving transportation needs. A significant portion of households with 1 or no vehicles are more likely to rely on public transit, walking, or bicycling for transportation to their destinations.

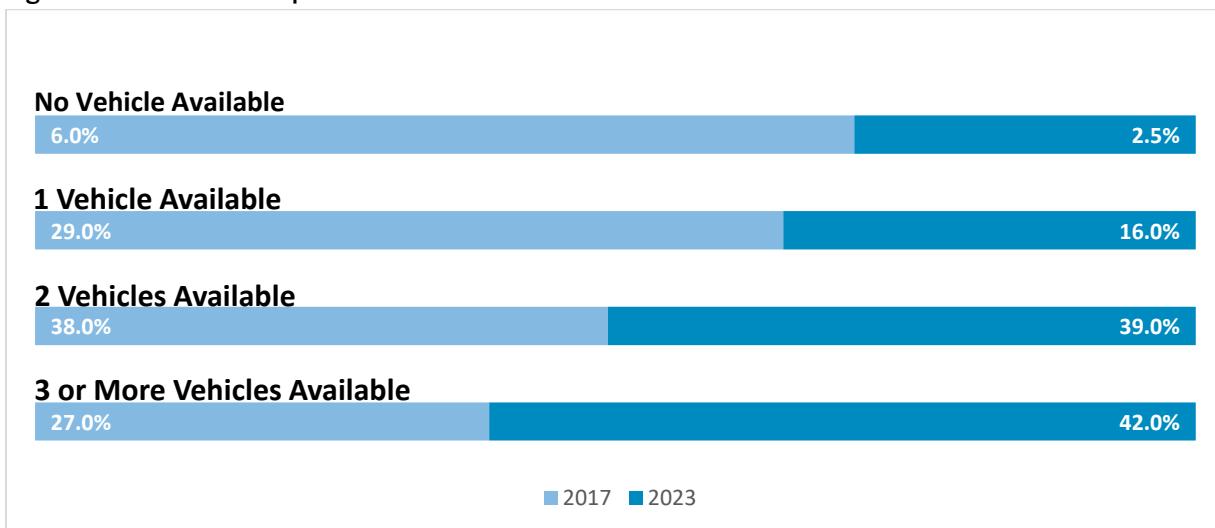
**Figure 2.7: Vehicles Occupied Per Household**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates

Figure 2.8 shows the comparison of vehicles per household from the year 2017 to 2023, revealing notable shifts in vehicle availability. The data shows the % change in vehicle availability from 2017 to 2023. Households with no vehicle available declined by 4%, indicating fewer people without transportation. However, there was a noticeable 13% increase in households with 1 vehicle, suggesting more people now have access to at least 1 car. Additionally, there was a slight 1% increase in households with 2 vehicles, and a 15% rise in households with 3 or more vehicles. These changes highlight a shift towards greater vehicle ownership, which may also indicate a reduced reliance on public transit, as more people own personal vehicles, potentially affecting the demand for transit services in the region.

**Figure 2.8: Vehicles Occupied Per Household 2017 Vs 2023**

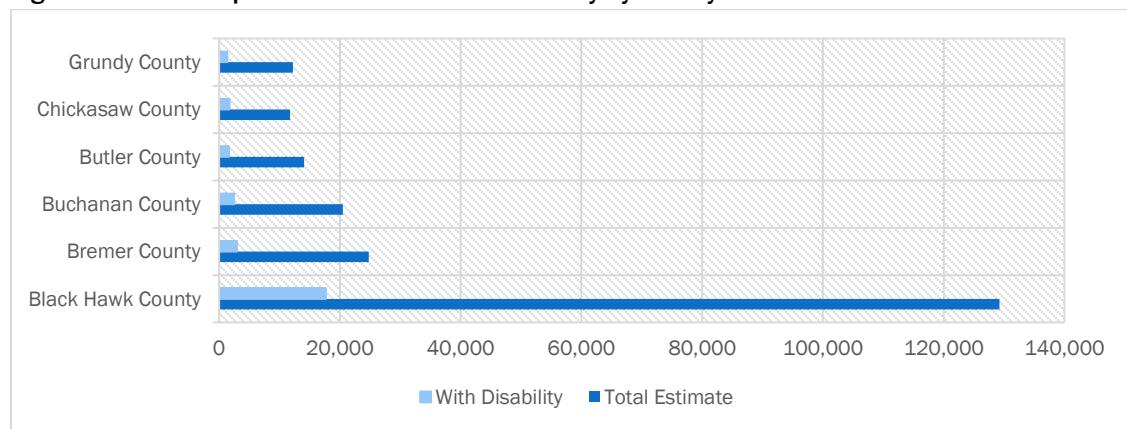


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2017 vs 2023 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates

## Disabilities

Individuals with disabilities frequently encounter transportation difficulties, and inadequate or unreliable transportation presents a major barrier to securing and retaining employment. The 2014 National Household Travel Survey found that adults with disabilities are over twice as likely as those without disabilities to experience inadequate transportation. In a similar finding from the 2022 surveys, adults with disabilities averaged 1.7 trips per day, while individuals without disabilities averaged 2.3 trips. Further, the unemployment rate for individuals with disabilities is twice that of the general unemployment rate. For people with disabilities, transportation choice allows for full participation in community life. According to the 2023 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, 27,000 people are living in the region with a disability. Figure 2.9 shows the number of people with a disability by county, and Map 2.5 shows the % of the non-institutionalized civilian population with a disability.

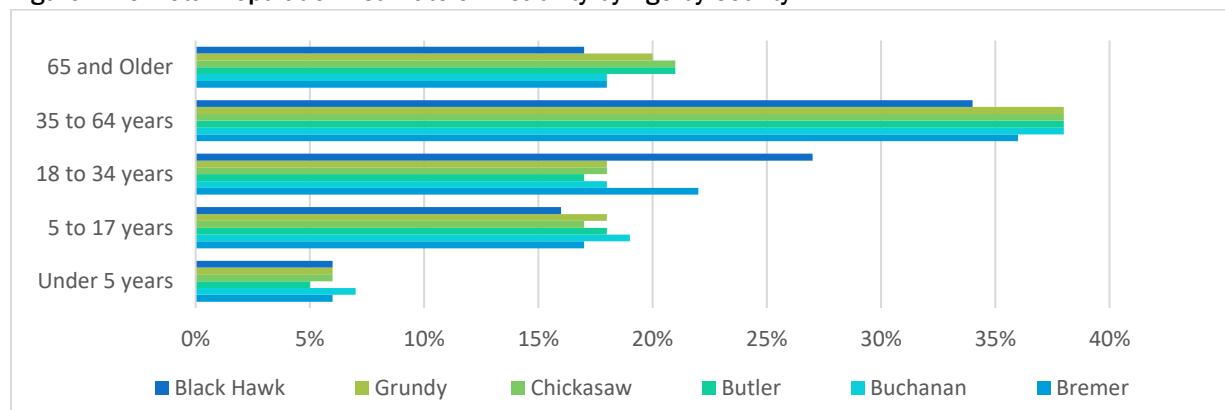
**Figure 2.9: Total Population Estimate with Disability by County**



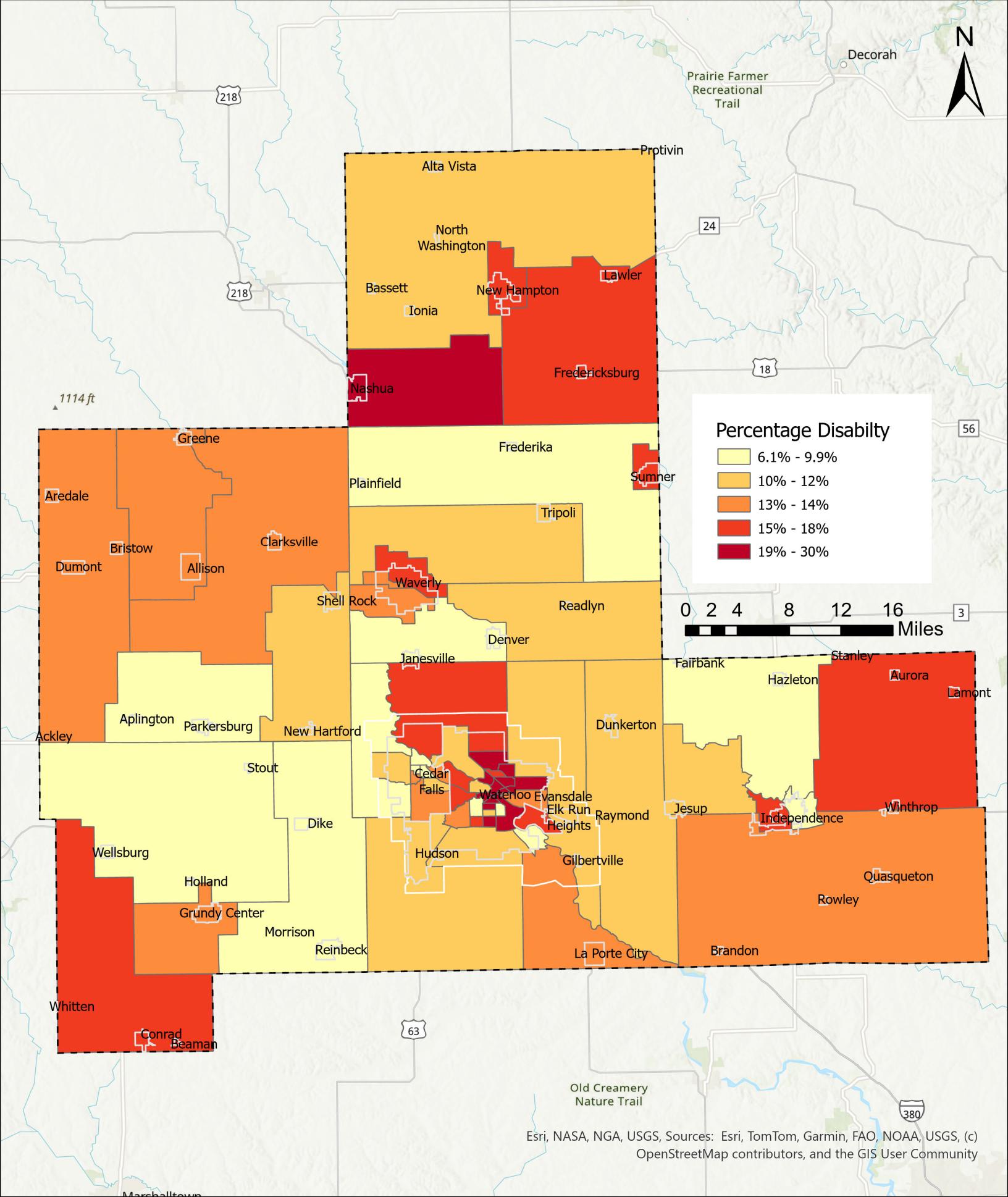
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates

Figure 2.10 illustrates that individuals aged 35 to 64 have the highest prevalence of disability, with approximately 38% to 34% of people in this age group reporting at least 1 type of disability across the counties. This age group stands out as the most affected by disability compared to others. Following closely, individuals aged 65 and older represent the second-largest group with disabilities. The data also shows a general decline in disability as age decreases, with older age groups experiencing a higher % of disability. This underscores the need for transit systems to include accessible buses, more paratransit services, and low-floor vehicles to support individuals with disabilities, especially as the population ages and disability rates rise.

**Figure 2.10: Total Population Estimate of Disability by Age by County**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates



Map 2.5

Percent of Population with Disability by Census Tract

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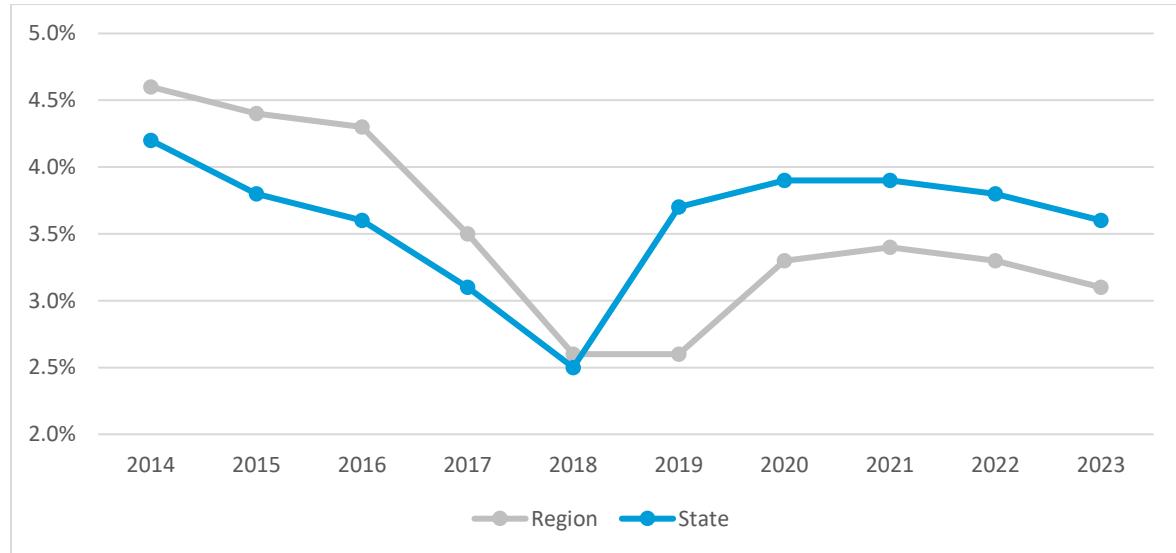
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## Unemployment

Figure 2.11 illustrates the unemployment rate for the region over the past 10 years, along with the statewide average. The unemployment rate in 2009 during the Great Recession was at its highest point since the early 1990s. Since 2014, the region has experienced a steady decline in unemployment, reaching a low of 2.5% in 2018, below the state average, followed by a slight increase in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Since then, the unemployment rate has gradually declined, relatively consistent with the statewide average.

**Figure 2.11: Unemployment Rate**

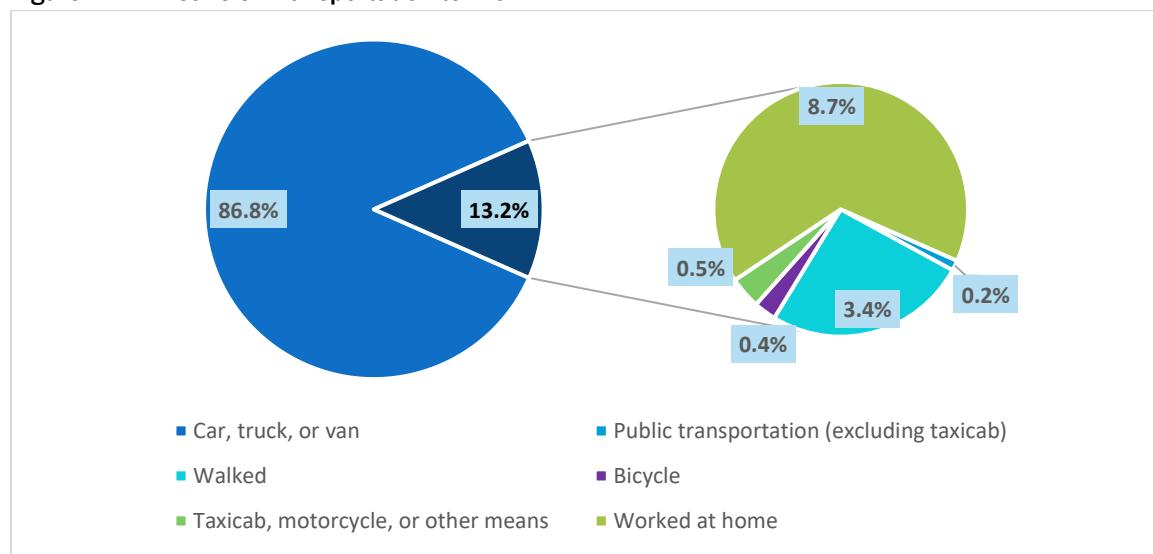


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates

## Mode of Transportation to Work

The Iowa Northland Region remains an auto-oriented community. About 87 % of residents utilize an automobile for travel to work (Figure 2.12). Walking, taxicab, or bicycling are the next highest modes of transportation at about 4 % combined. Public transportation makes up a small % of all commuting trips.

**Figure 2.12: Means of Transportation to Work**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates

## Service Inventory

The INRCOG region is served by both public and private transportation providers, which include MET Transit, Onboard Public Transit, private taxi operators, and intercity bus carriers. The following section provides a summary of the region's transportation providers.

### Metropolitan Transit Authority

MET Transit is the designated public transit provider for Waterloo and Cedar Falls (28E agreement) and recently restructured its existing routes. MET Transit operates 10 fixed bus routes in the cities of Waterloo, Cedar Falls, and Evansdale, as well as ADA-compliant paratransit service within ¾ mile of fixed-route service. The recent MET Transit Route Restructuring Plan includes modifications to several routes in Waterloo, specifically Routes 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, and 10. Routes 6, 7, and 9, which serve Cedar Falls and are operated through intergovernmental partnerships, are not part of the plan with the aim of transforming the current system of looped routes into a network of bidirectional, corridor-focused routes. Table 2.2 outlines each route's operations and annual ridership for fiscal year 2024.

**Table 2.2: MET Transit Fixed Routes**

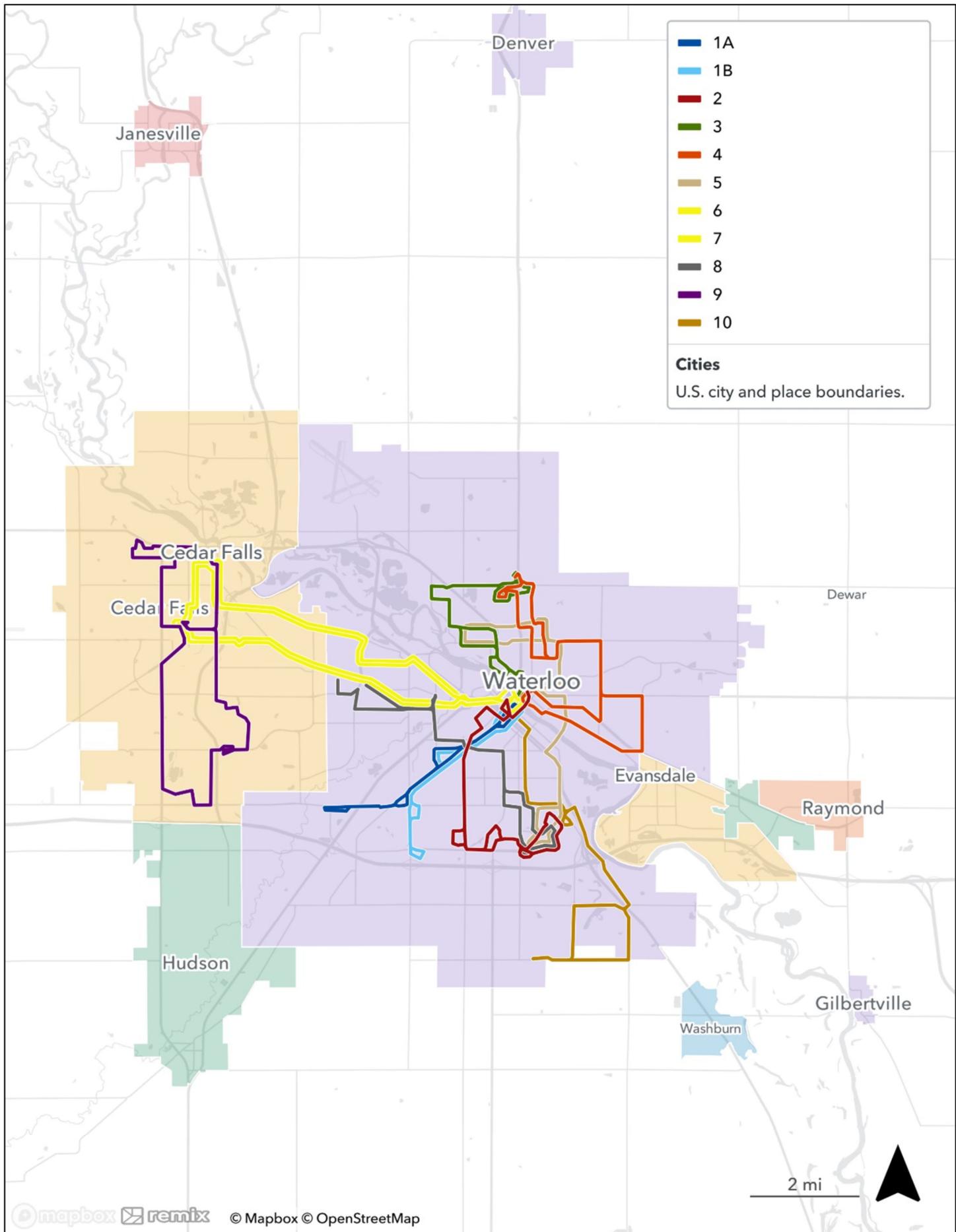
Route	Annual Operations	Daily Operations	Ridership (FY 2024)
Route 1 West	All year	All day	19918
Route 2 West	All year	All day	27276
Route 3 East	All year	All day	21880
Route 4 East	All year	All day	20735
Route 5 LaPorte/5 W.11th	All year	All day	48000
Route 6 CF/University	All year	All day	12809
Route 7 CF/Rainbow	All year	All day	28985
Route 8/West Loop	All year	All day	Discontinued
Route 9 CF Loop	All year	All day	9668
Route 10 HCC	All year	All day	1726

Source: MET Transit, FY 2024 Ridership Statistics

MET Transit's fixed route and paratransit services operate from 5:45 a.m. to 6:15 p.m. Monday through Friday, and 7:15 a.m. to 6:15 p.m. on Saturdays. Regular fixed route fares have remained unchanged for over 10 years. Adult fares are \$1.50 per ride, while seniors, individuals with disabilities, Medicare cardholders, and students pay \$0.75. A 30-day pass costs \$50 for regular riders and \$45 for eligible groups. Additionally, riders can purchase 11 ride tickets for the price of 10. Map 2.6 shows the location of MET Transit's current fixed routes. Of the 10 regular fixed routes, 9 serve downtown Waterloo's Central Transfer facility, and 2 connect Cedar Falls and Hawkeye Community College. 2 routes link Waterloo, Cedar Falls, and the University of Northern Iowa (UNI). Specialized routes, a major destination for transit. Riders in partnership with UNI include the Panther Shuttle and Weekend Safe Ride Service. Map 2.8 highlights the distribution of benches and shelters along fixed routes in the region, although benches are more prevalent than shelters. While benches offer some comfort for waiting passengers, the limited number of shelters highlights a lack of protection from winter snow or summer sunlight.

## Activity Centers

Transportation needs extend beyond just the urban areas, extending outside of the metropolitan area and the cities of Waverly and Independence. The region is primarily rural, with small cities scattered throughout. However, key transportation destinations are not limited to the urbanized areas of the region. Maps 2.7 identify activity centers within and outside of the metropolitan area that are considered trip generators. For this document, activity centers include grocery stores, residential care homes, social services, pharmacies, and medical facilities (hospitals, clinics, and dentists). Most activity centers are concentrated in the region's larger cities and the metropolitan area.

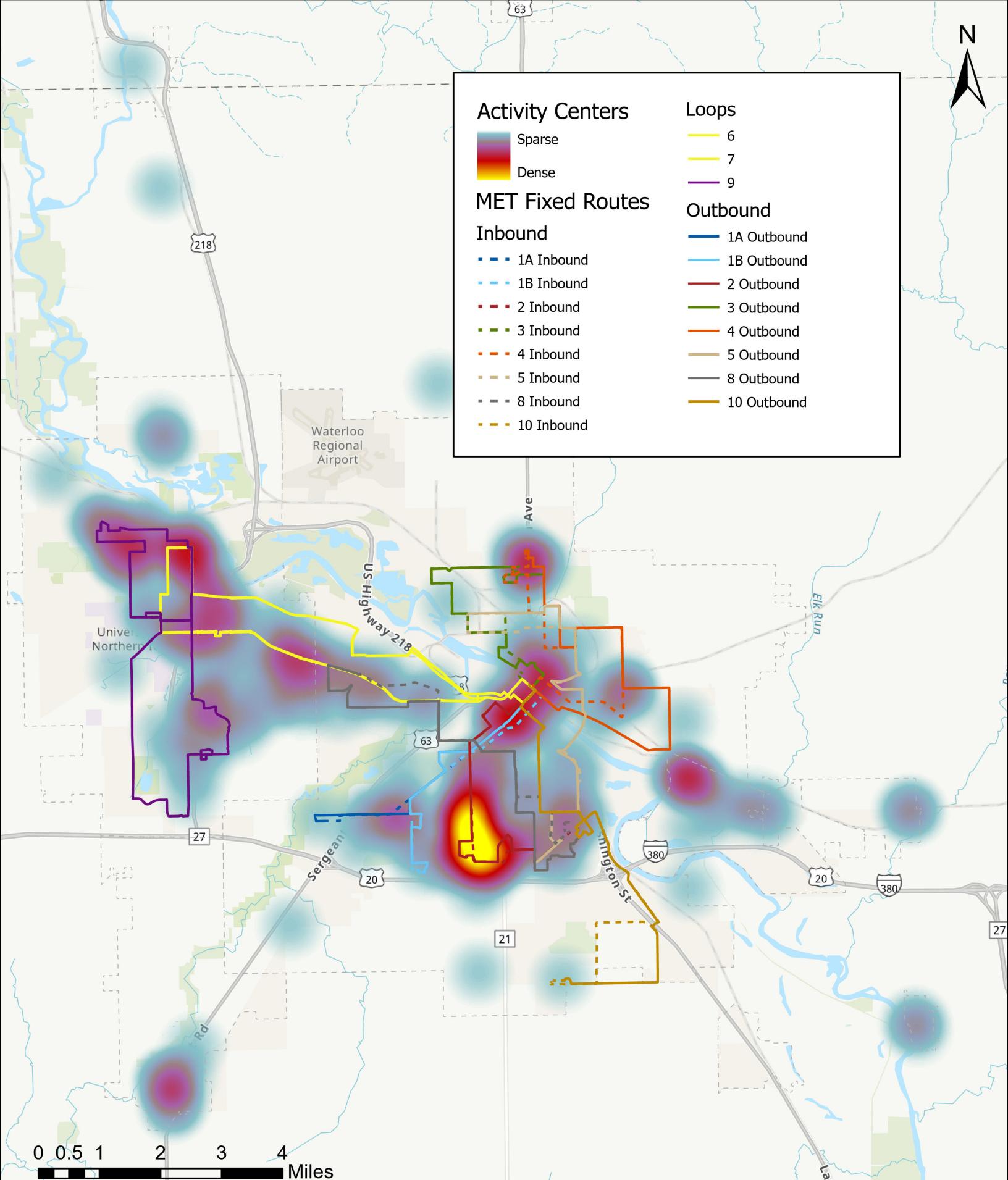


Map 2.6  
MET Transit Fixed Route

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Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2023

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Map 2.7

Heat Map of Activity Centers & MET Transit Route

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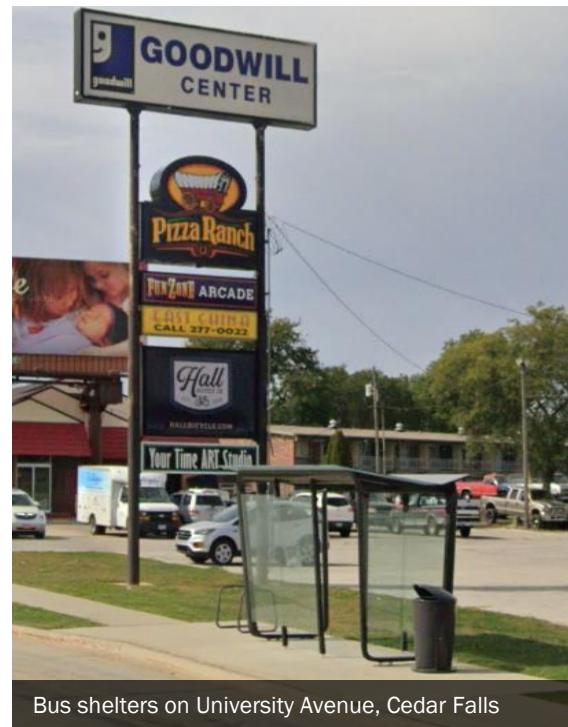
INRCOG  
Iowa Northland Regional  
Council of Governments

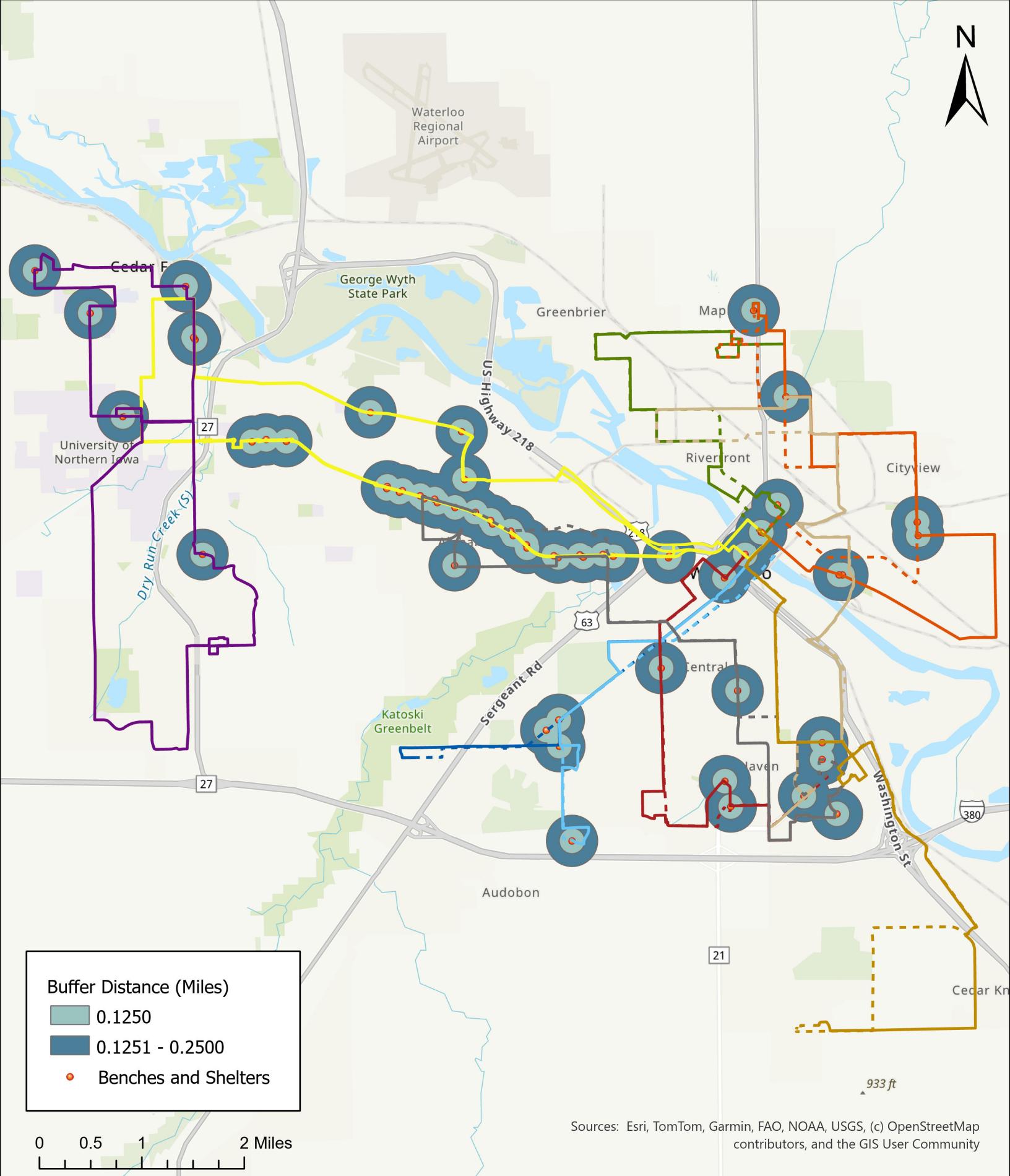
### Bus Shelters

As of Fall 2025, there are 17 bus shelters in the metro area, including 2 recently added during the construction of the Main Street roundabout, 1 eastbound (EB) and 1 westbound (WB). Route 9 runs along Main Street, looping around Cedar Falls to the north on W 1st Street and to the south on W Ridgeway Avenue, while Route 7 passes eastbound on 18th Street through Main Street. Despite these additions, bus stop amenities remain limited along the Cedar Valley corridor, particularly on Washington Street, La Porte Road, and several other routes, leaving passengers with minimal protection from intense weather conditions during the Summer and Winter. This underscores the need for additional shelters and enhanced facilities to better serve riders throughout the region. Most bus shelters and benches are in Cedar Falls, following a 2017 complaint by riders to the U.S. Department of Justice regarding ADA compliance. As a result, the non-ADA-compliant benches in Waterloo were replaced with ADA-compliant benches throughout the city.

Table 2.3: Bus Shelters

City	Location
Waterloo	Independence Ave. and Idaho St.
Cedar Falls	Bluebell Rd. and Fareway/Kwik Star
Cedar Falls	College St. and Seerley Blvd.
Cedar Falls	University Ave. and College Square Mall
Cedar Falls	University Ave. and Melrose Dr.
Cedar Falls	University Ave. and Black Hawk Village
Cedar Falls	University Ave. and Goodwill ( <b>westbound</b> )
Cedar Falls	University Ave. and Goodwill ( <b>eastbound</b> )
Waterloo	University Ave. and Access B ( <b>westbound</b> )
Waterloo	University Ave. and Access B ( <b>eastbound</b> )
Waterloo	University Ave. and North Star -
Waterloo	University Ave. and Falls Ave. ( <b>westbound</b> )
Waterloo	University Ave. and Falls Ave. ( <b>eastbound</b> )
Cedar Falls	Main St. and 6th St (northbound)
Cedar Falls	Main St. and 6th St (southbound)
Cedar Falls	E. 18th St. and State St. ( <b>eastbound</b> )
Cedar Falls	E. 18th St. and State St. ( <b>westbound</b> )





Map 2.8

Buffer for Existing Bus Benches and/or Shelters

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## MET Transit Routes

Paratransit service, which is also provided by MET Transit, provides transportation for people who are unable to use fixed route buses. To qualify for paratransit service, passengers must meet 1 of the following conditions established by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA):

- Inability to get on or off a bus
- Inability to get to or from a fixed bus stop
- Inability to wait at a fixed route bus stop
- Inability to ride the fixed route buses or follow transit instructions because of a disability

ADA paratransit eligibility is based on a passenger's functional abilities rather than a medical diagnosis. MET Transit currently offers paratransit throughout Waterloo, Cedar Falls, and Evansdale, though it is only required to offer the service within 0.75 miles of fixed routes.

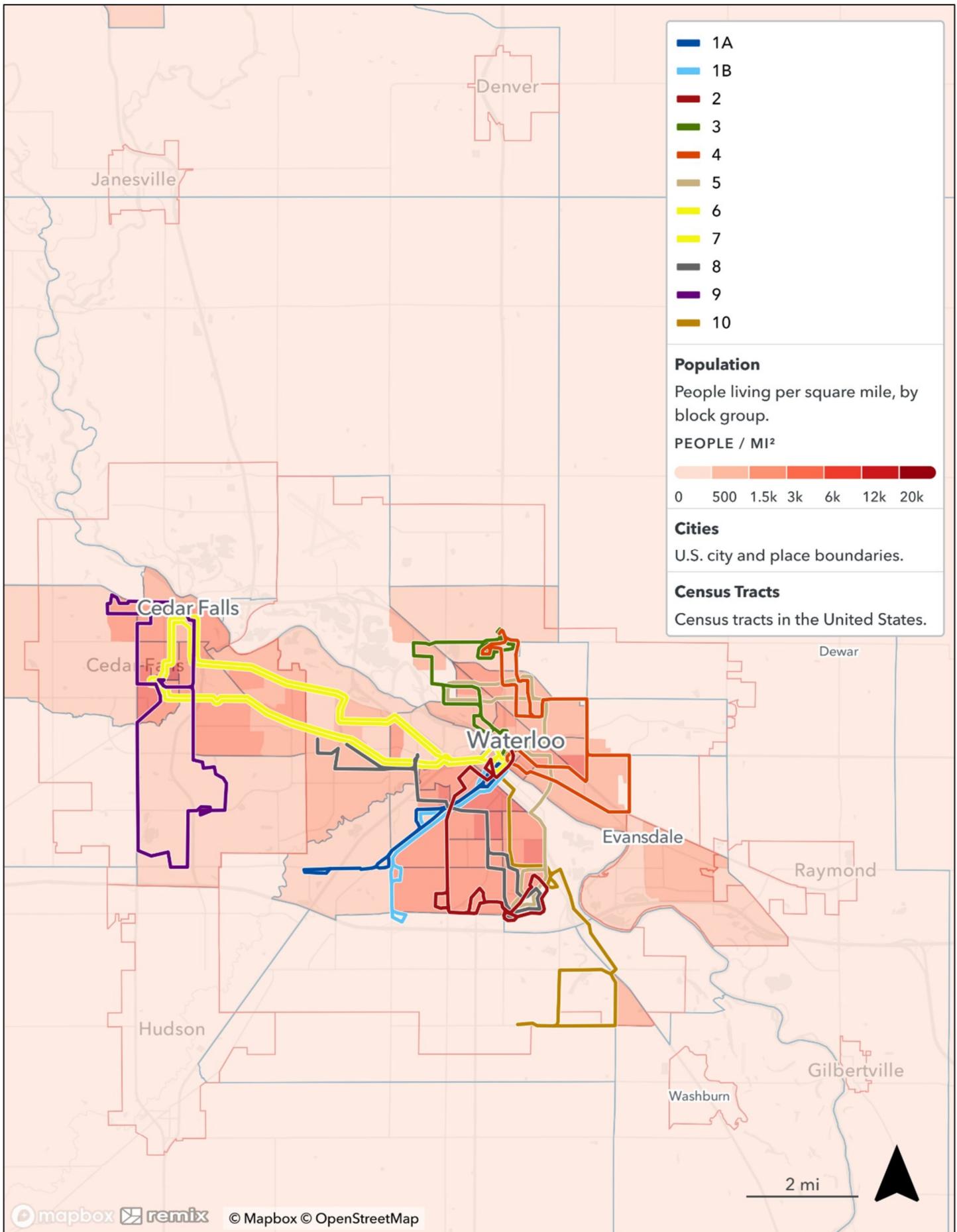
Maps 2.9 through 2.13 illustrate how MET Transit's current fixed routes align with key economic and demographic factors, including population density, employment, non-White population, non-English speaking population, and individuals living in poverty. These maps provide a visual representation of how transit routes correspond to areas of higher need, offering insight into where coverage may be inadequate. Table 2.3, derived from Remix, a transit planning software, provides detailed demographic data for each fixed route based on a 0.25-mile radius. This data is crucial for identifying gaps in service and understanding the socio-economic characteristics of areas served by MET Transit. Reviewing these characteristics can help determine areas where future service expansions or route modifications are necessary to better serve underserved populations. However, it's essential to recognize that proximity to a transit route does not always ensure accessibility or efficiency, as routes may not always provide direct or convenient connections to key destinations, limiting their effectiveness for potential passengers.

**Table 2.4: Demographic Characteristics within 1/4 Mile of MET Transit Fixed Routes**

Route	Population	Jobs	Poverty	Minority	Seniors	Youth	Non-English	Disability	No Vehicle
Route 1A	≈8000	3,000	24%	36%	16%	16.8%	11%	15%	12%
Route 1B	≈8800	3,200	22%	36%	16%	17.0%	11%	15%	12%
Route 2	≈12,300	6,600	20%	38%	17%	17.2%	10%	18%	13%
Route 3	≈4,900	3,000	25%	51%	18%	18.3%	7%	23%	24%
Route 4	≈8,500	3,300	22%	61%	14%	17.6%	5%	21%	17%
Route 5	≈7,400	4,100	19%	52%	13%	19.0%	11%	19%	14%
Route 6	≈17,200	9,900	22%	19%	15%	37.9	1%	13%	9%
Route 7	≈13,100	8,900	27%	22%	14%	39.9%	2%	14%	10%
Route 8	≈14,800	5,300	17%	29%	15%	17.5%	10%	16%	7%
Route 9	≈13,300	8,200	21%	16%	11%	52.1%	1%	11%	7%
Route 10	≈7,000	3,600	16%	33%	17%	17.5%	16%	15%	14%

Source: Remix

Table 2.3 reveals key insights into the demographics and needs served by MET Transit's routes. Route 6 stands out as the route with the highest population, at 17,200, and the highest number of jobs, with 9,900 jobs along its corridor, highlighting its significance in connecting residents to employment opportunities. Route 7, with the highest poverty rate at 27%, serves a community with a greater need for affordable transportation options, making it a critical route for low-income individuals. Further, Route 3 has the highest % of individuals with disabilities (23%) and the highest proportion of people without vehicles (24%), suggesting that it serves some of the most vulnerable populations, who rely heavily on public transit for mobility. These routes indicate the areas where MET Transit might need to focus on service improvements or expansion, particularly in serving underserved or disadvantaged groups.



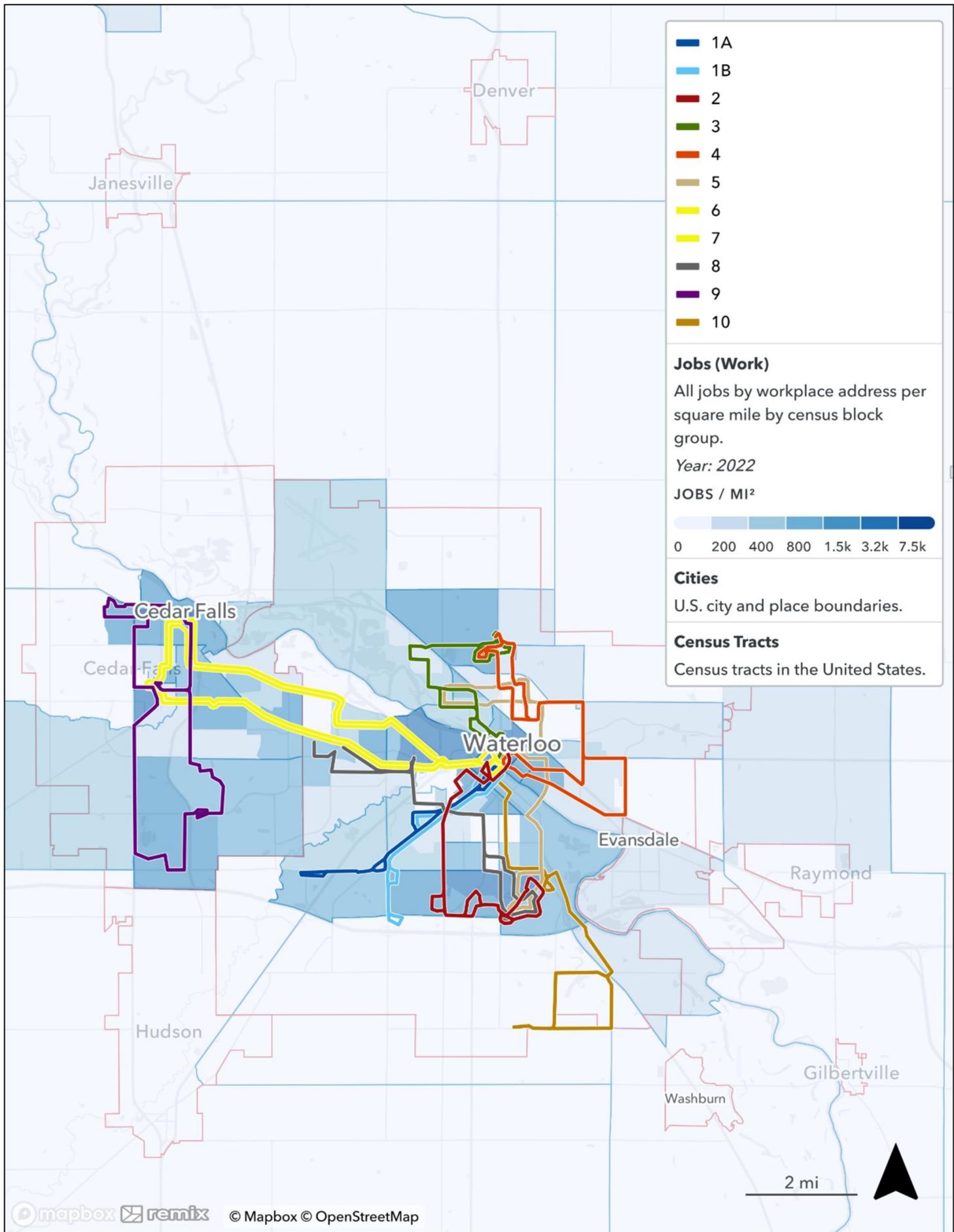
Map 2.9

MET Transit Fixed Route - Population Per Sq Mile

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Source: U.S. Census Bureau (ACS) 2019-2023

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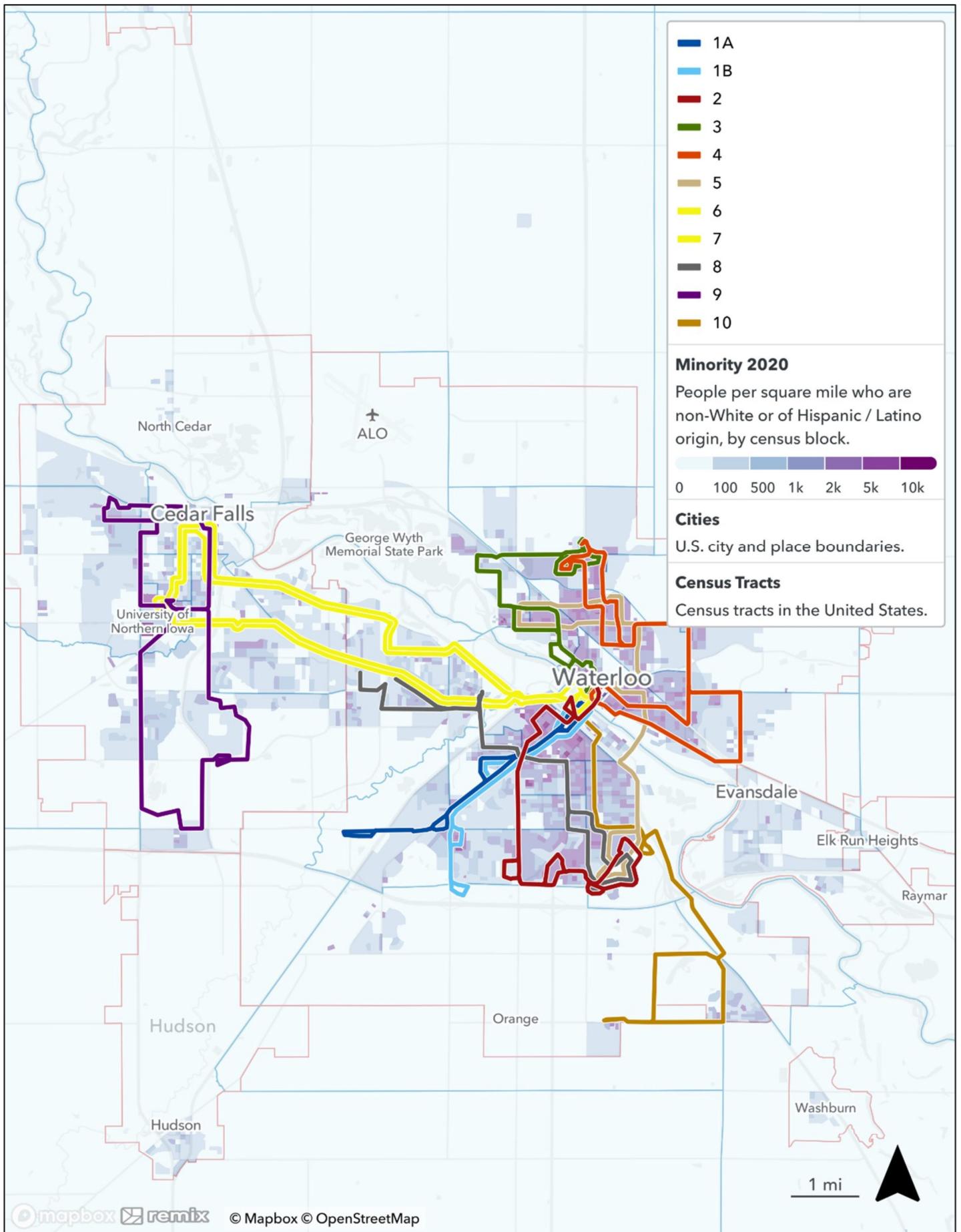
Map 2.10

MET Transit Fixed Route - Employment Per Sq Mile

This map does not constitute a survey, and INRCOG assumes no liability for the accuracy of the data presented herein, whether expressed or implied.  
Source: U.S. Census Bureau (ACS) 2022

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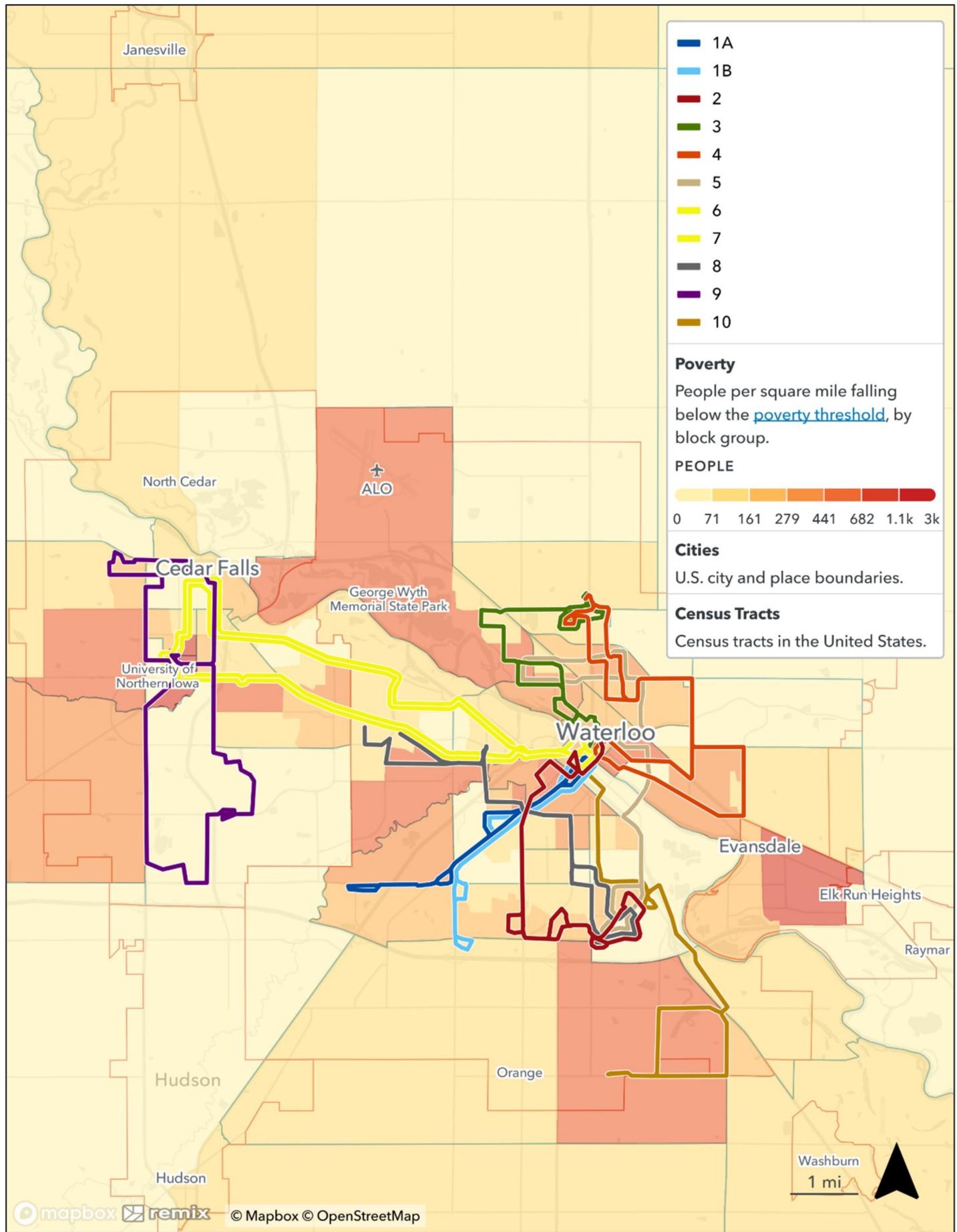
Map 2.11

MET Transit Fixed Route - Percent Population Not-White

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 Source: U.S. Census Bureau (ACS) 2019-2023

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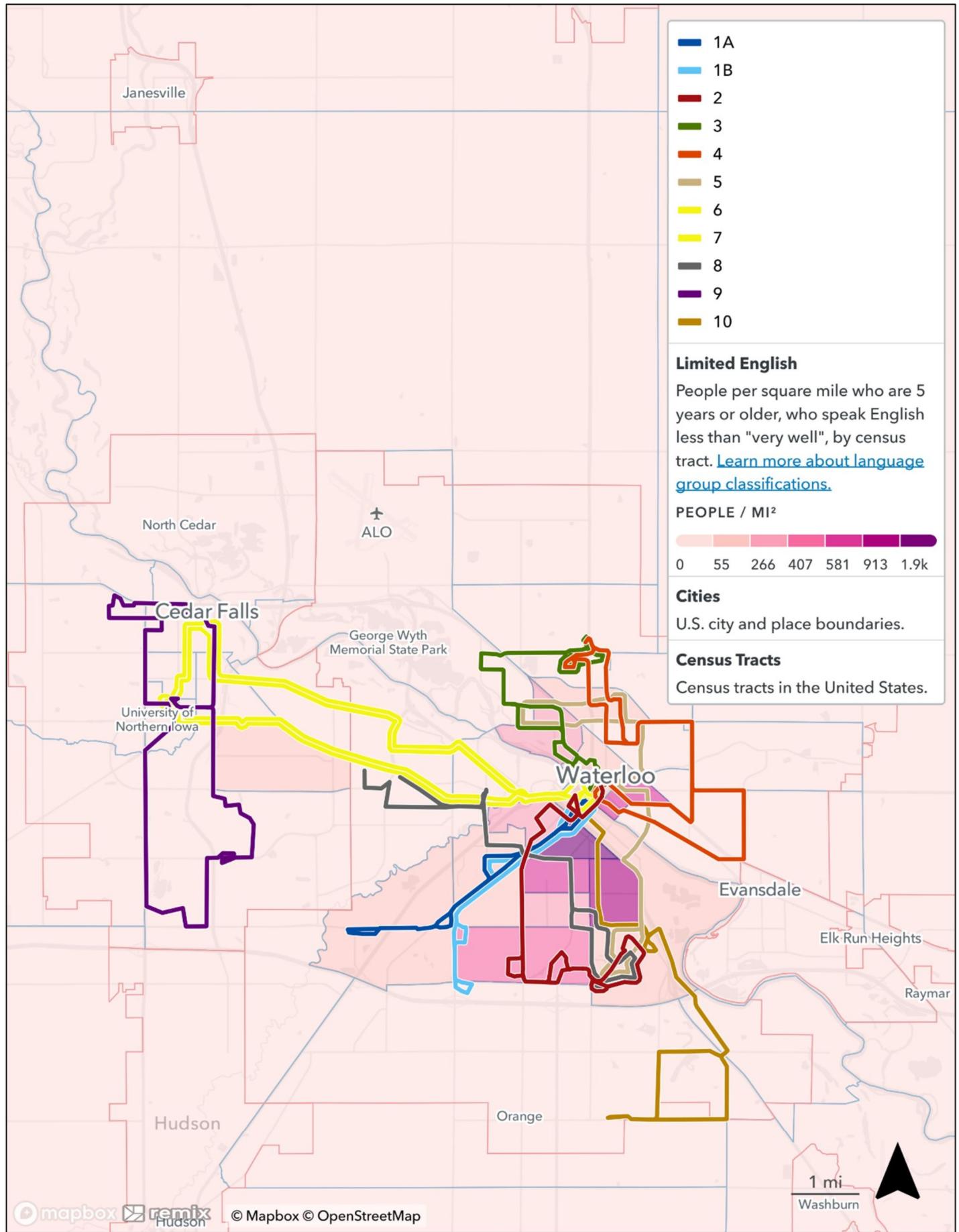
Map 2.12

MET Transit Fixed Route - Percentage of Population Below Poverty

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 Source: U.S. Census Bureau (ACS) 2019-2023

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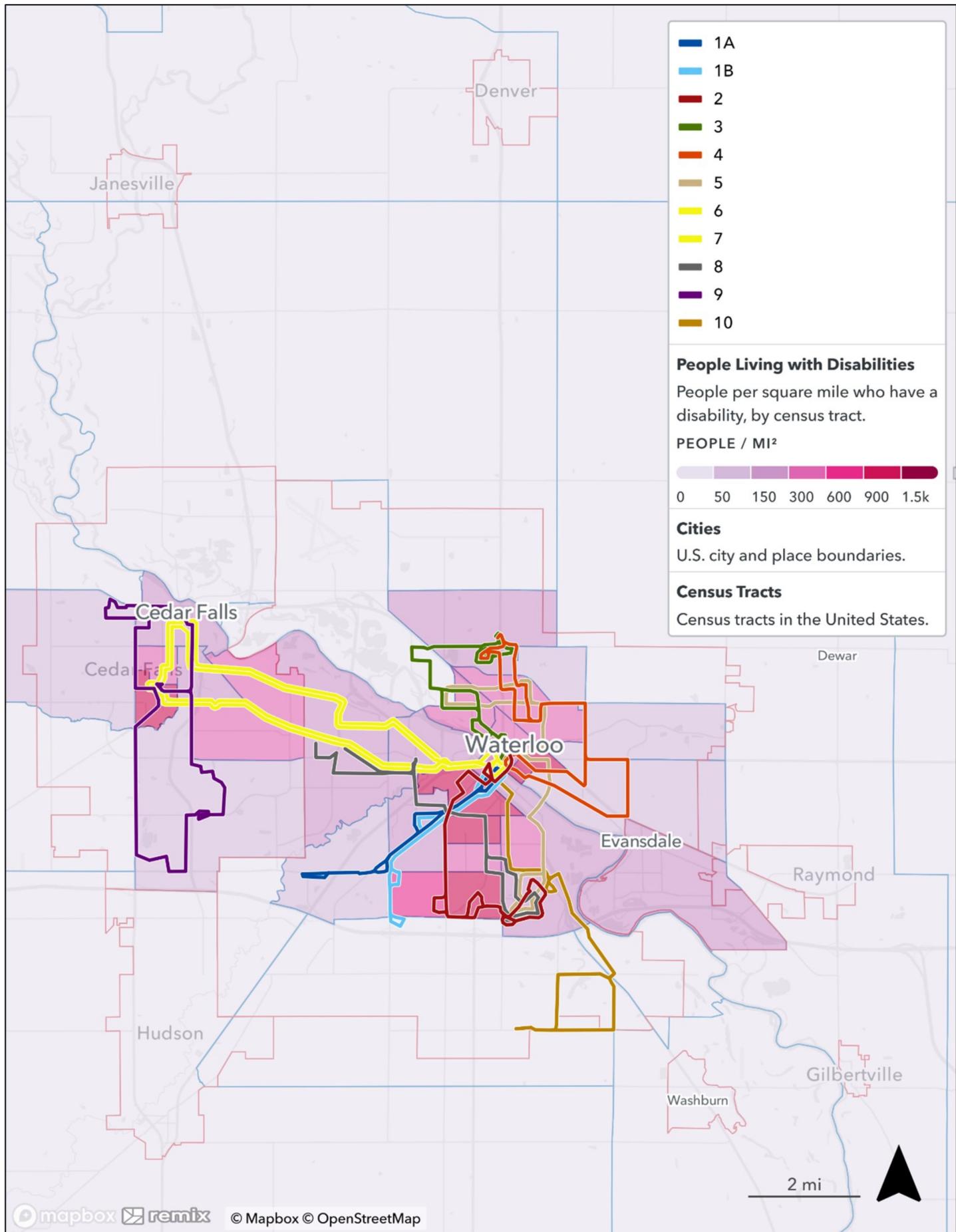
Map 2.13

MET Transit Fixed Route - Limited English Proficiency

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Source: U.S. Census Bureau (ACS) 2019-2023

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Map 2.14

MET Transit Fixed Route - Percentage of Population with Disability

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Source: U.S. Census Bureau (ACS) 2019-2023

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The MET Transit fleet consists of a total of 39 vehicles in service, including 20 fixed route buses and 19 paratransit buses. Table 2.4 provides a comprehensive overview of the vehicle fleet, presenting detailed information on the various characteristics of each vehicle and its useful life benchmarks. 9 paratransit buses, which are about 47%, have exceeded their useful life benchmark, while 10 buses, or 53%, are still within them. 15 fixed-route buses, about 75% have surpassed their expected lifespan, requiring replacement or repairs, while 5 or 25% remain within their useful life.

**Table 2.5: MET Transit Vehicle Inventory, 2024 Target**

### Onboard Public Transit

Onboard Public Transit is operated by the Iowa Northland Regional Transit Commission and provides open-to-the-public, accessible transit services to the public, seniors, disabled, and low-income persons as a primary means of transportation in the rural areas of the region. Onboard Public Transit is also responsible for coordinating transportation in the region. In addition to providing direct service, Onboard Public Transit can collaborate with sub-providers to offer contracted open-to-the-public transit service to regional residents on behalf of Onboard Public Transit. Onboard Public Transit operates Monday through Friday from 6:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. As a common rule, the service provided is from curb to curb; door-to-door service may be provided if requested. Reservations require a 24-hour notice.



Onboard Public Transit operates 7 light-duty buses, 5 medium-duty buses, and 8 transit vans. Onboard Public Transit switched from diesel to gasoline vehicles over a decade ago due to several issues with diesel vehicles, including limited availability, difficulty servicing them, complications in winter conditions, and not always being able to refuel in certain areas of the region. Table 2.5 outlines the fleet of vehicles for Onboard Public Transit. Just before the start of 2025, Onboard Public Transit implemented CTS Software's Trip Master program to streamline scheduling and dispatch. Modern technology allows for real-time communication across the fleet and the ability to access and control operations for multiple administrative staff.

**Table 2.6: Onboard Public Transit Vehicle Inventory as of September 2024**

ID	Total Cost	Vehicle Year	Manufacturer	FTA Category	Seating	WC Positions	ULB	Current Mileage
V061	\$15,700.00	2006	Ford	Van	9	2	0	97752
1001	\$56,757.40	2011	Ford	LDB	18	4	-9	220884
1402	\$74,385.00	2015	Ford	LDB	18	4	-4	211468
1401	\$74,385.00	2015	Ford	LDB	18	4	-4	225076
1601	\$83,713.00	2017	Ford	LDB	18	4	-2	154385
1801	\$76,251.00	2018	Ford	LDB	18	4	-1	160765
1802	\$76,251.00	2018	Ford	LDB	18	4	-1	165562
1901	\$75,787.00	2019	Ford	LDB	18	4	0	95152
V206	\$72,601.00	2020	Ford	Van	8	3	1	83163
V205	\$72,601.00	2020	Ford	Van	8	3	1	102120
V203	\$70,591.00	2020	Ford	Van	8	3	1	83835
V204	\$70,591.00	2020	Ford	Van	8	3	1	106171
V201	\$70,456.00	2020	Ford	Van	8	3	0	84931
V202	\$70,456.00	2020	Ford	Van	8	3	0	103133
2101	\$94,142.00	2021	Ford	MDB	18	5	4	90673
2102	\$94,142.00	2021	Ford	MDB	18	5	4	78805
2105	\$94,142.00	2021	Ford	MDB	18	5	4	84388
2103	\$94,142.00	2021	Ford	MDB	18	5	4	81910
2104	\$94,142.00	2021	Ford	MDB	18	5	4	77538
V231	\$99,691.00	2023	Ford	Van	6	3	4	221

ULB = Useful Life Benchmark

**Exceptional Persons, Inc. (EPI)**

Founded in 1957, EPI operates as a 501(c)(3) private, non-profit, charitable organization serving individuals with disabilities and families with childcare needs. In addition to full- and part-time staff, EPI enlists the services of volunteers. In the past, EPI provided primary transportation services for people with disabilities through contracts with counties, the Central Rivers Area Education Agency, MET Transit, and Onboard Public Transit. Due to a funding change in the latter half of fiscal year 2018, EPI faced significant financial strain and decided to discontinue bus and trolley services, including daily routes, field trips, and charters, after June 2020.

**Black Hawk-Grundy Mental Health Center (BHGMHC)**

BHGMHC is a private, non-profit, community mental health center accredited by the Iowa Department of Human Services. The center provides comprehensive and accessible mental health services for children, adolescents, adults, older adults, couples, and families. BHGMHC is located at 3251 West 9th Street, Waterloo.

**Center of Attention**

The Center of Attention is a community resource center dedicated to building circles of support and friendship to help reduce loneliness and isolation. Programs include after-school activities, mentoring, and adult and family groups. The center offers resources and programs related to substance use disorders, aligning with the broader efforts in the community.

**Community-Based Services (CBS)**

CBS offers Supported Community Living services to promote the development of abilities and successful community living for individuals and families with special needs. Services may be provided 24 hours per day in supported living sites or in a person's home for a customized amount of time. CBS services include advocacy, skill building, community skills, basic living skills, personal care, and recreation. CBS is located at 403 3rd Street SE, Waverly.

**East Central Region (ECR)**

ECR is a partnership of 9 counties that provides improved mental health and disability services to individuals in eastern Iowa. By pooling resources, counties can offer a core set of services to address residents' needs across the region. ECR is located at 203 1st Avenue NE, Waverly.

**Eastside Ministerial Alliance**

This non-profit agency serves low-income individuals in Black Hawk County. Services include rental and utility assistance, food and clothing pantries, Meals on Wheels, and parenting workshops. Eastside Ministerial Alliance is located at 205 Adams Street, Waterloo.

**House of Hope**

House of Hope provides homeless mothers and women aging out of foster care with individualized support and transitional housing to help achieve secure families, independence, and permanent homes. Their vision is to end the cycle of homelessness in the Cedar Valley with respect, empowerment, stewardship, and accountability. House of Hope is located at 845 West 4th Street, Waterloo.

**IowaWORKS Center**

IowaWORKS Centers across the state provide services for individuals and businesses, including career exploration, labor market information, and job fairs. The IowaWORKS Center serving the Iowa Northland Region is located at 3420 University Avenue, Waterloo.

**Jesse Cosby Neighborhood Center**

Jesse Cosby Neighborhood Center is dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for neighborhood families through stewardship of resources and shared responsibility. For 50 years, the center has served as a

multicultural, multigenerational service provider for individuals and families in Black Hawk County. Services include senior programs, Meals on Wheels, and a youth summer feeding program. The center also supports individuals who are disabled, sick, homebound, homeless, or from low-income households in crisis. The center is located at 1112 Mobile Street, Waterloo.

#### **North Star Community Services**

North Star Community Services is a non-profit rehabilitative agency providing adult day services and supported community living services. Its programs help individuals with disabilities live enriched, meaningful, productive, and independent lives. Within the Iowa Northland Region, North Star operates facilities in New Hampton, Waterloo, and Waverly.

#### **Northeast Iowa Area Agency on Aging (NEI3A)**

NEI3A is a private, not-for-profit corporation serving individuals across 18 counties in Northeast Iowa, including all 6 counties in the Iowa Northland Region. The organization coordinates services to help individuals maintain independence, offering option counseling, case management, meal programs, caregiver support, respite services, evidence-based health programs, advocacy, and recreational and educational programs. NEI3A is located at 3840 West 9th Street, Waterloo.

#### **Operation - Threshold**

Operation Threshold provides education and services to help individuals meet basic needs and achieve self-sufficiency. The agency serves Black Hawk, Buchanan, and Grundy Counties, offering programs such as the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), affordable housing assistance, energy assistance, and family development. Operation Threshold is located at 1535 Lafayette Street, Waterloo.

#### **Pathways Behavioral - Services**

Pathways Behavioral Services is a non-profit corporation licensed by the Iowa Department of Public Health and accredited by the Iowa Department of Human Services. Pathways provides substance abuse and mental health prevention and treatment services in the Iowa Northland Region, with facilities in Waterloo, Waverly, Independence, Allison, and Fredericksburg.

#### **People's Community Health Clinic**

People's Community Health Clinic is a non-profit health care provider offering affordable, compassionate, high-quality care to all, regardless of financial status. Both uninsured and insured patients are welcome. The clinic is located at 905 Franklin Street, Waterloo.

#### **Tri-County Child & Family Development**

Tri-County is a local non-profit organization providing Head Start services throughout the Cedar Valley. Its mission is to support children and families in Black Hawk, Buchanan, and Grundy Counties. Tri-County is located at 205 Adams Street, Suite 2, Waterloo.

#### **Retirement Communities, Assisted Living Facilities, & Nursing Homes**

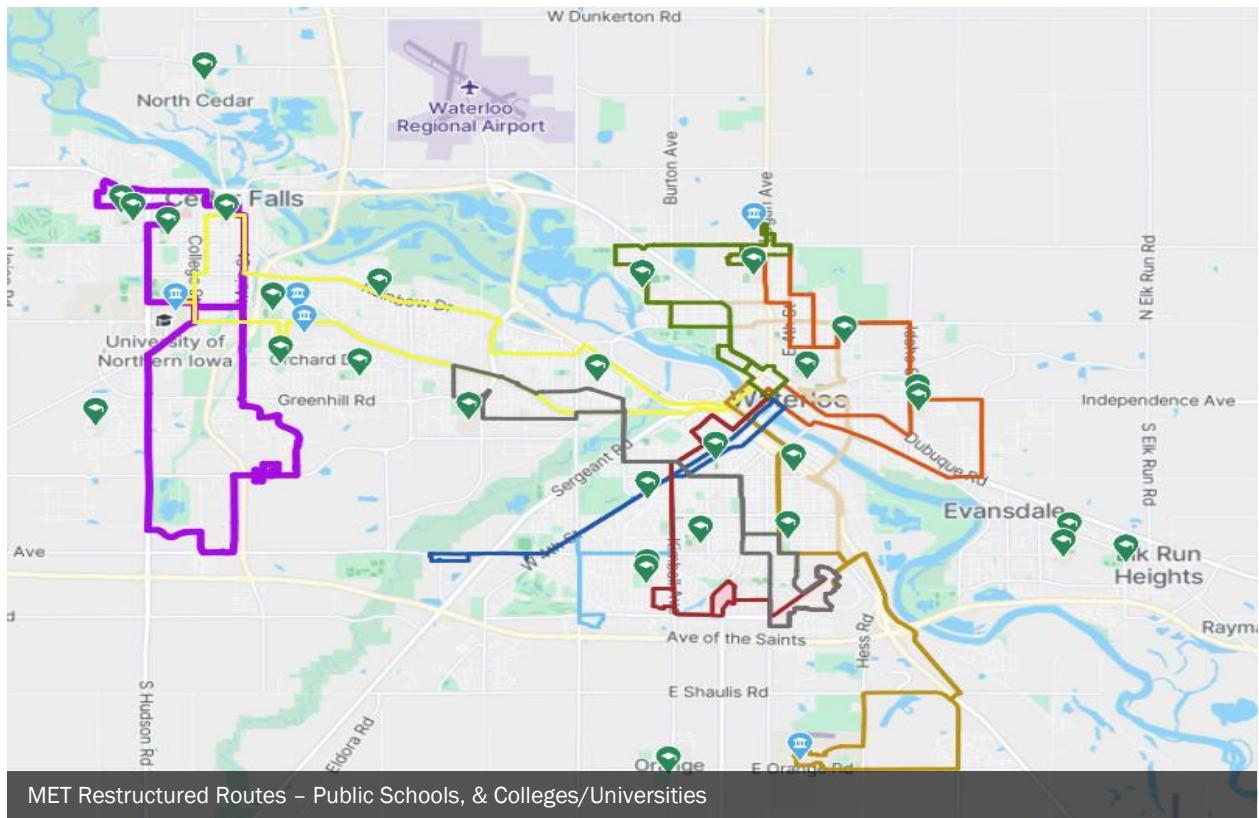
The region has numerous retirement communities, assisted living facilities, and nursing homes. Facilities that provide transportation services to their clients include Prairie Hills of Independence, Tripoli Nursing and Rehab, Rehabilitation Center of Allison, Linden Place in Waverly, Valley View Community in Greene, Parker Place Retirement Community in Parkersburg, Winding Creek Meadows in Jesup, Hillcrest Home in Sumner, Shell Rock Senior Living, Parkview Manor in Reinbeck, and Arlington Place Assisted Living in Grundy Center.

#### **Taxi Services**

There are a handful of taxi services operating out of the Waterloo and Cedar Falls metropolitan area. Most of the companies serve the metropolitan area only, though a couple will travel outside this area. Most of the region is largely without a privately operated taxi service due to limited operating costs and the substantial lengths of trips requested.

## Public School Districts

The Iowa Northland Region has 33 public school districts with at least a portion of the district located within the 6-county region. The 2017-2018 certified enrollment for these public schools was 41,634. Transporting students to and from school and events is an integral operation for each school district. Table 2 provides transportation statistics for these districts.



**Table 2.7: Human Service Agencies that Provide Transportation Services**

Agency	Provide Rides to Clients	Contract to Provide Rides	Purchase Transit Passes	Clients Use MET Transit	Clients Use MET Para.	Clients Use Onboard Public Transit	Clients Arrange Ride	Counties & Cities Serviced	Hours and Days of Service	Buses ADA	Vans & Minivans ADA	Cars ADA	Buses Not ADA	Vans & Minivans Not ADA	Cars Not ADA
Black Hawk-Grundy Mental Health Center	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Black Hawk, Bremer, Buchanan, Butler, Chickasaw, Grundy; Waterloo, Cedar Falls, Grundy Center, Waverly, Independence, New Hampton, Cedar Rapids, Iowa City	M-F, 8:00-17:00		1	1			
Center of Attention	X						X	Black Hawk; Waterloo	M-Tu, 14:30-19:30; Su 15:00-19:00				1	1	
Community-Based Services	X		X			X		Black Hawk, Bremer, Butler; Waterloo, Cedar Falls, Waverly, Iowa City	M-F, 8:00-17:00				2	6	
East Central Region		X	X	X	X	X	X	Bremer; Waverly	M-F, 7:00-17:00						
Eastside Ministerial Alliance		X		X			X	Black Hawk	M-F, 9:00-16:00						
House of Hope			X	X	X		X	Waterloo, Cedar Falls, Iowa City	M-F, 5:30-18:30; Sat-Sun, 7:00-18:00						
IowaWORKS Center			X	X	X	X		Black Hawk, Bremer, Buchanan, Butler, Grundy; Waterloo, Cedar Falls, Waverly, Independence, New Hampton, Grundy Center	M-Tu, 7:00-18:00						
Jesse Cosby Neighborhood Center	X		X	X	X	X	X	Black Hawk; Waterloo, Cedar Falls	M-F, 8:00-16:30				1		
North Star Community Services	X	X	X	X		X	X	Black Hawk, Bremer, Butler, Chickasaw; Waterloo, Cedar Falls, Waverly, New Hampton, Iowa City, Mason City, Decorah	New Hampton: M-F, 5:00-18:00 Waverly: M-F, 7:00-15:00	1			3	2	
Northeast Iowa Area Agency on Aging	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Black Hawk, Bremer, Buchanan, Butler, Grundy; Waterloo, Cedar Falls, Waverly, Independence, New Hampton, Grundy Center	M-F, 8:00-18:00						
Operation Threshold			X					Black Hawk; Waterloo, Cedar Falls	---						
Pathways Behavioral Services	X		X	X	X	X	X	Black Hawk, Bremer, Buchanan, Butler, Chickasaw, Grundy; Waterloo, Cedar Falls, Waverly, Independence, New Hampton, Grundy Center	Independence: M, Tu, Th, 8:30-18:00; W, 8:30-16:00				1	1	
People's Community Health Clinic		X			X			Black Hawk, Butler; Waterloo, Cedar Falls, Waverly, Iowa City	M-F, 8:30-17:00						
Tri-County Child & Family Development		X						Black Hawk; Waterloo, Cedar Falls	M-F, 9:30-14:00						

## Public School Districts

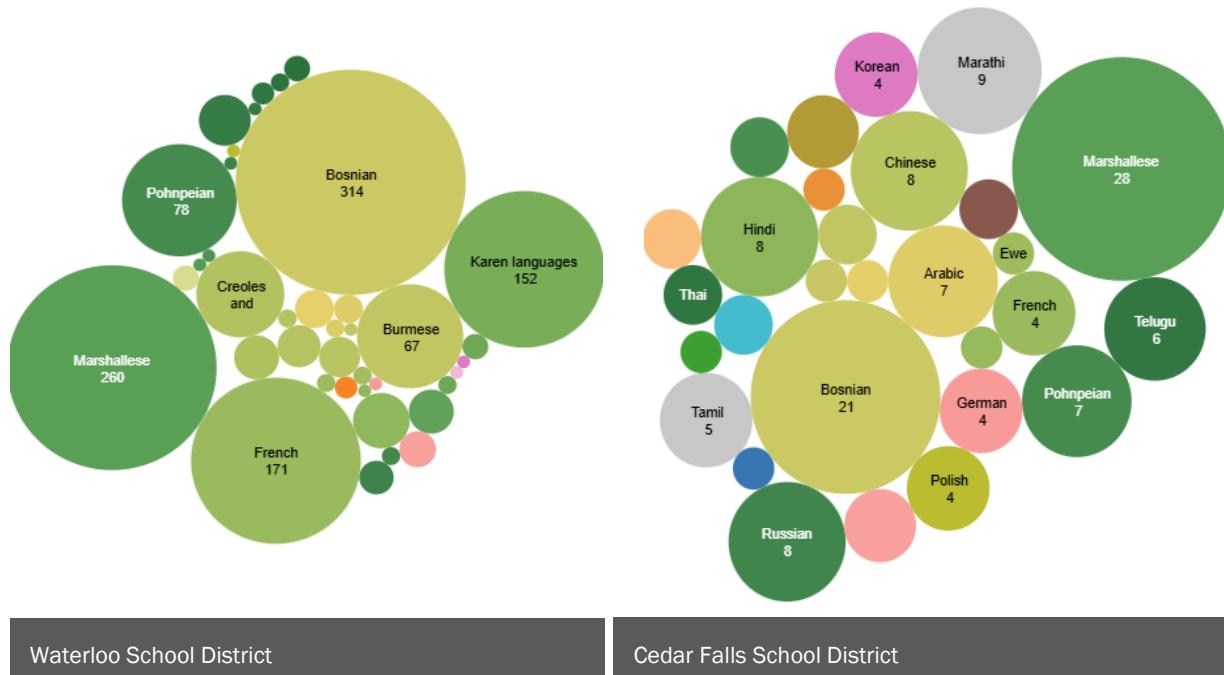
The Iowa Northland Region has 33 public school districts with at least a portion of the district located within the 6-county region. The 2022-2023 certified enrollment for these public schools was 44,578.4. Transporting students to and from school and events is an integral operation for each school district. Table 2.7 provides transportation statistics for the 2022-2023 annual transportation data for public schools in these districts. As part of the PTP development process, INRCOG staff contacted each school district to obtain vehicle fleet information.

**Table 2.8: 2022-2023 Annual Transportation Data for Public Schools**

District Name	Certified Enrollment	District Sq. Miles	Route Miles	Non-Route Miles	Avg Cost per pupil enrolled	Adj. Net Operating Cost	Avg. Students Transported	Adj. Avg. Cost Per Pupil Transported	Adj. Avg. Cost Per Route Mile
AGWSR	686.4	266	115550	10950	\$797.12	\$547,145.64	337	\$1,623.58	\$4.74
Aplington-Parkersburg	813.2	165	104970	22215	\$402.01	\$326,911.24	586	\$557.87	\$3.11
BCLUW	461.6	187	96356	25898	\$1003.45	\$463,193.50	373.02	\$1,241.74	\$4.81
Cedar Falls	5,517.8	61	274233	84711	\$297.61	\$1,642,159.11	2328.19	\$705.34	\$5.99
Charles City	1,483.3	224	86179	73286	\$215.27	\$319,306.75	793.52	\$402.39	\$3.71
Clarksville	289.4	63	22484	10220	\$321.90	\$93,157.52	70	\$1,330.82	\$4.14
Denver	862.9	57	44729	11638	\$220.14	\$189,959.62	348.98	\$544.33	\$4.25
Dike-New Hartford	876.2	151	98035	29092	\$501.92	\$439,780.54	533	\$825.10	\$4.49
Dunkerton	366.1	82	32913	11630	\$433.02	\$158,528.77	160	\$990.80	\$4.82
East Buchanan	541.9	137	64931	13030	\$571.43	\$309,656.27	239.91	\$1,290.72	\$4.77
Eldora-New Providence	560.7	137	44788	42355	\$493.65	\$276,790.11	111.01	\$2,493.38	\$6.18
Gladbrook-Reinbeck	617.3	189	50220	17185	\$406.63	\$251,012.07	180	\$1,394.51	\$5.00
Grundy Center	679.3	114	37301	18242	\$285.27	\$193,785.56	185.99	\$1,041.91	\$5.20
Hampton-Dumont	1,119.5	239	78596	35205	\$342.39	\$383,301.48	507.98	\$754.56	\$4.88
Howard-Winneshiek	1,374.6	279	140044	57228	\$610.38	\$599,251.23	463.53	\$1,292.80	\$4.28
Hudson	714.7	63	43332	19505	\$386.63	\$276,327.70	302	\$914.99	\$6.38
Independence	1,245.4	200	119202	31788	\$292.71	\$490,130.31	701.21	\$698.98	\$4.11
Janesville Consolidated	714.7	63	43332	19505	\$428.76	\$276,327.70	302	\$914.99	\$6.38
Jesup	1,245.4	200	119202	31788	\$378.48	\$490,130.31	701.21	\$698.98	\$4.11
Nashua-Plainfield	592.6	180	74953	17662	\$490.11	\$290,436.45	250.03	\$1,161.61	\$3.87
New Hampton	1,399.4	118	78399	36092	\$527.39	\$423,940.87	1186	\$357.45	\$5.41
North Butler	586	211	106,691	54,144	\$565.54	\$371,786	371	\$1,002	\$3.48
North Linn	556.9	151	79437	20533	\$216.05	\$314,947.95	276.01	\$1,141.07	\$3.12
Oelwein	1,326.0	143	50017	17847	\$850.30	\$286,481.48	490	\$584.66	\$5.73
Starmont	584.6	201	74062	16272	\$540.35	\$315,888.99	424.01	\$745.00	\$4.27
Sumner-Fredericksburg	2,526.4	85	120723	54810	\$577.03	\$631,845.10	1009.42	\$625.95	\$5.23
Tripoli	380.7	105	31491	10679	\$310.74	\$118,297.58	115	\$1,028.67	\$3.76
Turkey Valley	354.4	169	85526	13308	\$747.01	\$264,740.77	243.76	\$1,086.07	\$3.10
Union	965.5	255	147419	63614	\$590.50	\$570,126.96	342.99	\$1,662.23	\$3.87
Vinton-Shellsburg	1,621.5	235	140283	59482	\$357.92	\$580,360.62	466.98	\$1,242.80	\$4.14
Wessie Valley	657.7	130	52883	19998	\$318.57	\$209,524.14	216.01	\$969.97	\$3.35
Waterloo	10,659.7	150	933108	29930	\$488.09	\$5,202,849.57	8944.91	\$581.65	\$5.58
Waverly-Shell Rock	2,196.6	162	149310	94555	\$262.83	\$577,343.26	1533.29	\$376.54	\$3.87

Source: Iowa Department of Education, 2022-2023 Annual Transportation Data for Iowa Public Schools

## English Learners by School District (Waterloo & Cedar Falls)

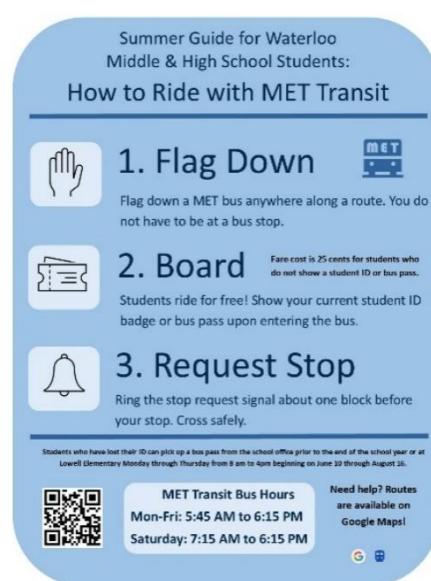


Source: Iowa: Department of Education; Bureau of Planning, Research and Evaluation, September 2024.

In school districts in Black Hawk County, specifically Waterloo and Cedar Falls, many students are learning English, which can significantly impact the operation of school buses and transit ridership by students. Some of these students might also need help understanding the bus schedules, so buses might have signs in different languages or drivers who speak more than 1 language. The goal is to ensure that all students, no matter what language they speak, have the same opportunity to get to school, participate in after-school programs, and feel confident using the bus system. This means making it easy for every student to ride the bus and get to school without facing any obstacles, irrespective of language barriers.

In 2024, as part of the initiative to promote and encourage students to ride the MET Transit buses, the Waterloo Community School District partnered with MET Transit to offer free bus services to all students in grades 6 through 12 throughout the summer. Students show their school ID when boarding any MET Transit bus to enjoy free rides until the start of school in August. This effort is designed to make transportation more accessible, helping students travel conveniently and safely throughout the summer months.

An easy-to-follow guide to assist students in learning how to ride the bus was created. The guide includes a QR code that students can scan using their mobile phone devices to access bus routes and schedules directly from their devices. This makes it simple for students to find the information they need and navigate the transit system with ease.



Visit [mettransit.org](http://mettransit.org) or call 319-234-5713 for more information.

## Homelessness

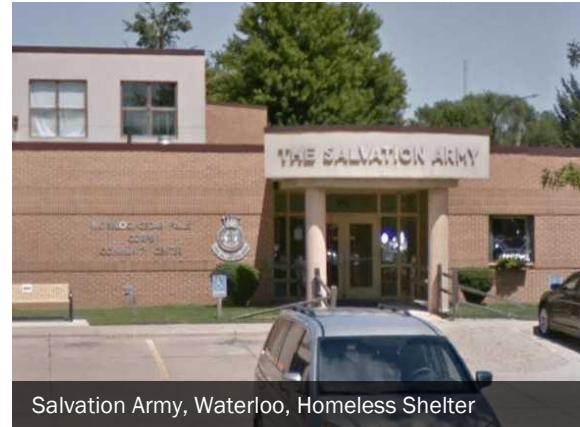
As of now, there are 57 individuals in our county experiencing literal homelessness, each of whom is on the county's prioritization list to receive shelter and supportive services. Over the past year, specifically from March 1, 2024, to February 28, 2025, a total of 522 households were added to the prioritization list, with 78% of them being single adults.

Importantly, 380 of those 522 households (72.7%) meet HUD's criteria for a permanent supportive housing intervention, having scored an 8 or higher on the vulnerability index. This score reflects significant barriers to housing stability, indicating that these individuals are unlikely to resolve their issues on their own or achieve success through short-term interventions alone.

Layered into this issue are the ongoing transportation challenges faced by those experiencing homelessness in Black Hawk County. Limited access to affordable, reliable transportation directly impacts individuals' ability to reach shelters, attend case management meetings, access healthcare, or maintain employment. While services like MET Transit's paratransit and emergency bus ticket assistance through General Relief exist, they are often insufficient, especially for those with temporary or unverified disabilities or those navigating complex, shifting schedules.

Moreover, the geographic spread between services such as shelters, medical clinics, mental health support, and employment opportunities can pose additional barriers for individuals without personal transportation. Without more integrated planning between transportation and homelessness services, even those placed into housing programs may struggle to maintain stability due to mobility constraints.

This intersection between housing vulnerability and transportation access highlights the urgent need for cross-sector collaboration to create a truly supportive and accessible system for our most vulnerable residents.



Several taxi services are operating out of the Waterloo and Cedar Falls metropolitan area, and limited access to ridesharing. Most of the companies serve the metropolitan area only, though several will travel outside this area. Most of the region is without a privately operated taxi service due to limited operating income, and substantial lengths of trips are requested.

### Intercity Transit

In addition to MET Transit and Onboard Public Transit services, Burlington Trailways operates 2 private intercity bus routes with stops at Central Transfer in Waterloo. The Schedule 1492 bus departs Waterloo daily at 1:30 p.m. to Cedar Rapids, Ames, Des Moines, Davenport, Iowa City, and Chicago. The schedule follows the same route in opposite directions. Burlington Trailways provides intercity bus service throughout much of Iowa with routes extending as far as Indianapolis, St. Louis, and Denver. However, the Iowa-based company recently announced plans to discontinue its intercity bus operations in September 2025 and lay off 79 employees, more than half of its workforce across six locations, including Des Moines. This closure marks the end of a longstanding intercity travel option and reflects the broader shift toward more flexible and technology-driven mobility solutions across the state.



### Ridesharing

Transit ridership has generally decreased nationwide, but the use of ridesharing services, such as Uber and Lyft, has grown significantly in recent years. Both services are available in the Waterloo and Cedar Falls area. As more people become aware of ridesharing and the increasing use of smartphones among adults, the demand for these services is expected to continue rising. This shift may further impact traditional public transit ridership, as people seek more on-demand and personalized travel options.

### Transit Infrastructure

There has been an increase in the development of transit-related infrastructure in the metropolitan area in recent years. In 2018, the City of Waterloo began replacing its old bus benches with ADA-compliant bus stop landings. The old benches were often situated in grassy areas inaccessible to people in wheelchairs, and many benches had begun falling into disrepair. In recent years, significant strides have been made in enhancing transit infrastructure in the Waterloo and Cedar Falls metropolitan area.

Further developments include MET Transit's revised routes, aiming to reduce looped paths and enhance efficiency while maintaining coverage in key areas, particularly those with employment opportunities. Public meetings were held in February 2024 to gather community input on these proposed changes. These initiatives reflect a collaborative and inclusive effort to improve public transit accessibility, efficiency, and safety in the region, aligning with broader goals of sustainable urban development and community well-being.



New landing on South Street, Waterloo



New bus shelters on University Avenue, Cedar Falls

New bus shelters have also been installed in Cedar Falls as part of the University Avenue reconstruction project. Similar shelters are planned for the Waterloo side of University Avenue, which is expected to be completed in 2021. Bus stops with these new shelters include the first designated bus pull-outs in the metropolitan area.

The University of Northern Iowa Multimodal Transportation Center (MTC) was completed in the early 2010s, providing the metro area with a second indoor transfer facility. The UNI Department of Public Safety oversees the operation of MTC. Since the MTC was a unique project that received an earmark to help fund construction, it is not anticipated that UNI would receive future funding through the FTA.



University of Northern Iowa Multimodal Transportation Center (MTC)

As of January 2024, MET Transit in Waterloo has been actively restructuring its bus routes to enhance connectivity, particularly to the Waterloo Regional Airport and the surrounding air and rail park. These efforts aim to improve accessibility and reduce travel times for riders.



MET Transit Bus, UNI Multimodal Transportation Center (MTC)

MET Transit's Central Transfer facility in downtown Waterloo is still in good shape, and MET does not envision the need for a new transfer facility in the immediate future. MET's office and bus facility are currently at capacity. Onboard Public Transit operates out of the INRCOG building located in downtown Waterloo, and the facility will adequately serve Onboard Public Transit for the near future.

### **MET Transit Ridership**

Historical MET Transit ridership data shows total ridership steadily increased from around 2007 to 2013, with Ridership peaking in 2014. Beyond 2014, Ridership has declined exponentially in the subsequent years. Between fiscal years 2014 and 2024, the annual fixed route ridership has decreased by 59.9% from 582,780 to 233,727 rides. This trend is not unique to MET Transit, as decreases in ridership have been seen in most transit systems nationwide. Several factors may be contributing to this drop, including the lower cost of gasoline, construction detours disrupting regular routes, the rise of ridesharing services like Uber and Lyft, and changes in Iowa's managed care organization (MCO) structure, which could have impacted transportation accessibility and availability.

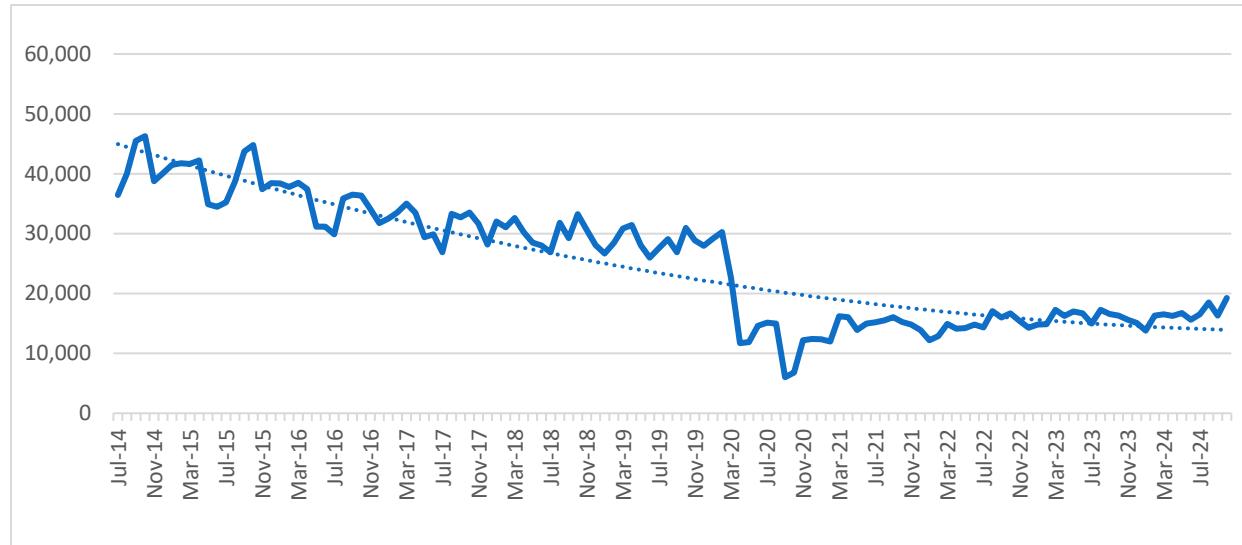


MET Transit's Central Transfer Facility Downtown Waterloo

Figure 2.13 shows the total number of fixed route passenger trips by month, and Figure 2.14 shows the total number of paratransit trips by month. As shown, fixed route ridership peaked in October 2014. On a month-to-month basis, ridership trends follow the academic calendar. Notable ridership increases are observed each year around March-April and September-October, and decreases are observed in June-July and in December. However, since 2019, the monthly decline has become more pronounced, particularly due to the pandemic, as

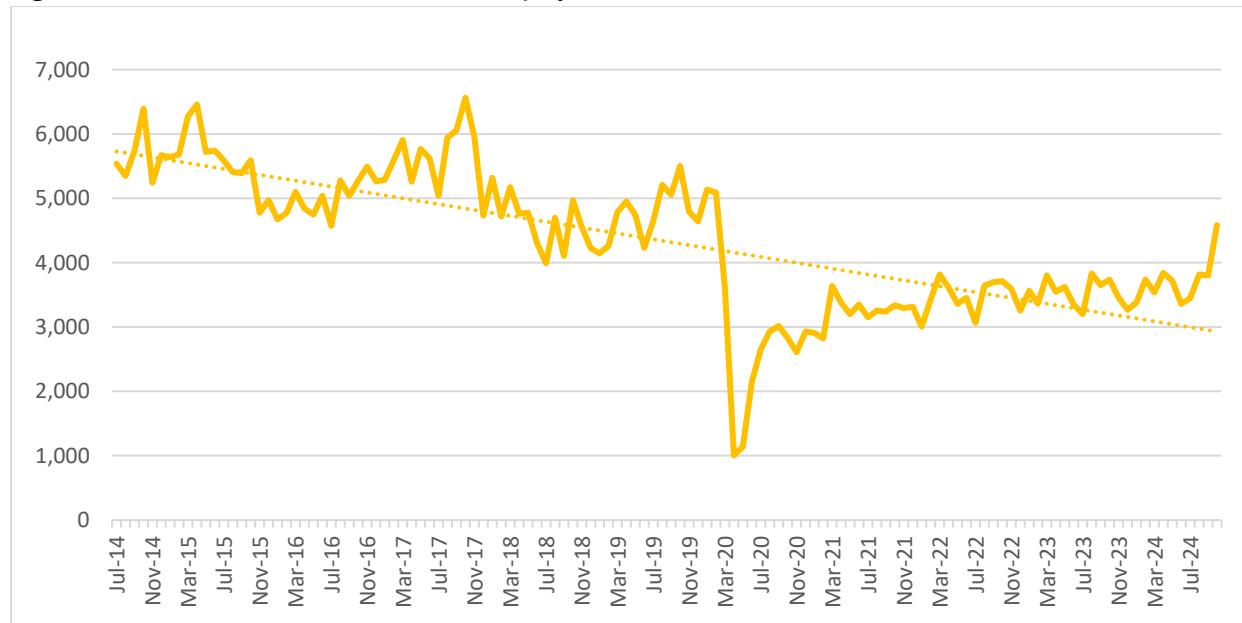
many passengers have reduced or halted their use of transit due to health concerns, remote work, and changes in daily routines, reflecting a long-lasting shift in travel behavior and patterns.

**Figure 2.13: MET Transit Fixed Route Ridership by Month, FY 2014-2024**



Source: MET Transit

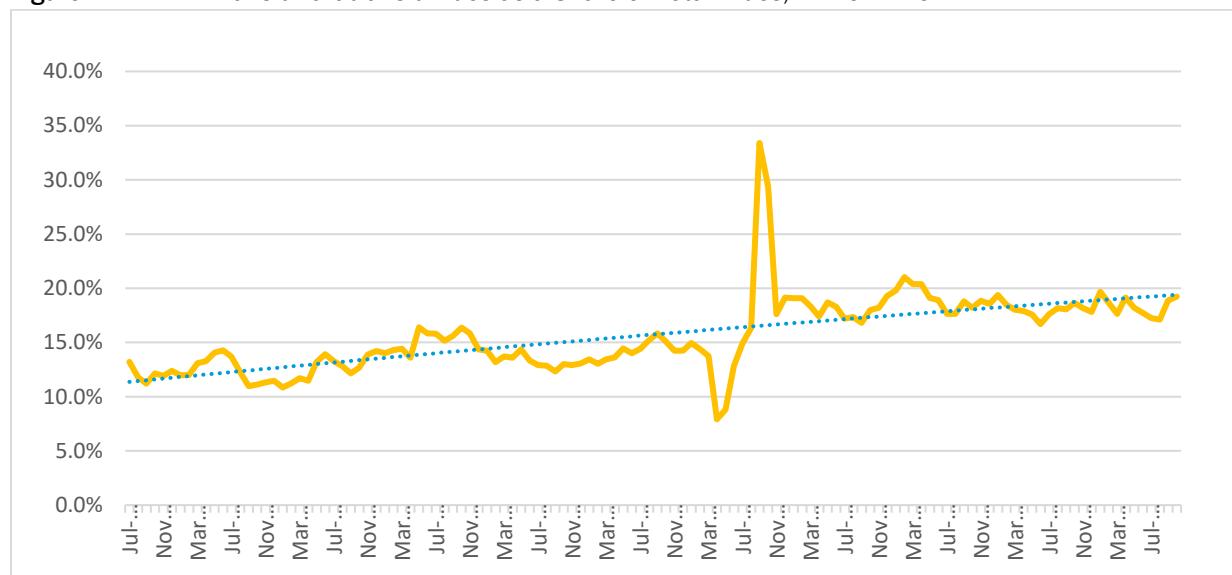
**Figure 2.14: MET Transit Paratransit Ridership by Month, FY 2014-2024**



Source: MET Transit

Overall changes in paratransit ridership are seen to show a negative slope. FY 2014-2019 displayed a steady sloping ridership; however, a sharp decline is noticeable from late FY 2019-2020, which is attributed to the impacts of COVID-19. Figure 2.15 shows the number of paratransit rides as a % of total rides. Despite a slight decrease in paratransit ridership, fixed route ridership has decreased more so resulting in an increase in the share of paratransit rides as a % of total rides.

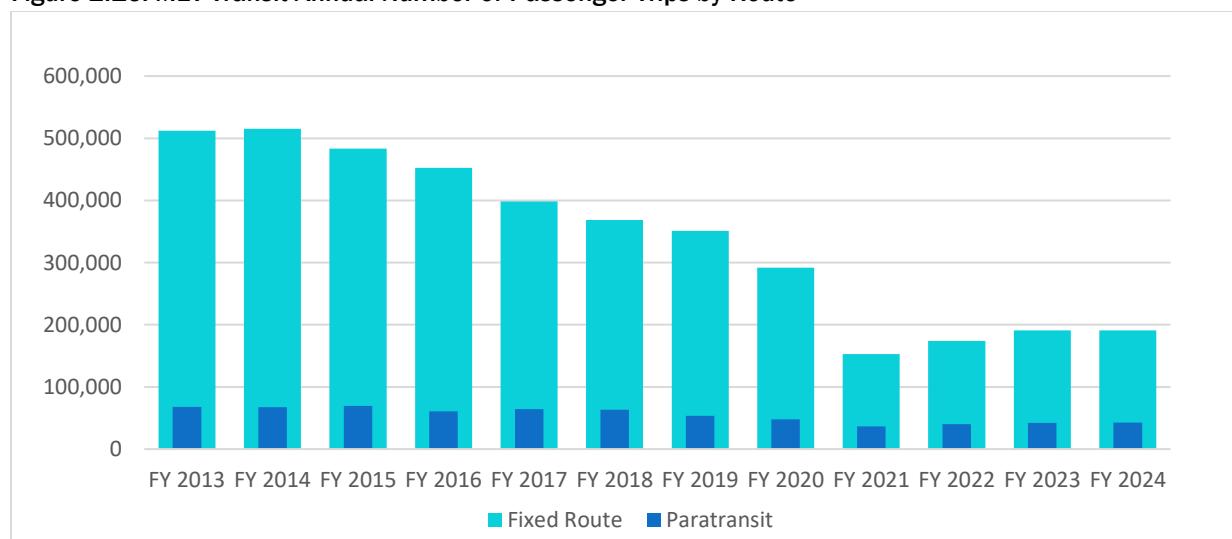
**Figure 2.15: MET Transit Paratransit Rides as a Share of Total Rides, FY 2014-2024**



Source: MET Transit

Analyzing the ridership of paratransit as a share of total rides reveals a significant surge in 2020, primarily driven by the COVID-19 pandemic. With public health concerns and restrictions on traditional public transportation, many individuals with disabilities or mobility challenges turned to paratransit services as a safer and more reliable option. This shift led to an increase in paratransit demand, highlighting its crucial role in providing essential mobility during a period of limited access to other transportation options.

**Figure 2.16: MET Transit Annual Number of Passenger Trips by Route**

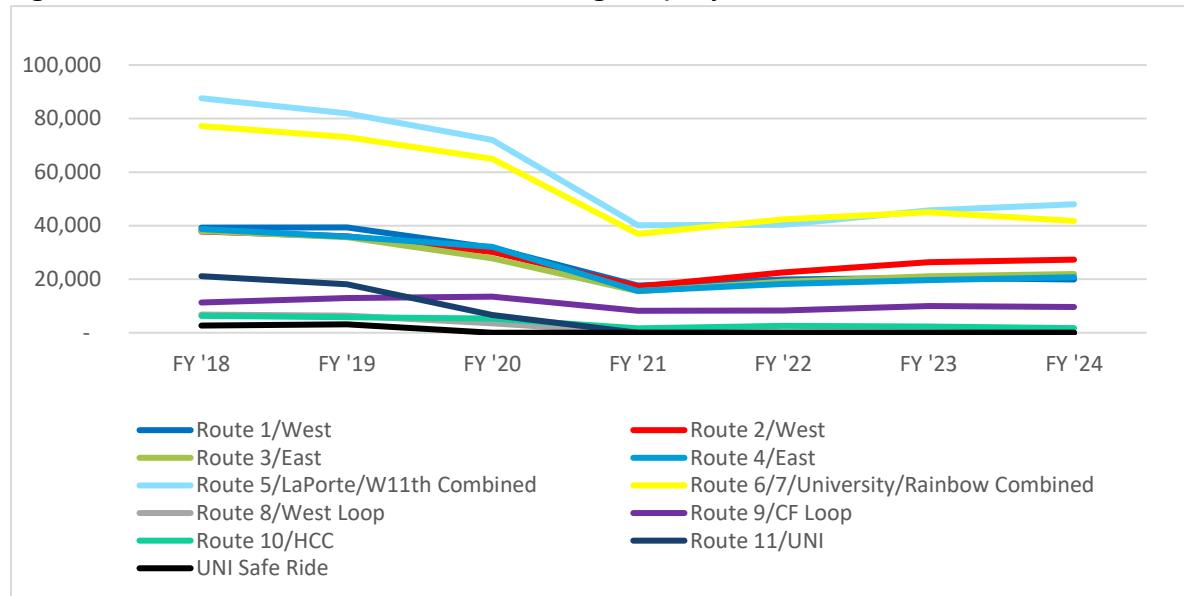


Source: MET Transit

Figure 2.16 highlights a distinct pattern of ridership for both fixed routes and paratransit services from FY 2014 through 2024. Between FY 2014 and FY 2018, fixed route ridership saw noticeable peaks but gradually declined in the following years. Despite this, fixed routes remained a dominant transportation option. In contrast, paratransit ridership was relatively low during this period, as it primarily serves individuals with mobility challenges.

Ridership trends can also be observed by individual fixed routes. Figure 2.17 shows the annual ridership on each bus route since fiscal year 2013. 2 sets of routes are combined in the figure, Routes 5L and 5W11, and Routes 6 and 7, because they cover much of the same areas.

**Figure 2.17: MET Transit Annual Number of Passenger Trips by Route**



Source: MET Transit

Figure 2.17 shows a significant declining trend in ridership for most routes from FY'18 to FY'24, with several routes experiencing sharp drops, particularly after FY'20. This sharp decline in ridership is closely related to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to disruptions in daily life activities, including usage of public transit usage. Route 5/LaPorte/W11th Combined and Route 6/7/University/Rainbow Combined still maintain moderate ridership but have also experienced a decline in ridership.

Most notably, ridership on Route 5/LaPorte/W11th Combined, and Route 6/7/University/Rainbow combined experienced the most significant drop in fiscal year 2020. Some routes have essentially been discontinued (e.g., Route 11/UNI and UNI Safe Ride) due to a decline in ridership and as part of the new restructuring of the routes, and student housing near the University of Northern Iowa campus may have also contributed to the reduction in rides.

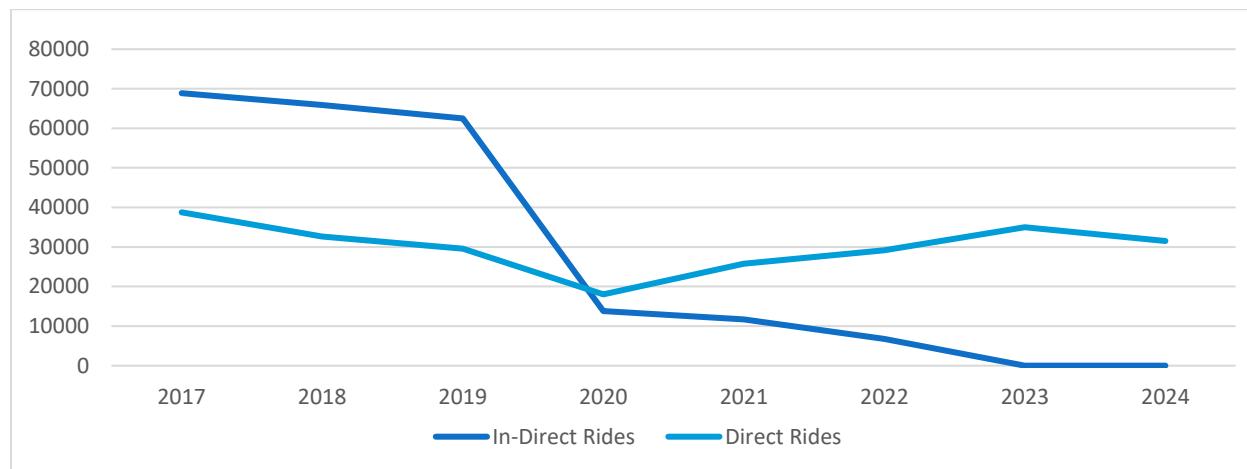
## Onboard Public Transit Ridership

Figure 2.19 shows the total number of rides by year from FY 2017 to FY 2024. Indirect ridership significantly declined, beginning in 2019. This statistic is due to the departure of contracted services from the region, most specifically Exceptional Persons Inc., eliminating their transit system. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, a notable increase in Direct ridership is evident. Ridership has rebounded to pre-pandemic numbers by 2023. Like MET Transit, ridership peaked in 2017 and has since declined each subsequent year. Between fiscal years 2017 and 2024, ridership decreased by 70.5 % from 107,635 rides to 76,141 rides.



Onboard Public Transit New Minivan

Figure 2.19: Onboard Public Transit Ridership by Year, FY 2017-2024



## Ridership Forecasts

Predicting future transit ridership can be difficult due to various factors, including changes in economic conditions, demographic shifts, the availability of alternative transportation options (like ridesharing), and the design of the fixed route system. For instance, a significant rise in gasoline prices could lead to an immediate boost in ridership, while if gas prices remain below 3 dollars per gallon, the ongoing trend of decreasing ridership may persist.

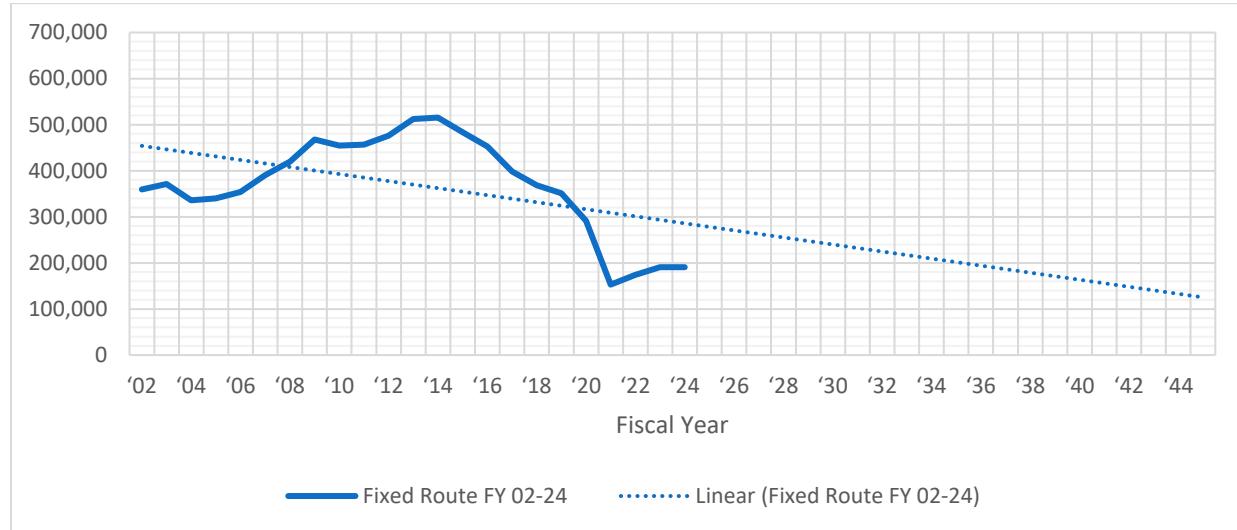
To forecast ridership on MET Transit's fixed routes, a linear trendline is used based on each year's ridership from fiscal year 2002 to 2045. This forecast is based on over 2 decades of historical data, which show, in general, an overall increase in ridership. For example, while the recent decline in ridership is notable, total annual ridership is still not as low as it was in fiscal years 2004 and 2005. Interestingly, this projection estimates that annual ridership will increase to around 660,000 in fiscal year 2045, which is the same as the annual ridership observed in 1991. In other words, this projection shows that 27 years from now, ridership will return to levels observed 27 years ago.

In recent years, ridership has been affected by factors such as road construction, changes in Medicaid, and a lack of awareness about how to properly use the bus. Roadwork on U.S. Highway 63 and University Avenue, particularly near downtown Waterloo, caused significant detours and delays, resulting in buses running behind schedule and confusing route changes for riders. However, these road projects have now been completed, and the associated issues have been addressed. Additionally, changes to Iowa's Medicaid program led to some passengers relying on paratransit services, as there was no system in place for providing bus passes to Medicaid recipients. Another challenge is the lack of knowledge among many riders, especially newcomers, about how to effectively use the bus system. MET Transit staff are confident that these issues will be resolved

over time as managed care transitions out of its current phase, local transit impacts are addressed, and educational efforts help riders become more familiar with the bus system.

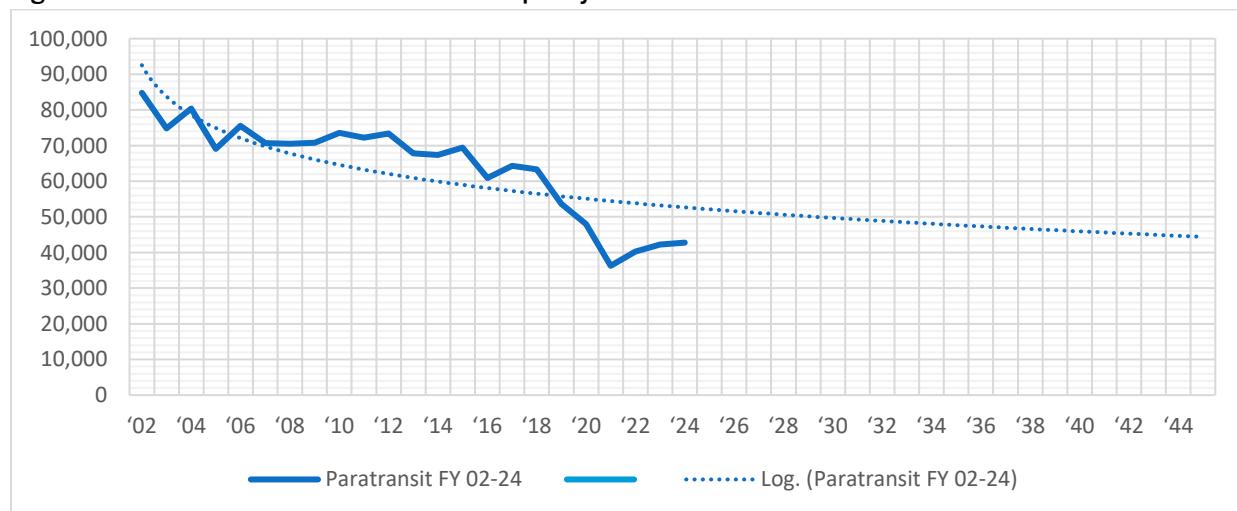
Figure 2.20 shows the projection for MET Transit fixed route ridership. The solid line shows the observed annual ridership totals, and the dotted line shows the linear trendline and projection out to fiscal year 2045.

**Figure 2.20: MET Transit Fixed Route Ridership Projection**



To forecast ridership on MET Transit's paratransit buses, a logarithmic trendline is used instead of a linear trendline. This is because ridership is expected to level out as the baby boomer generation ages and begins using paratransit services more. According to the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 5-year Estimates in 2023, an estimated 22 % of the population in Black Hawk County was between the ages of 50 and 75 years old. This is a slight decrease from 23.1 % according to the same survey in 2017. While this indicates a small decrease, paratransit ridership is expected to continue to rise moderately instead of a flat line over the next decade. Figure 2.21 shows the projection for paratransit ridership.

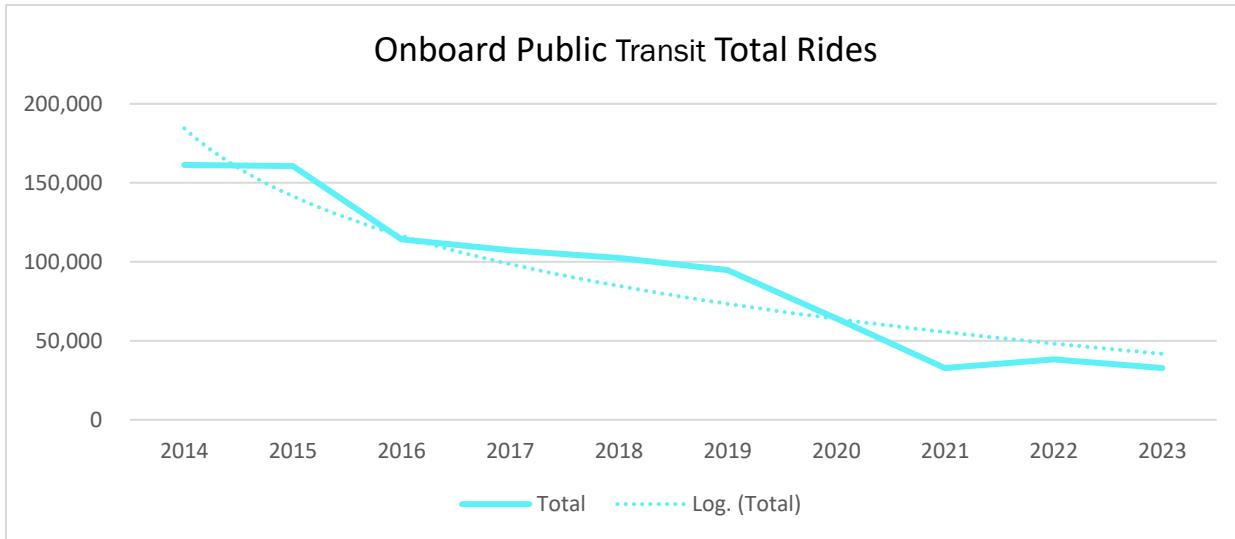
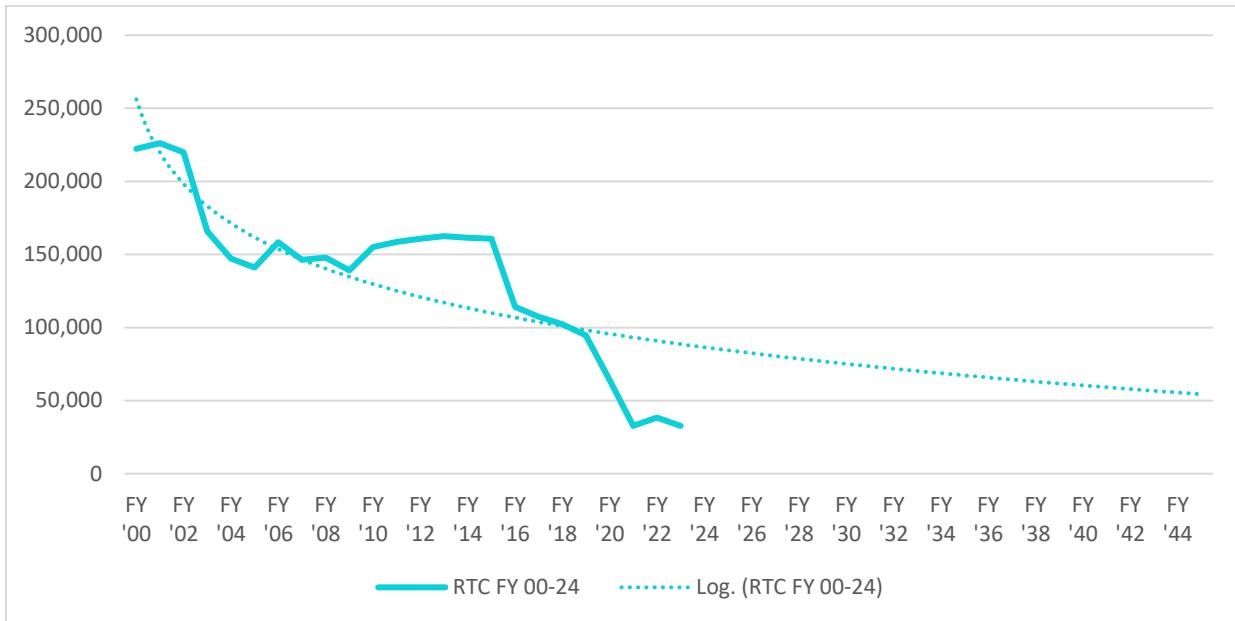
**Figure 2.21: MET Transit Paratransit Ridership Projection**



To forecast ridership for Onboard Public Transit, a logarithmic trendline is used instead of a linear trendline. Like MET Transit's paratransit system, ridership is expected to level out as the baby boomer generation ages

and relies more on passenger transportation services. According to the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 5-year Estimates in 2023, an estimated 26 % of the region's population, outside of Black Hawk County, was between the ages of 50 and 70 years old. This is relatively no change from 26 % according to the same survey in 2017.

**Figure 2.22: Onboard Public Transit Ridership Projection**



## Section 3 – Planning Concerns and Coordination

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### Service Expansion

MET Transit is committed to providing accessible, reliable, and efficient transportation options for the community. It intends to enhance mobility, support economic growth, and improve the quality of life for residents by offering a range of transit services. Additional funding opportunities would be significant in fostering these objectives, as the current challenge of limited funding impedes the expansion of services to areas not being served. If new funds become available, MET Transit has outlined several key priorities for service expansion:

- Review and adjust the hours of operation to start at 5:15 a.m. instead of 5:45 a.m.
- Add commuter service to the Airline Highway Industrial Area in Waterloo
- Expand service to underserved areas, including North Cedar in Cedar Falls and Cedar Terrace in Waterloo
- Extend operating hours further into the evenings
- Increase frequency along high-demand routes
- Offering services on Sundays

The restructuring process initiated in 2018, with valuable public input gathered in early 2020 through 2023 along with collaborative efforts between MET Transit and MPO staff, has now been completed with the assistance of MET consultant, SRF Consulting Group, and implemented in 2024. The new route changes aim to transform the existing looped routes into bidirectional, corridor-based routes. Bidirectional service allows customers to choose the direction that suits their trip, eliminating the need to ride an entire loop.

In areas where loops overlap, this approach simplifies the system by using a single route number for each corridor, reducing confusion for passengers. While service expansion is naturally constrained by funding, MET Transit plans to optimize its fixed-route service using the Remix software. Remix enables the development and analysis of alternative routes to maximize the use of available funds. It also allows for comparisons between the existing fixed-route system and potential new configurations, helping to evaluate the effectiveness of changes on a system-wide scale.

Onboard Public Transit, operating as Onboard Public Transit, has actively responded to public input and the growing demand for expanded services. In Waverly, the service hours have been extended to 6:30 p.m. on Mondays to provide transportation for community meals, which has been a successful addition. Additionally, Onboard Public Transit has engaged with larger businesses in rural areas to explore the possibility of offering vanpool services for employees commuting from the metropolitan area. With several major businesses set to open in the coming years, this presents significant potential for expanding passenger transportation services.



Waverly and Independence are Onboard Public Transit's largest service areas in the region, and expanded service in these communities is always considered a need. Expanding service in Waverly has been limited by a lack of drivers for an additional bus. A third bus had been added to Independence to focus on dialysis patients, but the service was dropped due to a lack of ridership and available drivers. A consistent issue when additional buses are added to an area of existing service is that existing ridership is spread out among the buses rather than attracting new riders.

## Ridesharing and Car Sharing

Transit ridership has been declining across the country in recent years, but the popularity of ridesharing services has seen a significant rise. Services like Uber and Lyft are widely available in metropolitan areas, and their usage is expected to keep growing as more people become aware of these options. Additionally, as smartphone adoption increases among adults, the convenience of booking rides through apps will likely drive even greater demand for these services in the future. This trend reflects a broader shift toward on-demand transportation solutions as an alternative to traditional transit.



Ridesharing services, like Uber and Lyft, can compete with public transit to some extent but can also work alongside it to provide more flexible transportation options for riders. However, they can also complement transit service in certain situations. For example, a part-time worker might take a MET Transit bus to work and use a ridesharing service to get home. Newcomers and visitors can also benefit from rideshare because it's a convenient way to get around, especially if they're not familiar with the area. As more people use ridesharing, it can complement public transit to provide better overall transportation options.

In addition to ridesharing, car-sharing services are currently available in many larger metropolitan areas and may eventually be deployed in Black Hawk County as well. Car sharing is a short-term rental service, usually charged by the time. There are multiple car-sharing services, some of which rely on a designated fleet of cars, while others rely on individuals' private vehicles. These services may also compete with MET Transit. However, they may also allow a greater share of the population to adopt a car-free lifestyle, thereby increasing the total number of unique riders on MET Transit buses.

## Detours and Delays

A common challenge for MET Transit's fixed route service is navigating detours and delays, especially during the summer construction season when roadwork causes bus routes to be rerouted. Changes to these routes can confuse riders and make it difficult for them to stay informed. Detours often require buses to take longer routes or wait in traffic, which causes delays and makes it harder for the buses to stay on schedule.

With MET Transit recently restructuring routes, replacing the old loop system with a bi-directional system. This adjustment allows for smoother transfers between buses, particularly in areas where routes overlap, and helps riders save time, in contrast to the old system, where multiple buses meet at Central Transfer for rider transfers, compounding the problem. The bi-directional system reduces the impact of detours and delays, improving the overall experience for riders.

Another common cause of delays in the metropolitan area is rail crossings. This is exacerbated by the presence of a large CN rail yard near downtown, where the constant movement of rail cars can disrupt access to essential services and amenities. Often, trains are stopped at rail crossings for long periods to allow for safety-related work, and railcar changes occur on 1 of the 2 major rails in Waterloo. Some major railroad crossings near downtown, including East 4th Street, Martin Luther King Jr. Drive, East Donald Street, and East Mullan Ave/US Hwy 63, experience traffic disruptions due to nearby rail yard activity.

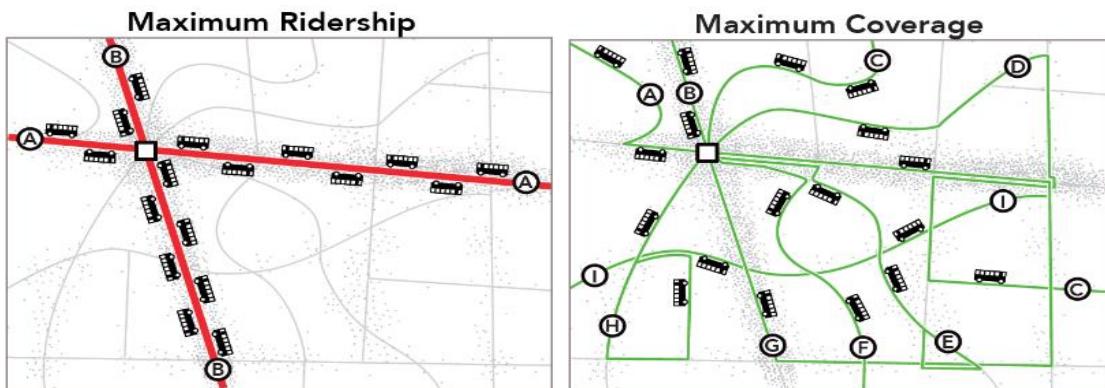


These blocked crossings prevent traffic from crossing, forcing MET Transit buses to take detours where feasible and causing delays. Long-term improvements to address this problem include the construction of additional grade-separate crossings, optimization of freight rail service, and construction of a pedestrian overpass. The completion of the railroad overpass on U.S. Highway 63 in 2019 is expected to help minimize delays and reduce the need for reroutes. Overall, as part of efforts to improve safety and mobility, in October 2023, the City of Waterloo, in partnership with INRCOG, received the U.S. DOT Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods Federal Allocation Grant to engage a study to relocate the Canadian National (CN) Railyard.

### Ridership vs. Coverage

Today's transit planners focus on balancing the trade-offs between ridership and coverage. Ridership prioritizes fewer, more direct routes with high-frequency service, whereas coverage involves offering a larger number of indirect routes with lower-frequency service. Systems that prioritize ridership tend to attract more passengers than coverage-oriented systems, as the latter often spread service too thin, making it less practical for individuals who have other transportation options, such as carpooling or ridesharing. A balance can be achieved by offering more direct routes to various areas, even if slightly fewer people live within that  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile radius. Figure 3.1 demonstrates the contrast between ridership- and coverage-focused systems.

Figure 3.1: Ridership vs. Coverage-Oriented Fixed Route Systems



Source: [humantransit.org](http://humantransit.org)

## Driver Recruitment and Retention

A significant challenge for MET Transit and Onboard Public Transit is finding and retaining qualified drivers. Many potential drivers are drawn to private agencies or school districts, which often offer higher salaries and more predictable schedules than public transit providers. Another barrier for MET Transit in recruiting drivers may be that drivers are required to start as part-time paratransit drivers and work their way up if they want a full-time position as a fixed route driver. While MET Transit works with drivers to help them secure the hours they need and offers opportunities to transition to full-time roles, this initial part-time requirement can be a tough hurdle for many prospective employees.



A major management challenge for Onboard Public Transit is hiring and retaining drivers. The role of a transit driver goes beyond just operating a bus; it requires a significant level of care and attention, particularly for riders who are physically challenged and require assistance with boarding, getting off, and reaching their destinations or appointments. Drivers must develop strong social skills, patience, and tolerance, as they often provide more than just a ride, but also a significant level of support for passengers. Many prospective applicants are not prepared for the demands of this role, leading to high turnover rates.

Onboard Public Transit has faced problems with recruitment and new drivers passing all necessary tests and licensing, leading to difficulties staying fully staffed. Currently, Waverly is assigned 2 buses, Independence 3 buses, Grundy Center 1 bus, and New Hampton 2 buses. This distribution is a result of the inadequate staffing of drivers, which limits the ability to allocate more vehicles to these locations. As a result, the transit service is operating with reduced capacity in certain areas, impacting the overall efficiency and coverage of the system.

Recruiting and retaining qualified drivers is compounded by the fact that the service area is geographically spread out, requiring drivers to either commute long distances or have buses parked at the drivers' residences. Onboard Public Transit added utility driver positions to use these drivers to fill in for other drivers and/or provide expanded service. However, these positions have often been vacant, putting a strain on the system's ability to meet current demand. The lack of drivers is also a limiting factor for expanding service in the region.

## Bus Replacement

The condition of MET Transit's fleet is generally in moderate shape, with 65 % of MET Transit's paratransit fleet having surpassed its Useful Life Benchmark (ULB), and 75 % of the fixed-route fleet is also beyond its ULB. In contrast, Onboard Public Transit's fleet is in relatively poor condition, with about 50 % of its vehicles surpassing the Useful Life Benchmark. Many of the buses purchased by MET Transit and Onboard Public Transit as part of the 2009 stimulus package are now aging and will soon need replacement. While another stimulus could offer short-term relief to transit agencies, only a long-term funding solution will provide the necessary assurance that these agencies will have the vehicles needed to maintain operations at their current level.

In FY 2014, the MPO used Surface Transportation Program (STP) funds, now known as the Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) Program, to fund its first-ever paratransit bus replacement. In FY 2017, the RTA followed suit by using STBG funds for the first and only bus replacement for the Onboard Public Transit. Additionally, some funding from the Iowa Clean Air Attainment Program (ICAAP) has been allocated for bus replacements.

However, these funding sources are unlikely to fully compensate for the reduction in funding resulting from the enactment of new federal transportation bills.

In 2018, Onboard Public Transit purchased 2 new minivans to replace existing buses beyond their useful life benchmark. The minivans were purchased using local funds rather than federal or state dollars. The vehicles have been a great addition to the Onboard Public Transit fleet, primarily providing economic services for trips with 3 or fewer passengers. The minivans are equipped to accommodate all riders, especially those with disabilities and special needs.

Being that most of the riders are individuals with disabilities, the minivans are well equipped with 2 wheelchair security locations and a manual ramp, fully ADA accessible and compliant, ensuring that people with disabilities have equal access to the transit system. This also aligns with Onboard Public Transit's commitment to providing inclusive transportation options for all community members. The decision to use minivans for these types of routes has proven successful, allowing the system to meet the needs of passengers without the high costs associated with larger buses.



Onboard Public Transit Minivans

Transit Hours of Operation are from Monday to Friday, 6:30 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. Office Hours for Reservations and Information are Monday to Friday, 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m., during which time you can make reservations, ask questions, and receive further assistance regarding routes, schedules, and other services. To ride the Onboard Public Transit, rides are scheduled through the website or by calling the service directly. To schedule a ride, reservations must be made at least 24 hours in advance to ensure that the system can accommodate all riders and plan for effective operations. Whether booking online or over the phone requires the provision of all necessary information, such as your pickup location, destination, and preferred time. To schedule a ride or make reservations, use this link: <https://onboardpublictransit.com/>

For riders with Limited English Proficiency, Over-the-phone interpreting is available to ensure equity and create access for all. Cost for Rides is \$2.00 per mile, with a minimum fare of \$8.00 for a one-way trip. This pricing structure helps keep the service affordable while providing flexibility based on the distance traveled. Whether you need to book a ride for a quick trip or a longer journey, this cost structure ensures transparency and ease when planning your travels.

Ultimately, Onboard Public Transit is considering expanding its fleet of minivans as a cost-effective option for future bus replacements. As these vehicles continue to demonstrate their reliability and operational efficiency, especially as Onboard Public Transit works to maintain service levels while managing budget constraints and vehicle replacements. The use of minivans represents a strategic way to balance cost, service delivery, and accessibility within the region's public transit system.

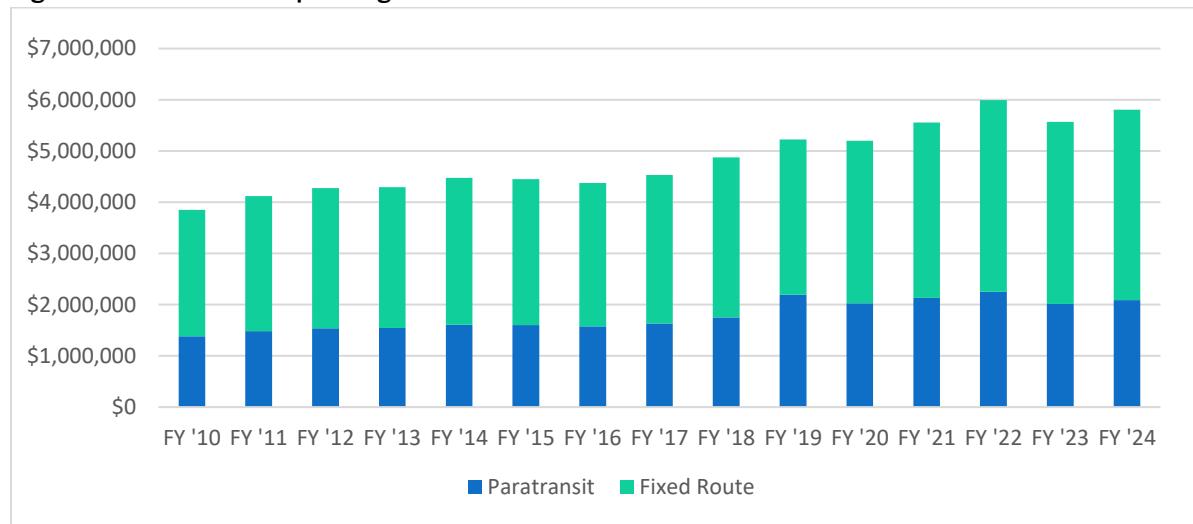


Onboard Public Transit Aging Fleet

## Increasing Costs

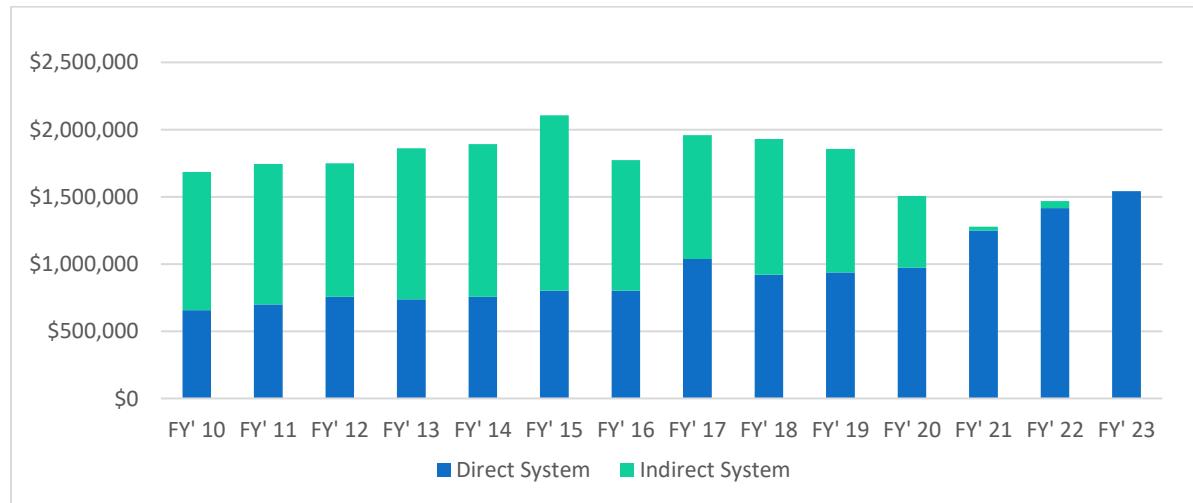
Operating costs have grown over the years. For MET Transit, operating expenses in FY 2010 for both fixed and paratransit totaled \$3.8 million; in FY 2013, operating costs rose to \$4.3 million; and in FY 2019, these costs increased to \$5.2 million. Ultimately, without increased funding from state or federal sources, either local funding or fares will have to increase, or services may need to decrease over time. Demands for additional bus routes, expanded service hours, and expanded service days are constrained by funding availability. For Onboard Public Transit, there was a substantial increase from FY 2010, with a peak in FY 2015 totaling \$2.1 million. Since then, costs have been rising at a steady rate, largely due to the rising cost of maintenance and fuel. The operating costs for the direct and indirect systems from 2010 to 2023 showed gradual increases in the early years, followed by a decline in recent times, with the direct system rising from FY 2017 from \$1,03 million to \$1.5 million in 2023. In recent times, the indirect system has seen a sharp decline since 2019, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, to an all-time low of \$52,803 in 2022, whilst the cost of operating the direct system continues to rebound on an increasing trend.

**Figure 3.1: MET Transit Operating Costs**



Source: MET Transit

**Figure 3.2: Onboard Public Transit Operating Costs**



Source: Onboard Public Transit

## Regulations

State and federal funding are critical to the operation of public transit, although the regulations that accompany the funding can make coordination and improving service challenging at times. The bureaucratic processes and rules involving items such as drug and alcohol testing, statistical reporting, and insurance requirements are some of the examples of regulations that have deterred potential coordination partners. Another issue that has historically affected public transit in the region is charter regulations. These rules limit the availability of charter services for individuals and organizations, making it harder for people to use these services for events like field trips or weddings. In many cases, customers are unable to access these services at all. Finding a balance between the purpose of these regulations and their real-world impact remains an ongoing challenge for both state and federal governments, as well as public transit providers.

## Medicaid Brokerage

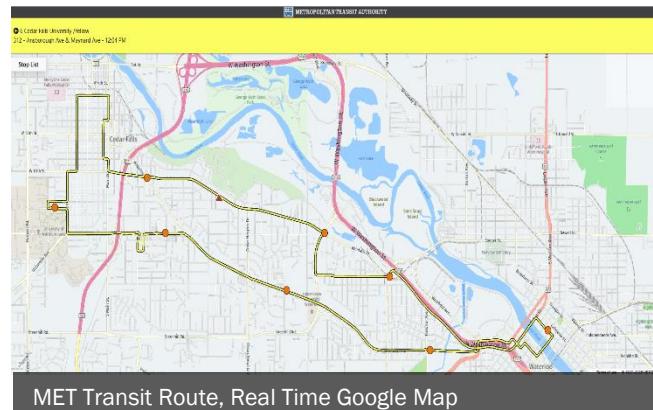
Recent changes in Iowa's Medicaid insurance programs continue to affect transit service within the region. Medicaid brokerage is now run by managed care organizations (MCOs). MET Transit and Onboard Public Transit continue to work on addressing the challenges involved with the implementation of this new system. Both transit agencies hired additional staff to assist with the modernization process. The modernization process initially hurt rides, but both transit agencies have experienced an increase over the past 2 years. A particular planning concern for MET Transit and Onboard Public Transit is physically disabled persons being transported by other transit providers in vehicles without wheelchair lifts. MET Transit works with clients to use the fixed route system, but winter months can be difficult for mobile-challenged people. MET Transit has a full-time staff member to assist with the process.

## Technology

The transition into the 4<sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution has greatly enhanced the use of technology in transit by introducing innovations that improve efficiency and passenger experience. Advances such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), GIS & GPS systems, IoT, and lots more are optimizing routes and increasing safety, while enabling real-time data collection for better decision-making and predictive maintenance. Smart ticketing and mobile payment systems have made fare collection faster and more convenient, and the shift to electric transit vehicles to reduced carbon emissions and overall promoted an environmentally friendly transit system that supports sustainability goals.

MET Transit now has GPS on all buses, which allows riders to track a bus online. The real-time map is available at

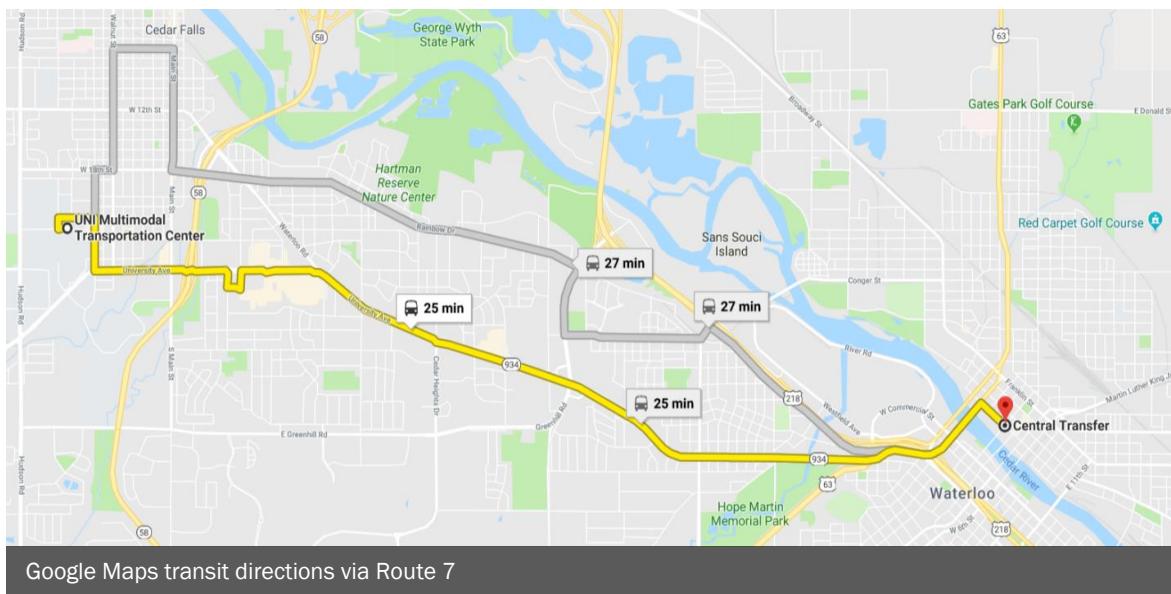
<https://transit.unitegps.com/mt>. GPS technology can provide real-time information displayed on screens or tickers at central locations, directly informing passengers. MET Transit has shown interest in these improvements, developing an easy-to-use app, and partnerships with entities like hospitals and educational institutions will be essential to extend these upgrades to additional transfer locations.



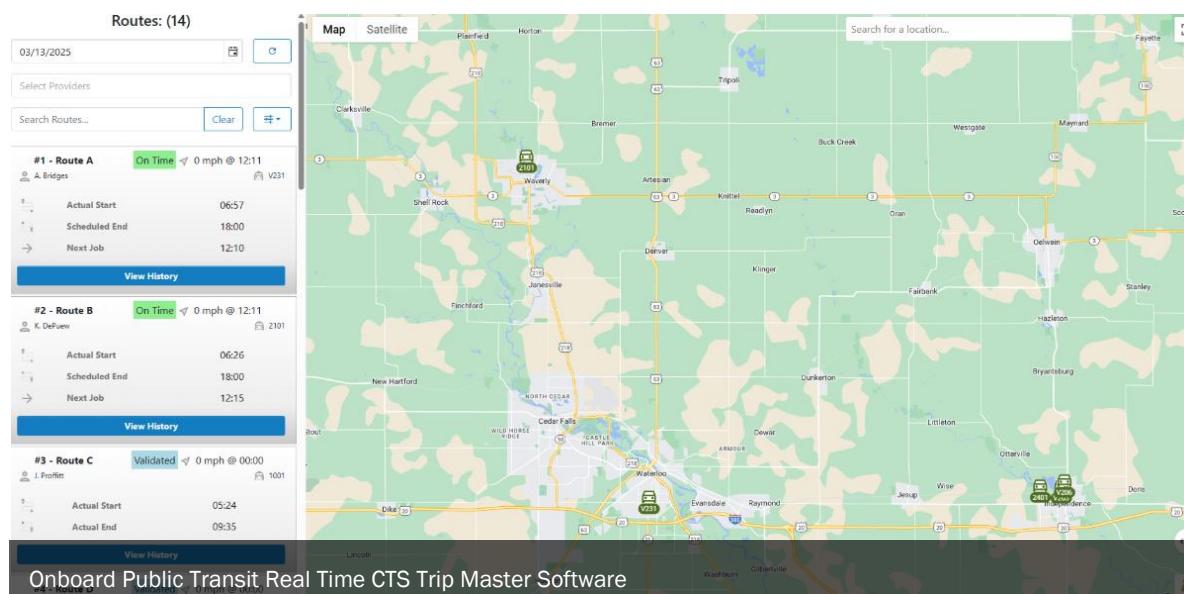
In 2015, MET Transit routes were made available on Google Maps. Users can now search for bus directions as they would for driving directions. Additional settings allow users to set the time they wish to depart or arrive, and the best routes are generated based on MET Transit's fixed route timetables. Other technological improvements implemented over the years include electronic fareboxes and video surveillance on all buses. Paratransit service is now scheduled through EchoLane, and vehicles have transitioned from the old paper-

pencil manifests to electronic tablets around 2016. The Text MET service has been discontinued, with the availability of a real-time map.

Onboard Public Transit's fleet of vehicles has all been updated, including video surveillance systems. Buses feature a 4-camera system focusing on the driver, the lift and entrance door, the interior of the bus from the back, and the road. The cameras have increased safety and security for the drivers and passengers. Onboard Public Transit has also used video recordings for incident investigation and risk management, as well as driver and management training.



In 2024, Onboard Public Transit implemented CTS Software's Trip Master program to streamline scheduling and dispatch for Onboard Public Transit. Modern technology allows for real-time communication across the fleet and the ability to access and control operations for multiple administrative staff remotely. This advancement has enhanced operational efficiency, coordination, connectivity, and overall improvement of the fleet management and riders' satisfaction.



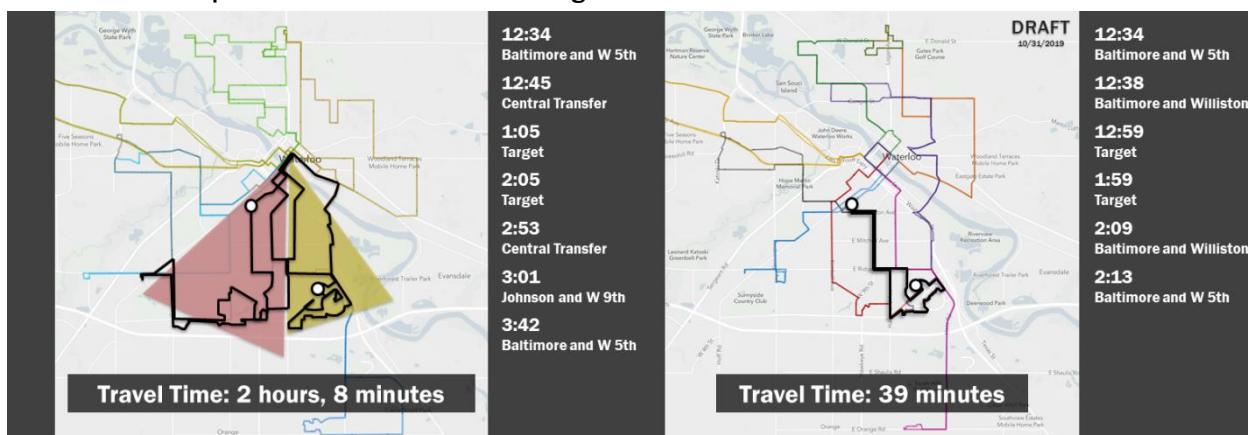
As mentioned earlier, MET Transit purchased a 3-year license for the transit planning software, Remix. Remix allows users to develop and analyze alternative fixed routes to determine how to maximize the use of available funds. Staff at MET Transit and INRCOG have access to this software and have met regularly to discuss the software's capabilities and opportunities for service improvement. Planners can analyze the effects of potential changes to fixed routes and how these changes would affect a route's coverage, service times, and connectivity to other routes.

Remix Software provides significant benefits across all areas, and MET Transit, along with INRCOG, will continue using it to assess the feasibility of long-term changes to the fixed route system. Over the past few decades, shifts in development patterns have altered where people live and work, impacting the effectiveness of transit services in certain areas. While several small adjustments have been made to individual bus routes over the years, MET Transit, in collaboration with INRCOG, commissioned SRF Consulting Group to conduct a study aimed at restructuring the existing routes. As a result, in September 2024, the proposal was made to transform the current looped system into a network of bidirectional, corridor-based routes. This bi-directional service is preferred as it allows passengers to choose the direction that best suits their trip, rather than having to complete an entire loop to reach their destination, with a new bi-directional route in contrast to the previously existing loop system.

With the Remix software, MET Transit and INRCOG staff have continued to review data to identify entirely new fixed route network scenarios, which in turn can be compared against each other to identify routes that maximize ridership, coverage, frequency, and cost effectiveness. These analyses will also help identify new transfer locations, such as hospitals and shopping centers, where multiple routes from different directions can intersect. In addition, new routes can be explored that do not terminate at Central Transfer, as most routes currently do.

MET Transit's new fixed Route addresses many of the shortcomings of the existing route structure without requiring additional resources. First and foremost, it streamlines most of MET Transit's loop routes to form a robust network of bidirectional transit corridors. These achieve similar coverage to the current route network, with the added benefit of enabling riders to travel in both directions without riding an extra 30- or 60-minute loop or heading to the central station to make a transfer. With this new restructured route system, riders can make transfers at various transfer points where the route overlaps bi-directionally, promoting efficiency.

**Comparison of travel time on existing fixed routes vs. the new fixed routes scenario**



Ultimately, service improvements in the region are limited by available funding, while notable coverage gaps exist in areas like the Airline Highway in Waterloo and the Cedar Terrace and North Cedar neighborhoods in Cedar Falls. The lack of evening service further restricts transit effectiveness for some commuters. As the population of newcomers and immigrants continues to grow, there is an increasing need for enhanced transit

options to better serve these communities. Further, the rise of ridesharing services such as Lyft and Uber presents an opportunity to increase ridership, allowing passengers to take a bus in a direction and use rideshare services for the return trip. For example, employees could take the bus to work and use ridesharing services like Uber for their return trip in the evening. Overall improvements will depend on securing more funding to address coverage gaps and provide better service accessibility for all residents.

## Coordination of Services and Marketing

Given constrained transit budgets, cost and time efficiency are always important considerations. Coordination efforts are undertaken by MET, Onboard Public Transit, and various agencies in the INRCOG region. Joint contracts between these organizations have helped to improve the efficiency of the regional transit systems.

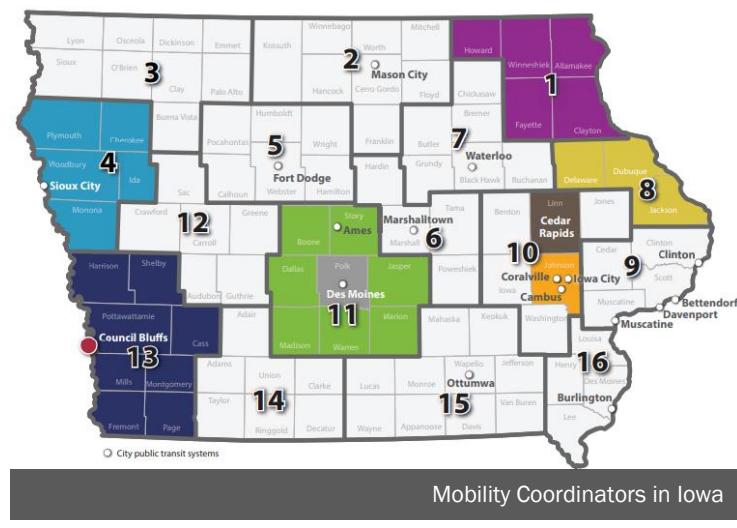
Mobility management has been a planning emphasis over the past 10 years, both nationally and in Iowa.

Mobility managers, or mobility coordinators, assist individuals in navigating from their origin to their destination, regardless of the number of modes of transportation required.

Referrals are made to public and private transportation providers alike. Mobility coordinators can provide travel training, showing people how to ride the bus if they have never had that experience. Mobility coordinators also meet with human service agencies, businesses, and other organizations to inform them of the public transit services available.

Currently, there is no mobility coordinator located in the region. MET and Onboard Public Transit have discussed jointly hiring a mobility

coordinator and marketing person, and this remains as an identified need. The Iowa DOT has a Statewide Mobility Coordinator who educates public transit agencies, planning organizations, and other statewide organizations about the benefits of mobility management. Both MET and Onboard Public Transit plan to continue to work closely with the Statewide Mobility Coordinator to coordinate transit services in the region.



## Passenger Transportation Survey

The most recent survey conducted by INRCOG, the 2024 Passenger Transportation Survey, was designed to identify existing transportation challenges and opportunities across the region. The survey targeted local organizations and agencies, with about 21 organizations and agencies participating in the region to gather valuable information on clients' primary destinations, the transportation modes used by both clients and employees, and other mobility factors in the region. The insights gathered from the survey played a key role in shaping the development of INRCOG's Passenger Transportation Plan, which aims to improve transportation services and address the evolving needs of these communities.

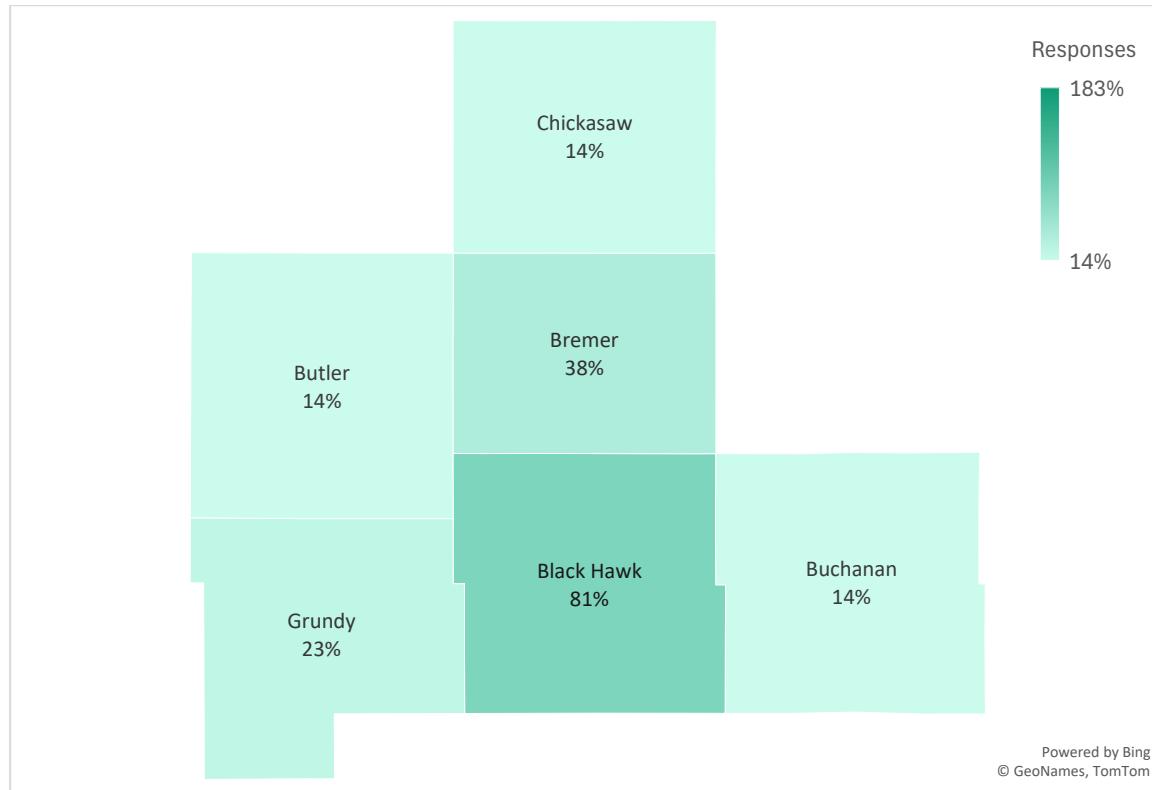
The survey consisted of 8 questions and an opportunity for written comments. Agencies were also provided with the opportunity to complete the survey manually, as well as notifications of the survey through mailings, email, and INRCOG's website.

Common needs and coordination issues identified by the organizations include the following:

- Extend Transportation Hours and Routes, which typically operate from 05:45 am to 5:00 pm
- Expand Transportation services by identifying and adding new routes to create fewer gaps in service

- Waverly and Grundy Center are the top destination cities outside of the Black Hawk County metropolitan area.
- The top primary destinations for clients are medical appointments, work or job search, shopping, and education.
- 85.71 % of respondents agree that there is a lack of available transportation due to the growing demand for transportation services in their agencies.
- 76.19% of respondents agree with gaps in the transportation service area and service hours
- 57.14 % of the respondents agree with increasing the cost of available transportation services
- 31 % of respondents agree that the primary mode of transportation for themselves and their clients is personal vehicles, 26 % public transit, 21 % agency-provided transportation, 10 % ridesharing, and 4.5 % active transportation such as biking and walking.
- 75 % of respondents would be interested in supporting transportation initiatives through collaboration across agencies, 70 % through community outreach and Engagement.
- Limited transportation service availability on weekday nights and on the weekends hurts clients.

#### Counties: Typical Clients live



Ultimately, the survey results emphasize the need for more rural transportation options outside of the Black Hawk Metropolitan area, subsidized rideshare programs, and affordable on-demand services. Further collaboration to improve understanding of the bus system and expanding service areas to maximum coverage, and reducing service gaps are also key priorities for improving the transportation services.

# Section 4 – Priorities and Strategies

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## Goals and Objectives

The MPO identified 7 goals specifically for the 2050 Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), which are to:

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

The MPO also adopted several objectives to help achieve these goals and performance measurements to track the progress toward meeting the objectives. Objectives and performance measurements specific to providing a high degree of multimodal accessibility (transit services) are as follows:

**Table 4.1**

Objective	Performance Measurement	MPO Baseline Condition Data (2024)
A greater number of trips are made using public transit	Total number of fixed route rides using MET Transit	190,997
Decrease the % of MET Transit's vehicles that are beyond the Useful Life Benchmark (ULB)	% of revenue vehicles within an asset class that have met or exceeded ULB  % of non-revenue vehicles that have met or exceeded ULB	Buses: 75% Minibuses: 47%  Non-revenue: 20%
Transit facilities remain in good condition.	% of MET Transit's facilities with a condition rating below 3.0	Facilities: 0%
Increase the number of bus shelters in the metropolitan area.	Number of bus shelters	17

The FY 2026–2030 Passenger Transportation Plan outlines targeted strategies developed through public input from a survey conducted in 2024 in collaboration with the Transit Advisory Committee (TAC), which comprises major stakeholders from various organizations and nonprofits within the MPO. These improvements encompass capital, labor, and policy change and are tied to specific action items, objectives, timelines, and responsible parties. The plan aims not only to identify key improvements but also to serve as a catalyst for enhancing the public transportation system. The TAC has established high-impact, easily implementable goals, supported by specific objectives to guide their implementation, including:

1. Provide equitable access to current Transportation Systems
2. Increase Safety and Reliability
3. Plan for future needs while adapting to evolving trends through 2050
4. Provide a high degree of multimodal accessibility.

## Projects and Initiatives

The table below outlines the projects and initiatives recommended by the TAC for the duration of this plan. Projects funded through Section 5310 must be specifically included in the Passenger Transportation Plan; all other identified projects and initiatives are encouraged, although not mandatory.

The Transit Advisory Committee (TAC) held work sessions to identify and prioritize high-impact, achievable goals for the 2026–2030 PTP. Additional goals were considered, most of which overlapped with previous plans but were constrained by funding and feasibility issues. As a result, these were not prioritized for near-term implementation.

Prioritized Projects/Initiatives Based on Impact & Ease of Implementation		
Project	Impact	Ease
Comprehensive Marketing Strategy	Medium	Medium
How to Ride Signage	High	High
Community & Business Outreach	High	Low
TAC-Led Marketing Strategy	High	Low
Follow-Up Outreach for Marginalized Groups	High	Low
Multilingual Access & Inclusion	High	Low
Free Ride “Try Transit Out” Event	High	Low
Conduct Quarterly Informational/Campaign Event	Medium	Low
Continuing to explore efficiencies in Transit Routes	High	High
Mobility Coordinator/Marketing Role	High	Low
Transit Audits	Low	High
Extend Weekday & Saturday Hours	Low	High
Passenger Staging Area Improvements	High	Medium
Vanpools for Regional Employers	Low	Low
Micromobility Integration Feasibility Study	High	High
Consider Additional Seasonal Routes to Points of Interest	High	High
Continued Performance Monitoring & KPIs	High	High
Driver Workforce Development	High	High
First/Last Mile Solutions	High	Low
Inventory sidewalk network along and in the identified proximity to transit fixed routes	High	Low
Preventive Maintenance – Section 5310 Funding	High	High
Fleet Efficiency Planning	Low	Low
Fleet Capacity Audit	High	High
Offer audio and visual route and schedule information at Central Transfer and on-board buses.	High	Medium
Partner with Local Agencies and Organizations to Create Art and Designs to Place on Buses and Facilities	Low	High
Transit Ambassador Program	High	Medium
Technology Equity Outreach	High	Low
Innovative Technology	High	Low
Explore the Implementation of Digital Forms of Ticketing	High	Low
Real-Time Rider Feedback	Medium	High
Continued Advocacy for State Participation in the Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission	Low	High
Emergency Operations Planning	High	High

**Table 4.2: Recommended Goals and Objectives – Transit Advisory Committee**

No	Project / Initiative	Goal / Objective	Description	Lead Agencies	Timeline / Status
1.	How to Ride Signage	Foster Accessibility and a user-friendly bus riding experience	Provide Signage across strategic and existing locations with a QR code with translations on how to ride MET	MET, INRCOG	Spring 2026
2.	Continuing to Explore Efficiencies in Transit Routes	Improve service efficiency and navigability.	Look for areas of gaps or underutilized routes to simplify the rider experience and maximize performance.	MET Transit	2026-2030
3.	Micromobility Integration Feasibility Study	Fill first/last mile gaps.	Assess potential for micromobility partnerships and funding mechanisms. Determine/identify areas where such a service would be most impactful/utilized.	MET Transit, INRCOG, TAC, & Local Jurisdictions	Feasibility phase
4.	Consider Additional Seasonal Routes to Points of Interest	Enhance passenger access to destinations while supporting the local economy	Determine/identify areas where seasonal destinations may exist. Explore whether an on-demand, shuttle service, or fixed route may be a necessary service.	MET Transit, TAC, INRCOG, GCV	2026-2030
5.	Continued Performance Monitoring & KPIs	Enable data-driven decisions for planning and funding	Implement KPIs (e.g., on-time performance, cost/trip, ridership by route) to monitor and improve operations.	MET Transit, Onboard Public Transit	Ongoing
6.	Free Ride “Try Transit Out!” Event	Promote ridership and system awareness.	Educational free ride campaign for various populations to promote awareness of the services.	MET Transit	May 2026
7.	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.	MET Transit, Onboard Public Transit	2026-2030
8.	Partner with Local Agencies and Organizations to Create Art and Designs to Place on Buses and Facilities	Promote local partnerships and generate passenger familiarity with the service.	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.	MET Transit, Onboard Public Transit, INRCOG	2026-2030
9	Emergency Operations Planning	Ensure continuity during disruptions.	Develop a disaster resilience and emergency operations plan for MET and Onboard Public Transit systems.	BHC EMA, MET Transit, Onboard Public Transit, & INRCOG	2026-2030

Based on the 2024 community survey and TAC input, a set of priorities and initiatives has been developed for the 2026–2030 PTP to address key passenger transportation challenges within the MPO. Each Initiative has clear objectives, strategies, lead agencies, and timelines to support coordinated and measurable progress. The projects and initiatives in Table 4.2 focus on practical, high-impact, and easily implementable solutions that align with TAC's goals, targeting service improvements, infrastructure upgrades, provider coordination, and expanded access to enhance transportation accessibility and efficiency across the region.

## How To Ride Signage

The “How to Ride the Bus” signage initiative aims to enhance accessibility throughout Waterloo, Cedar Falls, and the greater Cedar Valley area by removing language and informational barriers. This is especially crucial for the region’s growing immigrant population and visitors unfamiliar with the transit system. Signage will be placed at key locations and will feature QR codes that link to translated instructions, helping to bridge language gaps and encourage independent transit use. The project is currently underway and is expected to be completed in Spring 2026.

PROJECT/INITIATIVE:		SIGNAGE "HOW TO RIDE"
<b>1. Flag Down</b>	<b>TIMELINE</b>	Ongoing – Spring 2026
Wave to a MET bus at any street corner on a route—no bus stop needed!	<b>PROPOSED BY</b>	INRCOG & MET Transit
<b>2. Board</b> Adult: \$1.50 Senior/Disabled/Students: \$0.75 Kids under 6 free!	<b>LEAD AGENCIES</b>	MET Transit, INRCOG, & Local Jurisdictions
<b>3. Request Stop</b> Ring the stop signal one block before your stop. Cross safely!	<b>STRATEGY</b>	Design Signage in simple language and QR code, and Explore Multilingual Digital resources, & Install signage in selected Strategic locations.
	<b>NEED(S) ADDRESSED</b>	Accessibility for the community & Immigrant population, Language Barrier

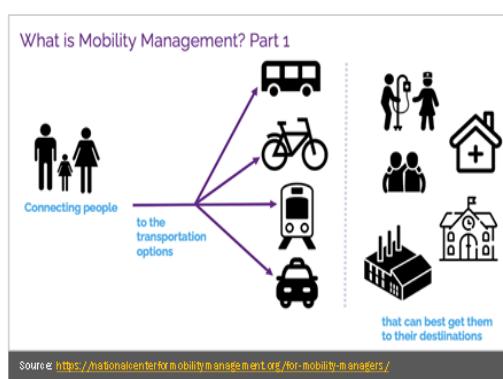
## Continuing to Explore Efficiencies in Transit Routes

This project initiative aims to improve transit route efficiency throughout the Cedar Valley area by maximizing services in high-ridership areas and identifying gaps in underserved areas or areas of recent development with potential for high ridership.

PROJECT/INITIATIVE:		EFFICIENCIES IN TRANSIT ROUTES
	<b>TIMELINE</b>	2026-2030
	<b>PROPOSED BY</b>	MET Transit & Onboard Public Transit
	<b>LEAD AGENCIES</b>	MET Transit, & Onboard Public Transit
	<b>STRATEGY</b>	Route Performance – Ridership & on-time data, Target Service Adjustments Based on Demands.
	<b>NEED(S) ADDRESSED</b>	Service Gaps, Reduce Excessive Wait Time, Route Reliability, and Rider Experience

## Micromobility Integration Feasibility Study

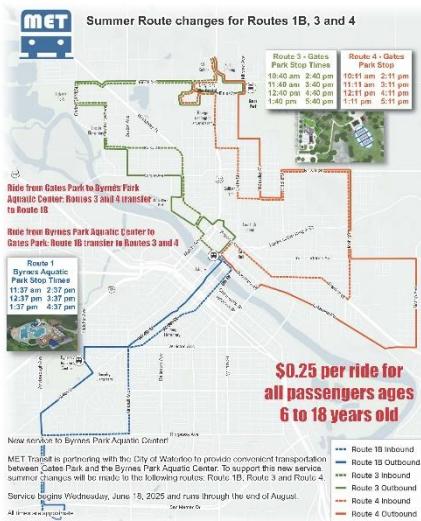
Exploring micromobility opportunities with a focus on developing a sustainable vision for integrating small, low-speed transportation options. The effort aims to evaluate the feasibility of introducing modes such as bicycles, e-bikes, scooters, e-scooters, smaller electric vehicles, and vans within the MET service area. The goal is to enhance first- and last-mile connectivity, expand transportation access, and advance a more sustainable and integrated regional mobility system.



PROJECT/INITIATIVE: MICROMOBILITY INTEGRATION	
<b>TIMELINE</b>	2026-2030
<b>PROPOSED BY</b>	MET Transit, INRCOG, & TAC
<b>LEAD AGENCIES</b>	MET Transit, INRCOG & Local Jurisdictions
<b>STRATEGY</b>	Partnership with Micromobility providers & connection between hubs & Transit stations
<b>NEED(S) ADDRESSED</b>	First & last mile connectivity, alternative and flexible travel modes for the community, Promoting Sustainability.

### Consider Additional Seasonal Routes to Points of Interest

The ongoing initiative by MET Transit, specifically during the summer seasonal service, aims to connect popular recreational spots, including Gates Park and Byrnes Park Aquatic Center, in Waterloo. Seasonal updates to Routes 1B, 3, and 4 provide direct, convenient transit between these parks through August, with discounted fares of just \$0.25 per trip for passengers aged 6 to 18. This goal seeks to expand the seasonal routes to other points of interest within the Cedar Valley Area.



PROJECT/INITIATIVE:		SEASONAL ROUTES TO POINTS OF INTEREST
<b>TIMELINE</b>	2026-2030	
<b>PROPOSED BY</b>	TAC, INRCOG & MET Transit	
<b>LEAD AGENCIES</b>	MET Transit, INRCOG, TAC & GCV	
<b>STRATEGY</b>	Expand Routes to Strategic spots of interest, Eliminate connecting stops to Central station, & Monitor ridership data & feedback during the seasonal service period	
<b>NEED(S) ADDRESSED</b>	Supports health & wellness, increased family-friendly summer activity, and encourages kids, youths & families to enjoy parks and other recreational facilities.	

## Continued Performance Monitoring & KPIs

MET Transit uses performance metrics aligned with federal legislation (e.g., FAST Act, IIJA/BIL) and meets requirements of federal and state funding programs (e.g., FTA Sections 5307, 5310, 5311), which require data-driven reporting to justify funding and ensure compliance.

PROJECT/INITIATIVE:	PERFORMANCE MONITORING & KPIS
	<b>TIMELINE</b> Ongoing
	<b>PROPOSED BY</b> MET Transit
	<b>LEAD AGENCIES</b> MET Transit & Onboard Public Transit
	<b>STRATEGY</b> Monitor On-time Performance, cost/trip, & ridership data.
	<b>NEED(S) ADDRESSED</b> Support data-driven planning & Decision making, Address funding & resource limitations, Transparency, and public accountability.

## Free Ride “Try Transit Out!” Event

As part of ongoing efforts to increase community awareness of transit use, the Free Ride “Try Transit Out!” event aims to promote ridership and understanding of the transit system. This educational, fare-free campaign targets various populations across the Cedar Valley area, including students, seniors, and first-time riders, encouraging them to explore MET services, understand available routes, and experience the convenience of public transportation.

PROJECT/INITIATIVE:	FREE RIDE “TRY TRANSIT OUT” EVENT
	<b>TIMELINE</b> 2026
	<b>PROPOSED BY</b> MET Transit, INRCOG & TAC
	<b>LEAD AGENCIES</b> MET Transit, INRCOG, Boys & Girls Club
	<b>STRATEGY</b> Target Outreach & Marketing Campaigns, Partner with Community groups & institutions, Offer Multilingual Resources
	<b>NEED(S) ADDRESSED</b> Increased Awareness & Knowledge, Reduced Barriers to Transit Use, Encouraged Ridership, and Accessibility for a Diverse Population.

## Driver Workforce Development

The driver workforce development goal focuses on supporting the recruitment, training, and retention of transit staff by launching CDL training programs, offering retention incentives, and implementing cross-training to ensure flexible staffing. Additionally, MET Transit and Onboard Public Transit will engage with other agencies to learn best practices and improve workforce strategies.



### PROJECT/INITIATIVE: DRIVER WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT



<b>TIMELINE</b>	2026-2030
<b>PROPOSED BY</b>	MET Transit & Onboard Public Transit
<b>LEAD AGENCIES</b>	MET Transit & Onboard Public Transit
<b>STRATEGY</b>	In-house & Partnered Trainings, Cross-trainings, Retention & Hiring Incentives, Partner with local workforce groups
<b>NEED(S) ADDRESSED</b>	Driver shortages & Service Reliability, High Turnover Rate, Lack of Operational Flexibility, and Career Growth Opportunities.

## Emergency Operation Planning

The initiative is to ensure service continuity in the case of emergencies such as flooding, severe weather conditions, etc., by developing a comprehensive disaster resilience and emergency operations plan for MET and Onboard Public Transit systems. Although there is no separate emergency plan specifically for transit in the MPO, there is collaboration with the Black Hawk County Emergency Management Agency (BHC EMA) to ensure that transit is operational in the MPO's overall emergency plan updates. This coordination would help to maintain safe, reliable transportation for evacuation or other needs during emergencies.

### PROJECT/INITIATIVE: EMERGENCY OPERATION PLANNING



<b>TIMELINE</b>	2026-2030
<b>PROPOSED BY</b>	INRCOG & MET Transit
<b>LEAD AGENCIES</b>	BHC EMA, MET Transit, Onboard Public Transit, & INRCOG
<b>STRATEGY</b>	Collaborate with the BHC Emergency Management Agency & develop an Operational Transit emergency plan.
<b>NEED(S) ADDRESSED</b>	Enhance Public Safety, Promote Transit's Role in Community Resilience.

## Partner with Local Agencies & Organizations to Create Ads, Art, and Designs to Place on Buses & Facilities.



To strengthen community connections and promote awareness of MET Transit & Onboard Public Transit service, this initiative is to host an annual “Design the Next Bus Wrap” contest, inviting local artists, students, and organizations to submit artwork for a chance to be featured on a MET bus. This initiative will also support small business visibility through local marketing strategies such as bus advertising, co-branded campaigns, and event partnerships, which help promote both transit use and economic growth across the Cedar Valley region.

### PROJECT/INITIATIVE: PARTNERSHIP WITH LOCAL AGENCIES & ORGANIZATIONS

	<b>TIMELINE</b>	2026-2030
	<b>PROPOSED BY</b>	MET Transit & Onboard Public Transit
	<b>LEAD AGENCIES</b>	MET Transit, Onboard Public Transit, INRCOG & TAC
	<b>STRATEGY</b>	Annual Bus wrap design contest, Advertising opportunities for small businesses, Partner with local events & organizations
	<b>NEED(S) ADDRESSED</b>	Boost local Business Visibility & Economic Support, Increase Community Engagement, Strengthen Partnerships in the Cedar Valley Area.

In addition to the primary priorities, the Transit Advisory Committee recognized several other important goals that address broader challenges and opportunities within the Cedar Valley transit system. These goals, while impactful, may face constraints such as funding limitations or longer timelines for implementation, but remain critical to advancing the region's transportation future.

**Table 4.3: Additional Goals and Objectives Identified – Transit Advisory Committee**

No	Project / Initiative	Goal / Objective	Description	Lead Agencies
1	Comprehensive Marketing Strategy	Raise awareness of MET/Onboard Public Transit services	Use traditional and digital media; consider external marketing expertise	Onboard Public Transit, MET Transit, TAC, Waterloo & CF CSD/Youth City Council
2	Community & Business Outreach	Strengthening partnerships and visibility	Host events, promote services with local organizations, and advertise via tech platforms.	MET Transit, INRCOG, Onboard Public Transit, TAC, GCV, Iowa Works
3	TAC-Led Marketing Strategy	Boost system image and usage.	TAC to lead marketing plans for MET/Onboard Public Transit, using media and community engagement	MET Transit, INRCOG, Onboard Public Transit, TAC
4	Follow-Up Outreach for Marginalized Groups	Improve access and awareness.	Surveys for non-English speakers, the unemployed, the unhoused, persons with disabilities, and other vulnerable populations to identify service gaps	MET Transit, INRCOG, Onboard Public Transit, TAC, BCPH, and Homelessness Task Force
5	Multilingual Access & Inclusion	Enhance equity in communication and services.	Translate printed/digital materials and apps into the top 3 to 5 non-English languages in the region.	MET Transit, INRCOG, TAC, BHC, HCC
6	Conduct Quarterly Informational/Campaign Event	Provide consistent outreach and updates to agencies and the public	Determine existing events and locations in areas where transit is either offered or needed to promote the service and increase ridership	MET Transit, INRCOG

No	Project / Initiative	Goal / Objective	Description	Lead Agencies
7	Mobility Coordinator / Marketing Role	Improve coordination and outreach.	Explore the feasibility of a joint position to support navigation, outreach, education, and cross-agency coordination. Interview other agencies' staff mobility coordinators to learn from their experiences.	MET Transit, Onboard Public Transit, Local Jurisdictions
8	Transit Audits	Identify barriers and improve user experience.	Walk-through of the full rider journey by stakeholders to gather feedback and identify gaps	INRCOG, TAC, MET Transit
9	Extend Weekday & Saturday Hours	Improve service availability	Explore the feasibility of an expanded fixed route vs on-demand hours to serve evening and shift commuters. Identify other potential solutions to support the demand.	MET Transit
10	Passenger Staging Area Improvements	Enhance rider comfort and ADA compliance.	Add shelters, benches, bike racks, trash bins, lighting, signage, and maps in proximity to areas of frequent passenger usage.	MET Transit, Local Jurisdictions
11	Vanpools for Regional Employers	Expand regional mobility options.	Support vanpooling through partnerships and subsidies (e.g., Enterprise Commute).	Vanpools for Regional Employers
12	First/Last Mile Solutions	Improve rural and low-density access to transit.	Partners with taxi services, TNCs, micromobility providers, and volunteer programs to bridge mobility gaps and unmet needs.	MET Transit, Onboard Public Transit, Local Jurisdictions,
13	Inventory sidewalk network along and in the identified proximity to transit fixed routes	Improve passenger access to fixed-route service areas. Educate decision makers on the importance of these connections.	Partner with Complete Streets and the Bike and Ped Commission to identify gaps and areas of needed repair in the pedestrian infrastructure as it relates to accessing the fixed-route service area. Develop a proposed Capital Improvement Plan to implement and seek funding for necessary improvements.	MET Transit, INRCOG, Local Jurisdictions

No	Project / Initiative	Goal / Objective	Description	Lead Agencies
14	Fleet Efficiency Planning	Maximize Fleet Performance and Longevity	Start the roadmap for electrification or clean fuel conversion of the fleet and facility upgrades. Identify funding sources to subsidize.	MET Transit, Onboard Public Transit
15	Offer audio and visual route and schedule information at Central Transfer and on-board buses.	Ensure accessibility to accurate service information for passengers	Place screens, audio equipment, and paper media in the fleet and facilities that provide information to the passengers	MET Transit
16	Transit Ambassador Program	Increase transit literacy through peer-to-peer education	Train high school students, immigrant ambassadors, and other identified populations to educate community members using videos and demonstrations	MET Transit, INRCOG, TAC, WCSD
17	Technology Equity Outreach	Ensure fair access to digital tools.	Offer training for seniors, non-tech users on trip planning apps, mobile ticketing, etc.	MET Transit, Onboard Public Transit, TAC
18	Innovative Technology	Provide a mobile application for MET Services.	Promote an integrated mobile application for accessing MET's real-time services.	MET Transit, INRCOG
19	Explore the Implementation of Digital Forms of Ticketing	Enhance the rider experience and attract more choice riders	Offer cashless options for passengers or online ticket purchase options. Review other agencies that offer digital ticketing.	MET Transit, INRCOG
20	Real-Time Rider Feedback	Improve rider satisfaction through responsive engagement	Deploy QR-coded feedback forms at bus stops and onboard vehicles for continuous rider input	MET Transit
21	Continued Advocacy for State Participation in the Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission	Expand long-range/interstate passenger transportation options for Iowa residents.	Promote awareness at a local level to generate state-level advocacy	INRCOG, City of Waterloo, Iowa DOT, All Aboard & Ride the Rail

# Section 5 – Funding

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There are several federal, state, and local funding opportunities for transit programs and projects. The largest amount of funding is distributed by formula to states and large metropolitan areas. Other program funds are discretionary or earmarked for specific projects. The following section provides an overview of federal, state, and local funding sources available.

## Federal Funding

### **Metropolitan Transportation Planning Program (Section 5303 and 5305)**

FTA provides funding for this program to the state based on its urbanized area populations. The funds are dedicated to supporting transportation planning projects in urbanized areas with more than 50,000 people. In Iowa, these funds are administered by the Iowa DOT's Systems Planning Bureau and distributed annually to each of the state's 9 metropolitan planning organizations through a funding formula. This program can support any MPO costs related to intermodal transportation planning activities for the urbanized area.



### **Statewide Transportation Planning Program (Section 5304 and 5305)**

These funds come to the state based on population and are used to support transportation planning projects in non-urbanized areas. Iowa uses these funds, combined with Section 5311 funds, to support a system of regional planning affiliations (RPAs). The RPAs are responsible for local intermodal transportation planning in areas of the state not included in an MPO. The combined 5304 and 5311 funds are distributed annually to each of Iowa's 18 RPAs through a funding formula.

### **Urbanized Area Formula Grants Program (Section 5307)**

FTA provides transit operating, planning, and capital assistance funds directly to local recipients in urbanized areas with populations between 50,000 and 200,000. Assistance amounts are based on population and density figures and transit performance factors for larger areas.

### **Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program (Section 5310)**

Funding is provided through this program to increase mobility for the elderly and persons with disabilities. The program aims to improve mobility for seniors and individuals with disabilities by removing barriers to transportation services and expanding transportation options. Part of the funding is administered along with the nonurbanized funding, with the remaining funds allocated among urbanized transit systems in areas with a population of less than 200,000. Urbanized areas with more than 200,000 in population receive a direct allocation. Traditional Section 5310 projects include buses and vans; wheelchair lifts, ramps, and securement devices; transit-related information technology systems; mobility management programs; and building accessible paths to bus stops.

### **Nonurbanized Area Formula Assistance Program (Section 5311)**

This program provides capital and operating assistance for rural and small urban transit systems. 15 % of these funds are allocated to intercity bus projects. A portion of the funding is also allocated to support rural transit planning. The remaining funds are combined with the rural portion (30 %) of Section 5310 funds and allocated among regional and small urban transit systems based on their relative performance in the prior year.

### **Rural Transit Assistance Program (Section 5311(b)(3))**

This funding is used for statewide training events and to support transit funding fellowships for regional and small urban transit staff or planners.

### **Bus and Bus Facilities Program (Section 5339)**

This formula program provides federal assistance for major capital needs, such as fleet replacement and construction of transit facilities. All transit systems in the state are eligible for this program.

### **Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) Program**

This program is designed to address specific issues identified by Congress and provides flexible funding for projects to preserve or improve the condition and performance of several transportation facilities. The Iowa DOT provides programming authority for allotments of STBG funds to MPOs and RPAs. The flexible nature of STBG funds allows them to be used for all types of transportation projects, including roadway projects on federal-aid routes, bridge projects on any public road, transit capital improvements, Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) eligible activities, and planning activities. Iowa has implemented a Swap program that allows MPOs and RPAs, at their discretion, to swap targeted federal STBG funding for state Primary Road Fund dollars. Transit capital improvement projects are generally not swap-eligible.

### **Iowa Clean Air Attainment Program (ICAAP)**

ICAAP funds projects that are intended to maximize emission reductions through traffic flow improvements, reduced vehicle miles of travel, and reduced single-occupancy vehicle trips. Funds are programmed for road and transit projects through a statewide application process based on their anticipated air quality or congestion relief benefits.

## **State Funding**



### **State Transit Assistance (STA)**

All public transit systems are eligible for this funding. These funds can be used by the public transit system for operating, capital, or planning expenses related to the provision of open-to-the-public passenger transportation. 97 % of funding is distributed among eligible transit systems using a performance-based distribution formula calculated on prior year statistics for rides, miles, operating cost, and local support. At least \$300,000 is reserved for special

projects each year. These can include individual special projects for new services needed to support human services coordination, statewide transit training needs, and emergency projects.

### **Public Transit Infrastructure Grant (PTIG) Program**

This program is funded annually by the state legislature to provide funding assistance to support the vertical infrastructure needs of Iowa's public transit systems. Projects can involve new construction, reconstruction, or remodeling, but must include a vertical component to qualify. Projects are evaluated based on anticipated benefits to transit, as well as the ability to have projects completed quickly.

### **State Transit Assistance Special Project Program**

The Iowa DOT sets aside \$600,000 from State Transit Assistance funds annually to fund training fellowships (\$175,000) and special projects (\$425,000). After consulting with Iowa's public transit agencies in Spring 2024, the total amount of State Transit Assistance funds set aside annually for special projects and large urban training fellowships increased from \$300,000 to \$600,000. This allows for more training opportunities for large urban transit systems, more flexibility to fund projects of statewide transit significance, and greater ability to fund pilot projects and studies. All 35 designated Iowa public transit systems are eligible to apply. Iowa Public Transit Association may also apply for projects benefiting all public transit agencies.

## **Local Funding**

### **Municipal Transit Levy**

Iowa law authorizes municipalities to levy up to 95 cents per \$1,000 of assessed taxable property to support the cost of a public transit system. Most of Iowa's larger communities levy support for their urban transit systems. Several smaller communities use this authority to generate funding used to support services contracted from their designated regional transit system. Within the metropolitan area, the City of Waterloo and the City of Cedar Falls have transit lines in place.

### **General Fund Levy**

The cost of supporting transit services is an eligible use of general fund revenues for all Iowa governments and is the primary source of funding to support transit for counties that do not have the option of a transit levy, as well as for cities that choose not to use the transit levy. Onboard Public Transit receives a small amount of support through such levies.

### **Passenger Revenue**

Fees paid by the passengers are some of the most common sources of local support. This can include monies collected on board the transit vehicle (usually called "fare box receipts"), as well as prepaid fares from the sale of passes or tickets, or fares billed to the passenger after the fact.

### **Contract Revenue**

Human service agencies, local communities, as well as private businesses are often willing to pay part or all the cost for certain types of rides provided as part of the open-to-the-public transit operation.

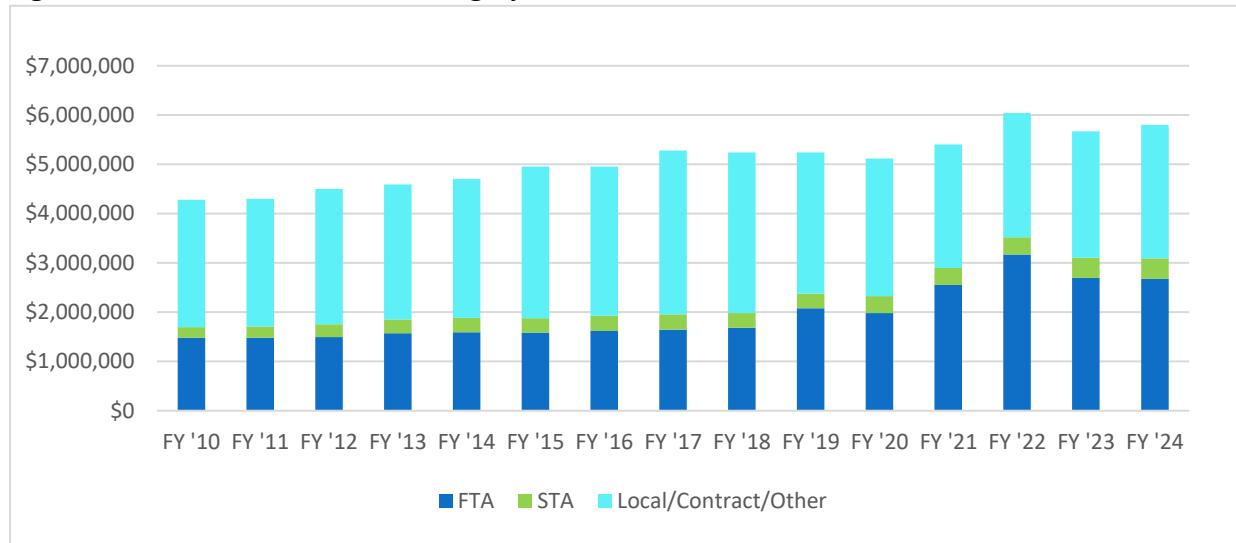
## **Other Funding**

In addition to traditional funding programs, there are other potential funding sources available for various passenger transportation projects. These sources are typically reserved for addressing the transportation needs of the population served by the program and can only be used for transportation related to that program. For example, the Cedar Valley United Way has funded programs that provide transportation to the elderly. Similarly, Head Start provides developmental and educational services for economically disadvantaged children and their families, offering funds to local public and nonprofit agencies, including support for transportation services. Other possible funding sources include university student fees, revenue from on-board advertising and bus benches, grants from the Black Hawk County Gaming Association and the Community Foundation of Northeast Iowa, and contributions from nonprofit organizations.

## **Historic Funding**

Figures 5.1 and 5.2 identify historical funding sources for MET Transit and Onboard Public Transit. For MET Transit, Figure 5.1 shows historical funding sources from FY 2016 through FY 2024. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has contributed significant funding to MET Transit, while the State Transit Assistance (STA) has consistently provided funding. The main funding sources for MET Transit historically are local taxes, passenger fare revenue, and contract revenue, all of which are crucial for covering operational expenses and maintaining transit services.

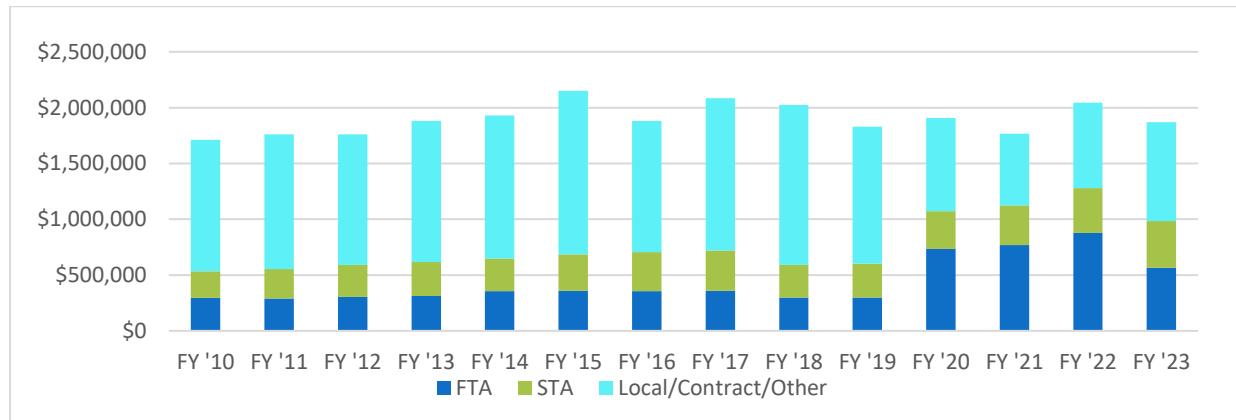
**Figure 5.1: MET Transit Historical Funding, by Source**



## Funding ONBOARD Sources

Figure 5.2 highlights the historical funding sources for Onboard Public Transit from FY 2010 to FY 2024. Most of the Onboard Public Transit's funding for operating costs has come from local sources and contracts, showing steady progression with slight declines through FY 2020, largely attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic. The contributions from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) saw a notable increase starting in FY 2020, rising to \$732,912, compared to \$435,834 in FY 2014. Meanwhile, State Transit Assistance (STA) funding is the most minimal and has remained relatively consistent over the years.

**Figure 5.2: Onboard Public Transit Historical Funding by Source**



## Projected Funding

There are 3 primary sources of funding for public transit: State Transit Assistance, Federal Transit Administration, and local government. Typically, federal funding is designated for operations, capital, and planning, and state funding is designated for operations.

As highlighted previously, cities can allocate up to 95 cents per \$1,000 of assessed taxable property value to help cover the costs of a public transit system. Currently, Waterloo and Cedar Falls are the only cities in the region that use the municipal transit levy to fund MET Transit services. For Onboard Public Transit, most of the funding for operating costs comes from local sources and contracts. Waverly and Independence are the only

communities in the region that provide funding for Onboard Public Transit services beyond paying for rider fees.

Table 5.1 illustrates the projected funding available for MET Transit and Onboard Public Transit, and Figure 5.3 shows the total funding received and projected by the agency.

**Table 5.1: Historical Funding for MET Transit and Onboard Public Transit, by Source**

	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025
<b>MET Transit</b>									
FTA 5303	50,336	50,336	50,336	52,000	52,000	52,500	53,360	53,610	96,000
FTA 5307	2,600,000	2,800,000	3,000,000	2,500,000	2,600,000	2,700,000	2,800,000	2,900,000	2,350,000
FTA 5310	85,000	90,000	95,000	96,000	96,000	96,000	96,000	97,714	107,268
STA	315,000	320,000	325,000	335,000	335,000	340,000	345,000	347,500	358,000
Cedar Falls Levy	373,115	365,969	375,254	417,377	411,113	421,653	432,194	442,734	503,230
Waterloo Levy	1,357,106	1,362,230	1,362,469	1,365,520	1,368,626	1,371,386	1,374,147	1,376,907	1,414,036
<b>Onboard Public Transit</b>									
FTA 5311	31,200	31,200	31,200	31,200	31,200	31,200	31,200	31,200	33,223
STA 5311 (FA)	359,271	298,100	358,156	358,156	376,063	394,867	414,610	432,966	445,241
STA 5311 (SA)	359,441	299,756	305,751	332,025	338,665	345,438	352,347	359,054	340,617
Local/Contract/Other	2,086,000	2,024,311	1,828,865	1,900,291	1,878,343	1,856,396	1,834,448	1,812,501	1,001,860

**Figure 5.3: Historical Funding for MET Transit and Onboard Public Transit, Totals**

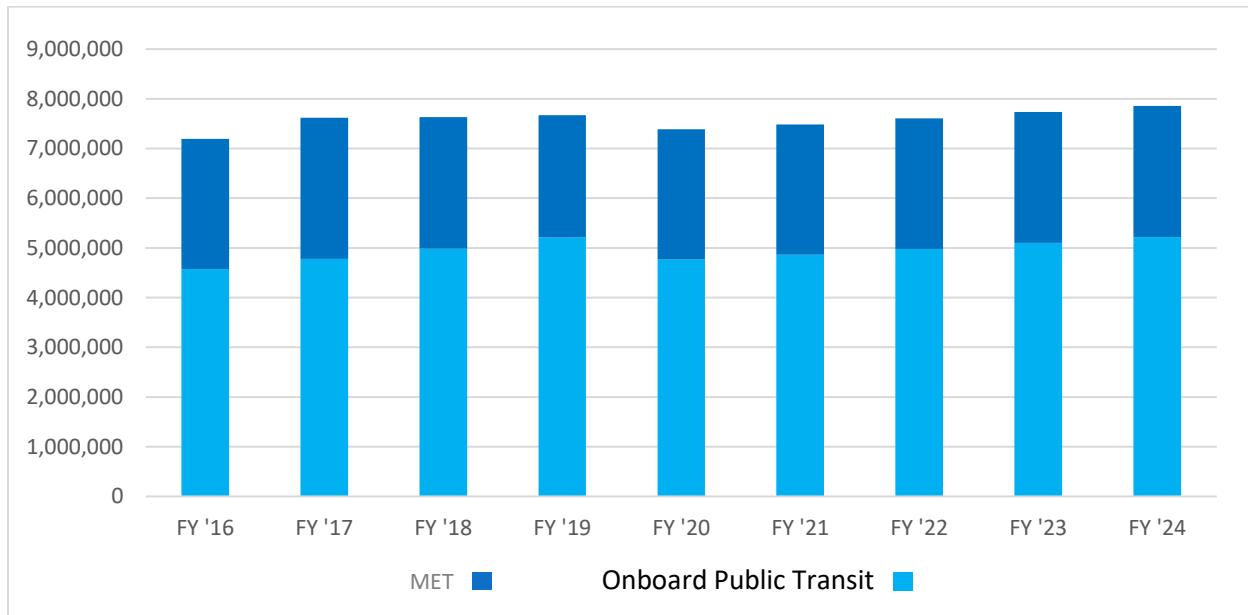
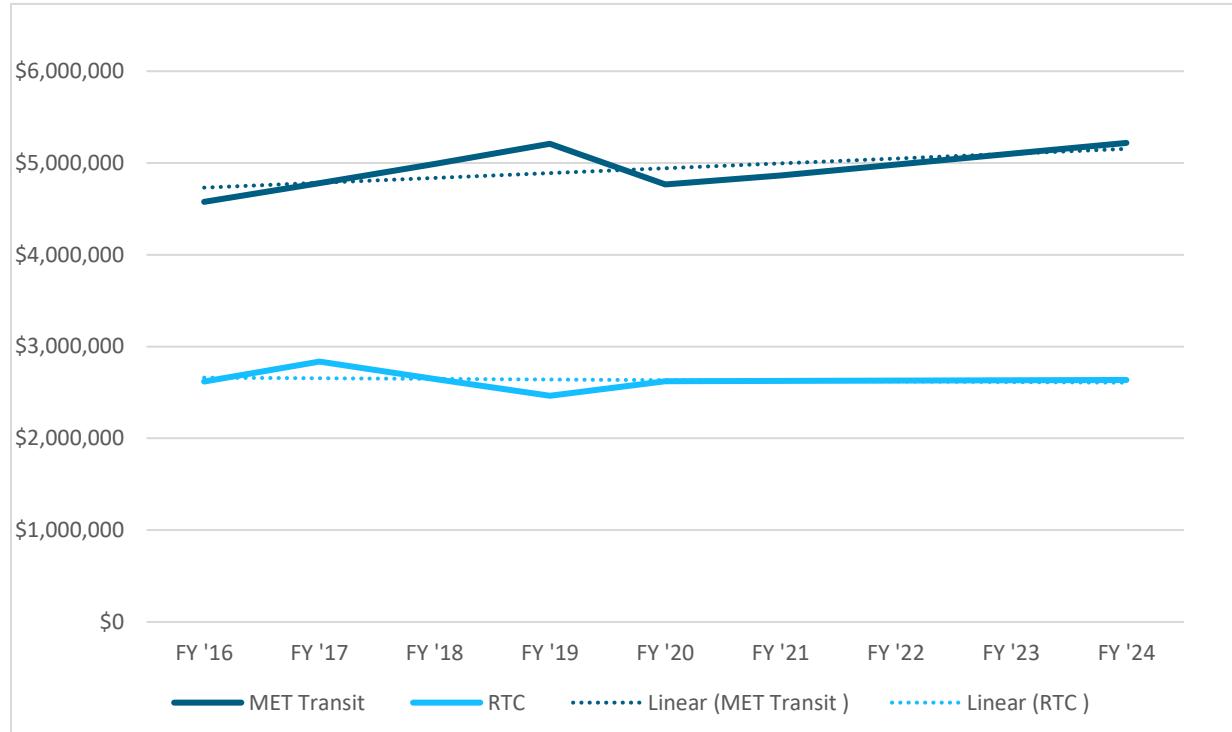


Figure 5.4 shows the progression of funding for MET Transit and Onboard Public Transit over the past decade. Of notable mention is the relevance of a little increase, but a higher demand for the agencies. Local jurisdictions in Iowa are in a pivotal transition phase where high-demand social services are increasingly coming at a premium cost to the consumer. In many cases, the transit services within the Black Hawk County MPO and Iowa Northland Region are a necessity for individuals who may not have another means of

transportation to access vital networks. Daily life that many take for granted can become greatly disrupted without access to reliable and affordable transportation. This has a cascading effect across communities, which struggle to maintain local businesses. Overall, community health is impacted as individuals cannot make appointments and cannot rise above barriers that can generate mental health challenges.

Over the course of this 2026-2030 Passenger Transportation Plan, the need for resiliency and creativity is likely to become paramount in conducting the successful provision of transit services. With operation costs at an all-time high and vehicles reaching nearly 75% cost increase compared to pre-COVID figures, there will almost certainly be a shift in the way transit looks and operates across rural America.

**Figure 5.4: Historical Funding Progression for MET Transit and Onboard Public Transit**



## Passenger Transportation Survey, Iowa Northland Region

This document summarizes the findings of the Passenger Transportation Survey conducted to support the development of the FY 2026–2030 Passenger Transportation Plan (PTP) for both the Black Hawk County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and the Iowa Northland Regional Transportation Authority (RTA). The MPO covers the cities of Waterloo, Cedar Falls, Evansdale, Hudson, Elk Run Heights, Gilbertville, and Raymond, along with portions of unincorporated Black Hawk County. The RTA serves the counties of Black Hawk, Bremer, Buchanan, Butler, Chickasaw, and Grundy, excluding areas within the MPO. Together, the MPO and RTA form the Iowa Northland Region.

The survey was designed to identify transportation challenges, needs, and priorities across the six-county region served by the RTA. A mailing list of 1,000 households outside the Black Hawk County MPO area was obtained, targeting Bremer,

Buchanan, Butler, Chickasaw, and Grundy Counties, along with rural portions of Black Hawk County near La Porte City and Dunkerton. To collect responses, the survey was conducted in two phases. Round One focused on a random sample of 1,000 households through mailed postcards containing a QR code and URL, with the option of requesting a paper survey and the incentive of a \$50 prize drawing. Round Two was open to the public and promoted digitally through INRCOG's media platforms to broaden engagement. Both rounds ran simultaneously between August 15 and September 15, 2024.



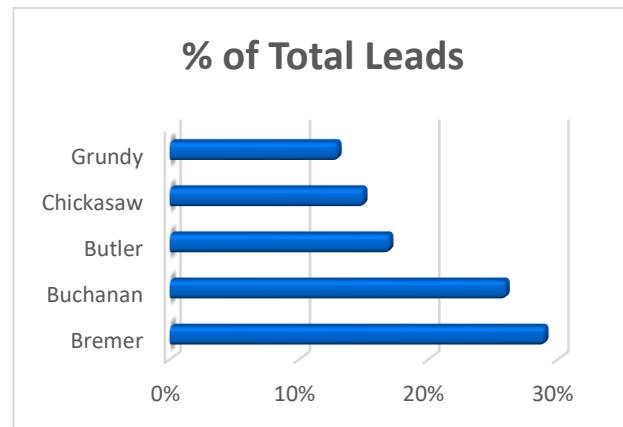
ArcGIS Survey123 was used for survey design, distribution, and analysis. Of the 1,000 postcards mailed, only 9 responses were received, with staff attributing the low participation to the overlap with the 2024 election cycle and the resulting saturation of political mailings. In contrast, Round Two was more successful, generating 232 responses through online outreach efforts. Because of the limited feedback in Round One, results from both rounds were combined for analysis to provide a more comprehensive understanding of regional transportation needs.

Households will be selected from the five-county RTA region: Bremer, Buchanan, Butler, Chickasaw, and Grundy Counties. From the available pool of 29,208 leads, survey invitations were proportionally distributed based on each county's share of the total leads. This ensures geographic representation while maintaining a minimum base of 200 mailers per county. Fig 10.1 shows the percentages representing each county's share of the total 29,208 available leads, used to proportionally allocate the 1,000 survey mailings. Bremer County, which makes up 29% of the total leads, receives 290 mailings, while counties with fewer leads, like Grundy at 13% receive fewer mailings to ensure fair regional representation.

## APPENDIX I – PASSENGER TRANSPORTATION SURVEY

- 29.5 percent of survey respondents rated roads as Good
- 44.4 percent of survey respondents rated bridges as fair.
- 37.8 percent of survey respondents rated pedestrian infrastructure as Fair.
- 39.6 percent of survey respondents rated bicycle infrastructure as Excellent or Good.
- 36.5 percent of responses rated public transit (bus) as Very Poor.
- When asked what the number one transportation problem is in their life:

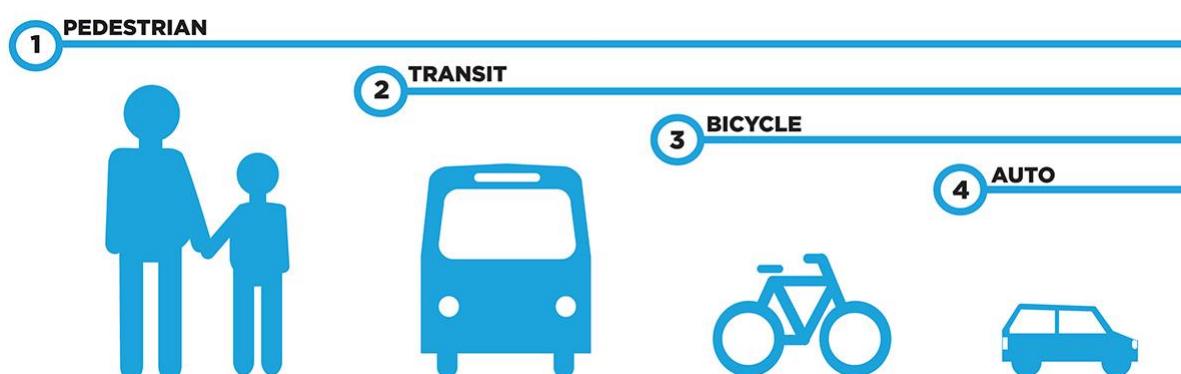
- 31.2 percent responded to road & bridge maintenance.
- 18.8 percent responded with a deficiency in public transportation in smaller towns
- 5.8 percent responded with cycling and pedestrian safety issues (road, railroad crossing, bike & ped).
- 26 percent responded to School Transportation.
- 8.2% responded to the cost of Fuel and Vehicle Maintenance.
- 4 percent Traffic flow & Vehicle behavior.



- When asked what the biggest transportation challenge will be in the next 25 years:

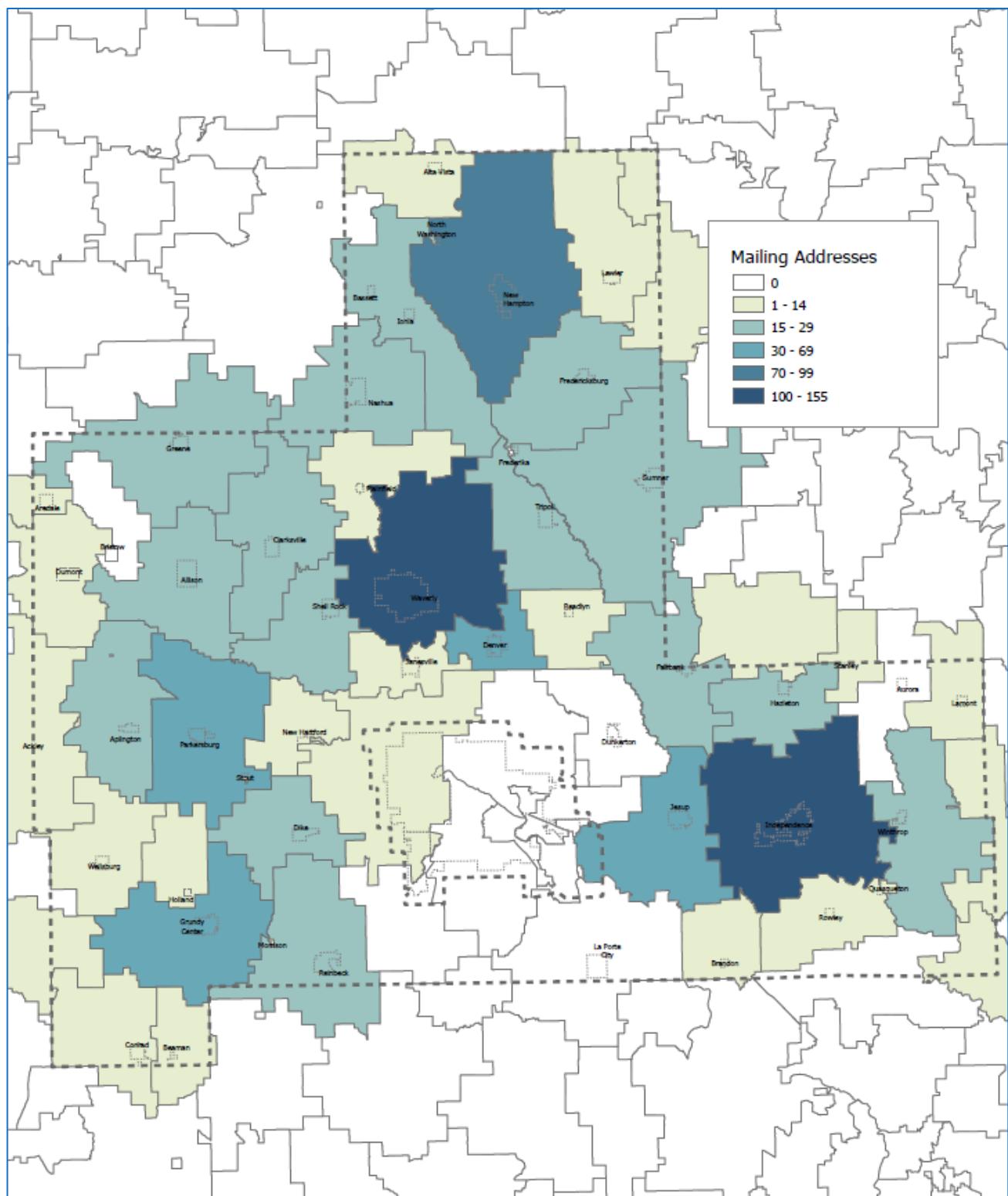


- When asked about strategies for road improvements
  - 52 percent responded with sidewalk additions and repairs.
  - 20 percent Crosswalks and Pedestrian Safety.
  - 12 percent responded with trail expansion and connectivity.
  - 16 percent responded to lighting Improvements, traffic calming, and signage

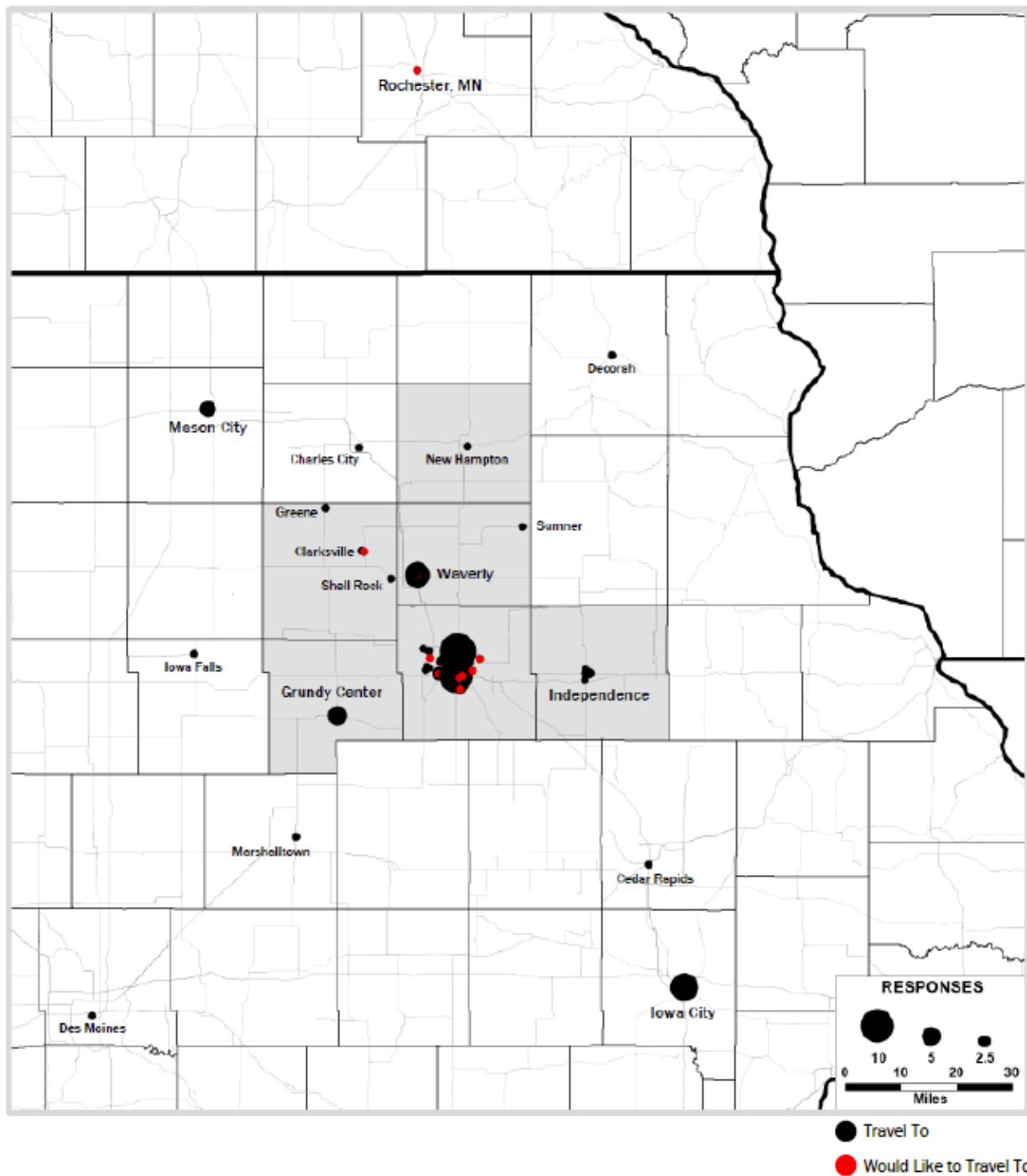


## APPENDIX I – PASSENGER TRANSPORTATION SURVEY

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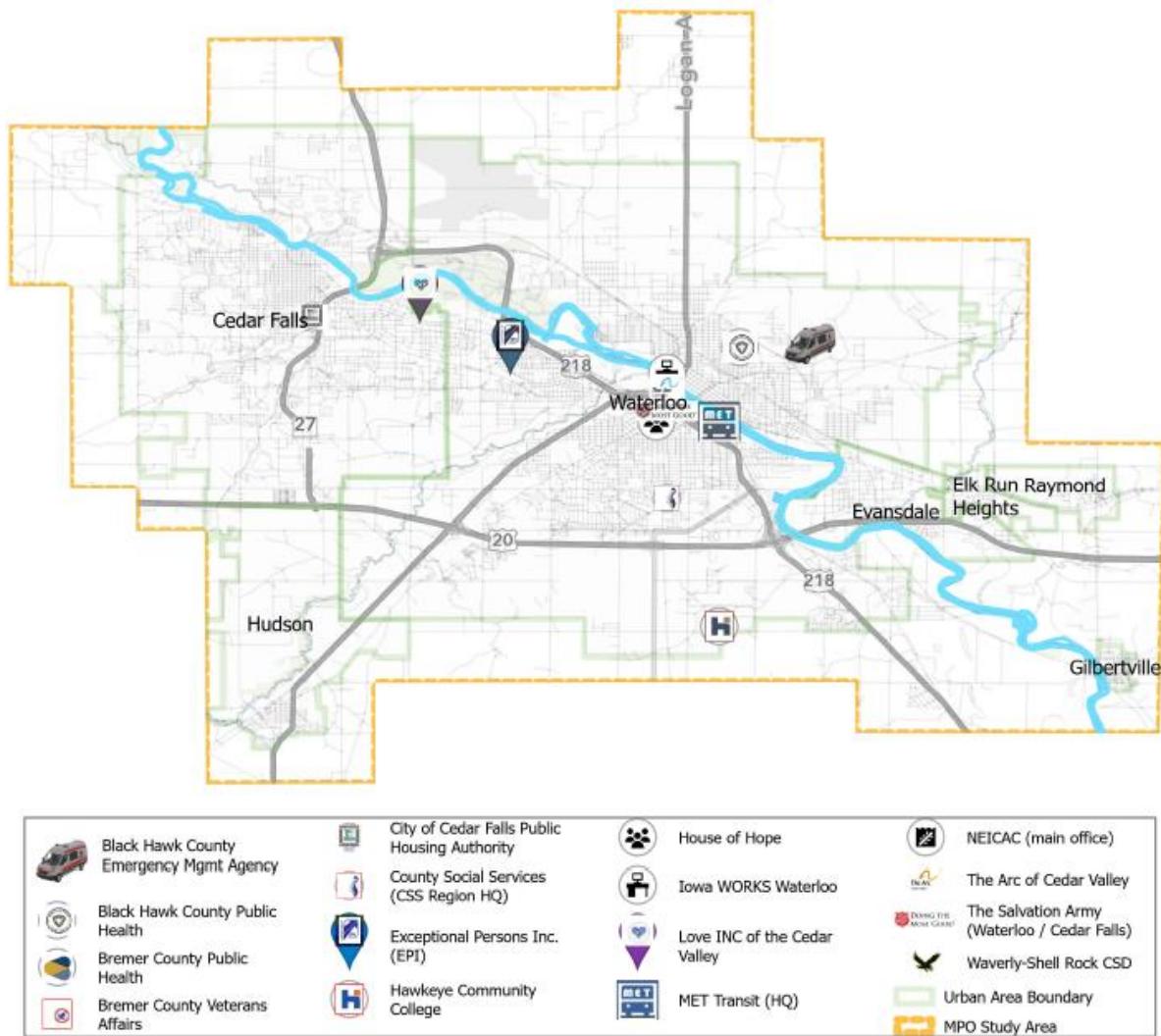
### Destinations Clients Travel To and Would Like to Travel To



## APPENDIX I – PASSENGER TRANSPORTATION SURVEY

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For the MPO, an alternative approach was utilized, administering an online version of a survey was subsequently distributed to passenger transportation providers and human service agencies throughout the Iowa Northland Region, as represented in the Transit Advisory Committee (TAC). The primary goal of the survey was to identify transportation challenges, unmet needs, and opportunities to improve coordination and service delivery across the region. The feedback gathered is intended to inform you about the development of realistic, actionable goals and projects that can be supported and implemented collaboratively by all TAC members



While the survey generated 21 responses, staff had anticipated a higher level of participation, particularly from the business community, which plays a pivotal role in shaping regional mobility and workforce transportation planning. Input from employers is especially valuable, as it provides insight into employee commuting patterns, accessibility challenges, and the transportation needs that directly influence economic growth and workforce stability. The respondents included:

## APPENDIX I – PASSENGER TRANSPORTATION SURVEY

Agency	City / Community	County
The Salvation Army (Waterloo / Cedar Falls)	Waterloo	Black Hawk County
Iowa WORKS Waterloo	Waterloo	Black Hawk County
City of Cedar Falls Public Housing Authority	Cedar Falls	Black Hawk County
The Arc of Cedar Valley	Waterloo	Black Hawk County
NEICAC (Northeast Iowa Community Action Corp.)	Waverly (main office)	Bremer County (serving multiple NE Iowa counties)
Waverly-Shell Rock CSD	Waverly	Bremer County
Bremer County Veterans Affairs	Waverly	Bremer County
MET Transit	Waterloo / Cedar Falls	Black Hawk County
Hawkeye Community College	Waterloo	Black Hawk County
Black Hawk County Emergency Management Agency	Waterloo	Black Hawk County
House of Hope	Waterloo	Black Hawk County
Love INC of the Cedar Valley	Waterloo / Cedar Falls	Black Hawk County
Exceptional Persons Inc. (EPI)	Waterloo	Black Hawk County
County Social Services (CSS Region)	Waterloo (regional HQ)	Black Hawk County (serves multiple counties)
Black Hawk County Public Health	Waterloo	Black Hawk County
Bremer County Public Health	Waverly	Bremer County



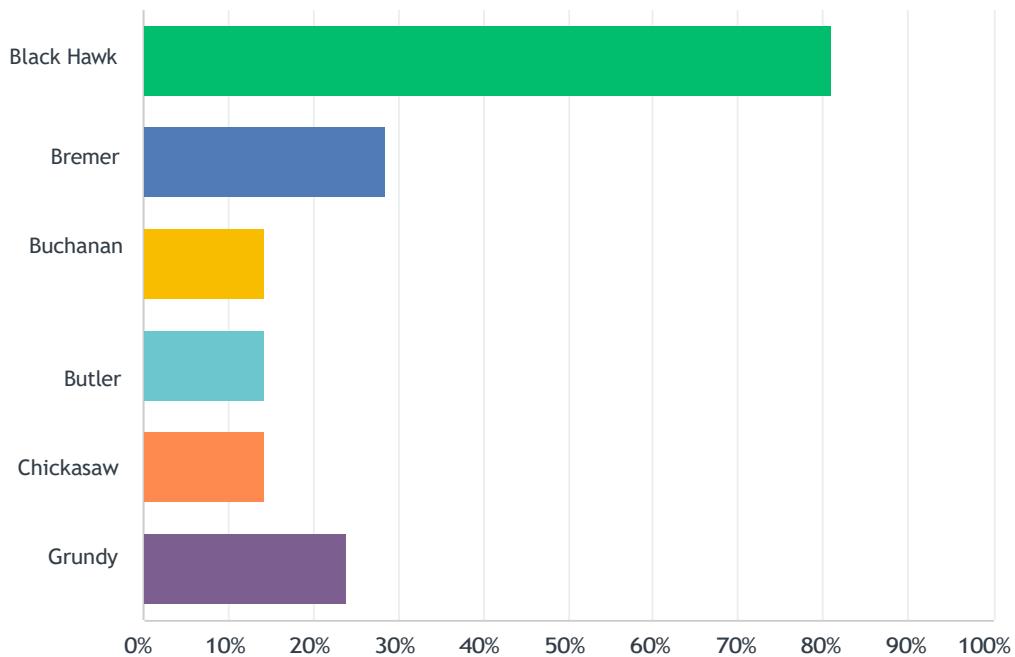
The survey was conducted through the website [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com). The website enabled the creation of the survey questions and choices, the creation of a link for users to click to access the survey, and the collection of responses. The survey included representation from assisted living facilities, retirement communities, hospitals, clinics, human service agencies, taxi services, and transit providers across the region.

The survey consisted of 7 questions, including open-ended comment sections. A total of 21 responses were received. This document details the results for each question, including tables and graphs.

The Passenger Transportation Survey is not statistically significant. For this reason, the following survey results should be considered anecdotal. Any questions regarding the survey methodology or results should be directed to INRCOG staff by calling 319-235-0311.

**Q1 In what county (or counties) do your typical clients live?**

Answered: 21      Skipped: 0



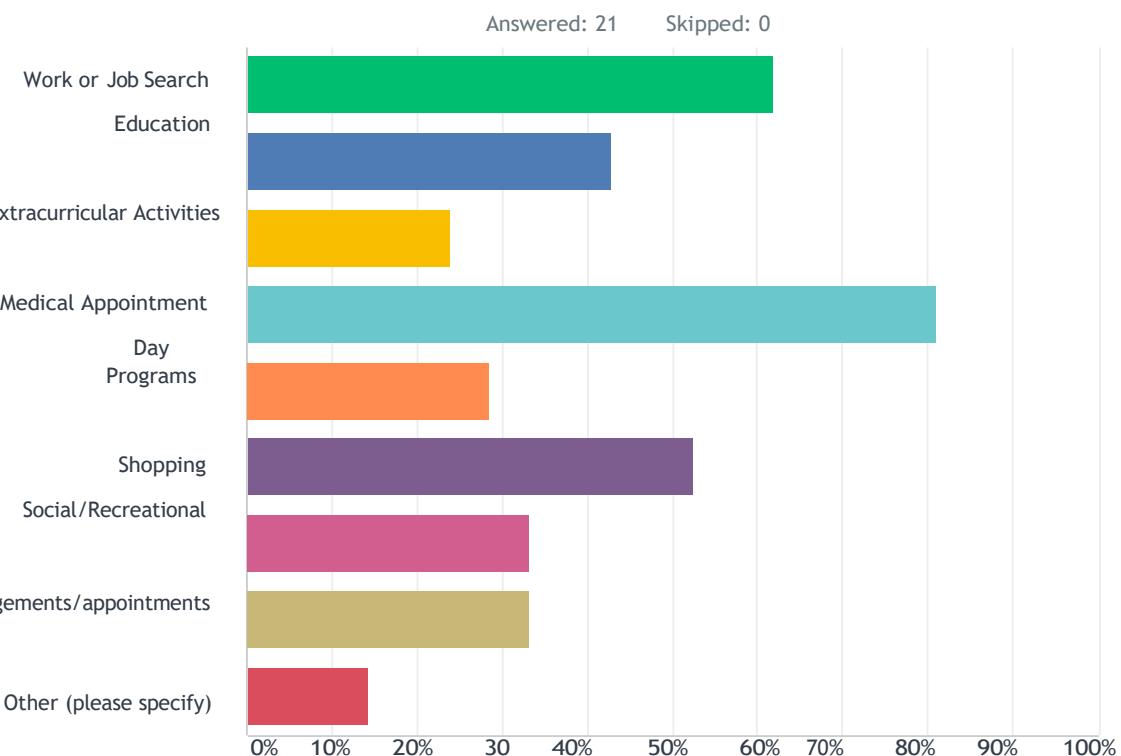
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Black Hawk	80.95%	17
Bremer	28.57%	6
Buchanan	14.29%	3
Butler	14.29%	3
Chickasaw	14.29%	3
Grundy	23.81%	5
Total Respondents: 21		

## Q2 What is the name of the organization/agency you are representing?

Answered: 21 Skipped: 0

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	The Salvation Army	1/28/2025 10:54 AM
2	Iowa WORKS Waterloo	1/27/2025 4:58 PM
3	City of Cedar Falls Public Housing Authority	1/27/2025 2:48 PM
4	The Arc of Cedar Valley	1/19/2025 10:49 PM
5	NEICAC	1/17/2025 2:19 PM
6	Waverly-Shell Rock CSD	1/17/2025 1:50 PM
7	Bremer County Veterans Affairs	1/17/2025 1:00 PM
8	County Social Services	1/16/2025 4:14 PM
9	MET Transit	1/15/2025 12:37 PM
10	Hawkeye Community College	1/15/2025 10:57 AM
11	Black Hawk County Emergency Management Agency	1/15/2025 10:42 AM
12	Met Transit	1/15/2025 9:53 AM
13	Hawkeye Community College	1/15/2025 9:27 AM
14	House of Hope	1/15/2025 9:10 AM
15	Love INC of the Cedar Valley	1/7/2025 11:19 AM
16	Bremer County of the East Central Region	12/20/2024 12:29 PM
17	Public Health	12/18/2024 9:08 AM
18	Blackhawk County Public Health	12/18/2024 8:50 AM
19	County Social Services Region	12/17/2024 3:41 PM
20	Exceptional Persons Inc.	12/17/2024 3:37 PM
21	Evansdale	12/17/2024 3:33 PM

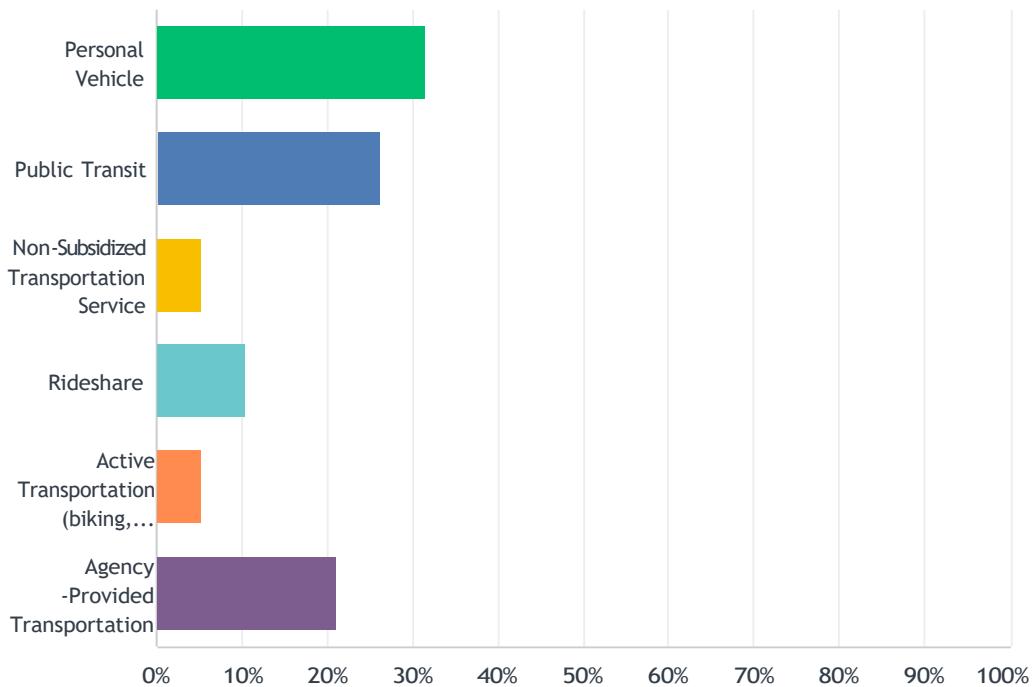
## Q3 What are the primary destinations of your clients?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Work or Job Search	61.90%	13
Education	42.86%	9
Extracurricular Activities	23.81%	5
Medical Appointments	80.95%	17
Day Programs	28.57%	6
Shopping	52.38%	11
Social/Recreational	33.33%	7
Legal Engagements/Appointments	33.33%	7
Other (please specify)	14.29%	3
Total Respondents: 21		

## Q4 What is the primary mode of transportation for you and/or your clients?

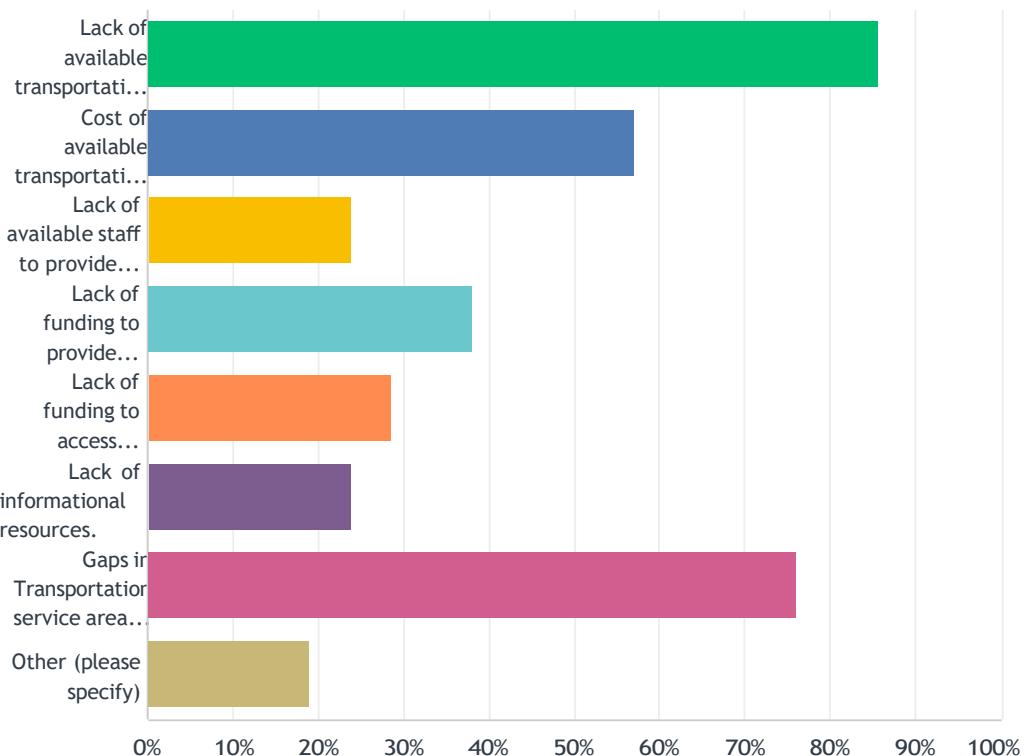
Answered: 19 Skipped: 2



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Personal Vehicle	31.58%	6
Public Transit	26.32%	5
Non-Subsidized Transportation Service	5.26%	1
Rideshare	10.53%	2
Active Transportation (biking, walking, etc.)	5.26%	1
Agency-Provided Transportation	21.05%	4
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>19</b>

## Q5 What are the main challenges you or your clients face with regard to transportation in this region? Check all that apply.

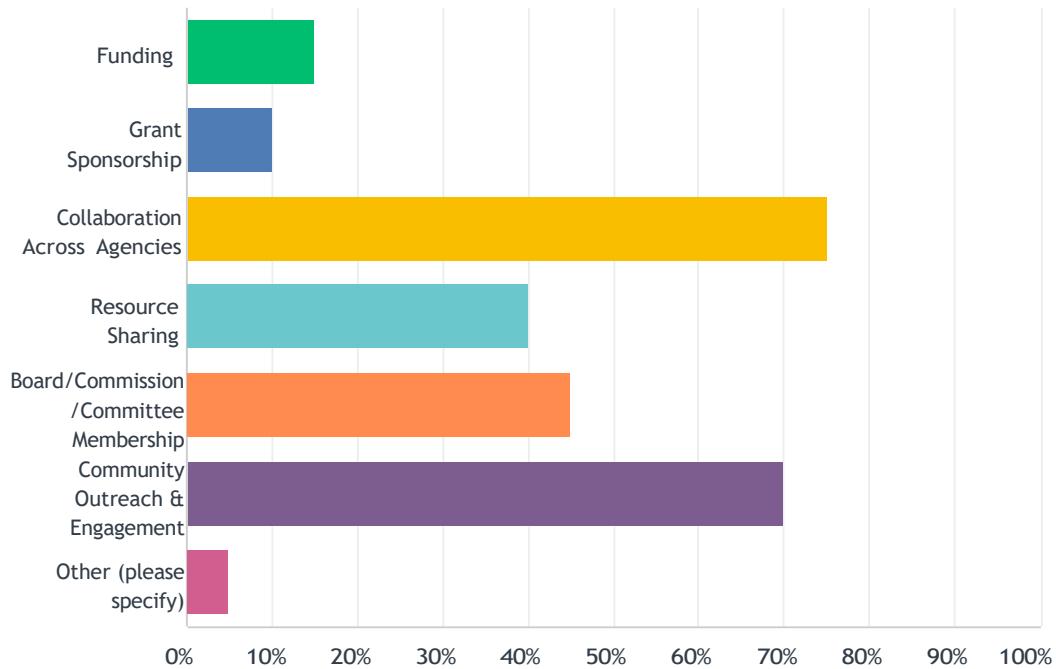
Answered: 21 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Lack of available transportation service	85.71%	18
Cost of the available transportation service	57.14%	12
Lack of available staff to provide transportation service	23.81%	5
Lack of funding to provide transportation service	38.10%	8
Lack of funding to access transportation services	28.57%	6
Lack of informational resources for available transportation services	23.81%	5
Gaps in the transportation service area or service hours	76.19%	16
Other (please specify)	19.05%	4
Total Respondents: 21		

**Q6 Would you or your organization be interested in supporting transportation initiatives in the region? Please check all that apply.**

Answered: 20      Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Funding	15.00% 3
Grant Sponsorship	10.00% 2
Collaboration Across Agencies	75.00% 15
Resource Sharing	40.00% 8
Board/Commission/Committee Membership	45.00% 9
Community Outreach & Engagement	70.00% 14
Other (Please Specify)	5.00% 1
Total Respondents: 20	

## Q8 What would you and your organization like to see focus on in Transportation Advisory Committee meetings in 2025?

Answered: 18    Skipped: 3

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	Legitimate and realistic solutions. Almost every conversation discusses a lack of transportation in our community.	1/27/2025 4:58 PM
2	Increasing public transportation routes to create fewer gaps in service.	1/27/2025 2:48 PM
3	Accessibility and ease for those with disabilities, especially those in wheelchairs and waiting at bus stops that are clear during the winter	1/19/2025 10:49 PM
4	Improving access-cost/hours of operation, ease of scheduling	1/17/2025 2:19 PM
5	Rural transportation options that are affordable	1/17/2025 1:50 PM
6	More transportation opportunities in rural communities	1/17/2025 1:00 PM
7	yes	1/16/2025 4:14 PM
8	Current member of the TAC	1/15/2025 12:37 PM
9	Expanding public transportation hours and routes	1/15/2025 10:57 AM
10	During one meeting discussion on mass transportation during disaster incidents and what that would look like for evacuations and re-entry of residents	1/15/2025 10:42 AM
11	Expanding service hours	1/15/2025 9:27 AM
12	Using the information you have gathered for years to put something into ACTION to improve the community's MET transportation services to be a support and service to the people of this community.	1/15/2025 9:10 AM
13	Some type of subsidized rideshare program that those in need can access for transport for work, health appointments, and available 24 hours a day	1/7/2025 11:19 AM
14	Affordable on-demand services for most hours of the day	12/20/2024 12:29 PM
15	unsure of involvement with MET in this group, but collaboration on improving understanding of how to use the bus system. It would also support the rideshare van initiative	12/18/2024 9:08 AM
16	Accessibility	12/17/2024 3:41 PM
17	Expanding Service Areas	12/17/2024 3:37 PM
18	helping smaller cities afford public Transportation	12/17/2024 3:33 PM

**IOWA NORTHLAND REGIONAL  
TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**THURSDAY, MARCH 6, 2025**

**MINUTES**

Durant called the meeting of the Iowa Northland Regional Transit Advisory Committee (TAC) to order at 1:00 PM. Introductions were offered to all in attendance.

Meeting Attendees:

Name	Title	Representing
Leticia Chabotte*	Community Health Worker	Black Hawk County Public Health
Lisa Sesterhenn	Public Health Planner	Black Hawk County Public Health
Bryan Burton*	CEO	Boys & Girls Clubs of the Cedar Valley
George Phillips*	Teen & Educational Center Director	Boys & Girls Clubs of the Cedar Valley
Hector Salamanca-Arroyo*	Director of Resource Development	Boys & Girls Clubs of the Cedar Valley
Thomas Weintraut*	Planner III	City of Cedar Falls
Todd Rickert*	Regional Coordinator of Adult Services	County Social Services
Nicole Ericson*	Community Development Director	Exceptional Persons, Inc.
Norman Coley Jr.*	Dean of Students	Hawkeye Community College
Nina Grant*	Vice President of Student Affairs	Hawkeye Community College
Karen Siler*	Work Force Advisor	Iowa Workforce Development
Megan McKenzie	Executive Director	McElroy Trust
Phil Golden	Para Transit Operations Manager	MET Transit
David Sturch	General Manager	MET Transit
Rosalyn Middleton	Board Member	MET Transit Board
Shannon Bass*	Director of Programs	Northeast Iowa Food Bank
Cathy Showalter	CEO/Executive Director	Otto Schoitz Foundation
Julie Molisho*	President	The River ARC
Trista Hill	Family Service Worker	Tri-County Head Start
Erin Tink	Executive Director	Waterloo Community Foundation
Terrance Hollingsworth*	Program Manager	Project Health
Kyle Durant	Transportation Planner II	INRCOG
Nick Fratzke	Director of Transportation	INRCOG / OnBoard Public Transit
Oghogho Oriakhi	Transportation Planner I	INRCOG

*\*Attended Online*

The first item was approval of the agenda. It was moved by Middleton, seconded by Golden, to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Next was to review and consider approval of the minutes for the January 15, 2025, meeting. It was moved by Showalter, seconded by Sesterhenn, to approve the minutes as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Next was Discussion Items:

1. PTP Survey

Fratzke provided an overview of the survey and the results. The online survey was shared with passenger transportation providers and human service agencies across the region. Its purpose was to identify transportation challenges and opportunities to inform the update of the Passenger

Transportation Plan. The goal is to establish actionable and attainable goals and projects that all TAC members can contribute to implementing. A total of 21 responses were received, though staff had hoped for greater participation from businesses. Grow Cedar Valley could be a great resource to receive additional feedback and insights on transportation needs for employers and employees.

2. Review the draft FY 2026-2030 Passenger Transportation Plan (PTP)  
This item was tabled.

3. TAC Priority/Goal Setting

The group identified the following potential priorities:

- Increasing education on how to use MET Transit
- Target educational outreach to people seeking sustainable employment, newcomer populations, existing users, etc.
- Develop a MET Transit App
- Expand available hours of service, not necessarily through public transit only
- Communication with employers on transportation challenges and opportunities
- "How to Ride with MET Transit" YouTube video

The TAC Priority and Goal Setting process was tabled for a future meeting.

4. Update on the restructuring of MET Transit fixed routes and ways TAC can assist in marketing and outreach

Durant shared that the new routes have been added to Google Maps. INRCOG staff created a "How to Ride with MET Transit" flyer for the public, which will be distributed to the TAC mailing list once a few final edits are made. The group discussed the possibility of adding these flyers as metal signs along fixed routes where people frequently board. Durant mentioned he would coordinate a discussion with MET and city staff. It was also recommended to include additional languages in the educational materials.

5. Update on Commute with Enterprise

Fratzke mentioned that this is still an opportunity to collaborate with Grow Cedar Valley to identify employers who may be interested in participating.

6. National Center for Mobility Management

This item was tabled.

7. General Discussion

In the general discussion, Durant asked the group to come prepared to the next meeting to discuss potential "Champions" for projects and initiatives. This will help ensure the successful implementation of these efforts.

There being no further discussion, Durant declared the meeting adjourned at 2:40 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Kyle Durant  
Secretary

**IOWA NORTHLAND REGIONAL  
TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**Wednesday, April 16, 2025**

**MINUTES**

Fratzke called the meeting of the Iowa Northland Regional Transit Advisory Committee (TAC) to order at 10:01 AM. Introductions were offered to all in attendance.

Meeting Attendees:

Name	Title	Representing
Lisa Sesterhenn	Public Health Planner	Black Hawk County Public Health
Aaron Reinke	Public Health Planner	Black Hawk County Public Health
Rachael Mayer	Public Health Planner	Black Hawk County Public Health
Thomas Weintraut*	Planner III	City of Cedar Falls
Todd Rickert*	Regional Coordinator of Adult Services	County Social Services
Norman Coley Jr.*	Dean of Students	Hawkeye Community College
Karen Siler*	Operations Manager	Iowa Workforce Development
Aric Schroeder	City Planner	City of Waterloo
Megan McKenzie	Executive Director	McElroy Trust
Emily Hanson	Director of Programs	Northeast Iowa Food Bank
Cathy Showalter	CEO/Executive Director	Otto Schoitz Foundation
Trista Hill	Family Service Worker	Tri-County Head Start
Mindy Benson	Coordinator	BHC EMA
Erin Tink	Executive Director	Waterloo Community Foundation
Nick Fratzke	Director of Transportation	INRCOG / OnBoard Public Transit
Oghogho Oriakhi	Transportation Planner I	INRCOG

*\*Attended Online*

The first item was approval of the agenda. It was moved by Hanson, seconded by Reinke, to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Next was to review and consider approval of the minutes for the March 06, 2025, meeting. It was moved by Showalter, seconded by Sesterhenn, to approve the minutes as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Next was Discussion Items:

8. MET Transit "How to Ride" Signage.

Fratzke stated that INRCOG staff have continued discussions with MET Transit about creating educational materials to help riders understand how to use the bus system, including the development of simple, instructional signage. Due to the City of Waterloo's agreement with the Department of Justice, which requires all designated bus stops to meet ADA accessibility standards, the signage cannot imply an official bus stop designation unless it complies with those requirements. To address this, David Sturch compiled a list of potential locations where signs could be placed without triggering ADA compliance issues, and efforts are underway to draft a resolution for City Council approval. Fratzke expressed hope that the signage could be implemented by summer. When Showalter asked if Cedar Falls would also receive signage, Fratzke noted that they plan to coordinate with Weintraut from Cedar Falls. Although there is currently no finalized cost estimate, Sturch has offered to manage the expense, potentially working with

Iowa Prison Industries to produce the signs at a reasonable cost.

Fratzke mentioned the possibilities of locating the signage in high-traffic areas such as Walmart and other key community locations. While multilingual components have not yet been finalized, there is hope that partner agencies can assist in addressing language accessibility. In response to Reinke's question about the QR code, Fratzke explained that it links MET Transit's live route page, with an alternate version directing users to a Google page. Weintraut asked if MET would coordinate with the City of Cedar Falls. Fratzke confirmed that MET works with a third-party provider to update route data, with input and support from INRCOG staff. Weintraut also suggested the use of posters or printed paper copies in public facilities and organizations. Sesterhenn added that route signage could be edited to exclude the fare and time details to allow flexibility and inclusion of a link to access translated information.

Tink suggested that it would be beneficial for MET to create a dedicated landing page accessible via the QR code, which could consolidate key information such as Google Maps integration, the live bus tracker, language translation options, and payment instructions. Further, Oriakhi added that a landing page could potentially save riders from the challenge of navigating between Google Maps and MET's real-time route map. Sesterhenn raised the question of whether language options should be indicated directly on the signage. Reinke emphasized the importance of ensuring the QR code is trustworthy and clearly marked as safe. Tink also inquired about payment methods, whether riders use cash or a transit pass, and emphasized that these details, along with any alternative payment options, should be clearly included on the landing page. Oriakhi stated that whilst several challenges around improvement of transit services revolve around funding, there are low-hanging fruits that could be potentially addressed, not necessarily involving a huge chunk of funding. Showalter recommended tabling further discussion on the "How to Ride MET" materials until a MET representative is present. Sesterhenn added that once MET finalizes the flyer, it should be brought to TAC for review and recommendations.

Fratzke tabled the signage for the next TAC meeting.

#### 9. Discuss and review the draft FY 2026-2030 Passenger Transportation Plan (PTP)

Fratzke began the review explaining that Section 1 is about the process, and a lot of things have not changed over time, and Chapter 4 seems to be the point of focus for the group and today's meeting. Seeking ideas to cover perspectives of the different representations in TAC. Reviewing Chapter 4, Fratzke gives a brief overview of the data collected from the survey, the objectives of the MPO, and requests members to present things they would like to see in the PTP for the next five years. This isn't limited to the MPO; Fratzke asked that the participants include Onboard Transit Services, RTC. Time was given for members of the TAC to write ideas in sticky notes and have them put in the different categories identified from the public input survey, ranging from specific destination of travel, efficiency/modernization, challenges, Route service area, solutions, etc. Weintraut stated whether the language for homelessness could be changed to unhoused or some more friendly verbiage.

Tink stated that it's okay to request the result of the Transit study from MET, and it wasn't reflected in the minutes of the last meeting. Hanson, how do we prioritize these objectives and goals? Fratzke mentioned that TAC meetings are held twice a year, but in recent times, we have been having the meetings monthly to make constant input from the group. Lisa, is this the group to develop the priorities and strategies for the region? Rickert added that it's important to have MET to sit in the meetings, posing questions like how we can make riding the bus attractive to increase ridership. How do you attract people who can sell the product and deliver good quality services, improve services, and the approach of staff, including drivers? Tink stated that focusing on alternative payment methods and the possibility of providing a mobile application would. Hanson stated that with the mobile app, MET can collaborate with organizations and boards such as Black Hawk County Gaming Association, McElroy Trust, Oho Schoitz Foundation, etc., to seek seed funding to drive the process.

Ensuring MET representatives attend TAC meetings.

10. TAC Priority/Goal Setting

The group identified the following potential priorities:

- a) Short-term Goals
- b) Long-term Goals

Fratzke mentioned staff would review the items from the TAC work sessions and itemize them in order of priority for the next meetings. Fratzke also stated that roles and responsibilities could be assigned, potentially so as not to overwhelm MET transit from being the primary driver of every strategy.

11. Update on Commute with Enterprise

This item was tabled

12. National Center for Mobility Management

This item was tabled.

13. General Discussion

There being no further discussion, the motion was moved by McKenzie, seconded by Erin. Motion carried unanimously. Fratzke declared the meeting adjourned at 11:32 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Oghogho Oriakhi  
Secretary

**IOWA NORTHLAND REGIONAL  
TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**Wednesday, May 21, 2025**

**MINUTES**

Fratzke called the meeting of the Iowa Northland Regional Transit Advisory Committee (TAC) to order at 10:04 AM. Introductions were offered to all in attendance.

Meeting Attendees:

Name	Title	Representing
Lisa Sesterhenn	Public Health Planner	Black Hawk County Public Health
Thomas Weintraut*	Planner III	City of Cedar Falls (Online)
David Sturch*	Manager	MET Transit (Online)
Todd Rickert*	Regional Coordinator of Adult Services	County Social Services (Online)
Shannon Bass*	Director of Programs	Northeast Iowa Food Bank (Online)
Terrence Hollingsworth*	Community Advocate	Project Health (Online)
Cathy Showalter	CEO/Executive Director	Otto Schoitz Foundation
Mindy Benson*	Coordinator	BHC EMA (Online)
George Philips*	Director	Boys and Girls Club Cedar Valley (Online)
Nick Fratzke	Director of Transportation	INRCOG / OnBoard Public Transit
Oghogho Oriakhi	Transportation Planner I	INRCOG

\*Attended Online

The first item was approval of the agenda. It was moved by Benson, seconded by Showalter, to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Next was to review and consider approval of the minutes for the April 16, 2025, meeting. It was moved by Sesterhenn, seconded by Showalter, to approve the minutes as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Next was Discussion Items:

14. MET Transit

a. "How to Ride" Signage.

Fratzke recapped the previous meeting's discussions on "How to Ride" signage and conversations with Sturch about communicating these to the MET Board. Sturch noted that the Board has been informed that TAC is working on sign locations, but the final decision lies with the cities since the signs would be placed right-of-way. Sturch suggested using existing structures and high-traffic locations like grocery stores (e.g., Walmart), identifying about 45 potential spots. There would be collaboration with the prison industry to produce the signs. Showalter inquired about the next steps, and Sturch explained that after the Board makes decisions, MET Transit would coordinate with city staff for council approval.

b. MET Transit Study

Sturch stated that the Transit Study is in its final stages, with the team fine-tuning the final report. RFP for bus wash improvements is also underway. However, the exact timeline for the study's completion is still uncertain.

15. Discuss and review the draft FY 2026-2030 Passenger Transportation Plan (PTP)

Fratzke provided an overview of the previous TAC meeting, which included a brainstorming session where attendees proposed goals, identified lead and participating agencies, and set timelines. Some goals overlapped with those from the previous PTP. Sesterhenn recommended grouping similar goals and subdividing responsibilities among agencies to improve accountability and focus on easily achievable items.

Fratzke suggested briefly reviewing agency-specific goals due to low attendance, with plans to revisit them in more detail at the next meeting. Fratzke also shared a conversation with Benson, who recommended dedicating a TAC meeting to emergency management, possibly as a tabletop exercise. Benson emphasized the importance of preparing for when, not just if, emergencies occur. Fratzke then raised the topic of bus evacuation with Philips, who noted that while school evacuation drills exist, they were unsure how evacuation procedures apply to public transit.

16. TAC Priority/Goal Setting

Fratzke asked if the group would like to table the priorities and goal setting, allowing INRCOG time to better organize the goals and for more members to be present. Showalter inquired about a mobility coordinator. Fratzke responded that the role existed about 20 years ago but was not heavily utilized. They noted that different regions handle the role differently based on service needs and that currently, there is insufficient support to prioritize reinstating the position. The item was tabled for the next meeting.

The group identified the following potential priorities:

- c) Short-term Goals
- d) Long-term Goals

17. Update on Commute with Enterprise

Fratzke discussed the importance of the RTC Board committing to the Enterprise vanpool program to encourage employer participation, rather than moving away from the initiative. Funding remains a key challenge, and efforts are underway with Grow Cedar Valley to identify interested employees. Enterprise recommended that local contributions be used to incentivize employee participation. The goal is to present this proposal to the next RTC members. Showalter added that the homelessness task force is examining gaps in the point-to-point transit system and its impact on the homeless community. While not the only option, the vanpool program is seen as a viable solution to provide affordable transportation for workers.

18. National Center for Mobility Management Grant

Fratzke provided an update on the second phase of the grant aimed at engaging youth in mobility initiatives while noting challenges such as staffing limitations and restricted operating hours. Phillips highlighted that one of the main barriers to recruitment from their experience with the Boys and Girls Club is the limited two-hour workday.

19. General Discussion

With no further discussion, the motion was moved by Showalter, seconded by Benson. Motion carried unanimously. Fratzke declared the meeting adjourned at 11:10 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Oghogho Oriakhi  
Secretary

**IOWA NORTHLAND REGIONAL  
TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**Wednesday, June 18, 2025**

**MINUTES**

Oriakhi called the meeting of the Iowa Northland Regional Transit Advisory Committee (TAC) to order at 10:04 AM. Introductions by attendees.

Meeting Attendees:

Name	Title	Representing
Alecia Allen	Public Health Planner	Black Hawk County Public Health
Aaron Reinke	Public Health Planner	Black Hawk County Public Health
David Sturch	Manager	MET Transit
Rosalyn Middleton	Board Member	MET Transit
Todd Rickert	Regional Coordinator of Adult Services	County Social Services (Online)
Mindy Benson*	Coordinator	BHC EMA (Online)
Cathy Showalter	CEO/Executive Director	Otto Schoitz Foundation
Emily Hanson	Executive Director	BHCGA
Megan Mckenzie	Executive Director	McElroy Foundation
Melissa Dennings*	Supervisor	Community Services (Online)
Nick Fratzke	Director of Transportation	INRCOG / OnBoard Public Transit
Oghogho Oriakhi	Transportation Planner I	INRCOG

*\*Attended Online*

The first item was approval of the agenda. It was moved by Hanson, seconded by Reinke, to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Next was to review and consider approval of the minutes for the May 21, 2025, meeting. It was moved by Showalter, seconded by Allen, to approve the minutes as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Next was Discussion Items:

1. MET Transit

Sturch mentioned that the Ridership is strong and doing well, with signs indicating a good response for the summer. Sturch added that the 11<sup>th</sup> Street reopening has improved accessibility, eliminating detours. Sturch stated that the Summer Route, park-to-park program is a 25-cent fare for children and teens (18 and under), which is funded by donations that will fund approximately 400 rides through the end of August, and has been popular for summer programming. McKenzie asked if there was a communication strategy for the youth-serving programs about the park-to-park summer option. Fratzke suggested using temporary signage options such as sign gypsies or sandwich boards. Sturch responded, describing the current approach, and noted that drivers would be tracking the number of rides provided under the promotion. For long-term signage and accessibility, Sturch mentioned MET Transit is still working on finalizing sign locations and coordinating with the City of Cedar Falls and Waterloo, while noting the intent is to have signs on existing infrastructure, like bus stops and benches, incorporating QR codes to improve accessibility and ensuring multilingual communication; Spanish, Marshallese, and French to better serve diverse community members.

2. Discuss & review the TAC work session on Draft Section 4 of the FY 2026-2030 Passenger Transportation Plan (PTP)

Oriakhi noted that the draft goals for the 2026–2030 Passenger Transportation Plan have been organized but emphasized the need to balance short- and long-term objectives and assign lead agencies to specific action items. Hanson expressed concern about the lack of multilingual access and inclusion in the plan. Fratzke acknowledged that while some of the goals and strategies may overlap, committee members are encouraged to review the draft and submit any comments or suggested edits. Reinke proposed using a prioritization matrix to help guide the implementation of the goals and offered to assist with this effort during the upcoming TAC work session. The committee agreed that Reinke would take the lead, given his experience in this area. Fratzke asked if the group would be open to holding a work session in place of the July meeting. McKenzie suggested using the Union Block Board Room for the session and offered to provide lunch. The group agreed to hold the work session on Wednesday, July 9, from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at the Union Block Board Room. Fratzke confirmed that the purpose of the session will be to finalize goals, establish priorities, and assign lead agencies for the plan. Attendees were kindly requested to RSVP to assist with lunch planning.

3. New Hire – Transportation Planner II

Oriakhi mentioned that the newly hired Transportation Planner II will be resuming in July. Fratzke added that they hold a master's in urban planning with a focus on transportation Planning, and we are looking forward to them joining the organization.

4. Update on Commute Enterprise

Fratzke stressed the need for the RTC Board to stay committed to the Enterprise vanpool program to encourage employer participation, despite funding challenges. Efforts are underway with Grow Cedar Valley to identify interested employees, and Enterprise recommended using local contributions to incentivize ridership.

5. National Center for Mobility Management (NCMM) Grant.

Fratzke provided an update on the second phase of the grant focused on engaging youth in mobility initiatives, noting challenges such as limited staffing and restricted service hours. Phillips added that, based on their experience with the Boys and Girls Club, one of the primary barriers to recruitment is the short two-hour workday, which makes participation difficult for many young people.

#### General Discussions

There being no further discussion, the motion was moved by Allen, seconded by Reinke. Motion carried unanimously. Oriakhi declared the meeting adjourned at 11:35 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Oghogho Oriakhi  
Secretary

**IOWA NORTHLAND REGIONAL  
TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**Wednesday, July 9, 2025**

**MINUTES**

Fratzke, Director of Transportation, opened the meeting of the Iowa Northland Regional Transit Advisory Committee (TAC) at 11:32 a.m. Following that, Attendees introduced themselves. Fratzke noted that the meeting would take an informal shape, focusing on the work session, with other agenda items tabled for a later date.

**Meeting Attendees:**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Representing</b>
Thom Weintraut	Planner III	Cedar Falls
Lisa Sesterhenn	Public Health Planner	Black Hawk County Public Health
Aaron Reinke	Epidemiologist	Black Hawk County Public Health
Alecia Allen	Epidemiologist	Black Hawk County Public Health
Rachel Mayer	Nutrition Health Planner	Black Hawk County Public Health
Heidi Witt	Community Benefit Coordinator	Mercy One
David Sturch	Manager	MET Transit
Rosalyn Middleton	Board Member	MET Transit Board
Norman Coley Jr.	Dean of Students	Hawkeye Community College
Nilvia Reyes Rodriguez	Director of Community Impact & Engagement	Cedar Valley United Way
Erin Tink	Executive Director	Waterloo Community Foundation
Cathy Showalter	CEO/Executive Director	Otto Schoitz Foundation
Emily Hanson	Executive Director	BHCGA
Megan Mckenzie	Executive Director	McElroy Foundation
Nick Fratzke	Director of Transportation	INRCOG/OnBoard Public Transit
Sanzida Rahmatu Setu	Transportation Planner II	INRCOG
Oghogho Oriakhi	Transportation Planner I	INRCOG

*\*Attended Online*

Next was the Work session to discuss & review the Draft Section 4 of the FY 2026-2030 Passenger Transportation Plan (PTP). Fratzke mentioned that the work session intends to focus on realistic and actionable objectives, rather than broad or overly ambitious goals that may not be achievable within the 2026–2030 timeframe due to various constraints. Fratzke stated that the goals/project initiatives had been numbered for easy identification and efficiency. Fratzke introduced Reinke, an Epidemiologist with the Black Hawk County Public Health, who volunteered to facilitate the workshop, seeing that they had done similar exercises in the past.

Reinke gave an overview of the exercise with the materials to be utilized, noting that the rubrics for prioritization will be impact versus ease/feasibility/Strategic Implementation. Reinke noted that each quadrant of the chart would capture goals/projective initiatives by their ranking in impact versus ease. Impact increases across the board vertically, while Ease increases horizontally. The committee agreed to adopt the impact versus ease to prioritize high-impact goals with high ease of implementation as high priorities in the chart. Tink suggested the group split into sub-groups of four (4), with a Transportation specialist present in each group to be efficient with time and the entire work session. Four (4) groups were created, and each group was allocated 30 minutes and assigned specific goals and objectives to review. Following that, each group took turns with a representative to speak on the reasons for their review and prioritization criteria for each goal/project initiative reviewed.

Overall, goals numbered 17, 24, & 33 were identified as high impact and high ease of implementation. The goals

are Continued Performance Monitoring and KPI (17), Fleet Capacity Audit (24), & Emergency Operations Planning (33). The group discussed and assigned the lead agencies for these initiatives. However, Showalter inquired about the possibilities of moving the initiatives from other quadrants as a second priority, because high-impact and ease initiatives that were identified were all led by MET Transit and INRCOG, whilst TAC and other lead agencies were mainly involved in marketing initiatives. Oriakhi noted that from the June TAC meeting, the Winter Maintenance Awareness Campaign (2) was agreed upon by the committee to be removed since the local jurisdictions and cities are actively involved in that, the committee agreed, and the initiative was removed.

Fratzke gave brief closing remarks, thanked all who attended the work session for their participation and input. A Calendar invite will be sent out for the August TAC meeting, where the group will revisit and conclude the work session.

The work session ended at 01:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Oghogho Oriakhi  
Secretary



**IOWA NORTHLAND REGIONAL  
TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**Wednesday, August 13, 2025**

**MINUTES**

Oriakhi opened the meeting of the Iowa Northland Regional Transit Advisory Committee (TAC) at 10:02 a.m. Following that, attendees introduced themselves.

Meeting Attendees:

Name	Title	Representing
Thom Weintraut	Planner III	Cedar Falls
Lisa Sesterhenn	Public Health Planner	Black Hawk County Public Health
Aaron Reinke	Epidemiologist	Black Hawk County Public Health
Rachel Mayer	Nutrition Health Planner	Black Hawk County Public Health
Heidi Witt	Community Benefit Coordinator	Mercy One
Kristin Schaefer	Director Business Development	Allen Hospital
Trista Hill	Family Service Worker	Tri-County Head Start
David Sturch	Manager	MET Transit
Norman Coley Jr.	Dean of Students	Hawkeye Community College*
Terrence Hollingsworth	Community/Youth Advocate	Community /Youth Advocate*
Mindy Benson	Coordinator	BHC Emergency Management*
Erin Tink	Executive Director	Waterloo Community Foundation
Cathy Showalter	CEO/Executive Director	Otto Schoitz Foundation
Emily Hanson	Executive Director	BHCGA
Megan Mckenzie	Executive Director	McElroy Foundation
Sanzida Rahmatu Setu	Transportation Planner II	INRCOG
Oghogho Oriakhi	Transportation Planner I	INRCOG

*\*Attended Online*

Actionable items

The first item was approval of the agenda. It was moved by Sesterhenn, seconded by Sturch, to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Next was to review and consider approval of the minutes for the May 21, 2025, meeting. It was moved by Weintraut, seconded by Showalter, to approve the minutes as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Next was the Discussion Items

1. Work Session for the Draft Section 4 of the FY 2026-2030 Passenger Transportation Plan (PTP).

a. Finalize goal prioritization

Oriakhi thanked members of the committee for their commitment to ensuring the exercise of prioritization and assigning lead agencies towards the FY 2026-2030 Passenger Transportation Plan (PTP) was progressive. Having finalized the goal prioritization in July, the August meeting aims to assign lead agencies based on the evaluation and collective agreement by the committee. Oriakhi introduced Reinke as the lead facilitator for the work session.

b. Assign lead agencies

Reinke stated that the goal of the work session was to assign lead agencies based on the rubric they have utilized in the past, which focuses on accountability. Project initiatives 17, 24, 33, 15, 19, 9, & 16 were keenly discussed with MET and INRCOG, sitting as key stakeholders and lead agencies for these goals. Also, Hawkeye College, UNI, Boys & Girls Club, Homelessness task force & Grow Cedar Valley were identified as additional key lead agencies for the project initiatives 15, 19 & 7. Sesterhenn emphasized the need to establish a workgroup or subcommittee for various significant project initiatives to enable follow-up and accountability from the lead agency.

Hanson raised the possibility of having ridership data for MET Transit and RTC provided to the TAC committee. Sturch responded that ridership data is an ongoing activity that is collected and updated monthly, as well as by route. Oriakhi added that INRCOG is required to provide a historical record of ridership for RTC and how ridership is being impacted. Ridership data is a significant aspect of the data representation process in both the Passenger Transportation Plan (PTP) and the Long-Range Plan (LRTP). McKenzie requested the possibilities of having an annual report to the TAC committee on ridership.

Tink stressed the importance of direct routes for the free summer rides program, noting parents may be reluctant to have children transfer buses between Brynes and Gates Park or future destinations. McKenzie added that data from the program could inform future planning and encouraged MET to provide a record, if available, to support strategic decision-making.

Erin asked about MET Transit's workforce development and retention challenges, particularly regarding driver incentives. Sturch explained that MET's funding structure limits flexibility in offering incentives, and drivers typically progress from paratransit to fixed-route service before moving into management roles. He also noted existing funding gaps. Oriakhi added that RTC drivers often provide care and assistance to seniors, which some new hires find beyond their expectations. He also cited competition from higher-paying transit agencies as a major factor in turnover. Oriakhi added that, based on past conversations with Fratzke, exploring partnerships with school districts to recruit recent high school graduates for training and licensure could help address workforce gaps, as the role is currently limited to certain demographics of drivers.

Sturch added that there is an emergency support/disaster plan that outlines how Transit is engaged during events of flooding, fire, or other disasters. Benson noted that work is ongoing to update the county's emergency operations plan in collaboration with INRCOG, local jurisdictions, and agencies such as MET, RTC, and Public Health, among others, who will be consulted as part of the process.

Rahman Setu asked whether there is a specific emergency operations plan for transit. Benson clarified that there is no dedicated emergency operations plan solely for transit.

#### General Discussion

Overall, the committee assigned lead agencies for Goals 17, 24, 33, 15, 19, 9, and 16, and agreed to develop strategic objectives for their implementation. Goals 18, 31, 26, 11, 32, and 1 will be addressed at the September TAC meeting.

There being no further discussion, the motion was moved by McKenzie, seconded by Weintraut. Motion carried unanimously. Oriakhi declared the meeting adjourned at 11:31 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Oghogho Oriakhi  
Secretary



**IOWA NORTHLAND REGIONAL  
TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**Wednesday, September 24, 2025**

**MINUTES**

Fratzke opened the meeting of the Iowa Northland Regional Transit Advisory Committee (TAC) at 10:01 a.m. Following that, attendees introduced themselves.

**Meeting Attendees:**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Representing</b>
Thom Weintraut*	Planner III	Cedar Falls
Lisa Sesterhenn*	Public Health Planner	Black Hawk County Public Health
Aaron Reinke	Epidemiologist	Black Hawk County Public Health
Rachel Mayer	Epidemiologist	Black Hawk County Public Health
David Sturch	General Manager	MET Transit
Norman Coley Jr.*	Dean of Students	Hawkeye Community College
Nicole Ericson*	Community Development Director	Exceptional Persons, Inc.
Erin Tink	Executive Director	Waterloo Community Foundation
Megan Mckenzie	Executive Director	McElroy Foundation
Nick Fratzke	Transportation Director	INRCOG/RTC
Sanzida Rahmatu Setu	Transportation Planner II	INRCOG
Oghogho Oriakhi	Transportation Planner	INRCOG

*\*Attended Online*

**Actionable items**

The first item was approval of the agenda. It was moved by Reinke, seconded by Sturch, to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Next was to review and consider approval of the minutes for the August 13, 2025, meeting. It was moved by Sturch, seconded by Reinke, to approve the minutes as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Next was the Discussion Items

1. Work Session for the Draft Section 4 of the FY 2026-2030 Passenger Transportation Plan (PTP).

Fratzke thanked the group for their active participation in the process, while noting that the Passenger Transportation Plan is already slightly behind schedule. Fratzke added that the DOT had provided Additional time, and the goal is to have the PTP document submitted by the start of the fiscal year 2026 in October, which is just a few days away. Fratzke added that, going forward, many of the goals would be organized into subgroups for follow-up. Oriakhi provided context on how the goals and objectives were presented, noting that the focus is on those initiatives highlighted during the July and August work sessions, while other goals would continue to overlap and be considered in the future.

Fratzke asked whether, once the PTP is adopted, the group feels it would be appropriate to adjust the meeting schedule from monthly to quarterly, prioritizing collaboration with organizations and groups that have strong marketing reach. Tink noted that, based on experience, implementation of the goals and objectives can only move forward if meetings occur every other month, a point Sturch agreed with. Tink noted that meeting agendas need to be specific to ensure effective follow-up on advancing the goals for the PTP 2026-2030.

Norman added that a balance should be maintained between the work done by subcommittees and the full group, supporting either a bi-monthly or quarterly meeting schedule. McKenzie noted limitations with engaging other TAC members or organizations beyond INRCOG and MET Transit and suggested exploring ways for these organizations to participate in additional goals. Oriakhi recommended leveraging the “Free Ride, Try Transit Out” event, and Sturch added that such efforts should be targeted toward specific groups, including students, seniors, and first-time riders. Sturch provided clarity on the micromobility study and mentioned that MET engaged in the Transit study, not micromobility. We could explore the possibilities and feasibilities in this region, to which Oriakhi mentioned making the edits in the language based on Fratzke’s suggestions of using the word “exploring”.

McKenzie suggested including TAC in the micromobility goal. Reinke inquired about how the work groups would be created going forward, noting that while the focus is on the top goals and initiatives, the other goals remain identified but may overlap. Fratzke responded that subcommittees would be established at the next meeting, with members selected based on their areas of expertise related to the goals we are implementing for the PTP2026-2030.

McKenzie inquired about Sturch’s data from the summer seasonal rides, to which Sturch responded that there was no ridership; zero rides. McKenzie then asked whether the MET board plans to continue the specific routes in 2024 or explore alternative routes. Fratzke raised the possibility of extending service along La Porte Road to the Theme Parks area.

Fratzke also announced that the next meeting will be held on October 22, 2025, for the purpose of setting up subcommittees, after which a recurring meeting schedule will be established. Sturch added that the Waterloo Community School District continues to support the fare program, allowing students with IDs to ride for free. Fratzke requested a motion to approve and adopt the FY 2026 – 2030 Passenger Transportation Plan (PTP). It was moved by McKenzie, seconded by Tink. The motion carried unanimously.

#### General Discussion

There being no further discussion, the motion was moved by Sturch, seconded by Reinke. Motion carried unanimously. Fratzke declared the meeting adjourned at 10:57 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Oghogho Oriakhi  
Secretary

## APPENDIX III – LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY ANALYSIS

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The purpose of this Limited English Proficiency (LEP) analysis is to outline how MET Transit and RTC identify persons who may need language assistance, how assistance may be provided, staff training that may be required, and how to notify LEP persons that assistance is available. As defined in Executive Order 13166, LEP persons are those who do not speak English as their primary language and have limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English. This analysis provides a more detailed analysis of the LEP population in the region and ways to assist that population. MET Transit has also adopted an LEP Plan within its Title VI Program that was approved in 2019.

This LEP analysis utilizes the framework of the U.S. Department of Transportation's four-factor LEP analysis, which considers the following elements:

1. The number or proportion of LEP persons in the region who may be served by public transportation or are likely to encounter a public transportation program, activity, or service.
2. The frequency with which LEP persons come in contact with public transportation programs, activities, or services.
3. The nature and importance of programs, activities, or services provided by public transportation providers to the LEP population.
4. The resources available to public transportation providers and the overall costs to provide LEP assistance.

### LEP Analysis

#### **1. The number or proportion of LEP persons in the region who may be served by public transportation or are likely to encounter a public transportation program, activity, or service.**

The 2023 American Community Survey (ACS) Five-year Estimates were utilized to determine what percentage of the region's population could be considered LEP. For this analysis, "Limited English-Speaking Households" data were utilized. The following table shows limited English-speaking households, and the population speaking English less than "very well", by County.

As shown in the table, as well as on Map 2.3, the percentage of the population in the region that has limited English-speaking proficiency is low. The Waterloo/Cedar Falls metropolitan area has the most linguistic diversity. New Hampton and Waverly also show larger percentages of LEP persons than the region as a whole.

#### **Limited English-speaking Households, by County**

	Black Hawk	Bremer	Buchanan	Butler	Chickasaw	Grundy
All households	53,740	9,693	8,150	5,887	4,985	5,085
Limited English-speaking households	1,131	13	52	58	48	8
Percent of limited English-speaking households	2.1%	0.1%	0.6%	1%	1%	0.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates

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### Language Spoken at Home and Ability to Speak English, by County

	Black Hawk	Bremer	Buchanan	Butler	Chickasaw	Grundy
Total Population	122663	23695	19282	13570	11118	11652
Spanish/Spanish Creole	4313	288	216	178	304	110
Speak English less than “very well”	1553	42	117	69	198	57
French (incl. Patois, Cajun)	1005	15	8	0	0	8
Speak English less than “very well”	869	9	0	0	0	0
German or other West Germanic languages	425	117	454	71	309	46
Speak English less than “very well”	24	11	130	4	14	8
Other Indo-European languages	337	34	0	12	0	14
Speak English less than “very well”	84	0	0	0	0	9
Russian, Polish, or other Slavic languages	2245	22	48	2	13	0
Speak English less than “very well”	1185	0	14	0	0	0
Chinese (incl. Mandarin, Cantonese):	205	18	0	0	0	11
Speak English less than “very well”	75	11	0	0	0	6
Korean	89	4	0	0	0	0
Speak English less than “very well”	42	0	0	0	0	0
Vietnamese	211	6	0	0	0	0
Speak English less than “very well”	132	0	0	0	0	0
Other Asian and Pacific Island languages	1383	63	7	84	0	3
Speak English less than “very well”	997	47	3	48	0	0
Tagalog (incl. Filipino):	147	18	5	42	5	0
Speak English less than “very well”	92	18	2	37	0	0
Arabic	205	7	0	0	11	4
Speak English less than “very well”	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other and unspecified languages:	363	20	0	2	11	0
Speak English less than “very well”	160	9	0	2	0	0

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates

### 2. The frequency with which LEP people come in contact with public transportation programs, activities, or services.

MET and RTC have assessed the frequency with which staff and drivers have, or could have, contact with LEP persons. This includes documenting any phone inquiries and surveying vehicle operators. To date, neither MET nor RTC has had requests for interpreters or for translated documents in the service area. Staff and vehicle operators have had very little to no contact with LEP persons. Any comments, requests, or significant interactions with LEP persons will be documented and maintained in a database.

### 3. The nature and importance of programs, activities, or services provided by public transportation providers to the LEP population.

While most of the population (96%) speaks English only or speaks English “very well”, there are areas within the Waterloo and Cedar Falls metropolitan area with higher percentages of LEP individuals. These areas are currently served by the MET Transit fixed route system.

There are limited organizations in the region that focus on outreach to individuals with limited English proficiency (LEP). MET Transit and RTC services most likely to serve LEP individuals include fixed route, paratransit, and demand-response systems, primarily used by seniors and people with disabilities. LEP

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individuals may also request transit services through the INRCOG office, which maintains a contract with 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and 365 days a year's interpretation support via Language Link.

### **4. The resources available to public transportation providers and the overall costs of providing LEP assistance.**

MET Transit and RTC have considered their available resources that could be used for providing LEP assistance, including how much a professional interpreter and translation service would cost on an as-needed basis, which documents would be the most valuable to be translated if the need should arise, and completing an inventory of available organizations that MET Transit or RTC could partner with for outreach and translation efforts. The number of staff and vehicles operating during training that might be needed has also been considered. Based on the needs and costs identified by the four-factor analysis, MET Transit and RTC have developed the following guidelines for identifying and assisting LEP people:

#### **1. Identifying LEP Persons**

- a. Examine records to see if requests for language assistance have been received in the past, either at meetings or over the phone, to determine whether language assistance might be needed at future events.
- b. When MET Transit or RTC sponsors an event, they have a staff member greet participants as they arrive. By informally engaging participants in conversation, it is possible to gauge each attendee's ability to speak and understand English.
- c. Have Census Bureau Language Identification Flashcards available at MET Transit and RTC events near the registration table. Individuals self-identifying as persons not proficient in English may not be able to be accommodated with translation assistance at the event, but it will assist the sponsoring agency in identifying language assistance needs for future events.
- d. Have Language Identification Flashcards on transit vehicles to assist vehicle operators in identifying specific language assistance needs of passengers. If such individuals are encountered, vehicle operators will be instructed to try to obtain contact information to give to the transit system manager for follow-up. Dispatchers and schedulers may also be instructed to obtain contact information from LEP individuals they encounter, either in person or over the phone.
- e. Vehicle operators and other front-line staff, such as dispatchers, may be surveyed annually on their experience concerning any contacts with LEP persons during the previous year. For MET Transit, this survey is conducted in October each year.

#### **2. Language Assistance Measures**

- a. Have Language Identification Flashcards available.
- b. Provide translation services to individuals who request them, if reasonable accommodations can be made.
- c. When the MET Transit website is redesigned, a feature will be added to allow an LEP person to contact staff via email, indicating their native language and the type of assistance needed.
- d. Include a statement on all documents, agendas, and meeting notices that assistance is available for LEP persons. When an interpreter is needed, in person or on the telephone, staff will attempt to determine what language is required and then contact Language Link, which provides telephone interpreting services. Available resources to identify what language is being used include Language Identification Cards and Google Translate. Documents will be translated into other languages upon request.
- e. The MET Title VI Policy and Limited English Proficiency Plan will be posted in both English and Spanish on the agency website, doors of the main office and central transfer buildings, and on all transit vehicles.

#### **3. Staff Training**

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- a. Information on MET Transit and RTC's Title VI Policy and LEP responsibilities.
- b. Description of language assistance services offered to the public.
- c. Use of the Language Identification Flashcards.
- d. Documentation of language assistance requests.
- e. How to handle a potential Title VI/LEP complaint.

4. Outreach Techniques

- a. When staff prepare a document or schedule a meeting for which the target audience is expected to include LEP individuals, then documents, meeting notices, flyers, and agendas may be printed in an alternative language based on the known LEP population.
- b. Bus schedules, maps, and other transit publications may be made available in an alternative language if and when a specific and concentrated LEP population is identified.
- c. MET Transit's policy regarding public participation activities
  - i. Meetings are scheduled at various times/days during service hours, with meeting locations easily accessible and on a bus route.
  - ii. Meeting notice is in English and Spanish, and includes a statement that translation service is available upon request.
  - iii. Meeting notice is posted in transit station and transfer locations, on buses, at City Halls, and on the MET Transit website.
  - iv. To further target low-income, minority, and LEP populations, meeting notices are televised on the city cable channel.
  - v. Community, educational, social, and/or faith-based partners that are actively involved with low-income/minority/LEP populations are notified, and their assistance with outreach is requested.
  - vi. Public input opportunities include both written and oral commentary.

5. Monitoring and Updating LEP Efforts

- a. The number of documented LEP person contacts encountered annually.
- b. How the needs of LEP persons have been addressed.
- c. Determine the current LEP population in the service area.
- d. Determine whether the need for translation services has changed.
- e. Determine whether local language assistance programs have been effective and sufficient to meet the need.
- f. Determine whether the transit system's financial resources are sufficient to fund language assistance resources needed.
- g. Determine whether MET Transit and RTC have fully complied with their LEP goals.
- h. Determine whether complaints have been received concerning the agency's failure to meet the needs of LEP individuals.

6. Dissemination of LEP Plan

- a. A link to the MET Transit Title VI Plan will be included on the website, [www.mettransit.org](http://www.mettransit.org). A link to the INRCOG Title VI Plan will be included on the website, [www.inrcog.org](http://www.inrcog.org).
- b. Any person may request a copy of the plans via telephone, fax, mail, or in person, and shall be provided a copy at no cost.
- c. LEP individuals may request a translated copy of the plans, which MET Transit and INRCOG will provide, if feasible.

Questions or comments regarding the LEP Plans or Title VI Plans for MET Transit and INRCOG may be submitted to the following individuals:

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## APPENDIX IV – DOCUMENT REVISION SUMMARY