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SRF

Kent County Mobility Study

Final Report

October 2025



GVMC

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AECOM



Kent County Mobility Study

Executive Summary



Kent County is growing, and the parts of the county with the highest and fastest growth are outside of the Grand Rapids urban core. Our townships and small towns are seeing new housing, jobs, and other economic opportunities, creating more demand for people to move about. While The Rapid provides transit services in the six core cities, **most of Kent County has limited mobility services available.**

The purpose of the Kent County Mobility Study is to understand the mobility needs of residents and begin to chart a path toward improving mobility options throughout the county outside of The Rapid's core service area.

Process Overview

The Kent County Mobility Study was developed using the following process:



The Case for Better Mobility

Accessible and affordable mobility options across Kent County are scarce. Meanwhile, population and job growth is occurring in underserved areas, while employers say they need transit to attract and retain their workforce.

Without better mobility options, Kent County's employers will have limited employee candidate pools, residents will have limited job and healthcare options, and workers and residents alike will need to dedicate a significant share of their household budgets to vehicle ownership costs. **Insufficient mobility stunts the county's economy and residents' quality of life.**

In response to these issues, the Kent County Mobility Taskforce developed a **regional mobility vision** in partnership to help shape and guide the Kent County Mobility Study:

Kent County Mobility Vision

*Kent County envisions a countywide mobility framework that **interconnects urban, suburban, and rural communities** through innovative and flexible transportation solutions. Our mobility future empowers residents of every age, ability, and income level to **access jobs, healthcare, education, and community life without barriers**. Through strong partnerships and sustainable funding, Kent County and its partners will build a shared network of transportation options that support economic growth and enhance quality of life in the region.*

In Kent County...



Sources: 2023 American Community Survey
5-Year Estimates, GVMC 2050 MTP

Recommendations for Better Mobility

Below are the study's recommendations and potential next steps for implementing the regional mobility vision over the next six years:

Demand Response Services



- Update Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan (CHSTP)** - more access to Federal funding
- Enable Transfers and Crossover Trips** - easier travel throughout the county
- Expand Volunteer Driver Pool** - more transportation needs met with volunteers
- Expand RideLink** - broader network for providing trips and broader eligibility for riders
- New Municipal Demand Response Services** - new public services where there are gaps

Mobility Management, Marketing, & Education

- Support the GVMC Travel Demand Management (TDM) Communications & Outreach Plan** - greater public awareness of mobility options
- Commuter Campaign** - incentive to try other mobility options
- Coordinate with Employment and Healthcare** - decreased barriers to accessing employment and healthcare
- Mobility as a Service (MaaS)** - more convenient trip planning, booking, and payment



Express & Fixed Route Services



- West Michigan Express** - Holland to Grand Rapids connection
- Other Express Services** - connections between Grand Rapids and other areas of the county
- Service-Level Enhancements to Existing Routes** - more frequent service and expanded hours of operation
- Geographic Expansion** - more routes to more places

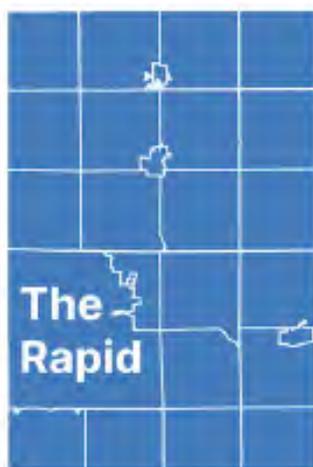
Supporting Services & Infrastructure

- Transit-Supportive Community Planning** - clustering housing, employment, and daily needs for easier mobility
- Mobility Hubs** - clustering different modes of transportation for easier access
- New Micromobility Services** - new ways to travel by bike, scooter, etc.



Potential Paths Forward

The Kent County Mobility Study outlines potential governance and funding pathways for advancing mobility initiatives in Kent County. Each option carries distinct benefits, challenges, and levels of regional integration. Importantly, these scenarios are not mutually exclusive and could be combined.



Community-Level Partnerships (No Change to The Rapid)



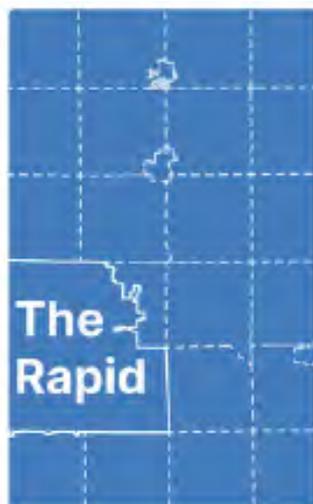
Approach: Municipalities continue to make independent decisions about which mobility services to provide and how to fund them. Collaboration between communities could be enhanced through intergovernmental agreements, but there would be no coordinating agency at the county level.



Opportunities: Allows communities to maintain **local control** and allows **flexibility for tailored services**.



Limitations: Would likely result in a **fragmented network** that leaves **gaps in coverage**, **does not generate new funding**, and cannot easily support the expansion of The Rapid's fixed-route system.



County-Level Administration (No Change to The Rapid)



Approach: Kent County would take on or designate a leadership and coordinating role in how mobility is administered and funded throughout the county. This would involve establishing new positions or a new division within Kent County responsible for coordinating mobility service providers, developing service contracts, and administering mobility funding.



Opportunities: **Strengthens coordination** and makes it **more likely to achieve a countywide mobility network**, while providing administrative support for all initiatives identified in the study



Limitations: Success would depend heavily on **identifying additional funding sources**.



New Public Transportation Authority (Overlaps The Rapid)



Approach: Create a new countywide public transportation authority with the power to collect its own millage specifically for demand-response services beyond The Rapid's current service area. The Rapid would continue operating under its existing authority with its own millage, while the new countywide authority would focus on filling service gaps.



Opportunities: Enables **service expansion where communities support it** and brings new **funding directly tied to service**.



Limitations: Introduces **governance complexity** and risk of duplication or fragmentation if the two authorities do not coordinate closely. This option would also **require voter approval of a new countywide millage**.

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PART I – SETTING THE STAGE

This is the final report of a series of five reports created for the Kent County Mobility Study. This Final Report provides a high-level summary of key findings from previous reports, which will be included as appendix items:

- Appendix A. Existing Conditions Report
- Appendix B. Governance and Funding Peer Review
- Appendix C. Survey Report
- Appendix D. Service Concepts and Evaluation Framework

This Final Report applies key findings to date, with Part V of the report providing recommendations to further transit coordination and investment in Kent County.

STUDY ORIGIN & PURPOSE

The Kent County Mobility Study is a joint project of the Grand Valley Metropolitan Council (GVMC) and Kent County, Michigan. This study was designed to assess the current availability of public transit, micromobility, and other mobility services in the region; identify high-priority needs and gaps in service; assess the market for mobility services in the county; evaluate possible service improvements; evaluate potential funding sources; and finally to develop an implementation plan.

At the study's commencement, early discussions produced the following problem statements which helped guide the direction of the study:

- **Regional Coordination:** Kent County lacks a cohesive regional mobility vision, where decisions are guided by shared countywide goals rather than the localized priorities of individual municipalities and townships.
- **Regional Mobility:** Affordable mobility options across the county are scarce. Meanwhile, population and job growth are occurring in underserved areas, while employers say they need transit to attract and retain their workforce. Services that do exist typically have limited capacity and narrow eligibility requirements. While The Rapid provides service to the public in southwest Kent County, the rest of the county lacks effective mobility service for the public.

In conducting engagement with decision-makers and Kent County residents over the course of the project, the urgency of these gaps in mobility services – particularly affecting those without reliable access to an automobile, or who do not have the ability to drive – were documented. Improvements in transportation service are critical for people of Kent County to maintain access to employment, avoid social isolation, obtain preventive healthcare, and participate in the regional economy.

Mobility Task Force

The Mobility Task Force has been a key partner throughout this study. This Task Force was created to bring together stakeholders from various sectors to develop innovative transportation solutions essential for economic prosperity in the present and future. The group began meeting in fall of 2024, as the Kent County

Mobility Study began, and continued to meet approximately every 6 weeks throughout the project. The full Mobility Task Force meetings were open to the public and included public comment.

The Mobility Task Force included two committees: the Steering Committee and the Technical Advisory Committee. The Steering Committee included representatives from: Wege Foundation, City of Grand Rapids, Urban League of West Michigan, Disability Advocates of Kent County, City of Walker, West Michigan Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Grand Rapids Community Foundation, Grand Valley Metro Council, Kent County, Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce, Alpine Township, The Right Place, and Kent County Essential Needs Taskforce.

The Technical Advisory Committee leaned toward subject matter experts and included representatives from: Hope Network, Area Agency on Aging of West Michigan, Michigan Department of Transportation, City of Grand Rapids, Senior Neighbors, State of Michigan, Kent County Community Action, The Rapid, North Kent Connect, and Plainfield Township.

The Task Force will continue to convene after the Study concludes, working towards implementation of recommendations discussed in this report.

Consultant Scope

While the Mobility Task Force provided direction for the study, Kent County and GVMC brought on a consultant team to provide professional expertise and conduct the technical work. The consultant team was led by SRF Consulting Group, with technical assistance from AECOM and engagement work headed by Aligned Planning.

Coordination with The Rapid Transit Master Plan

The Kent County Mobility Study is meant to complement the work of The Rapid Transit Master Plan (The TMP), which was completed in early 2025. Goals and priorities identified in The TMP related to regional mobility were pulled into this study for consideration. While this study is focused on the greater Kent County region, the goals and priorities identified in this study aim to complement those identified through The TMP.

THE CASE FOR BETTER MOBILITY

Early work completed for this study revealed why mobility is worth investing in and what mobility needs are present throughout the region.

Anticipated regional growth points to an increasing need to connect rural communities with urban hubs. This anticipated growth also points to the need to more efficiently transport a growing population. Data analysis and public engagement revealed transportation gaps, particularly for those outside of the Rapid's service area that do not meet age or disability requirements to access existing demand response services, while the peer analysis shows how regional transit investment makes regions more economically competitive.

While the data and research presented here highlight the need for mobility services, it's also important to hear from people in the county facing mobility challenges. The study team talked with people during engagement events to hear the challenges they face and what they need out of future mobility services. Their stories are shared throughout the sections below.

County Growth, Employment, and Demographic Trends

The Mobility Study team conducted an analysis of the study area, with attention to travel flows, residential demographics (race, income, zero-vehicle households, and populations over 65), and employment opportunities in and around Kent County. To discern regional travel patterns relevant to the needs of Greater Kent County, origin-destination (OD) travel flows were sourced from Replica.¹ Household and job growth from 2020 to 2050 by Transportation Analysis Zone (TAZ) were also mapped.

The market analysis revealed three different mobility areas in Greater Kent County:

- Northern Kent County: Travel demand is likely to be concentrated around Tyrone, Cedar Springs, and Oakfield. Trip generators include the Meijer in Solon. There is noticeable cross-border travel into Montcalm County, where Greenville is a major employment center.
- Central Kent County: Travel demand is likely to be concentrated around Northview, Belmont, Rockford, and Cannon.
- Southern Kent County: A densely interconnected fabric of trips can be found in the urban area that includes Grand Rapids, Ada, Vergennes, Cascade, Lowell, Caledonia, and Bowne Townships. Significant trip generators include the Gerald R. Ford International Airport, its surrounding industrial developments, and the Amway headquarters in Ada.

Data showed a demand for shorter-distance travel within these markets between rural communities into their closest hub and a demand for longer-distance travel across the county. The analyses conducted for The Rapid TMP and for this study both show that the Grand Rapids area continues to draw from around the county and beyond. Additional details on the market analysis are included in the *Existing Conditions Report* (Appendix A).

¹ Replica is a platform for building detailed travel demand models based on cell phone, census, and other data.

Case Study 1: Aging in Place

Gaines Township

Robert (72) and Linda (69)

Robert and Linda raised their family in Gaines Township and always planned to stay in their home. But after Robert's stroke last year left him unable to drive, and with Linda's vision getting worse, they've become increasingly isolated.

"We're not ready for assisted living," Linda says. "We're sharp, we're active, we just can't drive safely anymore. But that means we're trapped."

Their son lives in Grand Rapids and helps when he can, but he has his own family and job. Getting to medical appointments, the grocery store, and church has become a real struggle. "RideLink is wonderful when it's available, but you have to book days in advance, and sometimes they're just full," Robert says. "I had to reschedule a cardiology appointment twice because I couldn't get transportation. That's not good for someone with my history."

The isolation has been the hardest part. "We used to volunteer, go to senior center activities, visit friends," Linda says, her voice cracking. "Now we're stuck in our own home. This isn't the retirement we worked for."

Barriers to Opportunity

Although The Rapid provides a strong variety of service options within its boundaries, outside The Rapid, services are chiefly limited to seniors and/or people with disabilities. These services are in demand and must continue to be supported; however, service for the general public is also a critical need, especially for commuters, people with low incomes, and households without vehicles of their own. Throughout Kent County there are significant proportions of households without vehicle access. **In some census block groups, more than 10 percent of households do not have access to a vehicle.** Additionally, survey input showed respondents' top priorities for this study were *providing transportation options to seniors and people with disabilities, providing access to places with employment, and providing access to medical facilities/healthcare.*

Many of the organizations working in Kent County have a strong interest in improving mobility, and municipalities typically have planning goals favoring transit-oriented development, walkability, bikeability, and other treatments that extend the reach of public transit and enhance its efficiency. However, they are limited by the current patchwork nature of mobility work. It is felt that a county-wide vision and service strategy are necessary in order to use limited resources effectively.

Case Study 2: Breaking the Cycle

Alpine Township

Maria (38) and her son Devon (16)

Maria juggles two jobs—morning shifts at a nursing home in Rockford and evening shifts cleaning offices in Grand Rapids. Her son Devon wants to work and help out with bills, but the \$600 for driver's ed is just not in the budget. Without it, he can't get his license until he's 18.

"Devon's smart and motivated. He got accepted to a summer program at a manufacturing company in Comstock Park—they were even going to pay him \$15 an hour," Maria says. "But there's no way for him to get there. We live on a country road. The nearest bus stop is seven miles away, and even that only runs during limited hours."

Devon had to turn it down. Now he's watching his friends who can drive working and saving for college while he stays home. "It feels like we're stuck," Maria says. "I can't afford to give him what he needs to become independent, and without transportation, he can't earn the money himself. We're just trading water."

Economic Competitiveness

Public transportation serves as a foundational element of any thriving economy. This point was emphasized by the Growing Michigan Together Council, established in 2023 to address concerns regarding stagnant population growth in Michigan and to identify policies to help drive economic growth. One recommendation to emerge from their 2023 report was to *develop regional public transit systems*, citing the important role that transit plays in keeping jobs and talent within the state as well as retaining and attracting young residents.² The report finds that relative to growing metropolitan areas across the country, Michigan fails to build a robust public transit system. Statewide, transit user rates are in the bottom half of growing peer states and below national rates. The 2023 Michigan Infrastructure Report Card (conducted by the American Society of Civil Engineers) showed inadequate reliability and availability of transit service.

Currently, Kent County is experiencing population growth. This growth is not a coincidence, but a testament to what the County has to offer. This can be attributed to a variety of factors, one of which includes the success of The Rapid relative to other transit agencies across the state (demonstrated in the Peer Review Report³ recently developed as part of their Transit Master Plan). Transit investment across the region is an increasingly important tool for continuing the trends of growth seen in the county and accommodating the influx in population. Population increase means more stress on current transportation systems; However, it

² Growing Michigan Together Council Report, December 14, 2023, <https://growingmichigan.org/wp-content/uploads/2023-12-14-GMTC-Final-Report-2.pdf>

³ The Rapid Transit Master Plan: Peer Review Report, Interurban Transit Partnership (ITP), https://static1.squarespace.com/static/64c901c60e261369bbb8592c/t/660ff3a8aa79d16f2398f086/1738332477894/2024+03+01_TheRapidTMP_Peer+Review+Report_v2.pdf

also means more resources to invest in a future transportation system that encourages use of a wider variety of transportation modes and accommodates current and projected densities across the county.

Data analysis and stakeholder engagement conducted throughout this study support the Council's findings, revealing a need to support job opportunities and economic growth by connecting the region's residents with employment centers located across the county. Additionally, Kent County Community Action, a division of the County focused on economic security for residents, recently recommended continuing to work on expansion and improvement of public transportation systems. The report calls for reliable transportation options that extend outside of the core Rapid service area, lowering the transportation barrier that keeps many residents from meeting their needs.

Case Study 3: The Employment Barrier

Lowell area Marcus (28)

Marcus lives with a disability that prevents him from driving but doesn't limit his ability to work. He completed an associate degree in IT support and has been job hunting for eight months. He's had three job offers—all of which he had to turn down because of transportation.

"The jobs are in office parks off the highway, places you can't reach without a car," Marcus explains. "One employer in Cascade Township really wanted to hire me. They even looked into solutions, but the closest bus stop was four miles away, and that bus didn't run on weekends when I'd need to work occasionally."

Marcus relies on family members and the occasional RideLink trip for errands and medical appointments, but coordinating daily work transportation just isn't sustainable. "I'm qualified. I'm ready to work. I've got the education and skills employers want," he says. "But I can't get to where the jobs are. How am I supposed to build a career, become independent, contribute to the tax base, when there's no way for me to physically show up?"

It's taken a toll on his mental health. "You start to feel worthless," he admits. "Like the world wasn't built for people like me, and maybe I'm just a burden. That's a hard place to be when you know you have something to offer."

Benefits of Investing in Mobility Services

Many organizations like the Growing Michigan Together Council and Kent County Community Action bring up transit as a key regional economic driver because transit's return on investment has been well documented across the nation. It can be difficult to measure the impacts of transit because of the variety of ways it interacts with the economy. Transit agencies create jobs both for their employees and firms that conduct work for them. Public transportation helps to widen employer candidate pools and provides access to jobs for residents that may lack alternative forms of transportation. Public transportation increases workforce productivity – by allowing multitasking for those that use public transportation and by reducing traffic congestion for those that do not. Transit provides travel and vehicle ownership costs savings, attracts talent to the region, and encourages denser, more economically productive land uses.

The American Public Transportation Association (APTA) conducted an analysis of transit's impact on the economy, nationwide. Results show significant economic gain from increased transit investment, both from stimulus effects and long-term effects on national productivity.⁴ Their model showed that the economic impact of increased transit investment generated around five times the amount of added investment put into the public transportation system. This shows that significant economic gain is available through an increase in transit investment – with these gains accumulating in the long-term. Delaying transit investment delays regional economic gains.

In addition to peer research and industry experience, the project team – through the stakeholder engagement process -- was able to record many real-world examples of the broader costs that come with limiting investment in public transportation. For example, access to transportation is essential to obtaining preventive and acute health care services. For specialty care, people in rural areas must often travel long distances for these resources. We know that Grand Rapids is a regional center for health care, and it is a critical part of the economy in Kent County. The ability for patients to get to appointments reliably is linked to transportation and helps the entire system operate more effectively.

Health care is one example of how transportation has this multiplier effect in various industries, and even if there is an appearance of "inefficiency" within the transportation program, the trips that are being made yield an economic benefit and contribute to a thriving, connected community. Like housing or food security, transportation access is a critical component of combatting poverty outcomes and alleviating social isolation. The strategies outlined later in this report support removing barriers to employment and encourage participation in community activities.

⁴ Economic Impact of Public Transit, 2020, American Public Transportation Association, <https://www.apta.com/wp-content/uploads/APTA-Economic-Impact-Public-Transit-2020.pdf>

Case Study 4: The Education Gap

Tyrone Township The Anderson family

The Andersons' 17-year-old daughter qualified for a competitive STEM program at Grand Rapids Community College while finishing her senior year at the township high school. The dual enrollment opportunity would give her college credits and exposure to advanced coursework—exactly what she needs for scholarship opportunities.

"The program runs from 1:00 to 4:00 PM, three days a week," her mom explains. "Her last class at the high school ends at 2:15. There's no bus service, and I work in Rockford until 5:00. We tried carpooling with another family, but their schedule changed after two months."

She had to drop the program. "She was devastated," her mom says. "All her hard work to get accepted, and we couldn't make the logistics work. Meanwhile, kids whose parents have flexible schedules or can afford to hire drivers get these opportunities. It's not fair that geography and transportation determine who gets ahead."

The family is now looking at colleges within walking distance of bus lines as their main criterion. "She should be choosing based on academic programs and fit, not bus routes," her mom says.

VISION STATEMENT AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Taken together, the results of the data analysis and stakeholder engagement suggest three themes to guide this Study, with each theme representing different travel needs in Greater Kent County.

- Theme 1: Supporting diverse travel needs for the general public in and around Kent County for all trip types, including medical, shopping, school, recreation, etc.
- Theme 2: Supporting job opportunities and economic growth by connecting the region's residents with employment centers located across the county.
- Theme 3: Supporting those who commute into the core six cities from areas of the county lacking mobility services, and vice versa.

The Mobility Task Force agreed to a shared long-term vision for transportation in Kent County. This study is intended to be one step toward realizing that vision. The vision guided the development of alternatives and screening criteria and is as follows:

Kent County envisions a countywide mobility framework that interconnects urban, suburban, and rural communities through innovative and flexible transportation solutions. Our mobility future empowers residents of every age, ability, and income level to access jobs, healthcare, education, and community life without barriers. Through strong partnerships and sustainable funding, Kent County and its partners will build a shared network of transportation options that support economic growth and enhance quality of life in the region.

This vision was then distilled into a series of supporting principles, as follows:

- **Principle 1 – Accessibility:** Expand service options across Kent County, providing effective, reliable transportation options for residents regardless of age, ability, or economic status
- **Principle 2 – Regional Integration:** Create a coordinated network of services that link urban, suburban, and rural communities, model effective regional coordination, and support business growth and workforce mobility
- **Principle 3 – Innovation:** Embrace creative solutions, emerging mobility options, and new technologies that can scale to meet evolving community needs
- **Principle 4 – Economic Vitality:** Develop stable funding mechanisms and partnerships to ensure long-term service reliability and growth and create a cost-effective model that corresponds to demand

PART II - EXISTING CONDITIONS

In earlier phases of the study, the project team studied the existing state of mobility services within the county to know which services already exist, what planning studies were recently completed or underway, and the current governance and funding environment. Part II summarizes this effort, while the full details are included in the *Existing Conditions Report* (Appendix A) and the *Governance and Funding Peer Review* (Appendix B).

CURRENT MOBILITY SERVICES & PROVIDERS

The study area's mobility services include only one public transit service, The Rapid, which is a Grand Rapids-centered urban transit network. While the rest of the county does not have public transit, there are county-operated services for seniors and/or people with disabilities and limited non-profit services. Other services include taxis; non-emergency medical transport (NEMT); short-term bike, scooter, and car rentals; and long-distance bus and rail services. Table 1 below shows a summary of mobility services in the county. The two largest providers in the county are briefly summarized below, while more details on all service providers are also included in Appendix A.

The Rapid

The Rapid is a service of the Interurban Transit Partnership (ITP), established in 2000 by the municipalities of Grand Rapids, East Grand Rapids, Grandville, Kentwood, Walker, and Wyoming. Its services include 26 fixed bus routes—two of which are Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) lines known as the Laker Line and Silver Line—providing scheduled service. The Rapid also operates GO!Bus, an ADA complementary paratransit service offering door-to-door rides for seniors aged 65 and older and individuals with disabilities within $\frac{3}{4}$ mile of fixed routes during scheduled service hours. Additionally, the Passenger Adaptive Suburban Service (PASS) provides curb-to-bus-stop transportation for residents living over one-third of a mile from fixed routes within defined boundaries. DASH routes, funded by the City of Grand Rapids and Downtown Grand Rapids, Inc., provide free connections between key downtown locations and parking lots. The Rapid's service area extends beyond its member municipalities into Alpine, Byron, Gaines, and Plainfield Townships in Kent County, and through contracted service agreements with Grand Valley State University in Allendale Township (Ottawa County), and with Ferris State University serving Cedar Springs (Kent County) and Big Rapids (Mecosta County). Finally, The Rapid has a program, West Michigan Rides, that provides a resource for finding travel options like carpool, vanpool, transit, and other options throughout Western Michigan.

RideLink

RideLink is a network of providers offering transportation for older adults to any destination within Kent County. Hope Network coordinates the service and provides some rides directly; other providers include Senior Neighbors, Kent County Community Action, and United Methodist Community House. Each provider uses its own branded vehicles. Eligibility is restricted to Kent County residents 60 years or older. There is no restriction on trip purpose/destination as long as it is within the county. Rides are curb-to-curb and shared.

Table 1. Summary of Public and Non-Profit Services

Service Name	Organization	Eligibility	Service Area	Service Days/Times	Fares	2023 Ridership	Number of Vehicles	Number of Drivers	Funding Sources
RideLink	Hope Network, Senior Neighbors, KCCA, UMCH	Kent County residents 60+	Kent County	Mo-Fri 7:30 AM to 4:30 PM	\$3 suggested contribution	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Kent County Senior Millage
Wheels to Work	Hope Network	Commuters to participating employers	Unknown	Reasonable shift times	Shared cost employer-employee	Unknown	As needed (contracted with other providers)	As needed (contracted with other providers)	Employers
North Kent Transit Services	Hope Network	Seniors and people with disabilities	Unknown	Mo-Fri 8 AM to 4:30 PM	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	CDBG
Way 2 Go!	KCCA	Kent County residents 65+ or disabled	Must start or end outside The Rapid's service area	Unknown	\$2 suggested contribution	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	MDOT, The Rapid, CDBG
N/A	UMCH	Kent County residents	Kent County	Mo-Fri 9 AM to 3 PM	\$10 + \$3/mi (\$15+3 with wheelchair)	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
Georgetown Transportation	Georgetown Seniors	Georgetown residents 55+ or disabled	Greater Grand Rapids area, Hudsonville, Holland/ Zeeland, Allendale	Mo-Fri 8 AM to 4 PM	\$4 to \$24 depending on distance	13,000	6	9 part-time	MDOT and Georgetown Township
N/A	Western Michigan Veterans Coalition	Veterans and their households	Unknown	Unknown	Free	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
Transportation	Volunteers in Service (VIS)	Medical appointments, grocery shopping, and food pantry trips for Kent County residents	Kent County	Based on volunteer availability	Free	459	Varies by volunteer availability	~70 but varies by volunteer availability	Individual and church donations
Rides to and FROM	Flat River Outreach Ministries (FROM)	Residents of Greater Lowell with needs	Lowell Area School District boundaries	Mo-Th 10 AM to 4 PM One week notice required	\$2 suggested contribution	N/A – launched 2023	Varies by volunteer availability	Varies by volunteer availability	Unknown

PLANNING LITERATURE REVIEW

To understand the transit planning context in the county, the project team conducted a comprehensive review of existing and concurrent planning studies. Approximately 25 plans were reviewed with key points summarized in a table in the *Existing Conditions Report* (Appendix A). The plans most applicable to this study include:

- The Rapid – Transit Master Plan (2025)
- Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan for Michigan Planning Region 8 (2024)
- Kent County Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan (2022)
- GVMC Regional Transportation Demand Management Plan (2023)
- Kent County Transit Needs Assessment (2011)
- Kent County Community Needs Assessment (2023)

CURRENT GOVERNANCE & FUNDING

There is a wide variety of governing mechanisms through which transit can be provided. The governance options available in Michigan are broken down later on in this report, in the *Michigan Authorizing and Enabling Legislation* section. This section provides an overview of the mechanisms currently used by some of the county's providers.

Many transit systems in Michigan receive a blend of federal, state, and local funding to support transit capital and operating expenses. A list of commonly leveraged funding sources is included in the Funding Tools Examined section

The Rapid

The Rapid is the only public transit agency operating within the county. The Rapid began life as the Grand Rapids Transit Authority in 1963. As the need for regional transit services grew, the surrounding cities of East Grand Rapids, Grandville, Kentwood, Walker, and Wyoming joined with Grand Rapids to form a transit authority.

Governance

The Rapid's current incarnation dates back to 2000, when the six cities formed the Interurban Transit Partnership (ITP) as a Public Transportation Authority. Becoming a Public Transportation Authority established the ITP as a governing authority that can govern two or more political subdivisions and allowed them to secure more reliable funding. ITP service was rebranded under the name "The Rapid." Its 15-member board comprises representatives from its six constituent cities.

The Rapid currently has a unified service area millage rate for their six member communities. Contracts are required to serve businesses, municipalities and other organizations outside of the member communities. The Rapid currently has contracts with Gaines Township, Grand Valley State University, Ferris State University, and Disability Advocates. Other portions of the County have had service contracts in the past. In 2022, Byron

Township eliminated its contract with The Rapid, citing low fixed-route ridership levels.⁵ In 2023, Cascade Township Downtown Development Authority eliminated its contract with The Rapid after failing to come to agreement on proposed fixed-route service route changes. Funding from Cascade Township was partially redirected to Hope Network.⁶

Funding

In the next several years, the majority of The Rapid's operating funding is expected to come from local property taxes through a transit millage rate, currently set at 1.47 mills. State operating assistance is the second-largest revenue source for the agency. Passenger fare revenue is projected to increase in absolute terms over the next five years, but to fall as a percentage of operating costs (from 10 percent to six percent).

The Rapid also receives federal operating assistance, but this is a volatile source. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, federal sources funded only five percent of The Rapid's annual operating expenses. Federal COVID relief funding allowed The Rapid not only to maintain service during the pandemic, but to build up a reserve that will help cushion it against financial challenges (e.g., rising costs) for the next few years; however, federal assistance on this scale is unlikely to be available again in the future.

Capital funding comes from both state and federal sources. In recent years, The Rapid has received FTA's Section 5307 formula funding program for urbanized areas, discretionary funding from FTA's Capital Investment Grant (CIG) program (Section 5309), and bus purchase formula funding through Section 5339. The Rapid has also consistently received FHWA Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funding and similar sources that then are flexed to FTA. FTA capital grants generally have an 80 percent federal share and a 20 percent local match requirement with match funds typically coming from the State Comprehensive Transportation Fund.

Kent County

While Kent County is not currently a transit provider, they do oversee and fund transportation services.

Governance

Through their Community Action Division, the county oversees *The Way 2 Go!* Service for older adults and people with disabilities. *The Way 2 Go!* service area is limited to locations not currently served by The Rapid's fixed route and ADA paratransit (GO!Bus) services.

Kent County also provides senior transportation by serving as a service provider through RideLink, which offers transportation within Kent County for those 60 or older. RideLink service is coordinated by Hope Network and provided by five providers including Hope Network, The Rapid, Kent County Community Action, Senior Neighborhoods, and United Methodist Community House.

Funding

The Way 2 Go! service is supported by funding from the State of Michigan, The Rapid, and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Community Development Block Grant program. Other municipal departments and non-profits operating in the County can draw also from local, state, and federal

⁵ "Rapid bus system makes route changes after Byron Township axes contract," MLive, August 20, 2022.

⁶ "Cascade Township launches new bus route after fall out with The Rapid," MLive, August 30, 2023.

funding sources. More details about these funding sources can be found in Appendix B. *Governance and Funding Peer Review*.

The Kent County Senior Millage goes to a variety of senior services, with part of the revenue being directed towards senior transportation services. Funds are directed towards RideLink service and funding to provide one-way tickets on the Rapid's fixed route bus system, GoBus! or PASS tickets through the non-profit Senior Neighbors and the City of Wyoming Senior Center.

GVMC

The Grand Valley Metropolitan Council (GVMC) is an alliance of governmental units in West Michigan appointed to plan for growth and development, improve quality of the life throughout the community, and coordinate governmental services. This council serves as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Greater Grand Rapids area, covering all of Kent County and the eastern part of Ottawa County. As the MPO, GVMC provides transportation planning and programming services for the Greater Grand Rapids area. Their primary function is to provide a cooperative, comprehensive, and continuing transportation planning and decision-making process that includes all modes of transportation. Core duties include preparation of a Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), and development and maintenance of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP).

GVMC does not provide transit service but is a key partner when it comes to coordinating transit service that crosses agency jurisdictions. GVMC helps support transit and mobility initiatives through transportation planning support and support in pursuing discretionary funding opportunities. Additionally, the federal funding that is allocated to urban and rural transit projects in the region is programmed and administered through GVMC's TIP and The Rapid's federally supported transit planning efforts are part of the annual UPWP.

PART III –FINDINGS FROM ENGAGEMENT

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT METHODOLOGY AND FINDINGS

The Kent County Mobility Study employed a comprehensive public engagement strategy designed to gather input from diverse community stakeholders across the county's urban, suburban, and rural areas. The engagement program prioritized accessibility and inclusivity, ensuring that voices from all segments of the community - including seniors, people with disabilities, transit-dependent residents, and those living outside existing transit service areas - were heard and incorporated into the planning process.

Engagement Methods and Activities

Engagement included an online survey, a project website logging study details, community pop-up events, focus groups, and stakeholder interviews.

Demographics and Equity

The engagement program successfully reached diverse populations:

- Income diversity: 30% of survey respondents earned under \$25,000 annually
- Transit dependency: 23% of respondents lacked vehicle access
- Age representation: Strong participation from seniors (11.8% over 65) and working-age adults
- Geographic diversity: Majority of online respondents lived outside The Rapid's current service area
- Rural outreach: Pop-up events specifically targeted underserved rural communities in northern and southeastern Kent County
- Accessible outreach: The outreach efforts prioritized inclusive engagement through comprehensive accessibility measures including high-contrast colors, large font sizes, Braille materials, and translation services. Multiple participation methods accommodated different preferences and abilities, while geographically distributed events reduced travel barriers. Flexible daytime and evening scheduling ensured timing would not prevent meaningful community participation.

Online Survey and Digital Engagement

A comprehensive survey was conducted online and in paper form from September 12 to December 8, 2024, receiving 2,091 responses. The survey covered transit perceptions, travel preferences, mobility needs, and demographic information. Key findings included:

- 72.8% of respondents identified "Expanded Service Areas" as their most important transit improvement
- Over 60% indicated willingness to add 5-20 minutes to travel times for reliable alternative transportation
- Strong support for increased frequency, extended service hours, and weekend service
- Project website serving as a central information hub

Community Pop-Up Events

The study team conducted targeted outreach at community events to reach residents where they gather, totaling over 350 participants across four events. All events utilized innovative "penny priorities" exercises where participants allocated tokens among service features to indicate preferences. A mapping exercise was also used to allow people to indicate key destinations. Consistent themes across all locations included strong support for countywide service, low fares, reliable scheduling, and door-to-door service options.

ADA Celebration Event (July 24, 2024)

- Special Olympics Center, Byron Township
- Focused on accessibility needs and services for people with disabilities
- Used accessible engagement tools including Braille labels and tactile materials

Kent County Youth Fair (July 28, 2024)

- Engaged families and county residents
- Collected input on destinations and service priorities

Sparta Apple Fest (September 20-21, 2024)

- Reached rural northern Kent County residents
- Strong preference for countywide service, seven-day-per-week operation, and on-time performance
- Key destinations identified: Gerald R. Ford International Airport, Rockford, Sparta, Forest Hills-Ada-Lowell corridor

Lowell Harvest Festival (October 12, 2024)

- Engaged southeastern Kent County communities
- Top priorities: countywide service, low fares, ease of scheduling
- Destinations emphasized: RiverTown Mall, Rockford, Sparta, Cedar Springs, Allendale, and local Lowell services

Focus Groups and Stakeholder Interviews

Targeted discussions were held with key stakeholder groups and key findings are summarized below.

Business and Employment Stakeholders (February 26, 2025):

- Transportation costs are a major barrier - employees paying \$80-115/week for services like Wheels to Work
- Reliability, safety, and travel time are the most critical factors for regional transportation solutions
- Businesses are exploring various options including van pooling, carpooling, and employer cost-sharing
- Fixed-route bus services could help attract new employees
- Transportation ranks as a top workforce barrier alongside housing and food assistance

MDOT Funding and Coordination (February 7, 2025):

- Kent County receives \$800K annually for 5310 capital funding (80/20 federal/local split)
- The Rapid's 5-year Consolidated Plan is essential - services not included have limited funding access
- Multiple transit agencies exist but coordination is challenging
- State-wide transit gaps are common due to limited funding, with federal uncertainty adding complexity
- Alternative funding sources include CDBG grants and competitive state opportunities

North Kent Connect Rural Perspectives (February 6, 2025):

- Rural areas face unique challenges with clients needing door-to-door service as the only viable option
- Current partnerships with RideLink and Volunteers in Service provide limited service (2 rides/month)
- Car repair assistance and gas affordability are critical needs
- County-wide millages face political resistance and would likely require urban area support to pass
- Transportation is directly linked to housing insecurity and employment access

Key Engagement Findings

Community engagement sheds light on mobility needs and priorities of residents across the county as well as the ways that mobility needs vary in different parts of the county.

Service Priorities

Across all engagement methods, the following consistent themes emerged:

- **Countywide Coverage:** Strong demand for transportation service extending beyond The Rapid's current service area
- **Affordability:** Cost is identified as a critical factor in service utilization

- Reliability: On-time performance and consistent scheduling ranked as top priorities
- Flexibility: Support for both fixed-route and door-to-door service options, as well as flexibility to utilize service for community cultural and sporting events
- Key Destinations: Frequent requests for service to senior centers, medical facilities, employment centers, and "social hubs"

Geographic Patterns

Engagement revealed distinct mobility needs by area:

- North Kent County: Service requests to Sparta, Rockford, Cedar Springs, and connections to employment centers and the airport
- Central Kent County: Focus on connecting Northview, Belmont, and surrounding townships
- South Kent County: Integration with existing Rapid services and connections to Forest Hills, Gaines, Ada, Lowell corridor, plus shopping destinations like RiverTown Mall

NEEDS, GAPS, AND OPPORTUNITIES

Through early technical analysis and public engagement, the team was able to identify needs, gaps and opportunities for transportation in the county. This section largely draws from *Existing Conditions Report* findings (Appendix A), *Kent County Mobility Survey* findings (Appendix C), and feedback from the public and the Mobility Task Force. At the first Mobility Task Force meeting, the team conducted a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis, with findings summarized below.

Service Coverage, Gaps, and Reliability

The survey helped provide some insight into existing perceptions and preferences related to transit services. Survey respondents were asked to rank different priorities for the Kent County Mobility Study, with the top three respondent priorities being *providing transportation options to seniors and people with disabilities*, *providing access to places with employment*, and *providing access to medical facilities/healthcare*.

The survey also revealed that reasons for not taking transit can be attributed to a lack of access to frequent and reliable transit and car-dependent urban design. Many respondents who don't use transit service attribute this to routes taking too long, not having stops located near their homes, not having service going where it is needed, and having access to a personal vehicle. Survey results show that key travel constraints include a lack of reliability, safety, and long travel times. Parking cost and availability, and congestion/traffic were not commonly identified as travel constraints. Many open comments emphasized the need to enhance services by extending operating hours, improving connectivity and building trust through consistent system performance.

The SWOT analysis revealed that the region has an existing, strong network of human service providers, with this study serving as an opportunity to better connect existing services. The Rapid's BRT system is also seen as a key success, particularly seen through the high ridership on the Laker Line and free fare for GVSU students. Concerns arose about the lack of transit service outside of the Rapid service area, despite job and residential growth occurring there, and about limited access to industrial parks and other employment centers.

Travel Patterns and Restricted Mobility

Survey results found many opportunities to provide mobility services beyond the core service area of The Rapid. This could include opportunities to serve common, long-distance commuting routes and opportunities to connect major employment centers and high-traffic commercial and service areas. Respondents listed key destinations like Grand Rapids Community College, University of Michigan Health West, Meijer Gardens, and Meijer Stores.

Results also showed that many trips begin or end outside of the City of Grand Rapids. About 70 percent of respondents' 1st and 2nd most common trip origins start outside of the City. Additionally, around 20 percent of respondents' 1st and 2nd most common destinations are outside of The Rapid's service area.

Personal vehicles remain a top mode choice in the county. Personal vehicles were the most used mode choice (84 percent), followed by riding with someone else (four percent), riding fixed-route Rapid buses (four percent), biking (two percent), or walking (two percent). Many open comments discussed the transformative potential of e-biking and advocated for safer biking infrastructure. Many survey respondents are traveling long distances for both non-work trips and work commutes with more than 40 percent of respondents recording trips longer than 21 minutes.

Transit Across Urban, Suburban, and Rural Environments

The SWOT analysis identified strong partnerships in the region, pointing to a strong municipal presence and cooperative approach between governmental units. This will be important to leverage moving forward, to ensure any regional investment in transit connects well to The Rapid's service area and serves the variety of needs present in urban and rural parts of the county.

The analysis also revealed existing strengths in urban mobility, pointing to the emerging e-bike and scooter programs within Grand Rapids and to a willingness to explore multi-modality, represented by the investment in trail and on-street bicycle networks. The recent emergence of mobility as a concept, as opposed to straightforward transit, is an opportunity, with e-bikes and scooters already serving to provide connections to The Rapid.

Survey results revealed strong interest in increasing fixed-route bus service coverage and frequency. Respondents chose bus routes as the mode they would be most willing to use, followed by private door-to-door service. When presented with a list of features and amenities, respondents were more likely to prioritize investing in *service availability/coverage* and *frequency* compared with *cleanliness*, *fares*, *technology*, *safety*, and the *built environment*.

The SWOT analysis highlighted the trend of transit-supportive zoning being adopted across the region as a key strength and higher-density growth along commercial corridors as a key opportunity. Sprawling development patterns were raised as a threat, along with a concern that population growth will overtake the region's ability to keep up with demand.

Transit Advocacy and Awareness

Survey findings showed an opportunity to raise awareness of existing transit service. While most respondents were familiar with The Rapid fixed-route service and the Sliver Line/Laker Line Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)

services, only a small group of survey respondents age 26-64 use the Rapid *regularly* or *occasionally*. Additionally, most respondents have never heard of all the other mobility services in the County, with the Way 2 Go! service being the least familiar to respondents.

Survey findings also revealed that there is an untapped market for transit in the county. Roughly 30 percent of respondents indicated they had never used taxi or rideshare service before. Of respondents who had used taxi or rideshare services, almost half indicated they would be willing to use a bus route or a shared door-to-door service. Many respondents expressed an openness to extending trip duration 5-10 minutes to use safe and convenient driving alternatives. Many open comments discussed a need for clearer information on fare structure, simplified fare payment systems, and subsidies for low-income riders. Many open comments indicated a desire for more eco-friendly transportation options.

The SWOT analysis also highlighted the difficulty of making the case for funding in some jurisdictions where transit investment is seen as a subsidy rather than something that generates returns for the community. This was attributed to a disconnect between transit and non-transit users and a lack of awareness on how transit spurs economic development and serves as a tool to efficiently transport people through a region while reducing congestion and real estate dedicated towards vehicular storage.

Lack of community support is seen as the biggest threat, along with the stigma attached to transit ridership. This highlights the need for better communication. Relatedly, misunderstandings about how mobility solutions are funded is also seen as a threat. There is a lack of awareness about the ways the current car-dependent transportation system is heavily subsidized through current local, state, and federal funding structures, with free parking, low traffic levels, and toll-free roads being taken for granted across the state.

Funding and Administration

The SWOT analysis noted the way that current transit funding and organization limits regional expansion. Typically, transit service only exists where an individual community pays for it. Concerns from individuals and agencies about immediate tax impacts is seen as a threat. Additionally, concerns about a sharp decline in federal funds is a threat, along with the loss of gas tax revenue creating a gap in transportation funding, further impacting transit. The Task Force would like to see better models in the future, with a countywide vision and strategy and better alignment between different stakeholders.

This study represents an opportunity to design an innovative solution that serves all of Kent County, with the many townships in the county currently lacking transit service and direction, leaving room to organize a collaborative system from scratch. This could also be an opportunity for collaborative funding mechanisms, coordinating with employers willing to invest to widen their workforce pool. Technology advancements can also allow for shared payment platforms or other collaborative efficiencies, with many mobility technology companies now eager to help.

PART IV – POLICY AND SERVICE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

As a part of this study, the *Service Concepts and Evaluation Framework Report* (Appendix D) documents the initial screening of a wide array of proposed service concepts. The list of service concepts emerged from a comprehensive process that combined data-driven analysis with stakeholder and public engagement. Service concepts were evaluated based on a scoring framework grounded in the study's vision and four guiding principles: *Accessibility, Regional Integration, Innovation, and Economic Vitality*. This vision emphasizes a seamless, inclusive mobility network that benefits all residents.

This section briefly summarizes the process of developing the Service Concepts and Evaluation Framework. Part V - Recommendations carries forward relevant service concepts, applying them to a phased mobility road map which evaluates different initiatives and administrative and funding scenarios, describing benefits and drawbacks of each to inform what the Mobility Task Force should continue to work towards.

POLICY AND COORDINATION INITIATIVES

The last section of the *Service Concepts and Evaluation Framework Report* touches on policy coordination, which is essential to the success of new and expanded mobility services in Kent County. Effective policies can streamline service delivery, improve user experience, and support long-term growth by fostering collaboration across jurisdictions. Transit-supportive land use planning and multimodal design guidelines can also enhance transit access and usability.

Policy choices, by jurisdictions acting individually or as a coordinated effort across jurisdictions, can help to encourage new services, plan better for future services, or deliver existing services more effectively. To ensure the success of a new or expanded service, supportive systems like marketing, cooperative agreements, and technology investments must be in place. Additionally, these policies are consistent with the type of comprehensive mobility program outlined in the vision and goal statements shaped by the Mobility Task Force.

The *Service Concepts and Evaluation Framework* helped to generate a list of policies based on best practices and consistent with the type of comprehensive mobility program outlined in the vision and goal statements shaped by the mobility task force. For the most part, policy and coordination initiatives aim to improve coordination among transit service providers, further transit-supportive urban planning, and encourage creative approaches to mobility. Part V will define the next steps to further these initiatives.

MOBILITY SERVICE CONCEPTS

For the sake of the *Service Concepts and Evaluation Framework*, mobility services were divided into three broad categories: fixed-route transit service, demand response transit service, and other, less traditional, mobility programs. The evaluation considered fifteen fixed-route service options, including service extensions, new fixed-route service, and express services. Seventeen demand response options were considered, including local demand response zones and regional demand response zones.

These service concepts were evaluated based on seven different evaluation metrics: geographic coverage, mobility services propensity index (how well a given service reaches populations most likely to use and rely on it), community and partner support, jobs access, ridership potential, cost, and complexity.

Nine service concepts emerged from this evaluation as high-alignment concepts. It is important to note that this evaluation compared service concepts relative to one another, agnostic of service provider details and other important details that could significantly impact the success of each concept. This process helped the team identify concepts that were relatively more aligned with project goals based on data, public engagement, and discussion with the Technical Working Group. The concepts will be discussed further in Part V of this report based on how they fit into different administrative and funding scenarios.

GOVERNANCE, OPERATING, & FUNDING PATHWAYS

Each state has its own set of authorizing and enabling legislation when it comes to establishing, operating, funding, and governing public transit. Authorizing legislation establishes the legal framework and powers that allow a public transit agency or authority to exist, while enabling legislation provides the detailed tools or mechanisms for local governments or transit authorities to implement transit services.

Michigan Authorizing and Enabling Legislation

In Michigan, there are several transit authorizing and enabling legislative acts dating back to 1909, with the most recent legislation passed in 2012. These various laws ensure that communities of all sizes can design transit systems tailored to their specific needs, whether through local government control, intergovernmental collaboration, or regional coordination, while offering options for sustainable funding and state support. This section briefly summarizes each Public Act. Please refer to the *Governance and Funding Peer Review* (Appendix B) for more detailed information.

Public Act 51 of 1951

Public Act 51 is the primary legislation that grants all transit providers the eligibility to receive financial operating assistance from MDOT. This Act establishes the Comprehensive Transportation Fund (CTF) and defines the process for distributing a portion of CTF funds to eligible recipients, which includes eligible transit authorities and eligible government agencies providing public transit.

Individual Acts

Various transit authorizing and enabling legislative acts are leveraged by different agencies across the State of Michigan to provide service to their communities. Table 2 summarizes acts leveraged by various agencies across the State.

Table 2. Transit Authorizing and Enabling Acts

Act Name	No. in Mich.	Notable Agencies	Primary Objective	Brief Description
Act 196: Public Transportation Authorities (1986)	28	Harbor Transit, Bay Area Transportation Authority, Interurban Transit Partnership (The Rapid), The Metro (Governed by two Authorities: the Central County Transportation Authority and the Kalamazoo County Transportation Authority)	Transit Governance	Outlines the laws for establishing and governing a transportation authority. Under this Act, two or more political subdivisions may form a public authority. Political subdivisions can join the authority by majority vote of the members serving on the legislative body of the political subdivision requesting membership and upon resolution adopted by two-third vote of the members serving on the public authority's board. Political subdivisions can leave the authority by majority approval of the jurisdiction's governing body or by majority vote of the electorate and petition. Taxes levied by authorities on taxable property cannot exceed five mills or a time period of five years.
Act 94: Revenue Bond (1933)	21	Charlevoix County, Muskegon County	Establish Funding Mechanism	Establishes ability for local governing bodies to issue bonds for public improvements, including transportation. Often exercised by counties providing transit service.
Act 279 Home Rule (1909) and Act 359 Charter Township (1947)	18	City of Midland, City of Battle Creek	Integrate Transit as a Municipal Department	Allows for a city or chartered township to amend its charter to provide for the owning, constructing, and operating of transportation facilities, structured like a governmental department and incorporated into municipal administration.
Act 7: Urban Cooperation (1967)	9	Blue Water Transportation Commission, Detroit Transportation Corporation (People Mover)	Integrate Transit as a Municipal Department	Functions similarly to Act 279, but allows for interlocal public agency agreements – allowing two or more political jurisdictions to provide transportation services.
Act 55: Mass Transportation System Authorities (1963)	4	Ann Arbor Area Transportation Authority, Twin Cities Area Transportation Agency, Capital Area Transportation Authority, Mass Transportation Authority (Flint)	Transit Governance	Outlines the laws for a political jurisdiction to establish and govern a transportation authority. Allows for a public authority to acquire, own, and operate a mass transportation system. This authority may operate in member communities and levy tax on member communities as authorized. Taxes levied on taxable property shall not exceed five mills and the time period cannot exceed five years.
Act 204: Metropolitan Transportation Authority (1967)	1	Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation	Regional Transp.	Intended to create metropolitan transportation authorities to serve major metropolitan areas in Michigan. Unlike other authorities, Metropolitan Authorities do not have taxation powers.

Act Name	No. in Mich.	Notable Agencies	Primary Objective	Brief Description
Act 387: Regional Transportation Authority (2012)	1	Regional Transit Authority of Southeast Michigan	Regional Transp.	There may only be one regional transportation authority in the state. This act enabled the creation of the RTA of Southeast Michigan. RTAs can levy both property taxes and vehicle registration taxes.
Act 8: Intergovernmental Transfer of Functions and Responsibilities (1967)	0	n/a	Inter-governmental Collaboration	Allows two or more political subdivisions to enter agreements, transferring functions or responsibilities between one another. A joint board or commission may be created to oversee the contract.
Act 35: Intergovernmental Contracts Between Municipal Corporations (1951)	0	n/a	Inter-governmental Collaboration	Allows for a municipal corporation to contract services from another for services within their jurisdiction. Not currently used by any agencies in the state.

Case Studies

Through studying the governance and funding mechanisms in other counties, it becomes clear that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to operating and funding transit. Still, researching other regions, such as Kalamazoo, Washtenaw, Carver, and Marion Counties, reveals valuable insights into governance, service delivery, and funding strategies that Kent County can adapt to improve its mobility offerings. Table 3 includes a summary of the service, governance, and funding for each peer county.

Table 3. Peer County Summary

County	Service Provider and Type	Governance	Largest Revenue Sources for Transit Operations (Percentage of Operating Revenue)
Kent County, MI	The Rapid – Public Transportation Authority	One Public Transportation Authority, six member cities, 15-member board of directors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1.47 mill Property tax millage (42%) • State operating assistance (30%) • Sale of transportation services (14%) • Passenger fares (10%)
Kalamazoo County, MI	Metro – Public Transportation Authority	Two Public Transportation Authorities: (1) Central County Transportation Authority (CCTA) and (2) Kalamazoo County Transportation Authority (KCTA). Each authority has a 9-member board of directors that meets jointly.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State operating assistance (28%) • Federal operating assistance (22%) • CCTA urban property tax millage at 0.9 mills (22%) • Fares and other operating revenues (15%) • KCTA county property tax millage at 0.31 mills (13%)
Washtenaw County, MI	TheRide – Public Transportation Authority	One public Transportation Authority; three local unit members; 10-member board of directors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Property tax millages - City of Ann Arbor: 1.93 mills, City of Ypsilanti: 0.89 mills, AAATA: 2.38 mills (54%) • State operating assistance (32%) • Passenger fares (5%)
Carver County, MN	Metropolitan Council – Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)	Met Council (MPO); seven county area; 17 council members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motor vehicle sales tax (38%) • Regional sales tax (18%) • State general fund (11%) • Federal (7%) • Property tax (6%)
	SouthWest Transit – Joint Powers Agreement	Joint powers agreement; three local unit members; seven-person commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motor vehicle sales tax (58%) • Passenger fares (11%) • Regionally allocated motor vehicle sales tax (9%) • State sales tax (3%)
Marion County, IN	IndyGo – Municipal Corporation of Indianapolis-Marion County	IndyGo governed by 7-member board of directors; 25-member city-county council approves the budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local income tax at 0.25% (33%) • Property and excise taxes (28%) • Federal COVID-19 stimulus funds (14%) • Federal assistance (10%)

Governance and Operating Models Explored

Kent County shares many characteristics with its peers. The Rapid provides a solid foundation for urban mobility, similar to the role of Metro in Kalamazoo and TheRide in Washtenaw. While The Rapid is the only public transit agency operating in Kent County, there are several other eligibility-based services provided by local government or non-profits in the county, like Hope Network and Senior Neighbors. And, while some other counties have more than one public transit agency, they all have additional eligibility-based services to some degree. This shows that it is common for a county to have several service providers to meet specific needs in specific locations.

That said, there are benefits to countywide or regional approaches. First, partnerships and authorities have more options in terms of levying taxes to fund transit operations, such as the dual millage that exists in Kalamazoo County. Also, when multiple jurisdictions come together, the vision for transit services available can be expanded and prioritized in a way that each individual jurisdiction may not be able to do on its own. Part V of this report recommends Administration and Funding Scenarios that are most appropriate for Kent County to explore.

Key Takeaways

Part V of this report presents five Administration and Funding scenarios for Kent County to consider. These scenarios will help determine the ways Kent County should further transit in their region – whether by establishing an authority, encouraging their cities and townships to consider service agreements with other jurisdictions or agencies, and/or exploring ways to coordinate with The Rapid to expand service further into the county.

Kent County can help provide a more regional perspective and can play a role in helping to coordinate and strengthen the existing services that already exist within the county. Countywide or more regional services would likely focus on demand response services and could have the potential to relieve The Rapid of providing demand response services and relieve pressure for regional expansion.

The peers helped reveal methods for creating a more regional approach. In Kalamazoo, demand response services serve the whole county under a unified, county-wide governance approach. While fostering county-wide, demand response coordination, Kalamazoo also provides fixed-route service that is funded and governed by the urban communities that it serves. Both demand response and fixed-route services are housed under The Metro agency. In Kent County, existing services for seniors and individuals with disabilities, such as Go!Bus and RideLink, could be more effectively coordinated under a unified system to enhance both service efficiency and accessibility.

Currently, Kent County relies heavily on property taxes to fund transit through The Rapid service. New administrative and funding scenarios can open up more funding streams. In partnership with other transit advocates across the State, the County could advocate for state legislative action to introduce other allowable taxes and to provide new funding avenues from state and federal programs. Kent County can also explore how joint powers agreements and other intergovernmental service agreements can expand transit service coverage and create new funding streams for agencies or communities that already provide service.

Regardless of the service and governance models Kent County ultimately pursues, successful implementation of countywide public mobility service will require coordination among multiple partners and jurisdictions to

bring in diverse funding streams outside the ITP service area. In Michigan, transit agencies in urban areas (population greater than 100,000) are eligible for up to 50 percent of operating expenses to be covered by the state's Local Bus Operating Assistance Program. So, a benefit of raising more local funding is the added state funding an agency will be eligible for. That said, with a finite amount of money in the program annually, most agencies do not receive up to the full amount they are eligible, and if one agency were to see an increase in operating assistance funding, it would come at the expense of other agencies across the state, all else equal.

Funding Tools Examined

Through The Rapid TMP process, The Rapid explored ways to bring additional funding for transit into the region. The funding tools available to an agency and organization depend on what type of administrative and funding scenario they operate under. In Part V of this report, five different administration and funding scenarios are presented as potential paths forward for the County. Once a scenario has been selected, further study will be required to investigate all the potential funding opportunities available under that scenario. Kent County's advocacy and investment in transit has the opportunity to open the region up to a wider variety of funding sources.

The following table includes a list of funding tools, drawing from research conducted through this Mobility Study and from funding tools explored through The Rapid TMP planning process. Potential funding tools are organized based on whether they are Directly Generated, Local, State, or Federal funding sources. More information about these funding sources can be found in Appendix B. *Governance and Funding Peer Review*.

Some funding tools, particularly those leveraged by organizations outside of the State, could require legislative change to implement. Currently, compared with peer agencies in other states, Michigan agencies are unable to generate as much funding per capita through the transit funding avenues currently available to them. Kent County could play a role in coordinating with other organizations across Michigan in advocating for legislative changes.

Directly Generated Revenue

Directly generated revenue includes funds that are generated by the agency/organization. This can include a wide variety of sources including revenue that comes from fares, advertising, or sponsorships.

Table 4. Funding Tools: Directly Generated Revenue

Name of Funding Tool	Description	Funding Options	Primary Uses (Capital or O&M)	Implementation Challenges
Fares	Directly generated passenger fare revenue.	Annual / Recurring	Operating	This is a current revenue source. It is already implemented. Key challenge is in dependence on ridership to maintain current funding levels.
Sponsorships	Companies sponsoring service, often in exchange for advertising. For example, the Detroit People Mover has a free fare sponsorship, receiving \$500,000 from Priority Waste	Annual / Recurring	Operating	Often requires the provision of high-demand advertising space, which can likely only be provided in urban environments
Sale of Transportation Services	Revenue from sale of (non-public transportation) services such as employer funded or special event shuttles.	Annual / Recurring	Operating	Current Source. The Rapid contracts service with regional institutions and municipalities. No major challenges. Agency must follow federal reporting rules for transportation services. Fare revenue may not be collected for privately funded trips. Care to ensure providing only public transit service exclusively and not charter services.

Local Funding

Local entities that are included in a system's service area typically generate their share of the local cost of the transit system. These funds come from a combination of primarily farebox revenue, local municipal general funds, and property tax millages. The Rapid currently has a unified service area millage rate for its six member communities.

The Rapid TMP mentioned the use of Hotel/Motel taxes for transit in many communities across the nation. Kent County already collects this type of tax, referred to as the Excise Tax on Business of Providing Accommodations (aka Lodging Excise Tax).⁷ Act 263 of 1974 defines eligible uses of this tax, which include the following:

- The cost to administer and enforce the tax
- Convention and Entertainment Facilities
- Promotion and encouragement of tourist and convention business
- Construction or rent payment for a museum within the City of Grand Rapids

This tax is not currently directly used for transit, and it is unknown whether the use of tax revenue to fund transit would fall under the eligible uses as defined in Act 263 of 1974. However, since transit is a common tool to promote and encourage tourism and convention business, particularly when connecting tourist sites and convention venues to the airport, this is worth further investigation.

If eligible for funding, directing these funds towards revenue would be difficult as transit would be competing with other key investments for the region. Currently, the fund's two largest expenditures are bond payments for the DeVos Place Convention Center and funding for Experience Grand Rapids. The County also uses a portion of the revenue for events that attract visitors, like ArtPrize and the Grand Rapids Festival of the Arts. The tax rate was recently increased for a sports and entertainment facility. Directing revenue towards transit would likely require a champion and a coordinated advocacy effort.

Washtenaw County also administers this tax and directs revenue towards a non-profit called "Destination Ann Arbor." This non-profit does provide visitors with information about public transportation and other travel options in the county through their website. Similarly, Experience Grand Rapids, which receives funding from the Lodging Excise Tax, provides information about public transit options.

⁷An FAQ on the tax is shown [here](#).

Table 5. Funding Tools: Tax-Derived Sources (Local)

Name of Funding Tool	Description	Funding Options	Primary Uses (Capital or O&M)	Implementation Challenges
Unified Service Area Millage rate	Local property taxes. For example, all of the member communities of the Rapid pay the same millage rate	Annual / Recurring	Operating	Must be renewed every few years via public election. May be subject to property tax fatigue (option to collaborate with other cities).
Varying Millage Rates for Different Member Communities	Varying millage rates for different community members being directed towards the same service. For example, in Kalamazoo County member communities receiving fixed route transit pay a higher millage rate than member communities that only receive demand response services.	Annual / Recurring	Operating	Must be renewed every few years via public election. May be subject to property tax fatigue (option to collaborate with other cities).
General Revenue	Contribution from county or municipality general budget includes contributions reported as local agency/municipality revenue agreements for public transportation service.	Annual / Recurring	Operating	Politically competitive funding source. Also property-tax derived through local municipal millages
Hotel/Motel Tax	Tax imposed on room rate to guests staying at hotels or motels.	Annual / Recurring	Operating	No legislative action needed as this is already being collected (Kent County) but would require reallocation of existing funds, which may pose political challenges. A recent trend of local governments and organizations advocating for the use of hotel/motel tax revenues to support public transit has been growing (e.g., Montrose, CO; Des Moines (DART), IA; Central Florida; Chittenden County, VT).

Table 6. Tax-Derived Sources (Local) that may Require Legislative Action

Name of Funding Tool	Description	Funding Options	Primary Uses (Capital or O&M)	Implementation Challenges
Lottery Tax	Added local tax on purchases of gasoline.	Annual / Recurring	Legislation dependent	
Alcohol Tax	Added local sales tax on purchases of beer, wine and/or liquor.	Annual / Recurring	Legislation dependent	
Marijuana Tax	Excise tax on marijuana establishments and the sale of marijuana.	Annual / Recurring	Legislation dependent	
Sales Tax	Added local tax on general purchases.	Annual / Recurring	Legislation dependent	
TNC Tax	Tax on shared ride vehicles such as Ube/Lyft.	Annual / Recurring	Legislation dependent	Legislative action needed. Some of these options would be more feasible than others. Pursuing Legislative Action would likely be done in partnership with larger organizations across the State
Rental Car Tax	Tax on rental vehicles.	Annual / Recurring	Legislation dependent	
Combined TNC/ Rental Car Tax	Tax on shared ride and/or rental car vehicles.	Annual / Recurring	Legislation dependent	
Motor Vehicle Tax	Annual personal property tax for registered vehicles.	Annual / Recurring	Legislation dependent	
Local Income Tax/Payroll Tax	Tax on earnings or payroll. Currently, the cities of Grand Rapids, Walker, Muskegon Heights, Muskegon, Big Rapids, Ionia, and Portland in the Grand Rapids metropolitan area collect a local income tax at varying rates. In all of these municipalities, the majority of income tax revenue is allocated to the General Fund, with some funds designated for the maintenance of streets, sidewalks, and other public facilities.	Annual / Recurring	Legislation dependent	

State Funding

The Michigan Department of Transportation manages programs that are funded in part by the Comprehensive Transportation Fund and Federal Transit Agency funds. This funding is directed to a variety of programs, including Local Bus Operating Assistance Programs, the Local Bus Capital Assistance Program, and the Specialized Services Program.

Table 7. Funding Tools: State Sources

Name of Funding Tool	Description	Funding Options	Primary Uses (Capital or O&M)	Implementation Challenges
Formulaic - State Operating Assistance	State formula funding for operations. Primarily funded through state gas tax.	Annual / Recurring	Operating	N/A
Formulaic - State Capital Assistance	State formula funding for capital projects.	Annual / Recurring	Capital	N/A

Federal Funding

Federal funds can be distributed through MDOT through their programs or can be disbursed directly to local recipients like metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs), local government units, and transit agencies.

Table 8. Funding Tools: Federal Sources

Name of Funding Tool	Description	Funding Options	Primary Uses (Capital or O&M)	Implementation Challenges
Locally-Decided Discretionary Grants	Multiple programs e.g. CMAQ funding.	One time	Capital	N/A
Federally-Decided Discretionary Grants	Multiple programs e.g. Low No, Bus and Bus Facilities.	One time	Capital	N/A
Formula Grants	Multiple programs e.g. 5307 urban area formula grant.	Annual / Recurring	Capital and Operating	N/A

Other Funding Sources

Sometimes funds can also be directed from other fundings sources, like through fees or fines that are collected at the state or municipal level.

Table 9. Funding Tools: Fees and Fines

Name of Funding Tool	Description	Funding Options	Primary Uses (Capital or O&M)	Implementation Challenges
License and Title Fees	One-time fee associated with license renewal or title sale/transfer (Diverts portion of existing fee to transit).	Annual / Recurring	Operating	Typically a politically competitive funding source.
Fine for Emissions Violation	Diverts a portion of citation-based revenue to transit funding.	Annual / Recurring	Operating	Legislative action needed. 324.5521 Emissions control fund has limitations on permitted expenditures.
Fines for Traffic and Parking Violation	Diverts a portion of citation-based revenue to transit funding. For example, a portion of fines in Kentwood, Grand Rapids, and Wyoming can be allocated to transit.	Annual / Recurring	Operating	Present in Kentwood, Grand Rapids, and Wyoming (Silver Line corridor), but outside these areas, legislative action is required. Civil fines are to be "exclusively applied to the support of public libraries and county law libraries."

PART V – RECOMMENDATIONS

This section carries forward relevant service concepts, applying them to a phased action plan which includes different initiatives and administrative and funding scenarios, describing benefits and drawbacks of each to inform what the Mobility Task Force should continue to work towards.

METHODOLOGY

The project team developed a set of initiatives based on the findings of the *Service Concepts and Evaluation Framework* report, prioritizing the highest scoring service concepts for implementation.

As much as possible, ridership patterns should be well understood before making significant investments in bus stop infrastructure and implementing new fixed route service; therefore, the Mobility Roadmap recommends the implementation of alternative services, including demand response and shared mobility, in the interim of expanded or new fixed route service in order to both meet mobility needs and collect data to inform future route planning.

The Mobility Roadmap also treats some service concepts, such as autonomous vehicles (AVs) and transportation network companies (TNC), as opportunities for each of the initiatives to employ rather than their own initiatives in order to leverage these technologies for specific purposes that achieve the County's goals.

INITIATIVES

A set of initiatives have been identified to improve mobility in Kent County under the following categories:

1. Demand Response Services
2. Mobility Management, Marketing, and Education
3. Express Services
4. Fixed Route Services
5. Supporting Services and Infrastructure

Each initiative is described in detail in the following sections.

Group 1: Demand Response Services

Countywide demand response service was among the highest scoring service concepts identified by the *Service Concepts and Evaluation Framework*, but this is unlikely to be feasible with a single operator providing all demand response services throughout the county. Therefore, the following initiatives take an incremental approach to improving demand response service countywide via a network of different providers.

Initiative 1.1 Update Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan (CHSTP)

Include all demand response service providers in the CHSTP to be eligible for Federal funding.

Federal transit law requires that projects selected for funding under the Enhanced Mobility for Individuals and Individuals with Disabilities (Section 5310) Program be included in a locally developed, coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan (CHSTP). These plans identify the transportation needs of individuals with disabilities, older adults, and people with low incomes; provide strategies for meeting these needs; and prioritize transportation services for funding and implementation.

Historically, two separate CHSTPs have been developed for the Grand Valley region:

- Michigan Planning Region 8 Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan, developed by MDOT
- Kent County Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan, developed by The Rapid

Moving forward, to streamline planning efforts and ensure coordination, it is recommended that GVMC integrates service concepts into a single CHSTP which includes all demand response service providers throughout the region.

Table 10. Initiative 1.1 Supporting Information

Category	Description
Support Principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Integration • Economic Vitality
Implementation Roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead: GVMC • Partners: MDOT, The Rapid, Senior Neighbors, Kent County Community Action, United Methodist Community House, Georgetown Seniors, West Michigan Veterans Coalition, Flat River Outreach Ministries (FROM), Volunteers in Service, and any other demand response service providers in the region
Cost Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning staff/consultant time
Potential Funding Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing state and federal funding for planning administered by the MDOT's Office of Passenger Transportation
Timeline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation: FY 2029
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Michigan Planning Region 8 Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan • Kent County Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan

Initiative 1.2 Transfers and Crossover Trips

Develop policies that make it easier to travel across jurisdictional borders, especially for riders using ADA paratransit services.

Where residents can travel is sometimes constrained by service area boundaries which are established for a variety of reasons, including managing driver and vehicle capacity and limiting service to the municipality paying for the service. One way to expand mobility in the short term is to enable riders to transfer from one service to another and to enable demand response service providers to transport riders into other service areas as transportation costs and capacity warrant, effectively removing service area boundaries for riders. Transportation service providers can coordinate transfers at designated locations that are known to be safe and comfortable for riders, including mobility hubs (see Initiative 5.2). Implementation will require policy changes to determine circumstances under which a transfer or crossover trip will or will not be accommodated and standard operating procedures to guide how transportation providers handle these trips.

Table 11. Initiative 1.2 Supporting Information

Category	Description
Support Principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility • Regional Integration
Implementation Roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead: GVMC or Kent County (convener) • Partners: Transportation providers
Cost Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transportation provider staff time
Potential Funding Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No additional funding needed
Timeline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning: FY 2026 • Implementation: FY 2027

Initiative 1.3: Expand Volunteer Driver Pool

Incentivize more people to become volunteer drivers.

Volunteer drivers fill critical gaps in Kent County's current mobility system, and there is always a need for more of them. Marketing and promotion of opportunities to serve as a volunteer driver could be increased to recruit more drivers. In addition, incentive programs could be established to expand the volunteer driver pool.

An example of an incentive program that could be implemented is one in which driver education is provided to students at no cost to them in exchange for volunteering to drive other community members for a certain number of hours. Making it easier for younger people to get their driver licenses would enable more students to drive themselves to jobs, chauffeur family members who are unable to drive themselves, and meet mobility needs in their communities.

Table 12. Initiative 1.3 Supporting Information

Category	Description
Support Principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility • Regional Integration • Innovation • Economic Vitality
Implementation Roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead: Volunteers in Service • Partners: Driver education programs, schools
Cost Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marketing materials • Incentives
Potential Funding Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employer/institution contributions • Philanthropic contributions
Timeline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning: FY 2026 • Implementation: FY 2027
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hagerty Drivers Foundation License to the Future Grant Program

Initiative 1.4: Expand RideLink

Incrementally expand RideLink’s capacity, network of transportation providers, and rider eligibility.

RideLink – administered by Hope Network – currently serves as a mobility management program in Kent County, enabling residents to ride with a single application process. RideLink uses a shared dispatch software, funded by the Kent County Senior Millage, to coordinate trip requests amongst a network of five demand response service providers: Hope Network, Senior Neighbors, Kent County Community Action, United Methodist Community House, and The Rapid.

Coordination with Hope Network has revealed that the current capacity of the RideLink network is insufficient to meet current needs. Therefore, a first step in expanding RideLink would be to fully leverage the available capacity of the existing transportation providers in Kent County by incorporating more of them into the RideLink network. These providers include Georgetown Seniors, West Michigan Veterans Coalition, Flat River Outreach Ministries (FROM), and Volunteers in Service. Transportation network companies (TNCs, such as Uber and Lyft), taxis, and other private companies could also be added to the RideLink network to fulfill trip requests that other service providers are unable to meet or as an emergency ride option if another provider is unable to fulfill a scheduled trip.

The next step in expanding RideLink – which could overlap with the first step – would be to increase service levels for currently eligible riders by providing greater funding for additional drivers and vehicles to be deployed for service.

Finally, RideLink’s services are limited to Kent County residents 60 years or older, leaving other parts of the population without a mobility management service and, in some cases, without transportation. Expanding rider eligibility to include all Kent County residents, regardless of age or ability, would be the third step in expanding RideLink and would address these gaps.

Table 13. Initiative 1.4 Supporting Information

Category	Description
Support Principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility • Regional Integration
Implementation Roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead: Hope Network • Partners: Senior Neighbors, Kent County Community Action, United Methodist Community House, The Rapid, Georgetown Seniors, West Michigan Veterans Coalition, Flat River Outreach Ministries (FROM), Volunteers in Service, and any other demand response service providers not already in the RideLink network
Cost Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dispatch staff • Dispatch technology and equipment • Drivers • Demand response vehicles (wheelchair lift/ramp-equipped) • Vehicle fuel • Maintenance of dispatch technology and equipment • Vehicle maintenance

Category	Description
Potential Funding Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kent County Senior Millage • Employer/institution contributions • Philanthropic contributions • County or regional transportation millage • FTA grant programs for mobility management, including Section 5310 and 5311 • FTA grant programs for service, including Section 5307
Timeline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning: FY 2026 • Implementation: FY 2027-2030
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NCHRP Guide to Successful Mobility Management Practices in Small Urban and Rural Areas: National guidance on mobility management, including helpful planning considerations in Section 6. • Foenix Mobility Transportation Assistance Hub: Case study of an effective mobility management system that has been deployed in other Michigan communities. • ITE Multimodal and Accessible Transportation (MAT) Standards Project: Standards and deployment guidance.

Initiative 1.5: New Municipal Demand Response Services

To provide additional demand response service in areas of greatest demand, new municipal-focused demand response services can be implemented. These may be operated in-house, such as through a Parks and Recreation Department, or may be contracted to a third-party provider, such as Via. The following municipal demand response services were among the highest scoring service concepts from the *Service Concepts and Evaluation Framework* and should be prioritized for implementation:

- First/Last-Mile Service to Route 9 in Alpine Township
- Service within Cutlerville

The planning process could start out with a Request for Information to all potential service providers, enabling the community and its partners to fully understand their options before entering into a contract with a provider. Contracting out the provision of transportation service in Cutlerville opens the opportunity for organizations to test connected/autonomous vehicle technology, broadening the array of providers that could supply service and the funding mechanisms available for implementation. Partnerships with transportation network companies (TNCs, such as Uber or Lyft) or taxi companies could also be considered to provide service. Finally, it will be crucial to ensure that whichever service is ultimately implemented gets incorporated into RideLink.

Table 14. Initiative 1.5 Supporting Information

Category	Description
Support Principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility • Innovation
Implementation Roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead: Municipalities • Partners: Transportation service providers
Cost Considerations	<p>If operated in-house:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dispatch staff • Dispatch technology and equipment • Drivers • Demand response vehicles (wheelchair lift/ramp-equipped) • Vehicle fuel • Maintenance of dispatch technology and equipment • Vehicle maintenance <p>If contracted out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service contract, dependent on transportation service provider and model selected
Potential Funding Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipal funds • Value capture districts, including tax increment financing (TIF) districts and corridor improvement authorities • County or regional transportation millage • FTA grant programs, including Section 5307
Timeline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning: FY 2026-2027 • Implementation: FY 2028-2031+

Group 2: Mobility Management, Marketing, and Education

Mobility management provides customers with a one-stop travel information and trip planning center that provides information on available transportation options and coordinates requests for transportation services⁸. Effective mobility management enables customers to easily get the transportation they need without needing to research options on their own, and it maximizes the utility of the transportation network, providing more trips in a more coordinated and seamless way, without any changes to transportation services themselves. Incorporating other stakeholders – including health and human service providers and employers – into mobility management can further ensure transportation services are fully accessible and can help other stakeholders directly address issues such as missed appointments or work due to unavailable or unreliable transportation. Mobility management is the highest priority initiative for Kent County because it is the baseline service needed to effectively access all other mobility services.

Furthermore, ensuring mobility for all includes ensuring everyone is aware of the mobility services available to them. This is best achieved when marketing and education materials are integrated into places and with services that people already use and trust, such as senior or community centers, churches, and local businesses. Promotion is also much more effective when a mobility management program is already in place as a one-stop destination for public information.

Initiative 2.1: Support the GVMC TDM Communications and Outreach Plan

Actively participate in the development of the plan and its implementation.

GVMC will select a firm to develop a communications and outreach plan for the regional TDM (Transportation Demand Management) program. This provides an opportunity for Kent County and its partners to support communications and outreach strategies for mobility services in Kent County.

Several agencies in Kent County already provide information on available mobility services, such as Area Agency on Aging of Western Michigan (AAAWM) and Heart of West Michigan United Way’s 211 Helpline. Incorporating these agencies into the creation of the plan will be crucial. Developing well-designed, user-friendly, and cross-referenced digital content that is comprehensive and standardized across agencies and that can be housed on their existing websites and distributed through their networks is a simple way to improve marketing and education of existing mobility services and should be a key outcome of the plan.

Table 15. Initiative 2.1 Supporting Information

Category	Description
Support Principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility • Regional Integration
Implementation Roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead: GVMC • Partners: Kent County Administration Department – Communications, TheRapid, RideLink, Area Agency on Aging of Western Michigan, Heart of West Michigan United Way
Cost Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultant time

⁸ <https://www.nationalrtap.org/Toolkits/Transit-Managers-Toolkit/Operations-and-Planning/Coordination-and-Mobility-Management#WhatisMobilityManagement>

Category	Description
Potential Funding Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan is already funded through GVMC
Timeline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning: FY 2026 Implementation: FY 2027
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GVMC TDM Communications and Outreach Plan Request for Proposals

Initiative 2.2: Commuter Campaign

Expand Active Commute Week or conduct a new commuter campaign to promote the West Michigan Rides carpooling/vanpooling program.

Hosting a well-advertised contest, such as Active Commute Week, can get people thinking about how they get to work, introduce more people to the West Michigan Rides platform, and incentivize them to use the program on a more regular basis. Partnering with environmental advocacy groups in the region and establishing a presence at popular community events can help amplify the message and bolster engagement, especially as the West Michigan Healthy Climate Plan reaches completion at the end of summer 2025.

Table 16. Initiative 2.2 Supporting Information

Category	Description
Support Principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional Integration Economic Vitality
Implementation Roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lead: West Michigan Rides Partners: West Michigan Clean Air Coalition, Downtown Grand Rapids Inc., Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce, West Michigan Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, local businesses
Cost Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marketing materials Contest prizes
Potential Funding Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing marketing and communications budgets Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) Program Congestion Reduction Program (CRP) Local businesses
Timeline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning: FY 2026 Implementation: FY 2026
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> getDowntown Commuter Challenge: Case study of downtown Ann Arbor’s campaign in which local businesses donated contest prizes. SEMCOG Commuter Challenge: Case study of a commuter-focused campaign to promote carpooling/vanpooling and the Detroit region’s equivalent of West Michigan Rides.

Initiative 2.3: Coordinate with Employment and Healthcare

Coordinate work transportation support programs and non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT) offered through healthcare plans with transportation providers.

The employment and healthcare sectors have inherent mobility needs but are often not well-coordinated with transportation providers. Many employers, especially large ones, provide transportation-related benefits such as transit passes and employment agencies such as West Michigan Works may provide transportation resources to currently unemployed community members as they navigate the job search process. In addition, healthcare plans including Medicaid and Medicare offer non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT) for patients to get to and from appointments and to pick up prescriptions. A countywide mobility management system would provide the opportunity to incorporate these sectors' existing program needs and funding directly into trip scheduling. This could be achieved by embedding mobility managers at employers, employment agencies, and healthcare providers and/or providing these organizations with access to tools that allow them to book trips on behalf of their clients. Benefits include less administrative burden on individuals navigating the employment and healthcare sectors and more reliable worker and patient attendance at jobs and healthcare appointments.

Table 17. Initiative 2.3 Supporting Information

Category	Description
Support Principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility • Regional Integration • Economic Vitality
Implementation Roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead: Hope Network • Partners: West Michigan Works, Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce, The Right Place, Hello West Michigan, Amazon, Corewell Health, Trinity Health, and University of Michigan Health-West
Cost Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobility manager staff • Mobility manager training
Potential Funding Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employers/employment agencies • Healthcare providers • Healthcare plans, including Medicare and Medicaid • FTA grant programs for mobility management, including Section 5310 and 5311
Timeline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning: FY 2026 • Implementation: FY 2027
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MDHHS Community Information Exchange Micro-Toolkit

Initiative 2.4: Mobility as a Service (MaaS)

Develop a centralized, public trip planning and booking tool that incorporates a mobility wallet for use across all mobility service providers.

Since it is unlikely that a single operator will be able to serve all of Kent County, seamless countywide service can be facilitated across multiple operators with the help of the right trip planning and booking tools. If a rider can understand their options for a particular trip, book their trip, and pay for their trip in one platform – regardless of which operator ends up transporting the rider – and if all mobility services are included in the platform’s universe of options, which are filtered and then shown to the rider based on their trip needs, then that rider can get anywhere that all combinations of the mobility services operate. Establishing this technology platform is not absolutely necessary but will be extremely helpful in facilitating a countywide mobility network.

It is important to note that this initiative is also an opportunity to support efforts to implement a regional fare collection system across all modes of transportation and investigate a regional fare capping program.

Table 18. Initiative 2.4 Supporting Information

Category	Description
Support Principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility • Regional Integration • Innovation
Implementation Roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead: GVMC • Partners: MaaS software companies, mobility service providers
Cost Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MaaS-supportive systems (GTFS, GTFS Flex, interoperable dispatch software) • MaaS tool development, promotion, and maintenance • Digital payment technology and equipment
Potential Funding Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kent County Lodging Excise Tax funds as a tool for “Promotion and encouragement of tourist and convention business” (Act 263 of 1974) • FTA grant programs for mobility management, including Section 5310 and 5311
Timeline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning: FY 2026-2027 • Implementation: FY 2028-2030
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foenix Mobility Transportation Assistance Hub: Case study of an effective mobility management system that has been deployed in other Michigan communities. • Urbanism Next: University of Oregon resource with comprehensive information about and resources on MaaS. • ITE Multimodal and Accessible Transportation (MAT) Standards Project: Standards and deployment guidance.

Group 3: Express Services

Express services were among the highest scoring service concepts identified by the Service Concepts and Evaluation Framework. Due to having limited stops and operating during limited times of the day, they can be less complicated to implement than standard fixed route service. The express services recommended for Kent County also reach geographies that are not currently served by transit.

Initiative 3.1: West Michigan Express

Pilot standard bus West Michigan Express service owned and operated by The Rapid, as outlined in Scenario 6 of the West Michigan Express Implementation Plan.

As outlined in the West Michigan Express Implementation Plan, a three-year pilot is recommended to garner ridership and gauge the performance of the service. Launching express service as a pilot to begin with helps mitigate the risks because if the service does not perform as intended or fails to achieve its goals, the service can be discontinued at the end of the pilot period. For the first year of the pilot, the service is recommended to make five round trips per day between Downtown Grand Rapids and the Holland Park & Ride with stops at Monroe/Louis Station, DeVos Place Station, Medical Mile, Hudsonville, and Zeeland in between, as shown in the schedule below.

As mentioned in the West Michigan Express Implementation Plan, a Guaranteed Ride Home Program can be offered in conjunction with express service to provide registered customers with a transportation network company (TNC, such as Uber or Lyft), taxi, or other ride home in the event of a service breakdown or other emergency. This gives customers the confidence to use express services on a regular basis.

Table 19. Initiative 3.1 Supporting Information

Category	Description
Support Principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility • Regional Integration
Implementation Roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead: The Rapid • Partners: Macatawa Area Express (MAX Transit), City of Hudsonville, City of Zeeland, City of Holland, Hope College, Corewell Health, and Trinity Health
Cost Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operations: \$279,500 (annually) • Capital: \$209,600 (year 1 only)
Potential Funding Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kent County Lodging Excise Tax funds as a tool for "Promotion and encouragement of tourist and convention business" (Act 263 of 1974) • Public-private partnerships (P3) with major employers and/or universities • Local municipalities • Local transit agencies • Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) Program • Congestion Reduction Program (CRP)
Timeline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning: FY 2026 • Implementation: FY 2027
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West Michigan Express Implementation Plan

Initiative 3.2: Tier 1 Express Services

Pilot other higher-priority express services besides the West Michigan Express.

Higher-priority express services identified by the *Service Concepts and Evaluation Framework* include:

- Grand Rapids-Airport
- Rockford-Grand Rapids
- Sparta-Grand Rapids
- Ada-Forest Hills-Grand Rapids

Piloting express service could be as simple as providing express service just for special events, such as ArtPrize. Launching express service as a pilot to begin with helps mitigate the risks because if the service does not perform as intended or fails to achieve its goals, the service can be discontinued at the end of the pilot period. The planning process could start out with a Request for Information to all potential express service providers, enabling the communities and their partners to fully understand their options before entering into a contract with a transportation provider.

Table 20. Initiative 3.2 Supporting Information

Category	Description
Support Principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility • Regional Integration
Implementation Roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead: The Rapid • Partners: City of Grand Rapids, Gerald R. Ford International Airport, City of Rockford, Village of Sparta, Ada Township, Cascade Township
Cost Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drivers • Vehicles • Vehicle fuel • Vehicle maintenance
Potential Funding Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kent County Lodging Excise Tax funds as a tool for “Promotion and encouragement of tourist and convention business” (Act 263 of 1974) • Public-private partnerships (P3) with major employers and/or universities • Local municipalities • Local transit agencies • Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) Program • Congestion Reduction Program (CRP)
Timeline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning: FY 2026-2027 • Implementation: FY 2028-2030
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detroit Airport Express Pilot Service: Example Request for Proposals to solicit operators for express service. The Detroit Air Xpress (DAX) pilot service is funded by a \$2.5 million grant through the Federal Highway Administration’s Carbon Reduction Program, which is administered by the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG).

Initiative 3.3: Tier 2 Express Services

Pilot lower-priority express services.

Based on the performance of the Tier 1 express services, additional express services could be considered for implementation, including the following services which were identified by the *Service Concepts and Evaluation Framework*:

- Wayland-Grand Rapids
- Cedar Springs-Grand Rapids

Table 21. Initiative 3.3 Supporting Information

Category	Description
Support Principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility • Regional Integration
Implementation Roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead: The Rapid • Partners: City of Wayland, Wayland Township, Gun Lake Casino, City of Grand Rapids, City of Rockford, Solon Township, Nelson Township, City of Cedar Springs
Cost Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will be informed by Tier 1 Express Services
Potential Funding Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kent County Lodging Excise Tax funds as a tool for “Promotion and encouragement of tourist and convention business” (Act 263 of 1974) • Public-private partnerships (P3) with major employers and/or universities • Local municipalities • Local transit agencies • Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) Program • Congestion Reduction Program (CRP)
Timeline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning: FY 2031+ • Implementation: FY 2031+

Group 4: Fixed Route Services

Initiative 4.1: Service Level Enhancements to Existing Routes

Improve on-time performance on all routes and increase frequency and/or expand service hours on high-ridership routes.

Enhancing service levels on existing routes would increase reliable mobility for those living in, working in, or otherwise needing to access the areas served by The Rapid’s fixed route services. The Rapid Transit Master Plan identifies the following strategies for existing service improvements:

- Continue to invest in existing productive routes with above-average ridership by increasing service efficiency, frequency, and on-time performance (OTP).
- Explore tools and resources to support expanded service hours, such as earlier or later weekday service and extended service on weekends.

The identification of specific route schedules to enhance and how to specifically enhance them still needs to be completed.

Table 22. Initiative 4.1 Supporting Information

Category	Description
Support Principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility
Implementation Roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead: The Rapid
Cost Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drivers • Vehicles • Vehicle fuel • Vehicle maintenance
Potential Funding Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County or regional transportation millage • FTA grant programs, including Section 5307
Timeline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning: FY 2026 • Implementation: FY 2027-2031+
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Rapid Transit Master Plan (Existing Service Improvements strategies on page 44)

Initiative 4.2: Geographic Expansion

Extend existing fixed routes and/or create new fixed routes in areas ripe for fixed route service.

Leveraging ridership data from other mobility services, expanding fixed route services to currently unserved areas would provide a consistent transportation option, expand mobility, and connect the region.

The *Service Concepts and Evaluation Framework* identified the following concepts, which align with the Rapid Transit Master Plan’s strategies for future service expansion, that could be implemented as part of this initiative:

- Extension of Route 9 further north in Alpine Township
- New bus service along Walker Avenue
- New bus service between Grandville and the airport
- Extension along Plainfield Avenue
- Extension to the Jenison area of Georgetown Township

Table 23. Initiative 4.2 Supporting Information

Category	Description
Support Principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility • Regional Integration
Implementation Roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead: The Rapid • Partners: Municipalities
Cost Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bus stops • Drivers • Vehicles • Vehicle fuel • Vehicle maintenance
Potential Funding Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipal funds • County or regional transportation millage • FTA grant programs, including Section 5307
Timeline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning: FY 2027-2028 • Implementation: FY 2029-2031+
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Rapid Transit Master Plan (Future Service Expansion strategies on page 46-47)

Group 5: Supporting Services and Infrastructure

Initiative 5.1 Transportation-Supportive Urban Planning

People’s transportation needs are directly tied to their built environment. For example, how far a person’s home is located from their workplace, school, grocery store, and other destinations dictates whether they will need to use a car or bus, and how frequently they will need to use it. At a foundational level, locating the land uses a person needs to access on a regular basis near one another – transportation-supportive urban planning – can greatly reduce the need for the provision of more costly modes of transportation, enabling more people to get around by walking and biking without needing to rely on vehicular transportation.

Transit-supportive urban planning can be achieved by partnering with municipalities to adopt land use policies that support a greater mix of uses and multimodal design guidelines that support walking, biking, and transit use.

Beyond land use planning, municipalities can improve pedestrian and bicycle access to transit stops and other destinations through Complete Streets policies, guidelines and projects, prioritizing high-injury and high-risk networks identified in the GVMC Safety Action Plan.

Table 24. Initiative 5.1 Supporting Information

Category	Description
Support Principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility • Economic Vitality
Implementation Roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead: GVMC (convener), municipalities (implementers) • Partners: Municipalities
Cost Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipal staff time
Potential Funding Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No additional funding needed
Timeline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning: FY 2026 • Implementation: FY 2027-2031+
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Division United Incremental Development and Zoning Toolkit • Division United Mobility and Connectivity Toolkit • GVMC Safety Action Plan

Initiative 5.2: Mobility Hubs

Establish mobility hubs at key transfer locations between mobility services.

To enable easier transfers between modes of travel and to support regional connectivity, mobility hubs can be established to provide designated space and amenities for people to wait for their ride and access first/last-mile transportation options, such as personal bike parking or bike share. As identified in its Transit Master Plan, The Rapid has a near term strategy to “Perform a route network design study which incorporates additional mobility hubs/transfer centers within the ITP service area, in tandem with joint development and mobility hub strategies.” Kent County communities and other mobility service providers can be proactive in identifying potential sites for future mobility hubs and providing these locations, as well as preferred amenities, to The Rapid for consideration.

Table 25. Initiative 5.2 Supporting Information

Category	Description
Support Principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility • Regional Integration
Implementation Roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead: The Rapid • Partners: Municipalities, mobility service providers, developers/property owners
Cost Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dependent on specific amenities included at each mobility hub
Potential Funding Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipal funds • County or regional transportation millage • Public-private partnerships (P3) with major employers and/or institutions • Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) • Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) Program • Congestion Reduction Program (CRP) • FTA grant programs, including Section 5339 • Local businesses • Philanthropic contributions
Timeline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning: FY 2026-2028 • Implementation: FY 2029-2031+
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Transit Authority of Southeast Michigan (RTA) Mobility-Oriented Development (MOD) Action Plan (mobility hub guidance on pages 11-14): Plan for station areas along Woodward Avenue and the rail corridor between Ann Arbor and Detroit with mobility hub guidance for different scales.

Initiative 5.3: New Micromobility Services

Pilot micromobility services such as bike share or e-scooters as first/last-mile connections to fixed route transit.

Piloting micromobility services in targeted, urbanized areas with the appropriate pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure available to and from bus stops can make it easier for more people to access transit and may enable more people to choose transit as a regular transportation option.

Liability is a regularly raised concern for shared micromobility services but can be addressed by establishing comprehensive and thoughtful ordinances that govern micromobility services and vehicles. Best practices can be drawn from other communities that have had these services for years. Guidance is provided under Resources.

Table 26. Initiative 5.3 Supporting Information

Category	Description
Support Principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility • Innovation
Implementation Roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead: GVMC and/or local municipalities • Partners: micromobility providers, The Rapid
Cost Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bike/scooter stations/parking • Bicycles/scooters • Program management staff/contractor time
Potential Funding Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipal funds • Value capture districts, including tax increment financing (TIF) districts and corridor improvement authorities • Value capture districts • County or regional transportation millage • Better Bike Share Partnership grant • Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) • Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) Program • Congestion Reduction Program (CRP) • Local businesses • Philanthropic contributions
Timeline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning: FY 2027-2028 • Implementation: FY 2029-2031+
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transportation For America Shared Micromobility Playbook: Continuously updated site that explores the core components of a comprehensive shared micromobility policy for local governments to consider. • St. Petersburg, Florida's Bike Share Program: Information about the City's partnership with Lime to provide electric bike share service.

ADMINISTRATION AND FUNDING SCENARIOS

Based on the pathways explored in the *Governance, Operating, & Funding Pathways* section of this report, there are five different scenarios under which the initiatives could be administered and funded in Kent County:

1. Community-Level Partnerships (No Change to The Rapid)
2. County-Level Administration (No Change to The Rapid)
3. New Countywide Public Transportation Authority (Overlaps The Rapid)
4. Expanded Public Transportation Authority (Expands The Rapid)
5. New Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Expands The Rapid)

While this study does not prescribe which administrative scenario to pursue, the benefits and drawbacks of each scenario are detailed below. Additionally, these scenarios are not mutually exclusive. A combination of scenarios could be used to achieve a variety of goals and services.

In reviewing the five administration scenarios, the Mobility Task Force determined that The Rapid is charged with improving its current services and operations, rather than expanding, in the near term. Scenarios 4 and 5 are not recommended for implementation in the near term.

Scenario 1: Community-Level Partnerships (No Change to The Rapid)

This scenario builds upon how mobility is currently administered and funded in Kent County. Each individual municipality determines which mobility services to deploy in its community and is responsible for funding them, whether through their own funds or by contributing property taxes to The Rapid.

Greater collaboration and shared mobility services between communities could be achieved without a more regional structure through the following acts outlined in Table 2 in the *Governance, Operating, and Funding Path* section of this report:

- Act 7 of 1967: Urban Cooperation
- Act 8 of 1967: Intergovernmental Transfer of Functions and Responsibilities
- Act 35 of 1951: Intergovernmental Contracts Between Municipal Corporations

For example, Byron Township partners with Gaines Township to jointly offer many organized recreational opportunities. Similar agreements could be established for transportation.

Evaluation

This scenario provides more local control over mobility services but, in so doing, does not create a complete countywide mobility network and leaves some segments of the population without transportation access. This scenario cannot easily support geographic expansion of The Rapid's fixed route services (Initiative 4.2) and does not by itself supply any additional funding resources for the implementation of any of the initiatives. Furthermore, this scenario does not establish a coordinating agency over all mobility services within Kent County, contributing to gaps in coordination and a lack of seamless transportation for riders.

Peer Example

Washtenaw County, Michigan has smaller-scale independent operators – Western-Washtenaw Area Value Express (WAVE) and People's Express – that plug into the core transit system – Ann Arbor Area Transportation Authority (The Ride) – which serves the county's core urbanized communities: Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti. Additionally, communities within The Ride's service area, particularly City of Ann Arbor, has a separate city-level millage that has been approved, with the funding supporting added community for The Ride. The smaller-scale operators have enacted their own funding that layers on top of The Ride's regional property tax millage and supports additional service in the communities they serve.

Scenario 2: County-Level Administration (No Change to The Rapid)

In this scenario, Kent County would take on or designate a leadership and coordinating role in how mobility is administered and funded throughout the county. This would involve establishing new positions or a new division within Kent County responsible for coordinating mobility service providers, developing service contracts, and administering mobility funding.

While the most effective way to establish Countywide administration and funding is for Kent County to pass a new transportation millage, it is important to note this could still be established through partnerships and other funding mechanisms.

Evaluation

This scenario would more likely achieve a complete countywide mobility network, but its success may depend on the passage of a countywide transportation millage. In addition, this scenario can administratively support all the initiatives but does not necessarily supply any additional funding for their implementation.

Peer Examples

In 2024, the Columbus, Ohio region passed a transportation millage (Issue 47) to support the Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA). The millage incorporates funding for expenses beyond transit, including new and improved sidewalks, bike lanes, trails, and crosswalks.

Scenario 3: New Countywide Public Transportation Authority (Overlaps The Rapid)

In this scenario, a new countywide Public Transportation Authority would be established to collect a millage specifically for demand response service beyond The Rapid's service area. The Rapid's Public Transportation Authority would remain as is, collecting its millage to continue the services within its existing service area.

Evaluation

This scenario would support all the initiatives, as long as the two Public Transportation Authorities govern The Rapid jointly and coordinate closely, as they do in Kalamazoo County. The success of this scenario depends on the passage of a countywide transportation millage.

Peer Examples

In Kalamazoo County, Michigan, a countywide authority (CCTA) collects one millage which funds demand response service. Meanwhile, a separate, metropolitan-focused authority (KCTA) collects a separate millage which funds fixed route service. Both authorities govern the regional transit agency (Metro) jointly.

Scenario 4: Expanded Public Transportation Authority (Expands The Rapid)

In this scenario, The Rapid's service area would expand to incorporate more of the immediately adjacent urbanized townships and cities. The governing body of individual jurisdictions could have the option to seek membership within The Rapid's public authority, in which case they would become part of the transit agency and contribute property tax funding on a rate that is consistent with the other communities.

Evaluation

This scenario supports mobility service expansion in areas with the greatest community support and generates additional funding for the implementation of those services. However, the success of this scenario depends on individual municipalities voting themselves into The Rapid's Public Transportation Authority, and this scenario cannot support any initiatives in which The Rapid is not the lead implementer or which are located beyond The Rapid's expanded service area.

Scenario 5: New Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Expands The Rapid)

In this scenario, The Rapid would be reclassified from a Public Transportation Authority under Act 196 of 1986 to a Metropolitan Transportation Authority under Act 204 of 1967, incorporating the entirety of Kent County and potentially other counties into The Rapid.

Evaluation

This scenario can support all the initiatives from both an administration and funding perspective, and would establish a complete countywide, and perhaps even broader, mobility network under a single agency, providing a seamless experience as well as access to a larger geography for riders. However, this scenario would require a complex process involving a range of legal, operational, and financial considerations with strict adherence to the procedures outlined in both Acts referenced above, including potential public hearings, board resolutions, and state agency approvals. In addition, success of this initiative depends on the passage of countywide transportation millages in all counties included in the Metropolitan Transportation Authority.

Peer Example

In the suburbs surrounding Detroit, a metropolitan transportation authority (SMART) collects contributions from three counties within its service area (Oakland, Macomb, and Wayne Counties). Two of those counties contribute countywide millage funds (Oakland and Macomb Counties) and the remaining county (Wayne County) contributes millage funds on a municipal basis; individual municipalities can opt into or out of millage payment and transit service.

Budget Assumptions

As described in the previous sections, this study identifies a breadth of service initiatives grouped into five categories. Additionally, five potential administrative scenarios are identified, which can be paired together and might evolve over time as the region continues to grow. While this study identifies these options and helps the Mobility Task Force evaluate them, the scope of this study does not include detailed cost estimates for each option. The actual cost will depend heavily on the scale of the service, the administrative and governance structure selected, and whether the service is operated in house or contract out, among other things.

This section includes a few high-level, illustrative examples of operational costs associated with demand response and fixed route services, as well as the annual cost for staffing a Mobility Management, Marketing, and Education program. To illustrate these costs at the local level, the Rapid's FY 25/26 Budget was used to calculate unit costs.⁹

Demand Response Service

Through the planning process, the project team identified and evaluated 17 options for demand response services in the *Service Concepts and Evaluation Framework* (Appendix D). Some of those included larger regional service zones; however, most of the options were for smaller service zones, either as first-mile/last-mile connections to existing fixed route service or municipal demand response service outside of The Rapid's service area.

One option for municipalities would be to own and operate the service fully in-house, which would require the purchase and maintenance of vehicles; hiring drivers, dispatch, and supervisory staff; purchasing dispatch and other technology; paying for the cost of fuel; and covering all other costs associated with operations. However, as a starting place for a municipality, a likely option would be to purchase service from an existing service provider, which could include The Rapid, an existing non-profit service provider, or a private company.

The Rapid recently solicited bids for the provision of ADA and other paratransit services, which can be referenced as an illustration of a recent cost estimate to purchase demand response service from a private provider. Table 27 shows a summary of the cost estimates provided by the vendors represented as the cost in dollars per hour of service. To provide operations, maintenance, and dispatch services, the average cost of the proposals was \$80 per hour. To remove maintenance and dispatch lowers the cost per hour, with the average of the proposals for operations service only being \$67 per hour. Note: these costs do not include the cost of the vehicle, facilities, or equipment. If these costs are passed along to a contractor, it can be assumed that the rates for purchased transportation will increase.

As a starting place, a simple municipal demand response service could be implemented with a single vehicle operating 12 hours per day for 260 weekdays in a year, or 3,120 hours of service annually. Using the range of proposals provided for all services combined (operations, maintenance, and dispatch), the annual cost of service would be between \$200,000 and \$330,000.

⁹ ITP Board Meeting Packet, July 2025. <https://www.ridetherapid.org/assets/files/1g0/bod-jul-23-rev-board-budget-workshop-packet.pdf>

In addition to the cost of purchasing operations, maintenance, and dispatch services, the municipality would have to purchase or lease one or more vehicles.

Table 27. Cost Estimates to Purchase Demand Response Service

Service Provided	Low Proposal (\$/Hr.)	High Proposal (\$/Hr.)	Average Proposal (\$/Hr.)
Operations, Maintenance, and Dispatch	\$63	\$106	\$80
Operations and Dispatch	\$62	\$98	\$70
Operations and Maintenance	\$61	\$101	\$77
Operations Only	\$60	\$84	\$67

Fixed Route Service

Like the demand response service options, the project team identified and evaluated 15 potential fixed route service options. The proposals included extensions to existing The Rapid routes, new local fixed routes, and new express services between Grand Rapids and outlying communities. Because each of these fixed route options intersect The Rapid’s service area, a likely implementation option is for The Rapid to operate the service, either directly or indirectly through a service purchase agreement.

In its FY 25/26 budget, The Rapid illustrated the average cost of purchasing an hour of service from The Rapid, which would include the operating, maintenance, and dispatch costs. The proposed rate for line haul service was \$71.32. To include GO!Bus service, the cost increases to \$87.37 per hour (note: it is a federal requirement to provide complementary ADA paratransit within a ¾-mile of a fixed route).

Table 28 shows an illustrative example of the cost to operate one of the proposed fixed route service options through a purchased service agreement with The Rapid utilizing the rate of \$87.37 per hour. The example service option is a proposed express route between Rockford and Grand Rapids, with two levels of service shown. The first shows the cost estimate for hourly service during peak periods on weekdays only, which comes out to an estimate of \$136,000 annually. The second option, which shows hourly service all day from 6 AM to 8 PM, has an estimated annual cost of \$318,000.

Like the demand response example, this annual operating cost does not include vehicles, facilities, or equipment, which would need to be purchased or leased. For an express service like this, additional capital costs could include bus stops and a park-and-ride facility(ies). Enhanced fixed route services could include much higher capital costs, such as designated lanes, bus stop pullouts, transit signal priority, and more. Capital costs range significantly based on the level of service being implemented.

Table 28. Illustrative Example for Potential Rockford to Grand Rapids Express Service

Service Option	Headways (mins)	Hours of Service (Weekday Only)	Number of Vehicles	Hourly Cost with GO!Bus	Daily Cost	Annual Cost
Peak Only Service	60	6 AM - 9 AM 3 PM - 6 PM	1	\$87.37	\$524	\$136,297
All Day Service	60	6 AM - 8 PM	1	\$87.37	\$1,223	\$318,027

Mobility Management, Marketing, and Education Program

The final illustrative example shows the annual cost of one full-time employee (FTE) working toward implementation of the recommended initiatives described in Group 2: Mobility Management, Marketing, and Education. These initiatives include the following:

2.1 Support the GVMC TDM Communications and Outreach Plan

2.2 Commuter Campaign

2.3 Coordinate with Employment and Healthcare

2.4 Mobility as a Service (MaaS)

As a starting point, one FTE would be sufficient to make progress toward each of these initiatives. At time of writing, the Mobility Task Force has not identified which agency could take on the hiring of this FTE, however The Rapid's FY 25/26 budget could be used as an example to understand roughly how much it would cost to employ someone in this field. The budget shows that The Rapid Marketing & Communications Department's average cost per FTE per year for salary and benefits is about \$76,000.

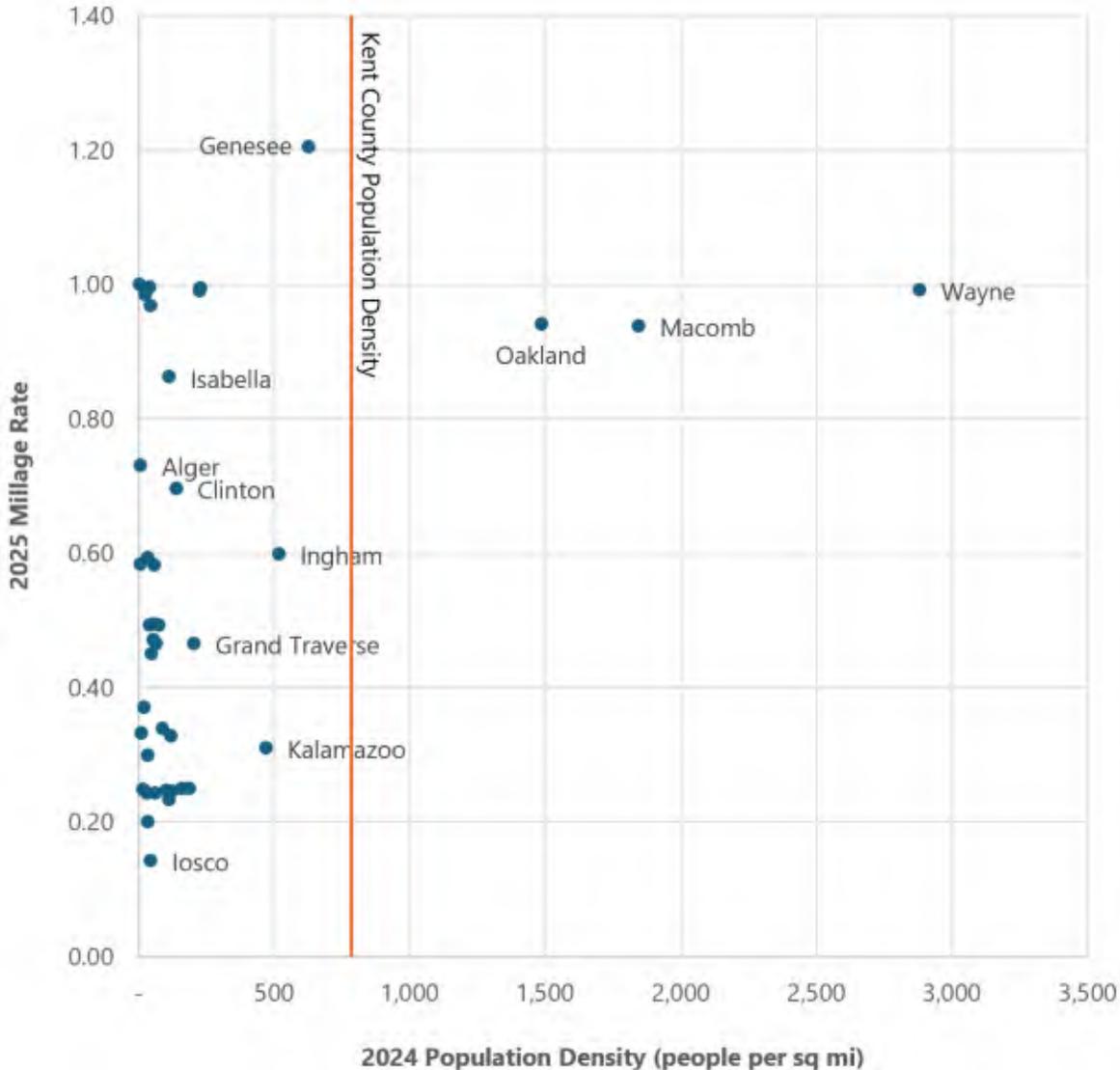
In addition to the FTE, initiatives 2.1-2.3 may also require an operations budget for consultant services, printing, advertising, campaign promotions/prizes, etc. Depending on the scale of annual campaigns, an additional \$25,000-\$40,000 per year could have a real impact on moving these initiatives forward.

Finally, full implementation of MaaS in the future would require additional costs, which could range significantly depending on the services offered and how they are implemented. Further analysis would be required to estimate the costs associated with MaaS-supportive systems (GTFS, GTFS Flex, interoperable dispatch software); MaaS tool development, promotion, and maintenance; and digital payment technology and equipment.

Millage Examples from Peer Counties in Michigan

Based on a review of transit millages in peer counties across Michigan, a relatively small transit millage in Kent County could go a long way. Figure 1 shows the current millage rates compared to population densities for all Michigan counties that have a countywide transit millage. Kent County's population density is closest to Genesee, Ingham, and Kalamazoo counties', whose millage rates vary drastically. This indicates that Kent County's mobility needs could be addressed at a variety of different funding levels, which will depend on political appetite and voter support.

Figure 1. Michigan Countywide Transit Millages



For additional reference, Table 29 shows the millage rates for Kalamazoo and Washtenaw counties, both of which have a “base” millage for the larger region and an additional millage for communities that receive a higher level of transit service. This demonstrates that an additional layer of as little as 0.31 mills could begin to address the mobility needs of communities beyond The Rapid’s current reach.

Table 29. Peer County Millages

County	Jurisdiction Taxed/Service Area	Millage Rate	Transit Service Provided
Kalamazoo	Entire county	0.31	Metro demand response service
	Cities of Kalamazoo, Parchment, Portage, Township of Kalamazoo and Comstock, and eastern portion of Oshtemo Township	0.90	Metro fixed route service
Washtenaw	City of Ann Arbor, City of Ypsilanti, Ann Arbor Township, Pittsfield Township, and Ypsilanti Township	2.37	TheRide fixed route and demand response service
	City of Ann Arbor	1.93	Additional TheRide service
	City of Ypsilanti	0.89	Additional TheRide service
	Scio Township	0.36	Additional TheRide service
Kent	Cities of Grand Rapids, East Grand Rapids, Walker, Wyoming, Grandville, and Kentwood	1.41	The Rapid fixed route and demand response service

ACTION PLAN: MOBILITY NEXT

Following this study process, it became clear to the Mobility Task Force that an ongoing, dedicated program would be needed to implement services while continuing to convene stakeholders going forward. The engagement results and peer review pointed to the same conclusion—closing the countywide mobility gaps will take more than a list of projects. It will take a visible, durable program with a clear mandate to keep partners aligned, secure funding, and move ideas into service. Mobility Next is that program. It is the natural next step from this study and the Mobility Task Force process that shaped it.

What is Mobility Next and Why This Approach?

Mobility Next would be a standing, countywide program that keeps the work moving between annual budget cycles. It would develop and launch pilots, scale what works, and help local governments and providers coordinate policy and funding. In plain terms, it would be the front door for mobility initiatives in Kent County; one place for employers, municipalities, human-service partners, and riders to plug in.

There are proven models close to Kent County. Mobilise¹⁰ in southeast Wisconsin is a nonprofit coalition that both convenes partners and runs real services like FlexRide Milwaukee, an on-demand workforce connection linking city neighborhoods to suburban job sites. They built the service with public, private, and philanthropic dollars and report steady growth and clear outcomes in annual impact materials.

In the Kent County area, Housing Next¹¹ shows how a named, cross-sector program can align policy, funding, and implementation across jurisdictions. Their day-to-day work—housing education, zoning and policy support, market data, and project shepherding—offers a playbook for how Mobility Next can function on mobility rather than housing.

What Mobility Next Will Do

Mobility Next's job would be to take the initiatives in this plan from concepts to operations and to keep a countywide lens on policy and funding.

- **Deliver projects:** Plan, procure, launch, and evaluate the pilot services in this report: microtransit and first/last-mile links, mobility hubs, volunteer-driver expansions, commuter connections and more. Then, take successful pilots to regular operations.
- **Coordinate the system:** Align service standards, hand-offs between providers, shared data, fare media, and rider information so trips feel seamless across jurisdictions.
- **Align policy and land use:** Provide practical help to local governments on ADA and Title VI requirements, interlocal agreements, and siting/design for mobility hubs—tying mobility investments to corridor and zoning work.
- **Lead policy and legislative advocacy:** Act as a unified voice for mobility across Kent County, coordinating with local, state, and federal partners to advance a shared legislative agenda.
 - State priorities: Advocate for Local Bus Operating (LBO) funding that keeps pace with operating costs; support more flexible local tax options such as sales tax for transit; promote

¹⁰ <https://www.mobilisewi.org/>

¹¹ <https://www.housingnext.org/>

the creation of a dedicated state program to fund mobility projects within future road or economic development packages; and encourage MDOT to include transit and micromobility amenities as standard elements in roadway reconstruction projects.

- Federal priorities: Mitigate the impact of federal executive actions or budget cuts on local services, and support stable, multi-year funding for essential county programs prevent financial strain on local governments.
- **Assemble funding:** Package funding for pilots and scale-ups, such as federal/state programs, local match, employer cost-shares, and philanthropy. Also keep an active grant pipeline.
- **Track results and tell the story:** Maintain a simple public dashboard (access to jobs/healthcare, reliability, trips/hour, cost/trip, customer experience, etc.) and publish an annual update that helps partners and funders see progress and decide what to expand.

Starting Mobility Next and Scaling Up

Mobility Next can begin with a lean program office hosted by an existing nonprofit or public agency, with the Mobility Task Force continuing as the steering group. This approach keeps overhead low and allows the program to move quickly while testing and refining new ideas. As projects grow, the program can revisit its long-term structure, either remaining hosted, transitioning to an interlocal program office, or eventually forming an independent nonprofit if the scale and funding justify it.

Program costs can be shared among local governments, private employers, and philanthropic partners, with each project built from its own blend of federal and state funds, local contributions, employer participation, and fares. This model would keep Mobility Next nimble while directing most dollars toward service delivery.

Mobility Next should continue to be guided by the Mobility Task Force, evolving into a formal Steering Committee that meets quarterly to review progress, approve the annual work plan, and oversee the program budget. Advisory conversations can continue through smaller working groups focused on workforce access, human services and health, local planning and land use, rider experience, and others. Including users of mobility services in these discussions would ensure that people who rely on these services help shape them.

Day to day, a small program team would manage procurements, oversee vendors and pilots, and coordinate with The Rapid, Kent County, GVMC, and other community providers. This structure would keep ownership broad while giving the work a single, accountable home.

Immediate Next Steps and Future Performance Monitoring

To summarize the service initiatives, Table 30 identifies each initiative, whether it is included in GVMC's Travel Demand Management (TDM) Plan and/or The Rapid Transit Master Plan (TMP), and its estimated timeline for planning and implementation. The lead agency is also identified with an immediate next step toward planning and implementation.

As progress is made in implementing the initiatives identified in this report, performance monitoring is essential for determining if mobility services are successful and how to target investments effectively. Table 31 includes a list of suggested Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), based on the supporting principles established by the *Service Concepts and Evaluation Framework* screening methodology and incorporating the performance measures established by The Rapid Transit Master Plan. These KPIs should be updated and reported on at least annually.

Table 30. Initiatives Timeline and Next Steps

Initiative	Next Step for Lead Agency	GVMC TDM Plan	The Rapid TMP	FY 26	FY 27	FY 28	FY 29	FY 30	FY 31+
1: Demand Response Services									
1.1: Update Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan (CHSTP)	GVMC: Plan for an update to the CHSTP that includes all demand response service providers in Kent County.						Implementation		
1.2: Transfers and Crossover Trips	GVMC: Convene transportation providers to understand existing transfer and crossover trip policies and explore future opportunities.			Planning	Implementation				
1.3: Expand Volunteer Driver Pool	Volunteers in Service: Convene potential partners to discuss promotion and incentive opportunities.			Planning	Implementation				
1.4: Expand RideLink	Hope Network: Develop an expansion plan in coordination with all other transportation providers in Kent County, outlining specific funding needs.			Planning	Implementation				
1.5: New Municipal Demand Response Services	GVMC: Develop and solicit a Request for Information from potential demand response/on-demand service providers on behalf of municipalities regionwide.	☑	☑	Planning		Implementation			
2: Mobility Management, Marketing, and Education									
2.1: Support the GVMC TDM Communications and Outreach Plan	GVMC: Incorporate appropriate partners into the development of the plan.	☑	☑	Planning	Implementation				
2.2 Commuter Campaign	West Michigan Rides: Develop a plan for future Active Commute Week.			Planning	Implementation				
				Implementation					
2.3: Coordinate with Employment and Healthcare	Hope Network: Convene major employers, employment agencies, and healthcare providers to understand existing coordination practices and explore future opportunities.			Planning	Implementation				
2.4 Mobility as a Service	GVMC: Develop and solicit a Request for Information from potential MaaS providers.	☑	☑	Planning		Implementation			
3: Express Services									
3.1: West Michigan Express	The Rapid: Convene potential funders for the West Michigan Express to develop a financial plan.		☑	Planning	Implementation				

Initiative	Next Step for Lead Agency	GVMC TDM Plan	The Rapid TMP	FY 26	FY 27	FY 28	FY 29	FY 30	FY 31+
3.2: Tier 1 Express Services	The Rapid: Develop and solicit a Request for Information from potential express service providers.		☑	Planning		Implementation			
3.3: Tier 2 Express Services			☑						Planning Implementation
4: Fixed Route Services									
4.1: Service Level Enhancements to Existing Routes	The Rapid: Identify specific route schedules for service level enhancements.		☑	Planning	Implementation				
4.2: Geographic Expansion	The Rapid: Determine feasibility and plan for extending Route 9 further north in Alpine Township.		☑		Planning	Implementation			
5: Supporting Services and Infrastructure									
5.1: Transit-Supportive Urban Planning	GVMC: Work with partners to develop transportation-supportive guidance for municipalities that can be incorporated into their Master Plans, ordinances, and other policies and procedures.	☑	☑	Planning	Innovation				
5.2: Mobility Hubs	The Rapid: Identify potential sites for mobility hubs in coordination with municipalities and other mobility service providers.	☑	☑	Planning			Implementation		
5.3: New Micromobility Services	GVMC: Develop and solicit a Request for Information from potential micromobility service providers on behalf of municipalities regionwide.		☑		Planning	Implementation			

Table 31. Suggested Performance Measures

Performance Measures	Descriptions
<p>Subsidy per Passenger (Annual Operating Cost – Annual Revenue) / Annual Ridership</p>	<p>Subsidy per passenger measures the local, state, and federal funding that is used to support each ride. Service projects should be rated on how well they minimize reliance on public subsidies:</p> <p>Projects that have a lower-than-average subsidy per passenger on a systemwide basis: High Rating</p> <p>If the project does not have a high rating, this measure can be refined by taking the average subsidy for different service types:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High frequency fixed route (< 30 min freq.) • Regular fixed route • Circulators • Demand response
<p>Passengers per Revenue Hour (Productivity) Annual Ridership / Annual Revenue Hours</p>	<p>Productivity is a way of measuring how well the system serves the proposed market and how effective the proposed service will be.</p> <p>Productivity should be above the regional average. In the third year of operation, a fixed-route service should carry at least 20 passengers per hour, and demand response service should carry at least three passengers per hour.</p>
<p>Capital Facility Coordination</p>	<p>Prior to making service changes or expansion, make sure all capital facilities are funded, acquired, and/or constructed in coordination with the service change.</p>
<p>Benefits to People with Disabilities</p>	<p>New transit service should be a benefit to people with disabilities. This should be verified by reviewing demographics and conducting outreach to regional human service agencies.</p>
<p>Benefits to Minority and Low-Income Populations</p>	<p>Service modifications should benefit minority and low-income communities. Service changes will be compliant with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act.</p>
<p>Population and Employment Density</p>	<p>The type of service that an area can support should be determined by the level of population and employment density. A minimum threshold for fixed-route service (hourly in a suburban environment) is 3 households per acre and 4 jobs per acre. Additional guidelines are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High frequency service (15-30 minutes) complemented by local connecting and circulator routes requires densities of at least 18 people per acre and/or 20 jobs per acre on multiple locations on the route • Lower density areas, or areas with few pockets of density, can support high frequency or express service during peak periods, and hourly circulator service.
<p>Local Funding Support</p>	<p>Mobility service providers should seek out sponsorship of service from local government, businesses, non-profit agencies, etc. Projects that provide “overmatch” will be prioritized.</p>

Performance Measures	Descriptions
Sidewalk Score	This measure is calculated by determining the ratio of sidewalk length to street centerline length for each block group. A higher ratio means the block group has a better sidewalk network.
Transit-Supportive Land Use	This measure is calculated by determining the percent of block group acreage of land use codes that include: medium to high density residential, commercial, and institutional. These land use types have a higher propensity to use transit.
Intersection Density	This measure can be calculated using GIS and Census data to determine the ratio of roadway intersections per block group and dividing it by the total block group acreage. A higher density implies greater transportation connectivity and the opportunity for better walkability.

PART VI – CONCLUSION

Kent County and the Grand Valley Metropolitan Council set out to understand where mobility is working, where it isn't, and what it will take to connect people to jobs, school, health care, and daily needs across the region. Over the past year, the Mobility Task Force met regularly, opened its doors to public input, and helped shape a practical path forward. This study paired that guidance with technical work, analyzing existing conditions, summarizing governance and funding options, and creating a service concepts framework, to make sure the recommendations reflect local reality.

The Final Report organizes this work into a clear structure—from setting the stage and documenting current services, to engagement findings, policy options, and a recommendations section that ties ideas to implementation. It aligns with The Rapid's Transit Master Plan, so countywide steps complement system priorities rather than duplicate them. Part V summarizes the service initiatives, administration scenarios, and next steps to move ideas from planning to implementation.

With this foundation, this study ends with a final recommendation to carry the work forward: stand up Mobility Next under the Mobility Task Force's leadership—coordinating partners, assembling funding, and launching near-term pilots that can scale over time. With the groundwork complete, the region is ready to move from study to action, improving mobility services for residents and visitors alike.

APPENDIX A. EXISTING CONDITIONS REPORT



Kent County Mobility Study Existing Conditions

October 2024



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Introduction

Project Purpose

The Kent County Mobility Study is a joint project of the Grand Valley Metropolitan Council (GVMC) and Kent County, Michigan. The study process will assess the current availability of public transit, micromobility, and other mobility services in the region; identify high-priority needs and gaps in service; assess the market for mobility services in the county; evaluate possible service improvements; evaluate potential funding sources; and develop an implementation plan.

Early discussions produced the following problem statements to guide the solutions sought through the study:

- **Regional Coordination:** Kent County lacks a cohesive regional mobility vision, where decisions are guided by shared countywide goals rather than the localized priorities of individual municipalities and townships.
- **Regional Mobility:** Affordable mobility options across the county are scarce. Meanwhile, population and job growth is occurring in underserved areas, while employers say they need transit to attract and retain their workforce. Services that do exist typically have limited capacity and narrow eligibility requirements. While The Rapid provides service to the general public in southwest Kent County, the rest of the county lacks effective mobility service for the general public.

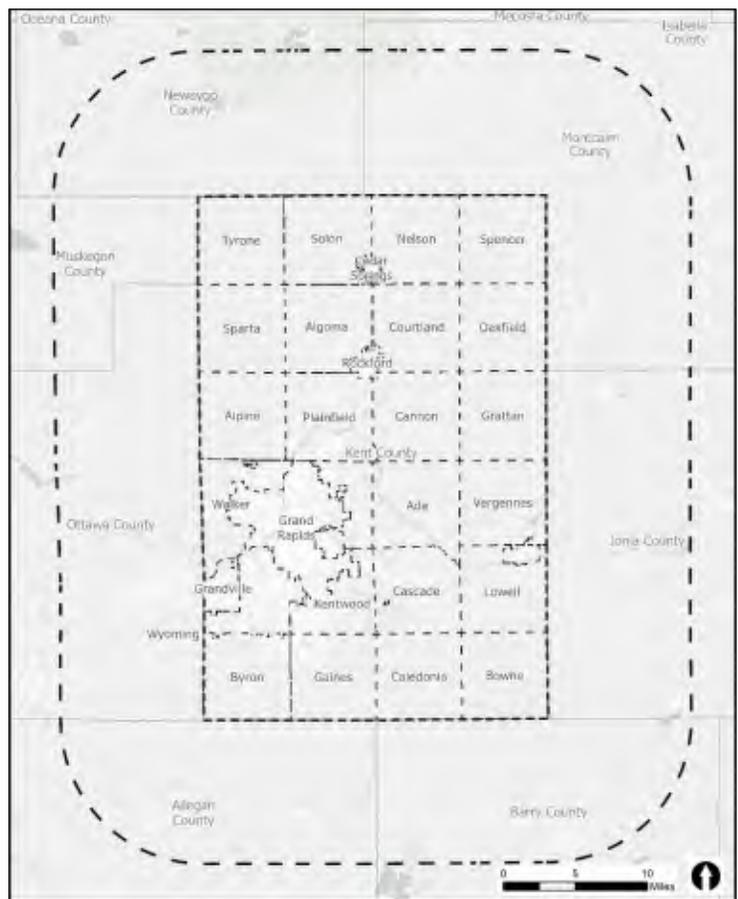
Project Team

The project team includes staff from the GVMC and Kent County. The consultant team is led by SRF Consulting Group with support from AECOM and Aligned Planning. Oversight is provided by the Mobility Task Force, a group established in 2023 by the Board of Kent County Commissioners which is inclusive of community stakeholders including residents, local and state government agencies, nonprofits, transit agencies, and private business.

Project Geography

The project study area includes all of Kent County, as well as the communities neighboring Kent County in an approximately 10-mile radius (Figure 1). These are communities that might have logical transit connections to locations in Kent County. The stakeholder engagement tasks in the project may inform future geographies for analysis.

Figure 1. Project Study Area



Existing Services

At the lower end of the fare spectrum, the study area's mobility services include a Grand Rapids-centered urban transit network, county-operated service for seniors and/or people with disabilities, and limited non-profit services. Short-term bike, scooter, and car rentals also fall into this category. Other services include taxis, non-emergency medical transport (NEMT), and long-distance bus and rail services.

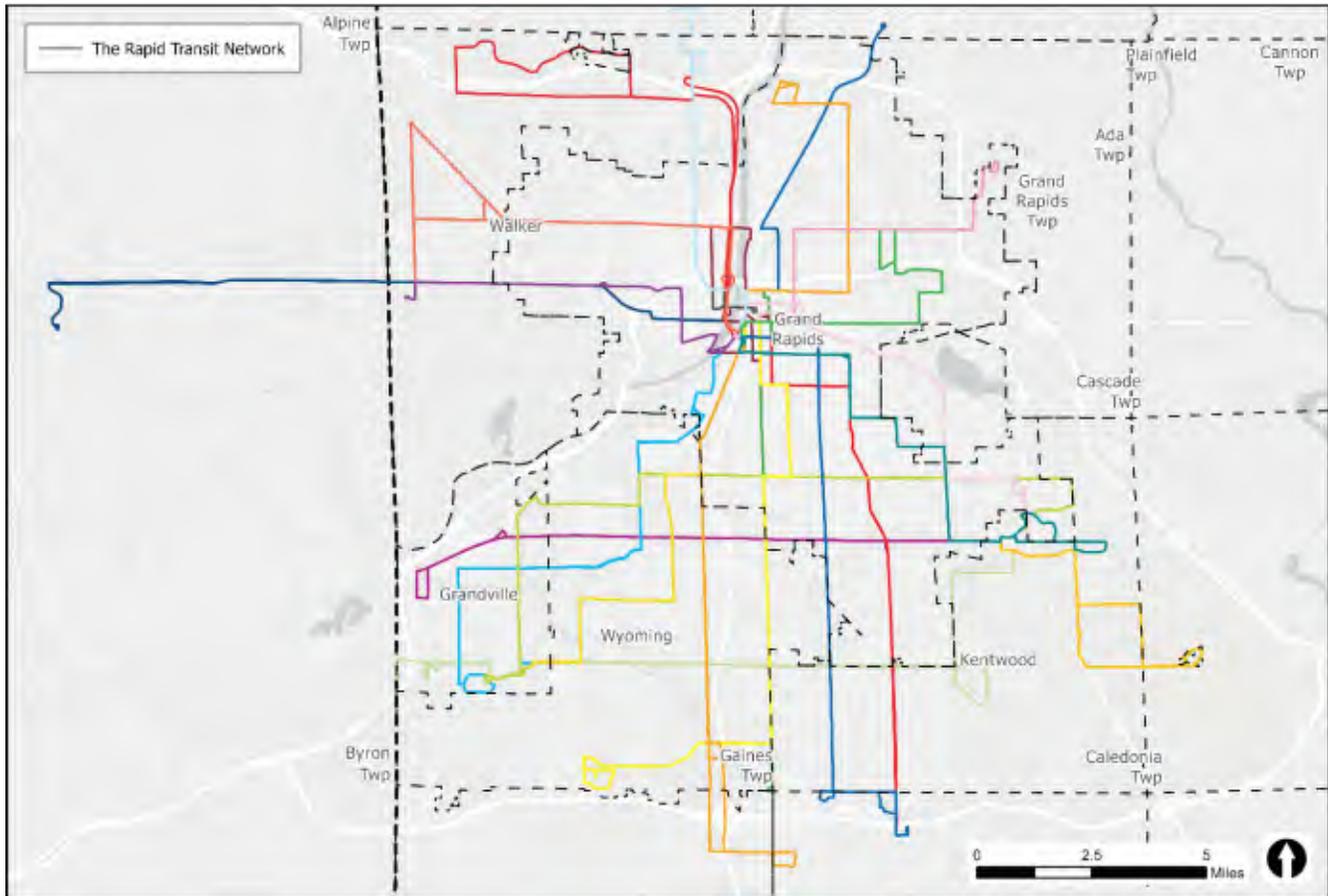
The Rapid

The Rapid is a service of the Interurban Transit Partnership (ITP) organized in 2000 by Grand Rapids, East Grand Rapids, Grandville, Kentwood, Walker, and Wyoming. Most local funding for The Rapid comes from a property tax levied by participating municipalities. The Rapid services include the following:

- Twenty-six fixed routes (Figure 2) provide scheduled service throughout Grand Rapids using a fleet of 149 buses. Two routes, the Laker Line and the Silver Line, are bus rapid transit (BRT) routes with enhanced stations, frequencies, and road priority.
- The GO!Bus offers door-to-door service for seniors 65+ and persons with disabilities who cannot ride a fixed-route bus. GO!Bus is The Rapid's ADA complementary paratransit service, and as such is available within ¾ mile of The Rapid's regularly scheduled bus services, during the hours that buses are running.
- Passenger Adaptive Suburban Service (PASS) allows those who live more than a third of a mile from a bus line to book a ride from their curb to the nearest bus stop. The area of eligibility is bounded roughly by Kenowa Avenue (west), Four Mile Road (north), East Beltline Avenue and Patterson Avenue (east), and 60th Street (south).
- Rapid Connect is a zone-based demand-response service in Walker and Kentwood. It is designed to connect to the fixed-route bus system. This service will be discontinued at the end of 2024.
- DASH routes connect key downtown destinations and parking lots in Grand Rapids with a fleet of 10 vehicles. The service is free and open to the general public. It is funded by the City of Grand Rapids and Downtown Grand Rapids, Inc.

The Rapid's service area extends slightly beyond the six participating municipalities into Alpine, Byron, Gaines, and Plainfield Townships in Kent County; Allendale Township in Ottawa County as part of contracted service with Grand Valley State University; and, as part of contracted service with Ferris State University, Cedar Springs (Kent County) and Big Rapids (Mecosta County).

Figure 2. The Rapid Fixed Routes



RideLink

RideLink is a network of providers offering transportation for older adults to any destination within Kent County. Hope Network coordinates the service and provides some rides directly; other providers include Senior Neighbors, Kent County Community Action, and United Methodist Community House. Each provider uses its own branded vehicles.

Eligibility is restricted to Kent County residents 60 years or older. There is no restriction on trip purpose/destination as long as it is within the county. Rides are curb-to-curb and shared. Passengers are asked to make a \$3 suggested donation per trip.

North Kent Connect, a resource hub for rural northern Kent County, arranges for a monthly group RideLink trip for seniors from six housing sites to North Kent Connect's community pantry in Rockford.

Funding for RideLink comes from the Kent County Senior Millage. It is further supported by Hope Network West Michigan, Kent County Community Action, The Rapid, Senior Neighbors, United Methodist Community House, and the Kent County Essential Needs Task Force.

RideLink Partners

Hope Network is a nonprofit offering a variety of services to community members, including transportation. It originated in the 1960s as a hospital-based workshop for people with developmental disabilities. Hope Network manages the RideLink program and provides the largest number of vehicles for service.

The Rapid coordinated the RideLink program until 2017, when it turned over that role to Hope Network.

Senior Neighbors is a nonprofit offering a range of services to older adults in Kent County. It operates branded cutaway buses through the RideLink partnership. It also distributes GoBus! tickets and WAVE card refills on a suggested-donation basis.

Kent County Community Action (KCCA) is a division of county government focused on economic security for residents. It offers assistance with food, housing, and other needs.

United Methodist Community House (UMCH) is a faith-based organization with program areas in child development, youth engagement, senior activities, and fresh food. It has additional transportation services beyond RideLink, described in the next section.

Table 1 shows the number of trips each RideLink provider completed within the last decade. The Red Cross was previously a participant but ended its transportation service in 2018. Hope Network has been the highest-volume provider in recent years.

Table 1. RideLink Ridership by Provider, 2016-2021

Agency	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	% Change 2016-2021
KCCA	13,952	11,698	14,059	13,042	6,668	7,702	-45%
Red Cross	5,124	1,518	0	0	0	0	-100%
Hope Network	16,792	20,296	25,856	26,525	13,963	19,311	15%
Senior Neighbors	12,653	11,107	9,267	10,161	13,559	7,934	-37%
UMCH	9,085	7,931	8,236	8,005	5,172	5,505	-39%
The Rapid	11,674	12,110	12,345	12,277	9,425	8,207	-30%
Total Trips	69,280	64,660	69,763	70,010	48,787	48,659	-30%

Source: The Rapid

Other Human Services

United Methodist Community House

UMCH offers transportation services to Kent County residents for trips within Kent County. Service hours are Monday to Friday from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM. Fares are based on distance and passenger needs (Table 2). Services to the general public are available, though may not be comparable to other services outlined in this section based on affordability. The organization also provides NEMT to individuals covered by private insurance, Medicaid, or other third-party programs.

Table 2. United Methodist Community House Fares

Service	One-Way Rate
Standard	\$10 flat fee + \$3/mile
Wheelchair	\$15 flat fee + \$3/mile

Source: UMCH.

Georgetown Seniors

The Georgetown Senior Center offers door-to-door service for seniors and people with disabilities. It is open to Georgetown residents. Fare is based on distance (Table 3).

Table 3. Georgetown Senior Transportation Fares

Destination	One-Way Rate
From a location within Georgetown Township to Senior Center	\$4.00
From a location within Georgetown Township to another Township location	\$7.00
Cities of Hudsonville or Grandville, or similar distance	\$9.00
Special trip to Downtown Grand Rapids area and Wyoming	\$18.00
Special trip to Zeeland, Allendale, Holland, Cutlerville, Walker, Beltline area, or similar distance	\$24.00

Source: Georgetown Township.

Hope Network

As an organization, Hope Network provides 1,200 trips a week with a fleet of nearly 100 vehicles. Vehicles are equipped with AVL, computer-aided dispatch, web-based scheduling software, web-based fleet management, and on-board cameras. From its origins in disability transportation, it expanded to diverse user bases, although none of its programs include an all-purpose service for the general public.

North Kent Transit Services

Hope Network offers demand response to seniors and people with disabilities between 8:00 AM and 4:30 PM on Mondays through Fridays.

Wheels to Work

Wheels to Work is a specialized program initiated in 2016 and designed for shared commutes. The fare is a shared cost between employers and employees, with the employee portion structured as a payroll deduction and the total billed to the employer monthly. Services are available 24/7. While most employers prefer door-to-door service, some arrange for pick-up and drop-off at defined neighborhood hubs.



Hope Network is the point of contact but coordinates with other transportation providers to deliver services. There are buses branded with a Wheels to Work logo, but service may also be provided by a Rapid-branded van, Calder City Taxi, or other branded partner vehicles.

As of July 2024, there were approximately 56 participating employers. Community partners for the program include Governor's Office of Urban Initiatives, Disability Advocates of Kent County, Kent County Essential Needs Task Force, The Rapid, United Way, City of Walker, West Michigan Works!, Muskegon CHIR, and the Fremont Community Foundation.

Other Services

Hope Network operates a variety of more specialized transportation services, among them a youth refugee program and a service for Porter Hills Village Senior Living. It briefly operated a fixed-route pilot to serve the Cascade Downtown Development Authority area, but that service was not continued after the pilot ended.

Way 2 Go!

KCCA operates its own transportation service for older adults and people with disabilities in Kent County. Rides can be scheduled for any purpose, including appointments, employment, stores, social, and recreational engagements. A \$2 minimum ride share is suggested per one-way trip, and rides are scheduled based on availability. Way 2 Go! is provided through funding from the Michigan Department of Transportation, The Rapid, and the Community Development Block Grant program.

The service is open to all Kent County residents 65 years of age or older and persons of any age with a disability. The service area is limited to locations not currently served by The Rapid's fixed route and ADA paratransit (GO!Bus) services. Trips may be scheduled to any address within Kent County as long as either the beginning location or the final destination falls within the program's service area.

Flat River Outreach Ministries

Flat River Outreach Ministries (FROM) is a multi-service organization serving the Greater Lowell area. In addition to food, housing, and other programs, it offers a transportation service within the boundaries of the Lowell Area School District. FROM's services are open to people who live in the Lowell Area School District and either make up to 300 percent of the federal poverty level or have an expressed need. Operating hours are Monday to Thursday from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM. Rides must be scheduled a week in advance and are free with a suggested \$2 donation per trip. The drivers are volunteers.

Volunteers in Service

This church-based program recruits volunteers from Christian churches to help out community members in need. An initial referral from a third party is required. Volunteers use their own vehicles to provide rides to medical appointments, grocery shopping, and food pantry pickups. Two weeks' notice is required for medical appointments. Wheelchair transport is not available.

West Michigan Veterans Coalition

The West Michigan Veterans Coalition uses volunteer drivers to provide rides to veterans and their close family members. In the first two and half years after its 2020 launch, the "Freedom Driver" program gave 400 rides. In 2023 it was included in a new Mobility Wallet program developed for veterans in Kent, Wayne, Jackson, Hillsdale and Lenawee counties. The Mobility Wallet is a one-stop shop for access to public transit, micromobility, and private companies as well as volunteer drivers.

Other Services

Taxi Services

Several taxis are available in the region, including Calder City Taxicab Co. and Metro Cab of Grand Rapids. Metro Cab operates 24 hours a day. For trips from the Gerald R. Ford airport, it charges a destination-based flat fee ranging from \$33 to Cascade to \$156 for Kalamazoo. A trip to downtown Grand Rapids costs \$60.

Ride-Hailing

Uber and Lyft are both available in Grand Rapids, although a limited driver supply drives prices upward in comparison to larger cities. Uber and Lyft are not available in some rural areas of the county.

Micromobility

The City of Grand Rapids has a year-round e-scooter and e-bike share program managed by the city department Mobile GR and operated by Lime. The program area covers approximately 12 square miles. It is app-based, with payments by debit or credit card. The cost is \$1 to unlock plus 30 cents a minute. There are discounts for people with low incomes and for trips beginning in disadvantaged census tracts. In July 2024, Mobile GR set aside \$100,000 for a pilot fare-free program for low-income residents enrolled in qualifying aid programs. The Kent District Library allows patrons to check out bicycles for a week at a time from May through October. The KDL Cruisers – Breezer Uptown EX 8-speed bicycles with a basket and lock provided – are available at the Caledonia, Cascade, East Grand Rapids, Grandville, and Krause Memorial branches.

Carshare

Mobile GR also launched a three-year carshare pilot in October 2024. The goal is to provide affordable mobility options for residents with low and moderate incomes. The cost to rent a car will be \$5 per hour or \$50 for 24 hours.

The pilot began with six plug-in electric vehicles and six charging stations at public parking lots across the city. Users will need to pick up and return the rental car at one of those locations. Up to 12 total vehicles are planned as the pilot advances.

Mobile GR chose the national company Mobility Development as a platform and vehicle provider. Mobility Development also runs carsharing programs in Detroit, Ann Arbor, and Kalamazoo. The contract is supported by \$500,000 from the Parking Capital Fund.

Intercity Bus

Greyhound stops downtown and at the Woodland Mall. The closest stations accessible via Greyhound include Holland, Muskegon, Kalamazoo, South Haven, Battle Creek, Grand Ledge, and Lansing. Greyhound buses depart Grand Rapids at 6:15 PM (westbound) and 2:00 PM (eastbound) daily.

Indian Trails serves Grand Rapids via its Detroit-Kalamazoo route and its Kalamazoo – St. Ignace route. Buses depart from The Rapid's intermodal center at 12:05 PM (eastbound), at 2:50 PM (northbound), and at 2:50 PM and 5:50 PM (westbound).

Rail

Within the region, Amtrak provides service from Chicago to Grand Rapids/East Lansing on the Pere Marquette Line. This service makes stops in New Buffalo, Holland, Bangor, and St. Joseph. From Chicago to Grand Rapids, the train departs at 6:30 PM, while the train departs from Grand Rapids towards Chicago at 6:00 AM.

Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT)

By far the largest number of individual transportation providers specialize in NEMT. Many of them provide only medical transport, although some (such as Good Samaritans Medical Transport and Assisted Non-Emergency Transport) are also willing to take customers to non-medical destinations. These providers are not listed and described individually here.

The fee structure for NEMT services is typically higher than for more general services. For example, Good Samaritans charges \$75 plus \$3.05 per mile for a round trip. NEMT fee structures are designed to be billed to insurers, HMOs, or Medicaid.



Table 4. Summary of Public and Non-Profit Services

Service Name	Organization	Eligibility	Service Area	Service Days/ Times	Fares	2023 Ridership	Number of Vehicles	Number of Drivers	Funding Sources
RideLink	Hope Network, Senior Neighbors, KCCA, UMCH	Kent County residents 60+	Kent County	Mo-Fri 7:30 AM to 4:30 PM	\$3 suggested contribution	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Kent County Senior Millage
Wheels to Work	Hope Network	Commuters to participating employers	Unknown	Reasonable shift times	Shared cost employer- employee	Unknown	As needed (contracted with other providers)	As needed (contracted with other providers)	Employers
North Kent Transit Services	Hope Network	Seniors and people with disabilities	Unknown	Mo-Fri 8 AM to 4:30 PM	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	CDBG
Way 2 Go!	KCCA	Kent County residents 65+ or disabled	Must start or end outside The Rapid's service area	Unknown	\$2 suggested contribution	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	MDOT, The Rapid, CDBG
N/A	UMCH	Kent County residents	Kent County	Mo-Fri 9 AM to 3 PM	\$10 + \$3/mi (\$15+3 with wheelchair)	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
Georgetown Transportation	Georgetown Seniors	Georgetown residents 55+ or disabled	Greater Grand Rapids area, Hudsonville, Holland/ Zeeland, Allendale	Mo-Fri 8 AM to 4 PM	\$4 to \$24 depending on distance	13,000	6	9 part-time	MDOT and Georgetown Township
N/A	Western Michigan Veterans Coalition	Veterans and their households	Unknown	Unknown	Free	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
Transportation	Volunteers in Service (VIS)	Medical appointments, grocery shopping, and food pantry trips for Kent County residents	Kent County	Based on volunteer availability	Free	459	Varies by volunteer availability	~70 but varies by volunteer availability	Individual and church donations
Rides to and FROM	Flat River Outreach Ministries (FROM)	Residents of Greater Lowell with needs	Lowell Area School District boundaries	Mo-Th 10 AM to 4 PM One week notice required	\$2 suggested contribution	N/A – launched 2023	Varies by volunteer availability	Varies by volunteer availability	Unknown

Literature Review

The literature review in this study expands on The Rapid’s Transit Master Plan, due to be completed in 2024. Both plans follow several years of planning work in the region. Table 5 lists other plans relevant to the current study. Several key plans are discussed in more detail below.

Table 5. Relevant Plans and Studies

Plan	Date	Relevance
County and Regional Plans		
The Rapid – Transit Master Plan	2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft recommendations include improvements to the frequency and span of the existing service, technology upgrades, community engagement, and transit-oriented development guidelines. • Subcomponents include market analysis of areas outside The Rapid service area. • Potential West Michigan Express includes Hudsonville and Grand Rapids stations.
Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan (Region 8)	2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus groups shared gaps in rural areas, for older adults, and for workers on second and third shifts. • Lack of cross-country service and coordination among regional stakeholders was identified as a challenge.
Kent County Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan	2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highest priority is to expand capacity of existing transportation systems by reducing capacity constraints, improving geographic coverage, expanding eligibility criteria, and continuing coordination between private, public, and non-profit providers.
Kent County Community Action Community Needs Assessment	2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One in three people surveyed identified transportation as a top need. • Human service providers reported that nonmedical transportation assistance is one of the most requested services. • Recommended a) expansion and improvement of current public transportation systems, and b) bringing together a group focused on these efforts.
Kent County Community Health Needs Assessment	2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey results suggest public transportation is lacking, especially (but not exclusively) for people who cannot take fixed routes. • Transportation barriers limit residents’ ability to find healthy/affordable food options and access medical care.
Kent County Transit Needs Assessment	2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The service plan proposed GO!Bus and countywide demand response expansion as well as commuter express/route extensions.
GVMC 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)	2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports transit improvement by addressing safety for all users, enhanced conditions and operation, and a mode shift to more forms of transportation.

Plan	Date	Relevance
GVMC 2050 MTP Update	Expected publication 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approved draft plan reports continued support for transit, with community surveys showing bus service rising from fourth place priority to third since the 2045 MTP. Survey responses requested transit service to airport. Survey responses indicated strong interest in passenger rail. Freight industry engagement identified connecting freight employers/employees to transit as a need.
GVMC Regional Safety Action Plan	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Currently in development. Intended to be a community-driven, inclusive, pragmatic plan that will guide transportation policies, visions, and behaviors in communities across the region. Funded by the Safe Streets and Roads for All federal grant program.
GVMC Regional Transportation Demand Management Plan	2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sets five-year goals for transportation demand management, starting with the creation of a robust and well-marketed program.
GVMC Airport Access Study	2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In response to rapid growth and development at and around the Gerald R. Ford International Airport, GVMC worked with MDOT, and other partners to study access improvements. Current transit access consists of The Rapid Route 27 and the Rapid Connect service. Near-term proposals include a shuttle from downtown Grand Rapids.
Four Corners Transportation Plan	2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinated planning by the City of Kentwood, Cascade Township, Gaines Township and Caledonia Township set goals for a multimodal transportation system. Recommendations include incorporating a transit element in each community's Master Plan, promoting TOD along existing or future transit corridors, and incorporating transit into site plan review. Other relevant recommendations include non-motorized access improvements generally and in key corridors.
Statewide Plans		
Michigan Healthy Climate Plan	2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Calls for increasing access to clean transportation options – including public transit – by 15% each year.
MDOT 2025 – 2029 Five-Year Transportation Program		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sets a five-year public transportation budget of \$3.6 billion including federal funds. FY2025 investment in transit is \$589.9 million.
City, Township and Village Master Plans		
Gaines Charter Township Master Plan	2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifies areas for potential transit service restoration and expansion including along Division Avenue between 60th and 68th Streets, connections to the Amazon fulfillment center, and other major employers. About 14% of surveyed respondents desire some improvements to bus service or carpooling.

Plan	Date	Relevance
City of Grand Rapids Community Master Plan	2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft plan update recommends collaboration between The Rapid, the City, Kent County, surrounding municipalities, non-profit and for-profit organizations, employers and residents to champion new multimodal infrastructure, including public transit. • Draft plan recommends supporting TDM programs in cooperation with GVMC. • Recommends working with employers to create Transportation Management Associations in areas of dense employment without robust public transportation.
City of Rockford Master Plan	2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rockford is growing faster than similarly-sized cities in the region. Its median age is 35.4 years, similar to the median age of Kent County and younger than surrounding townships. • Although Rockford's residents enjoy the walkability and small-town feel of its urban core, the majority of recent residential development has been suburban in nature, with large lots and curvilinear streets built on the city's periphery. • Plan goals emphasize a vision for the city center as a walkable, charming downtown with mixed uses, historic preservation, diverse businesses, and social interaction. Other plan goals emphasize housing affordability and environmental protection. • Mobility goals aim to create a well-maintained, safe, and logical network of streets, sidewalks, and trails. • A plan objective is to "resist efforts to widen 10 Mile Road/Division Street." This five-lane highway from US-131 into the city has numerous driveways and high traffic volume at peak hours. Traffic volumes are expected to increase with additional development and a lack of public transportation. Anticipated development there will impact Rockford's future. • The number of people driving alone to work has decreased in the last 10 years, although it is still high at 80%. The majority of Rockford residents work in Kent County but outside the city (likely in Grand Rapids.)
Plainfield Charter Township Community Master Plan	2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describes growth of 8% since 2010 and projected growth of 16% by 2040. • Topography and natural features mean there are few straight roadways, making connectivity a challenge. • 81% of residents drive alone to work and only 0.5% take public transit. • A 2021 extension of The Rapid to a Meijer store resulted in a 97% increase in ridership on Route 11. • A Sidewalk and Non-Motorized Trails Ordinance requires the extension of sidewalks or trails with all new development. • A network of safe and convenient pedestrian and non-motorized pathways, sidewalks and trails will connect neighborhoods to commercial and employment centers, public transit, health care and educational institutions, and the community's many natural features and recreational opportunities.

Plan	Date	Relevance
Cascade Community Master Plan Update	2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overdevelopment and its effects on local character, natural features, and congestion are concerns. • Recommends zoning and other design strategies, such as Complete Streets, as effective means of ensuring safe and efficient travel for all modes of transportation.
City of Grandville Master Plan	2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Grandville has roughly same median age as Kent County at about 35. • 60% of the population has a commute of 10-24 minutes, which by car implies Grand Rapids, Allendale, Kentwood, and Holland as possible destinations. • Goal is to achieve Complete Streets throughout Grandville. • Recommends prioritizing transit with attractive stations/shelters or dedicated bus stop space on Regional Boulevard and Urban Boulevard street types. • Envisions expanded The Rapid bus routes and suggests several streets as candidates for rapid transit. • Mentions that Grandville should support inclusion of Georgetown and Hudsonville in The Rapid and that Grandville would benefit from connections to its western neighbors. Supports the West Michigan Express. • Calls for an Amtrak station in Grandville. • Suggests a transit center at Wilson Avenue and Chicago drive. • Objectives include fostering relationships with local transit agencies, assessing current routes, advocating for transit improvements envisioned in plan, and working with The Rapid to determine feasibility of new stops or routes, including commuter service between Grand Rapids and Holland.
Kentwood Master Plan Update	2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobility is one of the six principles of the Master Plan. • Kentwood provides a suburban location with urban amenities to attract a wider variety of residents and workers. Bus service is one of those amenities. • The median age is rising over time. • Only 3.3% of Kentwood residents have taken public transportation to work. 83% drive themselves and 10.9 carpool. • Recent communications from area employers suggest that the demand for transit service is increasing. • The introduction of BRT is expected to encourage higher-density residential development, although as of 2020 BRT had not had the expected redevelopment impact on Division Avenue. • Kentwood plans to adopt TOD guidelines and work to connect pedestrian/bicycle transportation to transit corridors. • Kentwood will work with The Rapid to improve transit service to employers in which workplace transportation has become a barrier to business growth.
Walker	2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The plan identifies potential candidates for rapid transit and TOD.

Plan	Date	Relevance
Alpine	2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The plan identifies both The Rapid and Hope Network’s North Kent Transit Service as services operating in Alpine. Transit usage is expected to increase.
Wyoming	2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Envisions a future Wyoming known as a walkable, bikeable, and drivable community, accessible to people of all abilities. Establishes access to transit and other non-motorized options as an equity tool. Cites emerging transportation technologies – including subsidized ridesharing services, connected and autonomous vehicles, and drones – as potentially beneficial for public transit access and equitable mobility. Aims to work with The Rapid to improve transit routes to better connect residents to local destinations and to the larger Grand Rapids region. Recommends that the City of Wyoming actively seek opportunities for regional collaboration to expand and enhance transit services. Specific transit recommendations focus on fixed routes provided by The Rapid. Public engagement participants expressed a desire for improved roadway conditions, walkability, bikeability, TOD, and expanded bus service. Steadily growing population will likely require infill redevelopment. New households are projected to earn higher incomes. The Hispanic population is growing. The majority of commutes are into or out of Wyoming.
Allendale	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft plan recommends collaborating with The Rapid to extend service west of 48th Avenue Draft plan describes township as predominantly rural. The GVSU Campus Connector provides service from the Pew Campus (downtown Grand Rapids) to the GVSU campus in Allendale.

Plan	Date	Relevance
Algoma Township Master Plan	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies Way 2 Go! as primary transit service. • Recommends collaborating with nearby municipalities to expand transit access to more residents. • Draft plan recommends policies that allow residents to age in place. • Draft plan describes Algoma as a largely rural and residential community and describes residents as wanting to maintain this character. • Population growth has been, and is expected to continue to be, slow and steady. • While the median age is higher than Kent County as a whole, demographic trends suggest a future spike in the school-age population. • Median household income is \$96,217, almost 50% higher than Kent County median. • Residents overwhelmingly commute southward for work. • Draft plan recommends collaborating with nearby municipalities to expand public transportation access beyond Way 2 Go! • 99% of survey respondents use a passenger vehicle to get around the township.

The Rapid – Transit Master Plan

The Transit Master Plan draft recommendations include improvements to the frequency and span of the existing service, technology upgrades, community engagement, and transit-oriented development guidelines. Most relevant to the current planning effort, it includes the following recommendations:

- Study expanding the service area
- Study regional connections and/or commuter rail
- Align mobility solutions with regional economic development strategies
- Develop service expansion standards
- Study regional mobility and land use needs

Several components of the Transit Master Plan have particular significance for regional concerns.

Engagement

Online public engagement for the Master Plan update included a project website, an interactive map, an interactive ideas wall, and an online survey. The majority of online respondents lived outside The Rapid's service area, making them potential beneficiaries of the present study. When asked for their most important transit improvement, 72.8 percent of survey respondents chose "Expanded Service Areas." This improvement was rated highly among respondents making below \$25,000 in annual income as well as those aged 65 and above.

Regional Connectivity and Market Analysis Report

An analysis of regional connectivity and transit demand (July 2023) found that of the 1.1 million trips made daily (on all modes) from within GVMC's planning region to locations within The Rapid's service area, 76 percent originate within the service area. The remaining 24 percent come from the parts of Kent County and Ottawa County outside The Rapid service area.

About 23,000 trips to downtown Grand Rapids originate from outside the service area. Of those, a higher percentage are made on transit than trips from within the service area. This may be attributable to students from Grand Valley State University in Allendale Township (Ottawa County). The numbers involved are small, as only 1.3 percent of all trips downtown are made on transit.

Intercounty Corridor Analysis

An analysis of intercounty trip patterns (September 2024) looks at travel between the GVMC planning area and its neighboring counties: Newaygo, Montcalm, Ionia, Barry, Allegan, Ottawa, and Muskegon. It identifies relatively low trip volumes into and out of the GVMC area. Service concepts studied for cross-border travel include a microtransit zone connecting the Laker Line with adjacent areas; running express bus service between Wayland and Grand Rapids; extending Route 9 to 6 Mile Road and/or piloting a microtransit zone in Alpine Township; extending Route 11 to Rockford and/or piloting a microtransit zone in Plainfield Charter Township; and running express service between Holland, Grand Haven, and Muskegon.

Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan for Michigan Planning Region 8 (2024)

The West Michigan Regional Planning Commission – Region 8 maintains and periodically updates a coordinated plan for the transportation services available to seniors and people with disabilities. Inclusion in such a plan is a federal requirement for any projects benefiting from the Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities (Section 5310) grant program. A coordinated plan assesses available services, identifies gaps and needs

for people with disabilities and seniors, describes strategies and projects to meet those needs, and prioritizes strategies and projects for implementation.

Region 8's Coordinated Plan was [last updated in 2024](#). The process included two rounds of online workshops open to numerous stakeholders and their contact lists. Two focus groups brought together public agencies, nonprofits, colleges, chambers of commerce, and interested individuals.

During the focus groups, participants shared that there are significant transportation gaps in rural areas; that older adults need more options to access meal sites, medical appointments, social events, and chronic illness treatment; that workers need transportation options that accommodate second/third shifts and multiple stops (e.g. for childcare); and that transportation gaps make it challenging for employers in industrial parks to find employees. Additionally, a major challenge was the lack of transportation services that cross county lines and, more generally, a lack of communication and coordination among regional stakeholders.

The strategies ultimately prioritized most highly included:

- Maintain services that are effectively meeting identified transportation needs in the region.
- Identify a process for planning and implementing new regional services to fill current gaps in transportation.
- Continue to support capital needs that help to maintain existing services and ensure vehicles are safe and appropriate for the need.
- Work with community leaders to identify additional funding sources that support increasing expenses and enable transportation providers to maintain and expand mobility options in the region.
- Develop additional partnerships to identify new funding opportunities.

Kent County Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan (2022)

Separately from the Region 8 Coordinated Plan, The Rapid [maintains its own plan](#) (last updated 2022). This document focuses on The Rapid services, with some attention to the regional service RideLink. The highest-priority strategy in the 2022 update was to expand capacity of existing transportation systems by reducing capacity constraints, improving geographic coverage, expanding eligibility criteria, and continuing coordination between private, public, and non-profit providers. The plan does not identify funding sources or partners for this strategy.

GVMC Regional Transportation Demand Management Plan (2023)

GVMC recently completed its first [transportation demand management \(TDM\) plan](#) for the region. Although reducing reliance on single-occupancy vehicles is a regional goal, much of the region's recent and ongoing growth is taking place outside the existing transit network. Meanwhile, ridership remains low and the funding sources for transit improvements are limited. This suggests the need for a coordinated and strategic investment in transportation solutions.

Objectives and Key Results

The TDM plan has four core objectives: foster regional coordination to unify TDM messaging and programming; help people who live and work in the region get around without a car; integrate TDM into infrastructure investments, land use policy, and parking decisions; and build relationships with employer partners to maintain the trip reduction benefits of flexible work locations and hours.

The plan sets out [a list of measurable targets](#) for its first five years of implementation. Among others, these include an increase to 2,500 participants in the ridematch database; 30 employers engaged with the TDM program; 300 new

transit riders; and 25 vanpools (compared to 17 pre-Covid). Targets are also set for inclusion of TDM coordination in infrastructure projects and land use/parking policies.

Actions recommended to achieve the objectives include boosting organizational capacity for TDM work, identifying park-and-ride locations for carpooling and transit; funding and encouraging job access transportation; developing a TDM Toolkit for municipalities, developers, and funders; creating a downtown employer outreach program; and exploring an equity pass/mobility wallet that would combine transit, bikeshare, scooter share, and Uber/Lyft/Taxi credits.

Existing Conditions

The TDM plan's [Existing Conditions report](#) looked at mode split by age, household income, race/ethnicity, and vehicle ownership. Key findings are that vehicle ownership is one of the more significant predictors of transit usage, and income is not. Hispanic and multiracial people are significantly less likely than the general population to drive a private automobile. Regionwide, transit is about one percent of trips taken.

Although an analysis of employment hotspots shows highest concentrations within The Rapid partner communities, employment concentrations also exist in Allendale, Rockford, and Lowell. Allendale, where the GVSU campus is served by the Laker Line, is the only one of the three with high-quality transit (defined as 15-minute headways or better).

Kent County Transit Needs Assessment (2011)

Kent County's [last comprehensive assessment of transit](#) was published in 2011. This report made the following findings:

- A patchwork of transportation services exists in Kent County with much of it having program eligibility requirements.
- Both program and non-program related transportation services are limited and often rationed. This variety of transportation services can be difficult for the public to understand.
- Development continues to accelerate in areas outside of the current service district of The Rapid, leaving major destinations and residential areas without public transportation.
- Population in Kent County is aging with the over 65 age group increasing over the next ten years.
- There is no long term, adequate and stable funding source for public transportation outside The Rapid's service area.

The study recommended an expansion of countywide demand response services, commuter services, and ADA paratransit services, as well as extension of The Rapid's routes. A financial plan noted the need for a county millage to support these service expansions.

Kent County Community Needs Assessment (2023)

As described earlier, Kent County Community Action is a division of county government focused on economic security for residents. It recently completed [a broad assessment of the community's needs](#); although housing emerged as a top priority, transportation was also a key issue according to stakeholders and community members surveyed. Specifically:

- One in three people surveyed identified transportation as a top need.
- Human service providers reported that nonmedical transportation assistance is one of the most requested services.

The report recommended continuing to work on the expansion and improvement of current public transportation systems. It also recommended bringing together a group focused on these efforts – the purpose of the present study.

[Community forum and interview] participants reported that public transportation is perceived to be unreliable or unable to meet their needs—especially for those who need to travel outside of the “six-city” core service area of the Interurban Transit Partnership/The Rapid. Challenges included bus schedules being inconvenient, public transportation routes not being close enough to a person’s destination, and people not qualifying for services like medical transportation. These barriers have led people to rely on their own or somebody else’s vehicle, which can cause additional challenges.

Service Area Profile

Building on these previous plans and studies, the Mobility Study team conducted its own analysis of the service area, with attention to both the travel flows and the residential demographics in and around Kent County. The results of these analyses are described below, looking first at countywide data and then more closely into three market areas: north, central, and south Kent County.

For each demographic group, absolute numbers and percentages of total population were also summarized by municipality and township. For these data in table form, please refer to the Appendix (page 57).

Travel Flows

To discern regional travel patterns relevant to the needs of Greater Kent County, origin-destination (OD) travel flows sourced from Replica¹ are visualized in Figure 3 and Figure 4 below.

Figure 3 shows OD pairs with at least 25 daily trips, in which neither origin nor destination is within ¾-mile of a The Rapid fixed route. Across census tracts outside the Rapid’s service area, transit mode share averages 0.25 percent. If one assumes a uniform distribution of the trips across every OD flow, then a flow with 400 daily trips may be said to yield one transit trip. In terms of spatial relationship, trip flows are highly interconnected in the central and southern county, as these form a more consistent stretch of urban development. In the northern county, the densest trip flows are short distance links from exurban communities such as Cedar Springs and Sparta into adjacent tracts.

¹ Replica is a platform for building detailed travel demand models based on cell phone, census, and other data.

Figure 3. Replica Origin-Destination Travel Flows Outside The Rapid's Coverage Area – Countywide

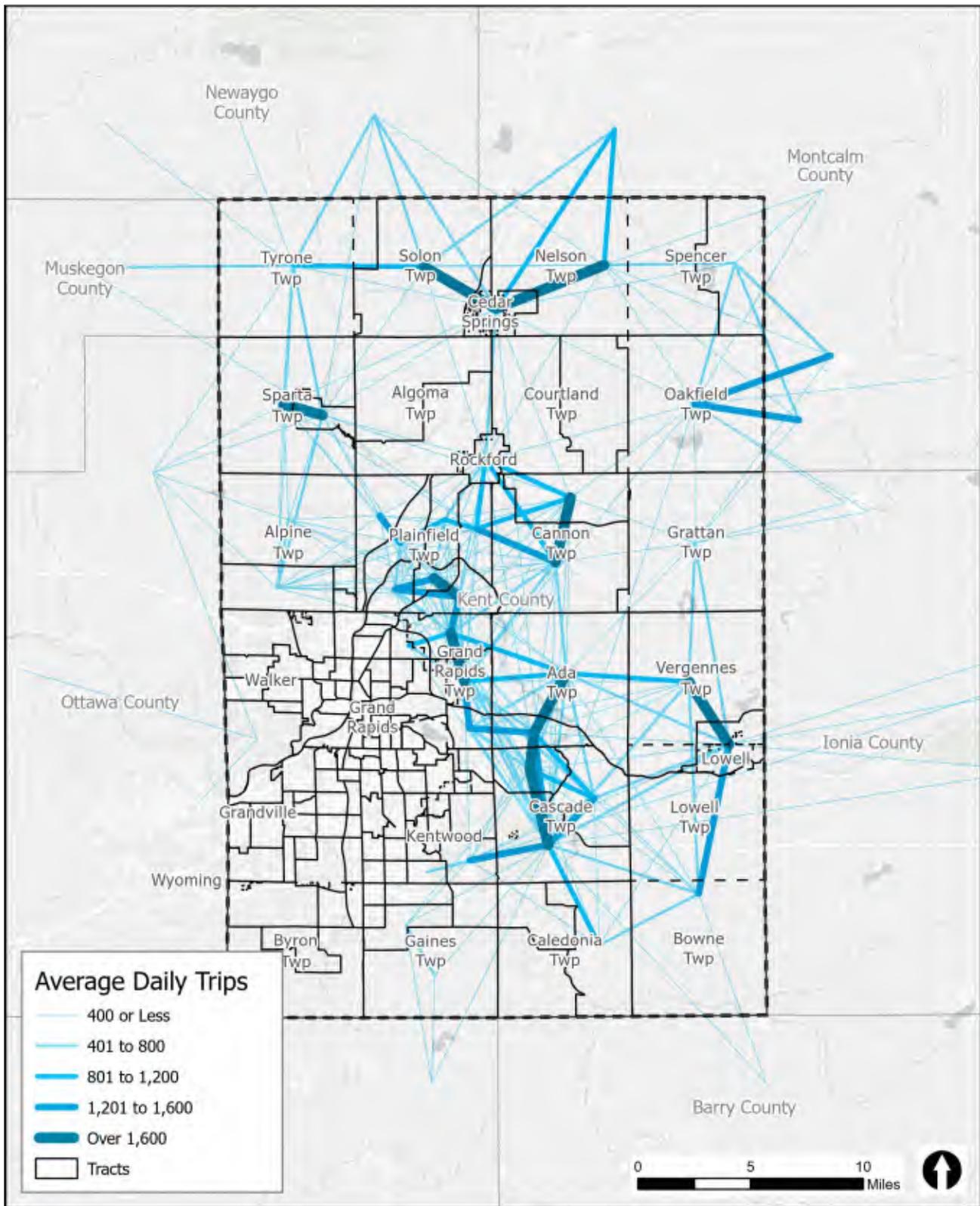


Figure 4 shows OD pairs with at least 25 daily trips, in which either the origin or destination is within The Rapid's ¾-mile service area. Trip flows into service area are most frequent among the townships immediately adjacent, particularly Grand Rapids, Cascade, and Kentwood Townships. Trips into the service area drop considerably north of Plainfield Township and east of Cascade Township, although trips to downtown Grand Rapids are still evident. Popular destinations include downtown Grand Rapids, Gerald R. Ford International Airport and its surrounding industrial and commercial zones, and shopping malls including Woodland Mall in Kentwood and RiverTown Crossings in Grandville.

Figure 4. Replica Origin-Destination Travel Flows Crossing The Rapid – Countywide

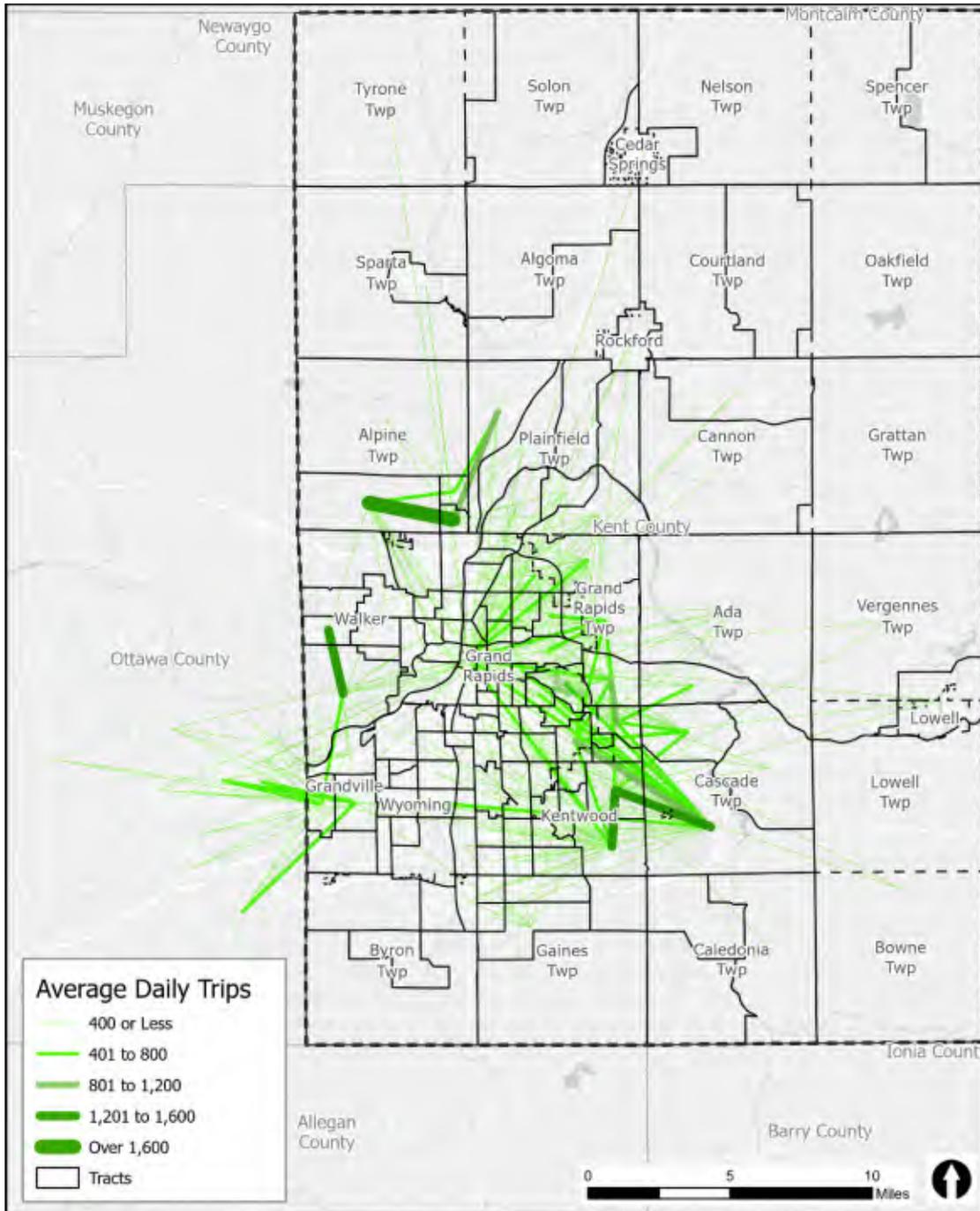
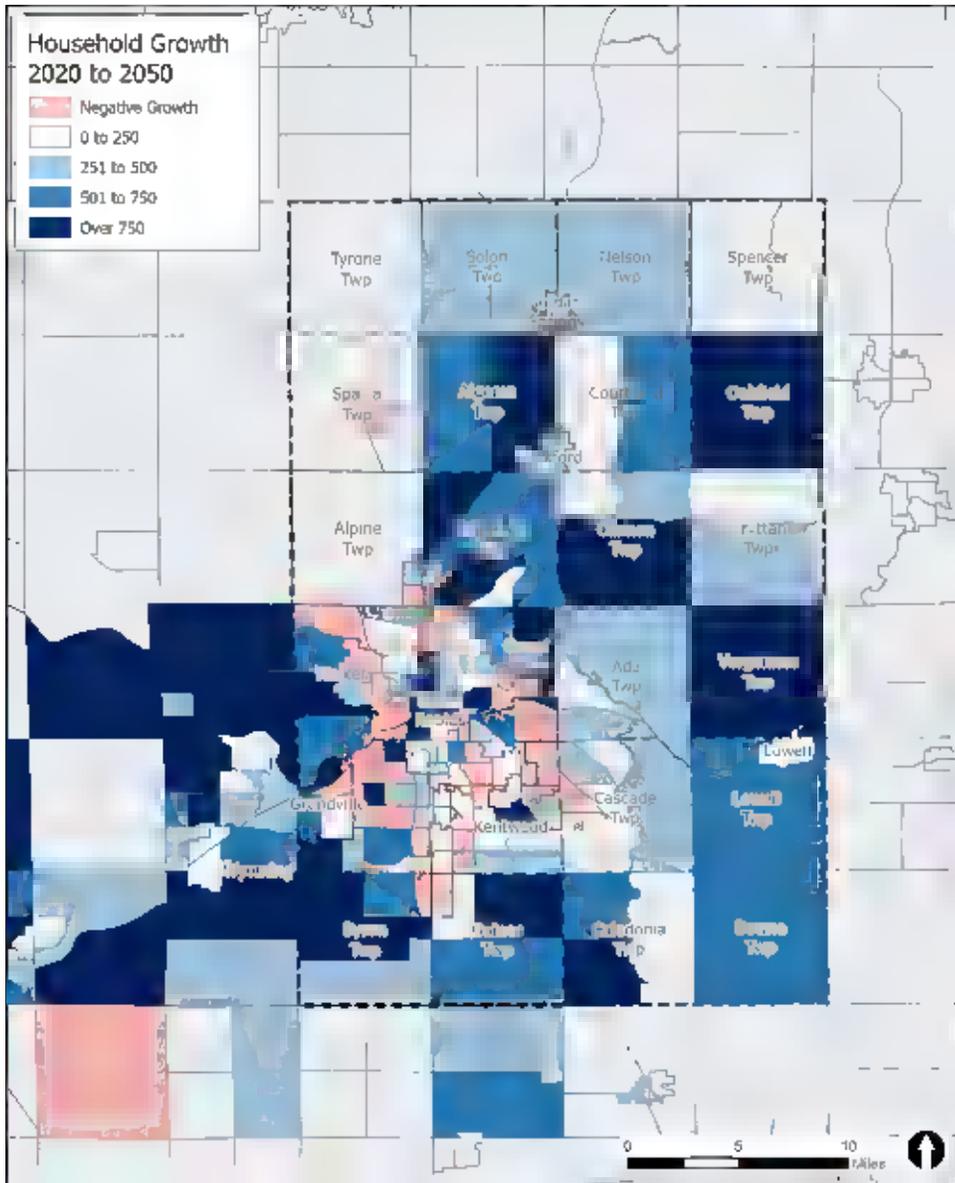


Figure 5 shows projected increases in the total number of households by Transportation Analysis Zone (TAZ)² from 2020 to 2050. Household growth is distributed across the county, with larger absolute increases especially noticeable in the communities surrounding Grand Rapids, such as Georgetown, Byron, Gaines, Algoma, Cannon, and Oakfield. In rural cities such as Lowell, Rockford, and Cedar Spring, projected growth is most notable on the immediate edges of their respective municipal boundaries, suggesting a trend of outward residential development.

Within Grand Rapids, the household growth patterns are more scattered. Some central Grand Rapids TAZs show strong growth, while surrounding TAZs show weaker growth or even decline in the number of households.

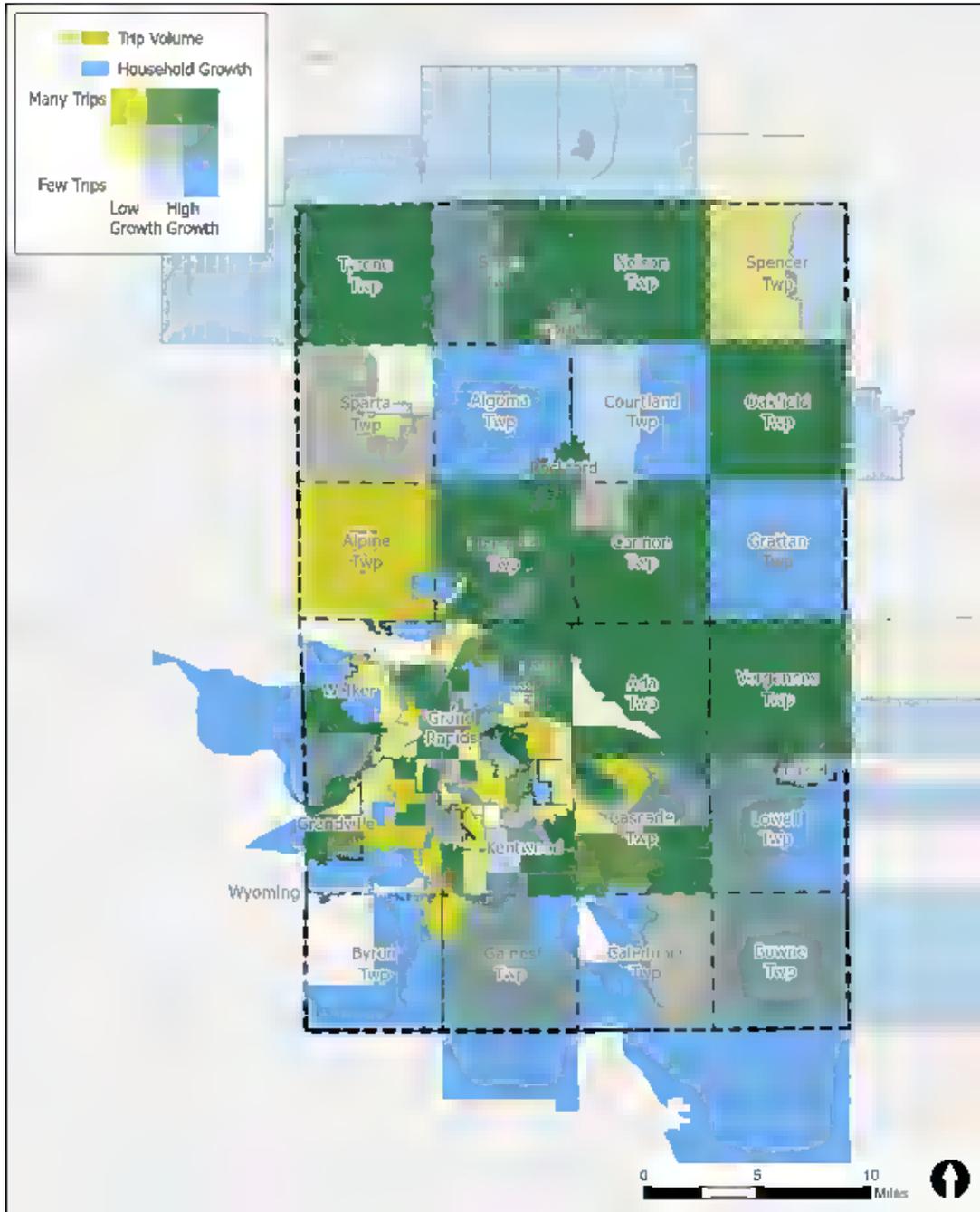
Figure 5. Forecasted Growth in Total Households by TAZ – 2020 to 2050



² A TAZ is a geographic division used for traffic demand modeling. The Michigan Department of Transportation defined the state’s 2,307 TAZs by aggregating census blocks.

Figure 7 overlays current year trip volumes with projected increases in total households to suggest areas with potential growth in travel demand by 2050. The color of each TAZ corresponds to the projected household growth in blue and trip volumes originating in the TAZ in yellow, with zones seeing high growth and high volumes represented in green. In the north, high trip volumes with high forecasted growth are found in Tyrone, the immediate area surrounding Cedar Springs, and Oakfield. In the center of the county, Rockford, Cannon, and Plainfield see high trip volumes and household growth. In the south, the townships of Ada and Vergennes see high trip volumes and forecasted growth, while Lowell and Bowne Townships see high forecasted growth but a more average volume of trips.

Figure 7. Forecasted Household Growth vs. Trip Volume by TAZ



The interrelationship of OD trip flows, in combination with forecasted growth in households and employment, is used to roughly define three 'markets' for mobility in greater Kent County. These include:

- **North Kent County:** All cities and townships north of Rockford, including Cedar Springs and Sparta
- **Central Kent County:** Rockford, Cannon, and other surrounding census tracts
- **South Kent County:** Grand Rapids, Ada, Vergennes, Cascade, Lowell, Caledonia, and Bowne Townships, including Lowell and Segwun.

For each of these markets, detail is given on Replica OD travel patterns in addition to select demographics that tend to have a higher propensity to use transit and mobility services, by census block group.

Market Area 1: North Kent County

Figure 8 shows Replica OD travel patterns in north Kent County by tract, classified by average daily trip volume. Inter-tract trips to and from Cedar Springs are generally north of 16 Mile Road, with the highest trip volumes entering Solon and Nelson Townships, followed by trips into Montcalm County. Solon trips are likely most correlated to the Meijer supermarket and residential development immediately west of Highway 131. Nelson trips may comprise mostly trips to Sand Lake at the northernmost edge of Kent County. Trips to and from Sparta are predominantly into Sparta Township, including City of Sparta development that contiguously crosses the municipal border. Other high-volume trips from Sparta enter Tyrone Township as well as Alpine Township. In Oakfield Township, a large volume of trips connects into Greenville and Eureka in adjacent Montcalm County.

Figure 8. Replica Origin-Destination Travel Flows – North Kent County

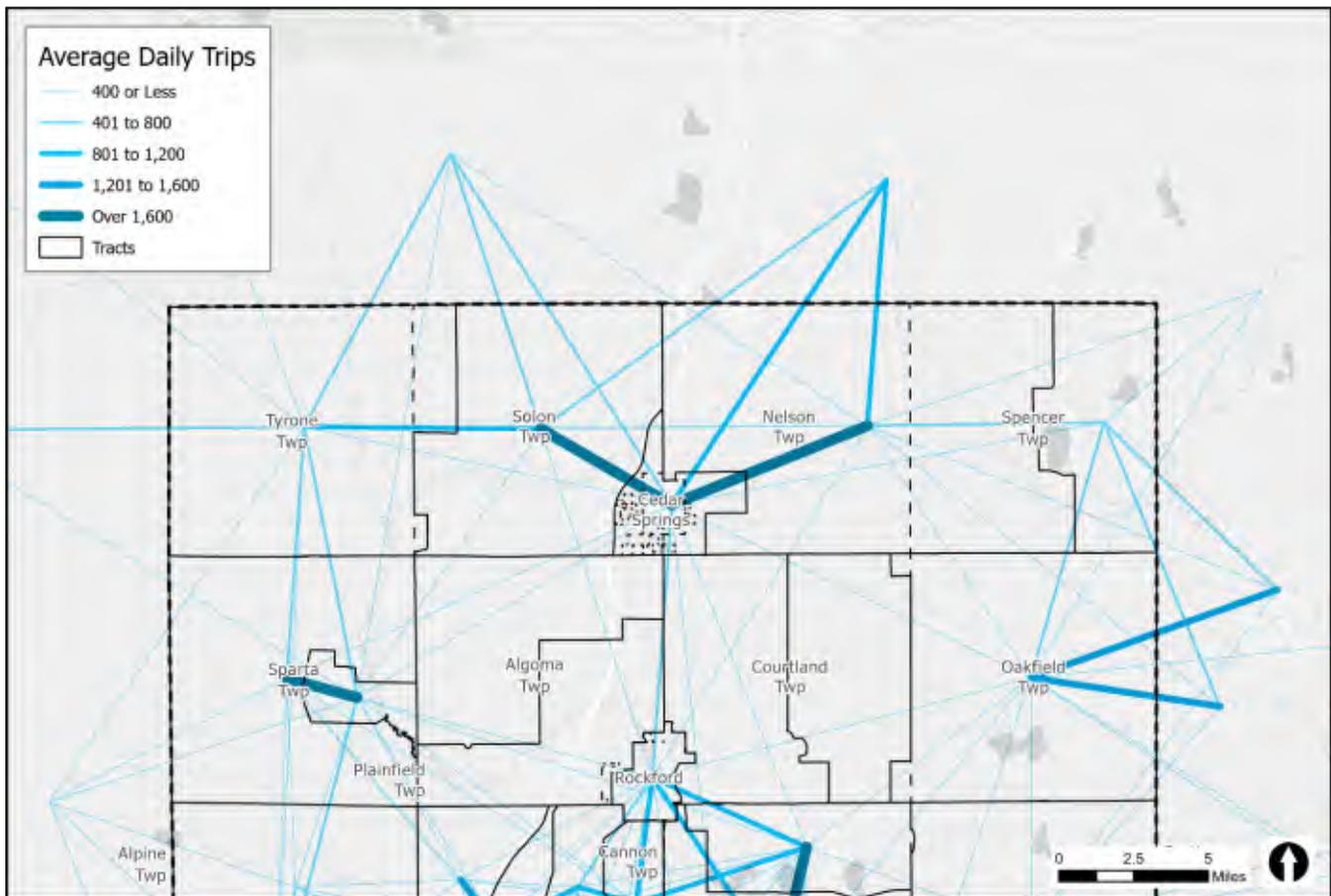


Figure 9 shows population density by census block group in north Kent County. Population density is generally low but reaches up to 5 persons per acre in the cities of Sparta and Rockford. Secondary concentrations of population are found in Kent City, Cedar Springs, Sparta Township, and Algoma.

Figure 9. Population Density by Census Block Group – North Kent County

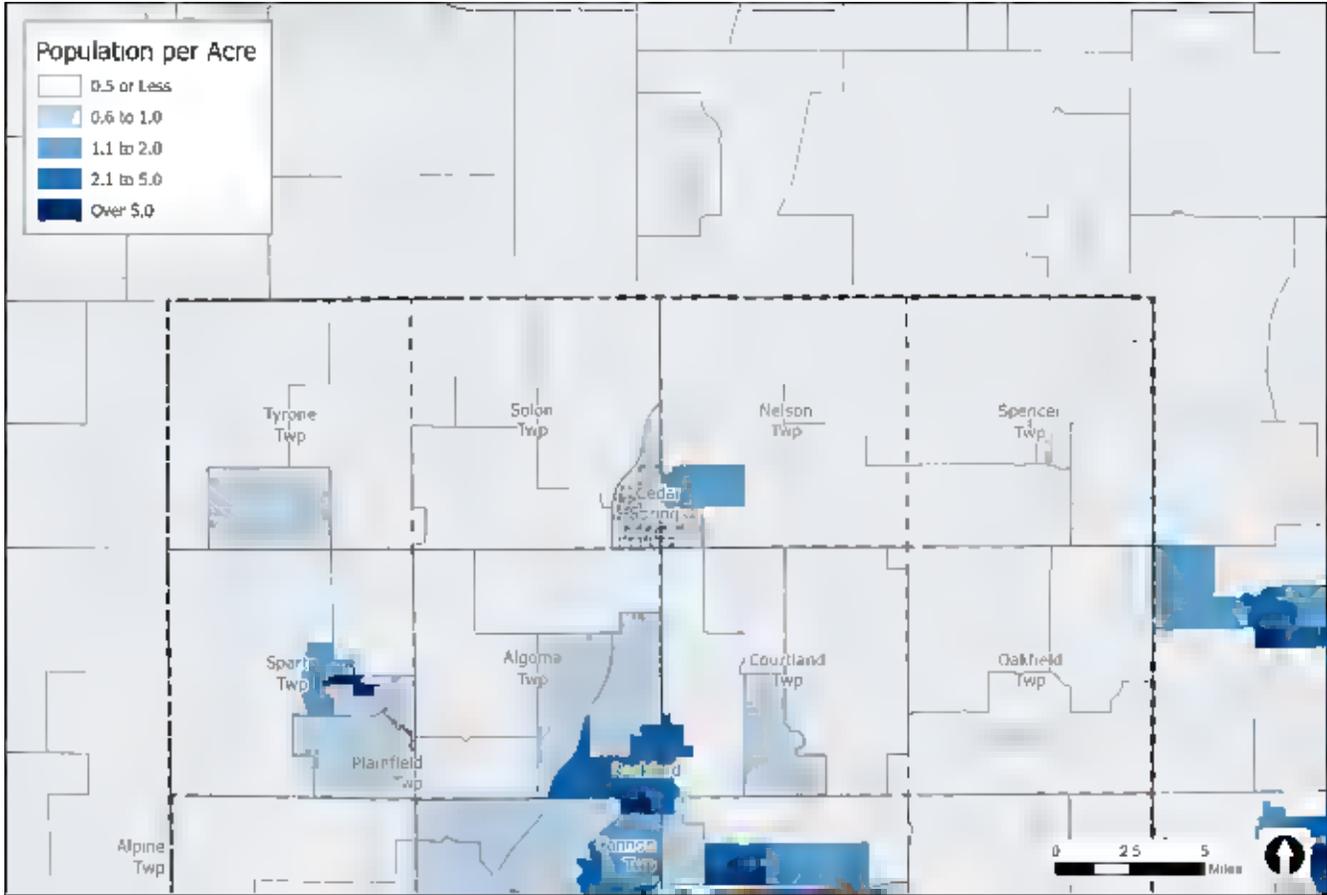


Figure 10 shows the distribution of job density by census block in north Kent County. Jobs in north Kent County are primarily concentrated in urban centers, such as Cedar Springs, Rockford, and Sparta. The City of Greenville in Montcalm County also represents a major employment center relative to the market area.

Figure 10. Employment Density by Census Block Group – North Kent County

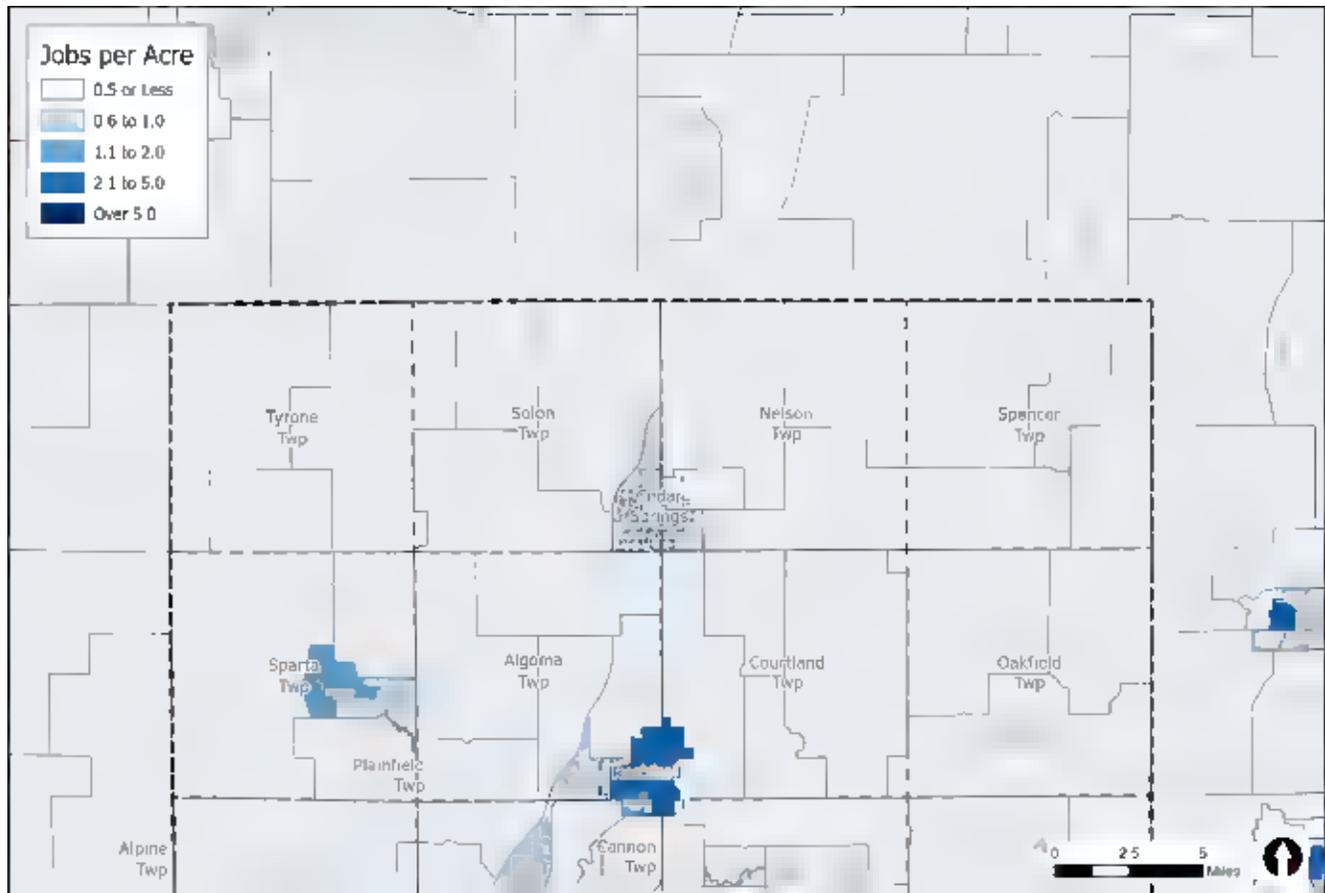


Figure 11 shows the distribution of non-white populations in north Kent County. Minority populations are proportionally highest in parts of Cedar Springs, in Kent City, and in Oakfield Township. Secondary concentrations are found throughout the remaining townships.

Figure 11. Minority Population by Census Block Group – North Kent County

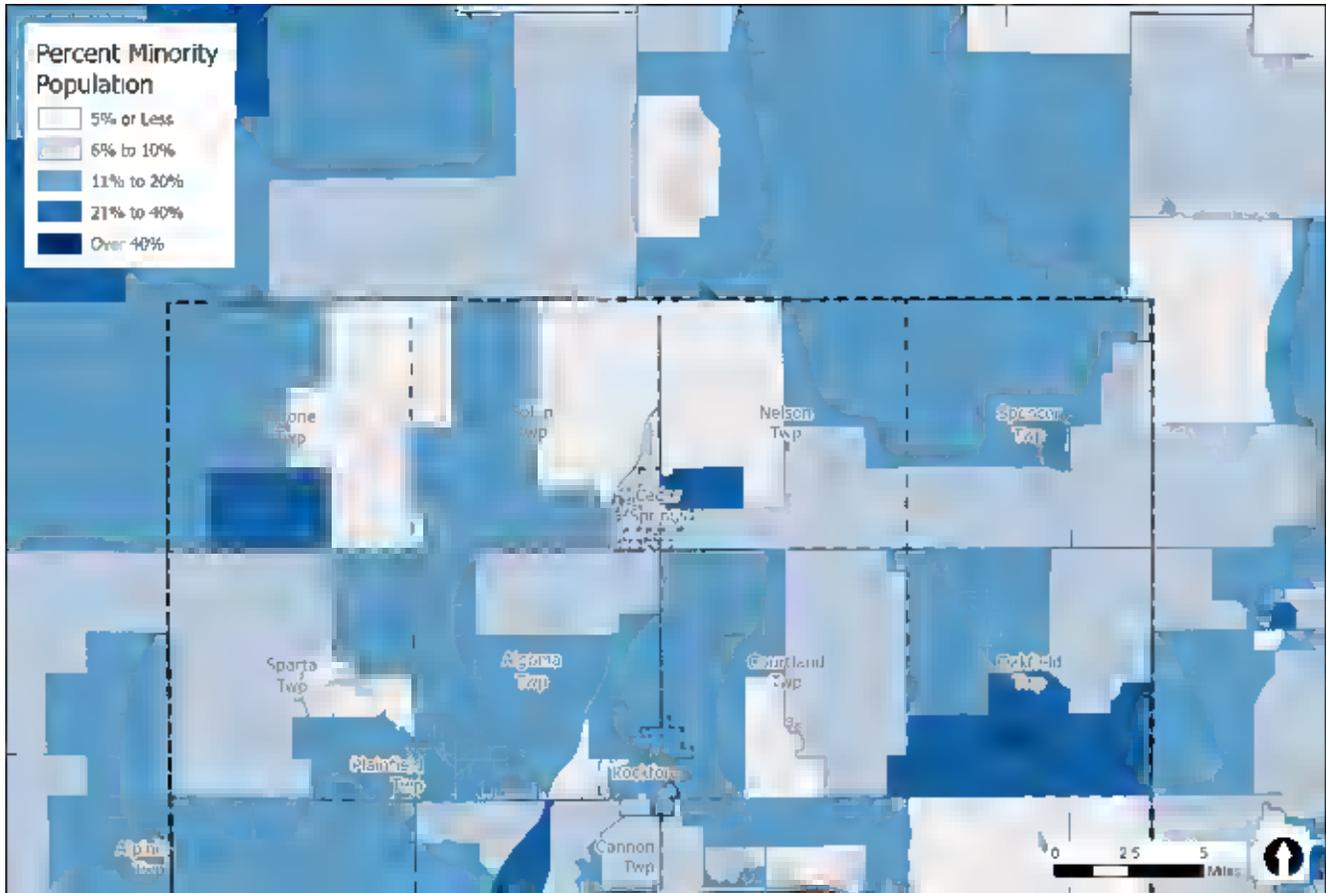


Figure 12 shows the distribution of low-income populations (defined as those earning less than 185 percent of the federal poverty level accounting for household size) in north Kent County. In parts of Cedar Springs, Tyrone Township, and the City of Sparta, more than 40 percent of the population falls under this threshold, with as high as 30 percent in the block groups immediately surrounding. Other concentrations of low-income populations are observed in Oakfield and Spencer Townships.

Figure 12. Low-Income Population by Census Block Group – North Kent County

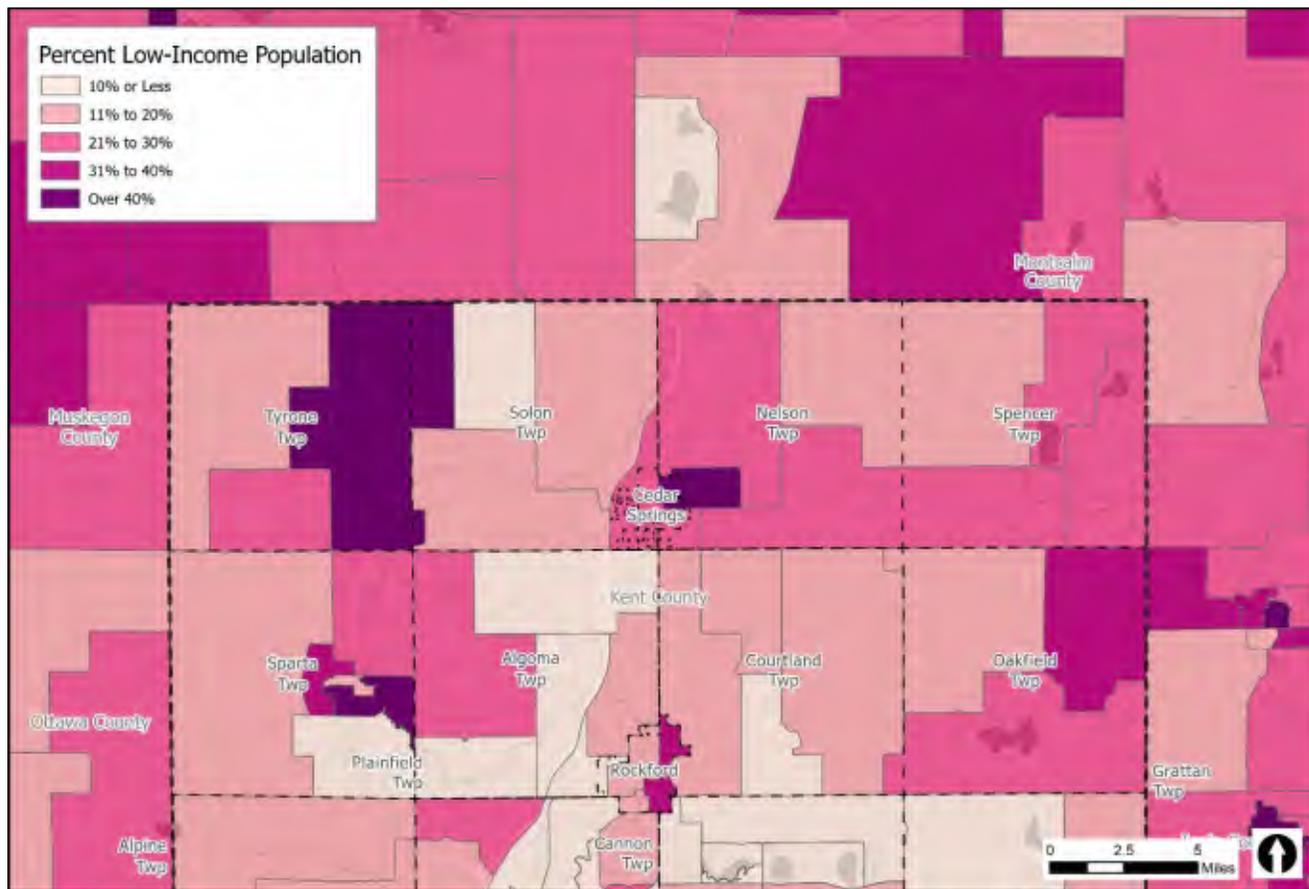


Figure 13 shows the distribution of households with no access to a personal vehicle in north Kent County. No strong correlation is visible between these households and low-income households as shown in Figure 12. The highest concentrations are found in Solon Township, the City of Sparta, and Courtland Township. Secondary concentrations are found in Cedar Springs and Kent City.

Figure 13. Zero-Car Households by Census Block Group – North Kent County

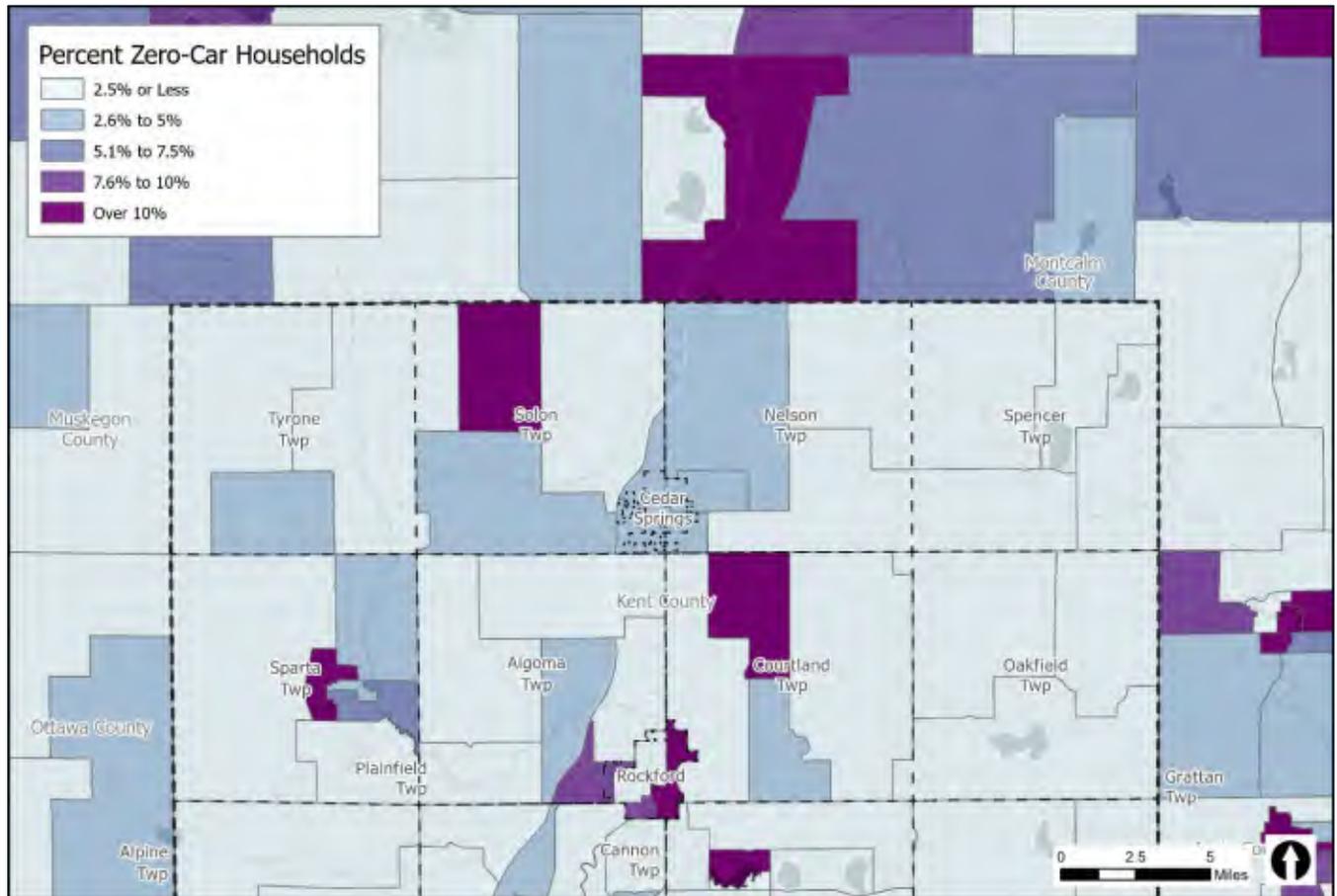


Figure 14 shows the distribution of persons over 65 years of age in north Kent County. Most block groups have at least 10 percent of their population above the age of 65, with particular concentrations in Solon, Nelson, Spencer, Algoma, and Oakfield Townships, as well as the city of Sparta.

Figure 14. Population over 65 Years of Age by Census Block Group – North Kent County



Market Area 2: Central Kent County

Figure 15 shows Replica OD travel patterns around Plainfield Township and Rockford by tract, classified by average daily trip volume. The highest volume OD pairs are those internal to Plainfield Township and those connecting the two tracts within Cannon Township. Trips from Rockford are primarily into Cannon Township and Plainfield Township, and an east-west flow across Plainfield and Cannon Townships is discernable. Trips across the Grand River are extent between most tract pairs, but do not form as consolidated a trip volume as the aforementioned pairs. A considerable volume of trips from Plainfield into Grand Rapids Township is also seen, as well as connections into south Kent County as will be discussed further.

Figure 15. Replica Origin-Destination Travel Flows – Central Kent County

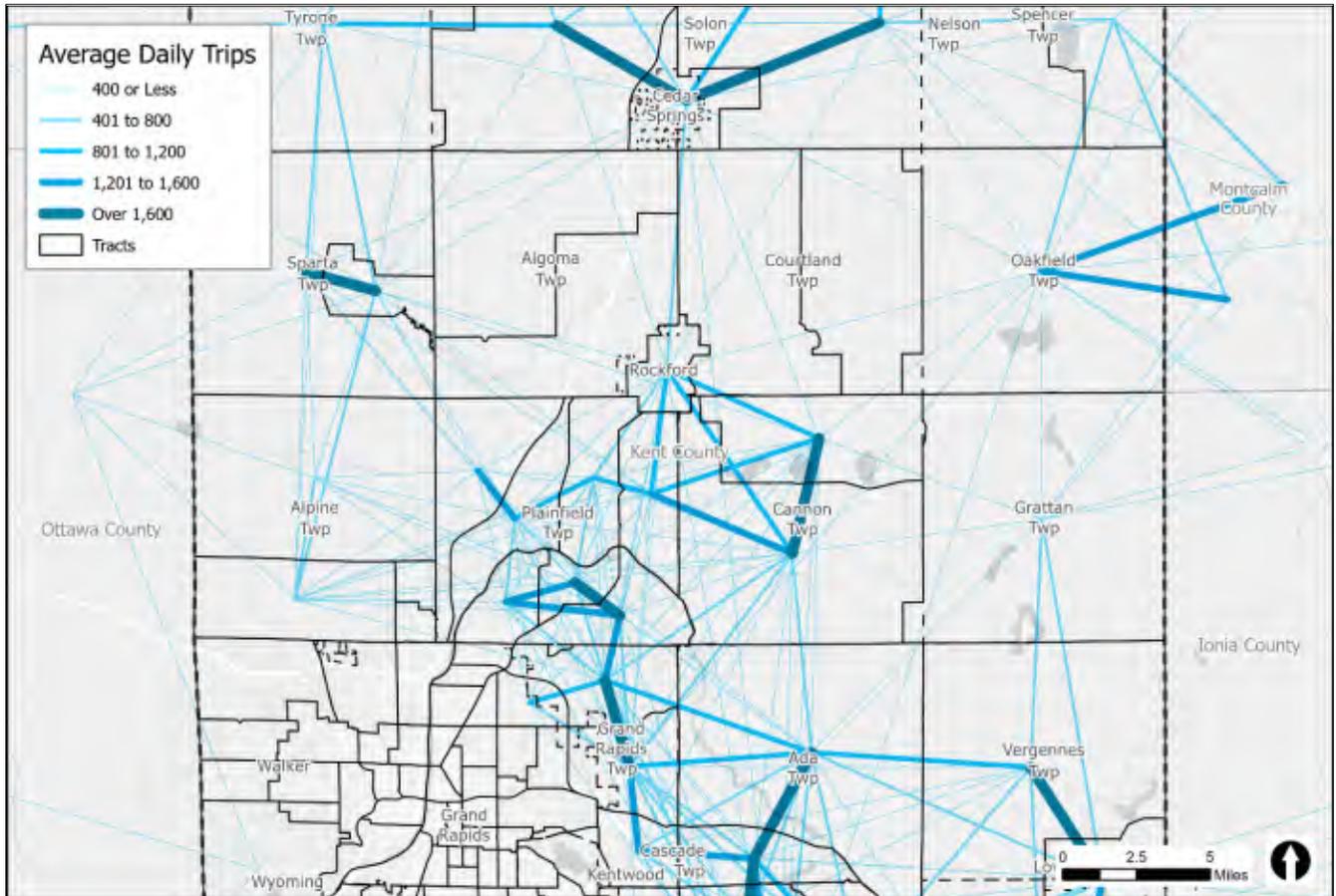


Figure 16 shows the distribution of population density in the central Kent County area. The densest concentrations of population, ranging upwards of two persons per acre, are found in the City of Rockford, communities just north of Grand Rapids in Alpine and Plainfield Townships, and the area near Lake Bella Vista in Cannon Township.

Figure 16. Population Density by Census Block Group – Central Kent County

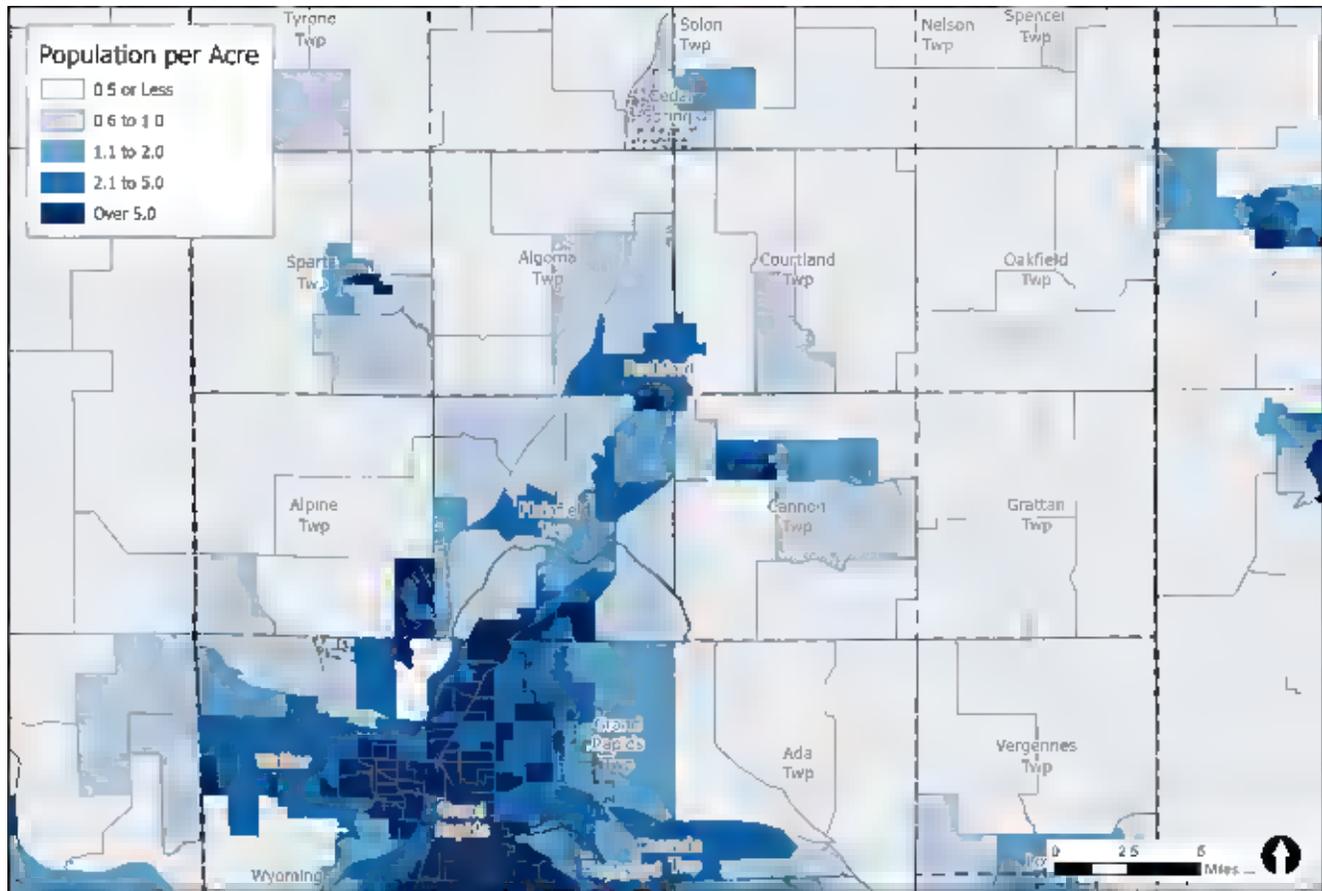


Figure 17 shows the distribution of employment density in the central Kent County area. Although there are higher-density pockets in the City of Rockford and Plainfield Township, overall this part of Kent County has very low job density.

Figure 17. Employment Density by Census Block Group - Central Kent County

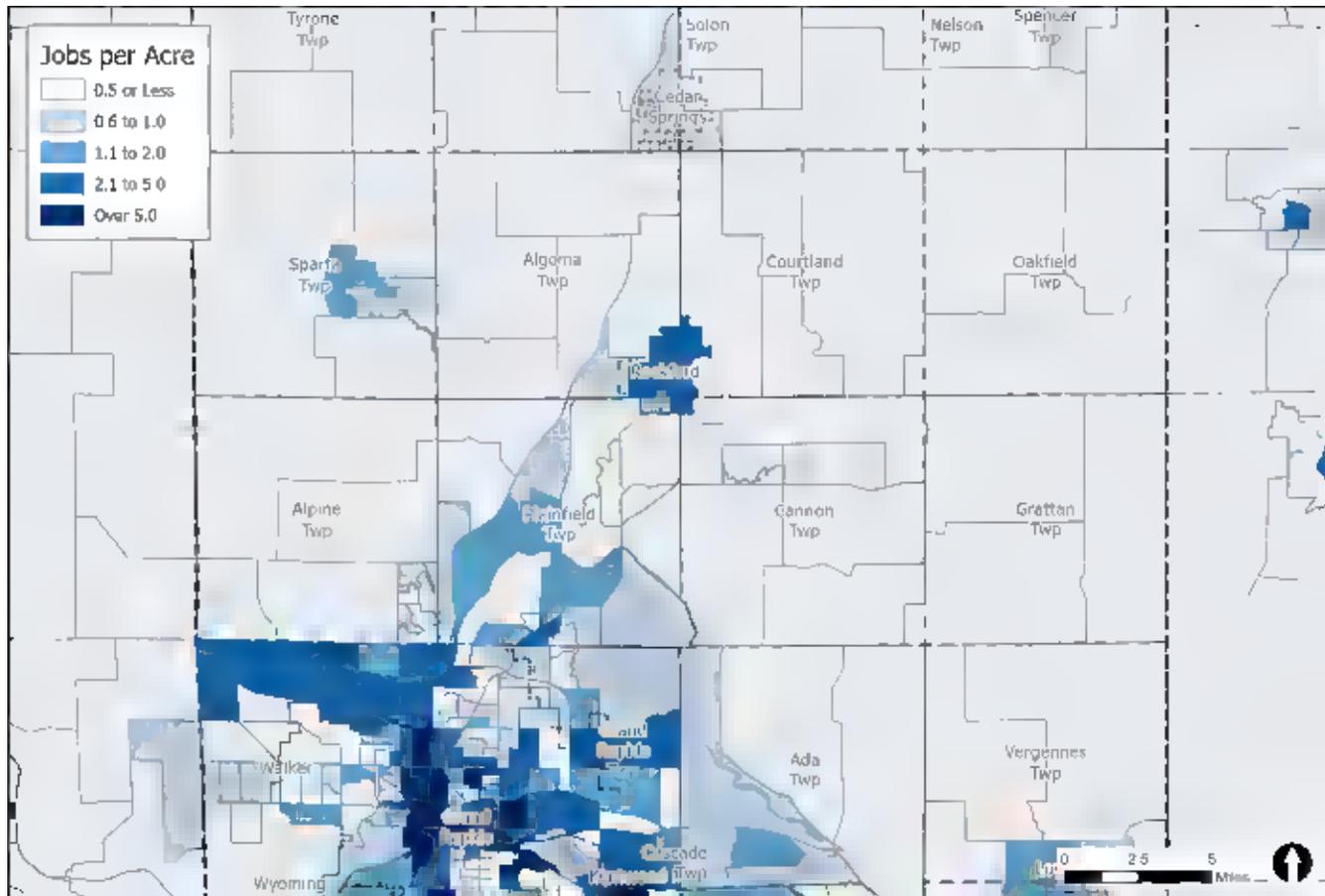


Figure 18 shows the distribution of non-white populations in the central Kent County area. The highest concentrations of minority population are found in parts of Alpine, Plainfield, and Oakfield townships.

Figure 18. Minority Population by Census Block Group – Central Kent County

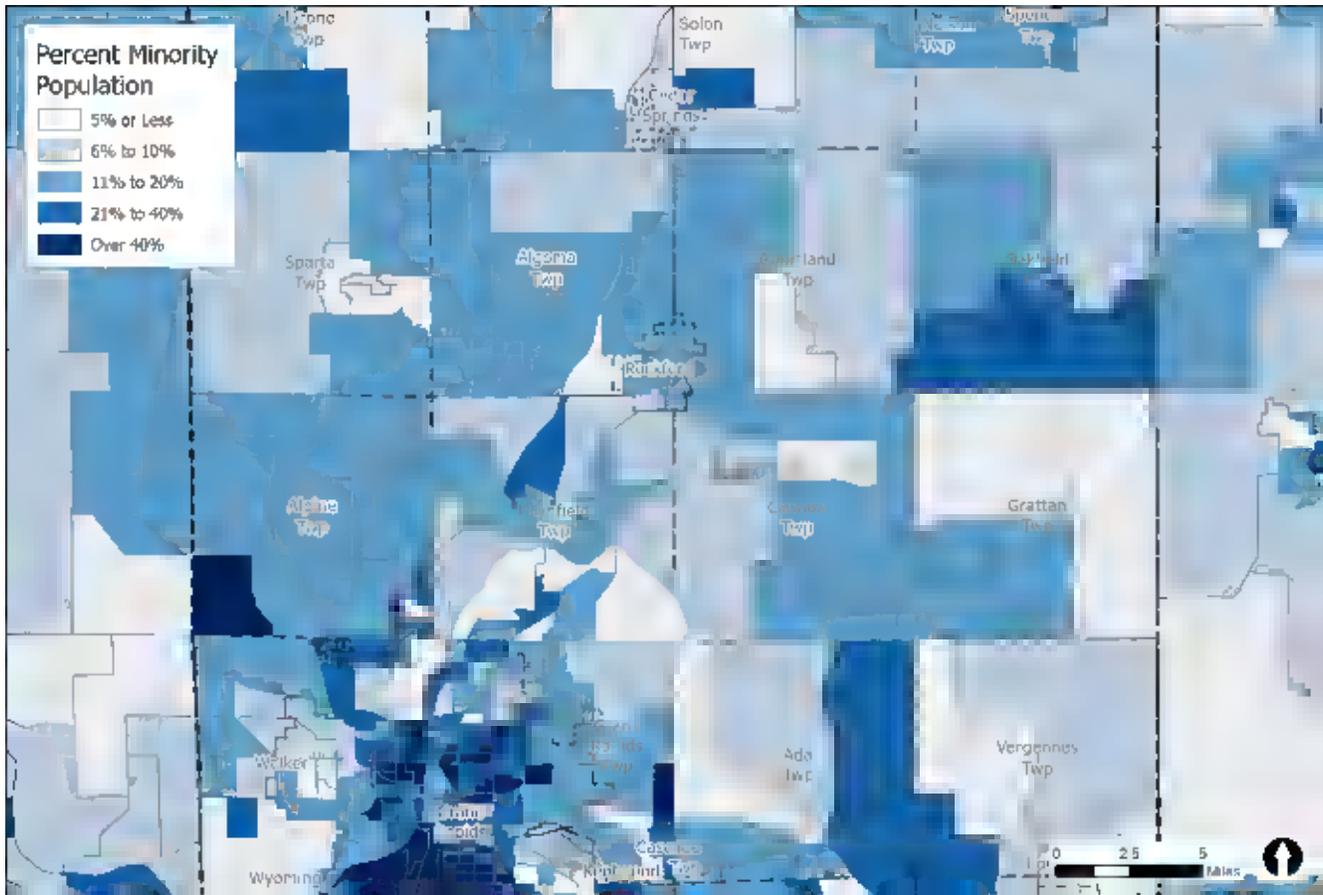


Figure 19 shows the distribution of low-income populations (defined as those earning less than 185 percent of the federal poverty level accounting for household size) in the Central Kent County area. The highest concentrations are found in Rockford and in communities north of Grand Rapids in Alpine and Plainfield townships.

Figure 19. Low-Income Population by Census Block Group – Central Kent County

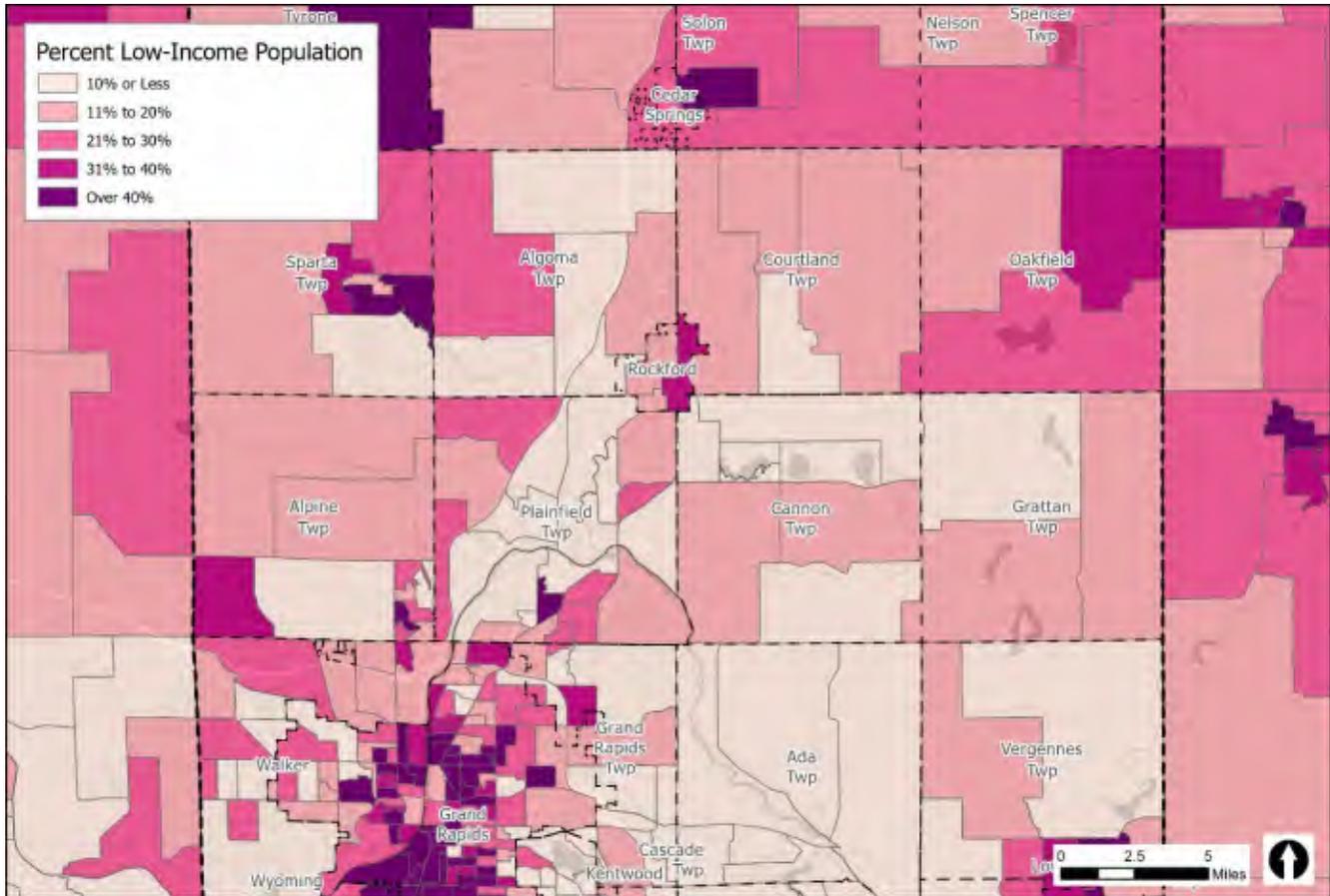


Figure 20 shows the distribution of households with no access to a personal vehicle in the Northview – Rockford area. Concentrations over 10 percent of total households are found in Rockford, in Cannon Township near Lake Belle Vista, and parts of Plainfield and Alpine townships.

Figure 20. Zero-Car Households by Census Block Group – Central Kent County

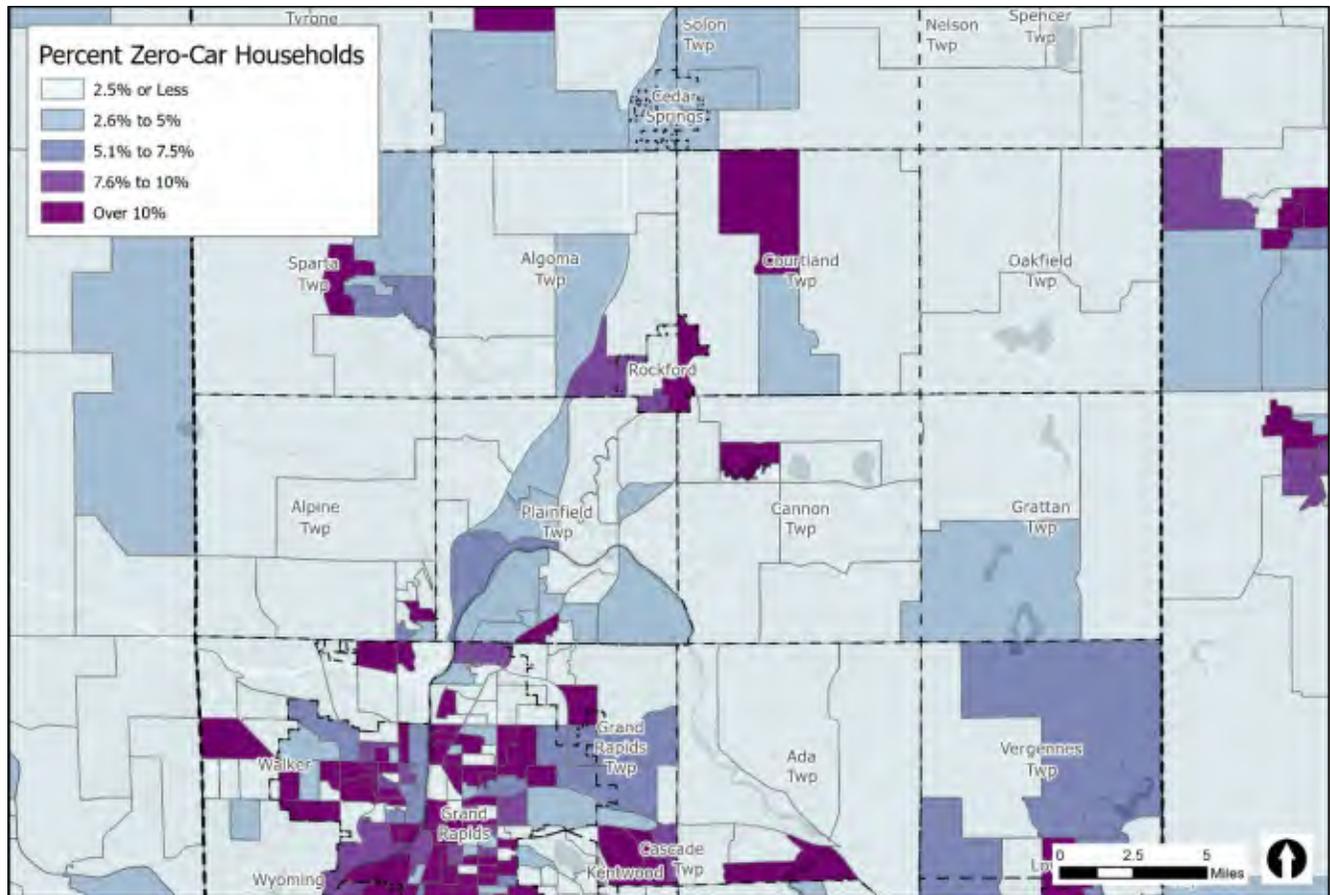
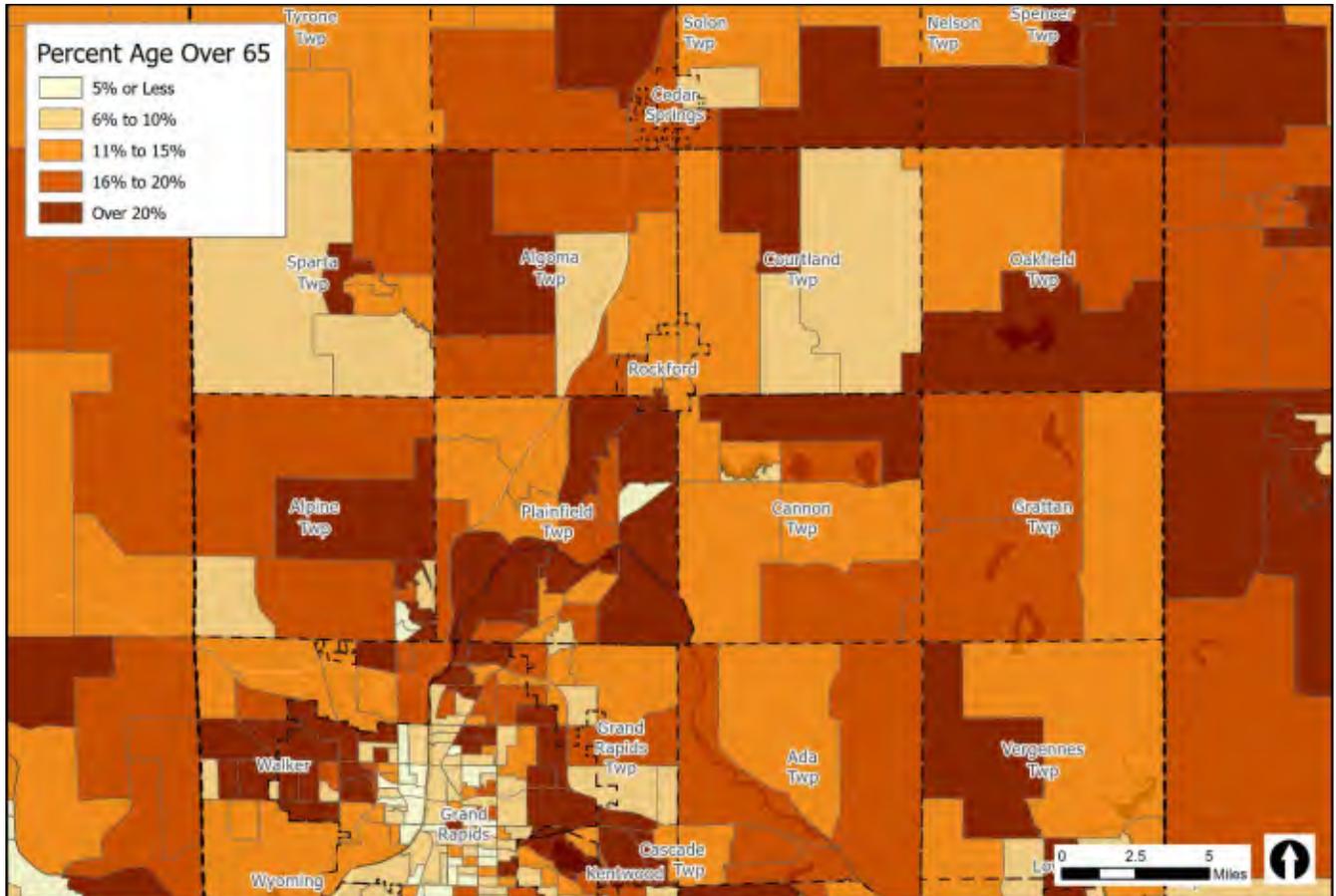


Figure 21 shows the distribution of persons over 65 years of age in the central Kent County area. Concentrations of persons over 65 years of age are relatively high in this market area, with much of Plainfield Township, and parts of Alpine, Cannon, and Oakfield townships exceeding 20 percent of the population.

Figure 21. Population over 65 Years of Age by Census Block Group – Central Kent County



Market Area 3: South Kent County

Figure 22 shows Replica OD travel patterns in south Kent County by tract, classified by average daily trip volume. Trips on the western side of the Grand River, comprising Grand Rapids Township, Cascade Township, and Kentwood, are highly interconnected as a contiguous urban form surrounding the City of Grand Rapids. Volumes are especially high on the corridor from Ada Township down to Gerald R. Ford International Airport and its surrounding industrial developments. The northernmost of the two census tracts representing Ada Township does not include Ada itself, but does include the Amway headquarters, which may comprise a significant share of observed trip flows to this tract. Trips to and from the City of Lowell are primarily to Vergennes and Lowell and Bowne Township. A significant proportion of daily trips between Lowell and Vergennes are likely to be related to Lowell High School, which is located in the Vergennes census tract.

Figure 22. Replica Origin-Destination Travel Flows – South Kent County



Figure 23 shows the distribution of population density across south Kent County. While most population density is located within The Rapid service area, densities exceeding one person per acre are also found in the City of Lowell and Caledonia Township.

Figure 23. Population Density by Census Block Group – South Kent County

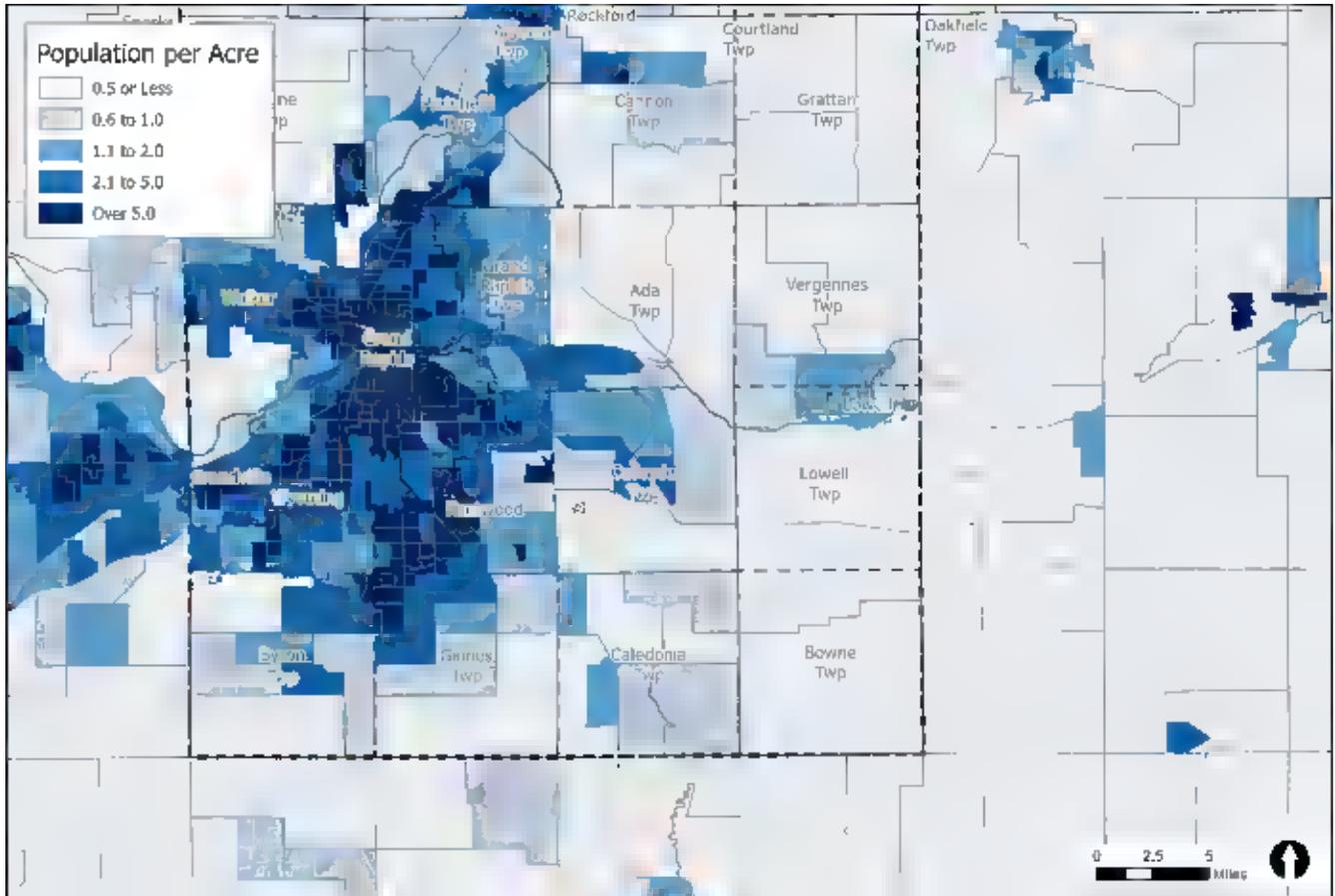


Figure 25 shows the distribution of non-white populations in the south Kent County area. The highest concentrations of minority population (more than 40 percent of total population) are found in Grand Rapids, Wyoming, and Kentwood. Gaines Township, Byron Township, and Grandville also contain block groups that are 40 percent minority. Block groups that are between 20 and 40 percent minority are found in Ada, Vergennes, Cascade, and Caledonia townships.

At the other end of the spectrum, the two block groups in Bowne Township are uniformly less than five percent minority (which is to say, more than 95 percent of residents are white and non-Hispanic). The southeastern corner of the county trends whiter overall in comparison to the rest of the county.

Figure 25. Minority Population by Census Block Group – South Kent County

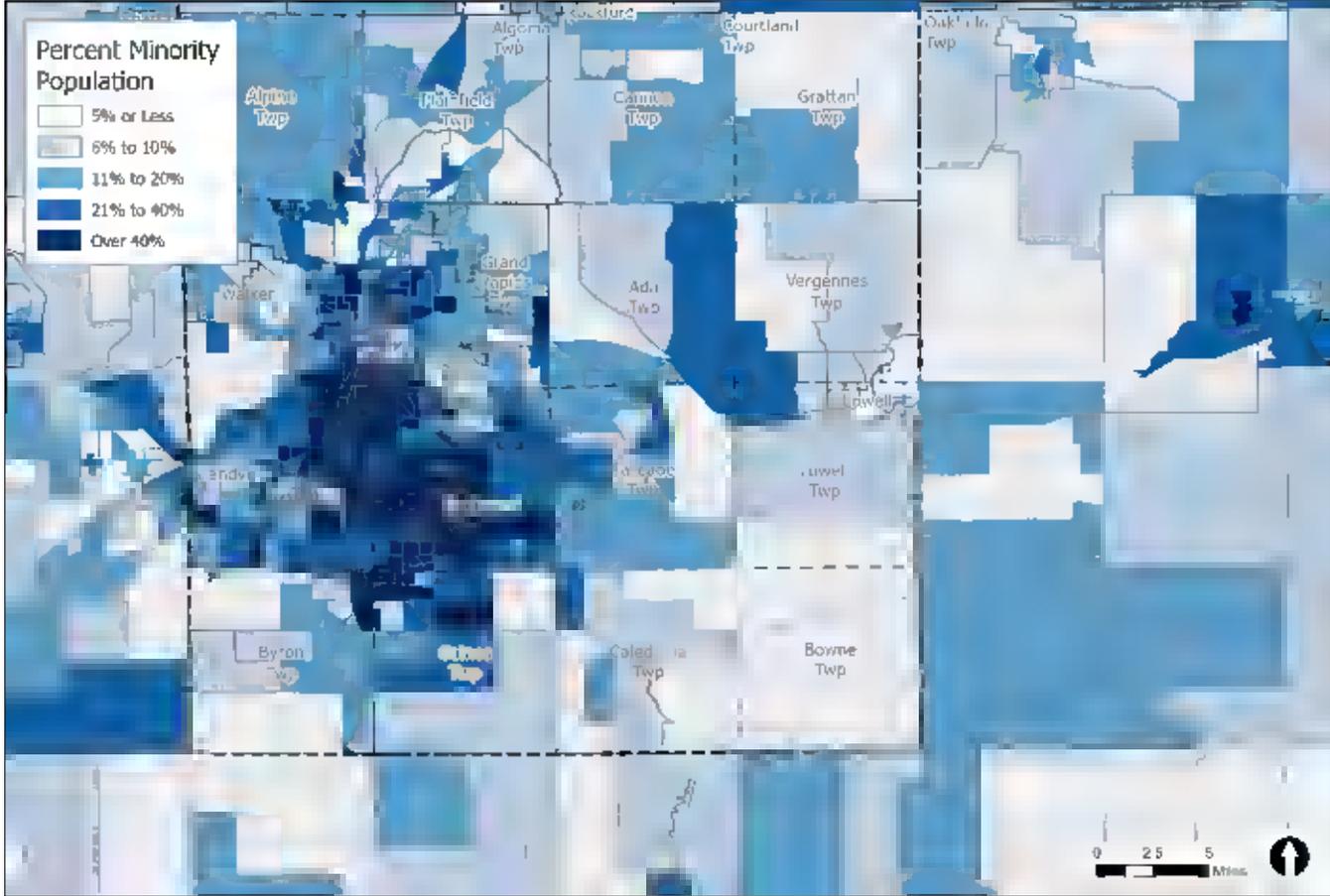


Figure 26 shows the distribution of low-income populations (defined as those earning less than 185 percent of the federal poverty level accounting for household size) in south Kent County. Concentrations of low-income households are relatively low in Grand Rapids, Ada, and Cascade townships. Higher concentrations are observable in the City of Lowell, reaching over 40 percent in some tracts, as well as Bowne Township.

Figure 26. Low-Income Population by Census Block Group – South Kent County

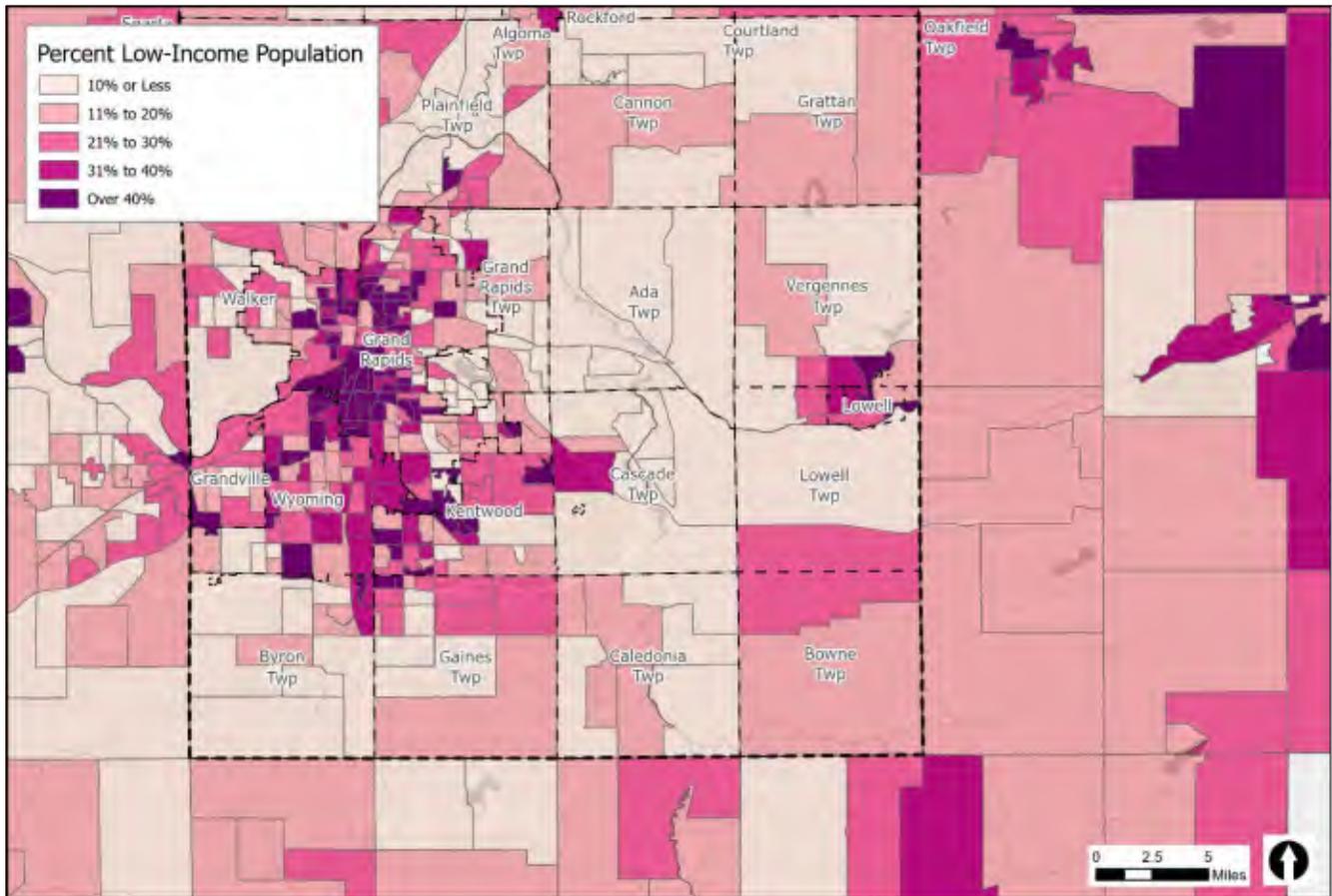


Figure 27 shows the distribution of households with no access to a personal vehicle in south Kent County. While much of the area shows high rates of vehicle ownership, significant concentrations are found in the City of Lowell as well as Ada, Lowell, and Bowne Townships, with some tracts exceeding 10 percent of households.

Figure 27. Zero-Car Households by Census Block Group – South Kent County

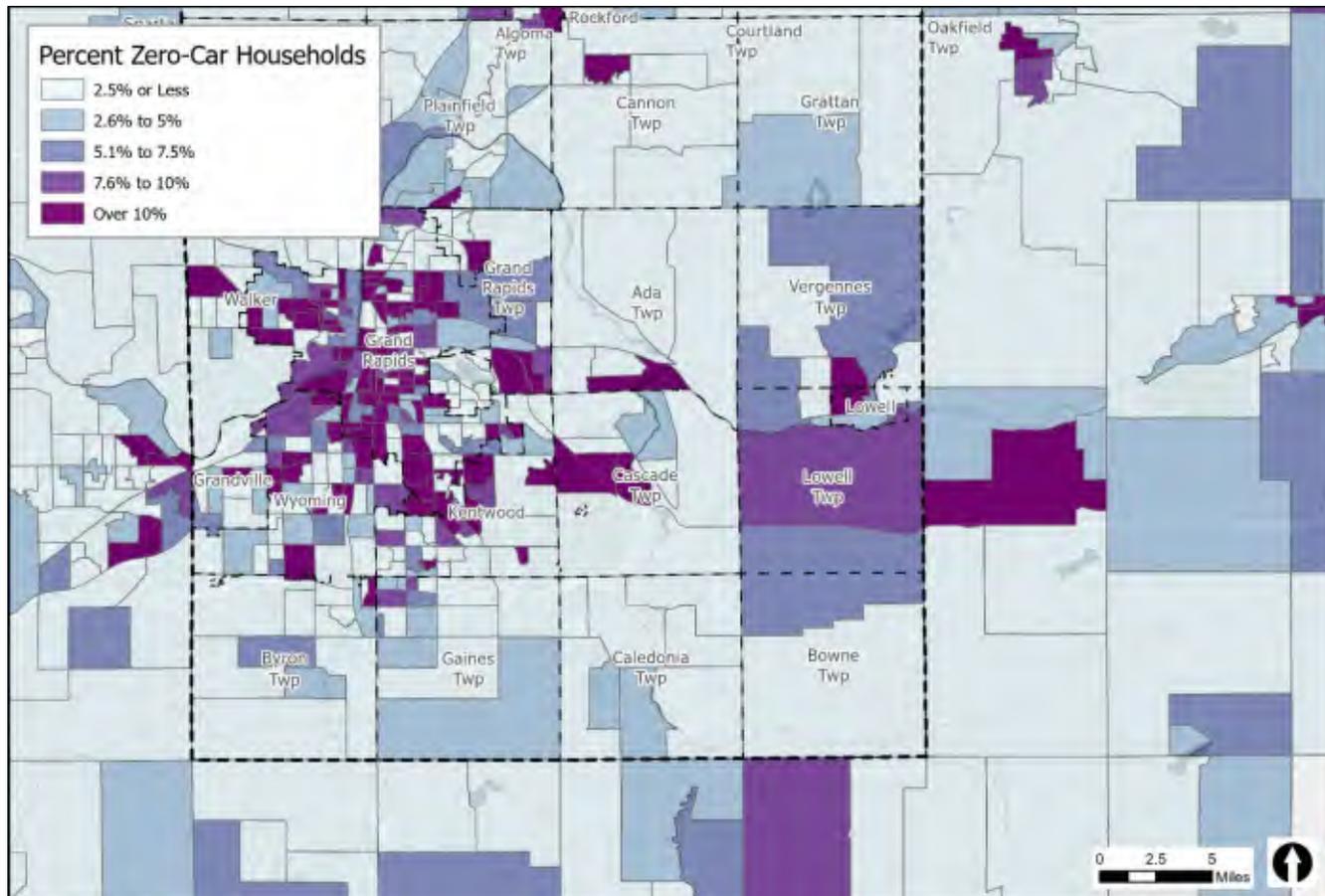
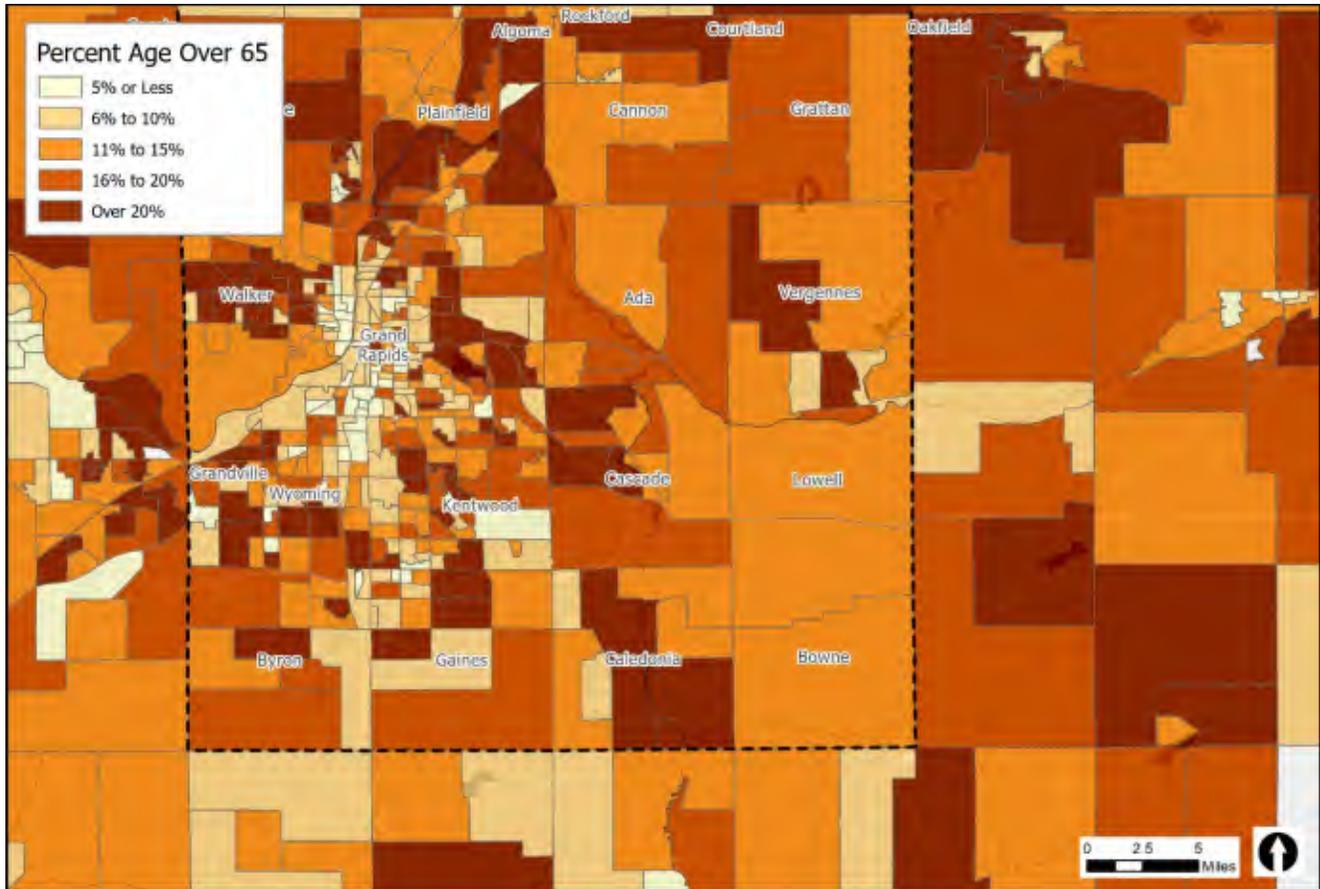


Figure 28 shows the distribution of persons over 65 years of age in south Kent County, which exceeds 10 percent in most of this market area. Particular concentrations are found in Grand Rapids Township, the City of Lowell, Vergennes Township, and Caledonia Township.

Figure 28. Population over 65 Years of Age by Census Block Group – South Kent County



Data Tables

For each demographic group, absolute numbers and percentages of total population were also summarized by municipality and township. For these data in table form, please refer to the Appendix (page 57).

Community and Stakeholder Input

The Kent County Mobility Study has incorporated significant opportunities for input from key stakeholders and other members of the community. In the early stages, this has included engagement with the Mobility Task Force and its technical subcommittee, hosting pop-up public meetings at local events, and launching a community survey. Engagement activities in upcoming phases of the study will include stakeholder interviews, focus groups, virtual public meetings, and local official leadership meetings.

SWOT Analysis

In its first meeting, the Mobility Task Force participated in an assessment of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT). The key observations made during this meeting are summarized below.

Strengths

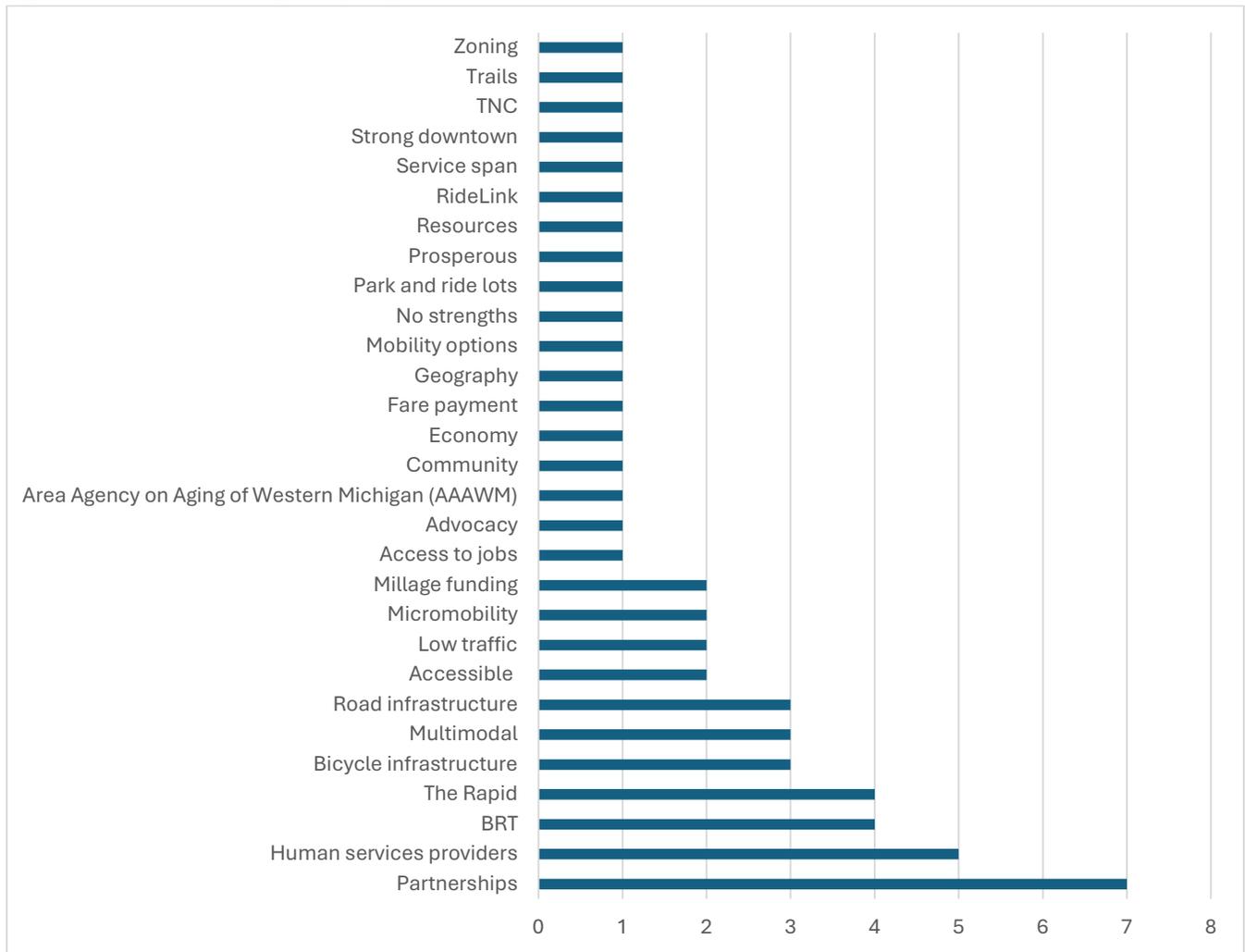
Figure 29 shows a summary of the strengths identified by the Mobility Task Force. Existing partnerships are a strength. There is a strong municipal presence and interest with a cooperative approach between units of government, as well as a shared awareness that the region could be doing better.

The landscape of human services providers is also a strength, with Hope Network and other providers offering more mobility options today than there were 10 years ago. The county millage helps to fund services. Micromobility has also become available with Grand Rapids' e-bike and scooter program, and use is rising every month.

The Laker Line and its high ridership are strengths; Grand Valley students riding it for free has been a game changer. There has been significant development along the line. It is accessible, affordable, and well-used. The Rapid more generally is considered to do a good job within its service boundaries. The local economy is strong and has a vibrant core city.

A willingness to explore multi-modality was mentioned as a strength. Zoning is becoming more supportive of transit. Bicycle infrastructure is becoming a priority, and parts of the county have safe bike lanes as well as a well-connected bike trail network. A robust and well-maintained road infrastructure was mentioned as a strength.

Figure 29. Current Strengths by Topic



Weaknesses

Figure 30 shows a summary of the weaknesses identified by the Mobility Task Force. The present study is underway because of a key weakness: the lack of service outside The Rapid’s service area, despite job and residential growth occurring there. Transit does not go to industrial parks and other employment centers.

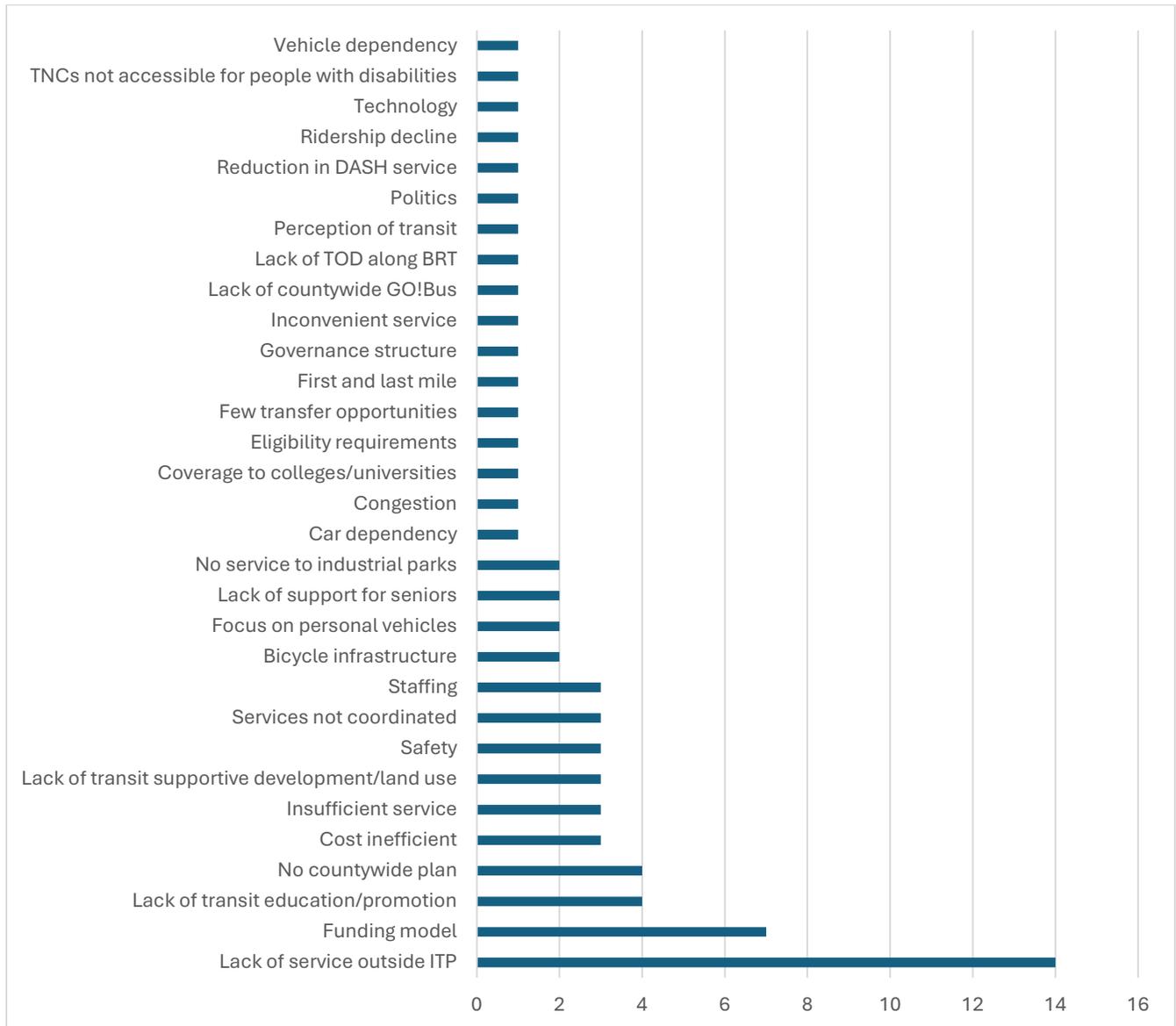
Part of the problem is that transit service only exists where an individual community pays into The Rapid. That is not seen as a good model for the future. There is a sense that agendas and stakeholders are not aligned, and that a countywide vision and strategy are needed.

Another weakness is the difficulty of making a case for funding transit in some jurisdictions. Investments in transit are seen as subsidies, rather than something that will generate returns for the community. There is a perception that “they” ride the bus and “we” do not. There is not enough education on how the economy does ride on transit. It is needed to reach doctor’s appointments and jobs. It is a tool to manage growing congestion. The lack of transit also forces people to spend more than they can afford on keeping their cars running.

In the last 10 years, Uber has changed people’s expectations about the ease and convenience of transportation services. This model is difficult to replicate in public transit. Moreover, Uber and Lyft are not accessible for people with disabilities.

Staffing is a weakness, with a small pool of potential drivers and mechanics. There is a perception that driving jobs are dangerous due to attacks on drivers and exposure to contagion. Women passengers are also paying more for an Uber because it is felt to be safer than a late-night bus.

Figure 30. Current Weaknesses by Topic



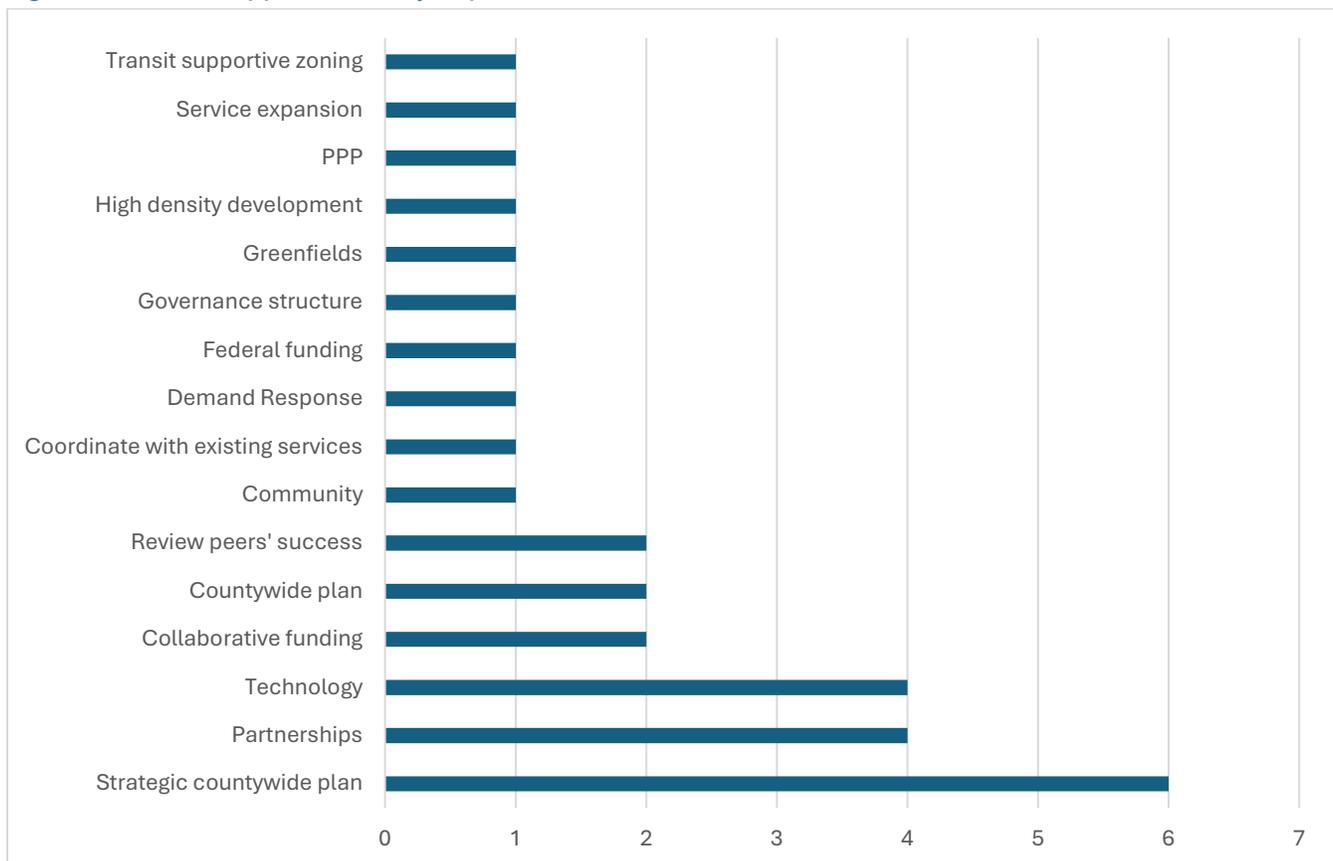
Opportunities

Figure 31 shows a summary of the opportunities identified by the Mobility Task Force. The present study – a strategic countywide plan – is an opportunity to design an innovative solution that serves all of Kent County. The absence of legacy systems in the townships leaves room to start from scratch. At the same time, there are opportunities for better connections between existing services, e.g. Hope Network and The Rapid. There is an opportunity for collaborative funding, with employers willing to participate in order to have stable employment. The existence of potential coordinators and brokers, such as Feonix Mobility Rising, is seen as an opportunity.

The recent emergence of mobility as a concept, as opposed to straightforward transit, is an opportunity as well. E-bikes and scooters have already been providing good connections to The Rapid. Uber, while challenging in that it raises expectations of convenience, also demonstrates what people value in a service. Technology advances allow for shared payment platforms and other efficiencies. Mobility technology companies are ready to help.

Higher-density growth along commercial corridors is seen as an opportunity. The existence of potential coordinators and brokers, such as Feonix Mobility Rising, is seen as an opportunity. So is the existence of model peer regions elsewhere in Michigan and the United States.

Figure 31. Current Opportunities by Topic



Threats

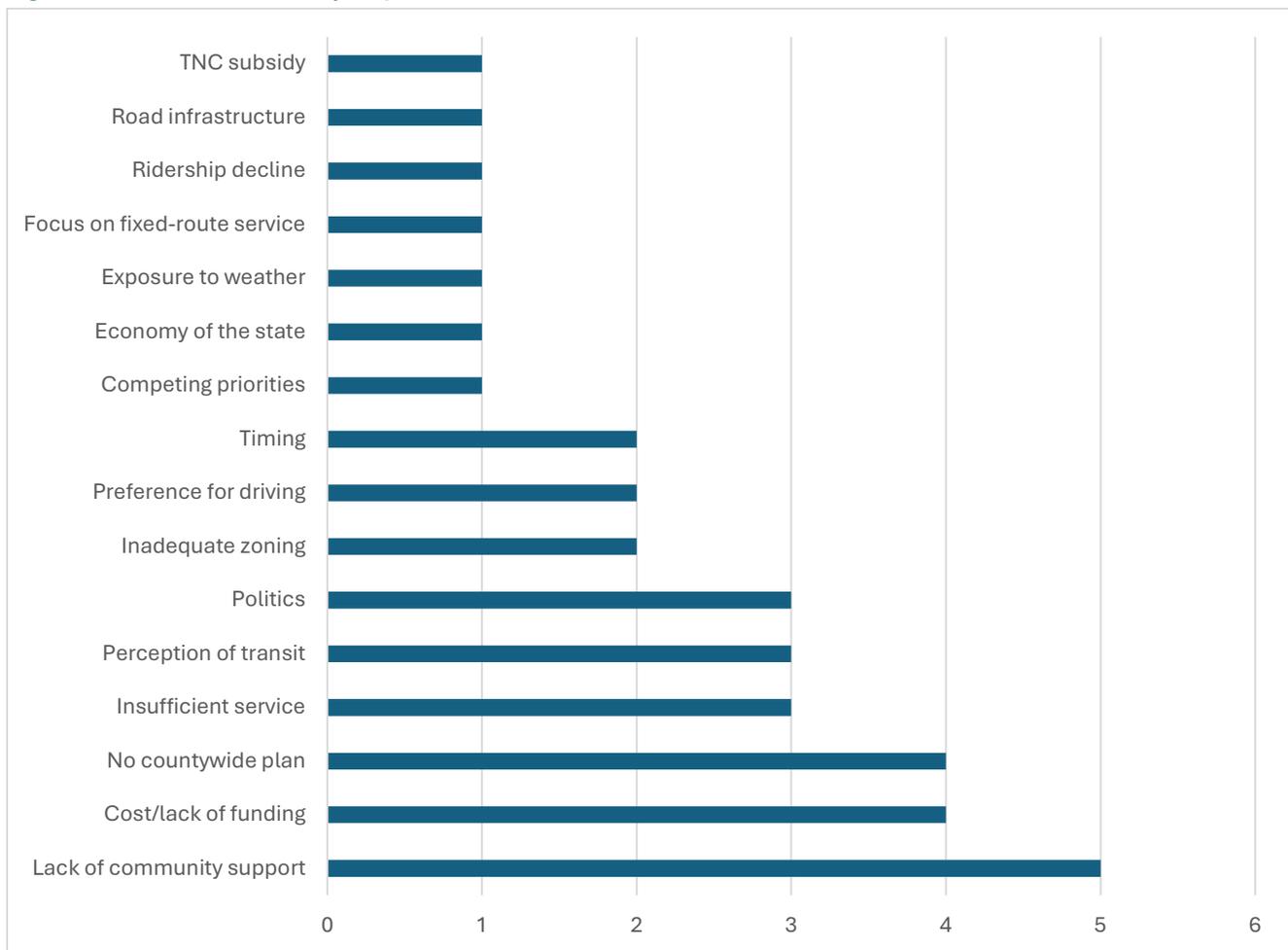
Figure 32 shows a summary of the threats identified by the Mobility Task Force. Lack of community support is the biggest threat. In addition to the stigma attached to transit ridership and unwillingness to brave harsh weather to use transit, many individuals and agencies are focused on immediate tax impacts; an important consideration for communication is to tell the big-picture story of incremental changes made toward a long-term goal. In the short term, there is a lack of realization that Kent County is already late to the game when it comes to investing in mobility services.

Sprawling development patterns are also a threat. There is concern that population growth will overtake the region's ability to keep up with demand, especially in light of "freestyle zoning" and services that are already underutilized or ineffective.

Misunderstandings about how mobility solutions are funded are also a threat. People think that Uber is not subsidized – but it is. If the us-versus-them mentality grows, that could also be a problem for transit. Leaning too hard on traditional transit models, rather than being open to new forms of mobility, is seen as a threat.

Finally, there is concern about a coming sharp decline in federal funds. Loss of gas tax revenue could create a hole in transportation funding that impacts transit.

Figure 32. Current Threats by Topic



Community Engagement

Pop-up engagement at summer events in the community generated awareness of the study and provided some early insights into priorities. The engagement team brought away the following high-level takeaways:

- There is community support for regional transportation
- Cost matters
- Door-to-door service is needed, but there is also a desire for regular bus route style to places like Sparta, Rockford, Lowell, Ada and Forest Hills
- Senior centers, and other “social hubs” are considered as locations for service connections (e.g. schools, medical centers, grocers)

The community survey and other upcoming engagement activities will provide further insights into the mobility needs and preferences of community members.



Study engagement at the ADA Celebration

Key Takeaways

The assessment of existing conditions identified the strengths and weaknesses of the existing service, pointing to the direction in which mobility options must grow. It also identified the travel patterns and demographic data that support potential future service alternatives. These high-level findings will guide the remainder of the study.

Service Landscape

Although The Rapid provides a strong variety of service options within its boundaries, outside The Rapid, services are chiefly limited to seniors and/or people with disabilities. These services are in demand and must continue to be supported; however, service for the general public is also a critical need, especially for commuters, people with low incomes, and households without vehicles of their own. Demographic data show that throughout Kent County there are significant proportions of households without vehicle access. In some census block groups, more than 10 percent of households do not have access to a vehicle.

Many of the organizations working in Kent County have a strong interest in improving mobility, and municipalities typically have planning goals favoring TOD, walkability, bikeability, and micromobility. However, they are limited by the current patchwork nature of mobility work. It is felt that a county-wide vision and service model are necessary in order to use limited resources effectively.

Travel Patterns

The forecasts for household growth and employment growth over the next 25 years, as well as the travel patterns shown in current models, suggest three different mobility 'markets' in Greater Kent County.

- In the north, travel demand is likely to be concentrated around Tyrone, Cedar Springs, and Oakfield. Trip generators include the Meijer in Solon. There is noticeable cross-border travel into Montcalm County, where Greenville is a major employment center. This suggests value in looking into ways to connect Greenville and Eureka.
- In the central part of the county, travel demand is likely to be concentrated around Northview, Belmont, Rockford, and Cannon.
- In the south, the urban area that includes Grand Rapids, Ada, Vergennes, Cascade, Lowell, Caledonia, and Bowne Townships forms a densely interconnected fabric of trips. The Gerald R. Ford International Airport, its surrounding industrial developments, and the Amway headquarters in Ada are significant trip generators.

It will be important to develop service alternatives that meet both the visible demand for travel within these markets – such as short hops across the border or from small rural communities into their closest hub – and the demand for longer-distance travel across the county, as the analyses conducted both for The Rapid Transit Master Plan and for this study show that the Grand Rapids area continues to draw from around the county and beyond.

Organizing Themes

Taken together, the results of the data analysis and stakeholder engagement suggest three themes for organizing service alternatives. These themes represent different travel needs in Greater Kent County and may suggest distinct service types.

- **Theme 1:** Supporting diverse travel needs for the general public in and around Kent County for all trip types, including medical, shopping, school, recreation, etc.
- **Theme 2:** Supporting job opportunities and economic growth by connecting the region's residents with employment centers located across the county.
- **Theme 3:** Supporting those who commute into the core six cities from areas of the county lacking mobility services, and vice versa.

As the Mobility Study advances, these themes will guide the development and evaluation of potential new mobility services.

Appendix: Demographics by Municipality

Table 6. Population Density by Municipality

Municipality or Township	Total Population	Total Acreage	Population per Acre
City of Grand Rapids	196,621	29,203	6.73
City of Wyoming	76,547	15,967	4.79
City of Kentwood	54,760	13,406	4.08
Plainfield Township	33,853	23,557	1.44
Gaines Township	28,890	22,891	1.26
Byron Township	27,138	23,112	1.17
City of Walker	25,005	16,124	1.55
Grand Rapids Township	19,691	9,953	1.98
Cascade Township	19,631	22,274	0.88
City of Grandville	16,035	4,904	3.27
Caledonia Township	15,913	22,857	0.70
Ada Township	14,424	23,765	0.61
Cannon Township	14,394	23,641	0.61
Alpine Township	14,051	23,167	0.61
Algoma Township	12,648	22,359	0.57
City of East Grand Rapids	11,164	2,157	5.18
Sparta Township	9,421	23,344	0.40
Courtland Township	9,107	23,021	0.40
Vergennes Township	7,393	22,641	0.33
Solon Township	7,360	23,171	0.32
Nelson Township	6,144	23,078	0.27
Oakfield Township	6,006	23,316	0.26
Lowell Township	5,980	21,331	0.28
City of Rockford	5,488	2,092	2.62
Tyrone Township	5,086	23,305	0.22
Spencer Township	4,236	23,456	0.18
Grattan Township	3,804	23,634	0.16
Bowne Township	2,931	23,050	0.13
City of Lowell	2,157	1,974	1.09
City of Cedar Springs	1,446	1,299	1.11

Table 7. Employment Density by Municipality

Municipality or Township	Total Jobs	Total Acreage	Jobs per Acre
City of Grand Rapids	125,600	29,203	4.30
City of Wyoming	43,576	15,967	2.73
City of Kentwood	53,445	13,406	3.99
Plainfield Township	12,159	23,557	0.52
Gaines Township	7,003	22,891	0.31
Byron Township	15,191	23,112	0.66
City of Walker	24,976	16,124	1.55
Grand Rapids Township	10,102	9,953	1.01
Cascade Township	31,905	22,274	1.43
City of Grandville	15,763	4,904	3.21
Caledonia Township	7,725	22,857	0.34
Ada Township	6,430	23,765	0.27
Cannon Township	1,199	23,641	0.05
Alpine Township	5,000	23,167	0.22
Algoma Township	1,862	22,359	0.08
City of East Grand Rapids	4,300	2,157	1.99
Sparta Township	3,795	23,344	0.16
Courtland Township	685	23,021	0.03
Vergennes Township	1,090	22,641	0.05
Solon Township	815	23,171	0.04
Nelson Township	365	23,078	0.02
Oakfield Township	291	23,316	0.01
Lowell Township	2,005	21,331	0.09
City of Rockford	5,248	2,092	2.51
Tyrone Township	699	23,305	0.03
Spencer Township	123	23,456	0.01
Grattan Township	244	23,634	0.01
Bowne Township	1,869	23,050	0.08
City of Lowell	2,243	1,974	1.14
City of Cedar Springs	2,123	1,299	1.63

Table 8. Minority Population by Municipality

Municipality or Township	Minority Population	Total Population	Percent Minority
City of Grand Rapids	82,428	196,621	41.9%
City of Wyoming	30,937	76,547	40.4%
City of Kentwood	23,236	54,760	42.4%
Plainfield Township	3,869	33,853	11.4%
Gaines Township	9,585	28,890	33.2%
Byron Township	5,085	27,138	18.7%
City of Walker	3,757	25,005	15.0%
Grand Rapids Township	2,949	19,691	15.0%
Cascade Township	2,536	19,631	12.9%
City of Grandville	2,325	16,035	14.5%
Caledonia Township	1,418	15,913	8.9%
Ada Township	1,980	14,424	13.7%
Cannon Township	1,143	14,394	7.9%
Alpine Township	4,451	14,051	31.7%
Algoma Township	1,285	12,648	10.2%
City of East Grand Rapids	809	11,164	7.2%
Sparta Township	733	9,421	7.8%
Courtland Township	728	9,107	8.0%
Vergennes Township	768	7,393	10.4%
Solon Township	604	7,360	8.2%
Nelson Township	644	6,144	10.5%
Oakfield Township	762	6,006	12.7%
Lowell Township	635	5,980	10.6%
City of Rockford	618	5,488	11.3%
Tyrone Township	706	5,086	13.9%
Spencer Township	384	4,236	9.1%
Grattan Township	204	3,804	5.4%
Bowne Township	128	2,931	4.4%
City of Lowell	102	2,157	4.7%
City of Cedar Springs	209	1,446	14.4%

Table 9. Low-Income Population by Municipality

Municipality or Township	Low-Income Population	Total Population	Percent Low-Income
City of Grand Rapids	68,212	196,621	34.7%
City of Wyoming	21,640	76,547	28.3%
City of Kentwood	14,286	54,760	26.1%
Plainfield Township	5,233	33,853	15.5%
Gaines Township	5,971	28,890	20.7%
Byron Township	4,174	27,138	15.4%
City of Walker	4,194	25,005	16.8%
Grand Rapids Township	1,997	19,691	10.1%
Cascade Township	1,302	19,631	6.6%
City of Grandville	2,732	16,035	17.0%
Caledonia Township	1,592	15,913	10.0%
Ada Township	484	14,424	3.4%
Cannon Township	1,179	14,394	8.2%
Alpine Township	3,464	14,051	24.7%
Algoma Township	1,096	12,648	8.7%
City of East Grand Rapids	705	11,164	6.3%
Sparta Township	2,150	9,421	22.8%
Courtland Township	831	9,107	9.1%
Vergennes Township	1,180	7,393	16.0%
Solon Township	1,265	7,360	17.2%
Nelson Township	1,975	6,144	32.1%
Oakfield Township	1,261	6,006	21.0%
Lowell Township	733	5,980	12.3%
City of Rockford	970	5,488	17.7%
Tyrone Township	1,528	5,086	30.0%
Spencer Township	894	4,236	21.1%
Grattan Township	468	3,804	12.3%
Bowne Township	456	2,931	15.5%
City of Lowell	620	2,157	28.7%
City of Cedar Springs	533	1,446	36.9%

Table 10. Zero-Car Households by Municipality

Municipality or Township	Zero-Car Households	Total Households	Percent Zero-Car
City of Grand Rapids	9,532	78,619	12.1%
City of Wyoming	2,022	28,452	7.1%
City of Kentwood	1,437	21,527	6.7%
Plainfield Township	384	13,545	2.8%
Gaines Township	314	10,820	2.9%
Byron Township	213	9,451	2.3%
City of Walker	367	10,381	3.5%
Grand Rapids Township	598	7,344	8.1%
Cascade Township	230	7,272	3.2%
City of Grandville	174	6,394	2.7%
Caledonia Township	70	5,445	1.3%
Ada Township	60	4,990	1.2%
Cannon Township	110	5,210	2.1%
Alpine Township	123	5,869	2.1%
Algoma Township	102	4,525	2.3%
City of East Grand Rapids	34	3,720	0.9%
Sparta Township	155	3,311	4.7%
Courtland Township	113	3,335	3.4%
Vergennes Township	172	2,810	6.1%
Solon Township	109	2,892	3.8%
Nelson Township	67	2,460	2.7%
Oakfield Township	16	2,287	0.7%
Lowell Township	157	2,261	7.0%
City of Rockford	172	2,403	7.2%
Tyrone Township	44	1,744	2.5%
Spencer Township	10	1,663	0.6%
Grattan Township	20	1,614	1.2%
Bowne Township	22	905	2.4%
City of Lowell	87	880	9.9%
City of Cedar Springs	25	570	4.3%

Table 11. Population over 65 Years Old by Municipality

Municipality or Township	Population over 65 Years Old	Total Population	Percent Over 65 Years Old
City of Grand Rapids	25,213	196,621	12.8%
City of Wyoming	8,641	76,547	11.3%
City of Kentwood	7,528	54,760	13.7%
Plainfield Township	6,581	33,853	19.4%
Gaines Township	3,802	28,890	13.2%
Byron Township	4,067	27,138	15.0%
City of Walker	4,392	25,005	17.6%
Grand Rapids Township	3,664	19,691	18.6%
Cascade Township	3,477	19,631	17.7%
City of Grandville	2,692	16,035	16.8%
Caledonia Township	2,371	15,913	14.9%
Ada Township	2,179	14,424	15.1%
Cannon Township	2,076	14,394	14.4%
Alpine Township	2,036	14,051	14.5%
Algoma Township	1,866	12,648	14.8%
City of East Grand Rapids	1,235	11,164	11.1%
Sparta Township	1,257	9,421	13.3%
Courtland Township	1,287	9,107	14.1%
Vergennes Township	1,019	7,393	13.8%
Solon Township	1,281	7,360	17.4%
Nelson Township	855	6,144	13.9%
Oakfield Township	1,035	6,006	17.2%
Lowell Township	706	5,980	11.8%
City of Rockford	820	5,488	14.9%
Tyrone Township	635	5,086	12.5%
Spencer Township	939	4,236	22.2%
Grattan Township	627	3,804	16.5%
Bowne Township	381	2,931	13.0%
City of Lowell	373	2,157	17.3%
City of Cedar Springs	178	1,446	12.3%

APPENDIX B. GOVERNANCE AND FUNDING PEER REVIEW



CEDAR SPRINGS

EST 1856

Kent County Mobility Study Governance and Funding Peer Review

February 2025



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Introduction

PROJECT BACKGROUND

The Kent County Mobility Study is a joint project of Kent County, Michigan, and the Grand Valley Metropolitan Council (GVMC). The first part of this study included an assessment of the current availability of public transit, micromobility, and other mobility services in the region, as well as a market analysis of demographics, community characteristics, and trip patterns. Additional steps in the planning process include identifying high-priority needs and gaps in service; assessing the market for mobility services in the county; evaluating possible service improvements; evaluating potential funding sources; and developing an implementation plan. Throughout the project, the team continues to engage stakeholders and the public through a survey, community meetings, focus groups, Mobility Task Force Meetings, and more.

The project study area includes all of Kent County, as well as the communities neighboring Kent County in an approximately 10-mile radius (Figure 1).

Early discussions produced the following problem statements to guide the solutions sought through the study:

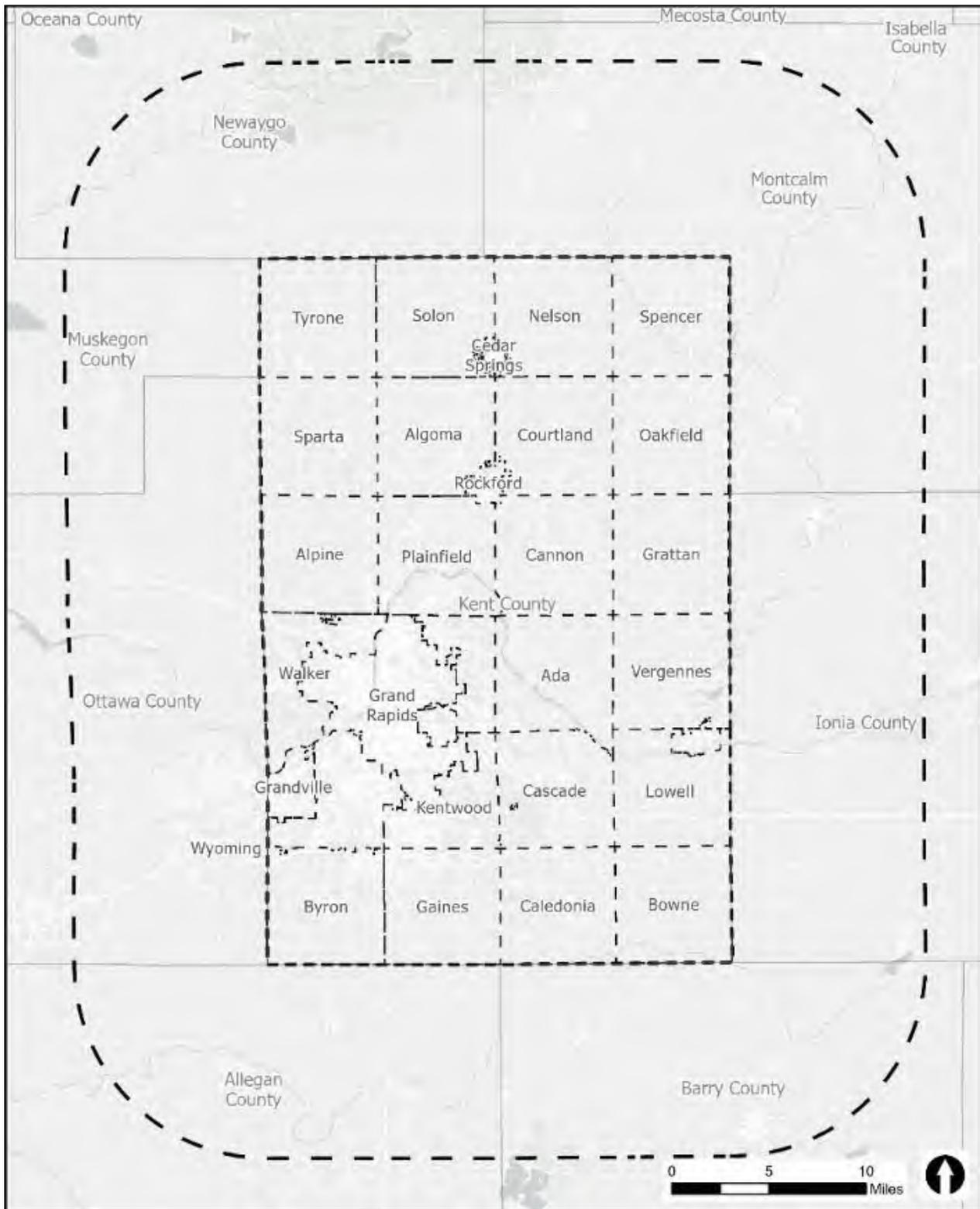
- **Regional Coordination:** Kent County lacks a cohesive regional mobility vision, where decisions are guided by shared countywide goals rather than the localized priorities of individual municipalities and townships.
- **Regional Mobility:** Affordable mobility options across the county are scarce. Meanwhile, population and job growth are occurring in underserved areas, while employers say they need transit to attract and retain their workforce. Services that do exist typically have limited capacity and narrow eligibility requirements. While The Rapid provides service to the general public in southwest Kent County, the rest of the county lacks effective mobility service for the general public.

PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

This report examines the mobility services offered in several peer counties, identifying those that offer useful lessons or models for Kent County. It begins with an introduction to transit governance in Michigan, including an overview of possible governance models and funding sources. It then continues with two different Michigan case studies that illustrate how other agencies operate in their unique transit governance and funding environments.

The Michigan case studies are followed by two case studies from Carver County in Minnesota and Marion County in Indiana, each of which offers multiple examples of services potentially applicable to Kent County. Finally, the report concludes with findings from the peer comparison and how they could be applied in Kent County.

Figure 1. Project Study Area



Michigan Transit Legislation and Funding Environment

The following sections describe the authorizing and enabling legislation in Michigan, followed by a detailed list of funding opportunities available to operate transit in the state of Michigan.

MICHIGAN AUTHORIZING AND ENABLING LEGISLATION

Each state has its own set of authorizing and enabling legislation when it comes to establishing, operating, funding, and governing public transit service. Authorizing legislation establishes the legal framework and powers that allow a public transit agency or authority to exist, while enabling legislation provides the detailed tools or mechanisms for local governments or transit authorities to implement transit services.

In Michigan, there are several transit authorizing and enabling legislative acts dating back to 1909, with the most recent legislation passed in 2012. The remainder of this section describes each Public Act (PA) by date of enactment, the number of agencies in the state of Michigan that are organized under the given PA, notable agencies that were established under the PA, and a summary of the findings.

Public Act 51 of 1951

All transit providers in the State of Michigan are eligible to receive financial operating assistance from MDOT based on authority granted in Public Act 51 of 1951. The PA established Michigan's Transportation Program including the Comprehensive Transportation Fund (CTF), which funds public transit projects. The PA includes a method for distributing the CTF and defines eligible recipients. Under the PA, two parties are defined as eligible CTF recipients:

- **"Eligible Authority"** – Section 10c(b) of PA 51 defines an "Eligible Authority" to mean an authority organized pursuant to PA 204 of 1967. Currently, only one transit provider is organized under this PA in MI – Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation (SMART) in the Detroit area.
- **"Eligible Governmental Agency"** – Section 10c(c) of PA 51 defines "Eligible Governmental Agency" to mean a county, city or village or an authority created pursuant to Public Acts 279 of 1909, 94 of 1933, 359 of 1947, 35 of 1951, 55 of 1963, 7 of 1967, 8 of 1967, 196 of 1986, or 387 of 2012. This includes all providers organized under the PAs listed in the following section except for SMART.

Individual Acts

Act 279 Home Rule (1909) and Act 359 Charter Township (1947)

"AN ACT to provide for the incorporation of cities and for revising and amending their charters; to provide for certain powers and duties; to provide for the levy and collection of taxes by cities, borrowing of money."

"AN ACT to authorize the incorporation of charter townships."

The Home Rule City Act and Charter Township Act allow for a city or chartered township to amend its charter to provide for the owning, constructing, and operating of transportation facilities within its limits and a 10-mile buffer from those limits. Jurisdictions that have transportation facilities formed under this act structure them like a governmental department and are incorporated into the municipal administration.

- Number in the State of Michigan: 18
- Notable Agencies: City of Midland and City of Battle Creek

Act 94: Revenue Bond (1933)

This Act establishes the ability for local governing bodies to issue bonds for the creation and maintenance of public improvements, including transportation.¹ This option is often exercised by counties that provide services themselves.

- Number in the State of Michigan: 21
- Notable Agencies: Charlevoix County and Muskegon County

Act 35: Intergovernmental Contracts Between Municipal Corporations (1951)

“AN ACT to authorize intergovernmental contracts between municipal corporations; to authorize any municipal corporation to contract with any person or any municipal corporation to furnish any lawful municipal service to property outside the corporate limits of the first municipal corporation for a consideration... to prescribe certain penalties; to authorize contracts between municipal corporations and with certain nonprofit public transportation corporation.”

Act 35 allows for a municipal corporation (county, charter county, county road commission, township, charter township, city, village, school district, intermediate school district, community college district, metropolitan district, court district, public authority, or drainage district) “to contract services from another to provide a service within their jurisdiction.” This may include public utilities like electricity or gas or non-profit public transportation services. The PA is not currently used by any agencies in the state to establish authorities or agencies eligible for the state’s Comprehensive Transportation Fund (CTF).

- Number in the State of Michigan: 0
- Notable Agencies: N/A

Act 55: Mass Transportation System Authorities (1963)

“AN ACT to provide for the incorporation of public authorities to acquire, own, and operate or cause to be operated mass transportation systems.”²

The Mass Transportation System Authorities Act (MTSAA) outlines the laws for a political jurisdiction to establish and govern a transportation authority. Under the MTSAA the “legislative body of any city having a population of not more than 300,000 may incorporate a public authority for the purpose of acquiring, owning, operating, or causing to be operated, a mass transportation system. The authority shall be authorized to operate the mass transportation system within the boundaries of the city which incorporates the public authority.”³ The authority may also operate a mass transportation system within a political subdivision which requests membership to the authority provided that a majority of the board approves the request.

Political subdivisions may leave the authority provided board majority approval and the provision of payment of all obligations. Any tax authorized to be “levied by the authority within the boundaries of the political subdivision to be released shall continue to be levied for the period of time originally authorized. In addition, a political subdivision which has been released from an authority shall continue to receive public transportation services from the authority

¹ The Revenue Bond Act of 1933, Act 94 of 1933, <http://www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/mcl/pdf/mcl-act-94-of-1933.pdf>

² Mass Transportation System Authorities Act, Act 55 of 1963, <http://www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/mcl/pdf/mcl-act-55-of-1963.pdf>

³ [MCL 124.352\(1\)](#)

until the political subdivision is no longer required to pay a tax levied by the authority during the time the political subdivision was a member of the authority.”⁴

Authorities formed under the MTSAA are also eligible to receive funds from the State Transportation Fund that provides grants to agencies providing public transportation services. Grants include up to 60 percent of all eligible operating expenses.⁵ Authorities formed under Act 55 also have the authority to levy a tax on taxable property within the political subdivisions that comprise the authority. The levy shall not exceed five mills and the period of time cannot be for more than five years.⁶

- Number in the State of Michigan: 4
- Notable Agencies: Ann Arbor Area Transportation Authority and Twin Cities Area Transportation Agency

Act 7: Urban Cooperation (1967)

“AN ACT to provide for interlocal public agency agreements.”⁷

Transit services provided under this act would allow two or more political jurisdictions to provide transportation services in a similar manner to services provided under the Home Rule of Charter Township Act or to a public transportation authority formed under the 1986 Act.

- Number in the State of Michigan: 9
- Notable Agencies: Blue Water Transportation Commission and Detroit Transportation Corporation (People Mover)

Act 8: Intergovernmental Transfer of Functions and Responsibilities (1967)

This act allows two or more political subdivisions (city, village, other incorporated political subdivision, county, school district, community college, intermediate school district, township, charter township, special district, or authority) to enter agreements where functions or responsibilities of one are transferred to another or between one another. A joint board or commission may be created to oversee the contract between the subdivisions. Currently there are no agencies that would be eligible for CTF funds established under PA 8.

- Number in the State of Michigan: 0
- Notable Agencies: N/A

Act 204: Metropolitan Transportation Authority (1967)

“AN ACT to create metropolitan transportation authorities; to define their powers and duties, including the creation of transportation districts.”⁸

⁴ [MCL 124.352a\(2\)](#)

⁵ Act 51 Public Acts 1951, MCL 247.660e(4)(a), <https://www.michigan.gov/mdot/business/local-government/act-51>

⁶ Mass Transportation System Authorities Act 55 of 1963, MCL 124.357, <http://www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/mcl/pdf/mcl-act-55-of-1963.pdf>

⁷ Urban Cooperation Act, Act 7 of 1967, <http://www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/mcl/pdf/mcl-act-7-of-1967-ex-sess-.pdf>

⁸ Metropolitan Transportation Authorities Act of 1967, Act 204 of 1967, <http://www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/mcl/pdf/mcl-act-204-of-1967.pdf>

Authorities formed under this act are intended to serve major metropolitan areas in Michigan. Currently, only one authority, Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation (SMART), has formed under this Act. Unlike other authorities, Metropolitan Transportation Authorities do not have taxation powers.⁹

- Number in the State of Michigan: 1
- Notable Agencies: SMART

Act 196: Public Transportation Authorities (1986)

"AN ACT to authorize the formation of public transportation authorities with certain general powers and duties."¹⁰

The Public Transportation Authority Act (PTAA) outlines the laws for establishing and governing a transportation authority. Under the PTAA, "a political subdivision or a combination of two or more political subdivisions may form a public authority under this act. A county with a population between 240,000 and 255,000 may form more than one public authority under this act. A city, village, township, or county forming a public authority by itself or in combination with one or more other political subdivisions may provide that only a portion of the city, village, township, or county shall become part of the public authority. The portion of the city, village, township, or county to become part of the public authority shall be bounded by precinct lines drawn for election purposes."¹¹ Additional members can be added to the authority given a majority approval of the legislative body of the jurisdiction requesting membership and 2/3 approval by the authority board.¹²

Political subdivisions that wish to leave the authority may do so in one of two ways: (1) majority approval of the governing body of the jurisdiction that wishes to leave, 2/3 approval by the authority board, and payment of outstanding obligations or (2) majority vote of the electorate and a petition with the required number of signatures.¹³

Authorities formed under the PTAA are also eligible to receive funds from the State Transportation Fund that provides grants to agencies providing public transportation services. Grants include up to 60 percent of all eligible operating expenses.¹⁴ Authorities formed under this act also have the authority to levy a tax on taxable property within the political subdivisions that comprise the authority. The levy shall not exceed five mills and the period of time cannot be for more than five years.¹⁵

- Number in the State of Michigan: 28
- Notable Agencies: Harbor Transit, Bay Area Transportation Authority, and Interurban Transit Partnership (Grand Rapids Area)

Act 387: Regional Transportation Authority (2012)

This act creates a regional transportation authority (RTA) which includes the largest county in the state, by population, and the next three largest contiguous counties. There may only be one regional transportation authority

⁹ [MCL 124.414](#)

¹⁰ Public Transportation Authority Act, Act 196 of 1986, <http://www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/mcl/pdf/mcl-act-196-of-1986.pdf>

¹¹ [MCL 124.454\(1\)](#)

¹² [MCL 124.457](#)

¹³ [MCL 124.458](#)

¹⁴ Act 51 Public Acts 1951, MCL 247.660e(4)(a), https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mdot/Act51_655261_7.pdf

¹⁵ [MCL 468](#)

in the state. Additional counties may petition the board of the RTA to join pending approval by the board. RTAs may levy both property taxes and vehicle registration taxes, given approval of the electorate and board.¹⁶

- Number in the State of Michigan: 1
- Notable Agencies: Regional Transit Authority of Southeast Michigan

Summary

Michigan's transit-related legislation provides a framework for local governments and regions to establish and operate public transportation systems. Cities and charter townships, under the Home Rule City Act (PA 279) and Charter Township Act (PA 359), can integrate transit as a municipal department, allowing them to own, construct, and operate transportation services within their jurisdiction and up to 10 miles beyond. The Revenue Bond Act (PA 94) broadens permissible funding mechanisms by enabling local entities to issue bonds to fund transit.

For collaboration, the Intergovernmental Contracts between Municipal Corporations Act (PA 35), the Urban Cooperation Act (PA 7), and the Intergovernmental Transfer of Functions and Responsibilities Act (PA 8) allow multiple jurisdictions to share services or contract transit operations, though there are no current transit agencies established under Act 35 and Act 8 receiving CTF funds.

For broader transit governance, Michigan allows for the creation of transit authorities that manage services across multiple jurisdictions. The Mass Transportation System Authorities Act (PA 55) permits cities under 300,000 population to form public transit authorities with the ability to levy property taxes and receive state grants to cover up to 60 percent of eligible operating expenses. Larger regional coordination is enabled by the Public Transportation Authority Act (PA 196), which allows cities, townships, or counties to form public authorities that can levy taxes and access state funding. Metropolitan areas can establish systems under the Metropolitan Transportation Authority Act (PA 204), though this law prohibits taxation powers.

Michigan also provides a unique structure for regional transportation through the Regional Transportation Authority Act (PA 387), which allows the largest counties to form a single regional transit authority (RTA). RTAs, like the Regional Transit Authority of Southeast Michigan, have the ability to levy property taxes and vehicle registration fees if approved by voters.

These various laws ensure that communities of all sizes can design transit systems tailored to their specific needs, whether through local government control, intergovernmental collaboration, or regional coordination, while offering options for sustainable funding and state support.

¹⁶ Regional Transportation Authority Act, Act 387 of 2012, <http://www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/2011-2012/publicact/htm/2012-PA-0387.htm>

MICHIGAN FUNDING MODELS

Many transit systems in Michigan, including The Rapid, receive a blend of federal, state, and local funding to support transit capital and operating expenses. The following sections summarize the various ways transit can be funded in Michigan.

Local Funding Options

Local entities (villages, cities, townships, etc.) that are included in a system's service area generate their share of the local cost of the transit system (the non-federal, non-state funds). These funds come from a combination of primarily farebox revenue, local municipal general funds, and property tax millages. Other funds that may be considered part of a system's local share¹⁷ include local service contract revenues collected directly from entities/organizations to purchase service that do not use FTA or CTF money. Transit systems can also raise local funds through concessions, advertising, and intercity ticket sale revenues as well as revenues from non-transportation services including, but not limited to, the sale of maintenance services, rental of revenue vehicles, and rental of buildings or other property.

Local funding from property tax millages can be collected in two ways: indirectly and directly. Indirect collection of local property tax millages for funding allows each participating local entity to raise its funds separately and provide those funds to the transit system through a contractual agreement. This way the local entities can maintain their own millage rates. For direct collection, the responsibility for raising the local share of funding for the service belongs to the transit system and a uniform local property tax millage rate is applied to all municipalities in the service area. Though the property tax millage rate proposed to be raised by a new transit system must be uniform across the boundaries of the new system, the boundaries of the organization may in some cases be incorporated to be less than the political boundary of a member municipality. Then, the millage rate would only apply to properties in the municipality that are within the organization's boundaries. Furthermore, when an indirect millage exists at the local jurisdictional level, and a millage exists for an authority covering that local jurisdiction, residents pay both millages.

State Funding

As stated earlier, the Comprehensive Transportation Fund¹⁸ (CTF), established by PA 51 in 1951, is the primary source of state funding for capital and operating expenses in the Public Transportation Program in Michigan.

State Programs

The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) manages programs¹⁹ that are funded in part by the CTF and federal FTA funds.

- **Local Bus Operating Assistance Programs** - This program is an operating assistance program used to provide state funding to assist transportation services in both urbanized and rural areas. Program funds may be used for operating and administrative assistance. The funds are distributed to eligible public transit agencies according to Act 51. Nonurbanized areas and urbanized areas under 100,000 population receive state operating assistance for up to 60 percent of eligible expenses. Urbanized areas over 100,000 population will receive state operating assistance for up to 50 percent of eligible expenses.
- **Local Bus Capital Assistance Program** - This program provides state share to match federal funds under various federal programs such as Section 5307, Section 5339, Small Urban, 5311(f), STGB, and CMAQ.
- **Specialized Services Program** - This program was developed to improve Michigan's public transportation services by providing operating assistance for transportation services primarily for seniors and individuals

¹⁷ [FY 25 Local Public Transit Revenue and Expense Manual](#)

¹⁸ <https://www.michigan.gov/mdot/programs/planning/five-year-transportation-program/revenue-impacts/public-transportation-funding>

¹⁹ <https://www.michigan.gov/mdot/travel/mobility/pub-transit/michigan>

with disabilities. Funds may be used to provide or purchase service and/or lease vehicles to provide service. The program is funded with 100 percent state funds.

- **Intercity Bus Program** - MDOT's Intercity Terminal Development Program is responsible for the construction or rehabilitation of intercity passenger terminals in over 20 communities throughout Michigan. Intercity Terminal funds are used to ensure the passenger terminals remain attractive, passenger friendly, and safe. Additionally, MDOT's **Intercity Bus Capital Program** utilizes state and federal dollars to fund buses used along Michigan's intercity bus routes. Buses are replaced when the federal useful life criteria have been met, ensuring safe and modern vehicles within Michigan's intercity bus program.
- **Service Initiatives Programs** – This is state funding program that provides funds to advance and improve mobility such as demonstration and implementation of new technology, innovative service models, regional services, research, training, planning and coordination. Applications may be submitted at any time during the year. MDOT may also issue calls for proposals or challenge grants seeking applications for projects to address specific state goals and objectives.
- **State Infrastructure Bank (SIB)** - The Michigan SIB loan program is available to any Act 51 public entity (county road commissions, cities, villages, or MDOT) for eligible transportation projects. The SIB complements traditional funding sources and serves as a tool to meet urgent project financing demands.

Federal Funding

Federal funds, available through a series of formula and competitive grant programs, are the third funding source available for transit operations. Federal funds can be distributed indirectly through MDOT via the programs mentioned above. Additionally, federal funds are disbursed directly to local recipients such as metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs), local government units, and transit agencies. Eligibility for a transit agency to be a direct recipient of federal funds is established in their enabling and authorizing legislation and cited in their articles of incorporation. For example, Harbor Transit in Ottawa County secured authority to receive federal funds under Home Rule Act 279 of 1909. These federal programs include, but are not limited to:

- **Urbanized Area Formula Program (49 U.S.C. §5307)** - Provides funding for public transportation in urbanized areas, places designated by the Census Bureau as having populations of 50,000 or more.
- **State of Good Repair Program (49 U.S.C. §5337)** - Provides funding primarily for repairing and upgrading rail transit systems, but also other fixed-guideway systems (such as passenger ferries and bus rapid transit) and bus systems that use high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes.
- **Capital Investment Grants (CIG) Program (49 U.S.C. §5309)** - Provides funding to support construction of new rail, bus rapid transit, and ferry systems and to expand existing systems. CIG funding is available on a competitive basis in which project sponsors undertake a multistep process to become eligible for funding.
- **Rural Area Formula Program (49 U.S.C. §5311)** - Provides funding to states and Indian tribes for public transportation outside of urbanized areas. Capital, operating, and planning are all eligible expenses. The formula used to apportion Rural Area Program funds includes rural land area, population, vehicle revenue miles, and the number of low-income individuals.
- **Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program (49 U.S.C. §5310)** - Provides funding to support specialized public transportation for these population groups. Under the law, 60 percent of the funds are apportioned to large urbanized areas, 20 percent to small urbanized areas, and 20 percent to rural areas. Within these categories, funds are distributed to specific areas based on the relative size of their elderly and disabled population.

Kent County Transit Governance and Funding

Transit service in Kent County is provided primarily by The Rapid, an intergovernmental partnership that receives a blend of local, state, and federal funding to support transit capital and operating expenses. To the extent that the County provides service, it is filling in where there is greatest need on a limited budget.

THE RAPID

Service Description

The Rapid is a service of the Interurban Transit Partnership (ITP) organized by Grand Rapids, East Grand Rapids, Grandville, Kentwood, Walker, and Wyoming. The Rapid services include the following:

- Twenty-six fixed routes provide scheduled service throughout Grand Rapids using a fleet of 149 buses. Two routes, the Laker Line and the Silver Line, are bus rapid transit (BRT) routes with enhanced stations, frequencies, and road priority.
- The GO!Bus offers door-to-door service for seniors 65+ and persons with disabilities who cannot ride a fixed-route bus. GO!Bus is a shared-ride, advanced reservation service intended to provide comparable level of transportation that is provided by The Rapid fixed-route bus. Fares range from \$3.50 - \$8.00 per ride and service is provided to and from all points within the 180-mile service area during the hours that buses are running.
- Passenger Adaptive Suburban Service (PASS) allows those who live more than a third of a mile from a bus line to book a ride from their curb to the nearest bus stop. The area of eligibility is bounded roughly by Kenowa Avenue (west), Four Mile Road (north), East Beltline Avenue and Patterson Avenue (east), and 60th Street (south).
- DASH routes connect key downtown destinations and parking lots in Grand Rapids with a fleet of 10 vehicles. The service is free and open to the general public. It is funded by the City of Grand Rapids and Downtown Grand Rapids, Inc.

The Rapid's service area extends slightly beyond the six participating municipalities into Alpine, Byron, Gaines, and Plainfield Townships in Kent County; Allendale Township in Ottawa County as part of contracted service with Grand Valley State University; and, as part of contracted service with Ferris State University, Cedar Springs (Kent County) and Big Rapids (Mecosta County).

Governance Structure

The Rapid began life as the Grand Rapids Transit Authority in 1963. As the need for regional transit services grew, the surrounding cities of East Grand Rapids, Grandville, Kentwood, Walker, and Wyoming joined with Grand Rapids to form a transit authority. Its current incarnation dates back to 2000, when the six cities formed the Interurban Transit Partnership (ITP) as a PA 196 authority to secure more reliable funding. ITP service was rebranded under the name "The Rapid." Its 15-member board comprises representatives from its six constituent cities. Other jurisdictions contract with The Rapid for service.

Funding Structure

In the next several years, the majority of The Rapid's operating funding is expected to come from local property taxes through a transit millage rate, currently set at 1.47 mills. State operating assistance is the second-largest

revenue source. Passenger fare revenue is projected to increase in absolute terms over the next five years, but to fall as a percentage of operating costs (from 10 percent to six percent).

Table 1. Millage Rates for Transit Providers in Kent County

Authority	Local Unit/Service Area	Millage Rate	Millage Purpose	Dates of Millage	Total Millage Revenue (2023)	Total Millage Revenue per Capita (2023)
The Rapid	Grand Rapids, East Grand Rapids, Walker, Wyoming, Grandville and Kentwood	1.4	The Rapid Services	2017-2029	\$72,399,485	\$116

Source: NTD 2023 Revenue Sources and Agency Information

The Rapid also receives federal operating assistance, but this is a volatile source. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, federal sources funded only five percent of The Rapid’s annual operating expenses. COVID relief funding allowed The Rapid not only to maintain service during the pandemic, but to build up a reserve that will help cushion it against financial challenges for the next few years; however, federal assistance on this scale is unlikely to be available again in the future.

Capital funding comes from both state and federal sources. In recent years, The Rapid has received FTA’s Section 5307 formula funding program for urbanized areas, discretionary funding from FTA’s Capital Investment Grant (CIG) program (Section 5309), and bus purchase formula funding through Section 5339. FTA capital grants generally have an 80 percent federal share and a 20 percent local match requirement. As explained earlier, CTF typically provides the 20 percent match.

OTHER TRANSIT PROVIDERS

While Kent County does not currently have a prominent role in transit provision, it does operate a transportation service for older adults and people with disabilities through its Community Action division. The *Way 2 Go!* service is supported by funding from the State of Michigan, The Rapid, and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Community Development Block Grant program. The service area is limited to locations not currently served by The Rapid’s fixed route and ADA paratransit (GO!Bus) services.

Additionally, a coalition of nonprofits and public agencies jointly operate the countywide RideLink program, which offers transportation to seniors 60 and older. Other nonprofit services are available for specific populations and areas.

Peer County Transit Governance and Funding

PEER SELECTION

To better understand how other counties provide transit services to their residents, the consultant team reviewed the transit governance and funding structures of two counties within Michigan and two counties outside Michigan. The team sought to answer the following questions about the peer governance structures, which will help guide recommendations for Kent County:

- What types of transit services are provided and how would they fit into the context of Kent County?
- How are transit service providers organized in peer county regions?
- How are transit service providers governed in their respective regions?
- What sources of funding do other regions use?

To find detailed answers to each of these questions, the consultant team first conducted research online. Next steps in the process may include interviewing peers to dive deeper into their governance and funding structures.

KALAMAZOO COUNTY, MI

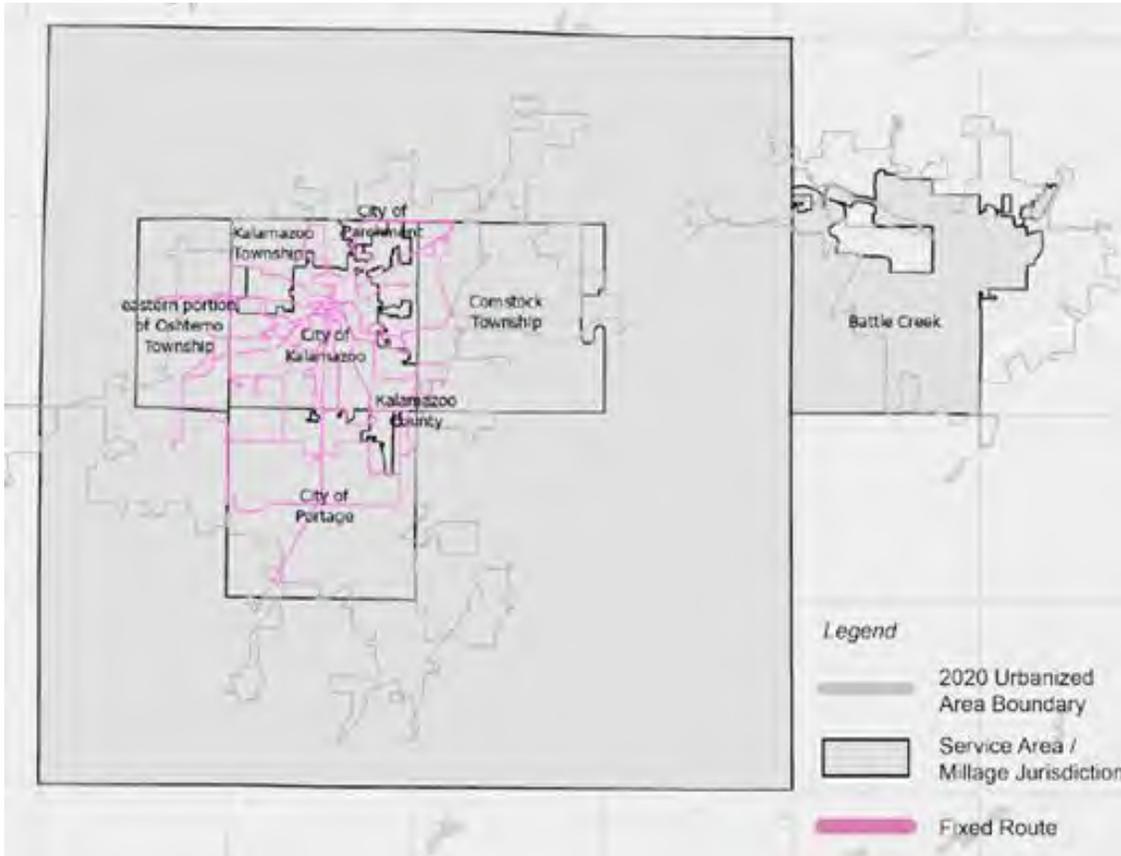
Kalamazoo County, located in southwest Michigan, is home to the City of Kalamazoo. The largest transit agency in the county is Metro, which provides services throughout the County. Additionally, the Kalamazoo County government helps to coordinate transportation services for seniors.

Service Description

Metro is the primary transit agency in Kalamazoo County, operating fixed-route and paratransit services in the Kalamazoo metro area and demand response services (including ADA paratransit) throughout the entire county. A map of the area is shown in Figure 2.

The Area Agency on Aging Region 3A is housed within the Kalamazoo County Government's Health and Community – Older Adult Services Division. Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) are a nationwide network of entities providing expertise on aging and long-term care, and often transportation services. The Area Agency on Aging Region 3A partners with senior centers and other non-profit organizations across the county to provide curb-to-curb service for seniors.

Figure 2. Metro Service Area and Millage Jurisdiction



Governance Structure

Metro receives millage funding from two authorities: The Central County Transportation Authority (CCTA) spanning the core urbanized area; and the Kalamazoo County Transportation Authority (KCTA), spanning the entire County.

Within the CCTA area, which includes the cities of Parchment, Kalamazoo, and Portage, and the townships of Kalamazoo, Comstock, and Oshtemo, Metro provides fixed-route services. They also provide Metro Link microtransit service, Metro Connect (which includes paratransit), and Metro Share Vans which are vans available for partner agency use. For all of Kalamazoo County, Metro provides paratransit services.

KCTA and CCTA each have a 9-member board that hold joint meetings to plan, promote, finance, and operate countywide transportation.

Funding Structure

Millage Funding Sources

The countywide authority, KCTA, has millage of 0.31. This entity was established in 2006 to manage Metro's Countywide paratransit and vanpool services.

After PA 123 of 2011 was passed (amendment to PA 196),²⁰ allowing two transportation millages in a single county, the CCTA was established in 2014 to manage Metro's fixed-route system within the urbanized area. CCTA officially

²⁰ [MCL 124.454](#)

began to operate the service in 2016, taking this role over from the City of Kalamazoo. The CCTA collects a 0.9 transit millage within the Cities of Kalamazoo, Parchment, Portage, Townships of Kalamazoo and Comstock, and the eastern portion of Oshtemo Township (Table 2). This funding is directed towards Metro services in the Kalamazoo urban area. Within Kalamazoo County, residents only pay one or the other millage depending on where they live.

Local city and county leaders championed the changes to the state law so that residents would only be taxed for services within their area. This effort was also focused on regionalizing public transit by having both countywide and fixed-route services operated under one entity, Metro.

Funding for the Area Agency on Aging Region 3A, housed within the Kalamazoo County government, comes from a 0.35 countywide senior millage. This goes towards a variety of senior services, which includes coordination of transportation services with non-profits across the county.

Table 2. Millage Rates for Transit Providers in Kalamazoo County

Authority	Local Unit/Service Area	Millage Rate	Millage Purpose	Dates of Millage	Total Millage Revenue (2023)	Total Millage Revenue per Capita (2023)
CCTA	Cities of Kalamazoo, Parchment, Portage, Township of Kalamazoo and Comstock, and eastern portion of Oshtemo Township	0.9	Metro fixed-route services	2021-2025	\$8,585,316*	\$33*
KCTA	Kalamazoo County	0.31	Metro county-wide Services	2022-2026		

Note: Millage revenue from both millages is directed towards Metro services. The per-capita value is based on the population of the county.

Source: NTD 2023 Revenue Sources and Agency Information

Revenue Sources

Most of Metro’s funding comes from directly generated sources, which is primarily comprised of property tax funding and fare revenue. A relatively high proportion of Metro’s funding comes from property taxes (34 percent of all revenue earned). State and federal operating assistance funds are still significant sources of revenue at 28 percent and 22 percent of total revenue generated, respectively.

Findings and Conclusions

Kalamazoo County presents an interesting case of transit funding and operations. To resolve tension between funding for rural and urban public transportation services, they championed a change in state law that allowed for the formation of two Public Transportation Authorities in a single county. This allowed Metro to raise funding for rural demand response services through a countywide millage. Meanwhile, funding for urban-oriented fixed-route services is raised through a millage in the City of Kalamazoo service area. This also transferred operation of the fixed-route system from within the City of Kalamazoo government to Metro. One goal of this change was to promote more regional public transportation by having Metro operate both countywide and fixed-route services.

Similar to Kent County, the Kalamazoo County government plays an important role in coordinating transportation for seniors, funded by a senior millage. The KCTA and CCTA each have a nine-member board that meet jointly. The boards work with Metro and are responsible for policy decisions related to operating the regional public transportation system.

WASHTENAW COUNTY, MI

Washtenaw County, home to the City of Ann Arbor and the University of Michigan, is in southeast Michigan. Outside of Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti, the county is mostly rural with low population densities.

Washtenaw County is part of the four-county jurisdiction of the Regional Transit Authority (RTA), an entity created to raise funds for regional public transportation and coordinate planning efforts for Metro Detroit. The main transit agency in Washtenaw is TheRide, also known as the Ann Arbor Area Transportation Authority (AAATA). The RTA coordinates with TheRide and smaller demand response agencies in the county. A map of the area is shown in Figure 3.

Service Description

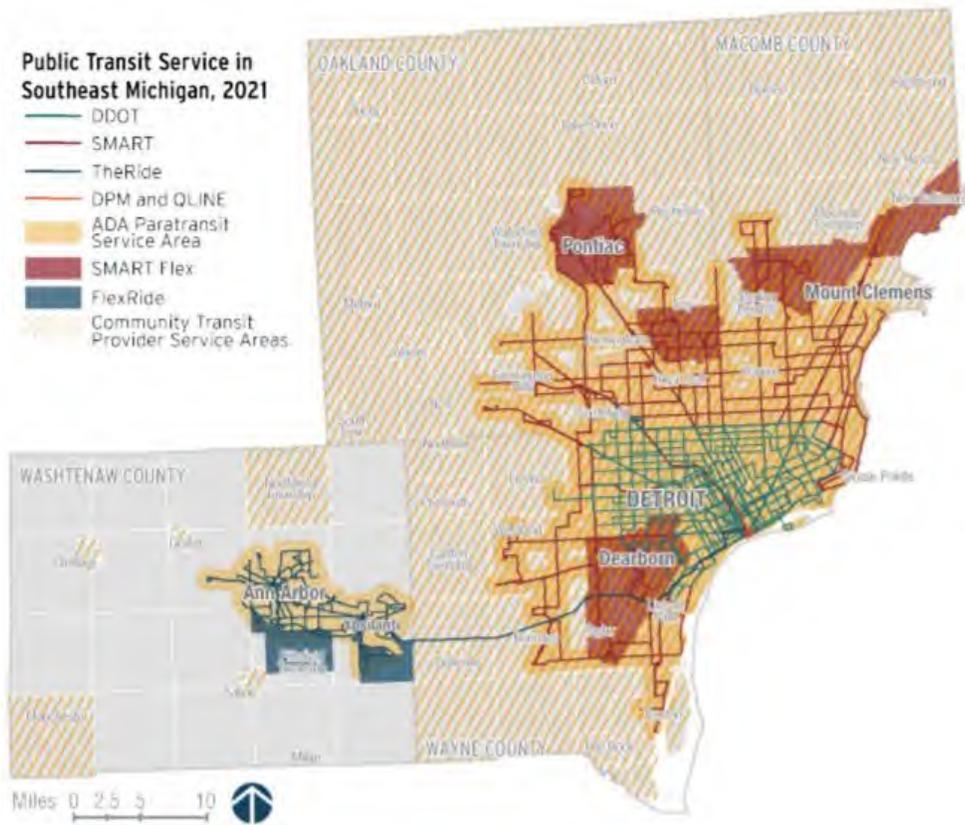
The following list summarizes the transit agencies and organizations operating in Washtenaw County, and which jurisdictions they serve.

- **TheRide:** TheRide is the largest agency operating in Washtenaw County, serving the City of Ann Arbor, City of Ypsilanti, and Ypsilanti Township. TheRide mostly operates within its service area, but does provide some contracted services to outlying areas, like Scio Township.
- **Regional Transit Authority (RTA):** The RTA is a regional authority whose jurisdiction includes Washtenaw, Wayne, Oakland, and Macomb counties. The RTA coordinates regional connections and passes federal funding to agencies within the four counties. In partnership with TheRide, the RTA runs the D2A2 bus shuttle between Detroit and Ann Arbor which has been successful since re-launching after the pandemic.
- **University of Michigan Parking and Transportation Services (UMTS):** Fully operated by the University of Michigan, UMTS runs fixed-route bus service on Ann Arbor's campus.
- **People's Express:** The People's Express is a non-profit organization providing door-to-door service throughout Washtenaw County and a commuter route between Brighton and Ann Arbor.
- **Western-Washtenaw Area Value Express (WAVE):** WAVE is a non-profit organization providing door-to-door service, fixed-route services, flex-routes, and shuttles in Western Washtenaw County.
- **Other smaller non-profits** providing door-to-door services within the county include Manchester Area Senior Citizens Council, Inc. and Northfields Human Service Agency.

Governance Structure

Washtenaw County does not operate or coordinate public transportation through the county government. However, Washtenaw County is a part of the RTA jurisdiction, which coordinates regional public transportation in Metro Detroit. Washtenaw County is not a part of the Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation (SMART) service area, which operates fixed-route and demand response services in Oakland, Macomb, Wayne, and Monroe Counties.

Figure 3. Public Transit Service in Southeast Michigan.



Source: Transit Riders United (TRU), <https://www.detroittransit.org/new-regional-transit-plan/>.

Funding Structure

Millage Funding Sources

In Michigan, local transit funding typically comes from millages. There is no countywide millage specifically dedicated to public transportation within Washtenaw County. Like many other counties in Michigan, Washtenaw County does collect a 0.5 millage to fund senior services, however it is not clear if any of that funding is directed towards senior transportation services (a common use of senior millage funding). Within the county, transit millages are collected in the City of Ann Arbor, the City of Ypsilanti, Scio Township, and in TheRide service area. Scio Township’s transit millage is partially directed to TheRide, which assists with planning and provision of contracted services to the township. The University of Michigan system is not funded through any local millages.

In the early 2010s, there was an effort to coordinate transit at the county level in Washtenaw County that ended up proving unsuccessful. Officials at the City of Ann Arbor and the county worked together to form a countywide transit authority called *The Washtenaw Ride*. However, when most jurisdictions within the county opted out, support was lost from the City of Ann Arbor, the initiative lost momentum, and the authority was never realized. After that, the AAATA pivoted to focus more on strengthening its service in core areas of the county, coordinating service, and raising funds predominantly in the Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti areas.

TheRide service area includes the City of Ann Arbor, the City of Ypsilanti, and Ypsilanti Township. In 2023, TheRide passed a dramatic increase to its transit millage, raising it to 2.38 mills for 2024-2028. On top of this millage, the

City of Ann Arbor and the City of Ypsilanti also have permanent transit millages, at 1.93 and .89, respectively, both also directed toward TheRide. In 2024 the Scio Township millage was slightly increased and renewed until 2034, with the new millage period beginning in 2025 (Table 3). Within Washtenaw County, residents of one of the jurisdictions charging a transit millage pay both the local transit millage and the AAATA millage.

Table 3. Millage Rates for Transit Providers in Washtenaw County

Authority	Local Unit/Service Area	Millage Rate	Millage Purpose	Dates of Millage	Total Millage Revenue (2023)	Total Millage Revenue per Capita (2023)
–	Scio Township	0.36	Transit (often contracting service from TheRide)	2025-2034	\$467,401	\$27
–	City of Ann Arbor	1.93	Transit (directed towards TheRide)	Permanent	\$12,845,722	\$108
–	City of Ypsilanti	0.89	Transit (directed towards TheRide)	Permanent	\$335,356	\$17
TheRide	City of Ann Arbor, City of Ypsilanti, Ypsilanti Township	2.38	TheRide	2024-2028	\$59,266,075	\$215

Sources: NTD 2023 Revenue Sources, NTD 2023 Agency Information, U.S. Census Bureau 2023 Population Estimates, Scio Township 2023 budget,²¹ City of Ann Arbor 2023 budget,²² City of Ypsilanti 2023 budget²³

2023 Revenue Sources

In Washtenaw County, 2023 revenue sources were reported to the FTA for TheRide and UMTS. Because UMTS service is run by the University of Michigan, they do not receive any local millage funding. Most funding for UM service comes from the state or is directly generated by the agency, through tuition and other sources.

In 2023, the greatest share of funding for TheRide came from federal sources. However, in 2024, TheRide service area millage increased from 0.7 to 2.38 mills. Because the agency is eligible for up to 50 percent of its eligible operating expenses to be covered by the state’s Comprehensive Transportation Fund through the Local Bus Operating Assistance Program, an increase in local funding could also lead to the agency being eligible for more CTF funds for operations.

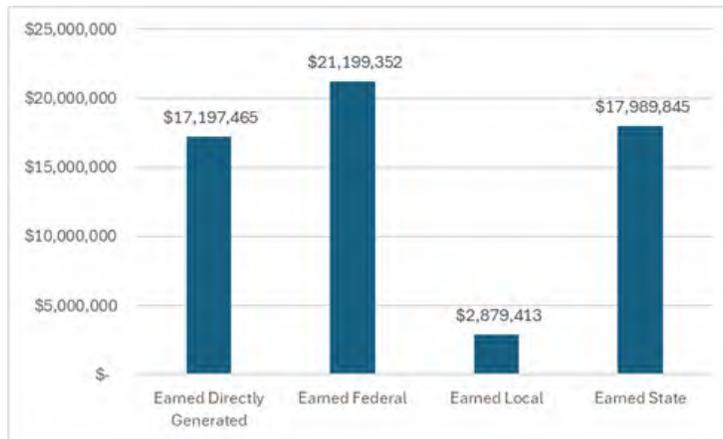
Significant funding from directly generated sources included passenger fares and property taxes from the service area millage. Significant funding from local sources included property taxes from the permanent Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti transit millages. A chart of revenue sources for TheRide is shown in Figure 4.

²¹ <https://www.sciotownship.org/home/showpublisheddocument/2358/638152677530570000>

²² <https://www.a2gov.org/media/o4vouf2j/budget-book-for-web-fy23.pdf>

²³ <https://cityofypsilanti.com/ArchiveCenter/ViewFile/Item/2267>

Figure 4. 2023 Revenue Sources for TheRide



Findings and Conclusions

Because of the rural nature of Washtenaw County, much of the public transportation in the county is provided by the county's largest transit agency, TheRide. The recent millage increase for TheRide service area will likely lead to significant improvements to existing service as well as the development of new services, like more bus rapid transit lines. This millage will not only increase the amount of local funding the agency generates, but also increase the amount of state funding it collects, which increases as local funding increases. This service area millage layered with the permanent transit millages from the Cities of Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti focus transit investment in the core urban areas of the county. Although Scio Township is not within TheRide's service area, service is provided in the township through a contract with TheRide.

An unsuccessful push to fund and plan transit at the county level in the early 2010s has helped create the concentrated transit investment within Washtenaw County seen today. Because Washtenaw County is a part of the RTA, there is a regional entity planning for more regional services, helping connect the county to the greater Metro Detroit region. While still being connected to Metro Detroit through the RTA, Washtenaw County and the City of Ann Arbor have taken this concentrated approach to transit investment, which in many ways has helped to implement a successful transit system in Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti.

Kent County is similar to Washtenaw County in the sense that there is one large transit agency within the County, The Rapid. Compared with TheRide, The Rapid has a similar sized service area (around 150 miles), but a much larger population. The amount of revenue generated per capita is much lower than TheRide. This means that while The Rapid does serve a denser area, it has fewer resources per capita to operate the system (**Error! Reference source not found.**). This discrepancy will only increase in 2024 onward as TheRide's increased millage takes effect. The Rapid's current 1.41 service area millage remains in effect until 2029, keeping the amount of property tax funding and state funding that it generates stagnant until then, in the absence of any state or local policy changes.

Unlike Washtenaw County, Kent County does not have a larger regional body dedicated to coordinating transit in the broader West Michigan region. Perhaps because of this, The Rapid has taken on more a role of coordinating regional services, helping to plan services like the West Michigan Express Pilot (a commuter route between Holland and Grand Rapids).

Similarly to Washtenaw County, Kent County collects a senior transit millage of .5. Although Washtenaw County does not explicitly use that funding for transit, Kent County does use a portion of its senior millage to help coordinate senior transportation services through RideLink, which partners with local agencies and organizations to provide demand response service throughout the entire county.

CARVER COUNTY, MN

Carver County is the westernmost of the seven counties in the Minneapolis-Saint Paul Metropolitan Area. With a population of about 111,000 and an area of 354 square miles, it has an average population density of 314 people per square mile. Comparatively, Kent County is larger, with a population of 661,000, an area of about 850 square miles, and a population density of 778.

According to the 2023 one-year American Community Survey, the median age in Carver County is 40.3, which is higher than Kent County at 35.5. Median household income is relatively high at \$129,581 compared to Kent County's \$80,390. Only 4.8 percent of residents are below the federal poverty line compared to 10.5 percent in Kent County. Sixty-seven percent of commuters drive alone to work, six percent carpool, and only one percent report taking transit.

There are two public transit providers serving Carver County: the Metropolitan Council and SouthWest Transit. The County itself did historically operate its own dial-a-ride service, but it has since ceded that role to other providers. Today Carver County and neighboring Scott County partner on mobility management work, directing community members to the public and private services that best meet their needs.

Metropolitan Council

Governance Structure

The Metropolitan Council, or Met Council, serves as the federally designated MPO for the Twin Cities seven-county metropolitan area. It is also an employer of more than 4,000 people in service provision and planning. The Met Council has 17 members appointed by the Governor of Minnesota. Sixteen members represent geographic districts, and the chair serves at large. Appointments are subject to confirmation by the state senate.

The Met Council was created in 1967 by Minnesota state statute as "a regional solution for regional problems" such as environmental protection, water supplies, and transportation.

Funding Structure

The Met Council receives transit funding from a variety of sources. It is the designated recipient of federal transportation funding, including FTA formula funds and discretionary grants. It receives state funding from a Motor Vehicle Sales Tax, local funding from a Transit Capital Levy District, and – since October 2023 – sales tax revenue from a new Regional Transportation Sales and Use Tax. While the state's Department of Revenue administers the tax on behalf of Metropolitan Council, only the seven counties in the metropolitan area are subject to paying the tax.

Service Description

Although the bulk of the Met Council's funding is directed toward its extensive bus and rail network in the Twin Cities, two regional services include Carver County in their service area: Transit Link and Metro Mobility.

Transit Link

Transit Link is a traditional dial-a-ride service available everywhere in the seven-county metro where fixed-route service is infrequent or unavailable. It operates weekdays only, uses a minibus or van, and requires phone reservations between two hours and five days in advance. The base fare is \$3.50 for a one-way trip, which includes a transfer to a Metro Transit bus if needed. Since this service is intended to be a supplement for people in underserved areas, an area may lose eligibility when other services become available. When SouthWest Transit

launched its microtransit service SW Prime (described later) in the cities of Chaska and Chanhassen, residents of those cities were no longer able to use Transit Link for trips that start and end there.

Metro Mobility

Metro Mobility is, first and foremost, the regionwide ADA complementary paratransit service for people who cannot ride fixed route because they have a disability or a health condition. Regardless of which agency operates a given fixed route, complementary paratransit service within the required three-quarter mile radius from that route is provided by the Met Council under the Metro Mobility name. It does so under an operating contract with two private companies. Fares are variable based on time of day and location, but never more than twice the fare for comparable fixed-route service.

When there is spare capacity, riders certified to use Metro Mobility may also travel outside the required buffer. For this reason, it has a two-tiered service area. Trips within the federally mandated $\frac{3}{4}$ mile radius, during fixed-route service hours, are guaranteed. Elsewhere in the Transit Capital Levy District, trips are available on a standby basis (and may be subject to a surcharge if they are more than 15 miles long). Figure 5 shows a map of the two service areas, with the smaller ADA zone outlined in solid blue and the larger taxing district outlined in a dotted black line.

Figure 5. Metro Mobility Service Areas



Source: Metro Transit

Demand for Metro Mobility services has grown as the metro area's population ages, and in recent years driver shortages and their upward pressure on wages have meant the cost of providing the service is outpacing its ridership growth. Although Metro Mobility has historically drawn its funding from the same pool as the Met Council's other services, the state legislature recently made changes intended to better support its operations. In 2019, the legislature gave Metro Mobility a one-time funding increase and its own budget line to ensure it was funded without competing with fixed-route services. In 2021, the legislature established Metro Mobility as a forecasted program starting in fiscal year 2026, meaning that state budget forecasts will obligate all estimated costs of the service after fares and federal revenue.

SouthWest Transit

Governance Structure

Jurisdictions governed by the Met Council are allowed to opt out of its fixed-route service and use the majority of their transit tax dollars to operate their own transit systems. In 1986, the suburbs of Chaska, Chanhassen, and Eden Prairie decided to opt out and form their own transit service, SouthWest Transit (SWT) through a joint powers agreement.

A seven-person commission oversees SWT. It is composed of one elected official and one appointed citizen from each city, plus one rider representative. Each member serves a three-year term.

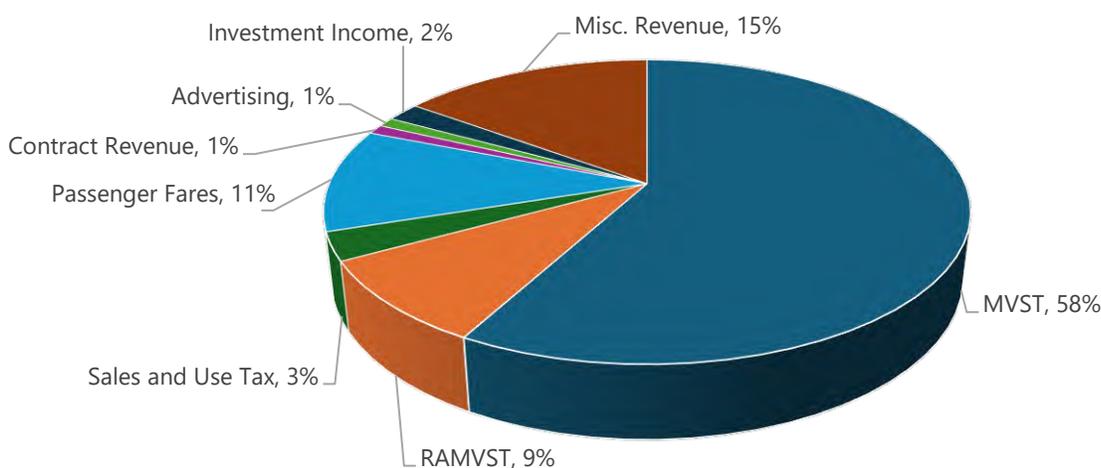
Service to other municipalities is provided on a contract basis. SouthWest Transit has service contracts with the City of Victoria and the City of Carver, both in Carver County.

Funding Structure

SWT's general fund is fed by two main sources: the state Motor Vehicle Sales Tax (MVST) and a new Regional Transportation Sales and Use Tax. A chart of revenue sources is shown in Figure 6.

- MVST is a large portion of the funding for transit systems in Minnesota. It is allocated to agencies by formula. SWT's 2025 budget projections estimate that MVST will account for about 58 percent of general fund revenues. With that said, since MVST is dependent on car sales, it can be difficult to forecast.
- Regionally Allocated MVST, a voter-supported supplemental allocation of tax revenue to transit, is apportioned by the Met Council. In 2025 it is projected to be nine percent of revenue.
- Operating grant revenues vary by year.
- Passenger fares have been recovering as ridership recovers from COVID-19; in 2025 they are projected to account for 11 percent of revenue.

Figure 6. Southwest Transit 2025 Revenue by Source



Source: SWT.

Capital investments in buses and facilities are funded by grants and by 5307 formula funding from the FTA, which is channeled through the Met Council and allocated as part of a regional spending strategy.

SWT has been considering a transition to FTA direct recipient status. This would add significant administrative responsibilities to its staff but would also give it freedom to pursue its own procurement strategies.

Service Description

SWT runs three different service modes.

SW Prime

SW Prime is an on-demand service for several cities clustered at the intersection of three counties. The service offers ride bookings with a smartphone app, website, or phone number. The service area includes three distinct zones: the cities of Chaska, Chanhassen, and Carver in Carver County; Eden Prairie in Hennepin County; and parts of Shakopee in Scott County. For travel between the zones, a transfer is required.

SW Prime service is contracted out. Transdev provides driver services on a three-year contract, with SWT paying the direct labor cost plus a management fee. As of the latest renewal, the management fee was \$241,250 per year.

The software used for booking and managing rides is provided by Spare Labs for a flat annual fee (currently \$20,400) plus a variable fee per peak vehicle. The total cost for the latest three-year contract is projected to be \$126,000, assuming 21 peak-service vehicles.

When it launched in 2015, SW Prime was one of the first tech-forward microtransit programs. It spoke to the desire for Uber-like ease and flexibility among potential riders, as well as the suburban road layouts and densities that make providing traditional fixed-route service a challenge. However, SWT continues to promote the more cost-efficient fixed-route service where it can.

The success of SW Prime is attributable to several factors. Riders find it particularly easy to schedule a trip with the app. High service reliability and short wait times also contribute to customer satisfaction. The zones are also carefully planned to complement other transit services within areas that have the right density and built environment to support microtransit.

Express Buses

SWT began its existence running commuter express routes, and the express bus continues to be a key service. For example, Route 698 runs from the City of Carver to the City of Minneapolis, with stops in Chaska, Chanhassen, and Eden Prairie, approximately 38 miles in each direction. This is about the distance from the farthest corner of northeast Kent County to downtown Grand Rapids. These cities collectively account for the commute destinations of 38 percent of Carver city's residents.

In 2025, SWT will launch a new fixed-route bus service to the Minneapolis-Saint Paul Airport along the I-494 corridor and simultaneously pull its microtransit service out of that corridor. It anticipates that fixed-route ridership will increase as Prime ridership decreases.

Special Events

SWT runs special services for events with major traffic implications. 2024 special services included (among others) the Minnesota State Fair, the Renaissance Festival, holiday light displays, and sporting events. During these events, SWT runs special bus routes between remote parking lots and the event venues.

SWT recorded a State Fair ridership of 100,632 in 2024, with the busiest day of the fair coming in at 15,712 rides. Random surveys suggested that about 95 percent of riders were satisfied with the State Fair shuttle service and with SWT overall. The highest-ridership year for this service line was 2016, when the Ryder Cup was held in Chaska.

Findings and Conclusions

The governance and funding environment of transit provision in the Twin Cities is defined by its regional government, Met Council, which operates its own services and channels federal and state revenue to any smaller transit providers in the seven-county metro area. The presence of the Met Council as a service provider has some benefits for Southwest Transit, as the existence of TransitLink and Metro Mobility fills in the gaps where it does not provide its own service. However, there is also some dissatisfaction with the role the Met Council plays in setting transportation policy and allocating funding, which has led to serious consideration of a change in funding structure within SWT. The complexity of this system makes it an unlikely model for Kent County in governance terms.

However, the microtransit and express bus services provided by SouthWest Transit are in line with the diverse needs identified in Kent County. The flexibility of microtransit is balanced by the efficiency of fixed-route service on high-demand corridors. The limitation of these services is that they serve only those areas that can best support them, leaving out other parts of Carver County and the southwest suburbs. They are fully inclusive only in combination with regional dial-a-ride.

MARION COUNTY, IN

Marion County is located in central Indiana and is home to the state capital, Indianapolis. The county is roughly 400 square miles of mostly urban and suburban development, about half the size of Kent County. Indianapolis covers most of the area while 15 additional municipalities make up the remainder of the county. Surrounding counties are mostly suburban and rural.

According to the 2023 one-year American Community Survey, the population of Marion County is about 970,000, resulting in a population density of about 2,400 people per square mile, making it more populous and denser than Kent County. While 91 percent of the population lives within Indianapolis, the next largest municipality is Lawrence, with about 50,000 people. The remaining suburban municipalities have populations of 15,000 or less.

Within Marion County, there is only one public transportation provider, the Indianapolis Public Transportation Corporation (IPTC), which is currently doing business as IndyGo. The following sections describe the governance and funding structures for IndyGo and provides a high-level summary of mobility services provided by other governmental agencies, non-governmental organizations, and private companies in the county.

Indianapolis Public Transportation Corporation

Service Description

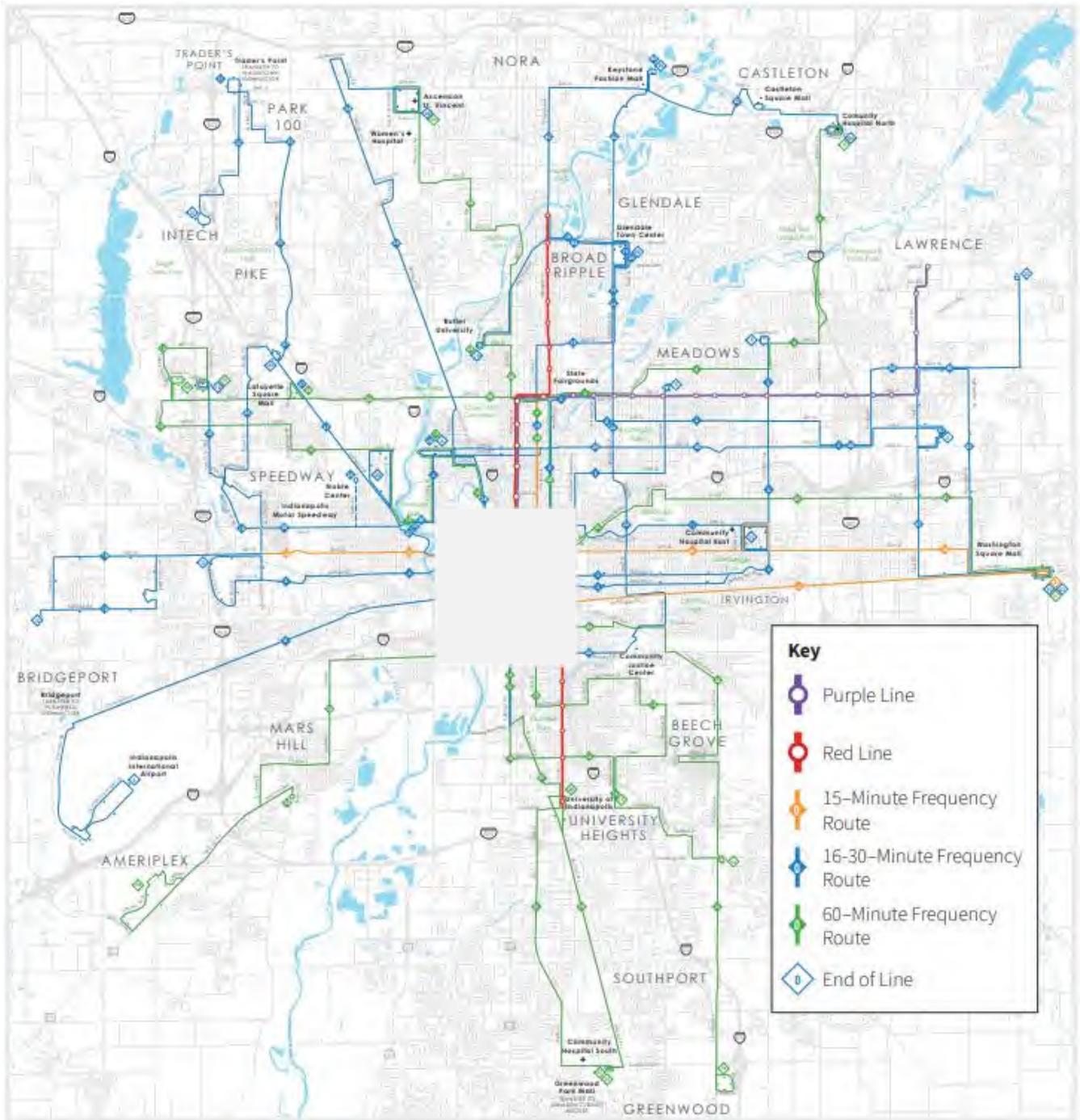
IndyGo currently provides service on 28 fixed routes, two of which are BRT routes (Figure 7). All fixed routes operate seven days a week with frequencies between 15 and 60 minutes. The fixed routes cover the majority of the county, nearly reaching the county line in almost all directions. The network is designed as a hybrid hub-and-spoke and grid system, with almost every route serving the downtown Julia Carson Transit Center. A regular fare is \$1.75 per trip, while a half fare is \$0.85. IndyGo recently instituted fare capping through the MyKey app platform. The daily fare cap is \$4.00 for a full fare and \$2.00 for a half fare, and the weekly fare cap is \$15.75 for a full fare and \$7.65 for a half fare.

IndyGo's paratransit service, IndyGo Access, operates seven days a week, maintaining the same hours as its local fixed-route service. Eligibility is restricted to individuals covered under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Fares for IndyGo Access range from \$3.50 to \$10 per one-way trip, based on the trip's origin and destination. Although the ADA mandates paratransit coverage only within 0.75 miles of fixed routes, IndyGo Access extends its coverage countywide through its "Beyond ADA" service, which is offered at a premium fare and operates on a modified schedule. However, when capacity constraints arise, priority is given to trips within the required ADA service area, potentially limiting service in the "Beyond ADA" zones.

IndyGo also allows IndyGo Access riders to purchase Taxi Vouchers for \$35 for a bundle of 10, the same price as 10 IndyGo Access passes. Taxi Vouchers for dialysis and other medical/emergency rides can be purchased in unlimited amounts, while a limited number of general Taxi Vouchers are sold through a lottery system.

Finally, IndyGo also tried a Microtransit Pilot that started in May of 2022 with the goal of replacing low performing fixed-route service in southeast Indianapolis. The pilot was discontinued in May 2023 because it did not effectively produce shared rides, adequately attract new riders, nor maximize the fixed-route service. As many as 30 percent of microtransit trips could have been made on an existing fixed route and up to 50 percent of trips could have been made on existing fixed routes with one transfer.

Figure 7. Marion County Extents with IndyGo Fixed-Route Service as of December 2024



Source: IndyGo. <https://www.indygo.net/indygo-system-map/>

Enabling and Authorizing Legislation

Indiana Code Title 36, Article 9, Chapter 4 (IC 36-9-4) is the current enabling legislation that allows municipalities or counties to create a public transportation corporation through local ordinances or resolutions. IC 36-9-4 was first established in 1981, however the provisions themselves are based on earlier laws regarding municipal transit, dating back to the mid-20th century.

In 1973, the Indianapolis-Marion County City-County Council (which has been a joint council since 1970) passed Ordinance No. 18, 1973, which chartered IPTC to acquire, provide, and maintain an urban mass transportation system for the Indianapolis metropolitan area. Prior to the IPTC, public transportation in Indianapolis was privately operated by companies like the Indianapolis Transit System (ITS). Declining ridership and financial struggles led to the need for a publicly funded and managed transit system.

Through IC 36-9-4 and Ordinance No. 18, 1973, IPTC was permitted to raise funding through the following mechanisms:

- **Taxes:** Authorizes the corporation to levy property taxes within its jurisdiction to fund operations and capital needs.
- **Grants and Bonds:** Allows the corporation to secure state, federal, and private funding, as well as issue bonds for infrastructure projects.
- **Revenue Management:** Permits the use of revenues from fares, advertising, and other sources to fund operations.

In 1996, IPTC began doing business as IndyGo, which continues to be a municipal corporation of Indianapolis-Marion County. Since then, two more major initiatives were passed that ushered in the current era of IndyGo's governance and funding. First, the Indiana Senate Enrolled Act (SEA) 176 passed in 2014, allowing counties in Indiana to establish dedicated local income taxes to fund public transportation projects. Then, in 2016, Marion County voters approved the Transit Local Income Tax (LIT) through a public referendum. Funds raised through the 0.25 percent income tax were approved to be used for:

- Operations and maintenance of IndyGo's existing bus network.
- Implementing rapid transit projects (e.g., IndyGo's Red, Blue, and Purple Lines).
- Covering operational and capital expenses for public transportation.

Governance Structure

IndyGo operates as a municipal corporation under the oversight of local government. Its governance structure reflects a balance of authority between the agency's self-governing Board of Directors and the Indianapolis-Marion County City-County Council, ensuring both autonomy and accountability in its operations.

The Indianapolis-Marion County City-County Council serves as the legislative body for the region, consisting of 25 Councilors who represent individual districts. Each Councilor is elected to a four-year term, during which they are responsible for a range of legislative and fiscal duties. These include passing laws, approving the annual City-County budget, levying taxes, and allocating funds for city and county operations. In addition to their legislative responsibilities, Councilors serve on various boards and commissions. The Council also exerts fiscal oversight over municipal corporations, including IndyGo, through its Municipal Corporations Committee.

IndyGo is governed by a seven-member Board of Directors—three members are appointed by the Mayor of Indianapolis, while the remaining four are selected by the City-County Council. The Board operates as a self-

governing entity, with responsibilities that include setting policies, strategic planning, and overseeing the agency's operations and finances. Each year, the Board of Directors adopts an operating budget in late summer for the following calendar year. This budget outlines IndyGo's planned expenditures and revenue sources and is subject to review and approval by the City-County Council. While the Board has autonomy in managing the agency, the Council retains authority to approve local funding for the transit agency's operating budget, ensuring alignment with broader municipal priorities.

Looking more broadly at the regional and state levels, The Indianapolis Metropolitan Planning Organization (IMPO) and the Indiana Department of Transportation (InDOT) do not have direct governance authority over IndyGo; however, IndyGo works very closely with each agency. IMPO leads the four-year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for the region, and some funding sources are only available to transit projects that are included in the TIP. Similarly, INDOT ensures that IndyGo complies with state and federal regulations when receiving state-administered funding.

The governance structure of IndyGo reflects a shared commitment to efficient and effective transit operations. By combining the policy-making autonomy of the Board of Directors with the fiscal oversight of the City-County Council, IndyGo benefits from both dedicated governance and integration within the broader municipal framework.

Funding Structure

According to IndyGo's 2025 Management & Financial Plan,²⁴ the agency expects to receive approximately \$147M in operating revenue from the following nine main sources:

- Local Income Tax (33%): The 0.25 percent income tax funds the largest portion of the operating budget.
- Property and Excise Taxes (28%): Taxes levied on Marion County residents.
- Stimulus Funds (14%): Funds remaining from COVID-19 economic stimulus packages.
- Federal Assistance (10%): On the operations side, IndyGo is the designated recipient of Section 5307: Urbanized Area Formula Grants and Section 5310: Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities.
- State Grants/Funds (8%): IndyGo receives Public Mass Transit Fund (PMTF) money from InDOT.
- Fare Revenue (4%): Total fares collected from riders.
- Other (2%): Includes earnings on investments and interest-bearing accounts.
- Advertising (1%): IndyGo expects to collect \$800,000 through an advertising contract.
- Service Reimbursement (0.2%): Revenues generated through agreements with other municipalities to provide service.

Within the county, municipalities have the option to opt-out of the traditional tax-based funding of IndyGo, and therefore opt-out of service provision within the municipalities. Still, some of the municipalities that opt-out enter into separate service agreements with IndyGo to provide service within the municipality.

Finally, IndyGo has a history of purchasing service from contract service providers for all its paratransit service, IndyGo Access. In the 2025 budget, about nine percent of the operating budget is dedicated to this contractual service. IndyGo is not currently using contract service providers for fixed-route service.

²⁴ <https://www.indygo.net/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/IndyGo-FY2025-Budget-Book-Final.pdf>

Other Mobility Service Providers within Marion County

While IndyGo is the only public transit system in Marion County, the following services are provided by other governmental agencies, non-governmental organization, and private companies in the county.

- **CICOA Aging & In-Home Solutions** (previously the Central Indiana Council on Aging) provides the following services:
 - **Door2Door:** Provides rides for medical appointments, pharmacy needs, and grocery shopping within Marion County for Marion County residents 60 years of age or older.
 - **My Freedom:** Provides affordable cross-county transportation for any trip purpose for qualifying individuals (people experiencing a disability or anyone over the age of 60). The service area includes nine counties in central Indiana. While individuals may cross into and out of Marion County, the service does not cover trips entirely within Marion County (instead people may use IndyGo Access for trips within Marion County).
 - **Shuttle Service:** CICOA provides regularly scheduled shuttle service between approved apartment complexes and grocery stores, banking institutions, shopping centers, and special group outing locations within Marion County.
 - **Medicaid Transportation**
- **Central Indiana Regional Transportation Authority (CIRTA):** A regional governmental organization, separate of IndyGo, CIRTA works in 10 counties and is governed by a 17-member board of directors. In addition to regional mobility coordination, advocacy, education, and funding work, CIRTA provides the following services to the public:
 - **CIRTA Workforce Connect:** A shuttle service operating between some IndyGo route termini and suburban industrial parks.
 - **CIRTA Commuter Connect:** Helps residents form carpools and vanpools.
 - **CIRTA County Connect:** A service that provides information to the public on all the existing transportation services in the region, with a focus on how to move across county lines.
- **Disabled American Veterans (DAV):** Provides free van rides to and from Richard L. Roudebush VA Medical Center in Indianapolis to Veterans who don't have other transportation options. Services include the Volunteer Transportation Network and other Veteran Transportation Services.
- **zTrip:** Previously the Indianapolis Yellow Cab, zTrip is the region's private taxicab service provider. zTrip combines the safety and service of traditional taxi with the technology and convenience of rideshare.
- **Pacers Bikeshare:** The Indiana Pacers Bikeshare provides bikes throughout Indianapolis that users can ride for a fee of \$1 plus \$0.15 per minute or \$80 for unlimited rides for a year.
- **Ride-hailing:** Lyft and Uber currently operate in Marion County.
- **Shared scooters:** Lime and Bird currently operate in Marion County.
- **A variety of medical transportation services**
- **Neighboring county transit services:** Most of the neighboring county's provide transit services, some of which operate into Marion County.

Findings and Conclusions

Marion County is somewhat unique in that its largest city, Indianapolis, occupies most of the county. To serve residents and visitors more efficiently, the city and county merged governments in 1970. In 1973, the City-County Council chartered IPTC (now doing business as IndyGo) to provide an urban mass transportation system for the Indianapolis metropolitan area. IndyGo has its own Board of Directors, a self-governing entity with responsibilities that include setting policies, strategic planning, and overseeing the agency's operations and finances. Meanwhile, the City-County Council retains authority to approve local funding for the transit agency's operating budget, ensuring alignment with broader municipal priorities. Through this governance structure, IndyGo benefits from both dedicated governance and integration within the broader municipal framework.

IndyGo has varied operating revenue streams, with local income tax (33 percent) and property and excise taxes (28 percent) making up the largest two groups. While property and excise (or sales) taxes are common sources of funding for transit, local income tax is a less common, more progressive tax that requires authorizing state legislation to enact. Having these dedicated funding sources allows IndyGo to provide transit service more equitably, rather than only to areas that generate the highest ridership. Notably, fare revenue only accounts for four percent of the operating revenue, indicating IndyGo is highly dependent on taxes to operate in its current form.

IndyGo's service currently includes 28 fixed routes that cover much of, but not the whole, county. While IndyGo piloted a microtransit service to cover an area lacking fixed-route service, the pilot was unsuccessful at reaching its goals. With the pilot discontinued, there aren't any services open to the general public outside the fixed routes. In terms of complementary ADA service, IndyGo goes above and beyond what's required by providing paratransit service countywide.

To fill some gaps in mobility service, the county's CICOA Aging & In-Home Solutions provides some demand response services to seniors and persons with disabilities through funding mechanisms different than IndyGo's. The Central Indiana Regional Transportation Authority also provides some shuttles between IndyGo route termini and suburban industrial parks. These other non-IndyGo service providers, and additional private mobility options, add value by addressing niche transportation needs, but lack integration and universal accessibility.

Key Findings and Conclusions

Through studying the governance and funding mechanisms in other counties, it becomes clear that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to operating and funding transit. Still, researching other regions, such as Kalamazoo, Washtenaw, Carver, and Marion Counties, reveals valuable insights into governance, service delivery, and funding strategies that Kent County can adapt to improve its mobility offerings. Table 4 includes a summary of the service, governance, and funding for each peer county.

Table 4. Peer County Summary

County	Major Service Provider(s)	Type of Service Provider	Services Available in the County	Governance	Largest Revenue Sources for Transit Operations (Percentage of Operating Revenue)
Kent County, MI	The Rapid	Public Transportation Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Fixed-route bus service -Bus Rapid Transit -GO!Bus shared ride, advanced reservation, ADA paratransit service -PASS on-demand service to connect to the nearest bus stop -DASH routes connect key downtown destinations and parking lots in Grand Rapids 	One Public Transportation Authority; six member cities; 15-member board of directors	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Property tax millage at 1.47 mills (42%) 2. State operating assistance (30%) 3. Sale of transportation services (14%) 4. Passenger fares (10%)
Kalamazoo County, MI	Metro	Public Transportation Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Fixed-route bus service -Metro Link microtransit zones -Metro Connect is a shared ride, origin-to-destination service that travels throughout Kalamazoo County without eligibility requirements (service also includes ADA Access Service) -Metro Share provides ADA-accessible vans to eligible partner agencies 	Two Public Transportation Authorities: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Central County Transportation Authority; six local unit members; 9-member board of directors 2. Kalamazoo County Transportation Authority; countywide; 9-member board of directors 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. State operating assistance (28%) 2. Federal operating assistance (22%) 3. CCTA urban property tax millage at 0.9 mills (22%) 4. Fares and other operating revenues (15%) 5. KCTA county property tax millage at 0.31 mills (13%)
Washtenaw County, MI	TheRide	Public Transportation Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Fixed-route bus service -A-Ride paratransit services -FlexRide on-demand service -Ridesharing -Van pools 	One public Transportation Authority; three local unit members; 10-member board of directors	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Property tax millages (combined 54%) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -City of Ann Arbor: 1.93 mills -City of Ypsilanti: 0.89 mills -AAATA: 2.38 mills 2. State operating assistance (32%) 3. Passenger fares (5%)

County	Major Service Provider(s)	Type of Service Provider	Services Available in the County	Governance	Largest Revenue Sources for Transit Operations (Percentage of Operating Revenue)
Carver County, MN	Metropolitan Council	Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)	-Transit Link is a traditional dial-a-ride service available everywhere in the seven-county metro that fixed-route service is infrequent or unavailable -Metro Mobility ADA complementary paratransit	Met Council (MPO); seven county area; 17 council members	1. Motor vehicle sales tax (38%) 2. Regional sales tax (18%) 3. State general fund (11%) 4. Federal (7%) 5. Property tax (6%) 6. Fares (6%)
Carver County, MN	SouthWest Transit	Joint Powers Agreement	-SW Prime is an on-demand microtransit zone service for several cities clustered at the intersection of three counties -Express commuter bus routes -Special event service	Joint powers agreement; three local unit members; seven-person commission	1. Motor vehicle sales tax (58%) 2. Passenger fares (11%) 3. Regionally allocated motor vehicle sales tax (9%) 4. State sales tax (3%)
Marion County, IN	IndyGo	Municipal Corporation of Indianapolis-Marion County	-Fixed-route bus service -Bus Rapid Transit -IndyGo Access ADA complementary paratransit	-IndyGo governed by 7-member board of directors; 25-member city-county council approves the budget	1. Local income tax at 0.25% (33%) 2. Property and excise taxes (28%) 3. Federal COVID-19 stimulus funds (14%) 4. Federal assistance (10%) 5. State grants/funds (8% of revenue) 6. Fare revenue (4%)

Key Similarities and Differences

Kent County shares many characteristics with its peers. The Rapid provides a solid foundation for urban mobility, similar to the role of Metro in Kalamazoo and TheRide in Washtenaw. While The Rapid is the only public transit service operating in Kent County, there are several other eligibility-based services provided by local government or non-profits in the county. And, while some other counties have more than one public transit agency, they all have additional eligibility-based services to some degree. This shows that it is common for a county to have several service providers to meet specific needs in specific locations.

That said, there are benefits identified in countywide or regional approaches. First, partnerships and authorities have more options in terms of levying taxes to fund transit operations, such as the dual millage that exists in Kalamazoo County. Also, when multiple jurisdictions come together, the vision for transit services available can be expanded and prioritized in a way that each individual jurisdiction may not be able to do on its own.

Opportunities for Improvement

- **Governance Enhancement:** To address fragmentation and allow for coordinated decision-making across jurisdictions, Kent County will need to consider a variety of models, such as: establishing an authority (as explained in the authorizing and enabling legislation section), entering into service agreements with multiple jurisdictions, expanding the role of The Rapid across the county, and others.
- **Service Expansion:** To address gaps in suburban and rural mobility, Kent County could pilot microtransit services similar to Carver County's SW Prime or traditional dial-a-ride services like Met Council's Transit Link. These programs provide on-demand service efficiently in areas where fixed-route transit is not feasible.
- **Funding Diversity:** While Kent County relies heavily on property taxes to fund The Rapid service, it could consider diversifying its funding streams, such as introducing other allowable taxes, funding through state and federal programs, joint powers agreements, and other intergovernmental service agreements. It is common among peers to have funding sources dedicated to specific services to avoid internal competition for funding.
- **Specialized Services Integration:** Kent County's current services for seniors and individuals with disabilities, such as GO!Bus and RideLink, could be more effectively coordinated under a unified system. This approach, seen in Kalamazoo, enhances both service efficiency and accessibility.

Regardless of the service and governance models Kent County ultimately pursues, a successful implementation of countywide public mobility service will require coordination among multiple partners and jurisdictions to bring in diverse funding streams outside the ITP service area. In Michigan, transit agencies in urban areas (population greater than 100,000) are eligible for up to 50 percent of operating expenses to be covered by the state's Local Bus Operating Assistance Program. So, a benefit of raising more local funding is the added state funding an agency will be eligible for. That said, with a finite amount of money in the program annually, most agencies do not receive up to the full amount they are eligible, and if one agency were to see an increase in operating assistance funding, it would come at the expense of other agencies, all else equal.

Another notable benefit of a countywide service, which may specialize in demand response services, is that it could relieve The Rapid of providing some of its demand response services and pressure for regional expansion.

Through further assessment of how these various models could be applied within Kent County, the county and other local jurisdictions stand to benefit from nuanced services designed to meet the needs of residents and visitors to the region.

Appendix

The following two shorter case studies also provide examples of the varying governance and funding models in the State of Michigan.

Genesee County Funding Model

Area Background

Genesee County is home to the City of Flint. The Mass Transportation Authority (MTA) is the main transit agency operating in the County. The authority is governed by an 11-member governing board that is made up of five commissioners from the County and six commissioners from the City of Flint.

MTA Service

The MTA provides services within a Flint service area and throughout all of Genesee County. Within the Flint Service area, the agency provides fourteen bus routes. There are also regional routes that originate in Flint, including fixed route service connecting to the SMART service area in Pontiac, the Michigan Flyer in Brighton, and the LETS Service area in Livingston County.

Throughout Genesee County, the MTA provides demand response service for seniors and people with disabilities through a service called Your Ride. Other countywide programs include Senior Shopper (connecting senior living centers to shopping centers across Genesee County) and Rides to Wellness (demand response service to medical/wellness appointments). The MTA also coordinates with local agencies throughout the County, providing funds and assistance.

Millage Funding Sources

Two sources of millage funding are directed to the MTA. A County-wide millage is collected for the MTA, specifically for demand response type services including the Your Ride service. An additional millage is collected from the City of Flint for the MTA, specifically for services serving the Flint service area like the primary bus routes.

Millage Rates for Transit Providers in Genesee County (MTA)

Authority	Local Unit/Service Area	Millage Rate	Millage Purpose	Dates of Millage	Total Millage Revenue (2023)	Total Millage Revenue per Capita (2023)
MTA	City of Flint	0.6	MTA fixed-route services	2021-2027	\$13,944,913*	\$34*
MTA	Genesee County	1.21	MTA demand-response services	2025-2030		

**Note: Both millages are directed towards the MTA. The per capita value is calculated based off the total service area of the agency, which includes the entire county.*

Sources: NTD 2023 Revenue Sources, NTD 2023 Agency Information

Like Kalamazoo County, millage funding is earned for the main transit agency (MTA) at the county-level and city-level, with the County millage going towards demand response service and the City millage going towards fixed route. In Kalamazoo, the County provides representation to the Metro through a separate county-led board. In Genesee, the MTA only has one governing board that is made up of commissioners from the City and from the County. Both systems serve as an example of how unifying urban and rural transit can serve the needs of both urban

and rural residents while also allowing for a more regionalized system that can take users across jurisdictional boundaries.

Harbor Transit Governance Structure

Area Background

Grand Haven is in Ottawa County along Lake Michigan, south of the City of Muskegon and west of the City of Grand Rapids. Other major cities in Ottawa County include the Holland, Zeeland, and Hudsonville.

Governance Structure

The primary transit agency in the region is Harbor Transit. Harbor Transit serves the cities of Grand Haven and Ferrysburg, Grand Haven and Spring Lake Townships, and the Village of Spring Lake. They provide an on-demand, curb-to-curb transit system along with two deviated express routes. They also coordinate a connection to the Muskegon Area Transit System (MATS).

Millage Rates for Harbor Transit Member Municipalities

Authority	Local Unit/Service Area	Millage Rate	Millage Purpose	Dates of Millage	Total Millage Revenue (2023)	Total Millage Revenue per Capita (2023)
-	City of Grand Haven	0.6	Harbor Transit	N/A	\$412,002	\$37
-	Grand Haven Township	0.93	Harbor Transit	2021-2025	\$531,350	\$28
-	Spring Lake Township	0.6	Harbor Transit	2024-2029	\$593,600	\$38

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau 2023 Population Estimates, 2023 budgets for City of Grand Haven,²⁵ Grand Haven Township,²⁶ and Spring Lake Township²⁷

Grand Haven currently lacks regional transit planning support. Ottawa County does not raise money for transit and has not conducted much planning related to transportation or transit in recent years; Grand Valley Metropolitan Council (GVMC) focuses on the Grand Rapids metro area; the Macatawa Area Coordinating Council provides support for the Holland/Zeeland area; and the West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission is largely focused on Muskegon. This leaves much of the transit operations and planning up to Harbor Transit.

In recent years, planning done by the West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission studied alternative organizational or governance structures that could better deliver public transportation services in the Muskegon Urbanized area, throughout Muskegon County, and across the service area of Harbor Transit into northern Ottawa County. This was largely driven by the need for an alternative system in Muskegon, whose transit service is currently housed under the County government with waning interest from County Commissioners.

Alternative organizational or governance options explored did include a scenario that would include Grand Haven, although this option was ultimately determined to be improbable due to complications in raising a local millage where Harbor Transit already is collecting millage funding. The study also did not find a need to change the existing

²⁵ https://grandhaven.s3.amazonaws.com/pdf_documents/budget/adopted_budget_2023-2024.pdf

²⁶ <https://ghtmi.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/2023-Approved-Budget.pdf>

²⁷ https://springlaketwp.org/wp-content/uploads/delightful-downloads/2024/03/FY24-25-Budget-Book-APPROVED_2024-03-25.pdf

system in Harbor Transit, although they did find an interest in enhancing regional coordination of services. The preferred path forward included turning MATS into a transit authority while maintaining Harbor Transit as a separate agency and fostering inter-agency coordination between the services.

The need for increased regional coordination between Ottawa and Muskegon County remains. Although as future changes come to the MATS system, there could be more opportunities for both transit authorities to cross county lines.

APPENDIX C. SURVEY REPORT



CEDAR SPRINGS

EST 1856

Kent County Mobility Study Survey Summary

February 2025



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Introduction

Project Purpose

The Kent County Mobility Study is a joint project of Kent County and the Grand Valley Metropolitan Council (GVMC). The study process assesses the current availability of public transit, micromobility, and other mobility services in the region; identifies high priority needs and gaps in service; assesses the market for mobility services in the county; evaluates possible service improvements; evaluates potential funding sources; and develops an implementation plan.

As part of the initial review of Kent County’s mobility needs, a countywide community survey was conducted on the following subjects:

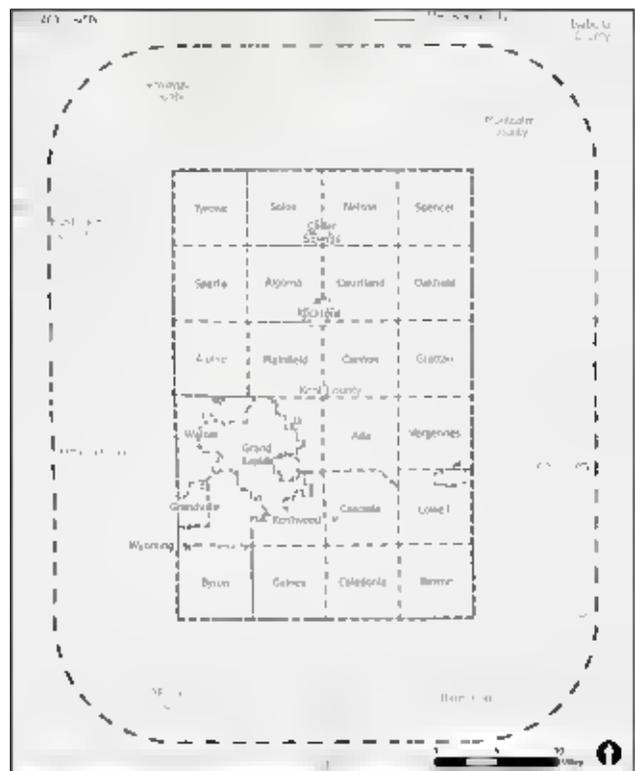
- **Mobility Service Offerings:** evaluate perception of twelve mobility services known to be operating throughout Kent County
- **Trips, Origins, and Destinations:** assessment of common trips, common trip origins, trip destinations, mode preferences, and trip durations
- **Mobility Options:** compare use of fixed-route bus service with app-based on-demand and door-to-door mobility options
- **Mobility Preferences:** evaluate trip preferences, features, and amenities
- **Respondent Profile:** compilation of home location, self-identification of sex, age, race, income, language, access to automobile, and access to internet.

The project team includes staff from Kent County and GVMC. The consultant team is led by SRF Consulting Group with support from AECOM and Aligned Planning. Oversight is provided by the Mobility Task Force, a group established in 2023 by the Board of Kent County Commissioners which is inclusive of community stakeholders including residents, local and state government agencies, nonprofits, transit agencies, and private business.

Project Geography

The project study area includes all of Kent County, as well as the communities neighboring Kent County in an approximately 10-mile radius (Figure 1). These are communities that might have logical transit connections to locations in Kent County. In order to differentiate between geographies with different needs, respondents who gave home locations in the county were assigned to communities in The Rapid service area (“Core Rapid”), communities immediately adjacent to The Rapid service area (“Adjacent”), or the remaining communities in Kent County (“Outlying”).

Figure 1. Project Study Area



Executive Summary

From September to December 2024, the project team conducted an extensive survey on mobility in Kent County. The survey, comprising 39 questions, was distributed via a paper form and a weblink and focused on various aspects such as means of mobility, origins, destinations, preferences for mobility, and access to mobility options. Over the three-month period, the survey received a total of 2,091 responses. The following summarizes key findings.

Kent County Mobility Services

To gauge respondent knowledge of existing Kent County mobility services, three questions were focused on knowledge and use of twelve mobility options spread throughout Kent County. If respondents did not use The Rapid or other mobility services, they were asked to consider eleven barrier issues for why they do not use mobility services.

A small group of respondents ages 26-64 either *use The Rapid regularly, occasionally, or used but stopped using service*. However, most respondents of the ages of 26-64 and above 65 were familiar with the Silver Line/Laker Line and The Rapid fixed-route service, as well as the Go!Bus Paratransit service. This was especially true within the Core Rapid and Adjacent communities, suggesting that marketing existing services in Core Rapid communities may result in ridership growth.

Some of the primary constraints for discontinued use of The Rapid can be summarized as *the trips take too long, there are not any stops near my home, and existing routes are not in convenient locations*. Similarly, reasons given for not using any mobility service include *the services does not go where needed, trips take too long, and other* (which was primarily summarized as having personal vehicle access).

Kent County Trip Origins and Destinations

To analyze mobility throughout Kent County 10 questions were asked that focus on trip purpose, origin and destination locations, mode preference, and trip duration.

About 70 percent of respondents' most common and second most common trip origins start outside of City of Grand Rapids zip codes. Conversely, 20 percent of respondents' most common and second most common trips end beyond The Rapid service area. These suggest there are needs for services that extend beyond The Rapid's current service area.

Personal vehicle was the preferred mode choice among respondents, however there are opportunities to serve respondents that use alternative demand-responses services such as carpool, van pool, and app-based rideshare.

Regarding trip duration, more than 40 percent of respondents recorded trips longer than 21 minutes, indicating that many in Kent County are traveling long distances for work commuting and other trip purposes.

In summary, there are opportunities to provide mobility services beyond the core Rapid service area, especially where there is an opportunity to serve common commuting patterns, many of which currently take more than 20 minutes. These services should connect to major employment centers and high-traffic commercial and service areas.

Kent County Mobility Options

To evaluate alternative Kent County mobility options, the survey posed two questions, specifically targeting on-demand and door-to-door services.

Roughly 30 percent of respondents indicated that they had never used taxis or services like Uber or Lyft before. Of the respondents who had used those services before, 41 percent indicated that they would be willing to use a bus

route and 44 percent indicated they would be willing to use a shared door-to-door service. This is an indication of a potentially untapped market in the county.

Deeper analysis of these sentiments across age and community profiles indicates that respondents ages 26-64 and from Core Rapid communities are most likely willing to use available bus routes or door-to-door service.

Kent County Mobility Preferences

To evaluate Kent County mobility preferences, ten questions were asked around trip preference, features and amenities, travel constraints, travel time, perception of The Rapid service, fare preference, preferred mobility destinations, mobility priorities, reasons for skipping trips, and concerns with existing Kent County mobility services.

Respondents chose *bus routes* as the mode they'd be most willing to use followed by *private door-to-door service*. Asked to prioritize service features and amenities, potential riders prioritize *service availability/coverage* and *frequency* the most. Features such as *cleanliness, fares, technology, safety, and the built environment* were chosen less frequently compared to options related to service availability/coverage and frequency options.

Travel constraints remained consistent with the theme of reliability, safety, and travel time from previous preference questions, suggesting that these factors help or hurt respondents' willingness to ride mobility services.

Many respondents within the Core Rapid communities did express an openness to extending trip duration by 5-10 minutes for short trips if the alternative to driving was safe and convenient.

There were also respondents from Core Rapid communities that are between the ages of 26-64 that start their commute beyond The Rapid service area, suggesting more opportunities for service area expansion. Respondents listed key destinations as Grand Rapids Community College, University of Michigan Health West, Meijer Gardens, and Meijer stores.

Respondents overwhelmingly chose modern forms of fare collection (such as smart phone tickets, tap to pay with credit cards, and smartcards) as preferred methods.

Respondents prioritized *providing transportation options to seniors and people with disabilities, providing access to places with employment, and providing access to medical facilities/healthcare* as the top three priorities for the Kent County Mobility Study.

Open response comments from the priority portion of the survey fell into six themes:

- **Public Transit:** Enhance services by extending operating hours and improving connectivity.
- **Cycling Infrastructure:** Recognize the transformative potential of e-biking and advocate for safer biking infrastructure.
- **Reliability of Service:** Emphasize the importance of building trust through consistent system performance.
- **Payments/Cost:** Provide clearer information on fare structure, simplify fare payment systems, and offer subsidies for low-income riders.
- **Environment/Sustainability:** Adopt eco-friendly solutions such as electric buses and other green initiatives.
- **Plan Feedback:** Ensure transparent communication with the public regarding service improvements.

Prioritizing improvements to service availability/coverage and frequency as well as service to employment centers, shopping/errands, and healthcare providers for seniors were common preferential themes.

Kent County Mobility Survey Profile

To better understand the demographics of the respondents to the survey, 10 questions were asked focusing on home location (zip code, city, town, township), sex, age, ethnicity, race, income, language, access to a personal automobile, and access to the internet.

Home locations were divided into three community subareas (Core Rapid, Adjacent, and Outlying) with over 700 responses coming from Core Rapid communities, 366 from Adjacent communities, and 315 from Outlying communities.

Key top line insights were that a majority of respondents self-identified as female (61 percent), between the ages of 26-64, within the income range of \$30,000 to \$125,000, of white race, speaking English, with access to a vehicle, and access to a smartphone with the internet.

Survey Findings

From September through December of 2024, the project team conducted a survey of the general public about mobility in the Kent County area. The survey was conducted via a paper form and a weblink and consisted of 39 questions focused on means of mobility, origins, destinations, preferences for mobility, and access to mobility options. A total of 2,092 responses were collected from the survey over a three-month period. The following is a summary of survey results.

Kent County Mobility Services

In the first question, respondents were asked: "How familiar are you with the following mobility services in Kent County?" in order to get a baseline sense of awareness of the various services available in the County. Eleven options were listed. The services with which people were most familiar were The Silver Line or Laker Line, The Rapid fixed-route service, and Go!Bus Paratransit service. Conversely, the services with which respondents were least familiar were Way 2 Go!, United Methodist Community House Service, and Georgetown Seniors Transportation Service. Respondents also mentioned The Dash, Hope Network, Uber, and Lyft as additional mobility services they were familiar with. Figure 2 summarizes all responses. A total of 2,091 participants responded to this question.

Figure 2. Familiarity with Mobility Services in Kent County

How familiar are you with the following mobility services in Kent County?

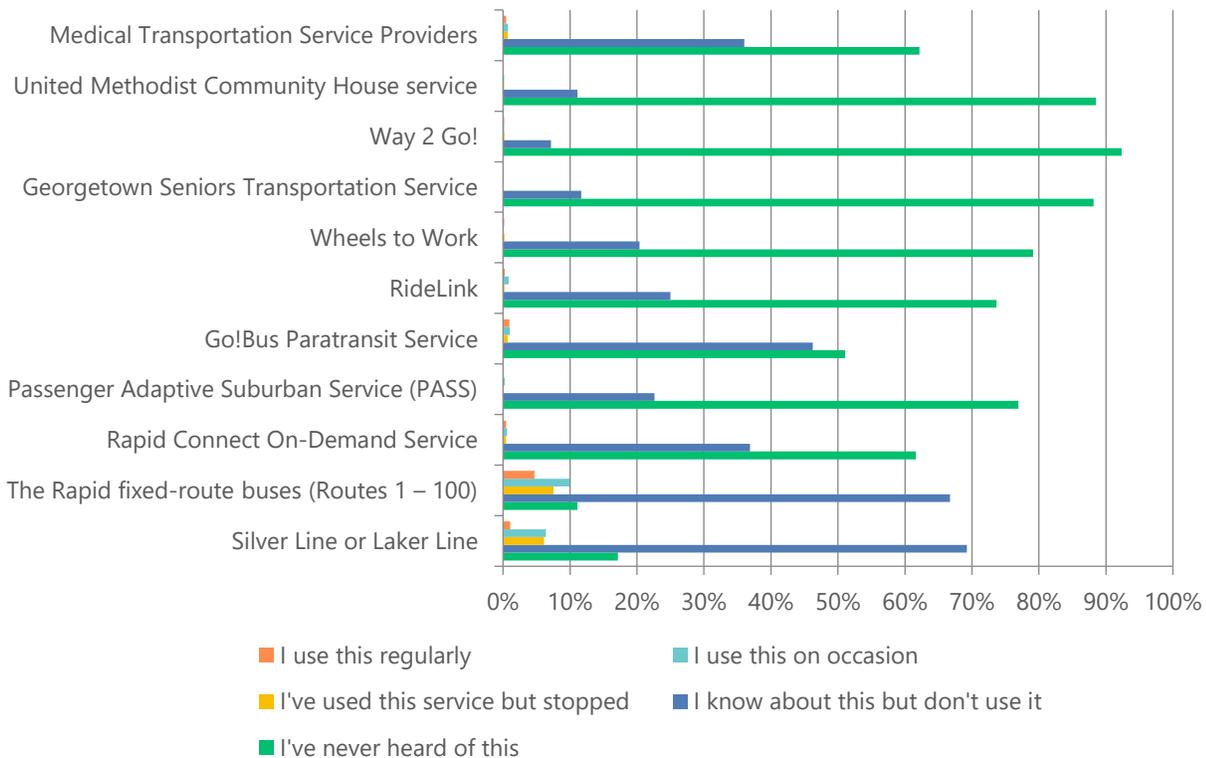


Figure 3 highlights that over 40 percent of respondents older than 25 know about the Silver Line and Laker Line but do not use it.

Figure 3. By Age, Familiarity with Silver Line or Laker Line in Kent County

How familiar are you with the Silver Line or Laker Line services in Kent County?

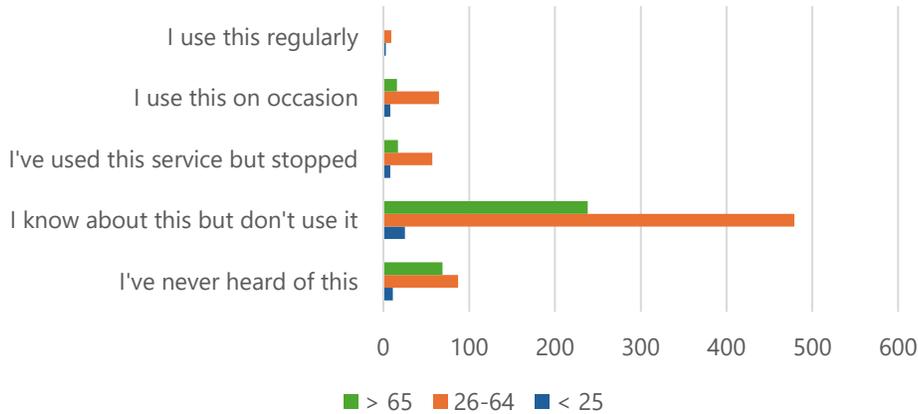


Figure 4 highlights that over 50 percent of respondents in Core Rapid and Adjacent communities know about the Silver Line or Laker Line service, but do not use the service.

Figure 4. By Community, Familiarity with Silver Line or Laker Line in Kent County

How familiar are you with the Silver Line or Laker Line services in Kent County?

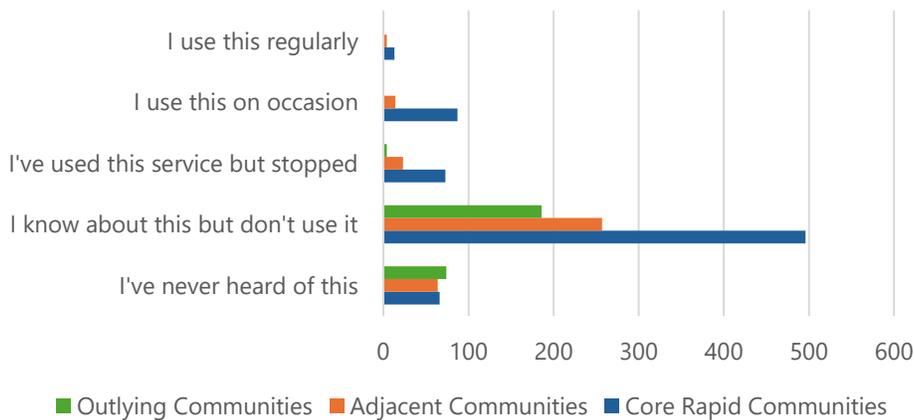


Figure 5 highlights that over 53 respondents ages 26-64 either use *The Rapid fixed-route service regularly, occasionally, or used the service but stopped*. Conversely, just over 40 percent of respondents over the age of 26, know about *The Rapid fixed-route service* but do not use it.

Figure 5. By Age, Familiarity with The Rapid Fixed-Route Service in Kent County

How familiar are you with the The Rapid fixed-route services in Kent County?

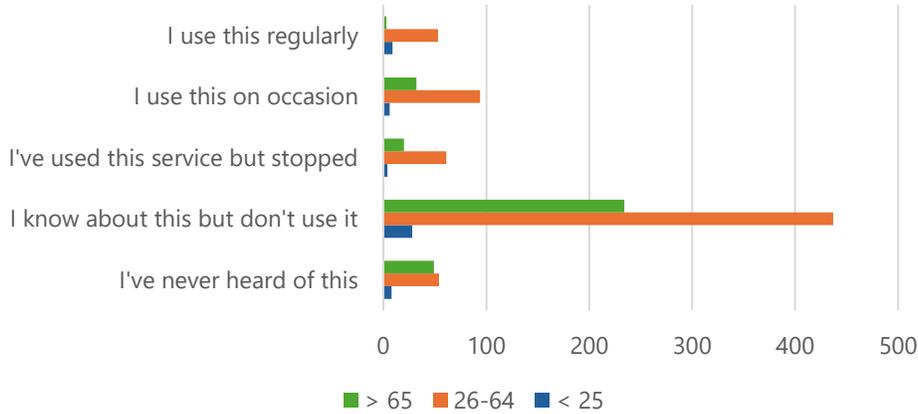
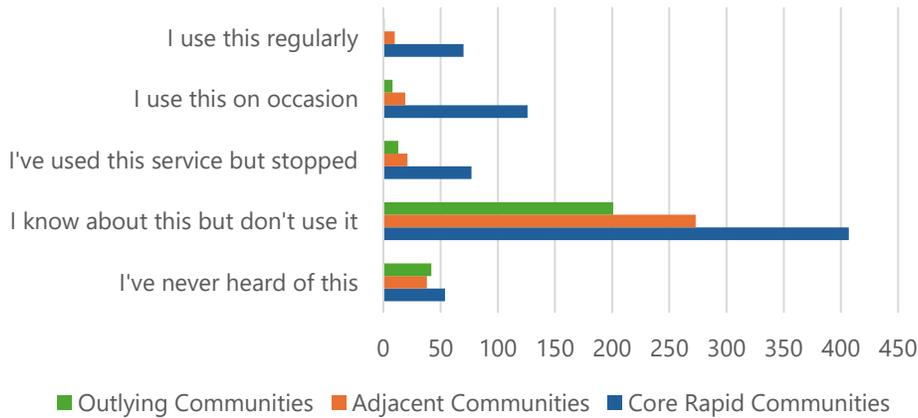


Figure 6 highlights that about 70 respondents from Core Rapid communities *Use The Rapid fixed-route service regularly* and 126 respondents use it *Occasionally*, while 77 respondents have *used the service but stopped*. Approximately 45 percent of all communities *know about The Rapid fixed route service, but do not use it*.

Figure 6. By Community, Familiarity with The Rapid Fixed-Route Service in Kent County

How familiar are you with The Rapid fixed-route service in Kent County?



Mobility Service Constraints

Question 2 of the survey asked respondents: “If you used The Rapid services previously, but then stopped, why did you stop? (Select all that apply).” The most common responses were: *It takes too long to complete a trip* (16.4 percent), *There are not any stops near my home* (13.9 percent) and *The bus routes are not conveniently located for me* (12.4 percent). Conversely, the least common responses were: *It’s too expensive* (1.4 percent), *I have medical concerns* (2.1 percent), and *The schedules are too complicated* (3.1 percent). Table 1 lists all responses to the question.

Table 1. Reasons for Discontinuing Use of The Rapid

Reason	% Responses	Responses
It takes too long to complete a trip	16.4%	215
There are not any stops near my home	13.9%	182
The bus routes are not conveniently located for me	12.4%	163
The bus does not take me to my destination	10.0%	131
I no longer live within the service area	9.0%	118
The service is too infrequent	8.9%	117
It’s too unreliable (poor on-time performance)	6.3%	82
The bus does not operate on the days/times I need	6.1%	80
I have security concerns	5.6%	74
I don’t feel safe while waiting for the bus	4.7%	62
The schedules are too complicated	3.1%	40
I have medical concerns	2.1%	28
It’s too expensive	1.4%	18

Question 3 asked: “If you do not use any mobility services, what are the reasons discouraging you from doing so? (Select all that apply).” Table 2 summarizes 1,783 responses, the top three of which are *The service area does not cover where I need to go* (26.8 percent), *It takes too long to complete a trip* (21.9 percent), and *Other* (17.6 percent). The least common responses were *I no longer meet the service’s eligibility criteria* (1.3 percent), *I have medical concerns* (2.1 percent), and *It’s too expensive* (2.1 percent).

Table 2. Reason for Not Using Mobility Services

Reasons	% Responses	Responses
The service area does not cover where I need to go	26.8%	477
It takes too long to complete a trip	21.9%	390
Other (please specify)	17.6%	313
I have security concerns	8.5%	151
The service does not operate on the days/times I need	7.2%	128
It’s too unreliable (poor on-time performance)	6.3%	113
It’s too difficult to schedule a trip	6.0%	107
It’s too expensive	2.4%	42
I have medical concerns	2.1%	38
I no longer meet the service’s eligibility criteria	1.3%	24

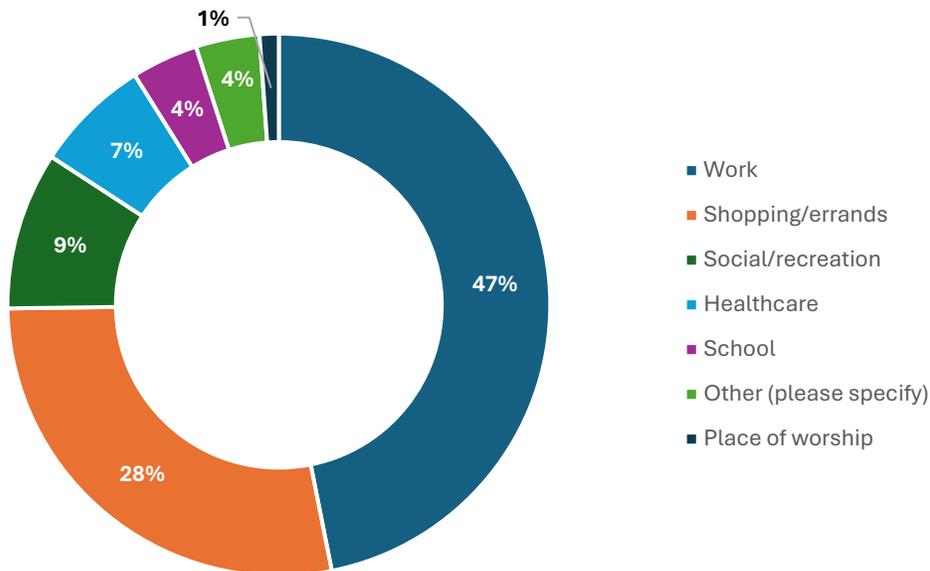
Kent County Trips, Origins, and Destinations

Questions 4 through 13 address trip purpose, origin and destination, transportation mode, and travel time for respondents' two most common trips. The most frequently selected options were linked to work in the City of Grand Rapids, with a trip duration between 11 and 20 minutes.

Most Common Trips

Question 4 asked for the purpose of the respondent's "most common trip." Among 1,841 responses, the top choices were *Work* (47 percent), *Shopping/errands* (28 percent), and *Social/recreation* (nine percent). The least common trip purposes were *Place of worship* (one percent), *Other* (four percent), and *School* (four percent). Figure 7 highlights the distribution of all trip purposes and shows that 75 percent of respondents' most common trips are for work and shopping/errands.

Figure 7. Most Common Trip Purposes



Most Common Trip Origin

Question 5 asked: “What zip code do you depart from for this trip?” Table 3 shows 1,820 responses with 557 responses (31 percent) originating from the City of Grand Rapids. This suggests that nearly 70 percent of trips start outside of Grand Rapids.

Table 3. List of Top 20 Trip Origins by Zip Code

Zip Code	City/Township	% Responses	Responses
49341	Rockford, MI	8.5%	154
49506	East Grand Rapids, MI	7.4%	134
49503	Grand Rapids, MI	7.2%	131
49504	Grand Rapids, MI	6.9%	126
49525	Grand Rapids, MI	6.4%	117
49505	Grand Rapids, MI	6.1%	111
49546	Cascade Township, MI	5.8%	106
49418	Grandville, MI	4.1%	75
49508	Kentwood, MI	4.1%	74
49507	Grand Rapids, MI	4.0%	72
49301	Ada, MI	3.8%	70
49534	Walker, MI	3.1%	56
49316	Caledonia, MI	2.7%	49
49321	Comstock Park, MI	2.3%	42
49315	Byron Center, MI	2.3%	41
49331	Lowell, MI	2.3%	41
49306	Belmont, MI	2.2%	40
49319	Cedar Springs, MI	2.2%	40
49345	Sparta, MI	2.0%	36
49548	Wyoming, MI	1.8%	33

Most Common Destinations

Question 6 asked: "What zip code is the destination for this trip?" Table 4 shows 1,695 responses, with 1,158 (83 percent) of responses destined for Grand Rapids zip codes. This suggests that roughly 20 percent of respondents most common trips are beyond Grand Rapids zip codes.

Table 4. List of Top 18 Trip Destinations by Zip Codes

Zip Codes	City/Township	% Responses	Responses
49503	Grand Rapids, MI	30.4%	422
49546	Grand Rapids, MI	9.6%	134
49525	Grand Rapids, MI	7.7%	107
49504	Grand Rapids, MI	7.3%	102
49512	Grand Rapids, MI	5.5%	77
49341	Rockford, MI	5.1%	71
49506	Grand Rapids, MI	4.6%	64
49507	Grand Rapids, MI	4.6%	64
49505	Grand Rapids, MI	4.0%	56
49548	Cutlerville, MI	2.2%	30
49544	Grand Rapids, MI	2.1%	29
49321	Comstock Park, MI	2.0%	28
49316	Caledonia, MI	1.8%	25
49509	Cutlerville, MI	1.8%	25
49519	Grand Rapids, MI	1.6%	22
49534	Grand Rapids, MI	1.4%	19
49501	Grand Rapids, MI	1.3%	18
49301	Ada, MI	1.1%	15

Transportation Mode Preference

Question 7 asked: “What transportation mode do you most often use for this trip?” Table 5 summarizes 1,863 responses. The vast majority (84 percent) chose *My personal vehicle*. Eighty respondents (four percent) chose *A ride in someone else’s personal vehicle*, and 69 (four percent) chose *The Rapid fixed-route buses*.

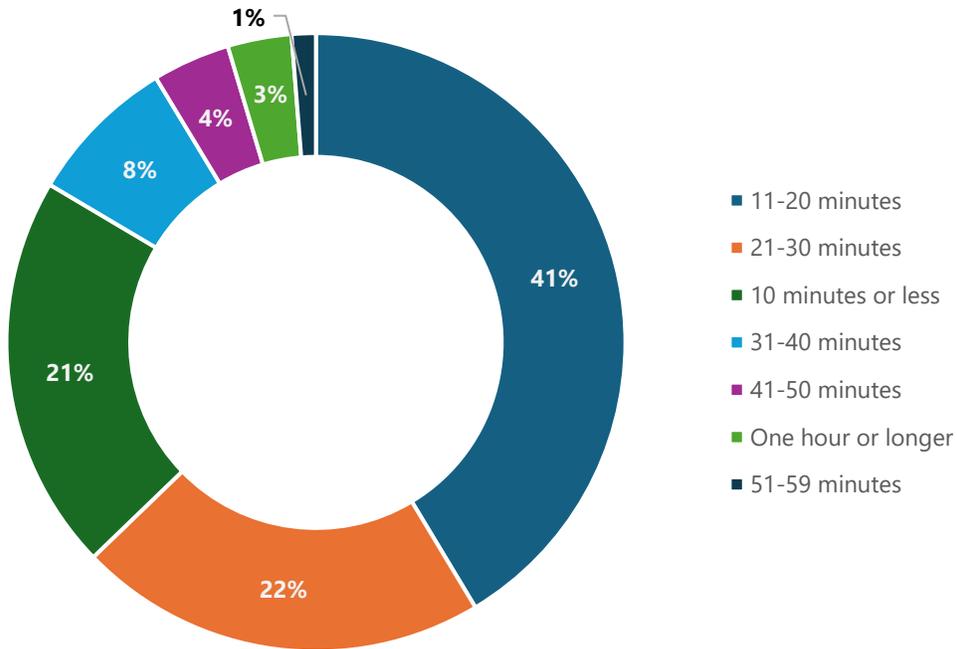
Table 5. Transportation Mode Most Often Used

Mode Options	% Responses	Responses
My personal vehicle	83.5%	1,555
A ride in someone else’s personal vehicle	4.3%	80
Other The Rapid fixed-route buses (Routes 1-100)	3.7%	69
Bike	1.8%	34
Other (please specify)	1.8%	33
Walking	1.5%	27
App-based rideshare	1.0%	19
Go!Bus paratransit service	1.0%	18
Silver Line or Laker Line	0.6%	11
Other Hope Network service	0.3%	5
RideLink	0.2%	3
Taxi	0.1%	2
Lime e-bike	0.1%	2
Rapid Connect On-Demand Service	0.1%	2
Lime e-scooter	0.1%	1
Wheels to Work	0.1%	1
Medical transportation service providers	0.1%	1
Passenger Adaptive Suburban Service (PASS)	0.0%	0
Georgetown Seniors Transportation Service	0.0%	0
Way 2 Go!	0.0%	0
United Methodist Community House	0.0%	0

Trip Duration

Question 8 asked: "How long does this trip take? (One way only, including waiting time)." Among 1,827 respondents, 756 (41 percent) chose 11-20 minutes, 391 (21 percent) chose 21-30 minutes, and 379 (21 percent) chose 10 minutes or less. Figure 8 highlights the distribution of trip duration and suggests that almost 40 percent of respondents are traveling longer than 21-minute durations which signifies relatively long travel distances.

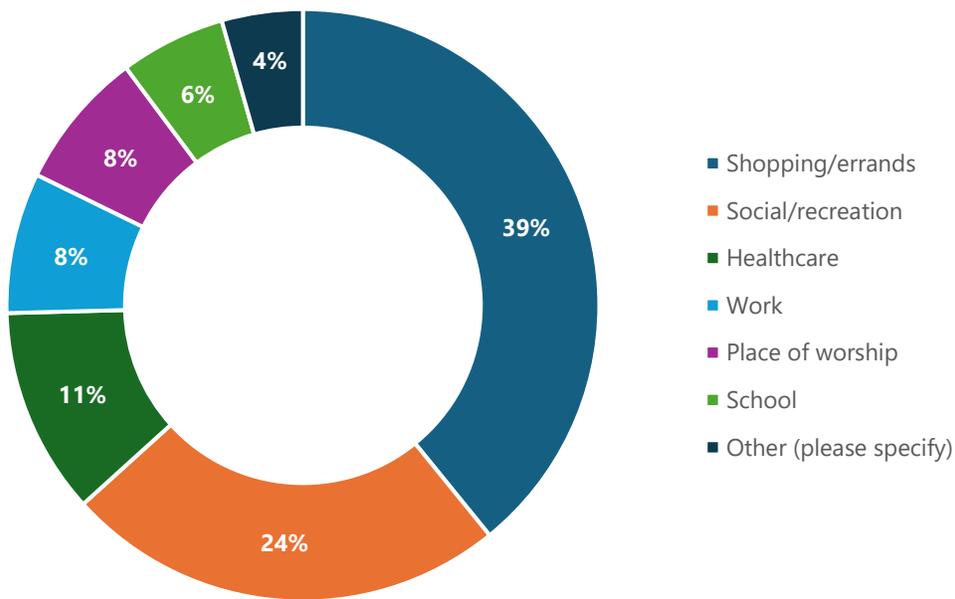
Figure 8. Distribution of Trip Duration



Second Most Common Trip

Question 9 asked for the purpose of respondents' second most common trip. There were 1,719 responses, with *Shopping/errands* (39 percent), *Social/recreation* (24 percent), and *Healthcare* (11 percent) leading the list. The least common trips were *Other* (4 percent), *School* (6 percent), and *Place of worship* (8 percent). Figure 9 highlights the distribution of second most common trip, with 63 percent of all trips between *Shopping/errands* and *Social/recreation*. Key take aways between first and second trips show that *Work* trips dramatically drop from 47 percent to 8 percent, while *Shopping/errands* share grows from 28 percent to 39 percent and *Social/recreation* grows from 9 percent to 24 percent.

Figure 9. Second Most Common Trip Purposes



Second Most Common Trip Origin

Similarly to Question 5, Question 10 asked for the origin zip code of the respondent's second most common trip. Table 6 highlights 1,672 responses with 517 (31 percent) originating from the City of Grand Rapids. Similarly to first trip origins, approximately 70 percent of all trips start outside of Grand Rapids.

Table 6. Top 20 Origin Zip Codes for Second Most Common Trip

Zip Code	City/Township	% Response	Responses
49341	Rockford, MI	8.4%	141
49503	Grand Rapids, MI	7.4%	123
49504	Grand Rapids, MI	7.0%	117
49506	East Grand Rapids, MI	6.9%	116
49525	Grand Rapids, MI	6.7%	112
49505	Grand Rapids, MI	6.2%	103
49546	Cascade Township, MI	5.7%	95
49508	Kentwood, MI	4.1%	69
49418	Grandville, MI	4.0%	67
49301	Ada, MI	3.8%	63
49507	Grand Rapids, MI	3.7%	62
49534	Walker, MI	2.9%	49
49316	Caledonia, MI	2.9%	48
49319	Cedar Springs, MI	2.5%	41
49331	Lowell, MI	2.3%	39
49321	Comstock Park, MI	2.3%	38
49345	Sparta, MI	2.1%	35
49306	Belmont, MI	2.0%	34
49315	Byron Center, MI	2.0%	34
49512	Kentwood, MI	1.7%	29
49519	Wyoming, MI	1.6%	27
49548	Wyoming, MI	1.6%	27

Second Most Common Destination

Question 11 asked for the destination zip code of the respondent's second most common trip. Table 7 summarizes 1,389 responses, with 1,158 (83 percent) of trips destined for Grand Rapids zip codes. Approximately 20 percent of trips have destinations outside Grand Rapids zip codes.

Table 7. Top 20 Destination Zip Codes for Second Most Common Trip

Zip Codes	City/Township	% Responses	Responses
49503	Grand Rapids, MI	30.4%	422
49546	Grand Rapids, MI	9.6%	134
49525	Grand Rapids, MI	7.7%	107
49504	Grand Rapids, MI	7.3%	102
49512	Grand Rapids, MI	5.5%	77
49341	Rockford, MI	5.1%	71
49506	Grand Rapids, MI	4.6%	64
49507	Grand Rapids, MI	4.6%	64
49505	Grand Rapids, MI	4.0%	56
49548	Cutlerville, MI	2.2%	30
49544	Grand Rapids, MI	2.1%	29
49321	Comstock Park, MI	2.0%	28
49316	Caledonia, MI	1.8%	25
49509	Cutlerville, MI	1.8%	25
49519	Grand Rapids, MI	1.6%	22
49534	Grand Rapids, MI	1.4%	19
49501	Grand Rapids, MI	1.3%	18
49301	Ada, MI	1.1%	15

Second Trip Mode Preference

Question 12 asked: “What transportation mode do you most often use for this trip?” Table 8 summarizes 1,722 responses, with 1,472 (86 percent) of responses for *My personal vehicle*. Other frequent answers include *A ride in someone else’s personal vehicle* (five percent), *The Rapid Fixed-route buses* (three percent) and *Walking* (two percent). Similar to the first trip, personal vehicle remains the preferred mode choice.

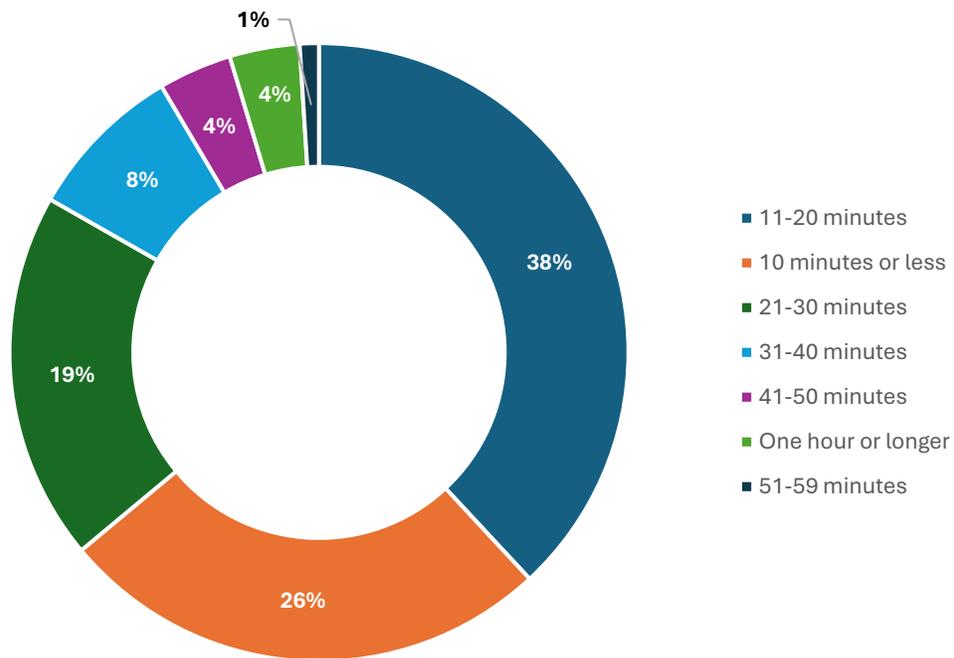
Table 8. Transportation Mode of Second Most Common Trip

Answer Choices	% Responses	Responses
My personal vehicle	85.5%	1,472
A ride in someone else’s personal vehicle	4.9%	85
Bike	1.1%	19
Walking	1.7%	29
Taxi	0.0%	0
App-based rideshare	0.5%	9
Lime e-bike	0.1%	2
Lime e-scooter	0.2%	3
Silver Line or Laker Line	0.3%	5
Other The Rapid fixed-route buses (Routes 1-100)	3.1%	53
Rapid Connect On-Demand Service	0.2%	4
Passenger Adaptive Suburban Service (PASS)	0.1%	1
Go!Bus paratransit service	0.5%	8
RideLink	0.1%	2
Georgetown Seniors Transportation Service	0.0%	0
Way 2 Go!	0.1%	2
United Methodist Community House	0.0%	0
Wheels to Work	0.0%	0
Other Hope Network service	0.1%	1
Medical transportation service providers	0.2%	3
Other (please specify)	1.4%	24

Second Trip Duration

Question 13 asked: "How long does this trip take? (One way only, including waiting time)." Out of 1,694 respondents, 26 percent chose *10 minutes or less* and 38 percent chose *11-20 minutes* (Figure 10). Approximately 40 percent of respondents had typical trips lasting more than 20 minutes, which is about the same as the first trips.

Figure 10. Duration of Second Most Common Trip



Kent County Mobility Options

Questions 14 and 15 address commercial mobility options such as taxi or rideshare (Uber/Lyft). Summary findings show that roughly 30 percent of respondents indicated that they've never used taxis or services like Uber or Lyft before. Among the people who have used those services before, 41 percent indicated that they would be willing to use a bus route and 44 percent indicated they would be willing to use a shared door-to-door service. This is an indication of a potentially untapped market in the county.

Available Mobility

Question 14 asked: "If you've ever used a taxi or app-based rideshare company (like Uber or Lyft), would you have made the trip on a bus route if it were available?" There were 1,778 responses, with 734 (41 percent) of respondents choosing Yes, and 500 (28 percent) of respondents choosing No (Figure 11).

Figure 11. Taxi/Rideshare vs Bus Route

If you've ever used a taxi or app-based rideshare company (like Uber or Lyft), would you have made the trip on a bus route if it were available?

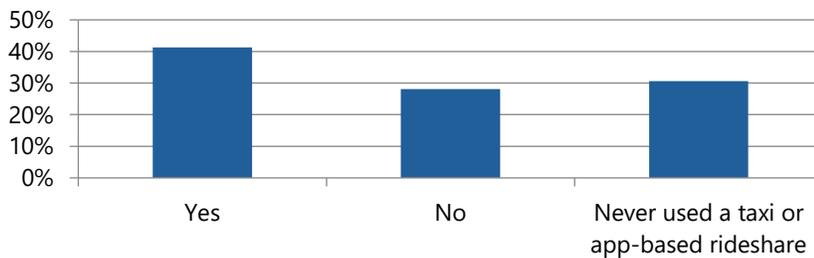


Figure 12. Taxi/Rideshare vs Bus Route By Age

If you've ever used a taxi or app-based rideshare company (like Uber or Lyft), would you have made the trip on a bus route if it were available?

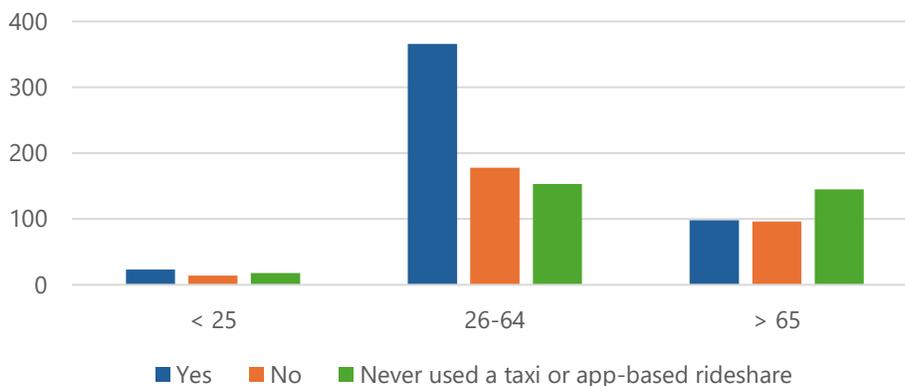


Figure 12 segments question 14 by age groups. Over 350 respondents aged 26-64 would have made their trip on a bus route if it were available.

Figure 13. Taxi/Rideshare vs Bus Route by Community

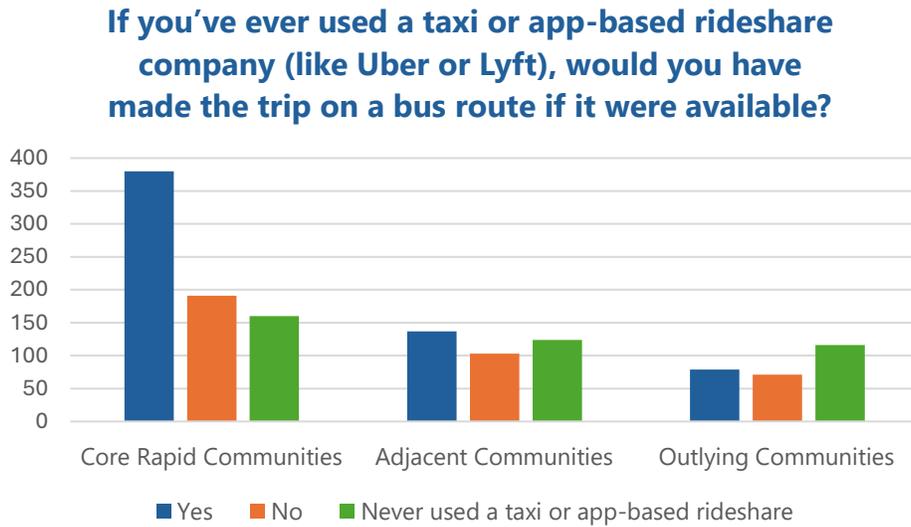


Figure 13 segments question 14 by community. Almost 400 respondents from Core Rapid Communities would have made their trip on a bus route if it were available.

Question 15 asked: "If you've ever used a taxi or app-based rideshare company (like Uber or Lyft), would you have made the trip on a shared door-to-door service if it were available?" There were 1,762 responses, with 776 (44 percent) choosing *Yes* and 446 (25 percent) choosing *No* (Figure 14). Of the respondents that have used a taxi/rideshare before (1,222 total), 44 percent responded they would have used a shared door-to-door service if it were available, nearly twice as many than those who indicated they would not have used a shared door-to-door service. Almost the same number responded they would have made the trip on a bus if it were available. This seems like a promising indication that people would use mobility services over taxi/rideshare if they were available.

Figure 14. Rideshare vs Door-to-Door Service

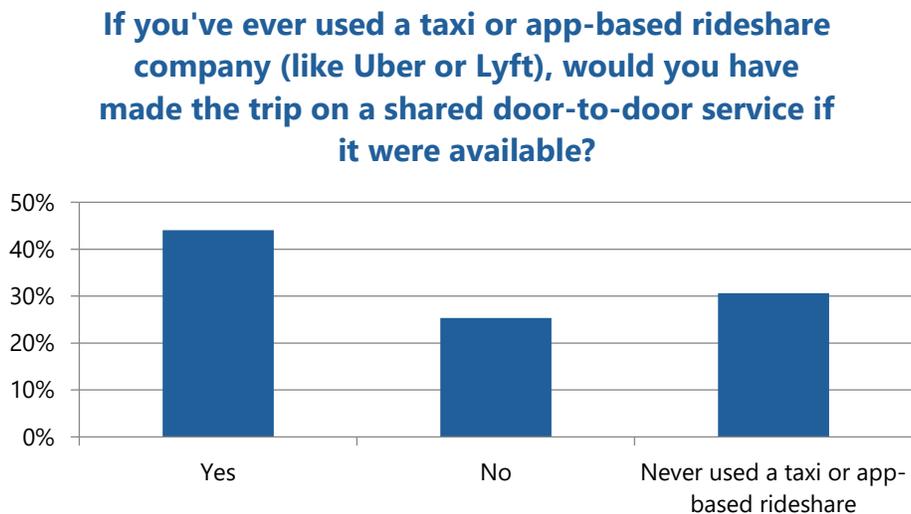


Figure 15. Rideshare vs Door-to-Door Service by Age

If you've ever used a taxi or app-based rideshare company (like Uber or Lyft), would you have made the trip on a shared door-to-door service if it were available?

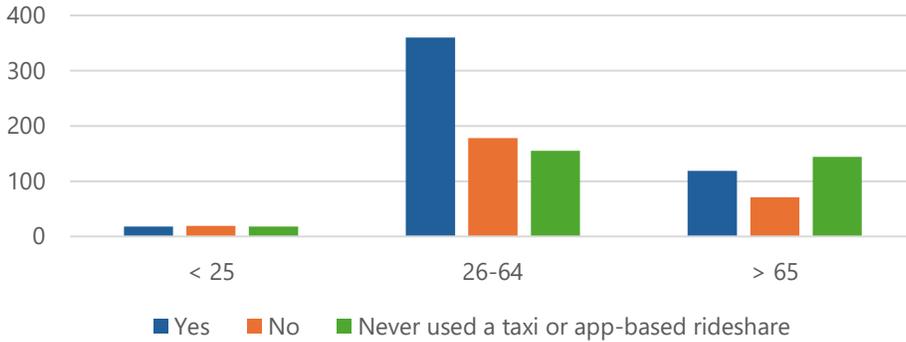


Figure 15 segments question 15 by age and highlights that over 350 respondents aged 26-64 are open to using shared door-to-door service.

Figure 16. Rideshare vs Door-to-Door Service by Community

If you've ever used a taxi or app-based rideshare company (like Uber or Lyft), would you have made the trip on a shared door-to-door service if it were available?

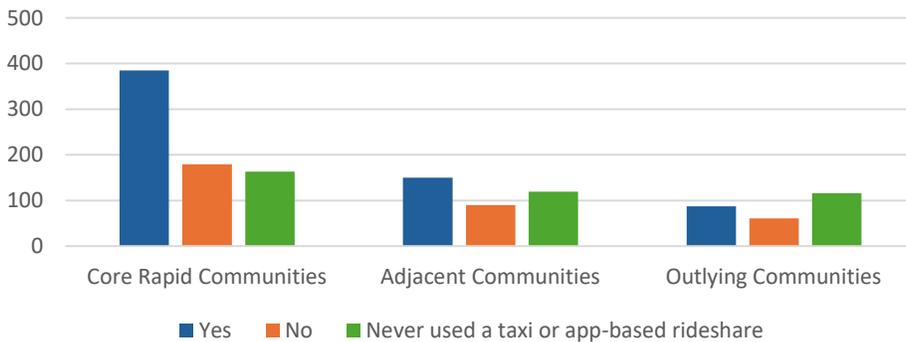


Figure 16 segments question 15 by community and highlights that almost 400 respondents from Core Rapid Communities are open to using shared door-to-door service.

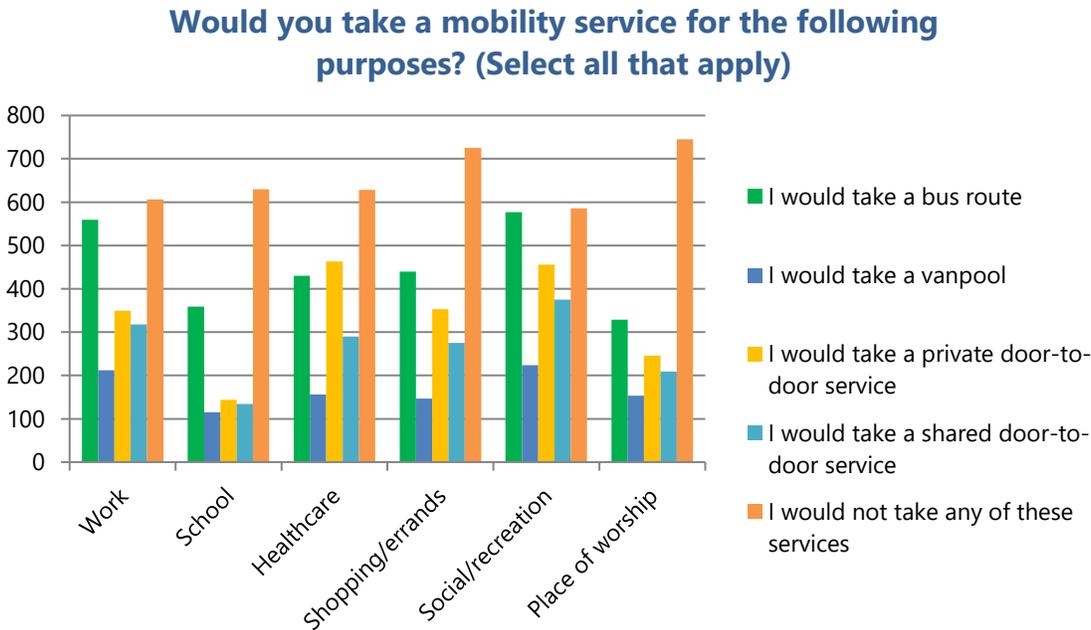
Kent County Mobility Preferences

Questions 16-25 are multiple choice and address mobility preferences, amenities, constraints, travel time, service area, fare collection, and improvement priorities.

Trip Preference

Question 16 asked: "Would you take a mobility service for the following purposes? (Select all that apply)." This question establishes a baseline of transit preferences for six common trips. Figure 17 highlights 1,540 responses with 559 *Work*, 359 *School*, 440 *Shopping/Errand*, 577 *Social/recreation*, and 329 *Place of Worship* preferring to take a bus route. 463 responses for *Healthcare* preferred taking a private door-to-door service. Conversely, a significant number of respondents chose not to use any of the listed transit options for the six common trips. Figure 17 highlights the distribution of trip preferences with *Work* and *Social/recreation* as top preferences for bus routes while *Healthcare* and *social/recreation* lean toward private door-to-door service.

Figure 17. Distribution of Trip Preference



Features and Amenities

Question 17 asked: “Which features/amenities would make it more appealing for you to utilize a mobility service? (Select up to three).” Table 9 summarizes 1,542 responses, with the top three being *Service that travels to places I need to go* (46 percent), *Stops closer to my house* (42 percent), and *Service that runs on a more frequent schedule* (38 percent). The three least-chosen responses were, *I would not ride public transit under any circumstances* (seven percent), *Other* (seven percent), and *More affordable housing options near mobility services* (eight percent).

Of the various themes these options represent, service availability/coverage and frequency are most important to potential riders. Amenities related to cleanliness, fares, technology, safety, and the built environment were selected less often.

Table 9. Appealing Amenities

Answer Choices	% Responses	Responses
Service that travels to places I need to go	45.8%	706
Stops closer to my home	42.0%	647
Service that runs on a more frequent schedule	38.1%	587
Shorter trip times	27.0%	416
Better online or app-based trip planning	23.0%	355
Better on-time performance, more reliable trip times	22.1%	341
More dense, walkable development near mobility services	17.1%	263
Clean vehicles	16.4%	253
Better walking/biking access to mobility services	16.2%	250
Improvements to security	14.2%	219
Better online ticket/pass purchasing	13.9%	214
Better passenger waiting facilities	13.8%	213
I don't know	12.7%	196
Lower fares	11.1%	171
More personal space/less crowded vehicles	9.3%	143
Easier methods of buying fares	8.9%	137
More affordable housing options near mobility services	8.4%	129
Other (please specify)	7.3%	113
I would not ride public transit under any circumstances	7.0%	108

Question 18 asked: “If you would like to expand on your responses to Question 17, please do so here.” There were 318 additional comments, focused on accessibility and coverage, convenience and reliability, safety and comfort, affordability and inclusivity, use cases and preferences, and barriers to adoption. The following expands on the themes collected from open comments.

Accessibility and Coverage

- Many respondents highlighted the need for expanded service areas to reach rural or suburban locations, including Comstock Park, Caledonia, Lowell, and Grandville.
- Door-to-door service was frequently mentioned as a desirable feature.
- Improved connections across town (not just downtown-focused routes) and direct routes to key destinations like the airport were requested.
- Light rail and train systems were strongly favored as alternatives to road-based transit.

Convenience and Reliability

- Shorter wait times, more frequent service, and extended hours (especially evenings, weekends, and late-night options) were emphasized.
- Park-and-ride areas and commuter lots were suggested for easier access to public transit.
- Reliability issues, including scheduling delays and challenges with rideshare services, were raised as concerns.

Safety and Comfort

- Many respondents expressed concerns about personal safety on public transit, citing issues like loitering, homelessness, and cleanliness at bus stops and on buses.
- Features like wheelchair-accessible vehicles, handicap-accessible sidewalks, and accommodations for strollers and service dogs were requested.
- A smoother ride and overall improvement in safety measures would make transit more appealing.

Affordability and Inclusivity

- Free or discounted rides for seniors were proposed.
- More clarity on how public transit accommodates parents with young children, grocery trips, and other specific needs was desired.
- Suggestions for reducing barriers to access, such as intuitive apps, better signage, and public awareness campaigns, were shared.

Use Cases and Preferences

- Some respondents mentioned they already have personal vehicles or rely on family, making them less likely to use public transit.
- Many would consider transit for specific purposes, such as trips downtown, areas with difficult parking, or healthcare appointments.
- Respondents who have used transit systems in other cities praised intuitive systems with integrated apps and clear navigation tools.

Barriers to Adoption

- Several respondents stated they would only use public transit if they lost the ability to drive or lacked a personal vehicle.
- Perceived inefficiencies, such as longer travel times compared to personal vehicles, deter current usage.
- A general lack of information about available services was cited as a barrier.

Travel Constraints

Question 19 asked: "How important do you consider the following factors when choosing your most frequent mode of transportation?" Table 10 summarizes constraint categories by importance into a weighted average response that highlights the highest constraints for *Reliability of my travel mode*, *Safety*, and *Travel Time*.

Table 10. Travel Constraints

Constraint	Very important		Important		Neutral		Unimportant		Very Unimportant		Total	Weighted Average
Reliability of my travel mode (I know it will be there when I need it)	76.4%	1,161	19.3%	293	3.0%	46	0.7%	10	0.7%	10	1,520	4.70
Safety	58.7%	885	29.5%	444	10.2%	154	1.1%	16	0.5%	8	1,507	4.45
Travel time	54.2%	819	33.6%	507	9.5%	144	1.6%	24	1.1%	16	1,510	4.38
Accessibility (I can use it with little to no help from others)	51.5%	769	23.2%	347	16.2%	242	5.2%	77	3.9%	58	1,493	4.13
Cost/affordability	38.1%	568	35.9%	535	20.6%	308	4.0%	59	1.5%	22	1,492	4.05
Parking cost/availability	34.3%	508	38.7%	574	18.6%	275	5.2%	77	3.2%	48	1,482	3.96
Congestion/traffic	34.0%	505	36.9%	549	20.9%	311	5.8%	86	2.4%	36	1,487	3.94
Lack of reasonable alternatives	32.6%	469	27.8%	401	32.4%	467	4.9%	71	2.3%	33	1,441	3.83

Figure 18. Travel Constraints- Reliability by Age

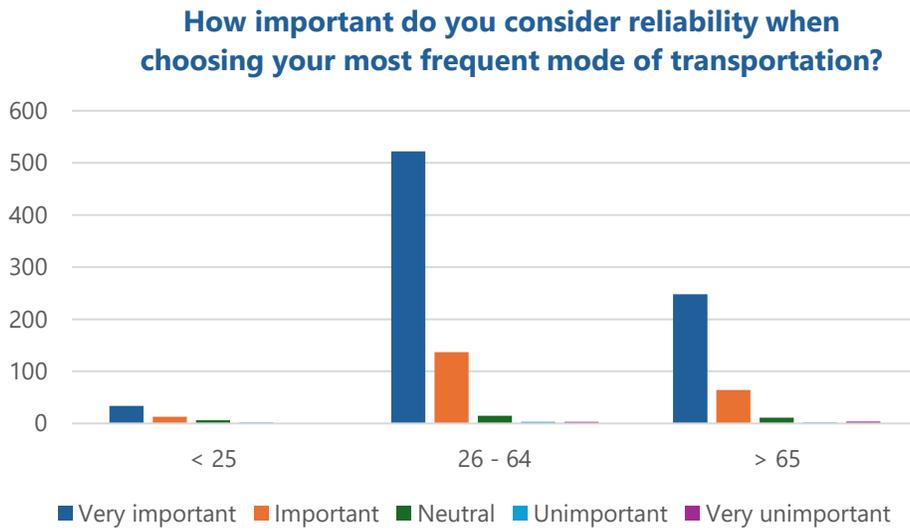


Figure 18 highlights reliability is a very important concern among all ages.

Figure 19 Travel Constraints- Reliability by Community

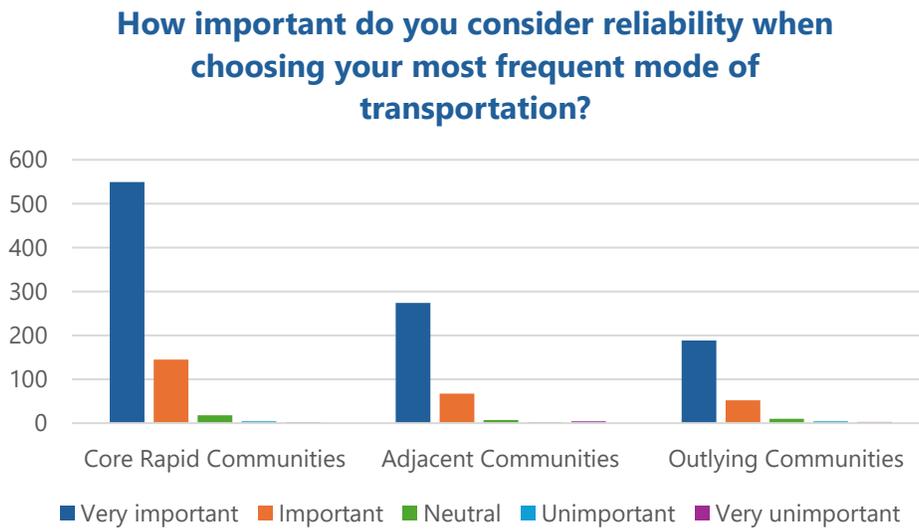


Figure 19 highlights reliability is very important to all communities.

Figure 20. Travel Constraints- Safety by Age

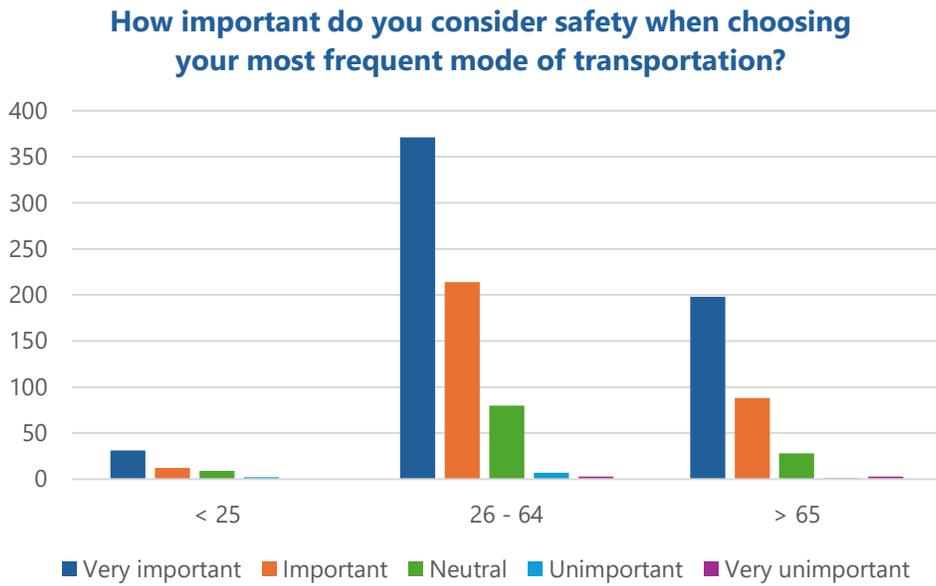


Figure 20 highlights that safety is very important to respondents of all ages.

Figure 21. Travel Constraints- Safety by Community

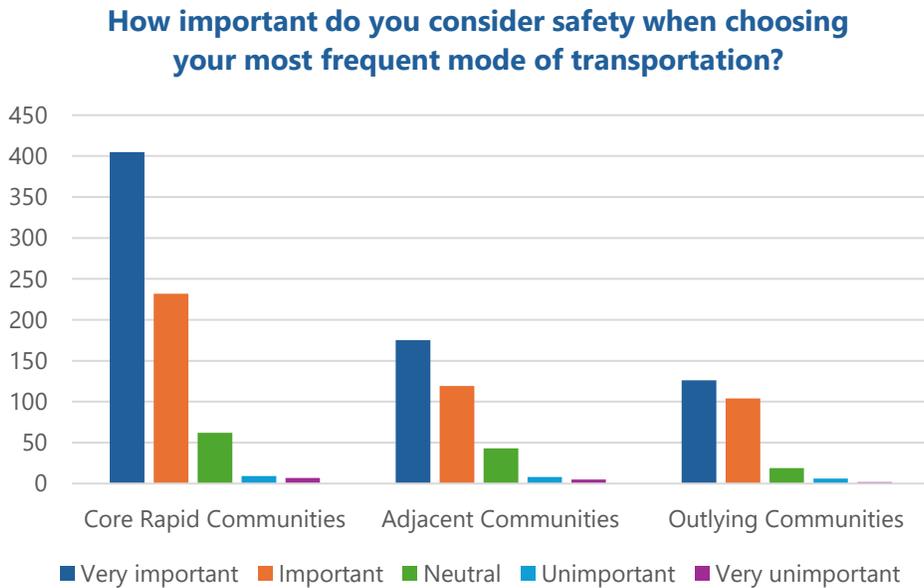


Figure 21 highlights that all respondent communities have safety concerns.

Figure 22. Travel Constraints- Travel Time by Age

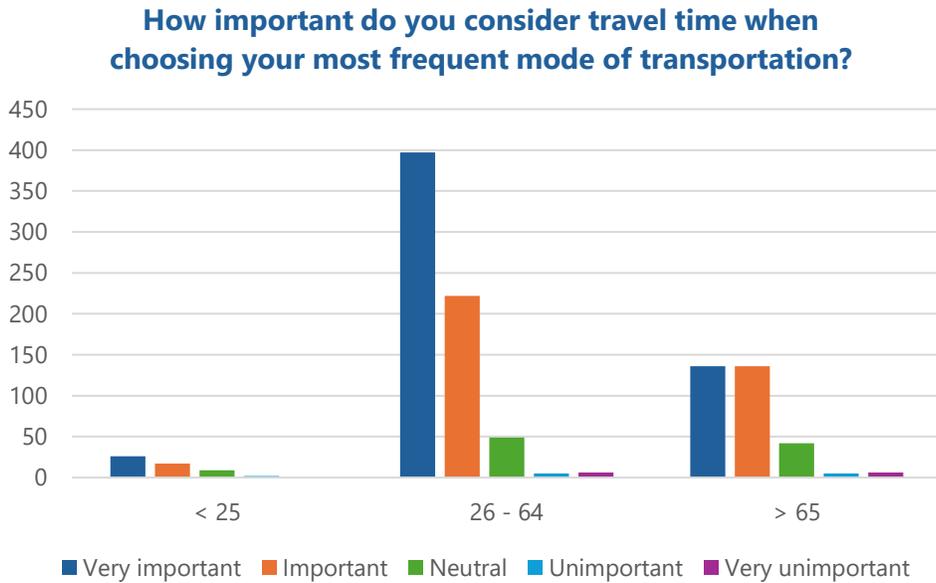


Figure 22 highlights that respondents older than 65 are less concerned with travel times than other respondents.

Figure 23. Travel Constraints- Safety by Community

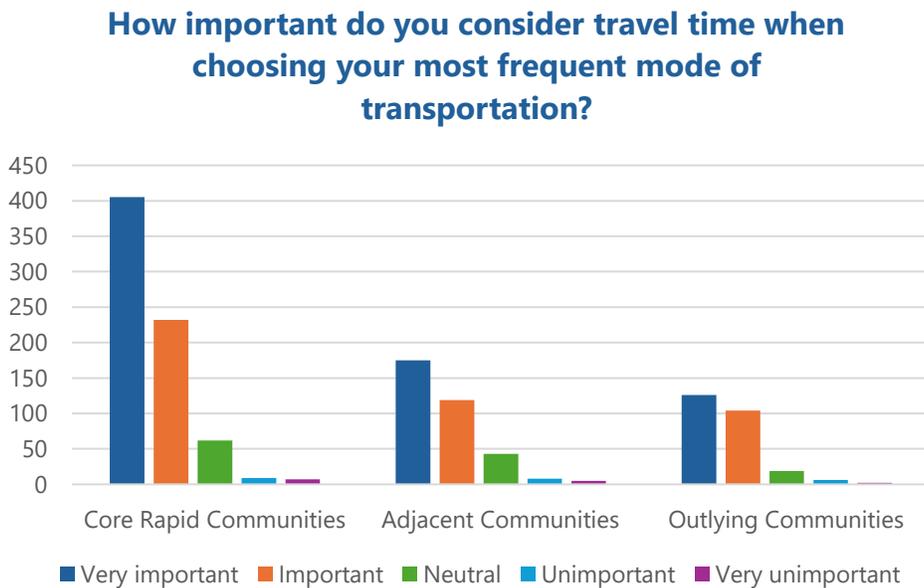


Figure 23 highlights that Outlying communities place slightly less importance on travel time compared to people in the core and adjacent communities.

Travel Time

Question 20 asked: "What is the additional travel time you would be willing to add to a short trip (less than 20 minutes) if you had a safe and convenient alternative to driving? (Select all that apply)." Table 11 summarizes 1,535 responses—the top three were *5-10 minutes* at 850 (55 percent), *11-20 minutes* at 366 (24 percent), and *Less than 5 minutes* at 275 (18%).

Table 11. Additional Commute Time for Short Trips

Commute Times	% Responses	Response
5-10 minutes	55.4%	850
11-20 minutes	23.8%	366
Less than 5 minutes	17.9%	275
None, I would not be willing to add travel time	8.1%	125
21-30 minutes	5.6%	86
31 minutes or longer	1.9%	29

The Rapid Service

Question 21 asked: "If you ride The Rapid service, do you have the need to start or end your trip beyond The Rapid's service area?" There were 903 responses with 555 responding *No* (61 percent). Figure 24 highlights all responses.

Figure 24. The Rapid's Service Area Extension

If you ride The Rapid service, do you have the need to start or end your trip beyond The Rapid's service area?

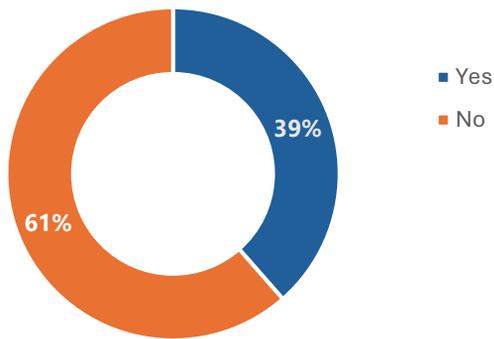


Figure 25. The Rapid's Service Area Extension by Age

If you ride The Rapid service, do you have the need to start or end your trip beyond The Rapid's service area?

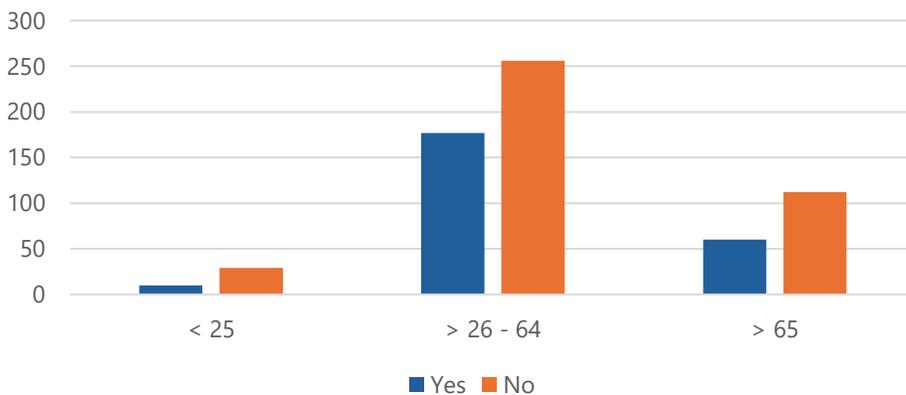
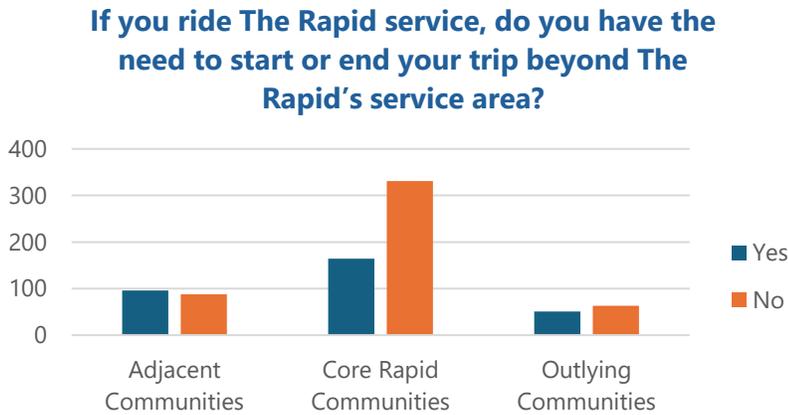


Figure 25 highlights that respondents ages 26-64 who ride The Rapid are more likely to start or end their trip outside The Rapid's service area.

Among respondents that ride The Rapid, Figure 26 highlights that one out of three residents in the Core Rapid communities have a need to start or end their trip outside of The Rapid’s service area.

Figure 26. The Rapid’s Service Area Extension by Community



Question 22 asks: “If your answer to Question 21 was “Yes,” how do you make that trip today?” There were 306 responses with 184 referencing *Personal Vehicle*. The following highlight themes seen in the open-ended questions.

Primary Modes of Transportation:

- Personal/Private Vehicle: The majority of responses indicate that individuals use their personal or private vehicles to reach their destinations when starting or ending their trips outside The Rapid service area.
- Rideshare/Taxi Services: Several respondents mentioned using Uber, Lyft, or other rideshare options to complete their trips.
- Walking/Biking: Some respondents walk or bike to the bus stops or from the nearest stop to their destinations.

Challenges Noted:

- Inaccessible Locations: Many respondents mentioned that they live outside of The Rapid service area or far from a bus stop (e.g., Rockford, Byron Center, and parts of Ottawa County), which makes it difficult or impossible for them to use public transit.
- Lack of Bus Routes/Service Extensions: Several people expressed a desire for The Rapid to extend service to areas like Rockford, Caledonia, and other parts of Kent County and beyond.
- Distance to Bus Stops: For some, the bus stops were too far from their homes, requiring long walks or additional transportation, which many found inconvenient.

Other Observations:

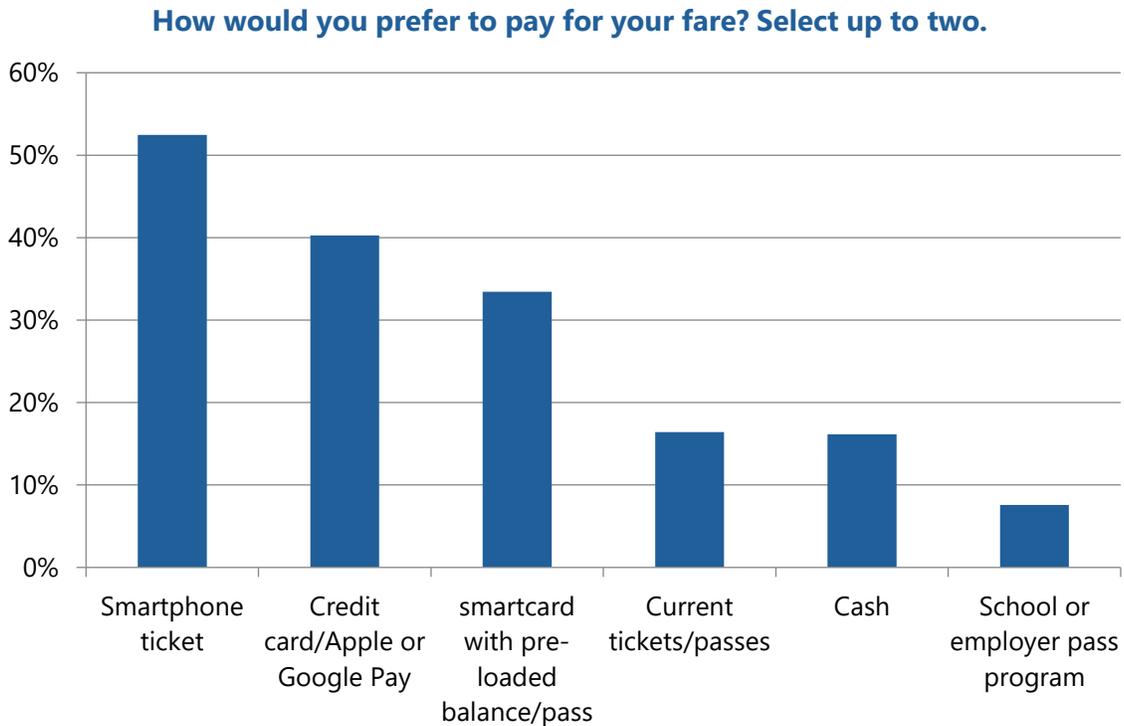
- Special Transportation Arrangements: Some individuals rely on services like Hope Network Transportation, Community Action of Allegan County, or medical transportation but indicated limitations in availability or funding.
- Family/Friends for Rides: A significant portion of respondents depend on family, friends, or neighbors for rides to bus stops or destinations.

“Some major workplaces lie beyond the service area of the rapid. If there were a good alternative I would use it for work.”

Fare Preference

Question 23 asked: "How would you prefer to pay for your fare? Select up to two." There were 1,426 responses with 748 responding *I would prefer a smartphone ticket or pass app* (53 percent), followed by 574 responses for *I would like to directly use credit card/Apple or Google Pay* (40 percent), and 477 responses for *I would like a smartcard with pre-loaded balance/pass* (34 percent). It appears that modern fare collection is favored over legacy transit cards and tickets. Figure 27 highlights the distribution of fare collection preferences which leans toward modern payment technology.

Figure 27. Distribution of Fare Collection Preferences



Grocery Stores:

- **Meijer:**
 - 5531 28th St Ct SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49512
 - 10 Mile Rd, Rockford, MI
 - 1997 E Beltline NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49525
 - 2120 28th St SE, Grand Rapids, MI
 - 5531 28th St Ct SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49512
 - 90 locations in Rockford, 10 Mile, Cascade, Beltline
- **Aldi:**
 - 2120 St SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49508
 - 28th Street locations
- **Costco:**
 - 5100 28th St. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49512
 - Other Costco locations mentioned in 28th St, Grandville
- **Trader Joe's:**
 - Grand Rapids area mentioned
- **Family Fare:**
 - 5241 Northland Drive, Grand Rapids, MI 49525
- **Walmart:**
 - Alpine Avenue, Grand Rapids, MI

Schools:

- **High Schools:**
 - Forest Hills District (All schools)
 - Caledonia High School
 - Kentwood Activities Center, 355 48th St SE, Kentwood, MI 49548
 - Kent County, Caledonia, and Byron Center schools
- **Elementary Schools:**
 - Kentwood Library
 - Walker Charter Academy Area
- **Specialty Schools:**
 - TRIO at Kentwood Library (Kentwood)
 - Special educational locations like "Life Beyond Barriers" in Rockford, MI

Priorities for Kent County Mobility

Question 25 was multiple choice and asked: "From the list below, please select your top three priorities for the Kent County Mobility Study." Figure 29 shows the top three responses were *Providing transportation options to seniors and people with disabilities* (51 percent), *Providing access to places of employment* (44 percent), and *Providing access to medical facilities/healthcare* (37 percent).

Figure 29. Distribution of Priorities for Kent County Mobility Study

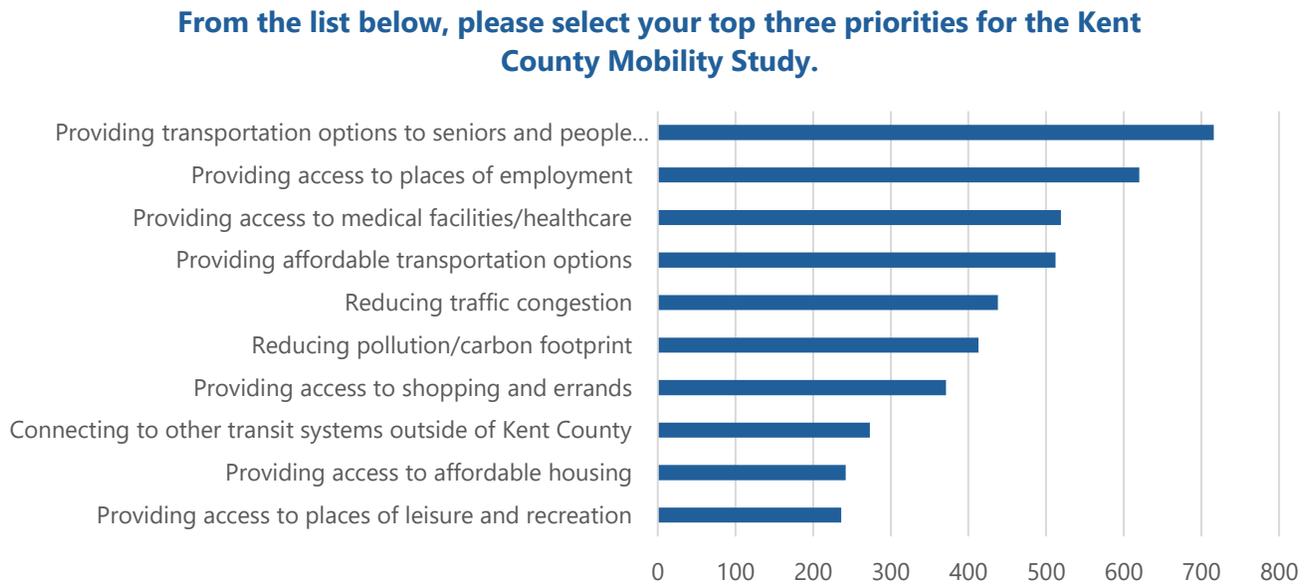


Figure 30. Providing Transportation Options to Seniors and People with Disabilities, by Community

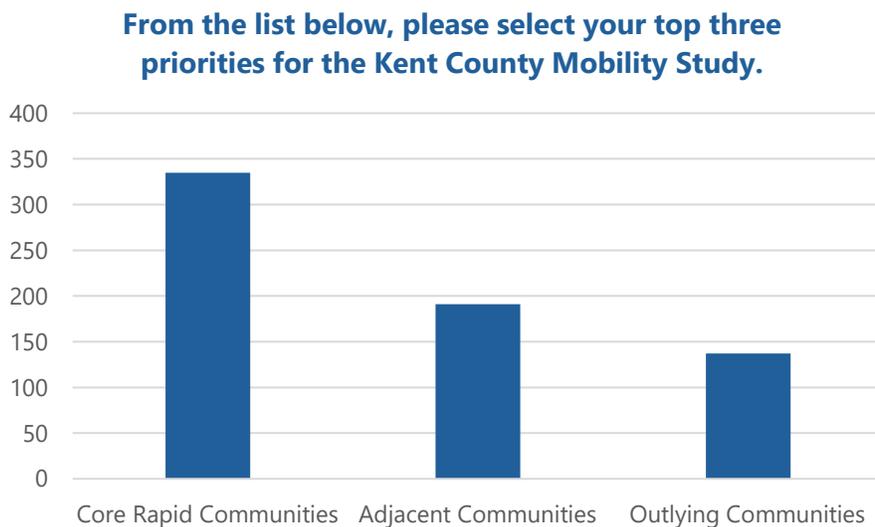


Figure 30 highlights that respondents from Core Rapid and Adjacent communities would like to prioritize transportation options for seniors and people with disabilities.

Skipped Trips

Question 26 was multiple choice and asked: "If there are trips you are not taking due to a lack of transportation, what type of trips are they? Select all that apply." As shown in Table 12, the top three responses were *Social/recreation* 274 (55 percent), *Shopping/errands* 193 (39 percent), and *Healthcare* 122 (25 percent).

It is notable that the most-skipped trips do not align with the highest priorities chosen in Question 29. While this reflects the importance of the least-skipped trips – i.e. those that residents will go to great lengths to achieve, despite transportation barriers – it should not be taken to suggest that foregone trips do not matter. Trips not taken represent a loss of opportunities.

The most commonly skipped trip purpose was *Social/recreation*. In 2023, the Surgeon General of the United States issued an advisory warning of an epidemic of loneliness and isolation. According to the advisory, loneliness is associated with a greater risk of cardiovascular disease, dementia, stroke, depression, anxiety, and premature death.

Table 12. Distribution of Skipped Trips in Kent County

Answer Choices	% Responses	Responses
Social/recreation	55.2%	274
Shopping/errands	38.9%	193
Healthcare	24.6%	122
Other (please specify)	20.6%	102
Work	18.6%	92
Place of worship	13.5%	67
School	6.7%	33

Some themes collected in the *Other* category include dependence on family transportation (shared vehicle), limited access to leisure or specific locations, and active transportation barriers (bike infrastructure connections to transit).

Summary comments regarding Mobility Services in Kent County

Question 27 is an open response question asking: "Do you have any additional thoughts regarding mobility services in Kent County or the Kent County Mobility Study process?" Out of 352 responses, six key themes emerged:

- **Public Transit:** Enhance services by extending operating hours and improving connectivity.
- **Cycling Infrastructure:** Recognize the transformative potential of e-biking and advocate for safer biking infrastructure.
- **Reliability of Service:** Emphasize the importance of building trust through consistent system performance.
- **Payments/Cost:** Provide clearer information on fare structure, simplify fare payment systems, and offer subsidies for low-income riders.
- **Environment/Sustainability:** Adopt eco-friendly solutions such as electric buses and other green initiatives.
- **Plan Feedback:** Ensure transparent communication with the public regarding service improvements.

Kent County Mobility Survey Respondent Profile

Questions 28-37 focus on the demographic profile of respondents around home location, sex, age, income, race, ethnicity, access to vehicle, and access to internet. Key top line insights suggest that most responses came from Core Rapid communities, people identifying as female, between the ages of 26-64, with household income of \$30,000 to \$125,000, of white race, with access to a vehicle, and access to a smartphone with the internet. The following section summarizes the respondent profile.

While these results reflect the region’s diversity in their range, they suggest only a small sampling of the populations most likely to depend on public transit, which include lower-income individuals, people of color, and people living in zero-vehicle households. Broad community survey results should be viewed in tandem with the results of the more targeted forms of outreach included in the Mobility Study.

Home

In question 28 and 29, respondents were asked: “What is your home zip code?”

Table 13 summarizes 1,421 responses with 484 responses for *City of Grand Rapids, MI* (34 percent). As described earlier, home zip code responses were used to develop community subareas based on their proximity to The Rapid.

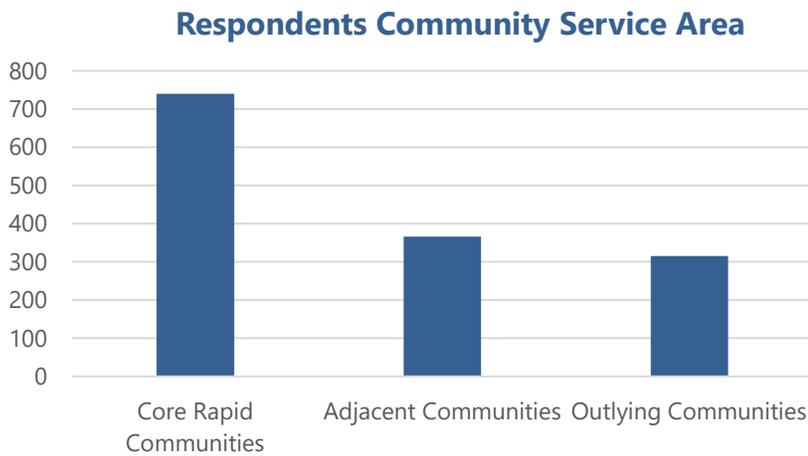
Table 13. Home Locations

City/Village/Township	Communities	% Response	Response
City of Grand Rapids	Core Rapid Communities	34.1%	484
Plainfield Township	Adjacent Communities	7.0%	99
City of Kentwood	Core Rapid Communities	5.0%	71
City of Rockford	Outlying Communities	4.6%	66
City of Wyoming	Core Rapid Communities	4.5%	64
Ada Township	Adjacent Communities	4.0%	57
City of Walker	Core Rapid Communities	3.2%	46
Cascade Township	Adjacent Communities	2.8%	40
City of Grandville	Core Rapid Communities	2.8%	40
Caledonia Township	Adjacent Communities	2.7%	39
Grand Rapids Township	Adjacent Communities	2.7%	38
City of East Grand Rapids	Core Rapid Communities	2.5%	35
Alpine Township	Adjacent Communities	2.3%	32
Byron Township	Adjacent Communities	2.2%	31
Cannon Township	Outlying Communities	2.2%	31
Gaines Township	Adjacent Communities	2.1%	30
Ottawa County	Outlying Communities	1.7%	24
City of Lowell	Outlying Communities	1.5%	21
City of Sparta	Outlying Communities	1.3%	19
Bowne Township	Outlying Communities	1.2%	17

City/Village/Township	Communities	% Response	Response
City of Cedar Springs	Outlying Communities	1.2%	17
Algoma Township	Outlying Communities	1.1%	16
Courtland Township	Outlying Communities	1.1%	15
Vergennes Township	Outlying Communities	0.7%	10
Oakfield Township	Outlying Communities	0.7%	10
Allegan County	Outlying Communities	0.6%	8
Nelson Township	Outlying Communities	0.6%	8
City of Kent City	Outlying Communities	0.4%	6
Montcalm County	Outlying Communities	0.4%	6
Muskegon County	Outlying Communities	0.4%	5
Lowell Township	Outlying Communities	0.4%	5
Spencer Township	Outlying Communities	0.3%	4
Grattan Township	Outlying Communities	0.3%	4
Ionia County	Outlying Communities	0.3%	4
Solon Township	Outlying Communities	0.3%	4
Newaygo County	Outlying Communities	0.2%	3
Tyrone Township	Outlying Communities	0.1%	2
Barry County	Outlying Communities	0.1%	2
City of Allendale	Outlying Communities	0.1%	2
Branch County	Outlying Communities	0.1%	1
Open-Ended Response	Outlying Communities	0.1%	1
Mecosta County	Outlying Communities	0.1%	1
Mackinac County	Outlying Communities	0.1%	1
Sparta Township	Outlying Communities	0.1%	1
Livingston County	Outlying Communities	0.1%	1

Figure 31 summarizes the distribution of respondents by service communities across Kent County and highlights that over 700 respondents come from the Core Rapid communities, while Adjacent and Outlying communities have over 300 respondents each. This represents a good balance of respondents across Kent County.

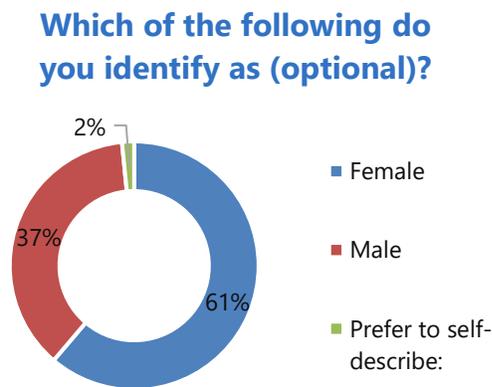
Figure 31. Summary of Respondents Community Service Area



Self-Identity (Sex)

Question 30, respondents were asked: “Which of the following do you identify as (optional)?” There were 1,405 responses with 860 responding as *Female*, 523 responding as *Male*, and 22 *Preferring to Self-Describe*. Figure 32 summarizes the distribution.

Figure 32. Distribution of Self Identity



Age

In question 31, respondents were asked: "Which of the following do you identify as (optional)?" A total of 1,114 individuals participated in this question. Among them, 703 respondents (63 percent) were 26-64 years of age (born between 1958 and 1999), 343 respondents (31 percent) were 65 years and older in age (born before 1958), and 59 respondents (nine percent) were 25 years and under (born after 1999).

Ethnicity

In question 32, respondents were asked: "Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin?" There were 1,409 respondents with 1,272 responding *No* (90 percent). Conversely, 81 respondents chose *Prefer not to say* (six percent).

Race

In question 33, respondents were asked: "What is your race?" Table 14 summarizes 1,408 responses. The majority identified as *White*, with 1,189 respondents (85 percent), while *Black or African American* respondents accounted for 58 responses (four percent). Additionally, 119 respondents (nine percent) Preferred not to disclose their race.

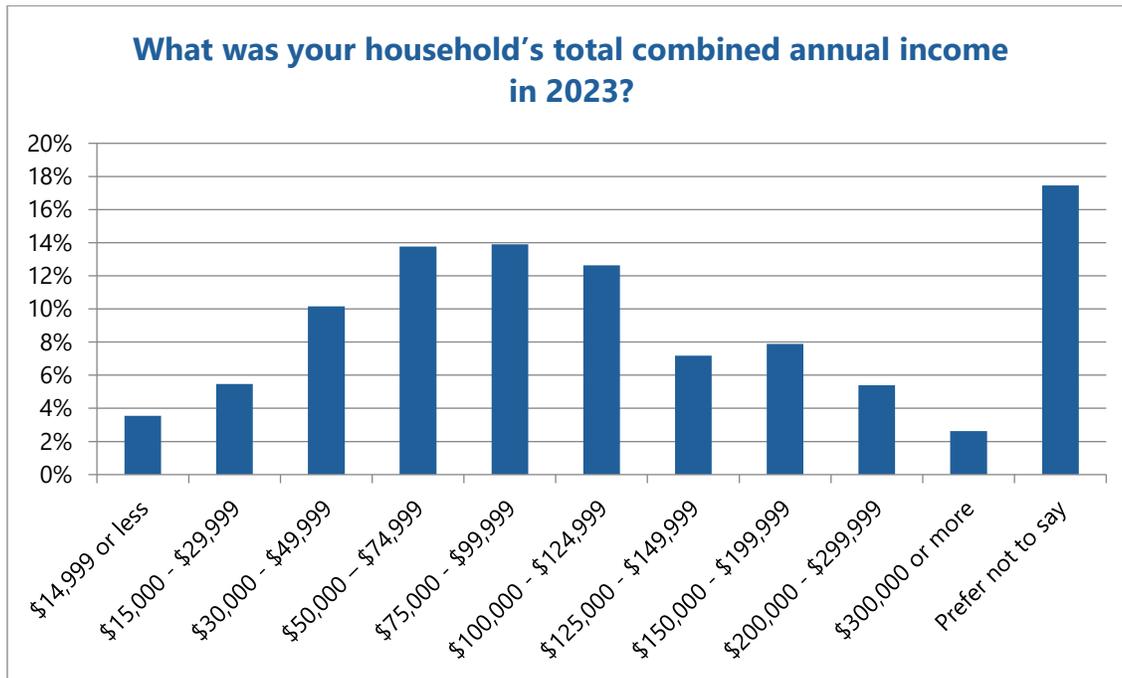
Table 14. Race

Answer Choices	% Responses	Responses
White	84.5%	1189
Black or African American	4.1%	58
American Indian or Alaska Native	1.2%	17
Asian	0.9%	13
Native Hawaiian, Samoan, Chamorro, or other Pacific Islander	0.4%	6
Prefer not to say	8.5%	119
Other (please specify)	2.7%	38

Income

In question 34, respondents were asked: “What was your household’s total combined annual income in 2023?” Figure 33 summarizes 1,422 responses, 246 chose *Prefer not to say* (18 percent). Conversely, there were 1,036 responses for household income above \$30,000 (74 percent) and 127 responses for households below \$30,000 (9 percent). Figure 33 highlights the distribution of household income.

Figure 33. Household Income



Language

In question 35, Respondents were asked: “What language do you typically speak at home?” There were 1,390 responses with 1,372 *English* (99 percent) responses suggesting very low responses among non-English speakers in Kent County.

Access to Automobile

In question 36, respondents were asked: “Do you have access to an automobile for personal use?” There were 1,427 responses with 1,303 *Yes* (91 percent) responses which suggest very high rate of car ownership in Kent County.

Access to Internet

In question 37, respondents were asked: “Do you have access to an internet-enabled mobile phone (smartphone)?” There were 1,432 responses with 1,387 *Yes* (97 percent) responses suggesting very high rate of smart phone usage in Kent County.

APPENDIX D. SERVICE CONCEPTS AND EVALUATION FRAMEWORK



Kent County Mobility Study

Service Concepts and Evaluation

May 2025



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Executive Summary

The Kent County Mobility Study, a partnership between Kent County and the Grand Valley Metropolitan Council (GVMC), is designed to guide the creation of a more accessible, regionally integrated, and innovative mobility network. Covering all of Kent County and neighboring areas, the study evaluates existing services and proposes new or enhanced options to better connect residents to jobs, education, healthcare, and daily life.

This report documents the initial screening of a wide array of proposed service concepts. The list of service concepts emerged from a comprehensive process that combined data-driven analysis with extensive stakeholder and public engagement. Key inputs included:

- Recommendations from The Rapid's Transit Master Plan (TMP) and regional studies
- Community surveys, pop-up events, focus groups, and other engagement events
- Travel pattern analysis using tools like Replica
- Demographic analysis (e.g., zero-car households, seniors, low-income populations, and others)
- Input from regional stakeholders and advisory committees

Service concepts were evaluated based on a scoring framework grounded in the study's vision and four guiding principles: Accessibility, Regional Integration, Innovation, and Economic Vitality. This vision emphasizes a seamless, inclusive mobility network that benefits all residents. Metrics varied by service type but included:

- Geographic coverage and connection to existing transit
- Mobility Propensity Index, based on demographics predictive of transit use
- Community and partner support, based on prior plans and local endorsements
- Job access potential and ridership projections
- Cost and complexity of implementation

It is important to note that the inclusion of a service concept on this list – even if it performs well on a first-pass screening – indicates only that it is worth further consideration.

The last section of this report touches on policy coordination, which is essential to the success of new and expanded mobility services in Kent County. Effective policies can streamline service delivery, improve user experience, and support long-term growth by fostering collaboration across jurisdictions. Key strategies include creating a unified transit marketing plan, standardizing service agreements, integrating fare and trip-planning systems, and aligning eligibility processes across providers. Transit-supportive land use planning and multimodal design guidelines can also enhance access and usability. Additionally, innovative ideas—such as funding emerging technology pilots or expanding driver education through volunteer programs—offer creative avenues to increase mobility beyond traditional transit models.

The screening conducted in this report is only one source of information on the potential service concepts. They will next be presented to the Mobility Task Force for review and discussion. It may be that a high-scoring concept is politically unfeasible, or that new information emerges that sends a low-scoring concept to the top of the priority list. The most promising concepts will be developed further with potential funding sources and recommended lead agencies in the next phase of the project.

Introduction

The Kent County Mobility Study is a joint project of Kent County, Michigan, and the Grand Valley Metropolitan Council (GVMC). The project study area includes all of Kent County, as well as the communities neighboring Kent County in an approximately 10-mile radius.

Earlier portions of this study included an assessment of the current availability of public transit, micromobility, and other mobility services in the region, as well as a market analysis of demographics, community characteristics, and trip patterns. This was followed by a review of governance and funding models available in the State of Michigan, including several case studies from peer counties. Throughout the project, the team continues to engage stakeholders and the public through a survey, community meetings, focus groups, Mobility Task Force meetings, and more.

PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

The steps to date have helped to identify high-priority needs and gaps in service and have generated a list of new or improved mobility services that may help to meet those needs. This report describes the process of identifying services, lists potential services, and shares the results of an initial screening.

It is important to note that the inclusion of a service concept on this list – even if it performs well on a first-pass screening – indicates only that it is worth further consideration. This report does not identify funding sources or operators for any service.

NEXT STEPS

The screening conducted in this report is only one source of information on the potential service concepts. They will next be presented to the Mobility Task Force for review and discussion. It may be that a high-scoring concept is politically unfeasible, or that new information emerges that sends a low-scoring concept to the top of the priority list. The most promising concepts will be developed further with potential funding sources and recommended lead agencies. The list will be presented in tiers, based on how soon and how easily concepts can be implemented.

Service Concepts

The following service concepts were gathered for initial screening, prior to discussion regarding potential funding and coordination needs. This is done with the intent of gauging county interest in potential services before diving into potential implementation scenarios. It begins by briefly explaining several different types of mobility service. It continues by describing the process of selecting service concepts for evaluation and listing the chosen concepts.

SERVICE CONCEPT TYPES

Mobility services can be divided into three broad categories: fixed-route transit service, demand-response transit service, and other, less traditional, mobility programs.

- Fixed-route service is the operation of transit vehicles along a fixed route on a set schedule, usually with set stop locations.
- Demand-response service serves variable origins and destinations within a defined zone. Passengers request specific trips ahead of time. Demand-response service can take many different forms, but details surrounding the type of demand-response service are not defined for the sake of this evaluation.
 - Some demand-response services are door-to-door or curb-to-curb, with the vehicle picking up very close to where the passenger is starting and dropping them off at their destination. Others require the use of transfer points or “virtual bus stops” at reasonably close intersections. A demand-response service designed to involve a transfer to a fixed-route service is often called “first/last mile” service.
 - Demand-response service can be shared with multiple riders making their own journeys if schedules and destinations can be coordinated.
 - Some demand-response services require bookings at least 24 hours in advance, while others allow ASAP pickups that – given sufficient resources – can get a vehicle to a rider within 10 minutes of booking. The level of technology available is a key factor for agencies deciding how to manage booking.
 - Demand-response is less cost-efficient than fixed-route on a per-mile and per-passenger basis, but it can be effective for serving a small number of passengers with diverse origins and destinations.
- While public transit is one way to serve mobility needs, a number of other mobility services have emerged or are under discussion in Kent County. They include micromobility programs like the bike-share or e-scooter rentals, volunteer driver programs, and employer vanpools, among others.

Policy is another puzzle piece that can complement mobility services. For example, recent master plans by local municipalities have emphasized the importance of transit-supportive land use policies. For purposes of this report, policy initiatives are treated as a fourth category subjected to a similar screening process.

SERVICE CONCEPT SELECTION PROCESS

The list of service concepts was developed from a broad array of inputs, beginning with the first stages of existing conditions documentation.

Building on The Rapid Transit Master Plan

The Kent County Mobility Study builds on the Transit Master Plan (TMP) recently completed by The Rapid. Whereas The Rapid Transit Master Plan focused on The Rapid's existing service area and on potential service extensions that could be operated by The Rapid, this study seeks to address broader regional needs that are not within the purview of The Rapid. With that said, The Rapid is one of many stakeholders in the study and one of many potential partners in implementation, particularly when deploying a public transit service within their service area. An effort was therefore made to consider both the relevant recommendations from the TMP and to maintain some level of consistency in evaluation methods between the TMP and the Mobility Study.

Recommendations from the TMP

As a part of The Rapid's 2025 master planning process, a Market Analysis assessed potential transit markets. Building from this work, the Intercounty Corridor Connectivity Analysis identifies, ranks, and prioritizes connections both within Kent County and part of Ottawa County and within all counties surrounding Kent County.

The intent of The Rapid's Intercounty Corridor Analysis was to rank potential corridors based on current travel demand, expected future growth, and proximity to transportation dependent populations. The TMP identified some of the top ranked corridors from this analysis as corridors that could be studied further. As a part of the Kent County Mobility Study process, some of these corridors were brought into this initial screening not to further analyze the corridors but rather to see how these corridors, already identified by The Rapid as top ranked concepts, fit with the goals of this study. Corridors identified in the TMP and pulled into this analysis include:

- Alpine Avenue: Extension or Rapid Connect Zone
- Walker Avenue: New bus service or Rapid Connect Zone
- Express bus between Grand Rapids and the airport
- Plainfield Avenue: Extension or Rapid Connect Zone
- Bus service between Grandville and the Airport
- US-131 express service between Grand Rapids and Wayland
- Allendale Rapid Connect Zone
- West Michigan Express

Current and Prior Plans

An early literature review identified recommendations that had been made in recent planning efforts around the region. In addition to the TMP and its associated documents, some of the plans with specific transit recommendations included the Kent County Transit Needs Assessment, the Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan (Region 8), the GVMC 2050 MTP update, the GVMC Airport Access Study, the Allendale Charter Township Master Plan, and the Algoma Township Master Plan.

Public Engagement

A series of pop-up activities at community events asked participants about their common travel destinations and features they most prioritized in mobility solutions. Following the pop-ups, an online and paper community survey asked a larger set of questions. These engagement activities showed that some members of the community prefer fixed-route service, while others prefer demand-response service. The survey results suggested that many current

users of Uber and Lyft are willing to use shared services. A question designed to gauge familiarity with the region's providers showed that few respondents were familiar with mobility services outside The Rapid. Other findings include a strong need for service connecting to/from The Rapid and a preference for electronic fare payments. Finally, participants who shared their top travel origins and destinations helped the study team identify potential locations for services.

Travel Patterns

Larger travel datasets helped to identify origin and destination pairs. Replica – a platform for building detailed travel demand models based on cell phone, census, and other data – was used to map trip flows within the county and across county borders. If high volumes of trips were observed between or within certain municipalities, these locations were added to the list of potential transit services.

Demographic Analysis

American Community Survey data provided an additional dimension of analysis, helping identify census block groups likely to have higher demand for transit services based on their demographics. The demographic groups most predictive of demand for transit services include zero-car households, low-income populations, seniors, and people of color.

Stakeholder Engagement and Study Committees

Focus group meetings with key stakeholders helped to refine the list of potential alternatives. These groups included Concerned Citizens for Transit, the Essential Needs Task Force, the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), Sparta Downtown Development Authority, City of Rockford, Nucraft, Senior Neighbors, The Right Place, North Kent Connect, Volunteers in Action, Hope Network, Lacks, Custom Profile, Cardinal Senior Living, and The Rapid.

The list of service alternatives was further refined in meetings with the Technical Advisory Committee and the full Mobility Task Force. Several items were edited or added in response to feedback from the task force. For example, the West Michigan Express had originally been considered out of scope for this study but was added to the evaluation based on stakeholder input.

Service Themes

The results of data analysis and stakeholder engagement suggested three different types of travel need, listed below. In developing service concepts, the study team made sure that each of the three was represented by potential services.

- Supporting diverse travel needs for the general public in and around Kent County for all trip types, including medical, shopping, school, recreation, etc.
- Supporting those who commute into the core six cities from areas of the county lacking mobility services, and vice versa.
- Supporting job opportunities and economic growth by connecting the region's residents with employment centers located across the county.

SERVICE CONCEPTS

The concept selection process described above resulted in the following list of potential services. They are listed in four high-level groups: fixed-route service, demand-response service, additional mobility programs, and policy options.

Fixed-Route

For purposes of discussion, the list of possible fixed-route services is divided into subtypes of fixed-route service.

Expansion of Existing Service and New Bus Service

The first list includes routes similar to The Rapid's current local bus service. They extend existing routes or add new, similar service to neighborhoods just beyond the reach of the current service area.

- New bus service along Walker Avenue
- New bus service between Grandville and the airport
- Extension along Plainfield Avenue
- Extension to Alpine Township
- Extension to the Jenison area of Georgetown Township

Express Service

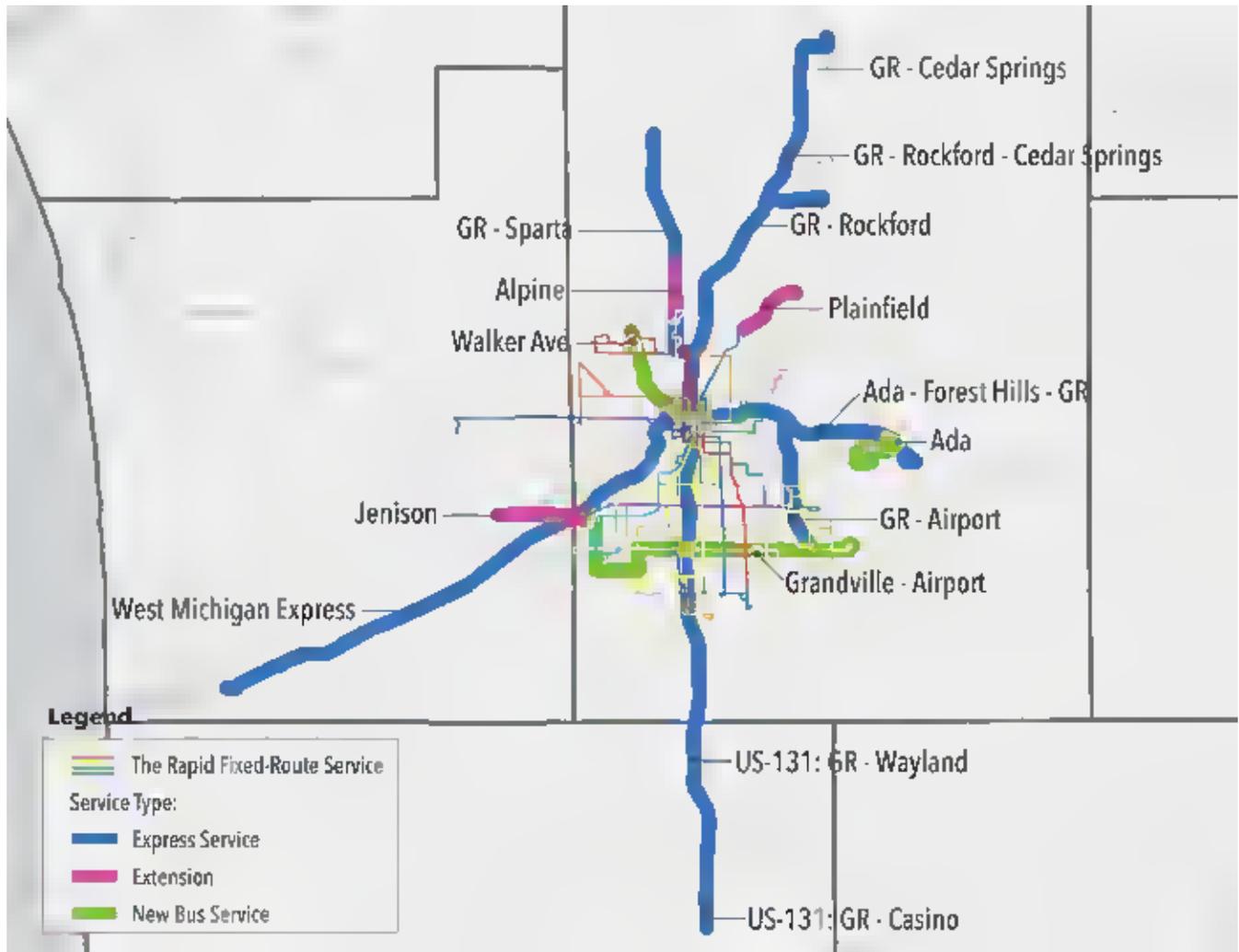
The second list includes express services. These routes run longer distances with long nonstop segments and are intended to provide efficient intercity connections. Express routes are often scheduled for commuters, with a few runs a day timed for typical shift start and end times. However, they may also be tailored to student schedules, medical appointments, or other needs.

- West Michigan Express (an intercity express bus connecting Grand Rapids, Hudsonville, Zeeland, and Holland; an implementation plan was completed as part of The Rapid TMP, but funding has not been identified)
- Express service along US-131 between Wayland and Grand Rapids
- Express service along US-131 between Gun Lake Casino and Grand Rapids
- Express service between Grand Rapids and the airport
- Express service between Rockford - Grand Rapids
- Express service between Sparta - Grand Rapids
- Express service between Solon – Nelson - Cedar Springs
- Express service between Rockford - Solon-Nelson - Cedar Springs
- Express service between Ada-Forest – Hills - Grand Rapids

Other Services

A third category of service is a local circulator introduced to a municipality previously without transit service. At this point, only one township is identified as a candidate for new local service: Ada Township, which shows relatively high numbers of internal trips, and which was mentioned by name as a candidate for bus service during public engagement.

Figure 1. Fixed-Route Service Concepts



Demand-Response

Demand-response concepts are divided into two categories.

- The first category consists of small, defined zones, contained to either a single municipality or to a few neighboring municipalities.
- The second category expands service to much larger areas, such as the northern end of Kent County. The tradeoff to a larger service area is that, while it does enable longer one-seat trips for some passengers, it requires quite a bit of driver time for any given trip and poses challenges to vehicle sharing. There are fewer of these alternatives in the list.

Local Demand-Response Service Zones

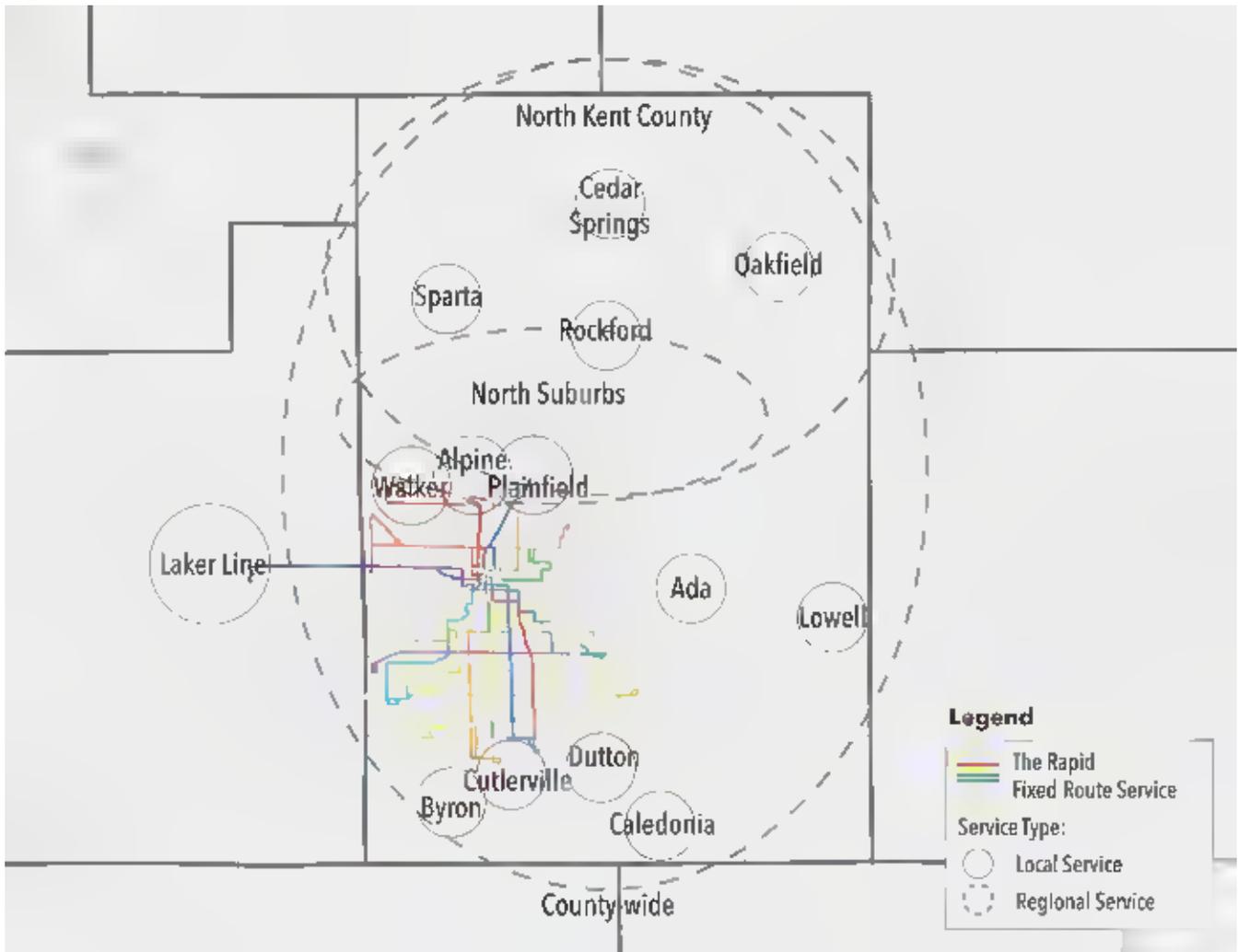
For evaluation purposes, each of these zones is defined as a circle surrounding each municipality, as indicated in the map below. Further evaluation of zones could result in more precise borders such as city boundaries, major streets and rivers.

- Municipal: Sparta
- Municipal: Rockford
- Municipal: Byron
- Municipal: Cutlerville
- Municipal: Dutton
- Municipal: Ada
- Municipal: Caledonia
- Municipal: Cedar Springs
- Municipal: Oakfield (with potential for added intercounty service to Greenville and Eureka)
- Municipal: Lowell
- Laker Line zone, including GVSU Allendale campus (Ottawa County)
- First/last mile service in Plainfield
- First/last mile service near Walker Avenue
- First/last mile service in Alpine

Regional Demand-Response Service Zones

- North Kent County Zone
- North suburbs (Plainfield, Alpine, Cannon townships)
- Countywide

Figure 2. Demand-Response Service Concepts



Screening

Concurrently with the gradual assembly and refinement of the long list of service concepts, the study team also developed methods for evaluating these concepts. The nature of the evaluation varies depending on the type of service, as the exact same metrics cannot be applied to a bike-share service, an express bus, and a unified fare policy. This section describes how the screening for each service category was designed. It then reports the results of the screening.

SCREENING METHODOLOGY

Immediately prior to developing and screening alternatives, the Mobility Task Force revisited the original goals of the study and agreed to a shared long-term vision for transportation in Kent County. This study is intended to be one step toward realizing that vision. The vision guided the development of alternatives and screening criteria and is as follows:

Kent County envisions a countywide mobility framework that interconnects urban, suburban, and rural communities through innovative and flexible transportation solutions. Our mobility future empowers residents of every age, ability, and income level to access jobs, healthcare, education, and community life without barriers. Through strong partnerships and sustainable funding, Kent County and its partners will build a shared network of transportation options that support economic growth and enhance quality of life in the region.

This vision was then distilled into a series of supporting principles. They are as follows:

- **Principle 1 – Accessibility:** Expand service options across Kent County, providing effective, reliable transportation options for residents regardless of age, ability, or economic status
- **Principle 2 – Regional Integration:** Create a coordinated network of services that link urban, suburban, and rural communities, model effective regional coordination, and support business growth and workforce mobility
- **Principle 3 – Innovation:** Embrace creative solutions, emerging mobility options, and new technologies that can scale to meet evolving community needs
- **Principle 4 – Economic Vitality:** Develop stable funding mechanisms and partnerships to ensure long-term service reliability and growth and create a cost-effective model that corresponds to demand

Transit Service Evaluation

The two categories of transit service evaluation – fixed-route and demand-response – were evaluated using metrics that distinguish one transit option from the next. These metrics are based on the supporting principles and draw on available datasets, which include census data, jobs data, and regional travel patterns.

Most metrics rely on assumptions about the service area of a given concept. For fixed-route services, the service area is defined as 0.75 miles from the route alignment. For demand-response services, the service area is defined as the proposed boundaries in which trips would be available.

Geographic Coverage

This metric gives an idea of the extent of coverage across communities in the county, both in terms of total service area and – because The Rapid is currently the main transit system – in the new service’s creation of ways to access The Rapid services. The highest scoring services by this metric would have large service areas and connect to The Rapid, whereas the lowest-scoring services would have small service areas that do not connect to The Rapid.

Mobility Services Propensity Index

This metric shows how well a given service reaches those populations most likely to use it. It draws on Census demographic data for income, population density, zero-car household density, population over 65, population under 18, and households with disabilities. The score for a given service is based on an index created from all these categories combined.

Community and Partner Support

To calculate this metric, local planning documents were consulted. If a particular concept was mentioned directly in The Rapid’s Transit Master Plan, in township master plans, or similar planning documents, it received maximum points. If a concept was consistent with specific goals or intentions stated in planning documents, but not mentioned directly, it received fewer points. Concepts not mentioned at all received no points.

Jobs Access

This metric used MDOT projections for job counts in 2050 to identify jobs per square mile in the transit concept’s service area. More points were allocated to services with higher future employment density.

Ridership Potential

This metric was defined differently for fixed-route and demand-response service. For fixed-route services, the annual average daily traffic (AADT) along the service corridor was used to gauge how high-volume the corridor might be generally, which would translate into a volume of potential transit trips. For demand-response services, projected 2050 household density was used instead.

Cost

Although this study does not include detailed cost estimates for service concepts, points were given to each concept based on some simple assumptions about the resources that would be required to implement it. If it were an extension of existing service requiring few new vehicles or stops, for example, it would receive maximum points because that is a relatively low-cost model. If it were a new high-capacity service, it would receive the minimum number of points for this metric. Points were determined relative to other services within the same service type (fixed-route or demand-response).

Complexity

Similarly to cost, the complexity of implementation was gauged at a very high level. An extension of existing service achievable through existing partnerships would be rated highly in this category. A brand-new service model requiring several partnerships would receive a low rating.

Evaluation Scaling and Weighting

The ultimate outcome of the evaluation for any given transit service concept was a single high, medium, or low rating, relative to service concepts of the same type. This represents its overall alignment with the diverse goals of the study, as expressed in the vision statement.

In order to reach this single rating, transit service metrics were calculated using a min-max normalization rescaling method. In this method, the range in scores between the minimum value in the set and the maximum value is transformed into a consistent range that allows easy comparison or summing across metrics.

The quantitative metrics were rescaled on a range from 0 to 2. For example, among fixed-route services, the Mobility Services Propensity Index scores in their raw form ranged from nine (Ada in-town fixed route service) to 21 (the West Michigan Express). The minimum was set to 0 and the maximum was set to 2, with all the values in between transformed into decimals somewhere between 0 and 2. This method was also applied to the jobs access and ridership potential metrics.

The other, more qualitative, metrics were rescaled on a range from 0 to 1. These metrics included geographic coverage, community and partner support, cost, and complexity. Therefore, the transportation need, jobs access, and ridership potential quantitative metrics received double the weight of the more qualitative metrics: geographic coverage, community and partner support, cost, and complexity. This was done because the quantitative metrics were scored based on specific values compared with the qualitative metrics, which received relative scores for the sake of comparison but would require more in-depth analysis based on more specific service details. This weighting method also brought scoring results closer to anticipated results.

Appendix A includes a rubric which shows more detail on the scoring system within each metric. Additionally, Appendix B shows the normalized and weighted score for each service concept and metric.

Transit Service Evaluation Results

The aggregate score ultimately assigned to each service concept is shown below in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1. Goal Alignment of Fixed Route Transit Service Concepts

FIXED-ROUTE	Score
Expansion of Existing Services and New Bus Service	
New bus service along Walker Avenue	Medium
New bus service between Grandville and the Airport	Low
Extension along Plainfield Avenue	Medium
Extension to Alpine Township	High
Extension to the Jenison area of Georgetown Township	Low
Express Services	
West Michigan Express	High
Express Service along US-131 between Wayland and Grand Rapids	Medium
Express Service along US-131 between Gun Lake Casino and Grand Rapids	Medium
Express bus between Grand Rapids and the airport	High
Express service between Rockford - Grand Rapids	High
Express service between Sparta-Grand Rapids	High
Express service between Solon-Nelson-Cedar Springs	Medium
Express service between Rockford - Solon-Nelson - Cedar Springs	Medium
Express service between Ada-Forest-Hills-Grand Rapids	High
Other Services	
"In-town" fixed-route service in Ada	Low

Table 2. Goal Alignment of Demand Response Transit Service Concepts

Demand-Response	
Demand Response Service Zones	
Municipal: Sparta	Medium
Municipal: Rockford	Medium
Municipal: Byron	Medium
Municipal: Cutlerville	High
Municipal: Dutton	Medium
Municipal: Ada	Low
Municipal: Caledonia	Low
Municipal: Cedar Springs	Low
Municipal: Oakfield (with intercounty service to Greenville and Eureka)	Low
Municipal: Lowell	Low
Laker Line zone, including GVSU Allendale campus (Ottawa County)	Low
First/last mile service in Plainfield	Medium
First/last mile service near Walker Avenue	Medium
First/last mile service in Alpine	High
Regional Dial-a-Ride Services	
North Kent County Zone	Low
North suburbs (Plainfield, Alpine, Cannon townships)	Medium
Countywide	High

Key Findings

Policy

Policy choices – by jurisdictions acting individually or as a coordinated effort across jurisdictions – can help to encourage new services, plan better for future services, or deliver existing services more effectively. To ensure the success of a new or expanded service, supportive systems like marketing, cooperative agreements, and technology investments must be in place. Additionally, these policies are consistent with the type of comprehensive mobility program outlined in the vision and goal statements shaped by the Mobility Task Force.

The list below includes some best practices. They have been grouped according to the way they support mobility services.

Improving Coordination Among Transit Service Providers

The fragmented nature of transit service provision can make it difficult for individual riders to navigate between systems and for providers to take advantage of all the resources available. The following strategies can make it more straightforward to operate multiple services in one region.

- Develop a Transit Marketing and Communications Plan
- Implement a technical assistance program to support non-Rapid communities with efforts to implement and coordinate transit with regional systems, including establishing service agreement standards that allow service extensions, or other context-relevant service expansion
- Ensure providers are included in the Kent County Coordinated Public Transit - Human Services Transportation Plan to be eligible for 5310 funding
- Support efforts to regionalize trip planning systems
- Develop policies that make it easier to travel across jurisdictional borders, especially for riders using ADA paratransit services
- Support efforts to implement a regional fare collection system across all modes of transportation, investigating a regional fare capping program
- Align eligibility requirements to ride with one regional application process, one portal and database, and more places to sign up

Transit-Supportive Urban Planning

The most effective way to create a multimodal community is to plan for multiple modes at all stages, including early land-use planning, site review, and transportation planning.

- Partner with municipalities to develop land use policies that support transit-oriented communities
- Partner with municipalities to develop multimodal design guidelines that are supportive of transit (Rapid TMP)
- Partner with local municipalities to improve pedestrian and cyclist access to transit stops through Complete Streets policies, guidelines and projects, prioritizing high-injury and high-risk networks identified in the GVMC Safety Action Plan <https://gvmc-rsap.org/resources/>

Creative Approaches to Mobility

The policy initiatives described above are generally geared to transit service provision, either directly or indirectly. Other policy ideas may open doors to improved mobility without necessarily involving transit.

- Establish a funding initiative for future emerging technology pilots: This policy decision would give regional stakeholders latitude to explore mobility options that may not be on their radar just yet.
- Require schools to provide drivers education and/or pay for students to take drivers education elsewhere if they volunteer to drive a certain number of hours. This was suggested in a stakeholder meeting. By making it easier for younger people to get their licenses, it may be possible to increase mobility overall, which has community and familial benefits. Students could volunteer with Volunteers in Service, drive themselves to jobs, chauffeur older family members around, and so on.

Highest Scoring Service Concepts

The service concepts with the highest alignment include:

- West Michigan Express
- Express service between Grand Rapids and the airport
- Express service between Rockford and Grand Rapids
- Express service between Sparta and Grand Rapids
- Express service between Ada, Forest Hills, and Grand Rapids
- Extending existing fixed-route service to Alpine Township
- Creating first/last mile demand-response service in Alpine
- Creating a demand-response zone in the unincorporated community of Cutlerville within Byron Township and Gaines Township
- Countywide demand-response service

Since multiple inputs were involved in every score, the reasons for doing well in the evaluation will vary. The West Michigan Express and service to Alpine Township are examples of services that benefited from having already been mentioned in prior plans, as well as serving areas with concentrated housing and jobs both directly and indirectly. The spreadsheet appended to this report shows the results of individual metrics.

The high score of countywide demand-response service merits more discussion. The clear benefit to countywide coverage is that it serves the maximum number of people, places, and jobs, in theory. However, single-operator countywide services often prove to be inefficient and costly. The most helpful way to think of this result is to see it as indicative of the need for service across the county, but not necessarily prescribing a single service to accomplish that goal. Having countywide coverage may be achieved through collaboration among different service providers.

As discussed earlier, these findings will help to inform discussion. However, ultimately, the most important factor in getting an idea to implementation is the availability of a strong champion, supported by public opinion and by funding.

Additional Mobility Services

As stated earlier, public transit is only one way to serve mobility needs. Grand Rapids and Kent County already have a number of programs that draw on pooled resources, volunteerism, new technologies, and employer participation. Further investments could include expansions of these programs or new additions to the list.

Expansion to existing services – or improved coordination between services – include:

- Promote and expand use of West Michigan Rides carpooling/vanpooling program
- Expand bike-share/micromobility programs
- Expand capacity of the RideLink coordination network (from CHSTP)
- Expand the Mobile GR EV CarShare program
- Continue to develop coordinated mobility hubs
- Coordinate non-emergency medical transportation offered through healthcare plans with human service transportation providers
- Expand the Volunteers in Service (or other volunteer driver, church-based) program countywide

Potential new services include:

- Autonomous vehicle pilot
- Employer-sponsored services
- Publicly owned/operated TNC or taxi service (private rides)
- Create new countywide or municipal car share programs
- Seasonal or special event services

Appendix A: Evaluation Rubric for Transit Service

	Distinguishing Metric: Geographic Coverage	Distinguishing Metric: Mobility Services Propensity Index	Distinguishing Metric: Community and Partner Support	Distinguishing Metric: Jobs Access	Distinguishing Metric: Ridership Potential	Distinguishing Metric: Cost	Distinguishing Metric: Complexity
Data Source	Measured route length or service area in GIS	Composite score of five equally weighted mobility service dependent demographic group population densities: (1) Low-Income (<185% of FPL) (2) Zero-Car Households (3) Over 65 (4) Under 18 (5) Households with disability	The Rapid Transit Master Plan (TMP) and other local and regional planning documents	2050 Jobs Density in jobs per square mile	Zone-based: Average 2050 Households/mi tract Corridor-based: Aggregate Current Traffic Volume	Team assessment	Team assessment
Metric Type	Qualitative	Quantitative	Qualitative	Quantitative	Quantitative	Qualitative	Qualitative
Weighting	1	2	1	2	2	1	1
Relative Score	0-1 Points, calculated using the rescaling min-max normalization method with no scaling	0-2 Points, calculated using the rescaling min-max normalization method and scaling by 2	0-1 Points, calculated using the rescaling min-max normalization method with no scaling	0-2 Points, calculated using the rescaling min-max normalization method and scaling by 2	0-2 Points, calculated using the rescaling min-max normalization method and scaling by 2	0-1 Points, calculated using the rescaling min-max normalization method with no scaling	0-1 Points, calculated using the rescaling min-max normalization method with no scaling

Point Calculation Details (before relative scores were calculated)												RATING THRESHOLDS	TOTAL POSSIBLE SCORE		
	Possible Points	4	Possible Values: 9-22	Possible Points	0-4	Possible Values: 960-2,000 Jobs/sq mi	Possible Values: 52,000-1,921,000 AADT	Possible Points	1-3	Possible Points	0-4				
Fixed Route	< 20,000 meter route length	1	Mean Transit Need Index score of tracts/geographies within 0.75 miles of the route	Mentioned in The Rapid TMP directly	2	Mean 2050 Jobs Density (jobs/sqmi) of tracts/geographies within 0.75 miles of the route	Aggregate traffic volume (2023 AADT) of corridors that have their center in the traffic volume segment	Low additional operating costs	3	Extension of expansion of existing service	2	Low	5.0-5.5		
	20,000 - 40,000 meter route length	2		Mentioned in The Rapid TMP vaguely	1			Somewhere in between	2	New service using existing service model	1	Medium		5.5-5.9	
	>40,000 meter route length	3		Bonus Points				High additional operating costs	1	Brand new service model	0	High			6.0+
	Bonus Points		Bonus Points		Bonus Points		Bonus Points		Bonus Points		Bonus Points				
	Connection to existing Rapid service	1		Mentioned in local planning documents directly (for each local planning document)	2						Achievable through existing partnerships	2			
				Mentioned in local planning vaguely	1						Would require new partnerships with 1-2 new communities / partnerships	1			
										Would require partnerships with 3+ new communities	0				
Demand Response	Possible Points	6	Possible Values: 5-17	Possible Points	0-4	Possible Values: 33-4,000	Possible Values: 93-1,277	Possible Points	1-3	Possible Points	0-4	RATING THRESHOLDS	TOTAL POSSIBLE SCORE		
	<1 township service area	1	Mean Transit Need Index score of tracts/geographies intersecting the service area	Mentioned in The Rapid TMP directly	2	Mean 2050 Jobs Density (jobs/sqmi) of tracts/geographies intersecting the service area	Mean 2050 Household Density (households/sqmi) or tracts/geographies that intersect	Low additional operating costs	3	Extension of expansion of existing service	2	Low	2.3-3.7		
	1-2 townships service area	2		Mentioned in The Rapid TMP vaguely	1			Somewhere in between	2	New service using existing service model	1	Medium		3.7-5.5	
	2-3 townships service area	3		Bonus Points				High additional operating costs	1	Brand new service model	0	High			5.5-7.5
	4-20 townships service area	4		Bonus Points				Bonus Points		Bonus Points		Bonus Points		Bonus Points	
	>20 townships service area	5		Bonus Points				Bonus Points		Bonus Points		Bonus Points		Bonus Points	
Connection to existing Rapid service	1		Mentioned in local planning directly	2						Achievable through existing partnerships	2				
			Mentioned in local planning vaguely	1						Would require new partnerships with 1-2 new communities / partnerships	1				
										Would require partnerships with 3+ new communities	0				

Appendix B: Transit Evaluation Results

Distinguishing Metrics								Total Score	Alignment with Goals
Description	Distinguishing Metric: Geographic Coverage	Distinguishing Metric: Mobility Service Propensity Score	Distinguishing Metric: Community and Partner Support	Distinguishing Metric: Jobs Access	Distinguishing Metric: Ridership Potential	Distinguishing Metric: Cost	Distinguishing Metric: Complexity		
	High value - High county coverage, creates new ways to access The Rapid services Low value - Low county coverage, does not connect to The Rapid services	High value - High mobility service need Low value - Low mobility service need	High Value - High community and partner support Low Value - Low community and partner support	High value - High projected 2050 employment density Low value - Low projected 2050 employment density	High value - High traffic volume (FR) household density (DR) Low value - Low traffic volume (FR) household density (DR)	High value- lower cost Low value - higher cost	High value- lower complexity Low value - higher complexity		
WEIGHTING	1	2	1	2	2	1	1		
FIXED-ROUTE									
Expansion of Existing Services and New Bus Service									
New bus service along Walker Avenue	0.33	1.87	0.25	2.00	0.56	0.50	0.33	5.85	Medium
New bus service between Grandville and the Airport	0.67	1.58	0.25	0.21	0.25	1.00	1.00	4.96	Low
Extension along Plainfield Avenue	0.33	1.77	0.25	1.70	0.77	0.50	0.67	5.99	Medium
Extension to Alpine Township	0.33	1.87	0.25	2.00	0.61	0.50	1.00	6.56	High
Extension to Jenison area of Georgetown Township	0.00	1.73	0.50	0.17	0.59	1.00	1.00	4.99	Low
Express Services									
West Michigan Express	0.67	2.00	1.00	0.91	1.63	0.00	0.00	6.20	High
Express service along US-131 between Wayland and Grand Rapids	0.67	1.84	0.25	1.23	1.97	0.00	0.00	5.96	Medium
Express service along US-131 between Gun Lake Casino and Grand Rapids	0.67	1.84	0.25	1.17	2.00	0.00	0.00	5.92	Medium
Express service between Grand Rapids and the airport	0.67	1.73	0.25	1.27	1.65	0.00	0.67	6.22	High
Express service between Rockford - Grand Rapids	0.67	1.48	0.25	1.37	1.54	0.50	0.33	6.15	High
Express service between Sparta-Grand Rapids	0.67	1.71	0.00	1.61	1.42	0.50	0.33	6.24	High
Express service between Solon-Nelson-Cedar Springs	1.00	1.40	0.00	1.33	1.63	0.50	0.00	5.86	Medium
Express service between Rockford - Solon-Nelson - Cedar Springs	1.00	1.32	0.00	1.22	1.73	0.50	0.00	5.78	Medium
Express service between Ada-Forest-Hills-Grand Rapids	0.67	1.58	0.25	1.41	1.55	0.50	0.33	6.30	High
Other Services									
Ada local service	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.33	0.33	Low

Distinguishing Metrics								Total Score	Alignment with Goals
Description	Distinguishing Metric: Geographic Coverage	Distinguishing Metric: Mobility Service Propensity Score	Distinguishing Metric: Community and Partner Support	Distinguishing Metric: Jobs Access	Distinguishing Metric: Ridership Potential	Distinguishing Metric: Cost	Distinguishing Metric: Complexity		
	High value - High county coverage, creates new ways to access The Rapid services Low value - Low county coverage, does not connect to The Rapid services	High value - High mobility service need Low value - Low mobility service need	High Value - High community and partner support Low Value - Low community and partner support	High value - High projected 2050 employment density Low value - Low projected 2050 employment density	High value - High traffic volume (FR) household density (DR) Low value - Low traffic volume (FR) household density (DR)	High value- lower cost Low value - higher cost	High value- lower complexity Low value - higher complexity		
WEIGHTING	1	2	1	2	2	1	1		
Demand-Response									
Demand Response Service Zones									
Municipal: Sparta	0.00	1.00	0.25	0.30	0.45	1.00	1.00	4	Medium
Municipal: Rockford	0.00	0.81	0.50	0.28	0.49	1.00	1.00	4.08	Medium
Municipal: Byron	0.00	0.90	0.00	0.44	0.72	1.00	1.00	4.06	Medium
Municipal: Cutlerville	0.20	2.00	0.00	0.72	1.38	1.00	1.00	6.30	High
Municipal: Dutton	0.00	0.86	0.00	0.42	0.43	1.00	1.00	3.71	Medium
Municipal: Ada	0.00	0.33	0.25	0.39	0.32	1.00	1.00	3.28	Low
Municipal: Caledonia	0.00	0.43	0.25	0.09	0.21	1.00	1.00	2.98	Low
Municipal: Cedar Springs	0.00	0.29	0.25	0.18	0.35	1.00	1.00	3.07	Low
Municipal: Oakfield (with intercounty service to Greenville and Eureka)	0.00	0.00	0.25	0.00	0.00	1.00	1.00	2.25	Low
Municipal: Lowell	0.00	0.64	0.25	0.15	0.19	1.00	1.00	3.23	Low
Laker Line zone, including GVSU Allendale campus (Ottawa County)	0.00	-	0.75	0.11	0.51	0.50	0.50	2.38	Low
First/last mile service in Plainfield	0.20	1.69	0.75	0.65	1.20	0.50	0.50	5.49	Medium
First/last mile service near Walker Avenue	0.20	1.07	0.75	0.62	0.75	0.50	0.50	4.39	Medium
First/last mile service in Alpine	0.20	1.71	0.75	0.73	1.12	0.50	0.50	5.51	High
Regional Dial-a-Ride Services									
North Kent County Zone	0.80	0.86	0.25	0.25	0.40	0.00	0.00	2.56	Low
North suburbs (Plainfield, Alpine, Cannon townships)	0.60	1.03	1.00	0.37	0.63	0.00	0.50	4.13	Medium
Countywide	1.00	1.97	0.50	2.00	2.00	0.00	0.00	7.47	High