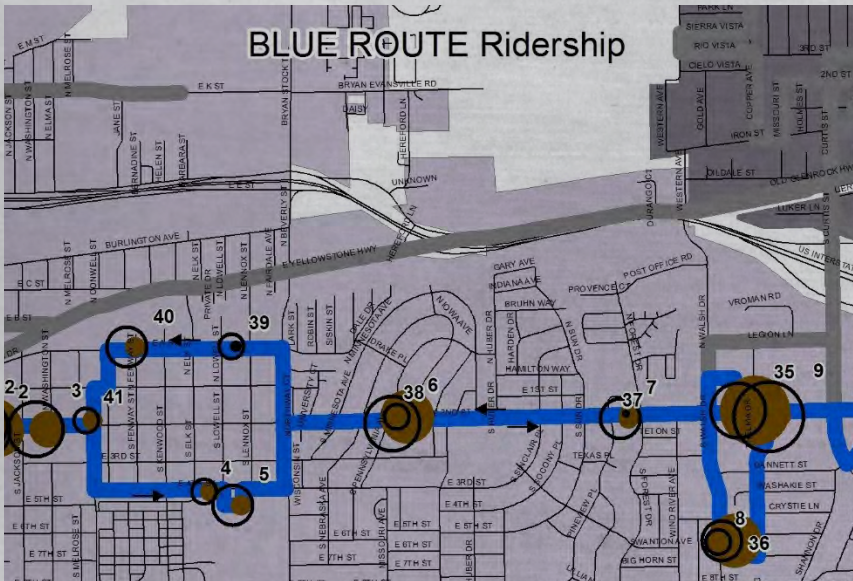


BLUE ROUTE Ridership



CASPER AREA TRANSIT DEVELOPMENT PLAN

2015 UPDATE

December 2015





CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION	1
PURPOSE	1
BACKGROUND	1
CHAPTER 2 - CASPER AREA DEMOGRAPHICS.....	3
POPULATION GROWTH.....	3
CHAPTER 3 - CATC and THE BUS.....	6
CATC - DEMAND-RESPONSE.....	6
THE BUS - FIXED-ROUTE	7
Route Deviations.....	9
Fares.....	9
Schedule	10
CHAPTER 4 - EQUIPMENT AND FACILITIES	12
FACILITIES	12
CURRENT EQUIPMENT	12
FLEET REPLACEMENT.....	13
CHAPTER 5 - SYSTEM RIDERSHIP	15
PASSENGER COUNTS.....	15
RIDERSHIP BY ROUTE.....	16
CHAPTER 6 - STAKEHOLDER SURVEYS.....	26
DRIVER SURVEYS	26
FIXED-ROUTE ON-BOARD INTERVIEWS.....	26
COMMUNITY SURVEY	32
DEMAND-RESPONSE ON-BOARD INTERVIEWS.....	35
CHAPTER 7 - ROUTE ALTERNATIVES.....	38
CONSIDERATIONS AND OBJECTIVES	38
HIGH DEMAND NEIGHBORHOODS	38
KEY TRANSIT DESTINATIONS	39
ALTERNATIVE 1 - OLYMPIC RINGS	40
ALTERNATIVE 2 - SPINE FEEDER	40
ALTERNATIVE 3 - INTERLINED LOOPS	40
ALTERNATIVE 4 - HYBRID	40
POSSIBLE FUTURE ROUTES	45
PUBLIC OPINION ON THE ALTERNATIVES.....	47
CHAPTER 8 - SYSTEM CONFIGURATION	50
OPERATIONS.....	50
REGIONAL COMPARISON	51



FAVORED CONFIGURATION	52
CHAPTER 9 - MARKETING	53
FIXED-ROUTE	53
The Marketing Message	53
DEMAND-RESPONSE	54
CHAPTER 10 - CONCLUSION.....	55
FLEET	55
RIDERSHIP	55
STAKEHOLDER SURVEYS	56
Bus Drivers	56
On-Board Fixed-Route Surveys	56
Online Community Survey	57
ROUTE ALTERNATIVES	57
Olympic Rings	57
Spine Feeder	57
Interlined Loops.....	57
Hybrid	58
SYSTEMS.....	58
MARKETING	59
CHAPTER 11 - RECOMMENDATIONS AND FUTURE STUDIES	60
FACILITIES.....	60
EQUIPMENT	60
DEMAND-RESPONSE	60
Increase Fares	60
Scheduling.....	60
Dispatching.....	60
On-board tracking.....	61
Limited Mobility Transfer Station	61
FIXED-ROUTE	61
crosstown express.....	61
Minimize headways	61
Maximize connectivity	61
Number of stops and placement.....	61
Meet changing needs in the community.....	62
Specific locations to service	62
OPERATING SYSTEM	62
Transportation Authority	63



Outreach and Marketing	63
Marketing Program.....	63
FUTURE STUDIES.....	63
Routing Study.....	63
Branding/Marketing Study.....	64
Coordination Plan.....	64

List of Figures and Tables

Figure 1 - Alternative Natrona county Population Projections	4
Figure 2 - Casper Population Density	5
Figure 3 - Current Fixed-Route System	8
Table 1 - Fixed-route and Demand-response Fares.....	9
Table 2 - Fixed-Route Schedule.....	10
Figure 4 - View of Current Fixed-route Schedule	11
Table 3 - Fleet Composition, Mileage and Condition - July, 2015.....	13
Figure 5 - Rendering of New CATC Buses.....	14
Figure 6 - Conducting Passenger Counts on the Green Route.....	15
Table 4 - Average Daily Ridership	16
Figure 7 - Blue Route Current Ridership.....	17
Figure 8 - Blue Route Extension Current Ridership	18
Figure 9 - Yellow Route Current Ridership	19
Figure 10 - Green Route Current Ridership	20
Figure 11 - Red Route Current Ridership	21
Figure 12 - Orange Route Current Ridership	22
Figure 13 - Purple Route Current Ridership.....	23
Figure 14 - Full System Current Ridership.....	24
Figure 15 - Trip Origin.....	27
Figure 16 - Trip Destination	28
Figure 17 - Bus Taken.....	28
Figure 18 - Trips per Week (2015 and 2010)	29
Figure 19 - Car Availability	29
Figure 20 - Bus Dependency (2015 and 2010).....	30
Figure 21 - Years as a Bus Rider	30
Figure 22 - Rating of Bus Service Elements	31
Figure 23 - Rating of Overall Bus Service.....	31
Figure 24 - Transit User	32
Figure 25 - Household Income.....	33
Figure 26 - Support for Transit.....	33
Figure 27 - Acceptable Fares.....	34
Figure 28 - Transit Outreach	34
Figure 29 - Demand-Response Locations Served - October 2015	36
Table 5 - Demand-Response Trip Purpose.....	37
Figure 30 - Alternative 1 Olympic Rings	41
Figure 31 - Alternative 2 Spine Feeder	42
Figure 32 - Alternative 3 Interlined Loops	43
Figure 33 - Alternative 4 Hybrid	44
Figure 34 - Future Routes.....	46
Figure 35 - Accept Route Transfers	48



Figure 36 - Bus Service to Paradise Valley	48
Table 6 - Management Operations	51
Table 7 - Regional Comparison of Operational Structure	52



CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE

This report serves as an update and supplement to the 2010 Transit Development Plan. An earlier plan prepared in 2005 that helped justify the establishment of a fixed-route system. That original document was extensive and covered the need for a fixed-route system, how it should be configured, and what has to be achieved to represent success of the system. The 2010 plan addressed how well the fixed-route system accomplished its goals. This plan looks at how the community has changed and will likely change in the next 5 years, and how the transit system will need to change to provide quality service to a changing demographic and increasing number of passengers.

BACKGROUND

The Casper Area transit program is administered and operated by a number of entities. The Casper Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) administers the program, providing oversight and funding for the operator. The City of Casper, Towns of Evansville, Mills and Bar Nunn, and Natrona County are the decision making bodies that make up the MPO. The Town of Bar Nunn and portions of Natrona County receive demand-response or “dial-a-ride” services from the Casper Area transit operator but do not have any direct agreements with the operator. They help guide and support the transit program through their position on the MPO. The Towns of Mills and Evansville are provided with fixed-route, scheduled service with the towns providing direct funding to the operator and the buses used on their routes. The City of Casper provides the fixed-route buses that operate in the City, all the demand-response buses, maintenance and repair for the buses, provides office and garage facilities, and assists with financial and grants management.

The Metropolitan Planning Organization staff members are City of Casper employees and their offices are in City Hall. They provide transportation planning services for the Casper Urbanized Area and oversee the transit program. Being an urbanized area with a population over 50,000 affords the communities the opportunity to participate in the federal MPO program, opening the door for special purpose grant funding and technical assistance through the Federal Highway Administration, Federal Transit Administration, and State of Wyoming. The MPO staff secures and manages most of the grant funding and supports the Casper Area communities in their transportation planning efforts.

CATC formed in 1979 with direct state and local support. Prior to that time, transit services were provided by three separate entities serving seniors, individuals in recreation programs, and persons with disabilities. The



Casper Area MPO was form in 1982. Concurrent with the establishment of the MPO, a consolidated transit program operator, the Casper Area Transit Coalition (CATC) was form to provide transit services to persons with special needs. The MPO transit programs were able to provide technical assistance and grant funding that made the coalition possible.



The MPO, through the City of Casper, has contracted with CATC to operate the transit system since its inception. Five year contracts with an annual renewal have been used, with CATC being the only operator to bid on the contract in the past. Other operators have expressed an interest in managing the transit program as recently as 2012. The Federal Transit Administration supports systems that offer opportunities to multiple operators and has pushed the MPO and City of Casper to establish a more competitive contract bidding process.





CHAPTER 2 - CASPER AREA DEMOGRAPHICS

POPULATION GROWTH

Casper is growing. However, its level of growth is uncertain. Given the current uncertainty regarding growth forecasts in the region, it is not a surprise that, as detailed in Figure 1, Alternative Population Growth Projections for Natrona County, could range from about 100,000 total residents to 137,000 through the year 2040.

Growth estimates from a variety of sources were considered while developing the alternatives and arriving at the preferred projection. Sources from the State of Wyoming, previous MPO studies and the Census Bureau were evaluated. In summary the alternatives are:

- The three Casper Area 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan alternatives were simply extended the additional ten years using their 1%, 1.25% and 1.5% growth rates.
- The state's 2030 projection, which is shown was adjusted to reflect current population estimates and then extended through 2040. The projected trend through 2030 was extended the additional ten years.
- The greatest growth shown in Figure 1 results from extending recent trends but at a decreasing rate over time.

Employment-focused population projections work well in higher growth locations, especially when they also consider natural change and migration patterns by cohort but they are less reliable for long-term projections. Regional experience with multiple high growth counties has shown high growth rates flattening after the initial boom. Anticipating when that shift will occur is challenging. The favored population trend line shows a steady increase of more than 2% per year through 2020, about a 1% growth per year through 2030 and less than through 2040.

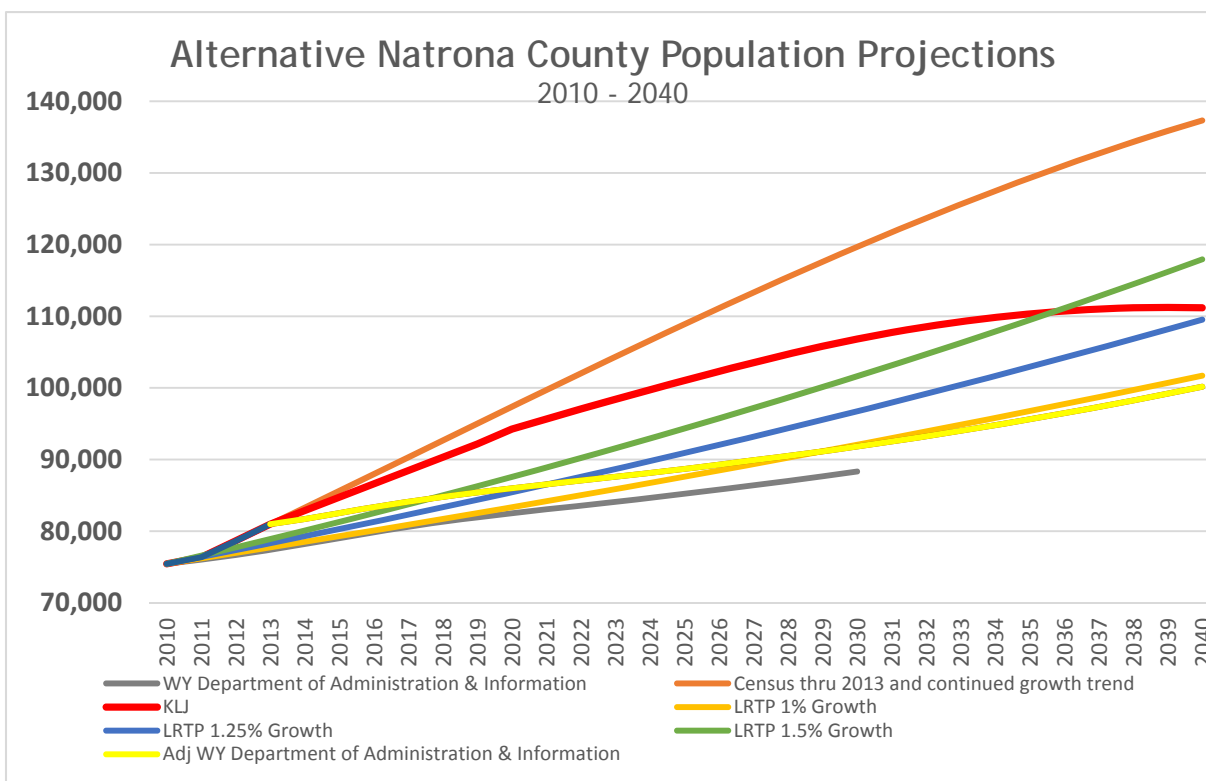


Using established projection methodologies, a reasonable estimate would be about 111,000 people in Natrona County in 2040. That is a total of about 30,000 new people to the area over the next 25 years, which represents a 39.8% increase or annual growth rate of 1.6%.

With this projected growth come a variety of opportunities and challenges. Continued population growth will demand more housing which will boost retail spending and drive commercial development. In addition, there will be demand for more community services such as schools, parks, and recreation facilities. New facilities for police, fire, and EMS will also be required to adequately serve the area. Similarly, infrastructure improvements will be needed to manage the demand placed on transportation and utility systems.



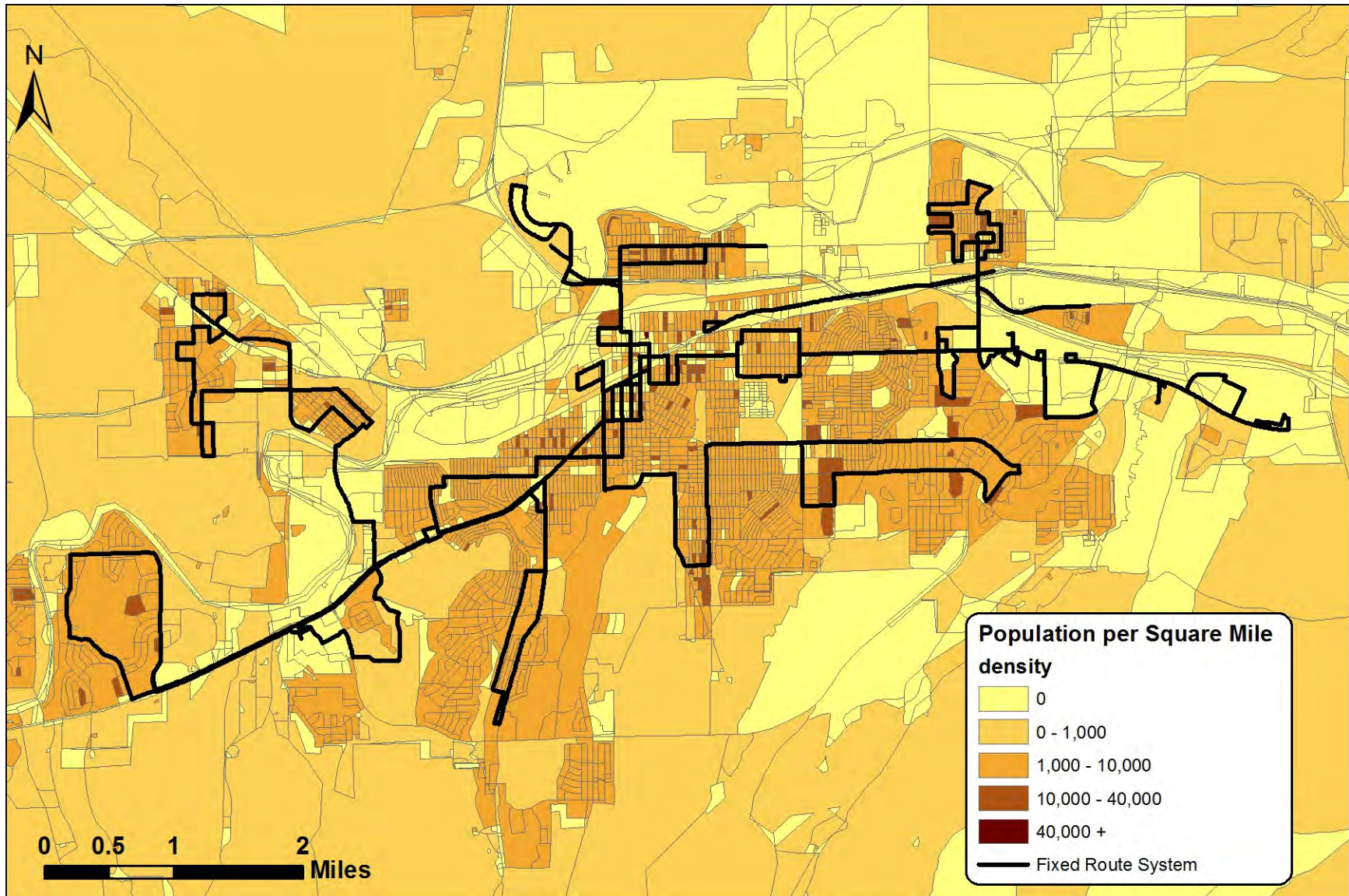
Figure 1 - Alternative Natrona county Population Projections



Transit systems are impacted by growth in terms of the number of new residents who may need or desire transit services. As important as the actual numbers are, the distribution of the new residents have a significant impact on the ability of the transit operator to provide quality service. Map 1 shows the location of the higher density residential areas in Casper. These higher density areas are more cost effective to serve. The lower density areas around the periphery of the community are difficult and costly to serve now and as the community grows.



Figure 2 - Casper Population Density





CHAPTER 3 - CATC AND THE BUS

CATC - DEMAND-RESPONSE

CATC operates both a fixed-route and a demand-response system. They both operate from 6:30 am to 6:30 pm and serve the communities in the Casper Area and Natrona County. At the present time the Town of Bar Nunn does not have fixed-route service but does enjoy the Demand-Response service.

To use the demand-response service, individuals must go to the CATC office on East 4th Street and sign up for the service. They need to demonstrate their eligibility either by their age, income or the presence of a disability that limits their mobility to be eligible for the \$2.00 one-way fare. The general public may use the service at a cost of \$5.00 each way. To receive service, the passengers must call more than 24 hours in advance to request a ride. Based on the calls received, a schedule is prepared for the following day that directs the 6 to 8 drivers that have been dispatched. CATC uses the Easy



Rider scheduling software which compiles the ride requests and formulates the schedules based on 30 zones that have been established for the area. The system attempts to optimize the rides so each driver has a balanced schedule. Depending on the calls received, drivers may have four or more riders on the bus at any one time. Individuals with set appointments are made a priority. The driver attempts to plot out a route that will get each rider to their destination as quickly as possible.

The two dispatchers who assist the drivers also set the schedules for the following day. Though the drivers receive a schedule at the beginning of the day, the dispatchers intervene when a client changes their plans or other complications arise. The dispatchers have a sense of where each driver is at any point in time and can redirect them to assist where conflicts or complications arise.

A significant number of the demand-response clients are short term users. Often individuals who have had an injury or underwent surgery are unable to drive or travel by car and need a vehicle with a lift to get around. They may only need CATC's services for a number of weeks or few months. Others with mobility challenges have used CATC for many years. Prior to 2005 and the establishment of the fixed-route system, a much smaller percent of the demand-response users had mobility challenges. Now that



many able bodied seniors and low income residents are using the fixed-route bus, the percent of riders on CATC with mobility challenges is much higher which means it takes more time per passenger for loading and unloading. This challenge is compounded by the fact that the community has grown and many of the clients destinations are on the outskirts of the community. As the number of seniors and others needing assistance in the community increases and the urban area expands, there will be a need for more buses and drivers to provide the same level of service.

THE BUS - FIXED-ROUTE

At the present time there are 6 routes which total 82 service miles that make up the fixed-route system that is operated by CATC. The number and placement of the routes was based on an assessment performed in 2005. The routing was based on the assumption that the downtown, grocery stores/shopping centers, medical facilities, employment centers and parks & trails would be key destinations for transit riders. It has turned out that the downtown, parks and employment centers have not been as significant as envisioned and medical and social service facilities have proven to be more important destinations. The jobs are most often lower pay retail or service jobs and are dispersed throughout the community rather than centered downtown or in the recognized employment centers. Based on observations and survey responses, it appears that those trends will continue over the short term and should be honored in the development of future alternatives.

It was anticipated that riders would come from higher density, lower income neighborhoods, as well as middle income neighborhoods. Most transit riders reside in mobile home parks, affordable apartments, and lower income neighborhoods. Middle or higher income apartment complexes and neighborhoods are not generators for the fixed-route system. This finding should be taken into account when planning future route alternatives.

The published map and schedule indicates the fixed-route service offers 185 stops: 148 stops in the City of Casper, 21 in the Town of Mills, and 16 in the Town of Evansville. There is only one bus operating on a route at any given time. The routes have between 23 and 43 stops with the shortest route being 10.0 miles and the longest 16.5 miles. Eight of the stops are used by two or more buses.

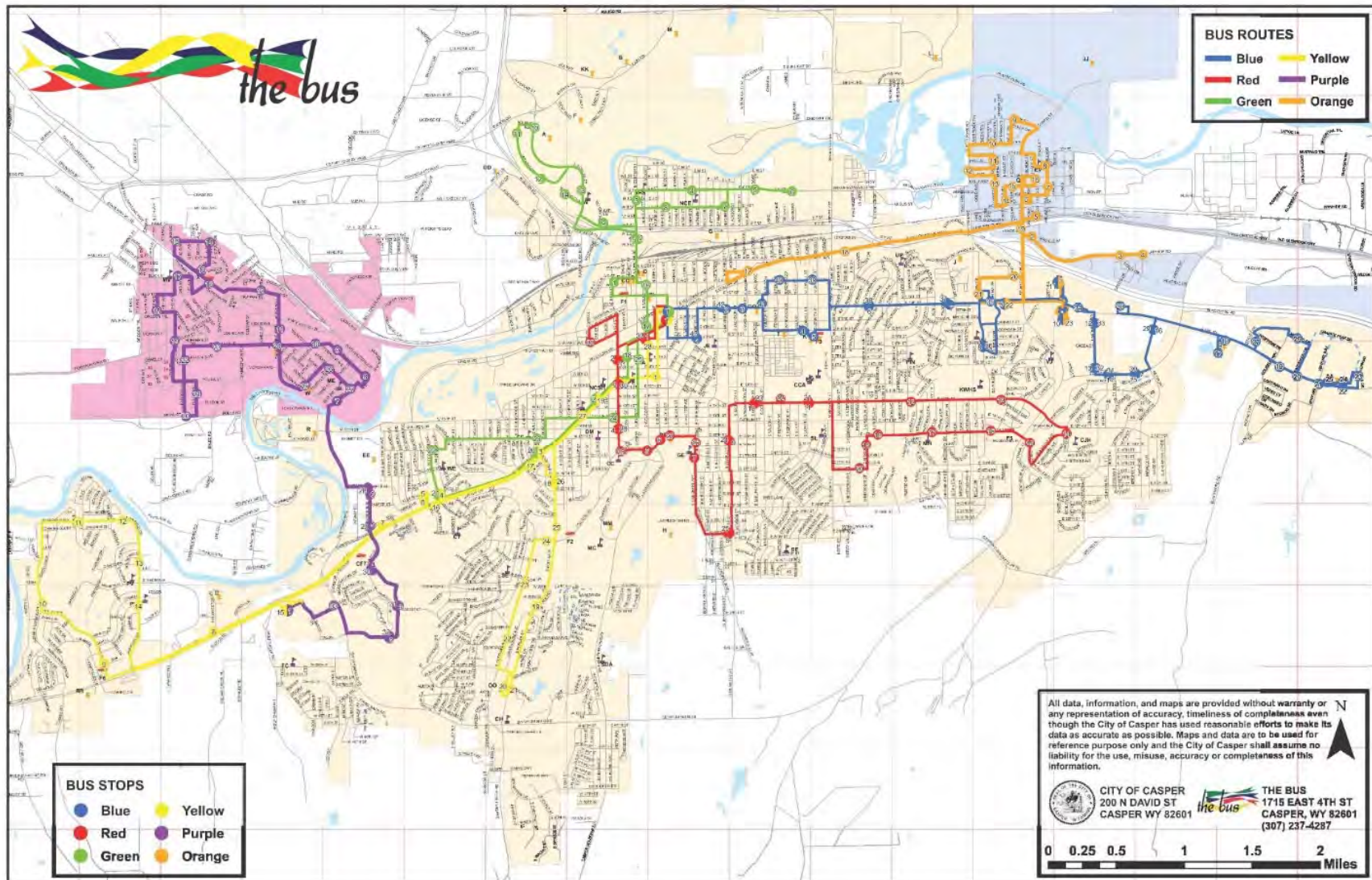
The spacing of the stops along the routes has a significant effect on the number of individuals who will ride the system. Adjusting for the stops used by two or more buses, the combined 177 stops are not evenly spaced with some as little as 2 blocks apart and others as much as 3 miles apart. If the stops were evenly spaced they would be approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ mile apart. Given that a $\frac{1}{4}$ mile walk to a bus stop is considered manageable for most transit users, a $\frac{1}{2}$ mile stop spacing is too great and additional stops should be added to provide good coverage.

The precise placement of transit stops is beyond the purview of this study. In general, stops should be located where sidewalks and crosswalks are present so pedestrians can safely get to the bus stop. There is no standard for how close bus stops should be spaced apart. The bus stops themselves must be accessible, safe, and comfortable. Without adequate sidewalks and crosswalks it becomes difficult and potentially dangerous to get to the stop. Once at the stop, the rider must have a comfortable place to stand or sit while waiting for the bus. It would be costly to place benches or shelters at all, or even most of the stops. Assessments must be made to determine where benches and shelters are needed, taking into account the proximity to public buildings or storefronts where a person could comfortably wait.

The Bus operates as a pulse system with the 4 routes with 50 minute headways converging on the downtown Transit Plaza at East 2nd Street and Beech Street at 30 minutes past the hour. The Green Route serves both North Casper and the Ft. Casper neighborhood and therefore passes through the downtown on the hour as well. The Mills and Evansville Routes do not use the Transit Plaza but link up with buses at the Walmart stores on the hour to exchange riders.



Figure 3 - Current Fixed-Route System





In response to concerns voiced through the 2010 Transit Development Plan, a route was added to serve a fast growing commercial area at the east end of the community. This was accomplished by adding an extension to the Blue Route that served the easterly part of the community which retained the downtown pulse system while providing service to the eastern most portion of the City. Ridership on the east extension of the Blue Route has been very low. As a result, Saturday service to this area has been discontinued.

The Transit Plaza has shelters and pull-outs for 2 buses at both the south end and the north end of the Plaza. Other than the Plaza, there are 8 shelters and 31 benches in the system. The installation of an additional 17 benches began in September of 2015. The first 10 benches are to be installed within the next year.

Route Deviations

To provide transit services for those who would have trouble walking to a bus stop, a route deviation service is offered whereby a person who lives within 2 blocks of an established route can call in advance and request that the bus that serves that neighborhood stop at their home. The fee for the general public to use this service is \$2.00 and \$1.00 for seniors and those with disabilities. Route deviations are less costly than demand-response service, though it is not well used.

Fares

The fares for the fixed-route system have not increased since the service started in 2005. Regular service one-way fares for adults are \$1.00 with fares for students being \$0.75 and \$0.50 for seniors over age 60 and those with disabilities. Children under 6 ride for free. Using the route deviation service costs \$1.00 for seniors, \$2.00 for students and \$5.00 for the general public. Monthly passes are available and they run from \$15.00 for seniors to \$25.00 for students and \$30.00 for the general public.

Table 1 - Fixed-route and Demand-response Fares

Riders	The Bus	Bus Deviation	CATC	Bus monthly pass
child 5 and under	free			
students	\$0.75		\$1.00	\$25.00
general public	\$1.00	\$2.00	\$5.00	\$30.00
seniors over 60	\$0.50	\$1.00	\$2.00	\$15.00
disabled	\$0.50	\$1.00	\$2.00	\$15.00
Medicare	\$0.50	\$1.00	\$2.00	\$15.00

The fares were set to help generate funds for The Bus and demand-response systems. An attempt was made to set the fees high enough to make a significant contributions to transit system revenues but not high enough to be a burden for riders and a disincentive. When The Bus system began in 2005, it was hoped that a significant number of demand-response passengers would switch to the less expensive to



operate Bus. That has occurred. To ensure that trends continue, it may be desirable to adjust the fee schedule to make it more expensive for able bodied passengers to ride the demand response system. During the 2010 TDP update it was determined that 40% of the demand response riders could manage the fixed-route system. The more that those who can use The Bus do so, the more the capacity of the demand-response system will increase for those with limited mobility, without adding buses and drivers.

Schedule

The fixed-route system does not operate on Sundays and Holidays. During the week most of the buses run from 6:30 am to 6:30 pm. The Blue Route runs until 7:30 pm on weekdays. On Saturdays 4 of the buses run from 7:30 am to 3:00 pm. There is no Saturday service in the Town of Mills and Town of Evansville (routes Orange and Purple)

Table 2 - Fixed-Route Schedule

Routes	Weekdays	Weekends	Sundays and Holidays
			no service
all but Blue	6:30 am to 6:30 pm		
Blue	6:30 am to 7:30 pm		
all but orange and purple		7:30 am to 3:00 pm	
orange and purple		no service	

Figure 4 - View of Current Fixed-route Schedule





CHAPTER 4 - EQUIPMENT AND FACILITIES

FACILITIES

CATC operates out of City of Casper owned facilities at 1715 East 4th Street in Casper. The facilities include a 1,250 sq. ft. office, 7,500 sq. ft. garage with 5 bays, and a 15,000 sq. ft. yard for bus storage. The entire transit fleet does not fit in the yard. Since one or more buses are out for service at any one point in time, CATC is able to get by with these facilities. The office space is very limiting. There is no room for staff meetings which must be held in an auxiliary room in the garage. More space is needed for office, dispatch, customer and staff functions.



CURRENT EQUIPMENT

The bus fleet is composed of smaller 12 to 18 passenger cut-away buses that are used primarily for the demand-response system. The fixed-route system has buses which range in size from 18 passenger to 30 passenger units. There are 2 small service units used primarily to shuttle drivers and support personnel.



Table 3 - Fleet Composition, Mileage and Condition - July, 2015

Unit #	# Passengers	With 2 WC	Purchased	Mileage	Condition	Notes
57	20	12	2006	192,711	fair	Back-up unit
58	18	10	2006	198,523	fair	Back-up unit
63	18	12	2008	191,577	fair	Back-up unit
64	18	12	2008	174,020	fair	Back-up unit
65	12	6	2009	154,320	good	
66	12	6	2009	156,728	good	
67	12	6	2009	174,929	good	
69	12	6	2009	162,358	good	
72	5	1	2009	33,425	excellent	Dodge Caravan
73	12	6	2010	92,519	good	
74	16	12	2012	68,194	excellent	
79	12	12	2012	37,771	excellent	
81	12	12	2015	NA	excellent	Rear lift - from WYDOT
				1,637,075		
				THE BUS		
41	5	1	2001	51,223	fair	Ford Van
52	26	2	2005	231,235	poor	Retired, may bring back after major repair
62	18	14	2007	232,750	fair	Back-up unit
68	26	22	2009	192,709	good	
70	26	22	2009	139,718	good	
71	26	22	2009	192,282	good	
75	30	26	2012	99,309	excellent	
76	30	26	2012	85,979	excellent	
77	18	14	2013	59,020	excellent	Mills
78	18	14	2013	58,723	excellent	Evansville
80	30	24	2013	4,344	excellent	
				1,347,292		

FLEET REPLACEMENT

In September of 2015, another bus was added to the demand-response fleet. A unit being provided to another community in the state by WYDOT was rejected by that community. The City of Casper expressed an interest in the 12 passenger, rear lift bus and was awarded it by the state. Two additional 16 passenger buses have been purchased for the demand-response fleet and are currently being assembled by the manufacturer. In addition to the 2 demand-response buses currently being assembled, the City of Casper has also gone out to bid for a low floor with ramp, 16 passenger bus with the option of purchasing 2 more identical buses by 2020.

To improve and upgrade the fixed-route fleet, the City of Casper has gone out to bid for two 26 passenger buses with lifts. In that additional buses will need to be replaced in the next few years, the



bid request has been structured such that the City may exercise an option to purchase up to 3 identical buses prior to 2020. Having the option for additional purchases provides the City of Casper the opportunity to stagger the bus purchases and institute a program whereby buses are replaced on a regularly scheduled basis to maintain the overall condition of the fleet from year to year. Therefore, over the next 5 years, up to 10 new buses could be added to the overall transit fleet, placing the system in a very solid position with regards to the equipment.

Figure 5 - Rendering of New CATC Buses



Selecting the right vehicles for the fleet involve a number of considerations. The function or role a piece of equipment has in the overall system must be considered. While having the flexibility to call on a bus to serve in place of a unit in for service is desirable, efficiencies are lost if a large, costly to operate bus is frequently used to cover for a smaller unit.

The durability of the bus and ease of maintenance must be considered. Having a significant number of identical buses makes maintenance easier and cheaper. The current fleet uses cut-away buses on a truck chassis that range in size from 12 to 30 passengers. The smaller buses are heavy and not much cheaper to operate than the large buses. Given the few number of riders on many of the demand-response runs, it may be worth adding smaller 10-14 passenger vans. The lighter, less powerful vans can use half the fuel as the cut-away buses in the current fleet. While such vans may play a role in the system, their longevity and cost of maintenance must be evaluated to determine if they are a good investment in the long run.



CHAPTER 5 - SYSTEM RIDERSHIP

PASSENGER COUNTS

The data gathering portion of the study was done in four phases. The first phase involved riding The Bus and counting passengers and assessing how well the buses stayed on schedule. The objective with the first phase was to ride each of the six routes during each run of the day. To accomplish that would require spending 72 hours on a bus. To save time and reduce the project cost, a number of runs with a history of low ridership were skipped.

Figure 6 - Conducting Passenger Counts on the Green Route



The data gathered on each run included:

- Passengers boarding and alighting per stop
- Passengers on the bus at each stop
- The number of minutes a bus was ahead or behind schedule at each stop
- The number of seconds it took for boardings and alightings at each stop.

During the 51 hours that the counts were conducted, it was noted that 56 percent of the 192 stops observed were actually in use and 44 percent were not being used at that moment. There were periods when there were no passengers aboard and others where almost every seat was taken. In general, there were frequently less than 5 people on the bus at any point in time, with the average being 7.5 riders.

Bus riders are encouraged to be at their bus stop five minutes before the bus is scheduled to arrive. Generally, it is considered acceptable for buses to be between 5 minutes early and 5 minutes late. The experience during the rider count phase of the study was that the buses were never more than 5



minutes early arriving at the transfer station but more than 5 minutes late on 6 occasions, for an on-time rate of 82%.

When route changes are being considered, it is necessary to know what the travel time is and how much time will be needed for the planned stops. The average time it takes to stop for a passenger and then pull out was 38 seconds. This average included passengers using the lift or bike rack. The shortest stop observed was 17 seconds and the longest was 4 ½ minutes.

RIDERSHIP BY ROUTE

Fixed-route ridership varies significantly by route. The Blue route that connects the downtown Transit Plaza with the east Walmart and Eastridge Mall is the busiest route. The Purple route that serves the Town of Mills has the lowest ridership. Ridership is represented on the route maps as both boardings and alightings by stop. A stop with more passengers getting on than off would be represented by a larger solid circle and smaller open circle. Combining the boardings and alightings provides the total ridership for each route and the entire system.

Table 4 - Average Daily Ridership

Average Daily Ridership						
Route	Stops	Get on	Get off	Length	Average on Board	Stop Efficiency
Blue	22	244.8	243.6	6.8	6.4	22.2
Blue Ext	23	52.0	36.0	5.5	2.1	3.8
Red	34	82.3	80.6	10.1	3.3	4.8
Green	26	113.3	108.0	11.6	4.3	8.5
Yellow	29	130.67	125.33	16.56	5.6	8.8
Purple	34	42.0	38.0	10.0	2.2	2.4
Orange	24	74.0	74.0	9.9	2.7	6.2
Total System	192	739.1	705.5	70.4	26.5	7.5

The total system ridership observed when the counts were taken was 1,445 trips per day. On average, there were from 2.1 to 6.4 persons on a bus at any point in time. When all the routes are combined, an average of 26.5 persons would be on a fixed-route bus at a given point in time. In terms of stop efficiency, there were only 2.4 individuals getting on or off a stop in Mills per day and 22.2 individuals getting on or off a Blue route stop per day.



Figure 7 - Blue Route Current Ridership

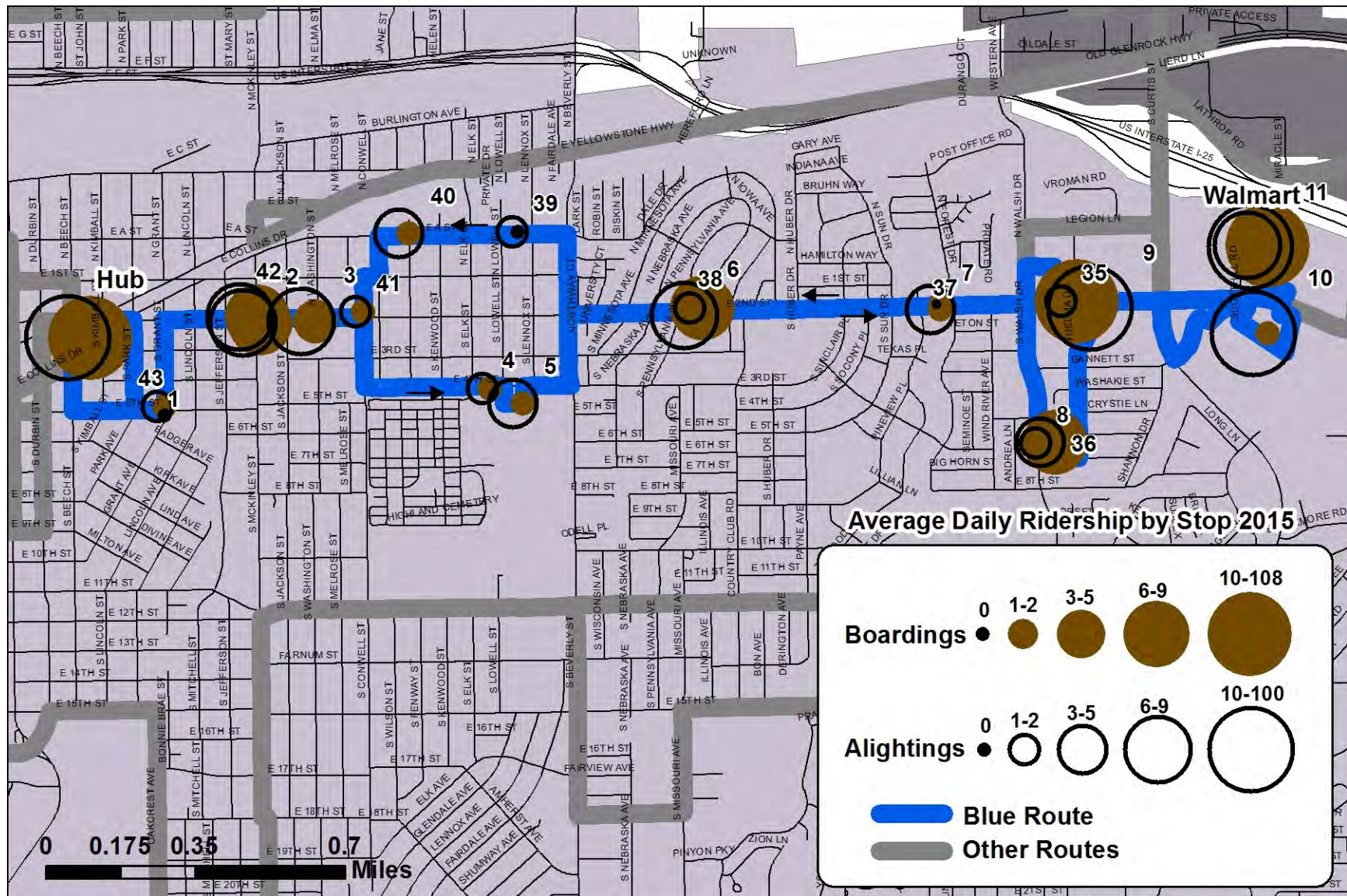




Figure 8 - Blue Route Extension Current Ridership

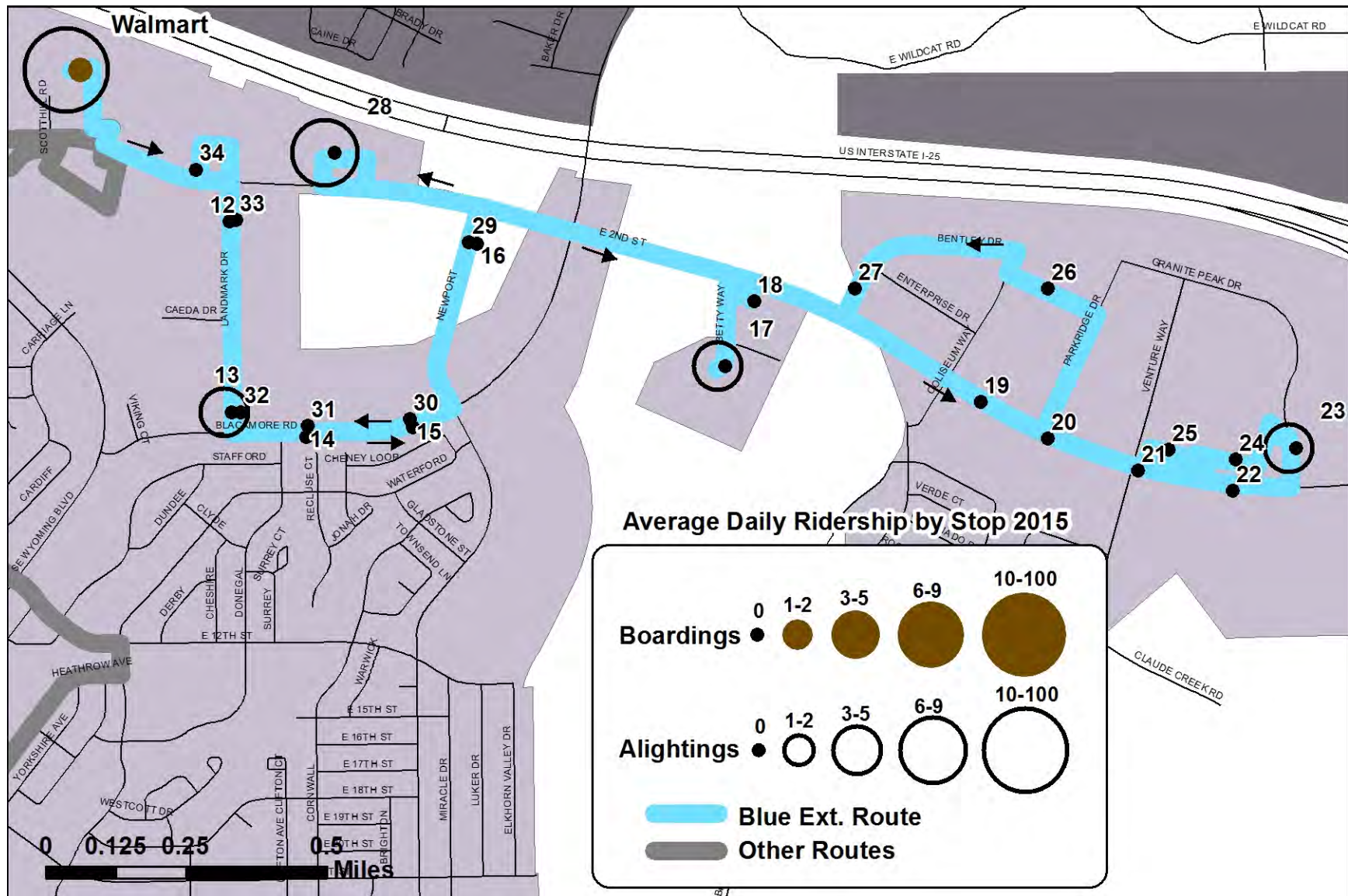




Figure 9 - Yellow Route Current Ridership

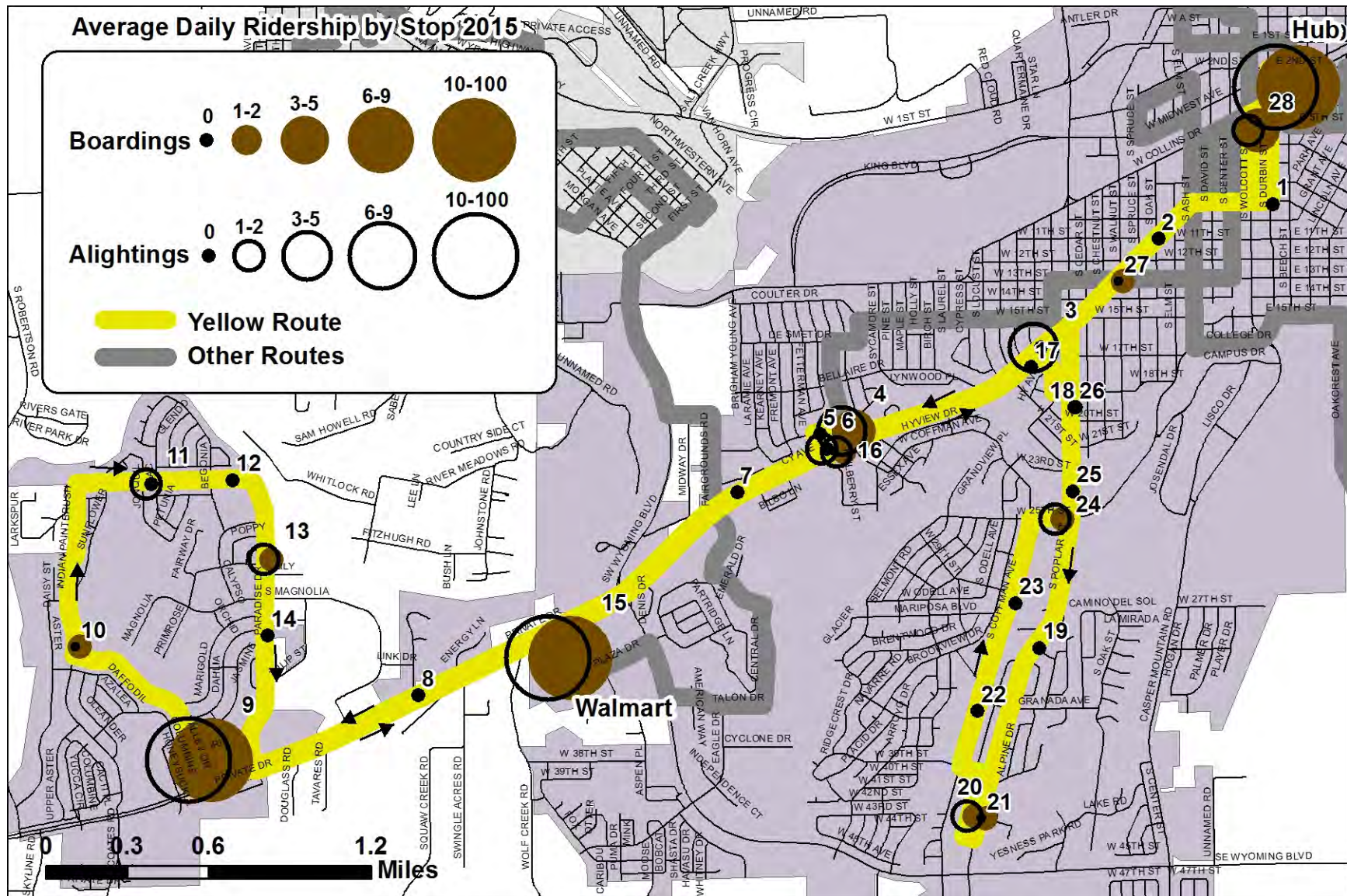




Figure 10 - Green Route Current Ridership

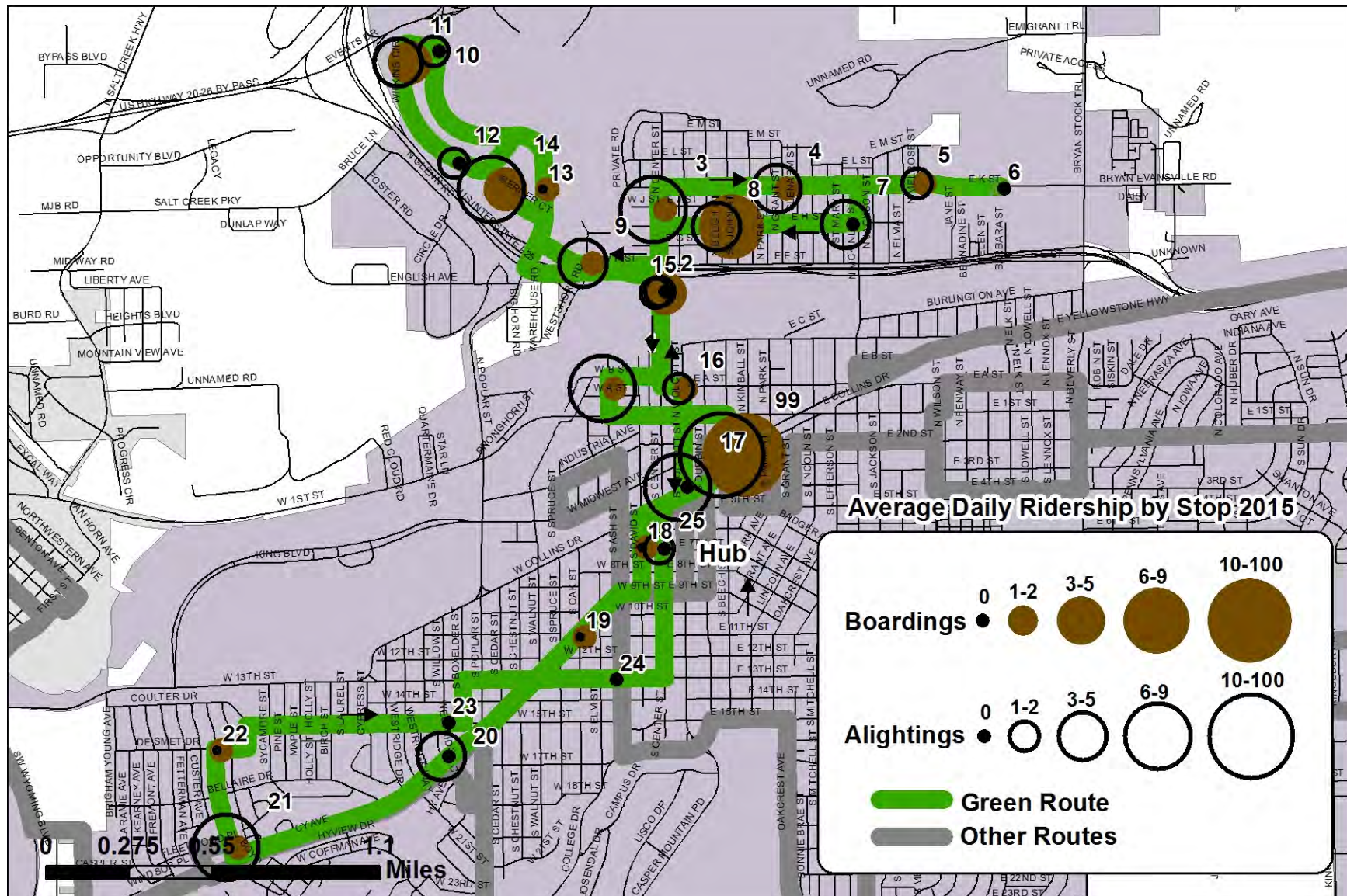




Figure 11 - Red Route Current Ridership

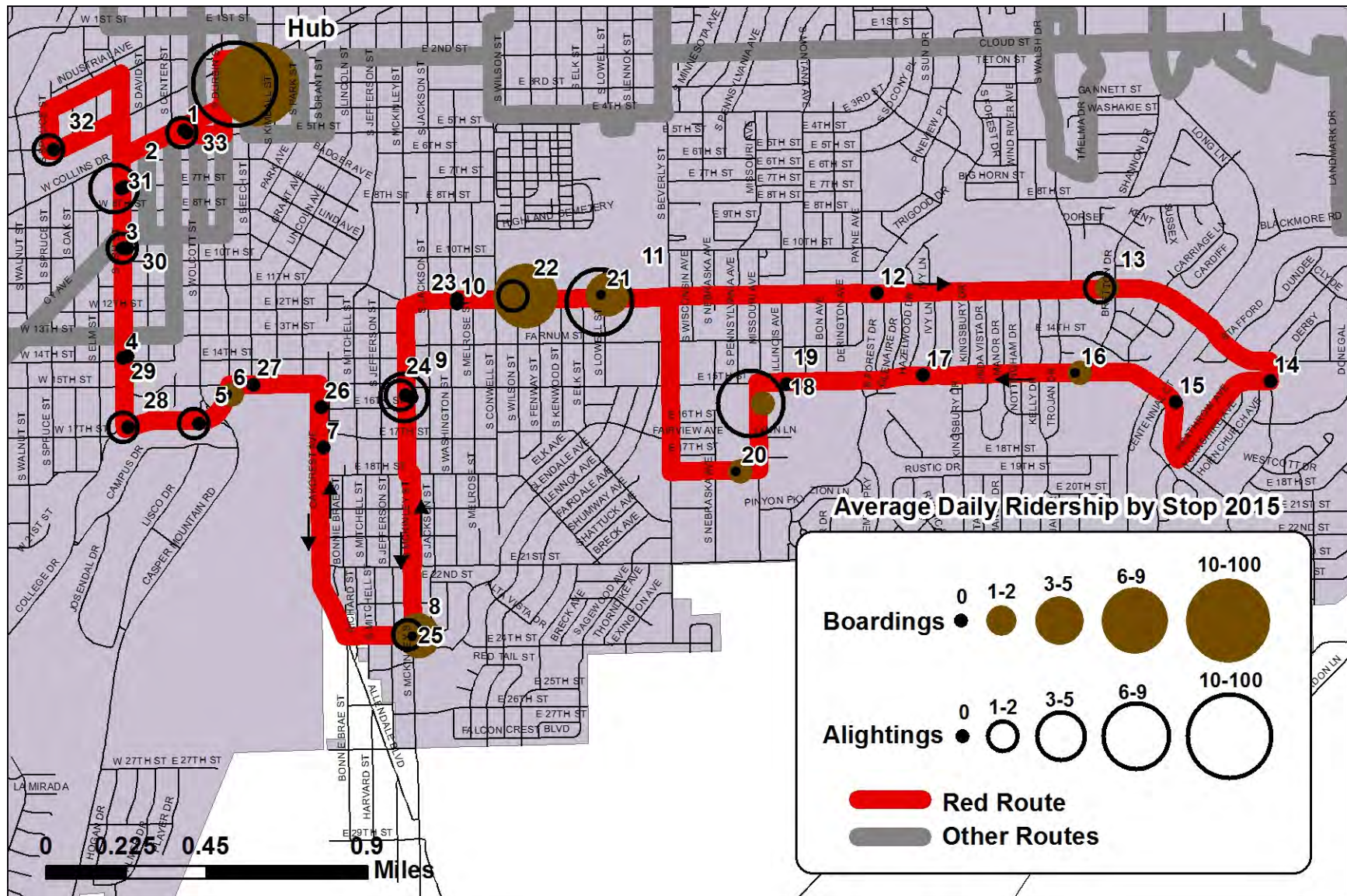




Figure 12 - Orange Route Current Ridership

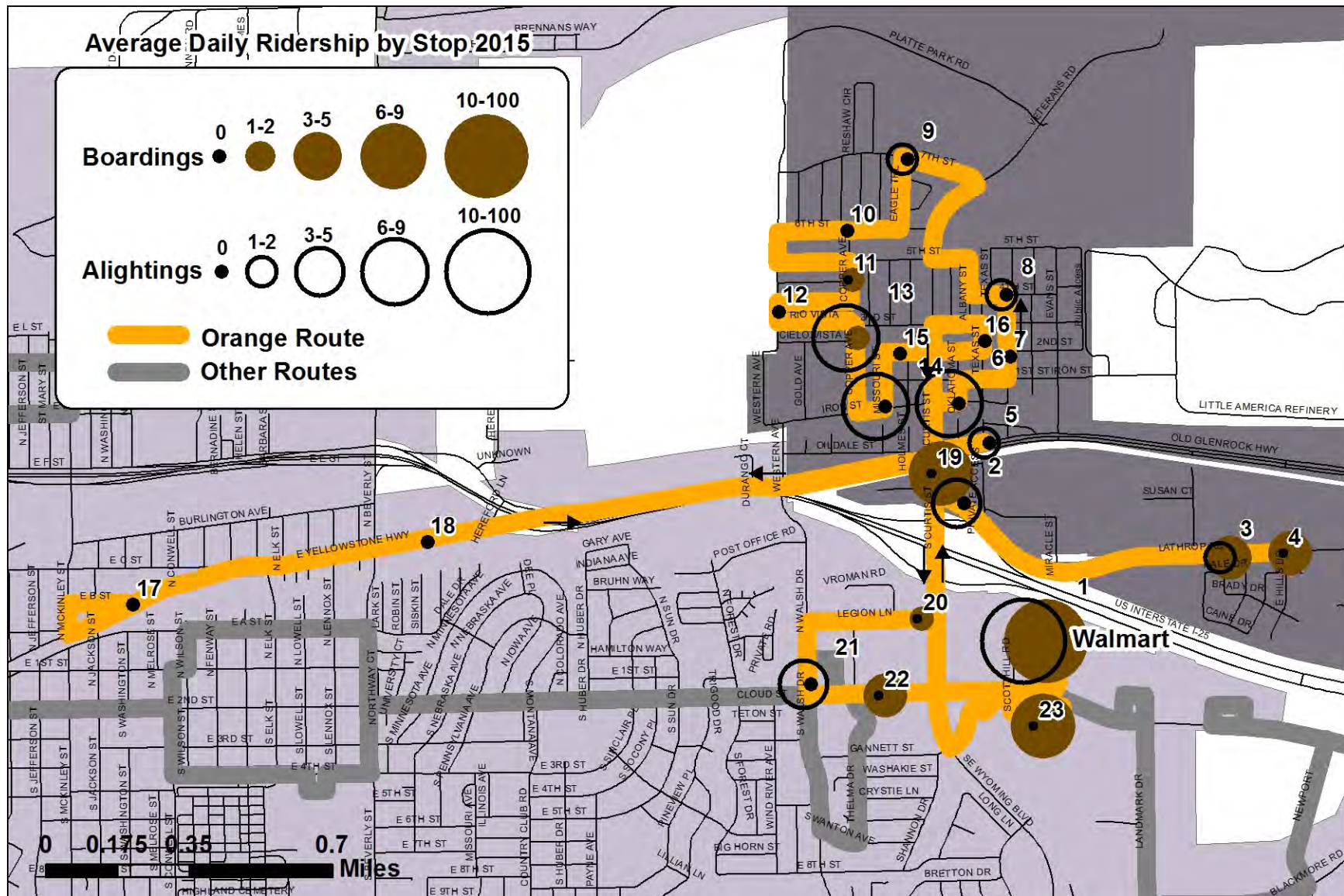
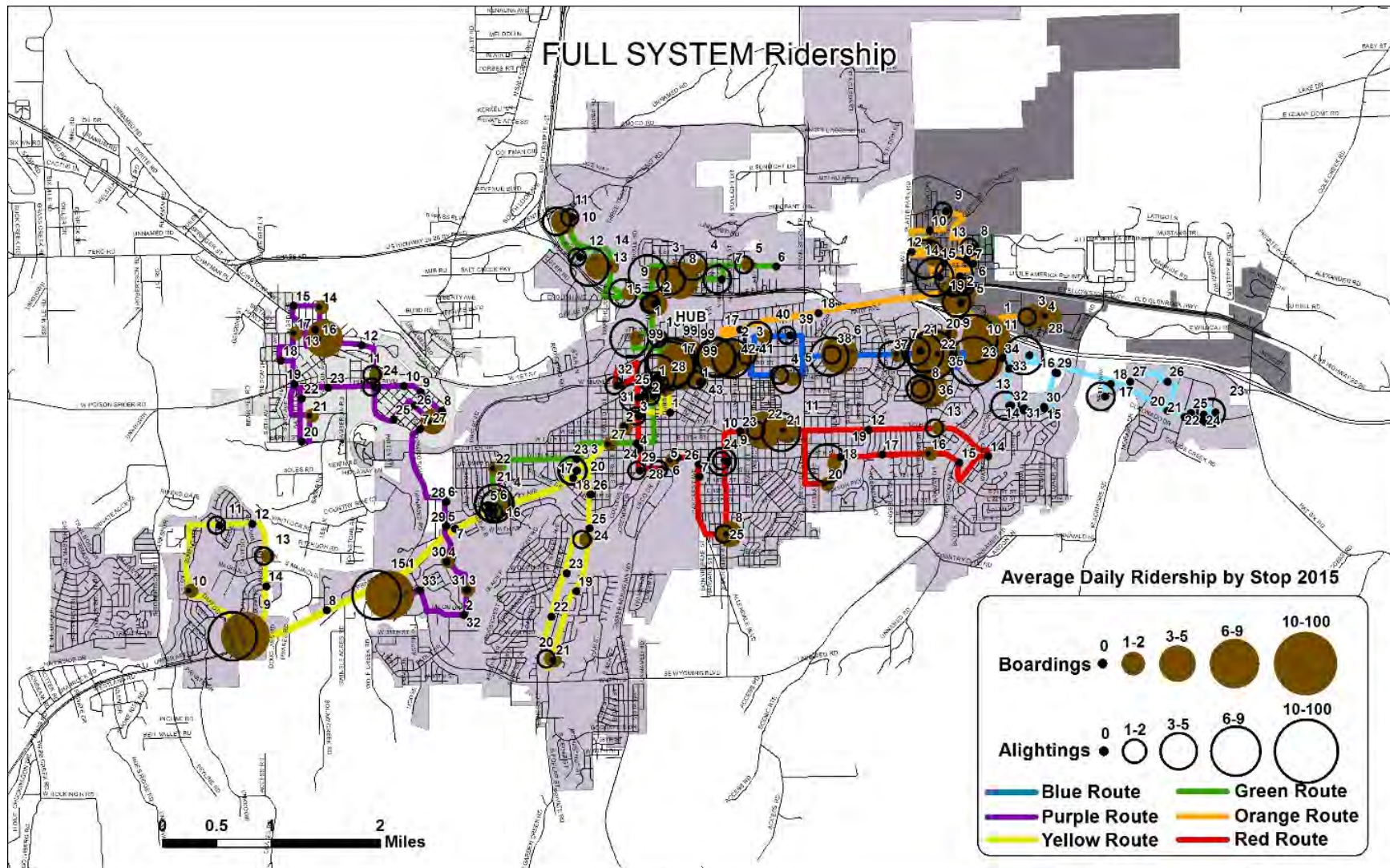






Figure 14 - Full System Current Ridership





The Blue Route is the most well used route with an estimated ridership of 500 per day when you combine boardings and alightings. An equal number of riders were getting off the bus as getting on, though they were not necessarily the same individuals. The most significant stops are the downtown Transit Plaza, Walmart East, and Thelma Drive. The stops near residential concentrations and medical facilities were not as busy as the stops in the commercial locations.

The Blue Extension has very low ridership, with an observed 52 passengers per day with more individuals getting off the bus than on. This likely signifies that the riders use the bus to get to work but get home by some other means. With more people are getting off than on, extending the hours on this route could enable workers to take the bus home as well. However, at the present time, this route does not have enough riders to make it viable.

The Yellow Route is the second most popular route with 130 riders getting on and 125 getting off. The Transit Plaza and Walmart West are the most well used stops. The first stop in Paradise Valley has a notable number of riders. This location is in close proximity to a lower income neighborhood with a significant number of apartments. The stop at Kit Carson near Smith's Grocery and the Central Pines senior residence is another key stop.

The Green Route serves both North Casper and Southwest Casper. Most of the 113 boardings and 108 alightings are in the downtown and North Casper. Key stops include the Central Wyoming Counseling Center and the Department of Family Services. The number of stops where more people get off than on suggest that it is more common to take the Green Bus to reach a destination than return home.

It is notable that the ridership is low in the Fort Casper neighborhood. If there is a need to shorten the Green route in the future dropping those stops could be a consideration.

Relatively little activity was observed at most of the stops on the Red Route with an equal number of boardings and alightings (161). Other than at the Transit Plaza, most of the other boardings and alightings occurred at the Life Steps Campus and Lowell Street. The Lowell stop serves Park Place, as well as Beverly Plaza and the apartments in the Wisconsin Street Project north of 12th Street.

The Orange Route services the Town of Evansville and a number of commercial properties in the vicinity of 2nd and Wyoming Boulevard. The Orange Route also serves the Salvation Army and Masterson Place on East Yellowstone, which were not in use when the counts were being taken. The busiest stops have more individuals return home on the bus than using it to get to their destination. Overall, the boardings and alightings were both observed to be 74 per day.

The Purple Route that serves the Town of Mills and Mesa Additon was observed to have the lowest ridership of 42 daily boardings and 38 alightings. The fact that the boardings are higher than the alightings suggests that the passengers in Mills take the bus to Walmart West to access the rest of the transit system but return home by some other means.



CHAPTER 6 - STAKEHOLDER SURVEYS

To gauge how the transit system is used, identify where there are deficiencies, and what improvements make sense, conversations need to take place with users and potential users. A variety of methods are available to gather information about the transit system which differ in the time and effort needed to engage the stakeholders and the value of the information secured. Given the parameters of this study, face-to-face interviews were conducted with riders, an online community survey was made available, and written comments were gathered from the bus drivers.

DRIVER SURVEYS

Before beginning with on-board bus rider interview, meetings were held with the bus drivers to gain a sense of the most frequent trip destinations, passenger concerns/complaints, and opinions on how transit services could be improved. In addition to getting verbal comments at the staff meetings that were attended, written surveys were distributed whereby drivers could provide private comments about how the system worked and what improvements could be made.

Other than providing their assessment on how the system was used based on their observations, the drivers offered opinions on sensible route changes, the equipment, outreach methods, and system improvements. Key findings from the driver surveys were: smaller buses can play a role, distributing information on transit services is important, and route duplication is a problem. The full results of the survey can be viewed in Appendix A.

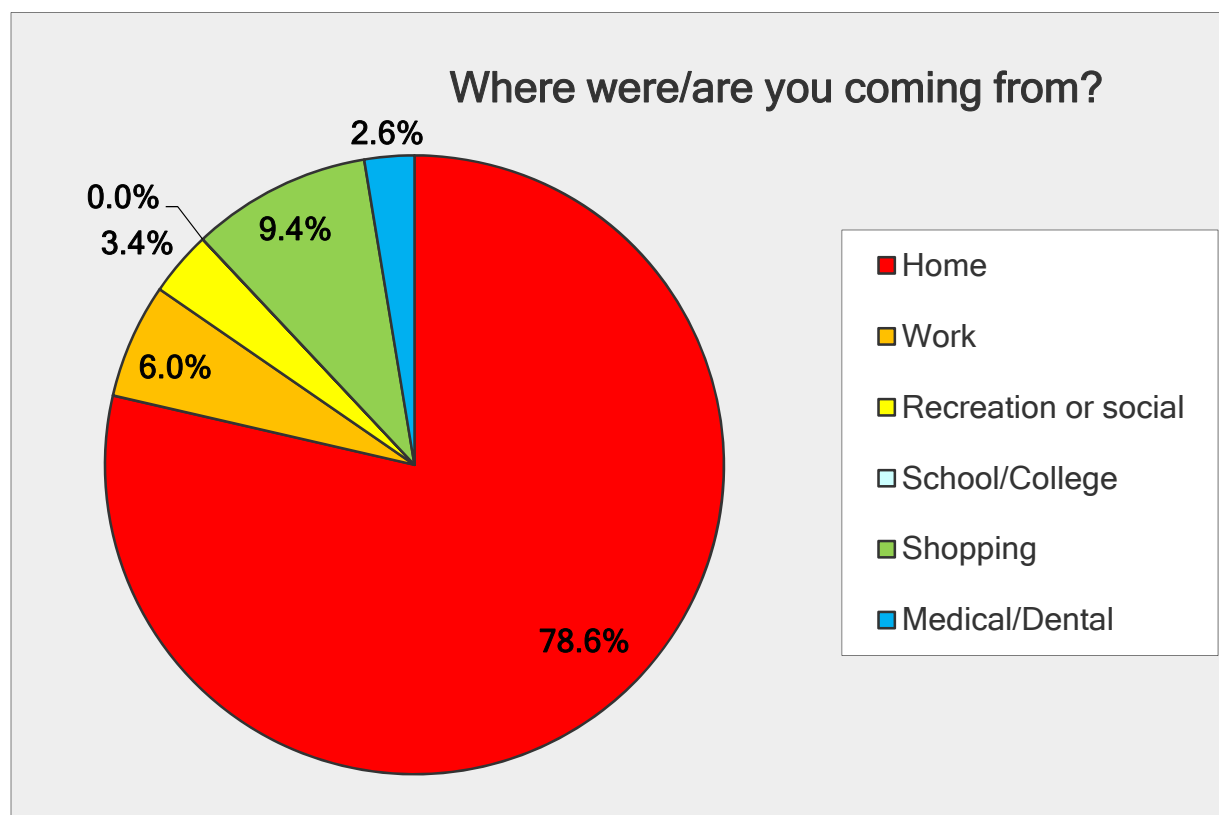
FIXED-ROUTE ON-BOARD INTERVIEWS

Another phase of the study involved onboard interviews with the riders. Volunteers provided by AARP assisted with this part of the study. Over a period of a week, they interviewed 136 passengers. The survey sessions were not distributed evenly throughout the day. Relatively few were performed at the earliest and latest run of the day. There was no attempt to focus on riders from a specific demographic group. The volunteers were asked to cover the whole gamut when approaching passengers.

To gain information on changes to the way the system was being used and where improvements are needed, the survey that was used with the 2010 Transit Development Plan Update was used. This allowed conclusions to be drawn on what has changed in the past 5 years. The survey is attached as Appendix B.



Figure 15 - Trip Origin



Clearly most of the riders indicated that they began their trip at home, as reflected in Figure 5. If you take that as a given, then shopping, work and recreation/social are the most frequent points of origin. In terms of where a random bus rider is going, shopping and work remain on the top of the list, however, recreation/social drop well down the list (Figure 6). One possible explanation would be riders begin their day on the bus at home and finish the day with family or friends.



Figure 16 - Trip Destination

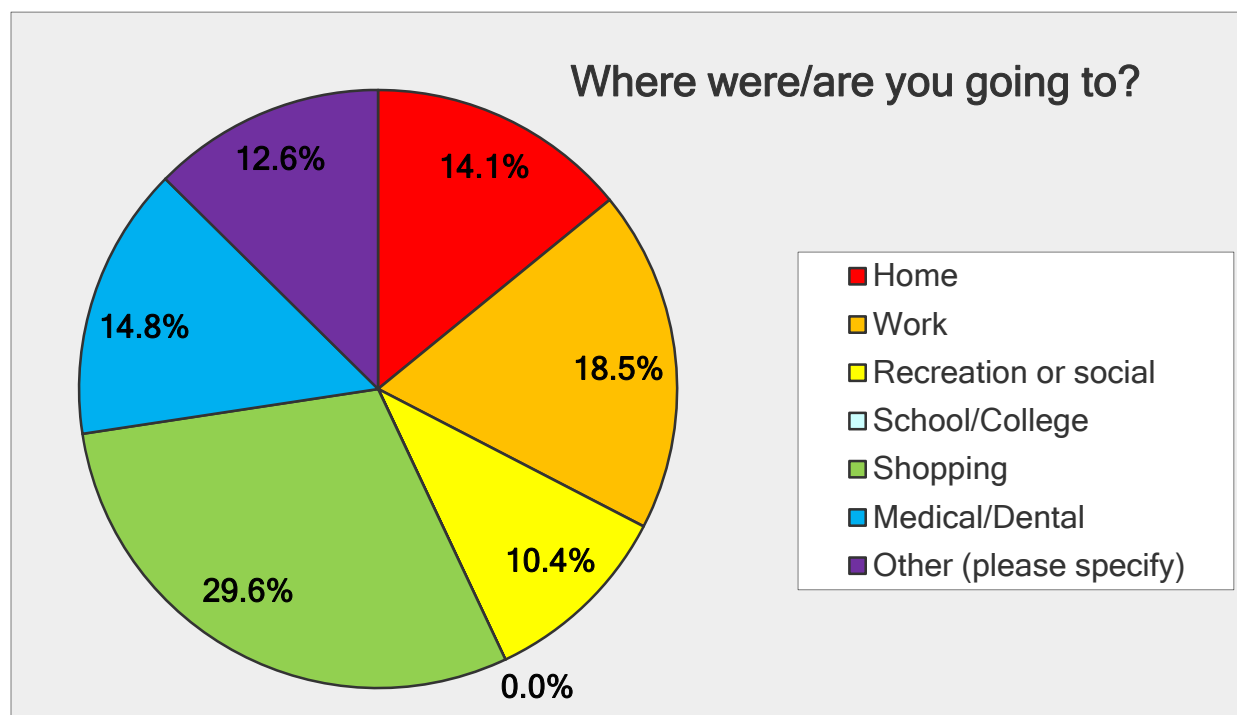


Figure 17 - Bus Taken

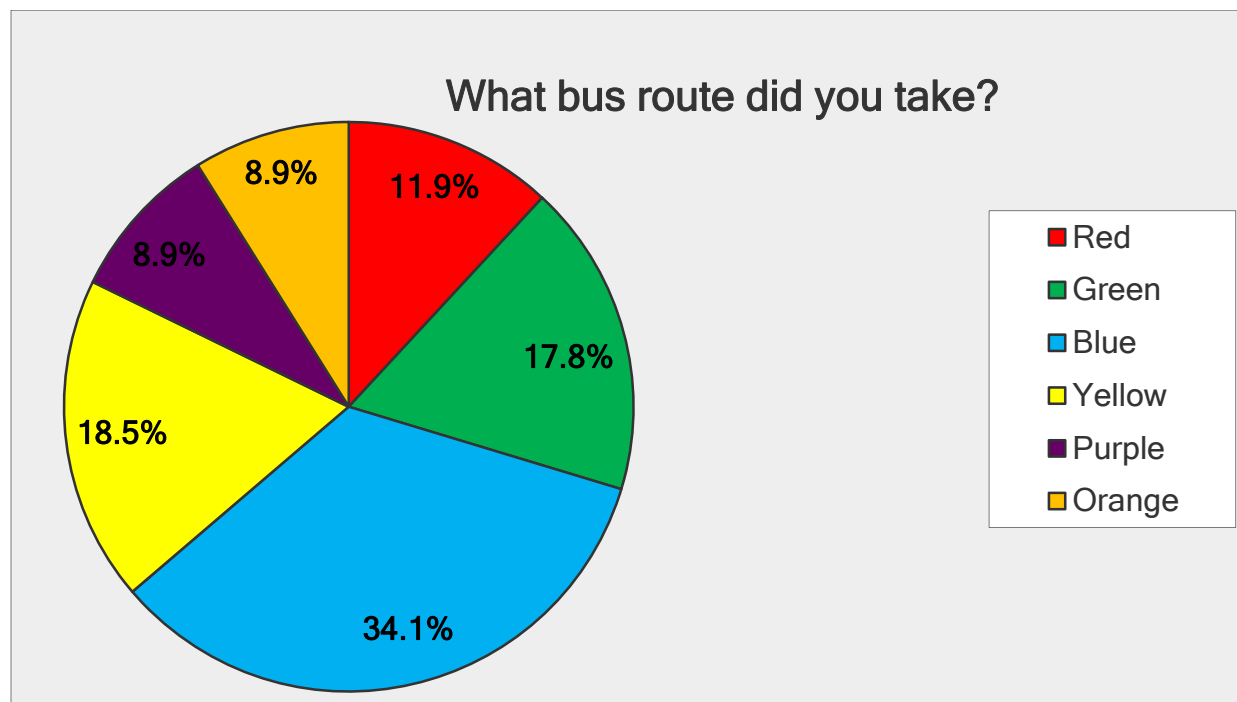
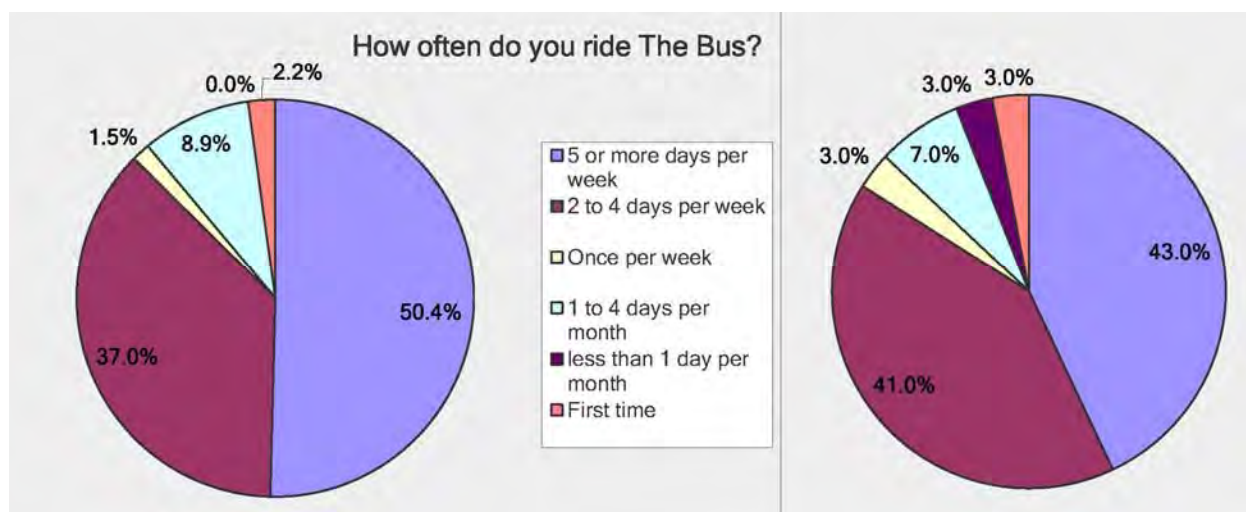




Figure 18 - Trips per Week (2015 and 2010)



The frequency with which most riders are taking the bus makes it clear how important the service is. Over 80% of those surveyed took the bus 2 or more times per week. As reflected in Figure 8, over the past 5 years the number that use the bus every day has gone up by 7 percent. Dependency on the bus has gone up as well. Figures 9 and 10 show that fewer people have access to a car than was the case in 2010 and more people would forgo their trip all together if there was no bus service. Walking is less popular as a means of transportation now that it was in 2010. This may be a result of greater distances between destinations or a reduction in individual's ability or willingness to walk to a bus stop.

Figure 19 - Car Availability

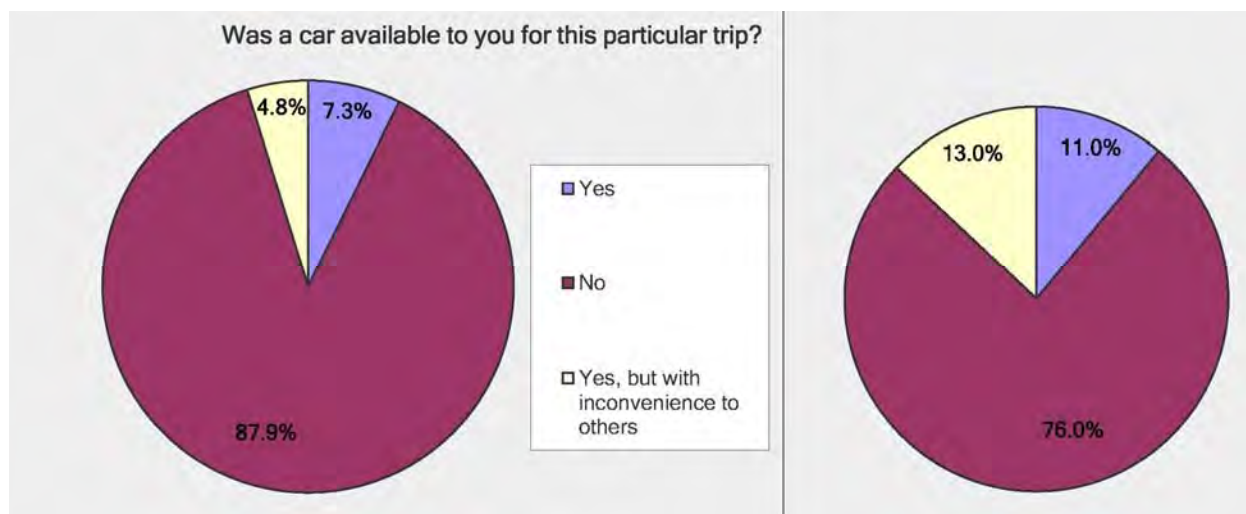




Figure 20 - Bus Dependency (2015 and 2010)

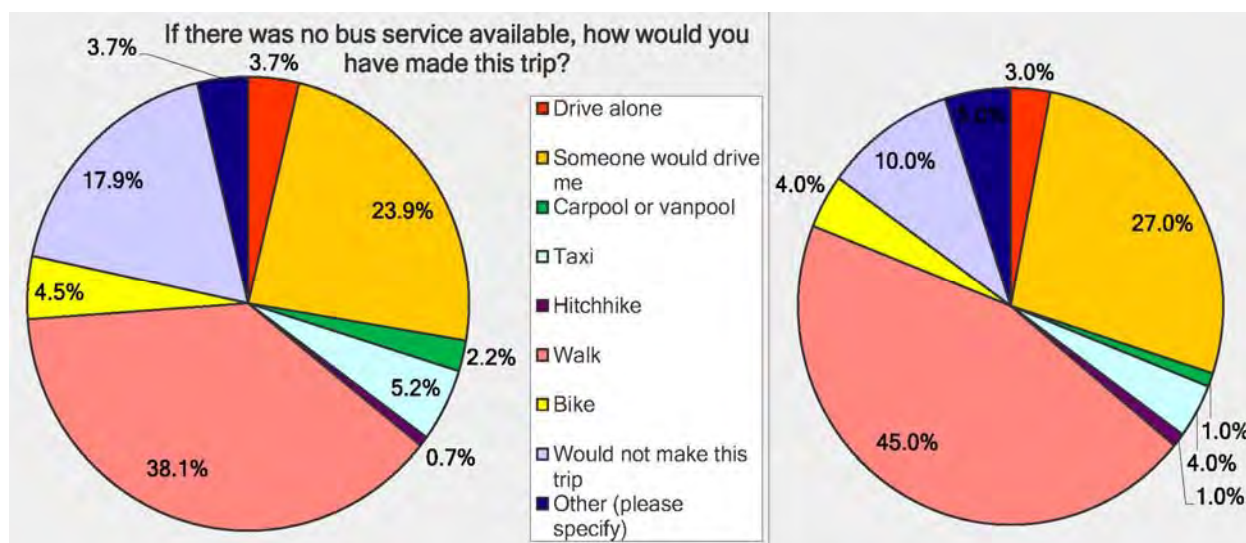
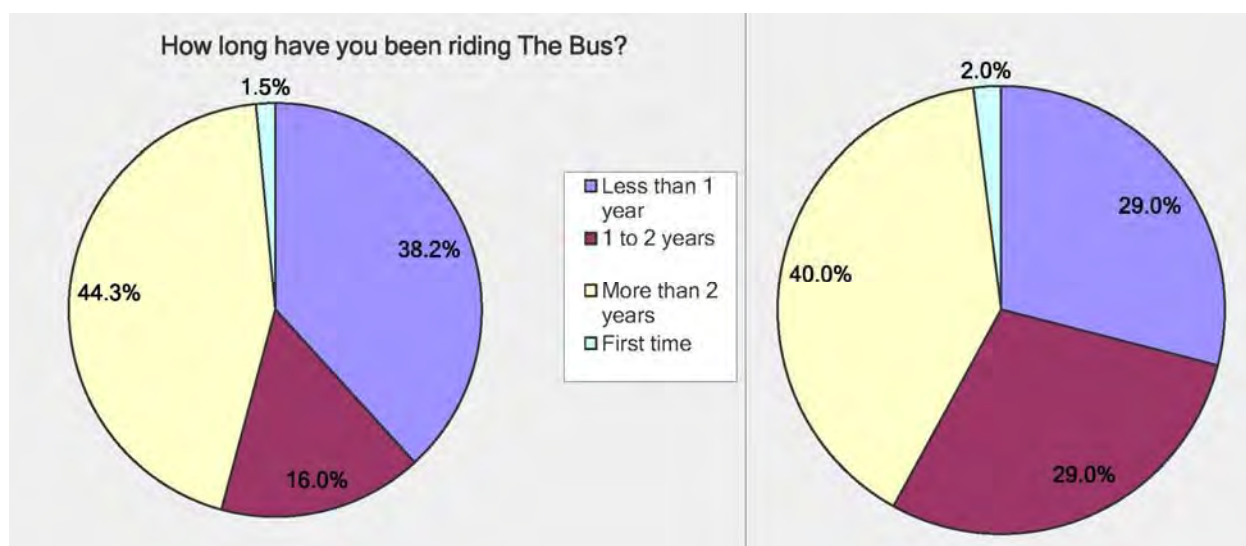


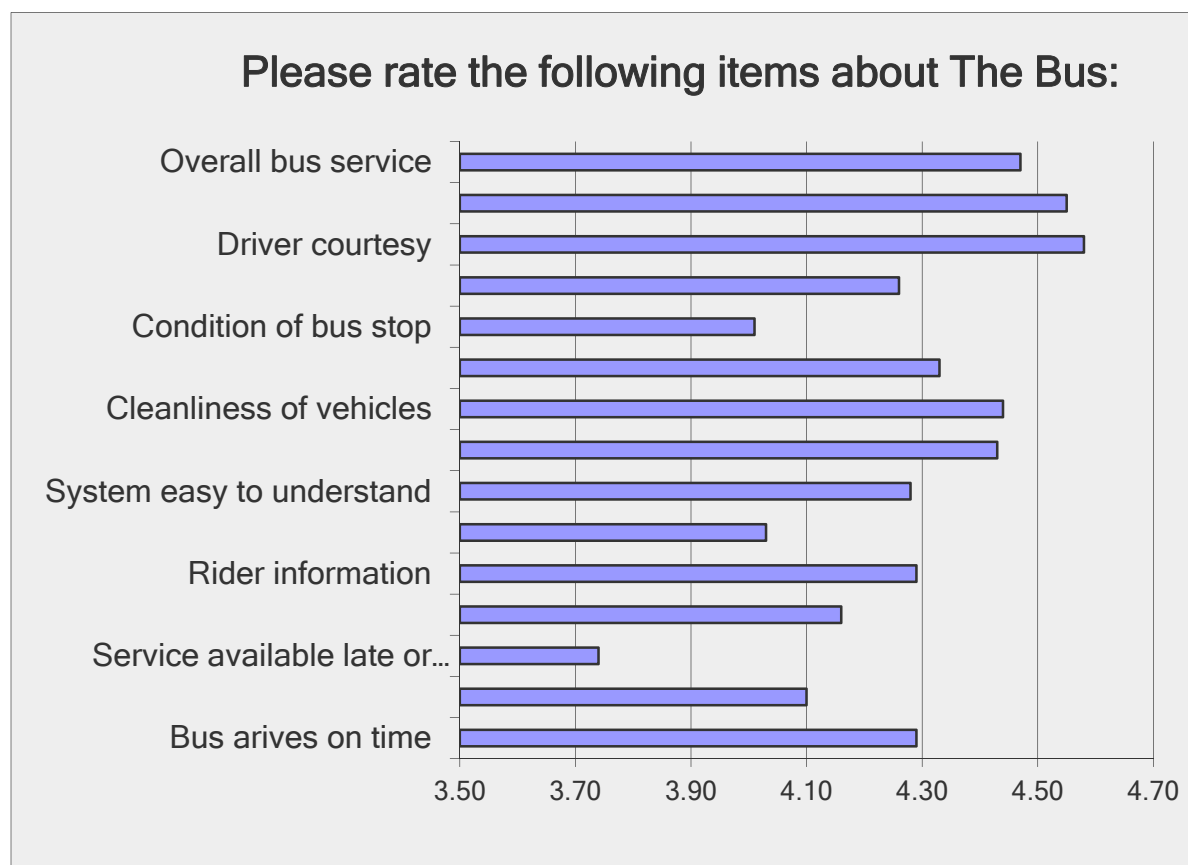
Figure 21 - Years as a Bus Rider



It is notable that there are more new bus riders now than there were in 2010. The number of riders who have used the bus for more than 2 years has remained about the same. CATC as The Bus operator has a greater opportunity to retain new riders than was the case in the past. Once someone has been a bus rider for more than 2 years they are more likely to stay with it.

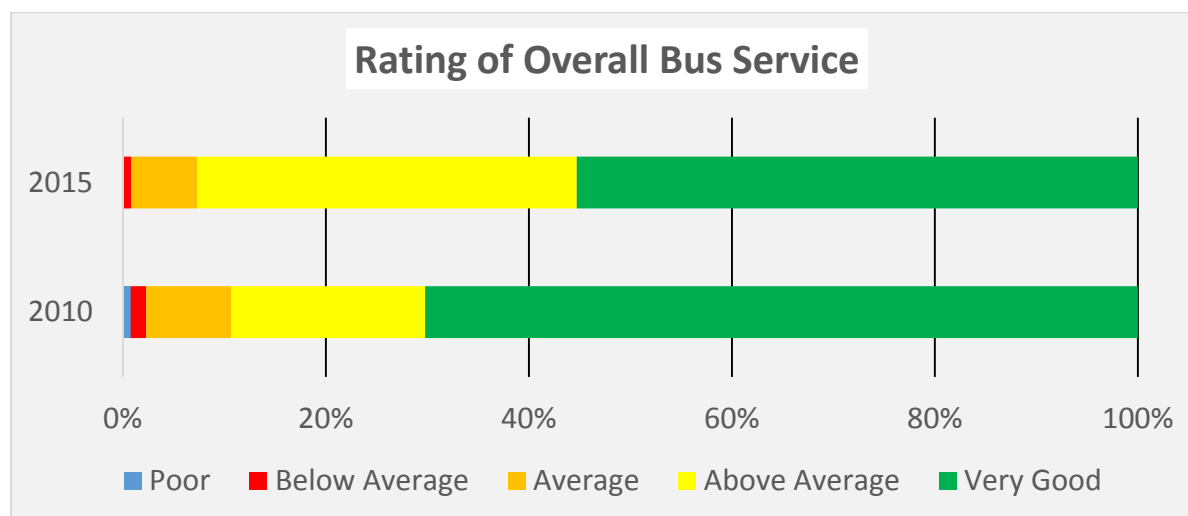


Figure 22 - Rating of Bus Service Elements



The overall rating of the bus system has improved since 2011. While the number who stated that the service was very good has gone down, those who found the service to be above average has gone up. Driver courtesy was the number one rated feature in both 2010 and 2015, with the cleanliness of the vehicles and information available to riders rated highly in both years. The condition of the bus stops and hours of service were given the lowest ratings.

Figure 23 - Rating of Overall Bus Service





COMMUNITY SURVEY

As a means to gauge the knowledge level of the general public regarding transit services, the likelihood that someone who is not currently a rider will begin using the bus and their reasons for doing so, an online community survey was conducted. The 11 question survey (see Appendix C) touched on assessments of the current service, key destinations, acceptable fees, and the importance of transit to the community. Ninety-nine individuals took the survey.

There were no demographic questions such as age, sex, income, or ethnicity included in the community survey. Since those who took the passenger survey were asked about their income, it is possible to compare the average transit user's income to the average family income for the City of Casper. Figure 15 reflects that the average income for a bus rider is $\frac{1}{4}$ that of the average Casper resident. This should be taken into account regarding transit dependence, fares and funding.

More than 20% of the respondents had taken transit in Casper in the past year which means a reasonable number have an understanding of the transit system.

Figure 24 - Transit User

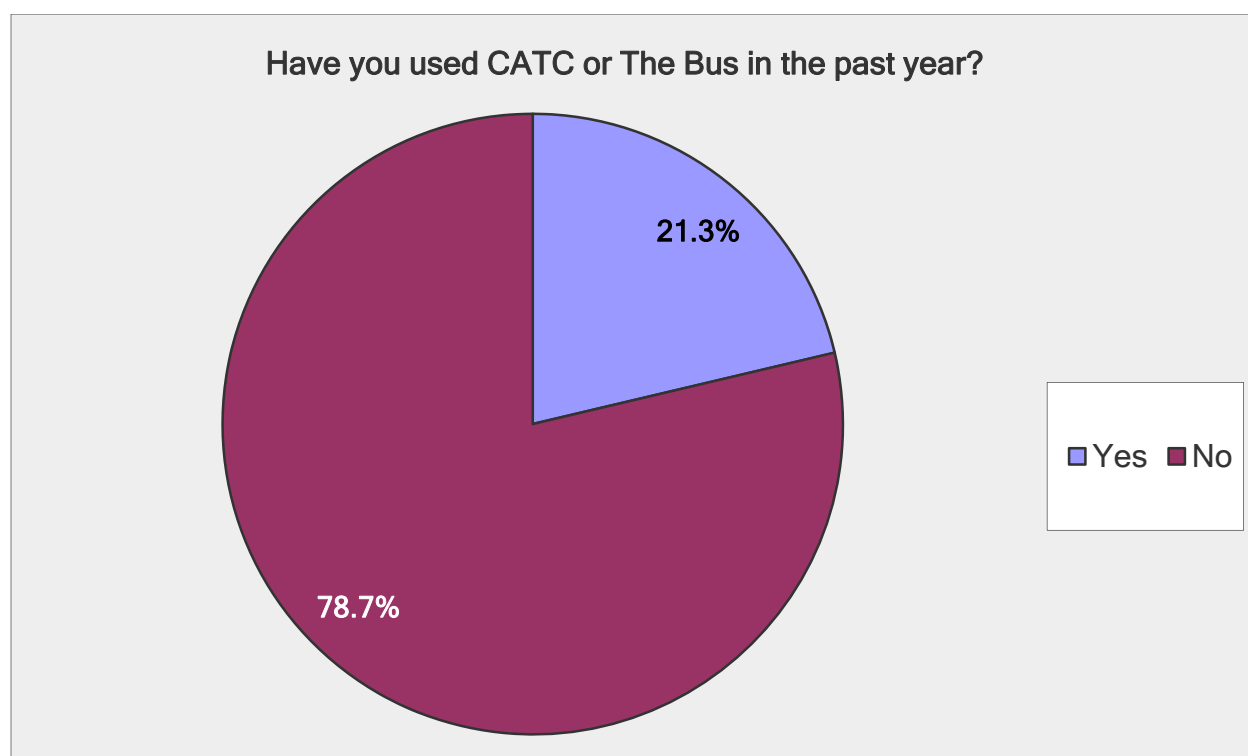




Figure 25 - Household Income

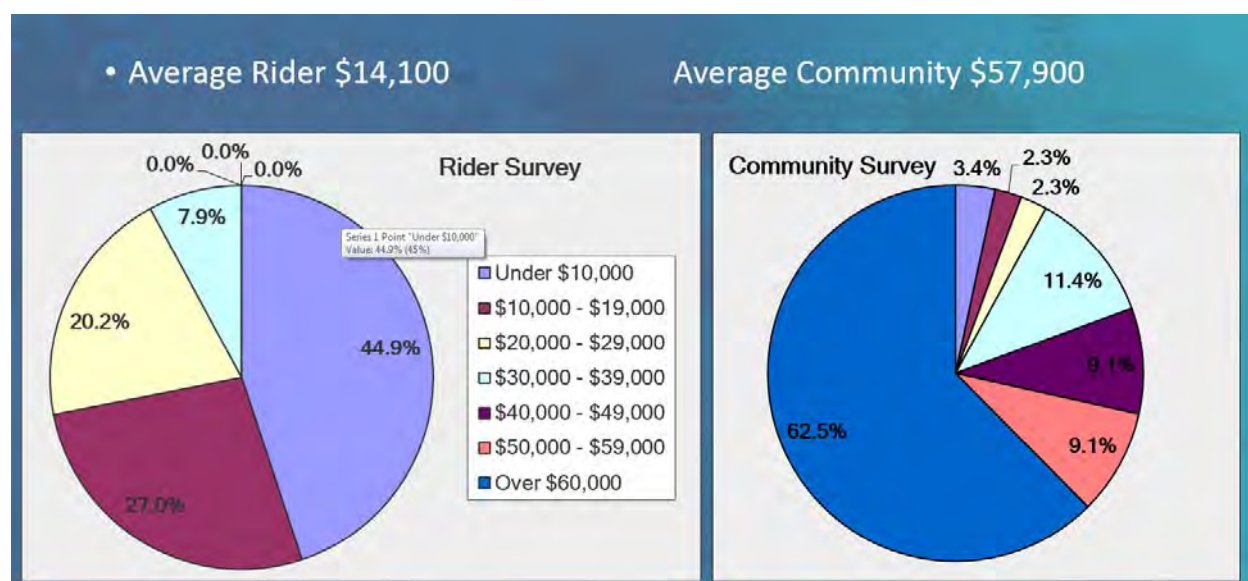
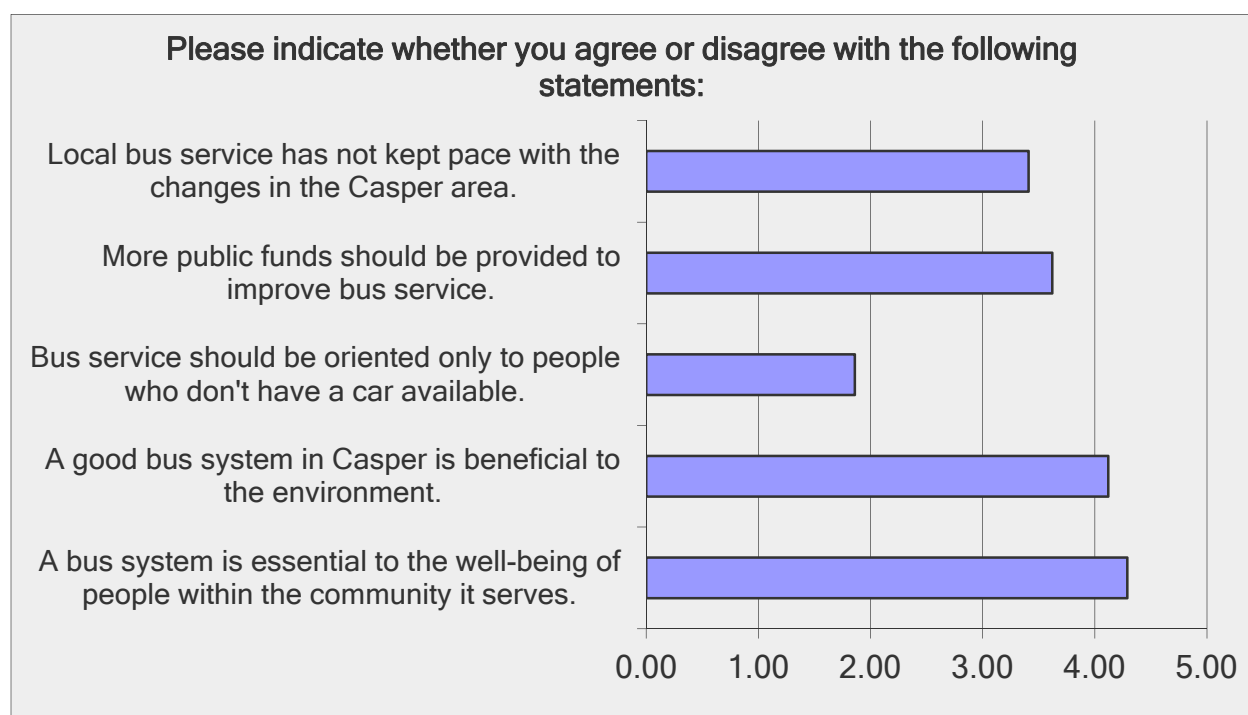


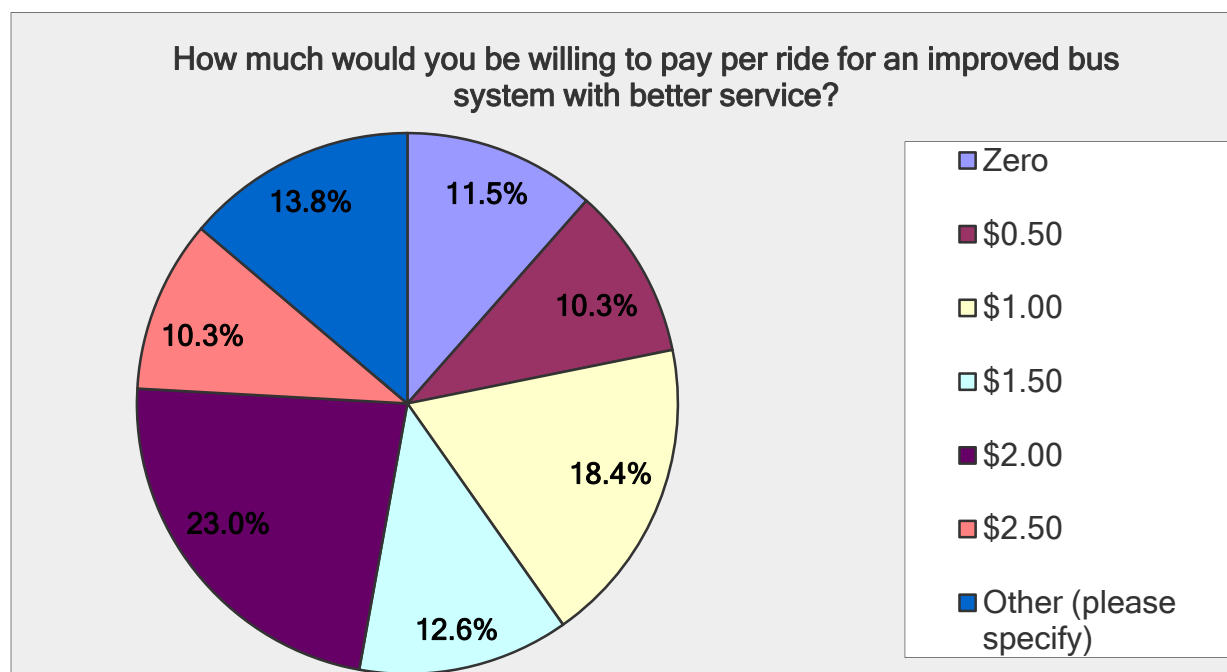
Figure 26 - Support for Transit



The respondents were asked about the importance of a transit system. Most suggested that transit should be available to everyone and not just those who don't have a car. They felt that more funds should be dedication to transit and that the current system has lagged some relative to growth in the community. The statement that received the most positive responses related to the importance of a transit system for the well-being of the community.

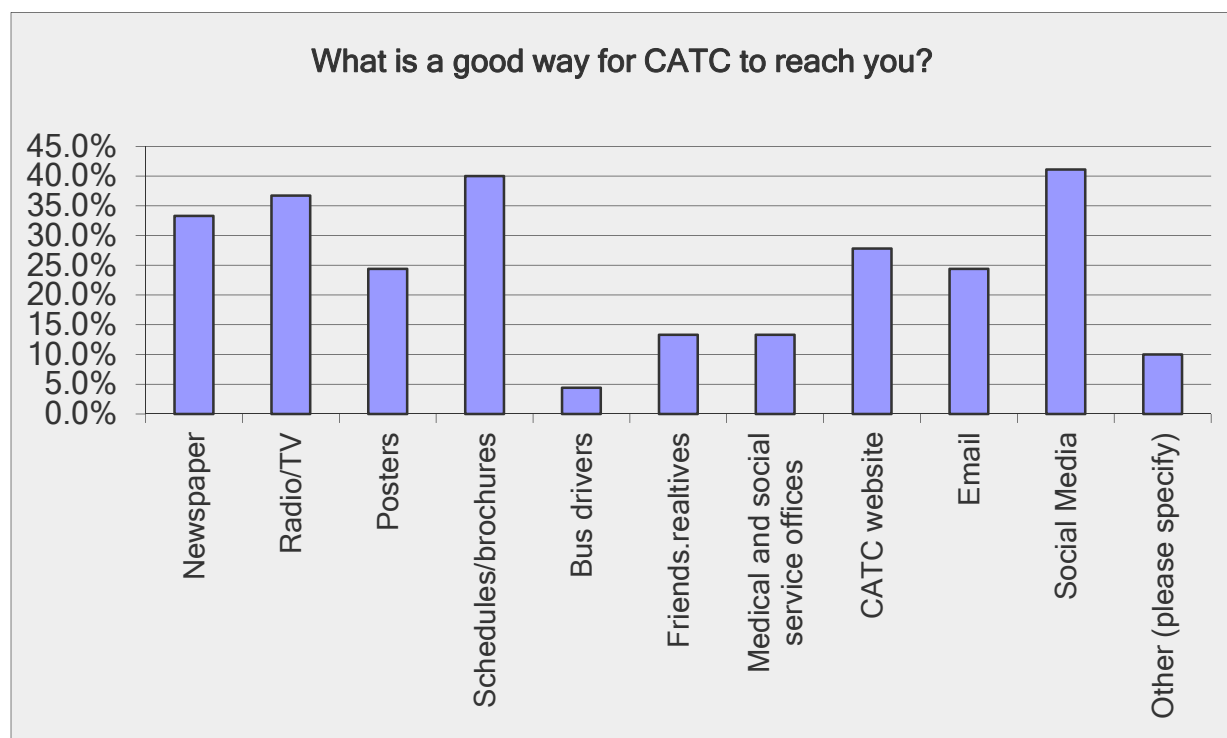


Figure 27 - Acceptable Fares



Currently, the fare for the general public is \$1.00 per ride. Based on the response from the community survey, almost half would be willing to pay more than the current rate. That may actually exceed 50% given that 13.8% of the respondents did not give a specific response and simply noted other.

Figure 28 - Transit Outreach





Attempts to reach current or potential riders should use a number of avenues. The most effective means, which is also one of the most cost effective, is social media. Placing schedules and brochures in key locations is believed to be of value as is radio/TV announcements or ads, and the newspaper.

DEMAND-RESPONSE ON-BOARD INTERVIEWS

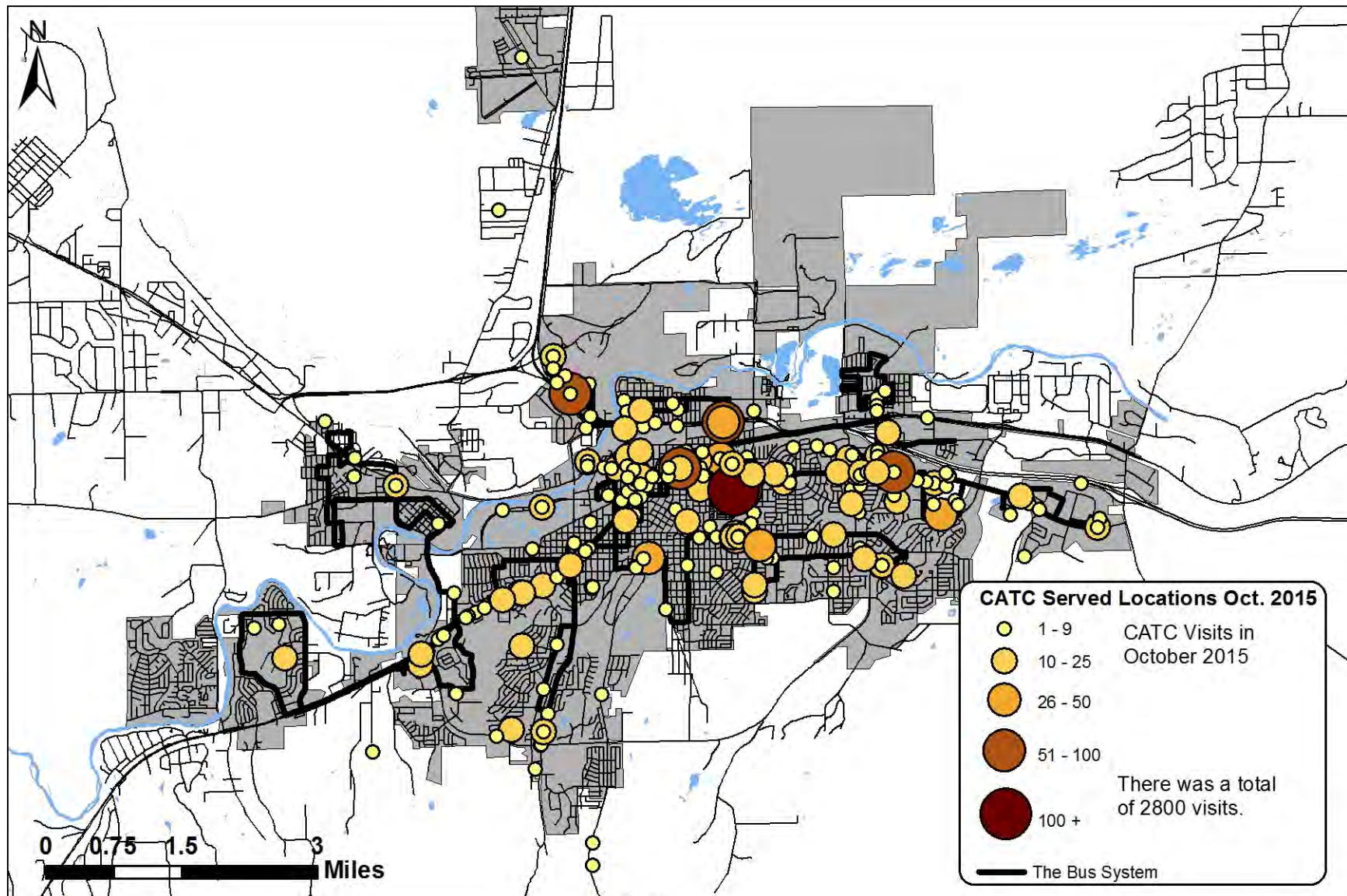
Time was spent on demand-response buses visiting with the passengers and observing the procedures followed when picking up and dropping them off. In that the demand-response rides are scheduled ahead of time, aggregate information on where riders were getting on and off is readily available. In that there were relatively few runs made on the demand-response buses, no attempt was made to measure how frequently the bus was on time, how often the passenger was ready, nor how long it took to load and unload passengers.

Most of the demand-response clients use CATC to get to work. Based on ridership counts for the month of October, 2015, approximately 27.5 of the riders used CATC to get to work. Trips for medical and personal reasons were the next most frequent. Table 3 lists the 18 trip purpose categories that are used when scheduling the requests for service that are received. The top 6 on the list, include work, medical and shopping, parallels the reasons given by those responding to the onboard survey on the fixed-route system.

In October of 2015, 285 different locations were visited by CATC. A significant number of locations listed are the residences where riders are picked-up. When the service locations are mapped, they show a notable degree of concentration within the central part of Casper (Map 11), with relatively few stops at the east and west ends of Casper. Of the 285 stops, 79 or 28% were visited 10 or more times. Those were concentrated in the central part of Casper and along the major streets.



Figure 29 - Demand-Response Locations Served - October 2015





Like the fixed-route system, the top reason for riding the demand-response system was to get to work. Shopping was not the second most reason for taking demand-response, and had dropped to fifth in importance. Not surprising, access to medical is very important as is daytime training, education and socializing. The top 6 uses recorded by the staff doing the scheduling account for over 80% of the trips.

Table 5 - Demand-Response Trip Purpose

Purpose	Frequency	Percent
Work	661	27.5
Medical	376	15.6
Personal	354	14.7
Day Program / Activities	284	11.8
Shopping	179	7.4
Physical Therapy	121	5.0
		82.0
Dialysis	87	
Meal	67	
Education	65	
Recreation	53	
Mental Health	52	
Dental	31	
Beauty Shop	29	
Vision	29	
Counseling	8	
Hydro Therapy	7	
Cardio Therapy	3	
Speech Therapy	1	
Total	2,407	



CHAPTER 7 - ROUTE ALTERNATIVES

CONSIDERATIONS AND OBJECTIVES

When developing alternative routes and schedules for a fixed-route system that is intended to improve transit services for current and future riders, a number of considerations must come into play. While having buses cover a large part of the community is desirable, building a system that is cost effective to operate requires sound analysis and planning to have buses available where and when they are needed. Based on the rider and community surveys, observations, and what the experience has been in similar communities, an effective and efficient system can be created for the Casper community.

HIGH DEMAND NEIGHBORHOODS

There are a number of characteristics of a neighborhood which may generate a notable number of transit riders. Based on the low income levels and high number of individuals without access to a car reported in the rider surveys, lower income neighborhoods are more likely to generate transit riders than higher income neighborhoods. Using household income and home values as a measure it is possible to identify those neighborhoods with a greater need for transit service.

The findings that a significant number of transit users are in the low to very low income bracket is consistent with the findings in other small city transit studies in the region. While it is reasonable to assume that a broadening of the transit population base may raise average incomes in the future, it is appropriate to look at providing service to lower income projects or neighborhoods when laying out future routes.

Neighborhoods with apartments and mobile home parks are the highest density areas of the community. Placing a transit stop within walking distance of a high number of people, results in a more efficient transit service in terms of passengers per hour or mile than in a lower density neighborhood. Density alone is not a strong determining factor in that a number of higher density apartment areas have relatively low transit demand. The apartment and mobile home parks that are in lower income neighborhoods generate more activity than higher income areas.

Comparing current rider survey results to the 2010 results reveals that the percent of elderly riders on the fixed-route system has declined. This may represent a shift in the type of service with more seniors utilizing demand-response transit service than fixed-route service. It could also signify that there are too few bus stops and they are too widely spaced. The number of transit users who are able to walk a greater distance to a bus stop may have increased while the number of seniors has not. Providing better fixed-route service for seniors may require that stops be located right at senior apartments or facilities.

Other than those who can't afford a car, or manage a long walk to a bus stop, there are transit riders who can't drive for medical reasons or because they don't have a driver's license. While these non-drivers may have clearly identified destinations like counseling centers or the courthouse, there are no clear geographic patterns or concentrations in terms of where these transit users reside.

While residential density and age can have an effect on the placement of fixed-routes and stops within residential areas, it appears that income, as it relates to being able to have access to a car, is a more significant factor in identifying areas with a greater likelihood of generating transit users. Placing buses in middle or higher income neighborhoods where cars are readily available may result in a less effective and efficient system than one that concentrates on the lower income areas of the community. Having a goal of broad geographic transit coverage in a community may not provide the best or most efficient overall service.



KEY TRANSIT DESTINATIONS

Knowing where transit users need to go is critical if changes to the fixed-route system that are intended to increase overall use and efficiency are considered. Based on the rider surveys conducted, shopping trips are the most frequent reason given for riding the bus, followed by trips to work, for medical reasons and finally social or recreational activities. Trips for medical or social reasons have the same level of importance as was reported in the 2010 study. However, at that time, trips to work were more frequent than trips for shopping. Trips to school or college were extremely low.

Given that trips for shopping are the most important, it is critical that any changes to the fixed-route system retain or increase service to shopping areas. Shopping centers or commercial concentrations are easy to identify and can be targeted when altering or adding routes. Given that the average bus rider is at the lower end of the income scale, stores that serve basic needs rather than discretionary wants should be incorporated into the transit system.

Information on where the most number of jobs are located in the community is readily available. As would be expected, the downtown, industrial areas, and medial or educational centers are where most jobs are to be found. The fact that a high percentage of transit riders have lower incomes suggests that they are more likely to have service or part-time jobs than jobs in the medical profession, in a downtown office or industrial park. Making route and stop changes needs to take into account the type of jobs, not just the number of jobs, when considering employment with the routing decisions. The commercial areas where the grocery stores and other stores that meet basic needs are located may well be the areas where the most retail and service jobs are located.

The location of medical service can and does change readily. While the downtown was the center for medical services for many years, those services are now spread throughout the community. Clinics and medical offices are more often new buildings constructed on raw ground than older buildings that have been remodeled. The downtown may house more medical offices and increase as a transit destination, however, it would likely involve the demolition of older commercial or residential properties and the construction of new offices. More likely, medical facilities will be centered in the newest commercial areas.

Trips for recreational or social reasons are difficult to define. When the fixed-route system was established in 2005 a number of stops were placed at parks and trail heads. The parks and paths have not proven to be important destinations. Stops in the vicinity of the library, senior center, YMCA, and recreation center do receive a notable level of use. Providing access to places where individuals can recreate and socialize at little or no cost should remain a goal of the fixed-route system.

Casper College has not been as big a traffic generator for the transit system as had been hoped. There are no stops on the college campus itself; however, there are 3 stops on College Drive abutting the campus. Having a stop on the campus may prompt more students, staff or faculty to ride The Bus. The fare is only \$0.75 for students. If unlimited transit access was incorporated into the tuition schedule, ridership could go up significantly. Marketing transit to college students may be an effective way to increase ridership.



ALTERNATIVE 1 - OLYMPIC RINGS

This alternative is intended to increase the opportunities to transfer between routes at multiple locations. Coordinated transfers only occur at 3 locations under the present system. The route headways will remain at 60 minutes. Under this alternative the Mills (Purple) Route will connect with Green and Yellow at CY and Kit Carson (Smith's), and the Red Route will connect with Blue and Orange at the east Walmart. It is proposed under this option that the Yellow Route south Poplar Street segment be dropped and a Robertson Road segment be added.

ALTERNATIVE 2 - SPINE FEEDER

This alternative introduces the concept of a crosstown express that will run from Walmart to Walmart with stops at the downtown Transit Plaza and the grocery stores on East 2nd Street and CY Avenue. Two buses will run this route concurrently which will achieve 30 minute headways. Two additional routes will be added and they will all be shorter to achieve 30 minute headways throughout the system. With the shorter headways, a coordinated pulse system will not be required, which means some riders will have longer waits at their stops.

ALTERNATIVE 3 - INTERLINED LOOPS

The primary objective with the Interlined Loops is to reduce transfers. Four of the routes will be set up as pairs, where the outbound Red Route will flip the sign to Blue at the east Walmart and become the inbound Blue Route. The Green and Yellow Routes will also be opposing pairs. Thirty minute headways can be achieved with this system, however, taking the full loop may take up to 60 minutes. The East 2nd and Paradise Valley service areas are dropped under this alternative.

ALTERNATIVE 4 - HYBRID

The hybrid alternative combines a number of features from the other alternatives. The Walmart to Walmart express is key to the system. In that the express has limited stops, the Red Route will cover East 2nd Street and pick up the stops that the express doesn't. A companion route to the express is proposed that will traverse the south part of Casper with a longer (120 minute headway) run between the two Walmart stores with connections to Casper College. Thirty minute headways can be achieved for Evansville, Mills and Paradise Valley. The Green and Red Routes will remain 60 minute headways.

Maps of the potential alternatives are shown below in figures 30 through 33.



Figure 30 - Alternative 1 Olympic Rings

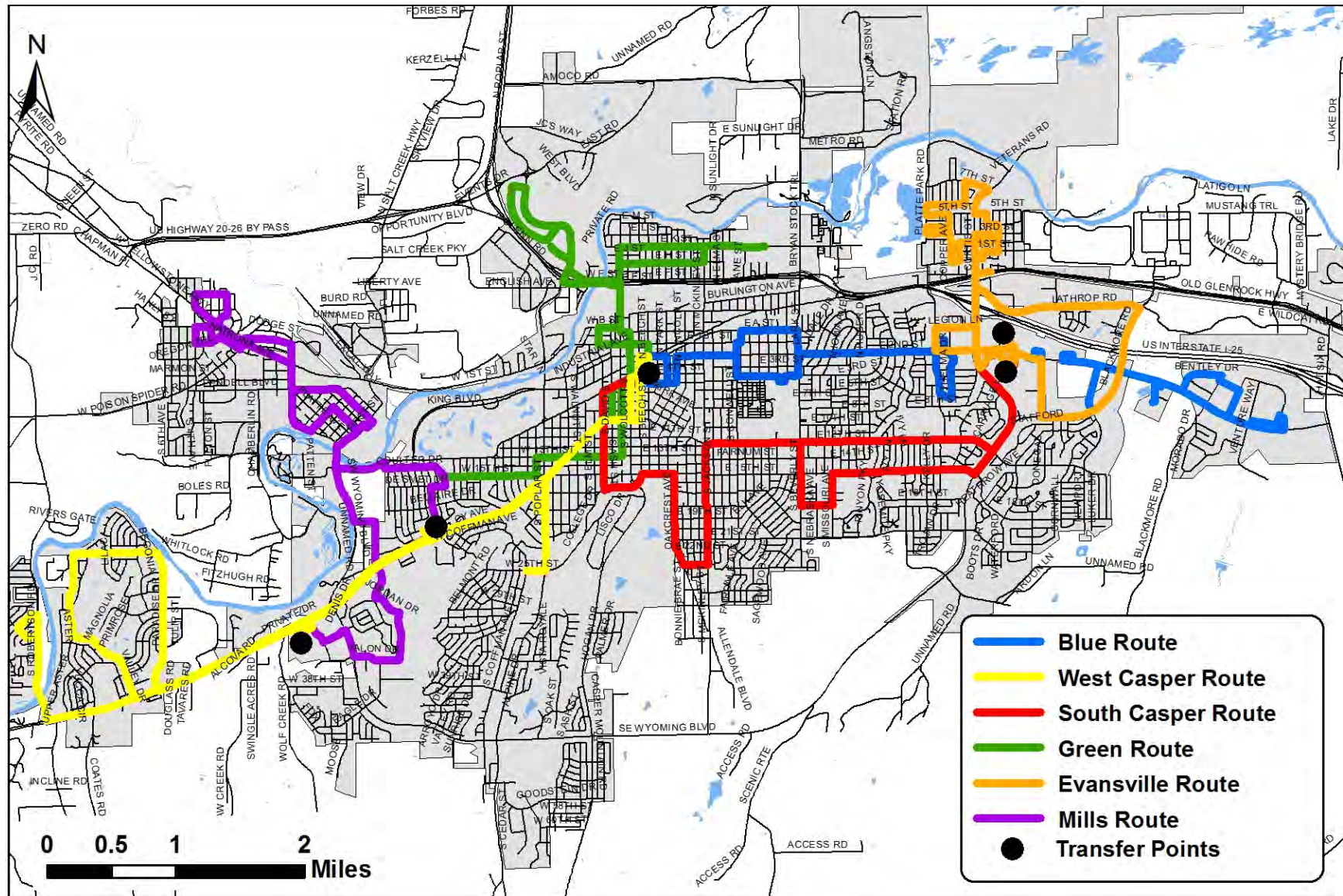




Figure 31 - Alternative 2 Spine Feeder

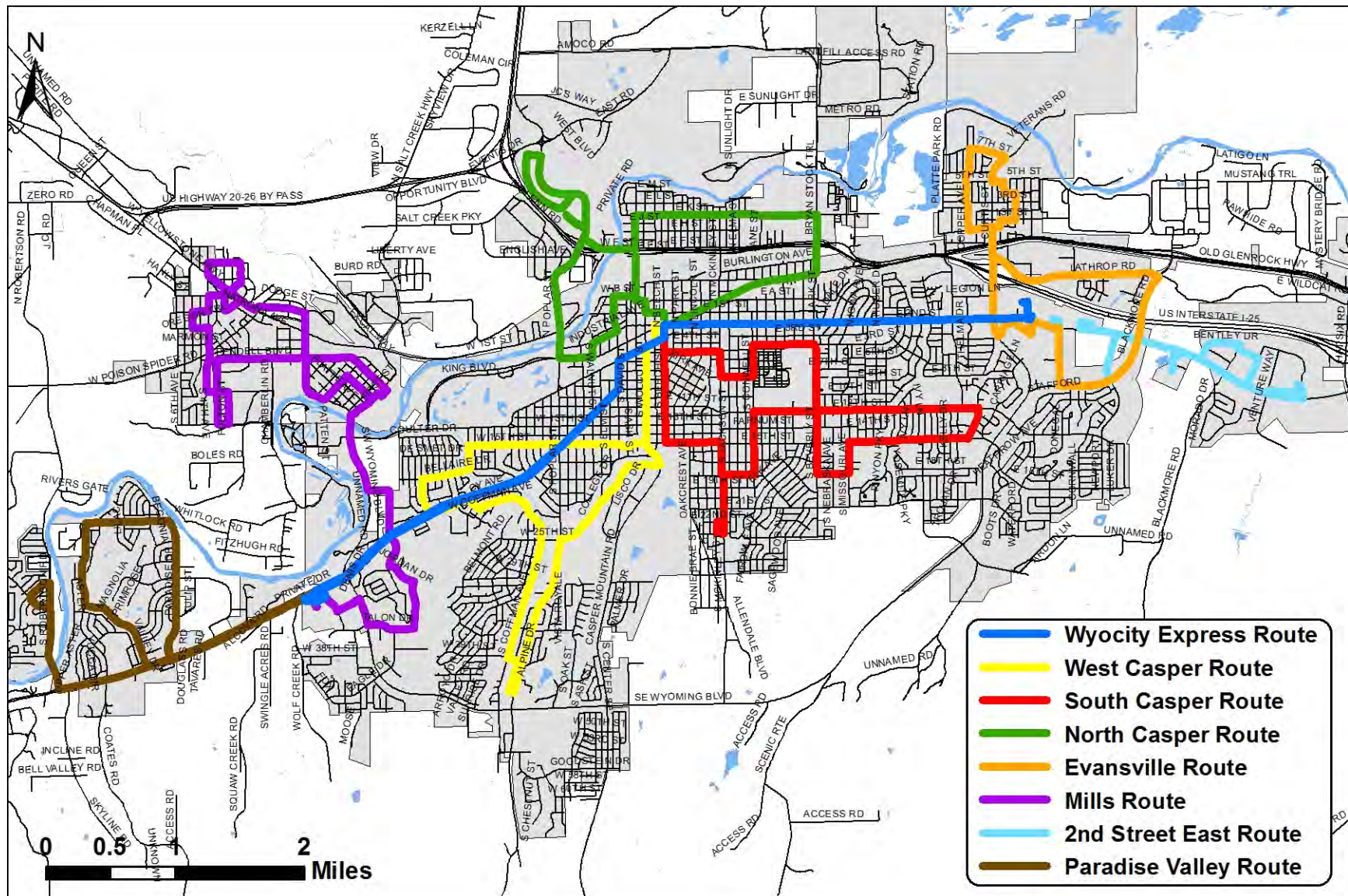




Figure 32 - Alternative 3 Interlined Loops

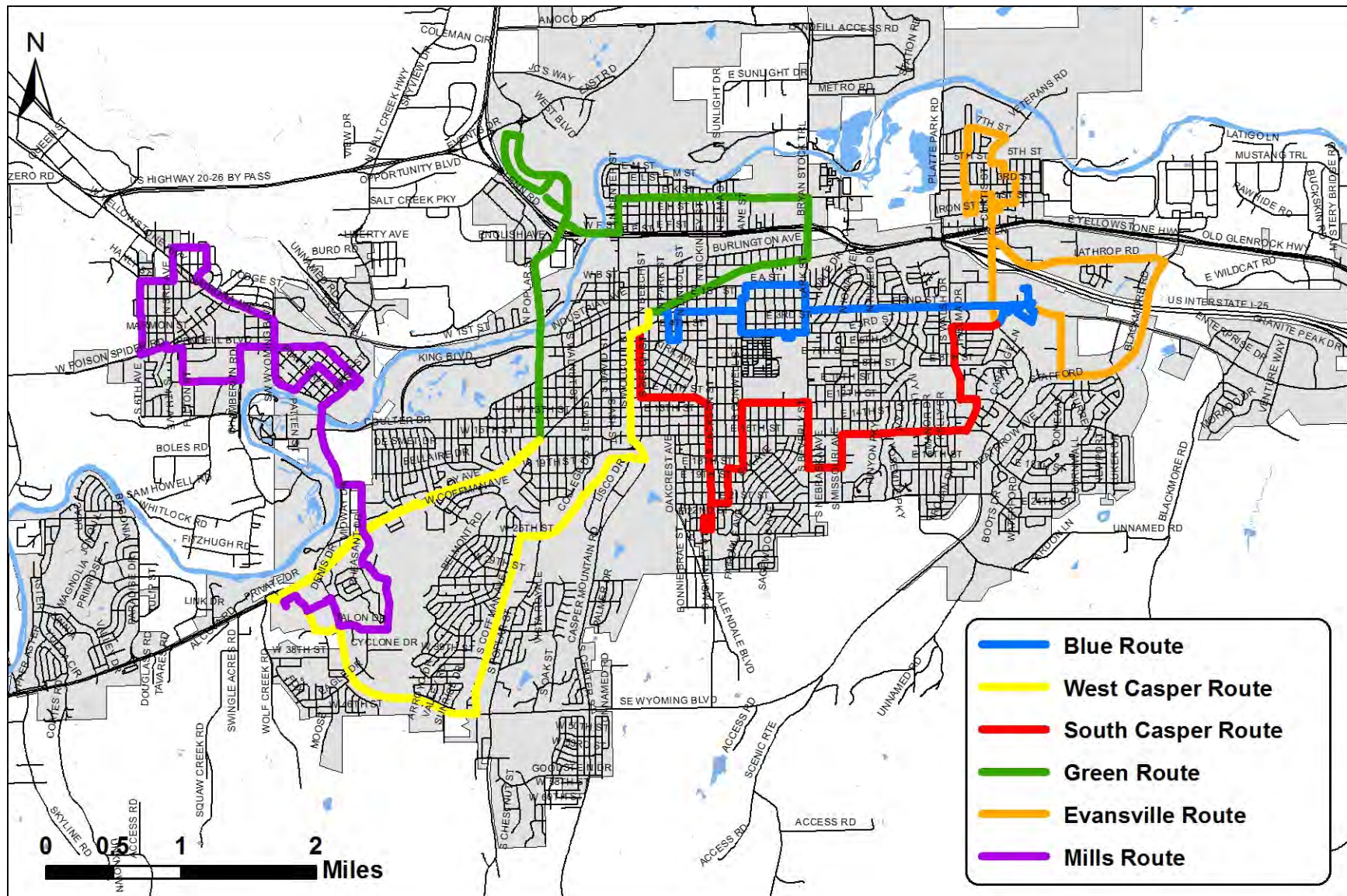
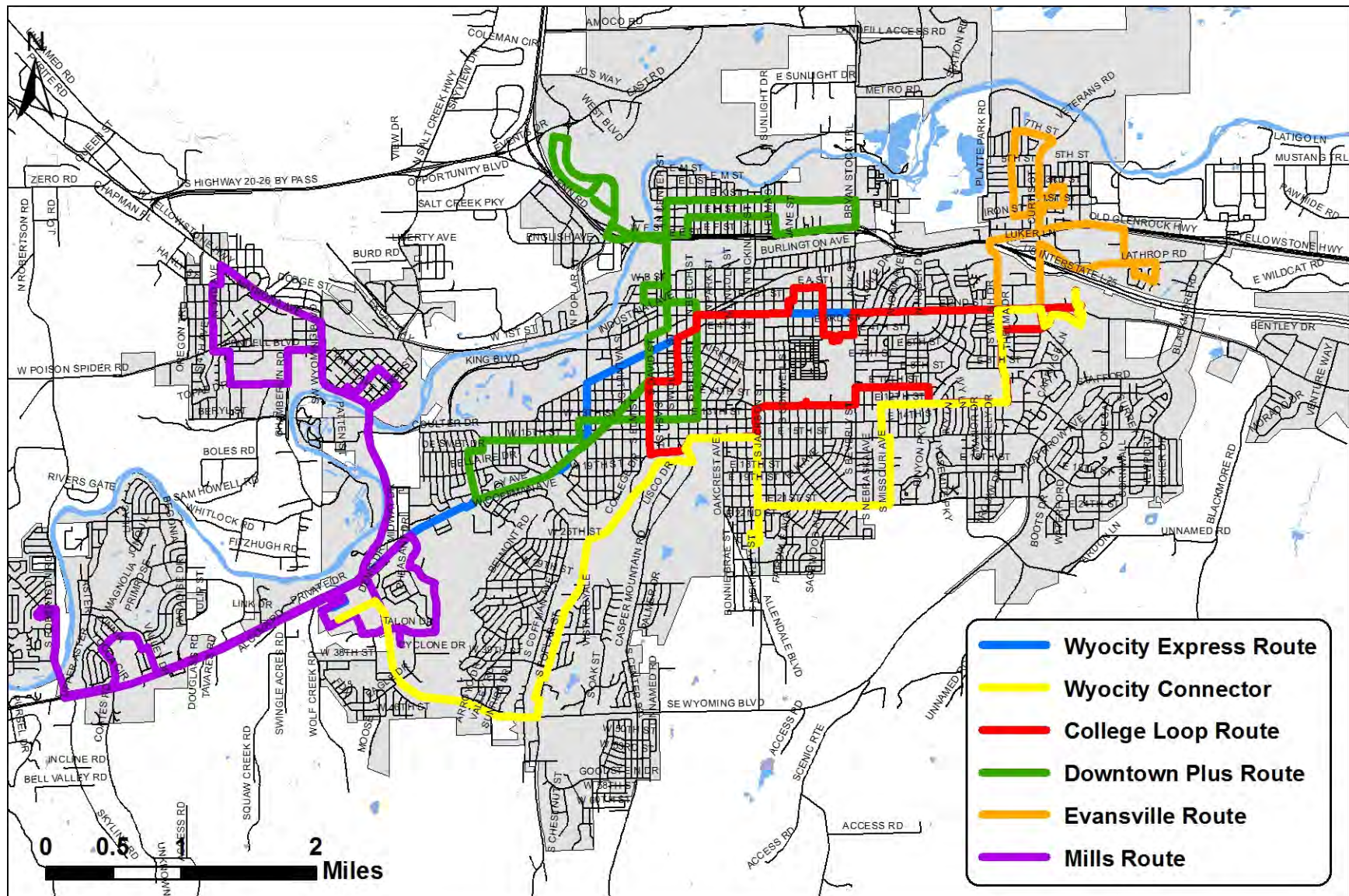




Figure 33 - Alternative 4 Hybrid





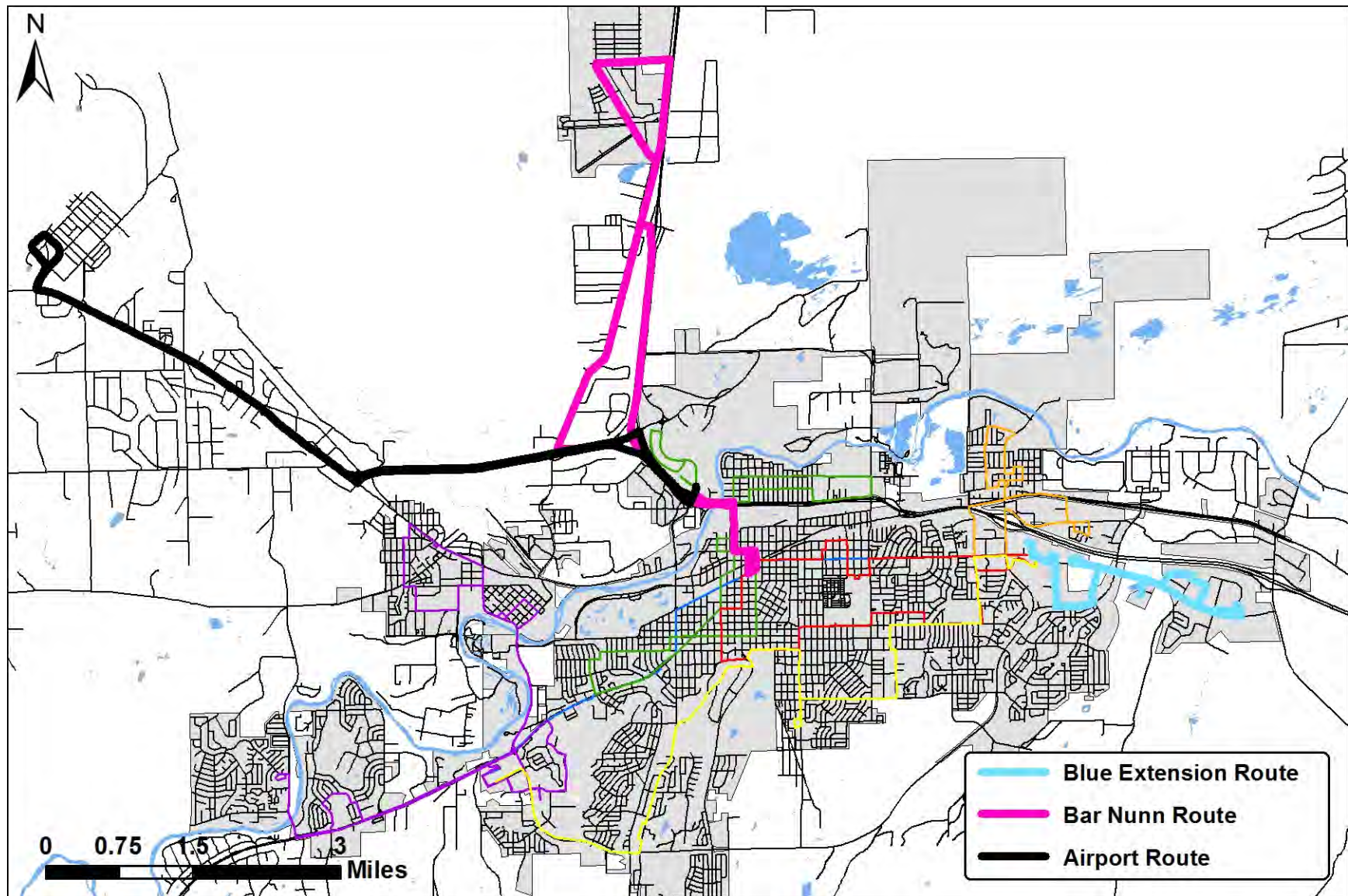
POSSIBLE FUTURE ROUTES

The Blue Route Extension on East 2nd Street was established in response to requests and an assessment made with the 2010 Transit Development Plan Update. The route has not been successful thus far but will likely be needed in the future. Picking up the west stops with the Orange Route may permit the MPO to drop the balance of the Blue Extension for a period of time.

Runs to the Regional Airport and Town of Bar Nunn have been requested in the past. A Bar Nunn run that goes north on Salt Creek Highway through Wardwell then returns on I-25 may be worth consideration. An Airport Route would be an express to the airport that would run 3 times per day. It is recommended that the route commence in the vicinity of I-25 and North Poplar Street where it would be in proximity to nine hotels or motels.



Figure 34 - Future Routes





PUBLIC OPINION ON THE ALTERNATIVES

The route alternatives that were developed following the ridership counts and surveys were presented at a public meeting November 19, 2015. The meeting was attended by 30 individuals, 20 of whom were actually transit users.

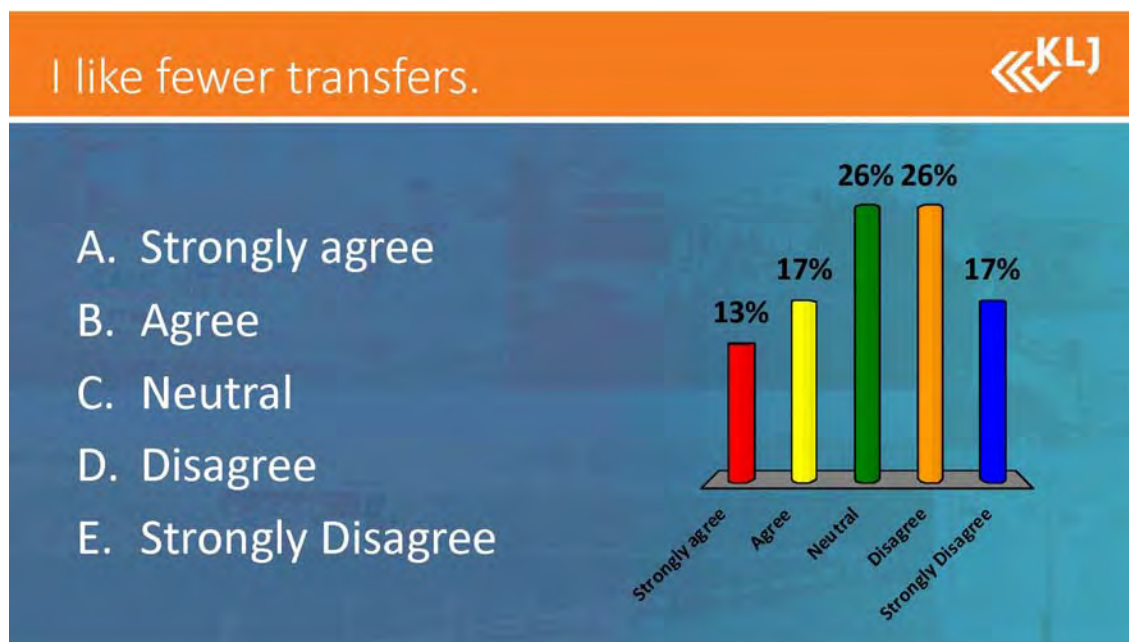
Each of the alternatives were presented along with the features that were key to that particular alternative. Those in attendance were invited to vote on both the key features as well as the route alternatives. Some of the features or characteristics were found in more than one alternative. The specific features or views that were presented for consideration were:

1. Routes should have more transfer points
2. The Red Route should be extended to Walmart East
3. The Riverwest neighborhood should be served
4. The Mills Route should connect with the Green Route at Kit Carson (Smith's Grocery)
5. Routes should strive for shorter headways
6. I like the WYOCITY Express Route
7. A bus should serve Casper College
8. Eight shorter routes are better than six longer ones
9. I like fewer transfers
10. Route loops should have multiple buses
11. The east portion of the Blue Route Extension should be dropped
12. Some of Paradise Valley doesn't need service
13. I like the WYOCITY Connector
14. The Red Route should serve 2nd Street
15. Casper College Should become another transfer point
16. The Mills and Evansville routes should have shorter headways
17. We should wait for demand to grow to use the Blue Extension Route
18. Limited service to the Airport should be added
19. Service should be added to Bar Nunn

Most of the features or views were supported by a majority of those in attendance. The strongest statements of support were offered for the creation of an express route and service to Casper College. Establishing a system with shorter headways was expressed through the On-board Rider Surveys and supported at the public meeting. It was anticipated that riders would favor fewer transfers and prefer to stay on the same bus to get to their destination. As summarized in Figure 19, riders apparently do not object to transfers if it gets them to their final destination quicker. In a similar action, respondents favored more short routes rather than fewer long routes.

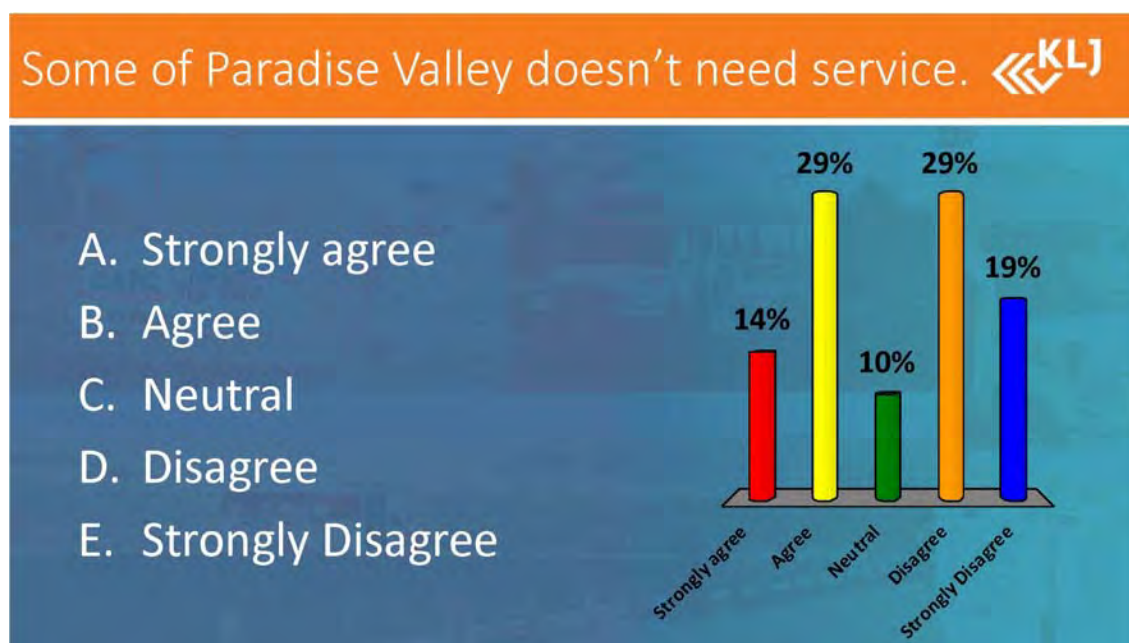


Figure 35 - Accept Route Transfers



At the other end of the scale, dropping service to portions of the Blue Route Extension and Paradise Valley were not favored (Figure 20). The idea of covering East 2nd Street with the Red Route to accommodate the WYOCITY Express was not strongly supported, nor was the WYOCITY Connector. Providing service to the Airport, Bar Nunn, the Riverwest Neighborhood, and McMurry Business Park were findings from the *2010 Transit Development Plan Update* and have been discussed for a number of years. Based on this most recent review, service to the airport is clearly supported while service to the Riverwest neighborhood and Bar Nunn is not viewed as important, and the need for the Blue Route Extension to the McMurry Business Park is split.

Figure 36 - Bus Service to Paradise Valley





Following the discussion on the transit service features being considered, those in attendance were asked which alternative they favored most. The Olympic Rings and Hybrid alternatives received an equal number of votes and no one supported the Interlined Loops alternative.



CHAPTER 8 - SYSTEM CONFIGURATION

OPERATIONS

A discussion on potential changes to transit services in the Casper area must take into account different approaches that exist to manage and operate a transit system. The current system that involves a vendor providing service to the City of Casper, Town of Mills and Town of Evansville with support and oversight from the MPO is an atypical system in this region. A recent review of transit services throughout Wyoming and in the neighboring states found that only a small percent of the systems operate through a “grantee-vendor” structure like Casper’s, and most of those are small, rural systems. A significant number of systems in the region are internal, municipal systems operated as an independent department or within a larger department within the municipal government. The second largest group is those that operate as an independent transit authority.

Systems that exist entirely within a municipal system carry with them some inherent strengths and weaknesses. As suggested in Figure 17, having full control of system management and operations can result in a more efficient system. A single entity dealing with grants, federal requirements and the managing of the funds can operate more smoothly than two entities sharing the work. A municipality may have to provide higher wages and benefits than a contractor to retain balance within the municipality. Other than increased cost, a municipal system may be perceived as less responsive to the needs and concerns of the transit riders. The system may run more smoothly and not have to be concerned with coordination but higher cost and concerns about the level of service that will be provided may limit the appeal of this approach.

A transit authority or district can enjoy even greater efficiencies than a municipal system since its level of autonomy lets it focus entirely on transit services and not extraneous municipal activities or procedures. Authorities and districts rely on grants and funding from the municipalities they serve, and may be granted taxing authority as well. As a result, these systems may have greater depth and a longer term vision, resulting in a strong, proficient system. With additional funding sources, it may be possible to keep the cost to the actual users lower with an authority or district. However, like a municipal system, there may be concerns about the responsiveness of the system and the ability of the users, general public or decisions makers to influence the operation or policies.

In building or modifying a system, cost, efficiencies and service to the public are key. The municipalities that help fund and direct the transit operator want an efficient, well run system but also have an obligation to establish a system that meets the needs of the public. It may be easy for the decision makers to support a more autonomous, professional run system if they know the needs and concerns to the users will be met.



Table 6 - Management Operations

Operations Tradeoffs		
System	Advantages	Disadvantages
Vendor	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Handles administration• City owned buses• Flexible with routes• Maybe lower cost	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Contract renewal not guaranteed• Limited resources• Lack of coordination
City Owned	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• City controlled budget allows for more flexibility• Some synergy with other services e.g. fuel and maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• City focused doesn't serve multiple jurisdictions• Requires additional staff• Requires additional city time• May cost more
Transit Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Autonomous organization• Owns the system• Access to different revenues• Could make changes easier• Can serve multi-jurisdictional area	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Requires restructuring (could be substantial effort)• May require additional staff• Limited resources initially

REGIONAL COMPARISON

Most of the transit systems within the region are either city systems or transit authorities. The Casper transit system is the only urban “grantee-vendor” operation in Wyoming and the surrounding states. As reflected in Figure 22, there are a number of successful systems in the area that operate as either a city system or transit authority. The Pocatello, ID and Great Falls, MT systems are examples of transit authorities with a similar population base and system size as Casper with a much higher number of trips per year. The Idaho Falls, ID system has the lowest ridership in the region, however it has a large service area and limited hours. In Loveland, CO, the transit program is city operated with a similar service area as Casper, much lower revenue hours, yet nearly the same ridership.

Most urban transit systems within the region have higher ridership than the Casper system. Any evaluation of potential changes intended to increase ridership, reduce costs or improve service should involve a consideration of the structure of the system.



Table 7 – Regional Comparison of Operational Structure

City	Population	Square Miles	Revenue Hours	Trips
Vendor Systems				
Casper	57,561	30	24,563	165,734
City Systems				
Cheyenne	59,466	18	22,333	255,877
Loveland	60,000	30	10,505	135,061
Rapid City	67,956	55	20,328	304,599
Greeley	93,000	17	32,854	525,186
Fort Collins	143,986	54	78,742	2,236,027
Transit Authorities				
Great Falls	63,000	20	33,357	439,266
Missoula	69,999	70	44,630	886,049
Pocatello	81,730	27	22,562	334,124
Idaho Falls	90,733	70	11,345	46,555
Bismarck	94,719	137	44,488	160,582
Logan	95,550	33	52,837	1,978,002
Grand Junction	120,000	66	56,721	974,644

FAVORED CONFIGURATION

The different transit structures employed within the region were discussed at the public meeting on November 19, 2015. Following a presentation on the characteristics of the operational systems, those in addition were asked their opinions of which approach would be most fitting for the Casper area. A majority of those who voted (61%) favored a transit authority system, followed by the grantee-vendor system (22%). The least popular approach for Casper was believed to be a city owned system (17%).



CHAPTER 9 - MARKETING

FIXED-ROUTE

The gains or benefits to be enjoyed from the expansion of or changes to the Casper area transit system will not be realized unless current and potential riders understand how the changes will affect them. Sound research and assessments may result in new routes and stops that will strengthen the whole system, if they are put to use. New or altered routes intended to meet the needs of an underserved segment of the population will not be utilized until the target riders know what has changed and how it will benefit them.

The most effective method to use to convey information about transit service changes depends on the scope of the change and who it will effect. If a route or a few stops are adjusted to better serve a neighborhood, those who use the current stops could be notified of the change as they get on or off the bus. Those within walking distance of the new or moved stop who had not been users up until that time could be notified by mailer or flyer of the opportunity they now have to use transit. Extensive changes that affect an entire route or series of routes, hours of operation, rates, and rules or procedures require flyers, signage on the buses, webpage notices, and the use of public media to get the word out. The message must touch on more than what is happening. To the extent possible, the message should address the need for the change and impact. Change is hard for many to understand and embrace. Opportunities for assistance with making the change work needs to be available and publicized.



Flyers and notices can be very effective public education and marketing tools when a business or service frequented by transit riders is known. Medical clinics, grocery stores, the public library, the college, human service agencies, government offices, and financial institutions are all locations frequented by transit users and potential users. Having flyers about the service can be very effective at such locations.

The public media is the most effective and most expensive means of reaching individuals who may be potential riders. These individuals need to be made aware of how the transit system works and why it may be for benefit to them. To convince someone who has never use transit and may not understand it requires a simple and frequent message to persuade them to give it a try.

The Marketing Message

Most of those who currently use transit do so because they can't afford a car, can't drive for medical reasons, don't have a driver's license, or enjoy the experience of riding a bus. Publicizing the benefits current riders enjoy can draw out more riders with similar needs. Attracting new riders with different needs or objectives requires different messages. Some of the key messages may include:

1. Riding the bus is cheaper than driving
2. Riding the bus is less stressful than driving in traffic
3. Riding the bus gives you time to read, text or work while getting to your destination
4. Walking to the bus stop provides exercise
5. Riding the bus is better for the environment
6. Riding the bus may be easier than brushing snow off the car and shoveling the driveway
7. Leaving the car at home reduces the risk of an accident, injury and damage to the car



8. Riding the bus eliminates the need for and cost of parking
9. Being on the bus is an opportunity to socialize with others.

Conveying these messages generally requires the use of public media. In that these methods are expensive, care must be taken to ensure that the message is as clear and effective as it can be. These campaigns involved picking up after your dog, limiting what you put down the drain, and managing yard waste. Recent City of Casper marketing and public education projects have ranged from \$6,000 to \$25,000 in cost depending on the degree to which City staff developed the project or private advertising/marketing firms were involved. Tools including newspaper ads, flyers/mailers, billboards, and electronic media spots have been put to use. The value of social media from a cost and exposure standpoint can't be overstated. Studies have shown that a higher percentage of individuals under 32 use transit than those in older age groups. Social media can be extremely effective as a means to reach those in their teens, twenties and early thirties with a message relating to the benefits of using transit.

DEMAND-RESPONSE

Sharing information about the demand-response or "dial-a-ride" system with current users is an easier proposition in that the riders must register with CATC and are in a database that includes a personal profile, and contact information. Calls, messaging, mailers and handouts can all be used to convey information about service changes. These methods are low cost and effective.

Having profile information on current riders can help identify other potential users in the Community. In many cases, potential riders can be reached through groups or organizations that help them with their special or unique needs. While the outreach objective with the fixed-route system is to secure more riders, the objective of a demand-response outreach campaign may be developing a better understanding of the service so that those with the greatest needs can be served and those that can drive or use the fixed-route system can be encouraged to use those alternate means of travel.

The demand-response system is significantly more expensive to operate on a per passenger basis than the fixed-route system. While the ridership on the demand-response system has declined after the fixed-route system was introduced in 2005, the ridership actually increased in 2010 and again in 2014. Surveys were not taken at that time to try to understand why the use of the higher priced service went up. The CATC staff has suggested that there are quite a few individuals who value the relatively quick and direct service they receive from the demand-response system even though it costs more. Having the personalized service as opposed to being one of many on the fixed-route buses is also appealing and has influenced ridership numbers.



CHAPTER 10 - CONCLUSION

The Casper area has been provided with valued transit services for more than 30 years. The demand-response service has been in place since 1982 and fixed-route service since 2005. The fixed-route service was promoted in 2004 as a way to provide transit services to a larger number of individuals at a much lower cost than the demand-response system. The 156,400 riders per year on The Bus represent individuals who generally have no car available to them on a regular and no other means to travel about the community.

The City of Casper and towns of Evansville and Mills provide transit services through contracts with the Casper Area Transit Coalition (CATC). The fixed-route system has a fleet of eight buses with 2 back-ups, which operate 6 routes on 82 miles of streets and roads. There are 177 independent stops on the routes, most of which are more than ¼ miles apart.

The demand-response service covers a significant number of locations. During the month of October, 2015, 285 different locations were visited. Relatively few stops represent a large number of users. During the month, the top 15 stops represented over 25% of the 2,407 trips.

The purpose of each trip is noted by the staff members preparing the daily schedule. There are 18 possible trip types used when scheduling. Over 80% of the trips, in rank order are for:

- Work
- Medical
- Personal
- Activities and training
- Shopping
- Physical therapy

Shopping is the top of the list for fixed-route passengers.

FLEET

Most of the buses are in good to excellent condition, are less than 6 years old, and have less than 200,000 miles. The cost of maintaining the older buses is climbing. The City of Casper will be purchasing from 2 to 5 twenty-six passenger buses within the next 5 years to replace the older buses. The demand-response service operates with 8 buses with 2 back-ups. Generally there are 6 to 8 buses on the road at any given time, transporting as many as 120 passengers a day to their destination. Two 16 passenger replacement buses have been ordered and are being assembled. To expedite the loading/unloading process, the City of Casper will be acquiring up to 3 sixteen passenger, low floor buses which utilize ramps rather than lifts.

The buses are all cut-away style vehicles. Small, unibody vans have been considered as an option, which would allow the City to expand the demand-response fleet and serve more locations per day at an equal or lesser cost. No actions have been taken as of yet to add this type of bus to the fleet.

RIDERSHIP

Over the past five years, ridership on the demand-response system has gone from an average of 4,463 riders per month to 4,394 per month. During the same period monthly ridership has gone from 11,148 per month to 13,033 per month on the fixed-route system. Seniors represent an increasing number of passengers on the fixed-route system, going from approximately 19.2 percent of the riders in 2010 to



29.0 percent in 2014. While college age riders represent an important component of many transit systems, there are relatively few 18-25 year old riders on the Casper fix-route system.

To gain an understand of how the fixed-route system is used, multiple trips were taken on each route to assess the level of activity at each bus stop, determine if the buses are on schedule, and count the number of individuals on the buses during different parts of the trip. The BLUE Route is the busiest with an average of 484 trips per day during the sessions and 6.4 passengers on the bus at any one point in time. The most number of riders observed on the BLUE Route during the sessions was seventeen. The PURPLE Route in Mills has the lowest ridership with only 2.1 passengers on the bus on average.

Counting the number of individuals getting on and off at each stop allowed for estimates to be made on boardings and alightings by stop. Most of the larger stops had a similar number of individuals getting on and off the bus. There were, however, a significant number of stops where more people got off than on over the course of the day. In total, there were more than 30 individuals getting on than those getting off, suggesting that there are a number of individuals who return home at the end of the day by some other means.

STAKEHOLDER SURVEYS

To gain a better understanding of how the transit system is used and how it performs, surveys were conducted with bus drivers, bus passengers, and the general public. The written surveys were administered to the passengers by volunteers, but simply made available to the drivers and general public.

Bus Drivers

Meetings were held with bus drivers on a number of occasions to get their assessment of what could be done to improve transit services. In responding to a written questionnaire, a number of the drivers suggested that adjusting routes and eliminating duplication would be a positive step. They also mentioned that smaller buses may make sense on some routes. Finally, the need for advertising and marketing was noted by a number of drivers.

On-Board Fixed-Route Surveys

Surveys that matched the on-board surveys that were used during the 2010 Transit Development Plan Update, were administered to 136 passengers over a one week period. Using the same survey made it possible to look at changes over the five year period. Using the bus for shopping was the number one purpose in both 2010 and 2015, followed by getting to work and access to medical services. More individuals ride the bus on a daily basis than was the case in 2010, and there is a greater reliance on the bus among users now than there was in the past.

Bus riders were asked to rate:

- Driver courtesy
- Bus stop condition
- Bus cleanliness
- How easy procedures were to follow
- Quality of the information for passengers
- Hours of operation
- Buses keeping on schedule

Driver courtesy received the highest rating, followed by bus cleanliness and available information. The respondents were most unhappy with the condition of the bus stops and the hours of operation.



Online Community Survey

Ninety-nine individuals responded to an online survey that was linked to the CATC website and both the City of Casper and MPO sites. Of those 99 respondents, 19 reported that they had ridden the bus within the past year. A number of questions were asked relating to how they viewed the bus system, how they would likely use it and what would encourage them to use it more. Fifty-five respondents said it was unlikely they would use the bus. Those who said they may ride the bus, reported that it would likely be for trips to work, shopping and personal business.

A question that was to gauge the level of general support there was for transit services was included in the survey. The question revealed that a majority of those who responded stated that:

- Transit services have kept pace with community growth
- Adequate public funding should be provide for transit
- Transit service is important for more than just those who don't have a car
- Using public transit is good for the environment
- A quality transit system is important for the well-being of the community

ROUTE ALTERNATIVES

Four different alternatives were developed following the assessment of the current routes, ridership data, and the opinions of both current riders and members of the community. Generators including low income neighborhoods and facilities for seniors were taken into account when formulating the alternatives as were major destinations including shopping centers, grocery stores, medical centers and gathering places like the public libraries, senior centers and recreation centers.

The key considerations when laying out the routes were headway times, opportunities to transfer from one bus to another, and how direct the routes were between popular generators and destinations. The features of the destinations are as follows:

Olympic Rings

- Increased opportunities to transfer between routes at multiple locations
- Route headways remain at 60 minutes
- The Mills (Purple) Route connects with Green and Yellow at CY and Kit Carson (Smith's Grocery)
- The Red Route connects with Blue and Orange at the east Walmart
- The Yellow Route south Poplar Street segment is dropped and a Robertson Road segment is added

Spine Feeder

- Introduces the concept of a crosstown express that runs from Walmart to Walmart with stops at the downtown Transit Plaza, and the grocery stores on East 2nd Street and CY Avenue
- Two buses will run this route concurrently which will achieve 30 minute headways
- Two additional routes will be added, with all the feeder routes running with 30 minute headways
- No longer a coordinated pulse system, some riders will have a longer wait for the next bus

Interlined Loops

- Four of the routes will be set up as pairs,
 - The outbound red route bus will flip the sign to blue at the east Walmart and become the inbound blue route bus. The BLUE Route becomes RED.
 - The green and yellow route buses will also be opposing pairs.



- Thirty minute runs each way can be achieved with this system, however, taking the full loop may take up to 60 minutes.
- The blue route east 2nd extension and paradise valley service areas are dropped under this alternative.

Hybrid

- Incorporates the Walmart to Walmart express
- The Red Route will cover East 2nd Street and pick up the lower volume stops that the express bus skips. A companion route traverses the south part of Casper with a longer (120 minute headway) run between the two Walmart stores with connections to Casper College.
- Thirty minute headways can be achieved for Evansville, Mills and Paradise Valley
- The Green and Red Routes remain 60 minute headways.

The alternatives were discussed at the public meeting in November 2015. Those in attendance were most concerned about headways and did not favor the Interline Loop option due to the longer round trip. Numerous transfers were not a limiting factor provided the time from origin to destination was short. Finally, providing better service to Casper College was favored and dropping service to current locations was not. When an actual vote was taken, the Olympic Rings and Hybrid were the top choices with an equal number of votes, no one favored the interlined loops, and the Spine Feeder receive twice as many votes as leaving the system as it is.

Adding future routes was discussed. A route to the Natrona County Airport was the most popular proposed route followed by service to the east end of East 2nd Street. Providing service to Bar Nunn was not strongly favored with a significant number of participants having a neutral opinion.

SYSTEMS

The Casper are transit system is a “Grantee-Vendor” system where Casper, the surrounding towns, and Natrona County contract with the Casper Area Transit Coalition (CATC) to operate the system. The municipalities own the buses and City of Casper owns the office and garage facilities used by CATC. The transit program administrative functions are shared by all the parties including the Casper Area MPO. This creates a cumbersome and inefficient system, particularly since the duties relating the management of grant dollars and meeting of federal mandates are divided up.

The Casper system is the only urban grantee-vendor system in Wyoming and the surrounding states. Most systems structured in this manner are rural, demand-response systems. When CATC was a small, demand-response only system, this approach was more suitable. It can be a more personalized and flexible type system.

Most of the urban transit systems within the region are either internal municipal systems or transit authorities. Municipal systems can have higher overheads due to standardized wage rates and required financial management procedures. Municipal systems frequently enjoy economies of scale when it comes to fleet purchases and maintenance, and can easily call upon addition staff or resources when needed.

Transit Authorities are quasi-public bodies. They work well when there are multiple municipalities or entities within an urbanized area to be served. They enjoy a certain level of autonomy in that they typically own and maintain the assets and the member organizations simply pay for the service. A council or joint powers board with members from the organizations served typically provide oversight. Transit Authorities may be less responsive to the transit users and don’t have the resources to call upon when a problem or need arises.



Participants at the November public meeting were asked which type of transit system was most suitable for the Casper area. A transit authority was the strong favorite (61%) followed by the current grantee-vendor system (22%) and a municipal system (17%).

MARKETING

CATC and the communities that are parties to the transit system do relatively little marketing of the system. Schedules with maps are available in printed form but there is no substantial or concerted effort put forth to distribute the schedules to locations frequented by occasional or potential riders. CATC has a website that provides good information on the system which is linked to the City of Casper website, adjoining towns and MPO sites. A media campaign was launched when the fixed-route service was added in 2005. Public outreach efforts have also taken place when certain milestones have been met, or in conjunction with special studies like the Long Range Transportation Plan and Transit Development Plan.

The buses are marked on the exterior with information about the service along with the CATC phone number and a dramatic system logo. Advertising space is available on the bus windows, and CATC uses this space for general advertising. Notices and regulations are posted inside the buses but there is no general information provided about the service other than the available maps and schedules.

A question on how people get information about transit services was asked on the community survey. The participants were asked which means of communication were most effective at reaching them. Social Media was listed most often. All of the various methods in rank order are:

- Social media
- Schedules/brochures
- Radio/TV
- Newspaper
- CATC website
- Posters
- Email
- Friends & relatives
- Medical and social service offices
- Other
- Bus Drivers



CHAPTER 11 - RECOMMENDATIONS AND FUTURE STUDIES

Based on the findings and study conclusions, a number of recommendations can be offered that are intended to have a positive effect on current transit services to the Casper area and help the system expand into new markets. A number of the recommendations are preliminary at this point and will require further study before they could be implemented.

FACILITIES

The current office, garage and yard facilities for the transit system are too small and would not accommodate future expansion. If a larger, more autonomous system is developed, new facilities will be required. A location within walking distance of the downtown Transit Plaza is recommended.

EQUIPMENT

The transit system employs a fleet of cut-away buses that range in size from 12 passenger to 30 passenger. As the population of the community ages and the number of transit users with limited mobility increases, there may be a greater need for buses that can better accommodate wheelchairs and scooters. Smaller, more energy efficient vans should be considered as the community expands and the number of transit destinations increase.

DEMAND-RESPONSE

The demand-response has operated in much the same manner for many years. The introduction of the less expensive to operate fixed-route system did achieve the goal of reducing ridership on the fixed-route system. There may be other measures that could be taken to try to minimize ridership on the demand-response system.

INCREASE FARES

The fares on the demand-response system have not increased in many years. Increasing the fares could encourage able bodied riders to use the fixed-route service, increasing the capacity for disabled and low income individuals on the demand-response system. Making demand-response more expensive would be an extreme hardship for many of the riders. However, assistance from the City of Casper is available for the very low income. Those who can easily afford the demand-response service use it simply for the convenience. Improvements to the fixed-route service that would reduce headways and shorten trip times may also encourage those who are able to switch.

SCHEDULING

At the present time, the scheduling of rides is managed by the Easy Rider routing software, dispatchers and drivers. More training is required and there should be greater reliance on the software to assign passengers to the right bus to improve overall efficiencies.

DISPATCHING

A key role that the dispatchers play is to re-assign buses when passengers are late or cancel the service at the last minute. The bus best able to respond to late or redirected rides should be dispatched rather than a bus with a driver willing to provide support.



ON-BOARD TRACKING

Drivers are expected to know the community very well and determine the best way to get from stop to stop. A GPS based on-board navigation system should be installed on the buses to assist the drivers with their routing and improve efficiencies.

LIMITED MOBILITY TRANSFER STATION

To better serve those with limited mobility, it is recommended that a transfer station designed specifically for wheelchairs and scooters be considered. A platform constructed to the same height as the bus floors would allow ramps to be used to enable riders to move from bus to bus quickly and without assistance. Passengers could be picked up, brought to the station, and transfer to a bus that serves a specific destination or part of town. Various agencies, organizations and businesses could use the station to help get their clients or customers where they need to go in a fast, comfortable and efficient manner.

FIXED-ROUTE

The fixed-route bus service is the backbone of the transit program, and offers the greatest opportunity for expansion as the community grows. A number of objectives should be met to improve the service for current users and create opportunities for additional residents of the community to take advantage of the fixed-route transit system

CROSTOWN EXPRESS

A crosstown express route which would provide more rapid service to downtown Casper and the major shopping locations in the community should be established. It could connect with the other routes at numerous locations to provide a versatile effective network.

MINIMIZE HEADWAYS

Short headways are desired by most users. Steps should be taken to minimize the route times to the greatest extent possible. Stakeholders that participated in surveys and discussions favored short headways over fewer transfers between buses

MAXIMIZE CONNECTIVITY

Having more opportunities to transfer from one bus to another is viewed as an effective means to maximize the flexibility of the fixed-route system. Rather than having most of the transfers take place at the Transit Plaza on an hourly basis. Coordinated transfers at locations like Casper College, Smith's Grocery, and Kmart can improve the service.

NUMBER OF STOPS AND PLACEMENT

To maximize ridership, there needs to be a well-planned network of bus stops which minimize the distance users have to walk to and from the bus stop.

Spacing

Making a 10 minute or ¼ mile walk to a bus stop is frequently referenced standard. The Casper fixed-route system has stops from 2 blocks to 3 mile apart with an average spacing of ½ mile. The number of stops should be increased significantly. The improvements at new stops can be limited to a sign to minimize costs. Stops that are used can be upgraded and those that are not can be abandoned.

Safety and comfort

There should be a gradation of improvements at bus stops that reflect the level of use. At a minimum, all stops should have sign and a hard surface pad or sidewalk to stand on. They should be located at established crosswalks and accessible by sidewalks in good condition.



Most stops should have benches. Shelters should be restricted to the busiest and most remote stops. Smaller, less costly, 3 sided shelters which would serve as a wind screen and sun shade should be considered in some locations.

MEET CHANGING NEEDS IN THE COMMUNITY

As the community grows and changes the fixed-route system should be modified to meet the changing needs. Substantial residential developments, particularly those that support an older or lower income population, should be evaluated to determine if they need new or altered transit service. When key destinations like shopping areas and medical centers emerge the fixed-route system needs to service them.

SPECIFIC LOCATIONS TO SERVICE

Providing fixed route service to specific facilities or locations was addressed in this study and has been looked at in the past. Locations including the Riverwest neighborhood (Robertson Road), East 2nd Street, the Town of Bar Nunn and Natrona County Airport have been discussed. Some warrant immediate service and others may not.

Casper College

Currently Casper College is served by 3 stops on the RED Route. Having a route go through the middle of the campus may increase staff and student ridership. A large number of students have part-time jobs and they may need to drive to get there on time. Nevertheless, a route and stop on campus should be tried.

Airport

Service to the airport would only be needed three times a day. A direct shuttle bus approach with strong support from the hospitality industry should be explored. Extend the PURPLE Route service from Mills to the Airport would not be effective.

Bar Nunn

Most transit riders are at the low income end of the scale. The income levels in Bar Nunn, particularly in the newer housing, is higher than the norm for Casper transit users. The income levels in the Wardwell area are low, however, the large lot, low density character of Wardwell is not easily served by transit. An addition route to serve Bar Nunn would not be practical.

McMurry BP

The BLUE Route extension was created to serve the area from the East Walmart to Hat Six Road. The ridership on this route has been low. The portion of the McMurry Business Park west of Blackmore Road should be picked up by the ORANGE Route (Evansville), and the area to the east should be served by a feeder line when the need arises.

Employment Centers

Industrial or heavy commercial area such as the Wyoming Industrial Park, Salt Creek Heights, Westgate Park, and the Air Rail Industrial Park support a large number of jobs. Providing fixed-route transit services to these area would not be practical because they are spread out, the income levels are high, and there is a well-established dependency on cars.

OPERATING SYSTEM

The current transit system is operated as a grantee-vendor system where CATC contracts with the City of Casper and neighboring towns to provide transit services. There is duplication of effort between CATC, the MPO and City of Casper with regarding to the management of federal and state transit grants and the execution of the steps or requirements mandated by the granting bodies. Greater efficiencies may be achieved by moving to a different system.



TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY

It is recommended that the City of Casper, Natrona County, and the towns of Evansville, Mills and Bar Nunn create a Transportation Authority to provide both demand-response and fixed-route transit services for the Casper urbanized area. With four municipalities within the urban area, a system operated by the City of Casper may not provide an equitable level of service to all transit users in the area. A quasi-public Transportation Authority can better achieve a balanced level of service throughout the area, manage state and federal grants more efficiently, and provide a more stable system.

Outreach and Marketing

Limited effort has gone into the marketing of the transit system over the years. Getting more information out into the community regarding transit services would increase awareness and may result in more riders, a broader mix of transit users, and improved overall support for transit service.

MARKETING PROGRAM

It is recommended that an ongoing marketing program be formulated and put into action to get more information out into the community on the benefits of a transit system, increase ridership among different demographic groups, and build a stronger base of support.

FUTURE STUDIES

While this study took a cursory look at many aspect of transit within Casper including the fleet of buses, the operations of the systems, future alternative routes, coordination, and branding or marketing among them. Further analysis is recommended before final decisions are made about these aspects. In some cases it would be beneficial if that additional analysis happened sooner rather than later.

Specifically future studies are recommended to analyze the potential routing of bus lines highlighted in the alternatives this study included. A plan that considers branding of the Casper Transit system together with a marketing strategy could increase ridership. A renewed and focused coordination plan could also enhance the transit system in Casper

Routing Study

This Transit Development Plan Update considers sweeping route changes for all six of the fixed routes today presented as alternatives. While the alternatives show new route locations on specific roadways and headway times, no routing analysis was done. The locations of new routes with well thought out with collaboration from the Casper MPO and CATC, including the consideration of stops and times. Still no software was used to analyze the route locations, no speed runs were conducted, and no analysis on potential riders was completed.

Before route changes can be acted on a detailed routing study should be conducted of the highest potential route changes from the alternatives. The routing study should include maps of routes and variations, documented speed runs with stop times and projected headway times. It should look at potential ridership along routes and boardings/alightings at stops. A study conducted soon would allow the MPO to build off the momentum of public outreach and support generated by this study.



Branding/Marketing Study

During the course of this study we heard from some folks that they don't know the difference between CATC and The Bus, and that they don't know the difference between CATC the organization and CATC the dial-a-ride service. We also heard that some people didn't know about existing services offered. Therefore we believe that CATC and Casper would benefit from a Branding/Marketing study.

This study should include a public survey about the current state of transit knowledge within the community as well as potential marketing ideas. The study should consider the Casper transit brand including the name, color scheme, logos, slogan and other aspects. It should include detailed recommendations about the branding and potential marketing campaigns targeted on improving the awareness in the community and increasing ridership. A time is approaching with the potential for major changes with CATC, therefore a branding study would be advisable now, so that major changes could be enacted together with a new brand.

Coordination Plan

The 2010 Transit Development Plan includes a robust coordination plan. This coordination plan includes a list of organizations that provide some transit service and recommendations to coordinate some of this service with CATC. It seems that few of the recommendations from that coordination plan have taken place and that there may have been some changes among those small transit providers.

A new coordination plan and focuses on both changes to CATC and the smaller providers would be beneficial in the future. This new coordination plan can also include greater outreach to provide better service, for example including the local hotels for potential service to the airport, coordinating with the city and others on the potential for a downtown trolley, and working with festivals to help with their transit needs. A new coordination plan may not have the urgency that the other recommended studies do, but it is still a good idea and would benefit transit in Casper.



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