

Section 6: Transit

What role should transit play in regional transportation?

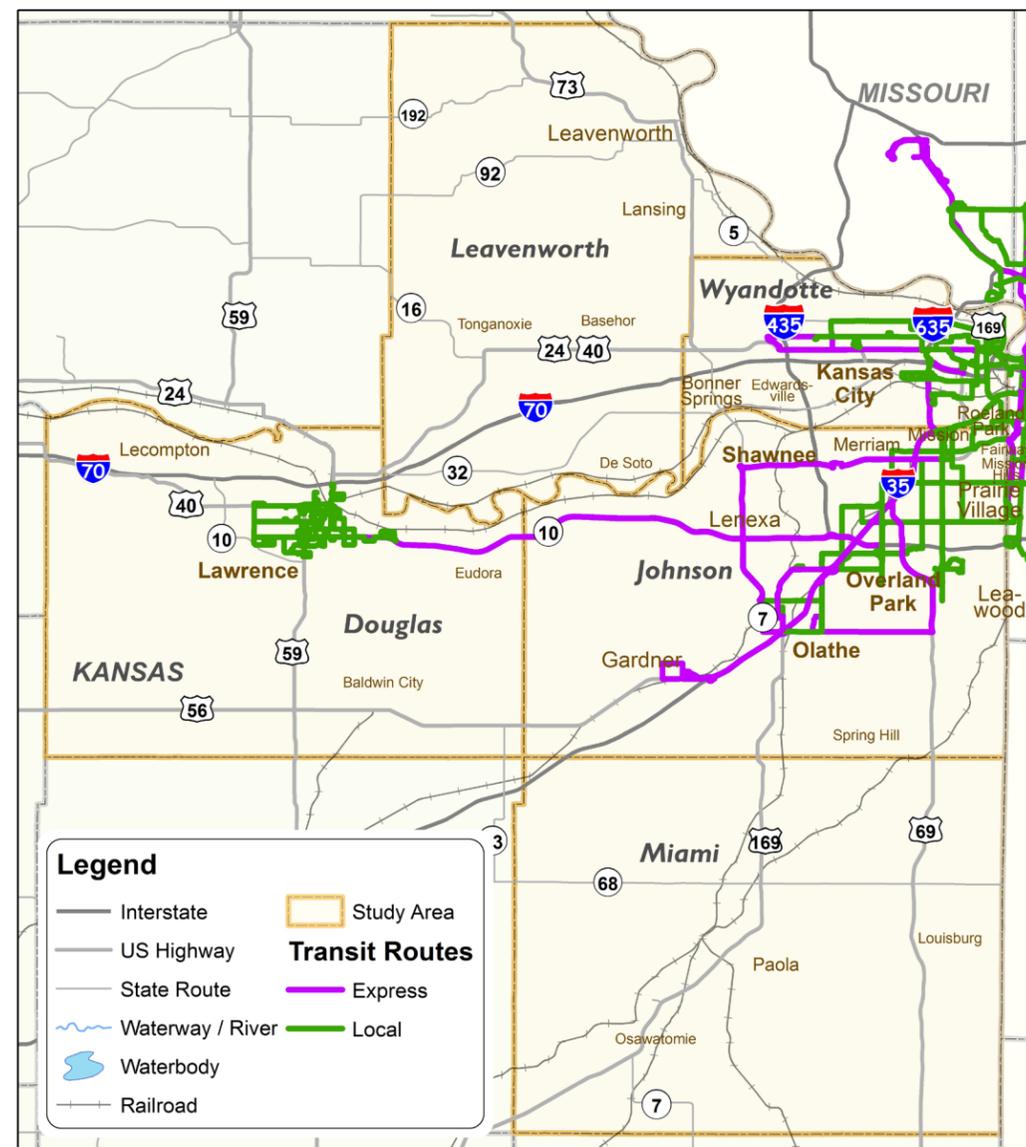
Transit will play an important role in the future transportation system for the 5-County region, particularly in moving commuters during the morning and evening peak travel periods. Enhancing regional transit service will also help in connecting communities and serving more people. Regional connections serve not only commuters, but also transit dependent riders (i.e., young, old, poor, infirm, or otherwise unable to drive). A more connected transit system will improve the movement of travelers both regionally and locally, connecting them to major activity centers such as universities, hospitals, shopping areas, sports arenas and major employment centers.

CURRENT TRANSIT SYSTEM

Transit is used for many different purposes in the 5-County region. Figure 6-1 shows the existing transit service in the region. All-day, fixed-route bus services are provided in portions of the 5-County region as described below:

- Douglas County: All day, fixed-route service is provided by the Lawrence Transit System and KU on Wheels along key corridors within the city of Lawrence
- Johnson County: The majority of the bus routes operated by Johnson County Transit provide service only during the peak hours. The Kansas City Area Transportation Authority (KCATA) has some routes that operate in eastern Johnson County as part of their service offerings
- Leavenworth County: There are no fixed-route bus services available in Leavenworth County
- Miami County: There are no all-day, fixed-route bus services in Miami County

Figure 6-1: Existing Transit Service in the 5-County Region



Source: Kansas Department of Transportation, Kansas GIS, US Census

- Wyandotte County: Unified Government Transit and the KCATA operate all-day, fixed-route bus service along key corridors within Wyandotte County

As required by the federal government, these fixed-route bus operators provide complementary paratransit service to those individuals who are not able to ride on the fixed-route system. Additionally, Johnson County Transit offers paratransit service and specific routes for the elderly and disabled to assist with their ongoing needs.

Commuter transit services are also being provided in the 5-County region. Currently, Johnson County Transit is operating all of the current commuter transit services within the region. This includes many routes that connect Johnson County with downtown Kansas City, Missouri. As many of their commuter routes connect with downtown via I-35, Johnson County Transit, in partnership with KDOT, created a Bus on Shoulder (BOS) service that allows transit vehicles to operate on



Bus on Shoulder is a partnership between Johnson County Transit and KDOT allowing transit vehicles to use the shoulder when mainline traffic is moving at less than 35 MPH.

the shoulder when mainline traffic is traveling below 35 miles per hour. In addition to providing services that connect into downtown Kansas City, Johnson County Transit also operates the K-10 Connector, which provides a transit connection between Lawrence and Overland Park, primarily connecting students at the University of Kansas Main Campus and Haskell Indian Nations University in Lawrence with the University of Kansas Edwards Campus and Johnson County Community College in Overland Park. In order for the K-10 Connector to serve a greater commuter need, there would need to be routes connecting to it that would serve a broader area in Johnson County.

Spring of 2009. Many of the survey questions asked for respondents to provide their opinion regarding existing transit service and opportunities for transit in the future. It should be noted that this survey was administered soon after the gas spike of 2007/2008, at a time when consumers were addressing concerns about the price of fuel and urging multimodal solutions.

When asked about their level of satisfaction with transit options within cities and towns, the majority of those responding were neutral or dissatisfied.

When asked their level of satisfaction with transit between cities, even more of the region was dissatisfied with transit service, particularly in southern Johnson County, along the US-69 corridor in Miami County, the I-70 corridor through Wyandotte and Douglas Counties, and all of Leavenworth County. These results are shown in Figure 6-2.

Dissatisfaction with bicycle facilities was the only mode that was higher than transit.

The travel characteristics of the respondents show that nine percent of respondents were dependent on transit or friends/relatives to get them where they need to go. As shown in Figure 6-3, when asked if the region's current transit services can serve most resident's basic mobility needs, nearly 60 percent of respondents said that it can't. When asked specifically about services for the elderly and disabled, only 24.5 percent agreed that those services were adequate.

The K-10 Connector

The K-10 Connector is an all-day, limited access long haul route between Lawrence and Overland Park. It is the one truly regional transit route operating in the 5-County region. The route has 30 minute peak frequency and 60 minute off-peak frequency, with a service span of 6:00 AM to 11:20 PM on most weekdays. The route provides 22 daily trips. Currently, the cost of a one-way fare is \$3.00, which equates to about 9 cents a mile if riding between the two furthest stops. This compares to an automobile travel cost of 55 cents a mile. Daily ridership is nearly 700. The cost of the service was \$930,000 in 2011. Users paid nearly \$400,000 of this cost.

Bus on Shoulder

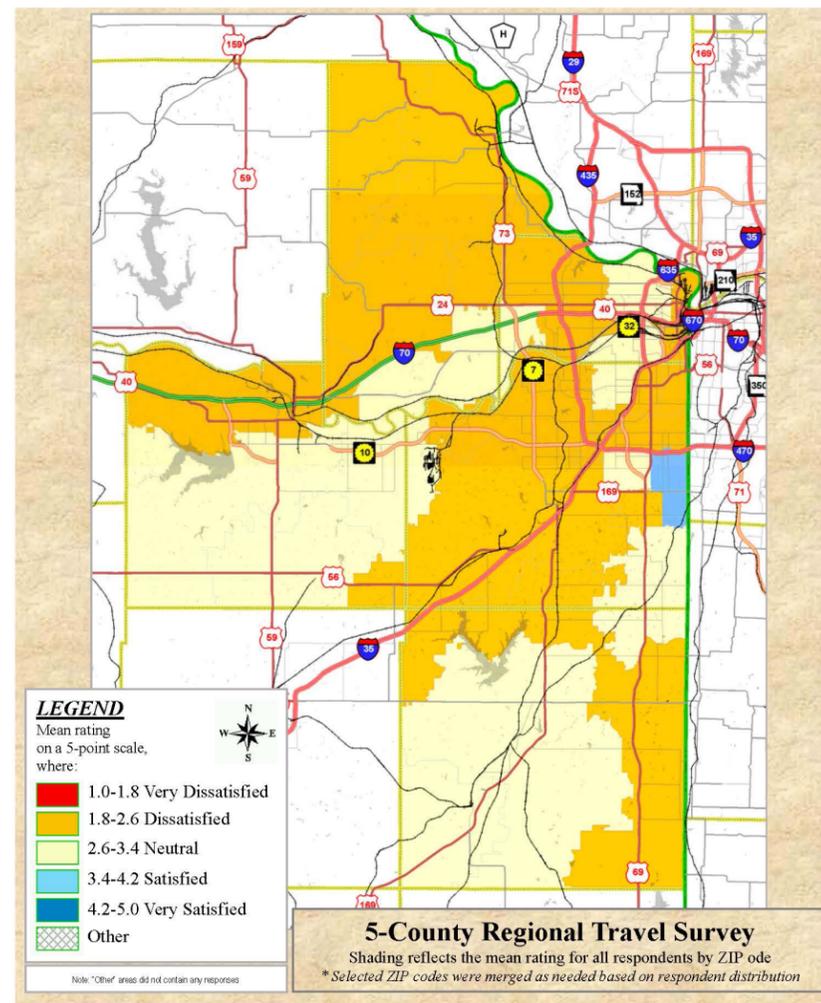
Bus on Shoulder (BOS) allows transit vehicles to operate on the shoulder when mainline traffic is traveling below 35 miles per hour. In 2012, 472 buses used the shoulder, traveling an estimated 1,348 miles on the shoulder. Johnson County Transit saw a 12.1 percent increase in ridership from 2011 (pre-BOS) to 2012 on the Jo Xpress routes that utilize BOS.

PUBLIC SATISFACTION WITH TRANSIT SERVICE IN THE 5-COUNTY REGION

As part of Phase 1 of the 5-County Study, a random sample of residents in the study region responded to a survey regarding issues and opportunities related to transportation planning for the region. This survey was conducted in the

Figure 6-2: Level of satisfaction with transit between cities and towns

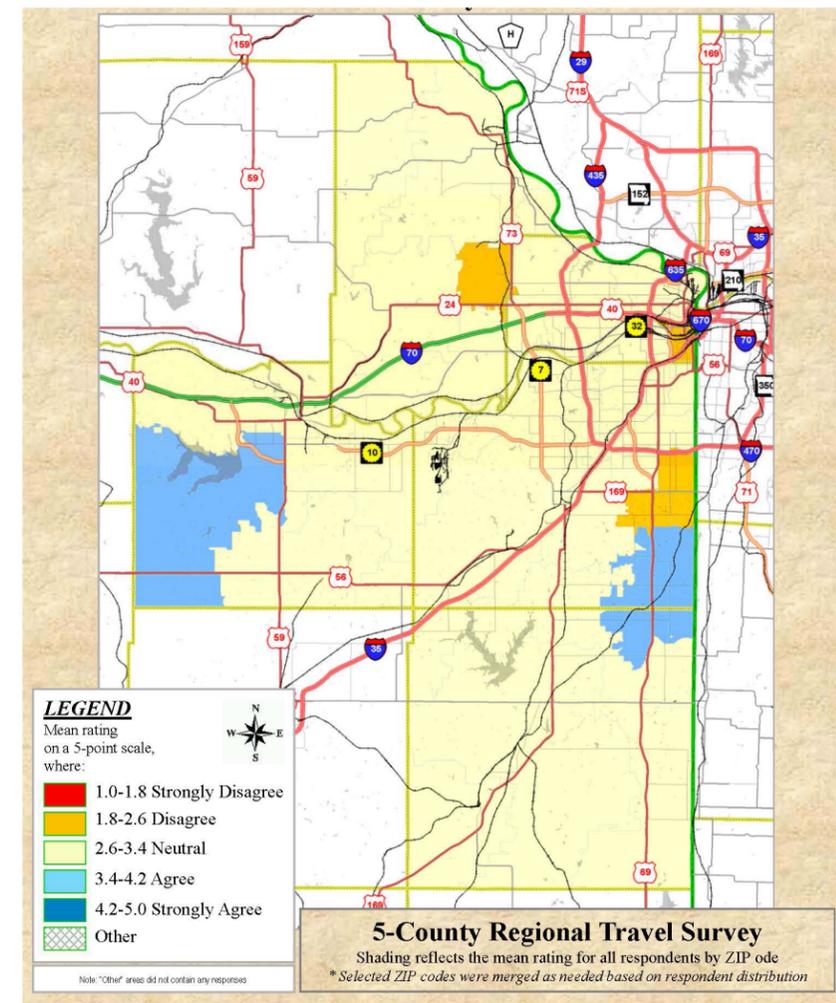
Please rate your satisfaction with the availability of transit options and coverage between the cities/towns



Source: 5-County Regional Transportation Study Phase 1 Survey

Figure 6-3: Current transit services can serve most resident's basic mobility needs

Please rate your agreement with the following statement: The region's current transit services can serve most resident's basic mobility needs

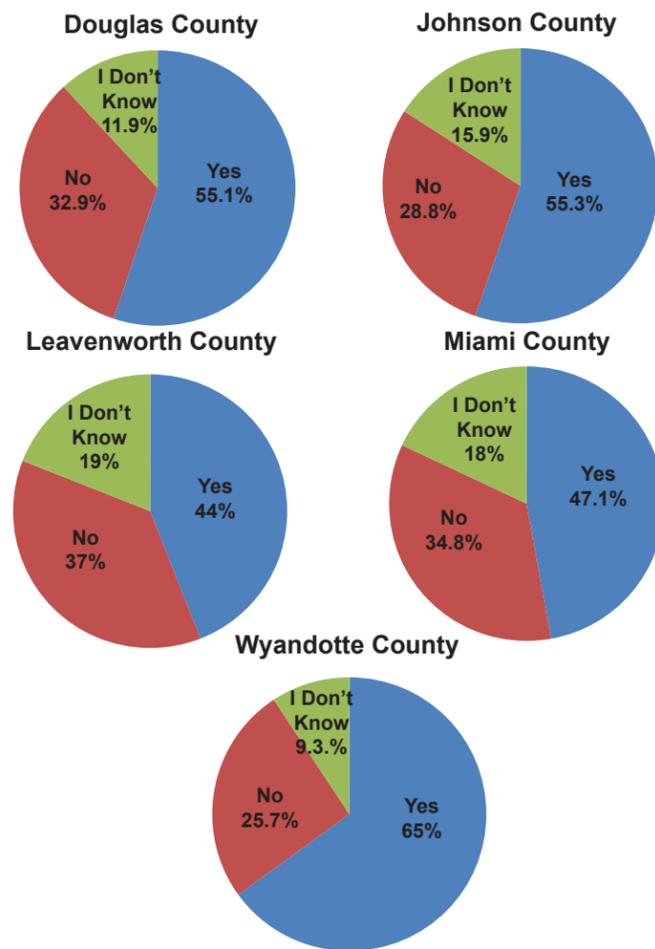


Source: 5-County Regional Transportation Study Phase 1 Survey

The survey asked “if the 5-County region had a regional transit system that went to where you wanted to go when you wanted to go there, would you be likely to use the system to get to and from work and for personal travel?” For that question, 53 percent of respondents said “yes”, 32 percent said “no” and 15 percent said “don’t know”. Figure 6-4 shows the results of this question when the data is analyzed on a county-level.

Figure 6-4: Regional transit use by county

If the 5-County region had a regional transit system that went to where you wanted to go when you wanted to go there, would you be likely to use the system to get to and from work and for personal travel?



Source: 5-County Regional Transportation Study Phase 1 Survey

The survey asked about the respondents’ support of specific strategies for transportation investments. 63 percent of respondents agreed that there should be a regional bus transit system. 55 percent of respondents agreed that there should be a light rail or a commuter rail system built in the region.

REGIONAL PLANNING

Regional Transit Planning is an important part of the Metropolitan Transportation Planning process that both MPOs undertake. Below is information about the strategies identified in Metropolitan Transportation Plans for transit.

Transportation 2030, the Metropolitan Transportation Plan for Lawrence/Douglas County, recommends the following action items for transit:

- Ongoing monitoring of transit performance and service
- Establish an off-street location for a regional transit hub
- Develop pedestrian and land development standards to promote productive transit service
- Study transit productivity and coverage issues
- Develop transit-friendly roadway design standards
- Pursue transit consolidation opportunities
- Develop a long-term transit funding strategy
- Develop a long-range transit plan
- Develop a long-term funding strategy for capital improvements
- Investigate the potential for regional transit connections along I-70

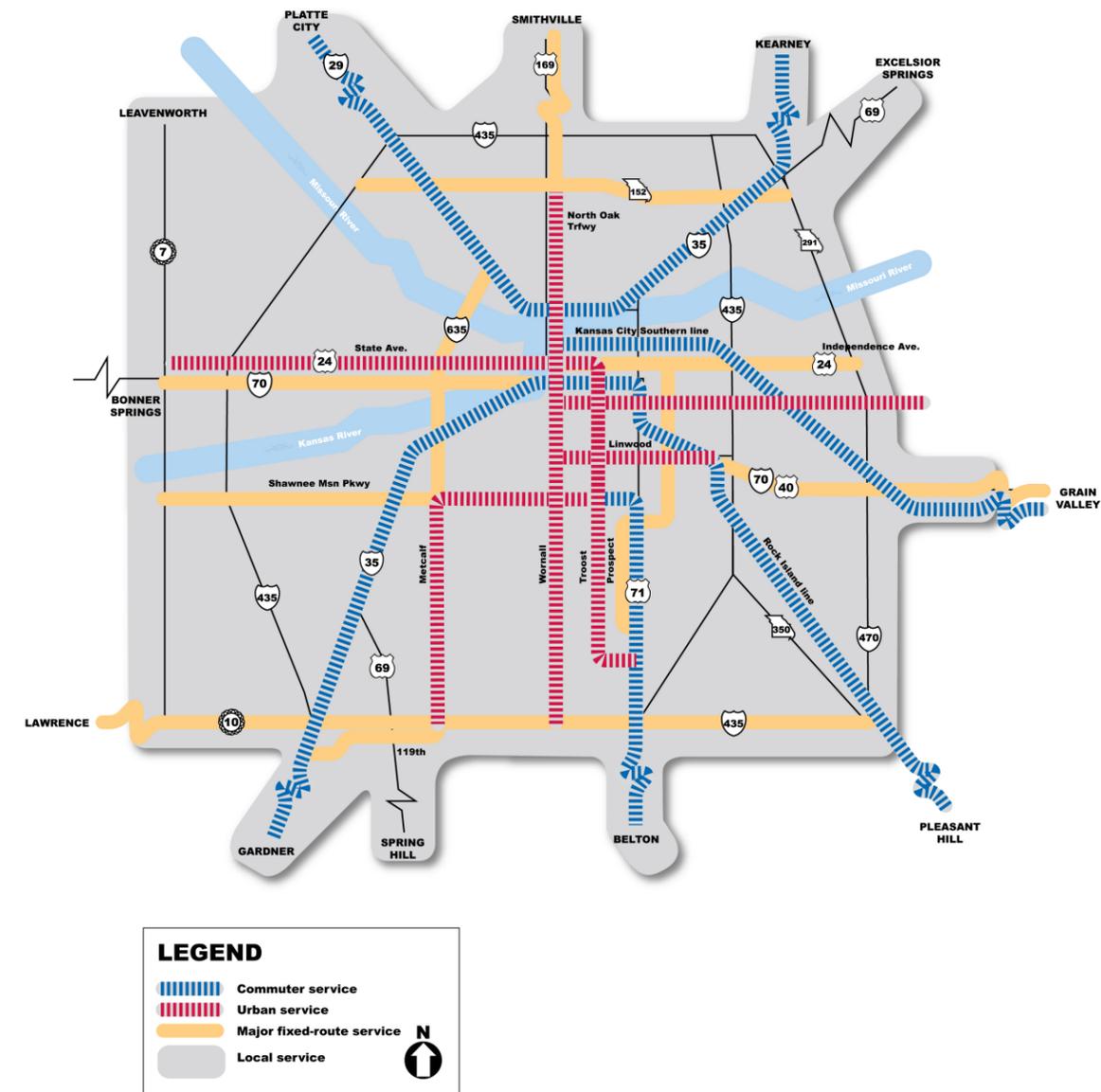
The Mid-America Regional Council has developed the Smart Moves Regional Transit Vision as part of the Metropolitan Transportation Planning process. The Smart Moves Regional Transit Vision provides the following goal statements for enhancing transit:

- **STRENGTHEN COMMUNITIES** and improve the quality of life of residents and visitors throughout the region by making transit an equal or better option to automobile travel
- **EXPAND AND ENHANCE MULTIMODAL TRANSIT SERVICE** throughout the metropolitan region

- **SUPPORT THE ECONOMY** through accessible transportation options
- **SAFEGUARD THE ENVIRONMENT** and improve public health through increased transit ridership

Additionally, the Smart Moves Regional Transit Vision provides a hierarchical route system that recommends urban corridors, commuter corridors and major fixed route corridors. Figure 6-5 provides a graphic of that concept.

Figure 6-5: Smart Moves Regional Transit Vision



HOW DO YOU PAY FOR LONG TERM TRANSIT COSTS?

A challenge that has been identified with the funding of transit is the lack of availability of a consistent source of annual operations funding. Under SAFETEA-LU, the previous national transportation bill, large urbanized areas (such as the Kansas City Metropolitan Area) are only allowed to use their Federal formula funds for capital improvements. While these funds are needed to keep transit vehicles and facilities in good repair, it does not provide assistance to local transit operations that need additional resources to provide the necessary transit service. With revenues from fares only recouping 15-25 percent of the cost to operate a system, funding from local governments and KDOT have been covering the difference. As the price to own and operate a personal vehicle increases, transit operators are challenged to meet the ever-increasing needs of their constituency. The current multi-year transportation bill is called MAP-21 and became law on October 1, 2012. It provides the transportation policy for fiscal years 2013 and 2014. As guidance through MAP-21 is forthcoming, it is unknown if this regulation regarding the use of federal funds for capital improvements will change.

Longer distance commuter transportation in the region also has the challenge of finding revenue for operating costs. An example is the K-10 Connector – this popular service, which operates on K-10 between Lawrence and Johnson County, received its initial start-up funds from KDOT and federal discretionary programs. After that funding was expended, the lack of a consistent source of revenue almost halted the service. Currently, Johnson County pays the operating costs for the service.

KDOT is currently planning for commuter transit along I-70 between Topeka and Kansas City. The K-10 Connector case study could apply in this case, as well as across the 5-County region. As in the K-10 example, there are multiple entities involved. In the I-70 commuter transit study area, there are four public transit operators (City of Lawrence Transit, Unified Government Transit, Topeka Transit and the Kansas City Area Transportation Authority), five counties (Shawnee, Douglas, Leavenworth, Wyandotte and Jackson (MO)) and numerous municipalities. In order for these projects to be implemented, there must be a regional funding agreement that identifies a long-term, consistent funding source.